

BIG STAR | FUTURE ISLANDS | CAT STEVENS

40 PAGES OF REVIEWS

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ARIEL PINK

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART

THE JAM

AND MORE...

EXCLUSIVE!

UNCUT

DYLAN

**At last!
The complete
story of
THE BASEMENT
TAPES**

PLUS

**T BONE
BURNETT
on the New
Basement Tapes**

AND

**THOMPSON
BRIAN WILSON
TERRY REID
DEEPLY VALE
LAURYN HILL**



**ALL-NEW
INTERVIEWS!**

**THE JESUS &
MARY CHAIN**

**"Why do people
take hammers
to gigs?"**

GENESIS

**"We managed
to sack the
lot of you!"**

**SHARON
VAN ETEN**

**"My life is an
open book"**

**ROBERT
WYATT**

**"I've stopped
making
music..."**

PLUS

**BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY
OUTKAST
SLEATER-KINNEY
NATIVE AMERICAN
ROCK**



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Are we rolling?

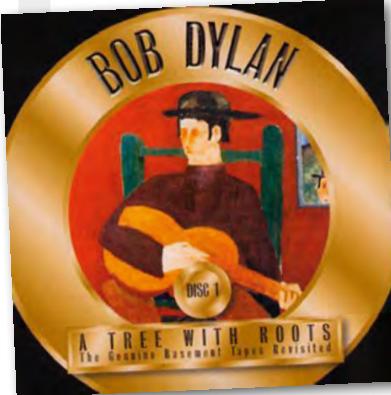
IN NOVEMBER 2011, ostensibly to celebrate the official release that month of The Beach Boys' *Smile Sessions*, *Uncut* cobbled together a list of rock's 50 greatest bootlegs. Three years on, most of the music on the list still languishes on the black market. The recent Led Zeppelin reissues, for instance, have made few inroads into the 11 volumes of the *Lost Sessions* bootleg. Neil Young's spectacularly capricious career path (the latest intriguing chapter, *Storytone*, is reviewed on page 79) has meant the *Archives II* set – theoretically containing fabled albums like *Chrome Dreams*, *Homegrown* and *Oceanside-Countryside* – remains in development. Perhaps it's best not to put aside any money for that one just yet.

Up until very recently, the idea of saving up for a Dylan-endorsed collection of *The Complete Basement Tapes* seemed equally optimistic. That 2011 *Uncut* chart had *A Tree With Roots*, with its 108 tracks, at No 2, and claimed "still more, yet uncirculated, recordings apparently reside within Garth Hudson's archive." The announcement this summer of T Bone Burnett's *New Basement Tapes*, repurposing a bunch of discarded Dylan lyrics with a new all-star band, hardly suggested a release of the original sessions was imminent.

But then, stories started emerging of the motherlode: an amazing 138 tracks, harvested from Hudson's collection and from a shadowy array of other sources. In this month's *Uncut*, Clinton Heylin digs deep into the six CDs of *The Complete Basement Tapes*, and uncovers the compelling story of the whole outlandish saga. It's a story we never thought we'd get to tell – but then, after our Pink Floyd exclusive last month, I guess that's becoming a habit.

On that bullish note, it seems timely I should mention the gilded benefits of a subscription to *Uncut*, especially with Christmas looming. This month, we're offering a year's subscription at a hefty 44 per cent discount. As well as the mag, you'll also receive a free trial of *Uncut* for your iPad/iPhone. Interested? Visit www.magazinesdirect.com/byy4 or call 0844 848 0848 and quote the critical reference code: BYY4.

Thanks, and enjoy the issue. You knew that we would meet again, if your memory serves you well...



No full house:
Dylan's incomplete
Basement Tapes bootleg

mention the gilded benefits of a subscription to *Uncut*, especially with Christmas looming. This month, we're offering a year's subscription at a hefty 44 per cent discount. As well as the mag, you'll also receive a free trial of *Uncut* for your iPad/iPhone. Interested? Visit www.magazinesdirect.com/byy4 or call 0844 848 0848 and quote the critical reference code: BYY4.

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John Mulvey, Editor

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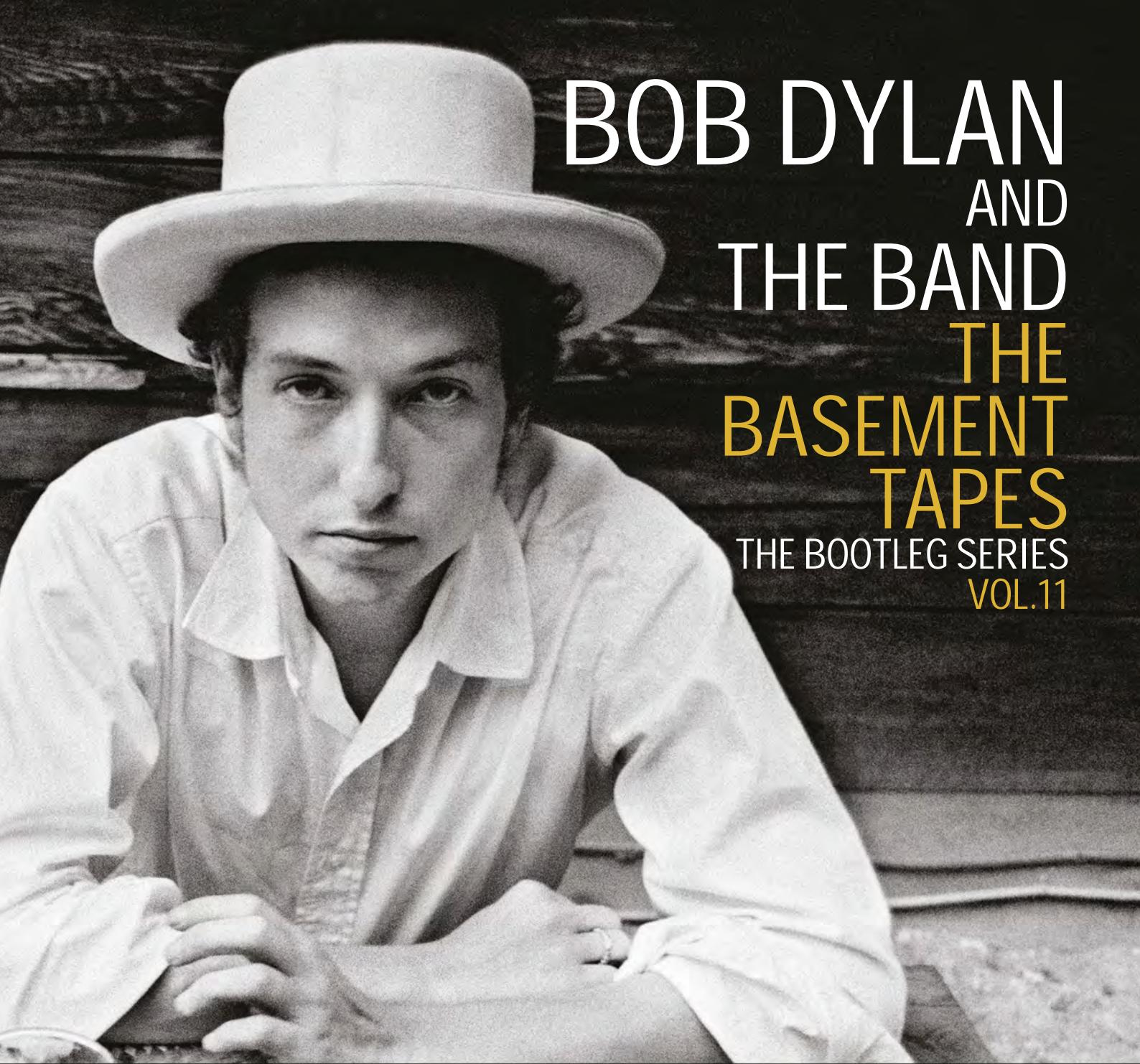
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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT
Featuring ROBERT WYATT | FUTURE ISLANDS | NATIVE AMERICAN MUSIC



SHOOTING STARS

Let's spend the night together!

2001: Danny Clinch captures an impromptu STONES/WHO summit. Who are you again?

THE PERSONAL ASSISTANTS are massing, the cue cards are ready, and there's just a moment backstage to catch up with old friends. Here, in the eternal parlance of caption writers, Keith Richards and Pete Townshend share a joke, while Mick Jagger and John Entwistle – one tense, another long-suffering – prepare for the official photocall, and Roger Daltrey is amused by something beyond the cameraman.

That cameraman is Danny Clinch, favoured lensman of rock's patrician class, and a man who categorises Springsteen, Patti Smith,

Dylan and McCartney as "Family And Friends". Clinch has just published a new book, *Still Moving*, that features rich and revealing shots of this auspicious cast. "I'm always looking for a distraction or a time when one's guard is let down," Clinch writes in the book's Artist Statement. "That moment when the shoulders relax and something else is revealed."

Or, perhaps in the case of Mick Jagger here, that moment when everyone else's shoulders relax and something else is revealed. This candid image was taken backstage at Madison Square Garden, October 20, 2001, when Paul

McCartney recruited a stellar cast for a Concert For New York City. The presence of Five For Fighting on that bill now looks a little incongruous, but McCartney's ability to mobilise his elite contemporaries resulted in performances by David Bowie, Elton John, Eric Clapton, and these two combos: Jagger and Richards, who contributed "Salt Of The Earth" and "Miss You"; and The Who, with John Entwistle making one of his last appearances with the band before his death in June 2002.

Danny Clinch: Still Moving is published by Abrams

Keith Richards and Mick Jagger with Roger Daltrey, Pete Townshend and John Entwistle, backstage at the Concert For New York City, Madison Square Garden, October 20, 2001



Wyatt at home:
"Train drivers
retire at 65, so
I will, as well..."



SCORING A HALF-CENTURY



END OF AN EAR

ROBERT WYATT calls a halt to his musical career.
"We're just getting through the day now..."

SOME SAD NEWS this month – Robert Wyatt has revealed to *Uncut* that “after 50 years in the saddle” he won’t be making any more music. Wyatt puts the decision down to declining health and a desire not to tarnish his legacy, but he admits he feels “a bit weird” about stopping.

“I thought, train drivers retire when they’re 65, so I will, as well,” Wyatt, now 69, tells *Uncut*. “I’ve stopped, I don’t really know why actually. And I do feel a bit... weird about it, but life is physically much harder for me and for [Wyatt’s wife] Alfie. It’s getting a bit scary, and I can’t sit around, messing around, thinking up new tunes in that, really. We’re just getting through the day now, and trying to have bits of fun when we can.”

“At the moment, I’ve broken my foot and I’m

sitting on a bed with my foot up. It happens, these things.”

Though he hasn’t released a solo album since 2007’s acclaimed *Comicopera*, Wyatt has remained active with collaborations, most notably on *For The Ghosts Within*, a 2010 album he made with Ros Stephen and Gilad Atzman.

“I’ve had 50 years in the saddle, I’ve enjoyed them, and I’ve enjoyed the stuff I did towards the end, in this century, at least as much as anything I’ve done before. So I don’t feel like I’ve done nothing... I always felt, in quite an old-fashioned way, you’ve got to do stuff. Not just have a nice time out, but actually get stuff down, accumulate material. I was only 28 when I broke my back, [so] I didn’t know if I would still be able to work in a

in left-wing politics. “I would say I’ve stopped, it’s a better word than retired. Fifty years in the saddle, it’s not nothing. It’s completely unplanned, my life, and it’s just reached this particular point. Other things have happened – I’m more taken up by politics, to be honest, than music at the moment. Music tags along behind it. There is a pride in [stopping], I don’t want it to go off. Performers say leave the stage five minutes before they want you to leave, rather than five minutes after!”

TOMPINNOCK

Robert Wyatt talks us through his back catalogue on page 60, while *Different Every Time*, released on November 17, is reviewed on page 97

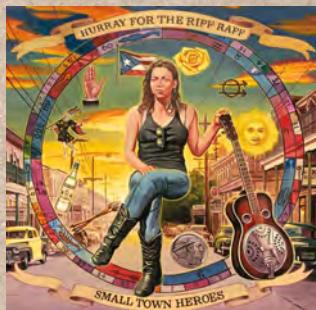
THE CLASSIFIEDS

THIS MONTH: Happenings and ecstatogenic substances from Melody Maker, December 3, 1966. Drag optional...

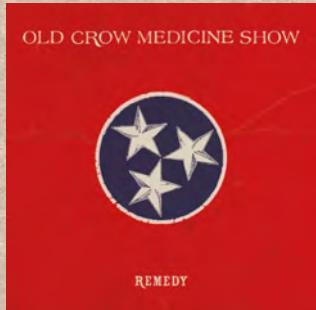
JAZZBAND SIX BELLS KING'S ROAD, CHELSEA Saturday, December 3rd, 8 p.m. SANDY with TONY MILLNER	SWAN LAKE Do Come!	BLUESVILLE '66 BLUESVILLE '66 JOHN MAYALL'S BLUES BREAKERS! FEATURING THE BLUES GUITAR OF PETER GREEN "THE MANOR HOUSE" (opposite Manor House underground)	PSYCHODELPHIA versus IAN SMITH GIANT FREAK OUT! AT THE ROUNDHOUSE CHALK FARM ROAD, N.W.1 DECEMBER 3rd, 10 p.m. on. Screaming THOUSANDS , Under- ground Films, Poets, HAPPEN- INGS , with the PINK FLOYD and the RAM HOLDER MESSENGERS . Bring your own happenings and ecstatogenic substances. Drag optional Tickets at Indica Books Housemans, Better Books, and Collets	MODERN JAZZ Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Friday, December 2nd DICK MORRISSEY Saturday, December 3rd ART ELEFSON Sunday, December 4th ART THEMEN BULL'S HEAD BARNES BRIDGE PRO 5241 ROY ELDRIDGE CANCELLED Roy Tempst unable to obtain permission from the National Union of Labour and Musicians' Union Resident Rhythm Section: BILL LE SAGE TRIO Friday, Saturday, Sunday, lunch & evening Friday, December 2nd TERRY SMITH Saturday, December 3rd DANKE MOSS Sunday, December 4th Lunchtime and Evening DICK MORRISSEY QUARTET Monday, December 5th TUBBY HAYES QUARTET Tuesday, December 6th DICK MORRISSEY QUINTET Wednesday, December 7th STAN TRACEY QUARTET Thursday, December 8th DICK MORRISSEY QUARTET THE CREAM ESSEX FIVE Coming soon – DRASTERS – CLIFF BENNETT – ZOOT MONEY
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OUT NOW



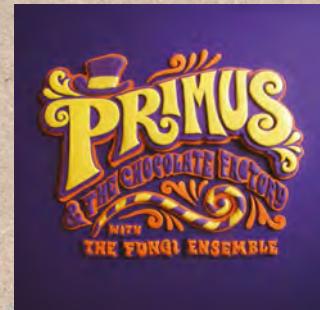
Hurray For The Riff Raff - Small Town Heroes
 "Standard-bearers for a new, forward-thinking
 generation of roots musicians" - 9/10 Uncut
 LP, CD & DOWNLOAD



Old Crow Medicine Show - Remedy
 "Original and impressive."
 THE GUARDIAN - ★★★★
 CD & DOWNLOAD



Old 97's - Most Messed Up
 "Shit kicking performances"
 8/10 Uncut
 CD & DOWNLOAD



Primus -
 Primus & The Chocolate Factory
 with the Fungi Ensemble
 LP, CD AND DOWNLOAD

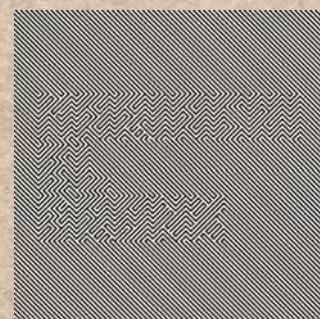


Drive By-Truckers - English Oceans
 "Hood and Cooley are working at the
 peak of their powers" - 5/5 The Independent
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COMING SOON



Stars - No One Is Lost
 DOWNLOAD - OUT NOW
 2LP+CD - 3/11/14



Mariachi El Bronx - III
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The Future of synthpop: (l-r) Gerrit Welmers, Sam Herring and William Cashion

Future Islands

Recommended this month: 2014's most passionate and unlikely breakout stars, happy to do things "the old-fashioned way and blow people's minds!"

SAMUEL HERRING IS on doctor's orders. Last night, his band Future Islands made their UK TV debut, performing "Seasons (Waiting On You)" from current album *Singles on Later With Jools Holland*. Today, he's bound to a vow of silence, to protect vocal cords in advance of a month of dates across Europe. "This year has been rough... we're playing more shows than we ever have," he writes to *Uncut*. "I'm learning to rest more these days. It only took 900 Future Islands shows to make me realise how important that extra sleep can be." Watch Future Islands live and it's not hard to see why Herring might find performance gruelling. The music of *Singles* is a rousing, bold synthpop, but Herring fills these electronic swells with perspiration and passion, jiving down close to the ground, beating his chest, occasionally contorting his operatic croon into a death metal growl. Still, the idiosyncrasy of his performance was only partly what sent Future Islands' appearance on *Letterman* back in March viral, with more than two million YouTube hits and counting: in short, these are great songs, about timeless themes, delivered with heart bared. Equally, it would be misinformation to paint Future Islands as any sort of overnight success. Herring, keyboardist Gerrit Welmers and bassist William Cashion came together in the quirky art-school quartet Art Lord & The Self-Portraits while studying in Greenville, North Carolina in 2003. They regrouped as Future Islands in 2006, and a year later transplanted to Baltimore, where they fell in with DIY artists' community Wham City, playing warehouse shows with

Dan Deacon and Ponytail. Growth, says Herring, feels natural. "We were happy on a DIY footing but we're not the sort to turn away a big stage. It's about bringing a party vibe into a larger space."

Singles – the group's fourth album, but debut for 4AD – was written on a break from touring, with early sessions taking place at a hunting cabin in rural North Carolina. It finds Future Islands looking back, considering memory and heritage: see "Seasons (Waiting On You)", with its dreamy video of cattle ranchers and country dances, or "Back In The Tall Grass", which finds Herring recalling walks home from school, along train tracks and over creeks filled with crayfish. "It's reminiscing on the times I'd lose my brother on the way, and then feeling that same emotion upon losing touch with someone later in life," says Herring. "And about how those early feelings of childhood may seem foreign to us as adults. Alive with curiosity and possibility, and at the same time experiencing fear in the face of loss and unknowing."

Future Islands find themselves in new territory again, plotting a route between their DIY nature and a wider world that's waking up to them. Herring: "We play along. You do extras to build an audience, to work within an industry. We'd rather do it the old-fashioned way and just blow people's minds! The audience is more important than the other stuff. It's more important than me and you." LOUIS PATTISON

I'M YOUR FAN
"Future Islands resonate really positively with me. It is a blessed relief to hear other musicians who trade in genuine feeling while avoiding many of the rock stereotypes"
Andy McCluskey, OMD

Future Islands play Manchester Columns Festival (Nov 1), Dublin Vicar Street (2 &3), Glasgow ABC1 (4), and London's Shepherd's Bush Empire (6)

THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

DAVID BOWIE

Sue (Or In A Season Of Crime) PARLOPHONE
Nothing Has Changed, proclaims the Dame's new comp. This new track suggests otherwise, being a fraught jazz epic, not quite like anything he's done before.

D.D. DUMBO

Tropical Oceans 4AD
 A newcomer from Australia, Oliver Hugh Perry's debut EP pitches him somewhere between Jeff Buckley and Grizzly Bear. One for 2015, if you're making notes.

MARK KOZELEK

Sings Christmas Carols CALDO VERDE
 A dolorous, engaging take on tradition, not unlike Low's cherished Christmas LP. "War On Drugs: Suck My Cock" not included.

AC/DC

Play Ball COLUMBIA
 No Malcolm Young, tragically, but the business of being AC/DC continues nonetheless, with this ruthless, impressive new sports-based anthem.

RUTHERFORD CHANG

The White Album x 100 SELF-RELEASED
 An NYC artist plays 100 copies of The Beatles' LP simultaneously; secret melodies, strange harmonies and a notable kinship to *My Bloody Valentine* reveal themselves...

KENDRICK LAMAR

INTERSCOPE
 The first single from the LA rapper's forthcoming third album, as he rides a sample from the Isleyes' "That Lady" in a joyous throwback to hip-hop's Daisy Age.

RHYTON

Kykeon THRILL JOCKEY
 In which a trio of battle-hardened New York psych vets incorporate Greek folk into their freak-outs. Olympian!



HAILU MERGIA & THE WALIAS

Tche Belew AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA
 A must for anyone entranced by the *Éthiopiques* comps; serpentine funk from the nightclubs of Addis Ababa, circa 1977.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

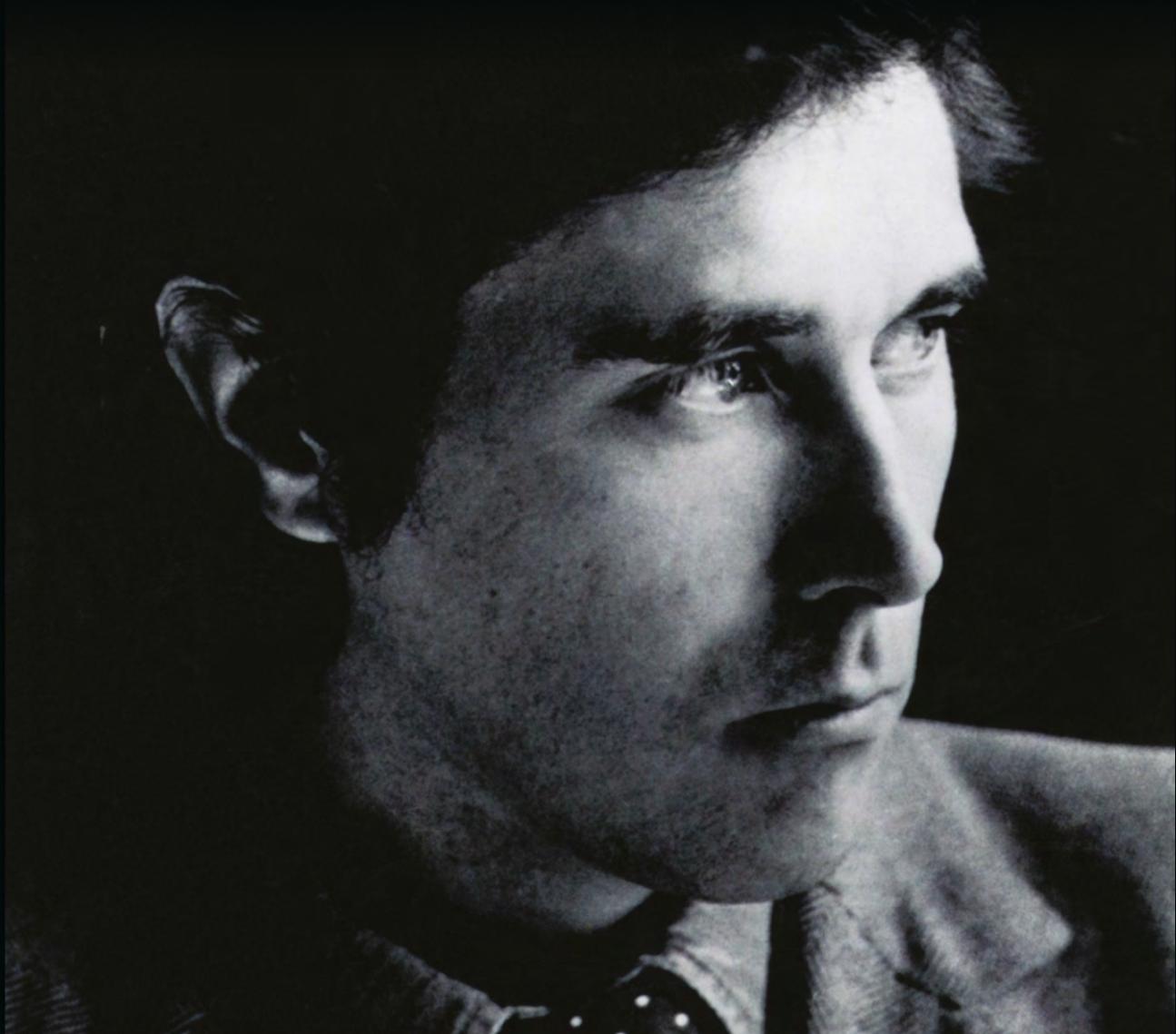
I'm Just Like You: Sly's Stone Flower 1969-70 LIGHT IN THE ATTIC
 The brief, revolutionary history of Stone's label, built around the sputtering beauty of the Maestro Rhythm King drum machine.

SPACIN + PURLING HISS

September 5, 2014, Hopscotch Festival
WWW.NYCTAPER.COM
 Philly's new kings of grunge come together for a rowdy supersession at Raleigh's Hopscotch jamboree. Sunshine, no shoes!

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BRYAN FERRY



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BMG



C/wise from
top left: David
Campbell,
Shingoose (left)
with Redbird,
Willie Thrasher,
Willy Mitchell
and band



Spirit children

Uncovered: the rich, neglected history of native North American folk rock...

KEVIN "SIPREANO" HOWES' journey into native North American folk rock followed a rambling path. He spent 15 years criss-crossing Canada in search of the records which make up *Native North America Vol One*, an extraordinary 2CD compilation on the specialist rarities label, Light In The Attic.

"I did a series called *Jamaica To Toronto*, featuring artists like Jackie Mittoo, who had come from Jamaica to Canada in the 1960s, and started cutting records on Toronto's Yonge Street strip, a real happening area which artists like The Band came to," says Howes.

Many of the records he discovered were made in pressings of 250 copies or less, funded by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for regional broadcast. "We know The Guess Who and Gordon Lightfoot and Anne Murray," says Howes. "I started getting interested in the music that was equally exciting, but didn't have that commercial exposure."

"There's a bit of segregation in our country with the aboriginal population, but these guys were buying the same Jimi Hendrix and Black Sabbath records and taking them back to the reserves and trying to imitate them; trying to combine it with their own culture."

"There's a big crossover. [Montreal songwriter and filmmaker] Willie Dunn lived in Greenwich Village for a little bit, and [composer] David Campbell actually moved to England in the 1960s and recorded for the Transatlantic label."

"Neil Young was an influence on me because of the harmonica," says Willie Thrasher, who grew up in the Northwest Territories, and formed the first Inuit rock band, The Cordells, in the mid-1960s. They started out doing Stones and Kinks covers, but Thrasher's growing awareness of his heritage emerged in songs such as "Old Man Carver" or the Young-like "Spirit Child".

"When I was five years old, and taken away to residential school, it's like my

Neil Young was an influence... and "a very vocal advocate of native rights"

spirit was taken away," says Thrasher. "I got my hair cut off, and I got slapped around for speaking my language. Then when I started understanding what was really my culture – from the traditional native peoples in the South I started realising that a root was planted in me, and I had to grow that root. I had to understand who I was and the only way I could do that was to listen to the stories from the elders."

"Most bands were country rock bands, playing Creedence Clearwater Revival," says Quebec-based Willy Mitchell, who

bought his first guitar from the compensation he received after being shot in the head by a policeman.

"I wasn't into doing what everybody was doing. I was looking for my own thing all the time."

"For about 10 years after I got shot, there wasn't much happening in Quebec as far as songwriters go – and no-one was singing in their language, only powwow songs. Up to about 1980. Then I met Kashtin, two Maloitenam boys who started singing folk rock, in their language. Before that, they used to only play Beatles songs... Quebec Western they called it. So I suggested they play their own songs in their language – I was really proud when they came out big."

"There was an exchange," says Howes. "Neil Young was a very vocal advocate of native rights – and he would have had a lot of exchanges with aboriginal people living in Manitoba. And a poet like Duke Redbird – who collaborated with Shingoose on the song "Silver River" – he lived in the same Toronto boarding house as Joni Mitchell and they became good friends. He also had a group with Bruce Cockburn. It was a great exchange, back and forth."

ALASTAIR MCKAY

Native North America (Vol One): Aboriginal Folk, Rock And Country '66-'85 is released on November 25 by Light In The Attic. See review on p97

A QUICK ONE

► BB King's 2014 activities were brought to an abrupt end on October 3, when the 89-year-old fell during a show at the Chicago House Of Blues. A doctor reported King was dehydrated and suffering from exhaustion, and the



remaining eight gigs of the tour were cancelled. "I'm back at home now... enjoying some downtime," King told his website four days later. "I want to tell you, I'm doing all right."

► Christine McVie's return to Fleetwood Mac seems to be going well, judging by the setlists of recent US shows. On the tour's opening night in Minneapolis, "You Make Loving Fun", "Everywhere", "Over My Head" and "Songbird" received their first airings in 17 years. "Little Lies", meanwhile, was dusted down for the first time since 1990, while "Seven Wonders" was played for the first time in 26 years. Fingers crossed for those 2015 UK dates...

► A couple of books to look forward to in 2015. Kim Gordon's autobiography, *Girl In A Band*, is out in February 2015, while Patti Smith is close to finishing the "contemporary" follow-up to *Just Kids*. Smith will also celebrate the 40th birthday of *Horses* with gigs in London, Paris and – of course – New York around the anniversary next November.

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NEIL YOUNG STORYTONE

THE NEW ALBUM OUT NOVEMBER 3RD

Neil Young's first-ever orchestral album,
recorded with a 92-piece orchestra and choir

Deluxe edition includes bonus acoustic album



BEYOND THE BASEMENT

Your guide to this month's free CD

1 JULIAN CASABLANCAS + THE VOIDZ

Where No Eagles Fly

"A triumphant, ridiculous mess," is how *Uncut*'s reviewer describes the new album from The Strokes' increasingly contrary frontman. "Psychotic prog/synth/punk from the old Bowery," might also work as a description, though "Where No Eagles Fly" has a hint of "Is Vic There?", too. Very good, anyhow, not least because, amid the chaos, there's one of Casablancas' best tunes in a decade.



2 GREYLAG Yours To Shake

For anyone who's lamented the stadium rock path taken by Band Of Horses these past few years, the appearance of Greylag, also from the Pacific Northwest, should be rather satisfying. Andrew Stonestreet and his Portland bandmates have the keening, dynamic folk-rock sound down to a tee; Phil Ek, meanwhile, produces with the clarity and empathy he brought to work by Fleet Foxes and, yep, Band Of Horses.

3 SLEATER-KINNEY Oh!

Few American indie-rock records of the '90s and early noughties have aged as well as those by Sleater-Kinney. As Sub Pop release an upgraded set of that righteous and potent back catalogue, here's a typically infectious taster, from 2002's *One Beat*.

4 COOL GHOULS The Mile

Not the most appealing band name, perhaps, but San Francisco's Cool Ghouls are proving masters of a filigreed strain of West Coast garage rock. Exhibit A: the insouciant twangs and cascading harmonies of "The Mile", much recommended to those turned on by the Allah-Las. Stick around for the "Our Prayer"-style a cappella pay-off.

5 ANAIS MITCHELL

Out Of Pawn

After grappling with old British folk songs on her last set (2013's *Child Ballads*), Mitchell sets out to rethink her own canon on the new *xoa*. Among the stark acoustic reworkings of her old songs, "Out Of Pawn", originally on 2007's *The Brightness*, is a heart-stopping standout.

6 NEW BUILD

Look In Vain

A rewarding curio from a couple of the Hot Chip legion, Al Doyle and Felix Martin. As "Look In Vain" illustrates so well, New Build write politically charged, folk-inflected broadsides, then subject them to pulsating techno arrangements. A welcome update of a musical idea investigated by Ultramarine in the mid-'90s, and mostly neglected since.

7 NATHAN BOWLES

Chuckatuck

Bowles' musical multi-tasking currently involves playing drums for another *Uncut* regular, Steve Gunn. Here, though, he's caught in full flight on his banjo, duelling with the seething electric guitar of Tom Carter in a classic roots/rock face-off. From Bowles' excellent second solo album, *Nansemond*.

8 DEERHOOF

Exit Only

There's a strong argument that the stop-start signature sound of 2014, as practised by the likes of St Vincent and Tune-Yards, owes much to the bracing awkwardness of San Francisco's Deerhoof. Celebrating their 20th anniversary, mind, the band's *La Isla Bonita* showcases an unusually direct take on their radical style – hence the crunchy, hugely enjoyable buzzpop of "Exit Only".



FREE
CD!



9 PAUL SMITH & PETER BREWIS

A Town Called Letter

While his brother beavers away with School Of Language, Peter Brewis' latest extra-curricular effort away from Field Music is a collaboration with fellow north-easterner Paul Smith, on leave from Maximo Park. This seductive piece of chamber pop, built around piano, strings and Smith's intimate vocal, is at once sombre and appealingly understated.

10 KHUN NARIN

Lai Sing

A startling change of speed, tone and location. The Khun Narin Electric Phin Band are a rattling, intoxicating bunch of musicians from a Thai mountain village, indulging in the sort of freestyle jamming that, to Western ears, has ecstatic, psychedelic possibilities. A heady subversion of clichés and expectations surrounding 'world' music.



11 HOOKWORMS

The Impasse

Hookworms come from Leeds, but there's a fair amount of psychedelic abandon flowing here, too. "The Impasse" is the headlong opener to their second LP, *The Hum*, perhaps usefully seen as a screaming Brit analogue to the heads-down dronerock of Wooden Shjips.

12 WILLY MITCHELL

Call Of The Moose

Light In The Attic's revelatory comp of native North American music is discussed at length a couple of pages back on p12. Here, though, is

one of the highlights, from Willy Mitchell, a half-Algonquin/half-Iroquois folk singer whose musical career was inadvertently kickstarted by being shot in the head by a Canadian policeman.

13 MEATBODIES Him

Unnerved that 12 tracks of an *Uncut* CD have rolled by without anything from Ty Segall and acolytes? Relax: the Meatbodies are a reassuringly great garage rock project from LA, helmed by Chad Ubovich, part of The Fuzz alongside Segall and, for good measure, a sometime bandmate of Mikal Cronin.

The guitar break at 1:55 is especially fine.

14 THESE NEW PURITANS

Field Of Reeds

One of the grandest tracks on 2013's *Field Of Reeds* is given a notably powerful live makeover, with all the ornate and resonant features of the original – not least a *basso profundo* with the lowest voice in Britain – intact. Further proof that TNP frontman Jack Barnett is a questing talent who should be judged alongside the likes of Scott Walker and Mark Hollis.

15 DREAM POLICE

Pouring Rain

A dramatic end to proceedings this month, courtesy of Mark Perro and Nick Chiericozzi on hiatus from The Men. Dream Police's *Hypnotized* often recalls Spacemen 3, but "Pouring Rain" recalls the swirling post-punk romances of The Psychedelic Furs or, perhaps, the Blue Orchids. Time to get the long overcoats out of mothballs; it is November, after all...

DEERHOOF / WILLY MITCHELL / COOL GHOULS / GREYLAG / NEW BUILD / DREAM POLICE



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AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Yusuf Cat Stevens

Interview: Michael Bonner

The hit-scoring singer-songwriter recalls growing up in '50s Soho, and touring with Jimi Hendrix and the Walker Brothers: "I was mostly blotto at that time!"

I

IT'S LUNCHTIME IN Dubai when *Uncut* calls Cat Stevens. Stevens – or Yusuf Islam, as he's better known since becoming a Muslim in 1977 – relocated to the United Arab Emirates 12 years ago. "I'm just enjoying this weather," he explains. "It's pretty good every day."

Currently, it's an exciting time for Yusuf. First, there is the forthcoming release of his new album, *Tell 'Em I'm Gone*, which features contributions from friends including Richard Thompson, Will Oldham and Rick Rubin. "I'm not precious about the work, once it's done," he explains. "After I've done the music, I kind of get on to the art. I began as an artist and progressed from there to music, so I always go back to the art. I spend a lot of time fixing the details of the record cover."

There is also the not-so-small matter of an accompanying tour – which, remarkably, includes Yusuf's first American dates since 1976. "It's a very exciting time for me," he agrees. "We've had so many fans clamouring for me to go there. I'm very excited about playing these new songs live, because they've given me a lot more potential in my repertoire."

But for now, Yusuf is content to answer your questions on a host of topics, from life in Soho during the 1950s to touring with Jimi Hendrix and recording one of the most successful albums in the Muslim world...

STAR QUESTION



Your mother was Swedish and your father Greek Cypriot. Do you think that the tastes and ethnicity of your parents have contributed to your very unique musical style?

Richard Thompson

I'm certain about it, because that's the first music I ever heard. The Swedish lullabies sung to me by my mother and the Greek weddings that I used to attend with my father. So those two poles of ethnicity – very pure, European ethnicity I must say – really formed the background to the different style I evolved through my writing. Richard is a gem, by the way. I used to admire him when he was with Fairport, and then later on I got to know him. His record collection is

out of this world, the Andalusian and Spanish music. Then we were rotating around each other and finally we got together. Come to think of it, he was at my very last concert before I took my big break, in 1979. It was the UNICEF Year Of The Child concert and he was there backing me up. Then we got together again at Cropredy a couple of years ago and this time he was on "Tell 'Em I'm Gone".

What do you remember about touring with Hendrix and the Walker Brothers in 1967?

Chris Sharpe, London

I was mostly blotto at that time so I wouldn't remember too much! However I do remember certain places... there was a show in Finsbury Park. I was upstairs swigging some, I don't know, brandy and port with Engelbert, and then we heard someone scream, "There's a fire onstage!"



"Those innocent days..." With Gary Walker and Jimi Hendrix in 1967

Everybody rushed to have a look, but I was too lazy to go down and see what was going on. Then we found out that Hendrix had started burning his guitar, and that was the first time he ever did it. I loved Jimi. He was a great guy to have along on the tour. We used to kind of hang out together. Generally, he was a sweet man, but I remember one time when I was doing "I'm Gonna Get Me A Gun" he was behind me on the side of the stage, squirting a water pistol at me. Those were the kind of antics we used to get up to in those innocent days.

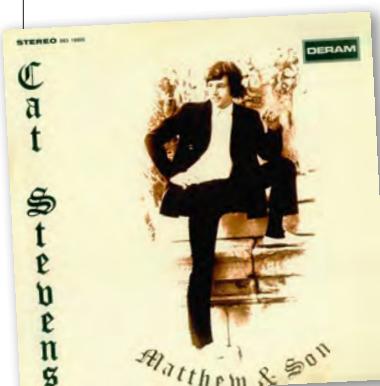
How did John Paul Jones come to play bass on the *Matthew & Son* album?

Shirley North, Scarborough

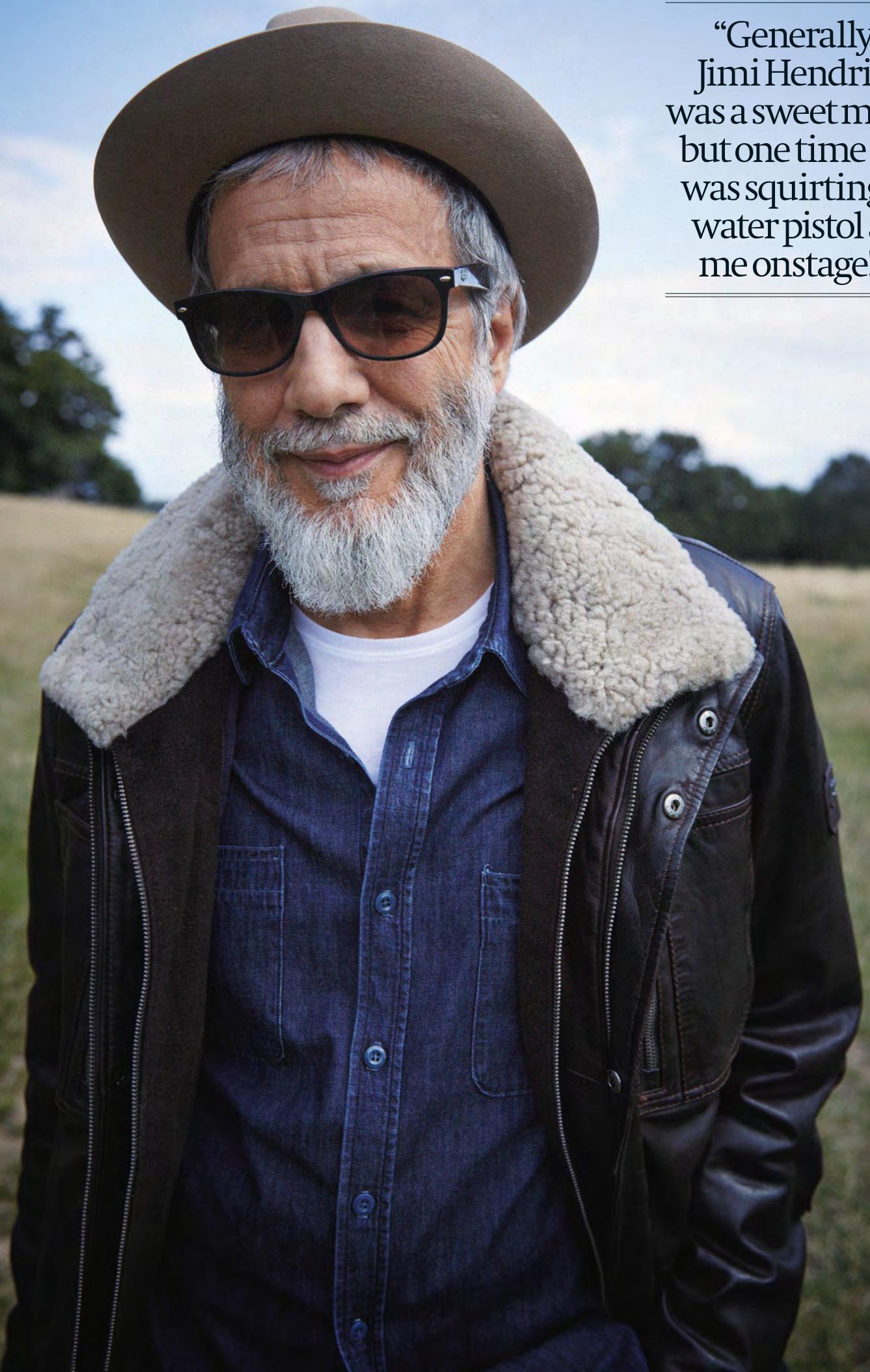
He was one of the regular session players, him and Nicky Hopkins. He was absolutely brilliant. You can hear him play on *Matthew & Son*, almost all of the tracks on that LP. What do I remember most about him? He was very quiet. He had very long hair, and he looked a lot like Brian Jones at that time. By the way, Nicky Hopkins was incredible, he was a very jangly little touch on "Matthew & Son" itself, that famous little riff. Nicky was amazing, really, one of the unsung greats.

Just wondered if you remember my mum, Teresa Jones? She helped you choose your stage name! Sara, via email

It's possible... My girlfriend at that time, Christine, said to me one day "You look so much like a cat." That kind of stuck. At the same time there were films around like *What's New Pussycat?* and *Cat Ballou*. One of my favourite tracks was called *•*



“Generally,
Jimi Hendrix
was a sweet man,
but one time he
was squirting a
water pistol at
me onstage!”



“Walking My Cat Named Dog” by Norma Tanega. I’m glad I wasn’t influenced by Rufus Thomas anyway – “Walking The Dog” – otherwise it could have been a totally different story. So, yeah, it just stuck and then I just kept my first name, Steven at that point, and tagged Cat on to it.

STAR QUESTION



Ask Yusufi
“Here, There And Everywhere” is the most intoxicating record of our age.
Art Garfunkel

Interesting question! I think what he’s implying is that I’ve never stood still. But when it comes to the best song ever written, I think it was Beethoven’s *9th*. How do I know, Art? Again, mutual admiration. At one point, back in 1975, we got together and he came on board to help me with the vocals on an LP called *Numbers*. We were in the mountains in Canada, in the deep snow, looking out this amazing window at this beautiful scene just doing this great album. He’s a great guy and he goes back as well, too. We almost brushed shoulders back in the old days, in ‘66, when he was with Paul down at Les Cousins, on Greek Street. So we frequented the same folk club at that time. The stars were Bert Jansch, Davey Graham, John Renbourn. It was a very narrow club and you just crept down the stairs. It was round the corner from our favourite coffee bar, Lorelei, where I first heard The Beatles on the jukebox. Les Cousins was the gig, it was the place to go to listen to all the real music. I played there once, I was so petrified. I’ve just erased it from my memory.

Where exactly was the restaurant in Shaftesbury Avenue that you lived above and that your parents ran?

Phil Porto, via email

It was at the topmost point of Shaftesbury Avenue. So if you took Eros at one end, then Moulin Rouge – my parent’s café – was at the other end. We were polar opposites. In fact, our shop also opened up onto New Oxford Street. Just a few doors down was Northern Songs, Dick Jones Music and Immediate Records. They all used to come to Dad’s café for coffee.

What was it like growing up in Soho during the 1950s?

Mark Steward, Sutton

Soho was buzzing. You had clubs like The Establishment on Greek Street, *Private Eye* round the corner, and Les Cousins. I used to frequent



quite a few in my time. The 100 Club, Tiles, the Marquee. One of my favourites was The Scene in Ham Yard, just around the corner from The Windmill. It had the best music and the best DJ, Brian Stevens. He was introducing us to incredible new-waxed singles from the States. “Louie Louie”, “Poison Ivy”, Smokey Robinson, Bo Diddley, Jimmy Reed, Howlin’ Wolf, Nina Simone. An incredible lineup of brilliance and genius from the USA.

joined us on this album. What was Rick Rubin’s role? We got to know him through a mutual friend. He set up some session musicians for me. We’re great friends and I really admire him as a producer, though in the end I produced this myself.

STAR QUESTION



Which string is acknowledged as the loudest on a guitar?

Alun Davies
For God’s sake Alun, you know it’s

D! This is a reference to “Peace Train”. I was introduced to Alun through Paul Samwell-Smith back in 1969 and he became my closest musical companion. He worked with me through all the major albums and he’s been an intrinsic part of my sound. We just balanced very well. Actually we’ve just been working together on some more tracks, the follow-up to *Tell ‘Em I’m Gone* – but I can’t say too much.

What are your memories of a young Peter Gabriel, who featured on flute on your *Mona Bone Jakon* LP? How did he get involved with those sessions?

Paul Williams, via email

He was timid, I hardly noticed him in the studio. He did these lovely flute parts on “Katmandu”. That was it – the next time I saw him, he had a whole different persona. Peter was pretty important in my return to music. There was a concert called 46664 in Cape Town celebrating Nelson Mandela and Peter invited me on to play. It was the first time I’d got back onstage and it was in front of 50,000 people! It was the Soweto Choir, and Peter and his band accompanying me. Incredible!

Were you still writing songs after you left music in 1979?

Peter Nixon, Melbourne

I wrote a song in 1980 called “A Is For Allah”. I sang it to my first-born, and then, when I was going around, a lot of people wanted me to give a talk and then they’d want me to sing something. I wouldn’t have a guitar, so I’d just sing this song a cappella and it was recorded on people’s cassettes. It was probably one of the biggest hits of the Muslim world back in the ‘80s. Almost every family had it. From there I realised, these kids need music, they need something. So I started writing songs for children and we’ve had one of the most popular CDs in the Muslim world called *I Look, I See*.

Were you cautious about returning to music?

Becky Chaplin, Harrow

For sure. When I left the business in 1979, I got myself another life. I got involved in establishing schools and doing charity work. So music just didn’t have a place in my life. Then gradually, I started learning a lot more about Spanish civilisation. You know it was in Andalucia where the guitar was introduced to Europe? The word troubadour is from the Arabic, meaning ‘to entertain’. So there are all these kinds of links. You suddenly realise, wow, I’ve been looking at things through rather conservative glasses. A big, big change happened for me when I realised that music is part of God’s universe. ☺

***Tell ‘Em I’m Gone* is released on Sony Music**



UNCUT.CO.UK

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

TEMPLES

SUN RESTRUCTURED

A BEYOND THE WIZARDS SLEEVE
RE-ANIMATION

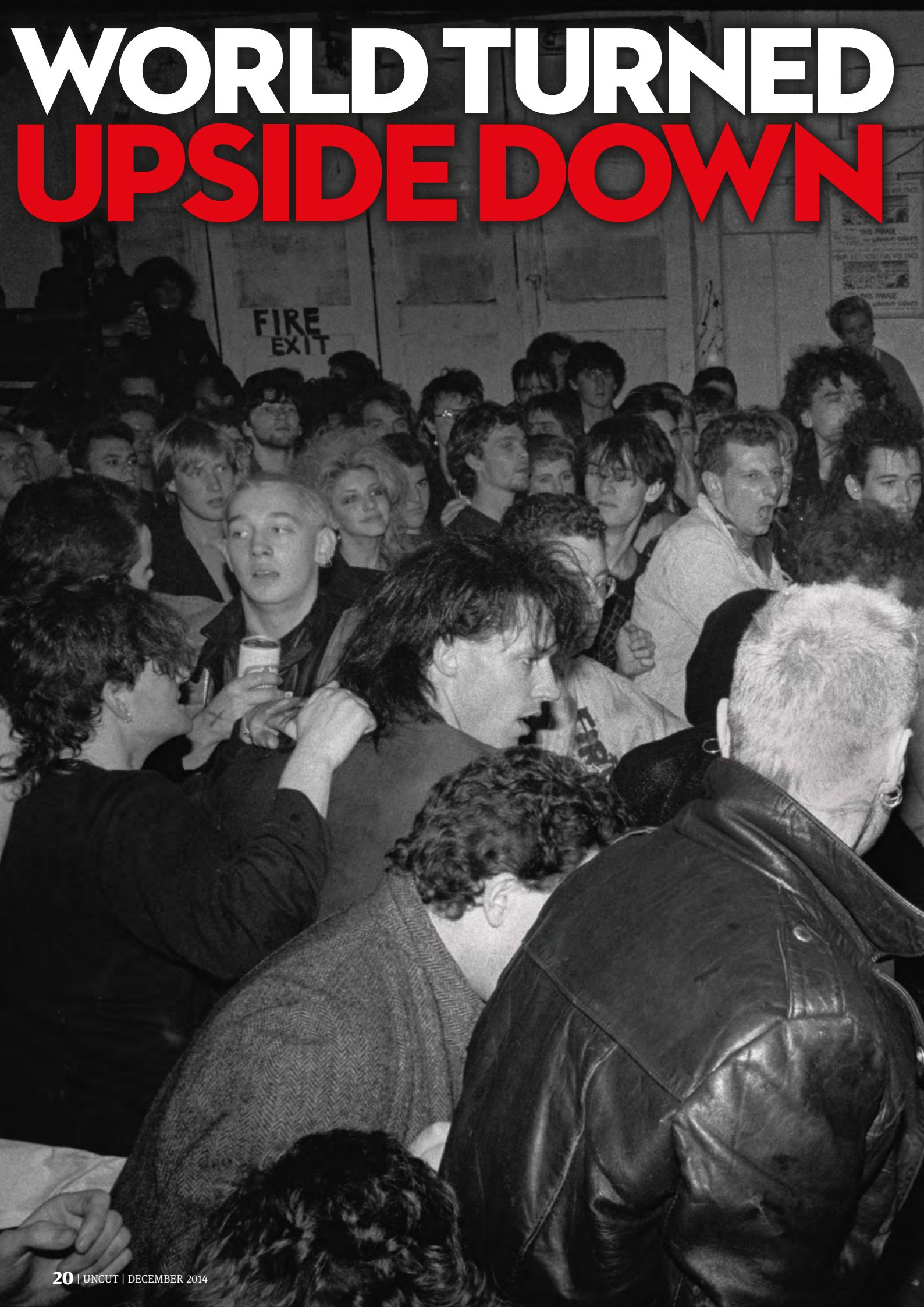
SUN STRUCTURES DELUXE 2CD EDITION

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“SWIRLING PSYCHEDELIC POP NIRVANA”
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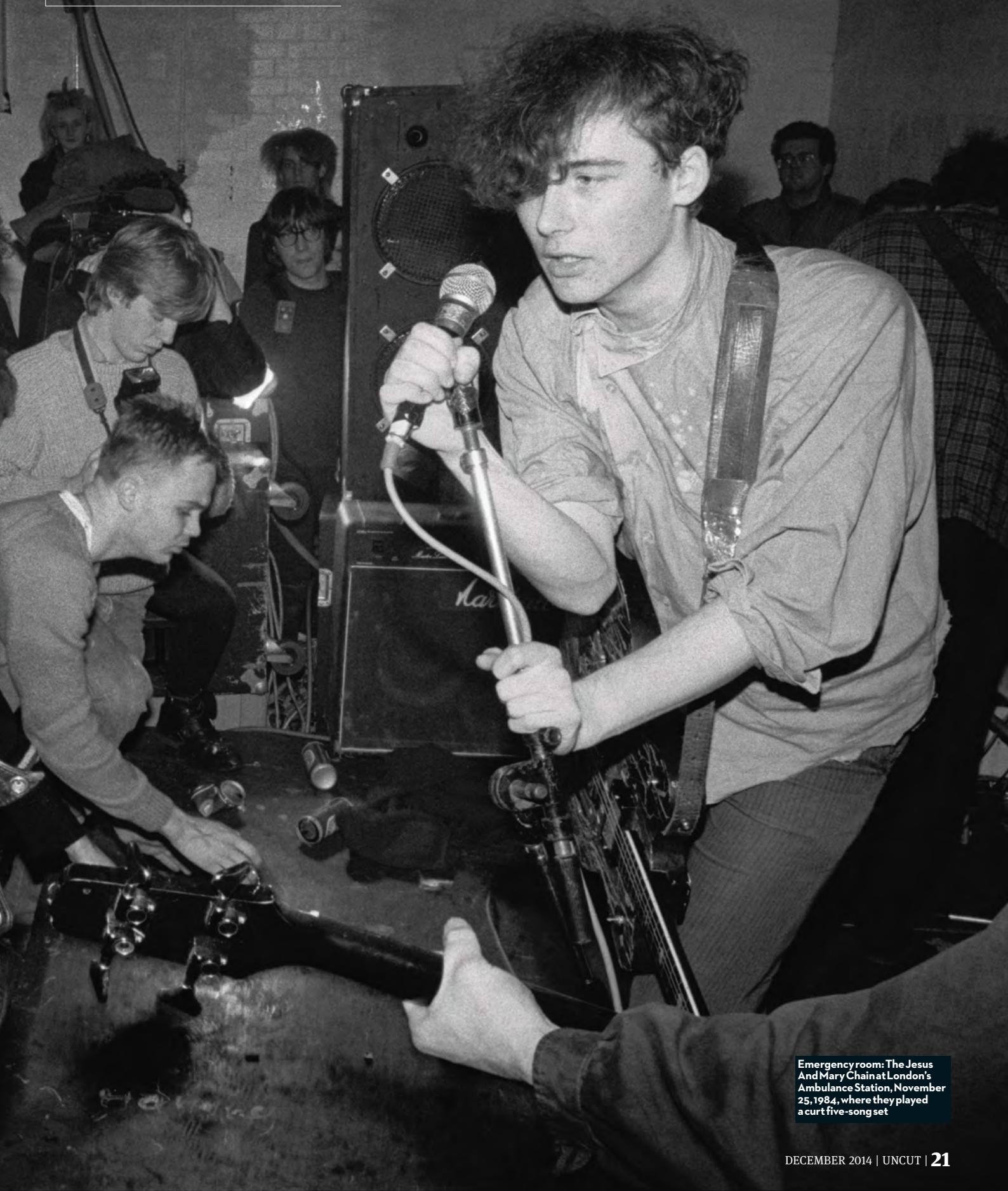


WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN



Thirty years ago, THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN were smashing up paint factories on acid and plotting their career in an East Kilbride bedroom. Soon, there would be riotous gigs, startling records, leather trousers, animosities and a musical revolution born out of white noise. Now, as they recreate the maelstrom of *Psychocandy* onstage, William and Jim Reid look back... "We don't punch each other in the face anymore. But it's pretty intense."

Story: Tom Pinnock | **Photograph:** Andrew Catlin



Emergency room: The Jesus And Mary Chain at London's Ambulance Station, November 25, 1984, where they played a curt five-song set



Taste the floor...the band onstage at the Ambulance Station, November 1984: (l-r) William Reid, Bobby Gillespie, Jim Reid, Douglas Hart



R

EFLECTING ON THE remarkable 30-year career of The Jesus And Mary Chain, William Reid seems as surprised as anyone that they've made it this far. "Growing up, music was a different universe," admits the guitarist and songwriter. "It felt like being a musician would

be like winning the lottery 100 times in a row. Then straight from the go, we had people despise us and love us."

This month, William and his younger brother Jim celebrate the 30th anniversary of their '85 debut LP with a UK tour. "It is strange to be playing *Psychocandy* again," William admits. "But hopefully we can do it justice. I want to make records and show people we're not a 'heritage act'. What a fucking horrible term!" But critically, the prospect of the warring Reid brothers still being around to honour the *Psychocandy* anniversary is something few would have bet on back in the '80s. In those days, William, his younger brother Jim, bassist Douglas Hart and drummer Bobby Gillespie were laughed at by their label, dismissed as "just noise" by their critics and almost killed by their own fans. Even more surprising than their survival, perhaps, is the fact they are planning to record new music as soon as they can. "I want to make an album this year," confirms William with some intent. "Or two. We're trying to get our shit together and hopefully it'll happen."

Despite reforming for live shows in 2007, the Mary Chain – with Jim and William now joined by Phil King on guitar, Mark Crozer on bass and Brian Young on drums – haven't released a new album since 1998's *Munki*. But both brothers admit that each have a number of songs stockpiled, with the only obstacle agreeing where and how to record them.

