"And our time is flyin'/See the candle burnin' low/Is the new world rising/From the shambles of the old..."

THE BEATLES THE NEW, INSIDE STORY OF A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

40 PAGES OF REVIEWS

JACK WHITE
THE EAGLES
NICK CAVE
SPOON
APHEX TWIN
AND MORE...

UNCUT

LED ZEP & BEYOND

THE FAR-OUT ADVENTURES OF

ROBERT PLANT

"I'm not my brother's keeper..."

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS!

Damn! At home with TOM PETTY

Inside the court of the new KING CRIMSON

RICHARD & LINDA THOMPSON

"Glum is the new glam!"

BOBBY WOMACK R.I.P.

It's all over now

AND

JOSEF K
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MERCHANDISE
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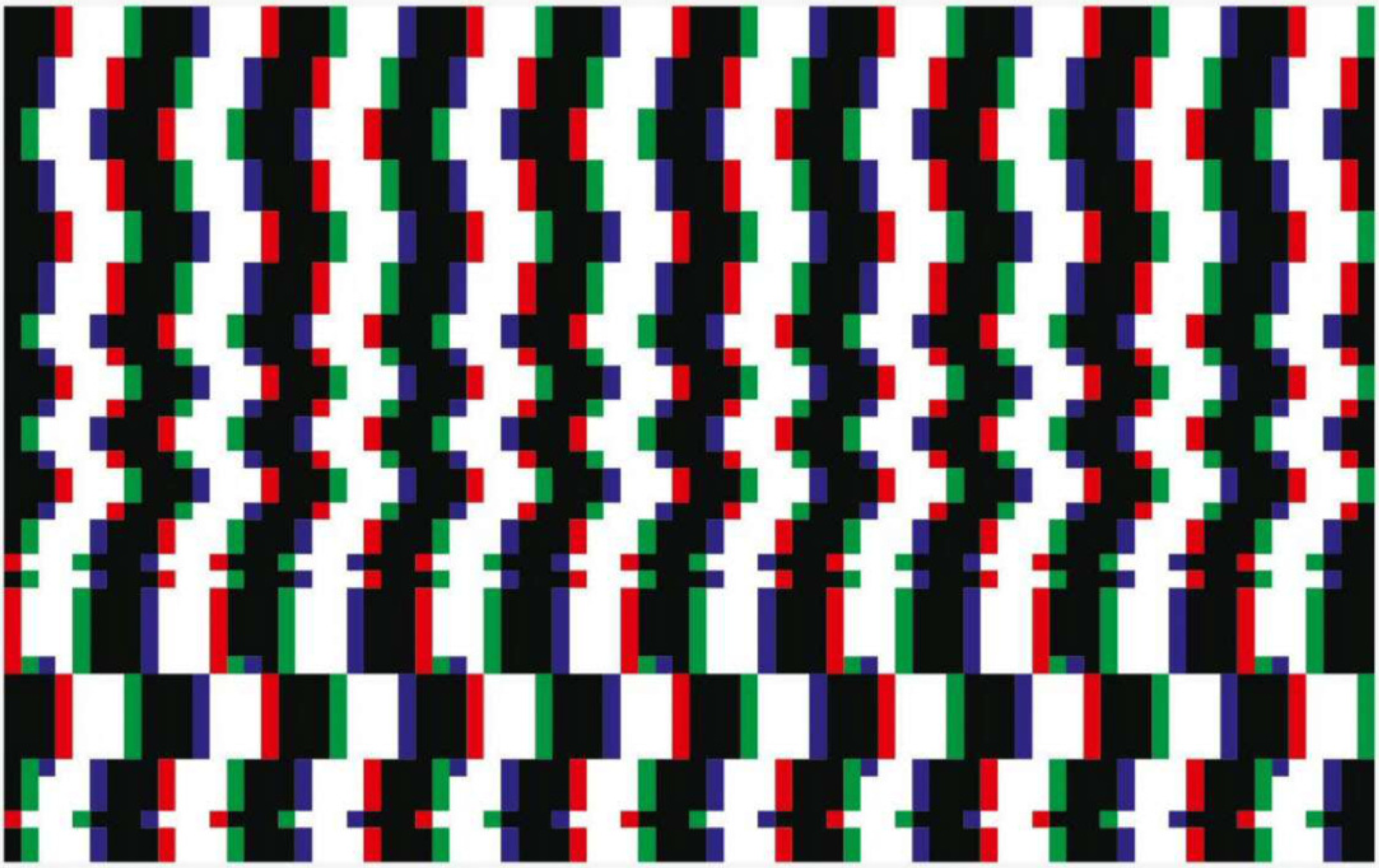
HENDRIX UNSEEN!
WIRE
J MASCIS
JENNY LEWIS
THE ALLMAN BROTHERS

TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS

HYPNOTIC EYE

American Dream Plan B | *Fault Lines* | *Red River* | *Full Grown Boy* | *All You Can Carry* | *Power Drunk*
Forgotten Man | *Sins Of My Youth* | *U Get Me High* | *Burnt Out Town* | *Shadow People*



'THEIR HARDEST ROCKING ALBUM' 8/10 UNCUT

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COVER: ED MILES **THIS PAGE:** GUS STEWART/REDFERNS

Are we rolling?

IT'S HARD TO tell where Neil Young and what we can just about call Crazy Horse end their main set in Hyde Park. "Rockin' In The Free World" has spluttered to a conclusion, and the band appear to have left the stage. Then you notice Young remains amid the debris, pointing agitatedly at the word printed across his new T-shirt: "EARTH".

For the previous two hours, Young has confounded his audience once again. Last summer, Crazy Horse's tour was a compellingly fractious affair, built around mammoth *Psychedelic Pill* noise jams that presented Young as creatively uncompromising, hardly afraid of alienating fans. This year, the show starts in broadly similar fashion: 15 magnificently wallowing minutes of "Love And Only Love", followed up by 10 of "Goin' Home", plucked from the oblivion of *Are You Passionate?* and not, perhaps, one to gladden the hearts of the casual onlookers at this British Summertime festival in central London. Even in the turmoil and longueurs of "Love And Only Love", though, there's a different energy and focus, driven as it is by Rick Rosas, a slightly more conventional bassist than Billy Talbot (absent recovering from a reportedly mild stroke). The onslaught is leavened, too, by the presence of two backing vocalists, Dorene Carter and YaDonna West, whose repeated exhortations to *"Break it down"* anchor Young and Frank 'Poncho' Sampedro's ambulatory paths. A good comparison can be made with the electric portions of the Chrome Dreams II tour in 2008, when Rosas again provided the security and Pegi Young and Anthony Crawford, on backing vocals, added a degree of emotional ballast. It's not a compromise, exactly; more a way in.

Magnificently wallowing... Sampedro and Young in Hyde Park

There are reconfigured hits, notably "After The Gold Rush", delivered electrically and at an engagingly sprightly pace. Again, though, there's great pleasure in trying to parse Young's setlist for clues where, after *A Letter Home*, he might be heading next. Does that heartening exhumation of "Goin' Home" mean the turn-of-the-millennium Crazy Horse session from which it originated, *Toast*, might all finally see the light of day? Why has Young chosen to pluck "Separate Ways" from the mid-'70s wasteland of abandoned albums? Is *Archives Volume 2* nearing completion? And what of Young's new "EARTH" shirt, on sale at the merch stands? When Young points to the shirt and the band hastily reconvene around him, it is to crunch into the night's solitary new song, "Who's Gonna Stand Up And Save The Earth?", a fiery compatriot to "Fuckin' Up". Extrapolating wildly from this righteous anti-fracking anthem, from the gentler but still aggrieved "Hole In The Sky" which surfaced on last year's tour, and from rumours of another record in the works, it might not be a stretch to imagine a forthcoming ecological concept album. After this, there is time for one more 20-minute song – a version of "Down By The River" that might rank as the deepest I've witnessed, for the dramatic highs and lows, the graceful tension, the jazzy space and nuance which is introduced into Young, Sampedro and the staunch Rosas' tight little scrum. In spite of all the whims and tangents, the continued potency of Neil Young is a wonder to behold, not least when he manages to transform what could have been a contractually expedient tour into something which is both historically satisfying and full of tantalising new possibilities.

That would also make a neat mission statement for this discreet new era of *Uncut*. Our founding editor, Allan Jones, is now editor-at-large and, after seven years as his attentive deputy, I've stepped up to continue the good work. I'm thrilled, too, that this month's cover star is Robert Plant – another artist who, like Neil Young and Jack White (*I reviewed White live on p102*), is steeped in tradition but wary of becoming trapped by the past, who is constantly striving to enrich and evolve the music that he loves. "Nothing gets in the way of anything," Plant tells Michael Bonner. "You just make music and keep moving..."

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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring JIMI HENDRIX | WIRE | MERCHANDISE | LONNIE HOLLEY

STARLESS AND BIBLE BACK!

"My professional life has been so devoid of joy..."

Unveiled! The fearsome KING CRIMSON Mark VIII. Can three drummers make ROBERT FRIPP enjoy touring at last?

Discipline, indeed... (l-r) drummers Pat Mastelotto, Bill Rieflin and Gavin Harrison with Mel Collins (sax, flute), Tony Levin (bass, vocals), Jakko Jakszyk (guitar, vocals) and Robert Fripp, Elstree rehearsal studios, June 11, 2014

OVER EARL GREY in the kitchen of Discipline Global Mobile studios in rural Wiltshire, Robert Fripp surveys the progress of King Crimson Mark VIII with a Puckish smile. "This is the first King Crimson of which I've been a member – and I have been a member of them all – where at least one member of the band does not hold resentment or active antipathy towards me."

Rehearsals are well advanced for a 17-date tour of the US – Crimson's first since 2008 – which kicks off in September. Improbably, this lineup is led by three drummers: Gavin Harrison, Bill Rieflin and Pat Mastelotto are the frontline. Fripp, Mel Collins (saxophone, flute), Tony Levin (bass, vocals) and Jakko Jakszyk (guitar, vocals) will be the backline, located on a riser behind. This, as they say, looks epic. "Crimson as a musical undertaking can't be judged from its records. It can only be judged by live performance."

Since exclusively revealing the tour to *Uncut* last year, Fripp has executed his masterplan with characteristic precision. The first two-week batch of rehearsals were completed in June at DGM HQ, with individual sessions for the front and backline. Full band rehearsals take place at Elstree in the middle of July. Final rehearsals are in Woodstock, New York, on August 25. And, uniquely, Fripp is delighting in the experience.

"For me it's a novelty. My professional life has been so devoid of joy. Satisfaction – yes. Bits of nice happiness on the way – yes. An education – constantly. But a joyful undertaking? No. I haven't actually enjoyed touring to date. I hope this tour will provide a new direction in my life of playing music."

Fripp maintains that for King Crimson 2014, it was this lineup or bust. Witness the inclusion of Mel Collins – who first worked with the band on 1970's *In The Wake Of Poseidon*. "This wasn't a question of 'we need a saxophone player', because I know at least one other sax player who would like the gig," Fripp says drily. "If Mel had said no – in fact if any one of the people had said no – then that would have been the end of it."

Fripp's stated goal is clearly to encourage his fellow members to push the limits of their playing, and the material. "All my best playing has been done outside King Crimson. Because no-one in Crimson has ever thought: 'Let's find a vehicle for Robert to do what he can do well!' The only two characters who've really done it supremely well were Bowie and Eno."

All the live shows will be recorded, working on the principle that if any shows are good enough, they will be made available as part of the ongoing DGM archive programme. As for writing new material, Fripp has made a start – "but we don't have the time for me to continue that process at the moment".

The mechanics of touring this seven-headed beast have directly affected where the band can play: hence, for the moment, the band are only touring the US.

SCARLET PAGE

The controller: Robert Fripp with his complex onstage rig

"In America we are able to actually pick the venues in the particular cities; venues that give us half a chance of making an honourable performance," says Fripp. "For me, every night provides a degree of heartbreak. If you're playing in a 2000-seat theatre, then only about 1000 are worth sitting in. What do you do about the character in the first row, last seat on the left, under the bins? I would advise them not to buy the ticket.

"The tickets are not exorbitant, but they are expensive... but that's a function of touring, and that's the amount of heartbreak I take on. If they were not that price, we couldn't be playing it."

Fripp has analysed the logistical complexities with academic rigour. The appetite is there ("I turned down an extraordinary offer from Japan last week. They didn't make my eyes water but I did put on my spectacles to read the offer"), but for the moment, touring Europe or beyond is "not a question which has current relevance".

"How do you handpick a tour of Europe? It's incredibly difficult. So someone says, why don't you come to, say, Warsaw. And I say which venue, and they say the Congress Hall. And I say I've played it twice – are you aware that the building has a key frequency of C, so that your feedback in the low mids will feedback on the note C? And they say no. I have played a lot of these places over the past 45 years. I do know what's involved."

What should audiences expect? Fripp is gleefully evasive about the material the band are playing, and how they are playing it.

"A guiding King Crimson principle is the music is new whenever it was written. So it's *all* new music. What I will say is, if you are coming with the explicit or implicit demand that you need to hear this music or that then don't come. And if you've already bought tickets, sell them to someone and you might make a profit. The point is with Crimson, if you come with an open mind, generally something worthwhile happens. If you don't, it's less likely.

"If you go there thinking, 'If I don't hear "In the Court Of The Crimson King" I will have a lousy show', then you will have a lousy show. It's not on the setlist."

MARK BENTLEY

***King Crimson**'s tour of the US begins on September 9, at The Egg in Albany, NY. See www.dgmlive.com*

SCARLET PAGE

CROSSED WIRE

LIGHTS! CAMERA! GOOSE!

In which WIRE revisit their disruptive art-punk of 1979. Involves Dada, gas stoves, baying mobs...

AT THE END of the 1970s, the British group Wire made three influential albums that suggested punk rock might have the eloquence and conceptual integrity of fine art. During the promotion of the last of these, 1979's *154*, Wire sowed the seeds for their final album of the period: the chaotic live album *Document And Eyewitness*, now being reissued on the band's own Pink Flag label.

On the LP, Wire were recorded playing an under-rehearsed set of mainly brand new material. Several of these songs also featured stage directions, among them "Piano Tuner..." (*singer attacks gas-stove*) and "Eels Sang Lino" (*vocalist lit by illuminated goose*). Obliquely, their approach was prompted by their label, Harvest.

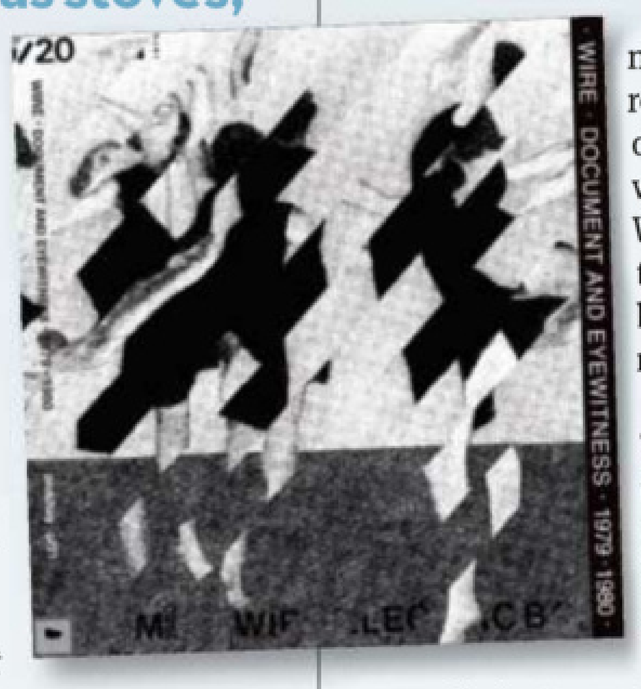
"We supported Roxy Music in 1979," explains singer Colin Newman, "by which time they had essentially become Bryan Ferry's backing band. We were playing stadiums, but to a mainstream audience, whistling for us to get off. And we were losing money doing it."

Wire realised that there had to be a better way to promote their albums. "One idea was to have a residency where we bussed people in from major population centres," remembers Graham Lewis. "It ended up as a collaboration with the Central School Of Art."

In November 1979, Wire played four nights at London's Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre, making full use of the facilities there to try something more inspired by performance art. It was record promotion, but not as anyone knew it. "It was vaguely Dadaesque," says Lewis, "it expressed our dissatisfaction with other things."

In February 1980, the band decided to try their ideas out on a more general audience, at two London gigs: Notre Dame Hall and the Electric Ballroom. As *Document And Eyewitness* records, punks, there to hear "12 XU" really weren't feeling the illuminated goose.

"It was meant to be disruptive," says Newman, "but there was a real undercurrent of violence at the gig. Punk had become the refuge of people who hadn't been around in '76. They weren't cool enough. We met the emergence of Oi."



"In some ways it was nostalgic," says Lewis. "It reminded you of the early days, when a baying mob was *de rigueur*. You'd be in Wakefield, and suddenly there would be this hail of bottles, and you would have no idea what prompted it."

When Rough Trade's Geoff Travis suggested releasing the live recordings, the band added taped comments to the hostile soundscape from longtime Wire fans Adrian Garston and Russell Mills, to supply the "eyewitness" part of the package. As such, it's very nearly Wire's *Gimme Shelter*: art rescued from the jaws of debacle.

Document And Eyewitness put a full stop on Wire's classic '70s phase, the band, says Colin Newman, "going from adulatory reviews to barely existing in the space of five months". Still, it has come to seem a blessing in disguise. Songs from *Document* were revisited for Wire's 2013 album *Change Becomes Us*, while the band's 1980 split now even seems fortuitous.

"It's the triumph of the long game," says Newman. "If we hadn't done it then, we might not be around now." *JOHN ROBINSON*

***Document And Eyewitness** is reissued on August 18 on Pink Flag*

"It was meant to be disruptive..." Wire in 1979: (l-r) Robert Grey, Bruce Gilbert, Colin Newman, Graham Lewis

A NEW EXPERIENCE

Voodoo style!

JIMI HENDRIX unseen. *"I'm right here in your picture frame..."*

LONDON, 1967. Jimi Hendrix and the Experience turn up for a photo session with Donald Silverstein. Two pictures will soon appear: one in the gatefold of *Axis: Bold As Love*; another in a poster packaged with *Electric Ladyland*. The rest, however, have never surfaced until now, at a show this month in London's Snap Galleries. As you can see, they provide an intimate new insight: while the picture below appears to show the dandyish Hendrix laughing at a video of some cats on an iPhone, he's actually amused by his own reflection, in a mirror held by Silverstein's assistant.

Jimi Hendrix By Donald Silverstein *runs from July 26 to August 23 at Snap Galleries, 12 Piccadilly Arcade, London (www.snapgalleries.com). A book of previously unpublished Jimi Hendrix photographs from the archive is available to purchase from the gallery.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY DONALD SILVERSTEIN COPYRIGHT SILVERSTEIN ESTATE/SNAP GALLERIES

A QUICK ONE

➤ The next edition of our **Ultimate Music Guide** series is dedicated to none other than the mighty **Tom Waits**. As ever with the UMGs, this includes archival interviews from

the pages of *Melody Maker* and *NME* along with brand new reviews of all Waits' albums. It goes on sale on July 30.

➤ The biggest news this month is the unexpected announcement that **Pink Floyd** are to release their first studio album in 20 years in October: *The Endless River*. Described as a "swan song" for the late Rick Wright, the album is drawn from unreleased material produced during the sessions for 1994's *The Division Bell*.

➤ Just as we were going to press, news broke that a new **Beatles** documentary is in the works. Directed by Ron Howard, the film will focus on The Beatles as a live entity, spanning the Cavern Club days to their last public concert at Candlestick Park, San Francisco, in 1966.

➤ Don't forget to drop in to see us at **www.uncut.co.uk**, featuring reviews, news, interviews and playlists...

END OF THE ROAD

"I didn't know what the word 'art' meant..."

Discovered! Visionary outsider artist LONNIE HOLLEY, belatedly turning his hand to music

"I work for the whole of mother earth and mother universe..." Lonnie Holley on the cover of 2012's *Just Before Music*

"THE EARLIEST PART of my art career is when I started making babies' tombstones, and I didn't know it was art at the time," remembers artist and musician Lonnie Holley, when asked about his formative encounters with making art. The babies in question were his niece and nephew, who had tragically died in a house fire. "When I found out it was art was when the fire department came to put a fire out at my house, and the fire chief asked, 'Who's the artist?', and I didn't know what the word 'art' meant. That was in 1979." It was yet another unexpected encounter in a thorny, complex life: one of 27 children from Birmingham, Alabama, Holley lived in poverty, was sent to a foster home before he'd turned two, and spent some of his teenage years in an Industrial School.

Over the past few years, however, 64-year-old Holley has started to build a name as a musician and songwriter, with two albums of gorgeous songs, *Just Before Music* and *Keeping A Record Of It*, released on Dust-To-Digital. He's spent the past four decades working away at his uniquely holistic vision of artistic practice, including collages, paintings and sculptural works built from scrap materials, some of which have been displayed at the White House and the Smithsonian. "I draw inspiration from whatever the materials are and the act that has been rendered from the action," he says. "A storm leaves so much trash and debris behind and I see it as materials to be worked instead of putting it off as trash."

> *"Instead of me telling my experiences, I sing about them..."*
> LONNIE HOLLEY

He'd also been recording his music, bled primitively to cassette, for some time before it came to the attention of Dust-To-Digital's Lance Ledbetter. "A mutual friend of mine and Lonnie's arranged a private performance at his house," he recalls. "As soon as I heard Lonnie playing the vintage organ I brought over with his singing, I was mesmerised. The unusual combination of soul and minimalist sounds was a perfect match for his voice and the lyrics drawn from his intense life experiences."

Ledbetter subsequently put Holley into the studio, and the results are genuinely otherworldly, Holley's sung-spoken vocals levitating above naked, drifting keyboard hums and whirrs. For a vague reference point, think Arthur Russell's oceanic drift-song, circa *World Of Echo*. 2012's *Just Before Music* cracked the code and broke the secret, and for his second album, 2013's *Keeping A Record Of It*, Holley was joined by Cole Alexander of the Black Lips and Bradford Cox of Deerhunter on several songs. Excitingly, Holley will be performing on *Uncut*'s Tipi Tent stage at the End Of The Road festival later in August. Word has it, too, that Nick Cave has taken to playing Holley's music between sets on his recent tour.

Ask Holley if much has changed for him over these past few years, though, and he gracefully demurs, "I don't think anything has changed. I'm just more busy. As an artist, I work for the whole of mother earth and mother universe... What I'm doing is making a song about my life. All songs and any form of music that has been done, is bringing out a feeling and an emotion and thinking about it. Instead of me telling my experiences, I sing about them."

JON DALE

***Lonnie Holley** is appearing at the End Of The Road Festival, Larmer Tree Gardens, Dorset (August 29-31) and London St John-At-Hackney Church (Sept 2). Keeping A Record Of It is out now*

UNCUT AT THE END OF THE ROAD

Come join us! Our Tipi Tent lineup revealed...

EXCITING TIMES AHEAD: *Uncut* will be hosting the Tipi Tent again at this year's End Of The Road festival, which kicks off in a matter of weeks. We're delighted to be showcasing many of our favourite artists on the Tipi Tent stage, including **Sam Lee**, **EMA**, **Wye Oak**, **Marissa Nadler**, **The Rails**, **Israel Nash Gripka**, **Lonnie Holley** *(see above)*, **Alice Boman** and **Arc Iris**. They join an impressive lineup spread across the other stages, among them **Flaming Lips**, **St Vincent** *(left)*, **Jenny Lewis**, **Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks**, **Felice Brothers**, **The Horrors**, **Wild Beasts**, **Yo La Tengo**, **Mark Kozelek**, **The BBC Radiophonic Workshop** and **John Cooper Clarke**. And don't forget: we'll also be holding a couple of 45-minute Q&A sessions with some of the bands: one on Saturday and one on Sunday. Please come along and say hello! As usual, End Of The Road takes place at Larmer Tree Gardens, Dorset between August 29-31. *For more info, visit www.endoftheroadfestival.com*

Way beyond punk: (l-r) Chris Horn, Elsner Nino, David Vassalotti, Carson Cox, Patrick Brady

WE'RE NEW HERE

Merchandise

Recommended this month: the Florida punks evoking The Smiths, REM and *Sir Gawain And The Green Knight*!

MERCHANDISE ARE, OSTENSIBLY at least, a punk band. From Tampa, Florida, to date they've conducted themselves in a manner of which Henry Rollins would approve. Frontman Carson Cox, guitarist David Vassalotti and bassist Patrick Brady met while playing in local hardcore and powerviolence groups, and they've gone on to operate by DIY principles, playing shows in squats and basements, self-booking tours with friends Milk Music and Destruction Unit and recording with the basest of tools. *Totale Nite*, released last year on Iowa indie Night-People, was made in the bedroom of their shared house with a drum machine, Vassolotti's guitar plugged directly into a PC. "We still do it that way," laughs Cox. "But I want to annex off our old records, build a layer of protection between the earlier stuff and what we're doing now. Because the music we're making now is way beyond anything we've done before."

Watching Merchandise at London's Islington Town Hall in June, as the front row gaze starry-eyed at Cox and a young man hops the barrier not to stagedive, but to grasp the frontman in a sweaty hug, it strikes you they're a punk band in the same way REM or The Smiths were a punk band: the rare sort that elicit ecstatic devotion. New album *After The End* – their fourth, but first for 4AD – is indeed a bold step forward, away from the "pop suicide" of *Totale Nite*, with its seven-minute songs and churning sax, to something of brightness and concision. Mixed with Gareth Jones (Depeche Mode, Einstürzende Neubauten), and featuring the expanded lineup of Elsner Nino on drums and Chris Horn on keys and sax, "Little Killer" and "True Monument" recalls the jangly melodicism of Felt or REM circa *Lifes Rich Pageant*. Cox, though, prone to invoking dizzyingly broad reference points, has other ideas. "I was thinking *Scott 3*, Serge and Jane, Jean-Claude Vannier... I love that symphonic French production – almost showbizzy, but super-subversive."

After The End, then, is just the latest chapter in the tale of a band determined to progress. Their first, 2010's *(Strange Songs) In The Dark*, was, says Cox, about "naïvety and curiosity"; 2012's *Children Of Desire* dealing with "reactionary depression"; *Totale Nite*, "purged of all romantic love". Here, says Cox, the lyrics were composed in Burroughs cut-up style, "throwing words together and finding out what I'm thinking afterwards". Still, what's within draws on notions of death and rebirth. "I was thinking of the tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight – him going into the forest to cut off the head of the bad guy, preserving his purity and returning a legend. It's apocalyptic, but there's that notion of 'after the end' – like, the story continues."

Signing to a proper label hasn't blunted Merchandise's sense of can-do. Next, Cox laughs, he's "trying to take the media into my own hands", working on a movie, a DVD of short films, and a new video with Scottish playwright John Byrne, based on Byrne's 1987 BBC drama *Tutti Frutti*. "My ideal record is something new. Even if it's bad, if it sounds genuinely new, that's exciting to me," says Cox. "All my favourite musicians have done that. Whether knowingly, like Johnny Thunders inventing rock'n'roll, or totally by accident – I find that inspiring." *LOUIS PATTISON*

After The End *is released by 4AD on August 25*

I'M YOUR FAN

"Merchandise are one of those bands who manage to take elements that would come off like bombast in a lesser band and turn them into pure emotional power"
Pete 'Sonic Boom' Kember

TIMOTHY SACCENTI; STEVEN PERILLOUX

THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

TWEEDY
Sukierae DBPM
Jeff Tweedy and son Spencer turn the sound of Wilco in on itself. A quietly wired, insidious departure.

ALICE GERRARD
Follow The Music TOMPKINS SQUARE
The 80-year-old bluegrass legend falls into the company of Hiss Golden Messenger. Ghostly Appalachian vibes aplenty.

GOAT
Commune
ROCKET
A second set of ethnological forgeries and psychedelic grooves, courtesy of the masked, self-mythologising Swedes.

ALLAH-LAS
Worship The Sun
INNOVATIVE LEISURE
Los Angeles' most assiduous band of record store clerks lovingly construct another jangling homage to the beaches and canyons of the late '60s.

STEVE GUNN
Way Out Weather
PARADISE OF BACHELORS
After last year's exceptional *Time Off*, the new guitar master continues to expand his vision.

BLONDE REDHEAD
Barragán KOBALT
A brittle, pulsating return to form from Kazu Makino and the Pace twins, veteran dreampop experimentalists from New York City.

VASHTI BUNYAN
Heartleap FATCAT
Forty-four years on from her debut, and nine since her second album, the angelic Bunyan pushes on with her intimate, magical career.

SYL JOHNSON
Diamond In The Rough FAT POSSUM
Fat Possum's invaluable recycling of the Hi! catalogue uncovers this gem from 1974. A poignant memorial, too, for the late Teenie Hodges, discreetly brilliant on guitar.

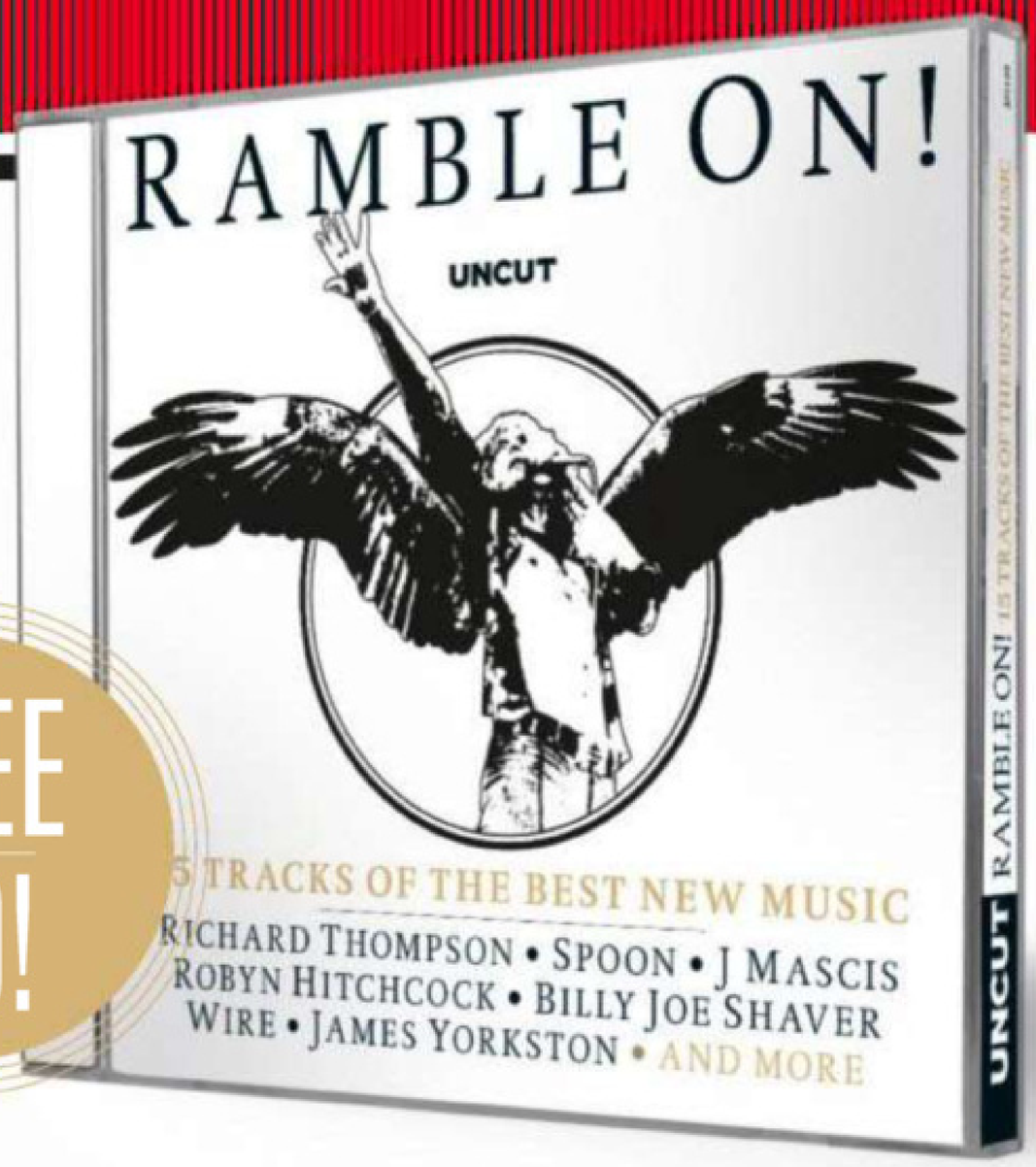
A WINGED VICTORY FOR THE SULLEN
Atomos ERASED TAPES
For all your serene post-classical needs... The ambient duo build a cultured hybrid of Arvo Part and *Apollo: Atmospheres...* -era Eno.

GERRY GOFFIN
Reverend Bottom's Tojo Saloon ADELPHI
Quite a discovery in the wake of Goffin's death: a rowdy, Dylanish vamp from his 1973 solo debut, *It Ain't Exactly Entertainment*.

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

RAMBLE ON!

Your guide to this month's free CD



FREE CD!

1 RICHARD THOMPSON
I Misunderstood

A characteristically tense and gripping opener from Thompson, a new acoustic rendering of one of his best songs from '91's *Rumor And Sigh*. Thompson graces the End Of The Road festival later this month, and looks back on *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*, alongside ex-wife Linda, on p46.

2 SPOON
Rent I Pay

Streamlined and with a bright, cerebral menace, "Rent I Pay" is a fine indication of what to expect on *They Want My Soul*, Spoon's eighth LP and our Album Of The Month. The way Britt Daniel's Lennonishly pinched vocal sits over a driving, bass-heavy groove is classic Spoon: a neat entry point to this terrific and frequently undervalued rock band.

3 J MASCIS
Every Morning

The relaunch of Dinosaur Jr has turned out, unexpectedly, to be one of the most creatively rewarding reunions of late. Nevertheless, Mascis has saved one of his best latterday songs for a new solo LP, *Tied To A Star*. Predominantly acoustic, "Every Morning" still features some economically stinging electric solos, plus one of Mascis' catchiest hooks this side of "The Wagon".

4 COLD SPECKS
Bodies At Bay

Graeme Thomson's review on p72 of the second album by Canadian singer Al Spx, *Neuroplasticity*, is full of tantalising reference points: PJ Harvey, Patti Smith, The Cure, Nick Cave, Kate Bush, Swans. They make sense, too, when you hear "Bodies At Bay", a gothic soul workout as intense as it is impressive.

5 ROBYN HITCHCOCK
Trouble In Your Blood

Now 61, some of Robyn Hitchcock's quirks might have been ironed out, but his songwriting craftmanship remains potent. "Trouble..." is part of an auspicious new LP recorded by Joe Boyd, skilfully aligning the old Soft Boy with Nick Drake and Bert Jansch. Says Hitchcock: "It's the teenage Robyn getting the chance to do what he'd have loved to think he was going to do in the future."

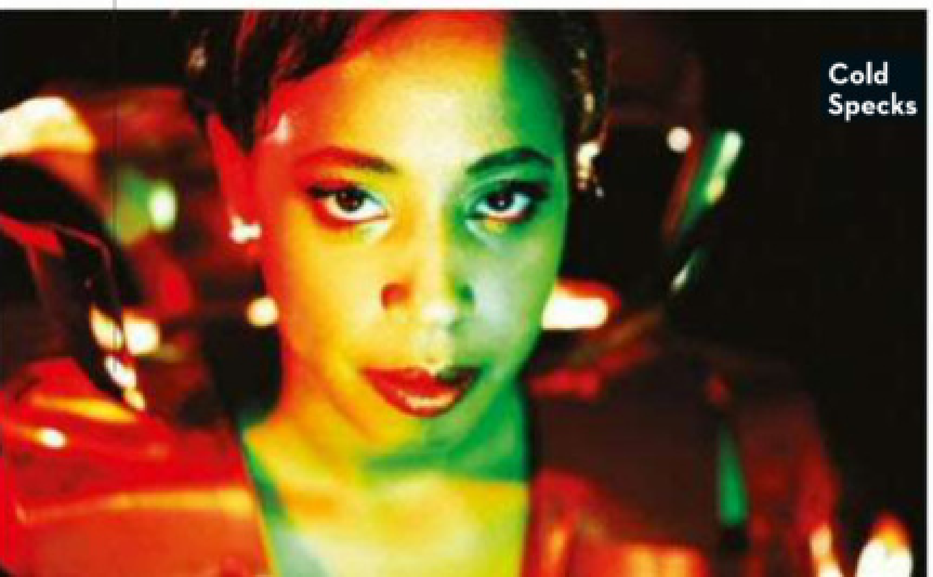
Robyn Hitchcock

6 DAVID KILGOUR & THE HEAVY EIGHTS
Lose Myself In Sound

Jangling New Zealand archetypes The Clean recently reissued their handy *Anthology*, a useful prelude to the new set from core member David Kilgour. As this cut proves so artfully, Kilgour has lost none of his chiming insouciance – nudged here into grungier, psych terrain.

7 JAMES YORKSTON
The Blues You Sang

Alexis Taylor is producing, but Yorkston's eighth LP sticks with the pensive folk at which he excels. In fact, *The Cellardyke Recording And Wassailing Society* might be even more reflective than usual: check out this understated, rather lovely duet with KT Tunstall.


Cold Specks

8 GRUMBLING FUR
Feet Of Clay

Alexander Tucker and Daniel O'Sullivan's backgrounds are in metal, noise and other vaguely forbidding genres. Increasingly, though, their music together employs the tools of folk, drone and systems music to make odd, bewitching pop. And with each album, Tucker's voice grows ever closer to that of Dave Gahan.

9 NOURA MINT SEYMALI
Tzenni

Given Robert Plant's exploratory tastes, it seems fitting to have a Saharan jam on this month's CD. This trance-funk beauty from Mauritanian griot Seymali is keenly recommended to those of you drawn to the desert blues of Tinariwen and their Touareg fellow travellers.

10 LULUC
Small Window

A new Sub Pop signing, Luluc are a duo from Melbourne, currently based in Brooklyn, who specialise in a preternaturally calm brand of acoustic folk-pop. Here's the highlight from their second, Aaron Dessner-produced album, *Passerby*, with the gorgeous voice of Zoe Randell (shades of Alela Diane, perhaps) well to the fore.

Billy Joe Shaver

11 BILLY JOE SHAVER
Hard To Be An Outlaw

A self-aware but defiant mission statement from the gnarled country veteran, keeping star-studded company on this cut from our Americana Album Of The Month. "Hard To Be An Outlaw" features Shaver sharing harmonies of a kind with old chum Willie Nelson. Authentically wayward, hugely endearing.

12 LONNIE HOLLEY
Sun & Water

One of the highlights on our stage at End Of The Road will almost certainly be Holley, a garlanded Alabama outsider artist who's recently turned his hand to an incantatory music built of chants and quasi-ambient synth doodles. From last year's *Keeping A Record Of It*; Holley is interviewed on p8.

13 DAN MICHAELSON AND THE COASTGUARDS
Getting It All Wrong

The former Absentee frontman and his band have become natural successors to the big sad band music made by Tindersticks and Lambchop in the '90s, experts in sounding gracefully forlorn. The soul bassline comes courtesy of The Magic Numbers' Romeo Stodart.

14 WIRE
Revealing Trade Secrets

A change of pace now, with this piece of post-punk history, lifted from *Document And Eyewitness* – a recording of a 1980 show that, Colin Newman tells us on p6, "was meant to be disruptive". In this context, the arty antagonism is as effective as the band doubtless intended.

15 BITCHIN BAJAS
Bueu

Something more peaceful to close? How about the epic organ and reed drone of "Bueu" from this Chicago trio? Their self-titled LP on Drag City keeps the party rolling, an immaculate work of kosmische/New Age/ambient driftmusic. See you in the vintage flotation tank...

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for the facts

Meet

THE BOSS

By day, he makes premium beer.
By day, complex recipe.
By day, smooth.
By day, glasses.
By day, he is The Boss.

By night, he makes premium brassieres.
By night, complex embroidery.
By night, supportive.
By night, cups.
By night, he is also The Boss.

He has a nap at lunch.

IMPOSSIBLY SMOOTH
PREMIUM BEER
COBRA

live smooth

IMPOSSIBLY SUPPORTIVE
PREMIUM BRASSIERES
BRACO

J Mascis

Interview: Michael Bonner
Photograph: Justin Lapriore

The Dinosaur Jr man who almost joined Nirvana but stood in with GG Allin instead: "Fine in theory, but when he's actually shitting onstage beside you, it's not fun!"

"PORTUGAL AREN'T COMING back from that," exclaims J Mascis with unexpected enthusiasm. Presently, the notoriously reticent Mascis is sitting in a hotel bar in London watching Germany beat Portugal in the World Cup on a giant television screen. His surprising outburst, he explains, is because he has a vested interest in the outcome of this particular game: Mascis' wife is German. She is currently in Berlin with their son where, it transpires, they are watching the match on a big screen, in the church where his brother-in-law is a minister.

Meanwhile, Mascis is in the UK to promote his latest solo album, *Tied To A Star*. Despite his woolly appearance – faded black Cactus T-shirt, trucker cap and purple-rimmed glasses, grey hair, beard – Mascis is on sharp form as he answers your questions on subjects ranging from his favourite guitar riffs to the existence of some deep Dinosaur Jr rarities and exactly what happened when Kurt Cobain asked him to join Nirvana...

Dinosaur Jr: (l-r) J Mascis, Lou Barlow and Murph – "It's not as extreme..."

STAR QUESTION

Hi, J. You've got a reputation for being difficult in interviews, do you think some people misunderstand your sense of humour? *Kevin Shields*

I've learned from being interviewed and dealing with people that I talk slower than a lot of people. If a person's really wired and ADD, and I don't answer fast enough, they write me off as an asshole in that second where I'm not answering them. Then, that's it. How long have I known Kevin? Since we first came to England. We opened for Primal Scream and then played at ULU. I think he was there. Someone told me to buy My Bloody Valentine, and the "You Made Me Realise" EP had just come out. We've seen each other pretty much every time I've come to England. Coming to Europe back then was great for us. They'd give us food and somewhere to stay and people actually liked us. We were pretty hated where we lived in Western Massachusetts.

Is it true you turned down Kurt Cobain's invitation to join Nirvana? *Stan Maloney, New York*

Yeah, Kurt asked me to join. I was with Thurston Moore at this Nirvana show at Maxwell's in Hoboken. I was talking with Kurt, and he said, "You should join my band." I think he was kind of sick of the guitar player at the time, Jason [Everman]. I was like, "Oh, yeah." That was kind of it. You know, I wanted to go to college in Seattle and I didn't get in. So I could have been there before all them. Imagine how different history would have been. I had gone to a semester in Amhurst. I hated college so I didn't do too well. When I applied to Seattle, they weren't too impressed. What was I studying? Nothing. You can do that in America. I took a lot of Hitler-inspired classes. I had a teacher who was an SS officer and another who was a Jew who escaped. They were both in the same history department, which was weird.

What do you remember about your earliest gigs in Boston? *Sheryl Dillon, Cardiff*

When we started, we were too loud and we had no fans. That's a bad combination when you're trying to play shows in these bars and the bartender can't hear the people trying to buy drinks. "Who are these guys?" So we'd get banned from all the clubs around there. In Boston the soundman threw a bottle at us. We were playing with Salem 66 or something. In Boston, in [*Mascis' early-'80s hardcore punk band*] Deep Wound, people liked us in the hardcore scene but the hardcore scene did not like Dino when we started. But what are you gonna do? I guess the first time we went to New York, which was three hours away, that's when we first met Sonic Youth and found some people who actually liked us. It was our home away from home. We'd spend a lot of time in New York.

STAR QUESTION

J, even your acoustic guitar sounds loud. How do you do it? I've been trying to persuade sound technicians to make mine louder for years... *TV Smith, The Adverts*

Travel with your own soundman, I guess. It's a battle, if you don't have your own soundman, to try and communicate what you're trying to do to some other guy. I think TV Smith could make it happen. Yeah, I'm a total fan of British punk. What are the differences between British and American punk? The production was much better in England. I guess most US punk bands never recorded in real studios. English punk seemed better for some years, until probably '81 when hardcore happened. It all came together perfectly at that age. I could relate to Minor Threat. They had more suburban problems, like me. You know, being pissed for no reason. "Oh, my parents are OK, I'm not starving, nothing is apparently wrong, but I'm still depressed and pissed off at everything. I have no reason to be." You get jealous of people with real problems.

I'm a massive fan of the first three Dinosaur Jr albums. Are there any unreleased studio recordings from this era ("Center Of The Universe", for example), and if so, what are the chances of them being released? *Bennett Sandhu*

No, across the board. "Centre Of The Universe" was an early Lou [Barlow] song. It didn't appear on any album, he didn't want to play it. It could have been on our first album, but he decided he hated it immediately. There might be some practice tape of the song, but not that I have. I guess we could always re-record it now.

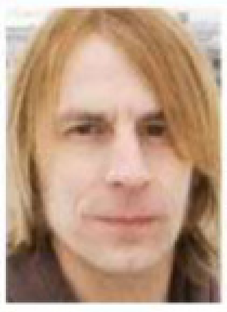
AJAY SAGGER; ROGER KISBY/GETTY IMAGES; MARTIN VON HADEL

"I'd see Lou, and he'd still be angry. Then at some point he mellowed. . ."

J Mascis, 2014: "I talk slower than a lot of people..."

The colour purple: "I have quite a few guitars – under 100, more than 50..."

STAR QUESTION



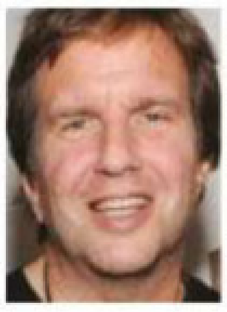
What was it about GG Allin that made you think, 'I want to be in a band with that guy?'
Mark Arm, Mudhoney

Yeah... that's a weird one. Gerard Cosloy, who went on to Matador fame, went to college in my town and became my band [*Deep Wound*]'s manager, for a minute, then we broke up. He said he'd put out the Dinosaur record when we formed, so we already knew we could make a record. But he was putting together this GG Allin band, and he asked me to be in it. I was excited, until the reality set in. I often thought it was kind of like how Kurt Cobain must have felt about Courtney Love. It's like this punk idea that seems cool 'til you're doing it. You like GG Allin in theory, but then when he's actually shitting onstage and you're standing there, it's not fun and you think, 'Wow, this is a bad scene.'

How many guitars do you own, J?
Craig Parsons, Hemel Hempstead

Quite a few. Under 100, but more than 50. That's a good answer. Where do I keep them all? They're pretty much everywhere. I like to try to get every conceivable rock guitar sound you could possibly need. The Wipers sound, the Keith Richards sound, the Fast Eddie sound. I'm just trying to cover all the bases. They all sound slightly different. Some for recording and some for playing. You hope some guitars have different songs in them you can just get out by playing them. That's one crazy justification for buying them. It's harder to justify to my wife, of course. The oldest guitar I've got is a Martin from the 1930s.

STAR QUESTION



Question: *Master Of Reality* or *Vol. 4*? (*Paranoid* is not an answer.)
Jonathan Poneman, Sub Pop

Vol. 4, definitely. This is Sabbath, who I just saw for the first time. In fact, Jonathan helped me get in to the show. They played in Berlin. Tony Iommi has now gone to the top of my guitar list, Top 5 guitarists I've ever seen. I love Sabbath, I was maybe 12 years old when I first heard them, but I never considered Tony to be as good a guitarist as he evidently is. I was blown away when I saw him do "Supernaut" from *Vol. 4*. I always thought that solo was impossible to play. I've seen people try, but no-one can do it. Then to see Tony play it live, that was awesome. Do I think Bill Ward should be back in the band? The new guy kicked them in the ass a bit, gave them some energy, but he's not so good it takes away from Bill. He's ballpark.

Which of your album sleeves do you like the most – and why?
Peter Fors, Stockholm

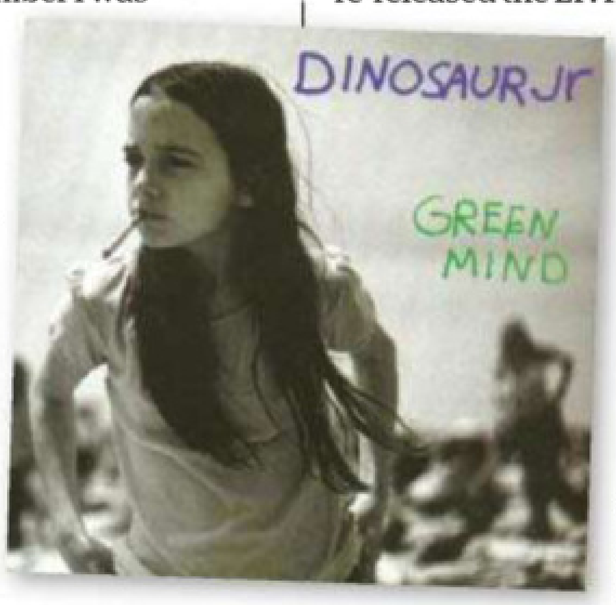
Green Mind is a good one. It's a cool photo. It seems to resonate. This '70s icon of the kid. It's got that over-the-edge look of teenage rebellion. Why do I like green and purple so much? They're my favourite colours. I have some purple clothing, but it's very hard to get for men. I've designed some purple trainers *(below)*. They came with a 7" cover of Mazzy Star, "Fade Into You". Will that ever get a proper release? Yeah, I think it'll appear on this record, like a B-side maybe. I played it live first time the other day. It was pretty good. I'll probably play it on this tour. It went on for a while. A lot of noodling. But if it's good, let it noodle.

If you could only play one riff for the rest of your life, what would it be? *Patrick Proctor, Manchester*

Maybe "City Slang" by Sonic's Rendezvous Band. Is that a riff? Sorta. What makes a good riff? It's memorable, you want to sing it and play it. What's a favourite riff of mine? I like "Sludgefest" and "Out There". "Out There" being more of what you'd consider a riff. It seems a bit complicated for me to play and sing, so I'm impressed. It seems a bit over my ability.

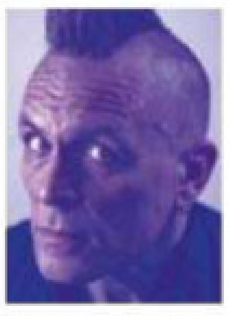
What are your memories of the 1992 Rollercoaster tour?
Debbie Williams, London

It was fun. I remember I was surprised that The Jesus And Mary Chain were even more socially retarded than I was. We didn't speak until maybe the last show. They'd hide in the dressing room. That was impressive somehow. I was already friends with My Bloody Valentine, so we'd hang out. Blur were the most sociable, the Mary Chain the worst, then us, then MBV. Did we drink a lot at that time? I don't think I was drinking. It was a cool tour. I'd never really heard Blur before, but obviously they became huge. Last time I was here, I saw the guitarist in Wagamama right over the road.



> *"The Jesus And Mary Chain were even more socially retarded than I was"*

STAR QUESTION



Hello J! Do you remember filming the "Freak Scene" video in my back garden in Manchester?
John Robb, The Membranes/Goldblade

Yes, I do. It was pretty exciting. We shaved our soundman's head for the video. Dancing around in weird costumes with all the *papier mâché* stuff he had lying around his house. Our label edited out everything like that from the video and just had us playing in the garden. I was furious. The real version only came out when we re-released the LP. How did we end up in John's garden? It's Manchester, that's what happened in those days.

How did you end up reforming the classic earlier lineup of Dinosaur Jr in 2005?
Matt Barlow, via email

We finally got the reissues to come out and got them away from SST, so we put it on Merge and my then-manager thought we could do something to promote it. I was the hard one to convince. Lou and Murph were on board but it took a bit of Lou mellowing out after being so angry with me for so long. I'd see him, and he'd still be angry. Then at some point he mellowed and it opened the door for apologies... we saw each other in the intervening years. I'd gone to Sebadoh shows when he was in town, but he'd never go to any show that I'd do. Was I on the guestlist? I'd never pay, so I must have got in somehow. Things are doing all right. It has its ups and downs, but it's not as extreme.

***Tied To A Star** is released by Sub Pop on August 25*

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

GREG CAMPBELL/WIREIMAGE; SHAWN BRACKBILL

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Ticket to ride: The Beatles take the train in *A Hard Day's Night*, 1964

THE BEATLES

FULL STEAM AHEAD

March 1964. Beatlemania is in full swing, and on a railway platform in the home counties, John, Paul, George and Ringo are catching the express service to their next triumph: film. With a 50th-anniversary re-release in the shops, what follows is the uncut version of A HARD DAY'S NIGHT, in which a cast list of movers and shakers like director RICHARD LESTER, cast members PATTIE BOYD and PHIL COLLINS, and choreographer LIONEL BLAIR tell a story of great charm, and surreal humour. Not to mention errant fathers, expensive horses and dance steps. Action!

Story: Michael Bonner
Photograph: Max Scheler/Redferns

The Beatles on set with director Richard Lester in 1964

LOOKING BACK ON his first meeting with The Beatles, film director Richard Lester remembers the unexpected topic of conversation that brought them together. "The boys found out that I was this pathetic jazz piano player," he explains. "That gave them something to lord over me because I was the past and they were the future. John Lennon in particular hated jazz, and he told me that."

When Lester met The Beatles in late 1963, the intention was to make a cheap, black-and-white jukebox movie to capitalise on the band's rapid success. For his film, Lester assembled a remarkable cross section of talent – including Wilfred Brambell, Victor Spinetti, Pattie Boyd and Lionel Blair – who all witnessed first-hand Beatlemania in full tilt. "It was becoming increasingly intense for the boys," says Boyd, who met her future husband George Harrison on the film's set. Meanwhile, Blair, an old friend of the band, recalls the logistical problems accompanying the shoot: "They couldn't walk round the streets or anything. There were screaming girls everywhere." But despite such obstacles, *A Hard Day's Night* rose above the ruck of rock'n'roll exploitation movies: its sprightly blend of absurdist humour, French New Wave aesthetics and unshakable optimism enlivened the dreary cultural landscape of post-war Britain. The soundtrack LP, too, proved equally successful: the first album to feature all original Beatles compositions, it gave the band two No 1 singles on both sides of the Atlantic. Reflecting on what it was that made *A Hard Day's Night* so remarkable, Richard Lester considers, "It was four people against the world and winning."

> "What made the film so remarkable? It was four people against the world and winning"
>
> **RICHARD LESTER**

"... BY THE END OF THE SUMMER THE BEATLES MIGHT BE A SPENT FORCE..."

Brian Epstein is pitched the idea of a three-picture deal with The Beatles by American studio, United Artists. *Goon Show* affiliate Richard Lester is approached to direct...

RICHARD LESTER [DIRECTOR]: I first met The Beatles at The Playhouse Theatre on Northumberland Avenue. They were doing a radio show. This was November, 1963. I'd just finished a film with United Artists [*The Mouse On The Moon*] and David Picker, the head of production there, had seen *The Running, Jumping & Standing Still Film* I'd made with Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan. He knew that John [Lennon] liked *The Goon Show*. It seemed a nice fit. UA wanted to make a very low-budget, black-and-white film, to start shooting in March, but it would have to be in cinemas in July because they felt that by the end of the summer The Beatles might be a spent force. So I was brought along to meet the band by [*producer*] Walter Shenson, with whom I'd made *The Mouse On The Moon*.

DAVID PICKER [EXECUTIVE PRODUCER]: My main responsibilities were working with the filmmakers and deciding what movies we were going to make. I was also responsible for our music and record operation. I said to our London office, if there were a couple of upcoming groups we could sign or make a relationship with, I'd be interested. One of the groups they recommended was The Beatles. I met Brian Epstein and we agreed to consider making some low-budget movies. Then they performed in front of The Queen at the Royal Command Performance and suddenly it wasn't a little group from Liverpool. It was The Beatles, and we had 'em.

DENIS O'DELL [ASSOCIATE PRODUCER]: I'd be away filming and I hadn't much heard about The Beatles. United Artists asked me if I would do this cheap film with a new pop group. I said I wasn't really interested, but my children asked who the band was. I said it was some pop group called The Beatles and they all went mad: "*You said no to it?*" I called back and contracted with UA for six or seven weeks.

MAX SCHELER - K & K/REDFERNS

LESTER: Johnny Speight was my first choice for writer, but he had other commitments. I'd worked with Alun Owen before, in the very beginnings of television. He'd written *No Trams To Lime Street*. As John said, "The trouble with you, Alun, is you're a professional Scouser." Alun at least had the courage to say, "It's better than being an amateur one."

PICKER: We shared publishing. We had the soundtrack album. The thing that made UA very attractive for some filmmakers is that once we agreed on a budget and script we left them alone.

O'DELL: I think the budget was £200,000 but I brought it in well under that. The Beatles were paid £40,000 collectively, I think. The deal with UA and Epstein? I think Brian just agreed to everything UA said. I'll give you an example of how you worked with Brian. When we did *How I Won The War*, I went to his office as we were a bit short on the budget. I said, "Do you think John will play a part?" He said, "Why don't you go and ask him, he's in the next office." So I went and asked John and John said, "Yeah. I could do it, Denis. Yeah." That was a deal with Brian.

LESTER: In February 1964, we went to Paris with the boys as they were playing with Françoise Hardy at the Olympia. That was a key moment. They took a suite of rooms at the George V. Alun Owen and myself had rooms with them. The film was writing itself as we went. You got a sense of being told where to go, what to do, and being pursued a lot. We watched how they went from car to hotel, and hotel to the Olympia and back, then to a club. We wrote a script to ask them to do things they knew. Messing about in hotel rooms with large blondes. Those elements of being let off the leash a bit then being tugged back is a big part of the early sequences. They're in low rooms, trains with low ceilings, being told what to do and organised.

"A girl threw herself in the car and said to me, 'We want to breathe the same air they are'..."

LIONEL BLAIR

"...THEY HAD THIS ABILITY TO FIND PEOPLE THAT THEY THOUGHT WEREN'T GOING TO DO THEM DOWN...."

Monday, March 2, 1964. The Beatles join actors' union Equity minutes before starting work on their first film. Cast and crew head off from Platform 5 at Paddington station as shooting begins...

DENIS O'DELL: In the original script, all those scenes with The Beatles on the train were written as rear projection. I suggested to Richard quietly, "If I could get a real train, what do you think about the idea of shooting on that?" I spent the next two weeks arguing with British Rail to get the train. Then I had to get almost a private line so we could use a train as and when we wanted it. I got little platforms made up for a camera to go up and down the corridor of the train.

LESTER: There were no rehearsals, everything started on March 2. By the time we started shooting, The Beatles had gone to America and done *The Ed Sullivan Show*. The film was already in profit due to advance sales of the album. We started with them running for the train with about 500 people screaming after them.

PAUL McCARTNEY (1964): The film virtually opens with our departures from somewhere like Liverpool to somewhere like London, and that's how we come to be on the train.

PATTIE BOYD [ACTRESS]: I was working as a fashion model. I got a call from my agent asking if I had my porfolio with me. If so, would I go to an address in Soho for a go-see. I went and there were loads of girls in the same room, waiting. We were called in and I saw Dick Lester, who I'd met on a TV ad. Later that afternoon my agent phoned and said I had a part in the Beatles film! I did two days on set. We got the train from London to Cornwall and back. We got on at Paddington. After about 20 minutes, we stopped at a small station, there were only four people on the platform – it was The Beatles. They came into our carriage – there were four of us girls, all in school uniforms. They drew back the glass door and introduced themselves. It was so charming. The energy was explosive as they came in smiling and laughing.

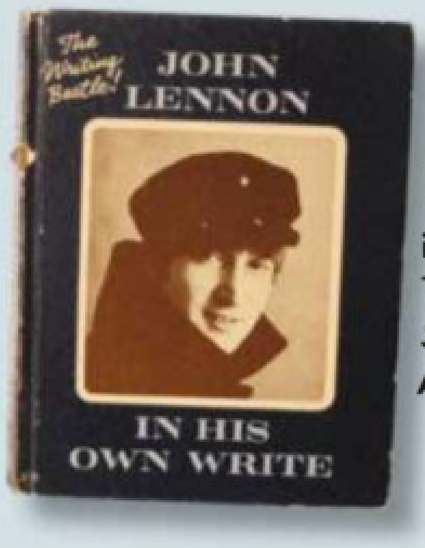
LESTER: They were extraordinarily like each other. And they liked each other. They protected each other. If one of them was down a bit, they would take over and protect them. Two or three nights later someone else would be down and they'd pick them up. We tried to artificially create a difference between the four, so each had a unique characteristic. It's probably apocryphal, but George was the mean one, they picked on Ringo, John was cynical and Paul was cute. It was something to hang things on. In real life, John was not known to suffer fools. I probably fell into the fool category. I have wounds, but I have huge admiration for John. I hope I formed a relationship with all of them. They had this ability to find people they thought weren't going to do them down. I spent a lot of time with John and was never less than impressed. How was it to direct Paul? He's so enthusiastic about what's going on, I think it got in the way. Sometimes he tried harder than he should have. George was the most effective actor in that he attempted less but always hit it right in the centre.

Thin blue line: the fans queue up for the arrival of the Fab express

DAILY EXPRESS/ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

THE HARD DAY'S DAYS A look at The Beatles' busy schedule during filming

MARCH 2: Begin filming *A Hard Day's Night*
MARCH 5: Attend Oxfam 21st-anniversary celebrations
MARCH 16: George Harrison and Brian Epstein attend Cilla Black radio session
MARCH 17: John Lennon interviewed by the BBC about *In His Own Write*
MARCH 18: Band record contributions for BBC programme, *The Public Ear*
MARCH 19: Interviewed for BBC's *Movie Go-Round* show; presented with Variety Club Award by Harold Wilson; record first *Top Of The Pops* appearance
MARCH 20: Appear on *Ready, Steady, Go!*
MARCH 23: *In His Own Write* published; Lennon appears on BBC TV's *Tonight*
MARCH 24: Lennon interviewed for BBC's *Dateline London*
MARCH 31: Record session for BBC radio's *The Saturday Club*; Lennon records two interviews for Home Service
APRIL 3: Film trailer for *A Hard Day's Night*; Lennon interviewed for Tyne Tees show, *Star Parade*
APRIL 15: Paul McCartney interviewed on BBC TV's *A Degree Of Frost*
APRIL 16: Record two songs for the soundtrack album
APRIL 17: Pre-record interview with Ed Sullivan
APRIL 18-19: Rehearse for TV's *Around The Beatles*
APRIL 23: Lennon attends Foyle's literary lunch
APRIL 24: Filming ends



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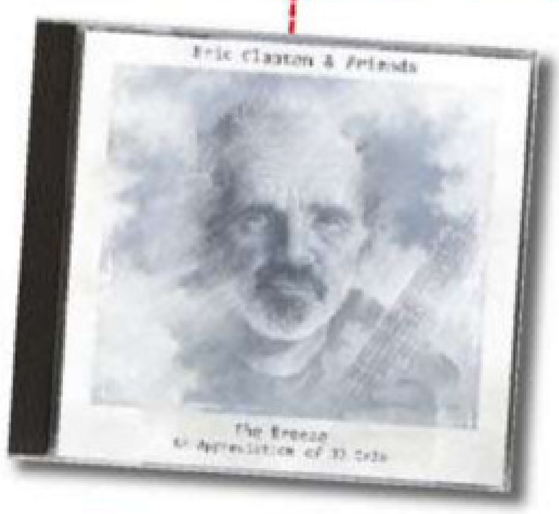

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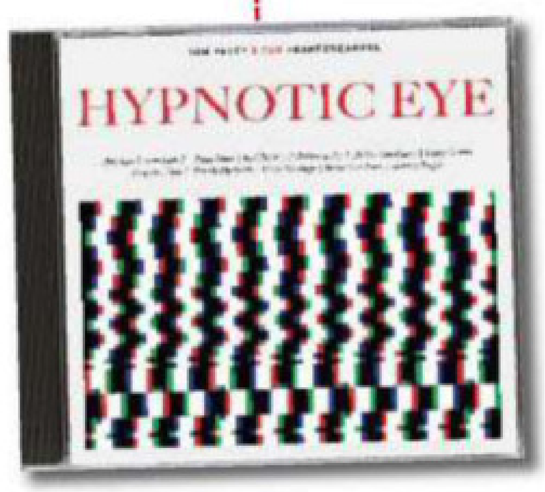

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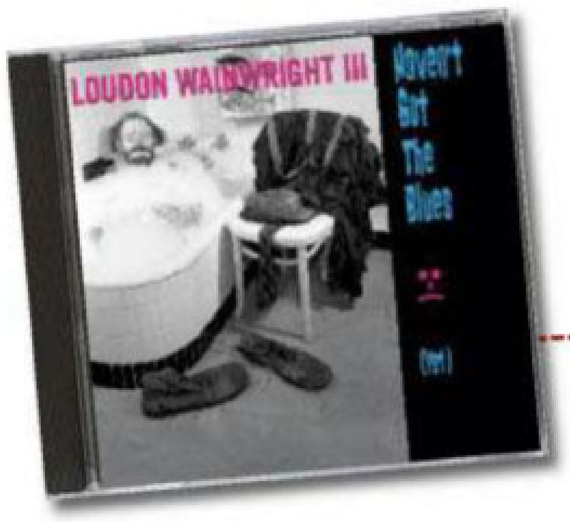

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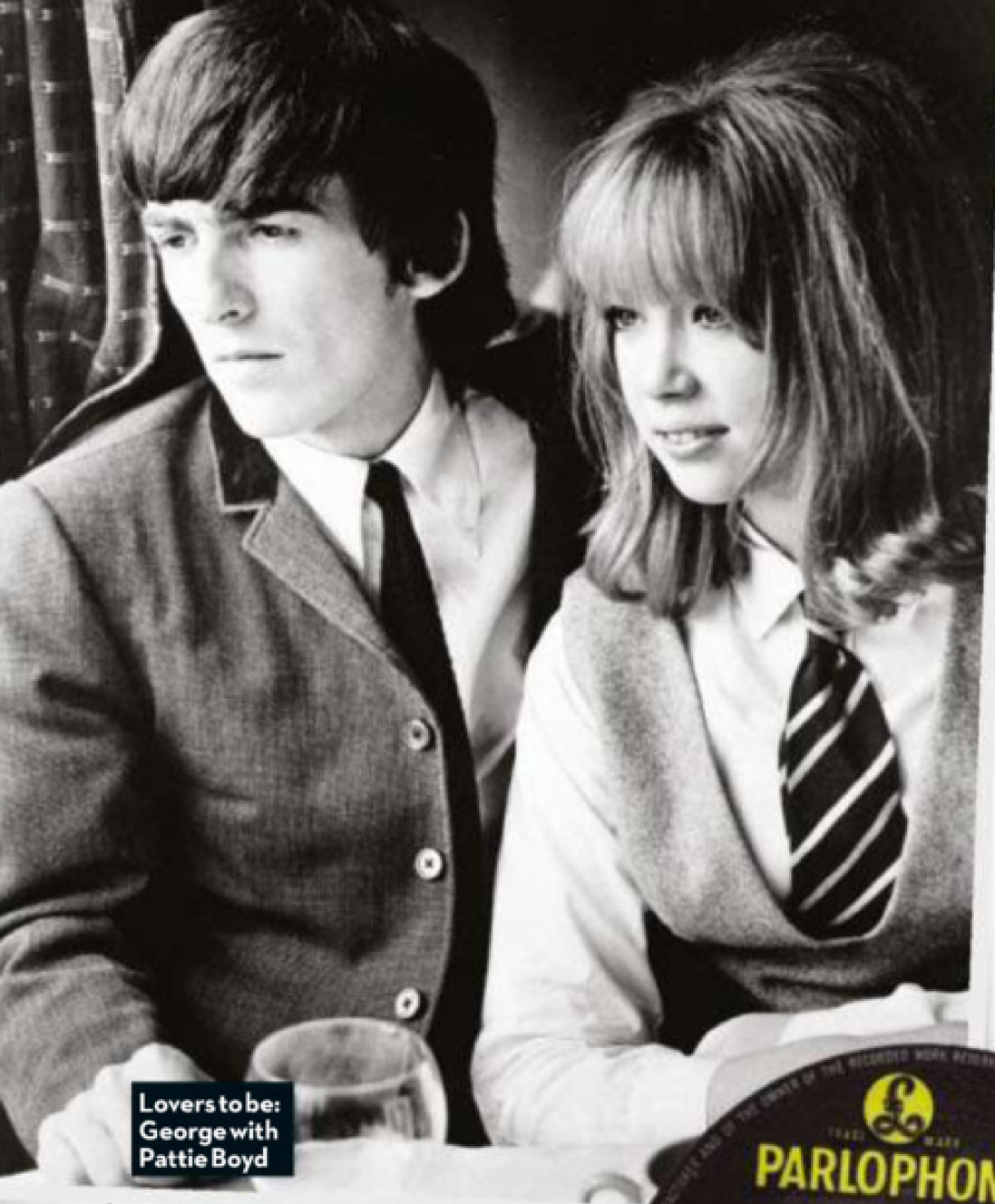


Lovers to be: George with Pattie Boyd

The Lionel Blair Dancers on set

so it would be easy to dive in there when we were in trouble. I had the idea of filming the TV show scenes at the old Scala Theatre on Charlotte St. I took a week's lease on it and we moved in: lock, stock and barrel.

GEORGE HARRISON (1964): When we get to the big city we have to make our way to a TV studio for a bit of a show – and that's where the speciality acts like Lionel Blair Dancers come in.

LIONEL BLAIR [TV CHOREOGRAPHER]: I worked with The Beatles on *Big Night Out* with Mike and Bernie Winters up in Manchester. Then when *Big Night Out* came to London, they were our first guests. We filmed at Teddington Studios and the girls were waiting for them to arrive. They came up the river by boat then we had an open car to take them to the studio. As they got in, a girl threw herself inside the car. I said, "Why are you here?" She said, "We want to breathe the same air they are." Anyway, I knew Dick Lester, and he said, "There's a scene where they're supposed to be at the Palladium so we'd love you and your dancers in it." That was at the Scala.

LESTER: The fans had got hold of hacksaws and sawed through the iron bars of the fire-escape doors.

O'DELL: There was one situation where the kids got a ladder and climbed onto the roof of the Scala to try and get in where I'd barred it up.

