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WELLER

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Are we rolling?



DOLLY PARTON AND Harry Dean Stanton are both in this month's *Uncut*, a bit of a dream come true. I was scheduled to interview Dolly once myself, at a rodeo in Spokane, which seemed too good to be true. This was September 1978 and there was only one catch. As part of a junket put together by RCA, I'd have to go to Los Angeles first to also interview Al Stewart, the British songwriter who'd moved to California a few years earlier and has since had worldwide success with a number of hits including "Year Of The Cat".

What I don't mention to RCA is that I've played a small part in Al's exile. A few years earlier during a very stoned interview with Roy Harper we end up making a list of all the wimpy singer-songwriters we mutually abhor, the kinds who write really wet songs, that a passing BP Fallon then christens 'Drip Rock'. I then pen an article for *Melody Maker* taking the piss out of these strumming confessional troubadours, with Al coming in for some fierce treatment. He apparently reads the article and is so upset he packs his bags and heads for California, possibly without leaving a note for his mum.

Anyway, we're no sooner booked into the swanky Beverly Hills Hotel - the Hotel California of Eagles legend - when I begin to feel very ill, spending the night before we're due to drive up to Al's place in Laurel Canyon wracked by heavy-duty coughing, sweats and chills. The next morning I'm coughing blood to boot. Suave RCA press officer Robin Eggarr wonders if I'm actually well enough to interview Al. He doesn't believe me when I tell him I'm fine, but off we go, the UK press posse soon agog at the vertiginous beauty of Laurel Canyon, where Al lives in some splendour.

I'm the first one to Al's front door, a big oak thing with wrought-iron inlays. It's the kind of door you want to rap robustly, but all I can muster is a feeble tap. The door opens, however, and there's Al, looking tanned and wealthy.

"Hi, I'm Al," he beams, holding out a hand. I reach out to take it and am vaguely aware of the look of surprise on Al's face when I pitch forward, falling with a crash through his front door. I'm aware of footsteps running up the wooden stairs behind me, people leaning over me and then a terrible hush, a graveyard quiet, the keen anticipation of people somewhat regrettably preparing to deal with an unexpected tragedy, a colleague snatched from them by whim or feckless fate. I then pass out.

The next thing I hear is birdsong and lapping water. Am I in some benevolent ante-room of heaven, surrounded by fountains, seraphim and much cooing in the afterlife's verdant foliage? No, actually I'm in Al's garden, stretched out on a recliner by the side of his pool, sunlight coming through overhanging trees. Al arranges for me to see his own doctor, who tells me I have viral pneumonia. This means I'm pretty seriously fucked, can't travel, will miss the interview with Dolly and must take to my bed at the hotel.

After four or five days, I'm going out of my fucking mind and stroll down Sunset Strip to the Rainbow Bar & Grill, where I have my first drink in what seems a lifetime, following it with several more. By the time I leave I'm a little drunk. Out in the parking lot, there's dust in the air, headlights sweeping through the night and someone I immediately recognise standing there looking baffled and possibly tipsy.

Before I know it, I'm walking towards him, hand outstretched.

"Harry Dean Stanton!" I shout in a bizarre hail-fellow-well-met bellow, startling myself.

"Harry Dean Stanton?" he says, giving me a squinty little look. "Hell of a coincidence, kid," he says. "That's my name, too."

And with that, a car pulls up beside him, he fall backwards into the passenger seat and roars off into the night, one arm waving out the window as the car disappears around a corner and he's gone, baby, gone.



"Harry Dean Stanton. That's my name..."

Man Jones

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THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring JESSE HECTOR | GENE CLARK | MIKE COOPER | DYLAN HOWE



THE AMERICAN INVASION

Motown Junket!

A pop landmark! The Supremes, Miracles, Temptations and Vandellas hit the London tourist trail



MARCH 1965. The Tamla Motown Revue has just arrived in Britain. Soon, their serried ranks will embark on a tour encompassing 20 venues in 21 days. Some of the artists on the bill – Little Stevie Wonder, for instance, or Smokey Robinson & The Miracles – have not yet scored major British hits, and ticket sales are so poor that Georgie Fame will be drafted in as added star power.

For those who do see the shows, though, they are confronted with one of the most dauntingly talented tour packages ever assembled. Here

many of the players are caught sightseeing by Marble Arch. Stevie Wonder and the Earl Van Dyke Six are not pictured; The Temptations, in London on promotional duties and not part of the revue, are. Left to right: Rosalind Ashford and Betty Kelley (Vandellas), Martha Reeves, Claudette Robinson (The Miracles), Eddie Kendricks (Temptations), David Ruffin (Temptations, hidden), Smokey Robinson, Pete Moore (Miracles), Otis Williams (Temptations), Bobby Rogers (Miracles), Melvin Franklin (Temptations), Ronnie White (Miracles), Paul Williams (Temptations),

Florence Ballard, Diana Ross and Mary Wilson (Supremes).

The jubilant photo forms part of a new exhibition – ‘Classic Motown: The Invasion Begins!’ – of rare images from the EMI archives. Expeditions to London provide a recurring theme: from first missions in 1964, to The Jackson 5 mingling with other tourists outside Buckingham Palace in 1972.

Classic Motown: The Invasion Begins! is on show at Proud Camden until July 13, 2014. www.proud.co.uk

KARMA!

Raw power: Jesse Hector (right) with The Hammersmith Gorillas



IN SEARCH OF PUNK'S RAREST GORILLA...

A new film uncovers a lost '70s legend - JESSE HECTOR of THE HAMMERSMITH GORILLAS. "The Jam and the Pistols learned from us!"

ALTHOUGH HISTORY HAS him pegged first and foremost as the lead singer and focal point of '70s punk also-rans The Hammersmith Gorillas, Jesse Hector could be found on the fringes of the London music scene almost 20 years earlier. While still at school in the late-'50s, his skiffle band secured bookings at the fabled 2i's coffee bar in Soho and came close to joining the Joe Meek stable, his next group embraced R'n'B, while trio Crushed Butler owed a sizeable debt to the likes of the Edgar Broughton Band.

Hector's career may never have reached anything resembling dizzying heights, but his story is told with affection in the forthcoming documentary *A Message To The World*, named after the Gorillas' sole LP, released in 1978. Now 67, he's long since turned his back on the music business (he manages a cleaning team at the Royal Horticultural Society), but his records still fetch huge sums on eBay and attract new fans. In the film, collector Mark Lamarr describes him as a Forrest Gump figure, cropping up time and again in various "scenes".

The Gorillas actually pre-dated the recognised UK punk movement; their 1974 debut single was a cover of The Kinks' "You Really Got Me", which drew upon both mod and glam and



has been cited by members of the Sex Pistols and The Damned as a major influence. The band's striking image, not least Hector's impressively bushy sideburns, may have appeared cartoon-like, but the raw power of the music made them thrilling live.

"Jesse brings this real energy to everything he does," says documentary director Caroline Catz, best known as an actress in TV shows like *Doc Martin*. "It's physically exciting to listen to his music, it has a rough authenticity very few others achieved." However, plans to lure Hector out of retirement for the cameras proved to be too ambitious...

"The big thing for me was that I wanted to see him play again," says Catz. "We arranged a gig for him at a working men's club in Stoke Newington, so one part of the film would be the lead-up to that. As it turned out, the week before the show he decided he didn't want to do it, he didn't think he was ready enough to face the public, and it looked like we no longer had a film. But the more I thought about it, the more I realised that was the story."

"Jesse has always gone his own way, he's never done anything he wasn't 100 per cent happy with, which I think is quite rare."

Hector concedes that the decision to leave the nurturing Chiswick Records after two singles and sign with another label for the Gorillas' LP derailed his quest for stardom (he told *NME* he was the natural successor to Jagger and Hendrix).

"I never did anything I wasn't happy with, never worked with people I wasn't 100 per cent sure of," he says today. "I don't think I was difficult, I just had a clear idea of what I wanted, although at the time it turned out to be something very few other people wanted!"

"But I like to think we helped a lot of bands find their way. The Jam and the Pistols learned from us, they're nice enough to admit that."

TERRY STAUNTON

"I never worked with people I wasn't 100 per cent sure of"
JESSE HECTOR

A Message To The World screens at the East End Film Festival (June 14), Port Eliot Festival (July) and Festival Number 6 (Sept), before other screenings and a DVD release later in the year

A QUICK ONE

➤ "It would have been very upsetting to me to have found out it was a joke," **Cliff Richard** has told *Uncut*, regarding his support slot with **Morrissey** in New York (June 21). "His manager said that, 'He's a fan of yours.' I hear that a lot. People forget that we're a fraternity of singers. We don't see each other enough, or even know each other sometimes. But we respect what we do." At 73, Richard is also seeing the gig as a career opportunity: "Even though I've had seven Top 30 successes in America, only three of them were in the Top 10, so I'm kind of unknown there. For me it's fantastic."

➤ The curious afterlife of **REM** continues with news of a new Peter Buck band, uniting him with Corin Tucker of **Sleater-Kinney** and



Nirvana's Krist Novoselic. **Super-Earth** (above) played a debut show in Portland, April 30, and are reportedly recording an album. REM sidemen Scott McCaughey and Bill Rieflin also feature.

➤ And in this month's **Dylan** news, the great man's archive - more than 60 years' worth of music, photos, written documents, video, and film footage - has apparently been digitised by software company Bluewall Media. "It's a mind-blowingly unending river of material," says Bluewall founder Peter Agelasto. Perhaps best not to anticipate a public release, mind.

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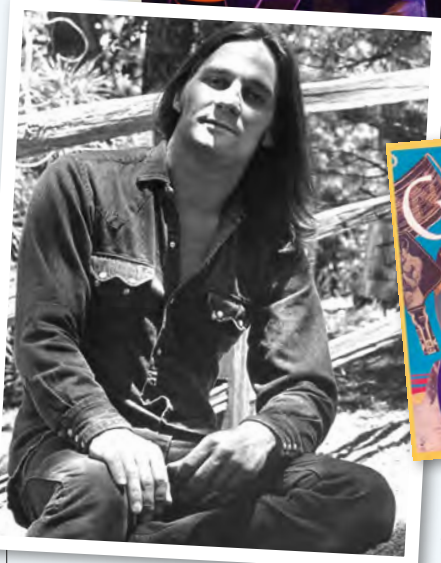
END OF THE ROAD

GENE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

BEACHHOUSE, DANIEL ROSSEN, ROBIN PECKNOLD and IAIN MATTHEWS bring their recreation of GENE CLARK's *No Other* to End Of The Road

"EVERYBODY HAD THIS insane feeling of joy. Partly it had to do with the fact that it wasn't our music, so there was no ego at the centre, no all-consuming 'me'. It was a very wonderful musical experience."

Alex Scally, one half of Baltimore dream-pop duo Beach House, is still marvelling at the communal euphoria that followed some unique US shows earlier this year. Along with bandmate Victoria Legrand, the multi-instrumentalist corralled a bunch of like-minded souls to tour the East Coast as The Gene Clark No Other Band, recreating the late singer's 1974 masterwork, *No Other*, in its entirety. The five gigs, one of which was reviewed in *Uncut* 203, were performed by an indie supergroup that had members of Wye Oak, Celebration and Lower Dens, alongside singers Robin Pecknold (Fleet Foxes), Daniel Rossen (Grizzly Bear), Hamilton Leithauser (The Walkmen) and ex-Fairport Convention man Iain Matthews.



"There were many driving forces behind it," explains Scally, whose first exposure to the starry country-gospel of *No Other* came courtesy of a vinyl copy belonging to Legrand's father. "The idea was generated between me and Victoria at least a year before it happened: this is such a crazy LP, what would it be like live? Gene had so many great records but you feel like *No Other* was his big moment. Yet no-one ever received it. I don't want to overstate things, but there's something heroic about recreating the LP, like we were doing something for the record that was



never done when it came out."

Despite its ornate production and ravishing songs, *No Other* bombed on release. And when the ex-Byrd died in 1991, aged just 46, it remained a neglected gem. "It's one of those multi-layered records that reveals itself over time," offers Rossen, who, along with Pecknold, was one of the first names on Scally's list. "There's a human and unhinged quality in Gene's performances that's so moving. In some ways it feels like it shouldn't work – it's too grandiose and produced, the lyrics are too out-there – but it still comes together beautifully. There's so much heart that it makes each song immediate and personal, and I think that's a big

reason it worked so nicely as a live performance."

For Scally, the 11-piece band's hardest challenge was capturing the "massive dynamic shifts" of *No Other*. "Alex wanted the music played note for note," recalls Matthews, the only member of the troupe who was a contemporary of Clark's. "The players had to immerse themselves in the production and figure out what everyone had played. The backing singers did a major job of recreating the vocals with power and grace. It was a fine opportunity to pay the ultimate tribute to the man and his music."

The Gene Clark No Other Band are due to make their UK debut at this summer's End Of The Road Festival in Dorset. Scally also reveals that it will be the final show of the No Other Band, "...despite having many offers. The US tour was unbelievable and around the time of our last show sales of *No Other* had gone up by an insane amount on iTunes. We were blown away. It was very gratifying to know that more people were finally getting around to hearing this amazing record." **ROB HUGHES**

UNCUT AT END OF THE ROAD FESTIVAL

FLAMING LIPS, WILD BEASTS and JOHN GRANT join us for 2014's finest festival

ONCE AGAIN, *UNCUT* is enormously proud to be involved with our favourite festival, End Of The Road. This year's cavalcade of delights takes place, as ever, at Larmer Tree Gardens in Dorset, between August 29 and 31. And besides the all-star recreation of Gene Clark's *No Other*, highlights include headliners **The Flaming Lips** and **Wild Beasts**, **John Grant**, **St Vincent**, **Yo La Tengo**, **Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks**, **Tinariwen**, **White Denim**, **Gruff Rhys** and the sainted **Richard Thompson**.

One of the reasons we love End Of The Road so

much is that their taste for newer bands is so close to our own, hence this year's lineup featuring **Robert Ellis, Unknown Mortal Orchestra**, **Woods**, a first British appearance from **Houndstooth**, **Ezra Furman**, **Alice Boman**, **Arc Iris**, **Kiran Leonard** and **Samantha Crain**. Add in the idiosyncratic likes of **Mark Kozelek**, **The Felice Bros**, **John Cooper Clarke**, **tUnE-yArDs** and outsider art legend **Lonnie Holley** and, hopefully, you can understand the fuss. Weekend camping tickets for £170 are still on sale; for full details, have a look at www.endoftheroadfestival.com.



Headliners The Flaming Lips



Questing spirit: shirt and guitar collector Cooper

REDISCOVERED!

“What can you do on this? Feel free!”

He could've been a Rolling Stone. Instead, folk maverick MIKE COOPER's career took a radically different path...

GUITARIST MIKE COOPER is winding back his memory, recalling how a young lad from Reading, kicking around in the early '60s, would spend his time in the big smoke. The co-ordinates are Ealing, London, where Cooper is hanging out at Alexis Korner's ABC Club. “It was where the ‘blues clan’ would gather once a week,” he says, after being asked about his encounter there with a formative R’n’B gang. “It was mooted that Mick Jagger was looking for a guitarist who could play slide. I could, but their music was going to be rooted in Chuck Berry and I didn’t care to do that and it never went further.”

Though a good story, this proto-Stones encounter is just a blip in a five-decade career, during which Cooper has scrolled through genres. Recently he's been collaborating with Necks pianist Chris Abrahams, and is readying a joint album with guitarist Steve Gunn; you can

also hear the questing spirit that's led to such juxtapositions on Cooper's 1970s albums, titles like *Trout Steel* and *Places I Know*. They've been out of reach for decades, but reissue label Paradise Of Bachelors is now shepherding *Trout Steel* back to the shelves, with subsequent albums *Places I Know* and *Machine Gun Co.* – the latter also the name of Cooper's pioneering folk/jazz/improv outfit – restored to their originally planned double-album status (reviewed p90).

These exceptional LPs reflect the freedoms and open-minded spirit of the times. Connecting with producer Peter Eden on 1968's *Oh Really!?* – “an LP of acoustic rural or country blues” – Cooper suggested to the producer that they try his “more personal songwriting”. Cooper: “I was impressed with *Astral Weeks* and its spontaneous feeling of improvisation. I was also aware of the South African contingent of ex-pat musicians already

HOW TO BUY... MIKE COOPER

PLACES I KNOW/ THE MACHINE GUN CO., 1971/1972

(REISSUED PARADISE OF BACHELORS, 2014) Summarises the breadth of Cooper's 1960s and 1970s explorations in potent small-group format. Stinging playing and extended forms take the listener through blues, folk, into thorny, wild free music. **9/10**

RAYON HULA

CABIN, 2004 (REISSUED ROOM40, 2010) Tribute to exotica king

Arthur Lyman and Hawaiian shirt populariser Ellery Chun – Cooper's a collector – *Rayon Hula* is a lovely, woozy set of Pacific(a) driftworks. **9/10**

BEACH CROSSINGS - PACIFIC FOOTPRINTS

RAI TRADE, 2008 A rich, compelling radio broadcast, for a large cast of players, which has Cooper exploring the Colonial presence in the Pacific, closing with a devastating reading of Dylan's “Masters Of War”. **8/10**

living in London, having seen Chris McGregor's band at Ronnie Scott's Old Place.”

After hooking up with McGregor's double bass player Harry Miller on second album *Do I Know You?*, Cooper started really stretching out with *Trout Steel*, which he explains was “me exploring not only my songwriting but what areas of music I could get people to listen to, and also get people to play with me, with just verbal instructions, or simply me saying, ‘What can you do on this? Feel free.’” The freedoms largely implicit on *Trout Steel* and *Places I Know* then become explicit on *Machine Gun Co.*, one of Cooper's landmark LPs, and a completely blitzing rapprochement of folk, blues, free improvisation and avant-garde tactics.

Indeed, *Machine Gun Co.* is named after titanic sax player Peter Brötzmann's classic free jazz set of 1968, *Machine Gun*. “I was on tour in Belgium and had taken guitarist/singer Bill Boazman to do some acoustic folk club gigs,” Cooper recalls. “One night we were in Ghent with nothing to do, and we passed a library with a sign advertising ‘free jazz’... by the Globe Unity Orchestra, I think. It was extremely loud and exciting. We sat at the back pinned to the wall as a gigantic wave of sound just surfed over us.” JONDALE

Trout Steel and *Places I Know/Machine Gun Co* are reissued by Paradise Of Bachelors on June 17. Mike Cooper & Steve Gunn's *Cantos De Lisboa* is released by RVNG Intl on June 24

AND ON SAXOPHONE... BOBBY KEYS

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

➤ Most famous for having played with The Rolling Stones since 1970, Texan saxophonist Bobby Keys started his career aged 15 playing with Bobby Vee. He can be seen in *Cocksucker Blues* throwing a TV out of a hotel window with Keith Richards, and can be heard narrating his early life in Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs And Englishmen* film. He played on John Lennon's albums, took part in his infamous ‘Lost Weekend’ and contributed to the last known Lennon & McCartney recording session in 1974. He has also appeared on albums by Ringo Starr and George Harrison.

KEY SESSIONS: The Rolling Stones' *Let It Bleed*, *Sticky Fingers*, *Exile On Main Street*, *Goats Head Soup*, *Emotional Rescue*, George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*, John Lennon's *Some Time In New York City*, *Walls And Bridges* and *Rock 'N' Roll*, Keith Richards' *Talk Is Cheap*, Ringo Starr's *Goodnight Vienna*, Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs And Englishmen*, Chuck Berry's *Hail! Hail! Rock'n'Roll*, the Faces' *Long Player*, Dr John's *The Sun, Moon & Herbs*, Warren Zevon, Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Second Helping*, and Graham Nash's *Songs For Beginners*. PHILKING



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THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

THE THE

Soul Mining SONY

A welcome 30-year anniversary reissue for Matt Johnson's still somewhat intense masterpiece. Altogether now: "I'm just a symptom of the moral decay that's gnawing at the heart of the country..."

REIGNING SOUND

Shattered MERGE

Greg Cartwright and his latest accomplices move away from garage rock and towards something more soulful and considered. Recorded in the Daptone Studios, Brooklyn.

SAM LEE & FRIENDS

More For To Rise EP NEST COLLECTIVE

A fresh clutch of old traveller and gypsy songs, retooled by one of UK folk's premier collectors and innovators.

WHITE FENCE

For The Recently Found

Innocent DRAG CITY

Tim Presley (left) takes his psych flashback project into a studio for the first time. Ty Segall produces. "Lucifer Sam" vibes proliferate.

HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

Brother Do You Know The Road? MERGE

A rich, bluesy prelude to the forthcoming MC Taylor album, *Lateness Of Dancers*. Heavy "Knocking On Heaven's Door" intimations, pleasingly.

LEWIS

L'Amour LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Yet another intriguing discovery from Light In The Attic: an entirely mysterious Canadian album from 1983, redolent of Arthur Russell at his most ethereal.

JAMES BLACKSHAW

Fantômas TOMPKINS SQUARE

A new score for Louis Feuillade's 1913 silent movie, provided by the increasingly expansive British guitarist/composer.

OOIOO

Gamel THRILL JOCKEY

This month's finest gamelan-inspired noise jam by a member of the Boredoms. Spiritually bracing.

CURTIS MAYFIELD

Superfly CHARLY

Another upgrade for the indestructible 1972 classic. 2CDs, involving demos, outtakes, anti-drug radio ads, etc.

MONTY PYTHON

Lousy Song VIRGIN

1980 outtake from Graham Chapman and Eric Idle, previewing July's reunion shows. As bad as the title suggests, of course.

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

Dylan Howe: "Prince and Stevie Wonder are pretty much the only heroes left on my bucket list..."



I'M NEW-ISH HERE

Dylan Howe

This month: the Wilko Johnson and Blockheads drummer who's reinvented Bowie's Berlin trilogy as jazz

THERE AREN'T MANY musicians with a CV to match the drummer Dylan Howe. He's just played on a chart-topping album with Roger Daltrey and Wilko Johnson, with his old pal Wilko

describing him as "the best drummer I've ever worked with". He spent 13 years with the Blockheads ("He's a funky little bastard," said Ian Dury), and has played extensively with the likes of Paul McCartney, Ray Davies, Damon Albarn, Nick Cave and David Gilmour – not to mention his father, the Yes guitarist Steve Howe.

In fact, David Bowie is one of the few rock legends with whom he's not worked. "Him, Prince and Stevie Wonder are pretty much the only heroes left on my bucket list," he laughs. "Bowie in particular, because I've been obsessed with his music since I was about 11."

Specifically, it's Bowie's Berlin canon that has been obsessing the 44-year-old Howe for a while, leading to *Subterranean*, a Kickstarter-funded album comprising nine radical reworkings of instrumentals from *Low* and "Heroes". "When I tell people I've been working on an album of Bowie covers, they assume I'm doing swing versions of 'Ziggy Stardust' or something, which sounds like a bloody awful idea. But the idea came from listening to 'Warszawa' and thinking, this would make perfect material for improvisation.

"Apparently, when Bowie first played these instrumentals at the start of his gigs, crowds hated them! But the more you immerse yourself in this music, the layers of complexity emerge."

Howe first performed versions of tracks from *Low*

and "Heroes" at the 2007 London Jazz Festival featuring a string section and Hugh Cornwell from The Stranglers on vocals. "It's changed a lot since then," he says. "It's a smaller group, with more electronics. It took a long time to get permission – the moment you start to radically change the source material you're covering, you need authorisation

from the artist. Luckily it appears that Bowie liked what I sent him."

Some of the versions occasionally move into the hard bop territory in which Howe's jazz quintets have previously specialised, but most of them, including "Art Decade" and "All Saints", recall the glacial, ambient jazz of ECM artists such as John Surman or Jan Garbarek.

"It's not blues," he says. "In some ways it's more similar to an album I recorded in 2010 with pianist Will Butterworth, where we reworked themes from Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring*. You have to understand the architecture of the music before you can start to redesign it."

Does he approach jazz and rock differently? "Ultimately it's about working with personalities. There's a snobbery among some jazz

musicians who regard rock as a lower art form, but that's a mistake. The brush strokes are broader but the art requires just as much attention: you work with simplicity, momentum and repetition, which can make things harder. One key area jazz people often ignore is texture and timbre. That's part of the reason why this Bowie project took so long. I needed to do justice to the textures and voicings before I could do my own thing with them." **JOHN LEWIS**

Subterranean is out on Motorik Recordings, July 7



I'M YOUR FAN

"Dylan Howe makes it new. The way he plays it, it's as if bebop were still hot and wet from its Harlem womb – he plays time from the heart."

Robert Wyatt

NEIL YOUNG



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1 DAVE ALVIN AND PHIL ALVIN *I Feel So Good*

Nearly 30 years on, it's not just the two fractious Blasters brothers who are reunited in the studio here, but their old pianist Gene Taylor. Taylor is a critical presence on "I Feel So Good", from their new album of Big Bill Broonzy covers, as he honky-tonks around Dave Alvin's needling guitar solos. Phil Alvin, meanwhile, is a magnetically revitalised frontman: "When I get high now baby/Feel like floatin' round in the wind!"

2 THE FELICE BROS *Lion*

After the musical adventures of last album *Celebration, Florida*, the Felices return to the secure embrace of Americana on *Favorite Waitress*. Hence "Lion", an estimably rowdy bit of Catskills folk-rock, with enough fiddle and accordion to ensure your next barn-raising goes with a swing.

3 STRAND OF OAKS *Goshen '97*

Tim Showalter's music normally fits more or less neatly alongside the likes of Jason Molina and Phosphorescent. "Goshen '97", though, is a homage to the music of his youth, "singing Pumpkins in the mirror... before I was fat, drunk and mean." Impressively, the Dinosaur Jr-style shredding is contributed by J Mascis, of all people.

4 WOVENHAND *Good Shepherd*

Strand Of Oaks rolls neatly into this similarly rocking, even more intense new one from David Eugene Edwards, no stranger to these comps with both Wovenhand and previous band 16 Horsepower. Thunder, brimstone, Biblical incantations, and a faint



whiff of early Bunnymen proliferate. Sinners, at this point, may realistically consider repenting.

5 SAM BROOKES *Crazy World And You*

Notionally a product of the British folk circuit, Brookes is clearly aiming for more ethereal frontiers on his second self-released LP, *Kairos*. Like many before him, Brookes is moving in Jeff Buckley and Bon Iver territory on "Crazy World And You". Unlike most of those aspirants, though, he sounds uncommonly at home there.

6 THE ANTLERS *Palace*

Speaking of Bon Iver, there's a touch of Justin Vernon's discreet grandeur to this highlight of the fourth Antlers album, *Familiars*, as horns, pianos and simmering atmospherics are neatly layered beneath Peter Silberman's androgynous vocal.

7 AMEN DUNES *Splits Are Parted*

Previous releases by New Yorker Damon McMahon have tended towards the obliquely lo-fi. Third album *Love*, however, imbues his shimmering dronepop with a new clarity and focus. Members of Godspeed You! Black Emperor provide auspicious backup.

8 VIKESH KAPOOR *Ode To My Hometown*

A social realist troubadour in the grand tradition of Woody Guthrie, Kapoor comes from Pennsylvania, but has had the good fortune to fetch up in Portland: bits of The Decemberists

contribute to the chamber-folk richness of "Ode To My Hometown".

9 LEE FIELDS & THE EXPRESSIONS *Magnolia*

JJ Cale's "Magnolia" proves to be an ideal slow-burn showcase for Lee Fields, a veteran soulman enjoying a late-flowering career surge in the vein of Charles Bradley. Pedal steel and Hammond augment the heavily-lidded Southern vibes. Elsewhere on *Emma Jean*, the ubiquitous Dan Auerbach lends a hand.

10 CARA DILLON *The Shores Of Lough Bran*

Over the past two decades, Dillon has established herself as one of the most consistent voices on the British folk scene. She hasn't, though, released an album since 2009. *A Thousand Hearts* showcases an enduringly graceful artist, not least on this windswept traditional, arranged by Dillon and husband Sam Lakeman.

11 BROKEN RECORDS *Winterless Son*

More strident fare here, from the epically inclined Edinburgh band Broken Records. Comparisons to fellow Scots Frightened Rabbit seem salient, though disenchanting. Fire fans, who preferred their earlier Springsteen phase, may well find succour in "Winterless Son", too.

12 ETHAN JONES *You Changed*

Johns may have a serious profile as the producer of Kings Of Leon, Laura Marling and Paul McCartney, among others. But, as last year's *If Not Now*

Then When? proved, he's also a handy songwriter himself. Here's a key track from *The Reckoning* (our Americana Album Of The Month, see page 70) – produced, you'll note, by one of his old charges, Ryan Adams.

13 THE RAILS *Panic Attack Blues*

It's something of a challenge to avoid mention of Richard & Linda Thompson when discussing new Island signings The Rails: Kami Thompson is their daughter, and her duetting partner is also her guitar-wizard husband, James Walbourne. Nevertheless, the comparison doesn't diminish the power of this track, produced as it is by Edwyn Collins.

14 STURGILL SIMPSON *The Promise*

From Nashville, Simpson is rapidly evolving into one of Americana's most imaginative and authoritative new stars. "The Promise" comes from his second LP of 2014, *Metamodern Sounds In Country Music*, a cosmically inclined take on the outlaw tradition. And while it may sound like a George Jones heartbreaker, the song's provenance is infinitely stranger – a 1988 US hit for forgotten British synthpoppers When In Rome, no less.

15 SHARON VAN ETTEN *Your Love Is Killing Me*

A showstopping finale from the brilliant Van Etten's recent fourth, *Are We There*. "Your Love Is Killing Me" is the point where Van Etten's subtle study of a disintegrating relationship transforms itself into a widescreen melodrama. An exceptional song.



The Rails



— *Meet* —
THE BOSS

By day, he makes premium beer.

By day, complex recipe.

By day, smooth.

By day, glasses.

By day, he is The Boss.

By night, he makes premium brassieres.

By night, complex embroidery.

By night, supportive.

By night, cups.

By night, he is also The Boss.

He has a nap at lunch.

IMPOSSIBLY SMOOTH
PREMIUM BEER

COBRA

live smooth

IMPOSSIBLY SUPPORTIVE
PREMIUM BRASSIERES

BRA CO

AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Harry Dean Stanton

Interview: Michael Bonner
Photograph: Michael Buckner

The actor and musician on Buddhism, Dylan, Peckinpah, Nicholson, Hitchcock, Brando and chocolate bunnies! "I think we got enough, don't you?"

A

FTER MORE THAN 250 roles, Harry Dean Stanton has all but retired from the movies. These days, it seems Stanton – an indelible, laconic presence in films like *Cool Hand Luke*, *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*, *Wild At Heart*, *Alien*, *Repo Man* and *Paris, Texas* – spends much of his free time watching TV. "I'm addicted to the game show channels," he reveals. "I hate the hosts and the people. I just like

the questions and answers." But cinema's loss is music's gain: aged 87, Stanton has recorded his debut album, a collection of covers of songs by Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson and Fred Neil which accompanies a new documentary about the actor, *Harry Dean Stanton: Partly Fiction*. As a singer, Stanton has regularly performed at some of LA's most colourful watering holes. He lists Pavarotti and Patsy Cline as his favourite voices, while conversation is peppered with references to musicians he has befriended through the years. "I love Dylan's work, and Kristofferson," says Harry Dean. "I've sung with both of them, in fact. Tom Waits, we're good friends. He's gnarly. He's a fine poet. James Taylor's song, 'Hey Mister, That's Me Up On The Jukebox'? He borrowed my guitar to compose that song."

After turning the sound down on his television, Harry Dean focuses his attention on your questions. "I'm sure there's dozens more things we could talk about," he says, after a lengthy, digressive chat that's taken in Brando, Jack Nicholson, Leon Russell and Alfred Hitchcock. "But I think we got enough, don't you?"



good so I knew then that's what I wanted to do. I quit college and went to the Pasadena Playhouse. This was 1949. I was trained on the stage, but I prefer films.

You were in the Navy during WWII. What do you remember about the battle of Okinawa?

Stephen Phelan, Buenos Aires
I was a gunner on an anti-aircraft gun, 40mm. I was the pointer. A Japanese bomber came over one night, 30,000 feet up, totally out of range, the whole harbour opened up shooting at it. I radio'd into the bridge, they didn't know what the fuck they were doing. So I held my fire and later got a commendation – cool under fire – when I got into the Navy Air Corps at the end of the war. But I dropped out. I didn't want to do any more military. Suicide planes were coming in. One of them came right at our ship one time. They'd come in with the sun, very low, a few hundred yards away and their nose dived straight up in the air and slid back down in the water. Someone had hit it, thank God.

What advice would you give your 18-year-old self?

Peter Ross, Glasgow
Study up on the Eastern religions. They're the only ones that are realistic. There's no answer, see. Daoism and Buddhism are the exact same religion. And also the Jewish Kabbalah. They all say the same thing. The word 'Dao' means 'the Way', 'the Nameless'. You can't see it, smell it, touch it, or anything, but it's there. There is no answer. That's what Buddhism says. The Void, oblivion, no answer. To be in that state is an enlightened state.

What are the best and worst things about having Jack Nicholson as a housemate?

Becki, Harrow, Middlesex
It was mostly good. Jack is a very strong-minded person. Nothing was bad, actually. We're still very close friends. He gave me advice in *Ride In The Whirlwind* [1966], he said, "Harry, I want you to do this part, but I don't want you to do anything. Let the wardrobe do the character, just play yourself." ➔

STAR QUESTION



Harry Dean, do you like chocolate bunnies?

David Lynch

Chocolate bunnies?

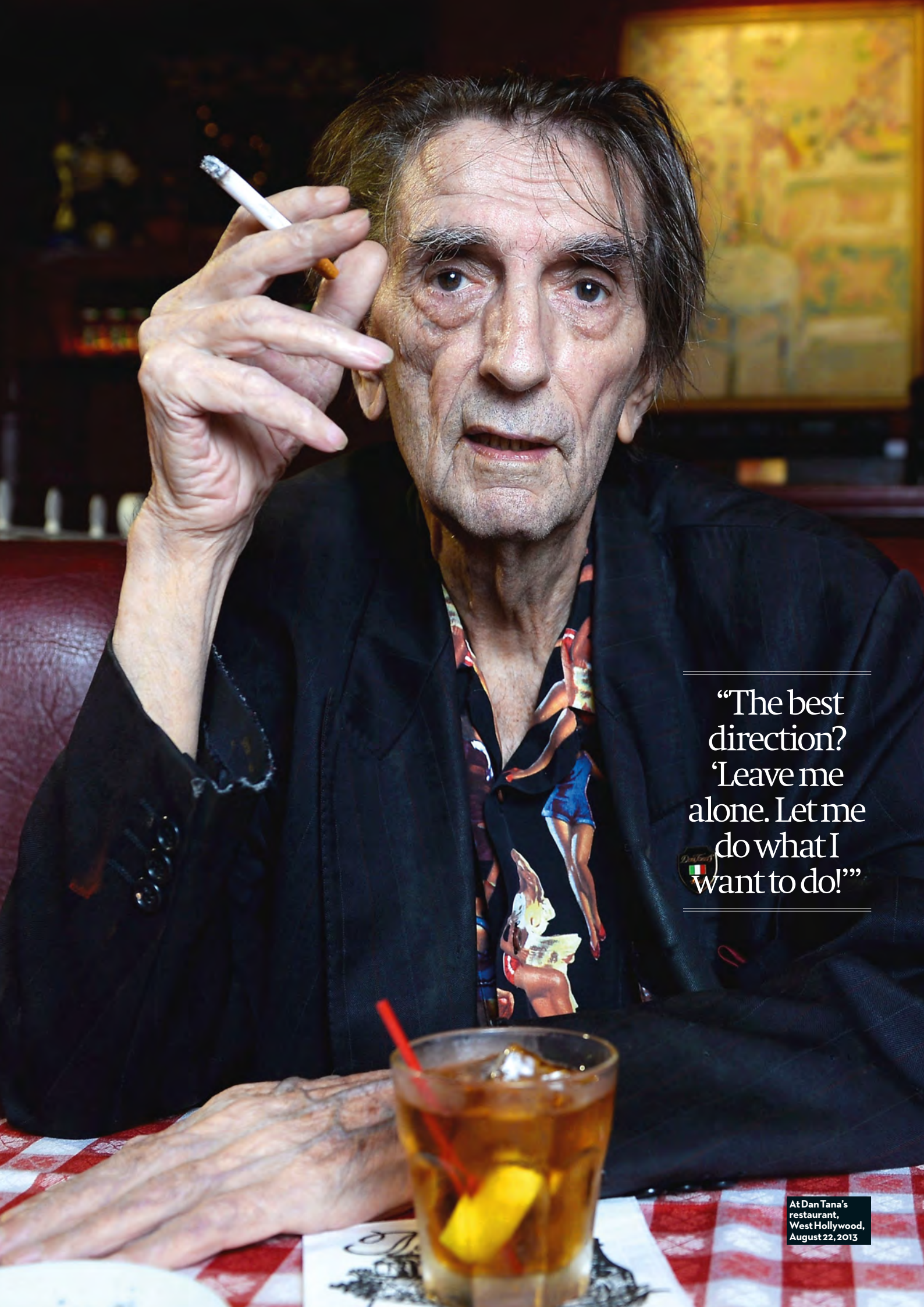
Of course. David is a big fan of mine. He first got in touch with me to play the part Dennis Hopper ended up playing in *Blue Velvet*. Because I play myself as much as I can, I didn't want to go there emotionally, I guess, killing people and stuff. I told him to get Dennis. Dennis had dropped out at that time. He was down in New Mexico or somewhere, I think. When we did *The Straight Story*, David called me and said, "I want you to do the last scene in the movie and I want you to cry." He had me

read a letter from Chief Seattle to the President in the 1800s. Chief Seattle was the first Indian to be put on a reservation. He wrote this letter: "How could you buy or sell the sky." It's beautiful. Anyway, it makes me cry. So I read that. And cried.

Growing up in Kentucky in the late 1920s/1930s, did you get to see many movies as a kid?

Mark Barclay, London

Not a lot. As I grew up, I saw more and more. The first film I ever saw, I think my mother took me to it, was called *She Married Her Boss*, with Melvyn Douglas. Why did I go into acting? I did a play in high school, then I did a play in college called *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw. I played Arthur Doolittle with a Cockney accent. I had a good ear for dialects and my speech was



“The best
direction?
‘Leave me
alone. Let me
do what I
want to do!’”

At Dan Tana's
restaurant,
West Hollywood,
August 22, 2013

➤ That was the start of my whole approach to acting. How did we come to live together? He was living with Bob Towne, the writer. Towne had these two big, mangy dogs... Afghans? Jack called me and said, "Harry, Towne's dogs have eaten the drapes half way up the wall, can I come stay with you?" I lived in a little adjoining house down the bottom of Laurel Canyon and then we rented a house way up towards the top on Skyline Drive. We lived there for two and a half years then he did *Easy Rider* and that's what got him started.

STAR QUESTION



Harry, are you still mad at me for accidentally tuning your guitar down to E flat when we made demos together at my house? *Daniel Lanois*

Oh. That was a long time ago. You know, I was a born singer. I sang when I was a kid. When people would leave the house I'd get up on a stool and sing an old song by Woody Guthrie, or before him, "The Singing Brakeman", Jimmie Rodgers. Anyway, I sang this country song, standing on a stool, thinking about this girl I was in love with. I was 6, she was 18. Her name was Thelma. So I sang, "T for Texas, T for Tennessee, T for Thelma/That gal made a wreck out of me".

What's the best piece of advice Marlon Brando gave to you?

Robert Bearyman, London
He recited soliloquies on the phone. "Our revels now are ending..." What was that one from? *The Tempest*? He taught me a couple of them and I would do them over the phone and he would direct me over the phone. He was an amazing man, a great sense of humour, tremendous depth, unpredictable. He's the greatest actor of all time. We were very close, yeah. During the last three years of his life, we spent hours on the phone and I went to his house a lot. He asked me once, he said, "What do you think of me?" I said, "I think you're nothing." He laughed. Eastern concepts. He knew what I was talking about. Marlon's reminiscent of Dylan. Both very eccentric, complex characters.

What are your memories of working with Bob Dylan on *Pat Garrett...* and *Renaldo & Clara*?

Sam Chaplin, Dublin
Bob's an unusual guy. We went jogging during the shoot [for *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*], about half a mile from where Peckinpah was shooting, and we ran into his shot.



Stanton in *Paris, Texas*: "I just played myself..."

Sam might have thrown something at us. Dylan and I cut a Mexican song. We made a tape together. He asked me, did I want a copy. I said no. What an idiot! We once drove from Guadalajara, Mexico all the way to Kansas City, to a singer's house there, the guy with a big beard, Leon Russell. Anyway, it took us two or three days. Yeah, we spent some time together.

What similarities are there between preparing for a part in a film and preparing to deliver a song? *Charlie Yapp, Birmingham*
Just learn the lines! It's the same thing, you're playing a character. I think any performing artist can do films... in fact, anybody out there in

three times. Years ago. The third time it took hold and I understood the song. "Everybody's talkin' at me/I don't hear a word they're saying/Only the echoes in my mind". It's an enlightened state, really, but like Alan Watts said, someone told him that on heroin you get to an enlightened state, and he said, "Yeah, but when you get the message, you hang up the phone." So I hung up on that one. Will I ever do another LP? There's no answer. Everything just evolves and there's ultimately no answer, nobody's in charge, it's just an inexplicable unfolding of events, this whole planet, the 'noosphere'. It means 'sphere of human consciousness on the planet'. Look it up.

"Everything just evolves... there's no answer, and nobody's in charge"



You read Charles Bukowski's "Torched Out" in a 2003 documentary. How did you come to meet him and what's your favourite memory of him?

Petra Shadd, Epsom, Surrey
We were close. I met him through Sean Penn. He was an enlightened guy. I remember him saying to me once, "Ah, Harry, the prejudice of biological kin." Made me laugh. His poetry was raw, uninhibited and spontaneous. It was gritty, real and there was a lot of beauty in it.

How did you get the part of Travis in *Paris, Texas*?

Nathan Lloyd, Crystal Palace
I was in Albuquerque with Sam Shepard. We were drinking and

listening to a Mexican band. I said I'd like a part with some sensitivity and intelligence to it. I got back to LA, and Sam called and said, "Do you want to do a lead in my next film?" I said, "Only if everybody involved is totally enthusiastic about me doing it." Wim Wenders thought I was too old. He came to see me and finally he agreed to it. I just played myself. Travis was looking for enlightenment, I think.

Which of your films do people ask you about the most?

Sarah Haycock, Monmouthshire
Paris, Texas for one. *Pretty In Pink* was a huge hit for me. Molly Ringwald was awesome, a natural talent. *Alien*? Oh, yeah. I still get fanmail almost every week. Am I still working? Just occasionally. I did this film with Sean Penn [*This Must Be The Place*, 2011]. I played the guy who invented wheels for baggage. I met the guy. It was an amazing experience. He told me how he invented it, the whole thing.

You've worked with Hitchcock, Huston, Peckinpah, Lynch... What's the best piece of direction a director ever gave you?

Julie Murphy, Edinburgh
The best direction? Leave me alone. Let me do what I want to do! I was on *Hitchcock Presents*... We had a sequence in a basement where we kidnapped and tied up a great actor, EG Marshall, me and this kid Tom Pittman. Hitchcock came up and said, "You fellows go down there and work it out." He let us direct the whole scene. No director before or since has ever done that. ☺

Partly Fiction is released on Omnivore Records on June 3

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

fresh

produce



sharon van etten
are we there
released 26/05/14

£10



the phantom band
strange friend
released 26/05/14

£10



hercules & love affair
the feast of the broken heart
released 26/05/14

£10



clean bandit
new eyes
released 02/06/14

£10



brian jonestown massacre
revelation
out now

£10



guided by voices
cool planet
out now

£10



archie bronson outfit
wild crush
out now

£10



tom vek
luck
released 09/06/14

£10



owen pallett
in conflict
released 26/05/14

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rival sons
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Iron Butterfly

Beyond the 42 albums, 111 hit singles, 70 million free books, personal theme park and indefatigable positivity, what is DOLLY PARTON really like? In Nashville, *Uncut* dodges the handlers to try to get under the skin of the most heroic and hardworking woman in Country. “I’m begging of you, please...”

Story: Jaan Uhelszki

Photo: Everett Collection/Rex

FIVE MILES NORTH of downtown Nashville, way past the Ryman Auditorium, the Country Music Hall Of Fame, Johnny Cash’s Museum and all the blinking neon honky-tonks of Lower Broadway, is a place tourists rarely see. Two exits past the spot where three super-freeways converge is a nondescript stretch of road, dull and treeless, with fast-food chains and budget accommodations for nearby Opryland. Despite the cheery signage, there’s an air of resignation hovering above the We Buy Gold/Music City Pawn/Cash City storefronts, pre-pay dry cleaners and rundown nail salons, all uneasily housed in the grossly misnamed Grand Central Parking Center. It’s a perfect location to hide something in plain sight. Like Dolly Parton, one of country music’s most recognisable and beloved stars. For the past four days she’s been ensconced behind a reinforced 6ft chain-link fence that surrounds North Star Studios, a 125,000-sq ft complex owned by the Christian Broadcasting Network. A guard in a concrete gatehouse screens visitors, and there are surveillance cameras on high poles

watching for anything untoward. Eight satellite dishes are arranged in a rough constellation in an empty field, like oversized oyster shells, their ears cocked skyward to catch, one supposes, emissions from Mars. Or transmit them.

Click. Click. Click. Click. The distinctive sound of high heels bounces off the dark tile floors, ricocheting off the low, cavernous ceilings. I quickly turn to see Dolly Parton surrounded by a half-dozen people dressed in sombre colours. None of whom are saying a word to her, or to anyone else, for that matter. Except for the soft clatter of Parton’s five-inch heels, the group walks in abject silence. Her eyes look forward and she doesn’t speak to anyone as she takes small, careful steps. Nor is she smiling. Hell, I haven’t even seen photos of Dolly not smiling. We’re running early. In fact, almost two hours early, which is a little intimidating. But Parton has got this promotion thing down to military precision (she’s nicknamed the Iron Butterfly). Over the past 24 hours, she’s logged in 80 interviews, by satellite hook-up, by phone, and in person. By day’s end she’ll have completed 31 more and filmed a video for the title song for her new LP, *Blue Smoke*. Not that she’d ever complain, but you can see the teeniest bit of weariness behind those eyes of indeterminate colour. “Even though I do

these interviews day in, day out,” she confides to me later, “it’s like looking at you and the way you say it, and the tone of voice you say it makes me have a whole different delivery, makes me add more to something I’ve said before. It takes on new meaning for me.”

DOLLY PARTON GREETES *Uncut* on a brilliantly lit soundstage. She is mic’d, I am not. The mark of a real pro is, despite conducting the interviews in front of almost two dozen people, giving it an intimacy and a folksy charm that makes you feel in that moment that you are the only person in the world that matters.

She watches me as I walk toward her, a little like a jungle cat assessing prey, her manicured talons — more lethal fuchsia than mere red — folded benignly in her tiny lap. She sits like a schoolgirl, perfectly erect posture, slim legs crossed demurely, the ankle displaying a lot of lean leg, and ending in a pair of clear five-inch heels, the kind Cinderella must have worn.

Parton was raised 207 miles east of here, in Sevierville, Tennessee, the fourth of 12 children of a dirt-poor tobacco farmer and his wife. She got her start when her uncle Bill Owens heard her sing as she washed dishes, and



Dolly Parton, Battle
Creek, Michigan,
March 13, 1977

started bringing her to country fairs and churches to perform. She wrote her first song aged five and began appearing on local radio and TV shows at nine. She got her first guitar at 10, and by 13, when most girls were thinking about football stars and lipstick colours, she had already recorded her first single, "Puppy Love", for a small Louisiana label Goldband Records, and had appeared on the Grand Ole Opry.

She was on a Greyhound bus the day after she graduated high school, and she was signed as a songwriter for Combine Publishing, and then a recording artist for Monument Records. After hearing one of her early recordings, the misleadingly titled "Dumb Blonde", Porter Wagoner sought her out for his syndicated TV show, setting her on a course that would eventually result in more than 3,000 songs written, 26 No 1 hits, 100 million sales and eight



Dolly as a child



With Porter Wagoner in 1967

GREAT BIG HITS

10 Classic Dolly Songs

Just Because I'm A Woman

(JUST BECAUSE I'M A WOMAN, 1968)

Written in response to her husband's questions about whether she'd been with another man before him. Gutsy for the times.

Down From Dover

(FAIREST OF THEM ALL, 1969)

Secrets and death in this macabre ballad, covered by Nancy & Lee, and Marianne Faithfull.

Coat Of Many Colors

(COAT OF MANY COLORS, 1971)

Based on a story about Parton's mother, written on the back of a dry-cleaning receipt while travelling with Porter Wagoner.

Jolene

(JOLENE, 1974)

About a bank teller who flirted with Parton's husband, it's been covered by everyone from The White Stripes to Patti Smith.

Two Doors Down

(HERE YOU COME AGAIN, 1977)

Disco-tastic song about mending heartbreak by attending a party in her apartment building "two doors down".

Here You Come Again

(HERE YOU COME AGAIN, 1977)

Not written by Dolly, but her pensive delivery made this her first million-seller.

Islands In The Stream

(GREATEST HITS, '82)

The Bee Gees wrote it for Marvin Gaye, but recast it as a duet for Kenny Rogers and Dolly.

9 To 5

(9 TO 5 AND OTHER ODD JOBS, 1980)

The title tune for Parton's film debut. The inspiration came from the sound her acrylic nails made when she clicked them together.

I Will Always Love You

(THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS OST, 1982)

Written as a goodbye to Porter Wagoner after she left his TV show. Whitney Houston took it to No 1.

Just When I Needed You Most

(TREASURES, 1996)

Paul Butterfield and Dylan covered it. Dolly's original features Alison Krauss on vocals.



Grammys. Gingerly stepping over thick black cables and picking my way around her staff, publicists, photographers, stylists and makeup people, I note that there are no hangers-ons in a Partonian universe. Everyone has a function, the purpose

to ensure everything works like a well-oiled machine.

Behind us is a backdrop with a remarkably lifelike vista of downtown Nashville, even though we are 20 minutes away. But even more remarkable is Dolly herself. Her waist couldn't be more than 20 inches, and is made to look even smaller by her nipped-in Meyer lemon-coloured jacket. Underneath she's wearing a black blouse that extends far down over her perfectly manicured nails, rather like someone suffering from Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, or something Conor Oberst might wear under his hoodie.

Her small hands are bedecked with an oversized black cocktail ring and rather modest diamonds, and her skirt is no more than strips of black chiffon that skim her legs when she walks, a little like a cheerleader's culottes. It's the same outfit she wore a month before on the *Today* show, the top-rated US morning show, announcing FireChaser, the latest ride at her theme park, Dollywood. Parton is all business today. You can tell because she's not exposing any cleavage, two of her best assets restrained in a good bra and a high neckline. But you can tell more by the style of the wig she's wearing, always a dead giveaway of her mood and intention. Today it's rather shaggy and flat, with a few wayward spiky bits that makes you think of Joan Jett's hair circa 1977. In a good way. None of that "the higher the hair, the closer to God" stuff.

"Nice boots!" I hear as I climb up two small steps to a platform in the center of the soundstage, momentarily blinded by two huge lights aimed at a pair of black leather club chairs placed at a 45° angle to encourage conversation. As if the two of us are having a friendly chat and not looking at two cameras pointed at us. Between us is a small red table. I tell myself not to get swept up in her golden glow and forget my journalistic impartiality, but it's hard. I remember what the late film critic Roger Ebert said when he met her at the premiere of *9 To 5*: "I left the room in a cloud of good feeling." He asked fellow critic Gene Siskel what he thought. "This will sound crazy," Siskel told him, "but when I was interviewing Dolly Parton, I almost felt like she had healing powers."

"Do you?" I ask her.

"I pray every day and certainly every night before I go onstage," Parton tells me. "I pray that God will let me shine



With Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin in *9 To 5*

Parton live circa '75:
"I never think of
myself as a star"

DOLLY STATS

Debut album: *Hello, I'm Dolly* 1967

First self-produced album: *New Harvest... First Gathering* 1977

First million seller: *Here You Come Again* 1977

First single released on her own label, Dolly Records: *Better Get To Livin'* 2007

No of Grammys won: 8
Year inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame: 1999

Most successful tour: 2011's *Better Day World Tour* (overall gross \$34 million)

Neil Young song covered: "After The Gold Rush" TRIO II ALBUM WITH EMMYLOU HARRIS AND LINDA RONSTADT, 1998

Led Zeppelin cover: "Stairway To Heaven" HALOS & HORNS, 2002

Simpsons cameo: "Sunday Cruddy Sunday". Helps Homer escape the Super Bowl stadium jail using her extra strong makeup remover to melt locks
The female country singer with the most charted country songs: 111

Longest span from first to most recent No 1: 35 years, 1 month. *Joshua* FEBRUARY 1971, *When I Get Where I'm Going* MARCH 2006, DUET WITH BRAD PAISLEY

Oldest female with a No 1 hit: 60 years, 44 days old when she hit with "When I Get Where I'm Going", a duet with then-33-year-old Brad Paisley, on March 4, 2006

Most Grammy nominations for a woman: 46, tying her with Beyoncé Knowles
Most covered song: "Jolene"



with his light. And to let me be a blessing and not have people idolise me, because I do not like the idol stuff," she says resolutely, leaning forward in her chair. "If they see a light in me, I want them to think it's the light of God. And even if I don't get to heaven, if I can help somebody else head in a better direction, that makes me happy."

If anyone is going to heaven, it's Dolly Parton. She already looks like an angel you'd put atop the Christmas tree, all creamy alabaster skin and dancing eyes. Add all the good works. Creating 3,000 jobs for Sevierville with Dollywood, employing almost every one of her relatives. Then there's the 70 million books she's given away to children through her Imagination Library. She seems too good to be true.

But after five minutes in her presence, you no longer even consider she's not genuine. It's the way she looks straight into your eyes when you ask a question. It's the little gestures she makes, like a small bird. It's how she calls you by your name. If it's a trick, I no longer care. It's why so many people truly love her. On a recent visit to QVS, the shopping network, for a live show and to sell her CD, the host told her no less than 17 times how much she loved Parton. She gets that a lot.

"Just suppose that you don't like someone you meet. Does that ever happen?" I ask, not so innocently.

"Well, of course I don't like everyone," she says in her high honeyed voice. "But I know we're all God's children. I try to go right to that God light in everybody, even if I don't think it's here. If a person don't look right. Or they're not acting right. I know that there's that little spark in there."

So what do you say to yourself when it's hard to find?

"Sometimes I just say, 'Gee, doesn't he have nice eyes?' And be done with it."

You have been in the spotlight for so long, is there a small zone of privacy in your life?

"My life is good," she counters. "I've managed that really well. When I'm home, I'm really home. When I'm with my husband, I'm totally with him. We have our life. If I'm with good friends, if I'm get a sister night with my sisters, we plan it and we love it and we spend all that time just being us and doing what we do. We laugh, we cry, we do whatever. But I manage. It's like you have to, because this is what I do. I've dreamed myself into a corner, so I have to be responsible for all of the things I've dreamed and I've seen come true. I've been blessed that my dreams come true. But there's a big responsibility. It's wearing. Sometimes you just physically and emotionally can't hardly keep up... You can't say no, exactly. It is how it works, and even when you're sick you can't take the time to be sick, you have to plan around that. You have to manoeuvre. It's like anything else you do. How I

look at my business and how I've conducted my business. I have to conduct, just like I say when I'm home, I'm home. But just like, even when you start having ailments you've got to say, you know what, I've got to set aside some time to take

"A lot of people my age have given up, but not me. I plan to be doing this for my entire life"

care of that. I'll go as far as I can... so you just have to plan everything. But, this is what I do. I never think of myself as a star. I think of myself as a working girl, always have. That's why I never had any ego problems. I'm thankful and grateful. And I look at the body of work I've done sometimes and I'm just shocked by it. I think, 'Lord, how in hell did I get all that done? In this many years.' But I did it."