"It's difficult," explains Jim Reid. "William lives in LA, I live in southwest England. But we're getting on about as well as we can. You put the two of us together for any length of time, there'll be some sparks. It's the way it'll always be, I guess. But we've learnt to back off when the right time to back off is."

WITH TALK OF tours and new albums, the Reids have come a long way from the drab Scottish new-town of East Kilbride in the early '80s. Then, the self-confessed "neighbourhood weirdos" could only dream



RECORDING "UPSIDEDOWN"

JOE FOSTER: "We didn't have any dough at that point, so we had to go after-hours and record it in one cheap-skate, vampire session. We had to crack it, we didn't feel we had a second chance. I remember the bass drum pedal broke, but I couldn't get hold of another band that I'd spoken to about borrowing their kit, so I had to break into their lock-up and grab it..."

MURRAY DALGLISH: "The bass drum was also bust, we had to trigger it after. I remember there was a third track we recorded and William played the drums on it instead, and I, being a 16-year-old boy, went away in a huff..."

of getting through the day with digits intact. "I was going to be a carpenter, William was going to be a sheet-metal-worker," remembers Jim. "We gave up our apprenticeships and that wasn't well-received at home."

"I worked in a cheese warehouse, which was fine 'cos you could slack off and steal cheese," adds William. "But being a sheet-metal-worker was shit."

The people were all missing toes and tips of fingers. I had to get out quick."

Signing on the dole, the Reids considered what opportunities lay before them. "We were young guys who were exploring what was possible," confirms William. "I remember before I decided I was going to be a musician, I was thinking of being a playwright. I actually wrote some plays... I found them a couple of years ago. They're so bad, though, they're terrible."

In their shared bedroom in East Kilbride, they began to plot and dream up their perfect band. "That's how the Mary Chain formed, from late-night talks me and my right nutty brother used to have," recalls Jim. "Punk seemed to be happening on a different planet. We'd gobble up the music papers and hear it all through Peel, but it just seemed so far away. So you take all the bits you're hearing on the radio and reassemble them, and often you come up with something unintentionally unique."

"That's all we had," continues William. "Punk happened, and that wall dividing possibilities and us was breaking down. You didn't need to be The Beatles or the Stones, you could be the Ramones. The Ramones made the most epic music with just a couple of fuzz pedals."

To counteract the boredom of East Kilbride, Jim along with his friend, Douglas Hart, sometimes in cahoots with William, would make their own entertainment, often utilising the fruits of the South Lanarkshire meadows. "One of the great things about East Kilbride is it's completely surrounded by countryside, and therefore magic mushrooms," says Hart, bassist from the band's formation up until 1991. "We used to walk round the streets all night, go to this old paint factory, take acid or mushrooms, and smash it up with hammers. The noise of metal hitting glass or concrete would reverberate around the factory and in our thoughts. The sound of *Psychocandy* comes from who we were, and part of who we were was taking psychedelics in that industrial wasteland."

But when they weren't caving in factories, the brothers would stay up through the night, chatting about music, books and films – key among them were T.Rex, Bowie, Syd Barrett, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Taxi Driver* and William Burroughs. They finally put their plans into action when their father gave them some of his redundancy money to buy a Portastudio.

"In 1982, Jim and I started to develop a style," explains William. "I know if I impressed Jim, it made my day. We were going to start two bands. We'd say, 'Why don't people write really catchy pop songs, and just put the most horrific noise'

on them?" He'd be like, 'My band's going to do that', and I'd say, 'My band's going to do that.' Somewhere along the line, it clicked. Let's be the same band."

"William came in with the name and a bunch of other songs," says Douglas. "So suddenly we had six or seven incredible songs, and we had to find a drummer."

"They were quite quiet boys," remembers Murray Dalglish, the only person to respond to the ad the Reids placed in Impulse, the town's only record shop. "It was funny; I'd lived in East Kilbride all my life but had never seen them before. Later on, I found out they were quite insular. Then it all made sense."

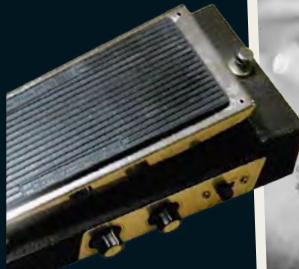
Encouraged by the demos they'd recorded with a primitive drum machine, the group began rehearsing. According to Douglas Hart, these early rehearsals were especially trying for their new drummer. "Murray played with just a floor tom and snare under a dictatorial regime. We were quite militant about it. The drum machine beats were primitive, but it suited. There were no drum fills in the demos so if someone played 'em live, it'd be like, 'What the fuck are you doing?' Sounds fucking shit. No cymbals, no drum fills, know what I mean?"

Meanwhile, a cassette of early versions of "Never Understand" and "Upside Down" – credited to The Daisy Chain – had been sent to a promoter at Glasgow's Candy Club, in the hope of securing a gig. They were turned down, although the promoter passed the tape on to a friend, who he thought might enjoy the compilation of Syd Barrett material on its B-side. However, the Barrett fan – Bobby Gillespie – found himself impressed by the two original songs and,

FUZZY LOGIC

William Reid on the gear that created the Mary Chain's sound

"I GOT MY original Shin-Ei fuzz pedal for £10. The guy in East Kilbride who sold it thought he was conning me, he thought it was broken. It's incredible, but it's not easy to use. In Dublin a couple of months ago it went well for about five minutes and then the fucker just decided it was playing itself. I got my Gretsch Country Gentleman for £20. I was so lucky, but at the time I thought it was a rather un-cool guitar. So I painted it black on the set of *The Tube*. As I was painting it, Dave Gilmour walked past and just shook his head."



Performing on *The Tube*, with William, left, playing his now-black Gretsch... November 11, 1985

stage after three minutes. We were really drunk, and rather than singing, Jim was screaming obscenities. The club owner was going, 'Never come back!' We were delighted by the reaction."

"At another gig, Jim and William were pissed," recalls Dalglish. "Jim was falling over the amps. The bouncers came onstage and we got heckled off."

After seeing the Mary Chain play a few more shows, Alan McGee signed them to his fledgling label, Creation, in late 1984. Under the auspices of the label's co-founder, Joe Foster, they recorded their debut single, "Upside Down", backed with a cover of Pink Floyd's "Vegetable Man" [see sidebar]. Although it didn't quite capture the fuzz and feedback the Reids were aiming for, "Upside Down" nevertheless showed the synthesis of girl-group pop and lysergic garage the group were aiming for.

Shortly after, the band relocated to London – and there were other changes within the band, too. The Reids had accumulated enough new original material to dispense with most of the covers they'd been playing, including The Subway Sect's "Ambition" and Jefferson Airplane's "Somebody To Love". Critically, they also had a new drummer, after Dalglish left to continue his apprenticeship in coach-building. "We were great before," says Hart. "But when Bobby joined, it completed the picture. McGee put us on a Creation tour of Germany. Bobby always says that I said to him, 'We're all gonna get leather trousers like The Beatles, and we're gonna come back pop stars.' And basically that's what happened! When we got back, 'Upside Down' had been released, and we were on the cover of every paper."

"IT WAS OUT OF HAND... SOMEONE WAS GOING TO GET STABBED"
WILLIAM REID

in turn, he gave the tape to his old school friend, Alan McGee. To their delight, the Reid brothers, Hart and Dalglish were invited to play their first gig at McGee's Living Room night in London on June 8, 1984. Though the drunken gig – which also featured The Jasmine Minks and The Loft on the bill – passed off without too much incident, their first show in Glasgow two days later was a different proposition. "There was a battle of the bands at Night Moves, a hipster club, and we got on the bill," begins Hart. "We were thrown off the

UNDERSTANDABLY, WILLIAM REID remembers the riots that took place at Mary Chain shows throughout 1985 as "pretty scary. I had my problems with the whole thing. I thought it was getting out of hand. Somebody was going to get stabbed. People thought we were like thugs. Other thugs thought we were thugs." Indeed, attracted by the band's wild reputation,

disruptive elements would turn up at their gigs with weapons, smashing up the band's gear or the venue's PA. The most famous incidents took place at the North London Poly on March 15, 1985, and Camden's Electric Ballroom on September 9.

"It came as a shock to London," says Joe Foster, who was sacked from his job teaching Spanish at the Poly after being misidentified as a

'ringleader' of the destruction. "We wanted it to be as shocking as the first five minutes of punk rock and it kind of was."

"Bobby and I were walking around the Poly before the gig," recalls Hart. "It had been oversold, so there was an amazing buzz. There were maybe 100 people outside with tickets who couldn't get in, so we kicked the doors open. But by the time we hit the stage, that atmosphere had become something different. You think, why do people take fucking hammers to gigs, you know? But you've got to remember, when we kicked in with the music, it was pretty extreme."

"There was just chaos surrounding the name of this group," recalls Rob Dickins, then head of Warner Music, who was taken to the North London Poly show by Geoff Travis. "They played for about 10 minutes, mostly just feedback, then threw down their guitars and left the stage, and people went crazy."

"The Electric Ballroom was the scariest," says William. "Security wanted to kick our heads in, and our fans were banging on our dressing room door, also wanting to kick our heads in. The guy hired to keep us safe was spitting at us. They thought we'd created the trouble. In Edinburgh, the bouncers at our own show beat up Jim and McGee."

"There's a level of destruction we loved," explains Hart. "But people were coming for all-out ultraviolence!"

Despite such incidents, Dickins signed the band to

ITV/REX



HOLY WARS

THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN
Electric Ballroom, London

A question for you: Why does anyone go to a Jesus And Mary Chain concert?

The answer: Christ knows.

It's not that certain

types of excitement that comes when

an evening song like "Jesus

Is Coming" is played.

Some come for the atmosphere

and others come for the

fact that they're really lucky, lead to

the most intense, most intense

experience of their life.

With nothing else to do but

watch the band, the audience

isn't exactly expected

to sit and not sing along.

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Blanco Y Negro – a Warners imprint run by Travis. “A lot of the people there just thought Rob was crazy,” laughs William. “He kind of supported us almost to the end. He was still the devil – but he was the devil you knew.”

The band’s first order of business was to record an album. They’d hated most of their previous recordings – engineers had neutered the Reids’ vision by toning down the sonic terrorism from William’s Shin-Ei fuzz pedal [see sidebar]. However, Travis suggested Crass engineer John Loder, and so the group recorded *Psychocandy* at Loder’s Southern Studios in Wood Green. “Finding John Loder was like a miracle for us,” explains Jim, “because other people we’d worked with seemed to be like our enemy in the studio. We heard he was a cool guy so we went over, had lunch, played him some records and realised he was our man. He knew exactly what we were doing. It was a breeze.”

“There was a lot of talk about, ‘Oh, this band are just hype, just noise, it’s all about violence’, but we always knew deep down there were a bunch of amazing songs there,” says Hart.

“John Loder would set the desk up and leave us to it,” recalls Jim. “If we got into any trouble we’d intercom his office and say, ‘John, come down and help us.’ The control room was in the garage, so we were an actual garage band.”

Ranging from the nihilism of “In A Hole” and “The Living End” to the tender “Just Like Honey”, *Psychocandy*’s 14 tracks proved the Mary Chain were more than a noisy gimmick. As the Reids had envisaged, it mixed the pop melodies of The Shangri-La’s and T.Rex with the primitive pulse of The Velvets or Suicide, and the assault of The Stooges. In its metallic reverbs and psychedelic overtones, it also conjured up the bad-trip netherworld of the paint factory. “I think Jim and Douglas were smashing up the factory ‘cos that was our life,” William suggests. “If you didn’t go to university you’d work in a factory. I don’t think we were trying to glamorise that with the sound of *Psychocandy*, we were trying to destroy the paint factory.”

BY THE END of ‘85, the Mary Chain should have been ecstatic. *Psychocandy* reached No 31 in the UK Top 40 and ended up second in the *NME* Albums Of The Year poll (behind Tom Waits’ *Rain Dogs*). The band had even managed to curtail the riots at their gigs by performing on time and extending their sets. However, beaten down by a relentless touring schedule, the group were dispirited; a situation exacerbated by the loss of Gillespie. “We were heartbroken when Bobby left,” admits Hart. “It changed after that. I’m not saying it got worse, but it was never the same again.”

Their relationship with their label, too, was becoming strained. “Everyone at Warners



“It can come to blows...” William and Jim Reid, 1985

hated us, but Rob Dickins,” says Jim. “Love him or loathe him, he had time for us.”

“We were at the label offices doing the cover for *Psychocandy*,” adds William. “Jim and me were joking, saying, ‘Oh, it’s going to be a classic,’ and the woman there just laughed at us, like, ‘You fucking fools...’ Another time there was a bunch of jazz records there, all on heavy vinyl. I said, ‘Why can’t our records be on this solid vinyl?’ And the guy says, ‘Well, that’s the good music.’”

Evidently, the Reids were discovering the reality of being pop stars didn’t match up to their dreams. “I remember doing *Top Of The Pops*,” laments William. “The place was so fake. The furniture was cardboard and not painted properly at the edges. You started to see it as a metaphor for the whole thing. It’s great from a distance and on TV, but up close it’s tatty and unsatisfying.”

The Reids responded to these pressures by increasing their intake of drink and drugs – and taking their frustrations out on each other. “If you’re a doctor or a taxi driver, then you’re fucked if you want to go out there and get fucked up,” says Jim, “but if you’re in a band it’s applauded. If you turn up at the party sober, people are disappointed.”

Darklands – the band’s 1987 follow-up to *Psychocandy* – featured only Jim and William, aided by drum machines. “A lot of people thought *Psychocandy* was a trick with the sound, so I didn’t want to make another record like that,” says William. “I wanted a legacy; to show we could write songs. All we really knew how to do was to turn on a Japanese fuzz pedal and make a fucking racket, so we decided to book studio time and get some damn good songs, and what

happened was *Darklands*.” Indeed, *Darklands* is the band’s most accessible record – emphasising their ear for melody and structure on songs like “April Skies” and “Happy When It Rains”. It remains both William Reid and Douglas Hart’s favourite Mary Chain record. Significantly, the LP proved to be the band’s commercial high point – reaching the Top 5 in the UK, with first single, “April Skies”, peaking at No 8. But Hart left in 1991, leaving the Reids as the only founding members. Theirs was no unified front, however – while making *Automatic* (1989), *Honey’s Dead* (1992) and *Stoned & Dethroned* (1994), their relationship deteriorated further, with disagreements about the music becoming attempts to attack each other. “It started to become a bit tedious to go to the studio,” admits Jim. “Then on tour we’d bicker about anything. It got quite unpleasant on gruelling 10-week tours.”

By the time they came to make 1998’s *Munki*, they cut their songs separately. After a final gig on September 12 at the Los Angeles House Of

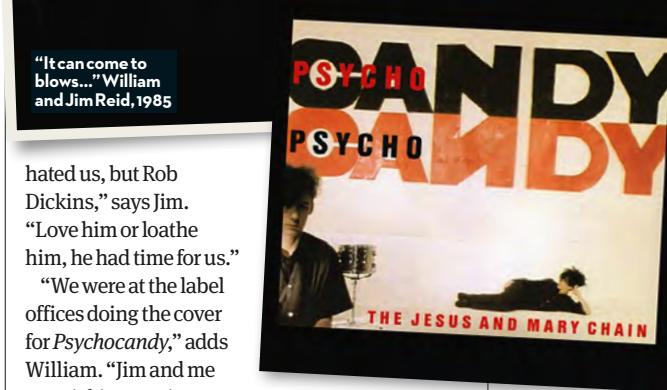
Blues, the group split. Subsequently, William and Jim didn’t speak to each other for over a year. The stand-off thawed when both contributed to 2005’s *Little Pop Rock*, the sole LP by Sister Vanilla, the pseudonym for their younger sibling, Linda. The band’s return in 2007, however, saw their fortunes revived. They returned to the stage on April 27 with a high-profile show at Coachella. With a wink to their chaotic past, Jim Reid dryly opened the show with, “Is everybody having a good time? Well, let’s see what we can do about that.” To illustrate how esteemed they’d become in the years since the split, they were joined on “Just Like Honey” by none other than Scarlett Johansson.

“WE WENT OUT of our way to not be like everybody else,” says Jim Reid, pondering the group’s legacy. “When William and I used to sit up all night discussing the perfect band, it was always about how to throw the cat among the pigeons.”

So it all went according to plan, then. With the Reid brothers managing to tolerate each other for now, and even Alan McGee back as their manager, all the signs suggest their *Psychocandy* tour will be a triumph, and that the long-awaited seventh LP will finally be made. But then again, with the Reids, you can never really be sure. “We don’t still punch each other in the face,” laughs William. “But it’s pretty intense, being in a band with your brother. There’s no rules, you just scream when you’re mad. On the last album it was thuggier-type spats, but at the start it was about advancement of the band. We didn’t just fight ‘cos we disliked each other. He didn’t like a guitar part I wanted, so we’d be rolling in the dust, punching each other. By the end of the ‘90s, we were drinking too much and it gets in the way of rationality at times.”

“When we talked about the perfect band all those years ago, it was always supposed to have rough edges,” adds Jim. ☀

The Jesus & Mary Chain tour the UK in November



NEVER UNDERSTAND

Rob Dickins on the softer side of the Reid brothers

“THE BROTHERS THING is always special, but it rarely lasts, as we’ve seen with the Gallaghers, and it was a similar dynamic between Jim and William. I had a very good relationship with them, in a very weird way. You know the story where they were meant to have trashed my office? Which of course, they didn’t do. But I remember when that rumour was current, one of them, I think William, knocked over his drink on my table, and he said, ‘Oh, I’m so sorry’, and was getting tissues out and mopping it up, around about the same time they were meant to have trashed my office!”

YUSUF CAT STEVENS TELL 'EM I'M GONE



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AND THEN THERE WERE...?

As a new boxset tries to make sense of their whole career, *Uncut* travels to New York in search of the real GENESIS. Is it the macabre prog-rockers? The slick pop technocrats? Or a confounding combination of the two? "It was a natural progression," says Phil Collins. "We ended up as a three-piece," adds Mike Rutherford, "because we had too many ideas for a five-piece."

Story: Michael Bonner | **Photo:** David Warner Ellis

Genesis in 1974: (l-r) Mike Rutherford, Phil Collins, Tony Banks and Peter Gabriel. Right: *We Can't Dance* - the trio of Banks, Rutherford and Collins in 1991



The final tour with Gabriel, outside the Chateau Marmont, Los Angeles, 1975



NE EVENING DURING the summer of 1998, a group of friends met for dinner in the discreet private dining room of a fashionable London restaurant.

The mood was warm and convivial and, by all accounts, the meal went on late into the night. Casually dressed, all in their fifties, you might suppose this to be a meeting of senior partners in a business practice celebrating the completion of a successful venture; or, perhaps, former school friends at an old boys reunion. As it transpires, both assumptions are, in their own ways, largely accurate. Over a meal of Japanese food at Nobu, on London's prestigious

Berkeley Square, all past and present members of Genesis convened for the only time in their odd, labyrinthine history. Ostensibly, it was an opportunity to mark the release of the band's *Archive 1967-1975* box; but it also afforded the musicians the chance, in some cases, to meet one another for the first time. Anthony Phillips, the band's founding guitarist, remembers sitting next to Peter Gabriel for much of the evening hearing all about the academic progress of the singer's daughters; Phillips' successor, Steve Hackett, recalls swapping flamenco guitar techniques with Chris Stewart, the band's first drummer. Keyboard player Tony Banks, for his part, recalls his wife – a vegetarian – struggling with a menu that consisted principally of meat and raw fish. "At the end of the evening, Tony raised his glass," Steve Hackett tells *Uncut*. "I thought

he was going to make a toast. Instead, he said, 'Well, we managed to sack the lot of you!' It could have been a line from *Ripping Yarns*. That's Tony, true to form. I had to laugh."

Anyone looking for evidence of Genesis' rather eccentric principles will find plenty in the revelations that emerged from that dinner. On one hand, the gathering of the extended Genesis family served to draw attention to the unusual dichotomy at the heart of their music. After all, to many, Genesis are two distinct bands, defined by the differences between successive frontmen: Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins. "People loved the mystery of those days with Peter," admits Collins now. "I think of him as the mysterious traveller in the band, and it all became a lot more normal

when I became singer. I was the guy next door and I didn't cultivate that Mister Mystery, with the masks, the costumes." But, critically, that night at Nobu also illuminates the cordiality that exists between bandmembers from across all lineups; a rarity among most rock groups. Essentially, no-one has ever been sacked from Genesis; they have simply become consultants. It's possible this politesse can be traced back to the public school education experienced by all of the band's founding members; a highly competitive, stiff-upper-lip quality, whereby personal matters are not openly talked about and resentment can fester. "They were the last generation bred to be officers and gentlemen," notes Collins. "All those guys

were left like a bit of a loose sail, not knowing quite what to do, as that vision for them was already outdated. They were left all puffed up, but with nowhere to go."

"They were designed to be builders of empire, which is what happened in rock, in a sense," observes Steve Hackett. "There was a single-mindedness, a steely determination from everybody. They were all educated to be able to lead a charge in the Crimea without flinching."



Genesis in West London, 2014: (l-r) Phil Collins, Tony Banks, Steve Hackett, Peter Gabriel and Mike Rutherford

"They were the last generation bred to be officers and gentlemen"

PHIL COLLINS



The Genesis lineup that recorded first single 'The Silent Sun', in 1968: (l-r) Anthony Phillips, Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks, Peter Gabriel and Chris Thomas

IT'S A WARM September afternoon in 2014, and Phil Collins and Mike Rutherford are sitting in the rooftop suite of an upmarket New York hotel. Looking out of the window at the traffic cruising along the city's Midtown district, Rutherford – dressed in regulation off-duty rock star casual wear of a white T-shirt and dark trousers – is reminiscing about Genesis' earliest shows in America, in December, 1972.

"It was a lunchtime concert at Brandeis University – it was a disaster," he confides with a theatrical moan.

"We had a manager, Ed Goodgold, who managed Sha Na Na," continues Collins. "He was great, gift of the gab. He said, 'We're gonna do a warm-up, so we're playing Boston.' A lunchtime gig. People were studying and eating and we were doing our show. It probably involved a flower mask in some shape or form. It must have been in broad sunshine. We thought when we left, 'Are you sure this is Boston? They're supposed to like English bands?'"

"We came here, then, to New York for a Christmas show, one performance at the Philharmonic, WNEW," adds Rutherford. "We'd all seen New York in films. It was so exciting. We must have been... what age were we? 21, 22? Mind-blowing, really. I remember staying at the Gorham Hotel not far from here and within five minutes of checking into our rooms, the phone rang and the receptionist said, 'There's a guy in the building with a gun, keep your doors locked.' I was straight out the corridor going 'This is exciting!' There was danger in the city, it was great."

Collins and Rutherford are here ostensibly to talk about *R-Kive*, the band's eighth boxset compilation. The material chronologically spans the band's career; although it omits material from their 1969 debut album, *From Genesis To Revelation*, it nevertheless gives equal weight to songs from the principal members solo careers. In tandem with a new BBC documentary, *Genesis – Sum Of The Parts*, *R-Kive* attempts to present the band's often-convoluted history as a coherent, linear narrative.

"The comparison I have is *Monty Python*," explains Collins. "Fawlty Towers, Ripping Yarns, Spamatot, Terry Gilliam's films and Michael Palin's travel programmes, they all came from the same place, this comedy group. It's a similar idea with all the music that's come out of the Genesis mother ship, the solo careers. You know people don't know that Pete was in Genesis? A lot of people don't know I play the drums. They join your career on 'One More Night' and whatever happened before, they're not sure about."

But perhaps more than anything, *R-Kive* reinforces the notion that Genesis are essentially two different bands. On one hand, *R-Kive* contains a piece like 1973's "Supper's Ready" – a bravura 23-minute suite consisting of seven linked sections, one of which is called "Ikhnaton And Itsacon And Their Band Of Merry Men" – while on the other, there's "Illegal Alien". Both of these are, to some degree, emblematic of the two different sides to Genesis' musical



TO SERVE THEM ALL MY DAYS

Life at Charterhouse revealed...

THE SCHOOL WAS going through a difficult time," explains Anthony Phillips. "It was coming out of the 1950s, an overhang from the war. I arrived in 1965, but there was still a caste system. Mike Rutherford had a housemaster, 'Hacker' Chare, who had these eyebrows which when he raised them, it was literally one of the most frightening things. David Thompson, who was at school, later head of BBC Films, described Mike's house as being run like a POW camp. He was not allowed to play golf, as it was a solo sport, not for the greater good of the community."

"I'd got a scholarship, and if you were a scholar you were allowed to

character. The music of early Genesis – as defined by the band's classic 1971-1975 lineup of Gabriel, Rutherford, Collins, Banks and Hackett – is often quite extraordinary. Eccentric in spirit, it is full of macabre tales, baroque song cycles and shifting time-signatures; a bestiary of beheaded schoolboys, alien watchers and fantastical creatures. "We almost put too much into our songs," laughs Rutherford. "Mythology, science-fiction books, fantasy, it was all part of doing English at school, in a sense." Meanwhile, the music of later Genesis is perceived as slick pop hits, linen suits and knockabout videos.

"When I joined the band in 1970, Genesis was a band of songwriters desperate to write hits as well as good songs," reveals Collins. "They weren't going to sell out to do it. But there is a huge jump from 'Supper's Ready' to 'Illegal Alien', yeah. But I think of it in simple terms. Look at what you read when you're 20 – like *The Hobbit* – then look at the books you're reading 20 years later, or what kind of music you listen to, or what kind of clothes you wear. Because there's a change. You grow up, that's part of it."

"'Supper's Ready', it wasn't a plan," admits Rutherford. "We didn't really hear it until it was chopped together. The first half joined some lovely bits. Contrasts, colours, 'Willow Farm', acoustic stuff, moody atmospheres. That was all going fine. Then into 'Apocalypse 9/8'. The way Pete sang the vocals on what I always call 'the home straight' made it a very strong little piece. 'With the guards of Magog'. There were so many ideas. We'd jam 10 ideas into three or four minutes, rather than giving the space to develop. As 'Supper's Ready' was a half-hour piece, we could give more time to things, like repeating the main theme at the end. The reason we ended up as a three-piece was because we had too many ideas for a five-piece."

TONY BANKS REMEMBERS the first time he met Peter Gabriel, at the start of Michaelmas term in 1963. "We arrived at Charterhouse at the same time," he begins. "The new boys arrived an hour before everyone else. I took to him immediately. I was quite a shy boy, and he obviously was as well. So we quickly

wear a pen in your outside pocket," recalls Banks. "But scholars were generally despised, so you didn't do it, as that pointed you out as being bookish rather than sporty. Charterhouse loved people who were good at sports; they didn't seem to care about anything else."

"When I met them, they were a bunch of guys who seemed to have their own language," reflects Steve Hackett. "I was from a very different background. It took me about six months to assimilate, to learn to be one of them, to eat at their speed, speak at their speed. I didn't know what they were talking about at first. They had code for practically everything."



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Vaughan Williams meets Buddy Rich. That sums up early Genesis. Later on, it became other things."

The period where Genesis became "other things" essentially began when Gabriel left the band; twice, as it turned out. On the first occasion, he decamped during sessions at Headley Grange for 1974's *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* to work on a film project with director William Friedkin. When that collapsed, he returned to the band, only to subsequently advise his cohorts he was leaving after the group's forthcoming *Lamb...* tour dates.

"It was a very dark time," admits Tony Banks.

"Everything started to change at that point. You felt he was a bit of an unwilling passenger. We had a meeting in this rather strange hotel in Cleveland when he said he wasn't going to do it any more. We'd been very close friends. I did try to persuade him to

stay for quite a long time, but ultimately it was the right thing. The group had to reduce in size. He was the only one who could leave, as he was the only one who had a career he could go to. No-one knew who the rest of us were."

Reflecting on his departure from the band, Gabriel told *Uncut* in 2007, "I hated having my life planned. You'd sometimes be looking two years ahead when touring. It felt like there wasn't much room for independent thought and action. And then my first-born, Anna... [the doctors] didn't think she was going to survive. We were halfway through *Lamb...* in Wales at the time, and she was in Paddington, and I was tearing between the two. There's nothing as important as your family, but the band were unsympathetic and didn't appreciate that they should sit around while I was dealing with life-and-death issues. We've talked about this since, but it built up some poison between us, internally."

"I used to think he left because Friedkin had asked him to do the film," muses Collins back in New York. "And this was better than actually being in a band, being a collaborator for film music. But there were a lot of personal reasons too, which I didn't know. Maybe Tony knew. Mike, did you know?"

"He never complained about it," shrugs Rutherford. "But on the tour, there was no thought about what to do after Peter left. You put that to one side because you've committed. You get your head down, you don't start to drift off into sentiment."

"We had to carry on doing the rest of the tour," says Banks. "The penultimate show was in Besançon, and it didn't go down very well at all. We cancelled the final show due to lack of interest. Ticket sales were very poor and we thought, 'What's the point? It's too depressing so we'll just peter out.' That could've been it. We did think at the time, 'Is there going to be a future for the band?'"

ASKED WHETHER HIS predecessor gave him advice when he assumed vocal duties with Genesis, Phil Collins admits that the subject was never raised. "I've heard Peter say later he had no doubts we'd be OK without him, but he didn't impart any kind of words of confidence to me. There was no animosity. It just wasn't spoken about. A very public school thing. But I was very close to him. Tony and Pete were schoolmates, but I came in and he was a drummer, I was a drummer, we related. We were soul mates, if you like. We liked soul music, I was his stooge onstage, always there singing, we were peas in a pod."

"Was there ever a conversation with Peter? No, not really," confirms Tony Banks. "He was leaving to do his own thing, and we accepted it. The rest of us were keen to carry on. I



Doing "The Lamia", from the *Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, 1975

"WE WERE WAY OFF PACE..."

It wasn't all four-night stints at Wembley Stadium; here, the band recall hairy times on the road in the early '70s...

EVERYTHING WAS A bit Heath Robinson. Nothing really worked," says Tony Banks. "We were actually very unprepared."

"We were hungry to do gigs, that's the thing," explains Mike Rutherford. "We wanted to play. This was before touring; it wasn't really a tour. You'd play Friars Aylesbury then keep going 'til, after three months, you're back playing Friars again. You just kept going for weeks."

"We were doing all sorts of weird and wonderful gigs," remembers Anthony

Phillips. "Tech colleges on a Friday night, where everyone wanted to get drunk. We were on the London nightclub circuit, playing places like the Revolution Club, with Italian arms dealers in shades who wanted dancing music. We were way off the pace."

"There was a fantastic night where we were supposed to play at Aberystwyth University," says Phil Collins. "We used to rent a van from a guy called Reg King in Kensington. We'd get the Tube and we'd all meet there, and you'd turn the corner and you knew if you had this van you were in trouble. It was a van he was always fixing but it was never actually fixed. So we'd all get in it and we went up to Aberystwyth and we broke down three times on the way there and we arrived to late to play. We turned around and drove back from Aberystwyth and broke down two times on the way back. We all get fed up waiting for the AA man and Pete was in the phone box playing his oboe in a towel."



"We set out in the early days to write hits, like The Beatles and The Kinks"

TONY BANKS

became friends. There were a lot of shared interests – music was a big thing – but also a genuine rivalry in everything, really. We would play sports, normally fairly badly, but with great intensity and passion, and try to beat the other. That was the only thing that mattered."

"Tony was sent away to school while his parents had exchange students in, which is very public school," reveals Collins. "I don't know what the repercussions were. But I remember Tony semi-laughing about it later."

Rutherford remembers Gabriel as "quite quiet at school, quite shy. He's still quite shy. But fearless. He pretends he's not sure what he wants, but he knows exactly what he wants and that's his strength, too. School was slightly more two pairs. It was Peter and Tony. I didn't know Peter that well at school. And myself and Anthony Phillips. Bar our afternoon writing sessions in the classrooms – we'd smuggle the gear in and play – it wasn't until later on that we got closer."

The creative relationship between Banks and Gabriel at Charterhouse and later became central to the band's early music. Indeed, Collins cites Banks' "quirkiness and Englishness" as critical to the records Genesis made in the first half of the 1970s. "We were part pantomime, part classical," explains Steve Hackett. "We were harmonically European and rhythmically Afro-American. The syncopation was all-important. The English hymnal,

“I think particularly Mike and I were bloody-minded. We wanted to show that it wasn’t just Peter. The band had been perceived like that towards the end.”

The band are careful to present the transition from hymnal prog rock to unlikely ‘80s pop stars as a natural progression. While Collins talks about “the awkward join” between the two incarnations, Banks is keen to stress, “When you’re inside it, you don’t see it like that at all. It was just a continuous thing. People think about ‘Phil-era Genesis’, which is the hits and the videos, but you’ve got all the records in between, from *A Trick Of The Tail* to *Duke*, even *Abacab*. Phil got more confident after the success of *Face Value*, and came forward as a writer; before that, he’d just been a contributor. But I’ve nothing against having hits. We set out in the early days to write hits. We were part of the ‘60s. Our favourite groups were The Kinks, The Animals, The Beatles, and we were trying to emulate them. It’s surprisingly difficult to write a concise song that works. It’s much easier for us to write a 26-minute epic, where you don’t have to worry about choruses and stuff.”

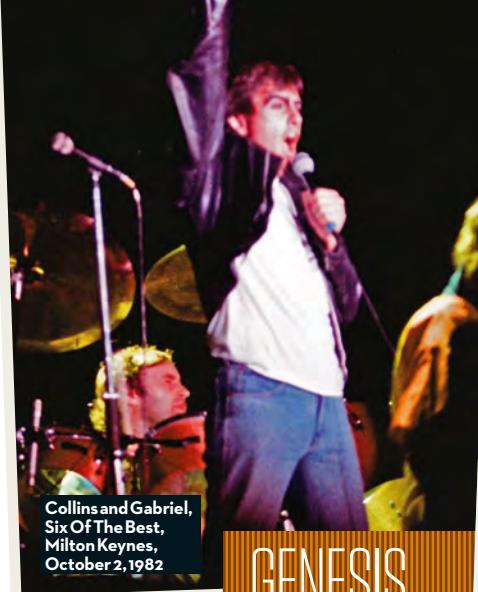
“Early on, everything came from improvisation and I’d record it on a Nakamichi,” reveals Collins. “None of us could read music and if you wanted to go to an idea that we



1978: the three-man lineup is augmented by Chester Thompson (left) and Daryl Stuermer (secondright)

liked, it was, ‘Can you dig out the cassette from four days ago and go to about five o’clock in the afternoon?’ I think what changed Genesis writing a bit was the drum machine, as it plays in 4/4. I was singing more, and all those tricky signatures tended to fade out a little as I was singing at a mic, using a drum machine to keep it together. Otherwise, it was just a natural progression. But I have found that people – and God knows people’s lives are heavy enough without thinking too much about this, because it’s only music and it’s only Genesis – who think there’s a big divide. Before Phil was all the thinking and prog stuff, then after Peter it was straight-ahead rock/pop/stadium. Actually, it’s not true. I was there, and I know there was no conscious effort.”

THese days, Phil Collins can no longer play the drums. Since 2007, he’s been suffering from nerve damage to his elbow. Despite undergoing surgery, he explains, he has two numb fingers on his left hand and cannot grip a drumstick. “I joined Genesis when I was 19,” he says. “I’m 63 now, I’ve played drums all my life. I don’t miss it. It’d be nice to have the choice, but I don’t miss it.” Collins’ injuries, he concedes, are one critical reason why the 1971-1975 lineup of Genesis could never reunite again. “There’s this incessant desire for it to happen,” he



Collins and Gabriel, Six Of The Best, Milton Keynes, October 2, 1982

GENESIS... REUNITED!

Peter Gabriel rejoined his ex-bandmates for a one-off gig on October 2, 1982 at Milton Keynes Bowl to raise funds for his fledgling WOMAD festival

HE HAD creditors breathing down his neck, threatening to kill him if he didn’t give them the money,” says Phil Collins. “We said we should get back together again, do a gig so the proceeds would help him out. So we had a couple of days’ rehearsal at Hammersmith Odeon. The idea was to play with Chester [Thompson; drums] and Daryl [Stuermer; guitar] and Peter and Steve came on, too. Everyone said, ‘Oh, it was great,’ but it was probably terrible because it was open air, it was raining...”

“It was a traumatic thing to do,” recalls Tony Banks. “When we did it we were quite glad we were in our separate camps, as we’d moved on a bit. But it was great fun watching Pete trying to drum along as the second drummer on ‘Turn It On Again’, as the extra beat threw him every time!”



acknowledges. “But I often think, ‘Have people thought it through?’ It’s not as if you’re going to get Peter as singer, me as drummer. I can’t play any more, so it’s never going to happen. But even if it could, you’re not going to get Peter singing ‘I Can’t Dance’ or ‘Invisible Touch’ or ‘Mama.’”

Do the band feel they were trying to escape the shadow of the Gabriel era during the Collins’ years?

“No, I don’t think so, any more than Peter was trying to escape the shadow of us,” counters Tony Banks. “It’s just what you did. Peter’s music became more streamlined and harmonically a lot simpler.

I’ve always tried to keep a few rambling moments in Genesis. Things like ‘Domino’ and ‘Drive The Last Spike’, I think they are very much part of Genesis’ character. Funny enough, up onstage they proved to be some of the most successful songs.”

“I’ve been here 40 years as singer and I’m still seen as the new guy,” laughs Collins. “It doesn’t frustrate me. I find it kind of comical. But yeah, what’s the difference between ‘I Can’t Dance’ and ‘Sledgehammer’? We’ll never know.”

“You’ve got to remember, while we were doing things like *Lamb...*, we were generally unloved,” explains Banks. “Tribute bands like The Musical Box, they get far bigger audiences than we ever did then. It’s a funny thing, nostalgia. It’s interesting, the music we made in the early ‘70s, it’s not really like anything else. Whereas some of those things we did in the ‘80s – really good pop songs, but not so dissimilar from what else was going on. That’s why I like things like ‘Domino’ and ‘Home By The Sea’, because they couldn’t be done by another band.”

“I was a lot easier to understand than Peter, but less interesting,” admits Collins. “I won’t have it any other way. I was far less interesting and that’s added to his mystique as a personality and all the stuff he does. I’m far too normal, I’m far more... I hate to say it, middle of the road and showbizzy than Pete was. That enhances the mystique about those early years. I used to think, because of my background in stage school, I was the closest to all those nasty words: ‘middle of the road’, ‘show business’, ‘Max Bygraves’. I guess I’m not that far away, when you look back on it.”

Although not a fan of *Lamb...* – a consensual Gabriel-era peak – Tony Banks recalls being pleasantly surprised when he went to see tribute band The Musical Box perform the LP live. “I crept into the Albert Hall to watch them play it,” he reveals. “It was interesting. The trouble is, they’re using the old show that today looks very dark and a little bit strange. When it was good, it was great. I thought ‘Back In New York City’ sounded great. The best moment for me was when they did ‘The Musical Box’ as an encore and I thought that was a lot better. *Lamb...* is a bit of a funny album for me. I never felt it concluded very well. But they did a grand job.” Tony Banks pauses for a second, then reflects on the experience of watching his former schoolfriend and closest collaborator impersonated onstage. “At times, the guy doing Peter was uncanny,” he considers. “The mannerisms of speech, his stuttering. It was really quite funny.”

R-Kive is available now on Virgin EMI/Universal Music Catalogue. **Genesis – Sum Of The Parts** is released on DVD and Blu-ray by Eagle Rock on November 17

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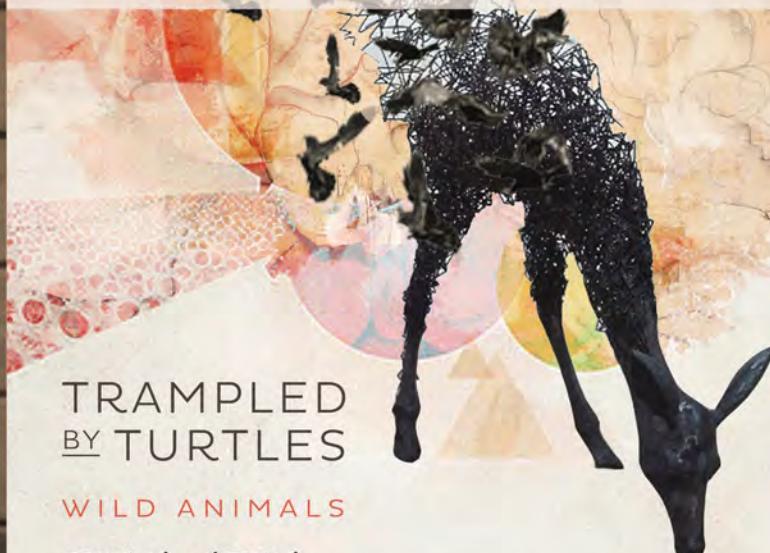
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Dylan at his Byrdcliffe home,
near Woodstock, 1968



Lo and behold!

Forty-seven years on from the fabled sessions in Woodstock, BOB DYLAN's complete *Basement Tapes* finally see the light of day this month — all 138 tracks of them! Now, too, the full story of the *Tapes* can be told: a tangled saga that begins with a motorcycle crash and encompasses mysterious disappearances, bootleggers, archivists, degrading tape reels, lost lyrics, and a man at Garth Hudson's door with a cigar box full of dollars. Renowned Dylan scholar Clinton Heylin reveals, at last, the secrets of the basement... “You ain’t no head of lettuce!”

Story: Clinton Heylin | **Photograph:** Elliott Landy

Dylan before his motorcycle accident in 1966



SNAPSHOT #1

THE TIME HAS come now when I must advise you that the publication date for Dylan's book, *Tarantula*, must be considered 'indefinite' ... Just in case you didn't see a report of Dylan's recent accident in the newspapers, let me fill you in briefly. On Friday, July 29, Dylan hopped on his motorcycle for a short ride to town. The front wheel locked on him, there was a crash and the result was a concussion and a fractured vertebra of the neck ... His injuries, which are not relatively serious, have [nonetheless] incapacitated him. He can't work." – Internal Macmillan memo from Bob Markel, Aug 12, '66.

The saga of *The Basement Tapes* itself begins on an upstate backwoods road with a 25-year old Dylan approaching "the last hairpin curve", not so much worn out as "burnt out from exhaustion".

It's July 29, '66. According to Dylan, talking to playwright-actor Sam Shepard 20 years later, "It was real early in the morning on top of a hill, near Woodstock... I was blinded by the sun... I went blind for a second and I kinda panicked or something. I stomped down on the brake and the rear wheel locked up on me and I went flyin'."

Dylan has rarely talked about the incident, but at the time he told a friend, the journalist Al Aronowitz, how he saw his whole life pass in front of him, fully convinced "he was going to be killed". Tellingly, he also admitted to his first



biographer Robert Shelton, "It happened one morning after I'd been up for three days."

For the likes of Aronowitz and Shelton, it was a cataclysm they had seen coming. Cartoonist Ray Lowry captured a whole generation's concern that maybe Dylan lost his marbles when that rear wheel locked in a sketch he drew for *NME* of the singer sailing over the handlebars of his Bonneville just as a lightbulb goes on in his mind: 'Country Rock!' Even in 1974, when *NME* published Lowry's cartoon, almost no-one knew how serious the accident was, and anyone who did was keeping mum.

Half a century on, we finally have the first contemporary report describing Dylan's fabled motorcycle crash [*forementioned*] without the spin of hindsight or faulty memory. If its contents might still be hearsay, at least they're contemporary – what Dylan and/or his manager Albert Grossman said to editor Bob Markel in the immediate aftermath. It's the best account there is; and it has taken 48 years to get this much.

But at the time, *nothing* was revealed. Radio bulletins confirmed only that Dylan had been involved in an accident, treated at Mid-town hospital and sent home. A couple of paragraphs in the *New York Post* four days later based entirely on a press release from Grossman's office merely confirmed the cancellation of two scheduled

concerts in August and reiterated the accident was not serious. Even Dylan later admitted he thought he "was just gonna get up, and go back to doing what I was doing before... but I couldn't do it any more." To understand why that might be, we need to backtrack to a few days before the crash when an English photographer turned up at Dylan's Woodstock home for a pre-arranged photoshoot. The rock star he snapped that day, the last public images of the pre-accident Dylan, was dog tired, world-weary and wasted. You can see it in his eyes as he crouches in the woods, half-heartedly playing with a stick as he peers into the unforgiving lens. Here was a man heading for a fall.

SNAPSHOT #2

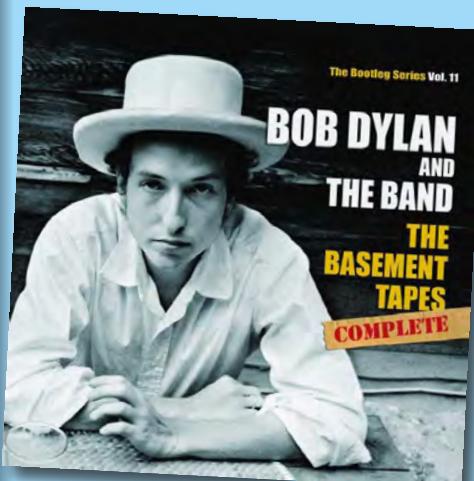
ICAME TO BELIEVE that Dylan was Christ revisited... that Dylan was sacrificing himself in his whole philosophy, his thinking. That he would eventually die or that something horrible

WHAT'S NEW, HAMLET?

We go inside this definitive cache of music from Big Pink

IT'S MAY 2014 and 'all' the extant basement tapes are in a small Toronto studio; being transferred with due diligence. Not surprisingly, five decades after Garth Hudson first recorded them, the reels are in a bit of a state. Time, and Woodstock winters have not been kind to the 7" Shamrocks, Pure Tones and Village Silver reels. Consequently, they have to be handled with care – respoiled and carefully wound and rewound until the tape ran true and new transfers could be undertaken. Thankfully, Canadian record producer Jan Haust and local Toronto engineer Peter Moore both worked tirelessly to extract the maximum from the degrading 7" reels.

What was revealed was over 140 tracks – some 30 of which were undocumented – in surprisingly spruced-up stereo, originating from Dylan's Red



Room and Big Pink. There are even some recordings made post-*John Wesley Harding*, post-Big Pink – including a spectacular session where Dylan reinterprets "Blowin' In The Wind" (a 6 1/2 minute hoot), an "It Ain't Me Babe" that's halfway to Nashville and "One Too Many Mornings", the 1966 arrangement but with added swing. Hudson, a genial if ghostly presence as proceedings unfold, occasionally corrects misassumptions about the recording personnel. Generally, though, Hudson leaves it to engineer and producer to extract the essence and balance that Cinemascope sound, where possible, centring the vocals, but otherwise preserving the spacious stereo soundscape of the original reels.

Aside from a sonic jump in quality on all the bootleg versions, sometimes subtle, other times spectacular, the 10 reels, one double-sided, that Haust had rescued from Hudson's lock-up and transported to Toronto for safekeeping included three sides' worth of 7" reel-tape which had escaped the tentacles of bootleggers altogether.

These included a two-sided reel, recorded at 3 3/4 ips on quarter-inch tape: an hour's worth of 'basement noise' pre- **CONTINUES OVER >**



Dylan and The Band live at the Woody Guthrie memorial concert, Carnegie Hall, NYC, January 20, 1966

would happen to him... Other people felt it [too]. Dylan knew it, and he was afraid of it. So very afraid." – Rosemary Gerrette, Australian actress, after spending time with Dylan on the 1966 world tour.

That "something horrible" had now happened; for the 18 months after the accident, Dylan literally vanished. He pulled the plug on every contractual commitment – not just the ones he had with Macmillan for a book (*Tarantula*), ABC-TV for a tour film (the still-unreleased *Eat The Document*), or Columbia Records (who had just a fortnight earlier released *Blonde On Blonde*, the last LP under a five-year contract Dylan signed back in October 1961 without counsel and still a legal minor). Critically, Dylan also re-examined the contract he had signed with Albert Grossman, which still had five years to run; and also the one he had with the publishing company he had allowed Grossman to set up on 'his' behalf six months earlier, Dwarf Music.

These were the very contracts that one of his closest friends, Victor Maymudes, had tried to warn him about during the European leg of the 1966 world tour that spring, only to be excommunicated for his pains.

Meanwhile, Dylan removed himself from the public arena, and stayed put in Byrdcliffe, Woodstock. The mystery deepened as 1967 turned into 1968, and he unveiled the follow-up to *Blonde On Blonde* – *John Wesley Harding*, a country-folk album of four-minute pop parables. In January 1968, Dylan made a three-song appearance at Woody Guthrie's memorial concert backed by The Band – billed as The Crackers – that further reinforced his country-rock credentials.

Only slowly, almost imperceptibly, did the

"I went blind for a second, the rear wheel locked up and I went flying..."

BOB DYLAN

counterculture learn what happened. After the crash, Dylan had spent the next year upstate with the guys from 'the band' crafting the most extraordinary body of songs in contemporary American song; before simply forgetting about them. The first inkling of this work came via bootleg records with self-referential titles like *Little White Wonder* and *Troubled Troubador*, which proved to be just the tip of the iceberg: 20 publishing demos Dylan's publisher drip-fed into the world of song between 1968

and 1970. So strong has been the hold of those 20 songs – 15 of them released in 1975 on CBS's 'comprehensive' double-album of *The Basement Tapes* – it is still slightly shocking to think they represent barely an eighth of the sum total of 'basement' recordings.

Because now 'all' 138 songs recorded by Bob Dylan and The Hawks in the spring, summer and autumn of 1967 are finally being officially released; 30 of which have never even rumoured to have existed, let alone bootlegged. On top of that, we have the discovery of two dozen Big Pink-period lyrics Dylan left in another rustic drawer, which have now been brought to life by an ensemble featuring the likes of Elvis Costello, Jim James and Marcus Mumford, under the auspices of producer T Bone Burnett. A bounteous yield, indeed.



SNAPSHOT #3

WOODSTOCK – "We put together about 150 songs at Big Pink. We would come together every day and work, and Dylan would come over." – Rick Danko, *The Woodstock Times*, 1985.

When Danko told *The Woodstock Times* there were "about 150 songs" recorded at Big Pink, it had been 10 years since CBS released their

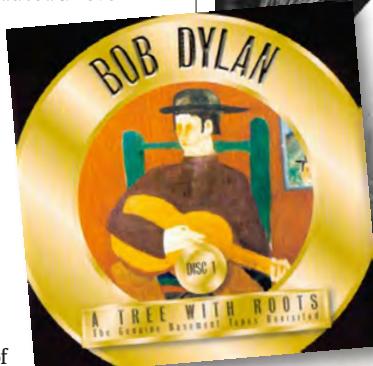
double-album of *The Basement Tapes*, which added just a single song to the bootleggers' booty, a whorehouse holler called "Going To Acapulco". So outlandish was Danko's claim, and so well documented were his substance-abuse problems, it was widely assumed he was on something when he spoke these words. But barely a year later, confirmation that the 1975 set was the first hint of a larger body of work came with the surreptitious release of two bootleg double-albums full of previously unheard, authentic 'basement tape' performances.

These contained reverential covers of "Young But Daily Growin'", "Bonnie Ship The Diamond" and "Hills Of Mexico" (recorded in one inspirational session) vied with off-the-cuff originals like "Baby Won't You Be My Baby", "One For The Road" and "One Man's Loss (Is Another Man's Gain)", all in the most atmospheric panned stereo. The collapsed mono of the publishing demos and the CBS album were a thing of the past. The hunt for the genuine basement tapes had begun.

Six years later, the quest produced an even larger set of basement tapes, culled directly from Garth Hudson's reels. This time nine of the 17 known reels were accessed, containing gorgeous mile-wide stereo dubs of almost all the Acetate tracks, evidence of hours more wild mercury music. On one cassette tape were two reels that between them yielded the pastiche pop of "Teenage Prayer", two takes of a Spanish bordello song, a handful of contemporary covers, and the remarkable compositions, "Tiny Montgomery" and "Sign On The Cross". Meanwhile, the ex-roadie who came up with these reel dubs claimed another nine reels lay (temporarily) out of reach. They remained so for another two decades, after they were spirited across the Canadian border by Jan Haust, a friend of The Band who arrived at Hudson's door sometime in the late '90s with a cigar box full of money. Haust became increasingly coy about the contents of the box of tapes he had acquired until careful negotiation by Dylan's manager Jeff Rosen finally yielded a deal which allowed dubs to be made of the original reels under Haust's supervision. Sony producer Steve Berkowitz sat in and returned to New York with a hard drive and a list of the reels he had been allowed to dub. These turned out to be six shy of the number there should have been. The search now shifted to unearthing the best copies of the still-missing reels.

After endless unofficial versions – starting in '69 with just seven songs on *Great White Wonder* and climaxing with the 107 on 2001's 4CD collection of source-tapes, *A Tree With Roots* – all the various reels (and cassettes) in private hands, those in the hands of The Band, and even dusty reels from Dylan's own archive, were successfully scoured and devoured. Perhaps the most spirited reel of all – the one containing "Teenage Prayer"

Dylan in the woods near his Byrdcliffe home, 1966. Below: the Great White Wonder bootleg



GREAT
WHITE
WONDER

York. The result was a bounty of basement tapes as complete as it is ever likely to be.

AND THAT'S NOT all. Even before the missing tapes were accessed, initially 16 – and then a further eight – previously unknown lyrics in Dylan's unmistakeable spidery black-pen scrawl, written on yellow lined notepaper and interspersed with various doodles, had been given to T Bone Burnett. Found in a box along with other items from Dylan's Byrdcliffe years, they shared the requisite basement wordplay and madcap characterisation. The verses were identified as lost lyrics from the Big Pink era – although no dissenting voice pointed out that if they were from the Big Pink era, one would expect such 'lost' lyrics to be largely typed. Both Richard Manuel and Rick Danko are on record as saying they were handed "typewritten lyrics" to "Tears Of Rage" and "This Wheel's On Fire" when Dylan suggested they add their own melodies. Indeed,

– had to be dubbed from one of the ex-roadie's "1992 cassette dubs" and FedExed to New

the one previously known basement lyric to have emerged, "I'm Not There" (published in Dylan fanzine *The Telegraph* in the mid-'80s) was also typed, without any hand-written corrections. Though these handwritten lyrics are about to be marketed as *Lost On The River: The New Basement Tapes*, not a verse, not a chorus, not a line in the lyrics I perused in facsimile in LA appears in the various pastiches that pepper the early so-called 'Red Room' reels, let alone the songs copyrighted from Big Pink.

One can fully understand why this material would be marketed as 'lost basement tape lyrics' but I have a suspicion the real story is a more interesting one. The reason these lyrics have a value beyond their 'lost' Dylan status is that they appear to be lyrics to songs Dylan wrote in the six months after his accident, but before The Band relocated to Big Pink. The period when he was supposedly hard at work revising *Tarantula* and re-editing *Eat The Document*, but was in reality "poring over books by people you never heard of, thinking about where I'm going, and why am I running." Which makes them the missing link, the bridge from *Blonde On Blonde* to the basements. If this is the case, then these are the songs Dylan alluded to in his one brief interview



at the time, from early May 1967, in which he told reporter Michael Lachetta: "Songs are in my head like they always are, [but] they're not going to get written down until some people come forth and make up for some of the things that happened." Dylan, presumably, was referring to copyright issues; and the "some people" he had in mind were all working on his behalf at the offices of Albert Grossman, manager and music publisher.

Were Dylan holding back songs in those months, while deciding where he was heading, it would certainly explain why this many lyrics never received a tune. These stand-alone lyrics may have that prototypical basement feel precisely because that's what they were. Accepting this, the hit and miss lyrics become transmuted into ideas Dylan jotted down on a pad while waiting for his body to recover and his mind return to a sense of vocation.

If *The Basement Tapes* as a whole reflect a gradual process of healing through music, then the Burnett lyrics perhaps suggest the healing has barely begun. Which is presumably why, 48 years later, Dylan has all but disowned these lyrics (though not his share of the royalties), leaving other musicians, many of them not even born when he was laid up in Byrdcliffe, to take them on. The inclusion on the Burnett project of at least two singers profoundly influenced by the basements, Elvis Costello and Jim James (whose "Going To Acapulco" was the stand-out track in Todd Haynes' fictional biopic, *I'm Not There*), is somehow fitting, a way of passing the baton on.

But Dylan refused to accept he had captured something unique back in the Woodstock woods. Even as he rejected these songs as a modus operandi for future work, he told Jann Wenner in his first ever *Rolling Stone* interview – a year after Wenner broke the basement tape story – "You know, that's really the way to do a recording – in a peaceful, relaxed setting, in somebody's basement, with the windows open and a dog lying on the floor." The dog was called Hamlet, and the location was now fixed in public consciousness as "the basement" of the gaudy pink house Dylan's backing musicians had rented in West Saugerties in the spring of 1967. Big Pink – home of Music.

SNAPSHOT #4

A REAL SNAPSHOT – an actual photo of Dylan in his Byrdcliffe home from the winter of 1967. The notorious recluse is reading a recent issue of *Melody Maker*. The December 24, 1966 issue. It has Donovan on the cover. He has a bandana on his head, as if prepping for his Hard Rain concert a decade early. More likely, he's

covering up the scars of his recent roadside spill. A pair of granny glasses and half a scrub beard completes the disguise. Just seeing these familiar features in such an unfamiliar setting makes one realise how easily this man might hide in plain view. This is someone to make Ralph Ellison proud.

