

ALBUMS BONANZA! NEW ORDER! GILMOUR! QUEEN!

PLUS

40 MORE PAGES OF REVIEWS

FACES

ROBERT FORSTER

RICHARD HAWLEY

LOW

LINK WRAY

AND MORE...

UNCUT

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW!

'I'm in competition
with **everyone**'

McCARTNEY

Sir Paul on **Lennon**,
self-loathing and
gunmen in the bushes



KEITH RICHARDS

'I'll tell you this,
I ain't retiring'

JOHN LYDON

'You can't expect me
to be angry forever!'

SQUEEZE

Carry on
up the
junction

DAN AUERBACH

Life beyond
The Black Keys

...AND INTRODUCING

JULIA HOLTER

DAVID BOWIE
KURT VILE
MERCURY REV
BJÖRK
THE SONICS

ROGER WATERS
BEIRUT
RICHARD FARIÑA
UNCLE ACID &
THE DEADBEATS

DAVID GILMOUR



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New Album September 18th 2015

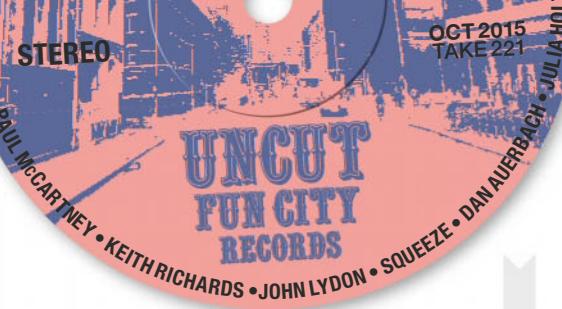
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Are we rolling?



Julia Holter

IT FEELS PRETTY disingenuous writing the introduction to this month's *Uncut*, since for most of the issue's gestation I was waltzing round Sardinia living out my less toxic Julian Cope fantasies. When I arrived back, in the face of looming deadlines, I discovered that my colleagues had assembled a startlingly high-powered lineup of interviewees: a charming, philosophical John Lydon; Dan Auerbach, embracing life beyond The Black Keys; a rejuvenated Squeeze (Jools Holland compares them to Chaucer, enterprisingly); Paul McCartney at his most candid; and, at the last moment, Keith Richards at his most irrepressibly Keith-esque.

There's also a great piece about the adventurous LA

singer-songwriter Julia Holter, which compounds the sense that this month is a significant one for newer talent as much as it is for returning heroes. Some of them might be unfamiliar names, but you may well already own a few records featuring their contributions – Phil Cook, for instance, whose work with Justin Vernon, Matthew E White, Hiss Golden Messenger and Frazey Ford has been a near-constant soundtrack in the *Uncut* office these past few years. Phil's splendidly Cooderish *Southland Mission* is our Americana Album Of The Month on p72.

The guitarist James Elkington, meanwhile, has lately figured in Steve Gunn's band, as well as doing shifts on this summer's new albums by Richard Thompson and Eleventh Dream Day. It's a small world – incestuous in unlikely places, perhaps – and one made even smaller by Elkington's lovely duet album with the fingerpicking folklorist Nathan Salsburg. On this month's free *Uncut* CD, you'll find the pair's brilliant deconstruction of The Smiths' "Reel Around The Fountain", which incidentally makes explicit the young Johnny Marr's debt to Bert Jansch.

One of Elkington's other recent gigs has been as part of Jeff Tweedy's solo band, which brings me to an apology with regard to that aforementioned *Uncut* CD. The keenest among you may have already spotted that, while Wilco are listed as being part of this month's tracklisting on the sleeve, there isn't actually a track by them on the CD itself, much as we love the *Star Wars* album that they sneaked out for free a few weeks ago. Again, sorry for the cock-up; hopefully there's plenty more good things on there to compensate.

Thanks for your patience,

John Mulvey, Editor
Follow me on Twitter @JohnRMulvey

UNCUT

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PAGE
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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT
Featuring THE WALL | END OF THE ROAD | RICHARD FARIÑA | UNCLE ACID



“Keep your 'lectric eye on me, babe...”

The lesser-spotted Bowie returns to the archives

YOU CAN TELL a lot about David Bowie's early history by the colour of his hair. In January 1972, Bowie visited photographer Brian Ward's new studio in Heddon St, Mayfair, along with his then-unnamed backing band. Bowie had been here a few weeks previously, for the session that eventually appeared on the *Ziggy Stardust* album sleeve. Returning on this second occasion with his bandmates, Bowie's new Ziggy look was still evidently a work-in-progress, as Ward's photographs illustrate. Bowie's hair, for instance, had yet to be dyed that familiar shade of red (it was unveiled at his Assembly

Ballroom, Aylesbury show on January 29).

This rarely seen picture [above] from the session now appears in *David Bowie Five Years: 1969-1973*, the first in a series of boxsets that will map out the opening two decades of The Dame's remarkable career. Volume One unites Bowie's groundbreaking run of albums from that period – from *David Bowie* through to *Pin Ups* – as well as assorted singles, B-sides and rarities. Of special interest to Bowie aficionados will be a previously unreleased single edit of “All The Madmen” and the original mono single version of “Holy Holy”, unavailable since 1971.

The set also includes an introduction from Ray

Davies (“There are so many changes in his music, with such a rush of ideas overflowing with imagination, that it makes the brain race,” he writes) along with photos, contemporaneous reviews and new essays from the two producers Bowie worked with during this period – Tony Visconti and Ken Scott. “I remember David full of excitement and having a strong belief in himself and his genius songs,” recalls Visconti. “We felt we were going to change the world with this music.” **MICHAEL BONNER**

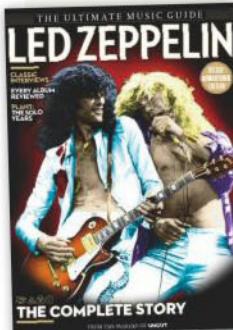
David Bowie Five Years: 1969-1973 is released on September 25 by Parlophone Records



Ziggy and his Spiders: (l-r)
Bolder, Woodmansey,
Bowie and Ronson

A QUICK ONE

► The *Uncut* stable currently has another couple of mags on sale for your delectation. Our **History Of Rock** monthly series has hit '66, full of astonishing stories from the NME and Melody Maker archives, and we've also produced a deluxe upgraded version of our *Ultimate Music*



Guide: *Led Zeppelin*. For full details, and the latest news, reviews, playlists and so forth, visit www.uncut.co.uk.

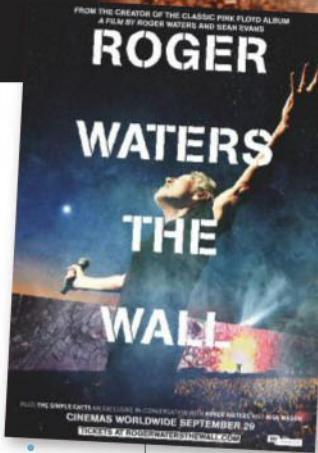
► Shortly after our review of the new **Faces** box had gone to press (p95), news arrived of the surviving members reforming to play a show for Prostate Cancer UK. They will reunite in the unlikely environs of Hurtwood Park Polo Club, Ewhurst, Surrey at Rock'n'Horsepower on September 5. "This year is the 40th anniversary since The Faces parted ways so it's about time we got together for a jam," says Stewart. "Being in The Faces back in the day was a whirlwind of madness but my God, it was beyond brilliant."

► **Patti Smith**'s second volume of memoirs, *M Train*, is due on October 6, and she is scheduled to celebrate Horses' 40th anniversary with a couple of shows at London's Roundhouse on October 30 and 31. Now, though, comes news that her first autobio, *Just Kids*, is to be turned into a TV series for Showtime. Smith will collaborate with John Logan, showrunner on *Penny Dreadful*. Early days, but internet gossip and *Uncut* opinion favours Kristen Stewart as the young Patti.

Is there anybody out there? Roger Waters in on stage action in a new film of *The Wall*



THE WALL REBUILT



Bring the boys back home

Roger Waters unveils his new version of *The Wall*: "an anti-war protest film" that mixes concert footage with a more personal journey...

IN EARLY 2013, Roger Waters travelled from his home in Hampshire to Europe. Driving his trusty Bentley across the continent, the purpose of Waters' road trip was to visit the Commonwealth War Graves cemeteries in France and Italy where his grandfather and father are buried. This pilgrimage was filmed by director Sean Evans and forms the emotional core of Waters' latest project – a hybrid concert film and documentary, *Roger Waters: The Wall*, that Waters describes as "an anti-war protest film".

Evans first worked with Waters in 2005 as visual designer for his 'Ca Ira' opera and, later, his 2006-2008 The Dark Side Of The Moon tour. "Dark Side... was pretty successful," says Evans with understatement. "We thought, 'What are we going to do now?' When Roger suggested *The Wall*, he said, 'It can't be about the angsty rock star. That's not who I am any more. I've grown out of that.'"

"When I wrote *The Wall*, it was very much a personal record of times of anguish that I had felt," admits Waters. "The reason I went back to it is because I felt it had a larger message: a broader, more ecumenical, more political, global anti-war message."

To capture the scale and ambition of the 2010-2013 tour of *The Wall*, Evans



"I went back to *The Wall* because I felt it had a broader global message"
Roger Waters

used as many as 10 cameramen to film three shows across two continents. But while *The Wall*'s anti-war message had undoubtedly global resonance, Evans was also keen to connect the film to Waters' own personal experiences.

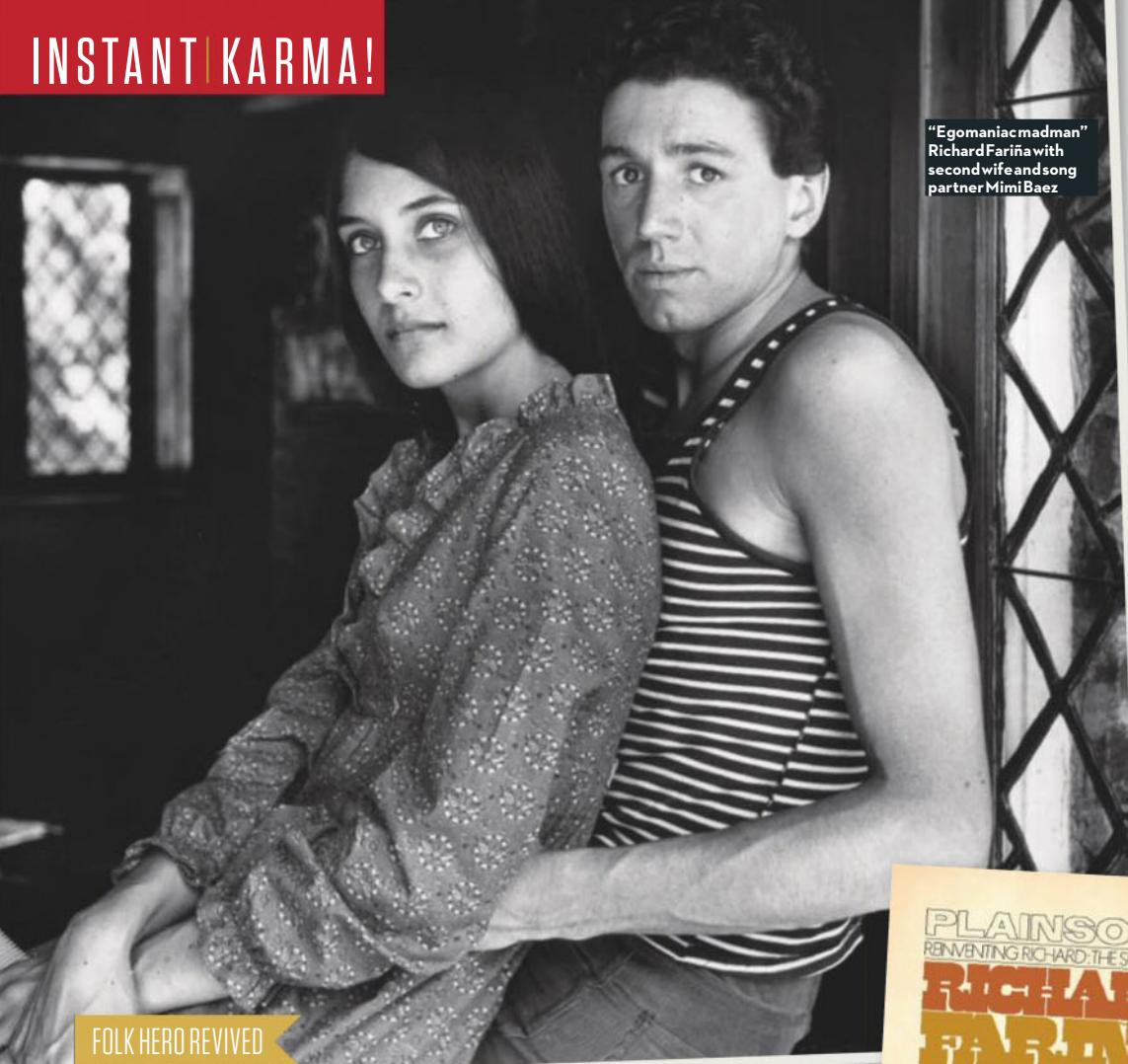
"They're such a crux of the genesis of the record, it seemed like a logical way to bring a bit of narrative back into an otherwise straight concert film," Evans explains. "It must've been in January 2013, Roger and I talked for a couple of days. He told me

these stories, these facets of his life. I put them in an order of when I wanted him to tell them. Then we would just get to these locations and I would say, like, 'Tell the story about the mongoose.' Roger would say, 'Why...?' But he would do it. He knew there was a plan."

During the journey, Waters is accompanied by several companions, including his three children, school friend Willa Rawlinson and filmmaker Peter Medak, who discusses his own childhood in war-torn Hungary. The film reaches an emotional climax in Italy, where Waters' father died in the Allied landings at Anzio. "That's all real emotion," says Evans of the scenes, which find Waters at a memorial garden in Monte Cassino where his father's name is displayed. "It's one take."

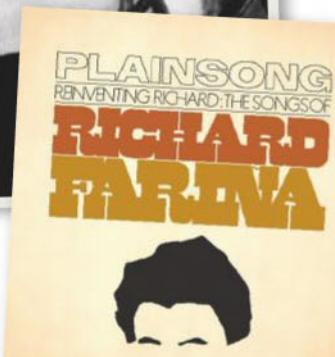
Of course, this is the third time *The Wall* has been committed to celluloid: first, in Alan Parker's 1982 film, then again in 1990 in the all-star concert film, *The Wall: Live In Berlin*. "I love the Alan Parker movie, it's beautiful," admits Evans. "The Berlin one is different, too. When we decided we were going to make this one, we didn't want to just point cameras at a bunch of people playing guitars. It had to be more than that." **MICHAEL BONNER**

Roger Waters: *The Wall* is in cinemas from September 29



"Egomaniac madman"
Richard Fariña with
second wife and song
partner Mimi Baez

FOLK HERO REVIVED



The Bold Marauder

Friend to Dylan and Pynchon, rampant self-mythologist, novelist and folk singer, the life and “boogie poetry” of RICHARD FARIÑA is remembered on a new tribute album...

HE'S VERY GROOVY. He's a kind of writer like Dylan Thomas," Bob Dylan said after his first encounter with Richard Fariña in Greenwich Village in 1961. Folk singer, poet, novelist and admiringly dubbed "a wild, improvising, egomaniac madman" by fellow folkie Eric von Schmidt, Fariña's comet blazed briefly across the '60s counter-culture before his death on April 30, 1966 at the age of 29, in a motorcycle crash in the canyons of California.

At the time, he was riding pillion on a red Harley-Davidson Sportster that left the road at 90mph and tore through a barbed-wire fence.

After his death, Thomas Pynchon – who served as his best man and pallbearer – dedicated his novel *Gravity's Rainbow* to Fariña's memory, while his songs have been covered by Fairport Convention, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Tom Paxton and Sandy Denny among others. Now comes a tribute album, *Reinventing Richard – The Songs Of Richard Fariña*.

"I'd wanted to do it for years and the imminent 50th anniversary of his death seemed like an apt time," says ex-Fairport Convention singer Iain Matthews, who recorded the album under the banner of

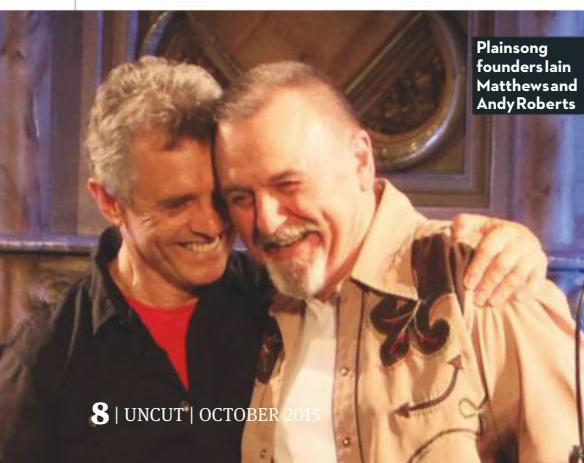
Plainsong, the enduring folk-rock outfit he formed with guitarist Andy Roberts in 1972. Over the years, Matthews has included Fariña's songs on half a dozen different albums after "the hook was baited" when producer Joe Boyd suggested

"Fariña's songs are very literate but emotional and political, too"
Iain Matthews

Fairport Convention cover "Reno, Nevada" on the band's 1968 debut. "His songs are very literate but emotional and political, too," Matthews explains. "And to the lyricism he added a strong chord sense and a great rhythmic value."

Like the young Dylan, Fariña had a taste for self-mythologising.

Plainsong founders Iain Matthews and Andy Roberts



He was born at sea. His father was a Cuban inventor, his mother an Irish mystic. He was educated in Europe and Africa, ran guns for Castro and the IRA, hung out with Hemingway in Cuba and kept a loaded 45 under his pillow. Or so he fantasised. In reality, he was born and educated in Brooklyn, suffered with childhood asthma and visited his father's relatives in Cuba once as a boy.

At Cornell University he took writing classes with Pynchon but dropped out to seek a different kind of education in Greenwich Village, where he encountered the folk singer Carolyn Hester. They married 18 days after they met and when Dylan arrived on the scene, Fariña invited him to play harmonica on Hester's third album. It led to Dylan's first recording contract when, during the session, Fariña urged veteran Columbia producer John Hammond to sign him. "The following day," Fariña said, "we were sitting at the Gaslight and Bob said that he'd just been offered a Columbia contract, and came over and hugged me."

Fred Neil also credited Fariña with hooking up Dylan with Joan Baez, telling him, "She needs you to bring her into the 20th Century and you need her to do your songs." Fariña soon had his eyes on Baez's 16-year-old sister, Mimi. They wed in 1963 after his divorce from Hester, who pulled a gun on him and threatened to kill her roving husband.

Fariña's debut album with Mimi, 1965's *Celebrations For A Grey Day*, was wildly adventurous, and many have cited the addition of a rock beat to two tracks, "Reno Nevada" and "One-Way Ticket", as marking the birth of folk-rock; Fariña preferred to call it "boogie poetry". But there was to be only one more album, 1965's *Reflections In A Crystal Wind*, before his death, two days after the publication of his novel *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me* and on Mimi's 21st birthday. A third album, *Memories*, appeared posthumously.

Some – including the writers David Hajdu and Ed Ward – have suggested that if Fariña had lived, his creativity could have rivalled Dylan. "The electric stuff shows the direction he was moving in. Where he might've taken it is endlessly intriguing," says Matthews, who will take a Fariña tribute show on the road with Plainsong in spring 2016. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

Plainsong's Reinventing Richard...
is out September 11 via Fledg'ling



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WE'RE NEW HERE

Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats

Recommended this month:
heavy grooves from
Sabbath-endorsed psych
rockers. "We've never just
been a doom band!"

DOOM SEEMS TO have had some kind of resurgence and people are just repeating themselves," Kevin Starrs pronounces. "But we've never just been a doom band; we've always had these diverse influences and weird harmonies, so it's all about progression and trying new things, rather than being stuck in a rut."

This is more than empty talk from the singer/songwriter and guitarist of Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats. Across three albums, the Cambridge quartet have made their name as worshippers of the monolithic, deep rock groove, citing obsessions ranging from pulp fiction to Hammer horror films and drug/murder cults. They've also become something of a cult themselves. Initially, the band refused to pose for press shots and Starrs only conducted interviews infrequently and via email, while first pressings of their 2011 album *Blood Lust* fetched up to £800 online. More recently, they supported their spirit guides Black Sabbath on a tour of Europe's enoromo-domes in 2013.

But buried deep within their dark heart is a surprisingly sweet, harmonised pop core, which points up Starrs' love of The Ronettes, The Shangri-Las and The Beatles, as well as an interest in the '60s English jazz-folk scene. One track in particular off new album *The*

I'M YOUR FAN
"Welcome to the Helter Skelter house band! Like a black, twisted echo from all my favourite psych and biker films, and countless, acid-soaked squat parties."

MR DIBS, HAWKWIND



SHARON O'CONNELL

THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

JOANNA NEWSOM *Sapokanikan* DRAG CITY
Back after five years, Newsom previews her fourth album (*Divers*, due October) with this rococo marvel. Paul Thomas Anderson, no less, directs the vid.

LOS LOBOS *Gates Of Gold* 429
David Hidalgo and co return with their first full-length in five years, an eclectic, warped set taking in blues, boogie and even – on "When We Were Free" – out-there acid jazz.

DAVE HEUMANN
Here In The Deep THRILL JOCKEY
The frontman of doomy folk-rockers Arbouretum goes solo, with bewitchingly similar results. Pianist Hans Chew figures among the *Uncut*-friendly supporting cast.

THE DEAD WEATHER
Dodge & Burn THIRD MAN
Jack White, off the touring circuit for now, is back at the drum stool for his other other band's third LP – tunes are out, swaggering grooves very much in.



STANLEY BRINKS & THE WAVE PICTURES
My Ass Fika
Following last year's *Gin*, André Herman Dune teams up again with the Billy Childish-bothering English trio, David Tattersall's Quine-like guitar thrillingly to the fore.

DEERHUNTER *Fading Frontier* 4AD
The Atlantans' seventh finds them in more relaxed, tuneful mood, toying with dusky electronica and bizarrely, swaggering funk.

THE CITY *Now That Everything's Been Said* LIGHT IN THE ATTIC
The only LP by Carole King's late-'60s LA band, soon to be reissued, prefigures the sound of *Tapestry*, and features King's own charming takes on "Wasn't Born To Follow" and "A Man Without A Dream".

RATS ON RAFTS *Tape Hiss* FIRE
Viciously noisy post-punks, straight out of Rotterdam, evoke Sonic Youth, Iceage and Killing Joke on their fiery second album.

MONK PARKER
How The Spark Loves The Tinder BRONZER RAT
Formerly of NY's Low Lows, this hirsute and 'hatted' singer/guitarist has returned to his hometown, Austin, to craft this debut album of dark, off-kilter Americana. Members of Okkervil River help out.

HARMONIA *Documents 1975* GRONLAND
Four previously unreleased cuts from the kosmische pioneers – the highlight, an 11-minute motorik juggernaut cut live in Hamburg, and complete with live drums, comes on like "Telstar" unexpectedly leaving the galaxy.

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

new music



album of the month

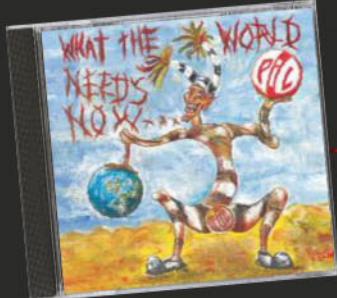
destroyer
poison season
out now



the libertines
anthems for
doomed youth
04/09/2015



craig finn
faith in the future
11/09/2015



low
ones & sixes
11/09/2015



public image ltd (piL)
what the world needs now
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highest point in cliff
town
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foals
what went down
28/08/2015



yo la tengo
stuff like that there
28/08/2015



ought
sun coming down
18/09/2015



mercury rev
the light in you
18/09/2015



hecta
the diet
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COMING UP

Your guide to this month's free CD

1 CRAIG FINN

Maggie I've Been Searching For Our Son

What better way to kick off this month than with the return of an old friend? Craig Finn's second LP outside of The Hold Steady is full of narrative episodes and tight, lean songs that ramp up the tension therein. This piece of high drama is about a father tracking down a son who's joined a cult, following an increasingly desperate trail from Arizona to Colorado and beyond.



Wagner as electro dancemaster, leading his troops through a tangle of synthetic grooves and beats.

5 ROBERT FORSTER

Let Me Imagine You

Production duties, overseeing a mammoth Go-Betweens boxset and a successful spell as a music critic have all conspired to keep Robert Forster from the studio for seven years. Thankfully, he's back in exemplary style with *Songs To Play*. "Let Me Imagine You" is typical: a spry, bittersweet tune imprinted with his unmistakable songcraft.

6 PIL Bettie Page

Described by John Lydon as "an homage to the late 'Queen Of The Pin-Ups'", a deliciously evil garage riff sets up this dedication to '50s centrefold Page. *What The World Needs Now...* is stuffed with



similarly disparate curios from a thoroughly re-engaged PiL, among them songs about sex, global disharmony and arguing with the wife about plumbing.

7 JAMES ELKINGTON & NATHAN SALSBURG

Reel Around The Fountain

Given their steep workloads – one as sideman to Richard Thompson and Steve Gunn; the other as curator of the Alan Lomax Archive – it's a wonder that James Elkington and Nathan Salsburg found time to get together at all. *Ambsace* is full of erudite guitar interplay and more than a few surprises, not least this riveting cover of a Smiths classic.

8 PHIL COOK

Anybody Else

Fans of Megafaun will be familiar with multi-instrumentalist Cook, who's also recorded with Justin Vernon in Gayngs and been

10 HECKA

Sympathy For The Auto Industry

"Suck it up, hippies. This music is our attempt to extend the boundaries of our expression and have some fun." So says Kurt Wagner of HeCTA, his ravishing new trio formed with Scott Martin and Ryan Norris. Forget the languid country-soul of Lambchop. This is

Wagner as electro dancemaster, leading his troops through a tangle of synthetic grooves and beats.

11 ROBERT FORSTER

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12 PHIL COOK

Anybody Else

Fans of Megafaun will be familiar with multi-instrumentalist Cook, who's also recorded with Justin Vernon in Gayngs and been

FREE
CD!



sideman for Hiss Golden Messenger and Matthew E White. *Southland Mission*, his solo debut proper, sees him step to the fore in assured style, with this easy-rolling, gospel-scented Southern ramble a peak.

9 WAND Stolen Footsteps

Wand don't hang about. Taken from their third LP in a little over a year, "Stolen Footsteps" finds the Cali quartet forsake their weirdo psych-rock for some old-school electronica fashioned from both pop and prog. Where they'll go next is anyone's guess but, given their work rate, we'll find out soon.

10 ELYSE WEINBERG

Houses

A genuine lost treasure from 1969, *Greasepaint Smile* never saw light of day due to label bankruptcy. But now we can appreciate the mystic electric-folk of Weinberg, a Toronto singer-songwriter who slipped from view after this second LP crashed. She was certainly well connected – JD Souther, Nils Lofgren and Neil Young all feature on the album, produced by David Briggs.

11 DUNGEN

Franks Kaktus

It's been way too long since we last heard from Sweden's premier psych-rock sophisticates, but *Allas Sak* ('Everyone's Thing') suggests it's been worth the five-year lull. Their sound has broadened out even further, as evinced by this gorgeous ethno-folk instrumental that makes liberal use of the instrument most prized by one Ron Burgundy: jazz flute.

12 BILAL

Satellites

A typically eclectic offering from the US neo-soul artist for whom R&B, hip-hop and jazz have always been interchangeable parts of a grander vision. Co-written with Adrian Younge and Venice Dawn



singer Loren Oden, "Satellites" is a sprightly dose of electro-funk with hints of psychedelia, heightened by Bilal's acrobatic falsetto.

13 UNCLE ACID & THE DEADBEATS

Waiting For Blood

Frazzled stoner-rock from deepest Cambridge, with Uncle Acid marrying their Sabbath worship to the less obvious climes of Spector-pop. Leader Kevin Starrs likens the trajectory of *The Night Creeper*, their fourth album, to a 25-cent trash novel remade as film noir and then appropriated as "an ultraviolet, slasher Italian Giallo film." Quite.

14 LOU BARLOW

Nerve

After reforming Sebadoh and pressing on with a revitalised Dinosaur Jr these past few years, Lou Barlow has finally found time to record a follow-up to 2009's last solo effort, *Goodnight Unknown*. "Nerve" is emblematic of *Brace The Wave*, a delicate acoustic rumination with a dash of electric guitar and soft ambience.

15 LOW

No Comprende

Magnificent, broody and intense, this is pretty much what we've come to love and expect from Alan Sparhawk's veteran Minnesota trio. Eleventh album *Ones And Sixes*, a worthy successor to the Jeff Tweedy-produced *The Invisible Way*, is full of such fabulous epiphanies and sets us up nicely for Low's upcoming headline date at London's Roundhouse in October.

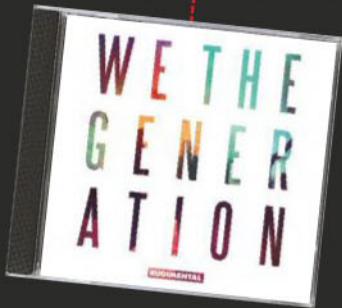
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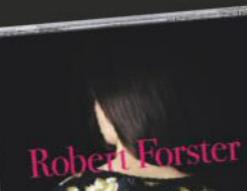
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Dan Auerbach

Interview: Michael Bonner
Photo: Joshua Black Wilkins

The Black Keys/Arcs man on his hometown work ethic, firing up the Harley Knucklehead and silently soloing with Neil Young: "I stepped on his foot!"

A

FEW DAYS BEFORE we meet, The Black Keys played a headline set at the Isle Of Wight festival. "It was really good, but it rained," says guitarist and singer Dan Auerbach. "That's the thing with European festivals – there's a 50 per cent chance it'll rain. But they didn't seem to mind."

Today, Auerbach is sitting in a hotel suite in Paris waiting for his coffee to arrive. Dressed in black despite the summer heat, he explains he is spending a few days in Europe before heading home to the US. At present, he's somewhere between projects. With no further engagements planned for The Black Keys, he is allowing himself a short break before the release of *Yours, Dreamily* – the debut album from his new band, The Arcs. "Besides Pat [Carney], these are all my oldest musical buddies," he says, once the coffee arrives. "In our spare time, we get together and record. We've been compiling songs and demos. I got together with [Truth & Soul Records'] Leon Michels six months ago to catalogue all this stuff. We didn't know what we had. Turned out, we had 75 songs sitting on the computer..."

STAR QUESTION



Any thoughts about how Akron, physically and metaphysically, has affected your music?
Jim Jarmusch

I had lunch with Chrissie Hynde in London a couple of days ago and we were just talking about this. There's something about Akron. It's an old factory town. So people are blue-collar. They've got their 'factory mentality'. Pat and I, as soon as we decided that The Black Keys was going to be a band, we worked every single day. It was like clockwork. And then, just like the way that we would tour, it was still kind of relentless. I still treat music like that. I like it feeling like it's a job, the whole Brill Building idea: "I'm going to work and write a song!" The other thing about Akron is, if

you want something, you have to do it yourself. There's nothing there. There are no rehearsal spaces for bands. If you want to play a show, you have to get out of town, you have to drive yourself at least to Cleveland, which is 45 minutes away. So, the whole DIY mentality is so ingrained in your brain. That really has a lot to do with Akron.

What was the best piece of advice Dr John gave you?

Tom Smith, Montreal

Spend time with your kids. How did I meet him? I was a fan of his first couple of records; they're kind of untouchable. I'd seen him play, maybe at a festival. Even though I didn't think that what he was doing was what I wanted to be doing, I could tell his voice was strong, his playing was still

amazing. So, I bugged him, I called him. He was dodging my calls at first. He'd put on those thick Jersey accents and go, [impersonating] "I gotta go, I'll call you Wednesday." So I flew to New Orleans, knocked on his door and he finally said yeah. After I went down there, his manager told him, "This guy's for real and he wants to make a record." I got in touch with him and he spoke normal English.

Do you and Pat have a particular song that best marks your relationship? *Nick Davies, Kent*

"Never Give You Up". Jerry Butler, from *The Ice Man Cometh*. The thing about Pat and I is, we were not friends from before being in a band. We always thought of this more like a business. We worked our asses off on it and then after, we'd go our separate ways with friends. On tour, Pat just chain-smokes and



The Black Keys:
Auerbach (right)
and drummer
Patrick Carney

hangs out and nervously paces. You really can't do much when you're on tour; you have to learn to turn your brain off. I tried to write on the road, but it's hard. The bus generators... you can barely hear yourself singing. But we learned to make it work. What does the future hold for The Black Keys? I don't know. There are no commitments.

STAR QUESTION



I tuned into you with your first album and the RL Burnside remixes. Both zones were inspiring, so who did you listen to

from a vocal angle? *Robert Plant*

My biggest influence was my uncle. He taught me how to sing. I started playing music in the first place so I could play with my uncles. They all played bluegrass. My uncle's biggest influence would be Carter Stanley. His music is so effortlessly pure and understated. My uncle sings a lot like that, too. And I saw Robert's solo show last year in the South Of France. His band was interesting and weird. They played "Black Dog", and when they were done, someone yelled, "Play 'Black Dog'!" And Robert said, "We just played it, you cunt!" Robert is cool, he still has that fire, that youthful enthusiasm. He's a good role model for ageing gracefully in rock'n'roll.





“We worked on The Black Keys every single day. Relentless. I treat music like it’s a job”

STAR QUESTION



Danny, I read recently on your poetry blog that you're an avid fan of the *Naked And Afraid* TV survival programme. If

you were to appear on the show, what survival tool would you bring and why? **Richard Swift**
Swift and I are addicted to it. They drop a man and a woman, naked, in a remote location and they each get to pick one survival tool. They have to stay for 21 days. You don't win anything, there's no award, you just have to survive. It's totally addictive, because after about 10 minutes, the nakedness is completely non-sexual. And then it just becomes insane. The tool that I'd choose is rope. I choose rope. Why? Because the guy who did the best, he brought ropes. I would bring what he brought, minus all the knowledge.

As a big boxing fan, did the Floyd Mayweather vs Manny Pacquiao fight live up to expectations for you? **David Waits, Chicago**

It was awful. I was so relieved I hadn't spent \$40,000 to go see it in person. Pacquiao looked like a child in the ring with Mayweather. On paper, it was supposed to be the best fight in the world. It was the worst. What was supposed to be like boxing's breakthrough – it's now on primetime, it's poised to explode – it just turned everyone off. How did I get into boxing? My cousin moved to Nashville three years ago. He's been in boxing since he was 10. He got me into it and we set up a little gym in the garage. It's cool that boxing hasn't really changed in more than 100 years. The fundamentals are all the same. The exercise equipment is identical. I liked the idea of that.

Did you ever get to play guitar with Robert Quine?

Joe Young, New York

He's my mum's first cousin. He lived in NYC and my parents basically made him sit down with me and play guitar. His mum's name is Rosalie – and Rosalie said, "Bobby, he's gonna be here at noon. You have to sit down with him." I'm sure he was thinking, "This teenager



Auerbach jams, quietly, with Neil Young at the 2012 Global Citizen Festival in New York

from Ohio is coming over. What the fuck?" So I arrived and I had my Junior Kimbrough records and my Teisco Del Ray guitars and he was overjoyed. We hung out for hours. He was telling me all about how he was so excited I was into the stuff he was into. He didn't get along with my family, as he's not the nicest guy to people who aren't interested in the exact same things as him. But we connected. He used to tell me to look him up when I came to New York to play. He was under 'Qwin' in the phonebook.

You performed with Neil Young at the 2012 Global Citizen Festival in Central Park. How did that jam come about? **Pete Mitchell, Lancs**
I don't know! [laughs] Neil never called us to say, "Hey, come play with me." [laughs] We all got brought on – Dave Grohl and me. But they didn't mic up our amps. So, Neil had me play, looked at me, I'm soloing. Nobody can hear anything! Dave Grohl, too. I was watching Dave miming, thinking 'Man, you're so good at this. You're such a rock star and I feel like a fucking idiot!' In the middle of the 'solo' I stepped on Neil's foot. A proper step. You're not supposed to meet your idols. Never! Putting me onstage with Neil Young is like pushing me into a movie with De Niro. Neil was the best guitarist I've

played with onstage. He's got these giant boxes up in the wings, the sound reverberates, it's like fucking thunder! I had this shitty little amp that's not even mic'd up. It was a fucking joke. We were just basically ornaments on the Neil Young Christmas tree.

What do you remember about seeing the Grateful Dead at Richfield Coliseum? And what impact did that show have on you? **Rob Bearyman, Birmingham**
I was 14 or 15. It was the first proper rock 'n' roll show I'd been to. It was eye opening, wild. Everything was unexpected. I was so used to seeing my mum's family sit around the living room playing guitars. There were 20,000 people in this place

"Putting me onstage with Neil Young is like pushing me into a movie with Robert De Niro"

alone and they all looked insane and they were all dancing and this was before anyone was even onstage! Then Jerry comes out with his white hair and beard, like Einstein. Crazy, but fun! They didn't sound like the Dead recordings I was used to, but he was cool.

STAR QUESTION



Where do you see The Black Keys' legacy in the history of rock'n' roll? **Jerry Casale**
We're just spuds compared to Devo.

We'll only ever be spuds compared to Devo. I can see how you might have a mental image of Akron from Neil Young's *Human Highway*,

because Devo are in the film. There are some towns in Ohio that are probably radioactive. [laughs]. But not Akron. It's such a bizarre town. It has so many deep-seated issues. There's something weird about it. It's one of those magical Midwest places right out of a book. It's like one of those things; you don't know it until it's gone. You gain a lot of perspective on Akron when you leave Akron and look back at it.

I know you're a big motorcycle enthusiast. What model do you prefer, and where are your favourite riding spots?

Bethany Ferril, Columbus, IN
Harley Knucklehead. It's the king of the motorcycles, the first you could comfortably ride on a highway all day long. Lasts forever. They're big, beautiful old machines that were overbuilt, in a good way. Robust, great colours. Former GIs would come back and personalise them with period bumpers and paint. I love all that shit. It's like a rolling folk art. It's how I feel about special old guitars with people's names carved into them. That's what these motorcycles are and they represent the same thing to those guys. It was a sense of freedom and empowerment; like a guitar. Riding spots? The Natchez Trace, a parkway that goes from Nashville down towards New Orleans. Lazy turns like that all the way and no traffic lights. It's beautiful. It'd take you a couple of days.

What have you learnt from producing a wide range of artists – from Radio Moscow to Lana Del Rey? **Pedro Ivo C Pinheiro, via email**

Every time I do a project I learn something. Every time I get to observe someone else's process, it's usually eye-opening. How do they come about? Usually, I reach out, as I'm not a full-time producer. My main job's touring. But it also allows me to not do records I don't want to do. A lot of producers would have to do a bunch of bullshit just to pay the bills. Fortunately, I can pick. I only work with people I like and I'm interested in, which is an absolute luxury and I don't take it for granted. Pretty much everyone was reaching out, except for maybe Lana. I met her in NYC, she was playing demos, I was playing some of The Arcs' stuff. We just hit it off and seemed to be on the same wavelength. ☺

Yours, Dreamily is out on Nonesuch Sept 4; tour dates announced soon

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



Mayweather versus Pacquiao: "Awful" says boxing fan Auerbach

"A STRONG SOLO EFFORT... 7.8 OUT OF 10"
-Lou Barlow



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BEFORE THEY MAKE ME RUN...

Further Rolling Stones obligations may loom, but for now the inimitable KEITH RICHARDS is focusing on his long-neglected solo career. *Uncut* has a chat with rock's most convivial wildman about *Crosseyed Heart*, fallen comrades, Dylan, retirement and, of course, the future of the Stones. "I love what I do, man," he says. "I'm a lucky son of a bitch!"

Story: Michael Bonner
Portrait: Mark Seliger

RELECTING ON A career spanning 53 years, Keith Richards is trying to account for his extraordinary longevity. "We didn't just do it to get a few hit records and be famous and blah blah blah, 'cos sometimes that's a curse," he insists. "We're doing what we feel we're good at, and in order to be heard. I don't think there should be any time limit on that. I'm still growing up."

A conversation with Richards is peppered with similar such routines. A flash of insight undercut by a self-deprecating punchline delivered with a throaty chuckle. Although his sentences are liberally scattered with colloquialisms like "croak" – at one point, he describes himself as "a lucky son of a bitch" – nevertheless his warm,

feline purr carries a faintly thespian quality. When talk turns to the home counties villages that incubated the British '60s blues boom, Richards' briefly adopts an unexpectedly genteel tone. "Epsom?" He says wistfully. "Oh, not far away. I know it very well. I used to drive through it on my way to Sussex."

Today, Richards is at home in Weston, Connecticut, in the house he and his wife Patti Hansen had built in 1990. At 71 he remains impressively busy. "I work like a dog," he tells *Uncut*. Most recently, the Stones finished their 15-date Zip Code Tour of North America to promote the reissue of *Sticky Fingers*. During our time together, Richards lets slip that the band will head out again in 2016. He even hopes that he can corral his bandmates back into the studio to begin work on new material "sometime early next year". In the meantime, he is getting ready for the Stones' EXHIBITIONISM retrospective which opens at the Saatchi Gallery next April. "There's some incredibly interesting things that go along" ●



High live: The New Barbarians' Wood and Richards in Madison, Wisconsin, May 1979

with The Rolling Stones, and it's not necessarily the members themselves," he explains.

Although it's been 10 years since the Stones released a new studio album, Richards has nevertheless found time to work on one of his own. His first solo record since *Main Offender* in 1992, *Crosseyed Heart* is a steady mix of blues, rock'n'roll and country, with Richards' co-conspirators led by Steve Jordan, his old friend from The X-pensive Winos, with walk-on parts for the late Bobby Keys, Aaron Neville, Spooner Oldham and Larry Campbell. The LP sessions figure in a new Netflix doc, *Keith Richards: Under The Influence*. Richards plays nine instruments on the record,



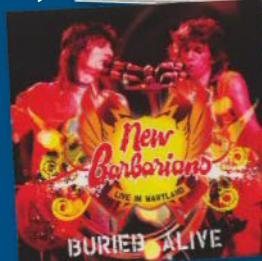
PLAYING AWAY...

“Zigaboo on drums, man. That was a hell of a band!”

Your guide to Keith's other musical assignations...

RICHARDS HAS REMAINED commendably faithful to the Stones; only straying from them a handful of times during their 52-year history. On July 13 and 14, 1974, he teamed up with Ron Wood, Ian McLagan, Willie Weeks and Andy Newmark for two shows at the Gaumont State on Kilburn High Road to promote Wood's *I've Got My Own Album To Do*.

Five years later, Richards again joined Wood and McLagan for another live project, The New Barbarians, this time on a larger tour to support Wood's *Gimme Some Neck* album. “It was a fun tour



Life. The lineup also included Stanley Clarke, Bobby Keys and Joseph ‘Zigaboo’ Modeliste. They played 18 shows in the States during April/May 1979 (Wood later released an LP of the tour, *Buried Alive: Live In Maryland*, on his own Wooden Records) and in August supported Led Zeppelin at Knebworth.

Richards formed The X-Pensive Winos in the late '80s, the core band revolving around drummer Steve Jordan, bassist Charlie Drayton, guitarist Waddy Wachtel and keys player Ivan Neville. Richards claims in *Life* that the Winos “brought me back to life. I felt as if I'd just gotten out of jail.” Their 1988 album, *Talk Is Cheap*, featured “You Don't Move Me”, about the state of his relationship with Jagger at the time: “What makes you so greedy/Makes you so seedy.” Jordan and Wachtel also play key roles on *Crosseyed Heart*.

including a Wurlitzer and an electric sitar. It is, perhaps, proof of that, despite his formidable reputation, Richards remains the model of a disciplined working musician.

UNCUT: It's been 23 years since your last solo record. What took you so long?

KEITH RICHARDS: I don't know! I've only ever done solo stuff when the Stones go into one of their long hibernations. I suppose I started this one off a couple of years ago, because there was another long hibernation. I'd just finished the book, and done all that thing, and I realised I hadn't been in the studio for four or five years. I bumped into Steve Jordan, he said, “I've got a good room, a studio round the corner.” He said to me, “How did you record ‘Street-Fighting Man’ and ‘Jumping Jack Flash’?” I said, “I was in the studio with Charlie Watts. In other words, just the drummer.” He said, “Well, there's nobody else around, why don't we try it on again?” So it kinda started like that.

There's 13 original songs on the album. What conditions improve your songwriting?

I don't know, I've never thought about improvement. It's weird, I've written some of my best songs when I was barely there. I was just scratching the surface. But writing is a strange thing. Once you start writing songs, it turns you into an observer of other people. You listen more to what is being said, phrases.

You pick 'em up, so without even meaning to suddenly everything somebody says is a potential song.

Do you carry notebooks with you? No, I have bits of paper, man, that are all over the house. The wife keeps continually saying, "Do you want to keep this?" Usually, what I've found with myself, is that if I remember it, then it's worth keeping. There's a few things I jot down, but a lot of it is remembering one phrase somebody said over there and another phrase somebody said across the room. They're totally unconnected, except I can see a connection. I observe.

How often do you write? You can't stop it. Once you're a songwriter, you can't stop it, really. It's built into everyday life. You can wake up with a great song, which I've only done twice.

I know one was "Satisfaction". What's the other one? "Robbed Blind", off this album. I just woke up and it was at my fingertips. Everything just rolled out. That's very unusual. Usually, it's a lot of craftwork and wondering whether it's any good, anyway.

After all these years, do you still get anxiety about whether a song is any good? Yeah, you do. It's not necessarily... I'm never going to put anything out unless I think it's good. Usually, I've tried these songs out on several people before I record them. I'm a sucker for that. If someone says, "I like it", I'll do it!

Do you compartmentalise when you write: this is a Stones song, this is a solo song? Does it work like that? No, no. That way, I can't think. I just write the songs. If the Stones were ready to record around the same time... Some of them were actually hanging around, ideas from while the Stones were still recording. We left certain things off, and I thought, 'I want to pursue that one.'

"MUSIC IS A BIT OF MY DAILY STAPLE DIET, EVEN IF I DON'T EAT..."

Do you mean the *Bigger Bang* sessions? Yeah, there are some outtakes from *A Bigger Bang*. I think you can maybe hear the beginnings of "Illusion". I really want to pick up on this song, or else it's going to disappear down the drain.

I really liked the title track; did you ever think about doing an acoustic album? Man, you know, that would seem such a task to me. I think everybody knows I love acoustic guitar. But the "Crosseyed Heart" one came because I wanted to start it off where basically all the music that I know and I've played came from. One of the wellsprings was Robert Johnson, and I've always wanted to do something in his style, so "Crosseyed Heart" came from that. That's why I did "Goodnight, Irene". For some

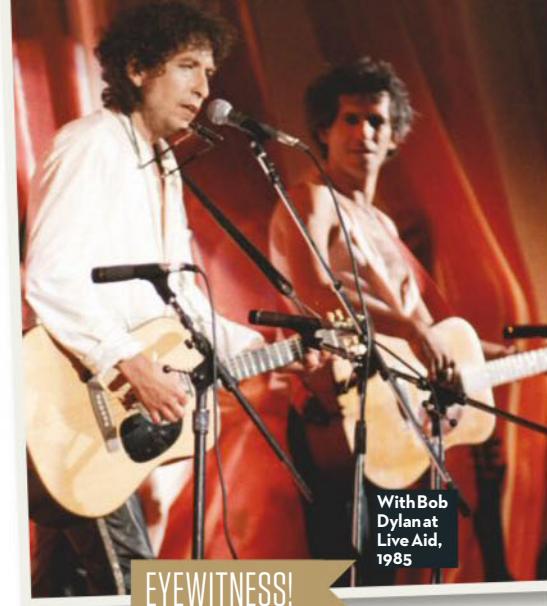
reason, I wanted to do one of those iconic American folk songs and renew it. In a way, it's a bit of an historical album. I didn't even realise that 'til I'd finished it.

It brings you full circle back to the records you and Mick heard when you grew up. Yeah, I guess.

There's some of Bobby Keys' final work on this record. What qualities did Bobby bring to a session? Bobby Keys brings everything to a session that he brings to life. He brought the true spirit of rock'n'roll, if you want it, in its rawest form, in its Texan variation. Larger than life, one of my best friends. In fact, most people know Bobby and I were born on the same day within hours of each other. Except he was in Texas and I was in London getting bombed on. It took Bobby and me, I don't know, a couple of years before we actually realised this. We were checking passports, going through Europe somewhere. I said, "December 18, '43? I thought that was mine exclusively!" But I'm glad we captured his last moments. He's rocking to the end. There's a spirit about the man and a genuineness that's rare in the world.

You play everything apart from the drums on *Crosseyed Heart*. What other hidden talents do you have? You better ask the wife! I don't know, what else do I do? I've always drawn a bit. But most of it is music. Basically, it's a bit of my daily staple diet, even if I don't eat.

The *Toronto Sessions* was your unofficial first album; what do you remember about that? Oh, the bootleg stuff. I do that around the house all the time, especially in the days of cassettes. Somebody would ask for a copy, I'd pass it along. That's usually country stuff and some blues, nothing out of



With Bob Dylan at Live Aid, 1985

EYEWITNESS!

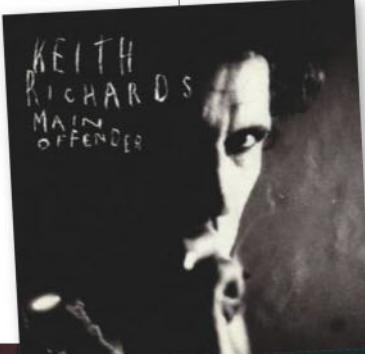
"We exchange the odd note, here and there..."

Keith on Dylan

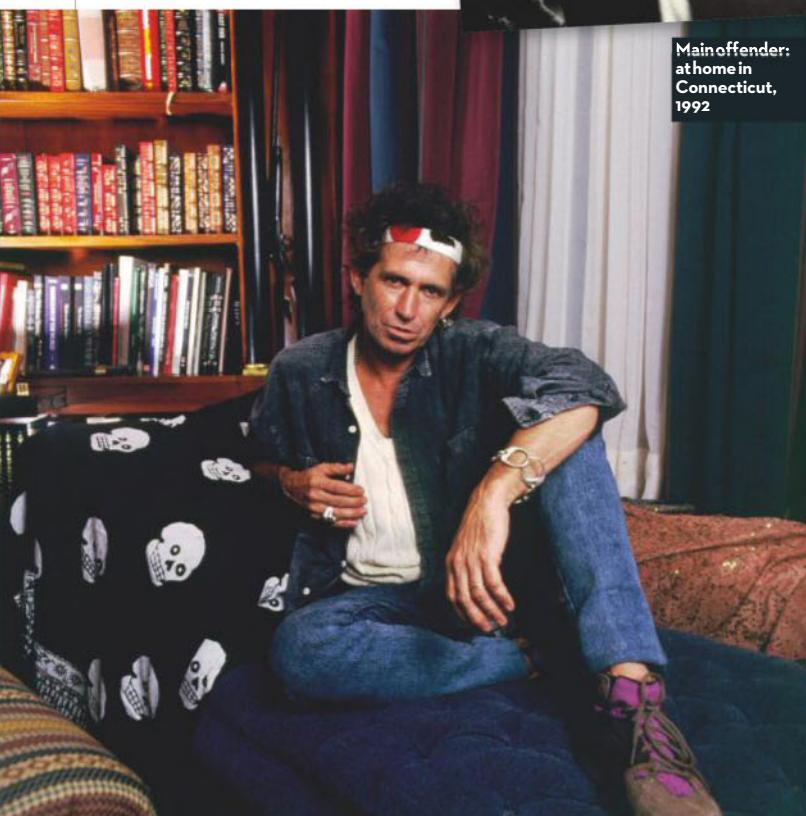
KEITH'S LONG friendship with Dylan stretches back to the 1960s. "We all pushed each other in those days," Richards told *NME*. "Bob's a nasty little bugger. I recall him saying, 'I could have written "Satisfaction", Keith, but you couldn't have written "Desolation Row".' I said, 'Well, you're right there, Bob!'"

During 1985, Dylan invited Richards and Ron Wood to perform with him at a charity concert. In his autobiography, *Ronnie*, Wood remembers the three of them rehearsing at Dylan's West 78th Street house. "On the day of the gig," Wood wrote, "a limo came to pick up Keith and me. Before we got in, a truck pulled up with Dylan on board - the driver was his daughter. 'You coming?' Bob asked. 'We're on in Philly, man.' That was 90 miles away, but Bob just said, 'Follow us.' Keith and I weren't too sure what this was all about, but we got into the limo and told the driver: 'Follow that truck.' Keith looked at me and said, 'This better be fucking good.' It was better than good, it was Live Aid." They played three songs: "Ballad Of Hollis Brown", "When The Ship Comes In" and "Blowin' In The Wind". But the stage was not equipped for an acoustic set: they couldn't hear each other over the noise behind the curtain where the all-star finale of "We Are The World" was being set up.

In April 1988, meanwhile, Dylan joined the Stones to play "Like A Rolling Stone" at Rio's Praça Da Apoteose.



Main offender: at home in Connecticut, 1992



my area. But, yeah, it's amazing to me over the years how these bootleg variations keep cropping up. In fact, people are giving 'em back to me now.

Have you given any thought to taking *Crosseyed Heart* on the road? Originally I didn't, because the Stones were supposed to go to South America next month. I didn't see any space, but the Stones has been put back to February or something. Suddenly I do find this extra space of time, so I've been talking to Steve Jordan – 'cos I couldn't do it without him, man. But let's say without saying "Yes", I'm looking forward to trying to put it together. If I can get the guys all together in the right place, I might do a couple shows. It's hard work doing all the singing and playing guitar at the same time, y'know. But if I think I can pull it off, I'll give it a bash.



Rain dogs: with Tom Waits at the Wiltern Theatre, Hollywood, November 4, 2002

KEITH'S 10 BEST CAMEOS

Extra-curricular sightings of the Human Riff...



Released on Apple Records, Preston's fourth album featured Richards (unusually, playing bass) in addition to George Harrison, Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker.



The British blues godfather convened this

Something more like *The New Barbarians*, maybe? Oh, Ronnie, Stanley, Bobby, Zigaboo on drums, man. That was a hell of a band. Would I do something as freewheeling as that? It's hard to predict. The germ is there, and I'm waiting to hear if I can pull the right guys together to do it. Otherwise, I'm all for it. It'll be a matter of scheduling and logistics and all that boring shit.

Presumably, it'll be a different proposition than the typical Stones tours? Of course, yeah. As you say, I haven't done it for 20-odd years: fronting a band. So I have to think about that. The idea is appealing. So if things come together, maybe it'll happen. I'd love to do that.

Who else would you want in the band? Mac and Bobby are both no longer with us...

Oh, man. All within a week. They come like sledgehammers when they come, it's terrible. This is the trouble with getting old, man. All your friends croak around you.

Do you ever give any thought to your own legacy? No. I'm not looking forward to croaking, though.

It's a pretty solid body of work, especially the run of albums between *Beggars Banquet* and *Goat's Head Soup*. Yeah, that was a burst of energy done under fire and on the run. Maybe that's what made it so interesting!

How are you getting on with the Stones exhibition? I'm going to London in a week

'supersessions' album featuring Nicky Hopkins, Peter Frampton and Steve Marriott.

Richards contributed guitar to Korner's Stones cover.

TOM WAITS TOM WAITS RAIN DOGS, 1985

Guitar and backing vocals on "Big Black Mariah", "Union Square" and "Blind Love". Richards also co-wrote and played on "That Feel" from 1992's *Bone Machine* and, more recently, appeared on "Chicago", "Satisfied", "Last Leaf" and "Hell Broke Luce" from 2011's *Bad As Me*.

ARETHA FRANKLIN "JUMPIN' JACK FLASH"; 1988

Keith produced and played guitar on Franklin's Stones cover, recorded for the Whoopi Goldberg film of the same name. He also co-produced her self-titled Arista debut album in 1980.



GEORGE JONES "SAY IT'S NOT YOU", 1994

From Jones' duets set, *The Bradley Barn Sessions*, Richards plays guitar and sings on this track, originally from 1967. He also appears on the title track from 2008's *Burn Your Playhouse Down: The Unreleased Duets*.



BB KING "PAYING THE COST TO BE THE BOSS", 1997

Richards paid tribute to King, following his death earlier this year, describing him as a "great loss for me and everyone who loves music". Along with the Stones, he guested on King's *Deuces Wild* album.



KEITH RICHARDS "YOU WIN AGAIN", 2001

1950s blues ballad, recorded by Richards for the tribute album, *Timeless: The Songs Of Hank Williams*.



JOHN PHILLIPS "PAY PACK & FOLLOW", 2001

Unreleased until 2001, but recorded during the '70s for Rolling Stones Records, Richards played guitar and co-produced with Jagger. Mick Taylor and Ron Wood guest. That's Richards on the cover.



MARIANNE FAITHFULL "SING ME BACK HOME", 2009

From Faithfull's *Easy Come, Easy Go* duets album. Richards also produced and played on her cover of Patti Smith's "Ghost Dance" for 1994's *Faithfull: A Collection Of Her Best Recordings*.



JERRY LEE LEWIS "SWEET VIRGINIA", 2010

Lewis covered the Stones track on his *Mean Old Man*, with Richards on guitar. The pair also dueted on "That Kind Of Fool" on the Killer's 2006 album, *Last Man Standing*.

or so to catch up on it. I love the name, *Exhibitionism*! But I hear it's all going well. I'm going to get a bit hands on when I get into town.

The sound of the record reminds me of the last few Dylan albums. You're not trying to be a young guy... I understand what you mean. There's no posing, I've given up trying to be a young guy a few years ago. Who do I see as my peers? Bob! Bob, I love Bob. Mind you, you never see him. We exchange the odd note here and there. The fact is that Bob's band has now since, well, for the last 15 years, been run by Georgie Receli, who's the drummer. I leant him to Bob for six months, and that was in 2001.

So what happened? Georgie was the very man Bob needed to organise who he's playing with. Bob's not a bandleader in that respect. He needed a firm hand, so I leant him Georgie and George is a firm hand. Bob, I love. That guy's got white line fever, he works constantly. It's unbelievable.

It's like the old blues guys who play a gig, go home, clean their teeth and die in their sleep... Yeah, I mean, did you ever see them retire? Muddy Waters? No, he died on the job. Howlin' Wolf, Jimmy Reid. I think among musicians of that calibre the idea of not doing it is a bit peculiar. You might as well go out until you croak, or until people stop listening. But there's a certain love of music, something deeper... it might start out as a pop song, but later on, there's music there that generations are still holding on to and holding up as, "Yeah, this is the way it should be." I tell you this, I ain't retiring.



The Stones' warm-up show at The Fonda Theatre, LA, May 20, 2015

We just had the 50th anniversary of "Satisfaction"... I know, don't rub it in!

...Do you enjoy revisiting these landmarks? You played the whole of *Sticky Fingers* at the LA club show in May... Yeah, we did the whole thing. Yeah, that was an interesting task we set ourselves. It was great to play. And also, a few of the songs on there we hadn't played for many years and it was nice to get your teeth back into a lovely piece of meat.

Would you consider doing that with another album?

Yeah, I think all possibilities are up. Most of these decisions are taken by the Stones just before we go on. "OK, so we're going to do this?" "No, we're going to do that." "OK!" Yeah, I'd love the band to experiment a bit more. There's plenty of room to manoeuvre and we've got nothing to prove anyway. It's just, you know, when we get up there, I love to play, love the audiences. I love what I do, man. I'm a lucky son of a bitch.

It was great to see Mick Taylor back in the band for a while. Yeah, that was cool. I loved playing with Mick again. He was with us for a year or two. He wasn't on the last tour. It sort of started off 'cos it was our 50th. But I really enjoyed having him around. The extra guitar was cool.

You should get him back in again. He's one of the best. We've had a few good guitarists through the band. That's what they call 'a necessary'.

