

"Ain't no change in the weather/Ain't no change in me..."

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REVIEWS

UNCUT

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

THE LAST STAND of **ERIC CLAPTON**

"The road
has become
unbearable!"

"It all got out
of control!"
**THE JESUS &
MARY CHAIN
RETURN!**

**BOB
DYLAN**
Everything
is broken?

A very long
night with
**SHANE
MACGOWAN**

**GRATEFUL
DEAD**
The ultimate
"Dark Star"

And introducing...
**HURRAY FOR
THE RIFF RAFF**

AND
STURGILL SIMPSON
SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY
ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN
THE PRETTY THINGS
KING CREOSOTE

PLUS
SOUNDGARDEN
MINUTEMEN
FIRST AID KIT
LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III
MONTY PYTHON



— Meet —
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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.

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PREMIUM BEER

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live smooth

IMPOSSIBLY SUPPORTIVE
PREMIUM BRASSIERES

BRA CO



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First Aid Kit

Are we rolling?



THIS IS MY last column as editor of *Uncut*. By the time you read this, in fact, I'll be gone. John Mulvey, who for the last several years has been such a stalwart deputy, is the new editor of *Uncut*, the handover completed just after our last issue went to press. After 17 years at the helm of *Uncut*, and 23 years before that at *Melody Maker* – the only vaguely proper jobs I've ever had – it seems like a good moment to stand down.

However much it might seem as recently as yesterday that I turned up for my first day of work at *Melody Maker*'s Fleet Street offices, it was in fact June 1974, fully 40 years ago. I had been to the office once before, when I had been interviewed by a balding man in a purple suit and bright yellow shirt whose aftershave hung in the air like some toxic emission, prolonged exposure to which might leave you in many ways blistered and enfeebled. This was *MM*'s legendary editor, Ray Coleman. *MM* had just run an ad I'd seen in *Time Out* that said they were looking for a new writer, someone under 21 and highly opinionated, both of which I then was. I'd been reading *MM* since I was 13, and although music was a passion it had never occurred to me I might end up writing about it for a living or anything else, although I had plenty of opinions about the music I loved and even more about the music I didn't. Crucially, the ad for the *MM* vacancy also added that no previous journalistic experience was necessary. This was just as well, since I didn't have any.

The letter of application I'd written included a lot of snotty criticism of what had seemed recently to me like *MM*'s growing complacency, a tendency to back the wrong bands and an attachment to ghastly progressive rock bands I'd come to abhor long before punk's subsequent mewling. I ended my application with a preposterous flourish, an attempt to catch someone's attention: "*Melody Maker* needs a bullet up the arse. I'm the gun. Pull the trigger." Ray was kind enough to overlook my raw presumption and to my stunned amazement subsequently offered me a position as junior reporter/feature writer.

In truth, what Ray gave me wasn't so much a job as a life, which very shortly I was living to the raucous full. It might have helped if Ray had alerted my new colleagues to my journalistic ineptitude. They were all trained professionals – veterans of coroner's courts, garden fêtes and the pop columns of provincial papers. In the popular drift of office opinion, I'd be lucky to last six months. Ten years later, I was editor, most of my original colleagues long gone and a new generation of writers making their own, often rowdy reputations. Things went well enough until Britpop loomed boorishly into view, dragging its knuckles on the pavement. I fled to Nashville at Britpop's height to spend a week with Kurt Wagner and his 15-piece country soul collective Lambchop, the idea coming to me over those few days for a new magazine that would in some part champion such music and celebrate also the music that originally inspired me.

Uncut was duly launched in May 1997. There have been many changes in look and content over the 206 issues of *Uncut* that have followed, but I hope we have not deviated from our original intention, which wasn't much more complicated than writing well enough about the things we liked to make our readers want to listen to, watch and read, sharing our discoveries and rediscoveries alike. I'm sure this will continue to be the case under John's astute editorship.

Thanks are briefly due to all the great people I've worked with over the years on *Uncut* and to all the readers who've enjoyed the magazine we've brought you. It's been a pleasure to have been in touch personally with so many of you who have shared your memories and opinions. Our conversation is not yet over, though. I seem to have got out of the habit of taking holidays in about 1975 because there was always so much going on – I recall once cancelling a holiday at the last minute to spend a day with Alice Cooper on the set of *The Muppets*, my girlfriend going off on her own on a vacation I'm not even sure she came back from – so I'll be taking a break, of sorts. But this isn't a complete divorce from *Uncut*. Let's call it, I don't know, a conscious uncoupling, something like that. In other words, I don't plan to entirely disappear quite yet.

In the meantime, all the best and thanks again for everything.

John Mulvey



The very first issue of *Uncut*, from 1997

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THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring GRATEFUL DEAD | SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY | THE PRETTY THINGS

THE CHAIN GANG

Psychomania!

THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN prepare to revisit *Psychocandy*. "I'm sure we'll have a good time," says JIM REID... "We just might not look like we are."



SINCE THEY LAST played in the UK, six long years ago, The Jesus And Mary Chain have intermittently played shows in the US, South America and the Far East, performed in the middle of a Chinese thunderstorm, and been offered assault rifles on Copacabana Beach. But, for the first time since 2008, Jim and William Reid are now preparing to return to the UK, where they'll perform their classic debut album in full and maybe even work on a new album or two.

"Nothing against the UK, but it's been something we've been holding back, waiting for the right time," explains Jim Reid. "I would imagine we will play *Psychocandy* in order – the songs were chosen to run that way at the time, and for a reason. Some of it we've never played live before, like 'It's So Hard', 'Something's Wrong', 'Cut Dead'..."

"I'm sure we'll have a good time," he deadpans,

"we just might not look like we are."

The band have recently returned from a South American trip with Alan McGee, who managed the group in their early years and has now happily resumed the role, "reigniting" Creation Management.

"All the music was there, they just needed someone to fucking believe in them again, you know?" McGee enthuses. "What I saw in South America was a vibrant rock'n'roll act, there's a lot of life left in the old dog yet. All the gigs were fucking amazing, mass singalongs and all that bollocks. But it got slightly strange too – in Rio De Janeiro, on Copacabana Beach, we got offered AK-47s!

"It's weird 30 years later being back with them, weird in a nice way. Apart from a few obvious things, like I don't have any hair, William's put on a bit of weight and Jim's suit is a bit more crumpled, we're all still the same fucking idiots!"

The group play London, Manchester and

Glasgow this November, ostensibly warm-up shows for what they hope will be an extensive 30th-anniversary *Psychocandy* tour in 2015.

"Weirdly, the myth of the Mary Chain has meant that they've come back bigger than ever," says McGee. "They sold the first Glasgow Barrowland date in 15 minutes, the second in six days, and we might end up doing three London shows."

Not that this huge demand must have come as a surprise – nearly three decades after its release, their 1985 debut, recorded by Crass' engineer John Loder in an end-of-terrace house in London's Wood Green (with the control room in the garden shed) remains as influential as ever.

"At the time we were into noise and '60s pop, and we couldn't really figure out why a band didn't come along and fuse the two together," says Jim, "so we did. We were thinking, if The Shangri-Las were backed up by Einstürzende Neubauten, what would that sound like?"

Candysays... The Jesus And Mary Chain, Tottenham, 1984: Bobby Gillespie, Douglas Hart, William and Jim Reid

DEREK RUDGERS

➤ “*Psychocandy*’s not a long album, so there’ll be other songs performed, probably separately, songs from that period that didn’t make it on the album. We used to use films onstage in the late ’80s, and we’re thinking of going back to that. We would have done that with the original *Psychocandy* shows if we could have afforded it.”

It’s doubtful the projection equipment would have survived their raucous early shows, though, which often ended in rioting, as at their infamous North London Poly gig on March 15, 1985.

“That whole riot thing, it just got out of control. It never was welcome,” explains Reid. “People thought it was orchestrated by the band. But we’d never been in the music business before, we didn’t know what the fuck we were doing! We tended to piss people off without even trying. We wouldn’t go onstage until we were kind of in the mood, if you know what I mean. And you’d go on an hour and a half late to a very angry crowd, who would just tear the house down – literally. But we soon figured out that the name of the game is to send people home having felt you’ve done your best to entertain them, as corny as it sounds.”



Brothers in harm:
William and Jim Reid
backstage at London's
Roundhouse, 2008

So while the upcoming *Psychocandy* shows are unlikely to see as much commotion, the news that the band are “seriously getting closer” to a new album just might. McGee even reckons 2016 could see two new albums released in quick succession.

“I think there’s a couple of albums left in them. I think we’re going to see a re-emergence and a resurgence in the Mary Chain.”

“William and myself have been tugging away at this one for quite a while now,” explains Jim Reid. “We wanted to do a new album when we reformed back in 2007, and we argued quite a bit about where we record it, how we record it, who we record it with, and it’s been going on a bit. But we’re getting there, we’re actually starting to pull sort of in the same direction now.”

“The band is almost like a third brother, you can’t just walk away from it. Most of our adult life, it’s something that’s been there between us and it’s something we both love and want to take control of. When we recorded *Psychocandy*, we argued like hell and there were actual fistfights. It’s never going to be ideal, but we know how far too far is now, so we can kind of work together without killing each other at the moment.”

TOM PINNOCK

The Jesus And Mary Chain play *Psychocandy* at London Troxy (Nov 19 and 24), Manchester Academy (20) and Glasgow Barrowland (21 and 23)

The “combative”
Southside Johnny
onstage today



JERSEY CREAM

Meanwhile, in Asbury Park...

Welcome back the Shoreline Sound’s other Boss, SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY & THE ASBURY JUKES!

IF THERE IS one man alive equipped to impart wisdom about the financially, logistically and politically maddening task of keeping a band together, it is surely “Southside” Johnny Lyon. He began playing with the Asbury Jukes in the bars of the Jersey Shore, a contemporary and comrade of Bruce Springsteen. Nearly 40 years later, the Asbury Jukes are preparing for a visit to the UK which has become an annual rite.

“You have to be flexible,” he explains. “So everyone in this band has a sub. If one guy can’t make it, he’s got another guy, and he’s taught them at least 20 or 25 of our songs. So if a job comes up, I know I can call people.”

Southside Johnny also asserts, perhaps counter-intuitively, that the apparently unwieldy size of the Asbury Jukes’ eight-piece lineup is another reason for its longevity.

“If you’re on the road with four guys,” he says, “you’ll end up hating each other, and yourselves. If there’s eight or nine of you, there’s always someone you’re happy to see, or at least someone you can’t remember why you were angry with.”

It has been four years since the Asbury Jukes’ rumbustious *Pills And Ammo*, and Johnny hopes to start work on their next album later this year.

“It’s going to be an upbeat record,” he declares. “*Pills And Ammo* was kind of angry. I have to finish five more songs and pick out some covers.”

Song titles Johnny is willing to part with include “One Woman Man” and “Ain’t None Of My Business”. Of the covers, Ruby Johnson’s ’60s soul lament “Weak Spot” is a likely starter. No decision has yet been made, however, about trying new material on the imminent British visit.

“It’s a possibility,” he says, “learn a few and inflict them on you guys. It’s what the Marx Brothers used to do before they made a movie – see what got a laugh on the road. I sometimes think we have a lot in common with them.”

Johnny also reveals plans to record with his rootsy side project, the Poor Fools, whose debut, *Songs From The Barn*, was released last year. He has also been maintaining his commitment to participating in the neighbourhood that first gave him places to play, and things to sing about. In May, the Asbury Jukes appeared on the roof of Jersey Shore landmark Windmill Hot Dogs on behalf of a food bank charity.

“When we started out,” explains Johnny, “Steve [Van Zandt, *Asbury Jukes* founder member] and I were always kind of combative. Jersey bands used to say they were from the ‘New York area’. But we put it right in the name. And that makes you part of the community, just like it does with Bruce – he’s a global superstar, but he’s still counted as a local guy.”

Johnny also clearly shares a Jersey work ethic, with his appetite for touring still strong.

“I’d actually like to tour more,” he says. “We play three, four shows a week. I used to like doing five nights a week, but I don’t know if I can do that anymore physically. And I like to be on the bus for a couple of months, but financially that’s a tough nut to crack. My accountant says ‘No, John’ a lot.”

ANDREW MUELLER

Southside Johnny And The Asbury Jukes play Wolverhampton Robin 2 (July 7), Portsmouth Guildhall (8), Holmfirth Picturedrome (10) and London Shepherd’s Bush Empire (11)

"Smelly, rotten lunatics!"

Happy 50th birthday, THE PRETTY THINGS. Age cannot wither them...

"WEDIDN'T THINK we'd last 50 weeks, never mind 50 years," laughs

Phil May, singer with The Pretty Things, who celebrate their 50th anniversary with a gig at the 100 Club in London this month. The band, part of the first wave of London R'n'B, were famed for being even scruffier and louder than The Rolling Stones, thrashing their way through the "Mississippi songbook" on their Bo Diddley-heavy debut album. It's that eponymous album they will recreate at the 100 Club on July 4 and they've also recorded it live on *The Pretty Things: Live At The 100 Club*, a limited-edition LP.

"We tried to do it as we did it then," says guitarist Dick Taylor. "No pedals, plug straight into the amps, record on tape, no overdubs. We wanted to do it in the same spirit as when we first recorded it." That spirit cost them their first producer, Jack Baverstock, who signed the band to Fortuna in 1964 and then blanching at the idea of producing them. "After an hour he said he wouldn't spend another minute with these dirty, smelly, rotten lunatics," says May. "I don't think we were that

bad, although the average suit must have found us quite outrageous."

The band were stalked by

Stones comparisons from the start, partly because Taylor played in an early incarnation of the Stones, while both he and May attended Sidcup Art College with Keith Richards. Down the road from Sidcup was Ravensbourne, the art school attended by David Bowie, and Bowie would record two Pretty Things songs for *Pin Ups*. It is this – and the fact they turned down a tour of the States in 1964, instead going to New Zealand where they were banned after setting fire to a bag of crayfish on an airplane – that has earned The Pretty Things the reputation of being one of the decade's 'nearly' bands. They're philosophical about this. "We could have done things differently," says Taylor.

"Maybe I'd have a bigger car, but maybe I'd be face down in a swimming pool." May adds, "Andrew Loog Oldham once said if we'd had a strong personality like Mick in the band we'd have been huge, but Dick and I weren't into that. We were having fun, making music, with no lifeplan for conquering the world."

The Pretty Things of 1964 were an anarchic bunch. Taylor recalls how drummer Viv Prince "would run around the audience hitting things with his drumsticks while we kept playing until he returned to his seat". This improvisational attitude may have helped the band make

the break into psychedelia, which they perfected on 1968's classic *SF Sorrow*, the first rock opera. "*SF Sorrow* is our great achievement," says Taylor. "We never played it live at the time, but we did a couple of mime shows, literally miming the plot. I was *SF Sorrow*'s dad and we had these big cardboard cut-outs behind us."

The band embraced the acid-inspired counterculture, partly because it made a change from the violence of early gigs. "There was a mod place in Harlow where we'd be onstage conducting the fights," says Taylor. "One time we couldn't play 'cos a rival gang had blown the windows out with shotguns. The peace and love thing couldn't come soon enough."

SF Sorrow flopped and the group split in 1970, reuniting sporadically since. May reflects ruefully on 50 years on the stage. "You don't get a watch after 50 years with a band, you get plastic surgery! The real reward is playing. We do a cross section of our music from over 50 years and the reaction is amazing. For many people, music is a seminal experience. These songs meant a lot in their lives."

PETER WATTS

The Pretty Things play the 100 Club on July 4

A QUICK ONE

► After **Robert Fripp** announced the King Crimson reunion in *Uncut* last year, news of actual gigs has been scant. Now, though, a tranche of US dates has come to light. The seven-piece – including three drummers – play



Albany The Egg (Sept 9, 10), Philadelphia Verizon Hall (12, 13), Boston Colonial Theatre (15, 16), New York Best Buy (18, 19, 20, 21), Madison Barrymore Theatre (23), Chicago Vic (25, 26), LA Orpheum Theatre (Sept 30, Oct 1), San Francisco Warfield (Oct 3, 4) and Seattle Moore Theater (6).

► A trifling 38 years after it was first released, the **Ramones'** self-titled debut album has gone gold in the US, to mark the 500,000th copy sold. Gabba gabba hey!

► **Michael Stipe** has stealthily returned to music for the first time since REM split up in 2011. His work appears as the OST to *The Cold Lands*, directed by Stipe's friend Tom Gilroy. The music is reportedly soundscapes rather than conventional songs, and is a collaboration with Andy LeMaster, known for his work with Bright Eyes, among others.

► Don't forget the online hive of activity that is **uncut.co.uk**, featuring reviews, news, interviews and playlists...



Outrageous to the average suit... The Pretty Things 1965: (l-r) John Stax, Dick Taylor, Viv Prince, Brian Pendleton, Phil May



Stephen Malkmus

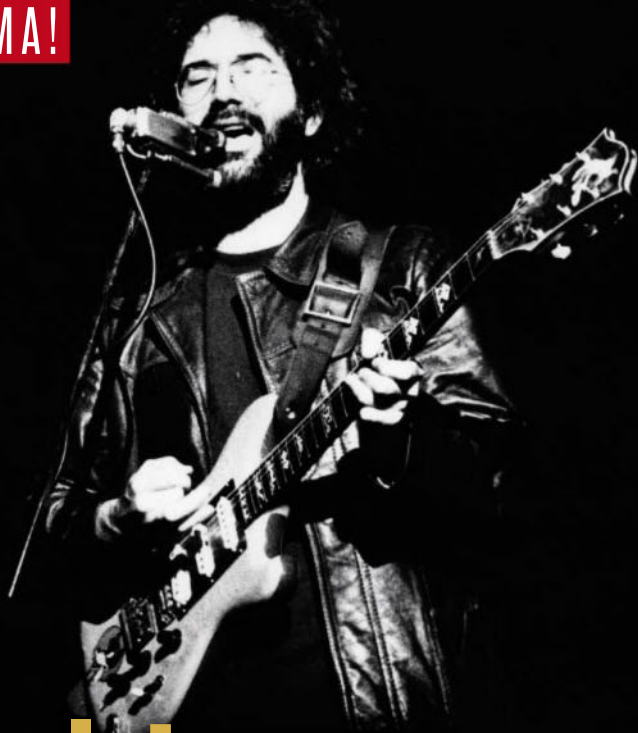
END OF THE ROAD

UNCUT AT END OF THE ROAD: OUR STAGE UNVEILED!

ONLY A FEW weeks to go now to the End Of The Road festival, and we're pleased to reveal that *Uncut* will be hosting the Tipi Tent again this year. Plenty of our favourite new artists are scheduled to play this intimate stage, including **EMA, Sam Lee, Israel Nash Gripka, Wye Oak, The Rails, Marissa Nadler, Arc Iris and Alice Boman**. They join the likes of **Flaming Lips, John Grant, St Vincent,**

Yo La Tengo, Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks, White Denim, Gruff Rhys, Richard Thompson and **Mark Kozelek** at the festival. Plus, we'll be holding Q&A sessions with some of the bands each day: please come and say hello. End Of The Road takes place, as ever, at Larmer Tree Gardens in Dorset, between August 29 and 31. Weekend camping tickets for £175 are still on sale: www.endoftheroadfestival.com.

The Dead's Jerry Garcia, probably playing "Dark Star"...



REDISCOVERED

The ultimate "Dark Star"

How JOHN OSWALD made the GRATEFUL DEAD's greatest song last forever

"GOOD MUSIC," IS the simple response Plunderphonics composer John Oswald gives when asked what he was searching for in the Grateful Dead archives. In the early '90s, he went looking for material with which he could build his *Grayfolded*, a near-two-hour trek through the outer universe of the Dead's live improvisatory standard, "Dark Star".

It's a song that's gathered all kinds of legend throughout the years – the hardcore Deadheads standing in the audience, repeatedly yelling "play 'Dark Star', Jerry!" were a constant source of

amusement and frustration for gig-goers. But with Oswald at the controls, the mercurial force of the Dead's playing collapses in on itself, over and over again, Oswald editing together this 110-minute meta-"Dark Star" from all phases of the group's career. Now, *Grayfolded* is back in print, thanks to the Important Records label.

Push Oswald further on the process of working up the two long-form compositions that make up *Grayfolded*, named "Transitive Axis" and "Mirror Ashes", and Oswald yields a little. He reminisces about his months of work at the Grateful Dead

clubhouse in San Rafael with Dick Latvala, Dead tape archivist: "We would work our way through that published directory of all the Dead setlists, and if there was a 'Dark Star' or anything somewhat improvisatory, especially if it was something he remembered fondly, which was quite often, Dick would scurry off to find the tape.

"Meanwhile I'd browse through tapes previously selected... These were mostly reel-to-reel tapes, which I often played through once at double speed, listening for atypical performances and particularly good playing, and dubbing those sections. I think I copied only one complete performance."

The group themselves were supportive, and indeed the seeds for *Grayfolded* came from group member Phil Lesh and David Gans, who originally wanted to commission Oswald to piece together a Plunderphonics intro theme for their radio show. "I initially replied 'no'," Oswald recalls, "but when Phil Lesh subsequently called, I was ready with the suggestion that it would be a more Dead-appropriate thing if it was somewhat more extended than the one minute they were proposing."

Not that the Dead were particularly involved in the process – "I purposely worked at their place when they were out of town, so we had very little contact. We only ever talked about the project during a bevy of interviews at the release of the first disc." This disconnect may have helped push Oswald to create the ultimate "Dark Star", smelting together decades of feverish, often hallucinatory playing, and creating juxtapositions that the group themselves wouldn't have dreamed of. But there are just as many moments where the group appear to be playing with shadow forms of themselves, or lost in a maze of circus mirrors, parts of their playing distended and extended out into space.

Oswald's processes are engagingly simple, such as the fold – "a fold is an overlap of segments of time that were originally consecutively linear" – but their cumulative effect leads to some seriously heady psychedelia. But perhaps the greatest surprise is Oswald's somewhat indifferent relationship with the legend of the Dead: "Other than buying and immensely enjoying the double album *Live/Dead* in 1969, I have had no contact with or particularly special interest in Grateful Dead music. I had never been to a Dead concert."

ROB HUGHES

John Oswald & The Grateful Dead's *Grayfolded* is now available on the Important label



Jeff Porcaro in 1971

AND ON DRUMS... JEFF PORCARO

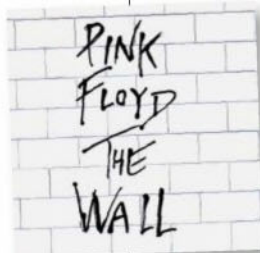
UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

➤ Apart from co-founding Toto with his brother Steve, Jeff Porcaro was one of the most prolific session drummers of the '70s and '80s. At the age of 17, he played his first professional show backing Sonny & Cher, and during his twenties played on various Steely Dan albums and toured with Boz Scaggs. He played drums on four songs on Michael Jackson's *Thriller* album – including "Beat It" – and worked with, among others, Paul McCartney, Dire Straits, Rickie Lee Jones, Joe Cocker, Diana Ross, Madonna, Eric Clapton,

Pink Floyd, Miles Davis, Bruce Springsteen and Elton John. He died in August 1992 at age of 38.

KEY SESSIONS: Steely Dan's *Pretzel Logic*, Katy Lied, *Gaucha* Boz Scaggs' *Silk Degrees*, Diana Ross' *Ross*, Lowell George's *Thanks, I'll Eat It Here*, Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, Donald Fagen's *The Nightfly*, Randy Newman's *Trouble In Paradise*, Paul McCartney's *Give My Regards To Broad Street*, Madonna's

Like A Virgin and Bruce Springsteen's *Human Touch*. PHIL KING





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THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

ROBERT PLANT

Lullaby And... The Ceaseless Roar

NONESUCH

Led Zep reissues safely dispatched, Plant gets down to serious business: a head-spinning global workout in the company of the Sensational Space Shifters.

HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

Lateness Of Dancers

A new country-soul classic from North Carolina's questing and prolific MC Taylor. Think: late-'70s Dylan, Veedon Fleece, Ronnie Lane...



TY SEGALL

Manipulator

After last year's restrained *Sleeper*, Segall returns to tearaway garage rock, this time channelling the locomotive spirit of Thee Oh Sees.

BOB CARPENTER

Silent Passage

An amazing find from 1974: ornate country-rock, featuring Emmylou Harris, that stands comparison with Gene Clark's *No Other*.

TWEEDY

I'll Sing It

Promising taster of Jeff Tweedy's extracurricular project, with son Spencer on drums. Still sounds like Wilco, mind.

NOURA MINT SEYMALI

Tzenni

A female Mauritanian griot trances out. Next-level desert jams, especially recommended to Tinariwen fans.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Acoustic Classics

The master warms up for *End Of The Road* with this wisely chosen set of reworked hits. "Shoot Out The Lights"!

EARTH

Primitive And Deadly

Dylan Carlson lurches towards the most orthodox Earth album yet. Head-nodding Sabbath wallows galore, with a guest turn from old chum Mark Lanegan.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Country Funk II: 1967-1974

A second impeccable collection of downhome grooves. Highlights include Thomas Jefferson Kaye's long-unavailable "Collection Box".

LOS JAIVAS

1971: Primer Disco De Los Jaivas

COLUMBIA

Hyperactive Chilean psychedelia: a winning purchase by our picture editor on his recent South American tour.

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I'M NEW HERE

"Music keeps me away from myself..."
Metaphysical
adventurer Simpson

Sturgill Simpson

Recommended this month: the Nashville outlaw giving country music a hallucinogenic new edge

SOME THINGS ARE so obvious that you can't see them. In the case of songwriter Sturgill Simpson, his true calling only became apparent after his wife intervened. "I'd taken a job on the railroad, working 80 hours a week and being miserable," explains the Nashville-based thirtysomething, "and was writing at home on the guitar. She said: 'You have this ability and you're gonna wake up one day knowing that you never tried to share it.' I had no real ambition or drive until she taught me how to believe in myself."

After jobbing around for most of his life, Simpson decided to funnel all his energy into a music career. Now there's no stopping him. The startling *Metamodern Sounds In Country Music* is his second album in six months. And whereas debut *High Top Mountain* suggested a classic purist in the vein of Waylon Jennings or Merle Haggard, the new record reveals the full scope of his adventurousness. Informed by religious texts, quantum physics and universal theory, it's a work that dispels the lazy myth of country as a non-progressive art form. "My favourite records have always been concept albums or thematically structured ones," he says, "be it Stevie Wonder or Marvin Gaye or Willie Nelson. I've probably listened to [Nelson's 1974 opus] *Phases And Stages* at least once a week. Making conceptual pieces of work is a goal for me."

The album finds Simpson leading his five-piece band through outlaw country, honky-tonk, psychedelia, bluegrass and a smattering of electronica. Avant-noise epic "It Ain't All Flowers" ripples with backwards effects, though perhaps the most striking example of his

metaphysical wanderlust is "Turtles All The Way Down". Written after he'd read Dr Rick Strassman's *The Spirit Molecule*, which catalogues people's experiences on the hallucinogen DMT, the song addresses the big issues. Simpson concludes that weed, LSD and psilocybin may change the way he sees, "but love's the only thing that ever saved my life."

He's talking from experience too. A native of smalltown Kentucky, Simpson admits that he "went wild" after his parents split up, landing himself in trouble at school for dealing drugs. The answer, he mistakenly believed, was to enlist in the US Navy:

"It was an impulsive decision but it wasn't good for me. It was a hard adjustment." He spent his twenties feeling jaded and "a bit nihilistic", before spending four years with the Union Pacific Railroad in Utah.

Aside from his wife's urging, Simpson's decision to finally realise his ambition was partly down to his musician grandfather. "When I was a child, we'd watch *Hee Haw* together and he'd teach me the nuances of what these guys were doing."

Looking back on his wilderness years from today's vantage point, Simpson is philosophical.

"Interestingly enough, the darkest periods were the times in my life where I wasn't playing music," he muses. "Most musicians are very self-destructive, but I find that music keeps me away from myself." **ROB HUGHES**

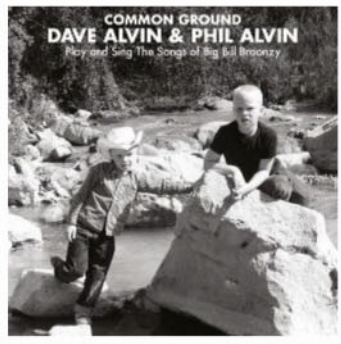
I'M YOUR FAN

"I love that Sturgill has a bluegrass soul. He's an eccentric outsider in the very insider world of modern country music. I don't know if he's the future of country, but I hope he is."

Dan Auerbach, The Black Keys



Metamodern Sounds In Country Music is out now on Loose. Simpson plays London Bush Hall (July 24), Sheffield Greystones (25) and Perth Southern Fried Festival (26)



DAVE ALVIN AND PHIL ALVIN

COMMON GROUND: DAVE ALVIN & PHIL ALVIN
PLAY AND SING THE SONGS OF BIG BILL BROONZY

"Fabulous" 9/10 — *Uncut*

"Bursting with humour and joy...their best album yet" ★★★★★ — *Q*

"Celebrating both Big Bill and the Alvin's shared boyhood, this genial collaboration throws a warm light on both" — *Mojo*

"Proof that great music doesn't lose its edge when it's done right" 8/10 — *Classic Rock Blues*

"It's an easy-on-the-ear-hard-on-the-shoe-leather set" ★★★★★ — *Record Collector*

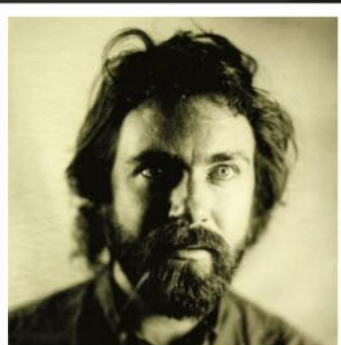
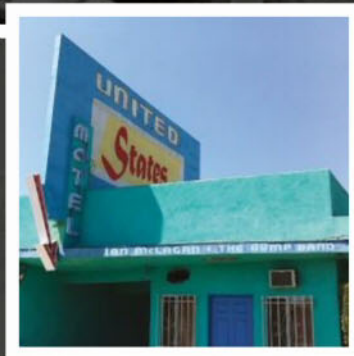
IAN MCLAGAN & THE BUMP BAND

UNITED STATES

"A lively mix of breezy country, rough-hewn soul testifying and finger-snapping R'n'B" 7/10 — *Uncut*

ON TOUR IN JULY

1st HARE & HOUNDS, Birmingham • 2nd, 3rd, 4th THE HALF MOON, Putney • 5th THE HOP FARM FESTIVAL
6th THE RAILWAY, Winchester • 7th THE THUNDERBOLT, Bristol • 8th THE PHOENIX, Exeter • 9th THE GREYSTONES, Sheffield
10th CAEDMAN HALL, Gateshead • 11th THE DUCHESS, York • 12th THE SQUARE, Harlow • 14th THE PALMEIRA, Hove
15th THE MAZE, Nottingham • 16th THE MUSICIAN, Leicester • 17th BOWERY DISTRICT, Reading • 19th WHELANS, Dublin.



LIAM FINN THE NIHILIST

"A mind-melting blend of traditional songwriting and endless, restless experimentation" ★★★★★ — *Q*

"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" 7/10 — *Uncut*



CHATHAM COUNTY LINE TIGHTROPE

"Walk a narrow and near-solitary road between traditional bluegrass and modern acoustic folk...with such conviction that there's simply no point anyone else trying to overtake them" ★★★★★ — *Q*

LIVE IN NOVEMBER with MANDOLIN ORANGE:

16th BUSH HALL, London • 17th BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB, Leeds
18th MONO, Glasgow • 19th BUTTON FACTORY, Dublin
20th RAHEEN HOUSE HOTEL, Tipperary • 21st DEAF INSTITUTE, Manchester



AOIFE O'DONOVAN FOSSILS

"Moody Americana — with teeth — from the Stateside Laura Marling" *Q*

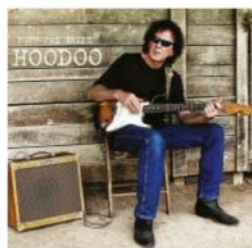
★★★★★ — *Mojo*

8/10 — *Uncut*

★★★★★ — *The Guardian*

'Album of the Week' — *The Sunday Times Culture*

LIVE IN JULY: 1st THE BORDERLINE, London



TONY JOE WHITE HOODOO

"Spellbinding stuff" — *Americana Album of the Month* 9/10 — *Uncut*

★★★★★ — *Mojo*

★★★★★ — *The Independent*

★★★★★ — *The Financial Times*

LIVE IN JULY: 1st GORILLA, Manchester • 3rd THE ROBIN 2, Wolverhampton
4th UNION CHAPEL, London • 5th HOP FARM FESTIVAL



JONAH TOLCHIN CLOVER LANE

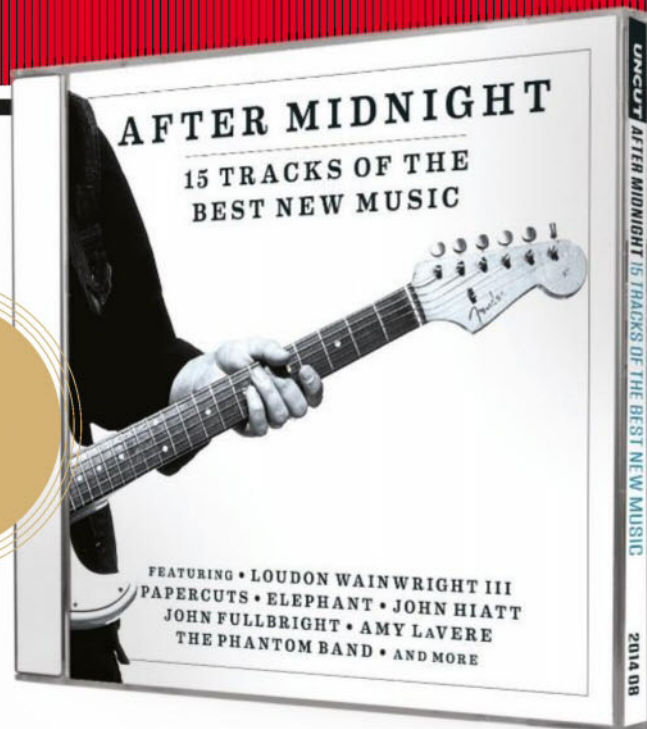
The album was recorded quickly and spontaneously in Nashville with an impressive cast of characters that include Chris Scruggs, Steve Berlin (*Los Lobos*), John McCauley (*Deer Tick*), and Mickey Raphael (*Willie Nelson*). As a songwriter, Jonah bridges the gap between classic folk self-sufficiency and punk's DIY defiance; he plays everything from roots and Americana music to old time folk and acoustic blues.

LIVE IN JULY: 30th Upstairs at THE GARAGE, Highbury Corner, London
31st THE WINDMILL, Brixton, London

AFTER MIDNIGHT

Your guide to this month's free CD

FREE CD!



1 THE PHANTOM BAND Clapshot

A pulsating start to proceedings this month, courtesy of Rick Redbeard and The Phantom Band, Glaswegian art-rockers with an expansive vision to match Arcade Fire's. As "Clapshot" develops, though, the anthemic possibilities of the song are pushed aside in favour of odder diversions; still rousing but, in the long run, substantially more rewarding.

2 PETER MATTHEW BAUER Shiva The Destroyer

Hamilton Leithauser turned up on our CD a couple of months ago, and now another one of New York's sainted Walkmen graces us with his solo presence. Bassist Bauer turns out to be a compellingly sullen, Dylanish singer, and his solo debut, *Liberation!*, has a rich backstory of a childhood spent in hippy communes, set – on "Shiva The Destroyer" – to a heady mix of jangle and drone.

3 BOB MOULD Tomorrow Morning

Evidently re-energised by playing his Sugar-era classics out live, *Beauty And Ruin* is the best Mould album in an age, as you can probably tell from "Tomorrow Morning", all crisply accelerating guitars, a trademark Mould vocal – at once yearning and agitated – and that still-heroic trick of melodic classicism being combined with hardcore's no-nonsense attack.

4 JOHN HIATT Nobody Knew His Name

"You hit a point where you start to feel that time's running out, and I want to do the best work I can and as much as I can before I kick the bucket," John



Elephant

Hiatt says frankly on p72. For all that urgency, though, "Nobody Knew His Name" is a gripping tale unravelled at an elegant saunter. A master craftsman, taking care of business.

5 WILLIAM CLARK GREEN Dead Or In Jail

From Lubbock, Texas, William Clark Green is – as the song title probably indicates – a storyteller with a gritty, hard-knock swagger. The swinging bar band Americana of "Dead Or In Jail" figures on Green's third solo album, *Rose Queen*.

6 SAM DOORES Drifters Wife

Digging into the New Orleans folk scene for our Hurray For The Riff Raff feature, Sam Doores and his band The Deslondes emerged as significant ones to watch. Fittingly, given this month's Clapton cover story, here Doores tackles JJ Cale's "Drifters Wife" in winningly unadorned style. From the forthcoming comp, *True To My Luck: The Early Years*.

7 ELEPHANT Elusive Youth

Uncut's reviewer pinpointed *Sky Swimming*, the debut by this London duo, as operating in a dreamy space somewhere between Beach House and the Lauren Laverne-fronted '90s indiepopers, Kenickie. Unlikely, perhaps, but charming nonetheless.

8 AMY LAVERE Rabbit

On her fourth album (produced by Luther Dickinson of The North Mississippi Allstars), Memphis' LaVere tackles songs by John Lennon and

Townes Van Zandt. "Rabbit", though, is a delicate and affecting original, drawing narrative inspiration from when LaVere ran away, aged 15, after her parents' divorce.

9 PAPER CUTS New Body

Among other handy references on the CV of San Francisco's Jason Quever, work with Beach House (a key act this month, it seems) is a sign of what to expect here. A highlight of his sixth Papercuts album, "New Body" is a homebrewed take on '60s baroque pop, pulling off the rare trick of being both intimate and grandiose at the same time.



Papercuts

10 LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III I Knew Your Mother

The Wainwright/McGarrigle family saga in song has an enchanting new chapter, in the shape of this sprightly highlight from Loudon's new album, *Haven't Got The Blues (Yet)*. The focus this time is on rueful sweetness rather than acrimony; an open letter to son Rufus as he turns 40. "Yeah happy birthday but I wanna be clear," notes Wainwright, "I loved your mother and that's why you're here..."

11 POLLY AND THE BILLETS DOUX Calico Blankets

A well-mannered and very English take on Southern Gothic folk, courtesy of Polly Perry and her bandmates, fresh out of the badlands of Winchester and Bristol. From their recent *Money Tree* LP, and strongly recommended to fans of the Smoke Fairies, among other things.

12 REIGNING SOUND My My

With the Oblivians and Reigning Sound, Greg Cartwright has made some of the greatest garage rock of the past 20 years. Increasingly, though, he's adding more raw R'n'B into the mix: this mighty tune from the new *Shattered* LP digs deep into his Memphis roots, even though his latest Reigning Sound lineup is packed with Brooklyn soulmen.

13 JOHN FULLBRIGHT The One That Lives Too Far

Along with Sturgill Simpson and Robert Ellis, Oklahoman Fullbright is one of the coming men of Americana. "The One That Lives Too Far" is a gently magisterial standout from his second album, *Songs*, reviewed at length on p68 of this issue.

14 FULL UGLY Hilly Street

Part of the endearingly shambolic new Aussie indie scene, Full Ugly's "Hilly Street" wouldn't sound out of place on the recently reissued C86 comp, though there's a certain slacker attitude prevalent on their recent *Spent The Afternoon* LP that betrays a bit more edge than that might suggest.

15 WILLIE WATSON James Alley Blues

A very Woody Guthrie vibe here from Watson, now solo after leaving the band he co-founded, Old Crow Medicine Show. "James Alley Blues" is a Rabbit Brown song that Harry Smith included on his *Anthology Of American Music*, produced – like all of Watson's *Folk Singer Vol 1* – by the great David Rawlings.



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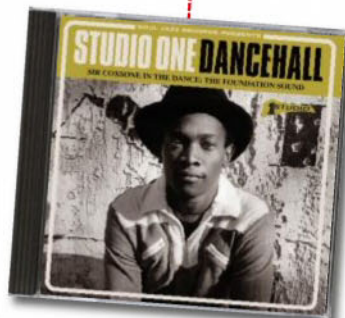
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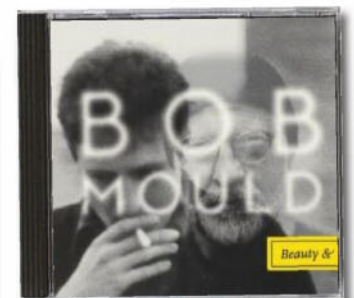
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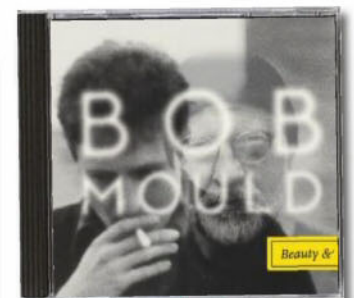
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Loudon Wainwright III

Interview: Michael Bonner
Photograph: Ross Halfin

The singing, songwriting actor on “Dead Skunk”, *M*A*S*H*, his one similarity to Bob Dylan, and meeting Dame Edna Everage... “I’ve had a life!”

IT’S EARLY MORNING in New York, and Loudon Wainwright III is reflecting on his relationship with the 23 albums he’s released so far. “When one is done, and it’s too late to change any of it, you never want to hear it again,” he explains. “It’s the cruelest thing. It’s like a child you just want to kick out the door and lock the door behind it. You hope that child will thrive, and be loved, but you don’t want anything to do with it anymore...”

Wainwright is about to release *Haven’t Got The Blues (Yet)*, a typically droll collection of songs that he claims, presumably only semi-seriously, are “about depression”. Of course, Wainwright has been writing about his own life with wit and acute candour for over 40 years, since he was dubbed one of the “new Dylans” in the early ’70s. During the course of a spirited interview, Wainwright answers your questions about his family – the subject of many songs – his ongoing creative relationship with Judd Apatow, memories of appearing on Jasper Carrott’s TV series in the ’80s, meeting Dylan and duetting with Dame Edna Everage – “a career highlight”, it transpires.

“Well,” he says, when all subjects have been exhausted, “I did enjoy myself.”



I wish the phone were ringing off the hook for a few more acting jobs. But thank God I don’t have to earn a living as an actor, otherwise I’d probably be a waiter. Fortunately, I have folk music to fall back on. I’ve known Richard fortysomething years. I was a big fan of that wonderful first solo record he made, *Henry The Human Fly*. We met in 1978, though, at a folk festival, I think it was in Rotterdam. He was signing with his then wife, Linda. Then we ended up going to Aberdeen, there used to be a television show called *Marc Time*, hosted by a guy called Marc Ellington, who is still around. He’s an American but he’s been living in Scotland for years and years. He’s actually the laird of a castle up there. That’s where we hung out for the first time, Richard and me and Linda.

STAR QUESTION



You’ve had many duets in your career – who is your favourite?

Barry Humphries
Number One would be “Something

Stupid” with Barry, of course. A close second would be “At The End Of A Long Lonely Day” with Suzzy Roche. I was living in Los Angeles and I got an offer to be in a couple of episodes of *Ally McBeal*. That season Barry was playing a character called Claire, which was basically Dame Edna, and I was hired to be her fiancé, Jerome. We got to be friends and we did two episodes and we sang “Something Stupid”. Barry is always impeccably dressed and I remember when we were recording “Something Stupid” he showed up at the recording studio and he had on a brown seersucker suit and a flower in the lapel and a

hat, rakishly pulled over his wonderful straight brown hair. Then he sat down, put the headphones on and Dame Edna came out. That was an exciting moment, to see the two of them together in one body.

How have your children reacted to the song “Your Mother And I” over the years?

Simon Stephenson, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

I don’t know – you’d probably have to ask them! But that goes with all of my material. It’s so funny you should ask that, as I have a little side-story. I have an acting job this month. I’m in an independent movie that’s being made here in New York and my character is a successful theatre songwriter. The guy who wrote the screenplay was thinking about Stephen Sondheim. We had a meeting yesterday to talk about my character, and I told him the story of when I met Stephen Sondheim. I auditioned for his show, *Assassins*.

It was never particularly successful although it’s now thought of as being one of his great gems. This was 20, 25 years ago. I got called back many times and thought I was going to get a part. Then finally I auditioned for Sondheim himself and I played “Your Mother And I” and he hated it! I didn’t get the job. So I don’t know what my kids think of that song, but I know Sondheim doesn’t like it! It’s too simple. It’s got only three chords in it.

STAR QUESTION



Aside from the great musician we know and love, you are also a fine actor. Are you happy with the current balance

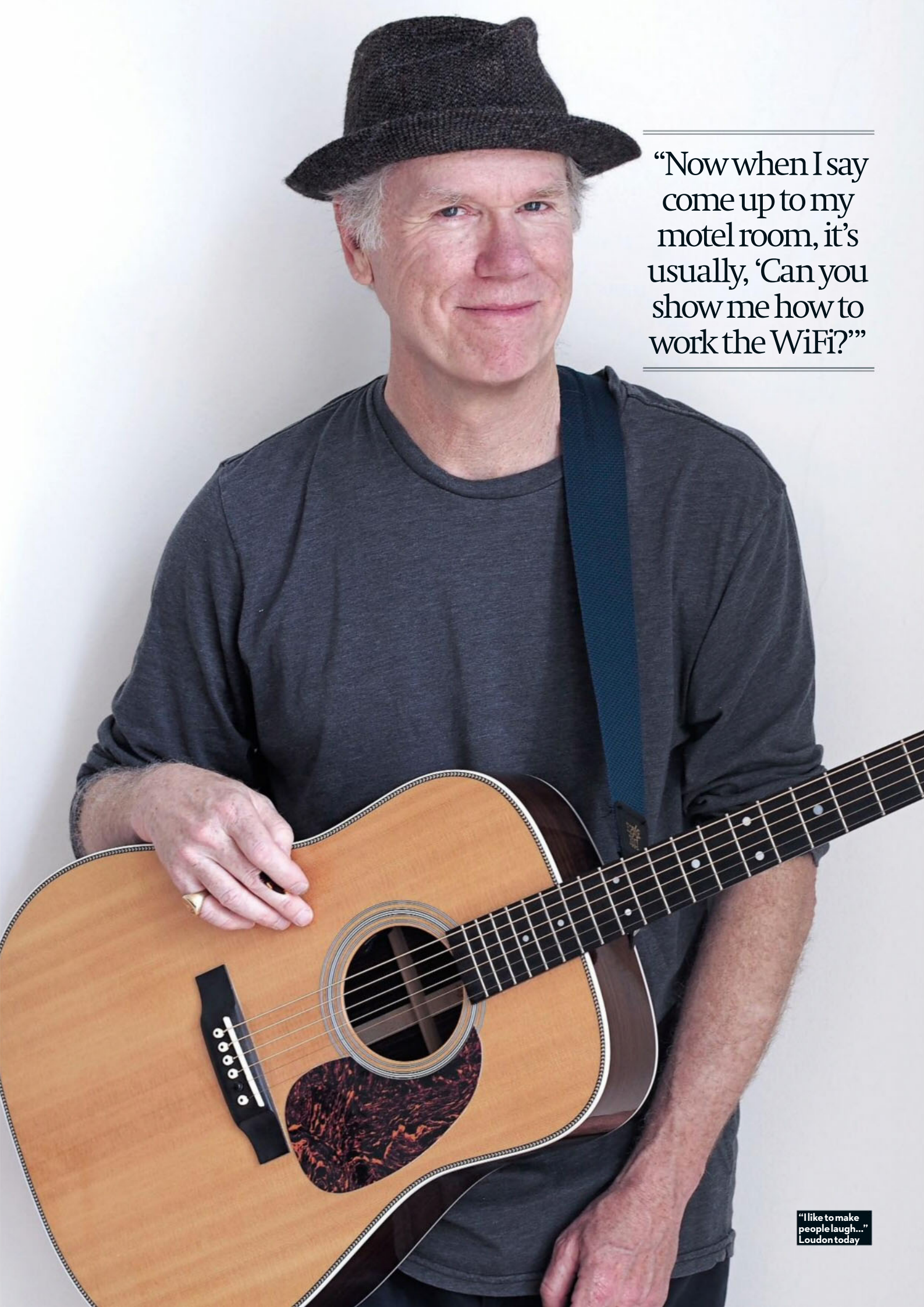
between the two aspects of your creative life?

Richard Thompson

The first song on your very first album starts off “in Delaware when I was younger”. Did you only ever consider yourself to be an autobiographical writer?

Edgar Church, Harpenden

I’ve always been writing about my life. I’m writing about what’s happened to my life and the people that are in it and what we’re doing to each other. There is that cliché, “write what you know”, but it just seems natural to me. I didn’t ride the rails or pick cotton or go over the trenches... I grew up in an affluent suburb of New York and went to boarding school. So, I’ve had a life and I’ve been writing about it ever since. Is any exaggerated? The whole thing is a bit of an exaggeration, really. You’re allowed to do that.



“Now when I say
come up to my
motel room, it’s
usually, ‘Can you
show me how to
work the WiFi?’”

“I like to make
people laugh...”
Loudon today

STAR QUESTION



Dear dad, if you had to pick a favourite song of all time (no Wainwright-McGarrigle-Roche numbers, for diplomatic reasons) what would it be? *Rufus Wainwright*

The first one that comes to mind is a Frank Loesser song from *Guys And Dolls* called "More I Cannot Wish You". I loved that show. My dad had a wonderful, eclectic record collection and it included a lot of great Broadway musical comedy scores and *Guys And Dolls* was my favourite. That song is the one that everyone forgets about in that show. It's a ballad sung by an older character actor. It's just sweet. It has a kind of Irish or Scottish hint to it. It's just a hidden gem and maybe that's what attracted me.

My earliest memories of you were your appearances in *M*A*S*H*. How did you become involved?

Tracey Blanchard, Kingston Upon Hull

This would have been 40 years ago at the Troubadour in Los Angeles. I was doing a show there and Larry Gelbart, who created the television show with Gene Reynolds, was in the audience and liked what I did. So they just approached me to play this character of Captain Calvin Spaulding, 'the singing surgeon'. I only actually did three episodes but I'll always be known as 'The guy who was on *M*A*S*H*'. 'The guy that wrote about the skunk' and 'The guy that was on *M*A*S*H*'.

STAR QUESTION



You've written a lot about your father; what was the inspiration for inner-weaving his work with your own and staging it theatrically, as you are now doing in NYC? *Joe Henry*

My father died in 1988. He died a relatively young man, just four days shy of his 64th birthday. When



Meet the family: (c/wise from top left) Suzzy Roche, Rufus Wainwright, Lucy Wainwright Roche, Loudon and Martha Wainwright, New York, 2012; inset, Loudon's father, Loudon Wainwright, Jr

I became 65 a few years ago, I started thinking about that landmark and passing it. He was a columnist for *Life* magazine throughout the '60s, '70s and '80s and I went back and read everything he wrote. Some of it I hadn't read the first time around. I was struck by how good it was, and how he and I were so similar – we covered a lot of the same waterfronts, so to speak. I always thought his best stuff was the personal stuff – having to put the dog down, the family house burning down or visiting his mother in a nursing home. So I've taken some of those stories and mixed them up with my songs. It's been great. I feel closer to my father now than I ever have, and he's been dead 25 years.

Loudon, what can you recall about your meeting with Bob Dylan and Doug Kershaw in 1972?

Terry Kelly, Jarrow
I've met Bob Dylan twice. I met Bob Dylan at the Gaslight. I don't remember it, I was so nervous. Then a few years later, the happening club was Max's Kansas City and I was doing a show there and I had just written the song "Dead Skunk", I hadn't recorded it, I played it at the end of the show and people loved it. I went to the dressing room and there was Dylan, and Doug Kershaw walked in, and Bob said, "I really like that 'Skunk', man." There you go! He was prescient.

I remember you on *Carrott Confidential* during the 1980s.

It seems incredible now to think of you on mainstream UK TV. What are your memories of that time?

Roy Waits, Maidstone
might have et Jasper at the Cambridge Folk Festival. I was supposed to write a topical song for the show every week. We'd get in the

"I'll always be known as 'the guy who wrote about the skunk'"

office on a Monday or Tuesday over there in Television Centre and we'd sit in the office, me and Jasper and about eleven comedy writers including Barry Cryer. We'd brainstorm and I was supposed to come up with a song. It was fun but terrifying because it was live, and there were 10 million people watching. I kept thinking I would break a string and then finally I did, but it didn't seem to matter.

You've worked with Judd Apatow in recent years. What do you think are the similarities between your work?

Nick McIlhenny, Dublin
I wasn't really aware of Judd, and then he approached me a few years ago about being in the show,

Undeclared. They sent me all these videos of his previous show, *Freaks & Geeks*, and the writing was just so smart and funny and surreal too, but it was grounded in a reality. I wrote a song for it, but Judd told me it wasn't bad enough. I like to make people laugh, but some of my songs aren't designed to do that, but are somehow rooted in a kind of truthfulness and I think Judd does that in his movies. Even when they seem the most silliest, there's a kind of underlying strain of truth about it.

How inconvenient was the "new Bob Dylan" tag?

Sandy Denton, Connecticut, USA
It was both good and bad. From a practical point of view, it helped me get a record deal. But aside from the fact I play the same five chords he plays, there aren't many similarities. Who else was a 'new Dylan'? John Prine, Steve Forbert, Elliott Murphy. Bruce. I made a joke about how we're all in a 12-step programme and we meet in Buenos Aires once a year, or Bruce's house as his is the biggest.

How do you look back now on a song like "Motel Blues"?

Norm Jones, New York
I think it is a song that holds up, although when I wrote it, and I was twenty-two or three, it was about trying to get laid. Now when I say come up to my motel room it's usually, "Can you show me how to work the WiFi?" There's a kind of clutch of very early songs of mine which lasted and which I still sing in the shower. "Be Careful There's A Baby In The House" has lasted too. I wrote that before I had any children and I knew better, but it holds up pretty good. I'd say those two are still in rotation.

STAR QUESTION



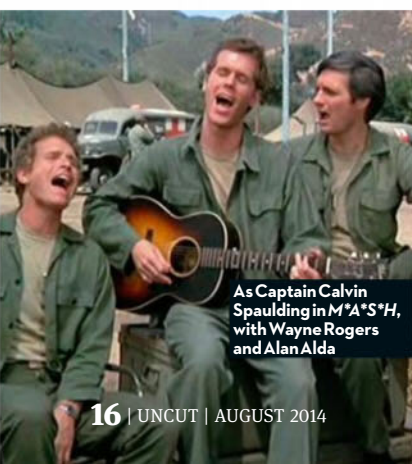
Now that all your children are grown, would you have liked it if they had paid more attention or less attention to your songs and your career?

Martha Wainwright
I'll take all the attention I can get. Quick answer. I want my grandchildren to pay attention to me, too. Is there a longer answer to that? No, there isn't. ☺

***Haven't Got The Blues (Yet)* is released by Proper Records on July 28**



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



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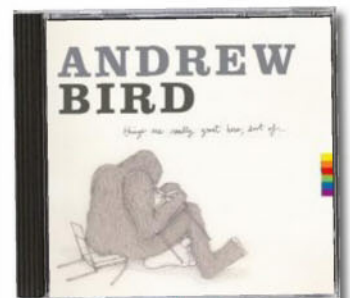
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Teenage runaway,
train-jumping hobo
and, now, the radical new
hero of American roots music.
Meet **Alynda Lee Segarra**
and New Orleans' remarkable
**Hurray For The
Riff Raff...**

Story: John Mulvey

Have love, will
travel: Alynda
Lee Segarra



ONE WARM LUNCHTIME in early May, New Orleans does not seem a particularly dangerous place.

The French Quarter is full, as usual, with tourists brandishing

frozen daiquiris, ambling past the voodoo stores and buskers. At the edge of the district, a guide shepherds her tour party out of this bohemian theme park and across Rampart Street. “Now,” she says, “you can tell your friends at home you actually left the French Quarter.” Ten minutes later they return, unbloodied.

Beyond the tourist zone, all appears peaceful. In the Lower Ninth District, still recovering nearly a decade after Hurricane Katrina, nothing moves on the levee overlooking the Mississippi. A few minutes’ drive away in the St Roch neighbourhood, Music Street is just as quiet. We cruise past the old house of Alynda Lee Segarra, fulcrum of Hurray For The Riff Raff and one of the most distinctive voices to have emerged from New Orleans – and, perhaps, from the US – in the last few years. While Segarra was living there, in 2010, the area endured one of the city’s periodic explosions of violence: a series of murders, rapes and home invasions concentrated on the streets between Franklin and St Roch Avenues. Among the victims was Jon Flee, 27, a hobo and artist whom Segarra had known since she was 15. He had been shot in the head by, police believed, a 16-year-old on a spree that included two more murders that same night.

“When the sun goes down, it’s different here,” says Segarra. “I’m from New York, and when I first came to New Orleans I thought I was tough, but it was nothing like what I’d ever experienced. In New York, I got mugged twice but never really felt that afraid. I always felt there was some kind of order glueing everything together. But in New Orleans, especially after the storm, people have to go through such hardship and injustice, and it just gets rid of that order. It makes the anger so strong, the confusion so strong.”

The fifth Riff Raff LP, *Small Town Heroes*, contains a song called “St Roch Blues”, a spare, haunted doo-wop written and sung by Segarra with her sometime bandmate and former boyfriend, Sam Doores; a eulogy for Flee and the many other casualties of this mystical, unsettling city. Segarra’s songs often capture the romance of New Orleans, and her own unusual story – how the punk daughter of New York’s Deputy Mayor away at 17, hopped trains across country and reinvented herself singing folk ballads of a modern, complex South – has the alluring quality of a myth.

New Orleans’ charm is easy to understand. It is a city steeped in history and culture, where young musicians can live out an escapist fantasy, hustling from the buskers’ domain on Royal Street to the clubs of Frenchmen Street, from one impromptu and surprisingly lucrative performance to the next. But at the same time, the messier fundamentals of New Orleans make it a hard place to hide from reality. 155 people were murdered there in 2013.

“St Roch Blues” comes loaded with a sorrowful warning to those dreamers who might follow Segarra’s path. “*Baby please don’t go down to New Orleans*,” she harmonises with Doores, “*Cause you don’t know the things I seen*.” One day, Segarra saw a 15-year-old boy get shot just across the road from her house, in the middle of a block party. “His grandmother told us there were some kids who were upset he wouldn’t join their gang,” she says.

“That was a big wake-up call. ‘St Roch Blues’ is about my



Yosi Perlstein

“Most straight people probably don’t immediately think we’re a queer band”

Yosi Perlstein

I'M YOUR FAN

Hurray! BRITTANY HOWARD of the ALABAMA SHAKES pays tribute to the Riff Raff

“We’re all really big fans of Hurray For The Riff Raff. We’ve become close friends over the years and we loved playing with them when we toured through the States together. We love Alynda’s songwriting, it’s very genuine. They are all great players and continue to get better every time I see them. It’s the real deal.”



outsider’s perspective and feeling naïve. We’re singing, ‘Don’t come to New Orleans,’ but really what we’re trying to say is, ‘Don’t come ignoring that there needs to be help here, that the storm happened, that there are people who are struggling.’ That’s what I’d like to get out, especially to young buskers who come here: ‘Be aware of the pain that people went through, and respect that pain.’”

ALYNDAA LEE SEGARRA has the temperament of a wanderer, but she has been embedded in the culture of New Orleans for the best part of a decade and, just back from a month on tour, she is plainly glad to be home. She has returned a star, of sorts. After years of low-key preparation, the first half of 2014 saw a dramatic spike in the Riff Raff’s fortunes. *Small Town Heroes* has been by some distance their most fêted record, with the calm, tender authority of Segarra’s voice and songs eliciting comparisons with Gillian Welch. A couple of days ago, the band made their network TV debut on Conan O’Brien’s chat show. Tonight, they will support Charles Bradley in a rowdy French Quarter club with bordello styling. Tomorrow’s agenda involves an afternoon slot at the city’s massive annual Jazzfest, and a headline show, supported by hill country gospel singers, in a Presbyterian Church.

This afternoon, though, the 27-year-old Segarra is pondering whether to order something called a Green Eggs’n’Ham Sandwich, and trying to regain her bearings. She is sat in the back room of her manager Andy Bizer’s offices in the Bywater district: a space that incorporates Bizer’s legal practice, the Riff Raff nerve centre, and his wife’s art studio. Across Segarra’s knuckles, tattoos spell out the word “Songbird”, dating from her late teens and a time when she barely considered herself a singer, let alone a songwriter: “It was like I was making a self-prophecy,” she suggests. Her latest piece of body art depicts a matchbook. “This is my Bob Dylan tattoo,” she says. “*Strike another match, go start anew...*”

Segarra got her first tattoo at her 17th birthday party in New York; a drawing of Frida Kahlo on her arm, with the title of her favourite Kahlo painting, ‘The broken column rebuilds itself’, written alongside in Spanish. The next day, she left town. “I had this incredible urge to get the fuck out. I’d known travellers forever and I was living part-time at this squat in Brooklyn [*Jon Flee was another resident*]. I wasn’t going to school anymore and my aunt was obviously



Segarra: "Bessie Smith was my idol for so long..."



