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ROXY MUSIC

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THE SPECIALS

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AND MORE...

# UNCUT

## JONI MITCHELL HER 30 GREATEST SONGS

*Chosen by*  
Robert Plant  
Pink Floyd  
David Crosby  
Radiohead and more

**PLUS EXCLUSIVE!**  
*'There's always a chance of new music!'*

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY  
CURTIS HARDING  
JELLYFISH  
DAVE CLARK FIVE  
AND THE CHILEAN WOODSTOCK!

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Confessions of a Bad Seed

**ARE YOU READY FOR THE COUNTRY?**

A guide to Nashville's new wave

The emotional return of

## SUFJAN STEVENS

## KIM FOWLEY R.I.P.

'I'm caught in a future shock time-warp!'

AND

PJ HARVEY

SIMPLE MINDS

THE YARDBIRDS

• RYLEY WALKER

THE THE

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original  
craft

Tito's vodka

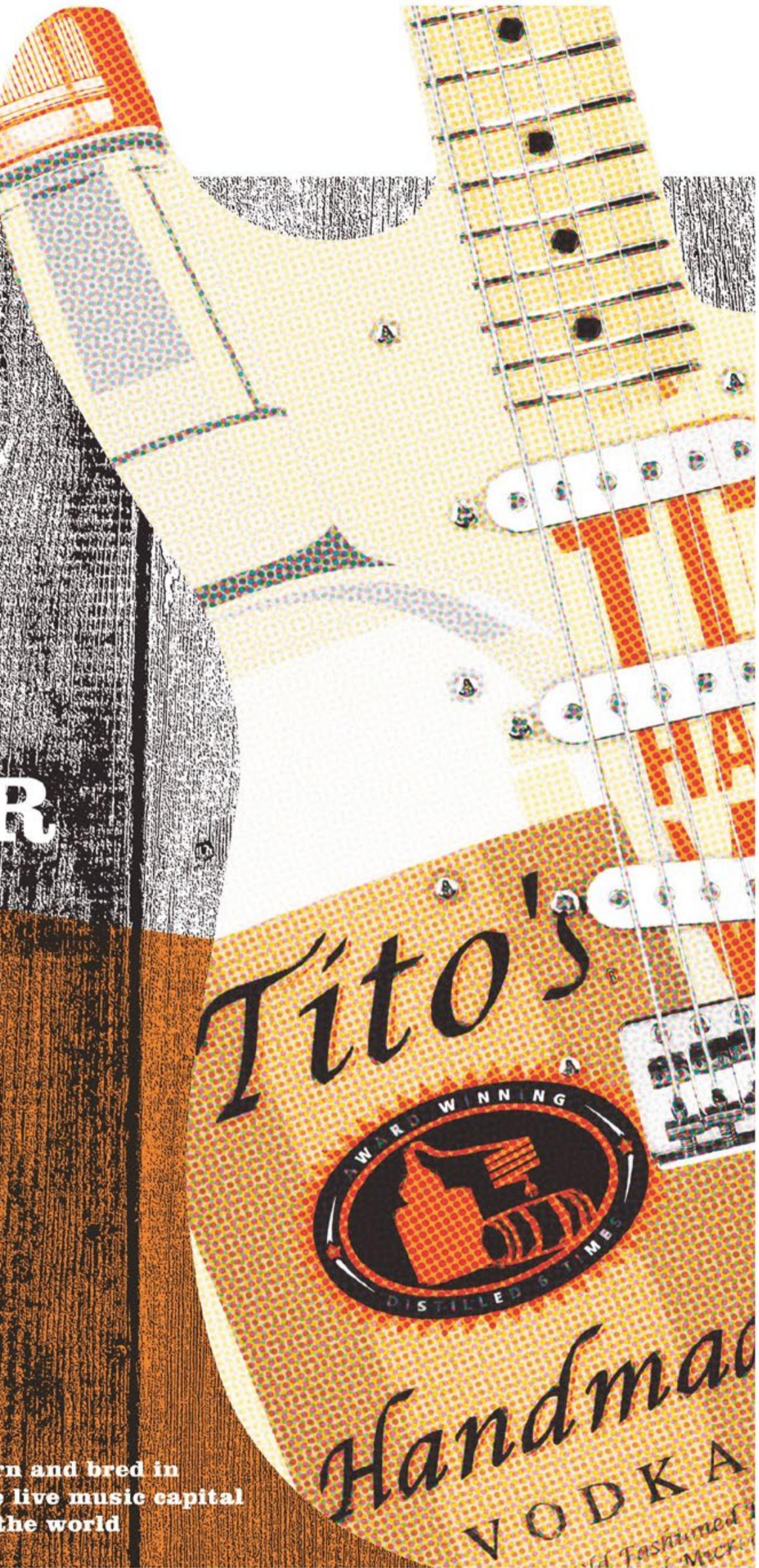
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## 4 Instant Karma!

In the studio with PJ Harvey, plus The Yardbirds, Curtis Harding, Jellyfish

## 14 Phil Manzanera

An audience with the Roxy guitarist

## 18 Sufjan Stevens

One of America's most restless musical spirits explains how road trips, rodeos and grief led him to return to folk music

## 24 Nick Cave

Warren Ellis gives us the inside story of the Bad Seeds – from silences and boils to respect for Australian goths...

## 30 Joni Mitchell

Her 30 greatest songs, as chosen by Robert Plant, Pink Floyd, Radiohead, Graham Nash, REM and more

## 42 The Dave Clark Five

The making of "Glad All Over"

## 46 New Country

Uncut meets a young breed of country artists, positioned between the grit of Americana and mainstream glitz

## 54 The The

Album by album with Matt Johnson

## 58 Kim Fowley

We salute the late rock legend, and rescue a hair-raising 1972 Fowley interview from the Melody Maker archives

40 PAGES OF REVIEWS!

## 65 New Albums

Including: Laura Marling, Ryley Walker, Björk, Courtney Barnett

## 87 The Archive

Including: The Specials, Bob Marley, Roxy Music

## 99 DVD & Film

Altman, Winterbottom's *The Face Of An Angel*, Joe Strummer doc

## 104 Live

Julian Cope, Lambchop

## 117 Books

Kim Gordon, Sandy Denny

## 118 Not Fade Away

This month's obituaries

## 120 Feedback

Your letters, plus the Uncut crossword

## 122 My Life In Music

Jim Kerr

# Are we rolling?



which one is the best. There are 30 or 40 best ones."

In the end, and with the help of Roger McGuinn, Matthew E White, Graham Nash, Linda Perhacs, Mike Heron and quite a few more, we settled on 30 songs. To rank them in any kind of order, though, struck us as an excruciating and ultimately pointless procedure; to be honest, we bottled it. On page 30, then, you'll find 30 insightful pieces on 30 exceptional Joni songs, arranged in the order they were released, beginning with Radiohead's Philip Selway on "Both Sides, Now" and ending with the 2002 orchestral version of "Amelia", nominated by Robert Plant.

I ended up contributing a few over-wrought words about "Song For Sharon" to the piece, and in this issue I also wrote about PJ Harvey's tantalising "Recording In Process" project, and Sam Lee's new album, *The Fade In Time*, another one of those records I seem to be fixated on at the moment that makes deep, scholarly and emotional connections with old traditions, without being hamstrung by them.

Serendipitous, too, that one of my favourite new albums that's turned up in the last few days is by The Weather Station, ostensibly a Canadian singer-songwriter called Tamara Lindeman. Like great swathes of the new Laura Marling album reviewed on page 74, The Weather Station's *Loyalty* doesn't really sound much like a record that could've been made in LA 40 years ago, but it does have a certain grace and profundity, a husky nuance or two that hits a few familiar emotional triggers... "I see something of myself in everyone," as "Hejira" goes, "Just at this moment of the world."

Speak soon,

John Mulvey, Editor

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# INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT  
Featuring THE YARDBIRDS | ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY | JELLYFISH

SILENCE IN THE STUDIO

## MEET ZE MONSTA!

In the studio with PJ HARVEY and friends.  
Involves lemon sherbets, faulty saxophones and,  
eventually, a “geopolitical” new album...

BY THE ENTRANCE to Somerset House on Waterloo Bridge, there is a shop called Knyttan, where one can “create your own unique jumper and see it made in front of you.” It is near here, on a bright January day, that about 40 people wait to be summoned down to the basement. PJ Harvey’s “Recording In Progress” project started four days earlier, a kind of installation where Harvey and her band work on their next album in a glass box, unable to see or hear the fans who watch, with self-consciously suppressed excitement, on the other side.

To enforce the aesthetics of an art event, the programme contains an interview with Harvey by Michael Morris, co-director of the organisers, Artangel. They talk a good deal about the significance of place, and the history of Somerset House: about how Oliver Cromwell’s body lay in state there; about how its stone comes from the Jurassic Coast, near Harvey’s birthplace; about how the Thames runs under the building. The putative album, Morris reveals, will be a “broader, more geopolitical record than *Let England Shake*”.

“This cycle of songs considers the major issues of our time,” he notes, “social inequality and injustice, the politics of poverty, anxiety and paranoia about terrorism and the way that hate breeds hate among generations in opposition.” Money, it will transpire, gets everywhere.

It will also buy you a photograph by Harvey collaborator Seamus Murphy (£300), or a sheet of Harvey’s lyrics-in-

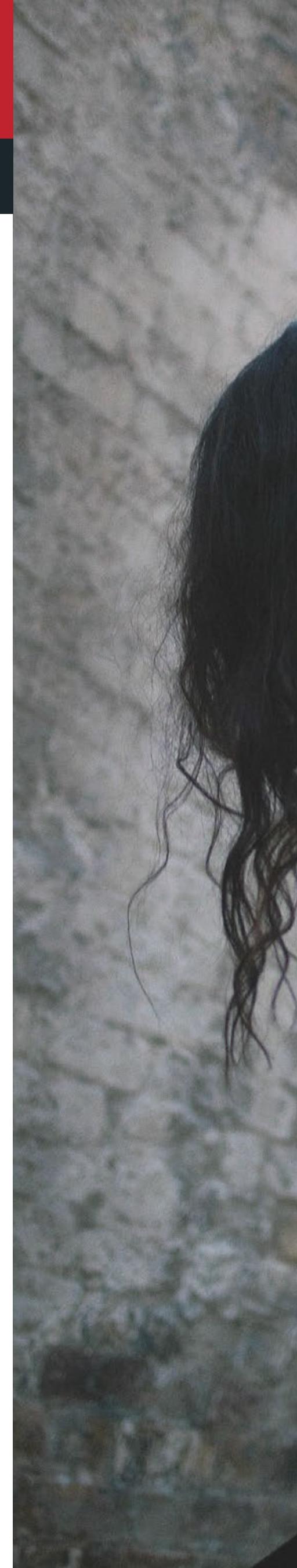
progress (£50), on sale in a grand anteroom, smelling of paint. Handing in all electronic devices is a necessary protocol: PJ Harvey’s openness, reasonably enough, has its limits.

At 1pm, Artangel curators lead us down into the lower levels of Somerset House, towards a room that was, in a previous life, the Inland Revenue’s staff gymnasium. Two sides of the studio are glass, enclosing Harvey, producer Flood, John Parish, Terry Edwards, drummer Kendrick Rowe and two techs/engineers, plus photographer Murphy. There is a

dense accompaniment. *Is This Desire* might be the closest comparison, though it may also be a mistake to draw comparisons at this early stage.

It is, though, a short and instantly excellent song, one whose catchiness will become apparent over the next 45 minutes. Harvey’s part ends with some virtuoso whoops and, as it finishes, the audience almost start to clap, then realise that such a response would be vulgar – and, of course, futile, since the performers cannot hear anything outside their space.

Flood, who soon emerges as the dominant – or at least the most voluble – character, gives his notes on the take; he is not happy with Parish’s guitar part. Harvey is stationed well away from the glass, ensuring no-one can read her lyrics and notes, and surrounded by those arcane instruments, aesthetically pleasing objects that illuminate a blank and functional room. While she allows Flood to do most of the speaking, Harvey’s constant alertness, the way she turns precisely to look at whoever is talking, is striking. What seems to be passivity reveals itself to be a more considered, collaborative, discreetly authoritative way of working.

One of the engineers appears to be giving names to each take, and this is “Brian Take”. It’s a significantly demystifying moment, when the reality of the project becomes clearer. The spectacle isn’t really much like an art installation, and the odd scenario doesn’t add any mystique to studio in-jokes, it just broadcasts them to 40 fans quietly delighted at the intimacy of their access. 

*As the public can only see 45-minute fragments, a bigger picture remains tantalisingly obscured...*

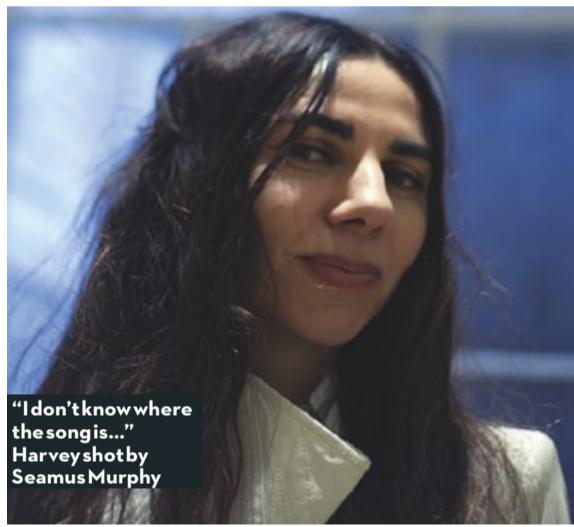
heraldic crest for PJ Harvey on the wall and on a marching band bass drum, the shield supported by a goat and a two-headed dog.

Edwards is playing flute, heavily distorted. Parish is hunched over a National Steel guitar. Rowe is stood up, playing rolls on two snares. Flood is sat on a white sofa in his parka. Harvey is surrounded by saxophones, autoharps and a small mixer, blowing her nose. After a few minutes, they begin again, Harvey singing what seems to be “God sent you” over a



For all the artificiality, nothing is that different from a routine studio session; plenty of artists have recorded in busy studios, full of friends, associates and hangers-on. Myths around Harvey often privilege the seriousness, intensity and privacy of what people assume is her working practice, but maybe that's a naïve way of looking at a collective and often mundane endeavour. One of the critical uses of "Recording In Progress" is that it eliminates some of those assumptions, while also ensuring Harvey stays in control. It's a new way for her to challenge her own shyness, in a mediated way, and deploy it as part of the artistic process.

Another take begins, and with Parish's noise reduced, Edwards' flute rises to the fore; looping and scuffy, reminiscent of how Florian Schneider played on early Kraftwerk tracks like "Ruckzuck". Flood approves. Edwards says something about "distorted ska". Behind them, on a wallchart,



"I don't know where the song is..."  
Harvey shot by Seamus Murphy

what appear to be song titles are listed, explicit in their engagement with money, politics, the city: "River Anacostia", "Medicinals", "Chain Of Keys", "Near The Memorials To Vietnam And Lincoln", "A Dog Called Money", "The Ministry Of Social Affairs", "The Age Of The Dollar", "The Community Of Hope", "The Wheel", "Homo Sappy Blues", "The Ministry Of Defence", "The Boy", "A Line In The Sand", "Dollar Dollar", "I'll Be Waiting", "The Orange Monkey", "Guilty". But as the public can only see the work in progress in 45-minute fragments, a bigger picture remains tantalisingly obscured. On January 23, at 1pm, work is being done on the chorus and horns of "Guilty"; a jar of lemon sherbets near the mixing desk has depleted significantly in the intervening three days. On February 5, at 1pm, baritone sax issues prompt a telephone call to a music shop.