With Brad Paisley at the Grammys, Los Angeles, February 2001

RICHARDE AARON / GETTY IMAGES, SCOTT GRIS / IMAGEDIRECT



My ride's here:
Dollywood's eighth
season opening in 1993

DOLLY FACTS

10 Things You Never Knew About Dolly

- Dolly once lost a Dolly Parton look-alike contest.
- Dolly turned down Jack White's offer to produce her, but she did let him buy her and her friends dinner at an expensive Nashville hotspot.
- Parton and her husband Carl Dean often go food shopping in the middle of the night at the 24-hour Wal Mart near their home outside of Nashville.
- She has stopped trying to disguise herself in public because people always recognise her voice. Last time she tried, some kids just said: "You're Dolly Parton in a black wig!"
- Although she's co-owned Dollywood theme park since 1986, she claims she's "too terrified" to ride any of the rides.
- The Ku Klux Klan once picketed Dollywood because of Parton's annual Gay Day.
- "I Will Always Love You" was Saddam Hussein's re-election theme song.
- Dolly received death threats after she wrote "Travelin' Thru" for the film *Transamerica* about a transgender woman.
- Her production company, Sandollar, produced *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.
- Dolly suffers from motion sickness and hates to fly.

“A LOT OF PEOPLE my age have given up,” says Parton. “But not me. I plan to be doing this for my entire life. But really, I just go with the punches. I try to stay active and stay up with what’s going on. I surround myself with younger people.”

Sometimes you have to

decide, album? Tour? I’m like 68 now and I keep thinking, ‘Well, if I put together a band, a show, then that’s going to take like a year, year and a half.’ And I think, ‘Well, if you’re going to do a tour you need to have a good record to promote it. Or vice versa. If you’re doing your CD you’ve got to have a tour.’ But in this case I decided that I was going to tour first. So that’s why we did this kind of record, because I decided that I wanted to tour a little bit more than make a record.”

She is cannily aware of what her fanbase wants: the rough magic and “mountain voice” of her humble backwoods beginnings in Locust Ridge, southeast of Sevierville, mixed with the down-for-anything gleam in her dramatically made-up eyes, the double-barreled double entendre and her rather outré selection of cover songs over the years [see p54].

Her followers are legion and fanatical. Parton was Jerry Garcia’s favourite female singer, and he once told *Playboy* Parton’s “Daddy, Come And Get Me” made him weep. Mick Jagger used to pop backstage to see her when she performed in New York, while Andy Warhol liked to talk wigs with her, sharing one of the small tables at Studio 54. Even Bianca Jagger liked Parton, and she didn’t like anyone. Willie Nelson is another old friend. They knew each other in Nashville in the early days. Last year Nelson asked if he could record her song “From Here To The Moon” for his *To All The Girls* duets CD. They have recorded a new version for *Blue Smoke*. “I love Willie,” she says simply. “I love that old funky sound he gets on that guitar. But he’s very hard to sing with because of his phrasing. It was like an exercise of some sort, like trying to catch him with all his little phrases and all. But it was a joy, and I’m glad we did it.”

What about Bob Dylan? Did you get in touch with Dylan before you recorded “Don’t Think Twice” for *Blue Smoke*?

She doesn’t immediately answer. Her eyes narrow slightly, she sits up a little straighter. “No. No, I did not,” she says, snapping her rose pink lips shut for an instant. Why not?

“I met him years ago but he didn’t seem to... we didn’t connect...” she says, trailing off. “Although I love his music. But I just always loved that song and I’d recorded another one of his songs in the past, I guess, ‘Blowing In The Wind’, years ago on another LP,” she rambles, taking a small breath. “I’ve been singing a lot of his songs through the years. But I just thought that was...” she pauses a minute too long. “I just love that little song and I was going to do it with just me and guitar, and not put any harmonies on it or anything. But then it just tended to want to hear something else, I guess... Well, it’s a fun song to sing...”

Parton wrote nine of the 12 songs that appear on *Blue Smoke*, many of them not of recent vintage.

“Songs usually demand to be written, but in this case, I had a lot of songs in the can. ‘Blue Smoke’ I wrote years ago, and I used to do it onstage, as it was just a fun song to do. A lot of fans remembered it, and kept saying, ‘Why don’t you ever put that out?’ So when we got ready to do this, I thought, ‘Blue Smoke’, that’s a great title. I guess a lot of it comes from the Smoky Mountains... the Cherokee word ‘shaconage’ meant land of blue smoke, that’s what they called the Great Smoky Mountains. And when I did my bluegrass album, *The Grass Was Blue*, I was going to travel with a bluegrass band, and at one time I was going to call them Blue Smoke.”

Parton has been known to write a song a day, but sometime they need a little help. So what does she do to shake the songs loose? “I do some of my best work when I’m reading. I always keep a notepad nearby. While one part of my mind is reading, another part of my mind is doing something else. And yet I never lose the story. But I’ll just stop. I’ll work for 10 or 15 minutes doing something entirely different. Then I cook. And I love to get in the kitchen when I’m getting prepared to write, because if I’m in a good creative mood, my food is spectacular. If my food is spectacular, my writing’s going to be spectacular. But really, one of my favourite things to do in the world is to have time set aside, like two or three weeks, to say I’m just going to go write. Go up to my old mountain home. I fast and pray for a few days to get myself kind of in a spiritual place, even get through the headaches and everything with the fasting ‘til I get kind of – yeah, I hate to fast. But once I get into the writing, then it starts to be creative and then I can cook.”

“Years ago,” she continues, “I used to wake, it was almost like, it was just a thing. I would wake up at three o’clock every day. But now that I’m older I’m waking up earlier and earlier. I go to bed early, but I get up really early because I love the mornings. That’s my time. Nobody else around, everybody asleep, all the energies have died down and I feel, like, God’s just waiting to come there. I’ve said before I think about God as a farmer, and he’s always throwing stuff out. And I want to be one of those early people that get some of that stuff before it gets picked through. I always

feel like the world is settled about that time. So I have a clearer direction... Yeah, well, see, we have our time. That’s my time, anywhere from like midnight to 6am. I’ll get up, I’ll do my spiritual work, I’ll answer mail or I’ll call in messages, and I always do my affirmations, my spiritual work, my reading, my Scriptures. But I always do that, then a lot of times I write songs, especially if I’m writing

for something. Just like when we wrote a lot of stuff for *Blue Smoke*, some of the new stuff. That’s when I work on it. In the wee hours, because it’s quiet.”

There’s a pause, then she says, “I am very

spiritual. I’m not religious at all but I totally believe in that. I can’t imagine anyone not believing in something bigger than us. I’d choose to believe it even if it wasn’t so. I’d invent God if there wasn’t one, too.”

Funny, that’s what they say about Dolly Parton. ①



“I met Bob Dylan years ago, but he didn’t seem to... we didn’t connect”



Blue Smoke is available now on Sony;
Dolly Parton tours the UK in June

fresh

produce



echo & the bunnymen

meteorites

released 26/05/14

£10



chrisie hynde

stockholm

released 09/06/14

£10



paul weller

more modern classics

released 02/06/14

£10



james

la petite mort

released 02/06/14

£10



far out presents

friends from Rio project 2014

out now

£10



sonzeira (gilles peterson)

brasil bam bam bam

out now

£10



clap your hands say yeah

only run

released 02/06/14

£10



the pains of being pure

at heart

days of abandon

released 02/06/14

£10



the felice brothers

favorite waitress

released 09/06/14

£10



mr. scruff

friendly bacteria

out now

£10



peter murphy

lion

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"I'm a lot more open to experimentation..."
Weller during the video shoot for "7 & 3 Is The Striker's Name", 2009

Interview: Michael Bonner

Photograph: Lawrence Watson



“Our lives have been transformed by rock’n’roll”

Eternally restless, PAUL WELLER is on the move again.

The arrival of a new Modern Classics compilation might be an occasion to look back, but the modernist has little time for nostalgia. Instead, he's railing against politicians and boxsets, plotting next moves, sci-fi memoirs and unlikely collaborators, and finding ways to celebrate the enduring, evolving power of music. “For all of my love of the '60s,” he says, “I still wouldn't want to be living in any other time but now.”



Weller in Black Barn, recording *22 Dreams*, 2008: "Starting the day with a cuppa..."

"I BET THEY NEVER had this trouble with eight-track cartridges," says Paul Weller, shaking his head in disbelief. We're sitting in Weller's Mini Cooper Clubman, parked on a quiet, tree-lined side street overlooking Regent's Canal. It's a warm spring afternoon in mid-March. Alongside the car, brightly painted narrowboats bob gently against their moorings, while ahead sits a glass-fronted restaurant that affords diners tranquil views along the water. Meanwhile, Paul Weller is trying to get his car's in-built CD player to work: evidently, it has other ideas. The plan is that Weller is going to give *Uncut* a sneak preview of some new music he's been working on, essentially material that could appear on the follow-up to 2012's *Sonik Kicks*. Earlier in the day, *Uncut* met Weller in a nearby café to talk about his new greatest hits compilation, *More Modern*



Classics, which includes tracks drawn from the past 15 years, and more besides. But once the tape recorder was switched off, Weller invited *Uncut* to this very exclusive playback in his car: "Have you got time to listen to some tunes?" he asked. Things, however, haven't gone entirely to plan.

Taking a break from trying to get his temperamental CD player to do as it is told, Weller nods over the road towards a large white house that's partly obscured by trees and says, "The Dark One lives there, Noel Gallagher." This genteel north London enclave used to be Weller's stomping ground, too: until recently, he lived opposite Gallagher on the other side of the canal. But last year, Weller moved to a bigger property more suited to raising his two-year-old twin boys. He still has ties to the area, though. During the interview, his eldest daughter, Leah, pops into the café to say 'Hi' to her father, while later in the afternoon



In the control room at Black Barn, April 2014

PREVIEW!

"HAVE YOU GOT TIME TO LISTEN TO SOME TUNES?"

Your exclusive preview of the three new songs Paul Weller played us...

"WAIT"

Title TBC. This begins with a burst of cranked-up guitar noise before the song itself emerges. Guitars aside, "Wait" is driven by a funky Rhodes riff and a sleek, mid-tempo beat. "Wait until tomorrow," Weller sings.

"THESE CITY STREETS"

The strongest of the songs Weller plays, this has a widescreen production to it -

faintly reminiscent of David Holmes - that starts off slow but gradually builds over its six-minute run-time to incorporate a mammoth, Crazy Horse-style guitar jam between Weller, Steve Cradock and a special guest - early Jam guitarist, Steve Brookes.

"OPEN ROAD"

The final track Weller plays has a pastoral quality to it, with a gently rolling piano riff and - a first, perhaps - Weller whistling. It is, he admits playfully, his Ronnie Lane's Slim Chance moment.



Weller plans to watch his six-year-old son Stevie Mac play rugby nearby.

Today, Weller is dressed as immaculately as you'd expect, in a blue striped jumper, a pair of slim, dark trousers and polished brown shoes along with a beige, knee-length lightweight coat. He stopped drinking four years ago, although he breaks off the interview to have two cigarette breaks, and he looks well for it: while there are little pleats at the corners of his mouth, he's trim and his grey-blue eyes twinkle healthily. Although Weller himself may be smartly turned out, the inside of his car is another matter entirely. There are CDs stuffed into the map pockets on both doors, on the floor by the passenger seat and crammed between the windscreen and the dashboard, among them a Northern Soul 2CD set, The Rifles' album *None The Wiser* and a promo copy of Damon Albarn's *Everyday Robots*. Sitting in the small moulded storage tray behind the gear stick are three lighters – a white Bic, and two Clippers, one yellow and one orange – as well as an open packet of Marlboro reds, a small brown tin of Vaseline cocoa butter lip balm and a set of keys. He decides to give the stereo another go. He treats the disc to a quick wipe on his trouser leg before sliding it back into the CD player. He gives the 'start' button an experimental prod with his left index finger: the car is suddenly filled with the unexpected sound of a Calvin Harris-style dance pop track. This sounds like a bold new direction, Paul, even by your



"I'd like to think the best is yet to come... that my music could still get better"



standards. "It's the bloody radio, isn't it?" He growls. Then – finally! – the digital display registers the CD and the first of three new songs begins [see panel, p26].

As the CD loads, Weller pulls a cigarette from the packet and winds down the window. As he's about to light up, he catches sight of a parking ticket placed underneath the windscreen wiper. He pulls it in and pockets it, muttering under his breath.

As the music starts, he leans back in the driving seat and stretches himself out, tilting his head to the right as he blows smoke out of the window, his foot tapping along to the music.

These new songs are the first real signs that Weller is slowly emerging from a period of creative hibernation. Since launching *Sonik Kicks* with four shows at London's Roundhouse in March 2012, Weller has released only one EP, "Dragonfly", in late 2012 and two limited-edition Record Store Day singles: 2013's "Flame-Out!" and this year's controversial "Brand New Toy" [see panel, p31]. There have been collaborations, too. Most publicly, he sat in on drums with Noel Gallagher, Damon Albarn and Graham Coxon at a Teenage Cancer Trust show last April. He's also worked with another well-dressed man, Miles Kane. But as a rule Weller prefers to nurture upcoming talent. He has produced The Strypes [see panel, p28] and is helping out a Brighton band, White Room, who he confides, "can only ➔

SONIK HELPERS

WHO'S WHO IN WELLER'S BAND

The Modfather's most loyal lieutenants

STEVE CRADOCK, GUITARS

NOW WELLER'S LONGEST-serving musical collaborator, Cradock was 16 when they first met. He joined Weller's band in 1992, playing on all his solo albums since. Apart from his duties in Ocean Colour Scene, Cradock has released three solo albums of his own.



ANDY LEWIS, BASS

Lewis, above, began playing with Weller in 2007. His Twitter profile describes him as "musician, DJ, producer, a singer-songwriter who only sings a bit. Bass guitar (& a bit of cello) for Paul Weller, The Red Inspectors, Pimlico, Drugstore & Spearmint".

STEVE PILGRIM, DRUMS

A member of Weller's band since 2008, Pilgrim has also played in Liverpool band The Stands, with Cast's John Power and others, as well as releasing three solo albums.

BEN GORDELIER, DRUMS

First appeared on Weller's cover of The Beatles' "Birthday", recorded to commemorate Paul McCartney turning 70 in 2012. He's since played on *Sonik Kicks* and Weller's Record Store Day singles. Gordelier also plays in his own band, The Moons.



work during half-term". During our time together, he enthuses about new releases by Telegram, Michael Kiwanuka, Villagers, Temples, Toy and Syd Arthur.

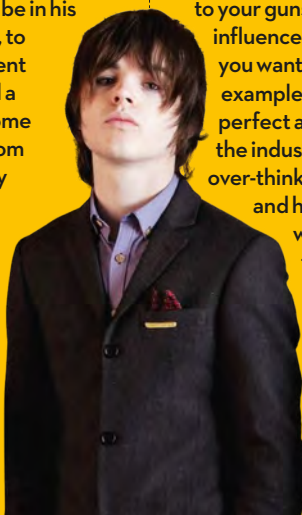
But presumably, Weller has also been waiting for his restless creative instincts to show him where he's headed next. "We've got half an album probably already, but we've still got a long way to go," he reveals. "That could change in time as well, do you know what I mean?" In the meantime, there is *More Modern Classics*, the follow-up to 1998's *Modern Classics* that showcased his early solo years. The material in this edition largely focuses on what Weller jovially calls "my renaissance" – the remarkable three-album run consisting of 22 *Dreams*, *Wake Up The Nation* and *Sonik Kicks*. In the café, Weller stirs a sachet of sugar into the first of three caffè lattes and over the clatter of plates and the gurgling coffee machine, considers this latest compilation. It proves to be the starting point for a wide-ranging conversation that illuminates Weller's working practices and future plans, but also finds him revisiting the earliest days of The Jam, identifying some unlikely potential future collaborators and confronting nothing less than his own mortality.

"You've got a fucking book there, mate," he says with a grin as the tape recorder is finally turned off.



"The whole band came to hang out when we went down for the rehearsals and we really liked the studio. He invited us down to work on a couple of tracks. Paul came in one day and ended up helping out. It was how we thought it should be in the studio: very creative. Then he ended up producing a couple of tracks on the '4 Track Mind' EP. Working with Paul is how we assumed recording used to be. Everything was very live, very spontaneous. 'Still Gonna Drive You Home', that was his track. He was around for 'So They Say' and 'I Don't Want To Know', as well.

"When we talked, he'd tell us to stick to your guns, don't let any outside influences fuck it up. Do what you want to do. He's a fantastic example of that. He's got the perfect attitude towards music and the industry. There's far too much over-thinking in the industry today, and he's the anti- that. He does what he thinks is right at the time, no matter whether it's worked out or not, and that's had a huge impact on me since I met him, and the whole band."



Why release *More Modern Classics* now? I realised it had been 15 years since the last *Modern Classics*. Does it define a chapter? I'm not sure, because it's got the new song ["*Brand New Toy*"] on it as well. I just thought there was so much material, I forgot how many songs there were. We did it chronologically. It's pretty much all the A-sides. It wasn't too difficult.

The tracklisting is weighted towards the last three albums. Is there a reason for that? Only because there's been more records in the last few years, really.

Three albums in, what, five years? Which is probably more than I did in the whole 10 years before that. There's a lot of music, a lot of songs. It's a good enough reason for me.

Do you think the earlier records featured here are undervalued? Maybe, in press terms, I suppose. We got glowing reviews for the last three records, pretty much across the board. I can't remember how the others were received.

But what did you think of them? There's some albums I like better than others, but even the ones I don't particularly care for, there's always a couple of good songs on there for me. But I did think on *As Is Now* up to *Sonik Kicks* there's a richer seam of music. There's some good songs on *Heliocentric*. I have mixed feelings about records, because I also think about how I felt when I was making it. *Heliocentric* was like pulling teeth, a difficult record to make. I don't know why. *Illumination?* I can't even remember it too well. But in the last few years, I've felt a lot more creative. Working with different people, different producers, different musicians, I've arrived at a good place where I don't feel any constraints about what I should do with my music. I follow wherever it goes. I think with *Heliocentric*, it was like it was tacked onto the '90s, so it followed on from *Heavy Soul* and *Stanley Road* a bit. I don't listen to the old records too much. I've had to, putting this compilation together, but I don't generally.

Why is that? I always think it could be better. Not just the bass level and those fiddly little things, it's just a general disappointment with a lot of it. It always leaves you slightly unsatisfied, but it's also the thing that drives you forward.

How important was [producer] Simon Dine in this part of your career? My renaissance, you mean [laughs]? Yeah, it was good working with him. I always like working with people. I'm also not clever enough to do it all myself. But that isn't just it. I'm always receptive to other people's ideas. I've got very set ideas about what we should be doing. But it's not so tied in that I won't listen to someone else's ideas.

Do you have an example? When I write a song, I can hear how I think it should be – how the drums could be or the instrumentation – but it's not set in stone. Maybe it would have been at one time. But if it goes off and changes and becomes something else, that's fine as well.

What do you think the Paul Weller of 2000 would have thought of *Sonik Kicks*? I don't know. You've got to be ready in life to receive certain things, haven't you? It's like when people say, 'What would the 16-year-old Paul Weller think of the 56-year-old?' Fuck knows. I have no idea... I'm definitely a lot more open to experimentation. I don't think the Weller of 2000 would have been ready to receive that way of working. With *Heliocentric*, for instance, like most of the records before

EYEWITNESS

"WE WENT FOR A CURRY THAT NIGHT..."

The Strypes' Josh McClorey on working with Weller

"THE FIRST TIME we met Paul was in Abbey Road studios. He was doing an episode of a Channel 4 series called *Live At Abbey Road* and his management got in touch and asked if we'd be up for supporting him at it. We jumped at the offer! He came to the soundcheck and was really approachable. Since the Abbey Road gig, he asked myself and Pete [O'Hanlon] if we wanted to be in his band for Record Store Day, to play guitar and bass. We went down to Black Barn and did a couple of Jam tunes and some of his solo songs as well. From the get-go, he made a really big impression on me, that someone could be that successful and still maintain a down-to-earth mentality – like we went for a curry that night. Did he pay for the curry? I think he did!



"The fourth member of The Jam..." Weller and father John at London Wembley Arena, December 5, 1982

it, I will have written a song in its entirety at home or wherever – chords, the melody, the words – and that would have been it. So that's the template and we would have to work round that. The tempo's set, the rhythm's set. But in recent years, on recent records, it hasn't been like that. It's started from next to nothing and then just seeing where it goes, building it up, and doing a lot more writing in the studio and on the hoof as well.

Do you remember why that happened? I'd just come to the end of the road – for a period anyway – with writing in the traditional way. Sitting in a room and bashing around on an acoustic guitar or piano. I just needed to look for different ways of writing. A good song is a good song whichever way you do it. Without being blasé, I know I can do it in the more traditional way. But I've also learned the last few years there are other ways of doing it. Different things I wouldn't have thought about – harmonically or melodically.

Do you work in sudden bursts of activity, or is it fairly consistent? I don't always actually do it, but I'm always looking to write. So whether that's a conversation I have with someone, or a phrase or a chord pattern or a melody, whatever it may be, they're things I just store up. I think I've probably got lazier in my old age, in terms of having an idea just before you go to sleep and then rushing downstairs and getting a guitar or whatever. Now I'm too fucking tired. Hopefully, I'll remember it by tomorrow.

Do you have a tape recorder by your bed? My missus bought me one. But, no. I'm always looking to write. I play guitar every day pretty much. Not necessarily to write, but just to keep my chops up and because I enjoy it.

Do you get much chance to write with two young kids in the house? I have to wait until everyone's in bed. Got no chance of doing it otherwise. There's always the late morning hours, the early morning hours, 12 o'clock, the witching hour. It's nice just to play for myself and sometimes songs come out of that. Sometimes I'm just practising or rehearsing.

The return of Bruce Foxton surprised and delighted a lot of people. Are you likely to work with him again? It's possible, you know. Obviously not in any reformation way. But I'm sure we will do. He played on *Wake Up The Nation* and I played on his recent album. But it was all right, it was nice.

What was the strength of that original partnership?

The strength was in The Jam as a live band. As personalities, we were all quite different. I don't know if we'd have hung out if we hadn't been in a band. What were our differences? Have I got to try and be diplomatic here? I think the big difference at first was that they were three or four years older than me. Which is nothing now, but when you're 16 and someone's 20 or 21 and they've got a car and a girlfriend, they're a proper grownup and I'm a kid. So that was a big difference initially, but we all had our traits and our good points. But the main thing was, when we all got together we made a good noise.

You were working at it for a long time, weren't you?

Yeah. We'd been together a good five or six years before we got a deal. So we were not necessarily road-hardened, but we'd done our apprenticeship. I suppose the bond came from playing all those pub gigs and club gigs in Woking and Surrey to mainly disinterested punters. That was our schooling. It served us well, because you learn to take the highs with the lows. It gives you some kind of inner strength. That was the bond. The fact we'd been through all that and then we finally made it, got a record deal and then had hits. And with my dad, as well. He was the fourth member of the band. I always remember, when we first got signed, after six months or so, he was saying to us, "I don't know if I'm the right person to look after you now we've got this far into it." To give them their due, everyone said, "We're all doing this together. We've come this far, we're seeing it through."

You were quite a serious young man, weren't you? I was probably too fucking serious, looking back on it. I wasn't in any way enamoured with other aspects of stardom, or whatever you want to call it. I was very serious about what I thought was my art, and writing, and what the band should be doing. I like to think I kept us on the right side of commercialism. There was plenty of opportunities, and plenty of people at the record company and my dad as well who wanted us to do what I considered fucking naff things, like a TV show or some terrible nonsense, that would get us out to the masses. I think I helped rein all that in, probably to the annoyance of a lot of people. Yeah, we were a successful band, but they probably thought it could have been more successful. Like The Police, or someone. I remember they were mentioned at one point. I said, "I'm not doing that. We don't do that."

COUNTRY MUSIC

SECRETS OF BLACK BARN REVEALED!

● Before it was converted into a studio in 1985, Black Barn "was a derelict barn with 15 sheep in it", according to studio manager Charles Rees.



● The first LP recorded there was Jethro Tull's *Crest Of A Knave*.

● Bruce Forsyth once recorded there. Says Rees, "In the late '80s, Bruce sang a cover of an old song, possibly for a television programme."

● A band wishing to record at Black Barn could expect, "a great live room," says Rees. "Some fantastic drum sounds and plenty of space for band to record live. A large control room, and some great equipment."

● Weller bought Black Barn in the late '90s.

● Acts who've recorded there include Free, Motörhead, Bo Diddley, Ride, Gary Numan, Ray Davies, Badfinger and Procol Harum.

● Outlining a 'typical' Weller session, Rees explains, "We'll start the day with a cuppa. Some days it's Paul playing everything, then others may involve the band or a guest musician. Usually work into the evening. When we've finished, we'll have a playback of our day's graft... with a cuppa. Goodnight."

rodrigo y gabriela



9 DEAD ALIVE

"ASTONISHING" MOJO

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RUBYWORKS

BECAUSE
MUSIC

● **The Jam were a great singles band, and here you are releasing a new single, “Brand New Toy”, your first new material since “Flame-Out!” in 2013, which was also a one-off single.**

Are you a particular fan of the format? I miss the days when you could put three or four singles out in a year. You probably can if you just use the internet. I don't know what value they'd have still, I'm not sure. But I like the idea of just making a record. I've got a couple of songs, I like them, let's go and cut them and put them out. I like that spontaneity. It's all changed so much, even in the last five years, how people receive the music and how you put the music out. It bothered me at first, but I'm accepting of it. It's no good moaning it's not as good as it used to be. Like any technology, it's got its good and bad points. It's great that if I wanted to, I could stick something new on the internet and people would get to hear it. But I think the negative side is that it devalues a lot of it as well. When you were waiting for a band to put a single out, the whole build-up to it, and trying to get your hands on it first, I don't know if it's quite the same now, is it? It's just the flick of a switch, isn't it?

Are these new tracks representative of the material you've been working on recently? No, it's all really different. I'm quite into having it a bit more groove-based, that's about as focused as I am at the moment. I've got lots of songs but they're all quite disparate. I'm going to keep writing and recording and store them up and see where it goes.

Is that usual for you, or do you prefer to have a vision in mind for an album when you start work on it?

After you get six or seven songs under your belt, you know where it's going. It's too early to say at the moment. I've got loads of little bits from all my playing at night, I've been recording them on my thing like that [points at recorder], but I don't know where they're going to go. Chords, half-songs, lyrics I haven't put music to.

What comes first? Melody or lyrics? There's no pattern at all to it. Sometimes I just write a lot of words, then I'll be in the studio and there might be a piece of music I can pull something out of. That's more of a spontaneous thing. Like I said, before I always had a song finished pretty much, the arrangement as well. But I like the idea of chance, a half-formed idea that once you get in the studio goes somewhere else. It brings out things I hadn't thought about. People making mistakes – that sounds good! When I was younger, I was much more set in my ways. But it worked for the time. You have to try other things and become someone else and grow.

Are there any collaborators you'd like to work with in future? I'd like to do something with Johnny Marr. We were talking about it for a couple of years. We always bump into each other in different places, but we've never actually worked together. I'm up for working with anyone, really, if they're good. I'd really like to do something with Boy George.

Why Boy George? His voice is sounding really, really good at the moment. I saw him on *Later...* a couple of months ago. I'd forgotten how great his voice was. It's gotten better with age. So it's more out of a musical consideration as opposed to being two old geezers from the '80s...



Weller with a copy of “Flame-Out!”, Record Store Day, 2013

RECORD RACKET?

“IT’S A NASTY THING, EXPLOITING PEOPLE...”

ON APRIL 19 this year, Paul Weller released a new single, “Brand New Toy” b/w “Landslide”, for Record Store Day, limited to 500 copies. Three days later, after discovering the single was being resold online at inflated prices, he announced he would not participate in future Record Store Day events.

RSD issued a follow-up statement admitting “some re-selling was expected”. *Uncut* caught up with Weller late in April to discover whether he was surprised by the widespread response to his decision.

“I didn’t know what to expect to be honest with you, I just think it’s really fucking out of order,” he said. “I just think it’s important to try and safeguard against people exploiting everyone else. How do you stop it? For me, just don’t fucking do it! Print up 20,000 singles and charge double, I don’t know. It’s just a nasty thing, exploiting people. Yeah, it happens with concert tickets, too. Poncing off people isn’t very nice, whatever shape or form it is.”

...who were both on Band Aid... Yeah, that’s right. But beyond that, I don’t know what sort of thing it would be. I spoke to him about it, and he’s up for doing it. It’s just finding the right tune.

Do you get to visit Black Barn as much as you like? I go there when I need to. The days of spending six weeks in the studio are long gone. I’d get too bored, but I’ve got too many other family commitments, which is the priority now. When I record these days, it’s like two or three days at the most, sometimes four, and we work really intensely. We work into the night, have a break, think about it, go back and fix things, or

change things or re-record, whatever may be. It works better for me that way. I’ve got the luxury of being able to step back and go back to it. That’s the beauty of having my own studio, I’m not watching the clock or the money and all that stuff.

What inspires you to write songs at the moment? It’s what I do. That’s inspiration enough, really. From being a kid

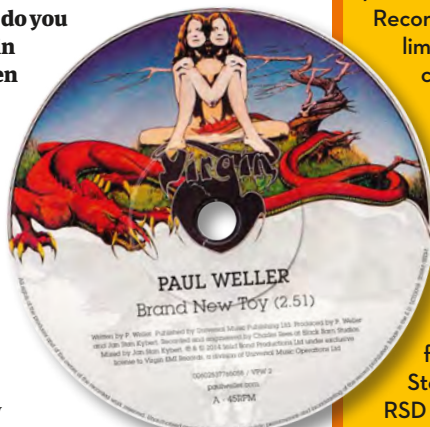
and dreaming about a band and making records to actually being able to do that is inspiration enough. Every time I hear a great piece of music – old, new, whatever – it makes me want to go and make music. Whatever happens with the industry, there’s still fucking loads of great music out there and I think there always will be. I don’t think that’s ever going to change much. Whether it has the same cultural value to people’s lives, I don’t know. I hope so. But the

music is still there, it’s just you have to seek it out a bit more. 6 Music is good. XFM. But generally radio’s pretty safe, isn’t it? The same cap on all of them.

Is that how you catch up with new music? Sometimes I’ll hear something on a radio show, or friends tell me about something, or I’ll be in Rough Trade and they’ll say, “You should check this out.” My day in music starts when I turn on the radio in the morning or put a CD in the car. I guess that’s never changed. I’m happy in the knowledge that there’s still great music. Without young artists coming through, we don’t exist really, do we? You’ve got to have that.

What did you think of Alex Turner’s “rock’n’roll will never die” speech at the Brits? The sentiment I thought was good, I’m not sure about the delivery. But it never will.

Our lives have been transformed by music and rock’n’roll and pop culture and I think any of the post-war generations are all like that. People in their sixties or seventies, they’re not the same as the people who were pre-war. Even up to the time before my dad died, every Christmas everyone would have a few glasses of pop and Little Richard would be put on the record player and my mum and dad would be jiving round the living room. It wasn’t like that for previous generations. ➔



A right pair: Weller with Boy George in London, 1984

COME TOGETHER

WINEHOUSE! DR JOHN! GABRIEL!

Following Weller's revelations that he would like to work with Johnny Marr and Boy George here's some of his other illustrious collaborations...

THE SMOKIN' MOJO FILTERS

A supergroup consisting of Weller, Paul McCartney and Noel Gallagher, convened for War Child in 1995. Recorded "Come Together" for the *Help!* charity album.

ROBERT WYATT

Weller's played on three Wyatt LPs: *Shleep* (1997) (which featured a Style Council cover, "Whole Point Of No Return"), *Cuckooland* (2003) and *Comicopera* (2007).

DR JOHN

Weller covered Mac's "I Walk On Gilded Splinters" on *Stanley Road*; Mac returned the favour by inviting Weller to guest on his cover of John Martyn's "Don't Want To Know" in 1998.

PETER GABRIEL

In 1980, both Gabriel and The Jam were recording at London's Townhouse studios. Gabriel invited Weller to contribute guitar to "And Through The Wire", which appeared on Gabriel's "Melt" album.



Don't "Start!"... Weller and Macca, 1995

KEVIN SHIELDS

The guitarist appears on "7 & 3 Is The Striker's Name" and "She Speaks", from *Wake Up The Nation*.

AMY WINEHOUSE

Weller and Winehouse covered Etta James' "Don't Go To Strangers" at the BBC Electric Proms in 2006 and then again on Jools Holland's *Hootenanny* that same year, along with "I Heard It Through The Grapevine".

GRAHAM COXON

The pair first teamed up on 2007's "This Old Town"; Coxon also appeared on 22 *Dreams* and *Sonik Kicks*.

MARTIN CARTHY

The folk guitarist invited Weller to join him on a version of "John Barleycorn" on *The Imagined Village* album.

SOUAD MASSI

The Algerian singer worked with Weller on "Let Me In Peace", from 2010's *Ô Houria*.

OASIS

Noel Gallagher has been a frequent collaborator with Weller over the years. The most emblematic is Weller's solo on "Champagne Supernova".

● I still believe in the value of pop culture and pop music, rock'n'roll, whatever you want to call it. Music. I think it's helped shape the 20th and 21st Centuries. I always believed in it.

Do you remember where you first used to buy records?

Yeah, in Woking. There were two shops, Maxwell's and Aerco. I am old enough to remember the listening booths. They had the Top 10, maybe Top 20, in a rack behind the counter. We used to go in there after school and play records until they kicked us out. Magical places. It's still the same vibe if you go into Rough Trade or Sister Ray. But now there's so much music. Reissues – including my new greatest hits – boxsets, new records you want to hear, old records you've never heard. It's a bit mind-boggling.

Are you trying to match that 'magical' experience in your music?

I would hope so. I don't know if people receive it in that way, I've no idea, but I hope it would be like that. But that gets more difficult as well, because the older you get and the more records you made. Is there still the same excitement? Hopefully there is. There is for me, but hopefully for my audience as well.

Do you think some of your audience found the last three albums difficult to process?

Probably, yeah.

Does it bother you that there's always people who want to hear "Town Called Malice"?

There's always going to be an element of that. I would like to think, wherever I go with my music, I'd take people with me. There was a time in The Style Council where I purposely put people's backs up. It was part of the plan, which is just fucking monstrous looking back on it. So I think now I could introduce something new to my audience but make them feel involved

as well. But you can't please them all, can you? It would never stop me going where I want to go. Even when we put out "Precious", there was division among the audience – "Oh, it's a bit jazz funk." You can't let those things stop progress though, can you? If you don't adapt, you die. Whatever aspect you're taking about. I've seen lots of bands do that. That's probably why there's so many bands around now getting back together.

You've had a couple of Jam and solo anniversary reissues, and there'll be more, I expect... What about when I die? Fucking hell, mate!

But what's your response when the record company asks for your involvement in an anniversary reissue?

Haven't we got enough anniversary boxsets?

I think we have, which will sound contradictory

because like you say, they've put enough of mine out. They did a good one on *Stanley Road*. There was some nice outtakes and there was a nice DVD that went with it. Some of them are pointless. There isn't any material, there aren't any hidden gems, it's just

people fucking around with

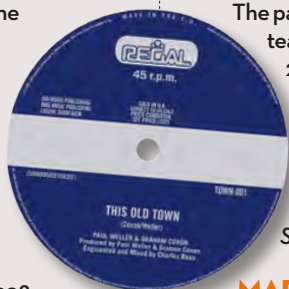
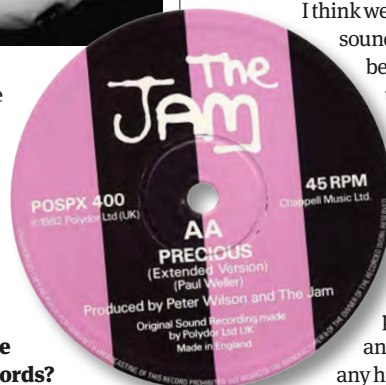
demos or half-formed songs. I was never interested in the demos. I've got a Beatles bootleg and one whole side is different takes of "Strawberry Fields...". What's the fucking point? All I want to hear is the finished track in all its glory. But that's the way it is. I don't know if I could put my foot down and say, "You can't do that." They own it all. You might as well get involved and make sure they do a half-decent job on it.

Do you have an archive? No. It's all been out by now. There's only a few bits of me scratching me arm or whatever.

There's no shed in the depths of Surrey, then? A bunker? No. I had this ritual, all my notebooks, after I finished a record, I'd either burn them or cut them into little pieces. My feelings was always: get rid of it, burn it, move on. It's only recently that a mate of mine said, "You should have kept all them." So I've started keeping them now.

You've been working with The Strypes recently. Do you see anything of yourself at that age in them?

What, the "youthful energy"? I can see that. Josh, he's somewhere else with his guitar playing. I think he's really special. But they're a good little band, they just need to carry on writing and let them evolve naturally. But to me, they all seem committed to what they're doing. Whether the management or the record company let them develop, who knows these days? But either way, Josh will do something. When I was doing that record, he must have



done four or five lead guitar takes and every solo was fucking brilliant. It was hard to pick a bad one.

Do you wish when you'd been that age someone from an older generation had given you a helping hand? Yeah, but all those '60s guys were too fucking tight, weren't they? I never

got any encouraging words from any of those people. I've had more in recent years but I think maybe I've earned the right to be... it's different now. I've played with a lot of my childhood heroes in recent years. Macca, Ray Davies, Ron Wood, Kenney and Mac from the Small Faces. But there wasn't that same vibe then. I don't think they were scared of punk, but they were very protective of the territory they'd built, which doesn't make sense to me. You've got to embrace the youth. Without them, you don't exist anyway, so what the fuck? Someone's got to take rock'n'roll on to the next generation. I'm quite conscious of that, but I don't feel threatened by The Strypes or something. It isn't like that.

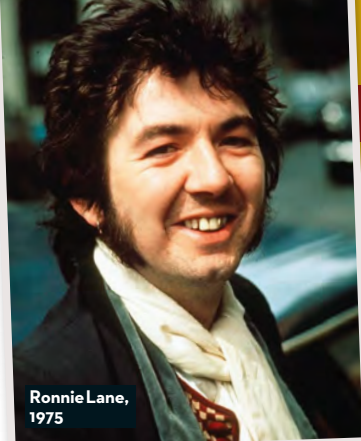
As you get older, is it reassuring that artists like Paul McCartney and Ray Davies are still making records into their sixties and seventies? Yeah, definitely. I've seen Paul McCartney two or three times in recent years, and he was fucking great. I saw the Stones at the O₂ a couple of years ago, that was the first time I've seen them. They were great. But why shouldn't they continue making music? All that 'year zero' with punk was just bullshit. I'm in it for the long haul. If there's a jazz sax player who plays until they fall off the stage, that's kind of romantic and appreciated. But why shouldn't the rock'n'rollers do that as well? John Lee Hooker doing his last gig, then going home and dying. Play up until the time you die. I never thought I'd get to 56. But it happens really quickly. 15 years since the last greatest hits. Where's that gone? I'm aware you don't get very long. I used to think you did, but you don't. So you've got to pack as much in as you possibly can. I'd like to leave a big body of work when I go, for subsequent generations or whatever. Just as we pick up a book written by someone from 200 years ago, or a record made in the 1940s and get something from it. I hope I'll be part of that as well, if that's not too lofty.

So who do you consider your peers these days? I don't really. I've got more in common with people who are much younger than me. Who would be my peers?

Who's left from the class of '77? Lydon, Mick Jones, Siouxsie... I don't relate to any of those people. Not because I dislike them, or their music, but they don't feel like peers to me. They haven't been consistent enough for me to regard them as peers, to be quite honest with you. I've wanted to keep working, but from a very practical point of view I've had to keep working to keep things on the road. Through work, you find yourself as well – or in my line of work anyway.

So what do you think you've learned about yourself through your work? Bloody hell! It's a bit early for that sort of thing. Although my songs are not wholly biographical, I think there's always little bits of yourself you expand on. There's always one or two lines, it might take me a long time to realise, but they say something about how I was at that time. Not even big, traumatic things, but your general relationship with the world and how you're feeling.

Have you ever wanted to write more overtly autobiographical songs? I have done, but I don't always do that. I wouldn't have enough to fucking say, really.



Ronnie Lane, 1975

FOR PLONK

"HIS INTENTIONS WERE SWEET AND NOBLE..."

More Modern

Classics opens with "He's The Keeper", the track Weller wrote in memory of one of his heroes...

“IT STARTS IN 1999 with a song I wrote for the late, great Ronnie Lane, so undervalued at the time but perhaps less so in the last 15 years, where we have seen Ronnie and the Small Faces reappraised and lauded, and rightfully so. There have been more books and boxsets and articles about the man and band in recent years than in the last 45 years since the split, and as a fan, I'm grateful for that.

"It's a good place to start, for his intentions were sweet and noble and a shining example for any songwriter of merit. He died potless and quietly and we can only hope he now looks down and smiles at the fine example he set down. He might have found the plaudits amusing but the royalties would have been fucking handy!"

You've lived a full life... Absolutely, yeah. But who'd want to write songs about your life all the time? It would bore me that, anyway. Often songs are born out of a little idea, that might come from myself and I explore that. Other times, I'm just writing words and I don't know what they mean.

Is there a recent example you can think of?

"Landslide"... I like the shape and sound of the words, but I wasn't particularly thinking what they meant, then after singing it for a little longer, I thought it was my own take on getting older. Me looking at my mortality. But I don't think those things are always apparent until some time later. You can have part of a song written by your subconscious mind and the rest is very conscious because you've got to try and fucking finish it. Unless you're so inspired you don't even stop to think about it, before you know it you've written them. But they don't happen all the time.

What about your autobiography. Would you ever consider that?

Yeah. But with a science-fiction theme to it. Set in space, or something.

It's the 30th anniversary of Red Wedge next year...

Don't tell me! There's a boxset coming out? A live album?! Sorry, go on...

...I wondered whether you thought there was a voice of protest in music today? Not one that's

detectable to my ears. I'm not hearing it. Maybe the closest I hear it is some UK rappers or some grime artist or something.

As someone who once was a serious young man, does that trouble you? We live in a different time, though, don't we?

But you've written songs in recent

"All that 'year zero' with punk was just bullshit, I'm in it for the long haul"



Clash of the titans: Weller and Mick Jones, August 2012



All mod throngs: The Jam at London Royal College Of Art, April 29, 1977

Still a heavy soul: Weller in February 2014



20 years like “7&3 Is The Striker’s Name” or “Wake Up The Nation” that felt like they were angry about the state of things. Yeah, they were angry. But I don’t hear that same anger anywhere else. Is it just because we live in a different political time? The same shit goes on. It’s just the face of it has changed. It’s hard to tell the difference between them. They’re all Etonians, same schools, blah blah blah. The same old people control everything. Money people, the royals. Does that ever change? I don’t think so. But

a lot of things have changed since Thatcher. The strength and pride of the working classes have changed. People being able to buy their council houses, splitting up communities, we’re still reeling from those effects, aren’t we, 30 years later? A few years back, they were saying that the state of our society was down to the free love people of the ‘60s. But it’s just fucking nonsense. I would say most of it you can trace back to the late ‘70s and Thatcherism. Her policies have defined things since. You were either for her or against her. But can you say that with Cameron, or Tony Blair? I wouldn’t be able to tell the difference between the two, policy-wise or as people. The same with Miliband. They’re not strong enough characters. Even though I try and stay in touch with what’s going on, I don’t know if people think they’ve got a voice any more. Who speaks for the normal people? I’m not talking about pop groups, I mean politically. There’s no-one representing the majority of the people. The unions were pretty much dismantled by Thatcher, so who speaks for those people now?

In what ways do you think you’ve improved as a songwriter and musician? I’m a better singer. I’m a better player, I think. I’m more focused. Not in a muso way, but I’m trying to improve. As a songwriter? I don’t know. I think I’ve been fairly consistent with my tunes. I’m not saying they’ve all been great, but they’ve been consistent. I think I’ve still got something to say, not about politics but I think

I’ve got something to say in song. As a personal thing, as a vocalist, I think I’ve improved. My voice is stronger, I’ve still got my range.

You’ve got 40 years of music behind you. Is the best yet to come? I’d like to think it is. When I listen to the compilation, I still think the latter stuff is better. But then, I don’t know if that’s just because I always like what I’m doing at the time, than if it’s genuinely better. I prefer the sound of the new stuff to the stuff that was made at the other end of the album. I’d like to think it could get better, yeah. It gets harder to

put new stuff on people, because we’re all getting older. The older people get, they generally stick to what they know or what they’re familiar with, don’t they? It’s pretty true in life, isn’t it, whether it’s routine or music or TV. I would like to get the rest of my generation to not be like that, to not be afraid of the new. It’s a symptom of old age when you start saying, “It’s not as good as it used to be.” Our parents said it, and their parents, so I don’t know how much truth is in that. It’s just a

perspective, and feeling safe with something you are familiar with. But if I can in any way change that, that would be quite an achievement, wouldn’t you say? I’m not scared of the

new. For all of my love of the ‘60s, be it clothes or music, I still wouldn’t want to be living in any other time but now. If I had a time machine, maybe I might go back to 1964 to the Flamingo and see Stevie Wonder, but I wouldn’t want to stay there. I like the modern. There’s so many dark forces trying to drag us back into the dark ages, globally, I mean, as well. We’ve got so many fantastic opportunities now with technology, and it’s such a fucking shame we can’t make it work for the world. You could, though. It’s only greed that will stop it. The invisible one per cent or whatever who control the planet, the establishment. Maybe it’s because I’m a mod but I like the modern world. Economics aside, culturally we’re a much better nation, aren’t we? My missus and I were doing some shopping in Westfield yesterday, and there was every type of person, all colours, all races. But I still had this overwhelming feeling that this is England, this is our country. Even though the shopping centre is a tiny microcosm of our society, that’s the future. That probably wouldn’t have happened 30, 40 years ago. So I try and look for those things that I think are the positives in life. We’re multicultural, we’re not as racist or as xenophobic as we used to be, or homophobic. We’ve got to fight against all that. And on that note, I could be a politician. ☺

More Modern Classics is released on June 2



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THE NEW
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ALBUM

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'Merchant's first album of original recordings
in 13 years is a stonker.'

Mojo ★★★★★

'An alluring mix of the political and the
personal. The arrangements are reserved
and understated throughout, gently cradling
Merchant's strident but intimate voice.'

Uncut

'Merchant's artistry remains formidable.'

fRoots ★★★★★

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ALBUM BY ALBUM

Black Sabbath

“We thought we were Pink Floyd meets The Beatles meets acid!” says Ozzy Osbourne...

OZZY OSBOURNE is in high spirits as he calls from Los Angeles. “I’m having the time of my life,” he says, revelling in the success that has greeted the reformation of the classic Black Sabbath lineup for a new album and tour. “We’re having a fucking blast,” he adds. “We played the Hollywood Bowl last Sunday. The last time we played there it was a fucking disaster. It was 42 years ago: we had to cut the show short because we were all going to pass out from drug overdoses.”

Not this time. The only downside for fans is the absence of Bill Ward (with whom an agreeable deal could not be struck). But all is not lost, Ozzy says, as he prepares to look back on his nine albums with Black Sabbath. “In the future, all three of us would love to have Bill up there...”



Ozzy in the studio: “We had the Egon Ronay map of coke dealers!”



BLACK SABBATH

VERTIGO, 1970

The black and blues. The newly christened Sabbath rock out, pretty much live. OZZY OSBOURNE:

We were made by Jim Simpson... he used to have a club, Henry’s Blues House. We used to carry our equipment around in case someone didn’t turn up, and say, “We’ll play”. We started off as a blues/jazz band like Ten Years After, or Jethro Tull: the hip crowd.

TONY IOMMI: “Black Sabbath” was the second song we’d written, so we called ourselves that.

GEEZER BUTLER: The first time we played “Black Sabbath” was in this tiny pub in Lichfield near Brum. The whole pub went mental.

OZZY: The first one was a live album with no audience. The manager said, go to this place Regent Sound... we’d never been into a studio before. We did the album in about 12 hours and then went to do a residency in Switzerland...

GEEZER: [Producer] Rodger Bain was like a fifth member of the band. We’d been to six different record companies and producers, and they’d all told us, “Come back when you can write proper music.” Rodger was the first person on the business side who understood what we were trying to do. He just said, “Play what you do live.”

OZZY: When we come back from Switzerland, Jim said, “Come in and I’ll play you your finished album.” It had a gatefold sleeve and started with all this thunder and lightning – it blew my mind.

GEEZER: I loved the cover – but I didn’t like the inverted cross on the inside. It was the first time we’d had something to take to our parents and show we were doing something constructive.

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



PARANOID

VERTIGO, 1971

The classic second album. An apogee of Iommi riffing, a whiff of Satan, and a hit single, too...

OZZY: *Paranoid* went from four tracks to 16 tracks. 16 tracks! The temptation was to fuck around with effects: we thought we were Pink Floyd meets The Beatles meets acid, y’know?

TONY: There was no-one doing this sort of thing. A lot of people were honestly frightened of us in the early days. We weren’t allowed to do interviews either, which made it more interesting in some ways. The image was built up by people talking... this satanic sort of thing.

GEEZER: We’d written “War Pigs” already. It was called “Walpurgis” back then. When the label wanted to know what the next LP would be called, we said we’d got a song called “Walpurgis” and we wanted to call it that. They said, “What does that mean?” And we said, “It’s

Satan’s Christmas.” They said, “No, thank you.” **TONY:** You get labelled as a black magic band and all that rubbish, but it was a more about what was going on in the world. “War Pigs” came up when we were playing at this club in Zurich and we had to play seven 45-minute spots a day. We hadn’t got enough songs, so we used to just make stuff up. And “War Pigs” was one of the things I just made up. Gradually, through the six weeks we were at the club, it took shape and we ended up with the song.

GEEZER: The very last thing we did in the studio was “Paranoid” – we had three minutes to fill for it to be a legal album. Tony wrote the riff, I quickly did the lyrics. Then the record company heard it and changed the whole title to *Paranoid*.

TONY: The album wasn’t long enough, and that’s how “Paranoid” came about. We’d never written a two-and-a-half minute song. I started picking around, had it in a couple of minutes, we learnt it and recorded it. I didn’t think for a minute it was going to be a hit.

GEEZER: After *Top Of The Pops*, we were getting teenage girls coming to the gigs. They were climbing onstage and molesting us while we played. That was the good part. But we knew that if we carried on like that, we’d just be another pop band. So we said, “No more singles.”

OZZY: I could afford to have a bath and put some smelly stuff on. It was just a great period of my life. The early days are always the best. I remember being in a club in Birmingham and posing around like the new child of rock, then the manager comes up to me and says, “Your album’s going in the charts at 17 next week.” I said, “Pull the other one!”



None more Black: the original and best Sabbath lineup: (l-r) Geezer Butler, Tony Iommi, Bill Ward and Ozzy Osbourne

BLACK SABBATH MASTER OF REALITY

MASTER OF REALITY

VERTIGO, 1971

The band's last with Rodger Bain. Slow, heavy – a downtuned stoner's choice.

TONY: We had to come up with stuff on the spot – we'd been touring so much on the *Paranoid* album, by the time we'd got to the studio we'd not had much time to come up with stuff.

OZZY: By that time, we were all so stoned I can't really remember it. People often say to me, what advice would you give to young bands? I always say write as much shit as you can. If you get a hit – you've then never got enough time to write any stuff.

GEEZER: We were all doped out of our heads by then. That's how we formed. When I first met Tony and Bill, Bill asked me, "Do you know where I can get any dope?" and I said, "It just so happens I've got a big lump of it in my pocket."

TONY: Ever since I had my finger accident, I've had to experiment to develop things. So downtuning was another example of that. I went through a period of trying different tunings. It was a bit of a breakthrough.

GEEZER: The third album took us about 10 days to record. I thought it was the heaviest album we'd done so far. We knew we were accepted: we were big in the States, big in the UK. It just gave us more confidence.

OZZY: We used to smoke dope before we became successful – a five-bob deal, and we'd just go behind the shed and smoke a joint. But we all tried to stay away from heroin, cocaine and all that.

Black Sabbath Vol 4

VOLUME 4

VERTIGO, 1972

The band set up shop in America. Contains the mighty "Supernaut" and scenes of drug use.

TONY: We'd moved out to California. We had all

the gear set up in the bar and we just had a great time playing and doing lots of coke. It was very much influenced by the coke.

GEEZER: It was a bit nuts at the house. We had all these mad fights with hoses and stuff. It was the first time we'd all lived together, and the first time we'd got into cocaine.

OZZY: Drugs became a part of Sabbath. We had the Egon Ronay map of cocaine dealers.

GEEZER: It was all the top dealers we were getting, so they'd come with bodyguards, armed with machine guns. They'd come up with these soap powder boxes filled with cocaine.

OZZY: We were originally going to call that album 'Snowblind' – if you look in the sleeve you can see we thank the "COKE-Cola company of Los Angeles". People think it was a spelling mistake. I look back on it, and say, "Why am I still alive?" When you write on cocaine, you think everything you write is magic, but there was so much of that shit we never used.



SABBATH BLOODY SABBATH

WORLD WIDE ARTISTS, 1973

The band stretch scaly wings: castles, funk, riffs... Rick Wakeman!

TONY: We'd done the

same thing – we went to the same house, the

same studio, but it just wasn't working out.

GEEZER: We thought it might be the end. We got to LA, and they'd changed the studio. Stevie Wonder had bought half of the studio and put a synth in there. What you do on your laptop now took a whole studio then.

TONY: We ended up starting again in England. We went to Clearwell Castle in Wales. We wanted to create a vibe, so we rehearsed in the dungeons.

OZZY: We used to play tricks on each other, and pretend the castle was haunted. We'd have a few beers and then plant a bug in someone's room and start making noises, like fucking schoolkids.

GEEZER: Tony said, "Let's give it one more try." And he came out with the "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath" riff, and we just went, "Yes!" We stretched ourselves a bit on that one... we needed to. We'd learned a lot more musically. Rick Wakeman's on it.

OZZY: In my opinion we should have folded after that. By this time, we'd realised the manager was ripping us off: we had lawsuits, and people serving us. That was our last joint effort.



SABOTAGE

NEMS, 1975

A legal matter, baby. Great album, marred completely by m'learned friends.

TONY: It was a funny period for us. We had

a lot of legal trouble: we were switching over from being managed by Patrick Meehan. In the court in the day and at night in the studio. The frustration came out in the music: we had a track called "The Writ".

OZZY: By *Sabotage* we had proof we were being ripped off. Every quid he gave us, he

BLACK SABBATH



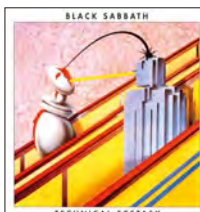
Devil's food cakes: the Sabs celebrate their 10th anniversary in 1978 – "We should have called the album *Say Die!*"

➔ had 20,000 himself. I remember us doing a tour for God knows how many months and he gave us a £1000 cheque. If you've never had £1000, you go, "Wow! A grand!"

GEEZER: One day he said I can't write you any cheques, there's no money in the bank – I've put it all "in Jersey" for you. Then we got the tax bill for the money he'd taken. So we'd not only lost the money, we had to pay the tax on money we didn't have. Then we found out all our houses were in his name.

OZZY: I remember him saying to me one day, "Do you know how much I'm worth, Ozzy? Eight million pounds." That was a lot of money. I should have said, "Most of that's ours, you cunt."

GEEZER: Dealing with the business side of things kind of ended the band from then on. *Sabotage* took 10 months to record – it wasn't any fun any more. We were all turning to drugs and getting stoned the whole time. It was horrible. Luckily the tours still did incredibly well – so we made money off that.



TECHNICAL ECSTASY

VERTIGO, 1976

Recorded at Criterion in Miami, scaring the Eagles along the way.