Soul connection: Why Are We Building Such A Big Ship? performing at Marvelous Records, West Philadelphia, PA, November 24, 2008

extremely worried about me. New York was so expensive and I just kept thinking, 'I'll never survive here.' My mother seemed to be such a great professional person, but I didn't really know how to ever emulate that."

Her mother, Ninfa Segarra, had spent the '90s as Deputy Mayor of NYC in Rudolf Giuliani's administration. "She grew up in

the projects in the Lower East Side and, especially as a Puerto Rican woman, she was such a trailblazer. There are definitely things I learned from her but, as a child, I wasn't necessarily interested in those things."

Alynda Lee actually spent the vast majority of her childhood living with her aunt in the Bronx projects, daydreaming about the vast empty spaces of Kansas and Montana. It was an unlikely fantasy for a misfit of Puerto Rican descent, hating school, victimised by classmates, obsessed with Marilyn Manson. Manson led to the Dead Kennedys and Bikini Kill and, by her early teens, Segarra was hanging out among the punks

"I learned that street music paid well in New Orleans"
Alynda Lee Segarra



Walt McClements aka Lonesome Leash

fantasy of hitching rides on freight trains across America. When she left New York at 17, a better sense of her own identity started to crystallise as she headed west to San Francisco and then, slowly, south towards New Orleans. "I was able to find the punk rockers and that felt like a step," she says, "and then I was able to find the travellers and that felt like a step, and then I met the people that put all that together for me and were honest and queer and feminist. That's when I felt like, well, I'm really with my people now."

Segarra identifies as queer herself – "I'm somebody who feels like my gender doesn't fit into this very solid idea of feminine and masculine" – and currently leads a band that joyfully debunks the idea of roots music being somewhat reactionary; a band as disdainful of old ideologies as they are respectful of old aesthetics. "I just want to play with people that I feel a soul connection and a musical connection with," she continues. "And that soul connection means you have to be a very open-minded person who understands this feminist and queer idea of what we'd like the world to be."

"Most straight people probably don't immediately think we're a queer band," says Yosi Perlstein, the transgender violinist and drummer who emerged out of the

ALLEYN EVANS, KEVIN RILEY

HURRAY MINTS

GOOD TIME BLUES

Hurray For The Riff Raff Album by Album...



IT DON'T MEAN I DON'T LOVE YOU

SELF-RELEASED, 2008

As with 2007's "Crossing The Rubicon" EP, Walt McClements adds a gypsyish swagger to Alynda Lee Segarra's prodigious first compositions. "Daniella" and "Here It Comes" remain mainstays of the Riff Raff live set.

SEGARRA: "It's very dark and minor key, very circusy." McCLEMENTS: "The sound that was popular on our little scene in New Orleans was heavy on the waltz. A lot of whimsical arrangement choices."



YOUNG BLOOD BLUES

SELF-RELEASED, 2010
McClements' last album with

Segarra, as the influence of country music discreetly increases. Highlights of the first two Riff Raff albums were compiled for an eponymous UK release (Loose, 2011).

SEGARRA: "I was relying on Walt a lot. I didn't really believe in myself enough. You can hear we're at the crossroads on that record on songs like 'Take Me' and 'Young Blood Blues' itself. I'm struggling to go in that direction."



LOOK OUT MAMA

BORN TO WIN/ LOOSE, 2012

The mature breakthrough, as Segarra's emerging love for Townes Van Zandt comes to the fore. Elegant barnstormers proliferate: "Little Black Star",

"Ode To John And Yoko", the country-surf "Lake Of Fire". The cover star is Segarra's father, pictured while serving as a teenager in Vietnam.

SEGARRA: "When Sam [Doores] and Dan [Cutler] started playing with us we were finally able to say, 'OK, now let's actually learn how to play and write a country song.' It was really exciting to be forced into this new genre."

MY DEAREST DARKEST NEIGHBOR

MOD MOBILIAN/ THIS IS AMERICAN MUSIC, 2013

Recorded at the same time as Look Out Mama, a spare covers set that reveals the evolving musical influences on the band. Lennon ("Jealous Guy") and Van Zandt ("Delta Momma Blues") figure, alongside Joni Mitchell, Billie Holiday, Lead Belly, Hank Williams and, critically, two songs by Gillian Welch.

SEGARRA: "I like to write out the

lyrics of songs that really inspire me: it teaches you how it feels to write that song, it teaches you a lot about phrasing."



SMALL TOWN HEROES

ATO, 2014

This year's masterpiece, as Segarra's original songs take on the simplicity and gravity of standards. SEGARRA: "Someone will say, 'You can't talk about being down by the river anymore!' Why not? It's a great phrase. It would be silly of me to think I could completely invent a new phrase in a folk song. Why not just work with the best?" DOORES: "Alynda is able to take her most important feelings, and put them in this really simple, vulnerable way that makes them universal. Every step of her life has been a big change, and there'll be a song that captures that and gets her to the next level."



The Riff Raff live at One Eyed Jacks, New Orleans, 2014

travelling community to become Segarra's right-hand man in 2009. "I'm guessing over time they realise, 'Oh, they're actually political and queer,' then we're able to subversively say, 'See? It's OK, we can do this too!' That's my hope."

AT JAZZFEST THE next afternoon, Perlstein's hope is made explicit. Though their songs may often touch on sadness and politics, the Riff Raff are also a mighty effective good-time band, exuberant enough to sustain the momentum generated by the act that immediately precedes them on the bill; storied New Orleans institution the Hot 8 Brass Band. "A big part of what drew me to trad jazz is Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey," Segarra says. "There are a lot of songs where they talk about queer topics, about getting dressed up like a man, going out on the town and hitting on women. Bessie Smith was my idol for so long, like, 'Man, I wanna be fearless like this lady.'"

When she first rolled into the Crescent City, the best part of a decade ago, Segarra started off playing washboard in itinerant jazz bands; ad hoc, revolving collectives with names like Loose Marbles, Tuba Skinny and the boisterous Dead Man's Street Orchestra, who gained a certain notoriety from a *Time* photo-essay portraying them as hobo urchins. "I got arrested bumming for money on Bourbon Street," says Segarra, "and I just felt, Oh God, I've got to figure this out. When I started playing music, I didn't have to spare-change anymore. I wanted a goal, and when I found music, that was when it all clicked into place."

"I learned that street music paid well here and that it was respected. There definitely is this idea that if you're playing on the street you're taking part in New Orleans culture. If you're learning the music of New Orleans, the traditional jazz, a lot of people appreciate it and tip their hats to you for doing that."

Segarra would flit from band to band, part of a theatrical, amorphous scene, setting up camp on Royal Street at 4am to secure the best busking spots. Walt McClements, currently recording as Lonesome Leash, first came across her playing washboard and remembers "a shy, kind of reserved, wonderful musician. Some people just have a nice feel for

anything they pick up." She fell in with McClements' own band, the gypsyish Why Are We Building Such A Big Ship, and he eventually gave her "this shitty banjo I'd sort of destroyed, carving out part of the neck. The whole thing was bent and super hard to play. I don't know how nice a present it was."

The banjo, though, went back to New York with Segarra for a summer, and when she returned to New Orleans she'd written a bunch of songs that became the foundations of the Riff Raff. "I first heard her play a song or two in her friend's backyard," recalls McClements, "there was a party going on, and she played me some amazing songs way over in the corner. She'd demoed 20 songs in the span of a month back in New York. And then we started playing together."

Andy Bizer, the Riff Raff's manager, stumbled on the band when he caught them supporting Why Are We Building Such A Big Ship in 2007. The lineup featured banjo, accordion, trumpet, upright bass, autoharp, toy piano and suitcases for drums. "I was fucking floored," he says. "She was playing in this old-timey style, I didn't know if the songs were covers – were they Ma Rainey songs I didn't know? But they were all original." Segarra sold Bizer a CD-R out of her purse for \$20 – "I knew I was being hustled and I didn't give a fuck" – and he was soon her manager. "I said, 'Look, would you like to travel and hop trains and shit, and play music as a hobby? Or do you want to make a career out of this?' She said, 'Let's do it!'"

With McClements as main accomplice, two self-released LPs swiftly followed – *It Don't Mean I Don't Love You* (2008) and *Young Blood Blues* (2010) – that aligned Segarra's rapidly maturing songcraft with McClements' waltzing influence. Gradually, though, new ideas were feeding into Segarra's world, in the shape of folk aficionados Yosi Perlstein and a laconic guitarist from San Francisco via Kansas, Sam Doores.

SAM DOORES LIVES in a 19th-Century house made out of old barge wood, right next to the Mississippi levee. There is a woodworking shop at the rear, and a campfire where songwriters seem to cluster even one early May afternoon. For a good while the house, in the

CHANGING MAN

"I'M OBSESSED WITH JOHN LENNON"

ALYNDA LEE SEGARRA on an unlikely feminist hero

There's an interview with John Lennon on *The Dick Cavett Show* with Yoko Ono that is one of my favourite interviews of all time, because it's him talking "about how he was so fucked up. It's incredible one of the biggest rock stars ever wasn't afraid to be on television and say, 'I look up to my artist wife who is an Asian woman who everyone ridicules. She has taught me about feminism and I feel like I need to change.' That, I think, is such an incredible journey for men to go on. I'm the type of feminist who believes men, especially straight men, need to be a part of the feminist movement. Because it needs men looking at what they've done and saying, 'I am willing to change, I am willing to look at life in a new way and question what I've been taught.'"



Lennon and Yoko on *Dick Cavett*, September 11, 1971



Sam Doores:
"Violent, terrible
things happen here"

Holy Cross area of the Lower Ninth Ward, was also home to Segarra, immortalised in the rousing "End Of The Line" on *Small Town Heroes*.

"It's pretty awesome to be right next to the Mississippi river," says Doores. "It's a dream to watch the sun go down over New Orleans and feel like you're a bit removed from the city and the madness. It's a neighbourhood where some violent, terrible things happen, but it's not a chaotic neighbourhood."

Doores and his housemates pay \$800 a month for the whole place – cheap enough for busking, jobbing musicians to subsist on the generosity of the tourists down on Royal Street. "When Walt went off to do his own thing," he says, "that was right around the time I was showing Alynda some Townes Van Zandt, Hank Williams, Dylan and The Band, Woody Guthrie. She started learning the acoustic guitar and writing songs that were more in that vein. My band at the time were just starting – we were called The Tumbleweeds [now renamed *The Deslondes*] – and we went on a big tour where we opened up for the Riff Raff in 2010. She was looking for musicians, and me and Dan Cutler, my bass player, started playing with her. New Orleans' street music scene is very well-respected, and it's more geared towards trad jazz bands, swing bands, jug bands. Alynda and I wanted to focus on original music, and play in New Orleans as much as possible, but also take it out into the world. She had the strongest ambition for that of any musician I've met in town."

Doores figures on three excellent Riff Raff LPs: *Look Out Mama* (2012), the covers album *My Dearest Darkest Neighbor* (2013), and this year's *Small Town Heroes*. He and Segarra were also a longtime couple before splitting up – amicably, it seems – last autumn. "It got too hard," he says, "to keep a relationship together with all the changes going on."

"We were in a six-year relationship and it was a really incredible journey," says Segarra, "learning about ourselves as artists and people. I was learning about the way I wanted to present my gender and, y'know, my queerness in the world. The ages of 20 to 26 are so huge. You grow so much and we were travelling all the time, not seeing each other. It felt like a very artistic relationship: very hard in all the good ways, and hard in all the bad ways, too."

Doores remains, though, a critical member of the Riff Raff family. Judging by a walk down Frenchmen Street with Andy Bizer, every other scenester seems to have passed through the band for a tour or two ("I was drinking too much," contributes one former bassist

ruefully, before cycling off to sell his paintings to tourists). And while the current five-piece lineup is the most dedicated and stable yet, it is still malleable enough for Doores to figure in a stripped-back Riff Raff, alongside Segarra and Perlstein, for a run of UK dates in late May.

He also turns up onstage, with a couple of his Deslondes bandmates, at the First Presbyterian church concert ("Jesus wants you to enjoy the beer available at the back," announces the priest, a very New Orleans touch). It is a casual, wonderful show, as musicians come and go around the still, magnetic centre of Segarra. There is carousing, knee-slapping and a singalong cover of "Be My Baby", all interspersed with songs of heartbreak and

injustice, that draw on the rich tradition of American folk music and find poignant new ways to update it. One extraordinary unrecorded tune, "Everybody Knows", laments the shooting of Trayvon Martin in Florida two years ago. Another takes the Johnny Cash standard, "The Ballad Of Ira Hayes", a song about an alcoholic WWII hero, and rewrites it to discuss the travails of a gay Vietnam Vet.

Best of all, perhaps, there's the centrepiece of *Small Town Heroes*, "The Body Electric", wherein Segarra draws on the drama of classic murder ballads while questioning the misogyny that underpins so many of them, adding an inspired new moral imperative. The song's title comes from the Walt Whitman poem, but alludes to the woman who died after being gang-raped on a Delhi bus in 2012: the name used for her, Damini, translates as "lightning". She is memorialised in the LP's sleevenotes, alongside a travelling

friend of Segarra's, Sali Grace, who was raped and killed in 2008 in Mexico, and "all others we've lost to sexual violence". "I was on tour," recalls Segarra, "in a bar listening to a guy sing a song about killing his girlfriend for cheating on him. At the end, everyone cheered and I was horrified, thinking, 'You have no idea what you're singing about.' Y'know, someone writes a song in an old form 'cos they think that's what they're supposed to do. They're not singing from their heart about something they know about, they're just trying to sound tough and get attention. It made me so angry, it just made me feel like I'm gonna take this whole form and sing about what I know..."

"When you sing about killing women," she says and, as in her songs, her measured tone only increases the power of her words, "I'm thinking about you killing me, and you killing my friends. And I'm thinking about you killing the girl that I knew who is dead now. Y'know?"

Small Town Heroes is available now on ATO Records



Segarra: "I wanted
a goal..."

"Not singing
from the heart
makes me
so angry"
Alynda Lee Segarra

PLAYING AWAY

SMALL TOWN'S OTHER HEROES

Three key albums
from the extended
Riff Raff family

SUNDOWN SONGS

Far From Home

CD BABY, 2009



The title of the New Orleans collective's '08 debut, *Like A Jazz Band In*

Nashville, set out their MO. Alongside the excellent Kate Cavazos, this second album incorporates Segarra and Doores into their country songwriting bootcamp. **SEGARRA:** "Multiple songwriters all together played country music that was a little bit weird. They really encouraged me to write."

SAM DOORES, RILEY DOWNING & THE TUMBLEWEEDS Holy Cross Blues

DOLLARTONE, 2012



The first release from Doores' own fine country band. Now

renamed The Deslondes, they've incorporated a third singer, Cameron Snyder, to complement the talents of Doores and Downing. Doores' solo comp, *True To My Luck: The Early Years*, is also worth tracking down on bandcamp.com for deep Dylan-in-the-Village vibes.

LONESOME LEASH

One Foot In Front
Of The Other

BANDCAMP.COM, 2013



The latest project of key Riff Raff alumnus Walt McClements

confirms him as an indie boulevardier who merits comparisons with Beirut and perhaps even early Arcade Fire.

Story: Nick Hasted
Photography: Paul Ronan

“GETTING HIT BY A CAR... YOU GET USED TO IT!”

In a North London pub backyard, SHANE MacGOWAN arrives at midnight and collides with a shed. Over the course of a long night, however, a more complex and surprising picture of the indestructible Pogues legend emerges. Is he working on new songs? Teaching young singers “how to drink responsibly”? Going to the gym and watching what he eats? “I’ve got to get back into proper shape,” he notes, just before passing out. . .



IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT when Shane MacGowan walks into the backyard of the Boogaloo pub in north London, hugs the barmaid, and promptly crashes into a shed. He's helped by the arm into the bar, owned by his friend and business manager Gerry O'Boyle. For most of the customers in the pub it's closing time, but MacGowan's night is only just beginning. Fresh off a flight from Dublin, he settles into a sofa with a couple of old friends and a large gin'n'tonic. After a while, O'Boyle and the barmaid leave. The jukebox murmurs on, playing Ian Dury,

The Clash, The Pogues, and records that resonate deep into the singer's past. *Uncut* has arrived just in time for a lock-in with Shane MacGowan. We'll still be here in 11 hours' time.

The altercation with the shed aside, the 56-year-old MacGowan cuts a surprisingly sturdy, even healthy figure. His bar-room pallor is offset by a full rocker's quiff dyed jet-black, black suit, DMs and an open-necked white shirt. He looks like the *Reservoir Dogs*' Irish cousin. Joining MacGowan's table, *Uncut* hands him a first edition of *Brendan Behan's Island*. MacGowan is delighted with the gift. "He was my parents' generation, you know," he says fondly. "He was from an IRA background, like me. When he joined the IRA, the first thing he had to do was learn Irish, so a lot of the way he writes – it's true of Joyce as well, and all of the 20th-Century Irish writers – they write direct translation from Irish, with its rhythm. I learnt that rhythm from my family. I spent most of my early life learning songs, and learning history from the people who made the Republic. Irish culture was very strong when I was growing up in the '60s – like him," he says, pointing at the Behan book. "He was sentenced to death twice, until they realised that he was the best publicity they could get. For Irish culture, and its superiority to, erm..."

To English culture?

"To English culture," he laughs.

SHANE MACGOWAN WAS born in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, on Christmas Day 1957. He spent his first six years living at his parents' farmhouse outside Nenagh, County Tipperary with "three generations of Fenians". Then, in 1963, the MacGowans made the first of their periodic moves back to England. But he's been living back in the Nenagh farmhouse for the last decade with his longtime partner Victoria Clarke; he also rents a flat in the swish Dublin neighbourhood of Donybrook. Dublin, though, is losing its allure. The Pogues, with whom he's about to play a massive Hyde Park gig as main support to The Libertines, don't fill him with joy, either. "I just meant to do one gig, to get out of a bind," he says of their initial 2001 reunion, 10 years after the band sacked him for drunken unreliability. "I didn't intend it to go on this long. No, this is it. This is the last year. They're all interesting gigs – Hyde Park with The Libertines, supporting. I love supporting – blow the fuckers off!" He gives his trademark hissing laugh. "The money is ridiculously good. But I'm not interested in that. I always put everything into it, and so do the rest of 'em. But there were a whole lot of things going on when we started that you can never get back. The countrybilly thing, marching, running away from the police! But I'm 56 now, so I want to start working out, going to the gym a couple of hours every day. Anyway, this is the last gig."

Why has he kept at it so long, then? The Pogues have been back together 13 years now. "Have they?" he says glumly. "Well, I don't count things in numbers. Our audiences are incredibly loyal, and incredibly into it. But I've got a bunch of new guys, a band that are really good – they do their own thing, and they've got their own name – the Cronins. They phoned me up, and I want to do some more recording."

"It's something that we hear quite often," The Pogues' Spider Stacy tells me later, when discussing

The Pogues in 1984: (l-r) Jem Finer, MacGowan, Andrew Ranken, Cait O'Riordan, James Fearnley, Spider Stacy



EYEWITNESS

A PEEK INSIDE THE STUDIO WITH SHANE MACGOWAN...

Johnny Cronin on the great man's inspirations: "An awful lot of tunes, an awful lot of movies..."

"He came down to the studio once," explains MacGowan's new bandmate Johnny Cronin. "He had a hurling stick with him, Paul McCartney's Russian rock'n'roll record, and Éamon de Valera's biography. He was prepared for the session!"

"We've been doing a lot of the writing up in his house in Tipperary. We'd go up and jam, and we'd listen to an awful lot of tunes: The Jesus And Mary Chain, the MC5, and a lot of Roxy Music, Them, the Pistols and Nick Cave. And Frank Patterson, an Irish tenor, and *The Year Of The French* by The Chieftains. He's obsessed with *Beatles For Sale*, the record and the look of The Beatles then. He's a great DJ, Shane. He's got a

record player in both his houses. He's played "Sweet Jane" with us at gigs, and Lou Reed's a very big influence, too. We watched *The Making Of Transformer* – oh, Jesus, a lot of times! And Van's *Astral Weeks: Live At The Hollywood Bowl*. You'd listen to the tunes and see what influenced him. You've got to watch an awful lot of movies with Shane. *The Departed* is a really big one with him, and *Mean Streets*, and Clint Eastwood Westerns. We watched *The Company Of Wolves* a little while back. And he loved *Midnight In Paris*, the Woody Allen film. He loves watching *The Quiet Man*, too. So you're watching movies, and you're listening to music. Then when the jams happen at the house, we're ripe. He's

great in the studio. He drinks tea – sober, pure professional. And his voice is in great shape.

"I think Johnny Depp wants to play guitar on the album. Shane's going to Mick Jones now to see if Mick will produce it..."



Johnny Cronin, Shane MacGowan and Mick Cronin

MacGowan with
The Nips, Soho, 1979

EYEWITNESS

“HE WAS VERY
MUCH A GURU...”Singer Candice
Gordon on being
produced by Shane

In 2013, MacGowan produced “Before The Sunset Fades”, the debut EP of young Irish singer Candice Gordon. “I was working in a night-club, and he was in one night, and we struck up a friendship,” Gordon explains. “He’s a very positive person. He’s influenced me to go with what the world gives you. He wrote in one of my birthday cards a while ago, ‘Do What You Want’.

“This EP was the first time I’d recorded, and I think the first time he’d produced. He was very much a guru. He didn’t engineer it, but he’d have a lot of creative ideas about melody and rhythm, and he was very outside the box.

“He came in one day and I was asleep on the sofa while the engineer was working, and he gave me a bollocking! There’s a limited view of him as being a mess, and he’s absolutely not. He’s very erudite about everything, sober or not.

“When I was younger, he’d tell me I was drinking too fast. So he knows how to drink responsibly! I’d be knocking them back, and he’d be saying, ‘You can’t do that. You’ll just end up a mess...’”

MacGowan’s apparently imminent exit. “It’s great that he’s talking about the gym, though. I do know that he’s thinking much more positively. This talk of wanting to get on with other music is a sign of that, too.”

Johnny and Michael Cronin, formerly of Irish chart mod-pop band The Aftermath, first worked with MacGowan on the unofficial European Championship Irish football song “The Rocky Road To Poland”, and then again on the soundtrack to *The Lone Ranger*, where they cut a new version of “Poor Paddy On The Railway”, a traditional song covered by The Pogues on *Red Roses For Me*. Johnny Cronin confirms MacGowan’s claims of both renewed musical and athletic activity. “He’s getting into rowing now,” he laughs. “He actually watches what he eats, too. It’s cool, for a man who’s had a few shandies, he does look good. Like Nick Cave. He’s really into his clothes, this is the main thing. You have to pass a test to be in the band, with how you dress. And we have started rehearsing and writing for a new record.”

IT’S GONE 1.30AM in the Boogaloo. We’ve been talking with MacGowan for an hour, but he’s a reluctant interview, unwilling to make eye contact. “Shane’s a shy man,” O’Boyle told me earlier, “with a small circle of friends.” Finally, he calls querulously over to the two accomplices who are still here. “Where’s Annie and Monroe gone? Will you come back?” They do, and comfortable with a familiar audience, MacGowan suddenly hits both ribald and thoughtful form.

“This is the Johnstons, ‘The Curragh Of Kildare,’” he says as an Irish folk tune comes on the jukebox.

“I saw the Johnstons throw up onstage in Liberty Hall in about 1968,” remembers Monroe, a sixtiesomething Irishman in a leather jacket.

“I’ve thrown up onstage,” MacGowan says approvingly. “It’s even better if you get it on the audience. Anyway, the one they’re doing there is ‘The Curragh Of Kildare’, which I sort of

accidentally borrowed the tune from for The Pogues’ ‘White City’, a song about the [West London] dog-track they knocked down.”

Since returning to Ireland, MacGowan has often talked dismissively of London. But The Pogues were always a great London band, as much as an Irish one. “Yeah, yeah,” he says enthusiastically. “We were a London-based Irish rock’n’roll band. There was a whole scene happening at the time. It wouldn’t have happened in Ireland. They were love-hate songs to London, and to the people in it. I’d describe London as being violent and scummy. But I like that,” he cackles. “But London isn’t the same, is it? I’m asking, because I spend hardly any time here. They don’t have an all-night cinema any more, do they? I used to go every fucking night to the Scala in King’s Cross. I used to fucking live there. I remember the cinema skinheads,” he cackles. “I pissed on them.”

MacGowan’s early memories of being an Irish immigrant back in the country of his birth are, though, at best mixed. There are other London-Irish songwriters from close to where we’re sitting – John Lydon, Ray Davies – who’ve adopted largely English identities. But despite spending so many formative years here, MacGowan was never tempted to do the same. “Well, I’m Irish,” he says simply. “I was brought up by Fenians. I was told, ‘Watch out for the fucking Brits – them bastards!’ That was true when I came over here, and it’s still true – all the ‘no blacks, no dogs, no Irish’. That was true. You were hated.”

Did that make MacGowan hate back? “Yes.”

What were the worst things that happened to him in London? “Some of it had to do with being Irish, some of it had to do with the bloody fucking Met. I got my head kicked

“I ALWAYS FEEL
GUILTY I DIDN’T
LAY DOWN MY LIFE
FOR IRELAND”

in fucking millions of times in the ’70s and ’80s. But so did lots of people. There was a lot of violence. It was a lot of fun! Getting beaten up, or getting hit by a car... you get used to it, y’know. You bounce off. Hitting a motorway doesn’t really register ‘til later. What would life be like without violence?” he sighs dreamily. “And dancing. And late-night things...”

MacGowan’s scholarship to study literature at Westminster public school ended when he was discovered taking drugs aged 14, in 1971. Then his mother had a nervous breakdown, while he went back and forth to Ireland. “There was no nuclear family or any of that crap,” he states. “I was cooking for the family, and then doing the night-life. I had a whale of a time. And an even better time in Ireland. But I eventually had a nervous breakdown. Or a fake one. I was sectioned for six months in Bethlehem Hospital. Before that, I was put on 100 mg of Valium a day. I was on a cloud. I felt much better. It was straight after I came out of the loony bin that I saw the Sex Pistols. I felt, this is the band that I’ve been waiting for. Because I’d been cutting my hair. A lot of people were cutting their hair.”

Did punk and the Pistols give him a sense of purpose?

“Yeah, they gave me a sense of purpose to fucking smash things up, and fucking hit people in the head with pool-cues if they said about a girl I was with – ‘Where’d you get her, in the zoo?’ I was very angry, after being locked up in the fucking loony bin for fucking six months. There were some horrible things going on in there. But I managed to dodge most of them.”





The reunited Pogues at the Paris Olympia, September 2012

MacGowan's small role in punk was captured by an *NME* photo of him at a Clash gig in 1977, bleeding profusely from a wound to his ear. As Monroe delivers another large G&T from the bar, MacGowan reminisces happily about the high summer of punk in 1976.

"It was the worst drought ever," he explains. "I was working in a bar, and people were collapsing on the street from the heat. I'd been sectioned, and nicked God knows how many times. And most of my friends were the same. And the Pistols came along, and they were a catalyst. And of course the IRA were bombing the fuck out of the place, London and the south-east and Birmingham – all the places where Irish people lived!" he laughs. "Gorgeous! And whether you're on their side or not, it caused a few rows anyway. And then the gravediggers went on strike, and the binmen, and everybody else was unemployed. It was fucking wonderful. Drugs and sex and violence!"

This cavalier talk of the IRA's '70s bombing campaigns recalls something MacGowan wrote in his autobiography: "I always feel guilty that I didn't lay down my life for Ireland. I'm ashamed that I didn't have the guts to join the IRA. The Pogues were my way of overcoming that guilt."

So was that your philosophy when you started The Pogues in 1983? "I was talking rubbish," says MacGowan. "Actually, I was told not to get involved in the Provisionals. I was brought up in an Official IRA family – they didn't like the indiscriminate bombing, the stupid bombing. They didn't like the punishment squads. The people that brought me up told me to steer clear of that. And do it with the music."

John Lydon remembers seeing MacGowan wearing a Union Jack T-shirt at the front of Pistols gigs, which seems out of character. "Haven't you ever seen pictures of Johnny Lydon in a Union Jack T-shirt?" MacGowan protests. "Mine was a real Carnaby St '67 job. I wore it to all The Jam gigs, 'cos I knew Paul Weller would crack sooner or later and give me a ridiculous amount of money for it. He offered me a Rickenbacker. I said, 'No, I couldn't part with it.' I'd got it from this old tramp. I was trying to get the most I could, and eventually he offered me £500. I said, 'You're done!'" he laughs. "Half a grand for a fucking mod shirt!"

THE POGUES' SPlicing of Irish traditional music with punk resulted in three tremendous albums – *Red Roses For Me* (1984), *Rum, Sodomy And The Lash* (1985) and *If I Should Fall From Grace With God* (1988). MacGowan wrote at least a dozen songs that became part of the Irish folk canon he so reveres. But two weaker Pogues LPs, and two with his next band the Popes, have been followed by 15 years of conspicuous creative silence.

It's 3am in the Boogaloo now, and MacGowan is finally starting to slur a little. He explains that, between fees for Pogues gigs and royalties from "Fairytale Of New York", most days find him free to do what he wants. What does that entail?

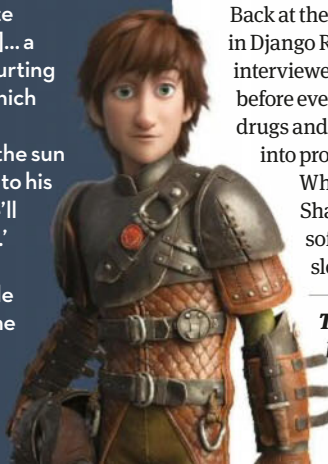
"Propping up a bar!" he laughs.

EYEWITNESS

VIKINGS! DRAGONS! GERARD BUTLER!

The inside story on Shane's first original lyric in 15 years...

Shane's creative comeback, "For The Dancing And The Dreaming", has surfaced, improbably, in *How To Train Your Dragon 2* – sung by a cartoon Viking voiced by Gerard Butler, to a tune co-written by Sigur Ros' Jónsi. "I'd been talking about the song feeling timeless," the film's writer/director Dean DeBlois says. "I kept referencing the lyrical poignancy of 'Fairytale...', 'Rain Street', and 'Misty Morning, Albert Bridge'. I said, 'We need someone who can write lyrics like Shane.' Our composer, John Powell, offered, 'Then why not ask Shane?' To our surprise, he was keen. This is part of the text I sent Shane: 'At a key moment... Stoick [Gerard Butler] whistles, then clumsily sings an old Viking ditty to his long-lost wife, Valka [Cate Blanchett]... a playful courting song, in which the man promises the sun and moon to his lady, if she'll have him...' Shane's a remarkable poet and he nailed it."



What's the main pleasure of that?

"It's the grabbing of a woman round the crotch and taking her round the back, and giving her one," he deadpans. "It's having my teeth kicked down my throat."

But how else does he spend his time? Does he still read a lot?

There's an incredulous silence. Then MacGowan howls with laughter. "I don't get a lot of time to read when I'm drinking and getting my teeth kicked down my throat, and fucking women, and beating up the guys who kicked my teeth down my throat, you know. You

don't get an awful lot of time for leafing through first editions of fucking 'Paradise Lost'."

Needless to say, this isn't totally true. Nick Cave thinks MacGowan's drinking is a red herring. "I don't view Shane in terms of drink or drug consumption," Cave tells me. "He's my friend. Loyal, generous, very fucking funny. Shane wrote some of the most beautiful songs ever. He's also done some of the most heart-stopping performances I've ever seen. Who can say that about themselves?"

Johnny Cronin also dismisses MacGowan's claim that he's a bookless boozehound these days. "Oh Jesus, what he'll teach you about Irish history, and [Éamon] de Valera," he laughs. "He teaches me all my history. And he's big into his writers. He gave us a copy of *Brendan Behan's New York*, he's reading Behan a lot. There's a great DVD called *Take The High Road*, and it's all those RTE TV archives from the 1950s and '60s of trad sessions from all over the country, and Shane was watching them, too – you could hear where some of the tunes had come from, for the writing he's doing."

"I've written a few songs, yeah," MacGowan reluctantly confirms. "But I've been going through a mental block..."

Once asked Jerry Dammers about why it had been over 30 years since he'd released a new song. He said, "It's hard to top 'Ghost Town'." Is there a bit of that with MacGowan?

"What, he thinks it's hard to top 'Ghost Town'?" he splutters. "I have to top fucking 'Fairytale Of New York', it doesn't scare me! I'm already writing new stuff. When it's ready, you'll be informed."

"He's fond of Elgar's quote, that music is everywhere, it's just waiting to be plucked out of the air," Spider Stacy says, as he considers MacGowan's songwriting processes. "It happens when it happens."

Cronin is happy to confirm that it's happening now. "It's good to see, when the muse comes to him," he says. "He scribbles it down, when listening to records, or having a drink, or in the middle of the night – like automatic writing, like WB Yeats. He'll ask for paper and start scribbling, and you've got to get him then, while he's hot. You can see the words coming to him, like songs are in the air. And then the songs mean more, when you haven't gone looking for them yourself. And I think that's why they touch so many people. We've got 15 songs ready for an album. They're classic MacGowan."

Back at the Boogaloo, MacGowan is more interested in Django Reinhardt on the jukebox than being interviewed any more. Improbably, his last words before everything starts to blur, are: "You've gotta treat drugs and drinks with respect... I've got to get back into proper shape, you know..."

When Gerry O'Brien reopens his pub, he finds Shane MacGowan snoozing peacefully on the sofa. It's 11.15am. Punk's old hellraiser is still sleeping like a lamb. ☺

The Pogues support The Libertines at London's Hyde Park on July 5

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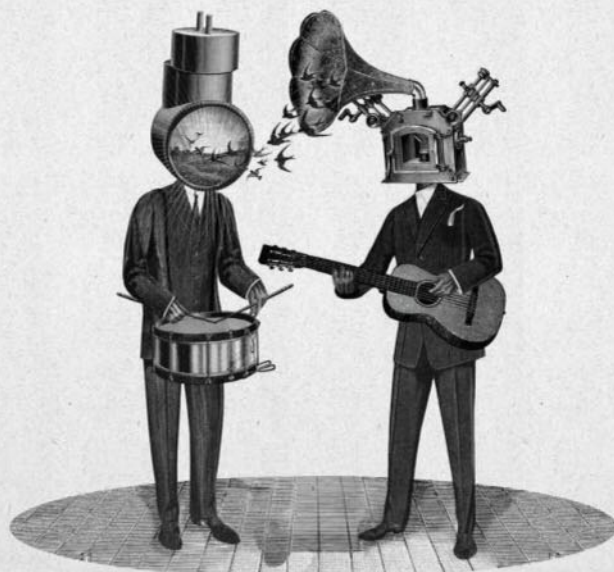
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June 2014. ERIC CLAPTON has just completed a new album, *The Breeze*, a tribute to his inspirational old friend, JJ Cale. But, as *Uncut* soon discovers, it is not just Cale's death that has put Clapton in a reflective mood. In a frank and moving interview, he confronts the messy past, the stable present, retirement, the prospect of diminishing powers and the reasons why touring has become "unbearable" to him. "In 10 or 15 years' time," he says, "driving will have become illegal!"



The end of the road?

Interview: Graeme Thomson
Photograph: Jack English



Slowhands on deck: Clapton at Shangri-La studio, Malibu, November 21, 1975

“I’M GETTING OLD, man,” sighs Eric Clapton, establishing a theme of sorts for the hour that follows, much of which will be dedicated to contemplating the “age thing” from a number of often surprising angles.

Clapton’s new album, *The Breeze*, a tribute to his late friend JJ Cale, will almost certainly be the last record he releases before he turns 70 in March, 2015. On the cusp of that landmark, and with Cale’s death last year still fresh in his mind, *Uncut* finds Clapton in unusually reflective mood as he sits down in London to talk through the priorities of a 69-year-old guitar legend in his 51st year as a professional musician. Thoughtful, articulate, and disarmingly honest, he roams over past and present preoccupations, pondering his “selfish pursuits” and musical shortcomings; the “volatile” dynamic of Cream; why touring has become “unbearable”; his physical decline; how marriage has, at last, brought the stability he craved for so long; and whether this has been, all in all, a life well lived.

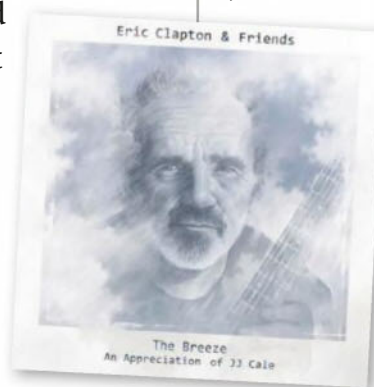
Certainly, if contentment can be attained through the gradual diminishing of worldly ambition, Clapton seems well on his way to achieving peace of mind. A combination of age and his willingness to embrace his responsibilities as a family man – Clapton married Melia McEnery in 2001, and they have three young daughters – has brought about a clear shift in his priorities. Bluesmen tend to go on for forever; Clapton insists he will not. More than once during a lengthy conversation he brings the subject around to the day – perhaps not so far away – when he will lay down his guitar for good. “I don’t want to have someone come up to me and say, ‘You know what? You shouldn’t be doing this any more,’” he says. “I’d rather come to that conclusion myself.”

These heavy intimations of the beginning of the end of one of the most celebrated careers in rock music lead to careful contemplation of his legacy, but first, there’s the matter of Clapton’s more recent activities. His last album, 2013’s *Old Sock*, was a gentle stroll through some of his favourite songs by other artists. *The Breeze* is a similarly retrospective affair,

this time focusing on the songs of just one enduring influence. In the press release for the new record he describes his role as that of a “messenger”, an idea that cleaves to the old blues tradition of being an interpreter rather than a writer.

UNCUT: Is that primarily how you see yourself?

ERIC CLAPTON: Being a writer is a full-time occupation. It requires a lot of discipline and it has to be the first thing





Old Sock and The Breeze are both covers albums. Neil Young has just released his covers album, and it looks like Bob Dylan is teeing up an old crooners record...

Is he? Oh, great...

...do you think it's inevitable that artists look back to their formative influences more frequently as they get older, and perhaps have less that they want to say?

They've probably got tons to say, but I think we all know that we have a shelf life. I've started doing it, with "The Folks Who Live On The Hill" and "Autumn Leaves" and all those things. These songs are deeply ingrained in my head, and I always think, 'Well, my version will be a blues version', because I don't really know how to play it. I don't want a glossy version of these standards. I would love to have heard Robert Johnson sing "Blue Moon", do you know what I mean? So my interpretation will always be an ignorant blues version, and I love that. When I heard one of Bob's albums a few albums back I knew he was copping an old song. It was an old Bing Crosby song that he'd rewritten, but the chord pattern was identical! I thought, 'I know where you're going. You're going back.' That's where a lot of it is – keep going back. Go back, go back, go back. Even as far as Purcell and Handel and Vivaldi, there's stuff back there that's so inspiring to rewrite and do versions of. Then again, I probably took on that messenger thing somehow to avoid being judged on my own merits. [Laughs heartily] "Don't shoot me, I'm just the messenger! Don't judge me, listen to what I'm trying to copy!" It's deflecting, you see.

That seems perhaps overly humble.

I don't know if it's humility. It may be avoidance tactics.

Avoidance of what?

Of having to work too hard. But, I don't know, it's an illusion to a certain extent to think that covering a song is going to be the easy way out. When you actually get down to it, you've still got to learn that song. I tried to do a version of "That Lucky Old Sun" – great song. I thought, 'Oh, I can do that.' That's always my foregone conclusion: 'Oh, I can do that.'

I'll just do it a bit like Ray Charles, but on the guitar.' But then you get on the floor, with a piano player who knows how to play it. Then I've got to learn those chords, and they don't sound right, and actually a whole other set of challenges come out that you hadn't thought about having to deal with. Like being able to sing the words like they mean something to you. So I have to then go inside the song and figure out a way to interpret it in a way that doesn't sound fake and just like any other old cover. Interpreting a song can be harder than writing one, is what I'm saying. To a certain extent I'm writing it off and saying, 'Well, that's the easy way out,' and I often think it is, but it can be tougher to make an old song come to life.

Do you aspire to writing one more killer song that would rival some of your classics?

No. [Pause] No. I'd just like now and again to write something that catches the ear – where someone goes, "What's that?" "Oh, you like it?" "Yeah, is that yours? It's good!" I think that my best song is "Believe In Life", which was on an

in your list of priorities – you go into a room and you have to come out at the end of the day with something. Well, I write so sporadically and sometimes nothing at all for year after year – but I've got to play. So what do I play? I improvise on a blues framework. I sit down and play a 12-bar blues every day or every other day, and then if something becomes apparent that's not a cliché – 'cos, you know, I'm the master of the cliché – I think, 'That might be useful,' and I'll put it on my phone and try to develop it. But it often doesn't get past the first stage. I've got dozens of voice memos that are never going to make it to the studio. So yes, I'm a messenger for the blues – still, I guess. If you look at any playlist on my iPod it's interlaced with Leroy Carr, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson, Son House. It's all like that, next to Nina Simone, next to Ray Charles, next to Rachmaninov or whatever it might be.

Are you actively interested in hearing new music?

Oh yeah. I watch Jools Holland a lot. I can't just do the radio, because it's all production, but the thing about Jool's show is that you see people interpreting their stuff, on the floor, live. I saw this guy the other night, Nick Mulvey, and I immediately bought the album. But the LP – as good as it is – is produced, whereas on the show he's just there playing with an acoustic, and I really loved that. I do keep my ear to the ground, but I don't think it's urgent. Most of the good stuff is still out there back in the past, and there's a lot still for me to discover.

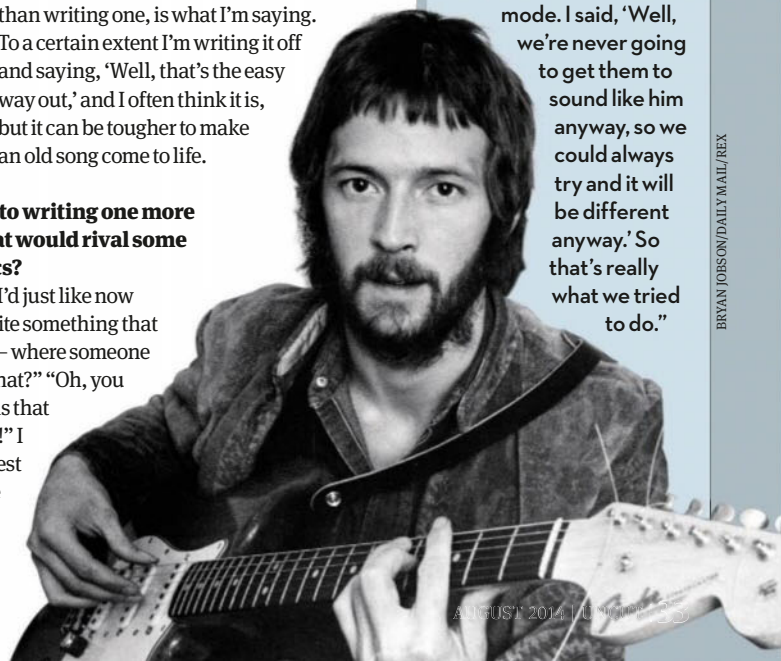
"I've got a different perspective now. I'm not just a wandering idiot anymore"

RED LIGHT FEVER

WORKING MAN'S BLUES

Clapton on his studio techniques

"IHAVEN'T REALLY got a method in the studio. If I'm writing, it will start with me and a guitar part or a keyboard thing, but I don't have a formula at all. If I'm on my own I'll work with [engineer] Alan Douglas and we'll do whatever we have to do. If I'm working with Simon Climie I'll rely on him to give me some technology, to put a drum part and a bass part together. Then there's different keyboard players I like to use, Chris Stainton, Paul Carrack, Walt Richmond, and we just build. With *The Breeze*, we listened to JJ's thing and put it into the computer, then we'd add to that and take John out, leaving little bits here and there, so the songs were all in the same key as the originals and the same length. JJ was critical of his own recording process, he said, "That's just the way we do it, they're just demos." Well, a lot of his demos just cannot be improved on for production and arrangement. We had a conversation about whether we should do really different versions, or try to keep them in his mode. I said, 'Well, we're never going to get them to sound like him anyway, so we could always try and it will be different anyway.' So that's really what we tried to do."



BRANDON JOHNSON/DAILY MAIL/REX

album called *Reptile*. That's my favourite song, and it's also current, because I wrote it about my wife. I like the fact that it's kind of low-key, a little in-the-background thing, but I'm proud of that song, as much as anything of mine that's more popular or well-known.

You said in 2006 that working with JJ Cale had fulfilled your last remaining ambition. Does that still hold?

There are tons of things I'd like to do, but I'm looking at retirement, too. I'm 70 next year. JJ wisely did the same thing. He said, "When I turn 70 I'm unofficially retired." I think what I'll allow myself to do, within reason, is carry on recording in the studio, but the road has become unbearable. It's unapproachable, because it takes so long to get anywhere, and it's hostile out there. Everywhere. Getting in and out of airports, getting on planes, travelling in cars. I like my life too much to have it ruined by other people's aggression. In the old days it was good fun. Travelling was something I used to look forward to, the change of scenery, meeting new people and getting a taste of a different culture. Now, the culture is global. It's all different versions of America, often in a kind of resentful, reluctant way. The internet has speeded life up, but the actual physical possibility of getting from one place to another is grinding to a halt. In 10 years' time we actually won't be able to leave home and go anywhere.

Really?

The road will become, literally, a thing of the past.

In what sense?

Well, I don't know how they're going to deal with actual travel, with getting in a car. I'm thinking that maybe in ten, 15 years' time, driving will have become illegal, because they'll have introduced another form of transport, with robot cars and things. You won't be allowed to drive. They're going to do it.

You're playing a handful of dates around the release of this album. Is that how it will be from now on: a few shows here and there rather than a huge tour?

I'm not doing anything for the album. The album is a separate thing. I may play a couple of songs from the new record but I've never really subscribed to that. I think I might have slipped into it during the '80s, that thing of taking the album on the road, but it's a painful experience.

In what way, specifically?

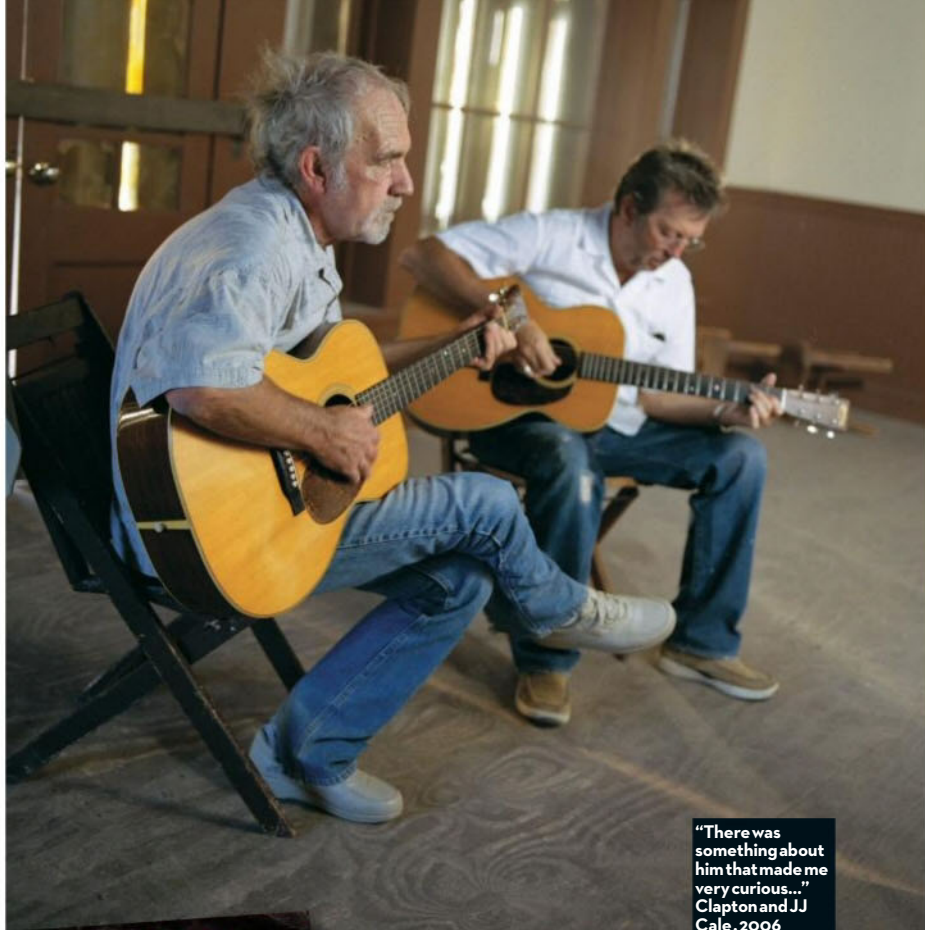
Because nobody knows it. You're playing songs because you feel like you're supporting the record company, rather than the other way around. It becomes a business venture. For quite a while now, when I get onstage I play the things I'm comfortable playing, that are just natural. If you give me an electric guitar and plug me into an amp there are three or four songs I will immediately want to play.

What are they?

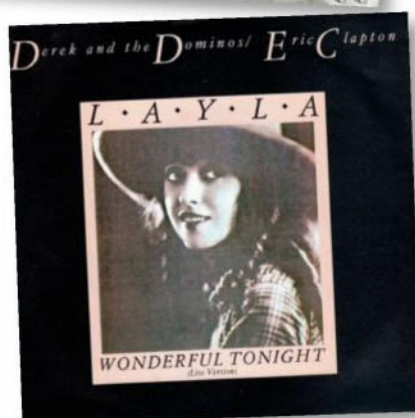
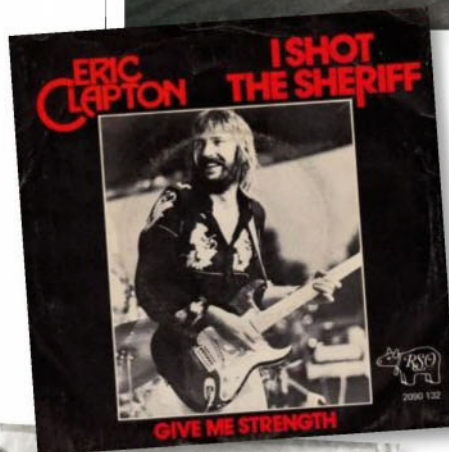
"Tell The Truth", "Pretending", "I Shot The Sheriff" – they're like old armchairs. To learn something that's great on the record but doesn't necessarily have stage potential requires a lot of hard work and, you know, I don't want to work.

Which songs in your catalogue always deliver the goods onstage?

We're probably always going to do "Cocaine", because that's a great closer, a finishing song. And a slow blues, "Before You Accuse Me" or something



"There was something about him that made me very curious..."
Clapton and JJ Cale, 2006



like that, and I'll do "Layla" acoustic. Just things that are recognisable for the crowd but fairly approachable for me. "Hoochie Coochie Man", stuff like that.

Do you regard yourself primarily as a live musician?

Yeah. I like that atmosphere, if you've got a good-sounding venue, big or small, and it just sounds right, and you have a couple of people who can play and you put them together and you don't really have an idea of what you're going to do. I always love rehearsals. Used to hate them at one time, but now I love them because – yes, you eventually have to arrive at the point where everyone says, "OK, we better do what we're supposed to be doing" – but up until that point, we always enter an unknown area where we're all playing something that has no connection to anything, and that's magic.

Off the road, do you have a regular routine?

As a human being, or as a musician – no, I don't. There was a normality probably in the early days, where there was a van, there was equipment, a band, and you'd get one job and the idea was to just keep travelling and working and playing gigs, without any idea of where it was all going to end up. Now, I'm a family man, and all this stuff has to work around that. My wife and I sit down at the beginning of each week and say, "What have you got to do?" "Well, I've said I'll do this but I don't have to do it. What have you got on?" And we just work it out like that. I've got a different perspective on the whole thing. I'm not just a shiftless, wandering idiot anymore. I've got responsibilities.

It sounds like a hard lesson learned. Was it difficult in the past to strike a happy balance between life and work?

I think I've been working towards that, and as a human being I've been craving that. Craving some kind of stability. I found – especially when I was using and drinking and everything back in the day – that the road didn't provide the answers anymore, though for a long time it did. I'd meet new people, or have brief affairs with people. My goal was excitement and pleasure, and that

had a shelf life. When that ran out, I could see I was just doing the same thing again and it wasn't really fulfilling me as a human being. I thought, maybe there's something else? I have to live with another human being and take on what their requirements might be, and give up a lot of my selfish pursuits.

That's clearly been a positive change in your personal life, but does it have any negative effects on your creativity?

No, I don't think that it does. I mean, I could convince myself that it does and make that up as an excuse: "Oh, this stuff is important." I'm careful enough to know that the minute I'm going down that road towards self-importance – Like, "By the way, what I'm about to do on this guitar doesn't seem like much, but this is how we all get to live like this, this is how you got that new dress", all of that – then it's a pretty disagreeable place to be for everybody. It makes me feel bad, everybody gets tainted by it, so I try to shut that stuff down. Humility is a big part of being a good musician, that's been my experience. Playing with great musicians, the best ones have always been very humble. They offer their space to you, and that's also part of being a great human being – or a decent human being, anyway. "How can I be of service?"

"A Cream reunion? At this time in my life, I don't want blood on my hands!"

pain all the way up my arms into my neck and shoulder. It limits me, but I do everything I can to stay healthy. I go to see a physio about my arm and there are things you can do with acupuncture and stuff like that. My joints are pretty good, actually, but the muscles get tired. So there'll come a time when I'll think, 'Is it worth it? You don't sound very good. You're missing things, your timing is gone.' I watch myself to see if I'm really deteriorating. I'm not really, at the moment, but I'm not where I was, there's no doubt about it.

I suppose we often assume that musicians just keep getting better at what they do.

There may be a peak, mightn't there, and you come down the other side. I don't want to go off the boil to the point where I'm embarrassing myself.

Do you still practise?

I do practise. I need to play in order to keep in touch with what I'm about to do, or just to entertain myself – because I like the sound of what I do now and then – and also to keep physically agile. But there are some things that I just don't need to do so much. If I try and keep it simple it's OK.

Do you ever look at other guitarists and think, I wish I could do that?

Oh yeah! God, yeah. One of my heroes is Kurt Russell. [Laughs] What!? Not Kurt Russell, Kurt Rosenwinkel. He's a jazz guitar player. Very fluid. He's a genius, he really is, and a lovely man. He has the ability to play directly what he hears

You mentioned retirement. Can you really envisage a day where you stop entirely and no longer pick up a guitar or sing?

Maybe. Physically, it might be that I can't, if it just hurts too much. I have odd ailments. I've had posture problems from playing heavy electric guitars on stage, one side of my body crunches up, that gives me lower back problems from time to time. At the moment I've got tendonitis, which means that if I make a barre chord I get

RIVER RUNS DEEP

"I make rock'n'roll records..."

SIX ESSENTIAL ALBUMS BY JJ CALE



NATURALLY SHELTER, 1972

Aged 33, Cale makes his long-playing debut on fellow Okie Leon Russell's Shelter

label, an opportunity afforded largely by the exposure he gained following Clapton's 1970 hit cover of "After Midnight". The song is re-recorded here in a slightly atypical funky piano style, appearing alongside other Cale classics: "Call Me The Breeze", "Magnolia" (later covered by Beck), and his biggest US hit, the whispering Zen-blues groove of "Crazy Mama".



TROUBADOUR SHELTER, 1976

Cale's fourth album deviates little from the mix of laid-back blues, country, jazz

and R'n'B established and honed on his first three records, although here it's lightly augmented by vibes, trumpets, trombones and saxes. Most notable for containing "Cocaine", which quickly became one of Clapton's signature tunes, and "Travellin' Light", also covered by Clapton, on *Reptile*.



SHADES MCA, 1981

The recording process was bitty but the results are consistently cool and punchy. A great band (Jim Keltner, Hal

Blaine and Russ Kunkel on drums; Leon Russell on piano; guitars by James Burton and Reggie Young) bring their A-game to some of Cale's most persuasive songs, including "Carry On" and "Mama Don't". There's variety, too, on the instrumental "Cloudy Day" and wistful "Wish I Had Not Said That".



TO TULSA AND BACK BLUE NOTE, 2004

Something new. Cale – an inveterate studio animal who was using

drum machines as far back as 1971 – incorporates synths, drum loops and horns into his trademark smoky blues and whiskery vocals, and even finds room for a touch of Latino ("Rio") and a lonesome Appalachian banjo ballad ("Another Song"). The Tulsa Sound finds a glossy new context, and thrives.



THE ROAD TO ESCONDIDO DUCK/REPRISE, 2006

Named after his adopted hometown near San Diego,

Cale's collaboration with Clapton finds the pair at cross-purposes: "I wanted him to make it the way he normally made records, which was almost at home, in private," says Clapton. "But he thought he'd get in a lot of great musicians and record everything live. So we had two different interpretations of what we were going to do." Cale prevailed, with a cast list including Billy Preston, Taj Mahal and John Mayer. The songs are mostly Cale originals, alongside a Clapton/Mayer co-write ("Hard To Thrill") and a Brownie McGhee cover.



ROLL ON ROUNDER, 2009

Cale's swan song, and a fine summation of his sound, from the jazzy "Who Knew" to

the closing "Bring Down The Curtain", a blunt valediction which makes explicit his exit from the stage: "Enough is enough, can't do it no more/Bring down the curtain, close the door." Clapton appears on the archetypal title track.

Guitar man... JJ Cale backstage at The Boarding House, San Francisco, 1977





Jamming with the King: Eric Clapton, BB King and Elvin Bishop, New York, 1967

BLUES POWER

Clapton & Co

Credited to Eric Clapton & Friends, *The Breeze* features John Mayer, Mark Knopfler and Tom Petty. But who else has EC been trading licks with recently?

STEVE WINWOOD: Picking up the thread of Blind Faith after four decades, the pair embarked on a joint US tour in 2008, performing onstage together throughout. A live album ensued, and they've continued to tour sporadically and appear on each other's records.

BB KING: They first performed together in 1967, but at the age of 74 and 55, respectively, the blues master and his apprentice finally made a joint LP, *Riding With The King*, in 2000. Their paths still cross: they cooked up a fine take of "The Thrill Is Gone" at Clapton's 2010 Crossroads festival in Antigua.

JIMMIE VAUGHAN: Brother of the late Stevie Ray, Vaughan's relationship with Clapton stretches back to the late '80s. A regular at Crossroads, when Vaughan supported Bob Dylan in 2006, Clapton made a guest appearance at the Columbus concert on August 13, guesting on three songs, while Vaughan dropped in on Clapton's 2013 US tour.

DOYLE BRAMHALL II: Having opened for Clapton in 2001, the Texan bluesman then played in Clapton's live band, appeared on his two 2004 Robert Johnson covers LPs, contributed songs to *Back Home* ('05) and *Clapton* ('10), and co-produced *Old Sock*.

SIMON CLIMIE: In the '90s, the singer in pop duo Climie Fisher changed tack to concentrate on production

and songwriting, working with Michael McDonald, BB King, Aretha Franklin and Jeff Beck. He first worked with Clapton on 1998's *Pilgrim*, and has been his studio righthand man ever since.

JEFF BECK: Clapton performed for two nights with his fellow Yardbirds guitarist at London's O2 in 2010. The two later took the show to New York and Canada, and recently appeared together at Crossroads.

DEREK TRUCKS: The young slide prodigy played on *Escondido* and later toured as Clapton's sideman. Clapton joined Trucks and the Allman Brothers Band during their Beacon Theatre run in 2009, and the pair have recorded together and sparred onstage since.

PAUL MCCARTNEY: A working relationship which stretches back to 1968, and Clapton's cameo on "While My Guitar Gently Weeps", has recently blossomed, with McCartney adding bass and vocals to "All Of Me" on *Old Sock*, and Clapton returning the favour on *Kisses On The Bottom*.

in his head. I can't do that. I go to the same old phraseology, or I have to work things out in advance. He's a proper jazz musician, and I'm in awe of that. He's got up to play with me a couple of times, we've played a blues, or "Cocaine", and he just flies like a bird. I think, man, that's a wonderful thing to be able to do.

But it often looks like that's exactly what you do onstage. There's no filter, it's coming straight to your fingertips.

I'm not saying I'm completely calculated. I can lose myself, and then I don't know what I'm doing. Something seems to happen of its own volition, and I just try to get out of the way. But it's not frequent, shall we say. It happens now and then.

Is it the same with writing – has it mostly been about graft rather than bolts of lightning?

No, it's both. "Wonderful Tonight" came fully formed, just like that. So did a song of mine called "Golden Ring". If it's that quick you don't even give it any value. You think, "This is too easy, it can't be any good." "Layla" was a labour of love. Writing that took a long time, bits and pieces stuck together. It was a collage. So it's both.

Who do you regard as your peers? Are they artists of comparable stature to you who are still out there doing it – Dylan, Neil Young, McCartney, the Stones – or people like Rosenwinkel?

I would acknowledge the people who grew up listening to the same stuff as I did, those are the ones that I would be in tune with. People like Jimmie Vaughan, Doyle Bramhall, Derek Trucks, Robert Cray – though they're younger than me, those guys. People who are more well-versed in blues, that's who I identify with as my peers. Definitely Jimmie Vaughan, he's probably at number one, and Robert's not far behind. These guys have stayed true to their principles all the way through. Commercial success hasn't really swayed them off the path.

