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Norman Blake

# Are we rolling?



The Making Of Robert Wyatt's "I'm A Believer" feature in this month's issue reminds me that when it was released in September, 1974, I made it Single Of The Week during a brief but lively stint as *Melody Maker*'s singles reviewer. For as long as anyone could remember, *MM*'s singles column had been written by ever-cheerful Chris Welch. Ever since I've been reading *MM*, Chris' bright round face has beamed from the page, a clearly likeable fellow whose reviews generally reflected his bounteous good humour and generously affable outlook. He seemed to like virtually everything he listened to, barely said a bad word about any of the records that came his way. But, back in 1974, not long after I'm taken on as a junior reporter on *MM*, it's deemed time to 'liven up' the singles page and I'm handed the gig, someone at the top end of the staff block making the not unfair point that since I have an increasingly noisy opinion about everything I should put my mouthy bluster to some practical use.

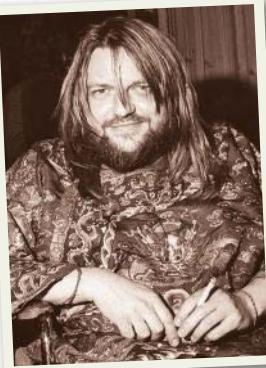
Everything seems to be going reasonably swimmingly in my new role until I review the new Wizzard single, about which I'm unkind enough for Roy Wood's manager to call me up in wrathful mood. I don't catch his name because this tough-talking windbag's threatening to have every bone in my body broken, my throat cut and my body burned and dumped in an alley somewhere, all which seems an implausible overreaction to a bad review. Who is this bullying wanker?

From his heavy breathing, he sounds like he's on his way to a cerebral explosion that will leave him with not much more to do for the rest of his life than stare at a wall and wonder where his slippers are. I suggest he thinks about calming down a bit, which sets him off again. "CALM fucking DOWN!" he screams. "Do you know who you're fucking talking to, pretty boy?" I don't, which annoys him even more, so he tells me, and things get heated again and we're both swearing at each other. This attracts the attention of a passing Chris Welch, who mimes the question: who are you talking to? I tell him it's some onerous twat called Don

Arden, who's threatening to have me so badly beaten up I'll never walk again. Chris pales, beckons *MM* assistant editor Mick Watts and news editor Rob Partridge, both of whom flinch when Chris tells them I've just told this Don Arden bloke to get fucked, Mick making it clear that I should put the phone down now. He's clearly taking this a lot more seriously than I am, until Rob gets out Don Arden's file with a piece Rob has written about him, headlined 'THE HIT MAN', Don turning out to be an old-school music biz leg-breaker with a history of violence, intimidation and frankly wholesale corruption, who once hung impresario Robert Stigwood out of a first-floor window in a managerial dispute over the Small Faces. Mick quickly convenes a meeting, COBRA-style, to devise an appropriate strategic response to Don's threats, which I now realise are not quite as empty as I'd previously imagined. Said plans involve me taking an extended break from the singles column, which is eventually handed over to folk correspondent Colin Irwin.

We don't hear from Don again, although I spend an uncomfortable hour a year later interviewing actor David Carradine, worldwide star of the *Kung Fu* TV series, who's recorded an album called *Grasshopper* for Arden's Jet label. At the last moment, the location of the interview moves from Carradine's central London hotel to Jet's HQ in Wimbledon, where we convene in Don's office. Don's thankfully absent, no doubt on dubious business elsewhere. Carradine sits at Don's desk, me opposite, staring not at Carradine but the huge framed photograph of Don on the wall behind him, in which Don's dressed in a chalk-striped suit, pointing either a shotgun or a machine gun at the camera. This makes me nervous enough to seem so distracted that Carradine asks eventually if I'm on drugs, which for a change I'm not, mainly because as I tell him, I don't have any. "Let's go find some then," Carradine beams, which seemed a good idea at the time. Enjoy the issue.

Robert Wyatt:  
from Matching  
Mole to  
Monkees...



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# INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT  
Featuring BOB DYLAN ON TOUR | JOHN SINCLAIR | KRAFTWERK

# “As you get older, you hone your craft...”

**JOHN MAYALL, kingmaker of the British blues boom, turns 80 and returns to the hard road**

“*I*t's a hard road 'til I die,” sang John Mayall back in 1967 in the early days of an epic career. The cover of *A Hard Road* was a Mayall painting, him looming largest in a classic Bluesbreakers lineup that also featured Peter Green, John McVie and Aynsley Dunbar.

Mayall's had his share of trials – like watching his house burn down and several marriages dissolve – but, as he celebrates his 80th birthday, life hasn't worked out too hard for him. Down the years he's played his blues unflaggingly, singing in that fierce, sufferin' falsetto. As he enters his ninth decade, he's in chipper shape, the sire of 57 albums, six children and six grandchildren.

To commemorate that 80th birthday last November, Mayall announced a 67-date world tour in support of a new album, *A Special Life*. A formidable undertaking for an old fella? Speaking to *Uncut* from California, his plain Manc tones still without a mid-Atlantic tinge, Mayall is unfazed.

“People keep saying how impressive it is to go back on the road, but it's old hat for me. It's what I do for a living. We've arranged it so there aren't too many days off. That way you get into the rhythm of the road, and when you add it up it's still a third of the year on tour, two thirds at home. It's always a treat to get out there, perform and meet people. In many ways I feel better equipped to play – as you get older, you hone your craft.”

The unquestioned Godfather of British blues,

Mayall's groups have been what Eric Clapton, one student, called “a finishing school for musicians”. You might imagine that his favourite Bluesbreakers lineup could have been the one that featured Clapton and Jack Bruce; or the one which incubated the original Fleetwood Mac lineup, as home for Peter Green, Mick Fleetwood and John McVie. The two years when he played alongside Mick Taylor, maybe? Or the Bluesbreakers that absorbed two key players – Harvey Mandel and Larry Taylor – from a splintering Canned Heat? Mayall, though, is unabashed.

“This is the best band I've ever had [Rocky Athas, Greg Rzab, Jay Davenport], which is why we can cut an album like *A Special Life* in three days. You can tell a good lineup if they get along. It's essential the vibe is good because that's what you bring to the audience. I liked *Along For The Ride* [2001], for which I rounded up 24 people: Otis Rush, Billy Preston, Billy Gibbons... there was almost no-one missing.

“I put as many blues things as possible on the new record, songs by Sonny Landreth, Jimmy Reed, Jimmy McCracklin, and Albert King's 'Flooding In California', which I first heard on the radio. There's a number by [zydeco accordionist] Clifton Chenier featuring his son, CJ Chenier, who flew in from New Orleans. There is an original, 'Heartache', from the first album I ever recorded in 1965.”





No sleep 'til Hamburg (l-r):  
Carl Wayne, Steve Winwood,  
Jimi Hendrix, John Mayall and  
Eric Burdon, Munich, 1968

→ The album in question is *John Mayall Plays John Mayall*, recorded live at London's Klook's Kleek. Within a year Mayall had his breakthrough with the *Blues Breakers* album, and was soon part of the 'British Invasion' of the States, where they instantly took to the craggy showman.

"It was an exciting time, very stimulating – there was this discovery of American blues, and people wanted to hear us," he says. "It was wearing, as we were playing seven gigs a week, more if you count doubles. When I started I never dreamed of getting to America. The Beatles were the first band to break there, then the Stones, then Cream. It was a gradual transition, though it seemed a very short time."

I ask about *Uncut's* classic shot from the time, with Mayall alongside Jimi Hendrix, Eric Burdon, Steve Winwood and Carl Wayne in Munich in 1968.

"It was a one-off gig, which was unusual. A German promoter chartered a plane for us, something that had never happened before. We all knew each other, so it was no big deal, but it was a good party."

Like his graduates in Fleetwood Mac, Mayall eventually settled in California.

"It was magic – I'd spent my life addicted to American movies and music, but it wasn't part of my lifestyle. I stayed at Frank Zappa's house for a short time, then Elmer Valentine, owner of the Whisky A Go Go, found me a house, which I bought for \$36,000, and where I lived until it burned

John Mayall in Tarrytown, NY, February 7, 2013



down in 1978 – 36 houses went in that fire. I lost everything. It took a couple of years to rebuild. Later I moved to the suburbs, where I still live."

Is it easier to grow old as a bluesman, John Lee Hooker-style, than as a rocker?

"I can't speak for others, but as a bluesman you reach a maturity. We are lucky, we have an audience. You can't just rest on your laurels, you can't take your audience for granted, it's no use just playing old stuff. I mix it up."

Is his road rigour down to his time in the army, his National Service?

"I was always an organised person. The big difference is that in the army you have to do as you're told!"

And who does Mayall listen to now?

"Art Blakey, Horace Silver, and funky organ players from what I consider the golden age of jazz. And there is always the blues." NEIL SPENCER

**John Mayall's 80th birthday tour arrives at London Ronnie Scott's on April 19**



Icebreaker: "Kraftwerk are the other side of the coin to Eno's ambient music..."

HAND-KRAFTED

## We aren't the robots!

**What if Kraftwerk never went electronic? ICEBREAKER's new show brings an alternative future to life**

**A** N INTERESTING PARLOUR game for you: what if Kraftwerk never went electric? Picture it: Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider meet at Düsseldorf's Robert Schumann Conservatorium in the late 1960s, but instead of focusing on the electro-acoustic experiments of Stockhausen, they decide to pioneer a new Germanic school of modern composition. Following a few years honing their craft on the fringes of the European new music scene, they tour the world's concert halls with *Autobahn*, a classical piece themed around the wonders of Germany's motorway system, played on guitar, sax, accordion, and Schneider's signature flute.

It's not quite inventing electronic music as we know it, but it's some testament to Kraftwerk that even unplugged, they sound like they'd be worth a listen. Nor do we need to enter a parallel universe to find out roughly how this might sound, as Kraftwerk Uncovered – A Future Past tours the UK in late January and early February. A joint venture by 12-piece orchestra Icebreaker and London's Science Museum, it will see the music of Kraftwerk reinterpreted by German composer J Peter Schwalm. The idea grew out of Icebreaker's successful acoustic interpretation of Brian Eno's 1983 album *Apollo*, performed at the Science Museum in 2009. "Kraftwerk represents, if you like, the other pole of '70s and early '80s electronic music – the other side of the coin to Eno's ambient music," says Icebreaker's James Poke. "We felt if we really wanted to continue

with this theme, Kraftwerk had to be the one."

Schwalm seemed like a natural fit for the project. He'd collaborated with Eno, who recommended him; he knew his classical music, but also modern electronic processing. One issue: "I'm not particularly a Kraftwerk fan," he says, "although of course I know their importance and I grew up with this music. I said, I'll do it if I can have complete freedom. And they said yes."

The project immediately raised questions. "How do you justify playing this minimal electronic music with 12 instruments?" ponders Schwalm. His idea was to use Kraftwerk's music merely as a jump-off point, reinterpreting their back catalogue with modern techniques. "My first approach was to do a remix of the original material. I did some live sampling, chopped it up and made it into loops, looking for bits and pieces that I couldn't think of before. It created something I couldn't come up with pen and notepaper."

Kraftwerk Uncovered will feature interpretations of Hütter/Schneider compositions from albums up to '81's *Computer World*, although Schwalm is particularly enthused by the prospect of reworking very early material, such as "Tanzmusik" from 1973's

officially disowned *Ralf & Florian*. "That very early music falls closer to the Krautrock sound, which is of great interest to me," he says. "I was born in 1970, and it feels to me like a nice response to what was playing on the radio at the time, a lot of American music... a very German sound, in a way."

The performance will also be accompanied by filmed material from artists Sophie Clements and Toby Cornish. Shot in Germany's Ruhr area, it couldn't be more different from the utopian visions of modernity Kraftwerk projected at London's Tate Modern last year. "It's an area that was destroyed during the war and rebuilt in the '50s," says Schwalm. "It is quite ugly, functional. There is sadness there. But there is the sense this is both the past, and a future world."

For anyone with the wrong idea, Schwalm is keen to point out that acoustic doesn't mean unamplified.

"I don't have to write very soft, orchestral music," he laughs. "I can put some energy into it. We can really make it loud!"

LOUIS PATTISON



**Kraftwerk Uncovered can be seen at London Science Museum (Jan 24), Liverpool Philharmonic (Feb 5), Manchester Royal Northern College Of Music (6), Birmingham Town Hall (8) and Nottingham Lakeside Arts Centre (12)**

# IDON'T BELIEVE YOU!

Bob Dylan played 59 different songs during his 85 live shows in 2013. Here they are...

- 83 Times All Along The Watchtower
- 83 Things Have Changed
- 83 Tangled Up In Blue
- 83 Soon After Midnight
- 82 Beyond Here Lies Nothin'
- 81 High Water (For Charlie Patton)
- 78 Love Sick
- 78 Early Roman Kings
- 60 Simple Twist Of Fate
- 60 She Belongs To Me
- 60 Duquesne Whistle
- 56 Spirit On The Water
- 56 Pay In Blood
- 56 What Good Am I?
- 55 Scarlet Town
- 51 Blind Willie McTell
- 44 Blowin' In The Wind
- 37 Ballad Of A Thin Man
- 34 Summer Days
- 33 Forgetful Heart
- 31 Waiting For You
- 24 A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall
- 24 Visions Of Johanna
- 22 Thunder On The Mountain
- 5 Desolation Row
- 4 The Weight (Robbie Robertson)
- 3 Highway 61 Revisited
- 2 Roll On John
- 2 Make You Feel My Love
- 2 Ain't Talkin'
- 2 Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues
- 2 Honest With Me
- 2 It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)
- 2 Shooting Star
- 1 Like A Rolling Stone
- 1 Rollin' And Tumblin'
- 1 Girl From The North Country
- 1 Tweedle Dee & Tweedle Dum
- 1 Watching The River Flow
- 1 The Levee's Gonna Break
- 1 Man In The Long Black Coat
- 1 Don't Think Twice, It's All Right
- 1 It Ain't Me, Babe
- 1 Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat
- 1 When The Deal Goes Down
- 1 Rainy Day Women #12 & 35
- 1 Under The Red Sky
- 1 I Don't Believe You
- 1 Positively 4th Street
- 1 Every Grain Of Sand
- 1 Boots Of Spanish Leather
- 1 Most Likely You Go Your Way
- 1 Queen Jane Approximately
- 1 Let Your Light Shine On Me (Johnson)
- 1 Twelve Gates To The City (trad.)
- 1 Cry A While
- 1 1952 Vincent Black Lightning (Thompson)
- 1 Susie Baby (Bobby Vee)
- 1 Workingman's Blues #2

Statistics compiled by members of the expectingrain.com discussion forums

Dylan on his last night at London's Royal Albert Hall, November 28, 2013



# Things have changed...

## DYLAN's 2013 tour anatomised, as *Tempest* songs blow away the '60s classics

**T**CAN TELL YOU every song he's going to play in the second half. I've got the setlist printed off in my pocket. Look!"

The man waving the sheet of paper during Bob Dylan's third and final gig in Glasgow for 2013 didn't look happy. Neither had the man seething in the stalls the night before: "Completely predictable. This is like some assembly-line product!"

There's a lot to say about the remarkable run of shows Dylan performed across Britain in November. But, among the hardcore who followed the tour around the UK, talk often returned to this topic: night after night, he was playing the same songs, in exactly the same sequence.

For casual observers, this might not seem such a big deal. Dylan, though, is a special case. Across the past two decades, he has made a point of mixing it up, raiding his songbook – and other people's – to offer notably different sets, show to show. But for his nine British dates, he kept rolling out that same 19-song setlist, with only two small, if significant changes.

Even more striking than the set's fixed nature, however, was that of those 19, only six were written before 1997, and only three dated from the hallowed 1960s. It was a defiant statement. Whole books of the Dylan Bible were tossed away as he focused on his 21st-Century blues, with latest album *Tempest* dominating (the last time Dylan toured the UK on the back of a new release, 2009's *Together Through Life*, he didn't play a single song from it).

The "static" set also dominated on US outings. When the European tour commenced in Oslo in October, the setlist was practically set in stone. But then, across two nights in Rome, Dylan ripped it up, playing different sets each night, both

leaning heavily on the 1960s – before returning to the same previous set.

Something was happening. But what? The Rome shows coincided with the release of his *Complete Album Collection, Vol. 1*, and it's possible to conclude they were intended as showcases to boost the boxset. A more intriguing speculation is that Dylan chose to mix it up in Rome just to demonstrate that he could do it if he wanted; thereby, perversely, underlining that it was precisely what he wasn't doing.

It's a fool's errand attempting to guess what Dylan is thinking. But a reasonable conclusion is that the songs he played this year were the songs he wanted us to hear – and also, to hear just how he and his band played them. Melded by the road, this is one of the best groups he's ever had. Watching them dig into this territory night after night, it became clear the set was no assembly-line product. Improvisations opened up. The songs were tested.

That first night in London and the last night in Blackpool saw the only changes to the UK set, as regular closer "Blowin' In The Wind" was replaced by the first performances of *Tempest*'s Lennon tribute, "Roll On John" – Dylan apparently choosing to debut the song in locations loosely suggested by "A Day In The Life".

The song had changed from *Tempest*. Lyrics were rewritten, but, more striking, as pedal-steel ghosted around the song, and Dylan teased a new melody from his piano, was how it sounded warmer, more achingly alive than on record.

Dylan once chased "that thin, wild mercury sound". The sound of 2013 was thicker, more golden, but just as fluid. He did the same thing night after night, and it was like seeing him doing something new. Again. *DAMIEN LOVE*

## A QUICK ONE

► The subject of our next *Uncut Ultimate Music Guide* is Lou Reed. The 148-page mag features the usual formula: brand new essays on every Lou album, alongside notably volatile interviews from the *NME* and *Melody Maker* archives. Find it in UK shops from January 16.

► While Neil Young's current manoeuvres appear to be solo-based, it seems as if he has unfinished business with Crazy Horse, too, following last summer's cancelled shows. With Poncho's injured hand now fully operational again, the band play London Hyde Park on July 12 (support acts include The National, Phosphorescent and Caitlin Rose). More dates are expected.

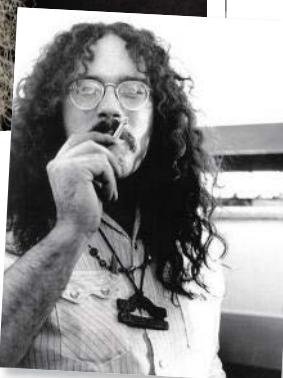
► In the wake of their autumn reunion shows, The Replacements seem to be gearing up for further activity. Nothing concrete as yet, but it may be wise to keep a check on their brand new website, [www.thereplacementsofficial.com](http://www.thereplacementsofficial.com)

► One of *Uncut's* favourite lost albums has just made a welcome return to circulation. David Ackles' self-titled debut from 1968 has been reissued by International Feel Records, with five unreleased tracks on the CD. Out now.

► Finally, the usual heartfelt plug for [www.uncut.co.uk](http://www.uncut.co.uk), where we're now publishing more daily news stories, reviews, features and blogs than ever before.



Still high time: John Sinclair today, and right, in the '60s



# Monk (sonically speaking)

MC5 ringmaster JOHN SINCLAIR's poetic tribute to Thelonious Monk. Co-starring John and Yoko...

John Sinclair, former manager of the MC5, founder of the White Panther Party and psychedelic revolutionary (retired), takes a deep drag and laughs like a cartoon dog as he ponders the final track of his latest album, *Mohawk*. "It's a semi-underground recording," he says of "Voices From The Void", which features Sinclair in dazed, ecstatic telephone conversation with John Lennon and Yoko Ono in 1972. Sinclair had just come out of jail, and Lennon and Ono

were instrumental in his release, organising the John Sinclair Freedom Rally concert to raise awareness of his outrageous 10-year sentence.

"I first heard it in the late '90s," he recalls. "I had no idea it existed but, if you've been around as long as me, weird things crop up." And then he laughs, hur, hur, hur, sounding much like he did on "Voices From The Void", an infectious laugh, relishing his own continued existence at 72.

The rest of *Mohawk* was recorded in 2013 in

Amsterdam, a city Sinclair likes to "spend as much time in as possible. Coming from Detroit, I like that nobody is armed and the police are not a presence in your life. I hate being back in America – everything costs too much, it's ugly, nobody has any taste and the music sucks. Amsterdam is very relaxed. You can go to a coffee shop and smoke with your friends. That to me is the height of civilisation. As long as there's some good music."

For Sinclair, that often means jazz, even if he is still best known for his work with the MC5. Like many from the 1960s counterculture, Sinclair was birthed at the twin founts of jazz and poetry via the Beats. He edited poetry magazines in the '60s and later introduced the MC5 to Sun Ra and Coltrane. Fittingly, *Mohawk* fuses these two obsessions, featuring Sinclair's witty poems about Thelonious Monk against a jazzy backdrop. "It started in 1982 with a book of verse I wrote called *Thelonious: A Book Of Monk* after he passed away," he says. "I decided to listen to everything he'd recorded in chronological sequence – real mental-patient collector activity, hur hur hur."

Sinclair next began writing poems based on Monk's compositions. Ten have now been set to music by Sinclair's friend Steve The Fly, the first of a proposed four-album set. "It will be divided into the four phases of Monk's recording career – Blue Note, Prestige, Riverside, Columbia," says Sinclair. "It's not about Monk, it's inspired by his work and life. Combining jazz and poetry is a challenge: first you have to write a good poem, that's the hardest part. Then I immerse myself in music, because the rhythm of the poem should match the composition of the song it's inspired by."

Sinclair's life is still guided by music. He is a keen DJ, recording a couple of hours of programming each night on his internet station, Radio Free Amsterdam (slogan "Blues, jazz and reefer"). "It's like Bob Dylan, but on a smaller budget," he laughs. "He had a team of 35 but I do it all myself. When I stay with friends I loot their record collection and stick the disc into my hard drive. The vastness of the digital musical archive is one of the greatest things of modern life. Playing a record was a pain in the ass, I'll never have to get up to turn one over again." **PETER WATTS**

*John Sinclair's Mohawk* is out on March 24 on Iron Man



## AND ON PERCUSSION...

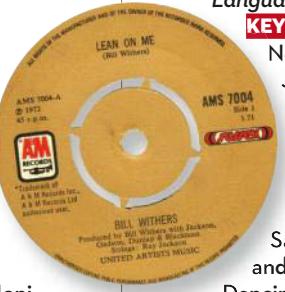
### UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

► Along with Carole Kaye, Bobbie Hall was one of the few '60s female session musicians in a male-dominated workplace. Percussionist Hall, from Detroit, played uncredited on many Motown recordings and recorded several albums with Bill Withers. She also went on tour with Bob Dylan in 1978 and appeared on his *Street Legal* album, toured with Stevie Nicks and played congas on Tom Waits' *Blue Valentine* album. She has also recorded with Randy Newman, Rod Stewart, The Doors, Joni Mitchell, Donovan, The Temptations and

## BOBBIE HALL

Aretha Franklin. Hall has released one instrumental album of her own, called *Body Language For Lovers* (1977).

**KEY SESSIONS:** Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" and "Lean On Me", Janis Joplin's "Me And Bobby McGee", Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On and Let's Get It On", Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, Tom Petty's "Don't Come Round Here No More", Leo Sayer's "When I Need You" and "You Make Me Feel Like Dancing", and Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Saturday Night Special". **PHIL KING**



## REAL ESTATE

Atlas Domino

A third set of suburban reveries from New Jersey's magisterial janglers. *Felt* and *Feelies* fans are especially recommended to place their orders.

## ANGEL OLSEN

Burn Your Fire For No Witness

JAGJAGUWAR

Second album confirms the St Louis singer-songwriter's arrival as a major new voice, equal parts Patti Smith, Kim Deal, Leonard Cohen and Loretta Lynn.

## LINDA PERHACS

The Soul Of All Natural Things

ASTHMATIC KITTY

The lost lady of Topanga Canyon belatedly files her second New Age folk classic, after 44 years distracted by the day job as a dental hygienist.

## TINARIWEN Emmaar Pias

The Tuareg collective record outside of Mali for the first time, fetching up at Joshua Tree for those home-from-home desert vibes.

## METRONOMY

Love Letters BECAUSE

Joseph Mount's follow-up to 2011's delightful *The English Riviera*. Involves plaintive minimalism, analogue electro and a killer Motown homage.



Metronomy

## NATALIE PRASS

If You Believe In Me

SPACEBOMB The standout from *A Spacebomb Family Album*, sampling Matthew E White's label roster: lavish country-soul from Nashville. One for 2014.

## THEE OH SEES

Singles Collection Volume 3 CASTLEFACE

Careering in the slipstream of 2013's mighty *Floating Coffin*, a grab-bag of rare and rabid hypno-garage singles.

## THE NEW BUMS

Voices In A Rented Room DRAG CITY

Fresh from the brief *Comets On Fire* reunion, Ben 'Six Organs' Chasny hooks up with Donovan Quinn for a series of dissolute, Nikki Sudden-style acoustic sketches.

## BRIGITTE FONTAINE

Est... Folle SUPERIOR VIADUCT

Ravishing avant-chanson reissued from 1968, as the French legend works with the great Gainsbourg arranger, Jean-Claude Vannier.

## BONNIE "PRINCE" BILLY

Black Captain (Revised For Peter Willcox)

YOUTUBE

Will Oldham revisits the *Wolfroy Goes To Town* track, dedicated to the Greenpeace captain detained by the Russians.

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I'M NEW HERE

# JAMES VINCENT McMORROW

**Recommended this month: Dublin's fast-rising falsetto, marooned on a pecan farm in Texas!**

**I**'ve never understood the attraction of making antique-sounding records," says the Dublin singer-songwriter James Vincent McMorrow. "I like sounds that are as forward-thinking as possible."

This might seem surprising given the lo-fi, round-the-campfire vibe of McMorrow's 2010 debut *Early In The Morning*. Self-financed and released with little fanfare, the album subsequently crept up the Irish iTunes charts to No 1, and was shortlisted for the Choice Music Prize, Ireland's answer to the Mercury Prize.

"I think because I had a guitar and a beard I was lumped into a folk category, which is understandable. At that point I was more fearful about the music I was making. Musicians can be a fickle breed and tend to make music that fits in with what's around them. But with my new album I decided to throw myself into my musical passions full-throttle. I wanted to record the sounds that I hear in my head."

Those sounds have less to do with old-time folk and more to do with classic R&B, albeit reinvented for the 21st-Century. "When I was growing up I was all about Donny Hathaway and The Neptunes," McMorrow explains. "They were the ones that resonated. Right now I'm listening to Drake and Flying Lotus. A lot of people who liked the first album will probably be surprised by that, but I like to think it won't put them off."

While *Post Tropical* retains the simplicity and the intimacy of its predecessor, it comes with discernibly smoother edges, with gentle flourishes of organ and brass replacing the acoustic

strumming. This new soulful direction – the second Bon Iver album would be a good comparison – also proves a fitting framework for McMorrow's fragile, falsetto croon that, it turns out, was a huge source of discomfort while he was growing up.

"It was pretty uncontrollable back then and I was a shy kid. When I went to choir class they were, like, 'You can't sing like that.' I wouldn't say it scarred me for life, but for a long time I didn't want to sing out loud. But I remember reading a Quincy Jones autobiography and how he brought in vocal coaches to help Michael Jackson hit the high notes. I realised these things require perseverance and hard work."

McMorrow's first album was made under his own steam in an abandoned house by the Irish Sea. He had tried his luck with major labels but had been met with "failure and closed doors, so I went off and did it by myself". For *Post Tropical*, recording took place in a studio in the middle of a pecan farm in Texas, not far from the Mexican border. "Yeah, I know it sounds ridiculous," he laughs. "Why on earth would anyone make music on a pecan farm? But I wanted to take myself out of my comfort zone and this was a really extraordinary environment. They flood the fields every two weeks, so you wake up and you're suddenly on an island. There's this sense of being marooned with your own music, which to my mind is no bad thing." **FIONA STURGES**

*Post Tropical* is out on Believe on Jan 13. A UK tour begins at Manchester Cathedral on Jan 24

## I'M YOUR FAN

**"When we were on the road with James, I would often sit side stage and watch. You can't help but be transported when you hear him."**

**Joy Williams,  
The Civil Wars**



# Smokey Robinson

Interview:  
John Lewis

**The Motown Miracle on The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder, Berry Gordy, and teeing off with Marvin Gaye: "I beat him every time! He was a lousy golfer!"**

**T**HE FIRST THING you notice about Smokey Robinson is how young he looks. A sprightly 73-year-old, he comes bouncing at you with a big bear hug, a full head of hair, luminous skin and a pair of coruscating green eyes. "I still work out," he explains. "I do yoga, I play golf, I sometimes shoot some basketball. And it helps that I don't drink. Never touched any alcohol. Not even beer!"

Smokey is in London, ostensibly to do some work on his new album – a duets project whose final lineup is at present a closely guarded secret. But meanwhile, Smokey is more than happy to spend an hour reminiscing in the company of *Uncut*. In fact, he seems to have a story about everyone from Marvin Gaye ("guy was always late! Flights, recordings sessions, meetings, you name it – but we were brothers") to Berry Gordy ("my best friend! We speak on the phone nearly every day"), and President Obama ("the guy knows his Motown!"). He remembers an encounter with a pre-fame John Lennon, and reveals his unexpected connection to Dylan – another old friend.

And now, over to your questions...

## STAR QUESTION



### What did Smokey and the people of Detroit feel when Motown split for LA? Julian Temple

Well, for us who left for LA it meant sunshine! But yes, it was a huge change for Detroit. For Berry, it was inevitable that we had to leave for LA – I doubt if the label would have survived otherwise. But Detroit went through a downside after we left, and it's sad to think that we contributed to that. I was just there, a couple of weeks ago – I still have some family and a few friends who are still alive. And every couple of years I play the Symphony Hall, or the Detroit DTE Theatre, which used to be the Pine Knob. But yeah, Detroit is in a bad state. They're trying to do what they can to revitalise it – some of the auto manufacturers are talking about coming back. But Detroit is like many cities around the world. Post-

industrialisation is an epidemic, right? Have I seen Julien Temple's film about Detroit [*Requiem For Detroit?*] That's the BBC One, right? I'd love to. I've heard good things.

### Is it true that George Harrison got you into Transcendental Meditation? Amy Philips, Brooklyn

Kinda. I did practise TM for a moment. I did know George – he was a lovely guy – and I did talk to him about it, but the main impetus was my then wife, Claudette. She suggested we try it because The Beatles had enjoyed it, and said they'd become drug-free. So I did it for a while. When you start TM, you start practising yoga and stop eating meat. So I haven't eaten any red meat since '72. And I still do the yoga. I don't do the meditation anymore – I find the stretching and yoga has the same relaxing effect, without going through the motions of doing a mantra. Although, if the day allows it, I sometimes have my own private meditation time where I just sit and think.

## STAR QUESTION



### What do you remember of those infamous Monday-morning meetings at Motown we used to go to?

*Mickey Stevenson, Motown writer and producer*

Me and Mickey were there every Monday! These were where all the creative people came. There'd be Berry, Mickey Stevenson, myself, Norman Whitfield, Barrett Strong, Ron Miller, Lamont Dozier, Brian and Eddie Holland, all the writers and producers. Stevie [Wonder] too sometimes. We all gathered there in Berry Gordy's office to critique the previous week's work. If we thought something was nearly a hit, we'd suggest a new rhyme scheme, or a pay-off, or another chord change, or a melody, or a different arrangement. Everyone would get critiqued, no-one was immune. Right down to Berry Gordy, who was still writing and producing. It was an incredible masterclass. I was in an unusual position at Motown in that I was both a creative artist and vice-president. That's why I became a kind of liaison between artists and label. A lot of artists would benefit from being in that position, because you are privy to lots of things that most artists don't know about. You stop blaming the label if your record fails.

### How did you get into golf?

*Rod Easdale, Leeds*

I was introduced to golf in the '60s by Robert Gordy – that's Berry's

younger brother – and Harvey Fuqua, who was the guitarist in The Moonglows and who then worked at Motown. Then I started playing with Marvin [Gaye]. I still play a lot – my handicap is about 11, which isn't too bad. Occasionally I'll play with guys like Samuel L Jackson, Kenny G and Alice Cooper, who are all absolute fanatics. They play every day, no matter what the weather is, no matter where they are! Could I beat Marvin? Every time! He was a lousy golfer!

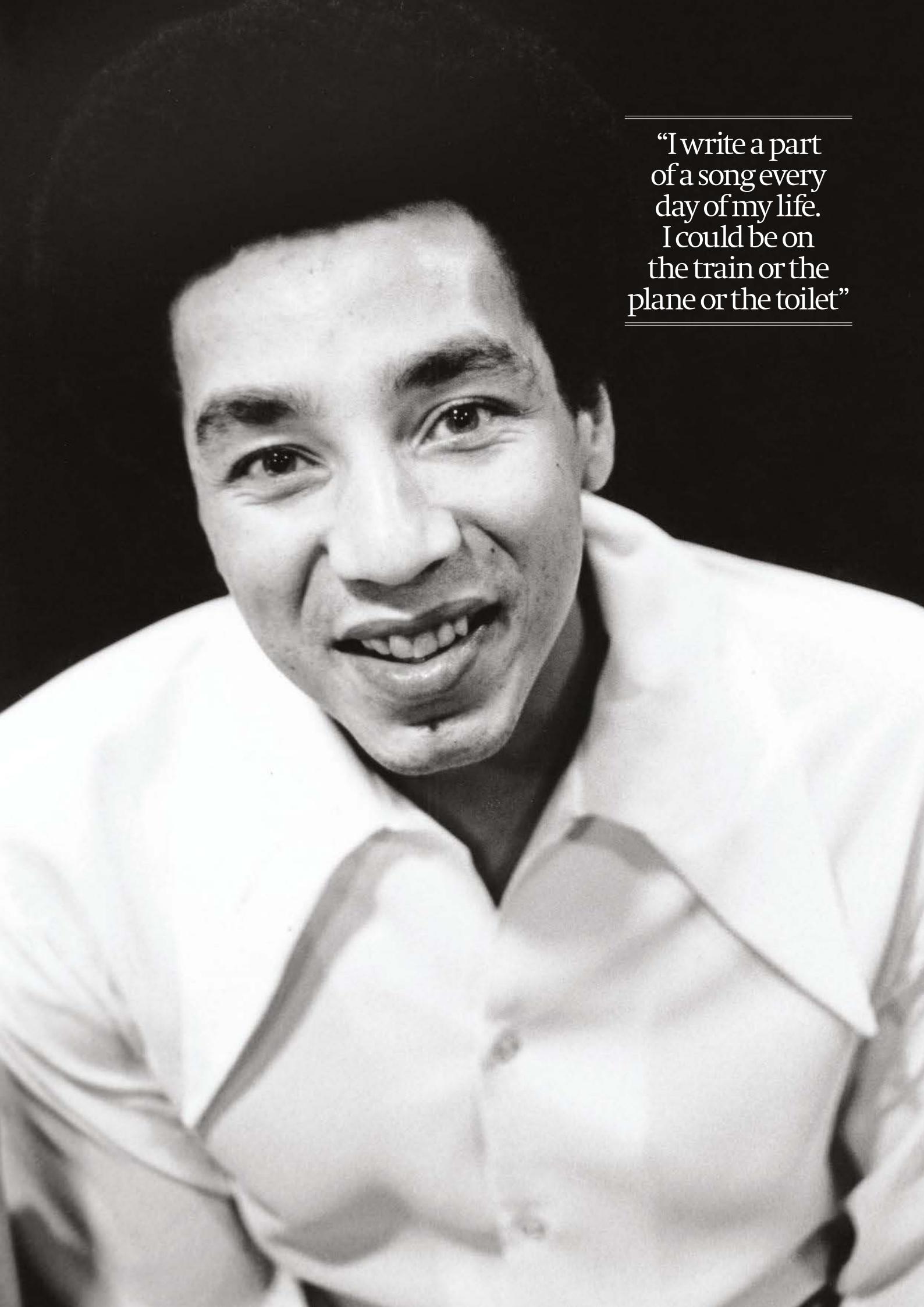
### What was it about the fabled Detroit studios that created that Motown sound?

*Ian Carter, London*

The original studio, Hitsville USA, is a museum now.

When Berry Gordy bought the building it was a house with a garage. We threw out the kitchen, put a big glass window in so we could see out to the garage, and the garage became the studio. People used to come from all over the world to recreate that magic, as if they could capture it in the air. But I'll let you into a secret – a lot of Motown hits weren't recorded there! A lot of the time our artists were on the road – in New York, LA, Chicago, Nashville, sometimes even in London – and we'd book studios in



A black and white close-up portrait of a man with short, light-colored hair. He is smiling broadly, showing his teeth, and looking slightly to his right. He is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, button-down shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

“I write a part  
of a song every  
day of my life.  
I could be on  
the train or the  
plane or the toilet”



**The Miracles, December 1964; below inset, with Stevie Wonder, 2009, and right inset, with Berry Gordy, 1981**

those cities. I'll defy anyone who claims he can identify the songs we recorded outside of Detroit. For me, the Motown sound is, and was, the artists, the musicians, the producers, the writers who created it. So if anyone tells you it was some wobbly tape track or busted valve amp, it's a myth!

**Bob Dylan described you as "America's Greatest Living Poet". What's your favourite Dylan song?**

**Alan Robinson, Whitley Bay**  
It's gotta be "Like A Rolling Stone". Great message, great melody, easy to remember. Dylan is a unique songwriter. I see him more as an orator than a singer. I've known Bob forever, better than 40 years. Bob's first wife, a girl called Sara Lownds, she and I had a class together in an acting school. Bob used to pick her up. At the end of each lesson we'd chat for a long time. He's a very funny, charming guy. Last time I saw him was when we did a thing at the White House [February 2010]. An evening of Civil Rights songs, with President Obama. I did "Abraham Martin & John", Bob performed a great version of "The Times They Are A-Changin'", as a kind of jazz waltz. We had a chance to talk and reminisce, which was beautiful.

**What is the easiest and hardest part of coming up with a song?**

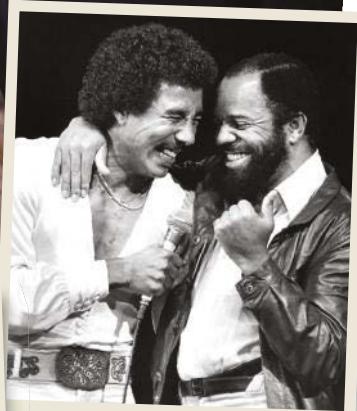
**Dan Clery, Essex**

The easiest thing for me is spotting a phrase or a riff and coming up with the initial idea. I'm not a writer who needs to isolate myself and go to the mountains for months. I write a part of a song every day of my life,



and I'm not exaggerating. It comes to me everywhere, and it's a blessing. I could be on the train or the plane or the toilet. I can get inspiration from conversation, from billboards, TV, books, films. Even a few things you've said to me, John, I could use them as the basis for a song! I usually call my voicemail when I get a good idea. The hard part is making it more than a bunch of words put together on a great beat. I always think songs should be timeless: it should have meant something 50 years ago, and it should mean something in 50 years' time. That's how I approach it.

**Which is best: The Beatles' version of "You Really Got A Hold On Me", or the Miracles' version of "Hey Jude"? *Dave Burns, York***  
You'll have to ask Paul McCartney! I met The Beatles before they were, you know, *The Beatles*, before they'd broken America. They were playing in a club in Liverpool when the Miracles and I were here in the



UK, doing a few dates and PR stuff. Maybe 1963? And the promoter took us to a little club called The White Elephant. They were playing there. They were already performing a version of my song, and John was asking me about this Miracles song and that Miracles song. I was very flattered he knew so much about my music. They were all lovely people, and all became my friends.

**STAR QUESTION**



**What do you love about Bessie Smith?**

**Wynton Marsalis**

Yes, Wynton is right, I've got a faint obsession with Bessie. She was one of those bar singers, no mic, just walking round a bar singing, with a piano tinkling away in the background. She was awesome. All her numbers are basically "somebody gone done me wrong" songs. I love that her voice is slightly androgynous – like mine, really! – which gives it an edge. And I love the fact I am privy to see her, on film, first hand. Imagine if we could watch Bach or Beethoven? Wouldn't that be amazing?

**Can you remember the first song you ever wrote?**

**Nina Goodall, Harrogate**

I was six years old. I was playing Uncle Remus in a school play. My teacher had written a melody on the piano. I asked if I could write some words to it, and she agreed. So I sang a song at the start and end of the play: "Goodnight little children/Uncle Remus said/Goodnight little children/It's time to go to bed". Ha ha! My mother was in the audience, clapping, with tears in her eyes, as if I was Schubert or Chopin or Irving Berlin! I always tried to write songs – making up words to myself, but this was the first one anyone other than my mom heard!

**What happened at your first audition with Berry Gordy?**

**Martin Ross, Stirling**

I had written about 100 songs that I thought were terrific. And I started singing them to him, and he started picking them apart. They were rhymed up pretty good, but the first verse had nothing to do with the second verse, and the second verse had nothing to do with the bridge. There were enough components for about three or four songs in each lyric. Berry pointed that out to me, and he started to mentor me. He had me listen more carefully to the radio, to how each song was formatted. That's the thing with Berry. He likes creative people, and wants to help. He was nurturing. He's not a dictator, he's a diplomat.

**Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson were both children when they started out at Motown – why do you think they both dealt with the transition to adult stardom so differently?**

**Kaz Bendall, Wimbledon**

I felt like a big brother to both of them. Stevie was incredibly independent, he'd write songs and record on his own, get about by himself. As I say, he's blind but he's not handicapped. He was 11 when I met him and already a developed songwriter. He says I mentored him, but I didn't have to do nothing! Michael's circumstances were totally different. He was in a group, overseen by his father, and he'd not experienced the independence that Stevie had. I'm much closer to Stevie than I ever was to Michael – I speak to Stevie a lot, but when Michael died, we'd not spoken for maybe 20 years. ☺

*Smokey Robinson's **Duets** album is released in the spring on Motown*

 **UNCUT.CO.UK**  
Log on to see who's in the hot-seat next month and to post your questions!

**"A song should have meant something 50 years ago, and it should mean something in 50 years' time"**

FREE  
CD!

You really got it  
tracks of 2014's best new music

# YOU REALLY GOT IT

Your guide to this month's free CD

## 1 DAMIEN JURADO

### Metallic Cloud

"Metallic Cloud" makes for a dramatic opening to the new year, showcasing as it does Jurado's transformation from horny-handed acoustic grafted to a grander, cosmically inclined balladeer. Jonathan Wilson would be a decent reference point – as, indeed, would the plangent solo work of Richard Swift, on hand here as co-producer.



Brendan Benson

suggests the band had yet another skilled country-rock artisan moving covertly in their midst.

## 2 DAVE EDMUNDS

### Halfway Down

The indefatigable Dave Edmunds returned to action at the end of 2013 with *...Again*, a collection of new tracks and rarities, mostly crafted solo with multiple overdubs. Here's a highlight: the Rockpile maestro's exuberant take on a zydeco stomper penned by Jim Lauderdale.

## 3 COURTNEY BARNETT

### Out Of The Woodwork

One of the best new artists we've come across over the past few months, Barnett is a 25-year-old from Melbourne with a droll way of spinning stories in song. Take "Out Of The Woodwork", a fine slouchalong that aligns Barnett with '90s kindred spirits like Liz Phair.

## 4 SHONNA TUCKER & EYE CANDY

### Since Jimmy Came

A busy month in *Uncut* for former members of the Drive-By Truckers, with a feature on Jason Isbell and an Americana Album Of The Month from his ex, Shonna Tucker. Tucker's songwriting contributions to the Truckers' mighty oeuvre were rare, but solo debut *A Tell All* – from which "Since Jimmy Came" is lifted



September Girls

## 7 THE NEW MENDICANTS

### Sarasota

More from Toronto, weirdly; the city Joe Pernice and Norman Blake now call home. "Sarasota", from their collaborative debut LP as The New Mendicants, is closer in spirit to The Pernice Bros than Teenage Fanclub. No mistaking the Norman Blake harmonies, though; lovely stuff.

## 8 SEPTEMBER GIRLS

### Green Eyed

"The Irish Bangles" is how *Uncut* categorises September Girls in the reviews section this month. The radiant "Green Eyed", though, suggests a band more aligned with the fuzzy rhapsodies of '80s British indie-pop – with specific reference to The Shop Assistants, perhaps – than the Paisley Underground.

## 9 BRENDAN BENSON

### I Don't Wanna See You Anymore

Over numerous solo albums and a couple of marquee hook-ups with Jack White in The Raconteurs, Benson's default mode has seemed to be a rich, melodically saturated powerpop. He can, though, turn his hand to more or less anything – in this case the brassy, showstopping soul last essayed on The Raconteurs' "Many Shades Of Black".

## 10 MARIJUANA DEATH-SQUADS

### Ewok Sadness

This month's obligatory Justin Vernon affiliates; the pungently named Minneapolis collective share personnel and a leader – Ryan Olson – with an old Vernon venture, Gayngs. The latter features on their *Oh My Sexy Lord* album, but isn't immediately apparent on the hyper-kinetic squeak'n'squall of "Ewok Sadness". "Marijuana Deathsquads is like a porcupine with a soft, rainbow underbelly that tastes like really good pizza if you lick it," they claim, intriguingly...

## 11 BOY & BEAR

### Southern Sun

A leisurely comeback from Oz's Boy & Bear, with a lush new sound that would've made them FM radio staples in the late '70s. You can also rank them as kin to Fleet Foxes (with

## 12 WHITE MANNA

### Ascension

Space-rock on spin cycle, loaded by CA's White Manna. This one comes from recent second LP *Dune Worship*, and bears the endearing hallmarks of a band who've wholly succumbed to the churn of Spacemen 3.

## 13 THE BAND OF HEATHENS

### Shotgun

Staunch Americana from the Austin band's fourth LP. Much of *Sunday Morning Record* betrays a not-unreasonable love of The Band. "Shotgun", though, captures the vibes of classic Jayhawks, too.

## 14 SAMANTHA CRAIN

### For The Miner

Shawnee, Oklahoma's Crain identifies the late Jason Molina as her greatest inspiration, something made explicit by "For The Miner" from her first European LP, *Kid Face*. A fine singer, somewhere between Neko Case and Alela Diane?

## 15 CIAN NUGENT & THE COSMOS

### Grass Above My Head

Guitarist Nugent and his Dublin cohorts' *Born With The Caul* would probably have figured in *Uncut*'s end of year chart had it arrived earlier in 2013. As it is, the gentle rag of "Grass..." is a persuasive intro to the psych-folk-rock within. Enjoy...

featuring brendan benson • dave edmunds •

damien jurado • shonna tucker • the new mendicants •

doug paisley • cian nugent & the cosmos and more...



# ALBUMS PREVIEW

# 2014

One features “astral tribal arpeggios”. Another contains a song begun in 1974 with Nick Drake. A third is a continuation of Dylan’s *Basement Tapes*. Welcome, then, to *Uncut*’s guide to the key albums of the next 12 months, as Robert Plant, Beck, David Byrne, Pete Townshend, Linda Perhacs and more tell all about their new records

## ROBERT PLANT

Title TBC | Label TBC | Released Spring 2014

Reunited with his old Strange Sensation band – reborn as the Sensational Shape Shifters – Plant reveals all about his latest marvellous musical adventures. “Trippy sonic palettes” are involved. Potential album titles include ‘Ramshackle’, ‘Slant’ and ‘Help Is On The Way’...

“**A**FTER ZEPPELIN III, I bought a place, a tumble down, which hadn’t been lived in for 25 years. I still have it. I can walk to Taliesin’s grave. It’s just a couple of ogham stones that have fallen down, covered in the turf. There’s a little crack in between, and every time I go by, there’s something stirring in there, maybe some crab apples or a little bit of this, a little bit of that. Maybe in our awful world of technology and speed, those places are a kind of oasis. That’s why I came back from America, and teamed back up with guitarist Justin Adams and the haphazard, topsy-turvy brotherhood that exists between us all in the Space Shifters band.

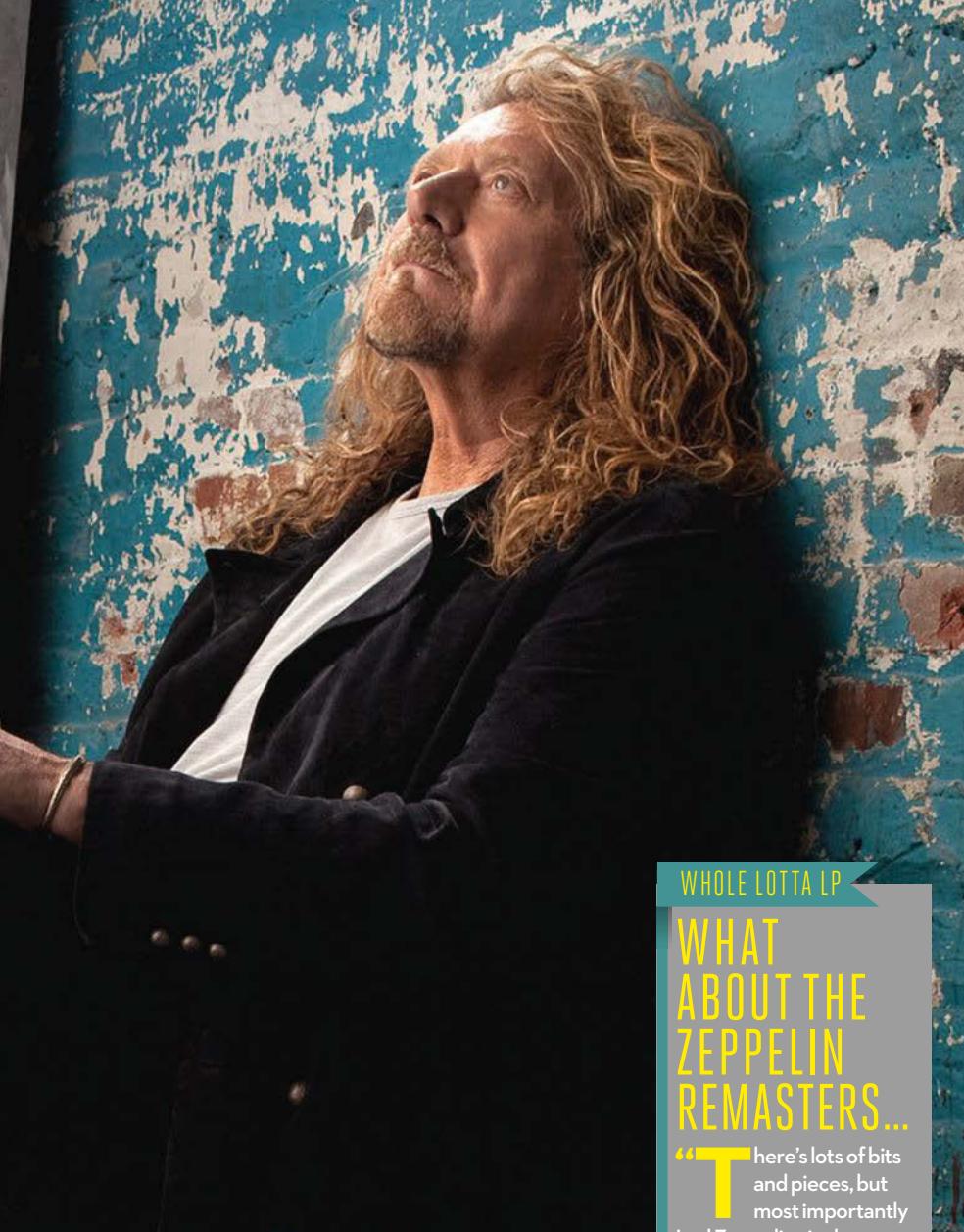
“It’s something to do with not running away any more. I got to the point about 10 years ago, where I was reeling with opportunities, and when Strange Sensation started to dissolve. I was drawn into working with T Bone Burnett and Alison Krauss, which was stunning. I learned a lot about myself as an entertainer and as a contributor to a project. The whole idea of sitting in alongside Alison and Patty Griffin and Buddy Miller, rather than being a frontman, was very invigorating. When people say, ‘Why don’t you stay with one thing?’, I’ve always wanted to move around and change things

about. Hence, I guess in the cut and thrust of entertainment I don’t really have a great deal of consistency for people to come along and say, ‘Oh great, the Sensational Space Shifters are gonna be doing all their big songs!’ Because – ha! – there aren’t any! There’s not a fucker in sight! We haven’t made a record yet – but we have toured for 15 months. We’ve been all around the world, setting places on fire, and it’s so much better to do that than to bathe in the tepid bathtub of old hits.

“We’ve been in the studio, though. We’ve got nine new tracks already. Skin Tyson, late of Cast, his knowledge and sources go from The 13th Floor Elevators through to Robin Williamson. He lives on the side of a mountain near Bala. He brings an otherworldly, trippy and very imaginative sonic palette into our party. And if you put him next to Justin Adams, something quite remarkable is going to happen. So, we’ve been going into the studio, with little filigrees of ideas that have popped up while we’ve been touring. *Zeppelin II* was created

“I’m in-step and out-of-step with everything, which is wonderful!”

entirely on the road, and I think that’s kind of been going on here, too. Johnny Baggott is bringing an amazing, individual mindset to the whole thing. There’s a lot of great mood, and that is juxtaposed against Skin’s astral tribal arpeggios. It makes for a real exciting place



WHOLE LOTTA LP

## WHAT ABOUT THE ZEPPELIN REMASTERS...

**T**here's lots of bits and pieces, but most importantly Led Zeppelin vinyl availability was minimal and at such a premium. 'Don't underestimate how different it sounds.' You don't have to go out and spend fortunes on a fantastic turntable. There's turntables available everywhere now. If you put them through a good pre-amp, they sound really good again. CDs are such a restricting medium of sound reproduction. So, yeah, we've put stuff back onto vinyl. Slowly. Only Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau could be speedier than us!"

to land. Billy Fuller, the bass player, he's with Beak> and Portishead, so he's got a trippy way of looking at stuff, too. Then there's Juldeh Camara from the Gambia. He calls me 'Uncle' for some reason, even though it's biologically impossible. He's riffing a totally different way from the JuJu days with Justin and Billy and drummer Dave Smith. As a student, Dave saved money and worked so that he could go to West Africa. Ginger Baker did it the romantic way in a Range Rover and went down and played with Fela Kuti, but Dave got a student reduced air ticket and went off into West Africa, some 10 years ago. He learned and learned and learned and now spends most of his time playing in fuck-off ridiculous time signatures in the Vortex in Stoke Newington. It's such a vibrant scene to create music in, and I get to put the lyrics on the top. Scrawling away about all the choices I have and all the options and none of them do I take. I'm in-step and out-of-step with everything, which is wonderful! My children have fled. They send me care packages occasionally.

"We're using two studios for the album. Ashley Manor, in Wiltshire, which belongs to Chris Hughes, who produced my *Fate Of Nations* album in the early '90s. And we're using the Wood Room at Real World to get real drum sounds and add Juldeh's *ritti*. It's good with a lot of air round it. The first session we did with Justin, just four of us. The second session was five and Justin put his

guitar down and Skin concentrated on his ideas and his contributions. So as far as musical colour, it's quite a different dynamic, depending on who's predominant with the guitar. We do it in different bits and pieces. If you're not careful, Juldeh will bring his *ritti* to every single idea, so there's no point in Juldeh hanging around the whole time. It's best to say 'Here's a part, can you overlay this against this drum pattern?' Dave Smith has total comprehension of the way that Juldeh moves. There's an absolute balance between us. This thing that we do, it's not a one-trick pony. I always want to come away from a project and think I couldn't do it any better because there are so many variants. I think the mentality of the players – never mind their gifts – is crucial to the success of the thing.

"We use Peter Gabriel's studio sometimes, and between Peter and myself we more or less keep a certain crew in business all year round. Hence the sound engineer out-front, Ben [Findlay], he's running both our careers, really. He's throwing my voice around. The deal is, when I hit particular vocal moments, he throws 'em into a spin, or turns 'em into some kind of distorted repeat thing. That's what we used to do in Zeppelin. I used to have a Revox set up with all sorts of effects, and in the middle of 'No Quarter' – or whatever it might have been – the guy would throw the voice all over the place and then pan it left and right. I'm into the idea of taking the voice into the performance, rather than just being a vocalist.

"I listen and I absorb and I dream, and I look forwards as well as backwards. I'm picking and listening all the time. Do I have a prospective title for the album? I've got a hundred titles. I'll just pull one out for you from my book. It says here 'Ramshackle'. But it also says 'Slant', which I quite like. 'Help Is On The Way'. That's a good title! I've got a book, but it's out in my writing room. It's just a bit of a barn where I can go when the grandchildren attack. I've got loads and loads of lyric books, and I'm going to have them burned when I die so nobody knows who I was talking about.

"Will the album be billed as Robert Plant And The Sensational Space Shifters? That's definitely what it is. Maybe we should call the album that.

"Our tour will go right through Europe, starting June 8, through Russia, Japan and the USA. I think we will go through Glastonbury, once or twice, and disappoint everyone who thought I might be bringing other people with me.

"I am fortunate, to have some really good friends in America who persevere with music. I ended up playing with Alison, Los Lobos, Harry Belafonte and Odetta in a tribute to Lead Belly, and that's when I said 'Right, I'm off. I've gone... completely.' I never saw that 'greatest hits' thing as being the currency of my time as a singer. It's seldom that I see anybody from my own time, from my own early days. People retreat and they retire to wherever they feel best, but I wanted to sing.

So that's what took me to America.

It was a whole new plan and a whole new style of using my voice but when I started coming back more to, I realised that I was missing so many signs for me to get back, and creating here again to reunite with my old friends, and off we go."

**MICHAEL BONNER** 





"It's about transition..." Elbow in the studio

## ELBOW

Title **Carry Her Carry Me** | Label **Fiction / Polydor** | Released **March**

The Bury veterans on their new album, inspired by prog-rock and immigrants



**GUY GARVEY:** "IT'S VERY different from *Build A Rocket Boys!*. In some parts it's choppier and tighter and harder than previous records. In other places it's a lot more experimental than we've been for the last couple of albums. One 'experiment' involved us being up all night at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studio and doing a lot of dancing. We watched a prog rock documentary, then sampled some of it and made a new groove. I'd say this is our proggiest record. I've been listening to everything from Death Grips to Fela Kuti. Then of course there are the staples: a bit of Yes here, some Genesis there. We've all been loving Little Dragon, Duke Ellington, Here We Go Magic. Lots in the pot, a real gumbo."

"Thematically, it's about transition. It's about life change of one kind or another, negative and positive. There's one song about an old guy in a young person's bar, telling them that he designed their drugs and their music and that they should have some respect for him. It's quite an angry thing called 'Charge'. Then there's 'The Blanket Of Night', which is a portrait of a refugee couple in a small boat on a rough sea at night. That was to illustrate that, while both political parties are blaming the country's problems on immigrants, there are people who are *dying* to get into the country. It's so irresponsible to blame immigrants for our problems, those politicians should fucking be ashamed of themselves. Another one's called 'My Sad Captains'. There's a line in it – "*We only come this way but once*" – which is actually a bastardisation of William Penn [founder of Pennsylvania]. He was talking about realising you only have one life, realising your own mortality." **ROB HUGHES**

influenced by classic rock bands, and an older sound, although still combined with a fresh perspective. What really appealed to us was the idea of how bands would record back in the day. Like Led Zeppelin or Fleetwood Mac or Hendrix, where everyone's in the studio, everyone's playing together, and it's about the feel and the performance, rather than the digital sound that's popular now. We're definitely a lot more analogue, and it's about the way the musicians performed a piece, rather than just lighting things up and going through a ton of takes. When 3rdEyeGirl perform live we improvise all the time, so what's being heard on the record is just one interpretation of the songs. This album is a different style and direction from *Purple Rain*. But, in terms of how guitar-heavy it is, if you like *Purple Rain*, then this album is rockin'." **NH**

## TINARIWEN

Title: **Emmaar** | Label: **PIAS / Co-op** | Released: **February**

Tuareg musicians swap the Sahara desert for the sands of California...



**IBRAHIM AG ALHABIB:** "We have been touring for two years around the world since the release of *Tassili*. Then

we spent a few months with our families and our people in the desert. Then we have recorded our new album in the USA. The name of the album is *Emmaar*. It is difficult to translate. It means something like a hot breeze, a hot wind from the desert, but also the warmth of the fire and also the situation we are living in the north of Mali with all the geopolitical tensions."

"The album has been recorded in the high desert of California, in the Joshua Tree National Park. Guest musicians on the record are Josh Klinghoffer (Red Hot Chili Peppers), Fats Kaplin (Jack White), Matt Sweeney (Bonnie Prince Billy, Johnny Cash) and Saul Williams.

"We have a lot to do in 2014. There will be shows in Chile, Italy, India in January, then we're rehearsing and touring in Europe and USA 'til mid-May, then playing at summer festivals. We have a project in 2015 to tour in Africa and we are also working on a desert festival. But in a different desert on the planet..." **MB**

## PRINCE

Title: **Plectrum Electrum**  
Label: **TBC**  
Released: **March**

The Purple One and his all-girl band get "guitar-heavy"



### DONNA GRANTIS IGUITARI:

"3rdEyeGirl is Prince, Hannah Ford [drums], Ida Neilsen [bass] and myself. The process of how songs are arranged is very organic, and often comes out of us jamming together. Mostly we're at Paisley Park, but we did spend some time in the studio in London. Sometimes we'll go in at two in the afternoon and stay 'til six in the morning. We're usually six days a week, 10 to 16 hours a day. At Paisley, I'm to Hannah's right, Ida is to Hannah's left, and Prince is in front of Hannah. We're set up to record the same way we play live. There is a song out called 'Fix Ur Life Up', and that is a good indicator of what the rest of the album will be like: very guitar-heavy, very edgy, sounds huge. There's a very interesting message behind all of the songs as well. Musically, it's

## PETE TOWNSHEND

Title: **Floss** | Label: **TBC**  
Released: **Spring**

As The Who celebrate their 50th anniversary, Pete Townshend gears up to finish a long-gestating solo project...

"The solo album I'm working on at the moment is so dark I'm hoping that when people have finished listening to it they'll kill themselves. It's called *Floss*. It's going to be a very serious, very long opera. I'm pretending to be Sting. There won't be any lutes. No, it's not dark, really. It's just very, very focused and serious. The idea is that we're all terrified. We're living in terror, we're living in anxiety, discomfort and the fear that we have is for the future, the fear for

our children's future. We're worried about the planet, we're worried about terrorism, being able to sustain life as we love it, we're afraid we can't guarantee peace. It ends with an interactive art installation. I'm hoping that will last a couple of years. I started working on it in 2008 and I'm hoping a series of songs from it will come out next May or June." **MB**

## ST VINCENT

**Title:** *St Vincent*  
**Label:** Caroline  
**Released:** February

Annie Clark's explores our "digital reality" on fourth LP



### ANNIE CLARK:

"This is the closest I've come to a party record. But it's a party record where there's blood on the piñata. There are some wild songs on it. The bangers-

to-ballad mix is sturdy. I finished it in between touring with David [Byrne]. It was really fun to do the more funky, groovecentric songs on our album together live, and I carried that idea of a sexy rhythm section forward. You'll find a big love of Parliament-Funkadelic on this record. There are references to the writing of David Foster Wallace, too.