PHIL COLLINS [EXTRA]: I'd just started at the Barbara Speake Stage School in East Acton. One of the first jobs I got sent out on was with about 30 other kids from the school. We didn't know where we were going or what it was for. We arrived at the Scala. There were loads of kids from other stage schools. We traipsed into the theatre and saw The Beatles' drumkit on stage. Then suddenly they rushed out and lip-synched. They did "She Loves You", "Tell Me Why", "I Should Have Known Better", all that stuff.

LESTER: I met George Martin about halfway through. I was given a group of 10 songs and chose the eight I wanted because I thought they would fit the rhythms of the film. Then we put old bits of the songs where we needed them. When they're playing the songs in the film, they were working to play back. I was slightly miffed in the end that George wrote two and a half minutes of background music and got an Academy Award nomination.

BLAIR: One thing I recall, there was a piano on the set and Paul was fiddling around. He wrote "Yesterday". On set, we'd fool around. They wanted them to do dance steps. I said to Paul, "Look, let's do this..." and he said, "No, I don't want to do any dance steps, Lionel!" And they never did.

LESTER: The boys were pretty well behaved. One day, John was too hungover to turn up. So I borrowed his shoes and operated the camera. I started with my feet then panned up

BOYD: The shoot took over two or three carriages. The boys didn't hide away. They were mixing quite a lot. I remember going to sit with George at lunchtime. We were talking quite a bit. For some reason I imagined he'd want to sit with the others but he said, "Come on, let's sit here." I thought he was really, really good looking. He wasn't as vocal as John and Paul; they seemed to behave in a more clownish way. George was quieter, more my level, because I'm very shy.

RINGO STARR (1964): John is going to play mouth-organ for the first time in ages. He'll do it during a number called "I Should Have Known Better", that we'll probably use in the guard's van scene.

O'DELL: I first met them on the train, on the first day. They were a nice bunch of fellas for musicians. Very polite. I was on set almost all the time. It turned out to be quite a dangerous operation, kids jumping in front of the bloody train to try and stop it.

"... THE FANS HAD GOT HACKSAWS..."

Lionel Blair and Phil Collins are among those who witness over-zealous fans disrupting the shoot. Filming locations include the Scala Theatre, where the band's TV concert takes place...

LESTER: We couldn't control the crowd. It became impossible to shoot. Every day we got one take. We got police permission to shoot in whichever street. We'd do Take 1 and 2,000 kids would arrive from nowhere. I think we had a mole in our production department. The police would rip up the permit and we'd have to go off and find a street six blocks away and hope we could get another take in before they found us again. It was total guerrilla filmmaking.

O'DELL: I knew shooting exteriors would be a problem. I arranged the schedule so we did half a day on location and half a day in the studios. I was aware there was a studio in Twickenham that had closed. It was 15 minutes from London,

"The energy was explosive as The Beatles came in smiling and laughing..."

PATTIE BOYD

FATHER'S DAY

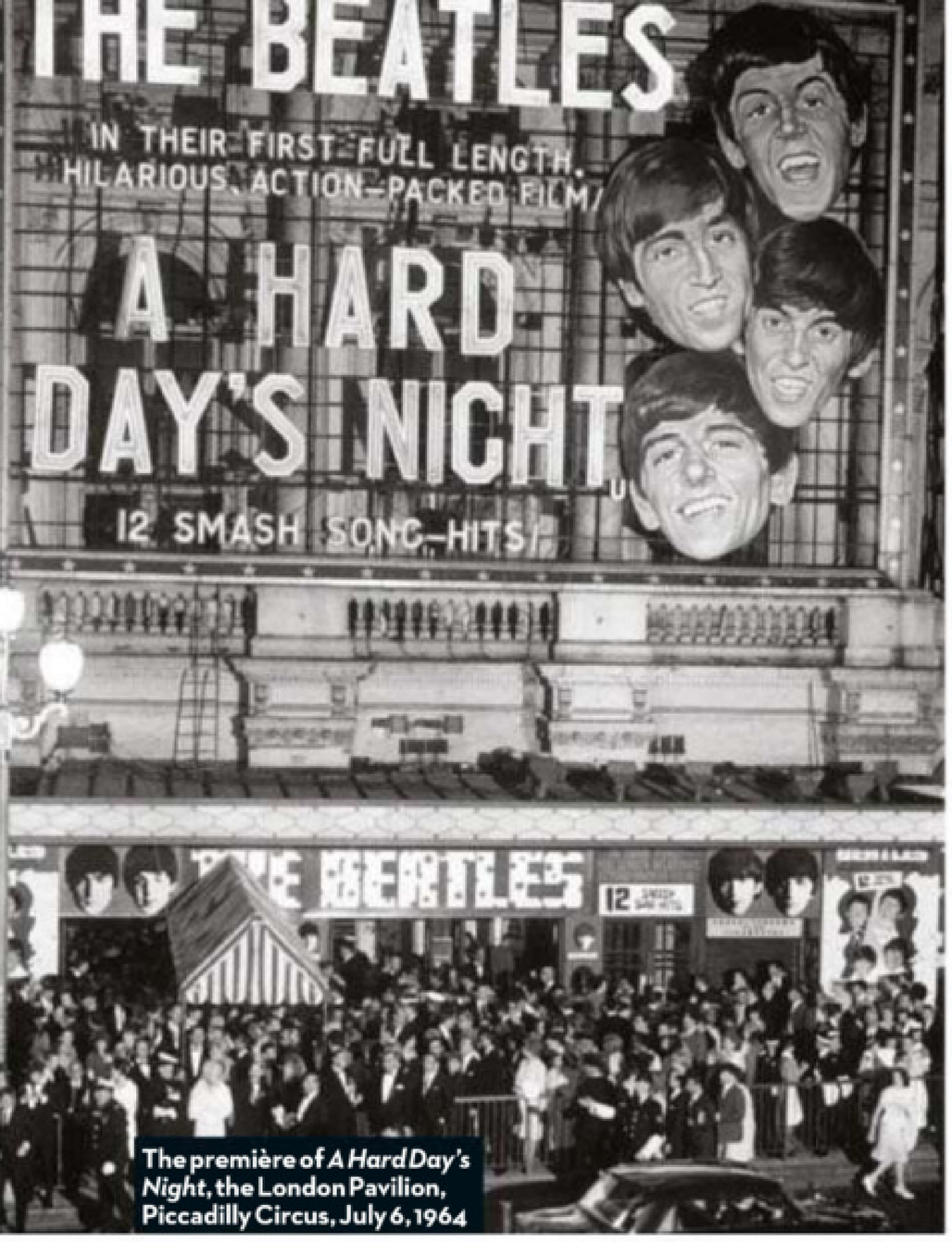
"TELL HIM TO FUCK OFF!"

John hadn't seen his estranged father Alfred "Freddie" Lennon for 17 years until Lennon Sr turned up during filming on April 1, 1964...

"WE WERE filming at the Scala," remembers Denis O'Dell. "My production manager came to me one day and said, 'There's a fella here amongst all this crowd, says he's John Lennon's father.' I said, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, I've heard it before. Go and ask him his name.' He said, 'It's Freddie Lennon.' I went down and saw this fella and said, 'Hold on.' He was outside the Scala Theatre. I went up to see if John was in the dressing room, I said, 'Hey John, your dad's here.' He said, 'Tell him to fuck off.' So I said, 'You can't do that. Whatever else he is, he's your father. I'm not going to tell him that. You go and tell him, if you want.' So John said, 'No, let him come up.' He came up and met with John upstairs in the Scala. I was in the room with them. It was OK. It was as if they'd seen themselves the week before. It was a little bit awkward. John relented, he was nicer. He didn't really mean it when he said 'Fuck off.' That was John, you know."

Freddie Lennon, 1965

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES, BFI, REX FEATURES



The première of *A Hard Day's Night*, the London Pavilion, Piccadilly Circus, July 6, 1964

to the other three. We had to do things like that to keep going as we had a very short schedule. I wasn't surprised by their ease in front of the cameras. Performers are performers, and we were only asking them to do things they were comfortable with. They'd done press conferences and shows, they'd been in hotel rooms and nightclubs. There were a few improvised lines, but most of the dialogue in the film was written down.

O'DELL: They had a very busy schedule, but it didn't make any difference to them at all. They just sailed through what they had to do on a day and spent most of the nights at clubs. They were very professional for youngsters who'd never seen a film studio in their lives.

"...DAD! WE GOT THE HORSE..."

Shooting finishes on April 24. The film receives two premières – one at the London Pavilion (July 6) and one at the Odeon Cinema, Liverpool (July 10). The film reportedly takes £27,712 in its first week at the Pavilion. The soundtrack album, released on July 10, enters the charts at No 3: kept off the top spot by Cliff Richard and The Rolling Stones.

LESTER: It was rushed. There wasn't a lot of time to sit and chat. We only had three and a half weeks to dub the film, cut the negative and get our showprint ready for the première at the London Pavilion. It was in 10-minute reels. If something went wrong with the take, you'd have to stop, take all the reels off the projectors, put them on a bench and rewind them back to zero. In the dubbing theatre, we marked out a badminton court using camera tape. We had a league going in the 10 minutes it took to rewind all these bloody bits of film. At that point, we showed it to UA, who hadn't seen a frame.

PICKER: I didn't see the movie until it was finished. I first saw *A Hard Day's Night* in a small screening room.

O'DELL: All the execs were sitting in the projection room. I'm not sure if Richard was there, he was a bit shy about these things. To my astonishment, at the end of the film, I think it was [*UA vice-president*] Arnold Picker's wife who said, "It's lovely but we'll have to dub it. I can't understand a word." Dubbing The Beatles? It was extraordinary. These were powerful people.

LESTER: We showed UA the film in a cinema in Curzon Street and they all agreed that as soon as we could dub it, it would be terrific. We all said, "No."

REX/HARRY MYERS, REX FEATURES

CUTTING ROOM

"HE DOESN'T LOOK VERY INTO IT..."

Phil Collins on not making the final cut of *A Hard Day's Night*...

"I WAS ONLY 13, but serious about becoming a drummer. Everybody in the Scala Theatre was screaming, except me. I wanted to tell the others to shut up so I could hear. I don't know if they said while they were editing, 'There's that bloke, he doesn't look very into it, cut him out.' But I wasn't in the finished edit. When they were doing the 30th anniversary in 1994, Walter Shenson contacted me and said, 'I believe you were in it.' I said, 'I never saw myself when I went to see it. I saw my friends, but I never saw me.' So he sent me these outtakes and I went through then frame by frame and I found myself straight away. I was sitting there wearing a pin collar, tie. I wasn't even standing up. I was fully caught up in this moment of seeing my heroes. In later life, I never met or worked with Lennon but I have met and worked with the other three. Whenever I'd mention I was in *A Hard Day's Night*, they'd look at me in disbelief. It was so strange for me to actually have gotten to know them, but yet all those years ago I was in the film. It was always a light moment."

Phil Collins in an outtake from *A Hard Day's Night*

I want to hold your hand: Princess Margaret greets Ringo

PICKER: Was there a concern about the accents? Why, no.

LESTER: I went to the London première at the Pavilion. They had an organist playing Beatles hits, with a spotlight on him. The lights were just about to go down, the film was about to start, but he hadn't finished. I'd made sure there were no titles or credit before the first chord that opens "A Hard Day's Night". But this mighty Wurlitzer was still finishing off his version of "Can't By Me Love" and ran over it. We heard nothing during the film. There was wall-to-wall screaming for 90 minutes.

BOYD: I didn't go to the première. Brian Epstein was so keen on promoting The Beatles as single guys so they could be potentially available to their fans. Even though George and I were going out, Brian invited Hayley Mills to accompany George to the première. She was the young English actress... it would have been a good look.

O'DELL: The premières were incredible. While we were filming at the Scala, Paul said to me, "It's my dad's birthday and I don't know what to get him." I bred race horses as a hobby. I said to Paul, "Does your dad ever have a bet? Why don't you buy him a race horse?" Paul said, "Where do you get 'em? How much do you pay for one?" So I bought a horse called Drake's Drum. I had a trainer in the north of England, a very straight military man. He looked after the horse for a couple of months. Then Paul asked me to get a painting of the horse – 'Drake's Drum, Owned By James McCartney'. At the party after the première, Paul called me over to join the band as Jim McCartney received his present, wrapped in brown paper. He unwrapped it, looked at the painting and said in amazement, "What's this?" I said to Paul, "Did you tell your dad we've got the horse?" "Oh, no! I forgot. Dad, we got the horse!" The horse won three races afterwards, so that was a great success.

LESTER: There was another première in Liverpool, but I'd gone on holiday by then.

O'DELL: The biggest première was in Liverpool. It was amazing. There were thousands of people on the streets from the railway station up to the town hall. We were standing with the mayor and The Beatles on the balcony of the town hall and I couldn't believe the amount of people we could see.

BLAIR: I went to the première. We all walked out on the balcony, even me. There were thousands of people screaming. Everybody associated with them, they went crazy for.

O'DELL: There was such a burst of interest, before we'd even finished it. I ended up running around the country delivering prints to the cinemas for UA. They couldn't get it out quick enough. What did the boys think of the film? They loved it. Some years ago we went to a showing of it. Paul was there. We had a laugh about it. Richard and I did about eight pictures together, I think. And my association with The Beatles went on for six or seven years.

LESTER: How do I feel about the film now? I knew while we were filming, probably the second week, that one day in 50-something years' time, if I fell under a bus and died, the newspaper headlines would say, 'Beatles director in death drama', no matter what else I did. And that is absolutely the way it's been. If I managed to produce the way I felt about them on the screen in a way that holds up, I'm just grateful. They were a marvellous part of my life.

***Hard Day's Night* 50th Anniversary Restoration** *is released on DVD and Blu-ray by Second Sight Films; thanks to BFI*

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Robert Plant at Ludlow Castle, Shropshire, May 16, 2014

ROBERT **PLANT**

THE ROVER

Story: Michael Bonner
Photograph: Ed Miles

Summer, 2014. The new Led Zeppelin remasters have just arrived but ROBERT PLANT is, as ever, moving on. In an exclusive, in-depth new interview, rock's redoubtable explorer remembers five decades of adventures – journeys across genres and continents, in search of musical transcendence and Watney's Red Barrel. *Uncut* tracks Plant from the Welsh borders to the nightclubs of Paris, and hears about bee colonies, Moroccan traffic cops, Bron-Yr-Aur, bustles in hedgerows, the meaning of home, his extraordinary new solo album... and, of course, the current state of affairs with Mr Jimmy Page...

Plant on Whitcliffe Common, May 2014: "I have to keep moving..."

RECENTLY, ROBERT PLANT has been troubled by bees. "I've spent the whole weekend with a colony of honey bees," he explains. "We had to cut through the floor into the passage between the bedroom and the sitting room, looking for the queen. Hundreds and thousands of bees."

Plant's revelation comes during *Uncut*'s photo shoot on Whitcliffe Common – an expanse of steep woodland on the southern edge of Ludlow in the Shropshire Hills. Admittedly, a bee infestation does not immediately spring to mind when considering the misfortunes that might befall an international rock star of Plant's standing.

But even during Led Zeppelin's imperial phase, Plant successfully balanced life aboard the Starship with more rustic and homely pursuits, like getting it together at the fabled Bron-Yr-Aur cottage in the tranquil Dyfi Valley. These days, you'll most likely find Plant traversing these Welsh borderlands accompanied by his loyal companion: Arthur, a lurcher. "I like the idea of Arthur carrying down through the generations," he admits. "As a sort of touchstone."

Plant has maintained a home in this wild and woolly region all his life, but he has been living back here permanently again since September 2013. For the last few years, he has resided in both the UK and in Austin, Texas – his base of operations from which he masterminded 2011's *Band Of Joy* album. Along with *Raising Sand*, its multi-Grammy winning predecessor, *Band Of Joy* was an elegant exploration of Americana, drawing together many of Plant's wide-ranging musical obsessions. Critically, those two albums also served to distance Plant from the long shadow cast by Zeppelin. But even on this warm day in mid-May – with the remasters of the first three albums imminent – Plant is niggled by a recent comment from Jimmy Page. His erstwhile band mate has grumped to *The New York Times* about being "fed up" with Plant for not committing to a reunion tour. "I'm not my brother's keeper," shrugs Plant. "And he, really, as a pro, should know better than that."

From the windswept Welsh Marches to the dusty plains of Texas and beyond, Plant has spent the last five decades on a wonderfully digressive adventure. "I have to keep moving," he confirms. "Everybody laughs at me, my kids and everybody. 'Jeez, why?' And I say, '*Because it's there to go to it*.' When you go to Essaouira in Morocco, or the Welsh coast... when you go to these borderlands here, get out of the car and just sit there and take it in, it's the very pulse of life. All the old gods are long gone but still... I don't wanna say that they're in the hedgerow because somebody will come and take me away. But there's something of the old magic that's still around.

"I got nicked for speeding in Morocco, Tuesday last," he continues. "Two cops said I was doing whatever it was. I said, in French, 'I don't think so. The sun was in your eyes.' They said, 'It's 500 dirham. Go and sit in the car.' It was 45°C. They dealt with everyone who came through the checkpoint. Finally, they called me over into the coolness underneath a stanchion and said, 'How much do you want to give us?' I said, 'How much do you think you should be taking from

ED MILES

me?' They held the 500 I'd given them and said, 'Take what you want.' I said, 'No, give me what you think you should.' They're looking at each other going, 'He doesn't seem like a bad guy.' So I said, 'The sky is blue and everything in the world is fine.' As soon as I said that, 300 dirham came straight back. It was great, those moments where you're just playing with people and they're playing with you."

For all Plant's splendid travels round the world – more of which later – returning home to a setting he has known since childhood has turned out to be propitious. In the company of his latest musical collaborators, The Sensational Space Shifters – a regrouping of the Strange Sensation band who accompanied him on the *Dreamland* and *Mighty ReArranger* records – Plant has recorded *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar*. It is an LP he believes to be explicitly linked to this mystical terrain itself. "It's a blessed relief to be reconnected to a very familiar landscape I can read quite well. Having been around it for 65 years, you start to get the hang of it. Whereas the brittle, harsh limestone Texas hills were slightly hostile to me. So I came back to this. The thing is, you only need to spend a couple of minutes here. It's formidable and beautiful. But the Shire, it resonates as a name. Yet you have to study the smaller parts to make it one, composite emotional force. That's what I'm doing. I'm thanking all the gods that I've landed safely."

> "That's what I'm doing... I'm thanking all the gods that I've landed safely"

Plant and Liam 'Skin' Tyson, live with the Space Shifters, 2014

IT'S MARKET DAY in Ludlow, a picturesque town deep in the Welsh Marches. In the busy Castle Square, stallholders are out selling everything from garden plants to artisan cheeses. Walking past the stalls, Robert Plant is dressed appropriately for this hot spring day in a blue T-shirt, red and grey striped shorts and plimsolls. Clearly, this is a place Plant knows well. As he guides *Uncut* first round the market and then off on a meandering tour round the town's side streets, Plant explains that his grandparents used to bring him here as a child. "I lived as a boy in a terraced house in Tipton," he says. "It was fantastic, because the spirits there were great. My granddad and all that lot, who were all bonkers. My grandfather, who was called Robert Shropshire Plant, was the founder and leader of a Black Country brass band. They were a pretty serious, renowned band. They were also known as the Dudley Port Drinking Band. He played trombone, then he played violin in the orchestra pit behind silent movies, and stuff on the piano."

We come across a poster for the Ludlow Arts Festival that's Sellotaped inside the window of a butcher's shop. Plant pauses to examine the lineup: Showaddywaddy, David Essex, The Bay City Rollers, Ken Dodd. "I'd come and see Ken Dodd," he nods, almost to himself. "You can't stop him. He played for three and a half hours once."

FRANK MELFI; YORK TILLYER

Eventually, we find ourselves in a gastro pub just off the market square. Prints by local artists line the pastel-coloured walls, and the floor is tiled with dark flagstones. "We may not be gods but our pizzas are heavenly" is written on a chalkboard hanging from a wall, while another sign advertises, "Live music every Thursday and Saturday from 9pm". Plant mentions that he recently saw a local band called Grey Wolf play here. "The whole pub was singing along to 'In The Pines'," he says grinning at the memory.

Today, Plant is accompanied by an amiable, soft-spoken soul called Trace. It transpires the two have been friends since the late '70s, when they played football together on a local pub team in Kidderminster. This is typical of Plant's modus operandi. Even when Led Zeppelin were in their pomp, playing multiple nights at huge venues, he would still find time for a five-a-side kickabout at his local. Much of Plant's career has been about balancing the fantastical with the down-home. But equally, much of his musical history has been intellectually and musically exploratory. As we settle down in a shady corner of the pub garden, Plant reflects on the beginnings of his ongoing musical journey. It just might, he concedes, have something to do with an early interest in philately.

"Maybe it was all those stamps that told me about other countries and postcards I picked up of ruins and castles and hilltops and iron-age forts and all that stuff," he muses. "But most of all it was the music that crackled through the radio from American Forces Network back in the early '60s that beckoned America."

Plant himself didn't leave the UK for the first time until September 1968, aged 20, on Led Zeppelin's first concert tour (though for contractual reasons they were billed as The Yardbirds). "I'd only travelled on this group of islands until then," he remembers. "We flew to Denmark. John Bonham and I had never seen so much cutlery in our lives as on that aeroplane. We couldn't get enough of it into our bags to steal it to take home, because we had been eating hand to mouth up until then in The Band Of Joy."

Perhaps the journey that left the biggest single legacy on Plant was his first visit to Morocco in 1971, when he was 23. "It's a very unnerving place sometimes, pre-Saharan Morocco," he clarifies. "It's fascinating, full of wild men and fools. 'Achilles Last Stand': *'Into the sun, the south, the north, at last the birds have flown/The shackles of commitment fell in pieces on the ground'*. It's all that thing about going back to the desert.

"I remember one time, the Algerians were financing the Polisario in the Spanish Sahara, so there was this pretty savage guerrilla thing going on in the '70s," he continues, setting off on one of his characteristically expansive travel yarns. "I suggested that Page meet me. My wife Maureen went back, she left as Jimmy was landing. Then we headed south. We managed to get down into the salt flats past Tan Tan Plage where all the pink flamingo colonies are. Phew, that was some place. Amazingly desolate and yet... beautiful. We were gonna spend the night on this salt flat. I remember we had a Primus stove you pumped up, so in the desert darkness there was just this glow to cook an omelette or whatever. Suddenly coming in from everywhere, beetles, phosphorescent insects popping out, it was amazing. Then the Moroccans, it's their job to be funny, said, 'There are mountain lions here.' I said, 'No, that can't be true, there's nothing for them to eat.' He looked at me and said, 'Are you sure about that?' So I went, 'Oh!' Got back in the car and drove back to Guelmim or somewhere like that. It was amazing down there then, once you got through all the machine gun nests. 'Cos the army was parked right across, east to west.

"We stayed in Guelmim, the Salam Hotel. I remember calling my wife and having to book the call three days in advance. Fortunately, she was in when I called. One morning, we woke up. It was a Friday or Saturday. The camel market was out the back. I opened the windows. We were listening to *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*, it was real Cheech & Chong shit, and I said to Jimmy, 'Fuck this, let's get out of here, I want a pint of bitter.' We drove straight to Tangier, we got the boat across to Algeciras, then we went to Torremolinos. We went to a disco and we stood in the middle of the floor with two pints of Watney's Red Barrel, with all the lights and music."

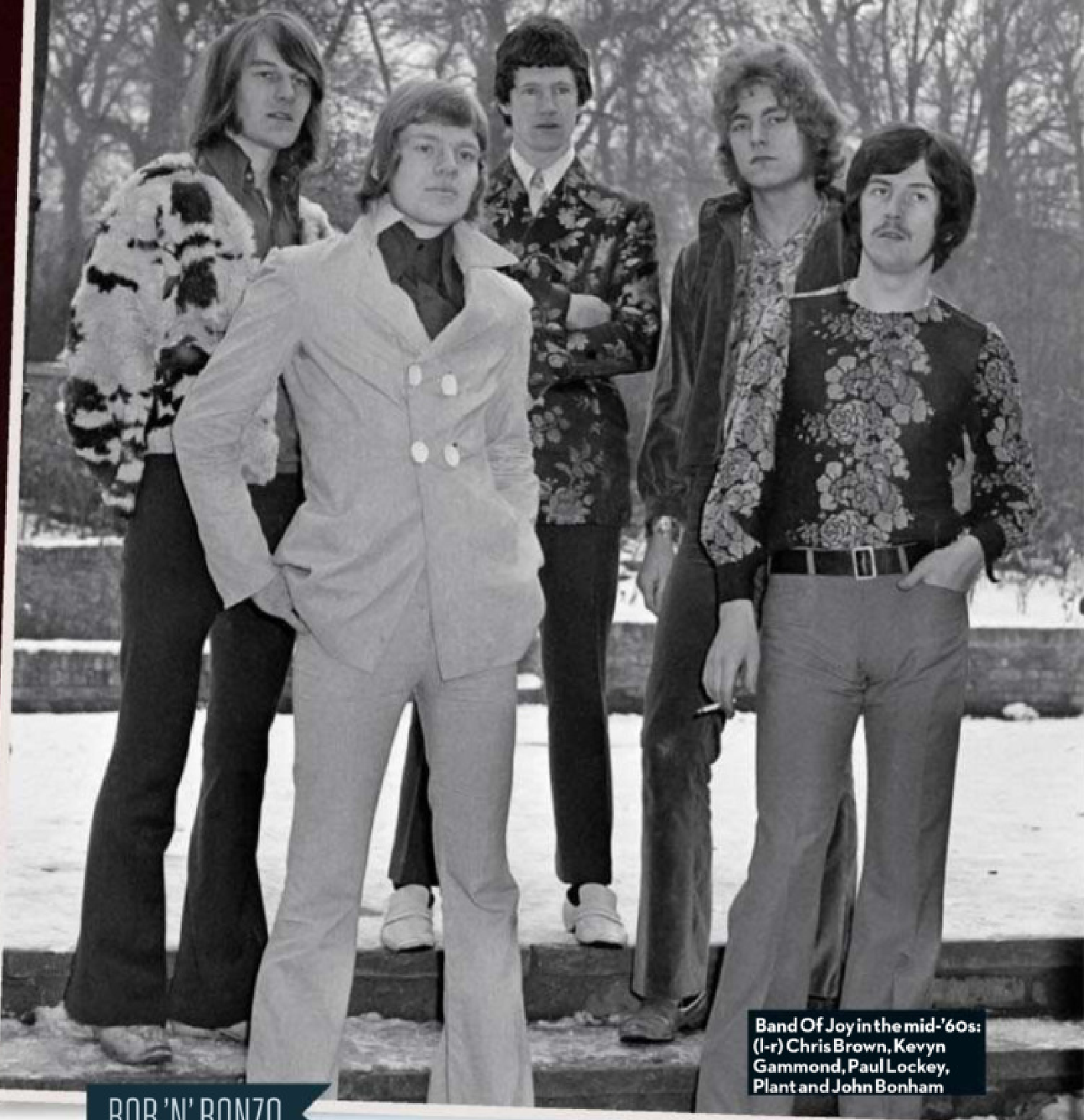
PLANT'S STORIES ARE satisfyingly mythic in scope, but laced with plenty of self-effacing humour. Thankfully, their potency remains unchanged, regardless of whether he's talking about scrapes in Morocco with Page, or events that took place quite literally just up the road. For all the importance of North Africa, another key touchstone in Plant's narrative is Bron-Yr-Aur, the 18th-Century farm cottage he first visited when he was seven. "It's pretty remote up there," he says. "I haven't been for ages 'cos they want me to buy it now. They're so pissed off at everyone going there from Japan or somewhere to pay homage. The remarkable

Plant and Page in their Led Zep pomp, 1975: "Percy could escape into the Misty Mountains, not covering myself in talcum and sitting in Istanbul in a knocking shop"

"I was in Morocco... I said, 'Fuck this, I want a pint of bitter', so we went to Torremolinos"

Plant with wife Maureen in 1970

REX/IAN DICKSON; GLOBE PHOTOS



Band Of Joy in the mid-'60s: (l-r) Chris Brown, Kevyn Gammond, Paul Lockey, Plant and John Bonham

difference between the history of the English and the history of the Welsh, and the poetry of the English and the poetry of the Welsh, is there's a longing. I think in Welsh it's called 'hiraeth'. The whole thing about parts of Wales is it's like the blue note in a progression. Like there's some *douleur*... not quite sadness, but a remote, untouchable, yet-to-be-sorted out thing. I don't have any medication to deal with it, and neither should I, because it inspires me and it means that everything isn't revealed for me. I'll never know. I know it sounds silly and strangely abstract, but I find something in those physical places that is unexplained and unfinished, and it's beautiful."

Plant took Page there in 1970, after *Led Zeppelin II*. While at the cottage, the pair wrote songs that appeared on four of their later albums. Crucially, the trip proved instrumental in the development of the band's aesthetic – adding texture and folky restraint to the bulldozer riffs of their first two albums. Looking back on his early songwriting, Plant admits, "When I started, I was jammed into Dion And The Belmonts. You take that, and a few Chuck Berry lyrics, and Howlin' Wolf, into 1967, '68. That's what Zeppelin won, that's where I come into it. I was very young when I was making records, and I was really mostly concerned about sounding good. You know, '*Oh baby!*' I just wanted to sound like somebody you should be frightened of," he laughs. "I probably succeeded!"

Out of the writing sessions at Bron-Yr-Aur came the beautiful, mournful ballad "That's The Way": a significant breakthrough for Plant as a lyricist and a pivotal song on *Led Zeppelin III*. "I was growing up, lyrically," he explains. "I'm concerned about Vietnam, I'm concerned about Paris in flames, I'm concerned about everything. I'm a dad for the first time in my life. But I don't know how to express myself. I was fumbling into trying to say something proper. If I'd been living in the Bay Area in San Francisco, I'd have got it down years before, because out there they had such prolific, virile, social commentary on the times. But not so in the new blues-rock movement, which was basically people singing like black kids did in '62, '63. It was brilliant, but it was expressive rather than lyrical. I was surrounded by the

BOB 'N' BONZO

"We were just a pair of Midlands wide boys..." Robert Plant remembers John Bonham

"I THINK ABOUT HIM a lot. I think about him in different times that we had, before Zeppelin. We were in two bands together, different bands. It was always pretty combative, which was kind of great fun. We never pulled our punches in any respect at all about what we thought about each other. In fact, we even managed to have a fight in between encores at the Budokan in Japan, in Zeppelin. I dunno what happened. He said, 'You're fucking 'opeless. Don't even bother about singing, just go out and look good.' So I bopped him on the nose. But he was right! And nobody could hear me anyway in those days. So I think about him lovingly a lot, and I also think about the waste of losing him, and the sort of eternal effect on everybody around him, and especially Pat and Jason and Zoe and Matthew. And of course, his mum, Joan, who used to come to my gigs. She'd always have something very funny to say. She never grew old, she had that bit that Bonzo got, that bit of sparkle that would come up, which was beautiful. They're talking about putting a statue up of him in Redditch.

"In the Band Of Joy he'd set up right next to me so he could get another job, 'cos people could see him. He was right at the front of the stage, and I was standing next to him going, 'Fuck off out the way, will you? I'm at the front.' 'No you're, not. I need to get away from you and quickly go to Tim Rose' or whoever it was.

"But I can still hear him going 'CANNONS!' behind me. Yeah, we were just a pair of Midland wide boys really. The mantle of success, it's a tough one. He always, always under-estimated himself. Because of that, he quite often lost the joy of drumming. And yet... the difference of losing the joy of what you do and still being an absolute inspiration to nearly every drummer on the planet. Look at that! How far apart is that? It's crazy."

finest guys who could play like mothers, but I didn't really have the state of mind or awareness to start talking about stuff. It came in, late on, in bits and pieces.

"At Bron-Yr-Aur, I think I finally realised I was part of something, a contributor. It had really good legs. It was going somewhere and we were able to move through the spheres. Around us, a lot of people got a groove and stuck with it, so the idea of creating different shades and colours seemed to me to be very fortuitous. If we'd have only carried on from where we'd left off with *Zeppelin II*, it would have been a big strong record but it wouldn't have shown that we had any intuition. Later on, after *Zeppelin III*, it was a juggernaut. But Percy could escape into the Misty Mountains, not covering myself in talcum and sitting in Istanbul in a knocking shop. But getting back, getting your fingers into the soil again. Touch the earth. Ho, ho. But seriously so, you know?"

Did Plant ever feel that the extravagance and superstardom of Zeppelin at their peak was a distraction from his questing imperative?

"No, I didn't feel it then, I didn't feel it at all. Driving up to Bron-Yr-Aur in an old Jeep with a blue-eyed dog hanging on for dear life and a piss-pot tied to the back by the gas tank and your wife and baby. You're off!"

> "Driving up to Bron-Yr-Aur in an old Jeep with a blue-eyed dog and a piss-pot on the back..."

THE IDEA OF disappearing into the hills – or certainly, changing locations and perspectives – seems central to Plant's peripatetic nature. It is also implicitly connected to Plant's desire to avoid, at any cost, what he calls the "tedium of repetition". A case in point is The Priory Of Brion, the folk-rock band he formed around the millennium with Kevyn Gammond, an old friend from the original Band Of Joy. Plant describes it as a direct response to his dissatisfaction for the tour with Page to support the *Walking Into Clarksdale* album in the late-'90s. "It was a glorious, silly knee-jerk reaction to doing one huge indoor ice hockey arena too many with Jimmy. We were already on the same old chunter round the big venues again. You didn't know where you were, who you were, what was anything, what it was all about, and was any of it coming from the soul. So I made a break for it. I played in restaurants in Oswestry, coming through the emergency exit while people were having their strawberries and cream. I was singing Billy Fury covers, so I didn't expect anyone to be enamoured by it. I was just on the run. I escaped."

As Plant repeatedly makes clear during our time together, "There would be no point in any of it if it was just falling off of the conveyor belt, spewing." Indeed, if anything, the trajectory of Plant's career has been about fulfilling his insatiable artistic curiously. Even during the Zeppelin years, the group's blues-rock foundation was supplemented by folk music and the kind of exotic North African influences that have continued to inspire his solo career. In the early 2000s, he recorded a pair of albums with Strange Sensation that drew heavily on desert blues and West Coast psychedelia. "I needed my music to be a long way away from everywhere I'd been before," tells Plant. "Otherwise, it's like you're a jobbing musician and you're gonna do the same thing forever. I wanted to go to some new places. Through Transglobal Underground and their endeavours I met [*Strange Sensation guitarist*] Justin Adams. I think that was a major turning point for me, to find a guy who could be so lyrical as a guitar player, and to have such amazingly beautiful roots of appreciation of music, and to have already been out there in Mali recording the first Tinariwen LP."

Seven years ago, of course, Plant found himself with an unexpected runaway success on his hands. *Raising Sand*, another marvellous

Priory Of Brion

GLOBE PHOTOS; DAVE PEABODY/REDFERNS

Plant at Bron-Yr-Aur in 1970: "They want me to buy it..."

excursion, this time into American roots music, recorded with Alison Krauss and producer T Bone Burnett. It was an instructive time for Plant: "I was singing for the first time ever with another voice," he confirms. "That opened a whole portal for me. I had to learn restraint. I had to remember when harmonies were coming."

For a follow-up, Plant convened a new iteration of the Band Of Joy, whose lineup included Patty Griffin and Buddy Miller. Plant continued to explore American musical history on their self-titled 2010 album. "It's very difficult for me to explain to you what it's like to have spent this time working with amazing American musicians, who took me to a totally different place and exposed me to amazing music," Plant reflects. "I was very young when I started playing and singing, and found an alternative to accountancy. I was very driven by the music of West Coast psychedelia, Delta blues and all that stuff. I never even thought about this other side of white American music. I now *have* to listen to George Jones once a day. Amazing singer. *What* a singer. So the American time for me was a revelation. I was learning about music that I'd never even touched. So why would I want to write in that genre? All I wanted to do was sing those songs. But Buddy and I have written a separate album, which is on a shelf somewhere, with [*Band Of Joy drummer*] Marco Giovino, of all original songs. We recorded it at Buddy's house. It's strong and powerful music, but I didn't see it as having the same life expectancy as a project."

During this period, Plant took up with Griffin, splitting his time between the UK and Austin, Texas. He seemed, perhaps, to be settling into comfortable domestic and musical arrangements. "I'd been in the same village most of my life, and I'd never really struck out," he says. "I really did like the whole idea of West Texas. It's such an amazingly deserted and yet darkly and sometimes sinisterly beautiful place. Down on the Mexican border, down into Big Bend National Park and across into Marfa and Fort Davis, where they've got the huge parabolic telescope going on."

Plant moved back to the UK permanently last September, leaving his relationship with Griffin behind. It's possible Plant's decision to return to his roots was motivated by a desire not to let his Americana adventures become repetitious. But it seems there were other factors at work, too. Plant talks about how, during his days in Texas, he would often find himself speculating about what his former cohorts in Strange Sensation were up to. "I came back from America a few times, and when I got back I went to see Justin [Adams]," Plant elaborates. "He was playing in JuJu with [ritti player] Juldeh Camara at the Hay-on-Wye festival along with [*bassist*] Billy Fuller and Dave Smith on drums. I went, 'Wow!' I loved the joy in this. I missed that. Because I am pretty much of an expansive guy, I shall probably just one day explode and turn to dust and crochets and quavers. So, yeah, I came back. I said, 'I'm back and I've gotta be back. I love my kids, my grandchildren and I like to laugh. I drink apple juice until I can't see...' I'm not a particularly profound guy. I just tried it and embraced it."

Plant on Page: "I don't know what he's trying to do"

> "Jimmy and I couldn't do anything proper. The expectation is too great"

Plant is understandably generous when discussing his current bandmates – now reborn as The Sensational Space Shifters. "There's no real boundary to where we can and cannot go," he enthuses. "There are cues within the songs and yet the contributors are all the players. It's not like a band, where there's a guitarist and a bass player and a drummer and singer. The give and take and exchange is magnificent."

The first sign of activity in the Space Shifters camp was on May 8, 2012, when they played a 400-capacity gig at the Gloucester Guildhall, followed by a show in London and one at Womad, then two in North America and 12 dates in South America. Plant is typically effusive as he recalls those dates. "I enjoyed seeing Juldeh flying and swirling with that ritti, and thinking to myself, 'I can sing in the middle of all this and get some of the old voice. But at the same time, I gotta laugh.' And I laughed and laughed. It was like none of us had been away... we just had so much fun."

SITTING IN THE pub garden, Robert Plant loudly slaps his left thigh with the palm of his hand. He is emphasising the importance of The Sensational Space Shifters in what he calls his "adventures in music", and pontificating on the wider musical possibilities they offer. "Last night, I was at home approving the vinyl, the test pressing," he begins, referring to the first fruits of this latest endeavour, *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar*. "Of course, the vinyl is always going to sound better, but I thought, 'Wow, I

Juldeh Camara: "I am a griot"

DJIN SPIRITS

INTRODUCING... JULDEH CAMARA

Plant's Gambian ritti player on his magical heritage...

"WHEN MY father was 15, he got lost in the forest. They looked for him two days, but couldn't find him. A djin had taken him away. The djin was a musician and taught him the ritti. My grandfather, a hunter, never gave up looking for my father. When he was hunting in the bush one day, he heard a noise from a tree. He knew a word to drive the djin away, and he saw his son, my dad, and took him home. But the djin wasn't finished. He'd call my dad back to finish his lesson. That's how he came to be a musician. He is not a griot, I am a griot. When I was five, I saw my dad play the ritti and I cried until he gave it to me. So he made me a very small ritti. When he played a naming ceremony, I'd take my ritti and play with him. When I was 15, people would call my dad and say they wanted me to play!

"I was touring Europe with Ifang Bondi from Gambia. A friend in the UK gave me *Desert Road* by Justin Adams. Whenever I listened to it, I wanted to play along with my ritti. I arrived in the UK in 2003, then in 2006 I called Justin and said, 'Before I tell you who I am, let me play for you.' So I played the ritti down the phone. He got my style and we made our first CD, *Soul Science*. We played our first gig in a small pub in Bath, and Robert came to watch. In 2009, he asked me and Justin to play at Abu Dhabi festival. In 2010 he was touring the UK with Band Of Joy, he asked our band, JuJu, to support him. And now, here we are."

GETTY IMAGES/JUDITH BURROWS; YORK TILLYER

CEASELESS SOUNDS

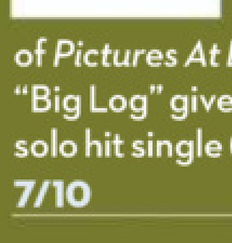
Buyers' Guide

A whole lotta Plant on CD

Golden throats: Krauss and Plant

PICTURES AT ELEVEN

SWAN SONG, 1982



One of the last releases on the Swan Song label. Guitarist Robbie Blunt and bassist Paul Martinez become critical to the next few albums. Phil Collins drums. Highlights: "Burning Down One Side" and "Slow Dancer". **7/10**

THE PRINCIPLE OF MOMENTS

ES PARANZA, 1983

Plant refines the polished song-writing feel of *Pictures At Eleven* while "Big Log" gives him a first solo hit single (UK: No 11). **7/10**

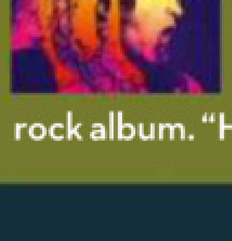
SHAKEN 'N STIRRED

ES PARANZA, 1985

Wonky '80s production. "Doo Doo A Do Do" a real low. Followed rock'n'roll covers EP, "The Honeydrippers Volume 1", recorded with Page and Jeff Beck. **6/10**

NOW AND ZEN

ES PARANZA, 1988



Phil Johnstone replaces Blunt as new collaborator. Electronic fizzles abound. Page guests on "Heaven Knows", "Tall Cool One": *ZoSo* vibes prevail as Plant samples Zep oldies. **8/10**

MANIC NIRVANA

ES PARANZA, 1990

"Tie Dye On The Highway"? Plant's most outright rock album. "Hurting Kind..." revisits "Black Dog". Best track: Moroccan-flavoured "Watching You". **6/10**

FATE OF NATIONS

ES PARANZA, 1993

Influences include West Coast psychedelia, singer-song-writers like Tim Hardin, as well as global grooves. Highlights: "Calling To You", "29 Palms". **8/10**

JIMMY PAGE & ROBERT PLANT WALKING INTO CLARKSDALE

ATLANTIC, 1998

Page & Plant's first new material for 18 years. Produced by Steve Albini. Highlights: the raga rock of "Most High" and "Shining In The Light". **7/10**

DREAMLAND

MERCURY, 2002

The first outing with Strange Sensation. Covers include Dylan, Skip Spence, Tim Buckley (a particular standout "Song To The Siren"), plus two originals. Enjoyably understated. **7/10**

ROBERT PLANT & THE STRANGE SENSATION MIGHTY REARRANGER

SANCTUARY, 2005

The shape of things to come. Plant & co wrap guitars round breakbeats and African rhythms with gripping results. "The Enchanter" and "Tin Pan Valley" remain live staples. **9/10**

ROBERT PLANT & ALISON KRAUSS RAISING SAND

ROUNDER, 2007

The US adventure begins. Impeccable studies of antique Americana, topped off by the principals' ravishing harmonies. Scooped six Grammys. **9/10**

ROBERT PLANT AND THE BAND OF JOY BAND OF JOY

ROUNDER, 2010

More of the above, but with a wider palette. Slowcore favourites Low rub shoulders with slices of American soul, Townes Van Zandt and gospel. **8/10**

ROBERT PLANT AND THE SENSATIONAL SPACE SHIFTERS LULLABY AND... THE CEASELESS ROAR

NONESUCH, 2014

Bold sonic adventuring, braiding Celtic and North African folk with dub, techno and rock music. A late career peak. **8/10**

actually did it. And the substance is new. All of it, it's new. That's quite a place to be, really. The laurels that I can lean back upon are so far back now that it's gotta be just about what this is today. The present is everything."

Although Plant talks about the album as a new concern, its roots nevertheless lie in an older project. He originally attempted the album's opener, an old folk song called "Little Maggie", while he was making *Raising Sand*. "I'd always tried to attack it as a song," he begins. "I was listening to a lot of Roscoe Holcomb, and he had this frailing banjo and I said to Alison, 'Let's try and do this, because if we get it right...' Of course, it was disastrous, funny beyond all belief. If it were to be included [*on Raising Sand*], I was to sing the main vocal on it. Alison was gonna join me on some lines here and there and play the fiddle. We knew we were going nowhere because T Bone suddenly appeared wearing a red dressing gown down to the floor, playing a tiny kid's piano with his fist, saying, 'We'll put this on it, too.'"

Plant, however, has high praise for the version he and The Space Shifters have recorded for *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar*. It's a typical blurring of musical lines, exploring the congruence between Celtic folk and African music and taking in dub and rock along the way. "I like the tease on it kicking off like you'd expect it to be if we were playing at Telluride at a bluegrass festival," he explains. "By verse three, our keyboard player Johnny Baggott comes in round the corner with the full force of his loops. So in the first two verses, I might have been nominated for an Americana award by Jed Hilly in Nashville, and by the end of it I'm castigated, thrown out, and I can no longer go to the Ryman. Which is exactly how it should be. I only stop for a second in any genre and keep going."

If "Little Maggie" is indicative of the album's wide-ranging musical sensibilities, there are other, self-penned songs that find Plant tackling his recent past. "Turn It Up", in particular, seems crucial in addressing Plant's decision to leave America. Against a thick, snaking riff and thrusting rhythms, he sings of being in a car, *"somewhere east of Tunica"* and *"close to giving up"*. Is this specific to him leaving America?

"'The car goes round in circles/The road remains the same'", he quotes. *"'The song remains the same'?* Yeah, yeah, definitely. Patty was recording *American Kid* across the border from Memphis with The North Mississippi All-Stars. I used to pop in every day and listen. But I didn't want to sit in some studio listening to people recording. There's nothing duller than that unless you watch a nil-nil draw with Aston Villa. So the rest of time, I had a car and I was moving through the hill country. I had the radio on and I realised I couldn't find anything substantial. I just heard religious claptrap and right-wing stuff down there on AM radio, sports radio, phone-in programmes... it's a very poignant song as I was turning into someone else I heard so much about. I suddenly became a hero with people, instead of 'Planty down the road'. I come and go in the game that I play, and I have the audacious expectation to be invisible most of the time. Because I just like to sing."

One of the album's central themes is the idea of Plant the explorer returning home – the record contains references to *"my island home"*, *"brought me home again"* or being *"out upon the Shire"*. It often seems as if Plant is trying to write himself into the mossy nooks and crannies of his beloved Marcher lands, with their own deep history and magic. A lot of the songs, too, are written in the first person; has Plant ever written about himself so openly before?

"I'm at the time in my life where I can't really sing about a girl in a bar room," he considers. "I can't go into familiar music terminology like you would hear on so many other songs, and I can't sing about love as an absolute pure and relative condition. Because there's way more to it than that, and the way I've crashed through my life and everybody else's life...

"You know, I had to give so much away to come back," he admits. "My relationship was out there. But what could I do? I could sweep it all under the carpet and pretend it doesn't exist. But I subscribe. Sometimes, some of the choices you have to make are bitter."

Like moving back to the UK?

"Yeah, like realising that I actually am from here. I see this is where it is for me, but I'm always coming and going. I'm a trader. I go and I come, I have a cargo of madness that I keep dumping into venues. I'm glad I can do, because I celebrate my gift. There's no point in fucking about and pretending."

Plant with Patty Griffin in The Band Of Joy, the War Memorial Auditorium, Nashville, TN, February 9, 2011

"I celebrate my gift... there's no point in fucking about and pretending"

LATER ON, STANDING in the gift shop at Ludlow Castle, Robert Plant scrutinises the contents of a well-stocked bookshelf close to the tills. His eyes rest on a copy of *Wolf Hall*, Hilary Mantel's novel about the rise to power of the Tudor statesman, Thomas Cromwell. Plant says he recently saw the stage adaptation at Stratford-upon-Avon. As we walk out into the grounds, he confesses that whenever he comes here as a paying customer – about once a month, he reckons – he nags the staff to stock books on Owain Glyndŵr, the 15th-Century Welsh prince who led a revolt against English rule. We've come here for part of the *Uncut* photo shoot. Standing in the outer bailey, Plant points out a solitary hawthorn tree growing close to the drawbridge. He extols the medicinal properties of the berries, then pauses and smiles. "The May Queen," he gestures in the direction of the tree. "'*If there's a bustle in your hedgerow, it's a spring clean for the May Queen*'."

In the pub garden a few hours earlier, Plant addressed the weird logistics of *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar* being finished just as the Led Zeppelin remasters were starting to roll out. "You have to get it out," he says matter-of-factly, referring to his own album. "It's just what I do. Whatever happens, this will be one of the best records I've ever made."

Does he see himself as competitive with Page and John Paul Jones?

"I don't think so. Visually, musically and the drive and intention behind all these things are coming from such different angles. I've seen Jonesy playing in the last couple of years with Them Crooked Vultures, or with Gillian Welch and Dave Rawlings, and he's now in the final stages of writing an opera. That's magnificent. Nothing gets in the way of anything. You just make music and keep moving."

What about Page? Do you think he needs you more than you need him?

"I don't know..."

What about the *New York Times* quote: "He's playing games and I'm fed up"?

"I feel for the guy. He knows he's got the headlines if he wants 'em. But I don't know what he's trying to do. So I feel slightly disappointed and baffled. The only game I play really is making great music with people who are really vibrant and positive. It's so easy, everybody's cannon fodder if they're not careful. Who cares? Getting up and being able to breathe is a good thing."

Is there a Zep song that reminds you of Page?

"'Friends'," he pauses, then a big smile. "Well, it's a Monday, innit?"

A short while later, Plant revisits the question of his relationship with Page. "Jimmy's like a

ED MILES; DOUGLAS MASON/GETTY IMAGES ENTERTAINMENT; ERIKA GOLDRING

Ludlow Castle, 2014: "I'm not a city guy..."

EYEWITNESS

"SOMETIMES, HE'LL THROW A SPANNER IN THE WORKS..."

Studio insights with Plant's right-hand man, Justin Adams

"IN 2001, I'D just moved to Bath and I got a call out of the blue from Robert. He had another band going with him, but he'd decided to start again from scratch. He'd always had an interest in North African music, and he asked Hamid, Transglobal Underground's drummer, if he could recommend anyone in their scene of similar tastes.

"Robert's got more than a normal amount of energy and drive. He enjoys the feeling of a real group where everyone's contributing. As producer on *Ceaseless Roar* he has the final cut, but he wants people to get involved. We all come up with little sketches. Either we'll play them live in a soundcheck or rehearsal room, or we'll send him CDs of ideas. Sometimes it's just a rhythm, a chord sequence or a sound. It's completely unpredictable what he'll respond to. You might send him a fully realised idea, and there'll be one little bit in the outro where I've made a mistake and he'll go, 'I like that bit, we'll work on that.' Quite often, he'll throw some massive spanners in the works: you've got a thing going and he'll say, 'Mix it up with this!' All of a sudden, it's in another key or rhythm, and as technical musicians, we think, 'How can we make this work?' But it's important to stand outside the technique – that 'You can't have an A flat with a G minor.' Robert works on atmospheres. He's very intuitive. There are many moments when we're playing and someone gets a chance to fly and they'll say, 'I can nail that a bit better.' But Robert will say, 'No, no, no. That's the one.' He hears something in it, a little bit of magic. He'll go with the freshness a first take brings."

clockmaker," he observes, pausing. "A couple of years ago, I said, 'If you've got anything acoustic, let me know. I'll give it a whirl. It was hands across the water. But he walked away. Just walked away. But we couldn't do anything proper. The weight of expectation is too great."

We meet again a fortnight later in London at the playback for *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar*. The date is June 2, the same day the Zeppelin remasters go on sale. In a newly opened hotel in Soho, Plant unveils his new album to a small audience of industry folk.

Afterwards, he appears in the bar, stopping to share a few words with old friends who've travelled down from the Midlands, a representative of his long-serving legal advisor Joan Hudson and delegates from his new label, Nonesuch. Does Plant ever feel anxious when letting a new record out into the world?

"I just want to take it into a corner and feed it milk and honey," he admits. "I feel a traitor to it. Like I'm selling it down the river to put it in the hands of people who want to consider which is the best way to hike the fucking thing to its ultimate, maximum... But here I am, talking to you. You're a nice guy, and so am I. But to give it on to other people, it's a price you have to pay. You know, when I was 12, I had a paper round and I was sending off to America for things like *James Brown Live At The Apollo*. So. Records, records, music. I'm part of it. Do it, then let it go."

> "Look, I just wanna have some fun... and that's what I said in 1968"

THERE IS A man kneeling on the floor next to Robert Plant pulling seaweed from a wooden crate. It's June 23, and we're at a small aftershow drinks reception at Le Bataclan, Paris, for Plant and The Sensational Space Shifters. The man on the ground, it transpires, is a friend of Philippe Brix, the French manager who introduced Plant and Justin Adams to the Festival In The Desert in Mali. Brix has arrived at the gig with a crate of homemade wine and a crate full of oysters for Plant and the band – *c'est très Français*. The next morning, Plant arrives in the lobby of his chic hotel in a navy blue T-shirt and grey jeans with his hair tied up in a topknot. At our first meeting, Plant hadn't entirely decided on a title for the new LP. Can he now explain what *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar* means?

"It's explanatory of all life," he begins, sipping a café au lait. "Life has a dynamic. It's not always so dramatic, but the extremes are... well, the extremes. It probably follows right the way through the story of my choices in music. Where I've been pleased to rest along the way in music, with people, with certain musical attitudes and enthusiasms – and sometimes the very opposite of that. It's just like, 'What a life!'"

And what is life like now for Robert Plant, out there on the Welsh Marcher lands?

"I like adventures in Soho and East London, the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and I know my way round Marrakech quite well. But I'm not a city guy. I can never really get over the speed of the changes of the seasons. At this time in my life, I'm trying to slow it all down, slow down the movement of the seasons so I can really devour them. We were in Estonia and Northern Sweden recently and I could see that spring had turned to summer there and I knew that if you went seven or 800 miles south you'd be on a line where I live. So the season would have advanced that much more there, and I would have missed it. But what do I do? I just go slowly with Arthur over the fields. 'Misty Mountain Hop'. Well, that shit's all still there, I'm drawn to that stuff. That's what I do when I play five-a-side on a Wednesday night with my friends in the village where I've been most of my life. We all wait to see who's gonna have the first cardiac arrest. I promised I'd buy a defibrillator for the village, just to help out.

"There's one or two policeman who play on the team. It's funny how a few years gone by, I was neurotic about the cops checking my pockets and I now I play soccer with them. It was a huge change to come back, a complete about turn for me. I spun round, right round, 360°, right round in a circle and came back. I threw my lot back in with the five-a-side on a Wednesday!

"I think you asked me about being... not restless, but on the move. I think that shows in the lifestyle of a musician anyway. You're not around long enough to be particularly affected by the glory of the moment. I like that thing about being gone. I don't wanna do multiple nights in one place. I wanna be gone 15 minutes after we're offstage. Just gone. I guess every generation's got its epoch of hope and passion and drive and zing and zest. I don't miss the one I was in because I've still got it. I'm still there, and the company I keep is everything. That gig last night? That was as good as it ever, ever was. *Ever was*."

Do you still think you need to prove anything after 48 years of making records?

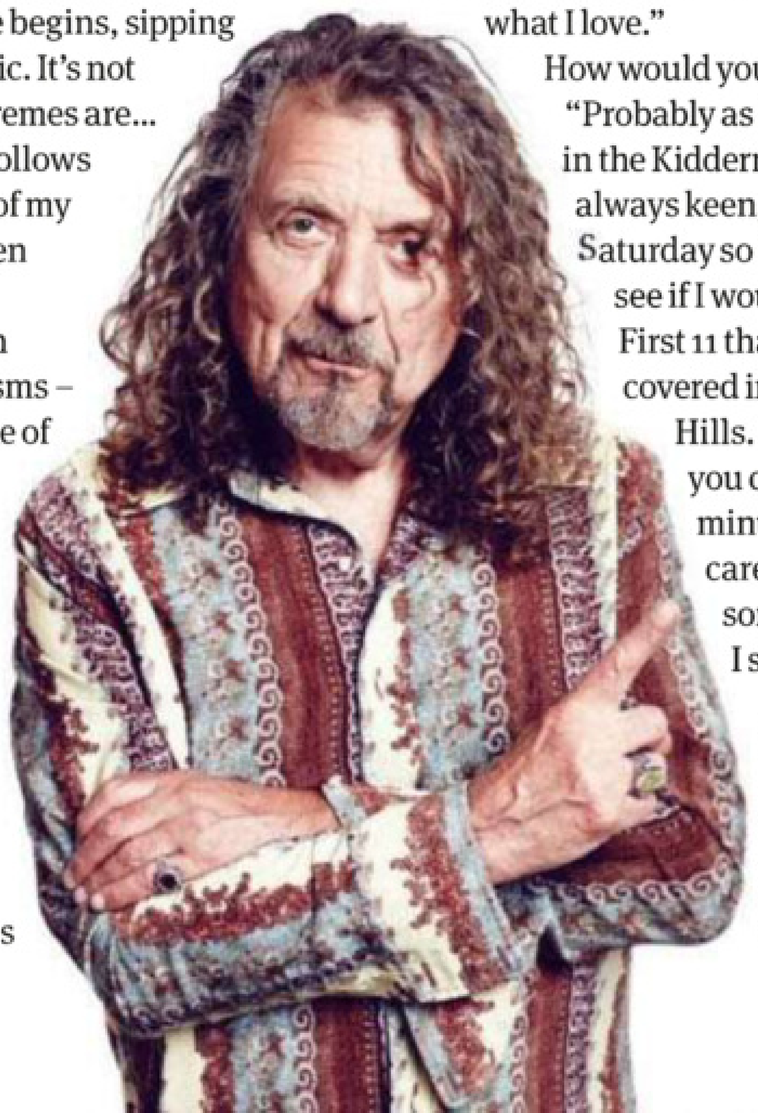
"No, not to prove... time is so important. The passing of time, when you get to this stage in life. When you get to that last verse in the ballad on the album [*"A Stolen Kiss"*]: *'There's so little time'*. You can't bluff it. You can't fake it, you can't take it up, you just gotta live it out. Time is so valuable. I don't put anything out that I don't have 110 per cent passion for. Otherwise I've got plenty of other things I could do with my life. Mix a greyhound with a good Bedlington Terrier, all that stuff. That's what I love."

How would you like to be remembered?

"Probably as the world's slowest inside right in the Kidderminster Sunday league. I was always keen, though. I never had sex on a Saturday so that I could save myself, and to see if I would actually be picked in the First 11 that ran out onto a pitch that's covered in cow shit, on the top of the Clee Hills. Clee Hills and Mortimer, where you could have a bloody nose in a minute and a half if you weren't careful. Look, I just wanna have some fun. And that's kind of what I said in 1968."

And have you had fun?

"On and off, yeah. Mostly on."



ED MILES

lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar *is released on Nonesuch on September 9*

ECLIPSES THE ORDINARY

2013 Ultimate Spirits Challenge, Finalist. 2012 World Whiskies Awards, Best Island Spirits Challenge, Silver. 2011 International 2011 International Spirits Awards, Bronze. Awards, Silver. 2010, Ultimate Beverage 2010 Ultimate Beverage Cocktail 2010 Ultimate Beverage Cocktail and Sand). 2010 Ultimate Beverage (Scotch Sour). 2008 San Francisco Gold. 2008 San Francisco Best in Show Whisky. & Spirit Competition, World Spirits Competition, (Best Packaging). 2007 Competition, Double Gold Wine & Spirits 2006 International 2006 International 2005 Spirits Journal Distilled Spirits, 12 year

2013 The Scotch Whisky Masters, Silver. 12 years and under. 2012 International Wine & Spirits Awards, Bronze. 2011 International Wines & Spirits Cocktail Challenge, Finalist (Rob Roy). Challenge, Finalist (Rusty Nail). Challenge, Chairman's Trophy (Blood Cocktail Challenge, Chairman's Trophy World Spirits Competition, Double World Spirits Competition, 2007 International Wine Gold. 2007 San Francisco Double Gold Medal San Francisco World Spirits Medal. 2006 International Challenge, Silver Medal. Spirits Challenge, Gold. Independent Guide to old category, 1st Place.

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BOBBY WOMACK | 1944-2014

"I'm a soulman. Everything I do is soulful to the max"

A tribute to one of America's greatest voices of the last 50 years. We revisit a remarkable 1985 *NME* interview with the Poet, holed up in New York with Ron Wood and plotting how to feed the world in a day. Plus, there's a guide to Womack's essential solo albums and a heartfelt memorial from his last producer. "He wanted to feel like he was getting his shot," remembers Richard Russell, "'cause he felt like he hadn't always had that."

1985 story: Paolo Hewitt

SPEAKING TO *UNCUT* in 2012 about *The Bravest Man In The Universe*, his first album in 14 years, Bobby Womack confessed, "I had given up on music to be honest. I thought I didn't have the necessary spark any longer." The puzzle is, why Womack's career renaissance took so long to happen. During a career spanning six decades, Womack's wide-ranging accomplishments as a songwriter, musician and performer seeped into soul, rock, pop and R'n'B. "His talents put him up there with the greats," wrote The Rolling Stones, following Womack's death on June 27, aged 70.

Bobby Womack's career began in his teens in Cleveland, Ohio during the early 1950s, as a member of Curtis Womack And The Womack Brothers. Renamed The Valentinos, they were mentored by Sam Cooke. Under contract to Cooke's SAR Records, Womack wrote "It's All Over Now" in 1964. Three months after Cooke's death that same year, Womack married his widow, Barbara Campbell, and struck out as a songwriter and session musician. Indeed, many of his songs were recorded by other artists, often with greater success. Janis Joplin covered "Trust Me" on *Pearl*, and Wilson Pickett recorded "I'm A Midnight Mover" among 17 of his songs. As a session guitarist, he brought his distinctive style – he played a right-hand-stringed guitar left-handed – to *Dusty In Memphis*, Elvis' "Suspicious Minds" and "The Letter" by The Box Tops. He also worked with the very best of his contemporaries: James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Sly Stone.

But even the warmest tributes to Bobby Womack acknowledged that his early promise was leavened by lengthy periods of decline. There were personal tragedies, too, and, in later years, he endured a series of major health problems including diabetes, pneumonia, colon cancer and Alzheimer's disease. As the '70s began, Womack's solo career flourished. All the same, the success clustered around the superlative run of albums at the start of the decade – *Communication* (1971), *Understanding* (1972), *Across 110th Street* (1972), *Facts Of Life* (1973) – was marred by the death of his brother Harry in 1974. From then on, various personal setbacks conspired to send him in and out of the wilderness: among them, an affair with his stepdaughter Linda and the death of his three-month-old son Truth in 1978. But the '80s started well: he enjoyed two acclaimed solo albums – *The Poet* (1981) and *The Poet II* (1984) – and a collaboration on the Stones' *Dirty Work* (1986). Inevitably, the suicide of his son Vincent in 1988 and a growing cocaine addiction impacted on the quality of his work. Ron Wood – a lifelong friend – inducted Womack into the Rock'n'Roll Hall Of Fame in 2009, but it wasn't until Damon Albarn invited him to join Gorillaz in 2010 that Womack's career significantly picked up. Albarn – who described Womack's rugged, emotive baritone as "somehow touched by God" – was also behind the valedictory *The Bravest Man In The Universe*. At the time of his death, Womack was working on his 28th studio album, titled with self-deprecating humour, *The Best Is Yet To Come*.

In 1985, the *NME* sent Paolo Hewitt to interview Womack in New York. At the time, he was staying at Ron Wood's house, while the Stones were making *Dirty Work*. With his own album *So Many Rivers* just recently released, Womack spoke openly about life and career so far, his triumphs and his disappointments. "Everything I do is soulful to the max," he said... ***MICHAEL BONNER***

AFRO AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS/GADO/GETTY IMAGES

Womack in New York, 1985

BOBBY **WOMACK**

TAKEN FROM NME, AUGUST 29, 1985

"They call me a living legend/But I'm just a soldier who's been left behind/And now my heart can't take it/My feet won't make it/I'm the only survivor left standing here."

"Only Survivor" from *So Many Rivers*

THERE WAS A time, somewhere in the '70s but lost now, when Bobby Womack would open his eyes and see nothing around him. When life felt useless and nothing, *but nothing*, could persuade him otherwise. All he could see was black and all he could do was stumble.

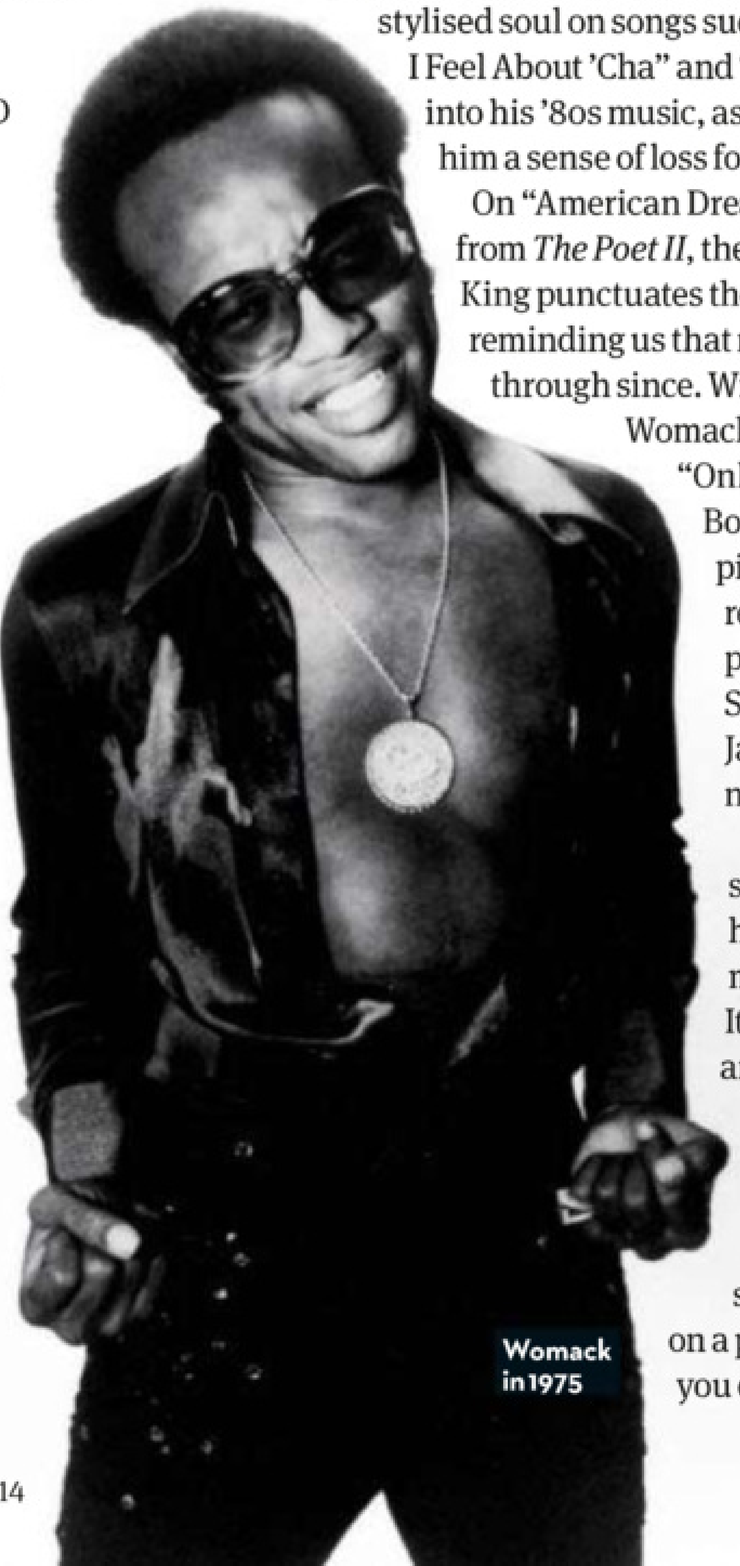
And there was a time when this 41-year-old singer would find himself walking into the bedroom of his baby son to find him dead, suffocated between the mattress and the cot.

Or the phone would ring and the voice on the other end would tell him, in cracked tones, that his brother Harry, closest to Bobby of all the Womack clan, had been killed, repeatedly stabbed to death by a girlfriend in a frenzied fit of jealousy. It later transpired that her jealousy had been totally unfounded.

Out of the seven years that Bobby Womack lost to the wasteland, when he turned his back on records, music and his career, four of those were spent financially and spiritually broke. To make matters worse, his reputation preceded him.

The seasoned heads would gather around the table and they would all agree that Womack was one of the Great Talents, out on his own in fact. But, ah! The tantrums, the drug abuse, and the volatile temperament: leave well alone, my brothers, leave well alone...

But four years after that period, and he had released three LPs of the best music of his life. And when Bobby Womack does that, you're talking about a music that is, quite simply, unbeatable.



Womack in 1975

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY MAGES

DESPERATE MEN AND women: they might have success and money, but see through it: their life is still one of unease. This is sometimes where the best music comes from, the tension that such a contradiction produces.

On the last three Womack albums, *The Poet*, *The Poet II* and *So Many Rivers*, that tension is discernible.

The key to it all is Womack's voice. Born and bred in the deep South, Womack comes from the gospel tradition but heads into another direction, linking soul as we knew it in the '60s and '70s to the patterns it has formed this decade. Somewhere along the line, soul lost its sweat and rawness, swapped it for strings and a quiet discretion. When Womack woke up from his inactivity, he put the gut back in. On those three '80s albums, Womack tackled electro, orchestras and synthesisers as well as the more conventional and natural instrumentation. Needless to say, he wins every time.

The Valentinos, Cleveland, Ohio, 1962. Top (l-r) Bobby, Friendly Jr and Curtis. Bottom (l-r) Cecil and Harry

"I think I'm good on any instrument," he boasts, "but the main instrument is going to be my voice on top which is identifiable, the lyric, which the world needs, and a feeling, that the world is going to vibe on. Put those three elements together and you got Bobby Womack. You got hit product."

Womack drags the qualities of his past – work as Sam Cooke's guitarist, as co-writer with people such as Wilson Pickett, and his own stylised soul on songs such as "That's The Way I Feel About 'Cha" and "Looking For A Love" – into his '80s music, as well as bringing with him a sense of loss for firm ideals.

