

"On the day that your mentality/Catches up with your biology..."

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UNCUT

30th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

Violence!
Oppression!
Sausages!
The truth about
**MEAT IS
MURDER**

**THE
SMITHS**
'We were unmanageable!'

**JOE
COCKER
R.I.P.**

**THE WAR
ON DRUGS**
'It's a trip into
the unknown'

**TIM
BUCKLEY**
'He didn't want
the goblins
to get him!'

KRAFTWERK
'We were natural guys
with natural needs...'

**ENNIO
MORRICONE**
An audience with
the Maestro

**MAN
CLIVE LANGER
PHOSPHORESCENT
THE POP GROUP**

**AND
DEVO
STEVE CROPPER
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Phosphorescent

Are we rolling?

FOR MANY OF us who came of age in the mid-'80s, The Smiths probably provided the soundtrack to a political maturing as much as an emotional one. My epochal moment of teenage rebellion came on July 23, 1986, a day I had strategically reserved for the purchase of *The Queen Is Dead*, so as to coincide with the wedding of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson. The gesture had its drawbacks: it took me 15 minutes to be served in an empty Woolworth's, unable to distract the shop assistants from the spectacle of Ferguson's 17-foot long train inching its way up the aisle of Westminster Abbey.

A vegetarian life only began a few years later, not least because it took me until then to work out what vegetarians actually ate. Anyone who felt similarly, and worried about The Smiths' protein intake, may find some validation in Michael Bonner's *Meat Is Murder* cover story this month. For young Mancunians adrift on the motorways of Thatcher's Britain, awkward visits to Little Chef and a predilection for crisps were the only solution. “If they'd have been presented with something like a couscous salad,” says their old tour manager, “it wouldn't have gone down well.”

Michael's piece is very good on diet, then, but it's also a great snapshot of an era when politics were at the forefront of British music: besides interviewing Billy Bragg and Paul Weller for the piece, he also spoke with Neil Kinnock, then leader of the Labour Party.

It's easy, reading such a vivid story, to end up bemoaning how music has now lost that radical imperative. But, like most things in 2015's complex and deeply textured music scene, activism and engagement can still be tracked down. On December 15, just

after the last issue of *Uncut* went to press, the Richmond R&B singer D'Angelo released his first album in 14 years. D'Angelo, it transpired, had been finessing the 12 songs for most of his time away, but the sudden appearance of *Black Messiah* was a rush job, in response to the events in Ferguson, Missouri, which gave awful new potency to lyrics like “All we wanted was a chance to talk/” *Stead we only got outlined in chalk.*”

Tragedy provided a context and urgency, and made it even easier to draw parallels between Sly Stone's *There's A Riot Goin' On* and *Black Messiah*. On every level, though, and at any time, D'Angelo's album shapes up as a masterpiece. I've reviewed it on page 75: if you haven't heard it yet, please give it a listen. Thanks, as ever.

John Mulvey, Editor

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D'Angelo



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THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring BLAKE MILLS | CLIVE LANGER | MAN | JOE JAMMER

“You can’t afford to dwell on shit. There’s no point”

JOE COCKER | 1944-2014

JOE COCKER IN London in January 1979 to promote his recent album, *Luxury You Can Afford*, was for the first time in years, according to his label, free of the alcoholism and heroin addiction that miraculously did not kill him decades before the lung cancer did, on December 22, at home in Crawford, Colorado. When he turned up for his interview with *Melody Maker* lugging three bottles of Champagne and a crate of Carlsberg, he did not, however, seem like a man entirely at home with notions of sobriety.

“Compliments of the management,” he cackled, popping a bottle of Bollinger. “So tuck the fuck in,” he guffawed, allowing a glimpse of the party monster that had threatened to consume the career he had made from humble beginnings in Sheffield. He was born John Robert Cocker in May 1944, and made his musical bones in the early ’60s as a raw-voiced singer on the northern club circuit with Vance Arnold & The Avengers. By 1964, he was signed to Decca, but his debut single, a cover of The Beatles’ “I’ll Cry Instead”, was a flop. Cocker returned to his job as a gas fitter for the East Midlands Gas Board, teaming up a year later with pianist Chris Stainton to form The Grease Band, who had a minor hit in May 1968 with woozy soul stomper “Marjorine”.

What changed Cocker’s world was its follow-up. A roaring gospel

version of The Beatles’ “With A Little Help From My Friends”, with Jimmy Page on screaming lead guitar, topped the UK charts in November 1968. The previous August Bank Holiday, he’d played the National Jazz And Blues Festival at Kempton Park Racecourse in Sunbury-On-Thames. The Saturday show started with Tyrannosaurus Rex and a blustery set from Deep Purple. The stage was then full of people, at their centre, making an incredible noise, a burly man in what used to be called a grandad vest, with a voice that even without the rickety PA could have been heard in the next county. This was Cocker and The Grease Band, Cocker looking like he’d just landed onstage after being shot out of a cannon. Dishevelled and deranged, even at 24, you would not have described him as fresh-faced. His increasingly hysterical physical gyrations were frankly scary – his body seemingly beyond his control, much writhing and squirming that quickly became a trademark.

When he delivered almost the same performance of the song the next year at Woodstock, it became a highlight of the movie that followed, and brought him into the orbit of Leon Russell, with whom in 1970 he put together Mad Dogs And Englishmen, a 21-piece band that rampaged across America, playing 65 shows in 57 days. The tour resulted in a hit live LP and film, but left Cocker physically shattered, an alcoholic recluse with a ruinous

“It was the times, man...” Joe Cocker in 1985





● heroin addiction, so massively in debt that when we met in 1979, he still owed \$400,000 to former label A&M, whose president Jerry Moss had recently pressed him for repayment.

"The old fucker had already taken the advance from my last album," Cocker said, laughing, topping up our drinks, "and I'd just got a bill from the Inland Revenue for £65,000, so I told him to join the fucking queue."

Attempting a comeback in 1972, he was often too drunk to perform, and although he had a huge hit in 1975 with "You Are So Beautiful", for much of the decade he staggered from one humiliation to the next, a formidable talent reduced to clownishness. There was much unfortunate merit, he admitted, in the suggestion he'd brought about his own ruin, via a tendency to blunder unplanned into his own future, which often, he wearily confessed, involved poor choices on his part of managers, lawyers, business partners, who took ample advantage of his addled gullibility.

"It was the times, man," he said, "and the people I allowed myself to be surrounded by, who sucked the fucking life out of me. This is a ruthless business. Folk aren't concerned for your well-being. You're just someone they can make a fast buck out of, and they're not satisfied until they've stripped you of everything."

He rallied again with 1982's *Sheffield Steel*, subsequently regarded as a classic. His commercial recovery was sealed the same year with "Up Where We Belong", a duet with Jennifer Warnes, from the movie, *An Officer And A Gentleman*, that won a Grammy and an Oscar. Its success allowed Cocker's career over the next three decades until his death to proceed in a more dignified manner than anyone associated with him, in the wilder times he was not expected to survive, could ever have imagined. He was awarded an OBE in 2007 and continued to tour and record, releasing his last album, *Fire It Up*, in 2012, before illness overcame him.

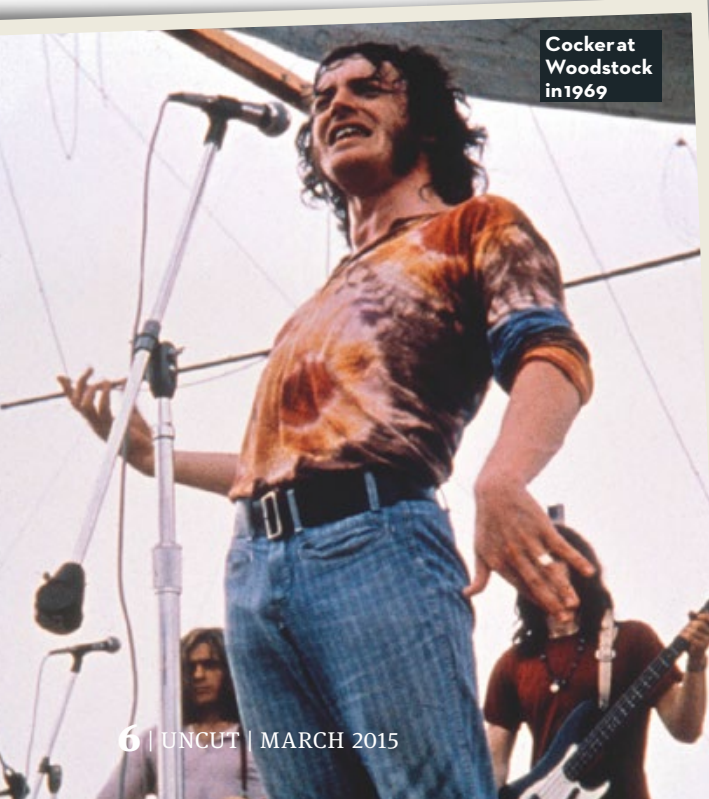
Let's leave him, though, as we found him, with a drink in his hand and a room full of laughter, looking back at the dark times he had been lucky to escape.

"You can't afford to dwell on shit like that," he said. "There's no bloody point. You do what you do and you pay the price. Fuck it. Let's have another."

And we did, and a couple more after that.

ALLAN JONES

REX, NEVILLE ASTLEY



NO DESK JOB

"I told myself to get on with it..." Clive Langer today

"Producing got in the way for about 30 years"

Master producer **CLIVE LANGER** returns to making his own music – not least by reclaiming his "calling card", "Shipbuilding"

"I WAS ALWAYS frustrated in the studio, not being able to play. Writing and performing is probably the most enjoyable thing for me. But producing kind of got in the way for about 30 years."

Clive Langer, one half of the team that produced key albums by Madness, Dexys Midnight Runners, Elvis Costello, The Teardrop Explodes, Morrissey and more, is busy explaining why it's taken him so long to become a frontman again. The Clang Group finds him heading up a band for the first time since Clive Langer And The Boxes in the early '80s. It's a project for which he's joined by Roxy Music sax god Andy Mackay, Eugene McGuinness' bass player Malcolm Lunan, and drummer Gregg Braden and keyboardist John Wood, both from Langer's other outfit, Deaf School.

The latter, it turns out, provided the spark for the whole thing. "We'd got Deaf School together again in the last few years," explains Langer of the art-rock combo he co-founded in Liverpool in 1973. "I was really enjoying it, but it was very sporadic. I decided I wanted something else. I'd been writing songs again and was thinking about singers, when Gregg reminded me I'd sung in my distant past. So I told myself to get on with it."

The first flush of his labour is an EP, "The Clang Group". A frisky set of English-sounding rock songs with a side order of jazz, Langer's vocals are not unlike some of those he and Alan

Winstanley produced in their prime, namely Suggs or Robert Wyatt. "My voice has taken on a more interesting tone as it's got older. I was never a singer like Elvis Costello or [Deaf School's] Enrico Cadillac. But I always loved Robert Wyatt, Syd Barrett and Ian Dury, people who sound like they're talking to you when they're singing. There's a kind of honesty, but you also want to be cheeky now and again, with irony and humour."

The Wyatt comparison is very apt. The EP closes with "Shipbuilding", the song Langer and Costello wrote with Wyatt in mind. "It was an amazing feeling when I first heard Robert's voice on it in 1982," recalls Langer, who was moved to tears. "For the first time it felt like I'd made a piece of music. I sang it originally, so it feels quite natural to do it again. It's a calling card really."

It's too early to say whether The Clang Group will release a full-length effort, though the signs are promising. "I only ever knew of Clive as a producer and Deaf School's guitarist," offers Andy Mackay. "But he's a very dynamic and energetic frontman." As for Langer, he's thoroughly enjoying being "more aggressive with the guitar than I am in real life. I'm not an aggressive person, but I like making a noise and being loud. This band feels like something incredibly exciting." **ROBHUGHES**

The Clang Group EP is released by Domino on February 16

"I only ever knew of Clive as a producer, but he's a dynamic frontman"

ANDY MACKAY

Jimmy Page, Jimi Hendrix and Joe The Jammer...

The legend of JOE JAMMER, lost guitar hero from the court of Led Zep

JIMMY PAGE AND Robert Plant both claim credit for coming up with the moniker 'Joe the Jammer'; but whatever its provenance, the name fitted Led Zeppelin's Chicago-born partner-in-crime Joe Wright like a guitar string wound around a machine head. "Because that's what I did all the time – jam," he says.

By the time he met Led Zep on February 7, 1969 backstage at Chicago's Kinetic Playground during the group's first American tour, the 18-year-old guitar prodigy had already worked as a roadie on tours by Jimi Hendrix and The Who. "Nobody had heard of Led Zeppelin and their first album had only just come out, but I was a big fan of The Yardbirds and Jimmy Page," he recalls.

Initially employed as John Bonham's roadie, Page was impressed by his guitar-playing virtuosity in dressing room warm-ups and invited him to London. He landed at Heathrow

on November 15, 1969 and became the guitarist's indispensable factotum. "I was the first guitar tech ever," he says. When not looking after Page's collection of vintage Gibson Les Pauls and Fender Telecasters, Jammer was kept busy with session work. "Jimmy handed over to me all the sessions he no longer had time to fulfil. I did sessions for more than 150 albums," he recalls.

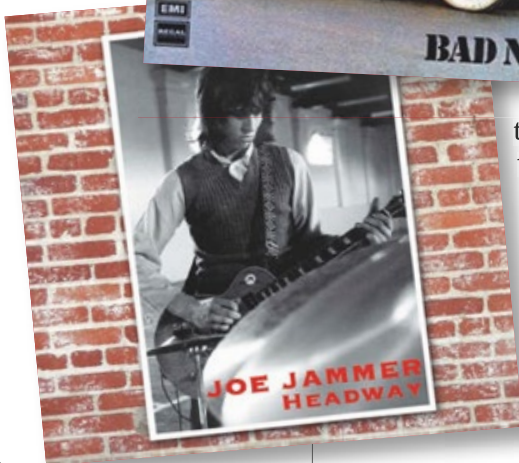
With Zep's manager Peter Grant directing Jammer's burgeoning career, he put together his own band and acted as support act to Zeppelin at various gigs, including 1970's Bath Festival. Grant asked Mickie Most to produce him and signed Jammer to EMI, who released his debut *Bad News* in 1973. By the time he recorded the follow-up, 1974's *Headway*, Mitch Mitchell had joined his band. "We'd become close after Hendrix died and I was living at his place in Surrey and was actually using some of Hendrix's guitars and amps," Jammer remembers.

But Jammer's album – a pioneering hybrid of rock and funk, not unlike the sound that, a year later, would give Jeff Beck the biggest-seller of his career with *Blow By Blow* – never saw the light of day. Returning from a tour of Germany, he was refused re-admission to Britain because his temporary visa had expired. "Peter Grant told me he'd sort out the paperwork for a permanent visa, but he was so busy with Zeppelin he never had time to do it," Jammer says with magnanimous forgiveness.

Back in America and unable to promote his album, EMI declined to put Jammer's record out. Grant sought to make amends by booking Jammer as support on US tours by Maggie Bell and Bad Company, both signed to Zep's Swan Song. But by the 1980s he was living in obscurity in Canada.

He discovered the long-forgotten tapes of his unreleased 1974 album in the basement of his mother's house, when she died two years ago. "I'm glad people will finally hear the record," he says from his home in Chicago, where he has since returned and continues to gig on the club scene. "I'm immensely proud of what we did. To me, it's the finest playing from Mitch after his work with Hendrix." **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

Headway is finally released by Angel Air on February 2



A QUICK ONE

➤ The lesser-spotted **Michael Stipe** appeared on CBS' *This Morning* on Dec 14 and revealed, "I think I will sing again. Not soon, maybe. I don't know." On Dec 29, however, he was onstage for the first time since REM's split in 2011, for a six-song set at



Webster Hall, NY, in support of Patti Smith. Alongside two REM songs ("New Test Leper", "Saturn Return"), Stipe covered Smith's "Wing", Vic Chesnutt's "Lucinda Williams", Perfume Genius' "Hood", plus "New York, New York".

➤ After his manic 2014, **Neil Young** already has another LP in the works. Unusually, the backing band are newcomers to Young's tight musical world: Promise Of The Real, featuring Willie Nelson's sons, Lukas and Micah.

➤ Unexpected product dept: **Nick Cave** has endorsed a limited edition skateboard. "Good friend and customer Nick Cave has teamed up with us to produce an exciting and rad collection," announced Aussie company Fast Times. "After discussing lyrics and a theme, it was agreed Nature Boy best suited the Melbourne skate scene..." Nick Cave's Nature Boy board retails at AU\$99.95. Rad!

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"I was the first guitar tech ever!"
Joe Jammer, 1974



MALE BONDING

THE ASCENT OF MAN

Wales' first psychedelic heroes memorialised...
"We were just another bunch of idiots walking around looking weird."

WALES' REPUTATION AS a psychedelic rock nexus only crystallised with the ascent of the Super Furry Animals and Gorky's Zygotic Mynci in the 1990s, but as a new exhibition at Swansea Museum documenting the tangled history of Man attests, crazy, hairy people stalked the valleys long before that. "We have got a thing of non-conformity in Wales," Man guitarist Deke Leonard tells *Uncut*. "We were another bunch of idiots walking around looking weird."

Acid Rock From Wales reveals that South Wales was home to a thriving club scene in the mid-'60s, with Merthyr Tydfil harmony popsters The Bystanders (who had an almost-hit with "98.6" in early '67) among the leading lights. Llanelli-born Leonard was thrilled to be offered a job with the band in 1968, but somewhat downcast when he first met his bandmates, while they were doing cabaret dates in Manchester.

"I'd been telling everyone: 'I'm going to join The Bystanders', but when I got there, they told me they'd

changed their name to Man. And I thought: 'I don't really like that name,' but the die was cast, I had no say. Just as well, in retrospect."

Leonard had plenty of say in the band's direction as they looked beyond the antique teacup pop of Perfumed Garden London to harder-edged San Francisco sounds – though Welsh acid rock had its roots in something rather less lysergic.

"I can't emphasise the influence

"We have got a thing of non-conformity in Wales"

DEKE LEONARD



Man in 1974: (l-r) Deke Leonard, Terry Williams, Malcolm Morley, Micky Jones, Ken Whaley

of Johnny Kidd & The Pirates enough," Leonard explains. "They set the template for so many Welsh bands. They were aggressive, and we were aggressive. We liked the Airplane, Quicksilver – but we went down the Zappa route and the Beefheart route, as well. It wasn't strictly flower power."

Somewhere between the free festival clump of The Pink Fairies ("They were crazier than we were," smiles Leonard, now 70) and the good-time boogie of Brinsley Schwarz, Man were local heroes in Wales, and massive in Germany – where an incarnation of the band featuring bassist Martin Ace still tours. Key live recordings like 1972's *Live At The Padget Rooms, Penarth* and the immense, side-long version of "Spunk Rock" on the same year's *Greasy Truckers Party* showed their dark star at maximum twinkle.

Leonard reflects: "We always were a great live band 'cause we loved it with all the drugs and pushing the boundaries, but we tended to look up our own arses in the studio."

A harsh assessment; 1969 debut *Revelation* for one is an authentic thrill – complete with orgasm-

faking banned single "Erotica". "It went to No 4 in France," says Leonard, who has just published *Maximum Darkness*, the third volume of his droll Man memoirs. "It was a hit in Angola! We didn't know they had record players in Angola."

An ever-changing lineup added to the sense of chaos; Leonard and Ace came and went several times. "The only constant was Micky Jones," says Leonard, remembering his lead guitar foil, who died in 2010. "He was too lazy to leave, we used to say. It was like a football manager rotating his squad. We rotated the fuck out of our squad."

Man's moving parts will be on display in Swansea until late March, much to Leonard's satisfaction. "I always thought I'd end up as a museum exhibit," he chuckles. "My wife Mary is, as we speak, building a glass case to put me in so I can get some practice." **JIM WIRTH**

The Evolution Of Man 1965-2014: *Acid Rock From Wales* is at Swansea Museum until March 23. Leonard's *Maximum Darkness: Man On The Road To Nowhere* is out then, from Northdown Publishing Ltd

THE CLASSIFIEDS

THIS MONTH: A star is born... The first night of David Bowie's first Ziggy Stardust tour is advertised in *NME*, dated February 12, 1972

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ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

RYLEY WALKER**Primrose Green** DEAD OCEANS

The Chicago free spirit channels Jansch, Buckley and Drake with unusual accuracy and fervour. An instant out-of-time classic.

SUFJAN STEVENS**Carrie & Lowell** ASTHMATIC KITT

After all the grandiose experiments, Stevens dials back to the acoustic minimalism of 2004's *Seven Swans*, and a startlingly intimate set of songs about love, death and family.

SAM LEE**The Fade In Time** THENEST COLLECTIVE

At last: a Japanese court music/Tajikistan wedding march/British folk crossover LP! A restless adventurer gives a radical but empathetic makeover to trad British songs.

LAURA MARLING Short Movie VIRGIN

The fifth wise and expansive album from Marling who, remarkably, only turns 25 this month. A city album: recorded in London, on the subject of LA.

JULIAN COPE**Trip Advizer**

LORD YATESBURY

A comp of neglected anti-hits (1999-2014) that proves the indefatigable Archdrude's music remains, covertly, as potent as ever.

STEVE GUNN & THE BLACK TWIG PICKERS**Seasonal Hire** THRILL JOCKEY

The tireless guitar maestro hooks up with the Piedmont roots mystics for some new weird jams.

VARIOUS ARTISTS**The Longest Mixtape - 1000 Songs****For You** YOUTUBE.COM/CARIBOUVIDEOS

Dan Snaith compiles his myriad musical crushes into one epic, mind-expanding playlist.

TOBIAS JESSO JR**Goon** TRUE PANTHER SOUNDS

Following a somewhat arcane series of flexidiscs, the youthful Vancouver piano man completes a full album, lavishly influenced by both Lennon and McCartney.

POPOL VUH Kailash SOUL JAZZ

A new comp of the kosmische giants, twinning Florian Fricke's piano studies with the soundtrack from *Kailash*, a rare film by Fricke from '95.

MOON DUO**Shadow Of The Sun** SACRED BONES

Further deep-space chugs from the Wooden Shjips spin-off. Psychedelic business as usual, satisfyingly.

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

WE'RE NEW HERE

Man of deep vision:
Blake Mills

Blake Mills

Recommended this month: a prodigious LA multi-tasker, anointed as Chosen One by Jackson Browne, Rick Rubin, Benmont Tench et al

A GENERATION-SPANNING Los Angeles musical renaissance is in full swing, and Blake Mills is at its very centre. The 28-year-old, who hosts jams at Venice's Mollusk Surf Shop, is best known as an in-demand session and touring guitarist. He's also an emerging producer; the Alabama Shakes sought him out to helm their upcoming second album, which he says captures "a wildly talented band reaching for something". Mills' own second album, *Heigh Ho*, puts his many skills on display, showing him to be a songwriter and singer of rarefied eloquence and emotional depth as well as a strikingly original guitarist and a masterful sound shaper in the studio.

"Blake's musicality is limitless," producer Rick Rubin told the *LA Times*. "He happens to be a breathtaking guitar player, but his real talent lies in what he chooses to play and how." Don Was, who played bass on *Heigh Ho*, said of the experience, "He's a mind-blowingly great artist with the type of deep vision that is the hallmark of true genius." And Fiona Apple, Mills' touring mate since 2012, called him "two of my favourite singers" in *The New York Times*, "because there's his voice through his body, and there's his voice through his guitar's body".

Growing up in Malibu within spitting distance of an array of legends provided Mills with plenty of opportunities. At 14, Mills filled in for a band made up of the sons of notable musicians: drummer Alex Orbison, bass player Berry Oakley Jr

and guitarist Duane Betts. "It was an interesting environment to grow up and play music in," Mills points out, "because I got to experiment, but I also became aware of some incredible music arguably before I would've found out about it otherwise."

Mills is the latest in a long line of LA artists stretching back to the 1960s, his dead-honest music evoking if not emulating the work of Ry Cooder, Randy Newman and Lowell George. Collaborative veterans like Jackson Browne, Benmont Tench and Jim Keltner form the bridge from the city's burnished past to its vital present, and Mills has eagerly soaked up knowledge from

them. "There are certain traditions that you have to pass on in a physical form, things you can never experience unless you're in the room with them," he says of his mentors. "And Benmont and Jackson in particular offer something that's intangible. It's purely magical to be able to talk about songwriting with Jackson, or to sit next to Benmont when he's playing a Steinway at Sound City."

With its sublime subtlety, *Heigh Ho* is in many ways the antithesis of (or antidote for) a "fast-food" mainstream album, as he puts it. "I'm not that interested in how people digest the food that I make. The choices that I made on this record had more to do with what was important to me." *BUD SCOPPA*

Heigh Ho is released February 2 on Caroline. Mills plays Brighton Komedia (Feb 9), London Union Chapel (10), Manchester St Philip's Church (12) and Glasgow CCA (13)

I'M YOUR FAN

"Blake's a remarkable musician. He's certainly my favourite guitarist of the last 15 to 20 years - it's his deep feel, his heartfelt inventiveness. He's smart as hell, but he never outsmarts the song."

Benmont Tench

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FRESH MEAT

Your guide to this month's free CD

1 **DAN DEACON**

Feel The Lightning

After the surprise success of *Future Islands*, could their Baltimore associate Dan Deacon find himself propelled into the limelight in 2015? On the evidence of this, it's entirely possible, as Deacon corrals his eccentric energies into a synth-rich anthem that opens one of *Uncut*'s most eclectic CDs to date. The stern Phil Oakey is Deacon – and so, in digitally adjusted form, is his apparently female duetting partner.

2 **PHOSPHORESCENT**

The Quotidian Beasts

Hard to imagine that there could be a better version of this blasted epic than the one on 2013's *Muchacho*. Here, though, is a revelatory take



from Phosphorescent's *Live At The Music Hall* set, with Matthew Houck urging his band into ever more expansive, wild mercury spaces.

3 **POPS STAPLES**

Somebody Was Watching

A long time coming, this one, given the Staples patriarch died in 2000, aged 85. Since then, his daughter Mavis has held on to a bunch of unfinished tracks, waiting until now for them to be completed with the assistance of her recent producer, Jeff Tweedy. Whatever Tweedy has added, it doesn't detract from the archetypal genius of Staples; check the trademark guitar twang, and the artful way it rides over gospel backing vocals.

4 **BADBADNOTGOOD & GHOSTFACE KILLAH**

Gunshowers

The master Wu-Tang Clan rapper has, in recent years, mostly eschewed beats and samples in favour of gritty live bands, in this case a young Toronto trio, Badbadnotgood. "Gunshowers" is a

languidly intense taster of their *Sour Soul* collaboration, with grooves that recall The Bar-Kays and characteristically pungent rhymes by the Ghost and Detroit rapper Elzhi.

5 **FATHER JOHN MISTY** Chateau Lobby #4 (In C For Two Virgins)

As last month's *Uncut* feature made evident, Josh Tillman's second trip as the good Father John is likely to end up as one of the albums of 2015, thanks in no small part to frank love songs like "Chateau Lobby #4". Crude, funny, obliquely rather sweet – and an impeccable piece of LA canyon pop, too.

6 **DUKE GARWOOD**

Heavy Love

An intriguingly moody figure on the London scene for many years, the Duke got something of a break when he joined up with Mark Lanegan on 2013's joint album, *Black Pudding*. It evidently provided an entrée into Lanegan's circles, since "Heavy Love" and its similarly-titled LP were recorded with various associates of the Queens Of The Stone Age in LA.

7 **RHIANNON GIDDENS**

Shake Sugaree

The best part of a decade fronting the old-timey Carolina Chocolate Drops brought Giddens a modicum of acclaim. But, following her appearance on the *New Basement Tapes*, her wide-ranging solo debut looks set to make the forceful singer a major star. Here's her take on Elizabeth Cotten's folk chestnut, "Shake Sugaree"; as unfussily beautiful as the Fred Neil version.

8 **STEVE EARLE**

You're The Best Lover That I Ever Had

If there's an inadvertent theme to this month's varied selection, it might be an endlessly mutating blues thrum – never more prominent than on this cut from Steve Earle's latest album, *Terraplane*. This rough'n'ready prowl in the style of "Smokestack Lightning" features what Earle calls, plausibly, "the best band I've ever had".

FREE
CD!



9 **SAMBA TOURÉ**

Touri Idjé Bibi

Very much in the same groove, here's the productive and emergent Malian guitarist Samba Touré, cycling round the trance-like possibilities of a desert blues riff. *Gandadiko*, Touré's fourth album in five years, "rocks as hard as any African record we've heard," says *Uncut*'s reviewer on page 83.

10 **THE UNTHANKS**

Died For Love

The Unthanks' new album, *Mount The Air*, places them closer to the arcane English likes of Robert Wyatt and Talk Talk than to the folk scene from which they emerged. Still, there's a vernacular immediacy to Rachel Unthank's take on maternal stress, raw enough to cut through the string-laden grandeur of its arrangement.



11 **SIR RICHARD BISHOP**

Frontier

A jewel-like piece of solo guitar virtuosity, now, from Sir Richard Bishop. An inveterate wanderer since his days in the Sun City Girls, Bishop's latest adventure found him recording in a Moroccan rooftop apartment, with a 19th-Century guitar bought in Geneva. "Frontier" is the bewitching opener from the resulting *Tangier Session* LP.

12 **THE PUNCH**

BROTHERS I Blew It Off

Chris Thile's notionally bluegrass

band moved far beyond the parameters of that genre a while back and their fourth album, *The Phosphorescent Blues*, has a complexity that presents them roughly as Radiohead with mandolins. This song, though, finds them in a ruefully poppy mood; the chorus recalls ELO, oddly.

13 **TWO GALLANTS**

My Man Go

Comparisons to another blues-inflected duo, The Black Keys, have dogged San Franciscans Adam Stephens and Tyson Vogel for years, even though the two bands are in strikingly different places these days. Hard to imagine, then, the latterday Keys coming up with a coruscating dirge as powerful as "My Man Go"; from the fifth Two Gallants LP, *We Are Undone*, a bitter requiem for their hometown.

14 **DUTCH UNCLES**

Be Right Back

From Marple, Greater Manchester, Dutch Uncles are in a grand tradition of British art-pop bands who package their subversions beneath a seductively glossy, funky veneer. "Be Right Back", from their fourth album, *O Shudder*, reveals a band ready for the level of acclaim that's been afforded kindred peers Hot Chip and Wild Beasts.

15 **SONGHYOY BLUES**

Al Hassidi Terei

Timbuktu's Songhoy Blues actually appeared on the last *Uncut* CD, as part of the Africa Express collective playing Terry Riley's "In C". This month, we showcase their own music, with a track from *Music In Exile*, the new album produced by the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Nick Zinner. An urgent, urban take on the Malian blues sound that Tinariwen have disseminated so effectively over the past decade.

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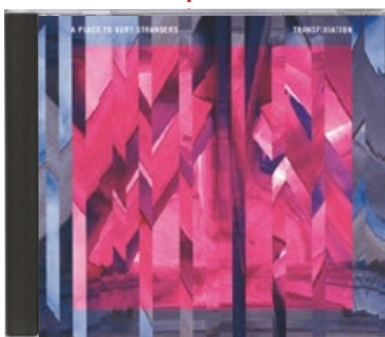
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AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Ennio Morricone

Interview: Michael Bonner

Photo: Vladimir Simicek

'Il Maestro' discusses Sergio Leone, Stanley Kubrick and Quentin Tarantino, and reveals the secrets of writing a successful soundtrack: "A very regular routine..."

W

HEN VISITING Ennio Morricone at home in Rome, it is necessary to observe a number of protocols. The composer, for instance, should be addressed as "Il Maestro". During a career spanning more than 50 years, he is worthier of the honorific than most. One other thing, *Uncut* is told: it is considered impolite to linger too long on the subject of Spaghetti Westerns.

There are, after all, over 500 other film scores in the composer's repertoire. "It could have been extremely boring to write scores for only Westerns or horror films," he explains. "It was exciting to work in all these genres."

The Morricone residence is a spacious apartment in the city's stately Monteverde Vecchio district. The living room windows look out over some of Rome's grandest architecture, including Michelangelo's Piazza del Campidoglio and the remains of the Forum, while the Trevi Fountain is only a short walk away. Inside the apartment itself, chandeliers hang from the high, coffered ceilings. Paintings in gilt frames decorate the walls, while a tapestry adorns one entire side of the living room. At 86, Morricone is on sprightly form. Dressed in a red polo neck, beige slacks and slippers, he peers owlishly from behind large glasses. At one point, he leaps to his feet to berate a BBC radio crew setting up in a corner of the room who, Morricone believes, are tampering with a socket next to his hi-fi.

Through a translator, Morricone is happy to discuss his extraordinary life and career. Many of his best known scores will receive a rare public outing this month as part of his *My Life In Music* tour. However, with so many credits to his name, it is sadly inevitable that he is no longer able to recall one or two collaborations. "Morrisey?" he says, shaking his head. "No, I can't remember him..."



Eli Wallach and Clint Eastwood in *The Good, the Bad & the Ugly*, 1966

cinemas showed two films in one day. I used to watch both of them. It may sound strange, but *West Side Story* was the only musical I liked. I didn't like musicals, or films with songs, at all. I always thought they were not real, that the songs sounded a little bit false. But in the case of *West Side Story* things were different. The songs started from reality and there was a real plot. I didn't like love stories much, either. I liked adventure films and detective stories. Hitchcock was the master.

In the late 1950s, you played the trumpet in a jazz band. What do you remember about that time?
Nikki Vogler, Vienna

Let me make a distinction. In the 1950s, I played the trumpet with some jazz groups. And then I did something else again with the trumpet, improvising with the Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza, who were really avant-garde. My more risky or avant-garde music is not that well-known to a wider audience;

but I wish it was. Was there a moment when I knew I wanted to be a composer? Initially, as early as my composition classes in the conservatory, at Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, in 1940.

Are there any regrets about not working with Stanley Kubrick on *A Clockwork Orange*?
Andrea Morandi, Milan

It was a real regret! We had already agreed to work together, but at that time I was working on a score for Sergio Leone. There was a problem of timing, different jobs and everything. I never met him; Kubrick didn't like flying, so we only spoke by telephone. We had already agreed that I was going to record in Rome, then send the music to him. Are there other occasions where circumstances have prevented me from working with a director? To tell the truth, no-one apart from Kubrick. You know, I have written 100 pieces of music for concerts when not writing for musical scores. I have had so many other engagements! ●

STAR QUESTION



Do you have any tips for a young guy like me, how do I get into the movie business?
Giorgio Moroder

He already has a career in film and doesn't have to do anything! Do I consider him to be a contemporary? It is hard to define him as a composer. When you write for films, you can use baroque music or something very contemporary. So it's hard to say.


What was it like growing up in Italy during the 1940s?

Sheena Roberts, Oxford

It was very hard. I was born in 1928, so in 1943, 1944, we had the war in Rome. There were a lot of hardships, a lack of food, many shortages. So when I played with the Americans, the English and the Canadians soon after the war, they paid me with food. That will give you an idea how widespread poverty was at that time. It was food for my family.

What are your earliest memories of going to the cinema?
Javier Vázquez, Madrid

My first memories were linked to cinema. I love cinema anyway, aside from the music. In my youth,



“My more
avant-garde
music is not that
well-known to a
wider audience;
but I wish it was”

AN AUDIENCE WITH...

● **Who is the most difficult director you worked with, or the one who has been the hardest to please?**

Steph, Twickenham

There was a lot of agreement, and a convergence of ideas, with Giuseppe Tornatore, because he improved his musical knowledge a lot from when we first met. But there were no directors with whom I had problems, particularly. I remember on *The Legend Of 1900*, the big issue we had was that the lead actor [Tim Roth] had to train beforehand to learn the piano before we shot, in order to be able to perform the music in the film. That was the only movie where I had to go many times on the set to see how everything was going.

Is it true that Sergio Leone let you compose the music before a shoot, to enable the actors to get in the mood on set?

Jessica Mackney, Tufnell Park

I liked to write the music before shooting the film begins, not only for the actors but also for the director. I think that when you have the music beforehand you can listen and get accustomed to it, you can assimilate it. Leone was not the only director for whom I did this. It may happen that you write a signature theme or a tune for a specific character, but usually I never lose sight of the whole film when I write scores. I prefer to have the whole film in mind rather than just a single character. My working relationship with Leone over the years was intriguing. It was an excellent collaboration, because he really trusted me; there was a lot of convergence of ideas!

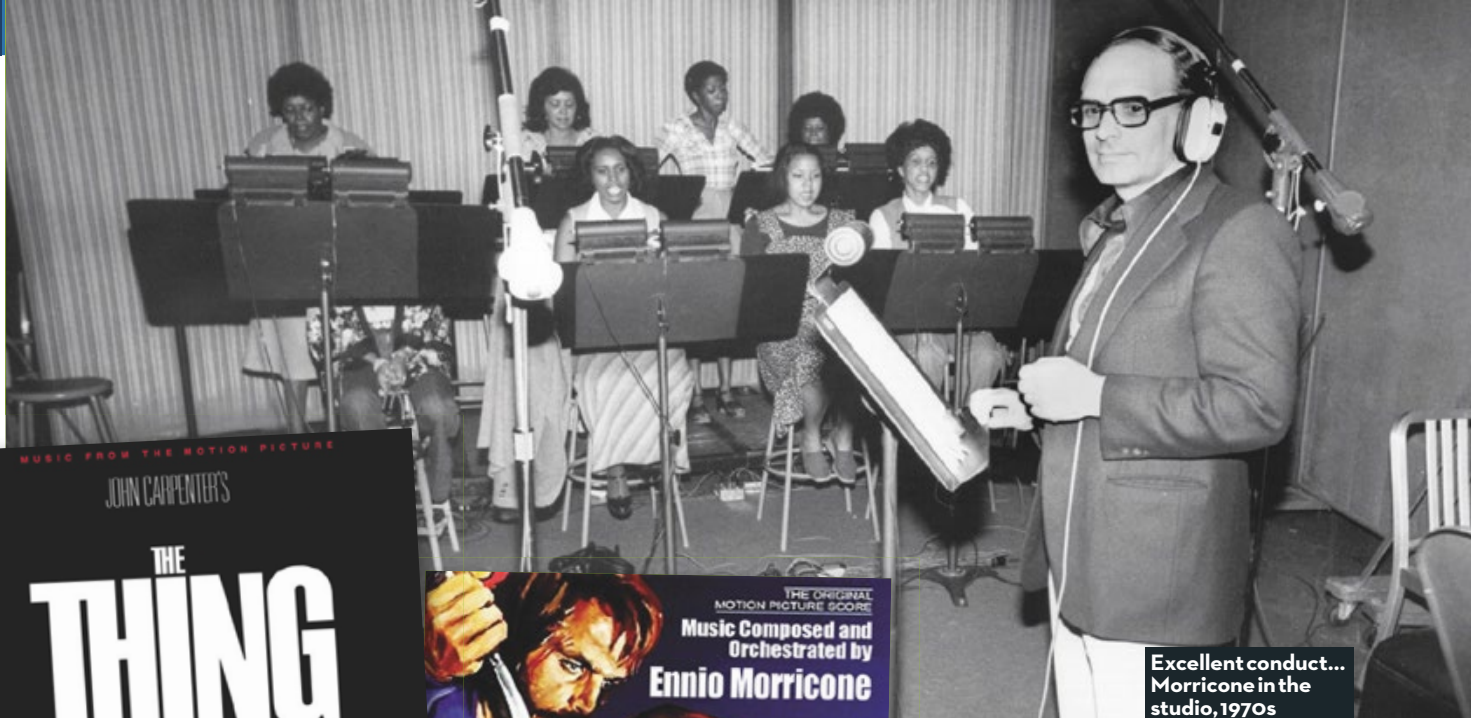
STAR QUESTION



Your score to John Carpenter's *The Thing* is sympathetic to Carpenter's own soundtrack work, but retains

your own sensibility. How did you arrive at this?

Clint Mansell



Excellent conduct...
Morricone in the
studio, 1970s



I knew that he was also a composer. He came to Rome to show me the film, and then as soon as I saw the film he went away. He never discussed anything with me at all, so I went to Los Angeles to record. He selected a piece that was unlike all the other pieces of music I recorded; it was an electronic piece of music. That was quite strange.

On *Inglourious Basterds*, Quentin Tarantino used music of yours that had already appeared in other films.

What were your views on that?

Dionne Newsome, via email

At first, he asked me to write a full musical score. The problem was he asked me in January and I had to go to Cannes in May, so these three months were really too short a time to write a complete score. That's the reason why he decided to use some pieces of music I had already composed. Was it strange to see the

music used in a different context? I thought the balance between the music and the scene was very good. So while I knew the music was written for another film, I couldn't care less. This is why I said there should always be a convergence. Directors should know the music and realise that it is the music that is good for the film. Tarantino probably knew the music because he heard it on other occasions and therefore thought that it was the right music for that scene, that film.

How did you come to score the '78 World Cup theme?

Jason Smith, Tadworth

Simply, I was commissioned. But it was terrible... because rather than having it recorded and played before matches as I wanted, they had these four people in a band going from one stadium to the other playing the music. It was terrible. I support Roma. They've got good results this season. Do I go to matches? I prefer to watch it here on television. It's quiet, I've got a big screen, and when Roma win, obviously, I can fall asleep.

Do you ever think about how your soundtrack will sound outside of the context of the film?

Nenad, via email

I always say that in order to work well in a film, the music should have the strength of its own specific technical characteristics. It should have a life irrespective of the film it's associated with. That is why at times you have unusual music in a film and it works really well. If it had been written before for other occasions but it still worked well in the film, obviously it was a formal and correct piece of work. It has its

own strength and autonomy. I have written musical scores for films, but I thought that they should have a life of their own. That's the reason why I can organise concerts with music produced for films, because that music has its own structures.

What are your current working practices?

Alison Goodman, Bristol

It's a very regular routine. I wake up early, I shave and dress then I do some physical exercises. Let's say I march around my home, buy the papers, read the papers. Then I start composing and if I have some urgent commissions I can work for a long, long period of time. Apart from lunch, obviously. Or if there are no urgent commissions, I rest a little bit in the afternoon. I usually feel more tired in the afternoon. At the moment, I'm working on the music for a French film.

Are there any films you regret writing the soundtrack for?

Paul Speller, Chalfont St Peter

No, and I can explain why. I have worked on the scores of films that were not so important, and those films especially had no real chance of success. But on those, I really experimented. Experiments were important for me and also a good contribution for the film. But there is one movie that I think I could have improved upon. *Un Tranquillo Posto di Campagna* by Elio Petri. A marvellous film, with ultra-modern music. It was a great success with the critics but not at the box office. I had the idea I should rewrite the music because it was very difficult for the public to understand. The producer and director both said there were no problems. For them, the music was perfect. ☺

Ennio Morricone appears at London's O2 Arena on February 5



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

Eli Roth and Brad Pitt in Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*, 2009





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“HEY
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YOU!”

THE WAR ON DRUGS have had an extraordinary 12 months. On the eve of a major UK tour, *Uncut* finds ADAM GRANDUCIEL in an LA parking lot — looking back at our Best Album Of 2014, looking forward to the next one... and responding, at last, to Mark Kozelek's attacks. “It's not my fault he's older than I am!”

Story: Allan Jones | Photograph: Sophie Harris-Taylor





The War On Drugs, December 2014 (Granduciel, far right): "We're not in our twenties any more, so we're not destroying our bodies every night"

➔ IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE in Los Angeles and Adam Granduciel is out for an early morning drive when he gets a perhaps not entirely well-timed call from *Uncut* that basically forces him off the road. "I'm just going to have to pull into this parking lot up ahead," he says. "Hang on," he adds, "I'll be right with you."

A couple of minutes later, evidently safely parked, he is, and without much further ado, quickly fielding questions about The War On Drugs' 2014, the most spectacular year of their career to date, the band's third album, *Lost In The Dream*, an international breakout hit even then riding high in a majority of end-of-year best of lists, including our own, which it topped as Album Of The Year.

On December 18, The War On Drugs played their last date of 2014 at The Powerhouse in Auckland. By then, they'd been on the road since just before the album's release in March. Building on the success of 2012's *Slave Ambient*, the new record was released to great reviews that kept the band on tour for nine months, during which time they played nearly 200 shows.

"When the momentum around the album started to really build, it was like there was no stopping it," Adam reflects, sitting there in Los Angeles, in a parking lot, sounding a little giddy as the past 12 months come back into focus for him.

Lost In The Dream was an album inspired by personal trauma – a shattered romance, depression, anxiety, debilitating phobias, a host of insecurities – out of which Granduciel shaped a resonant masterpiece. It was also the album that made the best sense to date of the myriad influences, most totemic among them Dylan, Springsteen and Krautrock, that Adam had been streamlining since the band's debut album, *Wagonwheel Blues*, which had just come out when they played an unforgettable Club Uncut show at London's Borderline in October 2008 [see panel].

As a triumphant 12 months drew to a close, there was only one cloud in an otherwise clear sky – a rolling row with



Mark Kozelek. Smarting like a slipped arse, the notoriously cantankerous Kozelek took almost pathological umbrage after The War On Drugs drowned out his set at September's Ottawa Folk Festival. The subsequent spat left Granduciel by turns baffled, confused, angry, a little hurt and cautiously reluctant to say too much about it, until the subject came up towards the end of the following conversation...

UNCUT: Would it be safe to assume that 2014 went pretty much according to plan?

ADAM GRANDUCIEL: Honestly, we just kind of went with the flow. I think my team, the people around me, knew what they'd do if the album was successful, how the year would then play out. They were more confident than I was about how well it would do. I mean, I knew we'd made a good record, but when I turned it in to the label, I wasn't like, "Oh, man, this is the best thing we've ever done. It's going to be such a hit." I wasn't even thinking at that point about how it was going to do commercially or what it was going to do for the band's career. After what I'd gone through to make it, I was just relieved it was finished and coming out.

But then when we started touring in March and the early shows all sold out, we weren't expecting anything like that. And then the album came out to positive reviews and

we stayed on the road and I started to sense that something was building. The thing kept growing, and it's turned into a great ride. It's far surpassed anything I expected. You always hope for the best when you release a new record, but this has been way beyond anything I thought was possible.

What was the best you hoped for when the album came out?

I was really pleased and surprised at how well *Slave Ambient* did and I guess I just hoped *Lost In The Dream* would be received as positively, that it would seem like a step up from the last record. That's all I ever really wanted, to make something better than the previous record and that people would like it.

Then at the end of the first week of the March tour, we played Chicago. We'd been booked into a room I thought would be too big for us to play at that time and it was a Sunday night, but it sold out. People just didn't want to leave and that's when I thought,

'Oh, wow. This is going in a direction I didn't expect.' Then we made it to California and all those shows were sold out



Kid rocker: the promo film for "Red Eyes", 2014

and the response to the new songs was great. People were already familiar with them and you start playing a song and they're cheering because they know what's coming next. The record had only been out for 10 days, so that was pretty amazing.

By your own admission, the year you spent working on *Lost In The Dream* was an emotionally raw time for you. Has the success of the album made what you went through worth it?

Not really [*laughing*]. 2013 in retrospect was a time of transition. I was trying to figure out what I was doing in every aspect of my life, trying to figure out what was real, what games I was playing with myself, what I was doing with my life. Making the record, making music as much as I could definitely helped me through all that. I've learned to deal with a lot of the issues I was confronting. When it comes time to do the next record, it might not be as difficult for me, but only because I've learned how to manage a lot of my anxieties and not let things get to a point of ruining me. But it's not like because this record has done so well I think everything from now on is going to be fine.

How awkward was it re-living that year in virtually every interview you did to promote the album?

I didn't have a problem with that. It actually helped put some perspective on things. It was a difficult time for me and people were aware of that. It's not like talking about it brought back bad memories. So I was comfortable when I started doing some press to talk about it. People close to me were saying maybe I shouldn't talk about it so much. But the record is what it is, you know. I'm not ashamed of that, so I was OK with being open about it. Then I also looked at it in the sense that all my favourite songwriters, while they may not always have been so open, they always wrote about what was happening in their lives, which became the narrative of their songs.

I guess I was thinking about *Blood On The Tracks*, not that Dylan would ever come out and give a lot of interviews about his divorce, so that's a bit different. But I was also thinking about *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*, a story about career trauma, and *Tonight's The Night*, a sad record about death and friendship. The list goes on. I felt a certain responsibility, I guess, as a songwriter, to be open about what inspired the record. If I was going to write a record inspired by my personal life, then I figured I owed it to people to be open about it. I didn't feel like I needed to be guarded about it. Obviously, you don't go into detail about everything, but I thought for the most part it was OK for me to be open about where the record came from.

What have been the highlights of the year for you?

Just the way things have grown, generally, the growing excitement wherever we go. It's like the album's happening everywhere and it seems for the right reasons. I can't believe it's travelled liked it has and resonated with so many people. It's also been amazing all over the world, really, to see the changes in the crowds who've come to see us. We've had all



SENT TO COVENTRY...

"THAT WAS A FUNNY, STRANGE TOUR"

The War On Drugs' first UK visit

A couple of days after they were due to start a 35-date European tour in September 2008 with The Hold Steady that had been cancelled at the last moment, leaving them stranded in London, The War On Drugs played a sensational Club Uncut show at London's Borderline. Desperate for more work for the band, their label then dispatched them to a Battle Of The Bands contest in Coventry.

"It was an open mic, Battle Of The Bands night at a place in Coventry called The Tin Angel," Granduciel

recalls. "I think we had to play an acoustic or unplugged set. There was us and a singer-songwriter who was probably in her sixties. I don't know if she was a professional singer-songwriter or a schoolteacher or a housewife, or what. But she had a lot of fans there. I think she sang two originals and a Tim Hardin song and she brought the house down and won the competition, hands down. We came second by default. There were only two acts, us and this woman. That was a funny, strange tour and the only time we've played Coventry."

"I DIDN'T WANT TO GET INTO A SPAT WITH SOME UNHAPPY OLD DUDE"

GRANDUCIEL ON KOZELEK

sorts of people coming out, which for a band is great.

So along with a lot of our earlier fans, really intense music fans, it's been cool that we've had people coming to our shows that are more casual concert-goers, people on dates, whatever. If this is the album that gets them out, that's pretty awesome. I think it's really cool that some older people have come out to see us, too [*see panel*].

Have there been any real downsides to the year?

I guess just the amount of time being away from family and friends. But you expect that. This is what I've always wanted to do, so I'm not complaining. Being away on tour for so long is tough, but we try to stay healthy. We're not in our twenties anymore, so we're not destroying our bodies every night.

One of the more bizarre things that happened this year must have been the public spat with Mark Kozelek?
Oh, yeah. There was that.

This all started when you played the Ottawa Folk Festival and evidently drowned out his set from a neighbouring stage.

That's right.



GLASTO

“AN
INCREDIBLE
SIGHT...”

Adam on The War
On Drugs' 2014
Glastonbury
experience

“WE PLAYED AT 12.30 in the afternoon and there was this huge sea of people. There's no other word for it. There was a sea of people, an incredible sight. We were on the Pyramid Stage and we got a great response. I remember during the guitar solo in 'Eyes To The Wind', everybody started cheering. This was at the end of our set, it was the last song and I thought, 'Oh, man. That's never happened before. People are cheering during my guitar solo. Oh, my God. They love my guitar solo.' And my sax player, John, says, 'Actually, man, they're cheering because the sun just came out.' I'm always so lost in the moment when we're playing. I hadn't noticed the clouds parting and the sun shining through. That actually made more sense than people cheering a four-note guitar solo. Either way, it was an incredible experience.”



Granduciel sitting pretty in 2014: “The next record could be about a million different things...”

Did you know he was even playing at the same time?

I knew he was playing the festival and we were actually bummed because we wanted to see him play. Then we found out that if our sets weren't actually overlapping, he was going to be on close to the time we were scheduled to play. That was the last I ever thought about it. I thought, 'That sucks. It would have been cool to see him.' I wished I could have seen him, because I love his record and I was familiar with his career up to that point and Charlie, the drummer in my band, he's like a huge Red House Painters fan, and we listened to *Benji* on our first tour in March. We listened to it a lot in the van when it came out.

And the next thing I know, I read online that this had happened and he'd apparently said some things about my band. So I sent him a Twitter message because I wanted to confirm what had happened. I wasn't trying to make a big thing out of it. I know that sometimes on the internet things get blown out of proportion and I just wanted to find out if it was true, not because I thought it was such a big deal. I was just curious, you know.

Like, “What's going on?”

Because we had a really good time at that festival and then the next day I heard about this thing and was really bummed. I didn't like the idea of there being this thing going on, whatever it was, that I wasn't aware of and it kind of ruined the previous day at the festival, which had been great. So I was just trying to find out what happened.

So you weren't aware of his comments at the time?

No. I didn't find out until someone in my band sent me something they'd seen online. I didn't like the idea of someone talking shit about us at a festival, but I still wasn't sure what he'd said, whether this really even happened. Then it turned out he'd been moaning and complaining about us. The whole thing, honestly, it's been mildly amusing and sometimes hurtful, but you know, people have their opinions and they can say what they like.

Was there a suggestion that you actually play together?

That was his idea. He wanted that. He sent an email through somebody else, through Charlie, my drummer, actually. He said, “Here's what we'll do. They'll invite me to play with them.” This would have been at the Fillmore, in San Francisco, where he lives. At first I thought, ‘This is kind of cool.’ But I didn't write him back straight away. I'm on tour, you know. But I was cool with the idea. Then a couple of days later, I got an email from him that said something like “the offer has expired”. Then he went public with it all and tried to make it seem like I'd backed out of something. I was like, ‘Come on. What're you doing?’ It was just fucking silly. He just wanted to start it up again.

What was your reaction when you heard his song, “War On Drugs: Suck My Cock”?

We'd just played the second of two sold-out shows at the Fillmore, this legendary venue, which was just really cool, and I remember sitting in my tour bus listening to it and

“SOME GUYS
LIKE FUCKING
WITH PEOPLE,
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THERE AND
LAUGHING
AT IT...”

GRANDUCIEL



“An incredible experience”: The War On Drugs at Glastonbury, June 27, 2014



what softened it was the fact we'd just played those two sold-out shows and I was sitting in my tour bus, feeling pretty good about that. But I got really upset at the song because I thought it was just stupid. What really rankled was he played it up like we'd actually met and we've never met. He gave the impression that he'd watched us play. He's never watched us play. He's probably never even listened to our music.

Do you think he was genuinely pissed about what happened and had a genuine gripe or has he just stirred all this up for publicity?

I remember playing Glasgow recently and there was a DJ doing a huge club night below the venue we were playing and even though we were playing real loud, I could still feel the bass from below and it was really throwing me off because it was very obviously very different to the tempo we were playing. So I can understand the frustration of playing a festival and having a louder band on a stage nearby. But that happens all the time when you have festivals with multiple stages. It's part of the game. Get on with it.

You know, the guy used to be an actor. So maybe he was just like playing this part of someone who was outraged, or whatever. I'm not really interested. But some people, they like fucking with people and putting stuff out there and sitting back and laughing at it and not really caring. I don't see the point. I mean, forget it, dude. Get over yourself.

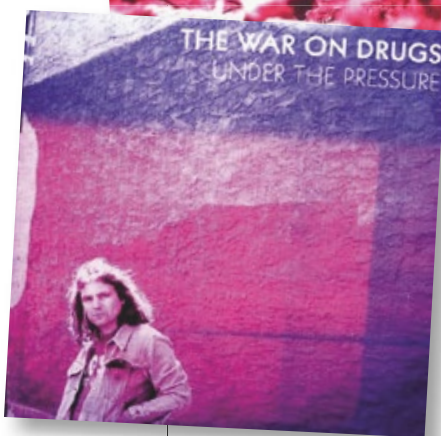
As a fan, how has all this affected your opinion of him as a songwriter?

I don't know. I mean, it hasn't really changed. I was watching some performance videos the other night, going through some websites, and I watched some stuff of him playing and he's got a cool band. He's got a guitar player who plays a Black Les Paul Custom, which I thought was pretty cool. That's the one I want next. I love his songwriting, so I think, 'Who cares what he says?' Then he makes fun of us for covering "Tangled Up In Blue". And it's like, "Hey, dude, you did a whole fucking album of fucking AC/DC covers. Come on." And the whole point is, we learned that song in like four minutes. We were in Minneapolis doing a radio session and we were all sitting there in our headphones and all that and I was like, "Hey, 'Tangled Up In Blue' was recorded here." And I

started playing it and in like two minutes we'd worked up a version and that was the first time we ever played it, on that radio show. It's one of my favourite songs and I have such a great band that out of nowhere they came up with this killer version of 'Tangled Up In Blue'. That's where I was coming from with that version and he's making fun of it like we're a fucking tribute band. That's the part where I have to go, "Come on, dude. We're all just out here in bands just trying to make it as far as the next gig, you know."

He seemed to be reluctant to let it go and followed "War On Drugs: Suck My Cock" with another song, "Adam Granofsky Blues", in which he read out some things you'd said in an interview, punctuated with much cackling laughter.

Yeah, he did that. It was just stupid. You know, our music is what it is and we're still comparatively a pretty young band. I mean, I've made three records. I want to make cool music, too, as I get older. He's been making music for much longer. But it's not my fault he's older than I am. I mean the dude's like 15 years older than me and of course he's made more records. But I just don't get this cut-down-the-other-guy thing he has going. That's not something I'm into. It doesn't have any value for me, whether it's an act or not. I have my fans and I'm grateful for them, whether they're new fans or old fans, casual concert goers or record heads or whatever they are. Everyone's entitled to like who they want to like, cheer who they want to cheer. But he's like, "I don't



tweet, I play shows." Hey, dude, we played 175 shows this year, fuck you.

You know, this is probably the most I've spoken about all this, because I didn't really want to get into some pointless public spat with some unhappy old dude. And it really is pointless. He has no real point.

There's nothing to defend. It's a non issue.

Finally, then, what are your plans for 2015?

We have January off and I have some studio time booked. We're going to be doing a lot of recording in February. I've been doing a lot of writing. I haven't been doing a lot of recording,

there hasn't been any time. But I record a lot on my phone when we soundcheck and have time to play a new song I've been working on. The band will play along and I'll record that, just loose jams on my phone, and then listen to that over and over. I have a lot of ideas, but who knows what will happen when we get in the studio. That's part of the excitement of making a record. It's like a trip into the unknown. The next record could be about a million different things. 🎧

The War On Drugs tour the UK from February 16

DAD-ROCKIN' GOOD

"I NEVER WANTED MY BAND TO PLAY JUST ONE KIND OF MUSIC TO ONE KIND OF MUSIC FAN"

The War On Drugs' trans-generational appeal...

"I'VE HEARD THIS really a lot this year: 'I turned my dad on to your record and now he loves rock music again.' That's been so great, you know, to make that kind of connection. It's like my own dad. He's 83 years old and even he loves the record. My dad has never shown any interest in rock music or pop music. He was born in the '30s and he's a fan of, like, Benny Goodman and Harry Belafonte. A couple of weeks ago, he told me he went out and bought *The River* because he'd read it was a record I'd been inspired by. He bought *The River*. He bought *Blonde On Blonde*. And he loves them. I'm like, 'What???' It's crazy, but I never wanted my band to play just one kind of music to one kind of music fan. So if people who haven't really invested too much in modern music have heard about us and listened to the album and really liked it, that's just really gratifying. Because a lot of those people grew up with the music I love."

Dylan: an inspiration for Granduciel and his dad



You can't go home again

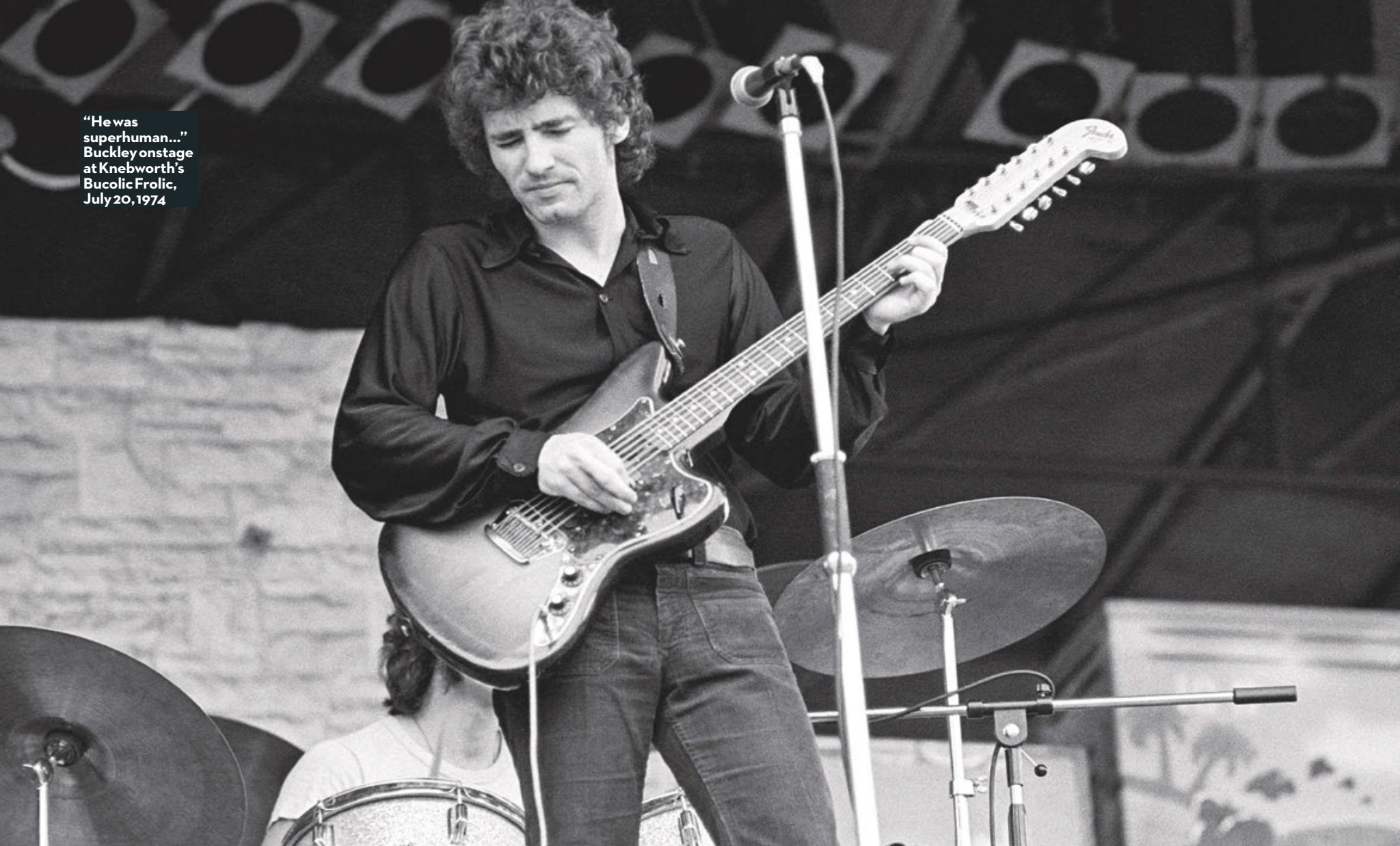
“Tim had a vision, he saw where the music could go.” In June 1975, the freewheeling musical adventures of TIM BUCKLEY came to a tragic end. *Uncut* pieces together the strange tale of his last years — from “superhuman” gigs to frustrated trade-offs between funk, folk and the avant-garde. From tentative reunions with his son, Jeff, to ardent pursuit from Chrissie Hynde. And, at the end, the tantalising prospect of a film career.