ALL THIS TALK of peers and staunch principles inevitably steers the conversation in the direction of JJ Cale. Though the two were only friends for the final 10 of Cale's 74 years, the Oklahoma guitarist, singer and songwriter had a profound influence on Clapton for more than four decades.

The Tulsa Sound, Cale's uniquely minimalist and deceptively simple blend of mid-paced shuffles, spare melodies and low, laconic vocals, entranced Clapton when he first heard it in 1969. He finds it no less seductive today. "It's a constant challenge to me with JJ," he says, "every time I hear anything, a single or an album or anything, just to try to analyse how he did it."

Having recorded his first Cale cover, "After Midnight", in 1970, Clapton has returned to the source regularly ever since, most famously on his hit version of "Cocaine". With little commercial success of his own, it was these high-profile Clapton covers (as well as others by the likes of Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Captain Beefheart, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Santana and Poco) which enabled Cale to earn a comfortable living, a deal which Clapton reckons suited the reticent musician just fine. "I don't think he had any interest in fame at all," he says. "He liked the perks as much as anybody, but it was all, really, about making great music."

The pair finally worked together on 2006's



With Jeff Beck at Crossroads in Bridgeview, Illinois, June 26, 2010



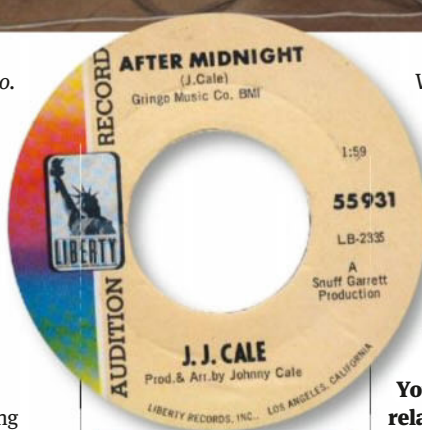
Blind Faith playing
at Los Angeles
Forum, August 1969

Grammy-winning collaboration *The Road To Escondido*. Clapton reminisces fondly about their relationship, recalling with a chuckle how he convinced his notoriously publicity-shy friend to spend three days on the promotional hamster wheel in a hotel room in New York. “We’d just wind each other up,” he says. “In the end I wanted to get out of there as much as he did!” Of all Cale’s many admirers – a long list which includes Neil Young, Mark Knopfler, Tom Petty and Beck – Clapton has been by far the most trenchant. Conceived immediately following Cale’s death from a heart attack on July 26, 2013, *The Breeze* is the culmination of Clapton’s long-term commitment to bring his friend’s work to widespread attention. “I made it clear to him that I wanted to spread the message,” he says. “I think the deal was that as long as he didn’t have to get too much involved then it was fine.”

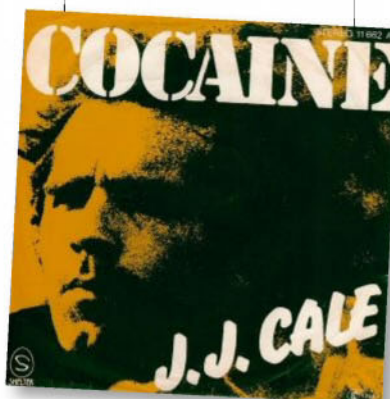
When did you first become aware of Cale?

I was touring with Blind Faith in 1969 when I met Delaney and Bonnie. Delaney was very keen to introduce me to stuff he liked. Through him I met The Crickets, people like that, a whole community of people in the valley in LA. He said, “You should hear this,” and he gave me the [1966] single of “After Midnight”, which had “Slow Motion” on the A-side. I thought it was fantastic, and we tried to work it out. It was really elaborate, it seemed. I’ve listened to it again and again and again and I’m still pretty sure I haven’t worked it out. Are there four guitars on there? Or three, or two, or five? Interlocking, all playing different stuff. It’s like a Chinese puzzle. As much as anything, back then there was something about the reverence other musicians showed towards JJ. He was a great musician, songwriter, singer, but he was like a lone wolf. There was something about him that made me very curious, a real mystique. So my radar went up.

You very quickly recorded “After Midnight”, and you’ve returned to his music throughout your career. Is there an evangelical aspect to that, saying to your audience, ‘Look, this guy is incredible and you should check him out’?



“JJ Cale was a great musician, songwriter and singer, but he was like a lone wolf...”



Well, I’ve always had that. I don’t know why. I think I have an impulse to share, especially with music. Music from my earliest recollection has had such a profound effect on me, and if there were more people than me listening I’d look around to see if it was having the same effect. I was always thinking, ‘This is hitting me hard, I want to share this and see if other people feel the same way.’ So when I got to JJ, I thought, ‘There’s got to be a lot of people who hadn’t heard it yet, so maybe I could give it a nudge in the right direction.’ He knew that.

Your collaboration on *The Road To Escondido* came relatively late in the day. How well did you know each other by that point?

Not very well. I’d only met him a couple of times, partly out of respect. I didn’t want to intrude. He did a lovely thing. After I’d covered “Cocaine” he covered “Golden Ring”. That was it, I knew then he was aware of me and that he was grateful or whatever you might call it. I thought, ‘That’s fantastic, and maybe that’s all, really, that we need to do.’ Sometimes I’ve met musicians that I admire and it can be a disappointment. You can feel it’s a bit forced, you don’t know what to say, and it can put unnecessary pressure on you. What happened for me was that over time a desire to work with JJ built up, to the point where I thought, ‘Well, you’ve fulfilled a lot of other ambitions with other great musicians, why don’t you just come right out and ask him?’ When he came and did the Crossroads guitar festival in 2004, I said, “I’d really like to make a record with you, I’d like you to produce it – I want to sound like you!” He said, “Yeah, OK.”

It might seem strange to some people that you would have doubts over whether he would want to work with you.

Yeah, I don’t know what that’s about either. I held him in high regard, I think that’s what it was. I was aware that he might say yes out of politeness, and I didn’t want that. I wanted to know that he genuinely wanted to do it, you know. And I think he did.

Did it become a close friendship?

Yes, it was close, it was close. As close as it can be with

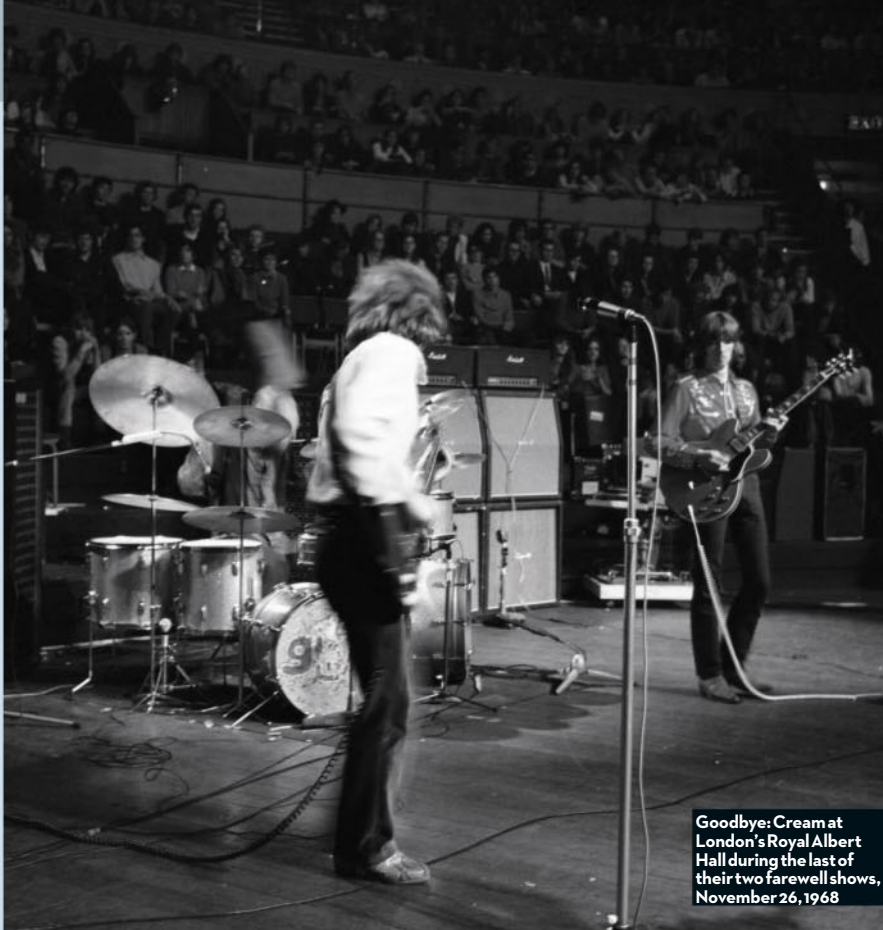
ERIC & ALBERT

THE PROSPECT OF Clapton winding down his live commitments is bad news for the Royal Albert Hall. No venue is more synonymous with his performing career, and here are the stats to prove it.

- **Total number of RAH appearances:** 197
- **As headlining solo artist:** 171
- **First appearance:** December 7, 1964, with the Yardbirds
- **First solo headlining show:** January 6, 1987
- **Most recent appearance:** May 26, 2013, the last of seven nights
- **Number of annual residencies:** 16, with an unbroken run between 1987 and 1996
- **Longest run:** 24 nights (1991)
- **Shortest run:** 5 nights (2001)
- **Benefit concerts played:** 13
- **Notable co-headliners:** John Mayer (2005); Joe Bonamassa (2009); Steve Winwood (2011)



- **Live albums/DVDs recorded at RAH:** 2: 24 Nights (1991), and Royal Albert Hall London May 2-3-5-6 2005 (with Cream)
- **Most bands used in a single residency:** 4: four-piece band, thirteen-piece band, blues band and orchestra (1990); four-piece band, nine-piece band, blues band and orchestra (1991)
- **The missing decade:** 1970s – no Clapton shows at the RAH. [Thanks to: www.whereseric.com]



Goodbye: Cream at London's Royal Albert Hall during the last of their two farewell shows, November 26, 1968

☛ musicians, I think. He was a very private guy, I'm a very private guy. We'd call one another on the phone occasionally to catch up, and I'd go and see him when I could.

Were you in touch before he died?

I knew he was ill. I would call him and he was shutting down. He was withdrawing. We tried to do something together after *Escondido* – we did a couple of tracks and he said, “I want to go home now. I've had enough, I don't feel very well.” Checked out of the studio and went back to Escondido, but I stayed in touch with him. I would also get reports from friends we had in common, saying, “Yeah, he's got this or that going on” – there were a lot of different things he was suffering from that all seemed to be building up. Then I got this great bit of news that he had gone on some kind of health diet, he was trying yoga and his spirits had lifted. Great! So the last time I was in LA at the time all this was happening, which was early spring of last year, I called him and said, “I'm going to be in town, can I come down and see you?” He said, “Yeah, yeah, come on down.” Then when I got to LA he called and said, “You know what? I've got to go into hospital for a couple of days to do a biopsy” – which was true – and that was the last time I heard from him.

At what point following his death did you decide to do this record?

I think a couple of days.

Really? That quickly.

I had planned to go to Columbus, where I've got a little private studio, and go in there with Simon Climie and just cut tracks with no agenda. I got the news, I woke up to find a text on my phone, and I got on a flight a little earlier than I had planned and flew to LA, and on the way there I thought, well, I have to do something. I can't let this thing just go off into the quiet distance, I want to make some statement for myself,

White. There were very few people there: Jim Keltner was there, and [Cale's wife] Christine, and this guy Don White. He said, “You wouldn't know about me, but I gave John his first job as a guitar player.” So I thought, ‘I can't do this on my own, I have to let people like this into the project.’ He was the first person I asked and it just gathered momentum from there. I talked to Christine and to [Cale's agent] Mike Kappus about the people they would nominate. We started with Tom [Petty]. He had really been instrumental in their lives for a few years, hanging out, and he made it really clear to Mike that he

wanted to do something. Then I heard that John Mayer was on YouTube doing “Call Me The Breeze”, and so we asked him. We had made tracks in Columbus on the computer with me playing guitar and singing guide vocals, and we took it to LA and then put live musicians on. Then afterwards we thought about Willie [Nelson] and so Simon went to Nashville and recorded Willie on site. We got Reggie Young to play, Derek Trucks to play, Albert Lee – anybody that I thought of who had a feeling for JJ. Then when we came back to England I thought, ‘Well, there's one person we have to ask, we'll need to go to his studio.’ We went to British Grove, where Mark Knopfler has his place, and I asked him to sing two songs, and that was it.

I thought, ‘We've got it now.’

What's next for you? Jack Bruce was quoted recently talking up another Cream reunion: “Everybody had agreed about doing it, but then I think Ginger upset Eric. He said something or did something, so it's not happening.” Is Cream still on your agenda?

Nobody has talked to me about anything. I haven't spoken to Jack or Ginger for quite a time. I don't think there's been any line of dialogue between any of us – or between me and them, that is to say – since the American affair [the trio's *Madison Square Garden* shows in 2005]. After that I was pretty convinced that we had gone as far as we could without someone getting killed. At this time in my life I don't

about the effect he had on my life, not just with his music but the kind of guy he was. I started planning it. By the time I got to LA to go to his funeral – which was a great privilege – I had the album cover, and all the songs I thought I should do. I made a list on the plane and it was quite long, about 30 songs, and we just started a little process of elimination.

The album is billed as “Eric Clapton & Friends” and features contributions from, among others, Mark Knopfler, Willie Nelson and Tom Petty. How did you round them all up?

I was just going to do it on my own, but then I met someone at the funeral called Don

“I'm maybe a third of the way there to another album, and I'm in no rush”

OLD FRIENDS

want blood on my hands! I don't want to be part of some kind of tragic confrontation.

I guess you've seen *Beware Of Mr Baker*, the film about Ginger. It's clear that he hasn't mellowed with age.

He doesn't look very happy in his skin, but it's difficult to say what was going on for him at that particular moment in time. The chemistry between the three of us was always tricky, and too volatile to be reliable. I mean, you could say, "Let's go into meeting mode and sit down to talk about how we could do something now", and have a couple of days' discussion about it. Well, it would probably end in an argument or a blaming competition. There were elements going on there before I ever met them, where things hadn't been resolved, and that stuff still comes up. I think if there was a different dynamic underlying it all – if we were people who occasionally had lunch together, or lived in the same neighbourhood, or hung out – then you'd have a friendship and a reliable dialogue going on, where you could just say, "Why don't we just do a couple [of shows]?" But to talk to journalists about it thinking that might provoke something... I mean, that doesn't work. Someone has to be direct. There is no relationship between the three of us whatsoever – or between me and them, anyway. I don't talk to them from one year to the next.

You seem quite reflective. Are you ever tempted to make a record that sustains that mood: something sparse, acoustic and intimate?



"Too volatile..."
Cream in New York,
February 1968

I enjoy listening to music like that, and I enjoy playing music like that. It's just that once you get into the studio the temptation to fill up the space with all kinds of stuff is very strong. It takes a lot of discipline to keep everything down, but yes, it does appeal to me, that kind of atmosphere.

Do you have songs in mind that would work for that?

I have a few songs, yes, that are ready for that kind of outing, but I've always got something else to finish off.

What needs to be finished next?

There were some songs left over from the JJ album. We recorded more than went on the record, so I'm now in the process of finishing them to put them on an album of mine. Then I need to figure out what else to put on there. I'm maybe only a third of the way there, and I'm in no rush.

You're 70 next year. You've mentioned retirement. Do you think much about your influence and your legacy?

I do, yeah. I wonder what the hell I'm doing and whether it's been of any use to anyone. The messenger idea we talked about, I think if anything that's what I'd like as my epitaph: He was a great messenger. A very gifted interpreter. 🎸

Eric Clapton & Friends: *The Breeze, An Appreciation Of JJ Cale* is released on July 28, 2014 on Bushbranch/Surfdog

Choice Cuts

Eric Clapton names the enduring loves and trusty lieutenants from his voluminous back catalogue

"Tell The Truth"

Co-written with Bobby Whitlock, this choogling blues-rocker appeared on Derek & The Dominos' *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs*. It was recorded twice: first by Phil Spector at Apple, and then, definitively, by Tom Dowd in Miami, with Duane Allman on slide. Has since featured on several live albums.

"Layla"

Clapton's most enduring song has also proved his most versatile. First came the epic two-parter on *Layla...*, with its glorious piano coda, then the shorter single version in 1972. These days Clapton tends to perform it live in the deconstructed acoustic arrangement he premiered in 1992 on MTV's *Unplugged*.

"I Shot The Sheriff"

Bob Marley & The Wailers' original was released in 1973 on *Burnin'*. The following year Clapton recorded the song after guitarist George Terry played it to him during sessions for 461 *Ocean Boulevard*. In 1974 it became his only US No 1 single.

"Cocaine"

With the ghost of "Sunshine Of Your Love" in the riff and a familiar old foe in the title, you can see why Clapton was smitten. First recorded on *Slowhand* in 1977, it was the long live version from 1980's *Just One Night* which gave him the hit. Now firmly entrenched as a set closer.

"Golden Ring"

From *Backless* (1978), the childlike melody and easy, back-porch vibe (humming, accordion, Gallagher & Lyle on vocals) mask a rather troubled reflection of marriage. Covered by Cale on *Rewind*.

"Pretending"

This minor hit from 1989's *Journeyman* is a slightly uneasy mix of sinewy blues and over-cooked pop-rock. The slide from the minor-key verse into

the reggae-inflected chorus is arresting, even if it doesn't quite convince.

"Before You Accuse Me"

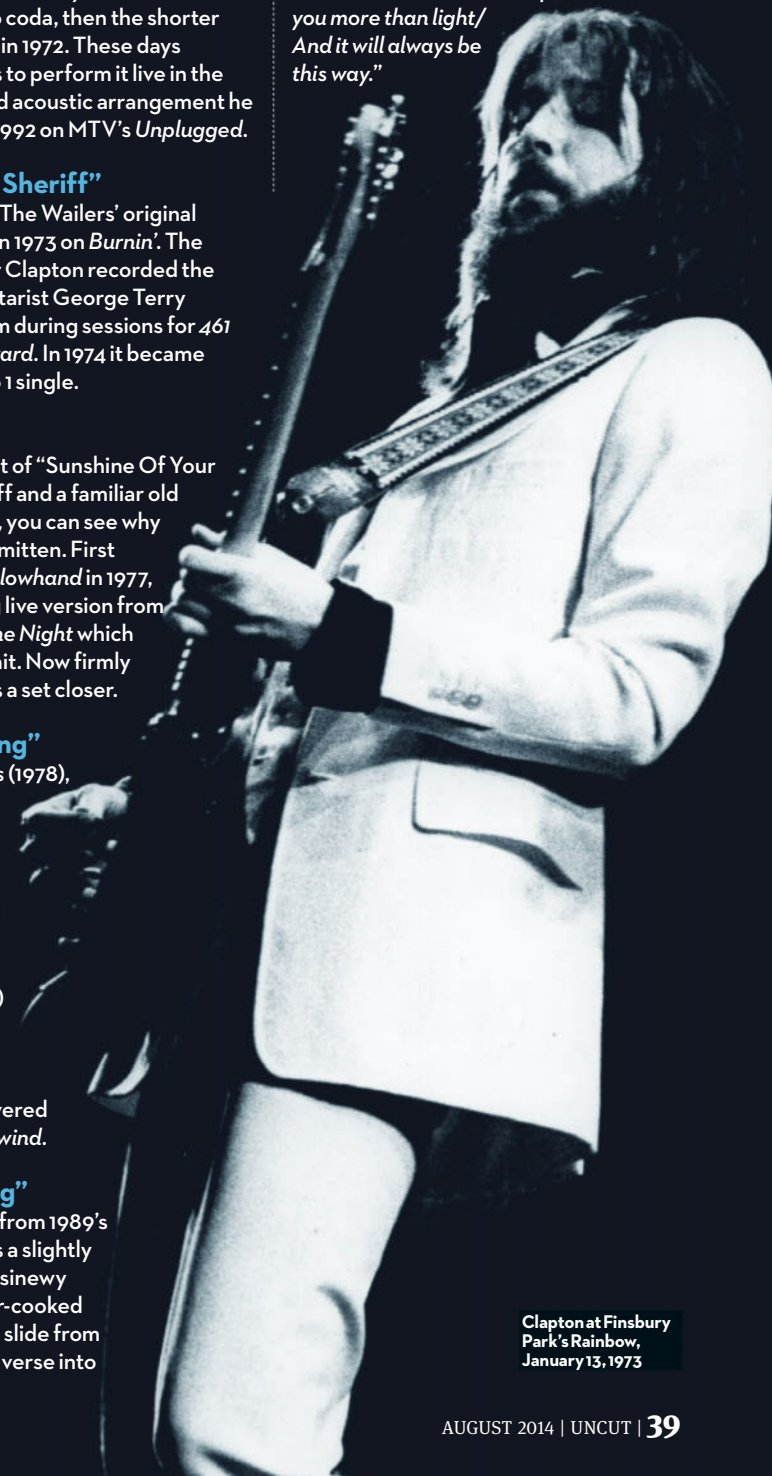
Bo Diddley's 1957 blues was recorded twice by Clapton: first on *Journeyman*, with Robert Cray guesting, and then on his 1992 *Unplugged* album. It's since become a live favourite.

"Hoochie Coochie Man"

The Muddy Waters classic was recorded live by Clapton on his '94 blues covers set *From The Cradle*, and has been a staple in his repertoire virtually ever since.

"Believe In Life"

From 2001's *Reptile*, Clapton's favourite of his own songs is a smooth, breezily melodic blend of blues, jazz and gospel. It's a heartfelt declaration of love with more than a hint of redemption. "I love you more than light/ And it will always be this way."



Clapton at Finsbury
Park's Rainbow,
January 13, 1973

THE MAKING OF...

Black Hole Sun

BY SOUNDGARDEN

A sombre, psychedelic ballad that became an international summer smash for the Seattle grunge rockers in 1994: “I understand it even less now,” says songwriter Chris Cornell...

A COUPLE OF weeks after Kurt Cobain’s suicide, a strange, sombre piece of American heavy rock hit the charts. With its moody refrain, hypnotic melody and gorgeous arpeggios, Soundgarden’s “Black Hole Sun” seemed to chime with the spirit of the times. It was also the song that brought Soundgarden a level of success that was long overdue. Soundgarden were the first band from the late-’80s Seattle scene to sign to a major label, although having dutifully polished their craft opening for the likes of Guns N’ Roses, the colossal success enjoyed by Pacific Northwest peers like Nirvana and Pearl Jam had so far eluded them: “the sound of the underground going overground,” as bassist Ben Shepherd puts it. But “Black Hole Sun” was a grimy psychedelic behemoth, inescapable on radio and especially on MTV, thanks to what songwriter Chris Cornell calls a “comically interesting video”.

Nevertheless, the band had initially been wary of the song’s huge commercial potential – for a while afterwards some of them would refuse to play it live – but Cornell notes that the song’s innate strangeness meant that “‘Black Hole Sun’ didn’t seem to corner us or create a problem, it provided a moment when a lot of eyes and ears were on us. We didn’t have to recreate ‘Black Hole Sun’, we never felt that need.”

“Black Hole Sun” – and its stunningly successful parent album *Superunknown* – ushered in multi-platinum success and a Grammy for the band. Soundgarden split in 1997, reforming in 2010.

During that time, “Black Hole Sun” enjoyed a life of its own, covered and reinvented by everybody from Paul Anka to Anastacia. “You can spend an hour looking at different versions on YouTube and they are all very different,” says Cornell. “The last one was a group called Strings Attached which starts normally and then completely freaks out with flute and violin. People send me links all the time and they seem to get weirder and weirder.” **PETER WATTS**

CHRIS CORNELL: I wrote it in my head driving home from Bear Creek Studio in Woodinville, a 35-40 minute drive from Seattle. It sparked from something a news anchor said on TV and I heard wrong. I heard ‘blah blah blah black hole sun blah blah blah’. I thought that would make an amazing song title, but what would it sound like? It all came together, pretty much the whole arrangement including the guitar solo that’s played beneath the riff.

KIM THAYIL: There are so many ways to write a song but in this one the melody is so strong that I’m inclined to believe he was humming the melody

KEY PLAYERS



Chris Cornell
Vocals, guitar



Kim Thayil
Lead guitar



Ben Shepherd
Bass



Michael Beinhorn
Producer

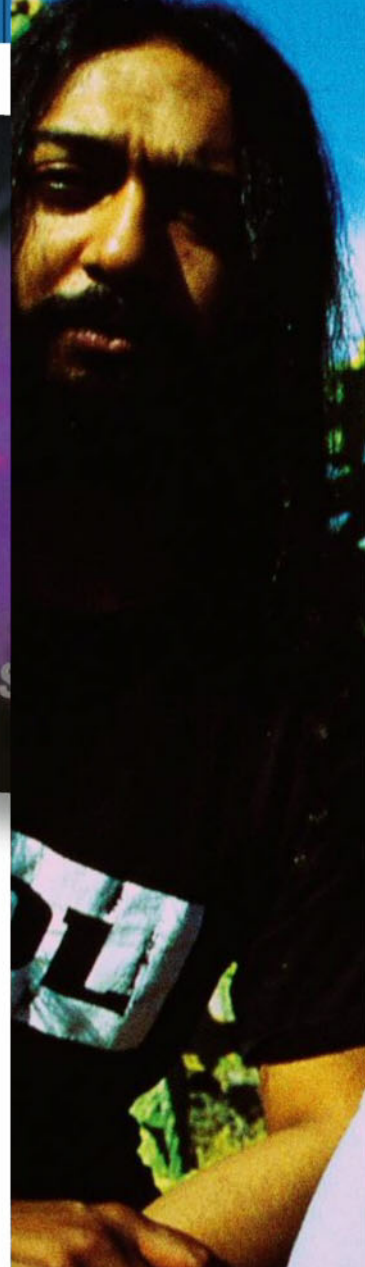
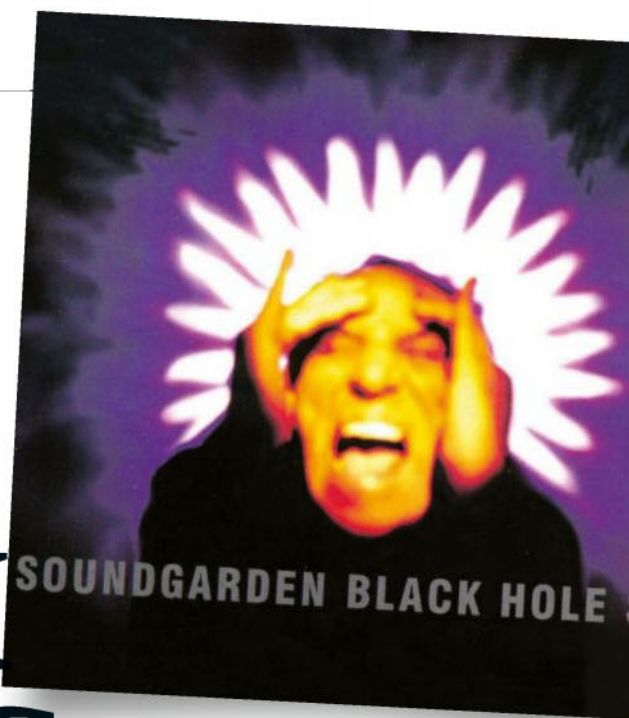
and then constructed the notes and chords around it.

CORNELL: I spent a lot of time spinning those melodies in my head so I wouldn’t forget them. I got home and whistled it into a dictaphone. The next day I brought it into the real world, assigning a key and adding a couple of key changes in the verse to make the melodies more interesting. Then I wrote the lyrics and that was similar, a stream of consciousness based on the feeling I got from the chorus and the title.

BEN SHEPHERD: I knew immediately it was a heavy-hitting song. I equated it with Stevie Wonder, that level of songwriting. Huge.

THAYIL: It wasn’t the heavy, guitar-orientated song we were used to. It had more of a pop construction, but it had seemed powerful.

SHEPHERD: I liked that it wasn’t heavy and visceral. It was melodic but it was its own thing. We were pioneers, we didn’t have a formula. The underground, the Seattle scene and that whole alternative rock thing we came from going back to Sonic Youth and Hüsker Dü, wasn’t shiny and happy. We were reticent about being stars and that





Prickly heat: (l-r) Soundgarden's Kim Thayil, Ben Shepherd, Chris Cornell and Matt Cameron

was the mood of the world around us. It was more honest. Being a star wasn't seen as cool, life wasn't shiny or happy. The song represented that attitude.

MICHAEL BEINHORN: A cassette came in the mail. Right at the end was "Black Hole Sun". I felt like I'd been hit by a bus. There's usually a point with music where your attention span wanders, but this was like my head was in a vice. It was one of the most incredible pieces of music I'd ever heard. I played it 15 times in a row. I told Chris he was a genius. He said, "Huh, really?"

CORNELL: I thought they might like it, but not think of it as a Soundgarden song. I wasn't sure myself. Sometimes a song is pushing the boundaries and you may not feel it belongs to the personality of the music that comes under the banner of that band.

THAYIL: We understood it had very strong commercial potential. We didn't know what that would mean for us. If it became huge, would people expect to play it everywhere we go? There was hesitation. Our musical identity was something we'd worked hard for. Maybe that's why we were a little tentative.

BEINHORN: Chris had an issue deviating too far away from what the band were known for. With 'Black Hole Sun' we walked a very narrow line but because of the mood I didn't think it was that removed. All they had to do was make it powerful and heavy, and make sure the instrument textures were exciting and rich. I was convinced it was a slam dunk.

CORNELL: We decided to record it and see what people thought. Our former bassist Hiro [Yamamoto] heard it and singled it out.

THAYIL: When we heard *Nevermind* a few months before it came out, we got to "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Ben started laughing, 'Oh my God, that's a hit.' With "Black Hole Sun", Hiro's response was the same, so we had a strong indication that it would have broad appeal.

BEINHORN: When so many elements that are

"It was this combination of bright and dark, this sense of hope and an underlying moodiness"

CHRIS CORNELL

exceptional in a piece of music converge on one point and interweave so beautifully... The melodic nature, the unusual chord structure, the way he starts with these arpeggios that cannon through the whole thing. And then there's the mood. There's something beautiful about it, something wistful and something dark too.

CORNELL: The aim was to capture the demo and add our own personalities. That's what people

connected with, the sound that is the result of a band effort. The big thing was the solo, which is a huge factor.

THAYIL: The solo allowed me to do something manic and noisy, which is one of a few things stylistically that augmented the song and brought out the dark, psychedelic Soundgarden side.

BEINHORN: I worked hard to get a drum sound and everything was built up from that. We added some distorted vocals and then Kim did his solo – actually two solos that we faded and cross-faded.

CORNELL: There was a sparkle the demo had that the band version didn't, and we couldn't work out what it was. We even sourced the same Leslie cabinet I'd used. I'd figured we'd get a better Leslie cabinet for the record but it didn't sound the same.

BEINHORN: It wasn't a normal rotating Leslie speaker, it was more unusual, a joint venture between Fender and Leslie.

CORNELL: I'd rented it, but the rental company had sold it to a band and I had to find the band and beg them to let me borrow it. We took it the studio and it was exactly right but there was something that still wasn't happening. I'd forgotten that when I cut the demo it was too slow, so I'd vari-speeded it up on the tape which changes the key, then sang over the top. Suddenly that sparkle was there.

THAYIL: It's just slightly faster, 1 or 2%. It gives a little more bounce and energy, a psychological lift to how we interpret a song rhythmically. In this case it would also benefit the arpeggio guitar parts, the little delicate floral chords.



"We were reticent about being the band that played the hit song..." Soundgarden get industrial



FACT FILE

- **Written by:** Chris Cornell
- **Performers:** Chris Cornell (vocals, guitar), Kim Thayil (lead guitar), Ben Shepherd (bass), Matt Cameron (drums)
- **Producer:** Michael Beinhorn
- **Recorded at:** Bad Animals Studio, Seattle
- **Label:** A&M
- **Released:** May 17, 1994
- **Chart position:** UK 12; US 24

➤ **CORNELL:** Michael had me sing it maybe 11 times, and he was going to comp it – poring over every take, picking the best bits and sticking them together. It took him two days. I hated it, it made me feel I was a bad singer.

BEINHORN: I was really impressed. To get an artist who can analyse his own work that way is pretty rare. He was right on the money, it wasn't good enough. I realised he was very adept at recording at home, so I showed him how to work the tape machine and left him to it. The next day he came in with a big smile on his face.

CORNELL: Sometimes when you try to communicate with somebody else they may not understand so you just give up. On my own, I could experiment. Since then, I've sung everything by myself.

BEINHORN: A&M wouldn't release it as the first single. I think they were feeling cocky, they knew people would play it anyway.

CORNELL: Because the radio stations were playing it, we had to make a video.

THAYIL: I hate making fucking videos. Videos are for dancers and models. Fortunately this video required very little of us.

CORNELL: Up to then we'd been hands on with

our videos to such a degree they never seemed to work. With "Black Hole Sun", I told director Howard Greenhalgh to do what he wanted and we would pretend to play and not even look particularly good doing it.

SHEPHERD: We told them we weren't going to perform. We just stood on boxes in the green room – it's a blue screen now, but then it was green.

CORNELL: You can see we are just standing there, we're not emoting. Because of that, his vision came across, the juxtaposition of a band looking bored, the song and the images he created really worked. It was a magic formula.

THAYIL: It was cynical, a bit nasty, and all we had to do was stand there and pose with our guitars like we did in our living rooms when we were kids.

SHEPHERD: This was the first time you could morph videos, like melt the screen. That was a big deal. The video really pushed it. It was a winning combination. I didn't think it would be that big a hit, not on that level. I became quite petulant about it. I stopped us playing it live. We were reticent about being the band that played the hit song.

THAYIL: The rest of us would wipe the sweat off

our foreheads and have a beer while Chris played it acoustically. It was a way to keep it fresh.

CORNELL: It was a good song for us to have as an international hit because it defied categorisation on just about every level. It's a moody, sombre song but it was a summer smash and the look of the video helped, with that eerie springtime thing. It creates a feeling, but I can't tell you specifically what it is about. And if I can't, how is somebody else going to connect to it? Maybe it's just open enough that people can make it a soundtrack to their moment.

BEINHORN: It hit a very strong emotional chord. People make their own connections with it. Some people thought it was about Kurt Cobain dying.

CORNELL: I understand it even less now, and I'm baffled by what other people think about it. I listen to Paul Anka and he really gets into it, he's digging for an emotional connection and he seems to be getting it, and that's interesting to me because whatever mine is, it's more personal than intellectual.

BEINHORN: When I first heard it I was profoundly disturbed. It's like the key to an emotional door in someone's psyche. It's great that Chris can't make that connection as it shows where the song came from. That phrase, black hole sun, opened the floodgates.

CORNELL: What's interesting to me is the combination of a black hole and a sun. A black hole is a billion times bigger than a sun, it's a void, a giant circle of nothing, and then you have the sun, the giver of all life. It was this combination of bright and dark, this sense of hope and an underlying moodiness. I even liked the way the words looked written down. I liken it to Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd, where there's a happy veneer over something dark. It's not something I can do on purpose but occasionally it will happen by accident.

BEINHORN: It shows how songwriters tap into something that's out there, like good antennae. It's a work of art, something that comes purely from the unconscious mind. ☺

*Soundgarden play British Summer Time at London's Hyde Park on July 4; **Superunknown** deluxe edition is out now*

TIMELINE


Spring 1993 Chris Cornell writes "Black Hole Sun" while driving home from Bear Creek Studio, near Seattle, where Soundgarden are recording a version

of "New Damage" for a charity album
July 1993 The band begin work on their diverse fourth album, *Superunknown*

March 1994 *Superunknown* is released on A&M and "Black Hole Sun" gets considerable radio airplay. Howard Greenhalgh shoots a

video to accompany the single release
May 1994 Although not eligible for the Billboard Hot 100 Chart, "Black Hole Sun" spends seven

weeks at No 1 in the Mainstream Rock Chart. It wins a Grammy and is later covered by Paul Anka and Peter Frampton, among others...

A portrait of David Gray, a man with short brown hair and a light beard, looking upwards and to the right. He is wearing a dark blue quilted jacket. The background is a bright, hazy sky. The text 'DAVID GRAY' is at the top, and 'MUTINEERS' and 'THE NEW ALBUM OUT JUNE 30' are at the bottom.

DAVID GRAY

MUTINEERS

THE NEW ALBUM OUT JUNE 30

www.davidgray.com



Bob, with his boots of Spanish leather, recording *Empire Burlesque* at The Power Station, New York, 1985



Story: Allan Jones with Damien Love

Photograph: Deborah Feingold

What Good Am I?

The years of turmoil. In the second part of our Dylan In The '80s epic, we re-evaluate BOB DYLAN's most confounding decade. From the travesty of Live Aid, via hook-ups with the Grateful Dead, the Heartbreakers and the Traveling Wilburys, to the start of the Never Ending Tour, we enlist some of Dylan's key collaborators to uncover the riches hidden in an oft-vilified body of work. "I literally had to sort the human from the myth," says one associate – and so, perhaps, did Dylan.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD/CORBIS; REX/SPA PRESS

Dylan onstage with Ron Wood and Keith Richards at Live Aid, Philadelphia, July 13, 1985



“SOME ARTISTS’ WORK speaks for itself. Some artists’ work speaks for a generation. It’s my deep personal pleasure to present for you one of America’s great voices of freedom. It can only be one man. The transcendent Bob Dylan...”

June 13, 1985. Live Aid is in its umpteenth conscience-stricken hour when Jack Nicholson excitedly introduces Dylan as the closing act at Philadelphia’s RFK Stadium, where he appears with Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood, looking flabby and distressed. In the opinion of the millions who witness it, he delivers a performance of shocking ineptitude, made worse when he dares mention the fact that people are starving in America as well as Ethiopia and maybe some of the money being raised by Live Aid could, you know, be used to pay off the debt of American farmers to US banks. This apparently gormless insensitivity confirms him in the eyes of most of the watching world as a raddled old twerp whose grasp of reality has fatally loosened. But some people are listening to what he has to say. Within two months, Farm Aid is underway at the University Of Illinois, organised by Willie Nelson with the support of Neil Young. Dylan appears with Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers as his band, and if they’d been playing under a roof, they would have blown it off.



Jack Nicholson and Bette Midler at Live Aid, 1985

It’s the start of a two-year touring alliance with the Heartbreakers, the True Confessions tour opening in Australasia in February 1986. There are US dates scheduled for June and July, and Columbia prompt Dylan for a new album to coincide with them. Dylan duly obliges with his sixth studio album in seven years. *Knocked Out Loaded* is assembled – haphazardly, even desperately, in subsequent opinion – from sessions going back as far as November 1984 at Cherokee Studios in LA, where many of the basic tracks that Arthur Baker turns into *Empire Burlesque* are recorded.

“*Empire Burlesque* and *Knocked Out Loaded* are essentially one album,” says guitarist Ira Ingber, younger brother of Elliot Ingber, who was in the original Mothers Of Invention but is perhaps better known as Winged Eel Fingerling in Captain Beefheart’s Magic Band. Ira, a veteran of the LA

music scene who’s played with JD Souther, Jennifer Warnes and Van Dyke Parks, gets a call in late 1984 from an old schoolfriend, Gary Shafner, who’s now working for Dylan. According to Shafner, Dylan’s putting a band together for an unspecified project, perhaps a new album. Would Ira be interested in being part of whatever might happen next?

“They had just done *Infidels*,” Ingber tells *Uncut*, “and Bob was back pretty much living at his place in Malibu. There was some new-found interest to go in another direction, but it wasn’t clear what it was.”

Ingber is duly summoned to Dylan’s Point Dume compound in Malibu.

“Bob was an idol, just huge. The first thing I had to do was get over my schoolgirl crush. We talked for a minute or two, then he pulled out three or four pages of typewritten song lists, and he said, ‘D’you know any of these?’ I said, ‘...yeah.’ So we started playing. He’s playing acoustic, I’m playing acoustic, and one voice in my head is saying, ‘I’m playing “It’s All Over

DON'T
LOOK
BACK...

How Dylan's back pages came back to haunt him

IF IN ONE version of Dylan's '80s he spends the decade trying to escape his past, how unnerving might it have been that as his career seems to be unravelling the release of an epic retrospective reminds the world of triumphs he now seems unable to match. Released in November 1985, *Biograph* collects 53



tracks, 18 previously unreleased, with a 42-page booklet.

This is the first major boxset dedicated to a living artist and its success effectively creates a new market for elaborately curated retrospectives. Dylan claims indifference to the whole idea, but there's a lurking suspicion he's started to hold back material from his albums to create future demand for what becomes the Bootleg Series, initiated in 1991 by his manager, Jeff Rosen. On the four occasions *Uncut* has put this to Rosen, he's denied any involvement by Dylan in the releases.

"He really doesn't care," Rosen's repeatedly said. "He's just not interested in going back to what he's done before. His most common response is, 'Why bother?'"

Now Baby Blue" with Bob Dylan. Right now.' And the other part of my head is saying, 'You're playing with Bob Dylan but don't think about it.' I had to sort the human from the myth. But it worked out fine. We got on, and then we started talking about a band."

Ingber calls some friends: Vince Melamed, a keyboard player he's worked with in JD Souther's band, bass player Carl Sealove and drummer Charlie Quintana, who is eventually replaced by Don Heffington from Lone Justice.

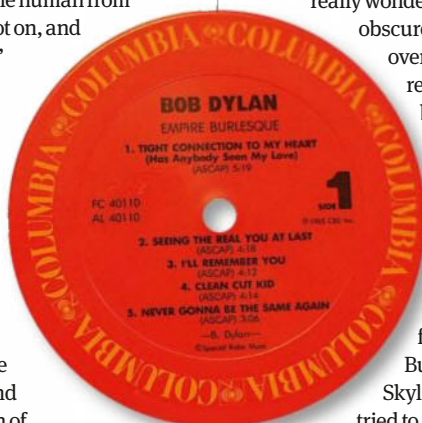
"This core group came together in late 1984," Ingber goes on. "The three of us went up to Bob's house, on a daily basis for some weeks. There were a number of houses on the property and this one was empty, except for a bunch of equipment he had in there. We would play some of his old stuff, or he'd bring a tape, or he'd start playing a song and we wouldn't know what it was – sometimes an old classic, sometimes even a demo that someone had sent him. Not all of it was his material, which I thought was interesting. He came to me one day and he told me he wanted to learn to play Ray Charles' 'Come Rain Or Come Shine' on guitar. Because it's arranged for an orchestra, not a guitar, there are some very complex chords. I said, 'Wouldn't it be easier if we just did it and you could sing it and not bother playing?' He was insistent – so I did an arrangement and I don't even know if we got as far as trying to play it, because the chords involved were a little beyond his comfort level on the guitar, so the whole thing kind of went away. But the scope of this work we were doing up in Malibu was very far ranging, that's the best way I can describe it.

"Dylan taped everything on this boom box he had. It was funny, there was a PA set up in this house we were rehearsing in. But he'd never sing into the PA. He would sing either into one of our ears – like, stand next to me, and sing straight into my ear – or he'd sing into the boom box. I kept saying, 'You know, if you sang into the mic, it might sound...'. And he'd be, 'No. No. I don't wanna do that.'"

After several weeks of rehearsals, the band is assembled at Cherokee Studios in Hollywood, where among the tracks recorded is "New Danville Girl", which Dylan re-writes and re-records subsequently as "Brownsville Girl" [see panel on p48]. Sessions continue at Cherokee through November, before Dylan completes what has become *Empire Burlesque* in New York, with Arthur Baker producing. When the album comes out, Ingber is not impressed by what he hears.

"I was disappointed based on what I had heard at the original recordings," he says. "Charitably, I think *Empire*

Burlesque and to a lesser degree *Knocked Out Loaded* were victims of what I call "80s-itis". Both those albums had some really wonderful performances, but the production obscured a lot of it, because back then the overuse of things like digital reverb was really prevalent. The records suffered because of it – I suspect that if somebody went back into the master tapes and had another look, I bet that these would be amazing recordings."



"Everything just exploded every which way. I knew, I've got to go out and play these songs"

BOB DYLAN

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS tour of Australia and Japan with Petty and the Heartbreakers finishes on March 10, at Tokyo's Budokan Hall. In mid-April, Dylan's in Skyline Studios in Topanga Canyon. He's tried to accommodate modern recording methods with Mark Knopfler and Arthur Baker on *Infidels* and *Empire Burlesque* and been frustrated and dismayed by the process. He now wants to return to the way he made records in the '60s – live in the studio, quickly and

intuitively. He thinks he can record a new album in a week to meet the deadline for the upcoming US dates with the Heartbreakers. A large cast of musicians are invited to Skyline for sessions that seem to have no coherent direction, including Los Lobos, T Bone Burnett, Al Kooper, Steve Douglas, the saxophonist with the Wrecking Crew, Stevie Wonder's drummer Raymond Pounds, bassist James Jamerson Jr and Blasters guitarist Dave Alvin [see panel on p49]. Ira Ingber is also present and like Kooper is dismayed by Dylan's startling lack of confidence in what he's doing.

"His inclination to add more and more musicians, certainly in the latter set of recordings I did with him – as opposed to that small core group we started out with

in 1984 – I think that indicates that he did lose confidence in the songs themselves, and his place in the songs," Ingber says. "I think he thought it could be made up by just obscuring it, with more instruments, background singers, whatever. It happened a lot even during his vocal recordings. I think he's one of the world's greatest singers, period. I believe everything he says when he sings. There's a complete credibility. But a lot of times back then, the vocal take wouldn't show that.

"There was a moment early on in working with him at Cherokee Studios, when I found myself in the recording booth, and, again, there was no producer. It was just me and an engineer, George Tutko. Bob was singing and he blew a line. He said from out in the recording room, 'How was that?' I said George, 'Do I tell him or do you tell him?' George said, 'I'm not gonna tell him.' I'm thinking, if I tell him that this

isn't working and he gets pissed off, then that's the end of that. But if I don't tell him, then I haven't done my job. So I push the talkback and I say, 'It sounded good, Bob, but I think you've probably got a better end part to that than the one you got there...'. There was this loooooong pause. I'm thinking, oh, here we go. But finally, he said, 'OK. Let's do it again.' This wave of relief came over me, because at that

Hay there: Dylan with Tom Petty and Willie Nelson at Farm Aid, Illinois, September 22, 1985



moment he started trusting me. Somebody had to drive the bus, there was no producer, and for someone like Bob out there singing and playing, it's very difficult to know when you're on target. That's one of the jobs of a producer to, hopefully, gently, guide without interfering.

"So that's what I started doing in that early set of recordings. Then in the second set, a lot of that was gone. Bob was hearing from a lot of other people, sometimes too many people. That lack of confidence was surprising to me. It would vary from day to day, song to song, and it didn't feel to me as though there was a singular focus, of 'This is what I'm doing. This is the record I'm making. This is my point of view.' It seemed very scattershot."

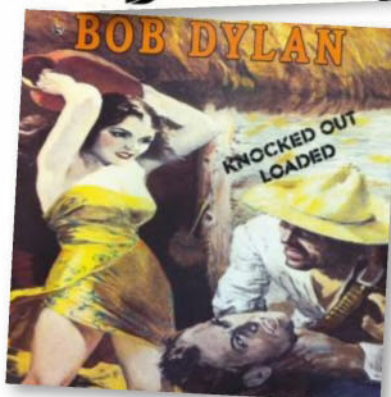
Reviews of the album are unilaterally hostile, as derisive as anything written about *Saved* or *Shot Of Love*. In another opinion, the opening version of Junior Parker's "You Wanna Ramble" is a gas. Take away the backing vocals, toughen up the guitars, thicken up the sound and it could be something you might hear on *Modern Times* or *Together Through Life*. "Maybe Someday" and "Got My Mind Made Up" are good-humoured loose-limbed lopes. The version of the country gospel standard "Precious Memories", meanwhile, has an appealing end-of-the-trail feel to it and an affecting vocal. The steel drums are an eccentric if lovely touch that make the thing sound somewhat like the Carter Family via the Caribbean. Carole Bayer Sager gets a co-writing credit on the creepy "Under Your Spell", which has echoes of *Planet Waves*' "Wedding Song" and the fevered desperation of "Where Are You Tonight? (Journey Through Dark Heat)" from *Street-Legal*.

Best of all is "Brownsville Girl". It's a song, one of the finest in his pantheon, about memory, identity, legend, loyalty, death and love across 11 action-packed minutes, Dylan throwing everything at this



DYLAN & DEAD

CBS



version, where the original was spare, acoustic and drifting. The *KOL* take is almost frantic, with Dylan often delivering its many great lines in a kind of delirium, the song revolving around half-remembered scenes from a Gregory Peck Western about an ageing gunfighter shot in the back by a craven young gunslinger. With Dylan's Queens Of Rhythm, hollering like a cross between the Ikettes and the chorus in a classical Greek drama, the song follows two young lovers on a roadtrip across Texas and Mexico, and back to New Orleans, Dylan singing his ass off in one of his most audacious vocal performances ever. The album doesn't even make it into the US Top 50.

The US True Confessions tour ends in Paso Robles on August 6. By the end of the month, Dylan's in England for *Hearts Of Fire*, a movie so dire it's barely shown in UK cinemas and goes straight to video in the US, Bob playing a washed-up rock star a bit too close to the bone for many. The only good thing to come out of the experience is the BBC Omnibus documentary, *Getting To Dylan*, in which he gives an interview in Ontario in his trailer, during which he draws director Christopher Sykes, sniffs a lot and appears quite lost.

In May 1987, Dylan goes out with the Grateful Dead for a six-date stadium tour that makes him a lot of money (he insists on a 70-30 split of the profits) but is considered otherwise worthless, a view reinforced when the *Dylan & The Dead* live album is released in February 1989. Whatever turned out to be the incompatibilities that prevented Dylan and the Dead from sounding at any given point like they were actually playing the same songs, Dylan, so jaded by now and adrift of himself and who he has been, digs the way the Dead make music. As strained as the short tour is, he feels by his later admission in *Chronicles* the beginning of a personal revival.

In September, he's back with Petty and the Heartbreakers for the start of the Temples In Flames tour, the first shows of which are in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and not well-received, things picking up somewhat when they reach Europe. On stage at the Piazza Grande in Locarno, Switzerland, on October 5, nine days before I see him at Wembley, Dylan is nursed by rejuvenation and a new sense of mission.

"It's almost as if I heard it as a voice," he later recalls. "It wasn't like it was even me thinking it: 'I'm determined to stand, whether God will deliver me or not.' And all of a sudden everything just exploded every which way. I sort of knew - I've got to go out and play these songs. That's just what I must do."

LET'S SAY THIS about Bob Dylan in the '80s, those years of turmoil. He stands his ground, even when it's shifting beneath him. Whatever the ferocity of critical pinion, self-doubt, the vilification of his deepest beliefs,

EYEWITNESS

'THIS IS ONE FOR THE AGES...'

Guitarist Ira Ingber on "Brownsville Girl"

"IT WAS ORIGINALLY called 'New Danville Girl' and we started it at Cherokee Studios in those first sessions in late 1984. Before we got into the studio, we had practised it during the rehearsal sessions at his house, but we had never played the whole thing up there. When we got to the studio, Bob said he wanted to do it.

"During the recording, Bob said he was short a verse. I said, 'Let's come back to it tomorrow or whenever you finish it.' He said, 'Wait a second.' He took out this impossibly small pen or pencil-like, maybe an inch and half long - and this tiny scrap of paper. He went off into the corner of the studio, and we're waiting maybe five or 10 minutes. He comes back and says, 'OK, let's go.' We start playing the song again, and all of sudden here comes this new verse that he'd written, and it was breathtaking. At that very moment I remember thinking: 'That's why he's Bob Dylan. That's what the guy does.' We all looked at each other and we were thinking, well - this is one for the ages. I did a mix of that

first recording with the engineer, Britt Bacon - see, there was no producer. Anyway, I did this mix of 'Danville Girl', as it still was, and we were listening to it for all of the 12 minutes, and then Bob turns to me and Britt, and says, 'Huh. Sounds too clean. I can hear everything.' Then he said, 'Sounds like a Lionel Richie record.' Until he said Lionel Richie, I thought it was a compliment that it sounded clean. I still have that mix somewhere, and it sounds really good: it sounds natural, and it doesn't sound like this pummelling of reverb and horns and all this stuff that ended up on the version that came out, that just really obscured what I thought was a pretty amazing recording."



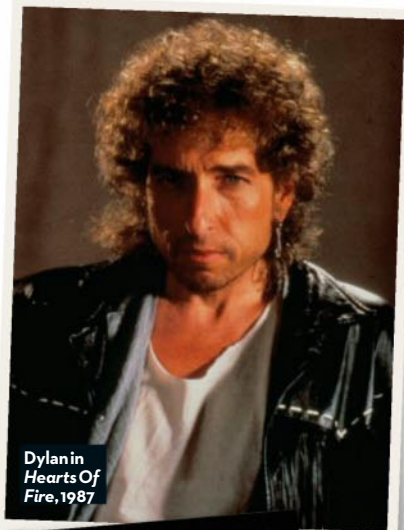
Dylan foil
Ira Ingber

he keeps going. You have to hand him that.

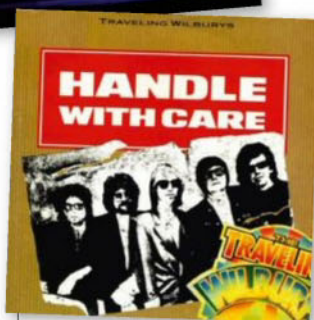
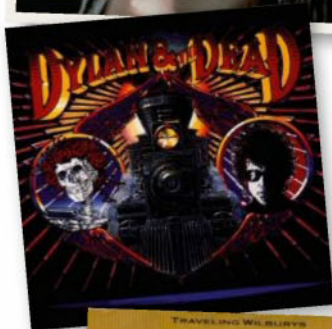
And here he is in early 1988, with George Harrison, Roy Orbison, Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne in The Traveling Wilburys. The group comes together when Harrison, Orbison, Petty and Lynne fetch up at Dylan's Point Dume compound to record a B-side for "This Is Love", a single from Harrison's *Cloud Nine* album. When the chums are assembled, they bash out a song called "Handle With Care" and have so much fun apparently they decide to make an album together. Bill Bottrell, who engineers the session and has worked extensively with Lynne, remembers, however, that Dylan, prior to the recording, summons Lynne, who he doesn't know, over to Malibu for a kind of audition.

"Jeff called me one day," he recalls, "and said, 'We have to go to Bob Dylan's house...'. At that point, Bob was the only one of those guys Jeff hadn't worked with. George had made the phone calls to get everybody together, I think, but before anything else happened, Bob wanted to check out Jeff. So Jeff and I went to Bob's house one day and they sat down with two acoustic guitars and recorded a version of 'I'm In The Mood For Love' together.

"It may have been a couple of months, maybe more, that the guys got together at Dylan's house to record. I drove Jeff down there and we started setting up in the garage. There was all this gear Dylan had bought from Dave Stewart sitting there, not really working. Jeff and I had to quickly plug it all together and make it work as much as possible. It was hilarious. It was a real garage. You know, like Sheetrock, plasterboard walls, a metal



Dylan in *Hearts Of Fire*, 1987



"Bob's studio in his garage was hilarious. It was a real garage..."
BILL BOTTRELL

garage door, the kind that rolls up. There may even have been lawnmowers in there. But when you've got Roy Orbison singing, the room doesn't matter. It's still going to sound like Roy."

The album's charming, just about, with Dylan's affectionate "Tweeter And The Monkey Man" a terrific highlight, and puts Bob back in the charts, which is more than can be said for his own new album, *Down In The Groove*, which has again been assembled from a sprawl of sessions, Dylan drawing on a lot of cover versions. *Melody Maker* exclusively

announces the album in January 1988. Columbia seem in no hurry to put it out, however, and it's anyway damned before release when in February, *The Observer* carries a story about it under the dramatic headline, 'Dylan's disaster', that claims the album – full of "unsavoury boogie" – has been indefinitely postponed, which seems like a euphemistic way of telling us it's been unceremoniously dumped from their schedules. When I call Columbia in New York for an update, I'm told by someone who sounds like she's chewing gum and balancing a small balloon on her nose that it will eventually come out, but is currently "unassigned", which makes it sound like it's languishing in some shadowy netherworld, unreachable by man.

When it's finally released in June, Dylan again is largely criticised for not being the Dylan people want him to be (which is to say, the last Dylan he would himself want to be). It's another album mostly of covers of R'n'B, folk, country and rock'n'roll standards. The most notable of the Dylan originals is the hilariously bleak "Death Is Not The End", originally written for *Infidels*. The album's another resounding flop, although we wouldn't end up arguing if you told me you were a fan of its rowdy clatter and enjoyed it as a passing insight into the kind of music Dylan grew up listening to, like a

harder rocking *Self Portrait*, Paul Simonon of The Clash and former Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones helping things along on a booting version of "Sally Sue Brown", which by presumable coincidence had just worked its way into sets by Elvis Costello, then touring with The Confederates. Elsewhere, The

EYEWITNESS

'I WAS FILLED WITH FEAR AND DREAD...'

Dave Alvin on the Skyline Studio sessions for *Knocked Out Loaded*

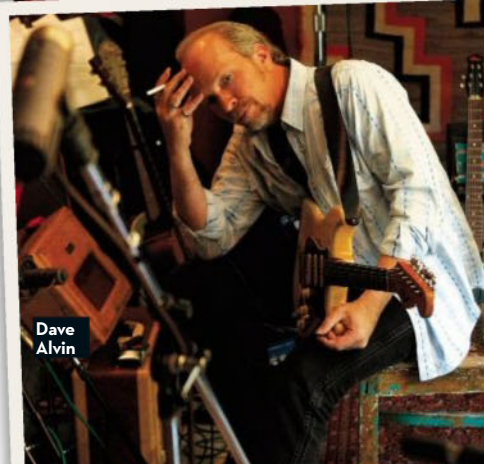
"I WAS INVITED BY Mr Dylan himself. It was a pretty state-of-the-art studio deep in Topanga Canyon. It had a nice-sized main room where all the musicians could sit in a circle and play together at the same time. For me it was terrifying and thrilling, I was asked to do two days but due to my touring schedule, I was only able to be in the studio for one marathon 13-hour session with Mr Dylan and myself on electric guitars, Al Kooper on keyboards, James Jamerson Jr on bass, Stevie Wonder's drummer, Steve Douglas on tenor sax on a few tracks, along with a trumpet player whose name I don't recall but was apparently an associate of Mr Douglas. The gospel vocal quartet was there too for some of the songs.

"We did 'Rollin' And Tumblin', Elmore James' 'Look On Yonder Wall', Slim Harpo's 'Got Love If You Want It', Chuck Willis' 'It's Too Late', Warren Smith's 'Red Cadillac And A Black Moustache', what I believe was Johnny Carroll's 'Rock Baby, Rock It' and Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'You'll Never Walk Alone'.

"He seemed to be a very loose and funny guy but he can quickly become serious and critical. He seemed to be exploring his roots and having fun. But he also knew what he didn't want you to play and a stern look in your direction let you know that immediately. When he was really feeling the song, his vocals were honest and poignant. Of everything we cut, I can still hear his extremely passionate live vocal on 'You'll Never Walk Alone' in my mind 28 years later. As surreal as it may sound, the guy who wrote 'Positively 4th Street' and 'Idiot Wind', sang his ass off on that possibly over-done Broadway inspirational chestnut."



Five go recording: the Traveling Wilburys, 1988



Dave Alvin

Stanley Brothers' "Rank Strangers To Me" is eerily covered, the traditional "Shenandoah" is a shimmering hallucination and "Ninety Miles An Hour Down A Dead End Street" gloriously sombre.

A tour's announced for June to coincide with the album's release, something Bob calls Interstate 88. No-one's in a rush to buy tickets to see what they imagine will be a dead horse being flogged on another tour to promote an album they're not going to buy. Interstate 88, however, is the start of something else. Dylan's been rehearsing with guitarist GE Smith, bassist Kenny Aaronson and drummer Chris Parker who – with Neil Young in tow – make their debut at the Concord Pavilion in California. Their first number is "Subterranean Homesick Blues". It's never been played live before, an indication that something's afoot. The show is in many respects chaotic, with Neil and GE Smith screaming chord changes at each other behind an oblivious Dylan. Not many people there realise they are witness to a historic moment. It's the first night, of course, of what becomes known as the Never Ending Tour, which comes sensationally to London in June 1989, Dylan looking trim in a gambler's black frock coat where two years earlier he'd looked like a bedraggled derelict.

There are terrific takes on hallowed songs from his back catalogue, played with a ferocious intensity, scalding versions of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" and "Stuck Inside Of Mobile With The Memphis Blues Again" still vivid in the memory. There's a marvellous acoustic interlude, too, featuring just Dylan and GE Smith on lovely versions of "It Ain't Me Babe", "The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll" and an exquisite "Boots Of Spanish Leather".

DYLAN THAT UNFORGETTABLE night at Wembley Arena is rejuvenated, born-again if you like. He's been writing, too, although by 1988, according to his own version of things, he no longer even thinks of himself as a songwriter. In *Chronicles*, Dylan alludes to a hand injury that leaves him in a cast. During his recovery from this vague injury and unable to play guitar, paint or draw, he writes, adding little more about this apparently miraculous creative recovery. The songs aren't coming quite as fast or easily as they once did. But there are enough of them eventually – more than 20, he reckons later – for a new album he's soon making in New Orleans with Daniel Lanois. The Canadian producer's worked successfully with Robbie Robertson and Peter Gabriel and more recently with U2 bringing the kind of atmospheric textures to *The Joshua Tree* that Bono tells Bob over dinner will be perfect for the new songs Dylan has played him.