What are the songs on this album you're most fond of? It's a hard call. I finished it about 18 months or so ago. It's been on the shelf, 'cos when the Stones started working again, there

was no point in putting a solo album out in the middle of Stones tours. It was a clash and doesn't make sense. Suddenly, this September, we found a slot where there was some space to manoeuvre. I only do solo records when the Stones aren't working enough.

"Doom & Gloom" was a brilliant song. When will we hear some new Stones music?

My other main task in the next year is to get the Stones in the studio again. It's been too long. You have to wait for the timing and you have to get everybody in the right mood. It takes a lot of backroom work.

What do you make of the Faces getting back together?

Oh, yeah. You know what Ronnie's like. He'll play with any of his old mates, bless him. I like him to keep his hand in.

Will we have to wait another 23 years for another solo album? I don't have another 23, pal!

How many songs do you have in the back pocket? There was always a backlog of songs and ideas. Most of those I have, I'm hoping to get the Stones in the studio with. Me? I'd put them in the studio in December, but I know they ain't going to go for that. It's too near Christmas.

Has Mick heard *Crosseyed Heart*? I don't know yet. I'm sure he has. But even I have only a test copy at the moment. So I'm waiting for the whole package myself. I'll make sure he gets one, don't worry. All right, mate? ☺

Crosseyed Heart is released by Virgin EMI on September 18. *Keith Richards: Under The Influence* airs on the same day

SAXY BEAST

"The true spirit of rock'n'roll..."

Friend, collaborator, sax man: Bobby Keys remembered...

BOBBY KEYS AND Keith Richards first met when the Stones played the San Antonio Teen Fair in 1964; Keys was performing with Bobby Vee. Keys was initially prejudiced against the Stones for their cover of Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away": Keys had toured with Holly, a fellow Texan. By the time he first recorded with the Stones – on 1969's "Live With Me" – his credits included Delaney & Bonnie and Joe Cocker's Mad Dogs And Englishmen Tour. His early contributions for the Stones included "Brown Sugar" and "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" from *Sticky Fingers*. Outside of his formal duties, he was an usher at Jagger's wedding in 1971; later, he acted as musical director of Ron Wood's Miami nightclub, Woody's On The Beach.

Keys also found work elsewhere, playing on Eric Clapton's solo debut, George Harrison's



Richards and Bobby Keys, Amsterdam, September 22, 2003

All Things Must Pass, John Lennon's *Walls And Bridges* and *Rock'N'Roll*, as well as his own instrumental solo album in 1972.

But Keys' erratic behaviour – immortalised in *Cocksucker Blues*, in which Keys and Keef hoof a TV out of a hotel window – got the better of him. He missed his flight on the Stones' 1973 European tour – apparently indisposed in a bath full of champagne with a "French chick" – and found his services dispensed with until 1982. He became a touring member of the band again in 1989. His last gig with the Stones was on July 3, 2014 at Roskilde; he died on December 2 at home in Franklin, Tennessee. "He was a piece of history in himself, and had a deep knowledge of it," Richards told *Rolling Stone* after Keys' death. He appears on the *Crosseyed Heart* tracks, "Amnesia" and "Blues In The Morning". "I'm going to miss the man dearly," Richards tells *Uncut*.

“LIKE
A FINE
WINE, I’VE
MATURED
WITH
AGE...”

Uncut visits JOHN LYDON at home in Malibu, where the self-professed “King Of Punk” is in a surprisingly reflective mood. Subjects under discussion include a Sex Pistols perfume range, his thoughts on David Cameron’s Britain and just what he intends to do with his body after he dies. “It’s very easy to be bitter and twisted,” he confesses.

Story: Jaan Uhelszki | **Photograph:** Ed Miles





B

LINK AND YOU'LL miss the turning to John Lydon's house in Malibu, the beach town 36 miles west of Los Angeles. The house is located a little more than two miles up from Zuma Beach – and only a few streets away from where Neil Young wrote much of his *Zuma* album in 1975. It is,

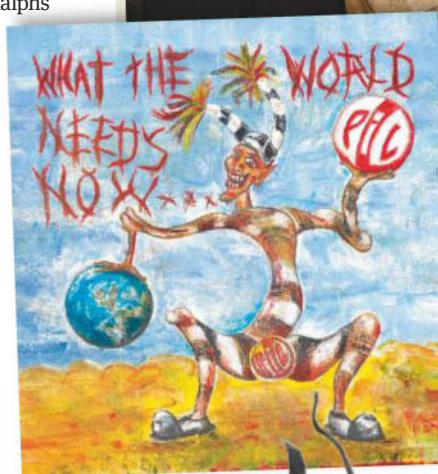
Lydon insists, the reason he bought the house. "Zuma is one of my favourite albums," he says with a straight face, but it's difficult to figure out if he's serious. The usual tip-off that he's trying to pull one over is that he cocks his head at a 45-degree angle and bugs his eyes out a little, then waits a few seconds too long, this side of awkward, like a lizard waiting to entrap a fly, silent and still to see if you'll buy what he's selling. In this case, it's not clear. No head tilt. Lydon and his wife, Nora, don't really live in the Malibu of fast Maseratis, pomegranate margaritas and pricy Pilates studios. They own a late-model Volvo, and shop at the local Ralphs market, not the upscale boutique grocery down the road. "We don't believe in forking out a big amount for anything," he says. Which goes a long way to explain why he lives in Malibu's outer reaches.

Built in 1973 – around the time Lydon and Sid Vicious were squatting in Hampstead – Lydon's home is modest by local standards. Located in a subdivision of about a dozen houses, it's set about 100 yards from the roar of the Pacific Coast Highway. Unpretentious and nondescript, it looks as if it could belong anywhere, except for the wrought-iron gate that's been ravaged by the salt air. It's the same colour as Lydon's hair, somewhere between banana-yellow and mustard. Behind a heavy grey weathered door comes the sound of raised voices. They stop abruptly after two knocks at the door.

"Allo," a voice bellows, and John Lydon opens the door wide with a low, sweeping gesture as if he's a courtier in Elizabeth I's retinue. Or perhaps Captain Hook. Lydon is theatrical and affected in an endearing way, and at times you feel yourself in the middle of a Gilbert and Sullivan light opera. He makes no offer for a tour of the house and resolutely brushes past in his clownish grey yoga pants and crimson shirt, heading straight for the large, portioned kitchen. As we enter, Lydon says, "We don't dust. We believe in the Quentin Crisp school of housekeeping: 'There was no need to do any housework at all. After the first four years the dirt doesn't get any worse.'" He is overstating the case, but the kitchen is a little messy. There is an empty coffee canister upended in the stainless-steel sink, a cardboard ice-cream container, and a stack of dirty dishes. The Mexican tile counters are lined with spices, olive oils and sauces. There's a tin of expensive cookies. Adjacent to the counter, there's a restaurant-class six-burner stove. On an opposite wall, there are fruits and vegetables – a perfect onion, a waxy pepper, some shallots and a bulb of garlic artfully arranged on a teak-tiered serving platter. Behind it is a dark, Dutch-influenced painting of fruit and kitchen crockery. "I think the painting is quite dull," Lydon confesses. "It's one of only two that aren't mine. Nora's former husband Frank [the late German singer Frank Forster] did it. But I think it's brilliant the way we have it behind the pile of vegetables," he chortles, quite pleased with himself. "But the painting is rubbish. As for mine? Well, decide for yourself." Lydon's art is primitive and colourful. One is a riot of blues and greens, emotional and chaotic. Another consists of splashes of primary colours fighting with each other for dominance. Lydon noisily sets down two tumblers on the glass-topped kitchen table. He



Public Image Ltd, 2015: (l-r) Bruce Smith, Lydon, Scott Firth, Lu Edmonds



"Music changes and reshapes societies, and will do so again"

reaches for a square ceramic bottle chosen, it would seem, because it looks like one of his paintings. "Lunch!" he says as he begins to pour tall glasses of tequila.

Why does the clock on the wall have no arms? Is it a metaphor? Oh, because the damn thing broke and it was the only clock in the house. We've bought loads since. I just liked it because it was my first clock when I moved to Pasadena, and I carried it for a

long, long time. I had a spare frame and stuck it on the wall. It means something to us. Nora always laughs, she goes, "What time is it? Oh, I keep going to this clock. We have a digital one in the kitchen. Right?" But she still keeps walking in looking at this one. I have another broken one in the bedroom. I just love clocks. And when they break, I love them more.

You wrote a second autobiography last year. Why bother? It's taken me 50-plus years to open the door fully and trust that the people now who will read my life will be able to handle it properly and not abuse that. There was some serious stuff going on in my childhood, and I kept quiet about that. I've mentioned it, little bits and pieces over the years. But not properly.

So you believe childhood trauma made you who you are? Well, that's what made Johnny Rotten, not Malcolm McLaren. And that's being trivial about it, for poor old Malcy. All these people who think they know me, they don't know me. They don't know what the King Of Punk really is. It's just their projections. Let's face it. I've made the best suits of armour, haven't I?

What did you really want people to know? I need to make it clear I'm not a cartoon character. Although I understand the media and its need for cartoon characters, and I'll play and bounce in that, and I hope that the reader or listener is picking up on the teases there. Sometimes I'll present something that's so totally absurd that it's not

humanly possible really to be that character, and I'll hope you're in on the joke with it. But my friends tell me all the time, my sense of humour is so wickedly out there that it leaves them utterly confused.

You weren't inherently musical, growing up? I didn't ask to come into the world of music. I WAS ASKED. I thought, 'Oh my God, I'm ill-prepared for this.' But I actually found out I wasn't, because I could write. The concept of translating words on a page to a voice was an intriguing one.

But you certainly proved yourself to be a poet.

"Johnny Rotten is a poet," Malcolm said. I thought he was insulting me. I love the sound of words and the way they hit you and how you can translate them by vocal interpretation. I write songs in order to find out who I really am. I want to see things clearly, therefore I do. I have no time for fantasy. But that's from a man who's consistently fantasising, because the concept of even being in a band was a fantasy. Writing, every time I'd go to think of a new song, there's a fantasy in that. There's aspects in your ego just telling you, oh, grandiose thoughts. 'Oh, this is going to change the world.' It doesn't. It's a song, at the end of the day. But internally it changes me, and always for the better, because I don't put out music that I don't believe in. Every single word is completely considered. There's not anything that's landed accidentally or inappropriately.

Could you have written the new album, *What The World Needs Now...*, at any other time? There seems to be more clarity of thought and purpose. It's like this – and I'm not even being cynical, but it sounds cynical – like a fine wine, I've matured with age. My mind is becoming clearer, and indeed for me that is an achievement. Ultimately, I will get to some point where I can write completely transparently, with clarity. It's a very hard thing, no matter what it is you do, to keep ego out of it. This is why those Indian monks study how to avoid ego through isolation, starvation, deprivation. I'm trying to avoid it by overindulgence.

Your recent track "Turkey Tits" seems to be about Malcolm and Vivienne Westwood. Was your biggest problem with them that they used the Sex Pistols to sell clothes? I never had problems with that. It was the problem of stealing the credit for things they didn't do that was impossible for me as a young person. You got these great clothes. You dress so thoroughly fashion-forward. You can get into all these trendy nightclubs, everybody loves you. You dine at five-star restaurants. And you're nicking my song, the lyrics, and claiming credit for that, while at the same time pretending I'm some kind of moron? A puppet. That hurts, because I'd struggled so hard to find myself when I was young, and I struggled so hard for this band, the Pistols, to work.

Do you feel you said everything you wanted to Malcolm before he died? No. Anybody's death, you don't always see it coming. It's very easy to be bitter and twisted and full of animosity for each other, and indeed I recommend that, too. In the Irish culture we don't speak ill of the dead. There's some really deep philosophy in it, I find. If you focus on the positive, then that's a step forward. Because you're not running away from reality. You're trying to fix it for the rest of us in the future. That's why I write songs, that's why I read books, and I know that's why people write books. I know that's why the good filmmakers make films, or good painters paint. I like the fact that my mum and dad wanted to be cremated. So anti-Catholic. But it was the right thing for both of them. My mother made that decision because she was dying of cancer and she didn't want bunny rabbits to get cancer. My dad went years later, and said, "I'll do what my wife did."

REVELATIONS

ME AND NEIL YOUNG...

...and a misunderstanding over cake

YOUNG IS BOTH a talisman and a bête noire for Lydon. He elevated Johnny Rotten's profile by including him in the lyrics of "My My, Hey Hey (Out Of The Blue)", but later refused to be part of a show Lydon made for VH1. "I wanted to interview him. And his press people or management, I've no clue about it, really, other than that they said they refused to believe that I actually existed, or counted. Inferring that they only work with geniuses. You wouldn't think I would like someone like this. My musical tastes are vast and enormous, but it's very difficult for an alleged punk audience to understand just how expansive the King Of Punk's library is. But at the same time, people like Neil reject me when I send out heartwarming signals. It was a lot to do with a meeting years earlier in a hotel. I was doing a PiL gig, and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young were having a meeting at the same hotel. They had a cake. I came down barefoot from my room, I had a suit jacket on with a tie but no shirt, and not a lot else. I jumped on his cake barefoot, and went, 'Hello!' But I meant it well. I thought they'd burst out laughing and go, this is our birthday gift, Johnny Rotten. Like exploding out of the cake? No, it doesn't work like that, rock people or not. They completely lack spontaneous humour."



Neil Young: "lacking spontaneous humour"

"PiL made anti-music. Anti-rhythm. The Sex Pistols solved problems"

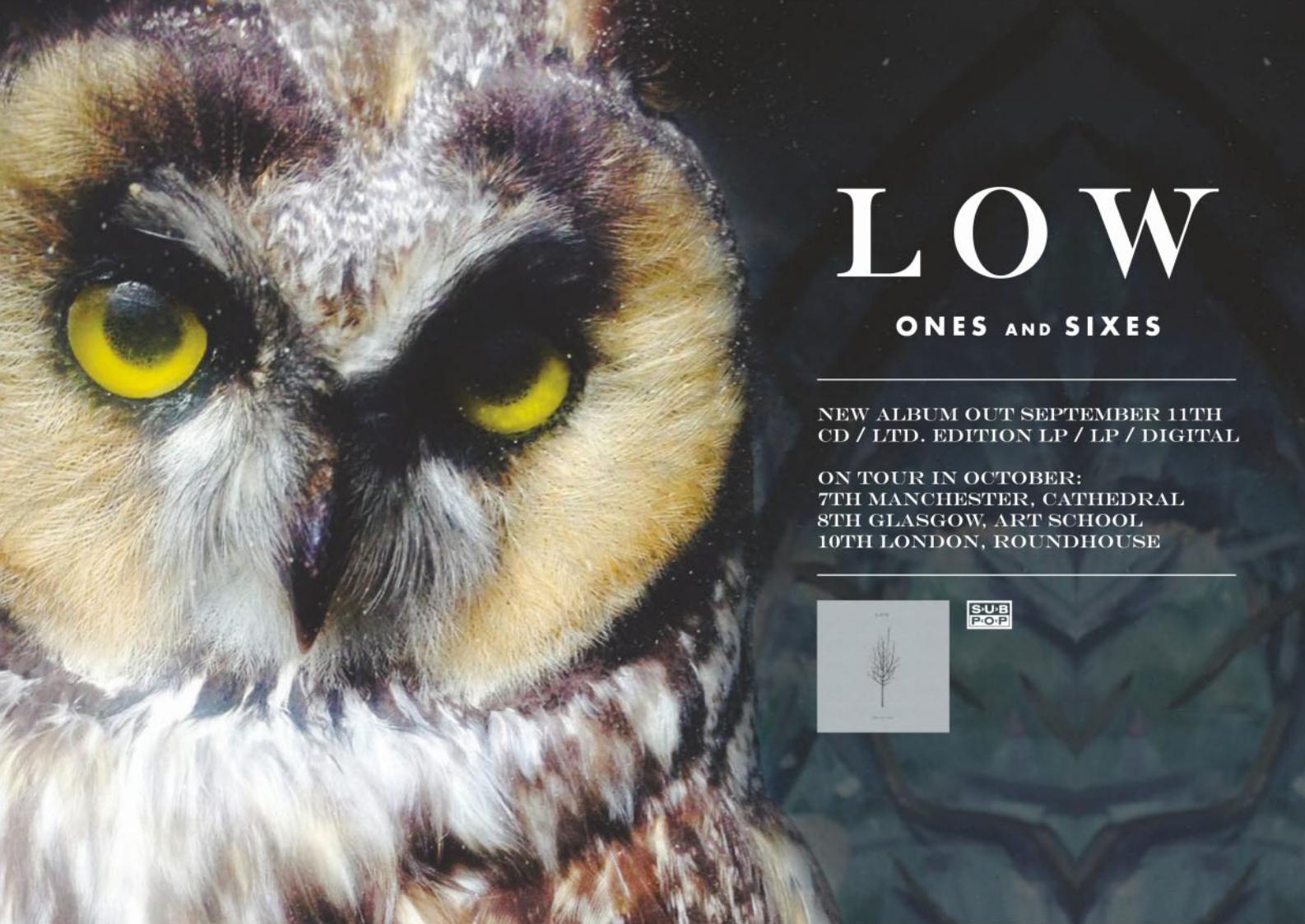


Turkey tits? Westwood and McLaren outside the latter's Glitterbest HQ, circa 1979

At this point, what do you see as the biggest difference between your two bands. Is there one that feels more like you? Yeah. I want a full life of experiences, both the yin and the yang. And in some ways I suppose that's what the two bands are for me. One can't exist without the other, really. And no, that doesn't mean I'm bipolar. PiL made anti-music. Anti-rhythm. The Sex Pistols solved problems.

Which ones? Royalty, of course. It opened up the discussion rather than having the hate stew contaminate you. PiL is a continuous creative pot of activity, and what am I doing but exploring the innards? This is not about music, ultimately. Self-autopsy. That's why my body will be dedicated to science rather than buried. I've made a promise if I die before Nora, I can't do that because she couldn't tolerate the idea of me being laughed at by medical students. It would be wrong. But if I go second, then wow. I want it on National Geographic, very much like they do that fake T-Rex autopsy.

How would you like to be remembered? As a person who respected the rights of others and always stood up for the disenfranchised. My family and friends will remember me as a bloke who likes a good laugh, and I don't let the bastards grind me down. Oscar Wilde turned the world upside down and was able to laugh at it, and hopefully by the time I'm 120 and worn out, that's what I will achieve. I love being alive so much. When you come out of comas in your childhood, every moment awake is a joyous occasion. That's probably where my predilection towards amphetamines came from. While you're awake, you're alive! But all the illnesses and pain made me what I am. Here's the difficulty with the Johnny Rotten persona. I presented a character



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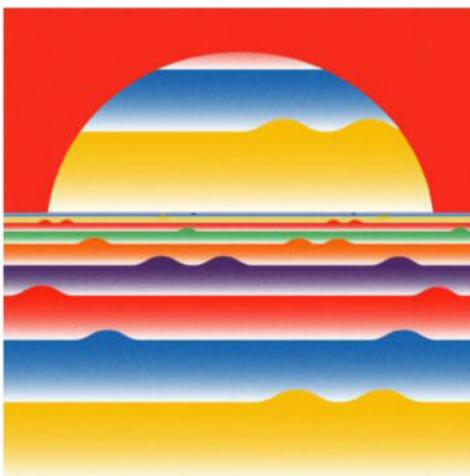
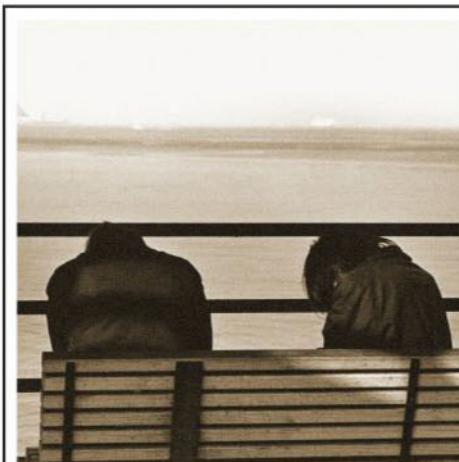
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Lydon greets his wife Nora after fleeing I'm A Celebrity... in 2004

• that didn't make you feel any empathy. And that's an ugly thing to present. It's actually realistic.

Did you feel that isolated you, being so horrible and inaccessible to people? That you lived in a sort of tower?
Not really, it's not a tower, but I am your genuine rock'n'roll monster. You cannot penetrate these walls.

Unless you're putting down the gate. Yeah, I'll let you in. On the weekend, or whatever, but that is the point and purpose of being a rock'n'roll monster, perfection. Find a flaw, dare you. That's the opportunity I was given and so here it is.

But you subverted that in more recent times. Thank you. But isn't that the point of being imperfect?

OK, what's your greatest strength? One hundred per cent Russian vodka. But no, my greatest strength is my capacity to share sadness, and that's only a recent development, too.

What do you attribute that to? I've learned to open up and be more forthright about things. Really I've only been able to do that because I spent so long attacking myself in songs.

I think it's like something's shifted in you. I've dropped the defences. I could be a hell of a professional agitator. But enough of that. When I was younger I had to be on the defence, because these were professional people trying to tear me down. It was open warfare going on any of those chat shows. There was a vindictiveness in the hosts that as a young lad I had to be very wary of, and I wouldn't let anybody get one over me. But now I just don't care. If they're going to talk nonsense then I'll just talk above and beyond and over them.

What do know now that you wish you'd known when you first started? I'm more than content with life as it is, and as incidences occur, that suits me. I'm not one of these people who suffers hindsight or fools very gladly. But you can't expect me to be forever the angry 17-year-old, because indeed I'd much rather be this angry 60-year-old. He's damn smarter.

That's the gift of ageing, that's why we're smarter. Well, I hope we are. There's more than a few people out there who would beg to differ. They work hard at being stupid. Just watch the rowing in the Houses Of Parliament debates. They do show that on American TV from time to time, and it's frightening how childish they all are.

So sum up David Cameron's Britain. Two words, A Fiasco, full stop. I think the man has an ineptitude that's almost whimsical. He is very much like a standup comedian who can't tell a joke, and can't perform any of the magic tricks he endures and inflicts on his audience. So in other

REVELATIONS

"MY GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?"

John's life-changing childhood illness

"PEOPLE ASK ME, 'Which is your greatest achievement, PiL or the Pistols?' It's neither. My greatest achievement is surviving a really insidious slow death called meningitis. It almost destroyed me, and it almost took everything that I held dear, memories, personality, all those things were almost stolen off me permanently. So that's my greatest achievement, to survive that. And around that everything else hinges and echoes. I had the rare privilege of a disease that allowed me to look at myself from the outside in, rediscover myself to find out I wasn't that far removed from what I was initially, but I was given the gift of self-analysis therein. So you could say I'm my own worst enemy, but also my

own best friend, and if I'm doing wrong I

won't let myself off lightly and I'll get that bit corrected. The self-analysis extends even to the realm of sleep. It's quite amazing what can float out of your mind, too, and to remember all of your genius thoughts after. I write them down. And I use little tape recorders constantly. I don't ever go to sleep without things next to the bed. And it's fascinating what my brain's telling me when I'm apparently unconscious. Yes, it triggers. Why lose your dreams? They're as relevant to us as anything of our walking psychosis."



As a six-year-old in 1962, a year before contracting meningitis

"If you're daft enough to buy a Sex Pistols perfume, I can't really help you"



words, a professional failure. And sometimes that is very amusing. But not with the harsh realities that his endeavours are inflicting.

Have you seen the Sex Pistols credit card? Their campaign is how they want to revolutionise banking the way you revolutionised music. Yes, yes, and there's the connection and indeed the respect, too, and so I'm very happy they didn't do this with any subterfuge. They approached us openly about the credit card, and we liked that idea. I mean, imagine the bills I could rack up and not pay.

Did you get a card? I await. But anyway, I have an account, there it is. It's a nice nod and a wink in our direction, which I think is healthy for banking systems to adopt.

You're not exactly Gene Simmons, hawking Kiss coffins, but there was a Sex Pistols perfume a while back. Yes, that was the most hilarious of all, because that came out in such a roundabout, almost a bootleggy way.

We jumped on that, because we don't like people to abuse our trademark.

The ad campaign was so good, I thought about buying a bottle. No, you wouldn't like it. It's horrible. And if you're daft enough to buy a Sex Pistols perfume, I can't really help you at this point.

Help me? You're the one with the "God Save The Queen" lap blanket. Well, it's very much, what's that term, Americana, isn't it, and I've always found that a fun side of America, that junk is attached to everything.

Do you feel your greatest compliment was when Miles Davis commented that you sang like he played the trumpet? People make too much out of it. It's like what we do, people who create sounds, you could call it musicians, but we do respect each other. It's unfortunately an audience ↗

Out there that puts divides between us when we don't view it that way at all. There's another quote that I like better. James Blood Ulmer after he saw a Public Image gig said that we went beyond music. I thought that's exactly dead right, yes, thank you. Somebody's noticed. The music in itself is not the be-all and end of it; there's something else that we're reaching to. The unobtainable. But sometimes it can be obtained. I can't clarify what that is, but I suppose it's the iCloud space.

You've said you've changed music twice. What was the biggest change? Public Image. First and foremost for myself, it was an internal conquest to clear out the debris of the past and to just find a new landscape for myself. And one that was more genuine, less crowd-pleasing. The Sex Pistols for me was attacking the institutions like religion and politics that were really stifling me and my kind of people. But Public Image was a self-analytical moment when I first started thinking, 'Well, I'm never going to make the world a better place unless I make myself a better person first.' That comes from the idea of you can't love others unless you learn to love yourself.

You're still rather romantic about music. What is it that we do? It's a proper, complete observation of humanity, and we have to get this one right, lest we become trivia. Our music industry, which it is, is not trivial. It's the greatest understanding of humanity that the world has offered to this point yet. Music does change and reshape societies, and it will do again.

Is there any single thing that made you know you were on the right path early on? The only person who really helped us when we were young was Chris Spedding. Wonderful fella. Love him. He'd been dating Nora, my wife, before the Pistols, so we were interrelated, sort of. Of course, Nora didn't like me because of what she'd heard from Malcolm and the rest of them, but it didn't matter. Chris, he went, "I don't understand. They say you can't play but you can, and John, your singing's really good, your breathing technique. It's something else." And, oh my God, that's all you really need when you're young, an accolade. And you go, "Yeah, he's noticed I'm doing something good." And then you use that. It's a jump-start to the universe. Show anything kindness and the rewards are endless.

You frightened so many people early on in your career, and here you are now having this kind of pacific relationship with people. But this is the John that always was, and I cannot help the misperception in-between, other than it utterly amazes me that you could think anything was bad about me for being so clued into the psyche of the time. What have I done wrong?

I always wondered if you planned to demolish the Sex Pistols at the San Francisco show on January 14, 1978... No. I just felt that this was too much. It wasn't right as a band. Sid was off on the delusion of drugs, and he should never have been allowed to get back into that. He should have been left closer to me, which would have stopped that. Steve and Paul just had enough. It was just chaos for them, and they're simple people who think in simple terms, which doesn't mean simplistic at all. You have to understand that they see things really clearly, particularly Paul. It was like family to him, and that was denied for him.

That show was so hard to watch. In a weird way, delicious. The ultimate rock'n'roll moment. The night before the show, I went to Alcatraz with my mate Rambo, who is now my manager. We'd arrived in San Francisco at something like 1am in the morning and three hours later, he's on the phone. He woke me at 4am to go visit Alcatraz. I told him I needed to sleep so bad and he went, "No, you need this more. Come on, you'll like it." I loved it. It's so odd, people talk about it being



The Sex Pistols at Majestic Studios, London, 1976: (l-r) Paul Cook, Steve Jones, Glen Matlock, Chris Spedding (producer) and Lydon

"It amazes me you could think bad of me for being clued into the psyche of the time"

haunted or it's got a bad atmosphere. I found the atmosphere really relaxing, isn't that strange? I found an empathy in there, of imprisoned souls. There was this sign, about 40ft high, saying 'Do Not Smoke'. We missed it and lit up, and that was that. We got kicked off the island. An official told us that there are cameras everywhere, even though it's a defunct prison. You're still a prisoner by mentality, and now tourists are paying for the privilege of being imprisoned. But there's the reward. I went to the gig that night with that information, you're still not free. Did it have anything to do with what I did? Probably. ☺

Public Image Limited release What The World Needs Now... on September 4; they begin a European tour on September 18. Visit www.pilofficial.com for further details

REVELATIONS

TOILETS... AND THE LIFE AQUATIC

Dinner for one: further foibles of the PiL man

TOILETS SEEM TO play a big part in John Lydon's life. He begins his new album with an argument he's having with his wife over fixing the plumbing. Years before, Joey Ramone refused to replace his toilet seat in his apartment because Lydon broke it.

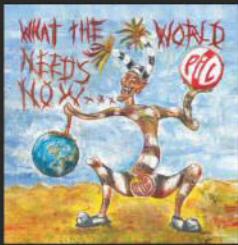
"I know, he told me that! He was hilarious. A golden mine of a human being," says Lydon. "Here's an aspect of humans that we don't understand. We spend more time on the toilet than anywhere else. That includes the bed. I love Sunday morning papers, sitting on the loo. Although it's iPad now, with rubber gloves. Oh, it drives me wife absolutely insane when I'm sitting on the toilet eating Heinz baked beans on toast, which is my favourite Sunday



morning meal. 'How can you do this?' she shouts. It breaks all rules of etiquette. And I understand it, too, but an indoor toilet for me, is a luxury. We grew up without one."

But toilets are by no means the extent of the life aquatic with John Lydon. "I'm a diver. I'm a good diver because I can hold my breath so long. All the years of singing. No aqualung. I got my deep-sea-diving licence in Africa studying great white sharks for a Channel 5 documentary, and it was fantastic."

Had events transpired differently, he might have become a marine biologist. "I was so deeply influenced by the Jaws films. But really not at all about the bits of savagery. It's the study of nature."

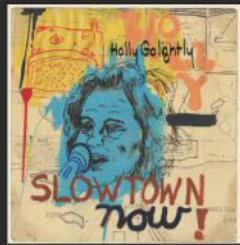


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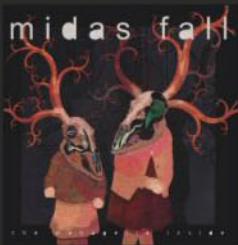
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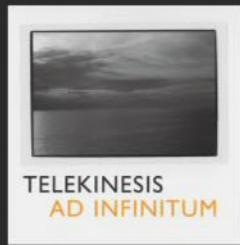
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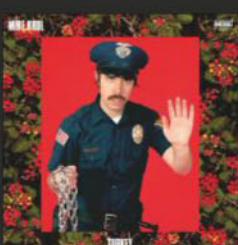
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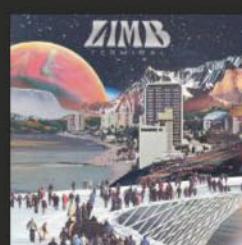
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Opus 40

BY MERCURY REV

“Catskill mansions, buried dreams”: inspired by their spiritual home, and energised by the great Levon Helm, “Opus 40” sits at the heart of their landmark 1998 LP *Deserter’s Songs* – and its recording helped pull Mercury Rev back from the brink

“**O**PUS 40” COULD be the song of ours that’s most connected to the Catskill Mountains,” says frontman Jonathan Donahue today. “It just came out of me like that.” Not only a stately highlight of *Deserter’s Songs*, “Opus 40” is aptly infused with the unique spirit of New York State’s most famous mountain range, an area still deeply connected with such luminaries as Bob Dylan and The Band. “I think the song is a bit of an homage to The Band,” adds guitarist Sean ‘Grasshopper’ Mackowiak, “in that it’s got those descending chords which The Band did a lot, especially Rick Danko’s bass parts with all those hefty suspensions. So we wanted to see if Levon Helm would play the drums on it.”

With help from The Band’s drummer, some cross-pollination with The Flaming Lips and a spot of whistling that would soon attract the attentions of a global fast-food chain, “Opus 40” became one of Mercury Rev’s best-loved songs. As a centrepiece of 1998’s storied *Deserter’s Songs*, it also helped re-energise the group, both musically and personally. “We thought, ‘Well, if no-one is listening and this is gonna be our last album, then we’re really gonna go for it,’” says Donahue. **TOM PINNOCK**

JONATHAN DONAHUE: *See You On The Other Side* [the band’s third album, released in 1995] was

obliterated by Britpop, it didn’t stand a chance. After the tour, we had no lawyer, no label, no money, no manager, nothing. And most of all, we had nobody waiting for a new record.

Grasshopper and I were both going through some heavy times personally. For a few years there, I dove head-long into some very self-destructive times, I split the seam both mentally and emotionally. I went through a really tough time which somehow, looking back, I think actually paralleled The Band, certainly with Levon and Rick [Danko] and Garth [Hudson], during those times.

ADAM SNYDER: I don’t know if *Deserter’s Songs* was a last roll of the dice, but it was an attempt at keeping things going. There wasn’t really the perception that it was gonna be a successful album. In a way it was Jonathan and I starting the process, because a lot of the others weren’t around.

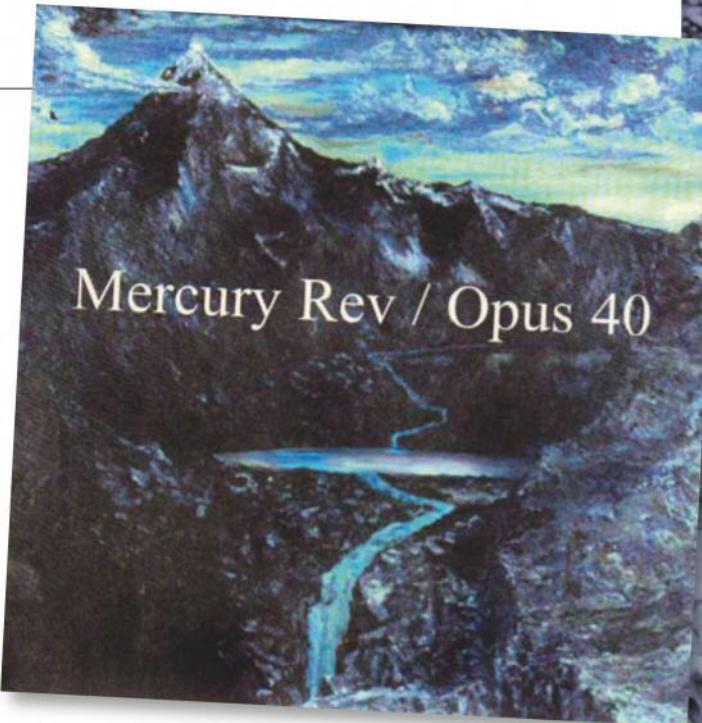
DONAHUE: We were broken up on the inside. We never said Mercury Rev is breaking up, but without a ready audience encouraging you, it was

easy to become very despondent, very disheartened. Drugs? Alcohol? You could probably shoot a very wide arrow and hit just about any of the marks for destruction [that were going on]. It was a total breakdown of confidence, because *See You On The Other Side* was so much us, musically, that where could you turn? We thought, well, we’re gonna go in a way where there’s no rock drums, there’s no chiming guitar solos or leads, and we’re just gonna go really deep on the inside.

SEAN ‘GRASSHOPPER’ MACKOWIAK: Right before *Deserter’s Songs*,

we moved back to the Catskills, and that was reflected in the music – you’re in this tranquil setting instead of being deep down in New York, the big town, every day.

DONAHUE: It’s strange, the Catskills have a quality of timelessness to them which can work wonders for you, but it can also work against you. You begin to lose touch with the outside world. Especially for Grasshopper and I, the Catskills were that still point where we could be really



Mercury Rev / Opus 40



All Revved up in '99: "If no-one is listening, we're really gonna go for it"

quiet and begin to reassemble all the points of light that made us up earlier in our musical lives. The entire area now is very commercialised. But back in the '90s, it didn't have that cachet, the *Midnight Rambles* hadn't happened, *Deserter's* hadn't happened, so it was almost like an abandoned musical amusement park. I just grew up with it, so I never was thinking, 'I'm at the spot where *Rock Of Ages* was recorded.' All the places there didn't have that timeless-history quality that would later become much more sensationalised.

GRASSHOPPER: Adam Snyder had joined the band to tour *See You On The Other Side* and we started writing a lot of stuff with him. With *Deserter's Songs*, a lot of it, the first batch of songs were mostly myself, Jon, Adam Snyder and Dave Fridmann.

SNYDER: I remember Jon and I were sitting in a room in Kingston, which is like the gateway to the Catskills. I started tinkering around with a Wurlitzer, and that's how "Opus 40" was born.

GRASSHOPPER: Opus 40 is a place here in the Catskills – Jonathan grew up around here, so that was a place that he used to go to, hang out there in the sculpted rocks of the bluestone. All the bricks of the Empire State Building and most of the Lower East Side came from this brick company that was here in Kingston.

DONAHUE: Opus 40 was built by one man over 40 years. It was one man's lifelong endeavour to leave something greater than himself after he

passed. It has a Rip Van Winkle quality – it's an old Dutch tale that says there was a Dutchman who fell asleep in the Catskills for 20 years, until he was woken by great thunder clouds, but the idea of falling asleep then waking up into another world, that's all within there. It's probably within me, it's just one of those places where you grow up with the mythology already embedded in your DNA. You don't have to be an artist, it's just one of

"We had no infrastructure. We didn't even have amps. I'd sold all my guitars..."

JONATHAN DONAHUE

those qualities to the Catskills. I can recall going to Opus 40 when I was a child.

SNYDER: The song was the beginning of a different type of chord structure for the band. You can hear it in other songs on the record, and then later you can hear it when the band started experimenting more with that descending chord structure.

GRASSHOPPER: We didn't have a lot of money, we were just scraping together small publishing cheques we got from stuff like *Yerself Is Steam*. "Opus 40" and "Hudson Line" were the first two songs we recorded, not too far from where Opus 40 actually is. I had met Rick Danko at a butcher's shop and Levon Helm at this place where I get my hair cut. We realised that they were recording at this studio, NRS, run by Scott Petito. We asked Scott if Levon would be interested in playing on "Opus 40" and he said yes, so we were really psyched.

DONAHUE: This was pre-Midnight Ramble, and Levon was in a dark time, there was no question about it. The Band weren't playing shows, and they weren't all flush with money. This wasn't the high point of two bands coming together – neither band was coming off highly successful records or periods in life, so we really mirrored one another.

SNYDER: We started recording "Opus 40" at NRS, on the Hurley Flats. The studio was surrounded by farm fields and really, really desolate all around. It was so quiet, and dark.

DONAHUE: Levon came to the studio with his daughter, Amy, and someone he referred to as a road manager, who was actually a local judge. It very much had that Elvis quality, that the people he was surrounded with were very protective of him. We'd never really rehearsed "Opus 40" properly, so I didn't know what to expect when Levon showed up. But he was just



MERCURY REV

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so personable.

There wasn't a lot of talking. You didn't have to chart anything out, you didn't have to say, "This is how this goes." He was smiling the whole time. I'll never forget it. I went home that night, laid in bed and I was in awe that I just played with Levon. It was probably the biggest contributing factor to *Deserter's Songs*, 'cos it gave me confidence when my confidence was shot at that point.

SNYDER: Sometimes Levon would have a second drummer with him to make him feel comfortable, so Randy Ciarlante played that night, too. We set up in a circle. The studio had a Hammond B-3 with a real Leslie cabinet, and that's what I was playing. I was facing Levon and I just kept looking up at him as I was playing, and it was magic. He was very gracious, he did a great job and we didn't do a lot of takes, I'd be surprised if we did more than four or five. Later in the night, Amy and Marie [Spinosa, *The Crowmatix*] mentioned, "Oh, we sing sometimes, just the two of us." So the female vocals you hear in the song are Amy and Marie. Then Amy said she was a really good whistler, so the whistling at the end of the song was also recorded that night, and it was just beautiful.

DONAHUE: A year or two ago, Amy told me that had led to her having a career in commercial whistling. She went on to do ads for a fast food chain, whistling. It was really funny. I guess one of the unintended consequences of the song.

SNYDER: By the winter, we moved the operation out to Tarbox [Dave Fridmann's studio], which is in an extremely rural location in western New York. It's a long drive from Kingston, so we would stay out there. Jonathan and I slept upstairs at the studio, Grasshopper stayed with his folks nearby, and Dave had his house in Fredonia. Others came and went throughout the process.

DONAHUE: I think it was only later in the recording that we got a record deal from V2, and that's when we began to be able to afford Dave Fridmann, to be able to pay the bills at Tarbox, which was beginning as a studio.

DAVE FRIDMANN: At Tarbox, we finalised it and mixed it, and came up with all the final arrangement portions, but a tremendous amount of work had already been done when they came into the studio.

SNYDER: Much of "Opus 40" was re-recorded there. What remains for sure are Levon's drums, Amy and Marie's singing and whistling, and my part on the Hammond B-3. The organ we kept from the first session, even though the solo I played on the B-3 was a little clunky. I hit at least one wrong note, but I insisted on keeping it 'cos

Donahue: "All of a sudden, we were asked to do world tours"

that was the one I played while Levon was actually playing. Of the new additions, the harmonies during the choruses really made the song pop. I'm pretty sure it's Grasshopper who's hitting those high notes, which for me lives on as an unintended tribute to Rick Danko.

FRIDMANN: I don't believe any actual string players were harmed in the making of that song, I believe that's all samples and synthesisers. There was a confluence of our technical abilities, having a stable environment to work in, and having the ability to get to where we wanted to be in the first place. That combined with the fact I was simultaneously making *The Soft Bulletin* with The Flaming Lips and there was obviously a lot of cross-pollination going on. We were all learning what some of the capabilities of that technology was at that time, which was awesome.

DONAHUE: I remember thanking Dave Fridmann at the end of *Deserter's Songs*, and saying, "Thank you, this is probably our last hoorah together." What took us by surprise was that people didn't see the album coming. Maybe there weren't oboes on *See You On The Other Side*, but there were other orchestrations, and more classical instrumentation, and on *Deserter's Songs* we just fully dove in. But even when we handed it in [to the label], no-one said anything. It was just quiet. It didn't occur to me that it would make waves like it did. All of a sudden we were being asked to

do world tours. We didn't even have guitar amps. I had sold all my guitars for heroin. We had no infrastructure, there was no management, there was nothing. It took a lot of soul-searching to even begin on how to piece this back together.

GRASSHOPPER: It really freaked us out. We were in London, in Sainsbury's, and all of a sudden we heard it on the loudspeakers in the

grocery store. We'd be in taxis and you'd hear it on the radio. We started to get stalkers that would follow us to the hotels and stuff, and Jonathan and I had to book under different names because you'd have people knocking on the hotel door at 3am. "Where's Opus 40?" It got really crazy for a while... we played two nights at Shepherd's Bush a few years later, and one night both Ryan Adams and Bryan Adams were on the guest list. We thought, 'Wow, that's pretty cool.'

DONAHUE: I live on top of a mountain overlooking Woodstock now, and Grasshopper lives in a small town that's nearby. We're releasing a new album, our first one in seven years, and people say, "What took you so long?" We're living in the mountains, people. Time goes differently here. It's a lot like being an

astronaut, you go up in space, you come back down and 30 years have passed on earth. It's like that. Seven years to me is like seven months, it just goes by differently. ☺

Mercury Rev's The Light In You is out Sept 18

ANDREW CSILLAG/REX

TIMELINE

March 23, 1996

Mercury Rev perform their final show in support of *See You On The Other Side*, and

return to New York

in disarray

Summer 1997 Donahue, Snyder and Levon Helm record the original

tracks for "Opus 40" in

Hurley in the Catskills

Winter 1997/98

The group reconvene at Dave Fridmann's new

Tarbox Studios in

Cassadaga, New York,

to continue work on the songs, including "Opus 40"

September 29, 1998

Deserter's Songs is released to acclaim. Spring, 1999 "Opus 40" released as a single

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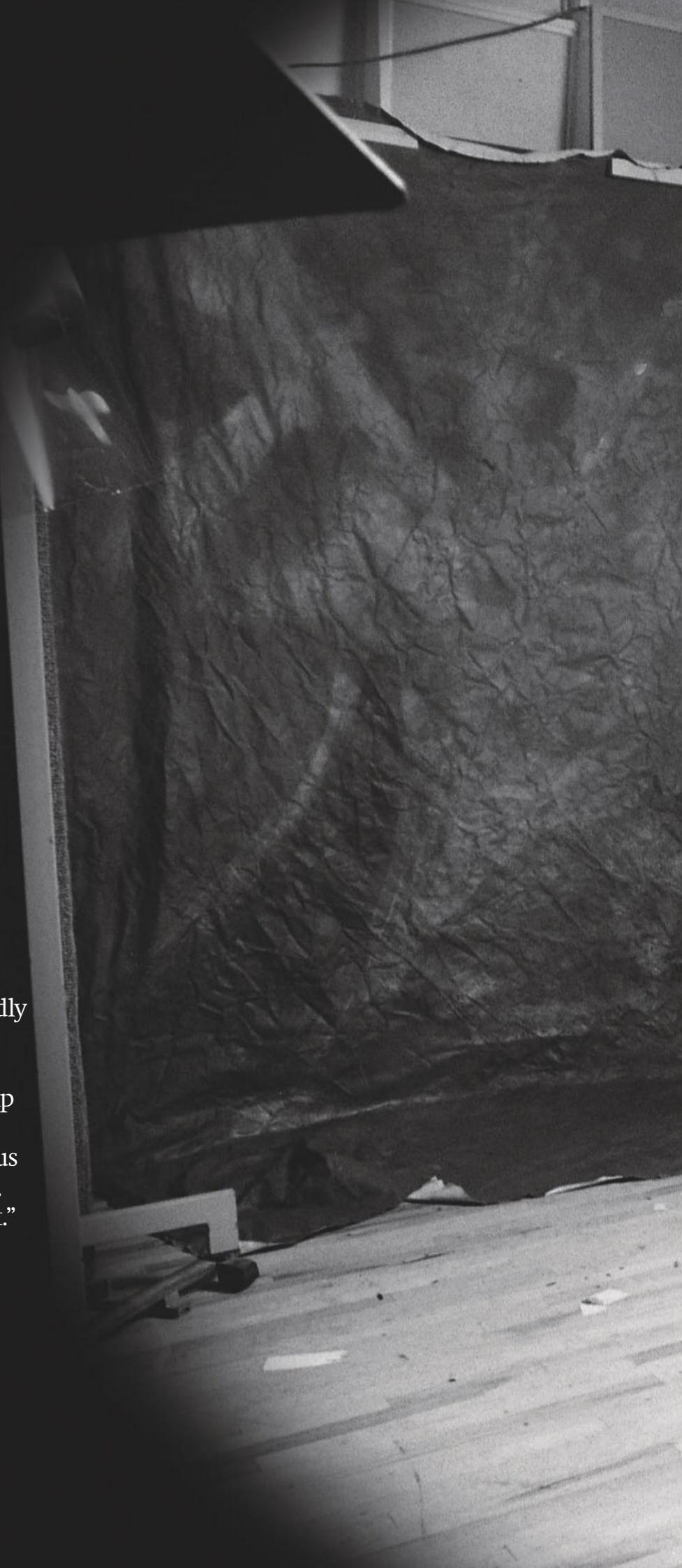


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“THE STORY OF ME AND JOHN”

Machine guns in the bushes.
The genius of George Martin.
“Late blooming” George Harrison.
“Allen fucking Klein”, and how
he learned to “block the shit”.
The re-release of his *Tug Of War*
and *Pipes Of Peace* albums prompts
Paul McCartney to talk unguardedly
to *Uncut* about working with and
without John Lennon — and to
discuss extensively the relationship
that revolutionised music.
“When I think of John, I think of us
writing together,” says McCartney.
“A Day In The Life’... stuff like that.”

Story: Michael Bonner
Portrait: © 1982 Paul McCartney/
Photographer: Linda McCartney





McCartney at AIR London,
during the video shoot for
"Tug Of War", 1982



McCartney with George Martin and Stevie Wonder, recording *Tug Of War* at AIR Montserrat, February 1981

“I’M TERRIBLE ON history,” Paul McCartney admits conspiratorially. “I am! What makes it even worse is that people know my history way better than I’m ever going to know it. I’m not paying that much attention.” In the first-floor office above his Sussex recording studio, Paul McCartney is gamely attempting to distance himself from the weight of his legend. But despite McCartney’s protestations that he isn’t quite up to speed with his own inimitable *McCartney*ness, there is evidence of his past everywhere around us. Awards line the shelves; framed discs hang from the walls; bags bulging with CDs and DVDs are shoved into corners. It is McCartney’s life measured out in memorabilia. At one end of the room sits his wooden school desk from the Liverpool Institute For Boys, where he and George Harrison were pupils during the mid-’50s. Propped up in the corner next to it is an upright bass with white trim around its edges. McCartney walks briskly over to it. “It belonged to Bill Black, Elvis’ bass player,” he explains, crouching down to run a finger along four letters – B - I - L - L – that have been fixed next to the tailpiece. “Linda bought it for me for my birthday. This is his bass, man. That is *the thing*.”

© 1981 PAUL McCARTNEY/PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA McCARTNEY



Do you ever use it?

“I do use it, yeah,” he nods. “I use it occasionally. But I’m not good on that. I’m better on...” he pauses.

The conventional bass?

“That is the conventional bass,” he laughs. “You mean the devilish, modern, electric bass.”

Today, McCartney meets *Uncut* wearing a pale blue polo shirt, navy trousers and a pair of light brown casual shoe/trainer hybrids. His hair is a nutty brown colour while his skin has the light tan of the well-heeled international traveller. His voice is a little husky, the Scouse accent more pronounced than you might expect.

It is a busy period for McCartney – he has only been back in the UK for a few days and tomorrow he flies to the States to play Lollapalooza. To make best use of his limited time, McCartney’s day here at Hog Mill Hill studios is taken up with meetings to discuss various projects – archival and new, solo as well as Beatles. A few hours earlier, *Uncut* had arrived by train in

nearby Rye. Walking up the town’s cobbled High Street, we bumped into Mary McCartney, who reassured us that despite his active schedule, “Dad is in a good mood today.”



TAKE IT AWAY...

A Macca timeline

1980

January 16: Arrives at Tokyo's Narita Airport ahead of Wings' tour of Japan; is arrested for possession of 219g of marijuana; imprisoned for 10 days

May 16: McCartney // released in the UK

July: Wings begin early rehearsals on new material at Finchden Manor in Kent

July 11: Paul and Linda work on Ringo's Stop And Smell The Roses at Super Bear studios, Berre-les-Alpes, France



January 28, 1980: back home in Sussex after being deported from Japan days earlier for marijuana possession



The journey from Rye to Hog Mill Hill in Icklesham takes around 10 minutes by car. The route passes signs advertising target sports, summer fêtes and marker posts for the 1066 Country Walk; at Winchelsea, we skirt by the churchyard of St Thomas the Martyr, where Spike Milligan is buried. Take a sharp turn off a winding country lane and Hog Mill Hill appears suddenly on the skyline. The body of the mill is painted black, while a weather-beaten red telephone box stands incongruously beside it. McCartney – who lives a 25 minute drive away, in Peasmash – converted the mill into a rehearsal space shortly after he bought the property, but it's currently empty save for a dusty-looking mandolin sitting forlornly on top of a pile of cardboard boxes. A few yards along from the mill – past McCartney's maroon-coloured Lexus – is the studio itself, housed in a two-storey white building. In the kitchen, John Hammel – McCartney's long-serving right-hand man – sits at a table sifting through receipts from the latest leg of the Out There Tour. When McCartney finally appears, he apologises for running late and, as we walk upstairs to his office, he talks enthusiastically about recent live shows at London's O2 Arena in May and at the Roskilde festival.

McCartney's office runs the length of the building's top floor. Two cheery yellow sofas sit on a red rug in the middle of the room. Walking over to the window, he points to a beach where, he explains, he was out walking one day when he first saw the mill in the distance. What first caught his eye, he explains as he ushers *Uncut* towards one of the sofas, was how remote and hard to reach the mill seemed.

October 30:

Additional Wings rehearsals at Parkgate Studios, Sussex and Pugins Hall, Kent are unproductive; soon after, McCartney disbands Wings but continues to collaborate with Denny Laine

November: Works with George Martin on "We All Stand Together"

December 7: Recording officially begins on *Tug Of War* at AIR Studios, London

December 8: John Lennon is assassinated

1981

February 2: Work resumes on *Tug Of War* at AIR Montserrat

February 15: Ringo arrives in Montserrat; six days later Carl Perkins arrives, with Stevie Wonder following on the 26th

April 27: Following Denny Laine's departure in March, McCartney officially announces the end of Wings

May 11: George releases Lennon tribute "All Those Years Ago", the first time Harrison, McCartney and Starr have appeared on the same recording since 1970

Summer: McCartney writes "Here Today" at The Mill; later renamed Hog Mill Hill studio

1982

March 29: "Ebony And Ivory" released as a single; reaches No 1 in nine countries

April 26: *Tug Of War* released; it enters the UK album charts at No 1



With George Martin
- "the grown-up
in the room" - at AIR
London, 1982

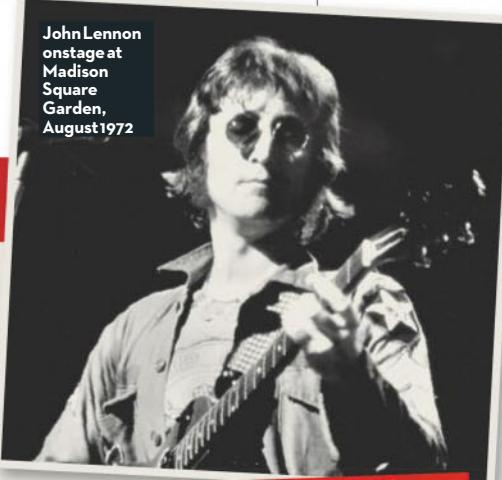
● This was 1981. No wonder he wanted to get away from it all – the new decade had started badly for McCartney. Within the first 16 months, he suffered a series of heavy upsets. He was jailed in Japan for possession of marijuana, *McCartney II* received a polarising response, Wings broke up, and John Lennon was murdered in New York.

After Lennon's death, he didn't tour for eight years. *Tug Of War*, the album he released in April 1982, contained a moving tribute to Lennon, "Here Today"; as a whole, the album found McCartney defiantly confident in his song-

JAM ON!

The secrets of Sir Paul's long shelf-life...

THE KITCHEN AT Hog Mill Hill offers some fascinating titbits for the ardent Macca spotter. On the wall just inside the door is a framed poster for McCartney's Liverpool Oratorio. A small shelf stacked with books hangs behind the door. There are volumes of vegetarian recipes – including several by Linda – mixed in with *The Oxford Book Of Ballads*, *Shamanism And The Mystery Lines*, *The Social Biology Of Ants*, two large box files marked "Studio Manuals" and a well-thumbed copy of *Without You: The Tragic Story Of Badfinger*. Perched on the edge of the shelf, a PG Tips monkey faces out into the kitchen. Two identical magnets are attached to the door of a fridge – both bearing the familiar image of the studio's owner. A window in the centre of the furthest wall looks out to sea, while to its right hangs a framed cover of *Country Life* from Feb 4, 1954 featuring a black-and-white photo of the mill below the inscription "A house worth saving". To the left, another shelf hosts jars of jam, Marmite, Branston pickle and organic peanut butter. The most eye-catching item, though, is a Lennon calendar hanging on the wall; the image for 'July' showing Paul's former bandmate during his August, 1972 Madison Square Garden show.



writing abilities. Working with George Martin for the first time since 1973, McCartney's sessions for *Tug Of War* and its sister album, *Pipes Of Peace* (both re-released this October), yielded gleaming pop gems, warmly sentimental ballads, a plea for social equality, and even a Christmas hit.

Among the many guest musicians invited to attend the sessions (at Martin's AIR studios in London and later Montserrat) were Ringo Starr, childhood hero Carl Perkins, American jazz fusionist Stanley Clarke, 10CC's Eric Stewart and Stevie Wonder. *Tug Of War* signalled a new start for McCartney. He had no intention of ever forming a band again, and the album essentially launched his career as a bona fide solo artist. "It was the first time I had a chance to do an album album, on my own," he explains. "Rather than just *McCartney I* or *McCartney II*, which were slightly more experimental. This was the first one I got into with George Martin, so I think that probably made it feel like the first proper album. But there's no such thing as 'proper' in my head. If it works, it's proper."

UNCUT: On *Tug Of War*, you were reunited with George Martin for the first time since 1973. What made you want to work with him again?

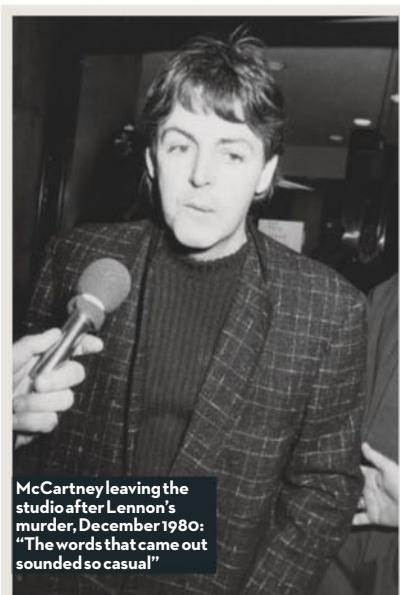
McCARTNEY: He's just the best. I'd always admired him and loved what we'd done together with The Beatles. I felt a bit sorry for him. It wasn't why I worked with him. Incidentally, I felt a bit sorry for him. He got slagged off. John was in one of

his 'hate the world' periods. He said some very bitter things about George Martin that I know he later withdrew. So in a way George wasn't getting the credit that he deserved. But he had really done an awful lot with us. He was brilliant to work with. He was the grown-up in the room. We would all be the naughty little kids. When he would go out, we'd even try and sneak a take in. "We can do it without you!" It was all that, you know. When The Beatles broke up, he got the short end of the stick. But we all knew he was the best. I used to say he had a great bedside manner. He was very clever, like a doctor when you're ill. They have a way of not getting you angry. "Sure, let me just take your temperature." George was like that. I'd disagree with one of his ideas, and they were often very good ideas, and instead of having a barney about it, he'd say, "Maybe we could just try it and if you don't like it, we'll lose it." Then I'd go, "Oh, OK." He was clever that way. He'd get you to try things.

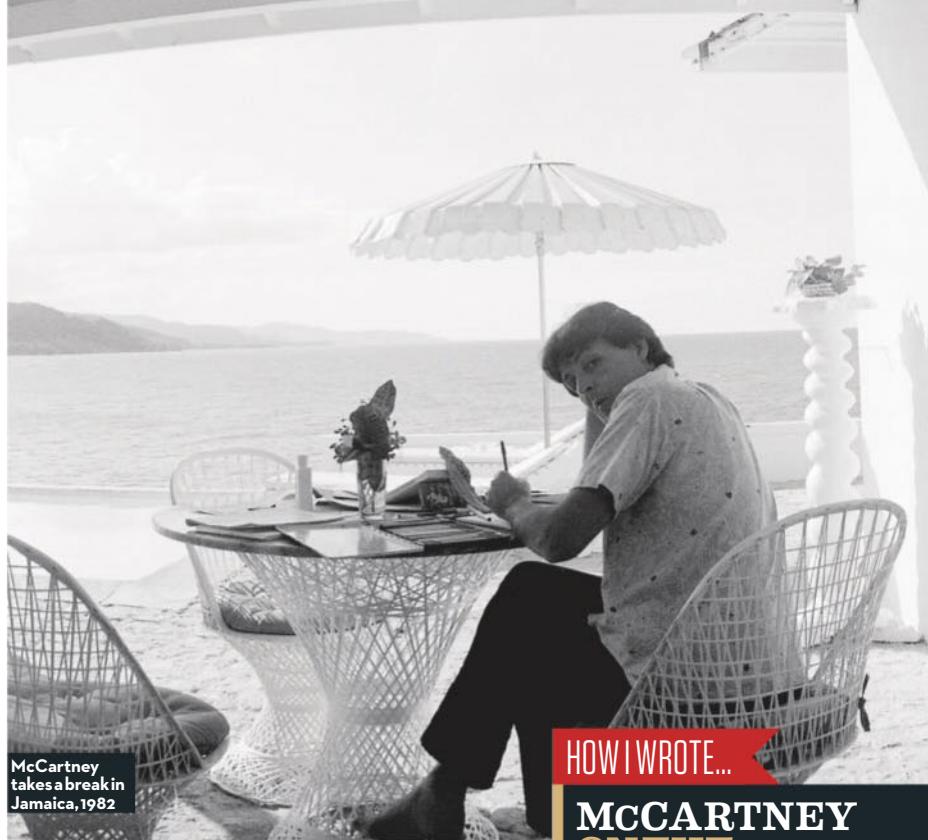
Do you have a specific example? "Please Please Me". Originally, we brought it to him as a very slow Orbison-esque ballad. [Mimics Orbison] "Last night I said these words... Come on – doodoo – come on – doodoo..." But George said, "It might be good a bit faster." We'd reply, "No." But he'd persuade us. "Oh, go on then, we'll try it." So we did. [Starts singing] "Last night I said..." He said, "There's your first No 1." So that, and a million times more, that happened, that thing. I just knew he was very good. If you were going to do an album, he'll give you good strong decisions; he'll put it together well. You're going to get a great sound quality. He's a swot like that. He's good at maths. He would know why something wasn't working. Whereas I'd say, "It doesn't sound good," he'd say, "It's overloading because we put too much bass there and we need to just do this." So that was one of the reasons I wanted to work with him again. And I like him is the other. That's probably the biggest reason.