At 1.30 on January 20, though, Edwards nonchalantly picks up a melodica and honks along, disconsolately. Flood is impressed, and gives him a thumbs-up. Harvey, meanwhile, makes a note on a sheet from her music stand. "It's starting to sound pretty interesting now," she says, approvingly. "How's the song going?" asks Flood. "I don't know where the song is," she laughs.

She has, though, an idea, and begins blowing on a tenor sax, eventually matching her tone to that of Edwards' melodica. They are about to start the song again when the sound cuts out in the viewing space, and the curators shepherd us away.

"You'll witness something that is passing in real time," Harvey says in the programme, "and I feel the best part of any creation is the creating itself. That is when it's most vital, most exciting..." And perhaps, after such a brief glimpse of that process, when it can also be most frustrating.

JOHN MULVEY

A POWERPOP RETURN

# "We wanted to come from outer space, not from the plumbing truck!"

Reintroducing Californian powerpop savants JELLYFISH. Twenty years on, what went wrong? Introspective country ballads – or The Sweet?

**W**E WERE SO interested in putting on an entertaining, theatrical show. A lot of artists then were wearing jeans and a T-shirt, with an acoustic guitar strapped to their back. But we found no reason why we couldn't present ourselves as a direct extension of the music: colourful, many-faceted. We had serious and heartfelt songs, and others that made you smile and laugh."

Songwriter and keyboardist Roger Manning Jr is recalling his time in Jellyfish, the San Francisco quartet that brought a welcome splash of Technicolor to early '90s pop. Theirs was a universe of fizzing hooks, urgent choruses and gang harmonies, played by men in flamboyantly retro stage gear to a backdrop of Christmas lights, bubble machines and white picket fences. "It was kind of a resistance to the everyman thing that was about to explode with grunge," explains guitarist Jason Falkner. "We wanted to come from outer space, not from the plumbing truck."

The two albums that Jellyfish released in their short lifespan, 1990's *Bellybutton* and *Spilt Milk* (1993), sparkling monuments to ageless powerpop, have just been reissued. Both carry echoes of the bands that inspired them, yet at the same time filtered through the post-punk sensibility of Manning and co-writer (and chief vocalist) Andy Sturmer. Says Manning: "I remember Andy and I listening to The Zombies' *Odessey And Oracle*, McCartney's *Ram* and 10cc's *Sheet Music* and saying: 'If we can combine the aesthetic of these three records, we've got something.' Those were huge influences, along with XTC, Queen, Cheap Trick and everything else."

Fired by singles "The King Is Half-Undressed" and "Baby's Coming Back", *Bellybutton* brought them cultish acclaim in

the US and overseas, though all wasn't quite rosy. "There was tension when we made that," offers Falkner, "so some stuff you're hearing is literally anger. In the solo on 'She Still Loves Him', I was screaming through my guitar." Frustrated at his lack of songwriting opportunities, Falkner quit after the accompanying tour.

*Spilt Milk* took two years to complete, Manning and Sturmer intent on creating a multi-layered suite of sophisticated pop. "It was challenging," Manning admits. "But, for me, the Jellyfish vision was fully realised on *Spilt Milk*. It moves all over the place, but that's what our heroes all did."

Post-*Spilt Milk*, Sturmer began to write introspective country ballads; Manning wanted to sound like The Sweet. By 1994 it was all over. Sturmer tried his hand at production, Falkner formed The Grays and Manning co-founded Imperial Drag.

"Jellyfish was everything we hoped it would be," says Manning, who, along with Falkner, has most recently been in Beck's backing band. "We contributed to a legacy of pop classicism. And that's really all that we were ever trying to do."

ROB HUGHES

*Jellyfish's* two albums are out now on Omnivore



Tentacle-CC:(l-r)Chris Manning (back), Andy Sturmer, Jason Falkner, Roger Manning Jr

# TRAIN STOPPED A-ROLLING?

**After 52 years, THE YARDBIRDS at least appear to call it a day. "There's no plans," says Jim McCarty...**

**L**OTS OF PEOPLE have come on board," says original Yardbirds drummer Jim McCarty of the band's present-day fanbase. "Young people who have found our music through Zeppelin. The repertoire is so strong, it's become more and more popular, strangely. It's like a fine wine."

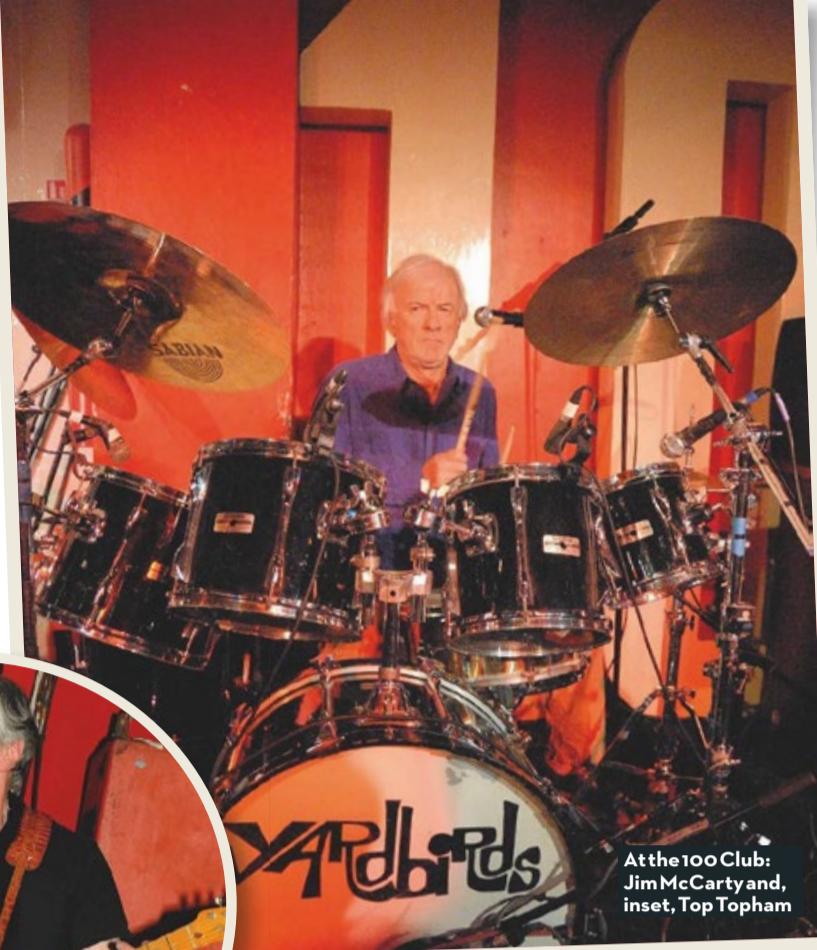
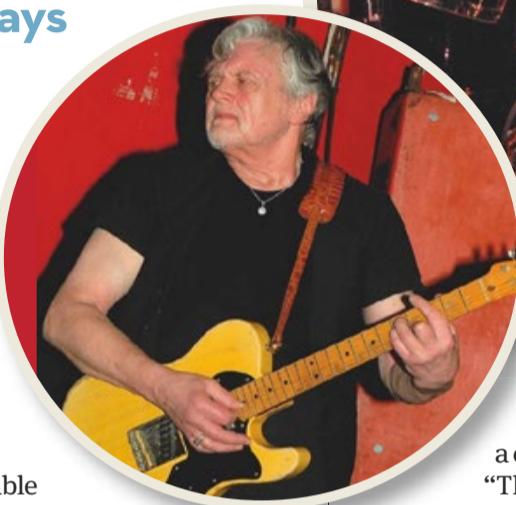
For the time being, however, that fine Yardbirds wine is being laid down in the cellar again. After several enjoyable years playing with a lineup featuring original members McCarty alongside (rhythm guitar/bassist) Chris Dreja and latterly original guitarist Top Topham, in late January, the band played their last London show with their current formation. "All the young guys are going out," says McCarty. "There's no plans."

Rather than a tearful farewell, the band's 100 Club show on January 30 proves to be a packed-out, sweaty old rave-up. Watched by beat fans aged from 40 to 70-odd, the band tear through a Yardbirds chronology that mirrors their evolution from blues purists, to psychedelic adventurers, to the proto-Led Zeppelin that they had, by their break-up in 1968, become.

"We were always a blues band," says Top Topham, introducing "Heart Full Of Soul". "But along the way hits did come along..."

A band known as much for the remarkable shadow cast by their post-Topham lead guitarists Eric Clapton (1963-65), Jeff Beck (1965-66) and Jimmy Page (1966-68) as much as for their group compositions, the set demonstrates the breadth of what the band achieved beyond the showmanship of their alumni. None of these august figures show up for a "surprise guest" turn, but lead guitarist Ben King stays well abreast of the band's definitive "Train Kept A-Rolling", the Stonesy breakdown of "Over Under Sideways Down", and melancholic psych gems like "Still I'm Sad" and "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago".

As dynamic as the band's "Dazed And Confused" sounds,



At the 100 Club:  
Jim McCarty and,  
inset, Top Topham

it is probably in emulating the straining string bends and feedback of the Jeff Beck era that the band particularly excel. This might not entirely be a coincidence.

"The most idyllic time was probably round '66 with the Jeff Beck lineup," McCarty recalls. "It was getting into a different sound: starting from the blues and then really opening out into something rather original. Jeff really did go for it."

There were downsides to this. "Of course, he went for it in terms of sound," McCarty recalls. "But when you played a gig you could never really be sure what was going to happen. That was always very tricky, without a doubt."

While the band has no plans for a new live lineup, they're not idle. The surviving original members are working on definitive remastered re-releases of their at present rather spotty catalogue.

"Our catalogue has been a long story," says McCarty. "We lost the rights to most of it. At the moment, Charly [Records] are considering putting the catalogue together with us on board, which would be good – we're in the middle of that now."

What McCarty hopes for is an agreement to get "all the best bits to the public" in a form the band can be proud of. For him, that would mean a reissue of 1966's *The Yardbirds* (known as 'Roger The Engineer'), which "has all the best qualities of the band represented". In the meantime, like that of The Pretty Things, the freakbeat legend of The Yardbirds only continues to grow.

McCarty chuckles. "It's almost like a cult, isn't it?"

JOHN ROBINSON

**The Yardbirds** played at the 100 Club as part of Independent Venue Week. [www.independentvenueweek.com](http://www.independentvenueweek.com)

## UNCUT'S END OF THE ROAD

**The War On Drugs and Sufjan confirmed for our favourite festival**

**O**NCE AGAIN THIS year, *Uncut* is enormously proud to be involved with the End Of The Road festival – not least because, more than ever, its lineup so accurately reflects the music we're excited about in 2015. Between September 4 and 6, then, Larmer Tree Gardens in Dorset will play host to three auspicious headliners: our 2014

Album Of The Year winners **The War On Drugs**, **Tame Impala** and **Sufjan Stevens**, who we've exclusively interviewed on page 18 of this issue. Joining them will be a supporting cast that includes **Future Islands**, **The Unthanks**, **Sleaford Mods**, **Jessica Pratt**, **Natalie Prass** and plenty more key acts still to be announced. Tickets on sale now cost £195, and you can find out more by visiting [www.endoftheroadfestival.com](http://www.endoftheroadfestival.com). See you there!

**END OF THE ROAD**



Adam Granduciel of The War On Drugs

### A QUICK ONE

► Advance warning that our next *Ultimate Music Guide* rolls out on March 12, this time dedicated to the genius of Kate Bush. Lots of full-length, historically fascinating interviews from *NME* and *Melody Maker* in there,



plus deep new essays on every Bush album. We just know that something good is going to happen, etc...

► In a moving open letter to his fans, Gong's Daevid Allen has announced that his "cancer is now so well established I have been given approximately six months to live... I believe that the time has come to stop resisting and denying and to surrender to the way it is." Allen revealed he will have no further surgery. "I can only hope," he continued, "that during this journey, I have somehow contributed to the happiness in the lives of a few other fellow humans."

► Excellent news for Londoners: The Replacements have announced their first UK shows in 24 years, playing the Roundhouse on June 2 and 3. Westerberg and co will also call in at Barcelona's Primavera Sound (May 28) and Amsterdam Paradiso (May 30) after a month of US dates.

► Visit [www.uncut.co.uk](http://www.uncut.co.uk) for daily news, reviews, playlists and the best longreads from the archive.

Jodorowsky in  
*El Topo* (1970)

REBIRTH

# 'When I ate the mushrooms, I became a lion!'

**A trip into the alternate world of cinefreak ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY: how George Harrison's bum lost him millions...**

IT IS NEARLY midnight when *Uncut* speaks to Alejandro Jodorowsky on the phone from his home in Paris. But the Chilean filmmaker is untroubled by the lateness of the hour. "I have no feeling of time," he explains. "I have been living in Paris almost 100 lives.

To me, there are a lot of Alejandro Jodorowskys who died. Then I am reborn. Everything is changing. You, me, the universe. Everything."

A conversation with Jodorowsky takes a lot of fascinating, if unexpected, diversions. Ostensibly, we are here to discuss the reissue of

three soundtracks to his films: *El Topo*, *The Holy Mountain* and *The Dance Of Reality*. The first of those, the psychedelic magic-realist western *El Topo* (1970), won the director powerful fans, including John Lennon, who helped secure funds for 1973's *The Holy Mountain*. "He recommended Allen Klein buy *El Topo*, and he did," recalls the director. "I met George Harrison in the Plaza Hotel in New York, in a big suite. He was dressed all in white. Very, very spiritual. I wanted him to star in *The Holy Mountain*. He said, 'I like the script, I want to do the picture. But there is one little part I cannot do.' I said, 'What little part?' He said, 'In a swimming pool, with a hippopotamus, I must clean my asshole in front of the camera. I don't want to do that.' I said to him, 'I am very happy that you like my picture. But this moment is very important for the picture and you are the biggest star and if you show your anus it will be the most fantastic illustration of how humble your ego is.' Then he said, 'No, I

can't do it. I lost millions of dollars!'

Nevertheless, Jodorowsky filmed *The Holy Mountain* in Mexico in 1972 while undergoing spiritual training developed by "Bolivian master" Oscar Ichazo. "He came to Mexico City. I paid \$17,000 to learn how to be a guru. He fed me LSD. There was also María Sabina, the priestess of the sacred mushrooms. She had a vision I'd make a picture that would help the world realise the true value of our culture. She sent me mushrooms in a jar of honey. When I ate them, I became a lion. I went up to the roof and made a connection with every one of the stars."

A wild mix of jazz, rock, avant-garde and Eastern influences, the soundtrack to *The Holy Mountain* was composed in collaboration with jazz trumpeter Don Cherry: a kindred spirit. "His aim was to have in his life only things he found in the street. He had a broken trumpet he played at right angles."

Following *The Holy Mountain*, Jodorowsky and Klein fell out. "He wanted me to make a picture [*The Story Of O*]. I didn't want to do it. I escaped... we fought for 30 years."