Back in September 1988, the Interstate 88 tour hits New Orleans and Dylan turns up at Lanois' studio on St Charles Street, where Lanois is working with The Neville Brothers on their *Yellow Moon* album. Lanois' recording methods appeal immediately to Dylan. For all his studio expertise, Lanois favours the feel and atmosphere of spontaneous performance over technical

perfection. The Interstate 88 tour climaxes in October with a barnstorming four-night run at New York's Radio City Music Hall. In March 1989, he's back in New Orleans to start working with Lanois on what becomes *Oh Mercy*. Perhaps mindful of the disarray Dylan has recently brought to recording sessions by inviting all and

sundry to call in and play on whatever he's doing, Lanois insists that *Oh Mercy* will feature only his own hand-picked crew of engineers and musicians, people who can work quickly and intuitively to accommodate Dylan's whims. The hot little band he assembles includes Lanois himself on guitar, dobro and Omnichord, engineer Malcolm Burn on guitar and keyboards,

supplemented by guitarist Mason Ruffner, percussionist Cyril Neville and The Neville Brothers' rhythm section of drummer Willie Green, bassist Tony Hall and guitarist Brian Stoltz.

"We had a party one night here in New Orleans," Stoltz tells *Uncut*. "The Grateful Dead were coming

the album. There was no further discussion until I got the call and went to the studio.

"The Neville Brothers had worked in a big room on St Charles Street but by then Dan had moved everything over to Soniat Street, uptown. It was a big, old Victorian house. The whole place was set up for Bob – Dan really likes to set things up geared toward the artist. Bob had already been over to the house on St Charles Street, to listen to some songs and he really liked the set-up. He liked the idea that it was in a house, he liked that it wasn't some sterile, generic studio."

The first song Stoltz works on is "Political World", one of the first Dylan writes for the new album. Dylan's already had one stab at recording it, but is unable to find the right arrangement. Lanois now thinks he can make the song work with a new one he's come up with.

"Dan had an idea for a little groove," Stoltz recalls, "kind of a funkier groove. I remember we ran through it a few times before Bob got there. Bob came walking in the room when we were playing. He said, 'What's that?' Dan said, 'It's a little something we're working up for "Political World"'. And Bob said, "'Political World'? It don't go like that! It goes like *this*.' He picked up a guitar and started playing it and we all jumped in – and my memory is that's the track you hear on the record. If you listen to 'Political World', you can hear how Willie [Green] doesn't even come in with the beat because he was jumping in after Bob.

"There wasn't a lot of time getting to know each other. It was immediately getting to work: here are the songs. Bob would show us something and if it didn't work, we'd try it again. If it still didn't work, we'd move on. When we were tracking, there wasn't a whole lot of time spent trying to rework tracks. It was either happening or it wasn't.

"For the most part, it seemed like he had a *lot* of lyrics and he had melodies for some of them, but for many he didn't and it seemed like he was just working them out. He'd sit down and show us what he had and we took it from there. I think he had a really good idea what the songs were, he knew where they were going lyrically – obviously, because he would come in with, jeez, just unbelievable amounts of lyrics, verses and verses. 'Political World' must have had, like, 25 verses. I remember he would come in every night and head straight to the kitchen, pour a coffee and start working on his lyrics, editing, rewriting. When we were working on 'Political World', he had a sheet

"Bob would come in with verses and verses. 'Political World' must have had 25 verses..."

BRIAN STOLTZ

to town. I was playing with The Neville Brothers at the time and they threw a party for the Dead. They rented a fishing camp out on Lake Pontchartrain and just had a big crab-boil. During the party Dan asked me, 'Brian, if you had the opportunity to produce either Stevie Ray Vaughan or Bob Dylan – which one would you do?' I busted out laughing. 'Man, do you even have to ask? You already know the answer to that. You *gotta* do Bob.' Dan started laughing, that was his way of asking if I'd play on





BOB DYLAN

in front of him that he was singing off, but then there were all these other sheets lying on the floor. I've never seen anybody who could fit so many verses on one page – and it was just amazing to watch how he'd rework them and then get it down to how it ended up. In most instances he knew what the song was, the spirit of the song, the essence of it. The way they got interpreted was another thing."

Dylan offers his own account of the making of *Oh Mercy* in *Chronicles* that hints at an inner turmoil that makes the initial sessions unexpectedly fraught and brings him into conflict with Lanois [see panel, right]. Nothing seems to satisfy Bob at this point. He rejects the producer's ideas and the arrangements cooked up by the band, despite the enormous patience Lanois displays as he attempts to accommodate Dylan's indecision, constant revisions and general stubbornness. At times, it must have seemed like an impossible task, like hammering a nail into a plank with a feather. An album, however, is eventually made.

There is a further confrontation between Dylan and Lanois, however, over what will be on the final version. Chuck Plotkin, Mark Knopfler, Ira Ingber and Arthur Baker have all been left aghast at Dylan's perverse omission of key tracks from *Shot Of Love* ("Caribbean Wind", "Angelina"), *Infidels* ("Blind Willie McTell", "Foot Of Pride") and *Empire Burlesque* (the E Street Band version of "When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky", "New Danville Girl"). Lanois is now appalled when Dylan drops the miasmic "Series Of Dreams", a fantastic track unlike anything Dylan's previously essayed, and decides also to ditch one of the first songs written for the album, "Dignity". Lanois argues for the inclusion of both, risking Dylan's wrath. It's another tense moment in their relationship.



FOR THE BEST of the decade, Dylan has been mostly vilified by fans who have felt betrayed by his perverse waywardness. They have perhaps not fully grasped what possibly can be seen as a protracted attempt in these years by Dylan to strip away the mystique that has attached itself to him, to deny the predictive powers attributed to him by fans convinced of his far-sightedness to shed himself of the burden of unreasonable expectation, to always be the Dylan his fans expect him to be. This is the Dylan who in their presumption he has lost sight of, the Dylan of cascading visions, infallible.

If it has indeed been Dylan's intention to turn himself into a journeyman musician, he has all too often in the recent past succeeded. But these fans listen to *Oh Mercy* and there are glimpses of the Dylan they have missed on the churning rockers "Political World" and "Everything Is Broken", jittery litanies of woe, anxiety, terror and dread. There are echoes of his earlier militant evangelism on "Where Teardrops Fall" and "Ring Them Bells", but even at its most oratorical, *Oh Mercy* is largely free of the scalding sermons of *Saved* and *Shot Of Love*. There is appreciation, too, of "Man In The Long Black Cloak", whose chilling narrative can be traced back to the traditional "House Carpenter" but owes perhaps as much to the Southern Gothic of the Robert Mitchum movie *The Night Of The Hunter*.

The stark nocturnal blues and self-examination of "What Good Am I?" and the lacerating "Disease Of Conceit" are regarded as highlights, too. Better yet, though, is the deep-hewn regret of "Most Of The Time", Dylan sounding both wry and vulnerable over the low rolling thunder of guitar feedback, fractured harmonics, cloudbursts of melting dissonance. The two songs that close the album, meanwhile, seem to directly address his audience and their demands of him. "What Was It You Wanted" is chiding, "Shooting Star" elegiac.

There is some dissent over the sonic landscape Lanois contrives for the album, but on the whole *Oh Mercy* on its release in September 1989 is hailed as a great return in a year that also sees major comeback albums from Neil Young with *Freedom* and Lou Reed with *New York*. Dylan's back, the headlines proclaim, although as ever no-one is quite specific about which Dylan they're talking about. Whatever, hallelujahs generally abound.

The euphoria doesn't last, of course. Dylan's next album is panned, *Under The Red Sky* dismissed as a sorry follow-up to *Oh Mercy*, largely misunderstood. There will be no new original songs for seven long years, until he returns in 1997 with *Time Out Of Mind*, when the last great act of his career begins. ☪

EYEWITNESS

"IT SOUNDS LIKE I'M IN A WELL..."

Brian Stoltz on the conflicts between Dylan and Daniel Lanois during the recording of *Oh Mercy*

"THERE WAS DEFINITELY tension. But it was strange. It seemed like a really good relationship. It seemed that intuitively Bob knew Dan was The Guy, someone who could help him make a really good record, get him back on the map, and Dan, who had just come off a great run with Peter Gabriel and U2 and all that. So naturally there was a little bit of tension there. Bob, I think, is more of a traditionalist, and he's always re-working tradition. Dan comes out of a lot of different traditions. They just had different ideas.

"I remember one night I got to the studio and Dan says, 'Brian, listen to this. I worked all night on this vocal. Tell me what you think.' So he put this track on and he was really proud of it – I believe it was 'Political World' – and, God, the vocal was great. The vocal was sitting on top of the mix, but he had what seemed like several different reverbs and delays on the vocal and it created this beautiful aura around the vocal. It was like you could actually see an aura shimmering around Bob's voice. It was really great.

"About halfway through the song, Bob walks in, as usual he came in through the room walking fast, head down, just kind of looking at the floor. Dan turns the song off and without missing a beat, Bob says, 'It sounds like I'm in a well.' And Dan just kind of sunk – he'd spent all night working on this vocal and it was so beautiful and... 'Sounds like I'm in a well.'"

Brian Stoltz:
"Bob is more of a traditionalist..."



Echo & The Bunnymen

“The best band in the world!” says singer Ian McCulloch. “It’s still an adventure...”

IAN McCULLOCH has always had a lofty opinion of Echo & The Bunnymen. “It felt like we were the best band in the world,” he says of the group’s early days. “It was my dream, and I didn’t want to be in ‘the second best band in the world’...”

Across their first four albums, up to the undisputed high-point of 1984’s *Ocean Rain*, the Bunnymen – McCulloch, guitarist Will Sergeant, bassist Les Pattinson and drummer Pete De Freitas – created their own lush, string-driven sound completely at odds with most of their ’80s post-punk contemporaries, and wrote glowering, majestic songs like “The Killing Moon”, “The Cutter” and “The Back Of Love”, that still sound like bona fide classics today – even if the band don’t always agree who actually wrote them.

“It still is an adventure,” says McCulloch. “A lot of our new album feels like the early days to me.”



The Bunnymen in 1981: (l-r) Sergeant, De Freitas, McCulloch and Pattinson

CROCODILES

KOROVA, 1980



The spiky, classic debut – with drum machine ‘Echo’ making way for Pete De Freitas.

IAN McCULLOCH: In those days we all got on and [manager] Bill Drummond was almost a

fifth member. I can’t recall any arguments, not that it was chilled for the first few days... Maybe it was ‘cos we were so young, but it was brilliant.

WILL SERGEANT: We didn’t know what we were doing, it all just fell into place in a weird way from the very first gig. I didn’t think, ‘This is what I’m going to do for the rest of my life’, but I knew it was better than working as a chef.

LES PATTINSON: Iggy Pop had been at Rockfield Studios the week before us, so we got all the stories about him chatting up all the chamber maids, and we all wanted to know which bog he’d shit on. Everything was new and I just couldn’t believe how much it cost, and how much time was wasted trying to get something we thought we already knew. It was really bizarre, the way certain members of the band wouldn’t get up until two in the afternoon...

SERGEANT: I was amazed by what [co-producer] Ian Broudie knew in the studio. Drummond and [Teardrop Dave] Balfe were “vibe merchants”.

McCULLOCH: The others used to go off to pubs or light bonfires while I’d be watching telly or singing my head off in the studio. I didn’t enjoy exploring the woods – I never had been one of those adventurous lads. By the end I was getting a bit of cabin fever. But *Crocodiles* got fantastic reviews. I never doubted us. I could see it was special. I felt destined to make great records.

HEAVEN UP HERE

KOROVA, 1981



Huw Jones is promoted from engineer to producer for the Bunnymen’s more expansive follow-up.

SERGEANT: We loved Huw, he was a mellow bloke, just stood there

smoking a roll-up. Everything then had that big, horrible drum sound, the DX7 with that chiming bell sound, and we hated all that. We wanted them to be classic sounds, sounds nobody else could get. I played guitar with a pair of scissors at one point, and I kind of banned cymbals.

McCULLOCH: I used to do the night shift, and finish at about 6 or 7 am. Huw used to survive on two or three hours’ sleep and still be perky in the morning to do guitar overdubs and percussion.

PATTINSON: With *Heaven Up Here* we felt a bit more confident, and experimental. I love cross-harmonies, and parts where I play the same thing over and over. Each bar doesn’t sound the same, as Pete’s adding a little bit and I’m adding a little bit. Me, Will and Pete would go to African music shops and buy marimbas, and come up with these rhythms we’d never heard before. It was all about not being scared to try things and think, ‘Well, this doesn’t sound like a Bunnymen record’, but it did, because it was the four of us.

SERGEANT: I remember The Teardrop Explodes were rehearsing in The Mill up the road from Rockfield, and we were hanging out then. Someone gave us shotguns to play with...

McCULLOCH: It was like, ‘What are we doing!? We’re going to hit someone!’ I left the others to that, had one go and nearly broke my shoulder! The power out of those things was nuts.

PORCUPINE

WEA, 1983



The icy, groovier third, featuring eternal fan favourite “The Cutter”.

SERGEANT: There were all kinds of shenanigans going on that I didn’t really know about at the time. The label were on

about getting rid of us even though we were “flavour of the month”, they were really pushing for hit singles. Drummond went in and sneakily remixed “The Back Of Love” and Balfe put a keyboard thing on “The Cutter”... we were all pissed off with it, we thought it was like Teardrops trumpets.

McCULLOCH: I had an idea for “The Cutter”, played it to Ian [Broudie], and said, “Can you play it in rehearsal and pretend you made it up?” Because if I showed it to Will and that, they’d say they didn’t want it. There was a lot of hiding stuff because I couldn’t be doing with them thinking as if there was a one-man conspiracy going on.

PATTINSON: There was no diplomacy in the band, it was either all-out war or you just shut up and became a dummy.

SERGEANT: Who was in charge in the studio? I’d like to say me. Definitely on the first few albums, I was there, all the time. Hours and hours spent on amps and mics, it seemed to take ages to get a guitar sound. We were using more strings, and Mac was coming on with the Sinatra vibe. For the cover shoot, we went on a frozen waterfall in Iceland called Gullfoss, and we were just clambering down this thing, pushing each other. Above a 5,000-foot drop of pure ice! Mac had these weird sheepskin banana boots on – funny suede slippers basically, no soles! Mental.



Mac makes himself at home circa '84: "To me, I was the greatest singer in the world!"

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



OCEAN RAIN

WEA, 1984

Modestly described as "greatest album ever made" by their singer, the Bunnymen's fourth – featuring hit singles "Seven Seas", "The Killing Moon", "Silver" – was the perfect marriage of McCulloch's warm Sinatra croon, dark melodies and lush string arrangements.

MCCULLOCH: Me and Will worked on two acoustic guitars. The other two didn't write a lot, but the credits were given to all of us. It pissed me off that the other two were getting a quarter of the royalties for words they didn't write...

PATTINSON: The truth is we all wrote the stuff; the songs wouldn't be the same without Pete's drum lines, Will's solos, Mac's lyrics... It'd just come from jamming. So in my view, everyone wrote... although Mac wrote the lyrics, and if we didn't like a lyric, we'd pull him apart on it. There used to be a way of working with Mac, he's very

controlling, and with us it wouldn't work. And that's a good thing...

SERGEANT: We recorded "The Killing Moon" in Bath a while before we did the album.

PATTINSON: Me and Will had been in Russia for a holiday, and there was this band playing balalaikas in a hotel foyer, real cheesy cabaret. But it was fantastic and we just started messing about and the next thing is we've got a chorus for "The Killing Moon". It was just brilliant.

SERGEANT: Adam Peters came and did cellos and double-tracked it to make it sound like an orchestra. I reversed the reverb of the autoharp going in on the chorus chords so you get a big 'whoosh' sound. I got a Vox Teardrop 12-string.

MCCULLOCH: I wanted to go to Paris for a month to record it. To me I was the greatest singer in the world, never shied away from bigging myself up. I told the label, "Imagine how much better and inspired I'll be if we were in France?" I said I wanted a conductor, and the label said we'll get one over in Paris – he had long curly hair, looked like Louis XIV with a suit on... he was uncool.

PATTINSON: We were pissed every night in a studio with two guys who hardly spoke English, and we produced it ourselves. It only took three weeks, and it was amazing, but for all that, Mac couldn't sing on it. He was too washed out from partying, so we ended up recording all his vocals in Kirby. That was typical, and I don't think it would have worked otherwise.

MCCULLOCH: I came up with the phrase "the greatest album ever made", which was on the posters when it was released, and some people thought that was great. I almost reviewed it before it came out, which split people.

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN

WEA, 1987



The only way was down. A more commercial, diluted album, and the last for 10 years.

SERGEANT: It was going to be called "The Game", but I didn't like that.

There was a lot of

manipulation – if somebody didn't like something, they'd say it sounded like something you hated. I was as bad as everyone else.

MCCULLOCH: I hated the fact it didn't have a title, it's been called the 'grey' album now for years. I was just thinking it could have been called the 'loss of grey matter' album. We'd recorded it more or less, and then we did it again in Manfred Mann's old studio, on the Old Kent Road in London. It was next to the Henry Cooper pub and we used to have pints brought in on a tray – well, I did. We also did a lot of the album in a forest in Germany, a good hour from Cologne. Couldn't wait to get out.

SERGEANT: Pete was amazing, the nicest bloke, but he had flipped his wig and bankrolled a big piss-up in New Orleans and was doing an album with his mates. Eventually we got him back, but he was never the same [*De Freitas was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1989, aged just 27*].

PATTINSON: I had my first kids around then, so I didn't have the same eyes on the ball. Having said that, there is some great stuff on here. But there was no direction. We weren't quite ready.

MCCULLOCH: It was our most successful album up to that point, especially in America. But there were outside things going on, I hated being around the band and I just thought, "Where was the Bunnymen we all loved?"

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN



Sergeant, McCulloch and Pattinson in '97: "There was a lot of politics going on..."

● ELECTRAFIXION BURNED

WEA/WARNERS, 1995



After a Mac-less Bunnymen album, Reverberation, with Noel Burke on vocals, Sergeant and McCulloch bury the hatchet.

SERGEANT: A mate of Pete's phoned me and

Mac up and said, "You should get back together." Mac didn't want to do the Bunnymen at first, so we did this. It was great with Spike [Mark Stent], great guitar sounds. Spent hours moving mics and all that stuff.

MCCULLOCH: I didn't want to go headlong back into the Bunnymen, I wanted it to be just me and Will rather than have Les, who's Will's old school chum. *Burned* got loads of great reviews and live it was brilliant, and a lot of old Bunnymen fans loved it. It was an experiment as much as anything.

SERGEANT: On the tour, we played eight Bunnymen songs out of the 13-song set, so it was like, what are we doing? Eventually, Mac came around to the idea of a Bunnymen reunion, which is when I asked Les to come back. Mac and I are not best buddies or anything, it's just like we tolerate each other, I think.

MCCULLOCH: There's something about writing for the Bunnymen, it means more to me than when I write a solo record. I know exactly who I am and what I want to say within that set-up. One night I went to bed and thought, 'What if?' And I woke up thinking, 'It's got to be, it's what I want.'

EVERGREEN

LONDON, 1997



A stately and triumphant return for the remaining trio, featuring "Nothing Lasts Forever".

PATTINSON: I was never keen about going back, but to tell you the truth it was fantastic. I'd been

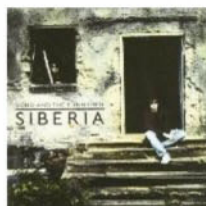
told that Mac was burnt out and needed fresh ideas, and wanted to work with us. Because we had such a long break, it was like a new lease of life. "Nothing Lasts Forever" was pure, pure Bunnymen, and it sounded fresh.

MCCULLOCH: I'd had that song since 1990 in various forms. The others were very negative – Will said, "It's a bit pretty," and I thought, 'You fucking idiot, that's like calling "The Killing Moon" a bit beautiful.' To me, it's the most important song I've ever written because it takes me back to being taken seriously, and it's one of the best songs of all time. Oasis were in the studio next door doing *Be Here Now*. Liam came in and listened to "Nothing Lasts Forever", and he had ideas for tambourine and a backing vocal, and we thought, yeah, we're having that. He was spot on, it really made that song great. With the lineage of frontmen through the years, having him on it made sense for me.

PATTINSON: My mum had MS, and the first day in the studio recording the follow-up [1999's *What Are You Going To Do With Your Life?*], I got a call saying my mum had been taken in with a suspected stroke, but it wasn't – she was given six months to live. So I left and my mum lasted five months. By then they had got another bass player in, and then they got dropped two weeks after the album came out. It was just bad timing all round. There was also a lot of politics going on about writing and royalty credits. People were trying to get control and I couldn't be arsed with that side of things.

SIBERIA

COOKING VINYL, 2005



Huw Jones returns to produce one of McCulloch's favourites.

MCCULLOCH: I like *Siberia* a lot. It's better than *Porcupine* and I prefer it to *Heaven Up Here* too. I remember

reading a review and it saying "no other group has managed nine albums in to make their best record ever". I didn't agree, but it was the first

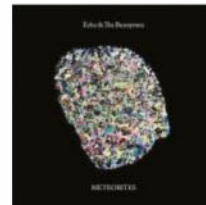
time that I was touching on my depression, I suppose. Singing about it, a line like, "Have I hit rock bottom, tell me how to hit rock bottom"... When I get to sing songs with words like that it will always mean more to me than the pretence in [2001's] *Flowers*. I thought the tunes were great, the guitars were brilliant. It sounded like a band with more bollocks to me than on *Flowers*. On *Flowers* it was the wrong vehicle we were driving, left-hand drive. We were just spinning round with no direction or knowledge of where to turn off. Whereas on *Siberia*, it was great, with Huw Jones producing, like the first few records. I can only judge things from my point of view, and I'm the biggest fan of this band, and I see it from the viewpoint of someone who sings the words. As much as you can be the bass player, drummer or guitarist... just the song titles alone mean so much. "The Killing Moon" – we didn't think of that title

together. It's the greatest title ever, I think, of anything.

SERGEANT: I think on *Siberia* there were something like 90 different guitar parts – but you can't really tell, it's all doubled guitars.

METEORITES

429, 2014



The Youth-produced, energetic new one, with McCulloch seemingly firmly in charge.

SERGEANT: I've done some good stuff on this new one, but I don't feel much of a, you know...

I didn't have a lot to do with the conception. I haven't got that close to it.

MCCULLOCH: There was only a bass guitar lying around my gaff and I started writing on that. Four songs on the album were finished in a day, and I've never done that. I've played bass on records before, but it's never really initiated a song for me until now. It sounds so different. I wasn't thinking chordally or the way I was used to writing songs, but by doing this it reminded me of Talking Heads. It reminded me of our early Bunnymen stuff, actually, that kind of pulse. Our manager suggested Youth to produce – we all really liked Killing Joke and they were one of the few bands I thought about as competition to us... I thought they had something special.

SERGEANT: I don't know what Youth was like as a producer! I only went up to his studio for two days, did stuff on five tracks. I did the rest of the guitars in my own studio, just me and the engineer, then they all went back to Youth to mix.

MCCULLOCH: I'd say "The Killing Moon" is the greatest song we've ever written, and I'd say the most important one up until this album is "Nothing Lasts Forever". Now I'd say "Meteorites" at this moment in time is equally as important, as well as "New Horizons" and "Market Town". ☺

Meteorites is on sale now; *Echo & The Bunnymen* play live UK dates this summer



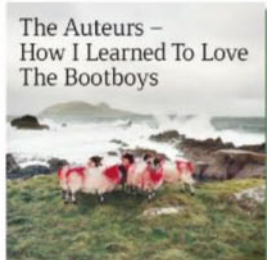
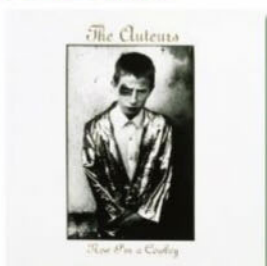
BETH ORTON

BETH ORTON CENTRAL RESERVATION



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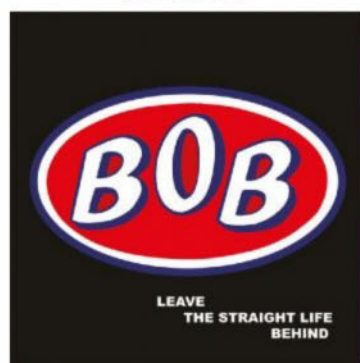
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BOB

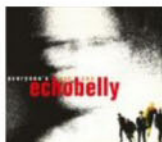


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Bonus material includes unreleased tracks and all 5 BBC sessions.

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COMING SOON
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DO YOU WANT NEW WAVE OR DO YOU WANT THE TRUTH?

Thirty years since its July 1984 release, *Double Nickels On The Dime* remains a high-water mark of US punk rock, and the MINUTEMEN one of its most resourceful, political and original bands. Bassist-songwriter MIKE WATT tells the band's story, and hails the greatness of his late friend, D BOON, "who had the balls like church bells" to make it happen.

Story: John Robinson

Photograph: Naomi Peterson

JANUARY 1980 WAS when we put the band together. D Boon met a drummer, Frank Tonche, who was in a polka band called The Polish Eagle Polka Band – and I guess because punk sounded like speeded-up polka, he thought he would be just right. So we came up with the first batch of Minutemen songs and did some gigs in April, May. But Frank left, he told D Boon: "This scene is full of insane people." Like: no shit, why do you think we're here?

You got to understand, it wasn't like now. Back then, punk was really little. Maybe not for the Ramones, but for people like us – people hated that shit. They look back now, and it's a different thing. The square johns, the other rock'n'rollers hated us. But they hated The Stooges and Captain Beefheart! We just learned to get a thick skin about it.

In early 1979, we see these guys handing out flyers and they're from Hermosa Beach, which is 15 miles away, but we don't know that town. We don't know anybody. So these guys are gonna have their third gig at a Teen Post, a youth centre in San Pedro. We were like, "What the fuck?" And they said, "What's so weird?" And we said, "Because we're from Pedro, and they don't have punk gigs. Especially there."

The guy said, "There's a Pedro punk band?" and we said, "Yeah, it's us!" This was The Reactionaries – the first punk band me and D Boon had. That's how small the scene was in the US. If someone else liked punk, you could trust them. Because everyone else hated us.

So that's how come we played with Black Flag. The cops had to lock everybody inside the Teen Post because there was a kid there with the Clash song "White Riot" written on the back of his jacket. The Latin guys and the black guys in the audience, they

A MIKE WATT GLOSSARY

Diminution is the better part of valour

"PEDRO" San Pedro, a port town in L.A. Home to the Minutemen.

"PROJ" **Noun:** The projects, specifically the projects where D Boon and Mike Watt's families resided in the 1970s.

"ECONO" **Adj:** "economically", "inexpensively". At the root of the Minutemen's working-class initiative: "We jam econo". All Minutemen tours made money, and were conducted while keeping regular jobs. Refers also to transport. "They were a Ford band – the Econolines," remembers Bob Mould. "We were a Dodge Tradesman band."

"MERSH" **Adj, derog:** "commercial", eg: "We could tell the good ones from the mersh ones, the new wave shit." Referenced on the band's record with "proper" horn arrangements, "Project: Mersh".

"MIKE" Michael Jackson. See also "Jim" (James Joyce), "Ig" (Iggy Pop), "Hank" (Henry Rollins).

"PRAC" **Noun/verb:** "Practice". "Flag would do those eight-hour pracs. We couldn't prac that long."

didn't know about some Clash song, so it was like, "You want a white riot, huh?" So the cops come, lock us inside.

Even if that band, The Reactionaries, continued we would have had to change our name – because those guys wanted to kill the band, for letting in the "White Riot" people.

We did a couple of gigs with Frank, but he ran away. We had to go and get the old Reactionaries drummer, George Hurley, because Greg Ginn from Black Flag asked us if Minutemen would be the second record on SST.

BUT WE'LL BACK up. There's this guy in our town and he wears a Kotex round his neck – Nickey "Beat" Alexander, he plays drums in The Weirdos. He tells us about these gigs in Hollywood



The Minutemen, Wilmington, CA, 1985: (l-r) George Hurley, D Boon and Mike Watt in Jack Brewer's garage promo shot session for the "Project: Mersh" EP

by these people who write their own songs. Which tells you how retarded the '70s were. We didn't know anybody who wrote their own songs. It was all about copying records and playing in your bedroom. There was no club scene: the only gigs we knew about were these arena rock things.

These Hollywood bands were so different, the way they did it, it didn't seem like a style of music, but a lot of fucked up people who didn't fit in with anything else. And that was all right with us. Deep people, strange... but they knew about a lot of things. Raymond Pettibon, who knew a lot about art, about Dada and John Coltrane. We wanted to be part of that thing, in a way, but we also wanted to find our own sound.

The first batch of Minutemen songs... our first influences after Blue Öyster Cult and T.Rex were Wire and The Pop Group. It was like – you don't want verse chorus

**"WE HAD A
MISSION... WORK
THEM GIGS. FIND
OUR VOICE. USE
MUSIC FOR
EXPRESSION"**
MIKE WATT

verse? You don't have to have it. You don't want a lead guitar? You don't have to have one – if you're the composer, you're in charge. The Pop Group took Beefheart and put it with Parliament/Funkadelic.

Even though we were appropriating things, it was for different ends – to try and stumble on our own voices. To find our voices using these guys from England and these gigs we were seeing up in Hollywood. The Dils, Germs... It was weird. We got these exotic records from this record store in Long Beach – two dollars, we'd pick 'em by their covers. You could tell the mersh ones, the new wave shit.

D Boon, the first song he wrote was about these people who took the projects where he lived and turned them into homes – kind of like a revenge tune, called "Storming Tarragona". He had an idea about renaming the streets. He had a song style he called "thinking out loud". Then I started bringing songs to the table – it was like

➤ permission was granted by these other bands.

We had a mission – work them gigs. Find our voice. Use music for expression. After all those years of copying shit, we had a vendetta on ourselves. We felt we squandered that time. We saw the Urinals, these guys just picked up their instruments and started playing. What were we fucking doing all that time? That’s the way we thought. Me and D Boon thought we were idiots. It wasn’t our fault completely, there was a culture around it, but it was our responsibility to get something done about it. That was the mission: find a voice, and fucking use it.

WE DECIDED TO divide the world into two categories: gigs and flyers. That’s why we were making records

every six months. They were like flyers to get people to the gigs. But listening to them: they’re diary entries. You can hear the Minutemen trying out different things.

Me and D Boon – we grew up since 13 playing together, we never had to teach each other songs. You know the situation, right? I had to move to the projects from Navy housing because my pop got stationed on another boat, my ma didn’t want to move from Pedro. So I had to move to proj. There wasn’t guns, but there was a lot of fighting and stuff... this was the 1970s, my ma wants us in the house after school.

D Boon’s mother said, “You’re gonna have a band.” This was the econo childcare. We’re not really musicians, it’s a way of hanging out. It was punk music instead of... building models.

George Hurley had learnt drums from that “Happy Jack” record by The Who. He almost got killed surfing twice, so he said he was going to become a drummer. He had the shed. That was the thing. Georgie had the means to do prac with a drummer.

It sounds kind of insane, but D Boon wanted to put politics into the band structure: he wants the band to be egalitarian. He noticed that R’n’B guys left space for the bass: Bootsy and Larry Graham. So he makes a conscious decision not to do power chords any more, not to play with any mid-range or low-end.

Our politicisation started when we were boys. We were boys in the ‘60s: it was in the streets, protesting the war, civil rights, the environment, all kinds of stuff. Taking things into your own hands, it seemed pretty principled. When we come of age in the ‘70s, it went away. Maybe a repository of that found its way out in the punk thing.

A real fucking lame-ass thing at that time was something I wrote about it on the first record, on “Joe McCarthy’s Ghost” – I didn’t like the idea of having to always prove that you weren’t a fucking traitor. That bothered me a lot when I was going to college and getting my degree. The motherfuckers

“You know what, I’m gonna play now...”
D Boon tears up
at a house party,
Hollywood, 1982



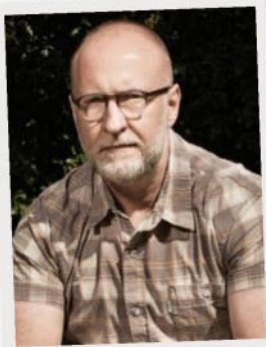
EYEWITNESS

BOB MOULD ON THE MINUTEMEN

“**W**E PLAYED together many times. Awesome people – the best. George the

drummer – what a character. A great musician just full of energy but a little different – not so punk rock, more an on-the-beach kind of guy. Watt with his ideas – always talking about ideas and the worker; it was always genuine

with him. Boon was such a giving, caring, sweet guy. What those guys did together and his style and the impact on American music is just ridiculous – how many things came out of it. It’s always bad when people go too soon – it’s always that ‘what if?’ ‘What if Boon would have been around now?’ Everybody remembers... so that’s the thing.”



were so fucking prejudiced, it was fucked up.

A story is more about what is written, than what it’s written on. The integrity is in the spirit, in the art you’re trying to communicate. That’s where the “Jam Econo” philosophy comes from. You don’t let material things stop you – you just adjust. Washing pots and pans for dollar twenty an hour, working at the Jack In The Box at dollar sixty-five an hour. Working three jobs, econo jobs – I put myself through school, I got my degree.

All these guys had ingenious ways of making do with their situations: Hüskers; Ian MacKaye – all these cats found their own way to do it, but at the same time we had so much common ground. It was a movement, but no-one was really in charge.

We were independent. We weren’t into adjusting our sound to an audience. Some people at those Hollywood gigs were total provocateurs. They impressed us. There was duality there: on the one hand econo. But on the other, fuck it if you don’t like it. If we didn’t do it that way, it wasn’t getting done. We were funny-looking guys – regular rock’n’roll people wouldn’t go for that.

Our band was about friendship, but it was also about D Boon having the balls like church bells. He wasn’t arrogant, but if he was gonna play, he was gonna play. Maybe it was being a bigger guy and always having people call him names and shit, he was like, “You know what, I’m gonna play now, and I’m gonna try very hard at it.” That’s what gigs were like. I could never be scared. You just looked over and saw this guy bunnyhopping around. I felt like one of the crowd. When you have a guy who wants to work a room that bad, it helps.

WHEN PUNK ROCK started to go into the suburbs with hardcore, the police started to see it as some kind of threat. You can’t really blame the hardcore kids – it was their first rock’n’roll. It was a social thing, like, “We’re angry with our parents...” There was a support group in Orange County: “Parents Of Punks”. But people wouldn’t leave us alone. We had some ridiculous adventures with the police. I don’t want to hurt anybody’s feelings or anything, but for what? For Green Day and Blink 182?



Things were simple-minded: "How can you be connected with Black Flag, you don't sound like them?" You had people who were supposedly part of the movement that were asking you this shit. That was the whole fucking point! The economy, the anarchy... it's funny how quickly that stuff just turned into empty slogans. Like, "This is how we should dress, this is what we sound like..." To us that was the exact opposite of the programme.

We were recording every six months. *The Punchline* was our third time in the studio, that and "Joy" is all part of the first batch of Minutemen. After *The Punchline* is a new version of the Minutemen. With things like "Buzz Or Howl Under The Influence Of Heat", D Boon is pushing the band in new directions, bringing in the trumpet. Then the record after that is *Double Nickels On The Dime* which is its own world.

It tripped me out when people liked us. I got a sense of: if you hear them out, they would hear you out – like taking turns. I didn't really think we were getting over on people, but that they were being more tolerant and more open-minded. I still think that now.

We went to Europe for the first time with Black Flag in early 1983. There was always a lot more drama in that band, we weren't really aware of. Henry [Rollins] was under a lot of pressure.

That tour was tough for Hank. That was the first tour he did where there was fighting every night – the crowd were putting cigarettes out on his back. Me and Georgie had to peel him off the deck. He took a lot of hell in there. We were all in the same room, in the same boat. We were real tight.

Minutemen were way in the back of the van, and we never had our hands on the radio. They would play Hanoi Rocks just to bug us, yanking our chain. But we played our cassettes – Henry told me, that's where he first heard The Velvet Underground.

Minutemen was a different dynamic to their band. We were all three firstborn – there's no mind games, all the words come out loud. There was no festering with us: we

FIVE ESSENTIAL MINUTEMEN RECORDS



PARANOID TIME

SST, 1980

The awesome debut, establishing the band's succinct and wiry mode. Highlights of the seven-song EP include "Joe

McCarthy's Ghost" and "Sickles And Hammers", an instrumental later covered by Sebadoh.

WATT: "We recorded and mixed 'Paranoid Time' in one night. We saw it as a flyer for the telephone pole of life – like if people couldn't come to the gig, they could hear it and maybe come next time. It wasn't jive."



THE PUNCH LINE

SST, 1980

"Until now, I hadn't noticed that fascism has many disguises!" Short and to the point, *The Punch Line* does its

18-song job in a mere 15 minutes, the likes of "The Struggle" combining the Minutemen's ire with persuasive melody.

WATT: "The *Punch Line* was like the older brother of 'Paranoid Time'. A lot of the stuff we were drawn to was a reaction to what we had been into, which was arena rock."



WHAT MAKES A MAN START FIRES

SST, 1983

Another surging and amusing record ("Bob Dylan! Wrote propaganda songs!"),

with music written entirely by Watt, which may account for its more thundering nature.

WATT: "For eight months, D Boon lived outside of Pedro. Georgie was trying to get stuff together to buy a house. I'd had knee

surgery and had to move back to my ma's place. So I was there to do it."



BUZZ OR HOWL UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF HEAT

SST, 1983

There's a busy side to the Minutemen, and an obliquely anthemic one – both satisfied by this

excellent EP. The likes of "Cut", as mixed by a new producer – Blue Cheer's Ethan James – sound huge.

MIKE WATT: "Ethan said, 'Give me a song for my compilation, I'll let you cut a song for free.' Well, we put three songs together and said it was one big one. The other side, Spot did live to two-track. The whole record cost \$50."



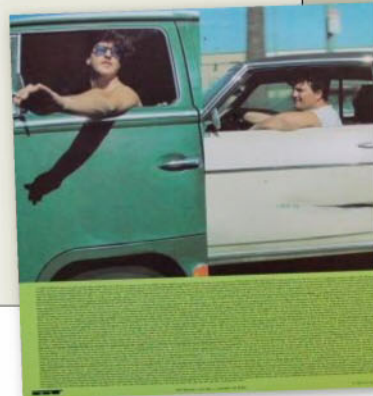
DOUBLE NICKELS ON THE DIME

SST, 1984

A jovial competitive streak sees the band driven to extremes by Hüsker Dü's double LP,

Zen Arcade. What follows isn't much of a concept, more a testimony to the band's resourcefulness and productivity. The title? "Double Nickels" means travelling 55mph on the former Interstate 10 into San Pedro ("The Dime").

WATT: "We each got half a side. We used the sounds of our own cars. Making fun of other music guys became our concept. But no-one got the title."



"THE SQUARE JOHNS – THE OTHER ROCK'N'-ROLLERS – HATED US!"

MIKE WATT

would just pull the van over and start fighting.

Or we would have to pull over at the library. Like, was it [Holy Roman Emperor] Henry IV or Henry II who had to kneel in the snow? D Boon was intense, and I had a terrible memory: we would fight over all kinds of stuff. I have a Minutemen interview cassette where the guy can't get any questions in because me and D Boon are arguing. We would get our shit out.

IN NOVEMBER OF '83, we recorded an album – we didn't have a title for it yet, but we had all these songs we had written over the summer. This was going to be our first recording proper with Ethan James: beautiful guy, easy to record with, no bullshit. Hüskers come to town couple of weeks after we get done. They record with [Black Flag producer] Spot this album called *Zen Arcade*. We say, like, "Fuck man... why didn't we think of something like that? Let's write some more and think up something that connects them."

D Boon hated Sammy Hagar who had this song called "I Can't Drive 55". Like, this guy can't drive to the speed limit, but he plays this most merish music. He was angry with





Minutemen live at the Grandia Room, L.A., 1982: fan Henry Rollins shows his approval

TRUE PUNKS

FLAG DAY

How Black Flag influenced the Minutemen

MIKE WATT: "From the Flag guys, we found out punk ain't even just writing songs and having a band with your buddy. It's about making your own records, fanzines – how you know what's going in other towns, or your town. Greg Ginn did ham radio when he was younger – he used to talk to people. So he knew about people outside of your own town. In fact, you should go play for them. He was about putting boots on the ground. It's almost a version of Vaudeville. A very old tradition. I still tour on the circuit that those guys built. For a lot of kids, Black Flag was the only punk band that came around."

"ALL THE TIME, SECURITY WOULD THINK D BOON WAS SOME GUY BUM-RUSHING THE STAGE"

MIKE WATT

words to other guys. The landlady's note. Hank Rollins wrote one. We were getting words from anyone. They were good songs, but we were just grasping at stuff, trying to get this fucker done.

"History Lesson, Pt 2", I actually wrote it for young hardcore guys. It's about how we got there. I was making fun of ourselves, but also saying it's a beautiful thing – without getting too schmaltzy. I was trying to say, "It's just me and my buddy playing – just like it is with you. The important thing is we're playing."

Songwriting was like making little movies. They were scenes I wanted to see. Like, "I know D Boon is gonna dance if he doesn't play guitar in this part... I know he's gonna give it everything in this part." I had gotten to know what Minutemen were like, so with D

the fourth side – we just wanted to be like Hüskers. Georgie got first pick, and I picked the song I wrote for Mike Jackson. Ethan James mixed all 42 songs in one night.

"Take 5, D" was my solo spot. D Boon said my lyrics were too spacey, so I thought the antidote to that would be to use the landlady's note about the shower leaking. We needed more and more songs. I had just finished *Ulysses* from Jim Joyce. Every fucking song was about *Ulysses*. So we started farming out the

Boon and Georgie there were cues I could give them in the songs: we had our own Minutemen language. It's about understanding, being aware. After you've been together a few years, you've learned how to do certain things with each other.

DDOUBLE NICKELS is the best record I ever played on. Which is kind of sad, because there's records after it. We knew there was a slump after *Double Nickels*, but we had a triple album planned: to fight the bootlegging people and have a live record. The other three sides were gonna be newly recorded stuff. D Boon had a political idea, the people could pick what songs they wanted to hear. We kind of knew "Project: Mersh" (Feb 1985) and *3-Way Tie For Last* (Dec 1985) weren't as good as

Double Nickels, but we had a plan to come back.

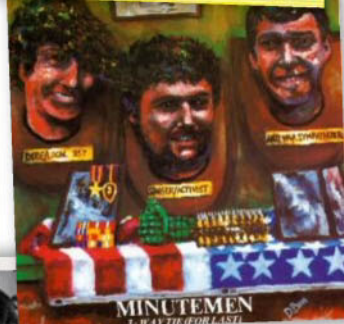
Bands are trying to be like perfect political states, their own little entity in a way – that's why people don't like the solo artists that come from them. Because a band is more than the sum of its parts, and D Boon totally embraced that in the Minutemen. I didn't need another band to bring my music ideas to: I could bring all my ideas to him.

A couple of months before D Boon got killed [in an automobile accident, December 22, 1985] I tried the two-bass thing with K [The Dos, with Kira Roessler, from Black Flag, Watt's then-girlfriend, now ex-wife], but that was the only time I tried it with someone else, which was a strange thing. I could channel everything through this. D Boon said we could try out anything, but they've got to know it's the Minutemen.

The Minutemen taking chances

with stuff helped people be confident with taking chances, but ultimately, it was the man D Boon. He did not look like your typical dude. I hear this a lot from guys who like Minutemen: he blew their minds, he was not supposed to be in a band. He wasn't supposed to play guitar and sing. He pushed out of the stereotype – just by being himself. He was a big guy. He didn't fashion it up. All the time, security would think he was some guy bum-rushing the stage. He'd say, "Uh, it's my turn to play!"

That's the good thing about the Minutemen. There's not one way to do it. He opened it up. You don't fit in? It don't matter. Do your piece. **1**



Black Flag live in 1982: Henry Rollins and Greg Ginn

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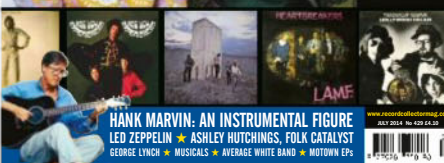
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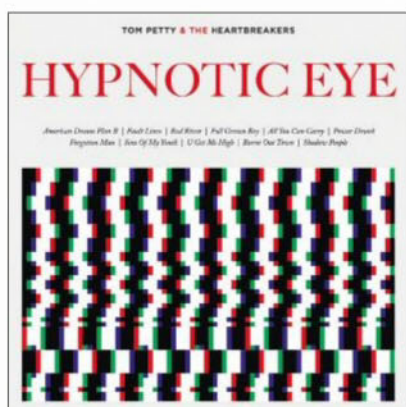
10 Masterpiece 9 Essential 8 Excellent
7 Very good 6 Good but uneven
4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

New albums

THIS MONTH: MORRISSEY | JOHN HIATT | CSNY & MORE



SAM JONES



TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

Hypnotic Eye

REPRISE/WARNER

Petty and band return with their hardest-rocking album in 25 years. Oh yeah, all right! *By Jason Anderson*

8/10

IT'S A SHAME that album covers are rarely equipped with the catchy taglines that are routine for movie posters. Maybe music consumers ought to get their own equivalents to "in space no-one can hear you scream" or "an offer you can't refuse". If that were rectified, the Hollywood marketing team would have an easy task with *Hypnotic Eye*,

the 13th studio album by Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers. "The snarl is back!" the print would read in bold red type, perhaps with a few more exclamation marks to drive the point home.

Of course, Petty's staunchest loyalists would cringe at such a crass display of hype, as would the man himself, who put his latest collection together with the usual degree of



TRACKLIST

- 1 American Dream Plan B
- 2 Fault Lines
- 3 Red River
- 4 Full Grown Boy
- 5 All You Can Carry
- 6 Power Drunk
- 7 Forgotten Man
- 8 Sins Of My Youth
- 9 U Get Me High
- 10 Burnt Out Town
- 11 Shadow People



Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers: the snarl is back

→ care over three years at his home studio in Malibu and the Heartbreakers' rehearsal space in Hollywood. Yet the diehards would still be plenty pleased to see those words and even happier to hear the songs that justify their presence. After all, that snarl was a key part of Petty's delivery in "Baby's A Rock'n'Roller", "I Need To Know", "Refugee" and many more of the songs that form the core of his catalogue. Conveying all that it is to feel jilted and jaded, sour and snide, adolescent and very badly aggrieved, it was arguably Petty's best weapon over his extraordinary early run of albums with the Heartbreakers. That was before he began to

mess around with the template, a radio-ready combination of garage-rock muscle, Byrds-ian jangle and the sound of a scrappy Florida kid with a serious chip on his shoulder and much to prove.

As strong as much of Petty's music has been in the decades since, it's been hard not to miss that snarl, especially on the albums that could've used it.

The mellower Petty of recent years did just fine without it on *Highway Companion* (2006), a consistently fine if unsurprising re-teaming

with Jeff Lynne, and his more engaging 2008 reunion disc with his pre-Heartbreakers outfit, Mudcrutch. That album's mid-album epic-length rambler, "Crystal River", also boasted a spirit of adventure that even the diehards hadn't expected to encounter again.

Instead, the snarl's absence was more keenly felt on Petty's last two albums with the Heartbreakers. Full of Petty's pique over the state of the music industry, *The Last DJ* (2002) had the muscle but not the tunes.

SLEEVE NOTES

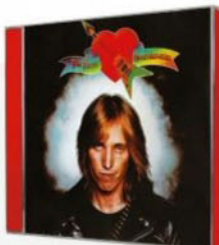
► **Produced by:** Tom Petty, Mike Campbell and Ryan Ulyate

Recorded at: Tom Petty's home studio in Malibu, California and the Clubhouse, Los Angeles, California.

Personnel: Tom Petty (vocals, guitar), Mike Campbell (guitar), Benmont Tench (keyboards), Ron Blair (bass), Steve Ferrone (drums), Scott Thurston (harmonica, guitar, keyboards, vocals)

HOW TO BUY... THE ROAD TO HYPNOTIC EYE

Four albums that blaze the way for Petty and co's return to form

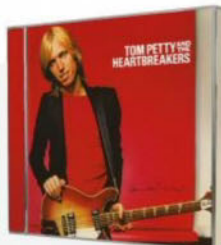


TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers

GONE WITH THE WIND/MCA, 1976

Though strangely marketed as new wave hopefuls, the debut from Petty's crew had as much bluster as anything else most US DJs dared to play when its synthesis of the Stones, Byrds and power-pop broke through a year after its release.

8/10



TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS Damn the Torpedoes

MCA, 1979

The original Heartbreakers scored their first Top 10 LP with the sharpest demonstration of Petty's loser-looking-for-a-break persona and his band's ability to maintain both force and focus, with Benmont Tench arguably emerging as its strongest asset.

10/10



MUDCRUTCH

Mudcrutch REPRISE, 2008

Formed in Gainesville in 1970 but kaput after its one single failed to chart in 1975, Mudcrutch was a footnote until it got a second life after Petty, Tench and Mike Campbell reunited with two other original members. The resulting album's brand of Southern-fried country rock was worth the wait and there may be more to come.

9/10



TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS The Live Anthology

REPRISE, 2009

Compiled from tapes of 170 shows over three decades, this four-disc set may hopscotch between eras and lineups but the quality rarely wavers. Especially welcome is the chance to hear leaner takes on glossy late hits like "Learning To Fly" and "Mary Jane's Last Dance".

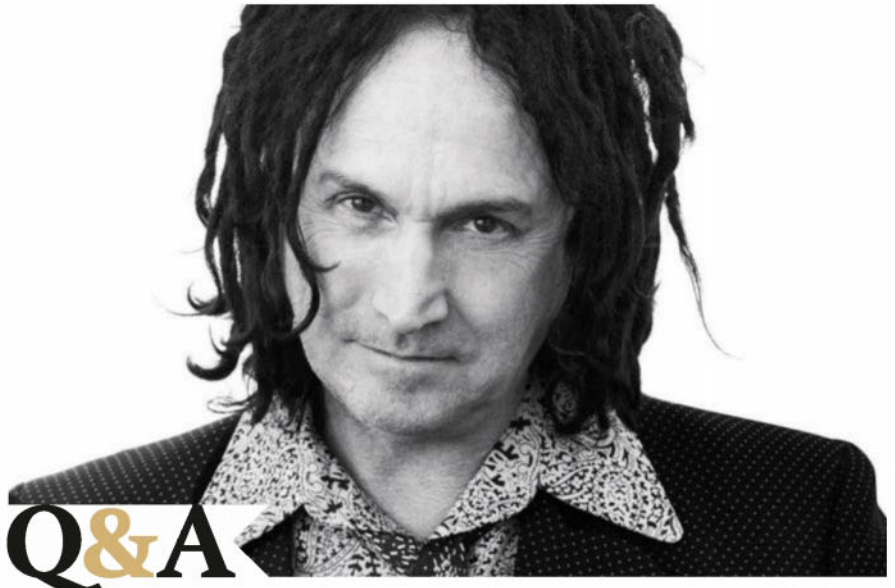
9/10

A letdown to anyone who thought Mudcrutch's revival might rejuvenate the better-known band that succeeded it, *Mojo* (2010) was a bluesier, jam-heavy affair that too often turned torpid.

But lo and behold, the snarl's right there for all to hear in "American Dream Plan B", a suitably punchy opener for Petty and the Heartbreakers' hardest-rocking set in a quarter-century or more. With its snarky statements of defiance – "I'm half-lit, I can't dance for shit/But I see what I want, I go after it" – the song is clearly born for that snarl and Petty delivers it with relish. When set against the intertwined guitars of Petty and Mike Campbell on "All You Can Carry" and "Forgotten Man", it's even better. Whereas its return might have smacked of yet another rocker's effort to recapture his long-gone youth (Petty turns 64 this year), it suits the surliest songs here, seeing as their sentiments have less to do with the small-town desperation of *Damn The Torpedoes* than it does with the frustration and fatigue felt by a greyer, grizzlier self who's pissed to get caught in the same old dramas. As he sings in "All You Can Carry", "You and I have burned every bridge/And now we gotta save our souls again." In "Power Drunk" – a blues-rock rumbler that gets an unexpected lift from an expertly placed middle-eight – what gets him riled is the fat-headed hubris of any man who "starts believing there's nothing out of his range".

Petty's delivery is more tremulous but just as dramatic in the fuzz-laden "Fault Lines" and "Red River", in which the plaintive passages of Roger McGuinn-worthy sweetness give way to more thunderous demonstrations of the undiminished prowess of Campbell and keyboardist Benmont Tench. As revitalised as Petty often sounds, the Heartbreakers may be even livelier. Whether it's Tench's barrelhouse vamping on "Burnt Out Town" or drummer Steve Ferrone's Sandy Nelson-worthy pummeling on "Forgotten Man", the band play with a sense of vim and vigour that was largely AWOL on *Mojo*. Nor do they let the tension slacken on *Hypnotic Eye*'s less obviously aggressive songs, like "Shadow People", the album's slow-burn closer and longest track at over six minutes.

Perhaps the Heartbreakers sound so powerful because Petty seems to be writing with them in mind, which hasn't always been the case on the albums that bear their imprimatur. Nowhere is this clearer than on "U Get Me High", a song whose terrible title might've been more forgivable had it appeared on the sleeve for *Hard Promises*. Nevertheless, with its masterful synthesis of chunky riffage and a softer psych-pop lilt that betrays Petty's enduring love of The Zombies – the Heartbreakers' cover of "I Want You Back Again" was in the set for last year's rarities-centric tour – it's the most convincing example of the album's *modus operandi*. If *Hypnotic Eye* was just about the snarl, it'd lose steam fast. Instead, it's only one element of a story that's bigger and richer, which is how a storied American band returned to the core principles of yesteryear without having to pretend to forget all they've learned in the meantime.



Q&A

Mike Campbell on jangle, reviving the sound of the early Heartbreakers and why Petty has "a real gift"

***Hypnotic Eye* is the Heartbreakers' most rock'n'roll album in a long while. How'd you end up heading in that direction?** Our last album was called *Mojo* and this album started off as an extension of that. But then it took a turn when Tom started writing to my ears a little more – it was more in the style of some of our earlier albums. He started writing some great lyrics, getting a little more melodic and not writing as much blues-based stuff. It was a nice change.

It's striking to hear the voice of Tom's younger self make a resurgence here. Yeah, I had that impression on some songs. I remember saying to him about one tune, "You sound like you were singing on the first album. There's something in the nuance and the spirituality of it that sounds familiar from those early days." He seemed pleased with that! There's an urgency in his voice that sounds very familiar to me.

The guitars on the album's opener, "American Dream Plan B", are laden with all that youthful fuzz and distortion, too. Were you pleased to bring those sounds out of your arsenal again?

It was Tom's idea to have fuzz bass on that song. He wanted it real spare and just to have this really ugly fuzz bass going on, which we've never really done. That was the inspiration for the whole approach to that. But we just love guitars and there are so many tones and nuances in electric and acoustic guitars that you can always find new things to inspire you and push you into a new area creatively. It's a pretty amazing instrument in that way. With these songs, most of the time Tom would bring in a song and the band would play it live and learn the song and in that process, certain ideas would become apparent. You think, "Maybe this kind of sound would work", and you change it around to try to find a sound that fits. When you find something that sticks, you just go with it.

"U Get Me High" is another one with a wild array of approaches. It's great to hear some of the Heartbreakers' well-loved Roger

McGuinn-style jangle in there, too. That was a leftover song from the *Wildflowers* era that Tom found a demo for and brought in. It dates back quite a way, so maybe that's why it's got some of that jangle in it – I thought it sounded more like AC/DC! But yeah, Tom and I play guitar a certain way, and from "American Girl" onward, we found a harmonic, drone-y sound, sometimes with open strings – I guess you'd call it a jangle. We love Roger McGuinn, among many other guitar players, so I love that sound, and it's tended to creep in throughout our whole career.

Are there any other new songs that you're looking forward to getting into the live set? "Fault Lines" will be a really good one because it's got a lot of guitar and a great rhythm and tempo we've never used before. It's always interesting because once you get out there and start playing songs live, they take on a life of their own and morph a little. You think, "Well, maybe we should stretch this bridge out a little bit or maybe the ending should go on a little longer so the guitar can build a little more." That's what happened with "Refugee". When we got to playing it live, we'd get to the end and feel, "Well, y'know, we're here and all these people are here and there's this great

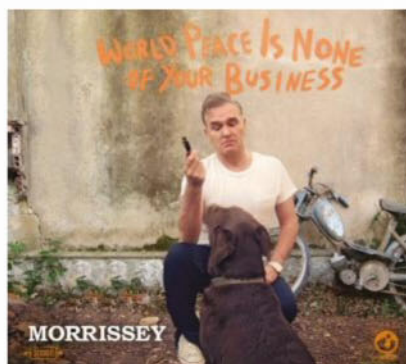
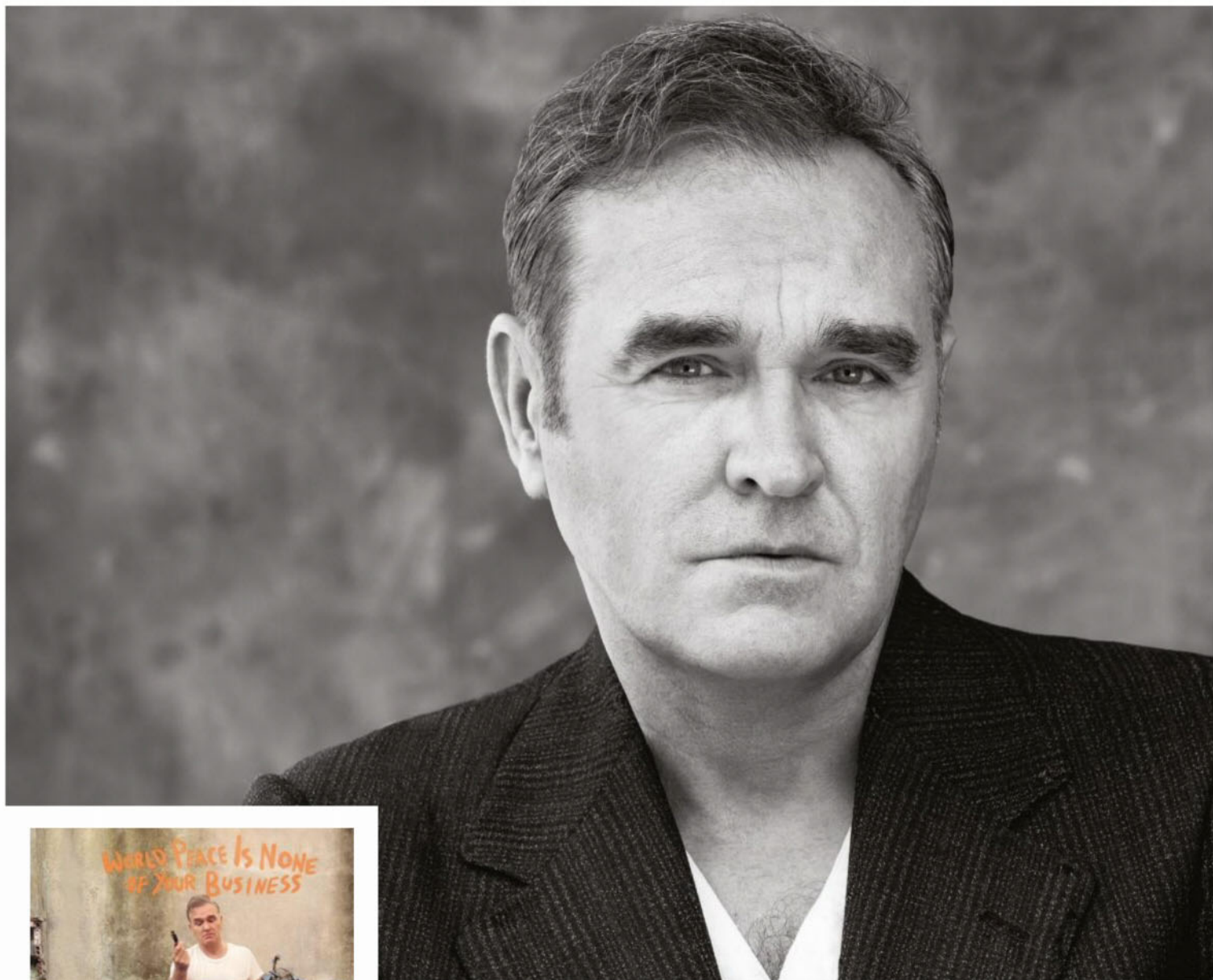
groove going on – we should let the guitars play another minute and really build up some excitement." But that's the beauty of songs – they're very organic. A good song can age really well, too. A lot of Tom's songs have aged well because they were well crafted and the lyrics still ring true. 30 years on, you can relate to them or they still make sense in relation to what might be going on in the world. That's a real gift

to be able to write songs like that.

It's great that even after 40 years of making music together, you and Tom are still excited to discover where the songs can go. That's part of why we're still together. If you lose the creative spark, then the game's over. You can't get stuck in one bag too long or you get stagnant. Challenging yourself is the secret to longevity.

INTERVIEW: JASON ANDERSON

"There's an urgency in Tom's voice that sounds very familiar to me from the early days..."