You were working on the album that became *Tug Of War* when John was killed. When was the last time you saw him? Good question. When he went with May Pang. I saw him and May at their apartment, which was quite nice actually. He'd mellowed out quite a bit. He was being himself more. Then I saw him – among the last times – when he was out in LA doing Nilsson's album [Pussy Cats] and they were all crazy. I'd been sent by Yoko to be a go-between and to give John a message from her. Which was, "If you go back to New York and court her again, she might accept you." So he did that. Birth of Sean, I saw him. I think that's after *Pussy Cats*. I think the last time would have been in New York – because he didn't come out of New York – at his apartment, the Dakota. I always think of *Rosemary's Baby*. It was round about the time that we got the offer to appear on *Saturday Night Live*. Lorne Michaels came on television holding up a cheque for \$2,000, or something. He really had gone to the NBC people and said, "I want this group." They said, "You can pay them scale." I was in John's apartment.

"JOHN'S DEATH? I WAS IN SHOCK. I JUST COULDN'T THINK OF WHAT TO SAY"



McCartney leaving the studio after Lennon's murder, December 1980: "The words that came out sounded so casual"

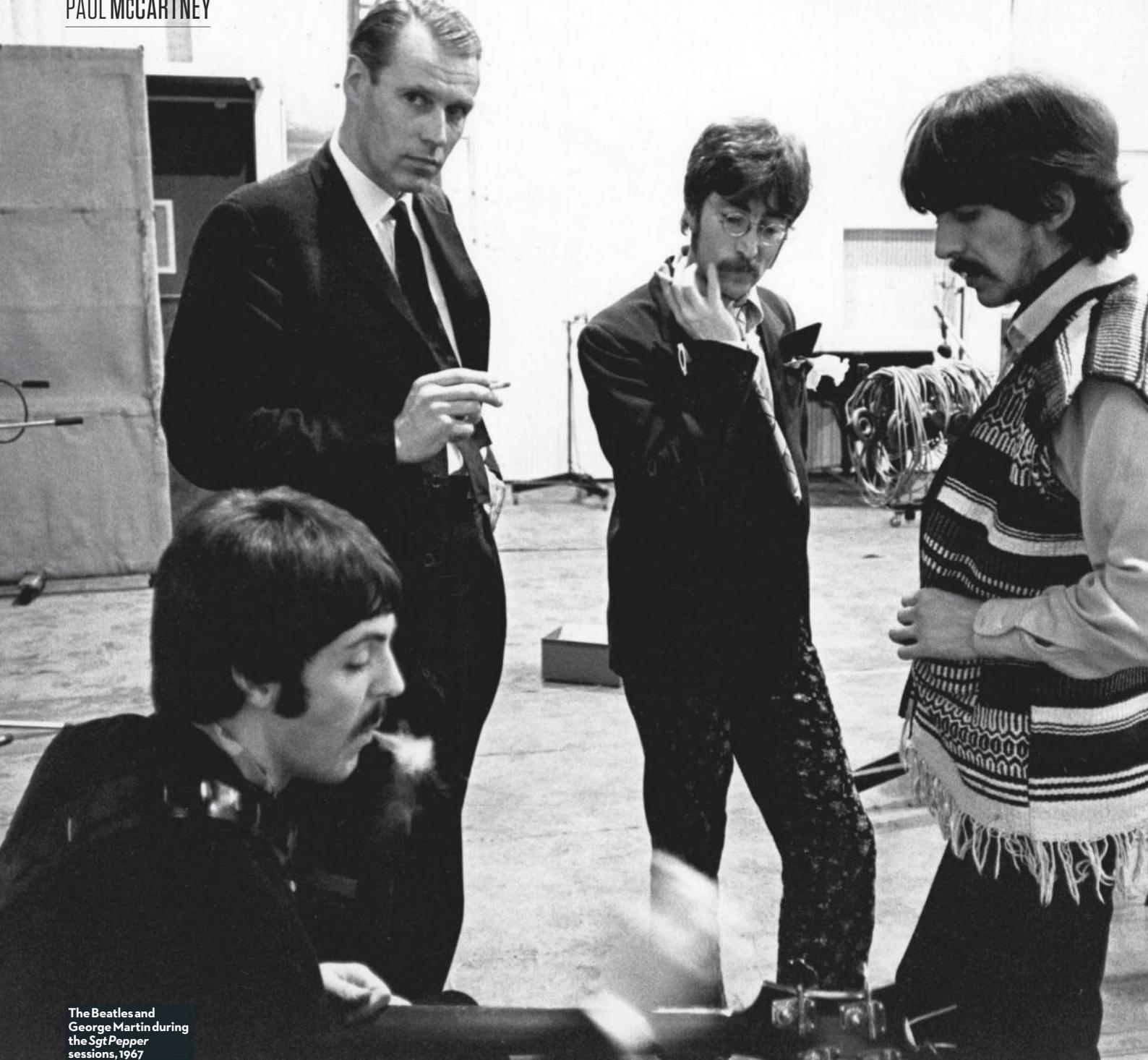


McCartney takes a break in Jamaica, 1982

HOW I WROTE...

MCCARTNEY ON THE ORIGINS OF "AVERAGE PERSON"

When I was growing up, there was a tradition in the musical hall to have a stage act with a song that involved various people. 'If I Were Not Upon The Stage', I think it's called. It appealed to me as a kid. 'If I were not upon the stage, someone else I'd like to be/If I were not upon the stage, a window cleaner me/You'd see me all day long singing out this song/Running up ladders, running up ladders...' And that'd be one person's song. Then another person would come on. 'If I were not upon the stage, someone else I'd like to be/If I were not upon the stage, a midwife I would be/Delivering babies, delivering babies...' And that 'delivering babies' fitted with the first guy's 'running up ladders'. It was a craft song, which is what 'Average Person' is supposed to be. It was like a music hall thing. In the end, you've got five people all doing mimes and bits of songs, and it all fitted. Then at the end, as everyone was so busy, there'd just be someone, 'If I were not upon the stage/An opera singer me/La la la la', so that fitted with 'running up ladders'. Musically, it all fitted."



The Beatles and George Martin during the *Sgt Pepper* sessions, 1967

get any of that together. In fact, I rather despised the pundits who did. I can't blame them now, but they were old friends or casual acquaintances and they'd been hauled in to say something. Yeah, but it was a hell of a shock for months at least, on an immediate level, and then there were all sorts of repercussions and stuff.

Like what? Everyone I knew suddenly got armies of security. You'd hear, "Sylvester Stallone's got six guys now." Everyone figured if it could happen to John, it could happen to them. It was weird because in the days that followed it, I was sitting in the house. We had a little perimeter fence, mainly to keep foxes out, because we had some chickens. I'm aware of security threats, so I'm on high alert and I look out and I see someone with a fucking gun, like a machine gun, an assault rifle – "Wha?!" He's in full military gear, and then I see there's a whole patrol of them. I'm going, "Holy shit, what's going on?!" I don't know what I did. I think I rang the police. It turned out to be army manoeuvres. "Oh, sorry. Are these your woods?" I'd put two and two together and made a thousand. God, I don't know how I lived through it.

"ME AND JOHN WOULD COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER TO WRITE"

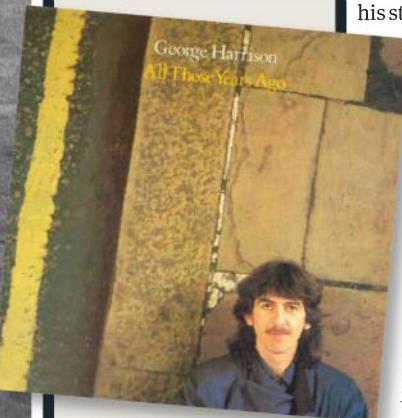
You think you'd just faint dead on the ground. But they were all there, coming through these woods.

You appeared on "All Those Years Ago", George's tribute to John. But did you think that people expected you to write a song about John? If you're not stupid, that does cross your mind. The same thing happened after Linda died. I thought, 'I just want to make the greatest...' But you're not always capable of responding to that stimulus. I don't know why. Maybe it's too big a thing to deliver. I was probably waiting to see if something came, but I couldn't just sit down and write a response song. Funnily enough, "Here Today" was written on this spot. When I first got this building, this used to be a series of little rooms, which I cleared out to make this big office. There was a little room here and I came up, just checking it out. I sat on the bare floor – probably exactly here, it was this end of the room. The bareness of the room was very conducive to focusing my thoughts. I had nothing to look at. So I remember just getting the idea of, 'If you were here today in this very bare room, what would we say, what would we talk about, what would

"NOW WE'RE LEFT COLD AND SAD..."



PAUL McCARTNEY wasn't the only ex-Beatle to record a tribute to John Lennon following his death. George Harrison was working on a song while Lennon was still alive. He originally wrote "All Those Years Ago" with different lyrics for Ringo to sing. A recording was made at Friar Park in late 1980, although Ringo was unhappy with the result and it was shelved. After Lennon's death, Harrison rewrote the lyrics, including a line to "the



devil's best friend": presumably, Lennon's killer, Mark Chapman. Harrison retained the original backing track - with Starr on drums - and overlaid his revised lyrics. He recruited Paul & Linda, and Denny Laine to add backing. Released in May 1981, the song hit No 2 on Billboard and No 13 in the UK and appeared on Harrison's *Somewhere In England*. Paul and George weren't the only artists to pay tribute to Lennon. Elton John released "Empty Garden (Hey, Hey Johnny)" in 1982, and Freddie Mercury penned "Life Is Real (Song For Lennon)" for Queen's *Hot Space* album the same year.

you do?" I announce it in shows as a conversation we never got to have. Which, to some degree, is true. Though it's a song, not a psychiatric report. There's one bit that I kinda disagree with when I sing it. "And you said, I really knew you well what would your answer be? Well knowing you, you'd probably laugh and say that we were worlds apart". He wouldn't have said "We were worlds apart." But anyway. It works in the song.

The song specifically references your early relationship with John. Was that how you tended to think about him in the aftermath of his death, as the young man you first knew? I think so. Often when you think about anyone, you go back to your formative years. They are core memories, your big movies. On my last album I wrote a song, "Early Days" - "There's the two of us dressed in black from head to toe..." - because I've got those images burned into my brain. The other thing is, some of the times in the years before he died were painful, particularly around the breakup of The Beatles. Like anyone - sometimes unwittingly, sometimes unwittingly - I block the shit. I don't

particularly want to stay with it and wallow in it. So even now when I think of John I often think of us writing together. "A Day In A Life". Stuff like that. "... Mr Kitel!". Whatever. Actually, I was just shown the old original scribbled manuscript lyrics for "I've Got A Feeling" [McCartney is referring to his previous meeting that day]. On my side it's, "I've got a feeling, feeling deep inside/Oh yeah." His lyrics are to the side of mine. "Everybody had a hard time, everybody had a wet dream." Those moments are the most precious for me. I can go to the others easily, if I'm required to, if we're taking about the shit. Fucking Allen Klein, all that. But I prefer to stay with the good stuff. So "Here Today" and songs like that hark back to the better memories.

Talking about those early days, Carl Perkins plays on "Get It". You once said, "If there were no Carl Perkins, there would be no Beatles." How important was he in shaping The Beatles' early sound? There were a few people in the beginning who were really influential, like Elvis. He was great, good looking, sang brilliant, had brilliant songs. "Heartbreak Hotel", "Don't Be Cruel", "All Shook Up". Then you had people like Jerry Lee Lewis. Buddy Holly was a very big influence because he wrote and sang his own stuff, which is what we were doing. And he played his own solos. So it gave us clues. When we do it, we'll play a guitar ourselves, not have a guitarist, and we'll stand with a mic-stand. We'll do the solos, we'll sing the songs and we'll write them. When you think about it, that's all The Beatles did. That was the revolution. Even the Stones and those guys didn't do that. We took all that from Buddy, really. There was a secondary group, and the top man was Carl, just because his stuff was brilliant. He'd written "Blue Suede Shoes". That interfaced with Elvis, as well. We loved Carl.

His songs were staples of your early sets. Ringo told me recently that the repertoire of every band in Liverpool in 1961, '62 was the same. We were all turned on to the same stuff. There were a certain amount of records people had and heard and those were all the songs we did, because we were basically cover bands. In the end, I don't know if it was me or John or the both of us, suddenly said, "The thing you've got to do is write some songs, and that will be stuff they can't get to. So we won't hear them singing it just as we're waiting backstage to go on." The other trouble was, even though we introduced "Twist And Shout" and "If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody", the other bands would nick it off us. They'd cover our covers. So there was no way out of it, unless you wrote your own songs. I like that, it demystifies the Lennon/McCartney thing. Instead of "The great muse descended upon us", it was more like necessity. We had to write songs. It was pretty lame at first. I wrote one called "The Pinwheel Twist", which was pretty bad.

Do you remember how it went? No. I remember fireworks, the pinwheel and the twist. "Doing the pinwheel twist". Those were only so the other bands couldn't access them. They weren't good songs. So Carl was a huge influence. There were strange little things that we really loved about Carl. We thought he was being really quite raunchy in one of his songs, "Lend Me Your Comb". [sings] "Lend me your comb/It's time to go home/I gotta confess/My hair is a mess". Anyway, a little later, he sings, "Sugar bugga it's getting' late". We thought it was 'b-u-g-g-e-r'. "Sugar bugga! Fucking hell, this is our hero!" Later, when we met him, he told us it was sugar bugga. It's alliteration, rhyme. Bugga wooga. Sugga bugga, boogie... it was harmless, anyway. But we thought it was red hot because of that. So silly little teenage things attracted us to him. But he was great. We did a lot of his songs. "Matchbox", "Honey, Don't!", "Lend Me Your Comb".



Perfect harmony:
McCartney and Wonder
work on *Tug Of War* at AIR
Montserrat, February 1981

• **Was getting Carl to play on *Tug Of War* after John's death an attempt to reconnect with a simpler, more innocent time?** It probably was, yeah.

That's always the case with things like that. I never remember my exact thinking but, for instance, round about the time it was to get away to record somewhere, because a lot of people were doing that. I'd already done it. We'd done *Band On The Run* in Lagos.

Tug Of War in... London? What am I taking about? No, Montserrat. Montserrat and London. That was one of the things: where will I go to record it? Montserrat. That'll be great, with George. Then the next thing is: who will I record it with? I'd written "Ebony And Ivory". I knew I wanted to sing this with a black guy who I admired, so Stevie was the obvious choice. Then it was: Who else? Oh, Carl Perkins. It was what you were saying, yeah. He was brilliant, from our youth. He's still good.

Ringo's on it, too. Ringo, yeah.

You were in the studio with Ringo and George Martin two months after John's death. Did that overshadow the recording sessions? It

was all a bit healing around this time. It was, "Let's try and do an album that I like, try and have some fun doing it." So, the people involved were a large part of that. And, yeah, just reconnecting. There's Carl with my rock'n'roll past. There's Ringo with my Beatles past. I rang him up and said, "Do you fancy doing it?" "Yeah, OK."



"A huge influence":
Carl Perkins at the
controls, AIR
Montserrat, 1981



You worked on Ringo's *Stop And Smell The Roses* album around then, didn't you? He asked me to write a song or two for it. They weren't very successful. I wish that I'd written a better song for him. You can't always do it. But anyway, we had a laugh. We went down to Super Bear in the South of France to do it. He was in a particularly crazy stimulant-laden time and he had decided he wanted to do this song called "You Can't Fight Lightning". It goes on for about 15 minutes. The lyrics are, "You can't fight lightning." It was something to do with freebasing. Lightning, lighting, drugs. So anyway, that was that. It was just a trifle boring, that take. But I didn't have the guts to say, "We should fix this up."

"Average Person" is another of your story songs, like "Eleanor Rigby" and "Penny Lane". What prompted you to start writing that kind of song in the first place? I think a lot of them, besides "Eleanor Rigby", tend to be comedy. It's me doing the tongue-in-cheek thing, whereas "Eleanor Rigby" was more serious. I think that's why it was more successful. I've still got a few that I haven't released because I don't think they're that good. It's quite a fun thing to do, to just dream up a name of a character and just try and write the story of that character and then make it fit with another character. "Eleanor Rigby", I did it with Father McKenzie and Eleanor. With some of these, I try and make too many fit. They're not always the most successful.

You recorded two tracks on *Tug Of War* with Stevie Wonder. Did you ever feel in friendly competition with Motown in the '60s? More

admiration, really. I remember us all getting "Fingertips". "What? This kid's 13? I can't believe it!" It was a very hot period for him. But really, you could say I'm in competition with everyone because you're trying to get in the charts. That sounds like a very big statement, that. But it is true, really. It may apply to you. There are a lot of journalists out there and you would like, presumably, to be better than them all and get the Pulitzer Prize. Having said that, though, that doesn't govern what you do. I think with Stevie, Carl, Stanley Clarke and Ringo on this album, it's more admiration, really. But if we were in the charts together, I'd rather do better. I have a competitive instinct. The great thing about me and John writing together was we competed with each other, which was very healthy. "Fucking hell, he's just written 'Strawberry Fields', I better write 'Penny Lane'."

George was no slouch, either.

No, but George was a late bloomer. He didn't really write until later on. Then he really started to come through seriously with his big songs. But it took him a while.

Do you think it was intimidating for him, presenting songs to you and John?

At first, we wrote his songs for him because he didn't write. The story of me and John. I'd written a couple of songs, he'd written a couple of songs. I'd never met anyone who'd written a couple of songs. I'd say to people at a party, just in conversation, school friends, "I've written a couple of songs." They'd go, "Oh, yeah?" That would be the end of it. With John, I said, "I'd written a couple of songs." He went, "So have I." Ding! Light bulbs all round. "Wha? Oh, well. Come on then. Come over to my house. I'll play you mine, you play me yours." That's what started us. So then we were writers. So in The Beatles when we needed anything, we were the writers. We wrote "Do You Want To Know A Secret" for George. We'd write something for Ringo, "I Wanna Be Your Man". We'd write for the other two guys. But then George first of all came up with one called "Don't Bother Me". We thought it was OK. But I suppose we were being a bit patronising, as it was good that he'd written one, but it wasn't quite as good as the ones we were writing for him.

Ringo Starr, Linda, Paul and Eric Stewart during the video shoot for "So Bad", London, 1983

Paul and Linda campaign against the closure of a casualty unit at Rye Hospital, 1990



A LITTLE HELP...

FLAMING RYE!



A BOUT FIVE MILES north-east of Hog Mill Hill studios lies Rye. McCartney has a long connection with the medieval town. In 1990, he led a four-year campaign against NHS plans to close Rye Memorial Hospital. "My mother

was a nurse," he told *The Independent*. "I've got a lot of time for nurses and doctors 'cos of what I saw her go through. The NHS is something our tax money buys."

Meanwhile, McCartney has often hosted Christmas parties for his staff at The George In Rye, a boutique hotel on the High Street. Across the road, you'll find Grammar School Records, a regular haunt of Mary McCartney during her childhood. Inside, you'll find a copy of *The Hollyridge Strings Play The Beatles Songbook* or *Marching With The Beatles* by the Band Of The Irish Guards alongside less arcane pressings such as *Tug Of War* (£8; G) and *With The Beatles* (£75; VG+).

But he wanted to write and he just got steadily better and better. "If I Needed Someone", "Here Comes The Sun", "Something". He was coming up with serious stuff. "Something" became Frank Sinatra's favourite Lennon and McCartney song. We didn't mind at all, no. It was good to see him progressing. We were chuffed.





Point of view: The Fab Four plus Yoko at the *Let It Be* sessions, Abbey Road, 1969

• **There's a lot of cross-pollination on The Beatles' solo albums after the split. Did you keep up with what the others were doing?** Yeah, I think we all listened to each other's records. There was bitterness at the end of The Beatles, and it was three against one, as I'd had to do my thing for us all to get out of Allen Klein's grip. It was successful but it was very unpopular with them as they thought I was being a big head. For me, I just saw it as, "I'm saving our fortune or this guy's going to run away with it." So I was very focused, knowing that if I saved mine I would save theirs. Many, many years later, they all acknowledged that. Now you'll get Yoko and Olivia saying, "Wow, good job you did that, Paul." Because they could see the value of it. Beatles going to iTunes wouldn't have happened. It would have been Allen Klein going to iTunes. So consequentially, we didn't really speak to each other much.

Then it got better? Yeah. Then if I was in New York, I'd ring John. It got better with all of them. I think we all just realised it was a bunch of bullshit. A breakup is like a divorce – very painful. So then we'd see each other. So, yeah, I did listen to their stuff, listened to George's *All Things Must Pass* and everyone's. If I was asked to write a song for Ringo, we all chipped in and wrote something. I would listen to John's and think, 'Ooh...' That same old competitive thing would come back in. I

know it happened with him, because people who were working with him said when he heard "Coming Up", he said, "Oh, shit, Paul's written a good one, I'll have to write a good one." It then forced him to write something good. So, yeah. We were aware of each other's work.

You were all quite insecure towards the end, though? It's a common artistic fault. I spoke to Lady Gaga the other day. She was talking about self-loathing. I said, "No! I don't want you to say that! You sing like a bitch, you know!" I didn't say that to her, of course; I'm trying to be evocative. "You sing like an angel, you're amazing, you write stuff, you perform. Please don't have any self-loathing." But everyone has it. I don't think it just exists in artists. But we were going through quite a bit of it at that time. Everyone was insecure, so we needed to bolster each other up, instead of what happened, which was split up. But, you know. A great band, while it lasted.

“THE BEATLES WAS A GREAT BAND, YOU KNOW. WHILE IT LASTED”

by the front door. He chats unhurriedly for another five minutes about seeing U2 play recently at Madison Square Garden, the proposed running time of his *Lollapalooza* set and the critical rehabilitation of *McCartney II*. He talks enthusiastically about his desire to perform a show where he is unshackled from playing "Hey Jude" and the big hits, and can instead focus on the lesser-known tracks from his catalogue. As he finally opens the front door to show *Uncut* out, he asks how we're getting back to Rye station. One of his studio staff is kindly providing a lift. He nods, then stops us on the doorstep. "Have you got anything to eat on the journey?" he asks. Without waiting for an answer, he ducks back into the kitchen and returns with some fruit. "Here you go," he says. "A banana and an orange for the train." And then, with a wink, he shuts the front door. ①

Tug Of War and **Pipes Of Peace** are released October 2 by MPL and Concord Music Group

COME BACK TOGETHER!

The Beatles on each other's records...



GEORGE HARRISON

WONDERWALL MUSIC, 1968

PLASTIC ONO BAND

"COLD TURKEY" SINGLE, 1969

"INSTANT KARMA!" SINGLE, 1970

GEORGE HARRISON

ALL THINGS MUST PASS, 1970

JOHN LENNON/PLASTIC ONO BAND

JOHN LENNON/PLASTIC ONO BAND, 1970

RINGO STARR

"IT DON'T COME EASY" SINGLE, 1971

JOHN LENNON

IMAGINE, 1971

RINGO STARR

"BACK OFF, BOOGALOO" SINGLE, 1972

JOHN LENNON & YOKO ONO

SOME TIME IN NEW YORK CITY, 1972

GEORGE HARRISON

LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD, 1973

RINGO STARR

RINGO, 1973

RINGO STARR

GOODNIGHT VIENNA, 1974

GEORGE HARRISON

DARK HORSE, 1974

RINGO STARR

RINGO'S ROTOGRAVURE, 1976

GEORGE HARRISON

SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND, 1981

RINGO STARR

STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES, 1981

PAUL McCARTNEY

TUG OF WAR, 1982

PAUL McCARTNEY

PIPES OF PEACE, 1983

PAUL McCARTNEY

GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD ST, 1984

GEORGE HARRISON

CLOUD NINE, 1987

PAUL McCARTNEY

FLAMING PIE, 1997

RINGO STARR

VERTICAL MAN, 1998

RINGO STARR

Y NOT, 2010

ROGER WATERS 'AMUSED TO DEATH'



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GREATEST FANS SAY
THEY'VE "NEVER HEARD
ANYTHING LIKE IT"...

UNCUT TAKES A RIDE
ROUND ECHO PARK
WITH THE ASTONISHING
JULIA HOLTER

Story: Laura Snakes | **Photo:** Tonje Thilesen



Julia Holter:
"Maybe this one's
a weirdo record
a little bit..."



Between the Silver Lake and Echo Park neighbourhoods stand some establishments that represent a quintessential incarnation of modern LA. At 2237 Sunset Boulevard is the House Of Intuition, which offers services pertaining to "herbs, crystals, mystics". Further down the road, next door to a vegan bistro and a stone's throw from Crosby Place, is Stories, a messy secondhand bookshop that conceals a small café.

Following a series of apologetic texts about her lateness, Julia Holter appears from behind a stack of books. She looks a little flustered as she removes her visor and flip sunglasses, though as she sits down with a cup of iced tea, it becomes apparent that a slight spaciousness is her natural mode. She's under pressure to finish prep work on a score she's composing for a forthcoming film – her first – before flying to New York to meet the director tomorrow, though she's "too paranoid" to offer many details on the project. It's a boxing drama, "a little bit between big and independent, it has some stars in it," she says tentatively. "I don't know much about movies – I'm from Hollywood, but..."

Holter's hesitation about her native land's influence on her cultural identity feels apt. She started playing the piano aged eight, and taught herself Joni Mitchell songs as a young teenager. Following four years studying composition at the University of Michigan, she returned to LA in 2006 to take up a more avant-garde programme at CalArts, a private institution founded by Walt Disney in the 1960s. The ornate music she began to record in her bedroom was partially indebted to Mitchell's jazz period – 1975's *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* in particular – but she buried her inner LA songwriter beneath stranger leanings: the vocal experimentations of Meredith Monk, Terry Riley's playful intimacy, and Arthur Russell's melancholy disco, along

with the *musique concrète*, Medieval madrigals and Indian ragas she discovered in school. The ambition of 2011's *Tragedy*, inspired by Euripides' *Hippolytus*, recalled Kate Bush's literary song cycles. Following several years' worth of limited releases through tiny labels, *Tragedy* was Holter's first major album, marking her out as a new American maverick whose rare strain of mystical pop never prioritised technique over magic.

As much as any artist can sound like contemporary LA, Holter's music traces a path through the multifaceted city. When she returned there to study at CalArts, she met Ariel Pink's associates and became involved with the leftfield online radio station Dublab, all of whom encouraged her formally grounded but impish bedroom pop. By her 2013 Domino debut *Loud City Song*, her sound had developed into a deft, strange cabaret that explored Hollywood's fascination with celebrity, inspired by Colette's 1944 novella, *Gigi*.

Have You In My Wilderness, Holter's fourth proper full-length, represents the frontier. "Vasquez" pinpoints the rocks north of LA County that were named after the 19th-Century Mexican bandit who made them his hideout, though the meanings in Holter's songs are as much in the composition as any lyrical signposts. On...*Wilderness*, she abandons the literary concepts that framed several of her previous records to make her links with LA's singer-songwriter tradition more overt, forging personal explorations into her own heart and soul. She sometimes refers to it as a country record,

though she's referencing the genre's sincerity and spirit rather than the sound. Holter and producer Cole M Greif-Neill have brought her extraordinary voice to the fore, leading shimmering orchestral arrangements that

have the strange clarity of waking from a dream and remembering every detail.

"What can I say, I've never heard anything like it," says Linda Perhacs, creator of the cult 1970 album *Parallelograms*, and a frequent collaborator. A lifelong dental hygienist, she likens Holter to her late patient, the

Oscar and Emmy award-winning composer Leonard Rosenman, among others. "I couldn't help but remember the day I heard Miles Davis do his



most controversial album [*On The Corner*]. In a way it was almost scary, he got into areas that were a little frightening. But I just stood there and said, 'This is pure genius, this is gorgeous,' and Julia – that's where she goes."

Loud City Song was full of hairpins and adrenaline, darting about like an actor trying to shake off the paparazzi. The songs on ...*Wilderness* follow poppier, more cyclical structures, and was instigated by two songs pulled from older home recordings, "Sea Calls Me Home" and "Betsy On The Roof" (along with the previously unheard title track). Holter had wanted to construct an album around them for a while. "It was exciting to do a record with the songs that didn't have any roots," she says, while working out how to attack an awkwardly shaped piece of toast. "They were independent songs. Maybe this is a weirdo record a little bit."

Attempting to preserve the "lightness and emotion" of those early demos slowed the recording process, which took a year and several stints in a studio in LA's Glendale suburb. Cole M Greif-Neill has worked with Holter since 2012's *Ekstasis*; he used to be in Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti, and this year was part of the team who won the Grammy for Best Engineered Album with Beck's *Morning Phase*.

"I think there was also a lot of trepidation that came with wanting to showcase her as a more conventional songwriter and singer," he says of the delay. "The necessary process that happens for artists reinventing themselves. I think Julia wanted to make this leap, but didn't know what it was going to look like when she started the process." He adds: "She battles with where her self is in the work. It's figuring out how

to work within those traditional forms and then a more personal folk kind of tradition, and synthesising the two in new ways."

In the studio, they often referenced Broadcast, Joanna Newsom, Miles Davis, and Nina Simone's performance at the 1976 Montreux Jazz Festival. "I remember us watching that and thinking, these songs have so much depth and dimension and art and

story," he says. "It's basically just piano and voice but they're so experimental but also so traditional."

Although Holter didn't start with a conceptual framework, a theme emerged. "It's definitely looking at relationships," she says. "Power, domination over somebody. I've always been a little more passive in my personal friendships, so there's the threat that I might be taken over by some aggressive person." The title track, which closes the record, initially sounds like a gorgeously romantic proposition – "Lady of gold, you would fit beautiful in my wilderness/In your waters I've dropped anchor" – but on second glimpse, it's as much about a Midas-like possession of another person.

Her surreal, elliptical songs are peppered with disorienting foreign lands, birds and whispering characters. Strangest of all here is "Lucette Stranded On The Island", which was slightly inspired by a side character in Colette's *Chance Acquaintances*. A woman awakes on a strange isle, badly wounded and strewn with cactus leaves. "That's what's interesting to me about a song, when there's some proper noun, something out of place, or not even – but just something specific about it," she says. "Writing about emotions isn't that interesting: what's interesting is when there's some object you focus on that reflects that emotion."

"CLASSICAL MUSIC HAS A MALE WAY OF THINKING ABOUT THE WORLD"

JULIA HOLTER

BUYERS' GUIDE

JULIA HOLTER

Moments of wonder...

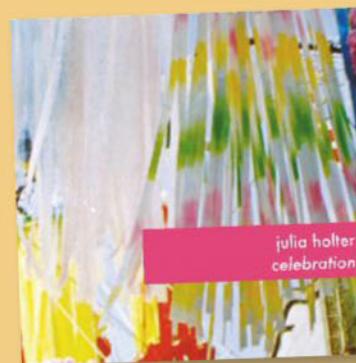


7/10

EATING THE STARS

HUMANEAR MUSIC, 2007

Holter's rich, celestial touch shimmers through on her debut. There's naïve fun here, though, in haunted carousel melodies, found sound samples, and two odd covers: a manic, glitchy take on Guillaume de Machaut's 14th-century "Je Vivroie Liement", and Crowded House's "Don't Dream It's Over", pitch-shifted and wobbling.



CELEBRATION

ENGRAVED GLASS, 2010

7/10 Just 50 copies of this were released, though it's now out online. The least accessible of Holter's recordings, it's mostly *musique concrète*. But nestled within "Bars in Afternoons" is a lovely cover of "Don't Make Me Over", sung over *Disintegration Loops*-indebted lapping organs.



8/10

LIVE RECORDINGS

NNA TAPES, 2010

A knack for poppy, sample-scuffed balladry shines through on this bedroom-recorded cassette release (now on iTunes).



6/10

MARIA

HUMANEAR, 2011

The core of "Maria" is the titular phonetic translation, where Holter translated Lyudmila Gurchenko's "Мария" into English words that resembled the original Russian, and a cover of Roxy Music's "2HB". It's backed with a live, painfully obscured seven-track radio session where Holter plays a number of songs that would appear on *Tragedy*.



8/10

TRAGEDY

LEAVING RECORDS, 2011

Holter's first noteworthy album is a concept piece based around Euripides' *Hippolytus*, though the background is fairly unimportant. Compared to previously, the production is piercingly clear, yet it's no less disorientating, playing like a sinister celestial event. The clattering "Try To Make Yourself A Work Of Art" is even dystopian.



9/10

EKSTASIS

RVNG INTL, 2012

Real moments of wonder abound as Holter refines her knack for beguiling poppier structures, and producer Cole M Greif-Neill casts every element of her ornate compositions – rolling timpani, disquieting glimmer, madrigal-indebted vocals – in bright starlight. She emerges as a great lyricist, too, establishing strange physical and sensory obstacles between her protagonists.

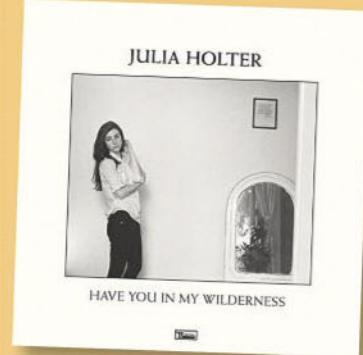


8/10

LOUD CITY SONG

DOMINO, 2013

Holter's first release for Domino returns to a conceptual framework, inspired by the musical adaptation of Colette's *Gigi* and using its observations of Parisian socialite culture as an analogue for modern-day LA. Greif-Neill strips back the shimmering wash to emphasise the live instrumentation, leaving a Lynchian cabaret-type feel.



HAVE YOU IN MY WILDERNESS

DOMINO, 2015

9/10 Scrapping *Loud City Song*'s frantic twists, *HYIMW* is a goldrush dream surrounding Holter's more intimate lyrics. She casts themes of dominance and desertion in some of her most divine, expressive vocal melodies, like the glinting chorus of "Sea Calls Me Home", or the heartbreak-hardened lounge-singer lament "How Long".

HERE MIGHT BE a certain amount of deflection going on, too. Holter says it's "insane" for her to perform live, because she had never intended to be the face of her music. The fact that her father, Darryl, once played with Pete Seeger is overstated, but he and her mother Carole Shamas, both academic historians, fostered a musical household. "As I usually play every night before I go to sleep, Julia would not have been able to escape hearing me play old songs by Bob Dylan, topical and union songs, and my own songs for all the years she was growing up," says Darryl. He recounts his youngest daughter's obsession with a red cassette player she received for her second birthday. Aged eight, she was given a piano by her grandparents. "She loved to play and there was never a time that we told her to practise. She was self-motivated. But she did not like to perform and had to be pushed into recitals by her teachers."

Holter attended West LA's Alexander Hamilton High, which had strong specialist music programmes. "There were a lot of musical theatre and jazz people who were really *out*, extrovert and loud," she recalls. "I was so quiet. I was a piano major. I loved it, but I wasn't so great. I wasn't going to be a classical pianist so I became a composer and thought I'd write for other people." Her then-boyfriend recorded Darryl's music in his father's studio. Another friend, who wrote his own compositions, brought a copy of Miles Davis' *Live-Evil* to school one day and inspired her to "get intense about music theory". Her group of friends started getting obsessed with classical music in the way many teenagers do Green Day or lurid hair dye, attending performances and listening to the likes of Penderecki, Ligeti and Messiaen. "It was our fun club of avant-garde music. By the time I got to college I hated it, but at the time it was liberating," she says. "The energy was what struck me, the freedom of it and the wildness. Not freedom that's like, 'I'm a freak and it's all about me', but just the music. It was just about these sounds, and that was exciting to me."

Inspired by her parents' background in academia, Holter applied to the University Of Michigan, which had a strong



Holter: "I'm more of a poetic person than a music person in lots of ways"

"YOU
SHOULD
NEVER DO
THINGS
JUST SO
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JULIA HOLTER

composition department. "I wanted to do music and I really loved it," she says. "But I didn't understand that I wanted to perform yet, I didn't think of myself that way, so I tended towards something more behind the scenes. It just seemed like the only feasible thing to do because I didn't see myself making money playing music, being able to support myself." She also wanted to get back to the Midwest: the Holters lived in Milwaukee until she was six; college compounded her regional accent.

The course ended up being a poor fit, the severely formal syllabus leaving Holter depressed. "I didn't have a good understanding of myself," she explains. "I really wanted to try to work within their world, which was traditional, classical conservatory style, and I didn't let myself do what I wanted to do. I was always trying to find what I wanted but it was really hard, I think that's normal when you're young. But I just really wanted to be right. There's a whole thing in classical music where you're right or you're wrong about everything, and it's very male and an old-fashioned way of thinking about the world."

She draws a breath. "It's totally stuck in some warped reality. This is so negative, but some of the more stagnant parts of the classical music world are such degenerates. They're taking ideas of classical music from the past and the way things were supposed to be then, and trying to apply them to, say, working with electronics on your

computer. Something that's already been done, in the 1960s and '70s in France, you don't need to try to make more. What's your purpose for working with such dissonant harmonies, the way they were at a time when it was revolutionary? What's going on in a lot of classical music – and this cannot possibly last as no-one will enjoy it – is you have people who are very good at their instruments showing off. It's the worst music ever, it's technically difficult..."

A friend wanders over to say hi, cutting her off, and they talk briefly about LA's surprisingly small-town feel. When he leaves, she stresses keenly that she's not "trashing all of classical music". Holter's saving grace at Michigan was the course led by composer Michael Pisaro, a member of the international Wandelweiser composers, who work with ideas of "silent music", and philosophies introduced by John Cage and Morton Feldman. He recalls her interpretation of Cage's "...Circus On...", which translates a book into music: Cage used *Finnegans Wake*, Holter used an old Los Angeles recipe book.

"She loved and really got into Robert Ashley's music, especially *Improvement*," Pisaro says.

EYEWITNESS!

"She's my favourite artist"

Linda Perhacs on the genius of Julia

Dublab asked me to perform *Parallelograms* at their 10th anniversary. I said there's no way I can do that for you, I'll do four or five songs, but not an entire LP when I've never performed. They said, don't worry, we'll bring in backup people who are young, not that well known yet, and each person can choose a different song. Julia chose the most difficult song on the whole album to sing, and, oh my God, she knocked us out! I ran backstage, put my arms around her, gave her a big hug and said, 'Who are you?'

"Julia's a natural at harmonies that are unlike anything I've ever heard. If I asked someone else to harmonise onstage, or for a recording, it can be kind of predictable... even I have to stretch to hear something new. With Julia, no problem: you bring her in and she will come up with something that's absolutely stunning. She's my favourite artist to work with. I expect she's going to advance way beyond even this level and surprise us all some more."



Perhacs and Holter work on a keyboard part for the former's material, LA, 2010

"SHE'S MORE OR LESS IN HER OWN WORLD..."

Producer Cole M Greif-Neill on working with Holter

"I knew her from the Human Ear people, the group surrounding Ariel Pink - she was the intern. After a while I realised that she did music. I did live sound for her once and realised she was incredibly proficient. She just played solo with harmonium, but the songs obviously had a lot to them - not only in craft but where they were coming from. Julia's artistic vision is very fully formed, it would exist whether anyone was paying attention or not. Whether consciously or not, she's more or less in her own world. She's not engaged with a lot of pop culture - she keeps a little bit of a buffer. I think the thing that's influenced her music most is playing live, she's really embraced the band. I love her solo home recordings, the almost *musique concrète* stuff, I love all her different dimensions."



"She played and sang a lot of music from the Wandelweiser group - the quiet, minimalist sensibility seemed to appeal to her. I also remember having long talks with her about poetry, including the Austrian/Italian poet Oswald Egger, and film - especially *Andrei Rublev* by Andrei Tarkovsky. I wasn't trying to bring anything out of her, it's more like I got to watch it develop. I did feel she would enjoy knowing about some kindred spirits who were a bit more off the beaten track, though Julia's curious enough that she discovers most of those things herself."

Another revelation came at the hands of fellow student Sean Schuster-Craig, who now makes music under the name Jib Kidder, and is signed to Domino imprint Weird World. They became programme directors of the university's experimental radio station, WCBN. He was also recording his own music, which inspired Holter to download Audacity audio-editing software and try it for herself. "I recorded a song and started singing down my computer's internal mic, and I enjoyed it so much," she says. "It was the first time in so long that I felt happiness and enjoyed something. I just couldn't stop singing."

A university programme took her to India, where she spent two hours a day singing ragas with a Hindustani guru who barely spoke English. Back in Michigan, she had to perform in front of 200 people. "I wasn't good, so really it should have been embarrassing, but instead of being embarrassed, I just enjoyed it," she says. "I'd never done something like that, and I didn't care, and it was weird because I'm such an anxious, introverted person, that combination is like, horrible. But it does fit the pattern of people who are introverted."

After graduating from Michigan around 2006, Holter moved back to LA and worked in an office for a year, which left her hankering for academia and music. She enrolled at CalArts, an experimental establishment that was all the better for not being considered "serious" by her stiffer Michigan tutors. It was a good time to be back home. Her friend, fellow musician Jason Grier, was starting a label, Human Ear Music, to release records by the likes of Ariel Pink, Lucrecia Dalt and Michael Pisaro. Excited by the self-recording roster, Holter became the intern. She fielded the demo pile, picking through records that she memorably described in early interviews as people "shitting into the microphone", a dismissal she regrets now. "I was really frustrated in those early years," she says. "I thought I would have to have a job and do music on the side, I didn't think I'd be doing what I am now. I was a bit sceptical and negative about people who become successful because they're cool and make all the right connections. I was really being an asshole about it: that's life, you don't always get famous because you do good work."

You can see why the charlatans bothered her: Holter's first release, 2007's *Eating The Stars*, was a conceptually ambitious, densely layered piece that she hoped would eventually be played by an orchestra. ("I was making it all on my Casio, of course.") A series of tapes, some more obscure than others (see panel) followed, including *Maria*, a phonetic translation that replaced the lyrics to a Russian song with similar-sounding English words. She spent two weeks prepping the music for a single performance. "I did it once for a few people and that was it," she says. "I used to do these things, no-one cared. This thing was crazy, I worked so hard on it. Which is fine, you should never do things just so people will hear it."

The unusual, academic processes informed her first noteworthy release, *Tragedy*, which was inspired by a scene

in *Hippolytus*. (At CalArts, to rebel against the modernist atmosphere, Holter became obsessed by Greek mythology and Medieval illuminated manuscripts.) Word had filtered through experimental communities to relatively mainstream music outlets, earning the record good reviews for its blend of Meredith Monk-indebted vocals and alien Enya atmospherics. (Last November, Holter performed tracks from the album at London's Barbican Theatre, accompanied by Berlin musical collective Stargaze.)

Its swift follow-up, *Ekstasis*, had been recorded at the same time, but hemmed closer to standard pop structures (albeit characterised by Indian and Gregorian tones). Pisaro recalls her working on that record's "In The Same Room" back at Michigan: "The way she got into it was extraordinary - using drawings and dialogue that seemed to come from a philosophical or psychological play, maybe by Beckett. This somehow was going to be a song."

Ekstasis was the first record to feature production from Greif-Neill. "When I'm in charge and recording at the computer, I'm just such a nut," says Holter. "It's exactly how I want it in certain ways but not because it's not recorded well. I don't have that type of ear - I'm more of a poetic person than a music person in a lot of ways." Soon after came the deal with Domino for *Loud City Song*.

WEAVE THE café to wander around Echo Park. Barbecue vendors line the edge of the lake, which is blooming with bright pink lotus flowers. Holter talks about the strange luxury of touring, and her frantic week ahead (LA, NYC, LA, London), and we soon have to circle back to her car. Film score prep calls. Holter's CD-strewn vehicle belies a consummate process: she's been listening to *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*, Medieval troubadour music and David Lynch soundtracks for inspiration.

When clarifying her remarks about people "shitting" into microphones, Holter said that she was a much happier person now, though it's not necessarily due to success. "I don't think my perspective on my work has changed," she says. "I still feel insecure about it mostly, but I think that's normal. I frequently hate it but I feel grateful I have a label that's so supportive."

It's not quite the Laurel Canyon scene of the '60s, but Holter has a strong creative community who speak as highly of her as she is self-deprecating: the likes of Greif-Neill, his wife Ramona Gonzalez, who performs as Nite Jewel; the crowds at CalArts and Dublab. Michael Pisaro talks about how Holter's voice has sustained his interest in using the voice in his work for several years. Meanwhile, her father listened closely to Julia when he decided to start releasing his own music, and credits her with several crucial compositional tweaks

to this year's *Radio Songs: Woody Guthrie In Los Angeles 1937-1939*. It features several female voices ("just as Guthrie did with Maxine Crissman in his Woody and Lefty Lou radio show on KFVD from 1937 to 1939"), with Julia on an adaptation of Guthrie's poem "My Flowers Grow Green".

Linda Perhacs returned to recording for the first time in 44 years with 2014's *The Soul Of All Natural Things*. She's in the process of writing a third album, a collaboration-heavy record with Holter as her right-hand woman. "I wouldn't do an album without Julia!" she says. "We're very dear friends at this point. Working with Cole [Greif-Neill] and Julia and Ramona, it's heavenly. It reminded me of the hippy years, where people were sharing soul and love every day instead of just dollars. In this group of Echo Park people, there's a different spirit." ☀

Have You In My Wilderness is out via Domino on Sept 25



EAST SIDE STORY



Story: Peter Watts **Photo:** Fin Costello

Deep in their south-east London lair, SQUEEZE are putting the finishing touches to their first album of new material since 1998. Here, the band's songwriters Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook – along with past and present bandmates – tell us their remarkable story, from the sweetshops of Blackheath to Eltham police station, Greenwich swimming baths and beyond. “It’s hard to compete with your own past,” they tell us...

Squeeze circa 1980:
(l-r) John Bentley,
Chris Difford, Gilson
Lavis, Jools Holland
and Glenn Tilbrook

IN THE BACK end of an industrial estate in south-east London, surrounded by warehouses containing steel, timber and beer casks, you'll find a one-storey building with a cheery "No Vacancies" sign in the window. This is Glenn Tilbrook's 45RPM Studio; where, ensconced in the welcome sanctuary of "the sofa room", we find Tilbrook and Chris Difford, his songwriting partner for the past 40 years. Through the wall, you can hear *Cradle To The Grave*, their first album of original material for 17 years, playing in the room next door. The two men reveal that the record was born in this studio – which resembles the of a funky motel, although Difford thinks "it could double up as a youth centre". At one end, there's a small paved open space – Tilbrook insists on calling it a garden – filled with benches, flower pots and a pub sign requisitioned from one of Tilbrook's favourite on-the-road boozers "somewhere between Birmingham and Crewe". At the other, there's the recording room, with walls plastered in sticky notes, each bearing the title of a classic Squeeze song – "Take Me I'm Yours", "Tempted", "Cool For Cats" and dozens more, a legacy carefully written out and posted up, proud and impossible to ignore.

"I used to be intimidated by our history," says Tilbrook later, surrounded by B-movie posters, instruments and Squeeze memorabilia. "It's hard to compete with your own past, which is what we do with every record. I always thought that there was no point doing another record unless it was the best we made and *Cradle To The Grave* was a litmus test. You can't hide in front of an audience."

Tilbrook and Difford sit across from each other, politely sharing jokes and acting more like colleagues than close friends. The pair met in Greenwich in 1973 and immediately established a routine they've maintained ever since, separating songwriting duties with Difford composing lyrics and Tilbrook taking musical direction from those words. Many of their most memorable songs are rooted in the London of the 1970s; indeed, the new album was inspired by the teenage memoirs of Bermondsey boy Danny Baker, the DJ and former *NME* writer. "I read Danny's book [*Going To Sea In A Sieve*] four years ago and thought for the first time that this might be a project Chris and I could work on," says Tilbrook. "I rang up Danny and told him it could be a musical. He said it was going to be a TV series and he'd love to have us involved."

Cradle To The Grave is, Difford feels, "the most cohesive Squeeze record we've made. It sounds like us." It marks the culmination of a process that has seen Difford and Tilbrook rebuild a troubled relationship, restoring trust that had gone awry and finding the confidence to start producing new material that stands comparison with the past. This is no small thing. At their peak during the late '70s and early '80s, Squeeze enjoyed five Top 20 singles, combining the energy of new wave with Difford's kitchen-sink, witty lyrics. "They wrote amazing songs, the way the lyrics and the music fall together, and they reflected their times," says producer John Wood. "I always thought that to compare them to anybody, it had to be The Kinks."

Original pianist Jools Holland looks back still further. "Squeeze captured the popular culture of '70s London in the way Chaucer did for 14th-Century London," he says. "Being in Squeeze [*gave me*] some of the most enjoyable experiences of my life, but also the most important. It was great to spend that time with people who shared such great humour and camaraderie and musical respect."



Difford (left) and Tilbrook performing as Squeeze forerunners Skycoin in 1974

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN...

Glenn Tilbrook was an early Only One

AT THE MEETING in 1973, Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook quickly put a band together. "That summer, we played a couple of festivals, one as a band, one as a duo," recalls Tilbrook. "The band was a bass player called Norman and a drummer, John, that's all I can remember. That didn't really work. Later, we had a West Indian pianist called Floyd. He was great, and I always wondered what Squeeze would have sounded like with him in it. He had some great songs, but it just didn't happen, that lineup was very fluid and gone in a few months. So after that, we asked Jools to join."

Tilbrook was also playing in another South London band at this time. "I played in an early lineup of The Only Ones," he says. "We had a guy called Lawrence Impey co-manage us. He'd been to school with Peter Perrett – Pete's wife is Harri Kakoulli's sister. I had a period of being homeless so my only way out was playing with Pete and living in his house. He was already a big-time dealer, it was a heavy scene."

"THE METRE OF 'COOL FOR CATS' WAS INSPIRED BY BENNY HILL"
CHRIS DIFFORD



IT WAS A spot of petty pilfering that set Squeeze on their way in 1973. "I'd been in a band at school," says Difford. "And that smell really attracted me. So I put an advert in a Blackheath sweetshop window with 50p I stole out of my mum's purse and that 50p took me all this way. Did I pay it back? Probably in brandy."

One of two people to answer the ad was 15-year-old Glenn Tilbrook. "It said, 'Wanted: Guitarist for band. Influences Kinks, Lou Reed, Glenn Miller,'" he says, remembering the exact wording. "It also said there were tours coming up and a record deal. My girlfriend said I should answer, so I gave him a ring. Everything in that advert was a lie except for Chris. He was real."

Tilbrook and Difford were impressed by each other's songs, particularly as neither had previously met anybody else who wrote. A routine swiftly developed. "Chris gave me a lyric and I put a tune to it," says Tilbrook. "It worked, so he gave me some more lyrics."

The pair put a band together, which went through various incarnations before Tilbrook recruited his old friend Jools Holland on piano. "I met Jools when he was trying to sell a guitar for £5 that was worth 50p," laughs Tilbrook. "The guitar was rubbish but Jools wasn't. He was the first person I met who could play. An incredibly precocious talent and very unwashed."

Holland, talking down the phone 19 to the dozen, recalls being equally impressed by Tilbrook. "He even had a girlfriend," he marvels. "I'd never met a man so ahead of the game in every area. We played in pubs and discovered we had the ability to make people dance or cry or sing

along. We learnt we had that power and we both unconsciously realised that this was going to be what we would do with our lives."

Difford's first meeting with long-haired biker Holland was also memorable. "He came round to play piano," says Difford. "He'd had a few ciders, played this wonderful song, fell off the stool and then raced to the toilet to be sick. I thought that was a fantastic start. He rode a motorbike without a licence, helmet or insurance. He gave me a lift once, we got stopped and locked up in Eltham police station. His dad got us

out and we pushed the bike all the way back to Jools' house."

With Paul Gunn on drums and Harri Kakoulli on bass, Squeeze took their name from the title of The VU's final album ("It made us laugh," says Tilbrook) and began playing local pubs. "We did originals and covers like 'Junior's Farm' by Wings, Lou Reed's 'Hangin' Round', 'I See The Light' by The Five Americans and a lot of rock'n'roll," Difford recalls. The writing routine was already established. "It's how we've always worked," says Tilbrook. "The lyrics inspire the melodies, the rhythm of the lyrics inspire the rhythm of the song. The lyrics have to tell the story before you play with the music."

"Chris' words have a metre that rolls easily with music, they are the perfect thing to set to a melody," explains Holland. "You don't need to force the words. Glenn, musically, is a genius – and I don't use that word lightly – and from a very early time was writing like Burt Bacharach, but didn't have a way of expressing the emotions we felt, so Chris came along and summed up what life was like in London at that time." With Holland's piano jollying things along, another crucial element came from the vocal harmonies – Tilbrook leading, Difford, almost flat, one octave lower. Difford's guitar had a similar function. "Chris played on everything and was the cement that kept everything together," says bassist John Bentley, who replaced Kakoulli in 1979. "We were all very good musicians, and Chris was more of a Keith Richards character. His playing wasn't immaculate, but it was part of the chemistry that made it sound like Squeeze. If he'd been technically brilliant, it wouldn't have been as good."

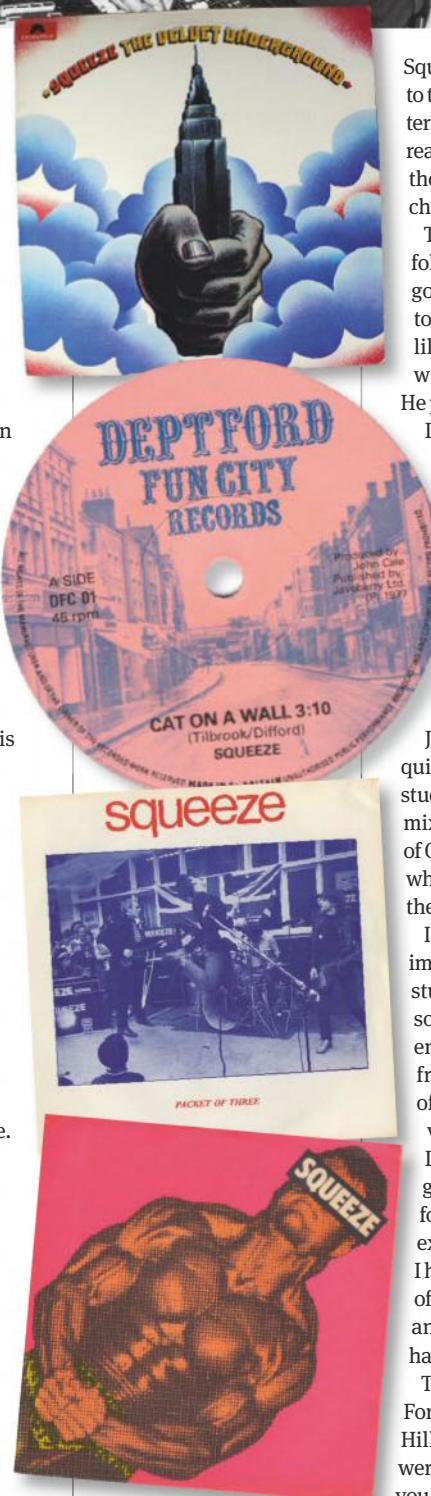
The final element was Gilson Lavis, who replaced Gunn on drums in 1976. Lavis had drummed for touring American musicians, including Dolly Parton, Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis, but had most recently been working in a brickyard in Bedford. He admits that when he saw the *Melody Maker* advert – "South London band seeks drummer" – he was desperate. "I took the seats out my mum's Mini, shoved my drumkit inside and drove to Greenwich swimming baths for an audition with this bunch of weirdos," he says. "They already had songs so different to what was in the charts – they were witty and had melodies."

As it transpired, Lavis became instrumental in knocking these songs into shape. "It's hard not to overstate Gilson's importance," says Tilbrook. "He taught us such a lot in terms of arrangements. Before, we didn't think about changing a song. Gilson showed we could do other things." After his time in the brickyard, Lavis relished his new role. "It was great fun," he laughs. "I said something, and they paid attention. It was very empowering."

THE YEAR 1976 was an auspicious one for Squeeze. They signed to RCA and found themselves assigned a high-flying producer. "We were in a studio with Muff Winwood," says Tilbrook. "He spent most of the time on the phone and the rest trying to make us sound like the Bay City Rollers. If it had come out people would have had a completely different perception of what we were about." The band tried again, recording a version of "Take Me I'm Yours" before RCA eventually dropped them. Miles Copeland, their manager, formed his own label, Deptford Fun City, and using his contacts – one brother, Ian, was a booking agent, the other, Stewart, was the future Police drummer – to get



The band records sessions for their self-titled debut with John Cale, far right



Squeeze in the studio with John Cale. Cale told the band to throw out their old material and explore murkier territory. "He was erratic, a dark character, very hard to read," admits Difford. "He'd say to me, 'Have you ever thought of writing about a sex master, with whips and chains?' I was 18, I had no idea what that might be like."

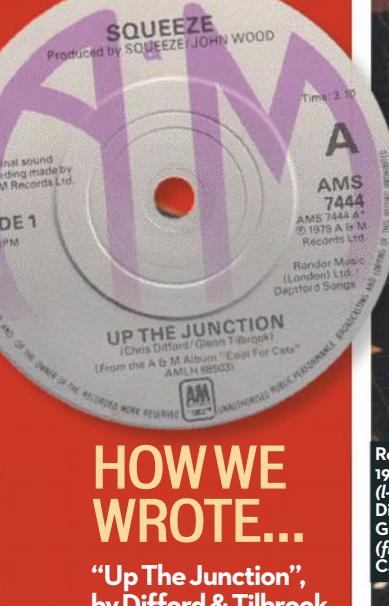
The band recorded an EP, "Packet Of Three" in 1977, followed by a self-titled LP in 1978. "We were happy to go along with everything John said, as it was inspiring to be around him, but it didn't sound like us, it sounded like us doing something else," says Tilbrook. "But he was the most musically gifted person I've worked with. He pulled some great stuff out of us, like 'The Call', which I'd never have written without John Cale."

Engineering the sessions was John Wood, who had worked with Cale for years. "John was very agitated, very manic," recalls Wood. "He had been brought in because this was punk and the material was quite aggressive, but the label didn't think they had a single, so without John we did 'Take Me I'm Yours'. It was as far from the rest of the album as it could get."

"Take Me I'm Yours" reached No 19 and paved the way for a second LP, co-produced by Squeeze and John Wood on A&M in 1979. "We did *Cool For Cats* quickly," says Holland. "We recorded in Pink Floyd's studio in Britannia Row and they had this amazing new mixing desk, and on day one somebody knocked a can of Coke over it and brought everything to a halt. That was what we were like, gumming up the best mixing desk in the world with the most syrupy thing you can find."

In spite of such incidents, Squeeze were entering their imperial phase. Wood recalls Difford walking round the studio with a school satchel full of lyrics containing songs like "It's Not Cricket", about London lowlife. "Our environment had changed quite radically, we had gone from hibernating to being lauded in the pubs and clubs of Greenwich and Deptford, getting locked in with villains, so there was a lot to write about," says Difford. "We were growing up, relationships were getting more complicated, so there was a lot more fodder. That album was directly influenced by life experience and also people like Ian Dury. As soon as I heard him, I locked on to it – it was so brilliant, the use of language. You had people like Dury, Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe writing shit-hot songs and you really had to sharpen the pencil to match your peers."