"I recorded it in Dallas. The musicians include Homer Steinweiss from the Dap-Kings, and McKenzie Smith from Midlake plays drums on a few tracks. There's a song called 'Digital Witness', and a lot of the record touches on this digital reality of total connection, and total lack of connection, where it feels like every

day is an episode of *Black Mirror*. This record is me trying to figure out how to navigate that malaise.

"'Huey Newton' was a song that I

wrote the words for in a very furious frenzy, it was just free association. I was trying to be meta-with it, and every line is tied to the next in a way that I don't even understand. I did a lot of that. It has the feel of an extended Google search, and is set in the near future, after a long winter. I got the idea for another

song, 'Severed Crossed Fingers', from a phrase in a short story by a novelist I love, Lorrie Moore. It was such a perfect image to sum up all the hope you have that ends up, for one reason or another, in a pile of rubble on the floor." **NH**

**"This is a party record with blood on the piñata"**

ST VINCENT

## ON THE HORIZON...

# INCOMING...

**RODDY FRAME** returns with his first studio album since 2006's *Western Skies*. Recorded at Edwyn Collins' West Heath Studios - with the former Orange Juice man producing - it will be released on Collins' AED label... In between his many other projects, **DAMON ALBARN** has been working with XL boss Richard Russell on his long-awaited solo album; **Bat For Lashes**' Natasha Khan is reportedly a guest... **PAUL WELLER** is also rumoured to



have a new album due for later this year... Two reclusive female artists - **LIZ FRASER** and **BETH GIBBONS** - are also rumoured to be presenting us with some eagerly awaited new material. **U2** will also have a new album out... Overseas, meanwhile, **DON HENLEY** is preparing to unveil his first solo album in 13 years, *Cass County*, recorded in Nashville, Texas and California. **TOM PETTY** is also planning a Heartbreakers album for this year, which he promises recalls earlier landmarks such as *Damn The Torpedoes*... **DOLLY PARTON**'s *Blue Smoke* is also due in Spring to coincide with her world tour, which reaches Europe in May... **RYAN ADAMS** has the follow-up to *ashes And Fire* due, produced by Glyn Johns and featuring Benmont Tench on keys, Ethan Johns on guitar, Don Was on bass, Cindy Cashdollar on steel guitar and Jeremy Stacey on drums... Following their Grammy nomination for *Boys & Girls*, **ALABAMA SHAKES** are "experimenting with other sounds" on their second album...

**THE BLACK KEYS** will present us with their eighth studio album... On the reissue front, **ELTON JOHN** celebrates 40 years of *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* and it's entirely possible that **CSNY**'s 1974 live boxset will finally appear. Then again...



Like a phoenix rising...  
Beverley Martyn

## BEVERLEY MARTYN

**Title:** *The Phoenix & The Turtle* | **Label:** Les Cousins | **Released:** March

First album in 14 years from legendary folk singer; among many jewels, expect a co-write with Nick Drake...

"**M**Y LAST ALBUM was *No Frills* in about 2000, but I've always kept singing. We started work about two years ago, but stopped for a while because I was quite ill. It was recorded in Wales, in Mark Pavey's studio. I would start just with guitar and a click track, and through the magic of computer we'd send a track to Matt Malley, ex-Counting Crows, and Victor Bisetti, ex-Los Lobos, in California. They would put the bass and drums on, then other things were added. It still has that in-a-room feel, it sounds like an old style analogue record. It's very me, very transatlantic. "I've recorded 'Going To Germany' and 'When The

Levee Breaks', which are songs I used to do with my old '60s jug band, The Levee Breakers. 'Reckless Jane', was started in '74 with Nick Drake. When John [Martyn] and I lived in Hampstead, Nick lived one stop down the tube line, he'd come and babysit sometimes. We started writing 'Reckless Jane' one day as a bit of a joke. I had the guitar and he was sitting on the floor, trying to look small and not be in the way, as usual! I couldn't look at it for a long time after he died, but finally I decided to finish it. It's a pastoral English thing - the strings are a tribute to Nick. 'Women And Malt Whisky' is about John. There's a verse about our son, who is a bit wild. He didn't have a good father's hand, John didn't teach him good things. Another line is about Davy Graham, John's hero, and Bobby [Dylan], who was mine. The whole album is very personal." **GRAEME THOMSON**



## LINDA PERHACS

**Title** *The Soul Of All Natural Things* |  
**Label** *Asthmatic Kitty* | **Released** March 4

44 years later, Perhacs — now a dental hygienist — follows up her astral folk classic *Parallelograms*. Contributors include Julia Holter and Nite Jewel's Ramona Gonzalez...

**“** I WAS ALWAYS VERY reclusive and quiet. I never wanted to be the centre of attention, with all that pressure on you. I would rather do something in the world that helps people have a better life. But I got hooked when I did the show for Dublab [a *Parallelograms* tribute concert in 2010, where Perhacs performed live for the very first time].

“In May 2012 I watched a solar eclipse out of my window through the trees. I just kept saying to God and the universe, ‘Thank you for such magnificent beauty.’ I was just overwhelmed. A whole new song concept poured into me. I settled down afterwards and had all these pages in front of me, and for weeks after I kept trying to find an hour in my busy schedule to put that piece together. I studied gospel pieces, searching for a way to convey what I heard, but nothing felt right. One day I was so frustrated, I had to get back to the workaday world, and I went to that window and said, ‘God, this is never going to happen unless I find somebody closer to my home. I need a full arranger, I need good recording capability, I have to translate these concepts on a keyboard, and I’m not skilled.’

“Two days later this email came from Fernando Perdomo [who produced *The Soul Of All Natural Things*]. I get a lot of messages but something said, ‘Answer that email right away. I need helpers or this isn’t going to happen; I’ll probably leave the earth plane before I get this done.’

“Fernando and Chris Price [co-producer] sped the process up. We did the album in eight months, whereas in many years I had not been able to do that because it was all in my mind. Sometimes these things take a few years to put together because I’m thinking them through. Thank heavens Fernando and Chris made the process happen faster.” **JOHN MULVEY**

## ALLAH-LAS

**Title** *TBC*  
**Label** *Innovative Leisure*  
**Released**: Summer

The LA garage revivalists' work up a more expansive second



**PEDRUM SIADATIAN (GUITARIST):** “For the most part it’s the same sort of influences. The Pretty Things, Love and The Byrds’ *Younger Than Yesterday*. We’re still trying to make songs of that calibre, but trying to evolve with our interpretation of

them. The studio we recorded the last record at is gone now, so we’ve been touring different studios in LA, testing different songs out in them, experimenting with sound, sorting out what works and what doesn’t, harmonies and instrumentation. We’re experimenting with instruments that aren’t on the first record, like vibraphone and more acoustic guitar. We’re still in the midst of recording, though, so I don’t know if we’ll end up using them.

“There’s a song called ‘Worship The Sun’, and one called ‘Voices Carry Through The Canyon’. I’m not sure if we’re settled on those yet, we might change ‘em. We’re recording the basic track all live

together, and over-dubbing what’s needed. The biggest difference between this record and the last one is that for the last record, we pretty much went in and recorded our live set. This one is more sorting things out in the studio as we go along. I’m enjoying it. It’s not as concrete, we’re experimenting more.” **NH**

## THE WAR ON DRUGS

**Title** *Lost In The Dream*  
**Label** *Secretly Canadian*  
**Released**: March, 2014

A stripped-down follow-up to *Slave Ambient* is promised...



**ADAM GRANDUCIEL:**

“For this new record I was definitely not hunched over my computer in my bedroom, smoking joint after joint. The music is a little different than *Slave Ambient*. Before, I felt like we were building layer upon layer and eventually arriving at the song, but this time, the songs are a lot more defined. There’s less floating ambience and electronics. The new record is a little less psychedelic, a little less trying to be something. It’s a combination of *Slave Ambient* and *Wagonwheel Blues*, maybe.”

“I started the record on my home studio in Philly, but all in all, we did it in about six different places and I produced it. I brought along my friend Jeff Ziegler for some engineering. My favourite is ‘Eyes To The Wind’; it just came out super natural, no bells and whistles. It’s just a band in a room, jamming out this epic song. ‘Disappearing’ is like a seven-minute Kraut-jammer for late-night driving on the highway.”

“I was in a much different place on this record than I’ve ever been at any other time of my life – just dealing with emotions I hadn’t felt before, like pressure I was putting on myself, but also some pretty serious depressive moments, where I became a total recluse. It was a really hard record to make.” **So’C**

## T BONE BURNETT

**Title** *The Basement Tapes...*  
**Continued** | **Label**: *Capitol*  
**Released**: Late 2014

A multitude of projects from T Bone, including... finishing *The Basement Tapes*?

**“** I’M JUST STARTING this involvement with Capitol Records and we’re going to try to reinvigorate the company.” **RH**

I have a new imprint with them, Electromagnet Recordings. Music is to the United States as wine is to France, and Capitol Records is like Levi’s or something, an American brand. I’m also doing something with some of the songs that Bob Dylan wrote for *The Basement Tapes* that have never been released. I’m starting a really interesting record with Jerry Lee Lewis in January.

It’s so much fun choosing songs for Jerry Lee because just the fact of him singing a song brings several new depths to it, when he brings his history and his tone to it. I started another record with Gregg Allman in December. There’s a TV show, the story of the American recording industry from 1926 to 1936.” **MB**

## HANS CHEW

**Title** *Life & Love*  
**Label**: *At The Helm Records*  
**Released**: March

The Brooklyn bar-room pianist on his “hard and intense” second album



**HANS CHEW:**

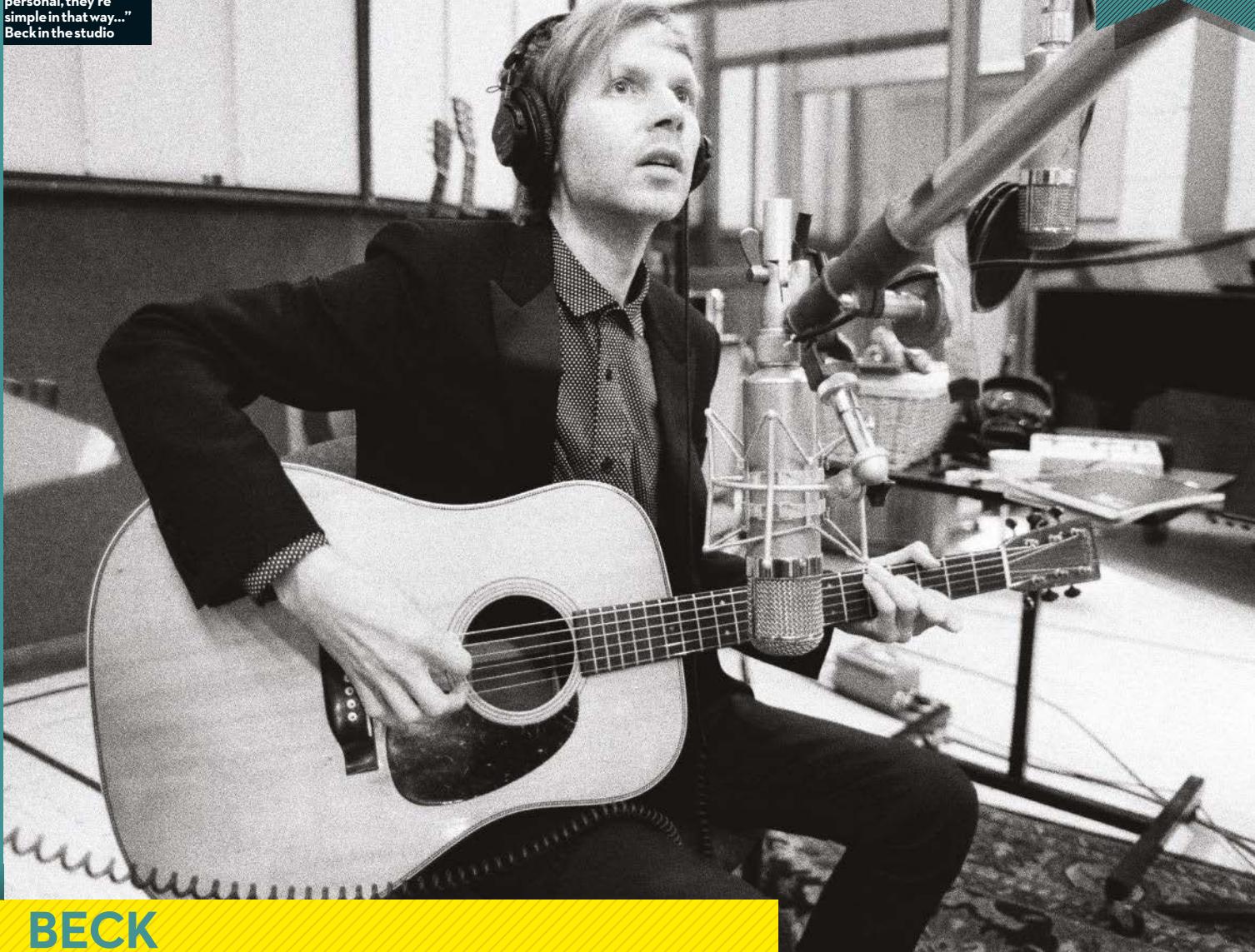
The tone is distinct from *Tennessee & Other Stories*.... It's much more the snapshot

of a rock’n’roll band than the sketchbook of a singer-songwriter. The theme is the perception of life and the role that love plays in it. If the inspiration that created *Tennessee...* was rebirth from a death state, then this album comes from the experience of negotiating life after rebirth, which for me has been actual, painful, inescapable, aware living. What strikes me is how hard and intense this album feels, at times desperate and frustrated in places.

“We had a great opportunity to record the album at Spin Studios in New York City, which has a Yamaha grand piano. Me and the band recorded all of the basic tracks simultaneously together in the studio, so the entire album has a very live feel to it.

“‘The Supplanter’s Song’ is a pretty unique mixture of gospel piano, salsa and rock. ‘Junker’s Blues’ is our riff on an ancient barrelhouse piano boogie. The outro solo of the song sends the listener off on their way, New Orleans funeral-style, with a screaming Telecaster solo from stunt guitarist Dave Cavallo. It’s a hungry, jonesing, New Orleans-via-New York City rock’n’roll song if there ever was one.” **RH**

"These songs, they're personal, they're simple in that way..."  
Beck in the studio



## BECK

Title *Morning Phase* | Label Capitol | Released February

Six years on from his last proper studio album, Beck reconnects with his inner singer-songwriter for some Laurel Canyon-inspired vibes...

"I DIDN'T HAVE a record deal for a long time. I'd suffered a spine injury [before the recording of 2008's *Modern Guilt*] and I didn't think physically I would be able to do another record justice, in terms of promoting it. I ended up helping other people with their records [Beck produced Thurston Moore and Charlotte Gainsbourg], but I wasn't really putting my own music over. But the last two years I've been working towards something.

"I think the songs on this record represent a formative sound for me. When I was younger, I was into Woody Guthrie, Blind Willie McTell – that rural, Southern roots music. It reminds me of my childhood, a lot of young men with moustaches and patchwork jeans running around. Like anything you grow up around, it takes time to appreciate, but it sows a seed. You go back and see it with different eyes. In the '80s, some of that Californian songwriter music was vilified. There was that reaction against it, the punk music, that DIY aesthetic. But I think we've all evolved, we've realised there's a place for it. As with *Sea Change*, I set out to make a gritty

kind of record, along the lines of those early '70s singer-songwriter records. But the songs ended up having another quality to them. There are harmonies there: Simon & Garfunkel, Crosby, Stills & Nash, The Everly Brothers, The Stanley Brothers, The Mamas & The Papas, even. That's the way they seem to ring true. Here I was embracing that, not apologising for it.

"One of the songs, 'Evil Things', dates back to 2005, recording in Nashville. But I'm not sure that's really important. All my records have one or two stray songs that have been sitting around. It's whether it feels like the right time to go in and finish them. I was back in Nashville a couple of years ago, and did some more songs with Jack White. I've done a lot with Jack over the years, and I hope more of it will see the light of day. I could do a group of acoustic songs pretty regularly, but you have to wonder if there's an audience out there who are into it. I guess I felt like enough time had passed since *Sea*

*Change* that it felt all right to go back.

"The band is the same that played on *Sea Change*, but we go a long way back – right back to

the *Odelay* tour. They're just brothers, you know. There's a certain emotion when we play together – it goes to a place. The album is called *Morning Phase*, but I suppose there is that double meaning there, 'mourning'. When I'm trying to come up with a title that sums up a group of songs, honestly, I'm just looking for something that doesn't make me cringe – or doesn't make me cringe too much. These songs, they're personal, they're simple in that way. A lot of them reference the morning, or the mourning of something. And I kept thinking

about this word 'phase'. Those two words came together, and really it felt like the closest approximation of the sound I was going for. I wouldn't speak for these guys, but I think coming into this record we've gone through some personal changes and challenges. You can certainly hear it in the songs. I could feel it in the room.

"There could be another album this or early next year, but I haven't quite finished it, I've been touring the last couple of months. But I'd say

it's finding its legs. For that one, I'm thinking more about the live show, which is more about energy. It's a lot more up." LOUIS PATTISON

**"Enough time had passed since *Sea Change* that it felt OK to go back"**



Van Etten in the studio: at the helm for the first time

## SHARON VAN ETSEN

Title *Are We There?* | Label Jagjaguwar | Released TBC

The New Jersey singer-songwriter embraces keys, horns and soul

**“**I’VE BEEN RECORDING just outside New York, near the first bus stop in New Jersey, at Hobo Sound, Stewart Lerman’s studio. He’s co-producing with me. After touring *Tramp* for a year-and-a-half my band have really grown to be a family, and it made me want to write with them. They helped shape these songs. Jonathan Meiberg from Shearwater also played some guitar, organ and Wurlitzer. My friend Dave Hartley from The War On Drugs did most of the bass, and his bandmate Adam [Granduciel] came in to hear what we were doing, and he put down some guitar. And there are horns, which I never thought I’d want on a record.

“Most of the songs are a lot more soul-oriented and beat-driven, with more organ sounds and bass, and

less guitars. They’re mostly about being in a transitional point in my life, settling down and growing up, and deciding to make music and make New York my home. I have one song called ‘Pay My Debts’, that’s about when my parents finally understood that I was serious about music. ‘Nothing Will Change’ is the story of how I met my boyfriend. I’m letting myself tell stories for a change, instead of it all being straight-up confessional. That one’s really R&B, which I haven’t done much before, it has more of a Sade groove. I was really into Sade’s *Soldier Of Love*. And I got tired of the guitar, I thought I was rewriting the same song, so I started playing keys more. Coming up with a song on the organ felt different, I started singing in a more soulful way. I’m really proud of the songs. It’s the first time I’ve really been at the helm. It’s different, but it’s still me.”

**NICK HASTED**

## TOUMANI & SIDIKI DIABATÉ

Title: TBC  
Label: World Circuit  
Released: March/April

Keeping it in the family: father and son team up for a batch of kora stories...



**TOUMANI DIABATÉ:** “We spent two and a half days at RAK Studios in London in November. It

was so exciting to do this album with my son, who is a great player. We come from more than 70 generations of musicians in our family, so I thought, let us show that to the world by doing something together. A few days before we recorded we played at the Royal Festival Hall. Like a rehearsal! That was the first time we’d done a duet with kora. The amazing thing was that the first time I played with my father in concert was the Royal Festival

Hall in 1987. That was the first and only time before my daddy passed away – he was called Sidiki, too.

“This album, it’s completely kora stories. You can hear all the different styles from the Mande countries in West Africa, with different tunings from Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso... We played some songs I’ve never heard before in my life, songs that were played 100 years ago by my great-great grandfather. One is called ‘Red Eyes’ in English. It used to be played for the last King of Gambia, Musa Molo. Griot people would play this for him and his eyes would become red from crying. I’m inviting people to go

to the roots, because the kora has 700 years of history, geography and legend.” GT

**“Imelda Marcos had a disco ball in her New York house...”**

DAVID BYRNE

**DAVID BYRNE**  
Title: *Here Lies Love - Original Cast Recording*  
Label: Nonesuch  
Released: Spring

Byrne revisits his Imelda Marcos project, now with extra songs...

**“**I WAS INSPIRED BY a book by Kapuscinski called *The Emperor*. As he described the bubble world of a dictator it all seemed very surreal and stagy. When I read that Imelda Marcos loved the club world so much she had a disco ball installed in her NY townhouse I thought, ‘There’s someone who lives in a bubble who comes with a soundtrack – wonder if there’s a story there...’

“Musically, this development began as a collaboration with Fatboy Slim – but I’ve done musical collaborations before. What made this different was that the songs had to tell the story, I decided to primarily use found sources for lyrics, things the actual people said in interviews, speeches...

Then, during the development process I realised I’d have to write more songs to make certain characters clearer and elucidate plot points. Not my usual motivation for writing, but I think

some of my best work came about when faced with those demands.

There was an earlier version of some of these songs, sung by wonderful singers – Florence, Sia, Steve Earle, Santigold and more [*Here Lies Love* released in 2010]. But I had to jettison about a third of those songs as they were narrative detours – and I had avoided dealing with the elephant in the room – the revolution that ousted the Marcoses. I wrote seven or eight new songs over the course of three years’ development and those (and new versions of the older songs) are what make up this collection. The cast – largely Filipino – are incredible. Great singers, and many have a personal investment in telling this story – it’s the era their own parents lived through.” MB

**Interviews by Michael Bonner, Nick Hasted, Rob Hughes, John Mulvey, Sharon O’Connell, Louis Pattison, Graeme Thomson**

Some of the *Here Lies Love* team, with David Byrne



# BOY & BEAR

## NEW ALBUM

# HARLEQUIN DREAM

OUT 13.01.2014

FEATURING THE SINGLE  
SOUTHERN SUN



[boyandbear.com](http://boyandbear.com)

Story: Nick Hasted  
Photograph: Dezo Hoffman

# please don't keep-a me

This year, THE KINKS are 50 years old. A reunion, according to RAY DAVIES, is “as close as it’s ever been to happening”. Plans are advancing, confirms MICK AVORY. DAVE DAVIES, though, is a little less certain: “I don’t want to see the legacy of The Kinks soured by two miserable old men doing it for the money.” In a series of frank interviews, *Uncut* discovers the state of The Kinks at 50 – a saga involving *Godfather*-style confrontations, flamenco songs, cursed concept albums, a troublesome pet rabbit and the tantalising prospect of, at last, reconciliation



# waiting...

Party line... The Kinks in the mid-'60s (l-r): Ray Davies, Peter Quaife, Dave Davies, Mick Avory



Brothers at arms?  
Dave Davies and Ray  
Davies, opposite  
page, rehearsing in  
Soho, May 1965

In the late summer of 2013, two brothers, both in their late sixties, met in a pub in Highgate, north London. Ray and Dave Davies, the creative heart of The Kinks, were talking seriously for the first time in nine years. They were meeting to discuss whether as The Kinks' 50th anniversary loomed there was any future for their great old band. "We got together in August, and the first few days were beautiful," recalls Dave. "We went up the pub and had a few Guinesses, and we were talking about all kinds of shit, the old days and what-ifs."

Getting to this point had not been easy for the brothers. The last time Ray and Dave tried to write together was in late 2003, six years after The Kinks had played their last show at the Norwegian Wood festival near Oslo, on June 15, 1996. Then, before anything between them could be taken much further, two things happened. On January 4, 2004, Ray was shot in New Orleans; five months later, on June 30, Dave suffered a massive stroke. Any plans they may have had then for a reunion were duly scuppered. Following his stroke, Dave spent a month at Ray's house – ostensibly they were both there to recuperate, but predictably the brothers found themselves arguing instead. "That was the last time we spent any significant time together," admits Ray. In the interim, however, Dave recovered from his

stroke and last May, he started playing live again, giving rise to speculation of a Kinks reunion to coincide with their 50th anniversary. That seemed increasingly unlikely, however, after comments Dave gave in an interview in *Rolling Stone* in September last year, where he described his brother as a "cunt" and an "asshole".

But over a series of exclusive interviews with Ray, Dave and original Kinks drummer Mick Avory, conducted during October and November 2013, it becomes apparent that plans for a reunion are very much alive. "It's as close as it's ever been to happening," Ray confirms to *Uncut*. Of course, any new Kinks activity relies entirely on Ray and Dave getting on. Speaking to both Davies brothers, you can't help but pick up on their frustrated fraternal love – as well as a mutual desire to give each other one more chance.

"I said to Ray I thought that it'd be a great shame if we don't try and do something," confides Dave, mindful of the Stones' recent 50th anniversary celebrations. "It'd be pathetic

finishing up being two waddling old men fucking up. Although the Stones do it quite easily! [Laughs] Playing the same tune for 60 years – 'Oohh, take me wallet, oohh, take me clothes!' What the Stones should do now, they've amassed so much wealth and money, they should start the Gimme Shelter Foundation, and use it to help the homeless people, or people who've really given up. When I first saw the Stones, I thought, 'Wow, this is fucking great.' I felt so in tune with it. And it helped me, as a young player. But I don't want to cast judgments. People go, 'It'd be great if you and Ray got together and you played the O2', and that fills me with despair." Ray, it transpires, has more ambitious ideas for a Kinks' reunion. "I'd like something good to come out of it, not something sad," he explains. "I couldn't think of anything worse than something sad, like those



Lookin' fine: Dave and Ray at the opening of the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame Museum in Cleveland, 1995



infomercials you see for country greats. I'd like to do something sensible, artistic and dignified. There's every possibility it could happen, if people behave. Or misbehave at the appropriate moment.

"It's just grabbing the unit," explains Ray, describing Dave's talent. "I want to see what the hands can deliver. But don't forget, key to The Kinks, in both recording and performance, is the uncertainty of it all."

**U**NCUT MEETS DAVE, 66, outside an East Finchley coffee shop in late October. He is wearing a pin-striped suit jacket, dark trousers, a *Star Wars* T-shirt and a fedora, which sits on the table between us. He looks healthier and happier than when I first met him, a decade ago, before his stroke. When he speaks, he emphasises certain key points by mimicking a boxer's "one-two" punch. "It's funny," he begins. "Me and my son Martin were doing some filming for a documentary we're making this morning, and I looked over the fence of 6

Denmark Terrace, where me and Ray grew up. We lived on Fortis Green, halfway between here and Muswell Hill. But I didn't really want to go in our old house. My memories are so full of that time, and how we played in the garden, and the boxing matches between me and Ray, and I think when you see it today it looks a bit sad. It's all posh and new, and they've actually got a proper bathroom! It was better when it was falling apart a bit, and there was people fighting and screaming. Aunt Lil being wheeled home drunk at four o'clock in the morning in a wheelbarrow because she was pissed and couldn't stand up. She couldn't even raise her hands to finish her last gin and tonic! But I don't see the point in going back there.

"Everybody talks about us fighting and bad-mouthing, but

that spirit comes from my family," he continues. "My mum was like that, she had to be. Those working-class families that grew up through the Blitz, seeing their friends blown up across the street, houses flattened, you've got to be a pretty powerful optimist to live through all that. It's embedded in the DNA of The Kinks. We grew out of that, and brought it with us through the '60s and '70s and '80s, right to the present day. I know that's a core of Ray's DNA, and mine. We approach what's going on today differently to other people. I'd even go so far as to take it back to a bit of Celtic in us [*the family are part-Irish*]. It gave us a ferocious desire to survive."

A month later, Ray greets *Uncut* in what used to be the private bar at Konk Studios [see sidebar, p26]. At 69, his thinning hair is defiantly arranged in twin arches over his head. He's wearing a brown cardigan to guard against the cold. Konk has recently undergone a rebirth as a gallery space. Two nights previously this room was packed with guests attending an exhibition opening, many of whom were oblivious to the building's lengthy history as The Kinks' studio. Today, meanwhile, Ray is in a particularly good mood. "I'm cocky because Arsenal are top of the league," he assures *Uncut*. Like his brother, Ray has recently been tempted back to 6 Denmark Terrace.

"When we had an exhibition opening a few weeks ago," he says, "this six-year-old kid came up to me and said, 'Are you Ray?' I said, 'Yes.' She said, 'Well, I live in the house

where you grew up.' I met the family who lived there. They were a nice, thirtysomething family, and I'm going to go and have a cup of tea with them."

As both Ray and Dave attest, 6 Denmark Terrace was a lively place to grow up in, with the brothers sharing the three-bedroom house with their parents, six older sisters and, ☀

## Dave and I only became brothers again when we went on the road

**Ray Davies**

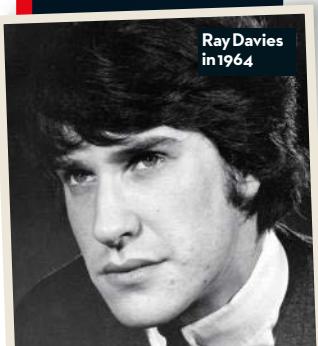
## "THEN WE FORMED THE BAND..."

### Ray opens his old diary

"I found my diary from 1964," Ray says. "Because I wanted to start a daily re-enactment of every day. So New Year's Eve 1963, I was walking home from playing a gig, and I was saying, 'I'm never going to do this again.' It was snowing, I think. Then we formed the band. Mick joined in January – a day that will go down in history, like Pearl Harbour! It's a Letts diary, full-size. The day I got married, I wrote, 'Day off'. When we recorded 'You Really Got Me' and I was trying to get it re-recorded, I remember walking round Denmark Street with my then girlfriend, who became my wife, saying, 'I'm going back to art school.' I still had my grant in the Post Office. 380 quid, so I could start again. 'They're not going to make me put that out. This'll be the last record I'll ever make.'

"Can I imagine my life if that had happened? I'm a bit of a fatalist. I believe I'd be sitting in exactly the same place, doing an interview like this, whatever course I'd gone on. Leaving Hornsey [College Of Art] was a depressing time for me. I got into a band after that. But not fulfilling my art was a big disappointment in my life."

Ray Davies  
in 1964





SITUATION VACANT

## "I'M THINKING OF MOVING IN"

**Recording studio, rock-star hang-out, exhibition space... massage parlour! What next for Konk?**

"I think a lot of people think it's a massage parlour!" Ray laughs. He's talking about the small neon "Konk" sign on the front door of the Hornsey studio The Kinks built and owned from 1973, and which is now Ray's exclusive property. Having failed to sell it, Ray is now full of plans. The downstairs Konk Club where assorted Pythons and Kinks used to drink into the night is now a gallery. "There used to be a pool table," Ray says, looking around. "It's a great events space. It's downmarket, but it's got a great feel to it. I've fulfilled my ambition at Konk, to have a mixture of artists like [film director] Gillies MacKinnon, who do other things but also paint, exhibiting. This would also be a great studio apartment. I'm thinking of moving in. Yeah, turning myself into a charity. That's what I've been all my life! One of the things we're also thinking about doing in 2014 is to turn the whole building into a museum exhibit. Use the upstairs, and walk down the whole building as a journey. Because so many people you wouldn't expect, like Philip Glass, have been through these doors."



"I'm cocky because Arsenal are top of the league..." Ray Davies at Konk studios, 2010

→ frequently, other members of their extended family. The four surviving Davies sisters, meanwhile, continue to play an important role in both men's lives.

"I spoke to three of my sisters today," Ray acknowledges. "I've got a big, big deal being negotiated tomorrow, but my priority is getting a little picture blown up of my sister Rosie with my first two daughters. It's the only picture that exists." Ray admits he was often sent off to stay at Rosie's during his adolescence. "It was such a madhouse at Mum's, she was probably glad to see the back of him for a bit," Dave explains. "I'd often pop up to my sister Dolly's for a few days, too, and sit in the candle-light because she could never pay the electric bill." He laughs fondly. "Ray would often go up to stay with Rosie. She seemed one of the few people who knew how to deal with him. I admit our upbringings were pretty weird. Ray was a very difficult child. Very withdrawn."

"A lot of the problems between us stem from the fact that we didn't have the majority of our childhood as conventional, live-in brothers," Ray confirms. "So there's an emotional gap there. We only became brothers again when we went on the road with The Kinks, and found an element of dysfunctionality in our work."

The brothers' frequent bust-ups with each other – and Dave's with drummer Mick Avory – have been well documented, not least in *Uncut*'s cover story from 2004. They seemed to run in tandem with the band's own, remarkable career – the peerless run of hit singles during the '60s, through the early '70s concept albums to their unexpected American success during the early '80s and their dissolution in the mid-'90s. The violence was so serious it drove bassist

Pete Quaife from the band in 1969. Avory, meanwhile, quit in 1984. All the same, the brothers are adamant it was never the whole story. "When things felt great between me and Ray, I knew that everybody would love it," Dave recalls. "Play an old Kinks record, and you think, 'What's that?' The beautiful intangibilities, those out of time moments when you don't know what you're doing on songs like 'Sunny Afternoon', was a great magic that me and Ray had when it worked well. It was because there was total trust between us."

"This is an insight into Dave and I," Ray adds. "The other day I was playing this song on The Kinks' *Preservation Act 2* [1974], 'Shepherds Of The Nation'. When I wrote it I was in quite a bad emotional state as my marriage had broken up. It changes from D minor to D major for the chorus, and when I played it to Dave he understood what I was doing. Maybe it came from a cowboy movie we saw as kids where we liked the chord changes. It was an acknowledgement of us growing up together."

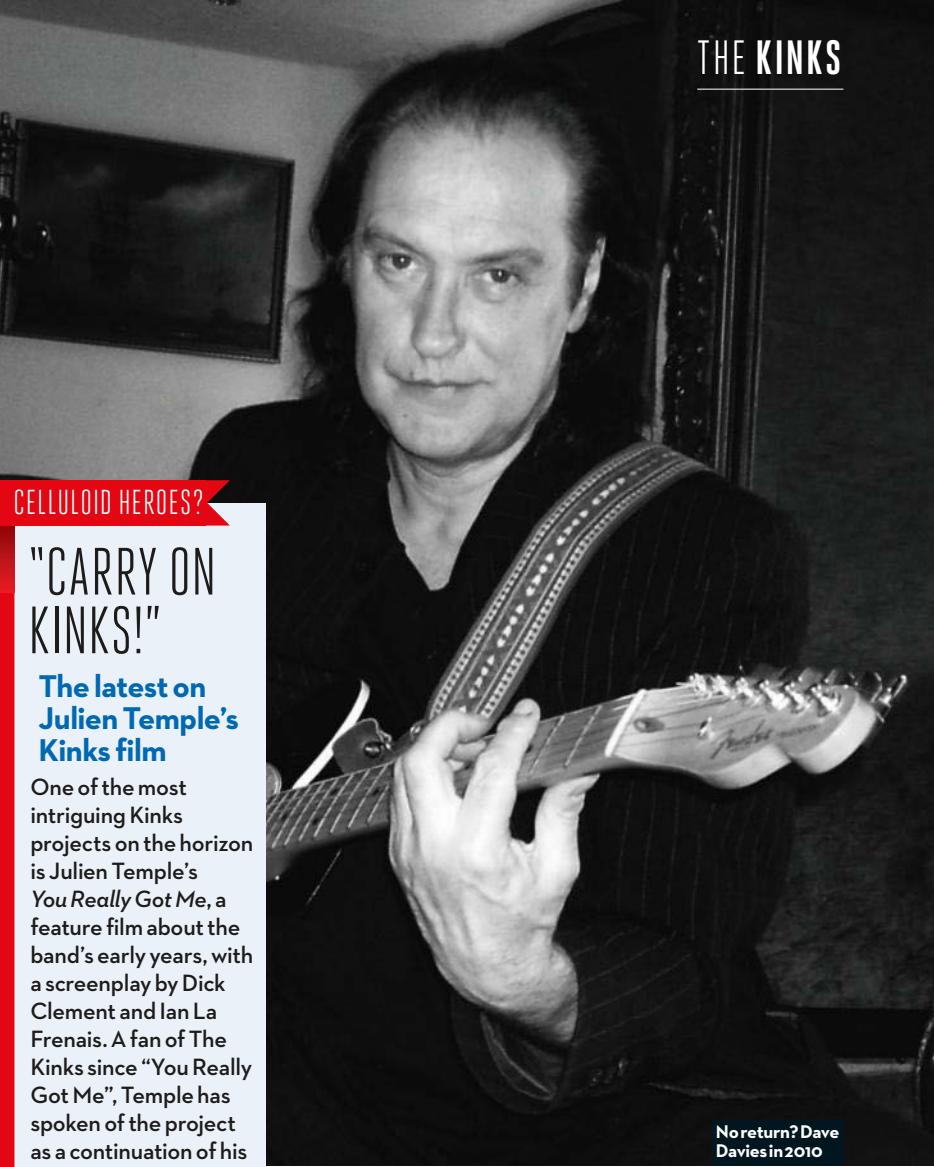
Dave, meanwhile, has his own happy

memories of time with Ray during The Kinks' heyday. "When my boys from my first marriage were small," he recalls, "and Ray was with [first wife] Rasa, we'd come off a tour, drive down to Cornwall or go on the train, and meet up with my sisters. We'd have a lovely time, hanging out at the pub, going on the beach playing with the kids. Just what normal, everyday people do. The simple things have always been more important than what we do for jobs."

The Kinks rallied for one final studio record, *Phobia* (1993). One of the album's best songs, "Hatred (A Duet)", was a parody Ray wrote about his and Dave's most hostile

## "Moving to Devon was a buffer to dealing with Ray – he's impossible"

**Dave Davies**



## CELLULOID HEROES?

**"CARRY ON KINKS!"****The latest on Julien Temple's Kinks film**

One of the most intriguing Kinks projects on the horizon is Julien Temple's *You Really Got Me*, a feature film about the band's early years, with a screenplay by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais. A fan of The Kinks since "You Really Got Me", Temple has spoken of the project as a continuation of his previous films about post-war British rock's revolutionaries. He has the rights to the autobiographies of both brothers, who are fully involved.

"We've discussed how the characters can be portrayed," Dave explains. "But despite Julien's wonderful ideas, it's not going to be a documentary. It's going to be an interpretation of what it could have been in The Kinks."

"My biggest fear in life is that the movie will be called 'Carry On Kinks!'" Ray laughs. "Hearing some of the people on board, it's a distinct possibility. Great writers, terrible footballers. La Frenais tried to nudge his way into the *Melody Maker* football team when I was the captain, but he had to be relegated. I hope he doesn't take it out on me in the script..."

moments. But the truth was that by the time the band finished, Ray and Dave had become indifferent towards each other. By the start of the '90s, Dave was living in Los Angeles, effectively scaling back his involvement with the band. He was offended, too, by what he perceived as Ray's constant belittling of his contributions to The Kinks. In California, meanwhile, he began to further explore his interests in spirituality and different styles of guitar playing; both of which were derided by Ray. Effectively, the Davies brothers had grown apart.

"It was a relief, those last few gigs," Dave remembers. "I really didn't want to do it any more. To be honest, being out of The Kinks felt like when I was thrown out of school when I was 15. Pure liberation. Why am I doing this fucking thing anyway? And I think if I'd had the money, I probably would've gone to Tibet, or done something else, painted even, and never come back."

Ray found life without the band far harder to handle. In his new book *Americana*, he presents himself as creatively lost and traumatised without them. Ray tells me his third marriage "evaporated" in 1998. By 2004, he was trying to make a new start in New Orleans; but the shooting evidently put paid to that. "I was, I think, in the second week out of hospital," Ray remembers. "Dave phoned me up. He was playing the Hard Rock Café in Florida. I said, 'You can get a flight, it's only 45 minutes away.' He said, 'Aww, I don't wanna go, you'll be OK.'"

"Yeah, I called him up," Dave remembers. "We were going to Orlando to do a show, and I called him in New Orleans in the hospital, and I felt terrible for him. And he asked if I was going to come down there, and I said I couldn't, because I'm trying to fucking make a living. Is that callous of me? And then I'm thinking of the emotional drain of it. I've supported his ideas and his music, and our music, all my life. And there

comes a point where you think, I can't fucking do it any more. The survival instinct kicks in."

Five months later, Dave suffered a stroke. After a spell in hospital, he optimistically chose to convalesce at his brother's. Surprisingly, Ray admits now he was comforted by his brother's presence under his roof. "I'm an insomniac, but when Dave and his girlfriend stayed with me, I felt I could sleep properly, because I love sleeping with a relative in the house," Ray says wistfully. "It was the way I was brought up. But his girlfriend had this pet rabbit she insisted on keeping in the house. I bought her a rabbit hutch and everything. That's what broke us up."

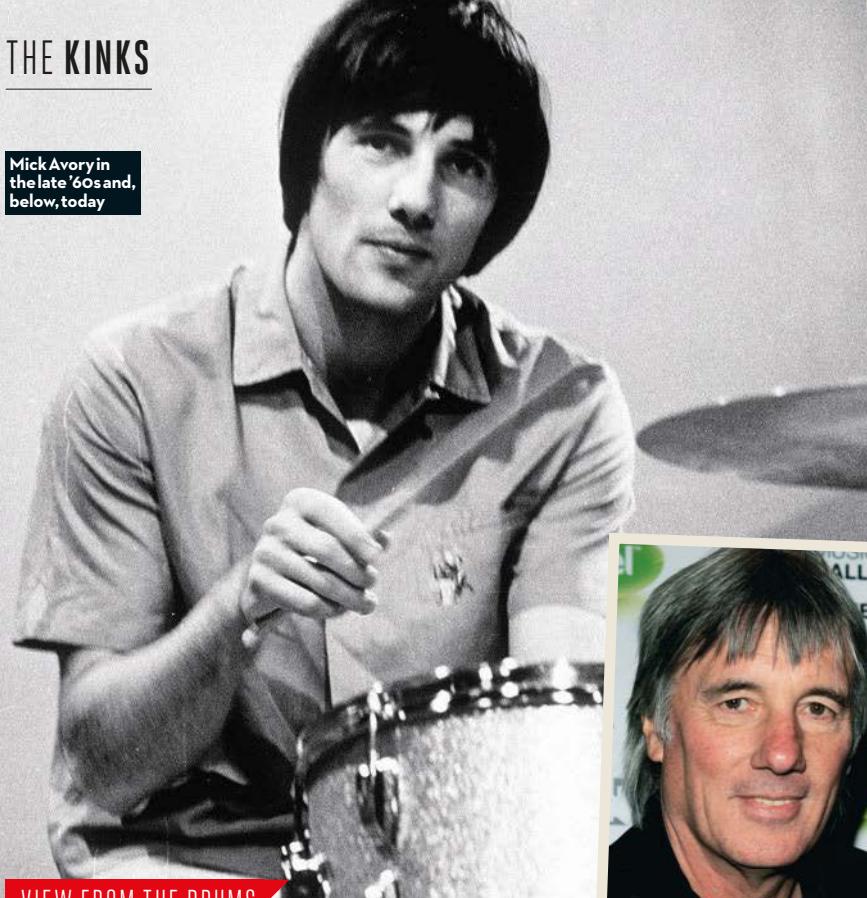
"He was in a mess and I was in a mess," Dave acknowledges today. "I don't think we helped each other by spending that time together. After about three weeks, he was saying, 'I can't ever work with you again.' He wanted me to jump right in and support him with mixing some old tracks, and I just did not have the emotional energy to deal with him."

"I can't help but equate this in cinematic terms," says Ray, amused in retrospect at the thought of the brothers still battling when they could barely move. "There's a movie with two gunfighters, Joel McCrea and Randolph Scott [*Ride The High Country*], and they're both dying and they're still trying to kill one another. It's a bit like that. It never stops. And Dave will like this equation. It's like the character in *Ben-Hur*, when Ben-Hur beats Messala in the chariot race. I think Messala's last words that he delivered on this earth were: 'It goes on. It goes on, Judah!' Hatred even after death. It gets a bit like that with us."

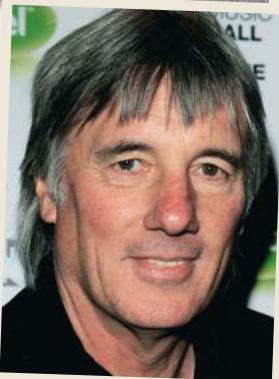
"I had to get out," says Dave, who shudders at the memory. "I had to get out somewhere where I could see trees and animals, and hear lovely music. To heal myself. Me moving to Devon acted as a buffer to having to deal with him, because he's impossible. I didn't really speak to him about

**No return?** Dave Davies in 2010

Mick Avory in the late '60s and, below, today



VIEW FROM THE DRUMS



## "I'D BE DISAPPOINTED IF I WASN'T INVOLVED"

Original drummer Mick Avory shares his thoughts on The Kinks' 50th anniversary reunion

Mick Avory, 68, was The Kinks' drummer from 1964 until battles with Dave made him leave the band in 1984, soon after the band's last big hit, "Come Dancing". In between rounds of golf he still plays around 100 gigs a year. "I play with a band called the '60s Allstars," he says. "We do low-profile gigs, mostly at pubs and functions, nothing big-time. A gig's just like an evening out for me, I'm so used to it. And I'm in the Kast-Off Kinks [featuring ex-Kinks members], which started 19 years ago. We had John Gosling on keyboards, he's out of the picture, so Ian Gibbons replaced him. John Dalton alternates with Jim Rodford on bass. If I wasn't to drum, it'd be Bob Henrit."

"Does joining The Kinks seem like 50 years ago?" he ponders. "In some ways, yeah, it seems like a previous life. It certainly turned my life around. The anniversary does mean something to me. Even though I haven't been involved recently, still when you see the history of The Kinks, and the Kast-Off Kinks, it's all connected. It's the same music, and we were part of it, and we keep it going. Ray came to the fan club convention we play every year in Tufnell Park in November, and sang a couple of verses of 'Acute Schizophrenia Paranoia Blues' [from 1971's *Muswell Hillbillies*]. He usually makes an appearance."

"I think it would be nice to do something all together. Because the

chances are diminishing as we talk. Hopefully me, Dave and Ray can meet before it happens. We'd have to knock our heads together and rehearse, if we meant to do it properly. We haven't played together for God knows how long. But I've been playing, and now Dave's playing again. So it shouldn't be too much of a problem."

"I'd be disappointed if I wasn't involved in the reunion. But it's got to be done on the condition we do it as a team. We can't have all that childish rubbish. Sort it out first. If something's wrong or there's a grievance, say it first and then we'll sort it out from there. If it's money, then we can come to an agreement. Usually it's money, innit?"

"Now that Dave's on his feet and playing again, it feels more realistic," Avory believes. He's incredulous, though, at some of Dave's recent outbursts, like calling Ray a "cunt" in *Rolling Stone* in September. "How fucking stupid's that?" he wonders. "And the trouble is he's a hypocrite. The next minute he's asking Ray for favours, usually money. That doesn't wash with me. Either dislike him, stay out of the way, don't have any conflict, or don't. You can't do both. I don't know how much resentment he's got in him, but hopefully he can overcome that. I can't call the tune, though. I just hope we can do something, that's all."

anything significant after that for quite a few years."

Nine, in fact: essentially, the period of Ray's solo career to date – *Other People's Lives* (2006) and *Working Man's Café* (2007), and a brace of Kinks reworkings, *The Kinks Choral Collection* (2009) and *See My Friends* (2010), a Top 20 album with collaborators including Springsteen, Metallica and Mumford & Sons. All the while, Dave stayed in Devon. "It's a wonderful place to live and be yourself," he explains. Dave regained his guitar abilities just a few years after the stroke and released two albums, 2007's *Fractured Mindz*, and *Two Worlds* (2010), an ambient piece with his son Russell recorded under the name The Aschere Project. But it took a lot longer to find

his confidence. Concerts were announced, then abruptly cancelled as Dave's blood pressure rocketed and his doctor advised him against playing live. He only met Ray at family events and business meetings. "When I made *See My Friends*, I may have reached out on email for him to collaborate," Ray says of one failed attempt to offer an olive branch to his brother. "I think he said he wasn't sharp enough, at that point."

**T**HEN AT THE City Winery, New York, on May 28, 2013, Dave played his first concert in 10 years.

"It came to the point in the end when I didn't give a fuck," he explains. "What are they gonna do if I fuck up, kill me? New York's always been a really great place for The Kinks. I thought I'd start there because I thought I'd have more of a chance. I couldn't sleep the night before. You start thinking really weird shit about failing. And come showtime I was absolutely petrified. But when you get out onstage, it all comes back, because you've done it so much of your life."

How did he feel when he came offstage?

"About 16," he laughs.

Dave was equally thrilled by his new album, *I Will Be Me* [see sidebar, p29]. It contained one song, "Little Green Amp", which acted as an origin story for "You Really Got Me". It was the closest he had come to Kinks music since his stroke. "This year was the only time I've been tempted by a Kinks reunion," he explains. "Once I got *I Will Be Me* finished, I sat and listened to it and thought, 'Fuck it, I love it, that's what I wanted to do.' It made me feel fulfilled. I felt then that Ray and I could do something. And going on the road and playing live, getting that feeling back, it does make you think, 'What if?'"

"I was coming back to London to do some business," continues Dave, who now lives in America. "And I thought, we've got to talk about what we want to do. And I got some songs together, half thinking about me and Ray. It was nice to see him again when we got together in August in the pub. It was wonderful. It made me feel like we're the last of a line."

"He got in touch with me," Ray remembers more coolly. "I said, 'Yeah, why not?' First of all he asked me for an amazing favour that I could no way deliver, out of the blue. Then he came to see me. It was good to see him confident and liberated again. I felt the same way anybody would feel. How have they changed, are they happier? He'll always be on the edge of something. It was like Michael Corleone and Lee Strasberg's *Godfather* character, Hyman Roth, when they met in Miami," he says. "The thing with Dave is, he's got this look about him, like Al Pacino. He's talking affectionately, but behind the veil of his eyes, he looks like he can kill you at any moment. He still has that, which is hunger. Which is ambition, which makes him a great guitar player. I'm more like Hyman Roth, seeing the big picture."

What did Ray and Dave talk about?

"Does he like shortbread biscuits?" Ray laughs. "We never reminisce. We never talk about professional things. He didn't talk about any work I'd done. He was just happy, he was taken aback at how cooperative I was. But he always wants something. He wants control. He had a list of things he

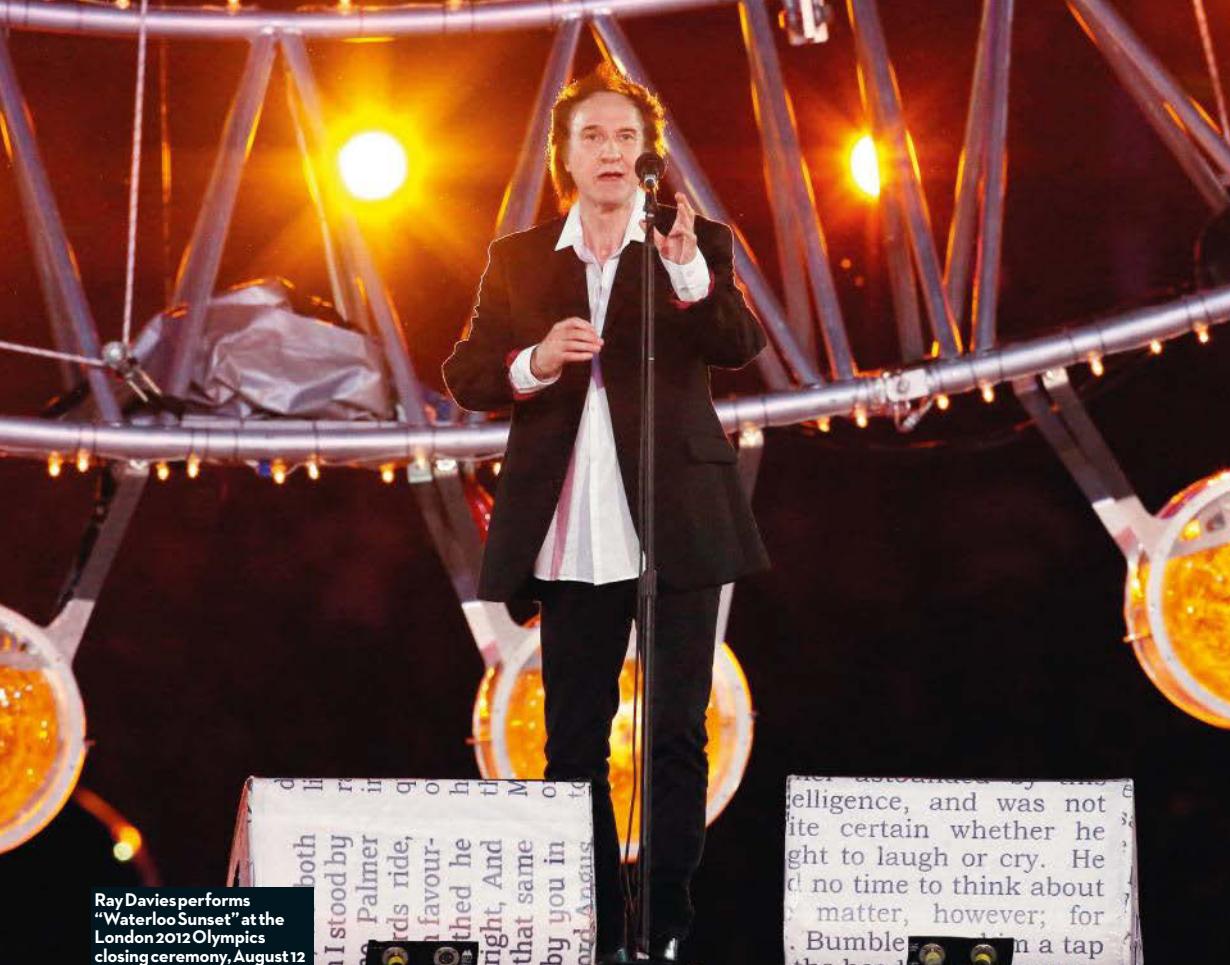
SOMETHING ELSE?

## "WE'VE GOT ABOUT 60 UNRELEASED SONGS!"

**Our guide to The Kinks' planned releases for their 50th anniversary**

The Kinks' half-century will be marked by a year-long reissue programme. It starts in February with 1970's *Lola Vs. Powerman And The Moneygoround, Part 1*, now accompanied by *Part 2* – a second CD based around 1971's *Percy* soundtrack, two unreleased songs, "The Good Life" and "Anytime", and a version of "Lola" with different lyrics. Expanded editions of the first five studio albums plus *Arthur* follow in May, with a deluxe edition of 1967's *Live At Kelvin Hall* in July. There'll be a 5CD boxset in September, with plans to also move the reissue programme through the '70s and beyond.

"Everybody's In Show-Biz is going to be a big one," says Ray, "because one half of it's live, and there are going to be a lot of live outtakes from Carnegie Hall. I think we've got about 60 or 70 unreleased Kinks songs in various stages of development. A song I've been singing a lot lately is 'Life Goes On'. That's an unsung hero that would have been on *Misfits* (1978). Another is 'In A Space' – 'allocated to me by the human race'. That's got a great thumping middle bit. And there's 'Laugh At The World', and 'Hong Kong Moon', which was recorded for an early '80s album, and 'Tender Loving Care', from the [drummer Bob] Henrit days. There are a lot of little treasures. I hope with these reissues they'll all find a home."



Ray Davies performs "Waterloo Sunset" at the London 2012 Olympics closing ceremony, August 12

wants, which had been written down. Which is strange, and kind of sad, when we're brothers."

"I just want to define a few areas," Dave clarifies. "I've said to Ray over and over that I felt really quite undervalued, in the past, and I think he should accept that I'm an active, creative person. It's about self-worth, a lot of it. He's always been so condescending about my contributions to the music. He still talks about me as some sort of kid that's latched onto his wonderful genius. And all the really great stuff was born out of collaboration and mutual support, and maybe our joint genius. I don't want to pump myself up to be anything that I'm not. But I'd like to be appreciated for my contribution to the work.

**"I don't think our love has diminished... it's time reality took over" *Dave Davies***

"I've always been afraid of happiness," Ray confesses. "It's fleeting. It's there for a moment. Because I'm more dark than bright. When I get happy, I'm ecstatically happy. When I'm down, I'm appalling. Dave has become more like that."

A subsequent meeting brought tensions to a head. "I'd booked to fly back to New York and he turned totally weird," recalls Dave. "He was going, 'Why are you leaving, don't leave, we've got things to do...' I thought, if I don't do something to make me happy, I'm going to regret it. So I got my flight back to New York, and it made me feel sad. Because we could've done it – and we might still do..."

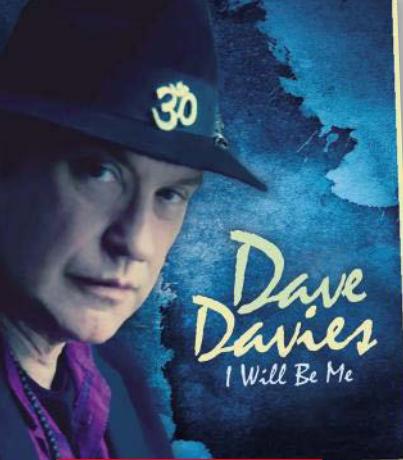
The brothers parted company, each convinced they had the measure of the other. "If it is a game between Ray and I, I realised years ago that he's already lost," Dave believes. "Because the one thing that's going to trip him up every time is that deep down, he loves me. And that is his weak-spot. So he's fucked! If it is a contest – which it's not."

"He knows I can out-psych him," Ray counters. "And ever since we were kids I could beat him at table tennis, snooker, everything. He wants badly to write good new stuff, which is very encouraging. But there's maybe a difference in perception. That's the first hurdle to overcome. None of these widdly-woo guitars, which was a phase he went through in the '90s. I like the solid part of his playing. And when he's at the top of his range, he's a great flamenco singer. I've got two flamenco songs I could try with him, that were written 30, 40 years ago. Because I'm competitive, still. When I can be competitive and get his anger up, that's unstoppable."

GETTY IMAGES

Dave Davies at his first gig in a decade, New York's City Winery, May 28, 2013





WELL RESPECTED MANTRA

## "I COULDN'T STOP WRITING!"

**Dave on his hypnotic and reflective new LP**

"I was so excited about *I Will Be Me*," Dave reflects on his latest solo album - the record that inspired him to finally play live again and attempt to restore his relationship with his brother. "I couldn't stop writing, and I didn't care whether people liked it or not, I just cared that it got finished. Just do the fucking thing. I think as I get older, rather than reflect too much, I think more about the future. That was the whole idea really behind *I Will Be Me*. 'Cote Du Rhone' is one of my favourite songs. It's about a guy who lives near LaBrea and Sunset, in a one-bedroom apartment like a lot of places in Hollywood, where it's a bit rundown but you can just about survive. And he's so disillusioned, he can't even buy a decent bottle of wine. He has memories of when he was young, and he could buy Cote du Rhone, but all he can afford is the cheap wine from the supermarket.

"The way the album fades out and I keep singing, 'You can be who you want to be' is like a mantra. My background is riffs and lines, and the more repetitive the groove, it gets like hypnosis. 'I will do it! Fuck 'em all.'"

Would Ray like to do that again? Would he risk it?

"It's not a risk," he laughs. "You can't get the riffs and the energy without having a hard time. He always liked being edgy, Dave. He still does. After we met, I said, 'Let me drive you home.' He said, [sulky] 'No, I'm walking.' I said, 'I wouldn't get on the No 41 bus at this time of night.' So he's very brave. I'm more... secluded."

"I don't think our love has diminished," Dave says as we prepare to leave the East Finchley café. "I think the stage-play has played itself out a bit, the pretence and the acting. I think it's time reality took over, and started directing the last years of... whatever it is. It's like Cain and Abel."

**B**ACK AT KONK, I push Ray on his intentions for The Kinks' 50th anniversary. People are picturing a triumphant anniversary gig, I tell him, with you, Dave and Mick back together. "Keep the flashbulbs ready," he chuckles. "I think in true Kinks fashion we'll save the great show for the Glasgow Assembly Rooms or somewhere. I wrote a piece years ago called 'The Last Chord'. So I'm looking for the last great chord with The Kinks. I can't do this forever. I want to do some gardening. I'm not quite sure whether it'll be a film, or a book, or a happening, or a think-in. But some interaction will occur," he assures me, as he sees me to the door.

Later, I ring Mick Avory at his home in Richmond. The drummer reveals just how advanced Ray's plans for a reunion actually are. "Well, if we do gigs, or a gig," he explains, "I think you'd call on the musicians who came through the group at the appropriate time, for the songs that they played on. That was one thing Ray touched on." Presumably, latter-day Kinks John Dalton and Jim Rodford (bass), John Gosling and Ian Gibbons (keyboards) and Bob Henrit (drums) should put themselves on standby.

"I told Mick about that the other week," Ray happily confirms in a phone call a few days later. "I think continuity's important. You want to hear the drummer who played that fill on the record. If I was a fan of the band's music, I'd like to see some of that. Everyone's got an ideal gig. If you get 10% of what you really want it'll be fantastic. I started playing *Preservation*, and I'd love to stage that properly. It could be an assembly of things, like the singles, and the well-known songs, and then go into the conceptualised pieces - see the complete arc of the band. And then end on some good new stuff. That's the key to it. The interesting thing about good new stuff is if you can recognise its origins. That riff maybe came from a track called 'Low Budget', and it's incorporated into something new and updated, using the same musicians. There'd be an evolution."

It seems typically provocative of Ray to mention *Preservation*, one of the band's concept albums from the early '70s - a period Dave has a well-known dislike for. But when I call Dave in New York, he

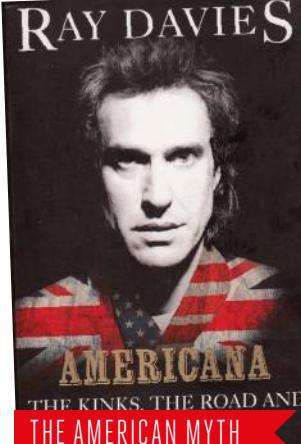
is equally bullish about which musicians he'd like to see play in a Kinks 50th anniversary lineup. "The question I always ask is, what the fuck is The Kinks?" he says. "In the beginning, there was me, Pete and Ray. OK? Maybe that was

The Kinks. Maybe there isn't a Kinks now. It's been diluted, convoluted by all these members that have come in and out. I'd rather work with strangers. Or my son Russ, who's an incredible talent, and my son Daniel. Rather than fishing for new people, maybe we've still got that DNA that made us what we've become. Maybe we could include our family in our new music."

"If they have the Davies DNA in them, I definitely would not want to work with them," says Ray when we speak for the

last time at the end of November. Instead, it transpires that Ray is working diligently to get the real Kinks together again. "Ray sent us an email today, that it'd be an opportunity missed again if we don't do something, and make a decision," Avory reveals. "He said it's down to me and Dave. All I can do is appeal to him, and see what he says."

"It's all the fucking emotions that go with it," Dave sighs. "I don't want to see the legacy of The Kinks soured by two fucking miserable old men doing it for the money. It's going to sour the whole magic, if it's not done with pure intent. Why break the spell, when I've spent most of my life trying to support that magic? Just to shit it all down the toilet. That's what I don't want to happen."

"I know it all seems very confusing," Ray admits. "It's my idea, why don't we do this? By the way, here are my demands. It's difficult for Dave, because he thrives on confusion. My job in life is to harness it and turn it into something magical on record. I hope I've got the ability and staying power to do that again. One of my attributes is guile - with an element of compassion!" he laughs. "I'll try and work something out." A black and white portrait of Ray Davies, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He has dark, wavy hair and is wearing a dark jacket over a patterned shirt.