After an ill-fated attempt to film Frank Herbert's novel, *Dune*, Jodorowsky's career dwindled. "I didn't make pictures for 22 years," he sighs. "I tried, but it is very difficult to make a picture that isn't Hollywood shit." He returned to active filmmaking in 2013 with the autobiographical *The Dance Of Reality*: a sequel is currently planned. Meanwhile, he has enjoyed a successful career writing comic books; he also gives weekly psychomagic lectures. "Every one of us is sleeping," he confides. "Because we have an ego, and we are not really what we are. We need to be awakened." At 86, it seems Alejandro Jodorowsky has no intention of slowing down. "To be old doesn't exist," he claims. "Inside, I am the same. In order not to get old, I just don't look at myself in the mirror." MICHAEL BONNER

*The Jodorowsky soundtracks are released by Finders Keepers in the UK and ABKCO in America*

## THE CLASSIFIEDS

THIS MONTH: The Cure's gig at the Marquee is advertised, with support from a certain Joy Division... Taken from *NME*'s March 3, 1979 issue

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Thursday 8th March	PRETENDERS + Neon	£1.00

# fresh produce



noel gallagher's  
high flying birds  
chasing yesterday  
released 02/03/2015



matthew e. white  
fresh blood  
released 09/03/2015



ghostpoet  
shedding skin  
02/03/2015



mark lanegan band  
a thousand miles of midnight-phantom radio remixes  
out now



jon hopkins  
late night tales  
02/03/2015



the monochrome set  
spaces everywhere  
16/03/2015

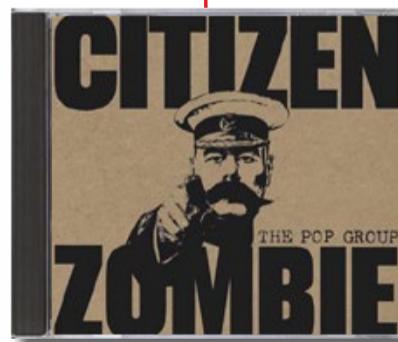
bjork  
vulnicura  
released 16/03/2015



moon duo  
shadow of the sun  
02/03/2015



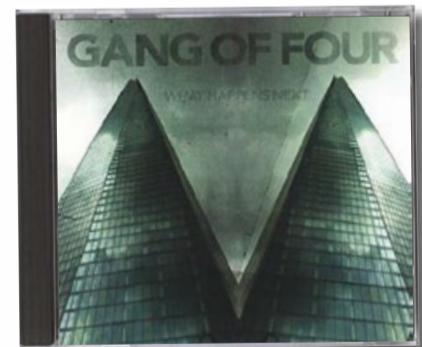
the pop group  
citizen zombie  
out now



public service broadcasting  
the race for space  
out now



badbadnotgood &  
ghostface killa  
sour skin  
out now



gang of four  
what happens next  
02/03/2015

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# Curtis Harding

**Recommended this month: How a child gospel star fell in with Cee Lo Green and the Black Lips and ended up 2015's feistiest new soulman**

**A**T 35 YEARS OLD, Atlanta's Curtis Harding might be considered a little long in the tooth to be releasing his debut album. But *Soul Power* is a record of experience. Equal parts horn-powered soul and garage grit, when it rocks – as on the hell-for-leather "Surf" – it rocks hard. And when it hurts – see the bereft "I Need A Friend" – you really feel the ache. "I wanted live instrumentation, all analog," says Harding. "I wanted it to touch on styles that I love – soul, classic rock, punk. But I didn't want it to sound like a throwback. It had to sound timeless."

Curtis Harding had the sort of childhood that makes a boy grow up fast. His mother was a travelling evangelist, and Harding and his three sisters were her gospel band. "We'd be out 1am on a school night, singing to homeless people. Next day we'd be singing for gang members. We'd do this from LA to New York, Tijuana to the Bahamas." At the time, playing in Mom's band felt embarrassing. "But I think she knew things about me that I didn't know about myself. It made me resourceful, adaptable. I went places most kids would feel uncomfortable."

Aged 16, Harding was hanging around Atlanta's pool halls, started a rap group, and worked his way into the inner circle of Cee Lo Green, the soul singer later to find fame in *Gnarls Barkley*. Harding sung backup for Cee Lo for five years, but the lifestyle took its toll: "I was getting caught up in the parties, the drugs... I felt myself slipping." So he took off for Canada for a year, waiting tables. There, he wrote "Castaway", a song about severing ties and surrendering to fate.

"I didn't know where I was going to end up."

It was Cole Alexander, frontman of Atlanta hellraisers the Black Lips that relit his fire. Harding heard Alexander DJ-ing old gospel records – the same his mother loved – at a bar. They got to chatting, and soon formed garage-soul group Night Sun, whose recordings sound like a dry run for *Soul Power*. But it was, says Harding, as much a mentality thing. "The Black Lips are regular guys, common folk. If they could do it and maintain their sincerity and sanity, I knew I could."

Released on California's Burger Records last summer, *Soul Power* won Harding some influential admirers. Jack White took him out on tour, while a set at California's Beach Style festival led to a meeting with Hedi Slimane, creative director of Saint Laurent. "He said, 'I want to take pictures of you with your guitar.' I said, 'I don't take pictures with my guitar.' And he said, 'That's the same thing Chuck Berry said.'"

The pair collaborated on a video for Harding's "Next Time", while one of Slimane's photos graces *Soul Power*'s cover. Meanwhile, *Soul Power* has just been released in the UK and Europe on Anti-, home of Tom Waits, among others. But Harding is taking it in his stride. "The goal was to make an album that I want to hear. Don't get me wrong, I love it when people dig what I'm doing," he laughs. "But I'm headstrong in that way."

LOUIS PATTISON

**I'M YOUR FAN**

**"Curtis Harding is this very cool, very current soul artist. He really has a good vibe"**

**Iggy Pop**



*Curtis Harding's Soul Power* is out now. He plays London Bethnal Green Working Men's Club on March 11 and Leeds Brudenell Social Club on March 12

## THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

### ALABAMA SHAKES

**Sound & Color** ROUGH TRADE

A brilliant expansion of the rock'n'soul band's MO, as cosmic R&B jams rub up alongside garage ramalam and much more.

### BOP ENGLISH

**Constant Bop** BLOOD AND BISCUITS

James Petralli takes a solo detour, without losing any of the invention and vigour that have made his regular band, White Denim, such an enduring *Uncut* favourite.

### THE WEATHER STATION

**Loyalty** PARADISE OF BACHELORS

Rather neatly, one of the month's best new arrivals carries strong echoes of Joni Mitchell. From Canada, too, should you need further serendipity.

### DEAN MCPHEE

**Fatima's Hand** HOOD FAIRE

Uncanny twang from West Yorkshire, as the fine solo guitarist spirals elegantly into Frippertronic territory.

### APHEX TWIN

**Early Demos** SOUNDCLOUD

An unprecedented binge opportunity for electronica fans, as Aphex – or "user48736353001" – dumps dozens of unreleased gems onto the net. Might not be him, of course, but still excellent.



Aphex Twin

### THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION

**Freedom Tower** BRONZERAT

The subtitle reads "No Wave Dance Party 2015". A new year, though, makes no difference to the bracing familiarity of Spencer's schtick. "Blues Explosion!" etc...

### GORAN KAJFEŠ SUBTROPIC

**ARKESTRA** *The Reason Why Vol 2* HEADSPIN

Swedish trumpeter's second globetrotting set of big-band freakouts, with a revelatory take on Grizzly Bear's "Yet Again".

### BASSEKOU KOUYATÉ & NGONI BA

**Ba Power** GLITTERBEAT

A rock-tinged workout from the Malian ngoni master, with help from Jon Hassell and Robert Plant's drummer Dave Smith.

### CALEXICO

**Edge Of The Sun** CITY SLANG

The eighth formal album from Messrs Burns and Convertino, explicitly referencing the career peak of 2003's *Feast Of Wire*.

### FÖLLAKZOID

**III** SACRED BONES

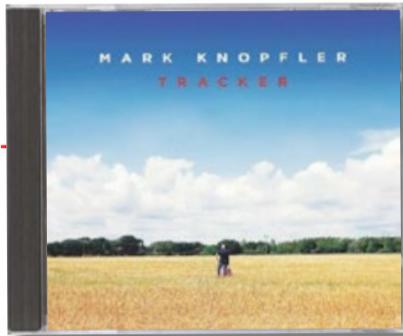
High-altitude psych from the Chilean equivalents of Goat. Also features Kraftwerk's old Korg!

For regular updates, check our blogs at [www.uncut.co.uk](http://www.uncut.co.uk) and follow @JohnRMulvey on Twitter

# fresh produce



**mark knopfler**  
tracker  
released 16/03/2015



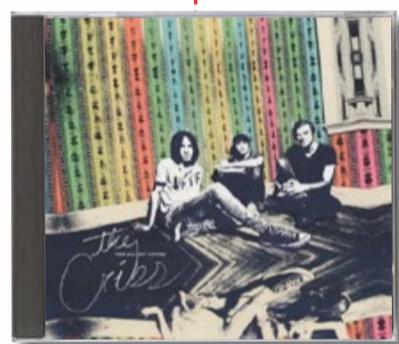
**modest mouse**  
strangers to ourselves  
released 16/03/2015



**will butler**  
policy  
released 16/03/2015



**the cribs**  
for all my sisters  
out now

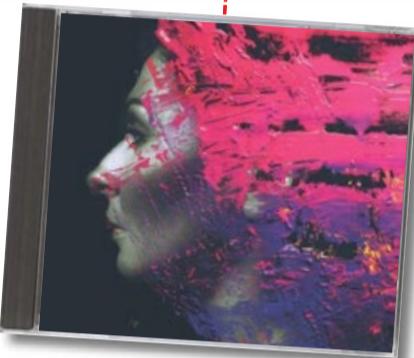


**spectres**  
dying  
out now



**steve gunn and the  
black twig pickers**  
seasonal hire  
out now

**steven wilson**  
hand.cannot.erase  
released 02/03/2015



**purity ring**  
another eternity  
released 02/03/2015



**black star riders**  
the killer instinct  
out now



**cold war kids**  
hold my home  
released 09/03/2015



**tobias jesso jr**  
goon  
released 16/03/2015



**dutch uncles**  
o shudder  
out now

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# BACK TO THE GARDEN

Your guide to this month's free CD

## 1 SUFJAN STEVENS

No Shade In The Shadow Of The Cross

An understated start this month, as Stevens dials back the maximalist excess of his recent work. The result, as this track illustrates so beautifully, is the sort of tender pop-folk that initially drew Stevens so many comparisons with Elliott Smith. Our exclusive interview with the great man starts on p18.

## 2 MATTHEW E WHITE

Rock'n'Roll Is Cold

Hot on the heels of the wonderful Natalie Prass album, the Spacebomb gang are back, this time with the team leader on the mic. A droll and very catchy exploration of genre politics, "Rock'n'Roll Is Cold" sounds a bit like late VU, produced by Allen Toussaint and with JJ Cale subbing for Lou Reed – can't be bad!

## 3 RYLEY WALKER

Primrose Green

From our Album Of The Month, "Primrose Green" is a ravishing example of the old magic that Ryley Walker is conjuring up right now. A wilder talent than most of his folk-guitar contemporaries, Walker is shooting for the sort of jazzy highs that were once associated with Tim Buckley. Ambitious, perhaps, but on this form not unreasonable.



## 4 COURTNEY BARNETT

Pedestrian At Best

How best to follow up a rapturously acclaimed debut? By being as knowing and snarky as possible, if you're Australia's Courtney Barnett, who also has the good sense to keep up the high standard of her grunge-pop. Key – critically untrue – line: "Put me on a pedestal and I'll only disappoint you!"

## 5 STEVE GUNN & THE BLACK TWIG PICKERS

Trailways Ramble

A few short months after his *Way Out Weather* solo high, the unstoppable Gunn returns, with the Virginian Black Twig Pickers in tow. Droning fiddles and mouth harps add a raga-ish intensity, and banjos sub for sitars. Gunn, meanwhile, sounds transported, serene in the midst of this barn-raising, old-time freakout from new album *Seasonal Hire*.

## 6 HOUNDSTOOTH

Borderlands

Mostly untroubled by hype thus far in their career, Portland's



Houndstooth are discreet ones to watch in 2015. This beguiling track comes from their second album, *No News From Home*, and is reminiscent of another bunch of unassuming classicists, Yo La Tengo; just check Katie Bernstein's unfussily intimate vocal, so redolent of Georgia Hubley.

## 7 23 SKIDOO Calypso

The quasi-industrial reputation of 23 Skidoo always did them a disservice. "Calypso", from their first album in 15 years, shows how Alex Turnbull's group remain one of the most durable and underrated British post-punk bands, here looping a steel drum sample over expansive, Eno-ish terrain.

## 8 HANNAH COHEN

Just Take The Rest

Enchantingly dissolute warbles galore, from a New York singer who often recalls a coherent Liz Fraser or, perhaps more pertinently, long-lost Sunday, Harriet Wheeler. Produced by the well-connected Thomas 'Doveman' Bartlett,

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15 TRACKS OF THE  
BEST NEW MUSIC

SUFJAN STEVENS

MATTHEW E WHITE

COURTNEY BARNETT

MARC ALMOND

RYLEY WALKER

STEVE GUNN

CAT'S EYES

23 SKIDOO

SAM LEE

& MORE

associate of The National, Antony Hegarty, Sharon Van Etten, Rufus Wainwright, Sam Amidon et al.

## 9 MOON DUO

Slow Down Low

A choogling, dronerock take on the old "Roadrunner" formula, enticingly, courtesy of Ripley Johnson, Sanae Yamada and, new for this third album, a third member of the Moon Duo, drummer John Jeffrey. Johnson launches one of his trademark guitar solos, all woozy wandering, at 2:53. Very groovy handclaps, too.

## 10 WILL BUTLER

Sing To Me

As the Arcade Fire's latest stadium-packing duties draw to a close, Will Butler has found time to record – at Electric Lady, no less – a debut solo album. *Policy* is a ramshackle and mostly exuberant return to Butler's indie roots. "Sing To Me", though, is something different again – a stark and insidious prayer of sorts, over sombre piano chords and the subtlest of string arrangements.

## 10 MARC ALMOND

Minotaur

When *Uncut* interviewed Almond last year about *The Tyburn Tree*, a song cycle about 'Dark London', he promised his next album would be "very posh, lustrous pop". Here's the proof: a luxurious synth ballad – produced and co-written by Lana Del Rey collaborator Chris Braide – that features Almond at his most elegantly dramatic.

## 12 LIGHTNING BOLT

The Metal East

Change of pace, anyone? Not the easiest track to sequence, perhaps, but it's great to have the bracing Lightning Bolt, scourge of a thousand All Tomorrow's Parties, in the month's mix. A heads-down,

ecstatically technical noise-rock duo from Providence, if you haven't encountered these notable forces of nature before, with a skree from their first album in three years.

## 13 SAM LEE

Blackbird

Sam Lee's second album has been on heavy office rotation this year, with its radical, inventive – and in this case, rather jazzy – new takes on ancient British folk songs. Like many of Lee's finds, "Blackbird" is Romany in origin, learned from one May Bradley of Shropshire.



## 14 JOHNNY DOWD

Cadillac Hearse

Dowd might have won Americana Album Of The Month garlands in this issue, but the old trickster remains endearingly tough to categorise. "Cadillac Hearse" involves gothic storytelling, Suicide-like drum machines and a big dirty guitar riff, not unlike that of the "Peter Gunn" theme.

## 15 CAT'S EYES

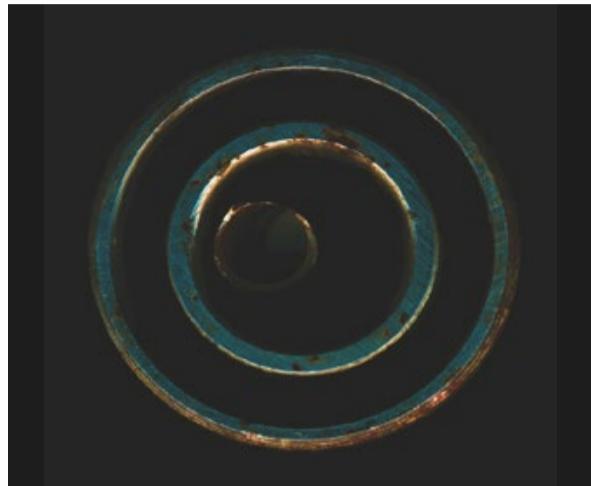
Requiem For The Duke Of Burgundy

To end this month, a flourish. "Requiem" is the highlight of Rachel Zeffira and Faris 'Horrors' Badwan's score to the new Peter Strickland movie, summoning up strong memories of Michael Nyman's "Memorial". Very grand; maybe we should do this sort of thing more often?