On "American Dream", Womack's song from *The Poet II*, the voice of Martin Luther King punctuates the orchestration, subtly reminding us that no-one has come through since. With *So Many Rivers*, Womack's current LP, the song "Only Survivor" finds Bobby looking at the pictures on his wall, realising that his peers, Marvin Gaye, Sam Cooke and Jackie Wilson, are no longer with us.

"A true performer," says Womack, "puts his whole life around making people happy. It's his wife, it's his kids and when he doesn't have a hit record his wife divorces him. Out! And that's why so many guys commit suicide. You put them on a pedestal so high and you expect so much out of them, and when they don't perform you snatch them right down and strip them of everything. So what I had to do was to find something that was permanent."

Which is exactly what Womack did.

He created a music for the '80s that will not diminish. What he also did was to bring a sense of politics back into black music.

Most soul singers don't want to know about putting themselves on the line. Some are genuinely at a loss as to how to do it meaningfully. The majority fear for their record sales. Perhaps Live Aid will change this. Perhaps the work that James Brown, Sly Stone, The O'Jays and many others have done will not go unheeded.

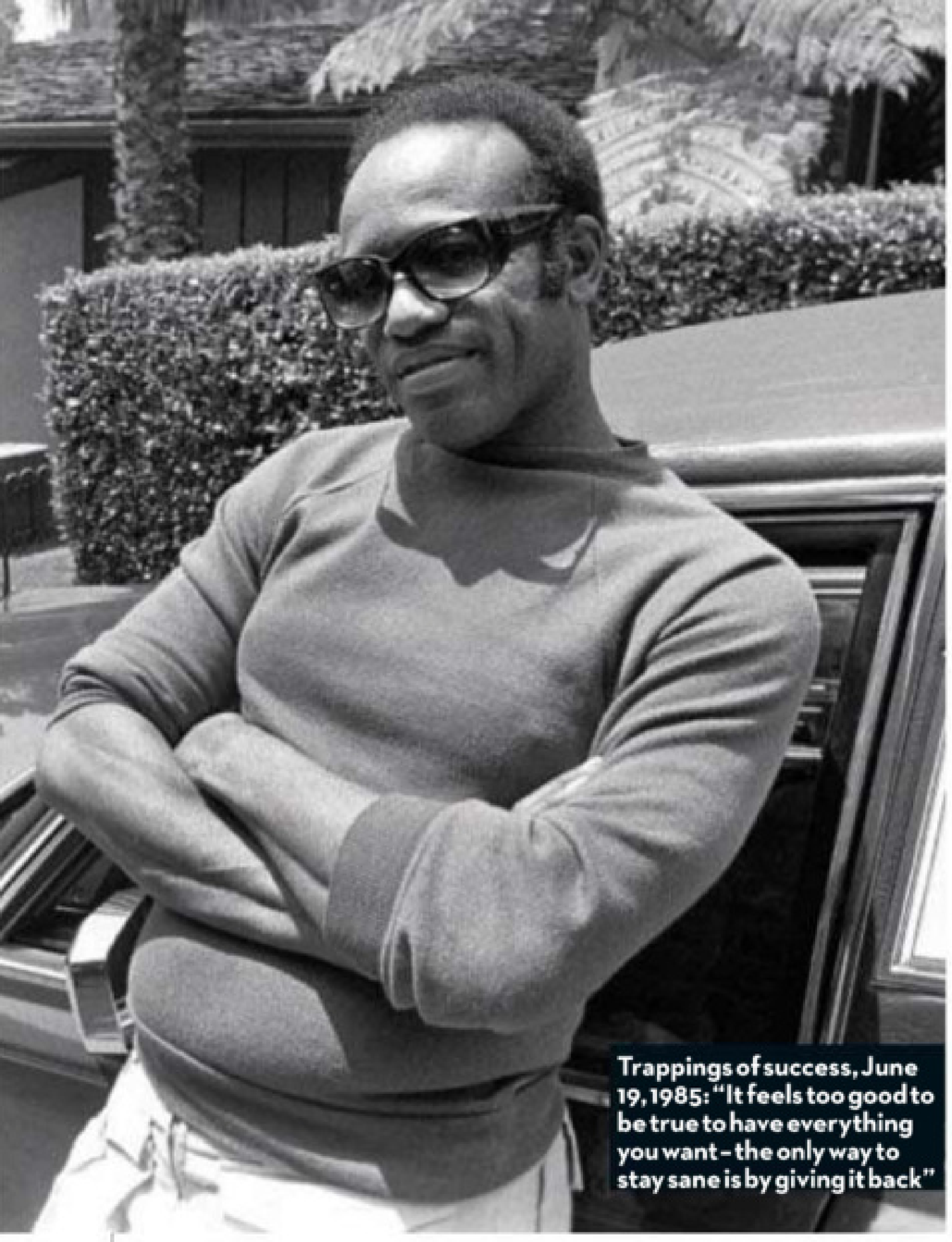
Womack's politics stem not from theory but from a genuine concern for his fellow man. If he can, he wants to protect. Soon you will hear him on Miami Steve Van Zandt's anti-apartheid record.

"I jumped at it because I said, 'Hey, I have one talent, I can bring people together through my music and I can draw a crowd and I can raise money.' I think that when people have got that kind of leverage, and that type of pull, they should use it in a positive way. And not just, 'everything is for me and I don't want to get involved in politics'. That's a cop-out.

"It's just that they don't want to be doing anything for anyone but themselves. Some remain that way and some grow out of it. Some start to give back because it feels too good to be true to have everything you want. The only way to stay sane is by giving it back."

You know what he wants to do next? He wants to organise an open-air picnic in his hometown of Cleveland. Womack will play, the entrance fee will be five dollars, and the food and the drink will be free.

Then he wants to get the profits and personally go into the poor areas, knock on every door, and try to help out. You're behind on the rent? Here's a fifty. Haven't eaten for a day? Take this and feed



Trappings of success, June 19, 1985: "It feels too good to be true to have everything you want – the only way to stay sane is by giving it back"

your family. "Fuck all the red tape," says Womack. "Imagine if every major band went back to their hometown and did it? We'd feed the world in a day."

He isn't kidding.

ACROSS THE SKY was a strip of bright orange, highlighted by dark blue above and pitch black below. We were an hour from New York and it was a monstrous sight. Tony was sitting two seats away, slightly drunk.

"Are you honest when you do your interviews?" he demanded of me. "Do you write it all down as it happens, or what?"

Tony worked as a sales rep for *Rolling Stone* so I suppose he knew about that kind of thing. "You see, these stars," he said, slumping back into his seat, "they're all full of bullshit."

> "I'm an artist and if you can relate to me, then thank God, you've got a soul"
> BOBBY WOMACK

Next day, we were heading towards Bobby Womack, The Renaissance Man. Womack is currently on tour in the States but had found three or four days to head for New York, where he will help the Stones on the recording of their new LP.

Instead of a hotel, Womack was staying at Ron Wood's house. In its basement he listens to a tape of the album. Back in the '60s, Womack gave the Stones their first American hit with "It's All Over Now". In the '70s, he gave Ron Wood "If You Don't Want My Love" for his first solo LP, when Wood was still a Face.

Now in the '80s he sits in this small basement as Stones music blasts out of the speakers, the cycle now complete. He's dressed simply and he's carrying a paunch, although his long legs which seem to stretch for ever balance him out considerably.

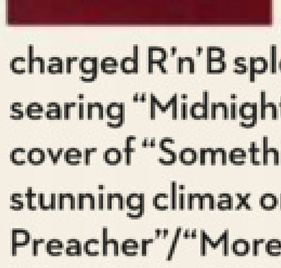
On the walls around him are drawings by Ron Wood of all the prominent rock'n'rollers. Springsteen, Jagger, Dylan, and one of Womack himself, that rests against a wall. Womack sees me studying it.

DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS

HOW TO BUY

Solid gold sounds of a soul survivor

10 ESSENTIAL ALBUMS BY BOBBY WOMACK



FLY ME TO THE MOON

MINIT, 1968

Graduating from songwriter/session guitarist to solo artist, Womack's debut is a genre-busting covers LP. From the killer version of "California Dreamin'" to a funkified makeover of "Moonlight In Vermont", the R'n'B arrangements, warm horns and Womack's gravelly rasp make for a compelling blend.

THE WOMACK LIVE

LIBERTY, 1970

Cut in Hollywood in 1969, and capturing Womack in his full-throated, highly-charged R'n'B splendour. Following a searing "Midnight Mover" and glorious cover of "Something", he reaches a stunning climax on a medley of "The Preacher"/"More Than I Can Stand".

COMMUNICATION

UNITED ARTISTS, 1971

Womack heads to Muscle Shoals and hits a deep groove. His breakthrough hit, the slow-cooked soul of "That's The Way I Feel About 'Cha", sits alongside covers of "Fire And Rain" and a long, languorous version of "Close To You", Sam Cooke by way of Isaac Hayes.

UNDERSTANDING

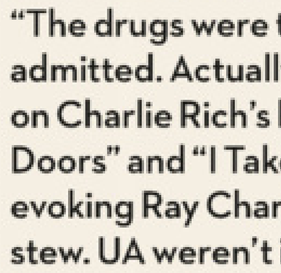
UNITED ARTISTS, 1972

A timeless classic that moves effortlessly from the lascivious funk of "Woman's Gotta Have It" and epic soul staple "I Can Understand It" to the old school Southern soul of "Harry Hippie". There's even room for a rousing take on Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline".

ACROSS 110TH STREET

UNITED ARTISTS, 1972

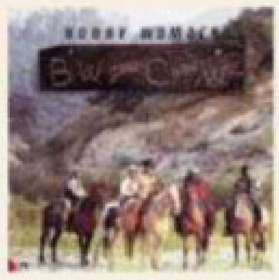
Womack co-wrote the soundtrack for Barry Shear's blaxploitation movie, and the title theme is one of his masterpieces. With its searing strings, fierce rhythm and soaring chorus, it's a wonderfully atmospheric depiction of bottomed-out street life, later featured in Tarantino's *Jackie Brown* and Ridley Scott's *American Gangster*.



LOOKIN' FOR A LOVE AGAIN

UNITED ARTISTS, 1974

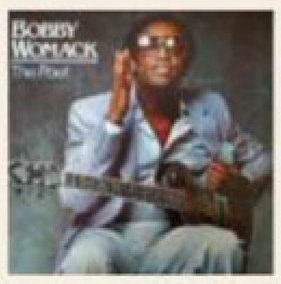
Lush, smooth soul. The title track had given Womack his first hit with The Valentinos in 1962, and is revamped here for one of his biggest solo singles. "You're Welcome, Stop On By" adds some welcome edge, a riot of thudding bass and funky fuzz-guitar.



BW GOES C&W

UNITED ARTISTS, 1976

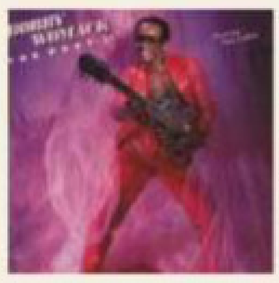
Fearing he was repeating himself, Womack takes a left turn into country: "The drugs were taking hold," he later admitted. Actually, it works, his take on Charlie Rich's hits "Behind Closed Doors" and "I Take It On Home" evoking Ray Charles' rich country-soul stew. UA weren't impressed, selling his contract to Columbia.



THE POET

BEVERLY GLEN, 1981

Womack's reinvention as a modern, decidedly Vandrossian soul man for the '80s isn't to everyone's tastes, but it has its moments. In particular, the testifying ballad "If You Think You're Lonely Now" features one of his most emotionally racked vocals.



THE POET II

BEVERLY GLEN, 1984

Front-loaded with a trio of duets with Patti LaBelle, *NME*'s Album Of 1984 is, as the title suggests, a further exploration of *The Poet*'s slick soul stylings. The easy, swinging shoo-be-doo-wah of "Surprise, Surprise" is a standout.

THE BRAVEST MAN IN THE UNIVERSE

XL, 2012

Inspired by his cameo with Gorillaz, an ailing Womack hooks up with Damon Albarn and XL supremo Richard Russell for his first album in 12 years. It's a triumphant swansong, pitching his still-extraordinary voice and rejuvenated songwriting against a stark electro-soul backing.

GRAEME THOMSON

Dirty Workmen: with Ron Wood and Keith Richards in the early '80s

JOHN BELLISSIMO/RETNA UK

"Hey, it ain't finished yet. I'm not that ugly." He has a winning smile mixed with a certain wariness of the interviewer. Womack is frank with most people, but he's wise to their ways.

MTV had just approached him. Said they'd interview him about his new LP. But could he bring along a couple of the Stones? Womack stalled, but Mick and Keith agreed. They were filmed for an hour. When it was aired, it was like Womack was only there to carry the luggage.

After 22 years, he's used to it. He recalls the first time he played support to the Stones. On the opening night, he asked Jagger to introduce him with no fuss. Just a plain, "Ladies and gentlemen, Mr Bobby Womack." When he walked onstage, you could hear a pin drop. It wasn't that different when he left the stage.

The next night, Jagger gave him a massive build-up. "Our biggest influence, we're very proud he's here tonight, blah, blah, blah". Womack walked on to a standing ovation. "I thought 'Fuck you.' See, there are too many followers and not enough leaders. See, when I decided I wanted to be heard, I had to make it so that it was suitable for radio stations to say, yeah, that's crossover material. And I still don't understand what crossover material is. I think it's prostituting yourself to be something that other people want you to be before you're accepted.

"And so I don't do that. I say, fuck crossover material. I'm going to sing and when I sing I'm a soulman, everything I do is soulful to the max. I came along in great company. I came along with Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, Marvin Gaye. Who could be any badder than them? Ain't no-one on the face of this earth today who can touch them. So I'm proud to be that. Proud to be a soulman. This is where I will be and this is my belief. I will stand up for those guys. I will stand up for those who broke the ice for the Princes and the Slys to make it.

"They did it to the max and they stuck to their guns. So if I sit here and say, I'm a pop artist... fuck being a pop artist. I'm an artist and if you can relate to me then thank God you've got a soul. That's the way I feel about it.

"That's cocky? That's the way I am."

And the way he *was* is something that Womack has never been scared to face. At the dawn of the '70s, Bobby Womack was one of the most successful artists of his kind. Up there with the rest of them, no less. Astonishing success, equally astonishing music.

> "I just did drugs... drugs never did me, ever. I was proud to get high"
>
> BOBBY WOMACK

"I was very successful," says Womack in his deep Southern accent that keeps your ears straining to catch every word, just to understand. "But I was very young too, and anything that you're born with, like having a talent to relate to people through writing and singing songs, it's like you take it for granted.

"So I was going. The only thing I could trigger was making people happy with my music. As far as putting away anything for myself or putting away anything for other people, I didn't do that, because I wasn't mature enough to understand what was going on. Then, all of a sudden, I had a kid, and I don't want my kid to be as crazy as me, because he's not as good as me. What I mean by that is that he don't have the talent I have.

"I think I'm a special person and I don't want my son to follow in my footsteps, people judging him by me. It's not right. By the time of the pregnancy I was crazy but when he got here I went out and straightened up. He taught me who I was before I became this guy chasing the dollar, chasing fame, or just being into situations that were nothing like I thought they'd be."

I heard there was a heavy involvement with drugs about this time.

Womack doesn't flinch. Where most would run for cover, sack press officers or simply storm out, Womack breaks it down into pieces.

"I was never heavily involved in anything because when you're heavily involved in anything it takes a lot of heaviness to get out of it. I just did drugs. Drugs never did me. Ever. It's just that I said, 'Hey, it's great.' I'm into that point reaching for another high. I never hid anything I did because I was proud to get high. That's where your head is at that time.

"I'm 41 now. I was twentysomething then. It was just a bad fire party and that's what I think made me a survivor, because I never took it seriously. If I had taken it seriously then... I would've taken care of other aspects of my business. I wasn't getting paid properly on my publishing, sometimes I wasn't getting paid at all. Sometimes I was a ghostwriter for other songs that I don't care to mention, that were Top 10 records. Someone would give me money under the table, or whatever, and I'd just be 'give it to me now'."

Just like an old cliché, Womack rose, shone, and then fell. Dramatically.

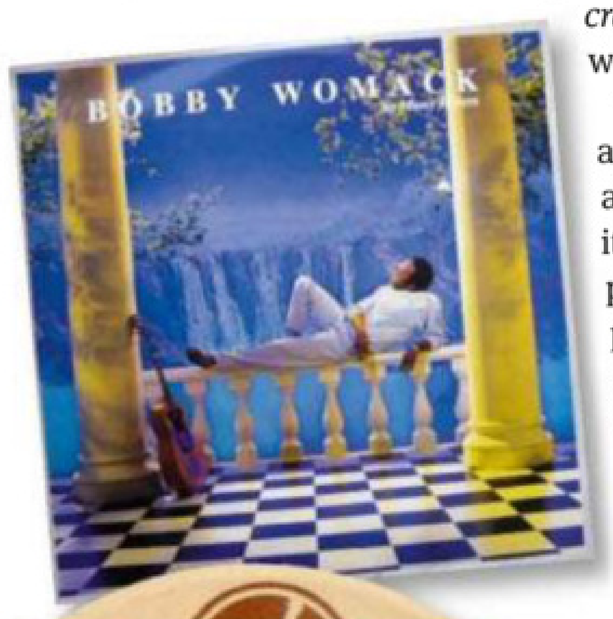
"I was totally into disappointment. Everything was a disappointment," he recalls. With it came a viciousness and an anger that you would

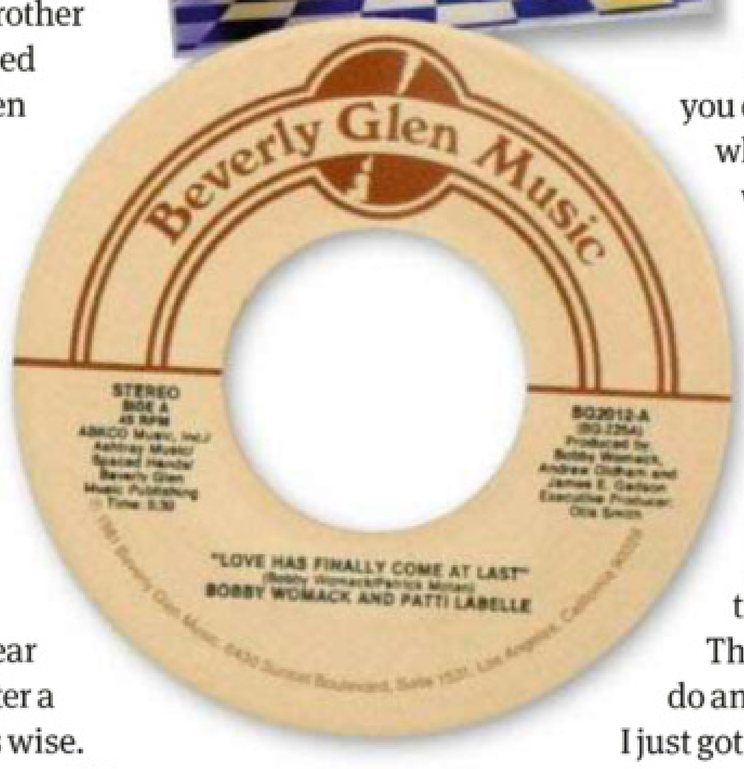
be hard pressed to fit into this amiable, if somewhat tired, man sitting opposite me.

Womack was raised in a strict religious environment. Everyday his father told him two things. Don't steal. Don't hit a woman. Do either, and I'll kill you. In 1974, when brother Harry died at the hand of a woman, his father's commandments suddenly made no sense.

"We grew up with that. Now my brother's thing, she was a jealous woman and she thought something was, wasn't so. So she stabbed him and he sat there trying to talk to her. For a while I blamed my pop for that, fucking dumb way to teach anyone.

"Now, if a woman came at me with a knife, I'd knock her into next week. I became very resentful, took it out one step further, nothing to do with that one person. It's like when people have one bad incident with a black then say they hate all blacks. But you grow and grow and there were women in my life who were truly great all the time."





With the death of son, brother and father, Womack slipped towards the edge. And then pulled himself abruptly back. In 1980, he phoned Allen Klein, Sam Cooke's old manager, and found himself on a small independent label, Beverly Glen. He cut *The Poet* LP and saw it sell over a million and a half copies worldwide. He claims he didn't receive anything near the money owed him. "After a while, even a dummy gets wise. You just don't give those songs 'til you say, 'What you gonna give me for it?' So he had his day and I hope he succeeded because he can never come that way again," he says of the owner of Beverly Glen.

What no-one can take away is the awesome beauty of *The Poet*, an LP that completely vindicated Womack's talent and laid out a few home truths. *"Once I thought I had the world in my hands/But I must have been the world's most foolish spender,"* he cries out on "Lay Some Loving", and that just about summed up the latterday Womack.

"It's when you try and make up something that never happened to you, that you have a hard time telling it," says Womack of his songwriting. "So when you write a song like, *'My woman ain't no good, I'm leaving the house tomorrow,'* if that's true, I can tell you why she ain't no good and the exact time I'm leaving. But if you got a good wife, it's hard to say that and make the world believe, because it ain't real."

The Poet heralded a return to the feel and movement of soul's golden years. It was followed by Womack & Womack's *Love Wars*. And then Bobby stepped it up even further with *The Poet II*. Just the duet with Patti Labelle on "Love Has Finally Come At Last" is enough to stop the most hardened in their tracks. It is one of the moments of the '80s and Womack just effortlessly kept on. Tunes such as "Surprise Surprise" and "Trying To Get Over You" are special works, music that goes straight where soul music was always meant to go: to the heart.

Yet, there is no-one following in his footsteps.

"There ain't no soul no more," says Womack irritably. "I'm the last of the soul. Soul music is yesterday. It's like when Stax gave out, that was it for soul music. It got so tough for blacks to eat that they tried to find a way to eat, so they tried to cross over. They did what jazz artists did. They believed in their art but they were tired of playing clubs this size [*he gestures around Ron Wood's cramped basement*], and walking out with $30.

"I remember sitting in a room this size looking around and I never noticed it before, but all the pictures on the wall were people who were long gone. And in such a short time. My brother wrote that song," he says, of "Only Survivor".

"He said, I wrote a song for you, man. But only you can tell the story. I said, what about Stevie Wonder, what about so-and-so-? He said, well they had a family that we weren't in. They had the Motown family which protected them. After 22 years, I'm still in the business, I'm still functioning, I know what time it is, I feel good. Things I used to do, I don't do anymore. I'm not straight. I just got more sense."

SOMETIME LAST YEAR Bobby Womack signed with MCA Records, got somewhere near $1m and gave us *So Many Rivers*. On it, his meticulous standards are upheld, and on at least three songs, he once again equals the best of his songwriting. "It's better than the last two *Poet* albums put together," he quickly points out. "It's so good that it will take you about a year to get over it. That's the truth. Matter of fact, if it wasn't as good as the last album, then I need to quit."

Once again, through the music and that so special voice, Womack is revealed to us as a caring, humane person. There are a few like him left, and God knows we need them.

"What's so special about music is that it's the universal language and I feel that a lot of people need talking to. I can write letters to people from Germany to Nigeria, and they don't know me, never seen me. But they go out and get the record to see what I've got to say. I think that's the greatest gift you can have."

Later on, in a Chinese restaurant, Bobby Womack, a top survivor, cracks open a rice cracker with a little message inside it.

"This," he announces to the table, "says, you will be receiving no royalties." Everyone around the table bursts into laughter.

But Bobby Womack is the first to finish smiling.

"HE WAS A GENIUS"

Producer Richard Russell on working with Womack

"I FIRST BECAME AWARE of Bobby through hearing him on Robbie Vincent's show on Radio London in the mid-'80s – songs like "I Wish He Didn't Trust Me So Much", and tracks from *Communication* and *The Poet*. His voice was so distinctive, it was definitely one of the things that I heard as a 14- or 15-year-old that really stuck with me. I actually felt quite intimately familiar with him just from hearing those songs on the radio. That was part of the magic of what Bobby did.

"I got to know him personally through Damon Albarn. Bobby was really enthusiastic about getting himself out there again, and had asked Damon to help him make a record. Damon's idea was that between me and him we could help create a platform for Bobby, somewhere you could see him and hear him and feel him that was authentically Bobby.

"We all felt very proud to be part of [2012's] *The Bravest Man In The Universe*. It was a unique privilege. All Bobby's ideas were just spot-on. He was a genius. He knew himself, so he knew what was good.

"His health can't have been good when we were making it, but he didn't want to talk about being ill. He wanted to be a musician, making stuff, and then he wanted to get out there and play it. And he wanted people to dig it, and he wanted to feel like he was getting his shot, 'cause he felt like he hadn't always had that.

"We were booked to go into the studio with him towards the end of this year, and we talked about recording more spirituals along the lines of 'Deep River' and 'Jubilee', which I'm very sad to not be doing now."

TOM PINNOCK

Recording *The Bravest Man In The Universe*, with Damon Albarn and Richard Russell, autumn 2011

It's Kinda Funny

Josef K, raising the post-punk bar: (l-r) Malcolm Ross, Paul Haig, Davy Weddell and Ronnie Torrance

BY JOSEF K

Postcard's existentialist dark horses, Paul Haig's Edinburgh four-piece scored a minor post-punk hit in late 1980 with a song about first-date nerves, "the human condition. And death…"

FOR A BRIEF moment between 1980 and 1981, Josef K, along with Postcard labelmates Orange Juice and Aztec Camera, were hailed as trailblazers of a bright, new post-punk movement.

In truth, the Edinburgh four-piece were always Postcard's dark horses, having more in common with Manchester, and Joy Division, than their breezy Postcard co-travellers. They had an aversion to showbusiness, employing taped intros to songs to limit live interaction with audiences. "I was aware through my Sixth Year Studies English of Brechtian alienation techniques," says guitarist Malcolm Ross today. "That was a way of flirting with that."

Lyrically, Paul Haig's interest in existentialism attracted plaudits, though critics often failed to notice the group's dry wit (a posthumous comp was titled *Young And Stupid*, "because we were").

Josef K were essentially a live force, but their December '80 single, "It's Kinda Funny", remains a near perfect example of their ability to conjure and control a mood. With Ross' understated viola, Haig's delicate croon, Weddell's Peter Hook-style bassline and Torrance's percussive syndrums, it can be seen as a companion-piece to Joy Division's "Atmosphere", though in this instance, Haig's journey into the void was inspired by his nervousness about going on a date.

ALASTAIR McKAY

PAUL HAIG: Josef K being on Postcard Records all came from Malcolm meeting Steven Daly at some gig in Edinburgh. They got chatting and discovered they both had bands, so they started getting together and doing gigs in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as Josef K and Orange Juice. After that Alan Horne and Edwyn [Collins] wanted to start a label, and wanted us to be part of it. They knew us already, so it was obvious we would be a part of it.

STEVEN DALY: I met Malcolm in Edinburgh outside of a Patti Smith concert (and, after that, the Banshees). When I started talking to him about putting out a single [*1979 debut, "Romance"/"Chance Meeting", on Absolute Records*], the band was working under the name TV Art. I had to insist that they change that name before we went ahead. I think I did both them and the record-browsing public a small favour.

DAVY WEDDELL: I started off managing the band. They had Gary McCormack playing bass. It was decided to get rid of Gary, and Paul had a bass guitar. Because I was there he said, "Why don't you start messing about a bit and learn how to play it?"

HAIG: We all came from punk rock. Early stuff like the No Wave New York scene, and *Live At the Roxy*. Then we moved on to things like Pere Ubu and The Pop Group and ATV, the alternative side of punk. There was so much stuff around. It would be very difficult not to be excited and influenced. It was a mini-revolution. I was also heavily into Chic. That's where my choppy rhythm guitars were coming from – Chic and James Brown, which I'd been listening to from a young age. It was good fun to try and mix that with punk. I also liked James Blood Ulmer. There was a lot of interesting guitar stuff going on. Tom Verlaine and David Byrne. It was great stuff, away from your typical rock guitar solos.

DALY: I think Josef K helped to make Postcard seem more legitimate by adding another dimension to the label. Orange Juice were a

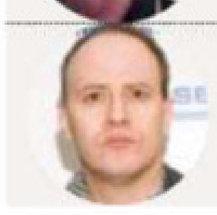
KEY PLAYERS

Paul Haig
Vocals, guitar

Malcolm Ross
Guitar, viola

Davy Weddell
Bass

Ronnie Torrance
Drums



Steven Daly
Orange Juice drummer

HARRY PAPADOPOULOS; IAIN STEWART; T.CERISOLA 2014, DUNCAN BRYCELAND/RETNA PICTURES

pretty solipsistic bunch, but certainly recognised that none of the other decent independent labels relied solely on one group or any single style of music.

HAIG: Alan Horne was a very opinionated, bitchy person. I never really got on with him, but we didn't have fights or anything. We just knew our places and got on with it. The whole thing was based on the Factory and The Velvet Underground. It was a good model to base things on. But it was very Andy Warhol. Alan wanted to be the Andy Warhol of Glasgow.

RONNIE TORRANCE: I didn't particularly like Alan Horne, I have to say. I thought he was sleazy.

MALCOLM ROSS: Alan's input was always useful. He was an abrasive person. He liked a bit of friction. If he could find a person's weak point he would, and he would do his best to open it up.

HAIG: "It's Kinda Funny" is a song about the human condition. And death. I lived with my parents, and I was going to go out one night to meet this girl that I was quite keen on, which she didn't know. So the first line, *"You may be dumb, but the passage of time can change anything like the feelings we find"*, was about meeting her, because she was dumb to my feelings. It was really about hoping that things would change in the future, and we'd get together. So the first part is a very normal unrequited love type thing. Then it goes off into the existentialist chewy stuff.

ROSS: We would never talk about what the songs were about. Paul was very reticent about his lyrics. I'm not sure he was always sure what they were about.

TORRANCE: I enjoyed the music, but the lyrics weren't of that much interest. The rest of the guys bought into the existential thing, but I wasn't at that level. Probably I should have been a New Romantic. I just used to enjoy things, probably to excess. I was never as serious as the rest of the guys.

HAIG: I have heard people say it was inspired by Ian Curtis' death. It wasn't. It was a song I was writing before going out. It came together incredibly quickly. I did the whole arrangement, the guitar solo, and the lyrics, in about 20 minutes. The only thing that makes me think of Joy Division is the bassline, which was influenced by Hooky. Books were a huge thing. There were people in Edinburgh walking around with paperbacks – they'd probably never read them, they just had them with the title sticking out the top pocket. It became a real pose. But it wasn't a pretentious thing on our part, we were just influenced by books.

> "It's about unrequited love, then it goes off into the existentialist chewy stuff"
>
> PAUL HAIG

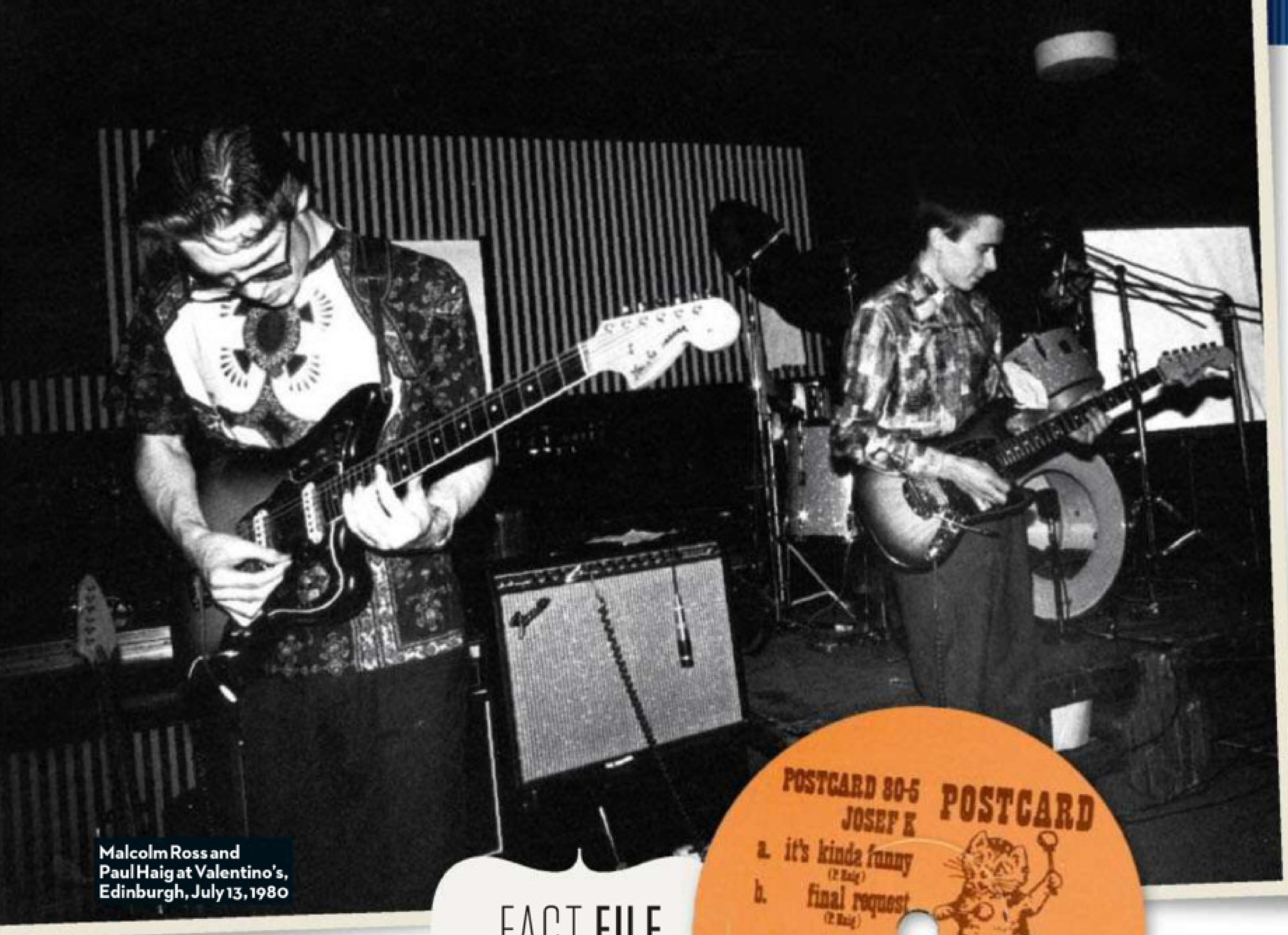
ROSS: Camus and Kafka – that's what I was reading at the time, TS Eliot.

HAIG: Lyrically, I liked to try and condense lyrics. I admire the economic lyric style of things like [*Iggy Pop's*] *The Idiot*. I like songs with a few good lines, instead of overly wordy.

TORRANCE: I remember very little about recording it, for one reason or another! I can't even recall which studio we used. Was that the one in Belgium? Oh, Castlesound [*in Pencaitland*]. The studio itself was really good. It was in the country, in the autumn, and I remember sitting in a rather large back garden, about half an acre, in the sunshine when I'd laid down the drum track, and letting the guys get on with the rest of the stuff. But that period of my life is hazy. I'll say no more!

ROSS: That would be the second time we went into Castlesound. The first time, we had one day we were sharing with Orange Juice, to record "Radio Drill Time". When we did "It's Kinda Funny" we must have had the day all to ourselves, so there was a bit of time to think about how it was all going.

HAIG: Josef K were quite an odd band. We always felt we didn't fit in anywhere. We kind of felt that maybe [*engineer, and future Blue Nile producer*] Calum Malcolm didn't like us that



Malcolm Ross and Paul Haig at Valentino's, Edinburgh, July 13, 1980

much. It was typical paranoia, though I'm pretty sure he didn't like our music. We went out to the shop at lunchtime, and we thought, 'Well, will we get him a present to crack the ice a little bit?' We deliberated for ages over buying a chocolate bear full of cream. We were so awkward and weird that we were standing around thinking, 'Well, would he like that?' We got back and gave him the chocolate bear. He wasn't very impressed, I don't think.

ROSS: Calum was quite an experienced musician, and maybe he didn't understand us that much. He was more pre-punk as opposed to a post-punk sensibility. He might have been a bit frustrated that we weren't able to express what we wanted. We were a group of teenage boys, and we weren't exactly very sociable. He probably just thought we were weird.

TORRANCE: It was all pretty new to us, but we had been in the studio maybe once or twice before. We weren't overawed or anything. It was just a bit more pressure.

ROSS: "It's Kinda Funny" was one of Paul's finest moments. We were playing a lot live, and rehearsing a lot, so it was all tight. It was just one of those days where there weren't any mishaps and it all came good. I made up the counter-melody on a viola I'd borrowed from a friend. It's the first thing you hear. It's mixed pretty low. When you're 19, you think, 'Och, I'll manage to play a viola no bother.' But actually playing it so it's in tune all the time and not getting that screeching sound is quite difficult. It has a really good drum sound. Everything in the band was just clicking.

ROBERT SHARP

FACT FILE

- **Written by** Paul Haig
- **Performers:** Paul Haig (vocals, guitar), Malcolm Ross (guitar, viola), Davy Weddell (bass), Ron Torrance (drums)
- **Produced by:** Josef K. Engineered by Calum Malcolm
- **Recorded at:** Castlesound studio, Pencaitland
- **Released** December 1980
- **UK chart position:** –
- **US chart position:** –
- **UK independent chart position:** 12

HAIG: It's close to being a ballad. I always remember playing it live. It was always a thoughtful part of the set, because things would slow down a bit. A slight break from the constant thrashing of guitars.

TORRANCE: I think I was probably the first person in Edinburgh, maybe even in Scotland, to have syndrums. I heard them, and I thought, 'Christ, that sounds amazing!' It might have been Joy Division I heard them on. We were into Joy Division big time. I had to take a part-time job collecting glasses in a bar at night to get money to buy them, 'cause as a trainee hairstylist my salary was crap. They were expensive, and having worked so hard to get them, I wanted to make sure they featured.

HAIG: I never thought of myself as a singer, I still don't. I was just warbling the best I could. My main influences were Lou Reed and Bowie, and Jim Morrison. Johnny Rotten as well. There's a slight bit of that going on. I've always loved good male singers. I don't know if it would have come across in Josef K, but I was listening to Sinatra. I was listening to a lot of Abba as well. I've always had eclectic tastes. Iggy Pop was another influence. I loved his voice, especially on *The Idiot* and *Lust For Life*.

ROSS: A couple of days after recording "It's Kinda Funny", I was helping Orange Juice record "Simply Thrilled Honey" at Castlesound. Orange Juice were a lot more shambolic than Josef K, and most of the time, one or two members of the group wouldn't be talking. I think that's why they liked me to come along while they were recording – as a social lubricant. After we'd finished recording "Simply Thrilled Honey", we played "It's Kinda Funny" in the studio, and the atmosphere changed, because "It's Kinda Funny" sounded better. It was a more professional, better arranged, better structured recording then "Simply Thrilled Honey". It got a bit tense driving back into Edinburgh; even as far as them saying I'd deliberately made sure the Josef K record was going to be better than the Orange Juice record. We weren't there when It's Kinda Funny" was mastered, and I emember Alan Horne phoning me and saying, Now listen, I had nothing to do with what happened at the mastering." I said: "What happened at the mastering?" He said, "Oh, bass was added, Steven and Edwyn wanted it added." I thought, 'What are you getting at here, Alan?' Were they trying to make sure that the Josef K record wasn't better than the Orange Juice record? I think it was that.

HAIG: We were all a bit disappointed at the sound of it. For some reason the guitars were quite muted, and it was more bass-heavy than we thought. It was a bit duller all round, the sound.

TORRANCE: I don't recall that. I'm tone deaf.

DALY: "It's Kinda Funny" sounded pretty accomplished at the time, so as far as Orange Juice were concerned it was an encouraging example of what could be achieved with similar resources. There wasn't any inter-group rivalry as such: Josef K's singer had suspiciously goth tendencies, therefore they could never be considered a real threat, but both groups were trying to figure out how to move things forward, so that kept everyone on their toes.

WEDDELL: It was a given that Orange Juice were always going to be the favoured band on Postcard. The more commercial band, but we just did what we did. It was just like being in a gang, the four of us. We just wanted to be different from everybody else.

HAIG: It was a conscious thing. We set out not to be rockist. Not to be a mouldy old rock group, a pub rock group. We just didn't like that stuff. We wanted to be sharper and cleaner, more brutal.

TIMELINE

Mid-1978 TV Art formed in Edinburgh
January 1979 Davy Weddell replaces Gary McCormack on bass
20 July, 1979 First show as Josef K (named after anti-hero of Franz Kafka's *The Trial*)
November 1979 Debut single, "Chance Meeting", released on Steven Daly's Absolute Records
September 1980 Postcard debut "Radio Drill Time" released
December 1980 "It's Kinda Funny" released on Postcard

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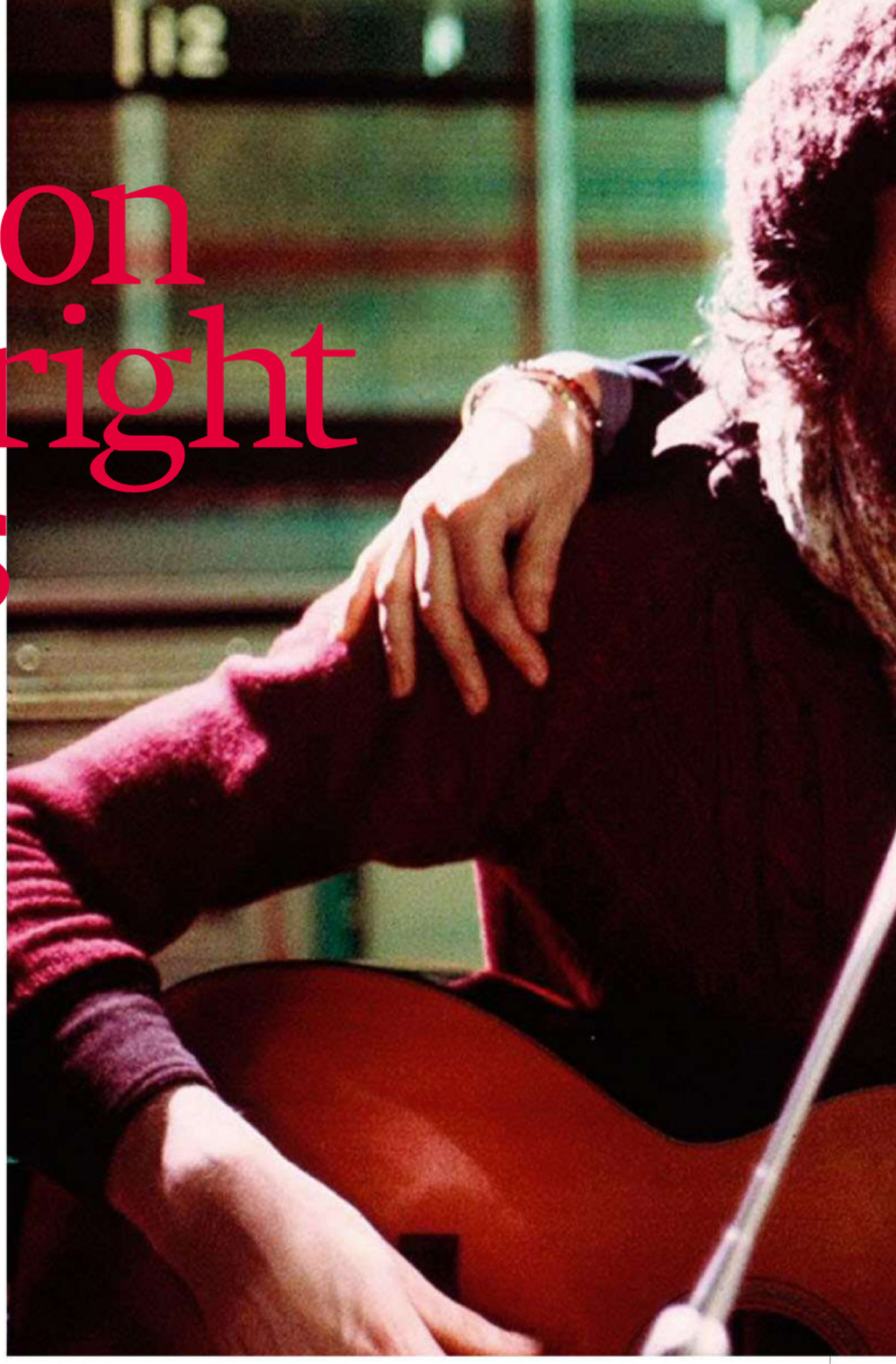
RICHARD & LINDA **THOMPSON**

Turn on the bright lights



A sullen guitar prodigy on the run from success. An extrovert Scottish jingles singer who could talk the back legs off a donkey… RICHARD & LINDA THOMPSON were folk-rock's odd couple, who complemented each other perfectly. Forty years on, *Uncut* pieces together the story of their first masterpiece, *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*: how tales of drunkenness and doom soon led to a radical change of lifestyle...

Story: Jim Wirth

ONE THURSDAY MORNING in April 1972, Richard Thompson and his wife of four months, Linda, were anticipating a nice day out. The couple took a walk from their Hampstead flat to buy the music papers and read the reviews of his debut solo album, *Henry The Human Fly*.

"Some of Richard Thompson's ideas sound great...," they found in *Melody Maker*'s death-knell write-up, "...which is really the saving grace of this LP, because most of the music doesn't."

The reviews were universally awful. "Poor Richard," recalls Linda Thompson today. "I remember us being on Primrose Hill in the sunshine. He was so unhappy about the reviews. Up 'til then he'd been the wunderkind in various bands and the criticism was hard to take."

To say that it was an enormous blow was something of an understatement. For a time, Linda even thought that her husband would never record again.

"Richard's had the last laugh – it's now sold trillions," she adds. "Just kidding."

Indeed, according to industry legend, the likeable but undercooked *Henry The Human Fly* – with its nasty market-stall typeface above a cover picture of Richard looking awkward in a tuppence-ha'penny fancy dress costume *(pictured overpage)* –remains comfortably the worst-selling record released by any arm of the Warner Brothers company in the US. It's a fact that one can imagine the faintly macabre Thompson's taking a perverse delight in.

"We loved glum," says Richard with a mischievous chuckle. "Glum is the new glam."

If it was, then *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*, recorded in May 1973, but not released until April 1974, would have been challenging The Carpenters' *The Singles: 1969-73* for top spot in the end-of-year best-sellers chart. For underneath that sparkling art-rock cover – the one that looks like an SOS message scrawled inside a tap room window – lurks the sweetest and darkest record of the couple's career. Where *Henry The Human Fly* was an amiable shambles, its booze-tormented, misanthropic follow-up was slick, supremely restrained and – for all the merry tunes – pretty much unremittingly dour.

The only glint of hope in the final shake-up came in the slightly irritating form of "The Little Beggar Girl", who concludes – as she merrily scams the well-to-do for pennies – that she'd *"much rather be rich after than before."* A prescient remark, given what happened to the Thompsons next.

"'The Great Valerio', 'The End Of The Rainbow' – those are very Richard songs," harrumphs John Wood, the album's co-producer, adding with a

Two sides of the same coin: Richard and Linda At *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, March 1975

wry chuckle. "There's no-one else who does things as cheerful as that."

HOWEVER, AS DARK as *Bright Lights* was, it is also a musical love story.

"They were definitely a couple on this record," says Thompson's former Fairport cohort Simon Nicol. "The music and the sense of humour was something that they really shared."

A close friend of Fairport singer Sandy Denny, Linda Peters was the former fiancée of Joe Boyd, the boss of the Witchseason agency that oversaw the careers of John Martyn, ISB and Nick Drake as well as Fairport. Peters – née Pettifer – first worked with Richard in late '71, guesting on *Rock On* by The Bunch, a throwaway rock'n'roll project featuring various Fairport alumni. Her sweet duet with Denny on Buddy Holly's "When Will I Be Loved" was the album's main selling point.

Peters subsequently provided backing vocals

> "Linda and I loved glum. Glum is the new glam..."
> RICHARD THOMPSON

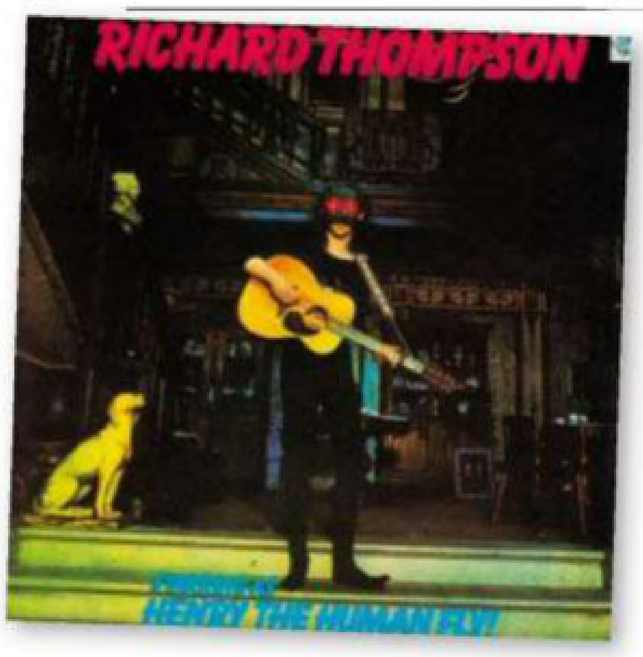
on Richard's 1972 solo debut, *Henry The Human Fly*, and by the end of that year, the couple were living together on Thurlow Road in leafy Hampstead, making occasional forays out into the folk clubs as a trio, Hokey Pokey, along with Nicol, another recent Fairport escapee.

"They were two sides of the same coin – a brilliant couple," Nicol says. "Linda's extrovert side was a very good match for Richard's introverted one. She could talk the back legs off a donkey – in a lovely way – whereas he was dodgy-eyed and stuttering. Sure of what he was thinking but unable to express it."

Richard Thompson, 25 when he recorded *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*, was certainly a little more abstract than the lively Linda. "I was extremely quiet, reclusive – had no sense of business or money," he remembers. "Rents, mortgages, bank accounts – hello, what? I didn't understand you had to get insurance and pay taxes. I was seriously out of it. I was airy. Head in the clouds."

A jobbing folkie, session singer and jingle artist before marrying Thompson on October 30, 1972, Linda remembers him rather more fondly. "He was very young – all young men are a bit sullen," she says. "He was unworldly, and generous, and just adorable."

REX FEATURES



"He could be brilliant company – witty and charming and obviously brilliant with a guitar in his hands, but I would say he was a bit awkward at times," adds John Kirkpatrick, who played accordion and concertina on *Bright Lights*, and many other Thompson releases besides. "He wasn't given to idle chitchat."

Still waters ran deep. Thompson had come increasingly to the fore as Fairport Convention morphed from England's answer to Jefferson Airplane into genuine innovators, 1969's *Liege & Lief* and 1970's *Full House* very much the Genesis and Exodus of British folk rock. However, he chose to leave Fairport in January 1971 to pursue his own idiosyncratic vision of English rock music.

He continued to live at the band's communal house, the former Angel pub in Little Hadham, Hertfordshire, until the following month, when a lorry smashed through the wall of the room below his bedroom. The reviews that greeted *Henry The Human Fly*'s release that April then drove a truck through Thompson's self-esteem.

"I was bothered," Richard muses ruefully. "I think the negative criticism of that record was 50 per cent absolutely right – it wasn't a very well performed record, and I sang it really badly because I wasn't a good singer. The other 50 per cent of the criticism was probably wrong. It was a record of songs very much influenced by British music as opposed to American music. When you heard a British accent on a record back then it was like a novelty – like a Rolf Harris record. People just didn't understand it."

When he mustered the courage to return to Sound Techniques just over a year later, Richard was adamant that he would not be misunderstood again. "He was very determined that it would be short, snappy and quick," says John Wood. "I should think we recorded it in less than a week added up – including the sessions with the crumhorns. And the brass band."

"We did it in three days," notes Richard. "It cost £2,500 to record; the whole thing – studio fees, session musicians, gear rental. Those were the days."

Once more deploying the rhythm section of drummer Timi Donald and bassist Pat Donaldson that had backed him on *Henry The Human Fly*, Richard and John Wood worked fast.

"I had played everything to Linda at home and we would sing through stuff and figure out who was going to sing the various songs," Richard says. "In the studio, we would start each song afresh and teach it to the other musicians, which wouldn't always take that long."

"If the songs had been bedded in onstage, we'd have done it in a day and a half," smiles Nicol, who added dulcimer on the luminous "Down Where The Drunkards Roll". "Why waste time?"

By the time Kirkpatrick came down to Sound Techniques a couple of days in, the record was all but done. "I was just overdubbing," he says. "The fiddles and the whistles were already there. I don't remember it being too tortuous. Get in and bash it out."

IF NOT TORTUOUS in its construction, *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* is certainly tortured in its essence. Richard's jaunty escape fantasy "When I Get To The Border" captures something of its mildly desperate sense of yearning (*"I'm packing up and running away to where nobody picks on me"*) before giving way to his enigmatic "The Calvary Cross". The cue for an extended guitar improv live, the Sound Techniques recording is fabulously curt. "It's about music – or the muse," Richard explains, a little awkwardly. "It's about how music takes over your life and drives you rather than you having a choice."

Richard has only two other lead vocals on *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*, his misanthropic wassail, "We Sing Hallelujah", and the brutal "The End Of The Rainbow" – his sour welcome to the recently born: *"Life seems so rosy in the cradle, but I'll be your friend, I'll tell you what's in store/ There's nothing at the end of the rainbow, there's nothing to grow up for anymore."*

Linda was pregnant with the couple's first child at the time – Muna was born that October. It was hardly a message of hope. "Well, he was certainly addressing a bleak outlook for children in that difficult early '70s era," she says diplomatically.

Richard, however, insists it was nothing personal. "I felt negative for the world for about an hour and then I didn't feel like that again," he shrugs. "I understand the emotion – look at the world you're bringing your kid into. It's a dark song, but it's a song that people seem to like. I get a lot of requests for it when I am playing live, and I've stopped being surprised by that."

Still not quite capable at the time of accepting that some of these dark thoughts were his own, Richard admits that most of *Bright Lights* was written in character. "It's that thing of not being comfortable enough to express your emotions in case somebody laughs at you," he concedes, adding: "You write a song and it starts out as a fantasy and it ends up being about you anyway."

In that sense, Linda was another mask to hide behind. She reckons the vocal problems that would dog the remainder of her career were already kicking in, but her crystal-bright and glassy-cold leads on six *Bright Lights* tracks are imperiously controlled.

"I was pregnant," says Linda. "I recorded and toured, and that was when I noticed my dysphonia [*a disorder causing impairment of the vocal organs*], though I had no idea what it was called at that time. It had a bit of impact on the recording, but I was able to work through it. It wasn't too bad."

Understatement of the century. "I think she absolutely peaked on this record," says Richard. "Naturalness – a complete lack of artifice," adds Nicol, while Kirkpatrick remains shaken by how powerful Linda's delivery is.

"Her singing on this album is dazzling," he says. "It became depressing how often you'd hear 'Down Where The Drunkards Roll' sung by folk-club floor singers. It's breathtaking to hear Linda's original take."

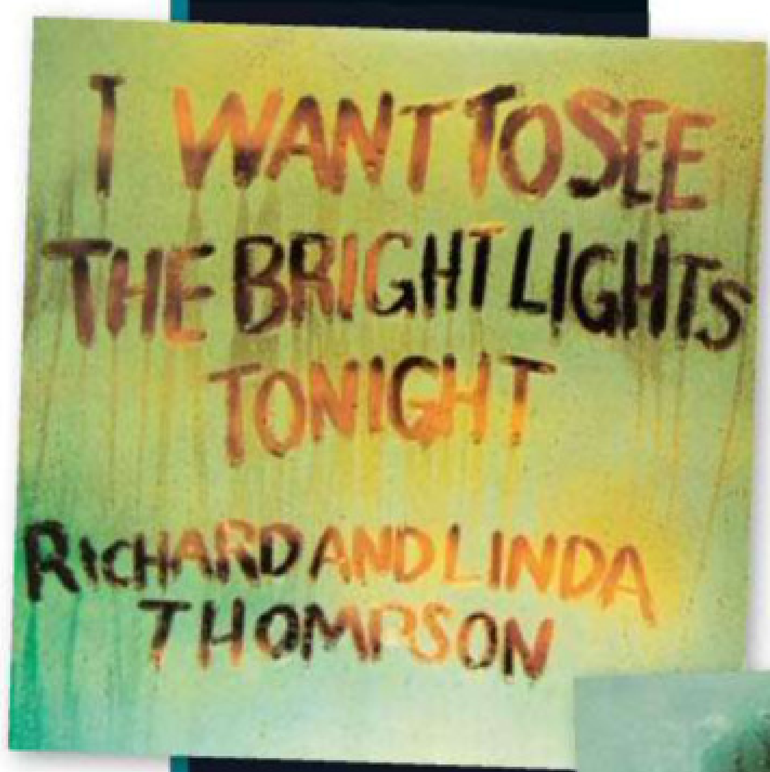
For breathtaking, read life-changing. Written by Richard about the denizens of a drinking club he used to frequent, "Down Where The Drunkards Roll" is a slow roll call of the living dead in a place where *"you can be a gambler who never drew a hand, you can be a sailor who never left dry land/You can be lord Jesus – all the world will understand"*.

Linda's contribution is extraordinary, her gloriously unemotional interpretation simultaneously expressing limitless compassion and callous disregard, pitying the lovelorn soak *"looking for the real thing, lies were all he*

EYEWITNESS

THE MYSTERY OF THE *BRIGHT LIGHTS* SLEEVE SOLVED

"I THOUGHT THAT was how you see London through the rain, through a steamy bar or taxi window," recalls Kentuckian Nancy Fouts, the uncredited artist behind the luminous *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* sleeve. "The red of a traffic light, the bluey green of early evening." Working with her then-husband Malcolm Fowler, Fouts co-ran Shirt Sleeve Studios in Camden producing covers for the likes of Steeleye Span, Jethro Tull and Uriah Heep. "Most of those other LPs had more labour in them, but I thought this was a nice idea," adds Fouts, now pursuing a less commercial muse as a surrealist artist (see www.nancyfouts.com). Richard and Linda – contrary to what many think – are not the shadowy figures on the back sleeve. "It was simply the mood of the shot," Fouts notes of the Richard and Linda mirage. "It needed shadows and a sharp focus on the steam, raindrops and drips, and the background is soft – it can be anything one wants it to be."



found" before concluding with gut-tugging candour: *"You can get the real thing, it will only cost a pound."*

On reflection, Richard is not so sure why there is so much strong drink on *Bright Lights* ("A big whisky" was his drink of choice at the time, remembers John Wood). "It wasn't conscious," he says. "I was probably drinking a bit in those days. Or a lot. Perhaps I just thought that was what you had to write."

Implicit on the forlorn "Withered And Died" and the pub-toilets soliloquy "Has He Got A Friend For Me", booze is the central theme of the title track, the *"silver band just marching up and down"* as Linda leads the weekend march to oblivion. Her interpretation is PH-neutral enough that you can read in a double measure of desperation if you choose. Her background as the singer of such folk-rock classics as "Ski, The Full Of Fitness Food" helped to hone her elegantly dead-eyed style. "Economical vocals – that's the name of the game," she explains. "I did jingles in the '60s; yoghurts, cereal, that kind of thing. Good money. I don't think it helped me to inhabit songs later. In an advert, you kind of sing in neutral."

That ambivalent tone perfectly encapsulates *Bright Lights'* underlying unease with the material world. Flash back to that album title again. Exactly what kind of bright lights were Richard and Linda hoping to see?

Given the dramatic turn his life would take subsequently, Richard won't deny that the lyrics express a yearning for some greater truth. "I was looking for a spiritual direction at the time of *Bright Lights* for sure," he says. "But I had been since I was 16."

The album's gaunt closer "The Great Valerio" certainly scrabbles in the dark for something bigger, as it evokes the pindrop atmosphere of an audience watching a tightrope walker, alone and silent, and somewhere above and beyond the normal world. *"Fools who think they see the light,"* siren-calls Linda. *"Prepare to balance on the wire."*

"I was in Glasgow Art Gallery where they have a painting of Blondin crossing Niagara Falls," Richard says. "I saw that and then scurried off and wrote something down."

"The Great Valerio" drifts off into minor chord darkness with an inscrutably sour witches' curse (*"I'm your friend until you use me – and then be sure I won't be there"*).

Friends would certainly find Richard and Linda harder to get hold of towards the end of the yawning 11-month gap between the completion of *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* and its release in April 1974. Possibly encouraged by former Action and Mighty Baby pianist Ian Whiteman, Richard found his spiritual calling after attending a speech on Sufism by Sheikh Abdalqadir as-Sufi (the former Ian Dallas) at a church hall in Belsize Park – a couple of minutes' walk from his Hampstead flat. What followed was an unusual double life.

Island ummed and ahhed over *Bright Lights*. Richard remembers: "The A&R was Muff Winwood who was very rhythm & blues, with the Spencer Davis Group connection, and he absolutely hated that record, which is one of the reasons it took so long to come out.

"They didn't understand Sandy, and they didn't understand Nick Drake," he adds. "I think we were slightly marginalised – what genre is this? Where does it go in the record shop? It's not R'n'B, it's not psychedelia, so where

Signing to Island Records, January 1974, with Richard Williams, left

> "Richard was very young... unworldly, and generous and just adorable"
> LINDA THOMPSON

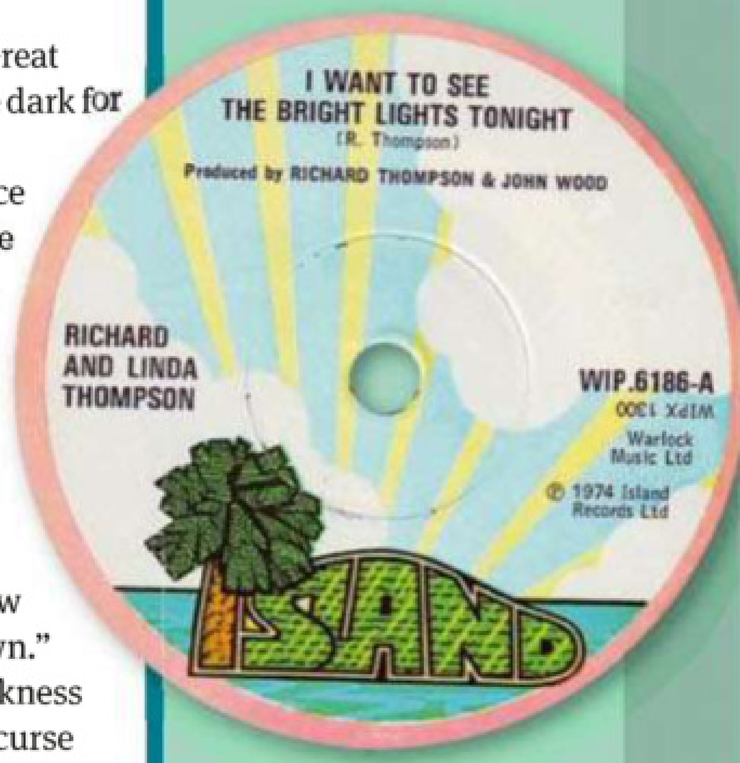
Live on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, March 1975

ADDED OOMPAH

SILVER BAND

Turning the title track into a hit

ALERTED TO THE title track's potential as a novelty hit, it was John Wood who decided that "I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight" needed more oompah. "Someone suggested we use the Salvation Army... I just figured it would be better to get something from the north of England."



Thus, one Sunday morning, Wood and Richard Thompson took the train north to record the five-piece CWS (Manchester) Silver Band (including noted cornet player John Gartside) at 10cc's Strawberry North studios – amid a degree of flat-capped grumbling. "It was a slightly odd interface," Richard recalls. "I was a hairy herbert from the south; that was a problem – me being from south of Leicester." Other more practical issues added a further dimension of discomfort. "It was impossible in 1973 to find food in Stockport on a Sunday," Richard says. "There was nothing – not an Indian restaurant – zero. We did the whole session on a bag of cheese'n'onion crisps."

BRIAN COOKE/REDFERNS; ALAN MESSER/REX

Linda Thompson at Sound Techniques, 1974

does it go? And in the end it didn't go anywhere."

Had Winwood not decided to focus on his production work, allowing Richard Williams – ex-*Melody Maker*, now *Uncut* – to take his place, it might have sat on a shelf in Island's new St Peter's Square headquarters indefinitely. "I remember calling for a copy of the mixes, listening to them, thinking that it was terrific, and wondering why on earth it hadn't been scheduled for release," Williams says. "It seemed to me to be a fully focused and realised piece of work, with great songwriting and performances."

"Suddenly things started to happen," Thompson says. "I spoke to Richard – I don't think I spoke to Muff ever. Richard was a super-nice person and took an interest in us."

However, by that stage, what the Thompsons were doing was changing fast. The Sufi connection was first made at the back end of 1973 – by early 1974 Richard and Linda were both committed Muslims; the songs of gloom and uncertainty they had laid down in May 1973 must have felt like vestiges of a past life.

"The zeal of the newly converted," says Nicol, recalling the Thompsons' swift change of priorities.

"I can remember that Simon Nicol was very depressed because his drinking buddy was now on the wagon," says Kirkpatrick. "It was slightly odd after [Richard] converted as he and Linda would start praying when the allotted time came and you had to live with it. It was a bit awkward to think what to do with yourself. To begin with, it completely absorbed him and the music almost became secondary to his spiritual pursuit."

> "We were marginalised ... 'What genre is this? It's not R'n'B, it's not psychedelia'" RICHARD THOMPSON

The release of "I Want To Be The Bright Lights" as a single on January 25, 1974, proved to be little distraction for the Thompsons, as it failed to challenge Mud's "Tiger Feet" for the No 1 slot.

"I never thought that it would be a hit," says Linda. "Even when we were singing something reasonably catchy, there was always a chord or two, or a hurdy gurdy, or an accordion or something, which jarred the general public's pop sensibility."

Its parent album received a more gracious reception than *Henry The Human Fly*, but its creators were moving on fast.

ESTATE OF KEITH MORRIS/REDFERNS

SOUND TECHNIQUES

The studio that defined UK folk rock

"WE DID ALL of the Fairport stuff there – it was a great studio," recalls Richard. A converted dairy at 46a Old Church Street, London SW3, Sound Techniques was set up by John Wood and Geoff Frost in December 1964, but was to become synonymous with Joe Boyd's Witchseason stable. All three Nick Drake albums were recorded there, along with LPs by Fairport, Sandy Denny, John Martyn, ISB and Vashti Bunyan, not to mention The Pink Floyd's "Arnold Layne" and "See Emily Play". The proximity of the Black Lion pub no doubt endeared it to thirsty hairies, but Wood insists there was never much loafing when it came to recording: "My attitude was always a recording studio should be more a factory than a hang-out." Businesslike, perhaps, but there was something transcendental about Sound Techniques too. "It was just a magical coming together of time and space," says Simon Nicol. "The people involved in it – everybody from Verity downstairs who kept the diary."

By the end of 1974, they had abandoned their flat to move to what Linda calls "the Sufi squat" – a communal house in Maida Vale. Austere, ascetic and a little on the squalid side, Richard's sister Perri called it a "ghastly place" in her brother's official biography.

The Thompsons seemed a little distracted on the flyweight *Hokey Pokey*, released in early 1975, their new spiritual concerns becoming explicit on the same year's beguiling *Pour Down Like Silver* – the couple's traditional Arab dress on the sleeve *(below)* a fair indication of the meditative essence of what lay within.

A retreat to a Sufi commune in Norfolk represented the casting off of further shackles, though Linda shudders to recall the place where she gave birth to her second child, Teddy. "It fair knocked the joy out of me," says Linda. "It was a difficult time for me, but I guess what doesn't kill you makes you more cynical."

A thaw of sorts occurred, with Richard and Linda re-emerging for 1978's stealth classic *First Light* and 1979's *Sunnyvista*, before 1982's *Shoot Out The Lights* heralded one of pop's most public divorces. That, however, is an unhappy ending, while *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* was a glorious dawn, Linda's voice as perfect a vehicle for Richard's newly decluttered songs as Sandy Denny's had been for his Fairport work in the 1960s. "I felt better to have a strong voice in Linda and probably I was writing less critically – becoming more naked as a writer," says Richard. "The stuff I did with Fairport and *Henry The Human Fly* was me being slightly afraid to show emotions, so I'd write around stuff. In the '60s you could get away with that sort of obfuscation, almost poetic or psychedelic – but by the '70s that mood had changed and you had to say who you were."

In its slightly strangulated, English, middle-class way, *Bright Lights* does that, the clean lines of its arrangements and the surgical precision of its execution ensuring it still sounds brilliantly contemporary 40 years on. Richard has problems with plenty of his old records, but tellingly, this one he can live with. "It was a record that we did very fast, and what that means is we got very lucky in the studio," he says. "It was done in record time, we hardly thought about it, and it ended up sounding the way I thought it would. There are some very naïve points of view here and there, but it's not worth going back and correcting that. It is what it is and I like what it is, and there's a lot of stuff out there that I've done that I like less."

He has a quick think.

"That being said, it sold about 30 copies."

A new vinyl pressing of ***I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*** *is now available on Universal Music Catalogue.* ***Richard Thompson****'s new album* ***Acoustic Classics*** *is released on Beeswing/Proper; he tours the UK until August 31*

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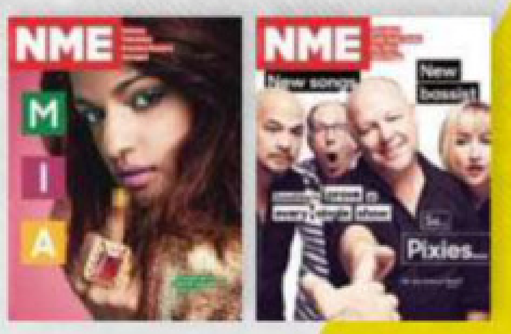

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Yes

Symphonic, experimental, close to the edge! The prog pioneers speak out…

Yes in 1969: (l-r) Peter Banks, Tony Kaye, Jon Anderson, Bill Bruford and Chris Squire

MORE OF AN orchestra with a revolving-door policy than a rock group, Yes continue to plough their own experimental furrow, 45 years on from the release of their debut album. Their best-known records, including *Close To The Edge*, *Tales From Topographic Oceans* and *90125* might have charted highly around the world and allowed the band to fill out stadiums, but they also melded together unlikely genres such as folk, jazz and scrapyard avant-garde, in tracks often reaching the 20-minute mark.