*Uncut's Ultimate Music Guide on The Kinks* is available from [www.backstreet-merch.com](http://www.backstreet-merch.com) and also as a digital download. Readers can buy Ray Davies' *Americana - The Kinks, The Road And The Perfect Riff* for the special price of £15.19 including free UK p&p (RRP £16.99). To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the reference 'Uncut magazine'; offer ends January 20. Nick Hasted's biography, *You Really Got Me: The Story Of The Kinks*, is out now in paperback

## "You can't get the riffs and the energy without a hard time"

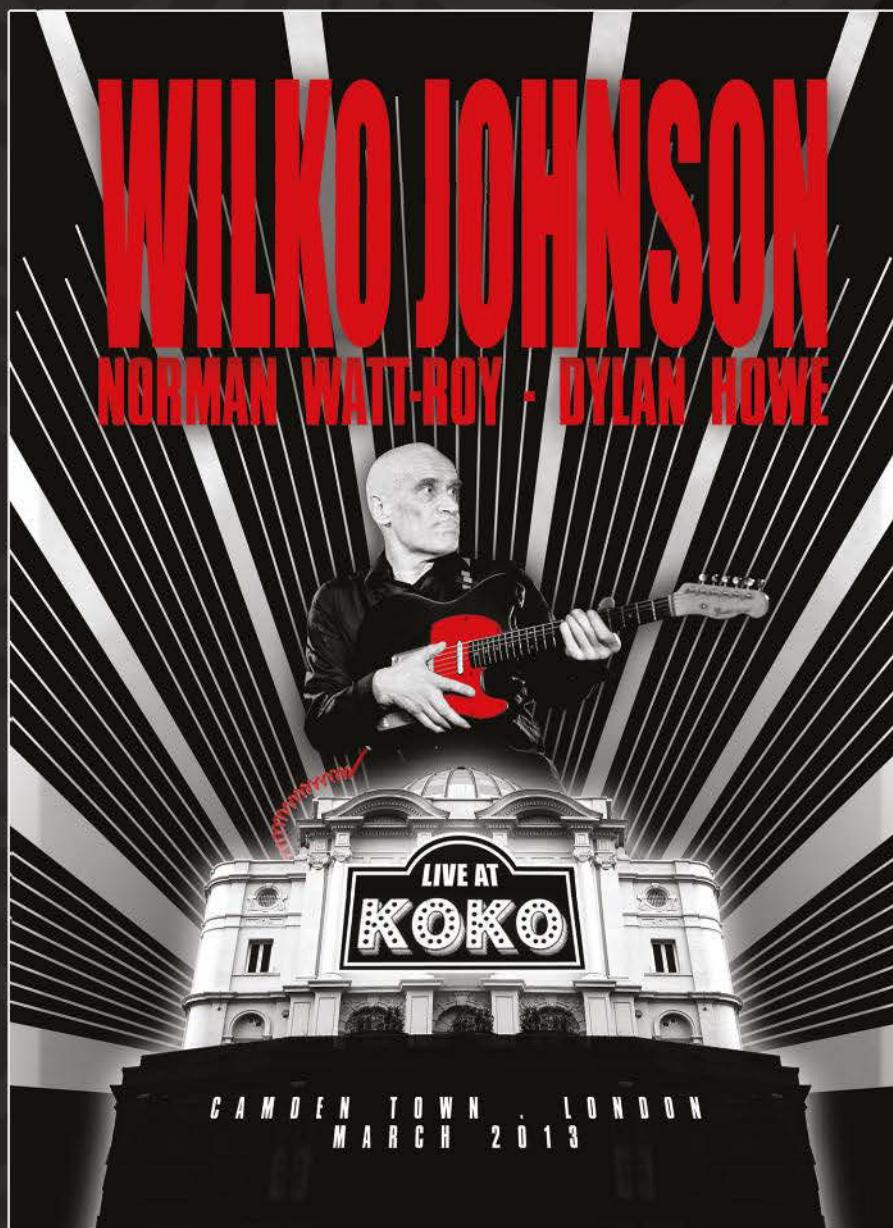
**Ray Davies**

## "IT'LL SURPRISE PEOPLE" Ray reveals all about his new solo album...

"Some of the songs are going to be inspired by and some are quoted from my book *Americana*," Ray says of the solo album he's about to record, "because a lot of the songs were written as a diary at the time, in New Orleans. I'm looking forward to recording 'The Big Weird' and 'I've Heard That Beat Before'. I broke the back of the song about Rory today. She was the rock 'n' roll chick everyone's supposed to have. When it came, it was too late for me, and we both knew that. She's an unfulfilled part of my life. Another song in the book that

really jumped out at me was 'A Long Drive Home To Tarzana'. It was written as an off-the-cuff statement about a manager who lived in [LA neighbourhood] Tarzana. But it means a lot more to me. It means the American trip, the American myth. It made me realise that a song's not complete until you can set it to a melody. It'll surprise people, hearing some songs after reading them in the book. The plan was to get some music out at the same time as the book, but they never listen, those people. It'll be in time for the paperback."

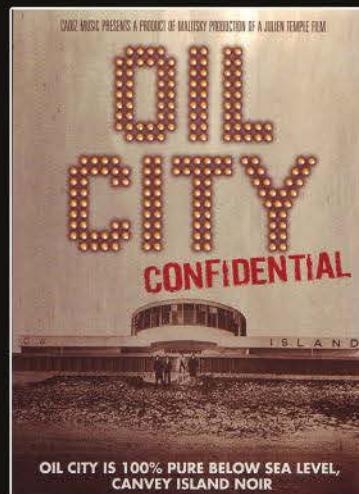
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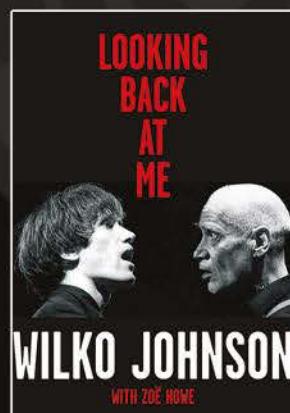
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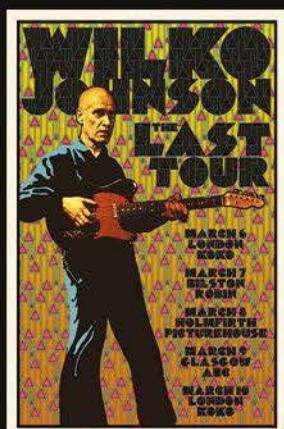
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ELVIS PRESLEY



# “I Was Born About Ten Thousand Years Ago”

Story: Nick Hasted

Photo: Alamy

June 1970. A rejuvenated **ELVIS PRESLEY** arrives at RCA Studio B in Nashville wearing a flamboyant black cape and carrying a lion's head walking stick. His business, though, is to reconnect with the long-lost roots of his music; to create a remarkable album, *Elvis Country*. “I was wondering,” he says, “if any of you guys would like to help me make a few phonograph records?...”

**I**T'S A SLEEPY Sunday afternoon on the outskirts of Bonn. Last night, veterans of Elvis Presley's TCB Band packed out the city's Stadthalle as part of a European tour to celebrate what would have been the King's 78th birthday. Today, a couple of middle-aged men in pompadours from the local Elvis Presley fan club drift around the foyer of a hotel close to the venue. Meanwhile, just a few feet away from them, sitting at the rear of the hotel's restaurant, two members of the TCB Band are reminiscing about a forgotten peak in Presley's career. James Burton was Presley's guitarist and right-hand man from 1969 until the singer's death in 1977. Sporting a thin moustache and a black Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame cap and jacket, he trades stories with bassist Norbert Putnam, a founding member of Alabama's iconic Muscle Shoals rhythm section. They met in Nashville, almost 44 years ago. A copy of the first record they played on together, *Elvis Country*, lies on a table between them – a photograph of the future King Of Rock'n'Roll, aged two, staring out at them from the front cover.

“I was totally stiff with fright before that first

session,” laughs Putnam. “I don't know why, because I'd already had a very successful 10 years in the studio. But something told me, this is bigger than anything that you've ever been a part of. I remember standing in the bathroom, just before I went out there, and I'd look in the mirror and say, 'Dear God, guide my fingers. Don't allow me to be the one to screw up this up.'”

When Elvis Presley entered the studio in June 1970, he did so as a man enjoying an unexpected third-act peak. The NBC TV special – the '68 *Comeback* – his record-breaking live return in Las Vegas, and a batch of sessions at Memphis' American Sound Studio resulting in the acclaimed *From Elvis In Memphis* album had successfully reinvigorated his career after a decade of artistic and commercial decline. These are remembered now as the final flare of Presley's majesty, but the *Elvis Country* sessions tell a different story: of a comeback with some distance left to run. As the surviving musicians who gathered in Nashville's RCA Studio B now testify, they found Presley energised, determined, ready to pull off whatever he set his mind to. “He was fearless,” confirms Putnam. “Elvis didn't have any borders.”



ELVIS COUNTRY is a return to roots. Released in 1971 at the height of country rock, the material – bluegrass, rockabilly, honky tonk, covers of songs by his heroes Eddy Arnold and Ernest Tubb – was deeply personal to Elvis. "Many of them were hits when he was just a kid," acknowledges the archivist who helps compile Sony Legacy's Elvis releases, Ernst Mikael Jorgensen. But astonishingly, it's an album that seems to have been created almost by accident, in the middle of recording something else altogether.

Prior to the *Elvis Country* sessions, Presley had made a successful trip to the American Sound Studios in Memphis, which had yielded "Suspicious Minds" and the aforementioned *From Elvis In Memphis*, produced by Chip Moman. Moman encouraged Presley to work with material outside his normal range – including "In The Ghetto". "They'd made a great LP in Memphis, and they should have cut there again," says Elvis' pianist David Briggs, speaking from his Nashville home. "But I don't think they could get along with Chips Moman. It was politics and business."

Elvis returned to Nashville, to RCA Studio B – where he'd recorded 18 sessions since 1958 – and his regular producer, Felton Jarvis, very different from the demanding Moman. "Felton wasn't a musical guy," says Putnam. "Felton was a pretty good judge of material that normal people would buy, and he was fun. Felton never got in the way."

"Felton wanted to get it back up here where he could control it," adds Briggs. The success of *From Elvis In Memphis* had been noted, though, as Putnam recalls: "Felton said, 'I want you on the next batch of Elvis sessions, 'cos it's got to be more like the American guys, and you guys are Muscle Shoals.'"

Elvis Presley walked into RCA Studio B at 8pm on June 4 to be greeted by some familiar faces – James Burton, who'd made his live debut with Elvis the previous year, David Briggs, harmonica player/organist

## ANOTHER COUNTRY

### "WAIT 'TIL GARFUNKEL HEARS THIS!"

More Elvis takes from the Nashville sessions, including a great version of "Bridge Over Troubled Water"...

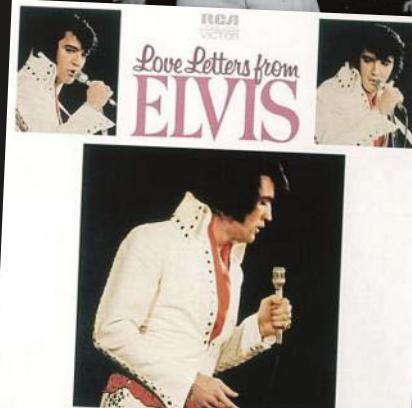
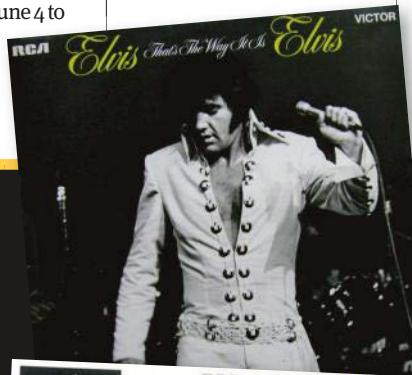
Elvis recorded 38 master-takes during the June and September 1970 Nashville sessions. They didn't go to waste. Two other Elvis albums, released either side of *Elvis Country*, drew on material recorded during these sessions. *That's The Way It Is* was released on November 11, 1970 six weeks prior to *Elvis Country*. Nominally a soundtrack to Denis Sanders' film of the August residency in Las Vegas, it included eight studio tracks from the RCA Studio B sessions, including a barnstorming version of Simon & Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water". "I thought, 'My God, he's tearing this song alive!'" says Norbert Putnam. "He even said something like, 'Wait till Garfunkel hears this!'"

Both *That's The Way It Is* and *Elvis Country* sold half a million copies in America, while the latter gave Presley his highest-charting studio album of the decade – No 12. Less auspiciously, *Love Letters From Elvis*, released on June 16, 1971, only limped to No 33 in the charts. "I just wanted to try 'Love Letters' again," sighs David Briggs, who also played on the version of the song Presley first recorded in 1966. "We didn't have any idea they would put it out. But they named an album after it." Other tracks from the sessions also appeared on February 1972's *Elvis Now*. "It was always a problem with Elvis albums that too much shit was recorded," archivist Ernst Mikael Jorgensen concludes. Elvis never recorded in Nashville Studio B again.



"Elvis would only sing a song three or four times, then move on to something else..."

JAMES BURTON



Charlie McCoy and guitarist Chip Young. There were some new ones, too: the rhythm section of Putnam and drummer Jerry Carrigan – both Muscle Shoals alumni. In effect, this was a new band waiting for him.

"I remember seeing him for the first time," says Putnam. "He comes bursting into the studio, and he's wearing a long black cape, and he's carrying a walking stick with a lion's head with ruby eyes. And he walked in like Prince Leopold, and took his cape off and he tossed it. He stood up and said, 'I was wondering if any of you guys would like to help me make a few phonograph records?' Then he burst out laughing, and he's telling four or five stories, making us all laugh. He reminded me of the kids I knew in high school. He never wore that cape again. Maybe he was dressing up for the new boys. In 1970, he was in great physical condition, he was still working out with his karate every day. I looked at him when he came in, and thought, 'He's the most beautiful man I've ever seen.'"

Working with Elvis was a unique experience for the musicians. "Elvis was on a different planet," Putnam explains. "In the control room would be all the Memphis Mafia and the publishing guys. And no matter how mediocre the first take was, at the end of it, they would leap into the air. They're saying, 'Gas, King! You're the King! Touchdown!' And we're all going, 'Boy, we could make this a lot better...' But they all worked for him. Every man had a chore assigned. I remember one of them brought in a Halliburton briefcase. And inside was an arsenal of weapons. So he was obviously the security guy."

Putnam also remembers some of Elvis' more unusual studio practices. "Studio B was a very traditional, open room. Screens were available, but most nights Presley sang into this mic with a long cable, and he'd come out and stand in front of us, and he'd be dancing. It was very difficult for the engineer. He wasn't interested in recording technique, whatsoever."

"It was almost like he was doing a live show for you," says Burton. "He'd be putting on a show for the musicians."

According to Peter Guralnick's *Elvis biography Careless Love*, a rack of clothes was available for costume changes. "He wasn't changing clothes to impress you," Briggs says. "He was sweating and felt dirty. He was working hard."

HERE WAS LITTLE evidence of how good that work would be when the sessions began. Elvis' publishers Freddy Bienstock and Lamar Fike started off by pitching the sort of tame material he'd been singing before Memphis. "There's every reason to believe the country album wasn't planned," explains Ernst Mikael Jorgensen, who has heard every tape from the sessions. "I think Felton thought he was going to go in there to record an album of pop songs. They started with two British power ballads – 'I've Lost You' and 'Twenty Days And Twenty Nights'. But then Elvis jumps into 'I Was Born About Ten Thousand Years Ago', in one take."

Originally a gospel tune, the boisterous version of "I Was Born..." would weave in and out of *Elvis Country*, an impromptu theme threading the record together. "After Elvis has finished more demanding, big ballads, including 11 takes of 'The Sound Of Your Cry', it's past midnight," Jorgensen continues. "And they start to play 'Faded Love' in a country version, and then they jump into '100 Years From Now' and 'Little Cabin On The Hill' – bluegrass songs like he did at Sun, not serious, with Elvis on his own acoustic guitar, very spirited. And Felton panics. This is developing in a way that he never anticipated, and fast, so at the end of the reel he has to turn the tape over and record on the back, there's no time to get a new one. They did nine songs that first night."

For a typical session, Burton remembers, "Elvis would only wanna sing a song three, four times at most. And after that, he'd move onto something else. He was the greatest at taking the song and redoing it, putting his thing to it, his



## KING ART

**"That is one of the most amazing photographs, isn't it?" says Norbert Putnam. "The looks are already formed, and the curl..."**

*Elvis Country's* rare thematic daring even extended to its sleeve.

The art department at Presley's label, RCA, took the unusual decision to use as the central image on the front cover a then-virtually unseen photo of Elvis, aged two, in a hat and dungarees.

The picture - coloured in by the RCA art boys - is in fact a detail taken from another black and white photo, which is inset in the sleeve's corner, showing Elvis with his parents, Vernon and Gladys. It's an astonishing treatment of Elvis' image - especially when compared to the LPs that followed. The sleeves for 24 of the 28 subsequent albums released in the last six years of his life were generic live shots, Elvis pictured with a mic in hand, demonstrating that never again was such care put into creating his sleeve art.

arrangement. His voice was so powerful, and we had all the freedom in the world to play what we wanted to play. I loved it when Norbert would break out the stand-up bass..."

"Elvis would let you go," continues Putnam. "He never said, 'I'd like you to play like this.' He would take the song and start getting in the mood to do it, then the light would come on and we'd play to that emotion. And he loved it, didn't he? I'd say, 'King' or sometimes we called him El. El, what do you think of the bass part?"

"I had all the freedom I needed," adds Burton. "We'd rehearse a song, and after one time, we knew who was going to play the intro, who was going to play the turn-around, and we all picked out the little frills for each one of us..."

Over the next two nights, there was little sign this interlude was significant. But on June 7, the floodgates opened and six country songs poured out of Elvis. Eddy Arnold's 1954 hit "I Really Don't Want to Know", another version of Bob Wills' "Faded Love", Ernest Tubb's "Tomorrow Never Comes", Ray Price's "Make The World Go Away", Willie Nelson's "Funny How Time Slips Away" and a riotous take on Charlie Rich's 1965 hit, "I Washed My Hands In Muddy Water". "He puts this blues phrasing on 'I Really Don't Want to Know' that makes it wonderful," Jorgensen says, "and then the whole spirit is created."

Presley had effectively hijacked his own session, using it to pay tribute to many of his favourite songs and formative musical idols. Eddy Arnold - pioneer of the 'Nashville sound' - was "definitely a hero", Jorgensen explains, and points out that Arnold was there in the photo commemorating Elvis' signing to RCA. Grand Ole Opry patriarch Ernest Tubb was, Jorgensen says, a "mighty man" to Elvis: "'Tomorrow Never Comes' is a difficult song for Elvis to sing, you can hear him struggling all the way through the takes. But it's an Ernest Tubb song. And Elvis says, 'If I can't sing it all the way through, I'm not going to do it.' Meanwhile, Texan swing king Bob Wills personally also encouraged the young Elvis in 1954. Elsewhere, Charlie Rich, Presley's near-contemporary at Sun, and Willie Nelson complete the night's cross-section of country songs. 'There's no talking, mostly first takes, one

right after another,' reveals Jorgensen. "I wouldn't say the excitement is building that night. What happens is, it flows so naturally. It's more like playing music than recording it."

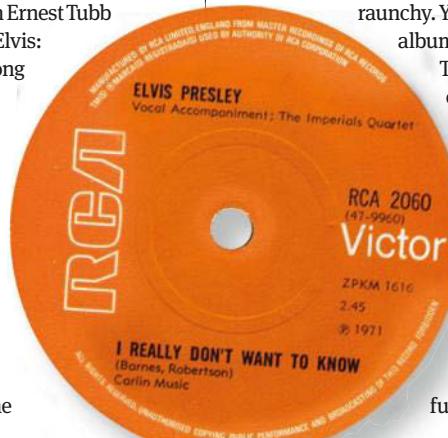
"There was some plan," nods Putnam. "I think he and Felton had considered doing a country LP. But it was a total surprise to us." At the session, Elvis would try to get the songs in one take, and the band would find ways of stalling him while Putnam or Briggs scrawled down arrangements in pencil. The songs, at least, they knew well: "A lot of stuff we'd played on the original sessions," laughs Briggs.

"I thought he should have done it a long time before that," says Charlie McCoy. "It's so natural for him. OK, he grew up doing R'n'B, but his roots are as country as anything else."

"But," Burton emphasises, "we didn't treat 'em like country." "We didn't go for the normal country arrangement," Putnam confirms. "We played them in the way that came naturally. Black music had influenced me heavier than anything, after I became a musician. And I needed to make the bassline more interesting than a country bassline. Jerry Carrigan and I had come up from Muscle Shoals, and you'll hear that R'n'B influence in songs like 'Make The World Go Away' - a little more soul on the bass and drums."

Burton: "When I got out the dobro, for 'Funny How Time Slips Away', Elvis said, 'Come on, baby. Come on...' You know like on 'Make The World Go Away', Elvis' vocal on that [croons delicately] and then the dobro thing really fit that song, and it was different to what you were expecting. And 'I Washed My Hands In Muddy Water', I had a little mud on my strings to get that scratchy sound. Ooh, and 'Faded Love', that was raunchy. Yeah, man. It's one of my favourite albums ever."

The last country song they recorded on the June 7 sessions, "I Washed My Hands In Muddy Water", shows the kind of music they were creating here. A tale of a Tennessee outlaw who can't wash himself clean of his crimes, it's rendered here as exhilarating rock'n'roll, driven by McCoy's blasting harmonica riffs and Briggs' urgent piano vamp, with Elvis himself giving full vent to his vocal abilities. Says ↗



**The King and I: Elvis and his father, Vernon, in Las Vegas, 1969**

Putnam: "He would dive down here and he'd soar up there, and he'd pant into the mic. Elvis made all the primal sounds that human beings exhibit, from blissful love to a primal scream, in one song."

**T**HE MUSICIANS CAME home in the small hours of June 8, many stunned by what had transpired. "It was like you'd just played four quarters of football and you won," says Putnam. "Everyone's gone, and you're sitting alone in your car, and can you get home without hitting a tree? It was exhilarating exhaustion."

The evening of June 8, they went back to RCA Studio B. It was as if the previous night's session hadn't happened. The five songs they recorded – "There Goes My Everything", "If I Were You", "Only Believe", "Sylvia" and "Patch It Up" – were the usual hotch-potch of mid-tempo ballads and love songs. They had completed 35 master-takes in five nights. Presley left Nashville shortly after. On August 10, he began what Colonel Tom Parker dubbed 'The Elvis Presley Summer Festival': a month-long residency at the International Hotel in Las Vegas, filmed as *Elvis: That's The Way It Is*, another triumph.

At some point during his tenure in Vegas, the decision was taken to release a country album drawn from the Nashville sessions. On September 22, Elvis returned to RCA Studio B. Four new songs were added to the 35 they'd cut back in June. Only two of those – Anne Murray's recent hit "Snowbird" and Jerry Lee Lewis' "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" – made the LP. But, as David Briggs recalls, the mood had gone: "James Burton wasn't on that session, and we got Eddie Hinton, which was my idea as he was a great rock'n'roll player. But when Elvis came in and had all these sorta corny songs like 'Snowbird', it's hard to make them anything that's groovy."

Presley lacked enthusiasm for the material. Even before they began "Whole Lotta Shakin'..." he told his band, "We've been doing it too long already." However, David Briggs remembers that their fierce, authoritative take of "Whole Lotta Shakin'..." would come to mean a great deal to Elvis later: "This was just before he died, in '77, when we were supposed to be recording an LP with just piano in Graceland. He used to like to listen to that up in his bedroom when I was with him. He played 'Whole Lotta Shakin'...' every day, 'cos he liked what Jerry Carrigan played on the drums. He wore me out, he must have played it 50 times. 'Listen to this, listen to this!' I was there! I was there! We were just playing around on songs like that... we'd just go, 'Jesus Christ!' and start jamming. It was a way of getting away from all that stuff he didn't like, the stack of bad songs that the Colonel had always agreed to do for somebody."

## PRESLEY VS. PARSONS

### COSMIC AMERICAN ELVIS

**J**AMES BURTON'S GUITAR-playing skills can be heard on many albums aside from Elvis' records. Of chief interest to *Uncut* readers will be his work on Gram Parsons' *GP* (1973) and *Grievous Angel* (1974). "I met Gram when I was playing on The Byrds' records, and of course Gram, me and Chris Hillman became friends," recalls Burton. "Did he and Elvis share an open approach to American music at the start of the '70s? Man, I don't know. Gram was into more of the storytelling, tearjerker music, like the Hank Williams and Merle Haggard-type singers – he was into that bag. He was a little more country, from the Hank Williams side of the music, the more traditional type. It was way different from Elvis. I don't think you can even mention them in the same sentence. Elvis' music was more forceful. Stronger. The background and even the songs were more powerful. And this particular album, *Elvis Country*, is not all country. Do I think that phrase of Gram's, *Cosmic American Music*, applies more naturally to what Elvis did? Oh yeah."



RCA's Studio B, Nashville



Elvis in live film  
*That's The Way It Is*

"OK, Elvis grew up doing R'n'B, but his roots are as country as anything else"

CHARLIE McCOY



James Burton

**E**LVIS COUNTRY was released on January 2, 1971, with the evocative subtitle, 'I'm 10,000 Years Old'. It reached No 12 on the Billboard Hot 100 – the highest place an Elvis album would reach until his death in 1977. In his review for *Rolling Stone*, future Elvis biographer Peter Guralnick considered it among Presley's best "since he first recorded for Sun almost 17 years ago... music that, while undeniably country, puts him in touch more directly with the soul singer."

The surfeit of recorded songs would be spread through a further two albums, *That's The Way It Is* and *Love Letters From Elvis*. "Mostly it was just, 'everybody goes wild,'" remembers David Briggs. "It was like a big gang-bang there. The engineers were lazy, some of them, and they were too busy dancing in the control room rather than working on the EQ. It's probably 10 per cent of what it could have been. And that's Elvis – that's the part that sounds great."

Briggs also contends that 1970 was a pivotal year for Presley, both in the studio and during his ever-expanding Vegas residency. "A lot of that stuff is when it started going bad. Maybe being so constricted in Memphis, when he did that great album, wore him out. Maybe he just didn't like to cut that way. Whereas before he'd sing softer, more in control and didn't sing hardly any bad notes, that was the start of his going down with his vocals. Singing in Vegas could have been a big part of it – that brassy, hard singing above the orchestra."

"It was a shared frustration with the band, that it went too fast and they could have done better," counters Ernst Mikael Jorgensen. "But Elvis never cared for perfection, if the thing had the feel." Elvis' exhilarated vocal outbursts on *Elvis Country* set the template for the unchecked soul of his best '70s singing, and the bombast of the worst. "He was in better shape to pull it off as a vocalist in 1970," Briggs concedes. "It was more special working with him than anybody else."

Back in Bonn, James Burton turns over the sleeve of *Elvis Country* and runs a finger along the tracklisting, before letting it rest on the title, "I Was Born About Ten Thousand Years Ago". "If you go through all the generations of this guy's music in his life," he says, "he might well have been born 10,000 years ago. It was a natural, exciting thing, playing behind that voice. Playing all the hot licks, all at once." ☀

*Elvis Presley – On Stage* tours the UK in May

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# I'm A Believer

BY ROBERT WYATT

How Canterbury's jazz adventurer turned out a hit Monkees cover, tiring out Pink Floyd's drummer and battling *Top Of The Pops* in the process... "The show side of pop? I can't be bothered!"

**F**ROM THE PSYCH pop of early Soft Machine to the cerebral jazz-fusion of Matching Mole, by 1974 Robert Wyatt was intent on following his own singular muse. You would imagine, though, that even

Wyatt's closest collaborators were shocked when he decided to release a cover of The Monkees' Neil-Diamond-penned "I'm A Believer" as his debut solo single. "No, Robert has always been most peculiar," laughs Pink Floyd's Nick Mason, who produced and played drums on the recording, "so nothing very much surprises me with him."

Wyatt has been in a wheelchair since June 1, 1973, when he fell out of a window at a Maida Vale party. But rather than hindering him creatively, his paralysis allowed the drummer to put down his sticks and concentrate on singing, keyboards and songwriting, crafting the experimental, pastoral *Rock Bottom*, produced by Mason and featuring Fred Frith and Richard Sinclair.

Far from starting a more commercial era in his career, though, things didn't run smoothly after the release of "I'm A Believer". An appearance on *Top Of The Pops* led to arguments with the show's producer and threats of a ban, then Virgin refused to release his follow-up single. The irrepressible Wyatt wouldn't have had it any other way, though – the only reservation he has about the track is his own "jigging about" when miming on TV.

"If you're going to do it, do it properly, like Wilko

Johnson... I just thought, note to self, don't do that anymore.

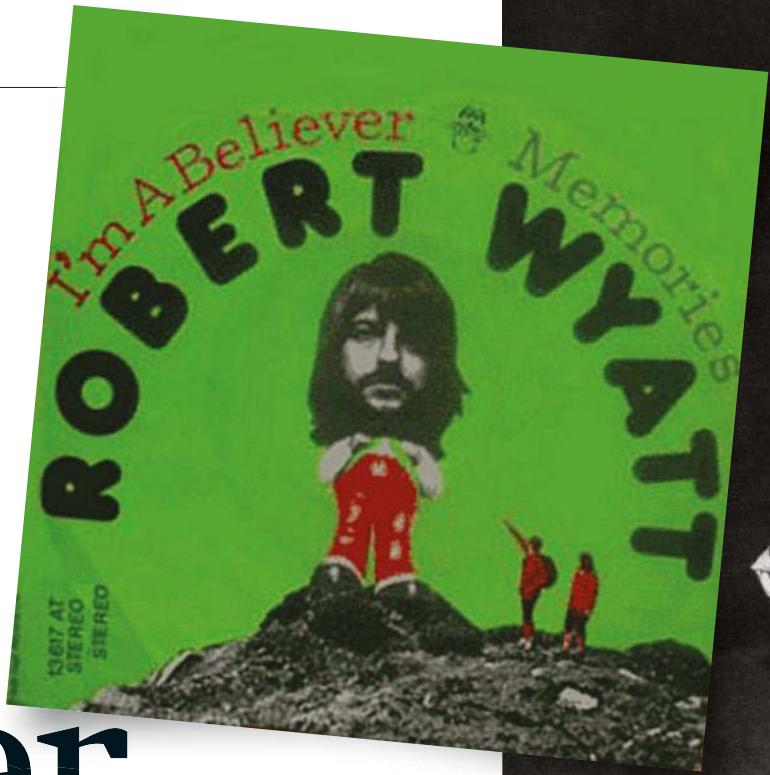
"But we all learn from our mistakes," he says, mock-philosophically. "That well-known saying – well, not that well-known, because I made it up – 'we live and learn, but in that order, unfortunately.'"

**TOM PINNOCK**

**ROBERT WYATT:** I'd said in *NME* or *Melody Maker* that I really liked pop music – to me, it's the folk music of the industrial age, it's what people sing and dance to on a Saturday night. Simon Draper at Virgin, he saw this and he called my bluff, saying "Would you do a pop song?" I'd intended to do "Last Train To Clarksville", 'cause I like that, but I got muddled up.

**NICK MASON:** I met Robert at UFO, then we did some gigs together – we certainly spent time together in New York when Soft Machine were touring with Hendrix. We were all holed up in the same hotel there in 1968. Then I produced *Rock Bottom*.

**DAVE MACRAE:** Was I surprised Robert was doing a Monkees song? Working with Robert,



## KEY PLAYERS



**Robert Wyatt**  
Vocals



**Nick Mason**  
Drums,  
production



**Fred Frith**  
Guitar, violin



**Dave MacRae**  
Piano



**Richard Sinclair**  
Bass

surprises were the norm! He has great mental energy, always looking for new ways to express his ideas.

**RICHARD SINCLAIR:** In The Wilde Flowers with Robert, I remember doing things like Chuck Berry numbers, so "I'm A Believer" wasn't anything unusual from Robert. He always wanted to be a popular singing artist. Blond-haired, quite good-looking, bouncing about – he liked that idea of entertainment, still does!

**WYATT:** One of my friends said, "But Robert, is it a great song?" In one exhibition, Peter Blake had a lot of paintings by monkeys, and somebody said to him, "Oh, they're not very good paintings." He said, "Well,

they're pretty good for monkeys!" So for a Monkees song, it's a pretty good song. I don't feel the need for any hierarchies [*in music*] and there was a slight statement I was making about that. Not being in a group you can do one-off things, have a particular band for a particular thing.



Moving away from  
Rock Bottom: Robert  
Wyatt in 1974

And for "I'm A Believer" it was the right group.

**FRED FRITH:** Robert used to show up at Henry Cow gigs and never failed to say nice things about us. Bill McCormick and Francis Monkman approached me about joining the reforming Matching Mole, but then Robert had his accident and that was the end of that. I visited him in hospital and we became close. Henry Cow had opened for Pink Floyd on numerous occasions between 1969 and 1972, so Nick and I had brushed shoulders. I'd had the unnerving experience of David Gilmour sitting at my feet checking me out while performing... I think Robert and I felt an affinity on many levels, musical, political and especially a shared enjoyment of life's absurdities.

**WYATT:** I did take the liberty of buggering around with the chords to "I'm A Believer". I played the piano part to Dave, and he played what I played him really. Dave's great like that, he can just sort of do anything. Amazing man.

**MACRAE:** Robert would certainly have indicated what he wanted played and I may have thrown in an idea. I think the arrangement was largely osmotic and a natural process. Robert has great mental energy, and this energy acted as a catalyst in generating ideas from others involved.

**WYATT:** I wouldn't have thought the recording took any longer than a day, maybe another day for mixing? I would have thought I'd have done the vocals after, especially as there is some double-

tracking there. I remember there was a bloke from Neil Diamond's publisher who hung around all the time, not doing anything at all, and I thought, 'That's an easy job.' He just traipsed around after us. "I'm from the publishing company." Just helping himself to the freebies knocking about...

**MASON:** Producing Robert didn't entail an enormous amount of hard work. He really just wanted a bit of assistance in the technical side. But I certainly didn't need to tell him anything about how the music went.

**WYATT:** Nick made some crucial decisions. He's also funny. He used to come out of a take and you'd say, "That's great." And he'd say, "Yes, it does a bit, doesn't it." A very funny man!

**MASON:** We probably did the backing tracks in an hour or two. We spent longer putting Fred's stuff on than anything else, the violins and so on. That was all Fred's idea, we let him loose on it.

**FRITH:** There was the instrumental break which they didn't have a plan for, so I wrote the string arrangement on the spot and recorded it. Then I finished up with the lead guitar stuff, which was a first take, just doing whatever came to me in one pass of the song, using my 1958 Gibson 345, volume pedal and Electro Harmonix Big Muff distortion – that was pretty much all I had. I remember Nick being super-complimentary about it and me feeling like a million bucks!

**WYATT:** Nick used to make this joke about a

"Pink Floyd tempo". We said, "We're going to do it a bit faster," and it was the first time he broke into a bit of a sweat!

**MASON:** It was probably faster than all the Pink Floyd tempos throughout history. We always kept to about 70bpm max. My doctor told me never to play faster than my pulse rate... But I was a lot younger and fitter, then, so it was fine.

**WYATT:** It hit No 29, did it? I'm too posh to think about charts... It's not the chart side of pop music that interests me, it's the music itself and what it means to people. There's a competitive edge to charts which I find very tiresome. Most of the records I liked, jazz records, probably sold about 5,000 tops, ever. I remember somebody advising me, "DJs would rather have the chorus first, if they're going to play it on the radio." I thought, "Hang on, wait a minute, music should be about expanding your freedoms and possibilities, not about contracting them."

**FRITH:** My brother [sociomusicologist and journalist] Simon was impressed when we appeared on *Top Of The Pops*! But my memory of it is mostly around the sadness and futility. Seeing The Tremeloes buttoned into awkward-looking satin suits and looking sulky and resentful as their manager told them what to do, just observing the pop game from close up. We had to be in the studio at 11am on call for rehearsals. We were hustled onstage at about 5.40pm and when we



Robert Wyatt with producer Nick Mason in CBS, London, 1974

were supposed to run it through, everyone disappeared – union-mandated break – so we never actually rehearsed or had any idea what was going on.

**SINCLAIR:** I'd been on with Caravan in 1970, playing "If I Could Do It All Over Again...". It was funny doing it for Robert and his pop tune!

**MASON:** Pink Floyd had been on *TOPP* in '67. It hardly changed from its first to last show as far as I remember. The same slightly uncomfortable dancing and some DJ shouting. We appeared with Robert two weeks running, and the second week they didn't want us to show the wheelchair.

**WYATT:** The producer said, "I'm embarrassed by that wheelchair, it's not entertaining, can you go and sit in this wicker-work thing?" I told him to fuck off, and he said, "You will never work on this programme again" – but as I just told you, I am too posh to care, frankly. I mean, I can't wheel a wicker chair, and I need to be able to get out quick in case the cops are coming, for fuck's sake!

**FRITH:** Richard Branson went out and bought an antique wheelchair, and insisted that if the BBC was going to object to Robert's wheelchair, they surely couldn't object to this beautiful antique version. The whole thing was irrational to the point of absurdity, but Richard insisted and won the day, making the BBC look extremely foolish in the process. And, of course, Ian MacDonald made sure there was a picture in the *NME* afterwards.

**WYATT:** We were on the cover of the *NME*, all in wheelchairs, it looked great – most of us who played at my Drury Lane concert are on there, Mongezi Feza's just behind Julie Tippett, and Mike Oldfield is there. Nick Mason's face is stuck on. It was a real laugh doing it, although there were, I believe, people who wrote to the *NME* saying it was a bit tasteless... I can't think why.



thought it was a very good idea. Especially on steps – wheelchairs on steps are dangerous, they're rubbish!

There are people in wheelchairs and with other disabilities, who I know from letters and so on, who were very encouraged that far from my career as a musician being over, it actually got much stronger in terms of my contribution to it. But there were others who thought that I should have been more militant and proactive in terms of disability rights and so on. And I accept that, but the fact is I'm not a professional cripple, I'm still just a musician.

**FRITH:** I remember almost nothing about Drury Lane [Sept 8, 1974], except being told which movie stars were in the audience. But listening to it now, I almost prefer the live version of "I'm A Believer"!

**WYATT:** It made a good encore, it was a good laugh. We had Julie Tippett singing, Mike Oldfield and Fred fiddling away at guitars, two drummers, Laurie Allan and Nick Mason, and Hugh Hopper on bass. And Gary Windo and Mongezi Feza doing little horn parts. Dave Stewart was on the organ, and he came up with that live fairground coda, and it's funny, because it was Drury Lane which, of course, 150 years beforehand, had music exactly like that.

**MASON:** That was the only time the song was performed – unless you count The Monkees. I remember it being fun, there were a lot of people who were fond of Robert there. It was very much a one-off show,

and they're difficult as they're always under-rehearsed, but it was fun.

**WYATT:** My follow-up single was "Yesterday Man", a song by Chris Andrews. We never pretended to be reggae but it was obviously influenced by that feel, which was very much the heartbeat of London around that time.

**MASON:** Did I produce that? Right. I can't remember what happened to that.

**WYATT:** The boss of Virgin said it was a bit "lugubrious". I thought, 'Oh, that sounds good,' and I looked in the dictionary, and it isn't. He wouldn't put it out. I wouldn't have minded, but I had to pay for the recording. If you sold millions like dear Mike Oldfield did, then you still got a lot of money, but if you only sold, what did I sell in the end? 50,000? I'd never get any of that back because of the cost of the second LP and so on... So I just said I can't do this stuff with Virgin anymore. So they said, "Well, you're not doing anything with anyone else." So I didn't for a while, I just went into politics. But there's no money in that, of course – it's mostly charity donations at the *Morning Star* bazaar, so that's not making a living, is it?

I like pop music, but that show side of it, I can't be bothered. When you get to a certain profile in pop, you're told what to do and you have to fit into a format, and that was completely alien to me. So I couldn't have been a pop musician, really. I started

out playing pop songs, but we made our own rules and did what we liked. No-one was gonna be pushed around by any of these people. ☺

## FACT FILE

• Recorded at: CBS Studios, London

• Released: September 1974

• Personnel: Robert Wyatt (vocals), Fred Frith (guitar, violin), Richard Sinclair (bass), Dave MacRae (keyboards), Nick Mason (drums)

• Label: Virgin

• UK chart position: 29

• US chart position: N/A

## TIMELINE

June 1, 1973: Wyatt falls out of a window at a party and is paralysed  
July 26, 1974: His second album Rock

Bottom, produced by Nick Mason, is released – sessions for the "I'm A Believer" single begin after

September 8, 1974: Wyatt plays an all-star concert at London's Drury Lane Theatre  
September 20, 1974:

Wyatt and those featured on the song, with Andy Summers on guitar, appear on *Top Of The Pops*

September 28, 1974: "I'm A Believer" hits No 29 – Wyatt's highest ever chart position

28 May - 25 June

**THE EAGLES**

Prince of Wales Theatre

**THE BOOK OF MORMON**

30 March - 3 April

**ALISON MOYET**

5 - 16 April

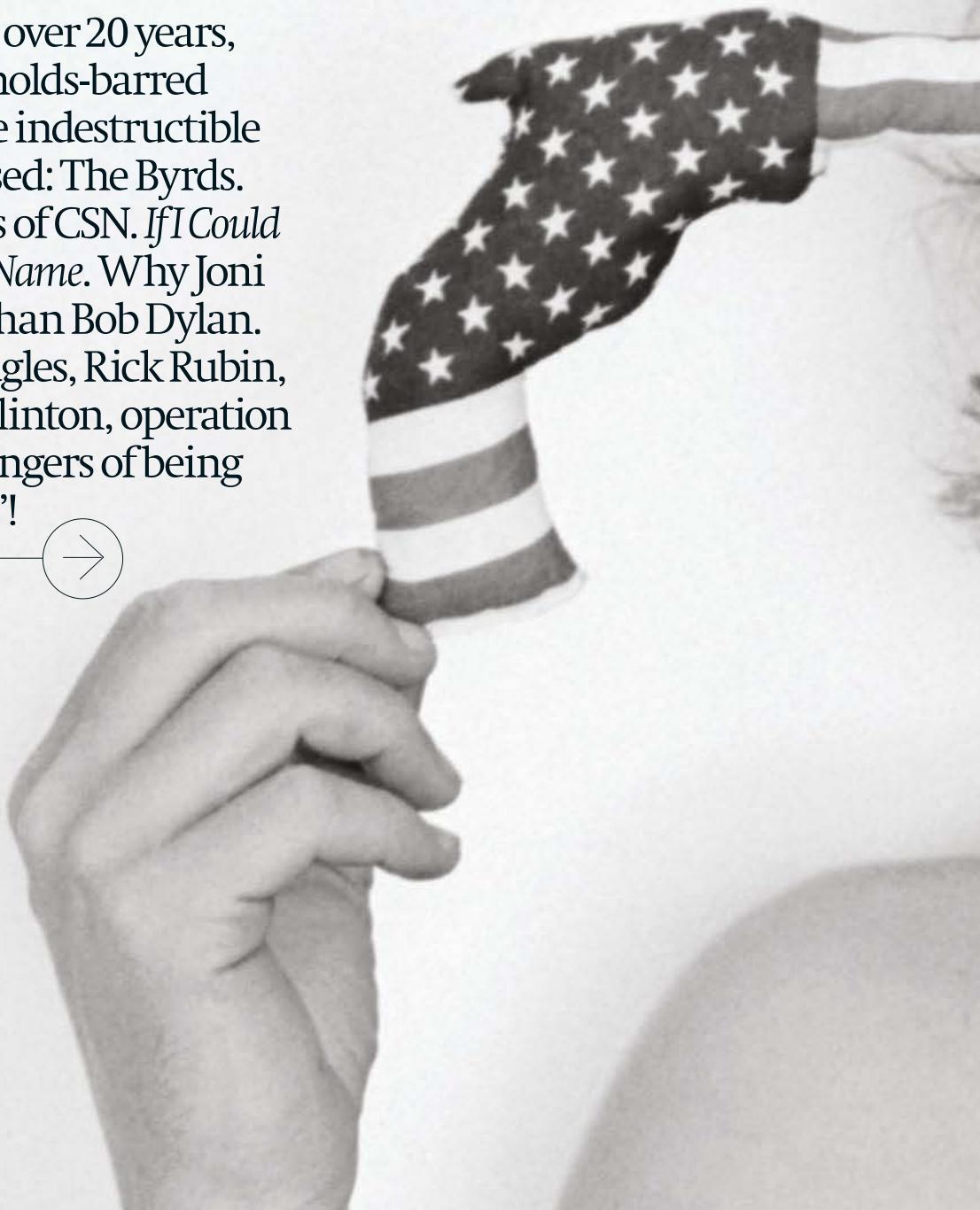
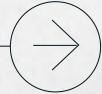
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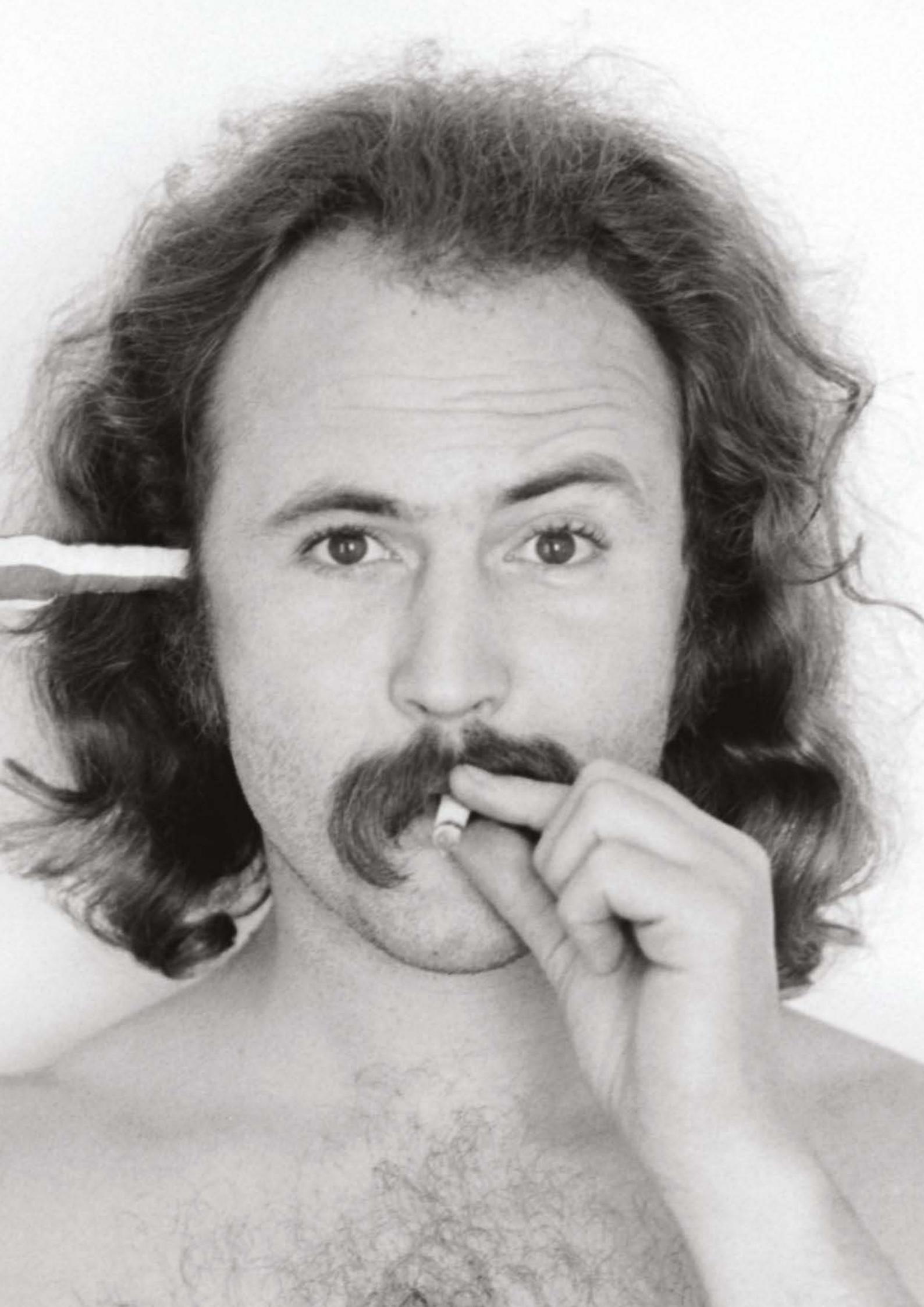


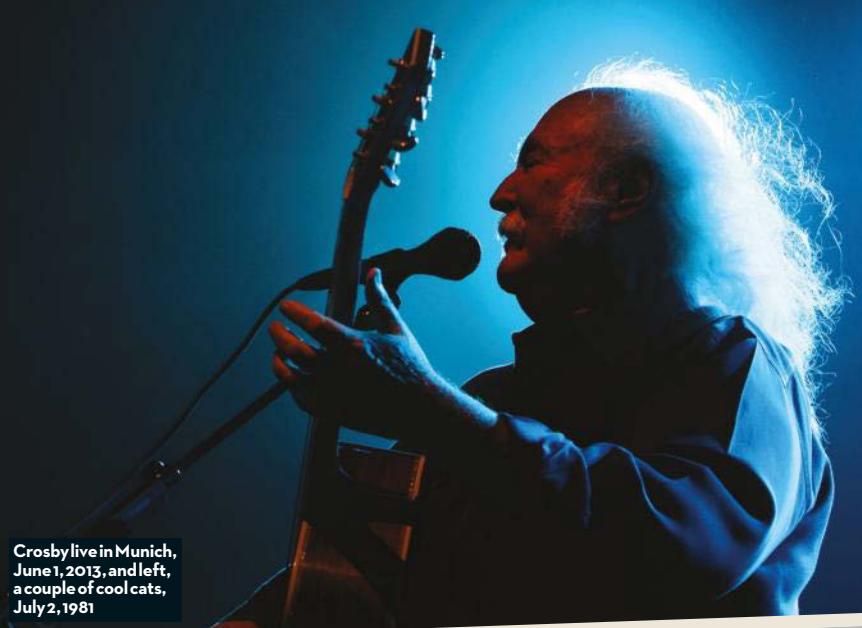
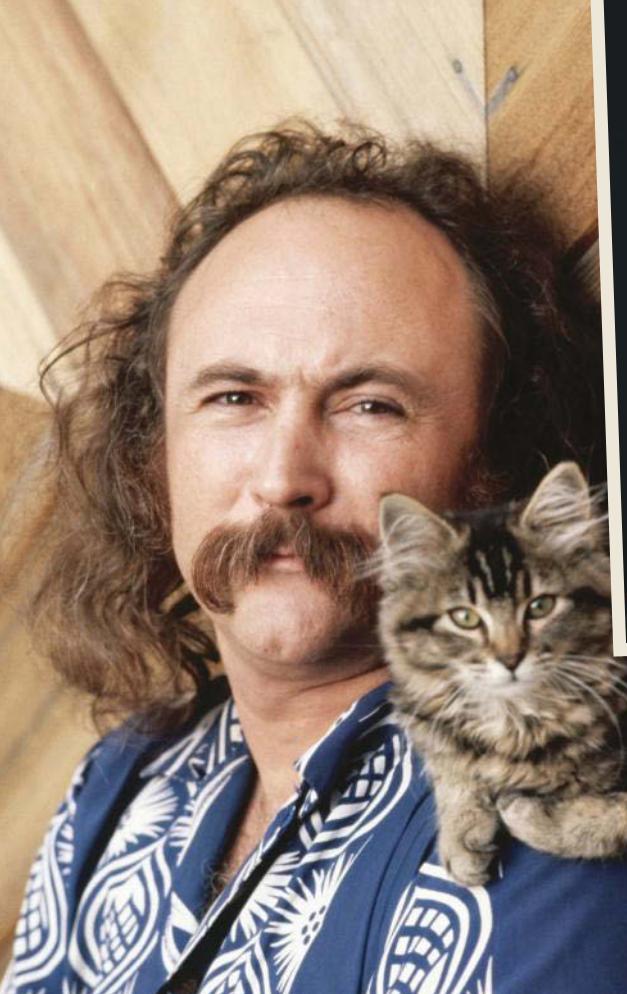
Story: Andy Gill  
Photograph: Henry Diltz/Corbis

# ‘We Were All As CRAZY AS FRUITBATS!’

As DAVID CROSBY releases his first solo album in over 20 years, *Uncut* enjoys a no-holds-barred pow-wow with the indestructible Croz. To be discussed: The Byrds. The shooting skills of CSN. *If I Could Only Remember My Name*. Why Joni Mitchell is better than Bob Dylan. The Beatles, the Eagles, Rick Rubin, Jerry Garcia, Bill Clinton, operation scars... and the dangers of being “a wake-and-bake”!







Crosby live in Munich, June 1, 2013, and left, a couple of cool cats, July 2, 1981

#### BYRD'S-EYE VIEW

## THE BYRDS AND THE BEATLES

Thanks to distinctive harmonies and hip characters, in the mid-'60s, The Byrds became known as the "American Beatles", and as the most gregarious band member, Crosby quickly became close friends with his English counterparts.

"I watched them make *Sgt Pepper*," he recalls. "I went to Abbey Road nearly every night. It was an astounding experience. I came in one night - blitzed, I admit - they were behaving very strangely, and they sat me down on a stool, in front of speakers the size of coffins in the middle of this huge room, then they go up to the control room and leave me all alone, and play 'A Day In The Life'!"

"They said I was the first person to hear it. It got to that piano chord at the end, and my brains ran out into a puddle on the floor, I just couldn't believe it. Because you can't do that, you can't be in the middle of this beautiful song and then just stop and go, 'Woke up, got out of bed, dragged a comb across my head' - McCartney, he's so fucking good! I got to the end of that, and there was not much left of me!"

**They're not that weird! But one thing struck me: in "Slice Of Time", you say, "My teacher said time was elastic". You have a teacher? I thought you were the teacher!**

No, no, no! I'm the goofball! I don't have a specific teacher, life is my teacher, but... I'm not in control of what comes out of my head, man! I'm not a constructionist, I don't sit there and think what would be the cool thing to say. Stuff comes, and I write it down, then I try and shape it as best I can into a song that's singable. It just seemed right: "My teacher said time was elastic, I wonder what I'll find in it." I liked how it sounds.

**That seems to be the creative process for many writers: they don't question it, when it happens, it happens.**

I often write some of my best words when I'm falling asleep: when the verbal crystallisation level is going to sleep, another level which makes longer leaps of connection, and is more intuitive, gets a shot at the steering-wheel for a second. It's that moment of half-awake, half-asleep, and it's happened over and over again. I had a song called "Shadow Captain": I woke up at 3am, I was off watch, a hundred miles off the coast of California, I got up from my bunk and wrote the whole song down, as it is now, without changing a word. I get to the end, "Shadow captain of a charcoal ship, trying to give the light the slip", and I think, 'Croz, you are so fucking cool!' I'm thrilled by it, but I feel as though it's been trapped in my head, as though I've been gifted it.

**There are those writers that can go into an office every day, sit down and work at it.**

Dylan used to get up in the morning, straight, cup of coffee, sit down at the typewriter - he had a work ethic, which seems like something crazy to say about him. I mean, talk about crazy as a fruit bat! Bob loves to screw with your mind. I went with him to sing on a record, and I said, "OK Bob, show me the song," and he says, "Ah, let's just go in and cut it." I say, "Bob, I've seen this movie before, sing me the song, so I've got a chance." He goes, "All right," looks at me out of the corner of

The Byrds with Dylan at Ciro's nightclub, Sunset Strip, (Crosby left) in 1965



#### You have your first studio album in over 20 years, *Croz*, out this month. Why so long between albums?

Because I love making music with Graham, and I love making music with Crosby, Stills & Nash, and I love making music with Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. I've made eight solo albums over the years, but I'm a slower writer than, for instance, Neil, who writes three songs a week.

#### Your new songs are very reflective pieces...

Go ahead and say it: they're weird. I can handle it!

his eye, and he sings me the song, one time. Then he says, "All right, let's cut this thing!", we go in the room, and he sings it completely different. On purpose! I'm just out there floundering, trying to find something that I can sing.

#### How did The Byrds start?

I started going up and hanging out with Roger and Gene, we would sing together at The Troubadour. Gene was from a family of 11 from somewhere like Mississippi, he had no clue what the rules were, so he would just do it in a way that somebody else hadn't thought of. And Roger was so smart, he'd listen to it and go, "Well, we could just do this and this to it," and boom, it's a record! I almost hate giving Roger as much credit as I do, but you can't deny it – he was the moving force behind that band, and he did create the arrangements for the songs.

#### What part did your first manager Jim Dickson play in the band's development?

We went to Jim Dickson because he was the guy I knew who knew more about show business than I did. He said, "Yeah, you got a band, we'll get you a bass player and a drummer, and it'll happen, and you're gonna make it, this is how we're gonna do it." And he knew how: he created a scene around us, he'd have us play some big movie star's party, he did a lot of good things. Then he got hold of a horrifically bad demo, of somebody whose name I can't remember now, singing "Mr Tambourine Man" very badly! We listened to it, and Roger, who has a gift for being able to translate from one mode into another, he heard that song and knew how to make it into a record. I sang good harmonies on it – that's what I do – but Roger did it. Roger was at least 50 per cent of The Byrds.

#### So Roger effectively invented raga-rock?

Oh, Christ! You know what? The music business always wants to label things, because once they've labelled you, they don't have to think about you. They tried to say we were so many things – we were folk-rock, then jazz-rock when we did "Eight Miles High", then raga-rock when we did something else. About that time, we got the giggles about it, really badly: you wouldn't believe some of the other ones we thought of! But it's nonsense.

#### In The Byrds, it must have been like riding a tiger: you're young guys, your first record is an enormous global smash, you're showered with fame and fortune and acclaim. What are you going to do with that?

Well, we did what we should have: we made good records – *Turn! Turn! Turn!* was fantastic, *Younger Than Yesterday* was a good album – especially once Chris [Hillman] started writing too. See, that's one of the strengths of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young: we all write completely differently, it gives us this enormously wide palette of colours to paint with. The same thing happened with The Byrds: I started writing, Chris started writing, and the whole thing widened out.

#### Then you got booted out of The Byrds. What were The Byrds working on at that point?

The one where they put a horse's ass on the cover in place of me! I don't know what they meant! Moi? We had pretty much gotten on each other's nerves by that time. The funniest part of the whole thing was that on the way out, their parting line was, "We'll do better without you!" Gotta be careful what you say, because that stuff always comes back to bite you...

#### Legend has it that "Triad" broke up the band...

Not true! I think it had mostly to do with my ego, and my wanting a bigger share of the pie, because I thought I was starting to write pretty good stuff. And also Roger, like the rest of us, is as crazy as a fruit bat – we all were – and it's not an easy thing to balance a bunch of egos that have just been given a million bucks and have no idea what they're doing

## "Hard drugs never made anyone play or write better..."



BYRD'S-EYE VIEW

## IF I COULD ONLY REMEMBER MY NAME

The making of a Crosby classic, with a little help from his friends

Almost as soon as they had formed, the individual members of CSN were already busily beavering away on solo projects. This, Crosby confirms, was planned. Stills, possibly piqued to action by the prolific solo start made by his old Buffalo Springfield jousting partner Neil Young, was the first of the trio to release a solo album, in late 1970; but Crosby's *If I Could Only Remember My Name* followed just a few months later, a blissful, ethereal work featuring multi-layered vocal experiments. It remains a distinctive, *sui generis* album over four decades later, beloved in the most unexpected quarters – in 2010, the Vatican newspaper

*L'Osservatore Romano* pronounced it second (after *Revolver*) on a list of apparently papally approved favourites.

*If I Could Only...* was recorded at Wally Heider's Studio in San Francisco, where Crosby had relocated to renew old friendships with such as Jefferson Airplane's Paul Kantner and Quicksilver's David

and are taking drugs and stuff. Drugs have probably been the single most destructive force in music. I think we've lost more people that way than any other. I tried writing a list of drug casualties on a legal pad, and when I got to the end of the second page I stopped, it just became too fucking grim. How good would Janis be singing right now? How good could Jimi play by now? How hard could John Belushi make you laugh?

#### A lot of creative people worry that they may lose their ability if they stop using.

I think that's absolute nonsense, they come up with that to justify their drug habit. I don't think hard drugs have ever made anybody play or write better, they've always been a destructive force. I know they were with me, and you can chart it: the drug-use curve goes up, and the writing curve goes down, at the exact same rate. They cross at a certain point, until you get down here, and I stopped writing. I was only doing drugs.

#### CSN is like a convoy whose vessels get separated and come back together again periodically.

And we planned it that way. I hate to claim that we

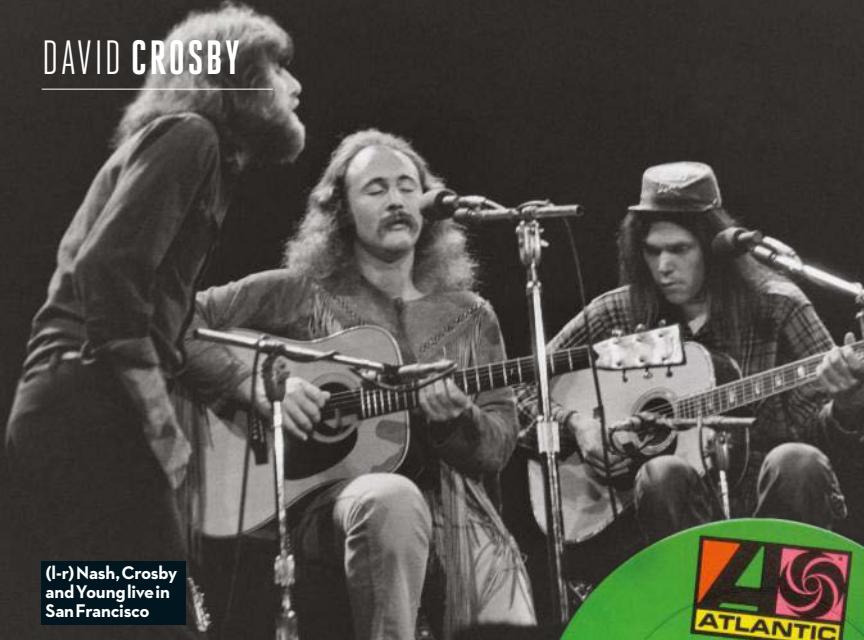
had just died. I didn't know what to do, I had no way to deal with it, so I hid in the studio – it was the only place I felt comfortable. Jerry came by every night. Every night he'd show, and we'd tap away. I had a double handful of songs, and they were good. I was doing things nobody had heard before, like 'Tamalpais High' and 'Song With No Words', using your voice like a horn stack. They were loving that we'd do shit nobody else had done.

"God, I miss Jerry. I wrote a poem about him the other night. I always thought that if we had to have someone speak for musicians, I'd have had Jerry. 'Cos he'd have come at it differently."