OZZY: We tried to march forward but we didn't

know how. We'd been beaten up by our own drug abuse and alcoholism, and the music was paying off our tax demands.

GEEZER: It was getting harder and harder to come up with something new and different. It's not like now: if you're a heavy metal band, you put out a heavy metal album. Back then, you had to at least try to be modern and keep up. Punk was massive and we felt that our time had come and gone.

TONY: It was the first time that we asked a keyboard player to join us: Gerald Woodroffe. Then we shipped all the stuff to Florida and recorded it. The Eagles were recording next door,

but we were too loud for them – it kept coming through the wall into their sessions.

GEEZER: Before we could even start recording we had to scrape all the cocaine out of the mixing board. I think they'd left about a pound of cocaine in the board. But we we had a good laugh on that album.

TONY: It was like paradise there. You'd be on the beach and you'd say, "Are you coming down the studio?" and they'd say, "In a couple of hours."

GEEZER: The nearest pub was a strip bar: a lot of old blokes with dirty mags on hanging around outside in the 90° Florida heat. It was walking distance from the studio so we'd go down and have a beer. There'd be completely nude women dancing in front of you. It seemed quite weird to us. That's where "Dirty Women" came from.



NEVER SAY DIE

VERTIGO, 1978

Winter is coming. Ozzy returns, to a freezing reception.

GEEZER: It should have been called *Say Die*. Ozzy quit, we got in this other singer, Dave Walker, who wasn't the right choice for the band. We'd booked this studio in Toronto, The Stones had just done their album there and were saying it was the best place in the world, so we thought maybe that would inspire us.

TONY: Ozzy came back but wouldn't sing any of the songs we'd done with Dave Walker. So we had to go to Toronto with no songs. We had to hire a cinema, freezing cold in the winter, to write songs to record that night.

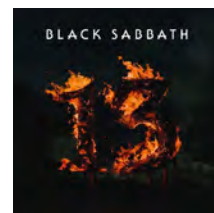
OZZY: We wrote the songs up where the screen was. Yeah, you really want to get into some heavy metal at nine in the morning.

GEEZER: The label had given up on us. The first night in Toronto we went into this restaurant and no-one had any cash. I'd brought \$20, and paid for the food. We had one cent left and left it for the waiter. He chased us down the street.

TONY: I'm amazed we managed to pull anything

out of the hat. With "Never Say Die" we ended up on *Top Of The Pops*, something we never thought we'd do again. But the writing was on the wall for the band. Ozzy just lost interest.

OZZY: When I was sacked, I thought I'm gonna go back to the hotel room and have the biggest party for as long as I got the dough, and go back to the real world. Then along the way Sharon comes along and says, "We want to manage you." I said, "You want to manage me?" And she said, "We believe in you."



13

VERTIGO, 2013

It is risen! Rick Rubin reconnects Sabbath with its younger self.

GEEZER: We did have a few worries at first. But the difference between this time and the last time we tried to do an LP in 2001 was that Tony had about 80 riffs written. So it gave us a great starting point. When we met with Rick Rubin he gave us the direction.

OZZY: I've known Rick for many years and every time I see him, he says, "If you do a Sabbath album with the original guys, I want to be the producer." So he says to me, "I don't want you to think about heavy metal." And I said, "What the fuck are you talking about? We invented it!"

TONY: Rick wanted to go back to the basics of the raw sound, with few overdubs. We were up for a go at that, but it's hard to go back when you've tried to get a new sound going.

OZZY: We'd say, "We're just warming up." He'd say, "That's what I'm after!" One time I wasn't even singing words, just filling the holes – that's what ended up on the album. He used ProTools like we used to use a four-track – he didn't load it up with fake effects. What you get is what we played, with just a few overdubs. He captured the spirit of early Sabbath. **Ⓢ**

Black Sabbath will play British Summer Time at London's Hyde Park on July 4



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Ernie K-Doe, Irma Thomas, Lee Dorsey,
The Meters, Frankie Miller, The Band,
Little Feat, “Lady Marmalade”,
Hurricane Katrina and...

ALLEN TOUSSAINT

Ladies & gentlemen, The Patron
Saint of New Orleans looks back

Story: Richard Williams

Photograph: Barry Morgan

A LLEN TOUSSAINT ARRIVED a few minutes early for the interview, which was no surprise. Fastidious would be one word to describe the great New Orleans songwriter, pianist, arranger, producer and singer. Standing to attention in the foyer of his London hotel, immaculate in an outfit featuring a subtly checked sports jacket, orange and yellow striped tie with a matching handkerchief in his breast pocket and the smart black sandals he had worn for his performance at Ronnie Scott's the previous evening, his luxuriant grey hair and moustache immaculately styled, he looked the picture of senior-citizen elegance.

He is 76 now, and it is almost 10 years since he lost his house, his recording studio and all his belongings to the destructive power of Hurricane Katrina. A two-year exile in New York enabled him to rediscovered himself as a performer, entertaining the Sunday brunch crowd at Joe's Pub. His solo act is a relaxed wander through some of the highlights of a career that began in the 1950s, saw him making hits with such hometown stars as Lee Dorsey, Benny Spellman, Irma Thomas and Jessie Hill, welcoming famous clients to his Sea-Saint studio and collaborating with the likes of The Band, Paul Simon, Paul McCartney and Elvis Costello. He is now back home, demonstrating that his musical powers are unimpaired. As, indeed, is his memory.

UNCUT: You played some boogie woogie last night, which must take you back to your beginnings as a piano player.

TOUSSAINT: Oh, yes. We all loved boogie woogie when I was coming up. Once we got to boogie woogie we thought we had arrived at a good place –

it sounded very energetic, very masculine, like a rite of passage. As far as boogie woogie was concerned, it was [Albert] Ammons. Then a little later on Pinetop [Smith]. I knew a couple of his pieces, like “Pinetop's Boogie Woogie”. That was an anthem.

Were your parents musical? Not my mother, although she loved opera and classical music. But my father, before I was born, he was a weekend trumpet player. He played in a big band, but he played it strictly off the page. He wasn't a cat who could scat. But I was the third of three children and he couldn't support us playing music, so he became a railroad mechanic – and he was very good at it.

Did you sing in church? I was brought up very Catholic – a lot of Bach and classical music. But I heard a lot of gospel music in the baptist and holy-roller churches around the neighbourhood, and I fell in love with it, just like boogie woogie.

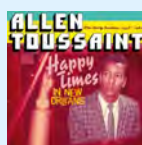
Encountering Professor Longhair's music was an important stage in your development.

I first heard Professor Longhair on record, and I thought, ‘Good heavens – this is the way I want to go.’ I knew he was from New Orleans, but I wasn't of an age where I could be where he was performing. All the kids around who tinkered with the piano, we all tried to play like Professor Longhair. One kid would have a few more notes of his music than the rest, and we'd feed off each other. So we came up as his disciples. My mother listened to Strauss and so on, so I heard that, and on the radio there was a lot of hillbilly music with the tinkling saloon pianos, and I loved that, too. It wasn't hard to get that kind of sound, once you knew the formula. And I loved ➔

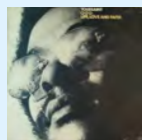




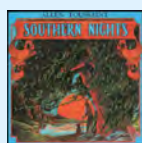
FIVE TOUSSAINT ALBUMS

**HAPPY TIMES IN NEW ORLEANS:
THE EARLY SESSIONS 1958-60****SOUL JAM, 2012****7/10**

Early instrumental and vocal tracks, mostly with Fats Domino's sidemen, including "Java", which became a hit for Al Hirt.

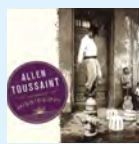
**LIFE, LOVE AND FAITH****WARNER BROS, 1972****7/10**

Contains the great "Soul Sister" and the original version of "On Your Way Down".

**SOUTHERN NIGHTS****WARNER BROS, 1975****8/10**

An extended version of the title song forms the climax of Toussaint's current live show. Also

contains the much-covered "What Do You Want The Girl To Do".

**THE BRIGHT MISSISSIPPI****NONESUCH, 2009****9/10**

Joe Henry supervised these glowing instrumental versions of "St James Infirmary", "West End Blues" and other American standards, with an ace band including guitarist Marc Ribot and saxophonist Joshua Redman.

**SONGBOOK****ROUNDER, 2013****8/10**

Recorded live, this displays Toussaint's recently developed talents as a solo entertainer, with lashings of great New Orleans piano.

polkas. So I just found myself having equal respect for all of the genres, and everything I heard, I began trying to play.

When did you become aware that New Orleans was a hotbed of music? I don't know. Me and [guitarist] Snooks Eaglin and some of the local guys started a band called the Flamingos. I was 13 or 14. Parallel to us was the Hawkets with Art Neville, who always had a good little band. We were too young to play in the clubs, but out of town we were playing all kinds of places that we were really too young to be in, but we got away with it. In town we played at schools – sock-hops, proms, those kinds of things.

Did it ever cross your mind to become anything other than a musician? Never. I told myself that very early on. My mother was very happy about it. In fact, when she saw I had such an interest, at about eight years old she enrolled me in the junior school of music at Xavier University. I had about seven or eight lessons before she gave up and said: "It's too late. The boogie woogie's got him."

As you ventured into the city's music scene, did you have mentors? I latched on to Dave Bartholomew. He had hits with Roy Brown and Fats Domino – a whole string of million-sellers – and he called me in to play on a few recordings. I saw the bigger picture by being near him: the way he moved about, the way he walked across the room, the way he spoke with folk – and he was very outspoken, very bold in whatever he had to say.

And, as Fats Domino's bandleader and songwriter and as a talent scout for Imperial Records, he must

"I had a few music lessons then my mother gave up. 'Too late, the boogie woogie's got him...'"



have provided a template for your career. Yes. We were called A&R men, although there was more to it than that. He was a producer and a trumpet player and he had a big band, which was exciting because few people could afford a full complement of horns and rhythm. And he was a good writer.

How did Joe Banashak and Larry McKinley invite you to take that role at Minit and Instant Records in 1960?

They were holding auditions at a radio station where Larry McKinley was a very important deejay. Most of the kids who were auditioning knew that I would know the songs of the day, so I played behind several of them. And at the end of that day, the guys who owned the company called me and asked me if I would consider to come and be their music man, producer, or whatever you want to call it, until they got their permanent guy, who they thought would be Harold Battiste. But Harold was busy with other projects at the time, and within the week we began making records. They were very satisfied with me and I was elated to be with them, so when Harold didn't return, I stayed with them.

You had many hits for Minit/Instant with Jessie Hill, Ernie K-Doe, Benny Spellman and Irma Thomas, recorded at Cosimo Matassa's studio. That first day of auditioning, Jessie had a demo of "Ooh Poo Pah Doo", minus the piano. He was a Professor Longhair devotee in every way: the vernacular, the ideology, Jessie loved everything about him. Ernie was a very theatrical character. He thought James Brown had his spot in life, and he could not stand it. He liked to shout and carry on, and sometimes it was a little hard to tame him without breaking him – because you certainly don't want to break an artist. But he was a very good entertainer. Benny loved to sing, and he considered himself a romantic balladeer. But his biggest fame came after he sang the lower line on "Mother-In-Law". It gave him more confidence and we went on to record songs on him as well. Irma was the only gal among the guys at that time. She would sing backup, and she had such a powerful and distinctive voice that I had to put her way in the background – because once you hear her, you might miss the main artist. Her voice inspired me to write songs. It still does.

Your longest string of hits with a single artist was with Lee Dorsey. How did you meet? I was called to play on a record of his called "Lottie Mo". Harold Battiste was the

arranger. We rehearsed it out in Thibodaux, Louisiana at a place called the Sugar Bowl, and it was such a happy sound, so wonderfully energetic, that I fell in love with it. A few years later we teamed up and started doing things together. We spent much time together out of the studio, as well. We would go to clubs, we rode Harley-Davidsons together, and we raced Cadillacs. We had a good time. He had a happy voice and he wasn't too cool to sing a humorous song. You would never write "Workin' In The Coal Mine" for Luther Vandross or Teddy Pendergrass. But you could write that for Lee Dorsey, or "Ride Your Pony". And a more serious song, like "Freedom For The Stallion". Because all the songs he did, I wrote them for him.

Your songs almost always have a strong and original idea in the lyric. Does that come before the melody?

LIFE, LOVE
AND FAITH

1938 Born in Gert Town, New Orleans, Louisiana
1951 Forms his first band, The Flamingos, with

guitarist Snooks Eaglin
1955 Attracts attention while performing at the Dew Drop Inn, New Orleans, and deputises for Huey "Piano" Smith with Earl King's band
1957 Plays piano on backing-track sessions for

Fats Domino and Smiley Lewis while they are on tour, and arranges Lee Allen's instrumental hit "Walkin' With Mr Lee"
1958 Records first album, *The Wild Sound Of New Orleans*, for RCA. "Java" later covered by Al Hirt

1960 Becomes Minit A&R man: produces Jessie Hill's "Ooh Poo Pah Doo", writes and produces Aaron Neville's "Over You"
1961 Writes and produces Ernie K-Doe's "Mother-In-Law", and produces The Showmen's "It

Will Stand"
1962 Writes and produces Irma Thomas' "It's Raining" and Benny Spellman's "Lipstick Traces"/"Fortune Teller"
1963 Writes and produces Irma Thomas' "Ruler Of My Heart"



Swiss Orleans: Dr John and Toussaint performing at the Montreux Jazz Festival, Switzerland, July 1, 1973



Elvis Costello and Allen Toussaint, 2006

The plot usually comes first. And of course the artist has a lot to do with it. Many times I wait until the artist is near and I can see them, see how they feel about themselves, how they would like to feel about themselves. So the storyline always comes first. But usually a little music comes along with it.

You were doing military service from 1963-65. Were you aware that bands in Britain had started to perform and record your songs during that time, like The Rolling Stones with "Fortune Teller"? Not at first. It was many years after those things were done that I learnt about it, because I was always so busy on the next thing that I was doing, and I hadn't paid attention to that, even if it was on the royalty statement – because I never look at the statement myself. Someone else does that. With The Rolling Stones, I guess it was five or six years later on. I was really glad to hear about it.

Al Hirt and Herb Alpert had big hits with "Java" and "Whipped Cream", two instrumentals that you'd written in the 1950s – you must have noticed the success of those. Yes, I got those right away. And I was very happy about it.

When you left Minit, you linked up with Marshall Sehorn, who became your business partner.

He was a very Southern guy, and a go-getter. People liked him. He came from the day when you sold the records out of the trunk of your car. He'd take a ride to country stations out in the woods, places that no-one cared about, and he'd wine 'em and dine 'em and promote the records. I'd met him before, when he commissioned me to record Bobby Marchan and then got permission from Minit for me to work with Lee Dorsey. Now he approached me and said, "I'd like to work with you in any capacity." So I said, what about a 50-50 partnership in whatever we do? He was for that. When Cosimo had to close his studio, we opened Sea-Saint.

You had The Meters as your house rhythm section. Art Neville put them together. He always had magic. When I got out of the military in '65 I was walking down Bourbon Street and I heard this really funky stuff going on at the corner of Toulouse and Bourbon, and I went and peeped in and there was Art Neville with some guys I had never seen. We had been friends all my life so I spoke to him about coming into the company. At that time they were called Art Neville and the Neville Sound. When they came to the studio, they decided it would be a co-operative group. We were choosing names. I selected four, and out of those we picked The Meters. It was as magic as everything else he did.

A lot of singers travelled from Britain to record at Sea-Saint: Robert Palmer, Jess Roden, Frankie Miller...

Great people. Frankie Miller – I couldn't get over how soulful this guy was. He was a happy fellow, and when he opened his mouth and began to sing, it was thrilling to me. I could write forever for him. And he's not an imitator. He wasn't trying to be someone else. He just happened to be that soulful.

You started collaborating with The Band, who were steeped in New Orleans music. I went up to Woodstock and arranged the horns for "Life Is A Carnival". I'd never heard ➔

STUDIO GEMS

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BENNY SPELLMAN
"FORTUNE TELLER"
MINIT, 1962

9/10

Every British beat group needed to master this song's descending chords.



THE METERS
"CISSY STRUT"
JOSIE, 1969

10/10

One of the great rhythm sections steps into the spotlight with some pure Second Line funk.



LEE DORSEY
"FREEDOM FOR THE STALLION"
POLYDOR, 1971

10/10

Toussaint's Civil Rights anthem, with a glorious horn arrangement.



LOU JOHNSON
"TRANSITION"
VOLT, 1972

8/10

Toussaint says this is his finest: introspective, complex, eight minutes long.



LABELLE
"LADY MARMALADE"
EPIC, 1974

7/10

This US No 1 brought the funky energy of New Orleans back to the world's dancefloors.

1963-65 Military service with US Army
1965 Begins string of hits written and produced for Lee Dorsey with "Ride Your Pony" and "Get Out Of My Life, Woman"
1969 Produces The Meters' first recordings,

including "Sophisticated Cissy", "Cissy Strut" and "Look-Ka Py Py"
1970 Releases solo album: *From A Whisper To A Scream*
1971 Solo album: *Toussaint*. Provides horn charts for The Band's *Cahoots* and

Rock Of Ages
1972 Solo album: *Life, Love & Faith*
1973 Opens Sea-Saint Studios in New Orleans with business partner Marshall Sehorn. Produces Frankie Miller's *High Life* and Dr John's *In*

The Right Place
1974 Produces Labelle's "Lady Marmalade"
1975 Solo album: *Southern Nights*. Plays on Paul McCartney and Wings' *Venus And Mars*
1976 Appears at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage

Festival, and produces John Mayall's *Notice To Appear*
1978 Solo album: *Motion*
1980 Produces Etta James' *Changes*
1997 Solo album: *A New Orleans Christmas*
1998 Inducted (continues ➔)



Irma Thomas and Toussaint perform for the Hurricane Katrina relief initiative 'Make A Difference Today', October 3, 2005

of them before that. A couple of years later I did the *Rock Of Ages* album, and we had a very good time. They were off the beaten path, but they knew who they were. It wasn't rock and roll as everyone knew it. It was somewhere else.

Little Feat were another band who admired your music.

Lowell George was one of the hippest guys I ever met in my life. And mature beyond his age. He had the philosophy and the wisdom of an old man. But very hip, with the cap on sideways, you know. He was a delight to be around. Also when I was in a moment when I didn't feel good about things, he gave me a couple of words when I needed them the most. He was telling me about me, but it told me so much about him.

Labelle's "Lady Marmalade" was one of Sea-Saint's biggest hits. I didn't write that, of course. I always make that very clear.

Maybe it sounds like I should have written it, but it was written by Kenny Nolan and Bob Crewe, and I arranged and produced it the way I thought it should go. Patti Labelle was pure theatre. She'd lean against the piano and just hum along, and as soon as she did that, you saw the world. She soared. She soared then, and she soars now.

When you made your solo albums in the 1970s, did you envisage a solo career like those of Curtis Mayfield or Marvin Gaye?

I never thought of being a performer. Never. I only recorded myself by request from companies. Marshall would say, 'Well, what would you like us to do?' And they might say, 'What about you giving us an album on Allen?' But my comfort zone is behind the scene. People out front, I expect them to live and breathe that, like I live and breathe what I do. I do this, you do that. That's what I believe.

You escaped Katrina, but you paid quite a price. I had planned on staying but martial law came in and we had to leave. So I went to New York and I spent two years there, the longest I have ever been away from New Orleans. And everything went. Everything except what I was wearing. But I was OK with it when I came back. It dawned on me that

everything had served me well to that point and the future was going to be nice.

How did you acclimatise to New York?

If I had to be any place, that was the place to be. In New Orleans we mosey along. If you stand on the corner in New York you hear 10 different dialects passing and cabs speeding and bright lights flashing. The energy was very good for me.

And you found a place to perform. My business partner in New York and other folk got together and said, "Put this man to work." So I did the Sunday brunch at Joe's Pub and the wonderful thing was that two or three generations would be there in the audience –

grandparents, parents and the little children. That a mother and father would think to bring their child to hear me, that meant something.

Did it rekindle the enjoyment of performance?

No [laughs]. I'd rather have been in the studio. It's another life, centre-stage, although I must say I grew to appreciate it. At first there was so much tension. I thought, "I'm here, but I'm an imposter." But after being there for a while and getting the response from the people, I began to feel differently about it. I thought, 'What we do in the studio is try to reach people, and here they are, reaching me back.' So I began to see it as a two-way street, and now I dearly appreciate it.

"After Hurricane Katrina, I lost everything except what I was wearing..."

The Bright Mississippi featured your piano-playing. Some people might have been surprised to hear you performing the title track, a Thelonious Monk tune.

Joe Henry chose that. He wanted to produce me. I thought he wanted the New Orleans thing, the funk and so on, but he chose these American standards, and I'm so glad he did. He surrounded me with giants and gave me such a smooth avenue to travel on. He thought more of me than I did myself.

Of all your songs, which is your favourite? I would have to say "Southern Nights" – it's like a little movie to me, a story of what happened when I was six or seven,

and every person in the song is real. But if I was going to grade myself as a songwriter, there's one called "Transition". No one would ever know it except me, but it's the most serious.

Which has been the most lucrative? The most covered is "Get Out Of My Life, Woman". I don't know what to make of that. It's certainly not one of my favourites, but I appreciate it.

And nine years after the levees broke, has New Orleans healed itself? New Orleans is doing great. The rebuilding has been wonderful. Things that were rebuilt were built better. Right now there's guys out in Jackson Square blowing their instruments, just as it's always been. Katrina turned out to be more of a baptism than a drowning. ☺

into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame
2005 Flees New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Settles in New York and begins Sunday lunchtime solo concerts at Joe's Pub
2006 Records *The River*

In Reverse with Elvis Costello in London
2007 Returns to New Orleans. Performs with Paul McCartney on Fats Domino tribute album. "Here Come The Girls", written and produced for Ernie K-Doe

in 1970, appears in a Boots TV ad
2008 Performs at Festival New Orleans and NFL Tailgate Party in London. Sugababes' version of "Here Come The Girls" reaches No 3 in UK charts

2009 Instrumental solo album: *The Bright Mississippi*, produced by Joe Henry
2010 Plays on Eric Clapton album, *Clapton*
2013 Solo album: *Songbook*, recorded live at Joe's Pub

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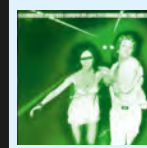
OTIS REDDING
"PAIN IN MY HEART"
VOLT, 1963

9/10 This remodelling of "Ruler Of My Heart", written for Irma Thomas, helped establish Redding's reputation.



LITTLE FEAT
"ON YOUR WAY DOWN"
WARNER BROS, 1973

10/10 Perhaps the band's finest hour in a studio, a note-perfect, soul-deep performance of a philosophical blues.



ROBERT PALMER
"SNEAKIN' SALLY THROUGH THE ALLEY"
ISLAND, 1974

8/10 The achingly cool title track of Palmer's debut, written for Lee Dorsey, re-recorded at Sea-Saint with The Meters and Lowell George.



LOWELL GEORGE
"WHAT DO YOU WANT THE GIRL TO DO"
WARNER BROS, 1979

10/10 Little Feat's singer-guitarist had a special rapport with Toussaint, and this – from his solo album – is the best of several covers of a heartbreakingly bitter-sweet song.



THE POINTER SISTERS
"YES WE CAN CAN"
BLUE THUMB, 1973

8/10 Another Dorsey retreat, a taut David Robinson production that launched the soulful sisters' career.

CHUCK PROPHET



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6th LIMERICK Dolan's Warehouse - 7th GALWAY Roisin Dubh - 10th LONDON SOLD OUT The Lexington
11th WINCHESTER Railway - 12th BRISTOL St Bonaventures - 13th OXFORD Arts Bar (Bullington)
14th NOTTINGHAM The Maze - 15th SHEFFIELD The Greystones - 17th BIRMINGHAM Hare and Hound
18th MANCHESTER Night and Day - 19th LEEDS Brudnell Social Club - 20th GLASGOW Oran Mor
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Apache

BY THE SHADOWS

Cliff Richard's backing band and their seminal 1960 No 1 hit inspired a boom of bespectacled, pre-Beatles guitar groups around the world: "We were fucking enormous!" says Bruce Welch

"I THINK THE SHADOWS and I are overlooked now in the history of British pop," Cliff Richard says, sadly. "People will take it back as far as The Beatles, and you would think the world had just started then."

When guitarists Hank Marvin and Bruce Welch, both 16, arrived in Soho in April 1958, British rock'n'roll was in its infancy. Richard's "Move It" was still four months away. At late-night coffee bars such as the 2i's, teenagers only listened to US releases. "I was trying to copy American rock'n'roll," Marvin remembers, "because their guitar sounds were very different from any British record – Tommy Steele sounded like a jazz player."

Marvin's break came when Richard needed a new guitarist for his backing band, the Drifters. Comprising Welch, bassist Jet Harris and drummer Tony Meehan, this incarnation of the Drifters released several flop singles separate to their career with Richard. After the US Drifters forced a name-change, their first single as The Shadows, "Saturday Dance", established their sound based on vibrato from Marvin's Fender Stratocaster's tremolo arm and an echo-box. "My guitar sound was not like anything we'd heard out of America," Marvin explains.

The instrumental "Apache" ushered in The Shadows' utter domination of the pre-Beatles UK charts. Its American Indian-style drum intro, partly

played by Richard, led into a classic, echoing riff from Marvin, underpinned by Welch's booming, acoustic rhythm guitar. This single gave a new, slightly younger generation of guitarists including Peter Green, Pete Townshend and Jeff Beck British role-models to aspire to. In a curious twist, a 1973 US cover by the Incredible Bongo Band became a key early hip-hop sample. "I was watching some music show," Welch says, "and this guy said, 'Oh, man, The Shadows – they're the godfathers of hip-hop! I went, 'Really?'"

"Apache" created a boom of groups," Welch argues. "The Shadows were fucking enormous. Every lead guitarist had glasses on, like Hank. And that was around the world. And it's all because of that 'Apache' sound." **NICK HASTED**

HANK MARVIN: Bruce and I came down to London with a Newcastle skiffle group called The Railroaders for a talent competition. The group broke up, and we stayed. Soho had Italians and Greeks, so there was this feeling of other-worldliness – it wasn't like anything we knew. And

KEY PLAYERS



Hank Marvin
Lead guitar



Bruce Welch
Rhythm guitar



Cliff Richard
Drums



Joe Brown
Popstar peer

there were prostitutes on street-corners, plus there was a hell of a lot of music going on. The 2i's was not very classy-looking, a simple little coffee bar. There was a door leading down steep stairs into a cellar, which led you to a stage, maybe 18 inches high. And on Friday and Saturday night, you could barely move in there.

JOE BROWN: There was loads of those clubs – the Freight Train, and the Skiffle Cellar. And the 2i's, yeah, everybody played the 2i's. And everyone was drinking Coca-Cola laced with cocaine, or so they tell me. These places in those days were real dives. They were an extension of your mum's front room.

BRUCE WELCH: The cellar was heaving, and very hot, and always full, with lots of people jamming. From April 'til September '58, that was our home. We'd read in the paper that Tommy Steele had been discovered there, so it was the obvious place to go. Everybody was young, and British rock'n'roll was in its infancy.

MARVIN: Some days we didn't have anything to eat, but if you had a couple of pence you could buy



The Strat pack: The Shadows backstage, circa 1960 – (l-r) Jet Harris, Hank Marvin, Bruce Welch, Tony Meehan

two tiny bread buns, not much more than a mouthful, and an Oxo cube, and that could last us two days. The ambition was simply to be able to make a living out of playing music. We didn't have any huge ideas of being stars.

WELCH: We wanted to be like Elvis and Lonnie Donegan and Buddy Holly. I was just desperate to be a rock star. Or a skiffle star. I wanted to be out of Newcastle, and be on the stage. The magic changed when Cliff's would-be manager, John Foster, came looking for a guitarist.

CLIFF RICHARD: "Move It" took off and I had to find a band. The guy who was acting as my manager, John Foster, went into the 2i's and came back saying, "There's this guy who looks like Buddy Holly, and he plays like James Burton." So I said, "Bring them in," and we sang and played in my council house in Cheshunt. Jet [Harris, bassist] joined us on tour, and they knew [drummer] Tony Meehan.

WELCH: We'd never seen a bass guitar, apart from in the hands of Americans at a Jerry Lee Lewis show in '58. Jet bought the first bass guitar in the UK after that. Cliff was very supportive. He just loved the band, and helped us get a record deal. Cliff wanted Hank to sound American, like Ricky Nelson's guitar-player, who we later found out was James Burton, another 16-year-old genius, and that's how Hank ended up with the famous red Strat. Cliff bought it from America for him.

MARVIN: That guitar's whammy [tremolo] bar was like manna for me. I could hit a note, and give

the whammy bar a shake, and get a vibrato. You could let the note sing, almost like a voice. But these guys like Scotty Moore had a twanging sound, using this very short tape-echo, that was very rock'n'roll. And that was something that we couldn't replicate, until I discovered the Meazzi echo-box. We were in Liverpool to meet Gene Vincent at Jack Good's TV show, and Joe Brown took me to one side, and said, "Look, I'm trying this thing out." This little box had this tape echo on –

"For me, Hank Marvin was British guitarists' Elvis Presley"

CLIFF RICHARD

this short, rock'n'roll echo – and I thought, 'Ahh, that's exactly what I want!' To sound like a rock'n'roll guitarist.

BROWN: It was a little thing that you put a tape-loop on, and then you had several heads that picked up various delays on it. I kind of remember giving it to Hank.

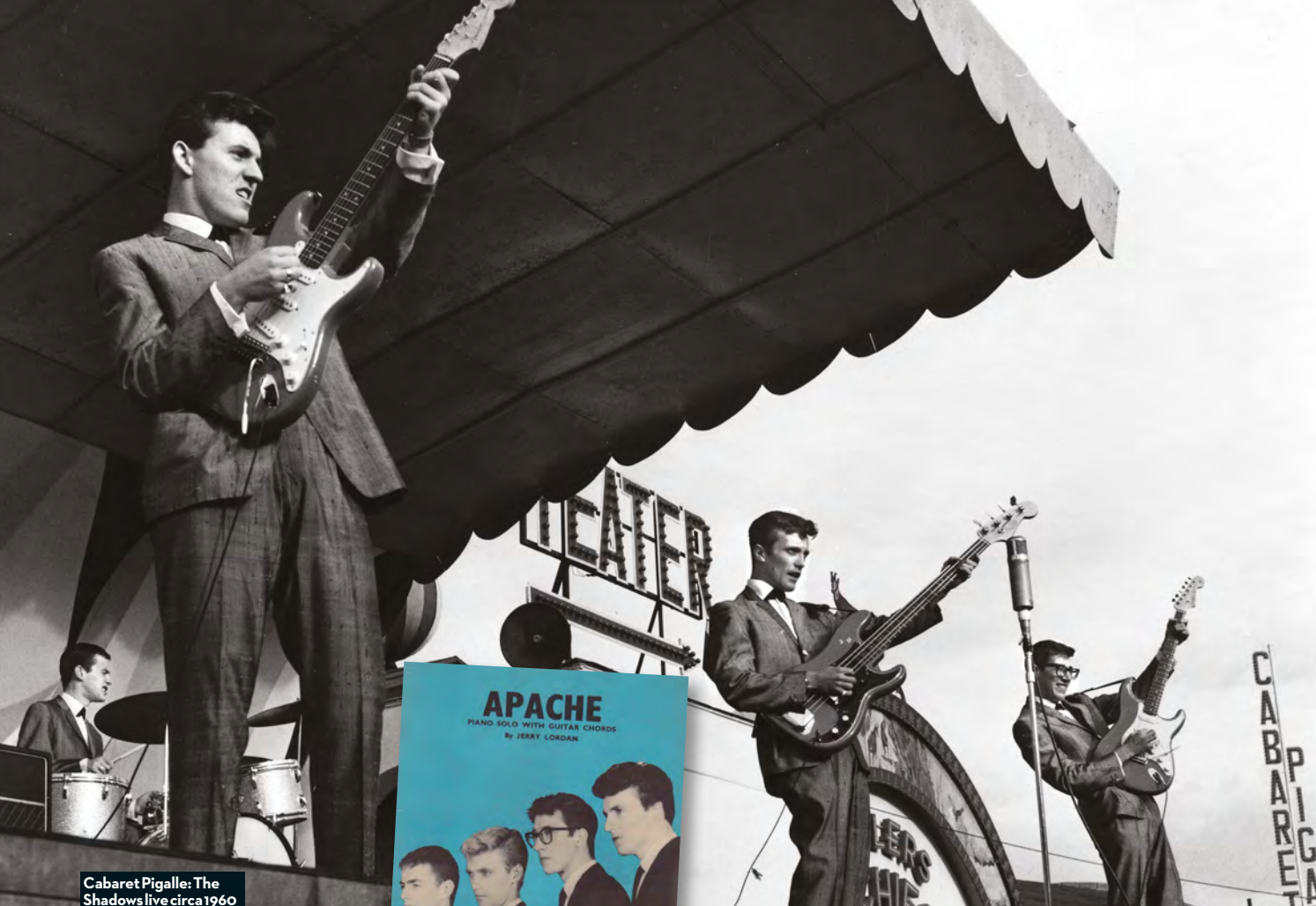
MARVIN: I got one from Vox, and I discovered that it not only had that short tape echo, it had multi-

heads, so you could get multi-tapped, tripping echoes. It created this full, rich sound. So by the time we came across "Apache", I had all these techniques at my disposal.

WELCH: Jerry Lordan was a singer-songwriter who was on our UK tour in April of 1960. We were on the coach, and Jerry said, "Can I play you this tune?" And he went to the back of the bus and got his ukulele. He played "Apache"'s rhythm, and sang the melody.

MARVIN: There was something magic about its atmosphere, even in that very raw, exposed state. We learned it on the bus and in the venues. Then back in London, we arranged it. First of all I came up with the drum introduction, and then CLANG DA-DA-DAAYI-YA, DA-DA-DA-DAH. And I wanted to get some echo on the guitar that gave it a character. It's a multi-tapped echo – it's not too long, but you could hear the multi-taps coming through, and it gives a richness to the guitar sound, and a strange, haunting quality, behind the notes. I wasn't afraid of giving it a lot of echo, because I thought it was such a good and different sound it didn't matter. I was making a statement with this echo. I didn't want to be too discreet with it, because it needed to be almost in your face. You can hear the whammy bar shaking the guitar and getting vibrato, too.

WELCH: We rehearsed it. Then we did an afternoon session at Abbey Road, 2.30 'til 5.30, probably. We started with "Quatermass's Stores", for a couple of hours, with a tea-break. We spent ➔



Cabaret Pigalle: The Shadows live circa 1960



most of the time on that, because [producer] Norrie Paramor insisted it was going to be the A-side.

RICHARD: I said, "It would be really good if I got you some publicity, as 'Cliff's band'", and they said, "Well, you need to play something on it." They found this Indian drum in a closet in Studio 2. And I remember playing that drum on the intro, so that we could genuinely say that Cliff plays on his band's single.

WELCH: I played electric guitar on "Quatermaster's Stores", and all the previous flops. Cliff had bought this beautiful Gibson J200 acoustic, and I borrowed that for "Apache". And suddenly I could hear myself – the acoustic guitar's really clear. It's loud, it cuts through. It's big. It all came together on "Apache".

MARVIN: We loved the title, it sounded bold and strong. And when we were recording it, I was trying to visualise in my mind that sort of Western theme, with the Apaches galloping off then stopping and looking into the distance, and then maybe a horse rearing up. I tried to get this whole visualisation in my mind. It was something I was trying desperately to convey through the way I was playing.

RICHARD: There was something simple about the way we recorded in those days. If I made a record, my voice was the priority, so you always heard every syllable, every breath that I took. In the same way, Hank's guitar is the vocal on that record.

jumping up and down in the studio. Norrie still thought it should be the B-side. He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do, boys" – because he was like our dad, a very gentle and kind older man – "I'll take it home to my daughters, and play it to them." His daughters chose "Apache".

RICHARD: I had a No 1 at the time, "Please Don't Tease", and they knocked me off, the little bastards!

BROWN: It was a special record. People were saying, "Have you heard that?" If you had to compare The Shadows with any other thing, I would say Duane Eddy's guitar instrumentals.

WELCH: Oh, absolutely. But Duane's sound was the bottom three strings, the bass-end of the guitar. Whereas Hank was the king of twang.

RICHARD: It's like Elvis was for me. Hank was British guitarists' Elvis.

MARVIN: People I've met over the years like Brian May, Mark Knopfler and

WELCH: We did seven takes, including four false starts. The folklore is Take 7 was the one. We were all chuffed to bits. Jerry [Lordan] was

Peter Townshend have said to me, "I used to copy all your records." Jeff Beck was here in Perth [Australia, where Marvin lives] recently, and said to his drummer, "This guy's 80 per cent of the reason I'm playing guitar." Always good for the ego...

WELCH: The biggest thing that pissed us off was that we were covered by a Danish guitarist, Jorgen Ingmann. EMI's American arm did a token release of ours before Atlantic properly released his, and he

sold two million records in America. If we'd cracked it with "Apache", we'd have followed it, our other stuff was good enough. Our lives could have been totally different.

RICHARD: I think we were step one. And The Beatles, quite rightly, took it on.

WELCH: "Apache" was nearly three years ahead of The Beatles. And I find it a bit distressing when music journalists think British pop music started in 1963. The great thing for me with the Shadows is, it wasn't copying an American band. With that one

record, "Apache", we created this thing. We did start something, and sometimes it's forgotten, and it pisses me off, to be honest. The band was enormous. And it was a great band. ☺

Hank by Hank Marvin is out June 2 on DMG

FACT FILE

- **Written by:** Jerry Lordan
- **Performers:** Hank Marvin (guitar), Bruce Welch (guitar), Jet Harris (bass), Tony Meehan (drums), Cliff Richard (drums)
- **Producer:** Norrie Paramor
- **Recorded at:** Abbey Road Studio No 2, London
- **Released:** July, 1960
- **UK chart position:** 1

TIMELINE

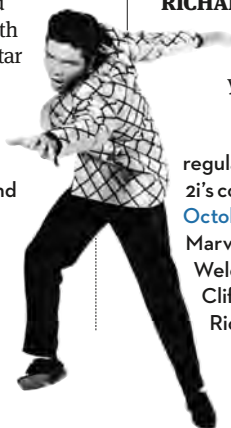
April 1958
Hank Marvin and Bruce Welch arrive in London from Newcastle, becoming

regulars at the 2i's coffee bar
October 1958
Marvin and Welch join Cliff Richard's

new backing band, The Drifters
February 1959 The Drifters' first single without Cliff, "Feelin' Fine", is released
December 1959 They

release their first single as The Shadows, "Saturday Dance"
April 1960 Tourmate Jerry Lordan plays "Apache" to Marvin and Jet Harris

June 17, 1960
The Shadows record "Apache" at Abbey Road studios
July 1960 "Apache" becomes the UK's No 1, for five weeks



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Out of the
wilderness...
Bob Dylan in
New York, 1981



Story: Allan Jones with Damien Love

Photograph: Lynn Goldsmith

SAVED?

As the 1970s draw to a close, BOB DYLAN is embarking on the weirdest and most controversial phase of his storied career. He has embraced Christianity with apocalyptic fervour. His fans, though, are less faithful: “Jesus loves your old songs, too,” notes one infidel.

In the first part of a major new survey, *Uncut* and many of his old collaborators reconsider Dylan’s 1980s, and discover a neglected treasure trove of music. “People felt that Bob disappeared into a kind of black hole. Whereas Bob would say, ‘No: that’s a hole full of light...’”



"Bob was on a mission..."
Dylan onstage with the
Heartbreakers at Wembley
Arena, October 14, 1987

OCTOBER 14, 1987. A couple of nights later, a hurricane roars through the south of England, but it's nothing compared to the inclemency that attaches itself to Bob Dylan's appearance this evening at London's Wembley Arena. Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers are already lined up onstage, waiting for him, when Bob blows out of the wings like something scary out of Revelation, that book of wrath and apocalypse, a wicked messenger, fire in his eyes and blood coming to the boil. He's wearing a bandana around his head, Apache-style, a grubby silk shirt tied in a knot at his waist, weather-beaten leather trousers and jacket, biker boots and fingerless motorcycle gloves.



His arachnid scurry brings him quickly to a microphone, already singing the opening lines of "Like A Rolling Stone". Petty and The Heartbreakers, perhaps not expecting this as the show's opening number, jump to attention like dozing sentries startled by gunfire. There's an all-hands-on-deck bustle about them as they manfully respond to what looks

like being caught on the hop – and not for the first time, you imagine, on a two-year tour of duty with Dylan that most nights have found them on a knife edge, no predicting where from moment to moment Bob's legendary whim will take them [see panel on page 54].

That night at Wembley Arena in October 1987, one of the last dates of the aptly named Temples In Flames tour, storm clouds already massing somewhere and a great wind beginning to stir, Dylan's 15-song setlist is a generous career-span that includes alongside more recent songs from largely unpopular albums crowd favourites "Maggie's Farm", "Forever Young", "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight", "I Want You", "The Ballad Of Frankie Lee And Judas Priest", "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright" and "Chimes Of Freedom". These aren't, however, songs that Dylan revisits happily and few of them bear an exact resemblance to what they

sounded like when the audience first heard them.

The sound that comes to me now when I think of the show is a garage band howl, abrasive, unruly and loud. It's at times cacophonous and ragged enough to make large sections of the audience feel witness to a kind of desecration, Dylan vandalising his own past in what seems as the show goes on increasingly like a conscious attempt to reconnect with songs that by his own later admission had lost all meaning for him by first dismantling them. By the time the set ends with a delirious version of "Shot Of Love" that at one point begins to resemble the calamitous rumble of "Gimme Shelter", and the nightmarish two-chord shriek of "In The Garden", the audience is for the most part palpably aghast.

There's a rippling disgruntlement in the seats around me where many venerable Dylan fans are gathered in muttering disapproval of what's happening, which is as dreadful to them as it is a revelation to me. John Peel about now taps me aggressively on the shoulder and asks if I agree that what we are sitting through is a grim travesty, a reduction of a formerly great artist to abject mediocrity and worse. He's shocked, I'd say even angry, when I contrarily offer a different opinion. He subsequently writes a scathing newspaper review describing Dylan as an irrelevant has-been, an embarrassment to his loyal and now long-suffering fans.

This is increasingly the prevailing view of Dylan. For many at this point in the '80s, Dylan is coming to the end of a dismal decade during which he has found God, embraced messianic evangelism and as a born-again Christian fundamentalist cast himself as a fire-and-brimstone preacher, the stage a pulpit from which he delivers hell-fire sermons about the coming end of the world that have made him seem like a demented crackpot. His faith, it's commonly held, has ruined his music, reduced its former poetry to harsh dogma to a point where it's mostly rejected, at best held up to ridicule. His albums have stopped selling, their rapidly declining sales alarming his label who are as distraught as his audience by the 'new direction' he's stubbornly been determined to follow whatever the cost to a reputation that by now

has also been tarnished by the further embarrassments of the dire *Hearts Of Fire* movie and an appearance at Live Aid in July 1985 whose apparently crass incompetence leaves even staunch admirers cringing in disbelief. As the decade ends, in other words, Dylan is almost universally reviled as hapless, bereft of anything you could call inspiration, creatively bankrupt, in terminal artistic decline, a deluded clown, a religious fanatic unmoored from reality, or what usually passes for it, pathetic and forlorn.

This at least is one way of looking at Dylan in the '80s. What follows is another.

CHRISt COMES TO Dylan in a hotel room in Tucson, Arizona, in November 1978. Bob senses "a presence in the room that could only be Jesus", feels the hand of Christ upon him, his body, in his later account, trembling at the holy touch. "The glory of the Lord knocked me down and picked me up," he subsequently attests. He is ready to be born again, accept Christ as his messiah, in contradiction of the Jewish faith in which he has grown up – and even now will not fully relinquish, as he tries to reconcile Judaism's rejection of Christ as the son of God with the evangelical Christianity he now fully embraces, in which Christ will deliver salvation to the true believer even as the agnostic are eternally damned.

In the years that follow, there's much speculation about the apparent suddenness of Dylan's conversion, as if religion has not been central previously to so much of what he's done. You could point to *John Wesley Harding*, that great album of parable and myth, as perhaps the most obvious manifestation of the Bible's influence on Dylan's writing, but by any reasonable assessment it's no more a singular example than his conversion is the result of unpredictable whim.

In one emerging narrative, Dylan at this time is made vulnerable to conversion by the exhausting mental and physical toll of recent events – a costly and bitter divorce, the nine-month slog of the so-called Alimony Tour during which he would

"Dylan's 1979 tour was like a circus... there was a guy carrying a cross up the street"
FRED TACKETT



Bob and The Boss at the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, 1988

GOD SAVE BOB

'BOB FREED YOUR MIND LIKE ELVIS FREED YOUR BODY...'

Bruce Springsteen inducts Bob Dylan into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, January 20, 1988

"DYLAN WAS A revolutionary. Bob freed your mind the way Elvis freed your body. He showed us that just because the music was innately physical did not mean it was anti-intellectual. He had the vision and the talent to make a pop song that contained the whole world. He invented a new way a pop singer could sound, broke through the limitations of what a recording artist could achieve, and changed the face of rock'n'roll forever.

"Without Bob, The Beatles wouldn't have made *Sgt Pepper*, The Beach Boys wouldn't have made *Pet Sounds*, The Sex Pistols wouldn't have made 'God Save The Queen', U2 wouldn't have done 'Pride (In The Name Of Love)', Marvin Gaye wouldn't have done *What's Going On*, The Count Five wouldn't have done 'Psychotic Reaction', Grandmaster Flash might not have done 'The Message', and there never would have been a group named The Electric Prunes. To this day, wherever great rock music is being made, there is the shadow of Bob Dylan. Bob's own modern work has gone unjustly under-appreciated because it's had to stand in that shadow. If there was a young guy out there writing the *Empire Burlesque* album, writing 'Every Grain Of Sand', they'd be calling him the new Bob Dylan...

"So I'm just here tonight to say thanks, to say that I wouldn't be here without you, to say that there isn't a soul in this room who does not owe you his thanks."

Back on the bus: Bob on the Alimony Tour, Paris, June 16, 1978



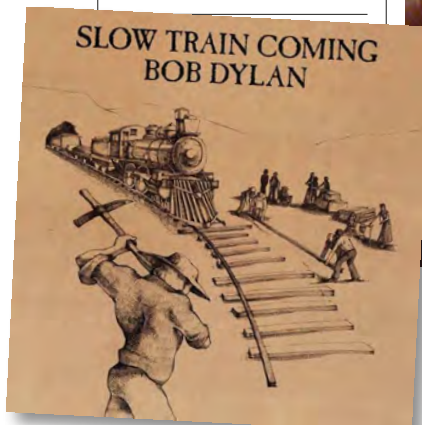
play 114 shows in 10 countries on four different continents. Drugs, a lot of them, and much hard drinking would also play their part in this version of things and make him easily susceptible to the word of the Lord. It should not be forgotten, however, that his band at the time includes several musicians who had already, as they say, 'received Christ' – Steven Soles and David Mansfield, who along with fellow Rolling Thunder revue veterans T Bone Burnett and Roger McGuinn have lately converted to Christianity.

Whatever, Dylan soon commits himself to 14 weeks of intense Bible studies with the Vineyard Fellowship, an evangelical group based in Reseda, in the San Fernando Valley, from which he emerges gripped by the idea of a returning messiah and an unshakable faith in the inevitability of a coming apocalypse, as predicted in the Book Of Revelation, that will only be survived by the truly righteous. For good measure, he is also now wholly convinced that man is born in sin and Satan is everywhere a malign presence. He also has a bunch of songs that give voice to his new beliefs that he now wants to record, hiring Jerry Wexler as producer and a band including Mark Knopfler on guitar that convenes in April 1978 at Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Sheffield, Alabama to record *Slow Train Coming*, a full-blown Christian rock album, the first of three records that test to the point of estrangement his relationship with his audience.

When it comes out in November 1979, the album's religious 'message', the strident

"Every time we did a mix and took it to Bob, he went: 'No. The other mix'..."

CHUCK PLOTKIN



imperatives of "Gotta Serve Somebody", "Slow Train", "Gonna Change My Way Of Thinking" and "When You Gonna Wake Up", is not an immediate concern. Most people are simply relieved that they have a Dylan album that unlike his last, *Street-Legal*, they can listen to without wincing at its plodding production and largely leaden playing. They make *Slow Train Coming* an enormous commercial success that sells more in its first nine months of release than *Blood On The Tracks* does in nearly a decade. "Gotta Serve Somebody" even wins him a Grammy for Best Rock Vocal of the year. Dylan is not yet cast as a crass Bible-thumper, despite the dark murmurings of some critics disturbed by what seems to them a terrible allegiance with the emerging Christian Right, the so-called Moral Majority mobilised by Ronald Reagan, Republican evangelists with sorry views on abortion, gay and women's rights, liberal inclinations of most kinds, to which Dylan now seems also to appallingly adhere.

They listen to *Slow Train Coming* and hear only the harsh word of Dylan's unforgiving sermonising. The album for them was pitiless, cold and austere. Nick Cave, whose favourite album it apparently is, would describe *Slow Train Coming* as "full of mean-spirited spirituality. It's a genuinely nasty record." How could anyone who'd been besotted with the libertarian hipster that Dylan had been relate to the grim prophet of doom now before them? The goodwill that has elsewhere been extended to Dylan and *Slow Train Coming* on its release doesn't go much further. It in fact almost entirely evaporates when Dylan announces that on his upcoming tour he won't be playing any of his old songs, the pre-conversion favourites his audience will be disappointed not to hear, some of them now turning against Dylan.

In November 1979, the *Slow Train Coming* tour opens with 14 shows at the Warfield Theatre in San Francisco with a terrific band featuring Jim Keltner on drums, Muscle Shoals

veteran Spooner Oldham on keyboards, Tim Drummond, who's served time with both James Brown and Neil Young, on bass and lead guitarist Fred Tackett, who's been touring with Lowell George until Lowell's sudden death in June. There's a host of backing singers, too, most of them at one time or another romantically involved with Dylan. The shows in many respects are fantastic, as tapes of the dates serially attest. But there are howls of critical disapproval

EYEWITNESS

'HOLY FUCK, WE'RE GOING TO PLAY "DESOLATION ROW"!'

Benmont Tench on the trials and thrills of backing Bob

"WHEN THE HEARTBREAKERS first got together with Bob," the band's keyboardist, Benmont Tench, tells *Uncut*, "everybody in the band knew at least half the songs he wanted to play although he'd sometimes teach them to you in a different way. And Bob had a lot of covers for us to learn. We learned a massive amount of songs, a million old blues songs, all kinds of things. I don't remember how much the sets actually changed from night to night, but he could throw these things in at any time. He had us learn 'All My Tomorrows', the Frank Sinatra song. And then we never played it – actually, we played it once, one night in a hotel bar – but we never played it onstage until two years later, just outside of Detroit. But we hadn't played it at all between the day we learned it and that night two years later, when we suddenly did it in Detroit.

"Also, there'd be songs that we hadn't learned that he'd throw out on stage. For example, 'Tomorrow Is A Long Time', we did once or twice. But when it first came up was when we were actually walking out

onstage and I said, 'What do you want to do as the slow song this set, Bob?' 'I dunno. Uh, do you know "Tomorrow Is A Long Time"?' I said, 'Damn straight I know it...' 'OK, let's do that.' Or one night in Australia, Bob was over on the far side of the stage and he just started playing chords, showing Howie [Epstein, *Heartbreakers* bass player] how to play something and four chords in, I realised, 'Holy fuck, we're going to play "Desolation Row".' And, you know, in all the mass, extensive rehearsals we had done, we never once played this song. So why not play it for the first time in front of 50 or 60,000 people? And it was terrific. If it's all about staying present in the song, that kind of thing will keep you there."





Dylan during his 14-night stand at the Warfield Theatre, San Francisco, November 1979. Below: Madalyn Murray O'Hair

and elements of the audience are made restless and uncomfortable by Bob's relentless Bible-bashing, song after self-righteous song, and what come to be known as Dylan's 'Jesus raps', fevered sermons about persecution, betrayal and, up ahead, the end of the world.

"Bob was on a mission and we were all doing everything we could to promote it," recalls Fred Tackett. "And there was a combination of different responses. It was like a circus, sometimes. We had Madalyn O'Hair, the famous American atheist, picketing in the streets outside some of the places we played back East. And at the same time, there was a guy dressed up like Jesus carrying a cross up the street. So, out in the street, outside the shows, there was a complete circus going on. The best thing I saw was when we were playing at the Warfield in San Francisco: there was a guy sitting in the front row, and he'd made this big sign: JESUS LOVES YOUR OLD SONGS TOO. I remember seeing that and thinking, 'Yeah, well, good point.'"

DYLAN'S SETS ACROSS the 14-night stand at the Warfield mainly put a spotlight on *Slow Train Coming*, but he also debuts new songs, including "Saved", "Saving Grace", "Covenant Woman", "In The Garden", "What Can I Do For You" and "Hanging On To A Solid Rock Made Before The Foundation Of The World". There are enough of them in fact for a whole new album, which he starts recording in Muscle Shoals on February 11, 1980, with Jerry Wexler again producing with Barry Beckett.

Pathologically opposed to modern recording techniques, unswervingly attached to the idea that his songs are best-served by spontaneity, suffer when they are over-rehearsed and inevitably ruined by overdubs, multiple takes and constant revision, Dylan sets aside a mere four days during a break from touring to make the record.

"*Saved* was done real old-style," says Fred Tackett. "Jerry

Wexler was talking to us about it and he said it was just like when he worked with the Ray Charles band. We were on the road, doing the tour, and we basically just pulled the bus into Muscle Shoals, Alabama, went into the studio for four days, then got back on the bus and drove away. And, you know, Bob's basically saying as we leave, 'Send me a copy when it's done.' He didn't participate in the mix: we recorded the songs, basically live, and then got back on the bus to get to the next show. And, yeah, Jerry Wexler pointed out, that's the way Ray Charles and all those other people would do it, too. There wasn't like some big, months-long preparation, and then months spent in the studio. It was, 'Well, today, we're dropping by the studio, and we're going to record.' That's the way that one worked.

It was a real lot of fun, it was great. It felt kind of historic."

Dylan's first album of the decade, *Saved* is released in May, 1980. Critics and fans agree it's entirely superfluous. They've indulged Dylan one religious album, much as they had allowed the country eccentricities of *Nashville Skyline*. They are not now inclined, however, to accommodate more of the same from an artist not previously known to repeat himself. Reviews are scathing, sales poor.

This is a nadir for Dylan many high-handedly decide on everyone's behalf – even the few who find it demonstrably a more exciting album than either *Slow Train Coming* or the lumpy *Street-Legal*. Such is the contempt in which *Saved* continues to be held that even now such an admission is sure to bring down the wrath of know-it-all Dylan scholars upon the lonely contrarian.

The opening version of the venerable "Satisfied Mind" is genuinely weird, Dylan and his four backing singers murmuring and wailing, a mingling of testifying voices over snatches of scratchy guitar, speculative bar-room piano and military snare drum rolls. It sounds like something made up on the spot and lasts barely two minutes. "Saved" itself is as sensationally rowdy as "Covenant Woman" is dreamily lovely. "Solid Rock", meanwhile, blasts off like something hard-riffing by the

Allman Brothers while "What Can I Do For You" has a warmth and humility entirely absent from *Slow Train Coming*, although the subservience to which Dylan attests is disturbing for a lot of people who have invested so much in Dylan's supremacy and are uncomfortable with this subordinate version. "Pressing On", in John Doe's version one of the highlights of the *I'm Not There* soundtrack, is wonderfully stirring and is even to the unbeliever genuinely uplifting. "In The Garden",

meanwhile, vividly dramatises the arrest of Christ in Gethsemane, from which he was taken for trial and crucifixion, more measured in its telling here than the firestorm it would be in concert.