TRACKLIST

- 1 World Peace Is None Of Your Business
- 2 Neal Cassady Drops Dead
- 3 Istanbul
- 4 I'm Not A Man
- 5 Earth Is The Loneliest Planet
- 6 Staircase At The University
- 7 The Bullfighter Dies
- 8 Kiss Me A Lot
- 9 Smiler With Knife
- 10 Kick The Bride Down The Aisle
- 11 Mountjoy
- 12 Oboe Concerto

Deluxe edition bonus tracks

- 13 Scandinavia
- 14 One Of Our Own
- 15 Drag The River
- 16 Forgive Someone
- 17 Julie In The Weeds
- 18 Art-Hounds

MORRISSEY

World Peace Is None Of Your Business

HARVEST

I know it's not over... The Moz enters a gripping new, possibly climactic, career phase. *By Stephen Troussé*

8/10

ONLY A YEAR ago the prospect of a new Morrissey record seemed inconceivable. Out of contract since 2009's *Years Of Refusal*, with a sorry litany of cancelled tour dates and a season ticket at Cedars-Sinai hospital, the 30-year career finally seemed to be winding down.

Yet the perfectly timed deployment of last autumn's *Autobiography* turned everything around. Beyond the piquancy of the book's poison and point scoring, the renewed attention and a season at the top of the paperback charts reinvigorated Morrissey's career just as it seemed at its lowest ebb. Now, after a recording sojourn in the South of France, another abortive US tour, and a series of glossily potty spoken-word promos, he returns once more to the breach with the first of two records for Harvest.

World Peace... feels very much like the beginning of Late Morrissey. Though *Autobiography* refreshed his profile and secured a new deal, you wondered what he could possibly have left to say in its wake, now that particularly quarry had been exhausted. The book, after all, began like a gothic collaboration between Mary Shelley and Elizabeth Smart and wound up an interminable diary of tour dates and ticket sales. One prospect for Late Moz seemed to be yet more namechecking of his itinerary. And sure enough, after "Mexico", "Paris", the Roman holiday of "You Have Killed Me" and "Scandinavia", *World Peace...* begins like some valedictory grand tour with the stately, Sparks-y, kicking-off-everywhere title track, veers off to "Istanbul" and includes the Viva España frolic of "The Bullfighter Dies".

But while the latter is, sure enough, a sulky two-minute swirl through Madrid, Seville and Malaga

A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

- p68** JOHN FULLBRIGHT
- p70** WILLIE NELSON
- p71** ERIC CLAPTON & FRIENDS
- p72** JOHN HIATT
- p73** ENO HYDE
- p75** JENNY LEWIS
- p77** KING CREOSOTE
- p78** THE SECRET SISTERS
- p80** REIGNING SOUND

settling, the best of *World Peace...* feels like a more profound reckoning with his work and its consequences. At times, it feels like one of those post-credits film sequences, detailing the final destiny and demise of the cast. Once upon a time, a title like *Strangeways Here We Come* felt like a giddy promise of adventure, "The Last Of The Famous International Playboys" treated prison like the green room for notoriety, and

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** Joe Chiccarelli
Recorded at: Studios La Fabrique, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France
Personnel: Morrissey (vocals), Solomon Walker (bass), Jesse Tobias (guitars), Boz Boorer (guitars, QChord, clarinet, sax), Gustavo Manzur (piano, organ, synths, trumpet, accordion, flamenco guitar, didgeridoo, QChord, backing vocals), Matthew Walker (drums, tubular bells, percussion), Kristeen Young (backing vocals), Christophe Minck (harp)

even "I've Changed My Plea To Guilty" saw the prospect of incarceration as blessed relief from "emotional air-raids". "Mountjoy" is the final instalment in Morrissey's jailhouse rock opera. It's Morrissey's reprise of both Behan's *The Quare Fellow* and Wilde's "The Ballad Of Reading Gaol" (even, in its cosmic desolation, Beckett's *Malone Dies*) all passion, desire and even gallows humour spent. All that's left, over sparse acoustic guitars and ominous cellos, is a final dismal realisation: "We all lose".

Best of all is "Smiler With Knife". Jesse Tobias has hitherto been an unheralded addition to the touring band, but now pulls out of the bag one of the indubitably great Morrissey songs. Here the reckoning is with "I Know It's Over" – the song you might feel, at 3am

on certain November nights, to be the very pinnacle of The Smiths' mordant romanticism. Astonishingly, "Smiler" doesn't suffer from the comparison. As close mic-ed as Sinatra on *Where Are You?*, tracing a tentative melody over sour sevenths and crunching power chords (it could be Jonny Greenwood arranging a Sondheim torch song), Morrissey wills into being a beaming assassin to plunge the knife in. While the earlier song passively observed "the knife wants to cut me", here the consummation is devoutly wished.

Without the musical guile, this despair can seem cynical. "Kick The Bride Down The Aisle" is notable chiefly for its spiteful update of "William It Was Really Nothing", shorn of any redeeming self-love, while "Oboe Concerto" feels inescapably like a sequel to "Death Of A Disco Dancer", though without even the vague promise of love, peace and harmony in the next world.

But *World Peace...* isn't all disillusion and pitiless despondency. "Kiss Me A Lot", notably, is the most uncharacteristically chirpy tune he has ever recorded: a shameless Kiss Me Quick sombrero of a song, complete with "Delilah" castanets and flamenco guitar. If released as a single you can imagine it residing on the Radio 2 A list for the rest of 2014, even soundtracking a celebrity chef's tango on the next series of *Strictly*....

The album has its fair share of filler: "Earth Is The Loneliest Planet" plays "Mountjoy"'s cosmic desolation for laughs, featuring *Star Trek* backing vocals from Kristeen Young, while "Staircase At The University" (an unnecessary update to "Girl Least Likely To") feels like a redundant B-side.

But, at its best, *World Peace...* feels like the perfect penultimate episode in the last season of a beloved TV series. With renewed ambition, gallows swagger and final-curtain sobriety, it sets the scene for a savage, melodramatic final act he might have spent his career plotting and stage managing. After all this time, I can't wait for the next Morrissey album. Am I still ill?

(largely redeemed by the breeziest twang and jangle he's managed since "Interesting Drug"), "Istanbul" is more intriguing and suggestive. Over the shuddering Bo Diddley beat that has served him so well from "How Soon Is Now" to "Disappointed", the singer ventures out into seedy moonlit Turkish sidestreets in a vain bid to reclaim his "brown-eyed son", lost to street-gang vice.

It's a startlingly confident performance and production. Returning to the stage in San Jose in May, Morrissey joked that he had finally been able to record "the follow-up to *Viva Hate*". And in many ways *World Peace...* sounds as fresh as *Viva Hate* did in the wake of The Smiths. After three LPs geared to the live show Mozpit, Joe Chiccarelli's production is as lavish and spacious as Stephen Street's, while always founded on the pounding bedrock of the Walker brothers rhythm section. And multi-instrumentalist Gustavo Manzur, who gets his first co-writing credits on "Neal Cassidy Drops Dead" and "Earth Is The Loneliest Planet", reprises something of the role of Vini Reilly, providing the instrumental filigree and shadow on flamenco guitar, accordion and keyboards.

But it's the lyrical focus of "Istanbul" that sets the tone for Late Morrissey. While "Piccadilly Palare" back in 1990 first touched on the reckless liberty of rentboy squalor, here the doom that was dimly sensed is fully achieved: "I lean into a box of pine/Identify the kid as mine".

If the worst of *Autobiography* was petty score-

ACOLLECTIVE Pangaea

ALCOPOP!

Second LP from genre-hopping Israeli seven-piece

Having started out in the late 2000s busking on the streets of Tel Aviv,

7/10

these childhood friends have since graduated to performing at Glastonbury and South By Southwest, and landing support slots for José González and Okkervil River. Now on their second LP, Acollective continue their mission to weave disparate musical threads into a sound that is as compelling as it is cohesive. Their approach is best showcased in "OTM", which moves between spooky electronic soundscapes and belting indie-pop choruses, and, thanks to singer Idan Rabinovici, comes with some of the oddest lyrics you'll hear this summer.

FIONA STURGES

HANNAH ALDRIDGE Razor Wire

TRODDEN BLACK

Fiery opener from a Southern country rock chanteuse

8/10

Aldridge grew up flitting between Nashville and

Muscle Shoals, the two cities where her father Walt plied his trade as a songwriter, session musician and producer, and the music of both locales informs what she describes as the "dark Americana" of her debut album. The saloon gal defiance of "You Ain't Worth The Fight", all wronged woman attitude and redneck twang, kicks off proceedings, while there's a ghostly swamp mysticism to "Strand Of Pearls" and the title track. The ice maiden vocals occasionally recall Bobbie Gentry, with Aldridge's tough-as-old-boots persona perfectly suited to a cover of Jason Isbell's "Try".

TERRY STAUNTON



Q&A

John Fullbright

How did you approach *Songs*? It's not as in-your-face as the last album. It could've been a hugely produced thing, except that the songs made me realise, 'No, this isn't a big record, it's a very small one.'

The lyrics suggest you've been through a major break-up... Yeah, but you don't have to write a break-up song just because you're going through one. It's a trap that you fall into. I've been accused of making a sad record with *Songs*, but I disagree completely. I think it's a pretty hopeful album.

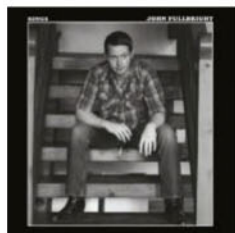
What have you learned in the two years since *From The Ground Up*? Too much for words! I feel like I'm a better player and musician, my philosophy's a little stronger and my foundation's firmer. The studio was the same as before, yet I was profoundly different. It's one thing to string words together in a way that sounds good, but it's another to focus on the crap and say exactly what you mean. That's what I'm trying to grow into right now.

What made you revive "High Road"? Some guy on Twitter, I think he was Swedish, posted a video of himself playing it. English wasn't his first language, and he wasn't the best musician, but he still made it sound moving. So I thought maybe I wasn't giving that song enough credit. I need to send that guy a thank-you note. *INTERVIEW: ROB HUGHES*

JOHN FULLBRIGHT

Songs BLUE DIRT/THIRTY TIGERS

Second album confirms a major new Americana voice. *By Rob Hughes*



8/10

IT'S BEEN A dizzying couple of years for John Fullbright. First came studio debut *From The Ground Up*, a record that set him up as country-folk cousin to Townes Van Zandt or John Prine, ripe with pithy narratives about sin, absolution and God. It was impressive

enough for the likes of Jimmy Webb and producer Gurf Morlix to proclaim him a household name of the future. The album was nominated for a Grammy (ultimately losing out to Bonnie Raitt), while Fullbright's deft turn of phrase earned him a Harold Adamson Lyric Award at the ASCAP Foundation's annual shindig in New York.

But Fullbright's life, privately at least, doesn't appear to have been all onward and upward. The themes of *Songs* suggest that the 26-year-old has been through some heavy-duty turmoil during the interim.

As you might gather from its no-frills title, the album is more direct than *From The Ground Up*. Several of the songs feature Fullbright alone, either sat at the piano or picking at a guitar. Simplicity and economy are key, as if the only way to convey these

moving meditations on break-up and loss is through the power of understatement. Even when the band do kick in, it's with some restraint.

Of course Fullbright isn't the first to address a failed relationship in song. But while he admits that "hard experiences" form its emotional core, the album is anything but a weepy confessional. Instead he keeps the details at arm's length and opts to focus on the universality of his motifs: absence, hurt, self-admonishment, survival. Even in spite of its sparser musical tone, *Songs* speaks to its composer's growing sophistication.

Another development is Fullbright's voice. If *From The Ground Up* used his grainy drawl as a counterweight to much fuller arrangements, *Songs* marks him out as a truly great singer, with a newfound authority and confidence at work. And while Fullbright has tended to elicit parallels to other folk-leaning country types when it comes to vocal style, the nearest comparison here, incongruous as it may seem, is Rufus Wainwright. It's particularly striking on "When You're Here", a tune that swells deliberately around piano, the Southern accents of Daniel

Walker's Hammond organ and Terry Ware's discreet electric guitar. "*Don't I feel my lungs losing air,*" he yearns. "*Don't I feel like I can show you/ I'm the one that you can go to/ When you need another heartbeat near.*"

A similar mood informs "The One That Lives Too Far", its protagonist jolted by the sudden realisation that life may never be quite the same

again: "*I haven't told myself the truth/ Since the first night you were gone.*" Built around acoustic guitar, the song is lifted by some gentle Southern gospel and a lovely piano refrain.

There's an echo of Fullbright's earlier penchant for third-person narratives on "High Road", a tune first unveiled on 2009's *Live At The Blue Door*, recorded at the Oklahoma City folk den where he first caught a break. It tells the story of a young married couple whose rural idyll is shattered by a fatal accident with a tractor in a rainstorm. Here it serves as both a Woody Guthrie-like tragedy and as a marker of how far Fullbright has developed since he wrote it.

Songs really isn't all gloom and despair. A sly humour is very much to the fore on "Happy", for instance, while the subtextual air of hope is finally made explicit on the album's closing line: "*I feel alright for the very first time.*" Above all, *Songs* places Fullbright firmly in the lineage of great American laureates.

SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Recorded at:** 115 Recording, Norman, Oklahoma
Produced by: John Fullbright, Wes Sharon
Personnel: John Fullbright (vcls, piano, gtrs, wurlitzer, harm), Terry 'Buffalo' Ware (elec gtr), Wes Sharon (bass, perc), David Leach (bass), Daniel Walker (C3 organ), Ryan Engleman (steel gtr), Mike Meadows (drums, perc)



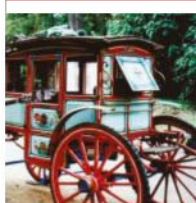
JON ALLEN **Deep River** MONOLOGUE

Third offering from confessional Winchester troubadour
Allen's subtle hybrid of folk, blues, jazz and soul found him

7/10

compared favourably to John Martyn on his previous two albums, especially 2011's *Sweet Defeat*. There's arguably more accessible and populist hues to *Deep River*, like the swooning balladry of "Falling Back" and the gentle country chug of "Wait For Me". The subject matter rarely veers from the pain of lost love, but there's occasional shoots of humour amid the licking of wounds (the Creedence-like "All The Money's Gone", the soulful waltz of "Get What's Mine"), all delivered in a robust, husky baritone and couched in economical musical settings.

TERRY STAUNTON

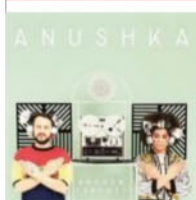


ALVARIUS B **What One Man Can Do With An Acoustic Guitar, Surely Another Can Do With His Hands Around The Neck Of God**

7/10 ABDUCTION

Ex-Sun City Girl's acoustic back pages
With his past life in Sun City Girls, alongside brother, guitar soli master Richard, and the late Charlie Gocher, guitarist Alan Bishop comes at solo endeavour with heavy form. If *What One Man...* sounds, at first blush, like more feathers plucked from the peacock's tail, that's because it is: these 16 instrumentals were primitively bled from veins between 1990-'99. They're an ornery bunch, with arcing clusters of flinty chords alternating with spiralling melodies, body-battering clanks, and tonally imprecise downward strums, as though the instrument's baking and warping under delirious heat.

JON DALE



ANUSHKA **Broken Circuit** BROWNSWOOD RECORDINGS

Brighton-based duo make impressive genre-hopping modern soul debut
"Patience was never my forte," declares former

8/10

Sussex music student Victoria Port (aka Anushka) on "Impatience". Appropriately, she and beat master Max Wheeler waste no time mapping out a classy, confident game plan. Flaunting a highly cultivated chemistry, at every turn touches of club funk ("Mansions"), 2 step ("Kisses") and Detroit minimalism ("Echo") fan the mellifluous, multi-tracked vocals. There's depth to the sweetness – Port's ebullient delivery cradling rich metaphors for the ache of longing in "Atom Bombs" and emotional exhaustion in brooding, tear-stained torch song "This Time". Impressive.

GAVIN MARTIN



GINGER BAKER **Why?** MOTEMA MUSIC/MEMBRAN

Grumpy master drummer's Afro-jazz supergroup
This "Jazz Confusion" quartet unites two musical forms that have

7/10

fascinated Ginger Baker since he left Cream – the African rhythms he's explored with Fela Kuti and African Force, and the modal jazz of his collaborations with Air Force, Bill Frisell and Charlie Haden. Here Baker's pleasingly heavy-handed beats interlock with those of Ghanaian master drummer Abass Doodoo over eight tracks, including two jazz standards and a darker version of Baker's own "Ginger Spice". The real revelation here is tenorist Pee Wee Ellis, best known for his parping funk riffs in the JBs, but also a ruminative soloist in the Coltrane idiom.

JOHN LEWIS



HOW TO BUY... GINGER BAKER The cream of the non-Cream

GINGER BAKER'S AIR FORCE
Ginger Baker's Air Force POLYDOR, 1970
A stellar, boisterous unison jazz jam, recorded live at the Albert Hall. As toxic as his personality has come to seem, here Baker is able to call on a strong cast of erstwhile colleagues and influences: from Harold McNair, to drum/drug mentor Phil Seamen, old boss Graham Bond, as well as Blind Faith's Ric Grech and Steve Winwood. An overlooked gem of the supergroup era.

9/10



BLIND FAITH **Blind Faith** POLYDOR, 1969

Eric Clapton thought he was leaving Cream – but he couldn't leave Ginger, even if he wanted to. Clapton

and Winwood created the gently unspooling pastoral jams (chiefly: "Can't Find My Way Home"; "Had To Cry Today"). Baker backed them with a wonderful rolling sensitivity.

9/10



HAWKWIND **Levitation** BRONZE RECORDS, 1980

Ginger recorded with Fela and Adrian Gurvitz, but his strangest fit was with Hawkwind. Theirs

was a monolithic riffing, propelled by the unshowy 4/4 of long-serving Simon King. Still, an upsurge in quality writing, Baker's subtle tweaking of the band's blueprint and the searching guitar of Huw Lloyd-Langton served to make this an unexpected highlight.

7/10

JOHN ROBINSON



BOBBY BARE JR'S YOUNG CRIMINALS' STARVATION LEAGUE **Undeclared** BLOODSHOT

8/10 **Clever chip off the old country block**

He shares the same name, but Bobby Bare Jr's music has little in common, stylistically at least, with that of his celebrated father. This first album for four years coincides with a new documentary about Jr – *Don't Follow Me (I'm Lost)* – and finds him unloading a bunch of superior break-up songs that range from fuzzed-up R'n'B ("North Of Alabama By Morning") to understated country-rock ballads ("Don't Wanna Know") to honking Nashville soul ("Blame Everybody (But Yourself)"). The highly able Starvation League, meanwhile, complement his anything-goes approach with a similar sense of noisy abandon.

ROB HUGHES



THE BLUE ANGEL LOUNGE **A Sea Of Trees** A

Brian Jonestown Massacre-approved glum orgy

7/10

Blue Angel Lounge's recent dalliance with The Brian Jonestown Massacre's supremely psychedelic frontman Anton Newcombe has prompted an unexpected shift away from their Ashram bad-trip vision. Slate-grey and wondering, their third album – released on Newcombe's A label – finds the Rhenish fivesome quoting Nietzsche on their website and coming across like Mancunian lost boys The Chameleons in the throes of a particularly grisly adolescence. Not fun, but playful in its way, a burst of what sounds like throat singing enlivens "Mutter" while Nils Ottensmeyer's sonorous bellow gives "Plane Communication" requisite gravitas. Keeping it funereal, but elegant nonetheless.

JIM WIRTH



BREMEN **Second Launch** BLACKEST EVER BACK

Space rock nihilism, from Sweden

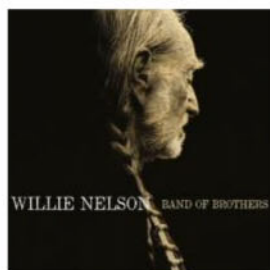
For approximately 30 years, Lanchy Orre and Jonas Tiljander have played in Brainbombs,

8/10

a notorious band of Stooges worshippers from the remote Swedish city of Hudiksvall with a lyrical slant focusing on transgressions largely too unpleasant to detail. *Second Launch*, however, finds the pair reunited in a surprising new mode, rewiring Brainbombs' raucous monotony as instrumental psychedelic rock. "Entering Phase Two" offers a rare sight of percussion, a two-chord organ jam that spools out into eternity. Perhaps more representative is the 15-minute "Static Interferences", a drift of bass vibrations and synth oscillations recalling a suicidal Spacemen 3. Cold as absolute zero, but of a desolate sort of beauty, too.

LOUIS PATTISON

AMERICANA



WILLIE NELSON *Band Of Brothers*

SONY LEGACY

"It's good to be writing again..." A rare letter home by the Red Headed Stranger

The backstory for this, Nelson's 37 billionth album, is that for the first time in eons he wrote the bulk of the songs. In truth, the nine (of 14) new Nelson compositions on *Band Of Brothers* are co-writes with Kenny Chesney producer Buddy Cannon. But no matter, this one dispenses with his usual distractions, Nelson singing with a simple grandeur, the most intimate, open-hearted effort by the Texas legend in years. Or, at least since *Spirit* and *Teatro*, his unjustly ignored one-two punch from the late '90s.

8/10

Like the best songs on those efforts, *Brothers* shines brightest when Nelson spins out pithy philosophising, or hits a certain inimitable, rambling, jazzy sweet spot with his longtime band. Opener "Bring It On" does both. "They say there's no gain without pain," Nelson speak-sings out the gate, against freewheeling honky-tonk backing. "Well, I must be gaining a lot," he quips. "The Wall", meanwhile, is its emotional flipside – sung with a matter-of-fact gospel lilt, Tommy White's steel guitar draping the melody in regret, it's a hypnotic, reflective masterpiece.

All is not grim and grimmer, though. Nelson sounds as if he's in his breezy '60s/'70s prime on road song deluxe "I've Got A Lot Of Traveling To Do" (sequel to "On The Road Again", perhaps), the musicians at their nimble, earthy best, while "Crazy Like Me" sets sail on a chugging, deeply satisfying roadhouse rockabilly frame. Lighter fare, novelty goofs like "Wives And Girlfriends" and "Used To Her", are riotous fun, harking back to madcap Nashville days. The dead serious "Hard To Be An Outlaw", a surly new Billy Joe Shaver composition, again though, inhabits the dark, desolate obverse – the country establishment's fearfully reactionary lockout of the true renegade: "It's hard to be an outlaw/If you ain't wanted anymore," Nelson wails, as one who's lived it all. **LUKE TORN**



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► It promises to be a hard-won contest at September's annual Americana Honours & Awards bash in Nashville. **Rosanne Cash's** *The River & The Thread* will battle it out for Album Of The

Year with comparative newcomers **Robert Ellis** (*The Lights From The Chemical Plant*), **Jason Isbell** (*Southeastern*) and **Sarah Jarosz** (*Build Me Up From Bones*). Ellis, Isbell and Cash (pictured) – along with her one-time spouse Rodney Crowell – are also up for Best Artist. The Uncut-friendly **Sturgill Simpson** and **Hurray For The Riff Raff** will both vie for Emerging Act Of The Year.

On the studio front, the first anniversary

of **JJ Cale**'s death is marked by a tribute album in late July. **Eric Clapton & Friends' The Breeze: An Appreciation Of JJ Cale**, curated by his most famous fan, finds old Slowhand team up with Tom Petty, Willie Nelson, Mark Knopfler and others for a bunch of Cale covers. Meanwhile, **Brad Paisley's** advance blurb for *Moonshine In The Trunk* is intriguing if nothing else. Out in August, the album finds Nashville's golden boy "adapting the modern technology of EDM and dubstep to the classic country formula".

Dates for the diary. **Sturgill Simpson** plays two UK shows in late July, at London's Bush Hall and Greystones in Sheffield. And the terrific **My Darling Clementine** bring their postmodern country duets to the festival circuit, beginning at Hop Farm and ending at Cambridge Folk. **ROBHUGHES**



BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT

Life Is Easy

SELF RAISING RECORDS

Welsh electro whizzkid goes for the rave-pop jugular

6/10

Much admired by Scissor Sisters, Pet Shop Boys and Elton John, who makes a guest appearance here, duetting on the weepy "I Wish We Were Leaving", Rod Thomas' sparkling, seamless blend of '80s synthpop and '90s rave is ruthlessly Radio 1-friendly. Behind the abundance of route one hooks and rather beige, Gary Barlow-esque vocals, however, there's evidence of emotional heft in the lyrics, while the "True Faith" throb of "An Open Heart" and the excellent "There Are No Miracles", which recalls Prefab Sprout circa *Let's Change The World With Music*, hint at a more interesting hinterland.

GRAEMETHOMSON



NELL BRYDEN

Wayfarer

157/UNIVERSAL

Change of direction for London-based New York-born singer-songwriter

6/10

After four albums of troubadour-pop flecked with blues/folk/jazz/folk tinges that made her a Radio 2 staple, Bryden has undergone a makeover. Perhaps it was Cher recording her song "Sirens" last year that gave her the green light, but here she's turned full-on electronic dance diva, vocoders and all. The opening title track sounds like a Rumours-era Fleetwood Mac outtake and the bluebird-of-happiness euphoria gets increasingly relentless on the Annie Lennox-like "Perfect For Me" and "Shadows In The Sun". Intriguingly, a second 'bonus' disc presents a stripped-down acoustic version of the album which some may well prefer.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE CAMBODIAN SPACE PROJECT

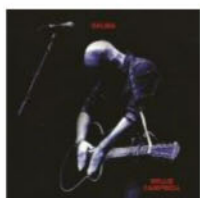
Whisky Cambodia

METAL POSTCARD

"Khmer soul" crew's third

7/10

As a fusion of Khmer folk and a vast spread of Western styles, Cambodian pop is either under-appreciated or unknown here. Labels like Finders Keepers and Sublime Frequencies have done much to spread the word, but they focus on the esoteric and historical; contemporary Cambodian music is harder to come by. Cue this set of '60s indigenous pop/rock covers and new originals co-written by singer Srey Channthy, with Detroit funk/soul tospin applied by Dennis Coffey (guitar, co-production) and the Motor City Horns. It assimilates Chubby Checker, The Temptations, Dick Dale and more, and is instantly likeable, with "If You Wish To Love Me" a groovily retro highlight. **SHARON O'CONNELL**



WILLIE CAMPBELL

Dalma

CEOL'S CRAIC

Former Astrid frontman, now back in Gaelic

7/10

Campbell was frontman of Glasgow's Astrid, and played in indie supergroup The Reindeer Section before retreating to his native Lewis. After working with folk-rocker Calum Martin, he found himself exploring his roots and re-embracing Gaelic. Fear not – Martin's musical tastes flow naturally along the Celtic tributaries that lead to Nashville and beyond. So, the opening "Fir Chlis" is a soaring country rock tune that nods to The Byrds, and the beautiful "Faisg Air Mo Dha" reworks hymn "Nearer, My God, To Thee", with Nashville utility man Scott Neubert adding mandolin to some heavenly harmonies.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



CHATHAM COUNTY LINE

Tightrope

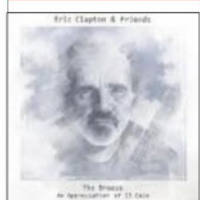
YEPROC

Attractive blend of the rustic and the radio-friendly

7/10

On their sixth studio album, and first release since 2012's live set *Sight & Sound*, North Carolina's Chatham County Line continue to fly the flag for bluegrass heritage while imbuing their songs with a more modern pop sensibility. Acoustic guitars and banjos are once again to the fore, but winsome pocket portraits "Girl She Used To Be" and "Will You Still Love Me?" fall somewhere between the alluring melodies of Crowded House and the grandeur of Jimmy Webb writing for Glen Campbell. The musicianship is exemplary throughout, with a stronger focus on roots traditionalism on "The Traveller" and "Ships At Sea".

TERRY STAUNTON



ERIC CLAPTON & FRIENDS

The Breeze: An Appreciation of JJ Cale

BUSHBRANCH/SURFDOG

All-star but low-key tribute to the late and laidback Okie

7/10

It's now 44 years since Clapton covered "After Midnight" on his first solo album, so there's nobody better to curate what is clearly a labour of love. Clapton plays on every track and sings on most of them, too, although assistance comes from a dozen guitarists, while Mark Knopfler, Willie Nelson and Tom Petty are among those contributing guest vocals. Ten of the 16 songs date back to Cale's first three albums from 1972-'74, and there's no attempt to reinvent any of them: the likes of "Starbound", "Magnolia" and "Cajun Moon" stick closely to the shuffling Tulsa vibe of the originals. Mellow but heartfelt.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



COMET GAIN

Paperback Ghosts

FORTUNA POP!

Indie-pop lifers on top form on their seventh full-length

8/10

David Charlie Feck has led Comet Gain since the early '90s: during that time, they've copped moves from Northern soul, '60s pop and mod revivalism, negotiating a path between Riot Grrrl disruptors and indie-pop lifers. They've also recently added The Clientele's James Hornsey as bass player, but it's too easy to attribute *Paperback Ghosts*' autumnal grace to his presence. Really, they've been heading this way for a while, with Feck's gracious lyrical observations of the minutiae only sharpened by such a lovely context. They're also fans to the bitter end, this time referencing Felt's "Sunlight Bathed The Golden Glow".

JON DALE

REVELATIONS

Bonnie Dobson on how "Morning Dew" went viral



► It was the first song I wrote! It was '61, the Cold War was raging. One night, my friends had a very gloomy conversation about it. I was staying at a friend's in West Hollywood, and after she went off to bed I sat there and thought about that film, *On The Beach*, which was about the aftermath of a major atomic war, and the words came to me. The following morning, I rang a friend and said, "Janie, I've written this song – do you think it's any good?" and I just started singing. I had no idea what would happen to it next.

Fred Neil covered it, and I have a lot to thank Fred for. I always sang "Take me for a walk..." and he changed it to "Walk me out..." – the Grateful Dead and everyone else seem to have taken that version. Lulu was one of the first people who recorded it in '68. I am very partial to the Robert Plant version too. It was Tim Rose's signature tune, but that was annoying because he never acknowledged I was the writer. I never met him. I only once heckled him at the Half Moon many years ago. I have a bad temper. Not really, but I did that night.

JIM WIRTH



THE DEVIL MAKES THREE

I'm A Stranger Here

NEW WEST

Garage ragtime from gutsy Vermont trio. Buddy Miller produces

8/10

"We bend genres pretty hard," says singer Pete Bernhard of his group's approach to blues, western swing, ragtime jazz and all points between. With Buddy Miller skilfully overseeing things, this fourth outing captures the trio's famously rowdy live spirit while expanding a basic palette of guitar/slap bass/banjo to include hoedown fiddle on "Dead Body Moving", 1920s brass (courtesy of The Preservation Hall Horns) on "Forty Days", and swampy electric blues on "Hand Back Down". Miller adds a few yards of echo for good effect, and Bernhard wails, moans yelps and (occasionally) yodels through a set of fine originals. Rocking.

NEIL SPENCER



BONNIE DOBSON

Take Me For A Walk In The Morning Dew

HORNBEAM

Lesser-spotted Canadian folkie breaks cover

7/10

Her apocalyptic "Morning Dew" was a signature tune for the Grateful Dead and Tim Rose, but making a record that did her sawtooth-sweet voice justice proved a struggle for '60s Greenwich Village siren Dobson, who was unearthed for Jarvis Cocker's *Meltdown* in 2007 after a long stint in the philosophy department at London's Birkbeck College. A *Liege & Lief*-ified "Morning Dew" headlines her first album in a generation, with the 73-year-old in fine voice – think Judy Collins impersonating a partially stunned Yoko Ono – while Dobson's English backing band whip up a bracing electrical storm around "Winter's Going" and "Who Are These Men?". Dew respect.

JIM WIRTH



EASTLINK

In The Red

IN THE RED

Excellent debut from guitar-loving Aussie slacker-psych-punks

8/10

It's not easy to draw a bead on Eastlink, whose debut album is a real scream, a four-guitar garage rock assault that flirts with punk, psych, noise-rock and metal. Impressively, they manage this versatility without relaxing quality – the band are just as good when playing the bouncing garage stomp of "Overtime" as they are the gluey psych metal ("Gina"), mutant surf "Spring St." or the ominous, freaky "Scat", where their gonzo spacey debt to Thee Oh Sees becomes apparent. Based in Melbourne, the band clearly have an eye on the English market too, finishing with a creepy instrumental called "Thatcher's Dead".

PETER WATTS



SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Produced, engineered and mixed by:** Doug Lancio
Recorded at: Lancio's Studio G, Nashville
Personnel: John Hiatt (vocals, guitars, harmonica), Kenneth Blevins (drums, percussion), Nathan Gehri (bass), Doug Lancio (guitars, banjo, mandolin), Brandon Young (bk vocals), Jon Coleman (keyboards)

JOHN HIATT

Terms Of My Surrender

NEW WEST

The past, present and future intertwine on the veteran's latest effort. *By Bud Scoppa*



8/10

FOR WRITER/ARTISTS of a certain age, the sands of time can be like quicksand, sucking them under as they grasp at their past achievements. John Hiatt is one of the handful of exceptions to this entropic pattern; at age 61, he's as prolific, expressive

and energetic as ever, demonstrating that a gifted songwriter who's dialed into the process of ageing can continue to find fertile subject matter.

Hiatt hasn't allowed himself to be trapped in the shadow of his 1987 classic, *Bring The Family*, his inspired collaboration with Ry Cooder, Nick Lowe and Jim Keltner, which could've been the hellhound on his tail if he'd succumbed to an ever more desperate need to try to match it; instead, he's kept plugging away as an indie artist, taking life as it comes. His postmillennial output – nine albums in 14 years, each one of them with its own distinct character and a share of memorable songs – has actually outpaced his rate of productivity on several major labels in the first quarter-century of his career.

Hiatt's recent work has yielded some impressive LPs. 2003's *Beneath This Gruff Exterior*, produced by the late Don Smith (Petty, Wilburys) finds Louisiana slide wizard Sonny Landreth letting rip. *Master Of Disaster* (2005) had roots legend Jim Dickinson at the desk and the North Mississippi All Stars (feat. Dickinson's sons) providing a shit-kicking vibe. On 2008's self-produced *Same Old Man*, a burnished, elegiac song cycle focused on the ups and downs of a longterm relationship, leading to some of the artist's most emotionally authentic performances.

Although Hiatt has been clean since 1985, leading a quiet life with his wife and kids outside Nashville,

recollections of his wild years have continued to provide him with grist for the songwriting mill. "Mistakes are to be highlighted," he noted in 2008. "You can't have the light without the dark." That duality permeates the new *Terms Of My Surrender*. Its songs are blues-based reflections recalling the sauntering grooves of JJ Cale, the gritty swamp rock of Tony Joe White and Bob Dylan's *Modern Times* throughout. Hiatt keeps things close to the bone, using his touring band, with guitarist Doug Lancio doubling as producer, and basing the mostly understated performances around his lived-in voice, acoustic guitar and harmonica.

In the middle of opener "Long Time Comin'", Lancio unleashes thunderbolts with a powerfully evocative guitar solo that amplifies the intensity of the lyric, evoking Daniel Lanois' atmospheric eruptions on Emmylou Harris' *Wrecking Ball*. Hiatt goes down to the crossroads on the 12-bar blues

"Face Of God" and treks to Cold Mountain on the refracted murder ballad, "Wind Don't Have to Worry", haunted by backing vocalist Brandon Young's androgynous soprano wail.

"Baby's Gonna Kick" stays low to the ground, set off by a smoldering Lancio solo, while Hiatt channels Howlin' Wolf on "Nothin' I Love", whose dissolute narrator bemoans his weaknesses – "I drink too much, I take too many pills/Ain't too long before my mind gets ill," – before delivering the album's most

resonant line: "Nothin' I love is good for me but you."

"Old People" starts out with a jokiness redolent of Randy Newman but then takes on a certain gravitas – it seems the song's road-hogging senior citizens are in a big hurry to slow down time. The existential poignancy in the title song is palpable, as Hiatt acknowledges his failures and regrets. "When the moon is rising/And the night is still," he sings in a worldweary baritone, "Some of my delusions have the power to kill/Scared I'll get what I deserve/Or maybe scared I won't." There's a passage in "Long Time Comin'" that crystallises the album and Hiatt's latterday body of work as a whole: "I've sang these songs a thousand times, ever since I was young/It's a long time comin' and the drummer keeps drummin', your work is never done". This is one old timer who's still in his prime, doing his damndest to keep it going 'til it's all used up.

Q&A

John Hiatt

To what do you attribute your longevity and undiminished productivity? You hit a point where you start to feel time's running out and getting more precious, and I want to do the best work I can and as much as I can before I kick the bucket. If you hang around and you don't embarrass yourself, you're in pretty good shape.

You've mixed things up from album to album in recent years, but there's a consistent thematic thread running through all of them. It's about

the adventure, and the constant is me and what I do. It's not the idea. Fuck the idea – I got a million of 'em. I like to try new things and I like good music. I don't have a notion other than let's put some players together with someone who knows their way round a studio and some arrangements, and we might make some great music.

Your songs, and especially your love songs, are quite different from what a young man would write, and they seem as genuine as anything you've ever done. It's the endurance of love, and also how broken it gets, and how broken we are – how broken I am, anyway – and how it just seems never-ending; the pieces breaking apart and being put back together somehow. BUD SCOPPA



AJ ELLIS Bury The Devil

GLAZE

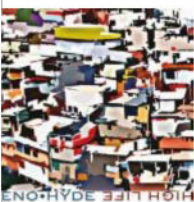
Former Five O'Clock Heroes frontman finds his own voice

The new wave revivalism of Antony Ellis' former band remains potent,

6/10

but on his solo debut he's nuanced the Elvis Costello/Joe Jackson mannerisms into a more distinctive and personal sensibility. His burnished songs are as full of memorable hooks as ever but he finally seems to have found an emotional language that has something to say beyond its own self-referencing pursuit of three-minute powerpop perfection. The jerky, streetwise feistiness of "Stand Up" might have found a place up on the Heroes' last album, 2011's *Different Times*. But "A Long Way Down" and the brooding "Cheating The Czar" come from a darker and ultimately more satisfying place.

NIGUEL WILLIAMSON



ENO HYDE High Life

WARP

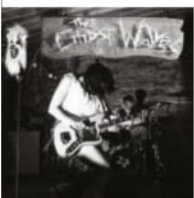
Second, superior collaboration between Brian Eno and the Underworld frontman

A companion piece to May's *Someday World*,

7/10

High Life has none of its predecessor's busy, over-cafeinated temperament. Indeed, the vibe – as set out by the gently oscillating loops of opener "Return" – is best described as 'stadium ambient'. "Time To Waste It" had a lovely funk guitar lick offset by pulsing electronic washes. Elsewhere, the jittery rhythms of "DBF" recall "I Zimbra" from Talking Heads' *Fear Of Music*, while the guitar delay/echo and widescreen sheen of "Lilac" suggests Joshua Tree-era U2. Only the vocal piece, "Cells & Bells", resembles what you'd imagine a Chris Morris pastiche of Brian Eno would sound like.

MICHAEL BONNER



THE GHOST WOLVES Man, Woman, Beast

PLOWBOY/PROPER MUSIC

Swaggering debut from Texas' answer to Jack'n'Meg

8/10

Carley and Jonathan Wolf are a married couple from Austin, Texas, who have spent the last few years boiling garage and blues-rock to its bare bones with songs about sex, money, guns and thwarted dreams. While their simple drums'n'guitar set-up inevitably has its problems – not least inviting comparisons to those patron saints of blues-rock The White Stripes – there's still plenty to enjoy in this swaggering debut that takes a simple idea and executes it in rollicking style. As Carley's hoots of laughter at the close of "Baby Fang Thang" attest, this is the sound of a band having the time of their lives.

FIONA STURGES



OTIS GIBBS Souvenirs Of A Misspent Youth

THIRTY TIGERS

Sixth offering from Indiana crooner keeps it in the family

Gibbs' 2008 album *Grandpa Walked A*

7/10

Picketline tapped into his own family's blue-collar history for a broader portrait of mid-20th-Century America, and here the chief inspiration is his truck driver dad. It's most evident in the cataloguing of the old man's wisdom on "Ghosts Of Our Fathers" and the picturesque depiction of smalltown life, "Wrong Side Of Gallatin". The songs glide by on waves of folk and country traditionalism, Gibbs' observations peppered with fiddles and violin, the perfect musical backdrop for such literate hobo laments as "It Was A Train" and "The Darker Side Of Me".

TERRY STAUNTON

WE'RE NEW HERE Gulp



➤ "Wales is just too rainy," sighs Gulp's Guto Pryce. "We can't make sunshine pop based on Cardiff's climate. That's why we've got a huge soft spot for California." The we in question is Super Furry Animals bassist Pryce and his wife, Scots singer Lindsey Leven, who've pooled their resources these past two years to make beautiful music together as Gulp, a name composed, more or less, of the couple's initials. Roadtrips around Joshua Tree and the Highlands fuelled the psych pop of Gulp's debut, *Season Sun*, with the pair aiming for a "Bo Diddley meets Suicide vibe" on sweet-natured songs such as "Vast Space".

"We both enjoy life at a relaxed pace – neither of us are fast workers," says Pryce, who spent part of the Furries' hibernation tinkering in Spectrum with Sonic Boom. "I've always dabbled in beats and grooves, but not being a singer I never had anyone to finish songs with, until Lindsey." Keeping things local, Pryce recruited SFA drummer Dafydd Ieuan for some of the album, which was mixed by the Furries' sound designer Cian Ciarán. "Sometimes I find it hard to articulate what I want," he adds, "so it's good to work with people who are like family to you." PIERS MARTIN



GREYHOUNDS Accumulator

ARDENT

The South rides again on Texan duo's debut album

Stalwarts of Austin's prodigious club scene and former members

7/10

of JJ Grey & Mofro, guitarist Andrew Trube and keyboardist Anthony Farrell come racing out of the slips with a set marinated in the traditions of Southern blues-rock: a touch of Meters funk and Memphis soul, all updated in the style of Alabama Shakes/North Mississippi Allstars. All performed on antique instruments scavenged from thrift stores, from the swamp-blues of "Soul Navigator" to the choppy New Orleans rhythms of "Get Back", via the Stax-tinged "What's On Your Mind", if you want a primer of all that's fine beneath the Mason-Dixon line, this is it.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



GULP Season Sun

SONIC CATHEDRAL

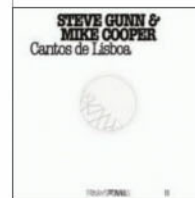
Super Furries man's tender synth-pop

While Gruff Rhys headed up the Missouri River two years ago to follow in his distant

7/10

ancestor's footsteps, his Super Furry Animals bandmate Guto Pryce has embarked on a more modest musical venture with his partner, the singer Lindsey Leven. A doe-eyed document of their relationship, Gulp's debut *Season Sun* is a spooked set of crepuscular pop, a Moogie wonderland furnished with some very good songs ('60s psych cut "Game Love", the alluring "Clean And Serene") and others that are over-egged with kitsch synths and tweeness, though even then Leven's voice, like that of Broadcast's Trish Keenan, cuts through the fluff clear and true.

PIERS MARTIN



STEVE GUNN & MIKE COOPER FRKWYS Vol 11: Cantos De Lisboa

RVNG INTL

A US/UK folk guitar summit, in Portugal

Below the radar for decades, Mike Cooper's

7/10

questing early '70s folk-jazz albums were finally reissued last month – a serendipitous prelude to this new collection of jams with busy Brooklyn guitarist Steve Gunn. Facing off at Cooper's home in Lisbon, their shared love of country blues is entangled with Portuguese folk and some brackish avant-garde tendencies. Cooper uses his lap-steel as an atmospheric tool, and sometimes ("Lampedusa 2013") becomes a little too abrasive for comfort. For all the liberating experimentation, it's interesting that *Cantos'* standout track is its most conventional: "Pena Panorama", an impressionistic Gunn song that recalls "Old Strange" from 2013's *Time Off*.

JOHN MULVEY



ROB HERON & THE TEA PAD ORCHESTRA

Talk About The Weather

TEA PAD

7/10

Retro Americana from Tyneside

The current embrace of Americana has largely avoided western swing and gypsy jazz in favour of more severe rootsy styles. Newcastle upon Tyne's Rob Heron evokes the spirit of Bob Wills and Django Reinhardt with a quintet that shuffles and boogies with panache. Their second album flits past in a blur of accordion, semi-acoustic guitar and brushed drums, with dabs of brass and fiddle, seemingly straight from the 1940s, though the songs are originals – "High Speed Train", with its puffing harmonica, is an anti-HS2 number, "Drinking Coffee Rag" about cappuccino fever. There's even a mambo number. Infectiously good-humoured.

NEIL SPENCER



HOLY FAMILY

Can't Dance, Won't Steal, Need Some Help

MELODIC

7/10

Tales of two cities from Nordic electro-rockers

Swedish expats now in Montreal, Holy Family are products of the same Gothenburg electro-pop scene that spawned The Knife, Fever Ray and Little Dragon. Though heavily mechanised, their sound leans more towards the melodic end of noise-rock, combining shuddering momentum with windswept hugeness on epics like "Fell Into My Hands" and "Alexander The Great". Much of this agreeable debut flirts with bombast, but the softer, weirder songs offer some consolation. Named after the fake storylines of professional wrestling, "My Kayfabe Babe" is a wonky lullaby that sounds like a great lost collaboration between Antony Hegarty and Boards Of Canada.

STEPHEN DALTON



HONEYBLOOD

Honeyblood

FATCAT

8/10

Engagingly scuzzy indie-pop from Glasgow newcomers

Stina Tweeddale and Shona McVicar, who had lovers of lo-fi all a-quiver last year with their limited-edition seven-inch "Bud", went all the way to Connecticut to record a debut album designed to sound like it was cobbled together in their spare room. Nothing wrong with that, of course. Produced by Peter Katis (The National), *Honeyblood* is a captivating debut that prizes atmosphere over precision and is characterised by soaring melodies and terrifically spiky lyrics. "Super Rat" is a ferocious take-down of "the smartest rat in the sewer" while the echoing disaffection conveyed in "Anywhere But Here" is catching for all the right reasons.

FIONA STURGES



DYLAN HOWE

Subterranean

MOTORIK RECORDINGS

8/10

ECM-style reworking of Bowie in Berlin

Bowie and modal jazz don't make the most obvious of bedfellows, but this album makes a fine job of getting inside some of the Dame's lesser-known instrumentals and reanimating them from a jazz perspective. Drummer Dylan Howe and his septet (featuring Portishead's Adrian Utley on guitar) take seven instrumentals from *Low* and "*Heroes*" in a variety of different directions: turning "Warszawa" is a skittery Coltrane miniature and "Moss Garden" into a glistening Fabergé egg. Best of all are "Art Decade" and two versions of "Neuköln", which recreate the glassy majesty of the originals but add a Jan Garbarek-style ECM minimalism that perfectly suits the mood.

JOHN LEWIS



INCOGNITO

Amplified Soul

EAR MUSIC

7/10

35th-anniversary celebration from Brit jazz-funk institution

A perfect accompaniment to BBQ season, this: 16 thoroughly summery grooves, from the UK's premium acid-jazz collective. Led as ever by ringmaster Jean-Paul "Bluey" Maunick, Incognito remain true to the template that brought chart success and wine-bar ubiquity in the early '90s: unimaginably tight funk workouts, shimmering bass, and hotter-than-July horns. It's all the ideal showcase for some of the best soul voices around, including Carleen Anderson, Tony Momrelle, Vanessa Haynes and Imaani. *Amplified Soul* won't change your life, of course, but the joyous, jasmine-blown exuberance of "Hats (Make Me Wanna Holler)" and "I See The Sun" will very probably make your day.

MARK BENTLEY



IRMLER LIEBEZEIT

Flut

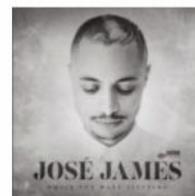
KLANGBAD

7/10

Another Krautrock group hug from Faust Studio

Given the music that tumbles from its doors, Faust Studio must be a groovy place to be: for example, To Rococo Rot's superlative last album, *Speculation*, was recorded there. Irmeler popped up on that album, playing keyboards on closing track "Fridays". On *Flut*, the one-time Faustian meets up with another legend of the Krautrock inner circle, Can drummer Jaki Liebezeit, for six rehearsal explorations drooled to tape in July 2013. Liebezeit's playing has lost some of its mantric power, but the match between his tumbling toms and Irmeler's wheezing organs, all flecks of backmasking and trilling melodies, does the job nicely.

JON DALE



JOSÉ JAMES

While You Were Sleeping

BLUE NOTE

7/10

Minnesota's neo-soul dude presses the button marked 'fusion'

José James' second album for Blue Note might be the venerable label's least jazzy release ever. *While You Were Sleeping* is a curious amalgam of '70s soul, '90s R&B and the epic manoeuvrings of stadium rock. Influences are legion, and often disorienting. Improbably, you can hear Marvin Gaye, Nine Inch Nails, Pink Floyd, D'Angelo, Radiohead and Roy Ayers here – and even James' languid baritone struggles to stitch all that sound together. When it works, it's daringly, pleasingly weird: "Angel" is obsessive sex funk, "Bodhisattva" is stark and seductive, and "U R The 1" welds woozy electronica to late-night soul pop.

MARK BENTLEY



JOAKIM

Tropics Of Love

TIGERSUSHI/BECAUSE

8/10

Heatsick electro on Frenchman's outré fifth

Joakim Bouaziz's inner tussle between attaining pop perfection and scratching his avant-garde itch has resulted in one of the more intriguing careers in contemporary electronics. He is, of course, unable to satisfy either, hence the tension. *Tropics Of Love* finds him looking for challenges in New York with the fêted French artist Camille Henrot on his arm and an excellent, slurred synth rendition of Neil Young's "On The Beach" sprawled out at the end of what is comfortably the Parisian's most unorthodox record. Amid the cheap preset funk and curdled interludes, Bouaziz enchants with moving pieces such as "Heartbeats" and "Hero".

PIERS MARTIN



WILLIE JONES

Fire In My Soul

SHOUT/CHERRY RED

7/10

Debut album from 76-year-old soul singer

Half a century ago, Jones sang in a Detroit group with Jackie Wilson, recorded with the Royal Jokers, released several singles under his own name and wrote songs for Bettye LaVette. Four decades of touring followed without setting foot again in a studio. His overdue return reveals a muscular, gritty, voice rooted in the blues and gospel of the deep South rather than the smoother sophistication of his native Motown, reminiscent of ZZ Hill or later-period Bobby Bland. Steve Cropper adds his burnished licks to the Muscle Shoals-styled backing and Black Francis turns up on the funk-drenched "Janie, Turn It Over". Unashamedly old-school, but still undeniably cool.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



JUNGLE Jungle XL

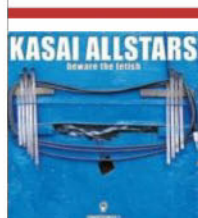
Formerly anonymous west London indie-funk group

Jungle have played a canny hand so far, ceding centrestage in their

6/10

videos to a freestyle skate team and a precocious six-year-old breakdancer – thus cultivating an air of cool mystique that this debut doesn't really live up to. While Jungle are obviously keen students of '70s funk, disco and blue-eyed soul, their own record is a slightly pallid approximation of these styles, hamstrung by rickety beats and flimsy falsetto. They've got a good ear for a summer anthem – "The Heat" and "Busy Earnin'" are particularly indelible tunes – but Jungle lack the knowing self-deprecation and tender lyricism of Hot Chip or Metronomy, so all you're left with here is a pleasant pastiche.

SAM RICHARDS



KASAI ALLSTARS Beware The Fetish CRAMMED DISCS

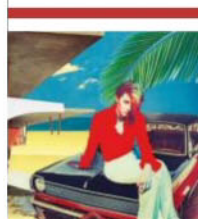
More electro-acoustic "Congotronics" from Kinshasa's finest

The second LP from this Congolese 15-piece collective is a 2CD set

7/10

mixing loud, clattering and complex polyrhythms with jit-jive guitars, lo-fi electronics and call-and-response vocals. Across 12 tracks, every rhythmic loop sounds like it's on the verge of collapse, with the electronic FX throbbing at a fractionally different pulse to the hand drums and metal percussion. Some of the tracks can sound exhaustingly out-of-phase, but such sonic wonkiness works brilliantly on the hypnotic thumb-piano minimalism of "Down And Out", the Afro-funk of "In Praise Of Homeboys" and the Congolese heavy metal of "The Ploughman".

JOHN LEWIS



LA ROUX Trouble In Paradise POLYDOR

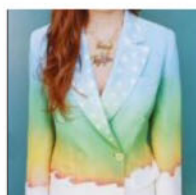
Elly Jackson returns with warm solo outing

The title of the follow-up to La Roux's 2009 debut could be a reference to its long gestation, which itself

8/10

may stem from the rift that sees La Roux Mk II return as Elly Jackson's solo project, after the departure of Ben Langmaid. But 'trouble' is only evident in the lyrics, which follow a forbidden romance from infatuation ("Kiss And Not Tell") to frustration ("Tropical Chancer") and fall-out (Moroder-ish slowburner "Let Me Down Gently") over exquisitely produced island-influenced disco. Unlike last year's revival, it resolutely eschews pastiche. *Trouble...* could be the best pop album of 2014 so far: a much warmer, more luxurious record than the brittle debut, the shrillness wiped from Jackson's voice in favour of uncontrived and appealing attitude.

LAURA SNAPES



JENNY LEWIS The Voyager WARNERS

Former Rilo Kiley mainstay makes her Ryan Adams-produced comeback
Jenny Lewis' solo

9/10

career used to be something that occurred as an adjunct to her work with Rilo Kiley. By her own account, when Rilo Kiley split in 2011, it took a while for her to get used to the idea that she was on her own. This difficult adjustment inspires much of *The Voyager* – "When the walls came down/The shit got real", as opening track "Head Underwater" has it. Mercifully, Lewis conducts what navel-gazing there is on *The Voyager* with her characteristic mordant wit, and she has shed none of her way with an irresistible, deadpan pop melody.

ANDREW MUELLER



REVELATIONS

Jenny Lewis on recording with Ryan Adams and Beck

➤ "Ryan Adams is like a whirling dervish," laughs Jenny Lewis. "He's how I imagine Phil Spector was in the studio – erratic, late, you don't know what's going on, but at the end of the day it sounds pretty fucking good!"

Lewis recently took on Adams, along with Beck, to produce her third solo album, *The Voyager*. It's somewhat of a landmark record for the singer-songwriter, being her first solo release since the dissolution of her band, Los Angeles' Rilo Kiley, in 2011.

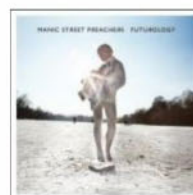
"It was quite an experience," she says. "First of all, I couldn't believe that I was working with either of them. They're both icons, but they couldn't be more different. Ryan wasn't afraid to cut a verse, cut a chorus, take the song up a key, which is what I really needed at the time."

"With Beck, it was so chilled. We walked on the beach in Malibu and talked about music, then we recorded a song. The songs kind of reflect the process if you're listening for it."

Being her first album as a bona fide solo artist, *The Voyager* is intentionally more expansive than 2006's *Rabbit Fur Coat* and 2008's *Acid Tongue*.

"When I made *Rabbit Fur Coat*, I wanted to make something that was the polar opposite of what my band was doing, so it was a folk record. With this, there were no rules, the band has broken up and it was truly about serving the songs with no restrictions."

TOM PINNOCK



MANIC STREET PREACHERS Futurology COLUMBIA

Bradfield, Wire and Moore fly continental on their 12th LP

7/10

Less than a year after the mainly acoustic *Rewind The Film*, the Manics return with its promised companion piece, informed by European art-rock and Bowie's Berlin trilogy. The savage teutonic stomp of "Europa Geht Durch Mich" and propulsive, glossy instrumental "Dreaming A City (Hughesovka)" are highlights, suggesting the trio can mould their style to any sound; though when they return to more familiar pastures, such as on the stadium-aiming "Walk Me To The Bridge", they recall their own tepid *Lifeflood*. For the most part, though, this is the Manics as you'd want them to be – thrilling, bombastic and sometimes ridiculous, but still raging.

TOM PINNOCK



MARTYN The Air Between Words NINJATUNE

Classy club-friendly collection with guest appearance by Four Tet
A Dutch-born DJ, producer and visual artist now

8/10

based in Washington DC, Martijn Deijkers gives left-field electronica a healthy blast of vintage dancefloor dynamics on his warm, rich, eclectic third solo album. Despite nods to jazzy glitch and ambient glide, most of these beautifully crafted tracks are united by supple but solid 4/4 rhythms. Irresistibly squelchy acid basslines figure heavily in "Drones" and "Forgiveness Step 2", while "Empty Mind" loops a Chomsky vocal sample to classic rave sonics. One of several stand-outs is "Glassbeadgames", a collaboration with Kieran Hebden, which layers splashy jazz chords and sweet thumb-piano chimes over crisp, lean, UK garage-style beats.

STEPHEN DALTON



MATTHEW DAVID In My World BRAINFEEDER

Luxurious avant-R&B with a creamy soft centre
Posing with his newborn baby on the sleeve, the LA-based producer and psychedelic rapper

7/10

Matthew McQueen – aka Matthew David – sounds fully blissed-out on his second solo LP. McQueen is mostly in experimental R&B mode here, whisper-rapping falsetto sweet-nothings while pouring a thick treacle of lysergically fuzzy sonic gloom over swampy dub and hip-hop beats. McQueen's label boss Flying Lotus and their shared hero J Dilla are obvious reference points on "Cosmic Caller" and "The Mood Is Right", while the freeform jazzoid d'n'b of "West Coast Jungle Juke" suggests Prince jamming with Squarepusher. After soothing us with smoothness, this slick excursion into semi-unlistenable easy listening sounds fantastic.

STEPHEN DALTON



MERIDIAN BROTHERS
Salvadora Robot
SOUNDWAY

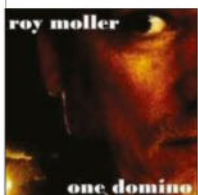
Latin psych
from Colombian
one-man band

6/10

Although they play live as a full band, the Meridian

Brothers are a figment of Eblis Álvarez's rich imagination – on disc, he plays and produces everything. A guitarist by trade, Álvarez mixes up his licks with off-kilter rhythms and a freakish array of drum machines and sci-fi swirls. *Salvadora Robot* rather overestimates the appeal of vintage synths, but its exploration of Latin styles has delights. Opener "Somos Los Residentes" is a frenetic chunk of electro-merengue, "El Gran Pájaro De Los Andes" is jerky cumbia, and "Bailie Último" concerns a man sentenced to the electric chair for dancing reggaeton. Some good jokes, if told too often.

NEIL SPENCER



ROY MOLLER
One Domino
STEREOGRAM

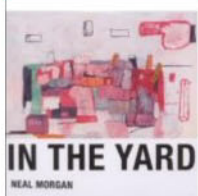
Fourth solo album
by idiosyncratic
Scottish poet

7/10

Moller, a Leith now resident in Dunbar, has a chequered

career which includes playing with Belle And Sebastian's Stevie Jackson in a psychedelic garage band, The Store Keys, and working with ex-Fire Engines singer Davy Henderson in Jesus, Baby!. He has a musical about being a Lou Reed fan at this year's Edinburgh Fringe. Vocally, he employs an Iggy Pop croon, notably on "Redpath", though the electro pulse of "Edinburgh City Control" confuses somewhat. There's real wit in the lyrics (see "When I Paint My Mantlepiece"), and steel guitar adds poignancy to the decrepit majesty of the title track.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



NEAL MORGAN
Neal Morgan
PARTY DAMAGE

Third solo album from
Portland poet-drummer

6/10

A childhood friend of Joanna Newsom, Neal Morgan arranged and performed percussion for

her *Have One On Me* and has hit the skins for Bill Callahan, Robin Pecknold and Roy Harper, among others. His solo albums, though, have distinct character of their own. Using just voice and drums, Morgan nonetheless makes something compelling, sometimes witty, at moments transcendent. Side A is dispatched entirely a cappella, a selection of dreamy travelogues, spiritual ruminations and snatched romances; on the flip, he gets behind the kit for some tumbling improv that locks into tight, circular patterns, and layers voices into a delirious babble on "German Artist At Night".