HENRY DILTZ/CORBIS



Dead friendly: Jerry Garcia with Crosby in 1971



(l-r) Nash, Crosby and Young live in San Francisco

made a plan that worked, because we were a bunch of goofballs, but we did make that plan, on purpose, and it did work. We wanted a motherhood that we could then go out in ones, twos, threes and fours, to work from. It's one of the only times in showbusiness that somebody made a plan and it worked.

#### Did you find it strange that Stephen wanted to invite Neil into the band?

Yes, after what they'd been through before – and, we had the No 1 record in the country! What the fuck did we need him for? But I couldn't believe anybody could write as well as him. Then I wanted him in the band as well, 'cos songs are it. This is the truth: songs are the jacks-or-better, they're the essence of the thing. If you don't have a song, all the production in the world is just polishing a turd. You have to have a song that makes people feel something, that takes them on a voyage: "Eleanor Rigby", which is one of my all-time favourite songs, takes you to a different place. No other writer in the world at that time would have had the courage to talk about those people. None. We were all writing about, "Ooh, you're so beautiful, will you suck my dick?" But that song takes you to places you've never been before. It's all about the songs: if you don't have 'em, you got Whitesnake! You got Kiss! If you don't have a song, you need fireworks. You have the musical equivalent of wrestling!

HENRY DILTZ/CORBIS

#### BYRD'S-EYE VIEW

## A BYRDS REUNION?

**"Not a chance!" says Crosby...**

With 2014 marking the 50th Anniversary of the formation of The Byrds, hopes are high among fans for another Byrds reunion. The first reunion of the original lineup occurred in 1973, producing the lacklustre Byrds, whose bland tone Roger McGuinn blamed partly on the strength of Crosby's pot: "Half a joint, you couldn't do anything," he claimed. Subsequently, late-'80s shows as The Byrds by Gene Clark and Michael Clarke prompted a legal challenge from McGuinn, Crosby and Hillman, who responded with reunion concerts of their own. This time, though, there is unlikely

to be any fresh alliance of the remaining members. "Not a chance," says Crosby. "I've asked Roger over and over. I've told him, 'Roger, you don't have to like me, just let me fly wing-man - you lead, I'll follow, I just wanna make that music.' He called me and said, 'I hear you're still telling people I hate you.' I said, 'Well, not exactly, though I'm probably not your favourite person...' He said, 'That's not it. I don't dislike you at all; I just love what I'm doing. I'm a folkie, I've played folk more times than rock, and I don't want to be in a rock'n'roll band, I'd sooner join the army!' 'That one got me! It's a shame, as Chris and I would love to do it. You can lead a horse to water...'"



Live at the Troubadour, LA, Nov '72: a shot from the cover session for reunion LP *Byrds*



#### So who's your favourite songwriter?

I think in a hundred years they'll look back and say, "Who was the best writer?", and I think it will be Joni. She's as good a poet as Bob, and she's a *waaaay* better musician. I produced her first album, and I was breaking up with her at the time. That was not comfortable. Falling in love with Joni Mitchell is a bit like falling into a cement mixer! I could bring you a list of songwriter guys – Nash, James Taylor, Jackson Browne, and so on, who would all testify to that! When we were together, I had a trick I used to enjoy doing. I had the best pot – 'cos I had the first sinsemilla that came into California, a kilo of it – and I'd give people a joint, and they'd be expecting the usual Mexican weed, and they'd be gaga; then I'd say, "Go on, Joni, sing them a song!" Ha ha ha! They'd walk out of my place completely scrambled!

#### Did you learn much about business from David Geffen and Elliot Roberts?

Yes. A great deal. Say what you want about them, they may be cold and they may be tough, but they knew what they were doing. We were earning millions of dollars, and doing stadium tours before anybody. They understood how to maximise the success of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, and credit where it's due, they did maximise it, they did get us the most amount of money that they could conceivably get out of it. And walked off with a considerable amount of it!

#### You spent a lot of time in San Francisco as well as Los Angeles, and I get the impression that the Bay Area musical community regarded the LA musical community as a bit showbizzy...

They did. And it was! I was leaving behind bands like Paul Revere & The Raiders, and going to hang out with my old friend Paul Kantner and these incredible people like Grace Slick and Jerry Garcia and Phil Lesh. But yes, there was a definite difference between the two communities. And I didn't want to be showbizzy Hollywood, I wanted to be like those guys – very free, breaking down the barriers, stretching the envelope, pushing the walls back. I wanted to be like that, so I moved up there, and lived on my boat in Sausalito. One of the best times of my life.

#### There was a CSN covers album mooted at one point?

At some point, that damn thing's gonna come out, I'll tell ya. We were on our way to making a good record, but the chemistry with Rick Rubin was not that good. I think it was something about the day I suggested there should be another Beatles song on the album and he told us, "There'll only be one Beatles song on this record." We all looked at each other and thought, 'He's appointed himself the sole arbiter of what goes on the record...'

#### Did the band's drug intake get in the way of the music?

Well, duuhh! Of course the drugs got in the way. That's what



Limo lovers: Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young in a limousine en route to Big Bear Lake, CA, 1969

they do. Though I don't think there's much harm in smoking pot, I never have done. It helps me at night, eases my shoulders - 'cos I've got two very bad shoulders - and it helps me sleep. I don't think it's smart to be a wake-and-bake, to get up and start your day with it, because you're not going to get anything done that day!

**When I was re-reading your autobiography *Long Time Gone* recently, I was struck by the frontispiece photo of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young in bandoleros, with shotguns and so on. It was *Desperado*, three years before. Are CSNY to blame for the Eagles?**

We kinda are! We were all friends, we knew the same girls, and you couldn't help loving 'em. But the Eagles, you gotta admit, man, even though they had a different approach to it, they tried to do the record, every time. Exactly, to the note. I've had friends who were in that band, who shall remain nameless for fear that Henley's goons will find them, tell me that Don would actually come by their room later and say, "Hey, you know that part where you did that thing? Don't do that." Ha ha ha! God bless him, Don's always been really nice to me, I've had other people tell me he's freakin' Hitler, but to me he's always been a gentleman, a nice guy, and extremely smart.

**The last time I met you, it was election season, and you were very bullish about John Kerry's prospects. You were walking around with a T-shirt reading, "Somewhere in Texas, a village is missing its idiot".**

That's a very fair assessment! That man was an imbecile! Posing in a flight-suit saying, "Mission accomplished"! He didn't have a clue! He did us a lot of harm. If that sonofabitch Clinton had just been able to keep his flies closed... I liked Clinton a lot, he was a Rhodes Scholar, very bright...

**...and he played an instrument, too.**

Yes. Not well, but the feeling was there. And America was in the black. Since then, we've been borrowing from the Chinese - now there's a really smart idea! Nice people to owe money to - not! You know what's gonna happen? We're gonna have an economic collapse, and default on China. And then the fur will fly. But they can't nuke us, 'cos those subs are still down there, underneath the ice-caps, and if you nuke us, a week later they'll surface, and turn your country to glass.

**Are you still against gun control?**

It all depends on where you come from, and how you got to guns. I was raised on a farm - we grew avocados and lemons and stuff - and in that milieu, when you got to be about 12, 13, you got a .22 rifle. And I got pretty good with it - I could take a lemon off a tree, y'know? I was taught how to shoot properly and safely, and it was all part of American life, a normal thing. Then guns became gang-bangers with 9mm with 50-shot clips and they're spraying them around, *braaapp!*, and guns got a bad rep. But all three of us [CSN] shoot, and we haven't started a war all week!

**Is the 1974 live album finally going to appear?**

Oh yeah! It's coming out, and I can tell you some good news: we have video! We have some amazing footage. And Neil finally approved it! We showed him two songs where he was so spectacularly good - "Pushed It Over The End" and "Only Love Can Break Your Heart" - he couldn't deny it. We were, at that time, one of the best bands in the world. ☺

New album *Croz* is released January 28 on Blue Castle Records



The Byrds in 1965: (l-r) Clarke, Hillman, Crosby, McGuinn and Clark

## HOW TO BUY...

# CROSBY & CO ON CD



8/10

jangling Rickenbacker 12-string and sylvan harmonies applied to material mostly culled from Gene Clark's singular songbook and Bob Dylan's fourth album.



9/10

psychedelia, this finds The Byrds expanding in all directions, from baroque folk music to electronics, backward guitars to jazz ragas, as Crosby, Hillman and McGuinn share songwriting duties.



9/10

three of his songs appear on what many consider the most satisfying Byrds album, its disparate sonic experiments sculpted into a seamless flow.

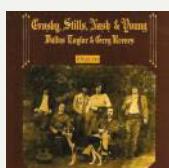
## CROSBY, STILLS & NASH

Crosby, Stills & Nash



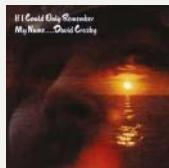
9/10

The quintessential Laurel Canyon album, mixing confessional intimacies with political broadsides, crystalline harmonies with dense webs of acoustic guitar, winsome with whimsy.



9/10

Though not as collectively recorded as its predecessor, the material and performances here are just as compelling - not least Crosby's tonsorial *cri du coeur* "Almost Cut My Hair", source of the hippy notion of letting your "freak flag fly".



8/10

Recorded at a traumatic time for Crosby, following the death of his girlfriend Christine Hinton in 1969 (see panel, p47) his solo debut album profits from the collaborative efforts of West Coast A-listers like Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Jerry Garcia and Jorma Kaukonen; but it's Croz's vocal experiments that give the album its unique, ethereal ambience.

# Mogwai

**The Scottish experimentalists on their noisy career – featuring soundtracks, synths and “wild wolves on chains”...**

## F

OUNDED IN 1995 and initially a trio, Glasgow's Mogwai made their debut with "Tuner/Lower", a self-pressed seven-inch in thrall to Slint and Codeine. They went on to synthesise post-rock, metal, slow-core, instrumental soundtracks, Krautrock and electronica into something

distinctively their own, moving well beyond the "quiet/loud" aesthetic that dominated their early years. Their reach has encompassed a cover of Black Sabbath's "Sweet Leaf", on obscure, absurdly titled split single "Two Sonic Scratches Of The Big Bad Rock Arse", substantial remix projects and scores for art movies, such as the cultish and acclaimed *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait*. As they release their latest studio set, *Rave Tapes*, Mogwai reassess the highs and happenstance of an impressive 10-album career.



A very young team...  
Mogwai in 1996



### YOUNG TEAM

CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND, 1997

Demonstrating from the off a disregard for recording conventions, Mogwai wrote a set of brand new songs for

their debut, defining the formidable quiet/loud dynamic that was their early trademark.

**STUART BRAITHWAITE:** We made it really hard for ourselves, because we'd done a lot of singles but since we were all really obsessed with Joy Division, we didn't want to put any of them on the album. Plus, we gave ourselves a deadline with a release date, which makes no sense for a band's first record, but I was 20 and John [Cummings] was only 18, so everything was new to us. We should have realised that if all those early seven-inches had only sold 500 copies, then it didn't really matter if we re-recorded some of the songs, like "New Paths To Helicon, Pt. 2", which was one of our best. After making a load of seven-inches, we were excited by being able to have these long songs and "Like Herod" is a bit like Nirvana's "Endless Nameless" – and like Slint. It's still fun to play live; we always get a laugh when people aren't paying much attention to begin with and then shit themselves.

**JOHN CUMMINGS:** In terms of being aware at the time of whether "Like Herod" was a "stayer", I don't think then we'd even considered that the band was a stayer. Just the fact that we were being allowed to record an album was more than we could have hoped for. It's not the kind of thing you presume when you're selling 500 seven-inches – that someone's going to give you a few thousand pounds to go into the studio for a month.

### THE UNCUT CLASSIC



### COME ON DIE YOUNG

CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND, 1999

Producer Dave Fridmann steered the experimentalism that quickly became vital to Mogwai's sound, but this was a powerful set of surprisingly spare and fx-free songs.

**DOMINIC AITCHISON:** I was very happy with getting Dave Fridmann in, because I was a huge Mercury Rev fan at the time and also it gave us the opportunity to go off to America to record. It was painless to make, because we had it finished before we went out there to record, the only time we've done that. A lot of the songs are sparse and downbeat and he didn't really mess with them at all; he was quite hands-off. But my abiding

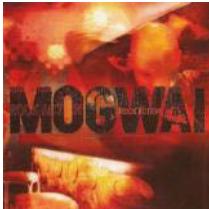
memory is Dave recording something onto what was practically fence wire; it was the most odd-looking, antiquated stuff ever and produced really low-grade recordings that made everything sound incredibly distorted and quite primitive.

**JOHN:** Dave's very quiet, pragmatic and a really nice guy – not what we were expecting. Yes, it was a wee bit disappointing, but it doesn't make the record sound any less good. That wasn't due to magic, it was due to someone knowing what they were doing and that was very inspiring.

**STUART:** At the time, we thought we could have done better with the first album and that we were flying by the seat of our pants, so we really had a mission with the second record, to make it something pretty special. As ill-prepared as the first one was, this was meticulously prepared and we wanted it to be different. We'd been doing the quiet/loud thing and wanted to show we could do more than that. The reason we went with Dave was because we heard *Deserter's Songs* and it sounded really lush and special, and *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space* had just come out. In our heads we thought we were doing something a bit like that, but to me now, the point of comparison for *CODY* is the early Cure records – very dark and kind of frosty. Dave's studio is in upstate New York, in the middle of nowhere. I remember saying I was going to go for a walk and he told me to watch out. So I went out and someone had these wild wolves on chains in their garden. I saw a snake... I never went out again. Wayne Coyne would apparently go out with a stick and just bash things, but he was running. I was not running.



Older, but no less noisier...  
the band in 2010 (l-r): Burns,  
Aitchison (back), Braithwaite,  
Bulloch, Cummings



## ROCK ACTION

PIAS/SOUTHPAW, 2001  
A big budget saw (some of) the band going bonkers. Multi-instrumentalist Barry Burns made his mark and a strong electronic/

synth element was introduced. As was a banjo. **DOMINIC:** We went to Dave [Fridmann]'s studio and recorded all the band stuff, then Martin and myself went back home for three weeks and Barry, John and Stuart went down to New York City to do all the overdubs. They did the best partying ever there, but they didn't do much recording and everybody reconvened three weeks later to mix it. Me and Martin got sent CDs of what they'd done in that time and we were both so pissed off. It was clear they'd done nothing. I told them to their faces I was pissed off they hadn't done any work, but I was actually just pissed off I'd missed out on three weeks of running around New York having a right old laugh! Looking back, it's utterly mortifying the amount of wastage around that album.

**STUART:** You can't make music in Manhattan, unless maybe you're from there and you're oblivious to what an awful amount of fun there is, constantly happening. We recorded a lot of songs, but the record's really short – around 38 minutes. It's got some good songs on it and it's really lovely sounding, but the sound we started out making had become kind of predictable and there were an awful lot of bands around making wash-y, long instrumental songs, so we did have a plan, which was to do something different. But we needed more of a plan than that.

## HAPPY SONGS FOR HAPPY PEOPLE

*Mogwai*

PIAS, 2003  
Label personnel changes, a departed manager and a shift in the musical climate

disturbed the picture. Mogwai moved even further towards a more subdued sound.

**JOHN:** The making of this was more influenced by what we'd done with *Rock Action*, in terms of the size of it [41 minutes] and the time spent on it, the best part of three months. It's an interesting bridging record. Stuart got a laptop, I was messing about with sequencers and bleeps and bloopos. There's more of that on the albums that followed.

**DOMINIC:** I think we all realised that *Rock Action* should have been a lot better than it was and I felt we'd blown it a bit. We had quite a lot of songs for this album and not a lot of it was fully formed beforehand. We had no idea what it was going to be like until it was mixed and it's probably one of my favourites. It could have turned out absolutely shite and I'm the pessimist; I always think a record's going to be terrible until it's done, so it was a brilliant surprise that it came together.

**STUART:** I was fairly conscious that people weren't as excited about what we were doing as they'd been before, because the musical climate had changed. People became interested in more overtly retro music, like The Strokes, and it felt like at this point in particular, we had to make a really good record. We've always felt that, of course, but around that time we did feel the pressure, though I wouldn't be surprised if that was only me. But we stood firm and it actually worked out well.



## MR BEAST

PIAS, 2006  
A curiously hybrid creation, heavy on the ambient instrumentals, lighter on the vocals and too long in the cooking, although it featured

Cummings' monstrous "Glasgow Mega-Snake".

**STUART:** It was our first time recording at Castle Of Doom, which is owned by us and [producer] Tony Doogan and has been in three different locations. This time, it was in a weird building in Glasgow's West End, where the control room was up a floor from the live room. It worked very strangely – I think we had those baby monitors – but it was fun. *Mr Beast* seems to be the LP people like more as the years go by, but it's not my favourite; it's very polished. I'm immensely fond of Alan [McGee, Mogwai's then manager] as a personality and he's quite like us, but the way he projects himself is utterly dissimilar to us. I wasn't very happy when he said *Mr Beast* was "possibly better than *Loveless*", because I'm friends with Kevin [Shields] and the last thing you want is to be used as some point scorer between two of your friends who aren't getting on. It's certainly not the kind of comment any of us would ever make, but...

**DOMINIC:** We had a long time to work on the album – about two months – so we ended up really messing about with the songs. I can't listen to it now, it seems so over-produced and slick. It's not the way we sound, which is not a reflection of Tony's recording skills – it was our decision to keep tinkering and we'll never do that again. We've realised that strict deadlines work well for us, because we are inherently quite lazy.



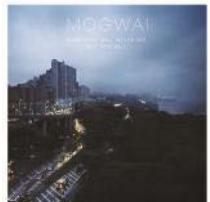
## THE HAWK IS HOWLING

PIAS/WALL OF SOUND, 2008  
**Entirely instrumental and the product of a failed commission, but Mogwai delivered some compellingly heavy tracks – and comically deadpan titles.**

**DOMINIC:** We'd been asked to do the music for a South American film and had been given a time frame of five days, so we pulled this music for it out of thin air. We were happy with what we'd produced, but they hated it and sacked us, so we reworked a lot of that music for *The Hawk*.... We had a brilliant time recording it and it's really good fun to play live, although it's really dour and probably a little bit too one-note.

**STUART:** The track with Roky Erickson [a Japanese bonus track] was supposed to be on *Mr Beast*, but it took a lot longer to organise than we expected. I went over to Austin and went into the studio with him, so that was a really special thing to happen. He was lovely; he's been in the wars, but he was really nice. And he's a proper legend.

**JOHN:** "I'm Jim Morrison, I'm Dead" was a concerted attempt to come up with a song title that mentioned Jim Morrison, without being too base. "Jim Morrison, American Prick" was a phrase we'd enjoyed, although it hadn't been assigned to any piece of music, but we thought it was too childish. And there's no need to be so vulgar.



## HARDCORE WILL NEVER DIE, BUT YOU WILL

ROCK ACTION, 2011  
**All things are relative, but some surprisingly poppy tunes surfaced**

**on Mogwai's seventh album and their love of motorik grooves kicked in seriously.**

**STUART:** By this point, Barry had moved to Germany and we had quite an intense period of getting together and rehearsing, so that was a factor in that we didn't really have much time to think about what we were doing. Dominic said he thought that my guitar on "George Square Thatcher Death Party" sounded like The Killers. I remember playing it to Arthur Baker before we finished it and he was totally adamant that we should have proper vocals on it. He said it was the only song we had that could ever possibly get played on the radio.

**JOHN:** What strikes me about it now is its relative poppiness. Certainly a few of the songs I had written I hadn't written for Mogwai, particularly; I'd just been messing about and didn't think they were appropriate. "Mexican Grand Prix" was just a wee Casio, Krautrock-sounding thing and when I was playing about I managed to get a computer to sing, although I can't remember how I did it. You can put a Neu! drumbeat on anything, so I hadn't really expected us to make much of that.

**DOMINIC:** I have absolutely no idea where these upbeat songs came from, but again, we don't really know the direction a record's taking until it's nearly done. I definitely raised my eyebrows when I first heard "George Square Thatcher Death Party" because I thought it was too straight-ahead and not like us, but it was fun to play and it sat well when we were sequencing the album. A lot of long-term Mogwai fans absolutely hate that tune.



**Beyond the fringes of rock: Mogwai today, with Stuart Braithwaite's dog**



## LES REVENANTS, OST

ROCK ACTION, 2013  
**The French television series (*The Returned*) about a mountain town visited by a number of**

**dead former inhabitants was given the moody and minimalist Mogwai treatment, to stylishly spooky effect.**

**JOHN:** The director and writer had wanted music in advance of filming, to set the tone and make sure we were on the same page, so we were writing blind. We'd read the first couple of episodes in English, plus a rough synopsis of the rest of the series, but that was really all we had to go on. It was difficult to put a finger on until they'd started filming, but by that point they'd already decided in large part the kind of music that they wanted. We'd just been writing stuff and sending it to them and they'd been saying either, "That's not quite right for this" or "Yeah, that's perfect". Maybe of the 40 things we'd send them, they'd be into 10 or 15 of them, so we'd work further on those. It certainly fell into place once we had seen the first four episodes and heard how they were using our demos. We only formed the complete pieces on the album after we'd done the music for the series. We didn't want to have a soundtrack album with a minute-and-a-half crescendo that just stops, but nor did we want to have a badly edited piece of music just put onto a random scene. We wanted to make music tailored for the scenes it was being used on and also to have songs that you could put on an actual album, so we did them separately. It could have ended up being cobbled together pretty badly, but it was very satisfying that it all came together. It was great.



## RAVE TAPES

ROCK ACTION, 2014  
**The horror! Mogwai's latest album sources '70s Italian prog and video nasty soundtracks alongside Krautrock, via heavy use of Burns' vintage modular synth.**

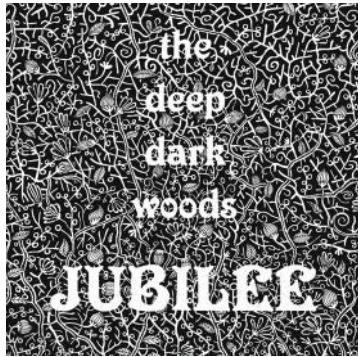
**STUART:** I think the feel of *Les Revenants* seeped into *Rave Tapes* a little bit, and because we did them both in Castle Of Doom it felt like part of the same thing. We were listening to an awful lot of horror film soundtracks – *Goblin*, *Fabio Frizzi*, *John Carpenter*, *Morricone*'s theme to *The Exorcist II*... we're not good enough to do anything like it, but it's amazing stuff. I think *Boards Of Canada* are of the same mind; I can hear a lot of that on their latest record. The title "Repelish" is a word that Martin [Bulloch]'s mum uses when she wants another drink; she means "replenish".

**DOMINIC:** Barry had recently bought all of this absolutely demented keyboard equipment and he has his own studio space in Berlin, where he'd go and record all of these demos, so we'd get these really crazy, *John Carpenter*-esque... squelches, basically. We'd all been listening to a lot of '70s horror soundtracks and although I'd seen most of the films, I'd forgotten about the music, but ever since *Death Waltz* started putting out all these soundtrack vinyl reissues, I'm hooked. It's like football stickers when I was a kid; it doesn't matter what label it's on – if it's on lurid vinyl and it's from a video nasty, I'm buying it. Because they were recorded quickly, there's a chaotic charm to a lot of these soundtracks. They're quite rough around the edges and that's a big part of the appeal for me; they're the complete opposite of big Hollywood soundtracks. ☺

*Rave Tapes* is out on January 20 on Rock Action

"The Deep Dark Woods have worked hard to create a loose, grungy folk sound that—for all its references to the past—is increasingly their own."

PASTE



# the deep dark woods

30 JAN: LIVERPOOL, UK *Leaf on Bold St* • 31 JAN: EDINBURGH, UK *Sneaky Pete's* • 1 FEB: GLASGOW, UK *Celtic Connections - St. Andrew's in the Square* • 2 FEB: YORK, UK *The Basement* • 3 FEB: MANCHESTER, UK *Gullivers* • 4 FEB: BELFAST, IE *McHugh's* • 5 FEB: DUBLIN, IE *Whalens* • 7 FEB: OXFORD, UK *Bullingdon* • 8 FEB: BIRMINGHAM, UK *The Sunflower Lounge* • 9 FEB: BRIGHTON, UK *The Haunt* • 10 FEB: LONDON, UK *The Garage* • 11 FEB: WINCHESTER, UK *The Railway* • 12 FEB: AMSTERDAM, NL *Paradiso* • 13 FEB OTTERSUM, NL *Roepean* • 14 FEB APELDOORN, NL *Podium Gigant* • 15 FEB COPENHAGEN, DK *Vega* • 16 FEB AARHUS, DK *Atlas* • 18 FEB BERLIN, DE *Crystal Club* • 20 FEB ZURICH, CH *Komplex* • 21 FEB FREIBERG, DE *Slow Club* • 22 FEB LEFFINGE, BE *De Zwerver*

[thedeepdarkwoods.com](http://thedeepdarkwoods.com)



"If you're not a little  
scared, you're not  
doing it right..."  
Jason Isbell in 2013

# Isbell Bottom Blues

**Story:** Andrew Mueller  
**Photography:** Chris McAndrew

JASON ISBELL was the gifted junior member of the Drive-By Truckers' frontline – until “weird dynamics”, divorce and alcoholism sent his career off on a wild tangent. Now, with the classic *Southeastern*, the songwriter Ryan Adams calls “the actual honest-to-goodness real article” is right back on track – as *Uncut* discovers on the road in Scandinavia. “I want a drink right now, man. But I’m not gonna have one...”

"I thought I was gonna get shot..."  
Isbell in 2013



Isbell and Amanda Shires perform at Austin's Petty Fest, September 25, 2013



• **I**OT THAT HE really needs it at this point, but late in an ecstatically received set at Stockholm's Bryggarsalen, Jason Isbell still has an ace up his sleeve. His new album, *Southeastern*, has a song on it called "Stockholm". Isbell, an easy and amiable between-song raconteur, has been teasing the audience, overwhelmingly attired in neatly pressed checked shirts, all night. He'd thwarted an attempted clap-along on "Alabama Pines" politely asking, "Please don't. You people are very white. And so am I. If y'all try to clap on the one and three we're all gonna be in trouble." He has also teased himself a fair bit, introducing the family feud fable "Decoration Day", one of his earliest contributions to Drive-By Truckers, by admitting, "I was 21 or 22 when I wrote this, so I had nothing to say at all, and I couldn't write songs about the world, 'cos that's hard, which is why most of those songs are terrible. So I wrote songs about my cousins and uncles, usually about the stuff they'd told me to keep secret. I thought I was gonna get shot."

MICHAEL WILSON, TAYLOR HILL/GETTY IMAGES

ISBELL BUILDS UP to "Stockholm" by saying that he isn't sure how to go about it. He explains that when Lynyrd Skynyrd play in his home state, toting a vastly bigger crowd-pleaser, they don't screw around. "They just, you know..." Isbell says, then picks the first notes of "Sweet Home Alabama", then stops, and says he was here a few years ago, opening for Ryan Adams on a European tour, and went back to the hotel after the show and sat "thinking about love, thinking about songs, a whole bunch of shit".

The subject of the song Isbell wrote that night, and the subject of much of *Southeastern*, stands a few feet to Isbell's right, bow poised above her violin, waiting for her husband to quit talking and start singing. The chorus of "Stockholm" pleads "Stockholm/Let me go home". The subtext of *Southeastern* is a hard-learned lesson that this elusive address is very much where the heart is.

**A**LITTLE LESS THAN 24 hours later, Isbell, 34, is backstage at Buckley's, a low-slung Oslo rock venue which suits his gritty, intimate songs rather better than the soaring, pristine modernism of the room he'd played in Stockholm the night before. That had been scarcely less



Isbell, right, in Drive-By Truckers, with ex-wife Shonna Tucker

incongruous than seeing Philip Glass play a sawdust-strewn honky-tonk behind a protective screen of chicken wire. Here, Isbell even feels like it's probably OK to smoke.

This European tour is a low-key, low-budget undertaking. The entourage comprises Isbell – and it's ISBELL – his wife/accompanist/opening act, the Texan artist Amanda Shires, and their tour manager/sound technician Alastair Artingstall, himself a folk singer and former keyboardist in The Fat Lady Sings. The luggage manifest comprises a suitcase each, one guitar, one ukulele and one violin, and they've travelled by plane, train and taxi. Isbell and Shires have been married not quite a year. They were wed in February 2013 in their adopted hometown of Nashville by Todd Snider, barefoot patriarch of the alt.country scene rooted in the city's east ("They hooked it up so I'm a reverend now," explains Snider. "I thought they were kidding 'til my manager called and said some certificate showed up. It was beautiful, a poets' wedding – they both married upwards, somehow. I read 'The Lowest Pair' by John Hartford for the prayer, then as my ad lib part I told them marriage was easy, especially for musicians – ask anybody.")

Isbell and Shires still exhibit the radiant mutual besottedness of honeymooners: there is fond eye-contact on the line "Won't you ride with me?" from "Traveling Alone" even when they soundcheck it. Isbell plays guitar on some of Shires' set, she plays fiddle on most of his, and they close the shows with a duet on Warren Zevon's "Mutineer", which they endow with a certain Gram and Emmylou quality.

Isbell and Shires are also co-proprietors of their own self-contained book club, subjects of which are sometimes dictated by Shires' pursuit of her Master's degree. "Ulysses was a hard time for both of us," says Isbell, who is presently engrossed by David Foster Wallace's doorstopper *Infinite Jest*. Shires, explaining the dynamics of their two-person salon, says, "It's nice to be able to argue with someone and

## "A MAN FROM ALABAMA DOESN'T WANT TO BE SEEN AS FRAGILE"

JASON ISBELL  
SOUTHEASTERN



I'M YOUR FAN

## "HE KNOWS HOW TO WEAR A HAT"

Ryan Adams salutes his friend, Jason Isbell

Jason is a tremendous songwriter. The actual honest-to-goodness real article. He has an amazing laugh, too, and you will work for it. People notice him when we travel. In foreign countries I oftentimes watch as people we walk past look over in a gesture of wondering just who that was. Some people just have that and Jason has that vibe in spades. He also knows how to wear a damn hat.

"He's always lugging around some book or other on the road; the kind the size of a reference book or either some doorstop with one of those spare and precise covers that warn people like myself of fleeting attention spans of impending headaches and confusion. He's a peaceful person and all his intellect and talent are squared away neatly in his authentically Southern charms. There he would sit as the rain tore past the bus windows in Scandinavia ignoring the sounds of Judas Priest, Emperor, and weed while he filed himself away into a cave of dreams, page by page.

"The thing I admire most about Jason and his songcraft is his restraint. He could boil it all over so many times and get away with it but he never does. He lets a song simmer for as long as you could think it should and often I will go back to a song of his weeks later to find the thing still on the burner, still not revealing everything. That's the kind of thing I imagine he drags from all those epic books; patience, the slow burn and maybe the ability to turn a draggy day in some miserable airport into an adventure of the soul and mind.

"I'm glad to call him my friend and even more happy to have him out throwing so many new colours into the book of songwriting. I'll be a fan my whole life."



know you'll still like them at the end of it. I love Stephen King, Jason's not on board. He loves John Le Carré. Not my deal, buddy. He loves Dave Eggers; I can't stand him." They manage to be an unoppressively cute couple, however. At no point during their clasped-hands cooing at a glorious sunset on the drive in from Oslo's airport was one tempted to abandon the taxi and walk.

"This album was more personal than anything I've done in the past," Isbell concedes. "It's a little scary to do that, but I think you're supposed to be a little scared. I think if you're not a little scared, you're not doing it right. Some part of

your creative output should terrify you. But eventually someone's gonna tell all your secrets. You might as well get in there first."

Isbell gets in there first with the opening track of *Southeastern*, "Cover Me Up", unmistakably a howling devotional to Shires, cresting on an entreaty ("*Girl, leave your boots by the bed/We ain't leaving this room/Til someone needs medical help/Or the magnolias bloom*") which sounds almost as much threat as promise.

"*Cover Me Up*" was one of those scary ones," he nods. "It's really direct, really direct from me to my wife. You don't want to be seen as fragile, especially if you're a man from Alabama who used to be in what a lot of people called a Southern rock band. But you are a fragile person. Everybody is, to some extent."



out, in the alley behind his apartment). Was there one funny story that was one funny story too many?

"Just a bunch of those stacked on top of each other," he says. "Three times I told Amanda I needed to quit but I couldn't do it on my own, and was going to need to go into treatment. First time, she said, 'Well, if you're serious, if you tell me this again when you're not drunk – or when you are drunk – I'm gonna hold you to it.' So a week later, I got unhealthily drunk, caused a bunch of trouble, told her I needed to go to rehab. So she called four or five people who I respect, and told them what I'd said."

"So he'd have to," interjects Shires, from another corner of the dressing room. "But he did try to on his own a little bit."

"I tried to slow down," nods Isbell, "and I couldn't. I'd known for a couple of years that I drank too much, way more than a normal person drinks. So when I told her the second time, I was very drunk, and very upset, and said I have to figure out a way to quit. She called a few friends and a couple of family members, and said, this is what he's told me, and if I tell you he won't back out of it. Luckily, my word was still intact, to some extent."

Which is no small thing, in such circumstances.

"It's a tough one to keep," he agrees, "because it's usually the first thing to go. When any kind of substance has a hold on you, it's impossible to be an honest person. So I went into Cumberland Heights in Nashville for a couple of weeks. Great facility, and they feed you real well, and I liked the people. It's an AA-based programme, and I'm not really an AA person in my recovery, so I don't talk about that side of it so much, 'cause I feel like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous work better than anything else does, and I don't want to place myself above any particular programme. Parts of it I couldn't come to terms with, but as a whole it worked miraculously."

Isbell is, of course, backstage in licensed premises, a few feet from a fridgeful of beer and a rider of whatever you're having yourself, and this is what he does for a living.

"No, it's not easy," he hoots. "It's not easy right now, man. I want a drink right now. But I'm not gonna have one. Anyway, what's easy? It was possible. And if something's possible I have a hard time judging whether it's easy or not."

IT'S SIX YEARS since Isbell left Drive-By Truckers, who he joined in 2001, staying for three albums, and to whom he contributed several of their finest moments, a judgement which Drive-By Truckers' Patterson Hood happily seconds. "He wrote 'Decoration Day' on his second day with us, and 'Outfit' a week later," says Hood. "'Outfit' is a great song from anybody at anytime – most people never do one thing that good in their damn lives. But *Southeastern* is a game-changer for Jason. It has an emotional honesty which I feel he ran from for a long time. It'll probably be a bigger hit than anything we've ever done."

Isbell's 2007 departure was shrouded in the standard press-release pabulum: amicable, different ambitions, all the best with future endeavours, etc. It was actually rather messier, made more so by the concurrent foundering of Isbell's first marriage, to Drive-By Truckers' then-bassist Shonna Tucker.

"It was pretty painful," remembers Hood. "He had gone from being an occasional drunk to being drunk all the time. I mean, we were all drinking a lot, but some people are better drunks than others. When he drank, he often became an asshole. More than just a tolerable amount. And he and Shonna were having problems, and that bled into the band. I think it was just too much, too soon. He was really young, he joined us as things were blowing up – we signed a record deal six months after he joined us, and Mike Cooley and I had been playing together for 16 years by that point. It made for a weird dynamic."

Isbell, for his part, can afford to take a more philosophical view than he once might have. "It was heartbreaking," he says, emphasising the "was". "It was really difficult, because I loved that band. I wasn't having much fun towards the end, none of us were, but you convince yourself otherwise."

And now?

"Patterson and I get along real well. And the couple of times I've spoken to Cooley since all that we've been very cordial. It'd

## "I WOULD LOVE TO MAKE A WEIRD INDIE ROCK RECORD"

### EYEWITNESS

## THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS ...

Jason tells all about three of his best creations

### "Outfit"

#### *Drive-By Truckers'* *Decoration Day*

A warm, funny and sad summary of a father's life and wisdom: "Don't call what you're wearing an outfit," among other excellent advice. "A lot of those are direct quotes, or references to things which were strange pet peeves of his when I was a kid – the chorus especially. I was trying to show what kind of person he was. When I was born my dad was 19, my mother was 17. I'm 34 now, and I'm barely scratching the surface of figuring out how to be a grownup. After I wrote it I played it for him, I sure did. He's a big-hearted guy, he got a bit of a tear."

### "Dress Blues"

#### *Jason Isbell's Sirens* *Of The Ditch*

Inspired by the death of a schoolmate in Iraq; a gentle, careworn protest song. "I knew Matt Conley not very well, he was a few years younger. I was coming off a tour with the Truckers, and I called my mom and she told me about his funeral, which she'd attended that day, and when I got home I wrote 'Dress Blues' in the time it takes to write it down on a piece of paper. I already had the chord progression from a song I'd been working on about Mickey Rooney, of all things. The song just fit that tune."

### "Elephant"

#### *Jason Isbell's* *Southeastern*

A wounded, defiant and intimate witnessing of the impending death of a loved one. "Best song of 2013," according to Patterson Hood. "I was living above this bar in Sheffield, Alabama, for a long time before I moved to Nashville with Amanda, and I was dating this girl that worked at the bar. I told her she couldn't get too attached to the people sitting around the bar because they're all gonna disappear, and sure enough – within a couple of years, half the regulars were gone. It's hard for me to get through it some nights. It's a sad song."

The Truckers in the mid-'00s, with Isbell, centre



Story: David Cavanagh  
Photograph: Max Browne

DAVY O'LIST was in with the in-crowd — a prog prodigy in The Nice, a founder of Roxy Music, the proud owner of Judy Garland's hat, sideman for Bryan Ferry and John Cale. But why did one of Britain's most inventive guitarists disappear for over 30 years? And can he make a comeback in 2014?





WORRY ABOUT THE sound effects," says Davy O'List as a rumble disturbs the afternoon calm. "The guy upstairs is hoovering." Dotted around O'List's one-room studio are an emerald green Gibson ES-335, some Monet-style paintings (his own) and a gold disc for a Bryan Ferry album.

He swivels over to the mixing desk. "I once thought of using a hoover on The Nice's LP *The Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack*. You can get good tones out of them." Recorded when he was just 18, that 1967 debut was supposed to launch O'List to fame. Within months, disaster struck instead.

He presses a button and the room fills with the unmistakable sounds of progressive rock. Epic guitar and synthesiser solos stretch to the horizon. Emperors gallop on horseback. This is O'List's new album, *Second Thoughts*, his first project in decades. The six tracks ("movements") are rooted in old-school prog – the topography of Rick Wakeman and Keith Emerson – with O'List's guitar positioned front and centre, as though he were leading a band of virtuosos dressed in capes through some conceptual extravaganza at Wembley Empire Pool during prog's golden age.

O'List, lifetimes ago, was a boy-wonder guitarist whose untameable talent (compared by critics to Hendrix and Jeff Beck) featured in early lineups of The Nice and Roxy Music. Around 1978, he vanished. There were rumours of health problems, and pretty soon there were no rumours at all. O'List was forgotten, mentioned in the briefest of dispatches when the stories of the '60s and '70s were told. The sleeve notes of one Nice anthology described him as "an

The Attack, with O'List, second right



#### MALT-ERED STATES

## THE 1968 'SPIKING'

**S**omebody slipped something in O'List's drink, and it changed his life. But who? And what? The official story – put forward by Keith Emerson and The Nice – is that O'List was spiked with LSD at the Whisky A Go Go by David Crosby in February 1968, causing a personality disorder that lasted for years. But O'List disputes this story. He was spiked, he says, but the perpetrator was Noel Redding and it happened in London. "I went round to Noel's house. He was going to show me some footage of a Hendrix tour. He brought me this warm Scotch. I could hear him laughing in the kitchen with a friend. It was some sort of strychnine." O'List couldn't sleep for weeks. "It seemed like it went on for a long time. I didn't know what was wrong with me. It took me months to trace it back to that night with Noel Redding." O'List denies, however, that the drug caused any lasting damage. "Completely untrue."

eccentric, legendary but unreliable genius". The photo on the cover showed a tall youth in a brown jacket, his face obscured by a low-hanging branch. This was O'List. For years, the internet had no photographic evidence of him at all. "I know I'm facing a long, hard climb back," he acknowledges today. "This album is just my first offering. But by the third album, people will know I'm serious. Writing 10 symphonies is my objective at the moment. One more than Beethoven!" A burly 64-year-old with dyed auburn hair, he punches the air symbolically.

TWAS FEBRUARY '67 when a teenage O'List first played a solo that made people stare at their radios in astonishment.

The song in question – "Any More Than I Do" by west London mod-psych quintet The Attack – was actually a B-side, but it became a pirate radio staple when John Peel raved about it on his Radio London show, *The Perfumed Garden*. O'List's solo – blisteringly bluesy like an angry Clapton, but more feral – drew attention from *Melody Maker* (who identified him as a rising star) and John Mayall (who later asked him to replace Peter Green in the Bluesbreakers).

Managed by Don Arden, The Attack had a setback when the single's A-side, "Hi Ho Silver Lining", was overshadowed by Jeff Beck's release of the same song. Beck had the hit; their version flopped. In the ensuing recriminations, O'List left to join a new group assembled by a charismatic 22-year-old organist named Keith Emerson. Their job was to back PP Arnold, an American soul singer on Andrew Oldham's Immediate label. O'List: "We were playing Supremes songs, 'First Cut Is The Deepest', stuff she'd brought over from the States. I was doing my Steve Cropper bit: neat little downward strokes, then a funky little solo. I was also her backing vocalist." Arnold named them The Nice. They became a sensation in their own right at the Windsor Jazz & Blues Festival in August '67, playing a music that nobody had heard before. It took influences from jazz, R'n'B, classical and psychedelia. O'List and Emerson engaged in thrilling skirmishes, soloing competitively like siblings at war.



Nice outfits... (l-r) Lee Jackson, Davy O'List, Keith Emerson, Brian Davison

**"The contrast in The Nice was new. It is where I thought rock'n'roll should go"**

"We released doves into the audience," O'List enthuses. "My sister had to go round afterwards collecting them all up. We also had smoke bombs and the go-go dancers from *Ready Steady Go!* We had wild rock guitar – people said 'Hendrix-y', but I wasn't copying him – having constant battles with Keith's classical organ playing. That was the contrast of The Nice. It was new. It is where I thought rock'n'roll should go."

They became the toast of the Marquee. Brian May used to go and see them. O'List remembers David Bowie "posing in the bar with his blond hair". The future members of Yes were in regular attendance. The Nice released their first single for Immediate that winter ("The Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack"), a paisley pop mini-suite with O'List on lead vocals. It was the only Nice song he would ever sing. The album of the same title confirmed him as a true psychedelic. His playing was nothing like the chivalrous virtuosity that prog adopted in the '70s. It was iconoclastic, freaked-out and abandoned.

The Nice toured America in February '68. O'List fell in love with a girl in New York, hung out with David Crosby in LA and met Judy Garland in a nightclub. "She said, 'Oh! You're from England!' She was wearing a beautiful black hat. She took it off and gave it to me. Then Keith took it off me and kept it. He wore that hat for the next three years." The Nice returned to Britain. O'List played a daredevil, feedback-defying solo on their next single, "America" (from *West Side Story*), and was onstage when Emerson controversially burned the Stars And Stripes at the Albert Hall in June. But something was wrong. Friends noticed O'List become withdrawn. He sank into a depression. He arrived late for gigs, or missed them altogether. He seemed unsure what song he was supposed to be playing. His personality had changed. The Nice came to the conclusion that he'd been spiked with LSD on the US tour. Eventually losing patience with his eccentric behaviour, they held a meeting in the autumn of '68 and sacked him.

"The beginning of the end for me," O'List recalls, "was when we were in the studio doing 'Diamond Hard Blue Apples Of The Moon' [B-side of 'America'], which had a trumpet part. I'd studied trumpet at the Royal College Of Music and played it with The Nice. But I got there and Keith had booked a session trumpeter. It was Keith making his move to take over the band. 'I'm the one, Davy. It's all about me. I don't need you anymore.' And the session trumpeter got paid, too, which was ironic. I didn't get a cent for 'America' – or the album – until 2000."

O'List's expulsion from The Nice was the pivotal event of his young life and he never quite came to terms with it. Since resurfacing a few years ago, he's been chipping away at Emerson's legacy by claiming that most of The Nice's innovations were his own ideas, not Emerson's, including the decision to do rock reconstructions of Brubeck ("Rondo") and Bernstein ("America") and the use of knives as props [see panel]. O'List's main reason for reconnecting with progressive rock on his new album is that he wants to prove his historical importance to the genre. If The Nice were the pioneers, he wants it understood that he was the pioneer within The Nice. It was my band, runs his argument; Keith stole it off me, just as he did with Judy Garland's hat.

Anything, for O'List, is better than being written out of history. Or worse, caricatured as an acid casualty and *then* written out of history.

O'List's modest North Kensington apartment is a long way from Emerson's oceanside property in Santa Monica. But they may be getting closer than we think. O'List no longer moves in rock circles, but he has one or two influential contacts in the movies. It transpires that he's spent large parts of the last

## MY KNIFE STORY

### O'LIST ON EMERSON

"He didn't have any ambition until he met me. He was working in a bank. I coached him on how to behave onstage. 'The Pete Townshend of the organ' – that's how I described it to him. 'Use your arms like Townshend. People won't believe it!' And the knives – people always say the knives were Lemmy's idea, but they weren't. I had some swords at home, which my grandfather had brought back from Africa. I showed them to Keith and said, 'We should use props and explosions.' He thought it was a great idea. He went down Portobello Road and bought some knives and a Nazi cross."

"I didn't get a cent for The Nice's 'America' until 2000..." O'List in the late '60s



"Writing 10 symphonies is my objective now..." O'List today

20 years as a film lecturer and scriptwriter. On a visit to Pinewood Studios in the '90s, he was introduced to Malcolm Stone, an art director on feature films (*Superman III*, *Empire Of The Sun*). The two men have collaborated on a TV screenplay (*Ad Astra*) and hope to complete scripts in the next 18 months before searching for finance. "It's a futuristic drama," O'List explains. "It starts in the 1940s and goes up to the end of the universe. We're writing 14 episodes." He talks casually of trips to Hollywood to discuss \$50 million budgets with producers. If it gets the green light, Stone reckons that *Ad Astra* will make decent money for O'List. It would represent an extraordinary personal comeback. In the meantime, a few hundred yards around the corner from him in Olympia, sits Bryan Ferry's multi-million-pound recording studio. O'List earned a gold disc for his avant-garde solo on Ferry's "The In Crowd" in 1974. He dreams of Ferry summoning him again one day.

When you tell people you're being speaking to Davy O'List, there's an interesting silence before they reply. "I know Davy, he's a lovely bloke," says Peter Oxendale, a keyboard player who worked with him in the '70s. "He's had one or two problems in his life, but for inventive guitar-playing – I mean, look at the solo on 'The In Crowd'. It's unbelievably out-there. He's a fantastic guitarist with a unique style."

Former *Melody Maker* journalist Chris Welch, a close friend of O'List's in the '60s, is happy to hear he's doing well these days. "Davy was an integral part of The Nice," Welch says. "I remember him introducing me to Keith at his flat in Earls Court. Keith was very much the guest. Davy definitely had a strong input into the concept of The Nice. They were all very fond of him and it was very tragic what happened."

But Lee Jackson, The Nice's bassist, has nothing complimentary to say about O'List anymore. "He's





Glam rockers Jet: not the right engine for O'List

JET



“delusional,” Jackson snaps down the phone. “He’s been slagging us off for years, saying that he invented prog rock. I think he actually believes it. You’ll get no help from me or Keith if you’re writing about that guy.” Emerson, as Jackson predicts, doesn’t respond to *Uncut*’s interview requests.

O'LIST WAS ONLY 19 when The Nice fired him. He auditioned unsuccessfully for Jethro Tull and spent a short time in The Misunderstood before materialising in 1971 in a new band called Roxy Music. “I'd seen him play with The Nice when I was a student,” Bryan Ferry relates, “and thought he was fantastic. When I was looking for someone for Roxy, he was the number one choice.” O'List raises an eyebrow at Ferry's version of events. He says that Ferry phoned him in answer to a *Melody Maker* ad (“name guitarist seeks up-and-coming band with prospects”) and realised halfway through the conversation who he was talking to. According to O'List, the unknown Ferry was desperate to persuade him to join, offering him verbal guarantees that he could rewrite the songs and produce the first album.

O'List never appeared on that album. He was gone within a year. It's certainly possible that he had an impact on Roxy's development, helping to turn them from a minority-interest art experiment into a commercially viable rock group. They all remember him in different ways. “Fragile,” says Andy Mackay. “Brilliant,” says Phil Manzanera, his successor. “Really good... he fitted in well. He played in a great, off-the-wall style Bryan liked,” says drummer Paul Thompson. But Thompson adds the dreaded words: “He became unreliable.” We can see from BBC archives that O'List was briefly Roxy's star attraction: in January 1972, John Peel, broadcasting their debut radio session, prefaced “The Bob (Medley)” with strategic tracks by The Nice and The Attack. But O'List soon clashed with Roxy Music's management and was asked to leave.

A glam rock supergroup, Jet, was next. Their songwriter was Martin Gordon, former bassist in Sparks. O'List, whose dislike of Gordon is mutual, dismisses Jet as “an in-between band, an nowhere band”. O'List moved to the King's Road, Chelsea, close enough to Malcolm McLaren's shop to know Sid Vicious and Paul Cook on a social basis. O'List was drinking in the Roebuck pub one day in 1977 when John Cale walked in. Cale asked him to be his guitarist on an upcoming European tour. O'List, going through a macrobiotic Buddhist phase, was delighted. “That was the best tour I ever did. Beautiful hotels.

“John Cale sent me flying into the amps in a big scream of feedback”

Nice venues. Really large audiences. And really good money. I was a bit nervous of Cale, though, because he used to bite chickens' heads off. I was a bit scared onstage when he came up to me like this [teeth bared]. My guitar lead was one of those twangy ones, and he got it in his mouth and started pulling me across the stage. Then he suddenly let go and I went flying into one of the amplifiers in a big scream of feedback. I remember lying there and Cale shouting, ‘End of gig! End of gig!’”

After that, however, times were lean. O'List had a record deal cancelled on him at the last minute, and when he launched a new project in the '80s (a dance-pop concept called Seal) and took it to Warner Bros, they used the name for another artist and removed O'List from the equation. He did some production work for a “psychedelic reggae band” who supported The Style Council. They invited him to be their keyboard player – hardly a dignified moment for one of Britain's most creative guitarists. He signed a publishing deal with Island but was sacked by the psychedelic reggae band, who kept all his gear. “I went to every police station in London and nobody would do anything about it. And that's when I lost faith.”

Deciding to go back to college (“It kept my mind off the music business”), O'List took courses in painting, sculpture and film. He has a BA in Fine Art and an MA in Film Studies. He vowed not to be an easy touch with record companies, who had started reissuing his old music on CD without paying him. He began to reveal a talent for writing strongly worded letters. (“A lawyer once told me, ‘Put your foot down.’”) He now receives royalties for his old recordings with The Nice. He also monitors what former bandmates say about him online. “I was going to sue him for libel but he's gone broke,” he says of one bassist, “so I sued his record company and now he's quietened down.” O'List usually settles out of court, but he's prepared to go the full distance if necessary.

“I had a great barrister with a really flash office,” he reminisces. “The deal was that he'd handle my legal work if I produced his country and western band.” Keith Emerson has been a recipient of the dreaded O'List legal letter on two occasions.

“He's lucky,” O'List says. “I let him off the third time because he was an old mate.”

There's something quintessentially English about O'List's doggedness, like a colonel who won't stop writing letters to *The Telegraph*. One wonders what the future might hold for this long-forgotten figure with an amused glint in his eye and a quirky take on rock's narrative. Can he still play guitar like a demon? Absolutely: movements three and six of *Second Thoughts* attest to that. Will he record nine more albums as promised? How many of his stories are true? I phone Malcolm Stone at Pinewood and ask what strengths Davy brings to their writing partnership. “Ideas,” he says. “I write the dialogue, but we brainstorm together and plan out plotlines. The best thing about him is that he's got a very vivid imagination.”

His friends and enemies alike would probably agree with that. ☀

Davy O'List's *Second Thoughts* is released in April

## HOW TO BUY...



### THE ATTACK

#### About Time!

RPBM, 2006

Posthumous compilation of O'List's first band. Includes his acclaimed solo on “Any More Than I Do”.

### THE NICE

#### The Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack

IMMEDIATE, 1967

O'List stakes his claim as an electrifying guitarist in the Hendrix mould. Look for reissues that add “America” and early B-side “Azrial (Angel Of Death)”.

### ROXY MUSIC

#### Peel Session

UNRELEASED

O'List doesn't play on any official Roxy recordings, but these four songs from January 1972 can be found on YouTube. His elegant-yet-twisted solo on “Sea Breezes” is a highlight.

### BRYAN FERRY

#### The 'In' Crowd

ISLAND, 1974

A hit single that climaxed in an amazing solo. O'List sounds like he's revving up a motorbike and wrestling an alligator.

### JET

Jet CBS, 1975

Second-division glam rockers. O'List's “My River” is his showcase, but Jet have a poor man's Bowie sound that soon grates.



# UNCUT

## We need to talk...

IT'S BEEN A WHILE! After 201 issues of *Uncut*, we thought it might be a good idea to ask you all how we're doing. We'd like to hear your thoughts, feelings and opinions about our magazine, so we've set up a special page on our website. If you have a moment, head to [uncut.co.uk/survey](http://uncut.co.uk/survey) and complete the short survey there: we promise it won't take long.

By also completing the survey, you will be entered in to win a complete set of our 2013 *Ultimate Music Guide* special issues, featuring The Smiths, Nick Cave, Depeche Mode, The Beatles, Neil Young and the Small Faces.

Thanks, as ever,



ALLAN JONES, *Editor, Uncut*

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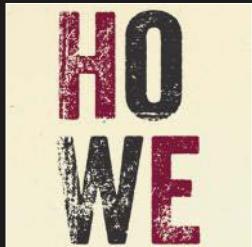


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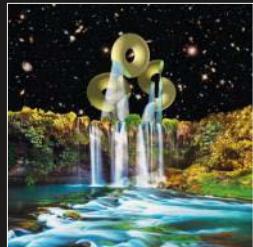
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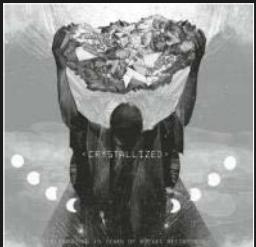
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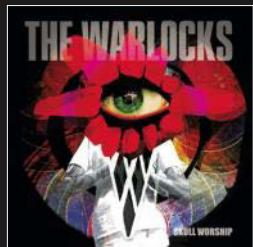
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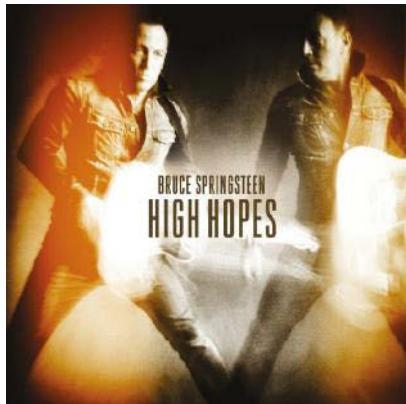


## OUR SCORING SYSTEM:

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

## New albums

THIS MONTH: SNOWBIRD | DOUG PAISLEY | BROKEN BELLS &amp; MORE



## TRACKLIST

- 1 High Hopes
- 2 Harry's Place
- 3 American Skin (41 Shots)
- 4 Just Like Fire Would
- 5 Down In The Hole
- 6 Heaven's Wall
- 7 Frankie Fell In Love
- 8 This Is Your Sword
- 9 Hunter Of Invisible Game
- 10 The Ghost Of Tom Joad (2013)
- 11 The Wall
- 12 Dream Baby Dream

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN  
High Hopes

COLUMBIA

Good-time title, sombre message on The Boss' 18th studio album proper. By Richard Williams

9/10

A SPINE-JARRING rattle of drums and a line of tracer bullets from Tom Morello's guitar introduce "High Hopes", the song by Tim Scott McConnell with which Bruce Springsteen opens his 18th studio album. High hopes? If the title suggests a collection of good-time music to follow the bleak anger of 2012's *Wrecking Ball*, which poured contempt on the world's bankers and their fellow instigators of contemporary discontent, it's hugely misleading. "Give me help,

*give me strength/Give me a night of fearless sleep*": that's how the song's chorus goes, first recorded by Scott McConnell on a solo album in 1987 and again, three years later, by his band, The Havalinas, in a percussion-heavy arrangement that Springsteen copies here. It doesn't sound like a plea that's going to be answered any time soon, and the note of barely suppressed desperation is one that persists throughout the album, even in its passages of piledriving energy.

In their origins, at least, these 12 songs form





→ a bit of a patchwork. Three of them are cover versions. A couple of the original songs have been recorded by Springsteen before. Some are familiar from live performances. Seven are previously unheard and unknown. Evidently energised by the success of the long world tour that followed the release of *Wrecking Ball*, he decided to fashion this motley collection into a new album, starting some from scratch but basing others on previously recorded material (a couple even contain contributions from Danny Federici and Clarence Clemons). The specific influence of the tour is felt in the presence of Morello, who joined the newly expanded E Street Band in the summer of 2012 as a temporary replacement for Steve Van Zandt and seems to have kindled some sort of spark in his temporary employer's breast.

So this is a proper album, a long way from *Tracks*, the 1998 anthology of material rejected or

If *High Hopes* is about anything, it's the failure of conventional belief systems and the blight of spiritual poverty experienced as a result

otherwise overlooked during Springsteen's early years, or *The Promise*, the set of songs passed up on the grounds of being too romantic, too upbeat or otherwise off-topic when he came to assemble

*Darkness On The Edge of Town* in 1978. The impression left by *High Hopes* is that these are songs speaking to matters on his mind today; the source or age of the material is beside the point. And what's on his mind is a world seething with dread, its scenes etched in the colours of fire and blood. There's a sombre edge to almost all these songs, even when the Hammond organ is wailing and the backbeat is a mile wide.

It takes something special for one lead guitarist to cede so much space to another, particularly when someone of Nils Lofgren's talent is already standing by, and Morello's presence is crucial to the tone of the album. At 49, he's hardly a kid, but he's from another generation and it shows in the way he goes for noises and effects that would be alien to Springsteen. The mutual enjoyment of their collaboration is evident in the volcanic remake of "The Ghost Of Tom Joad", a highlight of their shows together, which opens with a power chord and a lamenting violin before they trade verses and solos, going for broke in a storm of six-string starbursts and fireballs.

Morello's ability to add atmospheric textures is also to the fore in "Harry's Place", perhaps the most impressive of the new songs, a lurid depiction of a New Jersey milieu closer to the back room of the Bada Bing than the dancefloor of the Stone Pony. "You don't fuck with Harry's money and you don't fuck Harry's girls," Springsteen sings, against Brendan O'Brien's purposefully murky production. "These are the rules, this is the world." There's a burst of black humour: "Mayor Connor's on the couch, Father McGowan's at the bar/Chief Holden's at the door, checkin' who the fuck you are..." But as the lights dim, the guitars screech like bandsaws and the door closes behind the singer, the scene is more Abel Ferrara than Quentin Tarantino: a message from a place Springsteen doesn't usually visit.

"American Skin (41 Shots)", inspired by the New York police's killing of the unarmed Amadou Diallo in 1999, was included on *Live In New York City* two years

later and also released in a studio version as a promotional single. Its unexpected revival has a purpose: to comment on the recent acquittal of the man accused of the vigilante-style shooting of Trayvon Martin, another unarmed black man, in Florida in February 2012. The passion of this performance is intensified by co-producer Ron Aniello's synths and loops, with Morello again playing a significant role.

There's an apocalyptic feeling to "Down In The Hole", the track that half-buries Federici's B3 and Clemons' tenor saxophone in an arrangement full of spectral shadows. Springsteen's wife, Patti Scialfa, and their three children, Evan, Jessica and Sam, provide the vocal ensemble behind Bruce, whose own voice is electronically treated before emerging – during the lines "A dark and bloody arrow pierces my heart/The memory of your kisses tears me apart" – in its natural state. These could

## SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** Bruce Springsteen, Ron Aniello and Brendan O'Brien  
**Recorded in:** NJ, NYC, Sydney, LA, Atlanta  
**Personnel include:** Bruce Springsteen (vocals, guitar, mandolin, banjo, organ, vibraphone, perc, loops), Tom Morello (vocals, guitar), Nils Lofgren (guitar, pedal steel, mandolin, bk vocals), Ron Aniello (guitar, organ, accordion, synths, vibraphone, bass, perc, loops), Soozie Tyrell (violin, bk vocals), Sam Bardfeld (violin), Cillian Vallely (uilleann pipes, whistle), Jeff Kievit (piccolo trumpet), Curt Ramm (cornet), Clarence Clemons and Jake Clemons (tenor sax), Danny Federici (organ), Charlie Giordano (organ, accordion), Roy Bittan (piano), Garry Tallent (bass), Max Weinberg (drums), Josh Freese (drums), Everett Bradley (perc, bk vocals), Tawatha Agee, Steve Van Zandt, Patti Scialfa, Curtis King, Cindy Mizelle, Michelle Moore, John James, Al Thornton, Brenda White, Evan, Jessie and Sam Springsteen, E Street Horns, Atlanta Strings, the New York Chamber Consort

be the last thoughts of a dying man, lying in "the rain that keeps on fallin' / On twisted bones and blood", like the hallucinating soldier of Dylan's "Cross The Green Mountain". The protagonist of "Hunter Of Invisible Game" is also searching for grace, images of flaming scarecrows and empty cities emerging against the setting of a subdued string arrangement in a minuet for the end of time.

An unexpected cover of The Saints' "Just Like Fire Would" contains the album's key text – "The night was dark and the land was cold" – with the sound of the E Street Band at full throttle, paradoxically exultant and euphoric. "Heaven's Wall", which dates back to the writing sessions that produced *The Rising*, is another old-fashioned rave-up, but with a Biblical theme: mentions of Gideon, Saul and Canaan, and a repeated exhortation to "Raise your hand!" Raise it for what, exactly? The same question arises during "This Is Your Sword", a sort of rock'n'roll "Onward Christian Soldiers" (or possibly "Onward Muslim Soldiers") in which the message – "The times they are dark/Darkness covers the earth/But this world's filled/With the beauty of God's work" – is punctuated by Cillian Vallely's uillean pipes.

A little light relief comes in a great song called "Frankie Fell In Love", a jovial tale which features Einstein and Shakespeare, sitting together over a couple of beers ("Einstein's tryin' to figure out the number that adds up to bliss/Shakespeare says, 'No, it all starts with a kiss'"). Falling at the album's mid-point, it's a break from the intensity that can't help surfacing elsewhere, and which finally reaches its twin peaks of catharsis in the disillusioned starkness of "The Wall", a meditation that will resonate with anyone who has visited the Vietnam War memorial in Washington DC, immediately followed by the album's closer, "Dream Baby Dream", the song by Suicide's Martin Rev and Alan Vega which Springsteen uses to articulate his belief in a different kind of faith: a faith in ourselves and each other.

Why is it impossible to resist the temptation to search for an overarching theme that ties together this collection of superficially dissimilar songs, written and recorded in different times, locations and circumstances? Because that's how Bruce Springsteen works, always searching within his art for higher and deeper truths. If *High Hopes* is about anything, it's the failure of conventional belief systems and the blight of spiritual poverty experienced by all kinds and conditions of people as a result.