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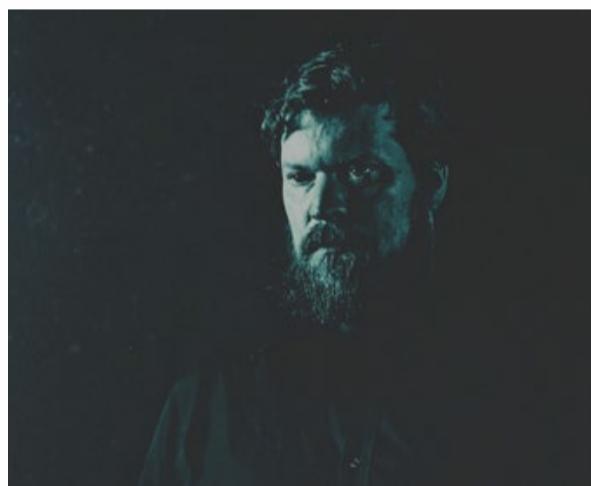
## FATHER JOHN MISTY

I Love You, Honeybear  
'truly compelling' uncut



## THE CZARS

Best Of  
'exquisite' the times



## JOHN GRANT with the BBC Philharmonic

★★★★ uncut



## BC CAMPLIGHT How To Die In The North

'a layered beauty' Q



## EMMY THE GREAT S

8/10 NME



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02.03.2015



## INVENTIONS Maze Of Woods

16.03.2015



## HANNAH COHEN Pleasure Boy

30.03.2015

# Phil Manzanera

Interview: Michael Bonner  
Photograph: Claire Singers

**The great guitarist and producer on playing with David Bowie, Bob Dylan, Nico and, of course, Roxy Music: “If we fancied having another go, there’s no rules...”**

## I

IT'S TURNING into an eventful day for Phil Manzanera. When *Uncut* arrives at his London home/studio complex, he's waiting for a visit from the RAC to fix his car. Meanwhile, a late morning meeting has just been postponed, which at least affords a quiet moment for Manzanera, who helps himself to a late breakfast of toast and coffee.

2015 looks set to become a very busy year for him. First, there's a new solo work, *The Sound Of Blue*, then a new volume of his Latin music project, *Corroncho 2*. Then there's also the small matter of David Gilmour's forthcoming album, which Manzanera is involved with. "It's going very well," he reveals. "I think it sounds fantastic, people will be very happy." Of course, Phil's other outstanding business concerns his old band, Roxy Music. "Last year, I said, 'I think our job is done,'" he says. "Everyone thought, 'Roxy's split – again.' Not at all! If we fancied having another go, there's no rules. That's what's great about Roxy. It's not over 'til you're 10 feet under..."

### STAR QUESTION



**You've produced a lot of albums... is there any artist that has defeated you and you've 'left the building'?**

*David Gilmour*

I find it quite difficult to produce divas. I remember Mónica Naranjo, she was No 1 in Spain and South America. I was meant to do three tracks with her. At the time, my studio here was under construction, so I set up a vocal booth on the floor below, with the trains going by outside. She's just come off from million-selling albums, arrives in Kilburn Lane and it all looks a little dodgy. I said, "Don't worry about it, just go in there and it'll be fine." Within a few hours, we had constructed a track and it sounded fantastic. I said, "Well, that's it, it's done!" Well, says Naranjo, it can't be, it's been done too quickly. So she hires this flash studio in Lake Lugano. We go there with her husband, a co-producer-type guy,

who was a bit miffed that I was doing the job and not him. Every day, she'd re-sing these vocals. We were in separate hotels, facing the lake and I was bored out of my skull. One day the husband rang and said, "She doesn't feel like going in today." I replied, "You know what? I don't fancy doing your album, I'm gonna call a taxi to the airport. Do it yourself. Good luck. Goodbye." I just took off; it was a liberating moment. They tried for months to do it on their own, but eventually they released the version we did downstairs. It was a huge, huge hit...

**What do you recall of supporting Bowie at the Rainbow gigs in '72?**

*Anthony Stobart, Newcastle*

I remember the first one, because we were all wearing high-heel boots with huge platforms. I walked in to the foyer, down towards where the seats were, and strained my ankle in these bloody boots. The whole gig was a nightmare for me, I was in agony. We supported David at the Croydon Greyhound, too. It was a great gig. I turned up in the



Roxy in their pomp, 1972

afternoon to soundcheck and they were all there, Bowie, Mick Ronson, Trevor and Woody, all dressed in Spiders gear. We just used to put our clothes on before going on, not wear them the whole time. So I walked in, in jeans: "Oh, hi, I'm from Roxy..." Oh God, they must have been disappointed we didn't come in with all our outfits on! After that, he invited us to support him at the Rainbow. David's come to our gigs in this decade. He brought his band along when Roxy played Radio City.

**How did your riff end up on Kanye & Jay Z's "No Church In The Wild"?**

*Alex Finlayson, Yangon, Burma*

It's a bizarre story. This guy called 88-Keys discovered a compilation album that I put out in 1976, *Guitarissimo*. The first track on it, "K-Scope", starts with the guitar riff, so he probably thought, right, I can sample that! He's in New York with Kanye West, who's doing their

album at the Plaza Hotel. They said "Have you got any beats?" and 88-Keys plays some, and they say, "We'll have that one, thank you." Which is the guitar riff. I was driving round Notting Hill with my son Charlie, and the phone went. "Hello, it's Roc-A-Fella Records here, just wanted to tell you Jay Z and Kanye West have sampled your guitar." I said, "No, you made a mistake. People always get me mixed up with Ray Manzarek." So they played it for me down the phone. Anyway, it came out, was huge, and it won a Grammy.

### STAR QUESTION



**Do you think your South American background made a difference to the way you think about music?**

*Brian Eno*

If you're taken to Cuba when you're six, go to the Tropicana Club and hear the grooves there, you can't fail to be influenced. And you have a South American mother who's into cumbia, then you go to school in Cuba for a bit, then Venezuela for a bit, then learn to play the tiplay – a 12-string Colombian instrument your uncle buys for you in a little dirt-track village three hours down the mountain from Bogotá. And all your cousins play jazz piano in New York. And your mother teaches you how to play Cuban songs on the guitar when you're seven... Yes, it's going to be a big influence!

---

“Dylan came onstage and didn’t play any of the songs we’d rehearsed... but he’s a genius, so who cares?”

---



Manzanera with his beloved red Gibson Firebird: “It’s been on almost every album I’ve made”

As a fan of the Velvets, how did you find working with John Cale, as executive producer on *Fear?*

Chris Parker, London

Richard Williams, when he was A&R at Island, asked me if I'd like to work on it. I was 23 or 24. So I met John. He had these songs, I got a bass player and a drummer and we rehearsed in a place off King's Road before we went into the studio. John was absent a lot of the time. His wife would ring up and I'd have to say he'd popped out for a sandwich. So I got a bit bored. I called Eno, "Why don't you come and treat my guitars and we'll just muck about?" We got Richard and Linda Thompson down. It was a really good album. Then I did the "Heartbreak Hotel" single with John. I worked with Nico, too, on *The End*. John produced it and he invited me down to play. She'd come down from the control room and say, "Phil, do not do a thing he says, just do whatever you want, ignore that maniac." She was fantastic, it was a total thrill.

## STAR QUESTION



Phil, you've worked with a huge range of musicians from Robert Wyatt to David Gilmour – what was it about

Roxy that made it special?

Andy Mackay

The people, really. You know, I failed the original audition. I was in Quiet Sun with Bill MacCormick, Charles Hayward and Dave Jarrett. We sent tapes to Richard Williams at *Melody Maker*. The following week, the embryonic Roxy sent in their demos. We read their review, and thought, 'This sounds fantastic!' Then Bill was asked to join Matching Mole, and said to me, "What about Roxy? They're looking for a guitarist." So I went to the audition. They got David O'List in from The Nice, but it didn't work. So I got a call asking whether I'd come and mix the sound for Eno. It was at some derelict house in Notting Hill. When I turned up, Brian said, "Oh, David's not here, but here's his guitar. Fancy having a jam?" I had an inkling this might happen, so I'd secretly learned all their tracks. They were tricking me and I was tricking them. I joined just after my birthday, the first week of February. That was 43 years ago!

How did Roxy Music's sound change with Eno's departure and how much do you regret him leaving after *For Your Pleasure*?

Jacqueline Brown, Leith

It became something different.

I tried to carry on some of those ideas by having a guitar version of the VCS3 synthesiser that was controlled by pedals and using Revoxes. But I was working with Brian anyway for the next five years in parallel with Roxy. The first two albums encapsulate all the ideas that were around at that point. But then going forward, a change was necessary anyway. By integrating a couple of mine and Andy's songs, we created a different kind of album. If Eno is asked

what his favourite Roxy album is, he always says *Stranded*. I'm never sure whether it's because it is the one he didn't have to do anything on, or whether he genuinely thinks that's the case.

## What are your memories of the 801 Live project?

Sheldon Jury, Cheam

Eno, myself, and Bill and Ian MacCormick went away to a little cottage and came up with this idea of doing a project that would only last for six weeks. And we had put together people who were very technical and people who were totally anti-technique and let them fight it out and do one concert. Actually there were three concerts in the end: there was the warm-up, Reading Festival and QEH. We thought we'd record it, because we've done all this bloody work fighting it out. The recording has been incredibly popular, but the project was designed not to last any longer or we'd have killed ourselves.

## As Musical Director of the Seville Guitar Legends festival, you played with Dylan. What was that like? Gary Zel, Illinois

I got Jack Bruce on bass, I got the best drummer in the world, I got backing singers, I got everything you could possibly want. So Bob comes in with the manager. Because it's Guitar Legends I had to say, "We want 'All Along The Watchtower'. But we're not doing your version, we're doing Hendrix's

With Andy Mackay on the Roxy reunion tour, Wembley Arena, June 2001



version..." The manager said, "Bob might come on, he might not. If Bob doesn't come on, Jack, can you sing his song?" To which Jack replied: "I'm not bloody fucking singing songs." Bob would just play around with us. At one point, he said, "Do you know that Tex Mex song from 1948 called blah blah?" No-one knew it, so I said, "I tell you what, Bob. You start playing it and we'll pick it up." He played it differently every time, and people started making excuses to leave the room... But I knew he liked Richard Thompson, so I rang up Richard who was playing in Holland, and said, "Richard, would you like to play with Dylan?" "Yeah, sure!" He arrived, so I sent him in before the concert to find out what numbers Bob was going to do. He came out and said, "Right, we're doing this and this..." So we went onstage – "It's Bob Dylan!" – and of course he doesn't play any of the numbers we rehearsed. We're all looking at each other, wondering what key he was playing in... But you know, he's a genius. So who cares?

## Your red Gibson Firebird must be one of this planet's most beautiful guitars. Where and when did you get it?

Jan Oldaeus, Manchester

I bought it from an ad in the back of *Melody Maker*. It belonged to an American guy who'd come over with his parents. They were living in a house in Regent's Park. The guitar I had when I was 9 or 10 was a Hofner Galaxy in red. When I joined Roxy, they insisted I had a white Strat, which I wasn't used to playing, but I thought, 'Sure, OK.' Then I saw this ad for a red guitar for £150. I had no idea what it looked like. I turned up, the guy opened the door, I said, "Yeah, I'll have it, thank you very much." He'd ordered it in this unique colour. I never saw another one like it, ever. It's been on almost every album I've made since. It records beautifully.

## STAR QUESTION



Thanks, Phil. That I've had the chance, in the last couple of decades, to get through some of the happiest and most fulfilling work in my life thanks to your invitation to use your studios, which you made feel like a home from home every time I came. I honestly don't think I'd ever have got through all the stuff I've been able to do without your generosity. Gracias, hombre...

Robert Wyatt

It goes right back to when I was at school in Dulwich. Bill and Ian MacCormick's parents knew Robert's mum. He was our hero. I met two people when I was 16/17: Robert and David Gilmour. They were in the coolest bands in London, Soft Machine and the Floyd. But Robert, he's a special, unique character. His ideas, what he stands for. Vicariously through the MacCormicks, I explored music, jazz, freeform, psychedelia. Anything Robert liked, we listened to. So when Robert started to use my studio in Chertsey, it was payback for all the inspiration he'd given me. I was surprised when he announced last year that he wouldn't be making any more music, but only because I'd been wanting him to play on my album. I think he just wants to take the pressure off having to do another album, so he can do whatever he feels like doing. But I love all his justifications for it, they just made me laugh! "Other people are allowed to retire, why can't I?" He's just so funny. ☺

*The Sound Of Blue* is released on March 23 on Expression Records

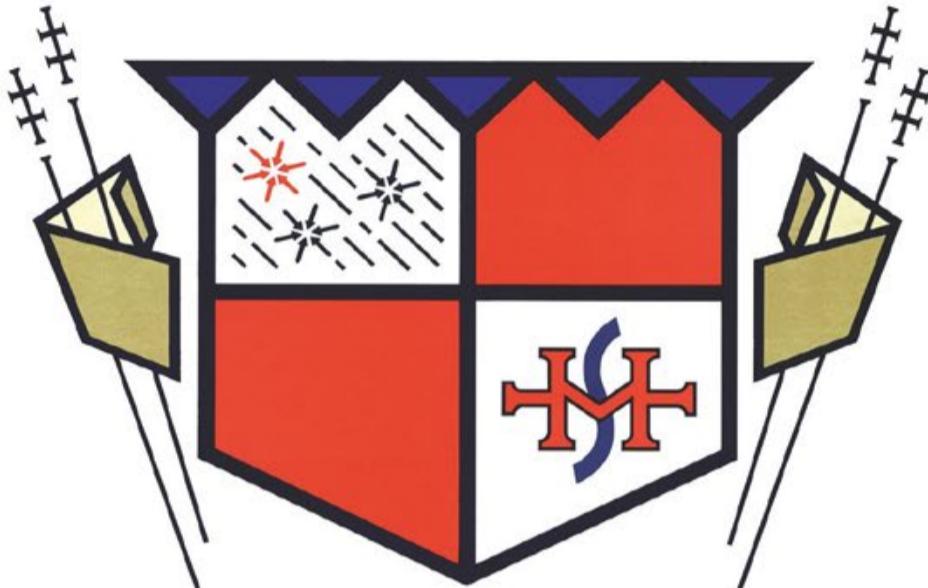


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# SIMPLE MINDS

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Lifting the cloud of  
grief...Sufjan Stevens  
in Brooklyn, New  
York, February 2015



# THE PRODIGAL SON

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**Story:** Laura Snapes | **Photo:** Emmanuel Afolabi

A very intimate interview with **SUFJAN STEVENS**. How road trips, rodeos, all-out noise and a reconciliation with his dying mother culminated in a return to folk music for one of America's finest and most restless musical spirits. "You have to cast out your demons and rebel against your traditions, but you always have to crawl back to the homeland."





"I couldn't sustain myself through my art..." Stevens in his Brooklyn studio

SUFJAN STEVENS IS wearing two hats. A woolly blue number sits atop his green trucker cap, the peak bent flush with his forehead, the goofy effect belying his 39 years. At one point, describing his sprawling approach to music, he has to stop himself from saying he wears a lot of hats. "I – accessorise a lot," he says, laughing.