By the spring of 1967, it seems no-one could any longer agree what the recovered patient looked like. The two New York reporters who visited Byrdcliffe couldn't confirm which man either of them met. The *World Journal Tribune*'s Mike Pearl, who found himself confronted by someone he (mis)took for Dylan while snooping around the singer's Byrdcliffe home in the winter of 1967, recalled someone still wearing "fashionable English suits" and with "short hair". The *New York Daily News*' Michael Lachetta, who interviewed a largely unknown Dylan back in 1963, returned from Woodstock in May with the first post-accident interview and a quite different description, of "a gypsy-like

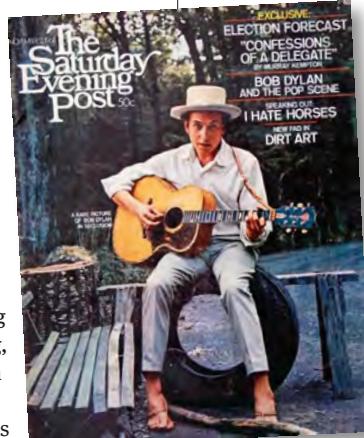
figure in faded dungarees, lavender shirt with collar turned up to cover his neck and a purple-and-blue striped blazer, his sandy hair... longer and wilder than ever."

If the object of the exercise was to disguise himself, it was evidently working. Al Aronowitz, the one reporter who remained in the loop throughout 18 months of retreat, dropped the occasional hint of Dylan's emotional wellbeing in his newspaper columns. But only

after Dylan went public with *John Wesley Harding* did he recall another pertinent incident for a June 1968 *Saturday Evening Post* cover story:

Dylan hadn't been seen on the streets of Greenwich Village for more than a year when he happened to walk past an old friend who had become one of his most bitter critics. It was on the sidewalk of 6th Avenue, one crisp and sunny day... the week before the first of his trips to Nashville to record *John Wesley*

Ferric pieces of the jigsaw gathered dust in the lock-ups of ex-roadies



Harding. Dylan was wearing a high-crowned cowboy hat and wispy beard, and he had been travelling unnoticed until they passed on the street. "He didn't even recognise you!"... "He never recognised me before. Why should he recognise me now?"

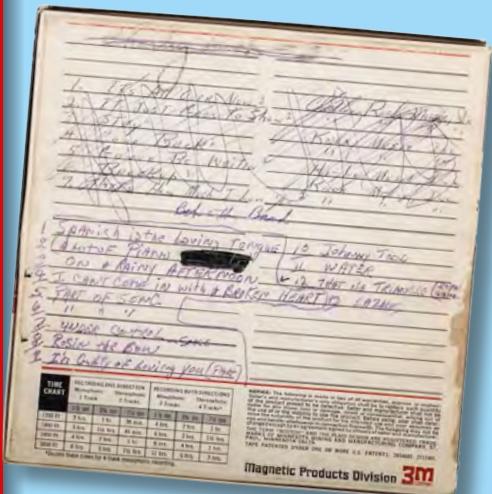
At this half-century remove, few can recall just how little information was available at the time Aronowitz shared this putdown. Meanwhile, in the face of Dylan's own silence, ferric pieces of the jigsaw gathered dust in the lock-ups of ex-roadies and/or friends of The Band. When Dylan finally broke his silence, so did Robbie Robertson, his former guitarist. But even in instances where the two men proved unable

◀ CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS SPREAD



Above: the "genial, if ghostly, presence" of Garth Hudson. Below: one of the tape boxes

dating all previously documented basement reels. Clearly marked 'Red Room' on the tape box, just "Bring It On Home", "King Of France" and a fragment of the doo-wop standard, "Silhouette" (all from #1B) had previously circulated. "Silhouette" turns out to be more than a fragment. While a particularly spirited romp through "Will The Circle Be Unbroken" is sandwiched between "Bring It On Home" and the impenetrable "King Of France". Sadly, these reels also proved to be unlistenable and therefore unusable – a Wurlitzer too close to the mic being the chief culprit. Hence, the caveat in the Sony press release that the 6CD *Basement Tapes Complete* includes everything that was 'salvageable'. Deemed unsalvageable were the likes of a particularly goofy "Confidential To Me" and an improvised blues called "Catfish" that bears more resemblance to "Matchbox" than the Robert Petway blues standard.



Still, what was considered salvageable – 138 tracks, 31 previously unknown – suggested that Dylan had started gingerly making his way back from the brink. Even the first Red Room recordings exhibit Dylanesque in-the-moment song-ideas masquerading as semi-improvised originals, the most realised of which are "Edge Of The Ocean (Seagulls)" and five-minute country tearjerker "That's The Breaks".

The other reel which avoided being found in substantial 1986 and 1993 bootleg trawls contains just seven takes of four songs; of which just a precious but incomplete alternate take of "I Shall Be Released" – with a very different vocal, no harmony vocal and formative lyrics – escaped collectors' attention. It is a delight, and a revelation; showing how quickly and constructively Dylan and the Hawks worked to perfect the quixotic and the plain queer.

Also herein are two 'alternate' Acetate tracks, neither previously accessed in stereo. Both are important. Finally everyone can hear the 'basement noise' version of "You Ain't Going Nowhere", which

CONTINUES OVER ➤

◀ CONTINUED FROM
PREVIOUS SPREAD

should bring a grin to the most jaundiced listener, notably when Dylan mordantly observes, "You ain't no head of lettuce". Here, too, is the first take of "Too Much Of Nothing" in wide-brimmed two-track (it was controversially included on the original CBS 1975 album over the oft-bootlegged second take).

Of the other seven reels salvaged, two in particular provide significantly superior sound to the 2nd generation dubs previously used on fabled 1986 bootleg LPs. Consisting largely of cover versions, these reels had been among Robbie Robertson's favourites; and not just because they included Ian Tyson's "Song For Canada (One Single River)". Utah Phillips' "Rock Salt & Nails" never sounded more heartfelt, while the ancient "Young But Daily Growin'" reveals what Dylan meant when he claimed the previous year that these tragic folk ballads provide "the only true valid death you can feel today".

The remaining five reels had all been accessed in 1992, but the dubs made then were under non-studio conditions, and in some instances the resultant tapes were badly over-loaded. Thankfully, not all – because at some point in May the producers of this set realised what all collectors already suspected: among this 1992 hoard were three reels which had, in the interim, gone missing from Hudson's Catskills hold.

A great deal of important material was on these reels: everything from "All-American Boy" to "Going To Acapulco", "Gonna Get You Now" to "Sign On The Cross", "I'm A Fool For You" to "Tiny Montgomery". Also missing, and now only accessible as a DAT dub from the original reel used by the 1986 bootlegger, were the two known takes of the supremely surreal "All You Have To Do Is Dream", one of Robertson's finer moments.

Thankfully, a sustained trawl of tapes in Dylan's possession produced an excellent reel-to-reel dub of the session that produced "Going To Acapulco" and "Gonna Get You Now", presumably the same source used back in 1975. Respectable dubs of "All-American Boy" and "Sign On The Cross" were also found on an 11-song March 1971 Copyright Reel made for Dylan's music publisher Dwarf at 7½ ips, again in well-balanced stereo.

That just left the all-important 'Reel #4', the first set of songs recorded at Big Pink. This 40-minute reel, which begins with "I'm A Fool For You" and ends with "I'm In The Mood For Love", somewhere between crosses the line between intoxication and inspiration. Fortunately, the ex-*Band* roadie who



Dylan at home, 1968.
Inset below: Robbie Robertson, 1969



to hold their respective tongues, the pair consistently denigrated the contents of the many reels that threatened to provide a permanent record of 1967's inspired sessions. It was an exasperated Dylan who, when asked in 1985 by Cameron Crowe why he never released "I'm Not There", replied, "It wasn't there!" The same year he told Denise Worrell *The Basement Tapes* was just "a bunch of guys hanging out down in the basement making up songs".

At the time, Dylan's near total silence on the subject allowed Robertson to make claims of his own. He maintained that Dylan "wrote a bunch of songs out of that, and we wrote a bunch of songs out of that". In fact, Robertson wrote nothing of note 'til after Dylan went off to Nashville in the autumn, while Dylan's attempts to encourage Richard Manuel to take up the baton foundered simply because he preferred to pick up a bottle. The Band's basement tapes, at least those released to date, have been nothing of the sort.

After Dylan continued to insist even the known copyrighted material "wasn't [for] a record, it was just songs which we'd come to this basement and record – out in the woods," Robertson proved only too willing to concur: "We weren't making a record. We were just fooling around. The purpose was whatever comes into anybody's mind, we'll put it down on this little tape recorder – shitty little tape recorder." By then, everybody concerned was becoming adept at sending smoke signals.

SNAPSHOT #5

NEW YORK, 1967 – "Dylan has been doing nothing, absolutely nothing," said Jamie Robertson, Dylan's guitarist, to an inquiring reporter. "He's been looking at the gate around his house and training his dogs how to bite." But that was just a contribution to the Dylan mystery. Actually, Dylan was writing 10 new songs a week, rehearsing them in his living room with Robertson's group, The Hawks, and trying to complete a one-hour film TV

special for ABC-TV, which said it couldn't use the program because it was delivered seven months late." – Al Aronowitz, "A Family Album", *Cheetah*, 1968.

Aronowitz had been one of Dylan's confidants long enough to know when to be circumspect and when to play loose with the facts. The man who famously introduced The Beatles to Dylan had once written an anonymous piece for the *New York Herald-Tribune* called "A Night With Bob Dylan", which he then turned over to its subject to rewrite. The 1968 *Cheetah* piece [above] did mention one song Dylan and Robertson played to Aronowitz in Woodstock, but it was not one that was now circulating on Acetate. Nor would it ever emerge – perhaps because its title said it all: "You Can Change Your Name, But You Can't Run Away From Yourself". Unfortunately, when Aronowitz assured his old friend it was "great", Dylan turned to Robertson and said, "We shouldn't keep any music critics around here. We just lost another song."

From the very start, the music at Big Pink was not made with historical preservation in mind. The whole object of the exercise was, to use Robertson's phrase, "stopping time", making music not to preserve it, but to preserve the sanity of all concerned. As Robertson informed a Dutch radio interviewer, "To keep [any] one of us from going crazy, we'd play music every day."

We now know that the process of easing Dylan – and, ultimately, Robertson – into writing songs was a protracted one. And it began not at Big Pink, but at Dylan's own backwoods Byrdcliffe home, in the so-called Red Room. How much material was actually recorded at Dylan's place has been much disputed, but access to the actual Garth Hudson reels for the new basement project confirms that at least three reels, probably four, were recorded there. Nearly two and a half hours of music – half of it previously unknown to collectors.

Of these reels, the first two (according to Hudson's numbering system), both wholly uncirculated, are unfortunately the most

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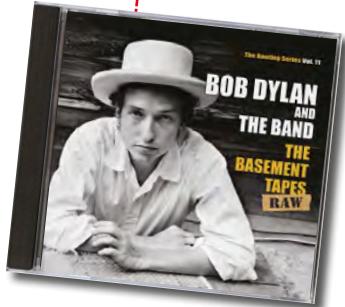
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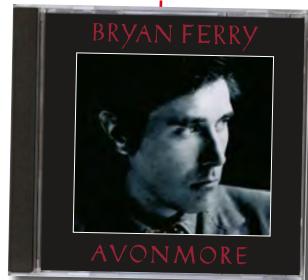
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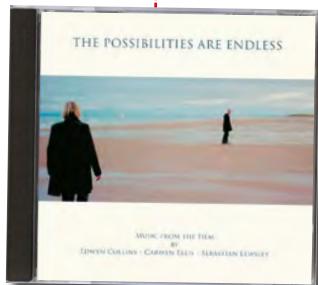
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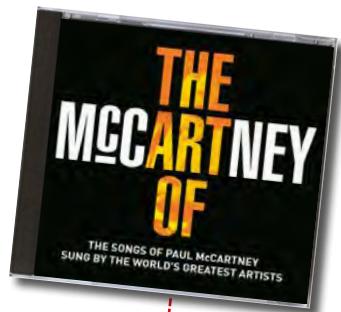


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had accessed Hudson's reels back in 1992 made his own copies of the reels, running another dub direct to cassette. It was this dub which was now accessed, transferred to digital, rebalanced and recalibrated until it sounded just like it did in the Big Pink basement. Even the glories of "Tiny Montgomery", the one Acetate song not otherwise accessible in true stereo, were restored.

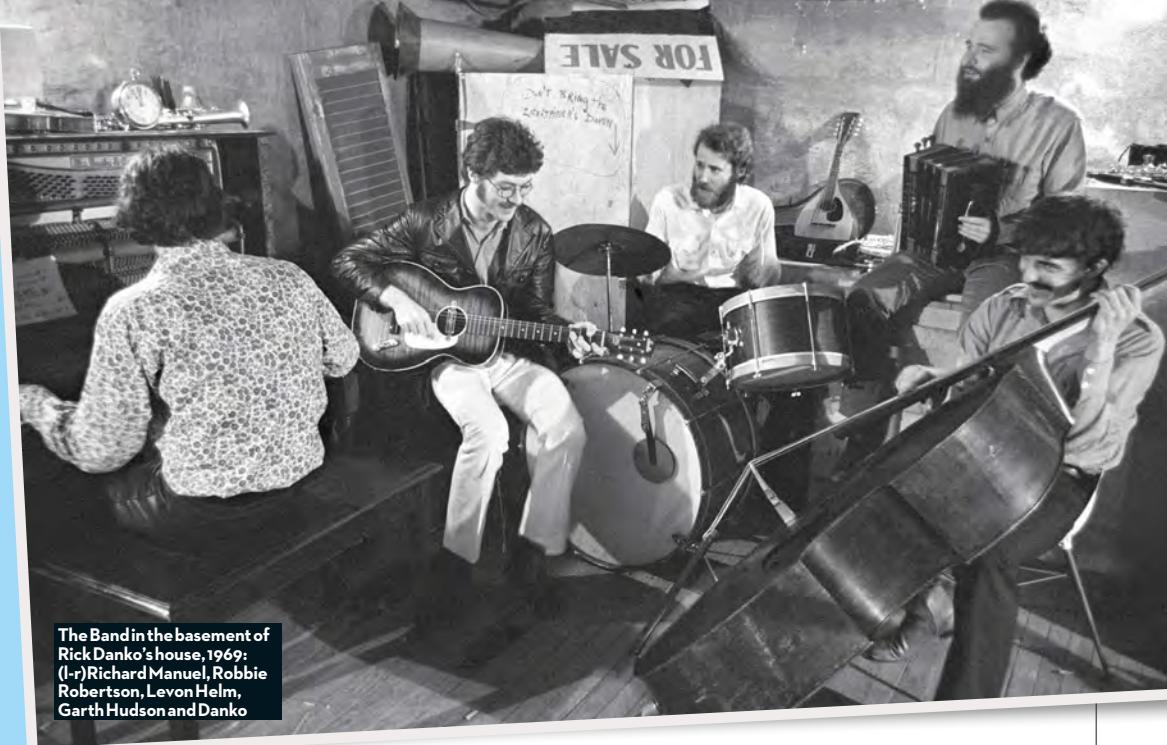
If one set of tapes went astray after being lifted in the early '90s, another couple were also lost in the Woodstock shuffle around the same time. This time it was Dylan's own archive-team who came to the rescue. At some point around 1991, a composite 50-minute reel had been compiled from at least two lost 7" reels, both referenced in 1975, some songs recorded at 3 3/4 ips, some at 7 1/2 ips. This reel had been lent to a trusted third party that year, so "Silent Weekend" and "Santa Fe" could be extracted for the first of the official Sony *Bootleg Series* (truncated to three volumes – hence the omission of "Silent Weekend"). The only proof of this tape's former existence in the Hudson hoard was an empty tape-box.

A complete dub of the reel, though, made at Sony in 1990, was found by archivist Glenn Korman. It contained the original basement version of "Minstrel Boy" (released as a taster of things to come on last year's *Another Self Portrait*), the three rehearsal versions of pre-electric Dylan songs, and versions of "900 Miles" and "Ain't No More Cane" that proved the spirit of Big Pink survived well into the winter of 1968.

The jewel of this reel, though, comes at the very end. The lyrics of "Wild Wolf", copyrighted in '73, hinted at another "I'm Not There". It lives up to its billing. A haunting series of dreamy vignettes teetering on the brink of coherence, it suggests another soldier perched along the watchtower, watching and waiting for the end; pondering another big fat question. It's stunning stuff.

"Wild Wolf" provides a fitting end to a 6CD treasure-trove that proves once and for all Dylan did not lose 'it' on that backwoods road when the back wheel of his Triumph Bonneville locked. Instead, he found a way to move forward that need not involve making records or touring the world. It just took Dwarf and The Hawks 47 years to excavate the irrefutable evidence.

ELLIOTT LANDY/REDFERNS



The Band in the basement of Rick Danko's house, 1969:
(l-r)Richard Manuel, Robbie Robertson, Levon Helm, Garth Hudson and Danko

Sonically suspect. But they are also full of Dylanesque in-the-moment song ideas, some – like the five-minute "That's The Breaks", "Roll On Train", "Northern Claim" and "Edge Of The Ocean" – likely to bring a broad grin to the faces of even the most jaundiced fans. Others served as both a way to stop them "from going crazy" and as a springboard to a summer of smoke-filled inspiration. Surprisingly, little time early on seems to have been spent recording covers, though the first reel does yield the likes of "My Bucket's Got A Hole In It", "Confidential To Me" and "Halleluiah I Just Been Moved". The widely bootlegged sets of country-folk covers only came after everyone was comfortable with the set-up and they could start having some fun. Again, though, at least one party later became convinced there was an underlying purpose at the back of Dylan's mind. Robertson now says, "Bob was educating us a little. The whole folkie thing was still very questionable to us... but he remembered too much, remembered too many songs too well. He'd come over to Big Pink... and pull out some old song – he'd prepped for this."

In the end, the process would take Dylan and The Hawks four and a half reels, and a change of locale, to arrive at "Tiny Montgomery" and the acquisition of a sensibility which would sustain Dylan through several months of mercurial inspiration, producing an avalanche of songs substantive enough to bury his 1965-'66 output. The Red Room tapes, then, are tantalising, but the real basement fare took place at Big Pink. As Robertson told Aronowitz, at a time when any such distinction was wholly lost on its intended audience, "There's the music from Bob's house, and there's the music from our house. The two houses sure are different."

Again, it is Aronowitz who would provide the only near-contemporary account of how this change came about. In a summer '68 piece for *Life* magazine, ostensibly about The Band's own *Music From Big Pink*, he described how the (as-yet-unnamed) band had originally moved into Big Pink in the spring of 1967 after stumbling on "one of those middle-class ranch houses of the type that you would expect to find in a development row in the heart of suburbia

rather than on an isolated mountaintop high above the barn architecture of New York State's rustic Woodstock".

Fortunately, Big Pink was cheap, it was isolated, hard to miss when returning from an evening on the town juiced to the gills, and it had a spacious garage-cum-basement that lent itself to music-making. Accordingly, they were soon, "settling [in] like the dust they brought. The band lounged awhile on Big Pink's overstuffed furniture and then, taking their boots off the coffee table, lugged their gear into Big Pink's cellar, [and started] improvising a recording studio."

It is unclear whether sound engineer Garth Hudson had a remit to reconstruct the Red Room vibe, minus the distortion Dylan's Wurlitzer and injudicious mic placement brought. But he excelled himself, creating a sound that was as successful at 'stopping time' as the songs Dylan was now producing, seemingly on a daily basis. Sure enough, Dylan soon appeared at their door, looking for a way to continue 'stopping time'.

According to Aronowitz, Dylan "would [now] come over evenings and they would play together, everything from folk-songs to music composed on the spot." In fact, the sessions were mostly conducted in the afternoon, before Richard Manuel started on that second bottle and between Dylan transporting his stepchild, Maria, to and from pre-school.

Dylan had seemingly been given his own school assignment; for at this juncture he belatedly, and perhaps a tad reluctantly, began formalising his song-ideas enough to stop 'wasting tape'; and started producing a flurry of copyrightable compositions of the stature of "I Shall Be Released", "This Wheel's On Fire", "Quinn The Eskimo", "Down In The Flood", "You Ain't Going Nowhere" and "Tears Of Rage". Thirteen of the fourteen songs collected as publishing demos on the fabled Dwarf Music Acetate in early 1968 were recorded on three consecutive reels (#8-10) at the approximate mid-point of the sessions, and copyrighted in two chunks, in October 1967 and January 1968 respectively. The sheer quality of what he



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Dylan with son Jesse and two friends, David Boyle and Dean Schambach, Woodstock, early 1969

now demoed – and copyrighted – has led many down the years to assume he intended to do something more with these songs. Some have even claimed these 14 songs were the same '14 tracks' a press report suggested he owed to CBS back in the spring, when he was threatening to join MGM Records.

But if Dylan still owed anyone some songs, it was his estranged manager. Dwarf Music, the company he had formed jointly with Albert Grossman in the autumn of 1965, was demanding its pound of flesh. Dylan certainly went to some pains to inform Jann Wenner in their 1969 conversation/s that he "was being pushed [his *italics*]... into coming up with songs." Fifteen years later, he expanded further on his rationale to another *Rolling Stone* interviewer, "They were just songs we had done for the publishing company... for other artists to record those songs. I wouldn't have put them out."

Whatever his original intention, though, one thing was for sure: the demand for Dylan's actual demos – and the chasm in protection the 1909 US Copyright Act left – was bound to mean someone would 'put them out'. As Paul Cable pithily put it in his book-length survey of *Bob Dylan's Unreleased Recordings* (1978), "If Jonathan King had a copy of the *Basement Tapes*, I determined that I, as a Dylan appreciator of some years' standing, certainly had a right to one... What else... did Dylan expect?"

Even Dylan must have known they were called demonstration recordings for a reason. If it was the three articles Aronowitz published in 1968 that first hinted at a raft of material Dylan had been stockpiling, it was the circulation of these 14 publishing demos in the winter of that same year that really caused a stir. Perhaps this was Dylan's intention. One positive result saw his songs once more all over AM radio; and another was that Dwarf's – and therefore Dylan's – publishing revenue stream was finally

flowing again. But after more than two years of being told by CBS, "nobody sings Dylan like Dylan", the real fans didn't want Manfred Mann or Julie Driscoll trying to interpret Dylan. They wanted the real thing.

SNAPSHOT #6

“TWO MONTHS BEFORE

he went to Nashville to record John Wesley Harding, Bob Dylan spent some time in the basement of his upstate New York home (sic). There he made a rough but very listenable tape with 13 (sic) songs. There is enough material – most all of it very good – to make an entirely new Bob Dylan record, a record with a distinct style of its own."

– Jann Wenner, *Rolling Stone* #12, June 1968.

“They were songs we'd done for other artists to record... I wouldn't have put them out”

BOB DYLAN

Released". At least Wenner realised "it is highly unlikely that Dylan would... go into the studio to record material that is now seven or eight months old (sic)." And yet, in Wenner's opinion, "The concept of a cohesive record is already present."

It was a view shared by *Melody Maker*, the one music weekly Dylan himself read.

MM ran their own story just a week after *Rolling Stone*'s scoop, after reporter Tony Wilson was played 'Secret Bob Dylan Recordings: Ten Fantastic Performances Never Likely To Be Heard'. Wilson also joined the chorus demanding their release, "[If] CBS can get the originals, we say release them."

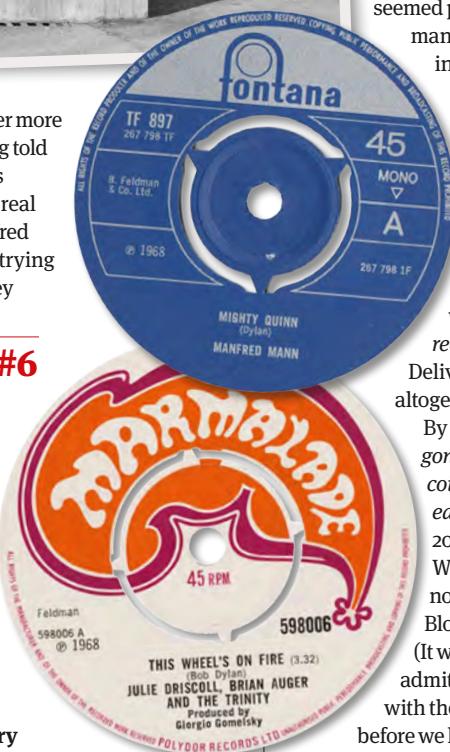
However, this was a big If. CBS, who had just re-signed Dylan to a deal which gave them far fewer rights to unreleased material, had no claim on the tapes or the songs. Only Albert Grossman did. Unfortunately, he and Dylan weren't speaking, except through designated go-between Sara Dylan, wife of Dylan and old friend of Albert Grossman's wife, Sally. Indeed, the only time Dylan seemed prepared to address his current

manager and former advisor was in song. Not only were a number of the Dwarf demos replete with lyrical allusions to rip-offs and retribution, but his vocal delivery when he sang "too much of nothing can turn a man into a liar" ("Too Much Of Nothing") or demanded "some answers for what you sell that has not been received" ("Nothing Was Delivered") strongly suggested an altogether personal dimension.

By the time Dylan asked, "Who's gonna throw that minstrel boy a coin? Who's gonna let it down easy to save his soul?" in front of 200,000 people at the Isle Of Wight, Grossman was persona non grata; his partner, Bert Block, shadowed Dylan instead. (It would be 1973 before Dylan admitted "Minstrel Boy" belonged with the basement tapes, and 2013 before we heard the aural evidence.)

Not that Grossman was about to allow any enmity on Dylan's part, or suspicion that he was somewhere in among the subtexts to "Too Much Of Nothing" or the trenchant "Nothing Was Delivered", to stop him from rubber-stamping cover versions by Peter, Paul & Mary and The Byrds respectively. When *Melody Maker* ran Wilson's article on the demos themselves in June 1968, they also reported hit singles of "Mighty Quinn", "This Wheel's On Fire", "Too Much Of Nothing" and "You Ain't Going Nowhere" by Manfred Mann, Julie Driscoll, Peter, Paul & Mary and The Byrds; and cover versions of "I Shall Be Released" and "You Ain't Going Nowhere" by English folkies Marc Ellington and Linda Peters (the future Linda Thompson).

By the time The Band claimed "Tears Of Rage", "This Wheel's On Fire" and "I Shall Be Released" for their *Music From Big Pink* debut later that summer, *The Basement Tapes* was fast infiltrating every arena of post-Pepper pop. The Beatles even made a couple of half-hearted stabs at "I Shall Be Released" during their own series of basement-inspired sessions, the January 1969 Twickenham jams; while Clapton named the



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the third Cream LP *Wheels On Fire* as a homage to *The Basement Tapes*. Van Morrison, meanwhile, simply turned "I Shall Be Released" into "Brand New Day".

In fact, The Byrds and The Band excepted, the influence of these songs seemed most pronounced in England. Fairport Convention recorded no less than three of them in 1969, though only "Million Dollar Bash" appeared on *Unhalfbricking*. The other two formed part of their own basement-esque folk-rock foray at a country retreat, Farley Chamberlayne, after their own serious road crash. Everyone from Thunderclap Newman to McGuinness Flint wanted a piece of the pie, the latter going as far as recording seven basement tracks for their 1972 all-Dylan album, *Lo And Behold*.

By then, the basement songs were serving to fill a void of Dylan's own making after he found himself experiencing writer's block – what he later called "the amnesia". Dylan had been walking in Woodstock one winter's day in 1968, "half-stepping", as he put it, "and the lights went out".

It took him seven years to recover those abilities. In that time, the legend of the basements grew. Even Dylan himself released ramshackle renditions from the Isle of Wight of "Mighty Quinn" and "Minstrel Boy", on 1970's *Self Portrait*. The following autumn he re-recorded three more 'Acetate' tracks – "I Shall Be Released", "You Ain't Going Nowhere" and "Down In The Flood" – for a double-album *More Greatest Hits*, before performing two of Big Pink's more irreverent originals, "Don't Ya Tell Henry" and "Down In The Flood", with The Band at their 1971 New Year's Eve 'Rock Of Ages' show. "Don't Ya Tell Henry" had been found on a stray reel from Big Pink that had somehow ended up at Grossman's office. On the same reel was "All-American Boy", based on a send-up of Elvis at the start of his army career by Bobby Bare. Here is a gloriously irreverent raw-boned talkin' blues in the coruscating tradition of Woody Guthrie, augmented with Dylan's own lyrics.

SNAPSHOT #7

WELL, SOONER OR later a boss gonna come/He gonna take a look at ya, look at your drum/Drink this sonny, it comes in a cup/Yeah, he'll take you out to his farm, where he's fixing it up." – "All-American Boy".

As of 1971, Grossman might still have been able to encourage Dylan to provide songs for him to copyright; but in the process, he also found many of those songs directed at him. Dylan had presumably forgotten all about "All-American Boy". He certainly cannot have envisaged a time when this riff on Bare's original would be copyrighted and published in his name (and his alone). In fact, the reel in question delivered no less than 11 previously unknown, uncopied Dylan basement tracks. None of them were referenced on the 21-song, 15 ips 'safety' reel Grossman had instructed Elliott Mazur to make in June 1969, which somehow ended up at Neil Young's ranch rather than Dylan's tape-vault. One can't help wondering what Grossman thought the day he first heard



The Rolling Thunder Revue, 1975, and inset below, the book of Dylan's lyrics and drawings

"All-American Boy"; which wasn't until March 19, 1971 at the earliest.

That was the day CBS sent over a reel they had been storing for him, marking it for the attention of 'Mr Grayson'. It was here that Dylan himself rediscovered "Sign On The Cross" and "Don't Ya Tell Henry", in time to include both in the collected lyrics he was working on, *Writings And Drawings*.

Two years later, after *Writings And Drawings* put some 21 *Basement Tapes* lyrics in print, someone at Dwarf or perhaps Dylan's office decided to re-examine that 'lost' reel. They found five more basement gems worthy of copyright: "Silent Weekend", "Santa Fe", "Bourbon Street", "Wild Wolf" and "All-American Boy". Of these, only "Santa Fe" has been released to date (on *The Bootleg Series Vols 1-3*). The full five-minute "Bourbon Street" and the beguilingly murky "Wild Wolf", a mini-"*I'm Not There*" sung as if he'd heard it in a dream, have remained unbootlegged. Both are major finds.

As are "We Can Talk About It Now", "My Woman She's A-Leavin'" and "Mary Lou, I Love You Too", none of which were copyrighted until 1988, and all of which will be new to even the most diehard Dylan collector.

Back in 1975, when [producer] Rob Fraboni and Robbie Robertson pulled as many of Garth's reels as they could find for a 'definitive' edition of *The Basement Tapes*, they included just three of the five '1973 copyrights' on the reference tapes they made, and none on the album itself. The result was a disappointing mish-mash of (non-basement) Band songs and collapsed mono dubs of 16 Dylan basement cuts. In a couple of cases,

these were given overdubs, courtesy of Robertson. On two important cuts, "Too Much Of Nothing" and "Tears Of Rage", the guitarist preferred inferior first-takes rather than the Dwarf demos. "I Shall Be Released" and "The Mighty Quinn" were omitted altogether, as were "Sign On The Cross" and "I'm Not There", both of which had entered discreetly into collecting circles shortly before the CBS set appeared. Predictably, Dylan's own way of promoting the release was by playing a solitary Big Pink song on his Rolling Thunder Revues; one that was not on the CBS set, "I Shall Be Released".

Indeed, in the hundreds of shows he played between 1974 and 1994, this track and "Tears Of Rage" were the only 'Dwarf demos' he ever performed in concert. Starting in 1995, though, Dylan looked again at this lost era, debuting "Yea! Heavy And A Bottle of Bread", "Million Dollar Bash", "You Ain't Going Nowhere" and "This Wheel's On Fire" over the next decade of relentless touring. He also revived two more basement cuts, each played live just once with The Band: "Down In The Flood" and "The Mighty Quinn". Meanwhile, the sentiments

of "I Shall Be Released" over the years became almost a code for the fate of the basements themselves; unloved, largely unreleased and seemingly disregarded by Dylan. Yet magical. And no other version of the song comes close to the stereo original, with Dylan and Manuel's heavenly harmonising – except perhaps the first take, sung solo, found on the original reel and now being included in the new 6CD set.

Perhaps inevitably, after those precious original reels were finally spirited away, the bootleggers found they had the field to themselves. Which after comparing the exquisite stereo "I Shall Be Released" on the unauthorised 4CD *A Tree With Roots* with the painfully generational, collapsed mono of the version on Sony's own *Bootleg Series 1-3*, might not have been a bad thing.

Such a comparison does make one wonder who really has been the true keepers of the flame these past four decades.

Without the basement bootlegs – and the legend they garnered, which books by Greil Marcus (*Invisible Republic*) and ex-Long Ryde Sid Griffin (*Million Dollar Bash*) further served to stoke – it is doubtful whether the tapes would ever have been rescued from their Canadian resting place. Or the impetus for this belated release become so powerful that even a pre-scheduled collection of *Blood On The Tracks* alternates and outtakes had to be put on hold to make way for it. Any day now, any day now... it all shall be released. ☩

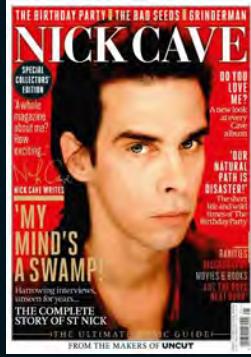
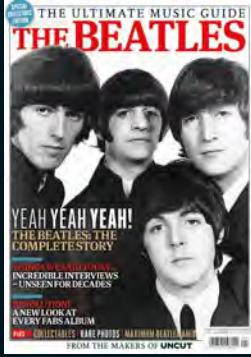
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September Gurls

BY BIG STAR

After the commercial failure of their debut album, Alex Chilton & co create a powerpop classic: "Alex's voice had built-in emotion," says Jody Stephens. "It comes from a pretty true spot..."

TOWARDS THE END of 1972, Big Star's short career already seemed to be over. *#1 Record* had failed to make any dent in the popular consciousness, Chris Bell had left the band and, chastened, Alex Chilton and Jody Stephens pondered whether their group had a future.

By 1973, however, Chilton would reconvene with drummer Stephens and bassist Andy Hummel to put together *Radio City*, a more muscular record that stripped back the sound of the lush debut without losing any of its melodic lustre. The jewel in *Radio City*'s crown was "September Gurls", a powerpop classic whose creation took in all-night Memphis partying, astrology, drunken overdubbing and a surprising Slade influence – before it was all put to tape in a matter of hours.

"I loved playing with Alex and Andy," says Jody Stephens today, preparing to play a Big Star tribute show in Los Angeles, with Van Dyke Parks conducting the string section. "I'd never experienced anything like playing with them. It's like an addiction – you get addicted to playing with guys who write good songs and it's hard to ever pass that up."

Stephens is the only one of the original four still alive, though John Fry, who mentored the band at Ardent and engineered and mixed "September Gurls" along with most of the Big Star catalogue,

and Richard Rosebrough, who raised hell with Alex, engineered them on *Radio City* and drummed on three of the LP's more out-there cuts, are on hand to recall the sporadic sessions, alongside Ardent's present-day producer and de facto Big Star archivist, Adam Hill.

"Alex was definitely unpredictable," adds Stephens, recalling the more difficult side of Chilton's personality. "But his voice had that kind of built-in emotion. I guess it all comes from a pretty true spot."

"Truth is stranger than fiction, and in this case that's so true. I could never have imagined back then that we'd be performing these songs today." **TOM PINNOCK**

JODY STEPHENS (drums): I didn't know what was going to happen after Chris left. We all kind of drifted apart. I was going to university in Memphis at the time, and I had a girlfriend, so I was busy with her. Then [Ardent's head of promo] John King gives me a call about Big Star getting together again for the Rock Writers' Convention [held in Memphis, May 1973]. We just played and

KEY PLAYERS



Jody Stephens
Drummer



John Fry
Engineer, mixer,
exec producer



Adam Hill
Ardent archivist



Richard Rosebrough
Engineer

had a good time, and it seemed to work.

JOHN FRY: I had always assumed that we would try to make another album. There may have been no basis for that assumption, but that was the way I felt.

STEPHENS: I figured that we'd miss Chris' production sensibilities, but Alex instilled confidence in everything he did; his guitar playing, his songwriting. His vocal delivery was just incredible. We had John Fry to work with so I figured it'd be all right. It was also a chance to be in a three-piece

band, which changed the approach a bit.

RICHARD ROSEBROUGH (engineer, and drummer on three *Radio City* tracks):

I suppose Alex was both disappointed that Chris left, and actually enjoying a little bit more freedom and control. Alex always liked things to go his way so he didn't have to deal with the fourth person saying, 'Let's not do this, let's do that.' I think he felt a little bit less restricted; he could do whatever he wanted to do.

STEPHENS: I remember Alex playing





Big Star in '73:
(l-r) Andy
Hummel, Alex
Chilton and
Jody Stephens

"September Gurls" to me complete. It was an easy song to play to. His songs always hit that spot that seemed to be natural for me to create those parts. Those initial chords are like clarion calls, you sit up and pay attention, that's for sure. Was it an attempt at writing a single? I could see Alex going after a particular sound, but he never talked in terms of writing a hit.

ADAM HILL: I'm pretty sure "September Gurls" came late in the game in *Radio City*. There's one 16-track reel that has the bulk of that LP on it, but "September Gurls" is on a different reel by itself.

STEPHENS: There were a couple of 'September girls'... one was Diane Wall, the receptionist at Ardent. September is probably the month they were born. Alex was into astrology then. Alex is a December boy. Chris and John and Alex were all December boys. Andy was born in January and I was October, but there were a lot of December guys around. The idea of spelling 'girls' phonetically was probably Alex's. Slade were doing that around that time, so I think that's where that came from.

ROSEBROUGH: "September Gurls" was recorded in Ardent's Studio B. It was the smaller of the two studios, and it had a warmer environment, perfect for a small band. The ones that were recorded at that time in Studio B all had a similar sound. They all had a big echo sound on

the drums and a peculiarly good bass sound. They were different from some of the other tracks [on *Radio City*].

HILL: They recorded the basic track all playing together. They didn't really do a lot of takes. It was come in and knock it out. I think there were

"The idea of spelling 'girls' phonetically was probably Alex's. Slade were doing that at the time..."

JODY STEPHENS

two outtakes during the session, one may have been a false start.

FRY: Tracking wouldn't have taken very long at all. There were hardly any songs on any of those records where we went past the third take. There's really just two guitars on "September Gurls". The main guitar, which is a Stratocaster, and the other guitar that's way up high is a Vox

Mando-Guitar. Jody's drums had four microphones on them, and the bass amp probably had one mic. There's a little drum overdub to reinforce the drum fill, then vocal and backing vocal tracks. It's on a 16-track, and there's a bunch of open tracks unused. Looking back, I can't believe how simple it was.

HILL: There were two Alex vocals, plus Andy's vocal. Alex did two harmony vocals as well, the oohs. So there's 15 tracks that I know of. The guitar has a classic out-of-phase Strat sound – I've asked around about that Strat that Alex had, and nobody seems to know for sure what it was. There was a period where Strats only had a three-way switch, but John Dando [Big Star road manager] told me Alex's was converted to a five-way switch somehow. It definitely has that [out of phase] sound.

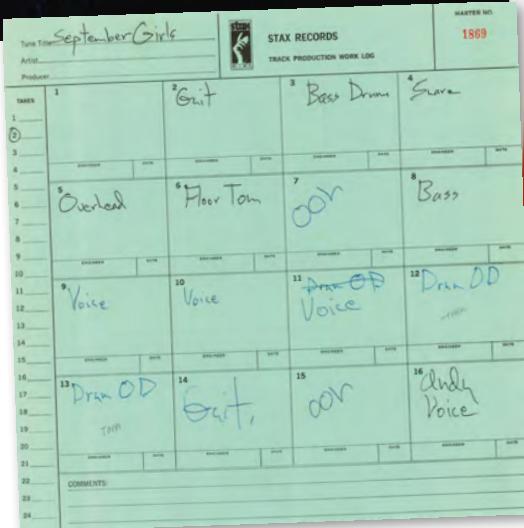
ROSEBROUGH: The microphones John Fry used on that session were some very high-quality AKG mics. Recording something like "September Gurls", though, it's how the engineer uses the equipment, and John did a really good job.

STEPHENS: I doubled the drum fill on the toms, then John put on some compression and made them kind of bombastic. I didn't record to a click. Music loses so much of its soul, so much opportunity for people to kind of feel their way through a track, if you use one. It's OK for it to speed up and slow down, that's just part of

BIG STAR



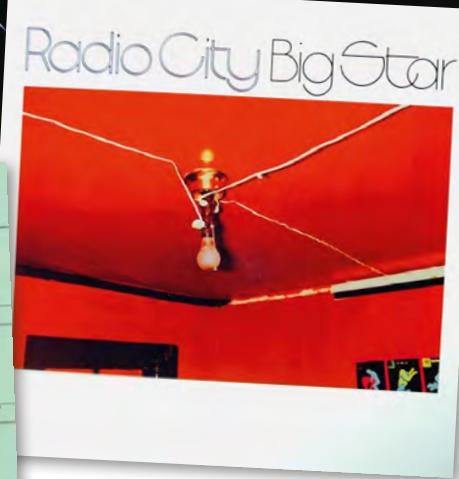
Radio City's back cover, shot by William Eggleston, at TGI Friday's, Memphis. Inset below left: the "September Gurls" tracking sheet in Chilton's own handwriting



① the emotional delivery of the song. I can't stand click tracks.

FRY: There were all kind of overdub sessions when I wasn't there. And things like [Radio City's] "Mod Lang" and "She's A Mover" that were getting recorded real late at night. People were messed up at the time they did those, there's no question about that. Everybody would go out to the clubs and do this and do that and then say, "Hey, let's go to the studio, we got an idea."

STEPHENS: Overton Square, which was the centre of the adolescent universe during that time, was just two blocks down from Ardent. So there was lots of trouble to get into there, and you can kind of hear it in *Radio City*, in the lyrics, and you can certainly hear it in the third album, that's for sure.



ROSEBROUGH: At the time I was very close friends with Alex, we were like constant companions. We spent a lot of time, socially, together

and, because both of us were recording, we spent a lot of time in the studio together. Overton Square was just a couple of blocks away. At that time bars in Memphis stayed open very late. You could always find a bar open at two o'clock and if they had to stop serving liquor at two, they'd just put the liquor out on the counter and you could make your own drink.

STEPHENS: I probably wasn't there for a lot of those late-night sessions. Not to say that I didn't indulge at Overton Square from time to time, but if I did, I was never up for playing after that, more up for going to bed.

ROSEBROUGH: Yeah, we were lubricated [at the overdub sessions]. We'd had a few drinks and we were loosened up by then...

STEPHENS: When Alex got into a studio, he was an amazingly free spirit, whatever popped into his head could see its way onto the tape machine. The little overdubs were a Mando-Guitar. You could tell Alex just felt his way through it and played things sparingly, but they were just the right length, just the right tone at just the right moment. Some of Alex's lead vocals could be from those late-night sessions, some could be from the vocal track as we were cutting the backing. If it wasn't the first take, it was probably the second. Andy was singing some of those background vocals. I'd thought I was doing those because I did them live, but I got Adam to solo the tracks on the desk recently, and it was actually Andy.

FRY: By the time of *Radio City* it was plain, even to us, fairly far down the food chain, that the deal between Columbia and Stax [Ardent's distributor] was not working well. I, for one, had had high hopes for that. I said,

'Oh wow, Columbia, that'll work well for Ardent. Columbia, rock music, Ardent, they'll love us.' But in 1974 when *Radio City* came out I just thought the handwriting was on the wall, and by November 1975, Stax was officially bankrupt.

STEPHENS: Andy had said, "This record's full of radio-friendly songs, so we'll call it *Radio City*." It's an expression – if something was a drag it'd be 'drag city'. So it was thought to be a very radio-friendly record. And radio stations were playing it in pretty key markets, but there were no records in the stores so the stations would drop it, or there

would be no sales because there were no records in the stores. Andy quit before the release of the record. He was ready to have a career and to get on with life and to have a family.

FRY: I think Andy felt like the prospects, at that point, of being able to earn a living in the music industry were growing dim.

STEPHENS: We only played a handful of gigs to promote *Radio City*. I wouldn't think we ever played "September Gurls" any more than 20 times [before the band's 1993 reunion], that's for sure, and that includes rehearsals! But I'm really glad Andy and Alex lived to see our

records become popular, though I could never quite read how Alex took it in. I never thought he would have agreed to play [as Big Star] in Columbia, Missouri in April 1993. But he did, and there you go. ①

CAPITAL PICTURES, JOHN FRY

TIMELINE



Late 1972 Chris Bell (left) leaves Big Star after the release of debut, #1 Record **May 1973**

The band reconvene as a three-piece, without Bell, to perform at the Rock Writers' Convention in Memphis **Autumn 1973**

Convention in Memphis **Autumn 1973**
Chilton, Hummel and Stephens gradually record **Radio City at Ardent Studios** **February 1974**
Radio City is released but fails to chart, as does

accompanying "September Gurls" single – Andy Hummel leaves the band shortly after...

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“You’ll never understand love. It’s infinite.”

Two doors down from Dylan’s old place in the West Village, SHARON VAN ETTE opens up her apartment and bares her soul. To be discussed: the brilliance of *Are We There*, the emotional upheavals that inspired it, and how “the female Conor Oberst” became one of the finest singer-songwriters of the past decade.

Story: Jaan Uhelszki | **Photograph:** Shervin Lainez

TOUR BUSES MAKE their way up the narrow tree-lined street that Sharon Van Etten calls home at the rate of about one every two minutes. They break the sleepy peace of a late Saturday afternoon in New York’s West Village, their loudspeakers barking out places of interest. Of interest, that is, to patrons on the *Sex And The City* tour, who crane their necks to spot the site of Carrie and Big’s wedding-rehearsal dinner or scamper out at the Pleasure Chest, the frou-frou boutique where Charlotte bought her first sex appliance, unaware that far more important events took place in the shadow of Washington Square Park’s 77-foot marble arch. Incidentally, we’re not referring to the White Horse Tavern, where Dylan Thomas drank himself to death in 1953; or a block away, where Edgar Allan Poe wrote *The Raven*. No, we’re talking more recent history. In 1962, Bob Dylan lived two doors down from Van Etten’s compact, well-appointed studio apartment, in a studio apartment of his own, for which he paid a mere \$60 a month rent – 29 times less than what Van Etten pays for hers. If you look

directly down the street from Van Etten’s front door, that is where the cover of *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* was shot, at the corner of Jones and West 4th Street. If you squint, you can see Van Etten’s apartment building in the background.

Today, in mid-June, Van Etten answers the door to her apartment in a large peach towel, her shiny black hair dripping water on her planked wooden floor. She seemed a little flustered. I’m early, but not that early. “I tried to clean up; I didn’t want you to think I wasn’t neat,” she says. Bending down, she plucks the vampish black crushed velvet off-the-shoulder top she wore at last night’s show from the floor, then scoops up a single shoe, while simultaneously pushing a stack of papers under her bookshelf with her foot, stopping a second to straighten the books: *Meditation For Beginners, If Only The Sea Could Sleep* – a collection of sacred love poems by Ali Ahmad Said, one of the great poets of Arab literature. There are the complete diaries of Anaïs Nin, the works of Sylvia Plath, and the *Tao Te Ching*. To lighten the mood, there’s Pat Benatar’s autobiography, *Between A Heart And A Rock Place: A Memoir* (“My mom bought it for me,” she confesses),

and *Love Is A Mixtape: Life, Loss, And What I Listened To*. She sees me looking at the book. “Embarrassing, I know. But haven’t we all done that?” she asks, rather rhetorically. Van Etten has, certainly. But to be completely accurate, that’s what she has been doing with every album she makes – detailing the emotional geography of her heart, hovering somewhere between uncertainty and regret, without truly landing on either. Making the mystery of love even more inscrutable. The 33-year-old singer seems to have a PhD in it. “You’ll never understand it,” she says. “It’s infinite.”

Her apartment tidied, Van Etten opens up the door to her bedroom. “I’ll be right back,” she says. “Why don’t you look around? My life is an open book,” she admits without irony. “I think I’ve always kind of worn my heart on my sleeve. I want people to know who I am,” she says, closing the door to her bedroom. “I just moved in here last November,” she explains through the door. “I wanted a place in the East Village, but it just didn’t seem right, because my ex lives there,” she trails off, her voice muffled as she pulls on clothes. “Anyway, I just walked into



“My life is an
open book.
I want people to
know who I am”

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at this real estate office one day. I laid it all out on the line. I told the guy, 'I want a studio, no shared bathroom, in a safe area. And I don't want to pay more than \$1700 for rent. No funny stuff. And I want it now.' The agent didn't even flinch. 'I've got one,' he told me. 'Can you see it now?' Van Etten's life seems to work that way. 'I'm not really a planner,' she says. 'Mostly I let events dictate what's supposed to happen. I know what happens when you try to force something.'

EVEN WITHOUT A plan, Van Etten's career has been picking up steam. Her 2012 album, *Tramp*, has sold double what her 2010 album, *Epic*, did and geometrically more than her 2009 debut, *Because I Was In Love*. Her latest, *Are We There*, released in May, has matched *Tramp* and looks set to continue the upward trend. Looking around the small apartment, you'd think a very orderly pixie lives here. Everything is compact and in miniature. There's a piano pushed against the window that overlooks a straggly garden. There's a scrap of rose-coloured lace tacked to the window frame at an artful slant, while a vase of dead pink roses sits on top of the piano, and below it two mics. There's a small amp, a boombox and a few vinyl records.

A worn pair of saddle shoes sit on the window ledge, a gift from Deer Tick bassist Chris Ryan, who sent them to her after she complained that her feet hurt backstage at one of Deer Tick's shows. 'He knew what I was talking about because he has bad feet just like I do.'

Two brackets, like the kind used to store fishing tackle, are nailed on the wall above her door frame, while an array of suitcases in graduated sizes line the space above her kitchen cupboards – much used artifacts since Van Etten toured relentlessly from January to August in 2013.



Sharon Van Etten's touring band: (l-r) Darren Jessee, Heather Woods Broderick, Van Etten, Doug Keith and Brad Cook

There's a Tibetan bell, threaded over a doorknob, and a small wooden table flush up against the corner of the tiny kitchen. Stainless steel pots line one shelf and are polished to a dull glow. The door opens quietly, and Van Etten walks into the tiny kitchen, her hair still damp, without a scrap of makeup, wearing a pair of jeans that might have come from Joan Jett's closet and a printed floral tank top, which exposes the two black bands of tattoos on her slender arms. 'In the Irish tradition, you wear a black armband at funerals. Within four years my grandmother and three uncles passed. I just thought it'd be a nice way to mourn them,' she says simply. 'The other one is my favourite flower. A violet. It was my grandmother's favourite, too,' she says, exposing her more feminine side. She's a strange combination of tough and tender, ending up somewhere near a winsome androgyny. 'One of my friends used to call me the female Conor

Oberst just to get to me,' she says with a quiet, tinkly laugh. 'Because I had a really short haircut. I used to wear cowgirl, cowboy shirts. And I did sort of look like him, as much as I hate to admit it. Mostly people think I look like Winona Ryder. Then I have friends that say when their eyes are closed, I sound like Lisa Bonet. My old boyfriend used to say I looked like Suzi Quatro...' she trails off, as if the memory hurts her.

She abruptly changes the subject and asks if I'd like anything to drink. She's making tea for herself because she's feeling a little poorly. At last night's show at the Bowery Ballroom, you could see her turning her head and coughing off-mic. Do you sometimes feel you reveal too much?

'I think I'll always write for me anyway, but what I choose to share will change, probably. I'm experimenting with what I'm comfortable with, how it affects other people, on a personal level.'

'I just got a letter from my boyfriend that said: 'I know exactly what it is you're writing about, and all our friends know.' And he's like, 'I'm proud of you, but it's so emotional for me to read about our life, and I feel bad.' On one hand I'm thinking to myself, you know what I write about and you've known from the beginning what I do, but at the same time I feel guilty sharing it with the world.'

She's not entirely forthcoming. Does anyone outside of her inner circle know the name of the touring musician she left in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in the middle of the night in 2004, after years of emotional and psychic abuse, and who was the *raison d'être* for *Because I Was In Love*? Or for that matter, the name of her last *inamorato*, whom she broke up with last winter, who inspired *Are We There*? Like everything else about Sharon Van Etten, there is the illusion of revelation – she seems to over-share at times, in order to conceal what she needs to, in her own version of the *Dance Of The Seven Veils*, but without truly standing naked before us. After all, there is the matter of the peach towel.

In the tiny kitchen, two bottles of Spanish wine sit atop the small refrigerator, its doors littered with photographs, business cards and something that someone put on the windshield of her Subaru a few years back. 'One day I came back to my car after a rainstorm, and someone left this magnet on it that just said, 'Love is always the appropriate response.' I had no idea who left it, but I've had it for all these years,' she tells me.

BUYERS' GUIDE

SHARON VANETTEN ON CD...



BECAUSE I WAS IN LOVE

LANGUAGE OF STONE, 2009

This is not quite the apology, or even an explanation for past

romantic missteps, that the title leads you to believe. Rather, it's a haunting précis of what happens when you put yourself in emotional and psychic peril. The close, unnerving harmonies hover above these spare songs like ghostly visitations from another time.



EPIC

BA DA BING, 2010

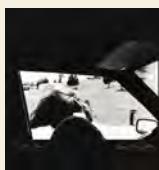
Less reflective and broken than its predecessor, Van Etten's moved into the second stage of grief after escaping from the abusive relationship that fuelled her debut. Brittle, biting words speak volumes of her emotional recovery, especially on the opener, 'Crime', where she vows she will 'never let myself love like that again.'



TRAMP

JAGJAGUWAR, 2012

The title refers to her unrelenting touring; but it was a second choice. She planned on calling it 'Transience', but then realised she needed something tougher. Produced by Aaron Dessner, it's more atmospheric and noisier than her earlier works, and a little more polished, but her introspection is even keener here.



ARE WE THERE

JAGJAGUWAR, 2014

Self-produced and self-aware, *Are We There* eschews the question mark to allow listeners to explore their own ambiguities about love, life and what's important to them. Fiercer than anything she's ever done, she veers from a widow's wail of PJ Harvey to the outrage of a young Patti Smith.

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• Are you always this sentimental? "I don't know. I think when the universe throws you signs, I'm like, OK, well, that meant something to me in that moment."

A leather keychain with her initials hangs from a nail — initials that make one think immediately of Stevie Ray Vaughan, without the tragic ending, although there have been moments of despair and abject sadness that bleed onto her albums, her songs the sound of love unraveling, each wrenching syllable a dark mirror that allows listeners to commiserate and experience Van Etten's pain as their own. But the eloquent expression of pain is just one side of Van Etten. "She's not sad like her songs," says Peter Silberman, lead singer of The Antlers, who asked Van Etten to sing on his band's magnum opus, *Hospice*, a sad record in its own right. "She's really much funnier than you'd expect. She's a total goofball. I'm obsessed with puns, so she gave me this book, *Get Thee To A Punnery*, on indefinite loan."

ONSTAGE VAN ETTEREN creates a sense of intimacy and comfort, more than a rapport, really. She's on par with Jeff Tweedy on dealing with hecklers, except she is never mean to them, like Tweedy is sometimes wont to be.

That wasn't lost on War On Drugs frontman Adam Granduciel, whose band toured with her in 2012 [in addition, he appears on "I Know" on the *Are We There* album].

"When we toured together in 2012, I was starting to come out of my shell as like a front person," Granduciel explains. "I saw how she would just let her guard down and just like talk to the audience and how they would respond to that. She would crack jokes but it wasn't like a shtick. She showed me it's OK to admit that you feel fortunate that you can play your music for your people. Or tell a story about the song, or admit how like sweaty you are right now. I felt like I'd figured something important on that tour: Sharon and I are more similar than I thought. I'm mildly socially awkward, too, and I realised there was no reason to hide that anymore."

"One of the things I've learned from talking to my friends and family and even fans is they say, 'It's such a relief to hear you make a joke after you've played a [painful] song. I knew what they meant,'" she says, rolling her eyes. "It's not like I'm not self-aware. I know when I have interviews people are relieved that I'm a goofball, because they're always

"I WRITE A LOT OF GARBAGE"

Sharon Van Etten on the perils of writer's block...

“I THINK ABOUT WRITING all the time, but sometimes I do get blocked, like everybody. If they say they don't, they're lying. I'll be sitting at my piano, and I'm just like, 'This sucks.' If I feel like I'm banging my head against the wall, I'll tell myself, 'You don't have to come up with something genius every day.' It's like, I write a lot of garbage, but it's better to just try. You don't have to keep all of it. Just take out the stuff that you like and get rid of the rest, and then you have pieces that eventually become songs. But you have to stop when you feel like you're forcing it. If I feel like I'm trying to force it, I try other mediums. I read, I go to galleries, or movies. I like to cook. I like to knit."

Me?" No surprise there.

"Sharon has always known her own mind," says her mother. "She was the kind of kid who would wear her slip over her dress. No matter what we thought. And we let her. We were always amazed at what she was reading. She's always been a bit of a seeker."

telling me, 'I thought you'd be this dark, brooding goth girl speaking behind a veil...'

"I'm like, 'That's one side of me, and if I didn't write music I might be that person *all* the time. But I exorcise it. I'm many things. I'm funny, I'm sad, I get angry. I'm sentimental, I'm romantic. This record shows more of that. And seeing me live you get more of a full, visual experience of who I really am. Because I'm playing with my friends. My family's in the audience. I'm nervous as hell."

The second of two nights at New York's Bowery Ballroom functions as a hometown show for Van Etten, who grew up across the river in New Jersey. She's expecting 50 Van Etten fans to attend. She's close to her family — she's one of five children. Her father is a computer programmer, her mother an assistant principal and a history teacher at a high school. Their first date was a Manassas concert in 1973. Her love of rock came from her father, who took her to Jethro Tull, Neil Young and Bob Dylan concerts. "He knows everything about The Byrds," she tells me. Her mother balanced out her musical education, playing her cast recordings of musicals and Lesley Gore. "I particularly liked her song 'You Don't Own

They check in on each other with great regularity. Maybe more because of those five years they didn't talk when she was ensconced in Tennessee after leaving college and moving in with her boyfriend. When she finally left the abusive situation — driven to the airport by her friend Rebeka Nolan, the woman whose photo is on the cover of *Are We There* — her sister picked her up at the airport and drove her to her parents' house on Thanksgiving. She knocked at the door and her mother answered it with a stack of dishes in her hands, almost dropping it.