Heavy, yes. But he's happy to carry it. And he carries it off.



## Q&amp;A

Rage Against The Machine guitarist Tom Morello talks us through his times with the E Street Band

**H**OW DID YOUR relationship with Springsteen begin? I've been a huge fan for a long time. Rage Against The Machine needed some new material to play when we opened up for U2 on the PopMart tour in 1997, and in the light of the fact that we had written no new songs, we did a version of "The Ghost Of Tom Joad". It was a smashing success and when we recorded it in a studio with Brendan O'Brien we needed Bruce's permission to release it. I think he was a little surprised we were fans and that we had homed in on this acoustic ballad of his. That conversation kicked off a dialogue that grew into our friendship.

**Where and when did you play live with the E Street Band for the first time?** In 2008, at Anaheim Pond hockey arena in California. I'd met him in a studio in LA a couple of weeks before and he'd made the offhand suggestion that I come up and join them some time. When I saw they were in town very soon, I called them a day or two before and said, "Hey, remember that offer? How about tomorrow?" I don't usually get nervous before shows, but I was nervous before that one. I suggested "The Ghost Of Tom Joad", and Bruce afforded me a 172-bar solo. It was a roof-raising moment and over the course of the next few years whenever I was in the same city as Bruce I would play a few songs with them. It was very, very exciting for me, and an honour.

**A lot of us have dreamed of playing with the E Street Band. What's it**

**actually like?** My take is that it's not a dream come true as it's nothing I ever dared to dream. I am not a casual Springsteen fan. He is the only friend of mine I subscribe to a fanzine about. I have every conceivable bootleg. To be onstage playing "Born To Run" every night, it's hard to wrap my head around. My MO for whenever I play with the E Street Band is "Do no harm." They've been a great live band for more than 40 years without me in it. So, first of all, don't mess it up.

**They always make it seem like huge fun, even though the songs are often serious. Is that**

**how it is onstage?** Very much so. The joy they create out of the ether, despite the serious content of much of the material, is something unique to Bruce. His catalogue is huge and he draws liberally from all parts of it, so for me there's a lot of paying attention and trying to lip-read in the dark what the next song is, and heaven help me when he starts pulling requests from the crowd. It's certainly helped me grow as an artist.

**How did the relationship evolve?** Next I was asked to play guitar on *Wrecking Ball*. Then when Little Steven was busy with his TV show, *Lilyhammer*, I was asked to fill in for the 2013 Australian tour. That was the first time I played a full set with the band. Prior to leaving for that tour, Bruce sent over the song "American Skin (41 Shots)" for an undefined project, to play some guitar on. I worked diligently on it and sent it back. He seemed to enjoy it and he kept sending songs for me to play on in my home studio. A short while before leaving for Australia I heard on a satellite radio station an obscure cast-off song called "High Hopes" that sounded like it would lend itself to some Morellian riffage. In the middle of the night I texted Bruce to suggest that he check it out. He liked the idea and it became a staple of the Australian tour. We continued to record, and there was one day in Sydney where the full band plus me recorded "High Hopes" and "Just Like Fire Would". Over the course of that tour and afterwards in LA, a small catalogue was amassed. It sounded pretty great and that became *High Hopes*.

**"Bruce is the only friend of mine I subscribe to a fanzine about"**

**If you were allowed to request a song of Bruce's that you haven't played live yet, what would it be?** I love "The Promise" and the title track from the *Magic* album.

**Do you discuss politics together?** I've maybe talked more about politics with Jon Landau (Springsteen's manager) than I have with Bruce. We haven't sat down and talked about Obama's pluses and minuses or anything like that. Maybe we will this next tour.

**RICHARD WILLIAMS**



## TRACKLIST

1 I Heard The Owl Call My Name

2 All Wishes are Ghosts

3 Charming Birds from Trees

4 Where Foxes Hide

5 Amelia

6 Bears On My Trail

7 Porcelain

8 Come To The Woods

9 We Carry White Mice

10 In Lovely

11 Heart Of The Woods

## SNOWBIRD

**Moon** BELLA UNION

Simon Raymonde and Stephanie Dosen's mysterious, Cocteaus-y nightscapes. By Graeme Thomson

**7/10**

THE LAST CREDIBLE sighting of a potential Cocteau Twins reunion was back in 2005, when the trio were briefly tempted by the lure of Coachella's big bucks before performing a hasty U-turn.

Since then Elizabeth Fraser has consented to a handful of collaborations, released a couple of low-key singles, and performed two triumphant solo shows at Antony Hegarty's 2012 Meltdown. Robin Guthrie, now living in France, continues to make music, while the group's bassist/keyboard player and co-writer Simon Raymonde has been sublimating his creative itch with his Bella Union label, home to the likes of Fleet Foxes, John Grant and Jonathan Wilson.

Raymonde's collaboration with Wisconsin-born singer-songwriter Stephanie Dosen is his first record

since the 1997 solo album *Blame Someone Else*, released a year after the final Cocteau album, *Milk And Kisses*. The chances of his old band reforming are, Raymonde tells *Uncut*, "almost impossible", and you wonder whether *Snowbird* is the sound of him finally coming to terms with that fact.

Featuring an ethereal female vocalist gargling in tongues over dreamy indie-pop, *Moon* certainly feels instantly familiar, which isn't to suggest that Dosen is some surrogate Liz Fraser. An impressive and versatile singer in her own right, her CV includes two excellent solo albums, performing with Massive Attack and the Chemical Brothers, and appearing on Midlake's *The Courage Of Others*. But still. Given that *Moon* is an album of textured atmospherics in which Dosen's multi-layered (though usually intelligible) vocals are the marquee attraction, comparisons to the Cocteau Twins are



## Q&amp;A

Simon Raymonde



**How did *Moon* begin?**  
I was in London and Stephanie was in America. I'd send her a track, she would listen to it for the first time, press record, and what came out of her mouth is the song. It took less than two weeks to write but ages to finish. We were a couple then we broke up, which put things on hold, though we stayed great friends. Also, it took Stephanie a year to do the vocals, then she decided she hated it and re-recorded it!

**Comparisons will be made with the Cocteau Twins.** Of course. Stephanie is not the same as Elizabeth, she has different influences, but I saw a similarity in the way they approached writing and singing. I didn't ever want to make a record where the vocals weren't of a high standard.

**Are the Cocteaus definitely over?**  
It's been done for several years. For a second or two [a reunion] seemed possible, but it was right not to do it. It could never have worked. The relationship between Robin and Elizabeth is super-complex. I'm loath to say it'll never happen, but I can't envisage us all sitting on a bus in Ann Arbor sharing pizza. *INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON*

honouring the dream-like aura of the project's unusual beginnings. Opener "I Heard The Owl Call My Name" offers a reasonably authentic approximation of the Cocteaus' giddy rush, with its tumble of phased and layered vocals chained to crunchy reverbed guitar. "Where Foxes Hide" and "Charming Birds From Trees" are similarly – rapturously – evocative, but there are other influences at play. "Porcelain" has a dusky film-theme drama redolent of One Dove at their most melancholic, and there are echoes of Camera Obscura's honey-glazed pop on the closing "Heart Of The Woods", its sublime chorus caressed by warm trumpet. Elsewhere, a folky pastoralism often dominates. Flute twirls through the gentle prog-like waltz of "All Wishes Are Ghosts"; "We Carry White Mice" carries the ghost of "Both Sides Now" in the bones of its melody.

It's a mysterious affair, but never obscure. These songs have strong hooks and defined shape, although their stylistic and thematic uniformity wears a trifle thin over 11 tracks. It helps that *Moon* comes with an additional album of remixes, *Luna*, by Michigan's electronic supremo RxGibbs, whose work here runs the gamut from gentle revisionism to full-scale reinvention on "Where Foxes Hide" and "Amelia". Where *Snowbird*'s *Moon* is full and bright, the stuff of romantic novels, Gibbs' version ventures to the dark side. In the end, cleverly, each album serves to illuminate the strengths of the other.

## SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Recorded at:** Martha's Studio, London; Bryn Derwen, Bethesda; Bella Union Studios, London  
**Produced by:** Simon Raymonde, Bill Gautier, Iggy B  
**Personnel:** Stephanie Dosen (vocals), Simon Raymonde (piano, bass, guitars, keyboards, drums), Phil Selway (drums), Ed O'Brien (guitars), Eric Pulido (guitars), McKenzie Smith (drums), Jonathan Wilson (guitars), Paul Gregory (guitars), Will Vaughan (woodwind, harp, flutes, strings), Steve Honest (pedal steel), Ol Ketteringham (drums), Rx Gibbs (remixes)

both inevitable and a useful point of orientation.

The genesis of *Snowbird* dates back several years, following the release in 2007 of Dosen's second album, *A Lily For The Spectre*. Every night over a period of two weeks Raymonde composed a series of piano pieces which he sent to Dosen in America; she would instantly extemporise melodies and send back the results the following morning.

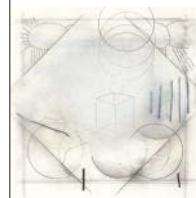
Appropriately for an album which started as a nocturnal dialogue across two continents, *Moon* is a nightscape, alive with creatures, the lyrics swarming with bears, birds, foxes, mice and horses. On some songs, most obviously "In Lovely" and "Amelia", the original piano and vocal structures are left relatively unadorned. Several others are more fully fleshed out, knocked into shape by a supporting cast handpicked from Raymonde's label roster: Jonathan Wilson, Midlake guitarist Eric Pulido and drummer McKenzie Smith, and Paul Gregory from Lanterns On The Lake all contribute, alongside Radiohead drummer Philip Selway and guitarist Ed O'Brien.

The sound they create is liquid, free-flowing,

## A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

- p70 DOUG PAISLEY
- p72 SHONNA TUCKER
- p74 BROKEN BELLS
- p75 EAST INDIA YOUTH
- p77 DAMIEN JURADO
- p78 MOGWAI
- p79 AFRICA EXPRESS
- p80 THE NEW MENDICANTS
- p82 STEPHEN MALKMUS



**ACTRESS**  
**Ghettoville**  
WERK DISCS

Unsettling sequel to Wolverhampton techno auteur's 2008 debut, *Hazyville*

8/10

Detroit techno was supposedly informed by the rhythmical clank of the Motor City's automobile assembly plants. In *Ghettoville*, only the ghosts of the machines remain, the factories long since rusted up or torn down, replaced by call centres and server farms. Everything feels here compressed, muffled, doused in digital static. The coarse, tinny textures reference ghetto house and even horrorcore hip-hop with beats that scuttle and lurch rather than thump and flex, puny bitstreams struggling to emulate the industrial glory of a former age. Inscrutable, unsettling and utterly unique.



**PAUL ARMFIELD**  
**Up Here**  
ARTFULL

Fifth album from mature Isle Of Wight troubadour

7/10

It takes a brave songwriter to tackle the distinctly non-rock'n'roll subject matter of growing old. Dylan's "Not Dark Yet" is perhaps the most successful attempt but Armfield – whose last album, *Tennyson*, was an interpretation of the Victorian poet's verse – broaches the theme uncompromisingly. His dark baritone and mellow, acoustic arrangements for banjo, pedal steel and strings evoke both Lambchop and Songdog's 2013 album, *Last Orders At Harry's Bar*. Literate songs such as "Passed", "My Apology" and the elegant psych-folk of "Speed Of Clouds" ruminate on ripeness and the passage of time in elegiac but staunchly non-sentimental fashion.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

# DOUG PAISLEY

## Strong Feelings

NO QUARTER

The Canadian crooner returns. Now with added Garth Hudson and Mary Margaret O'Hara.  
By Alastair McKay



**8/10**

artist. On the evidence of his first two albums, you might place him to the left of James Taylor and Don Williams, on account of the easy smoothness of his sound. But he's way more interesting than that.

What's evident is that Paisley has embarked on a re-evaluation since his fine 2010 album, *Constant Companion* (characterised by friendly critics as sounding like a never-ending 1971). Since then there has been one release, the austere EP, "Golden Embers" (2012), in which Paisley's acoustic guitar, a mandolin, and Leslie Feist, added muted backing to his characteristically careworn vocals.

If "Golden Embers" was a hat-tip to the bluegrass Paisley played for a decade as a member of a Stanley Brothers' tribute act, *Strong Feelings* is more diverse. There is, at the end of "Where The Light Takes You", a playful coda which could conceivably be termed "prog"; "Growing Souls" marries a church organ and a disorienting burst of Mellotron (the result sounds like The Beatles rehearsing in a Chapel of Rest). Then there is the bustling "To And Fro", which dates from Paisley's time as part of Dark Hand And Lamplight, in which he sang while visual artist Shary Boyle projected sympathetic images.

These variations are welcome, but Paisley's real gift is neither generic, nor subversive. His band, which includes Emmett Kelly (ex-Cairo Gang, and a Will Oldham sideman), is limber. But Paisley is an unassuming character and, at its best, his music is waist-high in the mainstream. A song like "Old Times" has the parched quality of a Guy Clark lament, while the ballad "One Love" is soothing and supple, its sweet intimacies propelled by the resting heartbeat of Bazil Donovan's bass.

Paisley can do the Nashville sound, but he isn't a formulaic writer. Mostly, he edits, removing narrative clues until only emotion remains. The opener "Radio Girl" has a lyric that is almost like a cut-up of country lyrics, yet the warmth of the melody takes it beyond pastiche. "It's Not Too Late (To Say Goodbye)" is a conventional country weeper, with resonant guitar from Kelly. And "Song My Love Can Sing" is a dreamily understated song about love and regret, with a gorgeous keyboard riff from The Band's Garth Hudson.

Hudson is also at the centre of the LP's stand-out, "What's Up Is Down", a late-night heartbreaker of the type Tom Waits and Crystal Gayle might have essayed in *One From The Heart*. Hudson plays "One For My Baby" piano on Glenn Gould's old Steinway, while Paisley acts the wounded man, and (another unclassifiable Canadian) Mary Margaret O'Hara



### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Recorded at:** Noble Street Studios, Toronto  
**Co-produced by:** Stew Crookes and Doug Paisley  
**Personnel includes:** Emmett Kelly, Bazil Donovan, Gary Craig, Robbie Grunwald, Garth Hudson, Mary Margaret O'Hara

trills beautifully. "What's Up Is Down" is a perfect illustration of Paisley's gift. It sounds timeless, and oddly familiar. But subsequent listens add intrigue. It's a love song framed as a complaint, though the exact nature of the singer's disquiet is hard to fathom. Perhaps it reveals a forbidden affair, or a dishonest relationship. It could be read as a passive-aggressive farewell, a blue valentine or a melancholy wallow. In truth, it's all those things, yet the mood is calibrated so precisely, the lingering impression is of emotional uncertainty,

a nervous flux in which love and hurt are locked in a bleary waltz.

Then there is the closer, "Because I Love You", in which Paisley directly addresses the power of song, via the metaphor of love. Recorded in a few spare moments at the end of his session with O'Hara, it's playful, joyous and sad. O'Hara improvises a whistling solo. "Songs can travel over walls, across great spaces, and through time," Paisley croons. It's crafted to the point of timelessness, as compelling as a dream.

## Q&A

Doug Paisley

### How did you approach this album?

Foremost, I'm a guitar player, so my daily work is really just sitting at home and playing lots of guitar and songs come out of that. A lot of these songs took two or three years, so you're really just playing them hundreds of times. If you're interested enough in them, that's what's going to make you keep playing them. But also you just have to wear away everything that might be superfluous, or that you don't like. Beyond that, when I work with musicians, particularly Garth

Hudson or the other people on this album, I have so much confidence in what they do that there really isn't any direction. The backbone of what I'm doing is deliberately laboured over, but when it comes time to record it with others, there's a lot of spontaneity.

### How did you find Mary Margaret O'Hara? Isn't she a recluse?

She's quite active in Toronto. Her mythology is one hugely important album [Miss America] and then disappearing, but she has been doing a lot of interesting stuff all this time. She's very funny, a real character, but actually when we were working, she's like any great musician you'd want to work with. She's very quick and very creative.



## THE AUTUMN DEFENSE Fifth

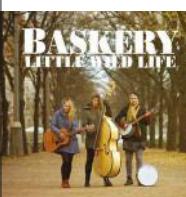
YEP ROC

**Wilco members once again take centre stage on soft-rock side project**

**7/10**

and bassist John Stiratt exhibit the same tendencies toward considered nuance and egoless restraint that characterise their work in Wilco. They cite Love's *Forever Changes* as a key reference point on this decidedly mellow LP, but the sound of *Fifth* has more in common with the filigreed neoclassic pop of Elliott Smith, though the songs lack his lyrical acuity and underlying emotionality. The duo's sophisticated feel for arrangement, the primary point of interest, is on display throughout, as they jangle regally on the Byrds-evoking "Things On My Mind" and hint at Bacharach-like elegance on the bossa nova-coloured "Why Don't We".

BUD SCOPPA



## BASKERY Little Wild Life

MOTHER TARANTULA

**Overdue return of rootsy Swedes as they slow down the pace**

**7/10**

It's been four years since the Bondesson trio of sisters released *Fall Among Thieves*, the album that introduced their one-take "killbilly" to a wider stage. *Little Wild Life* is altogether more considered and less kinetic. And while this may sometimes leave the listener hankering for the string-driven rush of old, the decision to ditch mountain music for a cooler, more European sensibility means more emphasis on the moody electric guitars and their very fine harmony singing. Highlight of the bunch has to be "The Big Flo (Adios)", which sounds like a broken border ballad with a sting in its rump.

ROB HUGHES

## BEASTMILK Climax

SVART

**Terrible name, terrible sleeve, good record**

**7/10**

Starved of daylight throughout the winter months, Finland has unsurprisingly proved to be a fertile breeding ground for haunting black metal and apocalyptic post-punk. Beastmilk combine these two traditions, alighting on a sound that can best be described as Interpol with added heft. *Climax* is both poundingly heavy and pleasingly melodic, at times also recalling the Sisters Of Mercy in their crossover pomp. In spite of its title, "Genocidal Crush" is as catchy as a Katy Perry number – a juxtaposition that suggests a dry sense of humour at work somewhere beneath the music's roaring intensity.

SAM RICHARDS



## BIG UPS

### Eighteen Hours Of Static

TOUGH LOVE

**Twenty-eight minutes of demented noise-punk, more like**

**7/10**

The title is apparently a reference to the late Carl Sagan, but it's hard to locate any other clear sign of the serene stargazer's influence on this New York foursome's long-playing debut. *Eighteen Hours Of Static* is a brutish rocker with its eyes in the gutter, reminiscent of The Jesus Lizard and Minor Threat in its scabrous mid-pace grind and occasional lurch up to hardcore speed. Frontman Joe Galarraga doesn't quite have the lyrical yucks to compete with Pissed Jeans' Matt Korvette, but there's a pleasingly sardonic edge to "Disposer" and quiet-loud tantrum "Justice": "Everybody says it's getting better all the time/But it's bad, still bad".

LOUIS PATTISON



## BLANK REALM

### Grassed Inn

FIRE RECORDS

**Terrific Australian punks head towards New Wave**

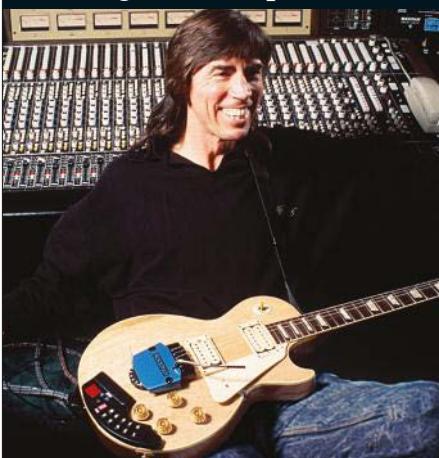
**8/10**

Here the snotty Aussie punk quartet retreat further from their experimental origins to explore the melodic leanings heard on 2012's *Go Easy*. They've been heading this way for a while, as "Falling Down The Stairs" attests, an old song that shines in this setting, combining jangle and synth-like classic New Wave, topped by a supreme Elvis Costello sneer. Elsewhere, the band's love of jamming bears fruit when they find a real groove on "Bulldozer Love". Equally jamtastic are the churn-and-whistle of "Baby Close The Door" and Dylanesque "Even The Score". The poppier "Violet Delivery" swoops like Talking Heads in their heyday.

PETER WATTS

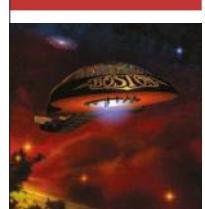
## REVELATIONS

**Boston's Tom Scholz honours his late singer Brad Delp**



► The inclusion of vocals by the late Brad Delp on two re-upholstered songs on *Life, Love & Hope* would appear to suggest that the fractious relationship between Boston's chief writer, musician and producer Tom Scholz and Delp's family may have reached a workable compromise. An article in *The Boston Herald* shortly after Delp took his own life in 2007 quoted a relative as saying the vocalist had been "beaten down by the years of dealing with Tom Scholz", a claim the band's majordomo strenuously denied. Although Scholz was undoubtedly the engine room of the band, their epic pop rock his single-minded vision, Delp's soaring voice, on breakthrough hit "More Than A Feeling" especially, was a major component of the band's sound. Delp originally quit the group in 1990 during the making of their fourth album, *Walk On*, and Scholz didn't complete the project until 1994. Delp returned to the fold in '95, and may yet turn up on future albums. "There are other recordings, but I'm not planning on releasing anything I think he would be unhappy with," Scholz said last year. "There are certainly live recordings that are a possibility for the future."

TERRY STAUNTON



## BOSTON

### Life, Love & Hope

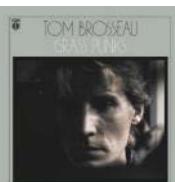
FRONTIERS

**Elaborate pomp rock, saluting a fallen friend**

**6/10**

Tom Scholz's intricately layered bombast hasn't altered a great deal since "More Than A Feeling" conquered the globe in 1976, and his band's first album in over a decade intentionally references the past, as a tribute to late singer Brad Delp. Two cuts featuring Delp on lead vocals were first heard on Boston's last long-player, 2002's *Corporate America*, although it's the impossibly catchy "Heaven On Earth" and the riff-fuelled harmony-laden title track that echo loudest with former glories. Old-school FM rock odes to love dominate, but Scholz comes unstuck on the clumsy sermonising of the Hurricane Katrina-inspired " Sail Away".

TERRY STAUNTON



## TOM BROSSEAU

### Grass Punks

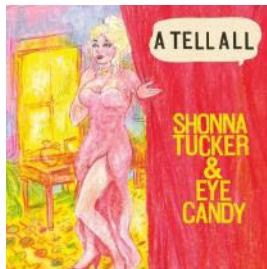
TIN ANGEL RECORDS

**Underrated Dakotan troubadour returns**

The characteristics that have presumably prevented Brosseau's praises being sung from hipster-folk rooftops everywhere are the very things that mark him out as a singular talent. To describe him as "the male Laura Marling" may be glib, but it's not too far wide of the mark; his songs' lack of adornment verges on the austere and his quavering, curiously olde-timey voice is an acquired taste. But there's lots to admire in this wry, beautifully finger-picked set, which recalls Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and a bluegrass-attuned, less whimsical Devendra Banhart. Brosseau, though, is no folk revivalist, as "Cradle Your Device" – which sees him routinely ignored by his partner in favour of a mobile phone – attests.

SHARON O'CONNELL

## AMERICANA



6/10

### SHONNA TUCKER & EYE CANDY

#### A Tell All

SWEET NECTAR

#### Ex-Drive-By Truckers bassist moves centre stage

After parting ways with Drive-By Truckers two years ago, bassist Shonna Tucker resolved to take a long break and tend to the chickens and donkeys on the farm where she lives with her partner, fellow ex-Trucker John Neff. But it wasn't long before she found herself back in the studio with old friends: what began as a casual musical get-together with Neff, Clay Leverett (drummer in honky-tonk band the Chasers) and Bo Bedingfield (guitarist in the Wydelles), has resulted in this first LP under her own name.

Tucker's return is hardly unexpected. In her eight years as a Trucker, she wrote and performed a handful of songs that placed her at the more soulful end of the alt.rock spectrum. On *A Tell All*, she dips in and out of folk and R'n'B, ultimately favouring a rootsy country rock vibe. Like much of DBT's output, storytelling is at the core, with sad tales of lives gone wrong. In the style of "Jolene", "Linda Please" implores a young woman to halt her course of destruction ("You sacrificed your body/We sacrificed our land") against twanging Tex-Mex riffs, while "Arielle" confronts a man who ruined the life of a young girl ("Arielle, nine years old and pure as gold/And you messed up her bed").

These are dark themes and yet in Tucker's hands they somehow lack bite. This is, in part, down to a pretty, yet bland vocal style that leaves you longing for her to add some grit. Elsewhere, a note of sentimentality takes over: on the organ-drenched "Since Jimmy Came" a mother learns the meaning of true love when she meets her son, and on the cosy but dull "A Family Dinner", Tucker (auteur of several instructional cooking videos on YouTube) extols the virtues of gathering around the dinner table. It's all very sweet and is backed by some seriously accomplished playing, but taken as a whole *A Tell All* proves underwhelming, never quite hitting you where it hurts. *FIONA STURGES*



## THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► The early part of 2014 ushers in *Blue Smoke*, a new studio release by **Dolly Parton**, which carries echoes of her back-to-roots albums *The Grass Is Blue* and *Little Sparrow*. The

67-year-old singer-songwriter has been talking up its bluegrass-country feel, adding that the title relates to its strong "Smoky Mountain flavour". Most of the tunes are originals, though she makes room for a cover of Dylan's "Don't Think Twice It's All Right" and, uhm, Bon Jovi's "Lay Your Hands On Me". She's already announced a major UK tour for next summer, kicking off at Liverpool's Echo Arena on June 8. On a less starry level in Music City,

industry veteran John Grady has formed IRS Nashville, a relative of the IRS label that once brought us REM and The Go-Go's. The idea is to sign up promising new country bands, though his first release is likely to be the final recording of the late **Cowboy Jack Clement**, who was joined by **T Bone Burnett** in the studio. Two other incoming albums worth shouting about. **Hans Chew**, whose debut *Tennessee & Other Stories...* was shortlisted for an *Uncut* Music Award, returns in March with *Life & Love*, which he describes as a more "rock'n'roll" record. And Toronto's **Doug Paisley** will issue *Strong Feelings* around the same time. The follow-up to 2010's very fine *Constant Companion* is easily his most countrified to date, with guests Garth Hudson, The Cairo Gang's Emmett Kelly and, on three songs, Mary Margaret O'Hara. *ROB HUGHES*



### BUSHMAN'S REVENGE

#### Thou Shalt Boogie!

RUNE GRAMMOPON

Mighty sixth missive from the jazz/prog interface

8/10

Guitarist/composer Even Helte Hermansen revealed that the working title for this Norwegian trio's latest was 'Yoga', because "the idea was to do a more meditative record than [we] previously have". In no way, though, is it a gentle Hatha exercise, rather than their usual rigorous Bikram workout. Winding, 17-minute epic "Baklengs inn i Fuglekassa" features the drone of an Indian shruti box and taps the ecstatic jazz of Alice Coltrane and Sun Ra, but it relies as much on slow-build heaviness for its power as it does serene space. Elsewhere, the album reveals formative years spent listening to Pixies, Codeine, Black Sabbath, Hendrix and Cream, although "fusion" this certainly is not. *SHARON O'CONNELL*



### CAKEWALK

#### Transfixed

HUBRO

Nordic noise-rockers kick out the seven-minute jams

7/10

All things Kraut, prog and analogue electro have now become such officially sanctioned signifiers of middlebrow good taste, they can seem lazy and predictable. But Norwegian trio Cakewalk still interrogate these elements with invention and bite, blurring the lines between drone-rock and dub, improvised jamming and mechanised noise. Billed as a more punky and concise affair than their 2012 debut, this second album is more abrasive. The clanking instrumental juggernauts "Ghosts" and "Dunes" sound like steam-powered robots trying to play jazz, but the stand-out is "Swarm", a seven-minute psych-out of crackling, heavily pock-marked Krautronica brightened by unexpected blooms of ambient beauty. *STEPHEN DALTON*



### MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER

#### Songs From The Movie

ZOË/ROUNDER

Roots-rocker turned torch singer: 10 career highlights reinterpreted

7/10

With its swelling, swirling string arrangement and vocals both light and dark, "On And On It Goes" (from 2007 LP *The Calling*) lays down the MO of this ambitious, stylistic left turn. Cherry-picking tracks from her 26-year career, the terra firma, country'n'folk-based Carpenter reaches for the skies here, reinventing her catalogue amid the glistening arrangements of composer/arranger Vince Mendoza. Carpenter's dense, narrative-heavy, emotional songwriting fits into the enormity of the setting well – Marianne Faithfull-like – wringing all emotion out of existential treatises like "Between Here And Gone", re-envisioning the romance of early hit "Come On Come On". *LUKE TORN*



## CRAYOLA LECTERN

### The Fall And Rise Of...

#### BLEEDING HEART

English prog-punk bohemia from veteran singer-songwriter

Crayola Lectern is Chris Anderson, formerly of art-rock nearly-bands Map and Supermodel. Now based in Brighton and in thrall to the early '70s Canterbury scene, he and cohorts Alastair Strachan and Random Jon Poole (Cardiacs) have made an exquisitely eccentric debut album. Pitched somewhere between Robert Wyatt, Jona Lewie and Baxter Dury, Anderson talk-sings his melancholic, self-mocking songs in an avuncular cockney, and then dresses them in elegant chamber-pop threads. Yet there's enough scope to journey from the quirk of the album's first line – "My goldfish died of boredom" – to the Spiritualized-style epic "Trip In D".

GARRY MULHOLLAND

**8/10**

## ADRIAN CROWLEY & JAMES YORKSTON

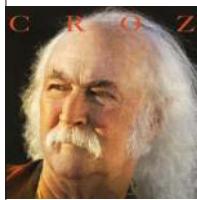
### My Yoke Is Heavy: The Songs Of Daniel Johnston

#### CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND

**7/10**

Tribute to the lo-fi genius Crowley and Yorkston collaborated on Johnston songs at a Barbican show held to celebrate the 2005 documentary about the cult songwriter. They continued the project, sending recordings between Crowley's home in Dublin and Yorkston's in Fife. The result is a suitably lo-fi affair – nervous melodies held aloft by tentative guitar and piano, plus surprising interventions from passing birds, a baby monitor, a smashed bouzouki. No special pleading is needed: "The Sun Shines Down On Me" and the beautiful, faltering "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Your Grievance" are revealed as anthems of lonely resilience.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



## DAVID CROSBY

### Croz

#### BLUE CASTLE

"Warm and wet" fourth from former Byrd Only the third studio album Crosby has run to since 1971's airy, decadent *If Only I Could*

*Remember My Name*, *Croz* emerges at a time when a heritage artist embraces his great achievements, rather than escapes them. So rather than the '80s rock of *Oh Yes I Can* or the guest-strewn covers of 1993's *Thousand Roads*, this frequently lovely, folky album instead recalls the ease and space of that debut. The tone is chastened; the writing acute. Mark Knopfler guests on the opening "What's Broken", "The Clearing" and "Morning Falling" find a place for Crosby in the Jeff Buckley-Radiohead timeline, while "Set That Baggage Down" has a flavour of CSNY's *Déjà Vu* jams – sepia but evergreen.

JOHN ROBINSON

**8/10**



## CYMBALS

### The Age Of Fracture

#### TOUGH LOVE

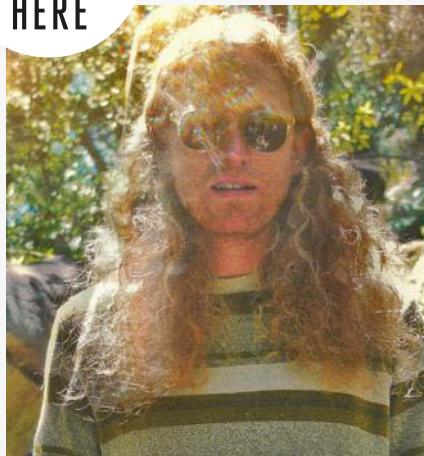
Indie outfit lunge at the dancefloor

The dry white wine of Cymbals' 2011 debut *Unlearn* revealed an enthusiastic band with good ideas who lacked the skills to do their songs justice. On follow-up *The Age Of Fracture*, the London quartet signpost the album with handsome literary and academic allusions in anticipation of an edifying dance direction, but end up trotting out the kind of meek synthfunk once propagated by the likes of Hot Chip and Metronomy. There's a certain charm to wide-eyed frontman James Cleverly's existential slant on modern life, though he does himself few favours by singing in French on "Winter '98" and "The End".

PIERS MARTIN

## Morgan Delt

WE'RE NEW HERE



► Morgan Delt was originally from the Bay Area but moved to LA when he was 17, where he absorbed "any kind of music that sounds strange, otherworldly, evocative, or mysterious", much of which was produced by musicians in his native state. The result of this immersion can be heard in his self-titled debut album, a wonderfully whimsical and adventurous psych-rock oddity that splices together the "psych, Krautrock, prog, jazz, soundtracks and experimental music that I like to listen to" on tracks like the churning "Barbarian Kings", deranged, kaleidoscopic "Little Zombies" and sinister downer "Sad Sad Trip".

It's an ambitious, exciting and decidedly weird achievement, especially as Delt wrote and recorded everything himself. While Delt's experimental approach means he stands apart musically from the more poppy aspects of the California psych scene, he feels an affinity with his peers. "I guess California, and especially LA, has been a magnet for all kinds of freaks, dreamers and crazies for a very long time, so psych fits in with that mindset," he says. "Plus there's a connection to all of the music that was made here in the '60s and even back earlier to people like Harry Partch, Ornette Coleman or Eden Ahbez."

PETER WATTS



## MORGAN DELT

### Morgan Delt

#### TROUBLE IN MIND

Skewed sunshine psychedelia from the weird West Coast

**7/10**

His discography to date consists of one seven-inch single and a cassette EP called "Psychic Death Hole", so background information on Morgan Delt is scarce. However, you learn pretty much all you need to know from the opening number here – "Make My Grey Brain Green" – not least that he's a man who's surely taken full advantage of California's relaxed laws on marijuana consumption. Delt has gorged on the music of the Summer Of Love (and its subsequent comedown), regurgitating it all back onto tape in the manner of a chilled-out Ariel Pink. The lack of outside input and studio polish only intensifies the trip.

SAM RICHARDS

## DISCODEINE

### Swimmer

#### DIRTY/PSCHENT

Paris duo's curdled synthpop

Discodeine's Benjamin 'Pentile' Morando and Cédric 'Pilooski' Marszewski cornered the

**7/10**

market in sleazy French synthwave a few years back with tracks featuring Jarvis Cocker and Matias Aguayo, but they've since failed to expand the business. Second album *Swimmer* offers slinkier songs sung by drummer Mark Kerr and boasts one trump card, a rich cut of spangled psychedelia called "Aydin", howled Lennonishly by Tame Impala's Kevin Parker. Much of *Swimmer*, particularly "Shades Of Cyan" and "Liquid Sky", glides attractively between the disco and the lounge, but the general impression is of Discodeine treading water rather than exploring hidden depths.

PIERS MARTIN



## DUM DUM GIRLS

### Too True

#### SUB POP

Brash '80s guitar-pop from former lo-fi punk queen

**8/10**

It's taken Dee Dee Penny, who records as Dum Dum Girls, three years to get her voice back in order after relentless touring, but she makes her return in dramatic fashion. *Too True* is a bold album, with Dee Dee backed by huge, swelling, guitars on a series of resoundingly anthemic and unashamedly '80s-sounding tracks. Stand-out tracks include the gothic echo of "Cult Of Love", the Duran Duran-esque "In The Wake Of You", the Bruce Springsteen-meets-The Pretenders "Rimbaud Eyes" and the confident indie disco floor-filler "Under These Hands", which sounds something like Madonna backed by Echo And The Bunnymen.

PETER WATTS

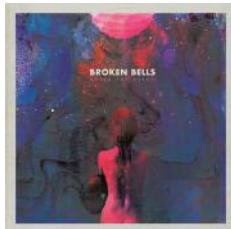


## BROKEN Bells

### After The Disco

COLUMBIA

Supple mood music tailor-made for a rainy Sunday afternoon.  
By Bud Scoppa



**8/10**

of this audacious auteur. Like Gnarls Barkley before it, Broken Bells presents the producer/one-man-band with ample opportunity to combine his studio wizardry with a singular voice, this one belonging to The Shins' James Mercer.

Still, there are more levels to this collaboration than the obvious one of producer and singer. Although he's put his sonic stamp on every Danger Mouse production, from Gorillaz's *Demon Days* (2005) and Beck's *Modern Guilt* (2008) to The Black Keys' *El Camino* (2011) and Norah Jones' *Little Broken Hearts* (2012), there Burton is essentially serving the needs of a client; here he's a fully-fledged band member. Likewise, Mercer, a singer-songwriter who has disguised himself as a bandleader with The Shins since 2001's *Oh, Inverted World*, gets another chance to mix it up with a kindred spirit. If the duo's self-titled 2010 debut album made it apparent that Burton and Mercer had found a fruitful common ground in their cerebral approaches to making music, the rhythmic, melodic

and thoughtful *After The Disco* stands as impressive proof of the strength of their partnership; its 11 tracks are the result of a balanced back-and-forth in the writing, arranging and playing.

The album's opening triptych forms an extended ode to the shimmering sounds of the new wave era, as Burton, 36, and Mercer, 42, appropriate and apply the music of their '80s childhoods to the rarefied chemistry they create together, with rapturous

results. The three tracks are elegantly contoured pieces of aural architecture. "Perfect World" is a pocket symphony for analogue synths with two distinct movements. "After The Disco" bounces along on a springy old-school groove of the order of Daft Punk's "Get Lucky". And first single "Holding On For Life" showcases Mercer's chromium falsetto as his chorus vocals form a reverent homage to the Bee Gees circa *Saturday Night Fever*, set off by a surging middle-eight in the manner of Tears For Fears' "Pale Shelter". This soulful and scintillating track is the most delectable pop confection Burton has come up with since Gnarls Barkley's "Crazy", while also displaying the feint-and-parry dynamic of Shins classics like "New Slang" or "Sea Legs".

Following this super-saturated opening segment, the album turns sepia-toned, starting with the

hushed, dusky "Leave It Alone". Five of the remaining eight tracks are burnished by string arrangements from Daniele Luppi, Burton's partner in *Rome*, their lush and atmospheric paean to the Italian film music of the 1960s, their presence deepening the nostalgic feel of the album. But even as the atmosphere darkens, the partners keep the quantised midtempo grooves percolating and the analog synths chirping. "The Changing Lights" juxtaposes an undulating Smiths-like verse melody and a subtle nod to Morrissey in Mercer's vocal with a full-on soul-gospel chorale in the choruses.

The chugging but languid "Medicine" could be a newly discovered Scritti Politti rarity, while the following "No Matter What You're Told" is an unlikely amalgam of The Clash and the Swingle Singers. From there, the mood deepens to blue noir with the languid, lovely ballad "The Angel And The Fool", giving way to the elegiac introspection of the closing "The Remains Of Rock & Roll", which functions as an end-title theme for this New Wave spaghetti western.

It will be fascinating to see how much of the Danger Mouse signature sound finds its way into Burton's upcoming productions of Frank Ocean and U2 (his fingerprints are all over "Ordinary Love", their contribution to the soundtrack to *Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom*). There's also the follow-up to *El Camino* to look forward to, as well as Mercer's next Shins opus. But no matter what delectations Burton and Mercer offer up later this year, they've begun 2014 with a flourish – at the tops of their games, totally in sync with one another.

## Q&A

James Mercer



**Was the falsetto chorus of "Holding On for Life" consciously based on the Bee Gees? That was a coincidence. I was singing over the verse trying to come up with a new melody.**

Brian picked that melody out and said it should be the chorus. We put together some lyrics, then I sang them in a falsetto to get it to a certain energy level, and it just sounded like me doing a falsetto. Then he had me do layers of it, and when he played that back, I laughed out loud. It was like the Gibbons were singing to me. I like that thing where you're almost, "Is this too much?" I seem to always find myself in that situation, so I just embrace it.

**"The Remains Of Rock & Roll", what's it all about?** We both have careers that happen to be poised on this downward slope of where music fits into pop culture. It used to be such a big deal, but the ones that are hugely successful now are just sort of... silly. Not that we're cynical about it.

**Did you listen to particular records when prepping for the album?** We listened to Kraftwerk to get an inspiration about beats and sounds. We wondered how they were able to get such powerful moments out of so little. We also listened to some pretty banal '80s music.

**What's the common ground between you two?** We both have a love for hooks and melancholy pop music. We just share that affinity for sadness – and also a good beat, strangely. Nowadays, you don't really see melody and beats and rhythm given this balanced approach. *INTERVIEW: BUD SCOPPA*



**EAST INDIA YOUTH**  
**Total Strife Forever**  
STOLEN RECORDINGS

Richly impressive solo debut from recovering indie rocker

**9/10**

A major new British talent is born in William Doyle's solo debut, which sounds like the great lost album that Brian Wilson, Eno and Björk should have made together. *Total Strife Forever* is a kaleidoscopic affair built around four iterations of the title track, which gearshift from shoegaze shimmer-shudder to ambient abstraction to full-blooded electro-orchestral symphony. A Bournemouth-born twentysomething based in London, Doyle keeps vocals to a minimum, favouring lush harmonies and falsetto peaks on honeyed techno-ballads like "Dripping Down". Elsewhere he covers a broad spectrum with versatility and verve, from modern classical austerity to endorphin-pumped acid house.

STEPHEN DALTON



**CHRIS ECKMAN**  
**Harney County**  
GLITTERHOUSE

Walkabouts man goes native in Oregon

Following his African adventures with Dirtmusic and Tuareg rockers Tamikrest, Eckman swaps

the sands of the Sahara for the sagebrush prairie. His last release with The Walkabouts, 2011's *Travels In The Dustlands*, was a song-cycle about a mythical America. These songs inhabit related territory but they're rawer, hewn from his fascination with the vastness of Oregon's sparsely populated Harney County, where the lonely back roads and squatter camps encountered in songs such as "The Sound Of No Return" and "Nothing Left To Hate" are merely there to remind us of man's transience. Eckman's echoing vocals and reverberating soundscapes evoke the wilderness with suitably existential dread.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**8/10**



**EJECTA**  
**Dominae**  
HAPPY DEATH

New York indie couple's sugared synthpop is troubled by tweeness

**7/10**

Ejecta is a partnership forged on the road between Leanne Macomber of chillwavers Neon Indian and Joel Ford, the straight man in also-rans Ford + Lopatin and Tigercity. What strikes you about *Dominae* is that their textbook synthpop is instantly gratifying: Ford is a card-carrying fan of '80s Eurodisco who now has the perfect foil in Macomber, whose breathless delivery on "Jeremiah (The Denier)" and "Silver" caresses his twinkling toplines. Tweeness soon sets in – full albums of this lightweight nature rarely take flight – but as kindred spirits Grimes and Austra have proved, one hit is all it takes.

PIERS MARTIN



**SOPHIE-ELLIS BEXTOR**  
**Wanderlust**  
EBGB

Pop/nu-disco diva and *Strictly Come Dancing* star's elegant rover assortment

**7/10**

A very British disco diva, Sophie Ellis-Bextor always seemed to be more *Death On The Nile* than murder on the dancefloor, but with her fifth solo outing, the *Strictly Come Dancing* star has seemingly found a more appropriate milieu. Produced by Ed Harcourt, the stately *Wanderlust* is an album of sweeping gestures, costume changes and stylish flights of fantasy – whether it's the sound of Shirley Bassey being smuggled out of communist Czechoslovakia on "Birth Of An Empire" or Margaret Rutherford stumbling across the formula for trip-hop on "Interlude". Frivolous but elegant.

JIM WIRTH

WE'RE  
NEW  
HERE

East India  
Youth



► "Brian Eno came to one of my London shows," gushes William Doyle, the twentysomething one-man-band of symphonic electronica who records as East India Youth. "I've got the guestlist saved from that gig with his name crossed out. I sent him an EP and a postcard, but he hasn't responded yet..."

Citing Eno, Shostakovich, Arvo Pärt and Fuck Buttons as key influences, East India Youth's debut album already sounds like one of the coming year's musical peaks. Finally receiving a proper release this month after circulating online, *Total Strife Forever* is a rich tapestry of sumptuous avant-pop and electro-classical instrumentals.

"I am not qualified in any music theory or anything," explains the Bournemouth-born Doyle, "I just love orchestral music and minimalism and Soviet composers like Shostakovich. I wanted to try and create something similar in texture and dynamics."

Before East India Youth, Doyle fronted indie rock quartet Doyle & The Fourfathers, but found himself increasingly limited by the guitar-pop format. "I loved my friends in the band," he says, "but it was a bit tiring not following my ideas through to where I thought they should go. So when I made some tracks that ended up becoming East India Youth, I instantly knew I could invest myself more in that."

STEPHEN DALTON



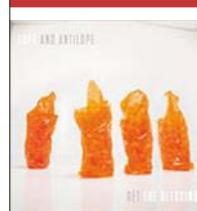
**EVOL**  
**Something Inflatable**  
ALKU

'Computer music for hooligans': they said it...

**7/10**

You wouldn't make it up: EVOL use the algorithmic complexity of computer music to poke and prod at the legacy of rave culture. They sit somewhere between academia, the gallery and an illegal warehouse party, which is why *Something Inflatable* is so curious. Inspired by hardcore classic "Poing", EVOL treat their inspiration onomatopoeically – this is 30 minutes of 'poing', a rubbery, ungainly bleep scaling octaves and rhythms at unpredictable intervals. A thumping bass drum joins in on the second side. It's a lesson in brutal clarity, apart from the section, about seven minutes into Side One, which sounds like "Popcorn".

JON DALE



**GET THE BLESSING**  
**Lope And Antelope**  
NAIM JAZZ

Punk-jazzers moving into weirder territory on fourth LP

**7/10**

This Bristol-based quartet have been steadily moving away from their initial incarnation as an Ornette Coleman tribute band with every successive release. On their fourth album, the vestiges of "jazz" are still there but they sound more interesting when they lurch into other territories, like Krautrock ("Viking Death Moped") or Eno-esque minimalism ("Luposcope"). Best of all are the bits where they put real-time digital effects on the saxophone and trumpet frontline, to the point that a sax solo starts to contain radical bends in pitch, or a trumpet is filtered until it resembles a BBC Radiophonic Workshop monster.

JOHN LEWIS



**THE GLOAMING**  
**The Gloaming**  
REAL WORLD

Stately debut from virtuoso international folk ensemble

Take two fêted Irish fiddlers, a Chicago

guitarist, an avant-garde pianist from New York City and the voice of Iarla Ó Lionárd, formerly of the Afro Celt Sound System, and you have one unexpected folk group. Ó Lionárd has always sung with a still, eerie beauty and the instrumentalists conjure up similarly precise, minimalist soundscapes that are rooted in Irish tradition but whose reels and laments stray into neo-classical territory. Martin Hayes' fiddle is at the centre of things, with Thomas Bartlett's piano providing odd, jazzy counterpoints. The 16-minute "Opening Set", running from slow beauty to joyful jog, is the standout of a magisterial set.

NEIL SPENCER

# New Albums



## HOLLY GOLIGHTLY AND THE BROKEOFFS

### All Her Fault

TRANS DREAMER

Roots-rock deluxe: Honky-tonk and Delta blues from the infamous Headcoatee

**9/10**

Having woodshedded for the better part of a decade, this duo – fronted by onetime Billy Childish associate Golightly – incorporate all their learnings here. For one thing, it's a sonic feast – crystalline piano runs, kitchen-sink percussion touches, churchy harmonies. Meanwhile, Golightly's songs are brilliant pastiche. Sticking to a pre-Beatles roots template, the songs branch out into gospel ("Don't Shed Your Light"), country-blues ("Trouble In Mind") and barroom ditties ("For All That Ails You"). "Can't Pretend", a rockabilly raver, and "Trouble In Mind", which sounds like X covering Lightnin' Hopkins, highlight an exemplary set.

LUKE TORN



## STEVE GUNN / MIKE GANGLOFF

### Melodies For A Savage Fix

IMPORTANT

Improvisation in isolation, with limited rewards

Gunn and Gangloff are both key figures in the American folk-psych underground: Gunn is equal parts blues raga man and classicist singer-songwriter, while Gangloff searches for the chronological infinite in Pelt. They're excellent, tasteful players, and there are some lovely moments on *Melodies...*, particularly when Gunn's hypnotic guitar spirals around Gangloff's seductive, heavily droning tanpura. But perhaps going into retreat and recording the album over one evening in Topeka wasn't the best idea, as nothing here quite kicks off like you'd hope: it's all a bit dissolute and unfocused. Perhaps next time will be the charm.

JONDALE

**6/10**

## SARAH LEE GUTHRIE & JOHNNY IRION

### Wassaic Way

RTE 8

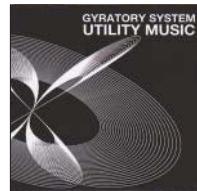
Woody's granddaughter and her husband get Wilco'd

Following on from

White Denim, Mavis Staples and Low, Guthrie and Irion are the latest artists to take up Wilco's invitation to record their latest album at the band's Loft studio in Chicago. The imprint of producers Jeff Tweedy and Pat Sansone is evident in the subtle details of *Wassaic Way*, which is less country and more pop than the couple's previous outings. There are small twangs of roots guitar, though this is mostly a deft set of folksy tunes marked by easy harmonies and, as on songs such as "Sleep On It" and "Hurricane Window", a faint air of Neil Young or early Paul Simon.

ROB HUGHES

**7/10**



## GYRATOR SYSTEM

### Utility Music

SOFT BODIES

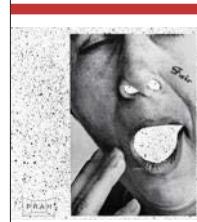
Exhaustingly inventive, lo-fi sci-fi instrumentals

Much has been made of mainman Andrew Bick's idiosyncratic, intellectual

musical approach – dubbed 'The Process' – but the joy of Gyroratory System's previous two records has been in its surprisingly playful results. Their third continues this tradition, its motorik rhythms unstoppable, its sampled sounds – including, on "Messidor", typewriters and recorders – unanticipated, as if the Radiophonic Workshop had been challenged to replicate the sound of Battles. At times, as with "Old Harmony", such childlike excitability can become irritating, but at their best – the 10-minute "This Could Be Your Party", for instance – they're like an analogue The Field, hypnotic and irresistible.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

**7/10**



## BRYCE HACKFORD

### Fair

PRAH RECORDINGS

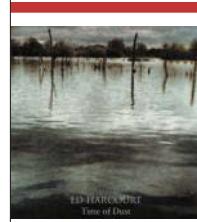
New Yorker's wispy techno

A serial collaborator, DJ and occasional model, 29-year-old producer

Bryce Hackford looks to lead a charmed life in New York City, and a sense of mischief pervades his debut collection of streaky dreamhouse and lo-fi kosmische for Moshi Moshi-affiliated experimental label PRAH. *Fair* displays Hackford's range across six tracks, two of which, "Modern Propeller Music" and "Run-on Cirrus", each unspool for 20 minutes, while others such as "Another Fantasy" squish boshing techno through a blender. Hackford is cut from the same shamanic cloth as DFA druid Gavin Russom in that he's quite at home producing zoned-out vistas of analogue bliss.

PIERS MARTIN

**7/10**



## ED HARCOURT

### Time Of Dust

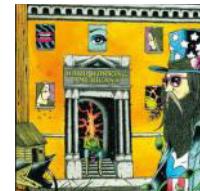
CCCLX MUSIC

A masterly lurch to the dark side by the multi-talented maestro

With its songs of negation, loss and swirling modern gothic pop, fuelled by hip-hop-accentuated loops and grooves, this 28-minute mini-album is a sharp, stirring contrast to the delicate lustre of its 2012 predecessor, *Back Into the Woods*. Harcourt relishes charting the atmosphere introduced on "Come Into My Dreamland"’s musical haunted house – a quasi-cinematic compositional bent emphasised by the *Reservoir Dogs*-inspired title "The Saddest Orchestra (It Plays For You)". The pointed and sonically explosive "Parliament Of Rooks" adds stirring contemporary resonance to the over-arching stylistic conceit.

GAVIN MARTIN

**8/10**



## HARD WORKING AMERICANS

### Hard Working Americans

MELVIN/THIRTY TIGERS

Roots-rock supergroup don't need no stinkin' originals

This is singer-songwriter

Todd Snider's one-off band. Drummer Duane Trucks (Derek's brother), bassist Dave Schools (Widespread Panic) and Snider's keys player Chuck Staehly are equally adept at earthshaking bashers (Will Kimbrough's "Another Train") and quicksilver balladry (Kevin Gordon's "Down To The Well"), but guitarist Neal Casal (Ryan Adams' Cardinals, Chris Robinson Brotherhood) consistently steals the show with his fluid slide solos. The material – which also includes selections from Randy Newman, David Rawlings/Gillian Welch and Frankie Miller – forms a coherent, hard-hitting song cycle about blue-collar hard times.

BUD SCOPPA

**8/10**



## HOSPITALITY

### Trouble

FIRE

Backwards-looking New Yorkers' gawk on the wild side

Possessed of the Bambi-legged awkwardness of the early Cure and traces of the haunted tractor-factory menace of Pere Ubu, Brooklyn's Hospitality have taken their post-doctoral indie-pop down a dark alley for their second album. The Rough Trade circa 1980 sleeve aesthetic gives some measure of a record defined by unexpected terrors. Hence, the shape-shifting "Nightingale" manages to find existential dread on a fishing trip, while singer and schoolteacher Amber Papini employs every spooky keyboard sound to be found on the first Magazine album on "Rockets And Jets". Sweet at its core, but pleasantly dark around the edges.

JIM WIRTH

**7/10**



## I BREAK HORSES

### Chiaroscuro

BELLA UNION

Sumptuous Stockholm dreampop

For their second album, Swedish duo Maria Lindén and Fredrik Balck have broken away from

the nu-shoegaze tags attracted by their promising debut, *Hearts*. *Chiaroscuro* fulfills its light-dark promise by way of droning retrosynths, tough machine drums, melodramatic pianos and Lindén's rich, breathy vocals. The vast soundscapes of epic ballads "You Burn" and "Medicine Brush" and the deliciously pastoral "Ascension" set the tone, whereby the dark, layered melodies and agreeably '80s-vintage pulsebeats overwhelm the lyrics. The meanings might be obscure, but *Chiaroscuro* is still deluxe cinematic pop by hugely accomplished composer-producers.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

**7/10**



**SHARON JONES & THE DAP-KINGS**  
**Give The People What They Want**

DAPTON

**7/10**

New York soul veterans make classy return

*"You think that you can keep the sea at bay/ It's about to get choppy,"* Sharon Jones warns a troublesome lover in "Retreat!". Things certainly got choppy for the singer last year when she was diagnosed with cancer and forced to call off her tour. But following treatment she is back with the Dap-Kings – best known for being Amy Winehouse's backing band – and in terrific voice on a sixth LP that, like its predecessors, studiously channels the halcyon days of Motown and Stax. With their retro sound and tales of love gone sour, Jones and co don't exactly push the envelope but what they do, they do with style.

FIONA STURGES



**DAMIEN JURADO**

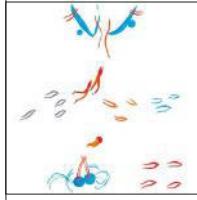
**Brothers And Sisters Of The Eternal Son**

SECRETLY CANADIAN

**9/10**

Sumptuous career best from Seattle songwriter Jurado's collaborative relationship with producer Richard Swift appears to have given him a whole new dimension of late. Gone are the stark acoustics of his noughties output, replaced instead by a layered warmth and gorgeous, semi-orchestral settings that make him sound like a spiritual descendant of early '70s Laurel Canyon. *Brothers And Sisters...*, Jurado's third album with Swift in the chair, carries choral echoes of CSNY and solo Crosby, with songs like "Silver Timothy" and "Metallic Cloud" tilting at the same kind of celestial abstraction as those of Matthew E White and Israel Nash Gripka.

ROB HUGHES



**MATT KIVEL**

**Double Exposure**

OLDE ENGLISH SPELLING BEE

**7/10**

Engagingly spectral indie folk; an act of "Skinny Love"?

Those who can't survive for long without a new Justin Vernon album have

plenty of potential substitutes around at the moment – not least, this month, James Vincent McMorrow and Nathaniel Rateliff. LA's Matt Kivel, though, is especially recommended. Kivel doesn't slavishly imitate Vernon, but his solo debut has many of the virtues of the first Bon Iver album, as delicate acoustic songs fade in and out of discreetly tweaked ambient settings. The diffident intimacies of "Whip" and "Rainbow Trout" have something of Grizzly Bear, too. But it's to Kivel's credit that he eschews the grander gestures and ambitions of these antecedents. Pleasingly small-scale; unexpectedly insidious.

JOHN MULVEY



**JUSTUS KOHNCKE**

**Justus Köhncke & The Wonderful Frequency Band**

KOMPAKT

**7/10**

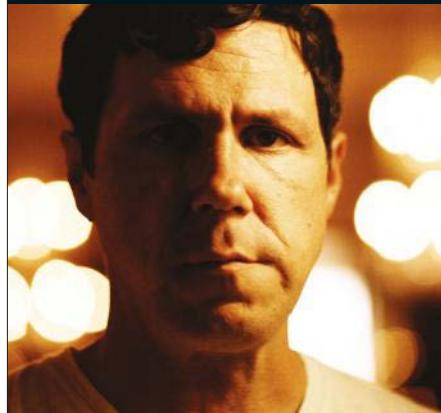
German disco-provocateur burns the floor

He's a brilliant disco producer, as past monsters like "Timecode", "Elan" and "Faults 'N' FX" prove, but Köhncke hasn't yet managed to pull off a completely successful, consistently great album. *Wonderful Frequency Band* is the closest he's come, terrible punning title aside, largely due to its focus on the dancefloor: there are less of his underfed pop songs here, more blissed-out disco moves. For proof, check the heavenly, sighing-in-mid-air voices on "Tell Me", the deep acid bubbles of "Nucleus Accumbens" and "Loop", or "Idee, Prozess, Ergebnis"’s frothy, ticklish rhythms. Unsurprisingly, for Köhncke, dancing is the answer.

JONDALE

## REVELATIONS

Seattle songwriter Damien Jurado: "I wanted to quit music"

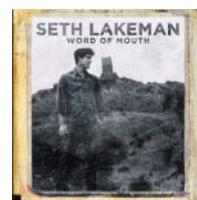


► Damien Jurado used to dread going into the studio. Not for him the "soulless, unnatural" process of multiple takes and separate tracks for vocals and guitar.

"There were many times when I wanted to quit doing music altogether," admits the Seattle songwriter, who began with Sub Pop in the late '90s. "I hated recording and touring, the whole lot."

Enter fellow tunesmith and producer, Richard Swift. "He said to me: 'You've been making records that don't reflect who you are. It's time to make one that's really you.'"

The result was 2010's *Saint Bartlett*, an album whose rich, luminous warmth was light years removed from the stark acoustics of Jurado's previous work. The third collaboration with Swift, following 2012's *Maraqopa*, has now yielded *Brothers And Sisters Of The Eternal Son*. Jurado's career peak, it's a beatific conflation of psychedelia, folk and soft rock. The album's protagonist, first introduced in *Maraqopa* and inspired by a dream of Jurado's, returns from a car wreck and encounters a strange community who are waiting for the Second Coming. "Richard Swift captured it best when he said it was like a sci-fi record. Will there be another sequel? I really can't tell you this time. I woke up from the dream." ROB HUGHES



**SETH LAKEMAN**

**Word Of Mouth**

COOKING VINYL

Cornish folk pin-up channels Alan Lomax. Though his music has always been steeped in the history of his local community, with his

**7/10**

seventh album Lakeman goes further, including an accompanying disc of interviews with the dock workers, WWII veterans and itinerants whose stories inspired nine of the 12 songs. It makes little material difference to his music, which continues to combine folk's traditional and contemporary styles with brisk efficiency. Recorded in a church, Lakeman's insistent fiddle drives dramatic folk narratives like "The Courier", "Last Rider" borrows from bluegrass to invigorating effect, while gentler acoustic textures envelop the more reflective – and engaging – material like "Bells" and "The Saddest Crowd".

GRAEME THOMSON



**ZARA MCFARLANE**

**If You Knew Her**

BROWNSWOOD RECORDINGS

Gilles Peterson protégée expands her sonic palette

**8/10**

The second album by this East London singer sees her moving away from the orthodox jazz trio and expanding her sonic palette. The opening track is a duet with a piece of tuned percussion called a hang, elsewhere she accompanies herself with a spartan acoustic guitar or piano, and mixes up her backing bands, paying homage to the likes of Alice Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders. Best of all are three intriguing covers: there's a baroque take on Nina Simone's "Plain Gold Ring", a funereal reading of Junior Murvin's "Police And Thieves", while the dub classic "Angie La La" is taken into space-age astral jazz territory.

JOHN LEWIS



**JAMES VINCENT MCMORROW**

**Post Tropical**

BELIEVE RECORDINGS

Stylistic about-turn from Irish acoustic troubadour

**7/10**

While singer-songwriter James Vincent McMorrow's debut album cast him as Ireland's answer to Bon Iver, complete with plaid shirt and falsetto croon, this follow-up finds him pursuing a new direction, bridging the rather large gap between folk music and contemporary soul. Oddly, it works a treat. Staying true to the melancholy vibe of 2010's *Early In The Morning*, on *Post Tropical* McMorrow keeps the instrumentation deliberately sparse – on the opener "Cavalier" he ditches his acoustic guitar for gentle swathes of organ and horn, while in "Red Dust" he employs twitchy percussion and backing harmonies – all the while keeping his idiosyncratic voice to the fore.

FIONA STURGES



## IAN MATTHEWS The Art Of Obscurity

OMNIVORE RECORDINGS

Folk-rock supreme: Onetime Fairport Conventioneer's first solo turn in 15 years

**7/10**

With its gentle melodies and folk/jazz frames, *The Art Of Obscurity* is heavy with thoughts of legacy, history and the weight of time. Matthews, a founding member of Fairport Convention but perhaps best known leading early '70s groups Plainsong and Southern Comfort, has taken some brave, unpredictable zigzags over an epic career (jazz to techno), plus myriad tributes and collaborations. On *Obscurity* he returns home: The mood is melancholy, the voice crystal clear, the folk-based songs deadly direct, Matthews immersing himself in narrative and memoir, via cuts like "Pebbles In The Road" and "Ghost Changes", and in the folds of time.

LUKE TORN



## MENTAL OVERDRIVE Cycs

LOVE OD COMMUNICATIONS

Playful punktronic party anthems for the postponed apocalypse

**7/10**

Norwegian Per Martinsen makes electronica that blurs conceptual art with socio-political subtext, from selling a record on eBay in an edition of one to playing gigs in direct exchange for food. Playful and eclectic, his latest album began life a year ago as an online "advent calendar" of tracks marking the Mayan apocalypse. Space poetry and dubby punktronica make an exotic brew in "A Fireball, It Is Red, The Sky Looks Black About It", while the fleet-footed Balearic bounce of "Sunstorm" is one of several reminders of early 1990s rave-pop. But "Quarks" is the stand-out, its scrambled squelch and arrhythmia suggesting disruptive intent beyond mere entertainment.