Story: Graeme Thomson | **Photograph:** Pennie Smith





"He was superhuman..." Buckley onstage at Knebworth's Bucolic Frolic, July 20, 1974



EYEWITNESS

KNEBWORTH, 1974

"How do you play to 100,000 people 50 feet off the ground?" Buckley's guitarist Art Johnson recalls opening the Bucolic Frolic

"IT WAS THE days without big screens or gigantic PA systems. They'd built the stage about 50 feet off the ground, you had to climb a ladder to get up there. It was like being a fireman. I had two Marshall stacks but I could hardly hear anything. Through the day there were at least 100,000 people out there with flags, it was amazing, like being in the 16th Century. The stage was shaking as we played, and the wind was blowing so hard at one point Jim Fielder looked at me and said, 'We're going to be blown off this fucking thing!' It was just a really far-out gig."

just as he embarked on yet another remarkable reinvention – this time, as a movie star.

THE LAST TIME Tim Buckley had performed in the UK, it was at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on October 7, 1968. Preserved on the live album *Dream Letter*, the show captured Buckley as he enjoyed the success of his excellent second album, *Goodbye And Hello*. Back then, Buckley seemed to have all the necessary credentials to be a folk-rock superstar. "He was a curly-haired mountain boy who played 12-string guitar and was signed to Elektra," explains his longterm guitarist Lee Underwood. "His idols were Pete Seeger, Fred Neil and Odetta, but he was never a folkie. He was always his own man, an original." Jim Fielder, who had known Buckley since they'd played together in the Harlequin 3 at Loara High in his hometown of Anaheim, California, agrees that there was always a degree of identity confusion over Buckley. "Because Tim played an acoustic guitar and had hair like Dylan he got lumped in with the folk crowd. What he really was from day one was a singer-songwriter."

But evidently there was more to Buckley than that; he had a questing musical spirit with a versatile, enveloping voice capable of immense emotional range. "He always felt he might die young, so he moved very fast, absorbing new ideas like a sponge," says Underwood. In the six years between *Dream Letter* and Knebworth, Buckley underwent a series of incarnations. Despite his striking good looks, charisma and angelic voice, Buckley seemed not just indifferent but actively averse to fame. "*Goodbye And Hello* had sold in the hundreds of thousands, but I don't think he gave a damn about success," confirms Jac Holzman, who signed Buckley to Elektra in 1965 following a tip-off from impresario Herb Cohen, who managed Frank Zappa and later Buckley. The looser, jazzier style of 1969's *Happy Sad* was the first indication of a capricious muse who was far from bothered by commercial concerns, while Holzman recalls a pivotal concert at the Avery Fisher Hall in New York in March 1969. "It was a sold-out house of 2,000

THE FIRST OF what became a regular series of tribal gatherings held at Knebworth House, the "Bucolic Frolic" was a bold experiment in cross-fertilisation. On July 20, 1974, the Hertfordshire stately home welcomed some 100,000 revellers into its grounds to hear sets from the Allman Brothers, The Doobie Brothers, The Mahavishnu Orchestra, Van Morrison and The Sensational Alex Harvey Band. But tucked away at

the bottom of the bill, playing a freewheeling eight-song set in the early afternoon, was Tim Buckley. Setting loose his remarkable four-octave voice over slices of sleekly libidinous rock and funk, Buckley's most recent albums, *Greetings From LA* and *Sefronia*, had alienated an already diminishing band of admirers. Now, at Knebworth, he was a low-profile addition to the lineup, performing while the audience was still in the process of arriving. "Didn't bother Timmy," remembers Buckley's bass player that day, Jim Fielder. "He launched into his set and we didn't come up for air 'til it was over. He was superhuman. That concert was a highlight of my career."

"Tim was like Secretariat, the greatest winner of the Kentucky Derby which finished lengths ahead of the next competitor," adds drummer Buddy Helm. "Once he got going and I was playing those Afro-Cuban grooves it was unstoppable. Tim was shining, he felt he totally belonged at the top of that billing, not the bottom. He wasn't being an egotistical jerk about it, he was just so sure of himself. It felt like the beginning of a new musical era for him."

As it transpired, events turned out rather differently. Instead, within 12 months, Buckley would be dead at 28,

people. Tim looked out of the curtains on the stage, and I think what he saw was a mob coming to gobble him up. He did not want the goblins to get him. That was a turning point.”

“He could have been even bigger than Dylan,” adds Buckley’s last touring guitarist, Art Johnson. “He could have been a huge star, but he was more into music than the ‘career’. He wanted the world to follow him, he didn’t want to follow the world.” Holzman believes Buckley’s escalating heroin use also played a significant part in him retreating. “In the beginning he was chatty and a lot of fun to be around, but heroin tended to make him insular. It started after *Goodbye And Hello* and I think it had to do with inner searching, but before he had an answer he was hooked. It made him terribly non-communicative. He was going to speak only through his music.”

IN 1970, BUCKLEY released *Lorca*, his follow-up to *Happy Sad*. The five-song avant-garde suite was defined by improvised dissonance, shifting time-signatures and Buckley’s wordless swoops, shrieks and sobs. Along with the heavy drug residue, such abstractions were too much for Elektra. “I wasn’t happy with that album, but that was my mistake,” says Holzman. “I didn’t get it. He was way ahead of me, and its brilliance was lost on me. I didn’t pick up his option.” It meant Holzman and Elektra missed out on releasing *Starsailor*, another daring showcase for Buckley’s vaulting ambition which included his most enduring track, “Song To The Siren”.

Starsailor may now be regarded as Buckley’s masterpiece, but in 1970 its release elicited a different response. By the time Buddy Helm had quit Zappa’s band and bumped into Buckley outside Cohen’s LA office in 1973, the singer was facing up to harsh industry realities. Having switched styles yet again with the steamy R&B of *Greetings From LA* (1972), his next record, *Sefronia*, was a conscious attempt to regain commercial traction. The album was recorded for Frank Zappa’s DiscReet label, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers.

“Frank said to me, ‘I love Tim’s voice, and I think he deserves to have some current attention,’” recalls producer Denny Randell. “It was an attempt to update his sound, make it a little more current. I was all for that, and so was Tim. He wasn’t getting the excitement and attention that he had, but he was totally into his artistry. He had a great attitude about doing that album.”

In fact, Buckley was resigned to compromise. *Sefronia* was a curious combination of intense ballads (“Because Of You”), rather constrained covers (Tom Waits’ “Martha”, Fred Neil’s “Dolphins”) and funk-rock originals like “Stone In Love” and “Honeyman” which explored a new, sexually

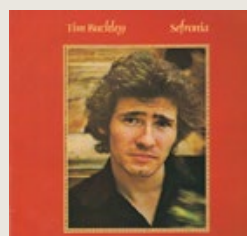
BUYERS’ GUIDE

Buckley’s cult cuts

The best songs from the singer-songwriter’s pioneering final albums...


SWEET SURRENDER GREETINGS FROM LA, 1972

A prowling, seven-minute portrait of two desperate, unfaithful lovers. Over a hypnotic rhythm and thrillingly queasy strings, Buckley pulls out every last vocal trick.

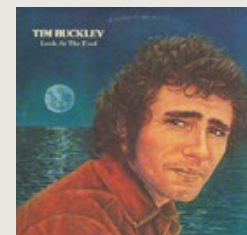

DOLPHINS SEFRONIA, 1973

Buckley had been performing Fred Neil’s song live for years, and finally recorded it for *Sefronia*. The syrupy backing vocals jar, but it’s lifted by Lee Underwood’s dappled guitar lines and the vocal’s easeful familiarity.


HONEYMAN HONEYMAN: LIVE, 1973

Released in 1995, this live album from late 1973 is an in-the-room

snapshot of Buckley as red-blooded soul man, all sweat, sex and steam. This extended workout of the title track is raw, throbbing R&B.


LOOK AT THE FOOL LOOK AT THE FOOL, 1974

On one of his most impassioned songs, a lovelorn

Buckley sings in falsetto as a “little boy lost in the storm” while the track ducks and weaves between driving hook and gentle refrain.

WHO COULD DENY YOU LOOK AT THE FOOL, 1974

A glistening, multi-layered affair, on which both Buckley’s vocal and the sweet soul style recall the sumptuous ballads of Bowie’s contemporaneous *Young Americans*.

“Tim was fearless... he was world-class at that point”

BUDDY HELM

frank lyrical direction. “I used to say that he took everyone into the bedroom,” laughs Buckley’s widow, Judy Llewellyn. Then again, the two-part title track – suffixed “After Asklopiades, After Kafka” and “The King’s Chain” – were as self-consciously cerebral as anything he ever did. “On *Sefronia* he was walking a tightrope between poetic surrealism and commercial viability,” reveals Helm, who played on the album. “That was his real art form, dipping into both worlds, but the songs weren’t strong enough. Tim had the pipes but he didn’t have the material. Herb was calling the shots. He was having a hard time getting his own way.”

The album’s release in May 1973 sparked waves of hostility. When Buckley played the Boarding House in San Francisco, an audience member shouted: “You’re a sell-out, Tim.” “He was crushed,” acknowledges Helm. “His heart was broken. I said, ‘Don’t listen to ‘em, don’t listen to ‘em’, but it took him down a notch.” Denny Randell: “A lot of his fans went nuts when it came out. Like, ‘How dare they do that to Tim?’, but he put his own writing in that direction. We were shocked and disappointed by the reaction.”

“First his critics put him down for leaving his folk roots and going into jazz and avant-garde,” continues Underwood. “They said he should make more accessible music. When he did that they turned on him again and called him a sell-out. He was frustrated and embittered.” Even Buckley’s manager, Herb Cohen, was on his case, exasperated by what he saw as Buckley’s continuing refusal to play to his strengths. “Tim wanted to make a funky record,” says Judy Llewellyn. “Herb wanted him to remain a ‘folksinger’.”

“Herb would talk to me on the phone and say, ‘Is he doing that yodelling thing? Why doesn’t he just do the ballads?’” remembers Helm. “Herb hated it when he got experimental because Tim was the greatest

“Tim was totally into his artistry...” Buckley with guitarist Lee Underwood onstage in Germany, September 1968





Frank Zappa and Herb Cohen, London, April 1975

THE STORY OF DISCREET RECORDS

ESTABLISHED IN 1973 by Frank Zappa and Herb Cohen, DiscReet was primarily a bespoke home for Zappa and The Mothers Of Invention, but also boasted a small roster of eclectic artists. Producer and hit songwriter Denny Randell was asked to handle A&R. “Warner’s gave Frank the label because he was really hot, they’d have been happy for him just to put out his own records, but he really wanted a record company,” says Randell. “Frank loved pop music even though he didn’t play it.” Alongside Buckley’s final two records, DiscReet released two albums by Ted Nugent & The Amboy Dukes, as well as work by relative obscurities Keith, Grawl and Kathy Dalton. Entangled in the messy end of Zappa’s working relationship with Cohen, as well as ongoing disputes with Warner’s, the label folded in 1979.

LEF: REX/JAMES FORTUNE



KATHY DALTON
BOOGIE BANDS & ONE NIGHT STANDS



Tim Buckley with his wife Judy in Beverly Hills, 1974

➤ ballad singer in the world. When he did “Buzzin’ Fly” or “Once I Was”, just him and the 12-string, the girls would get all weepy, but Tim was willing to change, and I really loved that. He was into pushing the envelope stylistically.”

Antipathy to Buckley’s new direction reached as far as his own record company. “Frank was up in San Francisco and he walked into one of the major chains, and he was incensed, because the record was nowhere in the store,” explains Randell. “He actually had a big fight with Warner’s. It turned out someone in promotion was a fan of Tim’s older stuff and didn’t like what we’d done on *Sefronia*.”

In truth, Buckley had outgrown the compromises and petty accommodations he experienced in the recording studio. “He loved making music and performing live more than making albums,” says Judy Llewellyn. To that end, he assembled a band able to explore the improvisational possibilities presented by his new music.

With Helm on drums, his old friend Jim Fielder on bass, jazz-fusion guitarist Art Johnson and Mark Tiernan on keyboards, Buckley made some of the most striking material of his career. “We really cooked,” agrees Helm. “Tim had a vision. He would make up songs in front of thousands of people, and we would have to pick it up and make it work. He was fearless. He came to respect that we were a band, and he felt he’d found a space where he could be an equal member. It freed him up, gave him more room to be creative. He was world-class at that point.”

By the time Buckley visited Amsterdam and Knebworth in summer 1974, 12-minute takes on “Honey Man” and “Sweet Surrender” sat alongside funky interpretations of classics like “Pleasant Street”. “We began to stretch out and

play a lot more solos, it really was a band,” says Johnson. “He was very generous. I worked with a lot of great artists, and I really felt that Tim was the least full of bullshit.”

AFTER KNEBWORTH, BUCKLEY was scheduled to travel to Italy, but a problem with the stage meant the band ended up staying in London for another week. While there he was interviewed by Chrissie Hynde,

then writing for *NME*. “Chrissie dogged him,” laughs Helm. “When Tim met her, she was so funky looking, he said, ‘If I don’t get a disease from you I’m gonna be disappointed!’ I remember one night at the Kensington Hotel, I got a knock on the door in the middle of the night and Chrissie is standing there with just a sheet on. Tim had disappeared. ‘I don’t know where he went to, but he’s not interested in me!’ That’s when Tim pulled the fire alarm. When he couldn’t reach Judy back in LA he’d go really nuts and do crazy shit.”

Buckley had married Judy Brejot Sutcliffe in Santa Monica in May 1970, becoming a stepfather to her young son Taylor. In contrast, his own son Jeff, from his brief first marriage to Mary Guibert when he was 18

and she was 17, was a marginal figure in his life. By the time of Jeff’s birth in November 1966, Buckley had already left the scene. “Several times he spoke to me of having abandoned Mary in order to fulfil his destiny as a musician,” admits Underwood. “Tim intended to explain his leaving when Jeff came of age. Meanwhile, he wrote ‘Dream Letter’ as a kind of love song reaching across the years to a son he hardly knew. He cared, but he’d made a choice early on: family life or music. He chose music.”

There were signs, however, that Buckley had started

“He made a choice early on: family or music. He chose music”

LEE UNDERWOOD

HELLO AND GOODBYE

“It was just a bad judgement call on his part...”

The death of Tim Buckley

ARRIVING BACK IN Los Angeles on June 29, 1975, from his final show in Texas, Buckley went to the house of his friend, UCLA post-doctorate student Richard Keeling. There he started drinking and, either by accident or design, snorted some heroin that had been left in an ashtray. When Keeling and a female friend took Buckley home he was unconscious. There, his condition worsened and paramedics were called. A little before 10pm that night he died.

The official cause of death was an overdose of heroin and alcohol, but intimations of foul play have persisted. Buddy Helm maintains that Buckley was murdered, talking about hits by government counter-intelligence agents and the wrath of Herb Cohen. The generally accepted verdict, however, is that he cut loose at the end of the tour, and his system – recently clean of drugs and alcohol – simply couldn’t take the shock. “My guess is that he thought he’d have a happy time and celebrate his new acting role,” says Art Johnson. “It was



just a bad judgement call on his part.” Today, his widow Judy describes it as a “very horrible accident”. According to Denny Randell, “We all felt so bad about his death, but I have to say it wasn’t a total shock to those of us who knew what he was dealing with.”

In November 1976, Keeling was charged and pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter, and was sentenced to community service. This was later commuted to 120 days in jail after he broke the terms of his licence.

reaching out to Jeff in the months before his death. Art Johnson remembers the eight-year-old being brought on tour – “I taught Jeff to look at the Don’t Walk sign in Vancouver,” he laughs. “That was my big contribution to his future!” – while Helm recalls an edgy meeting before a show at the Golden Bear at Huntington Beach, in May 1975. “Jeff was nervous,” he begins. “Everybody took off, it was just me, Tim, Jeff and Jeff’s mother. Man, they did not get along. Tim was there to work and she was just picking away at him. She was so bitter that he hadn’t taken care of Jeff. What was really weird is that when I saw Tim with Judy and her son, he was really a model husband and father. We were making money on the road so he could pay for Taylor to go to a special school – he had been through a horrifying car accident where his father had been killed, and Tim was very concerned about him.”

“When his family came on tour he was into it,” Johnson confirms. “He was just like a dad when they were around.” When they weren’t around, however, Buckley was faced with traditional temptations. “On the road, girls were always trying to nail Tim,” says Helm. “He’d play the game, he was very charming, but most of the time he’d end up in the hotel room with the door shut all by himself. He was never on the make or cruising, ever, when I was with him. He really loved Judy, she kept him focused and grounded.” The domestic stability helped control his drug-taking. Now, he tended to binge occasionally rather than use habitually. “When he was off-duty, so to speak, he would over-do it,” confirms Randell. “While making *Sefronia* there were situations at the weekend where he was drinking a lot and using drugs, but he was straight in the studio.” On tour he was invariably clean. “We travelled everywhere together, and I never saw him do any drugs, nor did he act stoned,” says Johnson. “He always seemed very lucid, and relatively up and cheery most of the time.”

Yet he was a man of intense mood swings and contradictions. Buckley is remembered by his friends and colleagues as an impish figure – unstarry, funny, intelligent – but also prone to insularity and black moods. His father had been emotionally abusive, and the sadness in his music betrayed a more sweeping despair. “He was a keen observer of the world around him, and it depressed him,” says Johnson. “That’s what you get for seeing too deeply. He may have been a little depressed about his career, but he was far more depressed about the world. We used to talk on the plane, have philosophical discussions about where the world was going. There was a lot of serious thinking going on, he always had a copy of *You Can’t Go Home Again* by Thomas Wolfe. He could be a morose guy, but he was also a real New York wiseacre.”

IN NOVEMBER 1974, DiscReet released Buckley’s final album, *Look At The Fool*. An undemanding mix of good-time rock, soul, Tex-Mex and R’n’B, it had its moments, but throwaways like “Wanda Lou” and “Mexicali Voodoo” offered meagre returns on his soaring talent. The album was a patchy piece of work and another critical and commercial flop, yet overall it was an optimistic time. Buckley had courageously broken from the formidable Herb Cohen and evidently relished his new found creative freedom. Most excitingly, he was slated to play the lead role in Hal Ashby’s Woody Guthrie biopic, *Bound For Glory*. Clean and healthy, he passed the physical with flying colours. “Tim was really strong and optimistic,” admits Helm. “He felt empowered. We went into Wally Heider and cut some new songs, and gigged all over the country. We were hot, and both the rockers and R’n’B people gave him a whole lot of respect. I remember in Detroit, Berry Gordy and The Temptations were in the audience, digging it.”

On June 28, 1975, Buckley and his band played a show to 1,800 people in Dallas. “The review was so positive,” remembers Helm. “Like, ‘Tim Buckley has arrived, he’s

“When he was off-duty, so to speak, he would over-do it”

DENNY
RANDELL

a real band leader.” He returned that night to Los Angeles, intending to take a short break at home in Venice Beach before heading to Aspen to start principal photography on *Bound For Glory*. Within hours he was dead from what the coroner later described as “acute heroin/morphine and ethanol intoxication.” Not everyone was entirely shocked. All the same, there was a sharp sense of loss, not just for a young man taken from his wife, son and stepson in his prime, but for a daring artist on the cusp of another bold reinvention. “His career was right on the verge of exploding, and doing *Bound For Glory* would have put him over the top,” says Jim Fielder. “He would have been on late-night TV and started being pursued by that era’s version of the paparazzi – the whole crazy stardom sideshow. How it would have affected his music is a whole movie in itself.”





The PLEASURES *of the* FLESH

If their first album set out the emotional terrain of THE SMITHS, *Meat Is Murder* provided a radical manifesto for troubled times, one overshadowed by the “violence, oppression and horror” of Margaret Thatcher. Thirty years on, *Uncut* tracks down bandmembers, intimate associates, contemporaries (and even Neil Kinnock!) to tell the full story of a band at their closest and most adventurous... A tale of brotherhood, marriage, “live-wire spitfire guitar sounds”, awkward moments in Little Chefs, car races with OMD and the use of sausages as an offensive weapon. “Unruly boys who will not grow up”?

Take a bow:
Rourke,
Morrissey,
Joyce and
Marr in '84



THE DISTANCE TRAVELLED by The Smiths in late 1984 can be measured, to some extent, in car journeys. En route with the rest of The Smiths from their respective homes in Manchester to Amazon Studios in Kirkby during the winter of 1984, Morrissey would sit at the back, to best enjoy the full benefit of the car's central heating system. The vehicle – a 1970s white stretch Mercedes rented from R&O Van Hire, Salford – had once been used for weddings. Now it was being used for another type of celebration. The Smiths – along with their fledgling co-producer, Stephen Street – were heading to

Amazon to record their second LP, *Meat Is Murder*. “We had a feeling the grown-ups had left the building and it was left to us to break some rules and have some fun,” Johnny Marr told *Uncut*. Despite the weather, the daily trips shuttling to and from Kirkby were conducted in high spirits, characterised by an air of anticipation for what the coming sessions would bring. The interior of the car featured two rows of seats, facing each other like a cab. Morrissey and Johnny Marr would face forward on the back seats, while Andy Rourke and Mike Joyce sat in front of them, facing the rear of the car. If there were any disagreements between the band members, it was usually to do with the heating – which Morrissey would complain wasn't turned up high enough. “Amazon was on an industrial estate in the middle of nowhere,” says Andy Rourke. “It was the freezing winter. We'd stop for a cup of tea at this mobile café and carry that into the studio. That was our routine for two or three weeks.”

An industrial estate in Kirkby, on the outskirts of Liverpool, in the depths of winter, hardly seems the most auspicious setting from which to storm the citadel. All the same, the work started here by The Smiths on *Meat Is Murder* was freewheeling and stimulating. “It was very exciting,” acknowledges Stephen Street. “It felt like all the stars were in alignment, everything seemed to be working.”

While historically Morrissey's songs had lingered on a nostalgic, post-war vision of England – one of juvenile delinquents, underworld spivs and “jumped-up pantry boy”s – *Meat Is Murder* presented a different, highly politicised side to the band. The songs on the album addressed powerful, contemporary themes including animal rights, domestic and institutionalised violence.

“The Smiths were out there on their own,” Paul Weller tells *Uncut*. “I thought they were similar to The Jam, really. It wasn't a party line thing, and the lyrics weren't always overly political. But they still seemed to reflect what was going on in people's lives.”

“The issues they were addressing in the songs on *Meat Is Murder* were socio-political,” adds Billy Bragg. “My politics were more ideological, but The Smiths were more involved in broader issues; we lived in a time when those issues were right to the forefront of debate.”

“The politics of the day had a big effect on the music and



Morrissey's lyrics," admits Andy Rourke. "That's what we wrote songs about: our experiences. That comes across in the music, also."

If *Meat Is Murder* helped establish The Smiths as a radical force, it had other, equally far-reaching implications for their career. These were fluid and fast-moving times for the group: since releasing their first single, "Hand In Glove", in May 1983, their ascent had been rapid and exhilarating, building on a brace of thrilling singles and, in February 1984, a self-titled debut album. *Meat Is Murder*, though, is best characterised as an exchange of ideas at a higher level. It moved their story forward credibly, giving them their only No 1 album, in the process dislodging Springsteen's *Born In The USA* from the top of the UK album charts. It also represented a point where Morrissey and The Smiths were at their tightest. "Morrissey always wanted to be part of a gang," says Richard Boon, then

production manager at Rough Trade Records. "He'd never been, because he was such an outsider character. I remember being in the band's van once when they were coming down to London. They were all wearing white T-shirts because that would make us stand out and they wanted to stand out. By *Meat Is Murder*, The Smiths had cohered as a gang."

"It all happened very quickly," reflects Rourke. "Especially at that time, things picked up even more, and the records started selling better than they had done. I think it always continued upwards, but around *Meat Is Murder*, it definitely stepped up a gear. They were crazy, busy times."

LOOKING BACK ON the mid-'80s, when he was leader of the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock vividly remembers the social and political landscape of the time. "We were in conditions of political and industrial turmoil," he begins. "With high unemployment, increases in poverty not seen since the War and whole communities turned into dereliction by changes not only in the wake of the coal strikes but also the steel strike of the early '80s. The rapid impact of unplanned and unsupported industrial change were evident."

"There was something in the air in that period, 1984-1985," agrees Billy Bragg. "It was incredibly intense. You have to

see Live Aid in some ways as a reflection of that, because they were all the bands who didn't want to get their hands dirty with the miners. But as me and The Smiths broke in 1984, we were very much of those times. We weren't there alone, but in terms of addressing issues, The Smiths were at the forefront."

"It's something that I find quite amazing nowadays, how political the '80s were," admits New Order's Stephen Morris, who played a Liverpool City Council benefit with The Smiths. "Greenham Common. Women camping outside, stopping Cruise missiles. That was brilliant. We took things more seriously then. We did loads of benefits, but ➔

"You can't make an LP called *Meat Is Murder* and then slip out for a burger"

ANDY ROURKE

WHAT THEY SAID...

Who's Who in our *Meat Is Murder* story

RICHARD BOON

Then: Rough Trade production manager. Currently: librarian involved with Stoke Newington Literary Festival. www.stokenewingtonliteraryfestival.com

TIM BOOTH

James released their most recent album, *La Petite Mort*, in 2014. www.wearejames.com

BILLY BRAGG

Will appear in two films *Death Or Liberty* and *Urban Hymn* this year - with new music due out in the autumn. www.billybragg.co.uk

JOHN FEATHERSTONE

Lighting designer. MD at US-based visual design studio, Lightswitch. www.lightswitch.net

CARYN GOUGH

Graphic designer. Runs her own consultancy, Dada Design. www.dadadesign.co.uk

DAVE HARPER

Driver. Currently manages Finnish electronic band, Husky Rescue. www.husky-rescue.com

STUART JAMES

Tour manager. Currently working on a solo album in his home studio.

NEIL KINNOCK

Leader of the Labour Party from 1983-1992. Created Baron Kinnock of Bedwelty in 2005.

DAN MATHEWS

Senior Vice-President, PETA. Author of 2008 autobiography, *Committed: A Rabble-Rouser's Memoir*. www.peta.org.uk

STEPHEN MORRIS

New Order are working on their first new studio album for 10 years. www.neworder.com

IVOR PERRY

Easterhouse guitarist. Programme manager working on new Childline platform for a digital marketing and technology consultancy.

ANDY ROURKE

The bass guitar. Recently collaborated with James Franco on *Let Me Get What I Want* - an LP based on Franco's Morrissey-inspired poetry. Rourke's Jetlag (NYC) project to release new material featuring Cranberries singer Dolores O'Riordan later this year. www.andyroure.com

STEPHEN STREET

Engineer. Recent credits include Aline, Flyte and Graham Coxon. www.stephenstreet.net

PAUL WELLER

Releases a new solo album, *Saturn's Pattern*, in the spring. www.paulweller.com

“everybody did benefits. I think maybe it was a continuation of the punk thing, Rock Against Racism.”

“There were people in the entertainment industry who were very disturbed by what was going on,” continues Kinnock. “When Margaret Thatcher’s premiership turned into ‘Thatcherism’ – in the wake of the Falklands War when the term started to be used – that became a pretty natural focus of antagonism for people who were becoming prominent in pop culture.”

“The Smiths were northerners with a tradition of stubborn working-class opposition, but delivered in a very nice and attractive way,” notes Richard Boon. “It wasn’t standing on the barricades, shouting. It was more subtle. The intent was to reach out to people who felt disenfranchised.”

“Everyone was political to a degree, because everyone was united in their opposition to Thatcher,” says guitarist Ivor Perry, a friend of Morrissey whose band, Easterhouse, supported The Smiths on the Scottish leg of the *Meat Is Murder* tour. “Groups like ourselves and The Redskins were far more explicitly political because we were attached to ideologies and programmes of change. But The Smiths were more about lifestyle politics. It was important – but vegetarianism and the school system are not really hard politics, like economics or imperialism, or the subjugation of Ireland or apartheid. Then you had Morrissey’s very strong opposition to Thatcher, as well.”

Indeed, Morrissey’s views on Margaret Thatcher were keenly expressed in interviews from the time. “The entire history of Margaret Thatcher is one of violence and oppression and horror,” he told *Rolling Stone* in June, 1984. “I just pray there is a Sirhan Sirhan [*Robert Kennedy’s assassin*] somewhere. It’s the only remedy for this country at the moment.” In October 1984 – the same month The Smiths began work on *Meat Is Murder* at Amazon – the IRA bombed a hotel during the annual Conservative Party conference in Brighton, causing Morrissey to express his “sorrow” to *Melody Maker* that “Thatcher escaped unscathed”.

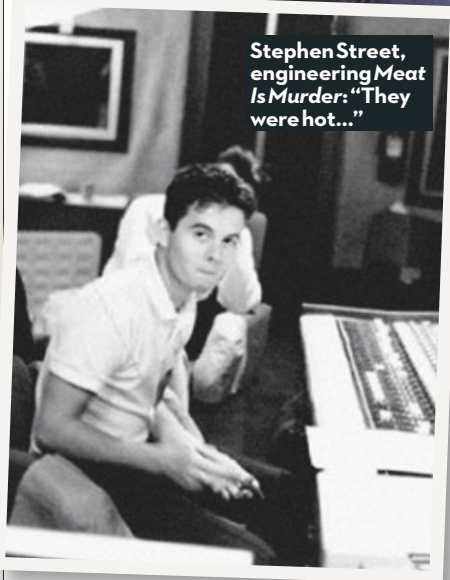
“Morrissey was always very outspoken in interviews about Thatcher and the Royal Family,” recalls Andy Rourke. “Did I ever feel uneasy about any of his comments? No, not for my own feelings. I was 18, 19. I used to panic about what my dad might read. I was OK with it. As a band, we showed a great deal of solidarity and stood behind Morrissey with all his beliefs. We all had to have the same beliefs.”

“The rest of The Smiths were not political,” says Perry. “They liked getting high, smoking weed and drinking. No-one was sat reading political programmes. Morrissey himself was very into feminism and challenging writers. It was radical, but in a way that wasn’t going to affect the average guy on the street, a striking miner or whatever.”

ON THE ROAD WITH MORRISSEY

As driver for Morrissey and The Smiths, Dave Harper occasionally found himself obliged to follow some unusual requests...

“**M**ORRISSEY AND I once stopped at some services on the M6 somewhere or other, and there was this top-of-the-range, brand-new big BMW, with three or four aerials sticking out of the roof. ‘Whose is that car?’ we pondered. It was Andy McCluskey from OMD, who’d made his packet and looked like he’d spent it on car aerials. Morrissey said, ‘He must be going to Liverpool.’ Morrissey was very insistent that I try and catch him up, and whether I could overtake him, to prove some weird point. This black limo I was driving was about 15 years old and McCluskey’s was a brand-new car. I couldn’t overtake it, but I did follow him for some time. Morrissey was in such a state of high excitement that he was crouched behind the driver’s seat holding onto the back, urging me to go faster. ‘Come on, you can catch him up!’”



Stephen Street, engineering *Meat Is Murder*: “They were hot...”

“They were politically idealistic, young, fairly militant people at a time when the country was going through a lot of turmoil,” remembers John Featherstone, The Smiths’ lighting designer. “A lot of bands develop a persona as a band,

which is a separate entity from their own individual beliefs. But The Smiths acted the way they did because they were the band and the band was them. They were largely self-managed at this time, too. So there was no manager saying, ‘You might not want to say that about the IRA attack on Thatcher.’ As a consequence, the way they acted was the way they felt and the way they talked. Things like *Meat Is Murder* was very much the way Morrissey and Johnny felt.”

STEPHEN STREET REMEMBERS the first time he became aware of The Smiths. “I saw them on *Top Of The Pops*, performing ‘This Charming Man’,” he says. “I was working at Island as an in-house engineer. There was a session booked for the weekend, so they wanted someone who was prepared to come in. Once I heard it was The Smiths, I said, ‘I’d definitely like to do that.’ You could tell the band were excited. They were very together, they’d done a lot of touring so they were in good shape... really hot.”

Street’s session – in March 1984 for “Heaven Knows I’m Miserable Now” – marked the start of a long and fruitful relationship with the band. A few months later, Street received a phone call from Rough Trade’s Geoff Travis. “He said the band want to do a record where they want to produce it themselves, and they want to work with an engineer they like and trust – would I be up for it? So we started sessions at Amazon. You could tell that the feeling in the band was very positive. They knew they were onto something good. Everything was flying. We would get picked up at 9.30 – 10 o’clock in the morning in Manchester.

A history of violence: Margaret Thatcher and her husband Denis leave the Grand Hotel in Brighton, after a bomb attack by the IRA, October 12, 1984





1985: The Smiths in heady times

Get to Amazon at about 11, work through to about eight o'clock at night, perhaps nine, and then get driven back."

"We figured, why have a producer and have his opinion forced upon us when we can do it perfectly well ourselves?" explains Andy Rourke. "It was a control thing. We really liked Stephen."

"I was literally the same age as Morrissey," says Street. "I'm in the same age group as the band. Morrissey was the eldest, then it was me. So it was a bunch of guys together. We were experimenting."

"I was exploring what I could do," Johnny Marr told *Uncut* in 2008. "I suppose I was feeling let loose on that second record. The first period was over – of getting known, learning to play onstage, getting a label and getting a relationship with the audience and then that's worked out. And then I went into it just rolling my sleeves up and thinking, 'Let's see what we can do!'"

"I get the impression that they were pretty well prepared for it – more so than the later albums we made together," acknowledges Street. "They had a bit of time playing these songs in rehearsals or in soundchecks. 'Barbarism Begins At Home' goes back quite a long way."

"We had about 80 per cent of the songs in hand," remembers Andy Rourke. "We always worked in the same way. Johnny, myself and Mike would put down a rough track with Johnny playing live guitar, just so we had that as a reference. We'd go all the way back and Mike would lay down the drums proper, listening to Johnny's guitar, and then I'd put the bass on top. Then Johnny would layer all his guitars. Lastly, Morrissey would do his magic over the top."

For the most part, Rourke reveals, Morrissey would be in the studio with the rest of the band even when he wasn't specifically required for the recording. "Then he would come into the recording room, with his notebook and his lyrics. He wouldn't show them to anybody beforehand. That was always an exciting part! You'd hear the lyrics for the first time when he was singing them over the track."

Writing glowingly of the sessions in *Autobiography*, Morrissey recalls, "We thrashed through the new songs

EYEWITNESS

ROTIS SERIF RUFFIANS

"MORRISSEY led on the design and had a vision for how the sleeves should be presented," says former Rough Trade production manager, Richard Boon. "All of his ideas had to be unpacked and made perfect. If they weren't, he was never happy."

"I'd got a job with Malcolm Garrett at Assorted Images," says graphic designer, Caryn Gough. "We did Culture Club, Duran Duran. Morrissey or Rough Trade had approached Malcolm to do The Smiths' sleeves. We both went to meet them. It was the only time I met Morrissey. He was talking to me like I was the boss, completely ignoring Malcolm. He said, 'I'd love you to do my sleeves.' So I became their layout artist. Morrissey used to send me rough scribbles, sometimes he'd tell me that he liked this font or that colour, and I'd adjust things if I didn't think they worked. Occasionally, he'd handwrite something. Everything was on CS10 board. I'd have to order the typesetting and stick it down with Spray Mount and trace over the photos. Then I'd get all the lyrics set for the inner sleeve."

"He had that photo of the

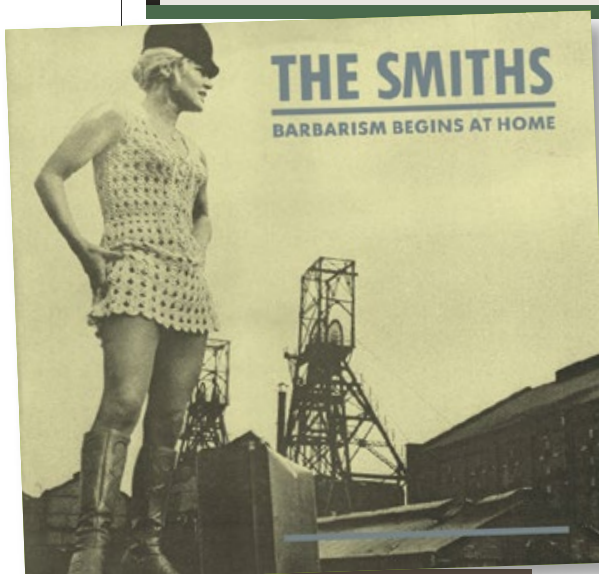
Meat Is Murder's cover photo, a September 1967 shot of Marine Cpl Michael Wynn in the Vietnam War



MEAT
IS
MURDER

marine [above], from [Emile de Antonio's 1968 doc] *In The Year Of The Pig*," continues Richard Boon. "There was an interesting approach to the framing edge, as 'The Smiths' ran down the left hand side. Usually, there was a load of things like rack momentum, when people would look through a rack as they used to, where the name should be in the top three inches of the sleeve."

"There was a little gimmick beforehand. We printed off loads of stickers saying 'Meat Is Murder' that were sent to all the regional areas of the Cartel. Shops like Probe and Red Rhino would just be giving people stickers that they could put wherever they liked. On the windows of butcher shops, I seem to recall..."



"For this album, things stepped up a gear: crazy, busy times"

ANDY ROURKE

back to back in order to see – just for the hell of it – where everything would land... Out poured the signature Smiths powerhouse full-tilt." Among the songs recorded at Amazon between October and November, 1984, Morrissey described "The Headmaster Ritual" as "a live-wire spitfire guitar sound that takes on all-comers; bass domination instant on 'Rusholme Ruffians'; weightier drums on 'I Want The One I Can't Have'. The Smiths began to stand upright."

Rourke, for his part, describes the sessions as "really fun to record", while Street professes to have been "blown away when I first heard 'The Headmaster Ritual'. I thought this was fantastic, and when I heard the lyrics as well, I thought it just sounded so... Morrissey! It was stunning."

"The Headmaster Ritual", the album's opening track, set out the band's stall. Inspired by Morrissey's own unhappy schooldays at St Mary's Secondary, Stretford, the song's fury was directed at violent beatings dished out by the teachers – "belligerent ghouls" – leaving terrified pupils with "bruises bigger than dinner plates". "Barbarism Begins At Home", meanwhile, addressed domestic mistreatment: "Unruly boys" and "unruly girls", Morrissey sang, "They must be taken in hand" – a queasy, ambiguous phrase that implied both harsh

THE SMITHS

PALE ALES! CRISPS! CUCUMBER SANDWICHES!

How much did it cost to send The Smiths on the road in 1985? The band's former tour manager, Stuart James, kept his old cash books. Here, he reveals a few of their secrets...

“WE HAD THE white Mercedes, which I used to drive a lot of the time,” he begins. “But we did have a bus halfway through the tour. We had two, one for the crew and one for the band. We also hired the PA from Ozz PA Hire, one of the partners was the monitor engineer. We took that on the road and then we just hired an extra PA for the Albert Hall. There was lighting hire as well. We took full production with us. “Per diems were £15 on that tour for band and crew – a lot in retrospect,” he continues. ““Adelphi Hotel, Royal Court Liverpool, return taxi, £2.’ This would have been us getting a taxi from the hotel to the gig. The Castle Keep in Margate, for the whole group, cost £199. There are a whole load of things like blank cassettes, and a copy of Buzzcocks’ *Singles Going Steady*, to play before the show. That was £3.99.” And the band’s rider on the Meat Is Murder tour? “Two bottles of wine, a bottle of Jack Daniel’s, five pale ales, a few bags of crisps and some cucumber sandwiches, and that was about it,” says Andy Rourke. “We were keen and lean!”

ANDREW CATLIN



➔ corrective discipline and also sexual abuse. Morrissey repeats the line “a crack on the head” eight times during the song’s duration, at one point yelping as if in pain himself. “Rusholme Ruffians”, meanwhile, described stabbings and a potential suicide attempt. The songs they recorded were brimming with violence, but also yearning (“I want the one I can’t have”), romance (“My faith in love is still devout”) and the melodrama of youth (“This is the final stand of all I am”).

THE TWICE-DAILY, HOUR-LONG commute to and from Amazon Studios along the M62, soon gave way to another journey and a different luxury hire car. After three weeks at Amazon, the band relocated to Ridge Farm, a residential recording studio near Horsham in Surrey. From there, the band’s driver Dave Harper, recalls they would travel to press engagements and meetings in a black limousine. “It didn’t appear to have a key for the ignition,” Harper notes. “It was all a bit dodgy. You put a large screwdriver, a big one, in the ignition and that’s how you started it. The boot didn’t have a thing to hold it up, so you had to use a broomstick. It was originally a funeral cortege car from Holland. Morrissey once asked me about the history of the vehicle. He was sitting behind me. He was in one of his chatty moods. I said, ‘It used to be a funeral cortege car from Holland.’ He said, ‘I wish you hadn’t told me that.’ He didn’t talk to me for the rest of the journey.”

While based at Ridge Farm, the band finished work on *Meat Is Murder*. Key among that last batch of songs was the title track. “It was me, Mike and Johnny jamming out this very mellow, repetitive riff,” recalls Andy Rourke. “It just happened organically. Morrissey already had the lyrics.” “There was no demo,” adds Stephen Street. “The chords are quite strange with that song and they wanted to create an atmosphere. So Johnny sketched out the chords, then we marked it out with a click track, put some piano down, and reversed the first notes to creative this oppressive kind of darkness. Morrissey handed me a BBC *Sound Effects* album and said, ‘I want you to try and create the sound of an abattoir.’ So there’s me with a BBC *Sound Effects* album of cows mooing happily in a field. It was a challenge, but I really enjoyed it. I found some machine noises and put them through a harmoniser and turned the pitch down so they sounded darker and deeper. I did the same things with the cows, to make it sound spooky. It was like a sound collage. The band learnt how to play it live after we’d recorded it.”

“The aspirant moment is the title track,” wrote Morrissey in *Autobiography*. “Each musical notation an image, the subject dropped into the pop arena for the first time, and I relish to the point of tears this chance to give voice to the millions of beings that are butchered every single day.”

Morrissey had become a vegetarian when he was “about 11 or 12 years old,” he told PETA, the animal rights organisation, in 1985. “My mother was a staunch vegetarian as long as I can remember. We were very poor and I thought that meat was a good source of nutrition. Then I learned the truth. I guess you could say I repent for those years now.”

The issues of vegetarianism and

animal rights had been thrown into sharp relief a few years earlier with the release of a documentary, *The Animals Film* [see panel]. “The matchstick which ignited animal rights in the mainstream in the UK was when Channel 4 aired *The Animals Film* in November, 1982,” explains Dan Mathews, PETA’s senior vice-president. “There were active groups for decades before, but this film brought the disturbing images to the masses. It connected to the broader political climate, especially to the UK’s class warfare, as animal issues like fur, fox hunting and foie gras were tied to the upper classes.”

“These were the issues around,” adds Billy Bragg. “If you went out of demos, there were always animal rights activists knocking around, no matter what the demo was. It was part and parcel of what the Left addressed at the time.”

Accordingly, if Morrissey was a practicing vegetarian it followed that his fellow bandmates adopt a similar dietary regime. “You can’t record an album called *Meat Is Murder* and slip out for a burger,” observes Andy Rourke. “After we used Ridge Farm, all our other recordings were done in residential studios. It was great. You could fit your own schedule. We used to work, then have lunch, sandwiches, maybe 2pm, then at 6 or 7, it would be dinnertime. You had your own chef there, who’d cook amazing food. We were always thinking with our stomachs.”

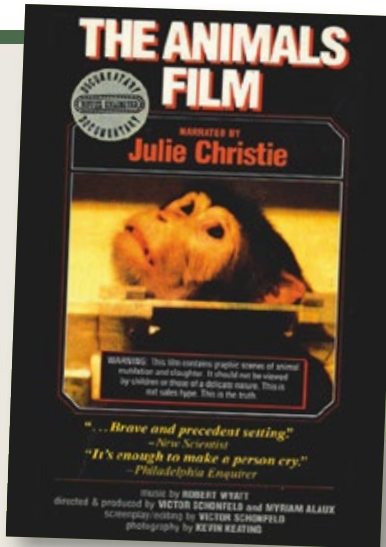
While at Ridge Farm, Stephen Street remembers the menu was “meat-free and fish-free. It was a *fait accompli*. I knew Andy and Mike would give in every now and then. But certainly, when we were together in the studio, no-one ate any meat. Their diet was bloody awful. It was chocolate and crisps. I remember thinking that Johnny looked so slight. No wonder, he hardly ate anything.”

“One time, we stopped at a service station to get some breakfast,” says Andy

REEL BEASTS

PETA’s Dan Mathews describes *The Animals Film* as the “matchstick which ignited animals rights in the mainstream in the UK”. The radical documentary was inspired by New York filmmaker Victor Schonfeld’s experiences on an Israeli kibbutz, where he was assigned to a hatchery. “I determined to make a doc for cinemas that would make the exploitation of animals a serious political issue,” he wrote in *The Guardian* in 2007. Co-directed by Schonfeld and Myriam Alaux, the film mixed cartoons, newsreels and ads with vox pop interviews and covertly filmed footage showing the abuse of animals. Narrated by Julie Christie, with a score by Robert Wyatt, *The Animals Film* received a limited run in cinemas in late 1981 before it was broadcast, uninterrupted by ad breaks, on Channel 4’s third night on air. At the behest of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, the film was edited before broadcast to remove 12 minutes of footage featuring a raid on a laboratory by Animal Liberation Front activists.

Were the more extreme actions

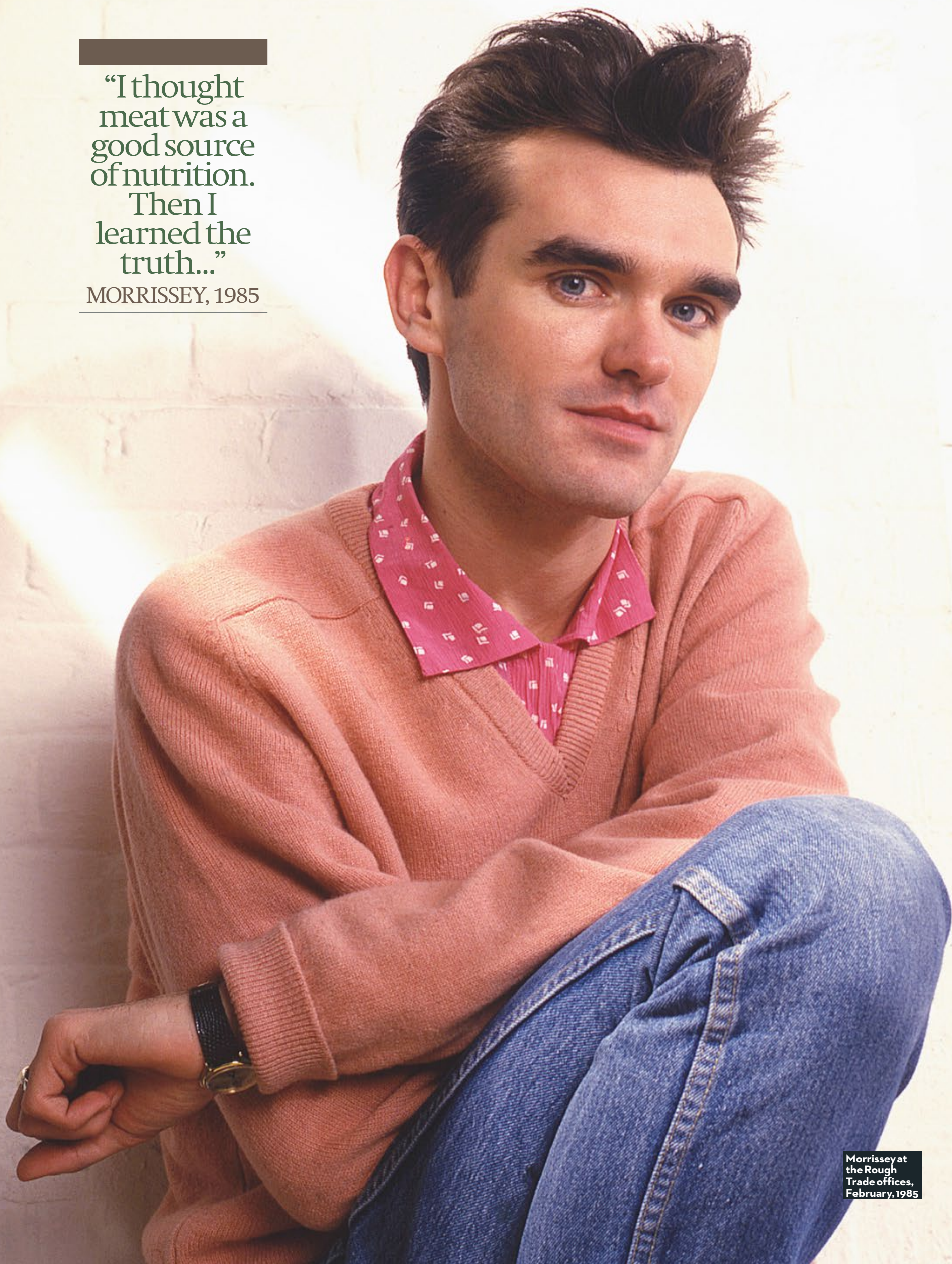


carried out by ALF detrimental to the public perception of the animal rights movement? “I guess so, in the same way the underground railroad drew society’s ire for helping slaves escape last century,” says Dan Mathews. “Whenever people learn about a hideous, violent injustice, there will be some who react aggressively, it happens with any movement. Even though some find such extreme reactions excessive, it raises the profile of the issue and many, though they won’t break the law, find themselves in moral agreement on the larger issue.”

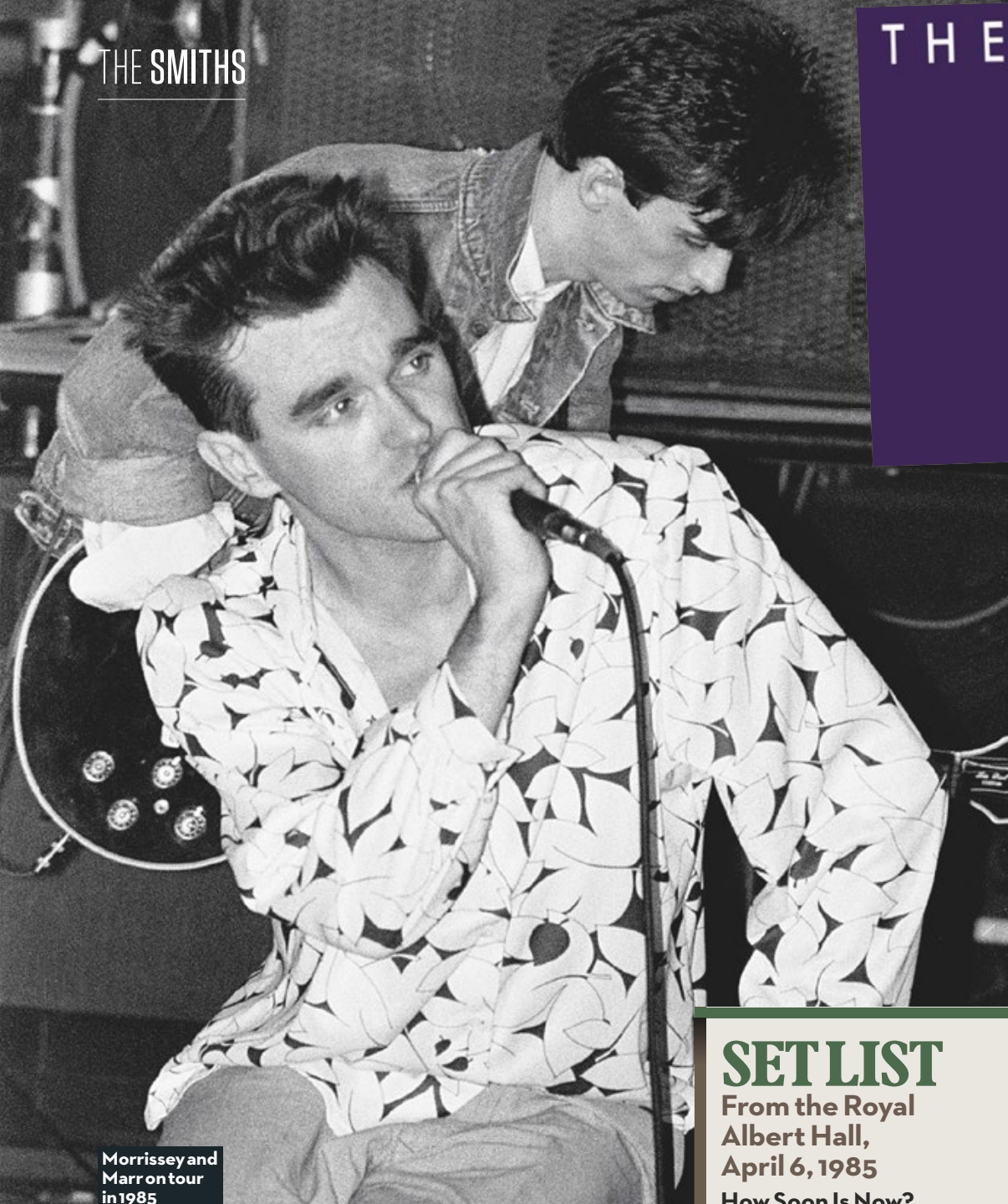
The Animals Film is out on DVD from www.theanimalsfilm.com

“I thought
meat was a
good source
of nutrition.
Then I
learned the
truth...”

MORRISSEY, 1985



Morrissey at
the Rough
Trade offices,
February, 1985



Morrissey and Marr on tour in 1985

➔ Rourke. “Everyone ordered scrambled eggs or fried eggs or whatever. I ordered the full English breakfast. When it arrived, Morrissey left the table. Then Johnny left the table. Then Mike left the table. So I was sat on my own with this English breakfast feeling very uncomfortable. I went vegetarian after that.”

“On one of our many trips, we stopped at a service station with a Little Chef,” adds Dave Harper, like Rourke another fan of the traditional fry-up. “In those days, if you ordered an all-day breakfast it came on a plate decorated with a farmyard scene. So you had the joy of eating bacon and sausages off a plate with pictures of pigs on it. I thought it was quite funny, particularly eating it in front of Morrissey. He didn’t make a scene, he just said, ‘Why have you done that?’ I replied, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about. Done what?’ He didn’t harangue me, or never forgive me for eating meat. It wasn’t the right environment for him to start sounding off about politics. It never came up. But it was a big thing: what does Morrissey eat? Biscuits, cake, ice cream...”

SHORTLY BEFORE RECORDING began on *Meat Is Murder*, both Morrissey and Marr had moved back to Manchester after a period living in London. “I used to drop Morrissey off at this big, Gothic, part-timbered *Scooby-Doo* style nightmare house he’d bought in Hale Barns,” says Harper. “He put his mother in it. It was the type of house an old person would live in; if you went to visit your grandparents and they’d done quite well and they liked having a copper-burnished fire surround and medieval-looking front door with ironmongery studded through it. Johnny was in Hale. He bought the old vicarage.” Harper would ferry the band up and down the M6, from their homes to engagements



in London. “If it was all four of them, Morrissey and Johnny had the seats behind me. Andy and Mike were further back. There was much twisting and turning, chitter chatter, and laughing and playing of cassettes. If it was Morrissey on his own, that was a different kettle of fish. He had

his own status to uphold. He’d start at the back, then as the journey went on he got progressively more bored, he’d work his way forwards so he had something to gawp at.”

During 1984, The Smiths had released three singles as well as two albums – their debut in February, followed by *Hatful Of Hollow*, a compilation of BBC radio sessions, in November. As 1985 opened, their already prolific output suddenly became complicated. In January – 14 days before *Meat Is Murder* was released – Rough Trade belatedly reissued former B-side “How Soon Is Now?”, as an A-side single in its own right. The track was later included on the US edition of *Meat Is Murder*. “It was all a bit chaotic,” confirms Andy Rourke. “We always felt a little short-changed about their preparation for supply and demand with our records. That obviously affected our chart positions, and so therefore our morale. Geoff [Travis] was doing the best he could for us, maybe it wasn’t just good enough. They just weren’t prepared. Before us, they’d been dealing with quite small indie bands. We were the first mainstream band they’d ever looked after.”

“The Smiths were the goose that was going to lay the golden egg,” says Richard Boon. “The late Scott Piering was plugging away at radio, Mike Hinc, their booking agent, was working really hard. So were the band. Everybody recognised talent and it was a mission to make the public recognise it. But there was tension between the band and the label and they were quick to point out any failings. But the band never accepted any failings of their own.”

The band were also without management at this critical time. “Nobody was steering our boat for us,” confirms Rourke. “While recording *Meat Is Murder* was great fun, it put a strain on Johnny and Morrissey’s relationship. If anybody had a question about the band that usually would go through management, Johnny would have to take the phone call. It would interfere with the recording process and stress him out; it wasn’t good for Johnny. We definitely needed a manager, but I think we were unmanageable.”

To accompany the release of *Meat Is Murder* – on February 11, 1985 – The Smiths set out on a 23-date UK tour, which finished at London’s Royal Albert Hall on April 6. Their tour the previous year in support of their debut album had followed a more typical trajectory of university and polytechnic student unions. But for *Meat Is Murder*, the band upscaled to theatres, town halls and arts centres. Notwithstanding such live achievements, the album’s only single, “That Joke Isn’t Funny Anymore”, peaked at No 49: a further cause of friction with Rough Trade.

The band began the tour travelling to shows in their white Mercedes limo, driven by tour manager Stuart James. James recalls the band’s strong sense of camaraderie. “They were very tight, but musically, Johnny was the MD,” he says. “Johnny and Morrissey would be talking and suggesting ideas. Then Johnny would present it back to everyone.”

“Both Morrissey and Johnny felt that the aesthetic was really important,” continues John Featherstone. “We spent a lot of time spitballing ideas. Johnny brought up a Stones piece from TV that was lit in a really even flat, very bright white. These were the days where you had to go and find a

SET LIST

From the Royal Albert Hall, April 6, 1985

How Soon Is Now?

Nowhere Fast

I Want The One I Can’t Have

What She Said

Hand In Glove

Stretch Out And Wait

That Joke Isn’t Funny Anymore

Shakespeare’s Sister

Rusholme Ruffians

The Headmaster Ritual

You’ve Got Everything Now

Handsome Devil

Still Ill

Meat Is Murder

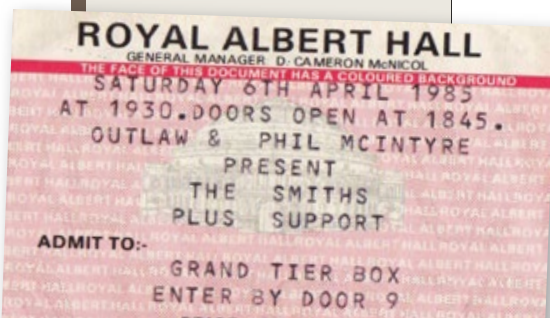
ENCORE

William, It Was Really Nothing

Heaven Knows I’m Miserable Now

Barbarism Begins At Home

Miserable Lie



VHS player – so he showed it to Morrissey who said, ‘Maybe we should use that for *Meat Is Murder*?’ One of the things they liked was very narrow colour palettes. So I lit the whole show through shades of blues and greens, with the exception of ‘Meat Is Murder’. It was such a different song, from a visual standpoint it needed a completely different treatment. So it was lit in just a wash of dripping blood red, to underscore the difference.”

PERFORMED LIVE, “MEAT Is Murder” closed the main set on the 1984 tour, positioning the band’s activist agenda at the fore. Backstage, however, Stuart James recalls that there was a slightly more laissez-faire attitude towards maintaining a rigorous vegetarian diet. “Meat was served, but certainly not at our table. Johnny wasn’t interested but Mike and Andy might slip off occasionally for a burger late at night after a gig.”

“For all his faults, Morrissey is often perceived as being dictatorial,” adds Featherstone. “That was never my experience with him. The way this was positioned to the guys was ‘We’re not paying for this; you can spend your money on whatever you want.’ There were many occasions when backstage at gigs, the truck drivers and the bus drivers would pull a barbeque out of the bay of the bus and they’d be cooking up steak and hot dogs, particularly on the US leg of the tour.”

“We used to travel around in a campervan we bought specially for the occasion,” says James’ singer Tim Booth, then a vegetarian, who supported the Smiths on the Meat Is Murder tour. “It was a beautiful old thing from the 1950’s. We lived off lentil stew and rice at those gigs and Morrissey used to come in and eat with us.”

Backstage, the vibes were good. Stuart James remembers Morrissey making the decision to restrict backstage passes to immediate tour personnel only. “We wouldn’t have anyone backstage before shows,” he explains. “I don’t mean just in the dressing room, the whole backstage areas. We’d just have the band and crew laminates. They wouldn’t be given out to anyone else, including record company people, who were always wanting to get backstage to talk to the band. But it wasn’t deemed the right place for them, and I’d be happy with that, as well.”

“We didn’t really have pre-show rituals – usually, it was just people dashing to the toilet,” laughs Andy Rourke. “I know Johnny always used to have this superstition that he had to have money in his pocket when he went onstage.”