The skills were becoming increasingly apparent. "*Cool For Cats*" reached No 2. "That was inspired by Benny Hill," says Difford. "The metre of the songs on his show were so simple, like nursery rhymes. If you read the lyric you can put it into a Benny Hill song."



HOW WE WROTE...

"Up The Junction", by Difford & Tilbrook

WE WERE IN New Orleans on our second US tour and we didn't have much money so we had to stay 15 miles outside town," recalls Difford. "We were young, we wanted to go to the French Quarter, but we had to sit there and do our laundry, feeling homesick. The lyrics just popped into my head, influenced by watching TV plays, kitchen sink dramas by Mike Leigh, Ken Loach, Alan Ayckbourn. It was written in one sitting, sometimes you just put the pen to paper and it's done. I never question that, it was a spiritual thing



Recording *East Side Story*, 1981, with visiting Attractions: (l-r, backrow), John Bentley, Difford, Pete Thomas, Tilbrook, Gilson Lavis, Elvis Costello; (frontrow) Steve Nieve, Paul Carrack, Bruce Thomas

It was followed by "Up The Junction", another No 2 single, and then a brilliant third album, *Argybargy*, in 1980, as the band perfected their smart, jittery pop. "By *Argybargy*, I felt we were getting better at everything we were doing, with the band as a backbone to everything we did," says Tilbrook. "That made it easy to write for them as it was an enormous palette to play with."

John Bentley was now on bass as the band sought a heavier sound. "They were enthusiastic and ambitious and we were very busy," he recalls. "There was always a radio session, photo session, gigs. What was unusual was we didn't rehearse before going in the studio. There was a fresh and spontaneous feel to the music because you don't quite know what you are doing."

Although Tilbrook and Difford say their relationship was already "distant", Holland recalls the era fondly, saying, "In every photo I've got, we are laughing." Bentley agrees. "Maybe they're building up mystique about a screwed up relationship, but I didn't see anything beyond the normal amount of moaning you get in any group," he says. Lavis' recollection is that while "it was never peace, love and understanding, there was camaraderie and a lot of joy. Glenn can be hard work, he likes to be in control, which wasn't the way at the start, but became more the case as things went on. It was a fantastic band with great songs. But we were individuals, there wasn't a group identity."

TWAS AT this point that Holland decided to leave. He'd become less involved during the *Argybargy* sessions and it was time to move on. "It was upsetting from a friendship point of view, but I wanted to play my own music and I was feeling a bit like the George Harrison of the band," he says. "I loved them, but I had to do my own thing. I loved playing their songs but I wanted to play mine."

Holland was replaced by Paul Carrack at the suggestion of new manager Jake Riviera, who also managed Elvis Costello. Riviera wanted their next album, *East Side Story*, to be a double, with each side recorded by a different producer – Dave Edmunds, Nick Lowe, Paul McCartney and Costello. McCartney was a pipe dream, sessions with Edmunds went nowhere, sessions with Lowe ended down the pub, so Costello did the job himself with Roger Bechirian. "*Cool For Cats* and *Argybargy* were brother and sister, one was a progression from the other, but they were cut from the same cloth," says Tilbrook. "Elvis saw another side of the band and got us through the next door, which meant growing up a bit as songwriters, musicians and a

band. Having Paul Carrack brought a different groove to us, and we began to explore black influences that hadn't been there so readily." *East Side Story* found the band embracing soul, psychedelia and country, and yielded a couple of terrific singles, "Tempted" and "Labelled With Love", but it also marked the end of Squeeze's golden era.

East Side Story was the last of the albums to be made relatively pressure-free, before the relentless touring became tiring," says Tilbrook. "The pressure of doing a record every year and trying to keep moving forward can only work when you are happy, and it all became too much."

In some ways, Squeeze were a victim of their own brilliance. "They were being compared to Lennon and McCartney," says Lavis. "That's a heavy burden to carry."

Eventually, it became too much for them. 1982's *Sweets From A Stranger* proved to be something of a disappointment for its creators. "For the first time, the next album wasn't as good as the one before," says Tilbrook. "We'd run out of energy and the chemistry in the band wasn't great. Gilson was going through a difficult time with drink and we were all doing a fair amount of drugs."

While the LP contains some great songs – "When The Hangover Strikes" and "Black Coffee In Bed" – its darker tone reflected the general mood. "I'm hard pushed to remember the sessions," says Difford. "It was a dark time. When you make a record that isn't as good as the three before, it begins to bear quite heavily down upon you. Glenn and I were on a train in Germany and we both decided independently that should be it, we were tired and needed a break. So we went to a pub in Putney and told the band it was the end."

Difford and Tilbrook worked together again two years later, on *Difford & Tilbrook*, before formally reconvening the *Argybargy*



"A RECORD EVERY YEAR ONLY WORKS WHEN YOU ARE HAPPY"
GILSON LAVIS

lineup – Tilbrook, Difford, Holland, Bentley and Lavis – to play a benefit show at the Saxon Tavern in Catford. "I remember the excitement the next day," says Difford. "Everybody calling each other up saying it was brilliant and we needed to do something." Encouraged, the band went back on the road; without Bentley. "I wasn't involved for 23 years and I was pissed off, but in retrospect I'm sure it was the best time to be in Squeeze," he says.

At first, everything seemed to be going well as the band played larger venues, especially in America. "We'd been to America a couple of times and that really opened our mind and spirit, to discover there was a world out there that listens to music in a different way," says Difford.

attached to a feeling."

Tilbrook was handed the lyric while the band were recording *Cool For Cats* and wrote the tune in his lunch break. "It just tumbled out, I didn't have to think about it."

John Wood knew at once it would be a hit. "It is an amazing story in two and a half minutes. The label didn't agree, as it didn't have a chorus, so that's why we released '*Cool For Cats*' first."

"We wanted to break that and it took us many tours before it began to crack."

Here, Squeeze's Britishness – the breezy music hall pop of Tilbrook, the colloquial, location-heavy lyrics of Difford – proved to be a benefit. "We found accidentally that being very English can be charming, the fact you remain where you come from without being professional Londoners," explains Tilbrook. "People like the real deal and make allowances for it. You don't have to be American to understand Springsteen even though you might not get all the cultural references."

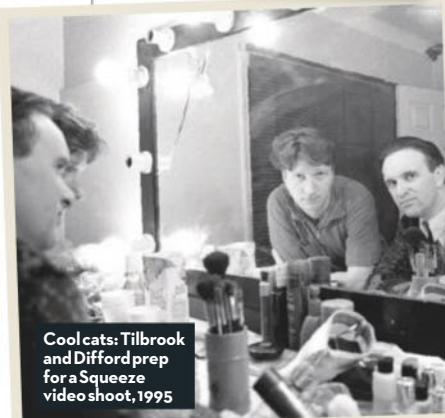
Holland was having fun, but the strain was getting to him. "I couldn't do it any more," he says. "I had my own records and TV shows and it was all getting a bit much. The first record we did [*Così Fan Tutti Frutti*] was in Brussels and we were out almost every night, roaring with laughter, that's what I most enjoyed. The records were wonderful, but it's the time we spent making them I remember. But while it was great fun, it meant there was a lot of things I wanted to do that couldn't get done."

Holland's second departure in 1990 was followed by a subtle shift in the band's dynamic. "When we did *Difford & Tilbrook* in 1984, Shep Gordon was managing us and he said Squeeze was me and Chris, so we should say this was a new Squeeze album," says Tilbrook. "But we insisted that Squeeze was all of us, the band. But Shep was right, it just took us a while to accept it."

Lavis was the last of the old guard to move on, leaving in 1992. "I stayed around 'cos I believed in Squeeze and wanted them to be successful again," he acknowledges. "There was this desire to recapture the glory days that was naïve, really. You can't. But we had some success and were still writing quality songs and playing well. I probably stayed too long, and in the end I was asked to leave because I reverted to my old ways and began drinking." Lavis now paints, and plays with Jools Holland's band. For Squeeze, these were uncomfortable times. The music was patchy, record labels came and went without ever really getting to grips with the band, and Difford and Tilbrook's relationship was poor, with communication issues not helped by alcohol, cocaine, heroin and depression. Neither Difford nor Tilbrook like to dwell on these personal struggles, preferring to recall errors made by labels who were confused about what Squeeze meant. "We were out the loop and getting further and further out," says Tilbrook. "You can't be new and exciting all the time, and we certainly weren't new."

The end came in 1999. "I didn't turn up to a gig," says Difford. "I'd stopped drinking, but there were personal things to work through. We'd recorded an LP I didn't feel confident about, so I sort of left." As Tilbrook puts it, "I was the last person left standing." Even now, 16 years later, the mood grows chilly.

SQUEEZE'S SECOND REUNION, however, was a long time coming. Both Difford and Tilbrook pursued other projects. Difford managed Bryan Ferry and Wet Wet Wet's Marti Pellow, while continuing to collaborate with other musicians; he released a solo album, *I Didn't Get Where I Am*, in 2002. Tilbrook, meanwhile, released two solo albums, *The Incomplete Glenn Tilbrook* and *Transatlantic Ping Pong*. In 2007, though, the two men found themselves in the same room for the first time in years. "It was another singles collection and we had to do some press," reveals Difford. "We went to a hotel in London and started talking about going back on the road to preserve what we'd done." Tilbrook, ever the leader, was inspired by seeing Brian Wilson perform *SMiLE*. "The thing



Cool cats: Tilbrook and Difford prep for a Squeeze video shoot, 1995

uppermost in my head was making sure we did the past perfectly," he says. "In the '90s we got comfortable, we toured without rehearsing and became complacent. Brian Wilson had clearly spent time on it. I thought if we were doing our past, we had to be the best Squeeze tribute band ever. That would make it worth doing."

This was partly what inspired 2010's *Spot The Difference*, for which they re-recorded older Squeeze songs, including "Cool For Cats", and "Up The Junction". And then came Danny Baker's book. "I played Danny a new song, 'Cradle To The Grave,' and he said he wanted it," says Tilbrook. "With that song, we did something we'd never done before, which is Chris would sit and listen while I was on the piano over there, and we'd actually communicate. I helped with the lyrics. It became more collaborative."

The album – a nostalgic look back at '70s London – was written in Tilbrook's studio retreat while the industrial estate around it was being sold. London is in a state of great change, and Charlton is no different to the rest of the city. Soon the warehouses will be pulled down, the industrial estate swept away. Squeeze's studio, though, will remain and this seems fitting. With London's transformation comes a renewed fascination with its past, and few bands are in a better position to interrogate that nostalgia than Squeeze. And so Difford and Tilbrook remain in their quirky eyrie, surviving change, still looking out at London and still playing its tunes. ☺

Cradle To The Grave (Virgin EMI) is reviewed p83

MARTYN GOODacre/GETTY IMAGES; STYLOROUGE

BUYERS' GUIDE

HOW TO BUY

Uncut's pick of the Difford/Tilbrook songbook



COOL FOR CATS

A&M, 1979

Tilbrook calls this Squeeze's real debut. It's a breezy introduction to the band's world, comprising songs about masturbation ("Touching Me, Touching You"), crime ("The Knack") and the danger of intoxicated songwriting ("Slightly Drunk"), as well as matchless singles "Cool For Cats" and "Up The Junction".



ARGYBARGY

A&M, 1980

After *Cool For Cats* established the Squeeze sound, *Argybargy* took it a stage further, with wonderful tracks like "If I Didn't Love You" ("Singles remind me of kisses") and "Another Nail In My Heart".



EAST SIDE STORY

A&M, 1981

Brilliant, funny and clever songwriting from a pair on top of their game, with Paul Carrack bringing a new voice to "Tempted" and Tilbrook and Difford producing a string of faultless songs from "Piccadilly" to "Someone Else's Bell".



PLAY

REPRISE, 1991

While Difford prefers *Frank*, this is Tilbrook's favourite album from Squeeze's troubled second era, containing easily overlooked treats such as "Crying In My Sleep", "Walk A Straight Line" and the extraordinary "The Truth".



THE COMPLETE BBC SESSIONS

MERCURY, 2008

Ostensibly a career retrospective, but much of the material was cut after the '85 reunion, showcasing Tilbrook and Difford's continued musical chemistry in laidback surroundings despite their personal difficulties.



CRADLE TO THE GRAVE

VIRGIN EMI, 2015

Inspired by Danny Baker's memoir, Squeeze's new album is a coming-of-age drama, featuring songs about home, school, girls, football and growing up, including the marvellous title track, "The Beautiful Game", "Happy Days" and "Sunny".

ALBUM BY ALBUM

Kurt Vile

...opens his "jangly, psychedelic mind": "I thought I'd die in my twenties of old age!"

IT'S BEEN A MAD WEEK," admits Kurt Vile. "I was practising with the band for five days. Then we flew to the Pitchfork festival in Chicago, left the stage directly after our set, went to the airport and flew to London to play the Citadel Festival that same day."

It is safe to say that the Philadelphia musician is currently entering a new phase in his garlanded career. His new album, *b'lieve I'm goin down...*, continues to refine his brand of hazy psych-rock and, as his recent travel itinerary demonstrates, his international profile keeps on rising. "It's hard to say how this record will be received," he admits. "But I know it's my cleanest, clearest message."

Vile has always been prolific, of course, whether it be his stream of early CDRs, his collaborations with The War On Drugs' Adam Granduciel or as an increasingly accomplished solo artist. "I fine tune my music," he says. "With every record, it gets better in certain ways or it gets more like my real life."

GOD IS SAYING THIS TO YOU

MEXICAN SUMMER, 2009



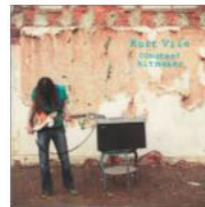
A compilation of material recorded prior to his debut proper, *Constant Hitmaker*, these songs established the early Vile sound: woozy, reverb-heavy rock

with a fondness for FM radio staples.

KURT VILE: I grew up in Lansdowne, the suburb directly next to West Philly. It's tiny, a mile radius town. But you can just jump on the trolley and go to the Philadelphia record exchange off South Street. It was a fun time for indie rock because 7" singles were only \$3. Just out of high school, I moved into the city, by the Art Museum area. I started playing music when I was 17, making tapes under various aliases, playing the banjo a lot. Then I moved to Boston for two years. I worked at this forklift job. I was able to buy things with my own money. I picked up fingerpicking, all kinds of home recording, psychedelic effects. While I was in Boston I bought the digital eight-track that most of *God...* and *Constant Hitmaker* are recorded on. When I moved back home in 2003, I recorded "My Sympathy", the first song on *God...* I recorded "Song For John In D". All of a sudden, I had legit songs. I also met Adam [Granduciel] in 2003. We'd always be playing with each other: he'd be playing in my band, and I'd play in his. We'd record at the house and we'd have this same kind of jangly, psychedelic mind. It really came together in 2005. There was also this cool DIY music coming out in 2005 that reaffirmed what I was doing, like Ariel Pink. As far as the Kurt Vile CDRs go, though, I made my first one in 2006 – the "Accidents" EP.

CONSTANT HITMAKER

GULCHER RECORDS, 2008

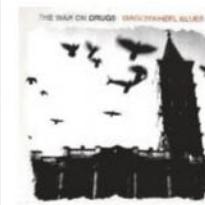


Vile's lo-fi bedroom antics reached an early peak. Lively lead 45, "Classic Rock In Spring/Freeway In Mind", had Vile channelling prime Tom Petty.

I moved to the Northern Museum area. That's the landscape of the Kurt Vile sound. It's industrial, mixed with row houses and a lot of bars and record stores and clubs, all in a small radius. The wall [on the cover] of *Constant Hitmaker*, that's right by this brewery where I used to work. Was the sleeve inspired by *Street-Legal*? That was a cult record for me and my friends at the time. I like the way Dylan's looking out of the warehouse where they recorded the album. On the CD version I'm looking to the side awkwardly. On the vinyl cover, it's me looking more rock'n'roll with my hair in my face. I perfected it the second time around. It became more me and less like a demented version of *Street-Legal*. There was a summer in 2005 where me and Adam took off from our jobs and I cut a bunch of stuff. In summer 2006 I also recorded "Freeway" in a real studio. Brian McTear recorded that, with me and Adam. That was a radio-friendly song, but I didn't have the right kind of deal. By the time anyone put my music out, which was *Constant Hitmaker*, it was this ultimate comp. It had all my stuff from 2006, then picking tracks from '05, like "Deep Sea". I had an archive of psychedelic recordings at this point, so once I was confident people liked what I was doing I could say, "OK, I think this one will work, too."

THE WAR ON DRUGS WAGONWHEEL BLUES

SECRETLY CANADIAN, 2008



Vile enjoyed a wide remit on Granduciel's debut. A perfect fusion of classic Americana - Dylan, Springsteen - with the experimental drones of *MBV* and *Sonic Youth*.

At some point, I was playing in some version of The War On Drugs early on and Adam was playing in The Violators. It was all good but we didn't quite mesh together. He did one tour with The Capitol Years and when he came back, once we made a decision to work together, it just meshed. We recorded some stuff from the live set, like "Arms Like Boulders", and Secretly Canadian really liked it. I still had no deal at that point. So it made things a little weird. I was stoked for him, but I was also like, "Shit, I mean, I've been working my whole life to get this too and I don't have it out yet." But I encouraged Adam to buy a 16-track reel-to-reel with his advance. My buddy Dave Park sold Adam one of his Tascam boards. Anyway, me and Adam played one show as a duo and he had this cool sample, which is the "Show Me The Coast" sample and we jammed on it for 10 minutes. We went into the studio not long after and I said, "Ah, man, you should lay that down." He played drums, it was like Max Weinberg but way vibier. That's how we worked together. We knew when we were both on to something and later we didn't even have to say anything; we just played so well together. The secret to my sound in TWOD was I had this acoustic 12-string with a pick-up I stole from my brother, Paul. You put it through filter and delay pedals and chime away. I cherish those times for sure. Somewhere in there, it was all fine.





Fronting The Violators at the Governors Ball festival, Randall's Island, NYC, June 6, 2014

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



CHILDISH PRODIGY

MATADOR, 2009

Vile's impressive major label debut. Includes added Violators; his touring band, who add momentum to the Krautrock groove of "Freak Train" and stoner boogie-rocker "Hunchback".

During that summer in 2005, Adam and I recorded things like "Overnite Religion" and "Blackberry Song". By the time *Constant Hitmaker* came out, I had already recorded most of *Childish Prodigy* with Jeff Zeigler. I sat on *Childish Prodigy* for a bigger label, because I had this whole database that I could pick through, about six-plus years of material that nobody had put out yet. There was interest from a lot of labels but Matador had a personality that was closest to my aesthetic. Matador are this unique thing, it's almost like classic rock of the '90s into today.

They had Pavement, Yo La Tengo, Guided By Voices, Cat Power. They recently signed Steve Gunn, who is another example of a total, unique talent. There were other labels, but either they were not totally committal or I just couldn't catch a vibe for whoever I was talking to. I thought it was like now or never. I would die in my twenties of old age or something, die a blue-collar death. Adam was in the band, I had Jesse Trbovich who played sax and guitar, he played sax on "Freak Train". And I had Mike Zanghi, but we're all still sharing the same people, Kurt Vile and The War On Drugs.

That was a fun era, because we were still pretty local. We'd be getting a lot of local gigs. I wrote "Hunchback", we played it live and we immediately went into the studio and it came out heavier than anything I've ever done. But it had such an attitude and such a groove. I love the Dim Stars cover, "Monkey". An old friend of ours asked me to play their wedding, and I didn't know what I was gonna do. I was listening to the Dim Stars album and Richard Hell's lyrics killed me. So I did that, and it turned out really good. "Freak Train" is awesome, live, but it came off a little thick in the recording. I'm proud of the whole record, but it's pretty primitive. Because I was sitting on that for a year or two, I had mixes on a CDR that I would dump on to another CDR and then when we tried to remix them for the album I ended up going with these primitive mastering jobs that I did myself. I guess we'll call it mid-fi, not lo-fi. It feels like some kind of schizophrenic version of a punk relic. That's my punk relic era! I don't know if I've ever been too punk again, but...

SMOKE RING FOR MY HALO

MATADOR, 2011



After the exuberant *Childish Prodigy*, this quieter effort from Vile foregrounded his folkier influences.

That's a folk record, it's a becoming-a-father record. I thought I'd finish the record before I had my kid, but I was just halfway done. I was recording with John Agnello; it was the first one with a producer. John was awesome. The first songs that I recorded on that were "Baby's Arms", "Ghost Town" and "On Tour". I recorded "Jesus Fever" during the *Childish Prodigy* era but I finished it up for *Smoke Ring*.... But I remember I had my kid, then immediately I wrote "In My Time". There were other songs I had written that I wanted to add to the album, but I didn't think I was allowed. I was pretty naïve still, I thought I had spent my whole budget so I couldn't make it better. Then all of a sudden John said, "You should go back, you've gotta go back in." So I kept recording more songs for that. I was listening to lots of folk music – there's always Neil Young, but I was heavy into Bert Jansch and Joni Mitchell. John Martyn. I usually write on an acoustic. I think I just had this new Martin acoustic and maybe I thought I'd add more electricity to it; but at the end of the day, I kept it pretty acoustic. That record is pretty pure. I go back to that one once in a while because my family listens to it in the car sometimes, so if I'm feeling nostalgic I hear it. The label suggested just doing one rocker, way later when I felt the record was done, so I did "Puppet To The Man" and "Society Is My Friend". "Puppet To The Man" is cool except it's a bit distorted; it's the oddball. "Society Is My Friend" is one of my favourites.



Smoke rings for his halo: "excited and apprehensive" Vile ahead of this year's *b'lieve i'm goin down...*

• SO OUTTA REACH EP

MATADOR, 2011



One of Kurt Vile's many between-album EPs. This six-track collection of songs that didn't make *Smoke Ring For My Halo* includes a splendid Bruce Springsteen cover, "Downbound Train".

By the time that we were touring, we got the full band again. So you tend to rock, because you couldn't help it. You got loud drums, you have to turn up the amplifiers.

At the beginning of the *Smoke Ring For My Halo* tour, we were playing "Downbound Train", the Springsteen cover. That was one of those times when I picked up my acoustic guitar, I started playing these chords... "What is this?" Then I realised what it was. It spoke to me, the same way the Dim Stars songs spoke to me. It just felt really good to sing it, so we got this rock version together.

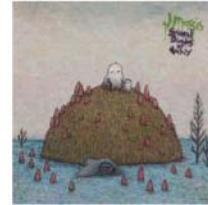
We had more than enough songs for *Smoke Ring...*, so every other song on "So Outta Reach" were ones we didn't use on the album. At that point in my career, I think I had to make a pretty concise statement [with *Smoke Ring...*]. It was important not to over-clutter the radio waves or the record player.

The Springsteen cover came out pretty good live, I wanted to put it out and I think the label were really excited to put it out, too. In between touring, we captured "Downbound Train" in the city.

Also, I had really wanted "The Creature" to appear on the *Smoke Ring...* album, but there were one too many fingerpickers already on there. I guess that all my EPs have to have substance. Its much more exciting when you have enough quality material, so that it's not throwaway.

J MASCIS SEVERAL SHADES OF WHY

SUB POP, 2011

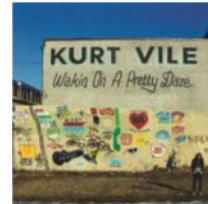


Kindred spirit Vile lends a hand to the Dinosaur Jr frontman's solo album. J became a fan of *Childish Prodigy*. He invited us on the Dinosaur Jr reunion tour, and some shows for the *Farm* album. That

was around the time I had to pick a producer; and John Agnello works with J. I played with Dinosaur at the Bowery, and that's where I met John to talk about making *Smoke Ring...*, and where I also met Kim Gordon, who was a fan of the album. Before *Smoke Ring...* came out, I was on the West Coast doing the Woodsist festival, then John invited me to play on *Several Shades Of Why*. I'd mixed part of *Smoke Ring...* at J's home studio and later I recorded "Society Is My Friend" there, so it was familiar territory. I was there for two days. He had all the stuff already recorded. He'd tell me what he wanted, but he also let me psych out. Sometimes, he wouldn't say much. He'd just say, "Uhhh". Or nod his head. But he's got his own vision, and he compiled it all the way he wanted to. I played on six songs. I play mainly guitar – psychedelic acoustic guitar – and Dobro. I sing back up on one song, too.

WAKIN' ON A PRETTY DAZE

MATADOR, 2013



Written partly on the road, this amiable set introduced some new West Coast friends; and found Vile at his most focused and personal. I had a wealth of material up until that point. Then,

all of a sudden, I was touring like crazy. I think in the case of *Wakin'...*, you can see it's really dense, everything has a lot of parts.

I put a lot of energy into each song and didn't show the label until it was done. Its not exactly prog, but it's like my version of it. It had lots of parts and changes. There is stuff we definitely left on the cutting-room floor, but it was pretty intense making the album. There's all kinds of synths and guitars, drum machines. People don't realise but the drums speed up for a second. I went to California and played with my friend Stella Mozgawa [Warpaint] and Farmer Dave Scher [Beachwood Sparks]. We had this psychedelic East Coast thing going and I took it over to the West Coast. I got this cosmic West Coast situation. We got deep into that record. Jennifer Herrema sang on "Too Hard". It's a sulk about being a father. It's not exactly the kind of song she usually sings, so I thought it would be a kind of cute but tough juxtaposition. "Was All Talk", "Wakin' On A Pretty Day", "Pure Pain", I started writing them on the road. You can go back to them and groove along with them. It's not like I finished them there

[on tour]. The only time I finished one of those songs was when I finally laid it down and then decided it was done.

B'LIEVE I'M GOIN DOWN...

MATADOR, 2015



An album recorded in many locations and a persuasive argument that Vile is among the very best...

I was supposed to play with Tinariwen out at Rancho De La Luna in Joshua Tree. I wanted to play with Stella and Farmer Dave again, and Stella gave me the number for [Rancho... owner] Dave Catching, who told me the recording with Tinariwen was still happening. So I went over there a week early. I stayed in the desert, playing guitar. I wrote "Wheelhouse" after I'd jammed with Tinariwen. My family met me out there. Then Rob [Laakso], who's a good engineer and a great multi-instrumentalist, came out with Stella and Dave. We could stay up until five in the morning without anybody looking at their watch. We got lots of good stuff there, and at our most recent drummer, Kyle Spence's studio in Athens. Me and Rob went on the West Coast with Dave and Stella or the East Coast with The Violators and somewhere along the line I just went up to Brooklyn. Another awesome studio we used was Pink Duck, which is Josh Homme's studio in Burbank. As sparse and understated as this record may come off, it was just as intense as making *Wakin'....* It was more like catching a vibe. Now I'm trying to figure out how to do it live, and represent all the different types of people who play on it. Everybody had a hand in it, all my bandmates. Yeah, I'm excited and apprehensive about it. ☺

Kurt Vile's new album, b'lieve i'm goin down..., is released on September 25 through Matador

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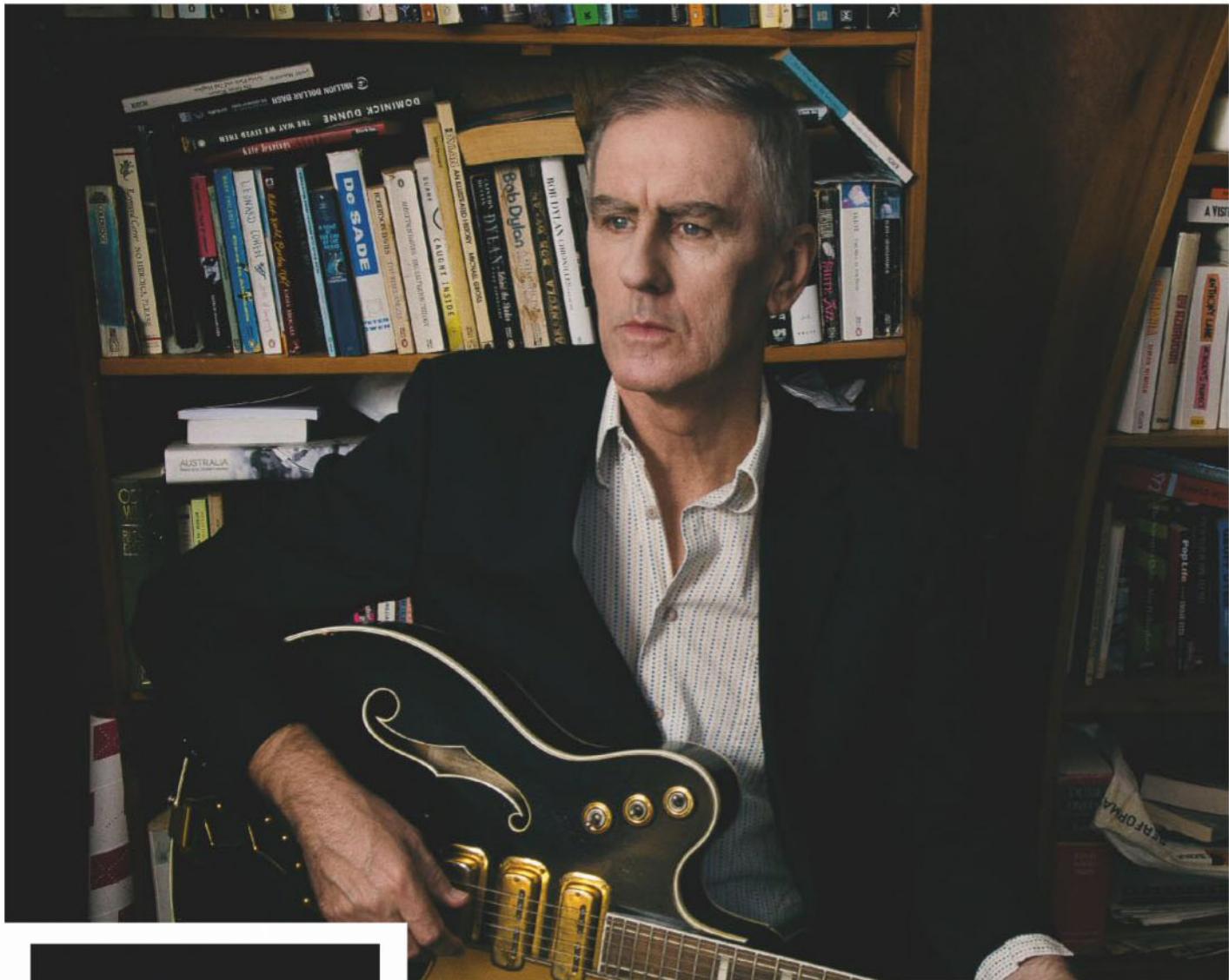
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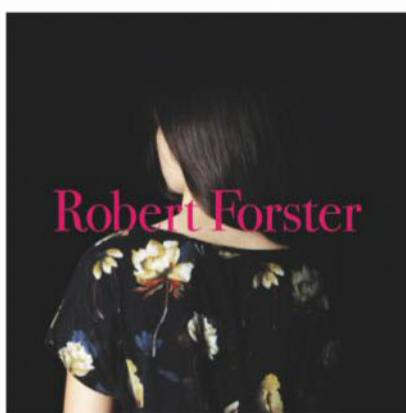
OUR SCORING SYSTEM:

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

THIS MONTH: LOW | KEITH RICHARDS | DAVID GILMOUR | NEW ORDER



STEPHEN BOOTH



TRACKLIST

- 1 Learn To Burn
- 2 Let Me Imagine You
- 3 Songwriters On The Run
- 4 And I Knew
- 5 A Poet Walks
- 6 I'm So Happy For You
- 7 Love Is Where It Is
- 8 Turn On The Rain
- 9 I Love Myself (And I Always Have)
- 10 Disaster In Motion

ROBERT FORSTER

Songs To Play

TAPETE

The former Go-Between's sprightly solo sixth finds him reinvigorated, says Tom Pinnock

9/10

WHEN BOB DYLAN released *Modern Times* in 2006, Robert Forster wrote an incisive essay in *The Monthly* about his hero's shape-shifting personas. In particular, he examined Dylan's most recent incarnation: a grizzled older man, yet still swinging, facing down death with a tune.

"His best songs of the last 10 years bear comparison with the best of his '60s work," Forster wrote, "and more importantly they offer a new voice: cracked, lovelorn, pessimistic, gallows-humoured, still towering over his generation. Old age suits him."

Over his past decade, Forster, now nearing 60, has gone through a few reinventions of his own. First off, 2008's *The Evangelist* suggested he was following Dylan's example and embracing the cruel passage of time just as it had embraced him. Inspired by the sudden death of The Go-Betweens' co-founder and co-writer, Grant McLennan, in May 2006, the record was slow, sparse and filled with ruminations on loss. It had its beautiful moments, sure, but the sarcasm, the louche sophistication and the playful, biting wit that have long characterised Forster's best work were, understandably, taking a back



New Albums

seat. It was as if Bryan Ferry had suddenly morphed into Nick Drake.

The Evangelist was something of an anomaly, though; in the years since, Robert Forster has become the renaissance man he's long cast himself as in his songs. His career as a music critic has flourished, even resulting in a publication of his columns as *The 10 Rules Of Rock And Roll*; he's compiled the reissue series *G Stands For Go-Betweens*, volume one of which was released earlier this year; he's begun producing for other people, including The John Steel Singers on their 2010 debut, *Tangalooma*; and now he's not only writing songs about Rupert Bunny paintings [see sidebar below], he's so respected as a cultural commentator that he's actually invited to galleries to talk about them.

With *Songs To Play*, Forster has finally returned to his old job, and – defying the example of Dylan – ignored the advancing years. Crucially, these are some of his finest songs in decades. Strikingly immediate, yet also rewarding repeated immersion, the 10 tracks here are, just as Forster intended, amusing, infectious and relaxed, a world away from the seam of sadness at the heart of *The Evangelist*. That lyrical wryness, as typically Australian as it is Forster-esque, has returned, with the songwriter heading out on wild flights of fancy; notably on the poised, acoustic “Songwriters On The Run”, a rather meta tale about two fugitive musicians who eventually hide out with a gig promoter, and “Disaster In Motion”, an atmospheric portrait of a small, isolated town. “Population 80, nothing much here,” he sings over watery organ, acoustic guitar and muted bass. “Things just drift from year to year/Once there was a scandal, once there was a flood...”

Unlike *The Evangelist*, recorded by Go-Betweens producer Mark Wallis on computer in London, *Songs To Play* was made in collaboration with two of The John Steel Singers, Scott Bromiley and Luke McDonald, and tracked live to tape up a mountain outside Brisbane. It's arguably the best Forster has ever sounded, with the crisp recording a world away from the digital reverb smears that blighted 1990's *Danger In The*



Buoyed by new possibilities: Robert Forster in 2015

Past, or even The Go-Betweens' *Tallulah*.

Thirty years his juniors, Bromiley and McDonald seem to have acted as the young bucks pushing Uncle Robert to again experiment with arrangements. *Warm Nights*, released in 1996, was similarly expansive, with lysergic fuzz guitars, oompah-assisted country shuffles and stately “Like A Rolling Stone” homages, and *Songs To Play* picks up where that left off;

from the bossa nova rhythms of “Love Is Where It Is”, and the acidic, clattering folk of “I'm So Happy For You”, to the glittering piano and glockenspiel parts that highlight the limping, romantic “And I Knew”, there's a rich palette of colour here. Throughout much of the record, too, the lilting violin and voice of Forster's wife, Karin Bäumler, are important textures, echoing Amanda Brown's contributions

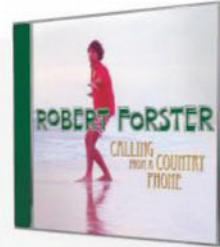
MORE SONGS TO PLAY

Earlier pointers to Forster's first solo release in seven years



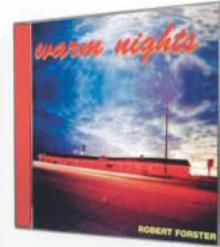
The River People
DANGER IN THE PAST, 1990

This hushed, acoustic track from Forster's first solo album, inspired by Rupert Bunny's painting *Tritons*, is still a mysterious, circling thing, hypnotic in its oblique narrative: “You came up to the house after swimming on sunset and the flattened sea.”



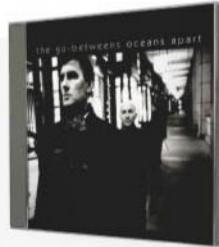
121
CALLING FROM A COUNTRY PHONE, 1993

With its chiming guitars, this propulsive highlight from Forster's most country-influenced album predicts the flighty delights of “Let Me Imagine You” and, with its tales of “tombstones, cobblestones, all those old bones”, the travelogue of “A Poet Walks”.



I Can Do
WARM NIGHTS, 1996

Complete with taut and dry production from Edwyn Collins, Forster's fourth solo LP is the only one that can match *Songs To Play* for sheer colour and playfulness. Opener “I Can Do” would fit perfectly into the new record, with its garage-rock rhythm and obtuse lyrics: “She reminds me of Africa, though I've never been...”



Darlinghurst Nights
OCEANS APART, 2005

Impeccably arranged, this ever-building highlight from The Go-Betweens' ninth and final album is a cousin of *Songs To Play*'s subtly climaxing closer “Disaster In Motion”, albeit with a more personal lyric about time spent in Sydney's suburbs.

to The Go-Betweens' late-'80s peaks.

Elsewhere, Forster's songwriting seems to have been broadened by his experience as a journalist, especially on the stunning, keen-eyed "A Poet Walks". This surreal, five-minute travelogue charts his journey around a rediscovered town – perhaps taking place just after his train trip in 2005's "Here Comes A City" – and eventually grows into a widescreen Mariachi-tinged epic that brings to mind both Morricone and Love's *Forever Changes*. As the chord sequence descends, trumpets blare and violins wail, Forster sings of the psychological journey prompted by his physical travels: "To walk, past all the loves that I've known/Past all the lives I've outgrown/The skin and the bone..."

It's not all reverie, either; on "Let Me Imagine You", a brittle indie-pop paean to the power of the mind in this age of digital over-sharing, Forster delivers the best line of the record, tongue firmly in cheek: "Please don't twitter/Let me imagine you/I find it sweeter..." Other gems reveal themselves with time: "Kathy got married

to Emmylou" on "Disaster In Motion" is deliciously jarring after Forster has set up the traditional, conservative rural scene, while on the punchy, 12-bar opener, "Learn To Burn", he gets joyfully silly, warning, "I mistook Memphis for a house in Surrey/You can miss detail when you're in a hurry."

The Go-Betweens were at their most impressive when they matched traditional

pop structures with warped lyrics or experimental textures – "Cattle And Cane"'s cantering, off-kilter rhythm, say, or the detached wordplay of "You Can't Say No Forever". Perhaps Forster was reminded of these successes as he compiled the Go-Betweens boxsets, as in many respects, for all the years, joy and pain that have spooled by, the Robert Forster on *Songs To Play* is very much like the Robert Forster of the '80s – bookish, aloof, fey, stylish and sarcastic, he's still speak-singing snarky bon mots like a subtropical Jonathan Richman in an undertaker's suit, or an antipodean Lou Reed more comfortable at a gallery than Lexington, 125.

His modus operandi – white, suburban, left-of-centre indie-pop, still in thrall to the '60s and '70s – might not have changed all that much, but *Songs To Play* is nevertheless his strongest work for decades. It's to Robert Forster's credit that he hasn't settled down into the persona of the older musician, like his hero Dylan, slowing both tempos and heart rates. Instead he's returned revitalised, buoyed by young blood and new possibilities, reinvigorated by life, art and music.

Back in 1987, he turned grey, the result of a reputed eight-hour dye job in unlikely honour of *Dynasty*'s Blake Carrington. Forster's hair is now grey for real, yet he's sounding more youthful than he has in years. Old age suits him.

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**
Robert Forster,
Scott Bromiley and
Luke McDonald
Recorded at: Wild
Mountain Sound,
Queensland,
Australia
Personnel: Robert
Forster (vocals,
guitar), Karin Bäumler
(violin, vocals), Scott
Bromiley & Luke
McDonald (bass,
guitar, keys), Matt
Piele (drums)

pop structures with warped lyrics or experimental textures – "Cattle And Cane"'s cantering, off-kilter rhythm, say, or the detached wordplay of "You Can't Say No Forever". Perhaps Forster was reminded of these successes as he compiled the Go-Betweens boxsets, as in many respects, for all the years, joy and pain that have spooled by, the Robert Forster on *Songs To Play* is very much like the Robert Forster of the '80s – bookish, aloof, fey, stylish and sarcastic, he's still speak-singing snarky bon mots like a subtropical Jonathan Richman in an undertaker's suit, or an antipodean Lou Reed more comfortable at a gallery than Lexington, 125.

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Q&A

Robert Forster on the new LP's relaxed gestation: "I write one or two songs a year. Three if I'm on fire."

THIS IS YOUR most upbeat record in years – how did that come about? It came from the songs. It burst out of *The Evangelist*, which was very clouded by Grant's passing. In 2008, '09 and '10, a bunch of songs came that had a lot in common, that were obviously lighter. I knew it was the start of something new. I really wanted time to pass because I thought this was another stage of my career. So I had the album written by 2011... but then what happened was the... *Go-Betweens* [boxset], and it took a year more than what everyone thought. Later, I wrote two more songs, one of which was "Learn To Burn".

In many ways, this is your first record without any of Grant's influence, isn't it? You're right, this is the first album without Grant there, which is sad but it's a fact. *The Evangelist* was almost like another Go-Betweens album – it's not, because Grant's not there, but it is very tied to *Oceans Apart...* it was recorded in the same studio with the same musicians. You know, I'll never make an album like *The Evangelist* again, I'll never be in that place again and I'm glad I did it.

Songs To Play really does have an analogue feel – what was the recording process like? I wanted to get back to tape, not because I was searching for 1975 or anything, I wasn't time travelling. I just wanted to play, quite live, and then walk back in [to the control room] and listen to the music and not look at a screen. We recorded in a house on a mountain half an hour from my house. The feel up there is a bit Woodstock 1967, you half expect to see Garth Hudson standing in a field or something. And it was strange, because the last Dylan Bootleg Series album [*The Basement Tapes Complete*] came out at the same time, and listening to "Tiny Montgomery", "This Wheel's On Fire" and "Tears Of Rage" fitted my half-hour drive up the mountain.

How important were Luke McDonald and Scott Bromiley to the record? They have a virtuosity about them, but also they have a lot of soul, and so they weren't lost in their abilities. They're very good on a lot of instruments and they have fresh ideas. It gives the record detail and a lot of touches that you can hear all the way through. Like the

trumpet on "A Poet Walks" – you know, there's sitar on there! "Disaster In Motion" sounded a bit like an Eno track, like something from *Another Green World*, so we actually tried an electronic version of that first. I wanted a track without any guitar on it – maybe I'll get to do this on my next album – so I wanted to have a bed of clattering, electronic rhythm and build the track up on synths. We got down that road a fair while and it just wasn't doing it for me. But you know, you've got to try these things.

"Please don't twitter" on "Let Me Imagine You" is a great line.

It's a song about imagining things, the power of visualising somebody in your mind as opposed to something [on a screen]. Let me imagine you in Paris. You know, you don't have to Instagram me, I can do some work here. I can think of you there and maybe that's more powerful for me. Maybe I get a distortion or maybe I get something wrong and that's interesting, as opposed to there it is, flat on the screen.

So I guess I get really direct in the last line, "Please don't twitter..."

I wrote that back in 2009, and I was really scared that Twitter was going to go out of fashion, and people would think, 'Oh God, Forster's five years behind the times.' But it's hung around.

How do you write now?

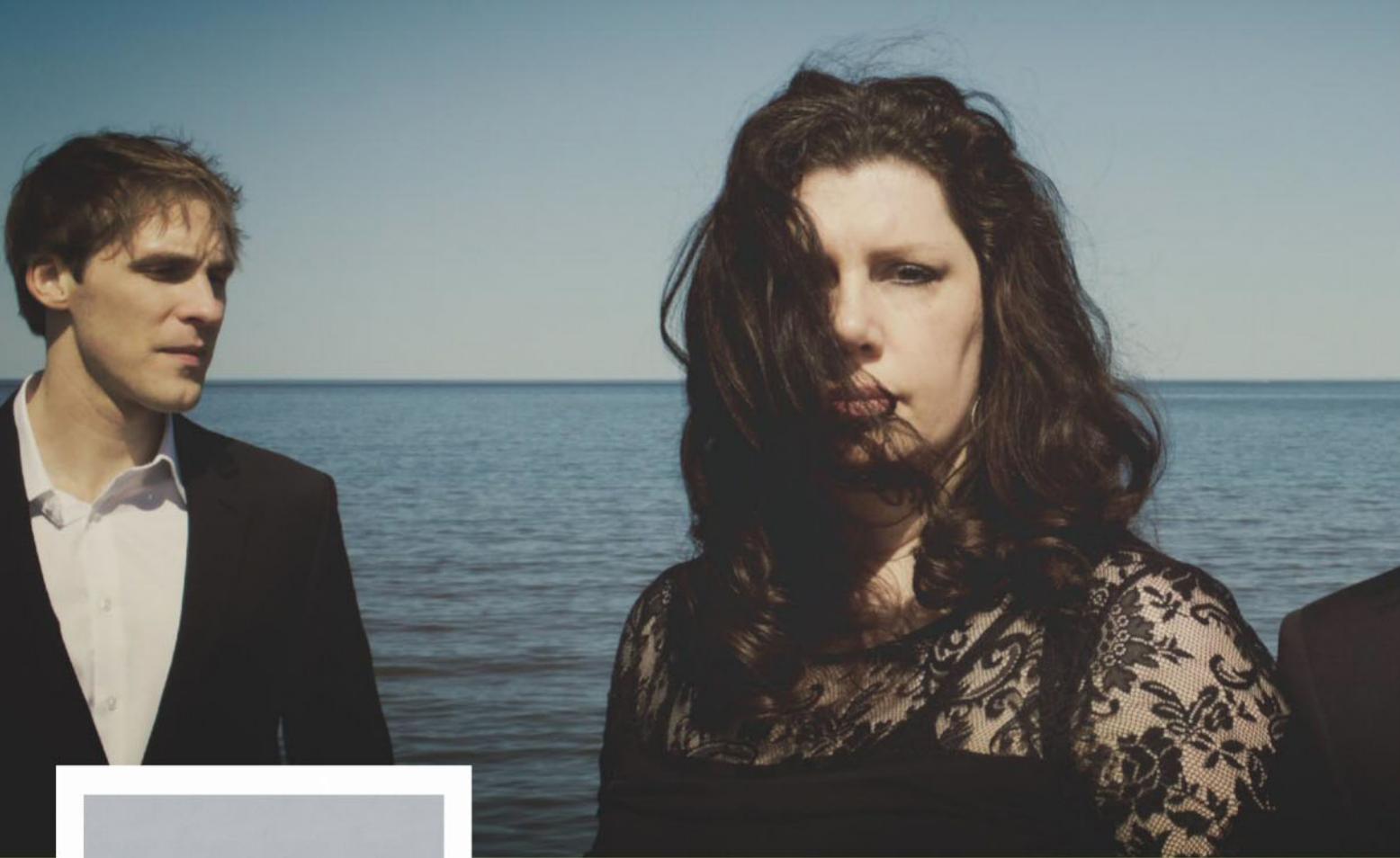
I'm really not a natural musician, I'm not someone like Paul Weller or Paul Simon, who can really craft a song. I might write one or two songs a year, three if I'm on fire, although I'm trying every day. That's the way it's always been with me. But with this album, I did write about 10 good songs in about three years, which is really fast for me – I was on fire. Grant was someone who wrote a hell of a lot of material. Coming up to any album, he'd have two or three times the amount of material that I had. You wouldn't see him for six weeks and then he'd play you six songs. I'd fumble through one, maybe.

One of your 'rules of rock'n'roll' is that the second-to-last song on an album is always the worst – did you think about that when you were tracklisting *Songs To Play*?

I did. "I Love Myself (And I Always Have)" was some people's favourite song when we were doing the album. And I wanted a late surprise – I just wanted to have something very poppy and cheeky and irreverent, deep in the album at track nine.

INTERVIEW: TOM PINNOCK





TRACKLIST

- 1 Gentle
- 2 No Comprende
- 3 Spanish Translation
- 4 Congregation
- 5 No End
- 6 Into You
- 7 What Part of Me
- 8 The Innocents
- 9 Kid In The Corner
- 10 Lies
- 11 Landslide
- 12 DJ

ZORAN ORLIC

LOW

Ones And Sixes SUBPOP

Enduring Minnesotans' end-of-days about-turn.
By Laura Snapes

8/10

LOW'S LAST ALBUM, 2013's *The Invisible Way*, felt like the completion of a full circle. It marked roughly their 20th anniversary, with Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker complemented by their fourth bassist, Steve Garrington, and saw them veering closer to their formative style than they had in more than a decade. With its clear vocals and reverent pace, it recalled the period spanning 1994 debut *I Could Live In Hope* to 2001's standout *Things We Lost In The Fire*. Producer Jeff Tweedy kept the arrangements spare and spiritual, and accentuated the prevailing sense of Midwestern, middle-aged familiarity.

If Low had chosen to live out their career reprising and honing older sounds, like so many of their early '90s peers do, few would have begrudged them the comfort. It's hard to imagine it's been an easy run: not least considering

Sparhawk's breakdown a decade ago, when he imagined himself to be an Antichrist figure straight from the pages of a Don DeLillo novel, but also the weight of inhabiting such diffuse, desolate music for so long.

Sparhawk spoke last year about avoiding his old habit of spoiling anything that sounded beautiful, commenting that the songs he loved most on *The Invisible Way* and 2011's *C'mon* were the "pretty and intimate" ones. He warned, however, that the new material they had been writing was "not pretty".

Recorded with BJ Burton at Justin Vernon's April Base studios in Wisconsin, *Ones And Sixes* is as significant a volte-face as Low have made since 2004's misanthropic rock epic *The Great Destroyer* into 2007's brittle, barren *Drums And Guns*. The spectre of apocalypse has often lingered on the fringes of Low's music. Their 11th record sounds as



Q&A

Alan Sparhawk



Why the title? *Ones And Sixes* is a step away from zeros and fives. It's an organised effort to create randomness and/or chaos. Where do you place your precious control to create something that is then out of your control? Once it was there, other references came: one to six was a scale once used to measure someone's sexual preference, or the success of an internet page. I heard the number of the beast is actually 616, not 666.

What prompted the dystopian electronic textures? We work in a certain direction for a few records then, when it feels like we have arrived with it or have answered a few questions, we tend to stab off into a different direction. The past few records have been an effort to shut down my ego and just let the songs do the work, but I can't stand it any more. When I met BJ and heard some of the things he was doing, especially with hip-hop, I knew he was the right person for the task. He wants to push boundaries, and we were ready. Certainly the ongoing war and racial/economic violence present every reason to shout a little louder. Meanwhile, seems like marriage in rock 'n' roll has taken some tough hits these past couple years. It's hard to make a relationship work in any situation, but you have to try. Love still wins.

Is there any significance to the record being released on 9/11? We didn't plan it that way, but when we found out, a little voice inside me whispered "Perfect". *INTERVIEW: LAURA SNAPES*

if the cataclysm has finally been, leaving a reeling dystopia in its wake. "Gentle" opens with frayed industrial drums and profoundly deep synthetic bass, the effect conjuring an army trudging across a snowy wilderness. You'd imagine Trent Reznor or Tim Hecker to have produced. Similarly, "The Innocents" shudders gravely as Parker intones, "All you innocents better run for it." Throughout, she and Sparhawk seem to turn their regrets and sacrifices into warnings for those who can still run.

Confusion reigns: hooked around whip-crack drums, "No Comprende" has Sparhawk malevolently intoning every syllable of a misunderstanding, before building to a grave guitar epic that recalls Grails' baked-earth doom. Parker exposes the subtly undermining tricks of intimate fights on "Congregation", with its flinty programmed percussion, and on "Spanish Translation", a moment of violent clarity proves worse than ignorance. "All I thought I knew then/ Blew out the back of my head/ Into the river it bled," sings Sparhawk, a reminder that, biblically, apocalypse is as much revelation as devastation. The song veers between spacey, distant verses and great lurching choruses; after the honeyed *Invisible Way*, the structures

of *Ones And Sixes* sometimes feel jarring.

The moments where everything comes together, though, stop the album from becoming too alienating for its own good. "Into You" is a transcendent hymn set to a dripping beat, slumping into each line as Parker describes the comfort and pain of long-term connection. The taut, Spoon-like "What Part Of Me" is a similarly ambiguous love song: "What part of me don't you know/ What part of me don't you own?" Parker and Sparhawk sing together, either out of wonder or frustration. The record peaks with the astonishing, penultimate "Landslide", 10 minutes of hard-edged riffs into mournful peace and then a thrilling swathe of crescendos that sound as if Sparhawk is yanking the strings from his guitar. It's strange to hear the omnipresent darkness in Low's work made so overt and cinematic, but refreshing, too.

After two decades, a band that could easily feel like part of the wallpaper remain hungry to show that you never know what lies beneath.

SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Recorded At:** April Base, Eau Claire, WI
Produced By: Low and BJ Burton
Personnel: Steve Garrington (bass), Glenn Kotche (hand percussion), Mimi Parker (vocals, drums), Alan Sparhawk (vocals, guitar)

A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

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ALIF

Aynam-Rtama

NAWA

Damascene conversion: post-rock heads East
Rethinking Arabic music in the same way Fairport once did British folk, five-man collective Alif owe some

inspiration to their London-raised oud player and Melvins nut Khyam Allami, and his mission to bring lo-fi ethics to the Middle East. *Aynam-Rtama* – translation: wherever it falls – fuses many old schools, traditional instrumentation and vocalist Tamer Abu Ghazaleh's intense meditations cross-fertilised with psychedelic backward-masking ("Dars Min Kama Sutra"), Warp ambient bleeps ("Al Juththa") and colossal Led Zeppelin drums ("Al-Khutba Al-Akhira"). Triumphant closer "Eish Jabkum Hon?", meanwhile, discovers that music's East-West faultline might have been Echo And The Bunnymen's *Porcupine* all along.

JIM WIRTH



DAVE & PHIL ALVIN

Lost Time

YEP ROC

Avatars of US roots: brothers boldly delve into oft-ignored heritage

8/10

Having established their reunion's potency with last year's (Big Bill) Broonzy-centred *Common Ground*, the Alvins' follow-up is highly expansive in a focused way: down, dirty, gnashing, slashing blues associated with historic figures – Blind Boy Fuller, Big Joe Turner. Fuller's "Rattlesnakin' Daddy" is a case in point: girded by the road-tested Guilty Men, the singer is surrounded by explosive guitars, piano and harp, a whirlwind of raging dynamics. The boiling point is "World's In A Bad Condition", wherein ominous rhythms collide with predatory guitars, and an election-year lyric somehow as apropos to 2015 as to its 1935 origins.

LUKE TORN

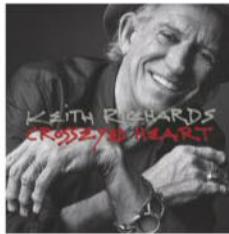


KEITH RICHARDS

Crosseyed Heart

VIRGIN/EMI

Still at large: the Stone returns with his first solo album in 23 years. By Michael Bonner



7/10

IN THE CROSSEYED Heart song "Nothing On Me", Keith Richards reflects on his reputation as an outlaw. "They laid it on too thick/They couldn't make it stick," he insists. "That's why I'm still at large." The song harks back to the good old/bad

old days of the late '60s, when the British establishment routinely pursued Keith and the rest of The Rolling Stones. Although it's impressive that Richards can keep a grudge warm for over 40 years, the song also brings into focus a particularly rueful sensibility that runs through the grain of *Crosseyed Heart*. Principally, the songs here are concerned with betrayal, romance and love lost; all delivered with the wisdom of Richards' accumulated years. Unlike, say, Mick Jagger – with his Peter Pan-ish impulses – Richards appears comfortable in his autumnal prime. In that sense, *Crosseyed Heart* has the warm, cask-aged feel of a late-period Dylan album. It's not dark yet, but it's getting there: just time for a playful reckoning with the myths, the ladies and the ones that got away. "Bitter wind is blowing, and winter's getting close," Richards sings on the closing track, "Lover's Plea".

Richards last released a solo record in 1992, the same year Bill Wyman left the Stones (though

there is no evidence that these two facts are connected). Since then, it appears Richards' day job has largely precluded him from getting stuck into another album proper. As a result, *Crosseyed Heart* has been a piecemeal business: Richards admits that at least one song here, "Illusion", originated in sessions for the Stones' 2005 album, *A Bigger Bang*; while in 2011, he told Jimmy Fallon he was working on new material only "when inspiration hits". It was recorded in four studios, three in New York and one in Memphis. Despite its lengthy, irregular gestation, *Crosseyed Heart* has a consistent texture and mood. It is a familiar stew of rock'n'roll, country and blues with – what else? – a bit of light reggae. Richards may have cultivated an image as a swaggering, devil-may-care rogue; but he is a working musician and, as *Crosseyed Heart* consistently demonstrates, not one to shirk from his responsibilities. Across the album's 15 tracks, he plays nine instruments – including Wurlitzer, Farfisa, electric sitar and a small Colombian guitar called (hilariously) a tiple.

We can also divine that Richards runs a tight ship and does not rely on extraneous session men. The key players are his X-Pensive Winos henchmen – co-producer/drummer Steve Jordan and guitarist Waddy Wachtel – along with a smattering of well-used guests. The album features some of the last work recorded by Bobby Keys (on two tracks), plus cameos from Larry Campbell, Aaron Neville, Spooner Oldham, Norah

SLEEVE NOTES

➤ Recorded At: Germano Studios, NY, with additional recording at One East Recording, NY; Brooklyn Recording, NY; Willie Mitchell's Royal Studios, Memphis

Produced by: Keith Richards and Steve Jordan

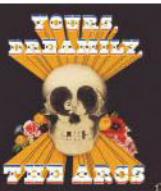
Personnel includes: Keith Richards (vocals, electric and acoustic guitars, bass, piano, keyboard, electric sitar, Farfisa, Wurlitzer, tiple), Steve Jordan (drums, percussion, piano, backing vocals), Waddy Wachtel (guitars), Bobby Keys (saxophone), Larry Campbell (pedal steel, violin), Paul Nowinski (bass), Charles Hodges (organ)

Jones and Memphis veterans drawn from the Bar-Kays and the Hi Rhythm Section.

The title track is Keith solo. It's a lovely acoustic blues song, with the Stone showing off unexpectedly nimble fingerpicking skills. The recording is beautiful – airy and warm. The best songs have an equally relaxed vibe to them. On "Amnesia" – that might be a distant, funkier cousin to "Doom & Gloom" – Keith dryly confesses, "I didn't even know the *Titanic* sunk". Elsewhere, "Robbed Blind" is carried along on a rolling piano and pedal steel that channels the melody from Dylan's "Queen Jane Approximately".

The lyrics are half-spoken by Richards and reveal a noir-ish yarn involving the crafty schemes of a nameless femme fatale. "Thank you sweetheart/Bled dry/That was a damn good try," he acknowledges at the song's close. Occasionally, Richards revisits the murky rock'n'soul of *Exile On Main St*, specifically on "Blues In The Morning". Later, during theairy "Substantial Damage", he takes a cue from his old friend Tom Waits, bawling arcane wisdom and/or the football scores over a blast of Blues Explosion-style drunk, funky rock'n'roll. "Mon plaisir," he hollers at the song's close. "That's your actual French, you know."

The rest of the LP is not perfect by any standards – some of the tracks, like "Heartstopper", feel like generic mid-tempo, Transatlantic rockers. Lyrically, Richards sometimes relies too heavily on the Random Stones Lyric Generator – "We can figure the odds/We can pray to the gods... You can shuffle the deck until you're a wreck," he sings on "Something For Nothing". But Richards has always worn his humour and his soul well, and those qualities are sympathetically served here. If *Crosseyed Heart* is an indication of where a potential new Stones LP might one day go, then this is the kind of record you'd wish they'd make.