STEPHEN DALTON



## MOGWAI Rave Tapes

ROCK ACTION

Strong eighth from instrumentalist Scots

It didn't take Mogwai long to tire of the quiet/loud post-rock dynamic and try other textures. *Rave*

**8/10**

*Tapes*, their eighth album, feels like a major achievement on a journey that has seen them explore instrumental music through remix culture, soundtracks and old synths as well as guitars. Now here we are: in place a bit Boards Of Canada ("Simon Ferocious"), a bit sports-goth Depeche Mode ("Remurdered"; "Master Card"), wherein the band's traditional lachrymose tunes and torrential guitar cohabit darkly with their electronic experiments. A powerful and accomplished album, killers like "No Medicine For Regret" underline the band's productive obsession with music that has the power to terrify but also delight.

JOHN ROBINSON



## THE MONOCHROME SET Super Plastic City

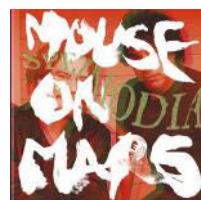
DISQUO BLEU

**7/10**

The arch indie-pop veterans master magic realism

Singer Bid defined art-school boppers The Monochrome Set's MO as classic pop songs with "elements that lightly tamper with the forces of nature". Their 11th LP, and second since Bid suffered a near-fatal stroke, *Super Plastic City* documents the singer's return to normality with a typically stylish tip of the fez. The title track celebrates his "brain rewiring" itself, with rehab reality spiralling off into *Barbarella*-soundtrack bliss on "Isn't It A Wonderful Life". "How can anyone go thru life without the dear, cuddly Monochrome Set?" wrote Morrissey to a penpal back in 1981. How indeed?

JIM WIRTH



## MOUSE ON MARS Spezmodia

MONKEYTOWN

Wildstyle, hyper-kinetic electronic music  
Whatever genre Mouse On Mars touch, they put through the shredder

**8/10**

several times over, treating every frequency as infinitely malleable material: as Jan St Werner once said, "Frequencies don't take it personally." On *Spezmodia*, Werner and collaborator Andi Toma are apparently taking on happy hardcore and gabba, but anyone expecting a full '90s revival, Holland-style, hasn't clocked the mutations. "Cream Theme" fires a spine-tingling, glistening riff straight to the centre of your skull; "Migmy" has the entire studio on Tourette's lockdown. Electronic music is rarely this exhilarating, this full of off-the-wall ideas, or this compulsive. Don't try not to dance.

JON DALE



## MT WARNING Midnight Set

MT WARNING MUSIC

An Antipodean meeting of minds

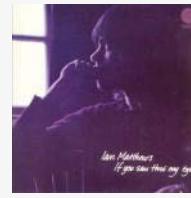
Mt Warning came about after the Australian filmmaker Taylor Steele went to a gig by the Byron

Bay musician Mikey Bee and invited himself backstage. The result is a collaboration named after the first place to see the sun in mainland Australia every day and which, inspired by Steele's film footage, forms an aural journey through the course of a day and, by extension, a life. If the broader concept is sometimes lost in translation, Bee's psych-folk compositions – sometimes reminiscent of fellow Aussies Cloud Control – are immensely affecting, moving between rousing anthems such as "Youth Bird" and "Like A Tattoo" and more reflective pieces such as "Anchor".

FIONA STURGES

## HOW TO BUY... IAN MATTHEWS

From Fairport Convention to solo flights

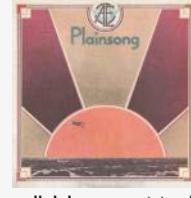


### IAN MATTHEWS If You Saw Thro' My Eyes

VERTIGO, 1971  
This folk-rock-grows-up release is perhaps more Fairport Convention-esque even than circa 1971

Fairport Convention. Richard Thompson (guitar) and Sandy Denny (piano) are on board, but it's Matthews' strongest set of original compositions that linger. Ever the interpreter, a hypnotic take on Richard Farina's "Reno, Nevada" is one of many highlights.

**8/10**



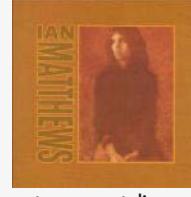
### PLAINSONG In Search of Amelia Earhart

ELEKTRA, 1972

A loose concept LP based on life, death and the pilot. This haunting, countrified

collab between Matthews and sidekick Andy Roberts is drop-dead gorgeous: outgunning Van Morrison at his own game ("Call The Tune"), or shining a light on lost Woodstock singer-songwriter Paul Siebel ("Louise"). He gives Richard Thompson's "Meet On The Ledge" a riposte – "Even The Guiding Light".

**7/10**



### IAN MATTHEWS Valley Hi

ELEKTRA, 1973

Matthews was always ace at covering fine songwriters, and this Michael Nesmith-produced disc churns

out one great discovery after another. Steve Young, Randy Newman, an obscure Richard Thompson original ("Shady Lies"), and maybe, just maybe the definitive version of Jackson Browne's wise-beyond-his-years "These Days".

**8/10**

LUKE TORN



## MUTUAL BENEFIT

### Love's Crushing Diamond

OTHER MUSIC RECORDING

Celestial pan-American folk music

**8/10**

First issued in a limited run of 250 LPs, the debut album from Jordan Lee's fluid, pan-American collective raised such a stir on Bandcamp it demanded a wider release. You can see why. *Love's Crushing Diamond* is really one long, Whitman-esque song of discovery. On each of these seven tracks, banjo, piano, violin and found sounds ripple under slow, simple changes and Lee's high, emotive voice. The result is a meditative, wide-open form of celestial American folk music, which on "Golden Wake" recalls Fleet Foxes at their most starry-eyed, and on "Statue Of A Man", Sufjan Stevens' earlier, pastoral adventures.

GRAEME THOMSON



# VARIOUS ARTISTS

## Africa Express Presents: Maison Des Jeunes

TRANSGRESSIVE

Albarn-led cultural exchange bears fruit. By Louis Pattison



7/10

THE WORLD AT large may be more eager for news of a new Blur album, but for the last seven years, Damon Albarn's attention has been fixed on a more distant horizon. Since 2006, the Blur frontman has been one of the main ringleaders of

Africa Express, a cultural exchange project porting Western musicians – themselves a diverse bunch including Paul McCartney, Fatboy Slim, and Flea of Red Hot Chili Peppers – out to locations such as Mali, Nigeria and the Congo in the name of musical alliance.

Some care has evidently been taken to ensure Africa Express smacks neither of Live Aid showboating or *Graceland*-style cultural imperialism, as the consequent tours have played up the project's democratic presentation and egalitarian participation. Take last year's flagship event, a pan-ethnic group of musicians chugging out of London Euston in a sort of *Magical Mystery* train, bringing their improvised and collaborative pieces to schools and factories, trade clubs and music venues of the UK.

The 11 tracks of *Maison Des Jeunes* constitute the highlights of a week spent in the Malian capital of Bamako, with visiting western musicians – an assortment including Albarn, Brian Eno, Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Nick Zinner, UK producers Two Inch Punch and Lil Silva, rapper Ghostpoet and members of Metronomy and Django Django – rubbing shoulders

with local musicians in the titular youth club, sat on the banks of the Niger river.

Mali, of course, has a rich musical tradition, home to the late guitarist Ali Farka Touré, desert blues group Tinariwen, and a cradle of the griot song-storytelling tradition. But the choice of location, you suspect, is also an artistic commentary on a political situation. Warfare continues to rage in northern Mali, where some areas remain under the control of Islamist militants, and armed groups such as Ansar Dine ("Followers Of The Faith") threaten musicians with a public whipping, or worse. An early album highlight comes as Songhoy Blues, a Timbuktu group formed in response to the jihadi occupation, lock guitars with Zinner on "Soubour" ("Patience"), a thorny desert blues stomp with a firm, upright backbone.

Deference, generally, is paid to the Malian contingent. Albarn sensitively produces a handful of tracks, letting the raw vocal soul of Bijou's "Dougoudé Sarrafo" and the weaving ngoni blues of Gambari's "Yamore" (vocalized by Kankou Kouyaté, 21-year-old niece of Bassikou Kouyaté) shine through. Eno, too, is here in the guise of dutiful documentarian, not egghead remixer, and the two tracks that bear his involvement – Yacouba Sissoko Band's "Chanson Denko Tapestry" and Tiemoko Sogodogo's "Latégué" – show off the flexibility of Malian song; the first an itchily danceable number with the faint vibe of a kora "Duelling Banjos", the latter a wise griot lament

### SLEEVE NOTES

➤ Recorded at:  
Maison Des Jeunes,  
Bamako, Mali  
Recorded by: Lil Silva,  
Brian Eno, Nick Zinner,  
Remi Kabaka, Damon  
Albarn, David Maclean,  
Two Inch Punch  
Personnel includes:  
Ghostpoet, Kankou  
Kouyaté, Bijou, Talbi  
(vocals), Yacouba  
Sissoko (kora), Barou  
Kouyate (ngoni),  
Garba Touré (guitar),  
Doucoura (drums),  
Moussa Traoré  
(djembe), Moussa  
Sissoko (perc), André  
de Ridder (conductor)

suffused with sublime longing.

Elsewhere, some of the younger members of the company set about a danceable sort of soundclash. Lil Silva is behind "Bouramsy", an organic rattle of hand percussion, flute-like melodies and ecstatic synth swells that sounds like a Congotronics street performance retooled for the dancefloor. On "Deni Kelen Be Koko", David Maclean of Scottish Beta Band-a-likes Django Django mixes musicians associated with the late 'Bambara bluesman', Lobi Traoré, into an insistent groove of loping bass and slippery snares, while Two Inch Punch takes Malian rapper Tal B Halala's "Rapou Kanou" and retools it in jazzy fashion with local instrumentation as his sound source.

A glimpse of the social side of the project comes on "Season Change", sloth-voiced Coventry MC Ghostpoet relating a smoked-out tale of late nights, strong drinks and Mahjongg games that cracks with melancholy. "All cried out but I'm shedding a tear/Why won't the seasons change?" he pleads, backed by soft Albarn sighs, before Bamako's talking drum band Doucoura beat the track to a hectic end.

*Maison Des Jeunes* is the sort of project that will probably please neither world music aficionados of a purist stripe, nor those holding out for Damon to make another *Parklife*. But as a collection of friendly collisions, an impulsive document of how music can bring people together over musical and cultural boundaries, it's well worth the visit.

### Q&A

David Maclean, Django Django



How was your experience in Mali? We literally fired straight into it. We got off the flight, drove to a club to see a band, then the next morning set up the studio and that was it. A full-on week. It's a challenge to find your feet when time is short. For me things started to click when I did away with the laptop and got stuck into enjoying the live music. There was lots of smiles, lots of laughter – the music did the talking, to be honest.

You recorded "Deni Kelen Be Koko" with Lobi Traoré Band... They were in one of the small rooms upstairs in the youth club late one night, and I heard them through the wall. The drummer was amazing. I went through and I played drums with them for a while and made a demo. The guitarist was into a kind of bluesy, rock'n'roll sound. When we met at the studio the next day, I started to put his guitar through delay boxes, and he was really into that. We recorded a few tracks, some with me on the drums, some with me dubbing out the tape loops. The track that made it to the record is quite a raw track, but for me it really captures what was exciting about Bamako, and the experience I had there.

# New Albums



## THE NEW MENDICANTS *Into The Lime*

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Pernice/Fannie

combo come good

Unwilling to let good material go begging, Toronto neighbours Joe

**7/10**

Pernice and Norman Blake didn't take it too personally when the fruits of their first sessions together were rejected for the soundtrack to the film version of Nick Hornby's suicide novel *A Long Way Down*. Those songs they had written for it – largely about springing to one's death off high buildings – form the spine of *Into The Lime*, with the spirited "Shouting Match" and "A Very Sorry Christmas" closer to the fuzzed-up cutie pop of *Bandwagonesque* than anything Teenage Fanclub have recorded since 2000's neglected *Howdy!*. A great leap backwards.

JIM WIRTH



## O'HOOLEY & TIDOW *The Hum*

NO MASTERS

Ambitious sophomore offering from the piano-led Yorkshire folk duo

Like its predecessor, 2012's *The Fragile*, *The Hum* comes not to replay tradition but to change it, only this time Belinda O'Hooley and Heidi Tidow have on board producer Gerry Diver, fresh from recent triumphs with Sam Lee and Lisa Knapp. He lends their piano ballads echoing ambience, subtle strings and, on the anti-clerical, pro-Pussy Riot "Coil And Spring", some noisy tub-thumping. The raw material comes up short, however. Covers of Nic Jones and Ewan MacColl have the catchiness and melody largely absent from socially concerned originals like "Two Mothers" and "Like Horses".

NEIL SPENCER

**6/10**

## TARA JANE O'NEIL *Where Shine New Lights*

KRANKY

Slowcore invention from Portland artist-musician

Since Rodan's dissolution in the mid-'90s, O'Neil has largely chosen to travel solo, her music coming to occupy an increasingly more intimate and rarefied space. Kranyak, home of reliably timid post-rock groups like Labradford and Stars Of The Lid, feels like an appropriate home for *Where Shine New Lights*. Alongside serene slowcore drifts like "Glow Now", we find O'Neil experimenting with pump organ drones ("Bellow Below As Above") and hushed exotica ("The Morning Glory"). Little is overstated, but Low fans will find much to love in "New Lights For A Sky", a cold chorus that makes powerful use of quiet resonance and empty space.

LOUIS PATTISON

**6/10**



## PAINTED PALMS

### *Forever*

POLYVINYL

Psych dreams and dance beats from San Francisco-based duo

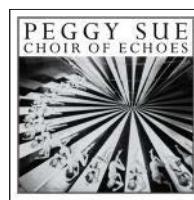
After a well-received EP on Secretly Canadian in 2011 and tours with Of Montreal and Braids, the full-length debut from Reese Donohue and Christopher Prudhomme paints the grey winter skies with a swirling, rainbow-hued, laptop trip through all our acid-laced yesterdays via homages to *Pepper*-era Beatles filtered via Steve Hillage ("Too High" and "Forever"), *Pills 'n' Thrills And Bellyaches*-style acid house rave ups ("Hypnotic") and *Merriweather Post Pavilion* otherworldly cool ("Soft Hammer"). They might've allowed the collage more space to breathe, for the bandwidth is densely layered to bursting with blissed-out sampling; but the rapture makes it churlish to complain.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**7/10**

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NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## PEGGY SUE Choir Of Echoes

WICHITA

London folk trio's beautiful third LP

From the choral opening of "(Come Back Around)", with its repetitive chant like a tribal call to the rising sun, it's clear that Peggy Sue's third album will foreground the fine singing of Katy Klaw and Rosa Rex. While their vocals have gospel and bluesy strains, this trio are ostensibly rooted in folk music – and songs like "How Heavy The Quiet That Grew" are almost traditional in that respect – but, as with their prime influence PJ Harvey, they explore much beyond, incorporating surf on "Esme", doo wop on "Always Going" and "Longest Day Of The Year Blues", while alt.rock jitters can be heard on "Electric Light".

PETER WATTS

**7/10**

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## DUANE PITRE *Feel Free: Live At Café OTO*

IMPORTANT

Gentle, mesmeric minimalism, on stage in London

**8/10**

As with many great examples of modern minimalism, Duane Pitre's *Feel Free* expands and contracts depending on its players, as each brings variance to their reading of the score. For this 2012 performance at London's pre-eminent experimental music venue, Café OTO, Pitre includes *Feel Free* veteran Jesse Sparhawk in the lineup, but fills the rest of the places with English players, including one James Blackshaw on hammered dulcimer. The resulting performance feels a little more fulsome than the original recording, with flocks of strings spiralling through the sky as Blackshaw's dulcimer spills down the window pane.

JONDALE



## PATTERNS

### *Waking Lines*

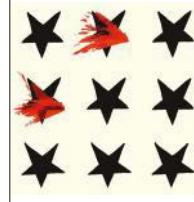
MELODIC

Opening gambit from Blissed-out Mancunians Animal Collective shorn of some of their wildness, Manchester space-cats

Patterns head straight for cloud nine on their debut album, with electronic flourishes, tingling bells and crashing cymbals combining to create something simultaneously shoegaze-y and ecstatic. "We explore musical terrain together that encompasses dreaming, hallucinating and walking," reads their website mission statement, and *Waking Lines* delivers on that, with the propulsive "Induction" and "Blood" an approximation of My Bloody Valentine experimenting with yogic flying. Singer Ciaran McAuley's words get lost in the dry ice a little, but a sense of quasi-religious wonder prevails. Destined for cult appeal, at least.

JIM WIRTH

**7/10**



## PONTIAK

### *Innocence*

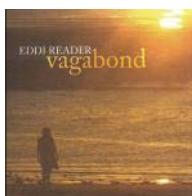
THRILL JOCKEY

Gnarly. Loud. Sludgy. If it ain't broke...

Virginian brotherly trio Pontiak operate something of a cottage industry, since not only do they record in

their own studio, they also film, direct and edit their videos and design their album artwork. This degree of focus and control has so far stood them in good stead, producing a slew of excellent, bass-amp-busting sludge-rock releases with a heavy, psych-blues bent. Their latest is hardly a reinvention, but alongside the howling and cyclonic, tar-black likes of the title track and "Beings Of The Rarest" sit "Darkness Is Coming" and "Wildfires", the acoustic strumming, ragged vocal harmonies and yearning heart of the latter suggesting Dylan joining Pink Floyd for a campfire cover of "Wild Horses".

SHARON O'CONNELL



## EDDI READER *Vagabond* REVEAL

Elegant folk and jazz with some familial themes  
Reader's first album of new material since 2009's *Love Is The Way*

**7/10**

ripples with memories of her Glasgow upbringing and subsequent move to seek fame in London. The folk waltz of "Back The Dogs (Dancing Down Rock)" is inspired by the various pearls of wisdom passed onto her by her grandmother, the jazzy lullaby "Edinah" catalogues the advice the now 54-year-old Reader wishes she could have given to her younger self, while the traditional "Buain Ná Rainich" is a song she remembers her late uncle playing. Understated acoustic shuffles give the record a sense of the passing of time, as does the tender regret of "Snowflakes In The Sun".

TERRY STAUNTON



## PAUL RODGERS *The Royal Sessions* 429 RECORDS

Vocal great's roots return: a set of soul covers recorded in Willie Mitchell's Memphis studio

With little in the way of original material to match his Free/Bad Company glory days Rodgers has earned his coin as a heritage market staple these past 20 years. Teamed with survivors of the studio band featured on Mitchell's classics, here Perry Margouleff's production apes the slinky intimate Hi Sound, while his song choices (Albert King, three Otis tunes) tend to the predictable. But his lusty gutsy core strengths are in seasoned form and he even delivers an inspired revamp of "Walk On By". After that unseemly (though no doubt coffee-filling) fling with Queen, it's a most welcome trip back to what he does best.

GAVIN MARTIN



## SEPTEMBER GIRLS *Cursing The Sea* FORTUNA POP!

Sassy jangles from the Irish Bangles  
Their name may be a Big Star steal, but sonically this youthful Dublin

quartet borrow more from vintage West Coast jangle, Spector-ish studio rumble and classic girl-group strop-pop, with a light dusting of My Bloody Valentine fuzz-noise on top. There is an agreeably lo-fi C86 sloppiness to much of this debut, even if it sounds more cheap than raw in places. Sandwiched between spindly garage-rock dirges and lo-fi indie janglers, the spartan post-punk pop-noir of "Ships" and the sulky Shangri-La's break-up anthem "Someone New" elevate the album from pedestrian to promising. Hopefully their next will be noisy and confident enough to fully shake off their ever-present influences.

STEPHEN DALTON

**7/10**



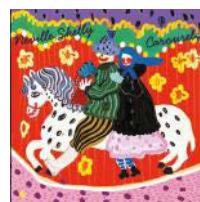
## SKADEDYR *Kongekrabbe* HUBRO

Avant Scandi-jazz troupe's striking first  
A 12-piece avant-garde ensemble whose arrangements are the result of a democratic

**8/10**

process sounds like both a practical nightmare and a guarantee of conflicting aesthetics. Not so the youthful Skadedyr ("Pests" in Norwegian), whose debut is an eloquent, bewitching, often playful and occasionally unsettling gambol with the spirits of Lowell Mason, Jaga Jazzist, Fats Waller, Zdeněk Liška and Talk Talk. These five compositions – by members Anja Lauvdal and Heiða Karine Jóhannesdóttir Mobeck – use modern minimalism and Nordic pastoral folk as their compass, but veer off course on "Partylus", which drops in a line from Dylan's "Like A Rolling Stone" and a blink-and-you'll-miss-it snatch of The Prodigy's "Firestarter".

SHARON O'CONNELL



## NEVILLE SKELLY *Carousel* PIAS

The Coral associate enters John Martyn territory  
Scouser Neville Skelly has had a few odd career lurches in his time.

**7/10**

His debut release, a decade ago, was a big-band jazz album, its belated 2011 follow-up a spartan collection of American folksongs. Now, following a furlough to bring up his baby daughter, his latest album explores that intersection of folk and jazz music, recalling, variously, Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks* ("Carousel"), Tim Buckley's *Happy Sad* ("House Of Saints") and Nick Drake's *Bryter Layter* ("Catherine's Song"). But it's Skelly's featherweight voice (which has a pleasing yawn in the lower register) and his heartfelt lyrics about fatherhood that save this album from empty pastiche.

JOHN LEWIS



## KARL SMITH *Kites* FORTUNA POP!

Former SodaStream founder celebrates impending fatherhood  
That Karl Smith's debut should be so warm is unsurprising: born in

**7/10**

Australia, he was raised in Bangladesh and India, though Eastern influences are definitely lacking here. What's instead evident is the shambling charm for which his band, SodaStream, earned a reputation as kindred souls of Belle And Sebastian: sprightly songs delivered with sincere enthusiasm. The sweetness of the breezy "Little Lucy" and the cute "I Want You" isn't incessant, however: at times, such as on "Glass Eye", there's a doleful quality reminiscent of Bill Callahan, and brass arrangements, especially on "After Mr Morrison", add a welcome rich depth.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE

## HOW TO BUY... PAUL RODGERS *Stone Free: the singer's best works*

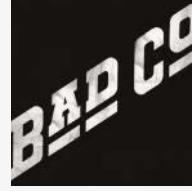


### FREE *Fire And Water*

ISLAND, 1970  
Rodgers was only 20 when Free's third album was released, capturing the band at a creative peak, before internal disputes and guitarist Paul Kossoff's drug problems lead to their demise.

Rodgers' vocal authority and the bold songwriting run right through it – from the blues-lore-reclaiming title track to the deathless rock classic, "All Right Now".

**8/10**

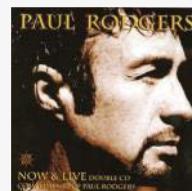


### BAD COMPANY *Bad Company*

SWANSONG, 1974  
A supergroup of sorts, uniting Rodgers and Free drummer Simon Kirke with King Crimson

bassist Boz Burrell and Mott's Mick Ralphs, Bad Company's debut was an object lesson in consolidating strengths. The band's lean grooves and the fierce yet economical drive (typified by single "Can't Get Enough") suited the singer's raw, impassioned delivery.

**7/10**



### PAUL RODGERS *Now & Live*

VICTOR, 1997  
An underperforming second original solo album, following on from 1983's *Cut Loose*. Now showed Rodgers in reliably fine voice but low on songwriting inspiration. The accompanying live disc featuring a resounding career résumé, including choice Free and Bad Company cuts and selections from his own Muddy Waters tribute, compensated amply.

**8/10**

GAVIN MARTIN



## MARTIN STEPHENSON & THE DAINTEES *California Star* BARBARAVILLE

High-water mark from a prolific folkie  
With a work ethic that puts most troubadours to shame, *California Star* is, incredibly, Stephenson's 40th release in less than 30 years, either solo or with the ever-changing Daintees lineup. The template remains the same, flitting between winsome, whispered folk (the childhood reminiscences in "Boy To Man", the yearning for paradise in "Silver Bird") and sprightly blues-infused stompers ("Power That Is Greater", "Ready To Move On"). He's rarely lost sight of his simple, unassuming musical goals, but here he's almost as close to a bullseye as he was on the landmark *Boat To Bolivia* (1986), dispensing endearing melodies with economy and wit.

TERRY STAUNTON



## STEPHEN MALKMUS

### Wig Out At Jagbags

DOMINO

Pavement's ex-mainman plays to strengths in his first since becoming a Berliner. By Jason Anderson



8/10

decades throwing stylistic curveballs to the ageing slackers who relish his brand of refined wise-assery, it can be a challenge for such an inveterate maverick to deliver a surprise or two. The other recurring test of his talents has been to figure out how to effectively contain or curtail the unruly sprawl that such creative hijinks inevitably yield.

His success on both counts makes *Wig Out At Jagbags* one of Malkmus' most consistently engaging outings since Pavement's gilded first trio of '90s long-players. In his journeys through a familiar and not-so-familiar array of blind alleys and rococo cul-de-sacs, he maintains a sure footing and a lively gait, crucial qualities for a performer and songwriter who needs a sure sense of navigation lest he be in danger of disappearing up his own backside. Whether making a typically idiosyncratic stab at a boudoir-ready R&B slow jam on "J Smoov" or maximising the lunacy in a pocket-sized rock opera named "Surreal Teenagers", Malkmus keeps it weird without wasting a moment.

It would seem that a general change in scenery has served him well. Following the release of 2011's Beck-produced *Mirror Traffic*, Malkmus and his family moved from Portland to Berlin so that his visual-artist wife could take advantage of greater opportunities there. After hashing out chords and lyrics "on a computer on someone else's table in

someone else's apartment", Malkmus headed to a studio in the Belgian Ardennes with Dutch engineer and former Pavement soundman Remko Schouten as well as his regular foils in the Jicks. One new face was Jake Morris, drummer Janet Weiss having reunited with her former Sleater-Kinney bandmate Carrie Brownstein in the (since disbanded) Wild Flag. Fran Healy of Travis – a friend from

Malkmus' new Berlin neighbourhood – introduced him to the horn players who appear on "J Smoov" and several other tracks.

The results boast an air of renewed vigour, and are as concise as *Mirror Traffic*. Not that Malkmus has entirely forsaken the kind of jammy, guitar-heavy epics that filled 2008's mighty *Real Emotional Trash*. He's just rediscovered a knack for keeping all the good bits and skipping the rest. That's pretty much his MO on the opener "Planetary Motion", an amiable slab of psych-boogie that playfully cribs licks from Cream's "I Feel Free". "Surreal Teenagers", meanwhile, is a mock-rock-odyssey in the vein of Barrett's Floyd that includes a stop in St Moritz to sample Swiss melted cheese dish raclette.

The Grateful Dead make a cameo in the loopy verbiage of first single "Lariat", a statement of

#### SLEEVE NOTES

##### ► Produced by:

The band (Malkmus, Joanna Bolme, Jake Morris and Mike Clark) and Remko Schouten

Recorded at: La Chappelle Studios, Belgium

Personnel: Stephen Malkmus (vocals, guitar), Mike Clark (keyboards, guitar), Joanna Bolme (bass), Jake Morris (drums)

purpose that's as tuneful as anything he's written since Pavement had their sole near-hit with "Cut Your Hair". "Houston Hades" and "Chartjunk" see Malkmus strike an equally fine balance between his pop instincts and his affection for squalls and rumbles.

More unexpected is "J Smoov", which finds Malkmus trying out a romantic croon – alas, his lyrics are too full of the usual references to magnets and

dragnets for him to worry Al Green. The lovers in the room must make do with Malkmus murmuring, "Mmm, rent a room, get it over with", until they can luxuriate in the dreamy trombone solo that perfectly accentuates the song's pillow-y vibe.

The album reaches its comedic apex with "Rumble At The Rainbo", a satirical swipe at ancient punk-rock acts and the loyal followers who couldn't be happier to hit their heroes' latest gig and see "no-one here has changed and no-one ever will". It might profitably be observed that Malkmus wasn't keen to unnecessarily prolong Pavement's reunion in 2010.

Such moments of snarkiness aside, *Wig Out At Jagbags* presents Malkmus at his most eager to please. That it does so while still honouring his idiosyncrasies makes it a particular delight to behold.

## Q&A

Stephen Malkmus



What prompted your family's decision to trade Portland for Berlin? We could afford to be fed up with the American way of life, so we took a flyer on Berlin. It's easy, fun and kinda outta control...

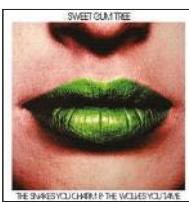
and cold. Ultimately I think there is more responsibility/trust given to the citizen in Germany, and in the end, civilisation ensues... for now. We are always an economic calamity away from finding out if civilisation survives in desperate times.

Did the change of scene prompt some fateful encounters with new (and old) friends? It all happened in the moment/by fate as it were. Remko Schouten recorded the album – he's been with me since we lucked into him as a soundman back in the '90s. Fran Healy lived across the way and I bugged him about doing vocals over there, if

it's possible to bug Fran. I met him in Travis' heyday through Nigel Godrich. He took my offhand comments about horns and made them a reality with some comrades from his son's school.

The horns add so much – it sounds like you've got a thing for early Chicago. I've been meaning to do a Chicago Transit Authority-style jam for years but it's tricky stuff. But I found the Sonatina Symphonic Orchestra [an online sound bank] for free on the web and bashed out an arrangement. I don't know Chicago's legacy in the UK but over here they are/were massive. Namecheck: Peter Cetera lives in Idaho near my parents' house.

"J Smoov" might even qualify as your first R&B slow jam – was that what you had in mind? You are in the right ballpark – the lyrics are classic "forbidden fruit" imagery, and there's a great apathetic trombone solo! Since I feel out of my range in this genre, I think of it as more lite psych/Nashville/LA watering-down/"whitening" (same difference?) of soul – a countrypolitan version of Al Green. Everybody got soul though, so that's dead-end thinking. INTERVIEW: JASON ANDERSON

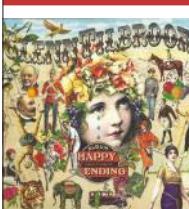


**SWEET GUM TREE**  
**The Snakes You Charm & The Wolves You Tame**  
 DREAMY BIRD/CADIZ MUSIC

**7/10**

French crooner in “not rubbish album” shocker  
 Sweet Gum Tree is the *nomme de band* of itinerant French singer and guitarist Arno Sojo. This incarnation sees him singing gentle, poetic and rather verbose ballads in American-accented English, backed by an elegant string section and a band who sound a lot like the Tindersticks (they even feature the Tindersticks’ drummer). The selling point is “Bird Of Passage”, a dreamy, waltzing duet with Isobel Campbell, but just as interesting is “The Crimson Flush” (which recalls Costello’s *The Juliet Letters*), and the Johnny Marr-ish “Grateful As Fire”. Most intriguing is “Redhead”, a lush ballad about ginger persecution through the centuries.

JOHN LEWIS



**GLENN TILBROOK**  
**Happy Ending**  
 QUIXOTIC

**7/10**

Well-observed snapshots of ordinary lives from Squeeze man  
 In the ongoing absence of a new Squeeze album, Glenn Tilbrook’s first solo set for four years intermittently sketches similar pocket portraits. Some are rooted in reality (the bouncy phone-hacking hullabaloo of “Rupert”), but for the most part it’s colourful tales of everyday characters. “Kev And Dave” drops in on chalk-and-cheese sibling landlords, “Mud Island” finds glamour in post-war childhood poverty, and “Peter” eavesdrops on peer-pressured petty thievery. Musically, Glenn strips things back to bare acoustic guitar with smidgens of percussion, concocting a stew of attractive singalong folk pop that looks to evocative kitchen sink drama for lyrical inspiration.

TERRY STAUNTON

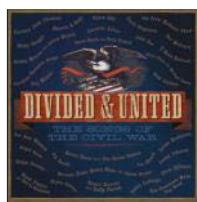


**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Pop Ambient 2014**  
 KOMPAKT

**8/10**

Another complex collection of Kompakt calm  
 The 14th instalment of influential Cologne label Kompakt’s superlative *Pop Ambient* series provides plenty of surprises. Among them are long-awaited new music from Ulf Lohmann – who contributes lavish, cocooning opening and closing tracks – and the return of label co-owner Wolfgang Voigt’s GAS with a grimly forbidding 10-minute remix of “The Field”. Voigt also contributes the swirling fog of “Rückverzauberung 8”, but Mikkel Metal lightens the tone by conjuring up memories of both New Zealand minimalists Labradford and David Sylvian’s instrumental work on *Gone To Earth*. Marsen Jules provides the more predictable, meditative ‘wind chime’ vibes.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



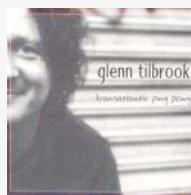
**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Divided & United: The Songs Of The Civil War**  
 ATO

**7/10**

Lyrical history of a nation torn apart  
 As the end of the American Civil War approaches its 150th anniversary, film/TV music supervisor Randall Poster (*Boardwalk Empire*, *The Aviator*) has corralled an impressive lineup to reinterpret the songs the conflict inspired. Tales of protest, battle, compassion, camaraderie, segregation and loss are recalled in rich tones by the likes of Loretta Lynn (“Take Your Gun And Go”), Chris Hillman (“Hard Times”) and Jack Clement (“Beautiful Dreamer”), conspiring to map out a country undergoing seismic changes. Banjo, fiddle and harmonium dominate, giving the recordings an earthy, authentic feel, most evocatively on Steve Earle’s tearful lament “Farewell, Mother”.

TERRY STAUNTON

**HOW TO BUY...**  
**GLENN TILBROOK**  
 Squeeze man’s extra-curricular activities



**GLENN TILBROOK**  
**Transatlantic Ping Pong**  
 QUIXOTIC, 2004

Tilbrook’s second solo release is at its best when it stays closest to the Squeeze template of literate, hook-filled pop, as on the frustrated-suitor paean “Untouchable” or the former-lovers autopsy “Domestic Distortion”. “Where I Can Be Your Friend”, his first co-write with estranged bandmate Chris Difford for seven years, signposts the full reunion to follow.

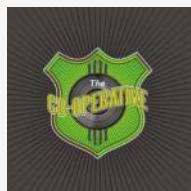
**7/10**



**GLENN TILBROOK & THE FLUFFERS**  
**Pandemonium Ensues**  
 QUIXOTIC, 2009

No sign of new Squeeze material, but Tilbrook gives his part-time touring band equal billing (including vocal spots for bassist Lucy Shaw) on a fun and frothy set of blue-eyed soul (“Still”) and bubblegum pop (“Black Sheep”). Johnny Depp lends guitar to the Joe Meek-inspired space rock of “Too Close To The Sun”.

**8/10**

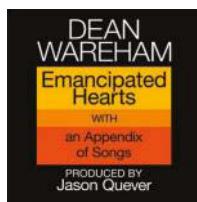


**THE CO-OPERATIVE**  
**The Co-operative**  
 QUIXOTIC, 2011

Teaming up with Squeeze’s ‘80s A&M labelmates Nine Below Zero for a collection of goodtime R’n’B with a few vaudevillian flourishes (“Chat Line Larry”, “The Next Thing I Knew”). A cover of The Beatles’ “You Never Give Me Your Money” is fairly by-the-book, but the understated cover of Randy Crawford’s “One Day I’ll Fly Away” is surprisingly heartfelt.

**7/10**

TERRY STAUNTON



**DEAN WAREHAM**  
**Emancipated Hearts**  
 SONC CATHEDRAL

Former Galaxie 500 and Luna frontman preserves the peace

A quarter of a century since Galaxie 500 first

slowed our pulses, Dean Wareham is still building bridges over emotionally troubled waters. Here, following a wittily confessional autobiography and a memorable, low-key appearance in *Frances Ha*, he finally goes solo with a literate, loveable mini-album. Delicately arranged, and sympathetically drenched in reverb by producer (and Papercuts frontman) Jason Quever, its six tracks find him in typically hushed mood, with “Love Is Colder Than Death” tripping along gently, and a dreamy cover of The Incredible String Band’s “Air” worthy of Low’s envy. Emancipation suits him well.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

**WARPAINT**  
**Warpaint**  
 ROUGH TRADE



Frustratingly indistinct second LP from the LA four-piece

On “Intro”, the opener to Warpaint’s second album, they preserve the sound

of drummer Stella Mozgawa misfiring and starting over. It seems strange when their allure stems from the sense that their perfumed post-rock – somewhere between Julianna Barwick and Slint – stems from intuition rather than exactitude. At any rate, that heavy-lidded atmosphere grows stifling on *Warpaint*, a codeine fog muddled by synthy tricks from the arsenal of producers Flood & Alan Moulder. Their wan vocals mostly belie the high-stakes emotions in their flimsy lyrics, other than on “Disco//Very”, which, with its feral playground chants warped through disorientating production, feels genuinely menacing.

LAURA SNAPES



**DOT WIGGIN BAND**  
**Ready! Get! Go!**  
 ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES

The return of The Shaggs sister!

The legend of Dorothy ‘Dot’ Wiggin, and her sisters Betty, Helen and Rachel, most definitely rests on the album that they made in the late ‘60s as The Shaggs, *Philosophy Of The World*. The sisters could barely play, but they’d intuited a thing or two about music, and the outsider disconnect of their instrumental prowess couldn’t mask the benign glow of their art. *Ready! Get! Go!* is much more together, but the magic is still there: Wiggin’s melodies charm with their oracular beauty, and on songs like “Banana Bike”, the band play with all the primitivist thud of ‘60s garage teen-rock.

JON DALE



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COLLECTION

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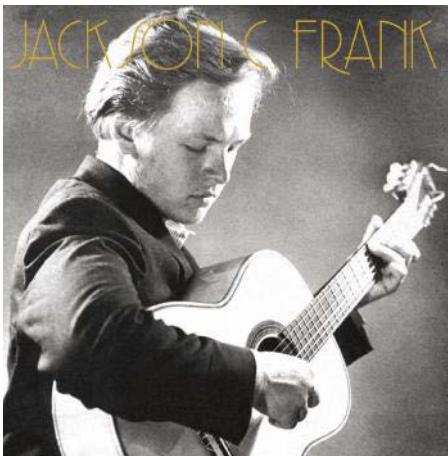
**TRACKLIST**

- 1 Blues Run The Game
- 2 Don't Look Back
- 3 Kimbie
- 4 Yellow Walls
- 5 Here Come The Blues
- 6 Milk And Honey
- 7 My Name Is Carnival
- 8 I Want To Be Alone (Dialogue)
- 9 Just Like Anything
- 10 You Never Wanted Me

**JACKSON C  
FRANK****Jackson C Frank (reissue, 1965)**

EARTH

Ill-fated folkie's fleeting moment of clarity. By Jim Wirth →



**8/10**

ON THE VERGE of being rescued from the streets of New York and returned to safe harbour in

Woodstock in the mid-1990s, Jackson C Frank got caught in the crossfire when neighbourhood kids were taking pot shots with an air rifle. He lost an eye. That was pretty much par for the course.

From freewheelin' to freefallin', Frank's story is a relentless downward spiral. He lived fast enough in his mid-1960s pomp to have died younger, but clung on until 1999 having spent decades bouncing between homeless hostels and mental institutions, the blues of his most celebrated composition having run his game throughout.

Reissued again in another new sleeve, the album Paul Simon teased out of Frank in 1965 is the only significant document of this extraordinary songwriter. A footnote in the pre-history of British folk rock by virtue of his turbulent relationship with – and lasting stylistic influence on – Sandy Denny, Frank cast a long shadow over many of the leading men he met after crossing the Atlantic on the Queen Elizabeth, in a quest to buy expensive cars and escape from Bob Dylan's shadow.

Bert Jansch reckoned him "a genius... an absolute genius", Roy Harper wrote "My Friend" in his honour, and – man handing misery on to man – Nick Drake committed a rough version of Frank's greatest musical statement, "Blues Run The Game", to tape in his bedroom in Tanworth-in-Arden. "The newspaper obituary of my inner

self," according to Frank's original album sleeve note, the song is a magnificently taut summary of the Frank's fruitless search for solace. "Catch a boat to England, baby/Maybe to Spain/Wherever I have gone/The blues are all the same."

At 22, Frank was no stranger to heartbreak. Badly scarred at the age of 11 in a boiler explosion and fire at his school in Cheektowaga, New York State, which killed half of his classmates, he took up guitar during his recuperation, and was another wannabe on the local folk scene in nearby Buffalo – crashing and burning in an audition for Dylan's manager Albert Grossman, according to one ex-girlfriend – before abandoning his job as a newspaper copy boy when he received a \$100,000 insurance pay-out for the fire on turning 21. He came to England "to hide" but stood out a mile on the Troubadour-Les Cousins-Bunjies circuit of Bohemian folkie London. "Scruffy and gruff," is how Linda Thompson – then Peters – remembered him when she spoke to *Uncut*. "I don't recall much of his back story, but he had more money than all of us, which wasn't hard. Also Jackson was, as they say now, well hard! Maybe you'd call him bipolar these days. He was either super-confident or super-nervous. Nothing in-between."

The pre-fame Simon was determined enough to get whatever magic Frank possessed down on tape, with Art Garfunkel acting as tea boy and Al Stewart providing a solitary extra guitar track.

"I recorded my album in under three hours in a CBS studio on New Bond Street in London," Frank remembered in the 1990s. "I remember hiding behind a screen while I was singing and playing, because I was just a little nervous and I didn't want anyone to see me."

A bundle of raw nerves threaded through impenetrable jazzbo poetry, Jackson C Frank still bears witness to how horribly exposed its creator felt. While there is throwaway stuff – the "will-this-do" Civil Rights thrash "Don't Look Back", Tim Buckley-ish free-form "Just Like Anything" and back-porch doodle "Here Come The Blues" – it is a record which sounds gruesomely, self-consciously adult.

His reading of the traditional "Kimbie" is a grim howl, while the oppressive thrum of "Yellow Walls" and "I Want To Be Alone (Dialogue)" prefigure something of the film noir

profundity of 1-2-3-4-era Scott Walker. Frank's sonorous voice wraps a mystical cloak around "Milk And Honey", while "My Name Is Carnival" is darker still, his equivalent of Jansch's similarly gaunt "The Bright New Year".

However, as much as Frank fancied himself as a poet, the great buttresses on which his reputation rests are his least writerly songs. Denny later banshee-wailed her way through closer "You Never Wanted Me" ("He broke her heart," says Thompson), but Frank's autopsy on a lost love is supremely, sublimely restrained. And then there's "Blues Run The Game", the fatalistic sentiment of which followed Frank through his declining years like the Mona Lisa's eyes.

Chronic writer's block and worsening mental problems conspired to ruin him. "I didn't see him – well, not alone anyway," recalls Thompson of his later '60s return to London. "He and Sandy didn't keep in touch. Jackson was sinking fast, and friends jumped ship. You couldn't deal with him."

Settling in Woodstock, Frank got married and had two children, but after his son died young of cystic fibrosis in the early 1970s, he deteriorated further, later vanishing on a windmill-tilt at finding Simon and rebooting his career. He was not seen again until a fan, Jim Abbott, tracked him down in Queens. "There was this heavy guy hobbling down the street, and I thought that can't possibly be him... I just stopped and said, 'Jackson?' and it was him. My impression was: 'Oh my God.' It was almost like the Elephant Man or something. He was so unkempt, dishevelled.

"All he had to his name was a beat-up old suitcase and a broken pair of glasses. I guess his caseworker had given him a \$10 guitar, but it wouldn't stay in tune. It was one of those hot summer days. He tried to play 'Blues Run The Game' for me, but his voice was pretty much shot."

Indignity was to follow indignity. Listening to the weary tunes he laid down here, you can almost believe he saw it coming.

**EXTRAS:** Happily, none. Previous versions have included some flightless songs recorded in the early 1970s, while earlier demos and later attempts at recording exist, but are effectively ephemera. Lost tracks "Four O'Clock In The Morning" and "Juliette", written for Art Garfunkel, have yet to surface.

## HOW TO BUY... JACKSON FRANK AND HIS CIRCLE

Paul Simon, Sandy Denny, Bert Jansch and more



### PAUL SIMON The Paul Simon Songbook

CBS, 1965  
Simon & Garfunkel retreated to London after their '64 debut LP *Wednesday Morning 3AM* bombed. Supposedly deleted at the artist's behest in the late '70s, Simon's solo debut – recorded at the same studio as Jackson C Frank – features naked versions of much of S&G's '66 hit album, *Sounds Of Silence*.

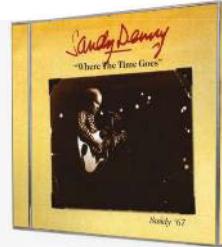
**7/10**



### AL STEWART Bed-Sitter Images

CBS, 1967  
First recorded on Jackson C Frank, Stewart recorded his Donovan-ly debut single, "The Elf", the following year. His first album is hippy-dippy juvenilia given the heft of what lay ahead for the songwriter, but while the orchestral lacquer invited sneers at the time, it sounds amiably gauche now.

**8/10**



### SANDY DENNY Where The Time Goes

SANCTUARY, RECORDED 1967  
Frank was a massive influence on Denny and she wrote "Next Time Around" in his honour. On those earliest official outings, compiled here, she does the quiet/loud thing on his "Milk And Honey" and "You Never Wanted Me" to bloodcurdling effect.

**7/10**



### BERT JANSCH Bert Jansch

TRANSATLANTIC, 1965  
The finger-picker's debut LP preceded Frank's, but Jansch held his peer in the highest esteem, regularly playing "Blues Run The Game" and "Carnival" in concert. Like Jackson C Frank, Bert Jansch is stark and sinuous. Folk-blues with something beyond.

**8/10**



## Q&A

Eyewitness Al Stewart talks us through the making of *Jackson C Frank*...

**W**HERE DID YOU first meet **Jackson C Frank?**  
There was a social worker called Judith Piepke who thought that folk singers were important, so she had this big apartment in the East End of London where she would let rooms to folk singers; Paul Simon stayed there and Arty Garfunkel. Judith had met Jackson when he was playing at a folk club in Richmond, so Jackson started coming round and I think the first time I met him was at Judith's apartment. Shortly after that he started dating Sandy Denny.

**Was that a volatile relationship?**  
Oh yeah! They weren't together that long. I remember Sandy coming back all hours of the night because she was a night nurse. She was starting to play the guitar and Jackson was not fond of that idea – she was supposed to be his girlfriend and he didn't want her onstage, and Sandy was a little resentful of that. I do remember her playing "The Ballad Of Hollis Brown" wearing her nurse's uniform and then putting the guitar away very quickly when Jackson appeared.

**Was his backstory with the fire and the insurance pay-out well known?**

It was obvious, because he had the scars from it. He wasn't physically frail at all – he had a slight limp but otherwise he was fine. Judith's theory was that he had the money and he just wanted to get rid of it. We were all taking the bus – we didn't have any money – and he was driving around in an Aston Martin. I think he had a Bentley or a Rolls, too. At one point he was

dating this fairly upper-crust English girl – it's so insane – and going round in pinstripes and a bowler hat, but he still had the long hair. He looked like Buffalo Bill or something. It was the oddest thing I've ever seen.

**How did you come to be involved in the making of the record?**

I'd been dragged along in case I was needed and at one point we were doing "Yellow Walls", and Paul said go and play some guitar on it. And I had been a big fan of Duane Eddy and I thought, what would he do?

So I went *dang dang dang dang* and Paul said, 'That's great – do it again.' So then I did some high parts on it as well, and it seemed to work.

**Did it feel like there was magic in the air?**

We made the record in six hours – the first three, Jackson refused to sing a note. We went into the studio and he just clammed up; he couldn't do it. He got into the recording studio and suddenly it was all real and he didn't want to do it. He didn't want us looking at him so we had to hide him! So we put baffle screens around him so we couldn't see him and it was only when we'd got him completely hemmed in on all sides so he was invisible that he started to play. I remember peering through the glass at this boxed-off section where the music was coming from. I remember Arty Garfunkel going out and getting tea! I think it's so insanely

wonderful that Art was the tea boy on a Jackson Frank session.

One thing I do remember about the session was that I never got paid for it. The standard session fee at the time was something crazy like ten and sixpence. I remember Paul saying I'll give you the cash afterwards and he never did. My first appearance on a record and I never got paid for it. I think Jackson bought me lunch and that was it.

By the time he returned from America in 1968, you all had recording careers and he seemed to be struggling: is that the impression that you got? I think Jackson wrote four or five more songs but they weren't as good. He was definitely not the same person in '68 as he was in '65. He'd begun a descent into the craziness that eventually overcame him. He'd run through his money and he didn't seem to have any prospects. He couldn't write songs anymore and the rest of us were all starting to do it pretty well. That must have been discouraging.

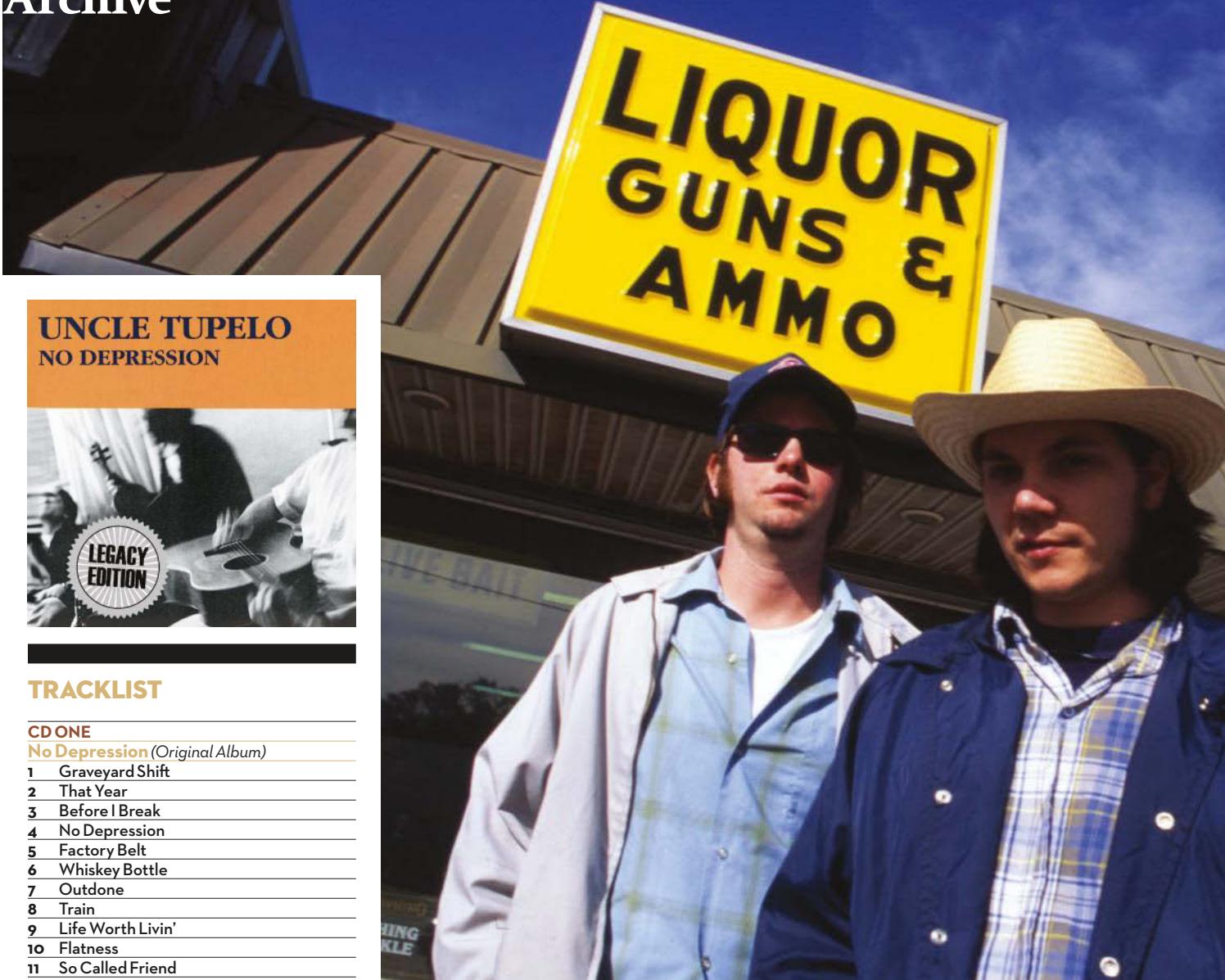
**When did you last have any contact with Jackson?**

At some point I went over to Woodstock where he was living to see him and he was pretty crazy at that point. He had a girlfriend called Elaine and she was a model. She was stunning looking, absolutely gorgeous, and when I was there he was chasing her round the furniture and it looked like a pretty strange situation. The last time I heard about him was probably the early '70s – could be as late as '74. I was supporting Fairport on Long Island and I was talking to Sandy and she said that she had heard from Jackson and that he was in a bad way and he wanted to borrow money because he'd had to pawn his guitar or something, and I got the same message. I think he was reaching out to all sorts of people, trying to canvass everyone for cash.

*"We went into the studio and Jackson just clammed up... we had to put baffle screens around him"*

melody, as well. I thought the songs were great. I especially like "Milk And Honey" – and "You Never Wanted Me" was a great song too. "Blues Run The Game" was the one that everyone did. Laura Marling recorded it – that's two generations on! How good a record was *Jackson C Frank*? Well, we all liked it at the time but there wasn't anything like it. We were all waiting for the second great album, which he never made.

*INTERVIEW: JIM WIRTH*



## UNCLE TUPELO NO DEPRESSION



### TRACKLIST

#### CD ONE

**No Depression** (Original Album)

- 1 Graveyard Shift
- 2 That Year
- 3 Before I Break
- 4 No Depression
- 5 Factory Belt
- 6 Whiskey Bottle
- 7 Outdone
- 8 Train
- 9 Life Worth Livin'
- 10 Flatness
- 11 So Called Friend
- 12 Screen Door
- 13 John Hardy

*No Depression Era Odds & Ends*

- 14 Left In The Dark
- 15 Won't Forget
- 16 I Got Drunk
- 17 Sin City
- 18 Whiskey Bottle (Live Acoustic)

#### CD TWO

**Not Forever, Just For Now**

(No Depression Demos,  
Produced By Matt Allison, 1989)

- 1 Outdone
- 2 That Year
- 3 Whiskey Bottle
- 4 Flatness
- 5 I Got Drunk
- 6 Before I Break
- 7 Life Worth Livin'
- 8 Train
- 9 Graveyard Shift
- 10 Screen Door

**From Live & Otherwise**

(Self-Released Cassette, 1988)

- 11 No Depression
- 12 Blues Die Hard

**From Colorblind and Rhymeless**

(1987 Cassette Demo)

- 13 Before I Break
- 14 I Got Drunk
- 15 Screen Door
- 16 Blues Die Hard
- 17 Pickle River

## UNCLE TUPELO

### No Depression: The Legacy Edition

SONY/LEGACY

Not for now, just for forever – insurgent country's big bang. *By Luke Torn*

**9/10**

THEY WERE STILL wet behind the ears in 1987, barely into their twenties, but Belleville, Illinois trio Uncle Tupelo (guitarist Jay Farrar, bassist Jeff Tweedy, drummer Mike Heidorn) had been woodshedding in various combinations around St Louis for years, first as upstart rockabillies (the Plebes), later as garage/punk acolytes (the Primitives). Soaking up every conceivable influence, they spun out everything: *Nuggets*-style '60s garage tunes, indie rock (leaning, especially, on the styles of the Replacements, Green On Red, and the Minutemen), the folk and folk-rock of Dylan and The Byrds, blues and hardcore country.

By the time their first true original songs arrived, though, they were beyond it all, and asking the hard questions; fun time was over. Or, as Tweedy later snapped in an interview: "This was not a game."

"Before I Break", "Screen Door," and "Whiskey Bottle", grim vignettes laid down on lo-fi

cassettes (and included here as alternate takes), ushered in a tidal wave of brutally honest material documenting – and defying – hopelessness, of being trapped with a nowhere life in a nowhere town. The songs, focused treatises on poverty and the search for meaning, were immersed in booze and disillusionment, tapping deep into the tattered psyche of Ronnie Reagan's now decimated 'City on a Hill' generation. "Well, time won't wait, better open the gate," Farrar barks out, in a rush of words on *No Depression*'s opening blast, "Graveyard Shift". "Get up and start what needs to be done."

These sentiments could be delivered in a gale-force rush of explosive electric guitar, noisy slabs of rhythm, and tricky, stop-on-a-dime time changes. Or, alternatively – and stunningly – with a wistful, floating melody dug out from AP Carter's dusty songbooks, accented by banjo, mandolin, fiddles, pedal steel, and gorgeous two-part harmonies. Both methods were equally devastating.



This almost randomised reconnection to America's deepest musical roots was timely. Mainstream country music, abandoning all self-respect, had transmogrified into something truly ghastly. Embracing line dancing, big hats, and a new generation of crossover stars – Garth Brooks, Billy Ray Cyrus – they kicked Cash, Buck, Merle and Possum to the curb. Blue-collar indie rock was on the run, too, soon to be subsumed into the pop mainstream in the post-Nirvana years. *No Depression* – mixing, on one hand, age-old sentiments of trial and trouble with urgent, cut-throat punk rock and, on the other, age-old musical styles with contemporary yearning for a better life – felt revelatory, inspirational, real.

Plenty of others – Jason & The Scorchers, The Blasters, Rank And File – had been pounding it out for years, searching for, among other things, common ground between The Clash and George Jones. But Tupelo's ability to reclaim the very fabric of American music, especially its distressed, hardscrabble underpinnings, to personalise it and shepherd it into the conscience of a new generation, well, that was a different thing entirely. By the mid-1990s, youngsters like Whiskeytown, Old 97's and Gillian Welch rediscovered treasures like Lucinda Williams and Billy Joe Shaver, even legendary old-timers – like Johnny Cash – were in ascension.

Produced by Paul Kolderie and Sean Slade, fresh off work with indie heroes Dinosaur Jr, *No Depression* was out as summer 1990 dawned. Farrar was indisputably the band's visionary at this point, handling most of the

## Q&A

Uncle Tupelo drummer Mike Heidorn



**You had garage-band roots; where did the country influences come from?** The punk rock, the garage rock, was definitely the common element that Jeff and Jay had. Jay's family and his upbringing lent itself to the acoustic instruments by way of the Missouri Ozarks [his mother's home], a very rural area southwest of Belleville. But his folks had banjos – I remember going there as a 14-year-old – fiddles, harmonicas, pianos, acoustic guitars galore. Jeff, his upbringing brought acoustic [instruments] to the family gatherings. I think he had some uncles who played country, so those two were in touch with the country. When they brought those acoustic guitars and harmonicas to band practice, that was really fascinating. It was like, 'Hell, we can do all these things!'

**A lot of these songs, the restlessness and frustration still resonate now, really hold up...**

I think that while Jeff was right behind him, that premise from Jay's lyrics really hit home with me as an individual living in Belleville. The lyric that personified Uncle Tupelo for many years – well, other than "On liquor I'll spend my last dime" [from "Before I Break"] was from the song "Whiskey Bottle": "not forever, just for now," in other words, there's a life out there, a life worth living. Those songs seemed so real to me. It was like these guys were really looking around.

**What strikes me is how the early Uncle Tupelo songs connect to the past, into age-old emotions, yet played for a very young crowd?**

I think if you'd have tried to purposely study how to do that, you'd have failed! The future takes its course...

INTERVIEW: LUKE TORN

singing and writing. "Graveyard Shift", "Before I Break" and "Whiskey Bottle" flying by in an adrenalin rush, were the hardest hitters, swinging at a pugilistic sonic presentation the band would, inevitably, drift away from. Slightly scaled-back, subtler numbers, though, like "Outdone" and the Tweedy-written "That Year", were just as affecting. The beatific title cut, of course, a cover of the Carter Family's soul-searching, spirit-seeking gem, was a stroke of genius.

This expanded edition appends 22 tracks, including a dozen cuts from those primordial cassettes – highlighted by a fine acoustic version of the Flying Burrito Brothers' "Sin City". The crown jewel, though, is *Not Forever, Just For Now*, a 10-song demo assembled for record-label attention in 1989. All the major *No Depression* material is here, fully formed, plus a fateful, forgotten masterpiece – "I Got Drunk" – fusing dark, galloping bluegrass hues to an all-too-familiar protagonist drinking himself into oblivion. With a fluid, gutsy sound leaning ever so slightly toward power pop, the start-stop, punch-in-the-face dynamics of the official versions are (slightly) less pronounced here, as if they're not trying quite so hard. A blistering portrait of the group just uncovering the breadth of their power.



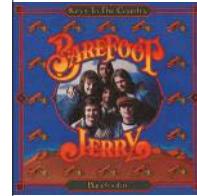
## BAREFOOT JERRY

**Watchin' TV/You Can't Get Off With Your Shoes On**

**Barefootin'/Keys To The Country**

LEMON

8/10



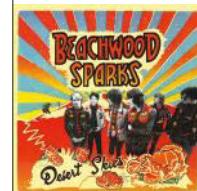
7/10

**Proud to be rednecks**

Taking their name from a grocery store, Barefoot Jerry evolved out of Area Code 615, a group of top-notch young sessioneers who saw the light after playing on Dylan's Nashville recordings in the '60s. Guitarist Wayne Moss was the one constant member of the two groups across eight albums while others (Mac Gayden, Charlie McCoy, Kenny Buttrey) came and went. These double-album sets combine the four Barefoot Jerry LPs released by Monument between '74-'77. The group rarely played live but the chemical reaction they underwent when not recording as 'hired' musicians is something to behold. They conjure up an effortless, complex sound that defies all preconceptions of country. Imagine Steely Dan raised in Nashville, Barefoot Jerry's playing has the same jazz-like freedom. Forty years on, titles like "Tokin' Ticket" and their peace'n'love preaching are decidedly dated, while some of the lyrics are dubiously un-PC. Musically they still sound fearless and as fresh as newly mown hay.

**EXTRAS:** None.

MICK HOUGHTON



## BEACHWOOD SPARKS

**Desert Skies**

ALIVE

**West Coast pop-art experimentalists' false start**

After stumbling upon the right mix of mezcal and mescaline, members of Los Angeles' post-grungers Further let their indie roots grow way out in the late 1990s, morphing into counterculture psychedelic grandees the Beachwood Sparks, who branched out beyond *Notorious Byrd Brothers* territory with two albums and a mini-album in the early 2000s – and a belated third effort in 2012. The tracks on *Desert Skies* were scheduled to be self-released before the band signed for Sub Pop. Essentially Teenage Fanclub with a microdot of Quicksilver Messenger Service, the eight-track album showcases their original six-piece lineup, and features both sides of their 1998 debut single as well as proto-versions of songs that would resurface on their 2000 debut proper. While there was a modicum of jingle-jangle mourning when they abandoned their reasonably straight-up approach, the spacious "Sweet Julie Ann" and closing freak-out "Midsummer Daydream" suggest that the pull of the Grateful Dead's dark star was there right from the start. So far, so far out.