This year's *Heaven And Earth*, the band's 21st album, features long-serving members Steve Howe, Chris Squire and Alan White, alongside newcomer Jon Davison on vocals – the band's original vocalist and driving force, Jon Anderson, is still absent from the group he co-founded in 1968.

"I'd come up with interesting challenges for everybody," explains Anderson today, describing the band's continuous quest to push the envelope, "and they were willing to go with it, which was fantastic, and I appreciated it. We were brothers, what else can you do?"

YES

ATLANTIC, 1969

More traditional than what followed, their debut featured Tony Kaye on keys and Peter Banks on guitar, as well as covers of songs by The Byrds and The Beatles.

JON ANDERSON: It was a pretty interesting group of musicians – Bill Bruford was one of the first jazz-rock drummers, and he just had this thing about jazz being the real deal, but he was, and is, an incredibly talented guy. Peter was very different, he was a big fan of Pete Townshend, so he was pretty wild as a guitar player. Tony Kaye came from an R'n'B background, and Chris is a very melodic bassist – one of the best bass players of all time. We learnt a lot from a band called Vanilla Fudge, and we pinched music from *West Side Story*, from the television. That's what music is, it cross-pollinates, and we developed into a strong stage band. I think that's what Yes was all about, performing live onstage.

CHRIS SQUIRE: We were just getting used to recording in a studio. On this album we were in the original Advision Studios on Bond Street in London. We were really just getting used to being in the environment – we didn't really have any plans, it just ended up sounding like it did because of the way we played.

ANDERSON: We were never thinking that we were pop stars, or that we should have a hit song, we never thought about that, because I honestly felt we were a bit too old at that time. Music is more important than trying to have a hit record.

THE YES ALBUM

ATLANTIC, 1971

Peter Banks departs, and Steve Howe joins for a taste of the more complex progressive rock that Yes are best known for. Features their first proper epic, "Yours Is No Disgrace".

SQUIRE: By the time we came to do *The Yes Album*, we were using Eddy Offord, who had engineered [*1970's*] *Time And A Word*, and we went for the same sort of soundscape as that – with the bass as quite a loud instrument.

ANDERSON: When Steve joined the band he brought in so many different musical styles. And at that time a lot of interesting things happened – the Moog synthesiser came through, and the Mellotron became a bit more compatible to tour with. Like anybody would say in the band, if you're not that interested in what we're doing, you may as well leave, and so people would come in and go out, simply through not committing to the band, or not really being interested in the style of music the band was going towards.

STEVE HOWE: When I joined the band, the focus wasn't so much on touring, but on making the new record. I hoped they wouldn't do any covers, and they agreed, so *The Yes Album* was the first 100 per cent original album. We made it in different sessions, a couple of days here, a couple of days there. But primarily, it was the product of coming down to Devon and immersing ourselves in the country. I played [*solo track*] "Clap" to the band, in the house in Devon – "Hey, I wrote this instrumental a few months back" – and they said, "Oh, stick it on the album!"

FRAGILE

ATLANTIC, 1971

Onwards and upwards, with Rick Wakeman on keys – though due to a quick turnaround and a shortage of material, 'solo' tracks fill out the band's ambitious fourth.

ANDERSON: We started thinking it would be good to have more colour in the band with what the keyboard plays, and of course we decided to get Rick [Wakeman], who we'd seen playing with The Strawbs, in the band, because he'd already decided to work with three or four keyboards onstage.

SQUIRE: Due to touring, we had a six-week window to go in the studio, rehearse and then record, and that's part of the reason why it turned out to be an album with just four band tracks, and then these solo contributions from everyone. But it ended up being a really good album. "Roundabout" became our first real airplay track in the United States, and the album started to do well.

HOWE: I think it was mainly Bill's idea to call it *Fragile*. If you listen to it on headphones it is exceptional, what Eddy Offord and the band did. It wasn't experimental, exactly, but very much on the edge of the things Yes had started doing, pushing that envelope a bit further.

ANDERSON: I was always pushing for different kinds of music, but sometimes not everybody wanted to do that. Chris would always say, "I just want to keep Jon happy" [*laughs*]. By the time we did *Fragile* we were doing long-form pieces – it was a different way of thinking about music and more about performing onstage and not thinking, 'Is it gonna be a hit?'

WORDS: TOM PINNOCK. REX/ALAN MESSER

Yes recording *Fragile* at Advision Studios, London, 1971: (l-r) Steve Howe, Chris Squire, Bill Bruford, Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman

CLOSE TO THE EDGE

ATLANTIC, 1972

Things get heavy and "a little bit crazy", resulting in the band's most successful album up to that point. A frustrated Bill Bruford leaves for King Crimson after the recording is done, though, to be replaced by Alan White.

HOWE: Bill's album titles are sometimes quite appropriate. We were – forgive me for saying this – bursting with talent, and we were bursting with people who wanted to learn how to use that talent, and that meant that there were internal bits of strife. There were silly things – I remember once throwing tape over another member. It was explosive – close to the edge! But the title came from something I'd written, maybe three years earlier, but that was about being close to the edge of the River Thames! [*laughs*]

SQUIRE: This was an exciting time but also quite nerve-racking – we were working at quite a fast pace and also fitting tours in, so life was becoming pretty hectic. And, you know, sadly, at the end of Bill playing on that album, he decided to leave to join King Crimson. And I remember when he told me that's what he wanted to do, I was shocked, because we were starting to do well financially around that period, and Bill was an economics major, so I didn't understand why he wanted to leave what looked like a better-paid job. But Bill was jazz at heart, you know, he followed his heart into that area.

ANDERSON: We were creating music that was a little bit crazy, a little bit wild, but it was an adventure, and if you're not having an adventure in music, what are you doing? You're just looking for how much money you're going to make. I would do battle with the management, 'cause they wanted to just keep making "Roundabout", and are you just gonna say, "Ok sir, yes sir, no sir"? No way. To get some success in this life of music, it's so amazing, but you've still got to work hard for it, you don't want to just sit back and think, 'Oh, I've made it now, I'm a big rock star.'

HOWE: When Bill left, I think it was more to do with the approach of the band and how people were starting to look like rock stars. I don't think Bill liked it, and I found that side rather plastic and rather forced.

ALAN WHITE: When I joined, they said, "Oh, we forgot to tell you we've got a gig on Monday, so can you learn everything before then?" It was a bit of a task...

TALES FROM TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS

ATLANTIC, 1973

A mammoth double, and perhaps the epitome of prog excess, with hay bales, cow cutouts and a replica bathroom as a vocal booth...

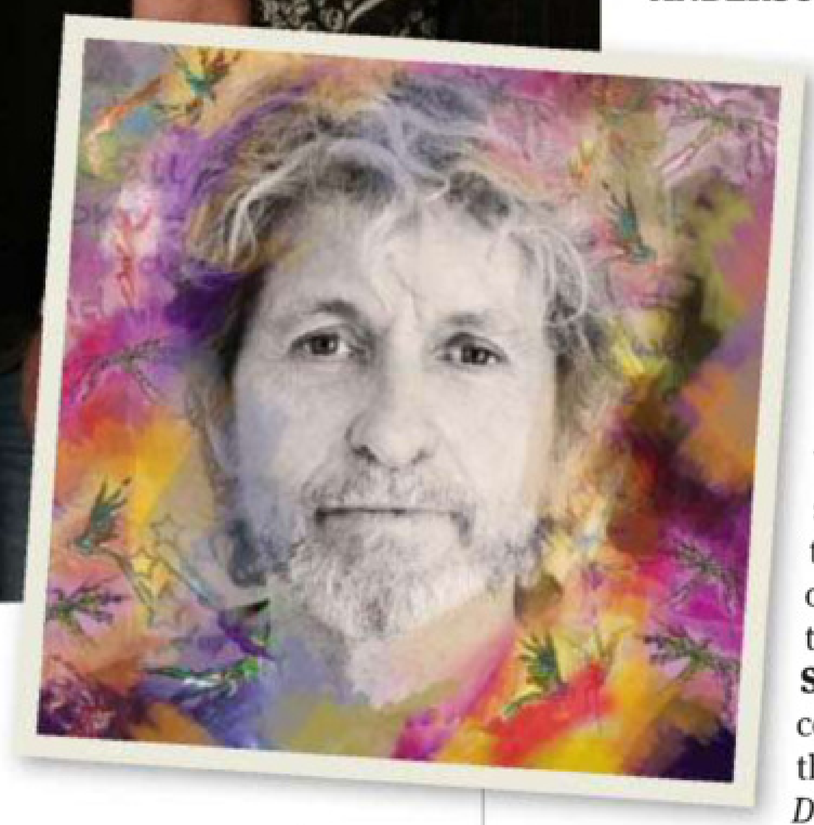
WHITE: We were in the studio for almost six months. One time Jon was singing and he said, 'It doesn't sound like it does at home, in my bathroom it sounds great', so the roadies built a shower in the studio, and he sang the track in there. Jon was very magical in his explanation of what he wanted things to sound like, he'd tell the engineer to add some gold dust over here and a bit of silver over here. So the engineer had to decipher that kind of stuff.

ANDERSON: I wanted to record in the woodlands, I wanted to get a big tent and bury a generator about 300 yards away, and actually create with all the birds and the wind and the sound of the earth. They thought I was damn crazy, so I just got some cut-out cows and sheep, and some flowers and trees, and put them in the studio, to try and make it not look like a studio!

SQUIRE: Eddy Offord was extremely good at editing, so on *Topographic* we'd go into the studio and play the next section and link it onto what was already done. And then we'd come in the next day with another section and edit that on. So we were sort of wandering around in the wilderness a bit, just sticking pieces of the tape together and hoping it would all make sense. I wouldn't say it was a clear vision, and some of it shows that, but other parts worked remarkably well. But if we had just tried to emulate the poppy side of Yes, we may not have lasted as long.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Yes today: (l-r) Howe, Jon Davison, White, Geoff Downes and Squire. Inset right: Jon Anderson, by his daughter Deborah Anderson



RELAYER

ATLANTIC, 1974

Rick Wakeman departs for this excursion into a jazzier style, recorded at Chris Squire's house in Virginia Water.

SQUIRE: The band was in a good place. I built a studio in my house in Virginia Water and everyone agreed to record there. I didn't have my own equipment – Eddy Offord brought in some remote equipment.

WHITE: We had a lot of fun making *Relayer*. We used to drive from London, and Jon and myself would stop by a scrapyard every day and pick up these pieces of metal – we built a tree of percussion made out of car parts. At the end of "The Gates Of Delirium" there's a battle between keyboards and drums, just a total freak-out. And when we were recording that live, it got to the point where it got really ridiculous, so I pushed the whole tree and it fell over in the studio – we kept that on the album.

SQUIRE: We recorded a whole 21-minute version of "The Gates Of Delirium", listened to it and went, "Yeah, I think we could do it better." So for whatever reason, Eddy put a razor blade through the whole of the two-inch tape and threw it in the trash. Then the next day, we came into the studio and were like "Oh, we didn't mean to do *that*!" We'd have given it another listen because, by then, people were having fond memories of what was good about it. We went and got all these two-foot pieces of tape out of the bin, about 90 of them, and stuck them together again, and that was the master we kept, unbelievably!

TORMATO

ATLANTIC, 1978

The follow-up to the UK No 1 of *Going For The One* sees uncertain times for the band, now back with Wakeman, the songs hampered by flat production and arrangements.

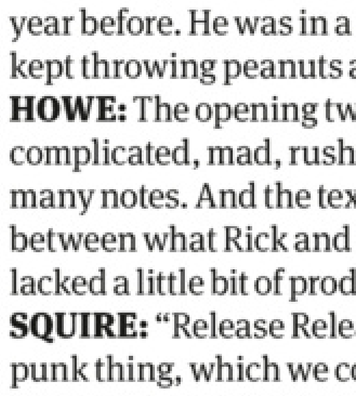
ANDERSON: I never really enjoyed making that LP, because the label wanted a hit record. It just became like the front cover, we threw tomatoes at ourselves, and said, "Whatever happens, we're not a commercial band, we're not built that way."

WHITE: Some of the tracks on there I couldn't get off on. But some, like "On The Silent Wings Of Freedom", were fantastic. Rick had returned the year before. He was in a very funny mood, he kept throwing peanuts around the studio.

HOWE: The opening two songs are very complicated, mad, rushing stuff, and there's too many notes. And the texture, the tonal marriage between what Rick and I did, wasn't great. We lacked a little bit of production vision.

SQUIRE: "Release Release" was to do with the punk thing, which we couldn't ignore, so we tried to take a bit of that and put it in the song.

ANDERSON: Did punk affect us? Not really. I was a punk, James Cagney was a punk, The Who and The Kinks were punks, so there was always punk music. But when you get bands getting up onstage who can't even play, and they just do crazy things to the audience, that's what I call not real. We were laughed at, people do that when they don't understand. They want to make a joke about Yes being dinosaurs and all that kind of shit, and it didn't make sense to me, because I knew what we were doing was honest at least.



90125

ATCO, 1983

A very different Yes – conquering stadiums with soft rock anthem "Owner Of A Lonely Heart". Steve Howe sat this one out, replaced by guitarist and songwriter Trevor Rabin. Tony Kaye also returns, and Trevor Horn produces.

WHITE: This was certainly an anomaly. It started with just Trevor Rabin, myself and Chris. And then Chris had the idea to invite Tony Kaye back. In the very late stages Jon came in and sang, and then obviously we couldn't call it anything else but Yes. And it turned into our biggest record ever! Recording "Owner Of A Lonely Heart", I started with a full drum kit and Trevor Horn said, "Take Alan's toms away." So I had a bass and snare, hi-hat and cymbals. Then they took the cymbals away. I was playing along with the track and they took the hi-hat away! I said, "Wait a second, guys..." Then we layered all the other stuff on top of it. We might even play it on the next tour.

ANDERSON: I just went in and sang some choruses, wrote some lyrics. Trevor Horn was OK, very talented. I didn't become too friendly with the guy, but I know Chris, Trevor Rabin and Trevor Horn became like three coins in a fountain. And I was on the outside, so I did another LP with Vangelis, I did a couple of solo projects. But I enjoyed the success thing, it was a lot of fun. It was wonderful to go through that experience.

SQUIRE: Trevor Horn, of course, had already been the singer of Yes [on 1980's *Drama*]. The success of *90125* was a lot of fun. When we played Madison Square Garden, after the second song we got 20 minutes of applause. "Owner Of A Lonely Heart" was the No 1 in America, and then even in the black charts as well, quite unbelievable for Yes.

HEAVEN & EARTH

FRONTIERS, 2014

With Jon Davison of US proggers Glass Hammer replacing Benoît David (a former Yes tribute band singer who himself replaced Anderson in 2008), Yes' 21st album takes an accessible tour of every diverse side of the band.

HOWE: There's always been this potential of change, and it's probably the reason why we're still here. If we had the same people, maybe we would have burst many, many times before. This ability of the band to come back with someone like Jon Davison is just part of the Yes story.

WHITE: The song value on this album is huge. Jon Davison is a very talented songwriter. There are hooks and semi-commercial stuff in certain places, but there is still a lot of intricate Yes-type playing on there, so it's a combination of both. We rehearsed some things together in Phoenix, Arizona, but most of the LP was recorded in LA.

SQUIRE: We did it relatively quickly. We went in the studio and pretty much put our heads down, and two months later we finished it, as we had a tour to do in mid-March. And I think it has a certain freshness because of that. I'm as pleased as I think I could be with this record. Jon worked with everyone on different songs before we came together. Benoît David wasn't a writer or a lyricist, but Jon Davison is. That's just a thing about Yes – when you juxtapose the members with what they do with a new member, you get a new chemistry, and hopefully a fresh Yes album out of that.

ROB SHANAHAN; DEBORAH ANDERSON

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You're gonna get it! Petty onstage at New York's Palladium, November 11, 1979

“I’M NOT MR LAIDBACK!”

“I did go through a lot of my life with a short fuse, where I could erupt into a serious rage...” At home on his Malibu estate, TOM PETTY is reflecting on his temper, his tempestuous career with the Heartbreakers, and his urgent and essential new album, *Hypnotic Eye*. Petty might be calmer these days, but there are clearly still battles to be fought. “I can’t save the world,” he says, “I can only bitch about it!”

Story: Jason Anderson
Photo: Richard E Aaron

RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

TOM PETTY

THE TROUBLES OF the world seem a long way away from the home studio at Tom Petty's Malibu estate. The singer's favourite spot on the property, it lies at the furthest end of his spread, which consists of a long, connected set of red-roofed ranch houses. Modest by the neighbourhood's standards, the most eye-catching features near the main house are a small fountain and an oval-shaped pool that's hardly what you'd call Olympic-size.

As for the studio itself, this was a garage when Petty bought the place in 1998. Now the space is rather cosier, with its sliding doors, warm terracotta colours, dark patterned rugs and natural-wood details, which fit with the mix of Spanish and American Southwest styles in the rest of the estate. There are still plenty of indications that this is a musician's idea of a man-cave, such as the enviable array of guitars on stands that line the walls of the recording space, the deep-cushioned grey sectional sofa and vintage red Coca-Cola machine in the lounge. Personal mementoes – like a painting whose thick brushstrokes mark it as the handiwork of Petty's friend Bob Dylan – decorate the walls.

Surveying his domain in his not-so-lordly outfit of classic Levi's denim jacket and faded blue jeans, Petty shows off the "world's only indoor/outdoor control room", so named for the patio that lies a few feet from the mixing board. He shrugs off the threat of noise complaints when the door's open and the speakers are loud: "I don't have any neighbours, so I don't worry about that."

It all feels like a safe haven for a self-described homebody, as well as a just reward for career sales of over 80 million and a body of work as treasured as anything else in the history of American rock. That's why it's jarring to hear Petty talk of how it nearly went up in smoke.

"That's how close the fires came," Petty says as he points to a ridge just beyond the red patio stones and a thicket of trees. This was in 2007, when wildfires devastated much of the area. "The smoke was so thick, if you went outside you couldn't breathe." He recalls grabbing what he could after being ordered to leave in a hurry, only to realise upon driving away that "there isn't really any possession that means shit."

It wouldn't have been the first time Petty learned that lesson. One morning in 1987, his house in Encino was set on fire by an arsonist – the singer and his family barely escaped before the place and almost all of its contents were reduced to ashes. As he says, "This would've been the second time where everything I owned was gone. And it never really made a difference as long as everyone was OK."

The Malibu fire was weighing on Petty's mind when he wrote "All You Can Carry". Like many of the songs on *Hypnotic Eye* – Petty's 13th studio album with the Heartbreakers – it bridles with a stridency and ferocity that were once hallmarks of Petty's music but have been rather lacking over the last two decades. Indeed, it's the anger you can hear in Petty's earliest, surliest songs, be it Mudcrutch's original version of "Don't Do Me Like That" or the Heartbreakers' "Breakdown". And while it might've seemed like a part of his past, right now it feels very much in the present. Petty may be plenty amiable as he plays host in his studio's lounge but, as he admits, "I'm not Mr Laidback."

THE UNRULY ENERGY of *Hypnotic Eye* may have been absent from the Heartbreakers' recorded output recently, but it has remained a conspicuous presence in their live shows. In his time onstage with the band during tours like his last UK dates in 2012 or the theatre residencies in New York and Los Angeles last year, Petty still demonstrates his love for "anything that's rock'n'roll", to crib the name of the song that launched them in Britain. This was in 1977, a year before they got any traction amid the surging new wave back home. Yet the albums in the latter half of Petty's career have tended to be mellower propositions. Certainly, that was as true of such

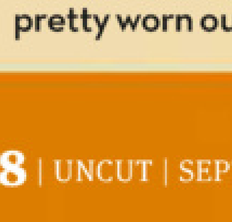
SAM JONES

LET ME UP

THE HARDEST PARTS

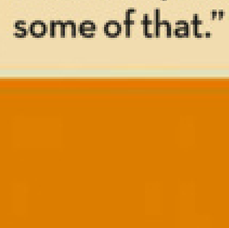
Petty on the albums that most tested the Heartbreakers

HARD PROMISES 1981



"That was a hard record because we were coming off this massive hit record [*Damn The Torpedoes*] and there was some pressure on me to make one just like it. I was determined not to. I was looking for some different ground and it was a very slow process. It was probably a good learning experience. Today, we know so much about the process of making a record that it's disgusting – we could bore the pants off you telling you about that end of it. But in those days we were still learning in the studio and it took us quite a while to get what we wanted. Fortunately we did and the record was successful, but I was pretty worn out when I got that done."

SOUTHERN ACCENTS 1985



"'Don't Come Around Here No More' was one of the only times I was trying to make a single. I wanted to get it just right. Dave Stewart and I had a lot of fun doing it but we were on it every day for a month – it's a very complicated record. But it's become one of the most popular songs we play live. The rest of *Southern Accents* was really hard and that was due to bad behaviour – too many women problems, drug problems, you name it and we had a problem with it on that record. I came out of that record on crutches and with my hand in a cast. I still don't feel like I got what I was really after. I would love to remix some of that."

band efforts as 2010's bluesy *Mojo* as it was of nominally solo outings like 1994's *Wildflowers*.

But there's no such air of late-life repose on the music on *Hypnotic Eye*. These songs may arrive the same year that Petty turns 64 but the best of the lot are bold, brash and gloriously loud. The opening salvo of "American Dream Plan B" and "Faultlines" is all fuzz, muscle and rumble, and even quieter songs like "Sins Of My Youth" simmer with tension. Petty's right to marvel at its wildest moments, like the fevered vamping of keyboardist Benmont Tench, or the "ridiculous" solo by Mike Campbell on "Forgotten Man".

"That just fries my brain," he says, his pale blue eyes widening at the memory of hearing his bandmates attack the songs with gusto. Nor can Petty conceal the pride he feels about the album. He even admits he counts it as one of the "special ones" alongside *Damn The Torpedoes*, *Wildflowers* and *Full Moon Fever*. Sipping coffee from a brightly coloured ceramic mug and drawing puffs on a red e-cigarette (and the occasional real one), he settles into the sofa as he reflects on the new LP's creation.

"The songs just started coming out that way," he says. "This album has been made kind of in between tours and the first few tracks were done two or three years ago. They were pretty hardcore blues tracks and really great, but then I started thinking, 'This is going down the same road twice – I'll hold onto those for later.' Then the songs just started determining how people were playing and the sounds they were getting. So at some point early on I started to think, 'Let's just do a real rock'n'roll album.'"

The Heartbreakers were down with that, to put it mildly. Speaking to *Uncut*, Tench says he was "really delighted" when he noticed the direction Petty's songwriting was taking. "The material he was bringing in toward the end was much more the very, very guitar-driven stuff," he explains. "We've always been a guitar band but this was more that style with hard drums and guitar riffs."

> "NOW I DON'T LOSE MY TEMPER AND, GOD, IT'S A LOT BETTER LIFE"

In the keyboardist's view, the new songs were consistent with the music that remains the Heartbreakers' fundamental vocabulary: "the rock'n'roll of the middle-'50s and the middle-'60s". Yet they also ended up sounding like the Petty and the Heartbreakers of the middle-'70s, too. Mike Campbell, Petty's closest collaborator since the days of Mudcrutch, confesses he surprised the singer when he told him how much the vocals on *Hypnotic Eye* reminded him of his voice on the first few albums. "There was an urgency in his voice that sounded very

Petty producer Rick Rubin: "Just bring up the faders!"

REVISITED

WILDFLOWERS RISE AGAIN

1994's solo LP reissued – as a double album!

"THIS IS NOT just some schlocky way to sell the old album," swears Petty of the forthcoming expanded 20th-anniversary edition of his solo *Wildflowers* LP. "There's a whole other album on there and it's good. We were really on our game then. When I hear it back, I'm like, 'Wow, we didn't put that out?!'"

The product of two years of diligent work by Petty, with Mike Campbell and producer Rick Rubin, *Wildflowers* was originally intended to be a double-disc set but was slimmed down to a single upon the advice of then-Warner boss Lenny Waronker. Petty later put four of the unused songs on the Heartbreakers' 1996 soundtrack for *She's The One* – but even those tracks will be heard in very different forms on the new edition, which Petty says will surface later this year.

"When you hear what was really on the tape and the way it was intended to be done, it's miles better.

"'Climb That Hill' was one of those songs. As we were going through the tapes, we found that we didn't even put the right take of that on that album. The one meant for *Wildflowers* had a different beat. I was so scattered at that point – not my proudest moment!"

Petty was similarly struck by the quality of the recordings thanks to Rubin's insistence on capturing live band performances. "God, it sounded so good," he says. "And it was all there – just bring up the faders and *voilà*, there it is."

Petty amps it up in his home studio, Malibu, June 2014: "Let's do a real rock'n'roll album"

STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

familiar," confirms the guitarist.

"I hadn't thought of that, but he was kinda right," agrees Petty with a smile. "That's the rock'n'roll voice."

Petty himself is given to wonder who exactly that voice belongs to now or why his signature snarl is back in the picture. "Maybe it's an angrier, more worked-up kinda guy," is all he'll admit. Thanks to the singer's affable Southern charm, it's easy to forget what a live wire he used to be. After all, he was ornery enough to incur the ire of the music business at least twice over. On the first occasion, he declared himself bankrupt to get out of punitive early contracts on the eve of *Damn The Torpedoes*' release, and then by warring with MCA over their plans to introduce a higher LP price with *Hard Promises*. "I did go through a lot of my life with a short fuse where I could erupt into a serious rage," he admits. "I think that was a product of my childhood, when I had some serious abuse."

Petty chalks up much of that darker energy to his physically abusive relationship with father Earl growing up in Gainesville, Florida. As much as it fueled his musical ambitions and bolstered his determination to stand his ground, his anger could cause considerable trouble. The most dramatic evidence came in 1984, when he vented his frustration during the *Southern Accents* sessions by smashing his left hand into a wall and pulverising many of the bones within. Eventually, he turned to therapy to help take the edge off the old traumas. "I started to learn and retrace what had happened to me and why I was that way," he explains. "It became quite clear to me why. And once you know why something is happening, you know how to fix it. Now I don't lose my temper and, God, it's a lot better life."

According to Petty, the only good thing about getting old is "the wisdom part". As he explains, "I don't have many debates with drunks on barstools any more. That's my shorthand for somebody who's just a waste of time, somebody who's just talking bullshit to me. I just walk away."

Petty now prefers to channel the rage of his younger self into characters, guys like the pissed-off narrators of "Burnt Out Town" and "Forgotten Man". Then there's the youngster in the album's opener, "American Dream Plan B", a kid who's "*half-lit and can't dance for shit*" but is still determined to get what he can in an era of diminished expectations. Elsewhere, panic and dread colours songs like "All You Can Carry" and the album's eerie closer "Shadow People"; clearly, this is an album that's not just louder but darker and more despairing than many of its predecessors. As usual, the prominence of Petty's melodic gifts and wry sense of humour are two mitigating factors. But by their author's estimation, the songs reflect the world as he sees it in an age of widening disparities and a public enthralled to the false values of tech and celebrity. (The album's title refers to a camera-happy populace who barely notice they're being controlled by the gadgets they love.)

Petty leans forward to put his mug on the wide coffee table in front of him, his manner less relaxed as he mulls the state of things beyond the iron gate at the end of his driveway.

"I'm not really a political person but I am a practical one," he reveals. "It is easy to see the good guys and the bad guys right now even though the good guys are a little grey.

"But I remember when people made a living and were quite happy and didn't even want a swimming pool but they were fine. You could do an honest day's work, support your family and maybe even own your own home – you could get by nicely. And as that's been taken away, a desperation creeps in. Then you have the media trying to hypnotise them by telling them, 'No, you should be rich or you're nothing. If you're not dressing like Kim Kardashian, you're nothing.' And that offends me."

His laughter suggests that he's aware of the irony of expressing these sentiments while enjoying the comforts of Malibu living, complete with a beach house closer to the ocean. But Petty still remembers what his life was like growing up in Gainesville, or driving cross-country with barely any gas money as he tried to rustle up interest in Mudcrutch. He presses one of his dark suede shoes against the table as he speaks. "I've been poor so whenever I hear somebody say, 'Oh, money doesn't matter,' I think, 'Well, that guy's never been poor because that's a stupid statement.' But y'know, it's nice to be able to pay your bills and not having to sweat it out all the time, because that's most people's lives. I don't take that for granted. I feel very blessed and happy. But I don't think money was ever the most important thing for us."

> "I DO MARVEL AT BOB DYLAN... HE'S SO MUCH BETTER THAN ALL OF US"

Petty and Dylan at Farm Aid, Champagne, Illinois, Sept 22, 1985

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS

AMERICAN BOYS

A HEARTBREAKERS WHO'S WHO 2014 Edition

MIKE CAMPBELL
GUITAR, BASS, KEYBOARDS, MANDOLIN – SINCE 1976

Petty's closest musical partner since they were teens in Gainesville. Extracurricular efforts include co-writing "The Boys Of Summer" with Don Henley.

BENMONT TENCH
KEYBOARDS – SINCE 1976

Gainesville keyboard wiz who Petty convinced to drop out of college and stick with him and Campbell in Mudcrutch. Has done sessions and tours with U2, Elvis Costello, Green Day and just about anyone else you can name.

RON BLAIR
BASS, BACKING VOCALS – 1976-82/2002-PRESENT

Gainesville native who joined the Heartbreakers along with Stan Lynch. Famously left the music biz to run a bikini store before rejoining around their 2002 induction to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame.

SCOTT THURSTON
GUITAR, HARMONICA, SYNTHESISER, VOCALS – SINCE 1991

Versatile player from Oregon whose pre-Petty career included a long stint with Iggy Pop.

STEVE FERRONE
DRUMS – SINCE 1995

Brighton-bred musician is the only Brit to serve. Early career includes time with Bloodstone and the Average White Band. Toured with Duran Duran and Clapton, too.

ALSO SERVED

STAN LYNCH
DRUMS – 1976-1994

Another Gainesville native who became a Heartbreaker in LA. Later worked with pals in the Eagles and country artists like The Mavericks.

HOWIE EPSTEIN
BASS, BACKING VOCALS, MANDOLIN – 1982-2002, DIED 2003

Plucked by Petty from Del Shannon's band after Blair's departure. Long struggle with heroin addiction ended with death at the age of 47 after being fired for his growing unpredictability.

HONORARY MEMBERS

STEVIE NICKS

Often claimed that she'd have quit Fleetwood Mac if the Heartbreakers would've taken her in. Settled for hit duets like 1981's "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around".

BOB DYLAN

Employed TP&TH as both opening act and backing band on tours in 1986 and '87. Was a Wilbury, too.

ROGER McGUINN

Key inspiration and longtime friend. Petty, Campbell and Tench backed him on much of 1991's *Back From Rio*.

Petty also understands the ultimate worth of his worries about where things are headed. "I can't save the world," he says, breaking up once again. "I can only bitch about it!"

OUTSIDE THE STUDIO'S lounge, the sun breaks through the haze typical of Malibu in the early summer, adding a little extra colour to the well-manicured lawn beyond. Petty slides open the door to toss his cold coffee onto the stones and returns to the sofa to continue with the conversation. For all the rancour he expresses in *Hypnotic Eye*, it hasn't seemed to impact the prevailing air of contentment among the Heartbreakers. Made to mark the band's 30th anniversary celebrations in 2006, Peter Bogdanovich's four-hour *Runnin' Down A Dream* film recounted the group's sometimes stormy history in exhaustive detail. But any signs of internal strife – like the strains when Petty stepped out of the fold to make *Full Moon Fever* with Jeff Lynne – seem deep in the past at this point.

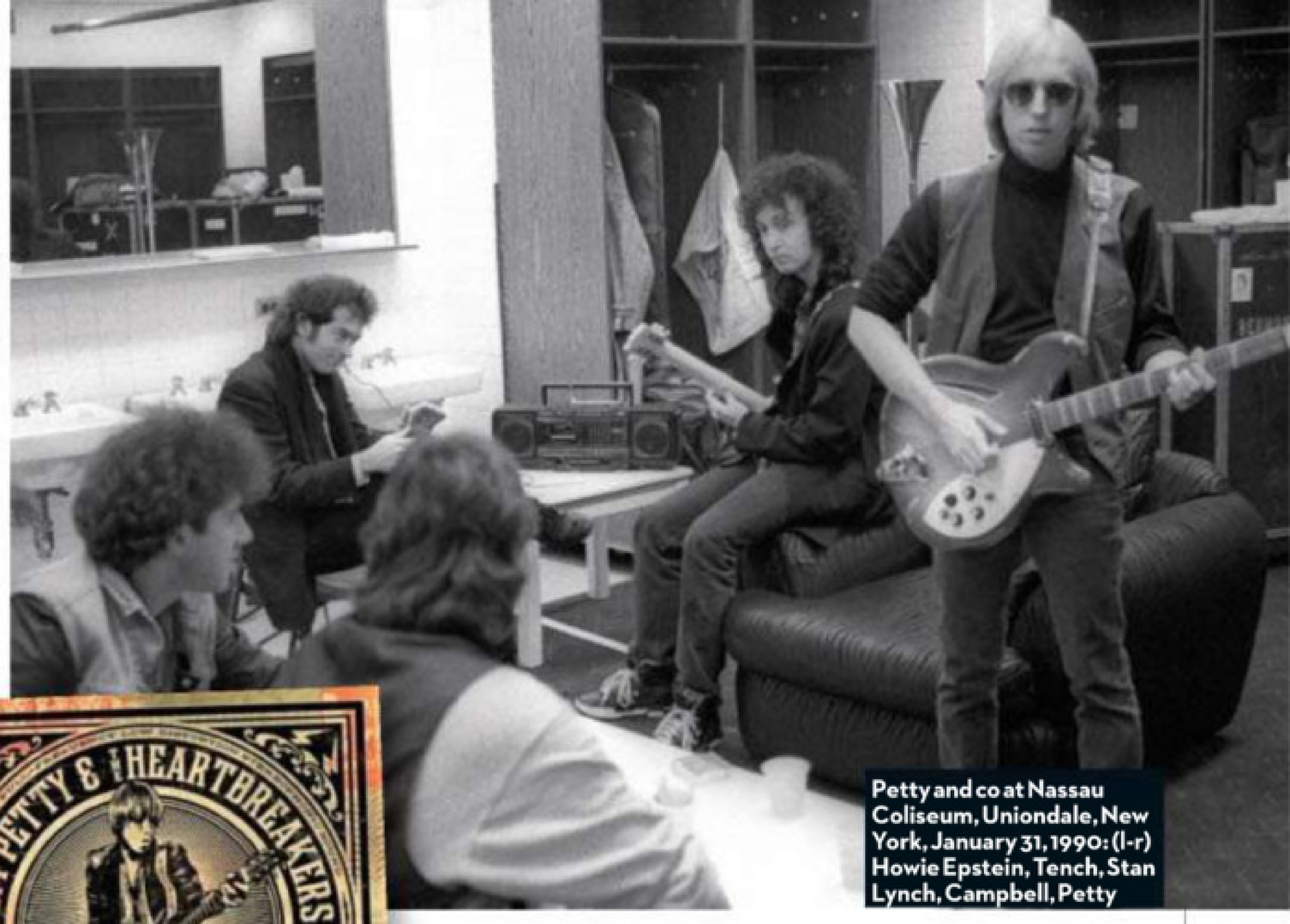
"It's pretty much a love fest," explains Petty. "It's almost embarrassing how well we're getting along – let's just say it's the complete opposite to what we were in our twenties! Everyone really appreciates this thing right now. We're lucky boys to be alive after what we've been through and to be able to do our thing on the level we want to do it. And I never dreamed we'd be doing it this late in our lives. We're all very grateful for that."

Mike Campbell believes it's only natural for the bandmates to have developed separate lives over the decades even as they've maintained the essential bonds. "Months will go by and I may not speak to Tom much," admits the guitarist. "And then we'll get on the phone and talk for two hours – we have that kind of relationship. We don't socialise that much – we don't go out to basketball games or movies or dinner too often. But you gotta give it a break every now and again. Bands are very delicate. If you love each other and you love what you do together, you have to protect it and give it space."

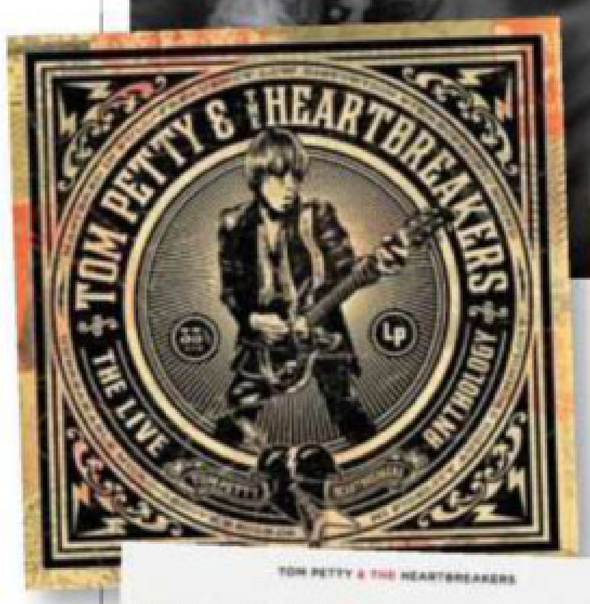
"Blood" is how Tench describes the bonds within the band. Even so, he was still moved by the support he received from his bandmates when he performed a Los Angeles club gig in support of his debut album, *You Should Be So Lucky*. Says Petty, "I went down to see the show and I felt so proud. He was really good and he had a great little band and the audience just went mad for him. You'd have thought he had done this his whole life the way he was so comfortable onstage and being up front. I was shouting at the top of my lungs for him."

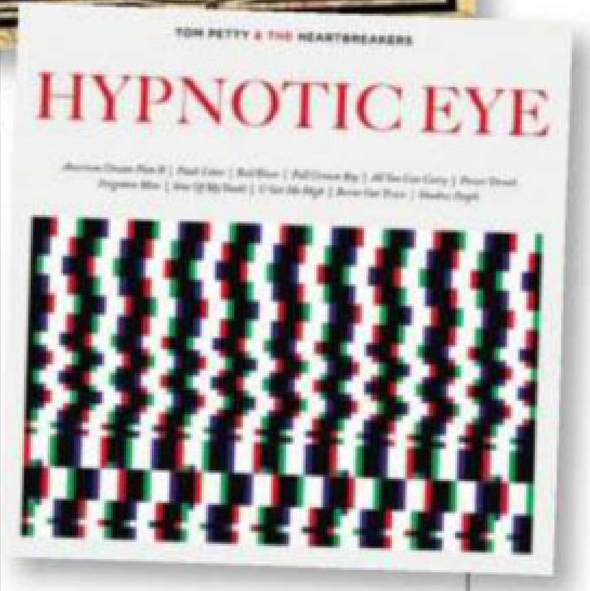
Tench admits it was intimidating to have the Heartbreakers in the house. "It's like having a party with your pals and your older brothers all show up," he jokes. "It's like, 'I better be sure I'm on the money tonight!'"

Petty was amused to be on the other side of a familiar situation when the Heartbreakers were asked to leave Tench's dressing room so he could get ready for the show. The band reconvenes for their North American tour in August and Petty hopes they'll play with the same spontaneity they brought to the dates in New York and LA last year. "There weren't really arrangements for a lot of those older songs," he laughs. "I knew I was starting in the key of C on my guitar and that was it. We didn't know who was taking a solo or when or how we'd end this motherfucker but that put us on our toes I kinda left there every night feeling, 'Wow, we really played some music tonight.' The band's at a point where we like to be as loose and improvisational as we can. That keeps us interested."



Petty and co at Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York, January 31, 1990: (l-r) Howie Epstein, Tench, Stan Lynch, Campbell, Petty





THAT THE HEARTBREAKERS still exude so much vitality is all the more remarkable given the potential burdens of their history. "You carry around a lot with you," Petty admits. At this point, their sets could consist of nothing but much-cherished hits, a prospect that doesn't sit well with Petty. "I ain't dead yet," he cracks. "I'm still doing new music and I insist on playing it. Haven't had a lot of resistance to that."

Yet whether it's going through old tapes to pick the performances on 2009's *Live Anthology*, delivering a dose of cosmic country-rock with the reconstituted Mudcrutch (which Petty plans to reconvene this year) or preparing a new edition of *Wildflowers* [*see panel*], Petty's tended to his legacy with the same care he devotes to his new music. Whatever he carries, he seems to carry it lightly. Here in the studio, that past is on the walls. The space peers may devote to platinum records is taken by more personal totems, like a photo of the host with hero Carl Perkins and the Dylan painting. "I do marvel at him," says Petty of his friend and former Traveling Wilburys bandmate. "Bob's so much better than all of us."

Further along the wall is a shot that Jim Marshall took of George Harrison backstage at Dodger Stadium in 1966. It's hard not to be struck by the fact that Harrison was all of 23 when the picture was taken. Petty and his friends were nearly as young when the band's rise began. Drawing on an American Spirit cigarette at the tail end of our talk, Petty is moved to reminisce. "We were kids," he says. "It was a great way to grow up. If I look back on it all like it's a film, the part I remember the fondest was before *Damn The Torpedoes*. The '70s was really great because we were getting to that point where we had an audience but things weren't out of control. We had steady work and we had a loving audience and we felt so inspired – that was the greatest to me. Not that the rest wasn't fun but that was especially so. We didn't have 20 bucks between us but we somehow made enough to live and keep travelling and keep working."

Petty leans forward to tap the ash into an oversised wooden ashtray on the table. "That was one advantage I had over a lot of my friends – by the time I was 15, I knew what I wanted to do with my life. A lot of them didn't well into their twenties. But I knew right away what my calling was, there was no question about it. I had no choice – I was fortunate in that way."

***Hypnotic Eye** is out now on Warner Bros*

"I AIN'T DEAD YET. I'M STILL DOING NEW MUSIC AND I INSIST ON PLAYING IT"

Today's Heartbreakers: Thurston, Tench, Petty, Ferrone, Campbell, Blair

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS; MARY ELLEN MATTHEWS

JENNY HVAL & SUSANNA

MESHES OF VOICE

SUSANNASONATA CD

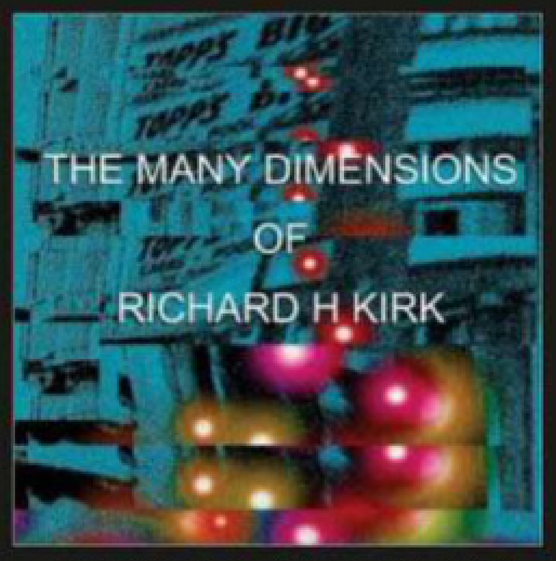
Two of Norway's most special voices, both in terms of songwriting, performance and presence in music- a merge of two creative worlds into one beast.

EXTNDDNTWRK

JUST TRACKS

FOURTH DIMENSION 2CD

'Just Tracks' collects some of Andrew Fearn of Sleaford Mods solo works, combining filmic electronics, mutant beats, loops, deep bass and even a devilish Big Black cover.



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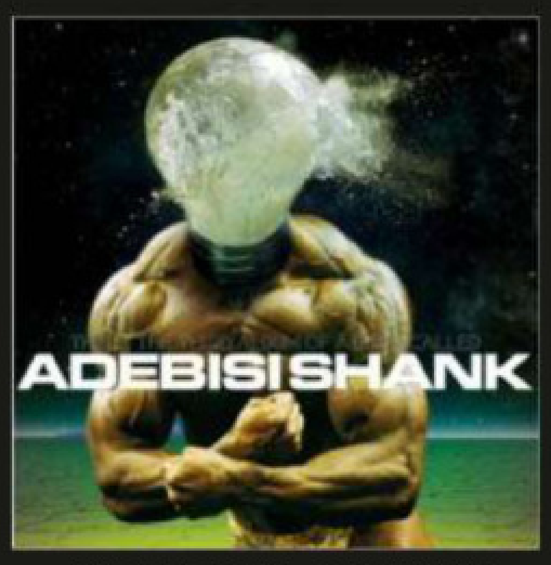

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Pitchfork says
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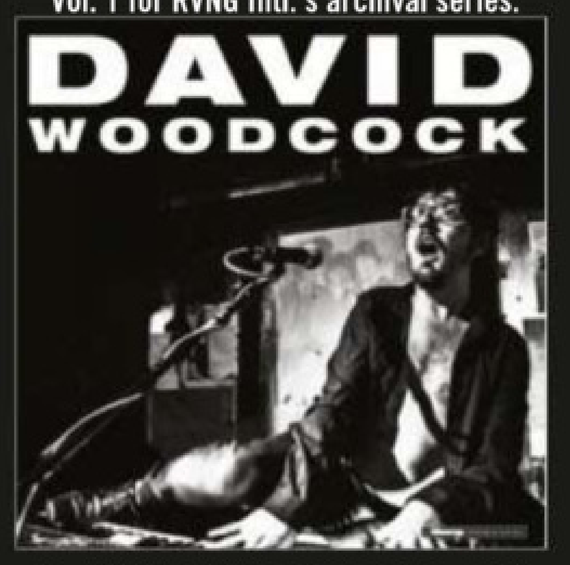

DAVID WOODCOCK

DAVID WOODCOCK

BLOW UP CD

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SPIDER BAGS

FROZEN LETTER

MERGE LP / CD

Pitchfork writes, "When Spider Bags hook into you, it's hard to shake the hold." Frozen Letter is their fourth LP and first for Merge.

DAVID KILGOUR & THE HEAVY EIGHTS

END TIMES UNDONE

MERGE LP / CD

Kilgour is a guitar god for guitar atheists. Brooklyn Vegan calls the album "a real gem, sparkling, with an off-the-cuff charm that complements their melodic sensibilities."

SAVAGING SPIRES

WE SHOULD BE DEAD TOGETHER

CRITICAL HEIGHTS LP

Animal Collective and the Incredible String Band jamming on found instruments at The Residents' house, with Mark Kozelek as guest vocalist.

OKKULTOKRATI

NIGHT JERKS

FYSISK FORMAT LP / CD

Night Jerks is Norwegian punk-metallers Okkultokrati's third album. In this album, shamanic synths, piericing guitars and lyrical bleakness unify to spread confusion and dispair in the kingdom of England.

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New albums

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4-5 Mediocre **1-3** Poor

THIS MONTH: TY SEGALL | COLD SPECKS | ROBYN HITCHCOCK & MORE

TRACKLIST

1 Rent I Pay
2 Inside Out
3 Rainy Taxi
4 Do You
5 Knock Knock Knock
6 Outlier
7 They Want My Soul
8 I Just Don't Understand
9 Let Me Be Mine
10 New York Kiss

SPOON

They Want My Soul

LOMA VISTA

Slow-burning experimental rockers achieve explosive release on terrific eighth. *By Ben Beaumont-Thomas*

8/10

THE PHRASE 'CRITICAL darling' is one of the worst brickbats that can be thrown at a band. Under the pretence of being a compliment, it suggests their work is not to be passionately celebrated, empathised with, or enthused about; merely evaluated, more a matter of the head than heart. Pity Spoon then, who, at least in the UK, are the definitive critical darling. According to the online reviews aggregator Metacritic, they are the most favourably reviewed band of the noughties, placing them somewhere between, say, mumblecore and tagines in an elegant but underpopulated corner of this country's public imagination.

All of which feels like a terrible misunderstanding, because Spoon exemplify the qualities of the very best bands. In the recent tradition of groups like The Sea And Cake, The Walkmen or Wilco, they're an urbane

New Albums

Spoon: bending convention – (l-r) Eric Harvey, Britt Daniel, Jim Eno, Alex Fischel and Rob Pope, 2014

US outfit confident enough in themselves to play what they want, not what they think they should. What that means here is classic, joyous rock'n'roll, played on rickety pianos and cleanly strummed guitars, and filled with clever production tricks: a bit of studio chatter here, a flourish of mysterious static there. This is a group for whom form is everything, who can swagger through garage rock and bluesy stompers, hunched art-rock and pretty balladry, but always make sure it hangs correctly on their shoulders. It's proved a winning formula in the United States. On their last tour, they sold out Radio City Music Hall, while their last two albums have gone Top 10.

Front and centre here is Britt Daniel who, a bit like John Lennon, sings in an enjoyably adenoidal and bunged-up way, sometimes breaking free with a soulful chest-driven holler. Melodies are often carried by the basslines, played by the casually dextrous Rob Pope, while drummer Jim Eno slips in sly tricks to keep the driving rhythms ticking with an unreadable intention. Keyboards and guitars flesh out the songs without them ever running to fat.

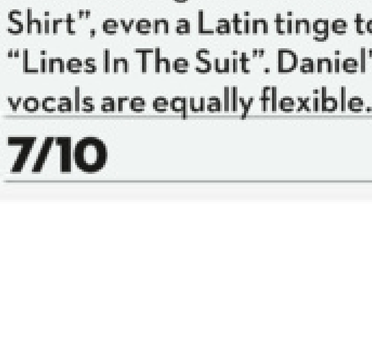
On early albums this sound took on a slightly happenstance air, which was then pared back for their first masterpiece, *Kill The Moonlight* (2002) – piano chords were played with manic repetition in the album's jittery anthems, assailed with claps and finger snaps. On next album *Gimme Fiction*, funk crept in, staying and maturing on the blockbusting *Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga*. 2010's *Transference*, however, seemed fraught with the anxious-sounding music of their earliest records. These anxieties are swept away again on this, their eighth album, where everything shines out brighter and louder than ever before as they return from a three-year break.

"Rent I Pay" opens with a sleazy electric shimmy, the central riffs underlined by swells of organ. As with the excellent "Rainy Taxi", here Spoon let themselves drift into the red, the song's seams straining with distortion. Where once a band's graduation to the big leagues was marked by cleanliness, Spoon, like The Black Keys or Jack White (who these bluesily rocking tracks somewhat recall), are among those who are enjoying the freedom to be as loud now they're near the top as they were on the way up.

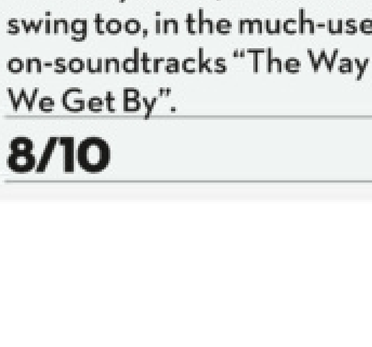
And like The Black Keys, they know when to be slick. At the smoother end of the spectrum the album offers "Outlier". Here, Edge-like guitars stream through synths, handclaps

HOW TO BUY... SPOON

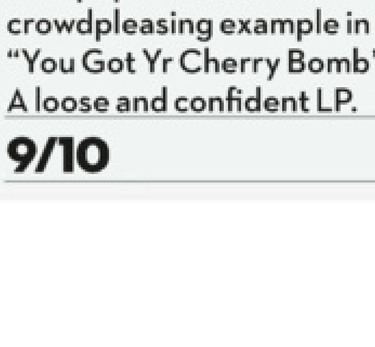
The finest helpings from Britt Daniel and co...



SPOON
Girls Can Tell
MERGE, 2001
Coming bruised from a luckless major-label deal, the band try on a few things for size in a literate US indie vein: a nifty cover version in "Me And The Bean", math-rock lurching on "The Fitted Shirt", even a Latin tinge to "Lines In The Suit". Daniel's vocals are equally flexible.
7/10



SPOON
Kill The Moonlight
MERGE, 2002
There's jittery, piano-driven post-punk with an unhinged danger hovering behind it on "Small Stakes", as well as anti-bully anthem "Jonathon Fisk" (who returns on "They Want My Soul"). But there's swing too, in the much-used-on-soundtracks "The Way We Get By".
8/10



SPOON
Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga
MERGE, 2007
The basslines, drums and production all get bigger and sexier on funky white grooves like "Don't You Evah", while the classic Spoon sound of honky-tonk pop sees its most crowdpleasing example in "You Got Yr Cherry Bomb". A loose and confident LP.
9/10

DIVINE FITS
A Thing Called Divine Fits
MERGE, 2012
A kind of supergroup for the *Portlandia* set, Daniel joins members of Wolf Parade and New Bomb Turks. Piano is replaced by synths, making this even chillier than Spoon's sparsest moments. "The Salton Sea" and "My Love Is Real" are lethally on point.
7/10

and vocal hooks recalling, of all things, Pulp's more disco moments. "Do You" straddles the clean/dirty impulses, with peppy guitar strumming soothing Daniel's wracked vocals.

Daniel used to make sound effects for videogames, and that talent for evocative sound pockmarks the album. On "Knock Knock Knock", an eerily inhuman whistle floats up through the traditional guitar, while "Outlier" has its pomp shorn off by a slow introductory fade in – it feels as though the band are jamming for the pleasure of it and an arena crowd has merely stumbled in. As with Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, the production builds a rich emotional topography for the songs on *They Want My Soul*, rather than decorating them with shiny follies.

Spoon are at their absolute best when they ratchet up this experimentation: 2002's "Paper Tiger", just a few strands of sound floating past each other on their way to other songs, or "The Mystery Zone" from *Transference*, with a one-note bassline and an unchanging riff that suddenly cuts into silence. On "The Ghost Of You Lingers" from 2007, which has no drums at all, Daniel calls bleakly at the song's walls: "*I had a nightmare nothing could be put back together.*" As if to suggest we expect the unexpected, here Spoon offer their most traditional moment ever: "I Just Don't Understand", a simple cover of Ann-Margret's country waltz from 1961. It's fond rather than ironic, and certainly has charm, but the band remain best when drawing their own maps.

They make up for it with their best song to date. On "Inside Out", Daniel uses a surefooted old-school rap breakbeat as a focal point to help collect his thoughts. It sounds as if he's been knocked for six by love, and "*time's gone inside out*", leaving him dazed but with a new perspective – one rendered by the gorgeously airy environs of the song. "*I don't make time for holy rollers; there's only you I lead,*" he sings, swooningly romantic and a little crotchety at the same time. A wonderful harp solo and ethereal trails of twinkling sound add the gilt edging to an exquisite portrait.

They Want My Soul could well be the point in Spoon's career where respect turns to love. It may not have the dizzying conceptual highs of previous records that so enthralled critics, but it has something equally valuable: a rock'n'roll band remembering the noise of rock and the swing of roll, and as such it may be their most crowdpleasing record. "Maybe things would have happened a lot quicker if I'd just gone out with Lindsay Lohan," Daniel said to an interviewer a few years back. This album should finally ensure he never has to resort to that.

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Public HiFi, Austin, Texas; Tarbox, Cassadaga, NY
Produced by: Dave Fridmann and Joe Chiccarelli
Personnel: Britt Daniel (vocals, guitar, piano), Rob Pope (bass guitar), Jim Eno (drums), Eric Harvey (guitar, keyboards), Alex Fischel (guitar, keyboards)

Q&A

Britt Daniel on *They Want My Soul*, the reasons for Spoon's break, and why he'll always be a screaming 16-year-old...

Why did Spoon have a long break before this record?
The beautiful part about being in a band is doing shows and making music, being absorbed by music. And there's the business part, a popularity contest and competition, that I was getting too involved in. *Transference* did all right, but it didn't do as well as we wanted it to. It wasn't the most fun record to tour, the songs were internal; they're not 'blast on your car stereo' songs. I think it's a great record, more of a 'sit in your bedroom' record. So we said we should go away for a while.

You ended up with some new sounds: heavier rock, dancier tracks, more delicate ballads...
We always try and do something we haven't done before. I suggested to the band that they get together and make some music without me, that I could sing on top of, and they came up with some great stuff. "Outlier", that was started by Jim and Eric, and as soon as I heard it, I thought: this is fucking great – can I put some vocals on top of it? With "Inside Out", we had a demo that was me singing on top of an eight-note toy piano – I was obsessed with Dr Dre, so this is our interpretation of him. I have this attraction to melancholy in music, the bitter longing in songs – on "Inside Out", the chord changes alone evoke that.

You worked with outside producers for the first time.
[*Recent Morrissey producer*] Joe Chiccarelli is a very pro, old-school producer, a traditional rock producer. We had disagreements with him about what the big picture should be – we wanted something a little bit weirder. He wants to run the show, and I felt like he thought most of our ideas are bad, and I know our ideas aren't bad. So Dave Fridmann came in, mixed the album and produced half of it – his deal is to make everything maxed-out and dirty.

What were you writing about lyrically?
Getting my heart broke. And breaking it myself. I kind of felt like the perspective of this one was... I remember when I was growing up and really becoming a person, maybe 15 or 16, and feeling like I didn't know any people older than 30 who were leading interesting lives. It just seemed like they were dead, and it was a terrible way to live. And I honestly thought that before I got to be 30 I would have offed myself or be dead in some way. I couldn't picture living past 30. Eventually I got out of my hometown and saw that there were people over 30 who were living interesting, rich lives and being humane and making the world better. I get that now. But there's still that 16-year-old, screaming, 'What the fuck is going on here?' Maybe that's why I'm in a rock'n'roll band.

You've become more and more popular, breaking the US Top 10 – have you started writing for a mainstream audience?
When we make a record we're in our own insular world, and focus on what pleases us, and then our vantage point shifts to: I hope other people like it too. When we just got the basic track down on "Rent I Pay", we were recording out in the country in upstate New York. At the end of the day we'd all pile into our rental van and listen to what we did that day, and we put on "Rent I Pay", and I got some shivers. It was hard rock in a way that we hadn't done before. Then it crosses your mind – people will like this, because I really like it.

The band has been together for over 20 years – how have you changed?
I didn't know where I was going when I started out. We had a hard enough time just getting gigs, so when we started making the first songs, it was all about: what songs can we write that will go over well in a tiny bar? We thought that was loud, fast songs. Eventually we found ourselves in this position to make records, and it wasn't all about trying to bash people over the head. But I always wanted to make an album called "Ten Bangers" – all rockers. Then Miley Cyrus came out with *Bangerz*, and she ruined it for me.

"We always try and do something we haven't done before... 'Inside Out' is inspired by Dr Dre"

Is it still fun?
It's the best job. I love doing shows, it's one of the most relaxing parts of my life, which some people find hard to believe. It's like being a hunter-gatherer; there's not much more you can worry about. I can't do it all the time, but when I get to do it, it's the best. *INTERVIEW: BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS*

TRACKLIST

1 Manipulator
2 Tall Man, Skinny Lady
3 The Singer
4 It's Over
5 Feel
6 The Faker
7 The Clock
8 Green Belly
9 Connection Man
10 Mister Main
11 The Hand
12 Susie Thumb
13 Don't You Want To Know? (Sue)
14 The Crawler
15 Who's Producing You?
16 The Feels
17 Stick Around

TY SEGALL

Manipulator

DRAG CITY

California's noisy, ever-changing adventurer crafts a double-album consolidation of his sounds. *By Louis Pattison*

8/10

TO DATE, THE records of Ty Segall have darted around as if in open defiance of the importance of the definitive statement. The cherubic Californian, 27 years old this year, evidently sees virtue in covering a lot of ground, and quick. From the sun-baked songcraft of 2011's *Goodbye Bread* to the Satanic Hawkwind space-rock of the Ty Segall Band's 2012 LP *Slaughterhouse* to the depressive acoustic balladry of last year's *Sleeper*, no two of his releases feel quite the same in either sound, influence, or vibe. You might well question the wisdom of this approach, but it's hard to deny that Ty's quicksilver muse is a good fit for his abundant work rate. Even if you've picked up the lion's share of his albums to date, you still don't yet feel like you won't have space for another.

Manipulator might be the point when all this changes. Ty's seventh solo album in seven years, it's a double LP and 17 tracks long, clocking in just shy of an hour. Packed with collaborators past and present, it's an album that feels quintessentially – perhaps definitively – Ty, touching on aspects of all his previous records: the volatile fuzz guitar, the gleefully villainous beat group pop, the noble string orchestration, the sweetly sardonic lyricism. But in contravention of the familiar rules of the double LP, *Manipulator* is neither a sprawling and chaotic thing, nor constructed along boldly conceptual lines. No song here exceeds the five-minute mark, and each one feels finely honed, melodically generous, and designed to penetrate your consciousness.

As ever, Ty's music feels wise to rock history, but wickedly playful in the manner he chooses to use it; he's not so much out to exhume corpses as make them stand up and dance. On *Manipulator*, Arthur Lee's Love is an evident touchstone – most notably on "The Clock", with its spry, flamenco-like guitar runs and genteel swoons of

violin. "Feel" channels the beefier end of *Nuggets* garage, the likes of The Chocolate Watch Band and The Mystery Trend, with visionary-paranoid lyrics ("*Feel the creeps in the sky/Let them live in each other's eyes*") and a heroic percussion breakdown that tips back into a sea of fuzz. The glorious "The Singer", a falsetto-flirting waltz with violin, viola and cello from the Bay Area's Real Vocal String Quartet, is reminiscent of the more Lennon-tinged material from last year's *Sleeper*, but with a decidedly sprightlier footing. Strings throughout are arranged by long-time co-conspirator Mikal Cronin, who has really found his feet as an orchestrater, decorous and light of touch.

But whereas *Sleeper* found Ty exploring his acoustic side, *Manipulator* is every inch an electric record, and we often find its diverse styles are often merely a rocky atoll from which Ty can trigger a variety of extravagant guitar detonations. The glammy Bolan shimmy of "Tall Man, Skinny Lady" would be a perfectly loveable song in its own right, even before it's caked in burnt-amp fuzz, squalls of top-of-the-fretboard shred, and a fade-out in which we hear dead strings thrashed without mercy. A careful mix ensures that the songs themselves keep their integrity even during such roughhouse treatment – although live, of course, we can fully expect them to fry like bacon.

As a symbol of *Manipulator*'s consistency, much of its goodies crop up towards the tail end. The febrile hippy balladry of "Don't You Want To Know? (Sue)" ushers you gently towards the vitriolic Fuzz War churn of "The Crawler". Here, too, there's space for Ty's introspective side to fan out, as on "The Feels". "*And when I look into your eyes/I realise/You're the same as me/You'll never be free*," he sings. A sobering thought: if a figure as flighty as Ty Segall feels chained down, what hope is there for the rest of us? *Manipulator* bows out with the sweetly frayed "Stick Around", featuring Ty's dad Steve Nutting, a touring drummer of some vintage, behind the kit.

So it's over to the growing cohort of Ty aficionados to quibble over whether *Manipulator* is their hero's definitive statement to date. It lacks, for instance, the sustained punk-rock dementia of *Slaughterhouse*, or the thematic fullness of *Goodbye Bread*, with its visions of Californian paradise gone rotten on the vine. But to consider it from another direction: are we going to turn our noses up at a record that comes on, in its spirited catchiness and daring scope, like the Greatest Hits of Ty Segall? No, we're not.

DENEE PETRACEK

Q&A

Ty Segall

Your records often focus in on one particular area. But *Manipulator* feels broad, all-encompassing. "I definitely wanted to make a record that had a little bit of every sound I have worked with in the past, and hopefully to expand on these sounds. It was wild to do, and it definitely only really glued together fully in the studio. I wanted to go as far down the writing rabbit hole that I could go..."

Your songs sometimes feel like they pick up from unfinished moments in pop history – that weird space between folk, glam and psych in that period of T. Rex and Bowie. "These are huge influences of mine... I definitely like pulling sounds from things I like and putting them in different places or contexts and seeing how they exist in that place, and that was a definite thing we went for. Like, glam drums in a punk song."

The guitar sounds on *Manipulator* are particularly hot. What's the secret? "[*Engineer*] Chris Woodhouse, my amp and the ol' Fuzz War pedal. But if I told you the secret I would have to kill you."

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Ty Segall and Chris Woodhouse
Studio: The Dock, Sacramento
Personnel includes: Ty Segall (vocals, guitar, bass, drums), Chris Woodhouse (piano, synth), Mikal Cronin (bass and vocals on "The Faker"), Charles Moothart (guitar on "The Faker" and "Who's Producing You?"), Emily Rose Epstein (drums on "The Faker"), Brit Lauren Manor (vocals on "The Singer", "The Hand" and "Feel"), Steve Nutting (drums on "Stick Around")

A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

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p80 SINÉAD O'CONNOR
p81 LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III

MARC ALMOND
Ten Plagues
CHERRY RED

6/10

Love and death during the Great Plague

Playwright Mark Ravenhill and composer Conor Mitchell's song cycle about the 1665 bubonic plague debuted at the Edinburgh Festival in 2011 before moving to Wilton's Music Hall in Tower Hamlets, East London. Written specifically for Almond, it followed a year in the life of a London-dwelling survivor and his struggle to come to terms with the death of friends and family, and the near destruction of his city. Accompanied only by piano in this studio recording, Almond has certainly been in better voice, although he still manages to bring enormous depth and poignancy to Ravenhill's libretto and its echoes of the AIDS crisis.

FIONA STURGES

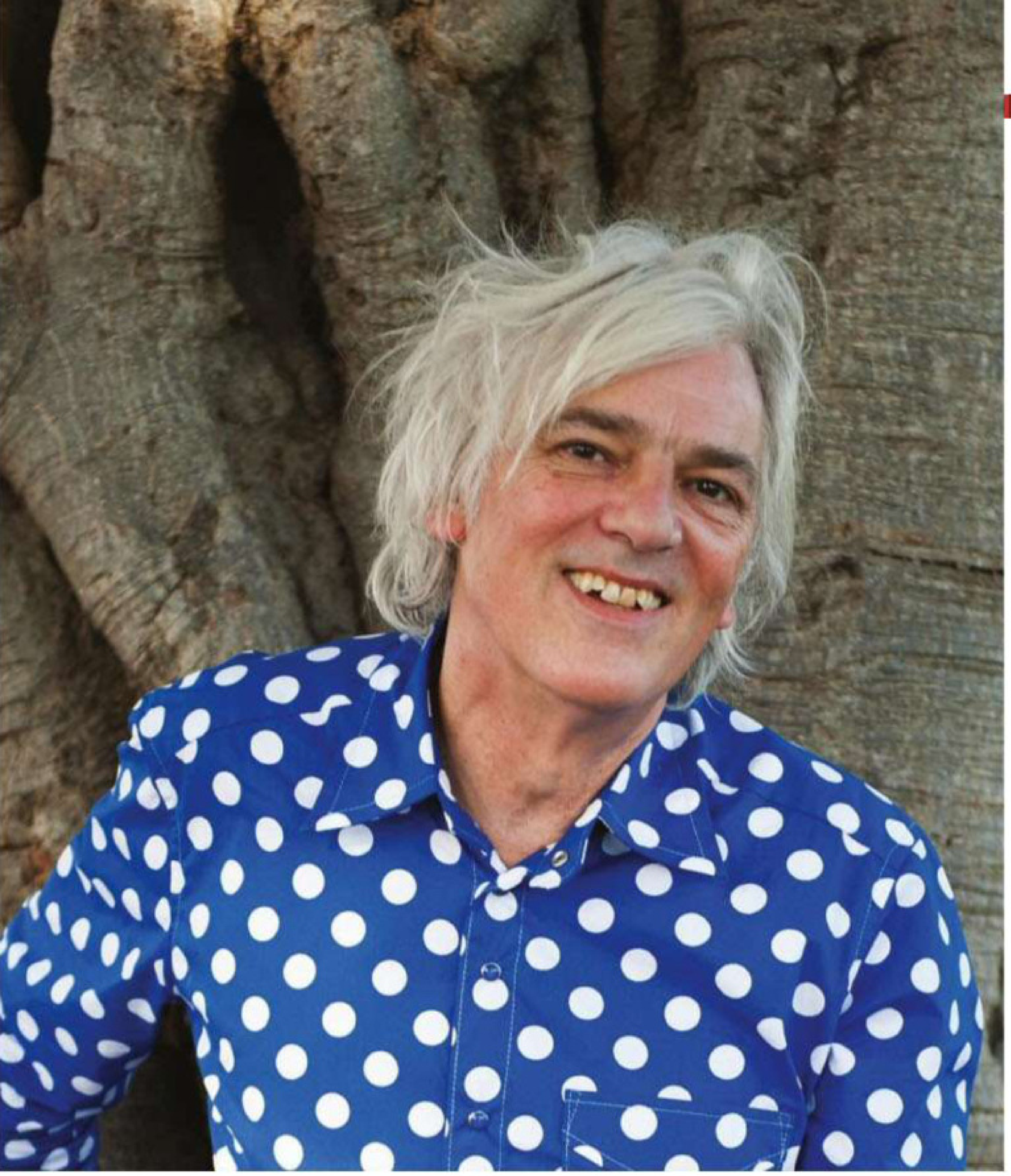
BAHAMAS
Bahamas Is Afie
BRUSHFIRE/ISLAND RECORDS

8/10

Former Feist collaborator unveils mellow gold

"I've got all the time in the world – don't you want some of that?" asks Afie Jurvanen four songs into his third album. Like his pseudonym, it's indicative of the Toronto musician's laidback, warm nature: *Bahamas Is Afie* drifts effortlessly from such easygoing, blue-eyed soul – also evident on the brassy "Stronger Than That" – to autumnal campfire acoustics, reminiscent of the work of overlooked fellow Canuck Paul Hayden Desser. Blessed by an amiably husky voice, Jurvanen unfurls elegant melodies amid intelligent, economical arrangements, with the delightfully understated strings and flute of "Can't Take You With Me" a particularly tender highlight.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



Q&A

Robyn Hitchcock

What was the appeal of making an album with Joe Boyd? Basically it's the teenage Robyn getting the chance to do what he'd have loved to think he was going to do in the future. The idea of mixing originals and covers was totally Joe. He said: 'Why don't you make a record like Judy Collins did?' And I thought: 'Brilliant – let's do 'Introducing Robyn Hitchcock' – he's this promising newcomer. He writes a few of his own songs but he knows the classics – here we go with this one from Bryan Ferry.'

You obviously adore Bryan Ferry. I am the opposite of him in so many ways. I feel like a shadow of Bryan Ferry. I have almost unconditional love for Bryan Ferry. I met him once. I poured a cup of tea for him in a hotel in Norway after a festival. Instantly, he is a man you want to genuflect to and pour out a cup of tea for. He said, "Thank you, my boy," and tipped me a florin. I've still got it framed on my wall.