The album may, however, be best remembered by many – typically, with an unpleasant shiver – for its sleeve, a lurid illustration by Tony Wright based on a dream Dylan had of the bloodied finger of Christ pointing down to the upraised hands of the suffering world. It looked like something you might see tattooed on the back of a serial killer, Robert De



"WE HAD LOTS of rehearsals, but Bob really didn't want us to play his songs so much that we would grab onto specific parts. Because, you know, that's what happens: you play a song 20 times,

pretty soon you work yourself up a little part, and then you just start playing that, you know?"

"He didn't really say, but this is my opinion – he wanted us to be fresh when we played his music. So, we'd come to rehearsal, and he'd give me a record: one time it was a Bee Gees song called 'Israel', and he had the music book, and he said, 'Hey, teach the band this one.' Or another time, we did a version of 'Sweet Caroline', the Neil Diamond song. Oh, we did a version of The Muppets' 'Rainbow Connection' – I'll tell you, it's great hearing Bob singing that, man. So I'd show the band the song, and we'd play it, and Bob would come back in and we'd do it. And he recorded all these things. He had this home studio in the warehouse room he used for rehearsals. I did a recording session with Neil Diamond later, and Jim Keltner and I were both on the date, and Neil Diamond says to us, 'I got this tape from Bob Dylan! It's him doing "Sweet Caroline"! And we're like, 'Yeah – we played on it.' So, yeah, that's the way he rehearsed: to keep us from just beating his music into the ground, we'd beat somebody else's music into the ground. I think it worked really good, too."

'HEY! TEACH THE BAND THIS ONE...'

Fred Tackett on Bob's Bee Gees, Muppets and Neil Diamond covers

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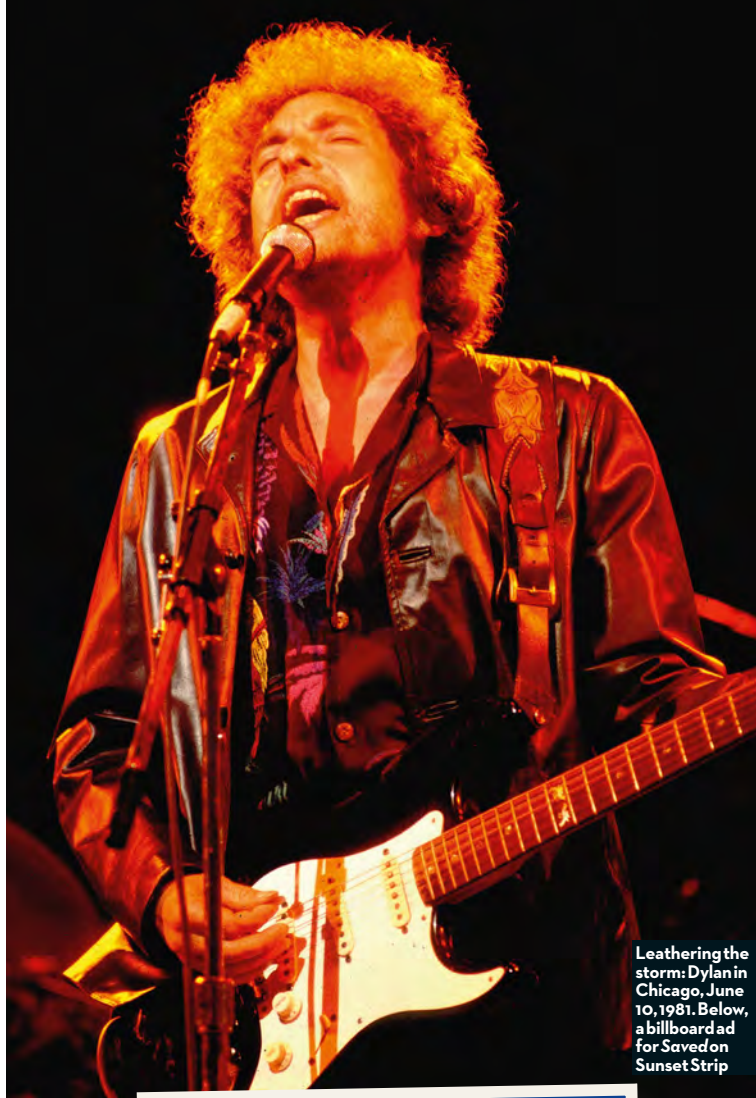
There's slightly better news for Dylan fans who have not been thrilled by the turn of events that has delivered Dylan to God when he goes back on tour and surprises them by relenting on his earlier dedication to playing only post-conversion songs and reassuringly including in his sets a raft of old classics. Was this a tactical retreat on Dylan's part, an attempt to appease disgruntled followers, or early evidence that he too was beginning to find the religious songs confining?

"There was nothing said about it," Fred Tackett recalls. "We just started rehearsing them again at this place he owned in Santa Monica. One day we started playing 'Girl From The North Country' and 'Like A Rolling Stone' and stuff like that. It was just that we'd be doing that instead of 'Saved' or something. But we were still doing those tunes as well, and we were also doing songs from what would be the next record, *Shot Of Love*, which had some more secular songs on it. But I'll tell you, the tour we did then, we played two or three weeks at the Warfield Theatre in San Francisco – we did that twice at the Warfield, first in '79 and then again at the end of 1980 – and the first night of the second time was the first time we came out and we did 'Like A Rolling Stone'. I think we'd done a couple of the religious-style songs first, but when we started to play the intro to 'Like A Rolling Stone' and the crowd started to realise what was going down, people were going, 'Oh, my God...' You could hear the joy from people, just hearing this song – it honestly sent a chill down my spine. That was really, definitely, a big moment in my musical life, being on that stage when he started doing that again. People were just hollering out, you know."

APRIL, 1981. CHUCK PLOTKIN who's recently mixed *The River* for Bruce Springsteen after earlier working on *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* gets a telephone message at Clover, the funky little recording studio he owns in Hollywood. It's someone who says he's Bob Dylan, which makes Chuck think it's a hoax. He doesn't bother to call back. Three further calls later, though, a startled Plotkin is on the phone to Bob.

"He said, 'I'm getting ready to start a record. Are you familiar with my work?'" Plotkin remembers. "I said, 'Yes,' and he said, 'Well, jeez, can you come by and take a listen to what I'm up to here?' I said, 'Sure, when?' He said, 'How about now?' He gave me an address, and I drove to this place, where he had some of his band assembled. He was sort of interviewing possible producers. There was a list of people, people were coming by, and they'd hear a bit of a rehearsal, have a bit of conversation, and somehow over a period of time, Bob figured out what'd work best for him."

As Plotkin now discovers, Dylan's been working since the previous September at studios all over LA on the follow-up



Leathering the storm: Dylan in Chicago, June 10, 1981. Below, a billboard ad for *Saved* on Sunset Strip



"He's a powerhouse – in writing mode, he can write and write..."
CHUCK PLOTKIN

to *Saved*. He's amassed a formidable batch of new songs that hint at a return to his song-writing of poetic evocation, ambiguity, doubt, a way of saying things in a language that is exact but not explicit, among them "Caribbean Wind", the apocalyptic "Groom's Still Waiting At The Altar" and "Every Grain Of Sand". Most recently he's been in the studio with producer Jimmy Iovine, who walks out of one particularly chaotic session and doesn't come back. On the day Plotkin arrives at Dylan's Rundown Studio and rehearsal space in Santa Monica, Dylan's just recorded a version of "Shot Of Love" produced by Little Richard's legendary producer Bumps Blackwell that will become the title track of the album he's struggling to finish. Plotkin's first instinct is to get Dylan into his Clover studio as soon as possible, to get these tracks down before Dylan, notoriously restless, loses interest in the songs.

"I had picked up that he was doing a lot of writing, and I was afraid he'd burn out by the material that I'd been hearing. This guy is a powerhouse as a writer, and when he's in writing

mode, he can write and write and write. I was thinking, there's just too much good stuff here, and if we don't get in before his focus shifts, this material that I'm hearing now might be lost. I was afraid if we delayed much longer, we were going to lose the songs – which sounded amazing to me. I could hear something in this material, a tone of his pre-Christian mode, if you know what I mean, that was mixed in with the Christian vision in a way that was enormously appealing. The religious stuff was still there, which was great, it was Bob's thing, but there

was this hint of the earlier Bob. So I said, 'Look. Let's just go in, and not worry about what it is, let's just record while it's fresh.' And he said, 'Great,' and that's what we did."

The album Dylan's laboured on for nearly a year is now finished in five sessions at Clover between April 27 and May 1. Plotkin delivers a sequenced mix of the record to Dylan on May 12 that Dylan rejects, the next day going back into the studio to re-do six of the tracks he's recorded. Plotkin spends another month re-mixing the album, Dylan rarely happy with what he hears.

"If *Shot Of Love* sounds at all raggedy-assed," says Plotkin, "it's because the mixes that got released are all just the monitor mixes that we'd get at the end of each night. We'd do a tune, get a track we liked, and we'd just run off a rough monitor mix. And those are the mixes you hear. Now, I tried to mix the record, to squeeze some little level of aural finesse in there. You know: we recorded this stuff, let's mix it properly. I'm trying to represent the United Record Producers of the World here: if you had the chance to record Bob Dylan, wouldn't you want to try and get everything just right, and try to bring all the tools at your disposal to the job? But every time we did a finished mix and took it to Bob, he went: 'Naw, no. The other mix. The ones I've been listening to – that's the record.' The rough mixes had some weird

quality to them. He had the sense to realise it.”

Shot Of Love is released on August 10, 1981, to even worse reviews than *Saved*. The sacred rapture of “Every Grain Of Sand”, which by now has undergone at least four major re-writes, is widely recognised as a major addition to the Dylan canon, but scant attention is paid to the riotous title track, the endearing Tex-Mex shuffle of “Heart Of Mine”, the vintage sarcasm of “Property Of Jesus” (the “Positively Fourth Street” of the ‘religious era’, in one critic’s sharp opinion), the hammering blues of “Trouble”, the seething “Dead Man, Dead Man” or the dappled warmth of “In The Summertime”, a nostalgic reverie that would not have been out of place on *Planet Waves*. As Plotkin sees it, *Shot Of Love* is given a rough ride as part of a general backlash against the whole Born Again period.

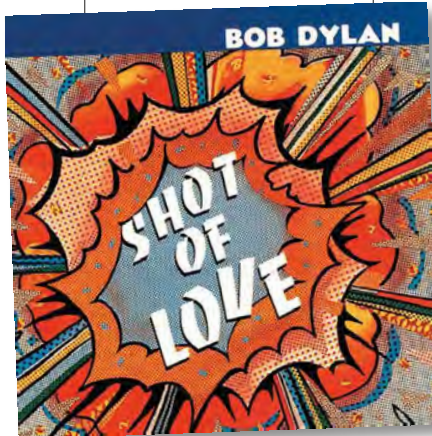
“*Saved* was his most reviled record – a lot of his regular fans felt almost betrayed that he was venturing into some zone that had already been defined by other people, if you know what I mean. Where did Bob go? They felt that Bob disappeared into a kind of black hole. Whereas, Bob would say, ‘No: that’s a hole full of light.’ Anyway, his audience was pissed at him, there’s no question about it, and it did affect the reception of *Shot Of Love*. But also, the record has this strange, wild, raggedy-ass quality to it that some people couldn’t hear through. But, yeah, I feel like it has been a neglected record.”

In Plotkin’s further opinion, the LP also suffers when Dylan removes three key tracks from it. The raging “Groom’s Still Waiting At the Altar” is dropped from the vinyl version but reinstated for the CD edition.

BOB VERHORST/REDFERNS



“Bob has always wanted an immediate approach. He gets very easily bored”
NEIL DORFMAN



EYEWITNESS

‘TEMPTATION’S ANGRY FLAME...’

Chuck Plotkin on capturing “Every Grain Of Sand”

“I THINK PROBABLY the single most important thing I did on *Shot Of Love* was deciding that I didn’t need to be in the control room. There was no point, and so I stopped being in the control room. I had a good relationship with [engineer] Toby Scott, and we could signal each other about things. I would have been useless in the control room: because Bob didn’t want to wear headphones while he was recording. That was the first time that I had ever run into that. So, I was out in the studio. There was a day, at some point, Bob had been playing guitar, but he suddenly moved over to the piano, sat down and began to play. Now, the piano was mic’ed, but there was no vocal mic at the piano, it just wasn’t set up, because Bob hadn’t been playing piano. And I realised, you know – this is not a guy who wants to even think about going through the business of doing, like, seven takes. Forget seven takes. Once he’s got the words right: that’s your take. He’s an artist, but he’s not a recording artist, it’s just not what he does. And so, he started to play, and I didn’t want to stop him. He’s playing something I’ve never heard before. I don’t know what’s going to happen. So, I grabbed hold of the mic

from the stand where he’d previously been playing guitar and singing, and I basically turned myself into a mic stand. I literally held the microphone up, tried to find a physically comfortable enough position so that I was not in his way, and that I could still manage to hold my arm out there for however long this song was going to take.

“And it was ‘Every Grain Of Sand’! And I’m standing there, hearing this for the first time, and the song kills me, I think it’s one of his great, great songs – and I’m hearing it for the first time while standing beside him imitating a mic stand as best I can. And that was it. That was the version we used on the record. People ask me sometimes, ‘Well, what is it you do as a producer?’ And sometimes that’s it, you act as a mic stand. ‘Grain Of Sand’ is just an amazing thing – he couldn’t have written that 10 or 20 years earlier, when he was a kid. There’s somebody who actually understands his own life, and understands our lives in depth and precision. ‘I gaze into the doorway of temptation’s angry flame/And every time I pass that way I always hear my name.’ It’s like, ‘Wooooaaah – go Bob!’ God, it still makes me cry.”

However, there’s no sign of either the vast romantic turmoil of “Caribbean Wind” or the noble, piano and organ-led epic, “Angelina”, until they are belatedly included on *Biograph* and *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3*, respectively.

“Sometimes you can fight,” admits Plotkin. “But you have to pick your fights. Part of the problem is, you know that your job depends on having the artist feel completely supported in what he’s doing. But, at the same time, he’s hired you to, from time to time, say, ‘No, I think this could be better,’ or, ‘No, I think we should use this.’ I’ve worked with Springsteen for 25 years, and there were times when I used to say to myself, ‘Well, another brave soldier bites the dust.’ It just happens. Songs go. But part of your job, while representing the artist, is also to represent the audience, and be able to make the case for a song. Sometimes you can, sometimes you can’t. If you’re too pushy about it, the trust breaks down. Since I got to work with Bruce over and over again, we’ve had some amazing battles over songs, I can tell you.”

SOMEONE’S ASKED YOU to make a list of people who might make a good job of producing Bob Dylan’s new album, so who do you pick? Frank Zappa? David Bowie? Elvis Costello? Dylan gives some thought to each of them, before hiring Mark Knopler to produce *Infidels*. Since playing on *Slow Train Coming*, Knopler has enjoyed huge success with smooth radio-friendly Dire Straits and mistakenly thinks their eerily clean and vacuum-sealed sound will work for Dylan. When album sessions commence at New York’s Power Plant he brings with him Straits keyboardist Alan Clark and the band’s producer, Neil Dorfman. Bob’s already

there with legendary Jamaican rhythm section Sly & Robbie and former Stones guitarist Mick Taylor. There is tension from the start between Knopler and Dylan.

“I had done Dire Straits’ *Love Over Gold* with Mark, which was a very worked-on and worked-over record,” Dorfman tells *Uncut*. “That was Mark’s process at the time, really

taking a lot of time, a lot of overdubbing and attention to detail and sound. And, you know – that is not Bob Dylan, at all. So, I think, once we got into it, Bob was a little shocked at the way Mark and I worked. My impression is that Bob always has, and always will want a very immediate approach. He gets very easily bored. So, in that respect, I think *Infidels* was not the most



comfortable situation for either Bob or Mark.

“I learned very quickly that this wasn’t going to be a normal session. I don’t want to use the wrong word, here, but Bob was also a little bit of an agent provocateur, or he even had a little saboteur in him. If things were going maybe too well, in somebody else’s definition, he would consciously make an effort to make that stop. Whether it was walking away from the piano and vocal mic while he’s doing a take, or, I remember him taking the tinfoil from a sandwich, and standing opening and closing it like an accordion into a vocal mic during a take. And, of course, everybody stops playing, thinking there was something wrong technically, but it was just his way of saying, ‘I’m bored with this, I don’t want to do this particular song anymore.’ Then he announced that he wanted to start a Christmas record that night. And, yeah, we all laughed,



They were the world: Bob Dylan and friends, (from left) Martin Scorsese, Lou Reed, Ian Hunter, Judy Collins, Arthur Baker, Billy Joel and Dave Stewart

thinking, he's just messing with us. But, of course, years later, he subsequently came out with a Christmas record. It was kind of intimidating, challenging, but also hilarious in its own crazy way.

"I don't know how much I should talk out of school about this particular situation. But I know that it really, really bothered Mark, that song choices were dictated a little bit, and were turning out to be different from the song choices he thought we were going in to do. I think it just really frustrated him. I imagine that he felt a similar responsibility to the one that I felt: this is Bob Dylan; we're going to make an amazing record, we have an incredible band, an incredible bunch of songs, and it's up to us, we really, really have to make this happen. And I could feel the air just sort of going out of Mark a little bit, when he realised that the traditional role of the producer was not going to be in play on this record. He was going to be looked to as an advisor, or maybe a mirror in some ways. But as far as driving the bus – that was not going to happen. Bob was going to drive this bus, no matter what. I'm sure it was very frustrating to Mark."

When it's released on October 27, 1983, *Infidels* is welcomed as a return by Dylan to secular music, although suggestions he has abandoned religion, discarding Christ as he might a suddenly out of favour bass player or backing singer, are wholly misguided. After *Shot Of Love*, Dylan simply steps down from the pulpit. But his obsession with an approaching Armageddon remains fiercely central to his writing, up to and including 2012's *Tempest* and its many songs of wrath and retribution.

Some reviewers are uncomfortable with the right-wing Zionist rhetoric of "Neighbourhood Bully" and strident patriotism of "Union Sundown". But there's enough here that reminds them of the Dylan they have been desperate to hear again and *Infidels* is generally well-received. A highlight for everyone who hears it, the six-minute opener, "Jokerman", is immediately hailed as one of Dylan's greatest songs, although its meaning even by Bob's most abstract standards is at best vague. No matter. It at least *sounds* like vintage Dylan – densely allusive, bristling with esoteric reference, coded, the song playing out in the somewhat



"You could hear people's joy when Bob started playing 'Like A Rolling Stone' again"
FRED TACKETT

detached atmosphere of a dream someone else is having, perhaps due to its soporific momentum, Sly and Robbie's ticking groove and the glossy guitars against which Dylan's washed-out voice is dreamily pitched.

On the whole, *Infidels* is better regarded than anything Dylan's done since *Desire*. Mark Knopfler may be forgiven for freaking out when he hears it, however, because in its released version it's not the album he left Dylan with when he re-joined Dire Straits for a tour of Germany in June, at which point he now discovers Dylan has 're-thought' the album, as he later puts it. In June, Bob is back at the Record Plant, re-recording some tracks and remixing what's left. As far as Knopfler's concerned this is bad enough to make *Infidels* sound more like an unpolished demo than the gleaming, streamlined thing he had envisaged. What appals him even more are Dylan's baffling revisions to the nine-song tracklisting they had earlier agreed. Dylan deletes two songs – a venomous rocker called "Foot Of Pride", later magnificently covered by Lou Reed, that Dylan under Knopfler's stern instruction has laboured through 47 increasingly agonised takes.

Also missing from the released album is one of Dylan's very greatest songs, "Blind Willie McTell", which in two versions, only one of which has been officially released (on *The Bootleg Sessions Volumes 1-3*), evokes a terrible history of slavery in America and the suffering that found a hallowed voice in the blues that Dylan so cherishes. It's a song in other words about how pain and anguish can be turned into art, and art in that transaction becomes redemptive, a hymn of survival, transcendence and eventual triumph over the world's every ill whose omission from the album, in either version, is a cause of great woe to Knopfler. "Mark was committed to the recording of *Infidels* for, I think, three weeks," Dorfman recalls. "And we thought that was enough to get everything done, except the actual mixing. So Mark then had to go off with Dire Straits to tour. I left with Mark. But I had the sense the record was at least recorded, if not quite finished. But there was a certain amount of rethinking by Bob – but Bob made that clear, that he was starting to rethink, in the last ➔



EYEWITNESS

'A MILLION FACES AT MY FEET...'

Arthur Baker on the recording of a masterpiece from *Empire Burlesque*

IN *CHRONICLES*, DYLAN more or less credits Arthur Baker with making him write 'Dark Eyes' because Baker kept suggesting he should do an acoustic song at the end of the album.

"It's funny, when I read *Chronicles*, I was shocked that this memory had any place in his book," Baker says. "Because I bought *Chronicles* as a fan, you know, which I still am. And I was surprised that that was something that he would even remember. 'Dark Eyes' is a great song, one of the best songs of that whole period, as far as I'm concerned, it's one of his best songs of the '80s. I said that thing about doing an acoustic song to him as a fan. I was brought in there, basically, as someone to sort of 'modernise' his sound. But I was still a fan and, as a fan, personally, I would have liked to strip the damn record down – but that wasn't what they hired me to do. They hired me to arrange and modernise his sound. But, as a fan, I would rather have done a whole album of just, like, guitar and harmonica, because the songs stand out so well. When I mentioned this idea about doing an acoustic song to him, and then the very next day, he came in with this 'Dark Eyes', I really thought it was a song he'd had. Because he had so many songs: he'd bring cassettes out, and he had just tons of songs. I never thought for a second that he'd just written this. I think what you hear on the album was the second take. And I'm pretty sure he only did two takes – I think it was on a Friday night, and I had planned to go to Boston, because I had tickets to see the Celtics play. So I heard that second take, and I go, 'Yeah. That's the one.' And then I'm literally running out the door to catch the train to Boston. And that was it. Never in my wildest dreams did I think he'd just go home and write one."

➔ week of recording. We'd done a bunch of overdubs, which Bob could not have been less interested in. He hates overdubbing, man. I think he finds the whole thing phony: 'Why are you overdubbing?' I remember, we had a percussion player come in, and I think it was an actual torture for Bob, to have to sit there and listen to shakers and tambourines being put on stuff. His view was that could have been done live, if he'd wanted them.

So, I think he wanted to go in and either erase these overdubs, or listen to them and decide that... no, he really did not like them. So, basically, he did a bunch of re-examining once Mark left. There was nothing anybody could do, and, really, nothing anybody *should* have done about it – after all, it's Bob's record."

HERE'S ANOTHER PRODUCER who gets an unexpected call from Dylan about working on his next album, and of all people it's

New York hip-hop and dance producer, Arthur Baker, best known for his work with Afrika Bambaataa, Rocker's Revenge and New Order and recent remixes of tracks from Springsteen's *Born In The USA*. He meets Dylan in a hotel on Central Park. "I was rung in, and went up," he recalls. "And, basically, when I went into the room, I walked in the door, and there was no-one there. So I was walking around the suite going, 'Hello? Hello?' There were food carts, loads of them, like no-one had cleaned the room for a few days, and a whole bunch of boom-boxes. Then, he appeared and introduced himself to me, and we sat down and started listening to tunes, tapes. He played me a ton of tunes, he just kept playing more and more – and, you know, it's Bob Dylan sitting there playing you a lot of tunes, and you trying to come up with some good ideas for each of them. A few days later I got a call that he wanted me to work on the record."

Dylan's been working on the album Baker will subsequently mix since the end of a grim six-week stadium tour of Europe in the summer of 1984, which includes a show at Wembley Stadium where Eric Clapton and Van Morrison turn up in support and some of the performances later make their way on to the largely drab *Real Live* LP. Dylan's since sacked his touring band and because he's now decided to produce himself, he doesn't block book recording time, flitting promiscuously from studio to studio in a process that will be even more laborious than the long months it took to assemble *Shot Of Love*.

There's an initial session on July 24, at Intergalactic in New York with Al Green's band, quickly abandoned. A couple of days later, he's at Delta Sound Studios with Ronnie Wood and drummer Anton Fig and records a funky thing called "Driftin' Too Far From Shore" and "Clean Cut Kid", a song about a Vietnam veteran that Dylan has originally demoed for *Infidels*. By November, Dylan's back in LA, where nothing comes of initial sessions at Ocean Way. Moving to Cherokee Studios in Hollywood, however, Dylan cuts a version of a new song he's

co-written with playwright and actor Sam Shepard, an 11-minute epic called "New Danville Girl" that astonishes everyone who hears it, although Dylan will discard it from the finished album. With Benmont Tench, Mike Campbell and Howie Epstein from Tom Petty's Heartbreakers, he also successfully captures the ominous "Something's Burning, Baby", set to a slow marching beat and embellished with menacing synthesiser.

He's still in LA for the all-star recording of "We Are The World", America's response to Band Aid's "Do They Know It's Christmas?". On February 23, he's at the Power Plant in New York where with Miami Steve Van Zandt and Roy Bittan from the E Street Band he records a sensational version of another powerful new song, the apocalyptic "When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky". Arthur Baker is in attendance. "It was the very first session I was at," he recalls. "We listened back to the version they'd cut, and it sounded

great – I think Sly & Robbie were playing on it, also. But, Bob said, 'Ah, you know. It sounds like Springsteen.' And I said, 'Well, hey, yeah – you get Van Zandt and Roy Bittan to play on it: it's gonna sound like Springsteen.' So he decided to cut another version of it, which is the one that ended up on the record."

Sessions for what's eventually titled *Empire Burlesque* and released on June 10 wraps with the recording of the album's highlight, a

disturbing, forlorn song, written overnight, called "Dark Eyes", which features only Dylan's voice and guitar, its simplicity a relief after the musical busy-ness elsewhere on the album on tracks like the irresistibly sizzling "Tight Connection To My Heart (Has Anybody Seen My Love?)", a re-write of the more obviously personal "Someone's Got A Hold Of My Heart". For an album subsequently so denigrated the original reviews of *Empire Burlesque* are mostly positive although sales are again poor and there is a general regret that Baker has layered the

record with electronics, processed drums and lashings of synthesisers. Did Dylan tell him what he wanted the album to sound like?

"No," Baker says. "In mixing, he just wanted it to be done *quick*! When we were in the studio mixing at Right Track, we were working on a song, and Bob came in, and he was sitting there, and sort of just expecting it to be done. And I said, 'Well, it'll take a while... why don't you go out, like go to the movies or something?' So, he went out, he went to the movies, and he came back like, you know, three hours later, and we were still working on the same track. And he'd be saying to us how *Blonde On Blonde* had been mixed in like two days. And I said, 'Well, yeah, but we're working on 48 tracks on some of these now, and that would have been four-track, so you gotta account for that...' But, you know, I would say maybe Bob wasn't so patient with that whole side of the process... the time it took bothered him." ➔

Next month: from *Live Aid* to *Oh Mercy*, Bob Dylan's '80s continued...



"I think it was torture for Bob, to have to hear shakers being overdubbed"
NEIL DORFMAN

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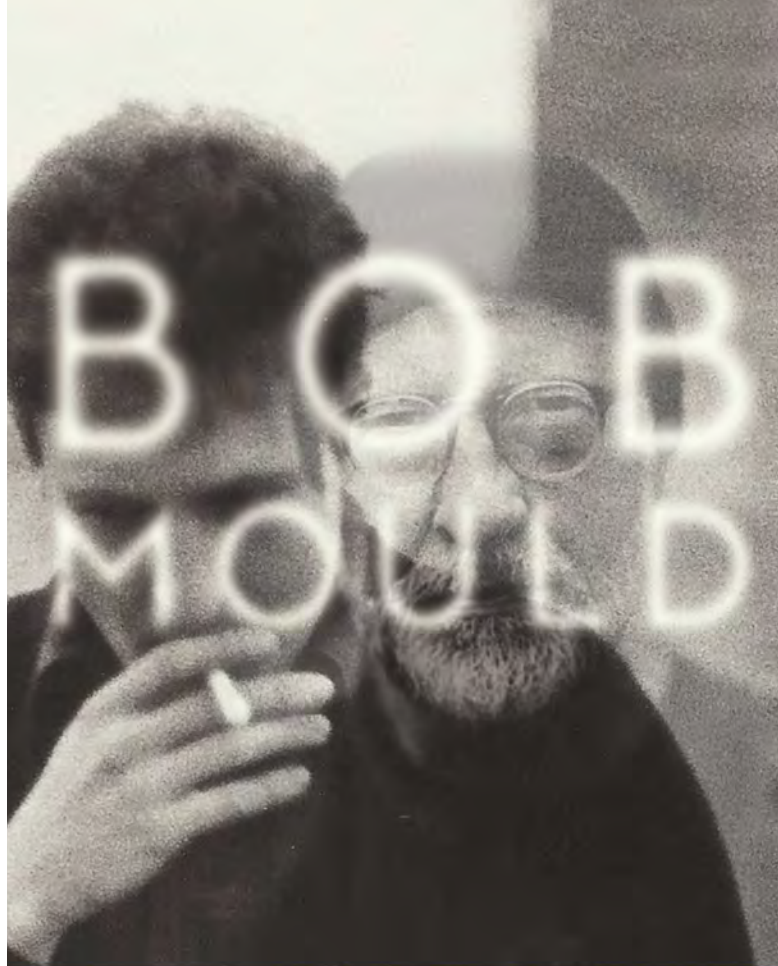
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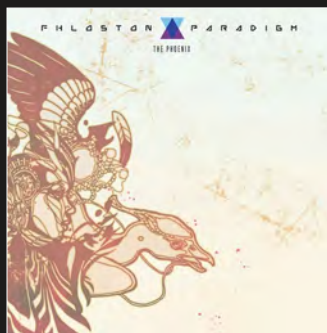


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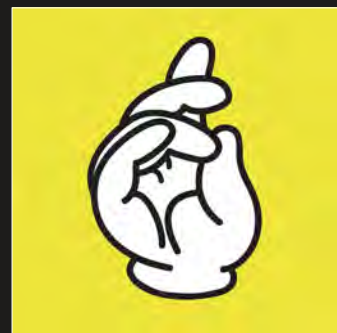


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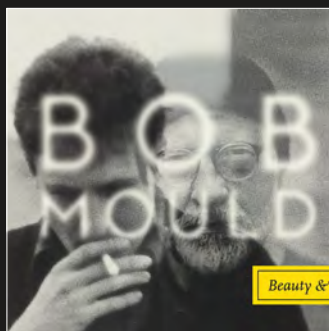


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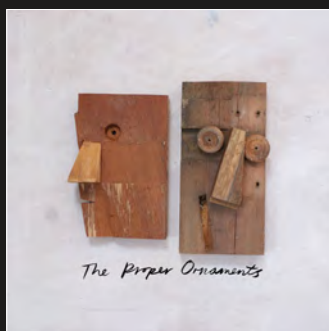


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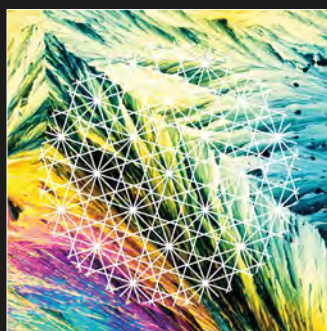


THE PROPER ORNAMENTS

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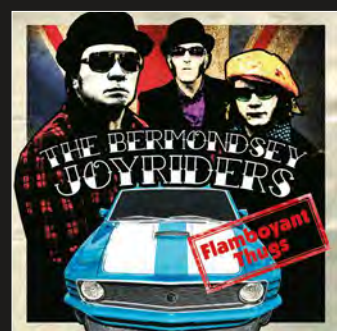


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New albums

THIS MONTH: NEIL YOUNG | FELICE BROS | BOB MOULD & MORE



MARY ELLEN MATTHEWS



TRACKLIST

- 1 Three Women
- 2 Lazaretto
- 3 Temporary Ground
- 4 Would You Fight For My Love?
- 5 High Ball Stepper
- 6 Just One Drink
- 7 Alone In My Home
- 8 Entitlement
- 9 That Black Bat Licorice
- 10 I Think I Found The Culprit
- 11 Want And Able

JACK WHITE

Lazaretto

THIRD MAN/XL

Third Man maverick shows little sign of mellowing on wild and witty second solo album. *By Jason Anderson*

9/10 ACROSS JACK WHITE'S prolific recordings over the last 15 years, he's long demonstrated a keen understanding of the value of an opening salvo. Indeed, it's hard to imagine The White Stripes' *Elephant* blasting off with anything but "Seven Nation Army", or there being a better summary of *Icky Thump*'s synthesis of arena-rock crunch and speaker-shredding skronk than its title track.

True to form, White opens his second solo album with another strong hand. A cheeky refashioning of Blind Willie McTell's "Three Women Blues", "Three Women" will rankle the blues purists just

as surely as The White Stripes' thrash-metal take on Son House's "Death Letter" at the Grammys a decade ago. Listeners wary of old-school rock-dude chauvinism may be similarly dismayed. "I got three women/Red, blonde and brunette," White sings over the raucous vamping of the Buzzards, one of the two bands that supported him on the tour for his 2012 solo debut *Blunderbuss* and back him on *Lazaretto*. (The all-female Peacocks get roughly equal time with White, getting additional support by friends like Patrick Keeler of The Raconteurs and The Greenhornes.) After repeating the line, White arrives at the



New Albums

➤ potentially cringe-inducing capper: “*I took a digital photograph/To pick which one I like.*”

On first impression, White’s update reeks of the same sexual braggadocio that defines McTell’s original from 1928. (Uncoincidentally, Third Man is in the process of reissuing McTell’s complete works.) He certainly risks further umbrage by mentioning the hair colours of his first two spouses. But any suggestion of machismo is undermined by later verses that paint the narrator as bewitched, bothered and bewildered, all qualities unbefitting of a stud. By the end of the song, scrutinising that photograph comes to seem less like the imperious act of an alpha male and more like a hapless gesture by a man whose life is too unruly to ever submit to his will or his whims.

“Three Women” is hardly the first time White has presented himself as a man who’s moving as fast as he can yet still feels trapped. It remains a popular motif on *Lazaretto*, which borrows its name from an archaic term for an island used to quarantine sailors. (A dictionary may be required for several other words in play.)

His songwriting’s propensity for hectic and harried characters is further reflected in White’s public image, what with the demands on his time as a solo artist and sometime sideman, a collaborator and producer for legends and upstarts alike, a label boss for Third Man in Nashville and – since his initially amicable but ultimately acrimonious breakup with second wife Karen Elson – a 38-year-old single dad of two. Surely he’d be forgiven for betraying signs of fatigue but there’s little evidence of mellowing even now, a decade-and-a-half after The White Stripes established its forte for ferocity with its self-titled debut and three years after the duo’s dissolution amid White’s ever-proliferating array of other projects.

SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Produced by:** Jack White III
Recorded at: Third Man Studio, Nashville
Personnel: Jack White (vocals, piano, guitars), Daru Jones (drums), Dominic Davis (bass), Fats Kaplin (pedal steel, fiddle, mandolin), Ikey Owens (organ, Moog, piano, keys), Cory Younts (mandolin, harmonica, synth, piano, backing vocals), Carla Azar (drums, timpani), Byrne Davis (upright bass), Catherine Popper (bass), Lillie Mae Rische (fiddle, backing vocals), Timbre Cierpke (harp), Brooke Waggoner (piano, organ, Moog), Olivia Jean (African drum, backing vocals), Maggie Bjorklund (pedal steel guitar), Dean Fertita (guitar), Ruby Amanfu (backing vocals), Joshua V Smith (backing vocals), Ben Blackwell (drums), Patrick Keeler (drums)



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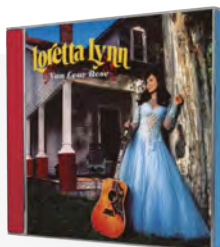
He bangs the drums (sometimes)... Jack’s best records



THE WHITE STRIPES *Elephant* XL, 2003

The duo’s breakthrough sees Jack super-charge the Stripes by adding more ammo (like – gasp! – a bass pedal) and a greater sense of dynamics. In so doing he maximises the impact of hooks like “Seven Nation Army”’s snarling riff and Meg’s cavewoman stomp on “The Hardest Button...”.

10/10



LORETTA LYNN *Van Lear Rose*

INTERSCOPE, 2004

Full of punchy playing by White and some soon-to-be Raconteurs that hit the right blend of ragged and sweet, VLR is a testament to the septuagenarian’s undimmed talents. Shame White’s later work with Wanda Jackson on *The Party Ain’t Over* didn’t get the same recognition.

9/10



THE RACONTEURS *Broken Boy Soldiers*

THIRD MAN/V2, 2006

On the first and more admirably concise of two fine outings with his pals Brendan Benson and Patrick Keeler and Jack Lawrence of The Greenhornes, White’s Zep-ready bluster roughs up Benson’s power-pop predilections to sometimes spectacular effect.

8/10



THE DEAD WEATHER *Sea Of Cowards*

THIRD MAN, 2010

Whereas Alison Mosshart occupies most of the spotlight in the supergroup’s 2009 debut *Horehound*, White has a more forceful presence on the grottier follow-up. The ghosts of Beefheart and Lux Interior would definitely approve of the air of gothic sleaze.

8/10

In April, White demonstrated that need for speed with a Record Store Day stunt that was one part Kim Fowley to two parts PT Barnum. Billed as the “World’s Fastest Released Record”, a live performance of *Lazaretto*’s tumultuous title track (plus a cover of Elvis’ “Power Of My Love” for the B-side) was recorded for a seven-inch single that was mastered, pressed, packaged and ready for sale at Third Man a little less than four hours later.

It’s a testament to White’s talents and abilities that such displays of haste have rarely yielded any waste. Yet even more so than its predecessor, *Lazaretto* is at its most startling whenever White’s torrents of devilishly clever lyrics and distortion-laden riffage give way to a moment of relative stillness or a hint of inconsolable anguish.

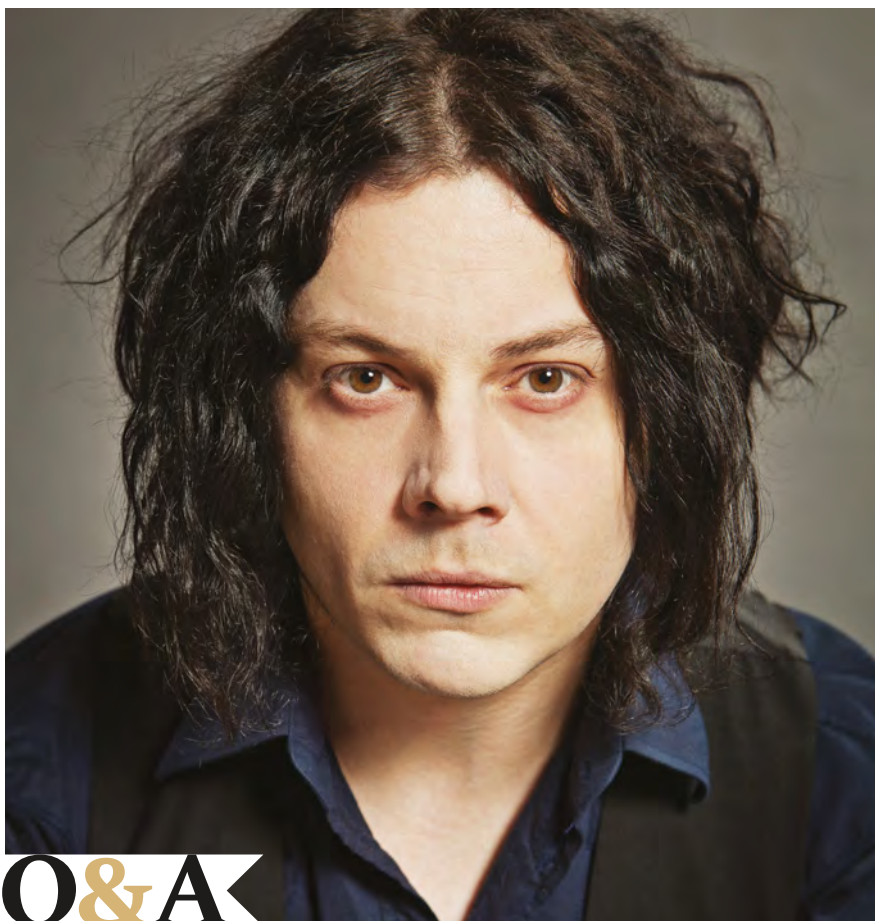
That doesn’t happen often, mind you. As “Three Women” indicates, White spends much of the album in gleeful attack mode, reaching a peak of intensity with the “Kashmir”-meets-swamp-funk of “High Ball Stepper” and a new extreme in lyrical dexterity with “That Black Bat Licorice”, surely the only song to ever combine references to the Egyptian god Horus, a popular home-heating method in ancient Rome and a key plot point in the classic Disney movie *Dumbo*.

But it still happens. One factor may be the unusual circumstances of *Lazaretto*’s creation, White having purportedly begun this batch of songs after discovering a trove of stories and plays he wrote when he was 19 years old. New characters and scenarios were spun out of lines and elements that he found in his juvenilia, which he claims to have destroyed lest they be used in any other way.

Lazaretto was also recorded over a period of a year and a half, an eternity by White’s standards but understandable considering what else was on the man’s plate, such as a divorce battle with Elson and Third Man projects like the enormous Paramount Records boxset. Really, it’s a miracle that the album sounds as coherent as it does given the pressures of the period and the many different configurations of personnel.

The songs also share an undercurrent of discontent that’s palpable in even the most seemingly gentle examples. A stately country number that rails against the selfishness of the world’s inhabitants, “Entitlement” concludes with its narrator casting a wary eye on all of mankind and deciding that “*we don’t deserve a single damn thing*.” A similarly weary and dyspeptic view pervades in the closer “Want And Able” (a companion piece to *Icky Thump*’s “Effect And Cause”) and many others here, which may be surprising to listeners expecting a more cocksure persona. Yet it would be foolhardy to interpret the desperation evinced in “Would You Fight For My Love?” or the despair described in “Alone In My Home” as slip-ups by a showman whose bravura can’t entirely conceal his feelings of fragility – White’s far too fond of flipping between voices and perspectives for it ever to be safe to believe that any single character or expression in his songs is any more “authentic” than the rest.

So while *Lazaretto* may sometimes appear to be a more nakedly emotional collection of songs than we’ve come to expect from its creator, the contents also rate among his wittiest and his wildest efforts to date. In other words, he’s his same old maddeningly inscrutable and compulsively entertaining self.



Q&A

Jack White on myth and fiction in music, his relaxed solo career and his teenage self’s “mediocre writing”

YOU RECORDED THE songs for *Lazaretto* over a year and a half rather than the customary handful of days or weeks. Why the longer gestation period?

Things are different when you’re in a band. When you’re in a band and you’re in motion, you’re constantly thinking of the next step and then the next. That was true when I was in The White Stripes, The Raconteurs and The Dead Weather. This is the first time in my life I’ve been making records under my own name and I’m not under so much pressure to make a next move if I don’t feel like it – you have to make yourself make the next move. This is also a very different time period compared to 10 years ago. I just will put things out whenever they make sense, more so than before. When we made *Elephant*, we had to wait a year for it to come out because *White Blood Cells* was doing so well still, they didn’t want to oversaturate the market or something funny like that.

Is it true that the new songs were inspired by a rediscovered trove of one-act plays and stories you wrote when you were 19?

It was just this pile of mediocre writing that I’d done as a teenager. I was about to throw it away but then I thought, “What if I pulled characters and lines from these things and put them into new lyrics?” It was like I was collaborating with my younger self. That was the idea and it really

helped inspire me – I definitely get something out of forcing myself into scenarios that I shouldn’t be in!

Blind Willie McTell’s “Three Women Blues” was the springboard for *Lazaretto*’s opener, “Three Women” – why make your own version?

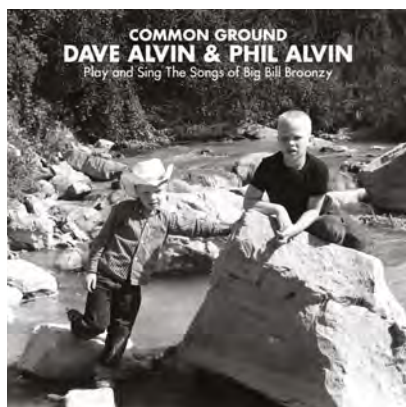
A friend of mine had heard “Three Women Blues” at a party and I thought it was an interesting song. I had covered Blind Willie McTell songs in the past and I came up with that first line – “*I’ve got three women, red, blonde and*

brunette” – just as a starting point for myself. I thought, “I’m gonna do a completely modern version of this type of song.” It doesn’t really have much to do with Blind Willie McTell’s song at all beyond the first line. I also think his song is a lesson in how it’s all false to begin with, how you shouldn’t believe these are all real events for the songwriter or the person singing. It’s

like when Elvis was singing his songs – he didn’t write the songs so they’re not about him. That’s one thing people really get wrong about all the old blues musicians – that every song they were singing was from the heart and about their own specific problems. I highly doubt that Blind Willie McTell had three girlfriends at the same time – it’s hard to pull off for anyone, especially someone who’s blind!

INTERVIEW: JASON ANDERSON

“You shouldn’t really believe these are all real events for the songwriter or the singer...”



TRACKLIST

- 1 All By Myself
- 2 I Feel So Good
- 3 How You Want It Done?
- 4 Southern Flood Blues
- 5 Big Bill Blues
- 6 Key To The Highway
- 7 Tomorrow
- 8 Just A Dream
- 9 You've Changed
- 10 Stuff They Call Money
- 11 Trucking Little Woman
- 12 Saturday Night Rub

DAVE ALVIN & PHIL ALVIN

Common Ground: Dave Alvin & Phil Alvin Play And Sing The Songs Of Big Bill Broonzy

YEPROC

Brothers reunited on fine tribute to Big Bill. *By Allan Jones*

9/10

ONE OF THE highlights of Dave Alvin's last solo album, 2011's *Eleven Eleven*, was a track called "What's Up With Your Brother?", a droll blues about Dave's famously fractious relationship with his brother, Phil, that ended hilariously with them having the kind of argument that put paid to The Blasters, the band they were in together before fraternal tensions

drove them into a ditch. They split in 1985, after just five albums. While Dave became dedicated to life as a hard-travelling road dog, Phil completed a master's degree in mathematics and artificial intelligence. His own musical career has in the circumstances been restricted over the last 30 years to a couple of fine solo albums and a brief 2003 reunion tour with The Blasters that produced the *Trouble Bound* live album.

Q&A

Dave Alvin and Phil Alvin



There must be a lot of great bluesmen whose music you both admire, so why an album dedicated to the songs of Big Bill Broonzy?

Dave Alvin: Phil and I have many favourite blues artists for both musical and often sentimental reasons. Our lifelong friend/mentor Big Joe Turner is one and, because we knew and played with Joe, he seemed a likely choice. But I chose Big Bill Broonzy because his 30-year recording and songwriting career gave us a great variety of songs and styles to choose from. Broonzy was the first "pre-war" bluesman we heard when we were barely adolescents and his stunning guitar chops, his gregarious personality, expressive voice and depth of his songs hooked us right from the start.

Phil Alvin: Big Bill has always been a favourite of ours – great singer, songwriter and guitarist with a 30-year career in many styles of American music from blues to swing to folk.

What was it like making an album together after over 30 years?

Dave: It was remarkably easy and quick. We don't argue about Big Bill Broonzy. If I had written 10 or 12 songs for us to sing together, though, well, that could've taken another 30 years.

Did it get heated between you at any point?

Dave: No firearms or bloodshed to report.

Phil: There were no flare-ups.

Is *Common Ground* likely to lead to further work together or are you looking at it as a one-off?

Dave: Yeah, I think so. I won't say never again, because this was too much fun. We'll see. Perhaps we'll do an album honouring some of our other favourite singers-songwriters. Maybe Big Joe Turner (my brother can sing remarkably like Big Joe when he wants to) or Johnny Guitar Watson or maybe early Bing Crosby material. Or maybe I'll write a bunch of songs for the two of us to sing. If I do that, though, then the recording session just might get a touch more dramatic and combustible.

Phil: We're taking things a day at a time.

The session for "What's Up With Your Brother?" was the first time they'd been in the studio together since 1985, an occasion made even more memorable for Blasters fans by the additional presence of the band's great piano player, Gene Taylor. Encouraged by Dave's label to turn an EP project they had been discussing into a full album, their mutual regard for the music of Big Bill Broonzy provided them with an opportunity to work together without undue conflict. The results are spectacular.

Broonzy's a towering figure in blues history, linking the acoustic rural blues of the Mississippi Delta and the electric blues forged in the urban crucible of Chicago's South Side, where he was an early influence on the young Muddy Waters and other wild and rising stars of that legendary scene. He was also one of the first great American bluesmen to bring his music across the Atlantic, first touring Europe in 1951. He was especially revered in the UK, where his smitten fans included a generation of young musicians in thrall to the blues who would soon be forming bands themselves, including Keith Richards, Ray Davies, Ronnie Wood, Eric Clapton and Pete Townshend. "Back before it all caught fire," Townshend later wrote, "we heard Big Bill and we knew that music could tell the truth as well as entertain."

Broonzy was one of the most prolific blues songwriters of his era, with more than 300 published titles that spanned acoustic Delta blues, the plugged-in Chicago version and also songs of social protest, like "Just A Dream", that daringly for its time put Bill in the White House, having a conversation with the president. It's the kind of thing you might expect to find on a recent Ry Cooder album, and is revived here by the Alvin's in a hard-driving version.

Common Ground on the whole gives a fabulous account of Bill's versatile songbook, whose warmth, wit, generosity of spirit and chin-up good humour in the face of what must have been a lot of awfulness is brilliantly delivered here on an exuberant opening versions of two of

Broonzy's signature songs, "All By Myself" and "I Feel So Good". The former is a boisterous tumble of acoustic guitars and raw harmonies, like something you might have heard on a plantation porch, bottles of moonshine being passed around, the song's self-mockery and droll narrative bringing laughter to lives that needed it. "I Feel So Good" is even more raucous, driven by Dave's stinging lead guitar and Gene

Taylor's barrel-house piano and topped off by Phil's good-hearted holler, still strong and handsome even after a near-fatal health scare in 2012. There can't be many professors of mathematical semantics who have sounded this hip.

He brings a bracing gusto to unabashedly bawdy Broonzy songs like "How You Want It Done?" – kin to Muddy Waters' fiercely carnal "Rollin' And Tumblin'" – and the even more lubricious "Trucking Little Woman", whose rockabilly twang and show-stopping guitar solos recall similarly steamy Blasters cuts like

"Hollywood Bed". The version, meanwhile, of another Broonzy standard, "Key To The Highway", made famous in several version by Eric Clapton, is altogether more stately, the prominence given to Phil's wailing harmonica part maybe a nod to the version of the song recorded as a tribute just after Big Bill's death in 1958 by Little Walter and a gathering of Chicago blues nobility, including Muddy, Willie Dixon and Otis Spann. Best of all though is "Southern Flood Blues", originally recorded as a country blues in 1937, and something of a lamentation, but now recast as an ominous rocker on the apocalyptic scale of Dylan's "High Water (For Charley Patton)", which is suitably drenched by torrential guitar, thunderous drums and spine-tingling harmonica.

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Winslow Court Studios, LA
Produced by: Dave Alvin and Craig Parker Adams
Personnel: Dave Alvin (guitars and vocals), Phil Alvin (vocals, guitar, harmonica), Gene Taylor (piano), Lisa Pankratz, Don Heffington (drums), Brad Fordham, Bob Glaub (bass)

AtoZ

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

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40 THIEVES

The Sky Is Yours

LENG

Californian troupe's strutting cosmic disco debut

8/10 San Francisco's 40 Thieves might well be named

Three Kleptomaniacs, because at heart its core crew of Jason Williams, Corey Black and Layne Fox appear to have plundered ideas, sounds and themes from that late-1970s/early-'80s golden era of flamboyant European electronic disco – Cerrone, Peter Jacques Band, Giorgio Moroder – and *The Sky Is Yours*, their sprawling 20-track debut album, is all the better for it. At times, their balance of nostalgia and modernism is askew, but for the most part, particularly on "You Wanna" and "Face Full Of Fur", this is a rich and colourful exploration of pulsing, tuneful, space-age funk.

PIERS MARTIN



LUKE ABBOTT

Wysing Forest

BORDER COMMUNITY

Artisan ambientronica from Alan Partridge country

7/10 Continuing the arcane East Anglian references of his critically acclaimed 2010

debut, *Holkham Drones*, Luke Abbott's second album is named after the Cambridgeshire arts centre where he served as musician-in-residence in 2012. *Wysing Forest* again features mostly beatless, amorphous, analogue electronic sound paintings in the spirit of classic ambient experiments by Aphex Twin, Four Tet or Boards Of Canada. The pivotal track is "Amphis", which occurs in two versions: first as a shape-shifting sonic tapestry of alien crackles and disorienting drones, then a sombre electro-classical tone poem. This is deluxe, bespoke, artisan electronica, only slightly marred by its high seriousness and lack of mischief.

STEPHEN DALTON



NEIL YOUNG

A Letter Home

THIRD MAN/REPRISE

A time-travelling adventure in Jack White's Voice-O-Graph.

By John Mulvey



7/10

ABOUT TEN YEARS ago, I had a series of conversations with some people preparing a new edition of *Harry Smith's Anthology Of American Music*. Their aim, it seemed, was to take the 84 tracks originally compiled from Smith's collection of 78s, and subject

them to a vigorous digital clean-up. How much better would these songs sound, was their reasoning, if all the grit and static was removed, leaving the performances unsullied and sharp?

Would songs like Charley Patton's "Mississippi Boweavil Blues" really sound better without their ancient blanket of fuzz, though? Wasn't part of the charm of these recordings, memorably classified by Greil Marcus as relics of "the old, weird America", that they actually sounded both old and weird? Perhaps this is a reason why the reupholstered *Anthology* was never released. The patina of age is easy and tempting to fetishise, and sometimes it can be used for dubious ends, not least when African-American musicians are patronised for the superficially "primitive" aura of their recordings. But crackle can make the simple act of listening to a song feel like a historical adventure. CDs and MP3s

suddenly seem more tactile, less sterile. A frisson of rawness and unmediated authenticity is invested in even the most cynical of commercial endeavours.

This, one suspects, is something Neil Young understands very well. In last month's *Uncut*, he described the crackle-saturated *A Letter Home* as "an historic art project": a collection of songs, by contemporaries like Dylan, Willie Nelson, Bruce Springsteen and Tim Hardin, performed and cut in a 1947 Voice-O-Graph recording booth. The booth is owned by Jack White, no stranger himself to conceptual art projects that take inspiration and mischief from our ideas about authenticity, about how we can tamper with, remake and at the same time still respect musical history. *A Letter Home*, though, is also part of a larger, all-encompassing project: Young's ongoing attempt to memorialise and catalogue his own past through a patchwork of new songs, covers, films, autobiographies and upgraded reissues. Sometimes it can all feel like ornery sport, a way for Young to avoid releasing the historical artefact that his fans actually want – the '70s motherlode of *Archives Volume 2*.

This latest delaying tactic is very much in the marginalia of Young's discog, tossed-off by design. The suspicion remains that music, old or new, is not his greatest priority at the moment, falling behind the more pressing business of biofuel cars, sci-fi novels and, of course, revolutionary new audio players (the key moment in Young's last *Uncut* interview came when he cut short a discussion of music and barked, "More Pono questions!").

Nevertheless, this sequel of sorts to *Americana* is an endearing little document, made more interesting by Young's decision to render a predominantly 1960s playlist in a way that would have been anachronistically lo-fi in the '40s. "Recorded live to one-track mono, the LP has an inherent warm, primitive feel of a vintage Folkways recording," the press release trumpets, and the unsteady sonics turn out to complement Young's wavering voice rather well. Young's schtick is to use the Voice-O-Graph like

a time machine, mapping wild trajectories between eras and dimensions, so that each side of the vinyl edition begins with a hokey "letter home" to his mother in the afterlife, much like the sentimental vinyl missives that were the usual two-minute product of Voice-O-Graph machines. "I'll be there eventually. Not for a while, though – I still really have a lot of work to do here," he notes, pointedly.