On an icy early February morning, Stevens' Brooklyn office is temporarily homing the accessories from his most recent stage show before they're transferred to his storage facility. Last week, he finished a six-night run at the Brooklyn Academy Of Music, where he performed *Round-Up*, leading a small ensemble in a peaceful, drone-oriented soundtrack over slow-motion footage of a traditional Oregon rodeo. It is not entirely clear what role the bag of gold foil fringing, hula-hoops wrapped in silver tinsel and the painting of a white horse played, but Stevens found a strange satisfaction in the project. "It's really non-musical," he says. "I really wanted to evacuate from the artistic experience and become almost like an observer, as a musician."

He's contemplating its viability as a touring production, and may eventually record it, as he did with 2009's *The BQE*, another BAM commission that focused on the freeway five blocks up from his office. But these projects often feel like distractions from the main event: the acoustic reveries of *Seven Swans*, Stevens' meticulously realised song-suites about the states of *Michigan* (2003) and *Illinois* (2005), and his last album proper, 2010's *The Age Of Adz*, a sprawling electronic record that engulfed the listener in his state of cosmic panic.

Being a fan of Stevens is somewhat predicated on accepting his large hat collection. It was barely surprising to see him make two hip-hop records with rapper Serengeti and producer Son Lux. A 161-minute-

long 2012 Christmas release felt as predictable as socks and clementines. But the difference with *Round-Up* is that Stevens intended it as a distraction from the music he had been writing. The songs he almost abandoned became *Carrie & Lowell*, his seventh studio album: not one he planned to make, but an attempt to survive the death of his estranged mother and the ensuing two years of grief.

"For so long I had used my work as an emotional crutch," he says. "And this was the first time in my life where I couldn't sustain myself through my art. I couldn't solve anything through my music any more. Maybe I had been manipulating my work over all these years – using it as a defence mechanism or a distraction. But I couldn't do that any more, for some reason."

**I**N DECEMBER 2012, Stevens' aunt called to say that his mother had cancer. "Carrie's in the ICU, she's probably not gonna live, if you wanna see her, this is your last chance," he recalls. He had a few days with her in hospital before she died.

The youngest of six, Stevens and his siblings grew up with his father and step-mum after his mother left when he was one. Over the next few years, they only saw her when they visited their yia-yia and pappou in Detroit, until she married her high-school sweetheart Lowell Brams when Stevens was five. The kids spent three summers with the couple in Eugene, Oregon, in the early 1980s, her most stable period.

"She was a good mother when she had her facilities together," Stevens says. "And she had nothing but love for us and the best intentions. But she was really sick. She was very dysfunctional and she had substance-abuse problems – she was an alcoholic and a drug addict – and schizophrenic, bipolar, really depressed. We were aware of that, even as children. So we were very grateful for the limited time that we had with her, and we knew that it was finite. We had no delusions or expectations."

When Stevens was seven or eight, Carrie and Lowell split. "We didn't see her for a long time after that – she was off the map," Stevens says, offering



a broad assessment of what she did next: "Not good things." As an adult, they occasionally met for lunch. "But outside of a few letters, we didn't see each other that much. And I didn't make an effort to see her. Why? That's a good question for therapy.

"They talk about the stages of grief," he says, wearily. "You go through denial and anger and depression, acceptance – there's these so-called patterns. But I found myself experiencing inexplicable and uncategorisable kinds of emotional states that were so far removed from these traditional patterns of bereavement. Resentment. Anger. Disappointment."

He pauses. "Shame."

For not having tried to communicate with her?

"No, ashamed of her."

Stevens doesn't want to talk about this record, but sees it as a professional duty – his success underwrites the existence of his record label, Asthmatic Kitty, which has nine employees. He evades eye contact but talks about his grief with disarming candour, and only refuses two questions: one about his love life, and the other about a lyric in the title-track, "She breaks my arm", when asked if it relates to his mother.

"I FOUND MYSELF FEELING LIKE MY MOTHER'S GHOST WAS INHABITING ME..."

is a portrait of self-destruction. "No reason to live", he sings on "Should Have Known Better". Asked whether the abusive relationship described in "Drawn To The Blood" was his own, he simply answers, "Yes."

"I found myself kind of feeling like my mother's ghost was inhabiting me," he says. "I had a lot of pretty dark moments. Oh god, it's over, though, I'm so glad it's over."

"The Only Thing" marks both the nadir of Stevens' emotional state during that time, and the first sign of light: "The only thing that keeps me from cutting my arm/Cross-hatch, warm bath, Holiday Inn after dark/Signs and wonders: water stain writing the wall/Daniel's message, blood of the moon on us all".

He slowly recovered by letting in "small encounters of hope in very necessary doses," he says: prayer, his young niece, the bike tours he took across America, staying in tents, hotels or his car, and cycling vast, solitary routes by day. "I went over North Dakota and Montana and Wyoming. And then eastern Oregon and eastern Washington were really unfamiliar and exciting to me because of how empty and vast and beautiful it was. I had my guitars with me so I wrote and recorded on that road trip."

He travelled cross-country to see friends with studios, who inadvertently became part of *Carrie & Lowell*. There was no clear plan. "I was just travelling a lot and working with other people because it was convenient and I wanted to engage socially lest I lose myself in isolation. A lot of those people and their participation, it really fed me, fuelled me, encouraged me."

Bella Union solo artist Laura Veirs recalls his

## BUYERS' GUIDE

# EVEN STEVENS

A look at Sufjan's unique catalogue



6/10

### A SUN CAME

ASTHMATIC KITTY, 2000

Stevens' debut album contains the dark matter for all his future LPs: gentle folk, crackling electronica, biblical and literary allusions, and abject zaniness.



6/10

### ENJOY YOUR RABBIT

ASTHMATIC KITTY, 2001

This electronic song cycle about the Chinese zodiac evoked Aphex Twin, Four Tet's more pastoral inclinations, and the soundtracks to Disneyland theme park rides. In 2009 he re-recorded and re-released it as *Run Rabbit Run* with string quartet Osso.



8/10

### GREETINGS FROM MICHIGAN: THE GREAT LAKE STATE

ASTHMATIC KITTY, 2003

A mournful folk meditation on his childhood home state. Laments for Detroit's disenfranchised sit alongside sad indictments of an absent mother on "Romulus".

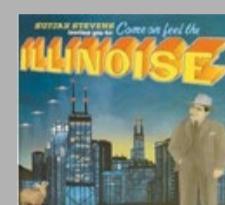


8/10

### SEVEN SWANS

ASTHMATIC KITTY, 2004

Comprising just his voice, banjo, acoustic guitar and woodwind, *Seven Swans* explores Stevens' relationship to God, though he has said he regrets opening his faith up for public scrutiny.



9/10

### ILLINOIS

ASTHMATIC KITTY, 2005

This 24-song epic contains his three best-known numbers: the rousing "Chicago"; "John Wayne Gacy Jr.", a folk ballad about the serial killer; and the devastating "Casimir Pulaski Day", about a friend's death from cancer.



8/10

### THE AGE OF ADZ

ASTHMATIC KITTY, 2010

Stevens explored existential doubt and his physical wellbeing with no small amount of neurosis in this period, first on the "All Delighted People" EP, and then this collapsing star of a record.



9/10

### CARRIE & LOWELL

ASTHMATIC KITTY, 2015

Refined folk arrangements backing startlingly clear-headed recollections of Stevens' experiences with abandonment. A painful but rewarding listen, with "Fourth Of July" and "The Only Thing" among his finest songs.

impromptu visit to her hometown of Portland about 18 months ago. They had met in 2005, when he asked her to support on the *Illinois* tour. "It was just one song, one hour, and then he left. He did not tell me anything about them. There were a couple of references to the state of Oregon, but that's all I can say."

In August 2013, Stevens travelled to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, to see Brian Joseph, who had been his live sound engineer and now works in Justin Vernon's April Base studio. There he played with Casey Foubert, Ben Lester, and Sean Carey, who drums with Bon Iver and releases solo albums on Jagjaguwar as S Carey.

"It's a pretty small town so you often end up recording on things that are sort of spontaneous," says Carey. "When we got there Sufjan was out so we started working and when he came in we worked for a little while before we even stopped and introduced ourselves. As the night got on it got looser and it was really fun. We recorded all night – I got home at 5am." ↗



“WILD IMAGINATION...”

## NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Sufjan Stevens assesses his place in NYC's music scene...

“MY AFFILIATIONS ARE all over the map because I’m interested in sound collage, improvisation, noise and hip-hop, but I also occasionally will do these [Brooklyn Academy of Music] commissions or write music for a ballet. Ultimately, I’m a folk songwriter with a wild imagination.

“What’s so remarkable about NYC is the resources available to us. There are fewer and fewer divisions between schools and genres, musically speaking. The fundamental apportioning of scenes is largely

economic at this point. The division between Uptown and Downtown music, that’s really an economic term. It becomes really confused by the dissemination of power and money in the music industry in general.

“I think that’s why it’s really easy now to find yourself in these unusual environments, whether you’re in a theatre or an opera house or a dance hall or a club – they’re all different platforms for the same thing. The ticket price is the one signifier though, you know. That’s where the economics identifies the audience.”



One of the seven swans come to life... Stevens performs in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, NYC, August 2, 2011

**A**UGMENTED ONLY WITH piano and occasional gossamer synths, *Carrie & Lowell*'s folky palette has drawn comparisons to Stevens' 2004 breakout, *Seven Swans*. While they share an aesthetic, he admits *Swans* was written for utilitarian purposes, allowing him to play solo acoustic gigs. In recent years, it felt like a sound confined to his past: around the release of *The Age Of Adz*, Stevens frequently said that his interests were primarily in all-out noise. “I was sick of my voice and I was sick of the strummy-strum acoustic guitar song,” he told *The New York Times*.

Faltering, he explains why he returned to the ballad form. “I just didn’t feel like I needed to... work through the death of my mother with noise, but with words.” *Carrie & Lowell* is “the most formal record” he’s ever made, he says, repeatedly saying it contains “no art”.

“I’m not saying these things disparagingly,” he says when accused of self-flagellation, “but as a non-evaluative, objective description. I definitely felt the desire to rewind and

return to a more traditional form. You have to cast out your demons and rebel against your traditions and pursue your interests through the adventure of discovery, but you always have to crawl back to the homeland like the prodigal son.”

Lowell Brams kickstarted Stevens’ musical discovery. There was no music, art or TV at home with his dad and stepmother in Detroit, who taught and educated their kids at the Waldorf School where the emphasis was on “the imagination, and eradicating the media accessories from your life in order to cultivate the liveliness of your mind,” he says. “Our house was almost sterilised.” That first summer in Eugene, Brams introduced Stevens and his siblings to The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Ry Cooder, Bob Dylan, Nick Drake, Frank Zappa. “The Wipers were his favourite band,” says Stevens. “It was as if he had opened up a Pandora’s Box, and we were so thrilled. It was like sensory overload – we would record these radio shows, DJ and do skits.”

Brams is now 63 and lives in Lander, Wyoming. He and Stevens founded Asthmatic Kitty in 1999, though he is slowly stepping back from its day-to-day running. After Carrie and Lowell separated, Brams continued to see Stevens and his siblings, bringing them cassette tapes. On one trip back from the West Coast, he visited the family home in Petoskey, Michigan, and heard a 15-year-old Stevens’ first original compositions. “I’d heard him playing the piano earlier, but when I stopped by that time he played things on his little Casio – like classical piano concertos, but they were his own. That’s when I thought, ‘Wow! That’s really unusual.’”

The pair grew closer when Stevens attended Hope College in Holland, Michigan, where Brams was living in order to

take care of his elderly parents. He drove Stevens' folk-rock band Marzuki to gigs and eventually replaced him on organ duties in garage party band Con Los Dudes when Marzuki briefly moved to New York. When they split and crawled back home, Asthmatic Kitty was born. In 2000, Stevens' debut album, *A Sun Came*, became the label's first release.

Brams won't pick a favourite of Stevens' records, but says he cried when he heard the three songs that would open *Michigan*. He had no qualms about having his name on Stevens' new record. "I am impressed about the music he's done and the way he works, and who am I to question his creative decisions?" he says. "They always seem to be right."

T WAS WHILE Stevens was travelling around the US that he witnessed Oregon's famed Pendleton Round-Up, one of the world's 10 biggest rodeos. Beguiled, he commissioned filmmakers Aaron and Alex Craig to capture it; when Stevens reviewed the footage, he realised there was a viable idea there, which he took to the Brooklyn Academy Of Music last summer. They commissioned a January 2015 run. "I had to scramble quickly to put it together," says Stevens. "There was so little time to do it that I didn't even stress. And actually the footage was so fully realised that I didn't feel the need to wrestle out meaning or substance from it. I just felt like a steward."

Embarking on *Round-Up* was a gamble: working on *The BQE* in 2007 induced within Stevens a profound existential and artistic crisis about the purpose of art after he had spent nine months attempting to wrangle significance from 35 miles of concrete. "It didn't really have any meaning in the end," he says. "It was a struggle."

Around that time, Stevens was struck with a chronic, mysterious illness. Once he had recovered, he wrote *The Age Of Adz* as an exploration of his creative and physical wellbeing: "The purity and authenticity of voice versus the desire for discovery and innovation," he says.

"Wanting to seek out new worlds and also wanting to know myself more fully and more clearly. Those two experiences or creative states of being don't always cohabit well."

Having the potential follow-up to *Adz* in the midst of depression, Stevens felt he lacked "responsible authorship for the material". *Round-Up* seemed like the perfect fresh start, so he abandoned the "30 or 40" grief-stricken songs he had been disparately working on. "I was finally over my depression and over my grief as well, and entering a new season of hope," he says. "The rodeo was the perfect kind of distraction because it's meaningless – it was a project based on aesthetics and design and beauty and meditation, it was very clearly organised."

His friends, however, weren't about to let him ditch the other material. "Anybody who heard that album was like, 'you have to put this out yesterday,'" says composer Nico Muhly. "I have like, 60 emails where I was literally like, 'put it out', both as subject and content." Manhattan-based composer Thomas Bartlett got in touch last summer to ask what was going on with the music. Stevens invited him to his studio to hear it.

"He said he felt a little bit lost with it, that he had been working on it for some years and didn't really have a sense of where the record was going, or if he had anything at all," says Bartlett, who insisted that Stevens make him a CD of rough mixes that he would

## COLLABORATIONS

### AVALANCHE

#### Sufjan Stevens' other projects

#### SISYPHUS

Formerly known as S/S/S, Sisyphus is a hip-hop trio formed of Sufjan Stevens, producer Son Lux and rapper Serengeti.



Mythical hip-hop trio Sisyphus

#### PLANETARIUM

In March 2012, Stevens, Nico Muhly and The National's Bryce Dessner premiered this cosmic suite in Holland. Plans to record it have been continually thwarted by the composers' busy schedules.

#### THE NATIONAL

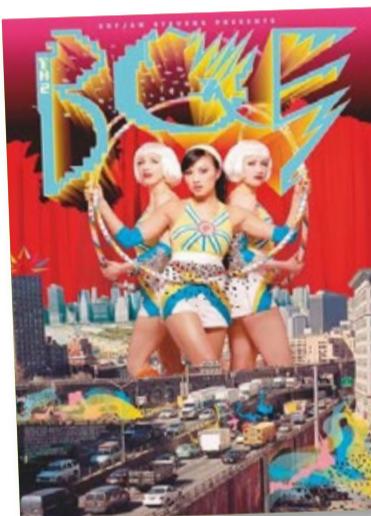
Stevens has appeared on the Brooklyn band's last three albums, and has twice made appearances with them in London. The band's guitarists, Aaron and Bryce Dessner, have played on several of Stevens' records.