LOUIS PATTISON



THE MUTANTS
Rhythm And Punk Review
KILLER TRACKS

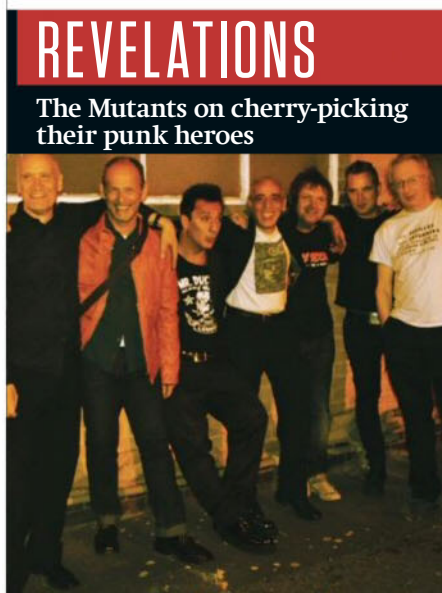
All-star lineup goes
back to the future

6/10

There have been at least three bands named The Mutants down the years,

but this latest incarnation finds London youngbloods Chris Constantinou (The Wolfmen) and Paul Frazer (Black Futures) rounding up a host of veteran 1970s names to create a fizzing fusion of punk, new wave and ska in which 2-Tone meets *Sniffin' Glue* in mature-but-rowdy middle-age. Neville Staple and TV Smith combine on the dubby, horn-heavy "How Dare You" and Rat Scabies and Jake Burns make nostalgic cameos. But the major talking point has to be "Walking Wounded", a strutting slice of R'n'B disorder which thrillingly unites Wilko Johnson and Wayne Kramer for the first time in a studio.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



REVELATIONS
The Mutants on cherry-picking
their punk heroes

➤ "It started over a beer in a pub," says Chris Constantinou, a musician who began his career backing Adam Ant in the 1980s, now one-half of The Mutants. Paul Frazer, his foil in the band, wasn't born at the time, but a shared passion for first-generation punk produced a list of iconic names from the era for a dream team, like a musical version of fantasy football. "In keeping with the spirit, we wrote a dozen songs in a day, demoed them and then started thinking who should be on each track." The demos were fired off by email to their targets and Rat Scabies was first on board. Former members of the Blockheads, Adverts, UK Subs, Stiff Little Fingers, Vibrators and The Specials followed. The biggest coup – the 'Motor City to Oil City' pairing of Wayne Kramer and Wilko Johnson – was a happy accident. "Wilko was up for it, then we found Wayne was in London. They'd shared a bill in 1972 but hadn't seen each other in 40 years. They were a bit nervous, especially Wilko, who said the MC5 had changed his life. But we got the gin and tonics out and everybody relaxed. It was a very emotional reunion."

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE NATIONAL JAZZ TRIO OF SCOTLAND
Standards Vol III
KARAOKE KALK

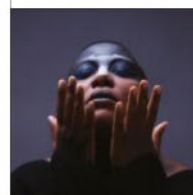
Glasgow alt.jazz
man goes pop

8/10

Bill Wells started out with free improv ensembles, but

his musical flexibility invited collaborations with the likes of Isobel Campbell and Arab Strap's Aidan Moffat. Typically, his jazz trio don't play jazz, though calling this Wells' pop album does a disservice to its cheerfully experimental tone. Employing samples provided by Teenage Fanclub's Norman Blake (who also produces), and vocals from Aby Vulliamy, Kate Sugden and Lorna Gilfedder, Wells conjures icy minimalism with faint echoes of Laurie Anderson ("Buchanan Street") and Young Marble Giants ("Getting Out"). For those seeking jazz, "Surprising Word" is like "The Girl From Ipanema" performed by robots.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO
Comet, Come To Me
NAÏVE

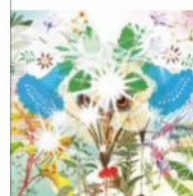
Relaxed, eclectic set
from groove governor

6/10

Prono to talk about the role of chance in

music, the Washington DC bassist calls this 11th album 'a random choice'. Too random, perhaps. Its 13 tracks are a haze of wispy vocals and synth washes punctuated by Meshell's thrumming bass. Of hooklines and impassioned vocals there are few signs. A cover of Whodini's "Friends" comes and goes, along with some half-realised reggae on the title cut and "Forget My Name". The spirit of Prince animates better efforts like "Good Day Bad", but Meshell's search for love and meaning rarely asserts itself over the sense of muso friends at play. More focus, please.

NEIL SPENCER



OOIOO
Gamel
THRILL JOCKEY

Seventh joyous
album from Yoshimi
(of ...Pink Robots fame)

8/10

Ten years on from the Dionysian frenzy of their last album, *Seadrum/House*

Of Sun, the recording future of Japanese psych overlords the Boredoms remains unclear. Five years after Ooioo's most recent release, it had started looking like drummer Yoshimi P-We's side-project was dormant, too. *Gamel*, though, is an ecstatic return; a ritual jam in which the band's post-punk angles take second place to their trance imperative. The ringing intensity of gamelan underpins Yoshimi's manoeuvres this time out, though the nimbleness with which her band flit from one hypno-musical state to another – fleetingly, "Gamel Uma Umo" resembles Konono No 1 – is more impressive than ever. Their best, perhaps, since 2000's *Gold And Green*.

JOHN MULVEY



SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** David McAulay **Additional production by:** Paul Savage, Chem19 Studios, Glasgow
Personnel includes: King Creosote (vocals, guitars), David McAulay (guitars), Derek O'Neill (keys), Andy Robinson (drums), Pete McLeod (bass), Kevin Brolly (clarinet), Pete Harvey (cello, string arr.), Beatroute Arts singers

KING CREOSOTE

From Scotland With Love

DOMINO

Fresh from the acclaimed *Diamond Mine* collaboration, the prolific Fifer pushes forward on his own. *By Graeme Thomson*



8/10

KING CREOSOTE, AKA Kenny Anderson, had been beaver away at the DIY indie-folk coalface for the best part of two decades. He was the ringleader of Fife's Fence Collective, the thriving artistic community which spawned a record label, a series

of homespun festivals and provided a home for the likes of James Yorkston, Kid Canaveral and Withered Hand.

Anderson has over 40 albums to his name, many self-released, and his solo career – he would no doubt balk at the word – is a blur of collaborations, side-projects and limited-edition releases. Despite a short and ultimately ill-fated dalliance with Warner Brothers, for many Anderson only really appeared on the radar with *Diamond Mine*, the wonderful, Mercury-nominated album he made in 2011 with English electronic musician Jon Hopkins.

Working with Hopkins took Anderson out of his comfort zone, and the results were all the richer for it. *From Scotland With Love* demanded a similarly bold approach. Another collaboration, this time with director Virginia Heath, the album was conceived for a poetic film about Scotland, timed to coincide with the Commonwealth Games, using archive documentary footage from the early 20th Century. The music is far from incidental. In a film without narration or interviews, the songs dictated many of Heath's visual choices and are tasked with much of the heavy lifting.

Two short, atmospheric instrumentals – “Crystal 8s” and “A Prairie Tale” – may stray into more obviously cinematic territory, but *From Scotland With Love* is an impressively unified, self-standing piece of work. With the themes of love, loss, war, emigration, work and play worn lightly, the project's cinematic roots are revealed in other ways, the most obvious being that the warm, melancholic roll of

Anderson's music unfolds on a larger scale, as though to fit the dimensions of the cinema screen.

On “Something To Believe In”, the scene-setting accordion burr and Anderson's tremulous falsetto open out into a stately, powerful air, and this tenderly anthemic quality holds for much of the record. “Miserable Strangers” and “Leaf Piece” are mini-symphonies, stitching together elegant string arrangements, surging dynamics and Anderson's affecting Scottishisms into bewitchingly beautiful music.

There are nods here to *Diamond Mine*'s sparse, elegiac tone, as there are in the drifting “Crystal 8s” and “Pauper's Dough”. The latter, a moving hymn to the dignity of the labouring classes, deploys some judicious recycling. Anderson lifts the chorus of “Harper's Dough”, from his 2003 Domino debut *Kenny And Beth's Musakal Boat Rides*, and builds a beautiful song around it, the chorus of voices swelling to a refrain which becomes a rallying cry: “You've got to rise above the gutter you are inside.”

This is not a top-down history, but instead an insight into everyday lives captured with wit and warmth. The nature of the project demands that Anderson writes from outside his own experience. Often the perspective is female, as on “One Floor Down”, a lonely tenement love story played out over a lush bossa nova, and the thrumming “Cargill”, where a fisherwomen frets over the safe return of the eponymous lover, gone to sea with “my heartstrings entangled in your net”. His tone is always empathetic

but he refuses to over-sentimentalise. “Largs” is a frantic jazz-polka, all oompah, boom and bash, relaying the madness of a seaside town turned upside down by hordes of city escapees on their annual holiday spree. The meaty indie-rock of “For One Night Only” explores a similar theme, the need for release and, if required, find refuge in a drunken alter ego, in this case “Wayne”, who “is appearing for one night only”.

At the other end of the spectrum, “Bluebell, Cockleshell, 123” freeze-frames a scene of youthful innocence. Anderson takes a skipping rhyme, performed by young singers from Glasgow's Beatroute Arts group, and introduces it to a crisp, acoustic strum. The two merge beautifully, a neat summation of everything the album achieves on a wider scale. *From Scotland With Love* successfully and movingly unites past and present, old and new, sight and sound. Another diamond.

Q&A

Kenny Anderson

Can you outline your working methods on this project?

It was a collaboration between film and music from the off. Virginia wanted the songs to be the narration and highlighted different themes she wanted to explore, and I basically had to get my imaginative brain into play and pen songs that I hoped she'd be able to find clips for. It was a giant leap, and even up to the wire I was seeing footage for the first time and trying to find something halfway appropriate. It was like a game of table tennis between the film end and the music end.

Did it make new demands on you as a writer?

You always draw from your own experiences, but the film is a series of stories within stories, very much open to interpretation, so it allowed me to explore different characters. A lot of it was from the female point of view, which was a bit daunting.

Will you work again with Jon Hopkins?

Yes. We were going to start at the end of last year, but he's very busy, he seems to be hopping around all over the place. We're keen for it to be different from *Diamond Mine*, and Jon is keen to have more of his input from a song structure point of view. He wants to work on some soundscapes and send them my way, which will be interesting.

INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON



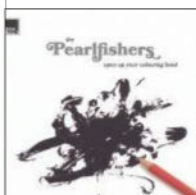
THE ORWELLS **Disgraceland** CANVASBACK/ATLANTIC

Chicago five-piece ransack indie rock
The mainstream will always repackage the underground in easily digestible pieces, and so

6/10

it is that Illinois youngsters The Orwells ape highlights of the last 25 years of indie rock on their second album. "Gotta Get Down" is like a lobotomised Pixies, "Southern Comfort" slips down suspiciously Strokes-like and "Who Needs You" riffs recalls The Libertines at their most coherent. There are still many things to enjoy across these 11 nuggets, however – the crunchy and exciting production, some of it from Dave Sitek, Mario Cuomo's gruff, menacing vocals, and discordant highlight "Dirty Sheets", which suggests The Orwells could have a more exciting, and original, future ahead of them.

TOM PINNOCK



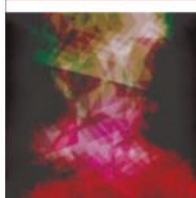
THE PEARLFISHERS **Open Up Your Colouring Book** MARINA

Scot pop nostalgia, gentle and drifting
The songwriting project of David Scott, Glasgow

6/10

eminence grise and producer for that city's pop underground (Isobel Campbell, Bill Wells, Norman Blake), The Pearlfishers sign and send love letters to pop past. Opener "Diamanda" has Scott channelling his inner Todd Rundgren: it's a sound he returns to on occasion during the album, but mostly *Open Up Your Colouring Book* hews closer to a post-sunshine pop vision of what songwriting could have been. A beautiful vision, true, but Scott's own voice is a big stumbling block – too reedy and thin, it lacks the necessary emotional gravitas to make this really work.

JON DALE



PLANK **Hivemind** AKOUSTIK ANARKHY

Buzzing return from the spacey Manchester trio
If 2012's debut album *Animalism* came steeped in '70s Krautlore, this

8/10

follow-up proves that Plank are much more than just the sum of their record collections. *Hivemind* is far more extensive, providing a roof for sub-metal riffs, ambient bliss and a fair chunk of zingy electronica. The latter is at its keenest on "Aphidely", whose groove latches onto the sweet spot between Giorgio Moroder and Crippled Black Phoenix. And while kosmische delights like "Drone" and "Waterboatman" are fine textural sound pieces, it's "Dark Web" – an epic that is part Mogwai, part Sabbath – that best displays their voyaging new ambition.

ROB HUGHES



POPSTRANGERS **Fortuna** CARPARK

Dark and arty retro-punk from New Zealand
Kiwi trio Popstrangers are punk in the literate, guitar-heavy tradition of The Church, Wipers

7/10

and much of the '80s roster of pioneering NZ label Flying Nun. Their second album is a moody yet youthful display of ringing, jangling angst with shades of shoegaze and Richard Hell ("Sandstorm"), The Cocteau Twins ("Don't Be Afraid") and a talent for pretty, earworm choruses ("Country Kills", "Violet"). The album sags in the middle with a few too many bog-standard indie ballads, but the swaggering misery of "Distress" and the sleigh bells and sneaky time signatures of "What's On Your Mind?" point to a potential greatness that *Fortuna* barely hints at.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

REVELATIONS

The Secret Sisters' Laura Rogers on Dylan's unfinished business



► "It's such a crazy thing, part of me still doesn't believe it actually happened," says Laura Rogers of the song on The Secret Sisters' second album credited to herself, sibling Lydia, and a certain Bob Dylan. "We'd just about finished most the record when T Bone [Burnett] said 'Bob has sent over some demos for you.' He just said 'Bob', no surname, so at first we didn't realise who he was talking about."

A fan of the sisters' eponymous debut, Dylan gave *Put Your Needle Down* producer Burnett the sketchy "Dirty Lie", which he'd started work on in the '80s but never finished. "The melody was written, the demo has him humming along to what he wanted it to be, and the lyrical hook 'whoever told you told a dirty lie' was already there. It was an honour to be invited to complete it but incredibly nerve-racking."

And what was Dylan's reaction to the finished product? "We've not had any personal feedback, but he gave permission for it to go on the record, so presumably he liked it. I actually feel better not knowing what he thinks; keeping him at a distance means he's still this important, almost mythical figure we grew up listening to."

TERRY STAUNTON



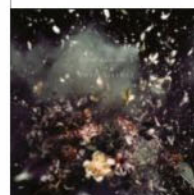
ELI "PAPERBOY" REED **Nights Like This** WARNER BROS

Blue-eyed soul boy goes pop

8/10

Fresh-faced and unthreatening, but with a back story that includes a stint as musical director at the Chicago church where '60s soul legend Mitty Collier is the minister, bequipped Massachusetts prodigy Reed might be the perfect 'authentic' US pop product. His fourth album doesn't entirely dump the retro-soul of previous hit *Come And Get It*, but deftly adds de rigueur synths and enough essence of *Glee* to qualify as a pop reboot. Although the stand-out title track is oddly reminiscent of Billy Idol's "Hot In The City", it's really Reed's ebullience that carries the day, bringing a likeable innocence to what is a carefully contrived clean-teen sound.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



ROLL THE DICE **Until Silence** LEAF

The suspense is thrilling these cinematic Swedes
If Swans in their '80s crushing-staccato-noise

8/10

pomp had made a soundtrack with John Carpenter, it might have sounded like the third *Roll The Dice* album. On the opening "Blood In Blood Out", soundtrack composer Malcolm Pardon and Fever Ray collaborator Peder Mannerfelt use stark piano and prowling machines to create a mood of unbearable, precipitous tension, and then keep us on the edge of our seats for nine more mesmerising tracks, adding throbbing pulse and slashing orchestral samples on "Coup De Grâce", climbing almost imperceptibly from creepy menace to elegiac optimism on "Aridity". This is as good as the "soundtrack for an imaginary movie" gets.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



THE SECRET SISTERS **Put Your Needle Down** UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC

More sweet sibling harmonies, with help from famous friends, including Bob Dylan

7/10

On their 2010 debut, Laura and Lydia Rogers fully embraced country traditionalism, while channelling the likes of Kitty Wells, Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn on an album largely comprised of covers. Here, with T Bone Burnett once again in the producer's chair, the sisters have a hand in writing the bulk of the tracks, and echoes of the past are given broader brush strokes with elements of twisted jazz ("Dirty Lie", co-written with Bob Dylan), delta blues ("The Pocket Knife") and Orbison-like pop grandeur ("I Cannot Find A Way"). For the purists, "Lonely Island" and "River Jordan" are closer to a bygone Nashville sound.

TERRY STAUNTON



**SHABAZZ
PALACES**
Lese Majesty
SUB POP

**Eminently digable
second album**

Dubbing them "the new cLOUDDEAD" may be glib, but it's not hopelessly

8/10

inaccurate. The Seattle avant-hip-hop collective helmed by former Digable Planets dude Ishmael Butler shares the defunct Oakland crew's interest in all things fragmentary and phantasmagoric, but is unlikely to start turning up on Hip-Hop Hits playlists, as cLOUDDEAD regularly do. The Shabazz sound is sprawling and promiscuous, but also deep, which might make for uneasy listening (despite its promise, closer "Sonic MythMap For The Trip Back" could well leave you dangling), while beats are not always of the head-nodding kind. With seven "astral suites" featuring 18 "dope hexes", it makes for an eccentric, but rapturous trip.

SHARON O'CONNELL



**THE SOFT
PINK TRUTH**
**Why Do The
Heathen Rage?**
THRILL JOCKEY

**Electronic pop maverick
desecrates black metal**
Half of Björk-approved

7/10

electronic duo Matmos, Drew Daniel has pursued an irregular sideline as The Soft Pink Truth, whose 2004 LP *Do You Want New Wave...* gave '80s hardcore punk songs a gay disco makeover. A decade on, he turns his attention to the foreboding genre of black metal. AN's "Let There Be Ebola Frost" is transformed into early '90s diva dance, replete with jungle breaks and airhorns, while a take on Venom's "Black Metal" somehow recalls both Major Lazer and The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown. While somewhat novelty, it's hard not to appreciate Daniel's conceptual moxie: politically questionable material squeezed into hotpants and voguing on a podium.

LOUIS PATTISON



**STARS IN
BATTLEDRESS**
In Droplet Form
BELIEVERS ROAST

**London art-poppers
hit Rock Bottom –
how now, Henry Cow?**
From the outer rings of

8/10

the Cardiacs' orbit, brothers Richard and James Larcombe's taste for the arcane and uncomfortable make them men refreshingly out of their time. Largely acoustic, and entirely devoid of drums, their second full-length outing *In Droplet Form* splices front-parlour pop to arrhythmic Chicago math rock with breezy insouciance. Egg-style time signatures and Soft Machine guitar grunt govern the tricky "TKS2", while Hatfield And The North and Slapp Happy do battle over the Larcombes' remote control on "Buy One Now" and "Fluent English". A tonic for quirkier troops.

JIM WIRTH



**JONAH
TOLCHIN**
Clover Lane
YEP ROC

**Excellent young
country-blues talent
from New Jersey**

8/10

The howling, confident harmonica that intros

"Mockingbird", opening track of *Clover Lane*, is a good indication of Tolchin's take-no-prisoners country-blues, which hovers around the box marked Americana but without the semi-apologetic reluctance you sometimes get from that genre. Whether on honky tonk kickabout "Midnight Rain" or honking blues "Hybrid Automobile", Tolchin and his band play with kickass vigour, but his songwriting really shines on aching murder ballad "Diamond Mind", gentle apologia "Low Life" or Leon Russell-style saloon blues "21st Century Girl", where he demonstrates the finesse and maturity of someone like Jason Isbell.

PETER WATTS



TO ROCOCO ROT
Instrument
CITY SLANG

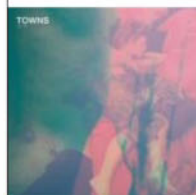
**Electronic beats mavens'
mellifluous eighth**

They administer the shock just 32 seconds in, presumably so listeners can acknowledge it and

8/10

move on. Cutting softly but insistently across the drum pulse and synths comes... a voice. It belongs to Arto Lindsay and featuring such a thing is a first for the German trio. Ironic, given the title of this set, but in their hands a vocal is used (three times) as an extra compositional element, never a focus. Impeccably plotted linearity and mastery of open space are what the slowly disassembling "Spreading The Strings Out" and sunken-cathedral dynamics of "Longest Escalator In The World" are about – although "Gitter" suggests John Carpenter, had he grown up in Düsseldorf. Brilliance and beauty, abounding in equal measure.

SHARON O'CONNELL



TOWNS
Get By
HOWLING OWL

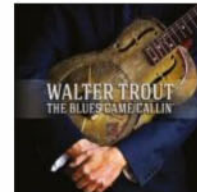
**Dreamy psychedelia
from Somerset**

This hotly tipped Bristol-based quartet appear to have built a haphazard shack constructed of

7/10

unlikely elements: a '60s psych rock frame with baggy brickwork, shoegaze pebbledashing and a gigantic, Oasis-sized roof. Were they just the sum of these parts, the construction would probably collapse on sight, but the attention to detail makes it not only stable but quietly spectacular. In particular, it's Jon-Paul Beaumont's wobbly, howling guitars that bury each perfectly executed chord sequence and each breathy voiced melody in a wall of distortion. It's a combination that works well throughout, but it's particularly effective on the coma-paced, MBV-style tangle of "Mirror Ghost".

JOHN LEWIS



**WALTER
TROUT**
**The Blues
Came Callin'**
PROVOQUE

**Former Canned Heat
guitarist still living
the blues**

7/10

You don't have to suffer to sing the blues – but it can certainly give the music impressive intensity. "I feel like I'm wasting away," Trout sings on the storming opener and he means it, too. He should have been on tour this year celebrating 25 years as a solo artist but a life-threatening illness has seen him lose 100lbs and he's currently awaiting a liver transplant. Unsurprisingly, the themes of mortality and making the most of the short time we're here dominate on a set of muscular, heartfelt blues-rock that's in dramatically high-octane contrast to his own tragically fading vital signs.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



**VARIOUS
ARTISTS**
**Bob Dylan In The
'80s: Volume One**
ATO

**Hit-and-miss
cover versions
of 'forgotten' Bob**

6/10

The reductive view of Dylan's career sees him soar in the '60s and '70s, dip in the '80s (*Oh Mercy* aside) then rise post-grunge. This compilation attempts to redress things by asking latterday names to cover songs from Bob's least celebrated decade. Like Dylan's own '80s, however, it's only partly successful. Glossy, synth-led reworks by Ivan & Alyosha, Tea Leaf Green and Aaron Freeman & Slash bring little to the table. Far more invigorating are Langhorne Slim's hillbilly take on "Got My Mind Made Up" and "Dark Eyes", a lovely duet from Dawn Landes and Bonnie "Prince" Billy.

ROB HUGHES



**VENETIAN
SNARES**
**My Love Is A
Bulldozer**
PLANET MU

**Breakcore irritant
hoovers up jazz for his
first in three years**

7/10

Since 1999, Winnipeg's Aaron Funk has made like Aphex Twin with a chip on his shoulder, firing out brackish mutant jungle vinyl like it's going out of fashion. Here and there, though, he's shown a delicate side, as on 2005's *Rossz Csillag Alatt Született*, which laced its beats with Hungarian brass, Bartók and Elgar. *My Love Is A Bulldozer* is of a similar vintage. The manic drum cascades are present and correct, but "10th Circle Of Winnipeg" drops a morose torch singer in moments of lull, while "Deleted Poems" mixes Eastern European choirs, mournful strings and flamenco guitar. Funk takes the mic on "1000 Years", although his wobbly operatics are hardly a highlight.

LOUIS PATTISON

REIGNING SOUND

Shattered

MERGE

Soul-saturated, Memphis-celebrating offering from Greg Cartwright's latest lineup. *By Peter Watts*



8/10

FOURTEEN YEARS INTO their career, Reigning Sound show no signs of getting over it. You could drop in any one of their records and find the same qualities: three-minute garage-soul songs about broken hearts, dreams, regret and loss. *Shattered* has a

stack of these sad and lovely offerings, all the work of Greg Cartwright, an inspired songwriter and possessor of a weatherbeaten, vulnerable voice. If there's one thing Cartwright knows, it's how to write a sad song and sing it 'til it hurts.

Reigning Sound's stunningly assured fifth studio album features a newish lineup recruited by keyboard player, Dave Amels, the sole survivor from 2009's *Love And Curses*. Mike Catanese, Benny Trokan and Mikey Post play with Amels in Brooklyn soul group The Jay Vons, and *Shattered* subsequently has an excellent, measured, grasp of soul, R'n'B and country-soul.

The band know exactly what to leave out – and that's important, as *Shattered* was recorded on eight-track, leaving little room for embellishment. There's more space, more air, than on *Love And Curses*, itself a far cry from 2004's *Too Much Guitar*, an atypically claustrophobic release that buried Cartwright's marvellous voice in tinny, psychotic guitar and which sounded more like one of Cartwright's (many) side-projects, punk-rock party band the Oblivians.

Shattered opens with the rat-a-tat drums of "North Cackalacky Girl", garage rock, with rumbling guitar, jaunty organ and defiant lyrics. "Let's get on with the show!" shouts Cartwright, addressing the first of many women who slip through these songs like ghosts. Our first encounter is with a temptress – "Don't make my heart your toy" – who can get his heart racing just "by the way you touch my hand". That impish promise is already spent by "Never Coming Home", gorgeous, chugging guitar-pop with heart-tugging strings in which Cartwright shows he has no fear of playing on emotions, embracing that plaintive side of pop, manipulating the heart but elevating the soul with a beautiful melody that could come from any decade.

Amels' whirling organ, thumping percussion and a sense of optimism drive "Falling Rain", before the perfect country-soul of "If You Gotta Leave" brings "broken hearts", a "whole lot of pain" and a barrel-load of tears-in-beers sadness (pedal steel is by John Whitemore, who used to be Cartwright's dentist). "You Did Wrong", a pointed Doors-y shuffle with psychy guitars and billowing organ has Cartwright chastising a friend – "You did wrong and now she's found somebody new", while on the acoustic "Once More", he's almost crooning, the delivery giving depth to lyrics about eyes that "sparkle and shine". "I've never loved... a girl... like this before," he purrs, and you want to believe him even if you've lost track



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:
Greg Cartwright
Recorded at:
Daptone, Brooklyn
Personnel: Greg Cartwright (vocals, guitar), Dave Amels (keyboards), Mike Catanese (guitar), Benny Trokan (bass), John Whitemore (pedal steel), Mikey Post (drums)

of which particular girl he's singing about now.

"My, My" picks up the pace, a Southern rock jive about cars, girls and rock'n'roll. "I don't claim to be lucky in love," is Cartwright's throaty cry – and even when he's having success with the ladies he's unsure about it – before we return to the warm Motown glow of "Starting New". The wicked mod strut of "Baby, It's Too Late", the sole cover version, gives way to the swinging statement of "In My Dreams". Amels' organ provides subtle texture but everything is in thrall to the vocal, a hymn of

praise to a girl of his dreams. "Drink my coffee, wash my face, put my heart back in its place..." sings this fragile Casanova, before the gospel lament of "I'm Trying (To Be The Man You Need)" sees Cartwright down on one knee, striving to be a better man and admitting he'll fail. "Got no money, fancy clothes, but a true, true heart, I've got one of those," he insists,

channelling his inner man-child, the one who knows exactly what a woman doesn't want to hear and sings it so intensely her stomach does backflips anyway.

Q&A

Greg Cartwright



What's different to *Love And Curses*? The lineup. I did an EP with this lineup about two years ago and that marked a big change. These guys are total in-the-pocket R'n'B players and they hit all those changes an R'n'B band would. We recorded on eight-track, and the limitations also changed how I made the record. You have to make decisions up front about what you are going to put on each song. Before I'd cut the basic song and then add piano or tambourine, basically do whatever I wanted.

Is every song a love song? In some, the nature of the song is veiled. So one is actually about the loss of loved ones, the way that as you get older people start to die. It's a different love and loss, of a person who completed you as a friend. Sometimes you are singing about loss, and sometimes you blame people for that loss and sometimes you forgive them – these are the recurring themes.

Tell me about "Baby, It's Too Late". That's a cover of a song by Shadden And The King Learns, a Memphis garage band that did a couple of songs before Shadden became a pastor. On my records I try to incorporate some lost Memphis nugget that I grew up with and will connect me to the Memphis heritage of music that I am trying to relate to. This music had a great impact on me and the root of it all is Memphis music.



WATERY LOVE
Decorative Feeding
IN THE RED

Sledgehammer hardcore four-piece with several bees in their bonnets

8/10

Belligerent Philly punks Watery Love come with a tar-black sense of humour – the second song is called “Pump The Bimbo” – and juddering sense of drama on this fine debut, that takes the angriest bits of Pissed Jeans and ratchets up the rage to somewhere past incandescent. While this can sometimes feel like you’re being shouted at by Travis Bickle, the music adds direction to the anger. “Skulls In Zen” is hardcore with a swagger, “Piece Of Piss” is a wicked, loud-quiet, Hüsker Dü-ish drawl while “I’m A Skull” is a bitter anthem of delicious self-loathing.

PETER WATTS



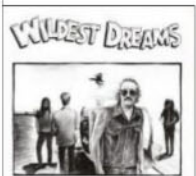
WHITE FENCE
For The Recently Found Innocent
DRAG CITY

LA psych maven tightens up. Ty Segall produces
Tim Presley’s ad hoc, lo-fi approach has produced six White Fence albums in

8/10

the past four years, plus *Hair*, an exceptional joint effort with Ty Segall. Segall produces this time, in what constitutes the most orthodox recording Presley has made since his time fronting Darker My Love in the noughties. Less fuzz, then, but Presley’s grasp of *Nuggets* beat, Paisley jangle and English psych arcana remains staggering (a reference to a “powdered wig” in “Sandra” is typically whimsical), and his remit now embraces early Who (“Like That”) and Kinks (“Arrow Man”). A risk of pastiche is never far away, but Presley staves it off with energy, songcraft, cunning and a renewed, relatively streamlined focus.

JOHN MULVEY



WILDEST DREAMS
Wildest Dreams
SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

DJ Harvey’s chunky psych-funk sideline
The louchely bearded Harvey Bassett is something of a legend

7/10

on the dance scene, renowned for his edits of rare disco anthems and eclectic DJ sets lasting anything up to 10 hours. *Wildest Dreams* is one of his occasional, no-strings-forays into groovy, psychedelic rock (see also 2007’s excellent *Map Of Africa* album), apparently knocked up in a couple of days with LA compadres Dan Hastie (keys) and Ethan Phillips (bass). It’s strictly a mood piece, complete with daffy lyrics about mermaids, bicycles and “gypsy tears”; consequently it’s wiggly instrumentals such as “Yes We Can Can” and “Scorpion Bay” that best transport you to the non-stop cosmic beach party in Harvey’s head.

SAM RICHARDS



WOLVES IN THE THRONE ROOM
Celestite
ARTEMISIA

Washington State metal duo go kosmische

While notionally a black metal band, Wolves In The Throne Room are very

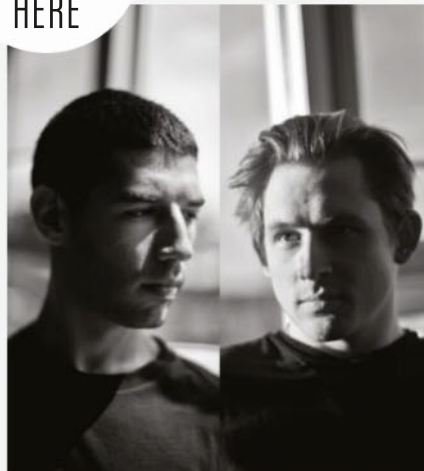
8/10

much on their own path, espousing radical environmental ideas and subsisting on an organic farm in the foothills of the Cascade mountains. Recent albums such as 2011’s *Celestial Lineage* made increasing use of modular synths; on its companion *Celestite*, they make the audacious decision to do away with guitars. Well, not entirely: “Initiation At Neudeg Alm” balances electronic swells with SunnO)))–like guitar sludge. But by and large, it’s contemplation they’re seeking: see the new age reverie of “Celestite Mirror”, a metal take on the electronic meditations of early Tangerine Dream or Popol Vuh’s *In Den Gärten Pharaos*.

LOUIS PATTISON

WE’RE
NEW
HERE

Yvette



➤ Noise rock isn’t a genre which generally prizes crystal-clear fidelity and haunting melodies, which makes the beautiful, if bruising debut from New York’s Yvette a unique album.

“The space we recorded in used to be an autobody shop,” says singer and guitarist Noah Kardos-Fein. “It was perfect – cavernous, made of concrete and metal. The space became its own instrument. There was hardly any heat, so my pedals started to do strange things.”

There are, Kardos-Fein reckons, 28 effects pedals used throughout *Process*, with his favourite being a Digitech XP-300 Space Station once owned by legendary art-rock guitarist Robert Quine, and which produces “warped ’80s extraterrestrial sounds”. Even the drums of bandmate Dale Eisinger are scrambled through numerous effects.

“Neither one of us was really sure how to play our instruments when we started,” says the guitarist. “The only game plan was to do something a little off. It’s more of a challenge to suggest aggression and despair than to beat someone over the head with it.”

“It’s also hard to ignore the history of New York bands that have used noise as a key element. What attracts us to noise is the chance to do something new. It’s still relatively uncharted territory.” TOM PINNOCK



WOMAN’S HOUR
Conversations
SECRETLY CANADIAN

Cumbrian quartet’s demure debut

For a small town, Kendal certainly punches above its weight when

7/10

it comes to producing intelligent indie-pop combos. First there was British Sea Power, then Wild Beasts and now Woman’s Hour, whose pristine blend of long-mac melancholy and swooning ’80s soul often recalls the Beasts’ previous album *Smother*, as well as The xx, Saint Etienne and Dave Okumu’s work with Jessie Ware. For the most part, their restrained approach pays dividends; “Reflections” and “Our Love Has No Rhythm” are all the more alluring for playing hard to get. But over the course of a whole album, a little more ribaldry is required.

SAM RICHARDS



YIP DECEIVER
Medallius
NEW WEST

Of Montreal stalwarts go retro-disco

Athens, Georgia’s Davey Pierce and Nicolas Dobbratz –

6/10

both former members of Kevin Barnes’ acclaimed indie collective Of Montreal – have performed a stylistic about-turn with their latest project. Yip Deceiver’s debut album is a frothing eruption of disco, R&B and synth-pop, all heavily steeped in the ’80s and aimed squarely at the dancefloor. There’s no denying the duo’s energy and confidence, and they have a keen eye for period detail. It’s a fine line between homage and pastiche, however, and Pierce and Dobbratz certainly veer too far towards the latter with the Nik Kershaw-esque “Obnoxia”.

FIONA STURGES



YVETTE
Process
TOUGH LOVE

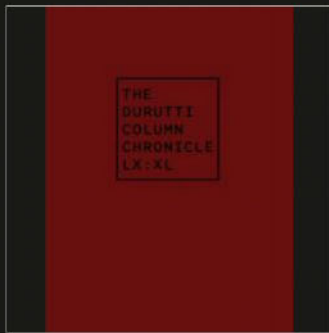
Brooklyn two-piece’s excellent, brutal first

The debut from Noah Kardos-Fein and Dale Eisinger is a rare thing, a noise-rock record that’s

8/10

genuinely a pleasure to listen to. Though drums hammer relentlessly and pitch-shifted guitars are brutalised through daisy chains of pedals, there’s a melancholic beauty to the melodies of “Radiation” and “Everything In Reverse” which suggests Liars circa *Drum’s Not Dead*, or early No Age. Recorded in a cavernous concrete garage in the middle of winter, *Process*’ airy production is also a relief compared to the oppressive vibes of forebears such as HEALTH and This Heat. Make no mistake, this isn’t mainstream music in any sense of the word, but it’s one of the first glass-rattling industrial-noise records you could imagine getting stuck in your head.

TOM PINNOCK



THE DURUTTI COLUMN

CHRONICLE LX : XL

KOOKYDISC 2CD BOX

Limited edition to acknowledge the artists sixtieth year. Firstly commissioned in April 2011 is now a two disc set and expanded with bonus online content.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

HYPERDUB 10.2

HYPERDUB CD

'Hyperdub 10.2' pools sunlight over 14 of the label's best slices of hyper soul of the last half-decade, illuminating an under-rated cast of talented songwriters, vocalists and producers.



THE DUSTAPHONICS

BIG SMOKE LONDON TOWN

DIRTY WATER CLUB LP / CD

A fresh and up-to-date take on classic hot rockin' soul'n'r&b, with a gorgeous fiery-haired singer and equally on fire backing band.

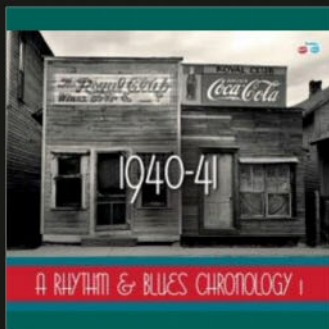


MFC CHICKEN

SOLID GRAVY

DIRTY WATER CLUB LP / CD

One of the hottest bands out there right now, setting clubs alight with their own red hot take on "the music the Sonics were listening to".



VARIOUS ARTISTS

A RHYTHM & BLUES

CHRONOLOGY 1: 1940-1941

RHYTHM AND BLUES 4CD BOX

Black popular music didn't get a proper name until after WW2. 1940-41 - the 1st volume in this series pinpoints records typical of the various strands of music which coalesced into R&B around 1947.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

A RHYTHM & BLUES

CHRONOLOGY 2: 1942-1944

RHYTHM AND BLUES 4CD BOX

Shellac was restricted after the US entered WWII, leading indirectly to the rise of the jukebox. This period also saw the introduction of the electric guitar into R&B.

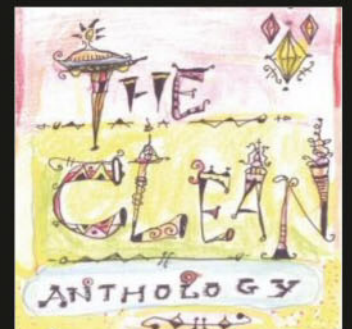


ROSCO AKA STERLING ROSWELL

THE CALL OF THE COSMOS

MEDIA ROSCOM LP / CD

New album from Spacemen 3's Sterling Roswell. "Think Lee Hazelwood produced by Joe Meek, perfectly realised and revealing a commercial side to Roswell previously unheard viewed through the lens of Syd Barrett & Kevin Ayers - Mojo



THE CLEAN

ANTHOLOGY

MERGE RECORDS 2CD / 4LP

The Clean's Anthology is a compilation of songs from across the New Zealand band's legendary musical career, which began in 1981 and continues today.



LANDLADY

UPRIGHT BEHAVIOR

HOME TAPES LP / CD

Brooklyn's Landlady releases their Hometapes debut with "an intimate urgency that uncrosses arms and impels involvement, and their sound invokes the Band if they had Dirty Projectors' skewed sense of song structure." Pitchfork



REIGNING SOUND

SHATTERED

MERGE LP / CD

Mojo calls Reigning Sound's principal songwriter Greg Cartwright "a virtuoso poet of car-crash, nicotine-stained heartbreak." Recorded at Daptone Studios in Brooklyn, New York.

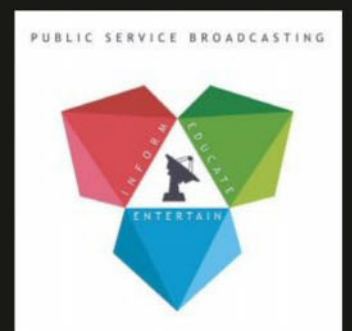


COMET GAIN

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Soaked in autumn melancholy, Paperback Ghosts blends psychedelia, folk-rock, garage muscle and 4am sadness while remaining at heart a pop record, a richly textured affirmation of Comet Gain's twenty-year anti-career.



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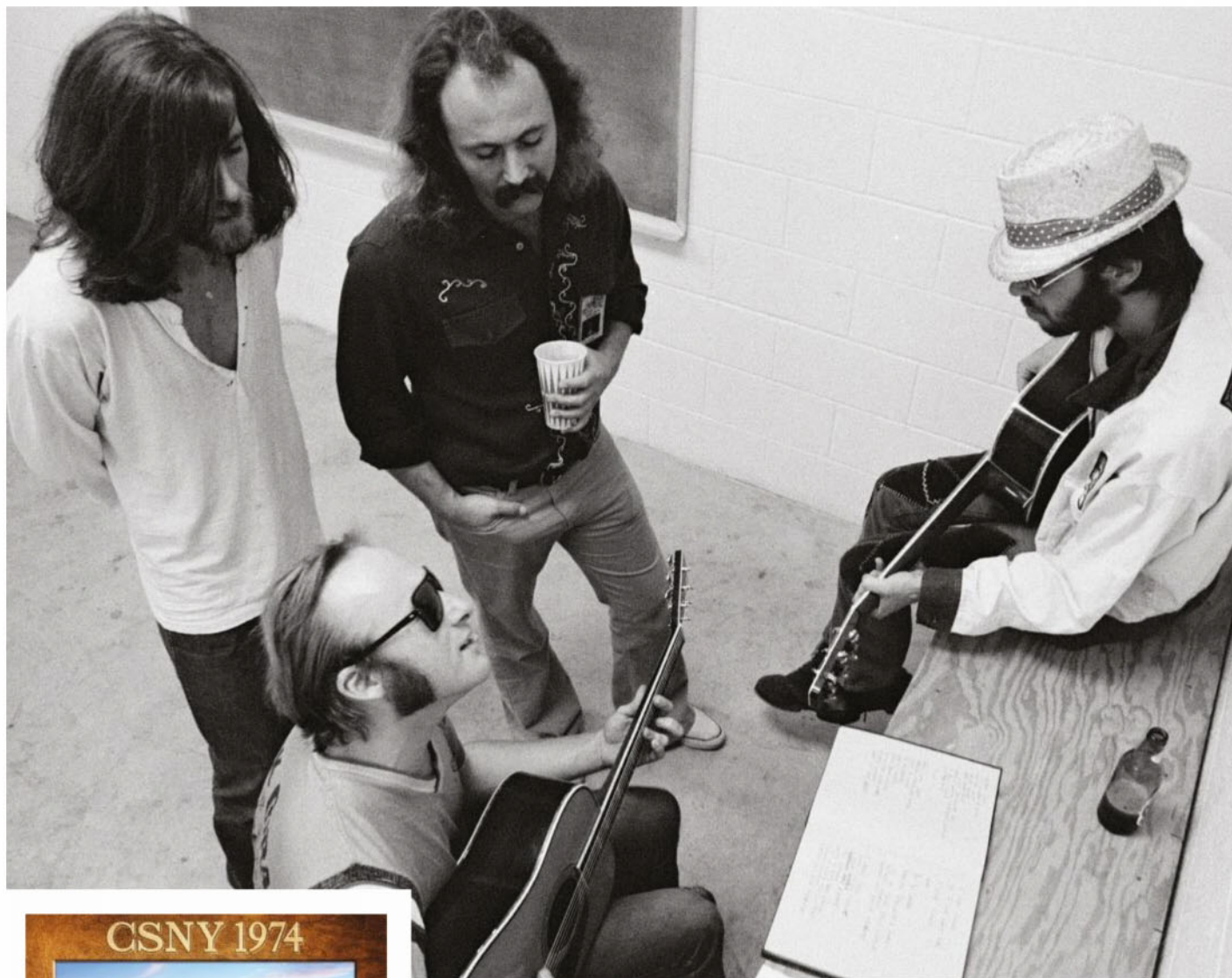
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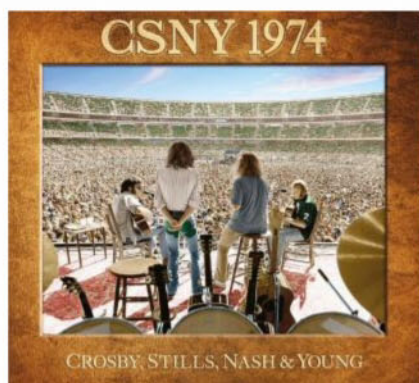
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Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



JOEL BERNSTEIN



CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG

CSNY 1974

RHINO

CSNY's "Doom Tour" exhumed, and reconstructed into an ideal show from their stadium excursion. *By Alastair McKay*

TRACKLIST

DISC 1 First Set:

- 1 Love The One You're With
- 2 Wooden Ships
- 3 Immigration Man
- 4 Helpless
- 5 Carry Me
- 6 Johnny's Garden
- 7 Traces
- 8 Grave Concern
- 9 On The Beach
- 10 Black Queen
- 11 Almost Cut My Hair

7/10 TO CALL THIS live compilation from CSNY's 1974 tour "long-awaited" is, on one level, an act of revisionism. Certainly, it has been a long time coming, but it's also true that in the intervening 40 years, the competing egos of CSNY have done their best to suggest that if the tour itself wasn't best forgotten, there was nothing to be gained by revisiting it. Indeed, Stephen Stills started suppressing interest before the tour had even

taken place, famously telling Cameron Crowe in *Creem*: "We did one for the art and the music, one for the chicks. This one's for the cash."

Less well remembered is how Stills immediately qualified that jokey remark, saying that "the music is real good, like it's never been before. And that's probably because everybody's matured as musicians." Neil Young, in his book, *Waging Heavy Peace*, was rather less ebullient, saying: "Most of these stadium shows were





CONTINUED...

DISC 2 Second Set:

- 1 Change Partners
- 2 The Lee Shore
- 3 Only Love Can Break Your Heart
- 4 Our House
- 5 Fieldworker
- 6 Guinevere
- 7 Time After Time
- 8 Prison Song
- 9 Long May You Run
- 10 Goodbye Dick
- 11 Mellow My Mind
- 12 Old Man
- 13 Word Game
- 14 Myth Of Sisyphus
- 15 Blackbird
- 16 Love Art Blues
- 17 Hawaiian Sunrise
- 18 Teach Your Children
- 19 Suite: Judy Blue Eyes

DISC 3 Third Set:

- 1 Déjà Vu
- 2 My Angel
- 3 Pre-Road Downs
- 4 Don't Be Denied
- 5 Revolution Blues
- 6 Military Madness
- 7 Long Time Gone
- 8 Pushed It Over The End
- 9 Chicago
- 10 Ohio

BONUS DVD:

- 1 Only Love Can Break Your Heart
- 2 Almost Cut My Hair
- 3 Grave Concern
- 4 Old Man
- 5 Johnny's Garden
- 6 Our House
- 7 Déjà Vu
- 8 Pushed It Over The End



→ just no good. The technology was not there for the sound. It was all about the egos of everyone. The group was more into showboating than music. It was a huge disappointment.”

So was it just one for the money? Well, it's true that 1974 found CSNY in a state of flux. After their anointment as the American Beatles, post-Woodstock in 1969, their solo careers had waned somewhat. Even Young had shed some of the commercial lustre of *Harvest*, and was in a state of emotional turmoil. He had recorded but not released *Tonight's The Night*, inspired by the death of Danny Whitten. And the similarly dark *On The Beach*, its bitter tone coloured by Young's troubled relationship with Carrie Snodgrass, was about to be issued.

These records are now seen as creative high-points, but they weren't considered commercial at the time.

Whether CSNY actually split up in between times is a moot point. Various permutations had managed to rub along onstage and record, but the full quartet only appeared together three times in four years. In spring 1973, they had made an unsuccessful attempt at recording an album in Hawaii, where David Crosby's schooner was moored, moving on to Young's Broken Arrow ranch, but the results were unsatisfactory. Still, something must have clicked, because rumours about a tour persisted. It took the recruitment of veteran promoter Bill Graham to get the wheels moving. Graham had just taken Bob Dylan on a tour of indoor arenas, and his ambitions for CSNY were grander still. A two-month tour of American sports stadia was arranged, plus a valedictory date at Wembley Stadium in London: 31 shows in 24 cities. Corners were not cut. A line portrait of the group by Joni Mitchell was affixed to the tour crockery and luggage tags, and screen-printed onto the tour pillowcases. The group hopped between cities in Lear jets. Limousines were on standby at all times, but rarely used.

“Long May You Run” sounds like a farewell to the hippy ideals CSNY once seemed to represent

Young preferred to travel with family and

friends in a mobile home which he called “Mobil-Obil”. It was later replaced by “Sam Sleaze”, an old gospel tourbus. But the sense of dislocation within the group wasn't just caused by the size of the venues, or the travel arrangements. There was a good deal of superstar excess at play too. Cocaine had replaced marijuana as the drug of choice, doing nothing to create a communal ethic.

CSNY's musical ambitions were grandiose. The plan was to avoid reprising old material. Back catalogue, when played, would be rearranged. Crosby talked of a setlist consisting of 44 songs. They managed 40 on the opening night, then trimmed back to 30, with each set including acoustic and electric passages, and individual showcases.

None of which prepares you for the extraordinary clarity of the sound on this album, which has been assembled by Nash from the 10 shows which were professionally recorded to represent an ideal night on the tour.

That isn't to say it all sounds harmonious. Playing

such large venues with inadequate equipment clearly strained the voices, so there are some rough larynxes on display on Stills' “Love The One You're With” and the croaky cover of The Beatles' “Blackbird”. (Stills' throatiness is put to good use on the bluesy “Word Game”, though.)

Superstar egos aside, a different kind of tension is evident. The world had moved on since Woodstock. The politics of 1974 were stalked by paranoia, fear and loathing. These were the last days of the Nixon administration. Crosby's banter includes a joke about the 18-minute gap on the Watergate tapes. There's even a musical tribute to the disgraced president, “Goodbye Dick”, composed in haste by Young after Nixon's resignation on August 9 (and performed on August 14). It's no “Ohio”, being a jokey banjo lament lasting no more than a minute, but it does capture the malignant spirit of the times.

It's also evident that Young is performing on a different level to his bandmates. Creatively, he's on fire, while CSN are doused, or prone to indulgence. So, while “Almost Cut My Hair”

HIDDEN TREASURES

ONE WAY STREET

Neil Young was considerably more prolific than Crosby, Stills or Nash when they re-convened in 1974. Five “new” Young songs appear on CSNY 1974. Here’s the lowdown.

GOODBYE DICK

Composed in haste as a bitter farewell to President Nixon and his personal secretary Rose Mary Woods, given a solitary airing at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, in Uniondale, Long Island. A short, banjo number.

HAWAIIAN SUNRISE/ LOVE ART BLUES

These were both scheduled for release on Young’s album *Homegrown*, which he abruptly cancelled, releasing *Tonight’s The Night* instead. Both songs feature on a bootleg, *Love Art Blues*, which curates music from Young’s

1974-77 purple patch. The best of these songs is “Love Art Blues”, which some speculate is a tribute to Young’s dog Art, which occasionally wandered onstage during the 1974 tour.

TRACES

“Hawaiian Sunrise” and “Love Art Blues” also appeared on a mammoth four-disc set, *Rock n’ Roll Cowboy*. As does the other ‘new’ song, “Traces”, a ballad first recorded with David Briggs at Young’s ranch in 1974.

PUSHED IT OVER THE END

First aired at a surprise show on May 16, 1974, when Young played the Bottom Line in New York, where it was called “Citizen Kane Jr Blues”. In the Bottom Line version it’s a gentle acoustic strum, with ominous undertones. By the time CSNY adapted it, the ante had been upped considerably. Released as a bonus 12” in an Italian boxset in 1981.

assumes a somewhat pensive air, protest songs “Fieldworker” and “Immigration Man” are too literal to be effective. Including “Goodbye Dick”, there are five unreleased Young songs. “Hawaiian Sunrise” is a frivolous South Seas lilt. “Love Art Blues” is a self-mocking country strum (“My songs are all so long/And my words are all so sad”). “Traces” is a typical exploration of alienation. And the eight-minute “Pushed It Over The End” is a sprawling exercise in uncertain time signatures and whacked-out emotions.

But there’s also an incendiary “Revolution Blues” with Young howling like a dog about the lepers of Laurel Canyon; a gospel-tinged “Helpless”, and a truly fantastic rendition of “On The Beach”, all malign electricity and coiled neuroses. “Old Man” is elevated by its harmonies, while “Long May You Run” manages to sound like a farewell toast to the hippy ideals which CSNY once appeared to represent, its fragile mood elevated by Stills’ fractured harmonies.

The album ends, as it must, with “Ohio”. Maybe, with Nixon gone, there’s a note of triumph buried beneath its thrashing riff, but the pervasive mood is one of melancholy fury – which qualifies it all the better to be the band’s swansong.

EXTRAS: The 3CD box has a bonus DVD with 7/10 decent live footage from Landover, Maryland and Wembley. There is a limited wooden boxset with 6 LPs, Blu-ray audio disc, and book. And a single CD version, with 16 tracks.

the VAULT



“WE’D DONE OUR INDIVIDUAL TRIPS...”

AUGUST, 1974: Together once more in ’74... *Melody Maker*’s CHRIS CHARLESWORTH gets an audience with C, S and N, if not quite Y.



MM
10/08/1974

THE INTERNAL arguments in this group have become rock folklore over the past three years. Each one groused because they thought they were being upstaged by another, and the bickering between Stills and Young seemed to indicate that CSNY was no more. It took Elliot Roberts (manager of Crosby, Nash and Young) to make the move, first ensuring that each artist had the summer free, then booking the stadiums with the assistance of Bill Graham, and then packing the band off to Young’s ranch near San Francisco for a month’s rehearsal.

Of the four, Young still remains the loner figure, choosing to travel in his own caravan by road instead of in the plane with the rest of the band. Each night he packs up his guitar, wife, baby son and dog and hits the road.

After the Denver show I asked Crosby what had happened to the elusive Neil... “He’s two miles out of town by now and so high on the show that nothing can touch him,” he replied. “He’s out there so happy. He came and did what he had to do for three hours and knows he did it well. Nothing can make a man happier than that.”

Young remains quiet and somehow aloof, disappearing into the night and not reappearing until a few hours before the next stop. He’s had his hair trimmed and most of the time he hides behind reflective sunglasses. Indeed the Loner.

For Stills, the Denver show held special significance. He lives about two hours’ drive away from the town, up on a ranch in the mountain and the crowd (there were 61,000 at Mile High Stadium) gave him a special welcome. His blond hair is cut short, and he’s never seen without a football jersey with a large digit on the front. The Stills uniform.

Crosby and Nash remain chums. If Young is the composing talent and Stills the instrumentalist, then Crosby and Nash between them provide the vocal ability to put over the material as it was intended to be worked.

“I can’t write songs like Neil but I know his songs are so good that I just have to sing them,” Crosby told me. “And I know that because they’re so good I can sing them as good as I’ll ever sing.”

Stills seems to be the perfectionist of the group; he gets annoyed if the sound isn’t perfect, while the others seem happy if the audience are happy. “Hey, English,” he shouted at me after the show. “What da ya think?”

I told him I enjoyed it, especially some of his lead guitar work. His job in the band is that of lead guitarist: he takes 90 per cent of the guitar solos and he’s proud of his work. Later in the evening he had a fierce argument with Nash about the quality of the monitor speakers and it took Elliot Roberts to drag them apart.

Crosby and Nash are the most enthused, Nash especially. He seemed as high as a kite after the concert, rushing here and there and refusing to stop talking to anyone who’d listen. With some difficulty I got him away from the crowd for 15 minutes to talk.

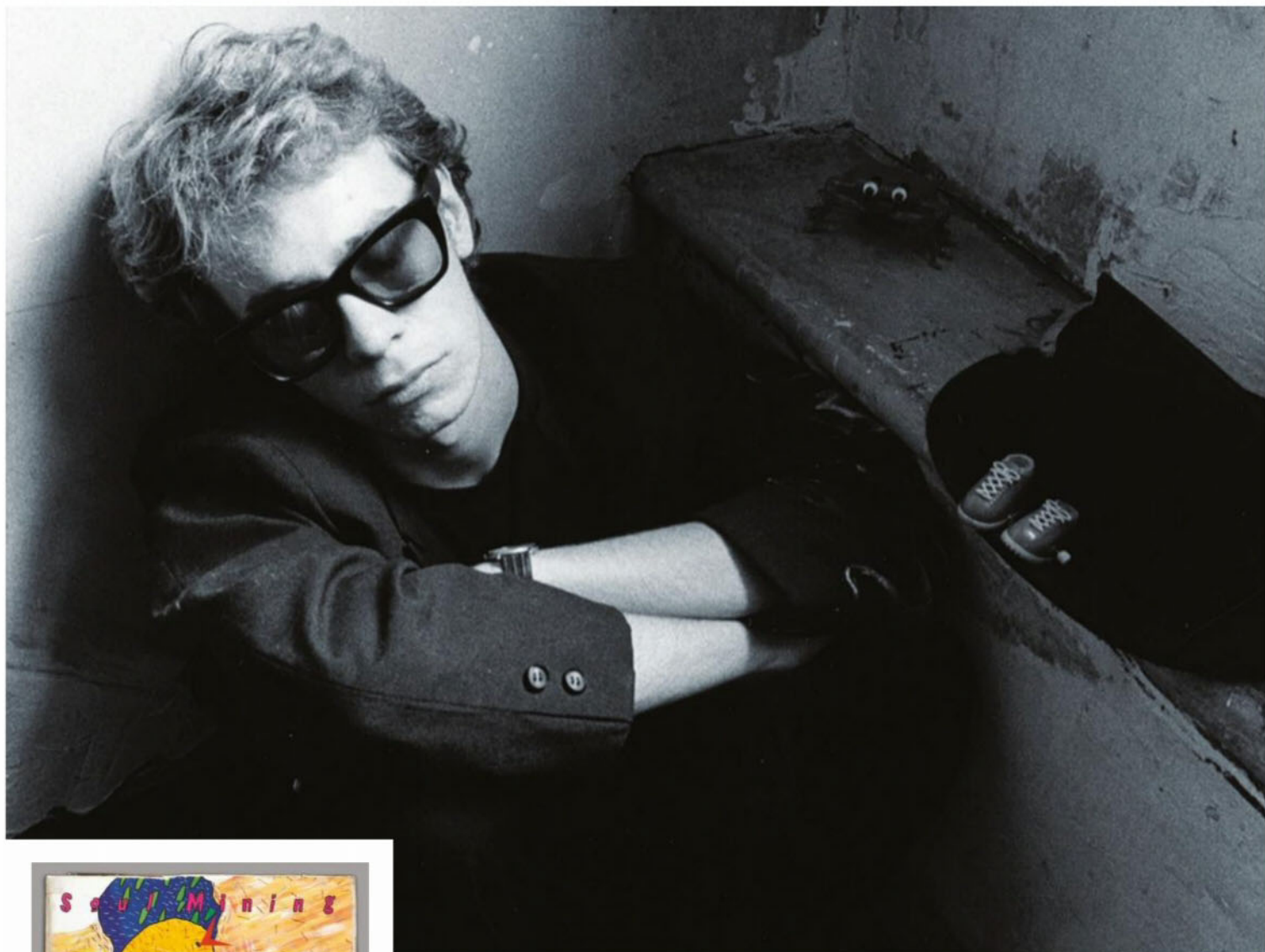
“It was a dramatic want to play music together again. A real need, man,” he replied when I asked point blank what motivated them to reunite. “We’d all done our individual trips and made our individual statements for whatever reasons we

had. We’d got that out of our system and then I think we realised about a year ago that we had a really fucking hot band if we wanted and we could really make this hot music.

“We missed each other, y’know. We missed that bounce off. When there’s four of yer up there and there’s Stephen at one side and Neil at the other and me and David in the middle.

Just watching them converse with each other. That’s it, y’know. Did you hear that conversation they had when Stephen was on clavinet and Neil on guitar? Mmm. So spacey. They’re great musicians, man. You can’t deny it. They got me high six times tonight in the show. Six times I just flashed out.”

Taken from the *Uncut Ultimate Music Guide: Neil Young*, which is available to purchase as a physical edition at backstreetmerch.com or digitally from gb.zinio.com



TRACKLIST

LP1: *Soul Mining*

- 1 I've Been Waitin' For Tomorrow (All Of My Life)
- 2 This Is The Day
- 3 The Sinking Feeling
- 4 Uncertain Smile
- 5 The Twilight Hour
- 6 Soul Mining
- 7 Giant

LP2: *Soul Mining Recollected*

- 1 Uncertain Smile (New York 12" version)
- 2 Perfect (New York 12" version)
- 3 This Is The Day (12" version)
- 4 Fruit Of The Heart
- 5 Perfect (London 12" version)
- 6 I've Been Waitin' For Tomorrow (All My Life) (12" mix)

THE THE

Soul Mining 30th Anniversary Deluxe Edition

SONY MUSIC

The '80s angst classic reissued as a vinyl boxset...
By Michael Bonner

9/10

VISITORS TO THIS year's Chelsea Flower Show may have encountered an unusual specimen stirring in the Carnivorous Plants section. *Sarracenia* 'Matt Johnson', a new hybrid plant named after the founder of The The, made its public debut last month at RHS Wisley with Johnson present. Johnson's appearance amid the brightness and colour of Chelsea, posing for photographers with his botanical namesake, might have come as a surprise to those who remember him best as the earnest young mastermind behind his band's early masterpiece, 1983's *Soul Mining*.

In fact, Johnson had already written four albums by the time he came to *Soul Mining*.

While other boys his age skulked in their teenage bedrooms, Johnson refined his songwriting: there were two unreleased albums (*See Without Being Seen* and *Spirits*) before he finally released his bona fide debut album, *Burning Blue Soul*, on 4AD. His intended follow-up was called *The Pornography Of Despair*, which should give you an idea where his head was at.

Instead he made *Soul Mining*. Released in the interzone between post-punk and synth pop, and reflecting both, *Soul Mining* thrums with ideas, tension, and dread. Johnson's enduring lyrical concerns – social alienation, political disillusionment and troubles of the heart – are all present and correct, but unlike the industrial/

Q&A

Matt Johnson

What themes did you set out to explore on *Soul Mining*?

At the time, it was all very instinctual. John Lennon used to say, "Tell the truth and make it rhyme." You can't get simpler advice than that! It was emotional expression. I was quite shy, and there was a lot of unrequited love. I've never been a depressed person, although I've suffered from sensitivity, and the songs reflect that a lot. I also feel very moved by the injustices and unfairness I see around me. So that anger and anxiety was fuel to those songs.

How did Jools Holland come to play on the album?