The dressing room, meanwhile, was by all accounts a relaxed place. “Mike and Andy were court jesters,” describes Featherstone. “You would see Johnny, always with a guitar in his hand, always with a cigarette burning, perched like a pixie at the end of a couch or a coffee table, strumming on a guitar, having four conversations at once. Morrissey would be more around the peripheries. He wouldn’t actually be in the room when Johnny was smoking. But if he was, he’d be a little more around the edge, watching what was going on, often reading – a little cone of silence around him. Sometimes, he’d completely ignore you. It took a little while to learn that wasn’t personal, it was just kind of the way that he dealt with stuff.”

Andy Rourke remembers the Meat Is Murder shows as “crazy”, Tim Booth recalls the “intense devotion” of the audiences, while Dave Harper describes the atmosphere as “so hot and exciting, there was sweat down the walls”. Stuart James explains his principal duties during the shows themselves were dissuading enthusiastic audience

members from getting onstage. “Later, though, it got to the point where the band wouldn’t think they’d had such a good show if they didn’t have a stage invasion,” he relates.

“You get the lads of terraces,” says Richard Boon. “Both terrace housing and football terraces, embracing the ambiguous character that Morrissey was intent on presenting. The last time I saw Morrissey live was at the Albert Hall when *You Are The Quarry* came out; it was full of football kids

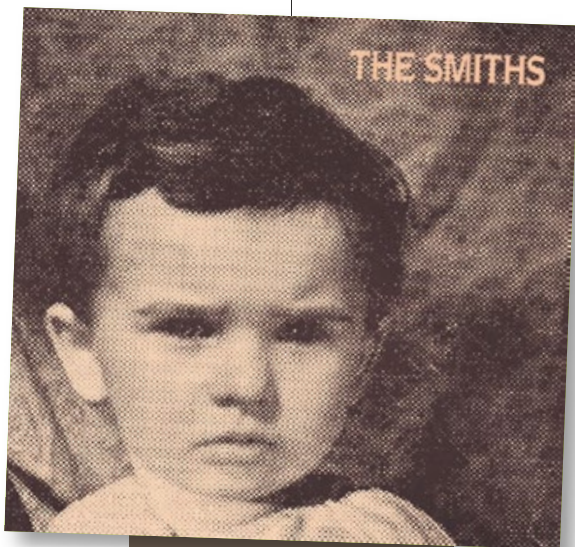
wearing flags and chanting. That started around *Meat Is Murder*.”

“Morrissey was a very sensitive human being, and he had this real love/hate relationship with his fame,” observes Tim Booth. “He loved it, he wanted it desperately, but he was also pretty terrified of people and terrified of what came with it. He was caught between two opposing forces. He used to hide in his hotel. He wouldn’t go out, he found it overwhelming.”

“He loved the attention as we became famous,” adds Rourke. “But if fans get too close, we always ended up in situations where Morrissey more often than not was

uncomfortable. People were over familiar with him. And bodily contact, people hugging him and kissing him. Onstage, he was fine, but not anywhere else.”

On March 16, The Smiths played Hanley Victoria Hall in Stoke-On-Trent. A few lines into “Meat Is Murder” an object thrown from the crowd struck Morrissey. “It was a dozen sausages with ‘Meat is murder’ written on them,” explains Rourke. “They’re quite weighty, a pack of sausages, hitting you in the face. That shocked him. Then, when he looked ➔



“The band’s diet was bloody awful... chocolate and crisps!”

STEPHEN STREET



THE ODD COUPLE

ONE UNEXPECTED guest on the Meat Is Murder tour was Pete Burns, singer with Dead Or Alive. A keen animal rights activist, Burns met Morrissey in February 1985 when they both appeared on *Top Of The Pops*; later in the year, they shared a *Smash Hits* cover. But on April 6, Burns joined The Smiths onstage at London’s Royal Albert Hall for “Barbarism Begins At Home” – giving him the honour of being the only artist aside from Sandie Shaw to appear live with The Smiths. “He was in full Pete Burns costume, that’s for sure,” remembers Stuart James. “A little bit aloof, a touch of arrogance there. I think they just went off into a corner and had a chat afterwards. I don’t recall him bringing a big posse with him.”

Pete Burns and Morrissey at The Royal Albert Hall, London, April 5, 1985



DO YOU,
JOHN
MARTIN
MAHER...

ON JUNE 20, Johnny Marr married Angie Brown, his girlfriend, in San Francisco. "Morrissey was the official best man but I pretty much organised it all from what I recall," says Stuart James. "I drove them to the doctor to get medical certificates. On the day of the wedding we went to get the license, then we went for a bit of a drive, we might even have gone over the bridge. Then it was on to the non-denominational church..."

"We'd all pretty much joined the circus at that stage," adds John Featherstone. "So they had many of the people that they cared for, and that they were sharing their lives with, with them. I mean, Angie was nominally de facto business manager of the band."

"It was also my birthday," says James. "The reception may have even been in my room. I was visited by Snakefinger and some of his band, because I'd worked with them on a tour. The hotel we stayed at was a Japanese chain called Miyako, in Japantown in San Francisco."

Johnny and
Angie on the
tour bus, 1984

➤ down he saw that it was meat. He was disgusted and he just walked offstage. They were Irish sausages. How do I know? I went to the trouble of wrapping them back up in the plastic. It was like a brick hit him in the face. If they'd unravelled, he may have got strangled by them."

"Morrissey loved being onstage, but he didn't like the boring, mundane, hard work of the travel," says Dave Harper. "With vegetarians, there's always the associated illness as they've been eating crisps for six weeks. I don't think it did him a lot of good healthwise, because until you get to another level you're not getting any decent food – and if you're a vegetarian, on top of that you're certainly not getting decent food, because no-one's catering for you."

As the Meat Is Murder tour progressed, without a manager and in a period of extraordinary activity, the band responded to the increased pressure in different ways. "Everything got louder than everything else," says John Featherstone. "The need to do press and promotion, the need to do shows. It all got too much. Johnny thrives on that stuff to the point of exhaustion. But when Morrissey felt burdened, he would push away. He'd get physically, intellectually and emotionally more distant. He'd cancel interviews and pull back. Johnny and Morrissey both set up professional methodologies that got defined on that tour."

MANY OF THE people working directly with The Smiths during this period were already close associates of the band. John Featherstone, for instance, had been on board since November, 1983. Rough Trade's Richard Boon, meanwhile, had first met Morrissey while running Manchester's New Hormones label: "He sent me a cassette of him singing, saying, 'I have to whisper because my mum's next door.' It had an early version of 'Reel Around The Fountain'." But as tight as this grouping was, it fell to Stuart James to handle the band's day-to-day duties. "I was their buffer in the middle," he reveals. "I'd be the person Rough Trade would go to if they wanted to get in contact with the band directly. I'd have to report their views back to the label, whether it's what they wanted to hear or not. It was taxing. They'd sometimes plan things I wouldn't find out about 'til it was far too late. It was the same on one occasion when Morrissey was on a train in one direction and the rest of the band were on a train going in the other

direction. Morrissey was on a train up to his mum's and the rest of the band were on a train to London to do a TV show."

Nevertheless, James – who was sacked and then rehired during the summer of 1984 – accompanied the band to America on Concorde for their first US tour. "It was a bit of a waste of money, certainly in terms of vegetarian food. It was far too dainty for them. Their vegetarianism at that point was beans and chips without the sausage. If they'd have been presented with something like a couscous salad, it wouldn't have gone down well with them."

Indeed, as the tour wound its way from Chicago's Aragon Ballroom (June 7) to the 16,000-capacity Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre in California (June 29), the band found it increasingly difficult to maintain a purely vegetarian diet. "I remember arriving in LA and we got picked up by a mini bus," recalls James. "We left the airport and on Manchester Avenue the next thing we see is 'English Fish & Chips'. It had taken a considerable amount of grief getting everyone onto the minibus, then five minutes later it was all 'Let's stop for fish and chips!' So then we're all eating fish and chips. I think fish was still acceptable at that point for everyone, although I can't vouch for Moz. Maybe Moz was put off once, when he was being encouraged to eat fish by our security guy, Jim Connolly. 'You've got to have a bit of fish, Moz.' When it arrived it still had its head on, and he turned up his nose. I think that was the last time he tried to have fish."

On June 11, The Smiths played LA's Warner Theatre. In the audience was Dan Mathews, who'd recently begun working for PETA. In his memoir, *Committed*, Mathews recounts cold-calling Morrissey in his hotel room when, to Mathews' surprise, the singer agreed to an impromptu interview: "Since this is for the animals, obviously I'm duty-bound," Morrissey explained. "I always thought animals were very much like children," he continued. "They look to us to help them and protect them..." At the conclusion of the interview, Morrissey offered Mathews an unreleased live version of "Meat Is Murder" – recorded at the Apollo Theatre, Oxford in March – for inclusion on a PETA compilation album, *Animal Liberation*. "In addition to interviewing him a few times we've had many dinners and gone out on the town a few times in LA," says Mathews. "I also connected with him once in El Paso on tour. Hates spicy food, loves Italian food, hates Madonna, loves [drag performer] Lypsinka, hates

parties, loves Champagne, hates sensational news programmes, loves *Golden Girls*.” (Morrissey continues to support PETA; though no-one interviewed for this article could confirm if he’d actively engaged in dialogue with other animal rights groups).

“They were great shows,” says Billy Bragg, who supported The Smiths on the US tour. “When you first tour the United States Of America, it’s so exciting. To be part of that with a bunch of guys who were doing that, it was a privilege. They were really at the top of their powers.”

Andy Rourke explicitly cites the band’s first American tour as a turning point in the band as a live entity. “We were changing,” he admits. “We thought we needed to bolster up the sound a bit. So we were all going full throttle. Johnny was using a ton of effects, and four amps at once.”

Noting the differences between UK and US audiences, Stuart James says there were “less bed-sitters” among the US crowds. Rourke elaborates. “The first thing that I noticed, we had a female following in America. Whereas in England it was predominantly pale young boys. The fans used to go crazy in America. A lot more exuberant.”

“We were doing these shows that were blowing people’s doors off,” adds John Featherstone. “It was our first US tour, we did two nights in the Beacon Theatre. In Chicago, we stayed in the Ambassador East, which is the hotel from *The Blues Brothers*. That was one of the sacred cultural icons of The Smiths. *The Blues Brothers*, Spinal Tap, Richard Prior...”

Reflecting on how Morrissey responded to America, Billy Bragg recalls: “One thing with Morrissey that’s universal is that he’s an outsider. And where was he more of an outsider at that point than America? But English music at the time had a real credibility in the USA. REM were in a similar sort of groove to The Smiths and had in Michael Stipe another outsider character.”

“As a performer, Morrissey relished the euphoria,” acknowledges Featherstone. “But he took slight offence to the perceived lack of culture in some of the fans. A lot of the US audience, particularly at gigs out west, like San Diego and Oakland, were more ‘Whoo, let’s party.’” Featherstone also recalls the choice of opening act on a number of the dates: transvestites. “That was Morrissey just trying to poke fun a bit. It was done through the agent. Morrissey came up with the idea, for sure. It was a little more formalised than an open casting call, yeah.” Featherstone laughs broadly at the memory; he also speaks fondly of Johnny Marr’s wedding to his girlfriend Angie Brown in San Francisco [see panel]. “I remember the Meat Is Murder tour being surrounded by friendship and laughter more than anything else.”

ASKED FOR AN enduring image of Morrissey during the *Meat Is Murder* period, Dave Harper alights upon the singer’s choice of clothing. “He started to wear a rather large hat, bigger than a trilby. A homburg? Wide-brimmed. And a long overcoat, probably an expensive one. He always had expensive luggage. He bought Rimowa. It was aluminium, almost corrugated; it might have even been a wheelie case. I was pretty impressed with his taste in luggage. He liked having nice, expensive things.”

Hats? Coats? Luxury luggage brands? Clearly, in 1985 Morrissey and The Smiths were going somewhere. A No 1 album. A sell-out tour, including a headline show at the Royal Albert Hall (“each of our families had a private box,” remembers Rourke). But such was the speed at which they were moving, in August, 1985, they returned to the studio to begin work on their third album, *The Queen Is Dead*. “They brought vegetarianism into the middle of the debate for young people at the time in a way that nobody else could have done it,” insists Bragg. “Instead



Ken Livingstone, Neil Kinnock, Paul Weller, Billy Bragg et al at the Red Wedge launch, November 1985

EYEWITNESS

SEEING RED!

SPEAKING TO *UNCUT* about the origins of Red Wedge, former Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock recalls, “There were people like Billy Bragg and Paul Weller who decided that they needed to turn their own expressions of outrage and dismay and anger into a political force. That’s why they got in touch with the Labour Party and they were very happy to become overtly political in their own profession so that we could use them in our political activities.”

“The thing that held Red Wedge together wasn’t that we all loved the Labour Party, it was that we all hated Margaret Thatcher,” adds Billy Bragg. “We all wanted to do something to try and defeat Margaret Thatcher. That’s what attracted Johnny. He was straight in with Red Wedge. It wasn’t a question of, ‘Oh I’ll have to see what the band says.’ Instead he said, ‘I’ll be there.’”

Johnny Marr and Andy Rourke first appeared on the Red Wedge tour with Billy Bragg, playing Manchester

(January 25, 1986) and Newcastle (January 27), before The Smiths themselves played at Newcastle City Hall on January 31, 1986 for the final date on the tour. The Smiths’ set consisted of four songs: “Shakespeare’s Sister”, “I Want The One I Can’t Have”, “The Boy With The Thorn In His Side” and “Bigmouth Strikes Again”.

“Newcastle was amazing,” says Bragg. “The number of people that turned up, because they weren’t listed on the bill, the audience was blown away. Madness came as well and Prefab Sprout. Tom Robinson... It was like panto. Everybody had to be onstage at different times, having worked out what songs they’d be playing as the sets changed.”

“The Smiths were fucking brilliant,” recalls Paul Weller, who was playing with the Style Council. “When they came on, it was just this BANG, this wall of energy. Morrissey just exploded; the audience did. I haven’t really seen that level of energy and excitement since my days in The Jam, for that kind of hysteria, in a great, positive electric way. That night I just thought, ‘Fucking hell, that’s really what it’s about.’”



MORRISSEY OF THE SMITHS

PHOTO CREDIT: PAT BELLIS

of writing a gentle song about loving the animals, going in there like that with a buzz saw, with the sounds of the abattoir in the background, it was a fabulous piece of agitprop.”

The Smiths further reinforced their political agenda by briefly allying themselves with the Red Wedge tour [see panel]. But *Meat Is Murder* remains their most enduring statement. “It was a very important record,” reflects Andy Rourke. “It educated a lot of people as to the plight of animals and their mistreatment; the barbarism, literally. What Morrissey and The Smiths have done in terms of promoting vegetarianism is amazing.”

The album’s title song, meanwhile, continues to be a live highlight of Morrissey’s solo sets; still lit with the familiar blood-red wash devised on the 1985 tour. Introducing the song onstage at London’s O₂ Arena, on November 29, 2014, Morrissey was moved to cite a story that had recently broken in the UK newspapers. “I read the other day that 75 per cent of chicken sold in the UK is contaminated and therefore poisonous,” he observed. “And I thought to myself: ‘Ha, ha, ha, ha...’”

FOX PHOTOS/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; PAT BELLIS

THE MAKING OF...



Are we not Devo? The band in Michigan, October 1978: (l-r) Gerald Casale, Bob Casale, Alan Myers, Mark and Bob Mothersbaugh

Jocko Homo

BY DEVO

Outraged by 1970's Kent State killings, the original Ohio art-rockers set out their mission statement with novelty face masks, Balinese monkey chanters and an unhinged, synth-stomp classic

ON MAY 4, 1970, National Guardsmen killed four students and wounded a further nine during an anti-war rally at Kent State University. Among the other students on campus, Mark Mothersbaugh and Gerald Casale reacted by forming a band, inspired by their own Dada-esque philosophical tract. "Devo was a creative response to the outrage," says Casale today, "and the realisation that the world as you had been told it was, was indeed upside down."

"Jocko Homo", the thrilling B-side of debut single "Mongoloid", was one of the first songs the five-piece came up with. With its off-kilter 7/4 rhythm and infectious chants, it perfectly summed up Devo's musical and theoretical mission statement, and has long been the centrepiece of their wild live shows (recently documented on *Miracle Witness Hour*, recorded in 1977). "It was always our performance stamp," says Mark Mothersbaugh, the song's primary writer. "It had the opportunity to be the craziest thing we did all night!"

It was primarily this chaotic, synth-led stomper that led

Devo on a strange journey from the violent fleapits of Akron, via Joe Walsh's LA mansion and their own surreal short film, to jamming with Bowie and Eno in Cologne. "We had a sense of humour," explains Casale despite the terrible events that sparked the group's formation. "But our songs had very pointed messages and irony in them always. We were real serious about our sense of humour..."

TOM PINNOCK

KEY PLAYERS



Mark Mothersbaugh
Vocals, keys, songwriter



Gerald Casale
Bass, keys, vocals



Chuck Statler
Director of *The Truth About De-Evolution*

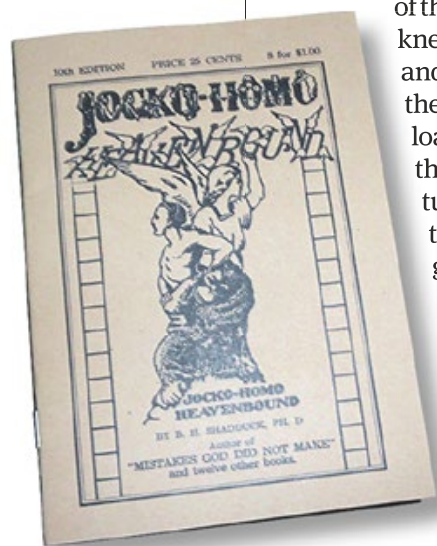
GERALD CASALE: I was in the middle of the action that day at Kent State. I knew [two of the victims] Jeffrey Miller and Allison Krause. Nobody knew that the National Guard's guns were loaded, and the next thing we knew they were firing their rifles at us. It turned me instantly from a thoughtful, live-and-let-live hippy guy to a 'no more Mr Nice Guy'.

MARK MOTHERSBAUGH:

Those scenes left an impact on us – that was the beginning of us trying to figure out what we were observing on the planet.

talk about was the evolution of the planet, or the opposite to that – things falling apart. Jerry had found this amazing book by this Yugoslavian anthropologist, Oscar Kiss Maerth, *The Beginning Was The End*. His take on it was that humans were an unnatural, insane species that was at odds with the planet. We found people with other similar ideas. A reverend from Ohio named BH Shadduck preached primarily against evolution and wrote these incredibly creative, humorous and kinda nutty tirades, including one named *Jocko Homo*.

CASALE: The cover is a stairway to hell, and the stairs are all marked with text like 'adultery', 'alcoholism', all the way up to the top. So the lyrics for "Jocko Homo" came out of that book.





ED BARGER (Engineer, soundman): Mark wrote “Jocko Homo” pretty much himself. It just came out of nowhere. At that point, Jerry was sort of the lead singer in the band, and Mark comes in with “Jocko Homo” and boom, Mark was the lead singer.

MOTHERSBAUGH: Once we decided what we were and what our mission was, that was one of the first pieces I wrote. I didn’t have a video recorder, but I would record movies on audio cassette. And one of the films I recorded was [1932’s] *Island Of Lost Souls*. It was the story of a mad scientist on a remote island taking the animals from the jungle and turning them into creatures that could walk on their back legs and looked like humans. But the problem was he couldn’t keep them going up the chain of evolution, no matter how many times he took them to the ‘house of pain’, his laboratory. Somebody would be acting like an animal and it would upset the doctor, he would crack a whip and go “What is the law?” and they would go, “Don’t walk on all fours! Are we not men? What is the law? Not to spill blood! Are we not men?” And they would remember that they were trying to attain human status. The movie was very inspirational.

CASALE: We used a lot of dark humour. I personally was trying to find a third way, because otherwise I probably would have joined the Weather Underground and have ended up in jail or dead. And I realised that was a path to a quick end. So that third way is a Dada approach

with a sense of humour. Mark and I would go to novelty stores and buy a lot of masks. I had what would now be considered as racist, a sort of Chinese man forehead and spectacles that made you into a Chinese person, and Mark had a baby mask, which I started calling Booji Boy.

CHUCK STATLER: Jerry kept me informed of

“I was trying to find a third way or I’d have joined the Weather Underground and ended up dead...”

GERALD CASALE

the band’s progress and around 1974 or ’75, I heard about Mark’s discovery of the Booji Boy mask. It seemed all that more fitting than the monkey mask he wore at their first show [*Kent State, 1973*].

CASALE: I started calling his character Booji Boy when we were driving to California on a completely misguided tip that Joe Walsh was going to help us out, because he was a Kent person. It was a

humorous disaster. Walsh had been completely California-ised – he was in this house in the Hollywood Hills, and his stoner friends were all around him and they had all the long hair, the ’70s clothes and moustaches, smoking tons of hash. And in come these two guys from Ohio, with our short haircuts and tight, straight-leg pants and buttoned-up shirts, and Joe’s friends were sniggering and laughing. Joe listened to the songs and you could see he was squirming. He walked out with us at the end of the night and he said, “Can you smell the eucalyptus?” And I said, “Oh, is that what that is? It’s pretty strong!” And then he goes, “Be quiet a minute, you’ll hear the hoot owls.” Mark and I were just looking at each other like, great... And then he goes, “Well, guys – keep doing it. I wish you all the best...”

MOTHERSBAUGH: We recorded the first version of “Jocko Homo” in 1976. This was a super low-tech basement recording.

CASALE: We had a place on the cusp of some ghetto neighbourhood and we set up in the basement. It probably took us about four hours to cut the first recording.

MOTHERSBAUGH: Back in the mid-’70s when we were playing one of our infrequent live shows, we tended to extend the middle section sometimes longer than you can call humane. It would be the thing we’d use as a lightning rod to attract hostility from out-of-work ex-Vietnam Vets that were unlucky enough to stop off at the bar we were

DEVO

playing at, hoping they could hear some Bad Company or some Wings before they went home and got in a fight with their wife. Instead we got the hostility going – we would get paid to quit playing or we would get attacked onstage. We would extend that “Are we not men? We are Devo!” and put other pieces in it. We had people come up onstage and take swings at us, throw things. Somehow it only confirmed our belief that if we were pissing these guys off then we must be doing something right.

BARGER: As soon as we went to NYC everybody loved us, but in Akron they hated us. Disco was just starting, mostly progressive rock before that, they just did not fit in at all. Other musicians would hate them, they would try to unplug their equipment. There weren’t that many shows, but Devo practised like crazy, they called it debasement, they were ‘in de basement’, you know? That was a very torturous place... They practised so much that any time they played they were so much more professional than anyone else.

STATLER: At the end of 1975, Jerry and I went to an all-night diner in Akron for a late-night meal. He expressed his frustration with the band’s inability to gain record company attention. It sounded as though they were on the verge of calling it quits. I believed in the band’s concept and music, so I offered my energy, equipment and financial support to document a performance on film. It took a collaborative effort from friends, family and bandmembers, as well as an on-again, off-again editing schedule that lasted for more than six months to put 11 minutes on-screen. But it resulted in a record contract for the band.

BARGER: The *Truth About De-Evolution* film was pure art, everybody was doing it for art.

MOTHERSBAUGH: We did everything ourselves and it took an incredibly long time. Jerry and I opened a graphic design company and kept it open just long enough to make the money for the film. The part in the film that looks like we’re in a lecture theatre, that was in the student union bar at Kent State, and General Boy’s office was actually at a McDonald’s in Ohio. Believe it or not, McDonald’s in Ohio had a meeting room you could rent.

BARGER: When we filmed at Kent State, about 10 or 15 friends came down to be an audience. But there weren’t enough people, so Mark went out into the hallway and just grabbed people until they filled the chamber up. Most of the people had no



Face the truth: early Devo show off their Booji Boy and Chinese man masks in the Goodyear World Of Rubber museum while filming *The Truth About De-Evolution*

idea what was going on! At the end of the film you see the guy stab Booji Boy, that’s me! Mark’s dad plays General Boy, he really got into it. To this day, he’s still General Boy.

CASALE: I pretended to be our manager and, dressing up all street, went to New York in April, and booked us into CBGB based on a 45 of our single and a tape of the 10-minute movie. Then I got this guy who had a New York paper called *The Rocker* to look at it, and he endorsed us.

BARGER: David Bowie introduced Devo at Max’s Kansas City. I’m at the back, at the soundboard, and I hear that David actually wants to walk out onstage with the microphone, but I have everything taped down because Devo’s shows were so crazy!

CASALE: David Bowie promised to produce us, but he kept taking on projects, and we were just being pushed and pushed, and I said, “We have to go now, we have to do it.” So me and Mark met Brian Eno in New York, and came to an agreement. Then off we went to Germany in ’78 to this studio just outside of Cologne, and us and Brian did the whole record in 28 days.

MOTHERSBAUGH: Eno took us to a studio he liked to work in, owned by Conny Plank, and

there was a farmhouse that housed the recording room, in a pigsty of all places.

CASALE: I was on the phone arguing with my girlfriend at the time, Toni Basil, at Cleveland Airport, and I didn’t hear the last call. When I got there the plane was still there but they had closed the door to the jet so I had to take the next flight.

MOTHERSBAUGH: So we had a day when we didn’t have the whole band. So Brian, David Bowie and Holger Czuckay from Can and the four other



Devo guys just jammed all day. There’s still a tape of that somewhere. In “Jocko Homo”, Brian put together this great piece of found sound of monkey chanters from Bali. He had done *Music For Airports* not long before, so he was used to this thing where four or five people would be supporting a 30ft-long piece of tape in a loop. We wanted to have that

part live, so at that point in the song, Bob Casale would hit a button on a tape deck and the monkey chanters would start. Once out of 10 times we’d be playing in the same tempo the chanters were in. So there was always this weird thing where we’d be playing faster than the chanters... We were like, “OK, technology doesn’t exist for us to work like this yet...” We were pioneers!

CASALE: Brian was by this point concerned with beauty – he wanted to put tracks on that made us less industrial and more harmonic. We let him do it, but in the end they got mixed out. It would be fun now to find all of those tracks and mix them his way. At the time there was no question, though. It was our aesthetic – we had to get that out there before we started being influenced by other things.

BARGER: “Jocko Homo” is one of the most classic songs, if you compare any other rock’n’roll hit, nothing’s like that. The timing of it, the whole thing. It became the main song every night.

MOTHERSBAUGH: During “Jocko Homo” I’d go into the audience. The lights would go out right before the chanting started and I’d maybe run up two or three flights of fire escapes and come down on a rope in the middle of the ceiling of the hall – I would be climbing upside down on a rope singing “Are we not men?” “Jocko Homo” always had the potential to get people going crazy. That’s when there was the most crowd interaction. My glasses would get stolen, or I’d come back with no shirt, or half a shirt. There was always the potential for something really crazy to happen.

CASALE: Live, people were always surprised because underneath it all, we were rock’n’roll. We weren’t a wimpy band standing there looking at our shoes. It was powerful and raw, and it still is today. I always said that we were Kraftwerk from the waist up, and Elvis Presley from the waist down. ☺

DEVO’s Miracle Witness Hour is out now via Futurismo. Order from www.futurismoinc.com

FACT FILE

- **Writer:** Mark Mothersbaugh
- **Performers:** Mothersbaugh (vox, keys), Gerald Casale (bass, keys, vox), Bob Casale (gtr, keys), Bob Mothersbaugh (gtr, vox), Alan Myers (drums)
- **Produced by:** Chuck Statler (v1)/Brian Eno (v2)
- **Recorded:** Devo basement/Conny Plank’s studio, Cologne, Germany
- **Released:** March 1977; February 1978
- **UK/US chart:** 62; DNC

TIMELINE

April 18, 1973 A ‘proto-Devo’ play their first gig, at Kent State University’s Creative Arts Festival
1975 Devo and Statler

begin filming *In The Beginning Was The End: The Truth About De-Evolution*
March 1977 The band release the original

version of “Jocko Homo”, recorded in an Akron basement
November 14, 1977 Devo play Max’s Kansas City in New York,

introduced onstage by David Bowie
Late 1977 Devo begin recording their debut

LP with Brian Eno – the new “Jocko Homo” comes out the following February





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 09/02/15



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 'A THOUSAND MILES OF MIDNIGHT'
 23/02/15

THE LONG & UNWINDING ROAD

Forty years ago, Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider shifted their band, KRAFTWERK, into a significantly higher gear. A sleek anthem to the open road, *Autobahn* also heralded a new idea of Germany, and a new era of electronic music. With help from Kraftwerk's associates, *Uncut* tells the story of a musical revolution, from *Tomorrow's World* to Disneyworld, and of the "German Beach Boys". "People said: are you doing surfing on the Rhine? Yes, maybe, but we don't have waves."

Story: Stephen Dalton | **Photo:** Gijsbert Hanekroot

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 1975, Kraftwerk made their first appearance on British TV. They were featured in an edition of *Tomorrow's World*, sandwiched between reports on the acoustic properties of glass fibre material and pedicures for pigs. This piece of TV history still looks utterly bizarre and vaguely sinister. Neatly dressed in sober suits and ties, the group's Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider faced each other across a compact stage, playing cumbersome analog synths and singing monotonous German lyrics about the joys of road travel. Between them, their bandmates Wolfgang Flür and Karl Bartos tapped electronic knitting needles on homemade foil-wrapped percussion pads seemingly salvaged from an early Apollo mission. "This is 'Autobahn,'" proclaimed presenter Derek Cooper in gloriously patrician BBC tones. "Based, say the group, on the rhythm of trucks, cars and passing bridges heard while driving through Germany."

Zooming in on a madly grinning Schneider, the clip signed off with a promise of further technological innovations to come from the band's "laboratory" in Düsseldorf. "Next year, Kraftwerk hope to eliminate the keyboards altogether," Cooper concluded, "and build jackets with electronic lapels that can be played by touch."

Forty years later, we are still waiting for those musical lapels to materialise. But minor technical hitches aside, "Autobahn" still sounds like a road map for the musical future. Kraftwerk's debut chart hit was not the first pop song to use electronic instruments, but it was the first to put synthesisers front and central in a tune composed almost ➔

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

Kraftwerk in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, March 21, 1976: (l-r) Florian Schneider, Karl Bartos, Wolfgang Flür and Ralf Hütter





Key players, Schneider and Hütter



entirely of artificial sounds. Critically, the song – and its parent album – almost single-handedly transformed post-war Germany from kitsch musical backwater to high-tech launchpad for pop’s electronic New Wave.

“*Autobahn* was about finding our artistic situation,” recalls Ralf Hütter, Kraftwerk’s sole remaining founder member. “Where are we? What is the sound of the German Bundesrepublik? Because at this time bands were having English names, and not using the German language.”

Born from Düsseldorf’s art scene, *Autobahn* also had a strong visual impact, with a sleeve that became an influential design classic. On *Tomorrow’s World*, the band’s short post-hippy hair and self-consciously formal dress made them look like funky accountants. But just a few years later, this aggressively normal look was adopted as the default uniform by post-punk bands with arty aspirations.

“We offered self-confidence,” explains former Kraftwerk percussionist Wolfgang Flür. “We wanted to show our German appearance with short-cropped hair, ironed suits and ties, not to imitate English pop or American rock. We knew our appearance was ironic, flirtatious, provocative.”

A sly subversion of Anglo-American rock tradition, “*Autobahn*” was a romantic hymn to the functional elegance of Germany’s motorway system. The banal, sublime beauty of modern transport infrastructure.

“It’s not about cars, it’s about the Autobahn,” Hütter confirms. “People forget that, but it’s very important. It’s a road where we were travelling all the time: hundreds of thousands of kilometres from university to art galleries, from club to home. We didn’t even have money to stay in hotels so at night we’d be travelling home after playing somewhere.”

SINCE THEIR PRE-KRAFTWERK incarnation as Organisation in 1968, band co-founders Hütter and Schneider had been restlessly searching for their signature sound in Germany’s experimental art-rock



Mental machine music: Kraftwerk on *Tomorrow’s World*, September 25, 1975

underground, recording four freeform albums and working with multiple guest musicians. In 1971, Hütter bought his first primitive drum machine. “We were mostly like the art scene band, always on the same bill as Can,” Hütter recalls. “We had jazz drummers, rock drummers, and I had my little drum machine. At one point, in one arts centre, nearly 10 years before *The Robots*, I had this drum machine working, playing with feedback and strobe lights. We left the stage and people were dancing to the machines. We didn’t have Kraftwerk, we didn’t have robots, we didn’t have the *Man-Machine* album, nothing. But the concepts were there.”

For most of 1971, while Hütter temporarily left to complete his architecture degree, Kraftwerk became a trio featuring Schneider, guitarist Michael Rother and drummer Klaus Dinger. Rother, who would later form Neu! with Dinger, remembers that even this early lineup had a rudimentary electronic agenda. “We had very simple gear,” Rother says. “Florian came from the flute, we were at the same school and he was in the classical orchestra, but at that time he was already manipulating sound with gadgets like equalizer, delay and fuzzbox. The results sounded electronic, but it was not anything near computers or synthesizers.”

The combustible chemistry between Rother, Dinger and Schneider did not even last until the end of 1971. But the guitarist is thankful to Kraftwerk for introducing him to Konrad “Conny” Plank, the producer and electronic music evangelist who would play a crucial role in the success of Krautrock and synthpop. “We tried to record the second Kraftwerk album with Conny Plank, but there was so much fighting going on,” Rother recalls. “Florian had all these tensions, he was quite the opposite of a relaxed person. And Klaus Dinger was also strong-headed, you see it in the way he played drums. He was the most forceful drummer. I looked up during one concert and saw blood flying across the stage. He’d cut his hand but he never stopped playing.”

Rother and Dinger had already left to form Neu! when Hütter rejoined Schneider in 1972. Back to their core duo, Kraftwerk began their evolution from hairy cosmic rockers to refined, streamlined, electronic chamber orchestra.

RALF HÜTTER ALREADY owned a Farfisa keyboard and basic drum machine, but the tipping point came when he bought a Minimoog, then a rare luxury which famously cost him the same as his Volkswagen Beetle.

I'M YOUR FAN!

"THIS WAS THEIR VERY IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON ME..."

David Bowie on the enduring importance of Kraftwerk

KRAFTWERK'S MOST FAMOUS cheerleader in the mid-1970s, David Bowie became obsessed with *Autobahn* during his stint in Los Angeles. A few years ago, Bowie spoke to *Uncut* about Kraftwerk in this previously unpublished interview.

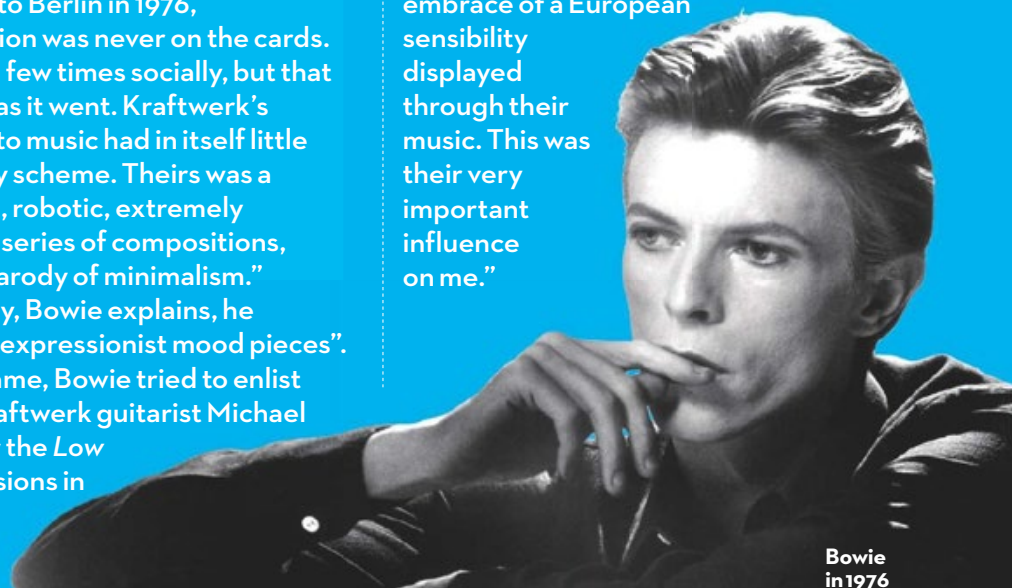
"This was where I felt my work was going," Bowie recalled. "My attention had been swung back to Europe with the release of Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* in 1974. The preponderance of electronic instruments convinced me that this was an area that I had to investigate a little further."

Although Bowie finally met Hütter and Schneider in person when he relocated to Berlin in 1976, collaboration was never on the cards. "We met a few times socially, but that was as far as it went. Kraftwerk's approach to music had in itself little place in my scheme. Theirs was a controlled, robotic, extremely measured series of compositions, almost a parody of minimalism." Conversely, Bowie explains, he favoured "expressionist mood pieces".

All the same, Bowie tried to enlist former Kraftwerk guitarist Michael Rother for the *Low* album sessions in 1976, but wires got

crossed and the message never arrived. That same year, Berlin trilogy collaborator Brian Eno went on to work with Rother in Harmonia. "I took it upon myself to introduce Eno to the Düsseldorf sound with which he was very taken, Conny Plank et al," Bowie said. "Brian eventually made it up there to record with some of them."

In 1977, Kraftwerk gave Bowie a lyrical shout-out on *Trans Europe Express*. He returned the favour with "Heroes" "V-2 Schneider", a sly tribute to Florian. Bowie still credits Kraftwerk for "their singular determination to stand apart from stereotypical American chord sequences and their wholehearted embrace of a European sensibility displayed through their music. This was their very important influence on me."



Bowie in 1976

Released in 1973, Kraftwerk's third album, *Ralf And Florian*, saw only lukewarm sales, but it laid the groundwork for *Autobahn* with its programmed beats and polished synthetic melodies. Rother calls this style "Wohnzimmer"—living-room music. "We listened to quite a lot of electronic stuff," Hütter recalls. "We were brought up within the kind of classical Beethoven school of music, but we were aware of a contemporary music scene and, of course, a pop and rock scene. But where was our music? Finding our voice, that was the use of the tape recorder. It made us use synthetic voices, artificial personalities, all those robotic ideas."

In 1974, Hütter and Schneider recruited two new members from the Düsseldorf art-rock scene: Klaus Röder on violin and guitar, and Rother's former bandmate Wolfgang Flür on drums. The incompatible Röder left after a few months but Flür was a harmonious fit, his light-touch style complementing the increasingly minimalist, mechanised palette. Soon Hütter was proudly telling reporters, "Our drummers don't sweat."

Flür moved into the apartment on Berger Allee in Düsseldorf owned by Hütter's artist friend Emil Schult, who had briefly played guitar with Kraftwerk before becoming the band's longtime visual advisor and sleeve designer. Flür recalls long discussions about the shape and direction of the band, with "technique and romance" as their new motto.

Over the course of 1974, Kraftwerk cropped their long hippy hair and adopted smart business suits. It was a self-consciously German rebranding, mixing deadpan humour with serious artistic intent. An elegant riposte to Anglo-American pop hegemony, *Autobahn* was a defiant reclaiming of a rich cultural hinterland that spanned Schubert and Stockhausen, Bach and Beuys. "Ralf had a kind of German idea in mind," Flür recalls. "Germany also needed something like The Beach Boys. Something with self-understanding and immaculate presence, after the ugly wars that our parents had inflicted on the world. Something positive and youthful, that freed us from the stench of the past."

AUTOBAHN IS NOT quite a fully electronic album, though everything Kraftwerk recorded afterwards would be. Featuring vestigial traces of violin, flute, piano and guitar, it was mostly recorded over the summer of

"STRANGELY, WE NEVER FELT LIKE POP STARS... WE WERE NOTHING SPECIAL"
WOLFGANG FLÜR



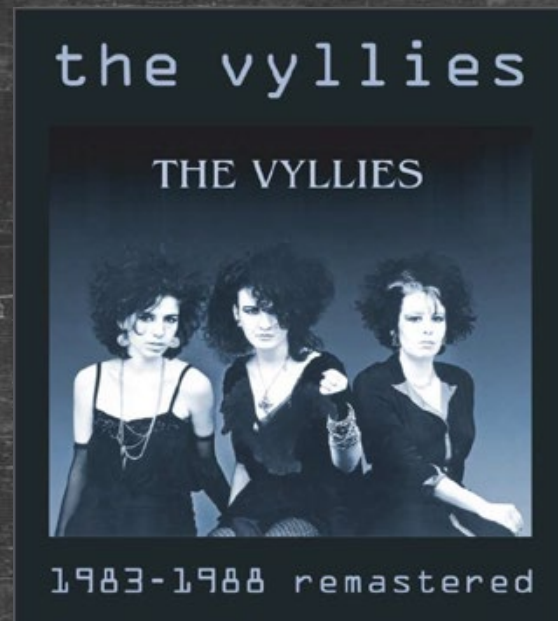
Michael Rother live with Kraftwerk in 1971

1974 at Conny Plank's newly established farmhouse studio in Wolperath, 20 miles southeast of Cologne. Sometimes Plank would drive his 16-track mobile recording truck to Kraftwerk's fabled Kling Klang headquarters on Mintropstrasse in downtown Düsseldorf, parking in the yard outside and running wires from his mixing desk into the building.

Opening with a clunking car door and a churning ignition sound, the full LP version of "Autobahn" is a serene 22-minute journey of swerves and curves, gentle gradients and blaring horns, tarmac-rumbling rhythms and doppler-shift effects that simulate the sensory whoosh of passing vehicles. Unspooling like a ribbon of road stretching to the horizon, it rolls on a warm rhythmic throb that accelerates and decelerates at different points, with a full breakdown midway through.

Plank and Kraftwerk painstakingly assembled *Autobahn* from multiple sound sources, primitive samples and field recordings. They made extensive use of Hütter's new Minimoog plus an EMS Synthesi, ARP Odyssey and other early synthesizers. To suggest passing vehicles, they used tape-reversed bursts of white noise. The song's harsh, sibilant, sinister-sounding vocal chants came from a Robovox, a programmable speech synthesiser built by Schneider. A thousand harmonising details converged

new music of the 80s



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Kraftwerk live at the Hammersmith Odeon, September 20, 1975. Inset: the back cover of *Autobahn*



into a marathon artificial road trip. “The white stripes on the road, I noticed them driving home every day from the studio,” recalls Hütter. “Then the car sounds, the radio – it’s like a loop, a continuum, part of the endless music of Kraftwerk. In ‘Autobahn’ we put car sounds, horn, basic melodies and tuning motors. Adjusting the suspension and tyre pressure, rolling on the asphalt, that gliding sound – pffft pffft – when the wheels go onto those painted stripes. It’s sound poetry.”

The simple, spare, circular lyric to “Autobahn” was composed by Emil Schult in a single day, then tweaked by Hütter. The seven-line nursery rhyme describes the view over a sunlit valley, the colours of the grey road with its green-edged white stripes, and the sound of a car radio which plays the song’s refrain back to itself. A droll, self-referential feedback loop. But of course, the lyric mostly consists of the single childlike chant “*Wir fahren fahren fahren auf der Autobahn*” (“We drive drive drive on the motorway”) repeated over and over. Anglophone listeners were quick to make phonetic connection with the refrains in “Fun Fun Fun” and “Barbara Ann” by The Beach Boys. But although Kraftwerk were fans of their car-loving California cousins, Hütter insists “Autobahn” is not a sly homage.

“In the case of The Beach Boys, ‘Fun Fun Fun’ is about a T-Bird,” Hütter explains. “But ours is about a Volkswagen or Mercedes. The quote is really more ethnic. People said: are you doing surfing on the Rhine? Yes, maybe, but we don’t have waves. It’s like an artificial joke. But no, it’s not a Beach Boys record, it’s a Kraftwerk record.”

SPANNING THE ENTIRE side of a vinyl album, the full-length version of “Autobahn” was defined by the limits of recording technology in 1974. The second side features four shorter pieces, all electro-acoustic instrumentals. The two versions of “Kometenmelodie” (“Comet Medley”) were inspired by the Kohoutek comet, which passed close to Earth in 1973. The first is a doomy analog sound painting composed of sinister whooshes and whistles, the latter a joyous gallop of synth-pop fanfares over phased pneumatic percussion that lays the groundwork for Jean-Michel Jarre. “Mitternacht” (“Midnight”) plunges the listener into a clammy



subterranean world of dripping water, metallic clanks and distant moans. But the LP ends on a hopeful note with “Morgenspaziergang” (“Morning Walk”), an ambient pastoral of tumbling flute and rippling piano, bubbling streams and larks ascending. This airy coda also reprises a melodic phrase from the early part of “Autobahn”, bringing the album full circle.

“All the tracks are like film loops, short films,” says Hütter. “‘Morgenspaziergang’ is what we wrote when we came out of the studio. We were always

working at night, then in the morning, everything seems fresh and our ears are open again. Everything silent.”

Besides penning the lyric to “Autobahn”, Emil Schult also painted the LP cover image of a motorway sweeping up into a glorious mountain vista lit by an explosively vivid sunset. Hütter’s grey Volkswagen makes a cameo appearance. Both futuristic and nostalgic, the image blends contemporary Pop Art collage with the heroic landscape tradition of German Romanticism. A former student of artist Joseph Beuys, Schult’s idea was to “create something timeless, out of time,” like a vintage Bauhaus chair.

But the most iconic *Autobahn* sleeve image was an in-house addition by Kraftwerk’s UK label Phonogram. Based on a blue-and-white motorway logo, this instant design classic became the default sleeve on future reissues. Peter Saville would later claim the cover “advanced my notions of visual communication enormously” and directly inspired his groundbreaking work for Factory Records. The monochrome band photo on the rear of the album, taken by Schneider’s then-girlfriend Barbara Niemöller, initially featured Schult alongside Schneider, Hütter and a madly grinning, hippy-bearded Röder. But Schult was later given the unenviable task of superimposing Flür’s face onto his own body to mark the percussionist’s arrival as a full-time Kraftwerk member. A very Orwellian touch.

RELEASED IN GERMANY on the Phillips label in November 1974, *Autobahn* was a striking sonic progression for Kraftwerk, distancing them from their hairy Krautrock peers. “I was very impressed by the sound,” recalls Rother, “but I would not have wanted to make music like that. There was not enough flesh and blood in it. It was a very conceptual approach to music.”

KRAFTWERK

REMEMBERING CONNY PLANK...

ATOWERING FIGURE in Krautrock and electronica, Konrad “Conny” Plank was the hirsute giant who helped define the Kraftwerk sound on their first four LPs. Plank’s production work on *Autobahn* inaugurated his new farmhouse studio near Cologne, but his liking for raw “organic electronics” was out of step with the band’s newly regimented, streamlined sound. *Autobahn* marked his final collaboration with the band. Though widely acknowledged as co-producer of *Autobahn*, Plank’s credit was later relegated to sound engineer. Many insiders believe he was short-changed. “The role of Conny Plank gets too little sunlight,” argues Michael Rother. “Conny was starting his own studio and needed cash, so Kraftwerk offered him a deal. He accepted and later they sort of erased him from history.” That said, Plank’s association with Kraftwerk helped establish his reputation. Soon a stream of famous names began making the pilgrimage to his studio, from Neu! and Ultravox to Devo and the Eurythmics. According to rock folklore, Plank was also offered a lucrative U2 collaboration but subsequently declined. Plank died in 1987, aged 47, but posthumous respect for his pioneering studio work continues to grow.

STEVE EMBERTON





Suited and booted: (l-r) Bartos, Hütter, Flür and Schneider, New York, circa 1975

electronic. Not disco... disco hadn't discovered Kraftwerk at that point. But they were well-received wherever they went. I did a lot of announcing for the band, bits and pieces in German. I was onstage in Chicago and a few kids started yelling 'rock and roll!' Ha! They got their ovations... they did well."

"They did not understand," recalls Flür. "However, it was not necessary to understand it, they enjoyed it because it was so new and experimental. During the first US tour, we had problems with equipment. The PAs in the halls were not designed for our massive analog sounds and many speakers burst."

BY THE TIME they flew back to Düsseldorf in June 1975, Kraftwerk were international chart stars. Top 10 in Germany, *Autobahn* rose to No 5 in the US and No 4 in Britain. The band's live schedule began to fill up, with Blacker booking a debut UK tour for September. But Hütter recalls a chilly reception at home. "We toured with *Autobahn* for the first time outside Germany,"

Hütter says. "A long time in America, then a shorter tour in England. But Germany had to be cancelled as there was no interest. The record was a big success but nobody could imagine it live – is this a studio record? Or electronic?"

Conversely, Flür recalls positive reviews from America and Britain having a knock-on effect at home. "In Germany artists are often not well regarded unless they've scored great achievements abroad," he says. "Our success in the US finally brought good headlines in the German newspapers."

Autobahn also generated unprecedented interest in German music worldwide. Bowie relocated to Berlin, Eno worked with Rother in Harmonia, and Conny Plank became Europe's premier electro-pop producer. Meanwhile, music industry scouts came looking for the next Kraftwerk.

"Suddenly US record companies were coming over trying to sign everybody who could hold a guitar," laughs Rother. "We had several offers. Capitol sent us this huge contract, 40 pages or more, and they offered quite a lot of money. In the end we didn't sign. But the impact *Autobahn* had on me was I started thinking about using voices, and on Harmonia's *Deluxe* you can hear an echo of that."

The success of *Autobahn* allowed Kraftwerk to break loose from Plank and take their production in-house, upgrading their Kling Klang base into an autonomous studio. When they began making the LP, Kraftwerk were underground experimental musicians. By late 1975, they were an unlikely chart act. "Strangely, we never felt like pop stars, I cannot explain why," says Flür. "We were natural guys with natural needs, nothing special. It felt at that time like we were real friends. Until 1981, at least. We had reached our *Computer World* tour and record, the peak. Suddenly there were other interests for most of us."

Autobahn became the first in an unbroken run of brilliant, progressive, highly influential Kraftwerk albums. Four decades on, it still stands as the Big Bang moment that ushered synthesisers, vocoders and sequencers into the mainstream. In 2012, Kraftwerk's 21st Century lineup began playing *Autobahn* in full around the globe, to rapturous sell-out crowds. But even before that, the epic title track was a fixture in every live show. This retro-modernist road trip sounds more vintage than avant-garde now, but it is still a timeless design classic and show-stopping reminder of when Kraftwerk went electric, composing the shiny soundtrack to tomorrow's world. 🎧

TOMORROW'S WORLD

THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW'S WORLD

How accurate were the other scientific predictions on Kraftwerk's British TV debut of 1975

THEN: Michael Rodd visits a brewery in Preston where acoustically absorbent fibreglass is being tested as a material to dampen noise levels. **TODAY:** Fibreglass is widely used in industry, and is on the Health & Safety Executive's Top 10 list of noise reduction methods. **PREDICTION:** True.

THEN: Raymond Baxter voices a report about veterinary advice to give pigs hoof pedicures. **TODAY:** Pedicures are now a widely accepted part of pig care, to combat disease and crippling with age. Miley Cyrus recently caused internet "outrage" by posting a video of her pet pig pedicure online. **PREDICTION:** True.

THEN: William Woollard visits a Swiss clinic where cells harvested from sheep fetuses are being injected into Down's Syndrome children, with disputed but allegedly therapeutic results. **TODAY:** Cell therapy has been condemned as quack medicine, blamed for dozens of deaths, and banned by the US FDA. **PREDICTION:** False.

THEN: Derek Cooper introduces a profile of Kraftwerk, claiming the band have plans to turn suit lapels into musical instruments by 1976. **TODAY:** Sadly still no sign, but wearable, gesture-controlled instruments are now in development, including "drumpants" sensors that can generate sound from clothing items. **PREDICTION:** Half true.



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ALBUM BY ALBUM

The Charlatans

Singer Tim Burgess guides us through a turbulent 25 years, involving robbery, drugs, death... and some great music!

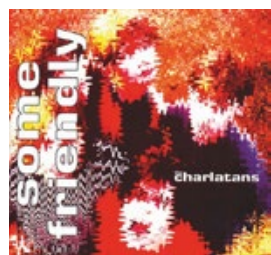
SURVEYING THE PAST quarter-century of The Charlatans' history, frontman Tim Burgess acknowledges, "There's been times when we've had to stop and restart. That's part of life, in a lot of ways." Certainly, the band have had an eventful career, including imprisonment, addiction, death, and what Burgess cheerfully if enigmatically refers to as "a bit of a drowning incident in Monnow Valley". Yet while the band's resilience is commendable, they are evidently more than just doughty survivors of Britpop. Their 12 studio albums have encompassed electronica, country and dub, while their collaborators along the way have included Dylan's henchmen, an eminent prog guitarist and former anarchist punks. Burgess himself is optimistic about the band's new album, *Modern Nature*, and what the next 25 years might bring. "I feel very good about this one. It reminds me of why we were doing it in the first place." **MICHAEL BONNER**



Up to their hips: with original guitarist Jon Day aka Jonathan Baker (second left), 1990

SOME FRIENDLY

SITUATION TWO, 1990



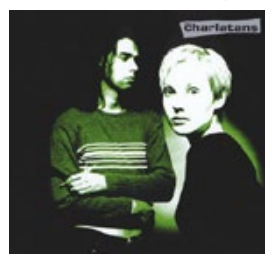
Spring 1989. Tim Burgess, frontman with The Electric Crayon Set, is invited to audition for another aspiring West Midlands band...

We got together for the first time in April or May, in the Midlands. I was taken there by Steve [Harrison], the band's manager. He'd said to the others, "There's this kid who comes into my record shop. I think he'd be a good person to sing for you." It was nothing really more than, 'Fancy trying something out to this?' I shouted along in a Jim Morrison style, and Martin [Blunt, bassist] said to me, "Let's try that again, and try singing this time." So I did! We played two songs, "Flower" and "Always In My Mind", and that was it: I was in the band. We'd write three songs on the weekend. There was a point where we wrote "Indian Rope", "Sproston Green" and "The Only One I Know" in a weekend. We used to rehearse on a Wednesday night and Sunday. The sessions for *Some Friendly* were broken up, because we were playing live quite a lot. I remember we did "The Only One I Know" in the Windings in Wales and mixed it at Strawberry in Stockport. We did Strawberry on the night clock; you start late and work through the night and then you've got a record. At the Windings, we were writing songs as we were going along. There was only one meltdown we had and it was over a choice of single. Some members of the band wanted "Then" as the follow-up and others wanted "Hold There". But "Then" won out and I'm glad it did. But that was the only kind of pressure we felt in the band. We were very high on the World Cup and New Order being No 1. There was a general air of greatness. I still love *Some Friendly*. There

were no guidelines for us. I listened to it recently because we did a couple of anniversary shows and it still sounded so fresh.

UP TO OUR HIPPS

BEGGARS BANQUET, 1994



Recorded in the wake of an unsuccessful second album and an armed robbery, the band attempt to carve out a "legacy" with help from Gong guitarist Steve Hillage...

I was trying to find myself. Our second album, *Between 10th And 11th*, had a critical mauling. But "Weirdo" was massive, our biggest hit in America. We were big stars. Rob [Collins, keyboards] came back from Japan and did that armed robbery [*Collins was charged with "assisting an offender after an offence" when a friend held up an off-licence*]. So it was a case of, let's get the songs written before Rob goes to prison for the rest of his life. Rob was leading that call, he wanted to leave a legacy. He did a lot of writing before he went down. People were trying to figure out who we were going to work with, and we met Steve Hillage. Mark [Collins, guitars] always said that he likes his eyes. They could tell a bit of a story. With *10th And 11th*, we'd tried to make an electronic record and then we became technophobes. We wanted to start at a rootsy level. The most beautiful memory for me was when Martin, Jon [Brookes, drums] and Mark had left me and Rob for a weekend. We had an instrumental, a bit like the Small Faces, then Rob got on a Dylan trip and we ended up with "Can't Get Out Of Bed". It was great, waiting excitedly for everyone to come back and see their faces, and everyone being completely blown away. Rob led that one and he wasn't afraid to really sing. It

was almost like Dexys: sing loud and proud. It was great to see, and my confidence came back and by the middle of the album there was no stopping me. A lot of people had tried to write us off, but when they heard that song, they realised that we were great. That was the one for me.

THE CHARLATANS

BEGGARS BANQUET, 1995



A No 1 album; a bucolic working environment; early morning fishing trips and regular visits to the kitchen...

Up To Our Hips, The Charlatans and Tellin' Stories feel like part of the

same thing for me. Not just because they come after each other, but because we were living in Monnow Valley Studio, Monmouth, where we recorded them, for about four years. There was a kitchen which had a step to a little courtyard and then you'd hop up the next step and you were in the studio. In between that we'd kick a football around and listen to playbacks and raid the kitchen. Me and Rob would go fishing in the morning, because we were the first up. We'd sit around and he'd tell me what he'd been getting up to and I'd just be... I don't want to get into the drug thing, but we were experimenting. We were there with *Up To Our Hips* for a month and with *The Charlatans* eight and *Tellin' Stories* nine. It got longer and longer but we felt like a great band, living it, everything in the music. There were some great songs on *The Charlatans*: "Crashing In", "Just When You're Thinking Things Over", particularly. "Crashing In" was wonderful. Steve Hillage was there, but we ended up mixing it ourselves: we had the desk, it was all done to tape. We didn't have a clue what we were doing! It felt quite brave.



Keep off the grass: the Charlies in West Sussex, April 9, 1997: (l-r) Mark Collins, Tim Burgess, Jon Brookes, Martin Blunt

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



TELLIN' STORIES

BEGGARS BANQUET, 1997

A career high, spawning three hit singles and featuring some of the band's strongest material; including "One To Another" and "North Country Boy". Rob Collins died in a car accident on July 22, 1996, midway through recording.

It's probably my least favourite album because of that. It's hard to get past the tragedy. But the fact it's the biggest album as well makes it harder to enjoy. Take away the pain and look at the actual songs on there – "How Could You Leave Us", "Get On It", "Tellin' Stories", "North Country Boy" – and it stands there in its own space. Although it's a continuation of what we're doing, it does stand up – and I don't think that's just because of Rob's death.

When we heard about the accident, me and Mark went to the hospital. Mark remembers the police telling us something about Rob and he thinks it was said in the past tense, so he was pretty convinced what we were going to hear when we got there. I remember hearing "One To Another" playing on the radio as we were going there. With hindsight, it was like our "Love Will Tear Us Apart". I was listening to the lyrics and I was like, "It's almost like something's coming true." When we got to the hospital, Mark jumped out the car and ran in. I followed him at a similar pace. That's when we realised Rob was dead. Jon got a phone call, Martin turned up late afternoon to the studios. There were local reporters outside. We were sitting there in the farm house in the late afternoon. Then Rob's mum and dad came down, and his girlfriend. It was pretty weird. Jon Brookes sat on the sofa and said, "We've got to carry on." We were supposed to play with Oasis at Loch Lomond and then Knebworth a week later. Someone was saying, "We've got to go on." The next person would say "How?" Rob was the best songwriter in the band, and the leader – kind of – certainly the best player and the eldest, as well. In the end, Martin Duffy from Primal Scream played with us live for quite a while. It was either Bobby [Gillespie] or Jeff [Barrett] who called to put Duffy forward. We all got something unique from Rob as a character. I thought he was my best friend and I'm sure Martin did too and Jon certainly did, and we all had great memories of Rob. He was nuts, as well, but it was the nuts you wanted to be on the same side of, as opposed to being on the opposite end of it. He was wicked, man.

US AND US ONLY

UNIVERSAL, 1999



The band gain a new member, while songs like the Stones' "A House Is Not A Home" and the country soul of "I Don't Care Where You Live" embody a new sense of optimism.

After *Tellin' Stories*, for all the sadness that had gone with it, we were playing arenas all over the world. So when we came back from all that it felt like we had to regroup. We were very fortunate to find Tony [Rogers]. We hung on to Duffy for as long as we could, but we knew eventually we'd have to find someone permanent. Mark found him. He lived really close to where Rob was living, which meant there were two Hammond organists within a mile of each other. It was quite weird! Mark had been given his number by one of his mates in the Midlands area. It all happened quite naturally. Martin did all the phone calling. We had a couple of people come and play the hardest songs that they had to learn, I think "Weirdo" and "Believe You Me" are quite difficult ones. Tony came through and he was quite a strong character. Obviously it wasn't going to be the same – but we didn't want it to be the same. I was about to move to America. We had written a song called "The Blonde Waltz" which I was quite proud of. I was listening to a lot of Lambchop at the time, and Woody Guthrie. I'd decided to go further back than Dylan, back to the real source and listen to the Dustbowl blues. I guess on reflection it was almost like a rebirth. I think sometimes it's good to withdraw a bit. I think that's where the title came from, *Us And Us Only*. It's like our withdrawal from the world.

THE CHARLATANS

➔ WONDERLAND

UNIVERSAL, 2001



The band decamp to Los Angeles, Dylan cohorts on board, while Burgess discovers an unexpected new singing style.

When we did *Us And Us Only*, we'd signed to Universal and built our

own studio in Cheshire. That was about the time our accountant went off with all our money. So we had this really weird thing going on where we realised that we'd signed a deal and if we hadn't built a studio then we would have had nowhere or no funds to record, so it was a good job we did. But then, instead of recording the follow-up to *Us And Us Only* in our studio that we'd just had built, we decided to go to LA and record there. Why? It just felt like a really great idea! Me and Mark started it all, really. Danny Saber had produced Black Grape and he'd produced The Rolling Stones and all these other guys. Then we recorded "Love Is The Key" and "A Man Needs To Be Told" with Jim Keltner on drums and Daniel Lanois on pedal steel. Keltner had just done *Time Out Of Mind*, with Dylan, so he was gloating about how much a masterpiece that was. But it was just great because he carried his drums up three flights of stairs, all the heavy ones. I carried up a couple of bongos for him. He was really very keen to do it. Then Lanois came in with his pedal steel. He came back with these songs and presented them to the band. The band came over for three weeks and we had the best time of our lives and made a record that has that kind of LA darkness but some sunshine, as well. At the same time, I discovered that falsetto singing style, maybe more Neil Young, Curtis Mayfield or something like that.