Your work has got a lot less cluttered. Is that a conscious thing? I've just been chiselled away by life. The acid rain of existence etches you away. My earlier songs were a reaction to the shock of existence; I just couldn't accept that I was. I'd just look around at my fellow creatures and think: 'Fuck, this is not working.' When you're young and you have your life ahead of you, you can hang your head deep in mourning and look with loathing at the foibles of humanity, but after a certain age you've just got to get up and boogie.

INTERVIEW: JIM WIRTH

ROBYN HITCHCOCK

The Man Upstairs

YEP ROC

Ferry aid: Roxy covers and more from eternal Soft Boy. *By Jim Wirth*

8/10

"WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO happen is you get slower and less vivid," Robyn Hitchcock tells *Uncut*, matter-of-factly measuring out the career path that awaits all sixtysomething songwriters. "You get deeper and a bit more boring. Your colours dim and I assume that's what happening to me."

At 61, Hitchcock's musical palette is fading, the Hapshash And The Coloured Coat hues of The Soft Boys and the acid brights of his REM-sponsored '80s and '90s pomp giving way to a pleasing silvered tone of late. However, if his 20th solo album, *The Man Upstairs*, is less excitable than the likes of *Underwater Moonlight*, *Fegmania!* and *Queen Elvis*, it's a change that many Hitchcock agnostics will welcome.

A largely acoustic confection of sombre originals and tastefully selected covers, *The Man Upstairs* was ushered into the world by Joe Boyd, the producer who coaxed landmark works from such Hitchcock idols as the Pink Floyd, The Incredible String Band and Nick Drake in their 1960s heyday. Infinitely more *Pink Moon* than "Arnold Layne", it is as stark and forbidding a work in its way as 1990's two-bob *Blood On The Tracks*, *Eye*, albeit studiously stripped of Hitchcock's usual flashes of *Spaniard In The Works* surrealism and references to seafood.

A gloriously demystified version of The Doors' "The Crystal Ship" is among its highlights, but while Hitchcock continues to see himself as an ambassador from the lost Atlantis of 1960s pop, his spirit guide here is not the leather-trousered Jim Morrison, but the elegantly tailored Bryan Ferry.

That reverence is most explicit on Hitchcock's eviscerated reading of Roxy Music's "To Turn You On", which rehydrates the dessicated, studio-tanned original, from 1982's ne-plus-produced *Avalon*, the singer's breathless urgency and eagerness to please a captivating counterpoint to Ferry's weary chaleur.

If the gangling Hitchcock could never hope to emulate Ferry's louche detachment, he manages to assimilate some of his pensive poise and lovelorn pessimism elsewhere. Romance is transformed into a tense stake-out on the perfectly-chiselled "San Francisco Patrol", his recurring motif "*can't take my eyes off you*" very much the twice-shyness of the once-bitten.

Hitchcock's appraisals of The Psychedelic Furs' "The Ghost In You" and Norwegian indie-poppers I Was A King's "Ferries", are further proof of his unheralded – and entirely Ferryesque – ability to spirit his way inside a song, while the ghost of Bert Jansch walks on "Trouble In Your Blood". Second person pronouns notwithstanding, it feels very much like a self-portrait of an artist whose work – even at its most exuberant – has always hinted at something naggingly unresolved underneath. "*You've got a well-constructed shell*," Hitchcock rumbles. "*Deep inside, you're deep in hell.*"

If a Jerry Hall ever broke Hitchcock's heart, then he has been discreet enough never to name and shame them, but – as it does on his favourite late-period Roxy Music albums – some spectral, lingering, emotional thundercloud hangs over *The Man Upstairs*. Painfully slow, and daubed with a harpy warble backing vocal from Anne Lise Frøkedal, closer "Recalling The Truth" harks back to that infinitely distant yet eternally resonant emotional big bang – "*a window of bliss, that opens just once for the price of a kiss*".

That window may have been slammed in Hitchcock's face forever ago, but as much as it pines for lost and irretrievable things, *The Man Upstairs* is another faltering step closer to self-realisation from the man who was once introduced witheringly in his days as a folk club wannabe as "Cambridge's answer to music".

"*You hide from yourself but you're tracking you down,*" Hitchcock intones with a certain grim certainty on "Recalling The Truth". The chase is getting slower maybe, with the light fading around him, but those autumn tones may have been what suited him best all along.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Joe Boyd
Recorded at: Snap Studios, London
Personnel includes: Jenny Adejayan (cello), Charlie Francis (piano), Anne Lise Frøkedal (backing vocals)

BALLET SCHOOL

The Dew Lasts An Hour

BELLA UNION

8/10

Winning debut from Cocteaus-inspired trio

Adopted Berliners Rosie Blair (vocals), Michel Collet (guitar) and Louis McGuire (drums) trade in a lustrous synth-pop rich in melody and introspection. Blair hasn't exactly been quiet about her admiration for Cocteau Twins – doubtless a contributing factor in the band signing to Simon Raymonde's label – and the Fraser factor is evident in her arresting voice that occasionally tips into the operatic. While songs such as "Pale Saint" don't shy away from '80s gloss, stentorian basslines and churning atmospherics add a pleasing thread of melodrama and prevent them from lapsing into pastiche. It's '80s pop, but not as you know it.

FIONA STURGES

BITCHIN BAJAS

Bitchin Bajas

DRAG CITY

8/10

Meditative ambient epic from Chicagoan Cave man

The fifth and finest album by Bitchin Bajas (Cooper Crain's side-project from the Krautrocking Cave) can, at times, work like a checklist of hip ambient tropes, in which transcendent new ritual is made out of trusted old components. Over 76 minutes, diligent cosmic trainspotters will note echoes of Tangerine Dream, *(No Pussyfooting)*, gamelan and plenty of '70s New Age, right down to the flute and raw birdsong. Most pointedly, Crain channels a lot of Terry Riley: in the reed drones of "Bueu"; the twilit organ flurries of "Orgone"; and, best of all, in the 18-minute morning raga of "Tilang". Derivative, perhaps, but reconfigured in a way which is both expert and highly seductive.

JOHN MULVEY

JAMES BLACKSHAW

Fantômas: Le Faux Magistrat

TOMPKINS SQUARE

8/10

English guitar maestro's many-shifting moods

If 2012's *Love Is The Plan, The Plan Is Death* saw Hastings' master guitarist/composer move towards a more song-based approach, then *Fantômas...* is a firm kick in the opposite direction. Soundtracking Louis Feuillade's 1914 silent film, this LP consists of one live, 74-minute piece from Paris' Théâtre Du Châtelet. As on *Love Is The Plan...*, Blackshaw's nylon-string guitar replaces his usual tangles of 12-string, but he's more commonly found at the piano conjuring up eerie passages in the style of Erik Satie. His small band of multi-instrumentalists provide drums, sax, violin and synth throughout, allowing Blackshaw to inhabit several noirish moods, from pounding post-rock to Chopin melancholy.

TOM PINNOCK

BASEMENT JAXX

Junto

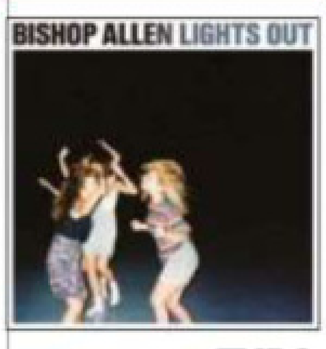
ATLANTIC JAXX

6/10

US rapper Mykki Blanco among the vocal guests on mixed return

After very successfully making a unique blend of Latin and lairy rave at the turn of the century, Basement Jaxx return as dance is in the ascendancy again – and audibly trying to keep up with the young guns. Tracks here borrow from the likes of Breach and Disclosure, and, as on "Buffalo", can be weedily underpowered where they were once impressively unhinged. But despite this and the generic lyrics, their vivaciousness shines on "Summer Dem", with its burst of Scottish rapping, and the strong songwriting on "Never Say Never" could well end up making a late festival hit.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



BISHOP ALLEN

Lights Out

DEAD OCEANS

7/10

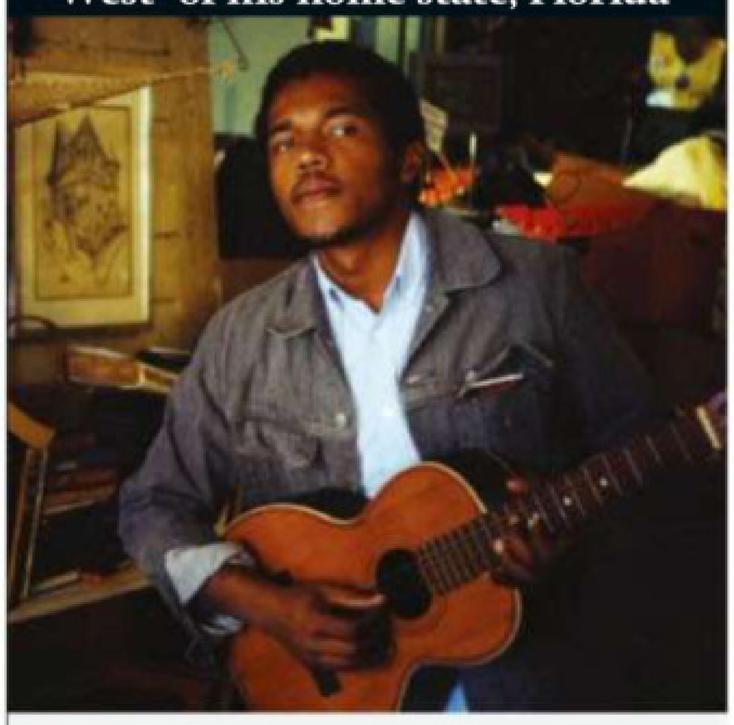
Still obscure, and still engaging, entering their second decade

A great deal of resolve is involved when a band plugs away for 10 years, cranking out four LPs, a dozen EPs and countless shows without hitting the radar, let alone hitting pay dirt. Through it all, Brooklyn's Bishop Allen have consistently displayed all the fundamental virtues – but for powerpop bands, even relatively high-profile ones like Fountains Of Wayne, Guster and Nada Surf, chops, smarts and tunefulness will get you only so far. *Lights Out* chugs along with Cars-like locomotion, with Justin Rice spinning out heart-on-sleeve songs ("Why I Had To Go", "Give It Back") framed by the weightier "Start Again" and "No Conditions". It's not earthshaking, but there's nothing wrong with simply being likeable.

BUD SCOPPA

REVELATIONS

Benjamin Booker on the 'Wild West' of his home state, Florida



As an obsessive youth, Florida-raised Benjamin Booker took inspiration from his local Tampa DIY punk scene as he defined his own combustible punk blues identity.

"If I liked a band I'd find 20 other bands that influenced them and go back and back – as far as I could," he says. "I feel a connection with old blues guys – Robert Johnson, Blind Willie McTell. When it comes down to it, we're all blues guitarists from the South trying to make music that fires people up."

A former trainee journalist ("I think it helped me to see a bigger picture and realise where I fit into that"), Booker began performing when he moved to New Orleans – but Florida had left its mark.

"I didn't realise how crazy Florida is until I left a couple years ago," he says. "The things that happened to me there have definitely affected my songwriting, but are not things I necessarily want to share in an interview. It's like the Wild West down there."

A recent *Letterman* TV appearance sent Booker's appeal nationwide, but also brought a crippling attack of nerves. Creditably, Booker has a sense of perspective.

"People are starving to death and fighting wars to protect themselves. I'd be an asshole to complain about attention."

GAVIN MARTIN

BENJAMIN BOOKER

Benjamin Booker

ROUGH TRADE

7/10

Young, New Orleans-based singer-songwriter's feral debut

Jack White likes Benjamin Booker – and Benjamin Booker certainly returns the favour. He's got the rasping voice (see "Slow Coming"), and the influences spanning Blind Willie Johnson to The Gun Club. He's also got a respect for the duo format: as illustrated by the swaggering "Have You Seen My Son?" on which his sole accomplice, drummer Max Norton displays a wayward, hurtling sense of rhythm. There's artifice in Booker's make-up but the troubled, strutting loner, serving sizzling sides of electrified psyched-swamp blues, is a role he inhabits with conviction and aplomb. A name to watch.

GAVIN MARTIN

THE BOYS

Punk Rock Menopause

WOLVERINE

7/10

Punky Monkees "party like it's 1976"

Featuring refugees from proto-Clash outfit London SS, The Boys were gleefully generic in their grotty pomp (sample songtitles: "I Don't Care", "Sick On You"), and with their first album since 1981, little has changed. A little bit Rollers Shang-A-Lang and plenty of charity-shop glitter, *Punk Rock Menopause* is beer-gut paced, but has enough dumb humour ("1976" and "Global Warming"), and knowing references ("Pistol-Whipping Momma", "Punk Rock Girl") to roll back the years. *"If you think about me, please think kindly of me,"* Matt Dangerfield pines on unexpectedly teary closer "Baby Bye Bye". Remember them this way.

JIM WIRTH

AMERICANA

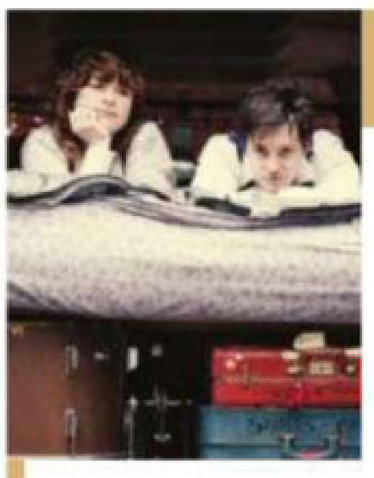
BEST OF THE MONTH

8/10

BILLY JOE SHAVER
Long In The Tooth
LIGHTNING ROD/THIRTY TIGERS

"The record's about me..."; first in six years from country songwriting legend

Brash, feisty, and rambunctious at 75 – one would expect nothing less from outlaw country's prodigal son. Indeed, decades after the songwriting well's run dry for just about all his peers, Shaver is still putting pen to paper, churning out the gems. And *Long In The Tooth*, his first full set of secular studio originals since 2005's *The Real Deal*, has its share. Willie Nelson is on board, sharing vocals, bashing contemporary country, and toying with their renegade mythology, on opener "Hard To Be An Outlaw". Leon Russell and Tony Joe White also guest, but it's Shaver's voice, in places more ragged and undisciplined than ever – spirited, shall we say – and songwriting that hold the spotlight. With Nashville-style balladry sparring with swampy rockers, bluegrass giving way to barroom bashers, *Tooth* plays like a Shaver career sampler, borrowing styles from all over the place. The bravado of the title track might be both the most absurd and most irritating cut of his career; "I'll Love You As Much As I Can" is its polar opposite, a soppy country/pop crooner from the hillbilly playlists of Eisenhower's America. Between these extremes lie the album's most sublime moments. "Sunbeam Special" reminisces on his 1950s Texas childhood over a careening banjo/fiddle arrangement. Border-ballad narrative "American Me" mixes personal romance and American arrogance to disastrous outcomes. "Music City USA" melds history and autobiography, appropriating Johnny Cash's boom-chicka-boom. Beyond the bluster, at the top of the heap, are songs without much to do at all with Billy Joe Shaver: "Checkers And Chess", a splendid, succinct commentary on class; and "The Git Go", melodic echoes of Mickey Newbury's "Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)", a haunting, burning, world-weary tour de force on the ways of the world. *LUKE TORN*



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

"If you unravelled all the threads Jack wove into the tapestry of what made country music great over the last 50-plus years, the whole thing would come apart," says Emmylou Harris of **Cowboy Jack Clement**. A year after his death, Harris is among the guests on Clement's final studio offering, *For Once And For All*. Others include John Prine, Duane Eddy, T Bone Burnett, Rodney Crowell, Dan Auerbach, Leon Russell, Gillian Welch, David Rawlings and Will Oldham. Less harmonious, it seems, is the legacy of **Hank Williams**. The country giant's grandson, Hank Williams III, is apparently unhappy at the decision to cast Englishman Tom Hiddleston in the lead role of upcoming biopic, *I Saw The Light*. Hank3 says that Matthew McConaughey would've been the ideal choice, singling out *Dallas Buyers Club* as proof of his 'authentic' Southern chops.

Back on the release front, early September sees **Shovels & Rope** follow up 2012's award-winning debut *O' Be Joyful*. Cary Ann Hearst and Michael Trent's latest, *Swimmin' Time*, further flexes their irreverent take on country, punk and gospel. The album arrives after documentary *The Ballad Of Shovels & Rope* was aired at the Nashville Film Festival. And after a very public bust-up with British label Communion Records, **Justin Townes Earle** has signed to Vagrant to release his forthcoming album. The 10-track *Single Mothers* is due in September. *ROB HUGHES*

CORY BRANAN
The No-Hit Wonder
BLOODSHOT

Wonderful fourth from fast-rising Nashville talent

8/10

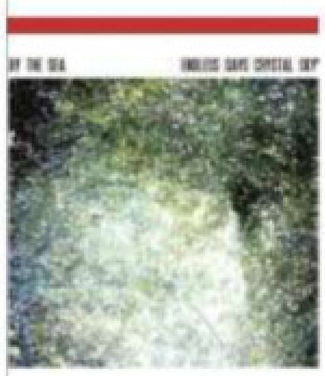
Branan's backstory – raised at the lip of Tennessee and Mississippi before settling in LA, Austin and now Nashville – makes sense of his spread of musical moods. The title track clatters headlong like primetime Replacements or Bottle Rockets, while "Daddy Was A Skywriter" creates his own rockabilly myth. At heart, though, he's a great country singer, armed with the sardonic humour of Todd Snider and the loping grace of Waylon Jennings. Branan's not short on admirers either, borne out by the presence here of Jason Isbell, Caitlin Rose and The Hold Steady's Craig Finn and Steve Selvidge. *ROB HUGHES*

THE BUG
Angels & Devils
NINJATUNE

Further dubtronic delving by prolific innovator and collaborator

8/10

Shape-shifting sonic explorer Kevin Martin has recorded under various guises, including Techno Animal and King Midas Sound. Relocating to Berlin since his last Bug album, 2008's *London Zoo*, Martin continues to brew new hybrids of dystopian dub reggae, industrial noise and experimental hip-hop. Highlights are the psychedelic stoner-dub epic "Save Me", with vocals by Gonjasufi, and "The One", which lays Flowdan's urgent raps over frenetic beats. Martin sometimes flirts with ugly machismo – notably the jarring Death Grips collaboration "Fuck A Bitch" – but his instincts are generally sound, mapping out new underground zones like a post-dubstep Adrian Sherwood. *STEPHEN DALTON*

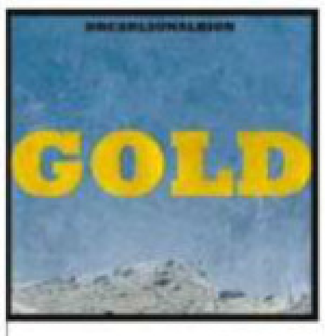


BY THE SEA
Endless Days Crystal Sky
WAR ROOM

Wirral neophytes' echoes of the Bunnymen

7/10

Seemingly titled using a random New Order lyric generator, the second album by winsome Wirral fivesome By The Sea upholds a noble Merseyside tradition of wearing – and warping – influences with pride. With a revolutionary spirit cribbed from The Wild Swans, a melodic grace which nods to mentor Bill Ryder-Jones, and a pastoral sweetness derived from Gorky's Zygotic Mynci (unlikely favourites of frontman Liam Power), *Endless Days Crystal Sky* is simultaneously intimate and huge. "I See A Crystal Sky" and closer "Wild September" exemplify By The Sea's time-honoured but never tired redefinition of epic. A Proustian rush-hour. *JIM WIRTH*



DYLAN CARLSON
Gold
SELF-RELEASE/DAYMARE

8/10

Electric guitar paeans to the Klondike gold rush

When Dylan Carlson's Earth returned after a lengthy hiatus in 2005, one of the reference points for their new direction was Neil Young's desolate doom-country score to the Jim Jarmusch film *Dead Man*. Now, with *Gold*, Carlson becomes soundtracker himself, composing for Thomas Arslan's arthouse Western of German settlers prospecting in the Canadian wilderness. Earth's droning instrumental metal can be sparse, but *Gold* is sparser still; just Carlson's effects-laden electric slide guitar plucking out ringing motifs that evoke craggy valleys and windswept peaks. Earlier Carlson works have explored his interest in alchemy, and he invests a Popol Vuh-ish spirituality in this hunt for the glittery hard stuff.

LOUIS PATTISON

CRAFT SPELLS
Nausea
CAPTURED TRACKS

7/10

Less synth-pop, more baroque pop: welcome dizzy spells

Citing a social media addiction, Craft Spells' baby-faced Justin Vallesteros 'unplugged' both his synths and computer while attempting to overcome writers' block at his parents' Californian home. But though his second album was written on a piano, you'd never guess: it's the gently chiming guitars, summery synth lines (especially on "Komorebi") and Vallesteros' Beach Boy melodies that dominate. Its title, too, is perplexing, since *Nausea* explores the same lightheaded, mainly upbeat territory as Scandinavian indie-poppers like Team Me and Young Dreams, albeit with occasional, jangling echoes of early Primal Scream on "Twirl".

WYNDHAM WALLACE

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN
Zim Zam Zim
BRONZE RAT

7/10

The God Of Hellfire, back and getting existential

Arthur Brown remains fixed in the popular imagination for 1968 chart-topper "Fire", and of course the *Top Of The Pops* clip in which he danced around with a dish of burning lighter fluid on his head. Four decades on, Brown's quixotic spirit endures. The title track is mystical free jazz that finds him imagining life before the Big Bang to a caterwaul of horns; "Jungle Fever" is Beefheart blues interrupted by the cry of parrots; and "The Muscle Of Love" suggests, slightly alarmingly, that the 72-year-old's libido remains not just operational, but positively combustible. It gets pretty silly, but the band are on point, and Brown's bug-eyed alternative wisdom is seldom not engaging.

LOUIS PATTISON

CHILDHOOD
Lacuna
MARATHON/HOUSE ANXIETY

6/10

London-via-Nottingham indie kids rock, dreamily

Next to peers Palma Violets and Peace, Childhood come over as a leisurely proposition, the quartet's debut album *Lacuna* displaying little in the way of beery raucousness or baggy swagger. Lightness of touch is their thing. "You Could Be Different" and "Right Beneath Me" crossbreed shoegaze and chillwave in a lilt of effects-soaked guitars and gauzy synths, singer Ben Romans-Hopcraft's vocal veering between tippy-toes falsetto and a King Krule-ish mumble that would have teacher demanding he speak up a bit, please. "Falls Away" is a sun-dappled take on The xx's pallid soul, "Solemn Skies" a decent stab at Primal Scream jamming. Elsewhere it can feel a little slack-jawed, its dreaminess concealing slight lack of substance.

LOUIS PATTISON

REVELATIONS
Helios Creed gets reChromed

For anyone deep into the world of Chrome, the original San Francisco sci-fi psych-punk-rock gang, the group's myth has much to do with their outsider status – this was a group, after all, whose debut album was rejected by a major label in 1976 for sounding like a 'messed-up Doors'. For Helios Creed, who joined soon after, and has led the group since the passing of founding member Damon Edge in 1995, marginal life was where it was at: "San Francisco at the time was in this post-'60s mellow burned-out hippy phase," he recalls. "I wasn't into it and neither was Damon. We both loved psychedelia, heavy rock, new free punk like The Stooges."

Bumping in a truckload of whacked-out sci-fi electronics, the Chrome vibe was set: "When we'd record we'd both get what we called 'the chill factor' at the same time from certain parts of our recorded sessions." That's carried through to the approach on their newest album, *Feel It Like A Scientist*. "It's got the rock and the rhythm section that rips your head off and then the weirdest shit you ever heard in rock on the top tracks. It's a process, I call it being Chromed."

JON DALE

CHROME
Feel It Like A Scientist
KING OF SPADES

8/10

The nth coming of San Fran's art-punks

Four decades since they were first formed by the late Damon Edge, Chrome's sulphuric take on rock'n'roll still sounds like they beamed down from a rarer, more caustic atmosphere than our own. Their head conceptualist is now guitarist Helios Creed, who's kept the vision tight, true to the corroded metal, viscous electronics and Burroughsian collages of their signal albums, 1977's *Alien Soundtracks* and 1979's *Half Machine Lip Moves*. There's more thuggish rock action on *Feel It Like A Scientist*, but songs like "Unbreakable Fluoride Lithium Plastic" are as scabrous and overloaded as ever: psychedelia as torched landscapes and industrial accidents.

JON DALE

DALHOUS
Will To Be Well
BLACKEST EVER BLACK

7/10

Second album of RD Laing-inspired ambience

Even when effective, so much ambient music can be too blatant in its emotional manipulation – credit to Dalhous, aka Marc Dall, for making something beautiful but still somewhat unreadable in its intentions. Aphex Twin or Boards Of Canada's foggy breakbeats are a touchstone, where the idealism of rave gets rose-tinted all the more through keening melody, and "Sensitised To This Area" has the wonkily sunkissed melancholy of Art Of Noise or even Chris Lowe's production. But there are drifts across dub and other digital cultures, with "Someone Secure"'s tone patterns harking to the dawn of the personal computer age.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

DESERTSHORE
Migrations Of Glass
DHARKAN

8/10

Evocative instrumentals from Mark Kozelek's eclectic muckers

Following last year's excellent album with Mark Kozelek, Desertshore return to wholly instrumental music on these 10 tracks, which run the gamut from slowly unfolding pastoral pieces ("Until Morning Comes", "Echos De Honfleur") to classical ("Intermezzo") and jittery jazz-prog ("Crosstown Seven"), but are most impressive when they aspire to be epic. The Spanish flavourings of "Tempest Armada" stretch out over 11 minutes into dusty cinematic terrain, "Forevermore" mines the mood of The Cure's *Disintegration*, while "Mesa Verde" harks back to guitarist Phil Carney's old band Red House Painters. The results are evocative paintings in sound, ethereal but muscular.

GRAEME THOMSON

COLD SPECKS

Neuroplasticity

MUTE

Bigger, bolder second by brooding Canadian. *By Graeme Thomson*

8/10

"NEUROPLASTICITY" IS A term that relates to the brain's ability to evolve when faced with new behaviour, environments, stimuli or trauma. According to Al Spx, the 26-year-old Canadian singer and songwriter who broods, bristles and snarls behind the soubriquet Cold Specks, she chose it as the title of her second album to honour "a creative rewiring process. It implies an aesthetic change."

Which, after prolonged immersion in this rather remarkable record, seems about right. *Neuroplasticity* is the follow-up to Cold Specks' 2012 debut, *I Predict A Graceful Expulsion*, and bears the same relation to that LP as an abstract oil painting does to an accomplished sketch. ...*Expulsion* placed Spx's core sources – old spirituals, Delta blues, Southern soul, Alan Lomax field recordings – into an overly polite gothic-folk setting of carefully plucked guitars, soft piano, keening violins and primal rhythm. It's a lovely record, but it could have offered more bite and daring.

Past songs like "When The City Lights Dim" suggested that Spx could turn her hand to vaguely anthemic radio-friendly fare, but in the event she has travelled to the other extreme. While *I Predict A Graceful Expulsion* was recorded in less than a fortnight, *Neuroplasticity* was stitched together over a period of six months. That time was clearly not spent applying commercial polish, but instead building a bigger, bolder musical framework to give full vent to her extraordinary voice – two parts Patti Smith, one part Tom Waits, one part Macy Gray – and unbendingly bleak worldview.

The dark, churning soundscapes on *Neuroplasticity* frequently approach the kind of fever-pitch of confrontational intensity which bears comparison with Nick Cave and PJ Harvey, combined with the tribal kick of '80s Kate Bush. "A Quiet Chill" has the same irresistible pulse as "The Big Sky", while "A Formal Invitation", with its bat-shit rhythm and layered, multi-octave backing vocals, has the edge-of-madness feel familiar from *The Dreaming*.

At other times Spx feels like a kindred spirit to notorious margin-hangers like Diamanda Galás and Swans. It seems entirely fitting that Michael Gira guests on two songs, his light-swallowing rasp intoning *"hung, drawn, quartered"* on "Exit Plan", and adding an extra layer of lupine menace to the album's pitch-black highlight, "Season Of Doubt". Even here, Spx out-glooms her co-vocalist, signing off with the promise that she possesses *"an unrelenting desire to fall apart"*.

The results suggest a spectral Odetta covering late Talk Talk, a bewitching tapestry made up of uncomfortable silence, broken piano chords and forlorn trumpet, the latter courtesy of young American jazzer Ambrose Akinmusire, whose contributions prove to be one of the album's most engaging new textures. His squealing horn lines skid all over opener "A Broken Memory", as well as "Old Knives", which pledges kinship to The Cure's *Faith*, with its slow-hanging guitar arpeggios and funereal drum tattoo.

Spx's use of traditional black American sources is less overt but remains in evidence. Avant-garde jazz notwithstanding, "A Broken Memory" is a bleached machine-gospel stomp. "Absisto" is built on a blues drone, stretched and distorted over a bass-heavy rhythm, beautiful and sinister at the same time. "Living Signs" is clipped gothic funk, with a lyric – *"I did not intend to raise the dead"* – which evokes images of vine-covered New Orleans graveyards. There are other connective threads to Spx's past work. "Change Of Command", a lithe construction of fluid guitar lines and an almost-pop melody, recalls "Hector" from her debut. The gentle, undulating "Exit Plan" also returns to the calmer waters of ...*Expulsion*, at least until the peace is, somewhat inevitably, shattered by eruptions of sonic turbulence.

Spx, who now lives in London, wrote much of this record in a remote cottage during a winter escape to the West Country, and the penetrating chill is tangible. *Neuroplasticity* is an unrelenting ride, but there's something heroic about its unwavering commitment to nightmare visions. On "A Quiet Chill", Spx growls *"I remain unshakeable"*. Every note of this compelling album backs her up.

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded: Hotel2Tango, Montreal; Revolution Recordings, Toronto
Produced: Jim Anderson
Personnel: Al Spx (vocals, guitar), Peter Roberts (guitar), Loel Campbell (drums), Thomas Greene (piano, organ), Jim Anderson (guitar, bass, synths, harp, vibraphone), Tim D'Eon (guitar, synths), Ambrose Akinmusire (trumpet, piano), Michael Gira (vocals), Chris Cundy (woodwind)

Q&A

Al Spx, Cold Specks

What changed between ...*Expulsion* and *Neuroplasticity*? My first album was a deeply personal folk record, and it became difficult performing those songs over two years. I felt like a bad actress and I wanted to change that. I made a conscious decision to make a more playful album with a far more expansive sound.

"Playful" isn't necessarily the first word I'd use! Sonically it's playful. Lyrically and thematically it's still incredibly dark. I don't know how to write in other ways, I've come to accept it.

Why did you go to the West Country to write? It was winter in London, miserable, and a friend had a cottage available for a few weeks. I had a couple of flatmates in London I just needed to get rid of! I need to be alone to be comfortable with fully exploring sound. I don't like to make errors in front of people, so I isolate myself.

How did Michael Gira come on board? I couldn't sing as low as he does! Luckily for me he was a fan and agreed to do it. He was kind and gracious through the entire process. I'm a very big fan of his, so it was a great pleasure. *GRAEME THOMSON*

TINA DICO
Whispers
FINEST GRAMOPHONE

7/10

Danish singer-songwriter travels deep into silence

As its title implies, the new album by one of Denmark's most successful artists is a study in stillness. Dico's strong, rich voice dominates an intense, and rather Cohen-esque suite of songs which frequently find her switching gender roles. "As Far As Love Goes" rides a wonky blues riff, and the title track has a rhythmic kick which is almost funky, but mostly the naked emotion in Dico's words is complemented by spare acoustic instrumentation. An extended rumination on a late-night mood, *Whispers* often finds dark poetry in the vagaries of love and the eternal dangers of "*sailing off on a promise*".

GRAEME THOMSON

ENGINEERS
Always Returning
KSCOPE

7/10

Wistful fourth album from revitalised dreampoppers

German analogue synth whizz Ulrich Schnauss' arrival in Engineers' ranks in 2010 has softened their edges, and done wonders for their aesthetic. Though both are associated with the shoegazing revival, their collaboration suggests broader horizons. In fact, early influences seem muted: "Drive Your Car", oddly, sounds more like Frazier Chorus than Slowdive. Nonetheless, Schnauss' trademark keyboard washes are a significant feature, at times helping stimulate euphoria beneath often gauzy melancholia, elsewhere adding a soothing Pink Floyd-ish balm. Consequently, while "A Million Voices' lifts Neu! skywards, the title track and "Smiling Back" hint more at Air's *Moon Safari*.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

EROTIC MARKET
Blahblahrians
JARRING EFFECTS

6/10

Coquettish Frenchtronica proves more charming than saucy

Marine Pellegrini and Lucas Garnier make sulky, sexy, beat-driven electropop which imagines how MIA might sound if she was an insolent cartoon squirrel. Built around sneery rap refrains like "*this is lame lame lame*" and "*I like it smelly stinky sweaty*", Pellegrini's lyrical barbs are hardly in the Peaches or even Lily Allen league, but they do exude a certain rude-grrrl charm. While this debut is full of scrappy half-songs, it contains moments of bubblegum-punk genius. The tempo-shifting, woozy-voiced "Ddddrunk" is a fine approximation of intoxication, while "Bitchy Muses" offers a gloriously synthetic mash-up of beats and bleeps, and surprisingly slick vocal harmonies.

STEPHEN DALTON

DREDD FOOLE/ BEN CHASNY
Drunk With Insignificance
FEEDING TUBE

7/10

Six Organs, 12 strings, and the holy Foole

A heavyweight summit between Dredd Foole, aka Dan Ireton, the founding father of free folk, and Chasny of Six Organs Of Admittance and Comets On Fire, *Drunk With Insignificance* is a heartbreaker. All throughout, Chasny's guitar, reverbed to fuck and distant, shades the songs with spectral, keening notes, even pulling some spindly surf motifs on the opening "Fly". But *Drunk With Insignificance*'s bloodied heart beats within its star-crossed laments, such as "Your Heart" and "If Things Don't Get Better", and the gorgeous "Won't Make It", where the duo play as though haunted by visions of the late, great Peter Laughner.

JON DALE

DANGER MOUSE AND SPARKLEHORSE
Dark Night Of The Soul EMI, 2010

Recorded by Brian Burton and Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous three years before the latter's death (legal wrangles delayed the release), it featured collaborations with a horde of alt-rock luminaries. The Lips' track, "Revenge", is a beautiful, bitter ode to heartbreak, and straightforward by their oddball standards.

7/10

THE FLAMING LIPS AND STARDEATH AND WHITE DWARFS WITH HENRY ROLLINS AND PEACHES
The Dark Side Of The Moon WARNERS, 2009

Suspicions of mockery were swiftly expunged here as Coyne and co offered a blow-by-blow, if considerably messier, version of the original. Peaches' raging take on Clare Torry's vocal histrionics on "The Great Gig In The Sky" is really quite spectacular.

8/10

THE FLAMING LIPS AND HEADY FWENDS
BELLA UNION, 2012

An LP of collaborations with Tame Impala, Neon Indian, Yoko Ono and more, this was testament to Coyne's ability to win friends and influence people. Some gems, among them "(2012) You Must Be Upgraded" featuring Ke$ha, an update of The Stooges' "1969". Their moot joint album was later called off.

7/10

FIONA STURGES

PETER ESCOTT
The Long O
FIRE

8/10

Endearing lo-fi from Tasmanian Renaissance man

It makes strange sense to discover that Hobart's Peter Escott – also half of punk electronica duo Native Cats – sometimes performs droll stand-up comedy. His introverted songs exhibit an eccentric whimsy, despite leaning on a limited palette of self-taught instruments. Their seemingly under-rehearsed fragility, however, keeps accusations of novelty at bay, even if "A16" is mischievously named after a setting on his MiniKorg synth. It might be the simple Daniel Johnston-plays-Harry Nilsson piano charms of "No One", or the way his voice struggles to reach higher notes on "My Arm Is True", but these intimate sketches are surprisingly engaging.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

ELECTRIC WURMS
Musik, Die Schwer Zu Twerk
BELLA UNION

6/10

Extra-curricular prog-fest from some Flaming Lips

Given the unrelenting darkness of last year's *The Terror* album, plus unlikely musical dalliances with Ke$ha and Miley Cyrus, this six-track side-project from The Flaming Lips' Wayne Coyne and Steven Drozd seems unusually straightforward by their standards, steeped as it is '60s prog and space rock and embellished with Lips-style instrumental doodles that join the dots between jazz, ambient electronica and psychedelic rock. A faithful if condensed cover of Yes' "Heart Of The Sunrise", sweetly sung by Drozd, concludes what is essentially a likeable frivolity, and a stopgap before their next Flaming masterwork.

FIONA STURGES

FIRE! ORCHESTRA
Enter
RUNE GRAMMOFON

8/10

First studio outing for the gigantic Nordic outfit

Mats Gustafsson is the bicep-flexing hulk of the Scandinavian free jazz scene, and with 28 members, Fire! Orchestra is his most maximalist project yet. Like his Thing/ Neneh Cherry collaboration, this is soulful songwriting sent mad by lust and art. The first movement is a masterful build from charming jazz through post-rock to big-band meltdown, while the second is all badass Yeah Yeah Yeahs-style no-wave riffage and cymbal clatter. The third suffers from a bit of improv cliché in its fox-sex vocals, but the central melodic theme is robust enough to return for a warm-hearted final track.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

New Albums

THE EMPERORS OF WYOMING

The Emperors Of Wyoming

PROPER RECORDS UK

8/10

Butch Vig regroups comrades for Americana classic

Singer/songwriter/guitarist Phil Davis and producer, drummer and Garbage man Vig spent their late '70s/'80s youth in Madison, Wisconsin, in underrated folk-rockers Fire Town. Now reunited as The Emperors Of Wyoming, they play like the great lost alt.country band. Crazy Horse and countrified Stones influences merge with bluegrass, amped-up folk and country, amid Davis' sturdily dynamic, intriguing songs. The dark, driving undertow of "Avalanche Girl", the redemptive push of "Sweep Away", and the Dillards-meet-powerpop vibe of "I Don't Know Why I Love You" jump out early, but really, every song might eventually be your favourite.

LUKE TORN

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM

Get Hurt

VIRGIN/EMI

6/10

Fallon and co's disappointing fifth

When 2010's *American Slang* failed to rescue The Gaslight Anthem from the tat-rock chitlin circuit, their unwelcome response was *Handwritten*, an album on which they surrendered Springsteen and The Clash as musical reference points in favour of generic hard-rock bluster and a relentless amped-up blare. *Get Hurt* is sadly more of the same, but even louder and with the unattractive addition of some of Kurt Cobain's self-pity, Brian Fallon's increasingly risible self-regard taking a morbid turn on the creepy neediness of "Underneath The Ground" and the martyred posturing of the title track, whose excessive emoting is unfortunately typical of the record's exhausting inclination towards overwrought histrionics.

ALLAN JONES

THE ICARUS LINE

Avowed Slavery

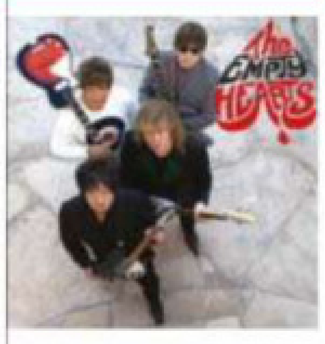
AGITATED

7/10

Companion piece to last year's *Slave Vows*

Following the ferocious, battle-scarred majesty of 2013's *Slave Vows*, feral rockers The Icarus Line have decided to "close an era" with this mini-album companion. Clocking in at 37 minutes, this is no EP or after-thought, even if it contains just five songs, from the seditious crawl-and-stomp intro of "Leeches And Seeds" to the stunning, swirling 13-minute closer "The Father/The Priest". The band's dense, textured rock always has an eye on the beat – "Junkadelic" has a Stonesy underbelly, while "Salem Slims" rages and riffs like AC/DC covering The Stooges – but it's the stubborn, sinister intensity of the final track that really stands out.

PETER WATTS



EMPTY HEARTS

Empty Hearts

429

7/10

Party like it's 1982: Rock icons toy with their pasts, go back to the future

The Cars' guitarist Elliot Easton, Blondie drummer Clem Burke, Romantics singer Wally Palmar, and Chesterfield Kings drummer Andy Babiuk sound like they're having the time of their lives on this retro project, merging spirited garage rock with pugnacious '80s-style powerpop, plus a smidge of arena-rock bombast. There's nothing deep or fancy here, just romantic joys and tribulations set to written-to-order, meat-and-potatoes guitar rock. Hearty hooks and harmony chants, testosterone-fuelled guitar and general chutzpah drive rockers from "I Don't Want Your Love" and album highlight "Soul Deep".

LUKE TORN

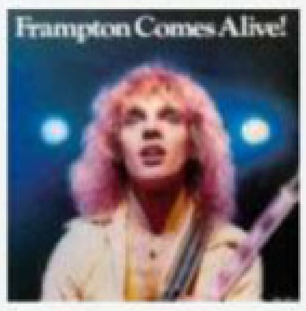
HOW TO BUY... PETER FRAMPTON

HUMBLE PIE

Rock On A&M, 1971

The twin attack of Steve Marriott's powerful voice and Frampton's fearsome lead guitar reached its heavy blues pinnacle here, best heard on "Stone Cold Fever" and a cover of Muddy Waters' "Rollin' Stone". Frampton quit the band within a year, the self-penned, poppier "The Light" a pointer to the soft rock of his subsequent solo work.

7/10

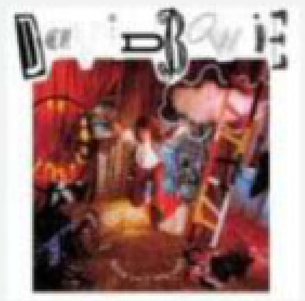


PETER FRAMPTON

Frampton Comes Alive! A&M, 1976

After four poorly-selling studio releases no-one expected a double live set to shift six million copies and become the best-selling album of the year. Monster hit singles "Show Me The Way" and "Baby, I Love Your Way" defined the smooth AOR of the era, while Frampton's guitar chops get a good workout on "Do You Feel Like We Do?" and "Jumpin' Jack Flash".

8/10



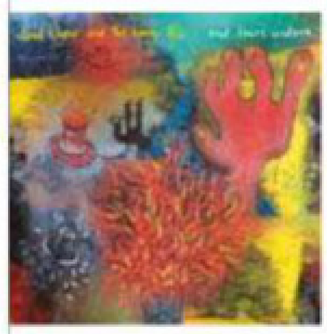
DAVID BOWIE

Never Let Me Down EMI, 1987

Brought in to beef up Bowie's sound on an LP that veers towards loud rockers and arty experimentation, Frampton especially cuts loose on "87 And Cry" and "New York's In Love". He was also part of The Dame's subsequent Glass Spider touring band, but links between the men go back to the early '60s – Frampton's dad was one of Bowie's art teachers.

6/10

TERRY STAUNTON



DAVID KILGOUR & THE HEAVY EIGHTS

End Times Undone

MERGE

7/10

Do it Clean: NZ indie legend returns

Like so many '80s records on the Flying Nun label, The Clean's music didn't appear built to last: such tentative, silvery indie-pop, underpinned by the frailest of jangles. Thirty years on, though, Real Estate have updated that same sound, The Clean are reissuing their *Anthology*, and core member David Kilgour's own aesthetic has proved to be fantastically resilient. His eighth solo album is a fine place to start investigations of this dappled terrain, in places a little heavier and more psychedelic than one might expect. "Comin' On" and "Like Rain", meanwhile, recapture the vague innocence and spindly momentum that made The Clean the best New Zealand band of a preternatural crop.

JOHN MULVEY

MARK KOZELEK

Live At Biko

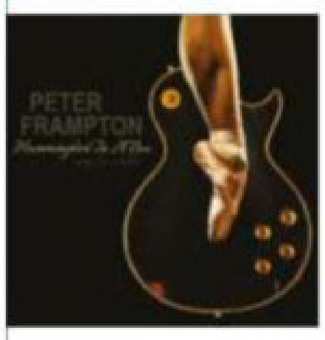
CALDO VERDE

8/10

Sun Kil Moon man's latest solo set captured

Mark Kozelek rarely lets audiences forget that he begrudges touring, and this brisk translation of his April 6 solo show at Biko, Milan (featuring an aborted "I Love My Dad" and silken Spanish guitar), into this live record demonstrates his business-first approach. As ever, there's great appeal in his stage patter, where he tests the tension between catharsis and awkwardness ("Were you comfortable while I was singing songs about eating pussy in seventh grade?"), and sends up his reputation for "middle-aged ramblings". But he never skimps on emotion, growing furiously sad on "Richard Ramirez Died Today...", and eventually shutting up and losing himself to the mournful final hour, a salesman not immune to his own pitch.

LAURA SNAPES



PETER FRAMPTON

Hummingbird In A Box

RED/SONY

6/10

Coming alive on the dance stage

Frampton's earlier collaboration with producer Gordon Kennedy, *Fingerprints*, earned the pair a Grammy for Best Pop Instrumental Album, but it's a potential puzzle determining in which category *Hummingbird In A Box* could be nominated. The suite of seven pieces was put together for a production by Cincinnati Ballet, and while the delicate picking of "The Promenade's Retreat" and the chugging funk of "The One In 901" show Frampton to still be an eloquent guitarist, they might make a greater impact with the visuals for which they were written. Vocals help on the soul-searching "Friendly Fire", reminiscent of the mellow AOR of his '70s heyday.

TERRY STAUNTON

LULUC
Passerby
SUB POP

Aussie folk-harmony duo make soothing sophomore set

7/10

It's been a long journey from Tad and Mudhoney to this defiantly middle-of-the-road album for Seattle's famous grunge label. But Melbourne-formed, Brooklyn-based duo Zoe Randell and Steve Hassett are formidable songwriters, and Randell's assured voice is even lovelier when joined by a Hassett harmony and a lot of Fleet Foxy reverb. Produced by The National's Aaron Dessner, *Passerby* is an acoustic record of great subtlety and warmth, so much so that it overcomes the chick-lit preciousness of Randell's lyrics – "*Two tangled hearts in the mise en scène*" and "*Gum trees/Put me at ease*" are the tip of the wince-inducing iceberg – and becomes brass-band nirvana on the epic title track.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

THE MAGIC NUMBERS
Alias
CAROLINE

Family affair: sibling-heavy group hit career high

8/10

Alias is where the giddy exhilaration and buoyant lift of early Magic Numbers grows into a bold, spacey and sensational creation. Firmly in-control frontman, writer and producer Romeo Stodart's songs consider changing minds and identities but always return to matters of the heart. Influences range through West Coast psych (the exuberant opener "Wake Up"), noir pop ("Roy Orbison") and exemplary disco finesse on the Chic-style "E.N.D.". Sister Michele's harmonies remain an essential ingredient and the blissed-out charge of "Better Than Him" captures the entire band's joyfully propulsive power.

GAVIN MARTIN

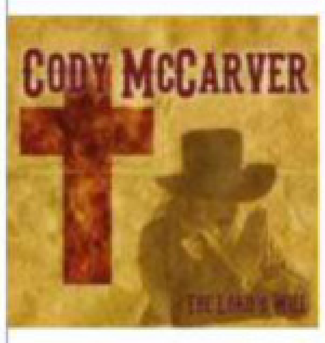
OLD CROW MEDICINE SHOW
Remedy
ATO/PIAS

More mountain revelry from the ace Nashville combo

7/10

The rowdy playfulness of Old Crow Medicine Show asserts a shared love of American post-punk and old-time mountain music. This ninth album is certainly louder than any string band has a right to be, packing tunes like "8 Dogs 8 Banjos" and "Tennessee Bound" with enough banjos and fiddles to make a barn dance burn. And if they're sometimes guilty of overdoing the chirpiness, their songwriting craft is best served on the more subdued "Dearly Departed Friend", a simple send-off to a fallen soldier, and "Sweet Amarillo", built around a Dylan outtake from *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*.

ROB HUGHES



CODY McCARVER
The Lord's Will
AGR

Articulate musings on faith and morality

7/10

Though never veering far from the purist country of his earlier albums, McCarver's latest release is more rooted in religion, the singer claiming God spoke to him following the death of his father last summer after 15 years in prison. The title track borrows passages from the Book Of Luke, while both "Leaning On The Everlasting Arms" and "I'm Gonna Meet Jesus" ponder a world beyond this mortal coil. However, Cody's outlook is more reflective than preachy, and his choice of cover material, the traditional "Wayfaring Stranger" especially, finds the Chattanooga boy contemplating sin and redemption with rugged saloon-bar eloquence.

TERRY STAUNTON

J MASCIS
Tied To A Star
SUB POP

Sweet second from master of squalling solos

7/10

He's legendarily taciturn, but then J Mascis has never really needed to say much when Dinosaur Jr's music has always communicated with such righteous, roaring force. Solo, though, it's a different story, his lyrical vulnerability and doubts so ruthlessly cleared of distortion-heavy wig-outs you wonder how he found the nerve to record them at all. His latest mixes John Fahey-like acoustic work with occasional brief bursts of his familiar electric shredding, and features guests including Mark Mulcahy and Chan Marshall – the latter on "Wide Awake", where Mascis croaks plaintively as if from under a duvet at 6am. "Heal The Star" is a highlight, its hammered acoustic outro a reminder of his appreciation of Indian bhajans.

SHARON O'CONNELL

OWL JOHN
Owl John
CANVASBACK/ATLANTIC

Frightened Rabbit frontman flies alone

6/10

This solo vehicle for Scott Hutchison, the singer and principal songwriter in Frightened Rabbit, is not so much a radical departure (Rabbit's guitarist Andy Monaghan features heavily) as a dalliance with a marginally more brooding, textured musical aesthetic. Written and recorded in two weeks, *Owl John* is a churning broth of heavy beats and pulsing atmospherics. If the superb "Hate Music", a clanking, convincingly demonic blues rocker, travels furthest from Hutchinson's regular stamping ground, the album's other highlights – the lovely "Los Angeles, Be Kind" and anthemic "Red Hand" – are, perhaps tellingly, almost indistinguishable from his day job.

GRAEME THOMSON

EUGENE McGUINNESS
Chroma
DOMINO

Liverpudlian singer-songwriter can't polish his third

5/10

Hailed as a great homegrown indie hope after his 2007 debut mini-album, McGuinness has struggled to make good on early plaudits. *Chroma* strikes a largely upbeat mood, producer Dan Carey foregrounding a McGuinness vocal that's more often irksome than endearing amid the skittering rockabilly beats and lively but derivative soundscapes. Competent yet flimsy songs such as "Crueller Kind" and laboured romantic saga "All In All" provide some commercial possibilities, while the throbbing biker drive of "Heart Of Chrome" provides a boost. Alas, it's too little too late.

GAVIN MARTIN

MERCHANDISE
After The End
4AD

Pop! goes the ex-punks' third

7/10

After trashing residual hardcore expectations with 2013's *Totale Nite*, Florida's Merchandise have not only put their noisy past to bed, but also shoved said bed off the edge of a cliff. "It's like we can start a new band with the same name," singer/guitarist Carson Cox has said. And how. Now they're immersed in keyboard-assisted '80s pop and brooding white soul, with overtones of New Order and Lloyd Cole, while Cox's Morrissey-like vocals again underscore their love of The Smiths. Of course, they don't play it straight – "Green Lady" is wrapped in reverb and features an abstract guitar outro; "Looking Glass Waltz" is tricked out with a Wurlitzer – but the completeness of their shift is almost shocking.

SHARON O'CONNELL

PLASTIKMAN
EX
MUTE

Stern techno auteur's first album in 11 years

7/10

In the 1990s, Canada's Richie Hawtin had a key role in repurposing the pulse of techno as minimalist art: a clubber with his mind more on Rothko than hedonism. For the past decade, Hawtin has lucratively reinvented himself as a more mainstream DJ, but *EX* is a neat throwback to his '90s ideals. Composed for and recorded live at a New York Guggenheim fundraising event, *EX* is full of Hawtin's old sleek menace and disdain for obvious peaks, though the sound design is fractionally lusher than that of brutalist texts like *Musik* (1994). A discreet climax is triggered in "EXpire"; the general ambience is fetchingly muted – as suitable to a symposium, perhaps, as a rave.

JOHN MULVEY

New Albums

PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND
That's It!
SONY LEGACY

7/10

N'Awlins trad jazzers team up with Jim James

This venerable collective have been making music for more than 50 years, but it's taken a collaboration with My Morning Jacket's Jim James for them to record their own material. These 11 original songs are very much in the tradition: there are stray chord sequences and melodies that recall old jazz standards, while the performances from veteran vocalists Freddie Lonzo and Charlie Gabriel add a pleasing, Buena Vista Social Club-style patina. But there's a clarity to the songs and an attention to the low-end of the mix – particularly on "Rattlin' Bones" and the title track – that will resonate with rock fans.

JOHN LEWIS

PORTER ROBINSON
Worlds
ASTRALWERKS/VIRGIN EMI

6/10

ID crisis mars dreamily majestic debut

North Carolina's Porter Robinson admits to liking "pretty" music "almost to the point of sappiness". The 21-year-old producer – who first made his mark with 2012's Top 10 single "Language" – has certainly indulged his preference here, mixing M83-style synth pop with Daft Punk/Justice bangers and adding assorted nu-rave and EDM tropes, to end up with not much to call his own. "Flicker" and "Fresh Static Snow" are guiltiest of mimicry, but Robinson's real talent is on show with the eccentric "Fellow Feeling", a pastoral chamber piece turned feral via monstrous bass and chopped and screwed electro funk. He's hardly the post-EDM messiah some have made him out to be, but youth is on Robinson's side.

SHARON O'CONNELL

NOURA MINT SEYMALI
Tzenni
GLITTERBEAT

7/10

Out of the Sahara, a new star emerges

At first, the international debut album by Noura Mint Seymali seems to place her as a sort of distaff Tinariwen. Seymali is from Mauritania rather than Mali but, like Tinariwen, her music is defined by the Sahara more than geopolitical borders. The phased, serpentine guitar lines of Jeiche Ould Chignaly (her husband) fit the desert blues template. Seymali's presence, though, is quite different: a stridently ululating griot whose vocal melodies have a more pronounced Moorish complexity; and whose prickly work on the ardine – a kind of harp, played only by women – underpins even gritty funk ecstasies like the title track.

JOHN MULVEY

PYE CORNER AUDIO/NOT WAVING
Intercepts
ECSTATIC

7/10

Sinister sounds from kindred circuit-benders

Spy flicks and slasher movies have provided a rich source of inspiration for bedroom producers since the dawn of VHS. But while technology has moved on, acts such as, for example, Pye Corner Audio and Not Waving still aspire to capture the murky, straight-to-tape aesthetic of those budget soundtracks. With conspiracy thrillers in mind, *Intercepts* pairs the succulent giallo disco of Pye Corner's Martin Jenkins with the flamboyant new-wave abstractions of Not Waving (the solo project of Walls' Alessio Natalazio). Grungy analogue grooves dominate, and both ultimately end up chasing each other down the same dark and lonely highway.

PIERS MARTIN

REVELATIONS
Jim James on producing the PHJB

"Man, you gotta go to Preservation Hall in New Orleans," sighs Jim James. "It holds no more than about 150 people and the walls look so old and worn, as if they've been blasted by a century of music. We could have recorded the band in some fancy studio, but we wanted to capture the spirit of this magical space."

Jim James first visited it four years ago when he guested on a fundraising album with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. "We hit it off, had a good time, kept in touch and they opened some My Morning Jacket tours. One day I asked why they never recorded their own songs, and it got them thinking. They ended up asking me to produce their album."

Only, says James, they don't need much producing. "You're obviously not going to get them playing synths or anything," he says. "You'll suggest they tighten up a chorus or re-order the structure, but it's more about where you put the microphones. Also, in an age of giant kick drums, you want to beef things up for a rock audience without making it sterile. It ain't retro, but it is timeless. Without this art form, nothing we know of as rock'n'roll would exist."

JOHN LEWIS

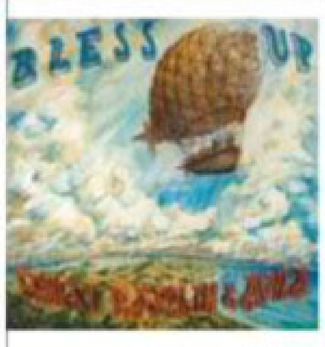
NAOMI SHELTON & THE GOSPEL QUEENS
Cold World
DAPTONE

7/10

Gospel with a groove from Alabama veteran

After decades as a club artiste, including house singer at The Night Cap in Brooklyn, Shelton got her big break in her sixties when she signed for Daptone. Cut live to tape, *Cold World* is her second for the label, and continues the righteous path of 2009's *What Have You Done, My Brother?*. That voice remains remarkable: a sandpapered contralto, delivered with commitment and Sunday-morning belief. She's backed by a band with serious provenance, including bassist Fred Thomas (James Brown band). Think Staple Singers: it's '60s-soul funky rather than frenzied testifying, as evidenced on the swinging "Sinner" and "It's A Cold, Cold World".

MARK BENTLEY



ERNEST RANGLIN & AVILA
Bless Up
AVILA STREET

7/10

Veteran Jamaican guitarist still going strong in his eighties

Ranglin was in at the birth of reggae, playing on early recordings by the Wailers, Jimmy Cliff and other artists that defined the genre. Opener "Bond Street Express" sets the tone as a righteous, one-drop reggae skank underpins soulful Hammond and potent horn riffs, topped by Ranglin's precise but fluid guitar solo. Fusing reggae and ska with jazz, tango, cha-cha-cha and township funk, some might dismiss the instrumental album's muso ambience as 'world dinner jazz'. But if so, it's a gourmet feast washed down with something cool and sparkling, as Ranglin's immaculate playing channels influences from Wes Montgomery to Jerry Garcia.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

LUKE SITAL-SINGH
The Fire Inside
PARLOPHONE

6/10

Hyped young button-pusher's first

It's hard to think of another new singer-songwriter who's poised quite so perfectly on the crest of a vast wave as Sital-Singh. Widely tipped last year, he seems certain to fulfil expectations, due to his lustrous, impeccably crafted tunes and a voice that combines the mournful grace of Bon Iver with Ryan Adams' muscular anguish. There's no questioning his emotional honesty, but much of his debut is too obviously in awe of *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* and *For Emma, Forever Ago*, the rest cast along "stirring", if less beefy, Mumford/Killers lines. "I Have Been A Fire" especially is set to make festival crowds weep while waving their flags. Not Sital-Singh's aim, maybe, but still sign of a creative cul-de-sac.

SHARON O'CONNELL

DAN MICHAELSON AND THE COASTGUARDS

Distance

THE STATE51 CONSPIRACY

Another dark night of the soul from matured ex-Absentee man.

By Alastair McKay

8/10

DAN MICHAELSON IS not a particularly prolific tweeter, but between musing about Ikea hotdogs and the time he DJed in Topshop (playing John Tavener, Laurie Anderson and ESG back-to-back) he found time to re-tweet a backhanded compliment from a thoughtful soul called @recordshopbloke. "I do like Dan Michaelson's records," said the bloke, "but sometimes it's a bit like a mate on the phone going on endlessly about his tragic life."

Well, @recordshopbloke better turn off his metaphorical phone, because *Distance* takes the intensity of 2013's *Blindspot*, and doubles it. That's a bit of a puzzle, because Michaelson doesn't seem like a tragic character, even if his lyrics are philosophically blue. Now resident in East London, but originally from Northamptonshire, he is blessed with a voice that draws comparisons with Bill Callahan, Kurt Wagner and – just about – Lou Reed. He claims to have no skill as a singer, but as a compromise with his own modesty, employs a confessional mumble that sometimes extends to a low croon, adding a patina of tragedy to lyrics which are already heartbroken. Add Horse's pedal steel guitar and it's clear that Michaelson is never going to be found busking on the sunny side of the street.

But, really, gloom is not the overriding sensation. Listen closely to "Getting It All Wrong", with its pulsing bass from Romeo Stodart of The Magic Numbers, and you can imagine Dionne Warwick taking the arrangement in another direction. This is soul music (as in "dark night of..."), but it comes in heavy disguise. The lyrical introversion is tough, but the delicate playing of the Coastguards adds drama and beauty. The overall effect is of emotional control in the face of great torment. To call it Americana would be misleading. True, the steel guitar makes it feel like ancient country music, but Michaelson also embraces minimalism, and isn't above colouring an emotion with a sombre cello. It's depressing in the way that Leonard Cohen is said by his detractors to be depressing (which is to say: not at all).

Distance can be viewed as the final piece in a trilogy that began with 2011's *Sudden Fiction*, Michaelson's third solo album, after a false start with the band Absentee in the mid-2000s. His first two solo records, *Saltwater* (2009) and *Shakes* (2010) showed him edging towards coherence. The spartan *Sudden Fiction* was informed by a stay in West Texas. The Coastguards returned for the exquisite *Blindspot*, in which Michaelson continued his forensic examination of a failed relationship.

Distance occupies the same emotional terrain. It was written in Montauk, New York, which seemingly influenced the seasonal feel of the lyrics. It starts with the gorgeous "Evergreen", which looks back on the end of a love affair, with the singer edging reluctantly towards the realisation that "*only fools think love is evergreen*". From there, Michaelson circles around the pain of separation; stripping the sheets from the bed, and wiping his footprints from the floor, in the country ballad, "Every Step" ("*Take the records we shared/So you can't hear what isn't there*").

"Bones" sounds like something from Lambchop's *Aw Cmon*. It starts small, and ends majestically. But the album's emotional power is located in the final three songs. The delicate "Evening Light" has Michaelson walking through the night "*to find morning light*", while still clinging to the hope that he might see his lover again. "Your Beauty Still Rules" sees him examining the dust in the sunlight of an empty room. The emotional arc is completed by the closing "Somewhere", which sounds like a song composed in the piano bar of an abandoned hotel at 3am.

"*Rip the hinges off the wall and let the wind blow down the hall,*" Michaelson sings in conclusion. "*It doesn't hurt to change at all.*" After all that has gone before, that sounds more like an aspiration than a statement of fact.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Ash Workman
Recorded at: The Premises, London
Personnel: Dan Michaelson (vocals, guitar), Romeo Stodart (bass), Henry Spenner (drums), Laurie Earle (guitar and piano), Horse (guitar and pedal steel), Gabriel Stebbing (cello), Johnny Flynn (violin)

Q&A

Dan Michaelson

Did you have a plan for this album?
I didn't. I thought I wasn't going to make any more records. I'd been doing quite a lot, and then I thought, maybe I'll think about not making any, after the last one. Then one morning I started to get a bit grumpy and stopped talking to people, and people started asking if I was OK. I usually feel that's the time to start making a record again.

It's a full band album, but it's restrained.
Yes – it's not a psychedelic thing where I just fed them acid for two weeks and then put them in a recording studio and pressed 'record' . There's no huge ego thing. We're trying to craft a song.

Was it inspired by a particular heartbreak?
It's more an accumulation of various emotions. Around the time of the last album but one, I was in a longterm relationship which ended, and some of that's still feeding in somewhere. I was reading Graham Greene's autobiography and he was going on about how writing was him taking the chaos all around him and distilling it into something that he could understand. There's another really good, or pretentious, literary quote – Raymond Carver said that in his stories there's one grain of truth that you build a beautiful picture around. Between those two things is how I feel I am, as a songwriter.

INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR McKAY

New Albums

SLEEP PARTY PEOPLE
Floating
BLOOD AND BISCUITS

8/10

Rabbit-mask-wearing Dane's dreamy third outing

Brian Batz's first two records marked him out as a kindred spirit to Efterklang, his swirling arrangements betraying the experimental leanings within his subtly melodic songs. But despite *Floating*'s comparatively limited use of studio trickery, and occasional forays into more ambient realms – he tips his hat to Harold Budd on "I See The Sun, Harold" – it's a denser affair, albeit lightened by Batz's often affecting falsetto. "Floating Blood Of Mine" and "Scattered Glass" recall Slowdive, if with sometimes anthemic inclinations, while "I See The Moon" combines motorik rhythms and hazy atmospherics to great effect.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

SOFT WALLS
No Time
TROUBLE IN MIND

8/10

Psychedelic notes from a Brighton padded cell

Strange that so many young turks are taking inspiration from Creation. The early garage-psych obsessions of Alan McGee's classic label are all over this second, superb album from Brighton's Dan Reeves; a one-man raga-delic revival dipped in the darkness of the Velvets and souped up by the motorik of Neu!. Soaked in the feel of valve amplifiers and tape delay, *No Time* sees Reeves creep narcotically through his lysergic drones and throbbing rhythms, whispering and whining some of the finest laser-guided melodies this side of Roky Erickson, The Pastels and Spacemen 3. It's all so ancient that it becomes thrillingly modern.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

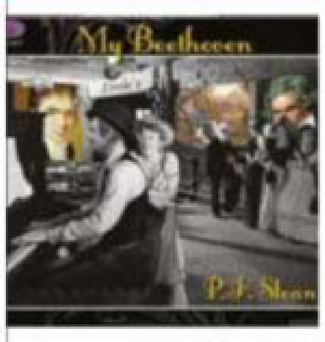
SÉBASTIEN TELLIER
L'Aventura
RECORD MAKERS

8/10

Hirsute Parisian returns to the sauce

Sébastien Tellier lost his way after 2008's sublime *Sexuality – My God Is Blue* was a mess – but with *L'Aventura* appears to have found salvation of sorts in Brazil, not just in collaboration with Rio's veteran carioca figurehead Arthur Verocai but also in his zestful approach to these new songs. Openers "Love" and "Sous Les Rayons Du Soleil" infuse the lush swirl of "La Ritournelle" with tropicália rhythms, while he explores a rich and unusual vein of rainforest chanson on the likes of "L'Adulte" and "Ricky L'Adolescent", each song almost bursting with joy. Finally, Tellier is able to be himself. *L'Aventura* could well be his best album.

PIERS MARTIN



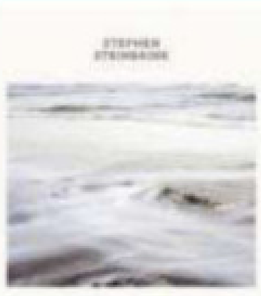
PF SLOAN
My Beethoven
FOOTHILL

8/10

Heartfelt hard left: folk/rock legend resurfaces, with members of the LA Philharmonic

All but disappearing after writing many unforgettable gems of the mid-1960s folk/rock era ("Secret Agent Man", "Eve Of Destruction"), vilified as a fourth-rate Dylan, Sloan essentially morphed into rock's JD Salinger. He's attempted several comebacks since, but none as offbeat and surprising as this, wherein Beethoven's internal struggles, his nuts-and-bolts biography, provide Sloan with metaphor and epiphany applicable to his own difficult career: "*I was a prodigy before my name was mud,*" goes the opener. Closer in feel to theatre than pop, riding waves of melancholy piano, it's a sprawling, obsessive set, balancing lifetimes of hope and wisdom, anger and regret.

LUKE TORN



STEPHEN STEINBRINK
Arranged Waves
MELODIC

7/10

Precision alt.pop from prolific Arizonian

Stephen Steinbrink's music is an easygoing synthesis of classic influences, some vintage (early Neil Young, Fleetwood Mac), some more modern. "Trust" is a sweetened Sufjan Stevens shackled to the herky-jerky rhythms of Talking Heads; the lovely "Animate Dust" is Ariel Pink meeting mellow Teenage Fanclub, while the finger-picked "Brand New Manic Brain Holder" falls somewhere between Pauls Simon and Westerberg. His soft, high voice and carefully crafted arrangements of guitar, cello, pattering drums and piano don't entirely draw the sting from the often searingly honest words, resulting in precision alt.pop with real heart.

GRAEME THOMSON

RICHARD THOMPSON
Acoustic Classics
PROPER

7/10

A courtly, forceful rethink of the master's back catalogue

Given his sometimes intimidating virtuosity, Richard Thompson's discography is surprisingly light on solo acoustic albums: even 2005's *Front Parlour Ballads* features percussion and electric guitar. *Acoustic Classics*, though, is a useful update on 1984's live *Small Town Romance*, with Thompson this time attacking his back catalogue in the studio. "Attack" is the operative word, such is the belligerence with which he tears into opener "I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight". The clutch of old Richard & Linda songs fare especially well, with the stripped-back treatments enhancing "Walking On A Wire" and "Dimming Of The Day" and Thompson's austere, even stentorian brand of tenderness.

JOHN MULVEY

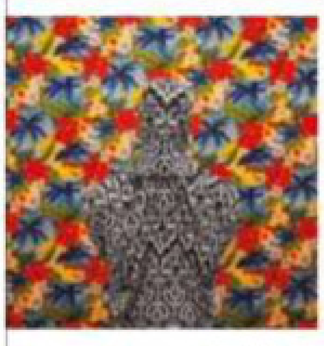
SLOW CLUB
Complete Surrender
CAROLINE

7/10

Handsome duo pump up the arrangements

This Sheffield duo have had their earlier dinkiness stretched out into bigger grown-up emotions, along with bigger voices and arrangements. Charles Watson has a tremulous Win Butler-ish treble that improbably but effectively harmonises with Rebecca Taylor's blowsy country-soul pipes, and they romp over fat saxophones, sad pianos and big singalong choruses. A couple of moments like "The Queen's Nose" use volume instead of ingenuity, but often there's a nose for a killer idea: they beautifully reconfigure "A Whiter Shade Of Pale"'s tripping chorus line on "Not Mine To Love". The overall mood is The Band given Taylor Swift's budget, on heartfelt and easily wounded love songs.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



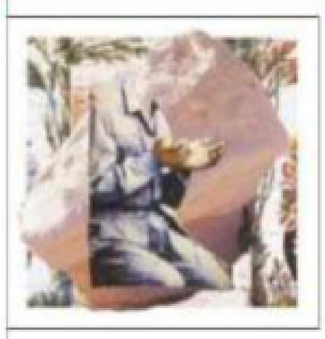
THE JOHN STEEL SINGERS
Everything's A Thread
FULL TIME HOBBY

7/10

Cosmic Australians' harmony pop with menaces

The second album by The John Steel Singers welds Strawberry Alarm Clock pop to a thunderous Krautrock chassis. Simultaneously Animal Collective groovy and Real Estate slack, it's a noble experiment by the Brisbane five-piece, whose nominal frontman is a toy horse; the excellent "Common Thread" and closer "MJ's On Fire Again" ratchet up the beachside bliss, while "TGI Tuesdays" and "State Of Unrest" bear witness to an undercurrent of brute force. The Go-Betweens' Robert Forster has sung the band's praises – a measure that for all of its ear-candy melody, *Everything's A Thread* has steely substance as well as style.