THE ARCS

Yours, Dreamily

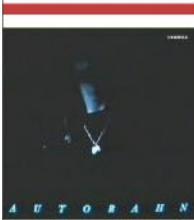
NONESUCH

Black Key Dan Auerbach stretches out with expansive new group For his latest side-project, Dan Auerbach has hooked up with maverick indie

popster Richard Swift, country guitarist Kenny Vaughan and members of funk-groove unit the Menahan Street Band: a flexible lineup enabling The Arcs to experiment seamlessly with melody and structure. In particular, the alliance of several guitarists allows for creation of an exotic, multivalent music, with "Put A Flower In Your Pocket" layering spindly lead, fuzz guitar and acoustic picking alongside fluttering organ. Vocally, Auerbach's soulful falsetto is to the fore on material dealing with anxiety, betrayal and fidelity through lyrics that, as he sings on "Stay In My Corner", "tell a story/allegory".

ANDY GILL

8/10



AUTOBAHN

Dissemble

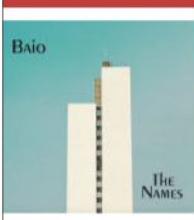
TOUGH LOVE

Journey to the heart of darkness with Northern noiseniks Like their Leeds brethren Eagulls, newcomers Autobahn locate their

sound in that bleakly histrionic corner of post-punk you wouldn't call fully fledged goth, but certainly has strands of the dark stuff in its DNA. The Kraftwerk-y connotation of their name isn't entirely a red herring, "Impressionist" and "Beautiful Way To Die" powered by a sense of forward motion that's almost mechanistic. Vocalist Craig Johnson is an energetic presence, an angry blend of Peter Murphy and Andrew Eldritch. The music could use more light to balance all the shade, but moments of experimentation (the title track, with its spun-backwards beats) and elation (the raucously uplifting "Society") provide welcome detours.

LOUIS PATTISON

6/10



BAIO

The Names

GLASSNOTE

Tropical pop from the funkiest Vampire Having bust out his solo moves across a string of EPs that mixed highlife with house, Vampire

Weekend bassist Chris Baio, a former DJ, cuts a more substantial figure on this charming debut. The disco is still a priority judging by effervescent Caribou-ish chuggers like "Brainwash Yyrr Face" and "All The Idiots", but the revelation here is Baio's sparkling songwriting; being in one of the world's sharpest bands clearly helps. As "Sister Of Pearl" and "Needs" swagger irresistibly, Baio delivers self-deprecating lyrics in his lugubrious Roy Orbison croon. "Every lyric I've written is a lyric I despise," he sings on "Endless Rhythm".

PIERS MARTIN

8/10



LOU BARLOW

Brace The Wave

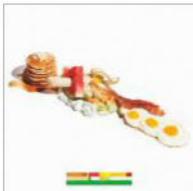
JOYFUL NOISE

Dinosaur Jr/Sebadoh man, back to basics with another drumless solo album

7/10

Freed from the control of J Mascis, the Dinosaur Jr bassist has been able to flourish as a songwriter and frontman of note. His first solo album in six years is another drumless collection that sounds like it was recorded in a toilet, with Barlow playing an adapted ukulele. The songs, though, are as good as anything he's done with Sebadoh or Folk Implosion: "Nerve" is a waltz that's oddly reminiscent of late-'70s Peter Gabriel, "Moving" recalls Nirvana unplugged, offset by a warm and woozy analogue synthesiser riff, while "Lazy" and "C+E" are both twisted pieces of Davy Graham-style fingerpicking.

JOHN LEWIS



BATTLES

La Di Da Di

WARP

Cerebral yet sweaty third album from New York math rockers

After the departure of Tyondai Braxton, a dominant presence on debut album *Mirrored*, and "Atlas", their unlikely hit of 2007, Battles' second album, 2011's *Gloss Drop*, felt understandably like a group of musicians finding their feet again. With *La Di Da Di*, Dave Konopka, Ian Williams and John Stanier come out swinging. Both cerebral and sweaty, the album combines cyborg-like technological enhancement with a more human element (according to the recently released documentary, they never play to click). Though they may always struggle to match their bravura live performances on record, this is an engaging piece of maximalist minimalism: Steve Reich with a battering ram.

MARCUS O'DAIR

8/10



I'M
NEW
HERE

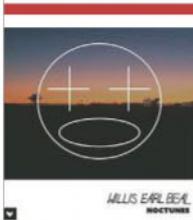
Baio

► "You know what is fascinating?" says Chris Baio, erudite bass player with New York's Vampire Weekend and now, off-duty, solo artist extraordinaire. "Come Dine With Me. I enjoy watching it with my wife. I like how mean the prize money is and the cutting wit of the announcer."

Tea-time telly is not the only quality British product that Baio has been savouring. The 30-year-old, who has lived in London for three years and recently moved from Islington to Peckham, became enchanted by the electronic reveries of Caribou and Four Tet while he took his first steps into producing his own music outside the band, and believes that leaving New York for London spurred him on to create *The Names*, his big-hearted soft-pop debut. "It's very possible I wouldn't have made this record if I hadn't moved," he says. "A lot of my biggest influences, whether Roxy Music or Bowie, are from here, and I feel like there's a lot of London in the record. It's a cliché, but moving to another place gave me a new perspective."

Baio - the name is from the Sicilian town of Sciacca - mixed his album with veteran US engineer Bruce Lampcov, who worked on *Brothers In Arms* and *Born In The USA*. He keeps good company, then, and he could, you feel, give up the day job.

PIERS MARTIN



WILLIS EARL BEAL

Nocturnes

TENDER LOVING EMPIRE

Tom Waits for no man: from outsider blues to minimalist soul

6/10

Anyone discovering Beal through *Nocturnes*, all synth strings and soul crooning, might be surprised to hear that he was originally discussed in the same breath as Jandek and Tom Waits. Much of the early hype related to Beal's backstory: emerging from itinerancy and a stint in the army, the Chicago-born artist signed to XL imprint Hot Charity after distributing CD-Rs in coffee shops. Beal has now split from the label, and *Nocturnes* completes his slow but surprising transition into alternative R&B. Technically, he shows himself to be a better singer than we might have predicted from those early lo-fi recordings, but it all tastes a little sweet.

MARCUS O'DAIR



BEIRUT

No No No

4AD

Sunny, post-breakup fourth from Zach Condon Written following a bad divorce and mental breakdown, Beirut's

6/10

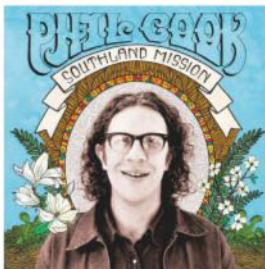
pared-back fourth album is less ambitious than its baroque forebears. Zach Condon's focus is on recovery and connection rather another overhaul of his sound, and the tone is unusually optimistic. "Perth" exposes his breakdown ("You saw me at my worst/Ragged tyres/Burnt for miles") over a surprisingly jaunty organ burble, while elsewhere he offers fragmented pleas for comfort and clarity against similar backdrops. The title track's rinky-dink romance is quite lovely, but *No No No* is limited overall, and finds Condon's filigreed production out of step with the minimalist balladeering peers who have flourished in his four-year absence.

LAURA SNAPES

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



8/10

PHIL COOK
Southland Mission
THIRTY TIGERS/MIDDLE WEST

American sideman delivers fine solo effort

Phil Cook will already be familiar to fans of freak-folk outfit Megafaun, with whom he began making wildly experimental records in 2008. But he's perhaps better known as a collaborator, be it as part of Justin Vernon's many-handed ensemble Gayngs, multi-instrumentalist for Hiss Golden Messenger or as pianist on Matthew E White's albums, doubling up as choir arranger on *Big Inner*. All of which has meant his solo career has taken a back seat thus far, with just a couple of EPs and a low-key instrumental album to show for it.

Southland Mission is a more concerted exploration of Cook's varied influences. It feels like the product of a man well-versed in the confluent points of Southern music, navigating a route through bayou blues, gospel and Blue Ridge folk and country. Cook's inclusive approach makes for some fascinating hybrids. "Ain't That Sweet" recalls the good-time ramble'n'roll of Ronnie Lane's Slim Chance and the rootsy fervour of Ry Cooder's early '70s work. A similar sense of migration floods his version of "1922 Blues", originally by another regular collaborator, Charlie Parr. In Cook's hands, the song sounds as if it's caught midway between the Mississippi Delta and New Orleans. Ditto the swampy Southern accents of "Great Tide" and "Lowly Road". One of the first things Cook did in 2005, on first arriving in North Carolina from his native Wisconsin, was invest in a banjo, after which he began studying the subtle complexities of mountain music. The fruits of this labour can be heard most explicitly on "Gone". Driven by a nimble banjo line, and aggregated by friends and fellow players from the locality, the song exudes an airy warmth that sounds both spontaneous and natural. Much the same can also be said for "Belong", with its deft plucking, softly descriptive fiddle and gentle Appalachian overtones. Cook will no doubt continue to be in demand by others, but *Southland Mission* suggests he really should make his own music more of a priority. *ROB HUGHES*



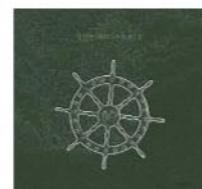
THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► Southern overlords **Drive-By Truckers** have announced the release of *It's Great To Be Alive!*, a 35-track set recorded over three nights at San Francisco's Fillmore in November

2014. Due at the end of October on ATO, and available in 5LP or 3CD format, the LP spans their entire career, including cuts from Adam's House Cat, the pre-Truckers band formed by Patterson Hood and Mike Cooley. There'll also be a condensed 13-track edition: *This Weekend's The Night*. Elsewhere, the Eagles' **Don Henley** heads back to his roots for *Cass County*, his first solo effort since 2000's *Inside Job*. Co-produced with ex-Tom Petty drummer

Stan Lynch, the album is named after his East Texan birthplace and includes duets with Merle Haggard, Miranda Lambert, Dolly Parton and Martina McBride. Look out, too, for *Sermon On The Rocks*, the latest from US singer-songwriter **Josh Ritter**. Recorded in New Orleans with a band that includes The Walkmen's drummer Matt Barrick, and due in mid-October on Pytheas Recordings/Thirty Tigers, Ritter calls it "messianic oracular honky-tonk".

On the live front, Robert Fisher's **Willard Grant Conspiracy** make a welcome visit to the UK in September, starting off at Glasgow's Glad Cafe and winding up at the Prince Albert in Brighton. **The Delines**, led by Richmond Fontaine's Willy Vlautin, also return that month, their six-date tour including shows at End Of The Road and London's St Pancras Old Church. *ROB HUGHES*



JENS-UWE BEYER
The Emissary
POP AMBIENT

A new ambassador for richly textured, abstract electronica
8/10

Forsaking the woozy electronic pop of his Popnoname alias, the co-founder of Cologne's Magazine imprint makes a far subtler impression with his first album under his own name for Kompakt's new ambient sub-label. Though "Hands" offers a mellifluous piano instrumental, Beyer otherwise trades largely in detailed, meditative soundscapes reminiscent of Biosphere: full of twilight shadows, echoes and, just occasionally, the most fragile of rhythm tracks. It's at once immense and intimate, with "Trip The Light Fantastic" drifting by like a distant galaxy. Think Haxan Cloak rewriting Raymond Scott's *Soothing Sounds For Baby* for a luminous, digital world.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



BILAL
In Another Life
BBE/PURPOSE

New Yorker's pastoral jazz set hits the right notes
7/10

Since his striking neo-soul debut in 2001, Bilal's career has gone not so much off the rails as all over the place. But in a year that's already seen landmark albums by D'Angelo and Kendrick Lamar – who guests here – this kindred spirit stages something of a comeback with *In Another Life*, a peppy funk confection produced by boho jazzman Adrian Younge that pitches Bilal, on occasion, between horny mid-'80s Prince and sad Thom Yorke. With a live '70s R&B sound fuelled by flower power and, in "Star Now" and "Satellites", some excellent songs, Bilal is as focused as he's ever been.

PIERS MARTIN



THE BLACK TAMBOURINES
Freedom
EASY ACTION

Cornish garage-punkers channel New York City on their satisfying second album
7/10

The Black Tambourines etch out some fine garage-rock grooves for themselves on this second outing, playing with a pleasing confidence on tracks such as "Namaste", where the singer drawls "We're young, but that's all right," with a touch of Alex Chilton. Elsewhere, things can get sweaty and frantic ("No Action"), sweet and modish ("She Don't Mind") or downright punky ("La"), but the band maintain a grasp of melody and propulsion. Though they often seem to forget that they come from Falmouth rather than the Big Apple, their unmistakable air of glee is infectious and deserved.

PETER WATTS


BLANK REALM
Illegals In Heaven
 FIRE

Brisbane quartet's triumphantly errant fourth

8/10

smitten with '80s chime-pop, but Blank Realm abandon it on impulse. The latest from the three siblings plus mate chews gleefully through genres – VU's art rock, Royal Trux's scuzzy noise, Sonic Youth's tuneful skronk – like an untrained pup, slathering on fuzz and echo and cranking everything up. It comes to heel with "Cruel Night" (Lou Reed goes country), but "River Of Longing" lashes The Cure to The Cult and sets them off at a mad gallop, while "Costume Drama" recalls "Kool Thing" remade by Hookworms. Idiosyncratic filter or no, Blank Realm's eye is firmly on the pop melody.

SHARON O'CONNELL


THE BOHICAS
The Making Of
 DOMINO

Essex likely lads' debut just about succeeds

The younger brother of singer-songwriter Eugene McGuinness,

6/10

and sometime collaborator in his Eugene & The Lizards, Dom McGuinness is now trying his hand as a frontman with The Bohicas. Though their stylistic template is clearly grounded in the early noughties sound of The Strokes and The Libertines, the group's formula is undeniably infectious, with giddy, harmony-enriched interplay outshining occasional lapses into spindly scuzz (such as the hangover-confronting "Swarm"). Elsewhere, McGuinness casts himself as a glory-seeking Romeo on the amorous "Girlfriend" and the glam-inspired title track.

GAVIN MARTIN


ZAC BROWN BAND
Jekyll + Hyde
 DECCA

Arena-filling country-rockers' obvious fourth

4/10

Zac Brown, an umpteen-platinum-selling practitioner of blandly proficient arena country, has the good taste to cover Jason Isbell's "Dress Blues". However, he throttles every subtlety from it, turning Isbell's gently angry elegy to a fallen soldier into a bellicose lighter-waver replete with violinist playing "Taps", fiddly guitar solo and bowdlerised closing line, lest anyone mistake it for a protest song. It is nevertheless the best thing on *Jekyll + Hyde*, which plunges to a wretched nadir on "Heavy Is The Head", a sub-Kid Rock plod in the company of Soundgarden's Chris Cornell.

ANDREW MUELLER


ANE BRUN
When I'm Free

BALLOON RANGER

Expansive sixth studio album from increasingly audacious Scandinavian singer-songwriter

8/10

Having put her acoustic troubadour origins firmly behind her earlier this year as the voice on the Top 5 dance hit "Can't Stop Playing (Makes Me High)", Brun continues to confound expectations on a set of sonically adventurous songs that might just turn out to be her radical, game-changing equivalent of Joni Mitchell's *Hejira*. Banishing the folk influences in favour of a jazzier, more experimental approach, the trip-hop-styled "Directions" and clattering syncopation of "Shape Of A Heart" are stand-outs, but best of all is the spell-binding soul-jazz intensity of "You Lit My Fire", the kind of track we've been waiting years for Lauryn Hill to make.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

 I'M
 NEW
 HERE
 Diane
 Coffee


►Shaun Fleming, aka singer-songwriter Diane Coffee, and the drummer for Foxygen, knows all about creating characters. Before he went into music, Fleming was a voice actor for Disney, working on several animated films and TV series. But Fleming feels Diane Coffee is something different. "Diane Coffee is the part of me that's the performer," he explains. "It's been there as long as I can remember. I'm never writing as an alter ego and because Diane is just a piece of me, I don't really feel like I'm hiding behind a character."

Everybody's A Good Dog has a bigger sound than Coffee's previous album, *My Friend Fish*, a result of changing circumstances. "It was recorded in proper studios, so production quality is a lot cleaner," says Fleming. "I was able to create the large, lush sound I'd always wanted."

The result is an LP that evokes a mix of '70s Elton John and '60s soul. "I wasn't necessarily trying to write a '70s glam record or a Motown record, I'd just been connecting with those kinds of songs and it seeped into the final product," says Fleming. "The sunshine vibes definitely came from Bloomington [the city in Indiana where Fleming lives]. My location and travel helps spark my inspiration, but I mainly write about my personal endeavours and feelings." PETER WATTS


CHVRCHES
Every Open Eye

VIRGIN EMI/GOODBYE

Glaswegian synth-pop revivalists party like it's 1987

Having sold half a million copies of their 2013 debut, Glasgow electro-pop trio

7/10

Chvrches fully embrace their knowingly retro, neon-lit, synth-saturated '80s aesthetic on this fine sequel. Their secret weapon is Lauren Mayberry's lush, ripe, twangy voice, which seems to come with its own inbuilt Auto-Tune harmoniser, and lends dramatic urgency to even the most chilly keyboard backdrops. Though nothing here quite matches the melodic and emotional force of their first album anthem "The Mother We Share", the quality threshold is high throughout, especially the galloping disco heartbreak anthem "Keep You On My Side" and the shiny, shuddering, strident "Never Ending Circles".

STEPHEN DALTON


DIANE COFFEE
Everybody's
A Good Dog

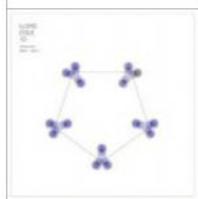
WESTERN VINYL

Swinging '70s rock and soul from Foxygen drummer alter-ego

8/10

There's a touch of Father John Misty on this fine second album in which Foxygen drummer Shaun Fleming finds comfort in an alter ego that allows him to explore different musical styles with dramatically overstated panache. There's a real Elton John vibe on tracks like "I Dig You", "Not That Easy" and "Duet" with Felicia Douglass, but also a neat appropriation of Motown and Philly soul on thrilling opener "Spring Breathes", bold and brassy "Mayflower" and the sublime "Down With The Current". It can sometimes feel a little over the top but that's partly the point, and Fleming's voice has enough sincerity to hold it together.

PETER WATTS


LLOYD COLE
1D (Electronics
2012-2014)

BUREAU B

One-time Commotion's attractively unfinished electronica explorations

8/10

Lloyd Cole and Hans-Joachim Roedelius' collaborative album from 2013, *Selected Studies Vol 1*, was imperfect – the two musicians, from discrete histories, gelled well, but there was something a little unappealingly florid about some of the compositions. It's not surprising, then, that Cole's *1D* – constructed from leftover solo material contributed to the Roedelius project – beats its host. Cole's experiments with modular synth are exploratory things, gently tickling the cochlea, peeling out abstruse patterns from relatively simple kit. There's something of modern German electronics here, too – it sits nicely alongside the work of Stefan Schneider, or Markus Popp (Oval).

JON DALE

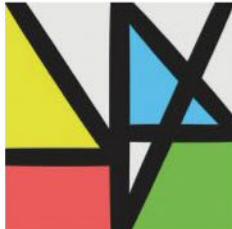


NEW ORDER

Music Complete

MUTE

Manchester's 35-year-party people rediscover their disco mojo on stellar comeback. By Stephen Dalton



7/10

HERE ARE THE old men, so much weight on their shoulders. Living proof that history repeats itself as tragedy first and farce second, New Order have spent the past two decades feuding, splitting, taking long sabbaticals, forming breakaway bands, reuniting, re-feuding and re-splitting. The long-standing tectonic faultline between former childhood friends Bernard Sumner and Peter Hook finally went volcanic in 2008, almost destroying the group. Once trailblazing electro-pop modernists, New Order have recently begun to resemble a post-punk Pink Floyd, a rock soap opera more famous for public acrimony than musical alchemy.

And yet here they are in a rebooted lineup making a third-act comeback with their first new album in a decade. *Music Complete* marks the band's debut for the long-standing tectonic faultline between former childhood friends Bernard Sumner and Peter Hook finally went volcanic in 2008, almost destroying the group. Once trailblazing electro-pop modernists, New Order have recently begun to resemble a post-punk Pink Floyd, a rock soap opera more famous for public acrimony than musical alchemy.

After two patchy, guitar-bloated albums in the noughties, *Music Complete* is being trailed as a return to New Order's heavily electronic, club-friendly '80s sound. Pleasingly, this proves to be largely true, though the baggy 65-minute running time still finds room for a few of the brawny, mid-tempo power-chord chuggers that dominated the band's post-millennial output, notably "Restless" and "The Game". Both are polished and listenable enough, though hardly evidence of progression.

More impressive are the two tracks produced by Tom Rowlands of the Chemical Brothers, adding extra whoosh and wallop, shudder and bleep to the whirling mirrorball melodrama of "Singularity" and the gleaming techno-pop gallop of "Unlearn This Hatred". Both are compelling, kinetic

disco-rock hybrids. Rowlands also co-produced "Tutti Frutti", a lively Europop interlude whose syncopated piano stabs and gruff Italian voiceover feel like sly tributes to the late-'80s sunsplash rave-pop of *Technique*.

Celebrity vocal guests are scattered across *Music Complete*. Brandon Flowers appears on "Superheated", a sugar-rush crescendo of synth-saturated pure-pop euphoria co-produced by Stuart Price of Madonna, Kylie and Pet Shop Boys fame. Elly Jackson of La Roux also joins Sumner on several tracks, including the lush retro-funk number "People On The High Line", which combines juicy Italo-house piano motifs with gloriously trite lyrics: "It's gonna be all right/So come with me tonight..." Classic Bernard lines, nursery-rhyme banality delivered with life-or-death conviction.

But the most incongruous cameo here is Iggy Pop's, who narrates Sumner's anguished winter poem "Stray Dog" over a clanging, scouring electro-rock backdrop. "I'd rather be a lover than a liar," Iggy intones in a pock-marked sub-bass growl as dry as ancient parchment. The musical score is indifferent but this Lee Hazlewood-style spoken-word vocal elevates it into something eerily cinematic. The fact that Iggy's *The Idiot* was the final album that Ian Curtis played before his suicide is mere coincidence, but still lends this track a certain spooky symmetry.

Among its rich, eclectic, 65-minute sprawl, *Music Complete* includes a couple of contenders for the canon of all-time New Order greats. One is the gold-plated, weapons-grade Eurodisco anthem "Plastic", its vivid acid-house plumage wrapped around a rubberised spine of Moroder-esque electro. Meanwhile Sumner's deceptively warm vocal taps into his deep inner seam of sulky Salford sarcasm: "You're so special, so iconic," he croons repeatedly

before the killer kiss-off: "You're like plastic, you're artificial/You don't mean nothing baby, so superficial." It's trashy. It's bitchy. It's fantastic.

Another potential future classic is the roaringly romantic

"Nothing But A Fool", which finds Sumner reflecting ruefully on lost love and impetuous youth. A warm endorphin rush of jingle-jangle guitars and softly glowing synths swimming around an inescapably Hooky-ish bassline, this is vintage autumnal New Order, falling somewhere between the heart-bruised majesty of "Regret" and the underrated, Springsteen-sized *Waiting For The Sirens' Call*.

Undoubtedly, any purists expecting a full rewind to New Order's '80s prime could find plenty wrong with *Music Complete*. It drags and trundles in places, opting for plump maximalism over the lean, urgent minimalism of yesteryear. That Peter Hook-sized hole has left them depleted, but not defeated.

All the same, *Music Complete* is easily New Order's best album since *Technique*, and probably their most musically diverse ever. Once sullen and monochromatic, Sumner's voice now offers supple, textured, emotionally mature shading. Crucially, the post-punk Pink Floyd have rediscovered the hedonistic throb of disco and the intoxicating potency of cheap music. New Order have never been a convincing rock band, but they are often a brilliantly perverse pop band. And sometimes, just sometimes, a great soul band. It feels good to have them back.

Q&A

Stephen Morris



Were you trying to recreate New Order's '80s sound on *Music Complete*?

It's not as self-conscious as that. The only self-conscious thing was: let's use some synths for a change, that was as far as it went. Everything else was just a chain reaction from that really. The last couple of albums did have synths on too, but they mostly started out as guitar tracks, whereas these mostly started out as synth tracks. Which is kind of what we did in the '80s.

Did it feel like an obstacle recording the first ever New Order album without Peter Hook? Ooh, I knew there was something missing!

I wouldn't say it's an obstacle, but it makes you write songs in a different way. Because we weren't working with Hooky this time, we had to think about it more. I think it helped, really, it makes you work a bit harder.

Are relations still prickly between Peter and the rest of the band?

I've not spoken to him since 2008 or something. I did see him dropping his daughter off at school in Macclesfield, I gave him a cheery wave but he didn't wave back. I haven't had a Christmas card off him for a while...

Surely New Order have always thrived on drama and tension?

Sometimes you do need a kick in the pants to shake you up a bit, because it is very easy to just sleepwalk your way through stuff. You don't want to get too comfortable, or too predictably uncomfortable, maybe. *INTERVIEW: STEPHEN DALTON*

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** New Order, Tom Rowlands, Stuart Price

Recorded at: New Order's own studio

Personnel includes:

Bernard Sumner (vocals, guitar, synths), Stephen Morris (drums and perc, keys, programming), Gillian Gilbert (keyboards), Phil Cunningham (keys, guitars, electronic perc), Tom Chapman (bass, synthesisers), Iggy Pop (vocal on "Stray Dog"), Brandon Flowers (vocal on "Superheated"), Zbigniew Wodecki (strings on "Plastic")



DÂM-FUNK Invite The Light

STONES THROW

LA auteur's epic electro funk opus – Ariel Pink guests Multi-instrumentalist Damon "Dâm Funk" Riddick is a vaunted

8/10

veteran of the LA hip-hop/funk scene. He hits hard enough to have Q-Tip, Snoop Dogg and the Ohio Players' Junie Morrison on this, his first full-length album since 2009. It's excellent stuff, too: a sprawling concept of ambient funk and jittery robotic grooves, spliced with otherworldly transmissions and whispered monologues. Odd that a record so steeped in both '80s machine funk and '70s disco-prog should sound so futuristic – this is an older-than-old-school double LP, to be consumed in one sitting, with the *Trouble Man*-ish "Floating On Air" and Ariel Pink collaboration "Acting" the standouts.

MARK BENTLEY



DARWIN DEEZ Double Down

LUCKY NUMBER

Puppy-dog charm and wicked chops combine on scintillating set

Darwin Deez has a higher profile in Britain than back home in the

8/10

States, which is odd given his balmy, distinctly American brand of avant-pop. The New York-based South Carolina native goes totally DIY on his third full-length, right down to the mastering, and while the programmed beats are generic, his fleet-fingered guitar work shimmers with the high-end wit that powers a batch of hooky, sharply drawn tunes, including "Last Cigarette", "Time Machine" and "Bag Of Tricks", piquant observations of the minutiae of everyday life. This second-gen Meher Baba disciple even manages to apply his beliefs into "The Other Side", a vision of romantic love on endless repeat.

BUD SCOPPA



DURAN DURAN Paper Gods

WARNER BROS

The Wild Boys are still hungry – like the wolf – for success on 14th studio outing

6/10

Determined to remain relevant nearly 40 years after they formed, Duran Duran rope in Mark Ronson, fellow Brummie Mr Hudson and – inevitably – Nile Rodgers for their 14th studio album. While no reinvention, *Paper Gods* is both entertaining and typically Duran-esque, with "Pressure Off" boasting "Notorious" guitar riffs and a compelling cameo from Janelle Monáe, as well as unvarnished lyrics like "the future will never last". Hints of Bowie in the title track, "Sunset Garage"'s Hall & Oates-style soft rock, plus Lindsay Lohan's unlikely intervention as a husky-voiced doctor on "Danceophobia", add further fun.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



JAMES ELKINGTON & NATHAN SALSBURG

AMBSACE
PARADISE OF BACHELORS

8/10

Elkington has played with Richard Thompson (on the Jeff Tweedy-produced *Still*) and Steve Gunn, as well as being half of folk-influenced duo The Horse's Ha. Salsburg is a soloist who curates the Alan Lomax archive. If that sounds dry, their second collaboration (following 2010's *Avos*) is anything but. Presumably, Elkington's influence led them to cover The Smiths' "Reel Around The Fountain", reducing – but not removing – its melancholic air. Elsewhere, their acoustic guitar duets circle playfully around mathematical patterns, notably on the sunny "Up Of Stairs" and a gorgeous re-imagining of Duke Ellington's "Fleurette Africaine".

ALASTAIR MCKAY

Ambsace Paradise of Bachelors

Second album of British-American guitar duets

Chicago-based Englishman



CRAIG FINN Faith In The Future

PARTISAN

Second solo shot by Hold Steady mainstay

Craig Finn has said elsewhere that he

took the songs on *Faith In The Future* to The Hold Steady, and "no-one really reacted to them". On the evidence of his second album, they're a tough crowd. The best of *Faith In The Future* is among the best of Finn, characteristically wordy and observant – and, unshackled from the full-steam-ahead rock'n'roll of The Hold Steady, free to be slightly more ruminative, lyrically and musically. "Roman Guitars" packs the brassy soul of *Punch The Clock*-era Elvis Costello, while "Sarah, Calling From A Hotel" may have pioneered bluegrass noir.

ANDREW MUELLER

FOALS What Went Down

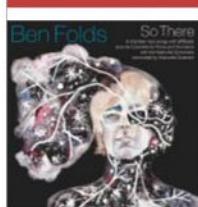
WARNER BROS

Oxford quintet's accomplished fourth

On 2013's *Holy Fire*, Foals enlisted Alan Moulder and Flood to bring heft to their spindly art-rock. James

Ford helps the Oxford five-piece sculpt that sound on *What Went Down*, which is often epic, but still reaches for sharp emotions and arrangements. Frontman Yannis Philippakis' violently wrenching vocals portray the volatility of complex relationships, via self-flagellation (the title track), spite ("Snake Oil") and regretted harsh words on "Lonely Hunter". They refine their distinctive sound – a highly strung, Afrobeat Stone Roses vibe ("Mountain At My Gates") – and conjure melancholy with accomplished, vast electronic textures. Foals' records have always been half-great; *What Went Down* is their most fully realised yet.

LAURA SNAPES



BEN FOLDS So There

NEW WEST

A consummate musician reaches new heights

Ben Folds' songwriting, piano-playing and arranging are so off-the-charts on this sophisticated

album that the listener could reasonably misinterpret opener "Capable Of Anything" as a boast. *So There* climaxes with "Concerto For Piano And Orchestra", a Gershwin-like piece performed with the Nashville Symphony, which led naturally to his partnering with chamber sextet yMusic on the eight songs that precede the concerto in the tracklist. Folds' heady tunes sparkle in these unconventional settings, delivered by the small orchestra with rock dynamism ("So There") or wistful, Tin Pan Alley elegance ("Not A Fan") as called for. This LP of instant standards could plausibly be titled 'A Little Touch Of Folds In The Night'.

BUD SCOPPA



THE FRATELLIS

Eyes Wide, Tongue Tied

COOKING VINYL

Fourth outing from Glaswegian trio
The Fratellis might seem trapped in an eternal 2006, when these fresh-faced

5/10

Glaswegians were seen as a budget-brand Arctic Monkeys. But they'd probably be happier in an eternal 1972, aping the geezer rock of Rod Stewart and the Faces, Mott The Hoople or Ace. Album number four, recorded in Los Angeles, adds a mid-Atlantic crunch to their sound and hints at new directions – the Clavi-led funk of "Dogtown", the gleeful gibberish of "Getting Surreal", the smart swing ballad "Moonshine", the Mike Scott-style howl on "Slow" – but few of these chugging bar-room stompers register as earworms, even after repeated listens.

JOHN LEWIS



FROG EYES

Pickpocket's Locket

PAPER BAG

Ninth album from idiosyncratic Canadians
Carey Mercer's mannered voice – something like a hyperventilating Beefheart

7/10

being slowly strangled – is very much an acquired taste, while his dense concept albums seem designed to put off audiences. But, after a dozen years and nine LPs, his band have made an album of well-crafted discreet songs. Mercer's cryptic reference points (Joseph Beuys, the Old Testament, the death of his father) remain impenetrable, but the slow-burning opener "Two Girls" – all woozy guitars and brushed drums – recalls Tindersticks, "Rejoinders In A Storm" sounds like The Doors through a wobbly fairground mirror, and some elegant string arrangements lend a grandeur to proceedings.

JOHN LEWIS



FTSE

Joyless

LUCKY NUMBER

Post-dubstep producer does socio-politics
Those familiar with the more obscure back roads of UK alt.rock might remember hard-touring

7/10

mathcore outfit Blakfish, of whom Sam Manville was a member. His reincarnation as a producer of gloomily soulful beatscapes has convinced across three EPs, alongside work with MNEK and Bipolar Sunshine, among others, but his debut LP reveals much broader horizons. There are clear echoes here of fellow Midlander The Streets in FTSE's kitchen-sink realism, but along with hip-hop and garage, he taps Afro-Cuban rhythms ("Animals"), bhangra ("Facts And Figures") and smooth R&B ("Binary"). Only the xx-styled "If You Want" plays to type in a keen-eared, contemporary set.

SHARON O'CONNELL



HOST

Meliora

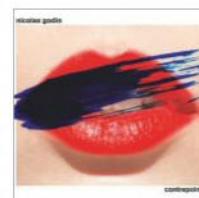
SPINEFARM

Sweden's anti-Pope returns with third album of sprightly doom-mongering

8/10

Since emerging in 2008, Ghost have gone to ever more ludicrous extremes to perfect their comic-book vision of heavy metal at its most Satanic. Their slickest album yet, *Meliora* is also their first recorded with Robyn and Katy Perry producer/composer Klas Åhlund, and singer Pope Emeritus III, who sounds suspiciously like his two predecessors. Perhaps in an effort to keep the conceit from wearing thin, the group here temper their usual black metal influences with stronger elements of Swedish pop and Italian prog. So much so that on standouts like the sprightly "He Is" and the irresistibly grandiose "Cirice", *Meliora* could pass for a Jim Steinman musical with lyrics by Anton LaVey.

JASON ANDERSON



NICOLAS GODIN

Contrepoint

BECAUSE MUSIC

Bach to basics for Air head
Nicolas Godin's wondrous first solo offering outside

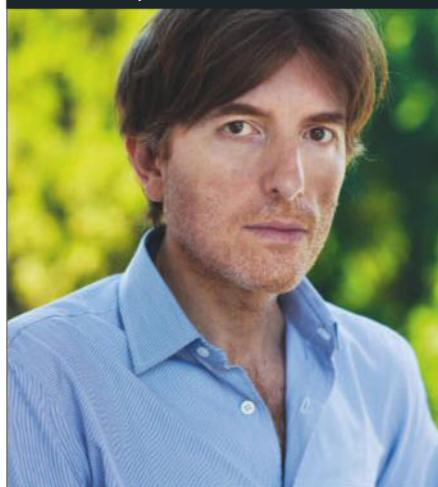
8/10

of Air finds him reaching into the classical realm for inspiration, namely the counterpoint harmonies of Johann Sebastian Bach. It may not sound like the most enticing proposition, but Godin excels by using the composer's melodies as jump-off points to explore a diverse spread of textures whose primary impulse is to keep on moving. "Orca" marries crazy electronica to proggy dazzle, "Glenn" (after Gould) is layered with gorgeous synthetic flourishes and the myriad moods of "Bach Off", from exotic jazz to spy thriller, echo the playfulness of its title.

ROB HUGHES

REVELATIONS

How Air's Nicolas Godin planned to retire, but went solo instead



After issuing eight studio albums as one half of Air alongside Jean-Benoît Dunckel, Nicolas Godin didn't consciously set out to go solo. In fact, he'd planned on retiring. "After a while you start making less good albums when you're in a band," he explains. "So I wanted to stop making records and study classical music instead, just sitting at home and playing piano all day. But I couldn't help it, this thing caught me by surprise."

The impetus for ravishing solo debut *Contrepoint* was the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, which Godin used as a launchpad to travel far into prog-pop exotica, with a little help from guests like Brazilian singer Marcelo Camelo, Phoenix frontman Thomas Mars and New Zealander Connan Mockasin. "I started using Bach for one track to see how it sounded. Then little by little, I made the album, though that wasn't the plan at the beginning. It ended up being a lot of fun. You can go 100 per cent into your craziness when you make a solo record, because you have no-one to please but yourself. So you can go very deep into your concept to make something unique."

ROB HUGHES



GWILYMD GOLD

A Paradise

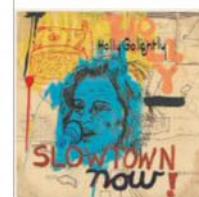
BRILLE

Ex-Golden Silvers frontman ditches the conceptual trickery and plays it straight

8/10

Tender Metal, Gold's 2012 debut, was released only for the iPad in a format in which – using a feat of technology called the 'Bronze system' – the tracks mutated each time you listened. Mercifully, its successor is more straightforward in as much as the songs remain the same. Sung in Gold's keening falsetto, these are subtle meditations on life and relationships given greater elegance by the classical composer and arranger Nico Muhly. Among the highlights are "A Greener World", the hugely atmospheric opener reminiscent of Choir Of Young Believers' "Hollow Talk", and "Breathless", a tale of crumbling friendship set against simple piano and gentle electronic glitches. Lovely.

FIONA STURGES



HOLLY GOLIGHTLY

Slowtown Now!

DAMAGED GOODS

Prolific garage-rock chanteuse reclaims her solo identity

6/10

Two decades into a scenic musical journey from Kent to the American Deep South, via various Billy Childish and White Stripes collaborations, the prolific Holly Golightly breaks off from her duo project The Brokeoffs to release her first solo album in 11 years. Golightly sticks largely within her established parameters of girl-group sass and vintage Americana twang here, sounding a little anaemic on the straight rock numbers. But the doomed bad-boy romance ballad "Fool Fool Fool", with its growling fuzz bass and candy-floss harmonies, and the sultry "Forevermore", which oscillates wildly like a love-drunk remake of "Apache" by The Shadows, have a voodoo electricity that cuts deeper than pasticke.

STEPHEN DALTON



**\\\\GT//
Beats
Misplaced**
COMMUNICATING VESSELS

Southern drone debut from Alabama biker's power trio

7/10

Southern three-piece \\\GT// mix ramalam rock beats with a yearning for drone and distortion, knocking melodies off kilter and bringing entertaining chaos to proceedings. There's a Motörhead vibe here, but also an enthusiasm for punk/drone weirdness that means tracks such as "Lake Arthur Sunrise" or "Life Is..." never turn out as straightforward as you might expect, but without sacrificing the underlying groove. At their best, this has them sounding like ZZ Top covering Swans – or vice versa – and results in monstrous sounds like "Real Good Sex" as well as catchier numbers such as "Something's Wrong With My Mind".

PETER WATTS



**GLEN
HANSARD**
**Didn't He
Ramble**

ANTI-

The Frames frontman delivers accomplished and intimate second solo album

7/10

Hansard's successes as bandleader and Academy Award-winning songwriter (*Once*) reap sizeable dividends here. A confident advance on 2012's *Rhythm And Repose*, *Didn't He Ramble* features Sams Beam and Amidon among its guests, and commands an impressive landscape. The horn and choir-boosted "Her Mercy" and rambunctious Celtic stomper "Lowly Deserter" flex musical muscle but, more typically, the lovingly crafted small details in Hansard's metaphor-laced songs of love ("Wedding Ring") and battle ("McCormack's Wall") ensure a soul deep connection.

GAVIN MARTIN



HECTA
The Diet
CITY SLANG

Lambchop chaps' beguilingly ambiguous first LP

Hearing Kurt Wagner's familiar, lilting baritone underpinned by a Nitzer

7/10

Ebb-style thump just 10 seconds in, is certainly a surprise. But this isn't the work of self-indulgent artists who feel professionally obliged to have a crack at dance music. Wagner's no stranger to ambient abstraction, and fellow Lambchoppers Scott Martin and Ryan Norris have electronic form as Hands Off Cuba. Together, they aim to take listeners "from the dashboard to the dance floor" and with mixers John McEntire and Morgan Geist on board, it's an immersive and emphatically pulsing ride along Detroit techno lines, with Wagner's trademark drollery surfacing on "The Concept", which samples a Buddy Hackett routine.

SHARON O'CONNELL



HELEN
**The Original
Faces**

KRANKY

A deep pass from Grouper's dreampop quartet

8/10

If there can be such a thing as a 'deep underground supergroup' – one suspects it's oxymoronic – then Helen is it. Counting among their lineup members of Eat Skull, Eternal Tapestry and Grouper, their first volley into the naïve pop hinterlands, *The Original Faces*, is very lovely indeed. For half an hour, sweet, fragile pop melodies are drenched in an enveloping haze of guitar fuzz, Liz Harris' vocals shaped by a heavy reverb aura. The most surprising thing about this album is how nostalgic it feels: it would be no great surprise to discover that this release is actually a lost demo by Black Tambourine.

JONDALOE



HILLS
Frid
ROCKET

Swedish trippers journey to the centre of the drone

7/10

Gothenburg psychonauts Hills return with a long, trancy album of deep vibes and soft grooves. While *Frid* never quite captures the free-spirited atmosphere of their labelmates and friends Goat, this is feelgood psychedelia, with the vibes remaining light no matter how deep the trip. "Och Solen Sankte Sig Röd" is the immediate standout, 10 minutes of velvet fuzz that sways and ripples, ceremonial but spellbinding, the drone ever-present but never dissonant. There's variety, too: "Anukthal Is Here" finds a melody to pick from the background hum, while "Death Will Find A Way" is an occult folk-psych death march.

PETER WATTS



**JULIA
HOLTER**
**Have You
In My
Wilderness**

DOMINO

Holter's wild ambition: devastatingly moving torch songs

9/10

Julia Holter's last album, *Loud City Song*, was a conceptually rigorous album of art music. With *Have You In My Wilderness* her songs feel brighter, more pop, yet they're also just as lush, as considered and as quietly experimental. First single "Feel You", and the rakish "Silhouette", open *Wilderness* with a warm blush, but the deep heart of the album is amniotic dream songs like the extravagantly gorgeous "Lucette Stranded On The Island". Much like predecessor Rickie Lee Jones, Holter has a quixotic way of draping melody across the arrangements, letting them fall in surprising ways, at unexpected intervals.

JONDALOE



**HOOTON
TENNIS CLUB**
**Highest Point In
Cliff Town**

HEAVENLY

Top titles and strong hooks on this indie debut

7/10

Though they sing about girls, exams, haircuts and "changing the wallpaper on my phone" with studied ennui, indie slackers Hooton Tennis Club also demonstrate some unique charms on their debut album. The quartet have a fond appreciation for excellent '90s powerpop hooks ("Kathleen Sat On The Arm Of Her Favourite Chair"), cosmic guitar work ("I'm Not Going Roses Again", "Jasper") and terrific song titles ("Something Much Quicker Than Anyone But Jennifer Could Ever Imagine"), with all these elements combined on standout track, "...And Then Camilla Drew Fourteen Dots On Her Knees", which constantly flits between creating a melody and pulling it apart.

PETER WATTS



**LAUREN
HOUSLEY**
Sweet Surrender

BIG BAD RECORDINGS

Big-voiced British chanteuse showcases her chameleon colours

6/10

Housley's storied past features a country band, a drum'n'bass collective and winning a juvenile British aerobics championship – and her solo debut is equally heterogeneous. Soul ballad "Show Me What Love Is" finds her auditioning as the new Joss Stone before turning into Rotherham's answer to Eva Cassidy on "Face The World Alone". The title track posits her in Allison Moorer territory, "It Ain't About You" releases her inner Wanda Jackson and the old-school girl-pop of "Ghost Town Blues" evokes Amy Winehouse. A degree in theatre studies may explain the multiple costume changes, but the voice is potent and the emotional directness of her songs is estimable.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



IRON MAIDEN
The Book Of Souls

PARLOPHONE

Rocking but reflective 16th by metal barbarians

At the beginning of 2015, Bruce Dickinson was hospitalised while doctors removed a tumour from his

tongue. It doesn't seem to have impeded him on *The Book Of Souls*, a 92-minute double album recorded before the singer's diagnosis, but delayed until his recovery. An epic, if somewhat ruminative tone dominates. "If Eternity Should Fail" is peopled by black dogs, lost souls and a spoken-word section in which the undead spirit Necropolis introduces himself to a soundtrack of classical guitar. Three tracks, meanwhile, top 10 minutes, most notably the climactic "Empire Of The Clouds", a piano symphony about airborne buccaneers that enjoys a rollicking instrumental mid-section before Dickinson returns to relate the calamitous denouement.

LOUIS PATTISON

New Albums



KING MIDAS SOUND/ FENNESZ

Edition 1

NINJA TUNE

Misty roots from UK dub destroyer

8/10

From his early work in industrial jazz group GOD to more recent outings destroying sound systems as The Bug, Kevin Martin has made heaviness his watchword. The music he makes as King Midas Sound, then, feels like a step into new territory: a reinvention of vocal reggae and lover's rock along airy, ambient lines. *Edition 1*, made in collaboration with Austrian sound artist Christian Fennesz, is angled even further out. Sometimes, beats and basslines are distinct; other times, as on "Mysteries" and "Lighthouse", you just get a sense of them, as structure dissolving into mist. Instead, you cling to Roger Robinson's voice, silky but with a hint of menace on the gorgeous "Waves".

LOUIS PATTISON

MIKE KROL

Turkey

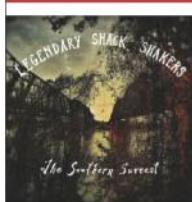
MERGE

Garage-rock outsider makes a punt for acceptance with slicker third album

7/10

Krol defines himself as a pariah in LA's lo-fi indie-rock scene, or perhaps the joker in its pack. But the former graphic designer is now signed to Merge (Ex Hex, Waxahatchee, Titus Andronicus) and *Turkey* is less throwaway than its scrappy, Bandcamp-released predecessors, *I Hate Jazz* (2011) and *Trust Fund* (2013). Recorded in a Sacramento studio, rather than at home, tracks like "Suburban Wasteland" and "La La La" are thicker-sounding and better-executed, although still coarse, unashamedly poppy and – at two minutes each – perfectly short. Not a turkey at all.

PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE



LEGENDARY SHACK SHAKERS

The Southern Surreal

ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES

7/10

Nashville-based quartet have built up a cultish following and delivered six LPs of darkly intense, blues-stewed country, punk and revivalist rock'n'roll. As its title suggests, their latest leans on Southern Gothic, in songs about death, drink and doing the hard thing. Led by gravel-voiced singer, banjo player and blues harpist JD Wilkes, they swing and rattle along, shifting from the perky hoedown of "Young Heart, Old Soul" to the lowering exit, an abridged version of "Born Under A Bad Sign". Fan Billy Bob Thornton even pops up, narrating a cheery tale about dispatching a maimed dog with a shovel.

SHARON O'CONNELL

Plant-approved hillbilly punks' first in five years

Over 20 years, this

Nashville-based quartet have built up a cultish following and delivered six LPs of darkly intense, blues-stewed country, punk and revivalist rock'n'roll. As its title suggests, their latest leans on Southern Gothic, in songs about death, drink and doing the hard thing. Led by gravel-voiced singer, banjo player and blues harpist JD Wilkes, they swing and rattle along, shifting from the perky hoedown of "Young Heart, Old Soul" to the lowering exit, an abridged version of "Born Under A Bad Sign". Fan Billy Bob Thornton even pops up, narrating a cheery tale about dispatching a maimed dog with a shovel.

SHARON O'CONNELL



THE LIBERTINES

Anthems For Doomed Youth

VIRGIN

Eleven years on, The Libertines deliver strong third

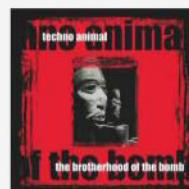
8/10

The odds seemed stacked against them – post-rehab recording in Thailand, helmed by One Direction producer Jake Gosling, with more than a decade since their previous, self-titled album – but the results are impressive. With its commanding stylistic and poetic sweep, *Anthems...* is a mature vindication mining often bitter experience to turn The Libertines' Arcadian myth into reality. "Glasgow Coma Scale Blues" shows that anthemic rough and tumble swagger is still a natural forte, but the dolorous "You're My Waterloo", music-hall morality tale "Fame And Fortune" and gimlet-eyed, generations-spanning "Anthem For Doomed Youth" add depth and detail. A career peak.

GAVIN MARTIN

HOW TO BUY... KEVIN MARTIN

From hip-hop to dub to ambient reggae



TECHNO ANIMAL

The Brotherhood Of The Bomb

MATADOR, 2001

After convening their '80s jazz-grindcore group GOD, Kevin Martin and Justin Broadrick – also of Godflesh – concentrated their energies on this industrial-strength hip-hop project. Machine-like grooves meet abstract lyricism, best seen on "We Can Build You", featuring El-P and Cannibal Ox's Vast Aire.

7/10



THE BUG

London Zoo

REPHLEX, 2008

As dubstep swept the capital, Martin responded with this apocalyptic vision, drawing lines between modern bass music, vintage dub and dancehall backed by a host of MCs. It spawned two enduring classics, the wickedly barbed "Poison Dart" (featuring ragga toaster Warrior Queen) and MC Flowdan's chilling "Skeng".

9/10



KING MIDAS SOUND

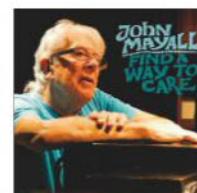
Waiting For You

HYPERRUB, 2009

Kevin Martin's work with Trinidad-born poet and author Roger Robinson tones down the booming volume of much of his work, but this ghostly re-envisioning of reggae is nonetheless of uncanny power, the likes of "Earth A Kill Ya" comparable to the downbeat dread of Massive Attack's *Mezzanine*.

8/10

LOUIS PATTISON



JOHN MAYALL

Find A Way To Care

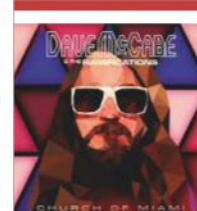
FORTY BELOW

Eightysomething Brit blues godfather rolls right along

7/10

The voice, needless to say, isn't what it was, that eerie falsetto long gone, yet Mayall remains remarkably limber, his keyboards impressive on this follow-up to the 2014 renaissance *A Special Life*. Otherwise workmanlike covers of Percy Mayfield's "The River's Invitation" and Lightnin' Hopkins' "I Feel So Bad" feature funky Hammond and slinky Fender keys respectively, and the nostalgia of "Long Summer Days" and "Crazy Lady" is played out to rolling piano. The 'fessing up title track has fat horns, and Rocky Athas supplies tasteful BB-esque solos throughout. No surprises, no classic, but a warm and well-produced set.

NEIL SPENCER



DAVE McCABE & THE RAMIFICATIONS

Church Of Miami

1965

Former Zutons frontman breaks silence with electro-pop detour

5/10

Buoyed by his royalties from Mark Ronson and Amy Winehouse's "Valerie" cover, McCabe has had time to consider options following The Zutons' last outing, 2008's *You Can Do Anything*. The stylistic overhaul signalled by the title track here – squelchy '80s synths meet tepid dystopian vision – sets a quaintly retro mood, with the robotic love songs ("Intertwine") and Vocodered Planet Rock affectations ("Time & Place") ensuring a competent segue from psych-pop to modish disco. Often favouring hammy falsetto, McCabe maintains a jolly mood, but an arch approach and surfeit of clichés ultimately make this overly mannered reboot hard to love.



MERCURY REV

The Light In You

BELLA UNION

American psych-pop adventurers scale up on first album in seven years

7/10

Mercury Rev's psych fantasias peaked in scale with 2001's gorgeous *All Is Dream* but sadly contracted as the new century wore on. Here, Jonathan Donahue and Grasshopper go the full Axelrod by stuffing strings, horns, timpani and sleigh bells into every available space on their eighth collection. While the sugary highs could give Van Dyke Parks an ice-cream headache, it's hard to resist a work so clearly besotted with the power of music. Fittingly an ecstatic expression of LP love, "Rainy Day Record" caps off this return to form with a list of musical heroes, Donahue punctuating a shoutout to The Fall by yelping, "I'm totally wired!"

JASON ANDERSON



RICHARD HAWLEY

Hollow Meadows

PARLOPHONE

Eighth solo studio LP by brooding Steel City baritone. By Andy Gill



8/10

home where the rich would dump their defective offspring, a borstal for naughty boys, a hospital for shell-shocked soldiers, a hospice for the mentally troubled. It's a place where things were hidden away, a veil concealing problematic issues that would otherwise disturb the seeming surface calm of family and society.

An odd choice then, perhaps, for an album that finds Hawley delving deeper beneath his own still waters to confront the kinds of nagging anxieties that only increase the older one gets. It's almost as if he's opted to uncover the hidden secrets of his own Hollow Meadows, shine a light on troubling issues through the illuminating medium of music. Like its inmates, Hawley was stricken down, forced into solitude and inactivity: and when you've spent long, painful months laid out recovering from a slipped disc, unable to move, with just the birds visible through the window for company, the mind tends to turn in upon itself, and reflection prompts a deeper understanding of your place in the world – which is the general, albeit loose, theme of *Hollow Meadows*.

At first, it sounds as if Hawley is retreating from the folksy psychedelia of *Standing At The Sky's Edge* into the smooth, retro songcraft of his earlier albums: sultry vibrato guitar heralds "I Still Want You", a lilting waltz with Mellotron and strings, in which he professes his enduring devotion "until the sun grows cold". And the ballad croon of "Serenade Of Blue" draws on similarly cosmic portents to express a

reluctant emotional fissure, the gently drifting descent of its melody like a leaf fluttering to earth. But elsewhere, psychedelic touches percolate subtly through the songs, fraying their edges with the sympathetic string drones of "Nothing Like A Friend", the shimmering guitar and organ textures of "Welcome The Sun", and the psych-folk swirl that closes "Sometimes I Feel", stippled with children's voices from just outside Hawley's garden-shed studio, headily redolent of the back-porch hippy bucolicism that spurred on Traffic.

"Sometimes I Feel" is the fulcrum around which the whole album pivots, a litany of "*all these things I know to be true*" laid over what sounds like harpsichord arpeggios. It's Hawley's most reflective lyric, one streaked with the kind of almost Zen acceptance that comes from lonely recuperation. "Sometimes, if you really don't want to go the way the world is," he sings, "you just can't stop it." And there's much of the world he doesn't go along with, not least the screen obsession derided in "The World Looks Down", whose punning title is further developed in a series of rhetorical questions: "How did we ever dream at night, before the screen took hold?/And where's the wisdom in our time that makes our children old?"

SLEEVE NOTES

► Produced by:

Richard Hawley, Shez Sheridan, Colin Elliot
Recorded at: Yellow Arch Studio, Sheffield
Personnel includes:
 Richard Hawley (vocals, guitar), Shez Sheridan (guitar), Colin Elliot (bass), Dean Beresford (drums), Martin Simpson (slide guitar, banjo), Nancy Kerr (fiddle, viola)

His own children's ageing is most painfully confronted in the concluding "What Love Means", written in the immediate anguished aftermath ("Did we pass the test?") of his daughter's leaving home: the paradox being, of course, that there's ultimately no coherent answer to what love means.

Sung to solo guitar accompaniment, it's one of several tracks reflecting the growing influence of folk music upon Hawley's art. His neighbour, omni-talented guitar virtuoso Martin Simpson, layers nimble banjo arpeggios over slide resonator guitar

on "Long Time Down", one of a brace of tracks considering the impact of cycling elemental forces on our fragile grasp upon endurance; and "Heart Of Oak" is a fulsome tribute to his friend and mentor Norma Waterson. Ironically, it's the most out-and-out rocker on the album, its trenchant, chugging riff striated with distorted guitar hooks and lead lines; but its message is for the ages: "You're precious to me, like Blake's poetry/I wish you well, old heart of oak." As for Hawley himself, his own situation is perhaps best summarised on "Welcome The Sun", where the admonishment to escape the shadows and face the light again is surely directed at his own recuperating self. As he notes, "You owe your allegiance to the fealty of your needs."

Q&A

Richard Hawley

The album had its genesis in your enforced recuperation...

I slipped a disc in my back, compounding what happened a year before, when I broke my leg while on tour. An unlucky series of events! I ended up just lying on my back for four or five months, and when you're in that state it's easy to get negative, so I tried to stay positive. I started writing songs, and as a result, without wanting to over-egg the pudding, your mind goes to deeper places.

There's a very philosophical cast to the song, "Sometimes I Feel".

That's my favourite on the record. It just seemed to appear out of nowhere. It strikes me that we pay so much attention to our outer appearance and wellbeing, but very little attention to our inner wellbeing – and a lot of this record is about

that. Because I couldn't move about, it made me spring-clean the way I thought: because what drives us as people is our thoughts, and without wanting to sound like some fucking hippy, it's a matter of getting that balance between your inner being and the outside world. It can cause a lot of shit if you don't get that right. And as you get older, you need a bit more maintenance with these things.

Is it Mellotron or strings on "I Still Want You"?
 It's both: a Mellotron, with the awesome Nancy Kerr playing two tracks of viola with it, to add the bowing touch. The Mellotron's a lovely sound. It has a unique sound all its own, nothing really like strings, but Nancy put emotion back into the part. Though I'm not sure she's that pleased with what I did to her viola part on "The World Looks Down": I played it from an iPhone at the bottom of a big metal bin, and re-recorded it from the top, because I wanted that sort of Bollywood edge to it. She looked at me as if I'd dropped some acid!

INTERVIEW: ANDY GILL

New Albums



METRIC

Pagans In Vegas

METRIC MUSIC
INTERNATIONAL

Emily Haines and
co return with retro
synth-pop odyssey

6/10

Though the Toronto band have never made a secret of their fetish for new-wave synth pop, Metric become more brazen about their analog love on their sixth album. Emily Haines describes it as embracing the "romance of another time", which presumably means not being embarrassed to sound like Visage. Either way, *Pagans*' first half dazzles, building on the "Personal Jesus"-like muscularity of "Lie Lie Lie" with the queasy Chris & Cosey-isms of "Fortune". Unfortunately, by the time the album closes with eight minutes of pseudo-Vangelis twaddle, this approach seems less a matter of repurposing the past than aping neon-lit nostalgists like Glass Candy and Electric Youth.

JASON ANDERSON



MICACHU AND THE SHAPES

Good Sad Happy Bad

ROUGH TRADE

Playful brilliance on
London maverick's
rough-hewn third

8/10

Mica Levi has rarely held back her maverick instincts since emerging as a talented purveyor of leftfield pop six years ago. Nevertheless, she ventures even further afield with her trio's rough-hewn third, Levi's first since her eerie score for *Under The Skin*. These songs originated in a jam surreptitiously taped by drummer Marc Pell, and Levi wrote the lyrics in an equally hasty manner. Though such creative tactics can yield sketchy results, Levi's penchant for cracked-up nursery-rhyme melodies and wry humour elevate what might've been an exercise in wilful primitivism. Likewise, the wonky rhythms are equally rooted in Levi's love of grime and the improv-inspired post-punk of This Heat.

JASON ANDERSON



ELLIOT MOSS

Highspeeds

PIAS

Upstate New Yorker's
first electronic song set
"I'm so tired and I need to
lay down, but you're
travelling high speeds,"

7/10

Moss sighs on the opening title track of his debut. It establishes both the 21-year-old multi-instrumentalist's lyrical concerns – life's relentless pace and the persistence of change – and his kinship with Bon Iver, James Blake and *Amnesiac*-era Radiohead. The electronic singer-songwriter field is now chronically overcrowded, but Moss marks his patch via a customised modular synth and vintage treated piano, and by delivering the unsettling (eg "About Time", where his voice is thickened and startlingly close) and the seductive ("I Can't Swim" – Frank Ocean mixing it with Sade) with equally quiet confidence.

SHARON O'CONNELL



ON AN ON

And The Wave Has Two Sides

CITY SLANG

Minneapolis indie-
poppers advance sound
on hi-fi sophomore LP

7/10

On An On hit the radar in 2013 with the polished ballad "Ghosts" from their debut *Give In*, and the trio's follow-up LP, recorded at Hollywood's high-end Sunset Sound by skilled veteran Joe Chiccarelli (Frank Zappa, Shins, White Stripes), displays even greater sonic sophistication. The subtly evocative "Drifting" is the new LP's centrepiece while "Icon Love", the other standout, boasts the heroic scale of *Tears For Fears*, the symphonic splendour of Alissa Ricci's synths set off by concise guitar bursts from husband Nate Eiesland. Otherwise, Eiesland's emotive vocals and the elegant new-wave-inspired soundscapes sustain the bittersweet mood even when the songs lack stickiness.