UP AT THE LAKE

ISLAND, 2004



Following on from Burgess' solo debut, *I Believe*, a cottage in Cornwall is requisitioned for the band's next mission: to write 10 songs in 10 days...

Up At The Lake,

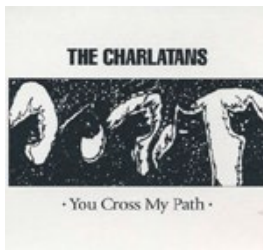
Simpatico and *You Cross My Path*... I like all of them; I think they're my three favourite albums, in a lot of ways. But I have zero fondness for making *Up At The Lake*. I refer to it as my Fat Elvis phase. Me and Mark went to Bodmin to start recording. It was the complete opposite to being in Hollywood with Danny Saber. We were chopping wood, and had full beards. I'm not going to speak on Mark's behalf, but I was doing a fuck of a lot of blow. It was pretty hard, but I enjoyed the results of making it back in our own studio. After that, we made *Simpatico*. My only problem was I really wanted Adrian Sherwood to produce the album. But there was, ah, internal politics in the band... there were those who wanted someone who was a bit more straight ahead rock to do it. No names! I lost that battle. It would have been a better record if Adrian Sherwood had done it, to be honest. Martin Duffy was very helpful, by the way. He almost pulled it off for me. But I'm still very happy with the songs. "Road To Paradise" is genius to me. That's me at my most out of it.

The Charlatans in 2014: Blunt, Tony Rogers, Burgess, Collins



YOU CROSS MY PATH

COOKING VINYL, 2008



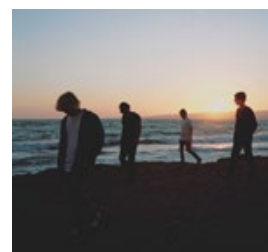
Initially released as a free download in conjunction with XFM, the band's 10th studio album was very much about Burgess, now sober, putting his life in order. But more

pertinently, through the atmospheric "Bird", the organ swells of "Oh! Vanity" and the punky title track, this felt like a band with a renewed sense of purpose.

I was living in Los Angeles. I was clean. It felt like I'd got myself back together. There's a beautiful song on *You Cross My Path* called "Bird". You know, people ask me all the time what my favourite Charlatans track is. I look at "Senses" or "Forever", off *Us And Us Only*, which are really sprawling, progressive songs that I consider examples of our 'tough guy' songs. Then there's "Bird", a two-minute long instrumental and the complete opposite to those. I love it for that. Actually, there's three songs at the end of *You Cross My Path* – "My Name Is Despair", "Bird" and "This Is The End" – that, I think, are terrific. I really wanted to leave Los Angeles and leave that life behind. And it was me telling myself that it was inevitably going to happen. I think it's a different record from *Who We Touch* [2010]. Gee Vaucher did the sleeve for that. She used to design the sleeves for Crass records. I met Penny Rimbaud through her and got him involved in the album. Youth was involved, too. We did it in two weeks. It was an experiment, I suppose. I like it, I think there are some good songs on there. The artwork could have been a bit darker. We recorded it, and then Jon got sick.

MODERN NATURE

BMG, 2015



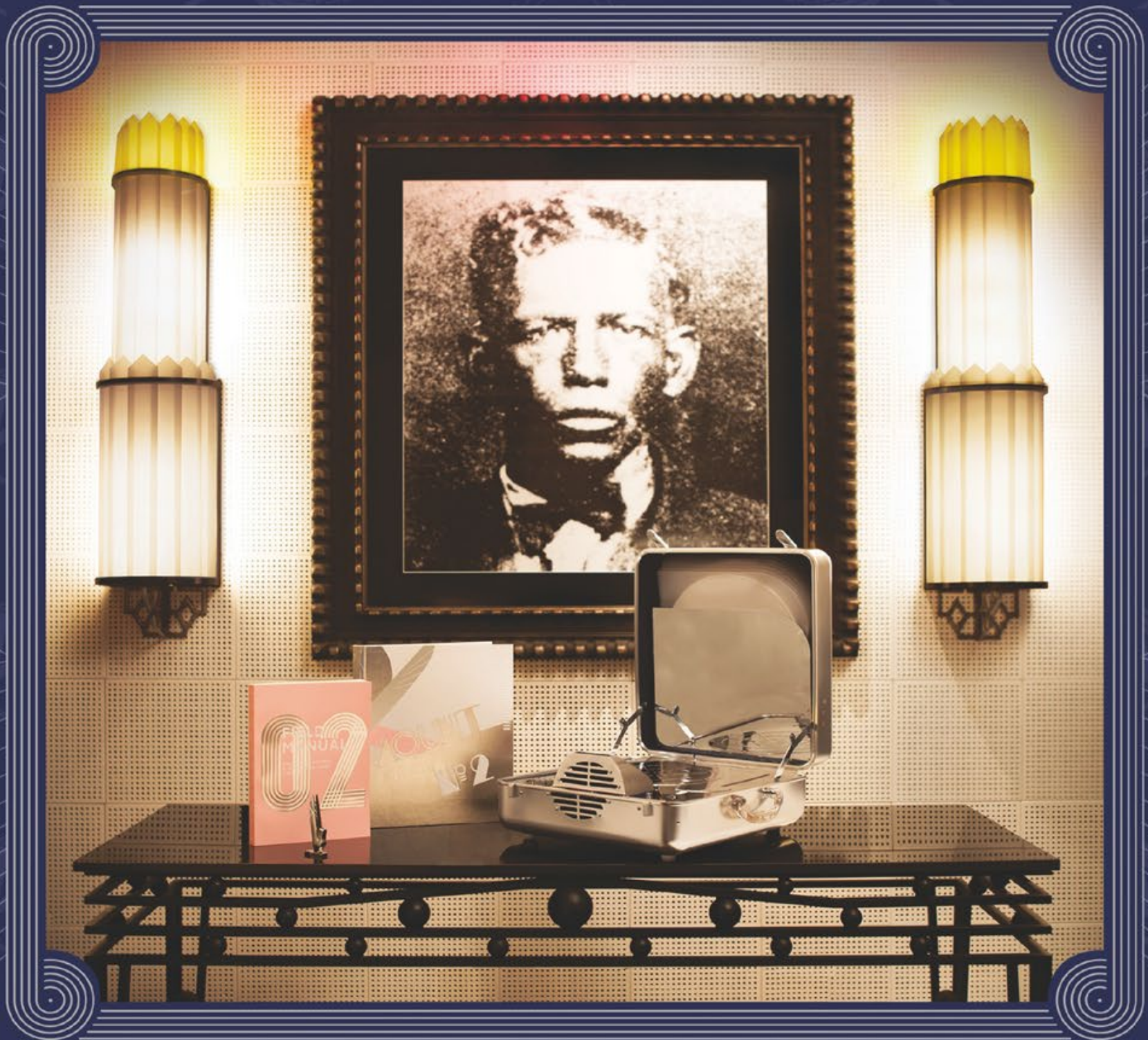
Fatherhood brings a new focus for Burgess while new working practices dominate the band's first album in five years – recorded following the death of drummer Jon Brookes.

We'd all been through personal things. I'd been through a divorce, then I'd had a baby with my partner, a little boy. I'm a first-time dad! Jon dying and then my son being born at the same time did help me to adjust to how I felt. My son was in the studio the whole time we recorded *Modern Nature*. It was good to focus on something very new; someone who needed me and depended on me. We had all Jon's gear in the studio, just as he left it. We didn't really start *Modern Nature* until we felt we could. If there is anything to be levelled at *Simpatico* and *Who We Touch*, it felt like we forced ourselves to make those records. But with *Modern Nature*, we realised one day, "Oh, we've started a record! Well, let's continue." It all felt very natural. We've been playing the first two songs on the album live, "Talking In Tones" and "So Low". There's a couple with gospel tinges and soulful stirrings, and then there's a couple of disco-y tracks. It's a lot of styles we've never tried before. I didn't want to bend any notes, vocally, I wanted to keep it straight, and let things come to me rather than dig them out. For the past couple of albums, we got used to going off in groups of two to write. It would end up being me and Mark, as we're naturally closer. Martin and Tony would go off and do their thing. Then we'd come back and try and work on each other's stuff. Whereas on *Modern Nature*, it felt like a band again. 🎧

The Charlatans tour the UK in March

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'IT'S LIKE THUNDER! LIGHTNING!'

The mighty STEVE CROPPER revisits 10 of his tracks that changed the world. Involves The MG's, Otis and the extended Stax family, plus Lennon, Big Star, The Blues Brothers and Neil Young. "Play it, Steve!"

Story: Tom Pinnock



ANY SESSION musicians would jump at the chance to make their own album and spring into the spotlight; but Steve Cropper is plainly not like most. "I'm not that much into making records or being the artist," the MG's guitarist explains from his Nashville home, before taking us through the creation of 10 of his greatest cuts. "I just never have been that way. I always have a good time no matter what I'm doing, but my basis is being in the band behind somebody, just making them sound good, that's what I like to do."

Cropper has co-written and played on many classic records, from sublime Stax singles like "Green Onions", "In The Midnight Hour" and "(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay", to '70s gems from John Lennon and Big Star, and, later, on hugely successful albums and tours with the Blues Brothers band. Along the way, he almost joined The Beatles, and still found time to fit in a regular round of golf with Donald "Duck" Dunn. 2011's *Dedicated*, a tribute album to one of Cropper's favourite guitarists, Lowman Pauling of the 5 Royales, was a rare solo outing, with the guitarist joined by guests including Steve Winwood, Brian May and Sharon Jones. Yet

Cropper has no plans to make another album of his own, though he still plays regular sessions for artists from around the world, including, most recently, Rumer.

"I am convinced *Dedicated* will become a classic through the years and will be in everybody's record collection," says Cropper in his customary wry, self-deprecating manner, as if he still can't quite believe his luck. "Do I practise guitar? My wife asked me that 27 years ago and I said, 'I don't practise! We don't do that!' We might rehearse a song we haven't played before, but I don't want to get too good at this! I guess that's where the simplicity of my playing comes from."

Despite often being ranked as one of the greatest guitarists of all time, there are still musicians who Cropper looks up to.

"Paul McCartney is phenomenal at playing bass and guitar and singing at the same time – it took me forever to learn how to do that. How do people sing and play at the same time? Now I know why there

are so many blues singers, they sing a little bit, then they play a couple bits, then they sing a little bit... I gotta double basslines and do all this other stuff, and I go, 'This is killing me!'"

THE MAR-KEYS

LAST NIGHT

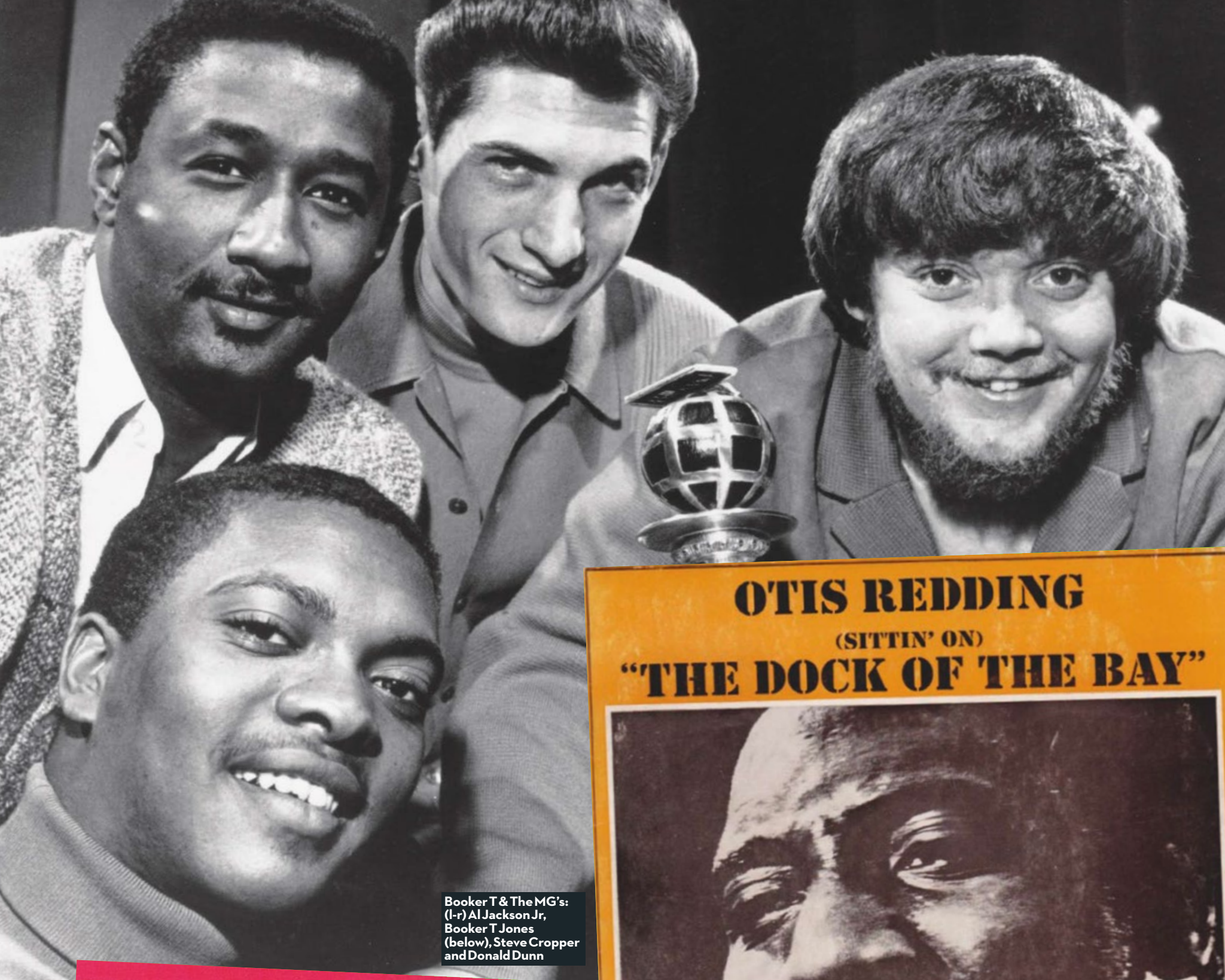
SATELLITE, 1961

Released on the fledgling Stax label, this instrumental (later the theme to *Bottom*) from Cropper's high-school band hit No 3 in the US charts – despite featuring no guitar.

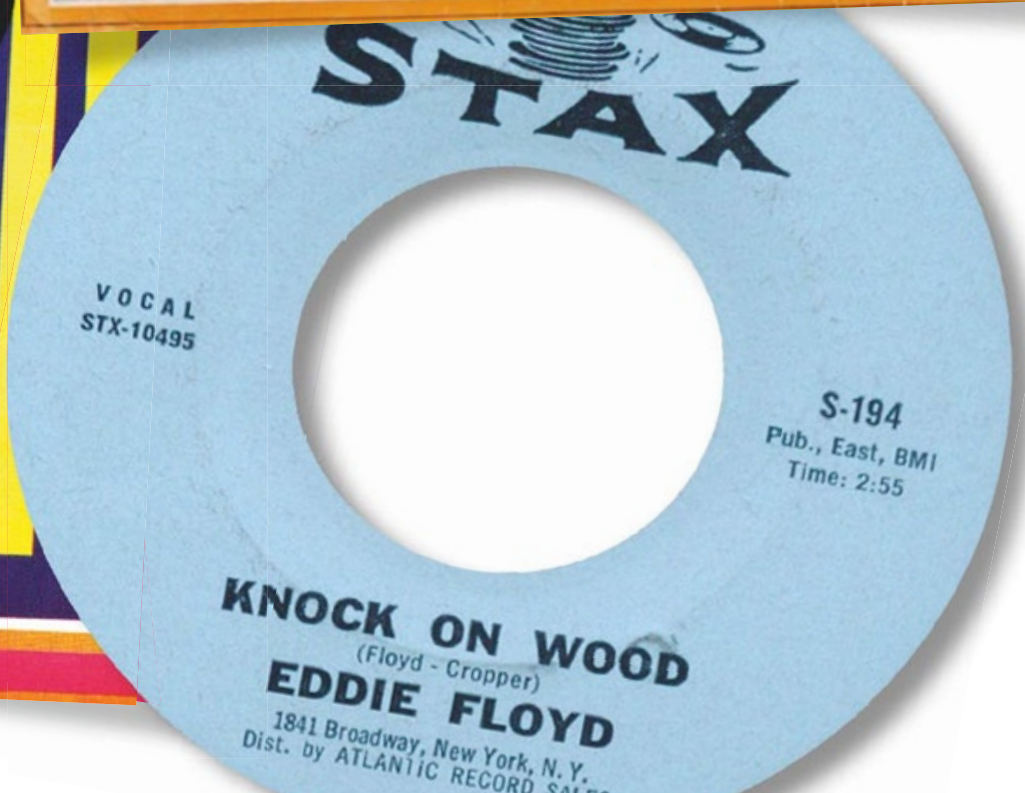
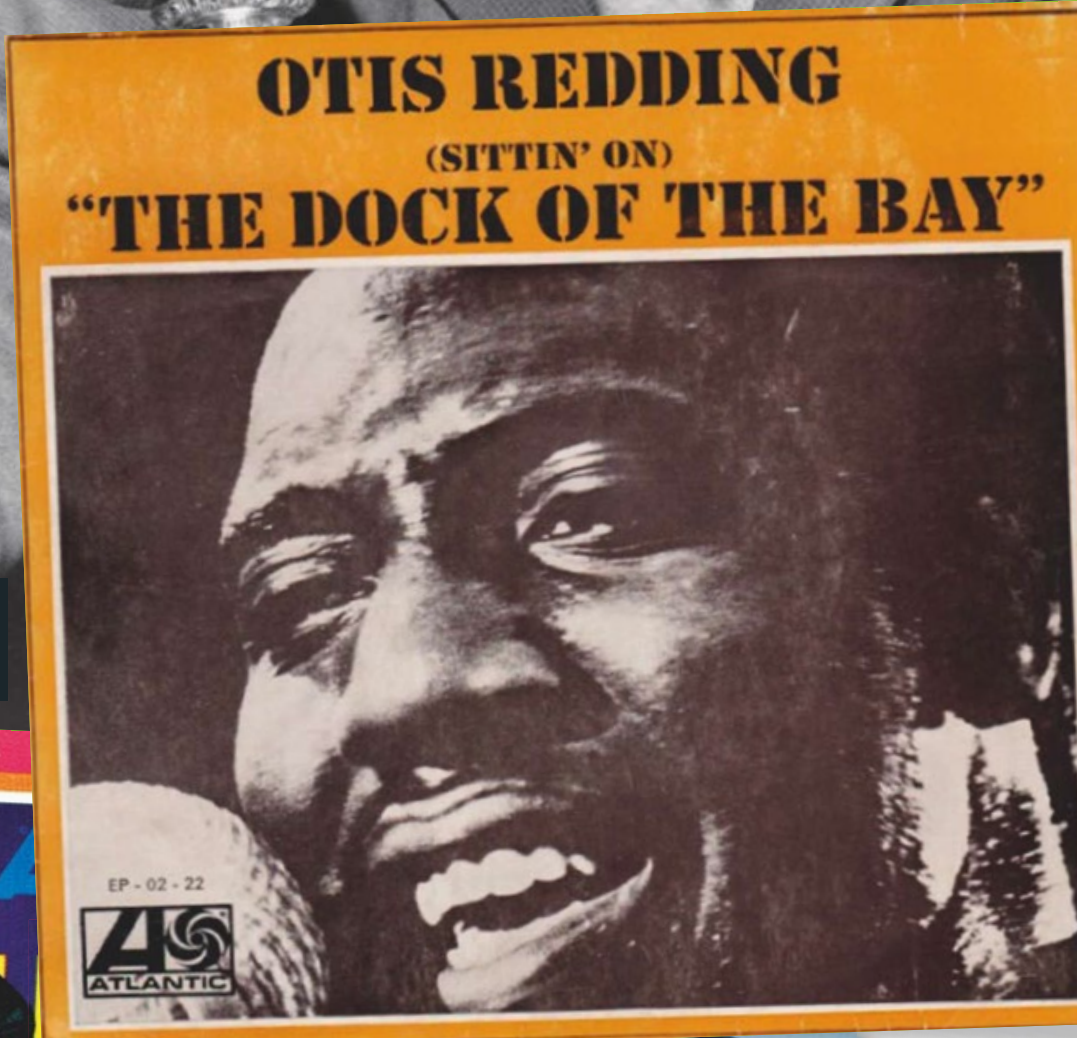
STEVE CROPPER: There are certain history books that say 'Steve Cropper wasn't on the record, he wasn't even in The Mar-Keys, there was no guitar on "Last Night"..."

Well, there is no guitar on "Last Night", but I played organ because Smoochy Smith couldn't hold that note down and play that solo at the same time. I remember it like it was yesterday, I crouched down next to the organ and reached up to play that note. I'm convinced the reason this was a





Booker T & The MG's:
(l-r) Al Jackson Jr.,
Booker T. Jones
(below), Steve Cropper
and Donald Dunn



Groovin'! The MG's in Memphis, December 20, 1968: (l-r) Al Jackson, Booker T Jones, Donald "Duck" Dunn, Steve Cropper

hit record was because it was the first twist instrumental. I remember my mother up in the living room when I was playing the record. I said, "Listen to what the band did," and she's up there twisting!

It was a hit, but I had my sights set on being a producer, and I still wanted to go to college. I was studying to be a mechanical engineer and I really wanted to get back to that. So I finished the tour and I left the band. I told [Mar-Keys sax player] Charles "Packy" Axton, whose mum was Estelle Axton, co-founder of Stax, "I'm catching the first bus out of here tomorrow and going back to Memphis, I'm going to enrol back in college and see if your mum will give me my old job back at the record shop"... and she did. But one day, Estelle said to Jim [Stewart, Stax co-founder], "You're going to have to start paying him out of the studio budget because he spends more time in the studio than in the record store..."

BOOKER T & THE MG'S GREEN ONIONS

STAX, 1962

A deathless classic, featuring a stinging solo from Cropper, which still pops up in countless adverts, movies (and ringtones) today...

CROPPER: At the end of '61, Jim Stewart said we needed to put a rhythm section together. I tried to get [bassist] Donald "Duck" Dunn but he was still on the road with The Mar-Keys. So I put together this other rhythm section. The horn player Floyd Newman suggested I go see this young guy names Booker T Jones. So I went to Booker's house and his mum invited me in. "Oh, Booker's back in the den..." I go back there and there's this guy sitting on the couch playing guitar! I said, "Woah, wait a minute, I need a keyboard player, not a guitar player..." But with him on organ, we then got Lewie Steinberg on bass and Al Jackson on drums.

'Til this day, I don't know where "Green Onions" came from, I mean, that was just something from some blues line that Booker played at clubs or something. I just doubled his organ. We were all playing together, all at the same time, all live, no headphones. When I hit the single notes for the solo it was really loud – it nearly blew Jim Stewart out of the studio, he grabbed the knob and turned it so far he almost turned it off, then you can hear him just sneaking the guitar

back in. It nearly goes to damn near silence!

I think the released version was about the third take of that song, it happened on the spur of the moment. It's like getting the right amount of sugar in your coffee, or on your cereal and all that you know is not enough is not enough and too much is way too much – you've got to get it just right! Had it not been a hit, I don't know whether we would have stayed around or not. Booker took off to college – he had one of the biggest records in the world and he decides to go off to college! Well, it didn't hurt his career. I always say if he hadn't gone off to college there probably would never have been an Isaac Hayes. We had to have a keyboard player so we got Isaac.

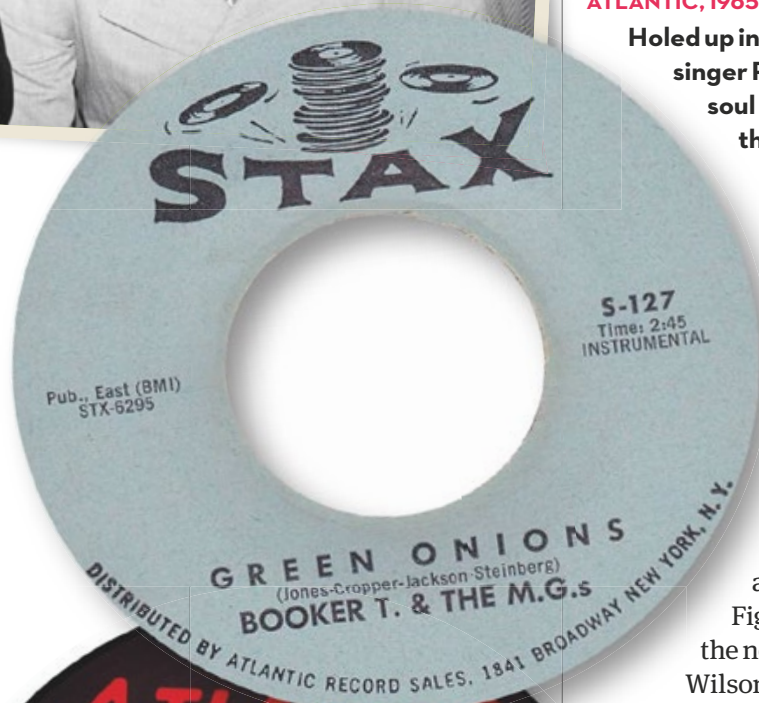
WILSON PICKETT IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

ATLANTIC, 1965

Holed up in the Memphis Holiday Inn, Cropper and singer Pickett come up with one of the classic soul A-sides, inspired by gospel and "following the dots" on a guitar's neck.

CROPPER: Jerry Wexler called Jim Stewart and said, "We've got an artist up here that's a great singer and we're having trouble getting a single for him, do you think we could bring him down to Stax and see if the fellows can come up with something?" So they flew into Memphis and Jim and I went and picked them up. They dropped us off at the Holiday Inn off of Union, and said, "You guys start writing and we'll come back to check on you later." So we wrote "Midnight Hour" and a song Wilson brought down, "Don't Fight It". We cut everything that we wrote the next day and they were all chart records. Wilson says he wrote the song but, you know, I listened to some old church stuff he sang on and he was singing "See my Jesus in the midnight hour, see my Jesus in the midnight hour", over and over, and

Midnight man: Wilson Pickett onstage in 1965





Play it, Steve...recording "Soul Man" in Memphis, 1967: (l-r) Al Jackson, Isaac Hayes (piano), David Porter, Sam Moore, Wayne Jackson (foreground), Dave Prater, Steve Cropper, Booker T Jones

I said, "I'm gonna see my girl in the midnight hour", what about that?" I say in my shows that playing the guitar is real simple, you just follow the dots – the dots on the neck on every guitar are in the same place. That's how I came up with the intro for this. They go, "It couldn't be that simple," then all of them go home and get their guitars out and go, "Wow, it is!"

EDDIE FLOYD

KNOCK ON WOOD

STAX, 1966

The hits continue with this superstitious standard, written by Cropper and Floyd in a bridal suite and later memorably covered by David Bowie.

CROPPER: Eddie had an idea he wanted to write a song about superstition, so we wrote "Knock On Wood", at the Lorraine Motel [in 1968 the site of Martin Luther King's murder]. We wrote a lot of hits there. The guy that ran it was called Bailey, we called him 'Old Man Bailey', and when available he put us in the Honeymoon Suite, all red velvet plush – all that craziness – but it was a big room. I can't recall how many songs Eddie and I may have written... oh, Lord, hundreds



Cropper, Al Jackson and Eddie Floyd backstage at Memphis' Mid-South Coliseum, December 20, 1968



I would go to dinner with Jim, then I'd go back to the studio and edit tapes or do whatever 'til the morning. There wasn't much time to go out – I would go home at two in the morning and get a couple hours' sleep, and get up, take a shower and be on the T with Duck at daylight. Sometimes we'd play 6am 'til 9am and get 18 holes in.

SAM & DAVE

SOUL MAN

STAX/ATLANTIC, 1967

Featuring the iconic "Play it, Steve" call from Sam Moore, this energetic soul stomper by Isaac Hayes and David Porter hit No 2 in the US.

CROPPER: Sam said, "Play it, Steve!" only one time, on one take, which happened to be the best take, so we used that. I didn't think about it at the time. We didn't know it was going to make history. I didn't write the song, but I can tell you that Isaac came to me and said, "Steve, can I borrow you for a few minutes? David and I wrote a hit for the session tomorrow for Sam & Dave, but I can't come up with an intro for it." So I plugged up and said, "Play me a little bit of the song." He went through some changes and I started playing along and that's the intro of "Soul Man"...

it was that simple. I played the bits in the chorus with a stainless steel Zippo cigarette lighter. I just laid the guitar flat on my leg. The hardest session I ever played was the "Soul Man" session, because you wanted to get up and dance and play at the same time, and I had to sit there very quiet and not even tap my foot so the cigarette lighter wouldn't fall off my leg! To me this song got better as life went on, as life progressed. It's just a great message – anybody wanna be a soul man!

STAX OF GEAR

TELEVISIONARY

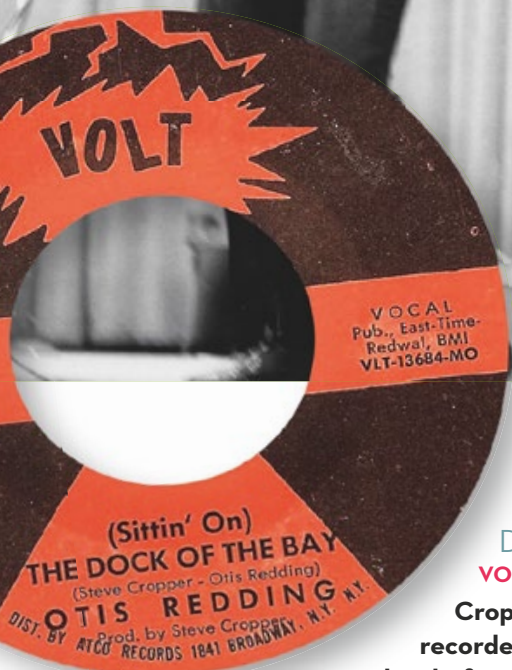
Steve Cropper on the tools of his trade

"WITH THE MAR-Keys, I was playing a Gibson Byrdland, then I started using a Fender Esquire on 'Green Onions' in 1962. I've been playing this Peavey Telecaster for about six years, that's the one I used on *Dedicated*. I've got a Howard Roberts Fusion guitar that I love too. I never really got into pedals, I like just plugging into the amp and that's my sound. The only thing I ever really did was, on the Gibson and on the Fender amps, they had tremolo or vibrato. When I played gigs with Booker T & The MG's, I would either have to have an amp that did that or have a foot switch that did! By the '80s, as amplifiers got a little more sophisticated, what we called RF, radio frequency, would come in, and it would be real buzzy and noisy. So I used to use an MXR noise gate."



Steve with his trusty Fender Esquire, 1967

STEVE CROPPER



OTIS REDDING
(SITTIN' ON) THE DOCK OF THE BAY
VOLT, 1968

Cropper co-wrote and recorded this with Redding just days before the singer was killed

when his plane crashed in Lake Monona, Wisconsin, on December 10, 1967. It became a huge hit, though Redding would never hear the finished version.

CROPPER: Otis didn't have an ego no matter how big he got. There was too much work to be done, he didn't have time for egos! He knew how important he was. He hadn't really done any shows or anything since the Monterey Pop Festival [June 1967] and he'd had a small operation for nodules on his throat. When we came to record this, we realised how good he was sounding. He could always sing but man, he was so clear. The last time I saw Otis I was setting up to overdub the electric guitar parts and he said, "I'll see you on Monday." I said, "All right man, have a great weekend." They still hadn't found his body when I added the overdubs. The water was murky and it was so cold that they couldn't really stay down long enough to search the plane. As the plane broke up most of the band went into the water, but Otis and the pilot were still in their seats, so they had to cut them out to get them up. He and I both knew in our hearts and minds that it was going to be a hit, that it was going to be our biggest record.

STEVE CROPPER

CROP-DUSTIN'

VOLT, 1971

A prime cut from Cropper's debut album as a solo artist, *With A Little Help From My Friends* – though the guitarist quickly realised he didn't enjoy being the featured artist.

CROPPER: I left Stax in September 1970. They began to say you couldn't play for other studios for other artists, you couldn't produce other records for other record companies, and we were getting major offers [laughs]. The first thing they did was take away Wilson Pickett and we weren't allowed to produce him anymore,



MR SOUL

"HIS NICKNAME IS SHAKEY..."

Cropper on touring with Neil Young

NEIL WAS AT the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame as a presenter when Booker T & The MG's got their award in 1992, and he came and sat in with us. Then he called and wanted to know if we'd be his backup band for a tour the next year, and it was great! We had meetings about maybe going into the studio and doing a new album, and touring Japan, Australia and New Zealand. And then right after that, Kurt Cobain died. Neil was really taken aback by that, and he cancelled the tour and started writing songs about Kurt. The funny thing was that they decided – whoever, [Young's manager] Elliot Roberts and all them – decided that they weren't going to release any live stuff from that '93 tour. Is Neil difficult to work with? Well, ha, his nickname is Shakey, and he comes by that honestly. But he's a great guy. He was fun to work with."

and I thought, 'Oh man, I'm on a roll with Wilson here!' Booker got asked to play on [Simon & Garfunkel's] *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, they'd already sent him a demo and then he was told he couldn't do it. Also round 1968, the people in charge decided it would be better to be an album-producing company rather than a single-producing company. And I said, "It's too much work, we can't do it." We tried it, and you're working on 30 or 40 songs at once instead of three or four, and I think the quality started falling down. Finally we just said, "OK, we're leaving".

I never cared anything about making a solo album, I never wanted to be the guy in front, didn't care a thing about it. Didn't work that way. If I could write a hit song for somebody or play on somebody's record then I was a happy camper – but to be a solo guy, no thank you. I'm proud of my solo friends who have done it, Jeff Beck, Clapton and those guys who stand out front and do their thing – but I just wanted to be the player in the band, that's all I wanted to be.

I had fun with my debut, yeah, I went out there and did a few songs that I co-wrote and played on and that was fun. But when fans come to me, they go, "Man, I really love that song you did on that album, like 'Crop-Dustin'", and I say, "I'm glad you liked that, but that wasn't a hit single, so it didn't mean anything." It had no significance to the record business. I don't want to play it down that much but that's the reality. I was lucky, I think I had 19 Top 10 songs on the pop or R'n'B charts... that's almost unheard of. I always wanted to be on the charts with song after song after song – but not as an artist, as a producer and as a songwriter and a guitar player.

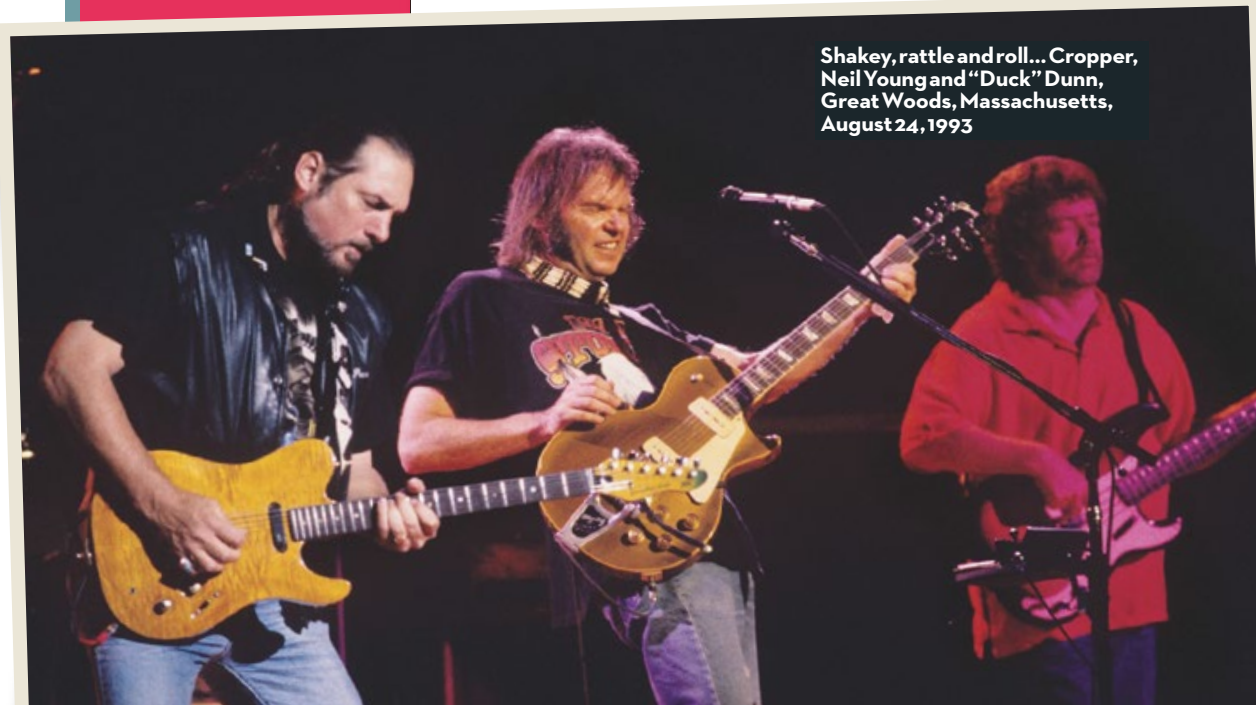
JOHN LENNON

ROCK 'N' ROLL

APPLE, 1975

With Phil Spector producing, Cropper plays on some cuts for Lennon's covers LP... and helps out with a future B-side.

CROPPER: I'm still not clear on this! I played the session, I played on two songs. But then it kind of disappeared. I don't remember the titles that I was on! It's so far back. It was a great session. Leon Russell played on it. They had two drummers – Hal Blaine and Jim Keltner, they had a bunch of horns and five other guitar players, which I thought was pretty bizarre. I don't know how the rest of the week went but they wound up going to New York and cutting most of the album and I just sort of let it pass. The neat thing about that session was that John said, "Steve, would you mind staying a little while after the session?" So it was just he and I. He'd been in the vocal booth most of the day and in the control room, and he came out and brought a chair, and sat down with a guitar and said, "I wrote a riff a long, long time



Shakey, rattle and roll... Cropper, Neil Young and "Duck" Dunn, Great Woods, Massachusetts, August 24, 1993

Blues incorporated: Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi and the Blues Brothers perform at Los Angeles' Universal Amphitheatre, August 1, 1980

ago that I always thought would be good for Booker T & The MG's." We were one of his favourite bands. So he played me the riff and I went home, and got with my band and worked up a little thing and sent it to him. And he wound up cutting it – it's a song called "Beef Jerky" [B-side to "Whatever Gets You Thru The Night"]. I didn't get any credit for helping with it [laughs], but it didn't matter, it was his lick.

BIG STAR

FEMME FATALE

PVC, 1978 (RECORDED 1974)

Cropper helps out on this Velvet Underground cover from Alex Chilton's infamous *Third/Sister Lovers* album. Ardent founder John Fry explained to *Uncut* how the team-up occurred just before he passed away late last year.

CROPPER: After [Cropper's studio] TMI closed, I wasn't ready to leave Memphis yet, and I called my friend at Ardent, John Fry, and said, "John, do you have any space over there that I could rent from you?" So I had an office at Ardent. And while I was there, they said, "Would you play on this track for us?" Jim Dickinson, who was already a fairly famous blues producer, played drums on the track, but the rest of it was Alex Chilton and whoever else. All I did was do an overdub; it just happened that it turned out to be a great song. You know, what goes around comes around, and it usually comes around. So be careful what you play on, be careful what you say, because it's going come back to you, it'll reach you one day [laughs].

JOHN FRY: I've known Steve since we started up Ardent at the end of '66. He would come to Ardent to do a lot of Stax projects. I think Alex, I or Jim Dickinson asked him to play on "Femme Fatale". They were working on the Big Star project in one studio, and he was doing work on something unrelated in another studio. I may have engineered his overdub. I don't think he required a lot of repetition, Steve's always worked very quickly. His parts are simple, but exactly right for the song. Even back in the Stax days his playing became instantly recognisable, you would hear a record and say, "That's Steve on there." Steve also had a role in the A&R department at Stax, as a producer, as an



engineer... his activities extended far beyond playing guitar. He was always quite modest, too, I never saw him bring any ego into the studio at any time.

THE BLUES BROTHERS

B MOVIE BOXCAR BLUES

ATLANTIC, 1978

Cropper hits the stage with the mighty R'n'B troupe, holding down riffs on songs like "Peter Gunn Theme" and this guitar tour de force. Along with Lou Marini, Cropper is the only original Blues Brother in the group.

CROPPER: Fans ask me, "Was it as much fun doing the movie and the project with the Blues Brothers as it appeared to be?" And I say, "There's no way to describe how much fun we were having!" John Belushi was so much fun, whether he was high or not high. He was just a great guy. I mean, he was a party monster – when he got in trouble for partying it was when he was on his own. When he was partying with friends we'd take care of him, make sure somebody didn't spike his drink or give him something weird that he didn't need. Dan Aykroyd, too, has bent over backwards for every member of the band, always stayed in touch with everybody.

LOU MARINI [Blues Brothers saxophonist]: From the beginning, the Blues Brothers was sort of a whirlwind. We were playing the Universal Amphitheatre in LA in 1980, and during "B Movie Boxcar Blues" – which I guess is Steve's biggest solo of the night – I looked out, and there was Jack Nicholson in the first row, and he looked at me, lifted his shades up and mouthed, "Wow!" [Laughs] Steve's a rhythm machine, a titan of rhythm guitar. He's such a strong guy that the way he bends notes, and also just the power he gets... He's got big hands and they're strong. Steve can play loud!

JOHN TROPEA [BB guitarist]: Steve really stretches out on "Boxcar Blues"... I once had to play his part, and let me tell you it's not easy! I don't know the reason why, but his fingers on that neckboard create their own sound. Steve's got big hands and a big heart!

CROPPER: I can't remember any projects where I wasn't having fun. I love to play! When I play, to me, it's going to be a party or I might as well not be up here. It isn't about the glitter and the glory, it's about having fun – everybody, let's party and I'll play some songs you can wiggle your butt to! 🎵

FAB DAYS

COME TOGETHER

How Cropper was almost on The Beatles' Sgt Pepper

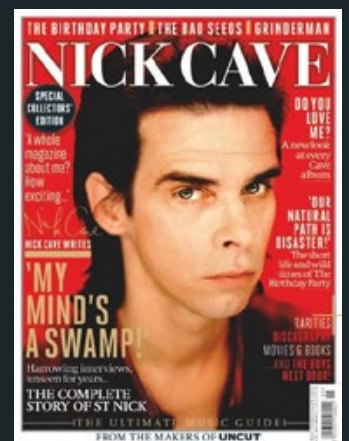
"THERE WAS TALK about me playing on one of their albums. Brian Epstein called me and said, 'Look, they've got most of this album finished, maybe we could do something on the next one?' But they were worried about security, and I couldn't convince them you don't have to worry about security in Memphis! Epstein said, 'No, we'll do something on the next album.' And it never did happen. They'd just finished *Revolver*, and that's one of my favourites. 'Taxman' is just great. Paul, I've met him two or three times, he's still super. I played on a couple of Ringo albums. John Lennon was just a super guy. All The Beatles were."

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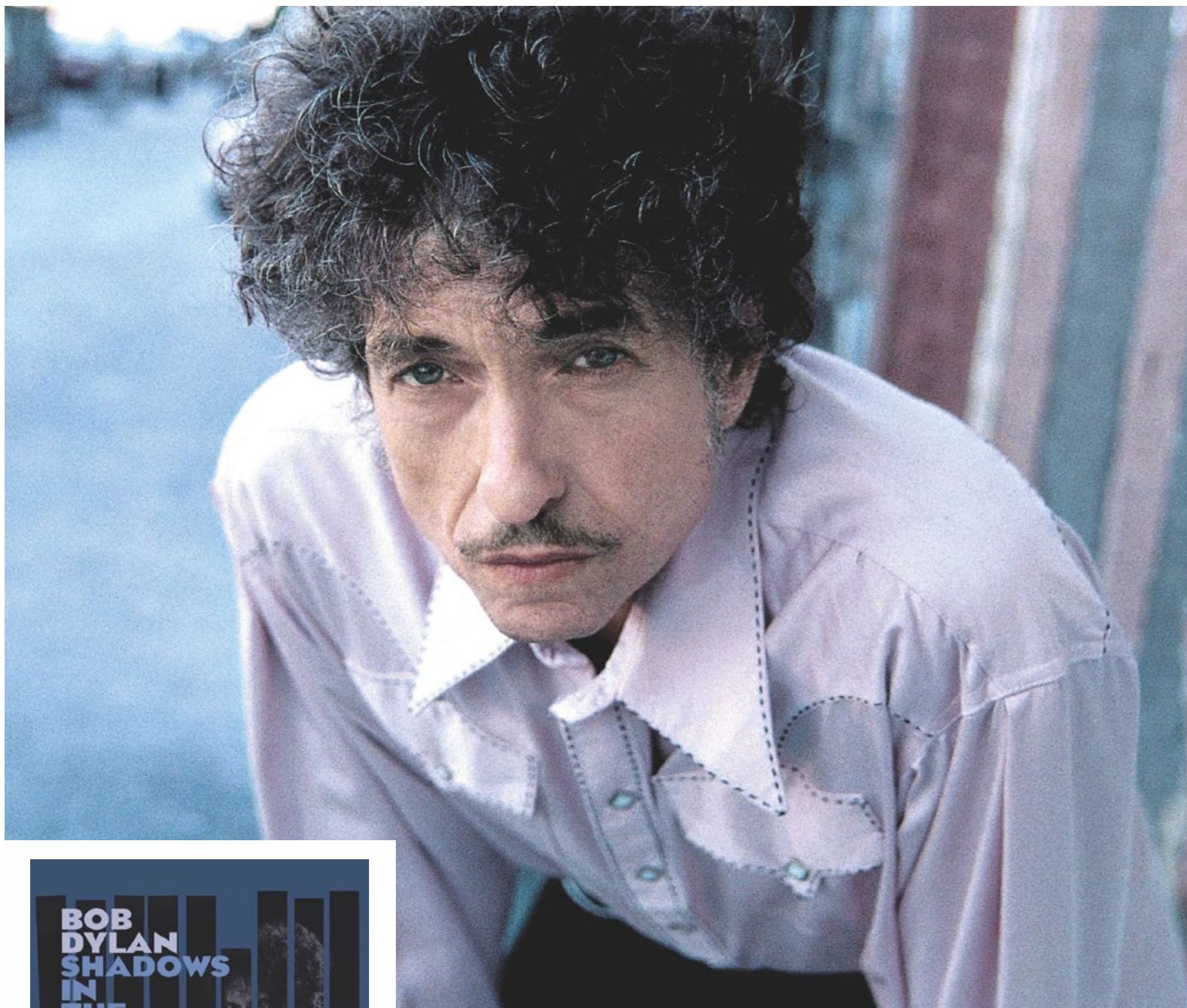


OUR SCORING SYSTEM:

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

New albums

THIS MONTH: FATHER JOHN MISTY | THE POP GROUP & MORE



DAVID GAHR



TRACKLIST

- 1 I'm A Fool To Want You
- 2 The Night We Called It A Day
- 3 Stay With Me
- 4 Autumn Leaves
- 5 Why Try To Change Me Now
- 6 Some Enchanted Evening
- 7 Full Moon And Empty Arms
- 8 Where Are You?
- 9 What'll I Do
- 10 That Lucky Old Sun

BOB DYLAN Shadows In The Night

COLUMBIA

Songs for swingin' Bobcats! Dylan salutes the magic of Sinatra. *By Michael Bonner*

9/10

WHEN HE ATTENDED Frank Sinatra's funeral at the Beverly Hills Good Shepherd Catholic Church on May 20, 1998, Bob Dylan was enjoying a renewed sense of purpose. The previous year's *Time Out Of Mind* – a spare, wintry lamentation of mortality and passing time – triggered a fresh burst of creativity that has now sustained Dylan well into the new millennium. But perhaps

pausing for breath after the exertions of 2012's *Tempest* – an album with plenty to say about violence and death – Dylan has circled back to Sinatra. In truth, the two men already have lengthy history together. Dylan has even had a crack at ol' Blue Eyes before; both live and in the studio, recording an unreleased version of Sinatra's "This Was My Love" during the *Infidels* sessions. For *Shadows In The Night*,



New Albums

→ however, Dylan has gone ‘full Frank’. The album features 10 songs popularised by Sinatra, mostly recorded in the 1940s for Columbia, Dylan’s current label. Presumably best placed to soak up the appropriate vibes, Dylan and his band – along with engineer Al Schmitt – decamped to Capitol Studio B, the site of some of Sinatra’s biggest successes during the 1950s. “I don’t see myself as covering these songs in any way,” Dylan explained. “They’ve been covered enough. Buried, as a matter a fact. What me and my band are basically doing is uncovering them.”

The sessions for *Shadows In The Night* took place between February and March last year – T Bone Burnett told *Uncut* that while he was recording the ‘found’ Basement Tapes project, *Lost On The River*, Dylan was mixing in the studio next door. According to Schmitt – who also recently worked at Capitol on Neil Young’s *Storytone* album – Dylan and his band recorded 23 songs in total. Two months later, on May 14, Dylan chose to stream “Full Moon And Empty Arms” on his website to coincide with the 16th anniversary of Sinatra’s death. It seems likely that *Lost On The River* hastened the release of *The Complete Basement Tapes*, effectively putting *Shadows In The Night* on hold until now: conveniently, the centenary of Sinatra’s birth.

Dylan’s last album of covers, 2009’s *Christmas In The Heart*, exposed an unexpectedly nostalgic side, and there is something roughly similar at work here on *Shadows In The Night*. Essentially, these songs reconnect Dylan with the music he grew up with. Looking at the span of the material featured here, Dylan was a year old when Sinatra recorded the album’s earliest song, 1942’s “The Night We Called It A Day”, and 22 by the time Sinatra came to sing the most recent, “Stay With Me” in 1963: the same year Dylan released his breakthrough *Freewheelin’*....

Evidently, Sinatra and Dylan are accomplished interpreters of other people’s material. But of course, both men are also very different singers. Sinatra was a master of the easy, self-assured baritone, and it’s to Dylan’s credit that he delivers his strongest vocal performance in recent memory on *Shadows In The Night*. For the opening track, he offers an intimate, dramatic reading of “I’m A

Fool To Want You” (a rare writing credit for Sinatra), holding notes, enunciating clearly, while his voice is forefront in the mix. His phrasing, too, is careful and precise. “*Time and time again I said I’d leave you,*” he sings, his voice rising through the line; then dropping to softly deliver the more contrite acknowledgment, “*but there would come a time when I need you*”. Around him, three horns, two trombones and a French horn parp mournfully like a Greek chorus.

Indeed, Dylan’s song selection foregrounds Sinatra’s qualities as a romantic, melancholic singer; the first two songs open with haunting steel guitar from Donnie Herron to accentuate

Shadows... may be an attempt to reclaim Sinatra from those who have diminished his legacy

the material’s sombre nature. It’s possible that *Shadows*... is an attempt to reclaim Sinatra from the legions of singers who have diminished his legacy to cheesy Vegas barnstormers. Dylan mercifully avoids “Theme From New York, New York” or “My Way”; for the most part, these are pensive reflections on unrequited love, love gone wrong, love lost. The arrangements are modest and sensitive. On “The Night We Called It A Day”, for instance, the brass rises consolingly to meet Dylan as he calls time on another roman d’amour, “*There wasn’t a thing left to say/The night we called it a day*”. Musically, the album doesn’t deviate much from the template established with “Full Moon And Empty Arms”: the band are at their gentlest and most discretely responsive, their music nestling in Dylan’s own warm, pristine production. On “What’ll I Do”, for instance, it is possible to hear Dylan breathing close to the microphone during Charlie Sexton’s

Dylan delivers his strongest vocals in recent memory



guitar interlude. You can catch every instrument, however low in the mix; keen listeners will note Tony Garnier's bowed bass on the hymn-like "Stay With Me" (Dylan unveiled a live version at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood on October 26, a few days before *Shadows In The Night* was formally announced).

That bowed bass gracefully glides through "Autumn Leaves", complemented by Charlie Sexton's beautiful, keening guitar intro and some mannerly fingerpicking from Stu Kimball. It's a full 50 seconds before Dylan begins to sing – almost a third of the song's 3:02 runtime – but when he does, it turns out to be one of the album's most effective deliveries. It's tempting to speculate what personal experiences he is bringing to the song as he sighs ruminatively, "But I missed you most of all my darling".

Meanwhile, "Why Try To Change Me Now" offers a change of pace. It's a lighter number, which allows Dylan the opportunity to ask the deathless question, "Why can't I be more conventional?", before moving on to tackle "Some Enchanted Evening". As with Sinatra, Dylan is a deft narrative storyteller, and here he presents the song as if he's passing on hard-

learned wisdom to the listener: "Once you have found her/ Never let her go," he counsels. Elsewhere, "Where Are You" further emphasises the rueful qualities of Sinatra's 'saloon songs', beginning with another lingering pedal steel intro from Herron. "Where is the dream we started?" asks Dylan. "Where is my happy ending?"

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Jack Frost

Recorded at: Capitol Studio B, Hollywood, California

Personnel: Bob Dylan (vocals), Tony Garnier (bass), George G Receli (percussion), Donnie Herron (pedal steel), Charlie Sexton (guitar), Stu Kimball (guitar)

A final "where are you?" is ragged, almost resentful. It's another skilful interpretation, positioning Dylan's narrator as an old man looking back through memories, good and bad. The album closes with "That Lucky Old Sun", a song Dylan covered live in 1986 and 2000. Augmented by two trumpets and a trombone, it's as close to a rousing, Hollywood-style ending as Dylan chooses to get. "Lift me to paradise," he sings defiantly, as the brass swells around him.

Essentially, *Shadows In The Night* posits Dylan as the latest interpreter of the Great American Songbook – a hit-or-miss legacy that tacitly connects Dylan to Paul McCartney, Rod Stewart, Ringo Starr, Harry Nilsson and Willie Nelson, as well as Michael Bublé and Harry Connick Jr. But while *Shadows In The Night* is nostalgic, it is not sentimental. As a celebration of classic songcraft, it is as sincere as any of Dylan's many forays into traditional American roots idioms. But how does Sinatra measure up to Dylan's other early heroes? "Right from the beginning he was there with the truth of things in his voice," Dylan wrote in the days after Sinatra's death. "His music had a profound influence on me, whether I knew it or not. He was one of the very few singers who sang without a mask." *Shadows In The Night* is Dylan's way of showing his appreciation.



"BRUTAL, UGLY, DEGENERATE..."

Frank Sinatra's difficult history with rock'n'roll revealed

WRITING IN OCTOBER 1957 for French magazine *Western World*, Frank Sinatra made clear his views on rock'n'roll. "My only deep sorrow," he said, "is the unrelenting insistence of recording and motion picture companies upon purveying the most brutal, ugly, degenerate, vicious form of expression it has been my displeasure to hear – naturally I refer to the bulk of rock'n'roll." He went on in this vein, concluding "it manages to be the martial music of every sideburned delinquent on the face of the earth."

As a representative of a more conservative generation, Sinatra's reaction to rock'n'roll was perhaps understandable. In a busy period of shifting musical tastes, Tin Pan Alley and the old-style Broadway traditional that had supplied Sinatra with his repertoire were being swept away. All the same, by 1960, Sinatra appeared to have reviewed his position. In May that year, he hosted a TV special to welcome home Elvis Presley after serving out his military service in Germany; they even duetted on "Love Me Tender" and "Witchcraft".

Sinatra further engaged with members of the rock'n'roll fraternity, including The Beatles, covering "Yesterday" and "Something". But while Sinatra rejected a Paul McCartney composition called "Suicide", Ringo enjoyed better luck: when he approached Sinatra to record a birthday message for his wife, he responded with "Maureen Is A Champ", a reworking of "The Lady Is A Tramp" with the lines, "She married Ringo and she could have had Paul/That's why the lady is a champ". George Harrison even visited the studio while Sinatra was working on 1968's *Cycles* (which included a cover of Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides, Now"). McCartney, meanwhile, attended Sinatra's February 1977 show at the Royal Albert Hall, where Sinatra covered Elton John's "Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word". Lennon revealed he wished Sinatra would record the *Walls And Bridges* song, "Nobody Loves You (When You're Down And Out)", telling *Playboy* in 1980, "He would do a perfect job with it." Later, commenting after Lennon's assassination, Sinatra was moved

to admit, "Lennon was a most talented man and above all, a gentle soul. John and his colleagues set a high standard by which contemporary music continues to be measured."

In 1960, Sinatra left Capitol to found his own label, Reprise, ostensibly to allow himself greater artistic freedom. In 1963, he sold Reprise to Warner Bros, and soon found himself sharing a label with Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa and Neil Young among others; in 1976, Warners deactivated Reprise, bringing across all of its artists except Sinatra and Young, who remained as the label's only two signings. Young remained loyal to Sinatra, who he described as "one of the greatest legends ever in the history of music".

As he grew older, Sinatra's trenchant views on rock appeared to mellow. He returned to the studio after a 10-year hiatus to record 1993's *Duets*, which featured Sinatra alongside younger artists invited to record their parts remotely. Among those participating were Bono, Aretha Franklin and Carly Simon. The following year's *Duets II*, featured Chrissie Hynde, Willie Nelson, Stevie Wonder and Linda Ronstadt. He would also cover songs by Paul Simon, John Denver and Billy Joel.

Interviewed by *New Jersey*

Dylan even contemplated working with Sinatra: "The tone of his voice is like a cello"

Monthly in 2011, Sinatra's widow, Barbara, recalled hosting a dinner party for her husband attended by Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen. "They had long conversations at that party," she disclosed. "There was a kinship there." Certainly, by Sinatra's 80th birthday celebrations in 1995, Springsteen and Dylan were both very much in the tent. Springsteen opened the show with "Angel Eyes", while Dylan closed it with "Restless Farewell", reportedly performed at Sinatra's request. Interviewed by *Newsweek* in 1997, Dylan revealed he had even contemplated working with Sinatra. "The tone of his voice," he explained, "it's like a cello. Me and Don Was wanted to record him doing Hank Williams songs."

Meanwhile, Dylan and Springsteen were among the mourners at Sinatra's funeral, there to pay their respects alongside old school A-listers including Gregory Peck, Sophia Loren, Tony Curtis and Kirk Douglas. **MICHAEL BONNER**



TRACKLIST

- | | |
|----|-------------------|
| 1 | Mount The Air |
| 2 | Madam |
| 3 | Died For Love |
| 4 | Flutter |
| 5 | Magpie |
| 6 | Foundling |
| 7 | Last Lullaby |
| 8 | Hawthorn |
| 9 | For Dad |
| 10 | The Poor Stranger |
| 11 | Waiting |

THE UNTHANKS
Mount The Air

RABBLE ROUSER

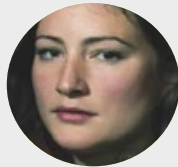
Folk roots, new routes: North-Eastern troubadours reach for the sky. *By Jim Wirth*

7/10 IF YOU CAME for the clog dancing, prepare to be disappointed. The opening track on the fifth album proper by Rachel and Becky Unthank sets an uncompromising pace. Billowing up on clouds of strings and trumpet, “Mount The Air” meanders through the 10-minute barrier, the sisters’ vocal mantra – a fragment gleaned from a book of Dorset ballads – transforming it into a Catherine Cookson approximation of Gavin Bryars’ hobo rhapsody “Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet”. It is emblematic of an album which has a substantial undertow of progressive rock, a fair amount of jazz and a smear of West End greasepaint, with the sinuous vocals that made the Unthanks the Watsons of the iPhone generation. Those who have tracked the Northumberland sisters’ career closely may have seen this coming.

The transition from Rachel Unthank & The Winterset to The Unthanks – effected in 2009, when Rachel Unthank’s husband Adrian McNally and his childhood friend Chris Price joined the band – changed their musical DNA. 2009’s *Here’s The Tender Coming* and 2011’s *Last* picked at the boundaries of folk music with an intensifying urgency. The extraordinary rendition of King Crimson’s “Starless” on *Last* was a milestone of sorts; The Unthanks’ more recent album of Robert Wyatt and Antony And The Johnsons covers another. Pieced together in their newly-built studio, in a disused farm building down the road from McNally and Rachel Unthank’s family home, *Mount The Air* is an earnest push for something bigger. Over an hour long, it might be more McNally’s album than anyone’s; a Yorkshireman raised on King Crimson and Miles Davis, he is the primary writer and

Q&A

Rachel Unthank



Mount The Air is another move away from pure folk music.

Obviously that core harmony sound is still the foundation of who we are,

but we're interested in all kinds of music, and the music is always the way to help tell the story. Me and Becky love working with Adrian because he can take us on musical journeys that we could never have imagined. It's important not to limit yourself.

Has parenthood made much of a mark on this record?

Obviously it is very much in our consciousness, but when you're looking for women's songs in the folk vernacular, inevitably a lot of songs about womanhood are about children, as well. Having the children really helps me recording. I used to get nervous and anxious, but now I will say, "I've got an hour, I'll do some singing, and then go home again." It helps me not to be precious and to just get on with it.

Has having a new studio made much of a difference?

It is literally down the lane. When we were recording, I'd wheel my youngest son, Arthur, down and he would fall asleep on

the way and then I'd sing my song and wheel him back up again. It's a godsend having the studio close but not in the house. There used to be wires down the stairs - the cupboard under the stairs was the vocal booth. We used to record at all hours and once you have children, you can't do that.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Adrian McNally
Recorded: In The Unthinks' Northumberland studio
Personnel: Rachel Unthank, Becky Unthank (vocals), Adrian McNally (piano, vocals, celeste, kalimba, Fender Rhodes, chord organ, glockenspiel, Indian harmonium, percussion), Niopha Keegan (quartet violin and all solo fiddle parts, vocals), Chris Price (bass, guitar, piano), Lizzie Jones (trumpet, flugelhorn), Becca Spencer (viola), Martin Douglas (drums, percussion), Dan Rogers (double bass), Tom Arthurs (trumpet), Kathleen Ord, James Boyle (violin), Gabriel Wait, Nick Byrne (cello), Eilidh Gillespie (flute)

arranger, with his defence of progressive rock to *Uncut* a fair assessment of this quest for new ways to tell old stories. "By definition, if you are going to make progressive music, you are going to get it wrong half the time," he explains. "And if you don't, you're not trying hard enough."