"My mom called me after hearing some of these songs [on *Are We There*]. She's like, 'Are you OK?' I told her I was great. She worries about me. But she's never tried to change me. She just raised me to be who I am. My mom is a Pisces too, so we fought a lot. But she always said I was the best birthday present she ever got. I said, 'But what about when I was at high school? I was a total bitch to you.' About eight years ago, it was Mother's Day, and I got a little stoned and I called her, crying. I told her, 'I'm so sorry for everything I've put you through. I'm a terrible daughter.' She just started laughing at me. I guess I wasn't that bad. I didn't really drink, but I was boy-crazy."

VAN ETTEREN PICKS up a few tea canisters and finally chooses Lady Grey. "Is this all right for you?" she asks, looking back over her shoulder. She busies herself boiling water, while Miles Davis plays softly in the background. "I was just in a kind of mellow mood today," she tells me. "It's sunny out, but I don't feel like going outside. Miles just sets the tone, because I know tonight's going to be pretty hectic."

It's good you know that. "I'm the middle child and was raised as a mediator. You have to be able to assess things immediately. Am I going to be the one that cheers you up? The one that's just quiet and listens? Am I going to be the one that needs to take care of you, or am I going to be the one that lets people take care of me?"

"I have a lot of siblings, and in my life most of my friends take me under their wing. Everybody looks out for me. I am their little sister all the time."

Tough and tender: Van Etten live in 2014



"I've learned how music has saved me"
SHARON VAN ETTEREN

Van Etten in New York, 2014:
"Thinking about becoming a therapist..."



“There isn’t anything I wouldn’t do for Sharon,” says The National’s Aaron Dessner. He certainly proved it, producing Van Etten’s previous album, *Tramp*, in the studio in his converted garage in Brooklyn’s Ditmas Park. He also introduced her to her current bandmate and secret weapon, Heather Woods Broderick. “I said yes immediately to producing her. I felt instinctively that I could help Sharon, and I also felt very inspired by her songs.”

But Van Etten deliberately shed that protective cocoon for *Are We There*. “Mostly I didn’t want to put out the same record twice; it’s boring,” she explains. “I know that a lot of me wanting to do it myself is a mix of insecurity and pride. It’s that middle-child thing again: I can do this by myself. I’ll show you I can. I wouldn’t take back working with Aaron for the world. I love what we did together, but I still felt there were some sonic compromises, choices I wouldn’t have made, things I ended up letting go. Mostly because I was

in Aaron’s world. It was his studio. He’d gone above and beyond what any other producer would do. I would leave and he would keep working, because it was his home. But when I started doing interviews, people kept asking who played on the record, instead of talking about the songs. I ended up feeling like the people who played on the record overshadowed the songwriting. I know it was a publicist’s dream when you’ve got the guy from The National producing it and all these other bands [*Beirut*, *Wye Oak*, *Julianna Barwick*, *Walkmen*] involved.

“This time, I did everything I wanted to do with the people I liked, and I didn’t know how it was going to turn out. But, y’know, I didn’t mind the uncertainty. It’s a little like why I left the question mark off the title. I wanted to leave it open-ended and people to be able to apply it to themselves.”

War On Drugs bassist Dave Hartley (who appears on *Epic* and *Are We There*) says: “What I learned from working with Sharon is that record

making can be fun and serious. They aren’t mutually exclusive. That you can helm your record without excluding your collaborators and bandmates. There was a lot of ‘The best idea is the idea that will be used.’ But there was never any doubt it was Sharon’s record. She played some drums, some bass, lots of guitar, keys. It was fun to watch her stretch her wings.”

Still, she continues to inspire protective impulses in friends and associates. Even Jimmy Fallon babied her on her first TV appearance. He let her redo her take after she hit her head on the mic. Meanwhile, Van Etten’s guitarist, Doug Keith, feels it’s his job to shield her from over-zealous fans. “Everybody thinks they know her. I always keep an eye on her if I see her over at the merch table. Sometimes I have to save her from an over-enthusiastic fan.”

“Doug’s right,” says Van Etten. “Sometimes he does have to come and save me. When I can, I’ll talk to people after a show, if my voice is OK and it’s not too much of a crazy show. But people do come up and tell me some really heavy stories to be telling somebody at a merch table. I love that, and at the same time I don’t feel qualified to deal with it. There’s some of that I’ve been a little freaked out by, but for the most part I remind myself that the connection is so important.”

Whether she’s qualified or not, a doctor in Vermont told her a few years ago that he was using her albums in his therapy session for the mentally disturbed. That apparently resonated with the singer. “I think about going back to school and becoming a therapist, because I feel I’ve learned how much music has meant to me and how it saved me, and I want to help other people learn how to do that. Because I think if I can connect with people on a more one-on-one level, I’ll know I’m actually helping people.”

Nick Cave helped her when she opened two months of shows for him last spring and functioned as one of his backup singers. “He was like, ‘I hear you crying before every show. What’s all that about?’” Van Etten relates. “So I told him my boyfriend didn’t like that I toured so much. I asked him, ‘You fight with your wife, right? You tour, you write, you work constantly, and you must fight all the time.’” Cave’s reply – “We fight, but never about work” – finally made her realise she had to choose between having a relationship and being on the road nine months of the year.

“That whole two months that we were out together was a journey of reminding myself that what I was doing wasn’t completely selfish. But I started asking myself questions about why I’m doing it and why I feel bad with my boyfriend. My friends and my family, they miss me, but they’ve never given me a hard time about what I do. They’re proud, you know? That was something I just couldn’t get past with him. He loves me, he cares about me, he’s proud of me too, but the stakes felt higher when we became serious as a couple, and it’s a hard thing to take in your life knowing that someone’s going to be gone nine months out of the year.”

She stops for a second, lifts the teacup to her mouth to take a sip and immediately puts it down on the table and makes a face. “I’m still learning this Lady Grey tea is a lot stronger than I think.”

Are We There is available on Jagjaguwar; *Sharon Van Etten* tours the UK in late November

A LITTLE HELP FROM HER FRIENDS...

WHEN SHARON MET

J MASCIS Collaborated with Van Etten on “Prisoners” for a John Denver tribute album. Live, they appeared together during a Mike Watt & Friends performance in NY last May.

JOHN CALE Handpicked Van Etten to cover two of Nico’s songs at 2013’s *Life Along The Borderline: A Tribute To Nico*. She performed “The Falconer” and “My Only Child”.

DAVE HARTLEY The War On Drugs bassist met Van Etten when he was hired to photograph her for Philadelphia’s *Weathervane* series back in 2010. Has played on *Because I Was In Love* and *Are We There*. Meanwhile, Hartley’s War On Drugs partner Adam Granduciel toured with Sharon Van Etten’s band, and played on *Are We There*.

ZACH CONDON Beirut founder and singer Condon appeared on “We Are Fine” on Van Etten’s *Tramp*.

Your guide to Ms Van Etten’s key collaborators

AARON DESSNER The National’s guitarist produced *Tramp*. He and Justin Vernon also covered Van Etten’s “Love More” live at the 2010 MusicNOW Festival. His brother, Bryce, also played guitar on *Tramp*. Van Etten returned the favour, contributing vocals to The National song “Think You Can Wait” from the soundtrack to indie comedy *Win Win*.

PETER SILBERMAN The Antlers tapped her as the only guest vocalist for their 2009 album, *Hospice*.

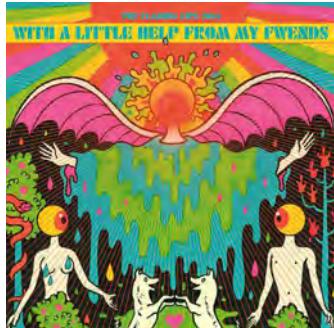
RUFUS WAINWRIGHT The pair covered “Baby It’s Cold Outside” for Starbucks’ 2012 Christmas comp, *Holidays Rule*.

THURSTON MOORE Van Etten guested with Moore’s *Chelsea Light Moving* on their “Groovy & Linda” at her Nov 2012 live show. She later invited Moore to sing Neil Young’s “Barstool Blues” with her and her dad for NY’s birthday.

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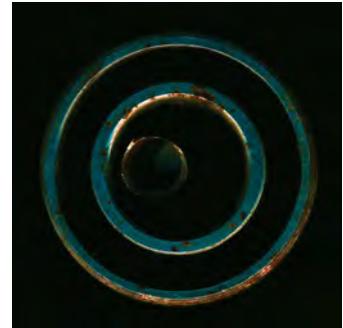
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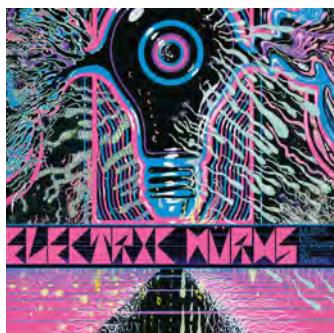
'Enchanting' The 405



BALLET SCHOOL

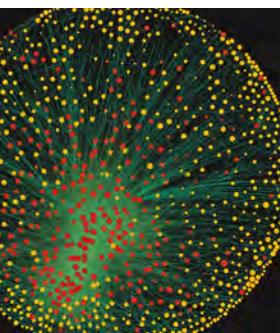
The Dew Lasts An Hour

**** UNCUT



ELECTRIC WÜRMS

Musik, Die Schwer Zu Twerk



MIDLAKE

Antiphon



JONATHAN WILSON

Fanfare



JOHN GRANT

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Robert Wyatt

...looks back on his life's work, starting with Soft Machine: "We were incredibly loud!"

SINCE SHOOTING FROM sleepy Canterbury to the clubs of London's '60s psychedelic underground as drummer and occasional vocalist with Soft Machine, Robert Wyatt has remained one of England's most idiosyncratic, thoughtful and fascinating artists. "When you're working as a musician, you're in a dream world that's beyond rational explanation," he tells us, outlining a unique approach that has over the years seen him feted and assisted by rock royalty, including various members of Pink Floyd and Roxy Music. "So what comes out comes out."

Though it sadly looks unlikely that we'll see any new music from him (see page 8), Wyatt is delighted to talk us through his varied catalogue – from Soft Machine and Matching Mole to his acclaimed solo records – with his customary wry humility still very much intact.

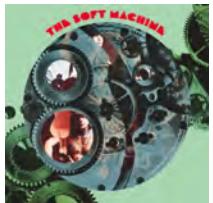
"I'm an old man now... But it's very, very nice for me that you take an interest and you think other people want to read about this!" *TOM PINNOCK*



Wyatt in furs: Soft Machine in 1968, with Kevin Ayers, left, and Mike Ratledge, right

SOFT MACHINE THE SOFT MACHINE

PROBE/BARCLAY, 1968



The toast of London's underground scene, Wyatt, bassist and vocalist Kevin Ayers and organist Mike Ratledge bashed out their debut while on tour with Hendrix in the US.

Robert Wyatt: Although we were a rock band, all the music we'd listened to live had been jazz, so the idea of extending songs with improvisations seemed totally natural to us. The original intention was to get together and do Kevin's songs. He was the only one in the group who wrote proper songs – I think he could easily have been up there, in terms of success, with people like Donovan and maybe Ray Davies. But he got landed with us and waylaid a bit, though I think he enjoyed the ride for a year or so. We weren't really a recording band until we made an obligatory first record in the middle of a tour of the United States. It was just done in quite a rush. How long did it take to record? About as long as it sounds. We had a few weeks off in New York, around when we toured with Hendrix, before getting back on the road again, so we went into the studio and did a live gig, really. It's pretty ramshackle for a debut record by an aspiring band. Our management had offered us a record producer who had guaranteed hits, he'd done The Yardbirds and Donovan. But they said, he will decide what tunes you'll do and how you'll do them. We thought, well, what's the fun in that? So we turned that down. After that the management were really pissed off with us, so they just let us carry on in our own way.

SOFT MACHINE THIRD

CBS, 1970



Wyatt's last album with the increasingly complex Soft Machine featured his first foray into solo work, the 20-minute, multi-part "Moon In June".

Kevin had left at the end of '68 to do what he should have been doing, and Mike surfaced as the voice of the group as he developed his organ playing skills. Mike or [bassist] Hugh Hopper had started writing pieces more directly influenced by the jazz of the day. The difference was that we were incredibly loud, and there's no way I know how to play drums like a jazz musician and be heard at that volume, so what came to my rescue was watching Keith Moon and thinking, 'That's the way, yeah.' Just fucking get on with it! We experimented with tape on *Third*, there were people we knew who'd been doing tape stuff – Terry Riley, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop and Delia Derbyshire. We took it in and used it in our context. Artists and musicians are just trying to stave off boredom really, so we tried to do stuff that interested us, whatever it was. I'd been working on my own when I could. 'Cause I can't write music, it's easier to just play it yourself rather than showing it to someone else. On "Moon In June", I used all the keyboards that happened to be in the studio, to try to keep it varied. It was my attempt to do an extended piece that wasn't just about improvisation, but was composed all the way through. So it was a bit of a mountain climb for me, but it turned out to be useful for later on in my life. It was the start of what I would later do.

MATCHING MOLE MATCHING MOLE

CBS, 1972



The first of two LPs that year from Wyatt's new "democratic" group, originally featuring his Wilde Flowers bandmate Dave Sinclair on keys, guitarist Phil Miller and bassist Bill MacCormick.

I thought I could carry on as the drummer in Soft Machine and as a vocalist and songwriter doing stuff in recording studios, but I think I'd become too drunk and irresponsible to work with, frankly. What was humiliating was that I sort of agreed with them. But I look back on it and think it sort of worked out. I didn't go straight to solo stuff after Soft Machine as I didn't think you could have a full life's work just writing songs. I thought, working life as a musician is being in a group. I thought it was the law, you know, all young men must go into a beat group. Just like 10 years before that, young men had to go into the army, then they cancelled national service and invented beat groups, so they could carry on the tradition of sending young men over to conquer Hamburg. With Matching Mole, there was an attempt to be a democratic unit, though I did take it over with my bloody Mellotron at the end of things. Phil Miller wrote lovely pieces, but they weren't completed, so they were perfect vehicles as launch pads for improvisation. Dave Sinclair was uncomfortable, he just wanted to do songs, but I really liked what he did on organ, I thought he was lovely on it. So he only lasted for that record. I thought it was a good band, but we had no money, and the business was ramshackle. It was very hard to develop, we really were poor.



Wyatt's desk job: recording his solo work in 1974

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



ROBERT WYATT ROCK BOTTOM

VIRGIN, 1974

After 1970's jammy, uneven *The End Of An Ear* came Wyatt's solo debut proper, and the first he made after being paralysed when drunkenly falling from a third-storey window. Features a host of guests, including Mike Oldfield, Hugh Hopper, Ivor Cutler and Mongezi Feza.

People say, it must have been awful when you broke your back, and I say, not really. It just set me on another more fruitful path. Alfie [Benge, now Wyatt's wife] and I hadn't been together long when she got this job of going to Venice and making *Don't Look Now*. I was still a biped and tagged along. They hired a flat on Giudecca, one of the non-touristy islands, and plonked me there. Alfie got me a little keyboard to keep me busy whilst they were. Then I had my accident, and for the first time ever I had to spend a lot of

time just sitting back and going over ideas in my head as opposed to desperately trying to make something happen immediately. So I was primed by the time I came out of hospital. It's partly therapy in a way, because when people become disabled they can become very internalised and feel cut off from the world. I'm not brave, I just pretend it's not happening and think about something else. So that's what *Rock Bottom* enabled me to do. [Richard] Branson came up to the hospital, bless him, and said if you want to make a record when you come out you can record one for us, so that gave me a specific thing to come out and do. I thought because I don't have to work in a group I can ask different musicians to be on each track. It was a kind of freedom I hadn't thought of before. Nick Mason was great as producer, he was very funny. I've always got on with other drummers, we can speak to each other really. We were quite used to our lowly place in the hierarchy. Alfie thought the music I'd made before was too congested, so she got me to listen to things like *Astral Weeks* by Van Morrison and said look how he leaves the space. So *Astral Weeks* was an influence on the sheer spaciousness of *Rock Bottom*. I wanted to make the most enjoyable, rich records I could make, and if that means me doing something then I'll do it, but if I think someone else could do it instead, I'll get them to do it. My voice is one of many, it's got some things it can do and other things it can't do. So just find somebody else who can, no problem. I say no problem, but when you have to find people who have their own character, their own way of doing things, but also don't mind having a go at your own stuff, that does narrow it down.

ROBERT WYATT RUTH IS STRANGER THAN RICHARD

VIRGIN, 1975



Rock Bottom's
jazzier, more playful
follow-up, with
Wyatt co-writing
with numerous
collaborators
including Phil
Manzanera, Bill
MacCormick and Fred Frith.

Rather like with the second *Matching Mole* one, with the second solo one I felt I should hand it over to the other musicians, I thought it'd be fairer. So there's a long piece on it, "Muddy Mouth", which is basically Fred Frith's piano piece which I really loved, so I put words to that. It's lighter than *Rock Bottom* because I was hanging about with people in a studio and having a laugh. It just sort of lightens you up a bit, takes the weight off things. And unexpected accidents of a delightful nature can happen. On "Team Spirit", George Khan, a wonderful tenor player, does the solo, and I got Brian Eno in, who hates jazz, to try and fuck it up as it went on. George plays so beautifully, and Eno's definitely trying to drown it out with computer noise and echo, but it's a battle that neither of them wins, so you get the best of both worlds. I think it's amazing, that bit. Laurie Allen [on drums] is pure jazz on that, and Bill MacCormick is very nimble, so aside from me just playing the piano chords, my favourite bit is the bit I'm not really on at all. It makes me laugh every time I hear it.

ROBERT WYATT

ROBERT WYATT NOTHING CAN STOP US

ROUGH TRADE, 1982



A compilation of Wyatt's politically aware Rough Trade singles, including the Elvis Costello-written "Shipbuilding" and a cover of Chic's "At Last I Am Free".

Virgin put me on a retainer so I could write, but I thought, 'This is dishonorable as I'm not sure I'm ever going to come up with anything, I'm just accumulating a debt.' So I said, 'Look, I'm knocking it on the head.' Branson was really cross and upset. It took us over a decade to pay off the debts, which is why Virgin wouldn't let me make an LP for anybody else during that time. It wasn't 'til Rough Trade said let's just do some singles that we found a way out of that. During that time, I found that there's more authentic and real things happening in politics than in music. While rock musicians were posing as victims of the establishment, there were people out there who really were victims, in Africa or South America, so I thought I would celebrate those people. Things like that overwhelm me, in terms of what goes on in my head, more than, you know, thinking up a nice little tune or something. I didn't plan to put these on an LP, they're quite topical and throwaway. Around that time, Swell Maps, Ben Watt and Scritti Politti came along and asked me to do a couple of things for them. Very nice people. So that surprised me – apparently, I had been heard! I certainly didn't feel guilty when I was charged as being a rock dinosaur, because I hadn't been successful enough to be a rock dinosaur. My records are all quite scruffy, so I already had a lot in common with punk when it came along.

ROBERT WYATT SHLEEP

HANNIBAL, 1997



After releasing two more albums sparsely recorded on his own, and battling depression in the early '90s, Wyatt returns with a host of guests, and a new lyrical collaborator...

People said to me, why don't you get other musicians on your records? And I said, well, I can't afford to hire them. And they said, just ask people, there'd be people who wouldn't mind playing. I didn't really know who, but people turned up, old friends like Brian Eno and some wonderful new ones like Paul Weller. And then the trombonist Annie Whitehead and saxophonist Evan Parker came along. It was a treat. It became a sort of imaginary group in the end. I was recording at Phil Manzanera's studio. That was a breakthrough. I'd always been clockwatching, as it's very expensive, recording. But Phil said, "Look, we'll set a price for it, then just do it as long as it takes", which was a fantastically generous thing to do. I found that

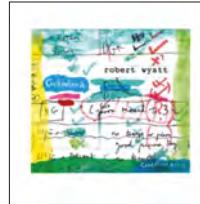


Last chance to see: Wyatt around the release of 2007's *Comicopera*

I still did have ideas, you know, and I wanted to try stuff out. But the key thing that came up in the last of my solo things was that Alfie – who had already been doing my covers – started writing these poems and verses. She'd always done that, but I started using them because I found I came up with much more music than I had words. And her words were a revelation for me, they completely expanded what I could do. Singing words from outside that weren't standards by other people, but nor were they devices I had come to rely on, they had a completely different approach. That became my group, me and Alfie, and without that I don't really know what I'd have done.

ROBERT WYATT CUCKOOLAND

HANNIBAL, 2003



Wyatt's surprising rejuvenation continued with this synth-led LP, inspired by jazz drumming and the finest painters.

Billy Higgins came up with the avant-garde in the '50s, but he always liked to swing. His beat got lighter and lighter – there were some gossamer-light cymbal things he was doing, just a gentle swing. So that gave me ideas. Plus you could do a lot only using the top of the kit, without the use of legs. So I started using cymbals again. I know a lot of rock people thought, 'Well, there's the problem right there, Robert, if you cut out all those jazzy cymbals, and just had a rock steady beat there, you'd have sold loads more.' And I thought, yeah, but of what? It was lovely that Dave Gilmour was on this. I always think of Floyd as real aristocrats of music, not just a group who are up for a blowing session here and there. Paul Weller put the idea in my head, and David was up for it. But I was a bit embarrassed, 'cause at one point he said, "Robert, what's that chord?" And I had to say, "I don't know, David!" He was lovely, a gentleman. I was interested in becoming a painter long

before I was interested in becoming a musician. If you think of painters like Turner, his work is awash with smoky effects which you can only just see things through, and I was impressed by that. I do a bit of that myself on *Cuckooland*.

ROBERT WYATT COMICOPERA

DOMINO, 2007



Perhaps his final solo album, this three-part epic moves from hazy introspection to political disenchantment, ending in a celebratory, foreign-language finale.

I didn't start with a concept, I start doing stuff I want to do and look at the shape of it afterwards. And having got these bits and pieces, I thought I'd put them into three sections. So it did end up as a concept but it wasn't devised as one. This is the album of mine that I least wince to when I'm playing it back. I managed to remember what made me wince about my previous records, and studiously avoid doing those particular things, including not burying the voice – thank you, David [Gilmour], for that advice! I think it helped that the musicians I worked with, although there were some new ones, had really got the hang of what I'm on about. Jamie Johnson, who was starting out when I first worked with him on *Shleep*, had become a very experienced and skilled engineer and was very quick and very funny too. Dave Sinclair was on this too – it was lovely, a link with the past. I still think it's terribly difficult to focus political ideas into songs. What's on my mind will come through in the lyrics, but that doesn't suddenly make me a frontline activist. I salute people like Billy Bragg, who has put himself out there to talk to people, but I haven't done that. There's nothing in my music that reaches out to people who wouldn't normally listen to it. It's like dreaming about politics, in a way. ☺

Wyatt's *Different Every Time* compilation is out on Nov 17; the biography of the same name is out now

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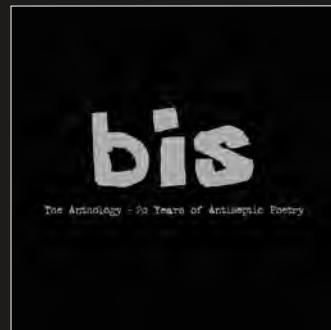


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THIS MONTH: PINK FLOYD | BRYAN FERRY | NEIL YOUNG & MORE



TRACKLIST

- 1 Down On The Bottom
- 2 Married To My Hack
- 3 Kansas City
- 4 Spanish Mary
- 5 Liberty Street
- 6 Nothing To It
- 7 When I Get My Hands On You
- 8 Duncan And Jimmy
- 9 Florida Key
- 10 Hidee Hidee Ho #11
- 11 Lost On The River #12
- 12 Stranger
- 13 Card Shark
- 14 Six Months In Kansas City (Liberty Street)
- 15 Lost On The River #20

LOST ON THE RIVER: The New Basement Tapes

ELECTROMAGNETIC/ISLAND/HARVEST

A forgotten box of Dylan's lyrics from 1967, set to music by Elvis Costello, Jim James and more. By Graeme Thomson

7/10

IN 2011, BOB DYLAN's Egyptian Records imprint released a record on which Jack White, Tom Petty, Lucinda Williams and Dylan himself set 12 previously unpublished lyrics by Hank Williams to new music.

Instigating the *Lost Notebooks Of Hank Williams* project may have jogged Dylan's memory regarding the whereabouts of some of his own back pages. Shortly after the album was released, T Bone Burnett, the ubiquitous enabler of American roots music, received a call from Dylan's publishers revealing the discovery of an entire box of words, dating from 1967, which Dylan had apparently forgotten even existed. Would Burnett, a friend since the days of Rolling

Thunder in the mid-'70s, care to do something with them?

Because the lyrics were contemporaneous with *The Basement Tapes*, Burnett duly assembled a modern-day approximation of The Band in the form of Elvis Costello, My Morning Jacket's Jim James, Marcus Mumford, Taylor Goldsmith from Dawes and Rhiannon Giddens from Carolina Chocolate Drops. The group of all-singing multi-instrumentalists convened for two weeks to transform lost scraps into living songs, working as an ensemble and taking lead vocals on three tracks each.

The unveiling of these 15 'new' Basement-era songs (20 on the deluxe version) coincides with the release of *The Basement Tapes* →

New Albums



Doing Dylan: (l-r) Jim James, Elvis Costello, Marcus Mumford, Taylor Goldsmith and Rhiannon Giddens

→ *Complete*, an exhaustive six-disc excavation of the wild, woolly treasure trove of originals, covers, standards, country, blues and folk songs recorded by Dylan and The Band in the basement of Big Pink in 1967 (see feature page 34). It's entirely typical of Dylan that, even as one hand is flourishing what is being billed as the royal flush of unexpurgated *Basement* recordings, the other is shuffling yet more mystery and intrigue into the deck.

In truth, the shared DNA between *Lost On The River* and the original *Basement Tapes* can appear negligible; the departure points for these songs are often inauspicious. It's not hard to divine, for instance, why Dylan might have quickly lost interest in the generic love lyric of

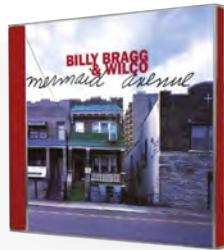
"When I Get My Hands On You", which Mumford turns into a creeping soul number with a staccato violin pulse, or the lovelorn whimsy of "Florida Key". Even the most routine songs, however, convey some glimmer of an extraordinary imagination at work. "I want a Tombstone pearl-handled revolver," runs a line in the otherwise unremarkable "Stranger". "I want to meet a pale man with a halo in his hair."

Other songs, such as "Spanish Lady", clearly arrived more fully formed. Set to a brooding minor-key melody not a million miles from the traditional "Blackjack Davey", recorded by Dylan on *Good As I Been To You*, the words toy with the tropes of countless old folk narratives, with three sailors pondering an existential

riddle: "Beggar man, tell me no lie/Is it a mystery to live, or is it a mystery to die?" Musically, it's an outstanding collective performance, dominated by Giddens' ominous minstrel banjo and powerful vocal. It aches to be performed by Dylan himself.

Elsewhere, it's diverting to hear wildly different styles applied to the same words. Written by James but sung with quavering conviction by Costello, "Lost On The River #12" is a moving if slightly ponderous country-soul ballad which wouldn't have sounded out of place on Costello's *The Delivery Man*. A later variation on the same lyric, "Lost On The River #20", turns the song into the sombre reflection of someone who escaped the madness of being

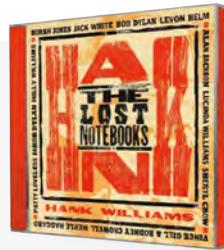
UNFINISHED BUSINESS: FOUR MORE EXAMPLES OF CREATIVE TIME TRAVEL



BILLY BRAGG & WILCO *Mermaid Avenue* ELEKTRA, 1998

Woody Guthrie wrote on a daily basis, and left behind thousands of unrecorded lyrics when he died in 1967. Approached by his daughter Nora to put an eclectic sample to music, Billy Bragg roped in Wilco and set to work. The joyous results were an unlikely triumph.

9/10



VARIOUS *The Lost Notebooks Of Hank Williams* EGYPTIAN, 2011

When Williams died in '53, he left behind four notebooks. Owned first by his publisher, Acuff-Rose, then Sony, Bob Dylan agreed to cut an LP based on the ideas. In the end he contributed one track, alongside the likes of Levon Helm and Rodney Crowell.

8/10



THEA GILMORE & SANDY DENNY *Don't Stop Singing* ISLAND, 2011

In 2010, Sandy Denny's estate sent Gilmore a booklet of lyrics culled from Denny's notebooks, with the aim of turning them into 10 new songs. Gilmore's crystalline, English voice proves a fine substitute, especially on "Glistening Bay" and "Long Time Gone".

8/10



NEW MULTITUDES *New Multitudes* ROUNDER, 2012

A continuation of sorts of *Mermaid Avenue*, initiated by the Guthrie estate to mark the 100th anniversary of his birth, Jim James hooked up with Jay Farrar, Will Johnson and Anders Parker to raid the still copious Guthrie archive for inspiration.

7/10

Bob Dylan in 1965 and 1966 and can scarcely believe he's survived to tell the tale. "The waves they rolled and tumbled over me/I spied dry land and a tall, veiled tree/I knew that soon that's where I'd like to be." Sung by Giddens, it's an eerily beautiful meditation.

Water, women and – oddly – Kansas feature heavily. "Kansas City" is melancholic country-folk with a rousing chorus which finds Dylan, not for the first time, in thrall to a "gypsy woman", though Mumford's racked vocals over-egg the sense of unvarnished emotional vulnerability in lines like "You invited me into your house/Then

SLEEVE NOTES

► Produced by:

T Bone Burnett

Recorded: Capitol Studios, Los Angeles

Principal personnel: Elvis Costello (vocals, guitar, bass, piano, organ, ukulele),

Rhiannon Giddens (vocals, fiddle, banjo), Taylor Goldsmith (vocals, guitars, bass, piano, Mellotron), Jim James (vocals, guitar, synth, Mellotron, drums, bass), Marcus Mumford (vocals, guitar, bass, drums, mandolin), Jay Bellerose (drums),

T Bone Burnett

(guitar)

you say, 'You've gotta pay for what you break.'" The same town hosts Goldsmith's "Liberty Street", which sounds like a Richard Manuel ballad sung by Jackson Browne. Costello's take on the same words, retitled "Six Months In Kansas City (Liberty Street)", is a time-shifting racket which honours the rough-hewn spontaneity of the original *Basement Tapes* by remaining apparently half-finished.

Such attempts to locate the loose-limbed spirit of adventure that permeated Big Pink in

1967 can't help but feel a trifle contrived, yet the album largely succeeds in avoiding the pitfall of treating these words with stifling reverence. The hugely enjoyable "Nothing To It" rides a hollering, funky backyard groove all the way from The Band to Hall & Oates, slipping in a deceptively personal lyric as it does so, while "Duncan And Jimmy" and "Card Shark" are light-hearted character songs, the music played high on fiddle, banjo, mandolin and ukulele.

Elsewhere, there are intriguing echoes of other Dylans. Opener "Down On The Bottom" revisits the heartsick growl of *Time Out Of Mind*, a slow, swampy evocation of dread – "No place to go but up/Always been in trouble, nearly all my life" – sung superbly by James. Giddens' scattered backing vocals on the lurching "Married To My Hack" recall *New Morning* oddity "If Dogs Run Free", although the song's boozily unbuttoned demeanour – "Got 15 women and all of them swimming," roars Costello – is recognisably Big Pink in tone. Best of all is "Hidee Hidee Ho #11", a joyously slinky thing sung by James with a mischievous leer while Giddens coos in the background. A slow stroll in the moonlight, it recalls the riverboat shuffles of "Love And Theft".

What does it all add up to? *Lost On The River* is an album of good, sometimes excellent songs with a unique creation story which, in the end, adds little of substance to the narrative of perhaps the most mythologised recordings in musical history. As footnotes go, however, it's an entertaining, energised and often fascinating one.

Q&A

Producer T Bone Burnett on collaborating with "a 26-year-old Dylan with 50 years of hindsight..."

HOW DID THIS project get off the ground? Bob Dylan's publishers called up and said that they had found a box of lyrics from 1967 and would I be interested in doing something with them? The idea of collaborating with a 26-year-old Dylan with 50 years of hindsight was intriguing. It was Bob's idea, it was clear that he wanted this to happen.

What kind of state were the words in?

Mostly handwritten, some typed, there were drawings on some pages. They weren't all written out strictly as finished songs. Some had three or four verses, a chorus and a B section, and some were just three blues verses, or notes. They were all different. I didn't pore into the lyrics incredibly deeply, I wanted it to happen more in the studio rather than preconceive something, but the first read-through was pretty humbling. You know, how many beautiful lines he'd written and left behind. Over the past 50 years, who knows how much stuff he's got lying in boxes? Terrifying!

Did part of you think, 'Hang on, these are your words – finish the job yourself?' [Laughs] Well, he famously said, "Don't look back." I think he knows that I've done lots of period films and I understand different eras of music, and my guess is he was intrigued by what people could do with these words now.

How did you choose the musicians? I was looking for people who could all sing and play multiple instruments in their own right, as well as being band leaders. People who I knew to be collaborative. It wouldn't have done anyone any good for someone to come in and try to own it. The idea was not to try and take it in any direction, but let it find its own course.

How did the practicalities work? [Dylan] had identified 16 songs initially, which I sent to each artist. Some people decided to write things and some people decided to wait until they got to the studio and collaborate. I didn't give anybody instructions, it was a bit of a free for all. Then just as we were starting in the studio the publishers sent eight additional songs. "Nothing To It" was one of those, "Six Months In Kansas City", too. Almost all of it was hammered out in the studio, very quickly. Most of them are one or two takes, with everybody playing on each other's songs, sometimes on their second or third instrument, to keep that devil-may-care attitude alive. I think the fact that Bob was so generous with the lyrics encouraged everyone else to do that.

Are all the words we hear written by Dylan? I would say more than 90 percent of

what you hear are Bob's lyrics, but it was an archaeological dig. Someone might find an arm bone over here and put it with a shoulder bone over here; I think Elvis wrote two or three lines on "Lost On The River". We took liberties, but I don't think we did violence to anything. We stayed true to what was going down in the first place.

How would you define the relationship between this record and *The Basement Tapes*?

The relationship is between the intellect that began both of them, and his way of looking at life and the world. I'm not a scholar of this stuff. Bob is a friend of mine, a man who I love, and I feel I understand him in ways that not many people do – I feel Bob, if you know what I'm saying! But I'm not a Dylanologist. I've never listened to the complete *Basement Tapes*, for instance. We're not trying to replicate the sound of The Band and Bob in 1967, but we tried to stay true to the spirit of it, which was not to overwork the thing.

Will there be more? Hopefully there will be a second volume, because there was some 40-odd songs recorded. We have several versions of all of these songs – four or five versions of some. There's another album that could be finished quickly, and it's equally as good and interesting and different. It turned into a wonderful band, so it would be exciting to take it out on the road. It could be a wild show.

"Bob's a friend of mine, a man I love. I feel I understand him in ways not many people do..."

Did Dylan take an active interest? He just left us to it. He was mixing his own record in the next room at the same time, so he was there as a presence for us, but he didn't intrude at all. I think he was happy to let us have our way with this stuff. I've had feedback since it's been finished, and it's been positive.

Any gossip about his new album? Maybe I'm not

supposed to say anything, but I've heard it and it's stunningly beautiful. He does these old standards, and it's gonna flip people's wigs when they hear him do these songs. It's like Debussy or something. It's not like Woody Guthrie, but it's not lush either. It's just high, high, high.

INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON

JESSE DYL



T Bone Burnett:
"Who knows how
much stuff Bob's
got lying in boxes?
Terrifying!"



PINK FLOYD *The Endless River*

PARLOPHONE

Finally! The first new album in 20 years proves a graceful, open-hearted swansong, says Tom Pinnock

7/10

FOR A GROUP who perhaps personify English reserve, Pink Floyd's approach to making

their first new album in 20 years seems surprisingly open-hearted. *The Endless River* is ostensibly a tender tribute to the late Rick Wright, whose keyboards long provided much of the sonic identity of the band, from their days as psychedelic pipers and onwards – with the exception of *The Final Cut*, practically a Waters solo album anyway – to the tolling of *The Division Bell*.

The effort put into curating this 55-minute memorial, pairing hours of 21-year-old jams with newly recorded parts, appears considerable – four producers, eight keyboardists and a number of studios were enlisted during its long gestation. And compared to its chillier-named forebears, even the record's title seems to embrace warmer, hipper ideals, perhaps a sign that this once closed-off band of passive-aggressives have learned to go with the

flow and maybe even appreciate each other and what they do best.

As the first of the album's four "sides" drifts into earshot with a clear evocation of "Speak To Me" from *The Dark Side Of The Moon* – all hushed drones and muffled speech – it certainly seems that way. Side One continues in this comforting, warmly nostalgic vein: the synth and E-bowed acoustic guitar on "It's What We Do" recall the first few minutes of "Shine On You Crazy Diamond", even with the same dramatic chord change as the synths blossom. Soon, David Gilmour embarks on a very David Gilmour solo, all yearning melody and bent blue-notes, while Wright digs out his trademark French horn sound. It's no great departure, but it's beautifully bittersweet, and very Floyd.

It's not just the band's '70s work that is evoked throughout *The Endless River*, either. Side Two fades in with Wright's Farfisa fed through a Binson Echorec, a combination which soundtracked the

TRACKLIST

1	Things Left Unsaid
2	It's What We Do
3	Ebb And Flow
4	Sum
5	Skins
6	Unsung
7	Anisina
8	The Lost Art Of Conversation
9	On Noodle Street
10	Night Light
11	Allons-y (1)
12	Autumn '68
13	Allons-y (2)
14	Talkin' Hawkin'
15	Calling
16	Eyes To Pearls
17	Surfacing
18	Louder Than Words



Q&A

Phil Manzanera



What was the camaraderie like between Gilmour and Mason in the studio? Great. I think with bands, whatever may have gone on in the past, when you get together, you have a bit of a laugh. You're not thinking about all the other hassles. It comes from years and years of being together, having an instant sense of humour, even though you may have wanted to strangle each other at times. But Nick was fantastic. And David, the minute he starts playing his guitar, even though it could be two notes, it could only be him. He's got a sound and a touch.

What do you think *The Endless River* refers to? David [Gilmour] and Polly [Samson] chose the title. The song "Louder Than Words" was moved to the end as Polly's lyrics seemed to be a comment on their methods of working over their whole careers. It seemed like a fitting summation of the complexity of the music. Obviously, if one looks back, most of Pink Floyd's words were written by Syd and then Roger. But the musical context, which was so strong, was these three guys. It's like, the music is louder than words. It's not saying the music is more important. It's trying to describe what they do. Musical conversations, rather than verbal ones. MICHAEL BONNER

SLEEVE NOTES

► Produced by:

David Gilmour, Youth, Phil Manzanera and Andy Jackson

Recorded at: Britannia Row, Astoria (London); Gilmour's home studio

Personnel includes:

David Gilmour (vocals, guitars, keys, bass), Nick Mason (drums), Rick Wright (keys), Guy Pratt (bass), Bob Ezrin (bass), Jon Carin, Damon Iddins, Anthony Moore (additional keys), Gilad Atzmon (sax, clarinet), Escala (strings), Stephen Hawking (voice), Durga McBroom, Louise Marshall, Sarah Brown (backing vocals)

we fight/Diss each other on sight/But this thing we do..." he sings over a stately ballad that could have been a highlight of *The Division Bell*. "[We could] stay by the fire/Failed by desire/Stoking the flames/But we're here for the ride."

It's a surprisingly moving finale, and a fitting tribute to Wright. And yet, *The Endless River* as a whole is more than that. With its flashbacks to their past glories, it's also a memorial to Pink Floyd as a group, a glimpse of what's been lost and what could have been. From Polly Samson's lyrics, and Stephen Hawking urging us to "keep talking", to the opening clip of Wright discussing "things left unsaid", almost every word on *The Endless River* is about communication, and it serves to highlight just how bad the members of Pink Floyd have been at it, historically. Why they waited until Wright's death to make another album is one of many questions that remain unanswered.

Though it's the end, then, this isn't goodbye – that

already happened at Hyde Park in 2005. *The Endless River* is a transmission from the afterlife of the group, an echo from the past. That it far surpasses its cut-up, protracted origins, and might even be the best thing the Floyd have released for over 30 years, is a welcome surprise.

So, with a grand Gilmour solo, a departing wave of ambient noise and the same synth arpeggio that kicked things off almost an hour before, the record, and Pink Floyd, bow out. As always, with a little quiet desperation, but a lot of grace.

Barrett-era Floyd and hasn't been heard for around 40 years. Why Wright decided to bring it back is a mystery, but it's a perfect example of what producer Phil Manzanera has described as the "part-documentary" aspect of the album.

The middle sides are more experimental, and consequently more uneven, with the second marred by a stiff drum solo from Mason. On Side Three, however, the galloping blues of "Allons-y" is bisected by Wright beautifully playing the Royal Albert Hall organ in 1969, with new Gilmour parts answering his lines. It's reminiscent of the hymnal solemnity of "A Saucerful Of Secrets", and one of the record's highlights.

Though in truth nothing here is as inspired as "Echoes", "Astronomy Domine" or even "Comfortably Numb", *The Endless River*'s success as an immersive listening experience is all in the edit. The level of sonic detail across the four sides is staggering, a testament to the effort put into weaving these ragged offcuts and newly recorded additions into one seamless tapestry, that winds through the band's back catalogue towards its climax.

That elegiac conclusion, "Louder Than Words", takes up half of Side Four, and when Gilmour's vocals come floating in, it's a surprise. "We bitch and

A to Z

COMING UP
THIS MONTH...

p70 BRYAN FERRY

p72 SID GRIFFIN

p74 ARIEL PINK

p76 FOO FIGHTERS

p79 NEIL YOUNG

p80 SIMPLE MINDS

p81 U2

p82 THOMPSON

p83 ROBIN WILLIAMSON



2:54
The Other I

BELLA UNION

Erudite sister act puts indie through the blender

Londoners Colette and Hannah Thurlow's second album is inspired

by Romantic poet Shelley and his muse Elizabeth Hitchens, whom he called in his letters "sister of my soul" and "my second self". In exploring this, and their own sibling relationship, the pair have come up with a finely crafted album that blurs the lines between shoegaze, indie pop and goth-rock, and is as assured as it is atmospheric. There's a hint of La Roux in "Blindfold", an ice-cool pop song that's underpinned with a pounding post-punk beat, while the expansive yet intimate "Orion" sounds like Bat For Lashes duelling with The Cure.

FIONA STURGES



ALEX G
DSU

LUCKY NUMBER

Impressive debut from Philadelphia-based songwriter

Philly songwriter Alex G's bedroom intimacy has already won an army of online admirers, and this first physical release shows there's much to get excited about.

A multi-instrumentalist with nasal vocals, Alex Giannascoli is only 21 and already shows a masterful handling of mischievous lyrics and beautiful melodies, valuing repetition on skewed pop like "After Ur Gone", "Black Hair" and "Sorry". Guided By Voices are one influence, but there are also traces of *Another Green World*-era Eno, that ability to create beautiful pop that carries the hint of sinister atmosphere, particularly on "Promise", indie-slacker "Boy" and skittish piano filler "Tripper".

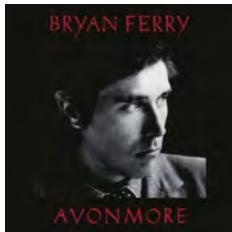
PETER WATTS

BRYAN FERRY

Avonmore

BMG

Don't stop the dance! Ferry's 15th solo album is a vigorous delight, says Michael Bonner



8/10

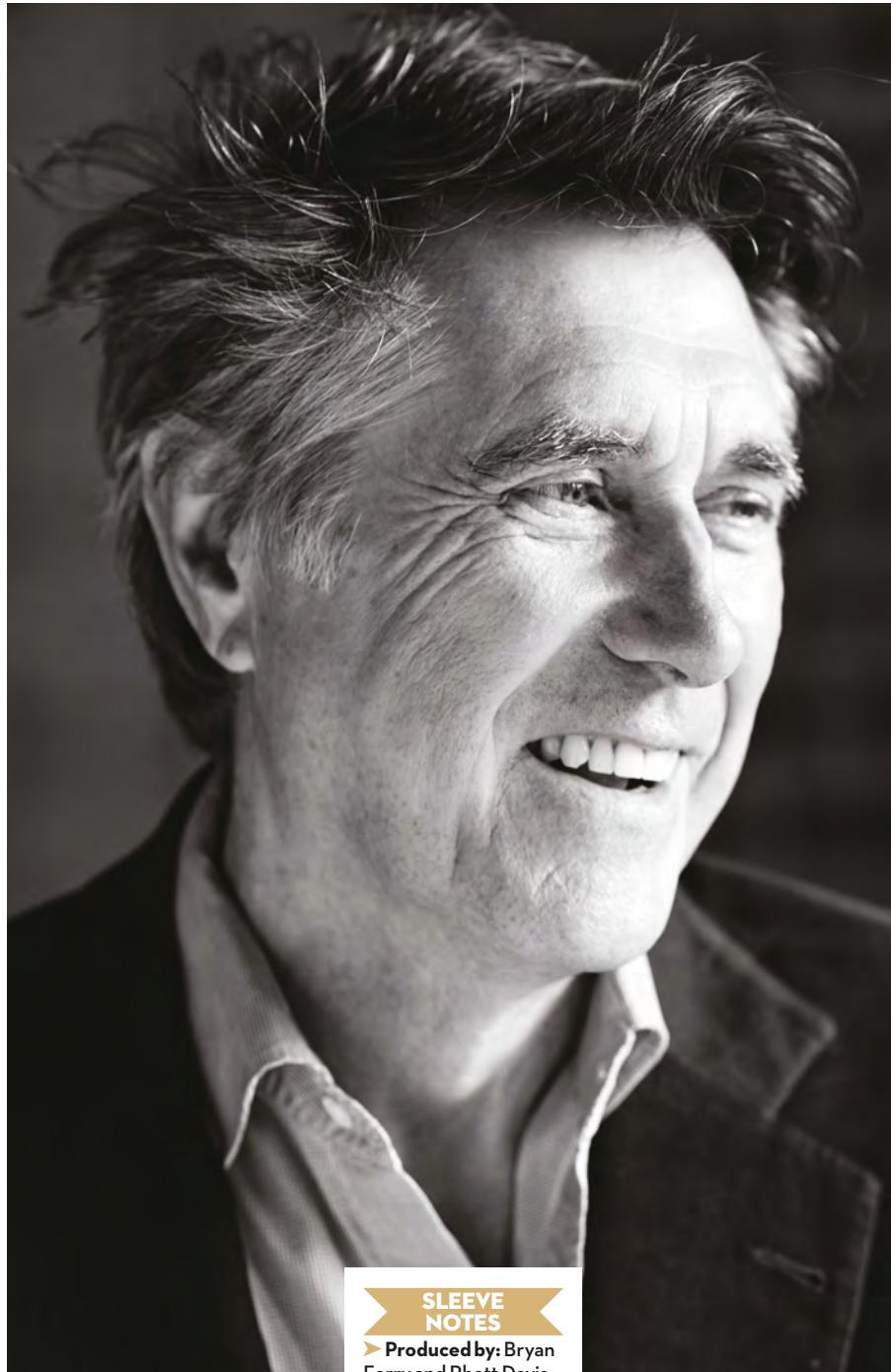
SOMETIMES, IN ORDER to move forward it is first necessary to go backwards. Take Bryan Ferry, for instance. On his last album, 2012's *The Jazz Age*, Ferry repurposed 13

favourite songs from

his back catalogue as instrumentals in a 1920s big-band style. The result was one of the very best of Ferry's solo efforts. He returns from his marvellous journey through the past, seemingly reinvigorated. Although *Avonmore* (the name of Ferry's studio) occupies largely familiar Ferry territory – luxurious, gilded funk – it comes delivered with an uncommon urgency and surprisingly muscular heft. Critically, *Avonmore* is also Ferry's first collection to feature original songs that date from the current century. Both 2002's *Frantic* and 2010's *Olympia* drew heavily on material recorded in 1996 with Dave Stewart; for the latter, Ferry even foraged through the abandoned early noughties' Roxy Music album for a couple of cuts. *Avonmore*, then, is evidence of Ferry's muse revived and inspired.

As it is, Ferry's 15th solo album begins with what sounds like a nod to the past. The initial 30 seconds or so of first track, "Loop De Li", resemble a gauzy sound collage lifted from *Avalon*: a sax riff from "While My Heart Is Still Beating", perhaps, a bass fill from "The Main Thing", maybe a guitar line from "Take A Chance With Me". All this changes, however, when Nile Rodgers' guitar drops in and the pulse quickens. "Loop De Li" and "Midnight Train", which follows it, are both supple but insistent, buoyed along on tight grooves. It would be disingenuous to suggest that Rodgers – an on-off collaborator since 1986 who plays on six of *Avonmore*'s tracks – is somehow responsible for Ferry's newfound swing. Indeed, "Loop De Li" features six guitarists, while "Midnight" credits – count 'em – nine, including Rodgers, Johnny Marr and Chris Spedding alongside Ferry's regular touring guitarists, Jeff Thall, Steve Jones (not the Sex Pistol!), and Jacob Quistgaard. Quite what there is for them all to do is a matter of conjecture – "nuance", presumably – but the cumulative effect is striking. By the time we reach "Driving Me Wild" – with its bleeps and DJ scratching across the intro – it's even possible to imagine Ferry's working up a sweat. The faster *Avonmore* goes, the better it sounds. When did Ferry last sound so thrillingly engaged?

Of course, the overriding vibe is that this would all sound extremely strong played loud on a yacht moored off Cap d'Antibes. Very much a case of: Cannes do. The album's guestlist, meanwhile, demonstrates Ferry has lost none of his power to assemble prestigious collaborators. Alongside the massed ranks of guitarists he assembles Flea,



SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** Bryan Ferry and Rhett Davis

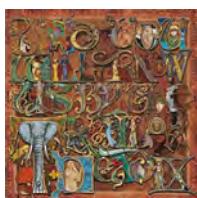
Recorded at: Olympia Studios, London

Personnel includes:

Johnny Marr (guitar), Nile Rodgers (guitar), Mark Knopfler (guitar), Guy Pratt (bass), Marcus Miller (bass), Flea (bass), Tara Ferry (drums), Cherisse Osei (drums), Fonzi Thornton (backing vocals)

meanwhile, is a strange fish. The backwards loops and Johnny Marr's crisp guitar notes add captivating texture; but they're drowned in soporific string arrangements. The cover of "Johnny And Mary", produced by Norwegian producer Todd Terje (of "Inspector Norse" fame) and first released in March, is strong, though its melted synths and '80s shimmers sound out of place here.

On the title track of Roxy's last studio album, *Avalon*, Ferry summarised a position that would define his solo career: "Now the party's over, I'm so tired." Subsequently, he fell easily into the persona of the perpetually unstretched roué, jaded by all the models and canapés and high-end Savile Row tailoring. *Avonmore*, instead, sounds like a man stirring from his ennui, popping the cork on a fresh bottle of Moët and striding out purposefully for one more spin around the dancefloor.



...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD IX

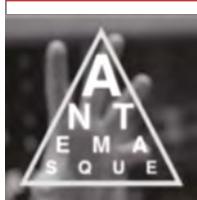
SUPERBALL MUSIC

7/10

Prolific Texans continue to square perspiration/inspiration circle

Rock's longest metonym, Texans ...Trail Of Dead have sometimes struggled to reconcile their talk with their walk. A big ideas band, their music these days gets painted on a Mars Volta-size canvas, on which their post-hardcore chops don't always carry the day. Like 2011's *Tao Of The Dead, IX* is a big thing, which sometimes rings rather hollow, anthemic stuff like "Jaded Apostles" pulling out production stops, but not demanding attention. Still, "Lie Without A Liar" and epic closer "The Sound Of The Silk" do a good job of tethering grand ambition to signature intensity.

JOHN ROBINSON



ANTEMASQUE

Antemasque

NADIE

Another Mars Volta side project – and a good 'un

Following a tiff around a ditched Mars Volta tour, that band's central

twosome Omar Rodríguez-López and Cedric Bixler-Zavala are back on good terms – and celebrating with this back-to-basics romp through highly melodic pop-punk. The lyrics, typically, are acid-fried but weirdly insightful observations hollered from a soapbox ("You can drink the yellow out your spine!"), but the riffs are totally clear-headed, occasionally galvanised by the Red Hot Chili Peppers' Flea and his dextrous basslines. Aside from the pleasantly Britpoppy "50,000 Kilowatts" and "Drown All The Witches", this is fast, fun, and full of more piss and vinegar than one might expect from such seasoned campaigners.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

7/10

ARCA

Xen

MUTE

Tipped Venezuelan producer makes stark and singular debut album

Off the back of just a handful of online tracks,

**8/10**

Arca was tapped up by Kanye West last year, and a close partnership with singer-producer FKA Twigs has led to some R&B masterpieces. Now he drops his debut album, and it's a stunning showcase of his emotional, slippery, psychologically fraught production style. The record is anchored around tinny dancehall and trap snares that are sent skittering off into anxiety-inducing flurries – the psychosis gets so bad at times that some tracks such as "Held Apart" and "Family Violence" shed their beats altogether, leaving just cowering pianos and strings. Bleak and unique.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



ATTAQUE ON LY OU

BAD LIFE

Former teenage Laurent Garnier devotee goes shoegaze Having earned praise for early techno releases from, among others,

Tiga and Erol Alkan, Colchester's Dominic Gentry here turns his back on the dancefloor in favour of melodic, richly produced electronica. It pays off on a refined, impressive debut album, whether he's building Seefeel-esque grooves with breakbeats, bells and drones on "Distant", or weirdly glutinous pop on "Future Earth". He even sculpts graceful Sigur Rós-style tension and release on "Let It Down", which also features poignantly warbled vocals. M83, Lemon Jelly, Radiohead and Caribou may be unlikely bedfellows, but Attaque is no ugly stepchild.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

Barr Brothers

WE'RE NEW HERE



► To say that Canadian-based alt.folk quartet Barr Brothers happened by serendipitous accident would be an understatement. Originally an avant-rock trio from Rhode Island named The Slip, they owe their transformation to a fire and a paper-thin apartment wall. "We were on tour with The Slip and were playing a club in Montreal that caught fire during our last song," explains frontman Brad Barr. The club was evacuated and on the pavement outside his brother, drummer Andrew Barr, lent his jacket to a girl who was shivering in the cold. He ended up marrying her and moving to Canada. "So I moved to Montreal, too," says Brad. "And my neighbour (Sarah Page) was a harpist. I heard her playing through the wall, asked her to join and that's how we came together."

With keyboardist Andres Vial completing the lineup, their self-titled 2011 debut earned rave reviews and a *Letterman* TV appearance. The follow-up *Sleeping Operator* took a year to record and was whittled down from 40 songs. "Sarah loves classical and I love rock'n'roll and we square it all in the Barr Brothers," Brad says. "It's not folk or rock or chamber pop or psychedelic or Americana. It's all of them mixed together."

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

BARR BROTHERS

Sleeping Operator

SECRET CITY

**7/10**

Former Bostonian art-rockers explore spacious Americana After Brad and Andrew Barr broke up Boston art-rockers The Slip, they shimmied over the Canadian border, recruited harpist Sarah Page and multi-instrumentalist Andres Vial and reinvented themselves on a self-titled album that was a highlight of 2011. The follow-up is even better, an exquisite exploration of spacious Americana, characterised by hushed vocals and intricate picking punctuated by experimental splashes. "Come In The Water" evokes both The Band and the Isleys, "Even The Darkness Has Arms" is Josh Ritter-ish and there are hints of Broken Social Scene and early Wilco. But ultimately the Barrs sound like themselves – and that's a rare and precious commodity.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



BASS DRUM OF DEATH

Rip This

INNOVATIVE LEISURE

Garage-band man dials it down

For this follow-up to his eponymous debut, former one-man-band John

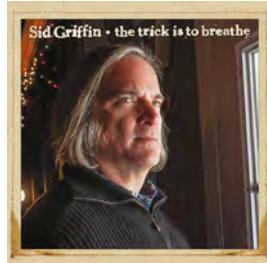
Barrett has enlisted drummer Len Clark and producer Jacob Portrait, and moved to a proper studio. And, it must be said, lost some of the garage-band magic that made that album so memorable. Now that things aren't constantly bouncing in the red, tracks like the crunching, burly "Electric" and fuzz-guitar stomp-boogie "Route 69 (Yeah)" sound as brutally direct and organised as Royal Blood; and now his vocals don't sound like you're hearing them through a plasterboard motel wall, his lyrical declarations of likes and dislikes just sound like Perry Farrell whingeing. With garage-punk, less truly would have been more.

ANDY GILL

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



SID GRIFFIN The Trick Is To Breathe

PRIMA

Former Long Ryder takes a short trip home

Since the demise of The Long Ryders at the beginning of the '90s, Kentucky native Griffin has made London his musical base, cutting records mostly with his band The Coal Porters, while carving out a dual career as a journalist and broadcaster. For his first solo album in a decade, however, he returned to his homeland, laying down these 12 tracks over an economical four-day period in Nashville.