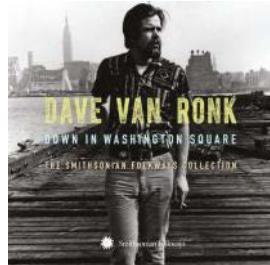
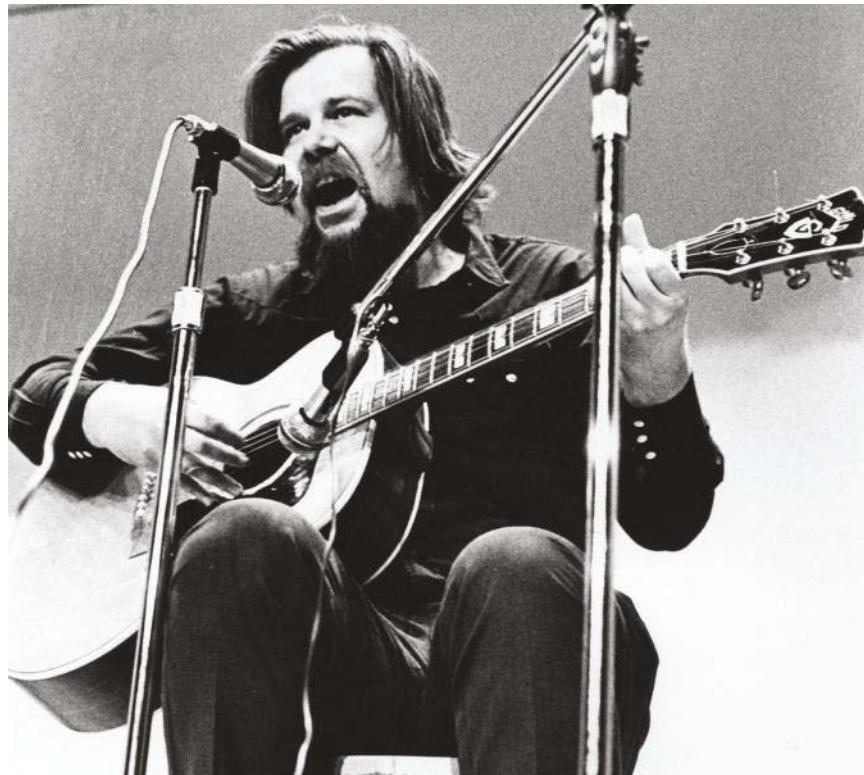
**EXTRAS:** Four more alternate versions are

**6/10** available on the CD version, while early adopters can go for a super-deluxe vinyl edition with poster and free single.

JIM WIRTH

# Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



**DAVE VAN RONK**  
**Down In Washington Square:**  
**The Smithsonian Folkways Collection**  
 SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS

8/10

**The real Llewyn Davis? The Mayor of MacDougal Street's first career-spanning collection**

One irony (among many) of Dave Van Ronk is that, for a lifetime of inspiration, on multiple generations – from Bob Dylan's earliest days to the brand new Coen Brothers film – the man

himself generally despised what passed for folk music. His true roots lay in pre-swing jazz and Dixieland, jug band music and hardcore country/blues – cf. Rev Gary Davis, Mississippi John Hurt. For another, he staunchly avoided specific social commentary, even as that was in vogue; protest songs were strictly nonstarters. Possessed of a gruff exterior and nary an ounce of pop sense, his recording career only occasionally matched his legend. Still, his astonishing finger-pick guitar style and encyclopedic knowledge of the tributaries of American music, his generous spirit and his larger-than-life presence, mark him as a pivotal figure.

This set, collecting some 54 tracks, most from his 1957-'61 prime, well captures Van Ronk's penchant for bringing a proper apocalyptic fervour to wide swathes of material, from scarifying blues to sea shanties, balladic obscurities to standards-to-be. He was most effective on myriad down-and-dirty blues, like Arthur Crudup's "Mean Old Frisco", given a driven, psychotic vocal amid lacerating guitar runs. An early studio recording of Bessie Smith's harrowing "Backwater Blues" is just as spooky, but nuanced by comparison – elegantly syncopated guitar, ever-present gut-check vocal.

Several unreleased live 1961 recordings are both electrifying and apocryphal: "Had More Money", a churning riff on Robert Johnson's "If I Had Possession Over Judgment Day", finds him in his growling, interpretive prime, inhabiting a steely, twitchy, unsettled intensity. "House Of The Rising Sun", presented in the splendid arrangement Dylan adapted for his first album, descends – within Van Ronk's choppy, spooked vocals – like a never-ending bad dream. *Down In Washington Square*, adding 16 unreleased cuts even while it summarily ignores some 20 years of Van Ronk history (1963-1982), brims with revelation. LUKE TORN

I'M YOUR FAN

**"Dave never got his due, that's for sure. But he was tremendously influential."**

T BONE BURNETT



**CLARENCE CARTER**  
**The Fame Singles Volume 2**  
 KENT

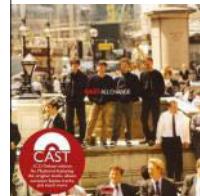
**More prime cuts from the soulful storyteller**

Carter's biggest hit "Patches", the soap opera saga of a poverty-stricken family, opens this second collection of the singer's bumper catalogue of recordings from the Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, covering 1970 to '73. The single's success meant that a certain template would be followed for at least the next couple of releases; both the strutting soul of "It's All In Your Mind" and the sly funk of "The Court Room" are distinguished by spoken-word introductions to tales of downtrodden folk, before the yearning, burning, singing Clarence cuts through the melodrama. It would sound cheesy as hell, if it wasn't for the purity and power of the voice, or the taut musical accompaniment. Away from the storybook songs, Carter relishes getting his hands dirty on some truly earthy grooves, playing the smooth adulterer on "I Hate To Love And Run" ("...but I think I hear your man with his shotgun") and the redeemed cuckold on "I Found Somebody New". Few singers of the time were as adept at inhabiting a character in song. His wife Candi Staton was Fame's biggest seller of the day, and can be heard here offering a sassy counter vocal on "If You Can't Beat 'Em".

**EXTRAS:** None.

TERRY STAUNTON

**CAST**  
**All Change/Mother Nature Calls/Magic Hour/Beetroot (Deluxe Editions)**  
 EDSHEL



**The life and death of Britpop's bit-part players**

Noel Gallagher once

described watching Cast perform as "a religious experience", a comment which could be used as a case for both the defence and the prosecution. Formed from the remnants of Shack and The La's, the Liverpudlians were part of Britpop's B-team. Lacking the charismatic spark that defined the best of their peers (Pulp, Blur, Suede), like Oasis they instead traded on the trad-rock credentials of their biggest hits: "Fine Time", "Alright", "Guiding Star", dewy-eyed ballad "Walkaway". Debut *All Change* (1995) favours uncomplicated (up)beat pop, but *Mother Nature Calls* (1997) leans towards a harder sound, incorporating – none too seamlessly – psychedelia on "Never Gonna Tell You What To Do". Cast struggled to negotiate Britpop's decline, though *Magic Hour* (1999) displays their range, moving from crunching blues-rock on "Compare To You" to the lilting orchestral pop of the title track. By their 2001 swansong, *Beetroot*, they were flirting with funk to general indifference, though the results, as on "Desert Drought", are not entirely displeasing.

**EXTRAS:** Each album (except *Beetroot*) includes

**8/10** a bonus CD of copious live tracks, outtakes, remixes and demos, plus interviews with John Power.

GRAEME THOMSON



## CRAZY HORSE At Crooked Lake (reissue, 1972)

RETROWORLD

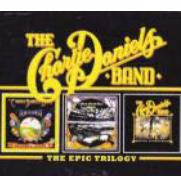
Neil's ragged crew  
saddled up on a rare  
solo ride

**7/10**

By the time Crazy Horse recorded their third studio album in '72, Danny Whitten had been lost to heroin addiction and Nils Lofgren to Grin, leaving only the rhythm section of Billy Talbot and Ralph Molina with any direct association with Young. Neither were writers, so they recruited slide guitarist Greg Leroy and multi-instrumentalists Michael and Rick Curtis, who between them came up with nine of the album's ten songs. Long out of print, the lineup's only recording is a minor canyon rock classic. Paradoxically, it's the influence of Stephen Stills rather than Young that's strongest on "Rock And Roll Band" and "Lady Soul", which sound like a brace of Buffalo Springfield outtakes, while the country ballad "We Ride" could've found a home on a Manassas album. "Love Is Gone" and "Your Song" evoke Richie Furay and Poco and "Vehicle" is heavily influenced by *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*. Best of all may be "Don't Keep Me Burning", which takes the strutting blues-boogie of Free and gives it a Laurel Canyon makeover. The Curtis brothers later co-wrote CSN's "Southern Cross" but otherwise disappeared with Leroy back into obscurity – testament to how deep musical talent ran in the LA canyons at the time.

**EXTRAS:** None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND The Epic Trilogy

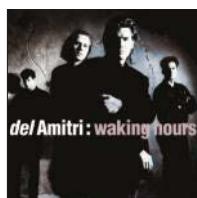
FLOATING WORLD

**6/10**

Good ole boy bridges the rock and country gap Although Daniels was, to all intents and purposes, part of the Southern Rock wave that brought the Allman Brothers and the Marshall Tucker Band to prominence, his own take on the form added more than a soupçon of traditional country. This two-disc set brings together the three albums he made for Epic Records in 1975 and '76, as the bluesier elements of his earlier releases give way to a safer sound to which "straight" Nashville would be more receptive. The rebel of yore rears his head occasionally on *Fire On The Mountain*, especially the redneck rallying cry "Feeling Free", but there's a touch of self-effacing rhinestone cabaret about "Long Haired Country Boy" and "The South's Gonna Do It". What elevates the material above the norm, and again on *Nighthtrider*, is Daniels' dexterous fiddle-playing, duelling with some lean guitar picking. That second album doesn't kick quite as much ass as its predecessor, but the skip-and-jump of "Willie Jones" does a convincing impression of a Kris Kristofferson tale about wayward vagabonds. *High Lonesome* saw a slight return to Daniels' more rock-minded beginnings, cutting a serious rug on the hard-nosed honky tonk of "Carolina (I Remember You)" and "Roll Mississippi".

**EXTRAS:** None.

TERRY STAUNTON



## DEL AMITRI Waking Hours/ Change Everything/ Twisted (Deluxe Editions)

UMG

**7/10**

Remasters from  
reformed Glasgow  
rockers – with B-sides

Tarted up and reissued to mark the band's first tour in over a decade, these three albums comprise the main meal of Del Amitri's six-album career. Possibly because they were never beholden to any trend, the band's crafted, sturdily melodic pop-rock, with distinct country and folk fringes, has weathered rather well, while Justin Currie has always displayed an enjoyably weathered way with boozy romantic angst. *Waking Hours* (1989), their breakthrough second album, features a fistful of hits ("Nothing Ever Happens", "Kiss This Thing Goodbye"), and at least one superior album track, the gentle hoedown of "This Side Of The Morning", while the highlights of *Change Everything* (1992), produced by Gil Norton, include "Always The Last To Know" and "Be My Downfall". Neither album debunks the notion that Del Amitri were generally built for 45rpm rather than 33, but on *Twisted* (1995), which includes jangly Top 10 US hit "Roll To Me", the quality runs deeper and darker, the mid-paced stomp of "Here And Now" and spare regret of "Tell Her This" among several songs revealing the substance beneath the singles and sideburns.

**EXTRAS:** Each album comes with a second CD  
**7/10** of B-sides. GRAEME THOMSON



## THE DURUTTI COLUMN The Return Of The Durutti Column (reissue, 1980)

FACTORY BENELUX

**9/10**

Factory's mercurial  
guitar epic, back in  
the sandpaper

When Tony Wilson (played by Steve Coogan) has a vision of God (also played by Steve Coogan) in Michael Winterbottom's *24 Hour Party People*, he has a word of advice: "Vini Reilly is long overdue a revival. It's good music to chill out to." Here, God is onto something. Reilly's debut is both one of the finest documents of early Factory, and a symbol of the label's part inspirational, part dysfunctional approach. It came about by pairing the fragile classical guitar prodigy with producer Martin Hannett. Chemistry was close to nil, but before storming out, Reilly recorded a number of jazzy electric guitar miniatures, which Hannett would layer with primitive beats and electronic ambience. In open defiance of post-punk trend, "Sketch For Summer" and "Katherine" are simple, pretty, free of ideology, but their simple beauty shines through.

**EXTRAS:** The original *Return...* was packaged

**7/10** in a sandpaper sleeve, inspired by a 1959 Situationist publication designed to damage books surrounding it. This reissue restores the sandpaper, though a die-cut case and plastic cover protects it. Also, liner notes, photos by Daniel Meadows, and additional 7" featuring non-album tracks "The First Aspect Of The Same Thing" and "The Second Aspect Of The Same Thing". LOUIS PATTISON

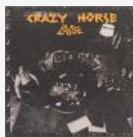
## HOW TO BUY... CRAZY HORSE Neil Young's ragged band of brothers



### CRAZY HORSE

#### Crazy Horse REPRISE, 1971

Stellar debut from Talbot, Molina, Whitten, Lofgren and Nitzsche, with Ry Cooder on slide for three tracks. Original songs getting first outings include "Beggar's Day", "I Don't Want To Talk About It" and "Downtown", plus fine versions of Neil's country cast-off "Dance Dance Dance" and Nitzsche's "Gone Dead Train", previously recorded by Randy Newman.

**9/10**

### CRAZY HORSE

#### Loose REPRISE, 1972

With Lofgren, Whitten and Nitzsche gone, the quality of the songwriting on the second LP suffered. But new members George Whitsell, Greg Leroy and John Banton crank out a high-grade country-rock sound.

**6/10**

### CRAZY HORSE

#### Crazy Moon ONE WAY, 1978

Frank Sampedro joined Molina and Talbot in 1974 and was still backing Young four decades on. Many of the tracks that turned up as the Horse's fourth 'solo' LP were cut during the Zuma sessions with Neil as 'associate producer' and guitarist on five of the 11 songs.

**7/10**

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## FLEETWOOD MAC

### Boston

SNAPPER

**7/10**

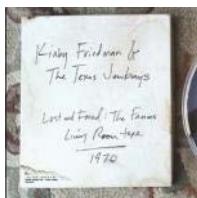
Three hours of Peter Green-era live magic

In February 1970, Mac's classic triple-guitar lineup played a three-night residency at the Boston Tea Party. The shows were recorded for a live album but the release was shelved when three months later Green quit the band after an extended LSD binge.

Parts of the planned album appeared on vinyl as *Live In Boston* in the mid-1980s but the sound quality was execrable. But when the original tapes were subsequently located and remixed they proved to be a treat, revealing a freewheeling improvisational live band, closer in spirit to the Dead and the Allmans than the tight, prog-blues arrangements of the band's studio recordings. If Green was close to the edge there's no sign in his savage playing on electrifying versions of "Oh Well" and "Black Magic Woman". Equally tasty are the extended improvs on "Rattlesnake Shake" and "Encore Jam", the latter exploring similar territory to the mighty 'live' half of Quicksilver Messenger Service's *Happy Trails*, with Joe Walsh added as a fourth guitarist. Most memorable of all is a messy, terrifying 13-minute take on the sinister "The Green Manalishi (With The Two-Prong Crown)", the song which defined Green's descent into acid madness and was being given its debut in the Boston shows.

**EXTRAS:** None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## KINKY FRIEDMAN & THE TEXAS JEWBOYS

### Lost And Found: The Famous Living Room Tape 1970

AVENUE A RECORDS

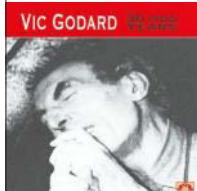
9/10

#### Bob Wills meets Lenny Bruce? The Kinkster as a mere pup

It's a sign of how 'progressive' Nashville had become circa the early '70s that Texas raconteur Kinky Friedman – social agitator, parodist, always eager to push the envelope of good taste – emerged as a bona fide country star. Religion, politics, mass killers, virtually any subject was Friedman fodder, so much so that sometimes it was impossible to tell where jokes ended and realpolitik began. Nonetheless, Friedman's odyssey starts here. His minimalist string band provides gentle, unobtrusive folky backing; he has his core repertoire down (eight cuts reappear on his debut, *Sold American*). But the tone is traditional, respectful – all the better to deliver devastating visions like "Ride 'Em Jewboy", a haunting depiction of the Holocaust as cowboy cattle drive that's still decades ahead of its time. Others – the down-and-out character sketch "Sold American" and "Ballad Of Charles Whitman", about the Texas tower gunman – mix irony and pathos, humor and poignancy, with rare skill. A bonus track, Friedman delivering a patriotic counter-culture riposte – "Carrying The Torch" – at the Grand Ol' Opry '73, is irony in action, Friedman literally bringing Nixon's Silent Majority to its feet.

**EXTRAS:** None.

LUKE TORN



## VIC GODARD

### 30 Odd Years

GNU

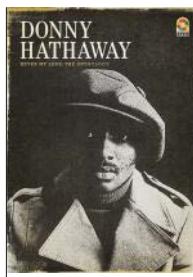
**Career-long survey from legendary punk postman**  
Goddard was there at the dawn of punk with Subway Sect, sharing a stage

8/10

with the Sex Pistols at The 100 Club, and his philosophical approach marked him out as a true original. Despite his ability to write straightforwardly commercial songs – particularly during his period as an unlikely lounge singer in the early 1980s – he's always seemed happier as an underground figure, which has led to the quality, and versatility, of his writing being seriously underappreciated. In a sense, it's not surprising. The bleak power of his earliest recordings remains undimmed. "Don't Split It" (Velvets jamming with Dr Feelgood), the debut 45 "Nobody's Scared" (opening line: "Everyone is a prostitute"), and the cacophonous angst of "Parallel Lines" are as good as anything that emerged from punk London, and the mastering on this 2-CD set uncovers new melodic lines within the thrashing. The great 45 "Ambition" is represented here by an inferior 2004 version played by The Bitter Springs, and the story is brought up-to-date with a reworking of his early 1990s comeback "Johnny Thunders", with Davy Henderson's Sexual Objects. The swing songs and his musical with Irvine Welsh (*Blackpool*) are like demos, awaiting discovery by the next Tony Bennett.

**EXTRAS:** None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



## DONNY HATHAWAY

### Never My Love: The Anthology

ATCO

9/10

#### Superb overview of the soul man's tragically short career

At the time of his death in 1979, aged 33, Hathaway was already perilously close to "Where Are They Now?" status. Bouts of mental instability and prolonged stays in hospitals had kept him away from the recording studio for six years, but what proved to be his final album, *Extension Of A Man*, was a solid gold soul classic, as vibrant and inventive as anything contemporaries Marvin Gaye or Curtis Mayfield were producing. Hathaway's plaintive vocal style also embraced blues, jazz and gospel, at its most disarming on "Someday We'll All Be Free" and "I'll Love You More Than You'll Ever Know". They're just two of many highlights on the first disc of this four-disc set, while the last comprises his sublime duets with Roberta Flack. Disc Two brings together unreleased studio recordings; a beautiful "Sunshine Over Showers", an electrifying "Always The Same". Disc Three is an unreleased '71 live show, Donny testifying on Lennon's "Jealous Guy" and subdued on Gaye's "What's Going On". A troubled man, defeated by his own demons (his death was ruled a suicide), he could never find for himself the strength and redemption his music brought others.

**EXTRAS:** None.

TERRY STAUNTON



## HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

### Bad Debt

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

**Kitchen-table confessional, with added live set**

9/10

MC Taylor had regional success with San

Francisco-based alt.country group The Court & Spark, but the group split in 2007, before Taylor and Scott Hirsch rebooted as HGM, releasing their debut, *Country Hai East Cotton*, in 2009. But Taylor's creative rebirth was more fully realised on the 2010 follow-up, *Bad Debt*. It's an extraordinary set, recorded on cassette in the singer's kitchen in Piedmont, North Carolina, while his baby boy sleeps in the next room. For whatever reason (fatherhood, the financial crisis), Taylor's songwriting has turned biblical, and his fears are channelled into a quest for faith (the gospel worksong "Balthazar's Song") or, failing that, reassurance (the lovely "The Serpent Is Kind [Compared To Man]"). Here, the original release is bolstered by three additional songs, the pick of which is "Far Bright Star" on which he addresses his sleeping son directly: "I love you most of all, but I'm terrified." It's a lullaby for uncertain times; a moment of sudden clarity in a moving, mystical trip. This is Taylor's *For Emma, Forever Ago*.

**EXTRAS:** Initial orders come with a free 8/10 download of a 2013 live set from Café OTO, London, on which Taylor is accompanied by guitarist William Tyler (also available separately from the HGM website).

ALASTAIR MCKAY

## JETHRO TULL

### Benefit

CHRYsalis

**Over-expanded 'collector's edition'**

Tull's third album moved beyond their blues band origins, adding piano for the first time and

enthusiastically embracing the full panoply of prog-rock studio innovation – which in 1970 mostly meant double-tracking the guitars and speeding up the tape or running it backwards. More inventive was the juxtaposition of Ian Anderson's flute and acoustic guitar playing with the crunching riffs of lead guitarist Martin Barre, creating a dynamic soft/heavy balance on tracks such as "Play In Time", "For Michael Collins, Jeffrey And Me" and "Nothing To Say" only bettered by Zeppelin at the time.

**EXTRAS:** The 10 tracks from the original LP are 6/10 somewhat overwhelmed by a further two-and-a-half-discs of 'bonus' material. For the most part it's strictly audiophile stuff as the same tracks are repeated in mono and stereo versions, 5:1 surround sound remixes and then even repeated again in the slightly different sequence of the original US release. But the fringe benefits more enticingly include three non-album Top 10 singles, "Sweet Dream", "Teacher" and "The Witch's Promise", a trinity of songs arguably superior to anything on the original LP and indicative of Tull's disregard for prog-rock convention by continuing to record old-fashioned 'commercial' 45s. Needless to say, these are also heard in multiple different formats.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

## REVELATIONS

### Roberta Flack on the torment of Donny Hathaway



► "He could have been Mozart," Roberta Flack once said of her duet partner Donny Hathaway. "Mozart had a lot of Donny, and Donny had a lot of Mozart in him, in that they were both supremely gifted, but very, very insecure about how to make that gift available to the world." The pair first worked together on an eponymous 1972 collection, earning a Grammy for "Where Is The Love?", but Hathaway's solo set the following year, *Extension Of A Man*, would prove to be his last full album. Having long experienced depression, the singer was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and spent lengthy spells in hospital. Flack coaxed him back to the studio in 1977 for "The Closer I Get To You", and they reunited two years later, but had only completed two more songs when Hathaway fell from the 15th floor of his hotel, the coroner ruling his death as suicide. "One day he said he couldn't sing," recalls Flack of the final sessions, "and that he didn't think he could sing anymore ever in his life."

TERRY STAUNTON



# SMALL FACES

## Here Come The Nice

IMMEDIATE

The Mod scamps' best work, finally given due respect. By David Cavanagh



**8/10**

hangs in the air: deserve to be but aren't. What happened? Was an injustice done?

Impeccably dressed Mods with the talent to excel in R'n'B and psychedelia, the Small Faces had the songs and the singer to take on the world. But their master tapes were chucked in skips and their classic songs thrown away on cheap compilations. Years in the planning, *Here Come The Nice* has proved something of an archaeological and legal ordeal for its compilers, yet they persevered, as if doing right by McLagan and Jones – and by the memories of Marriott and Lane – has become the music industry's last remaining moral imperative.

Goodwill only gets you so far. The rest depends on how special you were in the first place. *Here Come The Nice* opens with a 20-track round-up of singles and EPs. Every Small Faces collector in captivity will already own them in 18 different sleeves, but that may not be the point. This disc is about explaining who the Small Faces were and what they did. A magnificent 54-minute sequence of hit

IN THIS BOXSET'S 72-page book, where tributes come from admirers as diverse as David Bowie and Paul Stanley, someone says of the Small Faces: "They deserve to be placed right up amongst their contemporaries the Stones and The Who."

The implication

singles, Hammond organs and high-water marks of '60s pop, it establishes the context, the ground rules. We're transported to a golden age and these four young men do indeed deserve to be placed right up amongst their contemporaries. Some of the B-sides – "I Feel Much Better", "Donkey Rides, A Penny A Glass" – are as magical as other groups' A-sides.

Boxsets have been dedicated to the Small Faces before, but this feels more intimate. A 4CD set (with some vinyl) of their 1967-8 sessions for Immediate, *Here Come The Nice* features two discs of unreleased material assembled from sessions at Olympic, IBC and Trident studios. Push open the door and we're in, eavesdropping as they decide between a Marriott or a Lane vocal on "Green Circles" and attempt to nail an intro for "Tin Soldier" (working title: "Anything"). As the discs unfold, they work up arrangements of "I Can't Make It" ("Wit Art Yer"), "Wide Eyed Girl On The Wall", "Wham Bam Thank You Mam" and others. By the end of CD3 they're absorbed in sessions for an LP that will never come



## Q&A

Ian McLagan



You and Kenney have been involved in supervising this boxset. Is it everything you hoped it would be? It's a beautiful job. Rob Caiger [producer] has worked very hard on it and I'm absolutely thrilled. I haven't read all of the book yet, because it's so big, but I've played some of the singles and listened to one of the CDs, and it all sounds so good. I'm looking forward to really getting into it.

Listening to the tracking sessions, I was expecting to hear a fair amount of stoned giggling. But you sound like a band with a strong work ethic. Well, see, there was no time off. Time off was [spent] listening to records or playing. When we got to Olympic we didn't waste time. Glyn Johns may offer a different opinion, haha. I remember he used to go home at 12. "That's it. I'm off. You can stay here as long as you like." And we did – 'til three or four am. We were just blessed to be in the studio. This box covers the second half of our career, when we learned to use the studio more creatively.

What's it like hearing Steve and Ronnie's voices on those sessions? It's like they're still here. It brings a tear to my eye. As I look through the photos of us at Olympic, I can smell that place. I can see us, smoking cigarettes, passing a joint, having fun, getting on with it.

The book has tributes from some surprising fans. Paul Stanley of Kiss, Chad Smith of the Red Hot Chili Peppers... I worked with Chad earlier this year. I've also met Flea. Flea could have been in the Small Faces. He's the right height. *INTERVIEW: DAVID CAVANAGH*

out, floating into an uncertain future with Marriott's tender "Jenny's Song" ("The Autumn Stone").

Mindful of recent deluxe editions, *Here Come The Nice* avoids duplicating any album in full, though that wonderful first disc includes seven tracks from the 1967 Immediate LP (*Small Faces*) and five from Ogdens' *Nut Gone Flake* (1968). Rather than aim to be an anthology of the whole career, it's a dipping-into boxset for the fan who wants to get closer – as close as the *Pet Sounds* and *Smile* boxsets allowed Beach Boys fans to get to Brian Wilson. Aside from their glimpses of the Small Faces in their workplace, the second and third discs are a little window on their personalities. Marriott, small as life and twice as cheerful, is a constant energy in the room, putting on accents, calling everyone "man", radiating warmth. Lane, seated here, and McLagan, over there, follow his direction. They're a good-natured bunch. When a take breaks down, Jones quickly cues them in again. There's less larking about than one might presume. Only on a session for "Mad John", from Ogdens' *Nut Gone Flake*, does Marriott sound terribly stoned.

The fourth disc is an assortment of alternate mixes, rarities and live performances. It will delight anyone who wishes to hear Lane sing "Green Circles" in Italian – and many do – and it also boasts "If You Think You're Groovy", recorded with PP Arnold. But the live cuts are scarred by the teenage screamers who besieged the band, making it difficult for them to assert themselves as a serious group. In our modern age, of course, the currency of validity for serious groups has become the stylish, artfully constructed boxset. And so finally the Small Faces got there. *Here Come The Nice* really does sound lovely.

# MARK LANEGAN

## Has God Seen My Shadow? An Anthology 1989-2011

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Towers of song from gravel-throated American mystery. By Jon Dale



9/10

It can be hard to remember at times, but in the early 1990s, Mark Lanegan was one of grunge's secret treasures. This came about more through happenstance than any conscious planning: his group at the time, the

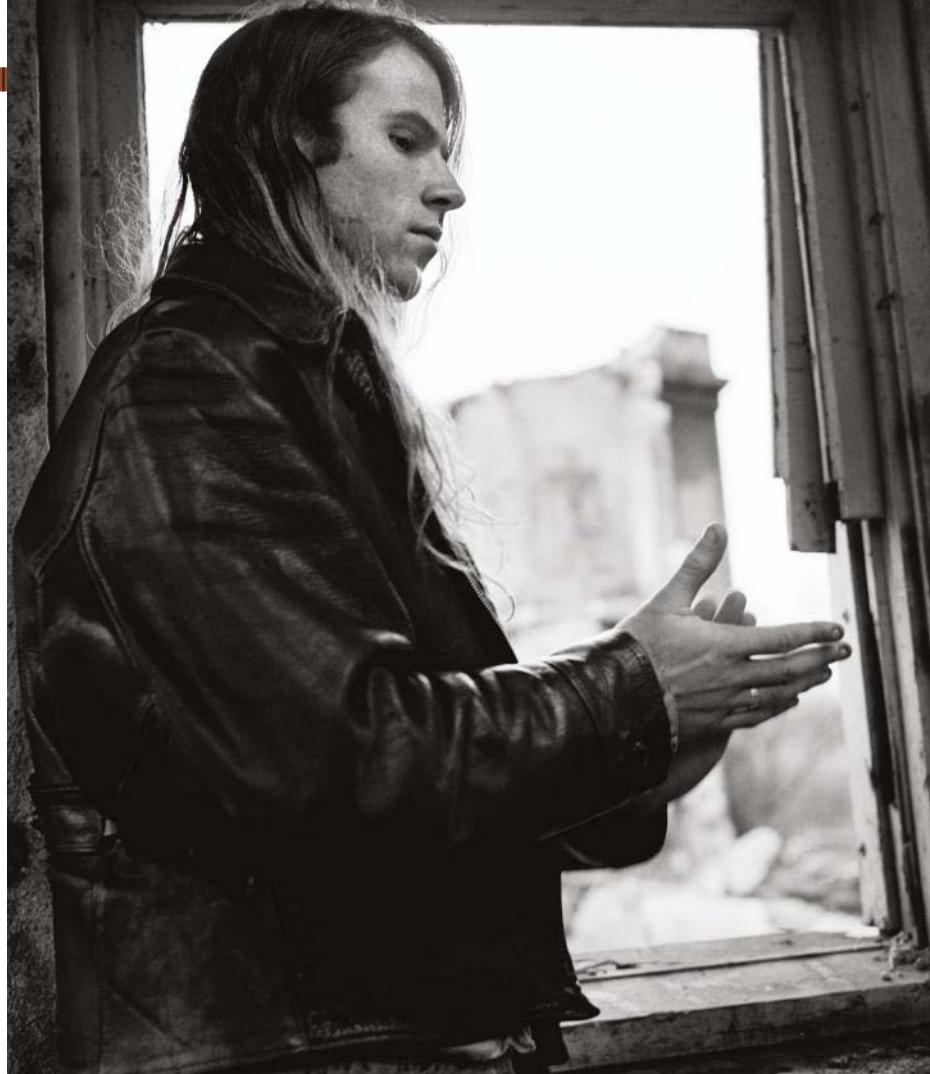
Screaming Trees,

had spent the 1980s recording a series of low-rent, seductively psychedelic rock records for indie SST, before signing to a major and delivering their defining moment, 1992's hard-won *Sweet Oblivion*, just in time for grunge to sweep the LP away in its midst. Which is all well and good, but by this stage, Lanegan already had his first solo album under his belt, 1990's *The Winding Sheet*, and listening back to its languorous, drifting blues and folk songs, you can already hear that this, more than some rock group, was where Lanegan should be.

Though his songs were routinely gorgeous, and the playing was pitch-perfect and unassuming, *The Winding Sheet*, and its 1994 sequel, *Whiskey For The Holy Ghost*, were most important for freeing the Lanegan larynx from the tyranny of rock'n'roll volume. It'd be trite to call him 'one of his generation's greatest voices' if it wasn't so obviously, undeniably true. It's a voice of astonishing grain, singing out somewhere between a graveled growl and the sweetest of croons, a voice almost unique in its capacity to caress the very base matter of language: vowels soar and consonants crumble to dust when Lanegan delivers his lines. It's a voice that startles, time and time again, through *Has God Seen My Shadow?*, a beautiful set of songs drawn from the batch of solo albums that Lanegan released, slowly, during the '90s and noughties.

*The Winding Sheet* is only represented by two songs, the acoustic lament of "Wild Flowers" and the slow prowl of "Mockingbirds". The latter in particular sets the tone for much of what Lanegan would subsequently do – an acoustic guitar strums slack and loose while a primal, stealthy electric guitar riff scratches over the top, the song's drama punctuated by tolling piano, while Lanegan sings out the eschatological blues: "the sun comes out and falls away... Two mockingbirds making sense of it." *Has God Seen My Shadow?* is compiled, roughly, in a backwards chronology, so these songs come near the end of the collection; the front is headed up with songs pulled from later albums, like 2004's *Bubblegum* and 2001's *Field Songs*.

These latter albums are more finessed: the production is richer, the playing stronger, the voice



more mature, measured. They lack nothing for these developments, as Lanegan is canny enough a singer and writer to know when to embrace forward movement, and when to return to roots, as he does through some of the covers he chooses: on the first disc of *Has God Seen My Shadow?*, he takes on Tim Hardin's "Shiloh Town" and does it justice, finding new stresses and nuances in the original. He's also supported throughout by an excellent cast of players, including Josh Homme and Chris Goss from the Queens Of The Stone Age family, J Mascis of Dinosaur Jr, Tad, Ben Shepherd of Soundgarden, and Mike Johnson, an ex-Dinosaur Jr member who for many years was Lanegan's right-hand man, a sussed operator with an almost preternatural knack for sympathetic, understated arrangements.

Indeed, Lanegan's solo albums are great examples of arrangement placed in service to song, but without recourse to the blandishments

of the 'tasteful'. There's always an edge in these performances: often it comes through Lanegan's voice, sometimes through his collaborators, such as the cold chill of PJ Harvey's guest vocals on "Come To Me". Collaboration has become more important to Lanegan over time, and if *Has God Seen My Shadow?* is missing anything, it's some of his great performances from his duo albums with Isobel Campbell, or from *Saturnalia*, his lone album with Greg Dulli of the Afghan Whigs, as The Gutter Twins. But as a representative trawl through Lanegan's solo albums, *Has God Seen My Shadow?* gets it very right indeed.

**EXTRAS:** A second disc of unreleased songs, 8/10 including a hilarious, slowly collapsing live cover of Jackson C Frank's "Blues Run The Game", and a lovely booklet with rare photos and lyrics.

it. Actually, it was really more that there were a few tunes I just didn't want on it.

**There's no Screaming Trees material on the compilation. I was wondering how you think the story might be told 'differently' if some of those songs were included...**

I think of the work I've done under my own name as completely separate from what I did in Screaming Trees and there are many, many reasons for that. There have already been something like three or more Trees anthologies and that, in my mind, is way more than enough. I would actually be horrified if someone were to try and force both things together in one collection. It would totally gross me out.

INTERVIEW: JON DALE

## Q&A

Mark Lanegan

**Why the compilation at this point in time? A necessary gathering up of the threads of the past?** The compilation idea was brought to me by the guys at Light In The Attic, who I think do really cool work. Until then the idea had never occurred to me.

**What was the motivation behind the particular selections – was there a kind of 'continuum' you were looking to emphasise?** Most of those were [Light In The Attic's] choices and outside of a couple of changes, I'm pretty sure there were only a couple tunes I specifically wanted on



## KING CRIMSON

### The Road To Red

PANEGYRIC

A 24-disc set for the aficionado, reconstructing a 1974 US tour

7/10

Overlapping slightly with a 1992 box (*The Great Deceiver*) and a 1975 live album (*USA*), *The Road To Red* is the second in a series of three massive sets dedicated to Crimson's '73-'74 period: *Larks' Tongues In Aspic*, *Starless And Bible Black* and *Red*. At these American gigs, road-testing material for *Red* was just one aim; Robert Fripp (guitar, Mellotron), David Cross (violin, Mellotron), John Wetton (bass, vocals) and Bill Bruford (drums) roamed prog-rock's darkest borders every night in manic ensemble bombardments and slow-building improvisations. Even when the sound quality is bootleg mono, Crimson's virtuosity has an unsettlingly evil grin: we hear the shock of the Fort Worth audience (CD5) hearing this stuff for the first time. The punishing volume took its toll on Cross, who left, and even the iron-willed Fripp was soon to vanish into a spiritual retreat. *The Road To Red* is no picnic, and newcomers should experiment with something much less intense, but insatiable fans wishing to spend the winter immersed in '74 Crimson will find that the boxset's 40-page booklet gives the US tour plenty of context. A new mix of *Red* is also included, along with hi-res audio on DVD and Blu-ray.

**EXTRAS:** None.

DAVID CAVANAGH



## LA HONDA

### I See Stars

AMS

The indie roots of Rumer rediscovered

Recorded 12 years ago but never officially released, the unique selling point of the solitary album

recorded by this long-forgotten London four-piece is the fact that their singer, Sarah Joyce, later became Rumer, who reinvented herself in 2010 with the platinum-selling album, *Seasons Of My Soul*. Rumer served her apprenticeship in a band whose career highlights were a lone EP and a tour with London-based dreampoppers Drugstore, but the 10 songs here are altogether better than that meagre legacy suggests. Written by guitarist Malcolm Doherty (who went on to collaborate with Lawrence in Go-Kart Mozart), they are simple, sincere evocations of the glory days of West Coast folk-pop, leaning heavily for inspiration on The Mamas & The Papas, Buffalo Springfield and the Laurel Canyon school. Though lavishly endowed with melody and harmony, the only persuasive evidence of a defined musical personality comes via Joyce's voice, which even at the age of 19 is a creamy approximation of Karen Carpenter and Sandy Denny, and works particularly well on the more melancholy tracks, such as "Take A Look Around You", "The One That Got Away" and the swooning "Music For Girls". It all makes for a pleasant, worthwhile excavation.

**EXTRAS:** None.

GRAEME THOMSON

7/10



## LONE JUSTICE

### This Is Lone Justice: The Vaught Tapes, 1983

OMNIVORE

Early recording by seminal SoCal alt.country band kicks like a mule

8/10

When Lone Justice tore up the LA club scene 30 years ago, there was no precedent for the band, which meshed the punk-fuelled exuberance of frontwoman Maria McKee and guitarist/singer Ryan Hedgecock with the seasoned cool of drummer Don Heffington and bassist Marvin Etzioni. A month after Heffington joined, fresh out of Emmylou's Hot Band, the quartet went into a San Fernando Valley studio and laid down a dozen tunes they were playing in the clubs, direct to two-track tape with producer David Vaught, capturing a young band's essence. LJ weren't the first purveyors of what was known as cow-punk – The Blasters and Rank & File were among their inspirations – but no group before could boast of reference points that encompassed (as Etzioni puts it) George Jones and The Clash or Merle Haggard and the Velvets. The LP's seven originals are solid, but the five country covers hit with sweaty immediacy, in particular the feverish romps through Haggard's "Working Man's Blues" and Johnny & June's "Jackson", each a smokin' example of the charged rhythm Heffington calls "two-beat shit". The title is accurate – this is the Lone Justice that blew the roof off the Palomino and Club Lingerie; the commercially compromised '85 Geffen LP pales by comparison.

**EXTRAS:** Nine previously unissued tracks;

**7/10** translucent red vinyl first pressing.

BUD SCOPPA

## HOW TO BUY...

### CHRISTY MOORE

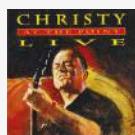
Ireland's greatest living musician



#### Ride On

WEA, 1984  
Bristling with politics, but with a dash of WB Yeats, this introduced Moore's "Viva La Quinta Brigada", about Irish volunteers to the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and included "Back Home In Derry", Bobby Sands' song about transportation to Australia. A huge favourite in Ireland.

8/10



#### Live At The Point

GRAPEVINE, 1994

Moore has always been a performer first, a studio act second. Made just before heart problems forced him to stop live work, this captures Moore in his pomp. Knockabout comic songs like "Knock" are interspersed with trad ballads like "Black Is The Colour" and an intense take on The Pogues' "Fairytale Of New York".

8/10



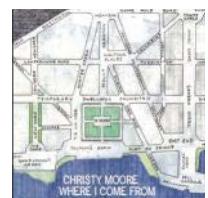
#### Listen

COLUMBIA, 2009

A gentle paean to his Irish roots, with a mesmerising title track and a touching version of John Spillane's "Gortatagort". The standout is an unlikely version of Floyd's "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" – his lament for a recently deceased Syd Barrett.

7/10

NEIL SPENCER



## CHRISTY MOORE

### Where I Come From

SONY

Newly recorded 3CD retrospective from Kildare's master raconteur

7/10

It's been a long, eventful journey for Moore, now 68, from renegade bank clerk to Planxty co-founder to social campaigner, humourist and international treasure. The decision to re-record his best songs (some co-written but with no covers) is vindicated on an easy-rolling set that acknowledges his history while tweaking his lyrics and perspective. For example, a new song, "Arthur's Day", is a snipe at a brewer-sponsored music festival from a now sober, former champion of the craic. He long ago withdrew support for the IRA, but his songs about the 'Troubles', such as "Birmingham Six" and "Minds Locked Shut", retain a righteous power, and he brings a similar cold anger to the 1996 murder of Dublin journalist Veronica Guerin. Sometimes blunt and confrontational, Moore also does poesy – "Smallcrows" is a masterful allegory about the tabloid press, delivered a cappella. The new title track is an almost-rapped evocation of boyhood from "a beautiful bog where I get the sap and get the sauce and hear the curlew sing". Jocular crowdpleasers about Irish life, usually heard to audience cheers – "The Ballad Of Ruby Walsh", "Joker Goes To Stuttgart", "Knock Airport" – are also here in more intimate form. A unique body of work.

**EXTRAS:** None.

NEIL SPENCER



## RAMONES

### The Cretin Hop: Live Broadcast From The Second Chance Saloon, February 1979

SMOKIN' UK

7/10

Da Brudders bash it out

in Ann Arbor on the Road To Ruin tour

Long in circulation among collectors, only now getting a proper release of sorts, this double-album document from an Ann Arbor, Michigan concert radio broadcast finds the punk progenitors at a crossroads. With four groundbreaking, but commercially disappointing albums under their belt, with no chart success to show, and Spector around the corner, this tour represents a kind of end to the golden period. As a performance, it hardly contrasts with Ramones Standard Presentation – though they did preview a few as-yet-unissued cuts like "Rock'n'Roll High School" and "I'm Affected". No matter – it's still a snarling, blistering performance set to stun. Routine for the Ramones still registered as teeth-rattling, transcendent, adrenaline-soaked rock'n'roll. Singer Joey Ramone, in particular, is unusually effusive this night – meaning he had one or two extra words for the audience – while his vocals are pushed (awkwardly at times) forward up in the mix. In short, while the sound quality is far from optimal, the performances are ragged but exhilarating.

**EXTRAS:** None.

LUKE TORN

## The Specialist

The Jesus And Mary Chain



Blues from a gun:  
William and Jim Reid

► WHEN IT WAS introduced in the early 1980s, the CD promised "perfect sound forever", a claim as much about its robustness as its sonic superiority over vinyl. Still, at the heart of the current revival is the conviction that vinyl sounds infinitely better than a CD – less shrill, artificially loud and uncomfortably compressed, far warmer, more intimate and with a stronger perceived connectivity. On the evidence of *The Vinyl Collection* DEMON 7/10, it's hard to disagree.

Released to mark *The Jesus And Mary Chain's* 30th anniversary, *The Complete Vinyl Collection* is a limited-edition boxset that features their six studio albums, remastered and pressed on heavyweight vinyl, plus one double LP of BBC Sessions, a live album and an LP comprised of B-sides and rarities voted for by fans – all packaged with a 32-page hardback book. Sumptuous presentation aside, it's the sonics that matter and TJAMC are a pretty strong argument for the merits of vinyl grain over CD gloss. Their 1985 debut, *Psychocandy*, is certainly worth revisiting in all its cavernous, shrieking, feedback-sprayed glory, its application of the Phil Spector sound to a mix of The Velvet Underground's art-pop ennui, '60s girl group romance and the savage noise of The Stooges delivering a triumphant classic. Almost its equal is

the drum-machine-driven *Darklands* of 1987. As the title suggests, it's shrouded in gloom, but these meteorological-metaphor-heavy songs pack a surf-guitar twang and a hooky pop punch that returned a Top 5 chart hit.

*Automatic* – which features the almost comically cranked drawl'n'swagger of "Gimme Hell" – marks a turning point in 1989, after which TJAMC's sound fell victim to the law of diminishing returns, while their studied air of detached cool was increasingly at odds with the energy of Pixies, Mudhoney, Nirvana et al. Sporadic flares like "Reverence" somehow saw them navigate the jangle and chug of *Honey's Dead* and the overlong, electro-acoustic and wash-y *Stoned & Dethroned*, featuring Hope Sandoval and Shane MacGowan, before their last gasp – 1998's frankly unmemorable *Munki*.

The BBC Sessions for John Peel and Janice Long, two random live UK recordings from the 1990s (why?) and the necessarily mixed bag of fans' favourites are for completists only, although happily, the latter includes nail-on-blackboard debut single "Upside Down" and its Syd Barrett-penned flip, "Vegetable Man". Yes, the highlights of *The Complete Vinyl Collection* are

heavily front-loaded, but fate, not format, is responsible for that.  
SHARON O'CONNELL



**MAX RICHTER**  
**Memoryhouse**  
(reissue, 2002)

FATCAT 130701

Deluxe reissue of early work by electro-orchestral composer

**7/10**

Outside his collaborations with electronic acts

including Roni Size and Future Sound Of London, and film work like his award-winning soundtrack to *Waltz With Bashir*, Richter enjoys a growing reputation as a modern classical composer influenced by Philip Glass, Arvo Pärt and Henryk Górecki. A little too slavishly under the influence at times, as this once hard-to-find debut demonstrates. Re-released in double vinyl to coincide with upcoming concerts, *Memoryhouse* is billed as "documentary music" by Richter, and much of it stands up well over a decade later. The emotional peaks are "Sarajevo" and "November", Glass-like gallops of orchestral arpeggios and falsetto vocals. But the default tone is more ruminative, the doleful piano and violin on "Europe After The Rain" or "Landscape With Figure (1922)" nodding to both Pärt and Penderecki. The lovely "Laika's Journey" is radiant ambitronica and "Untitled (Figures)" an agreeable experiment in layered electro-acoustica. But over the long haul, *Memoryhouse* slips too easily into mimicry and slo-mo solemnity that merely hints at gloomy Central European gravitas without really earning it. Which is why this important reissue ultimately earns a tastefully restrained rating on the Richter scale.

**EXTRAS:** None.

STEPHEN DALTON



**ARTHUR RUSSELL**  
**World Of Echo**  
(reissue, 1986)

ROUGH TRADE/AUDIKA

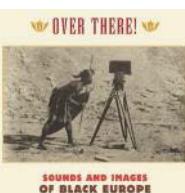
Sole, serene LP from NY's outsider disco prince

**9/10**

A wealth of retrospective collections have emerged in the last decade and a half, but in a way, Arthur Russell feels harder to pin down than ever: the giant, quiet Iowan who dated Allen Ginsberg, produced records that filled the floor at New York's disco mecca the Paradise Garage, and won the patronage of new music luminaries such as Philip Glass – yet somehow, died in obscurity, near penniless, of AIDS in 1992. One way to make sense of his career is that he was the victim of self-sabotage; vast swathes of his recordings went uncompleted and unreleased. What's truly incredible, though, is that the one complete album he did bequeath to the world was one as peculiar and uncategorisable as *World Of Echo*. Neither of the disco, nor the downtown avant garde, *World Of Echo* remains something strangely other. Comprised entirely of sweeps and scrapes of lone cello, Russell's softly sonorous voice, and big splashy pools of echo, the likes of "Lucky Cloud" and "See-Through" feel introverted and weightless, closer to devotional music than anything you might hear at a club or conservatory. It flopped on release in 1986, but in retrospect, may just be the clearest glimpse of its maker's unusual soul.

**EXTRAS:** Remastered from original quarter-inch sequenced masters; CD packaging based on original 1986 cover art; liner notes.

LOUIS PATTISON

COMING  
NEXT  
MONTH...
**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Over There!  
Sounds And Images  
Of Black Europe**  
 BEAR FAMILY

Fela Kuti's grandfather is one of the stars on this fascinating snapshot

**of pre-war black musicians in Europe**

This three-disc "taster" features 77 tracks recorded by four of the artists who appear on Bear Family's remarkable *Black Europe* 44-CD set, exploring early recordings by black musicians in Europe. (That epic set comes with two handsome books.) The oldest songs here come from Pete Hampton & Laura Bowman, an African-American couple who toured Europe in the 1900s, playing historically important but hard-to-stomach "coon songs" like "Tell Me, Dusky Maiden" and "The Phrenologist Coon" as well as plantation melodies and the occasional African spiritual. The second CD is given to ragtime outfit The Savoy Quartet, who had a black drummer and inched towards jazz on fine versions of "Over There" and "Swanee". The final disc is shared by Josiah Ransome-Kuti – Fela's granddad – and Josephine Baker. Priest Ransome-Kuti sings arresting compositions in Yoruba, accompanied by woodblocks and piano. Recorded in London in the 1920s, most are hymns, but "Bi E O Le E Le" is uplifting African folk. Finally comes Baker from 1926, singing showtunes and Tin Pan Alley ditties like the lovely "I Wonder Where My Baby Is Tonight" and scatting with youthful panache.

**EXTRAS:** Booklet with diligent sleeve notes.

**5/10** PETER WATTS


**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Hardcore Traxx:  
Dance Mania  
Records 1986-1997**  
 STRUT

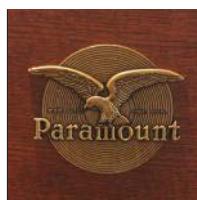
**Potted history of ghetto house hit factory**

Following last year's 16CD

excavation of the Traxx back catalogue comes this welcome celebration of another seminal Chicago house label. Dance Mania's story divides into two distinct chapters: CD1, covering from 1986 to 1992, is as satisfying a document you'll find of the early, uplifting Chicago house sound, featuring material from big-hitters like Marshall Jefferson and Farley "Jackmaster" Funk. But in late '93, everything suddenly changes – BPMs accelerate to almost manic levels, all extraneous musicality is ruthlessly stripped away and the yearning, soulful vocals are replaced by repetitive, sexually explicit commands. As dance music was busying conquering the world, Dance Mania itself looked inward, to perfumitorily named producers like DJ Funk and DJ Deeon, who had little interest in pleasing anyone outside their local scene on Chicago's West Side. But the raw, functional, almost nihilistic nature of cuts like "Work Out" and "Hit It From The Back" is exactly what piqued the interest of Europeans like Daft Punk (*Homework*'s "Teachers" is essentially a Dance Mania homage) and Boys Noize (who's curated a DM tribute album). Lewd, crude and curiously addictive, once you get a taste of the hard stuff, it's difficult to go back.

**EXTRAS:** None.

SAM RICHARDS


**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**The Rise & Fall Of  
Paramount Records  
Volume One: 1917-27**  
 THIRD MAN/REVENANT

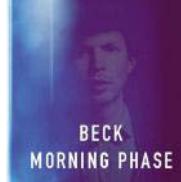
**9/10**  
The most lavish boxset ever? Not bad music either

From Harry Smith's *Anthology...* onwards, many

compilations have presented the blues and early 20th-Century American song in a mythographic context; asserting the "old" and "weird" over other qualities and commercial expediencies. This box, however, never forgets that Paramount were a calculating and sometimes seedy operation, preserving folk traditions – Blind Lemon Jefferson was a key signing – for quick profit rather than more elevated aesthetic motives. First and foremost, they were in the furniture business (as was Third Man boss Jack White), so the "Cabinet Of Wonder" is a hefty oak, velvet-lined cabinet, with an 800-song USB stick buried within. Paramount's recording operation was envisaged as a way of providing discs for their phonographs, but the skills of their talent-spotters soon transcended that. On the USB, then, you'll find Jelly Roll Morton and Ma Rainey, Bo Weavil Jackson and King Oliver, sundry ecstatic preachers and – a personal favourite – the Beale Street Sheiks, all dashing off work that would, inadvertently, shape a cultural century. A vital historical treasure-trove – and *Volume Two*, featuring Son House, Charley Patton, Skip James and Tommy Johnson, promises to be even better.

**EXTRAS:** Besides the USB and six brown-vinyl  
**10/10** LPs, the cabinet holds two tremendous books on the label and artists, ads and sheet music.

JOHN MULVEY



After a winter swaddled in thick plaid, the American underground emerges from hibernation in February with a range of impressive releases. So many have landed

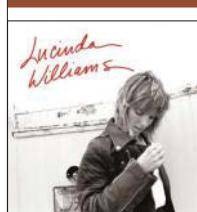
they will keep us busy until spring, but to pick just a few, there are strong efforts from old favourites like **Beck**, established players like **Ben Chasny** (who has a record with his new wry and meditative outfit **New Bums**), and relative newcomers like **Angel Olsen** (a Bonnie "Prince" Bill associate). Olsen brings a stirring, emotional second album, **Burn Your Fire For No Witness**, roaming from Cohen-esque introspection to Mazzy Star-like brooding rock. You may well like it. Some other returning favourites with good new records include **St Vincent**, who keeps it steady with a self-titled record illustrating again her infinite resource of guitar innovation and disarming wit. Try "Birth In Reverse", which opens thus: "Oh, what an ordinary day/Take out the garbage, masturbate..."

**Tinariwen's** *Emmaar* isn't much like that, but it is certainly a reassuring statement of the band's compelling power. Need someone on your side? Well, under the Archive tarpaulin, there's a deluxe reissue of **Your Arsenal**, the rousing, glam-inspired,

Mick Ronson-produced statement of intent by the popular entertainer and now noted author, **Morrissey**.

JOHN ROBINSON

JOHN\_ROBINSON\_101@FREELANCE.IPCMEDIA.COM


**LUCINDA WILLIAMS**  
**Lucinda Williams  
(reissue, 1988)**  
 THIRTY TIGERS

**9/10**

Out of print for the last decade; Gurf Morlix's production remastered

One of life's late developers, Lucinda Williams was already 35 when she released her third album in '88. At the time she'd been without a record label for eight years and it would be another decade before her commercial breakthrough with *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road*. But with hindsight, 'the Rough Trade album' (as it's often called after the label that originally released it) with its seamless mix of folk, blues country, cajun and rock can be seen as the album that launched the phenomenon we would come to know as 'alt.country'. Songs from the album were covered by Emmylou Harris ("Crescent City"), Tom Petty ("Changed The Locks"), Patty Loveless ("The Night's Too Long") and Mary Chapin Carpenter ("Passionate Kisses"), but none matched the visceral quality of Williams' own versions, sung in a Southern Gothic voice that seemed to come from a dark but fearless place none of those covering her songs was able to access.

**EXTRAS:** A second, previously unreleased  
**7/10** live disc from a concert recorded in Holland in 1989, featuring eight songs from the Rough Trade album as well as six others.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

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16H

# JANU



And so the yuletide festivities have once again come and also gone, and the New Year dawns, a time of resolutions, mostly soon to be broken, and, of course, the annual frenzy of the January Sales. Somewhere, queues no doubt are already

forming, people in sleeping bags taking position along Oxford Street and other similar commercial precincts, prepared to endure shivering hardship in pursuit of the ultimate discount. For a real bargain, though, why not simply take out subscription to Uncut and make

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BY MICHAEL BONNER

*Groovy hairstyles rule in David O Russell's brilliant crime caper, the Coens go folk, Joaquin Phoenix falls in love with his personal organiser, Will Ferrell revisits Ron Burgundy*

**A**MERICAN HUSTLE has a lot going on with the hair. Look, here's Christian Bale's paunchy con artist sporting an oily-looking comb-over. Amy Adams, as his mistress, is modelling some foxy corkscrew locks. Federal agent Bradley Cooper, meanwhile, has a tight perm: curlers ahoy! This is the 1970s, a time of exciting hairstyles – but also one familiar to *Uncut* readers as a period of prominent wiseguy activity, heavy on the whackings and knowing voiceovers. Indeed, for his follow-up to the largely wretched *Silver Linings Playbook*, David O Russell conspicuously evokes comparisons with two great Scorsese movies – *GoodFellas* and *Casino*. There's even a cameo for Robert DeNiro (wearing what might well be Marty's specs) as a high-up in the East Coast mob. "Some of this actually happened", reads an opening caption, but Russell is clearly operating under creative license here. The film is very loosely based on an undercover sting operation in the late '70s called 'Abscam', run by ambitious FBI agent Richie DiMaso (Cooper) who recruits con artists Irving Rosenfeld (Bale) and Sydney Prosser (Adams) to take down people like New Jersey Mayor Carmine Polito (Jeremy Renner), an intrinsically decent man with shady links to some interesting people in the Atlantic City casino business. The vibe is full-tilt whacko. Bale and Cooper – two actors I normally can't stand – are both well-suited to the material, amping up their characters' increasingly preposterous sense of their own self-worth. Bale – sans broom up derrière – even looks like he's having fun, for once. But the two best performances come from Amy Adams and Jennifer Lawrence. Is there a better actress currently working in movies today than Amy Adams? Here, as Sydney (and her sly English alter ego, Lady Edith Greensley), she is elegant and mischievous, a sociopathic glint in her eye, crooked smile, never quite letting you know what she's thinking. Meanwhile, Jennifer Lawrence – as Irving's wife, Rosalyn – is a whirlwind of blonde highlights, Swedish nail varnish and passive-aggressive one-liners. Nothing is particularly low-key; dysfunctional screwball comedy rules the day.

► **Inside Llewyn Davis** The Coen brothers are fond of shaggy dog stories. For *Inside Llewyn Davis*, however, they give a starring role to a marmalade cat called Ulysses who leads our hero, Llewyn, on a merry dance through the wintry streets of Greenwich Village, 1961. Llewyn is a folk singer struggling to balance his desire for success



*American Hustle*: (l-r) Amy Adams, Bradley Cooper, Jeremy Renner, Christian Bale and Jennifer Lawrence

with his fear of being perceived as a sell-out – a familiar struggle for many musicians, you might think. As a musician, Llewyn is good – but he's not great. "I don't see a lot of money here," observes Bud Grossman, proprietor of the Gate Of Horn folk club, when Llewyn auditions for him. Llewyn is an ungrateful soul, moody and self-destructive, who spends his days asking friends for a loan and a place to crash; he even sleeps with the wife of one of his best friends. The film's elegantly elliptical structure suggests Llewyn is prone to repeat his past mistakes; you might pause to wonder whether he is trapped in some kind of purgatory. Indeed, an ominously charged road trip to Chicago – in the company of John Goodman's corrosive jazz musician – feels very much like a descent into hell: the road viewed at night through the windscreens, the rear lights of the car in front turning the falling snow blood red. Certainly, while the Coens have made a film that is often funny, it is also incredibly bleak – even by their standards. It's possible to enjoy the use of contemporaneous songs – performed here in full under the off-camera tutelage of T Bone Burnett – and the Coens' richly detailed recreation of New York in the early '60s. There's some terrifically funny sequences, too – chief among them, the sessions for a novelty song about the space programme, "Please, Mr Kennedy! (Don't

Send Me Into Outer Space)", with Justin Timberlake's super-serious lead balanced by loopy bass vocals from Adam Driver. But these moments aside, not much light gets in here. I'm reminded a little of *A Serious Man*, which also gave us a leading character on whose shoulders the troubles of the world descended. The cast is uniformly good – props go to Oscar Isaac as the complex and contradictory Llewyn, but also Timberlake and Carey Mulligan as the folk duo Jim and Jean. John Goodman, meanwhile, have might walked away with the movie were it not for F Murray Abraham's five minutes as Bud Grossman. As viewers of *Homeland* will attest, Abraham is on a roll right now, and his inscrutable impresario has the truth of it. "You're no frontman," he tells Llewyn impassively. Llewyn's tragedy is the Coens' stroke of genius.

► **Her** In the future, no-one will wear belts. This is a place of gently muted colour schemes, discreet facial hair and where poverty appears to have been eradicated – but, alas, for all its Utopian charms, the denizens of future Los Angeles are still susceptible to broken hearts. One such individual is divorcee Theodore Twombly, who finds therapy from his broken marriage working at BeautifulHandwrittenLetters.com – composing love letters for strangers to send to their spouses.

## Reviewed this month...



### AMERICAN HUSTLE

Director  
David O Russell  
Starring Christian Bale, Bradley Cooper  
Opens Jan 1  
Certificate 15  
**9/10**



### INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS

Directors Joel and Ethan Coen  
Starring Oscar Isaac, John Goodman  
Opens Jan 24  
Certificate 15  
**8/10**



### HER

Director  
Spike Jonze  
Starring Joaquin Phoenix, Scarlett Johansson  
Opens Feb 14  
Certificate 15  
**8/10**



### 12 YEARS A SLAVE

Director  
Steve McQueen  
Starring Chiwetel Ejiofor, Michael Fassbender  
Opens Jan 10  
Certificate 15  
**7/10**



### ANCHORMAN 2: THE LEGEND CONTINUES

Director  
Adam McKay  
Starring Will Ferrell, Steve Carell  
Opened Dec 18  
Certificate 15  
**6/10**



Poor, lonely Theodore – that is, until he meets Samantha, and the two fall in love. Samantha is a computer operating system, no less: Theodore's IT girl, for want of a better pun. Spike Jonze presents Theodore and Samantha's relationship as perfectly natural – *Her* deploys all the tropes of the conventional rom-com – which forces a comparison between the director's beautifully designed fantasy world and our own increasing dependency on technology. Can a man really fall in love with a computer – and do the emotions of an artificial intelligence qualify as *real*? "Are these feelings real," Samantha wonders, "or is it just programming?" It feels a little like Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* in places, but Jonze sends the film's rom-com into tasty postmodern territory. In a calculatedly ambiguous way, Jonze appears to be both simultaneously mocking and embracing a genre (a tactic he used previously in *Adaptation*). Into this comes Joaquin Phoenix as Theodore, mercifully dialling back his usual ham to deliver a more approachable and sympathetic performance. As

Samantha appears to acquire consciousness ("I'm becoming much more than what they programmed"), he begins to push her away, revealing what we can assume to be a general inability to love – presumably what put paid to his marriage. Voicing Samantha, Scarlett Johansson is husky, warm and involving – much as you'd imagine. There is good support, too, from *Parks And Recreation*'s Chris Pratt as Theodore's work colleague, Rooney Mara as Theodore's ex-wife and, particularly, Amy Adams – playing Theodore's best friend Amy as a kind of Diane Keaton character. There is a lovely shot towards the end of the film as

Theodore and Amy sit on the roof terrace of their apartment block that recalls Keaton and Woody Allen in *Manhattan*, nestled on a bench in the shadow of the 59th Street Bridge.