The 11-minute set piece, "Foundling", which dominates *Mount The Air*, might be evidence, however, of McNally trying a little too hard. A three-part melodrama following the story of a heartbroken mother giving her baby into the care of London's Foundling Hospital ("I cast you away like Moses that you might be saved from the tarnish of me," sings Rachel Unthank with admirable restraint), it features some intensely crafted lyrics, an ocean-sized arrangement and a mildly mawkish dénouement, but it is a little more Shirley Temple than Shirley Collins.

Price and McNally's oddball east-west instrumental closer, "Waiting", is another inconclusive experiment, as is the hand-cranked trip-hop of "Flutter", but violinist Niopha Keegan at least finds a new slant on folk music's fusion of the ephemeral and the eternal with "Dad's Song", which splices a recording of a 1978 studio chat with her musician father to an intense instrumental lament. It's a rare stab of unfettered emotion on

a record which is - vocally at least - a model of restraint.

The Unthinks' readings of "Madam" and "The Poor Stranger" are elegantly clipped, while Rachel Unthank injects the wildly melodramatic "Died For Love" with a wonderfully weary froideur, the protagonist's wish to be "a maid again" transformed from the lament of a wronged lover to the wistful thoughts of a mother of young children in dire need of a good night's sleep.

And maybe that's what *Mount The Air* needed most of all. It is a record seemingly following a 3am quest for meaning when The Unthinks' cold-light-of-day instincts tend to lead them to more interesting places.

Evidence: the harmonium-bathed "Magpie", the sisters whipping up a brilliantly eerie harmony arrangement around a chorus of "Devil, Devil, I defy thee", the atmosphere so evocative that you can almost hear the sound of twig brooms scratching on church steps.

The rest of *Mount The Air* is tentative by comparison; stylish, and extremely skilful, but a bit too much arr and not enough trad.

AtoZ

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

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A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS

Transfixiation

DEAD OCEANS

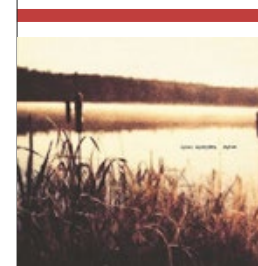
Derivative guitar scuzz from New York effects-pedal manglers

6/10

The cheerily named

A Place To Bury Strangers are essentially a showcase for guitar shock tactician Oliver Ackermann. His other job involves making custom effects pedals and, boy, does it show on the trio's fourth album, right along with his slavish devotion to The Jesus And Mary Chain and My Bloody Valentine. Ackermann's voice Jim Reids its way through 11 slices of black shoegaze called things like "I Will Die", while his hands and feet unleash William Reid squall at ear-splitting volume. Drums and bass throb accordingly. Not one original note, but big fun for feedback fetishists.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



JOHAN AGEBJÖRN

Notes

PAPER BAG

Swedish composer's bittersweet fifth

Best known as the producer behind buttery synth siren

8/10

Sally Shapiro, who's also his better half, Johan Agebjörn has spent the last decade crafting the kind of melancholy computer pop that brings tears to the dancefloor. *Notes* is a more subdued but no less spellbinding affair, a mainly instrumental and drumless set written using a basic Casio MT-52 electric piano that adds extra sweetness to melodious pieces such as "The Right To Play" and "Will They Forgive Us", which twinkle and twirl like Yann Tiersen's *Amélie* score. Occasional vocals from Loney Dear, Young Galaxy and Shapiro herself almost spoil Agebjörn's chintzy reveries.

PIERS MARTIN

FATHER JOHN MISTY

I Love You, Honeybear

BELLA UNION

A wry, sublime second from Josh Tillman's altar ego.

By Graeme Thomson



8/10

UNTIL RECENTLY, Josh Tillman was best known for drumming in Fleet Foxes between 2008 and 2012. Before and during that time, Tillman made several slow, sad solo albums which seemed specifically designed to make tiny ripples rather than big waves,

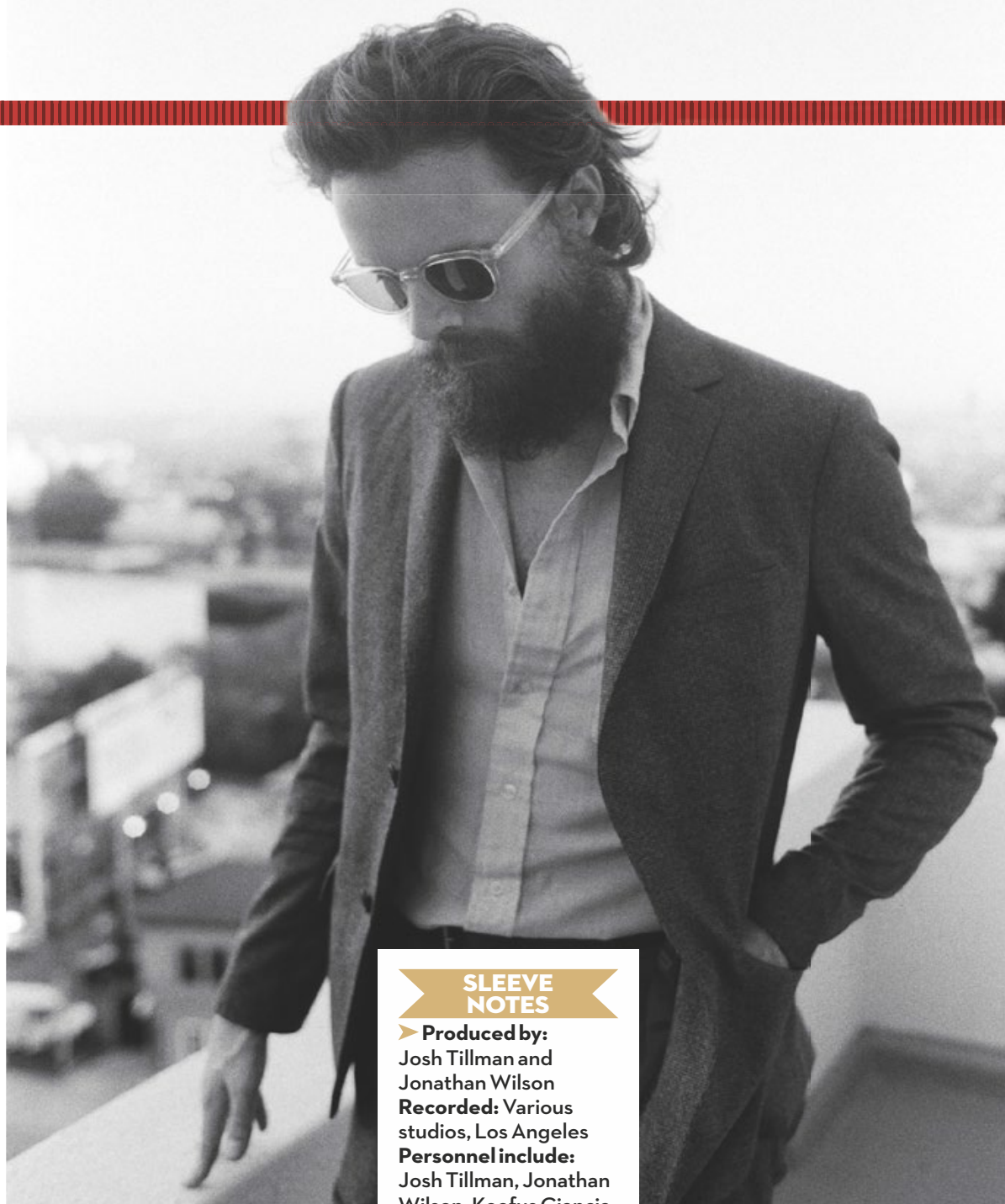
but his departure from the band after *Helplessness Blues* seemed to trigger a creative rebirth.

Rechristening himself Father John Misty, in 2012 Tillman released *Fear Fun*. Escaping the shadow of Fleet Foxes and the weight of his own moroseness, here was a funnier, truer writer exploring a more adventurous palette of sounds. If that record marked a significant step forward, the follow-up is even more impressive. An epic creation which takes its cues from the likes of Harry Nilsson, Randy Newman, Dory Previn and John Grant, it belongs to that honourable tradition of American songwriting which sets beautifully orchestrated pop and AOR against brutally honest and sometimes comically profane sentiments, sung with dramatic, edge-of-the-cliff conviction.

As Tillman explained in last month's *Uncut* feature, it's searingly personal stuff. Ostensibly, the album follows what Paul Simon called the arc of a love affair, covering the period when he met, romanced and committed to his wife Emma, but it's really about one man's struggle to accept love and hope into his life. In a record peppered with colourful lines, the key lyric is a matter-of-fact one, buried amid the thick, soulful stomp of "When You're Smiling And Astride Me": "I can hardly believe I found you/And I'm terrified by that."

This is love red in tooth and claw. There is romance here, but there's also raw sexual need, jealousy, druggy paranoia, hissy fits, over-sharing and megalomania. "Chateau Lobby #4 (In C For Two Virgins)" manages to be both bawdy – "I want to take you in the kitchen/Lift up your wedding dress..." – and touchingly innocent, depicting the couple's first sexual tryst as though it was the very first time for them both. An instantly memorable SoCal pop confection, with its mariachi flourishes and wonderful swelling bridge it's like Love in love. That first euphoric flush gives way to the jealousy of the long-distance lover on the plush, artfully conceived country-soul of "Nothing Good Ever Happens At The Goddamn Thirsty Crow", where Tillman stares into the abyss from an Ibis hotel in Germany. "Holy Shit", written the day before his wedding, compiles all the reasons stacked up against taking the plunge. The very act of falling in love clearly defies all logic, and yet Tillman is defiant: "I fail to see what all of that has to do with you and me."

Co-produced again with Jonathan Wilson, the album bristles with richness and bespoke detail.



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Josh Tillman and Jonathan Wilson

Recorded: Various studios, Los Angeles

Personnel include:

Josh Tillman, Jonathan Wilson, Keefus Ciancia, Benji Lysaght, Gabriel Noel, Paul Jacob Cartwright, Fred Herrera, Javier Rodriguez, Arnie Barrera, Hector Castro, Jorge Cardenas, Chavonne Stewart, Alethea Mills, Brian Walsh, Farmer Dave Scher, Andres Renteria, Daphne Chen, Elizabeth Bacher, Thomas Lea, Claire Courchene

"Bored In The USA" is a spare piano ballad lifted to sublime heights by restrained strings, disquieting sampled laughter and one of several stunning vocal performances. The sparkling "Strange Encounter" has Spectroscopic drums and a buzzing guitar solo, while the Byrdsy "The Night Josh Tillman Came To Our Apartment" (*I Love You, Honeybear* is the kind of self-portrait in which autobiography frequently elides into self-mythology) is another sweet and sour pick-and-mix of unspeakably tender music and hilariously caustic lyrics. Only "True Affection" seems misjudged, a synthetic pop song which fits the narrative but which roams too far from the defining mood of the album.

Otherwise, there is a neat circularity to it all. On the opening title track, Tillman is content to settle for solidarity in mutual distress, as though finding another damaged person with whom to share his sadness is about the best he can hope for. The prize that emerges as the record unfolds, however, is not merely solace but transformation. By the closing track, the bewitching "I Went To The Store One Day", Tillman seems dazed to discover that his world could be so completely turned upside down. "Seen you around, what's your name?" he sings, remembering the very first encounter with Emma outside the local store. From such banal beginnings a new life – and a truly compelling new album – have bloomed.

Q&A

Josh Tillman



You've talked about "chasing the sound" for this record.

This album is a monument to second guessing. I was afraid that it was going to be sentimental, and I was terrified of trivialising

the experiences that inform the album. I couldn't get the soufflé to rise until Emma said to me, "You just can't be afraid to let these songs be beautiful." Once I got that I wasn't making the album I made last time, and that I didn't know

myself artistically as well as I thought I did, things really started to come together.

Was it a struggle to allow yourself to reveal so much?

If you're going to write songs about this topic, they really have to be written in the moment. There are a lot of ugly sentiments on the album, but everything had to stay in there or it was going to be garbage. From a distance it's a love album, but the closer you get it's really about me and my problems with intimacy.

Is it a concept album?

I think to all intents and purposes it's a conceptual album. Every time you insert yourself into your art, you become a character. *INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON*



THE AMAZING Picture You PARTISAN

Soft-rock Swedes eventually live up to daft name

Having swollen to a quintet with three guitarists, The Amazing

8/10

now seem able to handle the music that Christoffer Gunrup hears in his head. This third album in tandem with Dungen's Raine Fiske is a peach, bold enough to carry off its epic tendencies. Gunrup's ability to blend prog, Bunnymen-esque art-rock, shoegaze, folk-rock and even a few elements of Coldplay sounds uncannily organic, and reaches peaks when songs like "Broken", "Fryshufunk" and the title track break into Pink Floydian flights of fancy, sustaining a hypnotic hold over eight or nine minutes. Preposterous on first listen, more utterly beguiling with each repeat.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



GILAD ATZMON & THE ORIENT HOUSE ENSEMBLE The Whistle Blower FANFARE JAZZ

Militant saxophonist digs deep into modal jazz

7/10

When he's not playing sax with The Blockheads, Robert Wyatt or Pink Floyd, or writing lengthy online screeds denouncing Israel, Gilad Atzmon also makes his own records. They often contain pastiches: this album opens with a jittery Palestinian wedding song ("Gaza Mon Amour") and ends with a piece of Martin Denny-style exotica featuring Atzmon on accordion (the title track). But the default setting here is fiery modal jazz, with Atzmon's garrulous solos egged on by pianist Frank Harrison. "Let Us Pray" is a slow-burning piece of Coltrane-ish rumination, while "The Romantic Church" is a lovely ballad that recalls Charlie Parker's string-laden projects.

JOHN LEWIS



JOEY BADA\$\$ B4DA\$\$ CINEMATIC MUSIC GROUP

Lyrical NYC rapper goes old-school

7/10

Still only 19, Bada\$\$ is already in a deeply reflective turnaround from his whirlwind rise to fame, hankering after Mom's cooking on "Curry Chicken" and jaded by cash on "Paper Trail\$". In this era of hook-obsessed rappers, his focus on lyricism seems positively old-school – a vibe underlined by his choice of production, all bumping breaks and anti-gloss from the likes of DJ Premier, Statik Selektah and even a posthumous J Dilla. But his singsong choruses on tracks such as "Hazeus View" still linger pungently. The album's hard-slapping boom bap, laced with confident social realist flow, could only ever have come from New York.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



BADBADNOT GOOD & GHOSTFACE KILLAH Sour Soul LEX

Exquisite '70s soul from Wu's premium storyteller

8/10

The orchestrated sweep of the Wu-Tang Clan's reunion

album, *A Better Tomorrow*, may not have pleased all bandmembers, with Raekwon, in particular, reportedly mutinying against RZA's live aesthetic. One suspects, though, that Ghostface Killah would've been less distressed. *Sour Soul* is his third album in a row where '70s soul backdrops are provided by a live band – in this case Toronto jazzers Badbadnotgood, very much The Bar-Kays to the Ghost's gruff Isaac Hayes. It's a serendipitous hook-up, the trio creating nuanced, immersive contexts for the rapper's narratives: occasionally dialled in, at times surprising, as when he extols the virtues of yoga, meditation and fish on the outstanding "Food".

JOHN MULVEY

REVELATIONS

Gilad Atzmon on Pink Floyd and moving between jazz and pop



➤ Last year, while the saxophonist Gilad Atzmon was producing an album in New York, he got a surprise call from David Gilmour to play on a session. "It was only halfway through the session that I realised I was playing over Pink Floyd," he laughs. The link, says Atzmon, came via Phil Manzanera and Robert Wyatt – Atzmon has served as Wyatt's key collaborator on several albums, with Wyatt describing himself as "a pretty obsessive Gilad groupie".

Since moving from his native Israel to London in 1994, Atzmon has combined his own rambunctious, Coltrane-inspired solo projects with sessions for the likes of Robbie Williams and Paul McCartney. He's also been a member of the Blockheads since 1998, both before and after Ian Dury's death.

Where some jazz musicians see pop sessions as "dumbing down", Atzmon sees it as a chance to improve his own work. "You might only have eight bars to produce an unforgettable new song. Lyrics can be inspiring – you're translating ideas like love, intimacy, yearning, anger, fear and so on into musical expression. I've been lucky enough to work with some shockingly clever people. That's my music education. I have saved a lot of dosh that way." JOHN LEWIS



BASSISTRY What The Hell Do You Call This? BASSISTRY MUSIC LTD

South London jazz funk finessed on third outing from Marcel Pusey's collective

7/10

As befits their name, and writer/producer Pusey's chosen instrument, Bassistry's ruminative and engaging tunes travel on agreeably cushioned grooves. A suitably palpitating foundation for the restless blend of jazz and electronica in "Moving On", the bass becomes a discreet shading on soul-searching meditation "Nothing To Prove". Precise and economical, the superior string and horn arrangements complement twin female vocalists Katy Seath and Nicola Bull. The latter particularly shine on upbeat Latin lovely "Legacy", recalling the late great Teena Marie as they bring melancholic reflection to the air of celebration.

GAVIN MARTIN



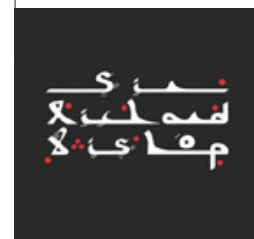
BIG NOBLE First Light AFFILIATES SOUND

Interpol man's ambient effort
Big Noble is, fittingly enough, the name of a serious-sounding shoegaze project by

7/10

Interpol guitarist Daniel Kessler and his New York sound designer friend Jason Fraioli, who in a past life produced electronica as Datach'i for Planet Mu. On their incredibly tasteful debut, *First Light*, Fraioli kneads Kessler's enchanting playing into the kind of glistening chocolate-box post-rock often used in mobile-phone commercials; "Stay Gold" and "Affiliates" positively *ache* like vintage Mogwai or Ulrich Schnauss. Happily, a sense of unease lies at its core – this is an Interpol project, after all – manifested in the elemental crush of "Weatherman Accountable" and "Atlantic Din".

PIERS MARTIN



SIR RICHARD BISHOP Tangier Sessions DRAG CITY

Have guitar, will travel. A restless explorer fetches up in Morocco
Myths and quasi-mystical arcana have always

8/10

clustered around Bishop and his old band, Sun City Girls. The story appended to his latest solo LP is less pranksterish and more plausible than most, involving a late-19th-Century guitar bought in a Geneva luthier's shop, used for a week of inspirational sessions in a rooftop Tangiers apartment. The resulting LP has fewer overt Middle Eastern influences than much of Bishop's work, focusing instead on courtly improvs that feel closer to the work of John Renbourn or, perhaps, Peter Walker's flamenco studies. Mostly, though, it reasserts Bishop's status as a wide-ranging guitar master, gently amused by any such assumptions of grandeur.

JOHN MULVEY

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



STEVE EARLE & THE DUKES

Terraplane

NEW WEST

His old friend, the blues...

Steve Earle has earned the indulgences and deferences of statesmanhood: the discography he has assembled these past 30 years is marvellous and important. Not for the first time, however, Earle has released an album which prompts the wish that he'd stop being quite so statesmanlike. *Terraplane* – the title alludes to Robert Johnson's "Terraplane Blues" – is Earle's blues album, the sort of thing artists of a certain age and gravitas tend to release when they feel they're entitled to, akin to a distinguished bishop having a go at

saying mass in Aramaic, as if to show he could totally have mixed it with his legendary forebears.

Terraplane is a perfectly decent blues album. It's beautifully played, and Earle's songs are respectful of their heritage while (mostly) sufficiently confident and idiosyncratic to transcend pastiche. It's just difficult to believe that this is the best imaginable use of Earle's time and talents. Even the title of the opening track, "Baby Baby Baby (Baby)", self-mockingly admits a tendency towards the generic, and the song does not disappoint at least in that respect: a 12-bar plod which sounds written as it went along. There's a stretch too much of this sort of thing: see also "Gamblin' Blues" and "Acquainted With The Wind". The latter suffers especially from being irresistibly evocative of Spinal Tap's early incarnation The Thamesmen playing their hit song "Gimme Some Money". The lighter the shade of blues, the better *Terraplane* sounds. "Ain't Nobody's Daddy Now" is a winning back-porch strum, "Go Go Boots Are Back" revives the Stonesy sleaze of vintage Dukes, and "Baby's Just As Mean As Me" is a lovely, waspish duet with Dukes violinist Eleanor Whitmore. But Earle's last real classic, 2002's *Jerusalem*, is now more than a decade behind him. Word is that Earle's next album will be a determinedly country one: an appealing prospect, but perhaps less so than just letting Earle be Earle.

ANDREW MUELLER



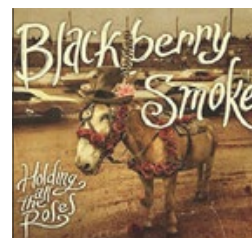
THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

➤ Ralph Stanley's

retirement, announced by the man himself in 2013, has turned out to be a little premature. It seems that the 87-year-old country legend not only

plans to keep on touring, but also has an album due imminently. *Ralph Stanley & Friends: Man Of Constant Sorrow* teams him up with an array of starry names – Ricky Skaggs, Del McCoury, Buddy Miller, Elvis Costello, Robert Plant, Old Crow Medicine Show, Gillian Welch and David Rawlings included – for a bunch of freshly recorded Stanley classics. "I meant it at the time," he explained of his creative U-turn, "but I've decided to leave

it up to the good Lord." Another hillbilly icon gets the nod on *Asleep At The Wheel's Still The King: Celebrating The Music Of Bob Wills And His Texas Playboys*. Due in March on Bismieux Records, it's the third such tribute from the modern-day Texan swing band and features a cross-generational guest list that ranges from relative youngsters like The Avett Brothers and Pokey LaFarge to Wills' onetime bandmates Leon Rausch (86) and Billy Briggs (92). On the live front, late February sees homegrown troubadour **Scott Matthews**, promoting his recent *Home Part 1*, play Bristol, Manchester, London and Brighton. Also on the road are Sid Griffin's *The Coal Porters*. Their tour stops off at The Green Note in London, before moving on to Birmingham, Twyford and Fairbourne in March. **ROB HUGHES**



BLACKBERRY SMOKE

Holding All The Roses

EARACHE RECORDS

Southern rockers show two sides

6/10

After enjoying a minor European breakthrough,

The Whippoorwill, Southern throwbacks Blackberry Smoke return with *Holding All The Roses*. It's an album of two halves, with "Rock And Roll Again" summarising a scene-setting opening hand that focuses on good-time, AC/DC-worshipping rockers. A shade more subtlety comes late on, with the band sounding more like late Wings on tracks like the jangly "Lay It All On Me" and growling "Wish In One Hand". The sound is great but it's all a little dreary until the anguished "Too High", with lead singer Charley Starr dredging genuine emotion and hitting a solid Nashville hard-country vibe.

PETER WATTS



BOXED IN

Boxed In

NETTWERK

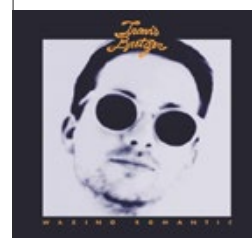
London producer's nifty new-wave grooves

7/10

A jobbing songwriter with credits on recent Steve Mason and

The 2 Bears records, Oli Bayston looks to have found his feet as punk-funk bohemian Boxed In, a nifty solo project that neatly illustrates what he's capable of. Nervous piano pop in the vein of Talking Heads dominates – "All Your Love Is Gone" and "Foot Of The Hill" are elegant examples of Bayston's neurotic new wave – and where possible he bolts on a Krautrock chassis to propel things along (see "Run Quicker"). There's a gauche *Hollyoaks* vibe to sentimental moments "Sailing" and "Wild West", but otherwise this is a handsome debut.

PIERS MARTIN



TRAVIS BRETZER

Waxing Romantic

MEXICAN SUMMER

Canadian jingle writer's sophisto-pop first

7/10

With his debut LP, 24-year-old singer-songwriter Bretzer is doing what the title promises, but this

tender examination of his current relationship uses simple rhyming couplets, rather than the arch poeticism of Paddy McAloon, Roddy Frame and Edwyn Collins, to whom he's clearly in thrall. "Idle By" especially is a synthesis of Prefab Sprout and Aztec Camera, yet behind the soft-focus vocals, careful arrangements and ringing, iridescent guitars, a slacker lurks. "Giving Up" aligns Bretzer with Kurt Vile and Ariel Pink (members of Haunted Graffiti play throughout, as does MGMT's James Richardson), while "Lonely Heart" suggests a mellower Malkmus smitten by Lennon. Hardly radical, then, but the familiarity breeds contentment.

SHARON O'CONNELL



CALIFORNIA X Nights In The Dark

DON GIOVANNI
RECORDS

East Coast rockers power up for fine second album

7/10

Having upgraded from a trio to a four-piece, California X bring a broader and darker sense of dynamics to their grungy guitar-led sound on this strong second album. Opening with the jagged starburst of “Nights In The Dark” and “Red Planet”, the band really find their element on the more sinister, quasi-occult two-part “Blackrazor”, which crawls with subterranean menace on “Part 1” before bursting into thrilling life with the riffy, Motörhead-like “Part 2”. Their acoustic/ambient interventions are also terrific, particularly the meditative “Garlic Road”, which does much more than just give the ears a break from an aural pounding.

PETER WATTS



JOHN CARPENTER Lost Themes

SACRED BONES

Synth-driven debut from veteran film director

7/10

A companion piece to his soundtrack work, *Lost Themes* finds the 67-year-old Carpenter on familiar turf. Recorded at his home studio with son Cody and godson Daniel Davis – both musicians – these immersive, synth-driven compositions may never match the brooding atmosphere of the filmmaker’s early scores like *Halloween* and *Assault On Precinct 13*, but still have much to commend. The burbling synths of “Fallen” and moody keyboard washes of “Purgatory” are standouts. At times, though, it’s a bit proggy – “Obsidian” is Mike Oldfield via the ’80s incarnation of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. But the gloomy industrial tremors of “Night”, at least, convincingly recall Carpenter’s landmark chillers.

MICHAEL BONNER



CARTER TUTTI Carter Tutti Plays Chris And Cosey

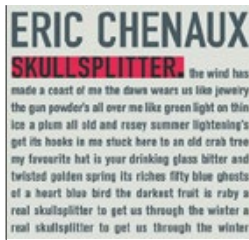
CTI

Industrial dance power couple revisit their back catalogue

8/10

By and large, re-recording one’s old songs is a thankless talk, a process typically embarked upon as a means of reallocating royalties, or correcting flaws only the maker can hear. ...*Plays Chris And Cosey*, though, more than justifies its existence. Prompted by a number of recent live shows in which the former Throbbing Gristle couple revisited old songs on updated kit, here songs like “Driving Blind” (from 1984’s *Songs Of Love And Lust*) and “Dancing On Your Grave” (from ’87’s *Exotika*) are reworked in vivid clarity with glittering, synths recalling *Techno Pop*-era Kraftwerk. Notes of darkness are still to be found in Cosey’s vocal, mind, vacillating between seduction and menace on “Love Cuts”.

LOUIS PATTISON



ERIC CHENAUX Skullsplitter

CONSTELLATION

Sublime ‘warm weather’ sounds from Toronto

8/10

In the field of avant guitar wrangling, Chenaux’s style is genuinely distinctive. Using modified (electric and nylon-string) instruments, contact mics and unorthodox signal-bending techniques, he’s been sculpting woozily luminous songs for more than a decade. His latest is an(other) effortlessly lovely solo set that recalls John Martyn, Marc Ribot, Arthur Russell and the Hardanger fiddle tradition, as it weaves trippily between improv jazz, electronica, folk-drone and lounge balladry. Chenaux’s pure, sweet voice soars along Chet Baker and Jeff Buckley lines and he’s no lyrical slouch, although an instrumental interpretation of the Rodgers/Hart classic “My Romance” is a highlight. More heartmelter than skullsplitter – but just as ruinous.

SHARON O’CONNELL

REVELATIONS

Moving on: Chris Carter and Cosey Fanni Tutti



➤ Following Throbbing Gristle’s split in 1981, the group’s romantic couple Chris Carter and Cosey Fanni Tutti reconvened as Chris & Cosey, signing to Rough Trade and teasing TG’s industrial churn into sensual, synth-pop realms. In 1999, they laid Chris & Cosey to rest, re-emerging as the darker, techno-driven Carter Tutti. But in 2011, Richard Clouston of London industrial dance night Cosey Club persuaded the pair to play a one-off Chris & Cosey set at the ICA. “For me, playing the old songs live through much-improved PA systems brought new life into them,” says Cosey. Hence, *Carter Tutti Plays Chris & Cosey* – old songs reworked in a studio setting, using cutting-edge equipment. “That included hardware, software, analog gear, digital gear,” says Carter. “Cosey probably used four different guitars, three cornets and dozens of effects pedals from our vast collection.” Now they’ve got it out of their system, attention turns to new projects – a new Carter Tutti Void record, the final X-TG album, and a Chris Carter solo album. “I love playing the old songs live, so the decision to let them rest again has been difficult,” says Cosey. “But I’m blessed with an irresistible urge to always be moving on.”

LOUIS PATTISON



COLD WAR KIDS Hold My Home

RED

Long Beach also-rans run out of steam and off track

4/10

The themes of longing, displacement and disconnection found on Cold War Kids’ fifth album prove sadly appropriate. Laboured, lit critic-inspired broadside “Harold Bloom” epitomises the calcifying of songwriting style and musical gesture that’s gathered pace since 2013 predecessor *Dear Ms Lonely Hearts*. Mainman Nathan Willet’s theatrical histrionics lead the peacock preening on “Nights And Weekend”. Despite its hopeful “I’m awake” hook, “Hotel Anywhere” founders on empty chest beating and “Drive Desperate” is the sound of an uninspired outfit played into a corner.

GAVIN MARTIN



J COLE 2014 Forest Hills Drive

ROC NATION

Third full-length from Jay Z protégé

6/10

The gangsta spirit that defined hip-hop throughout the late ’80s and ’90s has recently been supplanted by a softer sensibility: by smoothies and scholars, like Drake, Kanye and Jeremiah Cole. A mixed-race MC from North Carolina, Cole comes over as a nostalgic type with an eye for the ladies – whether recalling the losing of his virginity on an endearingly awkward “Wet Dreamz”, or acknowledging a romantic shallowness on “No Role Modelz”. The beats, largely self-composed, are fine-wrought from jazz and strings; “Note To Self”, meanwhile, proves his skill as a crooner. But you long for a bit more of the ardour of “Fire Squad”, which has a few bold things to say about white people making hip-hop.

LOUIS PATTISON



CORNERSHOP Hold On It's Easy

AMPLE PLAY

Born indie; died Easy Listening...

7/10

Cornershop’s creative highs have sometimes seemed like the result of Tjinder Singh’s desire to prove his critics wrong – never more so than on this instrumental reworking of their debut album. *Hold On It Hurts* was widely dismissed in 1994 as a scrappy adjunct to the Riot Grrrl movement. Two decades on, Singh has rescored the entire set as an Easy Listening fantasia, with Paul McCartney’s alternate take on *Ram*, *Thrillington*, a clear antecedent. The likes of “Born Disco; Died Heavy Metal” and a jitterbugging “New York Minute” are revealed to be much more robust tunes than was initially obvious. Odd, though, that the lounge whimsy is so reminiscent of another 1994. Mike Flowers Pops revival, anyone?

JOHN MULVEY



THE POP GROUP

Citizen Zombie

FREAKS R US

Post-punks meet Adele producer. Sparks fly! By Garry Mulholland



7/10

OF ALL THE iconic post-punk bands who have reformed in the last decade, the one least likely to do it well – to do it at all – were The Pop Group. Formed in Bristol by boys so cool that they had embraced and rejected the Sex Pistols by the end of 1976 for being too rockist, they lasted just three years, two albums (plus a compilation of early demos), a few dozen legendary shows and three singles that defined that puzzling but eternally underrated sub-genre called punk-funk even more perfectly than the Gang Of Four or James Chance.

While Mark Stewart (vocals), Gareth Sager (guitar), Dan Catsis (bass) and Bruce Smith (drums) have all spent the last 35 years or so making worthwhile music, nothing came close to the legend of The Pop Group, whose sloganeering, conspiracy-theory socialism, manic free-jazz unpredictability and ironic band name gained a hipster frisson for simply being too perfect to last.

The reunion for live shows in 2010 couldn't help but provoke cynicism, none of which was allayed by the news that super-producer Paul Epworth (Adele, Coldplay, Florence And The Machine, etc) was manning the helm on a comeback album. Nevertheless, from the opening testifying crackle and post-hip-hop strut of the opener and title track, it's clear that Mark Stewart's life-long mission statement for The Pop Group – "uplifting, abrasive funk with something more weird and interesting than 'I wanna shag you all night long' going on over it" – is present and correct. "Your mind has been

wiped clean," Stewart's distorted voice wails as "Citizen Zombie" drizzles to a standstill, the perennial Stewart theme of irrational denial of the system's violence and injustice firmly re-established.

So, having been reassured that *Citizen Zombie* is less money-spinning nostalgia and more rabble-rousing surprise, it fits that the following "Mad Truth" is an altogether more forgiving beast, a joyous early '80s disco throwback where, as Sager does his best choppy Nile Rodgers impression, Stewart concedes, "It's hard to make a stand." From there, any vague possibility that *Citizen Zombie* will be as dissonant as original albums *Y* and *For How Much Longer Do We Tolerate Mass Murder* is banished by "Nowhere Girl", a dubwise love ballad scorched by Sager's as-close-to-rock-as-it's-polite-to-get guitar.

But the most striking thing about *Citizen Zombie* is how young and naïve and happy it all sounds. The blissfully dancey "S.O.P.H.I.A." is a case in point. Stewart still talks fondly of the Bristol scene that spawned The Pop Group, a tribe who spent 1975-'77 enthusing about books, politics and the clothes and attitude of the Sex Pistols before going out to dance to soul and funk at multi-racial blues nights and discos. "S.O.P.H.I.A." channels that teenage joy, the delight in being white bohemians who play disco

ever so slightly wrong. And as always, Stewart is unashamedly, deliberately hilarious, crooning "You took me to the edge of the night" like a drunk

at a bus stop before hitting the Situationist hook with relish:

"Assume nothing!/Deny everything!"

The Pop Group have been given credit over the years for being original, subversive, prescient, clever, courageous... but rarely does anyone point out how funny they were. Epworth's production – a perfect blend of 1979 surrealist angularity and 2015 machine-tooled gleam – emphasises and revels in this mischievous, celebratory side.

In other words, *Citizen Zombie* is The Pop Group album they were too

at odds – with the world, with each other – to make 35 years ago. They were always inspired noise-mongers and sloganeers rather than great songwriters, and the likes of "Shadow Child", "Box 9" and the obligatory anti-consumerist rant "Nations" probably won't be making it into anyone's Desert Island Discs. But *Citizen Zombie* has a coherence and warmth that only really surfaced, briefly and tantalisingly, first-time around, on the triptych of classic singles, "She Is Beyond Good And Evil", "We Are All Prostitutes" and "Where There's A Will". In 2015, strangely, this makes The Pop Group finally sound like a pop group.

SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Produced by:** Paul Epworth

Recorded at: The Church, London

Personnel includes: Mark Stewart (vocals), Dan Catsis (bass), Gareth Sager (guitar), Bruce Smith (drums)

Q&A

Mark Stewart



Why did it take four years from the Pop Group live reunion in 2010 to releasing a new album?

Me and Gareth had been writing the whole time while we got a five-year-plan together.

Suddenly, out of the blue, I tweeted Paul Epworth because he'd been talking about us in an interview saying that we were a big influence. I asked him if he fancied doing anything with us and he came back in seconds and said it would be amazing. And the next week we were in the best studio in the world working on it. This was in

September so it's happening really, really fast... from four years to all engines go.

What did Paul Epworth add to The Pop Group?

He's what they call in psychiatry an enabler. Paul had only just opened this studio and wanted us in to baptise it, and he was so excited about plugging all the machines in backwards... he was like a little tiny kid. We were allowed to play with the big boys' toys... and cut their heads off.

Your lyrics still demand revolution. You haven't mellowed with age... Not at all. For me, it's always about context. The fact that we're using our own channels and distribution set-up means that at last we can do exactly what we wanna do. No censorship from outside capital. We're more radical, to use an old word, than we ever were.



D'ANGELO AND THE VANGUARD *Black Messiah*

RCA

Nu-soul's patron saint returns – finally! – with a masterpiece

9/10

D'Angelo's third album is one of those sets that feels

like a critical part of a great tradition rather than merely in thrall to it. In D'Angelo's case, that tradition is languidly considered soul auteurship, preoccupied with racial injustice and affairs of the heart. Sly Stone, Prince, Curtis Mayfield and George Clinton are heavy peers. But these unlooped, unprogrammed songs transcend homage, with weird jazz syncopations ("Sugah Daddy"), itchy funk matrixes and complex but nonchalant displays of virtuosity, meticulously jammed into shape over the 14 years between *Black Messiah* and its predecessor, *Voodoo*.

A timely political LP, in the wake of events in Ferguson, but anything but a reactive rush job.

JOHN MULVEY



DAN DEACON *Gliss Riffer*

DOMINO

Jubilant electronic pop from Maryland prodigy

7/10

High priest of Wham City, the Baltimore scene from which Future Islands recently propelled

themselves to superstardom, Dan Deacon cuts an exhilarating and eccentric figure: part contemporary composer, part computer game sprite. *Gliss Riffer* dials back the bold orchestrations of 2012's *America* in favour of a rapturous electronic pop with Deacon's voice pushed upfront, often digitally twisted so he can duet with his female self, as on rousing opener "Feel The Lightning". "Sheathed Wings" and "When I Was Done Dying" are barmy hymns delivered with Wayne Coyne exuberance; elsewhere, Deacon turns his Disklavier to elaborate minimalist compositions like "Take It To The Max".

LOUIS PATTISON



DENGUE FEVER *The Deepest Lake*

TUK TUK

Los Angeles Khmer-rockers expand their global sights

7/10

Fronted by acclaimed Cambodian singer

Chhom Nimol, this Californian six-piece have been mixing '60s Khmer pop with West Coast rock for almost 15 years. Here, on their fifth full-length, they've got looser and groovier, and it suits them – they're at their best here when they slow down, as on the opulent "Vacant Lot", with traces of The High Llamas at their most swinging; or the closing, narcotic trance of "Golden Flute", reminiscent of South Korea's Shin Joong Hyun. With its exotic percussion and unfurling jams, *The Deepest Lake* is the perfect complement to Goat's *Commune*, though with superior vocals (and no masks).

TOM PINNOCK



DAMON & NAOMI *Fortune*

20/20/20

New songs, and a soundtrack of sorts

9/10

Several years ago, a curious thing happened: Naomi Yang started

making music videos. Already a gifted photographer, her keen eye translated beautifully to the moving image. More recently, she has made her first film, *Fortune*: originally screened as silent, Yang and Damon Krukowski have since recorded this soundtrack, which is full of jewel-like songs, minimally arranged, for maximal emotional resonance. Damon & Naomi's unique approach to song, where melodies seem to arrive through cascades of notes, shivering through complex skeins of acoustic guitar, keyboards, bass and drums, is a natural fit for soundtracking: evocative, but with plenty of open spaces.

JON DALE

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Dutch Uncles



➤ In bands as in life, the priorities of one's late-twenties often differ wildly from tenets held a decade earlier. Inspired by The Strokes, Marple five-piece Dutch Uncles formed in college as Headlines, only to discover Talking Heads – who "exposed how vain some of our music tastes were," says singer Duncan Wallis. They changed their name and released their 2009 debut, a cacophonous art-pop selection (every song in a different time signature) that put them at the forefront of the north-west's post-Oasis frontier.

After bassist Robin Richards discovered prog and classical at university, they started refining their sound – 2010's *Cadenza* sampled Steve Reich and sounded like Sparks. But 2013's *Out Of Touch In The Wild* made them into the elegant aesthetes they are today, drawing from Kate Bush's Fairlight era and The Blue Nile: "The space in their compositions is perfect and surprisingly lush for something so minimal," says Wallis. They also did away with their more ornery instincts. "It felt like we'd trimmed the prog fat."

That's where *O Shudder* picks up, says Wallis, whose aim was to be a more comforting, engaging lyricist on a record that deals with the anxieties brought on by our current "self-interested" political situation. "Ian Dury and John Cooper Clarke are two performers I've kept in mind," he says. Aesthetic overhaul aside, however, nothing feels that different. "We still suffer from the same flaws. The only thing different is the palette." LAURA SNAPES



THE DODOS *Indivd*

MORR MUSIC

Californian duo's forlornly ebullient sixth

7/10

Vocalist/guitarist Meric Long claims "this record is about accepting what is natural for you or maybe

even a part of you" – which for The Dodos is making folkish psych-pop on (mostly acoustic) guitar and drums with deceptively joyous enthusiasm. After 2008's breakthrough, *Visiter*, they faltered with 2013's heavily electric *Carrier*, which saw them destabilised by the death of their guitarist Christopher Reimer, formerly of Women. Now, *Indivd* returns The Dodos to their source, albeit with a post-hardcore wiriness countering their softly-softly approach. It's most apparent on epic closer "Pattern/Shadow" (featuring Thee Oh Sees' Brigid Dawson), whose attitude and lyrics suggest Reimer's brief term in the band made an indelible mark.

SHARON O'CONNELL



DUTCH UNCLES *O Shudder*

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

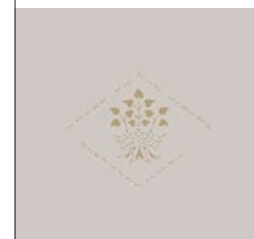
Marple five-piece hit their peak with fourth LP

8/10

Having been invited to tour with American pop-punk outfit Paramore, it should come as no surprise that

Dutch Uncles' bone-dry art-pop slips down easy. Frontman Duncan Wallis' sinuous moves in the promo for "Flexxin" (from 2013's *Out Of Touch In The Wild*) were a clear flag for *O Shudder*'s further shift towards the dancefloor, pitching the heavy-sigh melodies of The Blue Nile and Talk Talk against propulsive grooves. "Drips" hovers between Hot Chip and late-period XTC, while the meticulous detail of "Babymaking" and "Don't Sit Back (Frankie Said)" recalls lost studio gems like Rosie Vela's Walter Becker-helmed *Zazu*, buttoned-down synth figures suddenly bursting into blissful, string-sawing release.

LAURA SNAPES



ELEPHANT MICAH *Where In Our Woods*

WESTERN VINYL

Low-key songwriter skills from Indiana. Will Oldham guests

7/10

For a good few years now,

Joe O'Connell's work as Elephant Micah has provided plaintive succour to fans of Will Oldham (on backing vocals here) and Jason Molina on a deep quest for kindred voices. *Where In Our Woods* is, by his new label's estimate, the 12th Elephant Micah LP, and a nice one to start with, showcasing his most stealthily engaging music. O'Connell is a folklorist by trade, but rootsy tropes are used sparingly in these understated songs, where musical and emotional shifts are made so subtly, their resonance is only appreciated after multiple listens. A grower, then, though perhaps not quite as rewarding as 2012's *Louder Than Thou*.

JOHN MULVEY



ESKMO

Sol

APOLLO

LA producer's mutant, evocative second

Brendan Angelides often posts his field recordings – made in locales including China, Iceland and Costa

7/10

Rica – online, but with *Sol*, he's shifted his focus off the map. Avoiding Ligeti (who inspired Underworld's soundtrack to *Sunshine*), his combined celebration of the sun's life-giving force and meditation on its destructive power taps Clark's dazzling fractal house (on "Combustion"), Sakamoto's minimalist piano pieces ("Tamara", "Can't Taste") and, with "Mind Of War" prompts a blues-hop take on Peter Gabriel's "Games Without Frontiers". Eskmo's sweet, pop-toned vocals add an unexpected element to his expression of the sublime, although he lets his club-floor impulse rip on "The Sun Is A Drum".

SHARON O'CONNELL



GANG OF FOUR

What Happens Next

METROPOLIS

Andy Gill's reconfigured and revitalised lineup expand on mighty agit pop legacy

8/10

Following 2011's robust comeback *Content*, the departure of singer Jon King has left Andy Gill the only original member of the Leeds-bred post-punk heavyweights. As musical auteur, the axeman's splintered guitar and troubled eruptions capture contemporary dystopia on "Isle Of Dogs". Guest vocalists Gail Ann Dorsey, Alison Mosshart and German superstar Herbert Grönemeyer add communality to new singer John "Gaoler" Sterry's disembodied angst. The eruptive and besieged mood has a placid yet eerie centrepiece in the Grönemeyer-fronted "The Dying Rays". A lucid and accomplished departure.

GAVIN MARTIN



MARIKA HACKMAN

We Slept At Last

DIRTY HIT

The former face of Burberry finds unlikely folk calling

7/10

Before embarking on a singing career, the Hampshire-based Marika Hackman modelled for the clothing chain Burberry, and played her first gig with her old school chum Cara Delevingne. Hackman's considerable earning power and lofty connections don't seem to have dimmed the melancholy that was apparent on last year's "Sugar Blind" EP and is similarly present here on her atmospheric and generally likeable debut LP, produced by Charlie Andrew (Alt-J, Nick Mulvey). Here the disaffected delivery and spectral folktronica soundscapes are at their most poignant on the harmony-laden "Ophelia" and the woozy "Drown".

FIONA STURGES



EXHAUSTION

Biker

AARGHT

Excoriating free-rock blasts from deepest Melbourne

8/10

Exhaustion, an Australian three-piece, are the central node of the Endless Melt imprint, a beautifully confusing, self-contained universe of freedom sound. The cabal's many releases move all over the shop, but Exhaustion hit the heaviest, with a thudding take on post-No Wave poison that's heavy and unrelenting. With a guitar sound that approximates an anvil dropping on your cranium, repeatedly, and a rhythm section that moves with the thuggish grace of Feedtime or Chrome, *Biker* grasps a lesson that most groups miss – one great way to really go with rock music is further out, and faster.

JON DALE



JOSÉ GONZÁLEZ

Vestiges & Claws

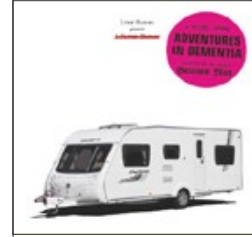
PEACEFROG

Swedish troubadour ends eight-year wait...

7/10

Since González's last solo outing he's made two albums with folktronica band Junip, collaborated with an orchestra and contributed songs to *The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty*. Now he's finally completed the acoustic trilogy that began with 2005's *Veneer* and continued with 2007's *In Our Nature*. Despite the time lag, little has changed in the hushed, pastoral late-1960s feel and its debt to Pentangle and Al Stewart and timeless hippy philosophising. More expansively, "What Will" and "Afterglow" boast a bluesy African drone, reminiscent of Davy Graham but stimulated by touring with Tinariwen, and the holy minimalism of "Vissel" evokes Arvo Part. Timelessly scented, you can almost smell the joss sticks.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



LUKE HAINES AND SCOTT KING

Adventures In Dementia

OUTSIDER MUSIC

A "20-minute micro opera" from Auteur and friend

6/10

The scabrous, perpetually pissed-off Haines has become fond of pastiche in recent years. Following recent takes on glam, punk and New York sleaze, this collaboration with London artist King spins a tall tale around The Fall, neo-Nazi punks Skrewdriver and road trips in old cars, which gives Haines licence to take the piss out of The Fall ("Caravan Man"), recall '70s kids' TV show *The Herbs* ("A Very Friendly Lion Called Parsley"), reference Peter Cook and David Baddiel while taking the piss out of Wire ("Regeneration"), and do a strangely hypnotic cod-reggae reprise of "Caravan Man" with kazoo. As defiantly annoying as it wants to be.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



FUTURE BROWN

Future Brown

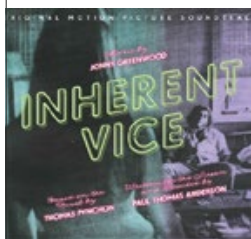
WARP

Debut album from forward-facing New York production unit

7/10

A supercrew bringing together neo-grime conceptualist Fatima Al Qadiri, production duo Nguzunguzu and J-Cush of NYC label Lit City Trax, Future Brown are very much a cutting-edge concern: think the globe-trotting DJ sounds of Diplo with added art-school smarts. *Future Brown* collects 11 tracks melding grime, reggaeton, and the tough end of R&B – robust and up-tempo, but slathered in Al Qadiri's glowing, ectoplasmic top melodies. It lives and dies on its guest vocalists: female MC Tink shines on "Wanna Party", as does grime veteran Riko Dan on "Speng". Elsewhere, a reliance on drab Auto-Tune crooning can drag.

LOUIS PATTISON



JONNY GREENWOOD

Inherent Vice OST

NONESUCH

Excellent soundtrack from Radiohead man

9/10

Greenwood's third score for Paul Thomas Anderson brings into sharp focus his skills as a composer. While *There Will Be Blood* was percussive and heavy, and *The Master* favoured minimalist compositions, here Greenwood privileges warm string arrangements. Radiohead fans note the band's unreleased "Spooks": a loping, Can-esque groover performed by members of Supergrass and overlaid with Joanna Newsom's narration from the film. Greenwood's orchestral material is dominated by three linked pieces, "Shasta", "Shasta Fay" and "Shasta Fay Hepworth", whose old Hollywood-style motifs unfold elegantly. Can's "Vitamin C" and Neil Young's "Journey Through The Past" also feature.

MICHAEL BONNER



PETER HAMMILL

...all that might have been...

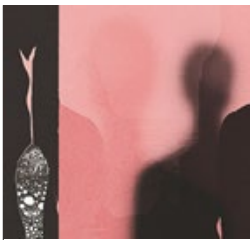
FIE

Van der Graaf leader breaks new ground on solo 32nd

7/10

Few prog-rock icons have actually progressed much since their '70s heyday. Peter Hammill is an exception, mostly managing to bring fresh angles to abiding concerns. He finds a new limb to go out on here. Three boxed CDs present music built from notebook observations and improv fragments, first as a continuous, darkly cinematic piece (the "CINE"), then as songs and instrumentally. Broken romance and danger in foreign climes assault the protagonists, "Alien Clocks" oppressive guitar typifying the "CINE"'s mood, which the "Songs" CD brings into sharper focus. It's like watching three radical re-edits of a 21st-Century film noir, which becomes its own immersive, paranoid world.

NICK HASTED



H HAWKLINE
In The Pink Of Condition
HEAVENLY

Compact psych gems from Welsh expat

Though now resident in Los Angeles, Huw Evans is carrying on the finest

8/10

traditions of European psychedelic pop on his third album. There are touches from the past – “Spooky Dog”’s warped whimsy suggests prime Gorky’s, while “Dirty Dreams” joyously pinches the grand, moody feel of Jean-Claude Vannier’s early ’70s productions – and from today, too, with Evans’ partner Cate Le Bon contributing the thrilling, scratchy production, along with harmonies and some stinging guitar. *In The Pink Of Condition* is very much Evans’ own, though, with his spiky melodies and surreal, nightmarish images about “a pack of tongues” and “cut glass crystal everywhere” lingering long after being spun.

TOM PINNOCK



REBECCA HOLLWEG
Country Girl
EMU

Songs for incurable romantics

Only Hollweg’s third album since 2001’s *June Babies* announced her as

8/10

a talented songsmith, she combines old-school craftsmanship with Joni Mitchell’s perspective on relationships and environment. Working with a core of South London jazz musicians including husband/producer/session player Andy Hamill, *Country Girl* delivers another delightful batch of tunes. The title track sets the tone, a jaunty, bass-driven, tongue-in-cheek look at city life, “Ruby” is sung to her daughter and would have fitted snugly on any Carpenters’ album. The arrangements skilfully blend mellow guitars, subtle strings, woodwinds and brass to keep Hollweg’s sentiments and honeyed delivery the right side of mawkishness.

MICK HOUGHTON



HOWLIN RAIN
Mansion Songs
EASY SOUND

Wonderfully skronky return of the San Francisco rockers

Ethan Miller doesn’t do easy. This follow-up

8/10

to 2012’s *The Russian Wilds* is the result of an intense bout of woodshedding in which the Howlin Rain leader ditched his band and their major-label deal and bunkered down in the basement to make an album as strange as it is compelling. *Mansion Songs* feels like a subterranean meeting post for the ragged psych-blues of Miller’s Comets On Fire and the hairy ambience of Skip Spence’s *Oar*. The rock’n’roll songs (“Big Red Moon”, “Meet Me In The Wheat”) sound unhinged. The quieter ones (“Ceiling Fan”, “Restless”) are plain unsettling.

ROB HUGHES



KITTY, DAISY & LEWIS
Kitty, Daisy & Lewis The Third
SUNDAY BEST RECORDINGS

Sister-sister-brother indie trio’s third album, produced by Mick Jones
After their so-so second

6/10

album *Smoking In Heaven* came out in 2011, sibling trio Kitty, Daisy and Lewis took a break and built a new analog studio in an old Indian restaurant in Camden. Still rocking a vintage vibe, the trio have now been joined by producer Mick Jones, who works manfully to keep their magpie tendencies in check. Although best with the blues, there’s also disco soul (“No Action”), ska (“Baby Bye Bye”), country blues (“It Ain’t Your Business”) and sultry stunner “Never Get Back”. The end result is a little pick’n’mix, but the delivery is great and songwriting assured.

PETER WATTS

WE’RE
NEW
HERE

H Hawklane



➤ “I’ve lived in Cardiff pretty much all my life, apart from a short stint in Prestatyn,” says guitarist, singer and songwriter Huw Evans on the line from his current Los Angeles home. “I love Wales, but being presented with the opportunity to live in LA for three years seemed like a nice idea...”

Since moving to record partner Cate Le Bon’s *Mug Museum* two years ago, the pair have been embraced by California’s alternative scene, befriending and performing with the likes of White Fence’s Tim Presley and singer-songwriter Jessica Pratt. The 29-year-old Evans still found time last year in the City Of Angels to record his strikingly infectious third album as H Hawklane, *In The Pink Of Condition*, with Le Bon in the producer’s chair.

“Cate was everything I hoped she would be as producer,” says Evans. “I needed someone with a unique approach to music. She hears songs in a different way, and makes great suggestions. She produced it in an old-fashioned way – providing ideas, and the Brian Eno Oblique Strategy style!”

“I love the cold and the wet,” he adds, reflecting on returning to the wintry UK this month to tour. “I think it’s good for the old psyche to be reminded that in some places it’s horrible all the time.” TOM PINNOCK



BETTIE LAVETTE
Worthy
CHERRY RED

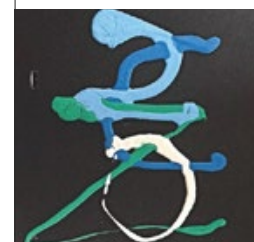
Detroit soul veteran covers the waterfront and hits the heights

Smart choice of material and insightful

8/10

interpretation are the dual requirements of a successful set of soul covers, but Lavette’s last album, *Thankful n’ Thoughtful* (2012), suffered from over-caution and a surfeit of standards. *Worthy* is a far bolder and more satisfying selection, like a sister to Solomon Burke’s sublime 2002 genre masterpiece, *Don’t Give Up On Me*. No coincidence that both were produced by Joe Henry, who creates a sophisticated but spare setting for the rich patina of Lavette’s gritty voice on such unusual and inspired picks as Dylan’s “Unbelievable”, the Stones’ “Complicated” and Savoy Brown’s “When I Was A Young Girl”.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



KEITH LEVENE
CZ2014 Essentials
CZ2014

Continued adventures of ex-PiL man

In 1984, after leaving Public Image Ltd, Levene released his alternate version of

7/10

PiL’s fourth album, *This Is What You Want... This Is What You Get*, under its original title, *Commercial Zone*. Last year, using crowd-funding, he returned to it, and from the resulting 20-track album has distilled 10 cuts. Leaving aside “The Voice Of Punk Rock”, on which John Robb rails against Simon Cowell to a backdrop of spiralling punk guitar, it’s a surprisingly melodic – and mostly instrumental – affair. “After Over” is like a hollowed-out Booker T tune, and “They Came To Dance” and “ProtoTeen” offer pulsing electronica: pure pop, punctured by shards of minimalism.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



SARA LOWES
The Joy Of Waiting
RAILINGS RECORDS

Bewitching second from Northern songstress

Given Lowes’ status as

8/10

a largely undiscovered treasure on the Manchester scene, formerly of The Earlies and onetime vocalist for Micah P Hinson, it’s hard to ignore the irony in the title of her latest album. A gorgeous confection it is too, her dreamlike prog-pop busying itself with jazz accents, brass, classical touches and melodies that warm the bones like a winter fire. “Bright Day” is as weightless as it is beautiful; “Little Fishy” has hooks big enough to land something far bigger; “Chapman Of Rhymes” sounds like the missing link between Cate Le Bon and Kate Bush.

ROB HUGHES



DANIEL MEADE Keep Right Away

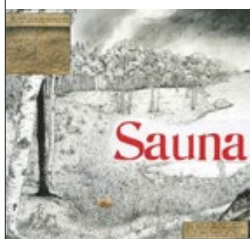
TOP

Clean-cut, homegrown country from a Scotsman in Nashville

7/10

Glasgow's Daniel Meade has opened for Sturgill Simpson, Vikesh Kapoor and the Old Crow Medicine Show since his 2013 debut album, *As Good As Bad Can Be*. He returns with a record produced in Nashville by Morgan Jahnig and aided by fellow Old Crows musicians Chance McCoy and Cory Younts. Meade mixes up ragtime, old-time and Jerry Lee piano rolls with the same breezy spirit as the Old Crows. A little too much polish undermines some sharp songwriting, although guest spots with Diana Jones on the Gram Parsons-like "Help Me Tonight" and a hell-raising Josh Headley help rough up the edges.

MICK HOUGHTON



MOUNT EERIE Sauna

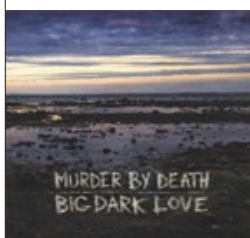
PW ELVERUM & SUN

Phil Elverum's experimental folk-rock project delivers

8/10

Writers often talk about musicians painting an 'inner world' – on *Sauna*, Phil Elverum paints an external one, a vast, stunningly realised landscape populated by pinprick-small humans. Scrappy garage rock sketches and folk lamentations are glued with meandering tramps through ambient space, in a giant visionquest across the Pacific Northwest. Elverum lets his gift for rounded melody shine with the pretty riff on "Planets", and there's a Damascene moment provided by the anthemic "Boat". In his communions with nature, Elverum continues the American tradition of Whitman, Thoreau or Emerson, immersing himself in hymns to the land.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



MURDER BY DEATH Big Dark Love

BLOODSHOT

Gothics amok in the heartland: versatile indie-rock veterans hit a new stride

8/10

The deceptively bare-knuckle sound of Indiana rockers Murder By Death's seventh full-length may be tough sledding to untrained ears. "Strange Eyes", for example, comes on as plain-vanilla balladry before the old-school soul of singer Adam Turla drags it into detonation mode – an unholy, asymmetrical blast of guitars, off-kilter horns, urgent vocals. In fact, just about every song is not what it seems: "Dream In Red" morphs from an archaic folk stance into waves of psych; the old-timey "Natural Pearl" might be classic C&W throwback, but something's off. The terrified "Send Me Home", drenched in anxiety, emerges as the most gripping cut on an obsessive album.

LUKE TORN



ANTHONY NAPLES Body Pill

TEXT

Intriguing nocturnal excursion, on Four Tet's label

7/10

Anthony Naples first emerged on the imprint affiliated with Brooklyn house bacchanal Mister Saturday Night, though his debut album, *Body Pill* – despite the name – is no straightforward dose of dancefloor euphoria. Naples is clearly well-versed in house and techno strategies but he often works counterintuitively, with a kind of studied naivety: kick drums are muffled, synth motifs hang unresolved and tracks seem to dawdle erratically rather than build and drop. Yet it's never a challenging listen, evoking distant, blinking skyscrapers, buzzing streetlights and echoes of the previous night's warehouse rave.

SAM RICHARDS

HOW TO BUY... WILLIE NILE New York heights...

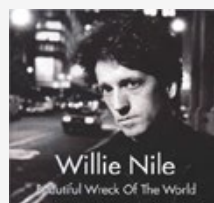


Willie Nile

ARISTA, 1980

Greenwich Village's latent legacy of literary songwriting springs to life renewed, with a fierce folk-rock vengeance, but this time against a dilapidated skyline, within a gritty punk milieu, and amid a glorious jangle. Every song spins superb hooks with a Buddy Holly flair, but the heartbroken "It's All Over" and the ominous "Old Men Sleeping On The Bowery" – the latter ringing in Reaganism with a sickening jeer – are towering achievements.

8/10



Beautiful Wreck Of The World

RIVERHOUSE RECORDS, 1999

Finally artistically free, independent after eons of record label hassles, Nile pens his wise, heartfelt, and occasionally absurd masterpiece. A backlog of pent-up visions come tumbling out on the high-voltage, state-of-the-state opener "You Gotta Be A Buddha (In A Place Like This)", a "Subterranean Homesick Blues" for the millennium; the majestic "On The Road To Calvary (For Jeff Buckley)" is soul music of the deepest order.

9/10



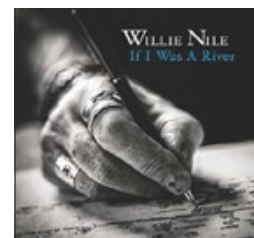
Streets Of New York

00:02:59, 2006

Anchored by a ringing, ever-appropriate revival of The Clash's "Police On My Back" and the chilling, mortifying "Cell Phones Ringing (In The Pockets Of The Dead)", *Streets Of New York* is the New-Normal, post-9/11 album no-one else dared write – epic and prophetic. The sleeper is "The Day I Saw Bo Diddley In Washington Square", a magnificent, cinematic fever dream.