Griffin says the brevity of the sessions was inspired by Dylan's *Nashville Skyline* and Billy Bragg's Joe Henry-produced *Tooth & Nail*, and it's the latter's laconic mood that most informs these songs. Assembling a crack squad of Nashville's finest, including members of Ricky Skaggs' band, Griffin immerses himself in the myths of Americana, often dabbling in intriguingly novel reportage. "Ode To Bobbie Gentry" chronicles the country star's rise to fame and subsequent retirement ("Christmas night in '78 was my last gig/It was walk away softly, or stay until I flipped my wig"), and Griffin also adopts a first-person narrative for "Elvis Presley Calls His Mother After The Ed Sullivan Show" ("In pink, white and black/I'm like a heart attack"). Other songs are, understandably, less specific in their subject matter, but Sid's scholarly approach to the hues and history of a nation's patchwork of musical styles reaps rewards throughout. The bluegrass canter of "I'll Forget You Very Well" waves a mandolin pick in the direction of Bill Monroe, "Between The General And The Grave" is a First World War saga that could have come from the pen of Kristofferson, while the sparse "Circle Bar" (written for a Long Ryders reunion but never recorded) addresses the death of a peer.

Beyond the spontaneity and freshness of the arrangements, it's Griffin's innate skill as a storyteller that marks the album out as a high-water mark in a career that has always celebrated traditional American music with eloquence and boundless enthusiasm. **TERRY STAUNTON**

8/10



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► Clearly making up for lost time, **Justin Townes Earle** (left) plans to follow up *Single Mothers*, his first album in two and a half years, with another effort in January. *Absent Fathers* was

recorded at the same sessions and, as you can probably tell, is intended as a sequel. Texan stalwart **Robert Earl Keen** has also been busy of late. February sees the release of *Happy Prisoner: The Bluegrass Sessions*, a project the country storyteller has been working on for some time. The album comprises traditional songs, alongside covers of bluegrass legends like Flatt and Scruggs, The Stanley Brothers and John Hartford. Guests include Lyle Lovett,

Peter Rowan, Natalie Maines and fiddle player Sara Watkins. Expect a fair amount of "foot-stompin' and hollerin'", as Keen puts it. Meanwhile, the forthcoming **Hank Williams** biopic, *I Saw The Light*, which begins shooting in Louisiana this month, finally has a leading lady. Elizabeth Olsen will play Williams' first wife, Audrey, with Tom Hiddleston in the title role.

On the live front, there's still time to catch **Dave & Phil Alvin** as they tour Big Bill Broonzy tribute album, *Common Ground*. The brothers' UK jaunt winds up at The Cluny in Newcastle on 29 October. And this year's **From A Distance**, Southport's Americana Festival, takes place from October 31 to November 2 and features Anaïs Mitchell, The Mastersons, Martha Wainwright, Carrie Rodriguez, Mary Gauthier and Red Sky July. **ROB HUGHES**



BELL GARDENS Slow Dawn For Lost Conclusions

ROCKET GIRL

Cali duo's nocturnal ride through the dusty darklands of Americana

6/10

Kenneth James Gibson and Brian McBride have a musical hinterland in leftfield electronica and avant-garde minimalism. But their joint project, named after a satellite city of LA, indulges their shared love of vintage guitar-driven Americana, from Spector and The Beach Boys to Laurel Canyon folk-rock. A more restrained affair than their lightly psychedelic debut from 2012, *Slow Dawn...* mostly twangs and rumbles along a lonely desert highway, from the languid country-noir of "Darker Side Of Sunshine" to the crepuscular pedal-steel lullaby "Sail". The lightly macabre Lynchian mood is alluring, but minimal variation in tone and pace produces diminishing returns over the long haul.

STEPHEN DALTON

DEAN BLUNT

Black Metal

ROUGH TRADE

Rebel stoner cleans up his act

With *Black Metal*, his umpteenth album in four years but first for Rough Trade, the British

playwright, provocateur and rap connoisseur Dean Blunt edges ever closer to mainstream respectability. Expanding on the enchanted funk of last year's hypnotic *The Redeemer* and *Stone Island* LPs, Blunt – an alias of Roy Nnawuchi – seduces newcomers with a volley of scuffed hits, including a dulcet duet with Joey Robertson, "50 Cent", a long-lost grandchild of Nancy and Lee's "Some Velvet Morning". Blunt runs dub, house and Drag City indie through his paranoid filter, and whenever his scorched Bill Callahan drawl appears, the effect is at once jarring and intoxicating.

PIERS MARTIN



BORED NOTHING

Some Songs

SPUNK

Australian indie-rocker remains in navel-gazing adolescent mode

Building on the critical splash of his 2012 debut, Melbourne twentysomething Fergus Miller returns with more retro-leaning slacker-rock tropes on his lazily titled second album. *Some Songs* is a little more crisp and compact than its predecessor, though Miller's fondness for sloppy guitar jingle-jangle remains, as does his lyrical fixation on juvenile romantic angst in sardonically titled strummers like "Why Were You Dancing With All Those Guys". Variety and depth are a little absent overall, but Miller strikes gold on sun-hazy psych-pop like "The Rough" and "Where Would I Begin", while the clattering tumult of "Come Back To" could almost be Dinosaur Jr's great lost shoegazing anthem.

STEPHEN DALTON



SARAH BORGES Radio Sweetheart

LONESOME DAY

Rockabilly chanteuse kicks back in blues and country style

7/10

After four albums fronting pop rockabilly outfit The Broken Singles, Massachusetts-born Borges strikes out on her own, working on a broader canvas that includes brush strokes of country and blues. Lucinda Williams would appear to be a touchstone on the gritty confessional "Hands And Knees" and "Think Of What You've Done", while the spectre of her heroes NRBQ looms large over the cut and thrust of "The Waiting And The Worry", the band's pianist Terry Adams along for the ride. Borges' passion for blues gets a lively workout on the album's sole cover, a snarling, dripping-with-attitude reading of Lloyd Price's "Heavy Dreams".

TERRY STAUNTON

NATHAN BOWLES Nansemond

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

A radical American Primitive's masterpiece

Nathan Bowles, a drummer and banjo player, has long moved in a shadowy interzone between roots music and the avant-garde, working as part of the Black Twig Pickers and Pelt, and guesting with Steve Gunn and Hiss Golden Messenger. But if 2012's *A Bottle, A Buckeye* played it relatively straight as banjo folk, his second solo set is a rich realisation of Bowles' full range. *Nansemond* evokes Bowles' swampy Virginia homeland with virtuoso picking, waterlogged drones, rowdy vocals (a first) and an inspired duel with the electric guitar of Charalambides' Tom Carter ("Chuckatuck"). Best of all, there's "Sleepy Lake Tire Swing", a culmination of his downhome and transcendent adventures that captures the same spirit as his mentor, Jack Rose.



THE BUDOS BAND Burnt Offering

DAPTONE

Brooklyn 10-piece's intense, cinematic funk

The Daptone label is a retro goldmine – but this time it's funky prog rather than purist soul that gets the treatment. The Budos Band are established voyagers in groove, fusing *Éthiopiques* rhythms, rock riffage and horns for what they call "Afro Soul". But for their fourth album, Tommy Brenneck's boys have fallen headlong into 1970 – from the wizard-and-skull-strewn cover to the portentous track titles ("Magus Mountain", "Shattered Winds", "Into The Fog"), *Burnt Offering* looks and sounds more like a reissue of some Japan-only psych-funk gem, beloved of Julian Cope. Recorded live, there's a twisting, doomy intensity to these 10 instrumentals: think Sabbath's "A National Acrobat" scored by Lalo Schifrin.

MARK BENTLEY

7/10



JULIAN CASABLANCAS + THE VOIDZ

Tyranny

CULT

NYC hipster goes nu-metal. Sort of

7/10

The first solo album by the Strokes frontman saw him remove his skinny garage rock strides and don the piano-keyboard tie of the '80s synth pop band. He's now replaced that tie for a tinfoil hat and made what appears to be a paranoid concept album about the military-industrial complex, assisted by Whitestarr guitarist Jeramy Gritter's metal band. There are clanking industrial beats ("Take Me In Your Army"), short blasts of proggy thrash metal ("M.utually A.ssure D.estruction", "Business Dog"), odd nods to Afrobeat ("Father Electricity") and Bollywood ("Dare I Care"), and an absurd 11-minute epic ("Human Sadness"). A triumphant, ridiculous mess.

JOHN LEWIS

HOW TO BUY... JULIAN CASABLANCAS COLLABORATIONS



Instant Crush by Daft Punk

from *Random Access Memories*, 2013

Casablancas' guest slots have been varied – some backing vocals and synth guitar for QOTSA's "Sick, Sick, Sick" (2007); an English-accented drawl on "Forrest Gump" by German duo Digitalism (2011); a version of "Rave On" for a Buddy Holly tribute LP (2011). But it's his vocoder-warped harmonies on Daft Punk's all-conquering 2013 album that delivered an international hit.



Boombox with Lonely Island

from *Incredibad*, 2009

Invariably cast as a handsome young hipster, Casablancas has become a frequent guest on the US comedy institution *Saturday Night Live* (his 2009 Christmas single followed an appearance on the show). "Boombox" is a duet with comedian Andy Samberg about a ghetto blaster that encourages people to lose all inhibitions. "Everyone started having sex," deadpans Casablancas on the chorus. "It was disgusting to say the least."



Little Girl with Danger Mouse/ Sparklehorse

from *Dark Night Of The Soul*, 2009

The 2009 album turned out to be the last release from the late Mark Linkous. On a prestigious guest list that included Iggy Pop, Frank Black, David Lynch and The Flaming Lips, it was Casablancas' wonderfully bored vocal and idiosyncratic guitar-playing that proved the album's high point.

JOHN LEWIS



EDWYN COLLINS, CARWYN ELLIS, SEBASTIAN LEWSLEY

The Possibilities Are Endless: Music From The Film

AED

7/10

Soundtrack to a film

charting Collins' recovery from a stroke. Director duo Edward Lovelace and James Hall's impressionistic film documents the recovery of former Orange Juice frontman Edwyn Collins from a stroke in 2005. The soundtrack includes cinematic fragments; the breathy and haunting "Home Again Harmonies", the reworked "Closing Time At The Punk Rock Hotel", the humming guitar and choral discord of "One Note Wonder Part 1". There's a new version of "Don't Shilly Shally" with the tune's fairground rush foregrounded, and a couple of new songs; the plangent "Quite Like Silver", and "Two Steps Back", which recalls the Juice at their funkiest.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



COOL GHOULS

**A Swirling Fire
Burning Through
The Rye**

EMPTY CELLAR

**Spookily accurate
retro-jangle from SF**

7/10

"I'm trying to understand these times we are

living," notes Pat McDonald, dissenting San Franciscan, in "Reelin". Cool Ghouls are an SF group riding a timewarp, singing about the tech-driven gentrification of their city in the style of their mid-'60s forebears. This second, much-improved, LP paints them as a jangling beat group, with three harmonising frontmen making tentative forays towards a new frontier: Byrdsian raga rock, perhaps ("Insight"); or a Beach Boys-style hook-up with The Wrecking Crew (the outstanding "The Mile")? Great tunes ensure *A Swirling Fire...* is more than a nostalgic art project: given the right push, they could be as big as Moby Grape, or at least the Allah-Las.

JOHN MULVEY



ADRIAN CROWLEY

Some Blue Morning

CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND

**Bespoke literary
musings from the
Irish Leonard Cohen**

8/10

Easing himself gently into a gilded pantheon that stretches from Scott Walker and Leonard Cohen to Nick Cave and Richard Hawley, songsmith Adrian Crowley really should be more famous outside his native Ireland, where he enjoys a prize-winning cult profile. Crowley's classy seventh LP couches richly poetic lyrics in supple orch-pop arrangements, his sardonic baritone ruminations sweetened by breathy female backing vocals in classic Cohen-esque style. He also deploys his spoken-word croak to great effect on the spooked avant-folk ballad "The Magpie Song" and textured ambient noirscape "The Wild Boar", a macabre account of a beastly nocturnal encounter in moonlit woodland.

STEPHEN DALTON



ARIEL PINK

Pom Pom

4AD

A double set of unbridled, out-there thrills. By Sam Richards

NOVEMBER 2012. Ariel Pink is at London's York Hall to play his biggest UK show to date, but as his Haunted Graffiti band launch into their opening number, the singer is nowhere to be seen. Suddenly the big screen flickers into life and a live

1080m

8/10

feed shows Ariel tackling the first song from a backstage corridor. So far, so droll. But he stays there for the duration of the second number, and the third. By the time he ambles onstage, the once-expectant crowd are audibly grumbling and the show never quite recovers. Could this really be the saviour of underground music, or is Ariel Pink just another time-waster, clad in the emperor's new clothes?

Admittedly, Ariel's attempts at subversion can often backfire. But genuine mavericks are rarely rational or dependable. If we've learned anything from his enjoyably haphazard career so far, it's that Ariel Pink will not be who you want him to be – largely because he doesn't know what he wants to be himself. And so that brings us to *Pom Pom*, the most consistently entertaining Ariel Pink album to date, but also the most chaotic, vexing and ridiculous.

Splurged across four sides of vinyl (it was originally to be called 'The Pink Album'), *Pom Pom* continues Ariel's mission to exhume and reanimate musical tropes and genres long considered beyond the pale: goth, glam, pre-Beatles teenbeat, '80s MOR, twee pop, zany prog, advertising jingles and kid's TV themes.

Similar in mood to his 2002 lo-fi effort *House Arrest*, this is a very silly record that includes songs called things like "Dinosaur Carebears" and "Sexual Athletics", adorned with numerous tempo changes and comedy voices. Musical reference

points range from the New York Dolls to New Model Army via Denim's *Novelty Rock* and The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band.

Yet Ariel's superior songwriting smarts ensures that none of this comes across as tossed-off or ironic. There are few moments of sustained rapture in the manner of *Before Today*'s "Round And Round" (Pitchfork's song of the half-decade) but *Pom Pom* is densely packed with hooks, gimmicks and amusing non-sequiturs.

Unlike Ariel's vast pre-4AD back catalogue of solo home recordings, this is very much a team effort. Much of the daffier material is co-credited to Ariel's spiritual forefather, eccentric rock'n'roll schemer Kim Fowley, while six other co-writers make telling contributions, from *Violents*' Jorge Elbrecht to teenage novelist Alex Kazemi. Ariel has stated his intention to "try to be invisible within my own band", although that is slightly disingenuous: there is unlikely to be a more distinctive album released this year, simply because so few artists would dare to put out anything so gleefully deranged. Ariel's

SLEEVE NOTES

Record at:

Seahorse Studio,
Joe's Downtown,
Kenny's Garage,
The Samps' Studio,
The Escarpment (LA),
Jorge's Place (NYC)

Produced by:

Ariel Pink

Personnel includes:

Ariel Pink, Kenny Gilmore, Joe Kennedy, Don Bolles, Shags Chamberlain, Jack Name, Tim Koh, Jorge Elbrecht, Cole Greif Neill, Jimi Hey, Chloe Sykes, Soko Sokounski, Justin Raisen, Jason Pierce, Ben Brown, Piper Kaplan, Alex Brettin, Ben Salomon

trademark production quirks are also in evidence throughout, ensuring everything sounds timewarped and faintly sinister, especially when the sleazy lo-fi funk of "Black Ballerina" goes a bit Benny Hill. Even the winsome Love-via-Sarah Records jangle of "Put Your Number In My Phone" is mildly unsettling, though its proximity to a song called "Not Enough Violence" ("Now it's time for pain, that's right!") probably doesn't help.

As ever, Ariel's intentions are unclear; amid the dazed guitars, plinking keyboards and belching frogs, the hunt for any kind of

coherent philosophy or point-of-view is futile and absurd. Perhaps the album's most revealing lyric is offered up by "Jell-o", one of its silliest songs: "Everyone eats white bread/That's why they're all dead." You could interpret this as a pithy attack on the culture of conformity that's as prevalent in experimental music as it is in the mainstream. Then again, it could be nonsense. Ariel Pink will not be who you want him to be, so it's probably best to just sit back and enjoy the show.

Q&A

Ariel Pink

Did you have any overarching theme or concept in mind when starting work on *Pom Pom*?

If my records have any conceptual air about them, it's largely unintentional. Everything is usually song-by-song, and even within a song it's not necessarily continuous. It was a very enjoyable working process this time around, primarily because there was no hurry. There was no deadline. The plan was to just do the record until I ran out of money and it would just morph into whatever it was going to morph into. Eventually 4AD warned me that if I wanted to release it this year, my window of opportunity was closing. So we basically stopped there and whatever we had was the album.

How did you get Kim Fowley involved?
I first approached him to be a part of a video for

"Nostradamus & Me" that never happened. Then he consulted me about my lawsuit [Pink was sued by former drummer Aaron Sperske in 2012] – very well, I might add. Originally he was going to produce the record, but we mutually decided it would be better if we just collaborated on several songs. I had a few meetings with him, brought over a guitar. He'd suggest some off-the-cuff lyrics and then it was up to me to make some coherence or order out of them.

The array of different voices that you adopt on *Pom Pom* – are you singing in character or are these different aspects of your own personality?

I see my thing as being very ambiguous and all-inclusive. I have my method of working and it's a very non-cynical, non-intellectual exercise. When I make music, it's a very melodic form. I don't do rap, do you know what I'm saying? I'm not branching out and trying to incorporate the world around me, I'm simply doing the project as I've always done it, and the results are varied.


RACHAEL DADD
We Resonate

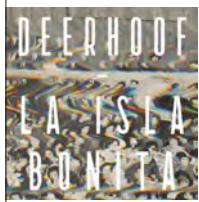
TALITRES

Bold art-folk from Bristolian singer-songwriter

7/10

fifth album, a result of part of its recording taking place in her front room, where she employed the sounds of an old-fashioned typewriter (audible in "Make A Sentence"), the clatter of tap shoes and the heartbeat of her unborn baby. *We Resonate* treads a fine line between folk pop and conceptual art, the conceptual element reaching a loopy apogee in "Bounce The Ball" ("Ba-bounce the ball, ba-ba-ba-bounce the ball", etc). But elsewhere Dadd finds a happier medium between art and music, creating an accomplished fusion of words, acoustic strumming and wild percussive textures.

FIONA STURGES


DEERHOOF
La Isla Bonita

UPSET THE RHYTHM

San Francisco mavericks celebrate 20 years of unsung genius

8/10

13th album is almost a pop record. Almost, because the quartet's restless exuberance makes it difficult for them to settle into anything resembling verse-chorus-repeat-fade. *La Isla Bonita* melds Satomi Matsuzaki's adorable pop voice, funky beats and a plethora of art-rock guitar styles in typically virtuoso manner. In catchier moments like "Mirror Monster", "Oh Bummer" and the gloriously Shonen Knife-ish "Exit Only", they even attempt to stay in one place for a while before veering off into bracing discord and/or bizarre syncopation. There isn't another band who make creativity sound so intensely joyous.

GARRY MULHOLLAND


DEPTFORD GOTH
Songs

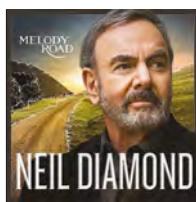
37 ADVENTURES

Expansive, emotive second from soulful South Londoner

8/10

in a splendid solipsism, Daniel Woolhouse's (aka Deptford Goth) second album is a confident, more expansive – emotionally and musically – annexe to his impressive, soul-baring debut *Life After Delfo*. Otherwise, much is the same: *Songs* is still bathed in strings and synths, and again it's Woolhouse's voice, and heart, that's the gem at the centre of each hymnal arrangement, by turns pleading, imploring, lovelorn and triumphant. "Relics" is a relatively upbeat opener, "The Lovers" an R&B fantasy, "Code" a gorgeous lament and the becalming "Two Hearts" a beautiful celebration of love. Emotive and immersive.

PETER WATTS


NEIL DIAMOND
Melody Road

CAPITOL

Still a solitary man on 32nd studio LP in 47 years

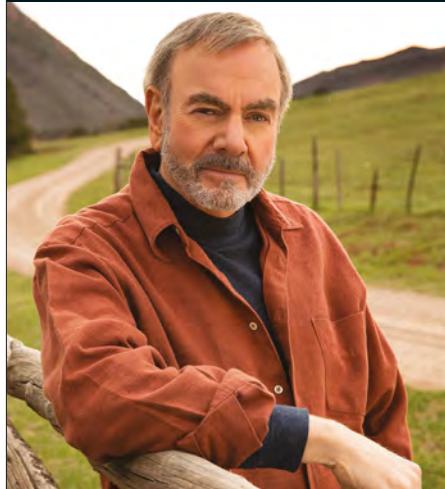
8/10

At 73, Diamond remains as solipsistic in sound and sentiment as does his peer Brian Wilson. Co-producers Don Was and Jackknife Lee bring an Orbisonian scale to *Melody Road*, surrounding him with ornate yet tasteful arrangements worked up by LA's top session cats. On standout "Nothing But A Heartache", the players accompany Diamond on a journey to his past, deftly referencing '60s folk-rock moves and '70s heart-on-sleeve balladry. By contrast, "(Ooo) Do I Wanna Be Yours", awash in bittersweet languor, comes off like a late-lifer's take on sad Beck. If Rick Rubin isolated Diamond's oddball genius on 2005's *12 Songs* and 2008's *Home Before Dark*, Was, Lee and the musicians reanimate him in full flower here.

BUD SCOPPA

REVELATIONS

Neil Diamond on why he isn't averse to messing with the formula



► After 40 years at Columbia Records, Diamond felt like "maybe it was time for a little bit of fresh air", so he brought his catalogue to Capitol, and *Melody Road* is his first album under the new arrangement. He shook things up creatively as well, employing two producers at the same time, something he's never attempted before. Indeed, it was Diamond's idea to put together Don Was and Irishman Jackknife Lee, who'd never worked together previously. "I just went with the people that I like and felt good about it", he says. "So it was a real collaboration, and you can tell it gelled by listening to the record, because it sounds, to me at least, like it's of one piece, of one mind and heart."

When asked if he feels a kinship with his still-vital contemporaries Bob Dylan, Paul Simon and Neil Young, Diamond replies, "I don't think about it much, but I understand their work and their lives and what they have to go through to make their music. So in that regard we are all brothers; we all know how difficult it is, and we all know how good it feels when you do it right. That's damn good company to be in."

BUD SCOPPA


DOPE BODY
Lifer

DRAG CITY

Hectic punk and garage from eclectic Baltimore rockers

Pulverising Baltimore four-piece Dope Body's second record on the

Drag City label is a typically frantic burst of speed metal/punk, but underpinned with plenty of hooks and changes of pace to maintain interest. While they love making a racket – the howling, Damned-like "Toy" is a prime example – the band are also capable of writing more subtle belters like "Echo", which matches the slink and sneer garage strut of *The Make-Up* with a blistering proto-metal outburst, the Krautrock-tapping eddies of "Even In The End", and "Day By Day", which introduces a bouncing Clash-like reggae-punk mood before embracing the inevitable bedlam.

PETER WATTS


DREAM POLICE
Hypnotized

SACRED BONES

Are we not The Men? Perro & Chiericozzi branch out

The Men's high workrate should realistically have kept two of their members,

Mark Perro and Nick Chiericozzi, pretty busy. But apparently not. Temporarily reconfigured as Dream Police, the duo seem to be pursuing a more focused vision than they do in the rambunctious, eclectic Men. So *Hypnotized* showcases pulsating dronerock, like Spacemen 3 at their most urgent, asserting that latter band's credentials as fierce psych-rockers rather than as a shoegazing archetype. The jams are propelled by crude Roland 707 beats, so there's a heavy Suicide vibe, too (cf "My Mama's Dead"), but not one which mitigates against serious guitar virtuosity: check the Television swagger of "John", or Neu! vistas of "Let It Be".

JOHN MULVEY


BAXTER DURY
It's A Pleasure

ROUGH TRADE

Rhythm stick – and heart – get hit

The son of Ian Dury has inherited his dad's

gift for wry observation being carefully lifted from one's mouth and placed into the world, as well as his funk (check the basslines on "Palm Trees" and "Lips"). But it would be reductive to just draw lines between the men. Baxter's brilliance is varied: his hangdog delivery made funny by the stoic Bontempi dinkiness that often surrounds it; his Anglicisation of French chanson; and his use of pure but not merely decorative female backing vocals. The nearest comparable voice is actually that of Robert Wyatt, with his talky, Southeastern tones plodding through beauty.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

New Albums



JUDY DYBLE Live At WM Jazz

CROMERZONE

Former Fairport singer, live and tremulous The original vocalist with Fairport Convention, Judy Dyble was unceremoniously expelled

in 1969; then, following brief spells with Giles, Giles And Fripp and Trader Horne, she abandoned music altogether. Last year's finely crafted *Flow And Change* was her most rewarding album since returning in 2004, recorded with instrumentalist Alistair Murphy who persuaded her to record this intimate live performance. Dyble duly revisits Fairport's first single, an enthusiastically received "If I Had A Ribbon Bow" and Trader Horne's "Jenny May" alongside recent material. After a hesitant start, her pure voice grows from precarious to powerful, closing with *Flow And Change*'s cascading "The Sisterhood Of Ruralists".

MICK HOUGHTON

7/10

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MICK HOUGHTON



THE FAUNTLEROYS Below The Pink Pony

PLOWBOY

Roaring mini-album debut from alt.rock 'supergroup'

The product of a four-day spurt at the New York studio of Ivan Julian, ex-cohort of Richard Hell in the Voidoids, this terrific mini-album signals the arrival of an unlikely new set-up. Julian's at his garagey best on guitar, joined by the equally bolshy six-string of fellow veteran Alejandro Escovedo, bassist Nicholas Tremulis and drummer Linda Pitmon, late of Steve Wynn projects the Miracle 3 and The Baseball Project. These six songs augur well for a planned full debut, the quartet rippling through cantankerous beauties like "Worry Doll" and laying waste to The Incredible String Band's "Chinese White".

ROB HUGHES

8/10

THE FLAMING LIPS With A Little Help From My Fwends

BELLA UNION

My Morning Jacket, J Mascis and, er, Miley Cyrus contribute to Beatles tribute LP

6/10

The world does not lack for *Sgt Pepper* tribute albums, but The Flaming Lips' contribution is still welcome, if only because it features diverse talents like My Morning Jacket, Black Pus and Miley Cyrus. Cyrus contributes a pleasingly stoned "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" (and also turns up on the restyled middle section of "A Day In The Life"), a track that also features Moby's backing vocals, while Birdflower and Morgan Delt duet to splendid effect on the echo-laden, ethereal "Within You Without You". Not everything works as well, but it's entertaining enough and a portion of proceeds go to charity.

PETER WATTS



FOO FIGHTERS Sonic Highways

ROSSELL RECORDS

Hard rock colossi's all-conquering eighth The belief that "every city has a sound" underpins both Foo Fighters' latest and a Dave Grohl-directed

8/10

HBO series of the same name, which explores the musical heritage of the eight cities in which it was recorded. The LP features guests including Joe Walsh and Rick Nielsen, but FF haven't strayed far from their hybrid of melodic punk, alt.metal and heavy post grunge, styled along classic rock lines from AC/DC and Bad Company to Queen. It's a muscular, Butch Vig-produced behemoth that impresses whether delivering a brutally clipped "The Feast And The Famine" or the Badfinger-do-molten-metal epic "What Did I Do?/God As My Witness". Intriguingly atypical is "Outside", where FF's lowering fury gives way to a wash of psychedelic Mellotron.

SHARON O'CONNELL

7/10



GONG I See You

MADFISH

Hippy hardliners holding back the years

As inspired and irritating as when he handed teddy bears to police officers during the 1968 Paris riots, Gong's Daavid Allen – at 76 – maintains some gravitas, despite having spent much of his career singing about gnomes while dressed like a New Age Christmas cracker. The founder Soft Machinist has not been in good health of late, but while there is an elegiac tone to *I See You* – the woozy "Zion My T-Shirt" and closing gliss-out "Shakti Yoni & Dingo Virgin" especially – the hippy hip-hop of "Pixelation" and "Thank You" showcase a Gong as impish and perverse as ever. This teapot, one hopes, has a way to fly yet.

JIM WIRTH

GREYLAG Greylag

DEAD OCEANS

Portland trio time-travels and shape-shifts on debut long-player The sweet spot for the Andrew Stonestreet-led Greylag is the dawn of

8/10



the 1970s, and the band homes in on its target from the opening salvo of "Another", with lush, propulsive acoustic guitars conjuring a lysergic pastoreale straight out of *Led Zeppelin III* before resolving into CSN-like chorus harmonies. The sensual refrain – "Lay it on top of me/I want to forget about the aching world" – deepens the impression. With Phil Ek (Fleet Foxes, Band Of Horses) at the helm, the group adeptly employs the soft/LOUD dynamic, summoning early Fleetwood Mac thunder on "Kicking", bringing Crazy Horse crunch to "One Foot" and one-upping Fleet Foxes on the intricate, exotic "Arms Unknown".

BUD SCOPPA



LIAM HAYES & PLUSH Korp Sole Roller

BANDCAMP.COM

Fourth chamber-pop gem from Chicago auteur Twenty years on from Plush's wonderful debut

7/10

45, Liam Hayes remains a frustratingly obscure perfectionist. *Korp Sole Roller* was heralded by a few songs on the soundtrack to last year's *A Glimpse Inside The Mind Of Charles Swan III*, before belatedly sneaking out online. Hayes is still a distract Bacharach, performing upbeat songs in an enigmatically mournful way. But some of his more ornate tendencies have been streamlined by Wilco's Pat Sansone producing, so that "Glimpse" and "Sane Society" emerge as exquisitely sugary '70s pop confections. "Cried A Thousand Times", meanwhile, may be the closest he's come to the epiphanies of that debut, "Found A Little Baby". Another LP, *Slurup*, is promised in early 2015.

JOHN MULVEY



BEN HOWARD

I Forget Where We Were

ISLAND

West Country folkie rises above the haters
The critical tide has turned for Devon's Ben Howard who, since winning a pair

7/10

of Brit Awards, has inadvertently become the toast of Ed Sheeran fans. It's not required much from him. Much like his 2011 debut, his second effort goes heavy on the atmospherics and confirms him as a skilful singer-songwriter who happens to be operating in an over-subscribed and increasingly commercialised scene. While there are a few too many round-the-campfire gloom-fests on *I Forget Where Were*, there are also displays of real musical backbone, as seen in "Small Things" which, from its gentle, twanging beginnings, builds towards a bruising finale.

FIONA STURGES



HOOKWORMS

The Hum

WEIRD WORLD

Excellent second album from Yorkshire psych rockers
Leeds-based Hookworms have followed their dark

8/10

debut *Pearl Mystic* with *The Hum*, a slightly sunnier and more melodic LP. While that's not obvious on the dense, storming, opener "The Impasse", a little light enters with "On Leaving", which has the whiff of Stephen McBean's rock'n'roll revellers Pink Mountaintops about it, while "Radio Tokyo" is a stomping, Led Zeppelin-esque raver. Most admirably, Hookworms are never straightforward – "Off Screen" brings some MBV to the party, while "Retreat" is a euphoric finale – but they are always cohesive and the band's evolution is fascinating to behold, especially as they continue to leave such splendidly exciting albums in their wake.

PETER WATTS



IAMAMIWHOAMI

Blue

KOBALT

Swedish audio-visual project plateaus out on third album
For some years now, Swedish singer-songwriter

6/10

Jonna Lee and producer Claes Björklund have been merging electronic music with bespoke films, an idea which feels more adventurous on paper than it does in reality. Lee still sings like a cross between Minnie Mouse and Elizabeth Fraser (opener "Fountain" makes explicit a debt to the Cocteau Twins), but between their 2012 debut, *Kin*, and their latest, *Blue*, the Stockholm duo have lost some of their Fever Ray-like ability to surprise and unsettle. Stripped of the visual element, what remains here is sparkling Nordic synth-pop, uplifting and accessible, but increasingly conventional.

GRAEME THOMSON



ICEAGE

Plowing Into The Field Of Love

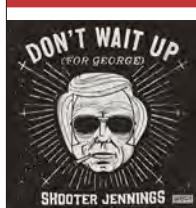
MATADOR

Copenhagen punks grow up on refined third

8/10

After two albums that found them exploring the darker reaches of post-punk, *Plowing Into The Field Of Love* finds Iceage's incipient hooliganism giving way to romanticism and refinement. An expanded instrumental palette ushers in elegiac piano ("On My Fingers") and mariachi trumpet ("Forever"). In places, there's notes of The Gun Club and The Bad Seeds; on the country-tinged "The Lord's Favourite", there's a big splash of Pogues rowdiness, vocalist Elias Rønnenfelt slurring of "100 euro wine" as guitarist Johan Suurballe-Wieth picks out a cowpunk thrash. The real leap here, though, is one of songwriting, Rønnenfelt's soul-baring lyrics swinging wildly between megalomania, euphoria and collapse.

LOUIS PATTISON



SHOOTER JENNINGS

Don't Wait Up (For George)

THIRTY TIGERS

Badass tribute to country music's most feted hellraiser

7/10

As Waylon's kid, Shooter learnt from the best, including the incomparable George Jones – who was a regular houseguest. Shortly before Jones died in 2013, Jennings wrote a brace of songs for him with the intention that he would record them on his next album. Sadly it never happened, but Jennings' own versions of "Living In A Minor Key" and "Don't Wait Up (I'm Playing Possum)" sound like instant classics of the genre. Covers of Jones' standards – including a bizarrely wonderful Giorgio-Moroder-goes-honky-tonk mix on "She Thinks I Still Care" and a heavy-metal assault on "The Door" – complete a raw and moving homage.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



KINDNESS

Otherness

FEMALE ENERGY

Classy second album from diligent student of '80s soul

8/10

Much as Daft Punk distinguished themselves from the EDM hordes by recording *Random Access Memories* with real musicians, Kindness' Adam Bainbridge transcends the current vogue for laptop R&B with a team of crack session players and nods to the Fairlight mastery of The Art Of Noise and Kate Bush. Centrestage is ceded to guest vocalists Kelela and Robyn, yet the mood of detached yearning minted by Bainbridge himself on "Geneva" remains consistent. His approach probably won't play well with soul traditionalists, but Bainbridge's achievement is to take a style of music defined by its emotional directness and render it mysterious, aloof and enthralling.

SAM RICHARDS



KHUN NARIN

Khun Narin Electric Phin Band

INNOVATIVE LEISURE

Psychedelic revelations from a remote Thai village!

7/10

For a certain kind of record collector, the story behind Khun Narin's Electric Phin Band is exotically irresistible: a bunch of musicians in a Thai mountain village, jamming and drinking outside the local Buddhist temple through a home-made PA. The danger of non-Western musicians being patronised or fetishised is always close, but the serpentine solos and rattling breaks here are genuinely thrilling. It's raw, exuberant music, centred around Narin and his phin – a three-stringed electric lute which sounds rather like a Turkish saz. "Show Wong Khun Narin", 19 minutes long, is especially remarkable – like a "Dark Star" re-imagined for the Subliminal Frequencies label.

JOHN MULVEY



YASMIN LEVY

Tango

WORLD VILLAGE

It takes a full orchestra and a diva's passion to tango...

7/10

Over half a dozen albums, Israeli-born Levy has sashayed promiscuously from her trademark Ladino songs of the Sephardic Jews, across flamenco, chanson, Persian and Turkish traditions and now tango, to become a world music diva for all seasons. Whatever mantle she takes on, she brings a rich, melodramatic passion that derives its inspiration from such diverse role models as Piaf, Oum Kalthoum, Mariza and even Callas, although there's plenty of subtle nuance, too. It's as sexy as it's theatrical, and both qualities are ravishingly framed by the full-bodied orchestral arrangements of Yaron Gottfried on a set of profoundly melancholic trad tango gems such as "Volver" and "Hasta Siempre Amor".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



MEATBODIES

Meatbodies

IN THE RED

This month's premium garage rock, endorsed by Ty Segall

7/10

By its very nature, garage rock can be a trashy, erratic business – inevitable given the unbridled spontaneity it privileges. The ever-expanding circle around Ty Segall, however, have found a way of adding consistency to the volatile mix of productivity and excitement. Meatbodies are strongly in that tradition, an LA band built around Chad Ubovich, part of The Fuzz with Segall and sometime guitarist in Mikal Cronin's band. Surprises are reassuringly thin on the ground here, but the quality of Ubovich's psych-tinged rambalams, mostly delivered at Ramones speed, is high. In the vein of Segall circa 2010's *Melted*, perhaps; or, on the thrumming, pinched "Off", the latterday Oh Sees.

JOHN MULVEY

New Albums



THE MERCY ALLIANCE Some Kind Of Beautiful Story

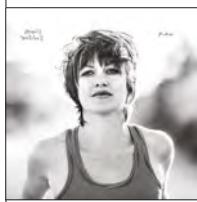
BEVERLY MARTEL MUSIC

Likeminded veterans team up for a guitars-and-harmonies showcase

7/10

Led by singer-guitarist Joe Rathbone, with indie all-star Brad Jones on bass and original Counting Crows member Steve Bowman on drums, The Mercy Alliance displays a natural feel for neoclassic folk rock on an LP suffused with melody and melancholy. "All For The Love Of You" is downright *Bandwagonesque* in its distortion-punctuated jangle, "I Can't Do It" sounds like a less loquacious Fountains Of Wayne and "Washington" imagines Rathbone's hometown as a glittering backdrop for a romantic tableau. Regimented, motorik-like drumming, humming synths and churning organ bring heft and gravitas to the album, not unlike The War On Drugs' *Lost In The Dream*.

BUDSCOPPA



ANAISS MITCHELL xoa

WILDERLAND

Spare revamps from Vermont singer-songwriter on sixth outing

7/10

'the queen of modern folk music' Anais Mitchell to revisit her back catalogue and render some of it anew. Thus, the stripped acoustics of *xoa* serve to reflect both her gift for a conceptual narrative and the shedding of her old self. Fans of 2012's *Young Man In America* album will be sated by the stark rework of the title track, though it's her selections from folk opera *Hadestown* that best showcase the vivid nuances of her delivery: "His Kiss The Riot"; "Our Lady Of The Underground". Meanwhile, new tune "Now You Know" suggests that there's still plenty in the tank.

ROB HUGHES



LAURA MOODY Acrobats

SURBITON LAGOON

Strikingly original debut album from the Elysian Quartet cellist In the hands of singer and songwriter Laura Moody, the cello can be

every bit as adaptable a solo instrument as a guitar or piano. On "We Are Waiting" or "Call This Time Love", she plucks spacious broken chords, like a particularly agile acoustic guitarist; on "Memento" or on Nick Drake's "Cello Song" her intricate double-stopping sounds like a neurotic string section. Throughout, she's singing along in a clipped, English-accented speech-song, punctuated with woody creaks and rhythmic, hiccupping breaths. The minimalist methodology is similar to that of fellow cellist Arthur Russell, but the effect – a spooky folk baroque – is icily beautiful and strikingly original.

JOHN LEWIS

7/10



MARK NEVIN Beautiful Guitars

RARESONG

Morrissey co-writer in spirited solo outing

7/10

Half of Fairground Attraction in the 1980s and Morrissey's regular co-writer in the 1990s, Mark Nevin has also worked with the likes of Kirsty MacColl, and Carleen Anderson. His fourth solo album, *Beautiful Guitars*, is, unexpectedly, solidly crafted and warmly conceived. Nevin's wry, very British take on soul, classic pop and roots sources encompasses the Stax horns of "100 Years Of Heartache", the Electric Light Orchestra-ish "Love = Love = Love" and the title track's waltz-time recollection of a lifetime's love affair with music. Nevin even redeems "Perfect", redrawn here in a loosely enjoyable New Orleans style.

GRAEME THOMSON

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Laura Moody



► Laura Moody tells the story of the organisers of a German cello festival, who contacted Nick Drake's estate. "They asked if Mr Drake would be available to come over and perform," laughs Moody. "Bryter Music politely pointed out that Mr Drake died in 1974, but recommended me as a substitute."

Moody's debut album features a haunted, shimmering, crisply enunciated version of Drake's "Cello Song", which Drake's estate authorised and enjoyed. But Moody has also worked with plenty of people who are still alive. Since graduating from the Trinity College of Music in 2002, she's guested with everyone from Aphex Twin to Tricky, from Peter Gabriel to Kate Tempest. "It's always fascinating to see how artists work," she says.

Moved by the work of Antony Hegarty, Baby Dee and jazz pianist Keith Tippett, Moody started performing her own songs in 2009, particularly influenced by '60s avant-gardists John Cage, Luciano Berio and the American soprano Cathy Berberian.

"The cello has a similar range and timbre to the human voice," she says. "If you're singing and playing at once, you have to integrate them until you become a single, breathing organism. The cello really is a magical box – something that can produce so many astonishing sounds." JOHN LEWIS



NEW BUILD

Pour It On

SUNDAY BEST

Hot Chip duo's rural rave-up

Until Owen Clarke gets his act together, New Build are Hot Chip's most impressive side-project.

8/10

A socialist pop vehicle for the formidable songwriting of old pals Al Doyle (vocals, guitars, synthesisers) and Felix Martin (programming), on second album *Pour It On*, New Build deal in rich pastoral futurism that, quite naturally, channels the political song of Richard Thompson, the euphoric heft of the Chemical Brothers and the sentimental prog of Genesis. Doyle shines as a singer and lyricist, drawing on John Berger and Robert Wyatt for "Strange Network" and "Witness", while the rousing anti-Tory title track unfurls into a crimson outsider anthem.

PIERS MARTIN

ROO PANES

Little Giant

CRC

Atmospherically well-dressed debut from Britfolk pin-up

Named from childhood after the Winnie-the-Pooh character, Panes came to

attention incongruously as a Burberry fashion model, but his music taps a deep well of folk heritage far removed from the glossily shallow world of haute couture. Rhythmically strumming a jumbo 12-string and singing in a dark but warm voice that soars from reverberating baritone to vaulting falsetto, the pastoral landscape of his songs is carved from the wide open spaces of an upbringing in rural Dorset, marinated in the classical troubadour tradition and lifted expansively heavenwards by sweeping violas and cellos. Try the thrumming *Astral Weeks*-influenced title track for a taste of what marks him out as special.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



PRIMUS

Primus & The Chocolate Factory

ATO

San Francisco freak-rockers get their Golden Ticket

6/10

As you might expect from a band who sell Wonka chocolate bars at their merch stand, this typically leffield reimagining of 1971's *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* soundtrack, composed by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley, is a sincere and affectionate tribute, albeit one wilfully accentuating the eccentricities of the film. This is a clanking, discordant beast. "Candy Man" comes suffused with Waitsian weirdness, "Pure Imagination" is transformed into a lumbering nightmare lullaby, while "Cheer Up, Charlie" is troubling boho-folk. It's all a little too eagerly oddball at times, but generally avoids the trapdoor marked Novelty.

GRAEME THOMSON

NEIL YOUNG

Storytone

WARNER BROS

Orchestral manoeuvres in the heart: Shakey's soul laid bare, in two versions: one sumptuous, one raw. *By Andy Gill*



7/10

RELEASED TO (ALMOST) coincide with the publication of his motorvatin' memoir *Special Deluxe*, *Storytone* is effectively Neil Young's *Blood On The Tracks*, an album shot through with the turbulent emotions of his recent break-up

with Pegi, his wife of 36 years, in favour of the winsome charms of his fellow eco-protestor, actress Daryl Hannah. Except that where Dylan concealed the truth of his own marital collapse behind a web of metaphor, allusion and fanciful narrative, Young just hangs it all out there, unvarnished except for the lustrous glow of new love, expressed in sometimes embarrassing terms. I challenge any self-respecting adult, even those with freak-flags flying proudly, not to cringe at the line, "Tumbleweed, your inner spirit is a peace sign to me".

Complicating matters, Young is releasing two versions of the same album, an acoustic one featuring his solo renditions of the 10 songs accompanied by just his own guitar, piano and harmonica (as a bonus disc on deluxe editions), and a version on which he performs them live in the studio with an orchestra playing arrangements by Michael Bearden and Chris Walden. In some cases, notably the blues boogies "I Want To Drive My Car" ("I Wanna Drive My Car" in the close-mic'd, conspiratorial acoustic version), "Say Hello To Chicago" and "Like You Used To", he's backed by big, brassy jazz horns; but mostly, the songs are jessied up with string and woodwind arrangements that sound like attempts to soften their impact.

This is most noticeable on the album's best track, the opener "Plastic Flowers", a melancholy reminiscence of better times. "I was doing well, and I thought she liked my style," recalls Young, "I had no business feeling like that, but it lasted quite a while"; but now, he's showing "plastic flowers to Mother Nature's daughter". It's left achingly barren on the solo piano version, but the orchestrations lend a roseate hue to the sad farewell, as if embalming memories in honeyed fondness. Likewise in "Glimmer", the solo stand-up piano speaks of a bare room, whilst the high shimmer of strings and flute drape a shroud of schlocky sentimentality over his nighttime driving memories of former times: "Like the changes in our life that hit so hard that day I couldn't find you, there's a glimmer of everything that I once saw in you". Jack Nitsche, one suspects, would have done it differently.

Things are dealt with more subtly on the orchestrated version of "When I Watch You Sleeping", with just a gentle wash of strings added to the acoustic guitar and harmonica framing Neil's early-morning moment of bliss; but then, his



account of listening to his lover "purring, like a kitten or a lion" hardly needs any further sweetening. "Today I make my masterpiece, tonight I trace my tears," he sings, "Thinking through my past to you, and where I stumbled through the years."

Where "Plastic Flowers" and "Glimmer" are retrospectively generous about a former partner, the corrosion of their deteriorating relationship is more evident in "Like You Used To", a Jimmy Reed-style blues trudge whose plodding, low-end guitar vamp sounds as sulky as Young's claim that "I got my problems, but they mostly show up with you". It's sullen points-scoring from someone convinced their ex will someday "see me like you used to", and pointedly sandwiched here between "Tumbleweed", glutinous in either its ukulele or flute and harp version, and "I'm Glad I Found You", protectively hymning the eternal glory of newfound love: "It's not that we got anything new, it's not that it's any better or worse/The way life treats us is a blessing and a curse/I'm glad I found you".

Despite his adolescent enthusiasm, though, he remains wary of setting his hopes too high. "Let us not be strangers if we come to know/Things about each other that come and they go/As friendship is everything if love is to last/And I have my guard down, and love passes fast," he observes cagily in "Say Hello To Chicago", a coded account of wandering passion that's like dirty laundry on spin-doctor cycle. A jazzy groove with cool piano and organ supported by relaxed

synchronization of horns, it's one of the more effective rearrangements here, as too is the electric barrelhouse boogie version of "I Want To Drive My Car", which swings in a way the demo version doesn't – although Neil's lower register sounds less comfortable having to deal with the bigger arrangement.

Another effective transformation is that applied to the rather simplistic eco-song "Who's Gonna Stand Up", of which Young has apparently recorded four different versions, including one with Crazy Horse. Here, the acoustic recording uses just a primitive monotonous strum of what sounds like steel-appendage guitar to support his gauche warnings about fossil fuels, pipelines and fracking, whereas the furtive whirl of woodwind, and sinister chug of strings, on the rearranged version evoke both the natural world and the threat posed. The choral refrain of the title hook, meanwhile, imposes collectivity on the query – just about the only time on the whole of *Storytone* that the horizon stretches further than Neil's emotional backyard.

SLEEVE NOTES

DISC 1: SOLO STORYTONE

Produced by: The Volume Dealers: Neil Young and Niko Bolas

Recorded and mixed by: Al Schmitt at Capitol Studios, Hollywood, CA

DISC 2: STORYTONE

Produced by: The Volume Dealers: Neil Young and Niko Bolas

Recorded and mixed by: Al Schmitt at Capitol Studios, Hollywood, CA, Sony Pictures Scoring Stage, Culver City, CA, and East West Studios, Hollywood, CA

"Who's Gonna Stand Up?", "I Want To Drive My Car" "Glimmer", "Say Hello To Chicago", "Tumbleweed" and "Like You Used To Do" arranged, orchestrated, conducted and co-produced by Chris Walden; "Plastic Flowers", "All Those Dreams", "I'm Glad I Found You", and "When I Watch You Sleeping" arranged, conducted and co-produced by Michael Bearden; orchestrations: Patrick Russ

New Albums



CHUCK PROPHET

Night Surfer

YEP ROC

Ex-Green On Red man charges on with jagged results

7/10

is something of an undersell: Waylon Jennings covers, Clash tribute band The Spanish Bombs, an album of political freedom songs recorded in Mexico. Now he seems to have returned to what he does best. *Night Surfer* is a swashbuckling set full of blasted guitars and rootsy grooves, the kind of jagged Americana that rests alongside the work of Dave Alvin or sometime collaborator Alejandro Escovedo. His slightly sullen vocals give things added edge, not least on the track "If I Was A Baby", which sounds for all the world like Bruce Springsteen doing "Diamond Dogs".

ROB HUGHES

THE RUA

Essence

FOD

Melodramatic debut from Irish family trio

A group of photogenic Irish siblings who appeared in the Harry Potter movies and whose

5/10



songs heavily feature violins and wholesome female vocals are unavoidably destined to be typecast as the new Corrs, although the epic stadium rock ambitions of Roseanna, Alanna and Jonathan Brown owe at least as much to The Cranberries. Younger sister Roseanna warbles like Dolores O'Riordan with a raunchier touch of Stevie Nicks and a country twist of Reba McEntire on relentlessly overwrought anthems such as "Follow" and "Stand Out". The dubious skill of writing histrionic songs that already sound familiar on first hearing is bound to take them depressingly far.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

THE SAINTS

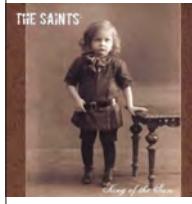
King Of The Sun/ King Of The Midnight Sun

FIRE

Eternally stranded; Aussie lost boy resurfaces

A Bruce Springsteen/

7/10



Johnny Thunders cross, Chris Bailey seemingly expresses both sides of his personality with the 14th Saints album – released simultaneously in cooked and raw form. One of the first men of Australian punk, and "god-like" to the young Nick Cave, Bailey's true calling – like The Replacements' Paul Westerberg – was probably to blue-collar rock (tellingly, Springsteen covered The Saints' "Just Like Fire Would" on this year's *High Hopes*). "A Million Miles Away" and "Adventures In The Dark Arts Of Watermelon" showcase his sloppy, soulful style to fine effect: born to run, born to lose.

JIM WIRTH



SAVAGES/ BO NINGEN

Words To The Blind

STOLEN/POP NOIRE

Gothic post-punks meet psych rockers uptown *Words To The Blind* documents a 2013 live collaboration between

London groups Savages and Bo Ningen, based on the Dadaist concept of the "sonic simultaneous poem" and sung in Japanese, French and English. As this description might imply, the resultant 37-minute piece is atypical of either band's work, aiming for something more freeform. And meandering, unfortunately – a pity, especially coming from Savages, whose 2013 LP *Silence Yourself* proved them adept at short, sharp shocks. Still, when it hinges together, *Words...* absolves itself, locking into grooves of squalling guitars and stiffly funky Stranglers bass, with Jehnny Beth's stentorian vocals speaking of sensuality and violence.

LOUIS PATTISON

6/10

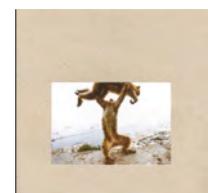
REVELATIONS

The Saints' Chris Bailey – "I ran away screaming from Oz..."



▶ "For us it was like going to an odd and very alien fashion planet," Chris Bailey tells *Uncut*, recalling how Brisbane's Saints crash-landed in London in 1977, their frenetic debut single "(I'm) Stranded" having been wrongly labelled as a punk rock classic. "It's basically an Eddie Cochran riff, but because we were young and a bit rebellious, we played it a bit faster," he notes. Hokey rock'n'roll or otherwise, it launched Bailey's career as a buzzsaw-soul boy, and had he not "ran away screaming from Oz at the first opportunity", The Saints might never have made a cameo appearance in ITV action series *The Return Of The Saint* in 1978. "It was just some bright spark going, 'Saints, The Saint – wouldn't that be cute cross-marketing?'" Bailey chuckles, adding of the show's plummy star Ian Ogilvy: "Nice chap, actually." Bailey's idiosyncratic path thereafter took him within inches of mainstream rock success, and more recently into an unlikely artistic dalliance with 1960s folkie Judy Collins – the pair recording a gender dysmorphic duet of Ian Tyson's "gay cowboy song" "Someday Soon". "I would have quite happily ended up being a pale, white imitation of Otis Redding," Bailey shrugs as he looks back. Be thankful he didn't.

JIM WIRTH



SHELLAC

Dude Incredible

TOUCH AND GO

Fifth album of mock heroic spleen

As brutal as is their sound, Shellac remain at heart an idiosyncratic, even a whimsical band. Duly,

their fifth album frames songs engaging with stereotypical male behaviours: in sports, exploration, childhood ("Riding Bikes"), even on the title track inventing a fraternity-based anti-hero ("Let us go where the females congregate...") whose exploits are conducted in pointed folk-rock. At 32 minutes, the album doesn't hang about, but offers in that time Shellac's signature intensity and repetition ("The People's Microphone" is a mathrock deconstruction of "Back In Black"), and, in the intro to "All The Surveyors" at least, a surprisingly convincing take on renaissance fair three-part harmony.

JOHN ROBINSON

7/10



SIMPLE MINDS

Big Music

CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

A vibrant return to founding principles

With their back catalogue undergoing a deserved critical reappraisal, Simple

Minds' first album in five years attempts to bottle some of the lightning of their early records, and partially succeeds. With collaborators ranging from Chvrches to Gong guy – and *Sons & Fascination* producer – Steve Hillage, the keynote is pulsing, atmospheric electro-rock. "Kill Or Cure" is convincingly glitchy, while the outstanding "Honest Town" channels the dreamily emotive rush of *New Gold Dream*. A congenital weakness for bluster is evident on the title track, which revisits the stadium-strafing bombast of the mid-'80s, but more often *Big Music* reanimates the band's foundling spirit of adventure.

GRAEME THOMSON

7/10



SLIPKNOT

.5: The Gray Chapter

ROADRUNNER

Masked Iowans pay their respects on a mournful fifth

Death and decay have always been topics of fascination for Slipknot, but the passing of bassist and founder member Paul Gray in 2010 has left a clear impression. "This song is not for the living," states a voice on "XIX", the intro to a grizzled commemoration that finds Corey Taylor warning "don't let this symbolism kill your heart". Elsewhere, we find their extreme metal interspersed with more reflective moments – single "The Devil In I" intersperses blast-beat churn with verses that approximate a sort of windswept new romanticism. "Skeptic", though, proves they can still pay tribute while making a right old racket: "The world will never see another crazy motherfucker like you".

LOUIS PATTISON



**PAUL SMITH &
PETER BREWIS**
Frozen By Sight
MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Tyne & Wear team-up yields interesting results
During Field Music's last hiatus in 2008, Peter Brewis released an

absorbing album of pointed English chamber-pop called *The Week That Was*. He's at it again here, this time in cahoots with fellow north-easterner Paul Smith. As frontman of chirpy indie-pop combo Maximo Park, Smith's vocals have always sounded a little affected, but his literary pretensions are more at home among Brewis' sturdy string arrangements. His travelogues contain some neat observations, too: Barcelona's outdoor escalators are "postmodern pathways" while Cornish surfers and their boards are "upright and medieval". It doesn't always come off, but there are plenty of inspiring moments.

SAM RICHARDS

7/10



STARS
No One Is Lost
ATO

Canadian alt.pop veterans discover the disco

8/10

It seems odd that a band who have made six increasingly accomplished albums of lush, friendly pop remains obscure outside of their native Canada. But this Toronto quintet carry on regardless, and their seventh long-player is arguably their best yet. Framed by two songs – "From The Night" and the title track – with a dancefloor pulse, *No One Is Lost* does what Stars do: uplifting songs with catchy hooks and gorgeous arrangements, inspired by looking the agony of life square in the eye and refusing to be miserable. Fleetwood Macisms abound, and it all builds perfectly to the closing title track's raved-up celebration of death's inevitability.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



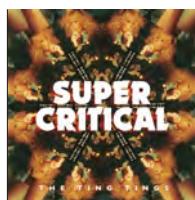
THESE NEW PURITANS
Expanded (Live At The Barbican)
INFECTIOUS

Southend art-rockers, live and unconfined

7/10

Expanded is a live record, but it's also a realisation, in a way. Recorded at London's Barbican back in April, it finds These New Puritans take 2013's *Field Of Reeds* – an ambitious, orchestrated work made piecemeal under fairly strained conditions – and present it with a 35-piece band that features banks of brass, a basso profundo with the lowest voice in Britain, and an electromagnetic piano that's never before been played live. More neo-classical moments like "Nothing Else But This" gain impressive heft from this intimidating phalanx, although a bold take on martial oldie "We Want War" brings a fire and brimstone that the more sombre *Field Of Reeds* material conspicuously lacks.

LOUIS PATTISON



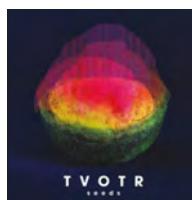
THE TING TINGS
Super Critical
FINCA

Former indie-brat duo stay up all night to get lucky
Divorcing their major label and glittering up their sound on this third album,

6/10

Katie White and Jules de Martino have come a long way from being bratty Next Big Things with their multi-million-selling 2008 debut, *We Started Nothing*. Recorded in Ibiza and co-produced by former Duran Duran guitarist Andy Taylor, *Super Critical* pays sparkly homage to vintage disco and pre-house dance-pop from the 1970s and early 1980s. With echoes of prime-time Chic, Prince and Madonna, the intent is admirable even if too many of the songs feel flimsy and pedestrian. That said, "Communication" and "Failure" are unabashedly gorgeous blasts of sugar-dipped synth-funk hedonism.