#### ROSIE THOMAS

Stevens produced the Detroit-based comedian's *These Friends Of Mine* LP in 2006, and she has frequently collaborated with him, notably as her character Sheila Saputo on his '12 Christmas tour.

#### THE WELCOME WAGON

In 2008, Stevens produced the debut by this Williamsburg Presbyterian minister and his wife. The experience pushed Stevens towards creating more music in social situations, rather than alone.



take on his summer holiday. "There were some outliers: electronic things, or sometimes four versions of the same song, with different lyrics or a radically different approach musically."

There was one aspect to cull immediately. *Michigan* and *Illinois* were the first entries in a project whereby Stevens apparently intended to document the historical quirk and emotional resonance of all 50 states in song. He eventually abandoned the idea, calling it a promotional gimmick. But *Carrie & Lowell* almost became "Oregon" until Bartlett talked him out of it. With no criticism implied, he calls Stevens' state records "complicated misdirection and an architecture by which he could actually write about himself. I asked him to let go of the idea that this was an Oregon record and just allow it to be what it really feels like it is, which is a very, very personal record."

Bartlett returned from vacation with the tracklist, made Stevens change some titles and vocals, and remixed it. "It all came together within a month," says Stevens. "He doesn't fuck around. I wouldn't have wanted to have made such a direct and depressing album, but he called me out on my bullshit and said, just be honest to this experience and stop trying so hard. I don't think I would have made this record without him."

VEN IF HE'D rather not discuss specifics, Stevens is glad that he's releasing *Carrie & Lowell*: hopeful about its universality and the path it might offer fans out of their own grief. The experience has also taught him a lot about living more healthily, a process that has included "eradicating resentment, and refusing to feel entitled or take anything for granted," he says.

Where *Adz* is manic and frazzled, *Carrie & Lowell* is utterly lucid. "When you're met with a very tragic event, you have to take stock of what's real internally and emotionally and allow yourself to express those feelings," he says. "Up until the death of my mother, I'd evaded that deepness of feeling in general. But grief is an extremely refining process. I felt I needed to be honest with my feelings for the first time."

To stay on course, he must remain nearsighted: "I have a problem when I start thinking cosmically because I lose sight of the exact nature of joy in my life, and I obscure it with grand, universal anxiety," he says. But the album doesn't indicate any kind of permanent musical volte-face: Lowell Brams mentions an "electronic noise album" that the pair are finishing. Before that, though, Stevens will make his first UK outdoor festival appearance headlining End Of The Road in September. It's an appearance 10 years in the making, but perhaps strange timing given the quietness of the record. "It's gonna be a challenge," says Stevens. "I think it would be disingenuous to engage with the full-throttle back catalogue. So don't come expecting a party."

When Stevens returns to this office after the *Carrie & Lowell* tour is over, there will be no cute props awaiting transfer to his prosaic personal archive. Instead, his survival and recovery is its legacy.

"Love is incomprehensible," he says. "It's a very simple and stupid statement, but it feels extremely profound and necessary and helpful for me right now to wave that banner. There is no justice in love or in death, but I think that we, as living survivors of this world and this life, have a duty to give testament to a deeper joy that we've been given. I'm not exploiting my misery – I don't want to do that. If that's how the record comes across then I've failed as an artist."

Sufjan Stevens' new album *Carrie & Lowell* is released by Asthmatic Kitty on March 30



# “Taking risks with like-minded people”

...That's how, after upwards of 20 years with NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS, multi-instrumentalist WARREN ELLIS describes the way they go about their work. As the band celebrate their legacy with the release of a set of heavyweight vinyl remasters, Warren gives us the inside story of the Bad Seeds. Scary silences, boils, Australian goths — and, of course, the evolving work of this enduring musical force

**Story:** John Robinson | **Photograph:** Kevork Djansezian



**Nick Cave and  
Warren Ellis, at the  
Lawless premiere,  
August 22, 2012**



The Bad Seeds, 2002: (l-r)  
Blixa Bargeld, Thomas Wydler,  
Jim Sclavunos, Nick Cave,  
Martin Casey, Conway Savage,  
Mick Harvey and Warren Ellis

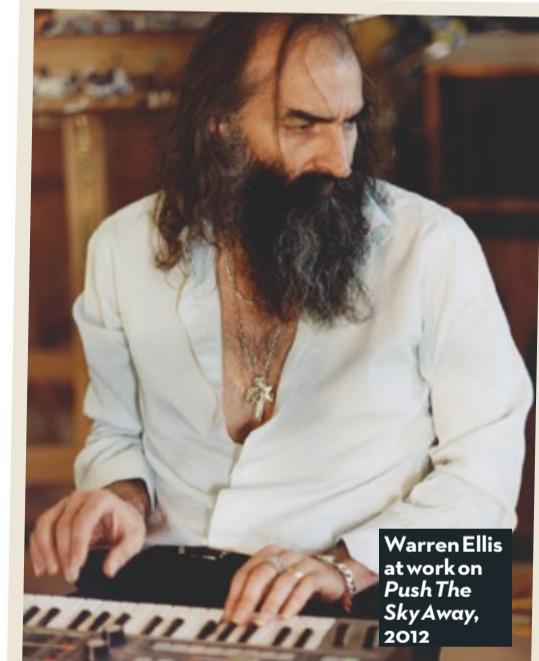
**N**ICK WAS ONE of those kind of guys. You always knew when he was around. There was always a certain sense of an occasion seeing the band in Melbourne at Christmas time

when we'd all be back from tours. He's always been one of those characters. He had this reputation.

I was aware of The Birthday Party. I moved to Melbourne from the country, and they loomed over a certain environment there. They had this incredible reputation for their live show, and they seemed to have spawned so many imitators as well, they left this real mark on the landscape there. I went to try and see one of their shows on the last tour, but I passed out in the lobby in the venue, so I never actually saw them live.

When they came back from Europe, it seemed like they'd all kind of grown a foot or something, they seemed mythical. It was really extraordinary. When you're in a band and you leave Australia, and try and make it outside of there, or just play some shows, it does a certain thing to you, whether you succeed or not.

There was a lot of exciting stuff going on musically... people really trying to challenge themselves, and take risks and go as far out there as they could. You'd go down on a Thursday night to the Prince Of Wales in St Kilda and there'd be half a dozen bands on, and some of the stuff that you'd see would be so insane, and the crowds were kind of mad, and everybody was off their brains. It seemed like if you



Warren Ellis  
at work on  
*Push The  
Sky Away*,  
2012

**“I tried to do the Bad Seeds session straight... I don’t know what I was thinking!”**

were in a band it was important to challenge people.

It really ran against the popular music of the day, which was much straighter. The alternative scene was so far apart from that, it was drawing influences from elsewhere, the Stooges, that kind of thing. You had bands like The Saints, then Ed [Kuepper] went on to form the Laughing Clowns and you had The Triffids there – it all totally ran at odds with the popular music scene of the day.

If you were a goth in Australia you had to be very dedicated because summers are brutal, particularly the more north you go, it's really... respect for anybody that can carry on with the pointy-shoed look, and with the hair, because it's brutal. You saw some people who suffered incredibly for their art, particularly around December and January.

There was this real sense of expectation when Nick came back with the Bad Seeds: 'What's going to happen?' Because The Birthday Party sort of imploded, and they were the genuinely exciting band that came from Australia at the time.

When [second Bad Seeds album, 1985's] *The Firstborn Is Dead* came out, it really seemed to draw the line. They just seemed to keep challenging everybody. So I mean, I was very aware of them, and had been to see them a bunch of times before I started playing with them much later on. I sort of crossed paths with Nick in the 1980s in places. Y'know, in various... places, but the first time I kind of met him, like in an official sense, was probably after.

**I** WENT TO PLAY on *Let Love In* [1994]. I was playing with Dave McComb, who was in Melbourne at the time. Dave had kind of taken me under his wing. I was already playing in The Dirty Three, then I started playing with Dave and The Blackeyed Susans. Then Dave did his solo record

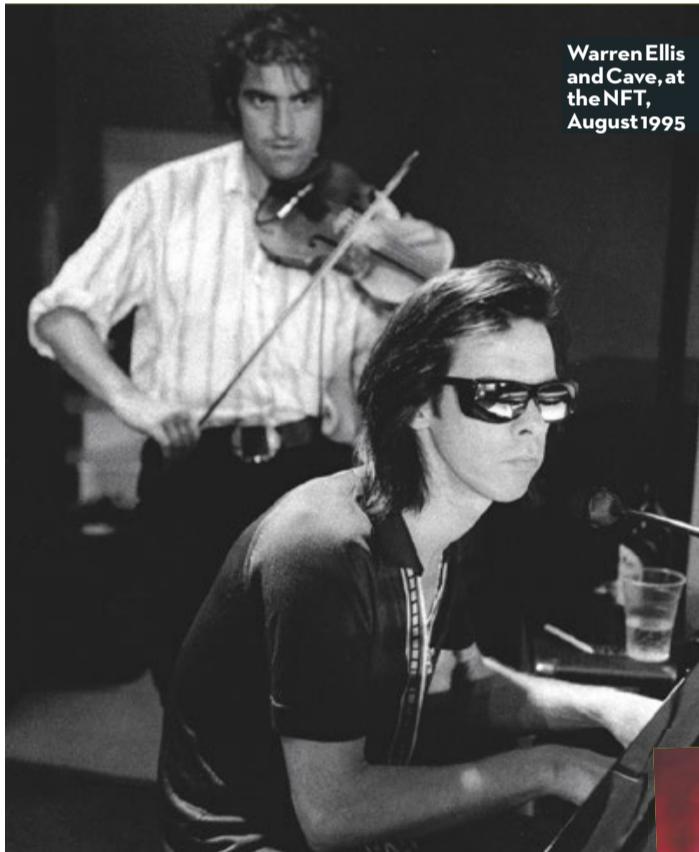
and he took me in the band. I met Mick [Harvey] at that point, when Mick was living in Sydney.

Mick got me in to play a string part that he'd written for a couple of songs on *Let Love In*. They were recording in Sydney. It was kind of chaos, I'd never seen anything like it, actually. They were all doing different things, there was just this creative energy. There was just notes everywhere, and Nick had this checklist, and the piano was covered in lyrics, stuff all over it. They had two studios running, one was mixing and the other one was doing overdubs. Y'know, it was really impressive to see.

Blixa [Bargeld] was there. For me, it was the first time I'd met a lot of these people I'd previously seen onstage and in magazines and stuff like that. So to suddenly see them in there doing what they do, it was kind of... impressive.

Mick Harvey had written this arrangement, a really great arrangement for the song [Warren plays on "Ain't Gonna Rain Anymore" and "Do You Love Me Part 2"] and I went in there with this other fiddle player. For me it was very challenging because I'm not a technically adept player particularly when it comes to reading [music] and getting up high and stuff like that. I have a very specific relation with intonation. We have a love-hate relationship.

I remember the whole thing being quite a struggle for me, on many levels, trying to play the part even though it wasn't particularly difficult. I guess it was thrilling to be hearing



Warren Ellis and Cave, at the NFT, August 1995

these new tracks that hadn't even been out yet or anything. That was exciting...

It was a very new experience for me. Everybody was focused and trying to do something. When you go into the studio you are in there for a limited amount of time and you know that, so there's a real intention to do something, and you want to do the job, so you get in there and you have a small window and that's it.

It creates kind of a great... cocoon in which to work and the rest of the world doesn't matter for that week or 10 days. It was a real laboratory in there. I keep saying energy, but this energy... everybody walking around and I was trying to play, and read a score – which I hadn't done for a long time, read notes. And, you know, I decided to do the session straight as I figured that was a good time to try... I don't know what I was thinking! But anyway I just remember it being sweaty and nerve-wracking. I met Nick again briefly, but he was off – I don't know what they were doing, mixing a song, I think.



Barry Adamson with Mick Harvey and Blixa Bargeld, 1985

EYEWITNESS!

## Close to the edge

**BARRY ADAMSON: there at the beginning and there again now...**

**“**WE CAME TOGETHER after The Birthday Party, an incredible sort of force. It was almost being a kind of... cinema, being a backdrop, if you like, to Nick's eloquence. As an instrumentalist, you try and wrap yourself around the words.

The way we were operating, there was a lot of sort of tension internally and externally: the band was almost on the edge of catastrophic collapse. It was a war of no words.

The Bad Seeds has thrived on an idea, that if every character is strong, that it sort of rubs up against itself. The language of the Bad Seeds was sort of forged then. Of course, Warren came

along and took it out there into another place, too, but I think some of it is from the early Bad Seeds days, as well.

“Recently, we were doing the solo shows and we were, I think, on *From Her To Eternity*, awestruck how detailed it was, but at the same time empty and also just so poignant, in what it was trying to profess musically. We were all blown away.

“There's a story about Beethoven where he writes down the note G on a score and he rubs it out and puts another note, and he rubs it out, and the quill almost goes through the paper, he puts more pieces of paper on the top and there's like this mountain of paper and he ends up writing a G. Sort of possessed, it was like that!

“What was interesting coming back in and walking into the studio while they're recording *Push The Sky Away*, it was almost calm. So quiet. I have to remind myself they've been together for all that time, they know each other inside out, and they're working together inside out. For me it's sort of watching a television. It's anthropological.”

I didn't want to be overwhelmed by the situation; I knew that wasn't going to get me anywhere. It never gets you anywhere, in any situation, to be overwhelmed by things. So... I was just trying to do what was asked of me, really. I wasn't in there to provide any musical ideas.

THE BAD SEEDS has always had a very solid nucleus. As an album comes up, there's a desire to kind of expand things and to take things on from the last recording. The more records you make, you try to develop the sound or the approach and that means getting more people in to cover the ground. They didn't want to repeat themselves.

There was never any formal discussion. I think Nick said, “You wanna come in for a day?” on *Murder Ballads* and then at the end of the day he said, “Do you wanna come in tomorrow?” and I said, “Yeah, sure,” and I played on a couple of songs. I remember there was a point, we were messing around with a song and I suggested something about some chords.

Later on, Conway [Savage, keyboards] told me that there was this sort of silence, like, “OK, well, get ready for it – here it comes.” And that I could have been



# NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

→ asked to leave at that point. But we just sort of kept messing around. And again it was another occasion I decided to try and do it straight, which was ridiculous. For some sort of reason any time I went in to the studio, I decided that was the day I'd be on my best behaviour.

I finished up a big European tour with Dirty Three, which was interesting [chuckles]. They thought I had a stroke on the tour – I was in hospital. They thought I had AIDS and all this. Then I broke out in all these boils, so it seemed like the odds were against me. So we cancelled the rest of the tour. Then Nick called me and said, "Hey we're going to do a couple of dates in South America. Do you wanna come?" I said, "I'm not really in showroom condition," and he said, "Look, that's fine, just come along, have some fun." So I went along to that. I moved to London at that point, they went in and did *The Boatman's Call* and Nick asked me to if I'd like to come in, play on some tracks.

**T**HE BAD SEEDS are people with very strong personalities who have been doing it for most of their lives. The group had developed this dynamic. Individuals were in there for a reason, to do what they brought to the table, which was pretty interesting, because they played as a group.

They would work out the material, and how to play it. You had Blixa: he's still one of the greatest guitar players, he's so extraordinary as a musician and at what he does, and he had a very solid opinion what he liked and what he didn't like. You also had Mick who had strong opinions as well and you know, was very forceful musically on a lot of things. And then there was Nick. You could see that they were a group of people who had been working together, and that it was for a reason they were working together.