8/10

LUKE TORN



WILLIE NILE If I Was A River

RIVER HOUSE

Intimate, understated gem from New York City's unofficial poet laureate

8/10

Willie Nile's gale-force DIY renaissance, after a nasty early-career experience with major label Arista, is a feelgood story to be sure, even more so when you hear Nile's epic, ingratiating brand of big-guitar anthemry. Here he goes rogue, though, scaling down to solo piano, voice, and a bit of the spirit of *Double Fantasy*-era John Lennon. The results are uniformly strong, sometimes funny, focusing as ever on an idealist's humanism, faith, and generosity of spirit – especially the spiritual bookends – "If I Was A River" and "Let Me Be The River", both sung with an intense gospel fervour.

LUKE TORN



ÁINE O'DWYER Music For Church Cleaners Vol I & II

MIE MUSIC

A radical organist brings serenity to everyday church life

8/10

On one level, the new work by Irish artist O'Dwyer is a straightforwardly lovely organ recital – a structured improvisation that references Bach as much as more recent, exploratory work like Terry Riley's *Persian Surgery Dervishes*. *Music For Church Cleaners*, though, has a site-specific narrative that adds a compelling subtext to the piece, O'Dwyer playing in an Islington church while doors slam, Hoovers drone and volunteer cleaners chatter in the background. The lapsed Catholic musician adds spiritual heft, while the religious workers seem substantially less transported; "A request from the ladies," one tells O'Dwyer. "When you hold it on one note for a long time, can you keep it quiet?"

JOHN MULVEY



ONLY REAL Jerk At The End Of The Line

VIRGIN EMI/HARVEST

West London rapper's sunny-sided debut

7/10

London's latest singing MC, Niall Galvin, boasts stylistic panache distinguishing him from predecessors. The sullen but wisecracking "Yesterdays" presents a welcome lo-fi alternative to Example's routine superclub salvos. Aply finessed by producers Dan Carey and Ben Allen (Gnarls Barkley), Only Real's intuitive tunes map a worldview as provocative as The Streets and more colourful than Jamie T. Playful and expansive, his reference points include the Stones via *Loaded*-era Primal Scream ("Blood Carpet"), while the ever-present rush of his beloved Beach Boys (as on the harmony-rich "Cadillac Girl") bring further distinction. Quite a catch.

GAVIN MARTIN



RHIANNON GIDDENS

Tomorrow Is My Turn

NONESUCH

Dolly Parton... Nina Simone... Odetta... A striking new American voice harnesses the power of her heroines. *By John Mulvey*



8/10

African-Americans in their country's folk music. More recently, she figured on *The New Basement Tapes*, a distaff presence in the group tasked by T Bone Burnett to at least try and pick up where Dylan left off in 1967.

Giddens' place in that project, alongside marquee names like Elvis Costello and Marcus Mumford, earmarked her as a singer of whom great things were expected. An artful repositioning as a kind of new Norah Jones, with a conservatory-trained voice that could be as stentorian as it was tender, did not seem implausible.

A scholarly long view, however, means that Giddens' first solo album has turned out rather differently. While *Tomorrow Is My Turn* is certainly an expansive sampler of her range, it's also an eloquent disquisition on the cultural paths that have kept intersecting, time and again, through

FOR SOMEONE WHO'S called her record *Tomorrow Is My Turn*, Rhiannon Giddens often seems mighty preoccupied with history. With her old-time string band, the Carolina Chocolate Drops, Giddens has meticulously celebrated the role of

the last century of American popular music. A key text here is the elemental field holler "Waterboy", rendered pretty faithfully to Odetta's version. Giddens' performance of "Waterboy" stole the show at the *Inside Llewyn Davis* concert in New York, September 2013, and the clarity and force of her vocal make it an obvious highlight. But it's also only a taster of what this supple, ambitious singer can do.

The exceptionally well-curated material is all drawn from women singers – if not always women writers – and does a fine job of placing Giddens at the nexus of a multiplicity of traditions. There's a polished effortlessness to the way she can switch from the uncanny blues of Geeshie Wiley's "Last Kind Words" to the tender swagger of "Don't Let It Trouble Your Mind", an early Dolly Parton gem. A rambunctious tilt at Sister Rosetta Tharpe's proto-rock'n'roller, "Up Above My Head", leads into to an exquisite, torchy take on Charles Aznavour's "Tomorrow Is My Turn", based on a Nina Simone version that Giddens found during one of her fact-finding missions on YouTube.

"O Love Is Teasin'", meanwhile, learned from Peggy Seeger and Jean Ritchie, moves in the misty

Q&A

Rhiannon Giddens

Did you always think you'd make a solo record?

Eventually. The timing of it was a little surprising, because I was settling in to work on the next Carolina Chocolate Drops record. Then this lightning bolt happened [*the response to her performance at the Inside Llewyn Davis concert*] and everything changed. It was kind of... accelerated.

How do you think the Carolina Chocolate Drops' concept connects to *Tomorrow Is My Turn*?

It's the same idea of highlighting history, highlighting the struggles of African Americans in the history of America, and the creation of American music, and all these very rich, deep things. But on this record I've been really thinking about women, and just being so grateful for the opportunities I've had, as a 21st-Century woman in a First World country, realising that not everybody has that opportunity, and they didn't in the past. I got really inspired by Nina Simone and Dolly Parton: these women are my heroes, they're the reason I can do what I do.

The album's a very effective sampler of your range – was that something you were conscious of when you were selecting the songs?

I've always been a mimic, ever since I was a kid. I really try and crawl inside a style. But I didn't so much want to showcase my ability, I wanted to show how well country and blues and Celtic and gospel and all of this stuff go side by side. It's like they're not so far apart. We're too genre-fied and too specialised, and we should be able to have these things next to each other, mixing together to make the music that we love.

hinterland between Celtic folk and the Appalachians, not unlike some work by another T Bone client, Alison Krauss. It's at this point, perhaps, that *Tomorrow Is My Turn* starts to feel kin to one of the real masterpieces in Burnett's production catalogue, Krauss and Robert Plant's

Raising Sand. Like that album, there's a prevailing intelligence, craftsmanship and good taste, which even a human beatbox-powered version of "Black Is The Color" can't quite undermine. And Giddens, for all her poise, is an emotionally resonant as well as academically precise musician; Elizabeth Cotten's "Shake Sugaree", in particular, benefits from a striking lightness of touch.

Tomorrow Is My Turn ends with a play that seems both poignant and strategic. "Angel City", the album's sole new composition, was written by Giddens during the *New Basement Tapes* sessions, and has a measure, a stillness, that collapses the genre adventures which have preceded it, and eventually transcends them. Its theme, too, is the implicit theme of the whole album, and captures

Giddens' perspective as a new phase of her career begins. When you've learned so much, so diligently from the past, the possibilities of where you can go next are tantalising.

SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Produced by:** T Bone Burnett
Recorded at: The Village, LA; House Of Blues, Nashville; Capitol Studios, Hollywood
Personnel includes: Rhiannon Giddens (vocals), Colin Linden (gtrs), Dennis Crouch (bass), Jay Bellerose (drums), T Bone Burnett (acoustic gtr), Gabe Witcher (fiddle, horn arr, viola), Hubby Jenkins (bones, acoustic gtr), Keefus Ciancia (keyboards)



PEACE Happy People COLUMBIA

Roistering indie anthems from the Brummie Britpop throwbacks

7/10

Peace are a proud anachronism: a rogueish indie boyband, all fur coats and fringes, in an era of tediously mannered singer-songwriters. You can see reflected in them something of all the big early-'90s Brit bands: Oasis, Suede, Ride, Blur, The Charlatans... and particularly on this funkier and more confident second album, *The Stone Roses* (the breakdown in "World Pleasure" is practically a tribute to "I Am The Resurrection"). The tunes are strong, the lyrics are alternately wry and wide-eyed, and what Peace lack in originality, they make up for in charm. They are a gang you want to join, and these days, that is rare enough.

SAM RICHARDS



GRETCHEN PETERS Blackbirds PROPER

Wonderful study of ageing by great country singer

9/10

Peters, one of Nashville's greatest talents of the past two decades, returns after 2010's majestic *Hello Cruel World* with her voice a little less steady but just as steely, and still equipped with the ability to stop clocks with a well-turned phrase. Death, ageing and disease are the themes that drive Peters in this moving sequence, with devastating effect on "The Cure For The Pain" and the mournful but proud "Everything Falls Away". This is a melancholic album, but a determined, thoughtful one, writing tough songs from a women's perspective and featuring contributions from Jason Isbell, Will Kimbrough and Jimmy LaFave.

PETER WATTS



PHOSPHORESCENT Live At The Music Hall DEAD OCEANS

Excellent widescreen triple album of live favourites

8/10

With some songs dating back to 2005's *Aw Come Aw Wry* and a pair of spellbinding versions of the stunning "Wolves" from 2007's *Pride*, this triple album is more than just a live run-through of Phosphorescent's recent *Muchacho*. Taken from four gigs the band played in Brooklyn in 2013, the album captures both Matthew Houck's heartbreaking delivery – rendered even more gorgeously cracked by the strain of live performance – and the sinewy charm of his backing band, who let fly on marvellous takes of "Terror In The Canyons", a sparkling "Tell Me Baby (Have You Had Enough)" and a rightfully mesmeric "Los Angeles".

PETER WATTS



KATE PIERSON Guitars And Microphones LAZY MEADOW/KOBALT

Nearly four decades in, B-52's chanteuse's solo debut

5/10

Guitars And Microphones is a curious beast.

Co-written by Aussie trip-hopster Sia and featuring contributions from The Strokes' Nick Valensi, Pierson's first outing without Fred Schneider and co is produced to sound immaculately (and blandly) like 1980s American new wave pop; enough to make "Love Shack" seem cutting-edge. Moreover, Pierson seems to be somewhat humourless without her Georgian cohorts, as lyrics like "Mister Sister" patronise the transgendered like a granny who's just seen her first Culture Club video. Nevertheless, a great singer is a great singer, and "Throw Down The Roses" is a rousing opener. It's just all a bit 30 years too late.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

HOW TO BUY... GRETCHEN PETERS The country songwriter's best work



Gretchen Peters PURPLE CRAYON, 2001

After writing hits (many captured on Peters' *Circus Girl* compilation) like the majestic "On A Bus To St Cloud" for stars

like George Strait, Neil Diamond and Trisha Yearwood, Peters released her solo debut in 1996 with *The Secret Of Life*. This self-titled second album was far stronger, containing cinematic efforts like "Love And Texaco", "Souvenirs" and "Picasso And Me".

8/10



Burnt Toast And Offerings SCARLET LETTER RECORDS, 2007

A real tour de force, with Peters casting an unrelenting eye over love and loss in a sequence of exquisite

songs. Highlight is the haunting "The Way You Move Me", but Peters demonstrates her lyrical eye as well as stunning voice on songs like "Sunday Morning (Up And Down My Street)" and "The Lady Of The House".

9/10



Hello Cruel World SCARLET LETTER RECORDS, 2012

Peters meditates on the nature of ageing, but looking at it not in terms of decline but from the perspective

of not having achieved quite what you expected when you set out, themes captured by the punchy title track, and "St Francis". Her comfort across genres is also apparent, as she explores country, rock, jazz and blues with grace and panache.

8/10

PETER WATTS



PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING The Race For Space TEST CARD RECORDINGS

Corduroy-clad duo ditch the kitsch and look to the skies

7/10

If Public Service Broadcasting's last album created Avalanches-style musical collages, blending public information film samples with banjos and beats, the London duo's second LP is a more focused effort, concentrating on man's adventures in space. This is no retro-kitsch novelty but a gripping tribute to an extraordinary period in history, much of it drawn from the BFI archive and filtered through Jean-Michel Jarre-style electronica ("Sputnik"), '70s soul-funk ("Gagarin") and, on "Valentina", a hymn to the first woman in space, post-rock. Rich and evocative, *The Race For Space* is the sound of two young men gazing heavenwards and dreaming.

FIONA STURGES



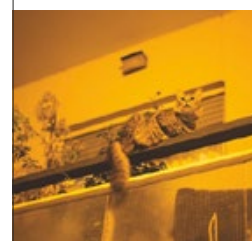
THE PUNCH BROTHERS The Phosphorescent Blues NONESUCH

Niche Grammy-winners prove their technical worth on fourth album

7/10

Once again showing off the virtuosity upon which they've built their reputation, The Punch Brothers' latest LP, produced by T Bone Burnett, opens with "Familiarity", a 10-minute epic full of jazzy discord, taut Beach Boys harmonies, sweet acoustic picking and bluegrass stompathons. Here the New York ensemble – who, by the way, aren't brothers at all – expertly weave the old-time and the experimental, and make light work of complex arrangements. Even with frontman Chris Thile's enduringly workmanlike vocals, *The Phosphorescent Blues* remains an album of fierce ambition and undeniable charm.

FIONA STURGES



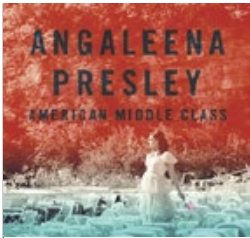
SAM PREKOP The Republic THRILL JOCKEY

Chicago indie doyen's solo synth set

7/10

Surprises have been thin on the ground during Sam Prekop's 20-year career as the leading light in Chicago indie stalwarts The Sea And Cake. Rather, after 14 albums of slightly jazzy soft-rock, this collection of modular synthesiser experiments, composed for a video installation by the artist David Hartt, seems a natural fit for the 50-year-old. For the first half of *The Republic* he extracts effervescent hisses and trills from his gear, fashioning a fragrant if unremarkable video score, while in the final section he lets loose, relatively speaking, exploring modal patterns and rhythms on freakier jams "Weather Vane" and "Invisible".

PIERS MARTIN



ANGALEENA PRESLEY *American Middle Class*

THIRTY TIGERS

Splendid solo debut by constituent of Pistol Annie's

8/10

The famous surname is coincidence. There's a better clue in Presley's middle name: McCoy, inherited from the indefatigable feuding rivals of the Hatfields. Her solo debut album sounds as her rural Kentucky background might signal: elegant bluegrass, a drawl that's evocative of Bobbie Gentry, lyrics of hard-worn hearts and hard-won wisdom suggesting a latter-day Loretta Lynn. But Presley has a wry, modern take on country: the title track reflects that the social strata in question isn't what it was, and "Better Off Red" wonders if she mightn't have been happier on the farm.

ANDREW MUELLER



PRIMEVALS *Tales Of Endless Bliss*

CLOSER

Garage rock, Scottish-style

When they formed in 1983, the Primevals' were out of kilter with

7/10

the prevailing sound in Glasgow, but managed to find an audience on the continent, where garage rock never went away. On their ninth album they still sound like The Stooges reversing out of the MC5's garage, with singer Michael Rooney bringing requisite menace to songs like the punky "Tell It Now", and the brusquely psychedelic "Pink Cloud". This 30-minute LP closes in style with the mangled R'n'B of "Hipster Beware", complete with defiant manifesto: "*Hipster beware, stuck in a hole/The primeval beat is rock and roll.*"

ALASTAIR MCKAY



KATHRYN ROBERTS & SEAN LAKEMAN *Tomorrow Will Follow Today*

ISCREAM

Second album from BBC Folk Award-winning married couple

6/10

Once part of folk-rock 'supergroup' Equation, Roberts and Lakeman were left behind when bandmates Kate Rusby and younger brother Seth Lakeman went solo and became the poster boy and girl of English folk. They regrouped as a duo for 2012's award-winning *Hidden People* and the follow-up is a similarly potent mix of trad ballads and their own compositions, from the brooding protest of the title track (like Dylan's "Masters Of War", loosely based on the folk tune "Nottamun Town") to Roberts' lovely piano ballad "A Song To Live By", which offers heartfelt advice to the couple's twin daughters with a charm reminiscent of the McGarrigles.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



ROMARE *Projections*

NINJA TUNE

Revitalising the art of the dusty sample

Londoner Archie Fairhurst has named this project in humble tribute to the mid-century artist Romare

8/10

Bearden, renowned for his vibrant collages of African-American musicians – the relevance being that Fairhurst strives to create a similar effect with his music. Whereas his '90s Ninja Tune forebears dug in the crates for funky basslines and drum breaks, Romare tends to sample the other stuff from those records – vocal snatches, trumpet fills, jazzy piano flourishes, random grunts and hollers – and works them into fractured house grooves informed by grime and footwork. "Roots", for instance, is an audacious attempt to draw a direct line between railroad blues and Chicago Juke. As history lessons go, it's a lively one.

SAM RICHARDS



RONE *Creatures*

INFINÉ

Guest-packed third album from French electronica auteur

Not for Rone the reconstituted disco or stylish electro so favoured

6/10

by his countrymen. A former film student at Paris' prestigious Sorbonne, the man born Erwan Castex opted instead to channel his talents into a dreamy electronica with the lightly curdled drift of Boards Of Canada or Röyksopp. Slight tendency towards wishy-washiness is kept at bay through the deft deployment of collaborators. The National's Bryce Dessner adds lilting guitar to the woozy crests of "Elle", the balletic trumpet of Toshinori Kondo offers a neat complement to the Orb-like meanderings of "Acid Reflux", and François Marry sings a lonely chanson over rippling synths on "Quitter La Ville".

LOUIS PATTISON



MARK RONSON *Uptown Special*

COLUMBIA

Cast of thousands overcrowd Ronson's nostalgic fourth album

Once you've clocked up the record sales and

6/10

Grammys that Mark Ronson has, you can get anyone on your concept album. Problem is, he has. Stevie Wonder, Bruno Mars, Carlos Alomar and Tame Impala's Kevin Parker are among those hopping aboard the multi-faceted producer's homage to the New York scene of his DJ-ing youth. A great many accomplished players lovingly recreate a slew of retro-funk styles, with Prince ("Uptown Funk", "Daffodils") and Steely Dan ("In Case Of Fire", "Summer Breaking", "Heavy And Rolling") to the fore. But novelist Michael Chabon's lyrics fail to illuminate the theme, while the music settles for tasteful reverence.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE *Hexadic*

DRAG CITY

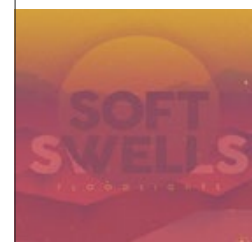
Psych-folk maverick unveils a new musical language

Ben Chasny's Six Organs has been an evolving

7/10

project, taking in Fahey-esque folk primitivism, psychedelic rock and free noise. Here's a bold step, though. *Hexadic* finds Chasny debuting his newly invented system of musical composition, The Hexadic System, a process intended to inject indeterminacy into chord progression, structure, even lyrics. Which sounds complicated, but primarily, this is a guitar record. On "Wax Chance", noise-informed guitar leads blaze like phosphorus over dialled-back jazz percussion. "Hollow River" recalls the drone-metal of Earth, while "Hesitant Grand Light" strikes a note of Lynchian suspense with its pendular motion and winding Spanish guitar.

LOUIS PATTISON



SOFT SWELLS *Floodlights*

MODERN OUTSIDER

Recording in England, an LA-based band seeks a sound to call its own

On Soft Swells' second album, Tim Williams

6/10

sounds boyishly earnest and somewhat distant amid settings that strive for arena-rock majesty. It's an approach used by countless bands during the last 15 years, from Coldplay to Snow Patrol, and as such requires a fresh angle, a distinct persona and arena-scale hooks. *Floodlights*' 10 tracks are melodically appealing, professionally played and put across with commitment to Williams' emotionality, yet the album suffers from a certain flatness, possibly budget-based. It isn't until the closing "Love Like You", a hyper-romantic mid-tempo march towards an intimated resolution that never occurs, that Williams finds a tantalising wrinkle, one worth further exploration.

BUD SCOPPA



SONGHOY BLUES *Music In Exile*

TRANSGRESSIVE

Rocking quartet introduce the new sound of urban Mali

First heard via Africa Express, Songhoy Blues

8/10

take the fusion of West African desert rhythms and rock'n'roll a further step down the road trodden so thrillingly by Tinariwen et al. Tracks such as "Soubour" and "Al Hassidi Terei" could've graced Robert Plant's *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar* as Nick Zinner's production hefts up the rocking rhythms without burying them in 4/4 mundanity. If the older Malian bluesmen sounded like African cousins of John Lee Hooker, these kids owe more to the patrimony of Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, their tribal origins transplanted into an urban setting, although "Petit Metier" and the acoustic lament "Mali" display a softer side.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TWO GALLANTS

We Are Undone

ATORECORDS/PIAS

Cali duo's fifth laments a lost San Francisco against a swaggering blues backdrop. *By Peter Watts*



7/10

THERE'S AN UNDERLYING air of menace that squats at the bottom of Two Gallants' fifth album like yeast in a bottle of beer, fermenting future discontent. The California guitar-drum duo have always had a dark view of the world, and *We Are Undone*

opens in high gothic fashion with a reverb-laden intro that sounds like a *Hammer House...* organ.

It's a suitably dramatic introduction to the world of Two Gallants, in which singer Adam Stephens castigates the perilous state of the world and the demise of his native San Francisco against a shifting sonic palette that makes light of the supposed limitations of a two-man band. Two Gallants can swagger and rage like The Black Keys, but they can also find moments of ambient bliss to complement songs of helplessness and regret.

After its B-movie intro, opening song "We Are Undone" is embellished by a distinctive, metal-ready guitar line, as Stephens introduces one of the album's prevailing themes – the failure of art and creativity against the onslaught of commerce and capitalism. This is something Stephens revisits consistently, scratching the scab from different perspectives, never liking what he finds underneath. After the catchy grunge of "Incidental", the rollicking "Fools Like Us" picks up the thread. While Tyson Vogel builds a march, Stephens sings arrestingly about the limitations of his trade – "You search for authenticity until you become a fake, you think you'll find salvation in a song" – and the tricks artists pull when "hunting muses". "You force your heart to fall in love just to feel it break," he roars, before concluding "fools like us just don't belong".

With a sense of impotence established, the pair take things down a notch with the strange "Invitation To A Funeral", slow, simmering, sullen, with an ominous beat mirroring medieval lyrics of bitter resentment which end in wailing lament. It gives way to "Some Trouble", wicked brooding blues albeit with box-ticking lyrics that would be trite if they didn't fit so snugly. Having reached midway and rarely straying from a blues rock template, there's now a switch of style. "My Man Go" may be the best song on the LP, an undulating shanty on epic scale with an Eno-esque handling of dynamics and a desolate, heartfelt vocal: "In the ruins of my night, I can still pretend, close my eyes and see my life as it could have been." Stephens is a powerful singer capable of lacerating heroics, but here he holds back, giving the song almost unbearable tension.

It feeds into "Katy Kruelly", a folky, finger-picking intermission that's strangely reminiscent of Ian Brown in its jaunty wordplay. Even this tender song is stoked by regret – "I think I loved you more than most, I tried to love you truly, but I couldn't love you half as much as I did Katy Kruelly." The mood of personal failure is maintained through



SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**

Karl Derfler

Recorded at:

Panoramic Studio,
Stinson Beach,
California

Personnel: Adam
Stephens (vocals,
guitar, piano), Tyson
Vogel (drums)

"Heartbreakdown", with Vogel effectively mimicking a malfunctioning machine, but with an overall impact that's too slight to excite.

A bolder, broader sense of drama returns on the boiling hard rocker "Murder The Season/The Age Nocturne", with Stephens providing a raucous, threatening vocal that warns of a near-distant future, an artificial age in which "their devices keep them real, frame their thoughts and print their meals, tame their hearts and paint their lawns, show pictures of a world that's gone". Again, Stephens is decrying the end of authentic

experience, and our own complicity in allowing it to happen. The brilliant "There's So Much I Don't Know" brings it all into focus, as Stephens mourns his hometown of San Francisco, a city he feels has sold out, "where all the strange has gone". San Francisco represents everything Stephens stands against, and the pace is sad but stately, led by

piano and punctuated by shimmering cymbals, with Stephens admitting his sense of bewilderment at a place that has been rendered unrecognisable, a world that has left him behind but which he still can't quite let go.

Q&A

Adam Stephens



What are the advantages of being in a duo?

The ideas I have wouldn't reach their potential without us being together... they don't get anywhere until we sit down and start messing with it together. I've always seen being in a duo as a necessary obstacle and, if there's a consistency, it comes from that limitation. It's a bridge we attempt to reach across with our respective instruments to meet in the middle.

Is there a sense of regret on this album?

It's not personal regret, I see it more as a general

regret for humanity. It's not about somebody's life falling apart because they made a bad choice, it's all of humanity falling apart because of bad choices that have collectively been made. That creates a feeling of helplessness. That's my response to a lot of what I feel, a sense of helplessness that can be stifling and frustrating.

What's wrong with San Francisco?

We're both native San Franciscans and we have to witness all these things happening that no native considers an improvement. Pretty much every change makes the city more uninviting and not very San Franciscan. It's not an inviting place for anybody who wants to be weird and live a life based on self-expression. But I still do these futile searches for that last untouched corner of San Francisco that hasn't been invaded by modernity and Google, looking for those things that don't exist anymore. *INTERVIEW: PETER WATTS*



SPECTRES

Dying

SONIC CATHEDRAL

Bristol newcomers trounce and torment their posing psych peers

Britain currently suffers no shortage of skinny young men plying so-called

8/10

psych, their musical bona fides somewhat indistinct, but tousled Syd Barrett locks and velvet loons picture-perfect. To that end, Bristol four-piece Spectres are a virulent tonic. Their debut refuses to rely on the genre's comforting tropes, instead exploring the limits of vicious guitar squall: they bury sweet melodies that recall My Bloody Valentine on "The Sky Of All Places", while "Blood In The Cups" advances on the foreboding of the executioner's drum. *Dying* is at once a queasy and exhilarating listen, made more unnerving still by the lyrical fragments about addiction, insomnia and depression that emerge from their clamour.

LAURA SNAPES



CHRIS SPEDDING

Joyland

CLEOPATRA

Star guests flock to session master's happy place

6/10

Chris Spedding slotted in as neatly as a Flying-V-toting Womble as he did with prog-jazz noodlers Nucleus, and his 13th solo album displays a similarly easygoing ethos. Arthur Brown teleports in from his crazy world to wail over "Now You See It", Bryan Ferry descends from a cloud of Aramis to sex up "Gunshaft City", while the king of the 1970s session men slows his 1975 solo hit "Motor Bikin'" to mobility-scooter pace for "Boom Shakka Boom". Fellow freelancers Johnny Marr and Ian 'Lovejoy' McShane also chip in, Spedding's ever-luscious quiff a measure of his stylish, if eternally backdated MO.

JIM WIRTH



THE STAVES

If I Was

ATLANTIC RECORDS

Bon Iver-produced second album by English sibling trio

It's a long way from Watford to Wisconsin, but this is where the

8/10

Hertfordshire sisters Emily, Jessica and Camilla Staveley-Taylor found themselves recording their second album at producer Justin Vernon's April Base studios. Treading a similar acoustic folk path to their debut, 2012's *Dead & Born & Grown*, their sound has nonetheless developed in intensity and sophistication, employing bold melodic hooks and rich orchestral flourishes in opener "Blood I Bled". Elsewhere, harmonies and heartbreak are the signatures of the country-tinged "Don't You Call Me Anymore" and the gloriously Marlingesque "No Me, No You, No More". Beautiful.

FIONA STURGES



STEELISM

615 To FAME

SINGLE LOCK RECORDS

Surf'n'twang debut from eclectic Nashville-based duo

American guitarist Jeremy Fetzter and English pedal-steel player

7/10

Spencer Cullum first met in Caitlin Rose's touring band and most recently backed Andrew Combs. A mutual love of instrumentals was the jump-off point for Steelism, under whose name they explore the textural detail of Ventures-style surf, R&B grooves, Hawaiian music and great drifts of country twang. Co-produced with Alabama Shakes' Ben Tanner and partly cut at Muscle Shoals' FAME studios, this arresting debut frequently sounds like a series of themes to imaginary spy thrillers, not least "Cat's Eye Ring" and the pulsing motorik of "Marfa Lights".

ROB HUGHES

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

The Staves



► When Watford folk siblings The Staves joined Bon Iver to support them on their 2012 tour, they were filled with trepidation.

"We were big fans so we were pretty scared," recalls Jess Staveley-Taylor. "But lasting friendships were forged. They were doing the full nine-piece band thing so we felt dwarfed by their epic set. But they gave us confidence and we all became very close."

Having been reared on The Byrds, the Eagles and Crosby, Stills & Nash, the three sisters already had plenty in common with frontman Justin Vernon. Such was their bond that he to invited them to his studio in Wisconsin as soon as the tour was over.

"The snow was up to our chests outside but it was warm and cosy inside," Staveley-Taylor reflects. "Musically, the floodgates just opened. The studio is very remote so there was this feeling of hunkering down. It was us against the elements."

The Staves didn't have firm plans to make an album, though they soon realised they had enough material for what would become their second LP, *If I Was*.

"Justin eventually said, 'So am I producing a record, then?' We were jumping for joy inside but trying to keep it cool. We were, like, 'A record? Yeah. Why not?'"

FIONA STURGES



THEE SATISFACTION

EarthEE

SUB POP

Second from Seattle's cosmic soul sisters

THEESatisfaction's psych electro-soul provides a more accessible entry point

8/10

into the Afro-futurist freakzone established by their friends and collaborators Shabazz Palaces. Stasia Irons and Catherine Harris-White sang together a cappella before they learned to program beats, and however much their music spins intriguingly off-beam, their dual vocals retain an effortless, almost naïve charm – all the better to deliver their deft, subtly political lyrics. "Universal Perspective" opens up a direct channel to the original neo-soul era with the appearance of Meshell Ndegeocello, ensuring that *EarthEE* feels both comfortingly familiar and thrillingly alien, without striving too hard to be either.

SAM RICHARDS



TONIK ENSEMBLE

Snapshots

ATOMNATION

Atmospheric armchair orchestronica from Iceland

6/10

Tonik Ensemble is the collaborative one-man-band project of Anton Kaldal Ágústsson, who specialises in chilled-out electronic chamber music that interweaves light-touch house beats with spare strings and mournful, tremulous vibrato vocals. At its best, this formula suggests Arthur Russell jamming with The xx, paying real dividends with the spectral glide of "Power Of Ten" and the artfully layered tech-noir textures of "Nangilima". As with so many Icelandic artists, tasteful understatement is Ágústsson's shortcoming, diluting the impact of more experimental elements like the ice-crackle percussion and Ibiza-friendly throb of Prelude. Lovely stuff, but a bit too pastel-shaded.

STEPHEN DALTON



SAMBA TOURÉ

Gandadiko

GLITTERBEAT

Funkiest offering yet from prolific Malian guitarist

With each new wave of acts to emerge from

8/10

Africa, the once gaping chasm between the purist aesthetic of world music and dirty western rock'n'roll grows ever narrower. Samba Touré's fourth album in five years rocks as hard as any African record we've heard. Calabash percussion, talking drums, the eerie tones of a one-string fiddle and Touré's deep, resonant vocals anchor the sound in its Malian milieu. But the rocking rhythms echo Led Zep ("Wo Yende Alakar") and Buddy Holly ("Su Wilele"), while Touré's lead guitar lines are as indebted to Jimi Hendrix as to the traditional desert blues of his mentor, Ali Farka Touré.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



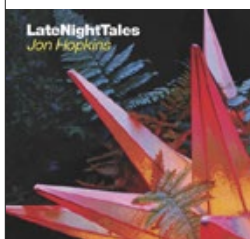
TWERPS Range Anxiety MERGE

Charming indie-pop from Aussie four-piece
Melbourne's Twerps have that Australian slack-rock sound down pat, a lazy, fat, delayed

7/10

twang that seems to give so much current Aussie indie a distinguishable accent. The band generally favour simplicity and great hooks on this fine second album, creating cracking indie-pop through the wonderful jangle of "Simple Feelings", the vivacious swell of "New Moves" or the excellent New Orderish "Fern Murderers". The cornball charm of "Love At First Sight" is more ambitious, while "Empty Road" is a five-minute slab of suspense and repetition, that neatly supplements exquisite opener "I Don't Mind"'s wicked sense of impending drama.

PETER WATTS



VARIOUS ARTISTS Late Night Tales: Jon Hopkins NIGHT TIME STORIES

The series continues, with a less-than-prime selection

4/10

Fresh from success with a solo LP and production for Coldplay, Jon Hopkins curates this comp in the after-hours series. Like his mentor Brian Eno, Hopkins is drawn to placid, ambient drift, with ethereal effects, minimalist piano and various intensities of twinkling. The dream-logic mixing is a strength, where folk songs from Alela Diane and Songs Of Green Pheasant tumble into the forefront, but most tracks are limp, effete and boring. This is a world of vague emotions, where love, terror and beauty are simpered at by those too timid to really know them, epitomised by Rick Holland's skin-crawlingly glib spoken-word coda.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



VARIOUS ARTISTS Another Day Another Time: Celebrating The Music Of Inside Llewyn Davis NONESUCH

6/10

The album of the concert of the film...
In September 2013, T Bone Burnett curated a spin-off concert from the Coens' film about a failed folk musician in '60s Greenwich Village. Evidently, Burnett's plan was to find commonality between the music of that era and today's artists; though sometimes his choices proved questionable. Gillian Welch and David Rawlings ("The Way It Goes") and Jack White ("Mama's Angel Child") outclass the flat cap and braces brigade – Marcus Mumford, et al. Elsewhere, Joan Baez and Elvis Costello make strong contributions; though Patti Smith's songs from the concert are regrettably absent.

MICHAEL BONNER



VENOM From The Very Depths SPINEFARM

Geordie metallers, rejuvenated for devilish 14th album
Venom's crude, Satanic heavy metal was the

8/10

subject of critical derision back in the 1980s. Perhaps the world has come round to them; or perhaps they're making better records than in their supposed heyday. *From The Very Depths* is unreconstructed but brutally effective, the likes of "The Death Of Rock'n'Roll" and "Long Haired Punks" combining caveman drumming and wailing leads, with frontman Cronos' bass booming high in the mix. There are moments of complexity you suspect the young Venom couldn't have pulled off – see the stop-start riffs of "Stigmata Satanas" – and Cronos' brutish blaspheming is enjoyable as ever, punctuated by the occasional Hammer Horror cackle.

LOUIS PATTISON

REVELATIONS

Venom on inventing black metal and taking on the Church



➤ Few bands can honestly claim to have invented a genre, but thanks to 1982's *Black Metal*, Venom comfortably have that one in the bag. That album's raw production and Satanic themes would influence Scandinavian black metal groups like Mayhem and Burzum, but Venom themselves hailed from a rather different part of the frostbitten north: Newcastle Upon Tyne. At home, however, Venom were far from fêted, their roughshod musicianship and unreconstructed working-class ways mocked by critics and peers alike. "I saw a bit of a snobbery from the Motörheads, the Maidens," says frontman Cronos aka Conrad Lant. "They thought we were a flash in the pan." Instead, Venom found fans further afield – early US tours saw them supported by the likes of Metallica and Slayer – and while the band splintered in the late '80s, a new lineup with Lant backed by new guitarist La Rage and drummer Dante stabilised in 2009. They're not living in the past, says Cronos, but validation feels good. "I remember in an early interview saying for every famous church song – 'Little Donkey' or whatever – I wanted a hundred thousand Satanic songs," says Cronos. "I reckon if you could count it all up now, we'd whip their fucking arses."

LOUIS PATTISON



VISION FORTUNE Country Music ATP

Italian ambient inspires avant-rock Brits
London post-rock minimalists Vision Fortune earned glowing

7/10

reviews for their 2013 debut, which many critics likened to Liars. But their second album drifts away from distorted guitar noise towards a more immersive and introspective musique concrète rippling with dub rhythms, orchestral strings, tolling bells and discordant drones. Recorded during a residency in rural Tuscany, *Country Music* is layered with locally sourced sounds, including the ping of cutlery striking china bowls of foie gras on "Dry Mouth". A few underpowered, slate-grey instrumentals miss the mark, but the gorgeously warped "Tied And Bound" comes close to the alien beauty of Mica Levi's sonically extreme soundtrack work.

STEPHEN DALTON



BUTCH WALKER Afraid Of Ghosts LOJINX

Minor-key seventh full-length from cult US songwriter

6/10

Walker's profile has undergone a populist spike in recent times via high-profile production work with the likes of Taylor Swift, Pink, Panic! At The Disco and Fall Out Boy. This first solo album in four years, for which he's handed over the reins to chum Ryan Adams, is a chiefly acoustic affair that finds Walker meditating on love and mortality in the wake of his father's death. Its muted feel is accentuated by folk-blues tones that rarely break out of a shuffle, enlivened only by some buzzing electric guitar cameos by guests including Johnny Depp and Bob Mould.

ROB HUGHES



THE WAVE PICTURES Great Big Flamingo Burning Moon MOSHI MOSHI

Billy Childish makes fey janglers unafraid to rock

8/10

Over 12 albums and 16 years, David Tattersall, Franic Rozycki and Jonny Helm have been content to pay twee tribute to Jonathan Richman. But approaching iconic artist and garage-punk refusenik Billy Childish to produce them pays dividends. Not that Tattersall's Vic Godard yelp or bookish vulnerability have changed greatly. But Childish has injected a dose of rock'n'roll abandon, contributing blues harp and stunning guitar solos to the likes of "Sinister Purpose" and the title track that lend unlikely sex and threat to the trio. Probably the closest anyone has come to capturing the 40-year-old virgin spirit of the seminal *Modern Lovers* album.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

DUKE GARWOOD

Heavy Love

HEAVENLY

Slow-burn songwriter's moody breakthrough. *By Tom Pinnock*



8/10

THOUGH NEIL YOUNG gave extensive instructions on how not to fade away, he declined to discuss the benefits of fading in. There are, of course, a great deal of positives to be taken from plying your trade in the gutter before heading for the spotlight, and Duke

Garwood is a perfect example.

Now in his early forties, the Kent-born guitarist, singer and songwriter has been involved in music for decades. As well as releasing four previous albums under his own name, Garwood has played guitar with The Orb, been a member of Inchworm and Little Wet Horse, and provided horns for the likes of Savages (whose Jehnnny Beth appears on "Heavy Love") and the Archie Bronson Outfit; yet only recently has he received notable attention.

The unlikely patron who has helped Garwood reach a new audience is Mark Lanegan; recognising a kindred spirit, the former Screaming Tree and Queen Of The Stone Age organised for the pair to record an album as a duo, released in 2013 as *Black Pudding*, and much of *Heavy Love* was tracked at Josh Homme's Pink Duck studio in Los Angeles after wrapping those sessions with Lanegan.

While *Black Pudding* featured primarily steel-string reveries, *Heavy Love* is mostly electric, though like its spiritual predecessor, and his previous albums, it takes its roots from the Delta. If the 10 tracks here are closest to blues, though, they are wonderfully warped and narcotically sluggish mutations, as well as beautifully stripped-down. Lyrics are repeated abstractedly as if they've just come to mind, the music rarely strays from one key, and deconstructed riffs circle ominously.

With songs as spectral and hushed as these, sympathetic production is crucial, and the subtle textures and atmospheric touches are perfectly tailored. "Burning Seas" features only Garwood's single-tracked voice, a guitar woozy with vibrato, and some backwards tones, while "Sweet Wine" is just guitar and vocals, with ghostly organ intruding, as though it's being played softly by the neighbours.

On other cuts, the instrumentation is broader, though only just: "Disco Lights" is a sultry delight in swung 6/8, Paul May's jazzy drums lifted by a mass of echoed guitars on the edge of feedback, while "Snake Man" floats by on a bed of muffled drums and grainy shaker. The whole trip is swathed in luminous reverb, threading a sumptuous twilight feel throughout the album; at times listening to *Heavy Love* is like happily drowning in honey.

Its blues is global, too; the sound of West Africa lurks like a watermark, as on the closing "Hawaiian Death Song", with its desert drones and sinuous electric. It comes as little surprise to discover that Garwood has previously collaborated with the Master Musicians Of Jajouka and Tinariwen.

As his sound has matured organically across his solo albums, Garwood has developed into an evocative lyricist and singer. Unsurprisingly, *Heavy*



SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Produced by:**

Alain Johannes and Mark Lanegan

Recorded in: Pink Duck, LA; Alpine Lodge, UK

Personnel include:

Duke Garwood (vocals, guitar, bass, keys), Paul May (drums), Jehnnny Beth, Petra Jean Phillipson (vocals), Fred Lyenn (bass), Alain Johannes (post-production)

Love is deeply concerned with matters of the heart. Throughout, love is portrayed as a drug, an obsession that could at any point turn poisonous. "Love is all there is," he mutters on the title track, before imploring his lover to crush his chest, so they "can take all of me"; on "Burning Seas", he describes his paramour and he as "bound by sin".

It's not hard to see why Mark Lanegan has long been enamoured with Garwood – the pair share similar tattered, guttural voices, which both reveal beautifully soulful nuances. The only real weakness in *Heavy Love* is the slight sense of artifice in Garwood's transatlantic accent; a necessary evil, perhaps, as his native intonation wouldn't blend

with the smoky background so well.

One benefit of getting older is often a kind of acceptance of yourself, of feeling more comfortable in your own skin. With his fifth album, you get the impression Garwood is making precisely the kind of music he wants to make, with no thought for anything but self-expression. As a result, *Heavy Love*

is a supremely self-confident record, a collection of brackish mood pictures that swell out of your stereo like the most redolent film soundtracks. If this is what Garwood has been working towards, then those decades spent honing his craft were surely worth it. After all, it takes a lot of effort to make something so gloriously effortless.

Q&A

Duke Garwood

Is it good that you've had to wait until your forties to garner this level of attention?

Yeah, I think so. I had high aspirations when I was young, and my technique and maturity maybe couldn't live up to them. So my music might've sounded ambitious, but like I was scratching at something rather than holding it. Now I've got the chops, and the understanding to know when something isn't working. Some people keep kicking at the thing until it falls over; I don't really like treating music quite so harshly as that.

How was the writing process for the album?

There isn't a song on there that hasn't done quite a lot of gig time. Those tunes have been worked and worked and worked. You know, I'm playing all the time, and in however many hours of playing maybe a small song will appear, in the flow of it.

What was Mark Lanegan like to work with?

He's inspiring because his internal editing machine is very good. He's very sharp. So if something's not happening, it's out. It's deleted. It's not saved for a rainy day or something. And when he gets on the mic in the studio that's when you see that he's such a heavyweight, because he completely nails it so precisely. It was quite amazing. Inspiring cat. *INTERVIEW: TOM PINNOCK*



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VARIOUS ARTISTS

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THE PRETTY THINGS

Bouquets From A Cloudy Sky

SNAPPER

Definitive, outtake-fattened career retrospective has been a long time coming. Of course, says *Andy Gill*

BOX CONTENTS:

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8/10 THE PRETTIES WERE one of the more dynamic proponents of the British R'n'B boom, perennially tipped for stardom, and admired by their peers: the young David Bowie, for one, was apparently so besotted with the band that he filed singer Phil May's phone number under "God" in his address book. But their course was pitted with missteps and misfortune, mostly self-imposed by their anarchic reputation. May was famously reputed to possess the longest hair in the country, which helped make the band prime tabloid targets; and drummer Viv Prince was so drunkenly uncontrollable that he seemed to court antagonism everywhere he went - Fontana's head of A&R head refused to have anything to do with the band after Prince puked over his drums in the studio.

Other decisions proved ill-judged. Their singles weren't included on their albums. Their first original song, "We'll Be Together", was about prostitution. Another was called, somewhat bluntly, "LSD". And due to one of their most potent singles, "Don't Bring Me Down", including the line "*And then I laid her on the ground*", it was effectively denied the chance of widespread airplay, especially in America. Then, when they should have been capitalising on early inroads into the American market, they were instead shipped off to tour that hotbed of rock'n'roll fever, New Zealand - where they triggered such a riotous response that they were promptly shipped right back, banned from ever entering the country again. At every turn, it seemed The Pretty Things were determined to sabotage their own career.



➤ Given which, it's astonishing that they managed to come up with several of the most thrilling pieces of primal UK R'n'B, before going on to invent the rock opera, following one of the more creatively intriguing examples of '60s pop's transition from mod to psychedelia.

Their position in pop history is undeniable. Guitarist Dick Taylor founded The Rolling Stones with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, before hooking up with fellow art student Phil May to form the Pretties. They would subsequently share a house – in Belgravia, no less – with Brian Jones; their raucous lifestyle there was celebrated in the song “13 Chester Street”, a “Not Fade Away” soundalike whose rhythm track featured Viv Prince's leather belt being whipped against a chair. Prince's avalanche drums were a crucial element of early successes like their visceral debut single “Rosalyn”, the musical embodiment of a primal urge with the waspish appeal of the early Stones. It's one of the era's emblematic recordings, as is its follow-up “Don't Bring Me Down”, a blast of feral momentum periodically arrested by a sexually frustrated stop/start structure.

Their eponymous debut album was mostly R'n'B covers by the likes of Bo Diddley and Jimmy Reed, lusty plaints given a pulsing pep-pill throb by the band's whipcord-thin sound and May's louche, laconic vocal sneer. The follow-up *Get The Picture?* featured more of their own material alongside covers of Ike Turner and Solomon Burke songs, but was mostly notable for the broadening of their approach, with fuzz-guitar effects, reverbed harmony vocals and odd chord-changes featured on some tracks. But when Fontana, frustrated at the failure of singles like “Midnight To Six Man” and “Come See Me” (both of which sound stunning half a century on), saddled them with string and brass arrangers and Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick &

Tich's producer, the Pretties lost interest in the subsequent *Emotions* album, never playing any of its tracks live. By that time, anyway, they were a completely different band, in terms of outlook and lineup. Viv Prince had long since tried the others' patience and been ditched in favour of

Skip Alan, while further changes saw the recruitment of keyboardist Jon Povey and May's childhood friend, multi-instrumentalist Wally Waller, both from The Fentones, who brought with them a love of West Coast harmonies that fed into the band's broadening sound as the Pretties made the

move from mod to an eclectic psychedelia.

The first declaration of this new intent came with the landmark single “Defecting Grey”, a multi-sectioned psychedelic extravaganza of rasping guitar, electric sitar, backward guitar and looming bass. Helmed by the inventive

At every turn, it seemed they were determined to sabotage their own career

Beatles/Pink Floyd engineer/producer Norman Smith, “Defecting Grey” is the Pretties' “Lazy Sunday”, their “Tomorrow Never Knows”, and an indication of the untapped reserves of musical ambition and imagination that would bear fruit on *SF Sorrow*, the world's first rock opera. Somehow, *SF Sorrow* failed to hoist the band into the first rank of psych-rockers, remaining instead a cult classic, but it stands up better nearly half a century on than most of their contemporaries' efforts. Based on a Phil May story following the titular Sorrow from cradle to grave, it's a densely textured work woven from threads of layered guitars, keyboards, horns and gorgeous harmonies, with Mellotron and sitar “borrowed” from The Beatles' studio down the hall, and Smith ladling on all manner of bespoke effects. But compared with the single-minded R'n'B approach that the band were famed for, it was perhaps too confusingly diverse, with tracks like the martial, rhythmic “Private Sorrow”, the ebullient “SF Sorrow Is Born” and the soaring prog-scape “The Journey” flying off at disparate tangents.



BURIED TREASURE

PRETTY THINGS

Boxset highlights...

COME SEE ME 1965

One of the Pretties' least successful singles, this sounded like an alien transmission in the Swinging '60s, with the swagger of its monstrous bassline allied to the fuzztone snarl of guitar and Phil May's threatening entreaty. *Disc* magazine panned it as "too ugly... an anti-sound". It's stupendous, a freakbeat classic.

DEFECTING GREY 1968

Both the short and long mixes of this psych milestone are here. The longer one is like wandering into a constantly changing maze, flip-flopping between fairground charm and darker portents. No other recording captures so perfectly the mid-'60s shift from mod/R'n'B to hippy/psychedelia.

WHY 1968 and RENAISSANCE FAIR 1969

This pair of Byrds covers, recorded respectively in Hyde Park and the Paradiso, indicate the Pretties' new influences. "Why" is particularly impressive, six minutes of spiralling guitars and wailing blues harp that takes the song even further out than David Crosby imagined.

IT'LL NEVER BE ME 1969

French millionaire's son and Pretty Things fan Philippe DeBarge wanted the band to write songs for him. After being wined and dined at his Riviera retreat, they ended up recording an entire album for him, including this serpentine psych exercise, in which DeBarge's so-so vocals are dissolved in the Pretties' lissom harmonies.

The follow-up, *Parachute*, a pastoral-psych album themed around the contrast between urban and rural lifestyles – a vogueish concern at the time, with hippies intent on getting back to the land – proved similarly outré, despite again featuring intelligent material, ambitiously treated. It's at this point that the band's career started to drift seriously off course, with the slick cover to *Freeway Madness* signalling the desperate urge to please American punters that would take up the Pretties' next decade. There were occasional highlights – the blend of jaunty, offbeat piano interspersed with darker intimations gave *Silk Torpedo*'s "Dream/Joey" something akin to the ambivalence of The Doors – but the hook-up with Led Zep's SwanSong label inevitably led to a coke-fuelled hedonism that gradually eroded the group's integrity. Following several further personnel changes, even Phil May was moved to quit, displeased at how money was becoming the driving force behind creative decisions.

Without him, the band collapsed – though there's a certain poetic justice in their eventual reformation resulting from the other Pretties joining him on a solo project. And there's something heroically noble at their continued existence, intermittently performing and releasing LPs like 2007's *Balboa Island*, whose "The Beat Goes On" offers an autobiographical overview of the life and times of those "dirty Pretty Things... back in the day we stole the blues". The fame has gone, they concede, but regardless, "the beat goes on inside me and you". And always will, no doubt.



Q&A

Phil May and Dick Taylor discuss R'n'B, being managed by Peter Grant, and *SF Sorrow*... "It was down to the drugs!"

PHIL, YOU HAD an unusual upbringing, brought up thinking your aunt was your mum, then being taken away from her by your birth mother. Do you think that influenced your artistic leanings?

PM: It was a bit like John Lennon – Flo was as good as any mum. It had an incredible effect on my life, because from the age of 10 to 14, I was a kind of prisoner in my mother and stepfather's house. In the end I ran away, but only after my stepfather had run off with the nanny. I asked my mum, "Now Ron's gone, can I go as well?"

Did art school give you some stability?

PM: It was the first place I was a kind of star – for once, I was good at a subject everyone was doing. Dick [Taylor] and Keith [Richards] were a year ahead of me, but my year had the nicest-looking girls, which gave us an entrée into the year above!

Dick, you have the distinction of founding two of the great bands of the '60s.

DT: I suppose I do. I was definitely there!

R'n'B was the exciting new sound then...

DT: Yes, though I was into all sorts of things. At art school, people would bring in all these different albums, so we'd be listening to Thelonious Monk and Joey Dee & The Starlighters and Howlin' Wolf, all in one lunchtime. I loved it all!

What were the Pretties' early days like?

PM: We had a fantastic time. We started off doing student gigs, at the Architects Association, St Martins, the Royal Academy. It was when we did the Dartford Station Hotel gig that it changed: I remember thinking, we are leaving the comforting bosom of art students to throw ourselves on the mercy of punters who might think we're bollocks.

A lot of bands like the Pretties made the transition from R'n'B to psychedelia. Was it mostly down to the drugs?

PM: Oh, totally down to the drugs. Well, not entirely: it also had to do with what intellectual interests you had – like in our case, "Alexander" was inspired by [Lawrence Durrell's] *The Alexandria Quartet*. I was up for it: the music and the energy met up with some feed from the life I would have lived if I'd have been a painter.

DT: I'd been into some far-out music for some time, and I didn't have to take acid to appreciate John Coltrane. But because of the whole underground thing, you could push the envelope a bit more.

What was Norman Smith's input to *SF Sorrow*?

PM: Well, everything. He was the sixth Pretty Thing. On *SF Sorrow* it was all good, he hadn't had his hit record ["*Don't Let It Die*", as *Hurricane Smith*], and become a complete diva! When we worked with him again on *Silk Torpedo*, he was worse than we were. He walked out after one song! He came in the worse for a bottle of whisky, learnt that the song was called "Psychosomatic Boy", and stormed off, saying, "I'm not doing a song about cripples!"

Why did you leave after *SF Sorrow*?

DT: Boredom! I thought, 'Oh, we made a really good record, but now I want to see what else is out there, outside this little enclosed bubble.' I don't know why *SF Sorrow* didn't sell more, but in a way it's kind of paid off, 'cause it's now a cult classic.

Who was Philippe DeBarge?

PM: He was a French millionaire's son who wanted to be a rock star. He asked me and Wally Waller to write him an album, and flew us down to St Tropez. The first night he took us out to dinner in a 1916 De Dion. We wrote a pretty good album, then realised he didn't have musicians to record it, so we used The Pretty Things.

Why did you leave the band?

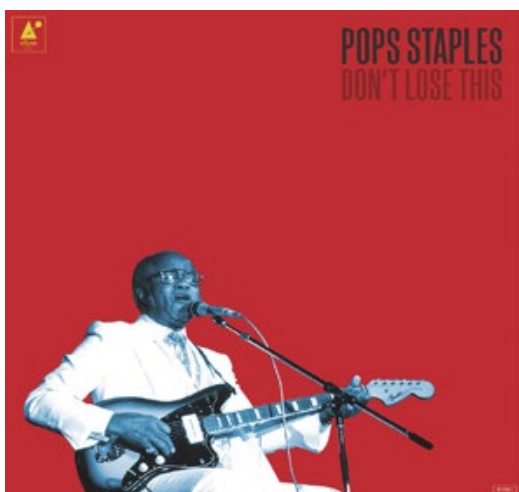
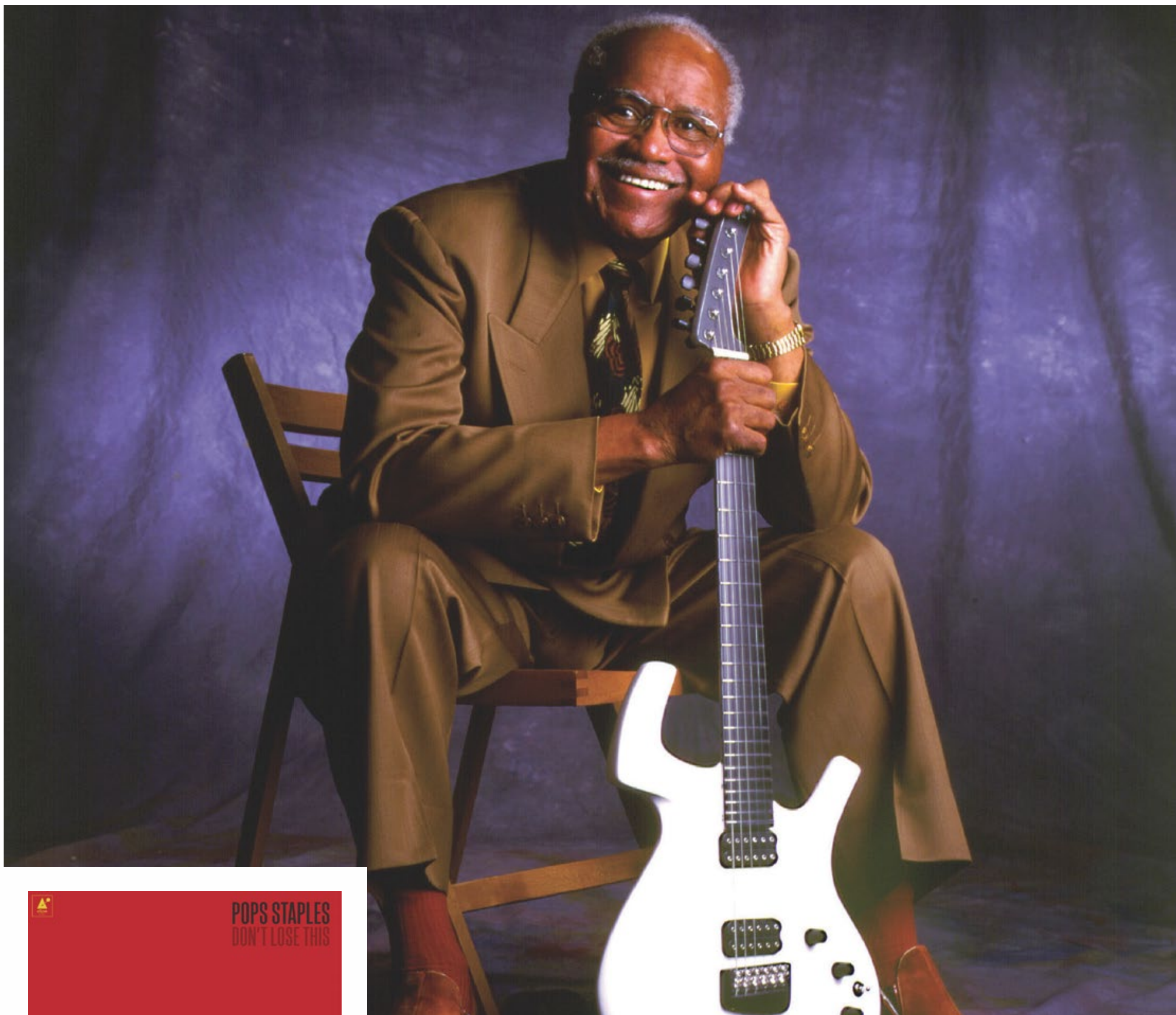
PM: We were like a wounded elephant after the *Savage Eye* tour, much more damaged than we realised once the drugs wore off. I felt we were just chasing money and losing our integrity, so I walked out.

The Pretties' career is a parade of mishaps and missteps. Do you think you needed a stronger managerial figure? I notice that later, when you signed with SwanSong, you insisted that Peter Grant manage the band.

PM: That was blackmail! We learnt that Peter was the head of the label, and I thought, 'Oh fuck, who's going to be able to argue with Peter for a bigger budget?' And I decided the only person was him! His response was, "Bryan Morrison told me you were fucking unmanageable!" But he agreed.

INTERVIEW: ANDY GILL

"We were like a wounded elephant, more damaged than we realised after the drugs wore off..."



POPS STAPLES

Don't Lose This

ANTI-

Jeff Tweedy helms this respectful, tender take on the Staples patriarch's final recordings. *By Richard Williams*

TRACKLIST

- 1 Somebody Was Watching
- 2 Sweet Home
- 3 No News Is Good News
- 4 Love On My Side
- 5 Friendship
- 6 Nobody's Fault But Mine
- 7 The Lady's Letter
- 8 Better Home
- 9 Will The Circle Be Unbroken
- 10 Gotta Serve Somebody

9/10 ROEBUCK "POPS" STAPLES left it until late in his seventh decade before embarking on a solo career. Until that point he had been the mentor of his family gospel group, the Staple Singers, guiding them through 30 years of progress to international fame. Only when Mavis, his younger daughter and the group's lead singer, decided to strike out on her own did he take the chance to step into the spotlight himself.

Not that he made much of a fuss about it. Anyone who met Pops Staples before his death in 2000, at the age of 85, recognised that here was a man of quiet modesty, who lived by the words he sang. His gentle vocal delivery and his distinctive reverb-soaked guitar tone were of a piece with that wise humility.

Musicians loved him. Ask Curtis Mayfield, who built his early hits on an adaptation of that guitar sound. Or Ry Cooder, who co-produced

Q&A

Jeff Tweedy, producer



It seems that the music on *Don't Lose This* was intended, back in 1998, to be Pops Staples' third solo album. How did you come by the job of completing the project?

I learnt about the existence of the record from Mavis during the recording of her last album. She asked me if I'd like a crack at finishing it. I replied that I'd be honoured to try to make it into something of which her father would hopefully be proud.

What sort of shape were the tapes in?

We never really got the master tapes. I guess they exist somewhere, but we had to work from computer files. Basically what I did was listen to Pops himself, his voice and guitar, to see how much spill or leakage there was in his microphone. Fortunately for me, it had been recorded very cleanly. So at that point it was just a matter of playing along with Pops, which was a thrill. The only things we added were bass and drums, and a little bit of guitar and some keyboards here and there. All the vocals are the originals.

On "Sweet Home", the guitar-player is you, accompanying a duet by Pops and Mavis.

At some point after Pops passed away, somebody else tried to finish the record. But, for whatever reason, they never made it. I'm grateful for that because it gave me the opportunity. They'd added a kind of a big-band arrangement to that song, which didn't necessarily hold up today. So I stripped it back to the two voices and added some guitar. When Mavis heard it, she was fooled: she thought it was Pops playing guitar.

Since he died in 2000, and you only began working with Mavis 10 years after that, I suppose you didn't meet him.

No, I didn't. But it was very touching, when we were adding instruments to the tracks, to watch my son Spencer playing the drums along with Pops on tape and be visibly moved by the experience.

It's a challenge to finish a record in the name of someone who's no longer around to give an opinion. How do you feel it turned out?

I was just going to do my best and let Mavis be the judge of whether it was close enough to what she felt would have been her father's vision of it. We played it to her, and she listened with tears in her eyes. Her dad was coming through so clearly and it made her happy. It was one of the best experiences I've ever had in the studio.

INTERVIEW: RICHARD WILLIAMS

the two solo albums released during Pops' lifetime: *Peace To The Neighborhood* (1992) and *Father, Father* (1994). They knew that this was a man who, born in 1914, grew up picking cotton on Will Dockery's plantation in Sunflower County, Mississippi, where he heard Charley Patton play in front of the general store. At 12 years of age Roebuck got his first guitar, and learnt to play the blues – although later on, he averred that his heart was never in it.

He made the classic migration north to Chicago in 1935, a handful of dollars in his pocket. Within a year his earnings from a job in the stockyards enabled him to call his wife and the first of their children to join him. He abandoned the guitar for 10 years, but hearing Big Bill Broonzy and others inspired him to buy a new instrument and rediscover his skills. Soon he was performing gospel songs in storefront churches, and teaching his growing family to sing along in simple harmony. Their recording career began in 1952 and the run of hits lasted until "Respect Yourself" and "I'll Take You There" brought them a global audience 20 years later.

The first of his solo albums was nominated for a Grammy and the second actually won one. When he died, he left a number of unfinished tracks in Mavis' keeping; they now see the light of day as *Don't Lose This*, restored and refurbished by Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, who produced Mavis' well-received albums *You Are Not Alone* and *One True Vine* in 2010 and 2013, respectively.

The Wilco frontman knows not to try anything fancy with this material. There's a hint of Americana in the rustic-sounding

drums, but no post-production tricks are allowed to get in the way of the signature Staples sound. Roebuck's lead vocals, with that confiding intimacy that made him sound like the precursor of Bill Withers, take centre-stage on songs such as "Somebody is Watching Me" and "Friendship", while Mavis steps forward from time to time, notably on "Love On My Side".