For the most part, the songs Young chooses are strong enough to withstand the rudimentary treatments. Bert Jansch's "Needle Of Death", transparent inspiration for "Ambulance Blues", is as a consequence the ideal song to use in an exercise about how folk songs are curated and reinvented over time. Wedged into a studio the size of a telephone box with his acoustic guitar and harmonica, the tight focus gives an edge to "Girl From The North Country", Gordon Lightfoot's "Early Morning Rain" and "Crazy". For Side Two, though, the team at Third Man in Nashville dragged a piano over to the Voice-O-Graph, leaving the booth's door open. And while "Reason To Believe" comes out as

odd, poignant honky-tonk, Willie Nelson's "On The Road Again" and the Everlys' "I Wonder If I Care As Much" are rickety, front parlour-style sing-alongs, with Jack White on piano and distant harmonies. It's a lot of fun, but the prevailing air is one of reflection, and an understanding that – from the 18-year-old Elvis Presley recording "My Happiness" for his mother in a similar machine, to Young's tremulous take on Springsteen's "My Hometown" here – cheap novelties can have unexpected emotional valency. Like *Tonight's The Night* and many other Neil Young albums, *A Letter Home* illustrates that

vagaries of sound quality can sometimes enhance the drama of a record, and rarely undermine the potency of a good song. How strange, then, that it arrives at a time when so much of Young's energy is concentrated on promoting Pono. While hyping the ultimate in studio-quality audio players, what else could such a seasoned contrarian do but release the most eloquent argument against their usefulness?

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Third Man Records, Nashville
Reproduced by: Jack White III & Neil Young
Personnel: Neil Young (vocal, guitar, harmonica, piano), Jack White (vocal and piano on "On The Road Again" and "I Wonder If I Care As Much")



PRISCILLA AHN
This Is Where We Are
SQE

California singer finds a mischievous streak on third LP

7/10

This third album from the Pennsylvania-born, LA-based singer-songwriter marks a stylistic shift from the straight-down-the-line folk of her early work into more imaginative and experimental territory. Ahn, who has toured with Ray LaMontagne and Willie Nelson, pinballs between ghostly electronica ("Loop", "Closetlude"), eccentric pop ("Wedding March") and gentle acoustic folk ("Remember How I Broke Your Heart") as she explores the complex underbelly of human relationships. Elsewhere, "Diana" is an oddball blend of Lana Del Rey and The Shirelles, while "I Think I'm Ready To Love You" is a tender love song that takes a distinctly creepy turn.

FIONA STURGES



THE ANTLERS
Familiars
TRANSGRESSIVE

Brooklyn trio explore the darker corners of the human psyche

6/10

Singer Peter Silberman, a man who clearly carries the weight of the world on his shoulders, has described The Antlers' fourth album as a reflection on the ways that the past can prevent us from moving forward and how *Familiars* is "a rescue mission". It's a nice idea on paper but in practice it's hard to make out any overarching theme amid the Floydian atmospherics and Silberman's sadly unprepossessing vocals. The addition of a horn section brings pleasing texture to the likes of "Hotel" and "Revisited", but it's rarely enough to lift The Antlers out of their wilfully wounded torpor.

FIONA STURGES



JOSEPH ARTHUR
Lou
VANGUARD

Ohio troubadour pays tribute to late Velvet Underground frontman

6/10

Lou Reed usually sang in a conversational, non-tonal style, uniquely suited to the contours of his voice, making his songs hazardous territory for anyone attempting to cover them. Here Joseph Arthur makes a fair fist at this impossible task, tackling everything from the VU 1968 rarity "Stephanie Says" up to a couple of tracks from 1992's *Magic And Loss*. Each track employs the same spartan, drumless backing (acoustic guitar, piano and double bass) and replaces Reed's spectacularly bored, demotic mumble for an impassioned croon, which suits some songs ("Pale Blue Eyes", "Coney Island Baby") rather better than others.

JOHN LEWIS



DAN BAIRD AND HOMEMADE SIN
Circus Life
JERKIN' CROCUS

You can take the boy out of Georgia...

7/10

Close to a quarter century after quitting Georgia

Satellites, frontman Dan Baird has never strayed too far from the shadow of the million-selling Southern rockers. His current band Homemade Sin have, at one time or another, included three other former Satellites in its lineup, so the tried and tested boogie template continues to thrive on the riffing romantic wreckage of "Fall Apart On Me", the dirty fingernail blues of "Where I'm Gonna Lay My Head", and the barroom swagger of "Baby This". No frills, but full of beer-sodden good intentions and grooves that invite the listener to cut loose on the saloon floor.

TERRY STAUNTON

REVELATIONS

Joseph Arthur on covering Lou Reed: "It was an act of grieving"



► "I first met Lou Reed in about 1996," says Joseph Arthur. "Peter Gabriel, who was signing me to his Real World label, took Lou along to one of my gigs in New York. Peter introduced us and we got on well. I think he was very defensive about his privacy, which is why he came across as grumpy in interviews, but Lou was funny and charming and very clever to hang out with."

It was after Reed's death that Arthur's label boss, Bill Bentley at Vanguard Records, suggested an album of covers, and Arthur recorded it in a few weeks at his home studio when snowed in last Christmas. When Arthur tours the UK soon his band will feature REM's Mike Mills, but the album sees Arthur multi-tracking on piano, acoustic guitar and acoustic bass guitar. "The rule was no electricity, no drums. It's intimate. Lou was primarily a poet, and his songs often virtually spoken. But a lot of the melodies are implied, and you can riff on that."

"I thought I'd done my mourning for Lou, but playing these songs was an act of grieving. I also realised what a funny writer he was. 'Wild Child' is fucking hilarious!"

INTERVIEW: JOHN LEWIS



PETER MATTHEW BAUER
Liberation!
MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Walkman's songs of incense and experience
Blessed and cursed to have had much of his childhood

8/10

soundtracked by handbells, Peter Matthew Bauer's solo debut stretches for a higher state of consciousness than he managed in 13 years with New York-via-Washington cool-cats The Walkmen. Velvets-raga on "I Was Born In An Ashram", yogic-flying Springsteen on "Fortune Tellers", *Liberation!* is a meditation on the false gods of Bauer's hippy upbringing, which finds something to be blissfully grateful for amid the guru hoodoo. "What is the wonder of everything?" Bauer's whoops Richard Hell-ish on transcendental closer "You Are The Chapel", questing still despite it all. A cult classic in waiting.

JIM WIRTH



ALEX BANKS
Illuminate
MONKEYTOWN

Richly melodic dance-pop debut spans the electronic spectrum
Signed to the Berlin-based label run by electro-dance duo Modeselektor,

8/10

Brighton-based producer Alex Banks has a deep hinterland that includes DJ-ing, playing heavy metal guitar, composing for adverts and writing a university dissertation on the effects of commercialisation on dance music. *Illuminate* is a rich, alluring debut which nods to Orbital or The Chemical Brothers with its hooky melodies, pulsing analogue synths and supple breakbeat rhythms. Quality levels are impressively high throughout, but the trio of tracks featuring Gazelle Twin's Elizabeth Bernholz really shine, particularly "Silent Embrace" and "A Matter Of Time", breathy blues-tronic beauties that invoke a kind of post-dubstep Portishead.

STEPHEN DALTON



THOMAS BARFOD
Love Me
SECRETLY CANADIAN

Rhythmically complex Scanditronica with a hint of Nordic noir

7/10

Besides drumming with the leftfield electro trio WhoMadeWho, Danish multi-tasker Thomas Barford is half of house duo Filur and a serial collaborator on many other projects. In between he makes LPs under his own name, earning rave reviews for his 2012 debut *Salton Sea*. This sequel is more focused and song-based, with guest Nina K making a return on a brace of upbeat disco-pop throbbers plus the stately techno-processional "Aftermath". Though the instrumentals are mostly too politely Nordic, "Blue Matter" and "Sell You" are handsome male-voiced excursions into glitchy, James Blake-style glumtronica highlighting Barford's command of intricate rhythmic detail.

STEPHEN DALTON

AMERICANA



ETHAN JOHNS

The Reckoning

THREE CROWS

Voyages to new frontiers of the heart and soul

His credentials as a top-flight producer firmly established over a broad range of jobs (Kings Of Leon, Laura Marling, Paul McCartney, Tom Jones), winning a Brit award along the way, Johns is himself quietly emerging as a writer and performer of some weight and stature. His 2013 debut, *If Not Now Then When?*, was the work of an evocative, articulate troubadour who surveyed and chronicled the world around him in almost filmic detail.

8/10

The Reckoning has more of a linking narrative, and took shape while Johns was promoting that first album, travelling across the US, UK and Europe, drawing inspiration from the people he met and the view from the window of the tourbus. The opening "Go Slow" sets the tone, a near-spoken vocal reminiscent of Gordon Lightfoot, telling the story of a 19th-Century Englishman setting out to find what lies beyond his humble homeland. The character and his brother feature in other songs (the funereal lament "The Roses And The Dead", the Western mythology of "The Lo Down Ballad Of James Younger"); young men addressing choices, decisions and consequences, faced with the uncertainty of life. Detours and wrong turns pepper their journeys ("I hope you never grow as hollow as this," Johns sings in the mournful "The Fool"), and lessons aren't always learned.

Johns is accompanied for the most part by just a delicately plucked or strummed acoustic guitar, although producer Ryan Adams fleshes out the sound with slide and reverby electric on the ghostly "Black Heart" and the tortured soul-searching of "Talking Talking Blues" ("Sometimes what I believe in is not what I feel"). However, the record is most effective when pared to the bone, like on the fraternal advice of the Dylanesque "Among The Sugar Pines" ("Take your time, let the river wind"). The travelogues come full circle and jump forward a century or so for the closing "This Modern London", Johns suggesting a hunger for discovery still resides in us all, and his beautifully considered songs make for an emotive sat-nav. **TERRY STAUNTON**



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

➤ Ahead of his headlining stint with Patty Griffin at Tennessee's Cross-Country Lines Festival in late May, **John Hiatt** (left) has released details of a new LP. *Terms Of My*

Surrender, due out in July on New West, is rooted in acoustic blues and produced by Doug Lancio, his longtime guitarist in touring band The Combo. Most of the record was cut live in the studio.

Meanwhile, *Uncut* fave **John Fullbright** follows up last year's Grammy-nominated *From The Ground Up* with *Songs*, an LP whose minimalism reflects the simplicity of its title. The Oklahoma native has described it as "real clear, precise and economical". It

includes two ballads ("High Road" and "All That You Know") written when the 25-year-old was in his teens. Fullbright is also slated for this year's SummerTyne Americana Festival, held in Gateshead between 18-20 July. Fellow rising stars **Sarah Jarosz** and **Samantha Crain** share the bill, while the rest of the lineup includes **Ethan Johns**, **Chuck Prophet**, **Smoke Fairies**, **Danny & The Champions Of The World**, **Booker T. Jones**, **Bettye Lavette** and headliners **The Jayhawks**. The latter are due to play four other UK gigs around the festival, beginning at the O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire before moving on to Liverpool, Leamington Spa and Bristol. Leader Gary Louris says the setlist will focus on three LPs - *Sound Of Lies*, *Smile* and *Rainy Day Music* - all of which are reissued this summer in deluxe format. **ROB HUGHES**



OLGA BELL

Krai

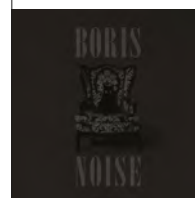
ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Weird but wonderful sounds from the Brooklyn-based 'Russian Björk'

8/10

Away from her dalliance with Dirty Projectors,

Bell explores her Russian roots and classical training on a work scored for piano, cello, electric guitar, electronics and six polyphonic voices. Sung in Russian, nine interconnected pieces mix Orthodox liturgy, Cossack chants and her own poetry into a dazzling oratorio, rendering the language barrier irrelevant as tone and impression rather than meaning are paramount in creating a sonic portrait of the Russian wilderness. There are echoes of Tim Buckley's *Starsailor* and Bell's rare ability to translate challenging ideas into a form that's accessible and appealing will provoke inevitable comparisons with Björk. Stunning. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**



BORIS

Noise

SARGENT HOUSE

Japanese trio's melodic immersive umpty-fifth

Typecast as tripped-out psych warriors or sludge/doom rockers off the heaviosity scale, Boris have

7/10

navigated their way around complementary mutant genres for years. Whether going the way of amped-up riffage (as with 2011's *Heavy Rocks*) or fathoms-deep, bliss-pop soundscapes (simultaneous release, *Attention Please*), shock and awe have been the usual result. Now, *Noise*, which might frustrate hardcore types because despite the promise of its title - delivered via speed-metal monster "Quicksilver" and 18-minute, FX-strafted epic, "Angel" - it leans on their melodic shoegazing tendencies. Of course, when this trio does poppy, it tends to be weighty and metal-tipped, too, but "Taiyo No Baka" might be an upbeat bridge too far for some. **SHARON O'CONNELL**



BLANCMANGE

Happy Families Too

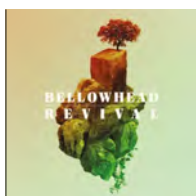
CHERRY RED

Neil Arthur and friends recreate Blancmange's debut

6/10

Artists who rework their own songs usually do

so from a position of maturity, eking truths from sentiments that were inaccessible to their younger self. But it's difficult to see the point in this elaborate attempt to recreate Blancmange's 1982 album using 21st-Century kit, especially given the absence (due to illness) of synth wizard Stephen Luscombe. Some reworkings succeed: the Joy Division-ish "Sad Day", for instance, is transformed from Casiotone miniature into grand epic, and the remixes (by Vince Clarke and electro DJ/producer Greg Wilson) are terrific. But, generally, these lack the new pop innocence of the originals. **JOHN LEWIS**



BELLOWHEAD

Revival

ISLAND

Fifth, more mainstream outing by English folk juggernaut

The intricacy and burlesque flair of Spiers and Boden's 11-piece

7/10

are best appreciated live, but they also blow up a fine storm on disc. Now signed to Universal/Island, they tone down their gothic proclivities for straight-ahead exuberance, the massed vocals and supercharged bass given widescreen shine by producer Rupert Christie. They turn R Thompson's doleful "I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight" into jollity and return "Rosemary Lane" to a navy singalong. "Moon Kittens", with its John Barryesque string part, reaches for anthemic ballad status but lead voice Jon Boden, while charismatic, is no Shirley Bassey. A cheery if tad predictable offering.

NEIL SPENCER



RUU CAMPBELL

Heartsong

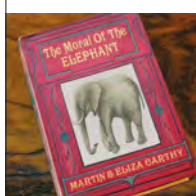
FULLFILL

For that Nick Drake-shaped hole in your life

6/10

Ruu Campbell has previously collaborated with Leftfield, but on *Heartsong* the British singer-songwriter spurns any trace of modern urban music in favour of English Pastoral: acoustic guitars, low strings and a timeless mix of the bucolic and melancholic. Every piece is in the right place, but the results lack the spark of originality. The likes of "Soul & Solace" and "Crystalline" are so close to Nick Drake it practically constitutes body-snatching, while on "Invisible Man" Campbell is in obvious thrall of Bon Iver. The album's warm, woody glow is undeniably lovely; it's just a shame that too often the loveliness is borrowed rather than owned.

GRAEME THOMSON



MARTIN & ELIZA CARTHY

The Moral Of The Elephant

TOPIC

Elegant trawl through tradition from folk's first family

8/10

The first official on-disc duo between dad and daughter, *Elephant* is also something of a career retrospective for Carthy M, recycling pieces played with Brass Monkey and Bert Jansch and revisiting "The Queen Of Hearts" from a debut almost 50 years distant. Carthy E adds pieces of her choosing, notably a version of "Happiness" by Molly Drake (mother of Nick) that evokes a 1950s England of childhood and woodland. There's antique gusto ("Blackwell Merry Night"), politics ("Grand Conversation On Napoleon"), wintry picking from a master ("The Queen Of Hearts"), some gothic touches from Britfolk's finest fiddler, and ground notes.

NEIL SPENCER



CLIPPING

Clipping

SUB POP

Scalding second from LA avant-rap trio

On last year's self-released debut *Midcity*, Clipping brought together the previously disparate

8/10

worlds of hip-hop and power electronics. Their counter-intuitive beats are constructed from warning sirens, rattling chains and ear-splitting blasts of digital interference, but here they often coalesce into a vicious parody of contemporary rap styles, with rapid-fire MC Daveed Diggs artfully reframing the usual cast of pimps, gangsters and players as drug addicts, psychopaths and serial killers. His dense rhyming can occasionally wear you down, but on the likes of "Tonight" – a sneering inversion of lazy club-rap anthems, featuring Three 6 Mafia's female MC Gangsta Boo – his subversive commentary hits home with industrial force.

SAM RICHARDS



REVELATIONS

Bellowhead discuss Revival, their new label and binge drinking

► Now an institution, Bellowhead celebrate a 10th anniversary with a monster tour, a major label signing, and a fifth album seemingly crafted for a wider audience. "We have always been keen to reach the most people possible," points out founder Jon Boden, "which is why we played the Proms and did *The Simpsons* and *The Archers* themes. *Broadside* was fun but quite a dark album. This one has a brighter aspect, not particularly by design – whatever tracks emerge during recording define the mood. My favourite track is the darkest, 'Greenwood Side', a 'Cruel Mother' murder ballad. It's seven-and-a-half minutes long and has a haunted feel, so I don't expect much radio play!"

It must be hard to distil the ebullience of a Bellowhead show onto disc. "We've learned they're two different things, and have become better at both. Five albums is way too much material for a gig, so some tracks will never get played live."

You're on pink Island and have covered Richard and Linda's "...Bright Lights Tonight". "That song has one of the all-time brilliant couplets: 'A couple of drunken nights rolling on the floor/Is just the kind of mess I'm looking for.' I'm not against a bit of binge drinking, as long as it doesn't define your life."

NEIL SPENCER



JERRY DAVID DECICCA

Understanding Land

ELECTRIC RAGTIME

Intense country-toned solo debut featuring Will Oldham and others

8/10

With a voice that's a cross between Leonard Cohen and Mark Lanegan, and a supporting cast that includes Will Oldham, Kelley Deal and Spooner Oldham, Jerry David DeCicca's solo debut is a minor treat of rich strings and warm songwriting. DeCicca, the former frontman of The Black Swans, wrote the album in Elephant And Castle but spiritually it reeks of the American outdoors on folksy ballads like "Gloves And The Turtle Dove", the countrified "Before The Storm" and the reflective "Bloom Again". Stand-out track, though, may be the lazy beat and introspective swirl of "First And Last", with Oldham on backing vocals.

PETER WATTS



JORGE DREXLER

Bailar En La Cueva

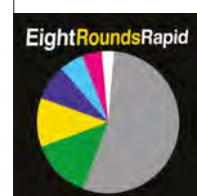
WARNER

Cool psychedelic samba music from Uruguayan Oscar winner

7/10

Since he bagged an Oscar for *The Motorcycle Diaries* theme song "Al Otro Lado Del Río" in 2005, musician, actor and doctor Jorge Drexler has become a Latin eminence. Now based in Spain, he draws on a South American motley here; airy sambas, Chilean rapper Ana Tijoux on "Paralel Universes", Colombian funksters on the title cut and Brazilian maverick Caetano Veloso on "Bolivia", an excursion into steamy trance. Though there is some bland ballast, Drexler's vocals are agile and clever; "Data Data" is an urbane piece David Byrne might have written. A classier act than the chronic cover art suggests.

NEIL SPENCER



EIGHT ROUNDS RAPID

Loss Leader

CADIZ MUSIC

Edgy outing from Southend four-piece featuring Simon 'son of Wilko' Johnson

8/10

Singer/lyricist David Alexander's politically charged bullets and the machine-gunning guitar ethos engraved in *Eight Rounds Rapid*'s heart are an excellent fit. Edgy, drugged-up thug punk is a speciality (the night-on-the-tiles circling of hell that is "Kicks"), the interplay between Simon Johnson's jagged, attritional guitar and Alexander's angry whine, increasingly intense. Thrilling climax "The Ryder" suggests Mark Perry in apoplectic early Alternative TV mode, fronting a defiant and virulent Stooges. *Loss Leader* is Thames Estuary crude given a vital contemporary twist: invest now.

GAVIN MARTIN

FIRST AID KIT

Stay Gold

COLUMBIA

Singing sisters' major-label debut is a glittering folk-pop tapestry of Scandi-angst. *By Graeme Thomson*



8/10

WHEN THEY FIRST started releasing music six years ago, teenage Swedish sisters Klara and Johanna Söderberg named their band in acknowledgement of the healing power of song. On their third album the pair sound in need of a dose of

their own medicine. The emotions driving these 10 tracks are as troubled and uncertain as the music is gloriously resolved.

There has always been an underlay of Scandi-angst to First Aid Kit's otherwise unfailingly accessible take on past and present Americana. It's got a lot to do with their vaulting sibling harmonies, so redolent of The Carter Family, The Louvin Brothers and the Everlys in the way in which they simultaneously convey a spine-tingling mixture of joy and heartbreak. Melancholia is also an integral ingredient in many of their most obvious musical influences. The pair first emerged in 2008 when their cover of Fleet Foxes' "Tiger Mountain Peasant Song" became a YouTube hit. On stage they've covered Gram Parsons' "Still Feeling Blue", while the pointedly titled "Emmylou", from their second album, 2012's *The Lion's Roar*, name-checks Parsons alongside Johnny Cash and June Carter.

On *Stay Gold*, their major-label debut, these core inspirations remain tangible, but the net is cast wider. "My Silver Lining", a galloping Death Valley lament in a malevolent minor key, sounds like Cash's take on "Ghost Riders (In The Sky)" filtered through Lee Hazlewood's "Some Velvet Morning". "Waitress Song"'s mix of crystalline vocals, violin and keening pedal steel recalls Neko Case's "I Wish I Was The Moon" from her 2002 album, *Blacklisted*. On "Cedar Lane", a shifty waltz with a bad case of the motel blues, the mix of sobering country music borne aloft by flutes and strings brings to mind Townes Van Zandt's 1969 album, *Our Mother The Mountain*.

Elsewhere there are other, perhaps more surprising echoes. The pounding tribal chorus of "Stay Gold" has more than a hint of vintage Eurovision about it, while the beautiful "Shattered & Hollow" pulses powerfully, like a forlorn, backwoods version of The Ronettes' "Be My Baby".

The duo's skill lies in their ability to weave these strands into a golden folk-pop tapestry of consistent loveliness, even if the results are hardly groundbreaking. First Aid Kit made their great leap forward when they moved from the spare acoustic renderings of 2010 debut *The Big Black And The Blue*, to the more fully-fleshed sound of *The Lion's Roar*. As a next step, *Stay Gold* is part confident consolidation, part logical progression. Like its predecessor, it was recorded in Omaha with Bright Eyes' producer/instrumentalist Mike Mogis, but while the general creative approach is similar, the arrangements are markedly more ambitious. The marquee harmonies and indie-folk textures remain,



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Mike Mogis

Recorded at: Arc

Studios, Omaha

Personnel: Klara

Söderberg (vocals,

guitar), Johanna

Söderberg (vocals,

keyboards, autoharp),

Benkt Söderberg (bass),

Nicholas Lindström

(drums), Mike Mogis

(guitar, pedal steel,

mandolin), Will Clifton

(upright bass), Nathaniel

Walcott (organ, piano),

Omaha Symphony

Orchestra (strings,

woodwind, flutes)

but it's Nate Walcott's inventive use of viola, cello, flute, Mellotron and clarinet, played by members of the Omaha Symphony Orchestra, which dominates.

Among all this crafted tastefulness, the breathless train-track rattle of "Heaven Knows" provides a welcome carefree kick, a lip-smacking kiss-off to some hapless fellow who has "spent a year staring into a mirror". If *Stay Gold* at times seems almost too poised and pretty, then the words drag the listener back to the messy heart of the matter. Now 21 and 23, respectively, Klara and Johanna have moved away from the precocious observational narratives of early songs like "Tangerine" into what feels like nakedly

autobiographical terrain. The songs return again and again to the dislocated sensation of being in constant motion and a long way from home. On "Master Pretender", "shit gets fucked up and people just disappear", while the rousing "Waitress Song" imagines a simpler life away from this "dark, twisted road".

The prevailing sense of regret, stoicism and hard-won wisdom is captured best on "Shattered & Hollow", which concludes: "I'd rather be broken than empty, rather be striving than settled." Embracing experience in all its prickly incarnations might make for a tricky life but – on this evidence – the pay-off is the creation of ever more beautiful and emotionally engaging music.

Q&A

Klara & Johanna Söderberg

Has signing to Sony changed anything about how you work?

KLARA: Not at all. We had the LP finished before we even knew the label. We made the record we wanted, and then found a home for it.

It's a logical continuation of *The Lion's Roar*...

JOHANNA: With that record we felt we'd found our home sonically and lyrically, so we wanted to establish what we'd already done, instead of doing something completely new.

KLARA: The strings and arrangements move us into new territory. We're a four-piece band live, but we felt that shouldn't dictate how this record sounds. If the songs wanted to be big, let them be big! On "Waitress Song" and "Stay Gold" we wanted something epic from the get-go.

There's a recurring theme of dislocation and travel, yet resolving to keep on keeping on.

KLARA: It's not something we planned. We wrote these songs about being away from people we love and going on great adventures. It's not an "on tour" record, it's about feeling lost in any sort of way. We're very emotional people, and we deal with our sadness by writing about it. That's the whole idea behind our band. *GRAEME THOMSON*



EPHEMERALS
Nothin Is Easy
JALAPENO

Coffee-shop soul, from Hillman Mondegreen's funky baristas. Mixing soul, funk, Afrobeat and roll-um-easy jazzy grooves, *Nothin Is*

6/10

Easy is an exercise in note-perfect pastiche – the kind of eminently listenable, ersatz soul delivered by Raphael Saadiq, Sharon Jones and pretty much everyone signed to the Daptone label. Producer Mondegreen has assembled a killer band, who committed these 10 songs to analogue tape in just three days in London last summer. Instrumental “The Oligarch” is the best cut here, chiefly because this record’s principal weakness is vocal. While Franglo-American frontman Wolfgang “Wolf” Valbrun does a passable Paolo Nutini, the sixth-form social conscience grates, and there’s more than a whiff of ‘emoting’ throughout.

MARK BENTLEY



ERGO PHIZMIZ
The Peacock
CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

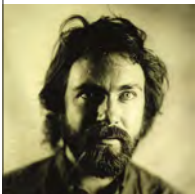
Poppy oddball spans the centuries on his third LP

7/10

“Peacocks always talk in riddles,” insists the

exceedingly odd Ergo Phizmiz on his third album, a typically appealing celebration of strange English sounds. *The Peacock* takes in all sorts, from opener “The Peacock”, which sounds as if it was first heard in Hampton Court 500 years ago, to the Floyd-like “Hyenas In The Hallway” and ramshackle Jilted John punk “The Tinker Song”. At his finest – the fleeting “All Fall Down”, rocky “Open Artery Surgery” or Jacques Brel-style “Smiles Of A Summer Night” – Phizmiz sounds like a lo-fi Scott Walker, spiritual kin to determined eccentrics like Luke Haines or Neil Hannon.

PETER WATTS



LIAM FINN
The Nihilist
YEPROC

Neil’s son puts his own spin on the family recipe. The third solo LP from this 30-year-old member of New Zealand’s first musical family taps into

7/10

the bustle of New York City – Liam now lives in Brooklyn. Frequently flirting with cacophony, *The Nihilist* feels like a collision of Gotham’s manic energy and the otherworldliness that has permeated Kiwi music from Uncle Tim’s Split Enz up to Lorde. Liam’s partner-in-crime is his kid brother Elroy, whose feverish drumming further ratchets up the relentless rhythmic intensity, as the siblings gleefully scribble all over Liam’s crisply crafted pop songs. These include the Prince-ish “Snug As Fuck” and the supercharged “Burn Up The Road”, which sounds like Crowded House on crystal meth.

BUD SCOPPA



MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD
All People
BOO BOO WAX/CAPITOL

10th from Beatnigs/ Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy veteran. From his punk-rap

7/10

beginnings, Michael Franti has fashioned an inclusive pan-global pop, heard here at its most confident and fully formed. Threaded together with a modern dance glow – Pet Shop Boys-style euphoria on “Long Ride Home”, Beyoncé and Jay Z shoutouts on “I’m Alive” – *All People* easily embraces Eurodisco thump, spangled dub grooves and twinkling acoustic sweetness. The songs are crafted to elide personal relationships and universal longings with the apocalyptic tremors beneath the summery bounce of “Earth From Outer Space” acknowledging hard reality behind the freedom calls.

GAVIN MARTIN

REVELATIONS

Mary Gauthier: “Addiction was one of my big monsters...”



➤ The six studio albums of Mary Gauthier have all been defined by a certain bruising intensity, but her latest is particularly damaged. *Trouble & Love* finds the 52-year-old Nashville singer relaying erudite tales of ruin and flight over moody clouds of guitar, organ and hushed harmonies. “The record is a story of transformation,” she explains. “I lost someone who meant a lot to me, then there was sadness from the loss and the phases of grief. I tried to write it in a way that works like a book, so each chapter would be a song.” The record ends on the uplifting tone of “Another Train”, which suggests a closure of sorts. “We all hope to have the strength to drag our ass to the station and love again,” she adds. “That’s the cycle I tried to capture.”

Gauthier is more qualified than most to document such things. An orphan-turned-runaway, she became hooked on heroin and booze at an early age before finally going clean and, aged 35, writing her first song: “Addiction was one of my big monsters that really destroyed all connection with people. So my life has been about learning how to connect and it hasn’t been easy. But I think I’m getting there now.”

ROB HUGHES



FUCKED UP
Glass Boys
MATADOR

Fourth long-player from ambitious Canadian punks

7/10

In some ways, Fucked Up are your familiar hardcore group – swear name, phlegmatic lead singer, songs that go along at a fair old clip. In other ways, they differ vastly, wrestling with grand concepts, progressive structures and, on 2011’s *David Comes To Life*, *Quadrophenia*-style rock opera. While more straight-shooting than its predecessor, *Glass Boys* strikes similarly celebratory notes, “Echo Boomer” and the power pop-tinged “Paper The House” sprinting through rapturous crescendos. Abraham’s roared delivery hides lyrics of subtlety and reflection, particularly on the soul-searching “DET”, and while the unrelenting energy can be somewhat exhausting, it’s hard not to get swept up.

LOUIS PATTISON



MARY GAUTHIER
Trouble & Love
PROPER/IN THE BLACK

First full-length in four years from raw Nashville diarist

7/10

Gauthier’s life prior to becoming a songwriter – homelessness, addiction, jail time – has been pretty well documented on her previous six albums. The estranged theme of *Trouble & Love* was apparently the result of her working through an extended period of grief. Cue slow-rolling songs, marked by unfussy arrangements and judicious use of guitar and organ, and allusions to lonely motel rooms, fists in faces and snow falling on snow. It’s all gracefully wrought, with discreet harmonies from Darrell Scott and Beth Nielsen Chapman, and ultimately ends on a hopeful note with the lovely “Another Train”.

ROB HUGHES



GLASS ANIMALS
Zaba
WOLF TONE

Sophisticated indie-soul quartet produced by the starmaker behind Adele. Expectations hang heavy on Oxford indie-rockers Glass Animals, chiefly

7/10

because they are signed to a new label founded by super-producer Paul Epworth of Adele, Plan B and Bloc Party fame. Their polished debut certainly has a strong studio aesthetic, each track suspended in the same syrupy sonic gloop of ambient twinkles and twangs. Slinky, sensual, androgynous soul-pop grooves like “Goosey” and “Hazey” feel like oblique homages to Marvin Gaye’s “Sexual Healing” while the crepuscular sci-fi R&B ballads “Black Mambo” and “Cocoa Hooves” are smoother, sunnier cousins of The xx. Moody textures outnumber memorable songs, but this is still a stylish and inviting debut.

STEPHEN DALTON



GRANDMA SPARROW ...& His Piddletractor Orchestra

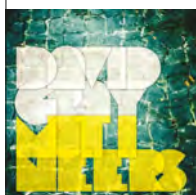
SPACEBOMB

Arranged follow-up, of sorts, to *Big Inner*
Hype for this second album from Matthew E White's

6/10

Spacebomb stable describes it as a cross between Charles Ives and The Beach Boys: accurate, perhaps, if Brian Wilson's defining work was "George Fell Into His French Horn". In truth, Grandma Sparrow, alter-ego of Megafaun's Joe Westerlund, favours a fantasia of silly voices, tape mangling, lavish orchestrations and poo jokes that resemble a Frank Zappa score for *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*. Just as clever – though not as funny, as it thinks it is – *Sparrow* has its moments: shoo-be-dooing, children-assisted singalong "Pigs-milk Candycane"; and "Twelve-Tone Lullaby", in which Schoenberg's compositional theories are revealed as – who knew? – terrifying to infants.

JOHN MULVEY



DAVID GRAY

Mutineers

IHT

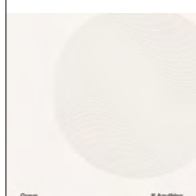
Tenth studio album rings the changes for UK singer-songwriter

Credit to David Gray's self-expressed desire to get away from a well-trodden

8/10

narrative of "crucified middle-aged man". If the lyrical preoccupations are less introspective and more universal on songs such as the title track and "Snow In Vegas", he's experimented sonically, too, bringing in Lamb's Andy Barlow to create a down-tempo soundbed with echoing touches of electronica and resonant cello underpinning Gray's piano and distinctive voice, which Barlow has given a layered, softer quality. Ultimately, the changes are subtle rather than profound and Gray still sounds like he's been nailed to a cross – which will no doubt come as a relief to loyal fans.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



GREYS If Anything

CARPARK

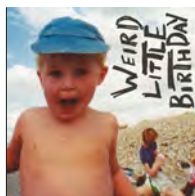
Canadian punks with a hard-on for hardcore

Hardcore enthusiasts Greys had a whale of a time recording

7/10

this colourful debut album judging by cacophonous singalongs such as "Adderall", frantic, hook-laden "Brain Dead" or the sledgehammer drive of "Chick Singer". The latter track sounds as though it was written by Kim Gordon for inclusion on an early-1990s Sonic Youth album, while "Flip Yr Lid" is a knowing nod to Hüsker Dü, but Greys are able to take these influences forward on tracks like "Cold Soak" and "Guy Picciotto", which seethe, howl and rock, combining the energy of hardcore with some of the more abstract sounds found in contemporary noise rock.

PETER WATTS



HAPPYNESS

Weird Little Birthday

WEIRD SMILING

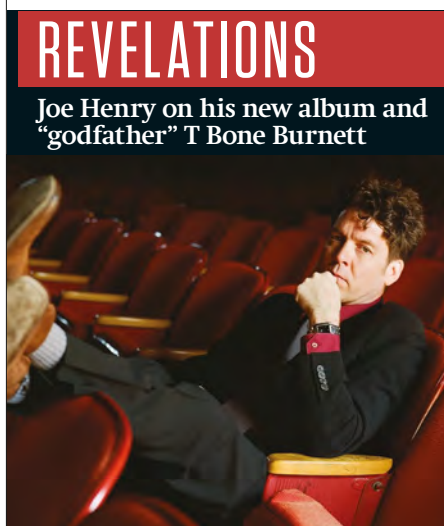
Affectionate homage to the post-grunge era

Within only three songs, Happyness confirm how deeply they're indebted to

8/10

mid-'90s US college rock. "Baby, Jesus (Jelly Boy)"'s vocals – and conspicuous lyrical reference to "motorcycle gas tanks" – wilfully mimic Sparklehorse's debut single, "Spirit Ditch", and the muted sentimentality of "Naked Patients" could hardly be more Yo La Tengo (whose former producer, Adam Lasus, mixed the South London trio's debut). Recent single "Great Minds Think Alike, All Brains Taste The Same" meanwhile recalls a less mischievous Pavement, and such influences are transparent throughout. Deft lyrical touches and a persuasive commitment nonetheless lift Happyness well above pastiche.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



REVELATIONS

Joe Henry on his new album and "godfather" T Bone Burnett

► Prolific singer-songwriter, Grammy-winning producer, co-biographer of comedian Richard Pryor, married to Madonna's sister with their eldest son on his team, Joe Henry has a touch of renaissance man about him. His studio in the basement of his Pasadena home has become a destination of choice for artists from Rodney Crowell to Aaron Neville and Billy Bragg. "It's not for everyone," he says, "but it's a unique space and people are responsive. It has a Motown ethos – a small group of musicians who are egoless collaborators and know what they're after." On *Invisible Hour* he's joined by folk duo The Milk Carton Kids and Irish singer Lisa Hannigan, with novelist Colum McCann co-writing the title track. "I wanted to steal a line from Colum – 'We come in bodies not our own' – and a volley of emails followed." Henry's producer role grew from his friendship with T Bone Burnett, who oversaw 1990's *Shuffletown*. "He became my professional godfather and mentor. He encouraged me to become an apprentice, which was an amazing immersion into that world." His own songs are non-confessional. "There's a Woody Guthrie quote, 'All you can write is what you see', but that doesn't have to be literal. It's what you open yourself to, you can be empathic, receiving the story from the person who has lived it."

NEIL SPENCER



HAT FITZ & CARA ROBINSON

Do Tell

MANHATON

Australian/Irish husband-and-wife duo's sensual roughneck blues outing

7/10

Following a whirlwind romance in the rowdy blues festivals of their respective homelands, Hat Fitz and the mighty-voiced Cara Robinson have proved well matched. Fitz's lonesome, slide-guitar-etched, depression-defying "Long Dark Cloud" complements the Deep South sensuality that Robinson commands on "Sister Sister". Producer Jeff Lang's minimalist approach (showcased on "99.9" or the triumphant muleskinner "Coming Home") is well chosen. Throughout the album, these two characters show their material needs no additional frills or padding – blessed as they are with a rare depth and conviction.

GAVIN MARTIN



JOE HENRY

Invisible Hour

EARMUSIC

Thirteenth album from eclectic American songwriter and

burgeoning producer

7/10

Joe Henry's output has veered between pop music, rock, country and even jazz, the unifying factors being his well-crafted songs and a fearless attitude also apparent in his growing producer's role. *Invisible Hour* is a return to basics – acoustic guitar, bass and brushed drums, enlivened by burbling woodwind, recorded in the already legendary home studio. Henry's everyman vocals are no seducer, but the words are, a torrent of post-Dylan imagery that can get a little lost but as often hits a sweet spot: "You speak from the shadows and I want you to lead me on". One-paced but classy.

NEIL SPENCER



HOWLING BELLS

Heartstrings

BIRTHDAY

Aussie expats trim their bliss-pop template

Howling Bells have often sounded like a band searching for their identity: aiming for intense

7/10

atmospherics but ending up with by-numbers, "swirling" indie rock. With the Alan Moulder-produced *Heartstrings*, they've finally found their mark. It moves at a cracking pace, its 10 concise songs (in barely 32 minutes) picked clean of fluff and with their sugar content much reduced. It starts as it means to go on, with clarion, panoramic opener "Paris", before hammering through "Possessed" and (the in fact darkly impatient) "Slowburn". Elsewhere, it channels Lana Del Rey's spangled doom, but something more intriguingly difficult – Abba's desolate core, maybe – is on show with "Paper Heart".

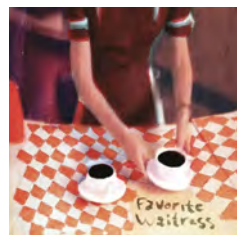
SHARON O'CONNELL

THE FELICE BROTHERS

Favorite Waitress

DUALTONE

The New York brothers refine their sound. *By Andrew Mueller*



7/10

THE FELICE BROTHERS' previous proper album, 2011's *Celebration, Florida* was by far their least characteristic to date – and, for that reason, arguably their most admirable. Having earned a reputation for robust, stirring, if somewhat orthodox

Americana, The Felice Brothers took an abrupt left turn, incorporating electronic and hip-hop influences into a semi-conceptual conceit about a planned community built by the Disney Corporation. As startling diversions went, it wasn't quite comparable to Radiohead unveiling an exciting new banjo-led direction, but it wasn't far off.

The Brothers began a return to their roots with 2012's *God Bless You Amigo* – a lo-fi, home-recorded collection of standards and unrecorded Felice Brothers songs, sold from their website on a pay-what-you-like basis. It seems to have resuscitated the Felices' enthusiasm for what they started out doing, jamming in the family home in upstate in New York, busking on the New York City subway. *Favorite Waitress* aims for a certain pastoral simplicity. Among the very first sounds it yields are the yaps of a dog – gambolling, it seems safe to assume, in view of a porchful of strumming musicians clad substantially in dungarees and beards. The opening couplet of the opening track, the Uncle Tupelo-ish trundle "Bird On Broken Wing", rhymes "street" with "meet".

The Felices haven't left behind absolutely everything they discovered in *Celebration, Florida* – "Saturday Night", by far the album's most successful ballad, suggests Tom Waits with his plinking pub piano replaced by a Roland, and a wobbly synthesiser underpins the slow verses of "Katie Cruel" before being spectacularly obliterated by the clattering, punky guitars of the album's best chorus. In general, however, throughout these 13 tracks, unconquered sonic frontiers are permitted to remain unconquered.

It's to The Felice Brothers' credit that *Favorite Waitress* never quite becomes oppressively earnest, though it's a near thing at a couple of points. As a general rule, the slower the tempo, the greater the temptation to fling an empty towards the chicken wire. *Favorite Waitress* assuredly has its moments, but it also has its hours – the ballads are too frequent and, in the main, way too much like hard work. "Meadow Of A Dream" has a certain grandeur, but it's difficult to listen to the words, riddled as they are with references to factory whistles, boxcars, bottles, Butch and Sundance, without checking one's way through an imaginary Americana bingo card. "Constituents" is pretty, but impossible to listen to without anticipating, at the end of every verse, the "1-2-3-4" that might launch it higher and faster. "Alien", again, almost



SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at:

Arc, Omaha

Produced by:

Jeremy Backhofen

Personnel:

Ian Felice (vocals, guitar, piano),

James Felice (vocals, accordion, keys), Josh

Rawson (bass), Greg

Farley (fiddle), David

Estabrook (drums)

works, but a heavy-handed arrangement gives it more the feel of a lecture than a hymn.

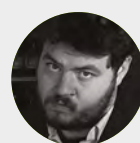
Mostly and fortunately, the Felices manage to avoid the curatorial piety which is often an unfortunate consequence of buying into a heritage, and realise that you're allowed to have fun with this stuff. The playful "Cherry Licorice" is a gleeful homage to John Prine at his daftest – think "Grandpa Was A Carpenter", "Spanish Pipedream" – right down to the cheerfully forced rhymes ("licorice"/"ridicklish"). "Lion", lurching around a seaisack accordion riff, summons something of the giddy dementia of DeVotchKa via the more

anthemic tendencies of The Decemberists. "Woman Next Door" is a wondrous cowpunk romp, its churning guitars and daffy lyrics ("I came to a field of posies/I asked them how they grow/Some said 'By the sunshine/Some said 'I don't know'" suggesting an unwritten history in which Donovan has recruited Drive-By Truckers as his backing group.

Favorite Waitress is, then, a kind of homecoming for The Felice Brothers after their exploratory digression, and by and large it's good to have them back. It would be a shame, however, if from hereon they entirely forgot that there's a big world out there.

Q&A

James Felice



Why the decision to record in Omaha? The studio is owned by friends of ours [Bright Eyes' Coner Oberst and Mike Mogis]. And going there from here [upstate New York] gave us an

opportunity to play the songs on the way. It took four days to drive, so we played some places as we went. We took our producer [Jeremy Backhofen] with us, and he listened to us play the songs and gave us notes after the shows.

Did the songs change at all as you went?

Honestly, not much. It was good to have Jeremy in the audience, for sure, but it was mostly to get the performances right. The songs were 90 per cent there before we left, but it's always good to hone. It was like a big camping trip.

Was the idea to reconnect with your live sound?

Yes. The idea was that if we liked how they sounded live, we'd like 'em on the record.

How do you feel now about the different tack you took on *Celebration, Florida*? We're extremely proud of that album. We had to make that record, to prove we could do something different. It was a fun departure.



CHRISSIE HYNDE *Stockholm*

WILL TRAVEL/CAROLINE

Solo excursion with surprising guests

Recorded in Sweden with producer and co-writer Björn Yttling (Peter, Bjorn

6/10

And John), Hynde describes this debut solo album as "Abba meets John Lennon". That's not immediately evident, because *Stockholm* never strays too far from the earlier Pretenders template, albeit with noticeably fewer guitars. Having said that, there's a strong six-string presence courtesy of Neil Young's aggressive twang on "Down The Wrong Way", while tennis player John McEnroe gets busy with the riffs on the sneering "A Plan Too Far". The record arguably lacks a killer track, Chrissie seemingly on autopilot throughout, although the sultry "In A Miracle" contains the occasional echo of past glories.

TERRY STAUNTON



JAH WOBBLE PRESENTS PJ HIGGINS

Inspiration

SONAR KOLLEKTIV GERMANY

Boss bassie hits form with sultry trip-hop singer
Vocalist with Dub

8/10

Colossus and an inveterate collaborator, PJ Higgins seizes her chance to shine in her own light on this excursion with the irrepressible Wobble. Singing over reggaematic trip-hop with acres of echo, Higgins gets anguished on "My Heart's Burning", chats entertainingly on "Watch How You Walk" and evokes Horace Andy's sinuous style on "King of Illusion", a blast of old-school roots complete with cavernous dub. Wobble thunders imperiously throughout, and the album's 33 minutes slip easily down aside from the brief, out-of-place holler that's "Chaingang".

A sweet session.

NEIL SPENCER



VIKESH KAPOOR *The Ballad Of Willy Robbins*

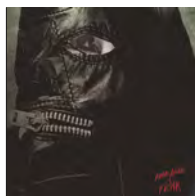
LOOSE MUSIC

Working man's blues from Portland

7/10

The titular anti-hero of this debut album is a man down on his luck, the hard knocks of his working life echoed in the disrepair of both his home and marriage. Willy Robbins' story is the heart of an overarching theme as Pennsylvania-born Kapoor (joined here by odd members of The Decemberists and Langhorne Slim) essays tales of struggle and survival across pithy folk-pop songs with delicate dashes of mandolin and Wurlitzer piano. The pleasing wobble of his voice accentuates a kinked approach, with the outstanding "Carry Me, Home" sounding like Barry Dransfield by way of Dock Boggs.

ROB HUGHES



KING DUDE *Fear*

NOT JUST RELIGIOUS MUSIC

Seattle rock wraith turns the blues black
Like the Bad Seeds and The Gun Club before

him, King Dude – real name Thomas Jefferson

6/10

Cowgill – knows there's little out there to contend with the darkness to be found in the traditional American songbook. *Fear*, his third album under the King Dude name, locates this seam and distils it like fine whiskey, assembling neat pastiches of old-timey country, folk and gospel and dressing them up in gothic garb. Producer Bill Rieflin, of Ministry and Swans, helps bring a thunderous urgency to the electric "Fear Is All You Know". But *Fear* is best when Cowgill strips things back: see fingerpicked lament "Maria", or "Devil Eyes", an outlaw blues strum he sings in a fresh-from-the-grave gurgle.

LOUIS PATTISON



...session man



ROLLING STONES *Some Girls*

ROLLING STONES RECORDS, 1978

Mac appears on two tracks; a cover of The Temptations' "Just

My Imagination" and, more significantly, "Miss You", his slinky electric piano riff the springboard for Jagger's disco strut at the height of New York's Studio 54 scene. "I was only with them for a weekend, but it was very work-intensive," he says. "Beds were not slept in."

8/10

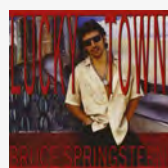


RICH KIDS *Ghosts Of Princes In Towers*

EMI, 1978
Producer Mick Ronson enlisted McLagan to beef up the sound of Glen Matlock's post-

Pistols power poppers, with subsequent expanded versions of the album including a cover of the Small Faces' "Here Come The Nice". Friendships were formed, and Mac invited Matlock to take the Ronnie Lane role when the Faces reformed with Mick Hucknall for live shows in 2010.

7/10



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN *Lucky Town*

COLUMBIA, 1991
When The Boss benched the E Street Band for this and *Human Touch*, it fell

to McLagan as the surrogate Danny Federici to provide the Hammond flourishes, best heard on the hymnal "My Beautiful Reward". Mac had earlier worked with Springsteen on a version of "Viva Las Vegas" for an NME charity album of Elvis Presley covers.

8/10

TERRY STAUNTON



KLAXONS *Love Frequency*

AKASHIC/SONY RED

London quartet return with smooth third, four years in the making

"It's where we always said we were gonna place ourselves," said

5/10

Jamie Reynolds of Klaxons' long-awaited third album. "It just took us a while to learn how to get there." In this case, though, a more developed sense of craft can be detrimental, as the band, with help from top-draw producers The Chemical Brothers, James Murphy and Gorgon City, have abandoned many of the elements that made them unique. Gone are the lo-fi synths, fuzz bass and Ballardian references, replaced with clichéd titles like "Show Me A Miracle" and the kind of electronic pop that fills Radio 1's A-list. It's well done, but the price of reinvention has been the band's personality.

TOM PINNOCK



LUST FOR YOUTH *International*

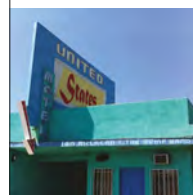
SACRED BONES

Swedish miserabilist finds happiness in the '80s

8/10

After two dark, often dissonant albums in five years, Hannes Norrvide's third is a surprisingly cheerful release that eschews his previous lo-fi work and, for the first time, involves live collaborators Loke Rahbek and Malthe Fisher, plus guest guitarwork from Iceage's Elias Bender Rønnenfelt. Undeniably influenced by '80s synth-pop, it finds the Swede – now Denmark-based – trading in flavours reminiscent of Depeche Mode (on the mildly claustrophobic "Epoetin Alfa"), New Order (on the wonderfully melodic "New Boys") and even Underworld (the "Born Slippy"-on-downers "Running"). Norrvide still sounds a little glum, but he's got plenty to be happy about here.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



IAN MCLAGAN *United States*

YEP ROC

No-nonsense good-time vibes from the much-loved veteran

7/10

McLagan's first album in six years, again in the company of his touring cohorts The Bump Band, is less personal than 2008's *Never Say Never*, which was written and recorded after the death of his wife Kim in a car accident. Mixed by long-time friend and collaborator Glyn Johns, it's a lively mix of breezy country ("Love Letter"), rough-hewn soul testifying ("Shalalala") and finger-snapping R'n'B ("Pure Gold"), and while the voice may croak and crack every so often, Mac's fingers are as nimble as ever across the keyboards. He's especially eloquent on the hymnal, piano-led "Mean Old World", recalling the tender side of his time with the Faces.

TERRY STAUNTON



JESSICA LEA MAYFIELD

Make My Head Sing...

ATO

Ohio singer-songwriter goes for the jugular

8/10

On her third album Mayfield discards her crafted alt.country roots in favour of blunt minimalism. The crackle and drag of over-loaded guitar and beautifully bleached-out vocals underpin a pared-down aesthetic which moves between grinding sludge-rock and fuzzy slow-core. Thrillingly heavy and direct it may be, but there are great tunes here. "I Wanna Love You" is an alt.rock mash-up of Fleetwood Mac and Blue Öyster Cult, while "Pure Stuff" marries a sugar-sweet melody to the primal heft of Dinosaur Jr and Nirvana. Even on "Party Drugs" – stripped to voice and treated guitar – the intensity of this impressive reinvention never wavers.

GRAEME THOMSON



MOULETTES

Constellations

NAVIGATOR

Well-wrought third album from Sussex avant-folkies

8/10

Tireless live grafters and entertainers, the Moullettes were previously undersold on disc. Now signed to Navigator, though, they find focus, moulding 10 eclectic songs into an otherworldly whole. *Constellations'* jerky shifts of pace can be irksome, but each number is a parade of surprises; a growling bassoon, a wordplay from leader Hannah Miller, a snippet of dub electronica. "The Night Is Young" is belle epoque waltz, the misterioso "Land Of The Midnight Sun" has swaying Beatlesque strings and tinkling harp, and The Unthanks even show up for the jaunty "The Observatory". Different, daring and full of Kate Bush-like enchantment.

NEIL SPENCER



JOAN OSBORNE

Love And Hate

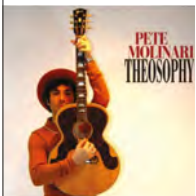
MEMBRAN

Mature songcraft from the 'God on the bus' girl

7/10

Osborne's erratic career trajectory has taken in pop novelty ("One Of Us"), a Motown revue with the Funk Brothers, jamming with the remnants of the Grateful Dead and singing at the Grand Ole Opry. Her last album, 2012's *Bring It On Home*, was a collection of blues and soul covers, but here she returns to classic troubadour mode with an intimate 12-song cycle about love in its many guises that sounds deeply autobiographical. There's a hint of Tropicália ("Work On Me"), lush strings and classical piano ("Train"), a touch of soul, some slinky jazz and echoes of Aimee Mann, Dory Previn and even Alicia Keys.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



PETE MOLINARI

Theosophy

CHERRY RED

Retro troubadour finds a harder edge

7/10

Pete Molinari could be forgiven for cursing Jake Bugg. Molinari has been pedalling the same wiry, mongrel mix of '60s folk, rock, blues and country for a decade, but while Bugg may be younger, glossier and more successful, Molinari's take on similar sources is more playfully promiscuous, even if he does often struggle to transcend them. His fourth album is leaner and meaner than 2010's *A Train Bound For Glory*, the ramshackle electric charge of "Hang My Head In Shame", the Kinky "Evangeline" and fuzzily malevolent blues of "Easy Street" characteristic of an enjoyably raw blend of his core obsessions.

GRAEME THOMSON



NAZARETH

Rock 'n' Roll Telephone

UNION SQUARE

Axl Rose's favourite band do it one last time

6/10

Four decades after being voted *Melody Maker's* 'brightest hope' of 1973, Nazareth's star may have dimmed but album 23 is consistent as ever. Stomping heavies with self-explanatory titles such as "Boom Bang Bang" vie with power rock ballads like "Back 2B4" and "Winter Sunlight" in the melodic style of their 1975 hit version of "Love Hurts". But, sadly, change is on the way: *Rock 'n' Roll Telephone* is the band's last album with Dan McCafferty, lead vocalist since the outset, who has been forced to retire due to health issues, quite possibly associated with 45 years of unadulterated hard rocking. A rip-roaring way to say goodbye.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



OWEN PALLETT

In Conflict

DOMINO

Orchestral pop prodigy virtuoso reinvents the love song

8/10

Composing video game soundtracks, scoring Spike Jonze movies, playing with the Arcade Fire: Ontario-born violinist Owen Pallett has spread his talents far and wide. His past solo work has tended to dwell in imagined realms – albeit, with real life poking through the cracks. *In Conflict*, though, feels starkly personal, wrestling with topics of love and human fallibility: "I Am Not Afraid" addresses body dysmorphia, childlessness and the appetites of the ex-addict. Musically, though, it's exquisite. "Chorale" and "Song For Five And Six" thread violin, piano and horns through a pensive simmer of electronics, and as a symbol of Pallett's good reputation, Brian Eno adds guitar and synth throughout.