One of the fantastic things about a group is the dynamics in there and the way of working, that you don't get when you're on your own because you're just banging your head against the wall after a while. They were bouncing off each other, but were also on the same page. Nick would have very strong ideas; there was not a lot of discussion. With *The Boatman's Call* in particular, he had very strong ideas about what he wanted for that record, about pegging it right back. The great thing about the band is that it was always about the songs, it wasn't about people trying to put their own stamp on the music, it was really about what the songs needed and what was required.

Nick is much more interested in what's coming up than what you've already done. If it's gonna evolve, the opportunity has to be there, and for the opportunity to be there you need people that will let that happen. It's not even like there was ever any discussion about anything, like how it's going to evolve or something like that, it's just the desire that it happens. Each record, you would do what was required.



Barry Adamson

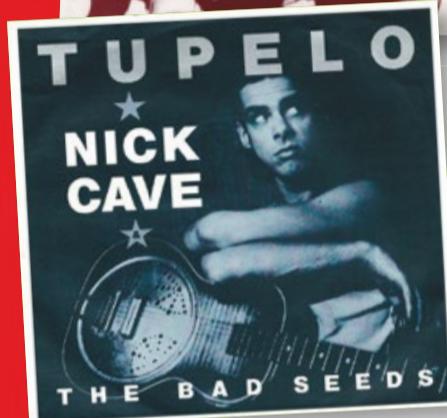
## EYEWITNESS!

### NICK CAVE IN AUSTRALIA

**BARRY ADAMSON**  
witnesses Nick  
Cave's Australian  
journey: from  
*enfant terrible*  
to cultural  
dignitary...

“I REMEMBER doing one of my tours and rolling into Sydney, I think it was, and the town hall and arts centre there had these massive, like huge, portraits of successful Australians, and he was one of them and I just thought, 'Jesus, I didn't realise.' Because in the old days, you know, we'd rock up at the airport and wait for a guitar on its own, with no case, to come round the luggage carousel. Maybe a drumstick, then we'd go 'Whose is that? It's not mine', that sort of thing... so those things kind of catch me, and then I just go, 'You know what, he's so committed to his art, it's a great thing to witness and be around.'”

### THE MERCY SEAT NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS



I don't know how it was in the early days, but when you listen to those early records there's such an attempt to move away, to subvert the kind of whole rock'n'roll thing, and yet it was very much rooted in rock'n'roll, which is always kind of fascinating. There's so much more coming out. It's not like rock'n'roll, there was so much space: things were in a different spot than they had been. Different elements had different roles to do, the guitar wasn't like what you imagined. It was always surprising the next record they would put out.

By the time I was coming in, they really developed a way of working... there was quite often not a lot of conversation: it was instinctive. They knew whether they had been somewhere before or not and that meant they would try something else. When I started being in there, it was very much about early takes and nailing it really early on, it wasn't like constant sort of playing over and over again.

**W**HEN I STARTED playing in the Bad Seeds, we were playing some of the older numbers like "The Mercy Seat" and "Tupelo", but you'd be doing them a

disservice, and yourself a disservice as well, if you tried to copy previous versions... there's just no point. What Blixa does is so unique – you can make a kind of ballpark sound but you have to realise what you need to leave behind and hopefully work out your own take on it.

It was a steep learning curve because it was about what I *didn't* do. People had this great control and restraint – Blixa was amazing, he could play and then fall back with impeccable timing. It goes against all the stereotypes of a guitar player. When I got in, there was so much going on already, finding a place was interesting. With the Dirty Three there was a start and a stop and whatever happened in the middle was anyone's guess.

As the lineup has changed my involvement has changed. It's determined by what's required. Has it ruffled feathers me being Nick's foil? I had lunch with Blixa and he wasn't going on about anything like that. Mick, I believe he said he didn't feel like he was being utilised as he would have liked

EVERETT COLLECTION/REX; DAVE J HOGAN/GETTY IMAGES



"I've probably had more meals with you than my wife!"  
Warren Ellis and Nick Cave  
in *20,000 Days On Earth*

towards the end, but he's never said anything to me about it. Bixa seemed to want to do other things. Nick's and my relationship is something that's developed over the years, we've always enjoyed playing together. When it doesn't feel like it's evolving, it'll be time to move on.

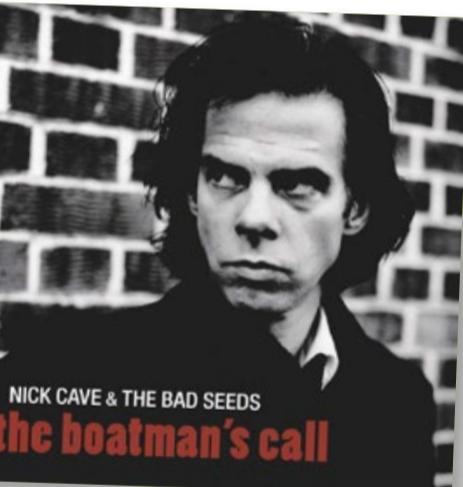
The thing about Nick is, Nick works. He loves to work, he has this incredible drive and a belief in what he's doing. He's always challenging himself. He's very encouraging. I remember buying a mandolin – in 2000 or so, before folk music was popular – and he said, "What an inspired choice." He doesn't seem to stop. People talk about "the drug years" and so on, but he just works non-stop. He won't let things go: this thing of trying to get things through, not giving up on an idea. There's things we've had for 10 years that we're trying to get through and probably never will. It's funny.

The history of the Bad Seeds makes for a sense of liberty: when you've done a certain number of records the more constraints are on you – there are more things you can't do again. You're forced to look elsewhere and that's the great

thing about being in a band that has constant players – the idea of taking risks with like-minded people.

A lot of it is about a moment and hoping it goes somewhere. Sometimes you think, is this ever going to work? And if you do get through it, then from that point on it will move in a different way. Like in the way you might feel after hearing The Velvet Underground: that things will never be the same again afterwards.

For me, I really enjoy it when you crack a song that looked like it wasn't going to make it. I find it hard to let go of the ones that aren't working, and get it so that it's now going somewhere. It's always about the last thing you've done. After a rowdy record like *Murder*



*Ballads* – with *Boatman's Call*, it was really interesting watching everyone try to fit in there.

But Nick is the one constant. Has he changed? I guess he just seems... a bit more concise. He used to let things sprawl, but he cuts things down now. The last couple of records are more about editing – he seems to rein it in a bit and it seems to create unknown things.

Nick always had the authority. I don't think there's ever been any confusion about that. Nick's written every kind of lyric for the whole thing except, you know, a couple of them. As far as I could see, if he didn't come in with the song, or when he was ready to do something, then the band would go. The great thing about the Bad Seeds is that you just understood how things were. Thank God not everybody in there is trying to be the singer. ☺

Fourteen *Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds* albums have been remastered for vinyl reissue; *Nick Cave* plays the UK in April and May



The Bad Seeds in 2012:  
(l-r) Thomas Wydler,  
Jim Sclavunos, Martyn  
P. Casey, Cave and Ellis

## SEEDS OF CHANGE

# "I CAN WRITE A SONG AND ALL THAT SORT OF STUFF..."

...But it's the Bad Seeds who make it work, says NICK CAVE

**N**ICK CAVE: "WHAT we all understand in the Bad Seeds is when we go into the studio we're making it like the first record, not like the 15th record. That's a different way of looking at things. I feel the legacy is significant – I look at it as a large body of work – I know that exists and that hangs heavy over the writing process, when I go into my office to write, but it's something I have to shed when I go into the studio. The recording process is about forgetting as much as anything else – about leaving the weight of what you've done before outside the studio walls and looking at things in a new way. Mostly we achieve that – our records aren't just reactive to what we've done before.

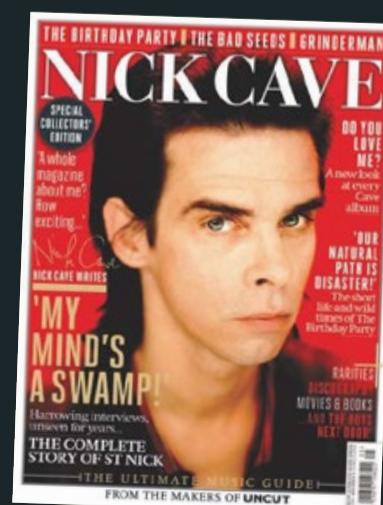
"Right from the start I've been a collaborator – I wouldn't be able to do what I do if I didn't have someone else. These people are significantly better and more natural musicians than I am. I can write a song and all that sort of stuff obviously, but the

implementing of that song and doing it in interesting ways is very much a collaborative effort.

"There's different types of collaboration: Mick Harvey, I can't see any similarities between working with him and working with Warren. One's not more successful than the other, they're just different things. The Bad Seeds have an uncanny way of just understanding the process – fitting into it and serving the song in some way.

"People brought into the way we record find it strange – it's so intuitive and very few takes are done. No-one gets the chance to work things out. Maybe that's a fault in our records – but maybe

that's the beauty of them, as well. Maybe we sacrifice development of an idea because of that, but the records have an adventuring spirit that you lose once you truly understand what a song is about. The way a song reveals itself to you is very much a live thing."



*Nick Cave* provides the introduction to the *Ultimate Music Guide: Nick Cave*

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*“We’re captive on the carousel of time  
We can’t return, we can only look  
Behind from where we came.”*

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# THE 30 GREATEST SONGS OF JONI MITCHELL

From “Both Sides, Now” to *Travelogue*, incorporating Laurel Canyon folk reveries, singer-songwriter milestones, jazz adventures and so much more, *Uncut* chronologically assesses the finest work of a singer-songwriter supreme. Thirty astonishing songs, chosen by ROBERT PLANT, PINK FLOYD, RADIOHEAD, GRAHAM NASH, REM, LAURA MARLING, ROGER McGUINN, ELBOW and many more collaborators, contemporaries and starry-eyed acolytes. “She’s probably,” says a still-devoted DAVID CROSBY, “the best writer of us all...”

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**Portraits:** Jack Robinson

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A photographer's contact sheet of Joni Mitchell, shot for *Vogue*, November 20, 1968

**“****I**DON'T THINK THERE'S a singer-songwriter in the world that hasn't been affected by Joni," David Crosby tells *Uncut*. "You want to be that good, we all did. We all do." As Crosby attests, in a career spanning almost half a century of music, Joni Mitchell has proved enduringly influential. During her artistic prime, she ploughed indefatigably through a wide variety of styles – from stark confessional to jazz – in an astonishingly short period of time; her sophisticated work transcending the conventional songcraft of her many like-minded peers. Lately, there have been encouraging signs of activity. Towards the end of last year, she curated her own retrospective boxset, *Love Has Many Faces*, while in January 2015 she was unveiled as the face of a new Saint Laurent ad campaign.

On this occasion, we have chosen to look back at some of her greatest songs with help from a panel of her collaborators, friends and famous fans. Along the way, we hear tales involving picnics with Eric Clapton, hand-knitted sweaters, a birthday cake in the shape of a guitar, car journeys across Canada, late-night visits to bowling alleys and one eye-watering early morning encounter with the Flying Squad. One former paramour, we learn, admits he still sends her flowers every year for her birthday. But, critically, one of her more recent collaborators shares with us a remarkable piece of fresh information regarding her current activities. "I think there's always a chance of new music," they reveal. "She was writing a few months ago..."

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS; NIALL REDDY



**1969**  
**1** **BOTH SIDES, NOW**  
**Clouds, 1969**

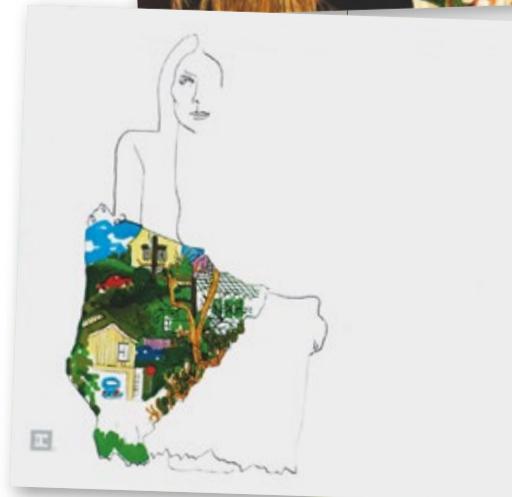
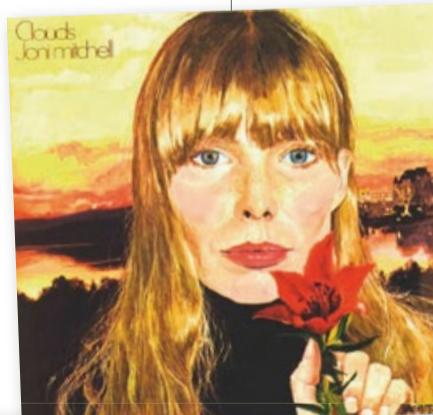


**PHILIP SELWAY, RADIOHEAD:** I think if you've got an interest in songwriting, Joni's one of the best reference points and guides in that respect. You can't go far wrong, can you?

My favourite, because it happened twice, is "Both Sides, Now". It was on *Clouds* originally, and then it was the closing track on [2000's] *Both Sides Now*. The first was in her acoustic phase, you know, *Clouds* and *Ladies Of The Canyon* and *Blue*, and it's such a strong song performed with just vocal and acoustic guitar. If a song can stand up in that way, and still have that power behind it, when there are no tricks to hide behind there...

it either stands up in its own right at that point, or it sounds insipid. To me, on that version on *Clouds*, it sounds amazing, it's the perfect culmination to that record.

And then Joni returned to the song again when



she did *Both Sides Now* in 2000, where she revisited some of her older songs. To me, she's almost like Ella Fitzgerald on that record and I found it really interesting, having "A Case Of You" from *Blue*, and also "Both Sides, Now", just comparing the two tracks; the younger Joni Mitchell, and then the wisdom and the depth that comes through in the version on *Both Sides Now*. When you hear the later version, you genuinely believe that she's really had the life that backs up the sentiment in the song. Her voice has dropped in pitch, and for some people that would be a huge worry, but actually she's used that to her advantage. It's like the before and after of songs, and it feels in some way like the two versions are bookends in her work.

**1970**

**2** **MORNING MORGANTOWN**  
**Ladies Of The Canyon, 1970**



**MIKE HERON, THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND:**

The first time I heard "Morning Morgantown" was up in Scotland on late-night radio. I was fascinated. We'd actually met her through Joe Boyd. Joe had been involved with Dylan's appearance at the Newport Folk Festival. He had a long connection with those people. When we recorded *The 5,000 Spirits Or The Layers Of The Onion*, he sent a copy of the album to the Newport committee. They were putting on a festival of new names on the block. They had Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen. They booked us for it, too. That was November, '67. So when we met her, she hadn't yet made her first album. We sat around, me and Robin [Williamson] and Joni, and we swapped songs. She sang a few of her songs, and we sang a few of ours. She said she really liked what we were doing. I was flattered! Robin and I were into open-tunings, so we were taken as much by her guitar-playing as her

beautiful voice. I followed her career since. *Hejira* was her stand-out album, really. I was listening to some songs earlier, and her piano-playing is remarkable. I don't know if anyone else was doing that kind of piano playing at the time. It's not really Carole King; but it's not too jazzy at that point. Listen to *Ladies Of The Canyon*. Songs like "Rainy Night House", for instance,

I think she set the template for that kind of piano-playing.