The guitar is at full strength on "Nobody's Fault But Mine", unaccompanied but as big as any band (interestingly, Roebuck seemed to be able to get his signature sound on any combination of equipment, from the Gibson Les Paul and matching amp set-up of his '50s VeeJay sides to the Stratocaster and Fender Twin of his later years). On the slinky groove of "The Lady's Letter", the family vocal blend first supports him and then takes over for a nostalgic chorus ("Hmm," Roebuck murmurs appreciatively as the track ends). On "Better Home", Mavis wraps her voice around his with infinite tenderness in a gorgeous duet. There's an appealing remake of "Will The Circle Be Unbroken", one of the Staple Singers' early hits, and the album closes with a driving live version of Dylan's gospel-blues "Gotta Serve Somebody", reminding us that Bob once unsuccessfully proposed marriage to Mavis.

However much work Tweedy needed to do to complete this record, the result is never lacking in sensitivity, authenticity or integrity. "What do you think?" Pops asks his daughter as the last notes of the lovely "Sweet Home" die away. "I think it's good, Daddy," Mavis replies. I'll go with that, and raise the mark a notch for the very fact of the album's existence.



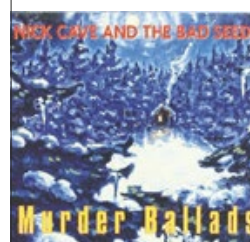
ARTHUR
Dreams And Images (reissue, 1968)
LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Enigmatic folk/psych oddity gets the deluxe treatment

7/10 *Dreams And Images*, 10 eerily muted pontifications

caught in a creepy strings-and-orchestra undertow, appeared on Lee Hazlewood's LHI label in 1968. In the then fast-expanding world of sad bastard singer/songwriters in the post-Dylan era, Arthur Lee Harper represented a fringe extreme, anger fully inverted – think a gloomy, unrelentingly droopy Donovan. Predicated on disconnectedness, Harper's protagonists drift on puffy clouds, trapped in a maddening, usually disillusioning ethereality. Harper's tenor governs the proceedings, holding court over clunky flutes, horns, woodwind and harpsichords. Some songs are so lethargic as to go virtually nowhere. "A Friend Of Mine", for example, drowns in über-precious intonations. "Wintertime", meanwhile, calls a chilling end to the Summer Of Love: "*Had a ball at a pleasure fair,*" Harper avers, "*But everything ends.*" Once sucked inside Harper's miniaturised world of desolation, though, *Dreams...* reveals its share of dark charm, including several downcast melodies to die for – the twirling stutter-step "Open The Door" and the gently tumbling "Valentine Grey", diabolical underground classics both.

EXTRAS: Three contemporaneously recorded **6/10** unreleased tracks, one of which, "Coming Home", pithily encapsulates Harper's entire vibe within a tidy 1:43. **LUKE TORN**



NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS
Murder Ballads (reissue, 1996)
MUTE

The vinyl curtain. '90s Cave, reissued on record
Bad Seed – then, abruptly, former Bad Seed – Mick

8/10

Harvey has been the curator of the Nick Cave catalogue for the past five or so years, presenting remastered Bad Seeds CDs with attractive additional content. Last year, the project entered the "fan tax" stage of the operation, when the catalogue began to make its way on to heavyweight vinyl. Vinyl seemed barely on the industry agenda when Cave's excellent mid-'90s work was released – a hack's relationship with *Murder Ballads* or the subsequent *The Boatman's Call*, for example, was a journey from promo tape to finished CD. Clever formatting and Kylie Minogue helped get "Where The Wild Roses Grow" into the charts – but records didn't have much to do with it. This monster (chiefly a collection of trad arr material given a violent reboot before anyone dreamed of the new folk revival) certainly benefits from the enterprise. Set to be a handsome double album, this finds the Bad Seeds in expansive and ribald form after the vow of silence they took on the previous record. Cave, meanwhile, plays to the gallery, relishing inhabiting the many murderous roles herein. The highpoint comes early with the bloodbath "Stagger Lee". The song is the death of many a poor sucker. But it's also the birth of the post-modern celebrity Nick Cave we know today.

EXTRAS: None.
JOHN ROBINSON

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Thunder Road OST

BEAR FAMILY

9/10

The original soundtrack from Robert Mitchum's cult classic, never before released

In 1996, Dolly Parton opened a new ride at her Dollywood theme park dedicated to the first film she saw at the cinema: *Thunder Road*, Robert Mitchum's 1958 yarn about moonshiners in the Southern Appalachians.

But Dolly wasn't alone in paying homage to Mitchum's picture: Bruce Springsteen named the opening track from *Born To Run* in its honour, while Tarantino and Jim Jarmusch have also acknowledged its influence.

Thunder Road is entirely Mitchum's film: he wrote, produced, co-directed and played the lead (though originally he courted Elvis Presley for the role). For the score, he enlisted composer Jack Marshall, who'd played on Mitchum's 1957 album, *Calypso Is Like So*, and arranged "Fever" for Peggy Lee. Marshall, in turn, brought on board Joe Maphis, whose legendarily fast finger-picking twang provides thrilling accompaniment to the film's chase sequences.

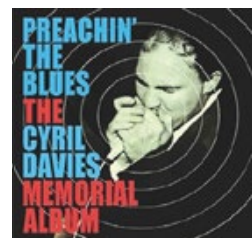
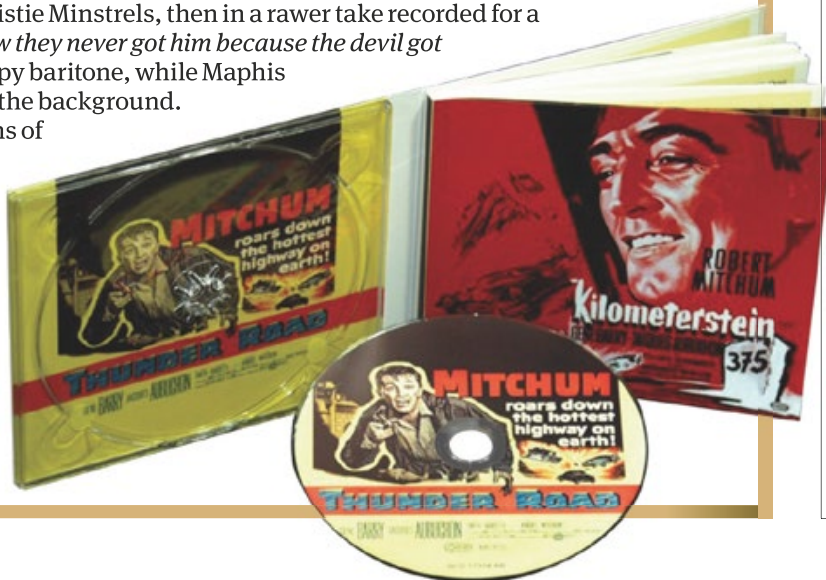
But there are two stories here. One concerns the film's original soundtrack – a mix of lush orchestral pieces and Maphis' quick-fire interludes – while the other involves the afterlife of two songs Mitchum co-wrote for the film, "The Whippoorwill" (beautifully sung by jazz singer Keely Smith, who also played the film's female lead) and "The Ballad Of Thunder Road".

"The movie's an icon of outsider Americana," says Mitchum biographer and *Uncut* contributor Damien Love, who authored sleeve notes for this release. "But Mitchum's rockabilly title song has an even bigger cult, cited by musicians from The Cramps to Steve Earle – Earle's 'Copperhead Road' is practically a sequel."

"The Ballad Of Thunder Road" appears here in several guises: first, as a folky ballad sung by Randy Sparks, later of The New Christie Minstrels, then in a rawer take recorded for a single by Mitchum himself. "The law they never got him because the devil got him first," Mitchum sings in his sleepy baritone, while Maphis plucks Mitchum's notes in the background.

There are nine different incarnations of "Ballad..." here – including, should you need it, a surf version by The Super Stocks, the studio band created by Byrds and Brian Wilson collaborator Gary Usher. Essentially, you may only need Marshall, Maphis and Mitchum's original recordings. Still stylish and exhilarating, nearly 60 years on.

MICHAEL BONNER



CYRIL DAVIES

Preachin' The Blues: The Memorial Album

HIGHNOTE

Late lamented harp howler anthologised

7/10

Had he not died from endocarditis in 1964, just shy of his 32nd birthday, Davies arguably would have become a much more well-known figure on the booming British blues scene. As it was, he remained largely a name associated with higher profile musicians, having spent time in Chris Barber's jazz band and lengthy stretches in a number of outfits with his close friend Alexis Korner. The latter man's presence is strong on this sturdy anthology, his name, either as leader of The Breakdown Group or Blues Incorporated, prefacing all but nine of these 50 tracks. Chronologically sequenced, Davies and his eloquent harmonica first make an impression with Beryl Bryden's late '50s group, bringing a rare jazzy sophistication to the usually roughshod DIY skiffle scene. But it's the enduring partnership with Korner that dominates here, from the Guthrie-like dustbowl holler of "I Ain't Gonna Worry No More" to the Chicago-inspired grit of "Rain Is Such A Lonesome Sound". Quitting Blues Incorporated in '62, Davies recorded five tracks with his own R&B All-Stars; all are included here, the harp-Hammond sparring of "Someday Baby" the perfect way to bring down the curtain on an all-too-brief career that should have soared to much greater heights.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON



MORTON FELDMAN

Two Pianos & Other Pieces 1953-1969

ANOTHER TIMBRE

Exceptional performances of early Feldman experiments

8/10

It's easy to peg American

composer Morton Feldman as the man whose compositions hover close to silence, for whom the dynamic indicator of *pianississimo*, meaning "very very soft", was a guiding principle, but there's so much more to his music than this. Later works, like "For Philip Guston", work with time fabric, using large scales, of four to five hours per piece, to patiently explore the potential of clusters of notes, or the voices of particular instruments. Reel back to the '50s and '60s, though, and Feldman's compositions are more cellular, and often deal with a negotiation between strict notational parameters, and flexibility in duration and time. The end result, particularly when performed by such excellent interpreters of Feldman's work as Philip Thomas, and John Tilbury of AMM, is music whose seeming quietude belies a heart of great tension – listen, for example, to "Four Instruments", where Anton Lukoszevieve (cello), Mira Benjamin (violin) and Rodrigo Constanzo (chimes) join Tilbury in a patient game of tag, "the end of one instrument's sound cues the beginning of another instrument's sound", as Thomas writes in his notes. Or the gorgeous, dappled driftworks of "Piece For Four Pianos". This is truly sublime music, patiently played.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



THE GOLDEBRIARS

Walkin' Down The Line: The Best Of The GoldeBriars

NOW SOUNDS

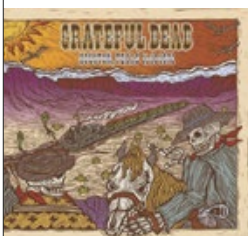
8/10

Sunshine pop impresario Curt Boettcher's ground zero

Contrary to customary norms, the sum of the GoldeBriars' parts far outpaces the whole. Dozens of likeminded white-bread folk/pop combos – fodder for the filmic *Mighty Wind* stereotype – lie trampled, rightfully buried by the likes of Dylan, Ochs, Neil *et al.* It's tempting to lump the GoldeBriars' highly palpable youth and innocence (see the precious delivery of folk standards like "Railroad Boy", the hopelessly camp "No More Bomb") in with the also-rans. Yet the group had many secret weapons: sisters Dotti and Sheri Holmberg were fine singers, delivering complex, moody arrangements and peerless harmonies. Meanwhile Curt Boettcher, the group's 19-year-old guitarist, was a snake in the grass, soon to become an influential kingpin of the West Coast studio sound. To their credit, the GoldeBriars eventually inched away from the hokiest repertoire, edging into folk/rock ("Tell It To The Wind"). Still, their significance lay in the game-changes they portended. How voice and harmony might morph into something like Boettcher's later production of The Association. How the aesthetics inherent in Boettcher's formidable work with The Ballroom, The Millennium, even The Beach Boys, filter through. File under: fascinating.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



GRATEFUL DEAD

Houston, Texas 11-18-1972

RHINO

8/10

Vinyl-only pick from the Dead's most celebrated year

1972 has become so sanctified in Dead mythology, hardcore fans are not averse to mocking those who fixate on live sets from that year, and the rootsy extrapolations that made *Europe '72: The Complete Recordings* the most fêted of the band's mammoth boxsets. Still, though, the treasures keep coming, not least this vinyl-only preservation of a show at Houston's Hofheinz Pavilion – one that would've been a joint headliner with the Allman Brothers, were it not for Berry Oakley's death on November 11. Strictly speaking, it's only half a Dead show, since the first set of the evening was deemed unreleasable due to what David Lemieux, in the sleeve note, calls "some tape/recording issues". Fortunately, Owsley Stanley had his equipment running properly for the second half of the show, which features some key '72 standbys and, in lieu of a "Dark Star" or "Other One", a great 26-minute take on "Playing In The Band". Phil Lesh's bass is high and melodically inventive, Donna Jean Godchaux contributes harmonies that are more stable than usual. Garcia, meanwhile, is in peak questing form, never better than on a version of "He's Gone" that wanders confidently off into a spare, funky 16-minute jam.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY



GEORGE JACKSON AND DAN GREER

George Jackson And Dan Greer At Goldwax

ACE

7/10

Raw demos by Southern soul songwriters

Born in Mississippi and working out of various Memphis studios, Jackson & Greer are familiar to in-the-know soul fans as the songwriting team behind a clutch of Southern soul gems for the likes of Wilson Pickett, James Carr and The O'Jays. They also recorded in the late '60s as George & Greer, and the 23 tracks on this compilation include six full studio recordings, including their single "You Didn't Know It But You Had Me" and the endearingly daft would-be novelty dance craze "Do The March". The remaining 17 tracks are previously unreleased demos from around 1967, with just Greer on piano and Jackson on vocals. Some of them were later recorded by James Carr with a full band – the pulsating "Coming Back To Me Baby", the chugging 6/8 Southern soul ballad "Love Attack", and the Otis Redding-ish "I Don't Want To Be Hurt Anymore". Others are slightly stilted pastiches of Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye or Wilson Pickett. None of these spartan and slightly clunky demos are great recordings, but they are a fascinating example of raw songwriting, and one that allows the listener to play Memphis A&R man. Imagine hearing similar versions of contemporaneous songs by the Motown or Brill Building songsmiths!

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS

HOW TO BUY... THE DEAD IN '72

Garcia & co's annus mirabilis



Europe '72 WARNER BROS, 1972

Not a perfect album by any means, but an essential document in the Dead's career, *Europe '72* was the album that captured the Dead as re-activators of American song. The playing isn't always as sympathetic as you'd expect, and there are some longueurs, but it's a good representation of where the Dead were at.

8/10



Dick's Picks Vol 23

GRATEFUL DEAD, 2001

From the Baltimore Civic Centre, this September '72 show is particularly compelling on the songs front, with lovely renditions of live staples. For those after wilder thrills, though, the 40-minute "The Other One" has some fine moments broadcast from the outer limits of the Dead's world. Not consummate, but strong.

8/10



Dick's Picks Vol 36

GRATEFUL DEAD, 2005

This was the last *Dick's Pick*, another September set, this time from The Spectrum in Philly. A fine setlist with expansive readings of "Dark Star" and "Playing In The Band", the Godchauxs really finding their feet. Worthy extra performances from Folsom Field.

9/10

JON DALE



JOE JAMMER

Headway

ANGEL AIR

6/10

First ever release for lost 1974 album from Led Zep acolyte

After the teenage Joe Wright had worked as a roadie on American tours by Hendrix and The Who, Jimmy Page employed him as his full-time guitar-tech. With a catchy Zep-given new name, friends in high places and a prodigious ability as a string-bender, a deal with EMI followed and Jammer's solo debut appeared in 1973. The follow-up had already been recorded with a crack band featuring Mitch Mitchell on drums when he ran into visa problems and was deported back to America. He took the tapes with him and they were forgotten for the next four decades until he rediscovered them in his late mother's basement. Given Jammer's heavy rock pedigree, the sound is something of a surprise, for there's little bludgeoning as he favours a more soulful, R'n'B-tinged approach. "Broken Little Pieces" is a Meters in-the-pocket style funk workout. "Cool Breeze" is Stax-inspired with Jammer chopping out riffs like Steve Cropper. "Axe Me Another" has a jazz-funk vibe reminiscent of Jeff Beck in *Blow By Blow* mode and finds the rhythm section of Mitchell and John Gustafson (The Big Three) swinging with explosive power. The weakness is the vocals, for both Jammer and lead singer, ex-Sha-Na-Na man Johnny Contardo, have bland and characterless voices.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



JOHN MARTYN

Sapphire/Piece By Piece

(reissues, 1984, 1986) UMC

6/10

Expanded reissues of middling mid-'80s albums from the late, great singer-songwriter

John Martyn's inimitable voice and restless creative tendencies lend an intrinsic value to almost everything he did, but this pair of mid-'80s albums, long deleted but now handsomely reissued on digital, CD and limited edition double vinyl, are two of the less essential items in his catalogue. Released in 1984 and 1986 respectively, they're both defined by the glossy, synthetic pop/rock sound, all fretless bass and Linn drums, that Martyn had pursued since 1980's *Grace And Danger*, only without that album's quality songwriting, or its keen sense of emotional hurt. Both albums slide along amiably enough without making much of an impression. *Sapphire* is the marginally stronger of the two, with the atmospheric title track, lovely "Rope Soul D" and Van Morrison-esque "Fisherman's Dream" standing out. On the more anaemic *Piece By Piece*, only the sultry "Angeline" and lithe title song really manage to break free of the surrounding aural blandness.

EXTRAS: Both albums come with a second disc of alternate mixes, outtakes and live performances from a 1986 show in Hamburg. The latter include an almost unrecognisable version of Dylan's "Tight Connection To My Heart".

EXTRAS: Both albums come with a second disc of alternate mixes, outtakes and live performances from a 1986 show in Hamburg. The latter include an almost unrecognisable version of Dylan's "Tight Connection To My Heart".
GRAEME THOMSON



MCCARTHY

Complete Albums, Singles And BBC Collection

CHERRY RED

Indie-pop insurrectionists, collected over four discs

8/10

Inserting the language of revolution into rock'n'roll is a tricky business: for every Clash or Manic Street Preachers, there's a dozen bands like The Redskins, hearts in the right place, but struggling to make a slogan sing. McCarthy maybe fell closer to the latter than the former, but if it's difficult to imagine storming a barricade to a knock-kneed indie jangle titled "The Procession Of Popular Capitalism", this incongruity was certainly part of the design. Nicky Wire later called the Essex quartet's debut album *I Am A Walrus* "the most perfect record... a Communist manifesto with tunes", and it still sounds like little else. Malcolm Eden sings reedily of Marxism and alienation over Tim Gane's lilting 12-string guitar, cursing Thatcher on "In The Dark Times" and advocating treason on "Charles Windsor" ("Revenge is so sweet/To those who have never known anything sweet"). 1989's *The Enraged Will Inherit The Earth* pales slightly next to EP "Should The Bible Be Banned", while 1990 swansong *Banking, Violence And The Inner Life Today* added droning keys, rudimentary electronics and vocals from Gane's girlfriend Laetitia Sadier – a glimpse of what they'd later do together in Stereolab. A fine summation of a remarkable, if flawed band.

EXTRAS: Additional EPs, disc of BBC Sessions.

7/10 LOUIS PATTISON



MANIC STREET PREACHERS

The Holy Bible 20

COLUMBIA/SONY

Balaclavas off! New 4CD edition throws some light on the Manics' dense, bleak masterpiece

9/10

A blistering riposte to sceptics who still had the Manics pegged as a triumph of slogans over substance – as well as to those who'd given up on rock's power to inspire and inflame – the Blackwood band's third album was a torrent of streamlined rage and despair, a stadium rock Joy Division with lyrics by a deranged Noam Chomsky. Released in the same month as *Definitely Maybe*, *The Holy Bible* stood in stark opposition to Britpop jollity, touching instead on capitalism, prostitution, anorexia, euthanasia, American imperialism and the Holocaust – yet it still yielded three Top 30 singles. The fixation on torment and suffering makes for a harrowing listen, particularly in the light of Richey's subsequent disappearance, but *The Holy Bible* remains an extraordinary, ferocious album from a young band pushing themselves to the very limit.

EXTRAS: All the B-sides of the period, including

9/10

an unlikely live pummelling of the Faces' "Stay With Me" featuring Bernard Butler on guitar; 13 songs from Richey's last ever show, at the Astoria in December 1994; the complete "US Mix" of the album, preferred by the band; and revelatory new acoustic versions of the likes of "4st 7lb" and "This Is Yesterday", exposing the raw beauty beneath the post-punk murk.

SAM RICHARDS



KYLIE MINOGUE

Kylie (reissue, 1988)

PWL

Kylie: The PWL Years, remastered

Mulling over the relative disappointment of *Kiss Me Once*, Minogue's 2014 album for Roc Nation, Jay Z could do well to revisit the singer's first four albums. Here – behind the teeth and curls – Minogue's early career attributes were well defined: lightweight pop, guilelessly delivered. 1988's self-titled Pete Waterman Limited debut and its 1989 follow-up, *Enjoy Yourself*, feature a brace of hit singles and future wedding reception staples – "I Should Be So Lucky" and "The Locomotion" among them. There is admittedly little artistically to commend much of the material – Pete Waterman never presented himself as a man striving for artistic longevity. But the first two albums at least display an endearing, can-do attitude that, on the back of the huge success of *Neighbours*, enhanced Kylie's ascending star power. 1990's *Rhythm Of Love* includes two of her strongest early songs, "What Do I Have To Do" and "Better The Devil You Know" – the latter described by Nick Cave as containing "one of pop music's most violent and distressing love lyrics". For 1991's patchy *Let's Get To It*, she receives co-writing credits on six tracks – but it tries too hard, too fast to escape PWL's orbit. "Indie Kylie" is just round the corner: a period that's long overdue reappraisal.

EXTRAS: None.

MICHAEL BONNER



THE ORB

History Of The Future Part 2

MALICIOUS DAMAGE

Alex Paterson digs deep into the cosmic dub archive

8/10

There have already been half a dozen Orb compilations, not including mixtapes, but this completes a definitive pair of three-disc boxsets. Last year's *History Of The Future* took us from Alex Paterson's late-'80s ambient work with Kris Weston right up to 2001: *Part 2* continues the story. Here the major labels and the hits are (largely) behind them, and instead Paterson and his new amanuensis Thomas Fehlmann are moving away from novelty cosmic rock and digging deeper into dub. Their one big hit LP of this period – 2010's *Metallic Spheres*, recorded with David Gilmour – is notably absent from this collection, but there is an interesting selection of tracks recorded for indies including Kompakt and Cooking Vinyl. "Little Fluffy Clouds" is revisited twice – first tangentially as "Apple Tree", then by Lee "Scratch" Perry on "Golden Clouds" – while tracks like "Battersea Bunches", "Shem", "Dilmun" and "D.A.D.O.E.S" see The Orb taking their ambient soundscapes into hauntological territory. There is enough here to knit into several different playlists: you can have fun programming the bleepy junglism of "Suck My Kiss", the slo-mo skank of "Aftermath", the folktronica of "Edelgrun" and the utterly blissful space jazz of "Traumvogel".

EXTRAS: Includes several obscure remixes and

7/10

JOHN LEWIS



RAMONES

Live At German Television: The Musikladen Recordings

SIREENA

Eins, zwei, drei, vier! Brudders on da German toob

7/10

A week before fourth album *Road To Ruin* arrived in (and largely remained in) the shops, in September 1978 the Ramones made a trip to Europe. They stopped in Germany and the studios of *Musikladen*, an OGWT-style show unaccustomed to punk (presenter Joerg Sonntag remembers giving away tickets to likely insurgents in bars the previous night), but with the taste and foresight to tape and broadcast a full Ramones set. This, on vinyl and DVD, is the documentary testimony: 25 songs in 50 minutes, the Ramones gradually winning over the crowd. Meanwhile, the assault instantly overpowers the TV station sound. This is a professional document, but the raw treble recording makes it more like a Stooges live album than a Ramones one. Strange to think of the Ramones as having a "transitional phase", but this is what is documented here. Tommy had lately left to concentrate on production, and the band were attempting to make explicit some of their pop influences. In fairness, not awfully hard. Here there are nods to new album ("I Don't Want You"; "Needles And Pins"), but mainly charges through classics from their first and third albums. It's a bop, for sure, just without much blitzkrieg.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON



BRIDGET ST JOHN

Dandelion Albums & BBC Recordings Collection

CHERRY RED

Modest trailblazing singer-songwriter

8/10

This four-disc set brings together Cherry Red's existing expanded editions of Bridget St John's three albums for John Peel's Dandelion Records between 1968 and 1972 plus related surviving BBC Sessions including a 1971 Radio 1 *In Concert* featuring two amiable duets with Kevin Ayers. Peel once described St John as his "favourite lady singer, alongside Sandy Denny"; her 1969 debut *Ask Me No Questions* was the first album of entirely self-written songs by any female British singer-songwriter at that time, and her alluring, largely acoustic songs and gentle husky voice placed her in a similar niche to Nick Drake, Vashti Bunyan or early John Martyn. Like Drake, she didn't emerge from a folk club background and had sung little before leaving Sheffield University in 1968. Peel was very much her champion and she remained under his protective umbrella over the course of these recordings, free of any commercial pressure. Her songs were accordingly unassuming and only sparingly adorned. Despite covering "Night In The City" for a Peel Session featured here, St John shunned the usual hallmarks of Joni Mitchell's pervading influence on her contemporaries; her songs were invariably optimistic and just occasionally bittersweet.

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON

LED ZEPPELIN

Physical Graffiti

(reissue, 1975)

ATLANTIC/SWANSONG

40th anniversary reissue of Zeppelin's monstrous masterpiece. By Andrew Mueller



8/10

LED ZEPPELIN'S SIXTH album, was also, to varying extents, Led Zeppelin's third, fourth and fifth albums – the 15-track running order, consuming 82 minutes and four sides of vinyl, consisted of eight new songs, amalgamated

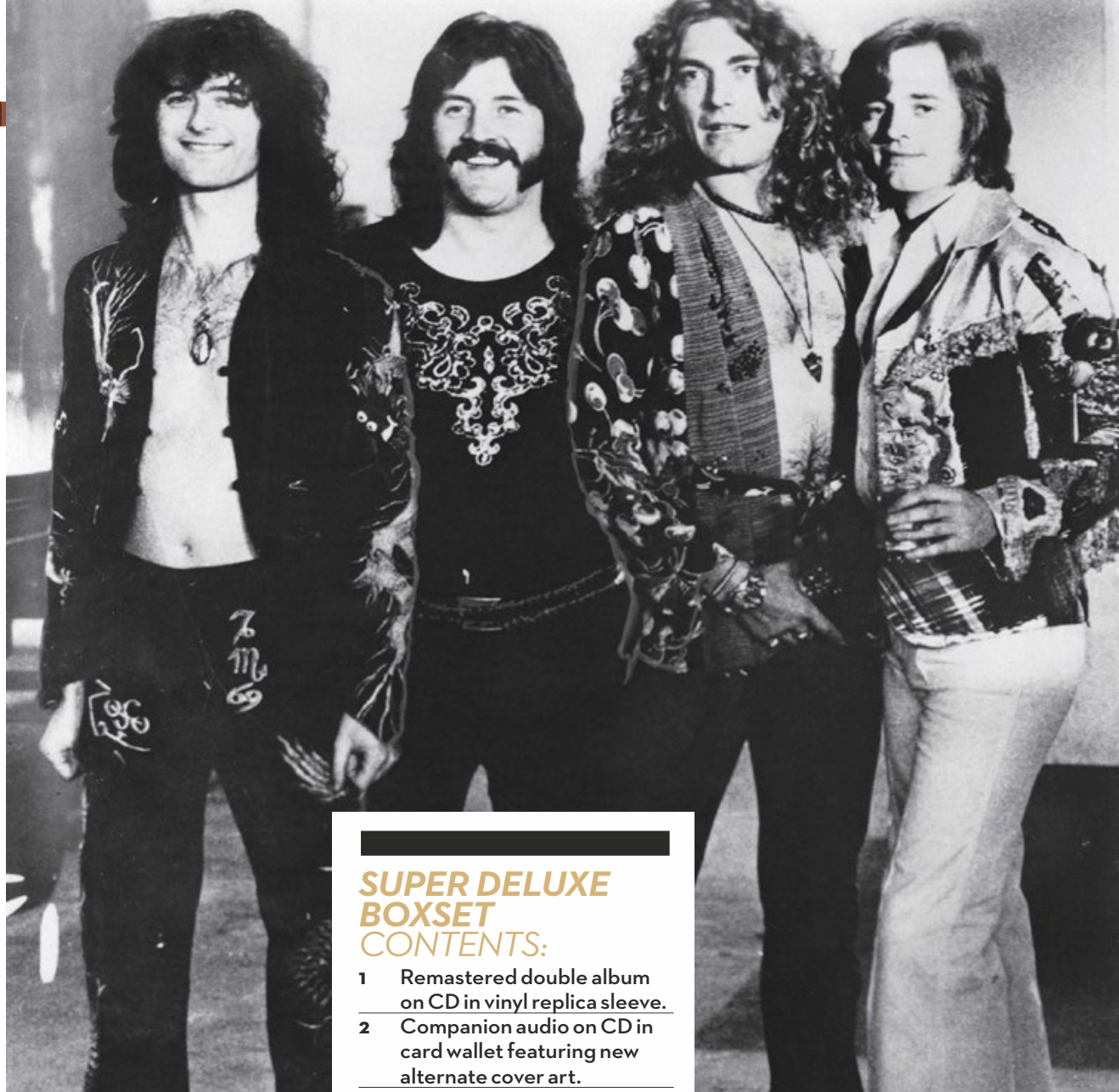
with seven outtakes from *III*, *IV* and *Houses Of The Holy*. When Zep began work on *Physical Graffiti*, in what proved to be abortive early sessions in late 1973, they were – with apologies possibly due to The Rolling Stones – arguably the biggest, certainly the most infamous, rock'n'roll band in the world.

All that remained was the creation of a definitive magnum opus – their own gatefolded masterpiece to file alongside *Exile On Main St.*, 'The White Album' and *Quadrophenia*. *Physical Graffiti* could – and in less adroit hands, assuredly would – have been preposterous, the moment at which Zeppelin's imperial phase collapsed in a goutish wheeze of decadent hubris. Instead, it's magnificent: the Rome that wouldn't fall.

This reissue appears in a panoply of formats. There's a straightforward double CD, a triple CD including a bunch of hitherto unreleased stuff, vinyl and digital equivalents of both those options, and a "super deluxe" boxset including all of the above along with alternate cover art, a book of previously unseen photographs, and a print of the original cover, the first 30,000 of which will be individually numbered. It has also been remastered by Jimmy Page, indefatigable curator of Zeppelin's legacy, who may be unique in being able to perceive significant difference between this and the original, or in thinking there was much wrong with the way *Physical Graffiti* sounded the first time.

The enticement of this reissue is a batch of previously unheard early versions of seven of the 15 tracks which comprise the epic sprawl of *Physical Graffiti*. These latest exhumations from Jimmy Page's attic contain few forehead-slapping revelations. "Brandy & Coke", an early take on "Trampled Under Foot", comes much cleaner on the finished song's debt to Stevie Wonder's "Superstition". "Driving Through Kashmir", part of the journey to one of Zeppelin's loftiest peaks, suggests that there was a point at which an argument was made for turning up the trumpets slightly.

A shorter, softer instrumental version of "Sick Again" permits appreciation of how pretty Zeppelin were capable of being when dropping to the swaggering priapic metal colossi schtick for a couple of minutes, and also spares the listener Robert Plant's exposition of the sexual politics of Hollywood's groupie scene of the early '70s ("The fun of comin'/The pain in leavin'," etc – arguably, you



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had to be there). Of the new versions of "In My Time Of Dying", "Houses Of The Holy", "Everybody Makes It Through The Night" and "Boogie With Stu", it is difficult to sum up much reaction beyond the thought that they're not as good as the familiar, finished versions – of some interest to completists and/or musicologists, perhaps, but not worth the price of re-purchase.

This is, of course, the nature of early takes – although, at the risk of prompting another deluge of expensive reissues, it might be more interesting to hear some really early takes. Where, for example, does one even begin assembling something as monumental as "Kashmir"? What were the first notes plucked or prodded that eventually became "In The Light"? From where did Zeppelin find the nerve to run "In My

Time Of Dying" out to 11 – still utterly compelling – minutes?

It's this ironclad – metalclad, if you will – confidence that makes *Physical Graffiti* such a gripping listen. So very many things could have gone wrong; none of them do. When Zeppelin are silly and puerile, they manage to sound guileless and charming – just as Plant is possibly not really singing about a car when he begs to be permitted to pump gas and dig under the hood on "Trampled Under Foot", it's plausible that "Custard Pie" is not actually about dessert. When Zeppelin are pompous and preposterous, they're also perfectly poised – in the years ahead, many would seek to conquer the heights of "Kashmir", and most would pratfall spectacularly. And the rare excursions into modesty are all the more affecting amid the *sturm und drang* elsewhere – Page's acoustic instrumental noodle "Bron-Yr-Aur", named for the Welsh cottage where Zeppelin composed much of *III*, and originally recorded for that album, is a deceptively nonchalant expression of his mastery of his instrument.

In retrospect, *Physical Graffiti* stands as Peak Zeppelin. Its sheer size and scope, and the epoch-spanning, piecemeal nature of its assembly, give it the feeling of an accidental best-of. And while Zep's two subsequent proper studio albums, *Presence* and *In Through The Out Door*, had their moments, they also – substantially as a function of having to follow *Physical Graffiti* – felt somewhat like exercises in decline management. The album endures as a bequest to the bogglement of the ages.



The Specialist

Vintage live recordings by the pioneers of psychedelia



Moby Grape: hippy bar-band deluxe

➤ CONSIDERING THAT CLASSIC, influential '60s groups – say The Byrds – were seldom captured live-to-tape, posterity is fortunate for the various early rock'n'roll concert recordings that have surfaced. In an era before the phenomenon of double-live album souvenirs, it was up to super-fans, would-be archivists, and the occasional brave radio station to set up tape decks. That was fortunately the case for **Signe's Farewell: At The Fillmore 10/15/66** RELATER/FRIDAY MUSIC, 8/10, catching **Jefferson Airplane** at their most formative, playing covers – an original repertoire was barely existent – parting with singer Signe Anderson, bracing for the jolt of Grace Slick. They were ragged, green, relying on four-square folk-rock ("Runnin' Round This World") and odd, not-entirely-convincing nods to soul (Wilson Pickett's "Midnight Hour"). But "Go To Her", with its generous harmonies and spooky melody, caught the classic, rambunctious Airplane sound to come; the opening, nameless jam – hair-raising improv – Jack Casady and Jorma Kaukonen sparring it out on fuzz bass and guitar, is the storming San Fran Sound in miniature, as auspicious as they come. **Quicksilver Messenger Service**, its initial incarnation anyway, had just about run their course by the time of **Winterland November 1968** SONIC BOOM UK, 8/10. Their mighty strengths lay in John Cipollina's uncanny, mystical guitar leads, heavy yet dexterous, grounded in R'n'B yet

voyaging into the spheres, with an apocalyptic tone rarely matched. In this, *Winterland* does not disappoint. They were short on memorable originals, but Cipollina & co took items like Bo Diddley's "Mona" and Howlin' Wolf's "Smoke-stack Lightning" to unimaginable heights.

Fellow Frisco-ites **Moby Grape** were on the decline by **Live At Stony Brook University NY, 10/22/68** KEYHOLE, 7/10. Reduced to a quartet without Skip Spence, de facto band leaders Jerry Miller and Peter Lewis are going through the motions here. Still, elements that made their '67 debut so perfect are in play, and *Stony Brook* plays like a hippy bar-band deluxe. Highlights are "It's A Beautiful Day Today" striking an à propos worldweary, 1968 brand of melancholy and the immortal "Fall On You" barreling down amid fiery guitar...

Finally, **Ultimate Spinach**, instantly blacklisted as part of the Bosstown Sound scandal, remain a virtual mystery of the psych era. As such, **Live At The Unicorn, July 1967**

KEYHOLE, 9/10, an eight-track snapshot taken prior to their studio forays, is a revelation: boy/girl vocals, light-and-dark balladry meet hard garage/psych. Their "Hey Joe" rivals most any other '60s band's, shockingly, thanks to a truly anarchic middle eight, while the 14-minute "Mind Flowers" is the brain-melting tour de force, an acid trip set to music. Just like psychedelia is supposed to be.

LUKE TORN



SUPERTRAMP
Crime Of The Century: Deluxe Edition (reissue, 1974)
UNIVERSAL

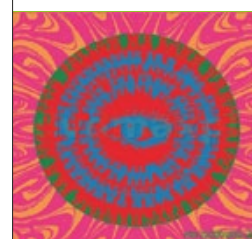
Low-key proggers' pop breakthrough

7/10

Supertramp made the sizeable leap from serious art/prog rockers to unlikely pop stars on their third album, thanks in chief to the impossible-to-escape hit single "Dreamer" (whose own ubiquity would be dwarfed a few years later by "The Logical Song"). The band had briefly split after 1971's *Indelibly Stamped*, but the new lineup were able to flex hitherto underused muscles, the contributions of woodwind maestro John Helliwell notably integral. The writing is certainly more ambitious than before, the jazzy hues of the seven-minute travelogue "Rudy" suggesting Steely Dan fronted by Bruce Springsteen. Less successful is the McCartney-esque "If Everyone Was Listening", which veers perilously towards twee stage musical, but it's neatly counterbalanced by the grizzly defiance of "Bloody Well Right" and Roger Hodgson's plaintive voice on the baroque "Hide In Your Shell". Band members have since claimed that the album started out as a suite of songs dealing with loneliness and mental instability, although that's not immediately evident listening to it now. It remains, however, their most cohesive set of songs, its more accessible elements paving the way for the juggernaut *Breakfast In America* three albums down the line.

EXTRAS: Full live show from London's **7/10** Hammersmith Odeon, March 1975.

TERRY STAUNTON



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Follow Me Down: Vanguard's Lost Psychedelic Era 1966-70 ACE

Nuggets-styled compendium from the vaults

7/10

Primarily a home for folk and blues artists, Vanguard embarked on a promiscuous psych-pop trawl across America after scoring a surprise hit with Country Joe & The Fish. None of their signings repeated that success and most have since bothered only the most dedicated collectors; among the 14 acts rescued from obscurity, Dick Wagner's The Frost may spark some recognition among cognoscenti, but the rest come from beyond the edge. Arcane highlights include Detroit's Third Power, a Cream-inspired trio of impressive heft; Berkeley's Notes From The Underground and Boston quintet Listening, both of whom trip to the same lysergic vision as Country Joe; the heady "I Can Understand Your Problem" by Jeff Monn (whose band the Third Bardo featured on *Nuggets*); the blistering acid-rock of Circus Maximus, whose Jerry Jeff Walker bizarrely went on to write "Mr Bojangles"; and "Did You Have To Rub It In" by Greenwich Village folk-rockers The Hi-Five, who were briefly managed by Brian Epstein. The most splendidly esoteric nugget, though, comes from San Francisco's Serpent Power, whose 13-minute raga-rock epic "The Endless Tunnel" sounds like a folk-baroque version of The Doors and features the most deranged acid-banjo solo in rock history.

EXTRAS: 20-page booklet with reproductions **7/10** of the original sleeves.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



Tonik boom: this was the modern world
"You've heard it all before, but we're saying it today,"
 sings Ian Page on New

Hearts’ “Just Another Teenage Anthem”, encapsulating the naïve essence of this 4CD posey parka splurge. The Jam are conspicuously absent, but this assemblage of the best *All Mod Cons* knock-offs that crap British towns produced gives due credit to the subculture they accidentally spawned, which peaked between 1979 and 1980. While post-punk mapped new terrain, here was music for fans hankering for – as The Chords put it in the majestic “Maybe Tomorrow” – “*a real sound, from the streets, from the towns*”. Thuggish and lumpen maybe, but *Millions Like Us* makes it all seem pleasingly egalitarian, too, with proper hit singles from Secret Affair and The Lambrettas interwoven with genre classics like “What I Want” by The Donkeys, and The Times’ pop-art fireball “Red With Purple Flashes”. With pre-fame cameos from Talk Talk’s Mark Hollis, The Alarm’s Mike Peters, and Paul Young stirred in, it gives noble artisan work its due, capturing a gormless but thrilling new optimism. A lost world reinvented.

EXTRAS: Sleeve notes and a biography of every band involved.

IIM WIRTH

Yabby You's wilderness years



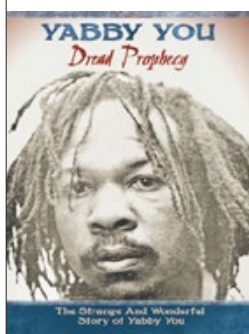
➤ Eager to follow Jesus Christ's itinerant path and discuss religion with learned men, Vivian Jackson left home at 12, gravitating to the Ites People, whose articles of faith included sleeping outdoors and a supermodel-friendly diet. "I never eat nothing that did come from the shop – nothing that the hands of man did handle," Yabby You explained. The extreme Rastafarian sect also forswore all food that grew underground, focusing on "anything above the earth like the fruits, the coconut, the corn and all them things they say is the highest". That austere life and a perilous job in a Kingston foundry contributed to the already arthritic 'Jesus Dread' contracting pneumonia, brain fever and an ulcer at 17, doctors allegedly subjecting him to bonus surgery to see how malnutrition had ravaged his organs. On crutches thereafter, pain served to hone Jackson's musical vision; as he was in the habit of saying: "It's through mi pain and affliction that I keep mi mind on Jah, cuz Jah di only t'ing can keep mi goinq." *JIM WIRTH*



at all bad, the sound of a 23-year-old wunderkind showing off on pianos, Hammonds, Moogs and harpsichords while his mates in Yes and The Strawbs provide jazz-rock backing. “Jane Seymour” is Bach’s “Tocatta And Fugue” put through a blender, “Catherine Parr” recalls Keith Emerson’s Hammond pyrotechnics. However, 1975’s *Arthur...*, recorded after Wakeman’s first heart attack, is a ridiculous mock-baroque compendium that serves as an unwitting sonic companion to *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*. Even the interesting ideas – the medieval barbershop choir, the trip-hop soundscapes of “The Last Battle”, the Brian May-ish bombast of “Guinevere” – are ruined by portentous spoken-word narration and inappropriate sung passages.

EXTRAS: Single version and alternate mixes, 7/10 quadrophonic versions.

JOHN LEWIS



YABBY YOU

Dread Prophecy

SHANACHIE

Hits and mega-rarities box for roots reggae's 'Jesus Dread'

A genuine visionary, the late Vivian Jackson's determination to live a Christ-like life caused him to be nearly crippled by arthritis and malnutrition

in his youth, but divine providence gave him his musical calling card in a dream. Released in 1972, murky, minor-chord hymn “Conquering Lion” – with its godsent hook “*you, yabby yabby you*” – literally made his name, with Rastafarian audiences in Jamaica prepared to overlook Yabby You’s party-pooing conviction that Haile Selassie was not the messiah. This revelatory 3CD set gives due credit to the singer, songwriter and enabler’s idiosyncratic style (“pleasant” is Lee Perry’s somewhat ambivalent assessment of his vocal style), with excellent productions and deejay versions besides. Grave prognostications abound, but “Anti-Christ” and “Carnal Mind” welcome the apocalypse with a jaunty spring in their step. Enough reason to get the Yabby habit.

EXTRAS: Reissue specialists Blood & Fire and 8/10 Pressure Sounds have rustled up superb rare Yabby You material in the past, and Shanachie have found even more, with scratchy sound-system specials like U Brown's jaunty "Natty Roots Man", Alrick Forbes and Willi Williams' cowbell-heavy "Warn The Nation Dub" and King Tubby's ominous "Run Come Raw Dub" all significant discoveries.

JIM WIRTH

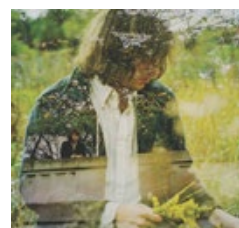
The Six Wives Of Henry VIII/The Myths & Legends Of King Arthur...

UNIVERSAL MUSIC

Portentous mock-baroque, not entirely awful

These two albums are often presented as exhibits A and B in any formal denunciation of prog rock, with the bloated, becaped Wakeman as the evil Russian tsar to punk's Bolshevik vanguard. There's a nugget of truth in this Manicnean history, though even John Lydon will admit 1973's *Six Wives...* isn't

COMING
NEXT
MONTH...



➤ His last album was a bit Bert Jansch, a work of offhand brilliance. On his forthcoming one *Primrose Green*, folk-blues stylist **Ryley Walker** takes things in a bit more of a Tim Buckley

direction, where, accompanied by the jazzy playing of an accomplished band, he lets his voice and the instrumental breaks roam. It's one of the most playable albums of the month, and is strongly recommended.

Other strong stuff from up-and-coming artists this month includes a new one from **Houndstooth**, who play in a rough but pastoral idiom you'd have to call Barnrock, the lovelorn **Hannah Cohen** and the Lennon/McCartney piano balladry of **Tobias Jesso III**. There's also new stuff from Masaki Batoh. With Ghost disbanding after 30 years, he is now making music as **The Silence**. After freeing Natalie Prass into the wild last month, Spacebomb collective supremo **Matthew E White** also returns to offer up his own searching, discreetly epic soul. Elsewhere, the returning **Laura Marling** continues to learn from the example of iconic female performers. Last time, she was on a Joni Mitchell tip, her emotional forays expressed in bucolic, jazzy rock. This time out, she's approaching things in a tougher, more urban rock – fans of PJ Harvey's *Stories From The City...* will want to take notice.

JOHN.ROBINSON.101@FREELANCE.TIMEINC.COM

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THIS MONTH: TRANS-EUROP-EXPRESS | DAVE CLARK FIVE | THE LEGACY



Hugely decent, though mildly peculiar: (l-r) Nicky Wire, James Dean Bradfield, Sean Moore

NO MANIFESTO

A Film About Manic Street Preachers

NOVEMBER FILMS

Long-delayed doc finally gets a release... *By Nick Hasted*



6/10

NO MANIFESTO FINDS the Manic Street Preachers at a transitional period in their career. Largely shot during 2005, as the band recorded the *Send Away The Tigers* album, first-time director Elizabeth Marcus encounters a group attempting to recalibrate their career after an unwelcome setback. In this instance, it's the *Lifeflood* album: a record

that yielded two No 2 singles, but that the band nevertheless feels to have been less successfully representative of their talents. As the Manics convene to work out how best to move forward, Marcus attempts to document their story in as straightforward a style as possible; *No Manifesto* is plainly filmed and free of mythologising.

Evidently, Marcus' film has been sat on the shelf for a while. With only a brief update to incorporate 2009's *Journal For Plague Lovers* – a record that ushered in the band's current creative resurgence – this is essentially a look at the story so far. Where it scores, in some respects, is that Marcus and her crew are American, and as such have an unusual, outsider perspective on the Manics' narrative. Accordingly, the band's politics – the Miners' Strike, Margaret Thatcher, Aneurin Bevan among them – aren't quite as fundamental to the story here

as perhaps a native director would make them. Instead, Nicky Wire, James Dean Bradfield and Sean Moore are filmed without preconceptions. In Marcus' hands, for instance, the band's unreconstructed love of Wimpy burgers becomes more of an intriguing proposition than any inner torment the band might have experienced recording *The Holy Bible*.

Wire has on hand his precious VHS recording of the band's first gig – the only copy in existence, it transpires. It shows an amateurish fire; indeed, it's about as punk rock as they could have hoped for in Blackwood. The 10th anniversary of punk was a key moment for the band; Bradfield recalls watching footage of The Clash "200 times" on a TV compilation, triggering an understanding that "politics could be glamorous". Though briskly treated here, their experiences during the Miners' Strike nevertheless are clearly articulated. Bradfield recalls it was "a glorious time to be angry. God, we were lucky!" Elsewhere, Wire bashfully leafs through the many notes he and Richey Edwards wrote to each other – the real *Postcards From A Young Man* – which reveal the delicate, intellectual world they constructed around themselves. Meanwhile, footage of the band arriving at garishly decorated TV studios provides quite a contrast. Less successful, however, is Marcus' attempt to use fans' thoughts and opinions as a kind of Greek chorus. While the band's bond

with their fans is undeniably deep and strong, as the Manics themselves demonstrate, their ability to tell their own story in an eloquent, riveting fashion is one of their virtues.

Marcus' prosaic approach works best when we go *At Home With The Manics*. Bradfield shows off his no-nonsense cooking skills with an industrial-scale fry-up. Wire potters about his garden with his dog, still pining for the terraced house he was forced to leave when the tabloid press became too intrusive. Now, his new, upmarket neighbours fear "wild rock star parties". "I am probably the most conservative person in the whole street," Wire protests. On the other hand, the more elusive Sean Moore is, by common consent, the weirdest of them all. "I never thought Sean would grow up with so many fucking guns," Wire admits. "It gets me out of the house," the drummer explains while he twirls an assault rifle, before settling down with undisguised glee to "the last truly working-class sport": target-shooting. Only Wire and Bradfield's starry-eyed interviewing here of Rush – huge Wire heroes – proves to be quite as startling.

The disappearance of Edwards is not lingered over unnecessarily. Moore appears uncomprehending of his friend's actions, while Bradfield speculates that Edwards' disappearance was a tacit admission that he'd "taken a wrong path" during his final, self-destructive months. "A huge part of our kind of rock'n'roll died then," Wire acknowledges. They returned without Edwards, but with their popularity enhanced and their humanity revealed. Indeed, while Marcus might fail to capture the rapture of a Manics gig, or anything else needing a poetic power, she does however reveal a hugely decent, though mildly peculiar group of people.

EXTRAS: Extended 2005 interviews with Wire, 6/10 Moore, Bradfield and engineer Dave Eringa, *When The Manics Met Rush* video, and 2005 tour footage.



8/10

'71

STUDIOCANAL

Tense, brutal film set during the Troubles' peak

Director Yann Demange certainly knows how to wring some suspense out of a block of flats. He did it in the TV series *Top Boy* – and he does it here, in this drama about a soldier lost “behind enemy lines”

in the occupied Belfast of 1971. Breakout star Jack O'Connell brings energy and humanity to Gary Hook, while Demange contrives to make this terse and brutal drama lyrical and painterly. Among the five or six lines spoken by O'Connell in the film is one about David Bowie. “It’s for girls, innit?”

EXTRAS: Making Of, featurettes, 7/10 commentary.

JOHN ROBINSON



8/10

THE BABADOOK

ICON

A creepy, unique gem

In this claustrophobic Australian chiller from writer-director Jennifer Kent, Essie Davis plays Amelia, a widowed mother driven to her limits trying to raise her troubled young son. Then along comes the Babadook, a baleful, top-hatted storybook ghoul... Kent channels elements of *Poltergeist*, *The Exorcist* and, when the superb Davis terrifyingly finds her own inner Jack Nicholson, *The Shining*. At heart, *The Babadook* is a keenly insightful parable about parenting anxieties, but also manages to put the current *Paranormal/Insidious/Conjuring* cycle to shame.

EXTRAS: Making Of, featurettes, 7/10 commentary.

JONATHAN ROMNEY



8/10

THE LEGACY

ARROW

Nordic TV series in no-crime shocker

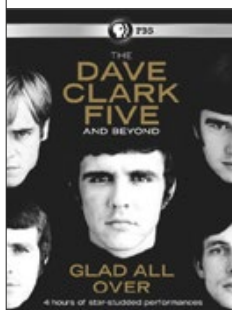
The success of BBC Four's experiment in importing subtitled Eurocrime can be measured by how it's emboldened other broadcasters to try foreign-language series – and even some shows

that aren't about cops. First shown (or buried) in the UK on SkyArts, this excellent Danish family drama charts the twisting and sometimes poisonous fall-out amid her pale adult children following the death of a child-of-the-'60s avant-garde artist (the great Kirsten Olesen). Not much in guns or iconic knitwear, but it's intense, mature and, in its slightly soapy way, strangely, slowly mesmerising.

EXTRAS: None.

DAMIEN LOVE

Five's company: (l-r) Rick Huxley, Dave Clark, Mike Smith, Lenny Davidson (in black), Dennis Payton



7/10

GLAD ALL OVER

PBS HOME VIDEO

The Dave Clark Five And Beyond

A surprising look at the Tottenham group's story

THINGS YOU NEVER expected to hear about The Dave Clark Five. Sir Elton John: “They had a lot of raw power in them.” Twiggy: “They were gorgeous.” Sir Ian McKellen: “They all shaved, didn't they? And they shampooed... I admired their individuality and their spunk and their beauty.”

There is much of that to be found in this tribute to the band who once rivalled The Beatles and Stones, but have since slipped into rock history's margins.

The facts are indisputable. The Tottenham group knocked The Beatles from the No 1 spot in 1964 with “Glad All Over”, and scored 15 consecutive Top 20 hits in the US. They played *The Ed Sullivan Show* 18 times, and were courted by Sinatra. Muhammad Ali and Sam Cooke came to see them, and at the height of the mania, Clark's bulldog Spike had a fan club with 50,000 members. They made a film, acting alongside actual hippies, directed by John Boorman.

It is a remarkable story, even if you don't quite

accept the truncated version delivered to a television audience by Dean Martin. “A couple of years ago in England, a bill collector met a draftsman, the two of them met a couple of factory workers, and they all met a bartender...” In fact, they grew up in post-war Tottenham, when London was still pockmarked with bombsites. When Clark's youth club football team were offered a chance to play in Holland, he formed a skiffle group to raise funds. They morphed into The Dave Clark Five, with Clark leading from the drum kit. They learned their trade playing three-hour sets at American army bases, while Clark earned extra as a film extra. He was fifth soldier from the right in the Richard Burton film *Becket*, and paid for the group's first single from a turn as a stuntman.

But what about about the music? Happily, Springsteen and Steven Van Zandt are on hand to testify to the brilliance of those early 45s. “Those were big, powerful, nasty-sounding records,” says Bruce, “much bigger sounding than, say, the Stones or The Beatles.” Van Zandt concurs: “There were a lot of parallels to our band. In the sense of having that performance thing cooking before they recorded.”

Some of Clark's genius was financial. He held onto his publishing rights and was rich enough to quit, more or less at the top, and go to drama school. This led to his musical *Time*, starring a hologram of Sir Laurence Olivier. That's not why we should celebrate Dave Clark. For that, you have to go back to “Glad All Over”, the sound of American rock'n'roll suited and rebooted in post-war London. The Dave Clark Five, says Gene Simmons (in full warpaint) was “a modern electric church, and I just wanted to go hallelujah.”

EXTRAS: None. ALASTAIR McKAY



9/10

MAN OF THE WEST

EUREKA

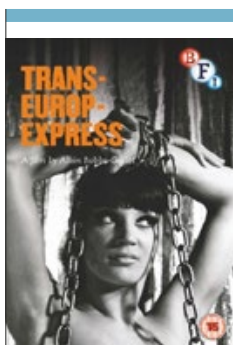
Blu-ray debut for this stunning 1958 Western

Starring Gary Cooper in his last great role, Anthony Mann's magnificent vision of wilderness, ghost towns and mud is a meditation on a man

confronted with the sins of his former life: a Western take on noirs like *Out Of The Past* or *A History Of Violence*. Cooper, looking tired, plays a gentle smalltownner, who was once the most brutal member of a vicious gang. Unwillingly reunited with old compadres, he must resort to type to extricate himself and travelling companion, Julie London.

EXTRAS: Dual-format Blu-ray/ DVD, 8/10 with gorgeous booklet.

DAMIEN LOVE



8/10

TRANS-EUROP-EXPRESS

BFI

Arthouse sexy, '60s-style

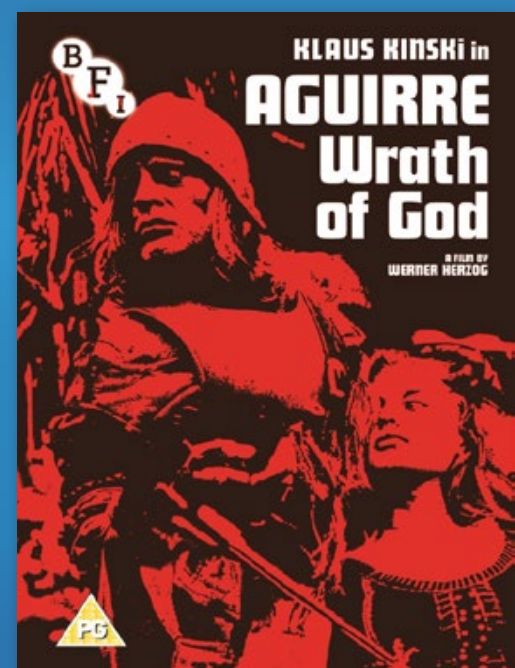
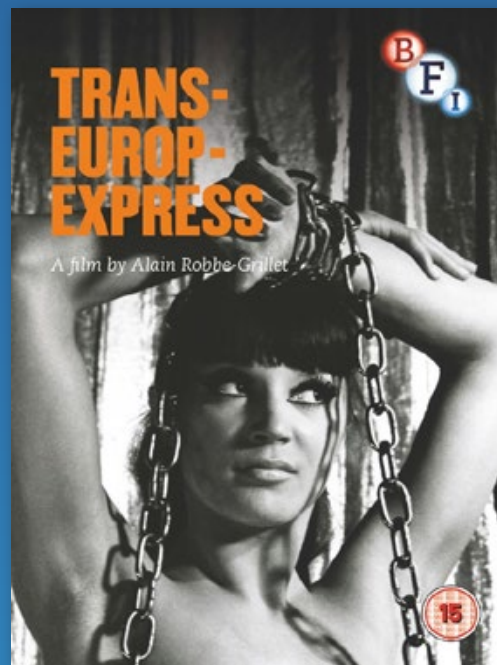
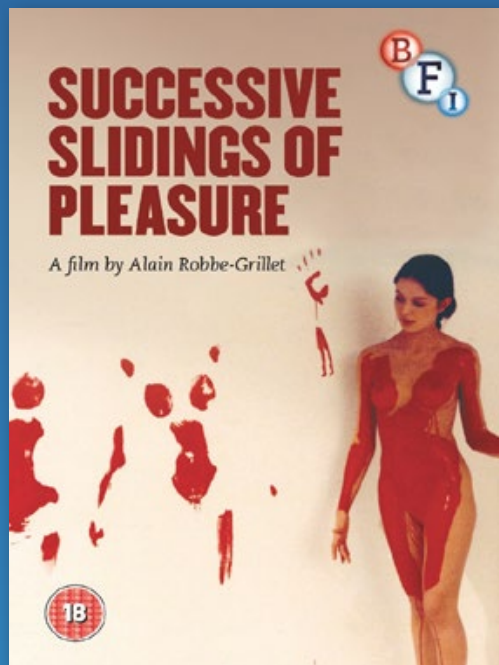
The S&M that made French novelist/filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet's avant-garde anti-movie a *succès de scandale* in 1967 seems tame today, but the loose-yet-intricate

game-playing and surrealist stance remain bracing. Dicing up pulp, pop and noir tropes, Jean-Louis Trintignant plays a drugs mule on the (amazing looking) titular choo-choo, whose erotic fantasies derail the plot, thriller narrative degenerating into an obscure attack on movie form. Robbe-Grillet's *Successive Slidings Of Pleasure* (1974), with Trintignant again, is also released, and more hardcore in every respect.

EXTRAS: Interviews and commentaries.

8/10 DAMIEN LOVE

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT



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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

This month: Peter Strickland's unusual take on erotica; a macho war film from Clint Eastwood; and secret agents go wild in London...

The **Duke Of Burgundy** In director Peter Strickland's last film, *Berberian Sound Studio*, a tweedy British audio expert toiled miserably in an Italian recording studio on the sound effects for a horror film. But beneath *Berberian Sound Studio*'s grisly *giallo* tropes was a portrait of midlife anxiety, and an attendant desire for stability and approval. Strickland essentially revisits the same themes for his new film, *The Duke Of Burgundy*. As with its predecessor – one of our Films Of The Year in 2012 – *The Duke Of Burgundy* introduces us to an insecure middle-aged protagonist – in this instance, a highly regarded etymologist named Cynthia (*Borgen*'s Sidse Babbett Knudsen). We discover she is engaged in an S&M relationship with Evelyn (*Berberian Sound Studio*'s Chiara D'Anna), with their role-play casting Evelyn as a maid and Cynthia as her unforgiving employer. But, as they repeat their unusual routines, it transpires that it is Evelyn who is the architect of their relationship, issuing her lover with cards detailing strict rules and listing dialogue for specific scenarios. "This is all I ever dreamed about," she tells Cynthia in a rare moment of casual intimacy. "To be owned by you, to be used by you. I can't tell you how happy I am." Initially, *The Duke Of Burgundy* appears to be Strickland's take on '70s Euro erotica (with a nod, too, to Bergman's *Persona*). But Strickland is evidently concerned with more than just gratuitous titillation. As with its predecessor, the events in *Duke...* happen in a cocooned environment, slightly dislocated from reality: a remote European village where there are no men or cars. Its sound design mixes ambient orchestral pieces by Faris Badwan's Cat's Eyes with insect noises and disquieting electronic passages, while the film occasionally drifts into hallucinatory montages of the natural world. It is, in its own way, just as unsettling as *Berberian Sound Studio*. Indeed, like his previous film, Strickland's latest includes flashes of great gallows humour. The opening credits list "Perfume by Je Suiz Gizelle" and a "Dress and Lingerie" wrangler. A visit from a carpenter (Fatima Mohamed) who specialises in making fetish beds is particularly rewarding. "Is there any way you can offer faster service?" asks Cynthia when told there will be a delay completing an order. "It's just that Evelyn's birthday is coming up and I was planning this as a present." Indeed, *The Duke Of Burgundy* – its title comes from a rare type of butterfly – is a remarkable and unusual film, where the finer details of a business transaction include the question, "Would a human toilet be a suitable compromise?"