The Garden [studios] had this beautiful little Yamaha C3 Baby Grand, and the decision was, "We have this fantastically long outro for 'Uncertain Smile'. We need to put this piano on

something. Who do we know who can play it?" Jools showed up, cool as a cucumber despite the sweltering heat, dressed in leathers, and he was absolutely charming. I think he had one run-through, said, "Let's go for it", and laid the whole thing down. There was just one drop-in we did towards the end. We were amazed. He told me years later, he gets asked about that more than anything he's ever done.

Where do you think *Soul Mining* fits into your broader body of work?

I think it's one of the crucial foundation projects.

What's it like, having a carnivorous plant named after you?

This chap – a lovely guy – had grown up with my music and wanted to know, would I mind having a little triffid named after me? I was quite honoured. It did take a little nip out of me when I touched it. They eat flies, small insects and small mammals. He won his 16th gold medal for it.

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER

psychedelic adventuring of *Burning Blue Soul*, they are here given a glossier sheen. Johnson signed to CBS on the strength of early demos he recorded in New York – including a version of future single, "Uncertain Smile" – which suggested major-label confidence in Johnson's growing abilities as a songwriter.

Certainly, for an album of heavy themes, *Soul Mining* is musically surprisingly light. Despite its gloomy lyrical disposition ("My aspirations have shrivelled in the sun", he tells us on the album's opening track, "I've Been Waitin' For Tomorrow (All My Life)"), the songs themselves are lush and cinematic, dressed in richly textured arrangements. Johnson's key influences around this time were Cabaret Voltaire, Wire and This Heat; but he had been raised on John Lennon and Tim Buckley. Johnson's vision for *Soul Mining* was to recast these classic, enduring antecedents in a new and experimental framework.

The songs themselves oscillate between the political and the personal. Despite its surprisingly jaunty backing, "The Sinking Feeling" bristles with social injustice – "I'm just a symptom of the moral decay/That's gnawing at the heart of the country". Elsewhere, against keyboard stabs, "The Twilight Hour" pushes into relationship paranoia: "It's now way past the hour she usually phones".

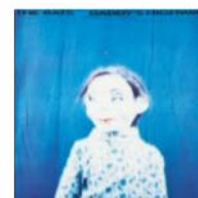
A welcome balance is provided by "This Is The Day" and "Uncertain Smile", an uplifting number worth the price of admission alone: here a loveless, late-night brooding is disguised by a crisp guitar melody and gilded by Jools Holland's sparkling piano solo. Although

at this point, The The was essentially a one-man show, Johnson roped in several accomplices to help bring his vision to life: Holland, Orange Juice's Zeke Manyika, synth pioneer Thomas Leer and Foetus' JG Thirlwell (credited here as Frank Wants). Manyika's African polyrhythms dominate "Giant", but arguably the most critical collaborators here are Leer and Thirlwell, whose involvement explicitly connected Johnson's songwriting craft to more leftfield sonic explorations.

Although *Soul Mining* only peaked at 27 in the charts, the album nevertheless marked the start of a prolific period for The The. 1986's follow-up, *Infected*, found Johnson further exploring a more leftfield musical agenda; it wasn't until subsequent albums that he began to loosen up a little. He even formed a proper band with Johnny Marr for 1989's *Mind Bomb* and *Dusk* (1992) and found himself, briefly, in the unlikely position of enjoying a Top 20 hit single. But *Soul Mining* is arguably Johnson's defining work: ambitious, strange, exciting. And, 30-odd years on, remarkably fresh.

EXTRAS: Accompanied by Johnson's sleeve 7/10 notes and a remastered pressing of the album, the boxset also includes a second 12" of alternative versions and remixes. Of most interest are the original 'New York' mixes from the Mike Thorne sessions:

"Uncertain Smile" is chunkier than the album version and features a sax solo rather than Holland's piano, not forgetting "Perfect", featuring David Johansen on harmonica. It's rounded off by 12" remixes of "This Is The Day", "Perfect" and "I've Been Waitin' For Tomorrow (All Of My Life)".



THE BATS

Daddy's Highway (reissue, 1987) 8/10

The Law Of Things (reissue, 1988) 8/10

Completely Bats (reissue, 1990) 9/10

CAPTURED TRACKS/FLYING NUN

Three stone tablets of near-perfect NZ pop

As The Clean blazed their peculiar trail through New Zealand's underground, the trio's three personalities came increasingly to the fore: David Kilgour's '60s Dylan moves, brother Hamish's droll humour, bass player Robert Scott's pop smarts. After The Clean temporarily disbanded in 1982, the latter fine-tuned his songwriting and formed The Bats, the group he's helmed ever since. While they've not released a dud album, it's hard to go past the compilation of early singles, *Completely Bats*, where Scott and his crew nailed the group's aesthetic, a warm, strangely precise jangle-pop that somehow balances the pastoral with the motorik. It's no surprise one of their earliest EPs was called "Music For The Fireside": there's an earthy, unassuming charm to The Bats' music. Their first two LPs, *Daddy's Highway* and *The Law Of Things*, build on the template, adding a spectral mystery to the collective armoury: "Smoking Her Wings", from the latter, is up there with The Chills' "Pink Frost" as one of the most eerie, evocative pop songs from NZ. **EXTRAS:** *Completely Bats* and *The Law Of Things* are deluxe editions, with extra tracks and demos. The three albums are also collected in one triple-disc set, *Volume One*. JONDALE



THE BEVIS FROND

High In A Flat

CHERRY RED

Choice cuts from the cult indie-rockers' inception

When a band has been as relentlessly prolific as The Bevis Frond, compilations are a godsend for the newcomer. Ahead of a full LP/CD reissue of their catalogue through Cherry Red comes this primer, drawing from the band's early years (1987-'91), when they were something like an English parallel to Guided By Voices – cranking out lo-fi home recordings, with no audience or hope of success in mind, heavily imbued with an innate sense of their own mythology. The 16 gems collected here show off Nick Saloman's impressive, idiosyncratic range – already in his thirties by the time he released the Frond's debut, 1987's *Miasma*, Saloman drew on his encyclopedic knowledge of classic rock, folk and psychedelia for melodic cuts like "He'd Be A Diamond" (which prefigured Teenage Fanclub, and was later covered by them), and proggy trips like "Once More", from 1987's *Inner Marshland*, which begins with a *Sooty Show* sample then swiftly transforms into a blistering jam laden with backwards effects and fuzz guitar. Though some choice songs are of course absent, *High In A Flat* is a comprehensive guidebook to a land well worth getting lost in.

EXTRAS: None. TOM PINNOCK

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



BIG BOYS

Lullabies Help The Brain Grow (reissue, 1983)

No Matter How Long The Line Is At The Cafeteria, There's Always A Seat! (reissue, 1985)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Texas' idealistic, punk/funk avatars finally get their due; "Now, go start your own band!"

A whirlwind of artistic fearlessness, rugged individualism, and community spirit guiding the Austin punk scene 1979-1985, the big-hearted Big Boys were outrageous and eclectic, risk-takers espousing an anything-goes creative fervour that forged its own path. They resisted pigeonholes from the get-go, a kaleidoscope of thick, hard rhythms and ideas coming at you from all directions, fast.

Onstage, led by singer and force-of-nature Randy "Biscuit" Turner (1949-2005), they were a riot. Whether appearing in a tutu or leaning into a radical, think-for-yourself lyric, Turner was the living embodiment of the freedom the band espoused. Together with guitarist Tim Kerr, bassist Chris Gates and drummer Rey Washam, the group delighted, and confounded. "The scene at that time was made up of colourful

characters and bigger-than-life personalities," remembers Kerr, now a respected artist and producer. "Biscuit was just another crazy bright light in a bunch of crazy lights, maybe a bit more Dada-bright than the others."

Apoplectically, they melded influences from Kool And The Gang to Throbbing Gristle ("We listened to it all," says Kerr), from swinging, stutter-step funk, with horns, to pissed-off, 30-second gut-punches. They were touring legends, but alas, tragically under-recorded in a cosmic-cowboy town. For his part, says Kerr, "I found freedom in the idea that, at least in Austin, this 'new thing' had no rules, no uniform. It was wide open to try anything."

These two albums, produced by Spot (Hüsker Dü, Misfits), reflect it all, flying shrapnel of defiance that acts from Scratch Acid to Red Hot Chili Peppers readily embraced. *Cafeteria* is boiling with funk overtures ("What's The Word"), ragged pop (Replacements-on-a-bender "Which Way To Go"), and time-signature weirdness ("Killing Time"). *Lullabies* hews closer to their fire, its anthem "We're Not In It To Lose" throwing down the gauntlet – to avoid groupthink, creeping repression.

"The cultural tension becomes fun," Kerr observes, "when you're not alone in the fight for self-expression. I think we all felt strongly about getting others involved. Or at least showing that there were other choices available. I still do." **LUKE TORN**



THE BLUEBELLS

Exile On Twee Street: Songs From Glasgow 1980-1982

CHERRY RED

The Postcard group that got away, recaptured

7/10 The Bluebells were almost on Postcard Records,

though the label imploded before they could release anything. Later, they became the only group from that Glasgow set to have a No 1 record (although posthumously, with "Young At Heart", via a commercial), an achievement which has undermined the appreciation of their broader merits. At heart, The Bluebells were pure pop, though B-sides betrayed hints of the folk-pop direction pursued by their post-spilt splinter group, The McCluskey Brothers. These demos catch them in that first Postcard-era flush, and are crammed with glorious, un-self-conscious melodies. At times, of course, it's ramshackle. There's a particular style of guitar playing, the choppy angles of Chic hammered into a post-punk shape (an Orange Juice trope), and it's rendered perfectly here on "Forever Young". Frontman Robert Hodgins (aka Bobby Bluebell) was less arch than Edwyn Collins, so while there's a decent cover of the Velvet's "I'm Set Free", the West Coast harmonies of "East Green" provide the missing link between Postcard and Teenage Fanclub. The Bluebells' breezy brilliance is heard to best effect on "Everybody's Somebody's Fool", which inhabits the joyous space between The Monkees and The Lovin' Spoonful.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



JOHN CALE & TERRY RILEY

Church Of Anthrax (reissue, 1971)

ESOTERIC

Velvets/minimalist sensational one-off summit, now remastered

7/10 With Terry Riley departing

abruptly at the mixing stage, *Church Of Anthrax* wasn't a collaboration that ended happily. Yet 43 years after its release, the LP (instrumental save for the anomalous haunting "The Soul Of Patrick Lee", voiced by Cale's pal Adam Miller) remains an exhilarating meeting of two iconoclastic musical minds. Cale's pre-Velvets avant-garde background with Riley collaborator LaMonte Young left him well-placed to assist in a CBS plan to give Riley mainstream profile. A key influence for Pete Townshend on the contemporaneous *Who's Next*, Riley and his cyclical organ keyboard grooves are given added momentum here by his own furious saxophone and Cale's savage stabbing organ on the opening title track. The stately "The Hall Of Mirrors In The Palace Of Versailles", where Riley's modal wailing colours the Euro classicism of Cale's piano melody, offers some respite. But the gleeful and malicious intent finds full force in the mighty "Ides Of March": viola, percussion, guitar and synth stoking the circular keyboard patterns, brilliantly sustained through its 11 tumultuous minutes. The mainstream may have been left untroubled and Cale himself later dismissed the album as "a jam with Terry", but the music's kinetic fury and unsettling charge still soars.

EXTRAS: None.

GAVIN MARTIN



THE CLEAN Anthology

MERGE

Comprehensive overview of cult Kiwi garage-rockers gets vinyl reissue

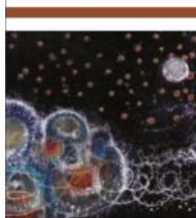
8/10

Formed in the late '70s and one of the first

bands to sign to the legendary Flying Nun label, the New Zealand garage-rockers have been a beguilingly dishevelled on-off affair ever since. Hindsight confirms their mix of skew-whiff guitars and off-kilter vocals to be one of indie's formative influences: the likes of "Big Soft Punch" and "Big Cat", built on simple chords, razorwire riffs and great washes of organ, transmit a wayward pop thrill which echoes through the work of Yo La Tengo, early REM and, perhaps most obviously, Pavement. *Anthology* is not a new compilation, but is instead 2003's 2CD collection reissued on quadruple vinyl. It collates the group's early singles and EPs – including their 1981 debut, the great "Tally Ho!", which sounds like Chris Montez's "Let's Dance" hotwired by punk – highlights of their first three albums, *Vehicle* (1990), *Modern Rock* (1994) and *Unknown Country* (1996), as well as four rare tracks culled from flexi-discs. The failure to bring things up to date by omitting their two most recent albums – *Getaway* (2001) and *Mister Pop* (2009) – mean that *Anthology* is by no means definitive, but it remains a comprehensive overview of a terrific and influential band.

EXTRAS: None.

GRAEME THOMSON



SAMANTHA CRAIN

Songs In The Night/You (Understood)
(reissues, 2009/2010)

FULL TIME HOBBY

8/10

Rising Okie star's prior form

Reissued to coincide with her forthcoming slots on the UK festival circuit, Crain's first two albums offer something of a contrast to the tremulous beauty of this year's *Kid Face*. *Songs In The Night*, in which she's backed by three-piece band The Midnight Shivers, is the

7/10

more cohesive of the pair. Bristly roots-folk is the key motif, marked by the gorgeous dip and roll of her voice on a bushel of literate tunes that range from the balletic ("The Dam Song") to the bluesy ("Devils In Boston") to the plain great ("Get The Fever Out"). *You (Understood)* is less successful, mainly because it sounds more confused. With her band now gone, Crain seems to try on a myriad of styles for size. The result being that her voice sometimes gets overpowered by distorted guitars and the occasional foray into choppy garage-rock. That said, the campfire country of "Sante Fe", on which she's joined by the Frontier Ruckus duo of Matthew Milia and David Jones, is as great a song as she's ever likely to write.

EXTRAS: Both LPs include a pair of bonus tracks, of which "I've Been In The Storm So Long" and "Labour Day" are keepers.

6/10
ROB HUGHES



BOBBY DARIN The Milk Shows

EDSEL

8/10

Full-cream supperclub entertainment from '60s legend

Having made the

transition from energetic rocker to superior pop balladeer, by 1963 Darin had become a sophisticated, finger-clicking night-club singer in the Sinatra mould – even enjoying a respectable film career. Before the British Beat Invasion upset the applecart, Darin was thriving, enjoying a new deal with Capitol (replacing Sinatra, who was now recording for his own Reprise label). Darin was also hosting a five-minute, daily radio show sponsored by the American Dairy Association. The "Milk Shows" are now released here en masse for the first time in a two-disc case-bound book edition. The 96 tracks uniquely feature Darin with a tight four-piece jazz outfit and capture an inventive interpreter at his peak; he can even turn "La Vie En Rose" into a blues. He tackles mostly standards, occasionally themed to highlight America's finest composers, including Johnny Mercer and Irving Berlin. With each song clocking in at a minute-thirty or less, the effect is almost relentless at times. This is Darin proving he was an exceptional jazz singer before switching identities yet again to embrace a very different generation of folk-based songwriters.

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON



HOW TO BUY... TERRY RILEY

The high priest of loopy minimalism



TERRY RILEY

You're Nogood CORTICAL

FOUNDATION, 1967/2000

Commissioned to write a theme for a Philadelphia disco in 1967, Riley grabbed an obscure Latin soul single by Harvey Averde, chopped it into loops, added Moog drone, and remade it as a 20-minute phantasmagoria. A radical forerunner of remix culture.

8/10



TERRY RILEY

A Rainbow In Curved Air

CBS, 1969

Riley's reputation as psychedelic rock's minimalist composer hinges on 1968's group experiment, *In C*, and this solo masterpiece. "A Rainbow..." layers looping organs in an ecstatic salute to the sun. A core text for Krautrockers, ambient and New Age practitioners, Mike Oldfield and even Pete Townshend: check the Riley homage that opens, yes, "Baba O'Riley".

10/10



TERRY RILEY

Persian Surgery Dervishes

SHANDAR, 1972

Two solo concerts featuring Riley on modified electric organ, sustaining a devotional frequency somewhere between Indian ragas and JS Bach. *Descending Moonshine Dervishes* (1975) is very nearly as good.

9/10

JOHN MULVEY



FIREBEATS, INC.

Firebeats, Inc.
(reissue, 1966)

RPM INTERNATIONAL

8/10

Reissue of lost Norwegian '60s freakbeat classic

In 1966, The Firebeats

changed their name to Firebeats, Inc. in a bid to stand-out from Norway's numerous Beatles imitators. It didn't work. Their debut album, released in December 1966, was completely ignored by the national press and the band split up soon afterwards. This is the first reissue of that self-titled album and it is a splendid time capsule of beat pop, ballads and Dylanish oddities, supplemented by album outtakes and other singles. Unusually for any band of the era, let alone one from the musical backwater that was mid-1960s Norway, Firebeats, Inc. wrote all the songs on the album themselves, and in doing so displayed impressive versatility from the frantic Yardbirds rave-up "Funny Things" to "Crying", a lovely pop ballad with hints of folk-rock, the wild, bluesy "Don't Believe Them", freakbeat proto-psych "Trying To Make You See" and the excellent Kinks rip-off, "I Can't Find Nobody". Nine bonus tracks include the Norwegian-language single "Hemmilig Agent/Vi Skal Ikke Klage" featuring a sprightly version of PF Sloan's theme to *Danger Man*, the monstrous bad-taste novelty swingalong "Jack The Ripper" and amusing, well-intentioned takes on "Oh Carol" and "Be My Baby".

EXTRAS: Non-album singles and outtakes.

6/10
PETER WATTS



HALF JAPANESE

Volume 1: 1981-1985

FIRE

The Fair brothers, slowly inching closer to pop

As a statement of intent, the first Half Japanese album proper, a triple-album entitled 1/2 *Gentlemen/Not*

8/10

Beasts, was hard to top, particularly given the unbridled wildness of the music contained inside: ungainly free-rock thud that hymned the anxieties of teenage love, lust and alienation. For the few actually listening, it must have been both confusing and yet oddly definitive, as though the Fair brothers, who basically were Half Japanese (with a retinue of friends filling out the membership), had blown their load at the first pass. Listening to the three albums compiled on *Volume 1: 1981-1985*, though, that debut album starts to sound more like mere prelude. 1981's *Loud* picks up where 1/2 *Gentlemen/Not Beasts* left off: chiming, clattering guitars and drums that are closer to No Wave than Jad and David Fair would likely have thought at the time, each song a minimalist anti-jewel. 1984's *Our Solar System* takes Half Japanese's first steps toward consensus thought, with songs like "Girl Athletes" tumbling along somewhere between non-pro visionary and hyperactive indie. But 1985's *Sing No Evil* is the monster in their catalogue: from its opening volley, the ass-kickingly raw riff machine, "Firecracker Firecracker", Half Japanese are completely storming.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



MARIZA Best Of Mariza

WARNER MUSIC
Fado dramatics from striking Portuguese superstar

Since her charismatic debut in 2001, Mariza has established herself

as one of the most dramatically voiced divas in world music, single-handedly reinventing the mournful, acoustic blues-like music of Portugal known as fado. This well-chosen selection from her five studio albums to date tracks an increasingly expansive journey. Her early recordings were very much in thrall to the classical style of Amália Rodrigues, the greatest fado singer of them all, who died in 1999 and who holds the same place in Portuguese iconography as Piaf in France or Judy Garland in America. But by 2005's *Transparente* she was adding Brazilian flavours to the mix and flamenco influences on 2008's *Terra*. Her voice is incapable of mundanity and there's an operatic theatricality to every note she sings. Yet there's no trace of showbiz; she has eschewed the path of commercial pop duets and remains the authentic voice of the back streets of Lisbon where she was raised. If you've not yet fallen for her Portuguese soul music, this makes for a fine introduction.

EXTRAS: Two newly recorded tracks and four rarities/outtakes, including her first English-language recording, an exquisite version of Nat King Cole's "Smile" that suggests an entire new career as a cabaret queen awaits should she want it.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

8/10



GRAM PARSONS The Early Years Vol 1 & 2

FLOATING WORLD

Country legend's unsteady beginnings

By 1963 the 16-year-old Gram Parsons had teamed

up with Greenville's The Shilohs to play hootenannies and high schools in South Carolina. The opening batch of recordings here, first issued on Sierra in 1979, sound like most other young groups caught up in the nascent folk boom: stiff-backed harmonies, breezy picking and a faithful, if bloodless, appropriation of The Kingston Trio. The exception is the loping "Zah's Blues", an early indicator of Parsons' feel for an elegant ballad. After ditching The Shilohs in 1965 he went solo, though the tunes he cut in New York, aside from the sprightly "That Kind Of Livin'", are still overly formal and traditionalist. The first real sign of Gram the Country Boy arrives with "Just Can't Take It Any More". Made with his post-Harvard outfit The Like, who became backing band for child-actor-turned-singer Brandon deWilde, it's a soulful twangfest that finally sees him escape from his mannered Southern gentility. The closing three tunes of this set, in which Parsons trades vocals with deWilde, include a classic Bakersfield take on Buck Owens' "Together Again" and a waltzy version of his soon-to-be signature song, "Hickory Wind". A flawed collection maybe, but fascinating nonetheless.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES

6/10



JOHN MARTYN Well Kept Secret (reissue, 1982)

ESOTERIC
The good, the bad and the ugly on his first Top 20 album

The early 1980s are often referred to in uncomplimentary terms as Martyn's 'Phil Collins years' after the former Genesis man's chart-friendly makeover when he produced 1981's *Glorious Fool*. Collins was too busy with his own solo career to be involved in the 1982 follow-up, but his influence was still strong, most malignantly on the disco-pop of "You Might Need A Man". On the nastily misogynist "Hiss On The Tape" and "Back With A Vengeance", meanwhile, Martyn sounds alarmingly like Robert Palmer. It didn't help that during the making of the album he punctured a lung after accidentally impaling himself on a fence and was so loaded on prescription painkillers that he later claimed he remembered nothing of the sessions. But thankfully the smooth arrangements, polished production and slick sessioners who make you long for Danny Thompson's upright bass, couldn't totally eradicate Martyn's trademark sensuality. A trio of the airier tracks, "Could've Been Me" (with a lyrical Ronnie Scott sax solo), the sultry "Hung Up" and a heartfelt cover of Joe Scott's jazz ballad "Never Let Me Go" can rank with his finest.

EXTRAS: Alternative takes of "Gun Money" and "Hiss On The Tape", released at the time on a single but never previously available on an album.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

6/10



HOW TO BUY... LOU REED LIVE

His onstage best
LOU REED
Rock'n'Roll Animal RCA, 1974
Hardcore fans were appalled by its showboating versions of VU classics. But for a generation less bothered with their reputation, this, recorded in December 1973 at New York's Academy Of Music, was loud, thrilling and ostentatiously decadent. One of Lou's biggest hits, so of course he later disowned it.

8/10

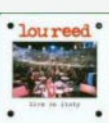


LOU REED Take No Prisoners

ARISTA, 1978
An incendiary set, the confrontational mood taken to extremes on a 12-minute

"I'm Waiting For The Man", and the extended monologues that consume "Sweet Jane" and "Walk On The Wild Side", whose 16 minutes of relentless bile is extraordinary even by Lou's bitter standards.

9/10



LOU REED Live In Italy

RCA, 1984
Recorded over two nights in September 1983 on the *Legendary Hearts* tour, this found Lou fronting

one of his best ever bands, with guitarist Robert Quine, Fernando Saunders on bass and drummer Fred Maher whipping up a cacophonous firestorm on a medley of "Some Kinda Love"/"Sister Ray".

6/10

ALLAN JONES



LOU REED Winter At The Roxy: The 1976 LA Broadcast

GOLD FISH

Jazz-rock Lou? The VU spar with *Bitches Brew* in Reed's brave new world

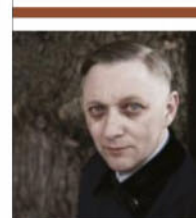
As a testament to Reed's

restless, adventurous nature, *Winter At The Roxy* delivers and then some. Sailing just about as far – musically anyway – as he ever would from his street-punk VU roots, Reed's startling sonic approach mixes hard R'n'B, stretched-out jamming, and radicalised, improvised jazz, courtesy of a band led by Ornette Coleman's late great trumpeter Don Cherry. The repertoire leans toward the Velvets: a thumping, horn-heavy "Sweet Jane", sounding like a Stax-minted Top 40 hit; a swinging "Lisa Says"; and "I'm Waiting For The Man", a wild, 11-minute rollercoaster, Reed sparring with Cherry's trumpet and Marty Fogel's sax, the musicians searching for and finding within it previously unimagined grooves. Things really get unhinged on "Kicks", the *Coney Island Baby* gem. Reed's vocals, depicting depravity on the streets of NYC, verge on the possessed here, a psychotic free-association, before the song sprawls in a mélange of discordant percussion, piano runs, and skipping, squawking horns. It's a shame the disc presents only an edit of the concert – a sublime, context-setting opening jam is among the absentees. Still, it's a fascinating listen, documenting a daring, little-remembered era in Reed's onstage evolution.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN

8/10



MARK REEDER Collaborator

FACTORY BENELUX

Euro-disco from Factory's Berlin correspondent

An art college friend of Mick Hucknall's, Reeder

played in the Frantic Elevators. He was Factory Records' man in Berlin between 1979-'82. He also performed in Die Unbekannten (The Unknown) who became Shark Vegas (their "Radio War" and "You Hurt Me" are included), managed Malaria! and worked for *The Tube* when it broadcast from East Berlin. A noted remixer, the highlights of this compilation are his collaborations with Bernard Sumner, who gifted Reeder the Transcendent 2000 synth that he used in Joy Division. Reeder, for his part, sent Sumner the early 1980s dance music he was experiencing in Berlin, inspiring New Order's transition into a dance act. The two men began formally collaborating after Peter Hook left New Order, and their creative relationship is represented by the breezy demo of "Crystal", Bad Lieutenant's "Twist Of Fate", and the speedy pulse of Blank & Jones' "Miracle Cure". Sumner also sings on a new remix of Westbam's playful "She Wants". Reeder's style incorporates pulsing bass and sampled vocals, and his remixes maintain the architecture of the original song. He even makes sense of Sam Taylor-Wood and the Pet Shop Boys' disco retreat of *The Passions*' "I'm In Love With A German Film Star".

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

7/10



PINK FLOYD

The Division Bell

20th Anniversary Edition

WARNER MUSIC

After the legal case, the musical one. Strong second from the Waters-less Floyd, expanded into a six-disc box. *By Nigel Williamson*



8/10

ROGER WATERS BELIEVED that without him, there could be no Pink Floyd. Floyd without Waters? It was, he said, like The Beatles without John Lennon – he regarded the lineup led by David Gilmour, which also included founder members Nick Mason

and Rick Wright, as having no right to the brand name – a point he pursued in court, calling them “a spent force”. Waters had, after all, been the driving force behind *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, *Wish You Were Here*, *The Wall* and *The Final Cut*. When the first Gilmour-led Floyd album, 1987’s *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, proved both flabby and insubstantial, it appeared that he might have been right.

With 1994’s *The Division Bell*, however – repackaged here as either a vinyl remaster or a boxset showcasing four different audio formats – Gilmour’s Floyd didn’t only recapture something of the group’s classic sound. He also found what Waters had historically supplied to the group: something to say. It’s probably no wonder that as late as the group’s 2005 Live8 reunion, Waters was still fuming about the fact that there remained a disturbingly large number of people unable to discern the difference between *Dark Side* and *The Division Bell*, made under the same band name, but products of two different sides of Floyd’s yin and yang.

All great Floyd albums need a concept and with his second wife (novelist Polly Samson) as his lyrical foil, for *The Division Bell* Gilmour came up with the theme of communication and the space between us. It was most overtly expressed in the song titles: “Lost For Words”, “Keep Talking” and “Poles

Apart”. The concept might have been nebulous, but it was sufficient to give the album the consistency and coherence that *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* had lacked.

What’s more, Gilmour went to great lengths to ensure that *The Division Bell* was genuinely a group album. Mason, who on its predecessor had shared drum duties with machines and Carmine Appice, was back firmly in the driving seat. Perhaps even more significantly, Rick Wright – sacked by Waters during *The Wall* and reduced to a salaried session man on subsequent Floyd projects – was fully reinstated. His photo hadn’t even been included on *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* but on *The Division Bell*, he’s credited as co-writer on five tracks, and on the standout “Wearing The Inside Out” takes his first lead vocal since *The Dark Side Of The Moon*.

The empathy between his keyboards and Gilmour’s guitar – heard to best effect on the instrumentals “Cluster One” and “Marooned” – is at the album’s musical heart. It all feels very reassuring. Bob Ezrin, who had produced *The Wall*, was at the helm and Dick Parry, whose sax playing had graced *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and *Wish You Were Here*, returned for the first time in almost 20 years for “Wearing The Inside Out”. All of these elements meant *The Division Bell* sounded more like a classic Floyd record than 1983’s *The Final Cut*, Waters’ swansong with the band.

Certainly, Gilmour’s U2 imitation on

“Take It Back” was a mistake and the sampling of Stephen Hawking’s voice on “Keep Talking” doesn’t convince. But they’re rare blemishes: the likes of “What Do You Want From Me” with its “Comfortably Numb”-style guitar solo, the ethereal “Poles Apart” with its inventive Michael Kamen orchestration and the magisterially doomy ballad “High Hopes” proved not only that there could be life after Waters but also ensured that Pink Floyd’s – apparently final – studio album saw them go out on a high.

Lyrical, it’s tempting to read the album’s themes of ruptured communication as a broadside against Waters, and “Lost For Words”, as Gilmour’s “How Do You Sleep”, when he sings: “So I open my door to my enemies And I ask could we wipe the slate clean/But they tell me to please go fuck myself/You know you just can’t win”. The references to “the day the wall came down” on “A Great Day For Freedom” may have been about the reunification of Germany but might also be interpreted as another sideswipe at Waters. And who can Gilmour be addressing but Waters in “Poles Apart” in acid lines such as “Hey you, did you ever realise what you’d become?”. Gilmour has diplomatically denied that any of *The Division Bell* is aimed at his former colleague. Waters can be forgiven

if he remains unconvinced by such protestations.

On its release *The Division Bell* went to No 1 on both sides of the Atlantic, Floyd’s first chart-topper in America in 15 years. Yet it was poorly received by critics and dismissed as an anachronism. Pink Floyd seemed at best an irrelevance and at worst a bunch of middle-aged millionaires engaged in a bitching match over the division of the spoils. Gallagher versus Albarn offered a far more titillating street fight than the High Court battles of Gilmour versus Waters. Twenty years on, the passage of time now allows for a rather different judgement.

EXTRAS: The six-disc boxset contains no actual new music, focusing instead on an audiophile smörgåsbord: an audio CD of the 2011 remaster; a remastered double-vinyl copy of the original album; and a Blu-ray disc with previously unreleased 5.1 mix, HD audio mix and video for “Marooned” directed by Aubrey Powell. There is also a one-sided blue vinyl 12” containing “High Hopes”/“Keep Talking”/“One Of These Days (Live)”, a red vinyl 7” single (“Take It Back”/“Astronomy Domine (Live)”) and a clear vinyl 7” single (“High Hopes”/“Keep Talking”), plus a 24-page booklet and five art

prints designed by Hipgnosis/StormStudios. There is also a new vinyl remaster, but no new CD: the 2011 remastered single CD remains in catalogue.

CONTENTS:

- DISC 1** Original album
(newly remastered for vinyl in 2014)
- DISC 2** Blu-ray
(all previously unreleased)
2014 “Marooned” video – directed by Aubrey Powell.
5.1 audio mix of *The Division Bell* by Andy Jackson.
HD audio stereo mix
- DISC 3** Red vinyl 7” single
Take It Back (edit)/
Astronomy Domine (live)
- DISC 4** Clear vinyl 7” single
High Hopes (edit)/
Keep Talking (edit)
- DISC 5** Blue vinyl 12” single
High Hopes/Keep Talking/
One Of These Days (live)
- DISC 6** CD 2011 Discovery
version in a dedicated wallet



MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

Monty Python's Total Rubbish: The Complete Collection

VIRGIN

Repackaged and remastered set. Lovely plumage, says John Robinson.



8/10

other names. Their work, like The Who's, has spawned a West End musical. Their catalogue has been reissued and compiled as often as that of Jimi Hendrix. Most recently, like Led Zeppelin, they've announced plans to regroup, and, dead member notwithstanding, play London's O2 Arena.

They didn't stress the association, but Python learned a lot from rock's example. They toured like a band, airing half new stuff, half "old favourites". They recorded live albums (like 1974's *Live At Drury Lane*). Most impressively, they understood what many musicians of the era did not: that the joy of the enterprise would decrease with obligation. They split early, the better to regroup afresh. "That way," John Cleese explained in a 1974 interview included here, "Python could go on almost indefinitely."

So now for something essentially the same. Namely: a boxset of Monty Python's remastered audio work, the nine albums they released over ten years, from their eponymous 1970 debut live album (the eerily unlive-sounding *Monty Python's Flying Circus*), all the way to 1980's *Contractual Obligation Album*. Albums for Python were arguably more revenue streams than a gateway to a new medium, but they certainly weren't (for all their ironic titling) rip-offs. In a pre-VHS world, the idea of a record of sketches from the TV show must have been an attractive proposition, while most featured new or reworked material from the TV broadcasts.

Though funny, this was still material filled with the strong currents of the time. The same age as Jagger, McCartney and Townshend, Monty Python was no more inclined than the Stones, Who (or indeed Beatles), to conform to a Britain stifled by authority, bureaucracy and prudery. Rather than become part of the establishment – which, with their university educations, might have welcomed them – they instead undermined its failings, using its own high culture and privileged information against it.

Acutely aware of the format in which it appeared,

GIVEN THEIR STRONG group identity, and their friendship with George Harrison, it's not hard to see how Monty Python have come to be known as "the Beatles of comedy". Really, though, if we seek comparables for Python, we need

Python's satire of TV, from current affairs to cultural discussion and game shows ("In the event of a tie, I'll start the clock") gave you to understand that no broadcast was worthy of your trust. In a pre-internet world, they democratised their knowledge: from philosophical terms to British history and the machinery of government, to fish sauces and esoteric cheese. Ten million viewers stayed up 'til 11pm on Sunday night to watch it.

Python on record is probably more about the hits ("Dead Parrot" and other undergraduate recitables have been compiled on several albums; there is one – *Sings...* – dedicated to their many songs), but even in a format that was not entirely theirs, there's no repressing Python's ingenuity. As on TV, here they were very aware of their medium. The 1975 *Holy Grail* record, for example, begins with an explanation of the LP's expensive "Executive Edition", an ironic moment during this deluxe boxset. One wonders, in fact, if they've missed a trick by not calling this "The Entirely Unnecessary Remasters". 1973's *Matching Tie And Handkerchief*, echoing the excesses of rock LPs of the period, featured elaborate fold-out art by Terry Gilliam and a "concentric groove" vinyl master by George "Porky" Peckham.

Today, some inevitably play better than others. In spite of their extra material, the film soundtracks are just that – draughty sounding excerpts of good bits, superfluous in the present age of home media. The *Contractual Obligation Album*, featuring a disproportionately large number of songs ("Never Be Rude To An Arab" and so on), is tough to get through, though it is nearly redeemed by "Rock Notes", a magnificent parody of 1960s music journalism. Considered alone, it's probably an album like the consistently amusing *Previous Record* (1972) that's the best, not least for showing its self-knowledge. When Flying Fox of the Light Entertainment Police arrives to arrest the team for offences under the Strange Sketch Act, it's clear Monty Python has reached a post-modern tipping point, and needs to move to bigger challenges.

"Silly" is a word that Pythons use often to describe their work, and their best comedy is certainly, heartwarming, that. Really, though, it seems a little modest. With its combination of eloquent sedition, manic energy and occasional profanity, their work doesn't seem much short of revolutionary.



Q&A

Eric Idle



Did making records allow Monty Python to try things out you didn't do in your TV shows?

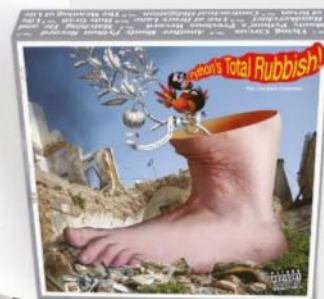
No. We always used songs in our shows. Absurd moments like The Archaeologists breaking into song, or "Bing Tiddle Tiddle Bong", still a superb nailing of Eurovision. Then there's the lovely moment when Michael's bad barber reveals he never really wanted to cut hair, he always wanted to be... a lumberjack! And suddenly we're off into the world of bad Canadian musicals. This unexpected change of pace and media is classic Python.

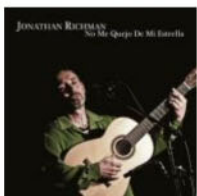
Your work often satirised the medium it was presented in. A title like *Contractual Obligation* suggests you had a rough ride on the business side. Did you? We found out we "owed" Clive Davis and Arista an album. Python never took very kindly to being told what they must do. So we threw a lot more songs in as an ironic gesture. This led to our best-selling album, *Monty Python Sings*, which I put together. You can listen to a funny song many more times than a sketch.

Some of your innovations (the "three-sided record", for example) seem to derive more from a recent past of psychedelic pranks. What were your inspirations for that?

We loved to think of ways to challenge our audience. To put the second side of a record on again and to hear completely different material, this is classic Python playing with the

audience. It came from Terry Jones, who had an old 78 record which was a commentary on a horse race: the outcome was different depending on where the needle dropped.
INTERVIEW:
JOHN ROBINSON





JONATHAN RICHMAN

No Me Quejo De Mi Estrella

MUNSTER

The Modern Lover's 2000s so far

8/10

"Vermeer was eerie, Vermeer was strange,"

Jonathan Richman sings with a typically impish smirk on "No One Was Quite Like Vermeer". "He had a more modern colour range." An artist with plenty of unusual shades to his palette, the Bostonian is routinely blamed for both punk rock and indie pop, but while his work can be rudimentary and self-consciously naïve, Richman is weirder and wilder than that would suggest. This splendid resume of his 21st Century output captures some of his contrary spirit. Largely just Richman, his acoustic guitar and drummer Tommy Larkins, it throws an autumnal light on the childlike romanticism of his '70s pomp, that quest for unsullied emotion seemingly even more intense in his sixties. "Not To Be Loved But To Love" and the unusually lush "Her Mystery Not Of Highheels And Eyeshadow" pick out romantic nuances with a deft and passionate flourish. Richman, Vermeer: old masters both.

EXTRAS: "You Can Have A Cellphone That's

8/10 OK But Not Me" makes its CD debut – something of a mission statement for a musician who now only conducts handwritten interviews – plus both sides of 2013's Spanish-language single for Munster: "La Guitarra Flamenca Negra" and "La Fiesta Es Para Todos".

JIM WIRTH



RUDIMENTARY PENI

Death Church

(reissue, 1983)

SOUTHERN/OUTER HIMALAYAN

Macabre debut from English anarcho-punks Rudimentary Peni would make stranger and more

8/10

developed records than *Death Church* – 1995's *Pope Adrian 37th Psychiatric*, reputedly written while frontman Nick Blinko was in a mental hospital, lyrically addresses his fantasy he would be the next Pope – but there are few more effective renderings of the trio's morbid, nightmarish music than *Death Church*. Musically speaking, the 21 tracks here conform to a fairly standard punk-rock template: short sharp shocks bristling with snotty rage. But little Rudimentary Peni did sound conventional. Even when considering familiar topics such as punk sell-outs ("Rotten To The Core") or church hypocrisy ("Army Of Jesus"), Blinko's eldritch vocals and dirge-like guitar means an authentic weirdness slithers in. When RP go off the deep end, they are *sui generis*. It's hard to imagine any other band approaching the 70-second surrealist splatter of "When You Are A Martian Church" or the bracingly hideous "Flesh Crucifix". Animal rights and veganism might have been a pet topic among English anarcho-punks of the time, but no-one tackled it with this visionary disgust, Blinko intoning "carnivores are like tombstones" over gut-wrenching animalistic cries.

EXTRAS: The 180g vinyl reissue restores Nick 5/10 Blinko's original pen-and-ink artwork on a fold-out insert.

LOUIS PATTISON



KEN STRINGFELLOW

I Never Said I'd Make It Easy

LOJINX

Fragrant rarities compilation from Posies man

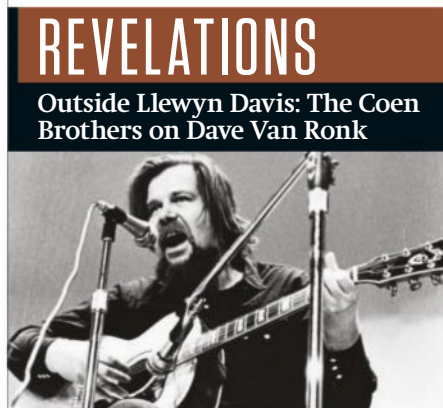
7/10

A paucity of solo recordings

(just four albums in 17 years) is less a reflection of Stringfellow's work ethic than it is his devotion to other projects. Aside from his main gig with Seattle combo The Posies, the multi-instrumentalist songwriter spent a decade on tour as fifth member of REM, also popping up on *Reveal* and *Around The Sun*. Factor in his involvement with The Minus 5, The Disciplines, the reformed Big Star and various others and you wonder how he ever finds any 'me' time at all. Which probably explains why *I Never Said I'd Make It Easy* is something of a stopgap. The majority of these tunes are gathered from noughties efforts *Touched* and *Soft Commands*, which underlined his reputation as a fine purveyor of peachy melodies and deft pop. As with Matthew Sweet or The Go-Betweens, there's a underlying sense of melancholy to many of these bright hooks, best illustrated by "Reveal Love" and "Don't Break The Silence". Some of the album gets a little too mellifluous for its own good, though Stringfellow excels when it comes to interpreting others. Aside from covers of The Replacements and The Association, his version of Robyn Hitchcock's "Airscape" is a real highlight.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES



REVELATIONS

Outside Llewyn Davis: The Coen Brothers on Dave Van Ronk

➤ **Ethan Coen:** He was a kid from the boroughs who came into the city and went to hoots in Washington Square Park. The main character isn't Dave Van Ronk – nobody who knew Van Ronk would mistake the character for Dave. But we pilfered things, some of them about Dave specifically, like the Merchant Marine background.

Joel Coen: We also took part of his repertoire: things that were Van Ronk's songs or arrangements. We knew his music. This music is all sort of a descendent of the music that was played in *O Brother Where Art Thou*, which is a precursor of rock'n'roll in this period.

Ethan: It's interesting about people who defined themselves by the kind of music they played. Van Ronk started as a Dixieland jazz guy and switched over to being a folk musician because, small as the money was in that, it was better than in Dixieland jazz. It's kind of interesting – people deriving their identities from their music.

MICHAEL BONNER



THE STUDIO 68!

Portobellohella

PAISLEY ARCHIVE

Blazing 1992 'retro futurist' mod manifesto finally sees light of day

Financial irregularities saw The Studio 68! one and only album impounded by

7/10

Sussex Police shortly after it was recorded in summer 1992. Writer/frontman Paul Moody then apparently ended up in the intensive care ward, a victim of the band's galloping hedonism. Any hope of The Studio 68! riding out the Britpop wave they pre-empted was dashed. Finally liberated from police custody, the good news is that *Portobellohella* actually lives up to its lost cult classic status. "Windfall" sets the scene with a fanfare of fevered psychedelia – the organ-strafed, windmilling, riff-freighted, harmony-packed insurgency that follows wears its cataclysmic art pop influences, and even Badfinger on the aching wanderlust of "Afternoon Sun", with pride and fervour. The infectious, going-for-glory, irony-free spirit – a choice reaction to the pervading greyness and grunge domination of the times – makes for far more than mere revivalism, with a mighty, Hammond-heavy instrumental cover of Python Lee Jackson's "In A Broken Dream" played with the intensity of true believers.

EXTRAS: Pre-album single "Double Decker 7/10 Bus" and the "Smash" EP including the splenic "Pop Star's Country Mansion". Though recorded three years beforehand, the latter now sounds like an impassioned riposte to Blur's "Country House".

GAVIN MARTIN



DAVE VAN ROK

Live In Monterey

OMNIVORE

Late, lost live performance by eclectic Greenwich Village legend

7/10

Interest in 'The Mayor Of MacDougal Street' spiked with the recent release of the Coen Brothers' movie, *Inside Llewyn Davis*, which remoulded elements of Dave Van Ronk's posthumous memoir. The singer tends to be viewed on the basis of the people he influenced (from Dylan downwards) but it's perhaps more useful to see him as a bridge to older musics, whose relevance he understood before it became fashionable. In a sense, he was caught between categories, being a student of jazz and blues with a penchant for ragtime guitar. This April 1998 performance, recorded in an old church just four years before his death, shows some discolouration of a voice described by Dylan as being like "rusted shrapnel", but there's no mistaking the delicacy of the guitar-picking, or Van Ronk's easy command of his audience. The set is a useful summary of his influences, with several songs he learned from the Reverend Gary Davis (not least a comedic take on "Cocaine Blues"). There's a hat tip to Mississippi John Hurt via "Spike Driver Blues" and Tom Paxton's "Did You Hear John Hurt?". He closes with "Four Strong Winds", in which the frailty of the singing lends a note of wistful finality.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

The Specialist

Brazil



Classy big band
Bixiga 70: muscular
yet precise

➤ MUSICALLY, BRAZIL IS less another country than a separate cosmos, with a bewildering array of styles where sophisticated urban bossa jostles with primal bush batucada, silky samba, cheesy MOR, weirdo indie rock and strident rap.

The 2CD compilation **Various Artists Rolé: New Sounds Of Brazil** MAIS UM DISCOS 8/10, offers a power shower from today's underground, its first disc packed with angular rhythms, itchy guitars and angst vocalists – try Arnaldo Antunes or Lucas Santtana – alongside acoustic bossa given a disrespectful treatment by Madame Rose Sélavy. The second disc jumps around dancefloor sounds, from the sleek hip-hop of Lurdez Da Luz to the demented electronica of Som Peba and Psilosamples and traditional funky stuff from Russo Passapusso. At 43 tracks, it's an anachic but educative ride through young Brazil.

MAIS UM DISCOS also has **Ocupai** 8/10, the second from classy big band **Bixiga 70**, who are rooted in Afrobeat (their drummer studied with Fela Kuti drummer Tony Allen) but who here extend their brass-heavy instrumental sound into Ethio-jazz ("Isa") and sprightly Congolese soukous ("Kalimba"). Muscular yet precise, these guys are worth looking out for live.

A distant Northern relative of Bixiga 70 is **Mestre Cupijo**, the bandleader who forged Brazil's far flung northern state Para back in the 1970s. Blaring brass, thumping Afro-percussion and an excitable attitude make **Siria** 7/10 ANALOG AFRICA a carnival blast. Opener and big hit "Mingau De Açai" captures his appeal,

but with their offbeat accents, "Mambo Do Martelo" and "Ventinho Do Norte" are kindred spirits to Jamaican ska. Great pop archaeology.

If there is a centre to Brazilian music (debatable) it's probably Jorge Ben's 1963 "Mas Que Nada" (a Nike soundtrack, you'll know it when you hear it), a samba classic recycled once more on **Various Artists Friends From Rio Project 2014** FAR OUT, 7/10. Now in its 20th year, Far Out was set up as a conduit from Brazil to London dancefloors and this latest commission of Rio's cool school has players like Azymuth's Alex Malheiros and Banda Utopia hitting slick jazz-bossa grooves, with dips into batucada frenzy. The label has gone further with **Various Artists The Far Out Monster Disco Orchestra** FAR OUT 7/10, an album steeped in slushy 1980s disco (Brazilians do listen to music from elsewhere) but whose best comes on a second disc of remixes from DJ dudes like John Morales; mirror ball madness. At the opposite pole is **Thievery Corporation's Saudade** ESL 6/10, where the US trip-hop duo deliver hushed bossas with five sighing female vocalists; a long, languorous chill. NEIL SPENCER



JOHN TAVENER
The Protecting Veil
BELLA UNION

An everlasting, holy classical communion

The late John Tavener, who passed away in 2013 after a long battle with

8/10

Marfan Syndrome, traced many different paths. His early compositions found him in the company of The Beatles, who released his 1969 piece, *The Whale*, on their Apple imprint. This connection with popular culture would hold throughout his career; in the early noughties, for example, he teamed up with Björk, who he described in one interview as "far more intelligent than most classical singers". Tavener's reputation, however, rests on the religiosity of his music, made explicit in his late '70s conversion to the Russian Orthodox Church. *The Protecting Veil*, which is divided into eight sections and refers to the Christian Orthodox feast, was premiered at the Proms in 1989, and went on to become one of Tavener's most well-known works, spending almost a year at the top of the classical charts. It's an intriguing piece, with great, mournful sighs from the cello arcing over glittering scrums of tonality, or rhapsodic spirals, etched out by swooning strings; at times, it gets a little too soporific, and you start to hear why Tavener's detractors have referred to his compositions as little more than 'holy muzak'. But it is also quite lovely, and at times, gently ecstatic.

EXTRAS: None.

JONDALE



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The United States Of America
(reissue, 1968)

ESOTERIC

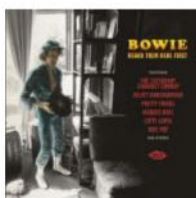
8/10

Revelatory, intelligent, electronic rock

Released in 1968, *The United States Of America* was a genuinely pioneering album that's rarely been bettered in terms of harmonising electronics and rock. Unlike the Silver Apples' debut which it predates by several months, it failed to make a lasting impact; the more confrontational Silver Apples would influence the likes of Suicide, '70s Krautrock, even Detroit techno. By comparison, The USA's sole album is more conventional yet it was the brainchild of experimental composer/arranger Joseph Byrd, aided by musicians steeped in avant-garde music and ethnomusicology. Conceptually, their approach was unexpectedly cosmopolitan; "Stranded In Time" is Beatle-like, "Hard Coming Love" is archetypal pulsating psych-rock, "The Garden Of Earthly Delights", thanks to inciting singer Dorothy Moskowitz, is a dead ringer for Grace Slick/Jefferson Airplane and "I Won't Leave My Wooden Wife For You, Sugar" is more music hall than musique concrète. Overall, the album is too fragmented but the electronic barrage of its opening tracks, a combination of clinical drums and pumping bass daubed with synth/oscillator noises is still eye-opening.

EXTRAS: Like Sundazed's 2004 version, this 7/10 adds 10 worthwhile bonus tracks including the group's Columbia audition.

MICK HOUGHTON



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Bowie Heard Them Here First

ACE

What's in a Dame?

This lot, for starters

8/10

Bowie was never overly coy when it came to citing his

influences. Look no further than 1973's all-covers *Pin Ups*, which duly paid homage to the key texts of his '60s teenhood. Some of those originals crop up on this riveting compilation. Namely The Kinks, The Mojos, The Easybeats, The Pretty Things and The Merseys, whose pumping, horn-happy "Sorrow" offers a contrast to Bowie's more melancholy version. His earlier career as head of Davie Jones & The King Bees is catered for by Paul Revere & The Raiders' "Louie, Go Home", along with Bobby Bland's "I Pity The Fool". As with Ace's previous *Heard Them Here First* subjects the Ramones and the New York Dolls, the format provides a ready-built arc for Bowie's career, from London mod through to urban spaceman, white soul boy and post-punk connoisseur. Roxy Music's otherworldly "If There Is Something" is a handy bridge to both Ziggy and Eno, while Tom Verlaine's "Kingdom Come" and the Pixies' "Cactus" prove that he was never too far away from the cultural hubbub. And of course no Bowie comp worth its braces should be without The Legendary Stardust Cowboy, whose "I Took A Trip On A Gemini Spaceship" rightfully closes things here.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES



VARIOUS ARTISTS

1970s Algerian Folk & Pop

SUBLIME FREQUENCIES

Gorgeous and quietly radical 45s, collected

7/10

Much of the joy of the Sublime Frequencies

back catalogue rests in its grasp of cultural geographies as provisional: not for them the glib, reductive assignations of 'world music'. For Sublime Frequencies, music can reveal the cultural impacts of colonial projects, but it can just as easily articulate resistance through both critical and playful uptake of colonialism's cultural production. On *1970s Algerian Folk & Pop*, as Omar Zelig explains in his liner notes, the intrigue rests in the way a cultural industry somehow escaped the purview of 'cops, bureaucrats and censors', and listening to the sly moves on songs like Kri Kri's "Wahdi", a song of subtle psychedelic heft, or the stripped-back toughness of Les Djinns' "Nesthel" – "a bleak song about a friend's betrayal" – one wonders whether this kind of radicalism-by-stealth was the Algerian 45rpm industry's great sleight of hand. *1970s Algerian Folk & Pop* is a lovely set of music that suggests an intriguing, often surprising to-and-fro between cultures – Djamel Allam's "Ourestrou", which sounds like it could have fallen from a dreamed volume of Damon & Naomi's *International Sad Hits* compilations, makes the negotiations explicit, with his relocation to France leading to him becoming Brigitte Fontaine & Areski's protégé.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Punk 45: Sick On You! One Way Spit! (Vol 3. Proto-Punk 1970-1977)

SOUL JAZZ

7/10

Twenty-one tracks to upset rock chronology

Traditionally, punk comps come with a whiff of cash-in, a set of cobbled-together tracks from 999, Chelsea and The Damned packaged in a phlegm-coloured sleeve with a safety-pin. Not so Soul Jazz's *Punk 45*, a sort of deep-cuts series that, in its previous two iterations, has explored lesser-heard singles from the US and UK punk undergrounds. This 21-track collection [subtitle: *After The Love & Before The Revolution*] attends to groups from both sides of the Atlantic playing attitudinal, DIY rock music before punk blew up, with the intent of proving punk was more evolution than revolution. There is pub-rock, represented by The Count Bishops' "I Ain't Got You", The 101ers' "Keys To Your Heart" and The Hammersmith Gorillas, who raucously cover "You Really Got Me". There is snotty intensity from Ohio's Electric Eels and California's Crime, who took the stage in police uniforms (their "Hot Wire My Heart", included here, was covered by Sonic Youth). But the most intriguing moments come from the groups whose eccentricities might later have been whitewashed: see the sci-fi glam of Zolar X's "Space Age Love", or the Joe Meek-inspired "(I Wanna Love You Like A) Mad Dog" by Coventry's Stavelay Makepeace, who would later find fame as Lieutenant Pigeon.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTISON



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Zorch! Transfusion Time With Nervous Norvus & Red Blanchard

RIGHTEOUS

7/10

'50s novelties from screwball rocker and DJ

As alter ego Nervous Norvus, truck driver Jimmy Drake hit big in 1956 with "Transfusion", a mad rocker about a motorist whose serial accidents make him a regular at the local hospital: "Slip the blood to me, Bud." It was the most famous of a bunch of novelties he recorded with jive-talkin' DJ Red Blanchard (known to readers of *Life* magazine as "the uncrowned king of juvenile California"), who peppered Drake's schlock'n'roll with sound effects of aliens, wild dogs and ape calls. Some of it's great, chiefly "Dig" and "The Fang". Others, like "The Plaster Song" and "The Lean Green Vegetable Fiend", are just plain bizarre. Blanchard cut his own sides too, spoken-word hipster things with titles like "Zorch!" and "Dig That Crazy Mixed-Up Kid" that now sound hopelessly dated. Meanwhile, the fact that Norvus also had a parallel career as balladeer Singing Jimmy Drake, alongside his decision to turn down *The Ed Sullivan Show* because he didn't want to play in public, only made him one of America's more curious underground legends. The Fall borrowed elements of "Transfusion" for "Rowche Rumble", while Mark E Smith and Ed Blaney covered the song in full effect on their first album together in 2008.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES

COMING NEXT MONTH...



➤ Were he running true to prolific form, this wouldn't be the first album by **Ty Segall** we'd be telling you about this year, but probably the third or fourth.

As it is, his very good

forthcoming new one **Manipulator** brings into focus the quality that we've often found scattered around in the great quantity of his releases. This, rather in contrast to last year's more vaporous *Sleeper*, and perhaps as you'd hope, feels like an insistently tuneful heavy psych record, its thundering melodicism reminiscent of his old San Francisco sparring partners Thee Oh Sees.

There's plenty of other good new stuff, too.

Newly signed to Rough Trade is **Benjamin Booker**, who feels like a strong contender.

From New Orleans, the 22-year-old's debut album finds him carving a niche for himself somewhere between the bluesy power of The Black Keys and the anthemic stadium Americana of the Kings Of Leon. On a rather more melancholic tip, is *Distance*, the new record by **Dan Michaelson And The Coastguards**.

There's a new, mainly acoustic album from **J Mascis**, one from **Sinéad O'Connor**, and also from **Yes**. Arriving too late for inclusion this month, meanwhile, is a collection of his classic songs performed acoustically by **Richard Thompson**. Not misleadingly, it's called **Acoustic Classics**.

JOHN_ROBINSON_101@FREELANCE.IPCMEDIA.COM

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Metatextuality in the making... Matt and Tom Berninger on tour with The National

THE NATIONAL Mistaken For Strangers

AMERICAN MARY PRODUCTIONS

Matt Berninger's awkward little brother creates a strange and moving documentary. *By Laura Snapes*



9/10

THE NEW FILM about The National doesn't quite know what it is. Neither quite a documentary or rock biopic, it's a strangely subjective picture that works itself out as it goes along. Fittingly, it starts on an uncertain note. "Do you have any kind of organisation or plan for this film?" singer Matt Berninger asks his younger brother, Tom. Set up in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, Matt has

erected a deckchair and parasol in less time than it takes Tom to think of the first question in his shamolic interview.

Cut to a montage of clippings – 10-page *New York Times* stories, Billboard chart positions – and newsreel footage that outline just how accomplished The National are these days. Meanwhile, Tom – nine years younger than Matt, a head shorter, a bit heavier – lives with their parents in Cincinnati, Ohio, and sits in the basement listening to metal and making B-movie-style horror films. His directorial intentions can loosely be interpreted as wanting to outdo Peter Jackson's *Braindead* for use of fake blood.

Feeling guilty about having left for college when Tom was a kid, and aware of his static home life, Matt offers his brother a job as a roadie on the tour

for 2010's *High Violet*. As the only member of The National without a brother in the band, it's a bonding exercise, though not a particularly successful one. Living with his parents has left Tom with a lax attitude towards responsibility: he misses bus call, forgets to sort out Werner Herzog's backstage pass, and leaves a milky cereal mess on the floor of his brother's hotel bathroom. In response, Matt runs the emotional gamut from empathetically frustrated to quite terrifyingly livid.

Not that Tom's particularly bothered at first; to him the job is a meal ticket to make an all-access movie about his brother's band. His predilection for bludgeoning metal and horror underpins his technique as a documentarian, sneaking money shots (the band asleep in their tourbus beds, drummer Bryan Devendorf naked in the shower) and asking blunt, odd questions that outline the lack of understanding between them. "Where do you see The National in, like, 50 years?" Tom asks Scott, stunned to learn that they don't plan on being octogenarian rock stars. "So, how famous do you think you are?" he asks his squirming brother.

Part of the film concerns the unfair immunity of fame and the resentment it brews among those who don't benefit from it, even when they love those who do. The band enjoy many layers of protection, while Tom cries into his camera after eventually getting fired and realising that his life is in "freefall". From its second act, the film turns into a portrait of his and Matt's relationship, addressing what hope any

of us have against our worst self-defeating impulses. (To see The National try and fight theirs, investigate their first documentary, Vincent Moon's *A Skin, A Night* [2008], an incredibly miserable and hard-to-love film about the very fractious sessions behind 2007's *Boxer*.)

It's heartbreaking to see Tom's happy-go-lucky, endearingly arrogant persona crumble into self-doubt as he realises how pitiful he's become, almost as if he were a character in one of his brother's songs. (There's some footage of The National recording sixth album *Trouble Will Find Me*, notably "I Should Live In Salt", which concerns the brothers' relationship.) He returns home to Cincinnati to interview their parents about the fundamental differences between the siblings. "Having Matt as my older brother kind of sucks, because he's a rock star and I am not," says Tom. "And it's always been that way." We see photos of a gangly teenage Matt playing quarterback, but also learn about the brothers' shared depressive tendencies from inside their artist mum's studio, where she has a wall covered in very un-brothers-Berninger inspirational quotes.

As Tom comes up with a plan for the film, it becomes a kind of metatextual documentary about making a documentary. It's an odd concept, but it works thanks to the enjoyably strange array of threads being tugged at here. What starts as a one-man *Decline Of Western Civilisation Part II* comes to evoke a significantly more redemptive *American Movie*. Tom embraces sentimentality, but his natural comic timing and propensity to fail keeps schmalz at bay. The National's public persona is misleadingly serious, but they're willing to appear in unflattering lights here, and relegate themselves to supporting players in the story of a guy who it's easy to love even if you're not a fan of the band. As different as Matt and Tom Berninger are, they both saved themselves in the same way: turning embarrassment and pain into enduring art rich with humanity and empathy.

EXTRAS: Performance footage, interviews
8/10 and offcuts.