BUD SCOPPA

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Ought



Ought were very much a right-place/right-time occurrence, according to keyboardist Matt May. The right place was Montreal, where the band's three American and one Australian members converged to attend university. The right time was 2012, when massive student protests exploded over tuition hikes. "Every night for several months people would be outside, strangers and friends alike," May says. "That energy and excitement was palpable... It made a huge impact on my life and on the city." It wasn't long before the four moved into a communal space and began developing the incendiary racket that fills 2014's *More Than Any Other Day* and its successor *Sun Coming Down*.

Ought soon attracted the attention of Constellation, the Montreal label spearheaded by Godspeed You! Black Emperor. Though May cites GY!BE's "huge" impact on Ought's musical and political development, the band feel a closer kinship to younger 'post-punk' peers like Pinkwash, Downtown Boys and Speedy Ortiz.

"I used to find the term 'post-punk' difficult," says May, "but I've come around to viewing it as a historical term. There are lots of post-punk bands I love – The Raincoats, The Slits, The Clean. A friend of ours is doing a PhD on 'queer feminist post-punk' and that sounds really rad!"

JASON ANDERSON



OUGHT

Sun Coming Down

CONSTELLATION

Montreal alt.rockers

continue to develop

voice of their own

On their 2014 debut *More*

7/10

couldn't always escape the shadow of their reference points. Similarly, *Sun Coming Down* fizzes with a nervous agitation that was once The Feelies' forte. Songs such as "The Combo" ride waves of tension that never quite crest, with singer Tim Darcy splitting duties between Mark E Smith-style barking and the impassioned throat-shredding of Guy Picciotto. All the while, the squalls and swells of Darcy's guitar and Matt May's keyboards ape Sonic Youth's *Daydream Nation*. As exciting as it all can be, the songs with the greatest range of dynamics – like eight-minute centrepiece "Beautiful Blue Sky" – are where Ought establish their own trajectory.

JASON ANDERSON



CHRISTOPHER OWENS

Chrissybaby Forever

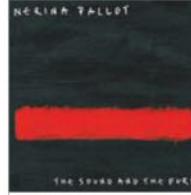
TURNSTILE

Girls' lost boy finds
his way home

8/10

Of God cult, then on to drugs and modelling – helped Owens fill the come-comb-my-long-hair-while-I-smoke-crack position in the indie market once held by Evan Dando. After two inbetweeny post-Girls solo albums, here he returns to unbearably sweet basics, with leaps into transcendental ecstasy – bongo-laced instrumental "Susanna" and "I Love You Like I Do" are ashram-farmed simulacra of Pastels jangle-pop. Felt homage "Me Oh My" ups the C86-retro ante, but – at its best – Owens' three-chord guilelessness offers a mantra for all seasons. Loving, not by the spoonful but by the bucketful.

JIM WIRTH



NERINA PALLOT

The Sound And The Fury

IDAHO

Award-winning
singer-songwriter
finds political voice

7/10

This fifth LP marks a change of direction for Pallot who, despite Ivor Novello and Brit nominations, has yet to dent the mainstream. As well as dabbling in blues-rock, *The Sound And The Fury* finds Pallot getting some things off her chest. Stentorian opener "There Is A Drum" revisits the murder of the military drummer Lee Rigby, while the righteous "If I Had A Girl" sees her railing against patriarchal forces that would hold back her future daughter. There are some glossier numbers too, perhaps aimed at counteracting the grit, but it's the serious, more politicised songs that leave a lasting impression.

FIONA STURGES



PEACHES

Rub

I USHE MUSIC

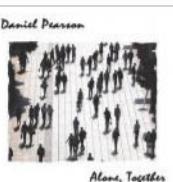
X-rated electro-pop from trailblazing Canadian artist

Back in 2000, Peaches brought us *The Teaches Of Peaches*, containing

8/10

such choice ditties as "Fuck The Pain Away" and "Diddle My Skittle". Four albums later and her subversion of sex, power and gender norms is still gathering pace on the likes of "Dick In The Air", "Dumb Fuck" and the terrific "Vaginoplasty" ("Be proud of it, bow down to it"), which features Simonne Jones. These songs offer a smart inversion of the usual gender roles in mainstream music, all set to a propulsive, bass-heavy backdrop – and it's not all about sex either. On the closing track, "I Mean Something", Peaches and fellow Canadian Feist make peace with life and mortality. Electrifying.

FIONA STURGES



DANIEL PEARSON

Alone, Together

SAINT IN THE CITY

Earnest third solo offering from the Yorkshire-born singer-songwriter

6/10

Daniel Pearson writes with the no-filter passion of a man who still believes that rock'n'roll can tilt the world on its axis; though it seems likely that it will take something more than his rather pedestrian take on roots rock to truly make the earth move. *Alone, Together* sticks to pleasant but well-worn paths, with the sub-Springsteen bar-room yarns of "War Stories" and *Rising*-era guitar crunch of "The Bridge" typical of Pearson's earnest endeavour. The loose, Creedence-y roll of "Rivers" and the folk-flavoured "The Open Sea" exhibit a lightness of touch that the rest, for all its good heart, lacks.

GRAEME THOMSON



PHAEDRA

Blackwinged Night

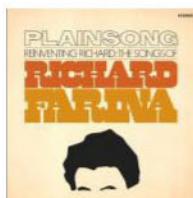
RUNE GRAMMOPHON

Norwegian auteur with no time for small talk Composer of ballets and creator of art installations, Ingvild Langgård launched her solo career with 2011's

7/10

The Sea, high-mindedly announced as the first part of an ambitious trilogy with its own "mythological structure". Exploring cosmic themes of "creation, collapse and time", part two is as bold in execution as it is formidable in concept. Densely layered with strings, woodwind, analogue synths and tribal drums, the vaulting, cathedral-rock of "Mend Me" evokes Vangelis, "Finally Unfolding" comes from the further reaches of Nico's *Desertshore* and the title track transplants angelic vocal purity into an avant-garde maelstrom reminiscent of Björk. After half a dozen listens, it feels like you've barely scratched the surface.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



PLAINSONG

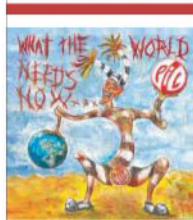
Reinventing Richard: The Songs Of Richard Fariña

FLEDGLING

7/10

Surprisingly there's never been a Fariña tribute album in the half-century since his death. Less surprising is that the man to fill the void is Plainsong's Iain Matthews, whose albums have regularly raided Fariña's songbook since he first sang "Reno Nevada" on Fairport's 1968 debut. Matthews' classic folk-rock arrangements are underpinned by Andy Roberts' shimmering mandolin, dulcimer and intricate guitar work on 15 Fariña songs, ranging from the well-known ("Pack Up Your Sorrows") to the unrecorded ("Sombre Winds"). It's a project that might have suited the all-star treatment, but *Plainsong*'s heartfelt approach does the job just fine.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



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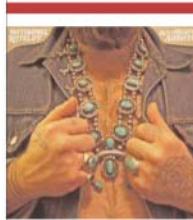
What The World Needs Now...

PIL OFFICIAL

7/10

John Lydon may now oscillate between national treasure and national joke, but reactivated post-punk icons PiL remain his most artistically rich outlet. Their second LP in three years is a self-funded affair that at times over-indulges Lydon's Albert Steptoe side, whether ranting about broken toilets or spewing Sleaford Mods-style streams of profanities. But cinematic sound painting "Big Blue Sky" and knotty No Wave art-funk workout "Know Now" are both excellent, while discordant, Dalek-voiced avant-jazz epic "Corporate" is one of the best things he's ever recorded. Behind the stage-villain gurning, Lydon remains a devout pop modernist.

STEPHEN DALTON



NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SWEATS

Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats

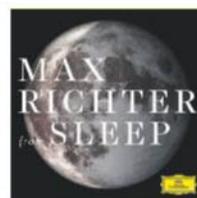
STAX

7/10

Denver soul crew's dynamic debut

Nathaniel Rateliff hasn't always favoured the boisterous expression you might expect of a man who worked the docks for 10 years; two solo albums of lean, melancholic folk often had the bearded Missouri native compared to Bon Iver. But now he's gathered around him an R'n'B-soul septet who work up a sweat while he works out his demons in a bourbon-soaked growl. Their debut's debt to Sam & Dave – underlined by the Stax seal of approval – is plain, but there's as much of Alabama Shakes and a pre-stadia Kings Of Leon, too, while "S.O.B." suggests "Hotel Yorba" spliced with a black spiritual.

SHARON O'CONNELL



MAX RICHTER

Sleep

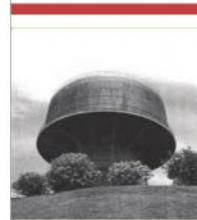
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON

Modern chamber music for your chambre

Designed to soundtrack a night's snooze, Richter's latest project – available substantially edited on

one CD, or digitally in its full eight-hour span – is transcendent listening, whether you're conscious or not. The 31 interlinked pieces, which hinge largely around murky piano, amniotic strings and subtle female voice, all tucked under a comfort-blanket of reverb, simultaneously evoke chamber music, 20th-century ambient and – of course – the nocturnes of Debussy and Chopin. For such a relaxing piece, though, there's also a melancholy to the minor keys and descending harmony lines, which elevates this epic above bland mood music. Still, listening in one sitting is a feat.

TOM PINNOCK



ROYAL HEADACHE

High

WHAT'S YOUR RUPTURE?

Eclectic second outing from punk-inspired Australian rockers

Sydney band Royal

Headache's second album oscillates between slightly unconvincing punk throwback – note the spirit of '76 evident on opener "My Own Fantasy", title track "High" and the jittery "Little Star", all of which seem to reach out to The Damned for some inspiration – and much more effective complex numbers. The latter include the lovely garage-soul of "Wouldn't You Know", the dense jangle of "Carolina" and the excellent "Garbage", which emerges from a hail of broken glass to weave a Television-style guitar tapestry.

PETER WATTS



KAREN RUIMY & YOUTH

Zik'r East

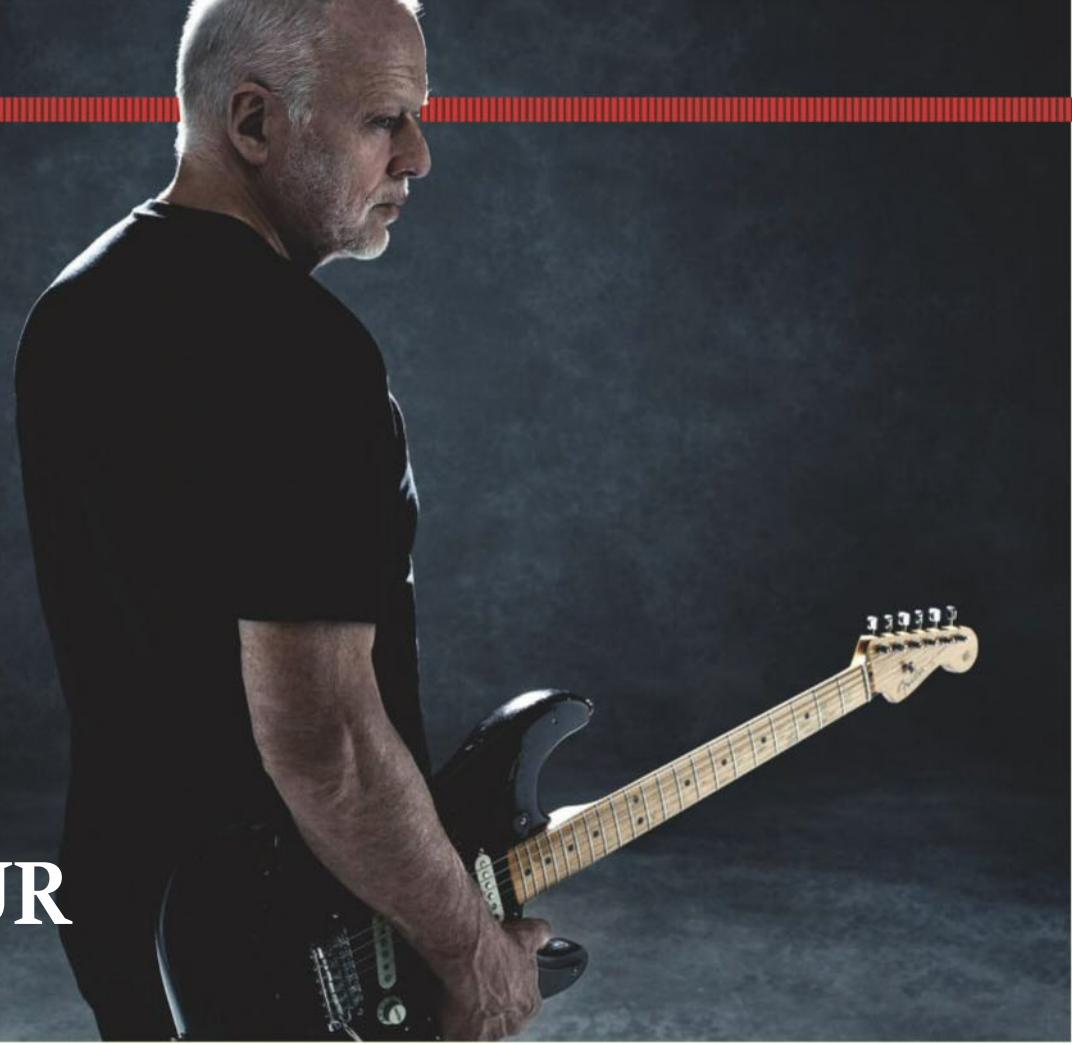
KARAIS

Youth-produced flamenco fiesta with added global beats

7/10

As improbable back-stories go, Ruimy's tale takes some beating. Born in Morocco to Jewish parents and raised in Paris, she became a banker but abandoned the hedge funds and a million-dollar job to become a flamenco singer and dancer. *Zik'r East* is the studio soundtrack of a live show created with producer Youth, and it's an atmospheric melange of Bollywood/Balkan/flamenco beats that recreates the journey of the gypsies from Rajasthan into Europe. There are passages that probably work better onstage; but there's enough passion and energy to sustain a mostly thrilling listening experience. A second disc, *Zik'r West*, features remixes by the likes of Groove Armada and 4Hero.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



DAVID GILMOUR

Rattle That Lock

COLUMBIA

First solo LP in almost a decade: fluffy and slick, with faux-French tunes, says David Cavanagh



6/10

53-minute, ambient-rock adieu to Rick Wright sounded, when you actually listened to it, like an expensively marketed relaxation tape. It didn't do much for Floyd's legacy and it wasn't a patch, either, on David Gilmour's '06 solo LP, *On An Island*.

Examples are rare of Floyd solo projects being equal or superior to official Floyd releases, but nine years later, *On An Island* still feels like a well-executed collection of slow-burning songs and mood-pieces to showcase the romantic, melancholy and aggressive sides of this famously fastidious musician. *Rattle That Lock*, his leisurely recorded follow-up, retains many of the same collaborators and enablers, including Phil Manzanera (guitar, keyboards, co-production), Jools Holland (piano), Zbigniew Preisner (orchestration), David Crosby and Graham Nash (backing vocals) and Rado Klose (the oft-misspelt 'Bob Close' in early Floyd biographies) on guitar. Gilmour himself, as with the previous album, plays everything from Hammond organ to bass harmonica. *On An Island* and *Rattle That Lock* even have the same way of saying hello. On the former it was a brooding instrumental, "Castellorizon". On the new one, an instrumental, "5 AM", broods.

After that, though, *Rattle That Lock* takes a different route to its dark predecessor. This is a fluffier confection with an '80s feel in places, a

hearkening back to slick pop and *Local Hero* atmospherics. It's a surprising decade for Gilmour to want to revisit. There's also a French theme on the album – not Debussy or Ravel but a bicycles-on-the-Left-Bank-with-accordions sensibility that slightly recalls the Floyd's "Biding My Time", from *Relics*. "Dancing Right In Front Of Me" opens like The Beatles' "Michelle" and has a piano solo straight out of Charles Aznavour. "The Girl In The Yellow Dress" wheels out the stand-up bass, the Gauloises references and the haw-haw Frangloisms, but is utterly superficial even as a pastiche. One gets the uneasy sense that Gilmour is sifting through his holiday snaps, laughing and smiling with the family, excluding us from the joke.

So we go in search of more heavyweight stuff. And we find it, four songs in, on "A Boat Lies Waiting". So tranquil and motionless are its opening piano chords that they could legitimately start an album on ECM, but then "A Boat Lies Waiting" rises dramatically to its feet, welcomes the harmonies of Crosby and Nash and assumes the album's first plateau of grandeur. Words and voices conjoin and breathe together in acres of space. The effect is akin to hearing CSN's "Cold Rain" crossed with Brian Eno's *Another Green World*.

In the second half of *Rattle That Lock*, however, things get messy. Whereas *On An Island* was unafraid to explore new horizons at its own dreamy tempo, here we find the instrumental "Beauty", which, despite a promising riff and a Terje Rypdal-style key change, has to admit that it has no plan, no ambition, no real destination in mind. It peters out after four minutes, just when it should be exploding into something substantial. The anti-war song "In Any Tongue", the album's most Floydian track from a musical perspective, has a

nagging similarity to "Comfortably Numb" here and there – and also to "Marooned", once or twice, on *The Division Bell* – but if that begins to sound encouraging, the homilies of Polly Samson's lyric soon render the song a sluggish chore. Roger Waters, a serious writer on the subject of war,

would be unable to control his mirth at lines like "How am I to know you with a joystick in my hand?" At the sight of young soldiers bleeding to death on the ground, Samson has this to say: "I hear 'mama' sounds the same in any tongue." Her facepalm lyrics haven't improved much, sadly, since that verse about bitching and dissing on *The Endless River*.

Patchy or not, the second half of *Rattle That Lock* does contain an infectiously funky track, "Today", one of the few to justify the album's proactive title. Gilmour isn't far off 70 nowadays – and can sound it in the occasional faltering vocal – but "Today" is a song that takes delight in shaking off the body's aches and the mind's cares. "Just a day when the weight of the world slides away," he sings, sounding like a young John Cale with a crowded disco revolving around him. In a balmy middle section, singers Mica Paris and Louise Marshall sunbathe in swoons of harmony while Gilmour banishes the "tempests of doubt". His guitar solo, when it comes, is stinging and defiant. But too late. Hyped to high heaven before a note had been

heard, *Rattle That Lock* turns out to be a modest achievement for the most part, with not much to move the soul and no sign of a psychological second layer. Repeated listens to the faux-French tunes only make them twice as annoying. A happy holiday? A contented man living life to the full? The sun may be sizzling, but the earth remains unshattered.

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**
David Gilmour, Phil Manzanera
► **Recorded at:** Medina Studio, Hove
► **Personnel include:**
Gilmour (vocals, guitar, assorted other instruments), Phil Manzanera (guitar, organ), Guy Pratt (bass), Steve DiStanislao, Andy Newmark (drums), Roger Eno (piano), Jools Holland (piano), Colin Stetson (saxophone), Robert Wyatt (cornet), Rado Klose and John Parricelli (guitar), Graham Nash and David Crosby (vocals), Mica Paris (vocals), Liberty Choir (vocals), Polly Samson (lyrics), Zbigniew Preisner (orchestration)



SEA LION Desolate Stars

TURNSTILE

Swedish balladeer sighs while her guitar gently weeps

Hushed and haunted, Linn Osterberg's ghostly alt.folk ballads inhabit the same

7/10

melancholy realm as early Cat Power, while her cooing voice has an otherworldly beauty akin to fellow Swede Stina Nordenstam. Recording as Sea Lion, this young Gothenburg native's absorbing debut mostly consists of fragmentary guitar motifs that repeat in slo-mo lava-lamp loops, overlaid with semi-whispered musings on love, solitude and fragile friendship. Bathed in gently experimental ambient drones, standout tracks such as "Room" and "If My Baby" barely even exist, yet still radiate an emotional intensity. Osterberg's luminous minimalism is a stylistic signature, though it could prove limiting in the long run.

STEPHEN DALTON



JOAN SHELLEY Over And Even

NO QUARTER

Will Oldham guests on Kentucky singer-songwriter's profound latest

9/10

The fifth album to feature Kentucky's Joan Shelley has an immensely welcoming ease that was absent on 2014's anxious solo breakthrough, *Electric Ursa*. Accompanied by Nathan Salsburg, Shelley teases loose acoustic guitar somewhere mesmeric and loosens her voice across *Over And Even*, which suggests her as a peer to Steve Gunn and The Weather Station. She often augments her profound and simple melodies with light touches: the droning raga underpinning "Brighter Than The Blues", Appalachian banjo on the title track, and several duets with Will Oldham. Meanwhile, "Ariadne's Gone" and "My Only Trouble" hang on the elegant lobe of her voice alone. A major talent.

LAURA SNAPES



SLAYER Repentless

NUCLEAR BLAST

Man down, but thrash progenitors soldier on

Age and hard living is starting to claim the lives of metal's founding

7/10

fathers: men such as Slayer's Jeff Hanneman, who passed away in 2013. You could see *Repentless*, on which Hanneman is replaced by touring guitarist Gary Holt of Exodus, as a tribute to the band's fallen comrade, albeit one that determinedly swerves misty-eyed reminiscence in favour of renewed commitment to a life of metal. The title track finds Tom Araya barking, "No looking back/No regrets/No apologies" atop a ferocious thrash, while "Piano Wire", the sole track here credited to the late Hanneman, strikes similar notes of no surrender. Their imperial phase may have passed, but Slayer will not go easy.

LOUIS PATTISON



SLIM TWIG Thank You For Stickin' With Twig

DFA

Toronto avant-popster's trippy sixth

8/10

Max Turnbull is as prolific as he is singularly inspired. As Slim Twig, he's released umpteen EPs, several cassette tapes, numerous singles and five LPs that warp rock history along thoroughly post-modern lines. Psychedelia of an almost baroque complexity looms large here, but so do glam, electro funk and Giallo scores, while Meg Remy (aka US Girls) guests. "Fadeout Killer" is a straight-up blending of Bolan with Beck, but "Textiles On Mainstreet" suggests 17th-Century metal and "You Got Me Goin..." seems to feature a pot-smoking gospel choir stuck in a wind tunnel. Business as unusual for Twig.

SHARON O'CONNELL

I'M
NEW
HERE

Sea Lion



► Linn Osterberg never had a Plan B. The young Swedish singer-songwriter, who records under the name of Sea Lion, always knew music was her destiny. "I thought if I had absolutely no back-up plan, I would pursue it harder," she says. After years as a wallflower on the fringes of Gothenburg's vibrant scene, Osterberg's youthful ambition has finally paid off with her official debut album, *Desolate Stars*. It's an achingly beautiful collection of avant-folk torch songs, albeit wreathed in heartbroken Scandinavian gloom.

"Yeah, it turned out pretty slow and dark," Osterberg admits. "It's definitely a reflection of my emotional state when I recorded it. I guess I can be a pretty melancholic person but it's not like I don't have every other emotion equally much."

Drowsy and dreamy in style, Sea Lion has already been likened to Joanna Newsom, Mazzy Star and Cat Power, comparisons she embraces. "I wish I sounded more like them," she says. Osterberg's father was a sailor, does that explain her maritime musical alias? "No, it's just a stupid name," she laughs. "I regret it, it sounds really bad when people asked what my band is called. I wish I'd chosen something cooler." STEPHEN DALTON



SLIME Company

WEIRD WORLD

Tyneside loner's late-night soul-searching

Slime, the musical alias of one Will Archer, is aptly named: the gooey, ghostly R&B of *Company* leaves silvery snail trails in the listener's mind, glistening in the moonlight. Understated and, in places, unfashionable, Archer's debut conjures a late-'90s Mo'Wax vibe with slushy instrumentals "In One Year" and "Symptoms", while elsewhere his sleight of hand transforms similar tracks into purring neo-soul delights (see "Hot Dog" and "My Company", laced with saxophone and his falsetto). Star turns by Belgian diva Selah Sue and Chicago rapper Jeremiah Jae end up sinking into the quicksand of Slime's supine funk. Best let it slowly slide over you.

PIERS MARTIN



SQUEEZE Cradle To The Grave

VIRGIN EMI

Deptford Beatles' Danny Baker dozen Reactivated in 2007, Squeeze did not rush to release new material;

2010's *Spot The Difference* reimagined old hits, and it might have been hoped that the skinny-tied Brinsley Schwarz were stockpiling classics for their first album of originals since 1998's unloved *Domino*. Not so. A song cycle to accompany the TV adaptation of Danny Baker's '70s memoir, *Going To Sea In A Sieve*, these 12 tracks confirm Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook's melodic talents (the title track and "Sunny" in particular), but leaden exposition lyrics and such awkward source material as Baker's teenage wank-mag habits make the grisly bits last a lifetime.

JIM WIRTH



STEREOPHONICS Keep The Village Alive

STYLUS

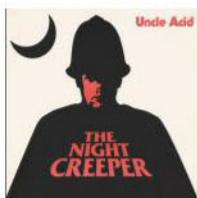
Air-punching stadium indie from Jones & Co

Catchy lead-off single

"C'est La Vie", which arrived in May, tells you all you need to know about the ninth studio album from this most resilient of bands. Here are 10 tracks of undeniably well-engineered rock, but the sounds remain the same: bold guitars, big choruses, all driven by that instantly placeable voice. There's no messing with a formula that has given the 'Phonics six platinum albums and five UK No 1s. You'll find an intense indie rock here, a reflective acoustic moment there – the Floyd-meets-Verve cut "Fight Or Flight", and the U2 soundscape "White Lies", will surely sound great at festivals worldwide. "You got the T-shirt, do you know how the song goes?" croaks Kelly, and in this case, you probably already do.

6/10

New Albums



UNCLE ACID & THE DEADBEATS

The Night Creeper

RISE ABOVE

Gnarly, high-concept fourth from London psych cultists

7/10

Much like former labelmates

Electric Wizard, Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats pursue a heavy metal sound of a distinctly '70s vintage: psychedelic, bluesy, and with a palpable love for all things pulp. Recorded at London's all-analogue Toe Rag Studios, *The Night Creeper* has a fuzzy concept of sorts: a murderous yarn that morphs from trash paperback to film noir to Italian slasher flick. So, it begins as stormy Sabbath-inflected psych ("Murder Nights", "Downtown"), but later takes some knowing stylistic detours: see the tense atmospherics of "Yellow Moon"; or "Slow Death", the sort of exotic, groovy piece that plays as a Giallo killer swings his razor.

LOUIS PATTISON



VANGOFFEY

Take Your Jacket Off And Get Into It

DISTILLER

He's alright: Danny "Supergrass" Goffey in enjoyably guitar-heavy solo debut

7/10

In the wake of Gaz

Coombes' well-received *Matador* comes the first solo effort from bandmate Danny Goffey – songwriting drummer, '90s tabloid presence and one-time semi-finalist on *Celebrity MasterChef*. Goffey was a crucial part of Supergrass, and it's refreshing to hear that he hasn't operated a scorched earth policy to the sounds of yesteryear. *Take Your Jacket Off And Get Into It* stays true to the template that made his band so popular in the first place, and at its best, it rivals prime-period Supergrass. Cue boozy, bouncy beats, big '60s riffs and wry lyrical vignettes, with "Beta Man" and "Trials Of A Modern Man" particularly good fun.

MARK BENTLEY



VARIOUS ARTISTS

I Can't Give You The Life You Want

BLACKEST EVER BLACK

Anxious sounds from outsider imprint

7/10

In its first five years, former journalist Kiran Sande's Blackest Ever Black label has carved out a peculiar niche in outsider electronics by releasing a steady stream of challenging records that on occasion cause you to wonder, beyond the beautiful packaging, who actually buys this stuff. In that respect, this US-focused, vinyl-only compilation provides a perfect introduction to BEB's mordant outlook, mixing popular fare – the toxic tribal rhythms of Cut Hands and manicured gloom of Tropic Of Cancer's gothic sloth-rock – with the eccentric (industrial punks Infrastructure Zero and Exploring Jezebel) and fruity (550 Stamps and Secret Boyfriend). Decidedly uneasy listening.

PIERS MARTIN



KURT VILE

B'lieve I'm Goin' Down

MATADOR

Engrossing sixth from sleepy-sounding Philadelphian

8/10

Over the past 10 years, Kurt Vile has developed an appealingly vaporous persona. A writer of entropic, personal jams, Vile's free-associations and jetlagged delivery shouldn't, however, blind you to the oddly meticulous nature of his work. This sixth album is no exception. It begins strongly with "Pretty Pimpin'" (which turns mild dissociation into a folk/Southern rock anthem), and appears thereafter to fail to meet those initial highs. Really, though, Vile reaps what economists call a "long tail" reward. As the LP continues, you are progressively engrossed, the effect of ruminative tracks like "That's Life, Tho" and "Wheelhouse" as persuasive cumulatively as a selection of more overt anthems.

JOHN ROBINSON



WIDOWSPEAK

All Yours

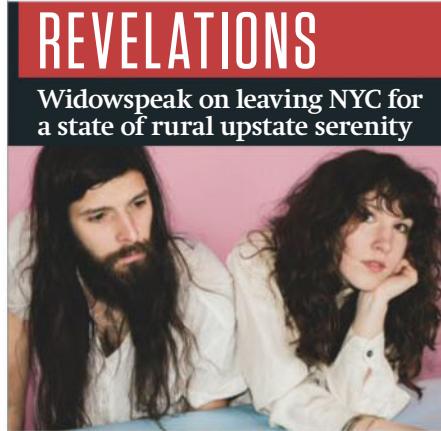
CAPTURED TRACKS

Splashes of classic rock appear on dreampoppers' third album

7/10

After the release of their second album, 2013's *Almanac*, dreampop duo Widowspeak – singer Molly Hamilton and guitarist Robert Earl Thomas – left Brooklyn for the Catskill Mountains. Recording with the rhythm section of Woods, they've added a Band-like country-rock groove to songs like "Girls" and "Cosmically Aligned" on this, their third and strongest album, pitching them closer to Captured Tracks labelmate Mac DeMarco. Mazzy Star remain a key sonic influence, though, and they haven't left the feel of New York City completely behind – "Dead Love (So Still)" steals from Lou Reed's "Vicious", but in typically graceful fashion.

PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE



WILCO

Star Wars

DBPM RECORDS

Tweedy and co's ninth: now available in a physical format...

"What's more fun than a surprise?" asked Jeff Tweedy, shortly after Wilco

stealth-released their new album as a free download in July. *Star Wars* itself is a lot of fun: looser and scruffier than their recent albums, it shifts in a number of enticing directions – glam rock ("More"), new wave ("Random Name Generator") and decorous Beatles-y balladry ("Magnetized"). Centrepiece "You Satellite" musters uneasy beats and jittery guitar melodies into a brilliantly Wilconian wig-out. Elsewhere, the anxious rhythms of "Pickle Ginger" erupt into a speaker-melting solo from Nels Cline. It is short – just over 30 minutes – but it feels sprightly and substantial. Strong stuff, as ever.

MICHAEL BONNER



YOUTH LAGOON

Savage Hills Ballroom

FAT POSSUM

Fragile dreampop misfit expands sonic horizons on third outing

8/10

Idaho-based singer-songwriter Trevor Powers, aka Youth Lagoon, has an androgynous voice that sounds delicate and powerful, exultant and melancholy. Reeling from the death of a close friend, Powers came to Britain to record his sonically rich third with Bristol-based producer Ali Chant (PJ Harvey, Perfume Genius). Lush, lightly electronic chamber-pop arrangements dominate, with Powers making cynical observations on humanity like "The Knower" or "Again" in his deceptively fuzzy-warm whine. But for all his apparent fragility, he has a firm command of songwriting dynamics, forever surfing skyward on euphoric dreamrock currents like a one-man Sigur Rós or Flaming Lips.

STEPHEN DALTON

DAVE RAWLINGS MACHINE

Nashville Obsolete

ACONY

Majestic, self-produced return of Gillian Welch's other half.

By Rob Hughes



8/10

the Dave Rawlings Machine since 2009's *A Friend Of A Friend*. Rawlings hasn't exactly been idle during the interim, serving as customary foil to Welch and producing albums for Willie Watson and Dawes, but *Nashville Obsolete* nevertheless feels like it's been a long time coming.

Thankfully, as tends to happen with Welch/Rawlings releases, it's been well worth the wait. Most striking of all is the album's deceptive simplicity. Rather than some painstakingly detailed production effort, you get the impression that the direct opposite is true – that Rawlings underwent a process of refinement, of paring things down to their essence, to achieve the desired impact. These are songs that largely prefer to unfurl at their own unhurried leisure, with loping chords and autumnal echoes of *Harvest*-era Neil Young or Dylan's late-'60s output, chiefly *John Wesley Harding*.

A sense of timeless rural repose is central to the mood. It's an album that's all the more beautiful for its lack of clutter, allowing Rawlings' slightly squirrely voice to shift over flat-picked guitar and finely weighted insertions of fiddle and mandolin. There's also a discreet string section, arranged by producer Rawlings, which posits *Nashville Obsolete* in a slightly more sophisticated, modernist milieu.

Some songs (true to normal code of practice, Rawlings and Welch co-wrote everything here) strain towards the epic. "The Trip" is an 11-minute meditation on identity that uses the American railroad as a rusted metaphor for escape and opportunity. It's a song, too, about family and roots, of pride and disappointment, stuffed with rich imagery: frayed denim, boots cracked with spit and asphalt, pictures of old black men in beaver hats. "So take a trip wherever your conscience has to roam," sings Rawlings, shadowed by a Welch harmony. "It's much too hard to try to live a lie at home."

"The Weekend" and "Short Haired Woman Blues" also amble beyond the five-minute mark, both complemented by gorgeous strings that frame the drama with understated grace. The latter, a lyrical tale of a girl from the Midwest with a farmboy hairdo and a cruel habit of turning men's hearts into putty, may just be the best thing on the album. It shares its title with an old Lightnin' Hopkins tune, but Rawlings' "Short Haired Woman Blues" is closer to Neil Young, with its reference to

GILLIAN WELCH AND Dave Rawlings have always seemed content to let the grass grow beneath their feet. Eight years elapsed between Welch's *Soul Journey* and its 2011 follow-up, *The Harrow & The Harvest*. Similarly, we haven't heard from



harvest moons and a minor-chord intro that brings to mind "My My, Hey Hey (Out Of The Blue)". A gentle invocation of the Stones' "Wild Horses" feeds into the chorus: "Don't go chasing wild ponies/They're half crazy and they run/Don't go loving short-haired women/They're gonna leave you cryin'/After thinking it was all in fun."

Of course, Welch, in a reversal of the duo's more usual roles, is a ready and natural complement to Rawlings, singing back-up vocals throughout and adding guitar and taking the odd turn on drums. Ex-Old Crow Medicine Show member Willie Watson, whose recent *Folk Singer Vol 1* was overseen by Rawlings and issued on the same Acony label that he runs with Welch, is also key here, helping to bolster the beautifully radiant harmonies. And honourable mentions go out to mandolinist Jordan Tice, Punch Brothers bassist Paul Kowert and fiddle player

SLEEVE NOTES

➤ Recorded at: Woodland Sound Studios, Nashville
Produced by: Dave Rawlings
Personnel: Dave Rawlings (vocals, guitar, mandolin), Gillian Welch (vocals, guitar, drums), Paul Kowert (bass), Willie Watson (back-up vocals, guitar), Brittany Haas (fiddle), Jordan Tice (mandolin)

Brittany Haas, whose nuanced tones provide much of the album's emotional heft.

As the record progresses, Rawlings and Welch begin to inject more pace, invoking the spirit of the Delmore Brothers on the bright mountain folk of "The Last Pharaoh". There's even room for a little novelty, with "Candy" serving as a kind of nonsense counterpart to Flatt & Scruggs' "Hot Corn Cold Corn", a live favourite of Welch and Rawlings. But things close with the deeper rumination of "Pilgrim (You Can't Go Home)", a roving ballad that namechecks a figurative landmark of folk-blues lore, St James Infirmary, on its eight-minute quest for salvation.

There is so much on *Nashville Obsolete* that impresses, but what lingers longest is a rare and persuasive ability to tap into the ageless mythos of true American folk.

Q&A

Dave Rawlings

What was the impetus for this album? After touring *The Harrow & The Harvest*, we started writing songs and it just felt as though the first couple of dominoes fell toward me, in terms of me singing. And that was combined with a feeling that we wanted to push a little differently after the last record. We decided to play a few dates, so I began looking for a new iteration of the [Dave Rawlings] Machine.

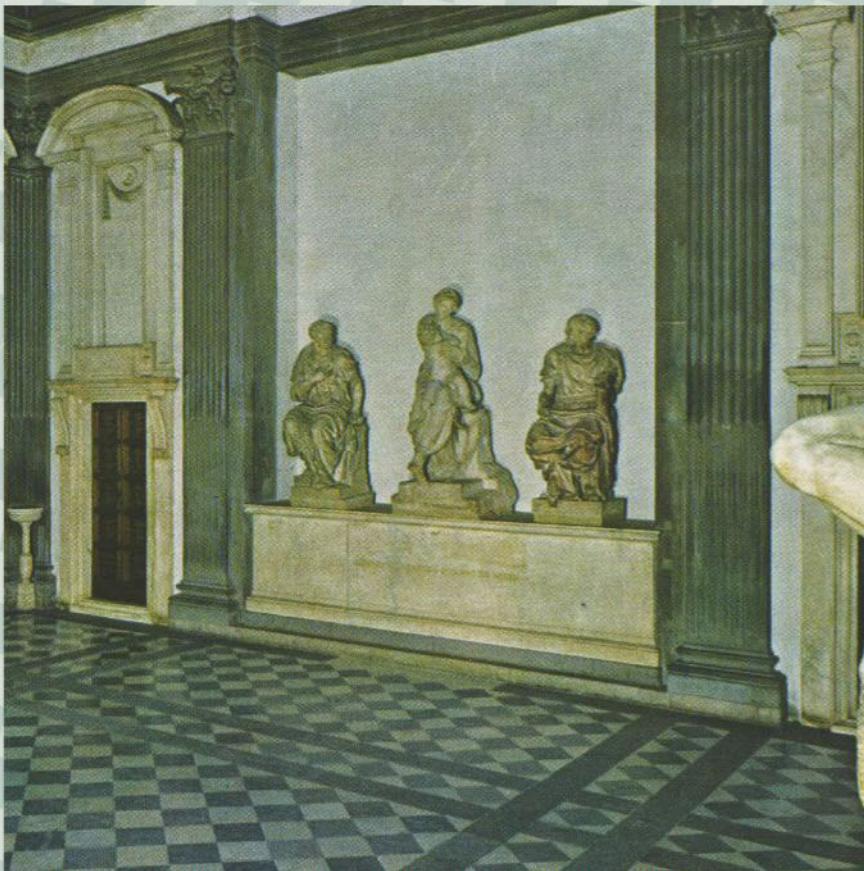
Were you after a particular feel?

The initial concept was that Gillian and I were going to record with just Paul Kowert on bass. But the songs dictated a certain other feeling. I

liked the pace of them and they suited the ruminations of the lyrics. As we were writing, there were clearly some themes that kept returning and connecting to the larger skeletons of the songs.

Does it feel natural being lead voice on an LP? Gillian's voice has such a great quality that the more you strip away around it, the better it sounds, which is why we've always made very sparse records. Her vocal delivery and tone, and the emotion there, just shines when you strip it bare. But when I'm singing, it's very much back to 'OK, how do we present this strange instrument?' It's frustrating at times, but it's rewarding when you get it right. I sometimes have to force myself to remember that I spent my entire life listening to voices that other people consider strange, but which I love.

INTERVIEW: ROB HUGHES



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LINK WRAY'S 3-TRACK SHACK



Three original LPs
 LINK WRAY • MORDICAI JONES • BEANS AND FATBACK

TRACKLIST

SIDE 1

LINK WRAY POLYDOR, 1971

- 1 La De Da
- 2 Take Me Home Jesus
- 3 Juke Box Mama
- 4 Rise And Fall Of Jimmy Stokes
- 5 Fallin' Rain
- 6 Fire And Brimstone
- 7 Ice People
- 8 God Out West
- 9 Crowbar
- 10 Black River Swamp
- 11 Tail Dragger

MORDICAI JONES POLYDOR, 1972

- 12 Walkin' In The Arizona Sun
- 13 Scorpio Woman
- 14 The Coca Cola Sign Blinds My Eyes
- 15 All I Want To Say
- 16 All Because Of A Woman

LINK WRAY

3-Track Shack

ACE

Link retires to his chicken coop, sings, invents Americana. *By Alastair McKay*

8/10

WHEN STEVE VEROCA encountered Link Wray playing guitar at a club in Virginia towards the end of the 1960s he was thrilled and shocked. The place was full of drunken sailors and hookers, none of whom were really listening to Wray, who was stationed on a small stage beside the bar, accompanied by his

brother Doug on drums, and Billy Hodges on keyboards and bass.

"It was smoky and loud," says Verroca, "and Link was up there, pretty much like a human jukebox, nobody was paying any attention. I was glad that I was watching the immortal Link Wray play, and very sad that he was playing in a rathole like that."





TRACKLIST CONTINUED...

DISC 2

MORDCAI JONES CONTINUED

- 1 On The Run
- 2 Son Of A Simple Man
- 3 Precious Jewel
- 4 Days Before Custer
- 5 Gandy Dancer

BEANS AND FATBACK

- 6 Beans And Fatback
- 7 I'm So Glad, I'm So Proud
- 8 Shawnee Tribe
- 9 Hobo Man
- 10 Georgia Pines
- 11 Alabama Electric Circus
- 12 Water Boy
- 13 From Tulsa To North Carolina
- 14 Right Or Wrong (You Lose)
- 15 In The Pines
- 16 Take My Hand (Precious Lord)

Bonus track

- 17 I'm So Glad, I'm So Proud (45 edit)

Rumblin' men: (l-r) Link Wray, Billy "Jukebox" Hodges and Doug Wray outside the 3-Track Shack

→ But Verroca had a plan, and it would lead to an extraordinary diversion in Wray's stalled career. It was not, perhaps, as revolutionary as the recordings that made his name, starting with the malign electricity of his 1958 hit, "Rumble". But there is a case to be made for the albums that emerged from Wray's collaboration with Verroca. They didn't exactly invent Americana; the recordings are too wild to be constrained by a generic straightjacket. But in diverting Wray's energies back to the music that first inspired him – hard country, hellfire gospel, blues – they showed how rock'n'roll

showed Verroca his rehearsal space. In retrospect, it has become known as the 3-Track Shack, a reference to the basic Ampex recorder in the corner, but not much effort had been taken to disguise its previous function. It was a chicken coop which had been converted into a rehearsal space, when the inconvenience of hosting a recording studio in the basement of the main house became too great. The shack was not designed with comfort in mind, and little thought had been given to acoustics. The roof leaked, playing havoc with the tuning of the piano.

HIDDEN TREASURES

COUPS OF THE COOP 4 choice cuts from the 3-Track Shack

FALLIN' RAIN POLYDOR, 1971

A gorgeous country-rock weeper, and not the only time Wray would deliver a tune that seemed to be a genetic outcrop of the Stones' "Out Of Time". The vocal is delivered with a hint of menace and a touch of despair as the Korean War veteran sings of tormented times in a world gone insane. Covered by Calexico circa *Feast Of Wire*.

FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

POLYDOR, 1971

The tune is curiously understated in this song about an apocalyptic dream. Is it the end of the

world, or a flashback to war? The lyrics keep things sketchy, and the tune proceeds gently until Wray's guitar solo fires in, as if from another dimension. As covered by The Neville Brothers; and Nick Cave, Warren Ellis and Mark Lanegan on the *Lawless* soundtrack.

I'M SO GLAD, I'M SO PROUD

VIRGIN, 1973

Edited for a single release from the outtakes album, *Beans And Fatback*, but it's the full-length version that really captures the lo-fi glory of the shack recordings. The words offer no more than

the upbeat commentary of the title, but Wray really lets rip on the guitar, scything his way through six glorious minutes.

LA DE DA

POLYDOR, 1971

The opening track from *Link Wray* is so loose it barely hangs together, but Wray just about gets the strung-out congregation moving in time with his invocations. Recently, Jim James of My Morning Jacket noted how "La De Da" "makes me feel right at home amongst the celebration and the longing", calling the album "perhaps the greatest rock'n'roll record of all time".

could renew itself by re-igniting its primal spirit. You only have to listen to Wray's two attacks on "In The Pines" to understand that Wray's shack recordings are the staging post between Lead Belly and Nirvana *Unplugged*. The fidelity, it's true, is not high. Wray sings like a one-lunged Jagger, and the guitar fizzles like an ultraviolet insect exterminator. It's punk before punk, delivered with the momentum of a runaway train.

Granted, few people cared at the time. Between 1971-'73, when the records were released, rock was still struggling to absorb The Rumble Man's earlier innovations – power chords and distortion – but viewed from here, the naked beauty of the recordings Wray made at the family farm in Accokeek, Maryland is obvious.

Wray's initial reluctance about the project was understandable. The music business had moved on since his brief moment of exposure, and as an innovator he had never really been rewarded. Link's brother Ray Vernon took care of the money, leaving Link to take care of the music. Wray was over 40, with no realistic expectation of a return to currency. Whatever market there had been for instrumental rock'n'roll had evaporated. But still, Wray had his pride. If he was going to make another record, more than a decade after his last, he was determined that it should be done properly, in a high-end studio.

Everything changed when Wray

showed Verroca his rehearsal space. In retrospect, it has become known as the 3-Track Shack, a reference to the basic Ampex recorder in the corner, but not much effort had been taken to disguise its previous function. It was a chicken coop which had been converted into a rehearsal space, when the inconvenience of hosting a recording studio in the basement of the main house became too great. The shack was not designed with comfort in mind, and little thought had been given to acoustics. The roof leaked, playing havoc with the tuning of the piano.

In the sleeve notes to this reissue, Wray gives his views on the shack in a 1971 interview. "We just sit down, start the tape and play what we want. If it's good it's good, and if it's bad it's bad. There's no electronics, just the real nitty gritty, honest music. When I'd be working in the studios in New York it'd be like working in a cathedral. You get these studios with 16 tracks and 24 tracks and you get drunk with power. You start adding more and more to what you have and in the end it's becoming mechanical music, head music, all planned out. The feeling comes first. Feeling is the secret, not some jumped up sound."

In that statement, Wray was both ahead of, and behind, the times. But the focus on inspiration and spontaneity produced great results. Verroca did a deal for five albums. In the end, only three emerged. The first, *Link Wray*, is an untamed, feral country rock album, with strung-out, Stones-style ballads ("Take Me Home Jesus"), violent story songs ("Fallin' Rain"), concluding with a swampy take on Willie Dixon's "Tail Dragger".

Wray was both ahead of, and behind, the times. But the focus on spontaneity produced great results

A sense that as Verroca and Wray got used to their limitations the fire dimmed slightly. The third album, *Beans And Fatback*, was sometimes dismissed by Wray, but it matches the spirit of the first album, and adds muscle. As well as those assaults on "In The Pines" (one labelled as "Georgia Pines"), there's the swaggering beat of "I'm So Glad, I'm So Proud", which succeeds, even though Wray appears to be singing on a different continent to his swaggering guitar. And "Hobo Man" is a gorgeous, strung-out ballad in the Stones gospel mode, which shows that Wray's guitar could evince subtlety as well as raw power.

Ultimately, Wray was right. In 1971, no-one was crying out for a new Link Wray album. The records didn't sell and Wray took his new direction west, collaborating with Jerry Garcia and others on the equally unsuccessful *Be What You Want To*. In truth, some of the magic was lost when Wray started to move in more elevated circumstances. The shack recordings were all about making do and making it up, and working within constraints helped focus Wray's creativity. Verroca likes to joke that, "The shack was so small, you had to go outside to change your mind." At their best, these sessions capture a man rediscovering that he was right all along.

Q&A

Producer Steve Verroca on working with Link Wray

HOW DID YOU PERSUADE LINK TO WORK WITH YOU?

At the beginning, Link didn't like me. Link was like, "What the fuck do you want?" He was the guy who invented rock'n'roll, and he was broke. He couldn't even feed his family. So he was very sceptical. He barely shook my hand, he didn't want to know about me. He said: "You want to produce an album? Who the hell wants an album of Link Wray's music any more?" This was the '60s, man, it was The Beatles, the Stones and all that stuff. And I said, "Well, Link, these are the people who idolise you." He didn't believe it – he thought I was just bullshitting him. I went back to New York and I began getting all these phone calls from Link, he was so excited. We wrote most of the material on the *Polydor* album, the Indian head album [*Link Wray*] on the phone. Me and him together at all kinds of hours. He'd call me at three in the morning.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RECORD IN THE SHACK?

To me, it looked like that was his home. He was awesome in there. So I thought, 'How am I going to convince him that we're going to record here, in this chicken coop?' He didn't care for the idea at all. So we agreed that we would do a couple of songs, and if they were not master quality, I would book a studio in New York. We did a couple of songs, and Link and his brother Doug, and a couple of other guys trooped over, and Link said, "Man, this is the best stuff I've ever done. Let's do it here."

WHAT WAS HE LIKE TO WORK WITH?

There was nothing very conventional about Link. He made his own equipment. He bought cheap Japanese guitars from the loan shop and he worked on them. The first, and the only, amp we used, he made out of an old radio. He got some tubes and he built a wood box, and he put some industrial cotton in the box and a 10-inch speaker, and it sounded incredible. There was no buttons, no high, no low, no bass, no treble, just one way: boom! The sound was so huge that it was impossible to record. The amp, the Link Wray sound, leaked into the drum track, it leaked into the piano track. So we decided to put the amp outside in the yard. The only way we could do that was to mic it through the window and it gave us kind of a special sound. We were trying different things. The piano was all rusted, because the shack in winter leaked. We had all blankets all over the place and we mic'd the

piano under the blankets and we started playing, and then Link just dropped his guitar and said, "Wait a minute, Steve, something is wrong with this sound, it's horrible!" He was right. Something was very wrong. What the problem was – the piano was untunable. You could not tune the piano. We had to tune to the piano, so we all were out of tune! That's how we got that sound. Then other problems came up. Like, the chickens would fly into the coop, through the window. One of the chickens hit me, boom, right in my face. So Fred, Link's dad, put a chicken wire on the window.

IS IT TRUE THE ALBUM WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE BEATLES' LABEL, APPLE?

We took the tapes to New York to transfer them to eight-track. My wife – now my ex wife – Yvonne, worked for Allen Klein who managed The Beatles and the Stones. One day she went to work and she had forgotten the keys to the apartment, so Link and I got a cab to her office to drop off the keys, and by the elevator in the lobby, there was John Lennon. My wife was there with [Lennon's girlfriend] May Pang, who knew me very well. And she goes: "Hi Steve. Hi Link," and John Lennon turns round, sees Link, and goes "Link Wray! Man, I love ya!" He hugged him and gave him a big kiss on the cheek.

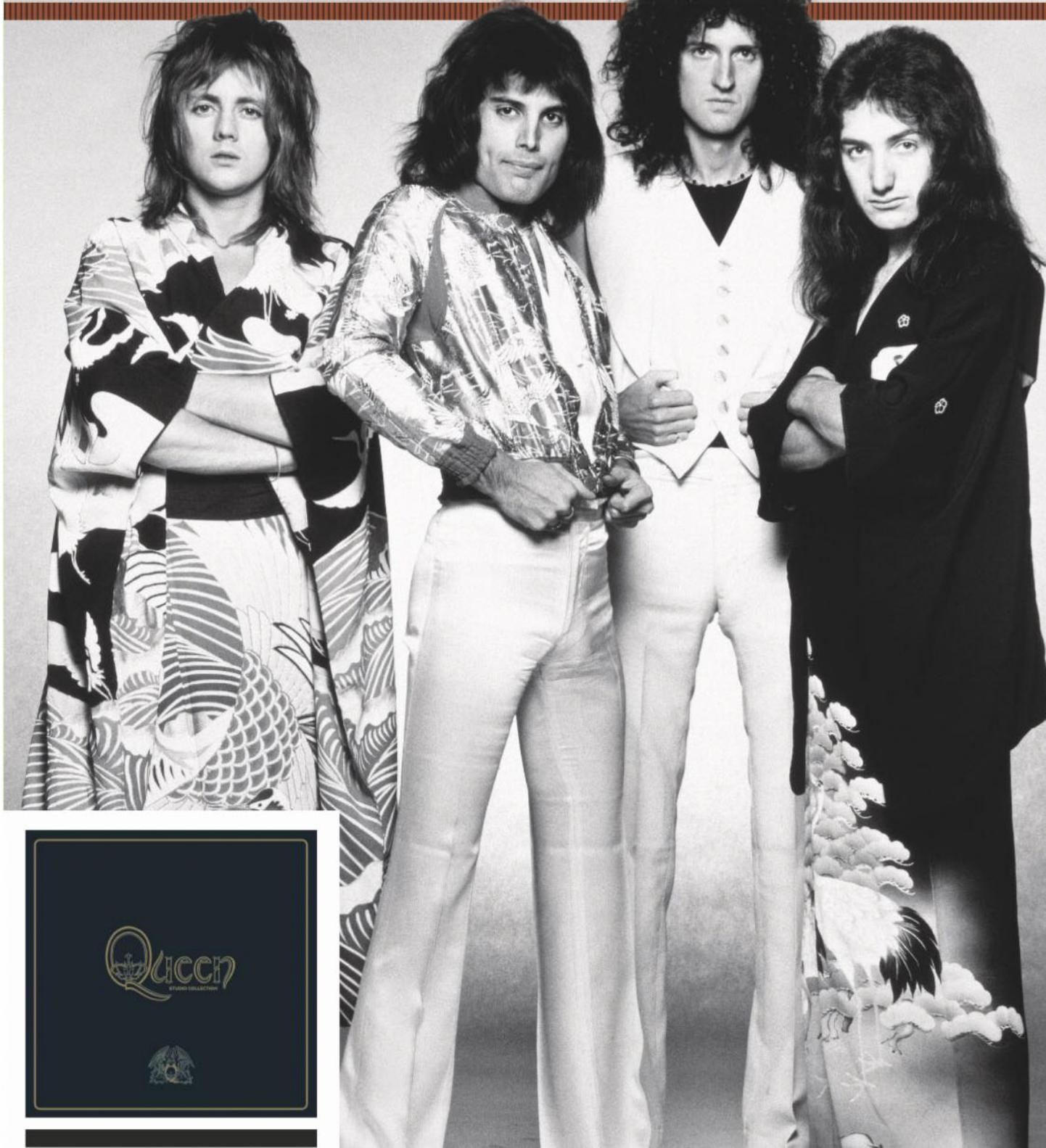
They spent an hour together talking. Then he asked Link, "What you doing in New York, do you live here?" Link says, "No, I'm here finishing my album." John Lennon was so excited you wouldn't believe, and he wanted Apple to put out the album, except they could not guarantee me a release within the

year. He sent Sid Bernstein – he's the guy who put The Beatles on their concert tour – to the shack and he wanted John and Link to do a jam together. They wanted to tape it, and they wanted to film it, working at the shack together. But there were problems.

INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR MCKAY



Steve Verroca: "Link was the guy who invented rock'n'roll, and he was broke"



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All albums come with a download code

QUEEN Studio Collection

UNIVERSAL

Two decades of stylistically divergent bombast in one handsomely remastered package. By Graeme Thomson

6/10

QUEEN WERE A strange old beast. Featuring four gifted songwriters (bassist John Deacon wrote "I Want To Break Free" and "Another One Bites The Dust"; drummer Roger Taylor penned "Radio GaGa") with wildly differing personalities, it's little

wonder they were stylistically confused, leaping from prog-rock to flapper jazz, disco to metal, and most points in-between.

An illusion of unity was fostered by three formidable constants: Freddie Mercury's inimitable voice, his preening persona, and Brian

May's layered guitar attack, a trinity that forever walked the tightrope between bombastic magnificence and delusional pomposity. Never fashionable and often critically derided, in their original form Queen achieved 20 years of commercial glory thanks to a savvy knack of absorbing contemporary trends while ensuring they were never far from the next killer 45.

The quantity and ubiquity of hits have tended to overshadow the albums, a view not entirely discredited by this hefty boxset containing their entire studio output: all 15 albums remastered by Bob Ludwig from the original tapes and cut on 180g coloured vinyl (each LP is also available individually on black vinyl).

The quality of the vinyl is superb, the packaging lavish – but what of the music? In their earliest incarnation, Queen were huffing blues-rockers enlivened by a proximity to glam. *Queen* and *Queen II* track their evolution from crunchy, riff-heavy rock ("Keep Yourself Alive", "Seven Seas Of Rhye") towards something closer to their signature sound: multiple stacked harmonies, layered guitar lines, rich melodies, stylistic promiscuity. Cohesive and atmospheric, *Queen II* is one of their best, featuring trippy folk ("Some Day One Day"), compelling hobgoblin silliness ("The March Of The Black Queen") and an undersung classic in "Father To Son".

Their imperial phase – royal Queen, no less – kicks off with 1974's *Sheer Heart Attack*. Stylish, self-assured and good fun, deep cuts like "In The Lap Of The Gods...", "Revisited" and "Stone Cold Crazy" more than hold their own alongside the louche "Killer Queen" and soaring "Now I'm Here". *A Night At The Opera* delivers more of the same, just more excessively, expansively (and expensively). "Bohemian Rhapsody" is the marquee turn, "You're My Best Friend" has second billing, while supporting highlights include May's stirring folk broadside "39" and Queen's very own "Stairway To Heaven", the eight-minute "The Prophet's Song".

A Day At The Races consolidated their position as arena-rock behemoths, but the soft-bellied *News Of The World* suggested a weakening of sinew, while opening an album with "We Will Rock You" and "We Are The Champions" during the peak of punk was evidence of a band trapped in a bubble of its own self-regard.

Following the so-so *Jazz* – which is either winningly eclectic or utterly directionless, depending on your tastes, but is undeniably lifted by "Don't Stop Me Now" – Queen began engaging with modern technology to explore electro-pop, disco and funk. On *The Game*, synths vie with May's guitar, and the bass-heavy throb of "Another One Bites The Dust" co-exists relatively happily with the throwback rockabilly of "Crazy Little Thing Called Love".

Quality control falls steeply from here. *Flash Gordon*, the soundtrack to Mike Hodges' 1980 sci-fi film, is largely instrumental and only sporadically effective, and *Hot Space* is a dance-pop disaster, characterised by tinny drum machines, disintegrating band unity, and a host of not very good songs. *The Works* is stronger but still patchy, big singles "It's A Hard Life", "I Want To Break Free" and "Radio GaGa" papering over the filler.

Surfing a post-Live Aid resurgence, *A Kind Of Magic* is the unofficial soundtrack (six songs feature in the movie) to *Highlander*, a fantasy film almost as silly as the band. The uber-'80s cover graphics, the synthetic stomp of "One Vision" and ethereal stodge of "Who Wants To Live Forever" present a sleek précis of Queen's latter-day aesthetic, striking a balance between their rock roots and newfound pop gloss.

Recorded and released following Mercury's AIDS diagnosis in 1987, *The Miracle* and *Innuendo* feel more unified and, at times, pack a surprising punch. "The Miracle" and "Was It All Worth It" reconnect with the old pomp, while "These Are The Days Of Our Lives" and "The Show Must Go On" mine Mercury's rapidly failing health for maximum melodrama, although his trademark chutzpah is evident on the otherwise execrable "I'm Going Slightly Mad". By the time of *Made In Heaven* in 1995, on which embryonic recordings made by the singer in the last months of his life were completed by his bandmates, Mercury was four years dead and Queen as a creative entity were finished.

Boxed up handsomely and never sounding better, Queen's oeuvre, hit and miss though it is, assumes more depth and substance here than is often credited, while in *Queen II* and *A Night At The Opera* they have at least two complete albums that stand the test of time.