Calling the shots: Bradley Cooper in *American Sniper*

► **American Sniper** In 2013, *The New Yorker* ran a story about Chris Kyle, a decorated sniper in the US Army, who tried to help a troubled veteran. The story detailed Kyle's extraordinary war record, but also explored the debilitating post-traumatic stress disorder both he and other veterans experienced back home. The bulk of the *New Yorker* story takes up roughly the last 10 minutes of Clint Eastwood's new film, which is principally concerned with building Kyle up as an All-American Hero: a patriot for whom the words "God, country, family" are all-consuming. Kyle – played by a beefed up Bradley Cooper – is told from an early age that he has "a hell of a gift" with a gun. At the dinner table, the impressionable Kyle is told by his father that "there are three types of men in this world: sheep, wolves and sheepdogs." To be a man, he must grow up to be a sheepdog. After watching the 1998 attacks on the US Embassy in Dar Es Salaam on television, Kyle enlists. Before he knows it, he is in Fallujah, racking up a body count.

Where to start? *American Sniper* plays out like a two-hour report on Fox News. This is an excitable, macho depiction of war, with manly banter yelled over gunfire. Kyle's fellow Navy SEALs are pencil-thin sketches, but at least they fare better than the women in *American Sniper*, who are

presented either as timid, unfaithful or duplicitous. At best, they are grieving wives and mothers; at worst, they are devious insurgents who send their children out onto the streets with concealed grenades in order to kill American soldiers. The most significant female character in *American Sniper* is Kyle's wife, Taya, played by Sienna Miller, who is largely reduced to crying or simpering.

It is possible to admire the vigour and discipline with which Eastwood shoots the scenes of conflict – but all the same, this is simplistic, reductive movie-making. The Iraqis are seen either through Kyle's sniper-sight or, at close range, are revealed to be treacherous bad guys. The dialogue is clunky, predominantly expository: "Even when you're here, you're not here," complains Taya. All of this has been done before – and much better – in *The Hurt Locker*.

► **A Most Violent Year** Set in New York in 1981 – statistically one of the most violent years in the city's history – JC Chandor's film is concerned with what happens to an honourable man who attempts to operate his business in a climate predicated around crime and violence. The irony here is that its hero, played by Oscar Isaac, is a quiet man in a dangerous time. As Abel Morales, the owner of a

Reviewed this month...



THE DUKE OF BURGUNDY
Director Peter Strickland
Starring Sidse Babbett Knudsen, Chiara D'Anna
Opens Feb 20
Cert 18
9/10



AMERICAN SNIPER
Director Clint Eastwood
Starring Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller
Opens Jan 16
Cert 15
6/10



A MOST VIOLENT YEAR
Director JC Chandor
Starring Oscar Isaac, Jessica Chastain
Opened Jan 23
Cert 15
8/10



KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE
Director Matthew Vaughn
Starring Colin Firth, Samuel L Jackson
Opens Jan 29
Cert 15
7/10



THE GAMBLER
Director Rupert Wyatt
Starring Mark Wahlberg, John Goodman
Opened Jan 23
Cert 15
6/10



rapidly expanding heating-oil business based in Brooklyn, he finds his trucks the victim of a number of hijacks. Contrary to the advice of his union rep, he will not allow his employees to carry arms to defend themselves. While his business is being hit, he is also trying to expand his enterprise and has put a sizeable, non-refundable deposit down on a waterfront operation. Meanwhile, Abel's wife, Anna (Jessica Chastain), offers to ask her father – a man with connections – for help. Their lawyer, played by Albert Brooks, is permanently exasperated.

Chandor's film is in many ways a kind of anti-mob film. Their presence looms large, but it is entirely off-screen. Indeed, Chandor isn't particularly concerned with gangsters and guns (though they appear), but more about what happens to Abel and Anna as the pressure mounts and his resolve is tested. *A Most Violent Year* is a slow, nuanced film pivoting around the performances from Isaac, Chastain and Brooks – who are all excellent. Although we are asked to see Abel as a man of fixed beliefs, it is Anna we should watch out for.

► **Kingsman: The Secret Service** Those with long memories for bad films will presumably remember *The Avengers*, a misfire which cast Ralph Fiennes as John Steed and Uma Thurman as Emma Peel. *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, based on a comic book series by Mark Millar and Dave Gibbons, is essentially a better iteration of that slightly campy world of well-tailored secret agents, replete with code names, secret bases and rather improbable gadgets. Under the auspices of Michael Caine's Arthur, the Kingsmen are a secret agency operating out of the back of a Savile Row tailor's,

with a nifty high-speed underground tube carriage running to their base beneath a remote stately home. Among their number are Colin Firth's Galahad and Mark Strong's Merlin; early in the film they recruit Eggsy (Taron Egerton; a kind of softer Jack O'Connell), the son of a fallen member, and enter battle with Samuel L Jackson's lispng billionaire tyrant.

Directed by Matthew Vaughn – currently overseeing the *X-Men* franchise and a former collaborator of Millar's on *Kick-Ass* – *Kingsmen: The Secret Service* is good fun. There are witty conversations about “early Bond” and the Jason Bourne films, while Firth, Strong and Caine deftly handle the improbable material.

► **The Gambler** The advertising campaign for this film makes a great deal out of the involvement of *The Departed*'s screenwriter, William Monahan, in the project. It rather rudely overlooks the contribution made by James Toback, who based the original 1974 film about a literary professor with a

gambling addiction on his own experiences. In fact, Toback has blogged with great candour about discovering, through a third party, that this remake was underway.

As it stands, *The Gambler* follows Toback's story fairly closely, though it misses his point. Director Rupert Wyatt lacks the unflinching directorial eye Karel Reisz brought to the original. Mark Wahlberg tries hard to recapture some of James Caan's old-school Hollywood machismo, but comes up short. It falls to a bald-headed John Goodman – as a Machiavellian gangster who offers Wahlberg a potential way out of his predicament – to provide dramatic ballast.

American Sniper
plays out like
a two-hour
report on
Fox News...

Also out...

JUPITER ASCENDING

OPENS FEBRUARY 6

After the bonkers *Cloud Atlas*, The Wachowskis return with big-budget sci-fi gear; Channing Tatum and Mila Kunis star.

SELMA

OPENS FEBRUARY 6

Drama following Martin Luther King's campaign to secure equal voting rights in 1965; David Oyelowo plays Dr King.



SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE

OPENS FEBRUARY 6

More stop-motion genius from Aardman Animations in this big-screen outing for the much-loved ruminant.

FIFTY SHADES OF GREY

OPENS FEBRUARY 13

Director Sam Taylor-Johnson tackles EL James' erotic bestseller, with Jamie Dornan and Dakota Johnson as her steamy leads.

LOVE IS ALL

OPENS FEBRUARY 13

Fascinating archival documentary charting the depiction onscreen of love and courtship during the 20th Century.

CASABLANCA

OPENS FEBRUARY 14

Of the two Valentine's Day reissues, we'd recommend this Bogart/Bergman classic over the other option: a *Grease* Sing-A-Long.

BLACKHAT

OPENS FEBRUARY 20

Chris Hemsworth temporarily lays down Thor's hammer to star in Michael Mann's thriller concerning international cyber terrorism.

IT FOLLOWS

OPENS FEBRUARY 27

Effective horror film about – yes – a sexually transmitted demon. A bit Cronenberg, a bit Carpenter.

MONSTERS: DARK CONTINENT

OPENS FEBRUARY 27

A sequel to Gareth Edwards' impressive British-produced 2010 film; more alien nasties rampage round Earth.

THE TALES OF HOFFMAN

OPENS FEBRUARY 27

A newly restored print of Powell and Pressburger's 1951 musical phantasmagoria; plays all key cities in the UK; recommended.

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD



Guesthouse...
Emmylou, centre, and
friends take a bow

THE LIFE & SONGS OF EMMYLOU HARRIS: AN ALL-STAR CONCERT CELEBRATION

DAR CONSTITUTION HALL, WASHINGTON DC, JANUARY 10, 2015

The circle remains unbroken: the stars of old and new country music pay tribute to Queen Emmylou

LUCINDA WILLIAMS, Shawn Colvin, Mary Chapin Carpenter and Rodney Crowell – all members of Emmylou Harris' inner circle – consistently mention the 'spirituality' of her music whenever conversation turns to her songs. That quality doesn't just come from Harris' style of songwriting – a specific brand of alt.country she created in the 1970s, long before there was such a sub-genre. It's given voice by her distinct, fragile soprano: no-one sings quite like Emmylou does, they say, though plenty try.

Fortunately, none of the performers at The Life & Songs Of Emmylou Harris: An All-Star Concert Celebration attempt to copy that sound. Instead,

over this three-and-a-half-hour tribute to her music and life, they dig deep into their own artistry to uncover new flavours in Harris' music, to give it divergent lives. Keith Wortman, creator and co-executive producer of the show, put the bill together to underscore Harris' musical reach. There's a cast of more than 20, all of whom have either worked with Harris or are ardent in their admiration of her work and its deep influence on their music. Credit, too, to the two musical directors, Don Was and Buddy Miller, for allowing – one might guess sometimes prodding – the artists to add enough spunk and spark to the Harris songs to make them their own. Wortman says he could easily have engaged twice as many performers for the DAR

Constitution Hall event in Washington, DC, the city where Harris was discovered in the 1970s playing the club circuit.

For the most part, Harris remains in the wings of DC's largest concert hall, only appearing three times during the show, and then with her oldest friends. Much like her music, her physical presence seems otherworldly: a vision in flowing black tunic and pants, accented only by a sequined guitar strap over her left shoulder and her gleaming platinum hair.

For some of the other artists on the bill, it's an understandably daunting experience, especially some of the newer acts who aren't as familiar to the 4,000-strong crowd. It's difficult not to feel



SETLIST

- 1 **One Of These Days** – Buddy Miller
- 2 **Will The Circle Be Unbroken** – Mavis Staples
- 3 **Darkest Hour Is Just Before Dawn** – Sara Watkins
- 4 **Red Dirt Girl** – Shawn Colvin
- 5 **Michaelangelo** – The Milk Carton Kids
- 6 **Wheels** – Chris Hillman and Herb Pedersen
- 7 **Orphan Girl** – Holly Williams and Chris Coleman
- 8 **Sin City** – Steve Earle
- 9 **Bluebird Wine** – Trampled By Turtles
- 10 **Hickory Wind** – Lucinda Williams
- 11 **You're Still On My Mind** – Rodney Crowell
- 12 **Born To Run** – Lee Ann Womack
- 13 **When We're Gone** – John Starling and Emmylou Harris
- 14 **Blackhawk** – Daniel Lanois and Emmylou Harris
- 15 **Wrecking Ball** – Iron & Wine
- 16 **Leaving Louisiana In The Broad Daylight** – Shovels & Rope
- 17 **All The Road Running** – Mary Chapin Carpenter (and Vince Gill)
- 18 **The Pearl** – Conor Oberst (and Patty Griffin and Shawn Colvin)
- 19 **When I Stop Dreaming** – Martina McBride
- 20 **Prayer In Open D** – Patty Griffin (with Buddy Miller)
- 21 **Pancho And Lefty** – Steve Earle (and Lee Ann Womack)
- 22 **Together Again** – Vince Gill
- 23 **Two More Bottles Of Wine** – Sheryl Crow
- 24 **Ooh, Las Vegas** – Sheryl Crow (and Vince Gill)
- 25 **Chase The Feeling** – Kris Kristofferson and Rodney Crowell
- 26 **Loving Her Was Easier** – Kris Kristofferson
- 27 **Till I Gain Control Again** – Alison Krauss
- 28 **Cash On The Barrelhead** – Alison Krauss
- 29 **Boulder To Birmingham** – Emmylou Harris and Herb Pedersen

empathetic when the Milk Carton Kids, a Grammy-nominated, flat-picking folk duo from California, walk across the elongated stage to virtual silence. The two Kids, Joey Ryan and Kenneth Pattengale, have the unenviable task of following a run of crowdpleasers: Buddy Miller's blistering "One Of These Days"; Mavis Staples raising the ceiling with "Will The Circle Be Unbroken"; bluegrass darling Sara Watkins' throbbing "Darkest Hour Is Just Before Dawn". Directly before the Milk Carton Kids, Shawn Colvin essays a raw version of "Red Dirt Girl", a staple in the shows she played with Harris, Miller and Griffin when they toured as "Three Girls And Their Buddy."

After what seems to be hours, Ryan turns to the crowd: "It's quite an honour to be here. We figured we are here because [Emmylou] wants you to know she is aware of some bands you have never heard of." The crowd dissolves into laughter and applause as the Milk Carton Kids, who clearly don't want to waste the newfound good will, turn immediately to work, pounding out a hard-hitting acoustic rendition of "Michaelangelo", complete with soaring harmonies reminiscent of early Simon & Garfunkel.

Although many naturally associate Nashville with country music, Washington, DC was the core of bluegrass from World War II at least through the

1970s, when Harris played the area's club circuit. At each of Harris' frequent DC-area performances, she always gives a shout-out to local hero John Starling and his former band The Seldom Scene, who were among the bluegrass giants that gave her props and opportunities as she built her fledgling career. Tonight, Harris recounts their impact on her career and her continuing love

for their music. Starling, she says, remains her all-time favourite singer, before the two lock voices in harmony on "When We're Gone, Long Gone" (recorded by Harris on 1999's *Trio II* set with Dolly Parton and Linda Ronstadt).

There's a general understanding that events like this have to balance commercial practicalities – The Life & Songs Of Emmylou Harris is being taped for future broadcast

and a DVD – with more nuanced, nostalgic moments; like when Kris Kristofferson, 78, his voice a gravelly shadow of what it was, belts out "Chase The Feeling" with Rodney Crowell. Nevertheless, those who complain that the likes of Martina McBride, Lee Ann Womack and Sheryl Crow are only on the bill to add to the marketing value, miss out on some significant histories.

*Much like
her music,
Emmylou
Harris' physical
presence seems
otherworldly*

When Martina McBride powers up to sing the Louvin Brothers' "When I Stop Dreaming", she pays tribute to the brothers, Harris – who re-introduced the gospel duo to a new generation of fans – and her own past. McBride began her career singing at wedding and community events with her father's country band, making a speciality of singing Harris' material.

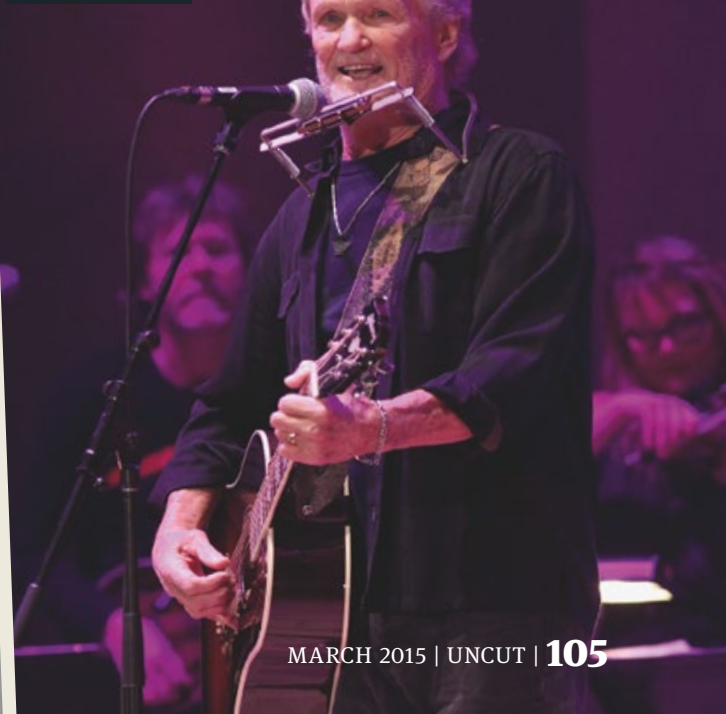
Crow, meanwhile, blasts through Gram Parsons' "Ooh Las Vegas", included on Harris' '75 album, *Elite Hotel*, with some virtuoso guitar licks provided by Vince Gill.

Among the younger artists, it's not just the Milk Carton Kids who make an impact. Conor Oberst is, on paper, an unlikely voice to harmonise with Patty Griffin and Shawn Colvin, but their take on "The Pearl" is quite beautiful, while emergent bluegrass sextet Trampled By Turtles boldly tackle one of the most storied songs in Harris' and Crowell's catalogues, "Bluebird Wine", and kick the standard into satisfyingly rockier territory.

But for sheer firepower, it's tough to beat the husband-wife duo Shovels & Rope,

and their no-holds-barred version of "Leaving Louisiana In The Broad Daylight". Harris might be mostly hiding in the wings, but the whole extravaganza proves, again and again, that her music has an uncanny potency that can continually reinvent itself, even in 2015. **NANCY DUNHAM**

Chasing the feeling again: Kris Kristofferson



PAUL MORICI/GETTY IMAGES FOR BLACKBIRD PRODUCTIONS



Blissed out:
Rachel Goswell

SLOWDIVE

THE FORUM, LONDON, DECEMBER 20, 2014

With the Ride reunion imminent, their shoegazing chums take one last hit at the past

YOU MIGHT IMAGINE any band able to fill The Forum for two nights, 20 years after the release of their last album and with minimal hoopla, must be bearers of a torch whose flame burns with effortless brilliance. Slowdive, though, have never had an easy ride. Dogged by bad timing (their 1991 debut album was all but nullified by the arrival of *Loveless*; their second released just as Britpop took hold) and creative self-doubt, Slowdive's glazed, fitfully noisy dreampop nonetheless attracted a large and evidently enduring fanbase.

What's most striking about tonight's crowd, though, is how young it is. This isn't just a gathering of the original party faithful – many of those standing motionless as if hypnotised, or ecstatically swaying to the songs' ebb and flow wouldn't have been born when *Just For A Day* was released. The archival drive of digital music consumption might be a factor, as fans of acts from A Place To Bury Strangers to The xx trace shoegazing's lineage back, but so too is the timeless appeal of bliss-out.



Halstead:
picking with
precision

The setlist for these shows leans on 1993's *Souvlaki* album, but Slowdive open with the self-titled track from their 1990 debut EP, the ringing, precision-picked guitar notes of Neil Halstead – now startlingly luxuriant of beard – offsetting both the song's ambient thrum and his harmonised cooing with Rachel Goswell, who stands centrestage, tapping her tambourine. The volume is cranked from the start and, as geometric

patterns shift on a bank of video screens behind and cold yellow light floods the floor, it bolsters a seductively ghostly "Avalyn", "Crazy For You" – with its furious drums and rhythmic string-thwacking from Halstead – and the compelling push-pull of "Souvlaki Space Station".

A band can hardly be condemned for sounding dated when they're here specifically to play songs that are up to 25 years old, but a few still sound anachronistic. Despite the gales of treated guitar, both "Catch The Breeze" and "Alison" are a reminder that nothing dates a tune more than its drum patterns. Goswell's voice

Slowdive's glazed, fitfully noisy dreampop has an evidently enduring fanbase

has to battle against a miasma of overused effects in "Machine Gun", while the slo-mo "Morningrise" sounds not so much seductively enervated as utterly exhausted.

But when Halstead dedicates "When The Sun Hits" to the band's late "friend and musician Nick Talbot, better known as Gravenhurst", and Goswell straps on her guitar for the first time, it's for what sounds like both a protest against the premature dying of a light

slowdive

The Forum, London
20/12/14

SLOWDIVE
AVALYN
CATCH THE BREEZE
CRAZY FOR YOU
MACHINE GUN
SOUVLAKI
BLUE SKIED AND CLEAR
WHEN THE SUN HITS
MORNINGRISE
SHE CALLS
DAGGER
ALISON
GOLDEN HAIR

RUTTI
40 DAYS

and a celebration of its shining. Whoops and cheers greet the frosted folk of set closer "Golden Hair" (music by Syd Barrett, words by James Joyce), before the band return for *Pygmalion*'s "Rutti" – cue sulphurous feedback from Christian Savill – and the parting, shot-silk gleam of "40 Days".

In an interview a month before the show, Halstead declared Slowdive's lack of interest in being "a heritage band". He explained that the point of the reunion "is to make a new record – that's the end goal. It's got to sound modern, it's got to sound relevant and it's got to be interesting." The 2014 dates (the first of which was at London's Hoxton Bar & Grill at Sonic Cathedral's 10th Anniversary Concert in May) were designed to provide the crucial momentum for writing and recording new material (scheduled to start early in 2015), but if that doesn't happen, Halstead reckons Slowdive will "just slide into the background". For any reformed band, modernity and relevance are the perennial challenge. All things must pass – except, perhaps, shoegazing.

SHARON O'CONNELL

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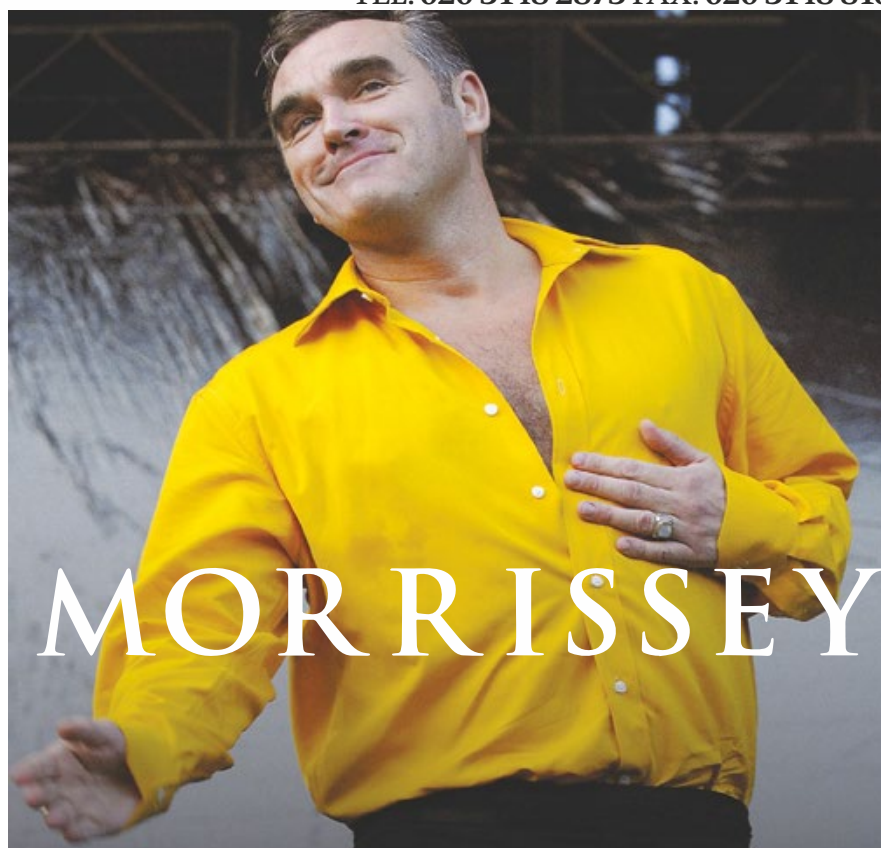
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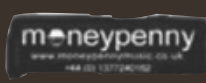
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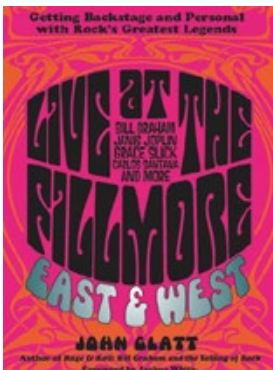
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Books

BY ALLAN JONES

The house that Bill built: Graham onstage at the Fillmore East, 1970

Reviewed this month...



Live At The Fillmore East And West

John Glatt

LYONS PRESS

8/10



Joni Mitchell: Both Sides Now

Malka Marom

OMNIBUS PRESS

7/10

JOHAN GLATT'S *Live At The Fillmore East And West* is a rattling yarn, whose high-tempo narrative advances on a surprisingly broad front, a lively history of the two venues intercut with vivid biographies of Bill Graham, the hard-nosed promoter who ran them, and the San Francisco bands (principally the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin and Big Brother And The Holding Company, and Santana) with whom he was most closely associated.

The book moves at an extraordinary lick, so much happening in its 400 pages it seems barely credible that the events it describes took place over not much more than three years of relentless activity, during which there were seismic changes in the way rock music was promoted and presented. Graham opened the Fillmore East in March 1968 in New York's decrepit Lower East Side, the first show headlined by Big Brother. Three months later, he opened the Fillmore West, in San Francisco, where he had already made a reputation for himself at the Fillmore Auditorium, which he acquired in

questionable circumstances at the end of 1967, just as the San Francisco scene was taking off. Graham had arrived in America as a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, and grew up in orphanages before being adopted, served in Korea, where he won a Bronze Star for bravery under fire. After failing to make it as an actor in New York and Hollywood, he fetched up in San Francisco as business manager for the San Francisco Mime Troupe before realising the money to be made as a promoter.

He was tough, ruthless, uncompromising, fiercely competitive and devious when he had to be, which seems to have been often. He was soon running a million-dollar empire, making a lot of enemies along the way. His belligerence made him personally unpopular with many acts and managers, but his twin venues provided the best sound, light shows and stage crews then available, and for a while therefore they attracted the top talent of the day, even as managers like Led Zeppelin's Peter Grant grew enraged at the amount of money he was making from them, as evidenced in heated correspondence between Graham and Grant reproduced here. After Woodstock, however, bands realised they suddenly could play one show in front of thousands more people than they could over four nights at a smaller venue. Many of the acts who'd regularly sold out the Fillmore East, for instance, now realised there was more money to be made playing a larger room like Madison Square Garden, at which point the Fillmore venues went into an irreversible decline. Graham shut down both venues in July 1971, blaming greedy bands, managers and agents for their closure.

By then, the whole scene was changing, heroin, cocaine and speed replacing marijuana and LSD, hard drugs ripping apart bands like the Airplane and Santana, and killing others, like Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison. "Everybody was dying in 1970 and things were getting very dark," according to the Airplane's Marty Balin, one of many key players interviewed for a book that by its end has become a requiem for an unrepeatable musical era.

➤ In the absence of a major biography or, even better, an autobiography, something you imagine might be as illuminating as Dylan's *Chronicles*, Malka Marom's *Both Sides Now* perhaps offers the best insight to date into Joni Mitchell's life and work. Marom first saw Mitchell in November 1966, at Toronto's fabled Riverboat coffeehouse. Mitchell, then 23, played that night to a virtually empty room, but Marom, a singer-songwriter herself, at the time part of a popular duo called Malka & Josie, whose brief career is recalled in somewhat unnecessary detail, was immediately smitten. Marom became a fan and an early champion, although the two did not meet again until 1973, when Marom interviewed Mitchell for CBC radio. It was the first of the three lengthy interviews that make up *Both Sides Now*, the second and third of which were recorded in 1979 and 2012, respectively.

As an interviewer, Marom is often inclined to gushing flattery, but she knows the work and Mitchell was clearly comfortable with her, answering a wide range of questions about her music with articulate candour and sometimes astonishing recall. The first interview catches Mitchell at the peak of her commercial success, *Court And Spark* just recorded, looking back on her childhood, the struggles of her early career and eventual breakthrough. By the 1979 interview, Mitchell was striking out in increasingly bold directions on LPs like *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*, *Hejira*, *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* and *Mingus* that brilliantly expanded her musical vocabulary even as they alienated her original audience and tested the patience of her label, who lamented what she describes as her "experimentiveness".

The third interview, Mitchell nearing 70 and ill with Morgellons Syndrome, whose invasion, as she puts it, of her nervous system leaves her paralysed and too fatigued to complete any meaningful work, is darkly reflective, more than a little morbid, angry and forlorn, ready to give up the daily struggle her life has become. "I feel at this point," she ominously observes, "I feel that I've swum far enough."

Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

TIM DRUMMOND

Bassist, Neil Young and Bob Dylan collaborator

1940-2015

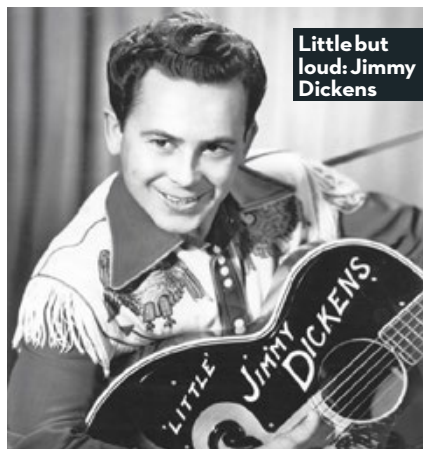
A MIXTURE OF necessity and pure chance brought Tim Drummond into Neil Young's orbit. Charged with finding a rhythm section for *Harvest*, at less than a day's notice, producer Elliot Mazer found Drummond walking down a Nashville street in early February 1971. The bassist swiftly became a member of Young's backing band, dubbed The Stray Gators, alongside pianist Jack Nitzsche, Ben Keith (steel guitar) and Kenny Buttrey (drums). Likened by *Shakey* biographer Jimmy McDonough to "a carny huckster at the game of chance", Drummond remained a part of Young's set-up for 1974's studio follow-up, *On The Beach* (for which he also provided percussion on "Vampire Blues"). The same year saw him take to the road on CSNY's mega-selling world tour, during which he invariably found himself sandwiched between the duelling guitars of Young and Stephen Stills. "I was lucky I made it through without ruining my ears," he declared afterwards. His association with Young lasted unbroken until 1980's *Hawks & Doves*, though he was later in his boss' short-lived back-up troupe, the Shocking Pinks. Drummond reprised his Stray Gators role on *Harvest Moon* in 1992, before making his final appearance with Young on the following year's MTV showcase, *Unplugged*.

He'd actually started his career with Conway Twitty, after which he



Tim Drummond onstage with Bob Dylan in Illinois, 1981

joined The Dapps and backed James Brown on a string of 45s that included 1967's classic "I Can't Stand Myself (When You Touch Me)". He found himself much in-demand over the decades, touring and recording with Brown, The Beach Boys, Ry Cooder, Eric Clapton, JJ Cale, Joe Cocker and Jewel, to name a few. But his other major alliance was with Bob Dylan. An ever-present on the 'gospel trilogy' that ran from *Slow Train Coming* to *Shot Of Love*, Drummond also co-wrote the title track of *Saved*.



Little but loud: Jimmy Dickens

LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS

Country pioneer

1920-2015

Having played his final Grand Ole Opry gig in December, a day after his 94th birthday, Little Jimmy Dickens was in the last line of Nashville's old-school entertainers. He made his name after forming the Country Boys in 1950, with whom he cut such novelties as "A-Sleeping At The Foot Of The Bed" and, given

that he stood at 4'11" and decked himself in rhinestone suits, the self-reflexive "I'm Little But I'm Loud". His biggest hit came with 1965's "May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose", which came a year after he became the first country star to tour the world. He was also a great friend of Hank Williams, whose "Hey Good Lookin'" was initially earmarked for Dickens.

RAY McFALL

Cavern owner, Beatles booker

1926-2015

Cavern Club director Jon Keats cited Ray McFall, who took charge in 1959, with ushering in "the whole Merseybeat explosion". Alongside resident DJ Bob Wooler, McFall transformed it from a jazz venue to a hotbed of rock'n'roll. Most crucially, he booked The Beatles for a lunchtime session in February 1961. "They were sensational and I was smitten," he recalled. "From that very first day, there was no stopping them." The Fabs went

on to make 292 appearances at the Cavern, including a 1962 fanclub gig during which McFall joined them onstage for "Can't Help Falling In Love" and "Tender Is The Night". Before going bankrupt in 1966, McFall also hosted the Stones and Howlin' Wolf.

ROCK SCULLY

Grateful Dead manager

1941-2014

Rock Scully's first impression of the Grateful Dead wasn't exactly positive. After seeing them play San Francisco in December 1965, he thought they resembled "the kind of random sample of unregenerate human types you'd find in a lineup or a Greyhound bus terminal". Scully nevertheless agreed to manage the group, then called The Warlocks, and helped guide them from a second-rate jug band to the Bay Area's quintessential acid-rock outfit. He organised appearances at cultural landmarks like the Human Be-In, Monterey Pop and

Woodstock, though his reputation took a hit after the debacle at Altamont (Scully always denied hiring the Hells Angels). He was fired by the Dead over his drug consumption in 1984, briefly returning to the fold a year later.

LARRY SMITH

Run-DMC producer

1952-2014

The pioneering music of Run-DMC owed much to the savvy production of Larry Smith. His previous work with Kurtis Blow, allied to his invention of the 'Krush Groove' (a drum machine-led sound that echoed the hip-hop of New York's urban spaces), led to the beats-and-rhymes assault of early '80s singles like "It's Like That", "Hollis Crew" and "Sucker MCs". The latter proved particularly influential and was sampled by Kid Rock, De La Soul, Tupac and Snoop Dogg. Alongside Russell Simmons, Smith co-produced the trio's first two LPs: *Run-DMC* (1984) and *King Of Rock*

JOHN FRY

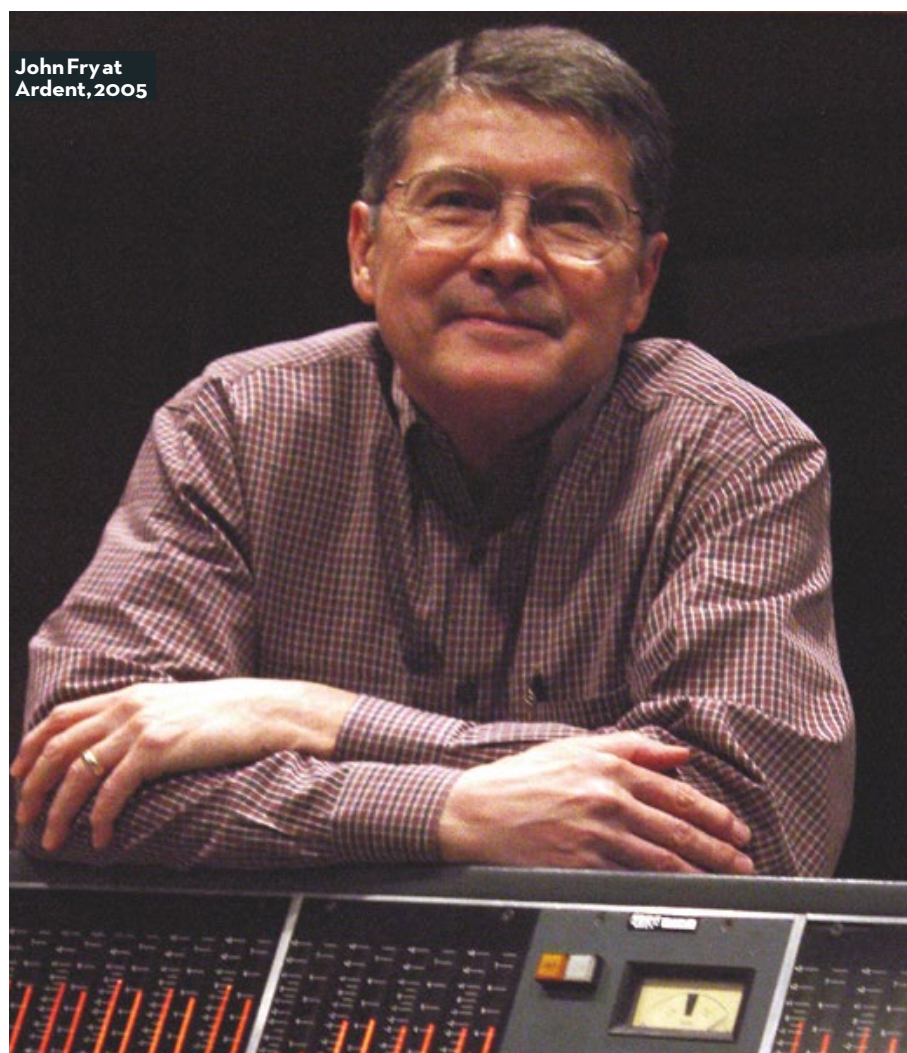
Ardent founder, Big Star producer/engineer

1944-2014

JOHN FRY CHANGED a lot of people's lives," Big Star's Jody Stephens told *Billboard*, paying tribute to a visionary figure of the Memphis music fraternity. "In a way he created a Peter Pan world where nobody had to grow up. We all enjoyed what we were doing so much that it never really felt like work." Stephens first met the entrepreneur in 1970, when Fry was teaching audio engineering at Ardent, the recording facility he'd founded four years earlier. Impressed by their enthusiasm, he allowed Big Star free access to experiment in the studio. "Ardent and John were such a beacon to a lot of people who had a passion for music," added Stephens.

During his 48-year tenure at Ardent, Fry created an environment that attracted a diverse array of musicians and producers, fostering its image as a progressive studio with a unique sound. He also handled the overflow from another local label, Stax, presiding over sessions by Isaac Hayes, Booker T & The MG's, the Staple Singers and more. But he's perhaps best known for his collaborations with Big Star, for whom he co-produced their seminal '70s albums *#1 Record* and *Radio City*, and engineered *Third/Sister Lovers*. Ardent also hosted the likes of Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, ZZ Top, Al Green, The Allman Brothers Band, REM and The Replacements plus, more recently, The White Stripes, Cat Power and MIA.

Born to a wealthy family in East Memphis, Fry was recording local bands in his parents' garage by the age of 14. He began releasing singles on his tiny Ardent label soon after, before setting up his first commercial studio, at 1457 National Street, in 1966. He struggled to articulate just what made the atmosphere at Ardent so conducive to great work. "I can't explain it," he once shrugged. "You come to record here, something good happens to you."



John Fry at Ardent, 2005

('85). His other association was with Brooklyn hip-hoppers Whodini, whose vocalist John Fletcher called him "the Quincy Jones of rap".

WENDY RENE

R&B/soul singer

1947-2014

Stax seemed to let Mary Frierson slip through their fingers. Having auditioned for them in 1963, the teenager left with two contracts: one with her quartet The Drapels and the other as a solo artist. She was christened Wendy Rene by Otis Redding and issued a series of 45s – "After Laughter (Comes Tears)"; "Bar-B-Q"; "Give You What You Got" – that featured some of Booker T & The MG's and showcased her vulnerable R&B voice. By 1967 she'd given up her career to look after her young family. The early '90s saw



Wendy Rene, 1965

her rediscovered by a new generation when "After Laughter" was sampled by the Wu-Tang Clan for "Tearz" and, in 2007, Alicia Keys on "Where Do We Go From Here".

CHIP YOUNG

Nashville session guitarist

1938-2014

Chip Young's list of credits, in a career spanning half a century, was little short of formidable. He started out as touring partner of fellow guitarist Jerry Reed, before leaving his native Atlanta for Nashville in 1964. There he featured on recordings by Elvis Presley, Waylon Jennings, Jerry Lee Lewis, Kris Kristofferson, George Jones, Carl Perkins and many more. Perhaps his most famous moment was the distinctive thumb-picking rhythm that drove Dolly Parton's "Jolene". At his own Young 'Un Sound studio, he also co-produced Billy Swan's 1974 crossover, "I Can Help".

KING SPORTY

Reggae producer and writer

1943-2015

Noel Williams, better known as King Sporty, cut several sides for Clement Dodd in the mid-'60s, though his career only took off after leaving Jamaica for Miami. There he set up two labels, Tashamba and

Konduko, and set about writing, producing and scouting new talent. In the '70s he co-wrote "Buffalo Soldier" with Bob Marley. First recorded by Marley in 1978, it became a posthumous hit in 1983. Another Sporty song, "Self Destruct" was sampled by Justin Timberlake on 2013's "That Girl".

MILLIE KIRKHAM

Singer, Elvis collaborator

1923-2014

Elvis Presley was so smitten with the female harmony on Ferlin Husky's "Gone", a hit in 1956, that he asked for the singer's number. Millie Kirkham duly arrived at the sessions for the following year's *Elvis' Christmas Album*. Her voice, at its most prominent on "Blue Christmas", led to her being labelled the 'Nashville Soprano'. Kirkham recorded with Patsy Cline, Brenda Lee and George Jones, but her most enduring professional relationship was with Presley. She can be heard on "The Wonder Of You" and "(You're The) Devil In Disguise", among others.

CHRIS SHEEHAN

Starlings singer and guitarist

1965-2014

New Zealand singer-guitarist Chris Sheehan, who has died from

cancer, was better known as Chris Starling, the guiding force behind UK-based combo the Starlings in the early '90s. He began with Christchurch new wavers The Dance Exponents, before taking on session work with Jane Wiedlin in LA and moving to London, where he signed to Dave Stewart's Anxious label. Three albums with the Starlings were followed by a couple of stints with The Sisters Of Mercy, two solo LPs and sideman duties with Babylon Zoo and The Mutton Birds.

HENRY STRZELECKI

Session bassist

1939-2014

Nashville bassist Henry Strzelecki was a go-to session player for over five decades. His high-profile contributions included Bob Dylan's *Blonde On Blonde*, Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman" and George Jones' signature tune, "He Stopped Loving Her Today". A dizzying CV stretched to Chet Atkins, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Elvis Costello, Willie Nelson, Elvis Presley, Loretta Lynn, Louis Armstrong and Ray Charles. He was also a member of the Million Dollar Band that performed regularly on US TV show *Hee Haw* and, with brother Larry, co-wrote oft-covered novelty song "Long Tall Texan".

ROB HUGHES

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As a rule, we're a little awkward when it comes to marketing ourselves at Uncut. Nevertheless, it's my job every now and again to plug the ongoing virtues of our magazine: the exclusive interviews and deep retrospectives; the vast and insightful reviews section; the way we try and provide a continuum between the great

music of the past, and the new things that we're excited by in the office each month. You probably know the drill by now.

Let me remind you, anyhow, that the best way of enjoying Uncut is to take out a subscription to our mag. This month, as a new subscriber, you can save a useful 26 per cent when you sign up. Plus, you'll also receive a trial version of Uncut for your iPhone and iPad, and a 10 per cent discount voucher for Sonic Editions, where you can buy some of our favourite rock photographs as limited edition, individually numbered, handsomely framed prints.

Sounds like a good deal, hopefully. As this month's cover star once (almost) sang, "You'll get everything now..."

John Mulvey, Editor

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IRISHMAN'S BLUES

Reading The Waterboys Album By Album feature in last month's issue, I see you gave the Uncut Classic award to *Fisherman's Blues*. The growing widespread praise handed out to this album since its release continues to mystify me as, for the most part, its songs are well below anyone's standard. Granted, the title track and "We Will Not Be Lovers" are brilliant. But varied stabs at other musical genres, especially the Irish traditional ones, simply don't work – and I say this as a born and bred Irishman.

Mike Scott said in the article that he had to do something different as it was a life or death time for him, but what about the likes of me and many others who fully believed in The Big Music he was composing up 'til then? Perhaps Karl Wallinger leaving unsteadied him, as Chaz Jankel's departure diminished Ian Dury's output. Maybe it's just me? Growing up back in the '70s in smalltown Ireland, I liked to woo the ladies by bringing them to the neighbourhood reggae blues dance instead of the overpriced hotels that staged the visiting showbands. These showbands played the chart hits of the day and attracted the sort of clientele that went on govern this mismanaged country of ours to ill effect up to the present day. Even the ceilidh bands who performed at the village crossroads seemed to need the appearance of a Robert Johnson or two to sex up the proceedings. The devil may have all the best tunes, but after the glory of *This Is The Sea*, I guess poor old Mike Scott, in some ways, never fully returned from the hell that can be Connacht.

Tom Kinsella, Dublin

A NECESSARY SUPERMAN

In your story on photographer Danny Clinch [December 2014], you mention the superstar lineup for Paul McCartney's Concert For New York City, and dismiss the presence of Five For Fighting as "a little incongruous". You seem to forget what that concert was for. While actually written the year before that horrible day in our city's history and not specifically for the occasion, John Ondrasik's "Superman (It's Not Easy)" will always be associated with 9/11 as



an ode to those first responders, many of whom lost their lives on that day, so it was fitting. Hardly "incongruous".

Dan Rohan, Bronx, NYC

SOMEBODY UP THERE LIKES US

Thank you for the fascinating article on the recording of *Young Americans* 40 years on [February 2015]. Despite my scrapbooks of cuttings from the *NME* and *Sounds* back in the day, along with my Bowie library of magazines and books, I have always found this stage of his career – the Philly Dogs tour in late '74 – difficult to access. Your fine article filled many of these gaps, thanks to the insights of his key personnel at the time, especially Ava Cherry. Regarding *Young Americans* itself, it remains among my favourite Bowie albums of all time, despite the inclusion of "Across The Universe". If only they had retained the amazing "Who Can I Be Now?" – giving a second side of "Somebody Up There Likes Me", "Who Can I Be Now?", "Can Your Hear Me?" and "Fame" – then this could have been truly an eight-track masterpiece; 10/10 as opposed to 9/10. The photos, interviews and career updates provided an entertaining, informative article that added value to my extensive Bowie files and memorabilia.

Jeremy Walker, Macau, China

THE SINS OF THE FATHER

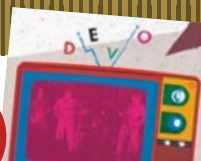
I have subscribed for 10 years, but never have you published such utter crap as the Father John Misty article [February 2015]. It's the most pretentious rubbish I have ever read. Most of it doesn't even make sense. Why use up space on such a self-obsessed man? **John, Rugby**

NEIL YOUNG AND ISRAEL

In Michael Bonner's "A Fork In The Road", in your January 2015 issue, Niko Bolas is quoted as saying, "He's [Neil Young's] stood in a tar sand field and looked at dead animals and come out thinking, 'Why isn't anybody doing anything about this?'" In the same article, Crazy Horse guitarist Frank Sampedro says, concerning a recent tour, "The war in Israel was happening. We had to cancel our show there... We were looking forward to playing Israel."

One suspects that, had Young, described by Bonner as having a "lengthy history of political engagement," stood not in said tar sand, but in Gaza, where not so much a "war" as a massacre was in progress, and observed human rather than animal corpses, he also might wonder why nobody was "doing anything about it". And one suspects that, like Roger Waters, Eno, Elvis Costello and others, he

might choose to boycott a state whose policies are, if anything, worse than those of Apartheid South Africa. And in so doing, "do something about it", however symbolically. Having myself visited Israel as a tourist a few years ago, seeing Wire perform in Tel Aviv, I understand there are legitimate reasons for not boycotting the country. "Reuters" aside, Wire is basically an apolitical group, whose subject matter is abstract, to say the least. But for Neil Young, an artist with a vastly higher profile than Wire, to be seen as a shining example of political activism while choosing to perform in Israel, and having nothing to say about the situation the Palestinians face, is ludicrous. Sampedro also says, "Here at home in the States, we don't see as much [as Europeans do] of the small conflicts that are going on globally on our TV news." Accurate info on Israel-Palestine doesn't exactly fall into the laps of US citizens. And that includes Neil Young. His attention to other causes is fine, but the keen desire for this "political" leader to play this show suggests an all-too common (and engineered) ignorance, occasionally transcended by the courageous likes of Roger Waters. That doesn't mean I won't continue to admire him and his music. It just makes him look foolish. Like lots of rock stars. **David Keay, via email**



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A KIWI CARPENTER

Bob Carpenter's sole 1974 LP, *Silent Passage*, has recently been reissued on CD. Your story [October 2014] tells us that, due to a contractual stand-off between the artist and the record company or producer, all the as-yet-unreleased, but already pressed LPs were melted down in 1974, and it was first (privately) released in Canada in '84. However, I have an original '75 New Zealand pressing of the album on Reprise. So the melting down order obviously didn't reach New Zealand in time, giving us yet another rarity!

Aalbet Rebergen, Masterton, NZ

THE WRONG KEYS?

Just read your Bobby Keys obituary [February 2015] and was amazed to see *Emotional Rescue* included in the "superior end of the Stones' catalogue". I'd think *Emotional Rescue* would be regarded as one of the weakest albums ever released by the Stones. I was fortunate to have met Bobby at the Borderline when he guested with the mighty Dirty Strangers, a true gent, RIP.

Steven Hancock, via email

STRAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

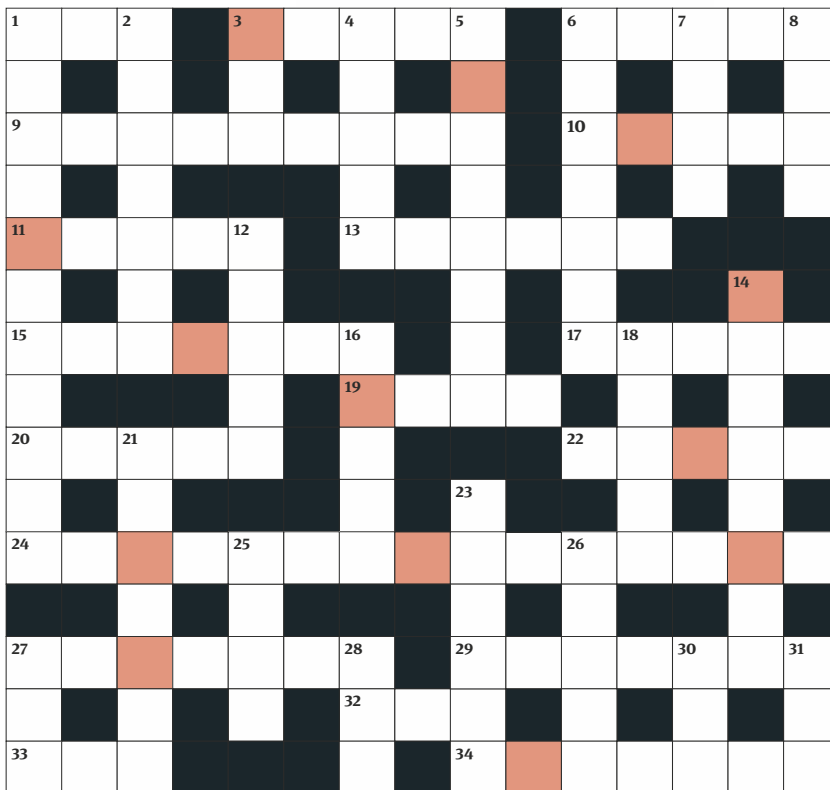
Great article on Big Star [December 2014]. Adam Hill was talking about the sound from Alex Chilton's Strat. As far as I'm aware, all early Strats had a three-way switch that selected one pickup in each position. If you carefully put the switch in between the detentes, you got the magic out-of-phase sound. Fender started putting five-ways on the Strat probably in the early '70s, a recognition that so many players were 'misusing' the supplied switch. I was shown the trick in about 1970 on a mid-'60s model and it was a real revelation.

Nigel Tannahill, via email

COMES A TIME?

I love your magazine. Been buying it since the very first issue (Elvis Costello cover, I believe). I have to admit, however, there's at least two or three out of every 12 issues where I won't buy it. It's to do with what I feel is an over-saturation of certain artists on the cover. I mean really, how many times can we read about Dylan, Springsteen or Neil Young? Great artists, sure, who no doubt deserve reassessment, it just seems that every other week some magazine is doing some sort of piece on the 'Lost' tapes or the 'Lost' interview. As a change, how about a cover story on Van Morrison or some of the younger bands coming through?

Jeff, Dublin



HOWTOENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by The Smiths. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* March 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, February 23, 2015. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1+3A** To a large extent, this sounds like Simple Minds (3-5)
6 Prog-rockers who suffered from *Moonmadness* (5)
9 Try to nose around in Neil Young's work (9)
10 This singer's addicted to being a *Pure Heroine* (5)
11+6D He began his solo album career in *Hope And Despair* and now it's *Understated* (5-7)
13 Canadian rock band who measured up to their *Fantasies* (6)
15 Without a break, The Box Tops recorded an album (3-4)
17 "They say _____ is pretty, though I've never been", from Elton John's hit, "Daniel" (5)
19+34A Can't wait for this Marvin Gaye record to be played (4-3-2-2)
20 A bit of a faulty pressing of Tindersticks' new album (5)
22 "Mama, take this _____ off of me, I can't use it anymore", from Bob Dylan's "Knockin' On Heaven's Door" (5)
24 "Hitch a ride to the end of the highway, where the neons turn to wood", 1970 (2-6-3-4)
27 (See 4 down)
29 A single track that charted for The Love Affair (3-4)
32 "Oh, let the _____ beat down upon my face", from Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" (3)
33+30D The La's took their exit with debut single (3-3)
34 (See 19 across)

CLUES DOWN

- 1** Dr Feelgood have to go now but look forward to your next visit (2-6-3)
2 The Doves' Jimi _____, who went solo with album *Odludek* (7)
3 Time of the year for a bit of Queen (3)
4+27A Deep Purple album that carried its own violent reaction (5-7)
5+7D "Well I was upon Stony Ridge, after this _____/Been chasing her for weeks", The Byrds (8-4)
6 (See 11 across)
7 (See 5 down)
8 "All _____ and jest, still a man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest", from Simon & Garfunkel's "The Boxer" (4)
12 "The funniest thing I wanted to sing but the _____ wouldn't come my way", from Renegade Soundwave's "Probably A Robbery" (5)
14+16D "You're so sheer, you're so chic, teenage rebel of the week", 1972 (8-5)
18 Rapper has another scheme lined up if all goes wrong (4-1)
21 Both David Bowie and James Brown became a different kind of star on their albums (7)
23 Powerful number by London Grammar (6)
25 All right to make a move for Grammy Award-winning US alt. rock band (2-2)
26 Press the button to get Senser cassette tape out (5)
27 Give a sign of respect to recent Kasabian single (3)
28 Naming a Bee Gees record label is a bit personal (3)
30 (See 33 across)
31 Put on an Everly Brother (3)

ANSWERS: TAKE 212

ACROSS

1 The Endless River, 9 New York City, 10 Red, 12+16D Absolute Beginners, 14 Choir, 15 Orb, 17 Still, 19 Flag, 20+21A Organ Fan, 23 No Need, 24 Sun, 25 Bus,

27 Reveal, 29 Earth, 30 Ellis, 31 Dream.

DOWN

1 Tone Loc, 2 Edwyn Collins, 3 No Other, 4+17D Like A Rolling Stone, 6+26D Royal Scam, 7 Very Things, 8 Ride,

13 Blind, 18+11A No Free Lunch, 22+5D In The Skies, 25+18A Blue Nile, 28 End.

HIDDEN ANSWER
"El Dorado"

XWORD COMPILED BY:
Trevor Hungerford



MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Phosphorescent

Matthew Houck checks the tape player in his dad's dumptruck to rediscover his formative influences



A record I wish I'd made

Leonard Cohen
New Skin For The Old Ceremony 1974

This record is such a beauty. It has such an all-encompassing reach. Mysterious and vague and also painfully blunt. Scrappy and also lush. Sad and funny. Angry and resigned. Broken and uplifting. Simple and complex. Indulgent and self-absorbed and charming and welcoming, too... The whole thing, honestly, I couldn't take just one track. The whole flow of the thing, just each song is a stunner.



A song that heart-attacks me every time

Nina Simone
To Love Somebody 1969

Nina Simone's recording of this song is just a powerhouse, she has such a huge catalogue, but this will just knock your socks off. Check it out. The Bee Gees wrote this song originally, if I'm not mistaken. I heard another version of it and it never connected. A while later in life I heard her version, and it's just such a perfect, perfect song.



The first tape I loved

Fleetwood Mac
Rumours 1977

In my dad's dump truck there was a tape player. The only tape in there for my entire adolescence was a tape with *Rumours* on Side A and Gerry Rafferty's *City To City* (1978) on Side B. I bet it's still in there to this day. Every weekend, dragged out to a worksite at some ungodly early hour and then riding home exhausted at the end of the day, I'd be hearing these two records. I'm not convinced this contributed to my love of these albums, but I still feel both of those records are top-to-bottom perfect.



A great song improved by its title

Bob Dylan
Love Minus Zero/No Limit 1965

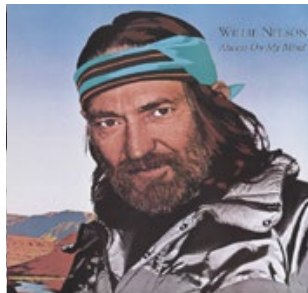
What a truly great song and title. Can you imagine what would have happened if a song like "To Ramona" was given a title as heavy and wild as this? This period of Dylan was my favourite for a while, but with Dylan you kind of think of the different periods as different artists. *Bringing It All Back Home* might be my favourite from that era, but I love the '70s stuff too – *Desire*, you know – probably a bit more at this point in life.



A minimalist masterpiece

Tibor Szemző
Tractatus 1995

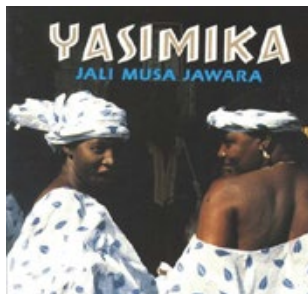
Almost nothing seems to be happening here, just a voice mumbling a repeating melody... and then you realise a new piece has been inserted. This kind of music seems to be categorised into an intellectual and compositional scene. I find most of that stuff intolerable, but maybe haven't looked hard enough to find gems like this. I disagree with the need for divisions between music like this and more traditional songwriting.



My favourite Willie Nelson album

Willie Nelson
Always On My Mind 1982

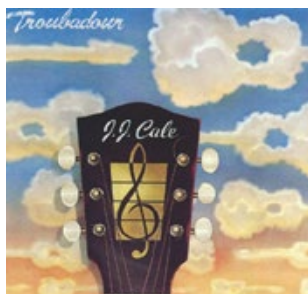
It's tough to pick just one Willie album, but, if pressed, I'd have to go with this one. The arrangements. Willie's singing and guitar playing... a master at work. Such a sad record, too. A flat-out masterpiece. And to top it all off, it sounds like they just tossed it off effortlessly. Some folks might have noticed that the last three songs on my LP, *To Willie*, are the very same three songs that close out this record. That's no coincidence.



My favourite foreign-language album

Jali Musa Jawara
Yasimika 1983

Lyrics have always been what I respond to most in songs, so songs sung in foreign tongues can be difficult to get into. But this record transcends all of that nonsense. It's made up of four songs, each of which runs around 10 minutes. It's so repetitive and beautiful, and what a voice from this guy, and the three women singers! Just get in the zone. Sing hard and high and loud. Keep going...



A song with a sexy groove

JJ Cale
Cherry 1976

This track is the sexiest groove on an album that's just overflowing with sexy grooves. The whole album that this track is from, *Troubadour*, is laidback, easygoing sexiness. This song takes it home. Sexy, sexy, sexy. Most JJ Cale records sound amazing, and *Troubadour*, in particular, is one of the best. I would definitely say it's one of my favourite-sounding records, ever.

Phosphorescent's Live At The Music Hall is released by Dead Oceans on February 16.

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT:

"We all learned how to be the whole band on one guitar..."



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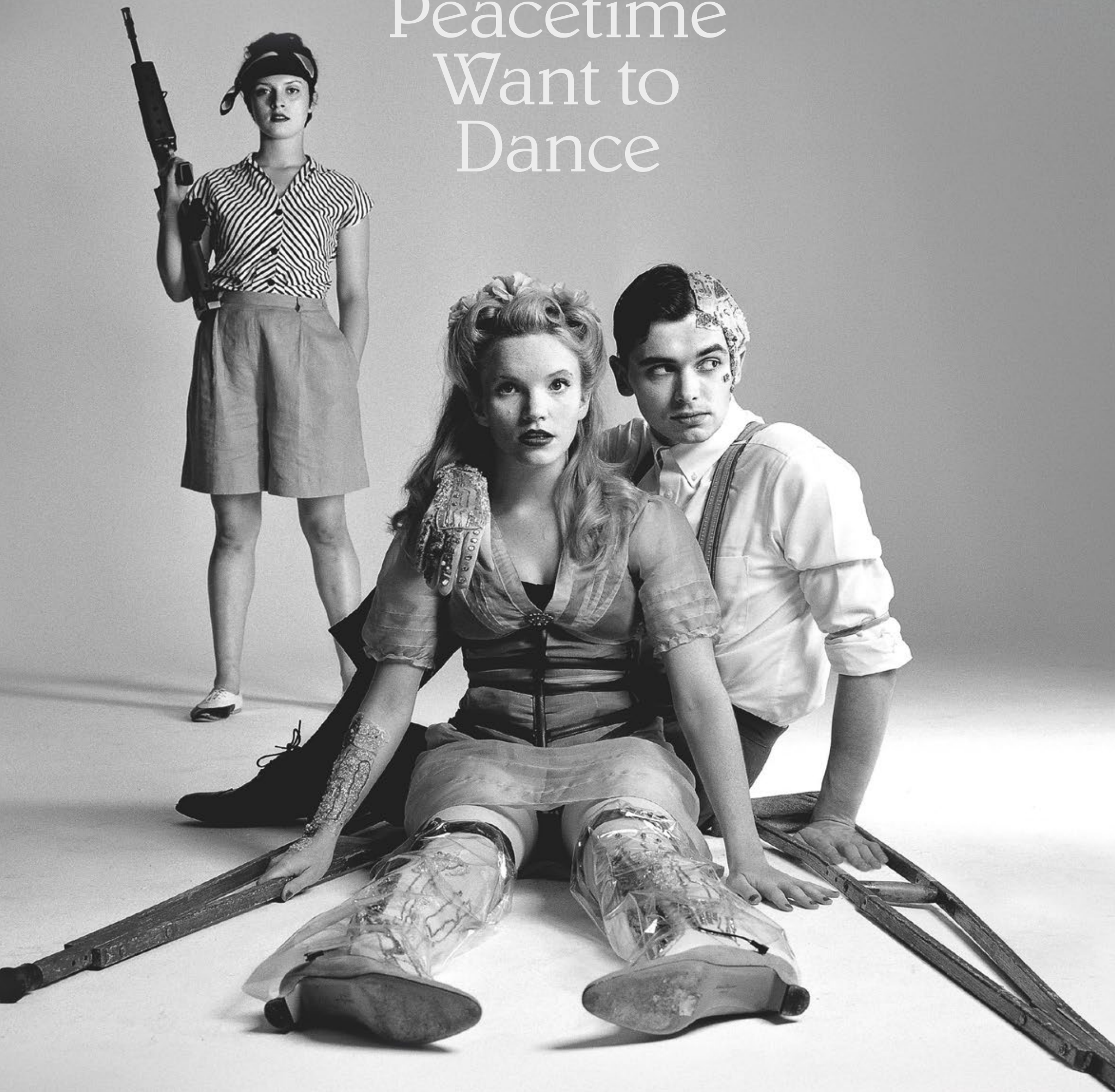
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Belle and Sebastian

Girls in Peacetime Want to Dance



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