JIM WIRTH



THE TRAVELLING BAND
The Big Defreeze
SIDEWAYS SALOON

7/10

Sunshiney good vibes from Mancunian five-piece

Imagine CCR or Crazy Horse filtered through an irreverent, very English post-rave sensibility. The Travelling Band's fifth album all but perfects their knack for making meaty, warm-hearted roots music – a summery, vaguely cosmic blend of classic pop, rock, folk and country, topped off with sparkling harmonies and big, rolling melodies. "Garbo" has the jaunty gait of early solo McCartney, the anthemic "Hands Up!" sounds like Teenage Fanclub meeting Coldplay, and "Passing Ships" is a lovelorn sea shanty. It occasionally stray towards Dodgy-esque perkiness, but mostly *The Big Defreeze* stays on the right side of a happy vibe.

GRAEME THOMSON

TRAMPLED BY TURTLES

Wild Animals

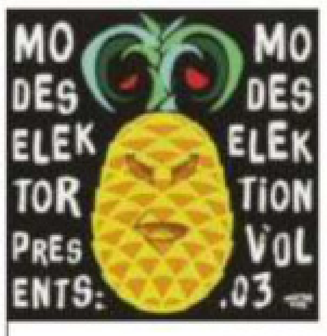
THIRTY TIGERS

8/10

Bluegrass, Duluth-style, with Low man Alan Sparhawk in the production chair

Trampled By Turtles have always been too eclectic to be categorised as straightforward bluegrass ("speedgrass" came closer), but the Duluth five-piece have taken a further step away from generic fidelity by employing Low's Alan Sparhawk as producer. They still skirt round the edges of tradition – "Come Back Home" is speedy enough – but Sparhawk builds on the melodic sensitivity that frontman Dave Simonett revealed on his "Razor Pony" EP, highlighting the chilly harmonies of "Silver Light", and bringing a gospel-tinged note of hope and oblivion to the country strum of "Nobody Knows".

ALASTAIR McKAY



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Modeselektor Presents Modeselektion Vol 3

MONKEYTOWN

6/10

Germanic beat preachers host another solid label showcase

Berlin-based duo Gernot Bronsert and Sebastian Szary score another broadly positive hit-and-miss strike rate with this third double-length shop window for their label roster. Highlights are the bleeptronica of "Funk 4D" by L-Vis 1990 and the teleprompter techno-chatter of "Shift" by French Fries. More esoteric names worth exploring are The Howling and Born In Flamez, their wistful vocal-tronica a reminder that Modeselektor have worked with Thom Yorke. The double-edged coup here is "Fibre Book Troll", a previously unreleased track by The Fall, which sadly sounds as perfunctory as most of Mark E Smith's latterday output.

STEPHEN DALTON

VENA PORTAE

Vena Portae

HUMBLE SOUL

6/10

Anglo-Swedish alt.folk luminaries unite for refined, decorous debut

Four increasingly accomplished albums with her band The Red Dirt Halo have primed Australian UK émigrée/BAFTA-awarded songstress Emily Barker for this new venture. With fellow writer Dom Coyote she trades harmonies and lead ("Solitary Wives") in backdrops ranging from gothic mystique ("Transatlantic") to breezy pop ("Summer Kills"). Their name is Latin for 'vein portal' and the earnest, thoughtful songs focus on connections lost and found. Although multi-instrumental Swedish producer Ruben Engzell's backdrops lack dynamic range, plucked banjos, horns and suave atmospheric washes provide a burnished glow. An elegant, if low-key, achievement.

GAVIN MARTIN

TURN TO CRIME

Can't Love

MUGG & BOPP

7/10

Awesome Color dude kicks out the MC5

Detroit garage/psych-punk outfit Awesome Color were overly indebted to The Stooges, the MC5 and Sonic Youth, and released three albums for Ecstatic Peace before calling time in 2010. What they might have lacked in inventiveness, they made up for with raw power, but now singer and guitarist Derek Stanton has emerged as Turn To Crime with something far more exploratory and entertainingly off-centre. His wonky debut taps kosmische, post-punk and lo-fi electronic noise, but keeps its sights on the pop hook, suggesting kinship with early Ariel Pink, Jim O'Rourke and (on the frazzled "Nightmares") a proto Suicide. Still, one old allegiance still lingers, as the Thurston-styled experi-drone closer "I Can't Not Love" demonstrates.

SHARON O'CONNELL

MORTON VALENCE

Left

BASTARD RECORDINGS

7/10

Punk stories, done bossa nova style, on London band's third album

Robert "Hacker" Jessett is a playful, literate songwriter who deals in opposites. So it's natural that his witty lament "Old Punks (Part 1)" applies a bossa nova rhythm to a defiant lyric about a suburban old-stager ("*I wear a Burton's suit and think it's funny*" is one highlight), before issuing 46 seconds of Wire-like sonic violence in "Old Punks (Part 2)". The seven-minute opener "The Day I Went To Bed For 10 Years" is like Pete Doherty's life in one song, but "The Return Of Lola" shows that Jessett and Morton Valence owe more to the suburban wit of Ray Davies.

ALASTAIR McKAY

WE'RE NEW HERE

Trampled By Turtles

It's tempting to imagine that Trampled By Turtles named themselves in tribute to John Fahey's tradition-mashing *The Voice Of The Turtle*, as the Duluth band incorporate, and transcend, traditional forms. Actually, they started as an acoustic side-project and – possibly as a result of the weed they were smoking – chose the name least likely to pigeonhole them as a straight bluegrass combo. "The original idea was extremely casual," says singer/guitarist Dave Simonett. "I knew Erik Berry and he played some mandolin. I had an acoustic guitar, so we started playing duo shows, made up mostly of old and traditional songs. Neither of us had a background in that music so it was interesting to dig in and find a lot of beautiful stuff to attempt to play. Our banjo player (Dave Carroll) was really more of a guitar player who had a banjo." On their seventh studio LP, Low's Alan Sparhawk has deepened the sound. "Low were this anomaly in Duluth. They actually left town to play music. Alan can pull off beauty in such a way that doesn't lose any of its darkness or strength or fear. He made us settle down and play the songs until we got them to a higher place."

ALASTAIR McKAY

VERMA

Sunrunner

TROUBLE IN MIND

8/10

Awesome, mood-altering psychedelia from Chicago five-piece

Verma are one of those psych-rock bands that aren't afraid to put some backbeat to their noodling, and *Sunrunner* is at its best – and that best is very good indeed – on tracks like mighty opener "Regolith" and bumptious "The Traveller", where wailing vocals are swathed in keyboards but nourished by an incessant foot-tapping percussion that hurries things along even as the music demands you bathe in pure noise. There's variation with tracks like "Erato" offering knobtwiddling interludes, while the epic one-two of "Hologrammer" and "Sacrifice" major on the vocals, providing a pre-religious, esoteric soundscape that both transfixes and moves.

PETER WATTS

VIET CONG

Cassette

MEXICAN SUMMER

8/10

Outstanding Canadian post-punk from former Women man

A good half-dozen bands have formed (and collapsed again) from the ashes of Women, the Calgary post-punks who split after two albums and a public brawl. For now, the keepers seem to be Patrick Flegel's avant-noise act Androgynous Mind, and his brother Matt's new band, Viet Cong. The latter's debut EP, *Cassette*, matches Flegel's lyrical focus on bodily and psychic degradation and the post-life realm with a corroded, anti-production aesthetic, but it never echoes his dejection. Instead, they cast Television's triumphant jousting within a weld of Deerhunter's cosmic and more country-fried tendencies, making for one of 2014's more necessary post-punk releases.

LAURA SNAPES

SINÉAD O'CONNOR

I'm Not Bossy, I'm The Boss

NETTWERK

Staunch 10th album finds O'Connor flexing her songwriting chops, *says Michael Bonner*

8/10

WHEN SINÉAD O'CONNOR tore up a picture of Pope John Paul II on *Saturday Night Live* in 1992, she brought into focus her gifts for music, controversy and self-publicity in one fairly explosive package. Since then, O'Connor's career has followed a singular – often heartbreaking – trajectory encompassing ordination into the priesthood, misdiagnosed bipolar disorder, an 18-day marriage and, most recently, an online spat with Miley Cyrus concerning the perceived exploitation of the former teen pin-up. Nevertheless, in amidst such hullabaloos, O'Connor's voice – a thing of silvery, haunting splendour – has remained a constant reminder of her exceptional talent.

O'Connor's recorded output has also followed an idiosyncratic path: there have been albums of traditional jazz standards, Irish songs and reggae covers. But on *I'm Not Bossy, I'm The Boss* – named after an awareness campaign to promote women's empowerment in the workplace – O'Connor shoots for the pop vibes of her last studio album, 2012's *How About I Be Me (And You Be You)?*.

On this, her 10th studio album (produced by her former husband and longterm collaborator John Reynolds), O'Connor explores the perspectives of a number of different female characters. The opening track, "How About I Be Me?", foregrounds O'Connor's voice against a minimal backing – a persuasive reminder of her natural abilities, certainly, but also perhaps a subtle nod to "Nothing Compares 2 U". Here, O'Connor's narrator claims she will only find fulfillment in the arms of a man: "*A woman like me needs love/A woman like me needs a man to be/Stronger than herself*". Soon after, one of the album's more empowered characters emerges in the playful "Kisses Like Mine". "*See, I'm Special Forces/They call me in after divorces/To lift you up*", she teases, buoyed along by some cheerful guitar riffing. This early run of songs finds O'Connor tapping into the bruised intensity of her early days; but fortunately not at the expense of her sense of humour.

The album's dramas, complications and conflict continue with one of the album's standout tracks, the gentle "Your Green Jacket". In this vignette, we experience one character's unrequited love – "*Even though I know I'm not for you/Is it OK to say I really do adore you*" – before O'Connor telescopes in on a moment of extraordinary intimacy. "*Smelled your jacket/When you left it on its lonely post/Wrapped it 'round me/Like it was the holiest of ghosts*".

She ups her game further for the album's centerpiece, "Harbour": a gruelling account of abuse, where "*A broken 14-year-old girl/Hasn't been allowed to tell/What actually happened in hell*". However fictional the narrators of each individual song are, it seems likely that in this instance, O'Connor is writing from her own experiences. The intensity and drive of the guitars – when they hit – matches the passion and righteousness of O'Connor's mesmerising delivery.

There are lighter moments, too. "James Brown" – featuring Seun Kuti on horns and Brian Eno on bass – is mischievous Afrobeat funk, complete with O'Connor essaying the occasional JB-style "*yow!*". "Take Me To Church" and "Where Have You Been", meanwhile, are upbeat if fairly unremarkable rockers. She exits the album with "Streetcars", her voice cast against an airy keyboard refrain. In this suitably valedictory note for an album that has addressed love in various guises, her narrator wryly concludes, "*There's no safety to be acquired/Riding streetcars named desire*".

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: New Air Studios, London
Produced by: John Reynolds
Personnel: Sinéad O'Connor (vocals, guitars), John Reynolds (drums, keys, programming), Clare Kenny (bass), Graham Kearns (guitars), Graham Henderson (keys), Brook Supple (acoustic guitar), Tim Oliver (keys), Rupert Cobb and Fred Gibson (trumpet arrangements), Caroline Dale (cellos), Justin Adams (guitars), Seun Kuti (sax), Brian Eno (bass)

Q&A

Sinéad O'Connor

The songs are told from the viewpoint of different characters. Why? On the last album, I started writing songs in the voice of different characters. This record is about a series of female characters, and the particular journey of one of the characters, who matures from romanticising girl to sensible woman. I consciously wanted to make a romantic record. I love the nature of the type of love songs. It's a very womanly record, from that point of view.

What are the key songs for you? My favourite is "Voice Of My Doctor". I love what the character has to say. The song was inspired by a painting I came across, which had this giant stone head of a man and this tiny little Buddhist priestess leaning against him snuggling, and he had a big old tear running down his face. I don't know whether it was the woman in the painting suddenly became the character or not, but the moment I saw it, I had the character. I love "Your Green Jacket", where the character manages to find a few moments alone with his jacket.

How did Seun Kuti come to play on the record? John Reynolds, the producer, also produced Seun's last album. I wanted horns on two tracks on this record, "Dense Water Deeper Down" and "James Brown". There's a line in *The Aristocats*, "*A square with a horn makes you wish you weren't born*". And it's true: not everyone can play horns in a way that is not fucking dreadful. So we were very lucky John knew Seun, otherwise we'd be reduced to white people horns, and they don't work. Brian Eno played the bass parts on "James Brown". I think he was attracted to the character, who's a bit naughty.

Where do you think the album fits into your discography? It's the first self-consciously pop record I've ever made. There's a strength in the record. I see it as a cornerstone for how I want to go forward creatively. *INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER*

WOLFGANG VOIGT

Rückverzauberung 9

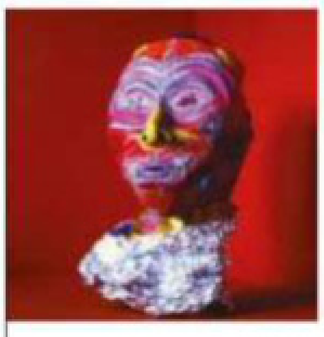
KOMPAKT

7/10

Transporting kosmische muzak from the Gas man

Where to go after Eno's Ambient Series? A good answer to that question has long been the four immersive albums Wolfgang Voigt recorded as Gas in the late '90s. Since then, Voigt has dallied with numerous projects, not least running the Kompakt techno label. *Rückverzauberung 9* is his best in a while, a hypnotic epic for a Berlin art exhibition titled "Dumb music, songs for dreaming, numbing and forgetting." It's certainly numbing, consisting of ebbing themes – notably a short brass fanfare – that loop with only the merest shifts for 51 minutes. The repetition is oddly potent, though, like a woozy take on a Philip Glass symphony; becoming ever more serene as it chugs on towards oblivion.

JOHN MULVEY



THE WYTCHES

Annabel Dream Reader

HEAVENLY

7/10

Impressive debut from Brighton three-piece

The self-appointed "surf doom trio" have a much broader reach than their own description suggests. They shackle abrasive post-punk to psychedelia, both the relatively benign British variety ("Wide At Midnight") and the dark, concentric psych peddled by the likes of The Black Angels ("Robe For Juda"). The corrupted surf guitar lines, fried in feedback, and general aura of desert-blown malevolence recall Thin White Rope, while the guitars on "Gravedweller" evoke vintage Dead Kennedys. Kristian Bell's racked howl brings a hardcore intensity to it all, but there's bags of melodic nous just below the scorched surface.

GRAEME THOMSON

XENO & OAKLANDER

Par Avion

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

8/10

New York duo's pristine synthpop

Brooklyn synth stalwarts Xeno & Oaklander – former lovers Liz Wendelbo and Sean McBride – have long been the pick of the coldwave revisionists, able to extract from their mess of wires and analogue hardware an icily elegant strain of pop of a kind once peddled by obscure young men in early-'80s Antwerp. In that respect, surprises are few on the pair's excellent fourth album *Par Avion* – this is a consolidation of sorts for new label Ghostly – and there is much to enjoy in the way Wendelbo's sensual voice softly caresses the mannered, brittle electro of "Nuage d'Ivoire" and "Jasmine Nights".

PIERS MARTIN

MIREL WAGNER

When The Cellar Children See The Light Of Day

SUB POP

8/10

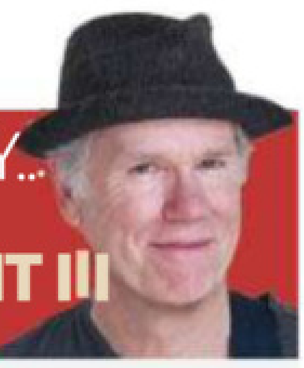
Dark, delirious second album by Finnish soloist

Death-obsessed and with a knack for atmosphere, Mirel Wagner's memorable second album is as creepy as hell. Wagner is adept at evoking children's half-remembered nightmares, something she achieves with spine-crawling results on lullaby "1-2-3-4" with the Waitsian refrain "*what's underneath the floor?*", or slow-burning "In My Father's House", about an unnamed terror in a father's cellar. There are traces of Nick Cave and Mark Lanegan in these dissections of dark souls, revelling in wrongness, but spiced with lines like "*I want to make babies with you*" (from "Taller Than Tall Trees") that in the context sound like a threat as much as a promise.

PETER WATTS

HOW TO BUY... LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III

The wit's best bits



ALBUM II

ATLANTIC, 1971

The stark arrangements on Wainwright's second album – alone with guitar and piano – serve to accentuate his dry lyrical turns. "Be Careful, There's A Baby In The House" aims for the funny bone, but there's also a bitter undercurrent to many of these tunes. Best of the lot is "Motel Blues", a mordant diary of life on the road.

8/10

CAREER MOVES

VIRGIN, 1993

His second live LP, recorded at The Bottom Line in New York, marks "25 years of earning a damn good living on the periphery of the music business". There are a couple of poignant evergreens, "The Man Who Couldn't Cry" and "The Swimming Song", while the comedic banter is counterweighted by moving ballad "Your Mother and I".

8/10

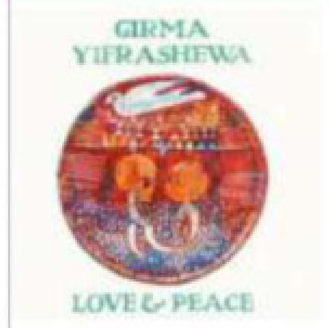
OLDER THAN MY OLD MAN NOW

PROPER, 2012

A 'celebration' of the fact he'd now lived longer than his father, Wainwright duly makes it a family affair. Rufus, Martha, ex-wives Suzzy Roche and the late Kate McGarrigle (as co-writer on one cut) all feature on a sparkling set of songs that swing from N'awlins jazz to stringy blues. Unlikely highlight: "I Remember Sex", a droll duet with Barry Humphries as Dame Edna Everage.

9/10

ROB HUGHES



GIRMA YIFRASHEWA

Love & Peace

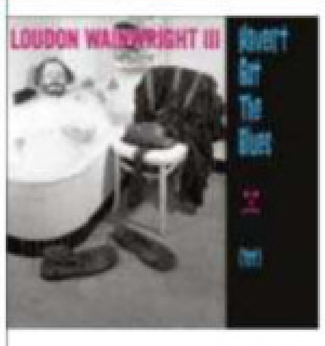
UNSEEN WORLDS

8/10

Gorgeous solo piano studies from Ethiopia

A few years ago, the Éthiopiques series of compilations uncovered a rich vein of music from the '60s and '70s that was at once funkily familiar – Alemayehu Eshete, for instance, resembled an Addis Ababa James Brown – and, thanks to the Ethiopian pentatonic scales that underpinned the grooves, tantalisingly exotic. Like the piano-playing nun, Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou, showcased on *Vol. 21*, fortysomething Girma Yifrashewa initially seems embedded in a romantic classical tradition, heavy on the Chopin. Gradually, though, the Ethiopian folk themes emerge in ravishing solo pieces like "Chewata", along with a meditative take on jazz that recalls New Age master George Winston.

JOHN MULVEY



LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III

Haven't Got The Blues (Yet)

PROPER

8/10

Old stager serves up a mix of the peculiar and profound

If 2012's *Older Than My Old Man Now* found Wainwright musing on mortality, his latest is altogether more carefree. The whole thing feels like a dusky gambol through America's musical past, picking up stray spores of folk, country, Tin Pan Alley and old-time jazz before tossing them to the wind. But while songs about faithful hounds and bad parking may seem skittish, there's genuine beauty in the dry depths of "Depression Blues" and "Harlan County"'s countrified kink. Meanwhile, the droll savagery of gun-law satire "I'll Be Killing You This Christmas" is both unnerving and powerful.

ROB HUGHES

ROSS HALFIN

JAMES YORKSTON

The Cellardyke Recording And Wassailing Society

DOMINO

8/10

Fifer's intimate eighth album

Alarm at the thought of Yorkston's breathy folk being entrusted to producer Alexis Taylor (of Hot Chip) is quickly dispelled. Taylor maintains the intimacy of Yorkston's sound, highlighting the weary warmth of his voice, and adding instrumental shading, while KT Tunstall and The Pictish Trail bring harmonic depth. There's a note of grief at the album's core, as Yorkston mourns the death of his double-bass player Doogie Paul (notably on the heartbreakingly beautiful "Broken Wave"), but he also celebrates fatherhood ("King Of The Moles") and closes with a fragile, piano-led rendition of Chris Bell's "You & Your Sister".

ALASTAIR McKAY

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KIRK WEST

TRACKLIST

DISC ONE: MARCH 12, 1971 *First Show*

1 Statesboro Blues *(previously unreleased)*
2 Trouble No More *(previously unreleased)*
3 Don't Keep Me Wonderin' *(previously unreleased)*
4 Done Somebody Wrong *(previously unreleased)*
5 In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed *(previously unreleased)*
6 You Don't Love Me *(previously unreleased)*

DISC TWO: MARCH 12, 1971 *Second Show*

1 Statesboro Blues *(previously unreleased)*
2 Trouble No More
3 Don't Keep Me Wonderin' *(previously unreleased)*
4 Done Somebody Wrong
5 In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed *(previously unreleased)*
6 You Don't Love Me
7 Whipping Post *(previously unreleased)*
8 Hot 'Lanta

DISC THREE: MARCH 13, 1971 *First Show*

1 Statesboro Blues
2 Trouble No More
3 Don't Keep Me Wonderin'
4 Done Somebody Wrong *(previously unreleased)*
5 In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed
6 You Don't Love Me
7 Whipping Post *(previously unreleased)*

Continued...

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

The 1971 Fillmore East Recordings

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIC MARKETING/UNIVERSAL

Jam – deluxe-packed! The legendary Fillmore stand just got longer. *By Jon Dale*

7/10

LIKE MANY OF their peers, the Allman Brothers Band never really hit it in the studio. Albums like 1970's *Idlewild South* had some strong moments, but the group were hiding under the shade of their mercurial guitarist, Duane Allman, whose stellar playing on Derek & The Dominos' *Layla*... had conferred to him something close to instant legend status. The Allmans themselves were painfully aware that they only really took off in the live setting, with Duane claiming in interview that the group found the studio limiting: in 1970, he'd said that the group's next album would be a live recording, the better to capture what many thought was their near-telepathic group interplay, and to grab the feedback loop between audience and performers and etch that magic onto vinyl.

The result was 1971's *At Fillmore East*, a record whose legend as one of rock's greatest live albums sometimes overshadows the reality of its performances. It's already seen a couple of re-treads, and some of the material recorded across their March '71 stand at the venue saw release on other albums as well. But with *The 1971 Fillmore East Recordings*, you get the complete sets from March 12 and 13, with an extra thrown in, from June 27 – the closing night at the Fillmore East. Is that enough jam for you?

If *The 1971 Fillmore East Recordings* tells us anything, it's that on record – and this proposition may come across as heretical to the dyed-in-the-wool follower – jam bands benefit from a judicious editing process. Case in point: the first two CDs, which comprise the two shows the

TRACKLIST ...*Continued*

DISC FOUR

MARCH 13, 1971 *Second Show, Part 1*

1 Statesboro Blues *(previously unreleased)*
2 One Way Out *(previously unreleased)*
3 Stormy Monday
4 Hot 'Lanta
5 Whipping Post

DISC FIVE

MARCH 13, 1971 *Second Show, Part 2*

1 Mountain Jam
2 Drunken Hearted Boy *(with Elvin Bishop)*

DISC SIX

JUNE 27, 1971 *Fillmore East Closing Show*

1 Introduction by Bill Graham *(previously unreleased)*/ Statesboro Blues
2 Don't Keep Me Wonderin'
3 Done Somebody Wrong
4 One Way Out
5 In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed
6 Midnight Rider
7 Hot 'Lanta
8 Whipping Post
9 You Don't Love Me

The original Allman Brothers lineup: (l-r) Duane Allman, Berry Oakley, Gregg Allman, Butch Trucks, 'Jaimoe' Johanson and Dickey Betts

Allman Brothers Band played on March 12, 1971, are marked by significant longueurs. For all the talk of the combustible nature of the Allman Brothers Band's playing on their lengthy extemporisations, if anything, it's actually the short, sharp blues numbers that are the most potent here. "Statesboro Blues" and "Trouble No More", to name but two, are in-the-pocket crisp: great examples of tightly controlled group playing.

When the group hits guitarist Dickey Betts' "In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed", though, things start to go awry. Taken from their second album, *Idlewild South*, the song itself has always felt strangely disconnected, pivoting on a number of riffs and vamps that toil, unassumingly, in the corner of the room. Both of their March 12 performances mostly lack inspiration, with the second show featuring a saxophone solo from Rudolph "Juicy' Carter so limp and restrained it's hard to think that music had just been through several decades of wild, exploratory free jazz and *Fire Music*. It fits the fusion-y lassitude of the song, but it's entirely uninspiring.

From here, thankfully, things take a turn for the better, and it's no surprise to discover that most of the material from the two March 13 shows has already seen release. An abbreviated "Elizabeth Reed" is stronger than the previous day's efforts; more exciting, still, is the consummate "Whipping Post" from the second show, stretching across twenty-two minutes, with the guitars hammering that odd, abstract opening riff into the ground before taking off to other planes of where, only losing the thread for a minute or so, at the halfway mark, before the players re-group for a final, laidback tilt toward the sun. The first show's

HOW TO BUY... JAMS

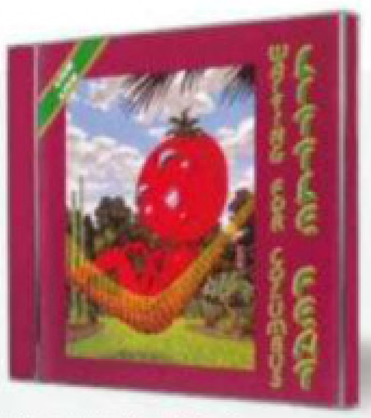
From the Grateful Dead to The Howling Hex...

GRATEFUL DEAD
Dick's Picks Volume 4

GRATEFUL DEAD, 1996

Cut in Feb 1970, released 26 years on as an instalment in the live archival series, this is up there as the best released example of the Dead's live alchemy, staggering takes on "Dark Star" and "That's It For The Other One". The Allmans supported: a taste of things to come?

9/10

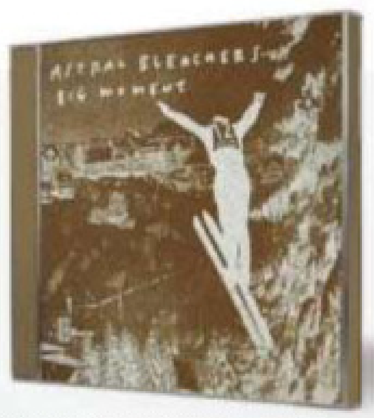


LITTLE FEAT
Waiting For Columbus

WARNER BROS, 1978

Not really a jam band, but nevertheless, on *Waiting For Columbus*, Lowell George's team make loose with some of their greatest songs. In this case, it's not so much about stretching time, more about warping the material of the music. The reworking of "Dixie Chicken" is great.

9/10

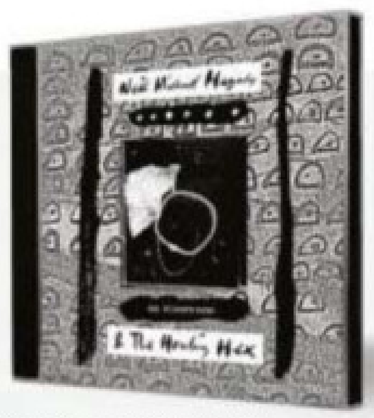


MV/EE WITH THE GOLDEN ROAD
Astral Bleachers...

CHILD OF MICROTONES/ ECSTATIC PEACE!, 2008

Free-folk lifers Matt Valentine and Erika Elder have put out buckets of live CDRs, but this is 'the one', particularly when Chris Corsano and Mick Flower join in for the sky-spearing "Canned Happiness".

8/10



NEIL MICHAEL HAGERTY & THE HOWLING HEX
The Hildreth Tapes

GOLDEN LAB, 2013

This triple-album boxset lets Hagerty stretch out as never before, psych spinouts and single-riff mantras stretched to eternity, the Royal Trux man playing high-octane note-spew like his life depended on it.

9/10

TWIGGS LYNDON AND BOB JOHNSON ABB ARCHIVES

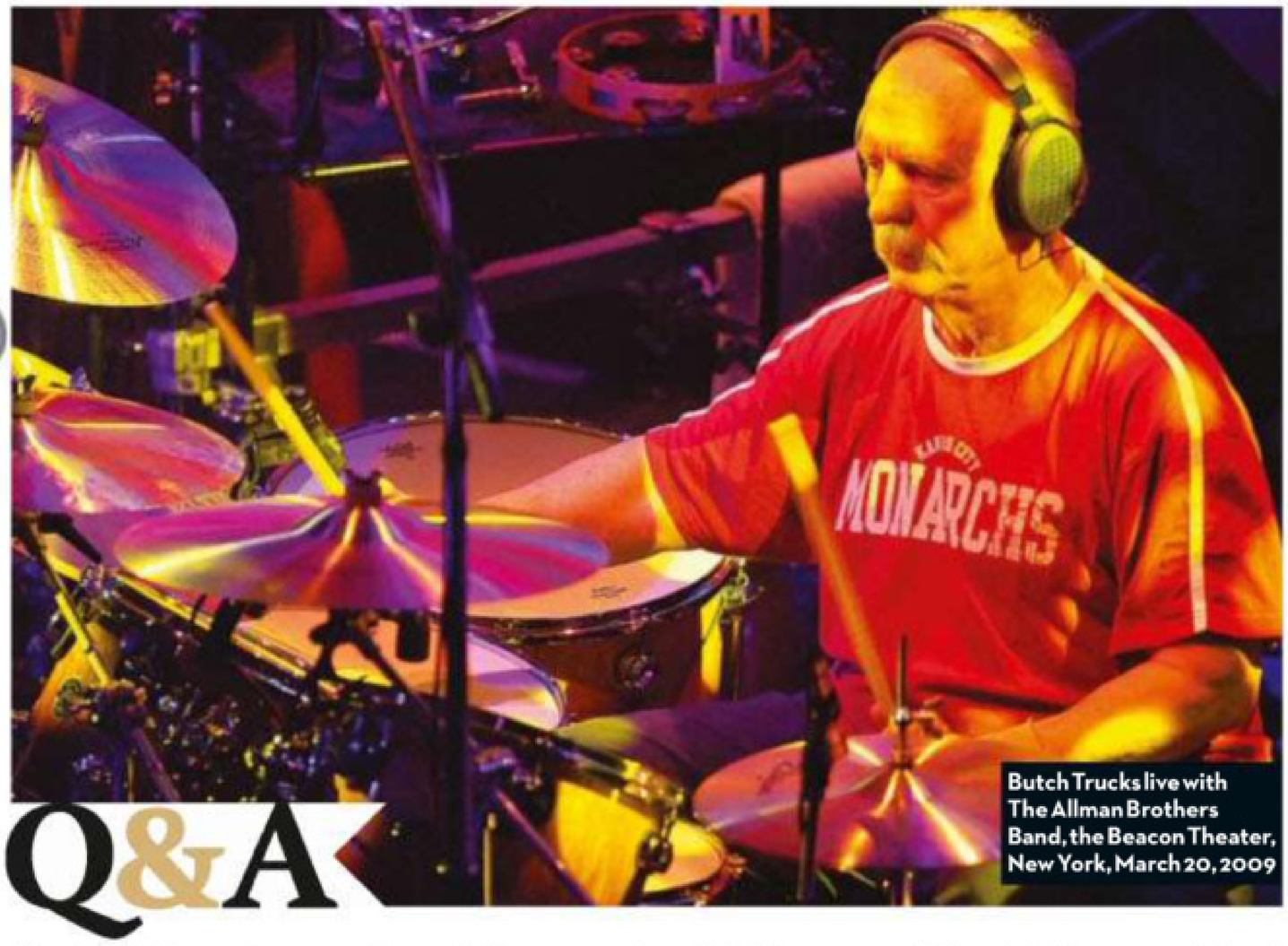
highlight, in contrast, is a stinging "Don't Keep Me Wonderin'", where slide guitar brutally pierces the weave of the group's collective drill.

If it's taken the Allman Brothers Band a while to really start firing, by the time you reach the fifth disc's "Mountain Jam" – and, let's be honest, that's a fair way into the set – all those claims about the group's one-mind playing really start to make sense. It's not without its weak moments, though. It takes the group a while to really get moving, and a limber, fluid passage of dual drum action, shared by Butch Trucks and Jai Johanny Johanson, is undone by some clumsy bass plunking from Berry Oakley that's so underwhelming, you're simply thrilled when both guitarists ride back into the spotlight and corral "Mountain Jam" back to peak form.

From here, things take off, the following 10 minutes the best of the entire set, the guitars both sinuous, bristling with spectral detail, as if both guitarists are holding their instruments to the light, the better to catch every reflection and radiance from six strings. The following "Drunken Hearted Boy", with Elvin Bishop, is a bit of a blunt comedown after such heights. Thankfully, the following disc's set from June 27, 1971 – the closing show at the Fillmore East, with the group hand-picked for the auspicious occasion by Fillmore boss Bill Graham – is a good summary of what has come before, summing up both the peaks and troughs of the group's set at the time: good, serviceable blues romps, the occasionally sloppy turn in the extended jams, balanced out by more exalted guitar tangle.

At such moments – where Betts and Duane Allman wrestle with each other in space, carving up the air with silvery threads of single-note splurge – the Allman Brothers Band come closest, in some respects, to that other legendary jam band, the Grateful Dead. And it's damn curious to measure both groups' live form via recorded reflection. While the Dead may have reinvigorated the Great American Songbook, their performances of blues songs were often perfunctory, hampered by Garcia's thin, reedy voice and an occasional bloodlessness in the playing. By contrast, this is where the Allman Brothers Band excels – tight, sure-footed and gutsy. And of course, the Grateful Dead reach far more intensive and exploratory improvisatory form than the Allman Brothers Band ever did.

Regardless, one thing is resoundingly clear from *The 1971 Fillmore East Recordings*: if you've got the original *At Fillmore East*, whether in its original double-album form, or the 2011 deluxe edition, so you get the full "Mountain Jam" (which had also appeared, cleaved in two, on sides two and four of 1972's *Eat A Peach*), that's really about all you need. For all the mystique around the Allman Brothers Band's entrail-sprawling jams, a good bit of (relative) concision really doesn't go astray.



Butch Trucks live with The Allman Brothers Band, the Beacon Theater, New York, March 20, 2009

Q&A

Butch Trucks on the Allmans' wild times at the Fillmore East

WHAT WAS HAPPENING for the Allman Brothers Band, leading up to *At Fillmore East*?

The band came together and this magic happened. We started playing this music, that none of us had ever experienced before. For the first time in our lives, music became something other than a career. We were all out to be rock stars, that's what everybody wanted to do, and once we played that music, then music became something else. It was more of a religion than it was a way to make money. The next big thing for us to do was to get out and play it for people. The first half-year we were out on the road, people had a hard time understanding what we were doing. The first time we played the Fillmore East, we opened for Blood, Sweat & Tears. The crowd didn't really react all that much, but Bill Graham did. He knew there was something special going on. So he had us back within a couple of weeks, and it wasn't long before we became the house band, playing there all the time, and people in New York really caught on to what we were doing. It became our home base.

Can you tell me about the shows that ended up on the original *At Fillmore East*?

We actually were not the headliners that weekend, it was Johnny Winter. The first show on the first night, after we finished our set, about half the audience got up and left. So Johnny Winter's manager went back to Bill Graham and said, 'Well, I don't think Johnny can go on after the Allman Brothers Band anymore.' So we got switched to the headline act. If that hadn't happened, we would never have had the time to stretch out and play a half-hour "Whipping Post", and all the things that are on *Fillmore East*. What made that weekend special is that we had been out on the road, we'd been playing these songs, and you know how sometimes, everything comes together at the right time? When you have the right people in the right place doing the right thing? We were really comfortable with these songs we were playing. Songs like "Whipping Post" and "Mountain Jam", these were jams. We had really learned to talk to each other. [*Duane and Dickey*], you call them two lead guitar players, but neither of them would play solos. What they would do, especially in "Mountain Jam", Duane would start playing, and Dickey would hear something that would trigger something in him, and he would jump right in and join in the conversation. We all would. And then we'd see where it would go. And every night it would go to a different place.

"We'd all join in the conversation and see where it would go. Every night it would go to a different place"

What other songs really showcase for you what the Allman Brothers Band was about?

One that really shows off what we did, but it's not the improvisation of the whole band, is "Hot 'Lanta". It's really strong, and really intense, and it really shows off what we did when we really focused on a structured song, and poured everything we have into it. You've got the blues tunes, "Stormy Monday" and "Statesboro Blues", and that stuff we loved to play, but that was more like paying tribute to the people we learned from. But those jams on "Whipping Post" and "Elizabeth Reed" was what we were, and I will still say, to this day, is uniquely the Allman Brothers Band. I have yet to hear anyone else play that kind of stuff. I keep waiting for someone to come along and raise the bar, and I don't know – I haven't heard them yet!

It's interesting to think about the connections with jazz, too...

I was talking with Lenny White from Return To Forever, and he was talking about the influence of the Allman Brothers. He said, 'You have no idea how much influence the Allman Brothers had on the formation of Return To Forever, and Mahavishnu, and fusion jazz. He said, "What you were doing was taking blues and rock'n'roll towards jazz, and what we saw, was that bridge where we could come as jazz players and head toward rock'n'roll and blues." And that's what they did.

DEREK MCCABE

More cool rulers: The Mighty Diamonds and, right, The Twinkle Brothers

FRONT LINE: SOUNDS OF REALITY

Various Artists

UNIVERSAL

Five-CD, 91-track bonanza from reggae's golden age. *By Neil Spencer*

9/10

IN FEBRUARY 1978 the Punky Reggae Party that Bob Marley would shortly celebrate in song was just getting going. To help fuel it came a mission to Jamaica comprised of several London faces; Sex Pistols frontman John Lydon, DJ and filmmaker Don Letts, photographer Dennis Morris and journalist Vivien Goldman, a quartet met at Kingston airport by Virgin boss Richard Branson in a vintage Rolls-Royce to carry them to the Sheraton hotel, where Branson had booked an entire floor. The mission statement was simple; to sign up as much of the island's musical talent as possible. For the next fortnight the Sheraton was besieged by singers and players eager for a contract.

Such was the birth of Virgin's Front Line label, launched that summer with a torrent of albums by some of reggae's finest acts; harmony trios like Culture, The Mighty Diamonds and The Gladiators, 'toasters' like U-Roy, I-Roy, Tapper Zukie and Prince Far I, and singers like Gregory Isaacs and Johnny Clarke, augmented by UK acts like Linton Kwesi Johnson and Delroy Washington.

To gather so much talent was an astonishing coup, and to market it with a pizzazz reserved for rock and soul acts almost as remarkable (although Island had already overseen the ascent of Bob Marley to superstardom). The Front Line logo of a hand clenching barbed wire was a debatable calling card – the music was more often about the spiritual aspirations of Rasta or plain old romance than political struggle – but punk and reggae shared a mood of fevered, exhilarating revolution.

The five CDs here do a commendable job of sampling what Branson's cash purchased, while the accompanying booklet includes evocative photos, press clips, profiles of the acts and a funny, gracious foreword from Lydon: "It was all so inspiring. I loved it and Jamaica became part of me."

The sheer profusion of names that were signed meant an inevitably uneven quality. Among the most enduring tracks are those by The Gladiators, who, like others, recut old hits anew that gained in clarity and force from the originals. "Looks Is Deceiving" and "Chatty Chatty Mouth" remain tough expressions of Rasta righteousness, tinged with mystery and the millennial mood of the era when the "Two Sevens Clash" (ie 1977), as Culture put it. That particular track isn't here, but the latter trio's anthem "Natty Never Get Weary"

is still brightly engaging. The brilliance and purity of the singing on display here is often breathtaking. Jamaica had inherited its vocal tastes from the likes of Marvin Gaye and harmony groups like The Impressions, and the island became the repository of the 'soul' tradition. The languid tones of Gregory 'Cool Ruler' Isaacs are emblematic – "Let's Dance" and "Soon Forward" are here – but the falsetto of Johnny Clarke is similarly seductive, and the purity and agility of Norman Grant, lead voice with The Twinkle Brothers was effective, both on a love call like "I Don't Want To Be Lonely Anymore" or a militant side like "Africa".

At the other end of the vocal scale is the concrete mixer delivery of Prince Far I, one of several 'talk-over' DJs present. More expressive than Far I are U-Roy, the pioneer of the style, and Big Youth, whose "The Upful One" lives up to its title, and the idiosyncratic Tapper Zukie, whose "She Want A Phensic" is a barbed sexual jibe. Rapping before hip-hop made its appearance, the 'DJs' were true traiblazers.

Rastafari's utopian vision of Africa was often fanciful and came mixed up with biblical prophecy, but reggae's championship of the stuggle against apartheid in South Africa was unflagging – see The Abyssinians' "South Africa Enlistment" or Zukie's "Tribute To Steve Biko".

Not everything on Front Line was righteous and rootsical. The label's biggest hit was "Uptown Top Ranking" by Althea & Donna, two uptown girls on a lark, who have a couple of other lightweight cuts here. Amid a sprinkling of single selections in the mix, a stand-out is the smoky "Cairo" by Joyella Blade, combining passionate vocals with early synth; another in a boxful of great voices.

Q&A

Don Letts

What was your role on that trip?
To lend moral support, because at home John was Public Enemy Number One. It was an escape from the media frenzy. Contrary to the 'Roxy Club DJ turned white people onto reggae' line, John already knew the music. I had never been to Jamaica. It remains the most remarkable journey of my life.

In what way?
Meeting people who were mythic, romanticised names, and finding they were people begging us for food and drink. John and I went on forays round the island, to U Roy's soundsystem, for example, where we got so blitzed we crashed through the whole event. Or going to Lee Perry's studio and watching him record "Holidays In The Sun" and "Belsen Was A Gas" – those tapes actually exist somewhere!

Any other encounters?
Meeting Tapper Zukie in Rema, a dangerous area. When John asked, "Where are all these guns, then?", his posse pulled them out. It was election time, and we were told, "Don't hire a green or red car – don't show allegiance." Also through the late Dickie Jobson we visited Joni Mitchell, who had a house there, and she played us some music – which John asked her to take off. "What is that shit?" "Oh, that's my latest album" – the first time I saw John turn red.

What about the music you brought back?
It's very special, the last golden moments of roots reggae.

Any favourites?
I can't separate them, roots and rudie. People say Jamaica is double-edged, for some a paradise, for others a pair of dice. What reggae got from it was exposure, and it went on to colonise the planet. *INTERVIEW: NEIL SPENCER*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Louis Armstrong And His Friends

BOPLICITY

6/10

1970: Satchmo tackles Lennon, Fred Neil

The guestlist at Louis Armstrong's 70th birthday party was a predictably auspicious one: Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, Tony Bennett, the great and good of whole spectrums of jazz. These, perhaps, are the "friends" referred to in the title of Armstrong's penultimate album, roped in by producer Bob Thiele to augment the chorus on a jolly opening "We Shall Overcome". In an attempt to capitalise on the crossover success of "What A Wonderful World" (re-recorded here), Thiele fed the ailing Armstrong a mix of sentimental new songs and contemporary hits. The results are sketchy, not least thanks to arranger Oliver Nelson (composer of *The Six Million Dollar Man*'s theme) driving the likes of "Everybody's Talkin'" at a jaunty clip, when Armstrong's still resonant voice would have benefited from a little wistful gravity. That said, the gospel-hued version of "Give Peace A Chance" works well enough, and there's a good stab at transforming Pharoah Sanders and Leon Thomas' cosmic epic, "The Creator Has A Master Plan", into a compact pop song. Thomas himself yodels ecstatically in the background. Armstrong, sadly, was not well enough to contribute much trumpet.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY

THE ARTWOODS

Steady Gettin' It: The Complete Recordings 1964-67

RPM

8/10

Gritty, gutsy British R'n'B nearly-men

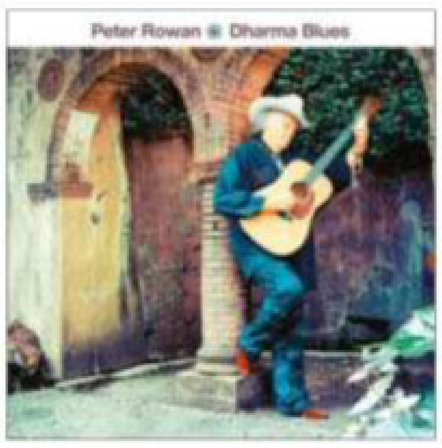
Of the hundreds of groups relentlessly working the club scene in the mid-'60s, The Artwoods were arguably the unluckiest never to make it. These days remembered for the musicians who passed through (organist Jon Lord, drummer Keef Hartley), burly frontman Art Wood was ultimately destined to be known as the older brother of Rolling Stone Ronnie. This three-disc collection is the absolute last word on the group, gathering up acetates, singles, the rare "Jazz in Jeans" EP, BBC sessions and their exciting *Art Gallery* LP. The final disc is a ropey-sounding but priceless live recording from 1967. Capturing the band in full flow it has a revved-up pizzazz that Lord carried into Deep Purple. The Artwoods' musicianship matched just about any of their peers but, like their mentors The Graham Bond Organisation, they didn't look the part in their ill-fitting suits, and lacked a charismatic figure – a Steve Marriott, Stevie Winwood or an Eric Clapton – to elevate them to even fleeting stardom. They also relied too much on blues-and-soul covers like "Sweet Mary" and "I Take What I Want", which delivered in spades but cast their own off-the-peg material in a fairly unflattering light.

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



8/10

PETER ROWAN
Dharma Blues
OMNIVORE

Bluegrass veteran proves he's still got it

Dharma Blues is arguably Rowan's most personal album in a career spanning five decades. It began playing guitar with bluegrass patriarch Bill Monroe, three years travelling which taught Rowan there were no limits. "Bill's style had more edge to it," he reflects. "I learnt to assimilate the roots of bluegrass which cover Cajun, blues and western swing. I'm not unique; we're all following in some mighty big footprints."

On leaving Monroe, Rowan formed the contrastingly conceptual Earth Opera, recording two art-rock albums which were "too weird for the bandmembers but now sound strange and wonderful". Next, Rowan teamed up with violinist Richard Greene in the multi-talented Seatrain; George Martin brought an English savvy to producing them: "When I wanted to add mandola to a track, he said, 'But Peter, when I hear that sound, I just see gondolas!'"

Jerry Garcia then recruited Rowan for his spin-off project Old And In The Way. "We were laughing like fools that we were on the charts with a bluegrass record. Jerry loved the band but had the Dead so it was doomed." Since going solo in 1978, he's been shrewdly exploring the roots of Americana, and *Dharma Blues* has a spiritual calm which is, he says, a "tip of the hat" to Jimmie Rodgers. His relaxed approach suited Rowan's "life-changing songs" written during a pilgrimage to India, Japan and Thailand.

The finishing touch is a natural, exotic sound, mixing steel guitar, banjos, tamboura and bamboo flutes; Gillian Welch further enriches Rowan's tenor voice on three songs. Rowan still tours relentlessly in five different bands including his Bluegrass Band and Free Mexican Airforce with Tex-Mex accordionist Flaco Jiménez. At 72, what's his secret? "Try to eat right," he declares serenely, "breathe, count your blessings, pray and meditate an hour a day – and try to rest like a jaguar on a tree limb when you can."

MICK HOUGHTON

MARTHA McCORD

8/10

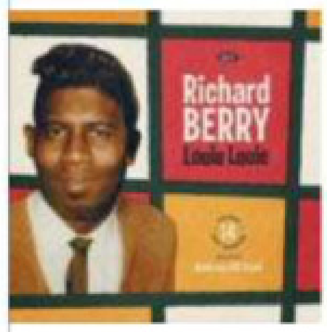
THE BEAT
The Complete Studio Recordings
EDSEL

Three original long-players, plus a disc of B-sides and remixes

In common with their contemporaries Madness, The Beat's association with 2 Tone Records was brief. Both bands left after just one single, yet despite enjoying a longer lifespan at their new homes than the first incarnation of label founders The Specials they're both still perceived as major players under Jerry Dammers' iconic black-and-white umbrella. The 1980 debut *I Just Can't Stop It* fully exploits ska's commercial potential, a clash of rock steady rhythms and traditional guitar pop, best illustrated by the jangle of "Best Friend", although "Hands Off She's Mine" and "Twist And Crawl" stay truer to Jamaican dancehall roots. The following year's *Wha'ppen?* finds them flexing their muscles further, Afro beats and Gang Of Four art-rock shapes meshing to great effect on "The Limits We Set" and "Drowning". The swansong *Special Beat Service* continues the band's experiments in diversity but often feels forced, the comparatively straightforward pop strum of "Save It For Later" and the star-crossed lovers wit of "Jeanette" emerging as highlights. It's arguably the sound of a band that's become too restless, pushing the envelope too far too soon, but contains the germs of both future splinter groups General Public and Fine Young Cannibals.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON



7/10

RICHARD BERRY
Louie Louie
ACE

Classic R'n'B from the overlooked pioneer who wrote a rock'n'roll standard

In 1955, a 20-year-old Los Angeles teenager named Richard Berry wrote a song that became the template for countless garage bands and has so far spawned more than a thousand cover versions. Yet Berry made no money from composing "Louie Louie", after selling his rights for 750 dollars to fund his wedding in 1959. This collection of 14 tracks recorded in the 1950s for labels such as Flip, Flair and RPM kicks off, naturally enough, with his compelling original version of "Louie Louie", which appeared as the B-side to his 1957 single "You Are My Sunshine". Other highlights include the Little Richard-like "Yama Yama Pretty Mama", a brace of what sound like Leiber & Stoller songs (but aren't) in "Get Out Of The Car" and "Next Time", the rocking "Give It Up" ,the funk-fuelled ballad "Sweet Sugar You" and a handful of fine tracks featuring female backing vocalists the Blossoms. It's a potent mix where doo-wop, R'n'B and garage meet on the mythical street corner of your dreams. There's a happy ending to the story, too: in the 1980s, when Berry was living on welfare, an artists' rights society helped him to recover his copyright and he belatedly became a millionaire.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

BLUE RONDO A LA TURK

Chewing The Fat (reissue, 1982)

CHERRY RED

8/10

Debut from spawn of London's eclectic early 1980s club scene

Formed in the post-cultural mix and match, clothes-horse frenzy that greeted the arrival into power of Margaret Thatcher, Blue Rondo À La Turk were a band for their shortlived time. Hailed as the Next Big Thing in a style magazine before they'd ever even left the rehearsal room, Welsh mastermind Chris Sullivan's Latin/Afro-funk jazz concoction brought a colourful homegrown spin to the austere New York funk of ZE Records alumni James Chance and Kid Creole. An all-dancing, sharp-suited live band, input from able producers Godley and Creme ("Klactoveesedstein"), Clive Langer and Pete Wingfield, top-notch London jazz horn players and a stellar Latin percussionist allowed Sullivan and co to made good on their goals. Their 1982 split produced the more chart/radio-friendly splinter group Matt Bianco, but the carnival-jolly festival vibe of "Me And Mister Sanchez" insured the Turk's sweat-stained, panting and pumping effusiveness topped the Brazilian chart for six months – just as they imploded. One (of several) reasons why this music deserves this handsome time capsule.

EXTRAS: Original 7- and 12-inch remixes and a second disc of contemporary remixes by admirers Andrew Weatherall, Youth and Faze Action.

6/10

GAVIN MARTIN

CARDIACS

Sing To God (reissue, 1996)

ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN

8/10

Deluxe double-album reissue from influential prog-punk eccentrics

Cultish almost to the point of being outsider artists, Cardiacs have one of the most original and underrated back catalogues in British pop. Though clearly rooted in punk, prog rock and Syd Barrett-eque psychedelia, their sense-battering baroque'n'roll maximalism defies simple categorisation. Frontman Tim Smith's impenetrable lyrics combined childlike wordplay with sinister personal mythology, while their theatrical live shows resembled *Little Britain* directed by David Lynch. Sadly dormant since 2008, when Smith suffered the first of several strokes, these twisted suburban surrealists are worth rediscovering, if only to unpick their influence on Blur and Radiohead. *Sing To God* became the band's double-disc magnum opus, a rambling mansion full of secret staircases and hidden trapdoors. While demented knees-ups like "Odd Even" are pure Graham Coxon, the octave-vaulting guitar-slammer "Dirty Boy" could sit comfortably on *OK Computer*. But Smith and his cohorts explore their full range here, from spooky spoken-word sound paintings to speed-shredding beasts like "Fiery Gun Hand" and "Angleworm Angel", English-fairground psych-pop played with all the furious precision of death metal. Too rich for one sitting, perhaps, but still a sprawling banquet of deranged genius.

EXTRAS: None.

STEPHEN DALTON

MICHAEL CHAPMAN

Playing Guitar The Easy Way (reissue, 1978)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

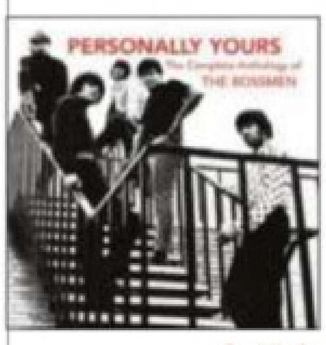
7/10

A folk guitar masterclass... Beginners beware!

Reissues of *Fully Qualified Survivor*, *Rainmaker* and *Wrecked Again* have evidently proved that the demand for Michael Chapman's '70s work, even its more esoteric extremes, is strong. Still, those who come to *Playing Guitar The Easy Way* expecting a handy beginner's guide – a Bert Weedon-style *Play In A Day* for Anglo-American primitives, say – may be disappointed. "It wasn't meant to be for people starting the guitar," Chapman told Thurston Moore in 2009. "It was for people who had maybe got bogged down a bit and then maybe wanted to write some songs, and here comes an interesting way to find some new chords." One suspects that it would take a pretty elevated acoustic guitarist to follow Chapman's open tunings, but the downhome virtuosity that runs through these 12 short instrumentals is striking. Amidst the extrapolations of country blues and English folk you can spot, too, a Tom Rush cover ("Rockport Sunday") and the ghosts of other Chapman songs: "Suite Mellow Dee", in particular, contains undisguised elements of the matchless "Rabbit Hills". A pleasure to listen to, if not necessarily to play along with.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY



THE BOSSMEN

Personally Yours: The Complete Anthology

LION PRODUCTIONS

8/10

First recordings by future Lou Reed/Alice Cooper sideman

Dick Wagner was guitarist with Lou Reed on the *Berlin* tour, before becoming Alice Cooper's right-hand man on a streak of big-selling albums. Between 1964 and 1967, though, Wagner cut his teeth with Michigan's British Invasion-inspired Bossmen. They rattled up eight consecutive No 1s in Michigan and were a top group there alongside The Rationals and Terry Knight. *Personally Yours* includes all The Bossmen's singles, and it's an exuberant, eclectic delight, despite the shaky start of "Take A Look", one of the most unashamed Beatles soundalikes ever. "Help Me Baby" ups the ante, sensationally capturing McCartney's ferocious Little Richard/"Kansas City" shrieks. The best of the earlier singles are actually more Byrd-like; singer Warren Keith's voice has a deep country tinge that brings a Gene Clark-like melancholy to morality tale "Bad Girl'. Wagner the guitarist springs into life with stinging solo runs on the Doug Sahm-style "On The Road", and "Sunshine" propels the group into the harder-edged psychedelic sound of his next group, The Frost. Shamelessly revelling in its influences, this is hard not to like.

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON

MATT ANKER

REVELATIONS

Cardiacs' Jon Poole on the making of their opus, *Sing To God*

"I have very vivid memories of making *Sing To God*," says former Cardiacs guitarist Jon Poole. "We uprooted all of Tim [Smith]'s studio gear and moved into his brother Jim's house in the country – Jim played bass in the band. A really great setting, we were recording during the week then we'd throw these big parties at the weekend. We'd get all our mates along and take copious amounts of Ecstasy. It was our Summer Of Love, really.

"It was the peak of Britpop, but the funny thing is the Cardiacs had been doing that kind of thing for years and the press always gave us a hard time. But people in other bands tended to be really nice. Damon Albarn was always a big supporter. We ended up supporting Blur at their huge gig in Mile End Stadium. We definitely influenced each other, I think.

"I am about to release the first album with my new band, The Dowling Poole. It would be really nice to think the Cardiacs could record or play again, but at the moment it's hard to imagine. It's completely dependent on Tim's health. But never say never." *STEPHEN DALTON*

CLUSTER

One Hour (reissue, 1995)

BUREAU B

7/10

Live-recorded 11th from avant electronica dons

Widely regarded as practitioners of almost exclusively ambient music and recognised as much for their collaborations with Eno as their own recordings, Cluster have in fact always had a far more fluctuating identity than that, embracing neo-classical minimalism, jazz, plaintive avant pop and even proggy rock across their 40-year history. Released in 1995 following their *Apropos Cluster* career reboot, *One Hour* is a continuous, 60-minute piece, a minimalist "field" that begins with several short compositions on which Hans-Joachim Roedelius' pastoral piano takes the lead, then progresses to the longer, more experimental passages. Around the 10-minute mark, mood and tone shift accordingly – the prettiness evaporates and a filmic eeriness settles, momentarily underlined by deceptively sweet chimes and a creepy descending synth coda. From that point, the Moebius/Roedelius gloves are off, their industrio-cosmic soundscapes alternately advancing and retreating, seducing and threatening, filling with light and darkening with shadow. *One Hour* may not be the duo's meisterwerk (that's *Cluster II*), but it's a reminder of the mark they've made on modernists from Boards Of Canada to Zomby, and of their wit and warmth as well as their exploration of the infinite possibilities of the waveform.

EXTRAS: None.

SHARON O'CONNELL

Archive

DEEP PURPLE
In Concert '72
RHINO

7/10

Smokin' at the BBC...

In March 1972, Deep Purple recorded a live set for Radio 1's *Sounds Of The Seventies* in the Paris Theatre on Lower Regent Street. The band was about to release *Machine Head*, an album that would define them and become a heavy metal landmark. Hot, hungry and in their pomp, it was the optimum moment to capture the live chemistry of the band's classic and soon-to-splinter Gillan/Blackmore/Lord/Glover/Paice lineup, and over the years the recording (made for some odd reason on eight-track) has appeared in various iterations, sometimes coupled with earlier BBC material and with a jumbled sequence. Restored to its correct running order, the set is essentially *Machine Head* (with the likes of "Smoke On The Water" getting its first-ever live performance) with the crowd-pleasing additions of the hit single "Strange Kind Of Woman" and a rip-roaring cover of Little Richard's "Lucille". As such there's a close similarity with *Made In Japan*, recorded six months later, and collectors can debate which is the more definitive recording. Either way, Deep Purple never sounded this good again.

EXTRAS: A soundcheck recording of 6/10 "Maybe I'm A Leo". Sadly, tape of the other two songs performed for the check ("Never Before" and "Highway Star") proved unsalvageable.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

THE GRATEFUL DEAD & JOHN OSWALD
Grayfolded
IMPORTANT

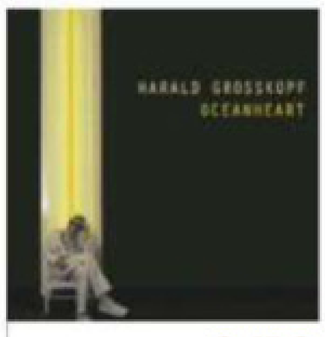
8/10

The ultimate "Dark Star", reissued on three vinyl LPs

A single live take on "Dark Star" can contain multitudes. *Grayfolded*, however, contains multitudes of "Dark Star"s, being a 110-minute collage that stitches together extracts from over 100 performances of the song, folding one incantatory solo in on another. The composer John Oswald, as he revealed to *Uncut* last month, hardly qualified as a Grateful Dead fan. It didn't stop him, though, from immersing himself in the Dead's archives in the early '90s, sifting through myriad takes of "Dark Star", then submitting them to his "plunderphonic" process – sampling, ostensibly. As a conceptual art project, *Grayfolded* could have archly mocked the Dead's long-windedness. Happily, though, Oswald celebrates the exploratory essence of the Dead, then pushes that questing imperative much further than even they dared to go. *Grayfolded* revels in endlessly delayed gratifications, so guitar lines keep massing towards some kind of climax in "In Revolving Ash Light", only to dissolve before any big pay-off. Long passages are closer to the airy, dislocated nature of a late '60s/early '70s "Drums/Space" jam than a "Dark Star". In "Clouds Cast", though, Oswald drops in a vocal, but stops on the word "*dark*", stretching it out for minutes into a suitably celestial drone.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY



HARALD GROSSKOPF
Oceanheart (reissue, 1986)
BUREAU B

8/10

Lost New Age investigations from the former Ashra sticksman

E2-E4, the 1984 album by Krautrock guitarist Manuel Göttsching, is often sung as inventing – or at least presaging – the ecstatic peaks and long suites of contemporary dance music. Less known is the solo work of Göttsching's bandmate in Ash Ra Tempel and Ashra, drummer Grosskopf. The 2011 re-release of 1980 solo debut *Synthesist*, reintroduced a lost kosmische masterpiece into circulation, one that swung tantalisingly between Kraftwerk synth-pop and the airy qualities of new age. If *Oceanheart*, released to little fanfare in 1986, is less remarkable than *Synthesist*, it's by small increment. Lighter in tone than its predecessor, its sonic palette is firmly fixed in the '80s, its bright synth loops and plasticky drums closer to, say, Tangerine Dream's *Hyperborea* than any earlier examples of Kraut invention. What delights about the 10-minute "Eve On The Hill" is the rhythmic intricacy Grosskopf brings, glimmering synth sequences, punchy drums and elegant washes linked together into sparkling lattices. Here and there, Grosskopf's melodies cloy slightly ("Coming Out"), but his spaced-out pieces are hypnotically engaging, and even the beatless title track is a thing of dreamy delight. *Synthesist* is also being re-released, on CD and 180g vinyl.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTISON

THE LEVON HELM BAND
The Midnight Ramble Sessions Vol 3
VANGUARD

8/10

Downhome one last time with the legendary Band man

No longer able to tour, during his final years before his death from cancer in 2012, Helm invited friends to play with him at his weekly 'Midnight Ramble' shows at his home in Woodstock. Two discs from the sessions appeared in 2006 and *Vol 3* – for which Helm selected the tracks and oversaw the artwork before he died – is as delightful in its rustic roots-rock charm as its predecessors. Allen Toussaint and Elvis Costello join Helm and band to fine effect on "A Certain Girl", Chris Robinson tears down the barn on "Shake Your Money Maker" and although enfeebled by illness and only able to take the lead vocal on four tracks, Helm's voice is still profoundly evocative on standards such as "Take Me To The River" and "Drivin' Wheel". Daughter Amy steps up to the plate to take the vocals on the country-gospel of Sam Cooke's "Ain't That Good News" and the ragtime reinvention of "A Simple Twist Of Fate", with Helm's mandolin duetting wonderfully with the brilliant New Orleans-style piano playing of Brian Mitchell, is inspired. There's nothing new or revolutionary here; just a bunch of simpatico musicians lovingly mining the motherlode of American music with Helm's warm, soulful presence providing the glue. Glorious.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

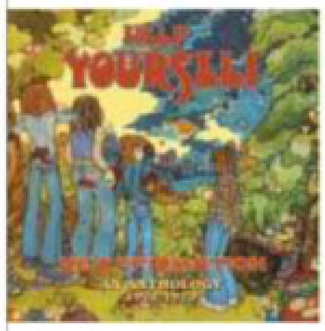
AHRON R FOSTER

REVELATIONS

Barn owls... Amy Helm on the legacy of her dad, Levon

Levon Helm's barn lies down a winding driveway through the woods at the foot of the Catskill Mountains, not far from 'Big Pink' where he and The Band made musical history. "He built a studio in the barn in 1970 and he always wanted to do concerts there. He was tired of the road and so in the last years of his life that's what he did with the Midnight Ramble shows," says his daughter Amy Helm, whose potent singing is a highlight of the third album culled from the warm and intimate sessions her father hosted there. "Dad picked the tracks before he died but it's taken a while to get it out. It's been a bit of a whirlwind getting used to not having him around."

Since Helm's death in 2012, friends and family continue to gather in the barn for regular shows in his memory and when *Uncut* spoke to Amy, she was preparing for another 'Midnight Ramble' the next Friday. "Dad created a special vibe in the barn and it feels right to continue. It was sacred and it didn't go away when Levon died." *NIGEL WILLIAMSON*



HELP YOURSELF
Reaffirmation – An Anthology 1971-1973
ESOTERIC

8/10

A very British Grateful Dead

Visionary A&R man Andrew Lauder put together a remarkable roster at Liberty/United Artists in the '70s; best remembered for championing Krautrock and steering the Bonzos, Hawkwind, The Groundhogs and Man to unexpected heights. Other signings inexplicably failed to click, not least among these, Help Yourself. Still scandalously unsung, across five albums they were one of the most creative, unobtrusively productive groups of the day. This two-disc set draws judiciously from those albums, beginning with their self-titled debut. It announced them as the most original of the bourgeoning British country-rock pretenders where rhythm guitarist Malcolm Morley's songs gave them the edge over the likes of Bronco and Cochise. Successive albums, *Beware The Shadow* being the pick, saw them stretch out fearlessly but their skilful arrangements and Richard Treece's sterling guitar work curbed any self-indulgence. Not unlike Richard Thompson, Treece could shift effortlessly from measured restraint to spiralling unpredictably. "Eddie Waring", from the live *Happy Days*, admirably demonstrates Help Yourself's improvisational skills; more disciplined studio highlights include the back-porch "Passing Through" and soaring, Quicksilver-like "Blown Away".

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON

ELVIS PRESLEY

Elvis: That's The Way It Is [Deluxe Edition]

SONY/RCA/LEGACY

Early '70s touchstone, expanded to 10 discs. *By Luke Torn*

8/10

WHETHER HIS EMERGING Las Vegas persona signalled the beginning of the end or the end of his new beginnings was hard to tell. But Elvis Presley, finally putting his cornball movie career behind him, had been consolidating his strengths since his momentous 1968 television comeback. Cutting the finest album of his career (*From Elvis In Memphis*), diving enthusiastically back into live performance, expanding his repertoire to touch on everything – pop, country, R'n'B, folk, blues, gospel, and his rock'n'roll roots – Presley was engaged and relevant again, in ways that, astonishingly, sometimes transcended even his watershed beginnings.

That's The Way It Is, the 1970 documentary film and attendant soundtrack, is perched on that precipice, before the miserable ups and downs took hold, when a playful, open and expansive Elvis was testing his newfound mettle among the pop elite. He'd already done two Vegas residencies in the glow of his comeback, so by the time the cameras rolled that summer he was primed to overtake Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin on their own turf.

More than that, though, Presley was positioning himself as the potent, interpretive repository of American music. With his seamless TCB Band (guitarists James Burton and John Wilkinson, bassist Jerry Scheff, pianist Glen Hardin and drummer Ronnie Tutt), Presley worked up dozens of songs, reaching into his past for the hits, but also redefining contemporary pop with cover versions of composers and compositions both famous and obscure.

This box – deluxe edition extremis – features DVDs of the original film and a posthumous 2001 edit, and eight CDs covering the original 12-track album, attendant singles, outtakes, a riotous set of rehearsals, and the *pièce de résistance*, six complete Vegas concerts.

The original album, like much of Elvis' later output, is a Frankensteined, barely-in-context mix of live tracks and studio cuts (though not without its charms, cf. "I've Lost You"). Presley's ambitious reach becomes clearer in the box's wide-angled context, though. From dreamtime ballads ("Mary In The Morning"), twangy country/rockers ("Patch It Up"), and hard blues ("Stranger In My Own Hometown"), to a sweep into the very ether of America's legacy in song – folk tunes to swamp pop, New Orleans R'n'B to cowboy songs – Elvis touched on everything. The film, meanwhile, centering on live rehearsal and performance, is a fascinating timepiece that aspires – awkwardly so in places – to convey the magic of Elvis in the post-hippy age.

By showtime, he'd mapped out the sets, even as song choices remained surprisingly fluid . Pugnacious rockers "That's All Right" and "Blue Suede Shoes" framed the sets. Familiar late-'60s radio melodies – the Bee Gees' "Words", Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" – were slotted in, suitably Elvis-ised. Mid-tempo romantic-heartbreak ballads comprised the heart of the beast: "You Don't Have To Say You Love Me", a 1966 hit for Dusty Springfield, and Guy Fletcher's "Just Pretend" had a dark undertow; others, like "I Just Can't Help Believin'", were hopeful, overly sentimental. By the time he leans into the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'", the Sweet Inspirations providing slinky call-and-response, Presley's feral interpretive skills, his ability to make any song his own, kicks in with an otherwordly force.

Touching yet grandiose, schmaltzy yet raucous, Presley operates in broad strokes. Ray Charles R'n'B ("I Got A Woman"), south to Tony Joe White's swampy rouser "Polk Salad Annie", nods to The Beatles ("Get Back") to over-the-top weepers ("There Goes My Everything"), even social protest ("In The Ghetto"), surely weird for Vegas – it all melts into consummate Elvisness.

The shows could be inconsistent. He sometimes sabotages performances with goofball jokes – the insecure human beneath the Elvis mask. The old ballads like "Love Me Tender", which he now held in contempt, suffered most. Goopy sentimentalism ran rampant, too, though balanced by pure power and beauty – best encapsulated in the showstoppers.

On "Suspicious Minds", driven by Tutt's windmill drum fills, Elvis is at his crazed, apoplectic peak. "Bridge Over Troubled Water", the recent Simon & Garfunkel hit, is the soul-bearing obverse, Elvis pouring himself into the song's gospel hue, its simple message of hope, humanity and redemption regularly unleashing deeply resonant emotions, a postcard of mercy from the artist and the times.