► **12 Years A Slave** marks the big step-up for Steve McQueen, as he leaves behind hunger strikes and sex addicts for a larger project about another difficult yet hefty subject: slavery. McQueen is keen to make his mark on this material – but nevertheless is sensitive to the demands of the marketplace in which his film will be shown. On one hand, there is a silent tableau of slaves filmed standing by the side of a plantation, rich with the kind of experimental vibes you'd expect from a former Turner Prize winner. On the other, to acknowledge the milieu in which McQueen now moves, there is the score – a violin theme that, you suspect, in the hands of, say, Hans Zimmer, would have been delivered by a massed orchestra with added choirs. *12 Years A Slave* is based on a memoir by Solomon Northup (Chiwetel Ejiofor), a free-born African American who was kidnapped in 1841 and sold into slavery. McQueen's film follows his passage through a succession of owners – Paul Giamatti, Benedict Cumberbatch, Michael Fassbender. The worst of the lot is Fassbender – enjoying his Amon Goeth moment as cotton planter Master Epps, a man for whom money, power, lust and whiskey have stripped all morality. If he is to survive, Northup – an intelligent, educated man – must keep the truth about his abilities from his masters. As a corrective to Tarantino's cartoon *Django Unchained*, *12 Years A Slave* is entirely successful – it is a sober, non-judgmental study that does not preach to audiences. It contains many powerful and lasting images, not least a prolonged shot of Northup, strung up from a tree as punishment, his feet barely reaching the ground, while plantation life continues around him. But for all its good points, the film never quite hangs together. It's at least 20 minutes too long, while the episodic structure – as Northup passes from owner to owner – breaks the film's pacing.

► **Anchorman 2** Considering Will Ferrell's recent CV (*Semi-Pro*, *Land Of The Lost*, *Casa Di Mi Padre*; a 2009 Forbes listing as Hollywood's most overpaid star), it seemed only a matter of time before he returned to Ron Burgundy and the Channel 4 news team. Indeed, although *Anchorman* made only \$85 million at the box office in 2004, it has subsequently gone on to take several times that in DVD sales. *Anchorman 2* is more of the same, but it's only sporadically as successful. The action relocates from the '70s to the '80s, where Ron is called upon to head up the first 24-hour rolling

news channel – run by (the horror!) a black woman. At its best, there is good satire on the inanities of the modern news cycle – but for much of the time, everyone is required to do what they did in the first *Anchorman* film, only a little louder. The

car-park showdown between rival news crews from the first film is repeated here – you might ask why – with A-listers including Will Smith and noted comic Kanye West. One of Ferrell's best performances came at the end of *Wedding Crashers*, when he cameo'd as Chazz Reinhold, a burned-out crasher who now hits on girls at funerals. It brought out a much darker side of Ferrell – and recalled some of Alan Partridge's more desperate nights of the soul, too.

There is a sequence of a similar hue late on in *Anchorman*, and I wish that more had been made of this.

**Everyone is required to do what they did in the first Anchorman film, only a little louder...**

## Also out...

### LAST VEGAS

OPENS JANUARY 3

The first of two films this month from busy Bob DeNiro, here joining Michael Douglas, Morgan Freeman and Kevin Kline for a *Hangover*-style comedy.

### MANDELA: LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

OPENS JANUARY 3

Idris Elba and Naomie Harris play Nelson and Winnie Mandela in straight biopic of the late ANC leader. U2 contribute a new song.

### THE RAILWAY MAN

OPENS JANUARY 10

Colin Firth is the ex-prisoner of war, on the Japanese "Death Railway" programme, who tries to find his former captors.

### THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER

OPENS JANUARY 17

Charles Laughton's ripe Southern Gothic from 1955. Robert Mitchum is the terrifying sociopath on the trail of two children.



### THE WOLF OF WALL STREET

OPENS JANUARY 17

'CashFellas'? Scorsese's latest charts the rise and fall of a stockbroker (Leo DiCaprio). Co-stars Joanna Lumley, it says here.

### AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

OPENS JANUARY 17

Mother and daughter Meryl Streep and Julia Roberts do some thesping; Chris Cooper and Sam Shepard add support.

### GRUDGE MATCH

OPENS JANUARY 24

More DeNiro – this time as an ageing boxer coming out of retirement to face off against his old oppo, Sylvester Stallone. Jesus.

### JACK RYAN: SHADOW RECRUIT

OPENS JANUARY 24

After his surprisingly accomplished *Thor*, Kenneth Branagh turns his hand to spy games – this time, Chris Pine plays Tom Clancy's hero.

### THE ARMSTRONG LIE

OPENS JANUARY 31

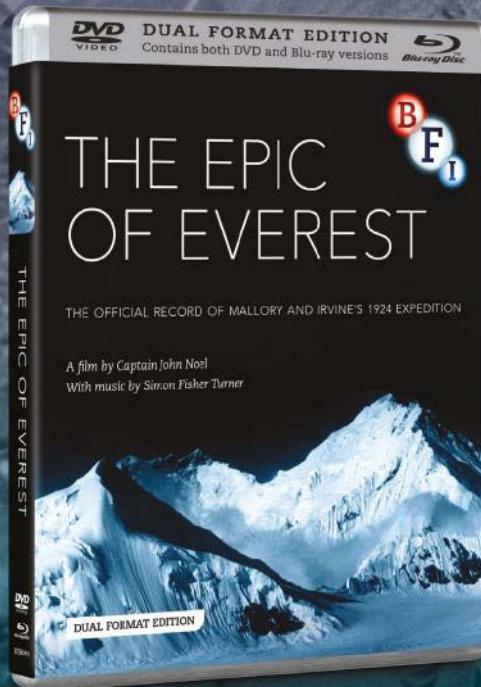
Documentary from Alex Gibney about the rise and fall of sporting doper, Lance Armstrong.

### OUT OF THE FURNACE

OPENS JANUARY 31

Bale, Affleck Jr, Harrelson, Shepard, Dafoe: they're all out for this crime thriller from *Crazy Heart* director Scott Cooper.

# 'The Epic of Everest must be seen'



THE GUARDIAN



DAILY TELEGRAPH



THE TIMES

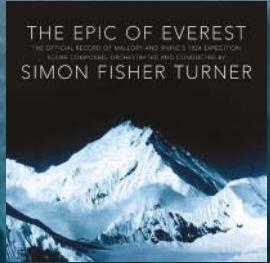


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# DVD & Blu-ray

THIS MONTH: METALLICA | ERIC CLAPTON | DEXTER | TOAST OF LONDON



## THE GREAT NORTHFIELD MINNESOTA RAID

101 FILMS

UKDVD debut for *The Right Stuff* director Philip Kaufman's cantankerous anti-western. By Damien Love



7/10

to the image of the outlaw as a dangerous but sensitive Robin Hood of the border, whose murder was a loss of innocence for the West.

Ray's film included a scene replaying one of the most famous tales of Jesse: that of the poor old widow, about to be forced from her home by the banker who holds the mortgage. James gives her the cash to pay the man, then ambushes him as he rides away, taking the money back again. More recently, while it looked to interrogate the myth, *The Assassination Of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford* (2007) couldn't help but

JESSE JAMES, THE folk ballad tells us, stole from the rich, gave to the poor, and had a hand and a heart and a brain. Ever since Tyrone Power saddled up for 1939's *Jesse James*, the movies have gone along with this. Even iconoclasts like Nicholas Ray and Sam Fuller, in *I Shot Jesse James* (1948) and *The True Story Of Jesse James* (1957), adhered

burnish it, too, offering Brad Pitt's Jesse as a brooding, burned-out monument.

Among such company, the Jesse James offered by writer-director Philip Kaufman's ragged and muddy *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* (1971) goes against the grain. As played by Robert Duvall in full, hollering, feral mode, here is Jesse as neither hero nor anti-hero, but instead as a scummy redneck hillbilly: a sly, lying, psychotic little glory-hound, as noble and trustworthy as a rabid dog. Kaufman establishes his revisionist tone early, introducing Jesse as he sits side-by-side with brother Frank in a flyblown outhouse, backwoods boys enjoying the opportunity to spend some quality time shitting together.

Long unavailable in the UK, this was Kaufman's debut as a major filmmaker, another vibrant souvenir of that heroic "New Hollywood" moment when, spooked by changing tastes and younger audiences, studios were reluctantly casting around for new blood.

Prior to this, Kaufman, a university graduate with European tastes, inspired by the independent example of John Cassavetes, had made two low-budget, long-hair films, the experimental *Goldstein* (1964) and *Fearless Frank* (1967), a scattershot Pop

### SCORING:

10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent  
7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

superhero satire. *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* marked a huge leap forward, but the ironic attitude remains. It fits into the cynical, blood-soaked western wave ushered in by Sam Peckinpah, but, if anything, it's even less romantic about cowboy myths.

Revisiting the film, it's striking how much it foreshadows Kaufman's great later work in *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976, which Kaufman wrote, and started to direct, until Clint Eastwood kicked him off) and *The Right Stuff*. The former's shagginess, and shaggy-dog qualities, begin here. More fascinatingly, it prefigures the ambivalence of his compellingly strange adaptation of Tom Wolfe's book on America's first astronauts. In both movies, Kaufman seems to want heroes to believe in, and simultaneously to subvert that whole notion.

The closest he can find to a hero here is not Jesse, but his usually overshadowed partner in crime, Cole Younger, played, in a brilliant, unshowy performance, by Cliff Robertson, who co-produced. (Watch him in this and Fuller's

*Underworld USA*, and wonder why he was never better known.) Cast by Kaufman as the true brains of the James-Younger gang, Cole has his flaws – this is a film about thieves and conmen, killers, bounty hunters and lynch mobs, after all – but he's the best man in sight. Perhaps even a visionary.

Set in the late summer of 1876, as the fracturing gang of train-robbers are hunted by Pinkertons employed by the railroad, the movie belongs to the times-changing subgenre of the western. Fascinated by the gadgets beginning to appear in the streets and shops around them, Cole is mesmerised by the dawning modern age, delighting in "machines run by steam, oil and electric", two of which – a steam-powered calliope, and a safe's clockwork time-lock – will play significant parts in his downfall during the disastrous attempted bank heist of the title.

Cole is a visionary in the other sense, too. While Jesse fakes babbling fits of speaking in tongues, Cole is genuinely battered by visions, glimpses of images that turn out to be fragments of his own bloody future. Kaufman's film has a very broad streak of very broad humour, but in these odd, unexplained moments, he sends strange gothic shivers running through it. He re-stages that story about Jesse and the old widow woman, too, but adds a new epilogue: Jesse subsequently kills the old woman, then disguises himself in clothes he's stripped from her body, so he and Frank can slink off and escape, leaving the rest of the gang to get slaughtered.

The best way to watch Kaufman's movie would be in a double-bill with Walter Hill's masterly take on the same story, *The Long Riders* (1980), following the same James-Younger gang as they ride toward bloody destiny through the same post-Civil War Missouri landscapes, wearing the same long white duster jackets. Spare, elegiac, autumnal, Hill's brilliant movie is a like a poem, or, more accurately, a ballad. It prints the legend. Kaufman's treats the legend as a dirty joke, and rips it up.

**EXTRAS:** None.



## THE AMERICANS The Complete First Season

20TH CENTURY FOX

### Superior espionage drama

*Homeland* spectacularly dropped the ball, but this nicely fills the paranoid, enemy-within thriller-shaped hole in our lives. Set in the

Washington DC of 1981, with the Cold War freezing and Reagan in the White House, our anti-heroes are Philip and Elizabeth Jennings (Matthew Rhys and Keri Russell): outwardly, a married couple with two young kids; in reality, Soviet spies, with lots of wigs. Mixing chilly espionage with an examination of a relationship built on lies, we're not talking Le Carré, but it's slow, involving, and there's an unexpected '80s mixtape soundtrack.

**EXTRAS:** Unconfirmed. *DAMIEN LOVE*

**8/10**



## CHARLES BRADLEY

### Soul Of America

DAPTONE/ROCO FILMS

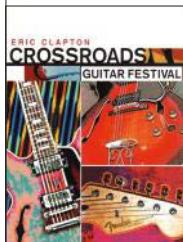
### Portrait of a late-blooming soul survivor

On the heels of *Searching For Sugar Man* comes the tale of another lost boy, ex-James Brown impersonator Charles Bradley. Poull Brien's empathetic film

foregrounds the release, aged 62, of Bradley's 2011 debut album, against the backdrop of a troubled past encompassing abandonment, homelessness, illiteracy and his brother's murder. Living with his parrot in the grim Brooklyn projects, the deeply decent Bradley isn't quite out of the woods yet, but by the end of the film the life he craves seems finally to be within his grasp.

**EXTRAS:** Two videos and a trailer.  
**6/10** *GRAEME THOMSON*

**7/10**



## ERIC CLAPTON

### Crossroads Guitar Festival

RHINO

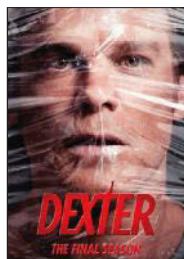
### Slowhand's six-string superstar pals

Clapton opened his Antigua-based Crossroads Centre for the treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction in

1998, and continues to be the public face of its fundraisers. These two shows from Madison Square Garden last April find him in exalted company (Jeff Beck, Gregg Allman), laying down soulful grooves with Booker T Jones and Steve Cropper on "Time Is Tight", trading sweet riffs with BB King on "Everyday I Have The Blues", but at his most laconic and fluid with Keith Richards on "Keys To The Highway".

**EXTRAS:** None.  
**TERRY STAUNTON**

**7/10**



## DEXTER

### The Final Season

PARAMOUNT

### Blood is thicker than murder

After eight years of vigilante killings and Chandlersque voiceovers, Michael C. Hall's seemingly mild-mannered police scientist puts down his scalpel, but like the previous season,

the focus is less on bad guys who escaped justice and more on Dexter's relationship with his sister, a former cop. The concluding of the story necessitates attempts to tie up any loose ends, and ultimately these last 12 episodes pack less of a punch than earlier series when our hero did battle with charismatic adversaries (Jimmy Smits, John Lithgow), veering awkwardly towards soap opera.

**EXTRAS:** Featurettes.  
**6/10** *TERRY STAUNTON*

**6/10**



## METALLICA

### Through The Never

ENTERTAINMENT ONE

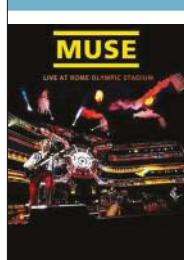
### 3D feature from the rock dudes

An intrepid but largely successful narrative spin on the familiar live-in-concert format. Young stagehand Trip (Dane DeHaan) is pulled out of a Metallica show and charged with transporting

a Jerry can of petrol to a broken-down truck across town. En route, he pops a mystery pill, and the increasingly dreamlike occurrences of his journey – riots, a mysterious holdall and a climactic battle with an apocalyptic horseman – are interwoven into footage of Metallica's pyrotechnic live performance. It's all slightly silly, but so slickly executed that it never really seems to matter.

**EXTRAS:** Making Of doc, behind-the-scenes.  
**7/10** *LOUIS PATTISON*

**8/10**



## MUSE

### Live At Rome Olympic Stadium

WARNER MUSIC

### Stadium flamboyance wins the day

A stadium band for an age that's forgotten how to breed them, Muse's ascent to venues such as Rome's 80,000-capacity Stadio Olimpico has been paved by a

willingness to embrace flamboyance that their contemporaries balk at. This 20-track show, recorded on their *2nd Law* tour in July 2013, is how *OK Computer* might have looked performed by Queen: New World Order angst explored with confetti cannons, actors playing investment bankers hurling money into the crowd, and a vast LED pyramid representing something or other.

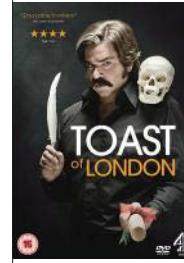
**EXTRAS:** CD, American tour highlights, short film *The Road*.  
**7/10** *LOUIS PATTISON*

**7/10**



## TOAST OF LONDON

4DVD



**Matt Berry's eccentric sitcom about luvvies. Contains polo necks**

**THERE ARE MANY** opportunities available to the modern actor to ply his trade. Stage, screen, radio. Matt Berry can claim to have done all of the above – but he has also released four albums, including last year's psych-prog-folk opus, *Kill The Wolf*, and an app, 'Matt Berry Does Your Dirty Work'. The scope of

his achievements might appear impressive, but until now Berry is perhaps best known as a charismatic supporting player, notably as Douglas Reynholm, the lascivious head of Reynholm Industries in *The IT Crowd*. But Berry's situation changed last October – coincidentally, just a few weeks after the final episode of *The IT Crowd* aired – when he raised the curtain on his first lead role, a portly actor about town called Stephen Toast.

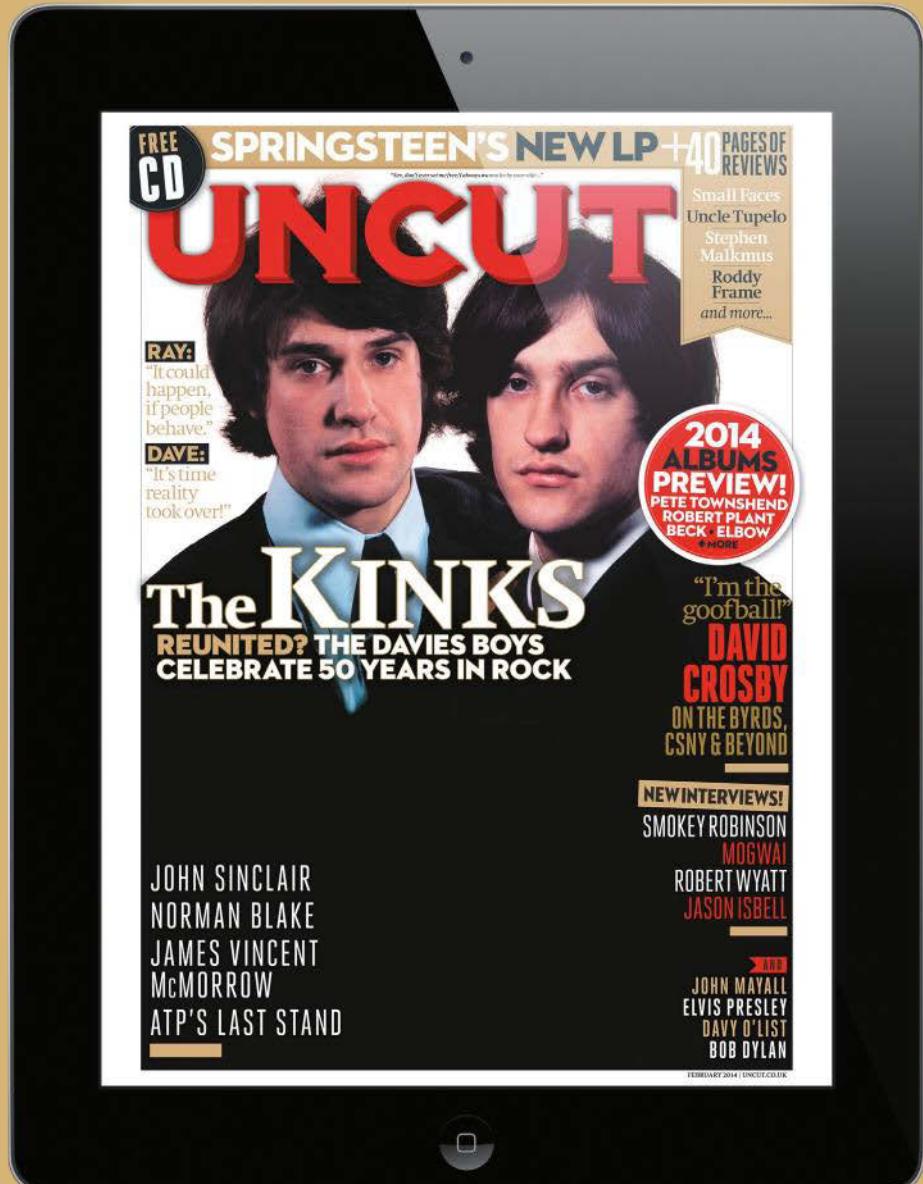
As with much of Berry's work, *Toast* begins with the voice – a rich, booming baritone that, in this case, is prone to overstressing syllables. "Forsyth", for instance, becomes "For-CITHE". Berry adds to *Toast* a fulsome moustache and a Dickie Davies-style grey streak to his hair, giving the visual approximation of a man who would be more comfortable stalking the members clubs of Soho in the early 1970s: he is fortunate, then, that his favoured drinking haunt is an exact replica of The Colony Rooms.

The set up is this. *Toast* is trying to right himself after a series of setbacks. In the morning, he undertakes voiceover work at an ad agency for clients who include the Royal Navy's submarine fleet ("Up periscope... down periscope... fire nuclear weapons"). In the evening, he appears onstage in a play so controversial strangers assault him in the street. In between, *Toast* inhabits a fantastical version of London – a place where the Nigerian Ambassador's daughter is transformed into a *Generation Game*-era Bruce Forsyth by a vengeful plastic surgeon. "Resembling Brucie from any era is bound to be traumatic for an African woman," we learn.

Berry (and co-writer Arthur Matthews) surround *Toast* with a similarly eccentric bunch – his agent, Jane Plough (Doon Mackichan), flatmate Ed Howzer-Black (Robert Bathurst) and his "nemesis", rival actor Ray Purchase (Harry Peacock). Polo necks and smoking jackets are the order of the day, and plots – such as they are – feature extreme hoarding, spontaneous human combustion, gay porn, Tom Baker-era *Doctor Who* and laxative ads. Even the names of supporting characters are ridiculous: Kikini Bamalam, Bezu Fafoon, Clem Fandango. A work of great imagination and absurdity, then.

**EXTRAS:** Pilot episode, commentaries, **7/10** featurettes. *MICHAEL BONNER*

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# ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES: END OF AN ERA 2

PONTINS, CAMBER SANDS, NOVEMBER 29-DECEMBER 1, 2013

Lots of “cry[ing] behind the door,” at the last radical jamboree. Shellac, Slint, Loop, Comets On Fire and The Pop Group stifle the tears...

**B**OB WESTON TAKES A moment's pause to gaze out over the packed ballroom. “I'm really trying to savour this,” he says, “because I know I'll never see it again.” Friday night, and in this somewhat decrepit holiday camp on the English south coast, Chicago's **Shellac** – a band not commonly thought of to have an especially soft centre – are feeling a little sentimental. Much of their set tonight sees them bring their clinical, dynamic hard rock to bear on music from their upcoming fifth album, *Dude, Incredible*, including an untitled track on which frontman Steve Albini ponders Einstein's theory of mass-energy equivalence and another, “Compliant”, that sees Weston drily considering the specifications of gas stoves. But

there's a sense of occasion in the air. Albini, Weston and drummer Todd Trainer wear matching tuxedo-design T-shirts, and when Albini snarls, “*This is a sad fucking song/ We'll be lucky if I don't bust out crying*,” as “Squirrel Song” takes its first faltering steps, that crack in his voice sounds genuine.

Tonight kicks off the very last of All Tomorrow's Parties' holiday camp festivals, which have taken place here at Pontins in Camber Sands, and at Butlins in Minehead since the year 2000. Earlier this month, Albini told *NME* that ATP has been “specifically responsible for making the festival circuit a lot more humane and a lot more hospitable”. Certainly, its innovations have been simple but effective. Instead of outdoor stages and waterlogged tents, there are self-catered chalets and wide, warm

ballroom stages with clear lines of sight. Instead of three A-list headliners and a lot of mid-afternoon filler, ATP offered lineups hand-picked by invited curators. A “no assholes” rule is largely adhered to. The result has been a festival of character. When Shellac curated in 2002, they brought with them Bonnie “Prince” Billy and Bill Callahan, but also Cheap Trick, reformed post-punks Mission Of Burma, and The Upper Crust, a Boston group playing AC/DC-style headbangers dressed in ermine gowns and powdered wigs.

Following Shellac tonight is another group close to Albini's heart: **Slint**. Hailing from Louisville, Kentucky, active between the years 1986 and 1991, they never played to large crowds, and split around release of their second album, *Spiderland*. Slint were tempted back

from the dead to curate an ATP in 2005, and tonight, reportedly, will be their last ever show. Guitarist David Pajo told *Uncut* earlier this year that they'd studiously recreated their '80s equipment, right down to the correct brand of guitar strings, and the gothic post-rock of “Nosferatu Man” and a wrenching “Washer” are recreated with eerie verisimilitude. As ever, they're light on stage presence, although vocalist Brian McMahan surprises everyone when he celebrates the end of his career in music with a dive into the crowd.

ATP's reliance on a reformation culture that can be perceived as nostalgic has traditionally rubbed some up the wrong way. On Thursday night, Mark Stewart of Bristol post-punks **The Pop Group** rattled out a string of Facebook posts in which he called ATP organiser Barry Hogan,



Strange conductor:  
Ethan Miller of  
Comets On Fire

among other things, "money-grabbing necrophiliac scum". By the morning after, though, all that remains is a curt apology and their Saturday night performance on the main stage sees Stewart, towel slung across his broad shoulders like a heavyweight slugger, save his ire for scorching runs through "Thief Of Fire" and "She Is Beyond Good And Evil". Following are Saturday and Sunday curators **Loop**, '80s droners apparently unfamiliar to many of the weekend's younger festival-goers (prize for Best Team Name in Sunday's pub quiz in on-site pub the Old Vic goes to 'Who The Fuck Are Loop?').

Regardless, the band themselves – looking rather smarter and modish than the vacant longhairs pictured in their early press shots – put on a bravura and very loud set, an hour-and-a-half of greyscale English ring-road motorik culminating in the Hawkwind-esque "Vapour" and a horizon-chasing take on Can's "Mother Sky".

Not all the weekend's heritage sets quite hit. **Michael Rother's** performance of the music of Neu! and Harmonia is neatly done, but a tasteful "Hallogallo" can't quite capture the original's fire-and-ice alchemy. **The Magic Band**, largely peopled by past Beefheart collaborators, feels a little tribute act, although to be fair they're not trying to be much more. "Through us, his music lives on," twinkles vocalist John "Drumbo" French. Still unusually contemporary sounding are **23 Skidoo**: the martial groove of "Coup" remains a thing of sublime menacing, its chilling *Apocalypse Now* sample – "GI, fuck you!" – roaring over tight drilled conga, while "Last Words" is spry punk-funk that sensibly foregrounds the funk.

There are younger bands, as well. **Crowdsurfers** tumble overhead as **Fuck Buttons** face one another over a table of keyboards and pedals and power through

**Comeback of the weekend is by Comets On Fire, who kick down the door to a psychedelic hurricane**

"Run To Your Mama" and "Stonegoat" moving to a groove that's alternately Led Zeppelin, Fela Kuti and Funkadelic. But it's left to **Mogwai**, curators way back in 2000, to bring affairs to a close, and come a climactic "Mogwai Fear Satan" there's not a dry eye in the house. As a curtain call, it's fitting and appropriate. And while this is the end, if ATP were to decide, five or 10 years hence, that it were time to get back together and do it all again, that would kind of make sense too.

LOUIS PATTISON

the buzzing noise crescendos of *Slow Focus*. **Dirty Beaches**, aka Montreal's Alex Zhang Hungtai, puts on an assured performance, stalking the stage menacingly to murky Suicide electronics. **White Fence**'s Tim Presley, dressed head to boots in black, offers a reverent take on '60s psych, occasionally leaving the mic to guitar solo like he's tommy-gunning his amplifier, while Leeds' **Hookworms** take a more circuitous approach, their pulsating organ jams resembling a sort of *Nuggets* motorik blasted out with punk vigour.

Comeback of the weekend comes courtesy of **Comets On Fire**, who pack the downstairs ballroom before kicking down the door to a psychedelic hurricane. These musicians played together on *Ascent*, the 2012 album by Comets man Ben Chasny's Six Organs Of Admittance, but this marks their first proper onstage collaboration for some five years. An extravagantly bearded Ethan Miller waves his arms like a demented conductor, Noel von Harmonson conjures strange roars over his Echoplex, and for just over an hour they're perpetually on the brink of boiling over, enervating and exhausting in equal measure. Next to that, the Sunday afternoon set from **Ty Segall** – backed by Charlie Moothart, White Fence's Sean Paul, and Traditional Fools bassist Andrew Luttrell – feels fairly serene, drawing heavily from his recent *Sleeper*. Still, even seated and acoustic, Segall plays from the gut, "Crazy" and "She Don't Care" as prickly and unsettling as anything in his catalogue.

Sweden's **Goat** are a Sunday highlight. Last year's debut album was titled *World Music*, and live they're an altermodernist gumbo, a gyrating carnival of psychedelic kaftan and ceremonial masques,

# Roddy Frame

THEATRE ROYAL, LONDON, DECEMBER 1, 2013

The Aztec Camera frontman recreates his classic debut, from pillar to post...

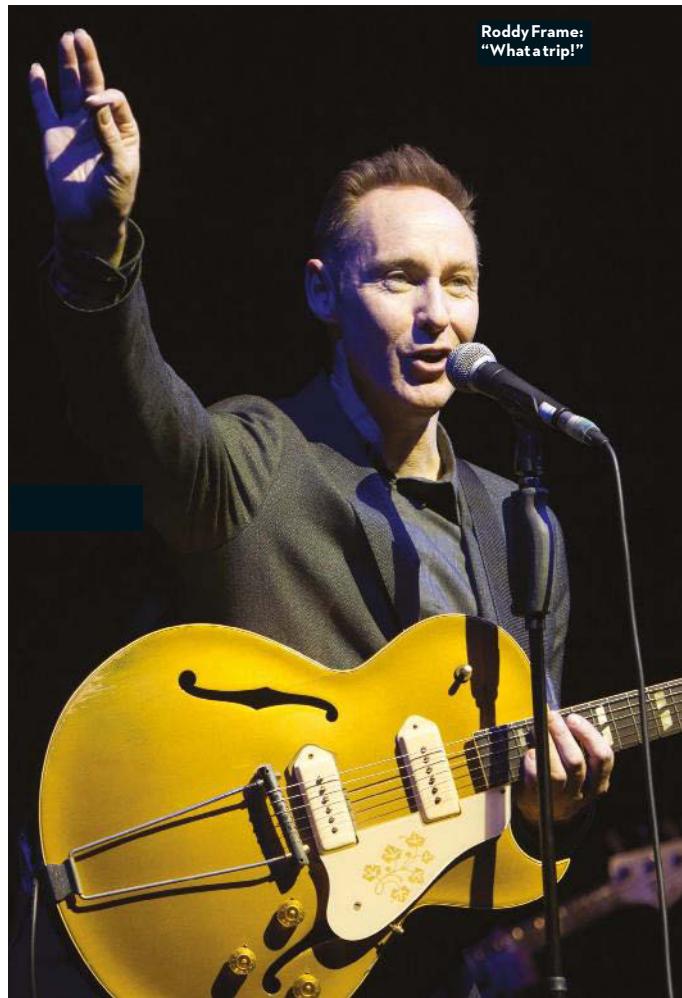
"I quite like this classic album lark," nods Roddy Frame approvingly, just a few songs into his run through Aztec Camera's pristine debut, *High Land, Hard Rain*. "But do I just have to play my own? Can I play *Rumours*?" As the enthusiastic audience at tonight's show will attest, to many *High Land, Hard Rain* is every bit the equal of Fleetwood Mac's '70s blockbuster. Released in 1983 when Frame was 19, its sunshine melodies and soulful heart survive re-examination 30 years on, as Frame plays it "in order, like on your cassette" at this, the first of three special shows celebrating its anniversary.

First, however, Frame treats us to a set encompassing hits and rarities, from the nimble fingerpicking of "How Men Are" and the flamenco flourishes of "Spanish Horses", to his first Postcard single "Just Like Gold" and "Green Jacket Grey", a legendary unreleased track from the early '80s, which offer yet more compelling evidence for Frame's songwriting gifts.

Dressed smartly in a black suit and shirt, Frame has retained his youthful looks – there might plausibly be a grisly portrait to be found in an attic somewhere in South Lanarkshire. Playing solo, and later accompanied by a full band, he also has a boyish exuberance, bounding round the stage, never quite staying still even when interrupting the set for an impromptu Q+A session with the audience. The rump of the show – the *High Land, Hard Rain* material – is still exquisite, whether it be the infectious opener, "Oblivious", the Spectorish "We Could Send Letters" or the soaring arpeggios of "Pillar To Post". "What a trip!" exclaims Frame as he finishes the set. The show ends neatly with a marvellous rendition of "Somewhere In My Heart". If tonight was about celebrating the past, here's hoping that Frame's new album – promised for this coming spring – adds some new jewels to his astonishing songbook. MICHAEL BONNER

GETTY IMAGES

Roddy Frame:  
"What a trip!"





A stellar band of Jansch fans:  
(l-r) Ralph McTell, Martin Carthy,  
Martin Simpson, Robert Plant,  
Jacquie McShee, Lisa Knapp,  
Bonnie Dobson, Beverley Martyn

# BERT JANSCH – A CELEBRATION

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, LONDON, DECEMBER 3, 2013

**Birthday blues:** the great and good remember a British folk genius

Bert Jansch was a folkie like no other. Steeped in tradition, he was also a fine songwriter and a dazzlingly original player who could make an acoustic guitar speak in tongues. His own voice was often a weary drone, but Jansch embodied all that was good about 1960s British folk, reawakening old songs, delivering new standards, crossing into blues and jazz – most notably with Pentangle – all with an understated generosity of spirit.

To celebrate what would have been Jansch's 70th birthday (he died in 2011), a stellar cast of fellow travellers have been assembled. **Ralph McTell, Martin Simpson, Wizz Jones and Danny Thompson** would have all been familiar with the setting, the Festival Hall stage turned into a facsimile of Soho folk haunt Les Cousins. Among younger acolytes are Jansch collaborators **Paul Wassif** and **Bernard Butler**, while **Robert Plant**, a lifelong Bert fan, lends his affable radiance.

McTell's opening rendition of a Jansch signature tune, "Anji", is

accomplished but a reminder that Jansch's intricate string-snapping style is irreplaceable. **Jacqui McShee**, a Pentangle companion, comes with a grim neo-jazz trio that drown her vocals. Donovan arrives unannounced, a ray of '60s sunshine with a sweet poem but a vague performance. Martin Simpson plays "Heartbreak Hotel", an epiphany moment for the young Jansch who glowers down from the back screen in black suit and white shirt.

**Neil Young** drops by on film to sing a coruscating "Needle Of Death", Jansch's anti-smack song, nearly busting out of the 'Cut Your Own Disc' booth in which Jack White had sealed him at Third Man, Nashville. A moment. Young

Shropshire singer **Mara Carlyle** provides another, daringly recasting Jansch's sullen "It Don't Bother Me" as a diva-esque blues.

On bass and cockney patter is double-bass supremo Danny Thompson, who plays Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat", a Bert favourite, as a labyrinthine bass solo, before joining a Pentangle quartet with Butler on guitar. Nice enough, but on the home movies behind, a notable absentee appears; Bert's former partner in rhyme John Renbourn, who is otherwise oddly unmarked.

Ever wondered who was the beatnik girl in the crashpad on the cover of 1966's *It Don't Bother Me*? Here she is now, **Beverley Martyn**, camping up a

bluesy rock-out of "When The Levee Breaks", with Butler quietly stealing the show. Paul Wassif is less well known, but his years at the fretboard of the master show in the sparkling pickings of "900 Miles" and "Build Another Band".

Bert's presence comes closer still with the duet of padrone **Martin Carthy** and rising star Lisa Knapp. Bert learned "Blackwater Side" from the free-spirited Anne Briggs, turning her a cappella song into a bravura guitar piece (lifted and uncredited by Page for Zeppelin's "Black Mountain Side"). Knapp's wandering, larkish voice is not unlike Briggs', and Carthy doesn't fluff a note among the arpeggios and bent ninths. Then he does, his reward for trying to read Bert's version of "Rosemary Lane" from an iPad instead of just singing his own estimable take on the old ballad. Carthy fluffing his lines – that is a moment, previously unseen.

A tawny Robert Plant saunters on and takes genial control, he and Butler brewing up a mid-Eastern version of "Go Your Way My Love", before Plant takes back seat on a fine duet with **Bonnie Dobson**, the creator of the much-covered "Morning Dew", from which the psych-folk juices dutifully flow. Over in the solo chair Wizz Jones lives up to his name with a flashy dash through Bert's "High Days", his left leg gyrating like a busted spring, before a happy ensemble finale of "Strolling Down The Highway" spells out; Remember Bert this way. **NEIL SPENCER**

**Neil Young**  
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film to sing  
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Death", Jansch's  
anti-smack  
song

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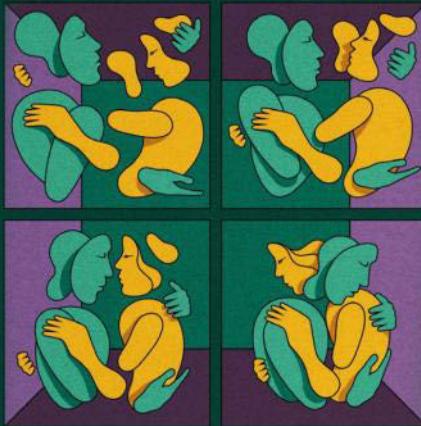
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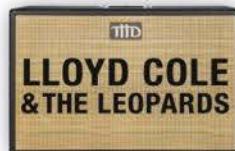
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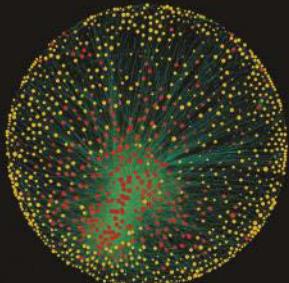
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22 YORK DUCHESS  
23 HULL WELLY  
25 LEICESTER O2 ACADEMY 2  
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28 SOUTHEND CHINNERYS

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16 <sup>th</sup>	<b>SHEFFIELD</b>	City Hall
17 <sup>th</sup>	<b>LIVERPOOL</b>	Philharmonic
20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>CAMBRIDGE</b>	Junction 1
21 <sup>st</sup>	<b>ST ALBANS</b>	Alban Arena
22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>BRIGHTON</b>	St Georges
24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>LONDON</b>	The Barbican
25 <sup>th</sup>	<b>CHELTENHAM</b>	Town Hall
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- 17 **MILTON KEYNES** The Stables
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# Books



Jimi Hendrix, Olympia  
Theatre, Paris, January  
1968 – “Too innocent  
to survive?”

**J**IMI HENDRIX didn't stick around long enough to write his own equivalent of *Life* or *Waging Heavy Peace*, so in the absence of such a memoir, producer Alan Douglas and his associate, the filmmaker Peter Neal, have created one. This book assembles into narrative form words written by Hendrix during his lifetime, and (more extensively) spoken to interviewers.

For Douglas, the eightysomething hipster who was Hendrix's friend and for years managed his legacy, this is business as usual. After Hendrix's death, Douglas assembled "new" releases from vault tapes, along the way tidying up with the help of session players. It wasn't a policy guaranteed to make him popular.

This volume, while apparently in the same eyebrow-raising vein of post-mortem productions, is actually all about transparency. The Hendrix here is undoubtedly as Hendrix was: a bashful, inarticulate, occasionally insightful hippy. He was 27 when he died, so this is not a work overflowing with self-knowledge, and nor is it revelatory – although Hendrix did think Spike Milligan "my sort of comedian". Instead, the book makes a virtue of Hendrix's guileless state. It reads a bit like a psychedelic *Candide* – its subject upbeat

about early indignities, chirpy about how "things really seem to be getting better", gratefully flung into Swinging London ("The Beatles and the Stones are beautiful cats..."). Outwardly he retains the same puzzled grin when his hopes and wishes for his records are ignored. On February 5, 1969, we find him waking too late from the dream and writing a note to his manager to discover where his earnings went. "I would like to check out moneys we may have coming in..."

Hendrix simply never built a persona to protect himself, and this spacey, self-mocking character was shark bait for the entertainment business. If Hendrix was too innocent to survive, a little of that private voice endures here.

JOHN ROBINSON

► UNUSUALLY, YOU MIGHT think, Alan McGee has arrived a little late for his own party. His label, Creation Records, has already been the subject of several books, a documentary and countless magazine articles. McGee, on the other hand, has never exactly been media shy. Indeed, you could be forgiven for wondering quite what McGee himself has to offer in a marketplace already bustling with accounts of his life and times. But **Creation Stories** is surely the insider's tale: McGee's life as McGee experienced it, from the housing estates of Glasgow to 10 Downing Street and beyond. As David Cavanagh wrote in his definitive Creation Records biography, *My Magpie Eyes Are Hungry For The Prize* (soon to be reprinted by Faber), "The key to understanding Alan McGee is not the years when he roared with vindication. It is the decades of disappointment and frustration that went before." Conspicuously, the early

sections of the book are among the most revealing, as McGee recounts his early, turbulent days in Glasgow's Mount Florida schemes. "The violence increased steadily from the time I was nine," he writes. Then, a few pages later: "At secondary school, I'd become more and more lonely, more depressed." An unhappy childhood subsequently shapes McGee's worldview, from the teenage scams he devises – stealing newspapers and selling them on – to his antics as Creation's majordomo ("a couple of years on the absolute razzle dazzle") which almost resolve themselves into an admission in the book's final pages: "I used to think, if you're not pleasing yourself, you're doing something wrong. I still do."

In between, what we get is a straightforward account of Creation and McGee's relationship with The Jesus And Mary Chain, The House Of Love, Primal Scream, My Bloody Valentine, Oasis, Sony and the decade he spent on drugs. Given how well-documented this period is, although the yarns are good, there are few fresh revelations here. The final third of the book finds McGee struggling with the moronic behaviour of Pete Doherty and Carl Barât, before morphing into a shadow version of *Hello!*, as McGee finds himself an increasingly prominent player on the celebrity circuit. "It was sometimes a bit rocky between us and the Blairs," he writes with apparent seriousness. Later, he tells us about meeting Lisa Marie Presley at an Independence Day party thrown by Joaquin Phoenix. Courtney Love introduces him to Paris Hilton. Kate Moss hooks him up with a great property lawyer. It is possible to find yourself applauding the life McGee has made for himself.

MICHAEL BONNER

## Reviewed this month...



Starting  
At Zero:  
His Own  
Story  
Jimi Hendrix  
BLOOMSBURY  
6/10

ALAN  
MCGEE  
Creation  
Stories  
Alan  
McGee  
SIDGWICK &  
JACKSON  
6/10

# Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...



## STAN TRACEY

Jazz pianist and composer

1926-2013

**I**T WAS DURING his time as house pianist at Ronnie Scott's club that Stan Tracey began recording *Jazz Suite Inspired By Dylan Thomas' "Under Milk Wood"*. A landmark piece in British jazz, released in 1965, compositions like "Starless And Bible Black" drew their power from the interplay between Tracey and his tenor saxophonist Bobby Wellins. A year later he was backing Sonny Rollins on the soundtrack of Michael

Caine's *Alfie*. The US giant, already convinced of Tracey's extraordinary ability after seeing him at Scott's, was heard to remark. "Does anyone here know how good he is?"

Influenced by the percussive melodies of Thelonious Monk and the lyricism of Duke Ellington, Tracey turned professional at 16. He toured America with Ronnie Scott before taking a job with Ted Heath's Orchestra in 1957. His role gradually extended to solo spots on both piano and vibes, his prowess enough to warrant his first album as bandleader, *Showcase*. By '59 he'd formed his own outfit, MJ6, and begun what turned out to be a seven-year tenure at Scott's newly opened mecca in Soho. While there he accompanied the cream of visiting US

jazzmen, among them Roland Kirk, Dexter Gordon, Freddie Hubbard, Zoot Sims and Stan Getz.

In 1973 he celebrated his 30th anniversary as a musician with a sell-out gig at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, before going on to form his own Steam label, through which he reissued "Under Milk Wood" and works like *The Salisbury Suite*, from 1978, and 1984's *The Poets' Suite*.

By the early '90s Tracey was recording for the Blue Note label and fronting a new quartet with Gerard Presencer. His legendary status was finally secured when he found himself the subject of a BBC TV documentary, *The Godfather Of British Jazz*, in 2003. His final album, *The Flying Pig*, arrived last September.

## CHICO HAMILTON

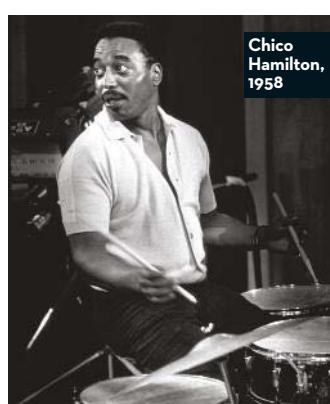
Jazz drummer, bandleader

1921-2013

THE COOL SOUND of West Coast jazz was largely defined by the work of bandleader Chico Hamilton. After starting out as sideman for Lionel Hampton, T-Bone Walker and Lena Horne, the LA-born

drummer joined Gerry Mulligan's quartet, which also included trumpeter Chet Baker, in the early '50s. By the middle of the decade, his own Chico Hamilton Quintet became leading players in the cool movement, which differed from East Coast jazz by way of its smooth intricacy and understated melodies. He recorded the first of over 60 albums as leader in 1955,

before disbanding the quintet in the mid-'60s to form a production company, specialising in music for TV and commercials. Hamilton explored free jazz and fusion throughout the '70s and '80s, forming bands like Players and Euphoria. He released *Revelation* in 2011, though his final album, *Inquiring Minds*, is due for release sometime in 2014.



# JUNIOR MURVIN

Reggae singer and songwriter

1946-2013

DESPITE AN impressive back catalogue, Junior Murvin will forever be remembered for his 1976 socio-political anthem, "Police And Thieves". The song eventually became a UK hit four years later, in the wake of its inclusion in the reggae film *Rockers* and its famous cover by The Clash. Murvin's first reaction to the latter's version, for which they turned his biblically allusive original into a revolution call after the Notting Hill riots, was to exclaim: "They have destroyed Jah work!" Paul Simonon later explained that The Clash's idea for reggae was to "put it on a number 31 bus and send it up to Camden".

Murvin began recording under the name Junior Soul for Sonia Pottinger's Gayfeet label in 1966, before cutting sides for Derrick Harriott's Crystal imprint. Two

of his standout tunes, "Solomon" and "Rescue Children", were later remade with famed producer Lee 'Scratch' Perry in the early '70s. His fruitful working relationship with Perry extended to "Police And Thieves", which they wrote together. Intended as a commentary on the fractious political climate in their native Jamaica, the song took on a more universal note when The Clash put it on their debut LP. Meanwhile, he and Perry released an album of the same name, on which Murvin was backed by Sly Dunbar, Boris Gardiner and Ernest Ranglin.

He went on to record with The Mighty Two (Joe Gibbs and Errol Thompson), most notably on the dancehall hit "Cool Out Son", and recorded '80s albums with Mikey Dread and Henry 'Junjo' Lawes. But he never repeated the international success of his signature tune. Murvin's final long-player was 1989's *Signs And Wonders*, helmed by New York producer Delroy Wright, after which he began issuing singles in Jamaica on his own label. The last single to appear, on Dubwise Productions, was 1998's "Wise Man".



Junior Murvin in the 1970s

## MARTIN SHARP

Artist, songwriter, *Cream* associate

1942-2013

MEETING ERIC CLAPTON at the Speakeasy club in 1967 was Australian artist Martin Sharp's entry into British pop culture. The lines from a new poem of his, hastily scribbled on a napkin, soon became the lyrics of Cream's "Tales Of Brave Ulysses", first released as the B-side of "Strange Brew". It was an instant friendship that led to them sharing a studio flat-cum-artists' colony on the King's Road and commissions for Sharp to design iconic covers for both *Disraeli Gears* and *Wheels Of Fire*. The latter won the New York Art Directors Prize for Best Album Design in 1969. He also created sleeves for Ginger Baker's Airforce, Mighty Baby, Jeannie Lewis and Tiny Tim, who became a lifelong friend. In London, alongside Richard Neville and Felix Dennis, Sharp also revived *Oz*, becoming art director and chief cartoonist for the underground magazine that he'd co-founded back home in the early '60s.

## DICK DODD

Standells singer and drummer

1945-2013

There was more than a little irony in the fact that "Dirty Water", the Boston-referencing song that now serves as the official theme of the Red Sox baseball team, was written

by a mugging victim of the city and recorded by a band from California. Taken from the album of the same name, "Dirty Water" was a huge US hit in 1966 for The Standells, whose singer/drummer Dick Dodd delivered it with a snotty venom every bit the equal of Tony Valentino's proto-punk riff. Dodd had initially joined after playing in LA surf outfit The Bel-Airs and Eddie & The Showmen. He quit the group in 1968, though he returned for various reunions in later years. His last Standells show was in 2012.

## LEWIS COLLINS

Merseybeat bassist, actor

1946-2013

THE STORY GOES that sometime in 1962, hairdresser and drummer Lewis Collins was urged by his fellow apprentice at Liverpool's Andre Bernard salon, Mike McCartney, to audition for his elder brother's band. Collins' response to a potential berth in The Beatles was unequivocal: "Are you mad? Don't you realise, in two years I could be earning £42 a week?" Instead, he quit hairdressing later that year and briefly became bassist for

another local combo, The Mojos, for whom he played on the singles "Goodbye Dolly Gray" and "Until My Baby Comes Home". Collins also played with The Renegades, The Eyes and The Georgians, before deciding to quit music altogether and set his sights on becoming an actor, finding fame in *The Professionals*.

## OLIVER CHEATHAM

R'n'B singer and songwriter

1948-2013

R'N'B SINGER Oliver Cheatham cut four albums and various singles throughout his 30-year career, but was best known for 1983's "Get Down Saturday Night". A Top 40 hit both here and in *Billboard's* R'n'B chart, it was also sampled on Room 5's 2003 UK No 1, "Make Luv". Two years earlier, Daft Punk had appropriated it for the *Discovery*



The Mojos, with Lewis Collins, far right

track "Voyager". Detroit-born Cheatham began with a number of groups, among them The Young Sirs and The Sins Of Satan, before securing a solo deal with MCA in the early '80s. He could never quite repeat the success of "Get Down Saturday Night", though he scored minor hits with "SOS", "Celebrate (Our Love)" and 1990's Jocelyn Brown duet, "Turn Out The Lights".

## RICHARD COUGHLAN

Caravan drummer

1947-2013

DRUMMER RICHARD COUGHLAN was forever grateful at being given the chance to join Canterbury prog-rockers Caravan. "The style of music is such that the drums are featured heavily, a bit like they were in Soft Machine," he once explained. "That's not the case in

most other bands, so I've always felt it gave me a real opportunity." The Softs connection was key. In 1966 Coughlan met Hugh Hopper, then bassist with The Wilde Flowers, and became fascinated with the technique of the group's drummer, Robert Wyatt. With the latter shifting to lead singer, Coughlan stepped in. After Wyatt left they evolved into Caravan, where he remained through their stop-start career until rheumatoid arthritis forced him to quit in 2005. **ROB HUGHES**

# Feedback...

Email [allan\\_jones@ipcmedia.com](mailto:allan_jones@ipcmedia.com) or write to: Uncut Feedback, 9th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Or tweet us at [@uncutmagazine](https://twitter.com/uncutmagazine)

## NOVEMBER SPAWNED A DANCER

Magnificent last issue. Brilliant Morrissey piece. I've just read a biography of Rudolph Nureyev by Julie Kavanagh. There are so many similarities between them, escaping, differing opinions of them, flowers, Oedipus complex plus loads of other things that made them both great and beautiful artists. Brilliant Nick Lowe piece, too. I remember his "Bowi" EP in response to Bowie's *Low* album. Best issue yet.

*Craig Feetham, Sheffield*

## A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

I've just been reading Allan Jones' article on Lou Reed in the current edition of your great mag. It made me laugh and understand him so much more than I had done previously. I also just wanted to mention a band I've been listening to recently, Field Music. I haven't noticed much coverage of this very good band. A friend suggested I try them out, and I was astonished by their sound and have purchased all of their albums. Their latest, *Plumb*, is a very good piece of music. I'd love to see something in *Uncut* about them. Thanks for giving us such a good read every month – can't wait for the next edition.

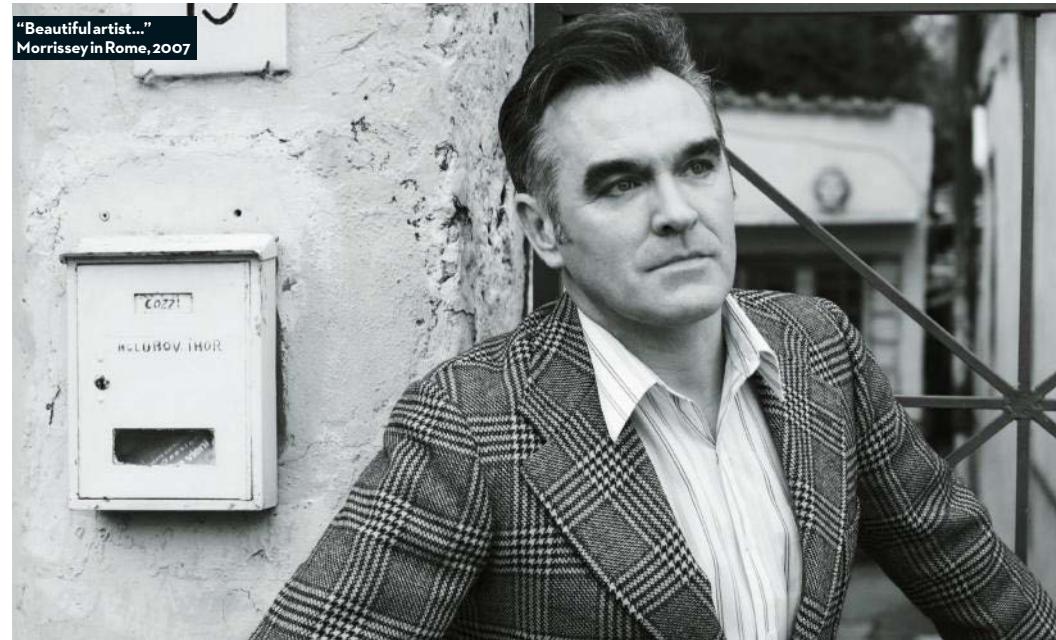
*David Stanton, Bridgwater Somerset*

...I just wanted to say Allan Jones' piece on Lou Reed in last month's *Uncut* made me want to completely reassess my opinion of him as having been an insufferable hard-on (although I remain as clear as ever on my love for his music). It sounded like Allan had a proper adventure and I envy him for having been in this journo game at a time when interviewing bands wasn't quite so PR-stymied and polite.

*Nathan Bevan, Cardiff*

...Having a day in bed with new *Uncut*. Just a quick line to say thanks for the Lou Reed story, best thing I've read in a long time. Really great. You've left the rest standing with that one. Enough to make me stop searching for Villagers' record in the year-end list. Keep on keepin' on.

*Alan O'Hare, via email*



## LOWE'S HEIGHTS

I thought I might add to your guide to the best Nick Lowe records by mentioning a very excellent release of Nick tunes covered by an eclectic range of artists, which I was lucky to fall over in a shop on a visit to Germany some years ago. It's called *Labour Of Love: The Music Of Nick Lowe*, and features Elvis Costello, Marshall Crenshaw, Levon Helm and Tom Petty. It makes a lie out of Nick's disservice to himself by his modesty in thinking that his output before *The Impossible Bird* phase had dropped off and was of lesser quality, when in fact there were great tracks such as "The Rose Of England" and "Cracking Up", plus a myriad of others all performed in rollicking style. Surely a measure of a great tune and a great writer is when it can sound as good if not better covered by someone else. Another myth is shattered by my fond memories of many a Nick gig – the most fascinating being Carlene Carter with Nick's then band, including Paul Carrack with Martin Belmont, in the Olympic Ballroom in Newcastle West, Ireland in the early '80s, where Nick was assisting the soundman. It might have been in the sticks, but I sure don't forget it!

*John Dundon, Limerick, Ireland*

## THE DISAPPEARING WOMEN?

Looking at the gallery of the 200 front covers of *Uncut* in your last

issue, there are five women featured, as opposed to the 195 men. On the front cover of this issue (Jan 2014) not one female musician is mentioned, yet the variety of women in music is undoubtedly the strongest it's been in recent years (Anna Calvi, Haim and PJ Harvey, to mention a few). Why are more female musicians not getting the representation they deserve in your magazine? There's only so many uncovered Beatles records your younger readers can take.

*Greta Gillham, Kent*

## ASHES TO ASHES

I loved the article about Bon Scott in Take 199. I missed a mention though of the Australian film *Thunderstruck*, which is a road movie about five friends from Sydney who are all big fans of AC/DC. After a near-death experience, the five make a pact that if one among them died they would be buried next to the grave of the late AC/DC frontman, Bon Scott. Seven years later, one of them dies and is cremated. Deciding to stick to the pact they made seven years ago, the remaining four embark on a road trip with his ashes to Fremantle (where Bon Scott's ashes were scattered) to scatter them over Fremantle Cemetery. I think it's a must see for (not only) Accadacca fans!

*Luc van Baalen, De Bilt, Netherlands*

## SPOONFUL OF TRUTH

Michael Bonner's review of Robert Plant's gig with the Space Shifters at the Royal Albert Hall on October 31, 2013 was very interesting. Sadly though, Michael's assertion that "Spoonful" was "first recorded" by Howlin' Wolf was (dare I say it?) a "howler". "Spoonful" was first recorded by Mississippi bluesman Charley Patton – himself a major influence on Howlin' Wolf – as "A Spoonful Blues" for Paramount Records on June 14, 1929, predating Wolf's version by almost 30 years. Wolf waxed "Spoonful" for Chess in Chicago in 1960. Just thought I would be pedantic!

*Tony Burke, Bedford*

## SHED SOME LIGHT

Thanks for such a great *Uncut* article and interview with Joni Mitchell. It was honest, fascinating and brilliant. I also enjoyed and generally agreed with your ratings on all of her albums. I see, though, you have omitted the album *Shadows And Light* (1980), a double live with the Pat Metheny Band and The Persuasions. It contains some great versions of her songs, though the jazzier tracks may not appeal to everyone. However, the sequence of "Amelia" running into "Pat's Solo" and then "Hejira" is particularly wonderful and this alone would merit a 7/10. Keep up the great work.

*Paul Wiehl, via email*





## MY LIFE IN MUSIC

# Norman Blake

The Teenage Fanclubber selects his favourite albums. Includes Alex Chilton, controversially...



### The Bill Callahan album I play the most

#### **Smog**

#### **A River Ain't Too Much To Love**

2005

Bill Callahan's an amazing songwriter and his lyrics are incredible – in very few words he says an awful lot. "The Well" is my favourite track on the album – just the idea of coming across a well [and shouting into it], "Fuck all y'all!" For some reason I just really connected with this album, although I think there are great things in all of his records.

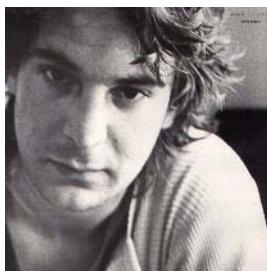


### A perfect album

#### **Scott Walker**

#### **Scott 4 1969**

I love all of his records, and again the lyrics are incredible – the opening song, "The Seventh Seal", is of course inspired by the Ingmar Bergman film. Wally Stott did some of the arrangements on the record, and it's beautiful, really lush production. Walker sold less and less copies of each of his '60s records, but they've really stood the test of time. *Scott 4*'s pretty much perfect, I think. An absolutely beautiful record.

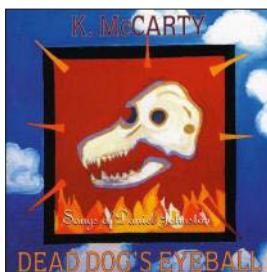


### My favourite Alex Chilton album

#### **Alex Chilton**

#### **Bach's Bottom 1981**

Alex was writing some great songs at this point, like "Take Me Home And Make Me Like It". He didn't think the Big Star stuff was up to much – he said to me, "Well, you know, there are a couple of good songs" ... We were lucky enough to play with him and got on really well. He showed me some great chords – I said, "That's a good chord, Alex," and he said, "Yeah, Carl Wilson showed me that one."

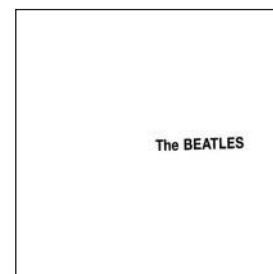


### A set of stunning covers

#### **Kathy McCarty**

#### **Dead Dog's Eyeball: Songs Of Daniel Johnston 1992**

She was Daniel's girlfriend, sort of – in Daniel's mind she was – I think they did date a little, but it became too much for her to deal with. On the early Daniel releases, the songs are incredible but a lot of people find it hard to get past the recording, 'cause they were recorded on a home tape recorder. So she's given the songs a more traditional arrangement and as they're such great songs, they sound amazing.

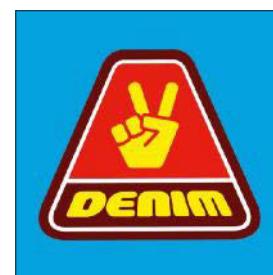


### My favourite Beatles album

#### **The Beatles**

#### **The Beatles 1968**

I was aware of The Beatles and I'd heard all the big singles, but 'The White Album' was the first of their LPs, as a young teenager, that I really listened to a lot. And I think it's still my favourite Beatles album, just 'cause there's such a variety of styles on it. It's got everything. The sound of the record is fabulous too, it just gives me a warm feeling. I never tire of hearing it, you're always hearing new things.

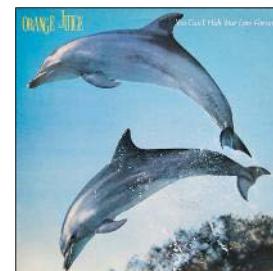


### The best 'pre-Britpop' album

#### **Denim**

#### **Back In Denim 1992**

This is, for me, the best record from the pre-Britpop period. "The Osmonds" resonated with me, because the way Lawrence remembers the '70s is similar to the way I do. It starts off as a nostalgic look back, but then it takes a real twist, and he starts singing about the Birmingham pub bombings, and Lesley Whittle, who was kidnapped by the Black Panther and murdered. It's a bit of a masterpiece.

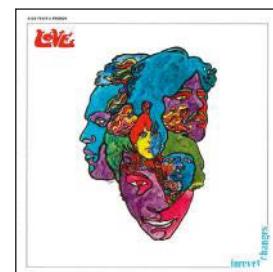


### The 'Rosetta Stone' for Glasgow bands

#### **Orange Juice**

#### **You Can't Hide Your Love Forever 1982**

I couldn't do this without picking the first Orange Juice record, the Rosetta Stone for most Glasgow bands. With post-punk, music had gone a bit dark, and then along came Orange Juice, saying, 'We love punk rock music, but we also like Al Green, Chic and Buffalo Springfield' – that really opened up a whole new world of music to me.



### An album I can play anytime

#### **Love**

#### **Forever Changes 1967**

I discovered Love through Orange Juice. The first group I was in, The Boy Hairdressers, were really influenced by Love. I actually got to meet Arthur Lee in Los Angeles probably 20 years ago now, with Kim Fowley, that was mind-blowing. This record from start to finish is just a joy. It's an album I can play anytime and it sounds as good as it did the first time I heard it. It still has that power.

Norman Blake and Joe Pernice's band, *The New Mendicants*, release their debut album for One Little Indian, *Into The Lime*, on January 20. They begin a UK tour in London on January 23

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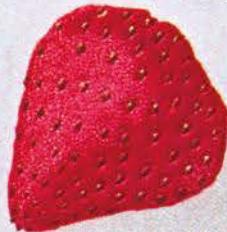
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