THUNDERBOLT AND LIGHTFOOT

SECOND SIGHT

Blu-ray debut of classic Eastwood/Bridges road/heist movie

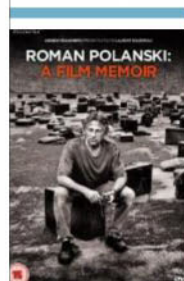
Michael Cimino's under-appreciated 1974 directorial debut won an Oscar nomination for newcomer Jeff Bridges, playing Lightfoot, a smartass

8/10

drifter who teams up with Clint Eastwood's seasoned bank robber, Thunderbolt, who is fleeing be-suited assassins. Beautifully shot against Montana's big skies, it's a road/heist movie with layers of strangeness and, if you care to indulge it, a homoerotic subtext secreted between the smartly executed shoot-outs and car chases. Watch out for the white rabbits.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



ROMAN POLANSKI

A Film Memoir

NETWORK

Intimate, career-spanning interview, essential for fans

A DVD extra veteran, Laurent Bouzereau directed this feature-length conversation in 2009, while Polanski was under house arrest in Switzerland,

7/10

facing extradition to the US. With Polanski's old friend and collaborator Andrew Braunsberg as interviewer, the spectre of his 1977 crime hangs over proceedings, and is addressed directly, but never quite comes into focus. More valuable is Polanski's frank discussion of the murder of his wife, Sharon Tate, and a spellbinding exploration of his early life in occupied Poland during the war.

EXTRAS: None.

DAMIEN LOVE



DEVO

The Complete Truth About De-Evolution

MVD

Visual document of the Ohioan Dadaists

A "post-modernist protest band" according to co-founder Gerald V Casale, Devo's records were only half the story. This DVD completes the

8/10

picture; 20 concept-heavy videos (including prescient 1976 double-header "Secret Agent Man"/"Jocko Homo" and cowboy-baiting early MTV hit "Whip It") plus plentiful career detritus, dating as far back as 1972. Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh's commentary highlights Devo's "soft spot for rubber masks" as well as their subversive intent during the Reagan years. Arty, but crafty too.

EXTRAS: None.

5/10 JIM WIRTH



TIMES SQUARE

NETWORK

Fairytale of (punk) New York

Allan Moyle's 1980 new wave exploitation movie, about two troubled teenage girls who find each other, run away to grimy New York and form a punk band, is perhaps no classic. But it deserves its fond cult status, partly

6/10

because Moyle would revisit the messed-up youth + music formula in *Pump Up The Volume*; partly for thinly veiled lesbianism and hinted New York sleaze; and mostly for its supercool CBGBs soundtrack, featuring Ramones, Talking Heads, Patti Smith, Roxy Music, Lou Reed and more. Tim Curry is great as the late-night DJ who makes the gals heroes.

EXTRAS: Trailer, gallery.

5/10 DAMIEN LOVE



TOO LATE BLUES

EUREKA

Underrated John Cassavetes-Bobby Darin collaboration

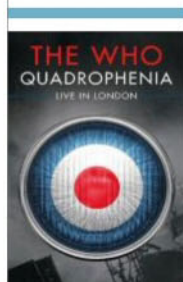
Following his debut, *Shadows*, Paramount hired John Cassavetes for this. The ensuing collisions caused Cassavetes to write it off, but, while sometimes awkward and overblown,

8/10

it's sharp and powerful – precisely because the subject of a serious artist selling out in the marketplace is the entire, tortured theme. Darin (pretty great) plays jazz pianist "Ghost" Wakefield, whose agent pressures him to abandon the music he loves, for music people will pay for. Stella Stevens is heartbreaking as the struggling singer he loves and their jazzland milieu looks and sounds real.

EXTRAS: Booklet.

7/10 DAMIEN LOVE



THE WHO

Quadrophenia: Live In London

SONY

Grand audio-visual treat from Wembley Arena

Filmed at the end of a nine-month tour to mark *Quadrophenia*'s 40th birthday last summer, the better of Pete Townshend's two populist rock operas

9/10

gets the send-off it deserves: bumper visuals and a riveting set in which "The Punk And The Godfather" and "Helpless Dancer" are little short of jaw-dropping. Roger Daltrey's suitably bullish too, the whole thing made extra poignant with old Who footage spliced into the main event.

EXTRAS: Six non-*Quadrophenia* tracks from the same gig, including dazzling binary visuals for "Baba O'Riley" and a terrific "Won't Get Fooled Again".

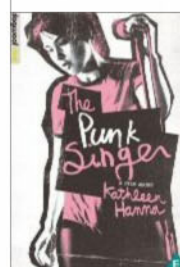
ROB HUGHES



Le Tigre, with Hanna, centre

THE PUNK SINGER

A Film About Kathleen Hanna



DOGWOOF

Heart and teeth bared in a vivid portrait of the riot grrl spearhead

"I'M YOUR WORST nightmare come to life – I'm a girl who won't shut up." So barks a furiously intense young Kathleen Hanna in footage of an early spoken-word performance, at the start of Sini Anderson's biopic. As singer with the iconoclastic

8/10

Bikini Kill, Hanna became not only a rallying figure for the riot grrl movement – part of the youthful "third wave" of US feminism that was committed to activism and zine culture and aligned with the DIY punk/hardcore scenes – but also a bona fide pop star. If she shouldered the former responsibility comfortably, the charismatic Hanna was less at ease with her cult status. She was eventually pushed to declare a media blackout in 1994, frustrated by articles that focused unflinchingly on her and her bandmates' physical appearance, her troubled home life and her work as a stripper while studying in Olympia.

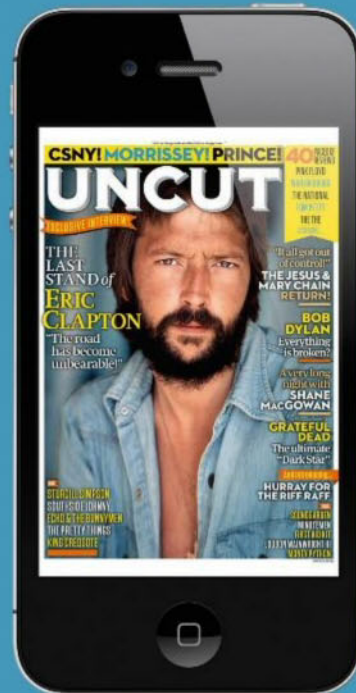
Shaped as much by Gloria Steinem and Jenny Holzer as The Runaways, X-Ray Spex and Fugazi – and an influence on Kurt Cobain, who briefly dated drummer Tobi Vail – Bikini Kill burned with an incendiary brightness for eight years, before breaking up in 1997. After writing and producing a solo album as Julie Ruin in 1999 and then fronting politico-synth-pop trio Le Tigre, Hanna suddenly stopped performing in 2005. She'd been dogged by mysterious sickness on tour and eventually quit, declaring that she had nothing left to say. One of the film's most poignant scenes is of Hanna explaining why she bowed out. "I didn't want to stop; I was told by my body to stop," she says, tearfully. She was finally diagnosed with Lyme disease in 2010, but has since returned with new band The Julie Ruin, featuring Bikini Kill bandmate Kathi Wilcox.

As a biography and a narrative of riot grrl's development, Anderson's documentary follows a logical timeline, but cuts back and forth between the past and the present via extensive archival clips and interviews with Hanna and other key players, as well as Hanna's husband, Adam Horowitz. Its tone is celebratory, but *The Punk Singer* is no dutiful hagiography. What it is, is the tale of the "Rebel Girl" from Maryland who taught herself to speak like a Valley Girl, the singer with SLUT daubed on her torso who directed "all girls to the front!" at hitherto female-unfriendly punk-rock shows. It's also an exhilarating reminder of where unshakeable commitment, a shared vision and daring to "be who you will" might take you.

EXTRAS: Eight segments including Kathleen gardening and *Strip For Art*.

7/10 SHARON O'CONNELL

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

*Nicolas Cage back on form;
Mike Myers' directorial debut;
Clint Eastwood's Jersey Boys; and
A Hard Day's Night revisited...*

JOE FOR A TIME, both Nicolas Cage and filmmaker David Gordon Green have been drifting away from what they do best. *Joe*, however, reminds us what both men are capable of when the gears are shifting in the right direction. Cage's Joe is a decent but no-nonsense supervisor of a crew working in rural Mississippi; he drinks, which proves not to be a good thing for anyone in close proximity. Nevertheless, when 15-year-old Gary (Tye Sheridan) shows up looking for work, Joe takes him in: perhaps he sees something of himself in the boy. There is also the small matter of Gary's father, a violent alcoholic (actor Gary Poulter was living rough on the streets of Austin, Texas when Green cast him; it's a chilling performance, but sadly Poulter died shortly after filming). There is more violence, too, in the form of Willie, a local with whom Joe has an unspecified beef in the past. There's trouble in all of these things. What Cage does here is brilliantly rein in his most extreme tendencies, so that this is a very internalised, but all the same very intense performance. He's not been this watchable for years. David Gordon Green, meanwhile, returns to his low-budget roots – *George Washington*, *All The Real Girls* – and weaves an intriguing, multi-layered story around people living on the fringes: poverty and alcoholism are rife. It reminds me, to some extent, of *Mud*: another Southern story about a fundamentally decent though compromised man taking a wide-eyed protégé (also played by Sheridan) under his wing. Just as *Mud* was a critical part in reinvigorating Matthew McConaughey's career, one can hope that *Joe* helps reconnect Cage with the qualities – and films – that made him such a compelling screen presence in the first place.

➤ **Supermensch** Mike Myers first met Shep Gordon in 1991, on the set of *Wayne's World*. At the time, Myers wanted to license an Alice Cooper track for the movie's soundtrack, a process that involved lengthy negotiations with Cooper's long-standing manager, Gordon. The friendship between the two men has culminated in this, Myers' directorial debut, a breezy documentary about Gordon. While Gordon may not be a recognisable name on a par with Brian Epstein, Peter Grant or Albert Grossman, nevertheless Myers' narrative suggests that his colourful lifestyle more than compensates. Indeed, Gordon's first brush with celebrity came the day after he moved to Los Angeles, when Janis Joplin punched him in the face by the pool at the Hollywood Landmark hotel; she later introduced

him to Hendrix. Gordon – a likeable, funny guy – found himself dealing hash to rock's A-list before assuming managerial duties for Alice Cooper. From here on in, much of Gordon's early career can best be described as wheeler dealing. When approached to help out at the Toronto Rock & Roll Revival – which marked John Lennon's first live appearance without The Beatles – Gordon refused monies for his services in order to secure Cooper on the bill between Lennon and The Doors. And so it goes. The rock star anecdotalism is high, as you'd expect: but Myers' film presents Gordon's flaws as somehow endearing, rather than as unsavoury qualities. We see Gordon proudly sporting a "No head no back stage pass" T-shirt (hey! Thanks 1970s!), while ageing lothario Michael Douglas is on hand to offer testimony to the "stunningly beautiful" ladies in Gordon's life. Other celebs – Sylvester Stallone, Mick Fleetwood, Sammy Hagar – further big up Gordon and his avaricious appetite. There is, however, a brilliant story involving Cary Grant and joint custody of a cat.

➤ **Cold In July** As a director, Jim Mickle has previously turned his hand to vampires, zombies and cannibals. For his fourth film, he essays a different kind of genre staple, though this one is no less bloody than its predecessors. *Cold In July*, based on a novel by Joe R Lansdale, is an unsavoury piece of Texas noir centred around the Dixie Mafia, police corruption and snuff movies. There are some laffs up front – it's 1989, look at the funny mullets! – but mostly this is a fairly gruesome film, heavy on the gore. Family man Michael C Hall kills an intruder in his house – "Nothing to be ashamed of," soothes a neighbour – and soon finds himself caught up in terrifying scenes. What starts off as unsettling soon becomes cartoonish after a gaunt-looking Sam Shepard turns up as the dead intruder's father, fresh out of prison and looking for revenge, with Don Johnson as a colourful private eye not far behind. The three of them go searching for the truth – heavily armed, as you'd expect, and what ensues will presumably have connoisseurs of this kind of film cheering in the aisles. But there are problematic shifts in tone and pacing issues don't



Reviewed this month...



JOE
Director David
Gordon Green
Starring Nicolas
Cage
Opens July 25
Certificate 15
8/10



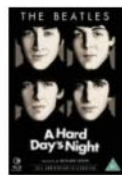
**SUPER-
MENSCH**
Director Mike
Myers
Starring Shep
Gordon
Opens July 18
Certificate 12A
6/10



COLD IN JULY
Director Jim
Mickle
Starring Michael
C Hall
Opens June 27
Certificate 15
6/10



JERSEY BOYS
Director Clint
Eastwood
Starring
Christopher
Walken
Opens June 20
Certificate 15
6/10



**A HARD DAY'S
NIGHT**
Director Richard
Lester
Starring The
Beatles
Opens July 4
Certificate U
8/10



Brilliantly reined in: Cage as the titular Joe

some personal resonances for this project. The story, too, is not without some meat on its bones: Valli and his cohorts came up through a rough New Jersey neighbourhood where the mob was prevalent, while founding guitarist Tommy DeVito is revealed to be as crooked as it gets. But somewhere along the line it's been neutered: Christopher Walken's Mafia boss Angelo 'Gyp' DeCarlo is, for instance, more cuddly grandpa figure than "methodical gangland executioner", as he's described in contemporaneous FBI's files. One minor but interesting piece of business, however, is the small role played in the story by the actor Joe Pesci, who was a childhood friend of Valli. Pesci employed Tommy DeVito as an assistant during the '90s, around the same time he made *GoodFellas*. It may simply be coincidence, of course, but the name of his character in *GoodFellas*? Tommy DeVito...

► A Hard Day's Night

Arriving in cinemas for a 50th-anniversary brush up, *A Hard Day's Night* still sparkles. Alun Owen's script, fictionalising a day in the life of the Fabs,

makes good use of the band's innate sense of humour. "How did you find America?" a journalist asks Lennon. "Turn left at Greenland," he pings back. It's interesting to see how similar the portrayal of the band in *A Hard Day's Night* is compared to the Albert and David Maysles' documentary *What's Happening! The Beatles In The USA*, which offered a similarly freewheeling and candid snapshot of the band. As research for his script, Owen spent three days with the band in November 1963, three months before the Maysles' filmed The Beatles' first visit to America. The parity between the 'reality' created

by Owen and director Richard Lester in *A Hard Day's Night* is extraordinarily close to the band's true lives as caught by the Maysles. But of course, Lester's film isn't a documentary: part Marx Brothers slapstick, part Goons surrealism, part new wave cinema, part satire

on being The Beatles, it's a multi-faceted piece, nowhere near as straightforward as its simple proposition and brisk pacing might suggest. There is some dubious shenanigans with schoolgirls at the start, and Lennon's 'comedy German' impressions in the bath (a Spike Milligan lift) are creaky now, but these feel like unfortunate errors of judgment from the time; there are still incredible touches here. The scene where Harrison teaches John Junkin how to shave using his reflection in the mirror is a brilliant piece of composition, predicated entirely on the location of the camera rather than what Harrison can really see of Junkin's reflection. Fab gear, etc.

much help the second half, which takes too long trying to build audience empathy for what are by any standards fairly thinly drawn characters. If this had the timbre of a Nick Cave film project, perhaps it would work more successfully. As it is – aside from a typically watchable performance from Shepard – it is nowhere near as lean or tightly focused as *Blue Ruin*, another, more successful recent genre exercise.

► **Jersey Boys** The past decade has given us a compelling, if not entirely positive, narrative for Clint Eastwood's career.

As he opened the new century with a run of movies comprising *Mystic River*, *Million Dollar Baby* and the two Jima movies, Eastwood was riding a splendid late-period career peak. But the fire that burned in those films has dampened considerably. Eastwood's career worst was, of course, *Hereafter* – his life-after-death story whose climax, lest we forget, occurred at the London Book Fair where Sir Derek Jacobi was signing copies of his Charles Dickens audio books. At first glance, *Jersey Boys* feels like a similarly curious undertaking for Eastwood – an adaptation of a jukebox musical about Frankie Valli And The Four Seasons. But Eastwood is keen to examine the disconnect between the group's private lives and their public undertakings, as well as the way that history is elevated to myth. These are both familiar topics for Eastwood – and, like *Bird*, his Charlie Parker biopic, we can assume that he has

Nicolas Cage's Joe drinks, which proves not to be a good thing for anyone in close proximity

Also out...

TAMMY

OPENS JULY 4

The rise of *Bridesmaids*' breakout star Melissa McCarthy continues with this comedy about a woman having a very bad day...

TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION

OPENS JULY 10

It's a massive art project, right? Michael Bay blows up more giant robot aliens.

BOYHOOD

OPENS JULY 10

Shot over a 12-year period, Richard Linklater's latest follows a divorced couple trying to raise their young son.

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2

OPENS JULY 10

Quite enjoyed the first one, in 3D too. Added attraction this time out: a new song by Shane MacGowan!

DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

OPENS JULY 17

The 53rd sequel to the Chuck Heston original. Apes yadda yadda Andy Serkis yadda yadda.



I AM DIVINE

OPENS JULY 18

Doc about the late, great Harris Glenn Milstead – aka drag artist Divine. Contributors include John Waters.

SOME LIKE IT HOT

OPENS JULY 18

Welcome reissue for Billy Wilder's peerless comedy, with Tony Curtis essaying a memorable Cary Grant impression.

BRANDED TO KILL

OPENS JULY 25

Japanese Yakuza movie from 1967, widely cited by Quentin Tarantino, John Woo, et al, as an influence.

THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI

OPENS JULY 25

More reissue goodness: Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth revel in the blackest noir.

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

OPENS JULY 31

It's Chris Pratt! We'll put aside all our superhero prejudices to see this, in the hope he falls over as brilliantly as he does in *Parks And Recreation*...

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD



SETLIST

- 1 Let's Go Crazy
- 2 Take Me With U
- 3 Raspberry Beret
- 4 U Got The Look
- 5 Musicology
- 6 Kiss
- 7 The Love We Make
- 8 Funknroll
- 9 When Doves Cry
- 10 Sign O' The Times
- 11 I Would Die 4 U
- 12 Forever In My Life
- 13 Controversy
- 14 1999
- 15 Little Red Corvette
- 16 Nothing Compares 2 U
- ENCORE
- 17 Guitar
- 18 Plectrum Electrum
- 19 Crimson & Clover/Wild Thing
- 20 Sometimes It Snows In April
- 21 Diamonds And Pearls
- 22 The Beautiful Ones
- 23 Purple Rain
- ENCORE 2
- 24 Play That Funky Music
- 25 Live It Up Pts 1 & 2
- ENCORE 3
- 26 Housequake/A Love Bizarre/
Alphabet St/Pop Life/
The Most Beautiful Girl In
The World/If I Was Your
Girlfriend/Nasty Girl/
Hot Thing

PRINCE & 3RDEYEGIRL

SSE HYDRO, GLASGOW, MAY 22, 2014

"Animals strike curious poses!" The inexhaustible beautiful one celebrates 30 years of *Purple Rain*

HAVING DRUMMED UP demand back in February with his catch-me-if-you-can sprint around the broom cupboards of London and Manchester, Prince has returned for the main event. He embarks on Hit And Run Part II, a mini-tour of British arenas, with his critical and commercial standing considerably higher than seems reasonable for a man who released his last memorable album somewhere around the time of the Blur/Oasis wars.

The fact that this is his first show in Scotland for almost 20 years only partly explains why the excitement levels tonight are somewhere due north of delirious. The other reason is that, whatever the merits of his most


recent output, Prince is a show-bringer without peer. As the 12,000-capacity Hydro fills up to the sound of ambient jazz, the stage obscured by a huge purple curtain, the anticipation builds perceptibly. Finally, announced by geysers of dry ice, flickers of fake fire and billowing purple streamers, the man himself appears, chanting "Let's go Glasgow!"

Prince is fronting his all-female power trio, 3RDEYEGIRL., comprising Ida Nielsen on bass, Donna Grantis on guitar and, sandwiched between a wall of amps as though to signal the band's emphasis on raw power, Hannah Ford on drums. They're augmented by two keyboardists at the rear of the stage and, from time to time, vocal foil Marissa Jack.

At 55, Prince isn't quite the fireball of

old, but he's still an intensely physical and charismatic performer, strutting beneath the lights in his white patterned coat, silk flared trousers and heels, topped off with shades and a funky Afro. During the 150-minute show he hops between guitar, piano and bass, while three screens offer rudimentary video projections. This is a no-frills affair, both musically and visually. The title of a new song, "Funknroll", best sums up where he's at these days.

Opener "Let's Go Crazy" is a slow, grinding blues, swapping the giddy urgency of the original for a low, gear-crunching growl which sets the template for a good deal of the set. This powerhouse approach isn't a unilateral success. It threatens to kick all the fuzz and fun out of "Raspberry



Powerhouse of love:
Prince and bassist
Ida Nielsen, hidden

At his best,
Prince is a
marvel, lending
the arena the
intimacy of a
small club

Beret" and "U Got The Look", which are a trifle heavy on their toes, but after half a dozen songs the balance settles for a crisp "Kiss", during which Prince sheds his jacket on the "undress me" line as a bank of fluorescent lips adorn the screens above him.

Six songs from *Purple Rain* provide the sole narrative thread running through an otherwise promiscuous setlist. The album was released three decades ago and the anniversary is clearly on Prince's mind. He alludes to it directly before "When Doves Cry", yelling "30 years ago this summer", before embarking on a performance which is stunning in its focus. No overloaded guitars here, just diamond-like purity. The purple theme is very much back in vogue, too. The crowd have been asked to wear something suitably hued for the occasion, and most have complied.

"When Doves Cry" begins a stark run of songs which includes "Sign O' The Times" and "Forever In My Life", the latter featuring Prince on bass accompanied only by drums. It's a mesmerising mini-set, and a demonstration of his – often overlooked – facility to conjure up a disquieting atmosphere using just words and rhythm. After that interlude, the energy levels in the room surge for a spectacular "1999" and a singalong "Little Red Corvette". During "Controversy" he instructs the crowd to get out their mobile phones – which we've been firmly requested to keep turned off for the duration of the show – and the darkness is illuminated by a thousand sparkling lights,

lending the cavernous arena the intimacy of a small club. Inviting a dozen fans onstage to dance behind him – "I dig the twister in the polka dots," he deadpans – further dissolves any feelings of distance.

When Prince hits these kinds of highs he's an unadulterated marvel, but it's not all so compelling. When he asks, "What shall we do now?", it's fair to say few present respond by shouting for "Guitar", a wholly forgettable squealer from 2007's *Planet Earth*, or "The Love We Make", a too-worthy ballad from *Emancipation*, or "Plectrum Electrum" from his forthcoming album. It seems churlish, however, to dwell on the occasional longeurs in what amounts to a generous greatest hits set culled from his imperious '80s. The off-grid selections also throw up a couple of highlights: a taut, funky "Musicology" – played against a visual backdrop

of vintage soul stars – and a languorous cover of Tommy James & The Shondells' "Crimson & Clover".

Prince's voice is still tremendous, a point hammered home on "The Beautiful Ones", performed solo at the piano in what is, alongside a band version of "Sometimes It Snows In April", the night's emotional peak. From here on, the show loses its shape. "Purple Rain", which starts quietly on piano and then blooms into a thing of slow-burning majesty,

seems a natural end point, but Prince has other ideas. He returns to the stage for another half-hour of party jams on Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music", The Isley Brothers' "Live It Up Pts 1 & 2", and a final, turn-that-dial sprint through his back catalogue. The thrill of hearing snatches of "Alphabet Street" and "Pop Life" is largely negated by their brevity, as though Prince has morphed into a twitchy teen, flicking distractedly through his iPod.

By this point you get the feeling he could go on all night, even if the crowd is now sated. Clinical set-building is not for impish geniuses, clearly, but what Prince lacks in economy he more than makes up for with dexterity, star quality, sheer volume of brilliant songs, and a joyful desire to entertain which is hard to fake. But for the curfew, you suspect he might still be there now.

GRAEME THOMSON

Ben Watt

ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL,
LONDON, MAY 19, 2014

Everything but the Tracey Thorn; Dave Gilmour subs, improbably...

THERE'S A STORY Ben Watt tells to illustrate the precociousness of youth.

He uses it tonight, before a foray into his solo back catalogue, with the song "Walter And John". "A few years ago," he starts, "when I was 19..." He then explains how, on signing his first deal, he thought it would be a good idea to phone up Robert Wyatt and ask him to play on his record. Surprisingly, Wyatt agreed, and Watt found himself transported. "This was like another world – it was all soya milk..."

Watt has been doing a lot of looking back lately. His current album, *Hendra*, is a beautiful rumination on grief, which works in tandem with his memoir about his parents, *Romany And Tom*. Musically, Watt seems to have journeyed back to his Robert Wyatt period. The *Hendra* songs are lightly jazzy, very English and deeply personal. When he plays "Some Things Don't Matter", a favourite from his early career, it sounds like an attempt at a jazz standard. But "Golden Ratio", with Bernard Butler's peeling guitar, is like a manifesto for his new work. It's an exploration of the limits of control, with Watt trying to accede to his own internal rhythm. Butler is a great foil for Watt, offering sudden swells of static and, on the terrific (unreleased) "Bricks And Wood", wiry, mournful licks. David Gilmour comes on to add pedal steel to a powerful "Hendra", followed by "The Levels", which is heavier than on record, its mournfulness emerging in a Floyd-like migraine drone.

Hendra is dark, but it's all about resilience. The set ends with "The Heart Is A Mirror", a song in which Watt's cracked classicism comes wrapped in optimism. Likewise the encore of "Spring", where Gilmour's steel lends a plaintive edge to Watt's McCartney-esque melody.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

PRESS ASSOCIATION



The A-team: (l-r) Bernard Butler, Dave Gilmour, Martin Ditcham, Ben Watt, Steve Pearce (hidden)

Lost in Catalonia:
Adam Granduciel
onstage in Barcelona



THE WAR ON DRUGS

PRIMAVERA SOUND FESTIVAL, PARC DEL FÒRUM,
BARCELONA, MAY 30, 2014

High tide! 2014's keynote band reign in Spain...

BEYOND THE PASSENGER seat of a car cruising along a warm, twilight road, there are few places more appropriate to watch The War On Drugs than the Primavera Sound Festival. Set in a vast concrete park on Barcelona's northeast coastline, Adam Granduciel's view from the stage is of a widescreen sea, while the crowd stands beneath a sky bruised pink and purple from a torrential thunderstorm earlier in the evening. The tang of weed is heavy in the night air, and intensifies as the band appear at 10.40pm, but proceed to spend half an hour soundchecking.

Watching them precision-tool the setup for their impressionistic Americana feels slightly odd. The appeal of the three War On Drugs records, not least this year's excellent *Lost In The Dream*, is almost entirely predicated on a willingness to surrender yourself to an absorbing, Springsteenish slipstream. An hour earlier, Sharon

Van Etten played a different stage and urged the crowd to go and see The War On Drugs, who appear on her fine *Are We There*. By contrast, she renders heartbreak and disappointment so brutally and unequivocally, it's hard to come away not feeling quite miserable. Testament to her skill as a songwriter, but perhaps why The War On Drugs' crowd are hastily trying to rekindle their festival buzz.

None of which is to say that Granduciel's onstage six-piece are merely a breezy proposition. *Lost In The Dream* took a gruelling year to make, fitting the old maxim that what sounds effortless doesn't come easy. Most of the record's lyrics take place in a protective night, a

redemptive place where Granduciel hides out from the passing of time, the failed relationship that inspired it, and the worst parts of himself. Eventual opener "An Ocean In

Between The Waves" swiftly gets to the heart of The War On Drugs' emotional dynamic: cynicism undercut by anxiety, evident in the way Granduciel sings nakedly

of self-doubt ("In my finest hour can I be more than just a fool?") in a flinty tone. The band lay down kindling drums and smeared guitar lines, stoking them into a huge crescendo that can only do itself justice by crashing, rather than fading out.

This is The War On Drugs' way live; nearly every middle-eight

Live, nearly every middle-eight is stretched and wrangled to a triumphant climax

SETLIST

- 1 An Ocean In Between The Waves
- 2 Eyes To The Wind
- 3 Under The Pressure
- 4 Burning
- 5 Red Eyes
- 6 Trilogy
- 7 In Reverse
- 8 Baby Missiles
- 9 Lost In The Dream

stretched and wrangled into some triumphant climax. On record, "Eyes To The Wind" builds like a sunrise, but tonight, it boils over into great racing guitar solos. The ending of "Under The Pressure" seems shot through with some mercurial, unstoppable intent, reaching far out to sea.

Unexpectedly, the last few songs take a step back: *Lost...* closer "In Reverse" peels away the punchy drums, gold-hued chiming, and saxophone solos to just Granduciel triggering the odd stinging guitar peal, singing his soft lament about "Wondering if you care/Calling out your name in the darkness". At that moment, there's nothing between him and the dark midnight sea.

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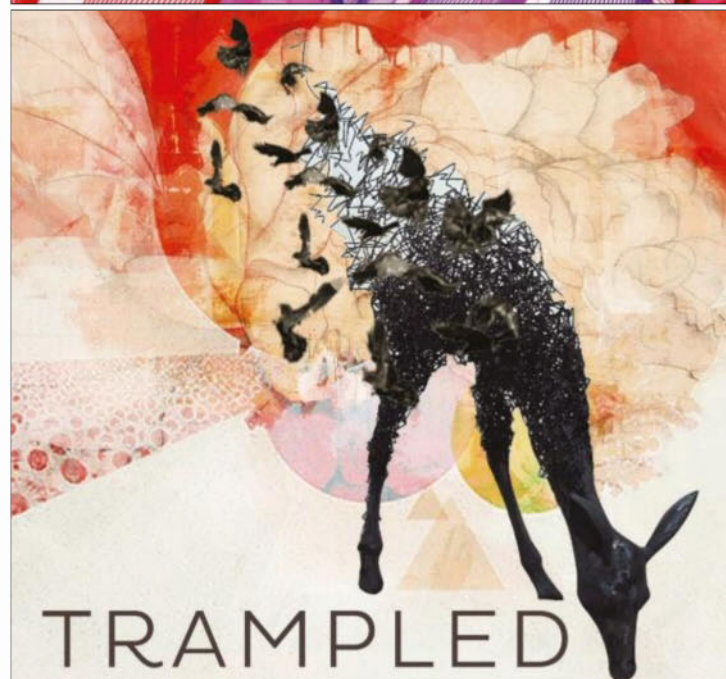
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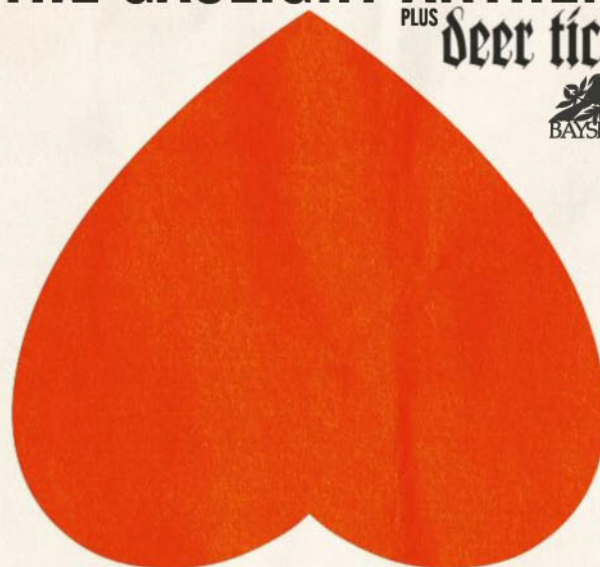
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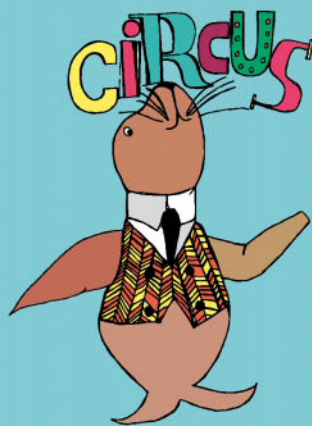
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RASMENTALISM, ARTUR ROJEK, ROYAL BLOOD, RUDIMENTAL,
THE AFGHAN WHIGS, THE HORRORS, WARPAINT, WILD BEASTS

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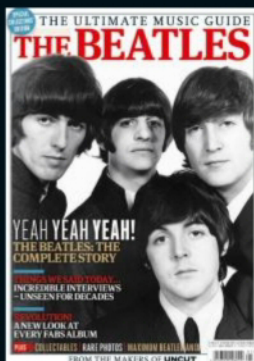
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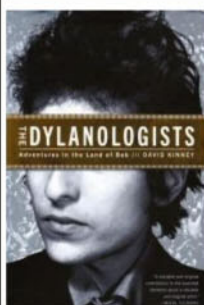
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Viv Albertine and Ari Up of The Slits performing at London's Alexandra Palace, 1980

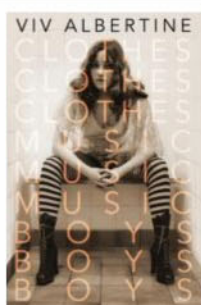
Reviewed this month...



The Dylanologists: Adventures In The Land Of Bob

David Kinney
SIMON & SCHUSTER

7/10



Clothes, Clothes, Clothes, Music, Music, Music, Boys, Boys Boys

Viv Albertine
FABER & FABER

9/10

HOW DOES IT FEEL, to be pathologised? A few of you might wonder as much, picking up with some trepidation David Kinney's *The Dylanologists*. For here is a book that purports to expose the eccentricities of Bob Dylan's most obsessive fans, who – imagine! – spend all their money on bootlegs, rarities and ephemera, follow the Never Ending Tour around the world, meticulously work through his lyrics for meaning and echo. Not to be paranoid here, but is Kinney talking about us?

He is, of course, or about some of us. *The Dylanologists*, though, is an open-hearted attempt to understand the nature of fandom, and the nature of Dylan himself, rather than a work of ridicule or hack-psychoanalysis. Indeed, there's a good argument to be made for Dylan emerging as one of the book's strangest characters, finessing his enigma with a zeal that even his most dedicated followers would struggle to match.

Kinney is particularly good at detailing the research of Dylanologists like Scott Warmuth, who

see their subject as a fairground illusionist, a fiendish riddle-setter. Warmuth fossicks through Google, chasing down lines and phrases in Dylan's writing – most amusingly, traces in *Chronicles* of a section in a self-help book titled "The Science Of Charlatanism, Or How To Create A Cult In Five Easy Steps". Fanzine editor John Stokes, meanwhile, writes a 23-part series, totalling 65,000 words, focused entirely on "Visions Of Johanna". "In part 22," notes Kinney, "he confessed to having second thoughts about his conclusions."

There are, necessarily, more disturbing stories in *Dylanologists*, and the trash-digging AJ Weberman hovers uncomfortably around the action, the paranoid extremist against whom Dylan fans must always measure their behaviour. But Kinney is a friend and fellow traveller, fastidious in avoiding freakshow exposés, and his engaging, contextualising backstories ensure that his book never becomes a voyeuristic sequel to Fred and Judy Vernorel's *Starlust*.

Even the singer's more dilettante-ish fans may find themselves frustrated by Kinney retelling great chunks of the Dylan story as a means of structuring his narrative, useful though it is to be reminded that Dylan himself has behaved like a stalkerish fan (towards Woody Guthrie, in particular). But along the way, there are vignettes and observations that make him seem closer than usual to human, even fallible.

"People want to know where I'm at, because they don't know where they're at," Kinney reports Dylan telling one interviewer. *The Dylanologists* approaches the problem from a crafty new angle, and makes a little more headway than usual. It is, again, Scott Warmuth who points the way to a potentially more useful, less emotive understanding of his prey – as a brilliant and slippery literary trickster, collagist and master of subterfuge, for whom the games might just conceivably be more significant than the solutions.

JOHN MULVEY

➤ "Anyone who writes an autobiography is either a twat or broke," declares Viv Albertine boldly at the start of this, her autobiography, before going on to

outline her thoughts on masturbation. Of course, these are just the kind of obstreperous provocations you'd expect from someone whose artistic sensibilities were shaped during punk, when Albertine was best known as the songwriter and guitarist with The Slits. But, as we learn, Albertine was not a typical punk; and this is not a typical music memoir.

Albertine grew up in Muswell Hill; her early heroes were John Lennon and local lads The Kinks. Her first brush with stardom occurred in 1972 at Imperial College, South Kensington when David Bowie clambered over her to get back onstage after a botched attempt at crowdsurfing. She fell in with the art school squat crowd, met on-off boyfriend Mick Jones at Hammersmith College, and found herself in the Flowers Of Romance with Sid Vicious. The Slits, Johnny Thunders and heroin followed. Far from being liberating, punk is depicted as rigid, unforgiving and overwhelmingly masculine. In this context, the all-girl Slits appear genuinely subversive and their unruly, confrontational antics are at the heart of *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes....*

Albertine is very good at snapshots of Rotten, Vicious, Jones and the rest of punk's A-list, but what's so astonishing about the first half of the book – 'Side One', as it's identified here – are the shocking number of times she is beaten up, sexually assaulted, or both. Albertine is strong and resilient and these are qualities she learns to rely on again and again as her post-Slits life unfolds in 'Side Two': constrictive domesticity on the South Coast, failed IVF treatments, cervical cancer, anxiety, a floundering marriage.

Albertine's unadorned prose veers between defiance and self-doubt. On a high, she recounts The Slits on tour – "We feel like outsiders so that's how we behave" – later "in a state of shock and terror" as her marriage unravels. If *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes...* was simply a rock memoir, it would come recommended for the fearless way Albertine challenges the orthodox male histories of punk. But in the context of her own personal tragedies, her subsequent recovery and the rebirth of her music career, it has a much wider resonance.

MICHAEL BONNER



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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

ALAN DOUGLAS

Producer, engineer,
Hendrix collaborator

1931-2014

Though best known now for his work with Jimi Hendrix, Alan Douglas first came to prominence as a formidably hip mover, shaker and producer in the jazz world. A friend of Miles Davis, Douglas took over United Artists' jazz division in 1962. He produced Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers, Duke Ellington & Charles Mingus' superb *Money Jungle* and Eric Dolphy, before setting up his own company, Douglas Communications. There he issued two spoken-word albums by Lenny Bruce, Timothy Leary's *You Can Be Anyone This Time Around* and, critically, 1970's debut LP from the polemical forefathers of hip-hop, *The Last Poets*. That same year he also co-helmed *Devotion* for John McLaughlin, who later complained it was "destroyed by Douglas, who mixed the recording in my absence".

Hendrix made a radio commercial for *The Last Poets*, and Douglas even facilitated a connection between the guitarist and Gil Evans. "When Jimi went on his last tour, Gil was writing some arrangements for him," Douglas told *Uncut* in 2009. "That was going to be an opportunity to sit down with somebody who could teach him, from a more educated music if you like, and to write an instrumental album... just to play with beautiful musicians around him."

Douglas' attempts to introduce Hendrix to his jazz world were thwarted by the guitarist's death. He did, however, become curator of Hendrix's estate, keeping his legacy alive by overseeing the release of unheard recordings. On 1975's *Crash Landing*, Douglas took tracks cut with bassist Billy Cox and either Buddy Miles or Mitch Mitchell on drums, erased all but Hendrix's contributions and brought in session players for overdubs. Douglas' reconstructions proved controversial with some Hendrix fans, but he repeated the process later that year with *Midnight Lightning*, and on two further projects, *Nine To The Universe* (1980) and *Voodoo Soup* (1995).



Alan Douglas
in 1997

HR GIGER

Artist and set designer

1940-2014

"The mid-'70s were full of attempts to shock the public," Keith Emerson once explained of the decision to enlist HR Giger for ELP's *Brain Salad Surgery* sleeve. "We chose this artwork because it pushed

album cover art to its extreme." The Swiss artist's iconic imagery was a bio-mechanical version of a human face, its complex layers involving infinity symbols, lobotomy scars and a partial phallus. As a strange postscript to the story, the original paintings went missing, presumed stolen, after a Giger exhibition in Prague in 2005. Aside from his work with ELP (which also involved the

band's distinctive logo), the inventor of Ridley Scott's *Alien* creature also created covers for Debbie Harry, Magma, Danzig and Carcass. His painting *Landscape #XX*, which showed a row of erect penises, landed him in trouble with US authorities when the Dead Kennedys gave it away as a poster with 1985's *Frankenchrist*.

ED GAGLIARDI

Bassist, Foreigner founder

1952-2014

Ed Gagliardi's three-year tenure in Foreigner wasn't always smooth. Writing in his autobiography *Juke Box Hero: My Five Decades In Rock 'n' Roll*, singer Lou Gramm claimed that the Long Island bassist was "obstinate at times, playing the song the way he wanted rather than the way it was drawn up". It was this friction, especially with guitarist Mick Jones, that led



Gagliardi,
1977

to Gagliardi's departure in 1979 after playing on their first two albums, *Foreigner* and *Double Vision*. The early '80s saw him team up with ex-bandmate Al Greenwood in Spys. The quintet issued a couple of LPs before disbanding in 1983.



HR Giger at his exhibition "Werke von 1975 und 1976", August 18, 1977, Kunsthaus Zurich, Switzerland

PRINCE RUPERT LOEWENSTEIN

The Rolling Stones' business manager

1933-2014

THE FACT THAT Prince Rupert Loewenstein never pretended to be a Rolling Stones fan proved an advantage. The Bavarian banker's lack of enthusiasm for rock'n'roll allowed him to guide their finances with a clarity of duty rather than emotional investment. "I was able to view the band and what they produced calmly, dispassionately, maybe even clinically," he wrote in his memoir, *A Prince Among Stones*, "though never without affection."

Loewenstein was exactly what the Stones needed at a crucial time in their career. By 1968 they'd become tied to a deal with then manager Allen Klein that brought crippling taxes and only a fraction of royalties from records and concerts. Introduced to Mick Jagger by art dealer Chrissie Gibbs, Loewenstein took over as business adviser and financial manager. He quickly set about extricating the band from their contract, convinced them to seek tax exile in Europe and began the process of turning them into a global brand through sponsored tours and lucrative advertising deals. During a partnership



Loewenstein with Keith Richards, 1991

that lasted until 2007, he helped bulk up Jagger's personal fortune to an estimated £200 million.

Loewenstein, who called himself "a combination of bank manager, psychiatrist and nanny", had a business brain as shrewd as it was sharp. He understood the earning potential of the band's iconic tongue logo, which he copyrighted, and played a key role in convincing the judge to keep Keith Richards

out of jail after 1977's heroin bust in Toronto.

An Oxford-educated aristocrat from the royal house of Wittelsbach, his relationship with the Stones soured in later years. Jagger was scathing of Loewenstein's disclosure of the band's fiscal matters in his autobiography: "Call me old-fashioned, but I don't think your ex-bank manager should be discussing your financial dealings and personal information in public."

NASH THE SLASH

Violinist and performance artist

1948-2014

US critic Lester Bangs once declared that "Nash The Slash is the kind of opening act that makes the headliner work twice as hard." Canadian performance artist Jeff Plewman invented the persona in the '70s as a vehicle for multi-media shows that combined electric violin, an Echoplex, strobes and reel-to-reel tape machines. "The stage is sacred," he once said. "I'm more interested in putting on royal spectacles, like Kiss or Pink Floyd or Arthur Brown." His bizarre image



Nash The Slash, 1980

involved wrapping his face in bandages and wearing a tuxedo and top hat. Aside from his solo career, which involved a spell on Virgin Records and two major tours supporting Gary Numan, Plewman was a founder member of prog rock outfit FM. He quit after 1977 debut *Black Noise*, rejoining the band twice before finally deciding to concentrate on scoring music for silent films in the late '90s.

WILL GAINES

Jazz 'hooper'

1928-2014

So developed was Will Gaines' sense of rhythm that he was able to dance to almost anything, adapting his soft-shoe shuffle for jazz, classical, flamenco, abstract electronica and even poetry. Hailed as the last of the freeform jazz hoofers, Gaines started out at Harlem's legendary Cotton Club in the late '50s. He shared stages with Charlie Parker, Lionel Hampton and Nat King Cole before settling in the UK the following decade. A regular at both Ronnie Scott's club and the London Palladium, in 1997 Gaines toured with avant-garde musician Derek Bailey. The result was the somewhat unlikely live album, *Rappin' And Tappin'*.

BERNARD 'DOC' NEESON

Angels singer

1947-2014

Even by his own admission, Bernard 'Doc' Neeson wasn't blessed with the sweetest of voices. But his gruff tones brought a distinctive edge to The Angels, the hard rockers who, in 1976, emerged from the Sydney music scene. Belfast-born Neeson wrote most of the songs on their self-titled debut album and remained the band's focus up until 1999, when injuries sustained in a car accident forced his departure. Four years later, he formed Doc Neeson's Angels before reuniting with the original members in 2008. Guns N' Roses and Pearl Jam are among those who've cited them as an influence.

ALEXANDER SHULGIN

Psychoactive drug pioneer

1925-2014

'Sasha' Shulgin's first great epiphany arrived in 1960, when an experience with mescaline led him to conclude that "our entire universe is contained in the mind and the spirit". The Californian pharmacologist, then employed

at Dow Chemical, went on to synthesise over 200 psychedelic drugs, including STP. But his chief claim to fame, or notoriety, was his development of a new strain of MDMA in 1976. Initially conceived as a therapeutic tool to relieve anxiety and emotional trauma, it gradually entered the wider culture in recreational form as Ecstasy, first in American clubland and then in Ibiza and the UK.

ALAN WILLS

Deltasonic Records founder

1961-2014

As founder of the Deltasonic label, Alan Wills helped foster a new generation of guitar-led Liverpool bands at the turn of the millennium. Chief among them were The Zutons and The Coral, the latter scoring a No 1 album with 2003's *Magic And Medicine*. Wills, who has died after a cycling accident, began his career as drummer for Shack and Top before setting up his own imprint. Deltasonic's publishing division also resulted in work with the Alex Turner-Miles Kane duo The Last Shadow Puppets. Kane, a longtime friend, said that Wills "made me believe in my dreams and gave me my first break".

ROB HUGHES

Feedback...

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OUR MAN IN TRANSVERSE CITY

Thanks for the piece on Warren Zevon [June issue]. It brought back many memories, not least my presence in the audience for both *Stand In The Fire* (recorded at The Roxy in August 1980) and some of *Learning To Flinch* (1992 in Kentish Town). But did you also know that Warren presided over the end of the British Empire? I sent Chris Patten, the last Governor of Hong Kong and a huge Warren fan, a tape of later Warren songs in early 1997, and he told me later that, during his last months in office, he played it every morning. He said he particularly loved “Boom Boom Mancini”. I always thought Warren would have been rather proud of that.

Sir Peter Coulson, via email

...Warren Zevon was beloved by a generation of foreign correspondents, a rock’n’roll Graham Greene. Wherever you were – Tegucigalpa, Jo’burg, Beirut, Havana – he had a song for it. I caught up with him in Miami in November 1997. Hoped to do an interview but, sadly, he didn’t have time. But we did chat at the Bayside waterfront mall before he played with the Rock Bottom Remainders – Stephen King, Dave Barry et al – at the Miami Book Fair. He was very gracious. I gave him a Zippo lighter I had picked up in Ho Chi Minh City, which had an inscription from a Special Forces officer to his Vietnamese scout. I had the thought that it might just inspire a song. That was not to be, but it was mentioned by Crystal Zevon in *I’ll Sleep When I’m Dead*, quoting from Warren’s diary. A memory I treasure. In his later years, his annual shows at the Carefree Theatre in West Palm Beach, when fishing buddies like Carl Hiaasen would show up, were intimate yet powerful events, with no indication of an artist in decline. As a footnote: Lee Ho Fook’s restaurant in Gerrard Street, Soho, had a picture of Warren and the lyrics of “Werewolves Of London” posted on its front window for many years until it changed hands and was renamed a few years ago. We miss him a lot.

Angus MacSwan, Thomson Reuters



Warren Zevon: “Chris Patten, a fan? Really?”

THIS WOMAN’S (UNRELEASED) WORK

I was reading the Kate Bush article in your June 2014 *Uncut* and felt the need to contact you about the ‘rumoured to exist’ (page 59) version of “She Moves Through The Fair”. It most definitely does exist because I listened to it on Rolf [Harris]’s producer’s iPod at Shepperton Studios in August 2009. I was playing in a Birmingham-based Irish band at the time and I wrote a song called “The Paddy’s Day Parade” which, by a strange series of events we ended up recording with Rolf that day in Shepperton. During lunch, Rolf’s producer passed me the iPod and I heard Kate’n’Rolf’s beautiful rendering of the Irish trad standard. Indeed, our fiddle player ended up overdubbing some fiddle on the track. I’m no longer in the band, but I still have Rolf’s version of my song.

Rich McMahon, Birmingham

NEIL YOUNG VS THE ALVINS

Great to see the glowing review of the new Phil & Dave Alvin record [Uncut 206]. By coincidence, on the next page is the review of the new Neil Young record. Like the Alvins’ *Common Ground*, Neil is looking back to his roots, but with very different results. Neil’s *A Letter Home* garnered 7/10, an over-generous mark in my opinion.

While the Alvins sound fresh and relevant, Neil is treading water, with his insistence on showing how he would sound making a record in the infamous Jack White kiosk. The comparison in these two records is interesting and can explain why, as a fan of Neil for 40 years, I still buy his records even if they no longer excite me. Dave Alvin’s back catalogue is impressive and, in the past 20 years since the release of *King Of California* in 1994, for me Dave Alvin has been the most important American singer-songwriter. I still love Neil Young and buy his records, but perhaps Neil is no longer that interested in making music. He should tuck these records away with all the great records from the ’70s that he didn’t release.

Andy Riggs, Wallington, Surrey

PETE SEEGER AND EWAN MACCOLL: THE BATTLE RAGES ON

I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised that my questioning of the hype, mythology and misinformation surrounding the life and death of Pete Seeger [Uncut, May issue] should have stirred up the “forces of conservatism”, to quote Tony Blair. But I am struggling to see how holding the opinion that Pete Seeger was a tuneless, overrated, hypocrite with delusional political beliefs means I am a closet Tory and

Daily Mail subscriber! Some geopolitical re-education is in order for Mr Smith [Uncut 206]. Just because I don’t back Russian dictators (unlike Seeger and MacColl’s love of Stalin and his heirs) doesn’t make me a member of the Carlton Club! Actually I’m a lifelong libertarian anarchist but, hey, we all know what assumptions make of us.

Anyway, my two critics rather make my point for me, with their furious piety. Keep party politics and single-issue campaigns out of rock music, for goodness’ sake, socialism only embarrasses the millionaires who walk the pages of this magazine and makes them look grubby if they get too close. “Born In The USA”, “Rockin’ In The Free World”, “Street Fighting Man” are all ambivalent, nuanced songs subverted for political ends by left and right alike and they’re the best of it! Still, it could be worse, we could be discussing another tuneless, millionaire [are we sure? – Ed] socialist: Billy Bragg!

Jon Grocock, Avalon Free State

...Jon Grocock’s mean-spirited and poorly judged attack on Pete Seeger and Ewan MacColl (not to mention all banjo players; *Uncut*, May issue) wasn’t without compelling arguments. Ideological music is very hard to do well, though some manage it: “Know Your Rights” and “Free Nelson Mandela” are pretty

unambiguous in taking a stand, but maybe even something as devastatingly understated as "Strange Fruit" is still ideological, as it reveals an opinion by nature of its quiet rage?

Anyway, I actually wanted to make a spirited defence of Ewan MacColl. I've spent much of 2014 celebrating the 50th birthday of the quite brilliant radio ballad "The Travelling People", from which the songs "The Moving On Song" and "Freeborn Man (Of The Travelling People)" originated, and have been immersed in his work, as well as that of his musical and life partner of many years, Peggy Seeger.

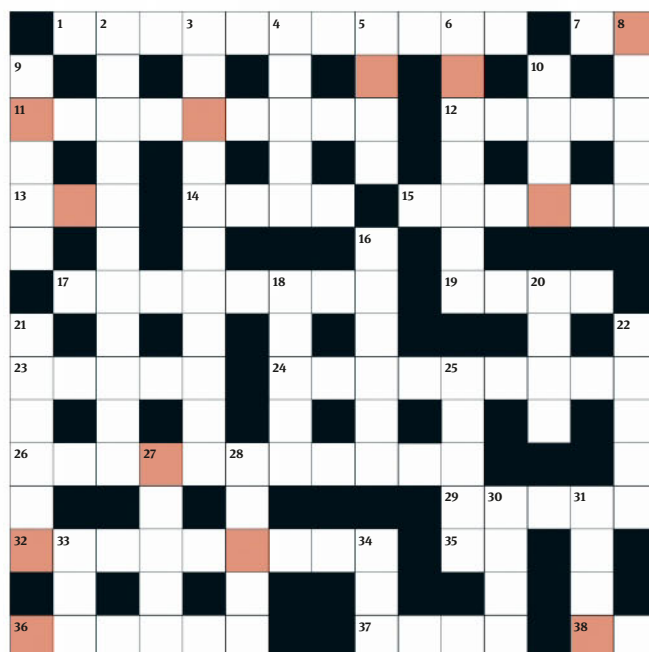
MacColl was an ideologue, no question, in fact he was for no short period a Maoist. He had an unerring belief in the power of art to make positive, necessary social change. He could also be judgmental and irascible in defence of his definition of folk music. However, he was able to write countless songs whose musicality was memorable and delicate, and whose words were possessed of a captivating rhythm. Towards the end of his life, he was drawn more to extremely moving character studies like that of his mother, "Nobody Knew She Was There", though he had already written the exquisite "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face", and the rousing yet solitary "Dirty Old Town", among a huge collection. He was wildly musical, but didn't play an instrument, so many of the arrangements on his records with Peggy Seeger were written and played by her, so she deserves great credit for the delicacy and even experimental nature of some of their work. Their recorded output is full of rarely heard treasures, as is her solo work. She's had to put performing on hold for the rest of 2014 due to ill health, so here's wishing her well.

I for one would like to doff my cap to anyone who dares to use music to make the world a better place, and manages to do it with warmth, humour, passion and conviction. Ewan MacColl was certainly one of those.

Mark Brown, via email

GOOD AS HE'S BEEN TO YOU...

Please tell Allan Jones, well, in the words of the Grateful Dead, "Thank you for a real good time." You did great, always treating those of us fortunate enough to read *Uncut* with total respect and a wonderful storyteller's love of life. Bravo, bravo, bravo. And in the words of one of your favourite icons, "May God bless and keep you always." **Gabe Miller, New York City**



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Eric Clapton. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut August 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: Tuesday, July 28, 2014. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Neil Young's recorded delivery (1-6-4)
- 7 An album from 16 down (1-1)
- 11 US baroque band whose "Walk Away Renee" was covered by The Four Tops (4-5)
- 12 Direction taken by Elvis Costello in 2003 (5)
- 13+8D US bluesman who took his name from a World Heritage Site (3-5)
- 14+22D Mr E Buckle somehow becomes drummer for Blondie (4-5)
- 15 Take the cover off an REM album (6)
- 17 Paul McCartney album that got quite a few people heaving (3-2-3)
- 19 Associates' album recorded with the moody blues (4)
- 23+27D Drummer for Rory Storm And The Hurricanes (5-5)
- 24 "All alone without a telephone", 1972 (5-4)
- 26 "I try to laugh about it, hiding the tears in my eyes, 'cause _____", 1979 (4-4-3)
- 29 Denny _____, frontman of The Moody Blues in their 'Go Now' days (5)
- 32 Zola treat arranged for Jack White (9)
- 35+38A With a "Flick Of The Switch" they can "Blow Up Your Video" (2-2)
- 36+37A Twinkle looked like Ellie Goulding (6-4)
- 38 (See 35 across)

CLUES DOWN

- 2 Leon Russell's entire existence on a trip now recorded on album (4-7)

- 3 "But it's home, the only life I've ever known/Only you know how I loathe _____", 1964 (7-4)
- 4 Irene goes wild for one of The Isley Brothers (5)
- 5 US group The _____ Corporation who had '70s hit with "Rock The Boat" (4)
- 6 (See 16 down)
- 8 (See 13 across)
- 9 Their lineup included Ari Up and Palmolive (5)
- 10 They arrived amid *Tons Of Sobs* in 1969 (4)
- 16+6D One tricky scam sorted out for a band (6-7)
- 18 "_____, I can hardly express my mixed emotions and my thoughtlessness", 1980 (5)
- 20 Rihanna music with too much volume (4)
- 21 Most of the trio use half of the ballad on Imelda May's new album (6)
- 22 (See 14 across)
- 25 "What'll you do when you get lonely, and nobody's waiting by your side", 1972 (5)
- 27 (See 23 across)
- 28+34D Foo Fighters' album tracks are all regarded as singles (3-2-3)
- 30 "The _____ Queen", track from The Who's *Tommy* and covered by Tina Turner (4)
- 31 Dinner dance includes appearance by R&B singer/producer Pharrell Williams' group (1-1-1-1)
- 33 Soft Cell album *The _____ Of Falling Apart* (3)
- 34 (See 28 down)

ANSWERS: TAKE 205

ACROSS

- 1+10A+9D The Take-Off And Landing Of Everything, 8 Ike, 11 Trapeze, 12+18D I See A Darkness, 13 Lost, 14 Halsey, 15 Grech, 17+23D

- Los Lobos, 19 Both, 20 One Man Band, 21 Krafty, 22 Ketting, 25 This Love, 27 Albion, 28 Manassas, 29 Yester.

DOWN

- 1 Talking Book, 2 Ernie, 3 Animal Heart, 4 Eagles,

- 5+7D Fifth Dimension, 6 Abraxas, 14 Hold Steady, 16 Elevation, 24 No-One, 25 Tom, 26 La's.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Secret Door"

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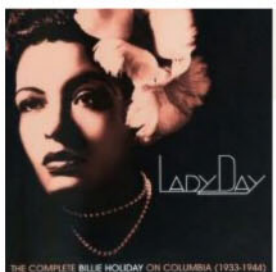
IPC INSPIRE



MY LIFE IN MUSIC

First Aid Kit

Swedish summers, unusual harmonic routes and a “wonderful Auto-Tuned mess”... The musical memories of Klara and Johanna Söderberg



The album that made us want to be singers

Billie Holiday
Lady Day: The Complete Billie Holiday On Columbia 1933-44 2001

Klara: I remember hearing this as a child. I couldn't understand the words but the songs were still so powerful, especially that voice. I requested that my dad learn “Gloomy Sunday” on guitar so I could sing it over and over again. The weight of the tragic lyrics didn't dawn on me until later, but there was a melancholy in it I could relate to.



The album that showed us the power of sister harmonies

Kate & Anna McGarrigle
Kate & Anna McGarrigle 1975

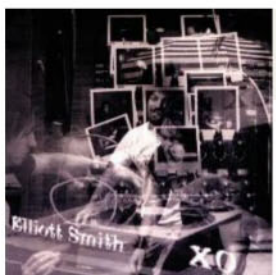
Johanna: We finally picked this up last year and instantly fell in love with it. Kate and Anna's voices are so pure and work so well together. It's very touching. This inspired me to play more with my voice on our new record and go for some more unusual harmonic routes. I consider this a timeless classic.



The song that changed it all for us

Bright Eyes
First Day of My Life 2005

Johanna: Klara and I came upon this by chance at the age of 12 and 14, and it was a revelation. Before, we mostly listened to pop on the radio, but this record turned us into passionate music fans. The fact that Conor Oberst's voice is quite rough made us realise we didn't have to be some perfect product in order to make music. All we needed was to pick up the guitar and write... and so we did!



A record that makes us cry

Elliott Smith
XO 1998

Klara: We were pretty young when Elliott Smith died and it was close to that time that we first started listening to this. It's hard not to mention “Waltz #2”, because it's just one of the most perfect songs ever written. “I'm never gonna know you now, but I'm going to love you anyhow” – that says it all, doesn't it? I can only listen to Elliott's music in small doses, because it's so sad it always brings me to tears.



Our favourite country album

Gram Parsons
GP 1973

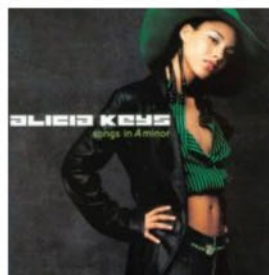
Johanna: Our uncle, who is quite the music fan, introduced us to this record about five years ago. Since then it has been on constant repeat. Emmylou Harris and Gram's effortless harmonies are just to die for. Klara and I went on a pilgrimage to Joshua Tree three years ago, where we shot the video for “Emmylou”. It was quite haunting listening to this record while driving around in the desert.



A song that reminds us of home

Ted Gärdestad
Come Give Me Love 1973

Klara: This was produced by Björn and Benny of Abba. Ted was just 17 when he recorded it. Due to his tragic fate [Gärdestad committed suicide in 1997, aged 41, after years of mental health problems], there is always that extra dimension to his songs, which you can't help but be moved by. He's one of our national heroes and listening to this always makes me think of Swedish summers.



An album that brings back childhood memories

Alicia Keys
Songs In A Minor 2001

Johanna: This was one of the first pieces of music I bought – after A*Teens' “Super Trouper” [laughs]. Both Klara and I were quite crazy about Ms Keys and tried to imitate her voice growing up. Dad even helped me record my own version of “Fallin'”. I still have it on CD, and it's a wonderful Auto-Tuned mess.



An album by a dear friend

Samantha Crain
Kid Face 2013

Klara: We had Samantha as our opener at our first ever American tour, having been massive fans of hers for a long time. While we were on tour with her I discovered that not only is she one of my favourite songwriters, but also one of the coolest performers and sweetest ladies that I've ever met. She continues to impress me – this is her third album, and I'm proud to get to call her a friend.

First Aid Kit's third album, *Stay Gold*, is out now on Columbia. They play Latitude Festival (July 19) and Green Man Festival (August 17) before embarking on a full UK tour in September.

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT: “I shall probably just one day explode and turn to dust and crotchets and quavers”



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