STEPHEN DALTON



TV ON THE RADIO
Seeds
HARVEST

Brooklyn cool-pop quartet's varied fifth
It's 10 years since TVOTR first turned heads with their inspirationally odd

7/10

debut. But if with consecutive releases their fusion of art pop, new wave and jazzy soul has sounded less striking by degrees, it's only because others have trailed weakly in their wake. Dave Sitek is again on production duties for *Seeds*, which underlines TVOTR's skill at balancing musical sensuality with lyrical smarts and crafting big melodies without sacrificing intimacy. Tunde Adebimpe's gorgeous voice guarantees quasi-spiritual uplift even in their more obvious moments, but there are a couple of wild cards; "Winter" and "Lazarray" respectively nip at West Coast punk's heels and crank up the Ramones-ish ramalama.

SHARON O'CONNELL



TORN HAWK
Let's Cry And Do Pushups At The Same Time
MEXICAN SUMMER

Agreeable audio mulch from avant-rock collagist

7/10

Brooklyn-based artist Luke Wyatt is a pioneer of "video mulch", strangely lovely montages of sounds and images from mostly obscure, uncool 1980s VHS movies. His musical projects follow similar rules, layered concoctions of glitchy retro-sheen ripples and blurry guitar shimmers invoking everything from Pink Floyd to U2, Mike Oldfield to Underworld. Fragmented and diffuse, Wyatt's second official album is occasionally guilty of being merely decorative. But the strongest tracks, such as the dessicated chimes of "Afterprom" or the luminous shudders of "There Was A Time", create an agreeable effect akin to hearing your favourite albums while mildly stoned and lying at the bottom of a swimming pool.

STEPHEN DALTON



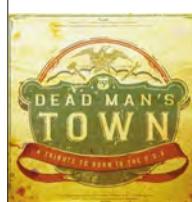
U2
Songs Of Innocence
ISLAND

Familiar 13th from Bono and co
Innovative only in its promotional presumption, U2's free album finds them reverting to the old formula of anthemic uplift and vibrato riffing as they survey the influences of adolescence that put them on the path to Apple-imposed ubiquity. There's lots of stuff about overcoming fear and adversity, seeking truth and direction, looking for "a soul that's real", set to the familiar chugging momentum and epiphanic melodies. It's all said best in the opening "The Miracle (Of Joey Ramone)", an exuberant, joyous celebration of the transformative power of music; but things get increasingly glum and disenchanted as the album grinds towards the cop-out of "The Troubles".

ANDY GILL

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Deadman's Town: A Tribute To Born In The USA
PROPER



7/10

Posse of alt.country artists reimagine Springsteen classic

The fantasy of an all-acoustic *Born In The USA* has long been desired by fans thanks in part to Springsteen's early demos of the album, and here a group of country bands have been persuaded to make that reality. First out the gate is a sublime monochrome version of the title track by Jason Isbell and Amanda Shires, after which quality varies but certainly hits the mark here and there – notably the zippy "Walking On The Highway" by Blitzen Trapper, a folksy "I'm On Fire" by Low, a touching "Bobby Jean" by Ryan Culwell and Nicole Atkins' splendidly tense "Dancing In The Dark".

PETER WATTS

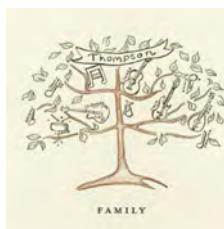


THOMPSON

Family

CONCORD

Folk-rock Von Trapps' generation game. By Jim Wirth



HIS FATHER IS "one of the greats". His mother "has the most beautiful voice in the world". As Teddy Thompson notes on the title track of this unconventional family album, the pressure of living up to his genetic billing

7/10

has never been easy. "And I am betwixt and between," sings the 38-year-old with brutal clarity. "Sean Lennon, you know what I mean."

Certainly, few singer-songwriters this side of Adam Cohen, Jakob Dylan or Rufus Wainwright have had an act to follow quite like Teddy Thompson and younger sister Kami. However, the fact that their nephew Zak Hobbs – son of Richard and Linda Thompson's older daughter, Muna – and half-brother Jack Thompson (Richard's son by his second wife) have chosen to ply a similar trade is testament to the folksy creativity – and distinctly British-accented melancholy – that seemingly courses through their bloodline.

A patchwork quilt of songs from the various branches of the Thompson family tree, written separately but stitched together collectively, *Family* might easily come across as an act of calculated smugness – a showcase for the family silver. However, it ends up being a more

nuanced guide to the Thompsons' flawed but just-about functioning dynamic, divorces, remarriages and all.

Richard Thompson's contributions are typical of the former Fairport Convention guitarist's idiosyncratic combination of twitchy bonhomie and underlying coldness; the half-chirpy "One Life At A Time" speaks of an effort to keep emotional vampires at arm's length ("I'm not thrilled about you," he bumbles), while "That's Enough" – a close relative of his own "Time To Ring Some Changes" – is a compelling slab of non-specific, us-and-them agit-prop; a fist

waved defiantly at nothing in particular.

Linda Thompson, meanwhile, brings her uniquely fragile gravitas to bear on two typically mournful ballads – "Perhaps We Can Sleep" and the faux-traditional lament of a dying matriarch, "Bonny Boys". "Dry your tears, I am at peace," she swansings, languid yet precise, after exhorting her young to live well and marry wisely, all the action – as ever – occurring several miles below the surface of the song.

Given their forebears' tendency to make musical molehills out of emotional mountains, it's no great surprise that the younger Thompsons thrive on understatement, too. Kami Thompson's deceptively flyweight "Careful" is a breezy piece of Fleetwood Mac circa *Rumours* psychodrama – with a cheeky cut'n'shut finish from the Modern Lovers' "Roadrunner" – while woozy closer "I Long For Lonely", a duet with husband James

Walbourne, is a tasteful nod to her family's spiderish yearning for dark corners.

Bassist Jack Thompson, meanwhile, abandons words entirely for the moody, elastic throb of "At The Feet Of The Emperor", while Zak Hobbs' straight-up folk/blues "Root So Bitter" sounds not unlike something that his grandma's old Glasgow pal John Martyn might have spat out in the late 1960s, before he lost the use of his consonants.

However, it is Teddy Thompson's title track that ultimately gives the album its stylistic and emotional heft. A Jackson C Frank-ish 3/4 strum, it succinctly expresses that combination of boundless love and who-exactly-are-you ambivalence that represents – to most functioning adults – the essence of the family dynamic. Detailing how being a Thompson has been simultaneously a privilege and a burden, the "boy with red hair and no smile" demonstrates something of his parents' inky-black humour with an absent-minded takedown of Muna.

"My elder sister is prettier than you'd believe," he keens. "My younger sister is prettier still and can sing." ("Believe me when I tell you that it was better this way round," he tells *Uncut*. "Kami would have been far more upset. Muna can take it – I know that.")

Hurting the ones you love the most, it seems, comes natural for any family – musical or otherwise – but the Thompsons' essential good nature shines through stronger than any sibling niggling. Dysfunctional but somehow comforting, and ultimately you don't need to be Sean Lennon to know how that feels.

Q&A

Teddy Thompson



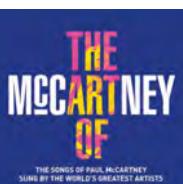
Why did you decide to bring the family together for this album?

I was having some miniature mid-life crisis. I was thinking about my family a lot and how I moved away from them a long time ago. In retrospect, I came up with this project to get everyone back together. I was really trying to heal some wounds for myself, but I dragged everyone along with me: "Come into my therapy session, whether you like it or not."

Is there a Thompson family musical style?

Songwriting-wise, we all have that distinctive dour outlook. And I also hear it in the voices, and the turn of phrase all the way to Zak – his guitar playing sounds so much like my dad's, and Kami sounds just like my mum sometimes.

Was it like being in the Von Trapp family, growing up as a Thompson? The polar opposite of that. My parents divorced when I was six, and we weren't the types to get round the piano and sing together. My dad just left, like a lot of fathers do, then my mum remarried and left us with my grandmother, Betty Pettifer. We did have a weird childhood, because we were ripped apart, especially me and Kami.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Art Of McCartney
ARCTIC POPPY

A-listers staying faithful to the Fabs and beyond

7/10

Macca on this two-disc set is undeniably impressive, there's little in the way of surprises when it comes to execution. Most go for accurate approximations of the originals (even relative left-fielder Perry Farrell plays it straight on "Got To Get You Into My Life"), perhaps because the majority are backed by McCartney's touring band playing the songs the way the boss sings 'em. It's left to Jeff Lynne ("Junk") and Brian Wilson ("Wanderlust") to stamp their own personalities on the material, but the likes of Bob Dylan, Roger Daltrey, Chrissie Hynde and Dr John settle for spirited karaoke.

TERRY STAUNTON



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Master Mix: Red Hot + Arthur Russell
YEPROC

Indie stars pay tribute for charity

7/10

The whimsical songs of Arthur Russell, who died aged 40 in 1992 from AIDS-related causes, tend to bring out the best and worst in those who cover them – who isn't a fan, after all? – and both kinds are in abundance on this 26-track, 2CD tribute arranged by the Red Hot charity. Skip the sanctimonious turns by vegan singer-songwriters and there's enough here to make it worthwhile, in particular stirring efforts by Blood Orange, Scissor Sisters, Alexis Taylor and Cults, but most alluring are the spaced-out interludes by US vibesman Lonnie Holley. Ultimately, you're better off returning to the source.

PIERS MARTIN

THE VOYEURS
Rhubarb Rhubarb
HEAVENLY

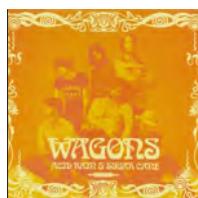
London five-piece renamed and reinvigorated

Charlie Boyer & The Voyeurs have dropped Boyer from their moniker,

8/10

though not from their ranks, for the follow-up to 2013 debut *Clarietta*, and it appears to have done them nothing but good. *Rhubarb Rhubarb* is scuzzy but smart, surging between primitive playfulness and something more malevolent. The chugging "Train To Minsk" sounds like Berlin Iggy meeting The Sweet, while "Damp Walls" is a wired VU-esque wig-out. The post-punk pointers – PiL, Buzzcocks, Magazine – may be overt, but more surprising is the benign English psychedelia of "Smiling Loon" and time-shifting "English Sings Rhubarb Rhubarb", suggesting an affinity with the late Kevin Ayers.

GRAEME THOMSON



WAGONS
Acid Rain & Sugar Cane
SPUNK RECORDS

Goth-blues wizardry from Oz

8/10

The imprint of co-producer Mick Harvey runs deep on this sixth effort from Henry Wagons' raffish sextet. "Hundred Years" and "Never Going To Leave" are clearly indebted to the Bad Seeds, though the band's keen eclecticism means they're equally adept at chugging '70s boogie, punky garage-rock and the kind of languorous blues that might soundtrack a Cormac McCarthy novel. Some of it's dramatically arch ("Why Do You Always Cry?" creeps in like Neil Diamond and blows out like Scott Walker), but Wagons has the voice to pull it off. Especially when roping in The Kills' Alison Mosshart for fine duet "Unwelcome Company".

ROB HUGHES



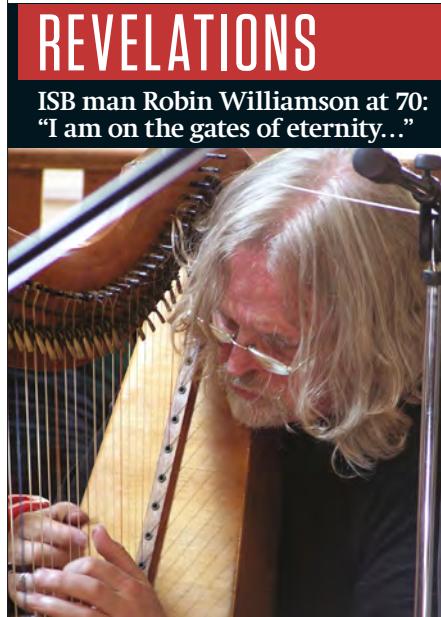
ROBIN WILLIAMSON
Trusting In The Rising Light
ECM

String Band-master maintains jazzbo credibility

8/10

A hard enough sell in his 1960s pomp when he looked like a medieval prince and sang like a hippy bagpipe, Robin Williamson's latter-day reinvention as a modern experimentalist has remoulded the Incredible String Band co-founder's single-mindedly perverse MO. His fourth album for ECM, *Trusting In The Rising Light* stirs Williamson's Celtic harp and meditations on monogamy, wonder and mortality into an austere folk/jazz potage. "Night Comes Quick In LA" glowers and clatters; "Roads" accidentally reinvents trip-hop, while "Islands Of The Inner Firth" is an eerie, viola-bathed rapture. Reassuringly uneasy listening.

JIM WIRTH



REVELATIONS

ISB man Robin Williamson at 70: "I am on the gates of eternity..."

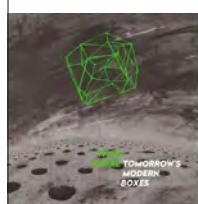
LEE ANN WOMACK
The Way I'm Livin'
SUGAR HILL

God, love and the devil: Texas country queen traces it all on ambitious eighth album

8/10

With its eloquent mix of hope and melancholy, recklessness and spiritual longing, Womack's first album in years is a substantive whomp on the butt to typical Nashville superficialities. She's always been a strong interpreter, but she's off the charts here, amid cast-iron beauties written by Americana stalwarts like Buddy and Julie Miller, Chris Knight and Mindy Smith. Simple sentiments, like "Chances Are", are classic C&W resurrected – shades of Dolly Parton – and perfectly executed; others, like the breathless gospel/soul of "Send It On Down" and the epic rumble of "Don't Listen To The Wind", startlingly blend riveting twang with the restlessly metaphysical.

LUKE TORN



THOM YORKE
Tomorrow's Modern Boxes
SELF-RELEASED

Radiohead frontman's subtle solo electronica When Yorke released his second solo album, via Bittorrent, on September

26, more time was spent discussing the delivery mechanism than the music. The eight tracks on his latest, though, aren't best suited to the snap judgments that accompany surprise releases, being delicate constructs rooted in the most solipsistic electronic music of the past decade. As such, the likes of "Nose Grows Some" build on the glitchy minimalism of "Cymbal Rush" from 2006's *The Eraser*, rather than the polyrhythmic exuberance of *Atoms For Peace*. Incrementally, too, Yorke's resilient gifts come into focus, as "Interference" reveals one of those rapturous yearning melodies, articulated in minimal strokes, that he's been finessing since "Pyramid Song".

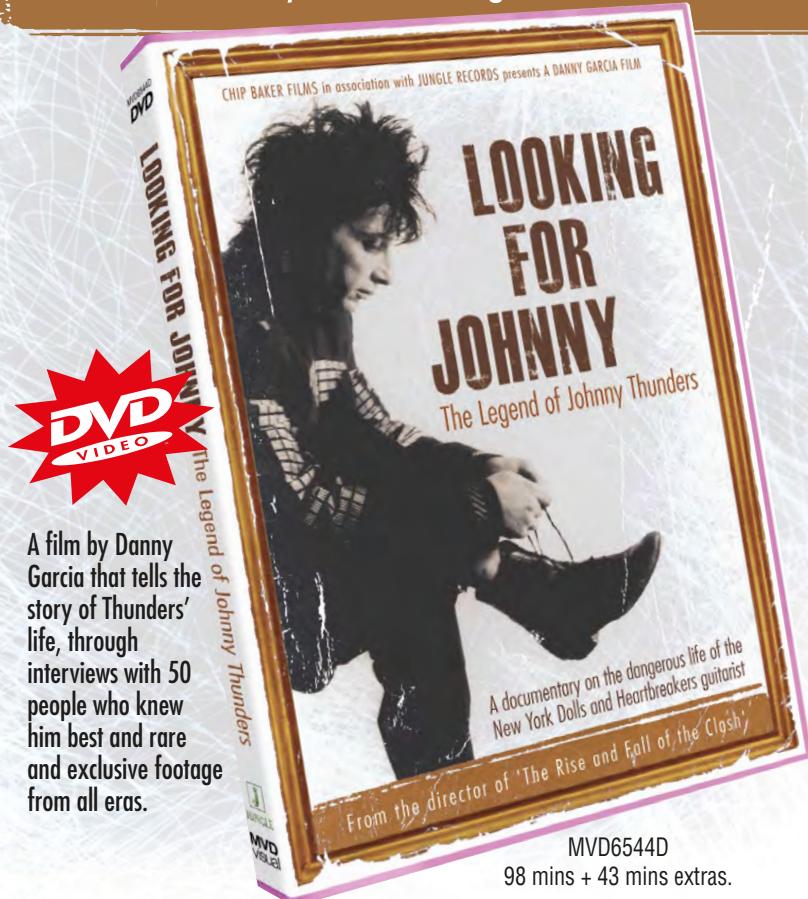
JOHN MULVEY

➤ "At age 70, I feel I am on the gates of eternity in every possible sense, and that's an everyday source of joy and wonder," Robin Williamson tells *Uncut*. Not going gentle into any Dylan Thomas-style dark night just yet, the Incredible String Band co-founder has defied the conventional career arc by producing his most challenging work in his fifties, sixties and beyond. Having marvelled at the unutterable oddness of existence on *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* and *Wee Tam And The Big Huge* in the late 1960s, Williamson's hippy gumbo of folk and world music has been forever altered by his embracing of improv and more ancient skills. "When I was a teenager, I started out reading Jack Kerouac, and I found that one of his influences was William Blake, and then following back Blake's influences I found he was talking about the Celtic heritage and the mysteries of the Bardic tradition," explains the Honorary Chief Bard of The Order Of Bards, Ovates And Druids. As much a poet and storyteller as a musician these days, Williamson continues to break strange new musical ground. "It's a mistake to become your own tribute band," he says sagely.

JIM WIRTH

LOOKING FOR JOHNNY - The Legend of Johnny Thunders

A documentary on the dangerous life of the New York Dolls and Heartbreakers guitarist



A film by Danny Garcia that tells the story of Thunders' life, through interviews with 50 people who knew him best and rare and exclusive footage from all eras.

MVD6544D

98 mins + 43 mins extras.



Looking For Johnny – Original Soundtrack' 30-track double-LP, exclusively on limited, numbered red vinyl. Only from independent Record Store shops. Out Nov. 24. FREUDLP116

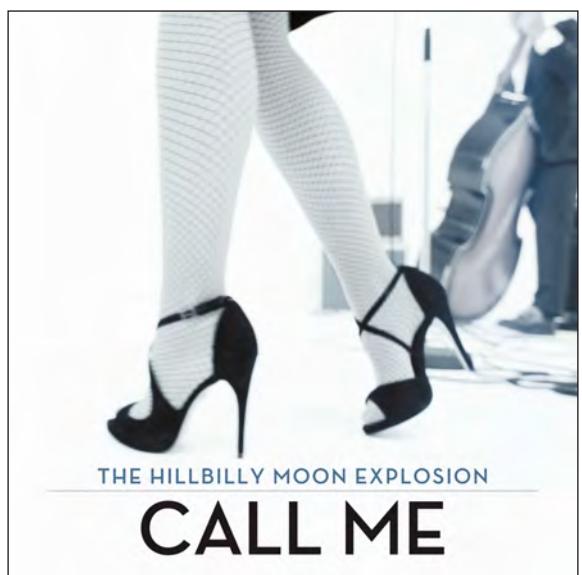


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SRD



SCORING: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

10 Masterpiece

1 Poor!

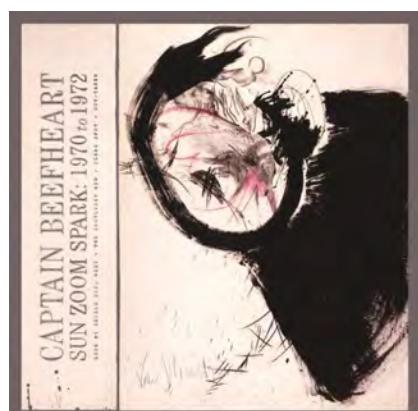
SCORING: EXTRA MATERIAL

10 Untold riches

1 Barrel-scrapings

Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



TRACKLIST

DISC 1: *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* OCTOBER 1970

- 1 Lick My Decals Off, Baby
- 2 Doctor Dark
- 3 I Love You, You Big Dummy
- 4 Peon
- 5 Bellerin's Plain
- 6 Woe-Is-Uh-Me-Bop
- 7 Japan In A Dishpan
- 8 I Wanna Find A Woman That'll Hold My Big Toe Till I Have To Go
- 9 Petrified Forest
- 10 One Red Rose That I Mean
- 11 The Buggy Boogie Woogie
- 12 The Smithsonian Institute Blues (Or The Big Dig)
- 13 Space-Age Couple
- 15 The Clouds Are Full Of Wine (Not Whiskey Or Rye)
- 16 Flash Gordon's Ape



GINNY WINN

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART AND THE MAGIC BAND

Sun Zoom Spark: 1970 To 1972

RHINO

The trout mask slips: Captain Beefheart's commercial ambitions revealed. By John Robinson

8/10

ONE OF THE best things you can do on the internet is a YouTube search for "Beefheart" and "German TV". Your results will offer up clips of varying length from an appearance by the Beefheart band on the German TV show *Beat Club* in 1972, in which Don Van Vliet, in fine voice and apparently benign control of proceedings as the Captain, is very much the

least interesting thing on display.

Behind him, one guitarist duckwalks in and out of shot wearing a silver suit. Another, hugely tall and thin, wails on slide guitar with the animal grace of a giraffe on a bouncy castle. A third guitarist stays nearly still, camouflaged (were his long beard and hair insufficiently doing so) behind dark glasses, the previous



TRACKLIST Continued

DISC 2: *The Spotlight Kid* JANUARY 1972

- 1 I'm Gonna Booglarize You Baby
- 2 White Jam
- 3 Blabber 'n Smoke
- 4 When It Blows Its Stacks
- 5 Alice In Blunderland
- 6 The Spotlight Kid
- 7 Click Clack
- 8 Grow Fins
- 9 There Ain't No Santa Claus On The Evenin' Stage
- 10 Glider

DISC 3: *Clear Spot* NOVEMBER 1972

- 1 Low Yo Yo Stuff
- 2 Nowadays A Woman's Gotta Hit A Man
- 3 Too Much Time
- 4 Circumstances
- 5 My Head Is My Only House Unless It Rains
- 6 Sun Zoom Spark
- 7 Clear Spot
- 8 Crazy Little Thing
- 9 Long Neck Bottles
- 10 Her Eyes Are A Blue Million Miles
- 11 Big Eyed Beans From Venus
- 12 Golden Birdies

DISC 4: Out-takes

- 1 Alice In Blunderland Alternate Version
- 2 Harry Irene
- 3 I Can't Do This Unless I Can Do This/ Seam Crooked Sam
- 4 Pompadour Swamp/Suction Prints
- 5 The Witch Doctor Life Instrumental Take
- 6 Two Rips In A Haystack/Kiss Me My Love
- 7 Best Batch Yet (Track) Version 1
- 8 Your Love Brought Me To Life Instrumental
- 9 Dirty Blue Gene Alternate Version 1
- 10 Nowadays A Woman's Gotta Hit A Man Early Mix
- 11 Kiss Where I Kain't
- 12 Circumstances Alternate Version 2
- 13 Little Scratch
- 14 Dirty Blue Gene Alternate Version 3

→ generation's fears about the counterculture in a single human entity. The drummer is wearing a monocle.

Individually, these were Mark Boston, Bill Harkleroad, Elliot Ingber and Art Tripp. Collectively, this was the latest incarnation of Beefheart's storied Magic Band, essentially the one anthologised on this four-disc boxset: covering 1970's *Lick My Decals Off, Baby*, through 1972's *The Spotlight Kid* and the band's third masterpiece, *Clear Spot* (also 1972). It is an indication of the singularity of Beefheart's vision that this was not only the version of his group he felt would bring him some mainstream success, but the one he put together while opposing himself to "freak" culture.

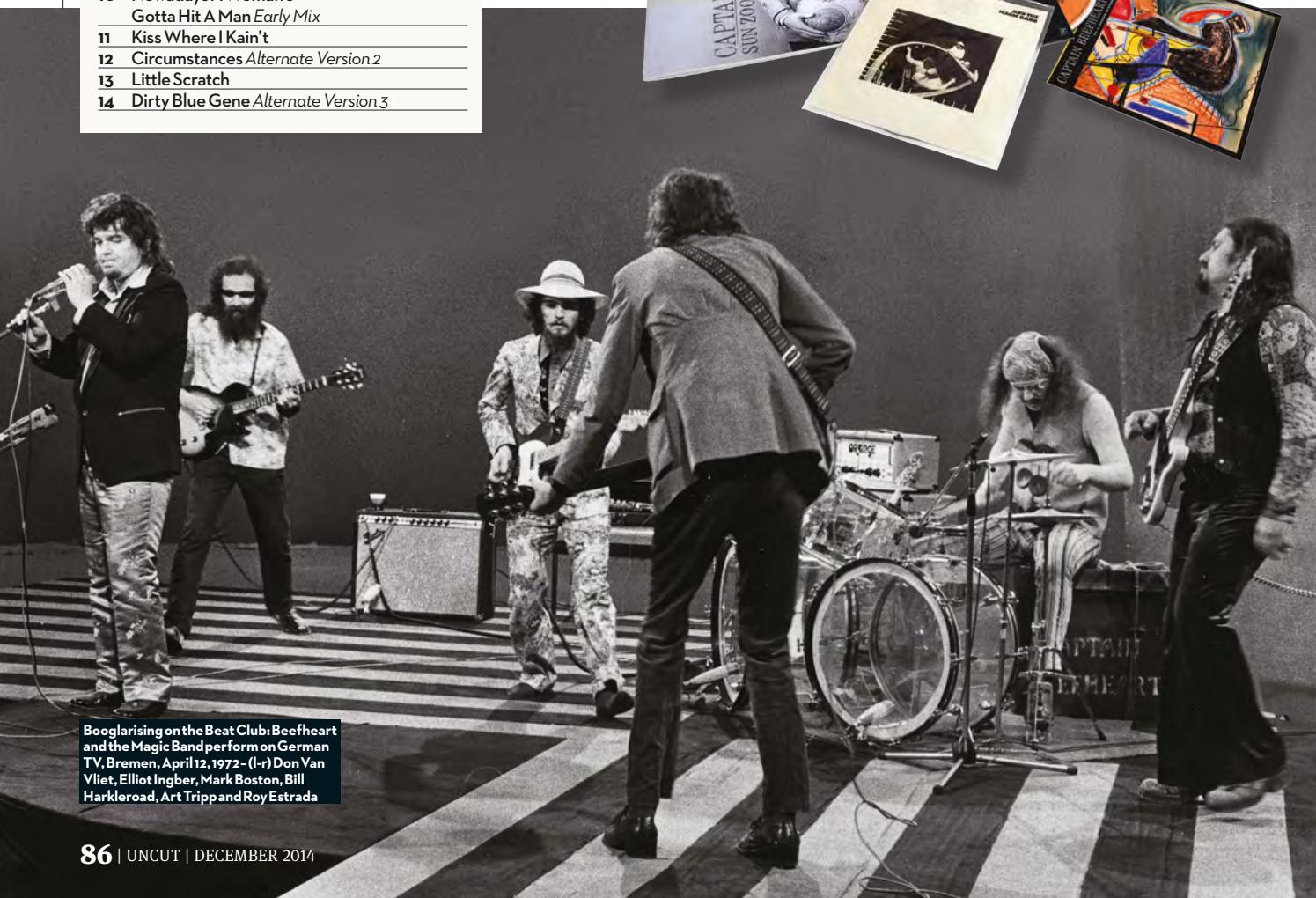
While it culminated in the sleek blues architecture of *Clear Spot*, the period covered by *Sun Zoom Spark* is not untouched by freakdom. Six months previously, the band had been living in a shared house in Woodland Hills, California subsisting on a diet of welfare cheese and soya beans, sustained mainly by the Captain's aggressively disciplinarian ideas about group composition. The regime yielded the double-LP splurge *Trout Mask Replica*, but was not incorrectly described by producer Frank Zappa as the "anthropological" incarnation of the group. A testimony to Beefheart's persuasiveness is that after the trauma of completing this essentially unmarketable work, he'd managed

to get the band signed to Warner Brothers.

Lick My Decals Off, Baby (here for the first time remastered on CD) was major-label funded, rehearsed on a Warners film lot amid *Bonanza* sets, and even had its own TV commercial. It was, however, still very much the product of Van Vliet's autocratic composition – the songs were assembled from his taped piano fragments by Bill Harkleroad, as they'd once been by drummer John French. These *Trout Mask*-style works were then recorded by Phil "Boogie" Schier, and transformed into a record of hellacious intensity.

There are some incredible things on *Decals*. "Peon" and "One Red Rose That I Mean" find Harkleroad on courtly solo guitar, or pursued by Tripp (a Zappa alumnus) on marimba. "I Love You, You Big Dummy" grooves oddly, while "The Smithsonian Institute Blues" amusingly excavates trad sources. In the TV ad, masked band members played egg whisks and cheese graters, while Beefheart, with his foot, gently overturned a bowl of bread mix in the middle of a road. For all its artistic success, in commercial terms, *Decals* was no less a waste of dough.

Mindful of the commercial inroads that had historically been made by bands like The Doors, Creedence and Canned Heat with something like his own blues source material, on *The Spotlight Kid*, Beefheart changed his



Booglarising on the Beat Club: Beefheart and the Magic Band perform on German TV, Bremen, April 12, 1972. (l-r) Don Van Vliet, Elliot Ingber, Mark Boston, Bill Harkleroad, Art Tripp and Roy Estrada

approach. The tempos on the album are slower, and the material – say, “I’m Gonna Boogalize You Baby” or “Click Clack”, a magnificently odd train song – attempt to reconcile commercially successful blues and boogie idioms with his own oblique approach.

Free playing – freedom generally – wasn’t encouraged in the Magic Band, but having retained his services after the *Decals* tour of 1971, Elliot Ingber’s untameably hairy wailing on guitar was accommodated here on “When It Blows Its Stacks” and the later instrumental showpiece, “Alice In Blunderland”. According to Lowell George, Jimi Hendrix was intimidated by Ingber’s playing, and no wonder: his “Blunderland” solo promotes a goodwill which lasts through *The Spotlight Kid*, all the way to the version on the extras disc, an hour or so later.

Warners bankrolled hours of studio time at the Record Plant in late 1971, allowing Beefheart to work on ideas not just destined for this record, but filling a well which sustained him for future albums. As bootlegs from the period have shown, there’s a good three hours of stuff out there from these and the so-called “Brown Star Sessions” for *Clear Spot*. On the fourth disc here, you can find the pick of it: a tender, jazzy take on “Harry Irene” (later on *Bat Chain Puller*), and the amusing “Kiss Where I Kain’t”, which sounds like a cartoon theme. “Two Rips In A Haystack” is a lovely, soulful composition with harmonica.

There are also songs the fan will know. “Best Batch Yet” and “Dirty Blue Gene” (here in two versions) were to make up the backbone for 1980’s *Doc At The Radar Station*. “Run Paint Run Run”, and “The Witch Doctor Life” threw a decade into the future and the final Beefheart LP, *Ice Cream For Crow*. It’s exciting stuff, but you wonder if this had been curated with the care of Revenant’s *Grow Fins* 15 years ago, it wouldn’t have developed from a taster to a fully indexed trove.

With Ingber’s skybound soloing, Tripp’s bony marimba and Harkleroad’s perversely swinging stop-start riff, “Pompadour Swamp” (whose title was used on *Bluejeans And Moonbeams* and which ultimately made it on to *Shiny Beast/Bat Chain Puller* as “Suction Prints”), is the true transitional oddity of the disc. The first escape act it performed, however, was from *Clear Spot*. Recorded with Ted Templeman, who later helmed commercial successes for the Doobie Brothers and Van Halen, Beefheart’s technical plans for the LP were met with a firm rebuttal.

With Templeman taking care of recording, Beefheart’s bigger blues picture received a spectacular update. A close cousin to *Safe As Milk*, *Clear Spot* fairly jumps with raw modern blues and soul. In the absence of Ry Cooder, guest slide was played by Cooder’s brother-in-law, Russ Titelman. Every bit as odd as a Beefheart record should be (have you heard “Big Eyed Beans From Venus”?), the LP found room for everything the band had to offer: the intricacies of Harkleroad’s playing, the stately, powerful swing, and Beefheart’s own ambition. There was even an unsuspected quality: soul. It remains a magnificent, truly indispensable album. Commercially, it peaked at No 191 in the US charts, 60 places lower than the previous record.

Q&A

Art Tripp recalls the Magic Band’s shot at the mainstream, Beefheart in love, and the psychological games: “Pure horse pucky!”

THE BAND HAD only recently come out of its most intense period – *Trout Mask Replica* and the communal living in Woodland Hills, a time of intermittent psychological warfare. Why did you get involved in that kind of scene? Don was really after me to join the band. I was disgusted with the way that the Mothers had ended, and I told Don that I wanted something solid. He readily agreed. Later, after I’d joined the band, I could see that Don wasn’t much interested in personally rehearsing as he was in challenging the others, and finding excuses why he couldn’t rehearse. He’d start band “talks” just to avoid rehearsing. It was all very psychological, you know, but looking back, it was pure horse pucky.

To some of the other guys in the Magic Band, it seemed as if Don meeting [his future wife] Jan marked a turning point in his behaviour towards the band. What was your impression of him at that time, and of Jan?

Jan was a wonderful gal: attractive, always smiling, great sense of humour, and very bright. Don was in love. I don’t know if his behaviour changed, or if it was simply that there was less of it, since she had most of his attention. Soon he realised that he couldn’t be married to her and still live in that little house. Don and she got a little place nearby.

How did the *Decals* relate to *Trout Mask Replica*?

We’d composed and rehearsed *Decals* at the Trout House, and also at my place in Laurel Canyon. The music, of course, was fascinating. Some of the parts were written for guitar, which I transcribed for myself on marimba. Bill would play the parts, and I would write them down in score form. I think the single most telling thing about the *Decals* period was that Don and I actually believed that the music would be commercial! Shows you how far out we were at the time. In many ways *Decals* was more advanced than was *Trout Mask*. It was better arranged and performed.

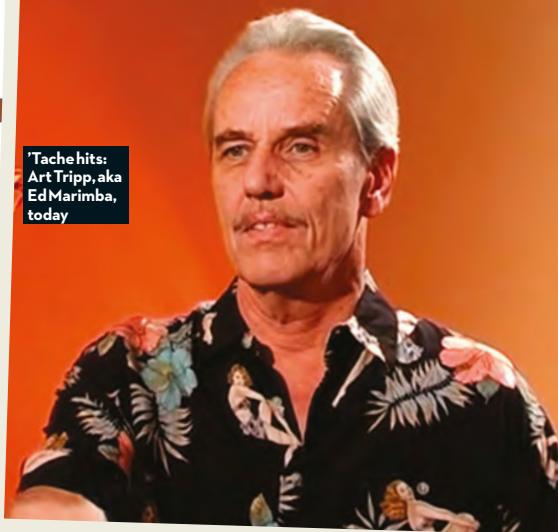
How far was there an attempt to shoot for commercial success with *The Spotlight Kid*?

Oh, yes. I was one of the promoters of attempting to be more commercial. But Don and management felt it too. The ‘starving artist’ label is captivating only in hindsight. I believed that we’d skyrocket right into obscurity with the art material. But looking back, it was a mistake on a lot of levels to try to make such radical changes.

You moved to Northern California to live in a compound. What was that like? Was money tight?

We all had separate apartments in a compound probably intended for tourists. I liked it in Ben

‘Tache hits:
Art Tripp, aka
Ed Marimba,
today



Lomond [near Santa Cruz], once I got used to the change from LA. During the hippy era, Santa Cruz was, as was the whole state of California, loads of fun. Unfortunately they’re now totalitarian nightmares. If morale was low, it was because we weren’t making any money, and a few of the guys weren’t getting enough to eat. I went to town a lot and hustled money by playing pool. That kept me in food, cigarettes and beer. Whenever guys are together with no money, but pouring a lot of energy into music projects, there’s going to be strife and stridency.

Clear Spot is a fantastic album. How much of that would you put down to the skills of Ted Templeman?

Ted Templeman was certainly the catalyst for *Clear Spot*. He was able to add a more commercial sound, and assured that we keep things simple. I think Ted was probably the only guy who could have gotten that high quality of an album from our material.

How long had it taken to develop this material? How were you working on these songs now?

Many of the songs were simply germs of ideas that had been floating around for a couple of years. There was an increased effort after *Spotlight Kid* to continue in a more commercial vein. Most often, Don’s notion of a completed “song” was a single line or phrase on a tape or a cocktail napkin, with nothing embellished further than that. Bill was a big help in developing the material.

Don was still interested in making a commercial record?

Yes, we were all tired of poverty. There was a concerted effort to head in a more commercial vein.

In hindsight, that new direction confused and disappointed many of our arts fans; and it may have perplexed record labels over what type of act they were being asked to back and promote. Our existing fans were not ready to accept us as a mainstream rock band.

“We actually believed the music would be commercial! Shows you how far-out we were at the time...”

It sounds as if it might have been a fun album to make – *Big Eyed Beans From Venus* is magnificent. Was it enjoyable?

Yes, it was very enjoyable. For one thing it was a pleasure to have a top producer like Templeman to keep things moving along. He was a very low-key guy with loads of talent and experience. He was also something of a baffle or anchor with Don. That is, Ted was able to keep Don’s mouth shut, and the sessions on track. “Big Eyed Beans From Venus” was fun to play, and very exciting. For several tours, we always ended the main portion of the show with that song.

INTERVIEW: JOHN ROBINSON



TRACKLIST

CD1: Original album and singles

- 1 Girl On The Phone
- 2 Thick As Thieves
- 3 Private Hell
- 4 Little Boy Soldiers
- 5 Wasteland
- 6 Burning Sky
- 7 Smithers-Jones (Album Version)
- 8 Saturday's Kids
- 9 The Eton Rifles (Album Version)
- 10 Heat Wave
- 11 Strange Town
- 12 The Butterfly Collector
- 13 When You're Young
- 14 Smithers-Jones (Single Version)
- 15 The Eton Rifles (Single Edit)
- 16 See-Saw
- 17 Going Underground
- 18 The Dreams Of Children

CD2: Demos and radio sessions

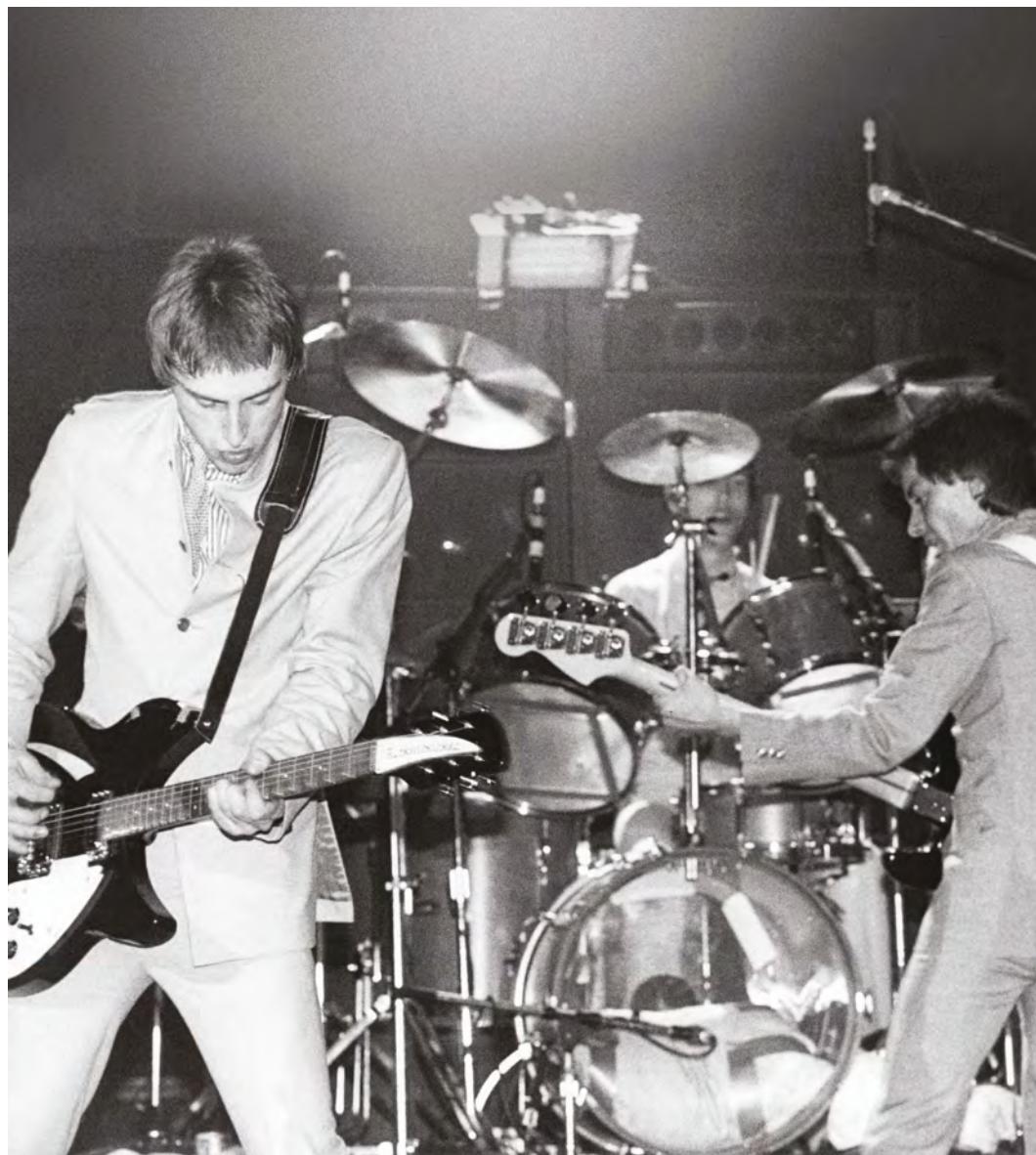
- 1 Strange Town (Alternative Take)
- 2 When You're Young (Alternative Take)
- 3 The Eton Rifles (Demo)
- 4 See-Saw (Demo)
- 5 Girl On The Phone (Demo Version)
- 6 Thick As Thieves (Demo Version)
- 7 Private Hell (Demo Version)
- 8 Little Boy Soldiers (Demo)
- 9 Wasteland (Demo)
- 10 Burning Sky (Demo)
- 11 Simon (Demo)
- 12 Strange Town (Demo)
- 13 The Butterfly Collector (Demo)
- 14 Burning Sky (Demo)
- 15 When You're Young (Demo)
- 16 Best Of Both Worlds (Remixed Demo)
- 17 Along The Grove (Demo Version)
- 18 The Eton Rifles (Demo Version)
- 19 Thick As Thieves (Peel Session, 1979)
- 20 The Eton Rifles (Peel Session, 1979)
- 21 Saturday's Kids (Peel Session, 1979)
- 22 When You're Young (Peel Session, 1979)

CD3: Live At The Brighton Centre, UK, 1979

20 tracks

DVD: Promos and TV appearances

- 1 Strange Town
- 2 Butterfly Collector
- 3 When You're Young
- 4 Going Underground
- 5 The Dreams Of Children
- 6 Strange Town (Top Of The Pops, 1st 1979)
- 7 Strange Town (Top Of The Pops, 2nd 1979)
- 8 When You're Young (Top Of The Pops, 1979)
- 9 The Eton Rifles (Top Of The Pops, 1st 1979)
- 10 The Eton Rifles (Top Of The Pops, 2nd 1979)
- 11 Going Underground (Top Of The Pops, 1980)
- 12 The Eton Rifles (Something Else, 1979)
- 13 When You're Young (Something Else, 1979)



THE JAM

Setting Sons

(Deluxe and Super Deluxe Editions)

UMC/POLYDOR

Remastered with bonus tracks, Weller and co's fourth album improves with age. By Garry Mulholland

8/10

THERE IS STILL a widely held perception that Jam albums follow a numerical pattern; an inverse of the Star Trek Movie Curse. That is, the odd-numbered Jam albums are excellent, while the even-numbered ones are... well... not.

This has always affected the reputation of The Jam's fourth album, with its healthy sales and inclusion of breakthrough Top 3 single "The Eton Rifles" undercut by a half-finished concept and a dodgy cover version closer that inevitably leads to *Setting Sons* feeling rushed and inconclusive.

But comparing *Setting Sons* with, say, the frankly awful second album *This Is The Modern World* is

pushing a nerdy fan theory way too far. The excellence of six of its ten songs, and the tougher, denser sound fashioned by loyal Jam producer Vic Coppersmith-Heaven, make *Setting Sons* the successful link between the creative breakthrough of 1978's career-saving *All Mod Cons* and the March 1980 triumph of the "Going Underground" single, an anthem of nuclear panic and social alienation that revealed that The Jam had stealthily climbed to biggest-band-in-Britain status by becoming the first single to enter the UK charts at No 1 since 1973.

The bonus tracks added to this remastered version – the brilliant pre-album singles and

Q&A

Paul Weller



What do you think of *Setting Sons* now? Where does it sit among the Jam albums for you?

Sound Affects is my favourite. That was us doing something really different. But I think there's some great songs on *Setting Sons*, with "The Eton Rifles" as the stand-out. "Private Hell" I really like as well. I was concentrating more on my lyrics at that time, and quite a few of the songs, like "Burning Sky", started off as prose or poetry.

How did you start writing like that?

"Down In The Tube Station..." from *All Mod Cons* was a long poem which Vic Smith helped me shape into a song, and that convinced me that there were ways of making things a bit more literary and still fitting them into a song structure. My songs were getting a bit more involved than verse-chorus-verse-chorus. So, from a selfish point of view, I felt I made a leap forward with my writing on *Setting Sons*.

Do you agree in hindsight that "Heat Wave" was out-of-place?

Yeah, totally! It's the "Yellow Submarine" of *Setting Sons*, innit? But I didn't have any more songs... that's the truth of the matter. It's a shame there isn't a real closer for the album, but that's just the way it was.

Why did you abandon the friends-reunite-after-civil-war concept?

I think I just ran out of ideas, if I'm really honest. Maybe I wasn't sure if it was the right thing for us to do anyway. It was a bit of a half-baked concept.

Was "Girl On The Phone" about a real female stalker?

Our fans were pretty obsessive but not to that extent! That song came from sitting in our offices in Shepherd's Bush with an acoustic guitar because we needed two more songs for the album. I just knocked out "Girl On The Phone" and "Private Hell". The title is from a Roy Lichtenstein pop art painting called *Girl On The Phone*. Sorry if I've ruined it for you!

INTERVIEW: GARRY MULHOLLAND

B-sides, the work-in-progress *Setting Sons* demos including three previously unreleased songs, the final Peel sessions, and the vinyl-only "Live In Brighton 1979" set – give the Jam loyalist an overview of exactly how Paul Weller, Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler made that creative leap at the end of a decade that had begun with The Beatles' split and ended with the anti-rock experiments of post-punk.

Setting Sons saw Weller basing more of his lyrics on his own poetry, and established his credentials as an ironic commentator on both the British class system and the fleeting bonds of childhood friendship. The typically tough-but-tuneful "Thick As Thieves" and "Burning Sky", and the ambitious mini-rock operatic "Little Boy Soldiers" are the most explicit survivors of the original album concept (as revealed to *NME*'s Nick Kent in September), of three male friends torn apart by a British civil war who meet up again after the war's conclusion.

But "Private Hell", "Wasteland", "Saturday's Kids", "The Eton Rifles" and the orchestral version of Bruce Foxton's "Smithers-Jones" are all close relations; bitter reflections on ordinary English men and women – working-class and suburban middle-class – alienated and manipulated by corporate and military power.

Only the closing "Heat Wave" – essentially a cover of The Who's cover of the Martha And The Vandellas hit, featuring future Style Councillor Mick Talbot's first

keyboard work with Weller – and the hilarious, out-of-character opener "Girl On The Phone" break ranks. One of the most underrated Weller gems, the latter examines the power of a stalker who knows everything about our bemused boy wonder, even "the size of my cock". It's the first evidence of Weller's dark humour.

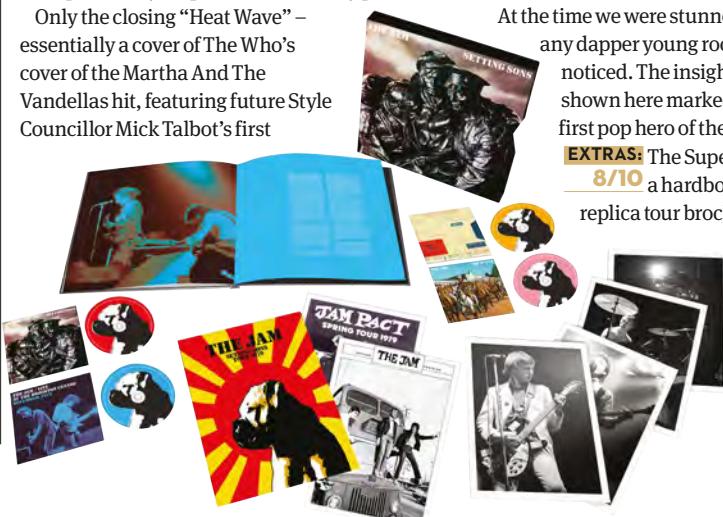
The new remaster gives freer rein to the density of the sound Vic Smith gradually developed for The Jam, with Foxton's bass punching through, revealing just how much space his busy, lyrical lines open up for Weller to use guitar as sound effect rather than straight rhythm and lead. And while the Brighton live show is inessential, two of the three newly unearthed songs, Weller's "Simon" and "Along The Grove", are stark, caustic and could have been contenders. Foxton's "Best Of Both Worlds" may have been best left in the vaults.

But *Setting Sons* has improved with age. It reminds us that working-class life was best captured, not by The Clash, nor PiL, nor even The Specials, but by the mock celebration of The Jam's "Saturday's Kids", with its life of "insults", beer and "half-time results", and Weller's recognition that we – and our parents, with their "wallpaper lives" – were "the real creatures that time has forgot".

At the time we were stunned, and grateful, that any dapper young rock'n'roll star had noticed. The insight and empathy shown here marked Weller out as the first pop hero of the coming decade.

EXTRAS: The Super Deluxe Edition has **8/10** a hardbound book, prints, a replica tour brochure and fan-club

magazine. The DVD has five promo video clips, six *Top Of The Pops* clips, and two from the Beeb's *Something Else*.



THE AFGHAN WHIGS Gentlemen At 21

MUTE

The Whigs' masterpiece comes of age

Earlier this year, the Whigs reconvened after a 16-year absence with *Do To The Beast*, an LP that

**9/10**

demonstrated their propensity to explore the darker impulses of the human condition remained reassuringly undiminished. 1993's *Gentlemen*, however, was the early career peak: the perfect marriage of Greg Dulli's obsessional, masochistic love dramas and the band's funky but hard riffing. Dulli underscored his position on "Be Sweet": "I got a dick for a brain". His bravado, meanwhile, turns into something darker on a song like "When We Two Parted": "You're saying the victim doesn't want it to end/ Good, I get to dress up and play the assassin again." Nevertheless, a highpoint is "My Curse", where guest vocalist Scrawl's Marcy Mays offers a sobering female counterpoint to Dulli's bluster: "I'll try and break your back/ You'll try and make amends." This fine reissue includes remarkably fully formed demos of the entire LP, including Dulli's original wounded-animal take of "My Curse". There are also some of the band's vaunted soul covers, too – the best of which, a live take on The Supremes' "My World Is Empty Without You", catches not only a commendably raw vocal from Dulli but also the fierce interplay between him and guitarist Rick McCollum.

EXTRAS: 17 bonus tracks of demos, B sides and **8/10** live performances.

MICHAEL BONNER

LEWIS BALOUÉ Romantic Times (reissue, 1985)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC



Mysterious playboy crooner unearthed

The curious tale of would-be '80s heartthrob Lewis Baloué had baffled

collectors long before it found its way online earlier this year, when *Light In The Attic* reissued the mystery crooner's privately pressed debut album, *L'Amour*, without knowing his identity. The story goes that in 1983 a suave Canadian, who drove a white Mercedes-Benz convertible and had a model girlfriend, turned up at a Los Angeles studio and recorded an album of sparse and otherworldly (read: amateurish) love songs using the name Lewis. He stayed in the Beverly Hills Hilton and paid a photographer \$250 to shoot the album cover, but the cheque bounced. He put the record out on his RAW label, which stood for Randall A Wulff, his real name. No-one had been able to trace him for 30 years until this summer when he was located in Canada, and wanted no involvement in his past. By chance, Lewis' equally lost second album, '85's *Romantic Times*, surfaced this year, just as *L'Amour* hit the streets. If we're feeling charitable, *Romantic Times* could be Bryan Ferry mooching over Angelo Badalamenti's *Twin Peaks* score, but the vibe is primarily strung-out Sinatra with a raw synthesiser backing. Like Randall A Wulff, it's not without charm.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



GAME THEORY

Blaze Of Glory (reissue, 1982)

OMNIVORE RECORDINGS

8/10

Big pop chronicles: Ground zero for Sacramento's ambitious '80s pop mavens

Unbeknownst to many at this late date, the underground 1980s were a golden era, a breeding ground for a new generation of quirky pop experimentation, even if said efforts only resulted in local bar-scene glory and a stab with an indie record label. Sacramento's Game Theory, whose ringleader and songwriter Scott Miller literally brimmed with bountiful nervous energy, agile new ideas of what a pop song could/should be, and enough melodic invention to front a dozen bands, persisted on the fringes of the so-called Paisley Underground. Wielding hooks as lethal as any by, say, The dB's, The Feelies or The Bongos, Miller's gift would fully bloom with the off-kilter classics *The Big Shot Chronicles* and *Lolita Nation* (to be anthologised on future Omnivore releases), plus his impressive 'gos-era group, the Loud Family. *Blaze Of Glory*, circa 1982, though, was early days. Frenzied and unfocused, but buzz with hooks atop more hooks, with (one might say) more sonic ideas than places to put them, it plays like a try-out for the varsity. Erudite yet playful, lo-fi yet dense, Miller's songs arrive from a million different angles. When it all unspools fully realised – eg, the one-minute outburst "All I Want Is Everything", played at a horse's gallop – it'll make you hop around the room. Others, like "Tin Scarecrow" and "Mary Magdalene", might be too overflowing and grandiose for their own good, but fascinating all the same. At its zenith, Miller's songwriting brims with the ebullience of youth, whether rewriting notions of romance – the swirling, carnivalesque "Date With An Angel" – or gallantly philosophising, via righteous critique of the decay brought on by adulthood, as on the timeless beauty of "Sleeping Through Heaven". Fifteen lo-fi bonus tracks, including ephemera from Miller's pre-Theory Alternate Learning, serves mostly to satiate obsessives, but a live resurrection of Theory inspirations The Twinkeyz' fun, hypnotic "Aliens In Our Midst", featuring original singer Donnie Jupiter on vocals, is a treat.

LUKE TORN



LC COOKE
The Complete SAR Recordings

ACE

The lost voice of Sam Cooke's little brother

In 1964, Sam Cooke wrote and produced an album for his younger

brother, LC, earmarked for release on his SAR label. Of all SAR's artists, including Bobby Womack and Johnnie Taylor, Cooke reportedly harboured the highest hopes of his sibling. But before the record was released, Cooke was shot dead, SAR collapsed and LC's album was shelved. Half a century later, the tracks finally see the light of day and reveal a singer whose supreme vocal mix of honey and grit sounds uncannily like his more celebrated brother. Backed by a band including Billy Preston and drummer Earl Palmer, the brothers crafted an album of classic soul-pop delivered with huge charm and assurance, from the jaunty contagion of "Take Me For What I Am" to the innuendo-laden R'n'B of "The Lover". Best of all is "Put Me Down Easy", a masterpiece of emotional intensity to rival Sam's own finest sides. Had it been released at the time, LC would surely have become a star in his own right. Instead, dispirited by his brother's death, he drifted out of music. Happily, at 81 he's still around to enjoy the belated recognition.

EXTRAS: Half a dozen tracks recorded for **6/10** Checker in the 1950s and a final 1965 single for Destination Records.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



IVOR CUTLER
Life In A Scotch Sitting-Room Vol II
(reissue, 1978)

REV-OLA

Peel favourite's live album, recorded in Glasgow in 1977

9/10

Ivor Cutler defied categorisation, being a poetic storyteller and sometime harmonium player whose dryly humorous tales of a childhood of privation and misery found favour with John Peel at the height of punk. He started out playing silly songs on the Home Service, before attracting the attention of The Beatles, who cast him as Buster Bloodvessel in *Magical Mystery Tour*. Cutler's association with Peel began in 1969, but this album – recorded at Glasgow's Third Eye Centre in 1977 – presents his semi-autobiographical monologues, along with a few of his absurd "Jungle Tips". His use of language is exquisite, as is his delivery, whether recalling the "many sorts of games" that could be played with three grains of sand, or evoking "the odour of singed leg-hair". There's an undertone of violence and joylessness which will be familiar to many who have endured a Scottish childhood, but Cutler's tone is (almost imperceptibly) mocking. Still, he probably means it when he explains, with reference to a family piano with missing keys, "I believe that my present feeling for silences and emptinesses dates from these sing-songs – the awaited non-note on the beat."