LOUIS PATTISON



JESS MORGAN

Langa Langa

AMATEUR BOXER

East Anglian folky's fine third offering

6/10

Folk-based singer-songwriter Jess Morgan combines winsome vocals with a simple back-and-forth campfire strum on her latest album, *Langa Langa*, which lays down its statement in the second track "The Missionary", an ode to self-sacrifice and the dedication of the zealous. Like the best folk singers, Morgan is preoccupied by physical place as much as internal space, and her flat Norfolk homeland is a tangible presence on tracks like the typically tranquil "Annie Of Greyfriars", the political "Movie Scene" and wicked "Cavalier", the last of which is a thoughtful meditation on the unlikely subject of sex and Norwich.

PETER WATTS



THE NEW LINE

Can't Hold The Wheel

THE NEW LINE

The new sound of Americana – out of Africa

8/10

The chiming sound of the Zimbabwean thumb piano or mbira briefly entered the mainstream in the 1980s when Thomas Mapfumo and the Bhundu Boys enjoyed five minutes of pop fame, but the instrument has never found the wider currency of the sitar or kora. Vermont's Brendan Taaffe and band may change that with an enticing mix of Appalachian folk and Afro-pop as mbira and banjo cast old-time roots ballads such as "Goodnight Irene" and "Danville Girl" in a beguiling new light. Stefan Amidon (younger brother of Sam) adds percussion and vocals and the results are as magical as if Justin Vernon had invited Toumani Diabaté to his Wisconsin cabin.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



PARQUET COURTS

Sunbathing Animal

ROUGH TRADE

Texan émigrés' subtly subversive third

7/10

In their twin infatuation with slacker rock and post-punk, Brooklyn's Parquet Courts are hardly alone. Their 2012 breakthrough, *Light Up Gold*, marked them out as smart, if overly zealous students of recent music history with a keen eye for the detail of modern life. There's no seismic shift here, but the differences – and listening rewards – lie in the indeterminate spaces between their sources (Television, Jonathan Richman, Sonic Youth, Pixies and Pavement). They sometimes still pull on single threads of melody or rhythm, as if marvelling at how their songs are made, but, as the controlled sprawl of "She's Rollin'" and garage blues of "Duckin And Dodgin" show, they aren't afraid to light out for new territory.

SHARON O'CONNELL

THE PIERCES

THE PIERCES

Creation

POLYDOR

Chart-topping Alabama sisters do it the major label way, with mixed results

5/10

Allison and Catherine Pierce have been

plugging away with their folk-pop sound for over 10 years but it was only in 2011, with input from Coldplay bassist Guy Berryman, that they eventually broke through with their fourth, MOR-influenced LP *You & I*. Their fifth effort finds them pedalling yet more heart-on-sleeve harmonies and sun-kissed melodies, all conspicuously lacking the grit of their earlier work. There's a certain wonky charm to the title track, but elsewhere *Creation* is too clean and clearly aimed at a Radio 2 demographic to be much more than background noise.

FIONA STURGES



PLAID

Rechy Prints

WARP

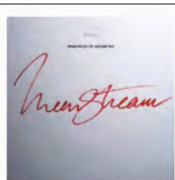
Doughty footsoldiers of IDM return, charming as ever

7/10

Compared with algorithmic and pranksterish contemporaries like

Autechre and Aphex Twin, Plaid's brand of electronica (or "Intelligent Dance Music", as it was briefly tagged in the early '90s) has always been a little prettier and, occasionally, more whimsical. Rather more underappreciated, too: *Rechy Prints* is Andy Turner and Ed Handley's eighth album, and one more discreet assertion of their excellence. The technology has evolved, but the Plaid aesthetic remains constant, as a harp-like flurry introduces nine melodically ornate tracks that often resemble the digitally adjusted work of multiple music boxes. "Liverpool St", in particular, is magical, a rococo re-imagining of one of London's least romantic train stations.

JOHN MULVEY



PRINCIPLES OF GEOMETRY

Meanstream

TIGERSUSHI

French pair's alluring, if unremarkable fourth

6/10

It might seem that pristine, retro electronic pop reached exhaustion point with Daft

Punk's patchy *Random Access Memories*, but lately, a darker and more dramatic route to the past has been opening up. Tracking back to John Carpenter and Vangelis, it's recently diverted College, Boards Of Canada and Oneohtrix Point Never. French duo POG have piped similarly ominous filmic elements into their latest set, notably on the chilly "Prologue" and "Lonnie", balancing its mix of digital funk, strutting EBM and cream-whipped synth pop. The latter reaches a peak with the dreamy "Streamsters", its cheesy nadir on "Polysex". *Meanstream* has its moments, but is too often more than just a vowel swap away from the overly familiar.

SHARON O'CONNELL



THE PROPER ORNAMENTS

Wooden Head

FORTUNA POPI/SLUMBERLAND

Indie-jangle classicism, diffuse and effete

7/10

A duo featuring Argentinian-born Max Claps, and James Hoare,

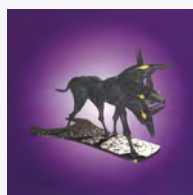
on day-release from Scottish indie-pop gang Veronica Falls, The Proper Ornaments sit nicely, if at times a little glibly, smack dab in the middle of the current wave of post-Velvets/C86 redux. What elevates The Proper Ornaments above their peers, though, is an ability to pull together everything you thought you knew about classic guitar pop moves – VU balladry, Flying Nun jangle, elements of shoegazing (the vocals are dead ringers for Ride's Byrdsian harmonies) – and, against the odds, making it new. The songs are simple but seductive; the melodies blissed-out, hypnotic.

JON DALE

HOW TO BUY...

PLAID

Eccentric IDM from London B-Boys



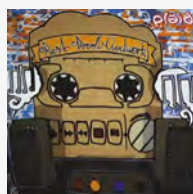
THE BLACK DOG

Spanners WARP 1995

Andy Turner and Ed Handley originally figured as two-thirds of The Black Dog, a critical and generally rather cryptic

presence in early '90s British electronica. After a fine if occasionally obtuse run (1993's pair, *Bytes* and *Temple Of Transparent Balls*, are both good), the pair left the band soon after *Spanners* – a playful opus that pointed the way forward for what would become Plaid.

8/10



PLAID

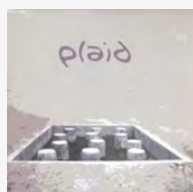
Rest Proof Clockwork

WARP 1999

The second Plaid album (following 1998's Björk-assisted *Not For Threes*),

Rest Proof Clockwork crystallised the duo's beguiling, gently eccentric take on the prevailing Warp sound. Slightly cheesy gimmicks – notably a taste for steel drum pre-sets – actually add to the fun, rather than undermine it.

8/10



PLAID

Trainer

WARP 2000

A 2CD comp of Handley and Turner's rare early work, collating various Black Dog Productions,

a 1991 Plaid mini-album (*Mbuki Mvuki*), plus releases from alter-egos Atypic, Balil and Tura. With a stronger techno influence than later work, it charts how two London B-boys channelled and subverted their love of Detroit club music.

7/10

JOHN MULVEY



RAH RAH

The Poet's Dead

HIDDEN PONY

Saskatchewanabies' midlife crisis comes early

7/10

Mildly countrified cousins to Glasgow's defunct Delgados and fellow

Canadians Stars, boy/girl-fronted sextet Rah Rah's journey from Regina, Saskatchewan, to Juno-nominated indie celebrity has not, it seems, been an entirely joyous one. However, their third album, *The Poet's Dead*, documents that band-in-a-van ennui and incipient thirtysomethingness with some panache. Marshall Burns yearns for domesticity on the Pavement-ish "Art And A Wife" and casual sex loses its appeal on the X-like "Fake Our Love"; meanwhile, Erin Passmore's apple-cheeked, folksy delivery masks some anti-social urges on "Prairie Girl" and closer "Saint". Worth a two cheers at least.

JIM WIRTH



BRIAN REITZELL

Auto Music

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

Soundtrack magnate's solo debut. Kevin Shields hitches a lift

6/10

The career arc of Brian Reitzell is a small exemplar of 21st-Century music biz

expediciencies, moving from Redd Kross drummer, to Air live auxiliary, to Hollywood "music conceptualist", producing, commissioning and curating film and TV soundtracks. More lucrative work, one suspects, than an orthodox solo career, and it's evidently influenced this atmospheric debut. Pitched as an exercise in LA motorik ("Auto Music 1" channels Neu! at their twinkliest), it's often closer to the quasi-ambient end of shoegazing; Kevin Shields, a key player on Reitzell's *Lost In Translation* soundtrack, adds organ to the outstanding "Last Summer". Less smudged tracks are more problematic: the crescendos of "Ozu" almost match Coldplay for portent and bombast.

JOHN MULVEY



RONIKA

Selectadisc

RECORDSHOP

The Midlands Madonna gets too deeply into the retro groove

6/10

Nottingham-based Veronica Sampson is a shameless dance-pop

magpie, drawing heavily on 1980s Madonna and her blank-voiced, hand-clapping disco-synth aesthetic. Beneath its derivative surface, this debut clearly has more to offer, from the Tom Tom Club wiggle-funk of "Forget Yourself" to the techno-blues sobs of "Search Siren". But in a postmodern pop landscape where Lady Gaga has already repackaged much of Maddy's early career as high-gloss conceptual art, Sampson's more pedestrian retro-homages lack bite and depth, reproducing the dayglo banality of her source material but not its box-fresh new-wave charm. There is talent and promise here, but context matters.

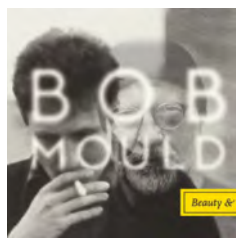
STEPHEN DALTON

BOB MOULD

Beauty & Ruin

MERGE

Warhorse: Songs and Stories – Hüsker Dü veteran makes peace with the past. *By Jim Wirth*



8/10

THAT GUITAR SOUND again: the sound of glass shattering, the sound of a hurricane howling. The sudden sandblast squall that whips up about 50 seconds into “Kid With Crooked Face” – the fastest, most furious moment on Bob Mould’s latest album –

is giddily familiar. Endlessly imitated but essentially unused since Hüsker Dü split up in 1988, it’s perhaps the mightiest weapon in Mould’s armoury, and on *Beauty & Ruin*, it is the sound of permafrost cracking.

For Mould’s 14th full-length outing post-Hüsker Dü may be the first to fully engage with that part of his musical legacy. The Minneapolis three-piece did a fairly indifferent job of following up their mind-blowing (10), (10), (10), trio of Jackson Pollock hardcore LPs – 1984’s *Zen Arcade* and the following year’s *New Day Rising* and *Flip Your Wig* – with Mould, songwriting foil Grant Hart and elaborately moustached bassist Greg Norton disbanding after two frustrating albums for Warner Brothers. Mould and Hart have done fine things since, but neither have dared to turn the distortion and chorus pedals on in the same dizzying combination until now. Inspired in part by the death of his father, *Beauty & Ruin*’s ruminations on mortality are hardly new territory for Mould, who sang in 1986 on Hüsker Dü’s stark “Hardly Getting Over It”: “My parents they just wonder when they both are gonna die; what do I do when they die?” However, his lyrics here seemingly derive less from a need to come to terms with his father – depicted in Mould’s autobiography *See A Little Light* as a controlling, violent alcoholic who never acknowledged Mould’s homosexuality – than a desire to stare down the disapproving glances of his younger self.

The “tales filled with riddles and rhymes that I just don’t recognise” on the perky “I Don’t Know You Anymore” might detail a conversation with his dying father or an unwelcome encounter with the mirror, while on the frenzied “Kid With Crooked Face”, Mould squirms in front of his glowering twentysomething gaze: “Look away, look away, look away.”

Now 53, Mould would seem to have little to be ashamed of when he looks back, having systematically vanquished his demons since Hüsker Dü’s late-1980s demise. An ex-drinker and smoker, he came out publicly while enjoying 1990s commercial success with Sugar, and then spent a decade spooking his fanbase by writing scripts for professional wrestling, DJ-ing at his “gay bear” house night, Blowoff, and releasing an unhinged hybrid electronic album – *Modulate* – in 2002.

However, personal fulfilment has not always made for great output; the string of elegantly whittled albums he has produced since moving to San Francisco a few years ago – *District Line*, *Life*



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Bob Mould

Recorded at: Electrical Audio, Chicago, and Different Fur, San Francisco

Personnel includes:

Bob Mould (guitar, vocals), Jason Narducy (bass), Jon Wurster (drums)

And Times and 2012’s *Sugar* re-enactment, *Silver Age* – have not for the first time seen Mould’s art gradually downgraded to craftsmanship. *Beauty...*, however, is an invigorating reconnection with a more difficult, dangerous part of himself. Glowering opener “Low Season” bemoans “chances that I wasted in my unforgiving days”, and while the Hüskers-pitched centerpiece “The War” ostensibly recounts Mould’s difficult relationship with his father, it sounds awfully like an apology for the decades of sniping that followed

his first band’s demise. “Listen to my voice, it’s the only weapon I kept from the war,” Mould wails, still pleading for a ceasefire long after Armistice Day.

Beauty & Ruin falls short as a masterpiece – the Wings-ish “Let The Beauty Be” is a notable lapse of taste – but it quietly lets the handbrake off on Mould’s creativity. It ends on an upbeat, “Fix It” slamming the door shut on the past. “Time to find out who you are,” Mould sings. Comfortable enough now that he knows who he was, what happens next could be incredible.

Q&A

Bob Mould

Did your father’s death inspire *Beauty...*?

Parts of it. He passed away in October 2012 right after *Silver Age* came out.

My father and I are a lot alike in many ways. I’ve come to terms with that in different ways over the course of my life – quitting smoking, quitting drinking. I’ve always loved my parents and though my dad’s final years were pretty tough I was fortunate to get a lot of good time with him and to talk about a lot of things.

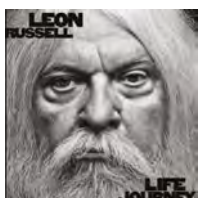
“Kid With Crooked Face” is closer to ‘81-style hardcore than anything else you have done

since Hüsker Dü. How did that come about?

It just happened – it fell out. People are going to get way more wound up about me doing those sorts of songs than I do. I used to hate pictures of myself when we did photos ‘cause I thought my face was a little crooked; not symmetrical. I am a Libra so symmetry is huge.

Have you ever fancied cutting loose and doing a concept album or a musical?

Like a big fictional stage thing? Yeah, someday. I fancy it but I can’t do it myself. The last thing I tried something like that we got *Modulate*! I always say it’s my *Trans*. Constructing an entire circus with invisible wires and anti-gravity machines – I think I need some scientists to help me with that. But I’ll do it someday. This is all building up to something big. *INTERVIEW: JIM WIRTH*



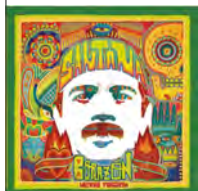
LEON RUSSELL
Life Journey
UNIVERSAL

First solo effort in almost a decade from misplaced legend
Re-animated by his 2010 duet with Elton,

6/10

Russell comes up with what's expected of grizzled veterans – a set of standards tastefully furnished by producer Tommy LiPuma. Russell was always more super-sessioneer and songwriter than vocalist, and the rasp of advancing years does little for over-familiar pieces like “Fever” and “Georgia On My Mind”. Better are more personal favourites like Billy Joel’s “New York State Of Mind” and Mose Allison’s “Fool’s Paradise”. Trademark keyboard romps brighten the bluesy “Big Lips” but “Down In Dixieland” is a fake ragtime too far. Good to have the ol’ feller back.

NEIL SPENCER



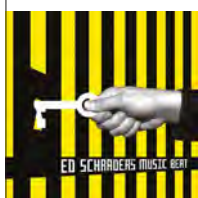
SANTANA
Corazón
SONY LATIN/RCA

The first all-Latin album of Santana's career
Corazón follows the template of 1999's *Supernatural*, which teamed his trademark

7/10

burnished guitar with a cast of guest vocalists from Lauryn Hill to Eagle-Eye Cherry. Their Latin counterparts here include Samuel Rosa from Brazilian band Skank, who storms through the salsa opener “Saideira”, Ziggy Marley and Afro-Columbian hip-hoppers ChocQuibTown on a thrilling reggaeton version of “Iron Lion Zion”, Los Fabulosos Cadillacs on the global dance party of “Mal Bicho”, romantic balladry from Gloria Estefan and the American-Cuban rapper Pitbull on a retooled version of “Oye Como Va” from *Abraxas*. As the album Latin music fans always hoped Santana would make, *Corazón* doesn't disappoint.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



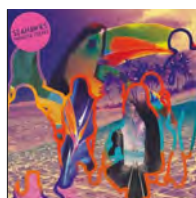
ED SCHRADER'S MUSIC BEAT
Party Jail
UPSET THE RHYTHM

Bare-bones punk jams, from Baltimore
The breakout success of Future Islands has restored focus to the Wham City

6/10

scene of Baltimore, Maryland, a fraternal DIY community bonded more by an oddball sense of play than any shared sound. Current Future Islands tourmates Ed Schrader's Music Beat confirm this, their boiled-down punk racket – just Schrader on voice and floor tom and Devin Rice on bass – lies at some remove from their peers' hyper-sincere synth-pop. “Pantomime Jack”, a squalling mix of rockabilly croon and spasmodic attack, doesn't have crossover success written all over it, but the spare sound works to their advantage on “Laughing” and “Pink Moons”, spooky struts from the Beat Happening school of lo-fi minimalism.

LOUIS PATTISON



SEAHAWKS
Paradise Freaks
OCEAN MOON

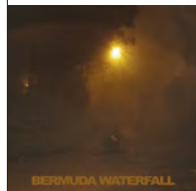
Blissed-out Cornish sea shanties

For a part-time project, Seahawks – the hippyish duo of long-time Super Furry Animals illustrator

8/10

Pete Fowler and Jon Tye, seasoned boss of experimental label Lo Recordings – are remarkably prolific: holed up by the River Tamar in Millbrook, southeast Cornwall, *Paradise Freaks* is their fifth LP in as many years. It's also their most appealing. While much of their output has consisted of freewheeling astral jams, this latest effort sets a deeper, dubbier course and is buoyed by appearances from Indra Dunis of Peaking Lights and Maria Minerva, exotic chanteuses whose opiated vocals turn the likes of “Drifting” and “Moon Turn Tides” into celestial lullabies.

PIERS MARTIN



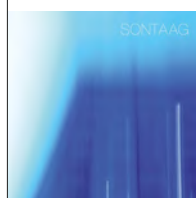
SEAN NICHOLAS SAVAGE
Bermuda Waterfall
ARBUTUS

11th album in six years from prolific lo-fi crooner

6/10

Sean Nicholas Savage is something of a local legend on the Montreal scene that spawned Mac DeMarco and Grimes, his garrulous personality feeding into some magnetic live performances. His primary mode is a kind of bedroom yacht rock: Bobb Trimble meets Hall & Oates. With the lo-fi tools at his disposal, *Bermuda Waterfall*'s bossa beats and midnite funk stylings are frequently cheesy, a state of affairs that he strives to counteract with his quavering, heart-on-sleeve vocal delivery. It doesn't always work. There are plenty of deft touches but it's perhaps too knowing to truly connect, too sketchy to reward deeper listening.

SAM RICHARDS



SONTAAG
Sontaag
CHERRY RED

Prog rock as a cinematic sci-fi morality tale

Who knew that people still made prog rock LPs? Full-on concept albums, complete with overarching

6/10

sci-fi narratives, David Gilmour-style guitar wailing and the odd Hawkwind-style thrash rock number? Well, multi-instrumentalist Richard Sontaag does. He provides luscious musical soundscapes that echo Pink Floyd and Tangerine Dream while music journalist Ian Fortnam blankly narrates his own *War Of The Worlds*-style morality tale. It's about the planet MPs, whose residents must synthesise energy by generating sound, and it's a daft but compelling narrative that would probably make a decent *Doctor Who* episode. Still, it's the Eno-esque ambient bits that work much better than the more turgid prog bluster.

JOHN LEWIS



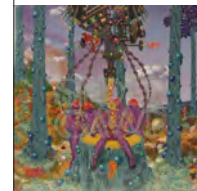
SONZEIRA
Brasil Bam Bam Bam
TALKIN' LOUD/VIRGIN EMI

Gilles Peterson produces a Buena Vista for today's Brazil

8/10

DJ Peterson has already delivered six compilations of Brazilianana. For World Cup summer, he turns Rio-based producer, using a wellspring of talents to represent the span of the nation's music. Seu Jorge whoops it up against carnival drums on “Sambaio”, Mart'nália floats her voice across the ethereal “Mystery Of Man” and percussion genius Naná Vasconcelos evokes slavery days on “Where Naná Hides”. There's a bossa take on UK jazz funk classic “Southern Freeez” (Peterson in disco paradise), while 76-year-old legend Elza Soares turns the anthemic “Aquarela Do Brasil” into a lament for the nation's poor. Inspirational stuff.

NEIL SPENCER



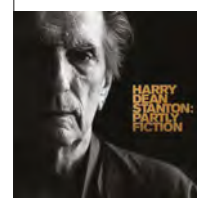
SPIDERGAWD
Spidergawd
STICKMAN

Norwegian prog-metal supergroup hit the ground running

7/10

Spidergawd were formed by two members of Norwegian prog/metal titans Motorpsycho, who have teamed up with Per Borten, former lead singer with Norwegian rockers Cadillac, to form a sort-of supergroup. While “Into Tomorrow” suggests Spidergawd will be a straight-ahead thrash metal outfit, songs like the skronky “Blauer Jubel”, the hop-scotching electro-fart “Million \$ Somersault” and rumbling boogie of “Master Of Disguise” point to jazz, prog and Southern rock influences. It all comes together on centrepiece “Empty Rooms”, a 14-minute stew of bent horns and minimalist guitar that gradually turns into the full-throated heavy rock blow-out you were always expecting.

PETER WATTS



HARRY DEAN STANTON
Partly Fiction OST
OMNIVORE

Debut album from the legendary cult actor

8/10

Stanton's career has taken many unexpected detours. Here's another one: aged 87, he has released his debut album. Ostensibly the soundtrack to Sophie Huber's forthcoming documentary about the actor, these 12 tracks find Stanton tackling outlaw standards, folk songs and ballads from “Blue Bayou” to Kristofferson's “Help Me Make It Through The Night”. Recorded in his living room with guitarist Jamie James, Stanton brings a weary melancholia to the ruminative “Everybody's Talkin'” and “Tennessee Whiskey”. Don Was adds bass to three songs, including a rousing “Promised Land”. Elsewhere, his rendition of Willie Nelson's “Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain” is heartbreaking.

MICHAEL BONNER



ELA STILES
Ela Stiles
BEDROOM SUCK

Sydney gal's short 'n' sweet solo first
The solo debut from this young Australian singer, songwriter and guitarist is vastly different from her

8/10

work with jangle-pop punks Songs and psych-jam outfit Bushwalking. For starters it's entirely a cappella, which is ruthlessly exposing for any singer, but despite her background, Stiles proves herself more than capable. There's a mountain-spring purity and soaring strength in her voice that invites comparisons with Sandy Denny and Maddy Prior, although her material is very different. These seven songs, some not even reaching the one-minute mark, are informed by English and Celtic folk traditions, but the album's ten-minute centrepiece – the layered and lovely "Drone Transitions" – recalls the looping technique of Alexander Tucker.

SHARON O'CONNELL



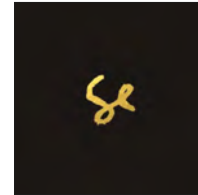
SYD ARTHUR
Sound Mirror
HARVEST

The Sound of Young Canterbury
Kent's latest generation of freak-flag bearers follow 2012's fine debut *On And On* with something even

8/10

more intriguing. Harnessing the sound and sense of adventure of vintage prog and psych while ditching the indulgences, *Sound Mirror* pursues a roving brief set to a pop aesthetic. These are compact but restless songs, typified by mini-epic "Chariots", which marries the modern blues-rock edge of Queens Of The Stone Age to leaping time-shifts. "Backwardstepping" is tightly woven acoustica, "What's Your Secret" is both folksy and funky, and they voyage furthest on "Autograph", its inquisitive refrain of "anybody out there?" apparently doubling as a band manifesto.

GRAEME THOMSON



SYLVAN ESSO
Sylvan Esso
PARTISAN

Fruitful marriage of rustic Americana and back-porch electronics
An inspired collaboration between bassist and producer Nick Sanborn

7/10

and Amelia Meath of neo-Appalachian vocal trio Mountain Man, Sylvan Esso have confected an appealing electro-folk hybrid sound that combines sepia-tinted rustic balladry with raw beats and dubsteppy bass shudders. Meath's ripe, unadorned voice packs an ebullient punch on infectious foot-stompers like "Hey Mami" and "HSKT", but switches to drowsy beauty on the electro-country lullabies "Play It Right" and "Dreamy Bruises". Not every track gels, but the duo's easy chemistry never feels like gimmicky contrivance. Mountain Man fans will appreciate the gorgeously intertwined harmonies on the closing techno-rustic spiritual "Come Down".

STEPHEN DALTON



STRAIGHT ARROWS
Rising
AGITATED

Direct hit for Aussie garage evangelists
"I figured it was kinda punk to have a name that essentially meant we were

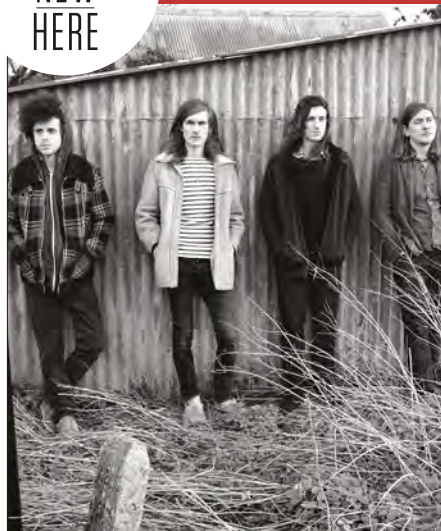
7/10

all uptight and moralistic," sneered Straight Arrows singer Owen Penglis in a recent interview, epitomising the Sydney primitivists penchant for the cluelessly confrontational. As rugged and atonal as their 2010 debut *It's Happening*, second outing *Rising* sticks to their slashed-speaker *Nuggets* blueprint. The Seeds' hokey psychedelic album *Future* playing at the bottom of a particularly deep well, the breakneck "Can't Stand It" and "Make Up Your Mind" exorcise Straight Arrows' speed demons, with "Changing Colours" a momentary grasp for Byrdsy sophistication. Reassuringly uncomplicated.

JIM WIRTH

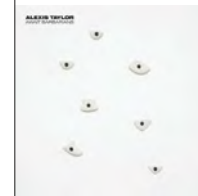
WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Syd Arthur



➤ A band rather than a person, the fact that Syd Arthur hail from Canterbury and are named in joint honour of Syd Barrett and Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* hints at their love of a venerable strain of tripped-out adventurism. The four schoolfriends formed around a mutual love of "festival culture and the free party movement," according to singer-guitarist Liam Magill, and though the Canterbury angle casts them as natural heirs to Soft Machine, Caravan and Gong, he insists "it's a quirk of geography, really. We like those bands, and we feel a certain pride that a lot of interesting music came out of Canterbury, but we listen to so much other music within the group, from jazz-harpist Dorothy Ashby to Davy Graham. We just follow our ears and do what feels good." Paul Weller is a fan, bringing them along as support on his last UK tour and supplying "a cheeky backing vocal" on the new record. Violinist Raven, meanwhile, is the nephew of Kate Bush, though apparently, there's little chance of a nepotistic support slot on her *Before The Dawn* shows. "She stays out of the way, really," says Magill, sounding a tad disappointed. "She's a bit remote."

GRAEME THOMSON



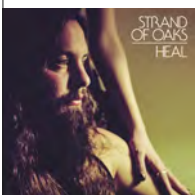
ALEXIS TAYLOR
Await Barbarians
DOMINO

Eccentric solo set from Hot Chip's frontman

7/10

Alexis Taylor has been carefully staking out his own territory around Hot Chip for some time, but both as a solo artist and in About Group he's yet to really make his mark. Slender and strange, *Await Barbarians* – Alexis means 'defender', he tells us in "Am I Not A Soldier?" – once more finds the singer on the back foot, his default position, peering curiously at the things around him. Though you instinctively root for him, his music is not always friendly. Sickly synths wheeze and flutter on the touching "Closer To The Elderly". "Without A Crutch", a wistful ballad, is a highlight.

PIERS MARTIN



STRAND OF OAKS
Heal
DEAD OCEANS

Recovery via recording; Dr J Congleton assists
"I don't wanna start all over again," Tim Showalter begs on the opener of his fourth

8/10

LP, establishing its themes of personal crisis and salvation against a grungy, power-pop backdrop that taps Smashing Pumpkins (name-checked) and Dinosaur Jr (J Mascis guests). But "Goshen '97" is rather a red herring. *Heal* is overwhelmingly epic and unashamedly ambitious, rating the communicative power of familiar rock/pop (Young, Springsteen, Arcade Fire) over sonic experimentation. That said, it's also pretty eccentric: how else to describe the lending of an Irish folk skirl to '80s electro pop ("Same Emotions") or a Mount Rushmore-sized hybrid of Coldplay and the Afghan Whigs ("Wait For Love")? Odd – and oddly impressive.

SHARON O'CONNELL



TELEMAN
Breakfast
MOSHI MOSHI

Former Pete And The Pirates members set sail in new vessel

7/10

Three-quarters of new London indie ensemble Telemans paid their dues in Reading rockers Pete And The Pirates, which might explain why much of *Breakfast* has a familiar taste. But while the key ingredients are the same – singer Thomas Sanders' affairs of the heart delivered in that Stuart Murdoch swoon – the recipe is altogether more appealing: Telemans' sound is cool and sleek, the songs propelled by a groove and furnished with unusual arrangements by producer Bernard Butler. Across 10 tracks, however, an Alt-J-ish smugness seeps in, but the opening trio of "Cristina", "In Your Fur" and "Steam Train Girl" is hard to beat.

PIERS MARTIN

CONOR OBERST

Upside Down Mountain

NONESUCH

The shambolic Bright Eyes auteur submits to a Wilsonian extreme makeover. *By Bud Scoppa*



7/10

A DECADE AND A half has passed since Conor Oberst popped into view as an 18-year-old lo-fi Heartland prodigy with a barely contained torrent of words pouring out of him, and it's tempting to look at the 11 proper albums he's made with his ever-changing band

Bright Eyes and under his own name as an extended coming-of-age narrative. Along the way, he's survived being classified as "emo's Bob Dylan", embraced as an indie heartthrob and vilified as an insufferable, navel-gazing narcissist, before attaining a reasonable degree of cred as a thoughtful, prolific and fearless artist eager to throw himself into challenging circumstances.

In 2005, he simultaneously released a pair of Bright Eyes albums, the folky *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning* and, in a total departure from his previous records, the synth-driven *Digital Ash In A Digital Urn*. After Bright Eyes' relatively straightforward (apart from the Easter eggs hidden in the artwork) *Cassadaga* (2007), he travelled to Mexico with a bunch of musician friends to cut 2008's *Conor Oberst*, then took them on an extended tour, at the end of which he initiated an experiment in democracy, calling on his bandmates to write songs and take lead vocals.

The resulting LP, *Outer South* (2009), released under the nameplate Conor Oberst And The Mystic Valley Band, was a ramshackle mess and apparently got that notion out of his head. On Oberst's next endeavour, 2011's *The People's Key*, made with his longtime collaborators Mike Mogis and Nate Walcott as Bright Eyes, he pushed himself to the opposite extreme, going for a modern-pop/arena-rock record that Mogis described at the time as "Police meets Cars" and Oberst compared (in theory) to The Killers. And while The Cars' influence is detectable in the taut grooves, the record's overall weirdness rendered it far from radio-ready.

Now a 34-year-old married man with a career spanning nearly half his lifetime, Oberst appears to have gained a degree of perspective on his work and his place in the musical universe. His boyish earnestness, the frayed, adenoidal quaver he claims to despise and his obsessive love of language are unchanged, seemingly as permanent as birthmarks, and are now the self-acknowledged tools of his trade. But, as he's shown so often during the last nine years, the context is everything for this artist. On this go-round, Oberst turned to Jonathan Wilson, the North Carolina native turned LA musical preservationist who's making a name for himself as a producer (Dawes, Father John Misty, Roy Harper) and solo artist.

Oberst knew what he was getting – a virtuosic instrumentalist and hands-on studio pro who values authenticity and venerates the golden age of SoCal folk rock in his work, different values than Oberst had attempted to cohere with on his previous LPs.



SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Fivestar Studios, LA; Arc, Omaha; and Blackbird, Nashville
Produced by: Jonathan Wilson and Conor Oberst
Personnel includes: Conor Oberst (voice, guitar), Jonathan Wilson (guitars, bass, drums, keys, vocals), Klara and Johanna Söderberg (vocals)

Given the stylistic thrust and a batch of Oberst songs that are somewhat more accessible and less verbose than anything he's penned before, Swedish sister duo First Aid Kit were a natural fit, and on the six tracks on which they appear, their harmonised voices caress Oberst's wobbly bray like liquid gold, filling in the crags. They bring an organic richness to the aural backdrops meticulously constructed by Wilson, who further burnishes the arrangements with brass, reeds, vibraphone, glockenspiel, pedal steel and keyboards. The producer's neoclassic aesthetic brings colour, scale and retro richness – but also much-needed structure – to signature Oberst opuses like "Time Forgot", "Kick" and "Governor's Ball", so much so that less ornamented tracks like the solo

acoustic "You Are Your Mother's Child" and the closing "Common Knowledge" seem threadbare by comparison. But the album's deepest, most beguiling song, "Artifact #1", features only young LA standout Blake Mills, whose guitars, keys and percussion render the performance luminous, and whose name I strongly suspect you'll be seeing in these pages with some frequency in the future.

Upside Down Mountain makes a persuasive case for itself as the Conor Oberst album for people who don't particularly like Conor Oberst, but more meaningfully, it's a record this restless artist can settle into and build on as he continues to mature, because it solves his chronic problems while presenting him with a newfound sweet spot.

Q&A

Conor Oberst

Several of these songs strike me as hallucinatory or dreamlike.

All my songs are daydreams – no joke. These were written over a three-year period, so in that sense it seems less conceptual than other records I've made, where the songs were written closer together. But I suppose there are some through-lines, thematically speaking. I guess the idea that we're all alone on our own little mountaintops, that life is a struggle for connection, to feel less alone. We do the best with the tools we're afforded, but

we all die alone. Solitude should not be the enemy. It is our most natural state.

How do you view your journey as an artist and a person, and how does this LP reflect that?

There's no dramatic arc to my narrative. If I ever self-mythologise, it's usually for comic effect. A common critique of my music has always been that I'm very self-absorbed, which it probably is, but it's interesting to note now with social media how disgustingly self-absorbed most everybody is. I've turned my self-absorption into rock'n'roll records for the last 20 years. Not everyone deserves a platform. You should have to earn it by contributing something of value. Being famous for being famous is just straight-up sad. And funny.



TOBACCO
Ultima II Massage
GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

US synth mangler's perverse third
Few deconstructions of synth pop are as deranged yet dance floor-friendly as this. Pennsylvania's

7/10

Thomas Fec claims he "spent a lot of time breaking it in all the right places" and, even if at times it sounds like he's taken to the original with a blunt chainsaw, his wrangling has worked a degraded analogue magic. From his subverting of the Daft Punk aesthetic (via "Lipstick Destroyer") to a syphilitic spoiling of Goldfrapp's glossy disco ("Face Breakout") and his carve-up of Gary Numan and Goblin ("Father Sister Berzerker"), twisted grooves and disorienting stop-starts abound. No gentle touch, *Ultima II Massage* is ostentatiously big and frequently clever; that it's also Fec's idea of a "meditative piece" merely adds to its appeal.

SHARON O'CONNELL



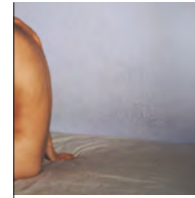
WILLIE WATSON
Folk Singer Vol. 1
ACONY

Ace solo debut from Nashville stringer
Quitting his job with Old Crow Medicine Show, the band he

8/10

co-founded in 1998, appears to have unlocked a new side to Willie Watson. This riveting solo album, released on the label that its producer David Rawlings owns with Gillian Welch, finds him picking his way through old and obscure folk-country standards with a sure touch and a keen ear for rural vernacular. Mostly it's just acoustic guitar, banjo and Watson's reedy tenor, imbuing songs such as "Stewball" and "Rock Salt And Nails" with the kind of agrarian otherness that might've sent Harry Smith into raptures.

ROB HUGHES



WIFE.
What's Between
TRI ANGLE

Unnerving vocal pop from Cork-based singer-producer

Until recently, James Kelly fronted the black metal group Altar Of Plagues,

7/10

who scored crossover success with 2013's *Teethed Glory And Injury*. He split that band to focus on solo project Wife., which occupies a quite different realm: a sort of doomy industrial pop tracing lines between the nocturnal clank of Massive Attack's *Mezzanine* and modern future-R&B crooners such as James Blake. Blake is evoked on the opening "Like Chrome", Kelly bringing his whispery melisma to brittle beats. But a bravura production job, assisted by The Haxan Cloak, gives *What's Between* arcane depths: see "A Nature (Shards)", which slathers on echoing effects and unheimlich samples in a manner recalling occult industrialists Coil.

LOUIS PATTISON



TUNE-YARDS
Nikki Nack
4AD

Skippping songs and Haitian drums from the extraordinary Merrill Garbus

8/10

Connecticut-born, Oakland-based Garbus is an interesting figure in American music: a singer and percussionist who produces her own records; a composer more influenced by a childhood spent in Kenya and the joy of playground chants than the rock or hip-hop of Los Angeles. Her third album sees her working with outside producers for the first time, but R&B and pop stalwarts John Hill and Malay can't dilute the power of Garbus' drum-heavy, soul-jazz mix of teasing sensuality, waspish protest and art-pop mysticism. Highlights include the Spectorish "Look Around" and the poignantly insecure "Wait For A Minute" on an album bursting with adventure and originality.

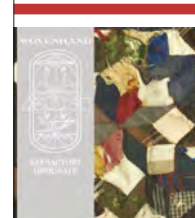
GARRY MULHOLLAND



► "I wrote a song - which was never recorded - that had a line: 'And we'll fly over tune yards in our dreams.' To me this was a place where songs were already in existence, and you just had to pluck them from the tune yards and they could be yours."

Merrill Garbus is Tune-Yards, and Tune-Yards is a perfect name for reasons other than imaginary concrete gardens full of song. The music the 35-year-old Montreal native has made since 2009 debut album *Bird-Brains* often sounds like playground chants; fused with Afro-jazz and the kind of abrasive-erotic electropop that her Canadian compatriot Peaches specialises in. Now based in Oakland, California, Garbus' third and finest long-player *Nikki Nack* shines a caustic-yet-self-critical light upon what she calls, "the rotting of society. I think a lot about a future where people stop paying their taxes, as they so often threaten to do in America." Yet Tune-Yards' music is always more sexy and funny than strident or worthy. Put it down to youthful rhythms, soulful vocals, and the natural curiosity of a restless spirit. "I don't wanna put what Merrill thinks on the rest of the world, but I do like to ask questions. And I don't wrestle with creation or write a song by force. My job is to relax and let it come."

GARRY MULHOLLAND



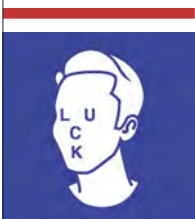
WOVENHAND
Refractory Obdurate
GLITTERHOUSE/DEATHWISH

Seventh album of heavy, dense, Old Testament rock from former 16 Horsepower man

8/10

The consistently intense David Eugene Edwards is at it again on Wovenhand's seventh album, a typically gothic affair of dense rock, Birthday Party jitter punk and dark folk. Edwards is never shy of dropping in a Biblical reference or 12, and at times this is the Old Testament set to music, bringing a claustrophobic quality to demonic, swirling, textured songs like "Field Of Hedon" and "Salome", like being lambasted by a comic book preacher in a vampires' nightclub. The overall effect is almost hallucinatory, and tracks like the spartan "Obdurate Obscura" and mesmeric, growling "Masonic Youth" are spellbinding setpieces.

PETER WATTS



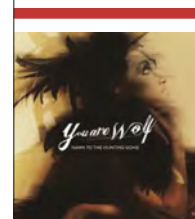
TOM VEK
Luck
MOSHI MOSHI

Anthemic electro-angst from eclectic Londoner on his third full-length

8/10

Tom Vek's jittery take on garage rock and indie pop comes garnished with an increasingly sophisticated layer cake of synths and meaty beats. His third album, *Luck* feels vaguely conceptual, filled with semi-ironic songs muttering at digital-age anxieties. "Pushing Your Luck" is a club monster which bites its nails, while the outstanding "Sherman (Animals In The Jungle)" is a compellingly nervy kind of anthem. "Broke", meanwhile, recalls the fuzzy drug-pop of Tame Impala's "Feels Like We Only Go Backwards". Over it all, Vek free-associates with the kind of blank monotony which serves his music - and these times - surprisingly well.

GRAEME THOMSON



YOU ARE WOLF
Hawk To The Hunting Gone
STONE TAPE RECORDINGS

Adventurous avian-centric electro-folk

Kerry Andrew's unlikely fusion of Prince's "When Doves Cry" with trad

7/10

tune "Turtle Dove" is a decent primer for her modernist twist on wyrd-folk. This bird-themed suite mixes old folk songs with crisp electronica, foregrounding Andrew's experimental use of multi-layered vocals. Her "Cuckoo" conjures up an entire flock, "Swansong" adds a spoken-word interlude to "Molly Bawn", and "Doves" features Alasdair Roberts. It's smart stuff, if sometimes overly dense. "The Buzzard's Heart", where Andrew brings TS Eliot to musical life with just a lone voice and a glorious array of strings, proves a victory for spare simplicity.

GRAEME THOMSON



THIRD MAN RECORDS

PRESENTS

JACK WHITE LAZARETTO



The newest album from Jack White, Lazaretto. Described as stormy, delicate, dramatic, volatile, scratchy and velveteen Lazaretto was made for the romantic and aimed at the soul, Lazaretto either sounds like it was recorded ten years from now or fifty years ago...

NEIL YOUNG A LETTER HOME



Neil Young's, A Letter Home is an unheard collection of rediscovered songs from the past recorded on ancient electro mechanical technology that captures and unleashes the essence of something that could have been gone forever...

YOUR TURNTABLE IS NOT DEAD!

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SCORING: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

10 Masterpiece

1 Poor!

SCORING: EXTRA MATERIAL

10 Untold riches

1 Barrel-scrappings

Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



LED ZEPPELIN

Remasters I-III

RHINO

The first three albums plus extra material from the Page archives. *By John Robinson*

8/10 A MUSICIAN'S CATALOGUE is his castle; its strength not defined by how much it changes, but how far it stays the same. In the case of Led Zeppelin, that castle has a vigilant gatekeeper. Of the group's surviving members, one now makes platinum-plated Americana for an imagined hippy society. Another stalks a black ambient Mordor in the

company of adventurous Norwegians. And then there's Jimmy Page.

Page is a musician who now has a curious relationship with his own band. In the 1960s and 1970s he controlled Led Zeppelin down to the smallest detail: selecting the players, paying for the sessions, retaining control of the masters. The devil, so to speak, was in the detail. Only

having confirmed the security of his initial position, could he go on to contrive his most extravagant flourishes.

Since the band's 1980 demise, however, Page's – relative – reluctance to make new music has meant he has become the de facto architect of the Zeppelin legacy, painstakingly curating his historic work. The 2007 Led Zeppelin O2

A WHOLE LOTTA OUTTAKES Plus lives, alternate mixes and unreleased tracks



LED ZEP I DISC 2

Live At The Olympia - Paris, France, October 10, 1969

- 1 Good Times Bad Times/
Communication Breakdown
- 2 I Can't Quit You Baby
- 3 Heartbreaker
- 4 Dazed And Confused
- 5 White Summer/
Black Mountain Side
- 6 You Shook Me
- 7 Moby Dick
- 8 How Many More Times



LED ZEP II DISC 2

- 1 Whole Lotta Love
(alternate mix)
- 2 What Is And What Should
Never Be (alternate mix)
- 3 Thank You (backing track)
- 4 Heartbreaker
(alternate mix)
- 5 Living Loving Maid
(She's Just A Woman)
(backing track)
- 6 Ramble On (alternate mix)
- 7 Moby Dick
(alternate mix)
- 8 La La (previously unreleased)



LED ZEP III DISC 2

- 1 The Immigrant Song (outtake)
- 2 Friends (outtake)
- 3 Celebration Day (outtake)
- 4 Since I've Been Loving You (outtake)
- 5 Bathroom Sound
(previously unreleased instrumental
version of "Out On The Tiles")
- 6 Gallows Pole (outtake)
- 7 That's The Way (outtake)
- 8 Jennings Farm Blues
(previously unreleased instrumental
forerunner to "Bron-Y-Aur Stomp")
- 9 Keys To The Highway/Trouble
In Mind (previously unreleased)

→ show seemed to suggest that there might soon be new chapters to the Zeppelin story – but the lack of movement in seven years suggests that Page, who once held all the cards, has seen a recalibration of his power. Is he still Led Zeppelin's master? Or has he now become its servant?

These new editions of the first three Led Zeppelin albums, which begin a campaign of attractive vinyl/CD reissues of the catalogue, do all they can to assert the former. To Page's ears, the advent of "streaming and MP3s" warranted giving the albums additional polish. These new reissues duly derive from remastering by John Davis, prior to their soft release on iTunes in 2012.

Led Zeppelin audio is a heavy scene, as anyone who has spent time on messageboard threads called "Gallows Pole": Left or Right channel? will know. Many rate the original "Diamant" CD transfers, mastered by Barry Diamant in 1987 over the initial "Page/Marino '92 remasters. John Davis, who brought a crisp loudness to 2007's *Mothership* and *Celebration Day*, isn't entirely popular in this world – but his well-articulated and fruity sound isn't going to disappoint the sensible listener. Certainly not John Paul Jones, whose warm, busy bass playing and deep Rhodes piano are both big winners here.

All done from transfers of the original –

apparently unplayed – master tapes, these feel a little less "loud" than *Mothership*. Still, whether you're listening flicking through the 70-page deluxe book while enjoying your audiophile vinyl, or on the tube vibing to your device, familiar features feel vibrant. That odd off-mic shout during "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You". The whump that shakes the room immediately before the guitar solo in "Whole Lotta Love". Or "Since I've Been Loving You", the song that details the empathetic Page/Plant musical relationship in a tender seven-and-a-half minutes. Whatever defines your relationship with the first three Led Zeppelin albums, you will find it here, as involving as ever.

What did we expect, though? Bad sound? As well as the detailed replica packaging (though sadly we get the boring green US labels, not plum and red), the selling point of these reissues is a previously unexplored aspect of the Zeppelin catalogue: extra material, judiciously selected by Page from his (two) archives. What you'll be appreciating here, however, isn't exactly a treasure house of

undiscovered gems. *III*'s "Keys To The Highway" is a pleasant reminder, were one needed, that Page and Plant were connoisseurs of the blues. "La La" is a wordless Hammond number but becomes a compendium of *LZII* guitar tropes, more production showcase than song. "Jennings

*Is Jimmy Page still
Led Zeppelin's
master? Or has
he now become
its servant?*

HIDDEN TREASURES

BLACK MOUNTAIN SIDES

Four interesting alternative versions from the new *I-III*

Since I've Been Loving You

(alternate mix)

Not so much a different mix as a different take. The elements we know are in place, but in a less involving arrangement. Page calls it aggressive; it's certainly forceful – at the expense of the empathy the band later arrive at.

Heartbreaker

(rough mix with vocal)

Always a strangely structured song, this mix highlights the isolation of the first guitar breakdown. Many other layers are in place, but the demented treatments on the solo are absent – directing attention to John Bonham's double bass-drum action.

Moby Dick

(backing track)

A drum solo – without the drum solo! The song's squeaking riffage is retained for this '38 backing track, but the solo is evidently going to be spliced in later. There's a pause, Page counts off...

Jennings Farm Blues

(rough mix)

We know "Bron-Y-Aur Stomp" as a fleet bit of acoustic picking, which gathers a straw-covered head of steam. This electric take on the same idea proves a fine excursion into gently propulsive guitar noodling, expansive in the Blind Faith manner. You can hear a whoop, and rightly so.

JOHN ROBINSON

Farm Blues” and “Bathroom Sound” are works-in-progress for other *LZIII* tracks (“Bron-Y-Aur Stomp”; “Out On The Tiles”).

Instead, the additional material on *II* and *III* is not misleadingly referred to as “companion audio”, and directs our attention to the tacit purpose of these reissues: to remind us of the editorial talents of Jimmy Page, Producer.

“Whole Lotta Love” is a decent place to begin. As we hear it on the second disc, much of the track is in place, but there is simply reverberating space in the cavern later populated by Theremin, and a heavy-breathing Robert Plant. It’s maybe not the revelation Page imagines, but it does endorse the value in what he recently described as the “filigree work” that completes a Led Zeppelin song.

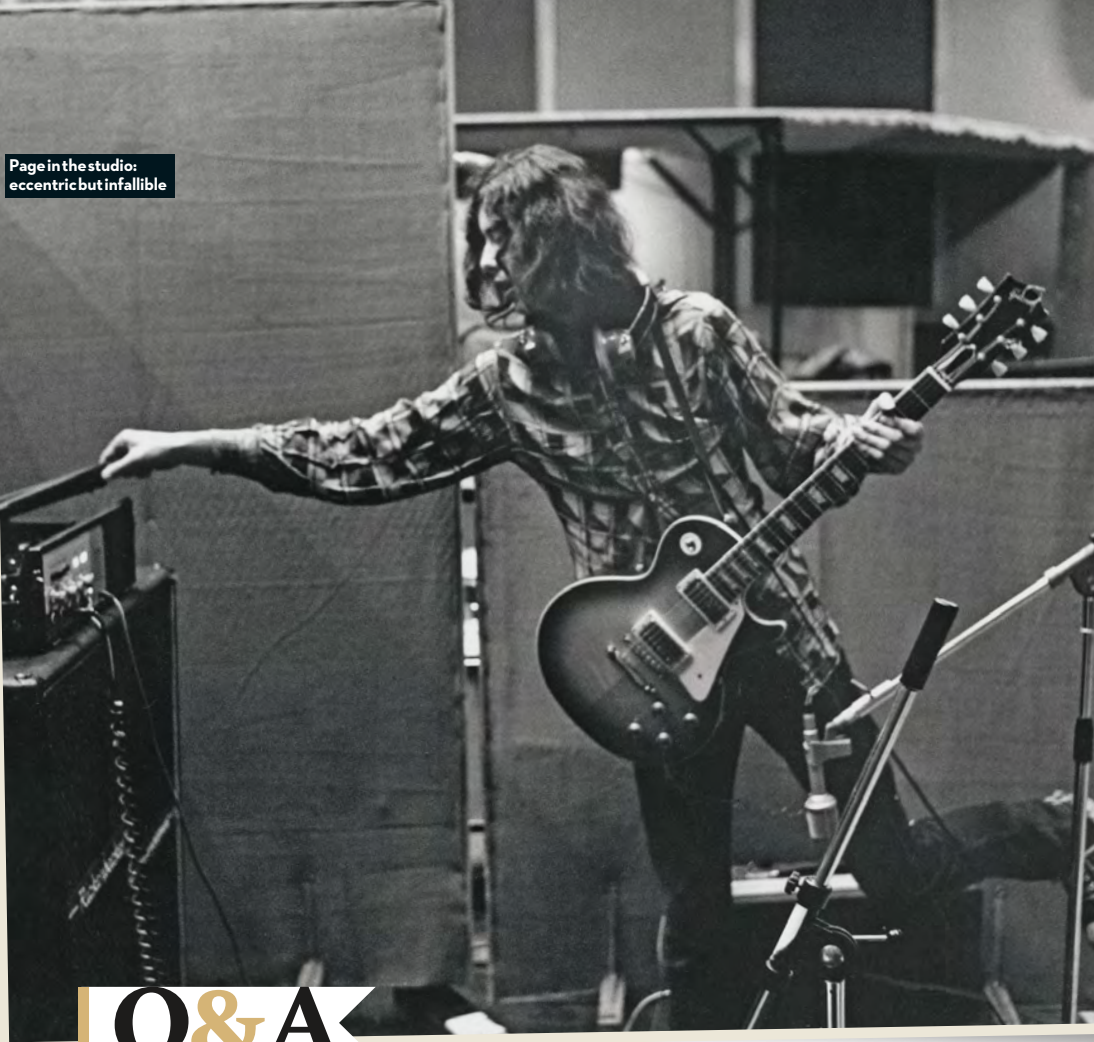
They didn’t just throw this stuff together, you know. *III*, often overlooked, will surely win new converts. It’s supposedly some kind of lo-fi Wiccan hoedown, but the detail of the *III* remaster reveals the space and structure in the songs (particularly the backing vocals), and the degree to which the band derived its sound not only from country, blues and folk, but also – like Deep Purple – from progressive pop. “Out On The Tiles” claims its seat at the table of big hitters, while the comparison disc is particularly interesting for “Immigrant Song”. You know something sounds odd. It’s because the one that sounds finished is the demo. The one with the hissy metronome and count-in is the finished one. On headphones, odd studio acoustics reveal themselves.

Page’s notion of what might catch the ear was eccentric, but generally infallible. Duly, these remasters aren’t asking you to extend your idea of the Zeppelin canon, but retract it – to realise why the albums have the power and mystery they do. The reason there aren’t more songs is because control – over quality, over everything – was, and is, very high.

The disc released to accompany *I* has been subjected to just this rigour. The live show, from Paris in November 1969 (note to audiophiles: a mono recording, sent over to Page in an email) has had its “How Many More Times” edited down by 50 per cent (to 11 minutes), while “Moby Dick” (omitted from the original French radio broadcast) has been reinstated. An entertaining exchange between Page and Plant in which the pair refer to “White Summer” as “the wanking dog” has been excised.

You might wonder at the inclusion of this, more *II* than *I* show here (rather than, say, some “New Yardbirds”-era stuff), and then the band begin to play. It’s “Good Times, Bad Times”. But that’s proves to be a deliberate false beginning – it’s now “Communication Breakdown”, and it seems like the song’s going far too fast. It sounds as if Page is never going to be able to pull off a solo at that velocity, that the wheels are going to come off completely. But then you listen again and get the picture. No need for alarm. Then as now, Jimmy Page knows precisely what he’s doing.

Page in the studio:
eccentric but infallible



Q&A

His dark materials: Jimmy Page on remasters and alternate mixes: “It’s just undeniable, the power of the band...”

WHAT MATERIALS WERE you working with on the remasters?

It’s all there on quarter-inch tape – apart from the Olympia show, which came in on a file from French radio. But everything else is on quarter-inch tape and it’s quite easy when you look in the archive to see which are the master tapes and the copy tapes of the masters.

What was the process?

It was a question of going through everything that said, for example, “Whole Lotta Love” on it, and all the working titles of these things. So “Immigrant Song” had working titles of “Bali-Hi” and “Overlord”. Anyway, I got all of the tapes out and systematically went through them. Whenever possible, I was looking at the chronology of it, so I worked through the chronology.

Were there any gaps in the chronology?

There was nothing left over on the first album, of course, because that was done so quickly. There was one other track that ends up, well, it ends up on *Coda*, actually, which is neither here nor there. So there are literally hundreds of tapes to go through and listen to and then make notes and sequence them to such a point where you had a number of “Black Dog”s, for example.

What kinds of things were you finding?

They are mixes that we’d done at the time,

working mixes. And quite clearly – when you heard “Whole Lotta Love” from the companion disc – you could hear the minimalism of it. You probably automatically were hearing in your mind the chorus, but it’s not there. And there’s a lot of things that aren’t on there, but it’s so powerful within itself.

What’s the value in all this?

It’s just undeniable, the power of the band on all of this stuff. So I would I get all these different versions and then find the one which is going to complement the original version that everybody

knows, and yet still be different enough that it makes a really interesting listen and a little journey into the band and the recording.

Where in particular?