IN THE BOX

CD1	Original album *12 tracks* Original singles *4 Tracks* Outtakes *5 tracks*
CD 2	AUG 10 – Opening Night *17 tracks*
CD 3	AUG 11 – Dinner Show *16 tracks*
CD 4	AUG 11 – Midnight Show *21 tracks*
CD 5	AUG 12 – Dinner Show *17 tracks*
CD 6	AUG 12 – Midnight Show *23 tracks*
CD 7	AUG 13 – Dinner Show *21 tracks*
CD 8	The Rehearsals *20 tracks*
DVD 1	2001 Special Edition *including Patch It Up: The Restoration of Elvis – That's The Way It Is*
DVD 2	1970 Original Theatrical Version *Outtakes*

ERIK LORENTZEN

Q&A

Ernst Mikael Jorgensen, producer of That's The Way It Is [Deluxe Edition]

With all the live '70s Elvis material now available, what sets this one apart? In my view, this is most likely the ultimate highpoint of his artistic career. He had just completed a week's worth of sessions in Nashville – enough for three albums – and now a film was going to be made of his show, from rehearsals to the concerts. He never worked harder. His repertoire was updated with the best contemporary writing and some hits of his own. And he looked great.

Summer 1970 seems like an Elvis turning point. How did the shows affect the public's perception of him? I think Elvis consolidated his position as a contemporary act as opposed to just a phenomenon from the past. It became the model for his shows for the rest of his life.

"Bridge Over Troubled Water" and "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" are incredible – any speculation on why he delivered those songs so convincingly? The process of incorporating contemporary songs, made famous by other people, started back in February 1970 with the *On Stage* album and hit "The Wonder Of You". I think Elvis realised the best songwriters now sang their own songs, whether they had good voices or not. People like Bob Dylan had shown that audiences were willing to accept lesser voices, as long as the songs were great. And for Elvis, it was always the songs, and the emotions, that counted the most. *INTERVIEW: LUKE TORN*

CAUSTIC WINDOW

Caustic Window

REPHLEX/YOUTUBE

A classic album slips out of the Aphex Twin archives. Is he taking the piss – or what? *By John Mulvey*

8/10

BACK IN THE days when The Aphex Twin was a sort of pop star, or at least a regular in the pages of *NME*, he would say roughly the same thing in each interview he gave. "I don't like sharing my music with anyone," he claimed, typically, in 2001. "I'd rather not release it. All these tracks are like your babies, and you have to share them. Suddenly everyone else can listen to them and it's really horrible."

"No-one but you will ever hear all your tracks, will they?" wondered Piers Martin, the journalist.

"Probably not. I don't reckon. Not unless they nick them."

In 2001, Richard D James released *Drukqs*, his last album to date as The Aphex Twin, and told Martin that anyone hacking his computer would only be able to find there a fraction of his unreleased tracks – "A few hundred," he estimated.

Up until this summer, that trifling few hundred included the 15 pieces on *Caustic Window*, a fabled set that James decided not to release in 1994. The Aphex archive of notionally lost albums might provide a techno analogue to the unreleased haul of Neil Young. But, for all of Young's contrariness, it's hard to imagine the likes of *Homegrown* or *Chrome Dreams* emerging the same way as *Caustic Window*.

Earlier this year, a white label of the double album appeared on eBay, and was bought by a consortium of Aphex fans for around £40,000. With the co-operation of James and his label, Rephlex, each fan received a digital copy of *Caustic Window*, and the entire set was posted on YouTube. The physical records have now been auctioned again, for £27,198: their new owner is Markus 'Notch' Persson, creator of the online gaming phenomenon, *Minecraft*.

James' motivations here remain obtuse. It's tempting, as a consequence, to see the whole operation as one more prank, another riddle to engage and infuriate the obsessives poring over 12-inches that might just conceivably be his work (was he The Tuss in 2007, for instance?). Perhaps James' longtime refusal to let go of excellent albums like *Caustic Window* frustrates him as well, with only stubborn pride preventing a release by conventional means?

The traditional narrative around James paints him as a mad genius operating in a vacuum, an artist whose radical aesthetic places him outside of the musical continuum. *Caustic Window*, though, tells a slightly different story – of a young musician embedded in the electronica scene of the late '80s and early '90s, putting his own spin on the sound. The embryonically charming "Squidge In The Fridge", for example, features the sort of cheesy piano line that anchored numerous Italo house records at the time, while "Mumbly", with its Dastardly & Muttley samples and cranking breaks, isn't so far from The Prodigy's formative work.

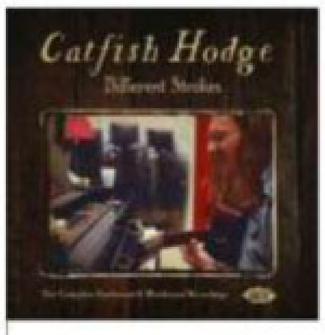
A J BARRATT

Nevertheless, a more recognisable Aphex Twin emerges on dystopian rave anthems like "Stomper 101mod Detunekik" and "Revpok". For all the creepiness of his music and visuals, James' agenda has never really involved anything more sinister than a little light perversity. At a time when he was held up as the exemplar of a genre called Intelligent Dance Music, it was his sense of mischief – not occultism – that debunked chin-stroking theory. So *Caustic Window*, like the *Surfing On Sine Waves* album he released as Polygon Window in 1993, is hyperactive and hedonistic, even as James threads the most serene of melodies through the mêlée. That capacity for prettiness peaks on "101 Rainbows (Ambient Mix)", a series of stately arpeggios pitched somewhere between Kraftwerk's "Europe Endless" and Cluster's "Sowiesoso". It is followed, though, by "Phlaps" and the particularly flavoursome "Cunt", two precursors of the kinetic, malfunctioning aggro-acid James would eventually codify as drill'n'bass. Significantly, they are the only two tracks he released at the time, on compilation albums.

"Cunt" is the last tune on *Caustic Window*, but it's followed by a pair of "Phone Pranks", in which James rings two techno contemporaries simultaneously on two phones. A confused chat between Scanner and Mixmaster Morris is interrupted by James ordering them not to hang up: *"If you do do, you'll die."* A second, between Cylob and Mike "Muziq" Paradinas, sees James busted. "Oh it's Richard, is it? Very funny," deadpans Paradinas, with the weariness of a friend perhaps overfamiliar with such larks. For here is a man not averse to playing moderately cruel tricks on his friends. Who told the *NME* in 1997 that releasing music was "too boring", and that he found his fans "pretty fucking amusing". Who has two more unreleased albums – *Analogue Bubblebath 5* (1995) and *Melodies From Mars* (1999) – being auctioned on eBay at time of writing. Whose whole career could be construed, like *Caustic Window*, as an accidental revolution: a private joke that got magnificently out of hand.

TRACKLIST

1 Flutey
2 Stomper 101mod Detunekik
3 Mumbly
4 Popeye
5 Fingertrips
6 Revpok
7 AFX Tribal Kik
8 Airflow
9 Squidge In The Fridge
10 Fingry
11 Jazzphase
12 101 Rainbows (Ambient Mix)
13 Phlaps
14 Cunt
15 Phone Pranks (Part 1)
16 Phone Pranks (Part 2)



CATFISH HODGE
Different Strokes
ACE

A true melting pot of Americana moods

7/10

Detroit-born Bob "Catfish" Hodge grew up listening to Motown, frequently sneaking into the label's Hitsville headquarters to eavesdrop on recording sessions by The Four Tops and The Supremes, although his first band, Catfish, took their lead from the city's more raucous sons, The Stooges and the MC5. By the time he launched his solo career in 1973, covered by the trio of albums brought together on this two-disc compilation, Hodge's particular hybrid drew not only on his formative years but on elements of blues, country and even funk (the roster of collaborators here stretches from Bonnie Raitt to Dr John to Funkadelic). Everything is fair game on the debut "Boogie Man Gonna Get Ya", from the BB King stylings of "Hungry Love" to a frenetic funk makeover of The Beatles' "I Want You (She's So Heavy)". And so it goes on "Dinosaurs And Alley Cats" and "Soap Operas", Hodge's gritty holler underpinned by choppy guitars and rasping horns ("Heartbeat Of The City", Jack Bruce's "Never Tell Your Mother"), with occasional detours into rough-hewn country ("Colour TV Blues"). He's still active today on the American club circuit, though rarely visiting the studio – these tracks represent the golden years of a forgotten maverick.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

JOBRIATH
As The River Flows
ESCHATONE

Unheard archives of an overlooked glam pioneer

7/10

Heralded as the first openly gay musician signed to a major, the myths, hypes and follies surrounding the man born Bruce Wayne Campbell have tended to overshadow the music in the 30 years since his AIDS-related death. Naked Times Square billboards and management claims that Jobriath would be as big as Elvis or The Beatles contributed to overkill that backfired with a mainstream audience seemingly unready to embrace the outrageousness of a singer who dared to combine glam rock and more trad Broadway, his sexuality seen as a stumbling block to fame. There have been intermittent reappraisals of his work, including a 2004 retrospective compiled by uberfan Morrissey, and this collection boasts 10 previously unreleased recordings from 1971, including demos that earned him the big bucks deal with Elektra the following year. The theatricality of "Ducky Lullaby" and the title track suggest the camp irony of *The Rocky Horror Show*, although the likes of "City Freak" and "Little Dreamer" are not that far removed from the singer-songwriter introspection of Jackson Browne or early Elton. Perhaps if the promotional push had focused more on Jobriath's solid chops as a writer and performer, than the supposed controversy of his lifestyle, he'd have earned more than the footnote history afforded him.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

LEYLAND KIRBY PRESENTS V/VM
The Death Of Rave (A Partial Flashback)
HISTORY ALWAYS FAVOURS THE WINNERS

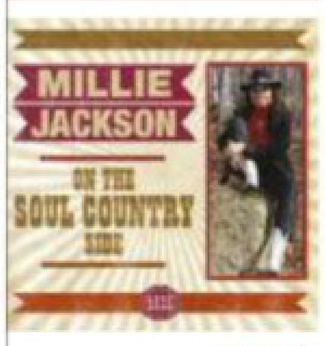
Old dancefloor classics, gone seriously mutant

7/10

It's still surprising to remember that Kirby, one of the most poignant artisans of 'hauntology', was once the arch-prankster of the electronica underground as V/VM. Under that name, Kirby released a deluge of records across the turn of the century, which goofed on pop music old and new – see his morose, hilarious mangling of Chris De Burgh's "Lady In Red", or the truly creepy manipulation of Berlin's "Take My Breath Away" as, yes, "Take My Beef Away". But the mask started to slip with the ectoplasmic isolationism of his Caretaker project, and recent solo albums like *Sadly, The Future Is No Longer What It Was* have been seriously moving explorations of psychic dissolution. With *The Death Of Rave*, Kirby disinters eight pieces from his mammoth 205-track, 20-hour long project of the same name, from 2006, in which Kirby sampled and defrocked classic tracks from the rave era as "an inverted paean to a time when the music was about bringing people together for a shared experience". It's gorgeously gaseous, close in spirit to the disorienting hiss-scapes of Wolfgang Voigt, as though Kirby himself is lost, on the edge of the dancefloor, about to step into a void of endless ambience.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



MILLIE JACKSON
On The Soul Country Side
KENT

Country sweetness meets urban sass

7/10

Having previously issued two multi-artist comps mining the rich crossover seams of soul and country, Kent Records throw a bright spotlight on one singer ideally suited to the hybrid. There's much common ground between traditional country's tales of cheatin' and hurtin' and Jackson's default setting fare of boudoir infidelity, and several of these cuts first appeared on Millie's 1981 release *Just A Li'l Bit Country*, but it's a genre in which she's frequently dabbled. Whereas Dolly Parton's hit version of "Here You Come Again" suggests helplessness and surrender, Jackson's strident vocal makes it a more menacing, accusatory song, and she plays the wronged woman card to perfection on the lush "If You're Not Back In Love By Monday" and "I Wish I Could Hurt That Way Again". Anne Murray's saccharine ballad "You Needed Me" becomes a powerful deep soul confessional when Jackson saddles up with duet partner Isaac Hayes, as time and again Jackson locates the darker, more sombre hues of cookie-cutter country. There's a plenty of sly wit on display too, most notably the self-referential, Kris Kristofferson-penned "Anybody That Don't Like Millie Jackson" and the album's one new recording, an overhaul of Tyler Farr's 2013 hit "Redneck Crazy", unapologetically renamed "Black Bitch Crazy".

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

HOW TO BUY... GLAM'S NEARLY MEN

ALASTAIR RIDDELL
Space Waltz EMI, 1974

Like Bowie, New Zealander Riddell *(above)* was a fan of Anthony Newley, and indeed of Bowie himself, both influences you can hear here. After a controversial appearance on the Kiwi *New Faces*, Riddell almost bagged a deal with AC/DC's management – sadly, most of his band deserted him to join Split Enz.

8/10

BRETT SMILEY
Breathlessly Brett RPM, 2003

Andrew Loog Oldham's answer to Jerry Brandt's Jobriath, Smiley quickly fell to earth after the release of his one single, "Va Va Va Voom", and a 'refreshed' appearance with Oldham on *The Russell Harty Show*. This excellent baroque glam album, made with the cream of US session men, was eventually released 30 years later.

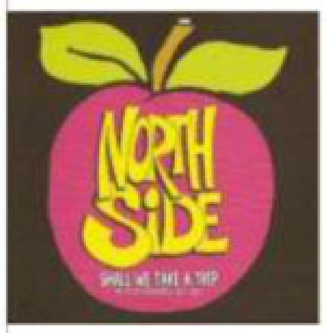
8/10

DAVID WERNER
Whizz Kid RCA, 1974

Werner was a US labelmate of both Bowie and Lou Reed. On this, the first of two LPs self-produced for the label, 19-year-old Werner has the Bowie-esque vocals down, while the guitars share the chiming crispness of Big Star and early Tom Petty. Criminally unreissued.

7/10

PHIL KING



NORTHSIDE
Shall We Take A Trip?: The Factory Recordings 1990-1991
CHERRY RED

Second-string Madchester outfit's collected works

5/10

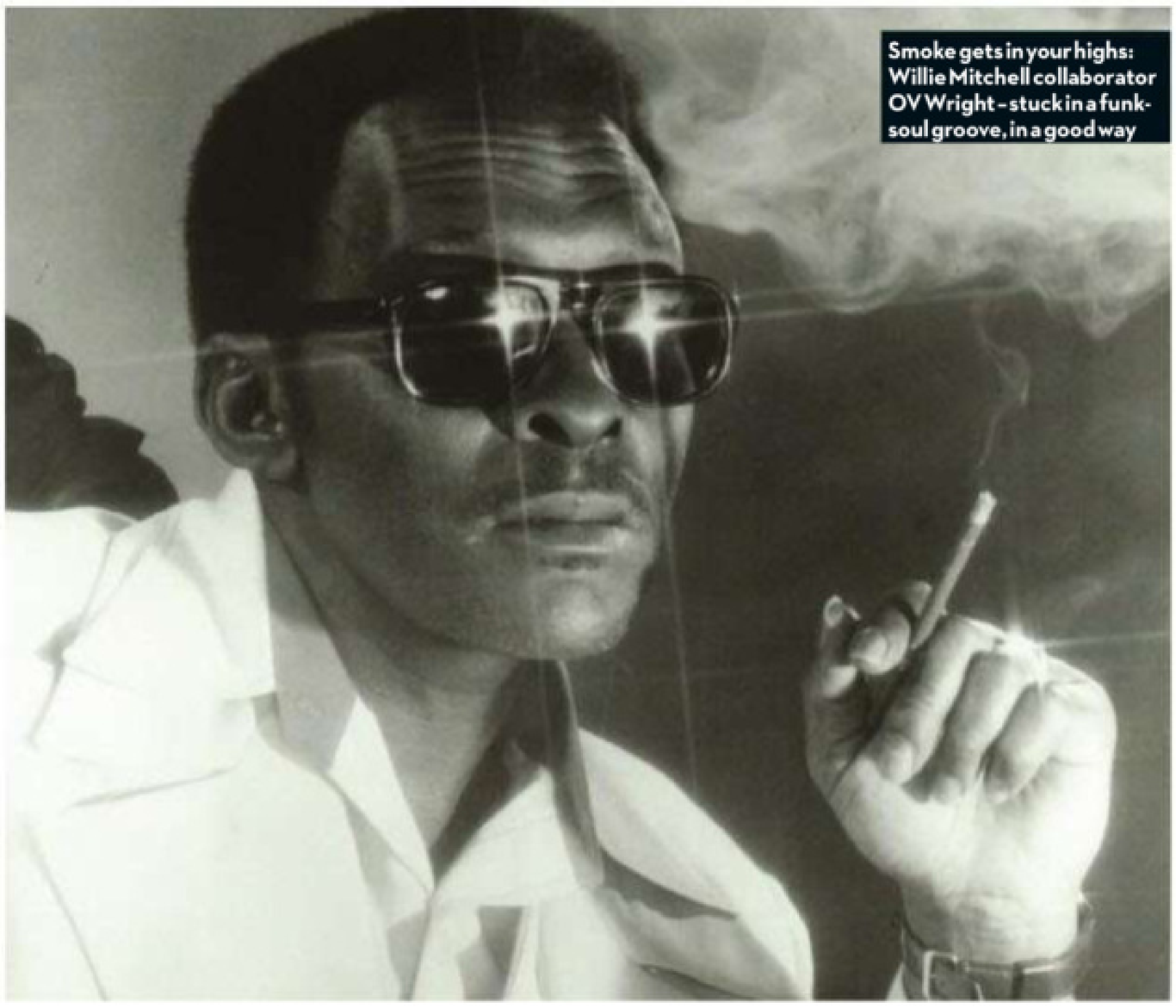
Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses had already led the charge, hitting the headlines and invading *Top Of The Pops*, so more than one version of history might be tempted to categorise Johnny-come-latelies Northside as little more than "baggy" makeweights. Their chart career was brief, lasting a year almost to the day, consisting of three singles in the lower reaches of the Top 50 and one album, *Chicken Rhythms* (Disc One here), peaking at No 19. Factory declaring bankruptcy in 1992 put paid to the release of a second, already recorded album, making this two-disc set the sum total of their output. The energy of the band's live shows struggles to translate to the studio, although the bounce and shuffle of "Take Five" and the slinky "Wishful Thinking" cut a fine groove, motored along by Timmy Walsh's dextrous guitar lines. But a general lack of variety in sound and Warren "Dermo" Dermody's unengaged vocals makes for a pedestrian listening experience, with only the looser BBC radio sessions included on the second disc hinting at a band that might have had more to say, given time. A reunion instigated last year may yet reap dividends and bolster what is, for now, an underwhelming legacy.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

The Specialist

Hi-Records



Smoke gets in your highs: Willie Mitchell collaborator OV Wright – stuck in a funk-soul groove, in a good way

THE MISSISSIPPI INDIE label Fat Possum has been steadily reissuing '60s and '70s albums from the **Hi-Records** label by the likes of Al Green, Ann Peebles and Otis Clay. Most of them were produced by the label's backroom guy **Willie Mitchell** who, it turns out, was also a fine trumpeter, bandleader and recording artist in his own right, Memphis' very own Quincy Jones.

Among the reissues are two long-deleted Mitchell albums. 1965's ***It's Dance Time*** **HI-RECORDS/FAT POSSUM** 6/10 is a collection of instrumental soul covers and originals. There are some daft honkers that recall the Benny Hill theme (including a chundering version of "In The Mood") but the Booker T-ish grooves like "Buster Browne" and "Woodchopper's Ball" are tremendous fun. Much tighter is 1967's ***Ooh Baby, You Turn Me On*** **HI-RECORDS/FAT POSSUM** 8/10, which must have soundtracked plenty of mod, skin and suedehead discos. "Soul Finger" is better than the more familiar versions by The Bar-Kays, Blues Brothers or Dexys, while (recently deceased) guitarist Teenie Hodges provides clean but thrillingly violent lead lines on riff-based tracks like "Cleo's Mood".

Two other Hi reissues this month are late-'70s releases by the troubled figure of **OV Wright**. Overton Vertis Wright is remembered for his 1960s gospel blues recordings on Back Beat and Goldwax, but he also cut five LPs with Willie Mitchell for Hi. Wright recorded 1978's ***The Bottom Line*** **HI-RECORDS/FAT POSSUM** 7/10 just after he'd been released from prison on drugs charges, and it sounds like the work of someone in a slight timewarp. Where his contemporaries were moving into disco, Wright is stuck in an early '70s funk/soul groove that suits him, particularly on widescreen ballads such as "Let's Straighten It Out". Even better is 1979's ***We're Still Together*** **HI-RECORDS/FAT POSSUM** 7/10. The full-throated blues holler that characterised Wright's '60s recordings has been replaced by a bruised Southern soul croon (imagine Grampa Simpson with Al Green's vocal chops). It's particularly effective on dreamy ballads that linger between major and minor keys, like "Your Good Thing Is About To End", but his grungy, clavinet-heavy version of "Today I Sing The Blues" is better than Aretha Franklin's, while the old blues standard "The Hurt Is On" is transformed into a righteous political funk anthem. Within a year of this recording he'd be dead from a heart attack, aged only 41. The label didn't last much longer.

JOHN LEWIS

BETH ORTON
Central Reservation – Expanded Edition
3 LOOP MUSIC

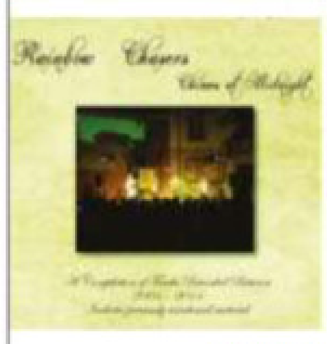
8/10

Timely reissue for Mercury-nominated post-club classic

Beth Orton's second album, released in 1999, remains her most persuasive. At the time of its release, *Central Reservation*'s organic mix of folk textures, airy beats and classic songwriting made it a favoured soundtrack to many a pre- and post-millennial comedown. 15 years on, the album's vaguely folktronic stylings seem coolly prescient, while its prevailing mood of hard-won healing is solidly underpinned by Orton's raw, emotive vocals. The performances throughout are relaxed and empathetic – guests include Ben Watt, Dr John and Terry Callier – while the songs are consistently superb. The gripping drama of "Stolen Car", the rippling melodic arc of "Sweetest Decline", the meditative "Pass In Time" and redemptive "Feel To Believe" merge into one slow, sweet ache, lending the record a unified, quasi-conceptual feel.

EXTRAS: **7/10** An additional disc comprises eight songs taped live for US TV show *Sessions At West 54th* (five are from *Central Reservation*, two from its predecessor *Trailer Park*, plus a cover of The Ronettes' "I Wish I Never Saw The Sunshine".) Also included are B-sides, remixes of the title track and "Stars All Seem To Weep", as well as four demos.

GRAEME THOMSON



RAINBOW CHASERS
Chimes At Midnight
TALKING ELEPHANT

6/10

Fairport Convention founder's ongoing folk crusade

When Ashley Hutchings wound up the Albion Band after more than 30 years, he put together Rainbow Chasers, an all-acoustic band fronted by two fine young female vocalists in Jo Hamilton and Ruth Angell. The band released a brace of intriguing albums, *Some Colours Fly* (2005) and *Fortune Never Sleeps* (2006), which fused folk simplicity with more complex, semi-classical, string-laden arrangements. Since then the Chasers have operated largely under the radar rather than over the rainbow. *Chimes At Midnight* is a 10th anniversary catch-up, mixing nine of the most notable songs from earlier albums with a generous smattering of new tracks. Hutchings for the most part is content to take a low-key role musically, his baritone growl and bass playing supporting the lead voices and string playing of his younger colleagues. But his strikingly literate lyrics such as "First Europeans", a politically charged lament for the plight of the continent's gypsies, command attention.

EXTRAS: **6/10** Six previously unreleased tracks including an intense reworking of Pete Seeger's WWII tale "Waist Deep In The Big Muddy" rewritten from the perspective of a British platoon in Afghanistan, in a potent exemplar of the power of folk song to transcend the confines of time and place.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

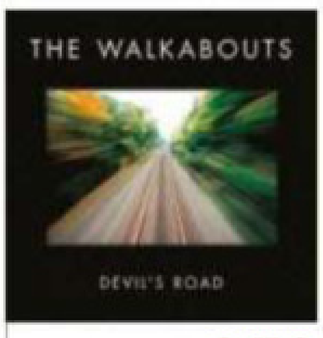
SOUNDGARDEN
Superunknown
A&M/USM

Major-label grunge edifice turns 20, remastered with sundry extras

8/10 For all that certain bands of the '90s alternative wave seemed ill-suited to mainstream celebrity, the phenomenon of underground bands inking major-label deals could be auspicious. Witness, Soundgarden's *Superunknown*. After three albums of punky Sabbath/Zep dynamics, their 1994 album saw the Seattle quartet hunker down for three months in the studio to refine a sort of psychedelic hard rock rich with melody and nuance. *Superunknown* strikes the right balance for albums such as this, offering a mix of rock radio bait – the blues introspection of "Fell On Black Days", the apocalyptic visions of "Black Hole Sun" – while not neglecting turns towards the outré: Kim Thayil's chunky Melvins riffing on "Mailman" and "4th Of July", or the pseudo-eastern raga moves of "Half", sung by bassist Ben Shepherd. At 70 minutes, it sags a little towards the close; of course, this wouldn't stop it from going five times platinum.

EXTRAS: 8/10 This 20th-anniversary reissue comes in two flavours. A 2CD Deluxe Edition adds B-sides, live tracks and alternate mixes, including "Exit Stonehenge" and "Jerry Garcia's Finger", an instrumental in honour of the Grateful Dead man's missing digit. A 5CD Super Deluxe Version adds demos, rehearsals and the album in Blu-ray surround sound, plus a hardbound book with lenticular cover.

LOUIS PATTISON



THE WALKABOUTS
Devil's Road/ Nighttown (reissues, 1996/97)
GLITTERHOUSE

Deluxe reissues from "the American Triffids"

8/10 In 1989, being the black sheep in Sub Pop's flock might not have been easy, but it had one major benefit. When grunge withered, Seattle quintet The Walkabouts' hybrid of haunted folk, Americana and energetic country-rock was unaffected, affording them a career that's now in its 30th year. These two LPs are the wild cards in their canon, the first and last for a major label (Virgin) and so subject to intense pressure and high expectation. It wasn't a happy relationship, although the odd, over-inflated orchestral part aside (big budget alert) there's little evidence of that. For *Devil's Road*, the band changed their sound dramatically, adding strings (Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, no less) to deepen the melodramatic splendour of Chris Eckman's new songs – and spooking a fair few fans in the process. The plush melancholia styled along Cohen/Bad Seeds/Walker Brothers lines comes courtesy of Victor Van Vugt, who also produced *Nighttown*. It relocates the band's darkening heart to the city, with tales of faltering relationships, broken dreams and "*gettin' stupid in a bar, not goin' home til the band plays 'Superstar'*." Warren Ellis' violin turn on two tracks is as welcome as it is unsurprising.

EXTRAS: 7/10 Bonus disc of five unreleased tracks (on both LPs), plus a 16-page booklet.

SHARON O'CONNELL

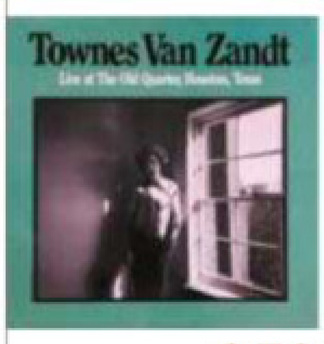
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Wheedle's Groove Vol II
LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Seattle funk enters the '80s

8/10 It's easy to forget that Seattle's best known musical exports aren't Nirvana and Pearl Jam, but Ray Charles, Quincy Jones and Jimi Hendrix, all of whom were nurtured by the city's unique but isolated R'n'B scene. It remained largely undocumented until 2004 when Light In The Attic released *Wheedle's Groove*, a superbly annotated 18-track compilation of funk and soul recorded between 1965 and '75. Ten years on, it's being re-released and accompanied by a second volume – subtitled 'Seattle Funk, Modern Soul & Boogie 1972-87' – that continues the story. Where the R'n'B scenes in, say, Chicago, Philly or New York had ditched funk for disco by the late '70s, Seattle explored an alternate universe where funk musos still ruled the roost, mixing electro beats with tight horn arrangements and busy basslines. Teleclere and Romel Westwood move into techno territory and Don Brown flirts with blue-eyed soul, but the highlights here are the funk gems from the late '70s. Highlights include Push, the ace folk-funkers fronted by roly-poly Big Joe Eriksen, the crazily syncopated soul-jazz of Seattle Pure Dynamite's "I Wonder Love" and the epic Rhodes-led balladry of Robbie Hill's Family Affair. One of the best – and most surprising – funk compilations in years.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS



TOWNES VAN ZANDT
Live At The Old Quarter, Houston, Texas
CHARLY

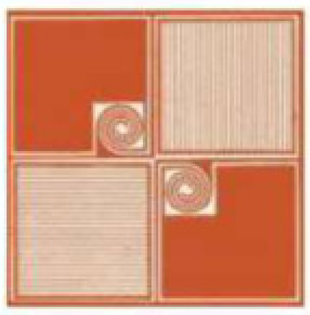
Nobody sings Townes like Townes: Texas poet laureate, in his element

9/10 Armed with a six-album repertoire as mind-shattering as any songwriter of his era, yet still just a busker of sorts, playing for door money and beer, Townes Van Zandt was in his own peculiar prime in 1973. Just voice and guitar, *Live At The Old Quarter* is pure, unembellished Townes, corny jokes and drop-dead poetry, free from studio prettification. While a pack of covers (Lightnin' Hopkins, Bo Diddley) and a few talking-blues novelties serve as mood-breakers, the focus is on rapturous, devastating versions of his most haunting songs – "Pancho & Lefty", "No Place To Fall", "If I Needed You", "For The Sake Of The Song", "Tecumseh Valley", and on and on. Exquisitely sequenced, with plenty of honky-tonk ambience – uptempo cuts like "White Freight Liner Blues" find the crowd adding impromptu percussion – Van Zandt's voice is strong, present, definitive, balancing tales of immeasurable beauty and emotional quicksand with sly between-the-lines commentary and gentle, finger-picked guitar cadences. Breathless performances all, but the gorgeous "Rex's Blues" and the divinely philosophical "To Live Is To Fly", to single out just two, are among the most transcendental, bone-chilling performances ever laid to tape.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN

COMING NEXT MONTH...



September, never a bad month for new albums, brings some particularly good ones this year. Already making itself comfortable in the *Uncut* office, much as the band's eponymous debut did, is ***Worship The Sun***, the new one from the **Allah-Las**.

With luck, you'll already know something of the unhurried way the Californian band do business: with a scholar's eye on the remotest outposts of the garage rock landscape mapped by *Nuggets* and *Pebbles*, but a dreamy sensibility of their own. The band haven't hung about in delivering their second album, but they have in so doing lost none of their languor.

Another office favourite is **Hiss Golden Messenger**. After several enjoyable albums of laid-back, emotional country/folk/soul, Mike Taylor's new one ***The Lateness Of Dancers*** finds him expanding his palette into a series of warm and engrossing full-band arrangements. Also on its way in is the new one from this month's cover star, **Robert Plant** – as ever exploring his own unique path through Cosmic, Celtic Americana. As you have no doubt discovered, the leonine Plant has called it ***lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar***.

There's more too, from **Jeff Tweedy**, **Marianne Faithfull** and ***Primitive And Deadly***, possibly the best yet from Dylan Carlson's doomy **Earth** – featuring a great guest turn from Mark Lanegan.

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17Q

DVD & Blu-ray

SCORING:
10 A true classic **9** Essential **8** Excellent
7 Very good **6** Good **4-5** Mediocre **1-3** Poor

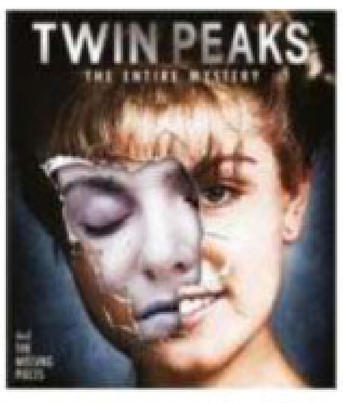
THIS MONTH: MORRISSEY | ZZ TOP | RANDY BACHMAN

Twin Peaks: Michael Anderson and Sheryl Lee in the Black Lodge

TWIN PEAKS
The Entire Mystery

CBS/PARAMOUNT

Logs! Cherry pie! Damn fine cups of coffee... welcome back to *Twin Peaks*, says Jonathan Romney



8/10

AMONG THE MANY new DVD extras on this anniversary edition of *Twin Peaks* is a featurette in which David Lynch interviews the ill-fated Palmer family in the present day. "Leland, you've been dead for 25 years now," he says to the late Mr Palmer. "I'd like to ask you how things are for you now."

Welcome back to *Twin Peaks*! If anyone had forgotten quite how peculiar David Lynch's estimable TV series was, then that is the kind of useful reminder that ticks a number of significant boxes. Of course, if ever a TV series was ahead of its time, it was *Twin Peaks*. Launched in 1990 by David Lynch and co-creator Mark Frost, the show's bizarre confection of small-town melodrama, macabre whodunnit and otherworldly surrealism carved out a legitimate place for darkness and the out-and-out bizarre in the American mainstream. You can trace its legacy in series from *Lost* through *American Horror Story* to *True Detective*, not to mention the very Peaks-ian New Zealand mystery show *Top Of The Lake*, by Jane Campion – one of a host of A-list auteurs (Scorsese, Spielberg, Soderbergh...) who might never have turned to long-form TV if Lynch hadn't blazed the way and made the format prestigious.

Released to celebrate the show's imminent 25th anniversary, this handsomely packaged new 10-disc Blu-ray box will get longterm admirers and newcomers alike brewing up the joe for late-night watching sessions. The best news is that Lynch himself is involved not only as executive producer but as master of ceremonies. Among the new material is the uncut 55-minute version of *A Slice Of Lynch*, in which the director shares memories and cherry pie with stars Madchen Amick (or 'Madgekin', as he insists on calling her), Kyle MacLachlan (Agent Dale Cooper, as was) and sidekick/producer John Wentworth. There's a lot of cosy stuff here ("You are a really great human being" – "Thank you!") and some typically nutty incidentals ("Madchen likes soya milk," Lynch reveals. "Me, I like whole milk").

More bizarre is the featurette where Lynch not only chats with the three actors who played the Palmers but also interviews them in character. The latter item comes across slightly as a self-indulgent actors' exercise, but anyone who relishes the inimitably weird presence of Grace Zabriskie, rest assured that the erstwhile Mrs Palmer hasn't lost her knack for crazed stares. And it's poignant to see Sheryl Lee today, aged 47, a quarter of a century after Laura Palmer's angelic corpse features became so iconic.

Also included is Lynch's 1992 feature *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, generally panned on release. The film baffled Lynch's cinema fans and the show's devoted public alike because it so wilfully defied categorisation. It was neither a conventional spin-off nor a straight prequel, more a sort of expanded parallel version or Cubist remix of the series. But retrospectively, in the light of Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* and *Inland Empire*, we can appreciate the film's baleful anti-logic on its own terms. A new documentary on the film offers such insights as one actor explaining that his character was meant to be "a talisman come to life". Which makes MacLachlan's comment that *Fire*... was an attempt to "make a little sense out of the series" seem like the richest joke ever.

Frustratingly, at time of review, the box's ninth disc was being kept under a seal of secrecy – it contains 'The Missing Pieces', nearly 90 minutes of deleted and alternate scenes from Lynch's feature, with an epilogue following on from the cliffhanger finale that so frustrated fans at the end of the series' second season (not least because there was never a third season). 'The Missing Pieces' may well turn out to explain some long-unsolved mysteries of both the show and the movie (like: what exactly *was* David Bowie's vanishing FBI man doing in Argentina?) – but don't count on it.

Meanwhile, you can distract yourself with other ephemera – including ads for the series' plot catch-up phone line, intros from the cosily enigmatic 'Log Lady', and ad break announcements from sheriff's receptionist Lucy. Some of this has been packaged before, but new material includes 'atmospherics' (including loops of the jazzy drums that accompanied the show's donut-eating sessions), outtakes and deleted scenes that are every bit as Lynchian as you'd expect: "...and one plum frappé turnover!"

EXTRAS: 8/10 Documentaries, outtakes, deleted scenes, 'The Missing Pieces', photo galleries, archive material.

RANDY BACHMAN

Every Song Tells A Story

ILS

7/10

It's stammer time!

The award-winning Canadian radio show Vinyl Tap features the Bachman-Turner Overdrive figurehead peppering some of his favourite songs with lively anecdotes, and here he applies the formula to his own back catalogue in an intimate show last year in his Winnipeg hometown. He's a witty and engaging raconteur with a neat line in self-mockery, recalling his time with teenage bar bands, the first flush of success with The Guess Who, and the secrets behind the stammering monster hit "You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet".

EXTRAS: Bonus live CD.

7/10

TERRY STAUNTON

WE ARE THE BEST!

METRODOME

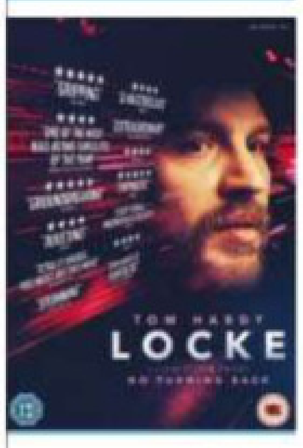
8/10

Punk's not dead, it's charming as hell

Stockholm, 1982, and while The Human League get the popular girls dancing, 13-year-old misfits Bobo and Klara form a proto-riot grrrl band, roping in devout Christian classical guitarist Hedvig to help, so long as she lets them chop her hair. After a lurch into studied grimness (*A Hole In My Heart*), this raucous blast, based on wife Coco's comic book, sees Swedish auteur Lukas Moodysson return to the warm yet acutely observed territory of earlier hits like *Together*. The girls' song "Hate The Sport" is an instant hardcore classic, too.

EXTRAS: None.

DAMIEN LOVE



LOCKE

LIONSGATE

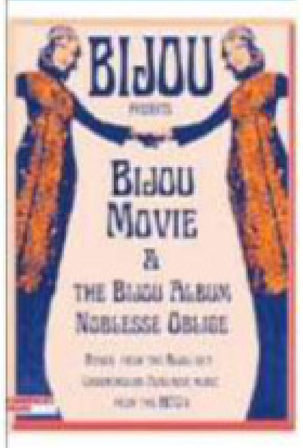
7/10

Tom Hardy, in a car, for 85 minutes

Very much a high-concept movie, this involves Tom Hardy in a car, travelling from Birmingham to attend the birth of his illegitimate child in Croydon. Meanwhile, he has to 'fess all to his wife and also deal with some hairy business at work. In short, we are watching a man in transit and in crisis; we stay in the car with Locke as he drives and make phone calls. Hardy, who has essayed a line in movie strongmen – Bronson, Bane – works in a minor key here, deploying a soft Welsh accent as he attempts to keep his inner tension in control. Like *Marion And Geoff*, obviously, but a lot darker.

EXTRAS: None.

MICHAEL BONNER



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Bijou Movie

TOMORROW

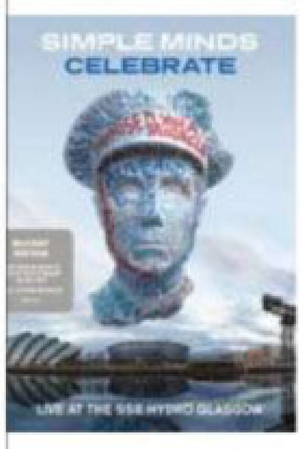
3/10

The Adelaide punk scene commemorated

In the 1970s even more so than now, Adelaide was very much the sort of city in which one was obliged to make one's own fun. The Bijou concerts were semi-regular gatherings of the city's underground music scene, such as it was. This film is largely composed of lousy amateur footage of a sparsely attended 2001 reunion of some of the artists involved (Black Chrome, Precious Memories, Zweck) all of whom amply demonstrate why nobody outside Adelaide – or, indeed, their immediate peer group – ever heard of them.

EXTRAS: None.

ANDREW MUELLER



SIMPLE MINDS

Celebrate: Live At SSE Hydro Glasgow

DOCUMENT

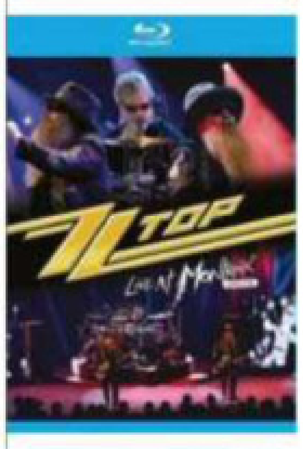
8/10

Career-spanning hometown show

Oddly, becoming a heritage act – since their last album in 2009, it's been wall-to-wall compilations and retro tours – appears to have given Simple Minds a new lease of life. This 90-minute film of last November's homecoming show leans heavily on early art-rock glories ("I Travel", "The American", "Theme For Great Cities", "Love Song" and much of *New Gold Dream*) and very fine they sound too. Though the cavernous stadium-fillers – and Jim Kerr's woeful patter – inevitably lumber into view near the end, mostly this is a vibrant document of a rejuvenated live band.

EXTRAS: None.

GRAEME THOMSON



ZZ TOP

Live At Montreux 2013

EAGLE VISION

7/10

The behemoth gets back to basics

Dramatically scaled down in comparison to their usual pyrotechnics-heavy stage set, last year's stopover at the famed Swiss festival is perhaps the closest The Top ever come to intimacy. Consequently, the MTV powerhouse tracks from *Eliminator* and *Afterburner* seem a tad restrained, as if struggling to get out of second gear. It's left to the more bluesy selections from their early triumphs *Tres Hombres* and *Fandango* to carry the momentum; no-nonsense barroom boogie that also informs cuts from 2012's *La Futura* album.

EXTRAS: Featurette, interviews.

6/10

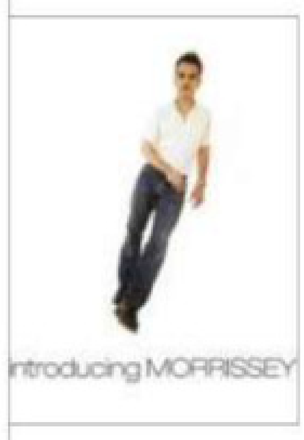
TERRY STAUNTON

Boxing clever: Morrissey in the mid-'90s

MORRISSEY

Introducing Morrissey

PARLOPHONE



8/10

First time on DVD for mid-'90s live film

IN 1995, WHEN this concert film was recorded, Morrissey needed no introduction, but the title of this film is more than just a wry nod to the manners of old rock'n'roll. The tour featured material from *Vauxhall And I* and *Your Arsenal*, both of which now stand as highpoints in the singer's career. *Your Arsenal* (with Mick Ronson producing) was a creative rebirth, mixing the rude electricity of glam with the guttural logic of rockabilly. *Vauxhall And I* (with Steve Lillywhite at the helm) was more conventional, but did underline a point many had been reluctant to accept: Morrissey didn't need The Smiths. He could do it on his own. Or at least, on his own, with Boz Boorer leading the band.

Nineteen years later, these two shows (February 7-8, from Sheffield City Hall and Blackpool Winter Gardens) seem like classic Morrissey. There is nothing tentative about them. He is, it's true, an idiosyncratic frontman, a self-parodist locked in the cocoon of his own desires, but there's stubborn beauty in his performance. After an intro video of an oik wandering through monochrome London and encountering Morrissey flyposting bills for the Angelic Upstarts, the band – Boorer (guitar), Alain Whyte (guitar), Gary Day (bass) and Spencer Cobrin (drums) – launch into "Billy Budd". Morrissey is dressed in a sports jacket, pinstriped white shirt and baggy jeans. He looks, as always, like a geography teacher on the rampage in 1963.

Director James O'Brien shoots the film in a rough and ready fashion, often from the eye-level of the crowd, which captures the energy of the performance, and neatly highlights one of the great contradictions of Morrissey during this period. As a writer, he was concerned with alienated youth, some of them right-wing. He was exploring alienation, and the allure of the crowd. The alienation part wasn't new. Neither was the fascination with lads. But still, there is something particularly piquant about the way Morrissey documents the hard edge of laddish behaviour in a manner that is simultaneously camp and knowing. He sings about kids lost to the far right in "The National Front Disco", and hooligans in "We'll Let You Know" ("*we will descend, on anyone unable to defend themselves*") and is cheered to rafters with football chants, which seem to celebrate and ignore his playful homoeroticism.

There are some lulls. The cover of "Moon River" is funereal, and "Jack The Ripper" is a bit stodgy. But the show closes powerfully with "Boxers", "Now My Heart Is Full" and "Speedway". The film ends with a montage of stage invasions. Morrissey's fans hug him like they want to squeeze the life out of him. He looks quite pleased with that.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR McKAY

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Nick Cave lets us into his world, Stuart Murdoch finally finishes his musical film and the Big Star documentary reaches the UK

20,000 DAYS ON EARTH As an artist, Nick Cave has mastered many different disciplines – musician, novelist and screenwriter among them – but arguably his greatest accomplishment has been the on-going management of 'Nick Cave'. Like any successful brand operating in a busy marketplace, Cave has reinvented both himself and his music – from the Melbourne punk scene via Berlin and São Paulo to his current domestic arrangement on the East Sussex coast – while the basic tenets of his brand remain consistent: artistic independence, dark Americana, interesting hair.

These notions of authenticity and reinvention – and the fine line between the private person and the public persona – are at the heart of this outstanding documentary by visual artists Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard, who present their film as a day in Cave's life. His 20,000th day, in fact. Forsyth and Pollard follow him to his office for a spot of writing, a visit to his psychotherapist, some robust banter over lunch with Warren Ellis, a recording session, and a trip to the archive, winding up with pizza and *Scarface* with his sons before a climactic gig. Cave airs his thoughts in voiceover ("Mostly, I feel like a cannibal"... "I love the feeling of a song before you understand it") and drives in his black Jaguar from one appointment to the next accompanied by various passengers: Ray Winstone, Blixa Bargeld, Kylie Minogue.

The film is a sophisticated exercise in blurring truth and fiction that chimes with Cave's own talent for revealing truths in fictional worlds. As *20,000 Days On Earth* progresses, it becomes evident that what we're watching is yet another marvellous act from Cave. Critically, he reveals to his therapist that a significant moment in his childhood was being read *Lolita* by his father, which he describes as a "transformative performance". Transformation is key to the film. Cave explains that, unbeknownst to him, his father attended one of his earliest gigs; when he later revealed this to his son, Cave Snr revealed he had looked "like an angel" onstage. Further conversations about the transformative possibilities of being a rock star permeate Forsyth and Pollard's film. Over eels and pasta, Cave and Ellis share a hilarious anecdote about Nina Simone playing the Cave-curated Meltdown Festival (punchline: "champagne, cocaine and sausages") that digs further into the propostion. Cave and Ray Winstone discuss the idea that a rock star, unlike an actor, can never truly be 'off duty'. You might just glimpse in one of his notebooks that Cave has written "terrible performance anxiety, that is what pushes me to lose myself in performance".

A self-confessed "ostentatious bastard", Cave makes a predictably compelling subject for Forsyth and Pollard, who have worked with Cave since 2008 on a number of projects. Whether striding round his home in Brighton, sitting contemplatively at a piano in the studio (filmed during the *Push The Sky Away* sessions), or discussing Bargeld's departure from the Bad Seeds (one of the film's most squirm-inducing sequences), he is smart and funny, much as you'd expect. Forsyth and Pollard surround him with rich, esoteric detail. The walls of his office are covered in photographs and memorabilia, we see pages from his diaries (the 'weather diary' is a highlight), a copy of *Technicians Of The Sacred* sits on a piano. Anyone wondering who the mysterious "*Janet*" was on "More News From Nowhere": prepare for revelations aplenty. Want to know what coffee Cave drinks in the studio? "A small one-shot latte with one sugar."

It all makes for a fascinating and engaging film, ending with a rousing rendition of "Jubilee Street" recorded at Sydney Opera House, with Cave – carried away, at last, in the rapture of performance, singing over and over: "*I am transforming/I am vibrating/I'm glowing/I'm flying/Look at me now*".

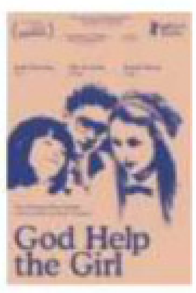
➤ **Big Star: Nothing Can Hurt Me** This documentary finally reaches the UK, over two years since it debuted at South By Southwest in 2012. It charts the band's formation in Memphis in the early '70s, subsequent falling apart and late rediscovery, as well as the confounding solo careers of principal songwriters Alex Chilton and Chris Bell. As you might suspect, the story writes itself: though the film is not without its problems.

It opens with a 1978 radio interview with Chilton: one of the few clips of him that appear in the film. We learn that after scoring a No 1 in The Box Tops with "The Letter", Chilton, then aged 18, returned to Memphis looking for a change of direction. He hooked up with Chris Bell, a recording engineer at Ardent Studios, who had been recording with bassist Andy Hummel and drummer Jody Stephens. Bell died in a car crash in 1978, while Chilton – who refused to participate in the documentary before his death in 2010 – features in a smattering of archive clips. Stephens and Hummel, meanwhile, appear in new interviews (the film was shot before Hummel died in 2010). Co-directors Drew DeNicola and Olivia Mori find plenty of people to speak on their behalf, however: Paul Westerberg, REM's Mike Mills,

Reviewed this month...

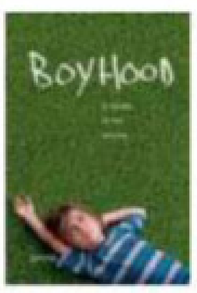
20,000 DAYS ON EARTH
Directors Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard
Starring Nick Cave, Warren Ellis
Opens Sept 19
Certificate 15
9/10

BIG STAR: NOTHING CAN HURT ME
Directors Drew DeNicola and Olivia Mori
Starring Jody Stephens
Opens August 1
Certificate 12
6/10



GOD HELP THE GIRL
Director Stuart Murdoch
Starring Emily Browning, Olly Alexander
Opens August 22
Certificate 15
6/10

GOD'S POCKET
Director John Slattery
Starring Phillip Seymour Hoffman, John Turturro
Opens August 8
Certificate 15
6/10



BOYHOOD
Director Richard Linklater
Starring Ellar Coltrane, Ethan Hawke
Opened July 10
Certificate 15
10/10

Cave's cave: Nick in his office in 20,000 *Days On Earth*

Matthew Sweet, Robyn Hitchcock and Norman Blake as well as Memphis musicians, critics and family members (Bell's brother and sister are both excellent). Inevitably, the lack of substantial archive material means we never get as close as we'd like to Chilton and Bell. It's understandable, of course, that a band who never had a hit in their lifetime haven't left the kind of visual archive required to fill a full-length documentary. It's that absence of material to adequately illustrate Big Star in full flight that diminishes what could otherwise be a stunning film.

➤ **God Help The Girl** For anyone with even a passing familiarity with the work of Belle & Sebastian songwriter Stuart Murdoch, *God Help The Girl* – his debut as a writer and director – will hold few real surprises. The action takes place in a rarefied version of Glasgow peopled by remorseful outcasts and socially awkward geniuses. The focus is on a pretty but troubled girl and a love-struck boy. Spectacles, berets, charity shops, bicycles and mixtapes all figure highly, while characters possess a kind of unaffected sweetness as they dream, read, walk, discuss music and sing – sing – SING!

In fact, *God Help The Girl* has been an ongoing side-project for Murdoch for several years now, generating several singles and, in 2009, an LP, before shooting began in 2012 on this Kickstarter-funded feature. The film centres on Eve (Emily Browning), a resident in a mental health unit who is undergoing treatment for anorexia. She is prone to escaping, however, and one night at the Barrowlands she meets James (Olly Alexander), dweeby singer with a band, who is instantly smitten with her. The two click and, along with Cassie (*Skins*' Hannah Murray), a rich girl James is giving music lessons to, they form a band. In the city's bedsits and cafés, Murdoch's twee trio argue about band names, print flyers and go about their business preparing for The Big Gig.

Whether or not you like the film inevitably depends on whether you're prepared to commit to Murdoch's vision. The songs are predictably lovely, but his three leads are, by turns, endearing and infuriating. Less-than-ardent fans might struggle with the close-to-two-hour runtime. There is no crisis to avert: no rival bands intent on derailing the band's musical vision, no hostile landlord to evict them, no trust fund about to be cut off. But arguably Murdoch isn't concerned with the real world: he is warm and sincere and appears more interested in the detail of his characters' lives than any bigger-picture stuff. You can see it in the way the camera closes in on Eve's writing on the label of a homemade cassette, or the lettering on a flyer. "No-one ever cried at a Bowie song," James says at one point, and you suspect Murdoch's characters would rather live or die by a point like that than anything else.

➤ **God's Pocket** The first film starring Philip Seymour Hoffman to be released since his death is not, sadly, the great send-off you might hope. *God's Pocket* is based on a novel by Pete Dexter, whose screenwriter credits include *Mulholland Falls* and *The Paperboy*. On the strength of this adaptation, it feels like a minor work for Dexter, though debuting director John Slattery (*Mad Men*'s Roger Sterling) has certainly assembled a staunch cast of actorly actors: aside from Hoffman, there's John Turturro, Richard Jenkins, Christina Hendricks and Eddie Marsan, who portray denizens in a working-class neighbourhood of South Philadelphia. Hoffman plays a thieving meat supplier who has to arrange the funeral of his despicable stepson after the boy is killed. Slattery aims for scudded naturalism – a cinematic approximation of a Springsteen song – though it never quite hangs together. It's worth watching for the performances: though Hoffman will be better served next month in Anton Corbijn's adaptation of John le Carré's *A Most Wanted Man*.

➤ **Boyhood** Richard Linklater's remarkable new film follows the life of a boy from six to 18, shot in 39 days. It's the most accomplished experiment yet in an eclectic career that includes the freewheeling *Slacker*, lo-fi animations like *Waking Life*, *School Of Rock* and the *Before...* trilogy. What makes *Boyhood* such an achievement are the mind-boggling logistics. The time transitions are seamless, the details shift fluidly, the passing of the years marked by clothes, hair, music, mobile phone technology. And of course the principals themselves, who literally transform in front of us: Ellar Coltrane as Mason, Lorelei Linklater as his sister Samantha, Patricia Arquette as their mother Olivia and their erratic father Mason Sr (Ethan Hawke), who drifts in and out of their lives. Much of the narrative is concerned with the decisions Olivia makes and the impact these have on her children. The tenets of Philip Larkin's "This Be The Verse" are clearly delineated here.

A self-confessed "ostentatious bastard", Cave makes a compelling subject for a film

One of the most resonant scenes occurs quite early on. Mason and his father are crashed out on couches at Mason Sr's. "Dad," he says, "there's no real magic in the world, right? There's like no elves in the world?" Mason Sr replies: "No, technically. No elves."

Taken cumulatively, these moments contain the movie's magic.

Also out...

THE DEER HUNTER
OPENS AUGUST 1
A strong month for reissues, headed up by Michael Cimino's powerful study of the effects of the Vietnam war on a Pennsylvanian community.

MOOD INDIGO
OPENS AUGUST 1
Romain Duris and Audrey Tautou topline this romantic fantasy by Michel Gondry.

Mood Indigo

THE INBETWEENERS 2
OPENS AUGUST 6
It's off to Australia for our four "students" – one of whom is now over 30 in real life – in the sequel to the record-breaking original.

TO CATCH A THIEF
OPENS AUGUST 8
Another fine reissue: Cary Grant and Grace Kelly bask in the French Riviera in this lightweight but classy Hitchcock caper.

WELCOME TO NEW YORK
OPENS AUGUST 8
Abel Ferrara returns with a drama inspired partly by the Dominique Strauss-Kahn affair, starring Gérard Depardieu.

THE EXPENDABLES 3
OPENS AUGUST 14
Creaky of both limb and joke, nevertheless Stallone's hugely profitable franchise returns for a third outing, now with added Mel Gibson and Harrison Ford.

THE CONGRESS
OPENS AUGUST 15
The future. An ageing, out-of-work actress (Robin Wright) accepts one last job. Harvey Keitel and Jon Hamm co-star.

INTO THE STORM
OPENS AUGUST 22
Richard Armitage (*Robin Hood* and *Spooks*) attempts to carve himself out as a Hollywood action hero in this big-budget disaster film.

SIN CITY: A DAME TO KILL FOR
OPENS AUGUST 22
Willis, Rourke and co return for another helping of Frank Miller's violent comic book noir, brought to life by Robert Rodriguez and Miller himself.

THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI
OPENS AUGUST 29
A welcome return for the influential German Expressionist horror from 1920.

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD

Blue light blues: White, with Daru Jones on drums and Lillie Mae Rische on violin

DAVID JAMES SWANSON

SETLIST

1 Sixteen Saltines
2 Astro
3 Dead Leaves And The Dirty Ground
4 High Ball Stepper
5 Lazaretto
6 Hotel Yorba
7 Temporary Ground
8 Ramblin' Man/Cannon
9 Icky Thump
10 Missing Pieces
11 Three Women
12 Love Interruption
13 Blunderbuss
14 Top Yourself
15 I'm Slowly Turning Into You
16 Holiday In Cambodia
17 Ball And Biscuit

ENCORE:

18 Just One Drink
19 Alone In My Home
20 Hello Operator
21 You Don't Know What Love Is (You Just Do As You're Told)
22 Broken Boy Soldier
23 Blue Blood Blues
24 Would You Fight For My Love?
25 Steady, As She Goes
26 Seven Nation Army

JACK WHITE

HAMMERSMITH APOLLO, LONDON, JULY 3, 2014

The garage rock superstar evolves into an extreme and dangerous stadium rocker. Would you still fight for his love?

WHAT STRANGE MUSIC Jack White makes these days. At the end of this hot, compelling, tempestuous show, he stands on a monitor, guitar held high above head like the axe of Thor, every inch the conquering stadium rocker. The guitar, though, is a battered acoustic one, and the music White has hurtled through for the past two hours is far from straightforwardly anthemic, subject as it is to weird currents, radical combinations, an overarching vision that is at once baroque and agitated. How on earth did that garage rock guy, the one with the sister, get here?

Jack White's secret – one of his secrets, God knows he must have enough of them – may be something to do with a volatile psychological mix of ambition in its most grandiose form, and a desire to subvert expectations that can swing perilously close to self-sabotage. During the encores, he and his five-piece band deconstruct the powerpop of "Steady, As She Goes" and rebuild it with a heavy new menace. The elegant melodiousness of The Raconteurs' original currently has little use for White, who breaks the song down into a fragmented, staccato prowl, knocking it off balance time and again as he and his bandmates take short and often jarring solos.

Most everything here is tense, indignant – even "Love Interruption", sung with fiddler Lillie Mae Rische, has a rowdy intensity – predicated on a short fuse. It fits neatly with the persona that White is projecting in recent interviews; the lone superstar, wounded and self-righteous, embracing the role of anti-hero. Swigging champagne from the bottle, spinning semi-intelligible yarns about Mariah Carey, turning most of his songs into bigger, more fraught and priapic creations, White's love of puzzles and tricks is now sometimes tantalisingly close to antagonism. A divisive rock god of unstable morals, toying with the expectations of his fans and the fabric of his music.

The thing is, most of White's provocations come off. Dubious new genres are minted at speed, so that "Just One Drink" and "Alone In My Home", two of the more straightforward tracks on *Lazaretto*, are amped up into a kind of preposterous pomp honky-tonk, with drummer Daru Jones throwing funk breaks into the latter for good measure. Among a kinetic band, Jones is a focal point front stage left, too restless to stay on his

stool for long, and occasionally behaving like a man who would be happiest with an entire kit of cowbells.

"Lazaretto" itself, meanwhile, very much resembles a rap-rock hybrid made by someone who loves rock, and rap, but has never actually heard any rap-rock before, and consequently comes to it with an ingenuous delight in his invention. It's a stunt White's clearly enamoured with, and so the likes of "Missing Pieces", The Dead Weather's "Blue Blood Blues" and even The Raconteurs' "Top Yourself", monstrously strung out in this incarnation, find the outraged cadences of White's vocal melodies pushed even closer to the rhythms of hip-hop.

The show opens with a climax – the curtain pulled aside to reveal White, theatrically buffeted by the force of his guitar playing, and his bandmates in the midst of a cacophonous ending, and it's this spirit of excess and bombast which dominates, even on vintage White Stripes nuggets like "Astro". As that song ends, and the brutal lurch of "Dead Leaves And The Dirty Ground" begins, White's guitar riff is doubled, tripled, even quadrupled by his bandmates on steel (Fats Kaplin), fiddle (Rische) and organ (Ikey Owens, playing with the same demented fusion of Booker T and Jon Lord that he brought to early Mars Volta shows). Time and again, the bullishness of White's playing is underpinned with more spectral elements – Rische and Kaplin switch between mandolins, fiddles, steel and theremin – so that even the most straightahead big rock songs like "You Don't Know What Love Is" are given a brittle subtext.

It's another way in which White creates a destabilising undercurrent, a sense of the unpredictable that is sustained in spite of the meticulously arranged and drilled nature of the band. Perhaps the waywardness is necessarily anchored in stability: the two bands, one male and one female, that White dragged around the world to support *Blunderbuss*, have been scrapped. For this year's manoeuvres, the male lineup has been retained and augmented by Rische from the distaff troupe. The switch means White has one less schtick (he wouldn't tell the bands which one was performing until the day of the show) in his armoury, but it also endows him with a band who've grown tour-hardened and flexible, who can draw on a richer repertoire and can cut loose when the need arises.

That need, it transpires, arises quite often. If the early *Blunderbuss* shows found an uncharacteristically cautious White at work, tonight's performance has some of the chaos and flux of the wilder nights of The White Stripes. The wired vibes recall a night at the Alexandra Palace in 2005, when much impatient song-mangling climaxed with a denunciation of some perceived misquotes in that week's *NME*.

White creates a sense of the unpredictable, in spite of the drilled nature of his band

Here, songs collapse, are handed over to the audience to sing ("Hello Operator"), or are brusquely cut and shut into one another, so that Hank Williams' "Ramblin' Man" becomes a gothic, windswept back and forth with The White Stripes' "Cannon". There is even a brief, apocalyptic version of the Dead Kennedys' "Holiday In Cambodia", prefacing a "Ball And Biscuit" which showcases how White, unlike at those *Blunderbuss* shows, has reconciled himself to the explosive joys of the guitar solo.

Amidst all the carnage, though, other possibilities present themselves. Splutter and thrust might predominate, but the best songs from *Blunderbuss* and *Lazaretto* are the grand romantic dramas, the ones with cascading pianos and red-raw passions. In the maelstrom, "Would You Fight For My Love?" is a highlight: still charged (Daru Jones drives it at an unstintingly hard pace), but with a space and grace that this powerful, exciting, ornately messy show sometimes lacks. As Rische provides backing wails, White appears consumed by his work, orchestrating his bandmates through the swells of his tremendous song. The mood is desperate, imploring, but the lyrics tell a different story. "*I know that you want more,*" he sings, "*But would you fight for my love?*" And the message is clear: if we want Jack White as our hero, he will entertain, but not pander. We have to accept all his flaws, whims, caprices and manias as a critical, sometimes uncomfortable, part of the contract. *JOHN MULVEY*

Stevie Wonder

CLAPHAM COMMON, LONDON, JUNE 29, 2014

Common ground becomes higher ground, courtesy of Motown's master blaster

"IF YOU DON'T like what I say, shoot me," suggests Wonder during his lengthy preamble to "Living For The City", surely not seriously expecting anyone to disagree with his pleas for racial harmony. Mind you, there may be a few chambers being loaded during the mawkish "Ebony And Ivory" singalong that follows immediately after, or "I Just Called To Say I Love You".

Thankfully, Stevie's saccharine side isn't given any further airings in an energetic two-hour set that leans heavily towards his '70s purple period, the remarkable run of albums from *Talking Book* to *Songs In The Key Of Life*. A slowburn, bluesy reading of "Maybe Your Baby", one of the former's lesser-known cuts, is an early highlight, designed to showcase the extraordinarily well-drilled band.

It's the big hits punters have come to hear, though, and they tumble from the stage and into the hot summer night with glee. Samba party vibes come via "Another Star" and "Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing", while "Higher Ground" and an extended "Superstition" (with guest guitarist Richie Sambora) bring the funk. Improbable as it might seem they're eclipsed by the simple balladry of "Overjoyed".

Arguably, the biggest headache artists with Wonder's bulging back catalogue face is what to leave out, and clearly a couple of classics have made way tonight for tributes to recently fallen friends. Bobby Womack is remembered, two days after his death, on a superb "If You Think You're Lonely Now", backing singer Keith John stepping up to take the lead, and an initially subdued take on Gerry Goffin's "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?" builds to a celebratory fast-paced Latino free-for-all.

A solid, satisfying new Stevie Wonder album has, for some time now, been just wishful thinking, but its continued absence is forgivable when the back pages are dusted off and delivered with such charm and vigour.

TERRY STAUNTON

Overjoyed: Wonder onstage at Clapham Common

JOSEPH OKPAKO/REDFERNS

The Eagles, creating a peaceful easy feeling at the O_2, 2014: *(l-r)* Bernie Leadon, Timothy B Schmit, Scott Crago, Glenn Frey, Don Henley, Joe Walsh

EAGLES

O_2 ARENA, LONDON, JUNE 21, 2014

The Long Run: Henley, Frey, Leadon, Schmit and Walsh take it to the three-hour limit...

SINCE THEIR 1994 reunion tour, the Eagles' afterlife has now lasted twice as long as their original career. For their latest Greatest Hits tour, deep connections have been made with the *History Of The Eagles* documentary, which means we get scripted yarns and video inserts sporadically telling the band's story. But what's most notable is the sight of the Eagles enjoying themselves. If not quite frozen over, Hell has cooled considerably.

Don Henley sets the scene for his and Glenn Frey's humble start in a "chickenshit shack" near Hollywood Boulevard in 1971, then introduces ex-Flying Burrito Brother Bernie Leadon, the country-minded guitarist who became an ex-Eagle by tipping a beer over Frey's head in 1975. Leadon seems the least comfortable onstage, and mostly leaves it once his part in the Eagles' story is done. Timothy B Schmit, originally an Eagle only for burnt-out swansong *The Long Run*, appears three songs in for "Peaceful Easy Feeling" and stays put, with Joe Walsh soon joining him.

The attempt at a chronological history of the band is, then, shaky at best. An initial acoustic section showcasing these sixtysomethings' unerring, somewhat antiseptic harmonies does the statically mid-paced songs few favours. The quiet of the massive crowd, who've been instructed to stay in their seats, as big hits such as "Best Of My Love" roll by, also leaves thrills in short supply. Still, when the band turn to bathe in the orange-red glow of the Pacific filling the screen behind them at the end of "Tequila Sunrise", the Eagles' strengths shine through. The synth-orchestral grandeur recalls the West Coast studio sound they were integral to, bringing their late friend Warren Zevon's early records fondly to mind.

In the second half, this starts to feel like a real band, not just millionaires playing for cash

"Lyin' Eyes" is a steely, even-handed tale of a love triangle, a country song with honky-tonk piano playing as the woman in the middle "*pours herself a strong one*". "Rowdy bunch tonight, huh?" Frey notes before it, as a few errant shouts break the hush. But with the crowd asked to loosen up by Schmit, the second half of this near-three hour show is more genuinely raucous. Wild card Walsh, especially, training a grainy, head-mounted webcam on the crowd for "Life's Been Good" and toying with a talkbox, is agreeably sloppy. Attempts to rock out are otherwise largely unimpressive. But as they informally stroll around the stage, jamming and grinning, this starts to feel like a real band playing, not just millionaires reconvening for the cash.

And then there's the truly iconic, Steely Dan-inspired "Hotel California", with its mythic sense of both the band's adopted state, and their own decadence at their 1976 apex. Henley, whose voice has gained the husky grain of experience, sings this drug-hazed precursor to *The Shining* with a quaver of fear. The gig finishes with Henley standing alone in the spotlight for "Desperado", then his bandmates joining him in deep gospel harmonies. It's as vulnerably human as the Eagles ever sound.