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



SMOKE DAWSON

Fiddle

TOMPKINS SQUARE

Fascinating, one-off curio from 1971

George 'Smoke' Dawson was, by all accounts, a wildly unpredictable talent, an Irish tenor singer

8/10

from Brooklyn with a mercurial disposition and a love of hillbilly mountain music. He started as a banjo player, gigging in an early '60s trio that included future Holy Modal Rounders man, Peter Stampfel. The latter was so proficient on banjo, however, that Dawson soon switched to fiddle, before running off with Stampfel's wife and winding up in San Francisco. This instrumental album, recorded in 1971 and limited to less than a thousand copies, is a wonderful showcase for his untutored expertise on fiddle and bagpipes. Dawson's animated personality finds a reflection in the kinetic nature of "Pretty Polly" and "Cacklin' Hen", both of which swing with raw abandon. Ace medley "Connaughtman's Rambles/Devil's Dream/Marche Venerie" brings the pipes to the fore, though his dazzling turn on "Flop-Eared Mule" attests that his prime impulse, as the album title says, was as a string player. The antique feel of this music is further amplified by Dawson's own appearance. Impressively whiskered and topped off with a black western hat, he could be a distant descendant of Custer. Though he's still going at 79, *Fiddle* remains Dawson's sole recorded legacy.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES



DEUS

Selected Songs 1994-2014

PIAS

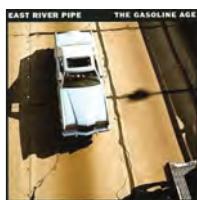
Underrated Belgian alt. rockers' retrospective
Across a 20-year career, dEUS have seen four of their seven albums reach

7/10

the No 1 slot in their native Belgium, but in the UK, their appeal has never extended beyond the cultish. Dedicated fans aside, probably few know that the quintet – of which singer/guitarist Tom Barman and Klaas Janzoons (keyboards and violin) are the only original members – released a new album in 2012. It's an egregious oversight, as this two-disc compilation underlines. Their artful blend of punkish alt.rock, prog, mutant blues and cool, cabaret jazz first surfaced when post-grunge and Britpop ruled the roost, but despite their experimental bent, dEUS have always had punchy and compelling tunes by the skip-load. Like the singles "Little Arithmetics", with its "Paranoid Android"-style wigouts, "Theme From Turnpike" (Tom Waits and Beefheart wrangle with "Peter Gunn"), "The Architect" (blues-soaked soul à la The The) and f-bomb-dropping epic "Instant Street", which welds a grungy workout onto country soul. Among five songs representing the later LPs are the Afghan Whigs-ish "Twice (We Survive)", from 2011's *Keep You Close*, and a languid, shimmering "Nothings" (*Following Sea*, 2012); that they are in no way the skip-over embarrassments of so many collections says much about dEUS' creative health.

EXTRAS: None.

SHARON O'CONNELL



EAST RIVER PIPE

The Gasoline Age (reissue, 1999)

MERGE

FM Cornog's finest hour, now with 75 per cent more melancholy

8/10

Home recording is pretty much the norm these days, but back in the '90s it marked FM Cornog out as an outsider, the lonely echo of his drum machine adding an additional layer of poignancy to his sweetly stoical tales of sleeping rough in New Jersey. Cornog still puts out the occasional East River Pipe album, although 1999's *The Gasoline Age* remains his critical and commercial zenith. Ostensibly a love-letter to the freeway, his "shiny, shiny pimpmobiles" quickly come to represent isolation, evasion and the American dream zooming off into the distance. The futile revs of Springsteen's *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* also loom large, especially on "44th Street Boys Stolen Car Club" and heart-busting mini-epic "Atlantic City (Gonna Make A Million Tonight)", on which Cornog matter-of-factly reveals that regular beatings as a child have left him mentally damaged to the point where he's prepared to stake his entire future on the turn of a card. You know it's not going to end well, yet his naïve optimism is overwhelming.

EXTRAS: An entire mini-album's worth of

8/10 unreleased song from the period. "How's It Feel To Piss It All Away?" and the defiant lo-fi disco number "The Handsome Cruel-Eyed Men" are as good as anything Cornog has recorded.

SAM RICHARDS



HOW TO BUY... IVOR CUTLER

Mr Cutler's back catalogue is in a neglected state, and what's really needed is a reissue of his Peel sessions. Some radio work can be found on the internet. But for an overview, try these:

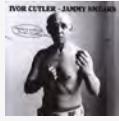


An Elpee And Two Epees

DECCA, 2005

A compilation of some of his early work from 1959-'61. It's silly songs, mostly, introduced in the manner of a school teacher (Cutler taught at Summerhill). Includes the classic "Gruts For Tea".

7/10



Jammy Smears

VIRGIN, 1976

The third of Cutler's Virgin albums, from 1976, and perhaps the best introduction to his work. Includes boogie-woogie classic "Bicarbonate Of Chicken", and darkly humorous "Big Jim" in which Ivor analyses the timbre of a drowning man's voice. "Life In A Scotch Sitting Room, Vol 2, Episode 11" is perfect.

8/10



A Flat Man

CREATION, 1998

Cutler's final album captures his mature style – poetic, whimsical, bleak – in a series of minimal vignettes. Classicists will appreciate "Gorbals 1930", with its flowing green snot and "strangers' diarrhoea".

8/10

ALASTAIR MCKAY



ALAN JAMES EASTWOOD

Seeds... (reissue, 1971)

CHERRY TREE

Unexceptional, befuddled singer-songwriter fare

6/10

Released in tandem with a compilation by Alan

"Bugsy" Eastwood's earlier Birmingham-based group The Exception – whose most heralded single "The Eagle Flies On Friday" is said to feature Robert Plant on tambourine – *Seeds* was Eastwood's only solo album, released in 1971 on the President label. There's much to admire but the end result is so unfocused that it's effectively three different albums in one, all hinged around Eastwood's faintly despairing love songs. The opening songs, notably "Evenin' Rain", are doused in the kind of elaborate string arrangements that will appeal to fans of the Honeybus' elegant chamber pop. It's all a little too scrambled, though; Eastwood's warm soulful voice shifts between sounding like MOR-era Long John Baldry, Cat Stevens and Richie Havens. Eastwood is most appealing where he favours Havens' affecting, stripped-back approach on songs such as the touching "Boston" and "Moonchild", his final single for the label in 1973, driven by strident acoustic guitars, stand-up bass and simple percussion.

EXTRAS: Eastwood's four non-LP singles for **7/10** President including the jazzy "Closer To The Truth", laced with wonderfully mellow flute, and the swamp-funk "Red Shoe Truckin'", tantalising indications of what might have been. *MICKHOUGHTON*



FUGAZI

First Demo

DISCHORD

Songs #1. Archive tracks from post-hardcore pioneers

"Demo" is a strange word for this collection of early Fugazi music. For whom,

after all, were they demoing? By 1988, the Washington DC band already had a record label, a communal house and a network of likeminded people over the United States. What else, if it came to that, did they need? As this document illustrates nicely, the band's musical approach was no less well-established. Originally a tape given away (Sold? Are you kidding?) to fans who came to early shows, *First Demo* captures the band's first flush of creativity. It features early versions of their first anthems ("Waiting Room", from their eponymous 1988 EP; "Song #1" and the others from the "3 Songs" EP of a year later), but it also contains "Merchandise", still a big number when it finally appeared on 1990's arguable career-best *Repeater* album. The crunch of Ian Mackaye's guitar, the songs (and, as with "And The Same", even the occasional tendency to hector) are all in place. As a document, meanwhile, the dub reverbs and more explicitly reggae rhythms essayed by rhythm section Joe Lally and Brendan Carty illustrate the routes the band were exploring in their efforts to explore what might be possible in a post-hardcore world.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON



7/10

GENESIS

R-Kive

VIRGIN/UNIVERSAL

Prog giants inclusively compiled, plus solo work

Rather than the rarities suggested by the title, this comp covers the band from their incarnation as uni

circuit proggers (1970's eureka moment "The Knife", *Friday Rock Show* staple "Supper's Ready") all the way to when they rolled up their jacket sleeves to become the favourite band of *American Psycho*'s Patrick Bateman ("Before Duke I didn't really understand their work...Too artsy.") Oddly, it also incorporates solo work from Phil Collins, Mike Rutherford, Peter Gabriel, Tony Banks – even "Nomads", a recent piece of flamenco-prog fusion from long-departed guitarist Steve Hackett. *R-Kive* implies that Genesis, rather like the Mafia or public school, is an organisation on some level you never really leave. It's an inclusive mission. Disc One, high prog, finds the band pursued in an unusual time signature through Victorian schoolrooms, a nightmare of cruel nannies only broken by *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. Disc Two (roughly '76-'81) marks an uncomfortable transition: Gabriel and Collins doing grand stuff solo, the band albums uncertain of their role. By Disc Three, a more Mike And The Mechanics kind of town, Genesis have reconciled to being a pop band with occasional fiddly bits. You can't please all of the people all of the time, ultimately – but you can give them a disc each.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON



8/10

GIRLS AT OUR BEST!

Pleasure

(reissue, 1981)

OPTIC NERVE

Jangle belles; Leeds lightweights' ode to joy

Girls At Our Best! like

Dolly Mixture were one of the great lost bands of C86 pre-history, their "legend" lent a twist by the fact that shrill-voiced singer Judy Evans – the only genuine girl in the band – went to ground soon after the release of their lone album. The Wedding Present's David Gedge and Talulah Gosh/Tender Trap frontwoman Amelia Fletcher both admitted to musical crushes on Girls At Our Best!, and – as this with-bells-on vinyl reissue shows – what's not to love? There's a little of the Television Personalities' coy naïvety, but also a melodic sophistication and an uncluttered sensuality, which – in the politically charged wake of post-punk agit-prop outfits The Au Pairs and Delta 5 – must have seemed guilelessly liberating. Evans' Roedean-accented mating call on "I'm Beautiful Now" and the too-cool-for-schoolness of "Fast Boyfriends" are only *Pleasure*'s cheapest thrills. They could have been bigger than The Pastels.

EXTRAS: A replica of the tat-frenzy 'Pleasure 9/10 Bag' that came with first pressings of the original album, as well as both sides of their four singles, and sardonic debut "Getting Nowhere Fast", rightly feted as one of the great indie-pop records.

JIM WIRTH



HENRY GROSS

Release/Show Me To The Stage
(reissues, 1976, 1977)

ACE/CHISWICK

Long-lost twofer from underrated soft rocker

Rock history has frozen Gross in time as the guitarist with the slicked-back hair and gold-lame jacket singing "At The Hop" with Sha Na Na at Woodstock. At 18 he was the youngest performer to appear at the festival but within a year he had quit, turning his back on doo-wop revivalism to pursue a solo career as a sensitive, long-haired singer-songwriter. 1976's *Release*, his fourth solo album, contained his biggest hit "Shannon", written about his friend Carl Wilson's dog, and sung in a tremulous falsetto with Beach Boys-styled melodies, but the entire album is a gem. "Juke Box Song" is burnished goodtime country-rock, reminiscent of Poco's "Good Feelin' To Know". "Lincoln Road" heads into sunshine canyon territory and half a dozen other songs might have come from the accomplished pens of Andrew Gold or JD Souther. 1977's *Show Me The Stage* is an equally impressive collection, from the pumping roadhouse boogie of "String Of Hearts" to the jangle of "Painting My Love Songs" and the extraordinary "Hideaway", a perfectly nuanced Brian Wilson tribute to match Chicago's "Wishing You Were". Anyone with a taste for classic '70s Cali soft-rock will find Gross irresistible.

EXTRAS: Nice booklet with memorabilia from 6/10 Gross' own collection.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

8/10



RICHARD HAWLEY

Lowedges
(reissue, 2003)

SETANTA

Sheffield's lovelorn balladeer reissues first three albums



8/10

Prior to his mainstream breakthrough with 2005's *Coles Corner*, former Pulp and Longpigs guitarist Richard Hawley released an eponymous mini-album in 2001, followed later that year by *Late Night Final* and in 2003 by *Lowedges*. Newly reissued on vinyl and CD, all three sound terrific, but it's on *Lowedges* that Hawley truly hones his luxurious sadness to a fine art. "The dark goes in and the light goes out," he frets on the Jim Reeves-esque "On The Ledge", a line that serves as a manifesto for these 11 songs of late-night contemplation and woozy regret, sung with the weary croon of the eternally bruised romantic. Moving between darkly dramatic northern pop ("Darlin'", the epic "Run To Me"), swooning Orbisonian balladry ("It's Over, Love"), and spare country waltzes ("You Don't Miss Your Water"), *Lowedges* affirms Hawley's love of the unhip '60s milieu of greased kiss curls and provincial dance halls without ever entirely bowing to nostalgia. "The Only Road" has echoes of Elbow's warm, shimmering grandeur, while the arrangements of lap steel, strings, Fender Rhodes and baritone guitar add variety and ambition to these simple, stirring songs.

EXTRAS: 2001 mini-LP *Richard Hawley* is 6/10 expanded to 12 songs with the addition of five B-sides.

GRAEME THOMSON

JIMI HENDRIX

The Cry Of Love
(reissue, 1971)

UNIVERSAL

Fine posthumous first album revisited

The cupboard finally bare of "unreleased gems", here the Hendrix estate makes a pilgrimage to a historic site: the point where posthumous Hendrix releases first seemed viable. In 1971, Jimi had been dead for six months, the recordings he made in his preposterously expensive Electric Lady studio still to be released. Producer Alan Douglas (*Voodoo Soup*, 1995) and the current Hendrix estate (*First Rays Of The New Rising Sun*, 1998) later tried to work the material into something approximating *Strate Ahead*, the destination Hendrix envisaged for these songs. This, however, (produced by Eddie Kramer and Mitch Mitchell) had a less complex plan. It simply took the good stuff (say "Freedom", and "Angel" – a hit for Rod Stewart) and gives a flavour of the many different directions that Hendrix was considering. Subsequent releases yielded less interesting booty, until even Kramer absented himself from the enterprise in 1974. "What if's" surround Hendrix. We applaud how his music yearned for freedom, accommodated his friends and his own experimentation, but have to acknowledge how he worked best with a producer, advising when something was done. The irony of this excellent album is that it showed how death drew a line under his work in a way he never quite managed in life.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON

SLEATER-KINNEY

Start Together

SUB POP

Trio's war against definition/explanation, compiled.

By Laura Snapes



9/10

Carrie Brownstein, one of their two singers and guitarists. Her counterpart Corin Tucker could pinpoint where exactly: Valentine's Day 1991, Bikini Kill at Olympia, WA's North Shore Surf Club. "It was the first time I'd seen feminism translated into an emotional language," she told Greil Marcus. "...You had the feeling they had started the week before and that you can do it too – stand up and speak in the town square, even if you have to create [it] yourself."

By the time Sleater-Kinney recorded their final album, 2005's *The Woods*, however, they were hell-bent on smashing their town square. Having made all but two of their records with John Goodmanson in Seattle, the Pacific Northwest trio (Quasi drummer Janet Weiss joined in 1997) ventured cross-country to Dave Fridmann's New York State studio, intent on halving their audience. *The Woods* was a flood of stinging, Zep-indebted sludge. Acclaimed but divisive, it let them exit as a band apart when they declared hiatus in 2006.

Eight years later, this boxset collects Sleater-Kinney's seven LPs, remastered by Greg Calbi (amplifying the bottom end in the absence of bass parts) and accompanied by a photo book. No liner notes, no rarities. Sleater-Kinney were constantly made to defend their legitimacy by critics and scene forebears who thought they'd sold out. This reissue eschews context and explanation to let their catalogue stand as its own defiant rock monolith. And as it should: their early feminist fury gradually became sophisticated songcraft that evoked Pylon collaborating with REM circa *Fables Of The Reconstruction*. Brownstein and Tucker's guitar parts threaded together classic American underground (Sonic Youth, Hüsker Dü) with British punk (Wire, X-Ray Spex) and heavy rock (The Who, Zeppelin). While they've no agreed-upon classic, rarely has a band released this many records without faltering.

Sleater-Kinney's success was often interpreted as transcending the limitations of being "women in rock". But their triumphant existence was a direct result of their perspective: on 1995's savagely hooky self-titled debut, Tucker and Brownstein turned society's marginalisation of women into a threat ("I'll show you how it feels to be dead"). By 1996's *Call The Doctor* they were singing "I Wanna Be Your Joey Ramone" – pop-punk-meets-'60s girlband-isms that maligned and celebrated male rock cliché while laying bare their ambition.

As chops-proud rockists, Sleater-Kinney

AFTER FORMING IN 1994, Sleater-Kinney spent the '90s trying to keep their ascendant profile connected to their roots. "We are coming from somewhere, we're not just an isolated entity without a context or a background," said



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Sleater-Kinney (1995)
Call The Doctor (1996)
Dig Me Out (1997)
The Hot Rock (1999)
All Hands On The Bad One (2000)
One Beat (2002)
The Woods (2005)

from their own backsides.

Ashamed of their peers' reluctance to criticise Bush post-9/11, 2002's *One Beat* married national and acutely personal terror: new mother Tucker recounts nursing her newborn, dangerously premature son as

"the world explodes in flames" on the grave "Far Away"; closer "Sympathy" is a bluesy hymnal "for those who didn't make it/For the mommies who are left with their hearts breaking".

Sleater-Kinney's story is of a band losing faith in humanity, nation, music, but thriving on their disappointment. In doing so, they blew the definition of rock wide open, daring to believe it could be a powerful social force once more. For an all-too-brief 12 years, that's what they made it.

EXTRAS: None.

Q&A

Dave Fridmann, producer of *The Woods*

You apparently weren't a big S-K fan... That's become a common idea but it really is not the truth. I know I certainly did explain to them that I thought sonically there was something lacking in their recordings up to that point, but that's a different issue than not liking them.

Had you seen them play live before working with them?

Never. Once they got to the studio we had come up with this plan to do a few days of pre-production. When I got them all in the same room playing, it was astonishing. The raw power completely took me by surprise. I had no inkling from hearing their previous recordings.

Carrie Brownstein has called *The Woods* a "deconstruction of ourselves". Was there any part of their identity that was sacrosanct? No! They were completely open and unbelievably helpful and supportive partners in creating what that record became.

Were you prepared for it to be controversial? Yes. They sat me down and said, specifically, we want to cut our audience in half. We want to challenge half and we want another half to just embrace it. We want to move forward and make a new world for ourselves to swim in.

Did you have any impression that this could be their last record?

No. I still hope it's not. I talk to them on a regular basis and I've always made it known that on a second's notice I would love to work with them on anything at any time, so... They're a great band, I hope they still do something.

INTERVIEW: LAURA SNAPES



Flying his own kite: Reid live circa 1970

TERRY REID

River

BCG

Free-roaming masterpiece of one of rock's nearly men.
By Allan Jones



9/10

man of soul stompers Peter Jay & The Jaywalkers who, at a spectacular show in November 1966 at the Capitol Theatre in Cardiff headlined by The Small Faces, was a raw-voiced livewire, quite the equal of Steve Marriott, then in his raucous mod pomp.

Great things were predicted for Reid when he went solo, although he would always be more popular among fellow musicians than the wider public, with whom he never really connected. Eric Clapton, for instance, was a fan and Reid supported Cream on a 1968 American tour. The Rolling Stones dug Terry, too, and he opened for them on their 1969 US tour, the one that ended badly at Altamont. Jimmy Page thought highly enough of him to ask Reid in 1968 to join the band that became Led Zeppelin. Reid, however, was committed to a solo career that everyone kept telling him was about to take off and recommended the then-unknown Robert Plant, with whom he shared a talent for high-end

shrieking. For the same reason, Reid also turned down a chance to join Deep Purple, the gig going instead to Ian Gillan.

But neither 1968 debut *Bang Bang You're Terry Reid* (bizarrely released only in America) or its eponymous 1969 follow-up sold well, and Reid was soon in bitter dispute with manager/producer Mickie Most, an old-school pop Svengali determined to groom him as a suave soul crooner. Reid was looking far beyond the local Locarno and seasons in seaside cabaret, however. He was increasingly drawn by the lure of Los Angeles, where like-minded musical souls were even now gathering in stoned idyll, making the kind of expansive, adventurous music free of commercial orthodoxies he now felt himself compelled to write and record. In early 1970, he quit Britain and moved to California, eventually signing to Atlantic when label head Ahmet Ertegun personally negotiated his release from Most's restrictive clutch.

The first sessions for the LP that was released in May 1973 as *River* took place in London. A series of long meandering sessions with Yes and ELP engineer Eddie Offord resulted apparently in enough material for three albums, most of which

TERRY REID WAS the youngest of a post-war generation of often electrifying British vocalists that included Eric Burdon, Van Morrison, Rod Stewart, Steve Marriott, Joe Cocker and Steve Winwood. At 16, he was the charismatic front

bass tumble busily in and what turns out to be David Lindley's slide guitar makes a noise that sounds like bullets whizzing over your head, Reid's marauding voice a tomcat howl, recalling Tim Buckley's carnal squawk on *Greetings From LA*. The cut's lack of conventional structure is typical of the following three tracks, apparently improvised jams that at times are markedly reminiscent of the funky gumbo Little Feat served up on *Dixie Chicken*, released the same year.

The fractured panache of these songs gives way on the album's second side to a heavy-lidded languor, a kind of stoned euphoria with Reid's voice at its liveliest, slurring phrases, blurring words, oblivious of obvious syntax. The title track, "Dream" and "Milestones", featuring just Reid's voice, acoustic guitars and occasional percussion, are nearly all vapour, an evocative mist, a melodic drizzle and spray that primarily brings to mind the aching drift of Buckley's *Blue Afternoon* and *Lorca*, with an echo too on the multi-tracked vocals of "Milestones" of the spectacular abstractions of *Starsailor* and David Crosby's *If I Could Only Remember My Name*.

EXTRAS: None.

that was any good. But I don't think they were an influence on *River*. I was much more into Latin rhythms. It's dug way in deep of everything I do. There's something of that in Little Feat, but theirs is more of a sodden Creole thing. What I was doing was very different.

Forty years on, what are your thoughts on the album? I still play songs from it and every now and then I have to pop it on and it's an interesting thing - a lot of records you loved back in the day they either stand up to the test of time or they sound dated. But with *River*, I was coming from somewhere else and the record still stands up, I humbly think, as something different. That's what was always most important to me. I always wanted to fly me own kite, you know?

INTERVIEW: ALLAN JONES

Q&A

Terry Reid

When you were recording *River*, how aware were you of what, say, Tim Buckley and Little Feat were doing at the same time? I knew Tim Buckley really well. I worked with him over here in the States, in Detroit and Chicago and all sorts of places. He was great, man. Some guys can just do it, you know, and he was one of them. Tim was fantastic. You'd give him a guitar and a stool and he'd tell these great stories and he was one hell of a singer. Little Feat with Lowell George were the one band that probably influenced every single group you've ever heard of that came after them



ARIEL KALMA
An Evolutionary Music (Original Recordings: 1972-1979)
RVNG INTL

7/10

The latest astral traveller to be

rescued from New Age oblivion...

The title of track two on this third-eye-opening compilation, "Ecstasy Musical Mind Yoga", is indicative of the aesthetic zone occupied by Ariel Kalma. A questing French musician, Kalma's wanderings in the '70s brought him into the orbits of Pierre Henry and Don Cherry, among others. But as *An Evolutionary Music* elegantly proves, most of his private-press releases sat squarely in the New Age department. Over 17 tracks, Kalma works through the full range of cosmic modes – synthesised raga, Terry Riley-esque saxophone and organ drones, relaxation-tape homilies, beatific mantras that recall Alice Coltrane's devotional music – so that, occasionally, it feels like a Various Artists sampler akin to last year's essential *IAm The Center*. There's even a spangled zither trance, "Love And Dream", that could easily be mistaken for the work of Laraaji. Lovely music all, though, with some neat intimations of future ambience: the gently sputtering beats of "Voltage Controlled Wave", in particular, would have fitted onto an early '90s album by The Orb or The Irresistible Force.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY



MADNESS
One Step Beyond 35th Anniversary Edition
SALVO

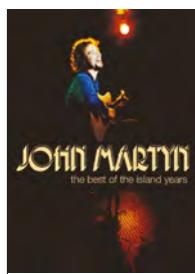
8/10

Expanded edition of the Nutty Boys' 1979 debut

It's not Madness' most musically, lyrically or technically interesting album but it's become their most cherished. Partly it's because even the daft fillers – the Studio One skank of "Swan Lake", the GI chants of "Chipmunks Are Go!", the playground grunts of "Tarzan's Nuts" – became such thuggish teen anthems. But it's also because that endearing idiocy always came welded to a healthy dose of heartwrenching pathos. "Land Of Hope And Glory" blends a knockabout tale of youthful delinquency with the horrors of borstal; "Mummy's Boy" is a song about a sexually suppressed singleton with learning difficulties that's as heartbreaking, in its own way, as "My Girl".

EXTRAS: The 14 tracks here from a rehearsal 8/10 tape, recorded six months before the album's release, are a revelation. It's a muddy, lo-fi recording of a clumsy pub-rock band, but you can hear that some elements of the Nutty Sound – particularly Mike Barson's intricate, rinky-dink Wurlitzer piano and organ riffs – were already in place, ready to be scrubbed up a treat by Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley. There's also a 10-track DVD featuring four single videos, five BBC television appearances, a 2000 documentary, and a 16-page booklet.

JOHN LEWIS



JOHN MARTYN
The Best Of The Island Years
ISLAND

7/10

4CD boxset: outtakes and lives, plus three new songs

The title is cheeky, suggesting you are buying a 'Best of' rather than a distillation of rarities from last year's monumental 18-disc *The Island Years*, which was all the extras with few of the basics. Still, the extras are pretty fine, while Martyn's approach to music-making lends itself to the alt. and live cut – this was a man who rarely played a song the same way. The feted early work, "Bless The Weather" et al, emerges with a stronger jazz accent. "May You Never" is funkier, and a glorious live "Spencer The Rover", an alehouse ballad spun into a delicate reverie, reminds you of Martyn's imprint on British folk music. It's a mighty fall to 1984's *Sapphire* sessions where that still potent voice was cast among the pits of synthesiser hell, and then into remix indignity. Outtakes from *One World* find him roaring in Echoplex excess (new cut "High Heel Sneakers" is a case in point), yet his middle years also produced tender songs such as "Some People Are Crazy". Curator John Hillary doesn't quite give us an alt. career arc, but this is a vivid portrait of a mercurial talent, torn between an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other.

EXTRAS: Edited sleeve notes, unseen photos, 6/10 memorabilia and more.

NEIL SPENCER

HOW TO BUY...
JOHN MARTYN
Where do you go after *Solid Air*?



Bless The Weather

ISLAND, 1971

The LP where Martyn established his identity, his early folkesque work with wife Beverley supplanted by jazzy interplay with bassist Danny Thompson and an early excursion into Echoplex guitar on the instrumental "Glistening Glyndebourne". There's also a brace of songs – the title track and the delicate "May You Never" – that stand alongside anything else he wrote.

8/10

Grace & Danger ISLAND, 1980

Martyn's return after a two-year absence was with a deeply personal album that paints a painful portrait of his break-up with Beverley, the self-searching tone set by the aching opener, "Some People Are Crazy". A rocking version of The Slackers' reggae classic "Johnny Too Bad", which became something of a signature tune, supplies unexpected relief.

8/10

Glorious Fool WEA, 1981

Now divorced from Island, too, Martyn and his new label set sights on a commercial electric crossover. While producer Phil Collins brings an '80s sheen, under the gloss are two fine political songs; a potshot at Reagan on the title track, and a timeless anti-war "Don't You Go".

7/10

NEIL SPENCER



THE MONOCHROME SET
Eligible Bachelors (reissue, 1982)
OPTIC NERVE

7/10

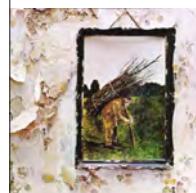
Art-school boppers' BA Hons in archness

The Monochrome Set could

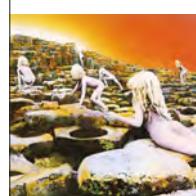
have headed off to teacher-training college with dignity in the wake of *Love Zombies*, their cryptic second LP for Virgin subsidiary DinDisc. As it was, Adam Ant's old college chums parachuted back into indie-land with some panache for what most regard as their finest LP. Produced somewhat incongruously by Steeleye Span's Tim Hart, the all-knowing *Eligible Bachelors* remains an opulent tour de force. Smart-arsed and sinister in equal measures, "The Jet Set Junta" flits light-footedly from Savile Row tailoring to electro-convulsive torture, while the Set's book smarts wink through singer Bid's Goya homage "Fun For All The Family". Punk-rock Duane Eddy, Lester Square, meanwhile, injects plenty of trebly gravitas into closer, "The Great Barrier Riff", which sounds like The Shadows' bid to cross the Andes by balloon. Greater things might have been expected as they joined Cherry Red labelmates Everything But The Girl on Warners-funded super-indie Blanco Y Negro, but their curious Carry On Cubism remains compelling still.

EXTRAS: Too clever by several halves cowboy 7/10 epic "Cast A Long Shadow" and the Set's eccentric 1982 tribute to departing drummer-turned-food writer "J.D.H.A.N.E.Y.". Order early to get a free poster.

JIM WIRTH



LED ZEPPELIN
IV/ Houses Of The Holy
RHINO

9/10**8/10**

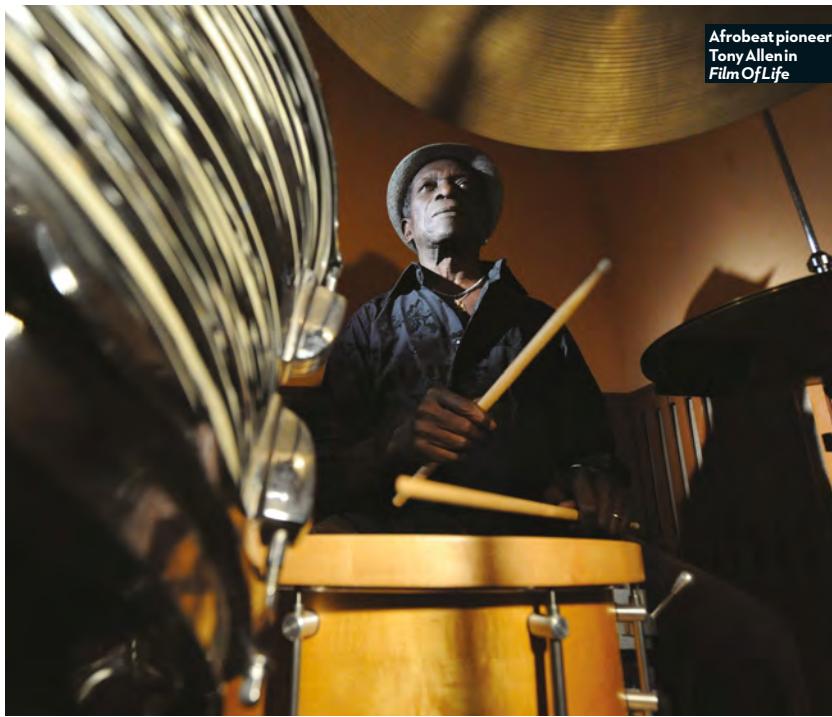
Even the mighty Led Zep had an imperial phase, and it's that which is revisited in this current installment of reissues. At the time, interestingly, the band felt unloved. Having seen *III* panned, the fourth Zep LP came out anonymously as a "so there" to critics in retrospect not awfully well thought out. In fact, it's their definitive statement: the fusion of riffs ("Black Dog") and songs ("Stairway..."), extending

their mythos, but also ensuring their ongoing life in the guitar shop and popular culture ("No Stairway!" etc.). 1973's *Houses* matches the stone classics ("Over The Hills And Far Away"; "Rain Song") with misfiring pastiche ("D'yer Maker"; "The Crunge"), but remains on balance mighty.

EXTRAS: On the discs of comparison audio, the 8/10 evidence for Page as "watchmaker" mounts, as minutely different decisions are privileged. Hoping for a working tape of "Stairway"? Afraid not. But there is a Sunset Sound mix, and a feral alternate of "Four Sticks". Instrumental mixes of "Going To California" and "Battle Of Evermore" are warm and fascinating. *Houses* provides slightly different views (an excitable "wooh-ooh"-filled working mix of "The Ocean") but nothing compelling in quite the same way. JOHN ROBINSON

The Specialist

Africa



Afrobeat pioneer
Tony Allen in
Film Of Life

► THE PUBLICITY FOR **Tony Allen**'s new album ***Film Of Life*** JAZZ VILLAGE 8/10 describes the Nigerian drummer as "the human metronome of Afrobeat". It's intended as a compliment but it's not necessarily one Allen will appreciate: he once noted that as an able-bodied drummer with two arms and two legs he expected to essay a different rhythm with each limb simultaneously. From the get-go on the simmering opener "Moving On" you can hear exactly what he means: under the surface of the ostensibly simple, fixed pulse of Afrobeat he creates a seething mass of polyrhythms that draws not only on African forms but bebop and experimental jazz.

Allen has always shone brightest in the company of visionary frontmen, most notably Fela Kuti, and, in more recent times, Damon Albarn, most of whose projects he has graced over the past decade. Albarn returns the compliment with two of the most potent compositions here, "Tiger's Skip", a clattering instrumental collision of melodica, dubby effects and complex, supple rhythmic patterns, and "Go Back", a characteristically arresting Albarn-sung ballad about exile which Allen drives with jazzy precision. But the drummer's own compositions are no less striking, as he curates a thrilling mélange of tribal grooves, jazz and funk that expands Afrobeat far beyond the parameters defined by Fela Kuti.

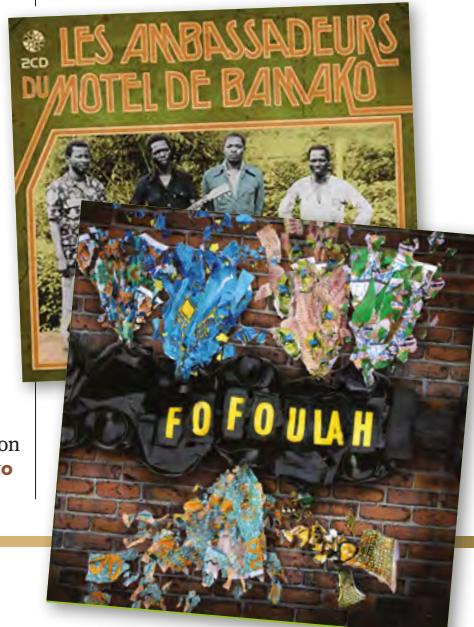
While Allen and Kuti were forging the sound of Afrobeat in Nigeria in the 1970s, a little further north in Mali, **Les Ambassadeurs Du Motel De Bamako** were creating a template for West African pop that continues to reverberate to this day in the music of Amadou & Mariam, Salif Keita and others. The two-disc collection ***Les Ambassadeurs Du Motel De Bamako*** STERNS 7/10 captures the band at

its height in 1975-77, fusing traditional Mande roots with imported Cuban and African-American forms and with the golden voice of Keita featured on half of the tracks.

One of Keita's few rivals as Mali's most celebrated singer is **Kassé Mady Diabaté**, whose new album ***Kirike*** SONY 8/10 is arguably the finest of his long career and finds him singing the Mande griot songs of his ancestors with ripe and radiant authority over a traditional acoustic backing.

Proving that in these multicultural times African music has truly gone global, **Fofoulah** are a cosmopolitan British-based ensemble featuring both African musicians and members of Robert Plant's Sensational Space Shifters. Their debut ***Fofoulah*** GLITTERBEAT 6/10 is an agreeable dialogue between African drumming, trance grooves, dubby bass lines and rock guitars with plenty of spatial improvisation.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES
Peepshow
(reissue, 1988)
UNIVERSAL MUSIC
CATALOGUE



8/10 Late creative peak for Class Of '76 veterans

By their ninth album, many bands have long since settled into a comfortable and familiar groove; *Peepshow*, however, found Siouxsie and her cohorts enjoying a remarkable creative resurgence. In part, this was due to the increasing involvement of Martin McCarrick, who'd handled string arrangements on the band's previous album, *Through The Looking Glass*. A multi-instrumentalist whose credits included This Mortal Coil, Bryan Ferry and Marc Almond, McCarrick brought a wider textural palette to the band's sound – cellos, accordions, harmonica among them. Invigorated, the new-look Banshees set out their stall with "Peek-A-Boo", a percussion-heavy track dominated by backwards loops and manipulated vocal tracks. "Carousel", meanwhile, finds Siouxsie's voice cushioned by a simple oscillating three-note keyboard motif, while "Ornaments Of Gold" balances programmed drums with sitars. The stand-out is ballad "The Last Beat Of My Heart", where lustrous strings complement Siouxsie's imperious croon. Neither 1991's *Superstition* nor 1995's *The Rapture* – also reissued, along with the all-covers *Through The Looking Glass* – quite match *Peepshow*'s satisfying balance of sinister theatricality and experimental flair.

EXTRAS: Bonus tracks to be confirmed.
MICHAEL BONNER

CHIP TAYLOR
Gasoline
(reissue, 1971)
FLOATING WORLD



7/10

Taylor's stock was already high by the time he finally cut his first album in 1971. His two signature songs, "Wild Thing" and "Angel Of The Morning", had been monster hits for The Troggs and Merrilee Rush, respectively, while The Hollies, Janis Joplin and Willie Nelson were among those who'd also dipped into his songbook. *Gasoline*, initially released on the Buddha label, showed both the limits and possibilities of Taylor's solo career. His own version of "Angel Of The Morning", for example, proves that there were far better singers out there. But what burns through is his assured feel for the mechanics of pure songwriting. "Lady Lisa" is a wonderful sliver of baroque pop, set to a clever arrangement and borne upwards by backing vocalists Von Smith and Debby Rothrock. The uncomplicated "Londonderry Company" and "Oh My Marie" suggest that Taylor was slightly out of sync with the prevailing times, perhaps more inclined to the folk cellars of Greenwich Village than the canyons of LA. The droll "Swear To God, Your Honor", in which he pleads innocent to the local judge over various indiscretions, proves that he never quite took it all overly seriously.

EXTRAS: None.
ROB HUGHES



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Native North America (Vol One): Aboriginal Folk Rock & Country '66-'85
 LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

8/10

Folk rock, indigenous Canadian-style

Collected from swap meets and thrift stores across Canada, this 34-track compilation of Native American music from 1966-1985 throws fresh light on the folk rock period. Traditional influences are evident, of course – in the rhythms of Groupe Folklorique Montagnais, or the heavy drumbeat of Philippe McKenzie's "Mistashipu" (which celebrates the Moisie River). But there are also heavy echoes of Neil Young (in Willie Mitchell and the Desert River Band's lovely "Birchbark Letter", with its lyric about "sweetgrass burning"); or Willie Thrasher's slightly psychedelic "Old Man Carver", a song written in celebration of his grandfather. Many of the songs are political, but the lyrics are given an extra edge by the specifics of aboriginal life. Lloyd Chee Choo's "Winds Of Change" concludes with the elders waiting out the storm and passing the pipe, while Sikumiut's "Utrumavunga" marries a lyric about white society bringing poverty to an Inuit garage-punk tune. But this isn't archaeology. There's real beauty in Willie Dunn's "Son Of The Sun", while John Angaik's "Hey, Hey, Hey, Brother" has a plaintive simplicity which belies its emotional power.

EXTRAS: The 2CD set has a 120-page book; the **8/10** 3LP set has a 60-page book.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Cracking The Cosimo Code: '60s New Orleans R&B And Soul

ACE

Rich testament to a Crescent City mover and shaker

9/10

By unhappy coincidence, Cosimo Matassa died, aged 88, a couple of days after this superb compilation arrived in the *Uncut* office. It has become, then, a memorial to the discreet architect of much of what we now know as the New Orleans sound – and perhaps even rock'n'roll itself. Matassa's career as an engineer began in the '40s, when he recorded Fats Domino in a studio at the back of the family delicatessen. *Cracking The Cosimo Code*, though, focuses on Matassa's '60s productions with a crew of extraordinary local musicians: the featured piano players alone include Allen Toussaint, Harold Battiste and Mac Rebennack. These are sessions that suggest efficiency and bonhomie running in unusual harmony, as the "gently self-deprecating" Matassa midwives a bunch of magnificent R'n'B records: Lee Dorsey's "Get Out Of My Life, Woman", Aaron Neville's "Tell It Like It Is", Robert Parker's "Barefootin'". Like the best comps of this kind, though, lesser-known cuts prove revelatory – Oliver Morgan's "Who Shot The Lala", for example, sinewy, call and response proto-funk from 1963 that captures the quintessential New Orleans paradox of creating celebratory music out of tragedy.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY



THE WHO
Hits 50!
 UNIVERSAL

Career-spanning 2CD collection to celebrate the Orrible Oo's big 5-0

9/10

As every Who fan knows, there is no such thing as a 'definitive hits collection', there being always a missing thrill or two from their prodigious output. The 50 tracks here make a good fist of the job, nonetheless, charged as they are with representing every phase of a five-decade career, from The High Numbers' jerky "Zoot Suit" to the spanking new "Be Lucky!". The elusive "Mary Anne With The Shaky Hand" eludes once more, otherwise you get all the usual suspects, the odd surprise (1968's quirky US single "Call Me Lightning"), and a selection from their middle and later years that stacks up surprisingly well. "Eminence Front" remains as stodgy as its title, but "Don't Let Go The Coat", "Athena", and the overlooked "Real Good Looking Boy", Pete Townshend's 2004 tribute to Elvis Presley, roll sweetly along – even the group's so-called fallow periods prove to have been fertile. Is The Who's song over? "Be Lucky!" is a promising omen for the soon-come new album, a defiant, life-affirming yell with a catchy title chant, a nod to AC/DC ("You gotta do a cover of 'Highway To Hell'"), and a snappy outro – "Don't bet on a pair of dices!" Good advice!

EXTRAS: None.

NEIL SPENCER

COMING NEXT MONTH...

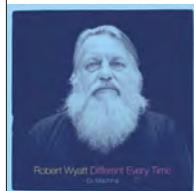


► A time for goodwill to all men, Christmas is particularly good to the music fan. In the build-up to the festivities, you won't feel guilty about spending money on yourself or those close to you ("What do you mean you wanted gloves? It's got 13 extra tracks, and disc 3 is a mono mix of the original album!").

Knowing this, record companies save some desirable packages for just this time of year. There's a reissue of the **Pixies** pre-grunge loud/quiet classic **Doolittle** with 23 extra tracks, sets of **Creedence** and **Cream**'s albums on vinyl (this year's major comeback story), and some new remasters. **Bruce Springsteen**'s first few albums appear thus for the first time, as does the third album by **The Velvet Underground**. This 45th anniversary deluxe edition features improved cuts of the "Valentin" and "Closet" stereo mixes, a promo mono mix, a live show and the unreleased "fourth album", known to fans from its issue as **VU**.

While there's a limited quantity of high-profile new releases, there is a new one from **AC/DC**. To judge by "Play Ball", **Rock Or Bust** promises to continue the band's irresistible blend of monolithic riffing and surprisingly lithe touches. The only major change is a sad

one. Malcolm Young, the band's rhythm guitarist, is now battling dementia, and did not participate in recording.

JOHN ROBINSON JO1@FREELANCE.IPCMEDIA.COM

ROBERT WYATT
Different Every Time
 DOMINO

Album tracks, singles and all manner of collaborations, compiled

9/10

Robert Wyatt's apparent retirement brings to an end one of music's most quietly breathtaking careers, a 45-year ocean this 2CD compilation attempts to hold in a three-hour cup. From his start on the British Underground scene, Wyatt's abiding forces – empathy, integrity, jazz – have been the currents gently guiding him to continually beautiful music of emotion and conscience. His is a unique voice, whether as guest vocalist (CD2) or on his own recordings (CD1). Here, Soft Machine's "Moon In June" already finds him drawing his own map, roaming distractedly through the fourth wall ("Just before we go on, to the next part of our song..."). His continuing journey off-piste takes in Matching Mole all the way up to his solo work for Domino, a song from each album, the effect more cool mixtape than an authoritative career retrospective. It's a characteristically even-handed approach, his voice and the music's swing bridging the 17 years between his take on "At Last I Am Free" (a 1980 single) to 1997's "Free Will And Testament" and making kindred spirits of Chic and Paul Weller. This free-flowing exchange might have been continued across the two CDs, excising minor collaborations for a deeper selection, but instead this honours Wyatt's generosity as well as his unique compositional gifts.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

This month, Dexys get reflective, James Gandolfini bows out on a high, and Edwyn Collins is profiled in a slow, beautiful documentary

NOWHERE IS HOME In April 2013, Dexys took up a nine-night residency at the Duke Of York's Theatre in London's West End, sandwiched between performances of David Hare's *The Judas Kiss* and Peter Nichols' *Passion Play*, starring Zoë Wanamaker. During those shows, the band played their 2012 comeback album *One Day I'm Going To Soar* in its entirety; it's these shows that form the basis for Kieran Evans and Paul Kelly's remarkable new film, *Nowhere Is Home*. It transpires that the Duke Of York's was an apt setting for Kevin Rowland and his nine co-conspirators. If *One Day I'm Going To Soar* was the latest chapter in Rowland's ongoing spiritual autobiography, then these narrative-driven confessionalists were splendidly – and stylishly – played out in this 120-year-old theatre. Indeed, such is the band's sheer confidence in the album's songs – you could be forgiven for thinking you were watching a boutique West End musical rather than a rock'n'roll band playing through their latest record. There is committed stagecraft at work here. There are numerous costume changes, some comedy larks and even a femme fatale, while Rowland himself exhibits a Brando-esque emotional intensity, whether during the stripped down soliloquising on "Me" or snapping into moments of sudden violence.

Such is the high-stakes drama of the Dexys narrative, you'd expect nothing less from these shows. But Evans and Kelly's film aims for more than simply documenting the Duke Of York's shows. As is evident from pre-credits shots of Rowland and his cohorts as they individually make their way through the bustle of the West End to the theatre, there is a documentary element to the project. But anyone expecting a forensic behind-the-scenes piece, chronicling the staging of the shows from inception to triumphant performance, might be disappointed. Instead, we are treated to glimpses of Rowland backstage in his dressing room, an array of coats hanging tidily on a clothes rail, adjusting the collar of his jacket; or Madeleine Hyland, his female foil, as she unpins her hair only seconds after coming offstage. Elsewhere, there are between-song interviews with Rowland and long-serving collaborator 'Big' Jim Paterson. During these, Rowland is inevitably candid about his life and his art: "I was a no-hoper," he says. "Prison was a possibility, it was an absolute possibility for me. It probably was 50/50 whether I'd end up there or not." Later, he explains, "You've got to fight for your art. People are going to try and make you



compromise at every stage, they do that to us on a weekly basis." Compared to Rowland, Paterson is the shyer of the two; though he does deliver a line that perfectly captures the dedication and devotion felt by Rowland and his bandmates. "I've bled for Dexys," he admits. "Quite a few times."

► The Possibilities Are Endless "I'm struggling to come to terms with who I am," admits Edwyn Collins early on during James Hall and Edward Lovelace's documentary. Accordingly, this is a film that is concerned almost exclusively with Collins' life since he suffered a hemorrhagic stroke in 2005. It presents its subject via a number of enterprising methods; not all of them conventional. It's a better piece for it. The film begins with static shots of a remote Scottish landscape – fields, sky, sea – which gradually coalesce into something less abstract. We learn this is the terrain around Helmsdale, the Scottish coastal village beloved by Collins and his wife, Grace Maxwell. Just as we attempt to connect these random images, so we must assume Collins himself struggled to make sense of the facts of his life after his stroke. Hall and

Lovelace then move down to London, where we see Collins at home, surrounded by his possessions. He sits silently in his living room, considering a set of shelves on the wall opposite stacked with 7" singles. "It's hard for me to communicate," he explains. A final act witnesses Collins as he prepares to return to live performance, aided by the redoubtable Maxwell – who is on hand to strum her husband's guitar while he forms chords on the instrument's neck. By avoiding a more conventional structure, Hall and Lovelace successfully sidestep the pitfalls this kind of film might have stumbled into. It is neither sentimental nor programmatic. Dramatised sequences – early shots in Helmsdale where local residents re-enact moments from Collins' early life, or later when his own son, William, appears as a young man who falls for a girl he meets in a chip shop – add an additional layer to the experience. The film's slow, digressive pace complements Collins' halting speech patterns perfectly, while the impressionistic, avant-garde collage (and Collins' own ambient soundtrack) of the first third truffle out a strange beauty in the singer's insular, fragmented state of mind.

Reviewed this month...



NOWHERE IS HOME
Director Kieran Evans and Paul Kelly
Starring Kevin Rowland, Jim Paterson
Opens Oct 20
Cert 12A
8/10



THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS
Directors James Hall and Edward Lovelace
Starring Edwyn Collins
Opens Nov 7
Cert 12A
8/10



THE DROP
Director Michaël R Roskam
Starring Tom Hardy, James Gandolfini
Opens Nov 14
Cert 15
8/10



THE GRANDMASTER
Director Wong Kar-Wai
Starring Tony Leung, Zhang Ziyi
Opens Dec 5
Cert 12A
7/10



GONE GIRL
Director David Fincher
Starring Ben Affleck, Rosamund Pike
Opened Oct 3
Cert 18
7/10



The Brando-esque
Kevin Rowland
Nowhere Is Home

► **The Grandmaster** Wong Kar-Wai's latest tells the true story of Ip Man (Tony Leung), the legendary martial arts master who trained Bruce Lee. Let's be clear from the off: this is not Wong's best, but the director's first new film in seven years is still full of extraordinary beauty and elegance and once again demonstrates his meticulous attention to detail. Essentially, even the opening credits – shot in ravishing yellows and golds – are a mini art film in their own right. Accordingly, Wong's account of Ip's life is not an action film – although it certainly contains fight sequences. Instead, Wong uses the events of Ip's life – from the 1930s to his death in the early '70s – as a way to explore his familiar cinematic concerns like loyalty, solitude, unrequited love and exile. Rather like 1994's *Ashes Of Time*, this is a martial arts film in name alone.

The Grandmaster opens in 1936, in Foshan Province, southern China, where Ip Man is called upon to demonstrate his style of fighting for a grandmaster visiting from the Japanese-controlled north. The contest proves to be more philosophical than physical, however in the first 60 seconds Wong and his cinematographer Philippe Le Sourd deploy close-ups, slow-motion, jump cuts, freeze frame and different shutter speeds for a showdown in the pouring rain. It is a breathtaking piece of filmmaking, much as you'd expect from Wong. Certainly, for all its biographical source, Wong's Foshan Province seems to exist in a kind of fantasy state. This is a gorgeous, stylised period piece, gilded by nostalgia and melancholy. The action moves through the

Japanese invasion of China through to Hong Kong under British rule. But none of these are especially relevant to Wong's storytelling. Wong can turn a plain coat button into a symbol of chaste and enduring love: his obsessiveness about romantic details, his devotion to the pursuit of beauty are what's critical here.

► **The Drop** Tom Hardy likes an accent. Playing a heavily masked supervillain in a Batman film, for instance, evidently wasn't enough for him – he decided to play Bane as an Irish gypsy boxer. For *Locke*, his last film, a brilliantly claustrophobic piece shot entirely in real time in a car speeding down the M1, his Welsh accent suggested more Rob Brydon in *Marion And Geoff* than a man in transit and in crisis. For this procedural thriller based on a Dennis Lehane story, Hardy adopts a Brooklyn lilt as Bob Saginowski, who works in a bar once owned by his cousin Marv (James Gandolfini). But, alas, now the Chechens own the bar and no good will come to any of these folk. As Marv notes, "We're all dead men walking. We just don't know it yet." As directed by Belgian filmmaker Michaël R Roskam, *The Drop* is steeped in the tradition of '70s cinema – a muted colour palette, slow-cooking pace, the downbeat mood only shattered by occasional bursts of violence. Lehane does this kind of crime fiction extremely well – and I've enjoyed previous adaptations of his work, *Gone Baby Gone* and *Mystic River*, very much – but the best thing here is simply Gandolfini. I appreciate it's easy to get a little maudlin about what we've lost – the same applies to Philip Seymour Hoffman, another talent who died too young – but here Gandolfini's Cousin Marv is browbeaten and embittered, a smalltime mobster trying to keep his head down. Essentially, Cousin Marv is the kind of man Tony Soprano would extort money from.

► **Gone Girl** At the conclusion of *Seven*, his second film as director, David Fincher memorably gave us Gwyneth Paltrow's severed head in a box. In many respects, he has been producing heads from boxes ever since.

Fincher's best films are dominated by queasy third-act revelations, bracing plot twists or convulsive violence. Like Hitchcock, Polanski and De Palma in his prime, Fincher is interested in the anxieties of people who have had the rug pulled out from underneath them – whether that be Homicide Detective Mills in *Seven*, investment banker Nicholas Van Orton in *The Game*, the unnamed protagonist of *Fight Club*, *Panic Room*'s besieged single mother Meg Altman or obsessed newspaper cartoonist Robert Graysmith in *Zodiac*. Each of them has disappeared down the rabbit hole in a Fincher film and endured the director's various puzzles, traps and tricks.

Something similar happens here with his latest film, *Gone Girl* – his tenth film as director, and his sixth literary adaptation. Based on

Gillian Flynn's pulpy, sensationalist airport thriller, it concerns the ailing marriage between Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike – and it is she who disappears on the day of their fifth wedding anniversary. But as *Gone Girl* reveals its secrets, it becomes open to different interpretations. Is it a film about marriage? Or how people become hemmed in by circumstance and the wrong choices? Or perhaps it's a study of violent revenge, or trial-by-television culture? Admittedly, it's not Fincher's best film – and I wish he'd step away from the airport thrillers – but if nothing else, *Gone Girl* is at least a superior diversion.

*Kevin Rowland is
inevitably candid about
his life and art: "Prison
was a possibility for me"*

Also out...

INTERSTELLAR

OPENS NOVEMBER 7

Christopher Nolan channels his inner Kubrick with this high-end space drama starring Matthew McConaughey.

LEVIATHAN

OPENS NOVEMBER 7

Acclaimed drama exploring corruption on a remote Russian peninsula; reportedly based on the Book Of Job, no less!

THE SKELETON TWINS

OPENS NOVEMBER 7

Kristen Wiig and Bill Hader play ghoulish siblings in this American comedy-drama, also starring Luke Wilson.

THE IMITATION GAME

OPENS NOVEMBER 14

Benedict Cumberbatch as prickly, overconfident genius – and Enigma codebreaker – Alan Turing in promising period biopic.

THIRD PERSON

OPENS NOVEMBER 14

From *Crash*'s Paul Haggis: another deep-thinking ensemble drama, starring Liam Neeson.

DAVID BOWIE IS

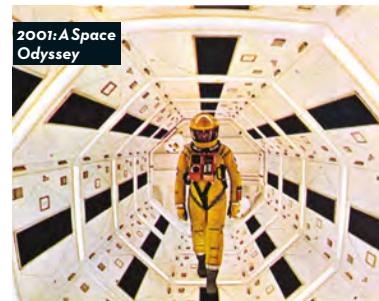
OPENS NOVEMBER 17

A welcome return for the film of the terrific V&A exhibit: check local press for details.

THE HOMESMAN

OPENS NOVEMBER 21

Frontier drama with Tommy Lee Jones running a wagon train through the wilds of Nebraska.



2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

OPENS NOVEMBER 28

Re-release of Kubrick's science-fiction magnum opus, with HAL, stargates, monoliths and all.

HOCKNEY

OPENS NOVEMBER 28

The world-renowned Yorkshire artist opens up his personal files for a new, BBC-produced documentary.

I AM ALI

OPENS NOVEMBER 28

Intimate documentary about the life of Muhammad Ali, utilising unseen material from the great boxer's own archive.

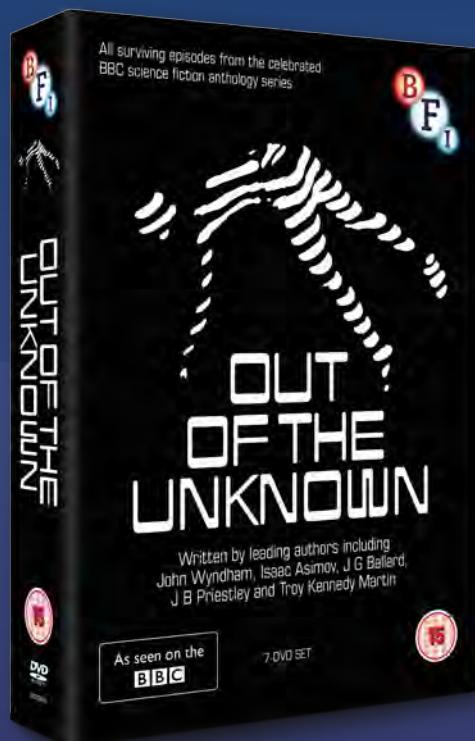
B
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Film
Forever

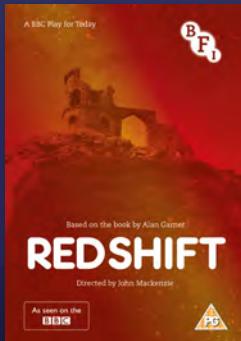
OUT OF THE UNKNOWN

7-Disc set includes:

- All 20 surviving episodes from Series 1–4
- Digitally remastered picture and sound
- Return of the Unknown: all-new documentary featuring interviews with cast and crew, and rare clips
- 11 audio commentaries with cast and crew, including Philip Saville, Wendy Gifford and Peter Sasdy
- An interview with director James Cellan Jones
- Four missing episode reconstructions
- Extensive stills galleries
- Fully illustrated booklet with essays and full episode credits



MORE CULT AND CLASSIC SCIENCE FICTION ON DVD



RED SHIFT
DVD



THE CHANGES
2-DVD



THE BOY FROM SPACE
2-DVD



THE DAY THE EARTH
CAUGHT FIRE
DVD / BLU-RAY



OUTER SPACE
DVD

DVD & Blu-ray

SCORING:

10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent
7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

THIS MONTH: THE ROLLING STONES | BJÖRK | JOHNNY THUNDERS



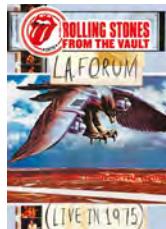
Visual spectacle, leaden music: the Glimmer Twins live at the LA Forum in 1975

THE ROLLING STONES

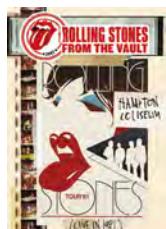
Live At The LA Forum/Hampton Coliseum

EAGLE ROCK

Mixed bag of concert films, marred by loon pants. By Neil Spencer



7/10



8/10

IN THE BUSINESS OF repackaging their past, the Stones have been laggards compared to peers like Bob Dylan or The Who. Only comparatively recently have 'deluxe editions' of the Stones' classic LPs started to flow. Since the reputation of 'The World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band' rests as much on performance as on studio output, live shows are an obvious route to enforce (and monetise) their mythos, and the two here, from '75 and '81, have only been available as sound-only downloads from the group's website. The DVDs add the much-needed visual pizzazz; principally Mick's cavorting, but also Keith's shape-throwing, Ron's way with an onstage cig, and the stoic impassivity of Charlie and Bill.