You can hear, for example, on “Gallows Pole”. That’s obviously one take, and you can hear how we’re just sort of moving it around at the end. That

was the beauty of the band. That’s how we could tackle something like “Since I’ve Been Loving You”. The version you heard was an earlier version that differs from the approach that is on the one you all know. It’s really so raw and the energy is just undeniable on it. It’s really moving. But the idea was to do “Since I’ve Been Loving You” slightly mellower and that’s why we recut it. But all of these things just paint a very interesting picture of what was going on in those days of the recordings.

“It makes a really interesting listen and a little journey into the band and the recording”



TRACKLIST

LP1

- 1 Punk Rock:
- 2 Cody
- 3 Helps Both Ways
- 4 Year 2000 Non-Compliant Cardia
- 5 Kappa
- 6 Waltz For Aidan
- 7 May Nothing But Happiness Come Through Your Door

LP2

- 1 Oh! How The Dogs Stack Up
- 2 Ex-Cowboy
- 3 Chocky
- 4 Christmas Steps
- 5 Punk Rock/Puff Daddy/Antichrist

LP3

- 1 Nick Drake
- 2 Waltz For Aidan (*Chem19 Demo*)
- 3 Christmas Steps (*Chem19 Demo*)
- Boxset Exclusive
- 4 Rollerball (*Chem19 Demo*)
- 5 7-25 (*Chem19 Demo*) Boxset Exclusive
- 6 Untitled (*Travels In Constants EP*)
- 7 Quiet Stereo Dee (*Travels In Constants EP*)
- 8 Arundel (*Travels In Constants EP*)

LP4

- 1 Cody (*Cava Sessions*)
- 2 Ex-Cowboy (*Cava Sessions*)
- 3 Spoon Test (*Cava Sessions*)
- 4 Punk Rock: (*Cava Sessions*)
- 5 Helicon 2 (*Cava Church Live*)
- 6 Satchel Panzer (*Cava Sessions*)
- 7 Kappa (*Cava Church Live*)
- 8 Helps Both Ways (*Original Version*)
- 9 Hugh Dallas

MOGWAI

Come On Die Young (Deluxe Edition)

CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND

Noise abatement! The Scots' chilly, sparse masterpiece gets a lavish, four-album treatment. *By Louis Pattison*

8/10 BY 1999, MOGWAI had a reputation. Their early, John Peel-approved singles saw them numbered alongside Tortoise and Godspeed You! Black Emperor in a transatlantic post-rock movement, although they were in their teens, from Glasgow, and shared some decidedly lowbrow predilections: for Black Sabbath, Celtic FC and fortified wine. Their music was thoughtful and melodic, but also loud and

confrontational. A European tour featured sets at a volume that ruptured eardrums. A remix album featured noiseniks like μ -Ziq, Alec Empire and Kevin Shields, entitled *Kicking A Dead Pig*. *Uncut* watched them, as they supported the Manic Street Preachers in 1998, play a bellicose "Like Herod", 10 minutes of noodling that suddenly erupted into a broiling tumult of feedback that persisted until the end of the set. As Manics fans jammed fingers in

Q&A

Stuart Braithwaite



What do you remember about the recording of *CODY*? I remember it really vividly. We were really excited about recording with Dave Fridmann, and he

and his family made us really welcome. His Tarbox Road studio is in the middle of nowhere in upstate New York – it's about 30 minutes from the closest town. The main shop in that town specialised in hunting gear. I remember one time we were out buying stuff – probably [American fortified wine] MD 20/20 – and a guy was targeting us with his gun's laser target, which was a wee bit scary. But working with Dave was great. We were really prepared and he contributed a lot in terms of extra instrumentation and ideas.

ears and glasses rained down, bassist Dominic Aitchison walked to the front of the stage, turned his back to the crowd, and dropped his trousers.

For second album, *Come On Die Young*, Mogwai recorded outside Scotland for the first time, decamping to Dave Fridmann's Tarbox Road studio in upstate New York. There were few immediate signs of a fresh maturity: a magazine feature of the time found Stuart Braithwaite and new recruit Barry Burns refining something they called "the paedophile chord". But the finished *Come On Die Young* offered something quite unforeseen. Melancholy and hollowed out, with Burns filling out the spaces between wandering bass and sparse drums with piano, keyboard and flute, this music was decidedly low-key. It was not immediate. Nor was it possessed of bold messages or complicated time signatures. But in gentle, unfolding suites like "Chocky" and "Waltz For Aidan" lay something enriching, a gloomy introspection traceable to slowcore groups like Low or Codeine, but also further back, to post-punk touchstones like The Cure's *Faith* or Joy Division's *Closer*. The opening "Punk Rock:" samples an Iggy Pop interview on Canadian TV: "I don't know Johnny Rotten... but I'm sure he puts as much blood and sweat into what he does as Sigmund Freud did. You see, what sounds to you like a big load of trashy old noise is in fact the brilliant music of a genius... myself." The music itself, though, is spidery and pensive, huffing on Iggy's spirited iconoclasm, and breathing it out at a hush.

Fifteen years on, this reissue expands the original album to a 4LP box and double CD. Much of the bonus material includes unreleased takes from the Chem19 studios in Glasgow and the pre-Tarbox Cava sessions. There are some valuable additions. Included is the original "Helps Both Ways", featuring American football commentary from the NFL's John Madden (for legal reasons, replaced on the album proper by footage

At the time, Mogwai had developed a reputation as a loud band. But *CODY* is largely a thing of quiet restraint. Was this a matter of conscious intent – to go against what was expected of you? I think we wanted to show that there was more to our music than radical dynamic shifts, and definitely had that in mind. A lot of very minimal records like *Seventeen Seconds* by The Cure and *Spiderland* by Slint were influencing us at the time too. I think it's aged reasonably well. We tend to avoid doing anything gimmicky on our records, which hopefully helps them from sounding too time-specific. As far as our catalogue, I think it has its own place. I still like all the songs and I'm pretty proud that such a bleak record made it into the charts – especially as records actually still sold back then.

Did you get Iggy Pop's blessing to use the speech on "Punk Rock:"? We didn't, though I've been told that he's heard it since and thought it was cool. I hope it's true!

from a college game). The previously unheard Cava sessions track "Spoon Test" and eight-minute rarity "Hugh Dallas" are both worthy of rediscovery, while deleted 2001 EP "Travels In Constants" is included in full, notably a piano cover of Papa M's "Arundel".

The body of *Come On Die Young*, though, features some of Mogwai's most remarkable music. For all its prevalent calm, there are crescendos, in the shape of slow-burner "Ex Cowboy" and the 10-minute "Christmas Steps" – a build from pensive guitar chimes to menacing Shellac thrash, finally relenting to elegiac violin courtesy of Long Fin Killie's Luke Sutherland. The slide guitar-accompanied "Cody", meanwhile, remains the band's finest vocal moment, Stuart Braithwaite breathing softly of late-night drives where passing streetlights come to resemble illuminated fairground carousels.

While Mogwai themselves have always been reticent to ascribe meaning or concept to their music, their playful titling opens up a world of its own. Non-album rarity "Nick Drake" is a Tortoise-like eddy named after the late English folk guitarist then only in the first fits of reassessment. The tension-release motions of "Kappa" takes its name from a brand of sportswear favoured by the Scottish ned, which Mogwai members wore with pride. The album bows out with a sombre trombone refrain dashed with wintry electronics, so of course it stands to reason it should be titled "Punk Rock/Puff Daddy/Antichrist".

There is a strange disconnect here. For all their mischief and confrontation, Mogwai's own music is a serious thing. Here, though, a vision is coming into focus. Making ears bleed was all well and good; but here, somewhere between euphoria and sadness, there was a rich seam waiting to be tapped. It's a formula that's served Mogwai well since, but they've not yet improved on the mesmeric meditations of *Come On Die Young*.

The Auteurs –
How I Learned To Love
The Bootboys



THE AUTEURS

How I Learned To Love The Bootboys

(reissue, 1999)

3 LOOP

8/10

Luke Haines' withering "pox on the '70s"

Notionally Britpop, Luke Haines' Auteurs fell from grace in the glorious Parklife year of 1994 with *Now I'm A Cowboy*, their undercooked follow-up to well-liked debut *New Wave*, then brought in the unfashionably American Steve Albini to produce 1996's rampantly un-geezierish *After Murder Park*. Beefed up to 2 CDs with contemporary detritus, both have significant merits, but The Auteurs' mean-spirited swansong may be better still. More interested in his brilliant Black Box Recorder side-project, Haines absent-mindedly whipped together this hateful riposte to 1970s nostalgia in 1999. *Metal Box* crossbred with Chicory Tip, the sardonic "The Rubettes" perfects its tarnished Christmas bauble twinkle, while his contemporaries' fetishisation of Chopper bikes and spangles is countered by Haines' grisly focus on tribal warfare, sex pests and vicious conformity ("Join the army or the National Front when you're 16," he wheezes on "School"). A past gone septic; Operation Yewtree – the musical.

EXTRAS: Sadly, the tapes of *Bootboys* 7/10 prototypes "Greatest Hits Of The UK", "Victorian Christmas" and "Bomber Jacket" are lost, but B-sides, outtakes and the aggressively-titled *No Dialogue With Cunts* – a CD of The Auteurs' final live show – pump up the volume. **JIM WIRTH**

WORLD'S YOUR LOCAL... SOUNDS AROUND THE SUN



BAYETÉ (TODD COCHRAN)

Worlds Around The Sun

(reissue, 1972)

OMNIVORE

8/10

Black Power jazz revisited

Keyboard player Todd Cochran has enjoyed a varied career, guesting with Aretha Franklin, Burt Bacharach and Peter Gabriel, as well as forming progressive rock band Automatic Man with Santana's Michael Shrieve. But his career began in 1972, at the age of 20, with this extraordinary jazz album, released under the spiritual name Bayeté (meaning "between man and God" in Zulu). Vibraphone player Bobby Hutcherson hails Cochran as a "beautiful young brother" in the original sleeve notes; he was part of the counter-cultural crossover in San Francisco, being influenced as much by Sly Stone as John Coltrane. He was also friends with Herbie Hancock, and considered Bayeté to be a homage to his quest for a more African-derived form of jazz. The key track, "Free Angela (Thoughts... And All I've Got To Say)" – later covered by Santana – was inspired by jailed academic and black power activist Angela Davis, who Cochran had seen speaking at UCLA. Musically, it's a work of funk as much as jazz, with a Coltrane-style chant of "free Angela" floated over Cochran's muscular keyboard riff. The rest of the album is pungent, if less muscular, though "I'm On It" keeps the funk flame burning.

EXTRAS: Two bonus tracks: "Phoebe" and 7/10 "Shine The Knock".

ALASTAIR MCKAY

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



DEAD MOON In The Graveyard/ Unknown Passage/ Defiance (reissues, 1988/'89/'90)

M'LADYS/MISSISSIPPI

8/10



9/10



9/10

are just as good: the nightmarish "thunderbolts and nightsticks" visions of "Dead Moon Night", or the wracked country blues of "Dagger Moon".

Fred and Toody split with drummer Andrew Loomis in 2006, but Dead Moon reformed at the start of 2014 to play the centenary of Portland's Crystal Ballroom. A subsequent European tour was cancelled when Fred fell ill, and he's just undergone triple bypass open-heart surgery. "He needs several months to heal completely, and be able to play onstage again, standing for over an hour with that heavy Guild Thunderbird guitar strapped on," says Toody. But a Portland show is booked for January 2015. The world still has a chance to wake up to Dead Moon.

LOUIS PATTISON

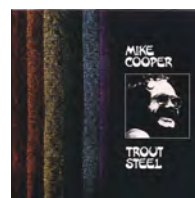
Portland garage rock refuseniks still doing it their way.

The first three albums, for the first time, on CD

That Dead Moon remain of relative obscurity feels not so much a matter of oversight as a cosmic injustice. Since 1988 they've independently released a dozen albums, toured extensively and teetered on the precipice of wider recognition: Pearl Jam and Shellac have sung their praises, while 2004 documentary *Unknown Passage* and 2006 Sub Pop collection *Echoes From The Past* have spread the gospel further.

It can't be to do with the backstory, itself a slice of history. Singer-guitarist Fred Cole played in '60s garage bands The Lords, The Weeds and The Lollipop Shoppe, whose "You Must Be A Witch" landed on the first *Nuggets* box. Fleeing the draft, the band ended up in Portland, where Fred met Toody, future wife and Dead Moon bandmate. The Coles conduct themselves with DIY integrity, booking their own tours, running a studio and guitar store, and pressing their own records, some cut on the same lathe used on The Kingsmen's "Louie Louie". Toody credits their spirited self-reliance to their parents: "They survived the depression and World War II, and taught us that strength and determination will carry you through."

Dead Moon's first three records, *In The Graveyard* (1988), *Unknown Passage* (1989) and *Defiance* (1990), remain unimpeachable. They started as a covers band, and some remain: Toody's Mo Tucker-ish "I Can't Help Falling In Love With You" on *In The Graveyard*, a raging take on blues standard "Milk Cow Blues" on *Defiance*. But the originals



MIKE COOPER Trout Steel/Places I Know/The Machine Gun Co. (reissues, 1970, 1971, 1972)

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

8/10



8/10

A British folkie begins his long journey to music's outer limits

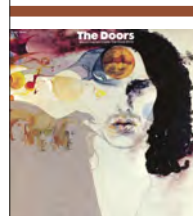
For those of us interested in how roots music can intersect with the avant-garde, the rediscovery of guitarist Mike Cooper is a fortuitous one. His journey from folk clubs to the furthest reaches of esoterica (detailed on page 8) began in the early '70s with these three rare and rewarding

LPs. '70's *Trout Steel* showcases singer-songwriterly craftsmanship in the Jansch mould, occasionally dissolving into free-jazz drift (the 11-minute "I've Got Mine" is a fidgety, minimalist precursor of Wilco's "Less Than You Think"). *Places I Know* (1971) is a good-natured retrenchment into Michael Chapman-ish folk rock, which also finds room for a spellbinding piano ballad, "Time To Time", that would have done Bill Fay proud. Cooper originally envisaged *Places...* as a double LP with what turned out to be 1972's *Machine Gun Co.*, and the pair are reunited for this reissue. After the relative orthodoxy of the first set, *Machine Gun Co.* is a rambunctious pursuit of *Trout Steel*'s wilder ideals, as sturdy songs – notably "So Glad (That I Found You)" – are repeatedly sent off onto knottier improv tangents.

EXTRAS: Chapbooks with lyrics and new

6/10 sleeve notes by Cooper.

JOHN MULVEY



THE DOORS Weird Scenes Inside The Goldmine (reissue, 1972)

RHINO

8/10

First time on CD for 1972 Doors compilation

Weird scenes is right. This is the first time on CD for a 1970s comp, that was launched recently by a limited coloured vinyl edition for Record Store Day, one year after co-founder and keyboardist Ray Manzarek's death. Whatever the anniversary, it's hard to argue with the content here, which succeeds in accommodating the band's searching, jazzy mysticism ("When The Music's Over"; "The End") alongside more succinct examples of their art. The first Doors compilation (1970's pre-mortem 13 cherry-picked the singles like "Light My Fire", "Love Me Two Times" and "Roadhouse Blues", so this cast its net rather wider, looking for (and finding) a coherent musicality and involving mood among deeper album cuts. 1971's *LA Woman* is the pole star in this regard. Drawn on heavily as a source, its deep bluesiness also helps provide a direction for the album, which unfolds through the likes of "Shaman's Blues", "Ship Of Fools" and "Maggie M'Gill". B-sides from *The Soft Parade* such as the enjoyable "Who Scared You" are as constructive as rightfully obscure Willie Dixon cover "(You Need Meat) Don't Go No Further" are not. Strange days indeed – perhaps *American Prayer* will be next.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON



KINKY FRIEDMAN

Lasso From El Paso
(reissue, 1976)

FLOATING WORLD

The Kinkster's finest hour...

7/10

Outrageous song titles such as "They Ain't Makin' Jews

Like Jesus Anymore" and "Get Your Biscuits In The Oven And Your Buns In The Bed" (which earned him a "Male Chauvinist Pig Of The Year" award) have done Friedman's reputation as a serious musician little good. Nor perhaps have his extra-curricular activities as a comic novelist and his maverick campaigns for political office. But during the 1970s he made some crackingly good country-rock and although he couldn't really sing, his finest album, 1976's *Lasso From El Paso* (bowdlerised from original title "Asshole From El Paso"), attracted a host of heavyweight guests including Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr, Ron Wood, Dr John and three-fifths of The Band. The brilliantly sardonic opener "Sold American" was recorded live on Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue, which Friedman joined for its second leg. Further highlights include an uncredited Lowell George on "Catfish", at-the-time an unheard outtake from *Desire* which Dylan gifted him, and Clapton playing dobro on a brace of tracks recorded at The Band's Shangri-La studio. There are plenty of good jokes, including Ringo as the voice of Jesus on "Men's Room, LA", as Friedman both sends up and celebrates country music. The spoofs may not have endured that well; but the musicianship certainly has.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



INSPIRAL CARPETS

Dung 4 (reissue, 1989)
CHERRY RED

Raw as milk: much-bootlegged demo tape appears on CD for the first time

6/10

Dig out those T-shirts.

"2014 is already looking like our biggest year since 1994," says Clint Boon, and this reissue arrives ahead of a brand new album for Oldham's finest, slated for September. Recorded in December 1987, the *Dung 4* demo tape was serially bootlegged as the band made it big, before receiving an 'official' mail-order cassette-only release in '89. DIY garage-indie, lifted with jabbing organ and lugubrious Lancashire vocals, *Dung 4* went on to sell 8,000 copies, but has never been issued on vinyl or CD before now. It's an Inspirals album in all but name, and contains unique cuts as well as first stabs at some curtain-haired classics, including "Inside My Head" (which features on 1990's excellent *Life*). "Theme From Cow" and "Seeds Of Doubt" are more than fun, as is the run through the psychedelic staple "96 Tears", and the whole package is a fine summation of the Inspirals' enduring appeal. It's not for audiophiles: even with a solid remastering job from Boon, the sound is a little one-mic-in-a-bathroom, but be fair. *Dung 4* dates from a time when garage band meant exactly that.

EXTRAS: The earlier four-track EP, "Cow", 7/10 and a demo from May '87.

MARK BENTLEY



WILKO JOHNSON

The Best Of
CADIZ MUSIC

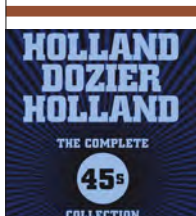
Wilko's post Feelgoods/Solid Senders output, chosen by the guitar maestro himself

8/10

Before Julien Temple's *Oil City Confidential* put him – and his inspirational legacy – back in the limelight, Wilko was not idle. For the last 35 years he's forged the most lasting, and expansive, relationship of his career with Blockheads bassist Norman Watt-Roy and, latterly, drummer Dylan 'son of Steve' Howe. The evidence gathered here, culled from the run of albums that ended with 2005's *Red Hot Rocking Blues*, has continued to fuel his blistering live shows and the indomitable spirit which must be at least partly responsible for forestalling his terminal cancer diagnosis. Potent reworkings of the Feelgoods classics (including a surly "Sneakin' Suspicion", the triumphant "Back In The Night" and the pulverising strut of "Roxette") show the master of the Telecaster sharpening his ferocious axe in a trio that's both a seriously tough and unfailingly agile. The patented R'n'B engine room is retooled on latter-day stand-outs – the splintered dynamics and rolling thunder of "When I'm Gone" and "Underneath Orion", where on the latter Wilko's astronomical fascination adds astral wonder to his seasoned Thames Delta mythologies. The wilderness years – brought in from the cold, not before time.

EXTRAS: None.

GAVIN MARTIN



HOLLAND-DOZIER-HOLLAND

The Complete 45s Collection

HARMLESS

Epic compilation of post-Motown releases by legendary songwriters

9/10

This 14CD boxset captures every track released on 45 by the three labels – Invictus, Hot Wax and Music Merchant – formed by the Holland-Dozier-Holland team after they left Motown in 1967. The release features 269 original tracks – A- and B-sides from the three labels – as well as a number of unreleased songs taken from acetates. While H-D-H never had quite the level of success with their new labels as they'd enjoyed at Motown, they still had several hits – mostly with Chairmen Of The Board, who are heavily represented including their No 3 hit "Give Me Just A Little More Time" (and glorious B-side "Since The Days Of Pigtales"), but also Freda Payne ("Band Of Gold") and Parliament, when they were still called A Parliament Thang. Treats are numerous – from Holland-Dozier-Holland's own imploring version of "Don't Leave Me Starvin' For Your Love" to the brilliant Ruth Copeland's fierce "Gimme Shelter", Eloise Law's funky "Tighten Him Up", Flaming Ember's "I'm Not My Brother's Keeper" and the choppy disco insistence of New York Port Authority's "I Got It" – while a 60-page accompanying book by Dean Rudland provides a colourful way of finding your way round the mass of material.

EXTRAS: Unreleased tracks, Tom Moulton

8/10 remixes and book.

PETER WATTS

REVELATIONS

The BBC Radiophonic Workshop: from Doctor Who to Glastonbury



► "People have such affection for the Workshop," admits Paddy Kingsland, whose musical credits include *Doctor Who*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* and countless TV and radio shows throughout the 1970s and '80s during his tenure at the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. "They remember the impact it had on them when they were young."

Although the Workshop closed in 1998, Kingsland and his surviving colleagues have enjoyed renewed interest in their work via a reissue programme and also live shows. "It's a bunch of old blokes going on stage and doing something that's quite close to contemporary," explains Kingsland. They began playing live in 2009; this month, they play to their largest audience yet, at Glastonbury. "Being on tour, sitting on a train for five hours, it's good fun," says Kingsland. "The thing is, everybody worked separately in separate rooms. Then we all used to meet up in the canteen over lunch, so it's a bit like that dynamic all over again. The same old stories!" MICHAEL BONNER



PADDY KINGSLAND

Fourth Dimension
(reissue, 1973)

PETER HOWELL
Through A Glass Darkly (reissue, 1978)

MUSIC ON VINYL

8/10

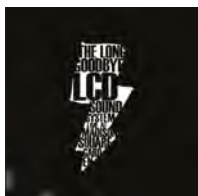
Vinyl-only reissues from the Radiophonic Workshop's synth years

The arrival of the synthesiser in the late '60s was a turning point for the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. The balance shifted from the experimental techniques

pioneered during the department's first decade to more conventional scores developed by new recruits like Paddy Kingsland and Peter Howell. *Fourth Dimension* (1973) showcases Kingsland's library recordings, with the likes of "Scene & Heard" squelchy fun anticipating Stereolab's more playful moments. After a psych-folk apprenticeship, by 1977, when he began work on *Through A Glass Darkly*, Howell had gone full prog. A collection of original pieces, the scope is ambitious, if not entirely successful. The 20-minute title track makes full use of the 'Flute' and 'Trumpet' settings on the ARP Odyssey. "Caches Of Gold" is irritatingly jolly, though the propulsive "Magenta Court" evokes a futuristic grandeur. It's all a long way from the otherworldliness of the Delia Derbyshire era.

EXTRAS: None.

MICHAEL BONNER



LCD SOUNDSYSTEM The Long Goodbye (Live At Madison Square Garden)

DFA/PARLOPHONE

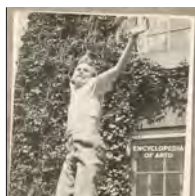
Time to get away...

8/10 James Murphy's 187-minute last stand

Amidst the eBay landfill of Record Store Day 2014 ("Ghostbusters" on luminous 10-inch vinyl, anyone?), one release stood out in terms of both bulk and desirability. LCD Soundsystem's 2011 farewell concert has already been documented in a movie, *Shut Up And Play The Hits* (2012). Now, the entire show – in which James Murphy attempted to play the band's complete catalogue – is memorialised on a suitably excessive vinyl boxset. Five records cover 187 minutes and 28 tracks, which confirm LCD as one of the century's key bands, and one of its most artfully self-aware. Exhausting pleasures proliferate: Murphy's jogging magnum opus, "45:33", enhanced by a deep house vocal from Reggie Watts; a lashing version of Nilsson's "Jump Into The Fire"; the awesome rhythmic drill of Tyler Pope (bass) and Pat Mahoney (drums). In this context, "Losing My Edge" is a mix of snark and abandon sounds more poignant than ever: an anthem for a generation of record collectors whose hipsterish superiority is mellowing into sentimentality; and who might now be pragmatically choosing the MP3 downloads of *The Long Goodbye* over the vinyl edition. "We could do this for another hour," chants Murphy at its death. One day, when his coffee business loses appeal, he just might.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY



ARTO LINDSAY Encyclopedia Of Arto

NORTHERN SPY

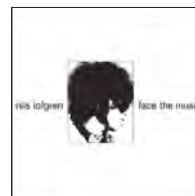
Brazil into New York: freestyle guitar meets luscious post-Tropicálismo

Forget that title: a real

autobiography of Arto Lindsay would take in the full breadth of this irascible artist's achievements, from his contributions to late-'70s No Wave – both in his group DNA, and the Arto/Neto single "Pini Pini" – through to the lounge jazz in his '80s group The Lounge Lizards, and then on into the focus of this double-disc set, his series of sensual solo albums released between 1996 and 2004. These records – *O Corpo Sutil*, *Mundo Civilizado*, *Noon Chill*, *Prize*, *Invoke* and *Salt* – are singular achievements in the 'general jelly' (as Gilberto Gil would have it) of post-everything culture. Drawing on Lindsay's Brazilian heritage, yet finding space for electronica, drum'n'bass, avant-R&B and trip-hop, the songs compiled on the first disc of this *Encyclopaedia* are grounded in the sensuality of Brazilian pop. Tropicália was clearly a significant socio-cultural force for Lindsay, and in songs like "4 Skies" and "Combustivel" you can hear him effortlessly reconciling this history with the daringly modern. Disc Two features a solo live set from Lindsay, where the frazzled intensity of his freeform guitar reintroduces itself in full force – here his songs are disrupted by transmissions from the edges of the guitar's lexicon.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



NILS LOFGREN Face The Music

FANTASY

Loyal Bruce Springsteen and Neil Young sideman's solo career, exhaustively exhumed

7/10 "I play guitar all night and day," Nils Lofgren

declares on "I Came To Dance". "Just don't ask me to think." This sarcastic, drunken riposte to a manager's attempt to make him more commercial matches his actual status for some as a trampoline-bouncing journeyman. These 10 discs of his work as a bandleader and singer-songwriter tip the balance too far, testing the patience. Harmony-drenched gems such as "Like Rain" by his lovely, lost early '70s band Grin are soon followed by hours of stiff '80s rock, eventually giving way to the glowering thundercloud of 1995's *Damaged Goods*. Recorded staring into the double-barrel of divorce and his dad's Alzheimer's, songs such as "Nothin's Fallin'" are uncharacteristically raw and gripping. Lofgren's somewhat MOR default setting is broken, too, by "Mr Hardcore"'s tribute to formative Lofgren/Young producer David Briggs. These obscure highlights are joined by two discs of unreleased ones, led by Young and Crazy Horse singing "Keith Don't Go", and a live DVD comp. Affidavits from Young, Costello and co testify to Lofgren's affable presence near rock's top table. A few of these songs see him sit at it.

EXTRAS: None.

NICK HASTED



K LEIMER A Period Of Review (Original Recordings: 1975-1983)

RVNG INTL

Private press ambient pioneer gets his dues

7/10 Born in Winnipeg, Canada and settled in Seattle in

the late '60s, Kerry Leimer's teenage interest in Dadaism and surrealism led him to the Krautrock music of Can, Faust and Cluster, and to the loop-based ambient music of Terry Riley and Fripp and Eno's (*No Pussyfooting*). Far from trying to ingratiate his way into any formal music hierarchy, though, Leimer's aspirations were local and underground. His music, made using a thrifted set-up of tape machines and rudimentary synthesisers, was released on Palace Of Lights, the DIY label he ran with his wife Dorothy. This 30-track collection steers away from his early albums in favour of unreleased music, weaving stylistically, but covers commendable ground. At times, his influences are rather transparent: the stream-of-consciousness "Lonely Boy" is kooky, trapped-in-the-studio eccentricity in the vein of Eno and Cluster's "Broken Head". But the less song-y experiments are often captivating: the New Age synths of "The Phonic Chasm", featuring unearthly vocals from Dawn Seago; the cryptic woodblock melodies and digital chatter of "My Timid Desires"; or "Two Voices", a gently circular Fourth World meditation that, at two minutes in length, is at least eight minutes too short. Like the catalogues of Laraaji or Suzanne Ciani, here is music deserving of rediscovery and reappraisal.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTISON



REVELATIONS

Nils Lofgren recalls Neil Young's Tonight's The Night tour of 1973

► "Tonight's *The Night* was a wake record for Bruce Berry and Danny Whitten," Nils Lofgren recalls of his rawest '70s record as guitarist for Neil Young. "The next thing I know, we were playing in England. That was a very radical extension of the experiment, and we paid the price." This was the notorious 1973 tour when Young rarely played anything but his brutal new songs, before anyone knew them. "People booed us every night. One night Neil threw his guitar on the floor and stormed off. And he came back, but he was pissed off. I'm trying to show you something. It's just a night. I'm not asking you to listen to this for the rest of your life." Usually the audience was, "No, we can't let you do that." There was one thing he did more than once, if the audience was being disrespectful, but not mutinying. "All right, everyone, I'm going to play one you've heard before." They'd freak out. It was 'Tonight's The Night' again. To this day, when I tour the UK, every night someone apologises and says, 'I was one of the ones who booed. Now I realise it was something really special.'" NICK HASTED



THE MOLES Flashbacks & Dream Sequences: The Story Of The Moles

FIRE

CARDINAL

Cardinal (reissue, 1994)

FIRE

Antipodean psychedelia and baroque-pop

It's not hard to figure why Richard Davies and The Moles were so out of place when they first appeared in Sydney in the early '90s. While Australia had its share of psychedelic pop in the '80s, by the early '90s, pre-grunge was the thing. The Moles were much trickier – they obviously had a stack of Flying Nun in their collections, probably some *Pebbles*, maybe even The Left Banke. They released a few singles and a mini-album, *Untune The Sky*, then moved to London, where their initial lineup imploded. Davies relocated to America and recorded the freak-beat interludes of 1994's *Instinct*; all these are collected on *Flashbacks...*, where pop gets seriously Pataphysical. The ace up the sleeve is Davies' peculiar genius – luscious, unpredictable melodies muddled by cryptic lyrics – something which blossomed further on *Cardinal*, recorded with Eric Matthews, where strings and brass drop the songs deep in the valley of '60s sunshine-pop. It's kind of like The Monkees auditioning Curt Boettcher and Arthur Lee.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE

VARIOUS ARTISTS

C86

CHERRY RED

The infamous mail-order tape gets a lavish three-disc treatment.
By John Lewis



7/10

IT'S DIFFICULT TO imagine how a simple cassette could become such a controversial document, but that's what happened with the NME's 1986 mail-order compilation. Where the paper's previous annual round-ups – *Mighty Reel*, *Dancin' Master*,

C81 – featured a mix of the punk, reggae, hip-hop and jazz that the paper had been championing, their 1986 compilation, *C86*, jettisoned all other genres to concentrate on a very particular type of music.

Loved and reviled in equal measure, *C86* featured 22 “shambling” bands signed to independent labels – rakishly thin chaps, almost exclusively white, in guitar quartets with not a single keyboard between them. They plied a chaste, asexual brand of beat-pop that borrowed heavily from Josef K, Orange Juice and The Smiths. But, where those bands betrayed vestiges of funk, soul and Africa, the shambling bands divested their music of its black origins: an incendiary statement in the rock-vs-hip-hop wars that raged across the inky at the time.

For the first time, “indie” became codified – not as an attitude, but as a genre. White rock abandoned any modernist impulse and retreated into the past, rejecting synths, drum machines and other garishly lit tropes of '80s pop. *C86* even came with its own retro “cutesy” couture: '60s anoraks, duffelcoats, childlike plimsolls, bowl haircuts and cardigans.

Some of the bands here were already established. Reluctant shambling scene godfathers The Pastels had been releasing records since 1982. The gallows humour of Birkenhead's Half Man Half Biscuit always seemed at odds with the wide-eyed, uncynical naivety of the other bands on the tape, while The Wedding Present seemed a little butch among their fey compatriots. Other *C86* bands seemed to have one great single in them: The Mighty Lemon Drops' “Happy Head”, The Bodines' morning-fresh “Therese”, and The Soup Dragons' “Pleasantly Surprised”. Those three tracks represented *C86*'s enduring public persona – a childlike perfect pop that no-one actually listened to, all asexual whimsy and male vulnerability. But this was not a homogenous scene. Stump, Big Flame and Bogshed all created a discordant racket of fractured rhythms, wobbly guitars and Beefheart wails. Leeds futurists Age Of Chance rumbled and throbbed and seemed to promise great things. East London revolutionaries McCarthy (later to morph into Stereolab) were fanning the embers of a radical fire that had all but been extinguished by the mid-'80s; as implicitly political was the proto-riot grll thumps and hiccupping vocals of Birmingham's We've Got A Fuzzbox And We're Gonna Use It.

Ex-NME scribe Neil Taylor, who compiled the first tape, here assembles this boxset (he's also written an upcoming book on the shambling scene), and Disc Two features many of the bands he left off the original. They include The Jesus And Mary Chain



Shambling
C86 scenesters
The Pastels

(unwitting poster boys of this scene), The Primitives (with guitarist Paul Court rather than Tracey Tracey on lead vocals), the BMX Bandits (whose first LP was called *C86*), The June Brides (who declined to appear on the original) and Talulah Gosh (who emerged just after the tape was compiled).

The third disc explores a broader range of British indie music around 1986 and includes a few bands who – like *C86* alumni Primal Scream, Age Of Chance and The Soup Dragons – would later neck some pills and “go dance”, including Pop Will Eat Itself (the first of these indie bands to embrace hip-hop) and the Happy Mondays (who, even in 1986, sounded like an under-rehearsed jazz-funk band trying to play folk). But it also strays far beyond the

C86 brief. There's the Brechtian cabaret of The Band Of Holy Joy, the epic strings of King Of The Slums, the folksy fiddles of The Nightingales. Peel faves The Noseflutes sound like someone has emptied the contents of a studio into a skip. There's also lots of guff, including Richard Hawley's early band Treebound Story. It covers a wider brief than Bob Stanley's *CD86*, a comp of contemporaneous music released on the 20th anniversary of the original. Weirdly, this reissue arrives at a more receptive time, with a generation of young bands from Portland to Tokyo taking their cue from *C86*. The appeal is partly a nostalgia for a scene that was already nostalgic, but there's an urgent intensity to these tracks that still resonates, nearly 30 years on.

Q&A

David Gedge, *The Wedding Present*



Was there a distinct C86 “scene” at the time? It was an exciting time – fanzines and labels were really taking off, and promoters around the country were always booking

us. We'd find ourselves sharing the bill with The Shop Assistants or The Wallflowers. But it seemed like *C86* was a catalyst, something that drew wider attention to a small scene.

Was there a definable sound? The music was varied. People now see *C86* as jangly indie pop, but Bogshed and Big Flame were nothing like that. We rode that divide: there were elements that were jangly but we had a much harder edge.

Were you suspicious of being pigeonholed as “a C86 band”? In retrospect, we were probably slightly more established than most of the other bands, even if it didn't seem like it at the time. We were just honoured to be on an NME tape, having read the magazine for years, and perhaps a bit guileless about how it might affect us. But I can see why, say, The June Brides didn't want to be on the tape, and how some less established bands might be pigeonholed by it, especially when the scene seemed to have run its course.

Was it as white and retro as it seemed? Yeah, that's a fair criticism. The retro thing even bypassed punk: the guitar thing harked back to The Byrds and The Velvet Underground. And we were certainly influenced by a lot of white guitar bands. But I guess that applies to all music. It's like criticising a hip-hop act for not being into Bogshed, or something...

INTERVIEW: JOHN LEWIS

The Specialist

Japanese Psychedelia



► SAD NEWS CAME early in the world of Japanese psychedelia this year, with legendary label PSF – named after *Psychedelic Speed Freaks*, the first release by Tokyo's motorpsycho rock'n'roll wrecking crew, High Rise – making an online plea for financial backers, given five-figure unpaid distributor debts. It's particularly depressing as PSF has done more than any other label to spread the word about the Japanese underground. Indeed, all of the players in this column have figured as part of the PSF story, several as flagship artists.

So, their artists have had to find new homes, for now. Japanese psych-folk singer **Kazuki Tomokawa** has stretched into the fourth decade of his career with **Vengeance Bourbon** MODEST LAUNCH 8/10, a typically deep pass from the singer-songwriter void. He's an irascible, at times furious singer,

and the sympathetic playing from Toshiaki Ishizuka on drums and Masato Nagahata on piano makes songs like "My Big Brother's Record" particularly potent, Tomokawa's see-sawing melodies levitating on pointillist percussion.

Another key PSF player, **Keiji Haino**, has gone seriously dippy with his new-ish 'DJ Keiji Haino' guise. **Experimental Mixture: In The World** YOUTH INC 6/10 is his second mix disc – actually, three discs here, with Haino pulling together strands from his wide-ranging record collection into complex webs. It's a nice idea, and some of the juxtapositions are wild – it's seriously surreal to hear Nico poking her head out of a peat bog of ethnic field recordings. But overall, these Experimental Mixtures are fairly awkward.

Indeed, the strongest records from the Japanese psychedelic underground are coming from lesser-known, marginal figures, like occasional Boris collaborator **Ai Aso**, whose first album for Stephen O'Malley of Sunn O)))'s imprint, **Lone** IDEOLOGIC ORGAN 8/10, compiles some lovely live performances. Aso's songs come across as fragile on first blush – one lilting guitar or buzzing keyboard, and a deceptively blank voice – but there's real depth in her ability to say plenty, using such minimal means.

Or, most thrillingly, the return of **H Usui** with his second album, **Sings The Blues** VHF 9/10. Some may know Usui from his collaboration with Ben Chasny (Six Organs Of Admittance) as August Born, or his self-released debut as L, *Holy Letters*. Usui's take on the blues is elemental and intimate, stretching well beyond the long blank, into a hermetic set of songs for banjo, bass, guitar and sporadic, spooked electronics. It's up there with Jandek's mid-to-late-'80s, overtly blues-marked albums, like *On The Way*, as far as mystifyingly gorgeous song suites go.

JON DALE



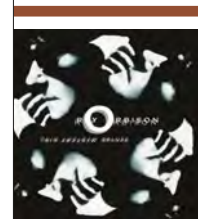
MORRISSEY *Vauxhall And I* (reissue, 1994) PARLOPHONE

Viva Vauxhall;
Morrissey's Astra weeks

All self-annihilating shyness and monstrous vanity, Morrissey appears on the front cover of all of his first solo LPs, but *Vauxhall And I* is the first one where he stares the camera down; an acknowledgement for some that his fourth album is his most unashamedly personal. However, while its lush textures and meaningful sighs are amplified by this remaster, the marvel – as ever – is how little Morrissey really gives away. Bereavements may have inspired the unusually human sentiment of "Hold On To Your Friends" and "Now My Heart Is Full", but the dreamlike Side Two is *Vauxhall And I*'s striptease with a difference. Morrissey hits an economical lyrical peak on Larkin-like apologia "Used To Be A Sweet Boy", oboe-laden "Lifeguard Sleeping, Girl Drowning", and thunderous closer "Speedway" (clarion call: "*All of the rumours keeping me grounded/I never said that they were completely unfounded*"), hinting at great revelations while remaining typically coy on the details. Such verbal teasing may not have impressed the courts a couple of years later, but it only piles on the wonder here. The windows open; the soul typically elusive.

EXTRAS: A few bonus photos, but no changes 7/10 to the running order: his finest self-portrait does not need retouching.

JIM WIRTH

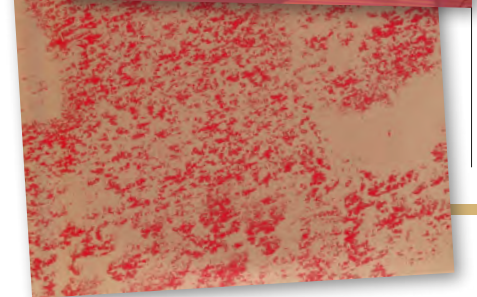


ROY ORBISON *Mystery Girl* **Deluxe** SONY/LEGACY

Fond farewell: The Big O's staggering sayonara, revisited

Like virtually all the pioneering '50s rockers, Roy Orbison was kicked to the curb. Lost and drifting for years, Orbison – only the greatest voice rock'n'roll has ever known – was afforded a rare, triumphant rebirth circa late '80s, first in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*, then as part of Dylan, Petty, Harrison and Jeff Lynne's chart-bound juggernaut Traveling Wilburys. The new juxtapositions shook something loose, both in Orbison's artistry and the public's perception of him, resulting in a feel-good comeback and this masterstroke, completed just weeks before his December 1988 death. Aided by a superstar cast, trading heavily on early themes – variations on dreams and romantic longing, heartbreak and yet more utopian/dystopian dreams/nightmares – *Mystery Girl* gracefully updates his oeuvre amid swooping, swerving, soaring vocal tours de force. Not everything shines, but the highlights – the driving Wilbury-esque "You Got It", the Elvis Costello-penned "The Comedians", where the singer is stranded on a ferris wheel as his love goes off with another, and especially the gorgeous, Bono-penned "She's A Mystery To Me" – rival his classic era. This expanded edition adds five studio outtakes/worktapes, jarringly unpolished in some cases, while a deluxe set offers four more rare tracks and a DVD.

EXTRAS: None.
LUKE TORN





THE PICTISH TRAIL

Secret Soundz Vol 1 & 2

MOSHI MOSHI

Collected ramblings of Hebridean Beck

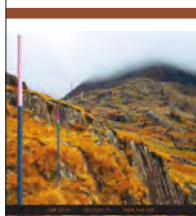
8/10

When he's not feeding the goats or running

his label, Lost Map, from a caravan on Eigg, Johnny Lynch writes and records as The Pictish Trail. Mostly, that seems to happen inside the caravan too, and the resulting music is confessional and lo-fi, but otherwise unbounded in its ambition. The eclecticism of Beck is clearly an inspiration, but there are faint hints of Simon & Garfunkel (on "The Lighthouse") and (on *Vol 1* especially) electronic hat-tips to Kraftwerk and the dance music they inspired ("Secret Sound #2" is Schubert via acid house). 2008's *Vol 1* was one of the most popular releases on Fence, the Fife-based folk label that Lynch ran for a decade, but 2013's *Vol 2* is more confident entirely, though its mood is melancholy. The theme was "corporeal and psychological isolation" fuelled, in part, by the death of Lynch's mother in 2011. But it's not a glum record. The Hot Chip-like rhythms of "Wait Until" fold around a gentle rumination on grief, but "I've Been Set Upon" and "Michael Rocket" stretch into a gently blissed-out state which finds full expression on the fragile anthem "I Will Pour It Down".

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



SECTION 25

From The Hip (reissue, 1984)

LTM

Blackpool post-punks ditch raincoats and embrace the electro

7/10

Initially dismissed as Joy Division copyists,

a similarity driven home by their presence on Factory and the claustrophobic Martin Hannett production of debut album *Always Now*, Section 25 found their feet on *From The Hip*. Recorded using state-of-the-art Roland drum machines and synths, you could venture the Blackpool band were still following in footprints: after all, it's Bernard Sumner producing, and a year after "Blue Monday", it was clear which way the wind was blowing. Still, little here actually sounds like New Order. The transcendent "Looking From A Hilltop" – appearing here in original version, "restructure", an eight-minute megamix, and a 2010 remix by Stephen Morris – still sounds like nothing else. A proto-acid jam with keening vocals from vocalist Larry Cassidy and his wife Jenny Ross, it was a club hit in New York, and picked up by radio in Chicago, a city incubating its own house style. Nothing else quite matches it, although the quicksilver electro of "Program For Light" comes close, and while Cassidy's voice is a touch limited for pop hits, Ross shines on the likable twee-tinged disco of "Reflection".

EXTRAS: This double CD reissue adds remixes, 8/10 BBC sessions, demos, a new remix of "Reflection", and sleeve notes from Jon Savage, Bernard Sumner and Vin and Angie Cassidy.

LOUIS PATTISON



PAUL WELLER

More Modern Classics

VIRGIN

The mod's past 15 years, extensively collected

8/10

Given the nature of his creativity, it shouldn't be surprising that Weller has

run not to one creative renaissance, but two. The mod's journalist-sponsored return from the wilderness in 1991 began his first. The most recent commenced with his upping of workrate since 2008's 22 *Dreams*. This collects material from the past 14 years, starting with stuff from 2000's essential *Heliocentric*, and serves to remind Weller's signature quality is conviction. This he brings to everything: whether that's earnest memorialising ("He's The Keeper", for Ronnie Lane), Dr Feelgood riffing (the hilariously mockney "From The Floorboards Up"), or muscular pastoral ("Wild Blue Yonder", a fine example of his dominant solo mode). His stirring passions can't always work miracles. Tunes like "Starlite" and "It's Written In The Stars" (anything vaguely celestial, in fact, though his cover of Rose Royce's "Wishing On A Star" is OK) all illustrate a strange residual affection for 1980s hairdresser soul. This comp is a placeholder as Weller takes family time, but there's no evidence of pipe and loafers ahead. After 20 years of mid-paced wah-wah noodling, that he can still run to something like "That Dangerous Age" (Blur do the "Shoop Shoop Song" in a midlife crisis) suggests there's plenty more surprises ahead.

EXTRAS: Deluxe version has 32 (!) additional

8/10 tracks of spirited live sessions and additional album tracks. JOHN ROBINSON



X

Under The Big Black Sun (reissue, 1982)

REAL GONE MUSIC

Height of their powers: LA punk's magnum opus, expanded

9/10

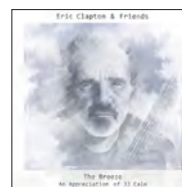
While many of punk's

most intense aggregations were spent forces, goners, by their sophomore LP, much less their third, X, circa summer '82, were picking up steam. Spurred to intense new creative heights by death (Exene's sister Mirielle, Germs frontman Darby Crash), John Doe and Exene Cervenka wrote their blackest, steeliest songs – jittery, poetic, desperate for meaning – in a career filled with nothing but. Producer Ray Manzarek, meanwhile, captures their dark majesty with just the right blend of blithe melancholy and blunt trauma. Cervenka's heartbreaking "Dancing With Tears In My Eyes" hints at furtive musical expansion, but ...*Black Sun* hinges on raging, rockers – "Real Child Of Hell", "How I (Learned My Lesson)", "Because I Do" – blistering sonic shrapnel that renders so-called hardcore punk as mere cartoon. The spooked vibe comes to a head on "Blue Spark", a noir-ish whack on the head, with Doe's out-on-a-ledge vocal. Closing the album proper is the atypical chug of "The Have-Nots", a working-class song for the ages – images of exhausted souls and sad-sack beer joints whirring by in a blur – a populist masterpiece whose truisms ("It keeps getting sooner or later") gain resonance with each passing year.

EXTRAS: Five bonus tracks, including a stellar 7/10 cover of Jerry Lee Lewis' "Breathless".

LUKE TORN

COMING NEXT MONTH...



➤ Easy does it – that was always the JJ Cale way. The Tulsa musician's mellow sound and accomplished composition were the hallmark for a series of albums influential

on artists as varied as Spiritualized and – obliquely – Dillinger. Most prominently, they influenced Eric Clapton, for whom they provided a signpost for much of his mid-1970s work, including hits with covers of Cale's "Cocaine" and "After Midnight".

Cale's influence and 2013 passing is next month commemorated with an album called *The Breeze* – taking its title from Cale's 1972 track "Call Me The Breeze". On it, Clapton is joined in tribute by pals including Tom Petty and Willie Nelson. Willie, never knowingly idle, has his own work afoot next month. After the success of his duets album, *To All The Girls...*, *Band Of Brothers* marks a concerted return to songwriting: the album features nine new compositions.

Staying with troubadours, there are also strong new ones from John Hiatt and John Fullbright. In markedly different business, July is also set to bring, after the success of his memoir *Autobiography*, a new album from Morrissey. Not a peep yet from *World Peace Is None Of Your Business*,

but the track titles alone (personal favourites: "Staircase At The University", "Oboe Concerto") make it sound intriguing.

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Jarvis Cocker feeds some ducks, Ken Loach postpones retirement, and Jon Favreau serves up a tasty slice of food porn...

PULP (A Film About Life, Death And Supermarkets) As anyone who has seen *Made Of Stone*, *20 Feet From Stardom* or *Frank* will have surely realised, we are not exactly living in a golden age of music films right now. Much of the problem with these projects lies in the reductive treatment of their subjects – The Stone Roses, a clutch of backing singers, the life of Frank Sidebottom. That *Pulp* manages to drag the genre out of its slump is quite an achievement. As much as I like the film, it's nevertheless hard to muster much enthusiasm for a band who – some spy reunion shows in 2011/12 aside – haven't released any new music for over a decade and whose story has been rigorously documented elsewhere. Jarvis Cocker seems to implicitly understand the shortcomings of the proposal: "I know that 'tidying up' isn't the greatest rock'n'roll motivation," he admits, "but I did want to give the story a happy ending." To reinforce how underwhelming all this might be, we then get footage of Jarvis changing a flat tyre, feeding some ducks, riding a bicycle. Very droll, etc.

As it turns out, Jarvis is arguably the least interesting thing about this film from director Florian Habicht. The events in *Pulp* take place in Sheffield, on December 8, 2012, the day of the band's last UK concert. It follows the individual band members, their fans and a handful of the city's more colourful inhabitants as they prepare for this momentous event. The band themselves prove to be amiable, self-deprecating souls – in particular drummer Nick Banks, who we first meet coaching his daughter Jeannie's football team, the Sheffield FC U14 Ladies, who are sponsored by Pulp. Elsewhere, interviewed in a local record shop, sometime member Richard Hawley notes of the 12-year gap between Pulp's debut, *It*, and their creative peak, *Different Class*, "marriages don't last that long, governments don't last that long." But the real stars are the good folks of Sheffield ("a medium-sized city in the north of England," says Jarvis helpfully): knife makers, fishmongers, school children, newspaper sellers, all of whom gamely offer their thoughts on Jarvis and Pulp. "When they first started out, I listened to their music with Blur," says Josephine, a white-haired fan of uncertain age. "And of the two, I prefer Pulp." Habicht also interviews the workers in the city's Castle Market, where the teenage Cocker held down a Saturday job. Meanwhile, a dance troupe, U-nique, treat the cameras to their routine for "Disco 2000" and the Sheffield Harmony vocal group deliver a fruity a cappella version of



"Common People". We also meet a nurse who's travelled from Georgia for the show, and a local musician who found solace in Pulp's music during an especially turbulent period in his life. "I think the concert was OK," reflects Cocker at the film's close. "It was important to do it, and I think it was good that we left Sheffield to the last thing. Life is a random process, I think, but you can add a narrative to it. And so by doing that, it just seemed logical that you would do this thing and finish in the place where it all started."

➤ **Jimmy's Hall** Reports of Ken Loach's imminent retirement appear to have been greatly exaggerated. Last year, his producer Rebecca O'Brien confirmed that *Jimmy's Hall* would be the 77-year-old filmmaker's last dramatic project, although he would continue with documentaries like *The Spirit Of '45*, his authoritative homage to the birth of the welfare state. But now it seems the director is considering a "small contemporary film" for his next project, after all. Whether this proves to be the case or not, *Jimmy's Hall* is a still an efficient, if minor work from the director which nonetheless

demonstrates that his firebrand instincts have not dampened with age. The film focuses on the true story of James Gralton, a political activist in 1920s Ireland who faced violent protests from the Catholic Church for running a dance hall that encouraged a left-leaning political agenda. Essentially, the film follows on from 2006's *The Wind That Shakes The Barley*, which told of the formation of an independent Ireland and the creation of Northern Ireland. As with that film (and, one could argue, much of Loach's work) *Jimmy's Hall* lacks balance. Gralton and his friends are well-rounded, articulate free-thinkers; the Church and their associates, on the other hand, are bigots, child-beaters, would-be murderers. Loach shoots without the usual Irish flourishes of wildness or lyricism: these are poor people who are tired and worn down after a particularly poor start to the century. The idea that Gralton's hall becomes not so much a venue for political debate as, on more straightforward terms, a place for people of all stripes to come and let their hair down is appealing, and Gralton is a sympathetic man of principal. It's just a shame that he is surrounded by one-dimensional adversaries.

Reviewed this month...



PULP: A FILM ABOUT LIFE, DEATH AND SUPERMARKETS
Director
Florian Habicht
Starring Jarvis Cocker
Opens June 6
Certificate U
8/10



JIMMY'S HALL
Director
Ken Loach
Starring
Barry Ward
Opens May 30
Certificate 12A
7/10



CHEF
Director
Jon Favreau
Starring
Jon Favreau
Opens June 25
Certificate 15
6/10



BENNY & JOLENE
Director
Jamie Adams
Starring
Craig Roberts
Opens June 6
Certificate 15
5/10



THE TWO FACES OF JANUARY
Director
Hossein Amini
Starring Viggo
Mortensen
Opened May 16
Certificate 12A
8/10



Leap of faith: Jarvis Cocker pays his dues to Sheffield in *Pulp* (A Film About Life, Death And Supermarkets)

Vergara as his ex – and Johansson as his occasional current squeeze. The film lacks urgency and could do with losing 20 minutes. But for all this, the vibe is easy-going enough, which in this instance accounts for a lot: this is as substantial as one of the cheesy ham things Casper whips up on his food truck for hungry customers. The topicality of certain plot points – food trucks, food bloggers, social media – will age the film quickly.

► **Benny & Jolene** It is possible to date this light-weight comedy about an indie-folk duo by the festivals at which they're scheduled to play. Festival No 6 in Portmeirion with Primal Scream and New Order headlining? That'll be 2012, then. Why this has spent two years on the shelf becomes apparent fairly early on. Despite a pair of likeable leads – Craig Roberts (*Submarine*) and Charlotte Ritchie (*Fresh Meat*) – this largely improvised comedy doesn't quite spark. Directed by Jamie Adams and shot over five days, the idea is familiar enough. Lifelong friends and now musical partners Benny and Jolene are on the cusp of success. An appearance on breakfast TV and an upcoming festival billing have generated enough interest for them to sign to a

► **Chef** Since making his name as writer and star of *Swingers* in 1996, Jon Favreau has followed a rather haphazard route through movies. As an actor, he's covered a lot of ground – romantic comedies, sci-fi, drama – without leaving much discernible trace. As a director, he has the first two *Iron Man* movies to his credit, whose box office successes have afforded him flexibility elsewhere in his career. As a writer, *Swingers*, *Made and Couples Retreat* dealt with similar themes of relationships under duress. *Chef* continues that theme, though under the guise of food porn. Favreau – writer/director/star – plays Carl Casper, head cook at a restaurant in L.A. A former *enfant terrible* of the kitchen, Casper is reviewed unkindly by online food critic Oliver Platt, resulting in him losing his job, flying to Miami with his son Percy and ex-wife Inez (Sofia Vergara) and rediscovering himself by fixing up an old food truck which he and his former sous chef (John Leguizamo) drive back to LA with Percy learning the trade along the route. Along the way, Dustin Hoffman, Scarlett Johansson, Bobby Cannavale and Robert Downey Jr appear and disappear: Favreau making good use of his address book. By rights, *Chef* shouldn't be half as enjoyable as it is. The best scenes are Favreau, Leguizamo and Cannavale bantering over the oven, while much of the rest of it is rote, in particular the father/son bonding between Casper and Percy. There is something mildly self-satisfying about the way Favreau casts an actress as beautiful as Sofia

label and hire PR. It turns out – no great surprise – that everyone around them is incompetent, while feelings Benny has for his singer partner are starting to surface. What could work well as a 60-minute Channel 4 one-off is stretched close to 90 minutes, which unfortunately reveals Adams' shortcomings as a director. Scenes drift and drag, and critically the chemistry between Roberts and Ritchie – both fine comic actors – is absent.