AMERICA The Warner Bros Years 1971-1977

WARNER BROS

The soft parade: chart-rockers' first eight albums boxed

6/10

America were something of an anomaly, formed in 1967 by three school friends in the Hertfordshire countryside, all sons of US Air Force officers. Three years later they auditioned for underground DJ Jeff Dexter at the Roundhouse who secured them a deal with Warners – Dexter was later ousted by David Geffen. Initially, they had more in common with British country rock bands such as Cochise and Bronco, but it was "A Horse With No Name" that sealed their fate, dislodging Neil Young's "Heart Of Gold" from the top of *Billboard*'s charts in March 1972. There was a certain irony since the song was mocked as such a pastiche of Young's more mawkish tendencies. Unfairly dismissed as Crosby, Stills & Nash clones, America favoured a smoother, folksy pop sound caught somewhere between Bread and Beatles balladry. In fact, from *Holiday* onwards, the fourth of eight albums collected here, they were produced by George Martin. The hits kept coming following their return to home turf, but they were too tame for the strutting, glam-infested UK charts. America's second album, *Homecoming*, is by far the strongest, but the smart hooks and appealing harmonies soon became soporific and the songwriting too formulaic.

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON

DAVID BOWIE Five Years 1969-1973

PARLOPHONE

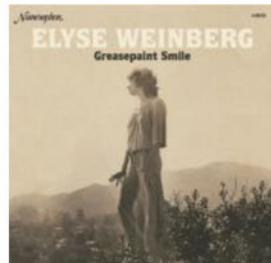
12CD box includes first six studio LPs, two live sets, rarities and oddities Bowie completists will wolf up this newly remastered overview of his first half

decade, spanning from the eponymous 1969 debut (aka *Space Oddity*) to 1973's covers record *Pin Ups*. *Live Santa Monica '72* (2008) and *Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture Soundtrack* (1983) also appear in remastered form. Producer Ken Scott's crunchy 2003 remix of *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust...* invites comparisons to his 1972 original mix. But the primary source of intrigue is *Re:Call 1*, a two-disc comp of non-album singles, B-sides and mono mixes, which, like Jimmy Page's Zep companion discs, traces the evolution of various stylistic vectors. Among the more fascinating rarities are a pair of tentative early stabs at Ziggy songs by a one-offlineup Bowie dubiously named the Arnold Corns; these turn out to be far less Ziggy-fied than the surprisingly lively re-recording of the first LP's quaint "Memory Of A Free Festival", featuring one Mick Ronson on electric guitar. Marc Bolan supplies the six-string fireworks on "The Prettiest Star" b/w "Conversation Piece", the follow-up to "Space Oddity". Also worth close examination are two very different takes on "Holy Holy", a delightfully twisted cover of Chuck Berry's "Round And Round" from the Ziggy sessions and the saxy single version of *Aladdin Sane*'s "John, I'm Only Dancing".

EXTRAS: The 24-track *Re:Call 1*; a book featuring 8/10 tech notes by Scott and Visconti, reviews and a foreword by Ray Davies. **BUD SCOPPA**

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



ELYSE WEINBERG

Greasepaint Smile

NUMERO GROUP

8/10

Toronto folk-singer's shelved 1969 gem

At the dawn of the '70s, Elyse Weinberg had all the right people in her corner. Instead, various troubles halted the release of not one but two albums by the raspy-voiced Canadian. The first to hit the shelf, *Greasepaint Smile* was recorded in 1969 with Neil Young's producer David Briggs and guests such as

Young, JD Souther and an 18-year-old Nils Lofgren. Newly unearthed by the Numero Group, Weinberg's gloriously ragged album shows why she deserved the good fortune bestowed on more famous peers.

While in Toronto in the mid-'60s, Weinberg played the same folk-club circuit as Joni Mitchell and Gordon Lightfoot. After moving to Los Angeles in 1968, she roomed with 'Mama' Cass Elliot, who hooked up the newcomer with manager Roy Silver.

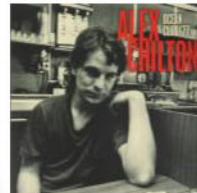
Early signs boded well. *Elyse*, her first album for Silver's label Tetragrammaton, made it to No 31 and she became a fixture at the Troubadour Club. She also had the support of Neil Young, a friend she made when he first arrived in Toronto. The singer – who changed her name to Cori Bishop after leaving the music world – recalls how he turned up in his hearse. "He was very quirky even then, just very much his own person," says Bishop.

Having crashed at Weinberg's place in Toronto, he returned the favour by putting her up in Topanga Canyon during her first weeks in LA. While recording *Greasepaint Smile* in San Francisco, she invited Young to play on a song called "Houses". Says Bishop, "He just came and whipped out that beautiful guitar line." First released on Orange Twin's 2005 reissue of *Elyse*, "Houses" is just one reason why *Greasepaint Smile* would've turned heads had its release not been foiled by Tetragrammaton's bankruptcy.

Bishop considers the album's Joplin-sings-Dylan brand of ramshackle Americana to be a better representation of who she was than her debut's acid-rock stylings. Alas, only a few test pressings made it into the world. Her third album, *Wildfire*, met the same fate when she fell out with Silver, thereby scuppering a new deal with Asylum. Having recently discovered a pristine cassette copy, she hopes that it, too, can finally be heard, along with more songs she recorded after trading the music business for a career in insurance.

Rather than feeling embittered, she's thrilled by the surge of attention, but also wary of the impact that fame might have had on her younger self. "I hear a real despair in my voice," says Bishop. "I had no spiritual tools to deal with it at the time, so I was just self-medicating as so many people do. I fully believe that if I had attained any type of large success, I probably would've overdosed and died."

JASON ANDERSON



ALEX CHILTON

Ocean Club '77

NORTON RECORDS

Missing link: powerpop's mercurial godfather adrift in the land of punk

8/10

His recording career mostly a shambles, and with Big Star – whose incredible third album wouldn't be released until 1978 – wrecked and defunct, Alex Chilton began picking up the pieces by settling in New York, signing with Ork Records, and playing bar-band gigs like this one. Where the '80s-and-beyond Chilton could be wayward onstage, this set presents a snippet of what a more conventional career path might have looked like for Chilton – a focused, enchanting mix of the fiery, the eloquent and the playful. Leading a stripped-down three-piece band (with Chris Stamey of dB's fame on bass), Chilton posits a unique snapshot: soulful Big Star interpretations, oddball covers and juxtapositions (Brian Wilson's "Wouldn't It Be Nice", Chuck Berry's "Memphis"), ancient history (a manic take on The Box Tops' "The Letter"), and new compositions, executed with drive, aplomb and some mesmerising guitar leads. Among the "new" material, the swinging, hook-laden "All Of The Time" stands out, far outdistancing its *Bach's Bottom* studio take. While "September Gurls" has a curious, tossed-off feel (and is somehow no less charming for that), others – "O My Soul", "Way Out West", "In The Street" – spring to life in raw, impassioned, unadulterated ways.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



THE CLIENTELE

Alone And Unreal

POINTY

Fifteen years of the best of Hampshire's dreampop disciples

Over five albums since their late-'90s debut on a Fierce Panda comp, the

bittersweet indie melancholia of The Clientele has earned a cult following, especially in America. Drawing on Paisley Underground harmonics, The Velvet Underground in "Sunday Morning"/"Pale Blue Eyes" mode and the likes of Galaxie 500, they've imbued their influences with a quintessentially middle-class English pastoral aesthetic, filtered through the rain-soaked streets of Basingstoke and Haringey. With the exception of a couple of singles, the band has been on hiatus since 2011, so a compilation featuring tracks from all five of their full-length albums is a welcome reminder of how magical Alasdair MacLean's songs can sound. But a single-disc career retrospective also exposes rather too obviously how little sense of development there has been. Almost all the tracks share the same mood and ambience and, more often than not, the same key and tempo. The result is that the 11 compositions melt into each other, not so much distinctively individual songs as interchangeable variations on a theme, albeit an exquisite one.

EXTRAS: One non-album track (the 2014 single

6/10 "On A Summer Trail") and a bonus download of a previously unreleased session by an early incarnation of the band.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



CLOSE LOBSTERS Firestation Towers 1986-1989

FIRE

Three-CD boxset from Paisley's C86 janglers

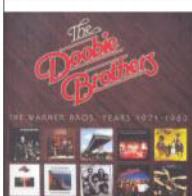
Best known for their contribution to the

NME's iconic C86 compilation, Close Lobsters actually provide a useful bridge between two generations of Glaswegian indie. They emerged in 1984, inspired by Postcard bands such as Orange Juice and Josef K, and split up in the early '90s just as the likes of Belle And Sebastian and Mogwai were forming a new Sound Of Young Scotland. It's that jangly, optimistic vibe that permeates these discs. The 1987 debut, helmed by the reverb-happy Felt producer John A Rivers, has all the student-disco faves ("Just Too Bloody Stupid", "Pathetic", "A Prophecy") that ended up earning them a cult following in the States. The 1989 follow-up, *Headache Rhetoric*, produced by Phil Vinall, removed all the modish gated reverb but ended up sounding like a rather unappealing demo, saved by the wonderfully disjointed "Got Apprehension" and the poppy "Knee Trembler". The final disc is the pick of the bunch: a 19-track compilation of singles, B-sides and sessions, including "In Spite Of These Times", "Firestation Towers" and the Nikki Sudden tribute "Hey Hey My My". The band never had the experimental instincts of some other C86 veterans – their lineage is pure, Byrds-inspired "perfect pop" that few there actually listened to.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS

7/10



THE DOOBIE BROTHERS The Warner Bros Years 1971-1983

RHINO

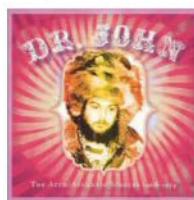
Ten-disc boxset, shoo-be-doo-be-doo-dah...

8/10

Even at their commercial peak, the Doobies' sound was constantly evolving, and a chronological listen to the nine studio albums included here (plus live disc from their 1983 farewell tour) tracks an enjoyably curving ride from the guitar boogie hooks and laidback country-rock leanings of the early albums through to the slick soul-pop and light funk of the late-'70s as Michael McDonald took control. Conventional wisdom holds that the band's albums tended to contain two or three killer tracks and a bunch of filler, leading to large sales for the 'hits' collections compiling over-familiar landmarks such as "Long Train Runnin'", "What A Fool Believes" and "Listen To The Music". However, renewed acquaintance with the original studio releases reveals an overlooked depth and breadth to the Doobies' catalogue, crammed with forgotten riches and lesser-known gems. An alternative 'best of' might include the CSN-like "Travelin' Man" from their debut, the splendid country-blues of "Snake Man" from 1972's *Toulouse Street*, the spirited blue-eyed soul of "Turn It Loose" from 1976's *Takin' It To The Streets* and the gorgeous, James Taylor-like "Sweet Feelin'" from 1978's *Minute By Minute*. And there's plenty more from whence they came.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



DR JOHN The Atco/ Atlantic Singles 1968-1974

OMNIVORE

Slick selection from the Doc's fonkiest era

8/10

A bunch of Dr John singles is not an obvious candidate to set pulses racing; he was a rare visitor to the charts on both sides of the pond – the sleek brass and driving funk of "Right Place Wrong Time" and the cheerily languid "Such A Night" aside, not much springs to mind. Yet by stacking up all the 45s that didn't make similar headway, *Singles 69-74* becomes a marvellous primer for the New Orleans maestro. Four cuts neatly fillet his phenomenal *Gris-Gris* debut album ("Gilded Splinters" is still as eerie as a nighttime bayou swamp), and six other early albums are likewise profitably raided. "Big Chief" and "Iko Iko" are guaranteed Orleans arse-shakers, as is rare B-side "Wang Dang Doodle". Other oddities include "Man Of Many Words", an Otis-like outing with Buddy Guy and Eric Clapton, and the droll "Patriotic Flag Waver" (from *Babylon*), a send-up of nationalism complete with a snatch of "God Save The Queen". The Doc's cheese-grater vocal chords aren't for everyone (he only started signing after hearing Dylan – "If that's singing..."), but his Crescent City keyboards and sly persona seep into every riff and lyric he touches. A 22-track treasure chest.

EXTRAS: None.

NEIL SPENCER

HOW TO BUY... ALEX CHILTON LIVE

Thudding, shambolic, glorious



ALEX CHILTON Live In London

AURA, 1980

Grounded by a thudding, virtually improvised backing group, *Live In London* is a full-bore mess, obdurately so. It's also about as hard as Chilton ever rocked, as evidenced by a blistering "Train Kept A-Rollin'", and a dark, stomping "Bangkok".

8/10



ALEX CHILTON Electricity by Candlelight: NYC 2/13/97

BAR/NONE, 2013

This impromptu, near-acoustic bevy of covers, performed during a power cut, is startling, shambolic, hilarious, and mercurial in equal measure. Chilton shows his range, covering Joni Mitchell and Glen Sherley, and ploughing through Loudon Wainwright's intemperate "Motel Blues", only to modestly offer up a trio of heartfelt Brian Wilson nuggets.

7/10



BIG STAR Live In Memphis

OMNIVORE, 2014

With kindred spirits Jon Auer and Ken Stringfellow of The Posies lending a garage-band mix of nuance, muscle and soul, Chilton reclaimed Big Star's glorious legacy live in the early '90s. On certain nights, like this one from 1994, he inhabited the songs with a rare verve.

9/10

LUKE TORN



THE GRATEFUL DEAD 30 Trips Around The Sun

RHINO

Chronological drag through the live Dead archives

7/10

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about *30 Trips Around The Sun* is what it celebrates: the 50th anniversary of The Grateful Dead, the trip captains of California turned American vernacular road show. Beyond the recent Fare Thee Well run of shows across the USA, where the remaining original members of the Dead gathered with a few ancillary players to salute their half-century, *30 Trips Around The Sun*, in its abridged 4CD form, could have been the perfect flip-book through the Dead's career. And indeed, there is plenty of fantastic music here – just two examples: a gorgeously extended "Here Comes Sunshine" from 1973's San Diego Sports Arena show; a pithy, yet exemplary "Dark Star" from Berkeley's Greek Theater in 1968 – but by its focus on the group's embrace of blues and folk song, it does a disservice to the more exploratory sides of the group's playing; the Dead's legendary dives into improvised space and fluxing time zones are notably absent here.

EXTRAS: Liner notes from Jesse Jarnow. The full 8/10 80CD set features each complete show in chronological order, with a gold-coloured 7" single, 288-page book and scroll. It's also available as a USB stick, which seems to miss the point, a bit.

JON DALE

BERT JANSCH It Don't Bother Me/ Jack Orion/ Bert And John (with John Renbourn) (reissues, 1965, 1966)

SANCTUARY



8/10

Bert's mercurial early work, with added Renbourn, now remastered

9/10

A half-century on, the power of Bert Jansch's early

recordings remains undiminished. *It Don't Bother Me* successfully fineses the formula of his nimble debut, with the defiant title track something of a manifesto for the guitarist's idiosyncratic career. Based around traditional folk songs passed on by Anne Briggs, 1966's austere, pioneering *Jack Orion* is the pivotal set here; John Renbourn's more exact lead guitar, notably on the 10-minute title track, a stunning counterpart to Jansch's less showy, but no less impressive picking. Duo album *Bert And John*, however, might be the most enjoyable listen. Just 28 minutes long, and joyfully low-key, it's still a rare delight, especially opener "East Wind" and the unexpectedly fluid take on Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat". With the sound quality of the original releases sometimes as murky as a dusty corner of Les Cousins, the remastering is the biggest draw for these reissues, and it's been handled sensitively. The sound throughout is crisper and more pleasantly mid-range, with Jansch and Renbourn's steel-strings now bursting out of opposite speakers in impressive clarity.

EXTRAS: New liner notes.

4/10 TOM PINNOCK



THE KITCHEN CINQ

When The Rainbow Disappears: An Anthology 1965-68

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Lee Hazlewood's charges chronicled. Everything but...

8/10

Responsible for the first album release on Lee Hazlewood's LHI Records, The Kitchen Cinq were a North Texas outfit unusual in combining fuzztone punk, albeit a genteel brand, with harmony-drenched, British Invasion-fed pop folk. *When The Rainbow Disappears* corrals almost the entire output from a group forever changing its name. Tracks from the formative Illusions in 1965, The Y'all's – one single in 1966 – and final efforts as A Handful in 1968, bookend The Kitchen Cinq's recordings, mostly produced by Hazlewood's first duet partner Suzi Jane Hokom. She delivers a snappy, reverb-heavy sound but, typically for the times, the Cinq were overly reliant on covers. Despite brave stabs at hits by Neil Diamond, The Beau Brummels (who they most closely resemble) and The Hollies, it's the originals that shine brightest; "You'll Be Sorry Someday" fizzes with fine foot-tapping Shadows guitar. It has a terrific stop-start chorus, though, as Hokom observes, they pause a tad too long for comfort. Later sessions with the Wrecking Crew and the Association's Tandy Almer stand out, notably Al Kooper's "The Street Song", swathed in baroque orchestrations but, like everything LHI touched, success never came.

EXTRAS: Extensive liner notes, interviews with band members and Hokom, photos.

MICK HOUGHTON

LARAAJI

All In One Peace

LEAVING

Collected cassette works from the New York new age luminary

The man who calls himself Laraaji Nadabrahmananda remains best known for the

1980 LP, *Ambient 3: Day Of Radiance*, produced by Brian Eno shortly after the ambient polymath came across the African-American mystic busking on his zither in New York's Washington Square Park. With Eno's patronage, Laraaji became a noted musician in avant-garde circles, collaborating with the likes of Bill Laswell and Roger Eno. But he's also been a prolific home-recorder, selling a formidable catalogue of cassettes through new age shops or meditation groups. *All In One Peace* collects three early works, 1978's *Lotus Collage*, 1981's *Unicorns In Paradise* and '83's *Connecting The Inner Healer* – over three hours of music. Perhaps surprisingly, given much new age music is characterised as insipid, large tracts are excellent. *Lotus Collage* finds a pre-Eno Laraaji honing his style, running electric zither and hammer percussion through effects pedals. *Unicorns In Paradise* feels more elevated still, its flowing improvs underpinned by deep, languid electric keyboard lines. The final cassette commences with several instrumental synth pieces, but the title track is a gorgeous 30-minute piece in which Laraaji, voice treated with a pinch of echo, guides the listener into a deep, cosmic meditation.

EXTRAS: Comes as three boxed cassettes, plus **5/10** digital download.

LOUIS PATTISON

8/10



McCarthy

I Am A Wallet

(reissue, 1987)

OPTIC NERVE

Exhuming McCarthy – deluxe vinyl edition of the Marxist janglers' first album

7/10

In many respects – the chiming guitars, the brisk songs, the preevish vocals – McCarthy were the quintessential C86 band. Except instead of bemoaning the cruelty of romantic rejection, singer Malcolm Eden bemoaned the cruelty of capitalist society. Uberfan Nicky Wire calls 1987's *I Am A Wallet* "a *Communist Manifesto* with tunes", although despite a song entitled "The Procession Of Popular Capitalism" this is actually a very personal, wounded take on 'me decade' intolerance that manifests itself in both the naïve jangle of "The Way Of The World" and the savage irony of "God Made The Virus". McCarthy would sharpen up, both musically and lyrically, before splitting in 1990 (with guitarist Tim Gane going on to form Stereolab). But this remains an endearingly brittle and unique personal-political statement.

EXTRAS: A bonus LP featuring all the tracks from McCarthy's first four singles, including shimmering anti-Thatcher fantasy "Red Sleeping Beauty" and No 4 Indie Chart smash "Frans Hals". You also get posters, a sticker and a booklet featuring Malcolm Eden's track-by-track commentary, while the first 250 copies come with a reproduction of rare 1985 debut 7" "In Purgatory". Oh, and the whole thing's pressed on red vinyl, natch.

SAM RICHARDS

HOW TO BUY...

THE BEST OF... LEE HAZLEWOOD'S LHI



THE INTERNATIONAL SUBMARINE BAND

Safe At Home

LHI, 1968

Safe At Home is now viewed as a foundation stone in the myth of singer Gram Parsons. Release of the record was delayed by Parsons' involvement with The Byrds, but the album includes "Luxury Liner" and "Blue Eyes". Future Flying Burrito Brother Chris Ethridge plays bass.

8/10



HONEY LTD

Honey Ltd

LHI, 1968

This Detroit girl group quit college and hitchhiked, stoned, to Sunset Boulevard to meet Lee. They were promptly signed and put in the studio with the Wrecking Crew. Their summer harmonies verge on psych folk, never lovelier than on the breezy "Silk'n Honey". They also do extraordinary things to "Louie, Louie", turning it into a sassy strut.

8/10



ARTHUR

Dreams And Images

LHI, 1968

Baroque pop oddity by sensitive soul, Arthur Lee Harper, who was described by Hazlewood as "a bird with eighth-notes for wings". Arthur had poetic aspirations, while arranger Don Randi provides an almost cinematic backdrop to his musings.

7/10

ALASTAIR MCKAY



SPOONER OLDHAM

Pot Luck

(reissue, 1972)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Muscle Shoals sideman's long-lost solo album

7/10

Playing organ in the house band at FAME and Muscle Shoals, Spooner Oldham brought majesty to songs such as "Mustang Sally" and "When A Man Loves A Woman". Continuing his relationship with Dan Penn at American Studios in Memphis, he co-wrote standards like "I'm Your Puppet" and "The Dark End Of The Street". Less well-known is his 1972 solo album, which emerged from a stint at Producer's Workshop on Hollywood Boulevard, the highlight of which was a session with Liberace. *Pot Luck*'s second side is largely an instrumental medley of well-known Oldham cuts, closing with a lovely vocal on "My Friend" and a full gospel rendition of "Will The Circle Be Unbroken". The treasure is on Side One, where Oldham's uncertain croon adds a careworn quality to easy-going tunes. "Life's Package Of Puzzles" is a self-penned tale of woe which suggests a country sensibility, as does "Easy Listening", a co-write with country singer Freddy Weller. The standouts are the fractured misery of "1980 (Keep On Smiling)" and the opener, "The Lord Loves A Rolling Stone" (a Penn co-write), on which Oldham just about carries home a weary (end of the) road song.

EXTRAS: Liner notes.

3/10 ALASTAIR MCKAY



SAVANT

Artificial Dance

RVNG INTL

Seattle synth doyen's avant-pop band-not-band project

7/10

After nearly 40 years of relative obscurity, US outsider Kerry Leimer drifted into vogue last summer when New York's RVNG Int'l put together a compilation of his early work, *A Period Of Review*, which surveyed the intuitive machine music this restless composer produced between 1975 and 1983. For context, Leimer looked overseas to the likes of Faust, Wire, Terry Riley and Stockhausen when assembling the lush ambient pieces and mechanical funk for his Palace Of Lights imprint, on which he would investigate the possibilities of sound. "I'm the least spiritual person you'd care to meet," he said in a recent interview, dispelling any new age connotations. For this one-off Savant record he invited local musicians from the Seattle post-punk and experimental scenes to jam at his house, the catch being that each person would be given an unfamiliar instrument to play. Leimer would then construct tracks from this collaboration, splicing tape, which explains why much of *Artificial Dance*, with its wafting wind chimes, awkward rhythms and queasy boogie, closely resembles his own solo gear. In places, his cut-up technique gives Savant an Afro-Cubist dimension that mirrors Brian Eno and David Byrne's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*, though ultimately *Artificial Dance*, stiff and self-aware, is easier to admire from afar.

EXTRAS: Liner notes and interviews.

5/10 PIERS MARTIN

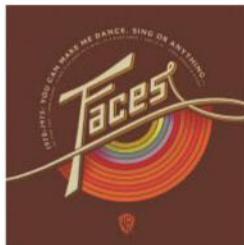


FACES

1970-1975: You Can Make Me Dance, Sing Or Anything...

RHINO

The four studio albums remastered and expanded with previously unreleased tracks, plus a bonus disc of singles. By Bud Scoppa



8/10

THEY CAME TOGETHER in a marriage of convenience – remaining Small Faces Ronnie Lane, Ian McLagan and Kenney Jones were in need of a frontman, Rod Stewart required a rhythm section to further his nascent solo career and fellow

Jeff Beck Group castoff Ron Wood just needed a gig. What the five had in common was a love of American R'n'B and a knack for appropriating its tropes with verve and personality. They went on to make but four studio albums, none of them a masterpiece (although two come close), along with a handful of single sides, during their four years as a working unit.

The Faces were barely there after *Ooh La La*, their 1973 swansong, with Lane going his own way, Stewart making his Atlantic crossing and Woody replacing Mick Taylor in the Stones. The brevity of their existence as a fully loaded entity, the lack of a *Sticky Fingers* or a *Who's Next* in their discography and Stewart's subsequent career have conspired to deflate the band's legacy. Largely forgotten is the fact that the Faces' status as an arena-rock band rivalled that of the Stones, The Who and Led Zeppelin following Stewart's 1971 breakthrough, *Every Picture Tells A Story*. It was Rod who got the asses in the seats, but the band as a whole sealed the deal with its antic, boozy brilliance

onstage. The records were primarily an advertisement for the tours – Jones admitted as much. But as the new retrospective *You Can Make Me Dance, Sing Or Anything* systematically reveals, there's more substance here than the Faces' marginalised present-day critical standing would lead the uninformed to believe.

Whereas 2004's *Five Guys Walk Into A Bar*, assembled by McLagan, functioned as a subjective, at times surprisingly intimate portrait of the band, this five-disc set of newly remastered recordings presents the four albums in order, each tagged with relevant extras, adding a fifth disc of non-LP singles. Organised in this way, the boxset documents the band's evolution from a tentative recording unit haphazardly honing a distinctive sound into a sure-handed studio band with more on its mind than coming up with the next crowd-pleaser.

The self-produced *First Step*, recorded during their getting-to-know-you phase and released in early 1970, finds the bandmembers locating their sweet spot – the interplay of Stewart's rasp, Wood's evocative slide work and McLagan's B3 churn. The tasty recipe is most appealingly represented by "Flying", their very first studio foray; Wood and Lane's Band-like ballad "Nobody Knows", sung in unison by Stewart and Lane; and a suitably rustic cover of Dylan's "The Wicked Messenger". It also reveals a band in need of some serious editing, as five of the 10 tracks stretch out for five minutes or more. The most intriguing of the five previously unissued bonus tracks are the raucous blues-rocker "Behind The Sun", cut in LA two months after the album's release, and a live-at-the-Beeb "Shake, Shudder, Shiver", their slithering grooves betraying the band's fondness for Free.

By the time they returned to the studio to cut *Long Player*, they'd toured extensively, and the two segments of the band had begun to cohere, but at the same time they'd had precious little time to write together, and the album stands as a classic case of the sophomore slump. The inclusion of two



TRACKLIST EXTRAS

FIRST STEP - EXTRAS

- 1 Behind The Sun (Outtake)*
- 2 Mona - The Blues (Outtake)*
- 3 Shake, Shudder, Shiver (BBC Session)*
- 4 Flying (Take 3)*
- 5 Nobody Knows (Take 2)*

LONG PLAYER - EXTRAS

- 1 Whole Lotta Woman (Outtake)*
- 2 Tell Everyone (Take 1)*
- 3 Sham-Mozza (Instrumental - Outtake)*
- 4 Too Much Woman (Live)*
- 5 Love In Vain (Live)*

ANODISAS GOOD AS A WINK... - EXTRAS

- 1 Miss Judy's Farm (BBC Session)*
- 2 Stay With Me (BBC Session)*

OOHLALA - EXTRAS

- 1 Cindy Incidentally (BBC Session)*
- 2 Borstal Boys (Rehearsal)*
- 3 Silicone Grown (Rehearsal)*
- 4 Glad And Sorry (Rehearsal)*
- 5 Jealous Guy (Live)*

STRAY SINGLES

- 1 Pool Hall Richard
- 2 I Wish It Would Rain (With A Trumpet)
- 3 Rear Wheel Skid
- 4 Maybe I'm Amazed
- 5 Oh Lord I'm Browned Off
- 6 You Can Make Me Dance, Sing Or Anything (Even Take The Dog For A Walk, Mend A Fuse, Fold Away The Ironing Board, Or Any Other Domestic Short Comings) (UK Single Version)
- 7 As Long As You Tell Him
- 8 Skewiff (Mend The Fuse)
- 9 Dishevelment Blues

* previously unreleased

extended live performances failed to disguise the paucity of first-rate material. The most revelatory *Long Player* bonus track is a raw-boned live-in-the-studio run-through of the rockabilly chestnut "Whole Lotta Woman", which is preceded by a few seconds of raucous banter in a microcosm of the Faces' freewheeling bonhomie.

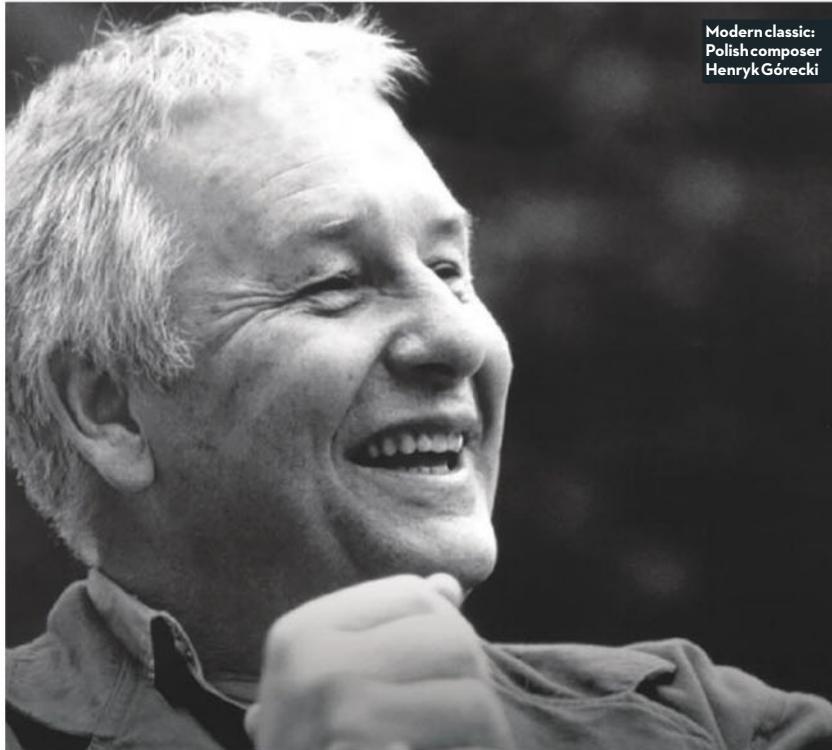
Clearly, the band needed help on the other side of the glass, and they got it from Glyn Johns, perhaps the greatest British rock producer, who proceeded to transform them on 1971's *A Nod Is As Good As A Wink... To A Blind Horse* and 1973's *Ooh La La* into a two-pronged studio unit, balancing the taut though seemingly ramshackle blues'n'boogie of "Stay With Me", "That's All You Need" and "Borstal Boys" with Lane's poignant, folk-infused "Debris", "Glad And Sorry" and "Ooh La La", which collectively comprise the gold standard of the band's recordings. Solid rehearsal takes of "Borstal Boys", "Silicone Grown" and "Glad And Sorry", along with the Johns-produced single sides "Skewiff (Mend The Fuse)" and "Dishevelment Blues" on the *Stray Singles* disc provide a satisfying complement to the latter LP. All nine of the collected singles are on *Five Guys Walk Into A Bar*, but it's useful to have them in one place.

Between the orderly new overview, with its 15 previously unissued tracks, and McLagan's engagingly hodgepodge insider's portrait, we now have as complete a picture as we're likely to get. Barring the miraculous discovery of a live

recording from the band's triumphant 1972 arena tour, or at least a long-overdue set dedicated to the BBC Sessions, the Faces' peak moments are consigned to the dustbin of memory. In the case of this underrated, misunderstood band, you had to be there.

The Specialist

Górecki



Modern classic:
Polish composer
Henryk Górecki

HENRYK GÓRECKI

Górecki: A Nonesuch Retrospective

NONESUCH

8/10

The holy minimalist compiled...

The Polish composer Henryk Górecki (1933-2010) acquired worldwide fame largely down to one specific piece of music: his "Symphony No 3". This shimmering, haunted hymn for the Polish victims of Nazism – a "Symphony Of Sorrowful Songs" – was premiered in 1977, but it wasn't

until Nonesuch released the London Sinfonietta's version in 1992 that it became something of a sensation, selling more than a million copies and topping the classical charts around the world. The second movement in particular got caned by Classic FM, was used on numerous film soundtracks and TV trailers, and even reached the UK Top 30 (courtesy of Lamb's trip-hop makeover).

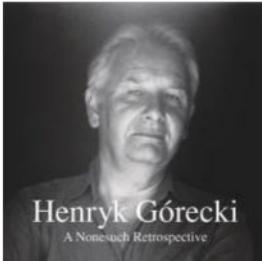
It also gave the reclusive composer a stardom that he was never quite comfortable with. Like Krzysztof Penderecki, Górecki emerged as part of a generation of experimental Polish composers who initially took their cues from Stockhausen, Xenakis and Boulez, and his '50s and '60s works are spiky, dissonant and highly textured. It was only in the '80s that he was lumped in with the "holy minimalists" – those deeply religious composers, like Arvo Pärt and John Tavener, whose New Age-y hymns seemed to provide chillout zones of repose in a digitally saturated age.

"Symphony No 3" features on this new seven-disc boxset, but the centrepiece is the first ever CD release of his "Symphony No 4". Unfinished on his death, it was left to his son Mikolaj to rework these fragments into some kind of narrative. It's an intriguing collision of styles – the first movement battering you with *Hammer House Of Horror* fanfares, the second moving from violent dissonance into comforting melody, the third tugging your heartstrings with yearning strings, and the final movement echoing Stravinsky's 'The Rite Of Spring'.

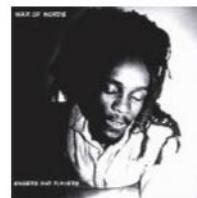
Of the remaining discs, it's the choral pieces that will appeal to fans of the Third Symphony. "Amen", from 1975, and "Wislo Moja, Wislo Szara (My Vistula, Grey Vistula)" from 1981 are both staggering, goosebump-inducing works, mixing folk and religious themes with tight harmony clusters, while 1979's "Szeroka Woda (Broad Waters)" sounds like a series of beautifully arranged Christmas carols.

Other compositions here lurch between slow-burning minimalism and terrifying atonality. "Lerchenmusik", written in 1986, sabotages beautiful lead lines with clashing harmonies; the "Kleines Requiem" from 1995 is a demented polka, while the three string quartets often sound – thrillingly – like sludge rock anthems. It suggests that the holy minimalist had a touch of the devil about him.

JOHN LEWIS



Henryk Górecki
A Nonesuch Retrospective



SINGERS & PLAYERS
War Of Words
(reissue, 1982)
ON-U SOUND

From the vaults: post-punk/dub soundclash

8/10

Singers & Players were less a fixed group than an idea, an open-ended collective through which Adrian Sherwood – a London studio hound and associate of PiL and The Slits – could explore and refine his own British branch of the dub reggae sound. The project's debut, produced by Sherwood and engineered by Dennis Bovell, assembled a dream team: on the Singers side, three JA reggae heavyweights, Bim Sherman, Prince Far I and Jah Woosh; and a list of Players including PiL guitarist Keith Levene and The Slits' Ari Up on keys and harmony vocals. This is dub reggae in a post-punk, post-*Metal Box* world. Production is cavernous, austere, experimental, riven with effects and tape experiments, with Levene's guitar sparking like flint in the gloom. To this, the Jamaicans bring the light. Bim Sherman's sweet, sung vocals helm five of the seven tracks, most notably the lovelorn "Devious Woman" and a skeletal take on Sherman's own 7" hit "Dispensation", renamed "World Of Dispensation"; "Quanté Jubila (Extended)", meanwhile, drops Prince Far I's guttural toasting over loping bass and Clangers-like squeaks. You can see why reggae purists might have been horrified, but taken as a fusion of Jamaican soul and post-punk methods, it still sounds remarkable.

EXTRAS: Fold-out poster.

5/10 LOUIS PATTISON



UNWOUND
Empire
NUMERO

Fourth and final box in Washington State trio's impressive reissue series While Unwound were slowly falling apart during the years chronicled on

Empire, they were making arguably their most enduring music: two impressive, expansive albums that took post-hardcore further out even than their more famous peers Fugazi. *Challenge For A Civilized Society* (1998) saw the Olympia trio experiment with longer songs, more electronics and, on "Sonata For Loudspeakers", free-jazz horns – an impressive thicket of an album, sure, but difficult to see where they would venture next without retracing their steps. The answer came with 2001's *Leaves Turn Inside You*, a double-album recorded to tape in the band's own farmhouse basement studio. With original drummer Brandt Sandeno helping out with keys and production, Sara Lund, Vern Rumsey and Justin Trosper created a dark psychedelic epic laced with jarring drones, eerie Mellotron, scraping cello, backwards tapes and Optigan samples. On tracks such as "Demons Sing Love Songs", Trosper abandoned his hollering for a low murmur, while highlight "Terminus" crossbreeds Godspeed's apocalyptic bluster with brittle, clattering post-punk. Atypical and stunning, it was the group's peak and also their goodbye; they split less than a year later.

EXTRAS: Nine bonus tracks, plus their sole 7/10 Peel Session from May 1998.

TOM PINNOCK

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Artifact: The Dawn Of Creation Records 1983-1985

CHERRY RED

8/10

Living Room to Loft: keynote indie's star ascending

Discovering Oasis torpedoed Alan McGee's underground kudos, but – as this 5CD explosion shows – the giddy passion that set him on course for tea with Tony Blair started admirably small-scale. Parallel to his career as a British Rail drudge, McGee ran a clubnight and a fanzine, finally setting up Creation, whose release of the first singles by Primal Scream and The Jesus And Mary Chain – as well as genre classics by The Legend!, The Pastels, The Loft, et al – made the label a beacon of hope for all wimpy indie boys with a yen for leather trousers. Most of those much-fetishised early sevens are here, along with a skein of album tracks, revealing McGee's own mournful psych-pop band, Biff Bang Pow!, to be perhaps his best early signing.

EXTRAS: A disc of demos and another of 7/10 Peel Sessions may tempt dithering dome-heads, along with the prospect of hearing the unreleased second Meat Whiplash single – better, incidentally, than the first. The best bits of McGee's pre-Creation band The Laughing Apple get revisited, and there are unheard live tracks from Television Personalities – the great lost band of this era, and most others besides.

JIM WIRTH

REVELATIONS

Unwound's Justin Trosper on rediscovering their masterpiece



► As the '90s drew to a close, Washington noise-rockers Unwound were becoming fed up of rushing at expensive studios. They decided to build their own, dubbed MagRecOne, in which to track their masterpiece, *Leaves Turn Inside You*. This wasn't the kind of facility with a jacuzzi and a well-stocked wine cellar, though. "It was in the basement of a property that Vern [Rumsey, bass] had lived in, near Olympia," explains singer/guitarist Justin Trosper. "The live room wasn't conducive to creativity, it was like, 'All right, let's get this over so we can put some jackets and hats on and crowd around the heater.' Recording there had the feeling of being somewhere 100 years ago... musty, mouldy, mildewy." Seeping up this atmosphere, the claustrophobic *Leaves* was a huge departure from their previous spiky, stripped-back work, and generally misunderstood on its release in April 2001. Trosper believes that's slowly changing: "People are rediscovering *Leaves* as an artefact rather than a living thing. The other albums are a bit more like chapters, *Leaves* is sort of like its own book." TOM PINNOCK

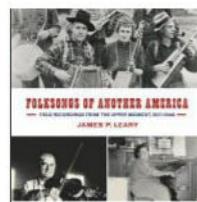
VARIOUS ARTISTS

Artifact: The Dawn Of Creation Records 1983-1985

CHERRY RED

8/10

Living Room to Loft: keynote indie's star ascending



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Folk Songs Of Another America: Field Recordings From The Upper Midwest, 1937-1946

DUST-TO-DIGITAL

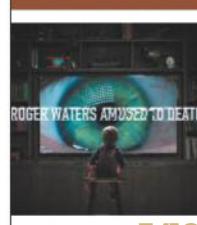
9/10

James P Leary's staggering set of diasporic folklore

If the recent wave of historical folk music reissue sets, pulled from archives like the Smithsonian Folkways collection, risks anything, it's a tendency toward taxonomy, needing to sift complicated diasporic voices and make them cohere into distinctive narratives of travel and settlement. *Folk Songs Of Another America* is powerful precisely because it doesn't cleave to this desire. As folklorist Richard Dorson says, in the Upper Midwest of America, "traditions are so mixed that no narrow specialist approach can hope to reveal their breadth". *Folk Songs...* is constructed so that as you listen, there's a continual unveiling: each disc moves across continents, as with the Sidney Robertson recordings, which leap from French Canadian songs through to Finnish melodies. But the crux is the Helene Stratman-Thomas recordings that make up the final two discs, where moving, disarmed performances, like Martha Steinbach's "Aneinem Fluss Daraus An Schuss", rub against gorgeous Dutch melodies, dirty lumberjack songs and wild Welsh melancholy.

EXTRAS: Five discs of folk music is just part of 9/10 this package. There's also a DVD of the film *Alan Lomax Goes North*, and a 456-page book with images and song annotations.

JONDALE



ROGER WATERS

Amused To Death (reissue, 1992)

COLUMBIA LEGACY

5/10

Third, and so far last, solo LP declares war on war. Waters apparently sees *Amused To Death* as the third great pillar of his life's work, after *Dark Side...* and *The Wall*. But though it shares their tone of portentous misanthropy, its take on man's inhumanity to man is less mediated – no pun intended – by the former's big melodies or the latter's common touch. Named after Neil Postman's apocalyptic anti-TV tirade *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, it extends Waters' obsession with war – it's bookended by a veteran's reminiscences – to include remotely guided drone warfare, while carping about TV's tendency to turn everything into a spectator sport. Thus does the smart-bombing of Baghdad get characterised as a multimillion-dollar videogame in "The Bravery Of Being Out Of Range", and "Perfect Sense" has Marv Albert commentating upon war manoeuvres as if they were just another US sport. There are sublime moments, mostly furnished by Jeff Beck; but the arrangements created by Waters and Patrick Leonard too often dissolve into amorphous montages, while RW's wearily declamatory delivery seems vindictive and condescending. The most enjoyable moment is the dig at Andrew Lloyd Webber in "It's A Miracle", in which "the piano lid comes down and breaks his fucking fingers": sadly, one of the few bits which isn't simply stating the bleeding obvious.

EXTRAS: None.

ANDY GILL

COMING NEXT MONTH...



► Five and a half years on from her mammoth 3CD *Have One On Me*, Joanna Newsom returns next month with *Divers*. Stretching to a slightly more modest 51 minutes, and in part recorded by Steve Albini, guest arrangers include Nico Muhly and the Dirty Projectors' Dave Longstreth.

Los Lobos re-emerge after five years, too, with the eclectic *Gates Of Gold*, while **The Chills**' upcoming *Silver Bullets* carries straight on from the New Zealand cult heroes' last record 19 years ago. **John Grant** flits between '80s electro and lush, sweeping balladry on his third album, *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure* – with his customary black humour liberally applied – while **Patty Griffin**, **Deerhunter** and **Judy Collins** are also back with strong work.

In the world of archival releases, **Peter Gabriel**'s pioneering first four solo albums get the reissue treatment, and **The Jam** get a none-more-mod six-disc live boxset, *Fire & Skill*, featuring shows from each year of their existence. Meanwhile, **The City**'s *Now That Everything's Been Said*, the only album by the late-'60s group led by a pre-Tapestry **Carole King**, is unearthed and reissued for the first

time on vinyl.

More esoterically, **Harmonia**'s kosmische voyages are collected in a new set, complete with unreleased material, *Documents 1975 - Deluxe*, indeed.

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THIS MONTH: JODOROWSKY | ROADIE | RORY GALLAGHER



Wilco: festival curators and part-time covers band

WILCO Every Other Summer

DBPM/VIMEO ON DEMAND



7/10

WHEN WILCO INVITED suggestions for their setlist at the 2013 edition of the Solid Sound Festival, they got a surprise. They expected their fans to treat the invitation lightly, and were braced for requests to play Justin Bieber songs. But the Wilco legions had other ideas. "There worries," says

guitarist Nels Cline at a rehearsal, only half-joking, "some of this stuff was iconic."

He needn't have worried. Wilco's covers set stands as a cut-out-and-keep guide to their creative roots, starting with Thin Lizzy and meandering through Big Star, Uncle Tupelo (obvious, that), The Rolling Stones, Dylan, The Grateful Dead, the Velvets, Brinsley Schwarz (or possibly Elvis Costello/Nick Lowe), Neil Young, Cheap Trick, The Band and, er, Daft Punk (Nels Cline's impersonation of Nile Rodgers is quite something). There are also nods to The Modern Lovers and The Count Five. Oh, and Abba's "Waterloo".

The full set is readily available on the internet, thanks to the friendly bootlegger, NYC Taper, and YouTube has the usual smattering of wobbly videos. Still, it's a little disappointing to discover

that this film of that year's festival – a two-yearly event which takes place at MASS MoCA in the rust belt town of North Adams, Massachusetts – features only a handful of Wilco numbers. They are worth it, though.

The documentary, directed by Christoph Green and (Fugazi drummer) Brendan Carty, opens with Wilco rehearsing Television's eerie anthem, "Marquee Moon", a composition which is so particular and precise that it should be uncoverable. Wilco come close to nailing it, though their version does illuminate the difference between Tom Verlaine and Jeff Tweedy. Verlaine sings from a distance, he's an alienated narrator. Tweedy is a soul singer whose voice has rock muscles. This makes him slightly unsuited to the task. Cline, though, is quite capable of echoing those Verlaine/Richard Lloyd guitar lines. Tweedy has a happier experience with Talking Heads' "Heaven", which plays out beautifully at the end of the film. Then, perhaps the song which is most in keeping with the event, Wilco's cover of Pavement's "Cut Your Hair". It really is fantastic. There's a fierce micro-solo from Cline, and then the band is joined by Tommy Stinson of The Replacements, who attaches jump-leads to a neurotic, punked-up version of "Color Me Impressed". At the end, the song collapses on itself, and Tweedy punches the air. You don't see that very often. Wilco have not relied on rock gestures in recent years, so it's refreshing to see Tweedy embracing his inner heavy metal drummer.

It's refreshing to see Jeff Tweedy embracing his inner heavy metal drummer as he punches the air

The festival, in its way, embodies Wilco's broad suspicion of rock cliché. "There are a lot of really big festivals in the world now," says Tweedy. "But the big festivals... to me, I don't think they're very musical. They're big cultural events and they're valuable in a lot of ways that I'm not necessarily a part of. The only real desire was to make a festival that we wouldn't be miserable at."

Solid Sound is an intimate event, thanks to MASS MoCA's sprawling campus; an experimental art space, inhabiting an abandoned industrial site. The way North Adams seems to have embraced both experimental art and Wilco's regular invasions is extraordinary. A local massage therapist, Molly Kerns, explains that the mayor, Dick Alcombright, held a meeting before the first Solid Sound festival, and said: "We've got 8,000 people coming next week. What are you gonna do?" As a result, townsfolk volunteer, and the event is integrated with its environment. People are allowed to get up close to challenging art, Cline notes, approvingly. "It's not a white gloves kind of feeling."

Wilco fans disappointed at not being able to experience Glenn Kotche's Earth Drums ("an interactive experiment in archaic percussion" – buried drums,

essentially) or John Stirratt's Rickshaw FM (a bicycle taxi, with music and street sounds) will welcome the clips of The Autumn Defense doing "The Golden Path", a sweet song, fringed with steel guitar. And those who value Wilco's experimental edge, will enjoy the jazzy free playing of Mikael Jorgensen, Greg O'Keeffe and Oliver Chapoy; and a guitar duet between Nels Cline and Julian Lage. In the same vein, it's fascinating to witness David Hidalgo (Los Lobos) and Marc Ribot (who punctured Tom Waits' sound) swapping ideas.

Another Tweedy favourite, The Dream Syndicate, deliver an extended version of "The Days Of Wine And Roses", and Yo La Tengo essay a fine, percussive version of "Autumn Sweater", which runs over a video portrait gallery of

festival goers. Neko Case, The Relatives (psychedelic soul), Foxygen (Doors-like racket) and Lucius also feature. There's also a lovely turn by Sam Amidon, doing the ancient-sounding "Sugar Baby" on a banjo to an audience of almost nobody.

There is but one song from Wilco's non-covers set, a blistering version of "Art Of Almost". The organ shreds the tune, which unfurls in waves of neurotic

minimalism as Cline, again, takes charge. It really is terrific. So, yes, Solid Sound isn't just about music, and the music isn't just about Wilco. But, modesty aside, there is room for a lot more of that stuff.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



JORDSKOTT

ITV

Nordic noir goes Grimmly supernatural

It seems that every other new TV drama is either trying to go Scandinavian or being billed as "the new *Twin Peaks*", so it's the ideal moment for a

show that does both. From Sweden, this 10-part series comes on like a regular (if foggy moody) cop thriller at first, as an obsessed female detective hunts for her long-missing daughter. Then, though, comes a hard left into a fairy-tale land reminiscent of films such as *Trollhunter* and *Little Olik*, as the forest on the edge of town becomes a main character. Highly watchable.

EXTRAS: Interviews, making-of.

7/10 DAMIEN LOVE

NEW MODEL ARMY

Between Dog And Wolf – The New Model Army Story

CADIZ MUSIC

Thatcher-baiting outliers get the doc treatment

Whatever your take on the music, New Model Army make for a fascinating narrative. Matt Reid's film follows the folk-punk

anarchists from no-marks in 1980s Bradford to cult heroes for a fervent fanbase throughout Europe. The central figure is singer-songwriter Justin Sullivan, whose thoughtful ruminations belie the lazy misconception of NMA as, in his own words, "thick, ignorant, militaristic boneheads". What emerges instead is a moving portrait of a band, and attendant community, that remains uncompromisingly durable.

EXTRAS: 60-plus minutes of unseen footage.

6/10 ROB HUGHES

NOT SAFE FOR WORK

4DVD

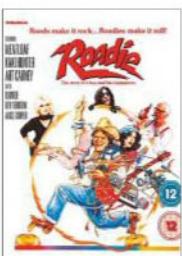
Well-acted civil service parody explores the work-life off-balance

Zawe Ashton leads the cast in this comedy/drama as Katherine, a civil servant with a bright future. That is, until she receives a posting to Northampton, and finds

herself trapped in the dysfunctional "Immigration Pathway" team. More than a bureaucratic satire (which, gently, it is), the show charts spectacularly the pitfalls awaiting the twentysomething, from love to family to work colleagues. The ensemble (particularly Sacha Dhawan and Anastasia Hille) is hugely strong, achieving spectacular stuff here – even if promotions and new postings now seem inevitable.

EXTRAS: To be confirmed.

JOHN ROBINSON



ROADIE

FABULOUS FILMS

Meat Loaf stars in rock comedy about... wait, come back

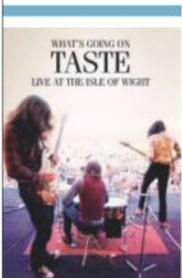
American indie-art favourite Alan Rudolph's exuberantly trashy 1980 blend of raucous redneckism and

slight surrealism was always destined for late-night culthood. Meat Loaf, at the height of his blubbery powers, plays good ol' Texas boy Redfish, who signs on as a roadie with a travelling rock'n'roll show to win a groupie (*Porky's*' Kaki Hunter), but becomes a legend due to his ability to fix anything. You'll want to know that Alice Cooper, Roy Orbison and Blondie all appear.

EXTRAS: None.

DAMIEN LOVE

7/10



RORY GALLAGHER'S TASTE

What's Going On – Live At The Isle Of Wight

EAGLE ROCK

Irish blues-rock titans in full effect

So explosive was Taste's performance at the 1970 Isle Of Wight festival that Jimi Hendrix promptly

declared Rory Gallagher the best guitarist in the world. Murray Lerner's film traces the trio's roots in Ireland as a lead-up to the show itself, at which Gallagher & co (before a crowd of about 600,000) lay waste to the blues with extraordinary, digressive takes on the likes of "Sugar Mama" and "I Feel So Good".

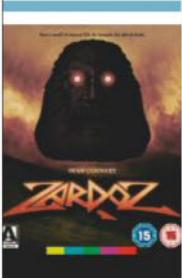
EXTRAS: Three tracks from German TV's

7/10

Beat Club, plus a trio of videos.

ROB HUGHES

8/10



ZARDOZ

ARROW FILMS

"The gun is good. The penis is evil."

Visually striking, completely insane, John Boorman's unforgettable 1973 sci-fantasy is set in 2293, when Earth's desolate outlands are patrolled by Exterminators on horseback – among them a ponytailed Sean Connery

in a red wraparound nappy – who oppress the population with aid from a massive flying stone head. Rebelling, Connery discovers things are controlled by an elite society of good-looking, sterile intellectuals including Charlotte Rampling. Suggesting 1984 after a night of drugs and prog rock, it's one of few films to feature a scene revolving around whether or not Sean Connery will get an erection.

EXTRAS: Boorman commentary and

9/10

interviews, trailers, booklet.

DAMIEN LOVE

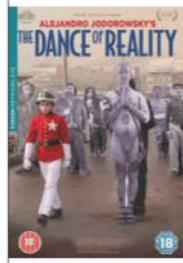
9/10



THE DANCE OF REALITY

CURZON, ARTIFICIAL EYE

Jodorowsky's fantasy memoir



CHILEAN-BORN ARCH-eclectic Alejandro Jodorowsky may not, finally, be the great maestro some claim – but there's no doubting his status as one of the legends of modern art-house. The co-founder of the notorious 'Panic Movement' in theatre, he directed and starred in definitive head movie *El Topo* (1970), a quasi-Western steeped in myth, mysticism, lurid violence and cheerful self-promotion; he arguably went further with the ostentatiously deranged *The Holy Mountain* (1973). Since the '70s, Jodorowsky has continued to be productive – making films, writing novels, comics and philosophical texts, even founding his own school of therapy using tarot cards and massage. Now, providing some clues on how someone could possibly end up leading such a colourful life, he's created a memoir of sorts. *The Dance Of Reality* is an autobiographical fantasy, Part 1 of a mooted two-part *Last Will And Testament*. In it, Jodorowsky himself – at 86, resembling an affable snowy-haired magus – appears side by side with his childhood self (Jeremias Herskovits), in an evocation of his beginnings in smalltown Chile in the 1930s. Young Alejandro is the son of Sara, who never speaks but only sings operatically (Pamela Flores) and Communist haberdasher Jaime (Brontis Jodorowsky, the director's son), a macho tyrant determined to toughen up young Alejandro through various ordeals. All the material of Jodorowsky's future art is there in his hometown from the start: clowns, drag queens, hookers, and a legion of dwarves and amputees.

The film begins by tracing young Alejandro's early traumas, then digresses into Jaime's ill-fated mission to assassinate Chile's president. Meanwhile, young Alejandro undergoes his own metamorphoses in an incestuous interlude with his mother – the film's Freudian entanglements all the more unsettling given the director's son is playing his own grandfather. Admirers of early Jodorowsky will miss the extremity of *El Topo*, and even of his relatively more reasonable 1989 exercise in 'circus Gothic', *Santa Sangre*. *The Dance Of Reality* is a gentler meditation, with a streak of mystical sentimentality beneath its wildness. Prone to rambling, the film mixes an epic grand manner with a cut-price magic, no-nonsense CGI and all, that makes it feel all the more personal. It's highly moving at times, outrageously risqué, and like any Jodorowsky film, offers rich pickings for symbol-hunters both mystical and Freudian. There's a greasepaint brashness to it all, but the film never feels anything less than honest (emotionally, if not factually) and generous. He may be cinema's most shameless charlatan, but even in this relatively minor-key piece, Jodorowsky continues to be one of a kind. JONATHAN ROMNEY

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

This month: Tom Hardy plays the Kray twins; Judd Apatow's latest; the story of NWA; an Arcade Fire 'art film'; and Roger Waters rebuilds The Wall

Legend For an actor like Tom Hardy, who specialises in colourful, larger-than-life roles, *Legend* is a dream gig. Why? Because not only does he get to do the things Tom Hardy is historically good at – violence, an accent, bulking up, more violence – but here he does it twice. Thanks to some ‘How did they do that?’ digital business, *Legend* finds Hardy playing both Ronnie and Reggie Kray.

He plays Ronnie as a kind of autistic psychopath: slicked-back hair, thick-set mouth, perpetual frown, stunted speech patterns. Weirdly, he looks like Patrick Marber. As Reg, he is a dashing jack-the-lad; socially engaged, a charmer, up for a bit of banter with both the ladies and the police who follow him everywhere. Reg entertains ideas of running a legitimate business; alas, if only his brother wasn’t such a deranged maniac... Out in his mucky caravan in the woods, meanwhile, Ron’s principal interests are young men and killing.

Admittedly, the Krays’ story has been well-told before; but not like this. Hardy has an incredible physical presence – even in films like *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* or *Locke*, where he is not required to actually kill anyone, he strains to contain himself. In *Legend*, Reggie moves like a big cat; muscle and sinew. Ron is a blunter instrument altogether. Even the cheery offer of a cuppa could end badly for someone. But Hardy aside, the fresh spin of *Legend* is that this is essentially the wife’s tale: Frances Shea (Emily Browning). It is Frances who provides the film’s voiceover, and who is central to Reg’s plan to go legit. We experience the gruesome business of life in the Krays’ orbit from her perspective.

Legend is written and directed by Brian Helgeland, who also wrote the screenplay for *LA Confidential*; a film that broadly covered similar ground. His work here is sharp, observant and mercifully he avoids the usual filmmaking clichés of depicting London. He casts well, too. Christopher Eccleston, Paul Bettany, David Thewlis and Taron Egerton do solid work in supporting roles.



► **Trainwreck** These days, Judd Apatow is not just a multi-millionaire filmmaker, but also a benign godfather, overseeing other projects by a sprawling ‘family’ of loosely connected comedians. Evidently keen to keep things on a casual footing, Apatow is also “the guy”. As in: “From the guy who brought you *Bridesmaids*”, as he is credited on the poster for *Trainwreck*. Although Apatow directed *Trainwreck*, it’s a shame that the name of the film’s writer and star, Amy Schumer, is absent from the poster.

Schumer is the creator and star of *Inside Amy Schumer*, a successful American sketch comedy that is widely tipped to storm this year’s Emmy awards. In *Trainwreck*, she plays Amy Townshend; a heavy drinker who enjoys a succession of one-night stands (“Never, ever let them sleep over”). “Don’t judge me, fuckers,” she says early on in voiceover. By day, she’s a writer for S’Nuff magazine, brainstorming features like ‘Ugliest Celebrity Kids Under 6’ and ‘Does Garlic Make Semen Taste Different’. The first 30 minutes of the film have a funny, foul-mouthed swagger; props especially to Tilda Swinton as Amy’s editor, swathed in toxic orange spray-tan and barking at her staff in flat Estuary vowels.

Amy is commissioned to write a sports piece, where she meets a sports surgeon, played by Bill Hader and his Concerned Eyebrows. Gradually, the com is replaced by the rom and what began as a frank and smart exploration of modern sexual politics winds up as a more conventional piece.

Hader is good, incidentally; maintaining a good balance between awkward and low-key charm as the film moves towards an increasingly programmatic final act. Schumer is sharp and funny, though her edges are dulled by Apatow’s need for comforting resolutions, where emotional maturity, domesticity and group hugs win the day. Incidentally, Schumer is not alone in having her name omitted from her own film’s poster. There were no credits on the *Bridesmaids* art for writers and stars Kristen Wiig, Annie Mumolo and Maya Rudolph. Thankfully, though, there was room for “The Producer Of *Superbad*, *Knocked Up* And *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*”.

► **Straight Outta Compton** To do full justice to the NWA story, you really need a multi-part HBO mini-series, ideally written by Richard Price and directed by David Simon. Instead, we have F Gary Gray’s 150-minute biopic: an initially valiant attempt to capture the sprawling, complex story that becomes a conventional music biopic. There is a lot of swearing, yes; but a lot more expository dialogue.

The first hour is the best. A *The Wire*-style opener finds Eric “Eazy-E” Wright (Jason Mitchell) in a tense situation in a dealer’s house. Through him, we meet talented DJ, Andre “Dr Dre” Young (Corey Hawkins) and visionary schoolboy poet O’Shea “Ice Cube” Jackson (O’Shea Jackson Jr; Cube’s son). As NWA ascend – *Straight Outta Compton*, “Fuck The Police” – the

Reviewed this month...