The LA show from July 12, 1975 finds the group at the peak of their reign as degenerate rock royalty, the pre-show backstage scenes crackling with attitude and tension. The film is a gloomy document, its sound muddy, its camera work haphazard, though as a time capsule it's priceless, not least as a reminder of the era's sartorial excesses. Mick, cross-dressed in silks and sashes, is campily timeless, but Ron and Keith in scarlet and black leather loon pants are absurd, a pair of shaggy crows in eyeliner, though they're trumped by Bill, encased in a brown and beige rhinestone ensemble. The case for punk – then in its birth throes – is right there. Unless you rate *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll* as a peak, the Stones in '75 were likewise at a somewhat grim pass of their career. Loaded on verboten powders, directionless, smarting from the exit of Mick Taylor, they spend much of their two

and a half hours onstage in a leaden chug through songs that on record had light and shade. "Starfucker" is routine, "Angie" and "Wild Horses" even drearier than on disc. A smacked-out Richards is not up to his job. "Keith's gonna sing 'Happy,'" drawls Jagger, except Keith can't, and has to be rescued immediately by Mick. Much of the human riff's guitar work is done by Wood. Only towards the end do things improve with "Midnight Rambler" and "Street Fighting Man". It's Jagger's show, and while it's hard not to be fascinated by the spectacle, it's difficult to enjoy the music.

One might expect worse from the 1981 tour, by which time the Stones were in civil war, with the Glimmer Twins at loggerheads and Wood sunk into freebase hell. Instead, the show at Hampton, Virginia, on Keith's 38th birthday (December 18) finds the band on surprisingly good form. Keith, crisp in riverboat gambler tux and white shirt, is fully focused, patrolling the stage, scything out killer riffs, rolling eyes, stooping low to hit a power chord. He upstages Jagger, who has just enough juice left for what was the tour's penultimate date. There are sprints up and down the walkway, but Mick postures less and dances better. Playing an unusual amount of guitar, perhaps to compensate for the struggling Ronnie, he also reminds us he's a very able blues singer. There's not a loon pant in sight, nor, on this occasion, the 'cherrypicker' lift Keith hated. Only Ron Wood is out of sorts, twitching, rictus, struggling to produce his solos.

It helps that the stage is well lit – the show was first broadcast live on US TV – and is overseen by director Hal Ashby, whose camera stays where the action is. The repertoire is similarly well chosen, with a clutch of '60s highlights – "Let's Spend The Night Together", "Time Is On My Side" and closer "Satisfaction" – vying with recent material like "Shattered". That the Stones look and sound like a band comfortable with their past and confident with their present would prove illusory. Years of in-fighting and fall-out lay just down the road, but here, at least, they emerge triumphant.



8/10

September 2013, was filmed by co-directors Nick Fenton and Peter Strickland of *Berberian Sound Studio* fame. They add subtle visual effects to Björk's fissile mix of future-punk lullabies, steampunk instruments and science-lesson interludes. David Attenborough provides godlike narration while the all-female choir, Graduale Nobile, almost upstage the star. Art-pop glamour meets weapons-grade weirdness.

EXTRAS: TBC.

STEPHEN DALTON

BJÖRK *Biophilia Live*

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Not your average gig...

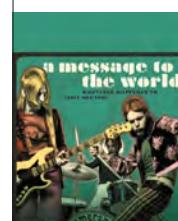
The in-the-round tour that followed Björk's 2011 LP, *Biophilia*, was an amazing high-tech circus show that richly merits the full cinematic treatment.

The penultimate set, at Alexandra Palace in

September 2013, was filmed by co-directors Nick Fenton and Peter Strickland of *Berberian Sound Studio* fame. They add subtle visual effects to Björk's fissile mix of future-punk lullabies, steampunk instruments and science-lesson interludes. David Attenborough provides godlike narration while the all-female choir, Graduale Nobile, almost upstage the star. Art-pop glamour meets weapons-grade weirdness.

EXTRAS: TBC.

STEPHEN DALTON



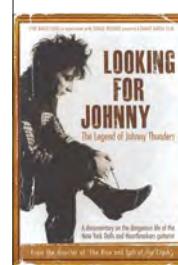
A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD... WHATEVER HAPPENED TO JESSE HECTOR?

RPM/SHOUT

Fascinating life of cult London rocker

Jesse Hector was the fiercely sideburned frontman for proto-punks The Hammersmith Gorillas, a man who Mark Lamarr described as being like music's Forrest Gump. This film follows Hector's career from nine-year-old skiffle player, through British Invasion, freakbeat, glam, punk, and garage revival. With fine animation, archive footage and a tight edit, actress Caroline Catz directs this story of a witty, committed man, now a cleaner and only occasional rocker, who still refuses to compromise.

EXTRAS: Accompanying CD of '90s releases.
8/10 **PETER WATTS**



LOOKING FOR JOHNNY: THE LEGEND OF JOHNNY THUNDERS

JUNGLE

The rise, fall, and fall of the New York Doll

Laying out Thunders' heroin-fuelled trajectory from the birth of the Dolls in early '70s NYC to his

mysterious death in a shabby New Orleans hotel, this loving, low-budget biography by Danny Garcia (director of *The Rise And Fall Of The Clash*) is rudimentary but evocative, powerful for interviews with some who were there – including the late Dolls managers Marty Thau and Malcolm McLaren – and a rich seam of archive of Thunders in his pomp, and out of it.

EXTRAS: Deleted scenes, extra interviews, **6/10** two videos.

DAMIEN LOVE

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD



Frisky and flirtatious...
Outkast's André 3000,
left, and Big Boi, Zilker
Park, Austin, Texas, on
October 3, 2014

AUSTIN CITY LIMITS

ZILKER PARK, AUSTIN, TEXAS, OCTOBER 3-5, 2014

OUTKAST, THE REPLACEMENTS, PEARL JAM and BELLE & SEBASTIAN's Texan adventure. The harder they come...

WITH SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST now the most oversubscribed music festival in the States, those wanting to mess with Texas, but have a little more breathing space, head to Austin City Limits. Sited in the picturesque Zilker Park, just south of the Colorado River, Austin City Limits is now in its 13th year, an offshoot of America's longest running live music television show of the same name.

Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder seems well aware of the cachet the weekend holds, even if he has a little trouble getting the words out. "Thank you for inviting us to this illustrious event," he says, stumbling over the sentence. "Have I had too much wine already?" the notorious oenophile asks. There is a thrash through Neil Young's "Rockin' In The Free World" during their lengthy headline set too, and a solo version of John Lennon's "Imagine" from

Vedder. The frontman's real passion, however, is for a band lower down the bill, who he dubs the "irreplaceable" Replacements. He's not the only one excited by the presence of the reformed Minneapolis legends. **The Gaslight Anthem**'s Brian Fallon can hardly contain his joy at being on the same lineup as two of his major inspirations. Before morphing into a *Sopranos* character, discussing dice games and pork rolls in his home state of New Jersey, Fallon is singing Paul Westerberg and Tommy Stinson's praises with the same gravelly sincerity that floods *Gaslight Anthem*'s work. On record, the heartland greasers might have lost the gruffness of their earlier releases, but live the material from this year's *Get Hurt* is gloriously raw, while "The '59 Sound" remains a masterclass in repurposing classic rock with a modern twist.

The Replacements themselves are an unbridled joy from start to finish. Dressed for the occasion in

sharply tailored suit jackets – which come off early in the set due to the searing heat – their songs of youth have lost none of their punch in middle age. A pert cover of The Jackson 5's "I Want You Back" leads into a triumphant string of classics, with "Can't Hardly Wait", "Bastards Of Young", "Left Of The Dial" and "Alex Chilton" making for an insanely strong finish.

Also on the reunion circuit are **Outkast**, on the last leg of a festival tour which started at Coachella in April of this year. Since that opening night, they now seem like they're actually having fun – upping the production values and feeding off the dynamic audience. "The energy is impeccable," beams Big Boi, from under a gigantic gold medallion which glints all the way to the back of the massive field. Opening with a frenetic "B.O.B. (Bombs Over Baghdad)", backed by backing singers in extravagant eye-masks, André 3000 ups the



Paul Westerberg of the
reunited Replacements

Lauren Hill

BROOKLYN BOWL, LONDON,
SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

Ready or not? The capricious Ms Hill makes peace with her public

THE MOOD TONIGHT is initially one of anxiety, rather than the giddy excitement you might expect to surround an artist who's visited the UK only twice in five years, and whose status sits somewhere between goddess and guru. But a week previously, Lauren Hill triggered an avalanche of Twitter condemnation. Fans, it seemed, were enraged by her very late onstage arrival at Brixton Academy, and by the fact that she'd reworked her songs to such a radical degree that most of them were barely recognisable.

Conforming to expectation has never been Hill's way, in the 16 years since her solitary masterpiece, *The Miseducation Of Lauren Hill*, was released. But that reaction might explain why she trails a mere 45 minutes behind schedule for this more intimate show. And even if Hill's solo material is versioned along scat-jazz, grimey dancehall and freeform gospel lines by a heavy-handed band, to occasionally incoherent effect, she also delivers the Fugees hits pretty much straight.

Alongside that, there are seven Bob Marley covers – which include a "Jammin'"/"Master Blaster" composite – and a solo medley from her 2002 MTV Unplugged album. For this, the crop-haired Hill sits on a stool with a white acoustic and relaxes her imperious demeanour a little, reminding the devoted of her formidable songwriting talent: the line "*I don't respect your system/I won't protect your system*", from "I Get Out" has a new resonance, in light of her recent imprisonment for tax evasion. The acoustic section proves, too, that the slightly ragged quality Hill's voice has acquired with age hasn't reduced its knockout soul power. Along with a cover of Aretha Franklin's "I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You)" and the fiercely spat rap "Black Rage" (her flipping of "My Favourite Things"), it's the highlight of the evening.

The show, which runs well past the two-hour mark, closes with a deliriously received "Doo Wop (That Thing)". However onerous some expectations may be, it seems even Lauren Hill must fulfil them.

SHARON O'CONNELL



A reminder of her
formidable talent:
Lauren Hill
onstage in London

"Piazza, New York Catcher". Maintaining the Royal Variety Performance mode, he croons a few lines of "I'm In The Mood For Dancing". "I don't know if the Nolan Sisters made it to Texas," he says; the crowd's puzzled reaction would suggest not. He continues to prance during "Sukie In The Graveyard", donning a fedora which seems to turn him into Bruno Mars, complete with squeals from the crowd.

Jimmy Cliff, meanwhile, arrives resplendent in a gold and red, Eye Of Horus-decorated tracksuit and matching headband. Fabulously lithe, the 66-year-old stalks and stretches across the stage like he's warming up for a football match, with "The Harder They Come", his version of Johnny Nash's "I Can See Clearly Now" and "You Can Get It If You Really Want" bouncing along almost as relentlessly as Cliff himself. The furious pace only holds up when

he straps on a guitar for "Many Rivers To Cross", lead by his crystal clear falsetto, a rare moment of stillness in one of the most kinetic sets of the weekend.

Also in fine voice is **Jenny Lewis**, who proves herself as a decent heir to Linda Ronstadt, her rich vocals blasting through rabble rousers like "The Next Messiah". There's something of June Carter about her, too: Lewis' total ease onstage, the way she gleefully interacts with her band, the testifying raise of her hand, which all smacks of a '70s Grand Ole Opry show.

Robert Ellis is another throwback to country music past, looking like a cross between Hank Williams and James Dean in his Stetson and tight white T-shirt. Pedal steel guitar weeps through his songs before they each explode with ferocious guitar solos. An effortless set – much like the relaxed but impressively diverse Austin City Limits itself. **LEONIE COOPER**

ludicrous fashion stakes even further in a grey wig, white sunglasses and boiler suit combo. Evidently in a frisky mood, he proceeds to flirt outrageously with the women invited up onstage to dance during "Hey Ya!" and clutches the bell of a trumpet tightly to his crotch for the majority of "Roses". He also manages to sneak a plug for his "Jimi Hendrix movie" into "Prototype", describing it as perfect date fodder.

Belle & Sebastian beef out their sound with brass too, and have also brought a small string section along for the ride. In patriotic tartan, Stuart Murdoch weaves offhand tales about ironing his shirt especially for this weekend's show ("Domestication is nothing to be scared of," he advises) into a set that encompasses the old ("Expectations", "The Boy With The Arab Strap") and the new (Stevie Jackson's seven-minute funk epic "Perfect Couples"). Removing his jacket to reveal said freshly pressed shirt and a black waistcoat, Murdoch is a textbook old-school entertainer, especially when sitting behind a piano for "Funny Little Frog" and crouching on the edge of the stage during

"The energy is impeccable," beams Big Boi from under a gigantic gold medallion



Heart's Ann Wilson, Brian Wilson and Al Jardine live at George Fest. Inset: the Flaming Lips' Wayne Coyne

GEORGE FEST

FONDA THEATRE, HOLLYWOOD, SEPTEMBER 28, 2014

George Harrison's songbook is revisited by an all-star cast... my sweet Lord, it's Brian Wilson!

THE NEW YORK-based Best Fest has been mounting guest-star-laden tributes to the likes of Dylan, Petty and the Stones for more than a decade. Now, though, they've headed west for a one-off celebration of the music of **George Harrison**, in partnership with the Harrison Estate. With Best Fest regulars the Cabin Down Below Band forming the backbone, the changeovers are relatively quick despite all the moving parts, enabling them to hustle a cavalcade of mostly West Coast-based artists through 26 songs in less than three hours. Nonetheless, this is a bar band, though a very good one, fronted by moonlighting *Rolling Stone* staffers Austin Scaggs (son of Boz) and Alex Levy; thus the show proceeds with an engagingly shambling quality that serves to dial back the slick factor whenever a professional entertainer like **Butch Walker**, **Ben Harper**, **Perry Farrell** or The Killers' **Brandon Flowers** takes the mic.

Perhaps it's the nature of the beast, but none of the participants seek to reimagine the original recording but instead attempt to render the source material as accurately as possible. Late-night TV host **Conan O'Brien**, an accomplished guitarist, opens the show, pickin' and grinnin' his way through "Old Brown Shoe" while bringing an early note of irreverence to the proceedings by quipping, "They told me this was a George Michael tribute – I've spent the last two weeks practising 'Faith'." Minutes later, "**Weird Al**" **Yankovic**

A glitter-encrusted Wayne Coyne summons ghosts of Syd Barrett and Skip Spence...

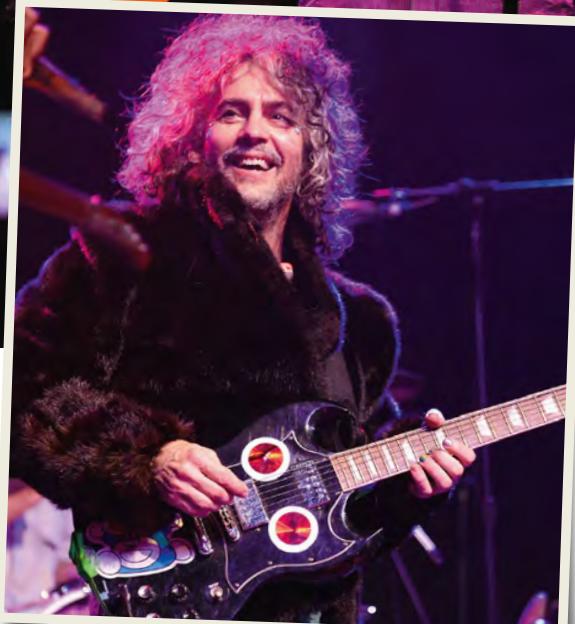
offers an uncharacteristically straightforward rendition of "What Is Life" before slipping into character, theatrically snapping a selfie with his back to the crowd.

The Harrison canon has its share of can't-miss crowd-pleasers (I'm told there was a spirited competition for the right to cover "Wah-Wah"; The Strokes' **Nick Valensi** drew the long straw). George's Beatles repertoire in particular has an all but magical allure, and it's eagerly revisited by **Jamestown Revival** (a jangling "If I Needed Someone"), **The Cold War Kids** (a snarling "Taxman"), Spoon's **Britt Daniel** (a suitably tormented "I Me Mine") and offspring **Dhani Harrison** (a zesty "Savoy Truffle"). But Harrison's post-Fabs music is defined by introspection and soul-searching, presenting a challenge to those who've been saddled with the more austere selections. The Cult's **Ian Astbury** struggles mightily with "Be Here Now"; Aussie shoegazers **The Black Ryder**, with Midlake's **Eric Pulido**,

sink under the weight of "Isn't It A Pity", and Heart's **Ann Wilson** can't quite belt her way out of "Beware Of Darkness".

The evening's most memorable moments turn out to be its weirdest. A glitter-encrusted **Wayne Coyne** of The Flaming Lips summons up the ghosts of Syd Barrett and Skip Spence, clapping his hands over his head with a blissed-out smile as Wilco keyboardist **Pat Sansone** and violinist **Ginger Shankar** conjure up the lysergic riff of "It's All Too Much". And just before the show-closing ensemble workups of the Wilburies' "Handle With Care" and "All Things Must Pass", **Brian Wilson** arrives on stage with **Al Jardine** and what resembles a Secret Service detail composed of members of his band, eases himself behind a keyboard, sings "My Sweet Lord" with the chorale and hurries off as if he's late for an appointment with his bed. George, at least, would've gotten a chuckle out of it.

BUD SCOPPA



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SATURDAY 25 LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB

MONDAY 27 GATESHEAD SAGE

WEDNESDAY 29 LONDON O2 SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

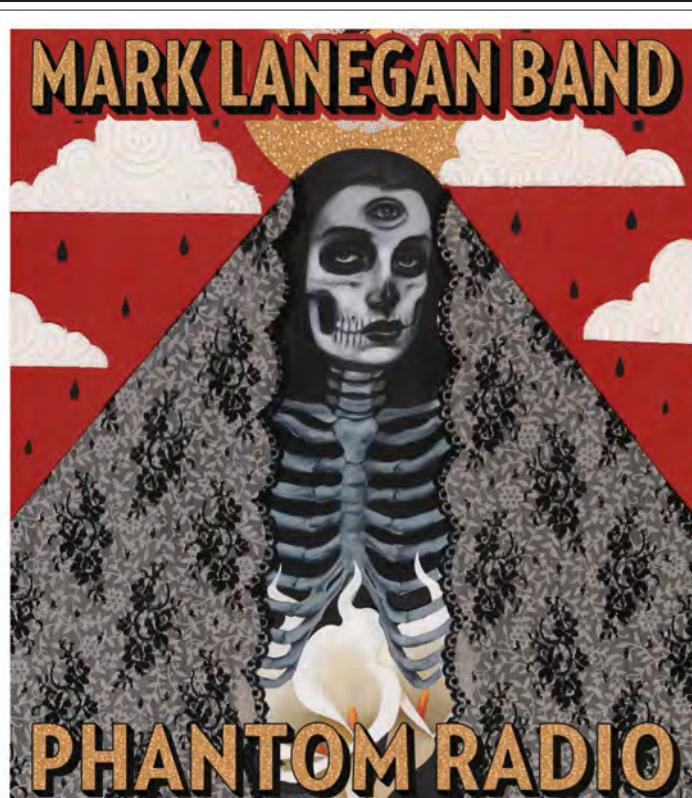
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 03 LONDON THE FORUM 09 ABERDEEN LEMON TREE
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- 18 BRIGHTON Concorde 2
- 24 STOCKTON Arc
- 25 BEDFORD Esquires

NOVEMBER

- 07 READING Sub 89
- 08 FALMOUTH Pavilions
- 14 BOGNOR REGIS Butlins
- 15 CHESTER Live Rooms
- 21 BATH Komedia
- 22 PORTSMOUTH Wedgewood Rooms
- 28 MANCHESTER Club Academy
- 29 NORTHAMPTON Roadmender

DECEMBER

- 05 GLOUCESTER Guildhall
- 06 LUTON Hat Factory
- 12 LEEDS Brudenell Social Club
- 13 BIRMINGHAM Institute
- 19 NORWICH Waterfront
- 20 OXFORD The Bullingdon

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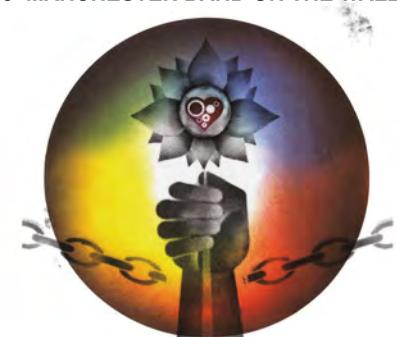
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- 04 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS
- 10 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY 2
- 11 SHEFFIELD PLUG
- 17 GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
- 18 NARBERTH QUEENS HALL

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- 01 LUTON HAT FACTORY
- 07 SALISBURY ARTS CENTRE
- 14 LONDON UNDER THE BRIDGE
- 15 TUNBRIDGE WELLS THE FORUM
- 21 BRIDPORT ELECTRIC PALACE
- 22 BRISTOL FLEECE
- 27 BIRMINGHAM INSTITUTE
- 28 GLASGOW ORAN MOR
- 29 LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL ROOMS

DECEMBER

- 05 OXFORD THE BULLINGDON
- 06 LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY 2
- 12 NORWICH OPEN
- 13 PORTSMOUTH WEDGEWOOD ROOMS
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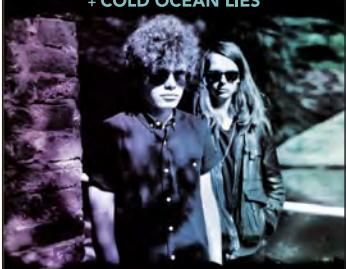
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BRIDLINGTON SPA	MON 06 APRIL	TUE 21 APRIL	EDINBURGH USHER HALL	SUN 03 MAY	NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
MON 06 APRIL	NEWCASTLE CITY HALL	WED 08 APRIL	CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE	MON 04 MAY	IPSWICH REGENT
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Friday 06	LONDON ROUNDHOUSE	Monday 16	PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
Saturday 07	SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY	Tuesday 17	LEEDS O2 ACADEMY
Monday 09	LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY	Thursday 19	BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
Tuesday 10	CARDIFF UNIVERSITY Y PLAS	Friday 20	CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
Thursday 12	NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY		

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Tue 09 Royal Concert Hall Glasgow 0141 353 8000

Thu 11 Royal Concert Hall Nottingham 0115 989 5555

Fri 12 Civic Hall Wolverhampton 0870 320 7000

Sat 13 City Hall Newcastle 0191 277 8030

Mon 15 Symphony Hall Birmingham 0121 345 0600

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Wed 17 Bridgewater Hall Manchester 0844 907 9000

Thu 18 Victoria Hall Stoke 0844 871 7649

Fri 19 Colston Hall Bristol 0117 922 3686

MARCH 2015

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Fri 13 Forum Theatre Malvern 01684 892277

Sat 14 Town Hall Cheltenham 0844 576 2210

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SUN 23 NOVEMBER SHEFFIELD, QUEENS SOCIAL CLUB
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08 Nov	Salisbury, City Hall
14 Nov	Cambridge, The Junction
21 Nov	Lincoln, Drill Hall
22 Nov	Chatham, The Britannia
29 Nov	London, Under The Bridge
12 Dec	Northampton, The Picturedrome
13 Dec	Manchester, Band on the Wall

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THE JAMES HUNTER SIX
FRI 28 NOV 2014 LONDON 229

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- 03 Bury St. Edmunds The Apex
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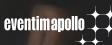
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FEBRUARY 2015

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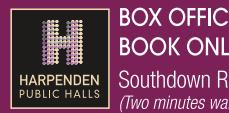
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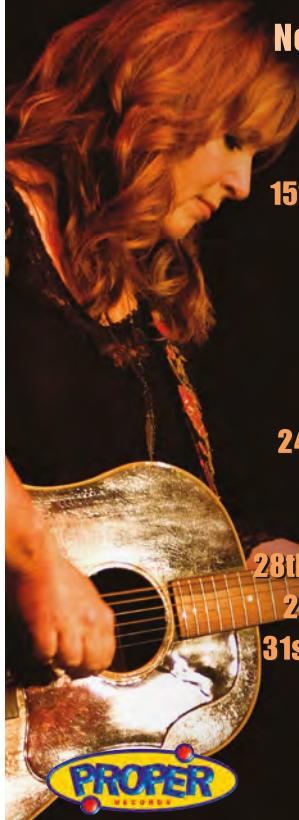
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November 9th Sun

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November 13th Thurs

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November 14th Fri

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November 28th Fri

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November 29th Sat

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December 4th Thurs

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December 5th Fri

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December 6th Sat

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December 7th Sun

o2 Academy Oxford,

December 11th Thurs

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WED 26 WOLVERHAMPTON

THU 27 YORK

FRI 28 SHEFFIELD

SUN 30 LEEDS

BIERKELLER

THE PORTLAND ARMS

DINGWALLS

SLADE ROOMS

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O2 ACADEMY 2

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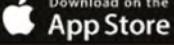
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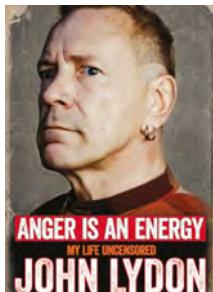
Books

BY ALLAN JONES



John Lydon,
then Johnny
Rotten, public
menace, 1976

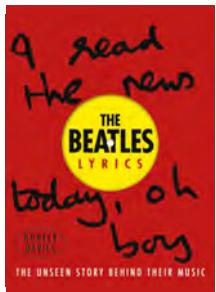
Reviewed this month...



Anger Is An Energy: My Life Uncensored

John Lydon with
Andrew Perry
SIMON & SCHUSTER

7/10



The Beatles Lyrics: The Unseen Story Behind Their Music

Hunter Davies
WEIDENFELD & NICOLSON

8/10

YOU MIGHT BE surprised to discover in *Anger Is An Energy* how much John Lydon likes Status Quo, Norman Wisdom and beetroot, but otherwise the book, hilarious as it sometimes is, seems largely a story already told and exhaustively documented, even if you haven't read his previous autobiography, 1993's *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*. John Lydon may these days occupy a kind of celebrity twilight, famous for once being someone else, like Charles Foster Kane or Kerry Katona, but there was a time when his notoriety was frankly off the scale, his life in these circumstances a series of lurid tabloid headlines, the Sex Pistols rarely out of the news, the nation's delinquent nightmare, the former Johnny Rotten better known then for more memorable things than selling butter, take-the-money-and-run reunion tours and gurning appearances on reality TV shows.

Across more than 500 pages of spite, bile and general rancour, what might also raise an eyebrow is the list of perhaps unlikely people who somehow

escape Lydon's venomous wrath. Mick Jagger, for instance, who offered unsolicited financial and legal support to the hapless Sid Vicious when Sid was arrested for murder and abandoned in New York by Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren who, as ever in a crisis, legged it, thinking only of himself. Lydon also writes rather glowingly about Pete Townshend, Robert Plant and Paul McCartney, who all in 1977 were targets for his lacerating scorn, dismissed as superstar has-beens, old farts, wholly redundant.

Some fondness is found for Sid, recalled here by Lydon with the same wounded exasperation captured in a famously tearful interview in Julian Temple's Sex Pistols documentary, *The Filth And The Fury*. He is altogether less forgiving of Sid's ruinous mother, Anne Beverley, who fed the young Sid with heroin for breakfast and was in all respects a catastrophic influence on her son. You get the feeling he would not have been unhappy to see her burned at a convenient stake. Predictable animosities with his former Sex Pistols bandmates are enthusiastically revived, despite his dubious claim to no longer hold grudges, and he is similarly scathing about erstwhile members of Public Image Ltd, especially Keith Levene, colourfully dismissed as a "rat-arsed, snarly, contemptuous cunt". There are plentiful digs, too, at The Clash – "a pub band" – especially Joe Strummer, cast here as someone possibly well-meaning but not entirely bright. Lydon's most splenetic outbursts, however, are reserved for Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood. The latter comes across in Lydon's account as batty and nagging, while McLaren is conniving, cowardly, inept, dishonest, not so much a punk visionary as a greedy little shopkeeper whose death has not softened Lydon's scalding opinion of him as completely detestable.

However familiar this part of the story is, it's still gripping, even in Lydon's often wildly self-aggrandising version. There are still over 300 pages to go, however, after the Pistols split, most of which are devoted to a long and eventually tiresome account of Pil's fractious history, by the end of which the reader will have lost interest. Pity in this instance, the book's ghostwriter Andrew Perry, faced with the sheer tedium of transcribing Lydon's voluminous recall of spats, recording sessions and

tours, pompous self-acclaim and increasingly humourless invective. It must have been like asking someone for the time and being told how to build a clock.

► Hunter Davies is the author of the only authorised biography of The Beatles, published in 1968, and more recently edited *The John Lennon Letters*, an assiduously assembled collection of 250 pieces of Lennon correspondence – letters, postcards, scribbled notes, birthday cards, messages to fans – many of which were reproduced and annotated and arranged chronologically to provide an epistolary narrative of Lennon's life. The book also provided a fascinating insight into the lucrative trade in pop ephemera, Davies in his pursuit of the originals of just about anything Lennon ever wrote to anyone else – family, friends, fans – negotiating a network of auction houses, agents, private collectors, professional archivists and borderline obsessives.

In the clumsily titled *The Beatles Lyrics: The Unseen Story Behind Their Music*, Davies has employed the same methodology to track down the original manuscripts of 100 of the 182 songs The Beatles wrote and recorded, many of which are reproduced here, sometimes rather blurrily, with Davies providing anecdotal commentary. It turns out that Davies already had in his possession nine original Beatles lyrics, collected during the research for his original biography, scraps of paper picked up from the floor of Abbey Road studios where crumpled and discarded they had been left for the cleaners or given to him by one of the group. He was clearly aware of their potential value but nevertheless was surprised when in 1981 Sotheby's held the first auction of Beatles memorabilia and it turned out his collection was worth more than his house and therefore worth a fortune on the open market (Davies donated them to the British Museum and they are now in permanent exhibition at the British Library on the Euston Road).

What's amazing is that these songs were so often scribbled down on whatever bits of paper were at hand – pages from notebooks, hotel stationery, backs of envelopes – and it's fascinating to see them with their hasty revisions, crossings out, lines being rewritten, ideas rethought even before they are fully complete, almost as if The Beatles can't keep up with their own creative momentum, colourful doodles and stoned illustrations accompanying some of them. Fans will pore over these as if they are religious relics, the teeth of saints, the bones of martyrs, precious illuminations.

The book's biggest drawback, however, is the principal text, Davies' commentary on the songs, the telling, if you like, of the 'unseen stories' behind the music, which at best is prosaic, sometimes painfully matter of fact – "Paul introduces us to the band, and hopes we will enjoy the show, to cheers and applause from the audience," begins the entry for "Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band". In his introduction, Davies makes clear he has no real taste for analysis and "over-intellectualisation", probably thinking of Ian MacDonald's *Revolution In The Head*, so it's fortunate that for the most part his recollections of The Beatles and the time he spent with them are generally warm enough to survive his otherwise bluff approach.

Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

ROBERT YOUNG

Primal Scream guitarist

1965-2014

PAYING TRIBUTE TO founder member 'Throb' Young, who has died suddenly at the age of 49, Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespie and Andrew Innes called him "an irreplaceable talent, much admired amongst his peers". He was, they added, "a true rock'n'roller. He walked the walk... He once said, 'When we go onstage it's a war between us and the audience.' He never let go of that attitude."

It seemed to be an extension of the trait that had first endeared him, albeit warily, to Alan McGee in early '80s Glasgow. The future Creation boss, several years his senior, recalled Young as "this little kid who loved fighting". Gillespie had met him at the local King's Park Secondary School and, in 1984, drafted in Young as bassist for the newly formed Primal Scream. He remained on bass until after the release of 1987 debut album *Sonic Flower Groove*, after which he replaced the departing Jim Beattie on lead guitar.

Young played a key role in the band's transition from jangly Byrds-fanciers to the acid house hedonism of *Screamadelica*. His guitar licks, for instance, supplied the grooves to more rockist tracks such as "Movin' On Up" and "Damaged". The album, which was awarded the inaugural Mercury Music Prize in 1992, also found him taking on vocals for their cover of the 13th Floor Elevators' "Slip Inside This House".

He stayed with the Primals through their next decade, continuing to share three-way writing credits with Gillespie and Innes, before deciding to quit in the wake of 2006's *Riot City Blues*. The band's excessive lifestyle, it appeared, may have begun to catch up with him. "Let's just say that he's got some problems that he's got to sort out for himself," was all Gillespie was prepared to say.

Primal Scream's keyboardist, Martin Duffy, was rumoured to have been recording with Young during the time leading up to his death.



Rob Young in Primal Scream, King's Cross, London, 1991

COSIMO MATASSA

New Orleans engineer/producer

1926-2014

NO LESS AN authority than Allen Toussaint cited Cosimo Matassa as "the doorway and window to the world for us musicians in New Orleans. An expert, with a lot of heart and soul. When The Beatles heard Fats Domino, they heard him via Cosimo Matassa. He touched the whole world." As a recording engineer and studio boss, Matassa was there at the beginning of rock'n'roll and was a crucial figure in the growth of New Orleans R'n'B. He opened his first studio in 1945, in the back room of the family shop in the French Quarter. A decade later he moved to the more spacious Cosimo Recording Studio, where he oversaw sessions by Fats Domino, Ray Charles, Lee Dorsey, Little Richard, Irma Thomas, Aaron Neville and more. Matassa's house band, meanwhile, included such

stellar pianists as Toussaint, Harold Battiste and Dr John. The sound he pioneered was showcased on recent compilation *Cracking The Cosimo Code*: warm rhythms, strident guitar and piano, subtle horns and soulfully expressive vocals. In September 2010, Matassa's J&M Recording Studio was declared a historic landmark.

JOHN GUSTAFSON

Merseybeats/Roxy Music bassist

1942-2014

LIVERPOOL'S THE BIG Three were once reputed to be the only local band to make The Beatles nervous. Signed to Brian Epstein's NEMS organisation after a tip-off from John Lennon, the trio issued a debut EP in 1963 before bassist John Gustafson quit to join The Merseybeats. By the late '60s he'd moved on to form prog rockers Quatermass, where he also doubled as frontman. The lineup lasted two

years, after which he served full-time in Roxy Music. Perhaps the most popular contribution of a tenure that spanned *Stranded* to live album *Viva!* was his infectious bassline on "Love Is The Drug". Gustafson's other significant career move followed directly after, when he joined The Ian Gillan Band. He played on four late-'70s albums with the ex-Deep Purple singer. In the '80s he and Mick Green revived Johnny Kidd's backing band, The Pirates.



Bassist John Gustafson, 1972

BOB CREWE

Songwriter, producer and singer

1931-2014

THE FOUR SEASONS rose to fame in 1962 with "Sherry", a song driven by sophisticated harmonies and the extraordinary falsetto of Frankie Valli. Written by keyboardist Bob Gaudio and produced by Bob Crewe, it was the beginning of a collaboration that lasted for years. Crewe and Gaudio co-wrote a welter of successes for the band, chief among them "Big Girls Don't Cry", "Walk Like A Man", "Rag Doll", "Connie-O" and "Can't Take My Eyes Off You". The group also recorded Crewe and Gaudio's "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine (Anymore)", though it was eclipsed by The Walker Brothers' version. Another Crewe-Gaudio classic, "Silence Is Golden", was a monster hit for The Tremeloes. As lyricist, Crewe specialised in rites-of-passage tales of heartache and

yearning. Valli's soaring voice only served to heighten the melodrama. Crewe's brother Dan cited Bob's "intense love affair with words. He told stories." In the mid-'60s, Crewe ran his own DynoVoice label, where his discoveries included Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels. The following decade saw him form Disco-Tex & The Sex-O-Lettes and co-write Labelle's dancefloor smash, "Lady Marmalade".

PAUL REVERE

Raiders leader and organist

1938-2014

PAUL REVERE & The Raiders never shied away from a gimmick. Togged out in colonial frock coats, tri-cornered hats and knee-high boots, the Idaho quintet enjoyed a series of US hits in the '60s. Their kinetic live act, allied to a distinctive brand of frothy pop-rock, also lent itself to TV. Led by organist Revere and singer Mark Lindsay, they became a staple of Dick Clark's *Where The Action Is* and fetched up on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and an episode of *Batman*. "We were visual, fun and crazy and were America's answer to the British music invasion," Revere told The Associated Press in 2000. Among their successes were "Just Like Me" and "Kicks", though their biggest splash came with 1971's "Indian Reservation (The Lament Of The Cherokee Reservation Indian)", a *Billboard* chart-topper that sold two million copies.

JOE SAMPLE

Fusion keyboardist and composer

1939-2014

THE FUSIONIST JAZZ-funk of The Crusaders owed much to the electric piano of Joe Sample. Having begun as The Jazz Crusaders in 1960, the group reached a commercial peak on 1979's *Street Life*, with the title track (sung by Randy Crawford) an international hit. Sample, who founded the band in his native Houston before relocating to LA, was also an in-demand session player. His impressive CV includes Marvin Gaye, BB King, Steely Dan and Joni Mitchell.

PETER GUTTERIDGE

Dunedin Sound' pioneer

1961-2014

NEW ZEALANDER PETER Gutteridge despised the self-

indulgent nature of the rock music he grew up with in the '70s. Founding indie darlings The Clean, songs like "Point That Thing Somewhere Else" heralded a looser, more textural approach that became a hallmark of the Flying Nun label. He went on to form The Chills, The Great Unwashed and, in 1986, drone-rock outfit Snapper. His songs have since been covered by Yo La Tengo, Wooden Shjips and Ducktails.

GEORGE HAMILTON IV

Country singer

1937-2014

CROONER GEORGE HAMILTON IV joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1960 and scored a major hit three years later with "Abilene". Later in the decade, having established himself as one of country's most bankable attractions, he was the first US singer to record songs by Gordon Lightfoot and Joni Mitchell. In 1969 he helped organise the International Festival Of Country Music at Wembley and, in the '70s, became the first country star to play behind the Iron Curtain.

KENNY WHEELER

Jazz trumpeter and improviser

1930-2014

KENNY WHEELER'S DESCRIPTION of his own work as "soppy romantic melodies with a bit of chaos" was a gross understatement of his ability. Starting out with John Dankworth's orchestra in 1959, the Canadian jazz trumpeter and flugelhorn player was a true innovator. Acclaimed recordings like 1973's *Song For Someone* and *Gnu High* (1975), the latter featuring Keith Jarrett, married a love of composition to free improvisation.



His most recent release was last year's *Six For Six*.

THE SPACEAPE

Singer, poet and MC

7-2014

IN HIS GUISE as The Spaceape, poet and MC Stephen Samuel Gordon provided vocals for 2006's *Memories Of The Future* and *Black Sun* (2011), two albums from Hyperdub founder Kode9. His first solo release on the label arrived in 2004 with "Sine Of The Dub", after which he collaborated with Burial, Jerry Dammers, Redshape, the Echologist and others. In September, Gordon, who has died after suffering from a rare form of cancer, issued a new EP with Kode9, "Killing Season".

TOM SKEETER

Sound City studio owner

1932-2014

IN HIS 2013 documentary, Dave Grohl called LA's Sound City "America's greatest unsung recording studio... the birthplace of legend." Neil Young, Spirit, Fleetwood Mac, Tom Petty and Nirvana were among those who cut major albums at the facility, founded by Tom Skeeter and Joe Gottfried in 1969. Its chief draw was a state-of-the-art console, the Neve 8028. It was bought for \$75,000 by Skeeter, who also served as CEO



of Rainy Day Records and president of Carman Productions.

MARK LOOMIS

Chocolate Watchband guitarist

1947-2014

THE SWIRLING GUITAR leads of Mark Loomis were as essential a component of The Chocolate Watchband's sound as the tough vocals of Dave Aguilar. Co-founded by Loomis in San Jose in 1965, the band appeared in *Riot On Sunset Strip* and became known for the garagely psychedelia of songs like "Let's Talk About Girls" and "Are You Gonna Be There (At The Love-In)". In 1967, Loomis left to form The Tingle Guild, before returning two years later.

LYNSEY DE PAUL

Singer and songwriter

1950-2014

RESPONSIBLE FOR OVER a dozen major hits in the early-to-mid-'70s, either as writer or performer, Lynsey De Paul was one of the decade's most prolific artists. Her breakthrough success was The Fortunes' "Storm In A Teacup" (co-authored with Ron Roker), before she embarked on a solo career that included hits "Sugar Me", "Won't Somebody Dance With Me" (making her the first woman to win an Ivor Novello award) and "No Honestly". The latter, a theme song to the titular ITV sitcom, earned her a second Novello.

ROB HUGHES

Feedback...

Email uncut_feedback@timeinc.com or write to: Uncut Feedback, 8th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Or tweet us at twitter.com/uncutmagazine

"HOUNDS OF LOVE ARE HUNTING..."

Can any artist fulfil everyone's expectations in a live performance? Clearly not. Whilst Peter Benyon [Feedback..., *Uncut* 210] is entitled to his opinion, we wonder whether he recognises how much his own attitude, beliefs and opinions have shaped his experience of Kate Bush's 'Before The Dawn'. It is unfair of him to assume that his opinion is shared by the majority. Surely a true fan would not treat such an event as cost-benefit analysis exercise.

And thereby, we suspect, hangs the tale. Inevitably, the performances have attracted the trophy hunters – those who have wanted to say they had been there rather than actually be there, as well as those whose investment in Kate as an artist spans only part of her career. Did Peter really think that a tour entitled 'Before The Dawn' would see Kate trotting out her greatest hits? Surely we should allow the artist to determine what they perform and how they perform it, and it is for us as fans to appreciate the art as intended. The only promise Kate made in advance was that "The Ninth Wave" was an integral part of the show – and on that she delivered; "bombastic" for Peter, for us bringing to life all the emotion of one of the most incredible pieces of music ever recorded. The fact she gave us a three-hour show with so much more as well is hardly cause for complaint.

As for Peter's comments about the band – "functional playing of all the right notes without any spark or originality". This was not a concert, it was a theatrical performance where one of the components was a group of highly competent musicians who knew what their role was – to play the music spot on and not be centrestage. Given the calibre of a band featuring Peter Gabriel's long-serving lead guitarist and members of Weather Report and Pink Floyd's band, what would Peter's opinion have been if they had not been note-perfect?

We cannot include ourselves in Peter's analysis of the audience as "we paying mugs duped into buying these exorbitant tickets so we could fund this grand folly". We include ourselves with those who exchanged an experience with Kate



and her team – a genuinely creative and emotive event that for us was priceless. There is, however, one point on which we can agree – Peter, we too wish you had waited for the DVD and then four tickets could have gone at cost price to people who really wanted to be there.

Allie and Paul Devenny, via email

COOL FOR CAT

Back in February 1973, when I was 15 years old, my family was on a weekend trip to the ski/snowboard resort town of Wrightwood, in Southern California. At the end of the day we started the drive home to Pasadena. We were driving westbound on the freeway when my best friend seated next to me in the backseat happened to look at a van (most likely a VW bus) in the lane to our left. He started hollering, "That guy driving looks just like Cat

Stevens! I'm sure that's Cat Stevens!" We were huge fans, so we had to try to get an autograph. The problem was we were driving at about 60 mph.

As our cars were side by side, I rolled down my window, stuck my head out and, while waving furiously, yelled out repeatedly, "Are you Cat Stevens?" The young woman in the passenger seat rolled down her window to hear what I was shouting about. Then, with a huge smile, she shouted back and nodded "Yes"! I motioned to her that I wanted an autograph.

The woman reached into her purse and handed Stevens a pen and small piece of paper. He carefully took control of the steering wheel with his forearms, and then, with the paper on the dashboard wrote on it. All the while, our two cars drove side by side. Then the woman had the

autograph, and now came the hand-off at 60 mph!

Stevens and my dad had to make a few daring attempts at manoeuvring our cars so that, with about two or three feet between us, the windows of the cars would be aligned enough to make the hand-off. Each time we came close I would lunge forward with my entire upper torso out the window. Finally, our cars were perfectly side by side. It was the magic moment! I took one more death-defying lunge out the window and grabbed the paper from the woman's outstretched hand. Success!

We all got our first look at the autograph. On the back of a restaurant's business card were the handwritten words, "With love, Cat Stevens"! What a priceless moment. We'd made a connection with one of our very favourite musical artists. It was unbelievable and surreal.

Howard Cole, via email

TICKLED PINK

This month the sight of two old men on the cover of *Uncut* (November 2014) caught my eye and I immediately bought a copy. One of these gentlemen, sporting a new beard, looks like he may find work in a grotto this year, but I doubt he will need the extra income. The other smiling man just looks happy to be next to this possible grotto employee. I rushed home giddy with my magazine and read the fascinating article about the secret work these old guys have been doing, and it's so nice of them to give fans of their work an early Christmas present this year.

It's a long time since I've felt so excited about an album, I admit, but *The Endless River* has made me feel excited about music again and if I keep in this good mood, I may ask Santa for a subscription to *Uncut*.

David Wright, Scarborough

Enjoyed your piece on the new album from the Floyd and the legacy of Rick Wright. One track to add to your list that exemplifies his contribution is his keyboard work on "Cymbaline" from the *More* soundtrack album. It transforms the song into something of strange, ethereal beauty. A song that I return to, again and again.

Richard Howlin, Chelsea, Michigan

CROSSWORD

WIN!

One of three copies
of *Lost On The River: The
New Basement Tapes*

SHEER CHART ATTACK

I just finished re-reading Garry Mulholland's excellent Small Faces singles article from the March 2014 issue. All is most groovy, except that the article states the Small Faces only had one UK chart-topper, and this is not true. Most music writers have the habit of quoting '60s record chart data peak positions from the Official Charts Company (OCC) or the Guinness books/websites. The OCC is using data from the *Record Retailer* chart for the '60s, proclaiming this is "official UK chart history", but there were no "official" charts in the '60s, there were five different charts plus the BBC average.

The major national charts of the '60s were from the *New Musical Express*, *Melody Maker*, *Disc*, *Record Mirror* and *Record Retailer*, plus the BBC average. By the peak of the mid-'60s, *MM* was sampling around 200 record shops, *NME* around 150, *Disc* around 90, *RR* around 80. *RM* had ceased with their charts in 1962 and began publishing the *RR* charts in its paper instead. So by the OCC choosing the *RR* chart to represent the '60s, it chose the music paper chart with the fewest number of sampled shops. Not only that, but *RR* disagreed the most with the other charts, and had the most problems with getting their weekly results in on time.

The two most famous examples of *RR* chart bogus history are the peak positions of The Beatles' "Please Please Me" and The Rolling Stones' "19th Nervous Breakdown". Both of these records peaked at No 1 on all the '60s charts (including the BBC average) except for the *RR* chart, where both records peaked at No 2. In the case of "Please Please Me", at that time in 1963, a total of 270 record shops sampled by *NME*, *MM* and *Disc* said "Please Please Me" was No 1. Thirty shops sampled by *RR* said it peaked at No 2.

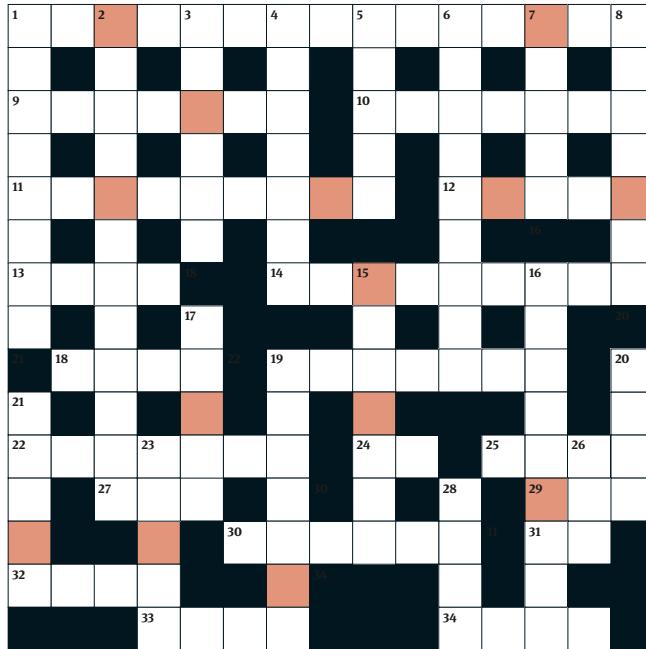
What should be done about this? I personally would prefer that someone publish a new (physical) chart book, listing every record to hit every chart, and list all the peaks they achieved on each chart. Once and for all that would reflect true UK chart history, and we could put an end to this rewriting of UK chart history.

Robin Ore, Richmond, Virginia

SONGS FOR HURLING

So Steve Albini thinks all team sports other than baseball are "fucking stupid" (October 2014). I suggest he checks out the magnificent Irish sport of hurling. That is all.

Eddie Walsh, Waterford, Ireland



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Bob Dylan. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* December 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, November 24, 2014. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Leonard Cohen is among the fashionable posers (7-8)
- 9 Leave behind on purpose an album by Deep Purple (7)
- 10-25A "You never get too big, you never get too heavy, you never get too cool....", opening line to 2006 hit (7-4)
- 11 Bo Diddley requests that he gets by with this album (3-4)
- 12 Having the courage to own a Marillion album (5)
- 13 "Moving lips to breathe her _____, I opened up my eyes", from The Cure's "Just Like Heaven" (4)
- 14 Aleshandy spilt by the Pavement (5-4)
- 18 Am returning twice to hear this Genesis number (4)
- 19 (See 7 down)
- 22 The La's main arrangement of Pink Floyd music (7)
- 24 _____ Was Here, written in Slowhand (1-1)
- 25 (See 10 across)
- 27 (See 20 down)
- 29 '90s indie band chewing over a "Purple Love Balloon" (3)
- 30-33A Nosmall places for Gerry Rafferty when taking this album on the road (4-2-4)
- 31 (See 34 across)
- 32 He bangs the drums (4)
- 33 (See 30 across)
- 34-31A I'm easy about this Melissa Etheridge album (3-1-2)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 It's where Johnny Marr's now at, but not with his work (8)
- 2 Mark Lanegan Band's new album being broadcast from a ghost town (7-5)
- 3 David Bowie looking for somewhere to rent.... (6)
- 4'90s US indie band have some properties available for him (7)
- 5 Aerosmith album making them bigger than the Stones? (5)
- 6 "I'm goin' back some day, come what may, to _____", 1963 (4-5)
- 7+19A George Harrison album that had a bit more feeling (5-7)
- 8 (See 28 down)
- 15 A state of uneasiness with Ladyhawke's last album (7)
- 16 US band Jay And The _____, whose members Becker and Fagen later formed Steely Dan (9)
- 17 A bit of The Libertines? A bit of Abba, rather (5)
- 19 Bear witness that this album is by Phil Collins (7)
- 20+27A Endure an album that's on offer by Jackson Browne (4-3)
- 21 Arthur _____, hip-hop producer who also worked with New Order (5)
- 23 As heard on most albums, but in particular this one by Carole King (5)
- 26 Pogues album, _____, *Sodomy And The Lash* (3)
- 28+8D Try one Yes LP remixed by member of X-Ray Spex (4-7)

ANSWERS: TAKE 209

ACROSS

- 1 The Man Upstairs, 9+25D The Basement Tapes, 10+4D+9D The Needle And The Damage Done, 11 Eels, 13+26D Back On Top, 16 Aswad, 18+17D Willie

Dixon, 19+22A Ian Dury, 20

Gas, 23 Stein, 24 Elton John, 27 Dreams, 30 Opposites, 33+21A You Me At Six, 34 Essex, 35 Pod, 36 New.

DOWN

- 2 Huey Lewis, 3+12A Meat Loaf, 5+23D Prefab Sprout,

6 Toto, 7 Is That Love, 8 See,

14 Keep On, 15 Bis, 18 Way, 20 Grin, 28 Amen, 29 Snow, 31 Sex, 32 Syd.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Man In A Shed"

XWORD COMPILED BY:

Trevor Hungerford

UNCUT

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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Bonnie 'Prince' Billy

Will Oldham's favourite records. Involves bridesmaids, The Cranberries, whipped cream...

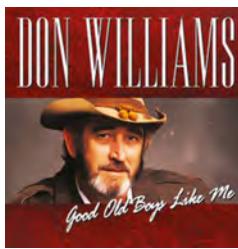


The song that got me into punk

Ramones

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow 1977

This was in my older brother's record collection. When I was a little kid I was deep into things like Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly, so the Ramones were a nice bridge from one kind of music to another. This song is the closest thing to a ballad on *Rocket To Russia*, and it's very fatalistic. On the lyric sheet, the first line of the song is "Oh oh oh, oh oh oh, I love you". All those 'oh's' counted as a lyric, and that impressed me.



A song that changed my mind about country

Don Williams

Good Old Boys Like Me 1980

His big popularity was when country radio was not something I had patience for. But I went back to this years later and realised what heavy lyrics it has: "I can still hear the soft Southern winds in the live oak trees/And those Williams boys they still mean a lot to me, Hank and Tennessee." It's nice that, in the '80s, songwriter Bob McDill, and Don Williams were pushing Tennessee Williams' legacy into the brains of country music listeners.

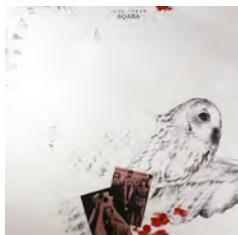


An album that taught me about production

The Cranberries

No Need To Argue 1994

In '96, I went to a disco in Guadalajara, where they played "Zombie". Seeing these Mexican youths dancing to an Irish, quasi-political folk-rock song... I liked it! I bought the album and listened to it for a year! Dolores O'Riordan had a sense of self-importance that the producer, Stephen Street, was able to use to strong effect, a beautiful combination of naivety and overconfidence. It helped me understand what a producer's role could be.



A track that taught me about gender in song

June Tabor

Where Are You Tonight? 1988

A contemporary composition, one of the most beautiful performances I'm aware of. The gender role is ambiguous, which can often give a song more weight – if it's powerful and the gender role is switched, it doesn't make you think this woman is singing about a homosexual relationship, you think, oh, this is about the emotion. She doesn't care about any of that, all she cares about is how powerful what she's singing is.

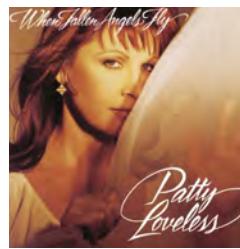


A song by someone I've always admired

Samhain

All Hell 1985

When I started to listen to the music Glenn Danzig was responsible for, the Misfits were gone and he'd formed Samhain. On their second EP, they did the Misfits' "All Hell Breaks Loose", but they called it "All Hell" and rearranged it. It was fascinating that he was making this new project, but finding ways of bringing songs from an earlier thing into it. He's always been somebody I've admired – a beautiful force in music.

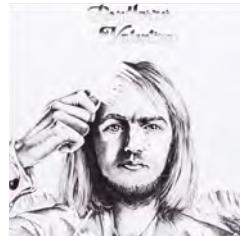


A song that gives me goosebumps

Patty Loveless

You Don't Even Know Who I Am 1994

One of the deeper, more resonant songs that have been popular country music hits. It got me listening to Patty Loveless obsessively. The song is a great mini-drama, and the chorus gets huge and bombastic... it's just chilling. Patty isn't the first-person narrator in the song, which is kind of amazing... she tells the woman's side of the story and then the man's side of the story, and at neither point is she either one of those people.



The song that helped me through touring

Roy Harper

I'll See You Again 1974

Around 2002, I got into a lot of Roy Harper's music, but I kept going back to this song. I just could listen to it over and over again. There's always a lot of confusion and stress around touring, and I was finding that the way to clear my head would be to buy a can of whipped cream, sit in my car and let it settle, and then take a big hit of the nitrous out of the can and play "I'll See You Again" on the car stereo.



An erotic anthem for hormonal adolescents

The Fall

An Older Lover, Etc. 1981

When I was an early teenager, this got me... a very erotic song. It makes me think of Anne Bancroft in *The Graduate*, or of one of my aunt's bridesmaids, who'd clench me to her ample breast not knowing – or knowing – the power she held over me. It's got a vicious slow burn that resembles the sensations that come with lust after someone. If you're a young nerd with hormones raging, there's no better anthem than this.

Bonnie 'Prince' Billy's latest LP, *Singer's Grave A Sea Of Tongues*, is out now on Domino. He plays London St John-at-Hackney Church on November 18 and 19.



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