► **The Two Faces Of January** Very much in the 'they don't make 'em like this any more' vein comes the directorial debut of screenwriter-by-trade Hossein Amini, who now adds a second string to his bow with this adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's '60s-set novel. Hollywood has always been kind to Highsmith, as filmmakers including René Clément, Anthony Minghella, Wim Wenders and Liliana Cavani have done justice to her work. As a novelist,

she writes with the modern viewer in mind. Here, in this lean period thriller with Hitchcock vibes, American couple Chester (Viggo Mortensen) and Colette (Kirsten Dunst) are holidaying in Greece where they meet small-time con artist Rydal (*Inside Llewyn Davis*' Oscar Issac). As you might expect, no-one's quite who they seem and the main pleasure comes from trying to work out who's fooling who: is Rydal scamming Chester and Colette, or has Chester a more devious plan in mind? And what of Colette herself? These are smart actors working from a tight script in elegant surroundings.

For Loach, the Church and its associates are bigots, child-beaters, would-be murderers...

Also out...

22 JUMP STREET

OPENS JUNE 6

In what's hardly a vintage month for new movies, Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum re-team for a sequel based on '80s US cop show.

THE DIRTIES

OPENS JUNE 6

High school bullies get their just desserts in this Canadian indie, championed by Kevin Smith.

GRACE OF MONACO

OPENS JUNE 6

Nicole Kidman – for it is she – looks glamorous but a bit tragic on the Côte d'Azur.

NOW: IN THE WINGS ON A WORLD STAGE

OPENS JUNE 9

Zounds! Behind-the-scenes doc chronicling Kevin Spacey's world tour as Richard III.

DEVIL'S KNOT

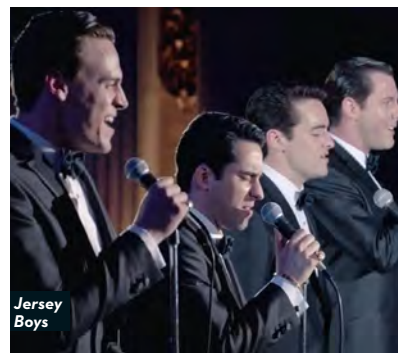
OPENS JUNE 13

Real-life crime drama concerning three teenagers wrongly convicted of murder in West Memphis.

3 DAYS TO KILL

OPENS JUNE 20

Kevin Costner – for it is he – plays a dying CIA agent who is offered an experimental drug that could save his life in exchange for One Last Job.



Jersey Boys

JERSEY BOYS

OPENS JUNE 20

Clint Eastwood directs this adaptation of the West End musical on the rise of Frank Valli And The Four Seasons.

MRS BROWN'S BOYS D'MOVIE

OPENS JUNE 27

The BBC comedy makes the leap to the big screen. Vibes? Expect more *Holiday On The Buses* than *In The Loop*.

THIRD PERSON

OPENS JUNE 27

Three interlocking love stories involving three couples in three cities from the pen of Paul Haggis.

ROCK AND ROLL'S GREATEST FAILURE: OTWAY THE MOVIE

OPENS JUNE 29

We thought this came out yonks ago. Anyway, film following John Otway, cult singer.

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17G



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN A MUSICARES TRIBUTE TO...

SONY

The good, the bad and the ugly pay tribute to a mighty catalogue, as The Boss looks on... *By Andrew Mueller*



MUSICARES IS THE charitable wing of Grammy-distributors the National Academy Of Recording Arts & Sciences. Since 1991, they've anointed a member of the rock aristocracy as their Person Of The Year. Springsteen's number was bound to come up, and in 2013, it did. This was commemorated with an all-star concert in front of a

hangarful of black-tie or ballgown-clad invitees, or as host Jon Stewart puts it, "a two-and-a-half hour extravaganza celebration of Bruce Springsteen's music – or as he would call that, tuning up."

The reality is an inevitably uneven procession of artists taking turns with Springsteen's mighty catalogue in the daunting presence of Springsteen himself, as well as assorted distinguished Hollywood cocktail-slurpers nodding along. In general, it bears approximately the same relation to one of Springsteen's own shows as a guided tour of a museum does to a bar crawl. It must have been very difficult for him not to contemplate the event as a preview of his own funeral.

It starts promisingly enough. Alabama Shakes, one of the few acts on the bill who treat the material like it's rock'n'roll songs, rather than Ming vases, unleash a rousing "Adam Raised A Cain". After which Patti Smith, who looks like she's just come in from the garden, delivers a big-hearted "Because The Night", which she co-wrote with Springsteen in 1978, and which she introduces with a sweet remembrance of her late husband, Fred "Sonic" Smith. The semi-supergroup of Ben Harper, the Dixie Chicks' Natalie Maines and veteran harmonica-blower Charlie Musselwhite follow with a quite lovely "Atlantic City".

From thereon, the highlights are rather further between. The contributions by Sting ("Lonesome Day"), John Legend ("Dancing In The Dark") and Dropkick Murphys' Ken Casey ("American Land") aren't even interestingly terrible – just prosaic, reverent and dreary. Elton John oversings "Streets Of Philadelphia", failing to grasp that the power of the original was all in its fatalistic understatement. The Nashville delegation fail entirely to spot the stuff in Springsteen's songs that could make them great country tunes – Kenny Chesney mutters "One Step Up", and Tim McGraw and Faith Hill turn the mournful, desperate "Tougher Than The Rest" into some sort of emetic wedding dance. Jackson Browne

approaches the theoretically seething and furious "American Skin" like it's the father of his fiancée, although Tom Morello's properly incendiary guitar solo redeems matters somewhat. Juanes' version of "Hungry Heart" is not readily distinguishable from anything you might hear in a Holiday Inn lounge on karaoke night. And Mumford & Sons do "I'm On Fire" (chance would be a fine thing, etc).

On the credit side of the ledger are Emmylou Harris, with a plaintive "My Hometown", Mavis Staples and Zac Brown with an unabashed gospel take on "My City Of Ruins", and Tom Morello and Jim James with a terrific "The Ghost Of Tom Joad", although Morello is generous with his solo to the extent that viewers may be tempted to rewind to check whether James had that beard before the song started. By far the best of the guests is saved until last – Neil Young & Crazy Horse with a frenetic, feral "Born In The USA", bewilderingly flanked by a pair of cheerleaders miming the song's narrative.

Springsteen's speech accepting Musicares' honour is appropriately, if predictably, humble ("Whatever philanthropy I've ever done usually just involved me playing a guitar and bringing attention to people doing the actual work. I was going to be playing the guitar anyway.") But it's also a characteristically astute meditation on music and its enduring power to affront authority – although perhaps realising he and his guests are now about as establishment as it gets, he approvingly notes the French vanquishing of the Islamist yahoos who had recently attempted to silence Mali ("You can't triumph without music, because music is life").

After too long, Springsteen leads The E Street Band through "We Take Care Of Our Own", "Death To My Hometown", "Thunder Road", "Born To Run" and an all-hands-on-deck singalong of "Glory Days". On balance, Springsteen doubtless deserved the honour, but his songs deserve better than they mostly get here.

EXTRAS: None.



THE DUKES OF SEPTEMBER

Live At Lincoln Centre

429

AOR supergroup cuts loose in NYC

The mighty FM triumvirate of Donald Fagen, Michael McDonald and Boz Scaggs share the stage and their back pages in this slick show from

7/10

November 2012, while also throwing a handful of their favourite rock'n'roll and R'n'B oldies into the mix. There's a spirited party atmosphere to the Isleys and Chuck Berry selections, although the rewriting of Arthur Conley's "Sweet Soul Music" to include references to themselves is a little heavy-handed. McDonald's "What A Fool Believes" hits the spot, but the showstoppers are Fagen's Steely Dan powerhouses "Kid Charlemagne" and "Hey Nineteen".

EXTRAS: None.
TERRY STAUNTON



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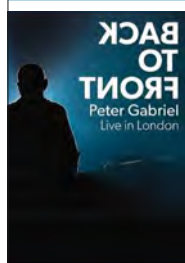
Celti-noir: rum goes on in the valleys

A laudable attempt to do for Wales what shows like *The Bridge* and *The Killing* did for Denmark and Sweden (and *Shetland* has done for, well, Shetland), this downtempo crime drama follows soulful DCI Tom Mathias (Richard

7/10

Harrington) as he investigates assorted murders around Aberystwyth. The bilingual show makes full use of the country's bleak/beautiful landscape and touches on the region's dark myths. The tone and pacing feel closer to *Wallander* than any of the more fast moving Scandi-dramas: there's a lot of brooding.

EXTRAS: None.
MICHAEL BONNER



PETER GABRIEL

Back To Front

EAGLE VISION

A full album, and overhauled archive

Filmed at The O₂ in London to mark the 25th anniversary of *So*, this gig sees Gabriel reunited with the touring band he put together to promote the record on its initial release. Yet while the

8/10

painstaking recreations of songs from that landmark album are impressive enough, it's the fresh textures the musicians bring to older material ("No Self Control", "Shock The Monkey", "Biko") that provide the true highlights. Gabriel appears to be less the detached art-rocker of yore, and more an avuncular figure, charming his fans with between-song anecdotes.

EXTRAS: Featurettes, interviews, archive live footage, double CD.

7/10
TERRY STAUNTON



McConaughey and Harrelson flex their actorly chops

TRUE DETECTIVE SEASON ONE

HBO

HBO's dark, unconventional drama sets the bar. By Michael Bonner



9/10

channel record ratings in January this year. Reports of Pitt's involvement, inevitably, threaten to rekindle the tired "TV is now better than the movies" argument. But more importantly, it illustrates the impact the show had in a remarkably short period of time: just eight weeks.

Across its run, *True Detective* was not as much about the murder itself as the two investigators in charge of solving it and how the effects of the case still resonated nearly 20 years later. While set in 2012, the bulk of *True Detective* took place in flashback during an investigation in 1995 by homicide detectives Marty Hart (Woody Harrelson) and Rust Cohle (Matthew McConaughey) into the murder of a prostitute in Erath, Louisiana. They uncovered plenty: a grimoire featuring a serial killer, abuse and

conspiracy, with the tantalising suggestion of occult forces in the background. Splitting the narrative across two time periods, we saw how Cohle and Hunt have changed, both physically and emotionally. We also enjoyed Harrelson and McConaughey flex their actorly chops: although both were excellent, it was McConaughey's Rust Cohle who presents the more intriguing figure, prone to visions and lengthy, misanthropic monologues he seemed to be in danger of falling off the rails. It set the bar that Brad Pitt or whoever picks up the reins of Season Two will have to match.

If the show's onscreen virtues seemed unconventional, the same was true behind the scenes. Unusually for a television series – which generally relies on many creative talents – *True Detective* was written exclusively by creator Nic Pizzolatto and directed by Cary Fukunaga. Its self-contained run also goes against the grain of current television models, which favour on-going series. What next from Pizzolatto remains to be seen. He has spoken in interviews about exploring the secret occult history of the United States transportation system in Season Two: perhaps, finally, the oblique references in Season One to Robert W Chambers' supernatural creations *The King In Yellow* and *Carcosa* will also be explored.

EXTRAS: Making Of's, deleted scenes, 8/10 interviews, commentary.



8/10

THE PINK FLOYD & SYD BARRETT STORY

EAGLE ROCK

In-depth rumination on the Crazy Diamond

Originally a 2001 *Omnibus* documentary – hence the incongruous narration by Kirsty Wark – this expanded version of John Edginton's film tracing the rise of early Floyd and

the fall of their troubled dynamo is sensitive, comprehensive and ultimately illuminating. A familiar tale is re-animated thanks to superb archive footage and unflinching contributions from all of Pink Floyd, including the late Rick Wright, alongside key contemporaries Joe Boyd and Peter Jenner.

EXTRAS: Disc Two has unexpurgated 7/10 interviews with the four Floyd members, and Graham Coxon performing "Love You".

GRAEME THOMSON



RAY DONOVAN: SEASON ONE

PARAMOUNT

Familial friction in La-La Land

It's easy to see why Ray Donovan was labelled a Californian take on *The Sopranos* by some critics when it premiered last summer. Liev Schreiber stars as the fixer for a showbiz legal firm working

7/10

on the fringes of the law, while contending with dysfunctional family home life and a manipulative parent, the latter represented by Jon Voigt as Donovan's father, recently released from prison. While making sharp observations about the cynicism and superficiality of the entertainment world, it's the blood ties plotlines that give the series its momentum, the two leads sparking in every scene together.

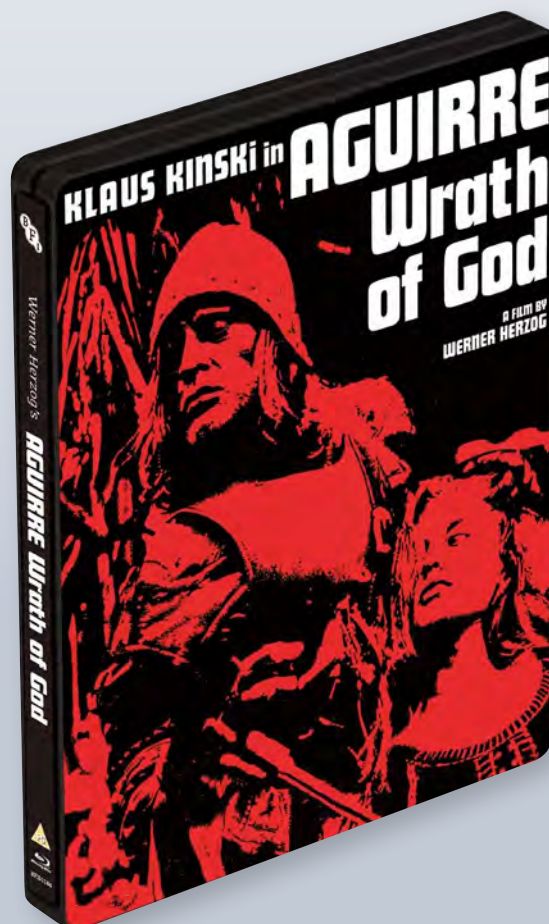
EXTRAS: Unconfirmed. 8/10
TERRY STAUNTON

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A Club Uncut sandwich (clockwise from main): The Hold Steady, Bernard Butler of Trans and Courtney Barnett

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CLUB UNCUT, THE DOME STUDIO, BRIGHTON, MAY 8-10, 2014

The Hold Steady, Courtney Barnett and Trans head up *Uncut*'s annual Brighton wingding

“YOU CHOSE TO drink some beer, and sing some songs,” Craig Finn congratulates us, as The Hold Steady’s set reaches a climax. “If we can get in a room and have a rock’n’roll show, I think that’s more and more important.” Rock as a meeting place, not a marketplace, is as good a mission statement for *Uncut*’s stage at The Great Escape festival as any. The storms battering Brighton have nearly blown themselves out by the time Club Uncut reconvenes for another year in the Dome Studio. On Thursday night, The Hold Steady are preceded by three newer acts. PHOX’s recent work at Justin Vernon’s studio might lead you to expect music in Bon Iver’s image, but the Madison, Wisconsin band are agreeably slippery to define. In her diaphanous black dress, Monica Martin has a torch singer’s quiet glamour and smoky voice, while her band mostly play a sort of chamber-country. **The Rails**, meanwhile, have a hearty, early-’70s folk-rock sound centred around guitarist James Walbourne and his wife, Richard and Linda’s daughter Kami Thompson. “They’ve revived the pink

label for us,” Walbourne proudly notes of the Londoners’ Island debut. Mandolin and fiddle bolster arrangements with a touch of tightly compressed prog, while narrative songs lean on the folk verities of soldiers and sailors leaving for war, mostly sung by Thompson as the strong, wronged woman left behind.

Sweden’s **Alice Boman** plays the first night’s most intriguing music. She’s diffident between songs which delineate a raging, resentful broken heart. Her pleading is backed by the heavy, reverberating pulse of her synth, and fellow bashful Swede Tom. “*Please don’t run from me*,” Boman continues with vaulting anguish, implacably hunting a lover who you get the impression is running for his life.

With his close-cropped hair, Craig Finn looks all business, and **The Hold Steady** play a tight 45 minutes, focusing on the best of their 2006 breakthrough *Boys And Girls In America*, and the current *Teeth Dreams*. 2010’s *Heaven Is Whenever* is wholly ignored. The crowd start to pack in from nearby, finished gigs, and as the clock ticks towards 1am sweat starts to drip down backs. The Hold Steady

have played much bigger places than this upstairs club in the past seven years, but they look comfortable, as if this sort of situation is their natural home.

For “Stuck Between Stations”, Finn holds his hands over the crowd in Springsteen-style testifying. Part of his appeal, though, is that his bespectacled looks make him resemble a Woody Allen klutz more than a Boss, an underdog rocker closer to the audience, claiming his right to be onstage by the force of his songs and his belief in them.

Friday night’s bill begins with a real multi-tasker, English psych-folk singer-songwriter **Serafina Steer**. Steer’s music could certainly be described as ‘ethereal’, with its rippling harp, droning synth (on “The Removal Man”) and Incredible String Band-esque lyrics about “*extraterrestrial beings*”. It seems this otherworldliness has a limit for her, though – after one song, she asks for the lush echo on her voice to be taken off, leaving a starker sound for the rest of the performance.

Up next are **Syd Arthur**, a Canterbury quartet influenced by ’70s prog rock, in particular their hometown’s jazzy, psychedelic scene. Complex time signatures (5/4 is common) and use of violin (played by Raven Bush, nephew of Kate) are more reminiscent of mid-’70s Caravan than Kevin Ayers or Robert Wyatt. Like Tame Impala, another band they sound like, Syd Arthur aren’t as keen as their ’70s forebears to stretch out and jam, though, and they only really let go at the end of the set.

Master producer **Ethan Johns** hasn’t quite released his second LP – the Ryan Adams-produced *The Reckoner* – yet. But the best song he plays tonight,



More klutz than Boss, Craig Finn claims his right to be onstage through the force of his songs

a grungy, languorous stomp that sounds very much like Neil Young, is an unrecorded gem slated for his third solo set. "Fuck record cycles!" he notes. With a three-piece band which includes pedal steel maestro BJ Cole and drummer Jeremy Stacey, Johns is on a heavier, jammier tack than during his solo show for *Uncut* at last year's End Of The Road Festival. "If you can hear hints of Black Sabbath," he tells the Dome Studio crowd, "you can blame Ryan Adams for that."

Courtney Barnett's packed show sounds pretty different from the tracks collected on the acclaimed *The Double EP: A Sea Of Split Peas*. The restrained atmosphere on record is evaporated by raucous noise, faster tempos and some thrashing, primitive solos from Barnett. The glammy "Blockbuster"/"Jean Genie" stomp of "David" is so exciting, it's enough to make you wish her two EPs were recorded in such a raw, amped-up style. Unlike Syd Arthur earlier, Barnett's vocals are clearly audible, a serious plus when her songs are so reliant on their witty lyrical narratives. Wry medical drama "Avant Gardener" is unsurprisingly the best received song of the night, but closer "History Eraser" runs it a close second. And intriguingly, Barnett performs a new song, which begins with a powerful drum

crescendo that brings to mind nothing less than Nirvana's "Breed". An interesting look at her next move, maybe?

In the same way that Marshall amps revolutionised rock music, loop pedals have changed the state of play for solo performers. No longer having to rely on real-time performing, the first two acts on Saturday night have been able to take folk to stranger new climes. Performing May carols, folk songs from Cornwall and Hampshire ballads about water sprites, **Lisa Knapp** loops her voice and violin, sometimes picking at her instrument like it's a ukulele and at other points creating sweeping drones reminiscent of John Cale. The songs and instrumentation are traditional, but her other approaches are much more experimental. The spoken-word loop, "Sky... wood... meadow...", plays throughout the opening song, while near the end of her set one piece is disrupted by a lo-fi sample of a cuckoo clock.

Cuckoos are also present in the next performance, from **You Are Wolf** – and Buckinghamshire native Kerry Andrew also uses the loop pedal to its full extent: aside from bass guitar on some songs, the only tuned instrument is her voice. She constructs layers of beatboxed percussion and harmonies, along with some eccentric real percussion like a knife and fork, a whisk and what looks like the lid of a kitchen bin. These impressive edifices are the foundations for a set of songs about British birds, both traditional and original. Barn owls, sparrows and cuckoos are all featured; more *Springwatch* than *The Great Escape*, but a welcome change.

If the feathers on **You Are Wolf's** shoulders seem glamorous, that's nothing compared to **Arc Iris's** get-up. The four-piece, led by former Low Anthem member Jocie Adams, are clothed in glittery jackets, and in the case of Adams herself, a skintight, sparkly gold bodysuit. There are augmented chords reminiscent of Steely Dan, cascading Rhodes pianos that suggest Hatfield And The North and complex

time signatures, with almost every song featuring off-kilter rhythms such as 7/4 or 5/4. Both their music and outfits are clearly ridiculous, yet in the best possible way.

The evening, and this year's *Great Escape*, is closed by **Trans**, Bernard Butler and Jackie McKeown's Krautrock-inspired, improvisational pop outfit. Before they even begin their first song, "Dancing Shoes", from their debut "Red" EP, though, they are suffering from sound problems. "Where's the bass? Where's the bass?" repeats Butler. "This is the worst stage chat I've ever heard," laughs McKeown. During the song's solo break, he and Butler are forced to swap sides onstage in order to hear each other.

Nevertheless, the musical interplay is excellent, with Butler's soloing shining as usual. McKeown springs around like a dynamo stage left, always ready with a quip or a risqué joke, while Butler is his glowering, intense opposite on stage right. "Celebrate good times," runs the refrain of "Dancing Shoes", and as the set nears its end, **Trans** finally seem to get comfortable, with "Building No.8", a jammy, Television-esque highlight. **NICK HASTED AND TOM PINNOCK**

Ginger Baker

ISLINGTON ACADEMY, LONDON, MAY 3, 2014

A premature birthday party goes somewhat awry. Who'd have guessed?

"IT'S NOT MY fucking birthday," Ginger Baker growls, in response to shouts from well-wishers in the crowd as he's helped onto the stage by a member of his band. Tonight's show may have been billed as a 75th anniversary shindig, but the drummer won't reach that particular landmark until August, and seems in no mood to celebrate.

He warns us that he's feeling ill ("a cripple", in his own words), and at one point silences the continual requests that he play "Toad", his lengthy instrumental piece from Cream's 1966 debut album: "It's not on; I'm too old and it's too hard, so I'm not playing it." It's a recognisable outburst of the curmudgeon of old, the scarily forthright and menacing figure from the 2012 documentary *Beware Of Mr Baker*, although the dapper haircut and well-pressed shirt make him look less a wildman of rock and more like Bill Nighy's clean-cut spook Johnny Worricker from David Hare's TV trilogy.

What punters, including those who've shelled out the big bucks for a pre-gig photo and memorabilia exhibition, get is the briefest of trawls through the past; a show that was scheduled to last two hours is brought to an end after less than one when it becomes clear that Ginger is suffering. Blind Faith's "Can't Find My Way Home" and Cream's "Sunshine Of Your Love", with Lynne Jackaman of Saint Jude on vocals, are despatched in relatively quick succession, Baker only displaying signs that he's enjoying himself on the more jazzy numbers (Wayne Shorter's "Footprints", Sonny Rollins' "St Thomas") that allow rhythmic flights of fancy and sparring with percussionist Abass Dodoo.

"I'm knackered," he tells us before a preview of the title track of his forthcoming new album *Why?*, and then he's gone, to a muted chorus of cheers peppered with a few jeers; legend just about intact, but hardly embellished.

TERRY STAUNTON



A curdling temper: Baker onstage in London

Pure and
effortless: the
rejuvenated
Rosanne Cash



ROSANNE CASH

BARBICAN HALL, LONDON, APRIL 30, 2014

Last year on Twitter she promised *Uncut* a pony after a 10/10 review. Surely we should be getting one now?

ONE COOL WAY to celebrate your wedding anniversary is for the two of you to play a triumphant gig in support of an album festooned with honours. That's the plan for Rosanne Cash and her husband and bandleader, John Leventhal, as they showcase *The River & The Thread* (a 10/10 album of the month in *Uncut*), and a vivid, Faulkneresque portrait of an American South still burdened by its history, and in whose sweltering fields Cash's famous father once toiled.

The album's meticulous arrangements are shorn away live, but the five-piece band led by Leventhal is up to every task; gentle and acoustic for the tear-jerking "Etta's Tune" (about Sun Records), shimmering moodily for "World Of Strange Design" (about Southern religion) and rocking out on "Money Road", with Leventhal and fellow guitarist Mark Copely trading fevered licks at its climax. Each song comes prefaced by a lengthy introduction from Cash, who proves a masterful narrator in word as well as in song. We are treated to a psycho-geographical tour of the gothic world of the South,

where the ghosts of the Civil War dead still march and the stain of slavery still lingers, but whose river of history "runs through me" as Rosanne puts it. It's masterfully handled, with country tropes mixed with elements of folk, blues and gospel.

When Cash is not toting her acoustic, her hands send out an elaborate semaphore of pointed fingers and open palms to make her point. Now 58, and with a wonky smile recalling her father's, her persona is an engaging mix of glamour, toughness and warmth. Her vocals are less striking than those of, say, Emmylou Harris (who she often resembles) but pure and effortless.

If the *River & The Thread* showcase is a mite intense, the night's second half offers a more celebratory mood. "Radio Operator", from Cash's previous album *Black Cadillac*, swaggers along as Leventhal and the

spidery Copely renew the time-honoured dual of Fender and Gibson. Hank Snow's "I'm Moving On", famously covered by father Johnny, becomes a roadhouse boogie, with Cash showing she can still cut a few dance steps. "Blue Moon With Heartache", introduced as "from a time when I still had hits" (she was 23 when it came out), takes the mood

down ready for a dramatic version of Bobbie Gentry's "Ode To Billie Joe", whose suicide from the Tallahatchie Bridge has already been referenced on "Money Road".

Delivered as a duo to Leventhal's adept picking, Gentry's enigmatic tale springs back to life, prompting an audience call of "bloody marvellous". "I hope you're reviewing for *The Telegraph*," shoots back Rosanne.

She carries the audience through a duet of another standard, "Long Black Veil", before honouring the late

We are treated to a psycho-geographical tour of the gothic world of the American South

SETLIST

- 1 A Feather's Not A Bird
- 2 The Sunken Lands
- 3 Etta's Tune
- 4 Modern Blue
- 5 Tell Heaven
- 6 The Long Way Home
- 7 World Of Strange Design
- 8 Night School
- 9 50,000 Watts
- 10 When The Master Calls The Roll
- 11 Money Road
- 12 Radio Operator
- 13 I'm Moving On
- 14 Blue Moon With Heartache
- 15 Ode To Billie Joe
- 16 Long Black Veil
- 17 Biloxi
- 18 Tennessee Flat Top Box
- 19 Seven Year Ache
- ENCORE
- 20 Western Wall
- 21 Motherless Children

Jesse Winchester on his reflective "Biloxi". Then comes an uptempo finale of her father's loping "Tennessee Flat Top Box" and her own 1981 country pop hit, "Seven Year Ache". The band encore with a bluesy "Motherless Children" and the crowd leave in rapturous mood, having witnessed an artist at the top of her game.

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Edwyn Collins and Orange Juice at Regent's Canal, Camden, September 9, 1981

Reviewed this month...



Simply Thrilled: The Preposterous Story Of Postcard Records
Simon Goddard
EBURY PRESS

5/10



Galveston
Nic Pizzolatto
SPHERE

8/10

TO ITS CREDIT, I suppose, Simon Goddard's *Simply Thrilled: The Preposterous Story Of Postcard Records* attempts to be a bit different from the typical record label history – something densely factual like Martin Aston's *Facing The Other Way: The Story Of 4AD* – that sinks eventually beneath an excruciating weight of detail and an accumulation of exhausting data. It's not Goddard's intention here to present a conventional history of Postcard, the label that threw a bucket of colour onto the grim monochromatic post-punk landscape of the early '80s, via early releases from Orange Juice, Josef K, The Go-Betweens and Aztec Camera. The book is not so much a documentary as a fairy story, Goddard explains in a brief introduction. Presumably therefore to capture something of the twee whimsy attached to the label, *Simply Thrilled* is written in an arch and frankly unbecoming manner, in which Glasgow's young punks, for instance, are described as "brave, wise and taut of trouser" and The Nu-Sonics, an early version of Orange Juice, are "rosy of cheek and crisp of hem".

Goddard usually writes without such distracting affectation. What may in the first instance have seemed to him a novel approach actually quickly becomes a testing indulgence that a sterner editor would surely have been inclined to play down to the point of welcome elimination. As it stands, *Simply Thrilled* is by turns annoyingly fanciful, impressionistic, light on detail, possibly incomprehensible to anyone unfamiliar with the Postcard story and the principals involved.

Alan Horne, the misfit music obsessive who with the similarly eccentric young Edwyn Collins was responsible for the Postcard 'aesthetic', is the figure around whom the book revolves, to a point occasionally where it seems we are reading his ghost-written account.

In this telling of the Postcard story, it's difficult to get a sense of Horne as anything but annoying, delusional, hyper-active, given to much bullying, tantrums, sarcasm and generally dictatorial behaviour. Goddard makes him sound like a cross between Timmy Mallet and Andy Warhol (Postcard was big on anything with a connection to their beloved Velvet Underground), with a dash of a playschool Bernie Rhodes. Maybe this is all there was to him, in which case it's a hugely unflattering portrait.

In its favour, the book is short – 200 pages, plus a discography – but for such a brief volume there's too much ripe overwriting. "In the sinister hangover of 1 January 1980," one chapter begins, "as glass-agony eyes and cactus tongues flickered in sorry heads uncorked of all reason, as promises of a brave new world were broken with dawn's picket-line grey 1970s skies, the name of Postcard Records was still nothing more than a white-hot figment of Alan and Edwyn's quicksilver minds." Goddard is no stranger to wild hyperbole, either. Dig this as an appreciation of the young Roddy Frame: "Abnormal of mind, abnormal of talent, Roddy took to the guitar like Turner to a canvas, its strings a secret spectrum of light for him to discover infinite colours and shades invisible to the blind fumbling of his pedestrian peers. Poetry spilled whenever his fingertips touched rosewood fret, his every strum a Sibelius symphony, his every pluck a pirouette by Nureyev,

playing as if the wind were his pick-ups and the stars his amplifier." At moments in the book like this, it's difficult to decide whether Goddard's got his tongue in his cheek or his head up his arse.

ALLAN JONES

► In Jim Thompson's novel *The Getaway*, the ultimate destination of Doc and Carol McCoy is El Rey, a legendary Mexican hideaway that exists outside the law. Every character we meet in Nic Pizzolatto's debut novel is likely also looking for a similar refuge where past misdemeanours might be overlooked. These are thrown together at Emerald Shores, a motel in *Galveston*, Texas, where mob enforcer Roy Cady washes up in 1987, on the run from his employer who has tried to have him killed. Roy – recently been diagnosed with lung cancer – arrives with Rocky Arceneaux, a teenage prostitute whose life he saved in a shoot-out, and her three-year-old sister, Tiffany. *Galveston* is a dismal place. "You're here because it's somewhere," narrates Roy. "Dogs pant in the streets. Beer won't stay cold. The last new song you liked come out a long, long time ago, and the radio never plays it anymore." Nevertheless, it is here that Roy believes he might be able to resurrect what good remains within him by providing security for Rocky and Tiffany.

Galveston follows in the wake of Pizzolatto's success with HBO's *True Detective*; his only previously published prose is a short story collection *Between Here And The Yellow Sea*. *True Detective* had layered, novelistic depth, but *Galveston*'s early chapters suggest it might be the opposite. Violent and abrupt, they read like self-conscious pulp parodies. It takes until the trio reach *Galveston* for the pace to settle and Pizzolatto's narrative to aim for something substantial. The lost souls we meet at the Emerald Shores are well-drawn: scarred and helpless, you feel something for them even though you know that, as with all noir, their futures have nothing good in store for them. As with *True Detective*, *Galveston* also takes place in two different time periods: 1987 and 2008, where Roy waits for a final reckoning but finds instead a flake of hope.

MICHAEL BONNER

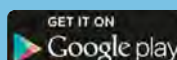
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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

JESSE WINCHESTER

Country folk singer and songwriter

1944-2014

THE BITTERSWEET IRONY of Jesse Winchester's career lay in the fact that his best-known songs were often wistful evocations of a land he had chosen to leave. In 1967 he received a draft notice ordering him to serve in Vietnam. Objecting to his country's involvement in the war, Louisiana-born Winchester avoided the call-up by boarding a plane to Canada, arriving with just \$300 in his pocket. He settled into a new existence in Montreal, joining local band Les Astronautes before hitting the coffee-house circuit as a solo artist.

The songs on his self-titled debut of 1970, produced by The Band's Robbie Robertson and featuring Levon Helm on drums and mandolin, included such homeward meditations as "The Brand New Tennessee Waltz", "Yankee Lady" and "Biloxi". Their impact was heightened by Winchester's dusky-sweet voice, which imbued his lyrics with an emotive strain of Southern gentility. "He sang me a few songs," Robertson later recalled of their first meeting, having been tipped off by a friend, "and I knew immediately he was the real thing."

Signed to Albert Grossman's Bearsville label, Winchester continued to release a steady procession of albums, including 1972's partly-Todd Rundgren-produced *Third Down, 110 To Go*. There were tours of Europe and Australia, but his status as a dissenter meant that he was unable to play the US. His reputation nevertheless grew in his absence. Joan Baez dedicated her version of "Please Come To Boston" to Winchester during Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue in 1975. Meanwhile, various admirers began covering his songs, resulting in a list that numbered Jerry Jeff Walker, Elvis Costello, Jimmy Buffett, Anne Murray, The Everly Brothers, Wynona Judd, Fairport Convention, Tim Hardin, Emmylou Harris, Tom Rush and Wilson Pickett. As a further mark of the esteem in which he was held by his peers, Dylan opined: "You can't talk about the best songwriters and not include him."

Winchester once attempted to explain his style, which mixed trace elements of soul, R'n'B and country, as "weird gospel music... sung by someone who's got one foot in heaven and the other foot, he just can't seem to pull out of the muck sometimes."

When President Carter declared an amnesty in 1977 for those who'd left the United States to avoid duty in Vietnam, Winchester was finally free to return. His first gig back on home turf, a sell-out show in Vermont, was greeted by *Rolling Stone* with the headline: "The Greatest Voice Of The Decade". Having married a Canadian and



"The real thing..."
Winchester in 1970

raised children, he elected to stay in Montreal. It wasn't until 2003 when he finally decided to set up camp in Charlottesville, Virginia.

By then, Winchester had grown tired of touring and was issuing albums only sporadically. A full decade passed between 1999's *Gentleman Of Leisure* and studio follow-up, *Love Filling Station*. But his profile was spiked by a guest appearance on Elvis Costello's *Spectacle* TV series in 2010. Lining up alongside Neko Case, Ron Sexsmith and Sheryl Crow, Winchester performed "Sham-A-Ling-Dong-Ding", a tender paean to '50s teen songs. So powerful was it that his famous host instructed the audience to go home, "because

I could not gather myself to make the next introduction, such was the supernatural beauty of his voice."

The following year he was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus, during which time a starry troupe of fans (led by Jimmy Buffett and featuring Costello, Emmylou Harris, Lucinda Williams, James Taylor, Allen Toussaint and more) recorded a tribute album of Winchester songs, *Quiet About It*.

Sadly, the cancer returned earlier this year. His final album, *A Reasonable Amount Of Trouble*, is due out on Appleseed Recordings in August.



Arthur Smith in the early '70s

ARTHUR SMITH

Country-folk composer

1921-2014

The inclusion of “Dueling Banjos” on the soundtrack of 1972’s *Deliverance* was a testing moment for Arthur Smith. The guitarist had written the instrumental in 1955 and recorded it with Don Reno as “Feudin’ Banjos”, but the film company failed to give him credit or royalties. Smith became embroiled in a two-year lawsuit that cost him \$125,000, but eventually Warners paid up. Whenever he was asked about the settlement, so the story goes, Smith would point to a picture of a 42-foot yacht that hung on his wall. Another famous composition was 1946’s “Guitar Boogie”, an instrumental that wed a boogie-woogie riff to a scorching solo. The song was later covered by numerous artists, including Les Paul and, during his first gig with The Quarrymen in 1957, Paul McCartney. Among others who cut Smith’s songs were Chet Atkins, Glen Campbell, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Tom Petty and The Statler Brothers.

JESSICA CLEAVES

Soul singer and songwriter

1948-2014

Jessica Cleaves’ honeyed alto was a perfect fit for the smooth pop-soul of The Friends Of Distinction. Like contemporaries Fifth Dimension, the quartet specialised in snug harmonies and a vaguely Aquarian sense of hip. Co-lead Harry Elston sang on their 1969 debut hit “Grazin’ In The Grass”, though Cleaves enjoyed her time in the sun with the expressive “I Really Hope You Do”. By 1972 she’d become

backing singer for Earth Wind & Fire, providing vocals for *Last Days And Time* and *Head To The Sky* before going on to record with George Clinton and Parliament in later years.

DJ E-Z ROCK

New York hip-hop pioneer

1968-2014

The biggest success of Rodney Bryce’s career was 1988’s “It Takes Two”, recorded as DJ E-Z Rock alongside fellow Harlem artist Rob Base. The pioneering duo were one of the first to blend hip-hop and R&B with the Teddy Riley-produced tune, which borrowed a vocal sample from Lyn Collins’ 1972 hit “Think (About It)”, written by James Brown. “It Takes Two” became a Top 40 hit both here and in the US, while also serving as the title track of their platinum-selling debut album. Other singles included “Joy And Pain”, which borrowed from the song of the same name by Maze And Frankie Beverly, and “Get On The Dance Floor”. “It Takes Two”, meanwhile, was later sampled by Snoop Dogg, Gang Starr and Chris Brown. Base and Bryce, who has apparently died from a diabetic seizure, split soon after, but reunited in 1994 for comeback album *Break Of Dawn*.

LARRY RAMOS

The Association guitarist/vocalist

1942-2014

Larry Ramos seemed destined for a performing career. In 1949, aged seven, the Hawaiian native landed a part in Esther Williams’ film *Pagan Love Song*. That year also saw him play ukulele on *The Arthur Godfrey Show*. By 1955 he was

touring the US in *The King & I*, where he starred opposite Yul Brynner. But life as an actor was eventually overtaken by the prospect of being a full-time musician. A regular on the coffee-house scene, Ramos joined the New Christy Minstrels during the early ’60s folk boom. His tenure lasted four years until 1966, after which he signed up with soft-rock combo The Association. Ramos’ guitar and vocals were key features of their harmony-rich sunshine pop, co-singing lead on “Windy” and “Never My Love”, two huge US hits in 1967. He quit the band in the mid-’70s, but reunited with the surviving members at the end of the decade.

GEORGE SHUFFLER

Bluegrass guitarist, and inventor of crosspicking

1925-2014

One of the signature sounds of modern bluegrass, according to its creator George Shuffler, arrived purely by necessity. As the post-war pinch forced The Stanley Brothers to slim to a trio, Shuffler invented crosspicking to fill the spaces during Ralph and Carter’s ballads. The guitar equivalent of a banjo roll, it took its cues from Mother Maybelle Carter and Merle Travis but was the first style to combine both rhythm and lead. Shuffler had begun in 1946 with The Bailey Brothers before joining the Stanleys, where he remained for nearly two decades. In 2011 he was elected to the International Bluegrass Hall Of Fame.

LEE DRESSER

Rockabilly guitarist/vocalist

1941-2014

Like many teenagers in post-war America, Lee Dresser’s introduction to rock’n’roll came courtesy of Elvis’ appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Five months later, on Valentine’s Day 1957, the singer-guitarist formed The Krazy Kats with fellow Missouri schoolmates Willie Craig (piano) and Fred Fletcher (drums). Dresser’s tenure in the trio was interrupted by a call-up to the US Army and service in Vietnam, after which he became a session player in LA for the likes of Merle Haggard and Dolly Parton. He revived The Krazy Kats in 1980 and was inducted into the Rockabilly Hall Of Fame 19 years later.

LITTLE JOE COOK

R’n’B singer and songwriter

1922-2014

The distinctive falsetto vocal of “Peanuts”, a US Top 30 hit in 1957, was the work of Philadelphia songwriter Little Joe Cook. A charismatic frontman who toured with Screamin’ Jay Hawkins and BB King, he led doo-wop group Little Joe & The Thrillers up until the early ’60s. His singing style proved influential on Frankie Valli, whose Four Seasons paid tribute with their own version of “Peanuts”. Cook went solo post-Thrillers, before forming R’n’B band The Sherrys and, in later life, taking up a club-land residency at the Cantab Lounge in Cambridge, MA. *ROB HUGHES*



Little Joe Cook, 1959

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FOR PETE'S SAKE

I was extremely angered by Jon Groocock's letter in issue 204, which was clearly the work of a closet Tory (from the comfortable middle-class/middle England setting of Glastonbury) in that it had a distinctly right-wing tone, was deeply condescending and played fast and loose with the facts.

Mr Groocock talks about 'Western democracy' and that Mr Seeger 'was on the wrong side of the argument'. This same 'democracy' of which he [Mr Groocock] writes sentenced Pete Seeger to jail for being a member of a party (a supposed democratic right) which he had left some years before. This is also the same 'democracy' which operated an openly apartheid system denying democratic rights to millions of people, which Pete Seeger worked tirelessly to change. The same 'democracy' in which leading or even being in a union could shorten your life expectancy during Pete Seeger's lifetime.

Mr Groocock denigrates music which is allied to causes or parties. Apart from the fact that I cannot recollect any song which either Pete or Ewan MacColl recorded which stated 'Vote Communist', there is no absolute evidence that songs are better for not stemming from an ideology. Political songs have been in existence for as long as there have been songs. Political songs which are successful and survive do so because of the talent of the songwriter, and their ability to communicate political thoughts and ideas successfully in song.

That Mr Groocock begins his letter with a patronising joke about banjo players says as much about himself as Pete Seeger. It is representative of the kind of crass snobbery which Pete would have fought against, but which appears to be an accurate summation of where Mr Groocock is coming from. Oddly enough reading the letter reminded me of another piece of humour: the Bill Hicks comedy routine 'Go back to bed, America'. I have a vision of him being reassured to watch mindless TV and not concern himself about what his government is doing.

I have no doubt that Mr Groocock's wish for history to look upon Pete Seeger unkindly will not happen (except by Republicans and Tea Party loonies). The fact (an



No banjo jokes here: the much admired Pete Seeger, March 14, 1969

unpalatable truth for Mr Groocock) is that Pete Seeger was a person who was much admired for his contribution to music as well as his selfless stance in actively supporting many causes for the downtrodden and disenfranchised of his generation, and will continue to be so. Just ask Bruce Springsteen. **Lionel Smith, via email**

COME ON REVIEWER

Bloody hell, did Frank Black take a piss on John Mulvey's picnic blanket or something? That was a rather unnecessarily scabrous attack on Pixies' comeback album and I think a re-listen with fresh ears is warranted. The irony is that Mulvey's problem seems rooted in the idea that the songs on *Indie Cindy* sound like Black Francis' solo material. I wonder why that is then, John? Could it perhaps be because Black Francis' solo material sounds like the fucking Pixies?!!

Granted, it's hardly comparable to *Doolittle* (and to be frank – no pun intended – what is?), but scoring it four out of ten? *Indie Cindy* is by no means perfect, but "What Goes Boom" is an explosive opener, the title track is like "Subbacultcha"'s mischievous younger brother, "Magdalena 318" would have slotted happily on the second side of *Bossanova* and the whole album has memorable hooks throughout that often recall the band's heyday.

I normally enjoy John Mulvey's comments and I've discovered a whole host of new (and old, previously unheard) music thanks to him, but fuck me, has he got it wrong this time! Otherwise, keep up the great work!

Loz Etheridge, via email

...It was sad to read such a crass and seemingly prejudiced review of the latest Pixies LP, spoiling an otherwise great issue 205. It lacked your usual measured approach and frankly came on like a protest from an aggrieved Kim Deal fan club. More significantly, the few pitiful lines offered as an excuse for a review completely failed to acknowledge their status as a major historical (and current) act. Surely, if this long-awaited release was such a disappointment, some decent analysis was required?

An "expedient" album you say, dismissively? The band are resolutely together and creatively active. By your terms all record releases are therefore "expedient". Also, please could you explain why it is considered cynical for the Pixies to sound like the Pixies? One of this year's more unusual accusations, surely. As for the quality, sure, it's no *Doolittle* (an impossibility) but it approaches the fine *Trompe Le Monde* and suitably fills a Pixies void left 23 years ago. 4/10? Clearly this was decided

prior to pressing play. If appropriate space had been allocated for some serious analysis instead of a stubborn stance taken I don't think I would have felt so annoyed. I was forced to read the Isaac Hayes article again to calm my nerves.

Nick Smith, via email

PIC'N'MIX-UP

I thought I'd draw your attention to an unfortunate error regarding the Joe Lala obituary. You've printed Al Perkins' picture rather than Joe's! I'm sure Mr Perkins will see the funny side. Otherwise, an excellent read and a wonderful piece on the late, great Warren Zevon.

John Brindle, Durham

ON THE ROPES

It was great to see *Uncut* sending out solid props to Davis, CA's finest, Thin White Rope, in last month's editorial. I saw them once, in September '88, on my first day at Birmingham Poly. They played to about 30 people, in the back room of the Hummingbird. My friend and I stood at the front, and as they plugged in the guitarist said, "Hi, my name's Guy, what's yours?"

They of course proceeded to blow everyone's mind. Then, at the end, while everyone else clamoured at the bar, they pulled four chairs up to a table and played cards.

In recent years, I've worked with a number of Italian musicians,



and found their influence is much greater in that country. Violinist Chiara Giacobbe included an instrumental version of "Not Your Fault" on her debut EP. Through Facebook I contacted Guy Kyser and Roger Kunkel to play them this version. I'd expected no response, but they were both kind and full of approval for her release. It'd be great if *Uncut* chose to cover this wonderful band in greater depth. The eager fanboy in me hopes it might encourage them to hit the reunion trail and claim their just rewards. The middle-aged me, however, realises they've done enough; they should be left to their own devices and can be content in their brilliant legacy. **Gerry Ranson, via email**

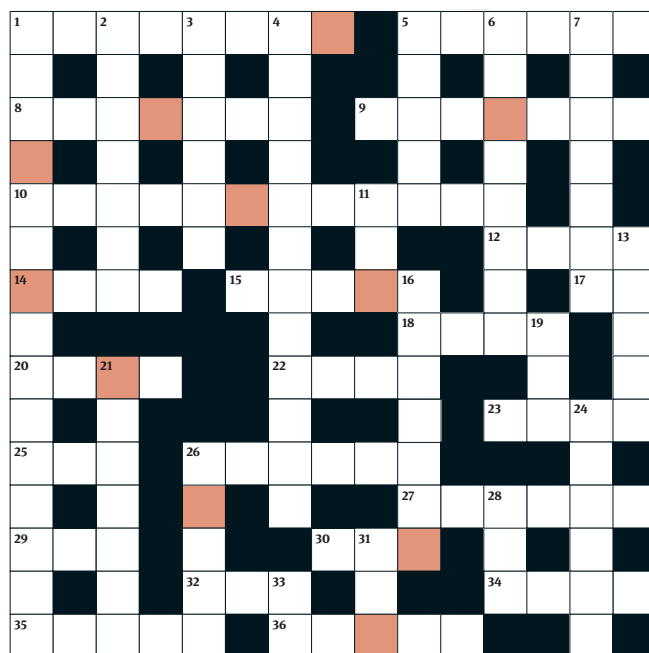
...Thanks for the nostalgic nod towards Thin White Rope, it had me re-spinning many a twisted tune that coloured my college years. I remember catching them live at the Subterranea in Ladbroke Grove about 1990 in front of a small but appreciative crowd and was spell-bound by the joint assault of Guy Kyser's spooky vocals and Roger Kunkel's distortion-laden feedback. I also recall a story about them fortunately missing a connecting flight on their way home to the US from a European tour, frantically driving through thick fog only to reach Milan airport too late for their flight. I say fortunately – they would've ended up, via Frankfurt, on the doomed Lockerbie-bound Pan Am 103. Anyway, it'd be great to see them reform and knock out those killer songs one more time. **Tony Gill, via email**

CANYON COVERS

In his review of the Jackson Browne tribute album, Andrew Mueller states, "His material has rarely been best-served by Browne himself." I have no idea how anyone who has listened to Browne can arrive at that conclusion. There seems little that is "contented" about, say, *Late For The Sky*. Mueller is, however, right to pick out Lucinda Williams' stunning "The Pretender", one of the musical highlights of the spring. **Guy Cooper, Matlock, Derbyshire**

TOO LATE FOR THE DATE

Regarding your Rufus Wainwright review [Take 204], did the reviewer even watch this DVD? The line goes: "...Rufus' vocal, blending sublimely with mum Kate McGarrigle, guesting on her own 'On My Way Into Town'." The lady died in 2010. The DVD was recorded in 2012. **Liz Tray, via email**



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Paul Weller. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut July 2014 Xword Comp, 8th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: Monday, June 23, 2014. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Blur tune reworked on The Black Keys' album (4-4)
- 5+14A Along with Ian McCulloch and Pete Dinklage he was a member of the short-lived Crucial Three (6-4)
- 8 Mike Oldfield album put on exhibition (7)
- 9+34A "As they pulled you out of the oxygen tent, you asked for the latest party", 1974 (7-4)
- 10 I haven't tried turning out for band who hail from 17 across (2-4)
- 12 (See 22 across)
- 14 (See 5 across)
- 15 (See 28 down)
- 17+20A Texan town on the Mexican border celebrated in song by Marty Robbins (2-4)
- 18 Marillion's frontman or Country Joe's backing men (4)
- 20 (See 17 across)
- 22+12A US protest singer who also hailed from 17 across (4-4)
- 23 This was the end for Sam Brown (4)
- 25 "She moves like she don't care, smooth as silk, cool as ____", from Blondie's "Maria" (3)
- 26 Really digging The The's album *Soul* ____ (6)
- 27 A big cheer for '80s indie band from Newcastle (6)
- 29 The aim of a Scottish rock band is the same as a single by Scottish band Chvrches (3)
- 30 Get fed up with an alt.rock band (3)
- 32 Ministry record held in Kenwood (1-1-1)

- 34 (See 9 across)
- 35 (See 7 down)
- 36 (See 11 down)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Last page had much altered about Syd Barrett's recordings (3-6-6)
- 2 From Little Richard, Razorlight or 24 across (3-2-2)
- 3+16D Having gone shopping for a Pentangle album but returning with 6 down? (6-2-5)
- 4 Then dire punk version comes out from Tori Amos (5-3-4)
- 5 (See 24 down)
- 6 The Horrors' new album is brilliant (8)
- 7+35A Song written in 1927, a version by The Beatles was a minor hit in 1964 (4-3-5)
- 11+36A Their albums include *Balance* and *A Different Kind Of Truth* (3-5)
- 13 "So I'm moving to New York 'cos I've got problems with my ____", The Wombats (5)
- 16 (See 3 down)
- 19 Record label that's housed The Verve and Smashing Pumpkins (3)
- 21 An odd name for someone fronting Visage (7)
- 24+5D Edwyn Collins' band of the '80s (6-5)
- 26 Joe ____ has the high position in Metronomy (5)
- 28+15A Hired Ron to sort out Pulp's first record label (3-5)
- 31 American punk band who've got everything (3)
- 33 Ciara and Ludacris sound a little surprised to have had a hit together (2)

ANSWERS: TAKE 204

ACROSS

1+6A Going Back Home, 8 Love My Way, 10 Stoosh, 11+33A Eddie Cochran, 12 Yello, 13+31A Indian Summer, 17+15A Thom Yorke, 18 Joyce, 20+21A At

The Edge, 24 Truth, 29 Ivory, 34 No Need

DOWN

1 Golden Years, 2 Invaders, 3+27A Gimme Some Lovin', 4+31D Always The Sun, 5 Kay, 6 Hutton, 7 Mayo, 10+9D Slim Chance, 14

Dio, 16 Estelle, 18 Jet, 19 You, 22 Don't Go, 23 I'm A Man, 25 Rivers, 26 Hay, 28 Vs, 30 Rank, 32 Red

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Nothing Man"

Xword compiled by:
Trevor Hungerford

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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Sharon Van Etten

The Brooklyn singer-songwriter shares her eclectic, surprisingly electronic favourites. “In New York everything can change in a day...”



The album to start my day

The Go-Betweens
Tallulah 1987

My ex used to wake up and play this record, running around making coffee, reading the paper and catching up on his day. I acquired the habit and *Tallulah* soon found its way into my own routine. It's not too punk, or too folk, and is mellow enough to start the day with. The arrangements are unusual too – you wouldn't think to have violin on some of those songs, but they manage to make it cool.



The soundtrack to a New York walk

Charles Bradley
Victim Of Love 2013

I'm a huge soul fan. I was thinking about his story, how he was discovered late in life. In New York you can be so anonymous, but it can all change in a single day. Today, this guy is touring the world, kickin' ass. I walk around the city listening to this and feel his story; it puts everything into perspective. I put my headphones on and block out all the frustrated people as I stroll around New York!



An album to work to

Natureboy
The Sweep 2013

This is a mixture of folk-pop, ambient, minimal guitar and drums, and the most beautiful vocals you'll ever hear. There's still a beat and a rhythm to it but the sonics have a hypnotic quality. You can work while listening and it won't distract you – but if you take a minute to really focus on the lyrics, which are very autobiographical, the songs are special. It's got an impressive sound but isn't so in-your-face that you can't do other things while enjoying it.



The album I fell asleep to

Pure X
Angel 2014

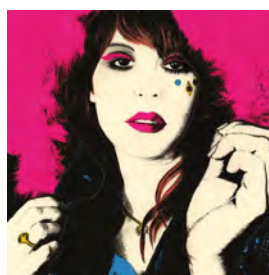
I mention this one because I actually started listening to it last night! My friend told me to check it out and it is so peaceful. I really like ambient music with strong beats – Pure X's earlier material is a lot like that, but this record is more spacey, with plenty of harmonies and a cool '70s vibe – Low meets Air meets *Saturday Night Fever*. It will help you drift off and zone out in a great way.



My soundtrack for flights

A Winged Victory For The Sullen
A Winged Victory For The Sullen 2011

If you're a fan of Eno, you'll love this. There are layers of drones filling these spacious instrumentals. There's minimal piano and string arrangements, but the overall sound is wide, dark and layered. Put it on repeat and it's a nice way to zone out on long-haul flights when you're stressed out from security.



The album I dance to in my bedroom

Glass Candy
B/E/A/T/B/O/X 2007

This one is fun to listen to but difficult to place. It's like early OMD – experimental but with a poppy feel. When I'm getting ready to go out, I put this album on because it psychs me up. I'm a pretty mellow person and a lot of people would probably laugh at the idea of me dancing, but if Glass Candy ever want someone to dance onstage at one of their shows, I'd happily do that for them!



The album I listen to on the train

Air
Talkie Walkie 2004

It takes you to a whole other place. All the songs are so different and the transitions are pretty amazing when you really listen to them. Songs like “Surfing On A Rocket” and “Cherry Blossom Girl” are anthemic but also hypnotic. You can tune in when you're on the train and just get lost. The views outside and the people around you become like characters in an Air music video.



The album I slow-dance to in my kitchen

Karen Dalton
1966 2012

Even on an upbeat song, there's this undercurrent of sorrow and pain. Her voice is unique. Her take on older folk songs was a lot more revealing than most people's cover versions as she had a way of bringing new meanings to light with her voice. She's timeless.

Sharon Van Etten's new album, *Are We There*, is out now on Jagjaguwar. She plays London Koko on June 5.



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