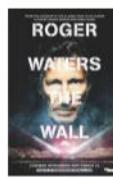
LEGEND
Director Brian Helgeland
Starring Tom Hardy, Emily Browning
Opens September 9
Cert 15
8/10



TRAINWRECK
Director Judd Apatow
Starring Amy Schumer, Bill Hader
Opened August 14
Cert 15
7/10



Straight Outta Compton
Director F Gary Gray
Starring O’Shea Jackson Jr, Paul Giamatti
Opens August 28
Cert 18
7/10



ROGER WATERS THE WALL
Director Roger Waters, Sean Evans
Starring Roger Waters
Opens Sept 29
Cert 12A
6/10



THE ARCADE FIRE - THE REFLEKTOR TAPES
Director Kahlil Joseph
Starring Win Butler, Régine Chassagne
Opens Sept 25
Cert U
6/10



Chains of command:
NWA in *Straight Outta Compton*

film cranks up a gear to deliver delirious, hyperactive montages of gigs and degenerate hotel room parties.

Sadly, Gray is unable to follow-up on such an exuberant first half. There is too much to focus on – multiple arrests, Cube's departure, legal sidebars, Dre's defection to Suge Knight's Death Row Records, Eazy-E's death from AIDS – and Gray delivers them in programmatic narrative beats. Unlike the excellent Brian Wilson film, *Love & Mercy*, Gray's film is untroubled by the creative act. Early on in the film, we see Ice Cube neatly jotting down lines in a notebook; that's as far behind the curtain as Gray goes. The process by which gangsta rap is created is never explored. "You are witnessing history," a character exclaims at one point, but Gray doesn't explain why. Nor do we ever really understand what it is that connects manager Jerry Heller (Paul Giamatti), a one-time promoter of mainstream rock acts like REO Speedwagon and Journey, to Eazy-E (Jason Mitchell), the hustling heart of NWA. In one scene, we see Eazy-E and his wife in their palatial mansion. On a huge television in on the corner, a ghostly loop of the Rodney King beatings plays out on a news channel. Any sense of irony is lost.

► **Roger Waters *The Wall*** This is the third iteration of *The Wall*, following Alan Parker's 1982 film and the 1990 ...*Live In Berlin* concert production. You might wonder what fresh perspective Waters himself will bring to this latest version, which he has co-written and co-directed with Sean Evans. It starts promisingly enough, with footage of Waters at home, from where he sets out on a *Who Do You Think You Are?*-style journey through his family history. Driving his vintage Bentley, Waters heads off to the

Delirious, montages of gigs and degenerate hotel room parties

Commonwealth war graves in France and Italy, to pay his respects to his grandfather and father, who died in service during the two world wars. Evans films Waters in his car, reading the letter written by his father's commanding officer, notifying his mother of her husband's death. With his children, he visits his grandfather's grave in a small military cemetery in Northern France. En route to his father's grave near Monte Cassino in Italy, he discusses war and family with old friend Andrew Rawlinson and film director Peter Medak. All this should present us with new insights about Waters himself and help flesh out the back-story of *The Wall*. Unfortunately, though, there's lot of live footage to incorporate. A lot. Shot during *The Wall*'s 2010–2013 world tour, it foregrounds scale and elaborate stagecraft; but once you've got over the admittedly impressive sight of a replica Spitfire dive-bomb the stage, the massive puppets and high-end light projections become more repetitive. In close-up, we see mature session musicians at work. Children from local schools come on to sing and dance through "Another Brick In The Wall (Part II)". Back at the cemetery, Waters salutes the war dead with a trumpet solo.

► **Arcade Fire - The Reflektor Tapes**

A few days before Christmas 2008, Win Butler discussed concert films with *Uncut*. He admitted he found them "pretty boring. Even the really great ones, like *Stop Making Sense*, are 45 minutes too long. My favourite part of every Stones documentary is the part where I get to see where the microphone is placed, because I'm a nerd in that way." The conversation was prompted by the release of *Miroir Noir*, a film documenting the making of Arcade Fire's 2007 album, *Neon Bible*, and subsequent tour. *The Reflektor Tapes* essentially does a similar job. Critically, the difference is that in 2007, Arcade Fire were still on the way up; by the time of the *Reflektor* album, they have very much arrived. If you wanted to

know what had changed for the band in the intervening years – how they met the challenges of their increased success, or how their creative processes had matured – you're unlikely to find answers here. *The Reflektor Tapes* is an art film, shot using different film stocks – colour, black and white, grainy or oversaturated – and filled with jump cuts, sped up and slowed down, overlaid with superimposed

images, snippets of music and dialogue. "One of the deep roots of Arcade Fire's aesthetic is trying to ignore the world and make art just with the people in the room around you," says one identified member in voiceover, over treated footage of the band attempting synchronised underwater handstands in a swimming pool. A trip to Jamaica to record new material is shown via slo-mo footage of the band in a studio, the film tinted red, with a few seconds of vibrant street scenes. "For me, all these influences are layers on top of each other," says Régine Chassagne. "One doesn't negate each other. They add to each other. It's like a diamond with a million cuts in it."

Also out...

AMERICAN ULTRA

OPENS SEPTEMBER 4

Stoner comedy, with Jesse Eisenberg and Kristen Stewart on the run from the CIA.

CARTEL LAND

OPENS SEPTEMBER 4

Documentary from Matthew Heineman exploring vigilante efforts to thwart organised crime along the Mexican-American border.

RICKI AND THE FLASH

OPENS SEPTEMBER 4

Neil Young reportedly taught Meryl Streep to play guitar for Jonathan Demme's latest: she plays a former rock star coming back for one last hurrah with her old band.

IN COLD BLOOD

OPENS SEPTEMBER 11

Reissue of Richard Brooks' fine adaptation of Truman Capote's book; Robert Blake and Scott Wilson are killers on the run.

PASOLINI

OPENS SEPTEMBER 11

Collaboration between Willem Dafoe and Abel Ferrara about the life of the notorious Italian director behind *Salò*.

TRIPLE 9

OPENS SEPTEMBER 18

A John Hillcoat film not scripted by Nick Cave? Crime drama with Aaron Paul, Casey Affleck, Woody Harrelson and... Kate Winslet.



A WALK IN THE WOODS

OPENS SEPTEMBER 18

Robert Redford is Bill Bryson in this book adaptation; co-starring Nick Nolte, Nick Offerman and Emma Thompson.

JUST JIM

OPENS SEPTEMBER 18

Submarine star Craig Roberts directs and stars in similarly themed film about an alienated teen in Wales. With Emile Hirsch.

MIA MADRE

OPENS SEPTEMBER 25

Nanni Moretti's latest; a director shoots a film while her mother's dying in hospital. John Turturro plays a difficult US actor.

ORION: THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

OPENS SEPTEMBER 25

Doc about Jimmy Ellis – an Elvis lookalike from Mississippi who found success as a masked doppelganger following The King's death.

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD



Emotional Wilderness:
Björk plays the walking
art installation onstage
in Oxfordshire

BJÖRK

WILDERNESS, CORNBURY PARK, OXFORDSHIRE, AUGUST 7, 2015

Heartbroken confessions for a festival rave-up?
Even the fireworks look like tears...

WHEN THE TEAM behind the Wilderness boutique festival booked Björk as their prime headliner, it proved to be more of a coup than anyone could have predicted. Just days before this appearance, the Icelandic art-pop diva mysteriously cancelled the rest of her 2015 dates. Thus Wilderness became the final stop in a short European festival tour that began in Manchester in July. At the time of going to press, it is shaping up to be the last live outing for Björk's latest album, *Vulnicura*.

Plotting a timeline of the singer's bitter 2013 break-up with her long-time partner Matthew Barney in almost forensic detail, *Vulnicura* is Björk's *Blood On The Tracks*, her *Shoot Out The*

Lights, her *Back To Black*. It's an emotionally raw, uncomfortably intimate listen in places. Some of her promotional interviews for the album were tearful and angry.

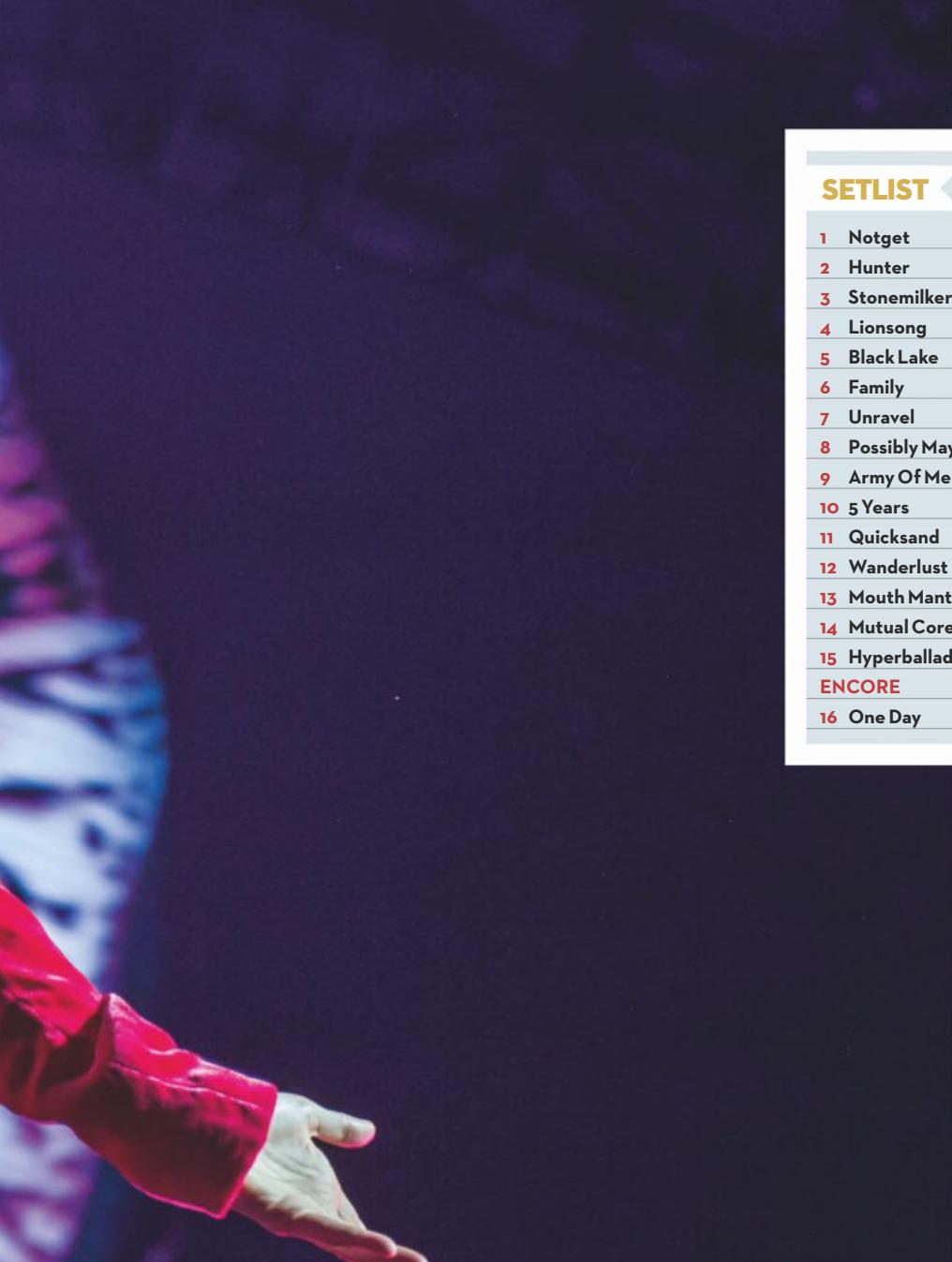
Schedule clash is the official explanation for Björk cutting short the tour, an unusually basic error for such an established artist. Of course, were we to speculate about more personal reasons, the harrowing tone of her set provides a few pointers. It is perfectly conceivable that any singer might find it draining to revisit a major romantic trauma onstage night after night. Equally, Björk may be far enough past the pain now that she wants to drop the subject and move on. Alternatively, it could just be a genuine timetable issue. Sure, why not?

Whatever the explanation, Björk makes no

mention of her future plans during her Wilderness set. In fact, between songs, she barely speaks to the crowd at all. Ditching the fluorescent moth costume that has served her for most of her tour, she sports a dazzling scarlet gown by the young fashion designer Markus Wernitznig, a giant necklace resembling a block of ice imprinted with a fossilised skull motif, and an embroidered biomorphic headdress by JT Merry. Up close, she looks like a walking art installation. From afar, more like some kind of avant-garde Teletubby.

On reflection, Björk's current musical mood is probably not an ideal fit for a hedonistic summer festival. Aimed at middle-aged ex-ravers as much as young party animals, Wilderness feels like a mini Latitude, a secret garden party in the magical wooded estate of Cornbury Park in Oxfordshire. But a fiercely single-minded artist playing her most downbeat, introspective, heartbroken album to date ultimately feels more suited to a hushed concert hall than an outdoor carnival. Björk does not do compromise, which is both strength and weakness when it comes to meeting audience expectations.

Featuring the massed string players of the Heritage Orchestra, percussionist Manu



SETLIST

- 1 **Notget**
- 2 **Hunter**
- 3 **Stonemilker**
- 4 **Lionsong**
- 5 **Black Lake**
- 6 **Family**
- 7 **Unravel**
- 8 **Possibly Maybe**
- 9 **Army Of Me**
- 10 **5 Years**
- 11 **Quicksand**
- 12 **Wanderlust**
- 13 **Mouth Mantra**
- 14 **Mutual Core**
- 15 **Hyperballad**
- ENCORE**
- 16 **One Day**

and abandonment to her ex-lover: “*You have nothing to give/Your heart is hollow.*” Synchronised to an animated film of abstract pictorial forms that re-imagine musical notation as a form of controlled synaesthesia, this is a dazzling piece of audio-visual design work. And yet the song still feels something like a chilly dirge, cerebral and overlong.

Thankfully, once she moves past the opening block of *Vulnicura* material, Björk appears to loosen up a little and regain some of her old spark. “*Unravel*” is sensual and radiant,

“*Possibly Maybe*” twinkly

and playful. The mighty electro-stomper “*Army Of Me*” delivers the first real festival-sized anthem of the evening, finally giving the crowd permission to dance with its military-industrial boombeats. Meanwhile, on the video screen, killer wasps are magnified into hi-def science-fiction monsters.

Some of these older tunes feel uncannily suited to Björk’s current post-breakup mood, and may well have been revived for that very reason. She reserves her most pointed, venomous vocal delivery for “*5 Years*”, from 1997’s *Homogenic* album: “*I’m so bored with cowards/That say they want/Then they can’t handle.... you can’t handle love, baby.*” Whether or not this is aimed at Barney, it packs real bite. There are certainly no tracks from *Vespertine*, the 2001 album which chronicled the start of the couple’s love affair in breathy, tingly, ecstatic musical reveries.

The final half hour of the set delivers more alluring crackle and fizz, desiccated electronica and supple jazzy dynamics. Vintage crowd-pleaser “*Hyperballad*” erupts with real passion, a belated reminder that Björk is, above all, a great soul singer. Accompanied by more fireworks and onstage flame cannons, the geothermal drum’n’bass blast of “*Mutual Core*” is a welcome flashback to her *Biophilia* tour, one of the greatest live rock spectacles of the past 20 years. It is easy to take Björk for granted sometimes, so consistently high-calibre is her output, but *Biophilia* was a reminder that we currently have a world-class avant-pop artist in our midst to rival primetime Bowie, Prince or Kate Bush in terms of imaginative overreach.

As she winds down, Björk thanks *Wilderness* for patiently sitting through so many slow, sad, difficult songs. An acknowledgment, perhaps, that she may have misjudged the musical mix on this tour, or even her own emotional resilience. As she confesses in “*Lionsong*”: “*These abstract complex feelings, I just don’t know how to handle them.*” In a career built on childlike wonder and passionate positivity, it could be that Björk has finally been laid low by messy, conflicted, adult emotions. **STEPHEN DALTON**

Björk’s high-art visuals are exquisite, but her performance feels muted by comparison

Delago and electronica producer The Haxan Cloak – aka Bobby Krlic – the default setting is slow and sombre. The performance comes heavily frontloaded with *Vulnicura* material, which fills almost half the 16-track setlist. With martial beats and discordant Bernard Herrmann-esque string stabs, “*Notget*” maps out the warning signs of an imploding relationship like a

Hitchcock horror-movie set-up: “*Our love couldn’t carry you/And I didn’t even notice...*”

Björk stutters warily as her imaginary assailant knifes her in the shower, right through the heart. High above the stage, crane-mounted pyrotechnics blast luxuriant scarlet smoke plumes into the evening sky. Even the fireworks look like they are weeping tears of blood.

“*Stonemilker*” brings more slithering orchestral disquiet, with Björk demanding emotional respect onstage while her giant digital doppelgangers crowd the widescreen video wall behind her, sobbing and imploring like Bergman heroines on a desolate Icelandic

beach. On the swirling “*Lionsong*” the image cuts to the singer wearing black latex and dandelion headdress, spliced with quasi-pornographic close-ups of strange pink organisms throbbing behind transparent rubber. But while the screen oozes 50 shades of creepy erotic subtext, Björk is still clinging on to hope in the face of hopelessness: “*Maybe he will come out of this loving me...*”

As ever with Björk, these high-art visuals are exquisite, with super-sized insects and squirmily-sexy Cronenbergian body-horror imagery serving as recurring motifs. But her actual flesh-and-blood performance feels muted by comparison, her skippy chipmunk dancing more perfunctory than usual, her normally volcanic voice drowned out by chamber-orchestra strings. She sings about heartbreak, but her heart doesn’t quite appear to be in it.

The real test of patience is “*Black Lake*”, the emotional abyss of *Vulnicura*, a 10-minute lament laying out the charge sheet of betrayal



The suited'n'booted
Sonics (Eddie Large
lookalike/Little
Richard soundalike
Freddie Dennis, left)

THE SONICS

THE FORUM, KENTISH TOWN, LONDON, JULY 30, 2015

"I wish I was dead! I wish I was dead!" Sex and drugs and garage-rock greatness from the Tacoma legends

HERE'S A WHOLE lot of incongruity about The Sonics, a sense of something that shouldn't work half as well as it does. It begins from the moment five greying men dressed like undertakers stiffly take the stage and proceed to blast out teenage garage-rock symphonies with the mussed-up glee of men 50 years younger. Gerry Roslie curls over his piano, howling lyrics about sex, drugs and dangerous women – hearing a man in his seventies scream *"I wish I was dead! I wish I was dead!"* is disconcerting – while saxophonist Rob Lind assumes MC duties between songs. He has a good-natured, gee-whizz American bonhomie, like the sort of 1950s jazz bandleader The Sonics were opposing when they began pumping out febrile garage anthems in 1960. The band's founder, guitarist Larry Parypa, is the last to lose his black jacket, a regal, becalmed figure amid the inferno but one capable of

demented solos as the set goes on. Rounding out the front four is Freddie Dennis on bass, a tiny ball of energy who looks like Eddie Large and sings like Little Richard. It's Dennis who kicks things off, unleashing that fabulous voice on

What American rock sounded like before The Beatles arrived to soften the edges...

"Cinderella" as The Sonics hit the ground running. Dennis – like drummer Dusty Miller – wasn't in the classic mid-'60s lineup of The Sonics, but has impeccable garage-rock credentials, having previously played with The Kingsmen. He alternates singing duties with Roslie, who sang the hell out of

1965's *Here Are The Sonics* and 1966's *Boom*. Their set moves seamlessly between old and new – 1966's "He's Waitin'" sounding just as vital, for instance, as "Sugaree" from this year's *This Is The Sonics*; their first studio album of all-new material in 49 years. As they tear through Little Richard's "Keep A Knockin'" or their own "Bad Betty" you get a sense of what American rock sounded like before The Beatles arrived to soften the edges and push things forward. It's thuggish and thrilling, white suburban rebels reinterpreting black urban blues, singing about girls, cars and music to distorted guitars, raging sax, jagged piano and a relentless beat.

Towards the end of the set, they take a typically monolithic run at The Kinks's mid-'70s rocker "The Hard Way", picking up the pace of the original to such an extent they can barely cram in all of Ray Davies' lyrics, bringing the song to the brink of collapse but never quite losing control. It's followed by a pair

of standards: "Louie Louie" and their own, perpetually astonishing "Psycho".

As the band return for an encore, their darker side takes over. A wicked version of "I Got Your Number (And It's 666)" is followed by "Strychnine" and "The Witch" as The Sonics play out in an ageless cacophony of drugs, sex, self-destruction and black magic women. **PETER WATTS**

SET LIST

- 1 Cinderella
- 2 Shot Down
- 3 He's Waitin'
- 4 Sugaree
- 5 Have Love, Will Travel
- 6 Be A Woman
- 7 You've Got Your Head On Backwards
- 8 Keep A Knockin'
- 9 Bad Betty
- 10 Look At Little Sister
- 11 I Got Your Number (666)
- 12 Dirty Robber
- 13 Money (That's What I Want)
- 14 The Hard Way
- 15 Louie Louie
- 16 Psycho
- ENCORE
- 17 I Don't Need No Doctor
- 18 Strychnine
- 19 The Witch

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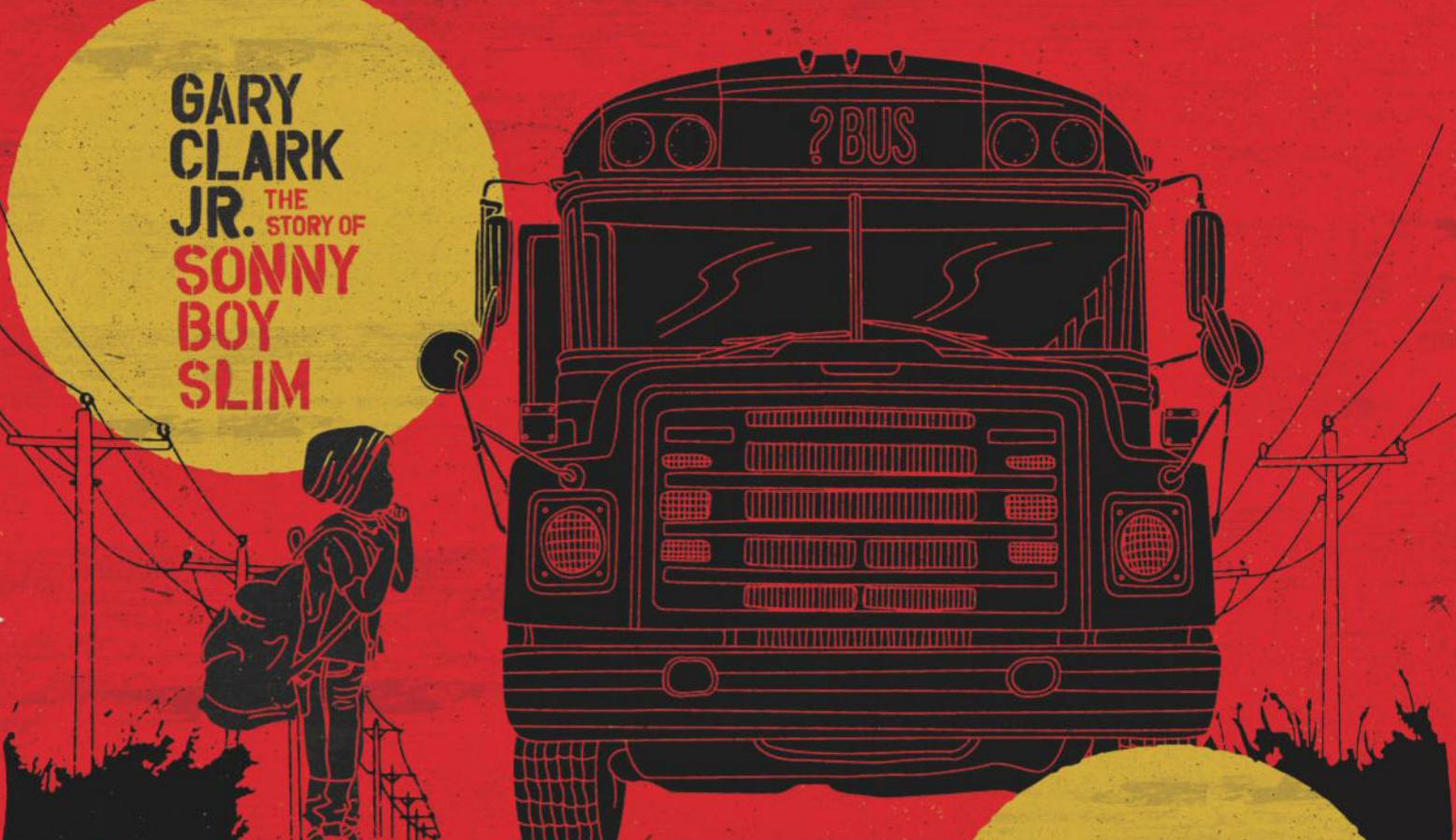
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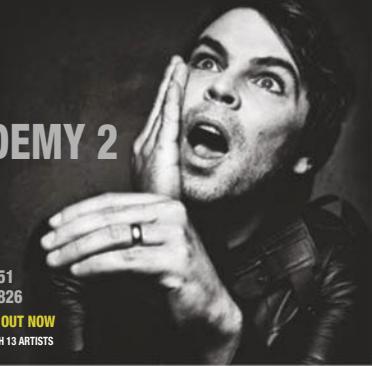
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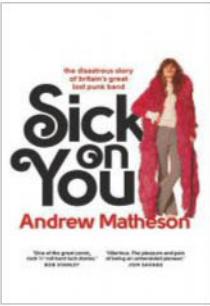
The Hollywood Brats with frontman Andrew Matheson in the boa

Reviewed this month...



Psychedelia And Other Colours
Rob Chapman
FABER & FABER

7/10



Sick On You: The Disastrous Story Of Britain's Great Lost Punk Band
Andrew Matheson
EBURY PRESS

8/10

THE WORLD DOESN'T really need another book on the psychedelic '60s that tells the same story about the same bunch of people from the same tired old perspectives," Rob Chapman writes in a somewhat peevish intro to the mammoth *Psychedelia And Other Colours* that berates the current manner in which TV and the music press presents pop history, which in his opinion is crass, predictable, meekly consensual. In his words, it's as if all parties have "settled on an agreed history of the past", a murky conspiracy that has balefully created a "non-negotiable narrative of epochs, icons and myths" that endlessly repeats familiar orthodoxies, informed more by marketing imperatives than the independent critical thought he's about to bracingly bring to the party.

This sounds promising and the reader therefore approaches this vast tome excited by the suggestion of fresh perspectives, challenging opinion, contentious reappraisal and the crash of toppling reputations to come. Unfortunately, the reader will still be looking forward to reading that book when they finish this one. There's a lot that's undeniably admirable and enjoyable about *Psychedelia And Other Colours*, but it's far from the contrarian epic its

author apparently imagines it to be. In fact, the rarely taken "scenic route" he promises to take through the psychedelic underworld turns out to be a path so well-trodden it looks like an army's just marched along it, followed by a couple of tanks and a regiment of cavalry.

It begins well, though, with a fascinating pre-history of psychedelia and the earliest polysensory experiments with music and light, the narrative advancing on a broad front at a brisk marching pace that brings us quickly to that point in the mid-20th Century when LSD became integral to a new creative vision and the psychedelic era beckoned.

Across the next 500 pages, however, the book pursues an increasingly familiar course. We are introduced to the acknowledged acid pioneers, including Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary, Ken Kesey and The Merry Pranksters. The usual cultural landmarks of the era are duly revisited – the Acid Tests, the emergence of the Bay Area scene, the Love-Ins, Be-Ins and various other gatherings, Haight-Ashbury, Monterey, Woodstock, the Manson murders, Altamont, well-documented events about which Chapman has little to say that's startlingly new. The book's schematic, largely chronological trawl through the era's music, meanwhile, offers similarly few surprises, revelations, insights or illumination. The Beatles loom predictably large in this cultural landscape and, despite some timid reservations about *Sgt Pepper*, are afforded the usual reverence, when a little heretical revisionism might have been more welcome. Elsewhere, Chapman negotiates an entertaining route through the roots of US psychedelia in surf music, girl groups and garage bands, but cleaves to much accepted opinion about, for instance, The Doors, Love, The Byrds, The Beach Boys, the Dead and the Airplane.

A chapter on black psych music is a highlight, although Chapman's thoughts on the genealogy of the blues have been pre-empted by scholarly types like Michael Gray and Sean Wilentz and are therefore less provocative than he probably thinks. Similarly, there's not much in the book's history of the UK psych scene that will unduly aggravate

readers. There are agreeable chapters on Pink Floyd (which recycles material gathered originally for Chapman's excellent Syd Barrett biography, *A Very Irregular Head*), Soft Machine, the sometimes hilarious metamorphosis of sharp-suited beat groups and mod bands into psychedelic warriors, complete with headbands, kaftans and a newly acquired taste for hallucinatory drugs, and the influence of English music hall on The Who, Small Faces and Kinks. By the end, though, *Psychedelia And Other Things* has become a book of lists, a litany of psychedelic sub-genres, more discography than discourse. Most disappointingly of all, perhaps, is the book's concentration on Anglo-American psychedelia, which allows no discussion of South American, Turkish, Japanese or African psychedelic music. Chapman offers lack of space as an excuse for these omissions and reckons it would take another book to fully explore them. What a pity that's not the one he chose to write.

► Andrew Matheson's *Sick On You* is the story of The Hollywood Brats, the band Matheson fronted in the early-'70s, supposedly London's answer to The New York Dolls, with whom they shared a love of sub-Stones trash-rock, eyeliner and dressing up. They were flamboyant

no-hopers whose barely remembered career is a dismal history of missed chances, appalling behaviour, astonishing arrogance, lots of drugs and an apparently endless capacity for self-destruction.

The clear model for Matheson's memoir is Bruce Robinson's *Withnail And I*, and he flounces through these pages much like Richard E Grant in fabulous high dudgeon and a feather boa, living with the band in a series of squalid digs and rat-infested squats, generally starving, freezing and hungover. The book's wonderfully evocative, too, of a pre-punk London scene full of awful blues groups and prog bands, beards and wizard's capes wherever you looked. Matheson probably fancies himself as a bit of an Oscar Wilde when he's more of a Chubby Brown, and the book's humour is often coarse, but often very, very funny. There are hilarious set-pieces involving live eels, a truly bizarre weekend rehearsing at Cliff Richards' country pile, setting fire to a studio, a punch-up with Freddie Mercury and a great deal of public drunkenness and vomiting.

They were turned down by every record company that heard them but eventually managed by Ken Lewis, a former hairdresser who had links with Andrew Loog Oldham and even closer connections to the scary Wilf Pine, a former enforcer for Don Arden, who ran a production company called Worldwide Artists as a front for the Krays. When the company crashed, it took the Brats with them, the album they'd recorded released only in Norway, where it sold 500

copies. The Brats by then had split, disillusioned, downcast, doomed. But there's a further twist. A pre-Clash Mick Jones, a Brats fan, still in his glam-phase, with long hair and bellbottoms, arranges a meeting with Malcolm McLaren, who wants to manage them and start a musical revolution with the Brats' raucous signature tune, "Sick On You", as its template. Matheson thinks McLaren is "a weak-minded, possibly insane fantasist" and turns him down, at which point McLaren turns his attention to the Sex Pistols. Matheson joins Mick Jones in London SS, but the band are so awful he walks out during their first rehearsal, his spirit finally broken, all dreams of stardom gone, baby, gone. **ALLAN JONES**

Live eels, a punch-up with Freddie Mercury and a great deal of public vomiting

Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

DIETER MOEBIUS

Electronica pioneer

(1944-2015)

THE DEATH OF Dieter Moebius has robbed the music world of one of the great innovators of electronica. His work with Cluster and Harmonia helped define the new strain of experimental and ambient sounds that began spreading from Germany in the early '70s. Moebius himself always insisted there was no great design to the music he made, be it the abstract dissonance of Cluster, the synthetic kosmische of Harmonia or his eclectic recordings as a solo artist. "The concept," he once said, "was not to have a concept."

Swiss-born Moebius first met Hans-Joachim Roedelius and Conrad Schnitzler at the Zodiak Free Arts Lab in Berlin, where he'd gone to study. In 1969 the trio formed Kluster, who announced their arrival with a 12-hour gig at a local art gallery. After two LPs of proto-industrial improv (*Klopzeichen* and *Zwei-Osterei*, each recorded in a single night with engineer Conny Plank), Schnitzler quit in 1971, upon which the remaining duo elected to press on as Cluster. The music gradually became less chaotic, with Moebius and Roedelius, both of whom were autodidacts, introducing more harmonic elements. It was a fruitful union that was to survive, on and off, for nearly 40 years and produce 11 albums. "It worked out quite well as Achim [Roedelius] is more of a romantic guy," Moebius explained to arts magazine *Frieze* in 2012. "I was more of the 'flippy' one that works a lot with rhythms."

Moebius: "The concept is not to have a concept"



In 1973 the pair moved to rural Germany, built their own studio in Forst and teamed up with Neu!'s Michael Rother to form Harmonia. The two albums they made, the following year's *Musik Von Harmonia* and 1975's *Deluxe*, proved to be hugely influential, forging links between warm ambience, loop-based repetition and motorik rhythms. Brian Eno called them the

"world's most important rock band", leading to a collaboration that yielded *Tracks And Traces*, though the album remained unreleased until 1997. Eno also worked with Moebius and Roedelius on 1977's *Cluster And Eno* and *After The Heat* (1978). Moebius made over a dozen solo albums and issued his final effort with 2014's *Nidemonex*.

THEODORE BIKEL

Actor, musician, activist

(1924-2015)

Theodore Bikel's actorly fame, be it in Broadway productions of *Fiddler On The Roof* and *The Sound Of Music* or roles in *The African Queen* and *The Defiant Ones*, tended to obscure

a distinguished musical career. A folk musician and activist, he recorded in multiple languages and cut nearly 30 albums. In 1959, Bikel co-founded the Newport Folk Festival with Pete Seeger and George Wein. Perhaps his most celebrated live appearance came four years later, when he and Seeger joined Dylan, Joan Baez and Peter, Paul And Mary for the festival finale of "Blowin' In The Wind" and "We Shall Overcome". He and business partner Herb Cohen were also responsible for opening LA's first folk coffeehouse, The Unicorn, followed by Cosmo Alley, which hosted music and stand-up.

BUDDY EMMONS

Steel-guitar legend

(1937-2015)

Steel-guitarist Lloyd Green may have been guilty of hyperbole when he once compared Buddy Emmons to Picasso, yet his assertion that he was "the first modern great steel player and nobody's surpassed him yet" still holds true. Emmons' immaculate technique became a Nashville trademark during a lengthy career that began in the '50s with Little Jimmy Dickens. He went on to grace key sides by Faron Young ("Sweet Dreams"), Ernest Tubb's Texas Troubadours ("Half A Mind (To Leave You)") and Ray Price ("Night Life"), before relocating to California at the end of the '60s. There he joined Roger Miller's band and recorded sessions for Judy Collins, The Carpenters, Gram Parsons and Ray Charles. He returned to Nashville in 1974 and

was touring with The Everly Brothers as recently as 2001.

WAYNE CARSON

Songwriting hitmaker

(1943-2015)

A fine musician in his own right, Wayne Carson became known as a hit-making songwriter for others. In 1966 Eddy Arnold took "Somebody Like Me" to the top of the country charts. A year later Carson scored a US No 1 when The Box Tops, led by 16-year-old Alex Chilton, recorded "The Letter". The band followed up with Carson's "Neon Rainbow" and "Soul Deep". His biggest success, however, came in 1982, with Willie Nelson's Grammy-winning version of "Always On My Mind".



CILLA BLACK

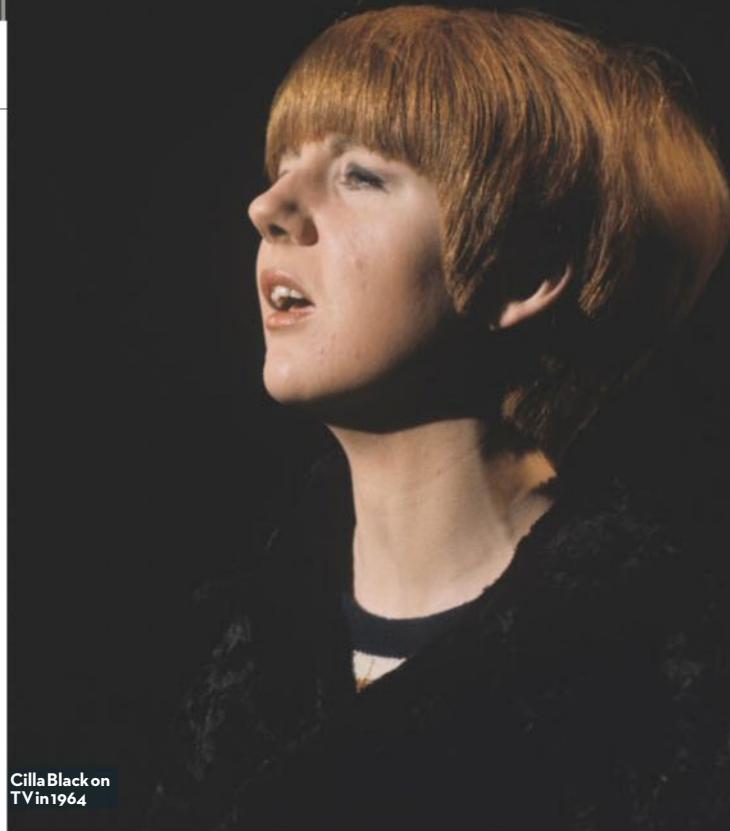
Liverpool legend, singer and TV host

(1943-2015)

GIVEN HER LATER career as a beacon of mainstream TV, it's sometimes easy to overlook Cilla Black's achievements as a pop star. She was the biggest-selling female artist in Britain during the '60s, racking up 17 Top 40 hits in six years, and carried the distinction of being the youngest female singer to host her own TV show. It was a trajectory that seemed to embody the egalitarian spirit of the decade, an era in which a cloakroom attendant from working-class Liverpool could suddenly be transported into the public consciousness.

Of course, local connections were handy too. Her part-time job at the Cavern brought her into contact with a number of promoters and bands, most notably The Beatles. She had already made guest appearances with The Big Three and Rory Storm And The Hurricanes by the time John Lennon secured her an audition with Brian Epstein. Signed to Parlophone, George Martin produced Black's 1963 debut "Love Of The Loved" (a Lennon-McCartney effort), though it was her sumptuous cover of Burt Bacharach and Hal David's "Anyone Who Had A Heart" that elevated her to stardom. Despite her later admission that "I never really rated the song," it topped the charts and went on to be the UK's best-selling single by a female artist in the '60s.

Black repeated her No 1 success with "You're My World" and went on to have sizeable hits with "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'", "It's For You", "Love's Just A Broken Heart" and another Bacharach-David tune, "Alfie". Bacharach, whose perfectionism supposedly resulted in over 30 takes of the song in the studio, paid her a high compliment. "There weren't too many



Cilla Black on TV in 1964

white singers around who could convey the emotion that I felt in many of the songs I wrote," he said. "But that changed with people like Cilla Black."

When Epstein died in 1967, Black's boyfriend (and future husband) Bobby Willis took over the management of her career. Paul McCartney wrote "Step Inside Love" as the theme to her TV variety show the following year, which itself led to another flurry of hits through to 1971.

BILLY SHERRILL

Country producer

(1936-2015)

Billy Sherrill and Glenn Sutton were the twin architects of the countrypolitan sound that rose from Nashville during the '60s. Their populist attempts to smooth over the harder edges of country with strings and choirs first paid dividends with David Houston on "Livin' In A House Full Of Love" and "Almost Persuaded". But it was through his associations with Tammy Wynette and George Jones that Sherrill would secure immortal status. He and Wynette reached their first milestone with 1968's co-written "Stand By Your Man". When Jones signed to Epic in 1971, Sherrill began producing and writing for the couple, who swiftly became country's most bankable asset. Arguably the producer's best moment with Jones arrived in 1980 (a year before he helmed Elvis Costello's *Almost Blue*), with "He Stopped Loving Her Today".

STUART JAMES

Engineer and producer

(1952-2015)

In his capacity as engineer/producer at Manchester's New Hormones label, Stuart James

called himself the poor man's Martin Hannett. "There wasn't a great amount of time for experimentation," he explained. Gloucester-born James moved north in the early '70s, forming his own band, The Bicycle Thieves, before going on to record sessions with Joy Division, A Certain Ratio, Durutti Column and Ludus. He became The Smiths' tour manager in the '80s and performed the same job for the Chemical Brothers for 20 years.

LYNN ANDERSON

Country superstar

(1947-2015)

Born to country songwriters Casey and Liz Anderson (responsible for Merle Haggard's "Strangers" and "I'm A Lonesome Fugitive", among various others), it was always likely that Lynn Anderson would follow a



Lynn Anderson

similar path. She was still a teenager in 1967 when she scored her first significant hit, "If I Kiss You (Will You Go Away)", written by her mother. But it was her version of Joe South's "I Never Promised You A Rose Garden", issued three years later, that made her a country superstar. The song was an international smash, earning Anderson a Grammy and helping its parent album, *Rose Garden*, reach platinum status. Such was her pulling power that she became the first female country singer to sell out Madison Square Garden when she appeared there in 1974.

SUSUMU YOKOTA

Dance music maven

(1961-2015)

Japanese maven Susumu Yokota, who has died after a long illness, was a prolific artist who issued over 30 albums throughout his career, covering a breadth of styles that spanned ambient, house, techno and breakbeat, often under pseudonyms like Stevia, Ringo and Ebi. Some of his best ambient work was released on the Leaf Label around the turn of the millennium, including *Grinning Cat* and *The Boy And The Tree*. His final album landed in 2012, when Lo Recordings issued *Dreamer*.

JOHN ORMROD

Punk scenester Jon The Postman

(DOB UNKNOWN-2015)

There were few more eccentric characters on the Manchester punk scene than John Ormrod, aka Jon The Postman, who made a habit of gatecrashing the end of live shows to perform a gleefully ramshackle "Louie, Louie". A popular local figure, he supported Warsaw (later Joy Division) in 1977 and issued two LPs in '78: *Jon The Postman's Puerile* and *Steppin' Out (Of Holts' Brewery)*. The former featured Mark E Smith, whose Cog Sinister label he would later help oversee.

ERNIE MARESCA

New York songwriter

(1938-2015)

Dion DiMucci heard Ernie Maresca's demo of "No One Knows" in 1957, after which he cut a version with the Belmonts and secured a Top 20 hit the following year. It was the start of a fruitful partnership that peaked with co-write "Runaround Sue" and Dion's rendition of Maresca's "The Wanderer". Maresca also penned "Lovers Who Wander" and "Donna The Prima Donna" for Dion, as well as scoring his own solo hit with 1962's "Shout! Shout! (Knock Yourself Out)". ROB HUGHES



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DEAD RECKONING

Loved John Mulvey's feature on the Grateful Dead farewell gigs [*Uncut, September issue*], lucky man to be at them. But it was the *Ramble On Rose* CD that really got me.

Someone else who dreamed of the "missing" Dead album, wow! I have thought for longer than I would like to recall that they probably lost their finest studio album at the turn of the '70s in a slew of double and triple live albums, solo efforts of varying quality and endless gigging. When *Wake Of The Flood* finally arrived, it was, for me, a shuddering disappointment. So I tried several times over the years, thanks to the miracle of the cassette tape, to create this lost gem from the available vinyl. When I saw the CD this week I went on an archaeological dig in my cupboards and dug out my final version, circa 1980 and obviously pre-Dick's Picks. I called it 'McTeague's Dream' after the

Frank Norris novel that became the classic film, *Greed*, as I think the Dead always evoked the romance of Old San Francisco and especially around that time. It went: "Bertha", "Looks Like Rain", "Bird Song", "Wharf Rat" on Side 1 and "Playing In The Band", "Cassidy", "Sugaree", "Loser" and "Mexicali Blues" on Side 2. Tracks drawn from *Garcia, Ace* and *Skull & Roses*. Not that much crossover with yours ("Loser" and "Looks Like Rain"), but I would now definitely try and slip "Mr Charlie" into mine with hindsight. Anyway, thanks, wonder if there are any more of these out there?

Jon Grocock, Glastonbury

...Just to say thanks a million for *Ramble On Rose* – it's a brilliant compilation! I have often thought about trying to assemble a 'Great Lost Grateful Dead Follow-Up to *American Beauty* Album' but now you have saved me the trouble (and expense). I can honestly say that it's the best free-cover-mounted CD I have ever heard.

Peter Cowley, via email

...I simply have to say that the Grateful Dead *Uncut* CD is a gas. Driving around listening to it – perfect. And I'm not

The Grateful Dead live at Levi Stadium, Santa Clara for Fare Thee Well: Celebrating 50 Years Of Grateful Dead, June 27, 2015



specifically a Deadhead. Thank you. By the way, *American Beauty* also reads "American Reality". Truly, I didn't know that until I looked at it via Dr Leary. Try it – it works even without Timothy's help.

BP Fallon, New York

ANY NEWPORT IN A STORM

Just a couple of slight corrections to Jason Anderson's otherwise fine article about the Newport festivals [*September issue*]. It was in 1969 (not 1968) that George Wein added rock artists to the lineup as an experiment, billing the event as The Newport Jazz And Rock Festival. I was there, and when Sly & The Family Stone

appeared, several non-ticketholders outside the festival grounds tore down a fence and stormed the arena, prompting Wein to announce the cancellation of the next act, Led Zeppelin. That was when the chairs and debris started flying through the air, causing Wein to quickly renege, allowing Zeppelin to go on. Incidentally, a bunch of us "entered" one of those (empty) mansions Anderson referred to, where we held a five-day party, but that's another story!

Bruce Paley, Haverfordwest

...Do we really need another article about Bob Dylan in your magazine? As a long-time subscriber, and fan of the man (up to 1980, anyway), I for one wouldn't dream of playing any album he's released post-*Street Legal*. *Time Out Of Mind* is OK, but *Blood On The Tracks* it ain't. Please devote a bit more time to some quality up-and-coming bands and leave the ramblings of the sad old man to himself.

Simon Taylor, via email

GUESS THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT THE BLUES?

Many thanks to *Uncut*, and more specifically to David Cavanagh, for

an excellent article in the August 2015 issue, tracing the recent development, or otherwise, of the blues music genre. Being the music history fanatic that I am, I appreciate most forms of music and cross-pollination of these. The blues really does seem to be at some kind of a crossroads, with a reduction in both paying public at concerts and the number of contemporary musicians wishing to prolong the legacy of this particular art form. The instant gratification and quick accessibility currently being experienced in the societies the majority of us are living in hardly encourages the perpetuation of blues music, with its lengthy guitar solos and meaningful lyrics portraying misery and woe. Nothing else seems quite as threatened from a musical perspective, but then again, I guess that's why they call it the blues.

Neal Braxton, via email

OF LENNON, UNCUT WRITERS AND SOILED OATMEAL...

As a longtime subscriber and fan of your magazine, I have never felt compelled to respond to an article or review over the past two decades. That all changed upon



CROSSWORD

WIN!



One of three copies
of Richard Hawley's
Hollow Meadows on CD

reading the review of the *John Lennon Vinyl Boxset* in your August 2015 issue. I am not sure if someone shat in Mr Gill's oatmeal the day he chose to compose his "review" of one of the music world's greatest composers/artists and cultural icons, as one can only believe that his vile mood must have led to this blasphemous submission.

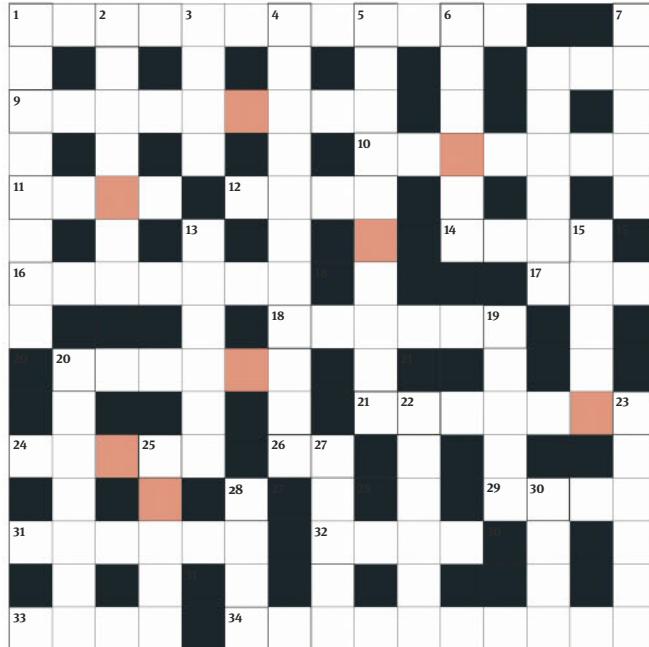
It is incredulous that Mr Gill assesses the sum total of John Lennon's post-Beatle output distilled to a 6/10 rating! So based on this, your reader would be advised not to waste your time on Mr Lennon's music! Absurd indeed! No musician is perfect, nor should we expect so, but the vast majority of John's songs are treasures few could hope to match in their lifetimes, and John only had 10 years.

We are all allowed our opinions, and tastes can vary, but as a reviewer of such an icon, to nit-pick and denigrate this hero in print is deplorable. This is the artist responsible for *Imagine* alone. I question your good sense Mr Mulvey in approving this diatribe for publication. If Andy Gill has such disdain for John Lennon, surely there are other reviewers on the *Uncut* staff who could have provided an enlightened review more in tune with the worldwide embrace of all of John's art. Interestingly, no assessment of the "vinyl mastering" was proffered, which really should have been the point in reviewing this release. *Uncut* owes John's legacy a huge apology.

Going Down On Love, for John, **Craig Schultz, Eagle, Wisconsin**

...I enjoyed your list of the 50 quintessential New York albums [August issue], but surely you could have left off Lennon's flaccid, featureless *Double Fantasy* or Woody Allen's comedy album (an artist whose cinematic tributes to the city made the stand-up albums redundant) to make room for the Stones, marinated-in-Manhattan tour de force, *Some Girls*. From Mick's Puerto Rican girl-aggrieved Central Park stalker in "Miss You", to his 53rd Street rentboy in "When The Whip Comes Down", to his coke-frenzied hustler on 7th Ave in "Shattered", the album is practically a cinematic ride through the highs and lows of late '70s New York culture ("Go ahead, bite the Big Apple, don't mind the maggots"), and in many ways the last great hurrah for both band and city.

Stephen Conn, Las Cruces, New Mexico



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Paul McCartney. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* October 2015 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, September 21, 2015. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 *The Sweet* _____ (*Are In Bed Now, Of Course*). May be there with the others? (6-6)
- 8 (See 2 down)
- 9 Sam Cooke kept in the dark about use of drums on this album (5-4)
- 10 Having a single passion for The Stone Roses (3-4)
- 11+28D Born Marvin Lee Aday in 1947 (4-4)
- 12 Collectively sisters Este, Danielle and Alana (4)
- 14 (See 7 down)
- 16 Had one remix version of a Fleetwood Mac single (2-5)
- 17 "I am a new day rising, I am a brand new _____", from the Foo's "Times Like These" (3)
- 18 "Cos we're lovers, and that is a fact," 1977 (6)
- 20+19D Nothing difficult for Jim O'Rourke to learn from his new album (6-5)
- 21+23D Ben E King's first solo hit (7-6)
- 24 (See 20 down)
- 26+27D Execute, with further optional execution, The Super Furry Animals (2-2-3)
- 29 The last article including mention of Kevin Ayers' single (4)
- 31 I'd go in awkwardly with Moloko (5-6)
- 32 Just take the necessary action on The Rollins Band and Clinic having same album title (2-2)
- 33 "No _____ below us, above us only sky", from John Lennon's "Imagine" (4)
- 34 Supergroup's debut album had been newly made (5-5)

ANSWERS: TAKE 219

ACROSS

- 1 Mystery Glue, 9 War, 10+11A Vanilla Fudge, 12 Success, 15 Rifle, 17 Elbow, 20 Rosie, 22 Vant, 23 Brel, 24 You, 30 Joe, 31 Child In Time,

ANSWERS: TAKE 219

DOWN

- 1+13A Mavis Staples, 2 Sonics, 3 Ellie Greenwich, 5 Life's Been Good, 6 Endgames, 7+32A Swell Maps, 8+27A Press To Play, 14 Fray, 16+4D Five Years, 18 Barry Gibb,

ANSWERS: TAKE 219

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Girlfriend Is Better"

XWORD COMPILED BY:

Trevor Hungerford

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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Beirut

Self-confessed skate rat Zach Condon on his love of surf songs, Motown and “Macedonian brass-band madness”

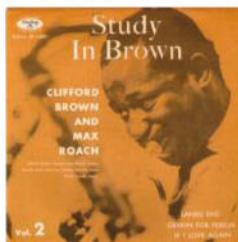


The first song I loved

The Beach Boys

Surfer Girl 1963

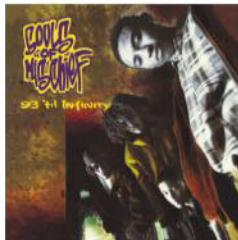
My father bought me this Beach Boys tape, a greatest hits compilation. I used to listen to “Surfer Girl” obsessively – I’d play it so often that my brother actually took the tape, threw it out into the garden and smashed it to bits, he was so sick of hearing it. The changes in the music kind of give it a depth it otherwise wouldn’t have, and I’m sure that my very young mind latched on to that without me having any idea why I liked it so much.



An album that redefined trumpet

Clifford Brown And Max Roach *Study In Brown* 1955

I was learning trumpet by fifth or sixth grade. I loved the feeling and tone of it. I had a teacher who was encouraging me to check out jazz – most of it was way over my head, I was too young. Then I picked up this record and was blown away. I haven’t heard it recently, but I was just listening to little snippets, and was like, “Oh my God, I need to go buy this again.” I forgot how much I love it. He had these elastic melodies that really draw you in.



A headphone delight

Souls Of Mischief

93 'Til Infinity 1993

Later on, I was a skate rat, and we would often miss school to go skating. We’d listen to a lot of hip-hop, and this song was probably the first besides “Surfer Girl” that I would listen to over and over again. You can get so lost in that beat. I’d take it home and think, ‘This means more to me than it does to these other kids. The world doesn’t stop for them when this song comes on, like it does for me.’



A record by a hero

The Modern Lovers

The Modern Lovers 1976

This meant so much to me when I was a teenager. It showed me you can have so much fun with music, you don’t have to sing perfectly. There’s such a gnarly energy to it and the lyrics are so leftfield. “Roadrunner” was the first song I used to blast to the point of rattling the windows of my car as I drove around town. Over the years I’ve kind of grown with Jonathan Richman. I’ve always checked in on his records – so many classics.



A wrong-speed revelation

Boards Of Canada *In A Beautiful Place Out In The Country* 2000

I broke my wrist skating and had to get surgery on it. Afterwards, I am dosed up on codeine and I buy this EP, take it home and put it on. I laid down on the bed and thought, ‘Holy shit, this is amazing.’ You’re supposed to play it at 45rpm and I put it on at 33 by mistake. So years later when my little brother bought the CD version, I was like, “Something’s wrong...” I still play it at 33rpm.



My favourite album from the Balkans

Kočani Orkestar

Alone At My Wedding 2002

I thought you could do three things with trumpet – mariachi, jazz or pop, in the way Burt Bacharach would have someone come out and play a melody. Then I hear this Macedonian brass band, and it’s madness... the excitement is palpable, and they’re dramatic in the best way, and since then I’ve been obsessed. We played a show together in Paris, and I think they were like, “Who’s this weird kid that knows all our music?”



The song that changed everything

Jacques Brel

Ces Gens-Là 1966

This is a huge influence as far as songwriting aspirations. It’s this slow piano ballad that builds into an orchestral thing. The chorus is wild, beautiful and stunning. I was listening to a lot of Serge Gainsbourg and yé-yé stuff. So I thought I’d check out Brel, and this one blew my mind to the point where it changed everything I thought I wanted to sound like. It made me realise that, up until then, I’d only been toying with instrumentation.



A perfect pop song

Smokey Robinson

The Tracks Of My Tears 1965

This is a song that pops up in the background of my life. Everytime I hear it, it reminds me like, Motown, holy shit what an amazing genre, what an amazing song. And Smokey Robinson, what an amazing singer. If I’d ever finished high school, I would have wanted to go to prom and listen to music like that. It’s pretty mind-blowing. It’s one of the best songs ever written, and it should be there in everyone’s life.

*Beirut’s new album *No No No* is released September 11 on 4AD. See review on page 71*



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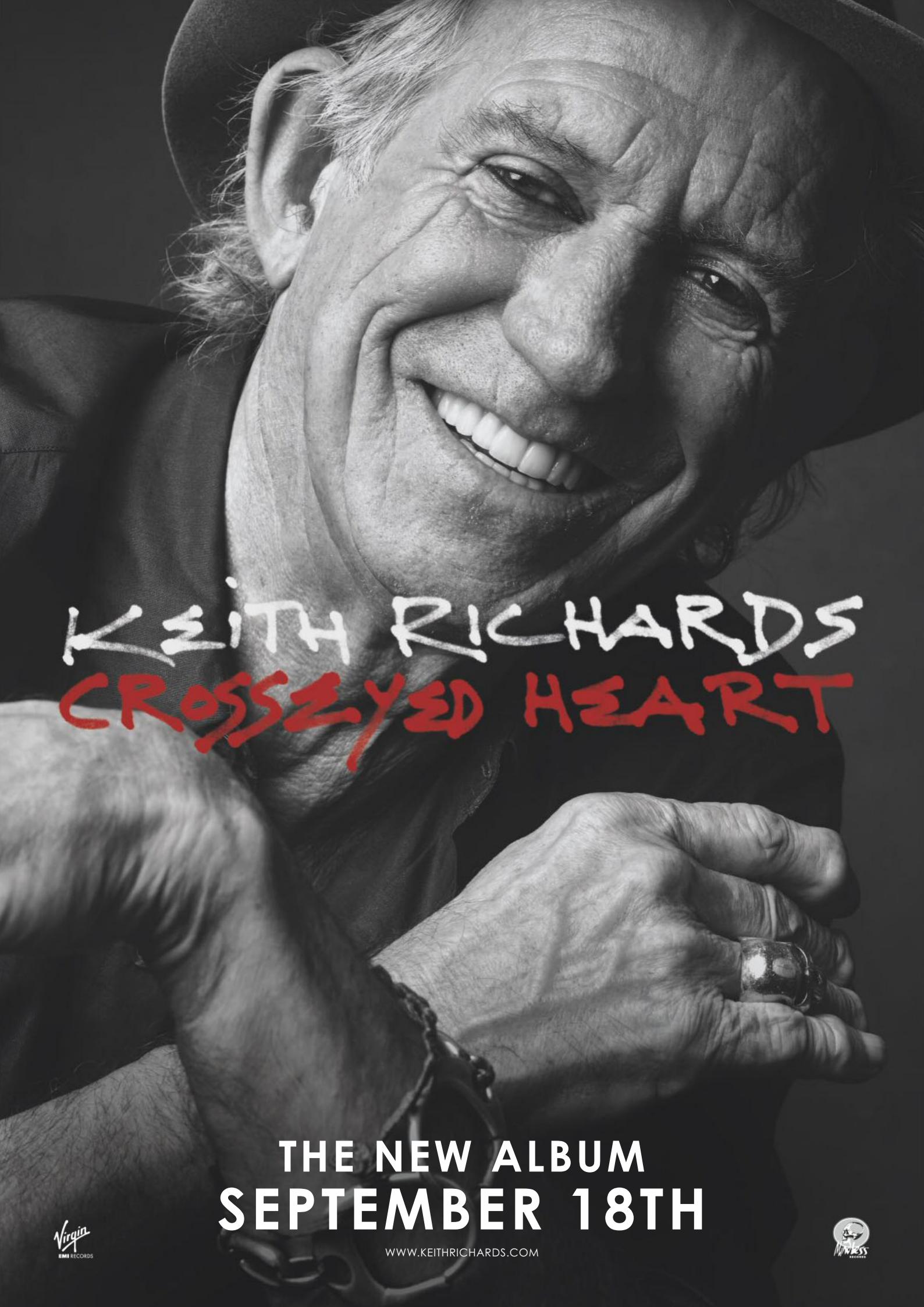
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