NICK HASTED

STEVE GILLETT/LIVEPIX

SETLIST

1 Saturday Night
2 Train Leaves Here This Morning
3 Peaceful Easy Feeling
4 Witchy Woman
5 Doolin-Dalton
6 Tequila Sunrise
7 Doolin'-Dalton/ Desperado (Reprise)
8 Already Gone
9 The Best Of My Love
10 Lyin' Eyes
11 One Of These Nights
12 Take It To The Limit
13 Wasted Time (Reprise)
14 Pretty Maids All In A Row
15 I Can't Tell You Why
16 New Kid In Town
17 Love Will Keep Us Alive
18 Heartache Tonight
19 Those Shoes
20 In The City
21 Life's Been Good
22 The Long Run
23 Funk #49
24 Life In The Fast Lane

ENCORE

25 Hotel California
26 Take It Easy
27 Rocky Mountain Way
28 Desperado

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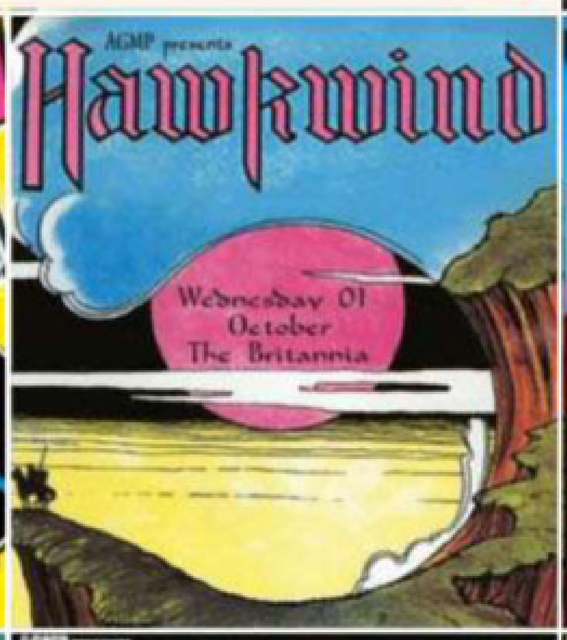

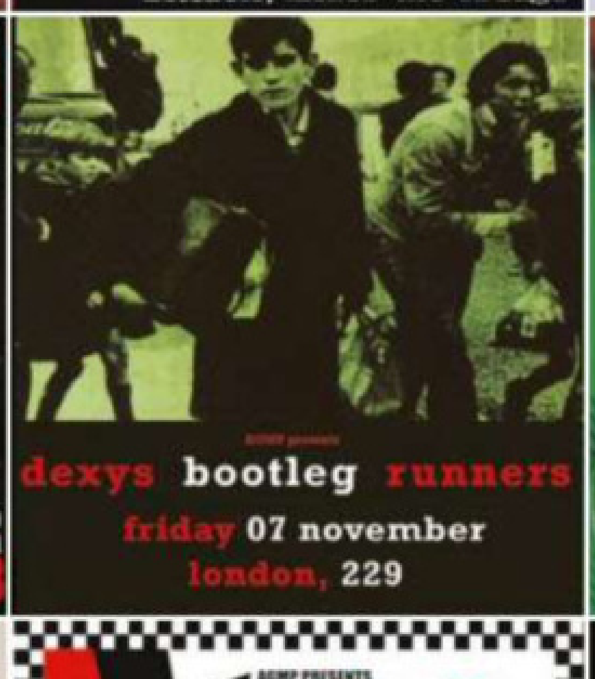

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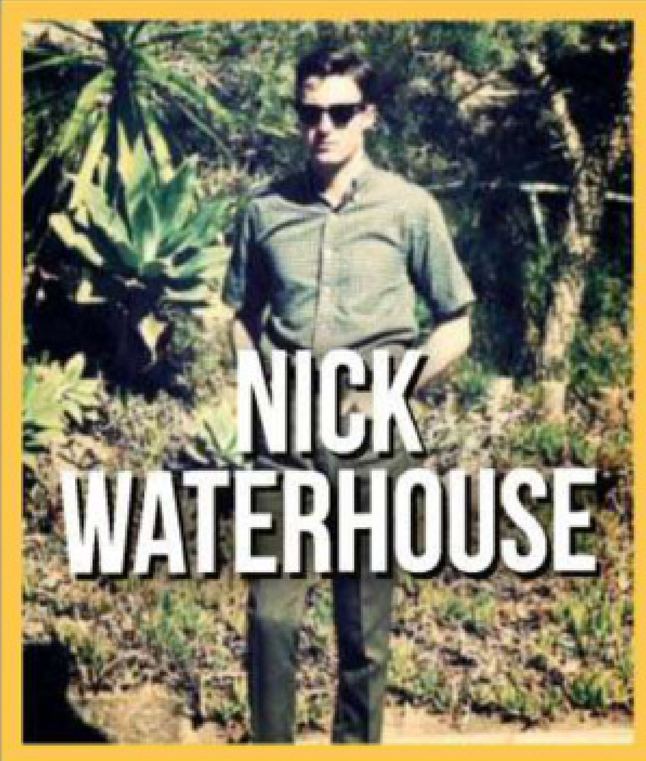

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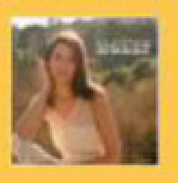

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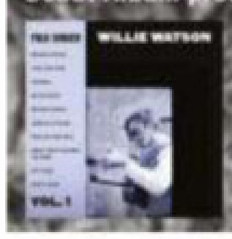

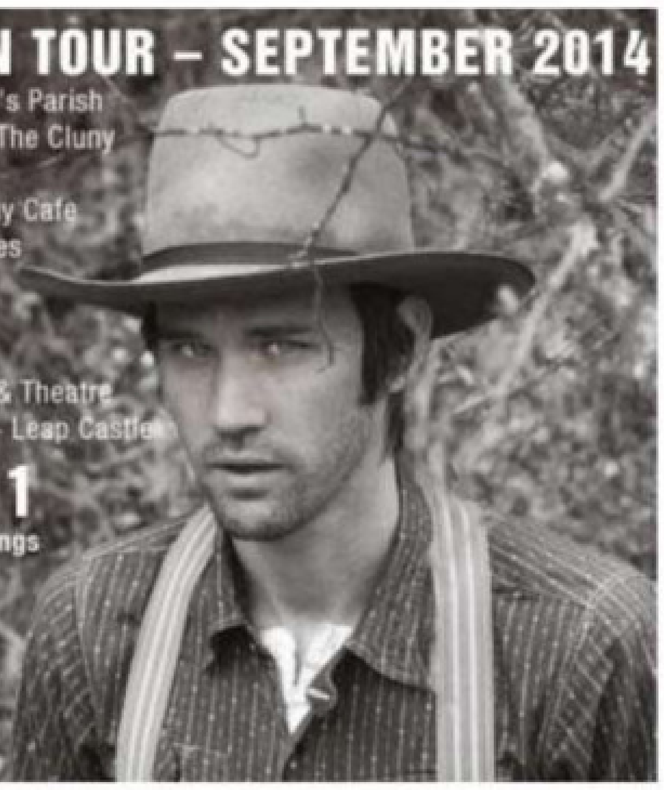

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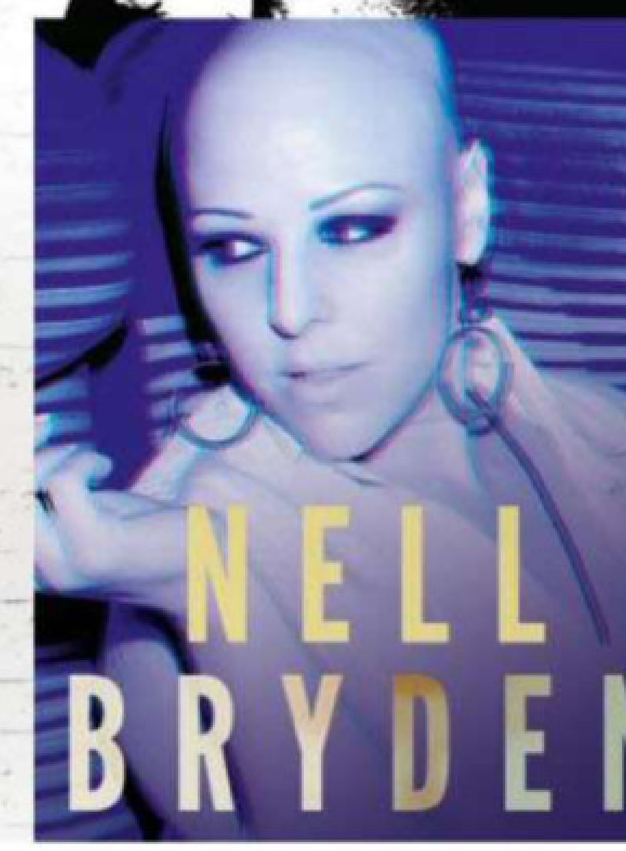

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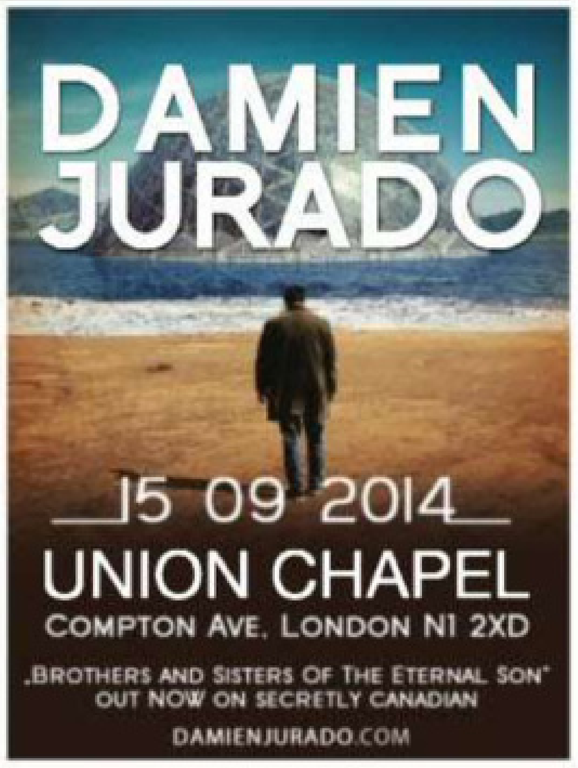

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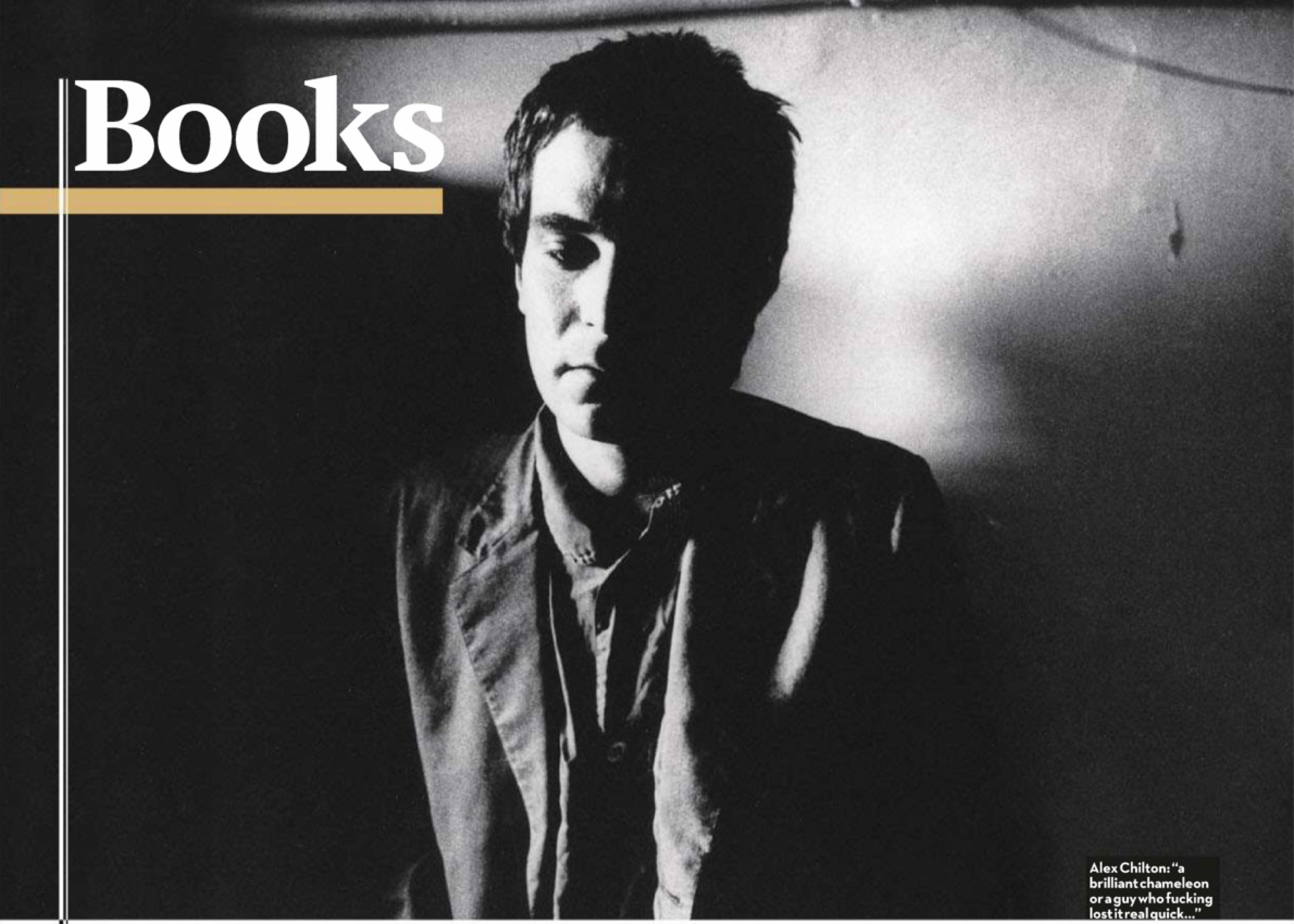
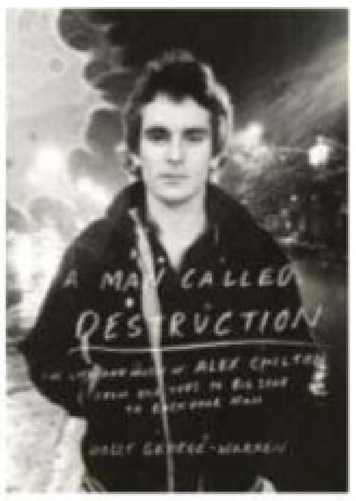


Alex Chilton: "a brilliant chameleon or a guy who fucking lost it real quick..."

Reviewed this month...



A Man Called Destruction: The Life And Music Of Alex Chilton, From Box Tops To Big Star To Backdoor Man

Holly George-Warren

PENGUIN

7/10

"FAME CAN MAKE you money, but it's a big pain in the ass. There are real advantages to being unknown," Alex Chilton, a teen idol at 17 as lead singer of The Box Tops, would subsequently reflect, looking back at a career it would be an understatement to describe as turbulent. His precocious talent had by then long since been surrendered to the waywardness, eccentricity and unruly dissipation that eventually delivered the anonymity he preferred, Chilton seemingly happier in obscurity than the spotlight, the cultish devotion that attached itself to him something he reacted to at first with suspicious contempt and then indifference.

It would be a narrative convenience, however, to blame his early success for the train wreck his life for long periods became. It would also be largely untrue. As Holly George-Warren reminds us in *A Man Called Destruction*, Alex Chilton was already off the rails by his early teens, by which time he had developed a premature taste for strong liquor, marijuana, sex and an inclination towards delinquent behaviour that worried even the rowdiest of the crew he ran with, who also often found him prone to moody sulking.

Later, his tearaway tendencies would be linked to the death in 1957 of his older brother, Reid – "the golden boy of the family," according to George-Warren – who drowned in the family bath at 17, after a brain seizure, his body discovered by Alex and his mother, Mary Ellen. Alex apparently idolised Reid, who had introduced Alex to the only thing in his life he ever seems to have loved more than himself, which was music.

Until his brother's death, Alex's life, as described by George-Warren, sounds like something out of a novel of post-war American suburbia by Richard Yates or John Cheever. His father, Sydney, a jazz fan and accomplished musician, was a 'manufacturer's representative' for an electrical lighting firm, in other words a salesman. His mother played bridge and drank. When the family moved in 1960 to Memphis' Midtown district, his parents became gripped by a hitherto latent bohemianism and their new digs an open house for artistic riff raff. Alex was allowed to do pretty much whatever he wanted.

So here he is, Alex at 14, freaking out his high school band The Moondogs, chugging cans of Colt 45 to get a buzz going before gigs and appearing on stage 'tipsy', in one quaint description. He could sing up a storm, though, and was soon recruited by The Devilles, by reputation the hottest of Memphis' many garage bands. And here's Alex at 16, turning up to record a song called "The Letter" with them, hungover and sleepless after a night drinking, getting high and having sex with his girlfriend Kookie in a remote cemetery. It was his first time in the studio and, despite his ragged condition, he nailed the song in five takes.

"The Letter" went on to sell more than four million copies and for the next four years, the band, now called The Box Tops, ricocheted around the United States, touring relentlessly. Chilton enjoyed the money, the drugs and the girls, but he was quickly disenchanted by the band's music, which in his opinion was safe and predictable compared to bands The Box Tops appeared with, including The Beach Boys (with whom Alex became fast friends, spending time in LA with Dennis Wilson at the same time Charles Manson and his Family moved into Wilson's Malibu pad). The band lasted until February 1969 when after 40 minutes of a particularly desultory show in North Carolina, Alex walked offstage and out of the band.

George-Warren devotes a third of *A Man Called Destruction* to Chilton's Box Top years and because they're less well-documented than his subsequent career, they are the freshest pages in the book. After he forms Big Star with Chris Bell, we are on territory familiar from myriad posthumous retrospectives on that brilliant but ill-fated band, especially the 2012 documentary *Big Star: Nothing Can Hurt Me*, (*reviewed p100*) with which there is an inevitable and unflattering overlap. George-Warren is a busy fact-gatherer and clearly believes facts alone will tell the story, which is not always the case, and is further hampered by a prose style possibly more suited to the filling in of a census form. So her account of Big Star's compromised career – lavish critical acclaim, negligible album sales, Bell's meltdown and early death – fails to fully address their enduring appeal and Chilton's part in it. He remains in George-Warren's telling of his story distant, enigmatic and unexplained (it's a shock to belatedly discover she actually knew him).

"I listen to his new compilation," The Replacements' Paul Westerberg, who like REM eagerly acknowledged Big Star as an important formative influence, said of the 1991 Rhino release, *19 Years: A Collection Of Alex Chilton*, "and I can't make up my mind whether Alex was some brilliant chameleon or just a guy who fucking lost it real quick." Unless you already have a firm opinion on the matter, you might read this book and be left pondering the same unanswered question.

ALLAN JONES

Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

TOMMY RAMONE

The Ramones' drummer, producer and sometime manager

1949-2014

Tommy Ramone in 1976

IT'S EASY TO forget how radical the Ramones once appeared. "We liked horror comics, B-movies, *Mad* magazine," remembered Tommy Ramone in our March 2014 cover story. "At that time, everybody was so serious that anybody who used humour couldn't be taken seriously. They thought we were retarded and on the surface, it might have seemed that way. We had an encyclopaedic knowledge of music and all forms of culture. We had our tastes and they'd get filtered and all the crap thrown out."

Initially, Tommy was a reluctant performer. Originally the band's manager, he only took his place behind the drumkit after it became apparent that Joey Ramone couldn't keep up. With Joey now switched to vocals, Tommy provided the band's furious backbeat. But he wasn't simply the band's drummer: Tommy played a crucial role in the sound and early development of the band. "Through my life I came up with a lot of ideas," he told *Uncut*. "But this one not only happened, it worked out better than I could ever have imagined."

Born in Budapest to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, Thomas Erdelyi and his family emigrated to Forest Hills, New York, in 1953. At high school he played guitar in a garage band, the Tangerine Puppets, alongside bassist John Cummings, who later became Johnny Ramone. Fresh out of his teens, his musical career began as an assistant engineer, lending a hand to recordings by Mountain, Herbie Hancock and Jimi Hendrix's Band Of Gypsys. It was a grounding that proved vital when honing the sound of the Ramones, teaming up again with Johnny and friends Douglas Colvin (Dee Dee) and Jeffrey Hyman (Joey).

Essentially a bunch of misfits, the chemistry of the band was key to their development. "They were all dazzlingly intelligent and that manifested itself in radically different ways," Danny Fields, who became their manager, explained to *Uncut*. "Tommy was quiet but very organised. He loved detail. It was like the four weirdest kids in the neighbourhood and they hated each other from the beginning, the way teenagers hate each other."

Tommy gave the band focus, outlined the idea of block chords, provided what few guitar solos they needed on record and helped nail their leather-and-ripped-jeans look. He was a gifted songwriter too, his most notable contribution being rallying cry, "Blitzkrieg Bop". The song's iconic yelp of "*Hey! Ho! Let's go!*" was inspired, admitted Tommy, by the Bay City Rollers' chant-a-long "Saturday Night".

He was aboard for their first three studio albums – *Ramones*, *Leave Home* and *Rocket To Russia* – which he also co-produced. But by 1978, life on the road was starting to take a toll: "It was hard for me," he admitted to *Uncut*. "We got along great until we started touring, which is true of a lot of bands, but the Ramones were different, they were a little higher-strung that other bands. What made the music so different and exciting was their personalities, but their personalities were kind of rough to be in a band with. I lost touch with reality. I was in the Ramones world, not the normal world. It was like being in a Picasso painting, everything was sideways. You only have to listen to the songs to get an idea of what it was like to be with these people."

Tommy returned in 1984 to produce *Too Tough To Die*, after which he oversaw The Replacements' *Tim* (1985) and Redd Kross' *Neurotica* (1987). In later years he performed as bluegrass duo Uncle Monk, alongside his longtime partner, Claudia Tienan. His most recent studio contribution was in 2012, when he played mandolin on the track "Bird" from Chris Castle's album, *Last Bird Home*.

The last survivor of the original lineup, Tommy always maintained that he was a Ramone at heart. "We were so unique," he said. "What we were doing was so different from anything anybody had heard before. It was like we were from another world."

CAMERAPRESS

MABON 'TEENIE' HODGES

Soul guitarist and songwriter

1945-2014

"HE DOESN'T PLAY a lot of music, but what he plays is sophisticated," Al Green explained of 'Teenie' Hodges to *Rolling Stone* in 1973. "He'll play a little guitar, just a taste, but it means so much 'cause he puts it in the right place." Hodges' knack for an economical groove, marked by a warm and loose funkiness, was one of the crucial features of Green's early '70s output. As part of Hi-Records' house band, which included brothers Leroy (bass) and Charles (organ), Hodges was one of the chief architects of a new kind of Memphis soul. Key albums by Syl Johnson, Ann Peebles and OV Wright also carry his imprint.

He was no mean songwriter, either. Among his best-known compositions with Green were "Love And Happiness", "Here I Am (Come And Take Me)" and "Take Me To The River". The latter in particular has enjoyed a healthy afterlife through covers by Talking Heads, Levon Helm, Bryan Ferry, Tina Turner, the Grateful Dead, Annie Lennox and more. One of his earliest co-writes, with Isaac Hayes and David Porter, was for Sam & Dave's '65 hit "I Take What I Want", on which he also played guitar.

Hodges began in his father's band aged 12, before hooking up with his brothers as The Impalas. The siblings released a couple of moderate-selling albums of their own after working with Green, though Teenie later enjoyed something of a career spike when Cat Power enlisted him for 2005's *The Greatest*.

JIMMY SCOTT

Jazz singer

1925-2014

THE MANNER OF Jimmy Scott's resurrection carried more than a touch of perverse irony. All but forgotten by an industry that he'd first encountered five decades earlier, he'd been asked to perform at the funeral of his good friend, Doc Pomus. It was 1991 and Scott began singing George and Ira Gershwin's "Someone To Watch Over Me", as requested by Pomus himself, in the extraordinary contralto voice that made him so distinctive.

Among those in attendance was Seymour Stein, head of Sire Records. As Stein later told Scott's biographer David Ritz: "My God, I thought to myself, no-one in the world can sing this soulfully." Stein began working up a contract the next day, which led to Scott's Grammy-nominated comeback, *All The Way*. Around the same time, fellow mourner Lou Reed recruited Scott for *Magic And Loss*. Reed later said that he had "the most extraordinary voice I've ever heard in my life". Others followed, most notably David Lynch, who brought in Scott to sing "Sycamore Trees" for *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*.

Reared in Cleveland, Scott was born with Kallmann Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that stunted his physical growth and left him incapable of reaching puberty. With his voice still unusually high in adulthood, his singing style retained a haunting purity and innocence, amplified by the lovelorn nature of many of his jazz-flavoured ballads.

He first appeared in the Lionel Hampton Orchestra, where, billed as 'Little Jimmy Scott' in 1949, he sang lead on "Everybody's Somebody's Fool". It became a Top 10 R'n'B hit the following year, though his name was omitted from the recording credits. Undeterred, Scott began cutting sides under his own name. His debut album, *Very Truly Yours*, arrived on the Savoy label in 1955, but even the patronage of Ray Charles couldn't bring about a change in fortune. In 1963, he signed to Charles' Tangerine Records and released the striking *Falling In Love Is Wonderful*. Scott considered it a masterwork, but within days it was withdrawn after Savoy's Herman Lubinsky claimed the singer was in breach of a "lifetime" contract. It was another 40 years before the album was reissued.

Disillusioned, Scott largely turned his back on his profession. Instead, he returned to Cleveland to take up a succession of menial jobs. Yet he hadn't been forgotten. His admirers, at one time or another, had included such luminaries as Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Frankie Valli, Sarah Vaughan and Quincy Jones. The release of *All The Way* gave him an Indian summer that he could never have hoped for. Scott went on to record a whole bushel of albums and performed with modern-day fans like Reed, David Byrne and Antony & The Johnsons. He sang at Bill Clinton's 1993 Presidential inauguration, exactly 40 years since doing the same for Dwight Eisenhower. "In my adult life, people have looked at me as an oddity," he told David Ritz. "But early on, I saw my suffering as my salvation."

Jimmy Scott in the late '50s

CHARLIE HADEN

Free jazz bassist and bandleader

1937-2014

THE ROOTS OF Charlie Haden's musical philosophy can be traced to the Five Spot Café in New York. It was there, in 1959, that the Ornette Coleman Quartet began a six-week residency that defined the notion of free jazz. Though bassist Haden was familiar with the idea of improvisation, having been a part of Coleman's band on that year's *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*, this was a whole other realm. In Haden's words, Coleman's avant-garde approach resulted in "on-the-spot new chord structures, made up according to how he felt at any given moment". Among those in the audience were Leonard Bernstein, Lionel Hampton and Miles Davis.

Haden, who'd initially joined Coleman's quintet in LA, went on to apply the same principles when he joined Keith Jarrett's American Quartet in 1967. The group lasted for nine years, during which time Haden also played with Coleman-affiliated collective Old And New Dreams and founded the Liberation Music Orchestra. The latter, with music mostly arranged by pianist Carla Bley, offered him a political platform with experimental albums that addressed the Spanish Civil War and American involvement in Latin America. By the late '80s, Haden was dividing his time between the LMO and a new group, Quartet West.

Among those who used Haden as a sessioneer were Elvis Costello, Ginger Baker, Yoko Ono, Beck and Rickie Lee Jones. His legacy lives on through his children, three of whom make up Americana band, the Haden Triplets.

Felix Dennis, 1971

FELIX DENNIS

Oz co-editor/magazine publisher

1947-2014

BEFORE HEADING UP one of the most successful British publishing empires, Felix Dennis was a notorious figure. His tenure with underground magazine *Oz* led to an obscenity trial in 1971, after he oversaw the 'Schoolkids' edition that included a sexually explicit variation on Rupert Bear. Defence funds were partly raised by John Lennon, who recorded a benefit single. Dennis later amassed an estimated fortune of £500m as founder of *Maxim*, *The Week*, *PC World* and others.

CASEY KASEM

American disc jockey and actor

1932-2014

CASEY KASEM was fairly dismissive about the vocal delivery that made his career. "It's a natural quality of huskiness in the mid-range of my voice that I call 'garbage,'" he once told *The New York Times*. Despite his reservations, the Detroit-born DJ became one of the most distinctive presenters on US television and radio, hosting *America's Top 40*, on-and-off, from 1970 to 2009. He also achieved fame as the voice of Shaggy in TV cartoon series *Scooby-Doo*.

GETTY IMAGES/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE; JOE STEVENS

GERRY GOFFIN

Lyricist in songwriting duo Goffin & King

1939-2014

IN 1963, THE same year that The Beatles covered "Chains" and "Don't Ever Change", John Lennon stated that he and Paul McCartney aspired to be the "Goffin and King of England". The songwriting team of Gerry Goffin and Carole King had by then notched up four US No 1 singles and a further 16 Top 30 hits. The fact that they'd done it in less than three years was an indication of just how fruitful a partnership it was, both on a creative and personal level.

At 24, lyricist Goffin was three years older than King, who he'd married in August 1959. They'd first got together as students at Queens College in New York, where Goffin wanted someone to compose melodies for a musical play about beatniks. Meetings in the college lounge led to a romantic relationship and a change of tack. As Goffin later explained: "I began to lose heart in my play, and we stuck to writing rock'n'roll."

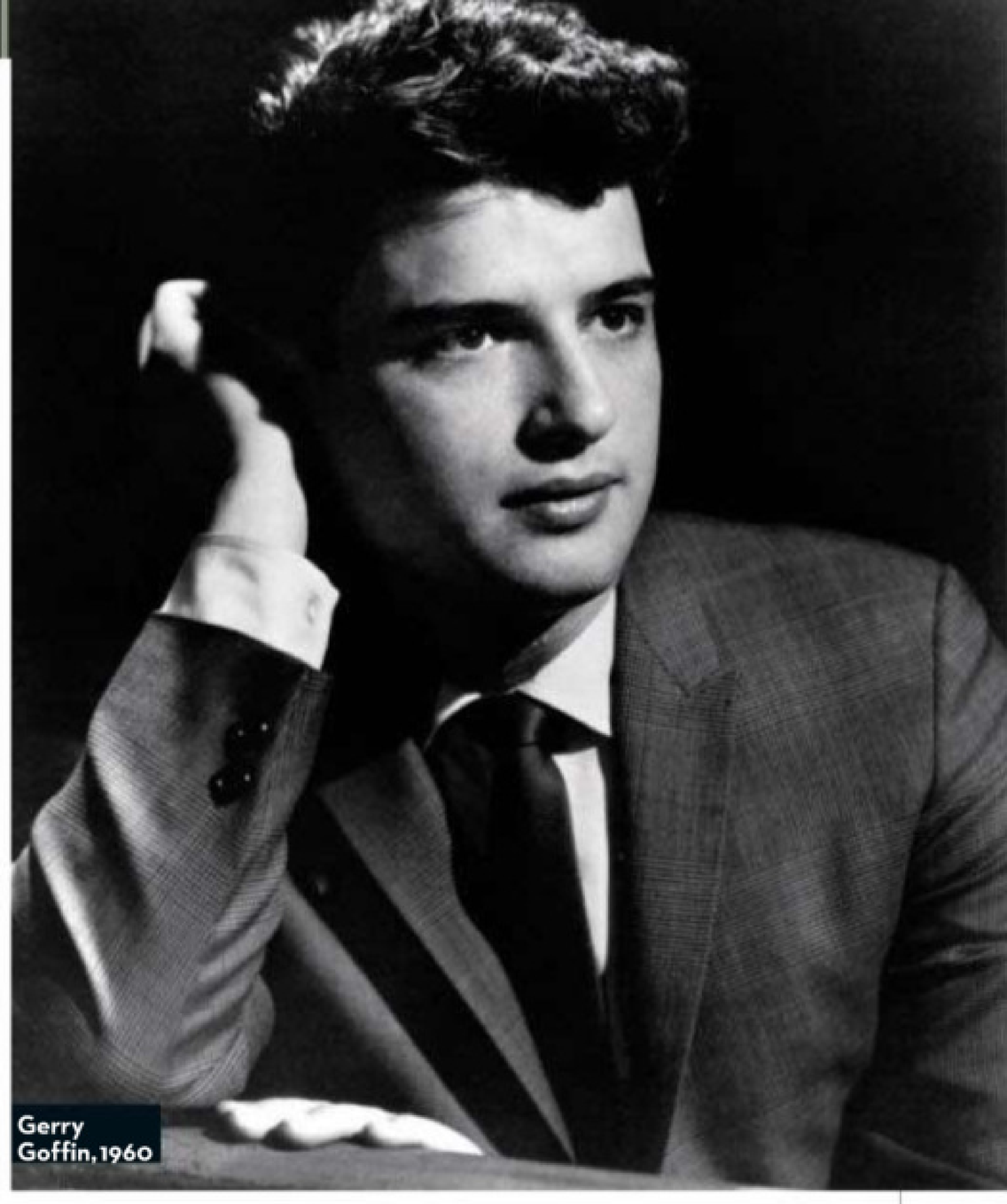
The duo's first 45, "Oh! Neil", was conceived as an answer to "Oh! Carol", a hit for King's high school boyfriend Neil Sedaka. Backed by the Goffin-King effort "A Very Special Boy", the single stiffed, but was intriguing enough for Don Kirshner to sign them to his Manhattan publishing company, Aldon Music. It was there, as part of the Brill Building collective that extended to 1650 Broadway, that the pair began collaborating in earnest.

Their breakthrough success, and arguably their finest moment, came in January 1961. Goffin came home after a night out to find a tape recorder and note from King, asking him to add words to a melody she'd written for all-girl group, The Shirelles. Goffin swiftly came up with the lyrics that became "Will You Love Me Tomorrow", investing the song with both youthful apprehension and sensual longing. The single raced to the top of the *Billboard* chart. "His words expressed what so many people were feeling but didn't know how to say," King said of Goffin.

The hits kept coming. Prominent among them were "Take Good Care Of My Baby" (Bobby Vee), "The Loco-Motion" (recorded by their sometime babysitter, Little Eva), "Go Away Little Girl" (Steve Lawrence), "One Fine Day" (The Chiffons), "Up On The Roof" (The Drifters), "Don't Bring Me Down" (The Animals), "Goin' Back" (Dusty Springfield), "Pleasant Valley Sunday" (The Monkees) and the Aretha Franklin classic, "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman".

But as the decade wore on, it was clear that all was not well in their marriage. In 1964, Goffin had an affair with Jeanie Reavis, singer with The Cookies, who gave birth to their child. King opted to stay with him, though tensions came to a head after Goffin began using LSD and mescaline. The adverse effects led to bouts of mental illness. In her autobiography, King admitted that she sent her husband for electro-shock therapy.

The pair divorced in 1968, after which Goffin made an unsuccessful stab at a solo career. Yet he remained a prolific lyricist, teaming up with the likes of Barry Goldberg and Michael Masser. He received an Oscar nomination with the latter for Diana Ross' "Theme From Mahogany (Do You Know Where You're Going To)" and later scored hits with "Saving All My Love For You" (Whitney Houston) and "Tonight, I Celebrate My Love" (Roberta Flack and Peabo Bryson). Goffin and King were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 1990. At the news of his death, King paid tribute to Goffin's "profound impact" on her life, adding that his "creative influence will resonate for generations to come".



Gerry Goffin, 1960

HORACE SILVER

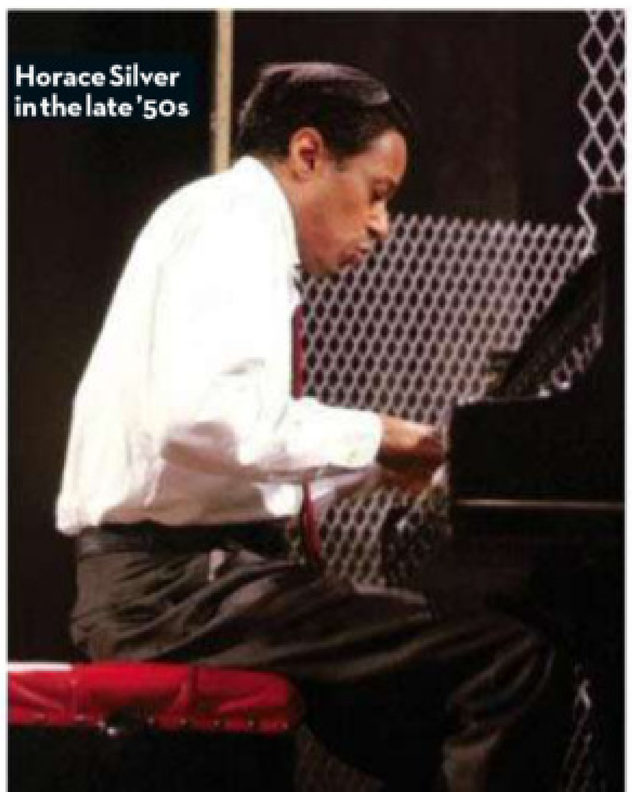
Jazz pianist, hard bop pioneer

1928-2014

AMERICAN JAZZ WOULD never be the same after Horace Silver's arrival. One of the genre's true pioneers, he was largely responsible for the development of hard bop, which introduced gospel and R'n'B to jazz forms. In 1951, he formed the Jazz Messengers with drummer Art Blakey in New York, initially as part of an ensemble, and within a few years was also recording for Blue Note as The Horace Silver Trio. His first major success came in 1955, when *Horace Silver And The Jazz Messengers* established the quintet formula that was to guide him for most of his subsequent career. The album yielded the hit "The Preacher". A year later he split from Blakey, taking the rest of the Messengers with him to form his own hard bop outfit.

Other landmark releases included *Blowin' The Blues Away* (1959), which featured one of his most popular compositions, "Sister Sadie", and 1965's *Song For My Father*. The title track of the latter would provide Steely Dan with the bass riff for "Rikki Don't Lose That Number". Silver's approach, meanwhile, proved a huge influence on pianists like Bobby Timmons, Ramsey Lewis and Cecil Taylor. "When I first heard Horace," Taylor said, "[*it*] turned me around and finally fixed my idea of piano playing."

Silver's post-1970 work, which reflected his burgeoning interest in cosmic philosophy on albums like *Silver 'N Strings Play The Music of The Spheres*, tended to divide opinion. He left Blue Note in 1980, though he continued to record for Impulse! and Columbia.



Horace Silver in the late '50s

GETTY IMAGES/CHARLIE GILLETT COLLECTION/DAVID REDFERN

ANNIK HONORÉ

Journalist, promoter and Joy Division associate

1957-2014

ANNIK HONORÉ, WHO has died after suffering from cancer, began promoting events at Brussels' Plan K in late 1979, when Cabaret Voltaire and Joy Division played at the opening night. Despite claims to the contrary by widow Deborah, Honoré always maintained that her relationship with Ian Curtis was "completely pure and platonic". She also co-founded the labels Factory Benelux and Les Disques du Crépuscule, issuing records by Josef K, Michael Nyman and The Pale Fountains, among others.

JOHNNY MANN

Arranger, singer and TV presenter

1928-2014

WITH THEIR PERFECT tone, ready smiles and matching outfits, the Johnny Mann Singers were a throwback to a less complicated brand of American showbiz in the countercultural era. Mann led the group to two Grammys with easy-listening versions of popular song. Their biggest hit came in 1967, when they took Jimmy Webb's "Up, Up And Away" into the Top 10. From 1971-74, he also hosted a variety show, *Stand Up And Cheer*, on US TV.

ULTRA VIOLET

Warhol Factory 'superstar'

1935-2014

SUCH WAS ISABELLE Dufresne's rebellious nature that she claimed her strictly religious parents had her exorcised as a teenager. After studying art in her native France, she became a pupil of Salvador Dalí, who later introduced her to Andy Warhol in New York. Warhol rechristened her Ultra Violet and, as one of the Factory's original 'Superstars', she appeared in several of his underground films. She made one solitary album for Capitol, before devoting her later years to art projects. *ROB HUGHES*

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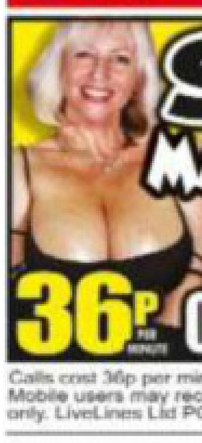

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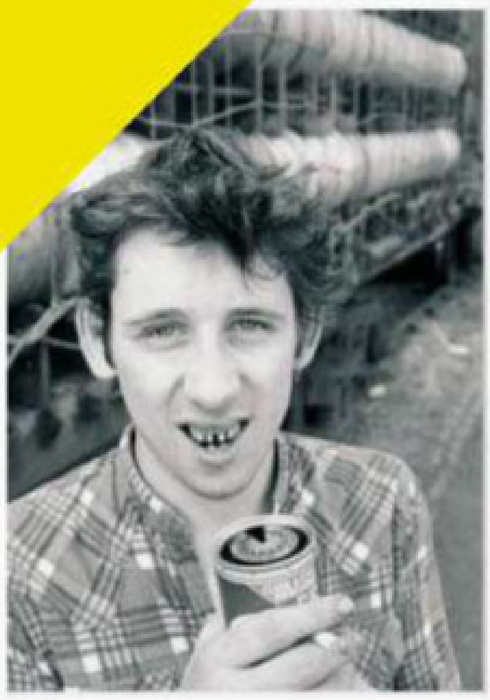

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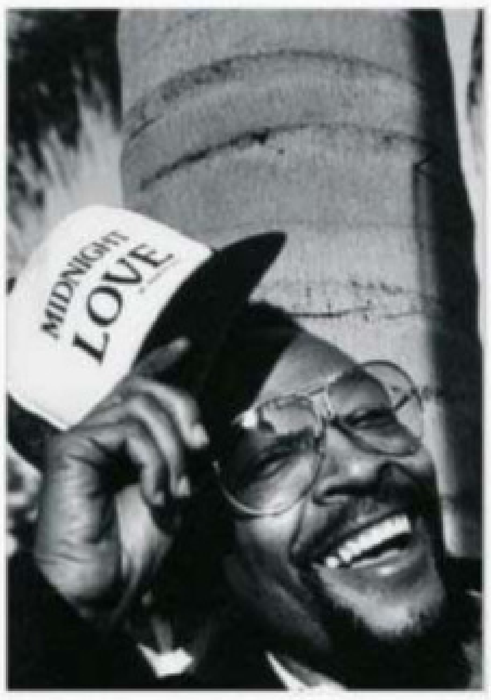

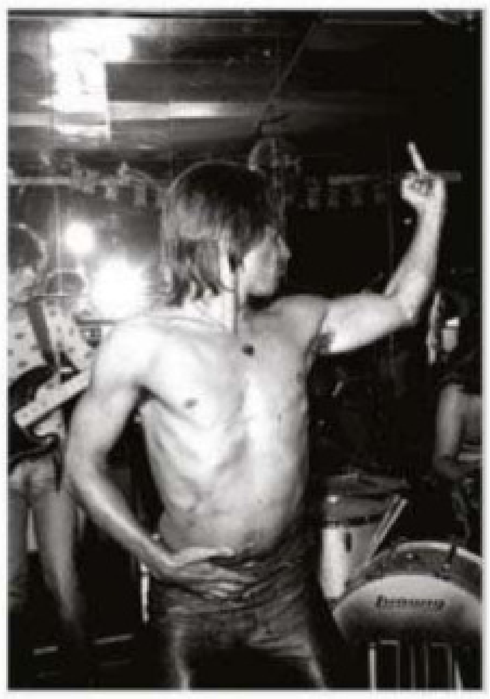

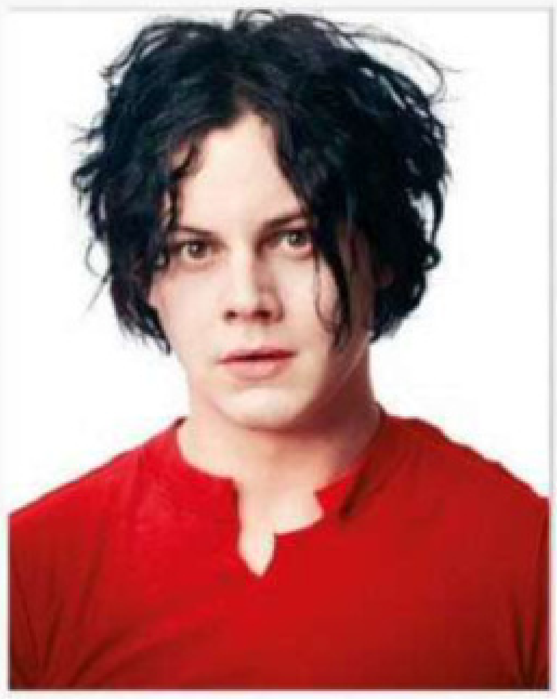

20 Iconic images curated by editor John Mulvey, completely refreshed for 2014.
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THE BALLAD OF ALLAN JONES

An affectionate tribute to your founding editor, crew and passengers of the good ship:

THE MUSIC LOVERS

Here's to all the farts like me
Who live their lives vicariously.
We must be mad, we must be sick
To let the Zimmer get our kicks.
As sweet as Stan, as sad as Chet –
I guess we haven't heard it yet.
So we read with baited breath:
Another star, another death.

Through the years we've slowly learned
To have our prejudice confirmed
By people who, like us, can't play
But know about it anyway.
What was it that Zappa said?
It doesn't matter now he's dead.
We were partners in the crime
That seemed important at the time.

To cap it all (I make no bones)
There is that fellow Allan Jones.
He rode the New Wave out of punk
And drank wherever drink was drunk
To chew the fat with Basher Lowe,
Doctor Feelgood, Cos-tell-o.
Jones has beaten all the odds
For one so hammered by the gods.

Catching glimpses of Nirvana,
He beheld Americana.
Now he's only ever fond
Of acts who hail across the pond.
Dylan, Springsteen, REM;
He chased the tales of all of them.
I'm not saying mine's been bad
But he's lived the life I should have had.

Digger Lawrence, Barnstaple, North Devon

SEEGER VS MacCOLL ROUND 4!

I've been a reader of *Uncut* since the first edition and it's a fine publication. I'm usually too busy to read everything, though, and I missed the recent article on Seeger and MacColl. However, I was amused by Jon Groocock's response to his critics (Feedback, Take 207), especially when he joins the 'keep politics out of rock music' brigade, a diverse and dozy bunch including Peter Noone and Steve Vai. How exactly is this ignoble aim to be achieved? Through legislation? If so, the even dozier world of 'lifelong libertarian anarchists' seems to have taken, improbably, a turn for the even worse. If not, let people sing and play what they will and the punters will decide. The three examples Groocock mentions are all tremendous rock songs – isn't that the point? Was Bob Dylan a "tuneless millionaire" when he wrote "Masters Of War"? Groocock might be happy listening to Cliff, Herman's Hermits and The Brotherhood Of Man, but perhaps there's more to it than that. Great music is great music, often because of its intellectual, emotional and political origins. Lest we forget, it was the anarchists who handed Franco an easy victory in the Spanish Civil War. Avalon Free State? Avalon What A State, more like. Peace.

Dave McGowan, Usk, Wales

Alynda Lee Segarra of Hurray For The Riff Raff

A QUESTION OF INTERPRETATION...

The illuminating, Bayou-soaked feature on Alynda Lee Segarra in the August issue follows a recent trend we're seeing in TV singing competitions and elsewhere of forgetting the writers of songs and crediting the performers who had hits with them – think of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah", now pretty well credited to Jeff Buckley (who in fact substantially altered the lyrics). In this way, John Mulvey (welcome to the big chair, John!) attributes "The Ballad Of Ira Hayes" to its wonderful interpreter Johnny Cash. Actually, not only was its author the largely unheralded folk singer Peter La Farge, but the story gets strange quickly: Cash was said to be the person who introduced La Farge to the potent anti-psychotic Thorazine (which Cash took along with a medicine chest of other meds to come down from amphetamines), and La Farge proceeded in a few short years to die of an OD from that very same drug. RIP to both these lonesome heroes, but let La Farge have his due for his most successful song. And say, John, how about an ongoing column on song origins?

Dalton Delan, Washington, DC

KRIS: GOLDEN MESSENGER

Having read the *Uncut* review of the Sturgill Simpson album *Metamodern Sounds In Country Music*, I duly purchased my copy. And a fine album it is. The more I played the album, the more I was reminded of Kris Kristofferson. A giant of country, Americana, call it what you will.

Gram Parsons is rightly lauded as a godfather of modern country music. I would contend that Kristofferson's first two albums are as equally important as Parsons' two solo albums, in both quality and in the effect they had on our perceptions, and interestingly were released two years prior.

I would urge anyone who has not got copies of *Kristofferson* and *The Silver Tongued Devil And I* to rectify that situation.

I have bought every copy of *Uncut* since it was first published and look forward to receiving my copy every month. However, while I accept that old age plays tricks on the memory, I cannot ever recall a major Kristofferson retrospective. If I am right, then I would ask you guys to consider such a project.

He was critical to the development and understanding of country music and has written some of its greatest songs.

Alan Stringer, via email

Thanks, Alan. You might want to have a rummage through some of our back issues to catch up on the previous occasions when Kris has graced our pages. In Take 61, we interviewed him for our Film By Film feature; we hosted An Audience With... Kristofferson in Take 151, and in Take 187, he talked us through his many career highs in our Album By Album feature.

KEEP (SKY) LARKING AROUND!

Great to see a decent-size review of XTC's *Skylarking* but surely an opportunity missed for an 'XTC in the '80s' article?

They were just about the only British band (apart from The Smiths maybe) that decade that took risks with each release and pushed themselves into new territories.

By the way, I still think that "Earn Enough For Us" from *Skylarking* was the best track that The Beatles never put on *Revolver*.

Come on then – get Partridge and Moulding in front of that interview mic and let's get the real heavy jelly from them on their 'English psychedelic' phase.

Alan Savage, via email

NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE, HYDE PARK, JULY 12: YOUR REVIEWS!

I have seen NY, NY&CH, NY and The Bluenotes, and CSNY, and I continue to get blown away. At age 57, I am a child of big rock concerts... Pink Floyd, LZ, the Dead, The Who... and I have always had Neil Young on the top of my list.

Regarding the show this past weekend, I thought the sound was some of the best I have heard in my life. [Ralph] Molina's drums were wailing and, though I like Billy [Talbot] more than Rick [Rosas], Rick did well and knows Neil like no-one else, really. Poncho [Sampedro] is the most underrated rhythm guitarist in the world. Neil was really good – I love jams and expected him to rip it... and he did!

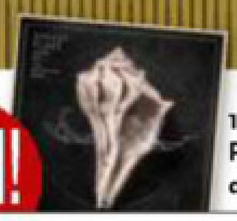
What I like most about NY is his total dedication to his craft and avoidance of in-house politics. Maybe Robert Plant and David Gilmour could take heed, they both piss me off with their stand-offishness. Maybe it is one of the endearing North American charms the UK needs more of. Neil doesn't give a shit about what people think of him, he and his mutton chops just play on and rock will never die.

Steve Kirchner, via email

...We travelled up from Somerset to see Neil Young. However, we were surrounded by a group of wankers so high on drink and drugs they couldn't care less who they offended. They decided they were only there to talk all the way through it, take endless selfies and piss in the plastic beer cups (this included the girls). Another couple barged their way in and stood so close to us my husband had to ask them to get out of his face. Again, these two were completely trollied. Another group next to us were also passing the spliffs around, but at least they weren't annoying everyone. So sadly this was not very enjoyable to say the least, despite being Neil Young fans.

Sara Rossiter, via email

CROSSWORD



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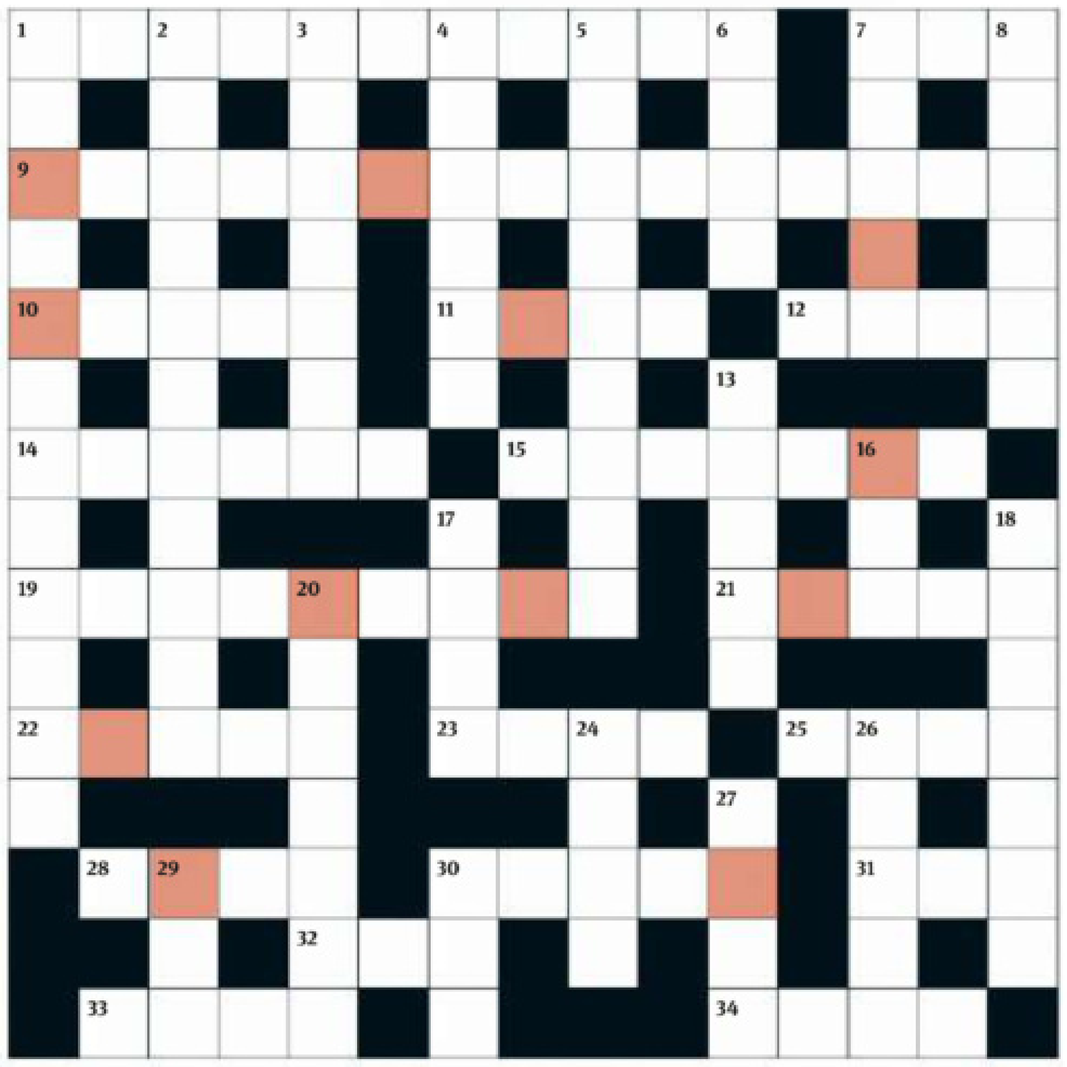

HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Robert Plant. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut September 2014 Xword Comp, 8th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: Monday, August 25, 2014. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

1 Having the look of a mesmerising album – it ain't nothin' but Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers (8-3)
7 "*It ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker*", 1970 (3)
9 Tim Buckley was on his way out and then on his way back in with this album (7-3-5)
10 (See 27 down)
11 Sigh awkwardly as a Smashing Pumpkins album appears (4)
12 Producer for The Animals, Donovan and Kim Wilde (4)
14+15A Indisputably, this is The Cranberries (2-4-2-5)
19 1963 hit that was allegedly plagiarised by George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" (3-2-4)
21+3D Men doubled up on hearing this Billy Bragg album? (5-2-5)
22 (See 33 across)
23 (See 6 down)
25 (See 1 down)
28 That company included a record label in America (4)
30 "*Sing us a song, you're the _____ man*", Billy Joel (5)
31 "*We got a kinder, gentler machine ___ hand*", from Neil Young's "Rockin' In The Free World" (3)
32 Legendary guitarist is partly available (3)
33+22A Naturally eggs on The Fall to do this number (4-5)
34 "*Girls will be boys and boys will be girls*", 1970 (4)

CLUES DOWN

1+25A The conditions surrounding an album by Aztec Camera (4-4-4-4)
2 "*I'm up each day with the rising sun/ I've got a job and it must be done*", 1965 (4-4-3)
3 (See 21 across)
4 "*The _____ is coming, the sun is zooming in*", from The Clash's "London Calling" (3-3)
5 Seen minor changes made to a Colin Blunstone album (9)
6+23A Grounds on which to hear again an album by Feeder (4-4)
7 Their albums include *Summerteeth* and *Sky Blue Sky* (5)
8+24D The Waterboys stray into an area where they have no real direction (4-2-4)
13 Johnny Marr was their guitarist for a while (5)
16 Rock band fronted by Phil Mogg since 1969 (3)
17 The immoral earnings of a 50 Cent piece (4)
18 Sounds like he's there to stay for the Pet Shop Boys (7)
20 1977 Bob Marley hit that was a medley with Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready" (3-4)
24 (See 8 down)
26 "*I've been searching for the daughter of the devil himself/I've been searching for an _____ in white*", from the Eagles' "One Of These Nights" (5)
27+10A Caribbean dance to American music on album by Booker T & The MG's (4-5)
29 Poly Styrene included an album by Black Sabbath (3)
30 This Yeah Yeah Yeahs number certainly had a point (3)

ANSWERS: TAKE 206

ACROSS
1 Turn Blue, 5+14A Julian Cope, 8 Exposed, 9+34A Diamond Dogs, 10 At The Drive-In, 17+20A El Paso, 18 Fish, 22+12A Phil Ochs, 23 Stop, 25 Air, 26 Mining, 27 Hurrah, 29 Gun, 30 Eat, 32 NWO.

DOWN
1 The Madcap Laughs, 2 Rip It Up, 3+16D Basket Of Light, 4 Under The Pink, 6 Luminous, 7+35A Ain't She Sweet, 11+36A Van Halen, 13 Sleep, 19 Hut, 21 Strange, 24+5D Orange Juice, 26 Mount, 28+15A Red Rhino, 31 All, 33 Oh.

HIDDEN ANSWER
"Cold Moments"

Xword compiled by:
Trevor Hungerford

UNCUT

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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Jenny Lewis

Pot roast jams, Ethiopian honeyslides, imaginary harmonica solos and the soundtrack to the singer's life!

My dressing room soundtrack

The Durutti Column
Amigos Em Portugal 1983

I toured with The Postal Service last year, and we had a record player, and Jimmy [Tamborello] would go out in the town we were in and buy a bunch of records. He bought this, and we'd listen to it backstage, before playing the Barclays Center, Lollapalooza, all these monumental shows. I assumed it was world music, but then when you find out it's world music through this Manchester filter, it's really fucking cool.

A spiritual album

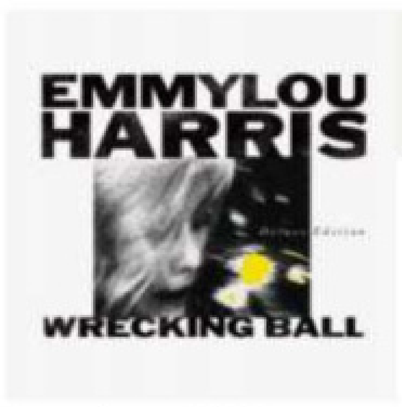
The Brothers And Sisters
Dylan's Gospel 1969

These are gospel covers of classic Bob Dylan songs, and it's just been reissued on Light In The Attic. It's just great song after great song, and to hear something exist in another musical realm and still work is really exciting. And I don't think these songs are from Bob's Christian period, but they all really, really resonate with spirituality. Merry Clayton is one of the singers on the record and, you know, she's a fucking legend.

An album that reminds me of my father

The War On Drugs
Lost In The Dream 2014

This has been on constant rotation since it came out. My dad was from Philadelphia, and so although I've never lived in Philly I feel connected to Philly bands. My dad was in a comedy harmonica troupe. He got a start at a famous harmonica school in Philly, and learned how to play on a wax harmonica, so the legend goes. So whenever I listen to these Philly bands, I imagine a lonely harmonica solo off in the distance.



An album I've just discovered

Emmylou Harris
Wrecking Ball 1995

This is a record that I didn't really listen to at all when it first came out, but we've been putting it on in the house recently, and it's just so beautiful. We were trying to figure out, "Who's that singing in the background? Like, who is that?" Then, our friend came over and said, "Oh, that's Neil Young." And once you hear him singing on the title track, which he also wrote, you can't really unhear him. It's pretty magical stuff.

An album to cook pot roasts to

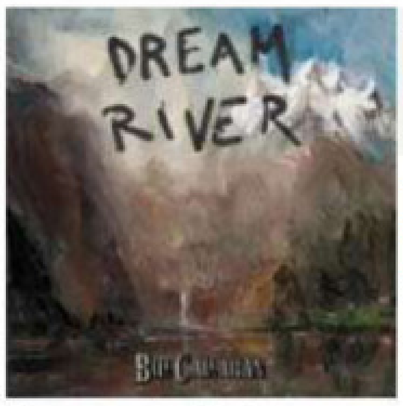
Cass McCombs
Wit's End 2011

I bought a cassette copy of *Wit's End* a couple of years ago at the Bowery Ballroom, when I went to see Cass McCombs. I must have listened to it in my kitchen a thousand times. It's just the perfect music for any occasion: a party, making a pot roast, watering your plants – I mean, it's just so good, and "County Line" is a true classic. It has improved my cooking, yeah – pot roasts with some Cass McCombs are a little bit more tender.

A 'morphine drip' of an album

Gétatchèw Mèkurya
Ethiopiques, Vol. 14: Negus Of Ethiopian Sax 2003

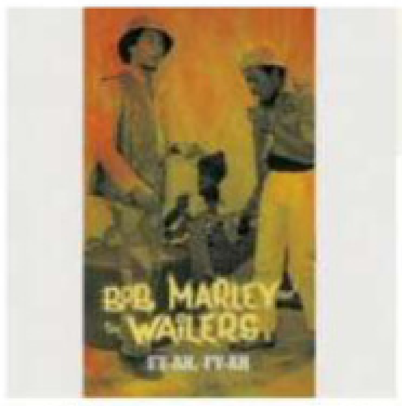
This is instrumental with a lot of sax. It's the equivalent of a morphine drip, or honeyslides – like Neil Young was supposed to have had around *On The Beach*. They're very, very strong, high in THC. This Ethiopiques album is a reedy, beautiful record that lulls you to sleep. I absolutely love it. There's so much amazing African music, especially from the 1970s – that and Jamaican music.



My favourite living lyricist

Bill Callahan
Dream River 2013

I'm impressed by records that are 10 or fewer songs – it's way easier to include everything, but being able to edit yourself and choose the essence of what you want to say is hard. Bill Callahan is my favourite lyricist still living – he invokes such a specific feeling. Sometimes his songs are like movies. He just put out a record of dub remixes of *Dream River*, *Have Fun With God*. It's great! The "Javelin Unlanding" remix is pretty sick.



A compilation to make anyone feel better

Bob Marley And The Wailers **Fy-Ah, Fy-Ah** 2004

I like when American music makes its way around the world then gets filtered back through another country. This is early Wailers, and the singing is so fucking good. I was looking for something to play pre-show. Never allow a venue to put their music on before your show – it could be anything... and it's funny to look into a crowd at little teenagers bopping heads to Bob Marley. Put this on; you'll be feeling much better very quickly.

Jenny Lewis' ***The Voyager*** *is out now on Warner Bros. She plays the End Of The Road festival in Dorset on Aug 29*

INTERVIEW: TOM PINNOCK PHOTO: AUTUMN DE WILDE

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT: *"Competition was heavy... we were a bunch of dogs guarding the meat house!"*

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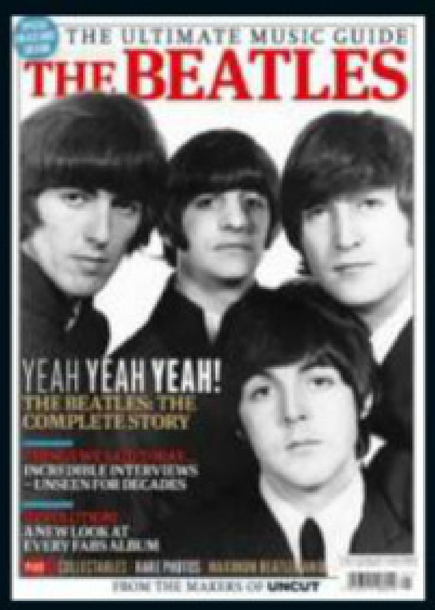

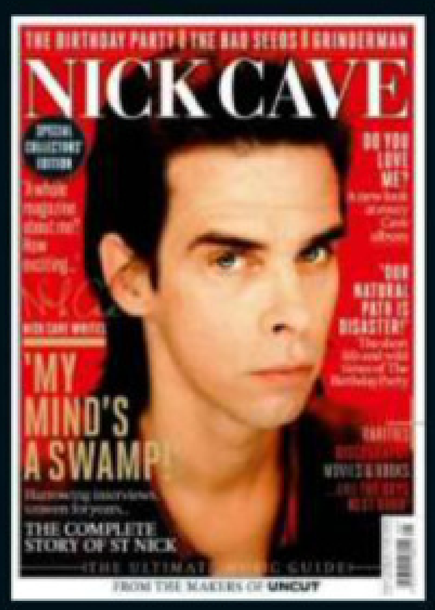

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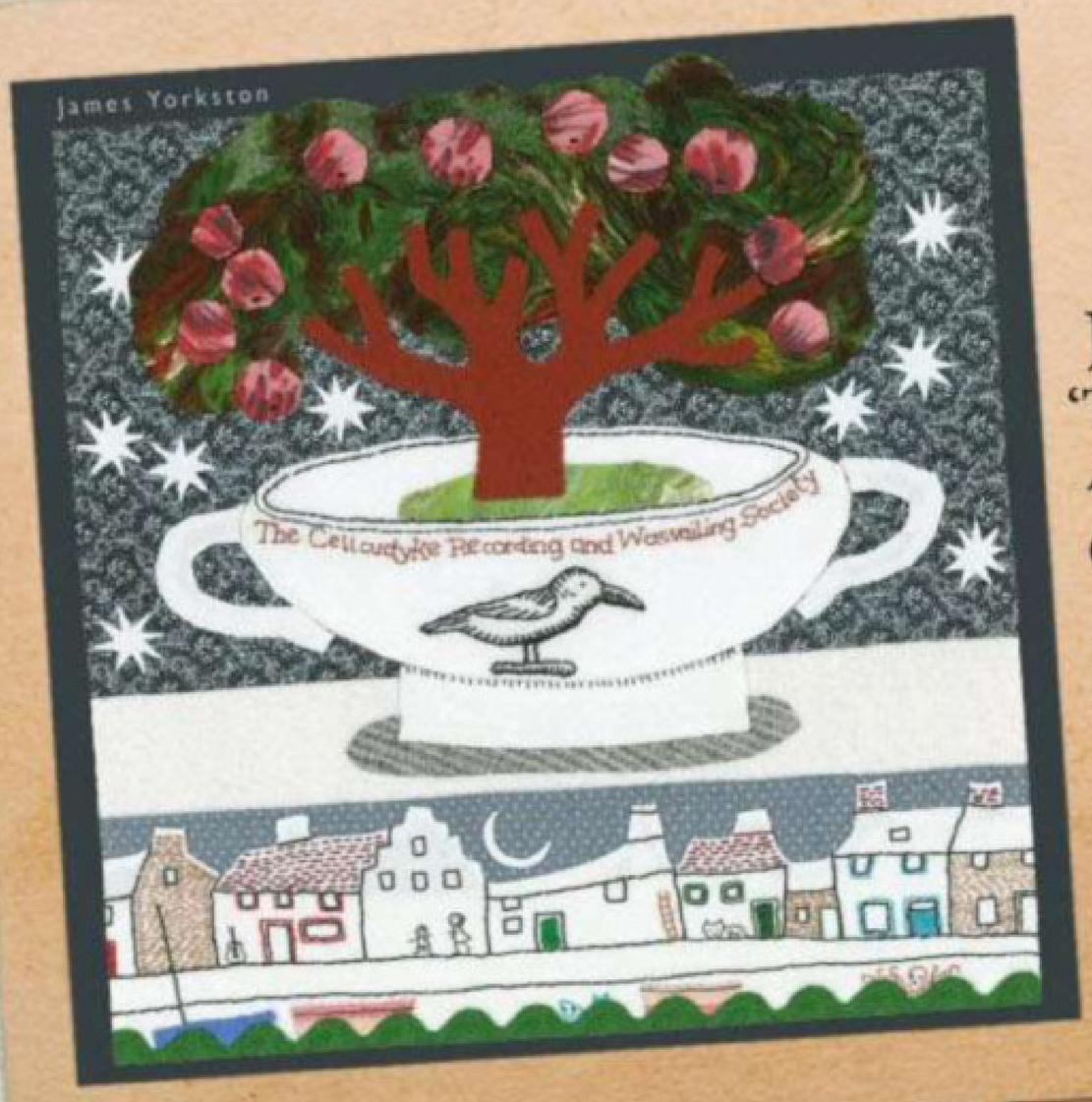

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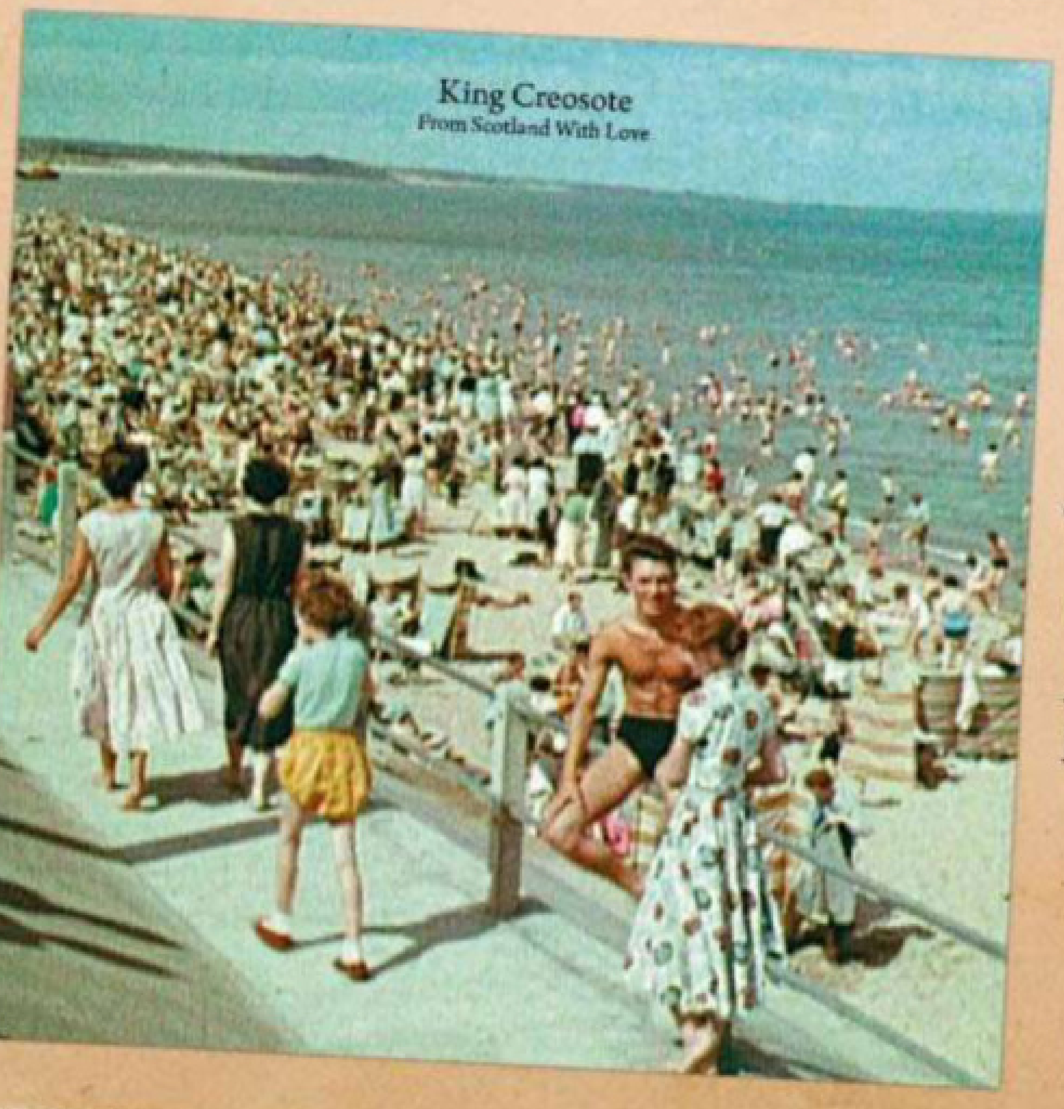

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