**3** **WILLY**  
**Ladies Of The Canyon, 1970**



**GRAHAM NASH:** "Willy", to this day, breaks my heart when I hear it. But her artistry is



With David Crosby in  
Mama Cass' garden,  
February 1968

such that she takes a personal situation and turns it into a world situation. The relationship she's talking about can apply to anyone who's listening. That's the art of writing a great song, taking a simple thing and making astounding music from it. There are so many great songs for a start. I really believe that in a hundred years from now, when people look back on the '60s, the great writers will be Bob Dylan, John and Paul, and Joni. I like "Amelia", I think it speaks directly to your heart, and there is not much in the way of production. She concentrates on the lyrics and the melodies of her music and she wants to find the shortest path from your brain to your heart. She consistently does that. If you listen to "For The Roses", for instance... my God! Listen to "A Case Of You": holy shit, it goes straight to your heart! I love "River" on *Blue*, too. She influenced me, as well. There's a couple of songs I've written in tunings that I learned from Joni, particularly "Lady Of The Island". I got tunings from Crosby, too, because he's a maniac that way. Hey, you know it's her birthday today? I've been sending her flowers on her birthday ever since the day we parted. Let's wish Joni a happy birthday today.

#### 4 | RAINY NIGHT HOUSE *Ladies Of The Canyon*, 1970



**JOHN GRANT:** Choosing my favourite song is an easy one for me – on "Rainy Night House", I just felt completely understood. I feel like she is very special, to underestimate the issue greatly. The combination of the songwriting craft and the level of vocal ability mixed with virtuosity on the guitar, and the choices of sounds and backing vocals and everything, all the production, is

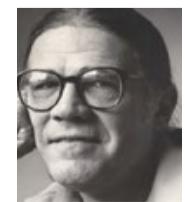
overwhelming. I was working in a record shop in Denver, I think, when I was introduced to her. I didn't think it was for me and I didn't get into her until much later. I think the first record I heard of hers was *Blue*, in California. I had a boss at the record store and he told me I needed to get *Blue* and *Court And Spark*. I was trying to get my own band going at the time and I wanted to be like Radiohead. Later, when I left Texas and moved to New York, and was working on my first solo record, Tim Smith, the former singer of Midlake, gave me a bunch of Joni Mitchell albums. The first one he gave me was *Ladies Of The Canyon*

**"Willy', to this day, breaks my heart when I hear it..."**

GRAHAM NASH

and I took that back and listened to it while walking around Brooklyn, and on the subway, and just fell deeply, deeply in love with her.

#### 5 | WOODSTOCK *Ladies Of The Canyon*, 1970



**HENRY DILTZ, PHOTOGRAPHER:** I first met Joni at Mama Cass' house, when she had a picnic for Eric Clapton. He'd come to town with Cream and didn't know anybody, so she

invited him to meet some friends. One of them was David Crosby and he brought this new girl with him he'd found in Florida and flown to LA to record her first record. We were all sitting out under the trees and Joni sat there and played the whole album. Eric was spellbound. He was staring at her fingers, transfixed by her tunings. I would see Joni around at friends' houses for dinner, or The Troubadour. One day, we went round her house down the hill from me on Lookout Mountain Avenue, she was leaning out of the window, with her elbows on the sill, relaxed, talking to my partner, Gary Burden, which allowed me to shoot about 50 pictures of her over 10 minutes or so. But "Woodstock" is a special song to me, partly because I was Michael Lang's photographer at Woodstock. In all, I spent two and a half weeks at Woodstock, photographing the building of the stage onwards to the festival itself. Joni couldn't make it, of course, and was stuck in her hotel room. So she wrote the song; this idyllic metaphor for the concert rather than the reality.

#### 6 | THE CIRCLE GAME *Ladies Of The Canyon*, 1970



**LINDA PERHACS:** So many folk singers were sticking with a pattern from the past, and men had more opportunity at that time to get contracts than women – we forgot this. So when Joni Mitchell came aboard she broke all those rules. One thing that opened the door for me was that Joni was doing so well on Warners that Universal wanted somebody in that kind of position on their label. So do I owe her a thank you? We all owe her a thank you!



Celebration at Big Sur, 1969: (l-r) Graham Nash, Joni Mitchell, John Sebastian, Stephen Stills and Joan Baez

There was Joan Baez, Judy Collins and a few others, but they were following more traditional lines. Joni just came right out front and said, "I'm gonna do it my way." She was so doggone good that you couldn't argue with her. I love everything she does. I love the early albums, because those were the ones I was first familiar with and first struck by. Songs like "The Circle Game". People who create are out there to open new avenues, and Joni Mitchell is definitely one of the strongest we had last century. I never met her – I was in Topanga Canyon, and she was more in her community of people in Laurel Canyon, a lovely little haven but very close to the city. Not everybody may agree, but I never feel a personality that strong doing something so well is a first-timer at it, there's a history as a soul.

1971

7 | CAREY  
Blue, 1971



MATTHEW E WHITE:

"Carey" is like a journey. It's so personal, so intimate, so free, so independent – and very cleverly produced. There's this really unique way that '70s guys produce records, where there doesn't seem like a lot of production going on, there doesn't seem like there's a lot of decisions being made, and it's because they were so good at making records. But Joni is such an incredible singer – no-one can sing like that, you can try but you can't. "Carey" has such a cool tempo. It's kind of an 'up' song when so much of that record is a 'down'. I just feel like it just captured a moment of her life that was so fresh, and so fun. It's funny, because *Blue* is so stereotypical – it's a famous album or whatever, but it's famous for a reason. When I was on tour last, all I listened to were *Blue* and Kendrick Lamar's record *Good Kid, Maad City*. I liked listening to them back to back. They represent complete opposites on the musical spectrum in a lot of ways, but they're both so beautiful and well-made and well-crafted. But "Carey", I probably play this one throughout my house and in my car more than anyone else. It's really groovy and minimal in a lot of cool ways. It gives you so much with so little.

8 | BLUE  
Blue, 1971



VASHTI BUNYAN: The first time I heard Joni play, I recall a borrowed cottage in the Lake District – winter 1968. The room with the TV in it had no heating. Wrapped in coat, jumpers and scarves, I watched a speckly black and white image of a young woman at a piano – playing a



song that made me forget being cold. I was overcome with admiration for her being able to play and sing alone in front of an audience. I don't remember the song – I only know it was as heartbreakingly beautiful as she was and that I have carried that image with me always, like an old photograph. And so now I choose a piano-led song of hers from 1970 – which was probably when I next heard her. "Blue"... how well it conveys to me an era – and an LA canyon culture – one that I didn't ever know but which I feel I can hear so clear through the words of this song. She moved on into jazzy styles I had less feeling for at the time, which only goes to underline the courage with which she left her – in her label's opinion – more commercial songs behind. She never gave up doing what she wanted to do. But when I hear her voice – from whichever decade – it is with an immediate recognition. Many may try to imitate her but what is the point? It seems to me that to try to sound like someone else is no real compliment but a waste of a musical talent

that could be going its own way. Own way – that would be much more like her.

9 | CALIFORNIA  
Blue, 1971



LEE RANALDO, SONIC

YOUTH: Joni managed through her personal experiences to embody the pulse of the times in so many ways. "California" is one of those songs which I always come back to. She's not quite wearing the pearls and perms that would come with the *Court And Spark* era, but it's certainly got this slightly jet-set vibe – there's a verse set in Paris, one on the Greek Islands, and one in Spain. But deep within all this travelling is this unsettling sadness about the war and the fact that on those fronts nothing is really changing – she's travelling around the world, but the war is the thing that's on her mind, and going back to her adopted home in California. There's something about the lyrics to this one – it sends chills up me. It's not saying anything very directly, but it says so much in such economical means.

When Sonic Youth was working on *Daydream Nation*, I wrote "Hey Joni". It stemmed from an odd comment that Thurston [Moore] made – he mentioned "Hey Joe" while we were working on the song, and it gave me the inspiration to flip it around. Although the song wasn't really about her, I always thought by putting her name in the title I was professing my deep love for her music.

I don't think she was a touchstone for the group, tuning-wise, but definitely something about those rich modal tunings she was using left a big impression on me. Back then, it was really hard to sit down and figure out what her tunings were – now you can look on the internet. So what Joni was doing was very mysterious, it's hard to figure out. I wonder if there are any Sonic Youth tunings that actually overlap with Joni's?

10 | RIVER  
Blue, 1971

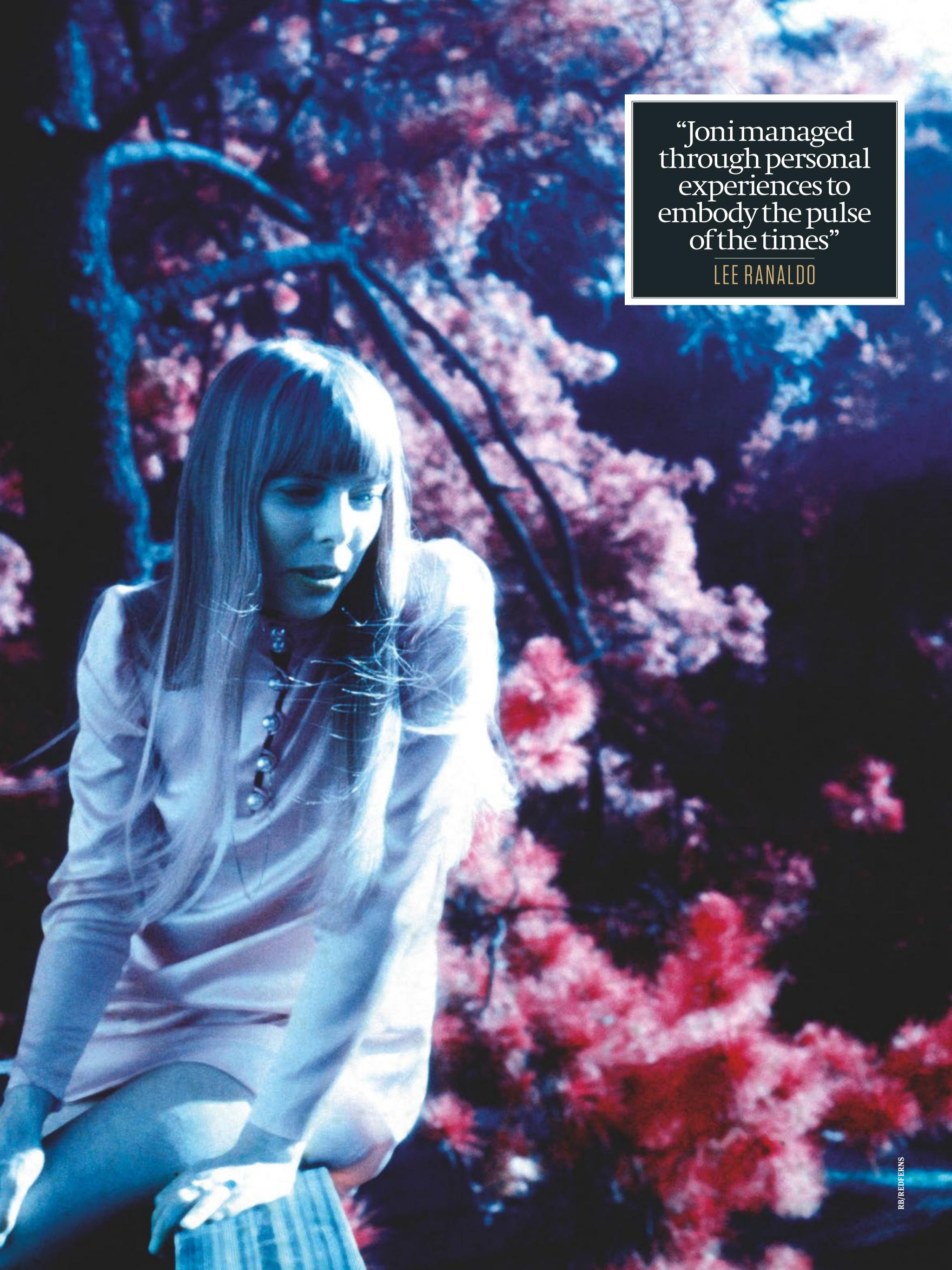


LINDA THOMPSON:

This is a beautiful, dark song, with an amazing lyric and melody. I particularly love that minor-key "Jingle Bells" bit at the top and bottom of the song. That lyric, "I wish I had a river I could skate away on..." Who says that? People often use rivers in a lyric, and water in general, for washing them clean, drowning in and even walking on. But skating away on... It's a most evocative picture.

I remember exactly where I was when I heard that song and the record *Blue*. I was living at the Chateau Marmont in Los Angeles, with my darling friend Joe Boyd. He was head of film music for Warner Brothers, then. He came home once with a test pressing of *Blue*. I remember being aghast with admiration and envy.

I met Joni once. Around *Blue*, she was managed by Peter Asher, and I worked for Peter for a while. She was with James Taylor at the time, and he often came by the office. She came once with one of her paintings, and a sweater she had knitted, and asked me to give them to James. Next time he came by, I gave them to him and relayed Joni's message. I guess they were on the rocks,



“Joni managed through personal experiences to embody the pulse of the times”

LEE RANALDO

because he told me he didn't want them. I'm upset to this day, that I didn't take both items home. They probably got thrown away!

## 11 | A CASE OF YOU



**JIMMY WEBB:** I saw Joni the first time at The Troubadour in 1967. She looked like an angel and out of her mouth came *cinéma vérité*: real life, real pain, real suffering and sometimes joy and excitement. She found this voice to reveal things that were not previously thought of as fitting, proper or even interesting subjects for songs. That got me thinking about my own songwriting. I was privileged to be round her a lot and heard many songs before they were finished. I heard the whole of the *For The Roses* album when I was staying in London making my *Land's End* album and she spent time with me. I had the chance to look over her shoulder and witness her methodology. She would take out her big Martin guitar and start playing these wildly interesting chords. The form of the song was constantly changing, she'd take out her notebook and have multiple versions completely written out. There was a tremendous amount of preparation. I love "A Case Of You". It's a revelation. I wish I could have written the lyrics to that song. There's 10,000 ways to tell somebody you love them and that song is one of them. The metaphor is perfect and it has a lovely air and a beautiful melody. That's my kind of stuff. She's an interesting combination of world-weary and totally innocent. I loved her and love her still.

*Jimmy Webb is touring the UK in April. Visit [www.jimmywebb.com/shows](http://www.jimmywebb.com/shows)*

1972

## 12 | URGE FOR GOING

B-side of "You Turn Me On, I'm A Radio", 1972



**MARK LANEGAN:** "Urge For Going" has got that kind of wistful, sad thing that I'm always drawn to. It's so devastatingly great, and it's one of my favourite songs. It was one of those things

Recording with James Taylor for Carole King's *Tapestry*, 1971



I heard about through other people or read about. I remember seeing her in *Creem* magazine in the '70s, but I didn't actually get to see her in concert until, I think, the late '90s, so it took many, many years between when I first heard and became a fan and actually saw her perform. And it was a good one, too. She was on tour with Bob Dylan and Van Morrison. What I remember most about her set was how very



charming she was onstage – and really funny. Yeah, man. That was some tour...

## 13 | COLD BLUE STEEL AND SWEET FIRE

For The Roses, 1972



**JOE BOYD:** We met at the Newport Folk Festival in '67.

She and The Incredible String Band were both on the bill on the Sunday afternoon. There was an evening of just drinking and smoking dope and sitting under a tree in the balmy Rhode Island summer and listening to Joni and Mike [Heron] and Robin [Williamson] swap songs for about three hours. She didn't have a record deal, but George Hamilton IV had a hit with "Urge For Going". She wanted to sort out a European publishing deal, so she came to London to stay. I was sharing a



## 14 | FOR THE ROSES

For The Roses, 1972



**JEAN GRAND-MAÎTRE (ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, ALBERTA BALLET):** When we came together to talk about the ballet, *The Fiddle And The Drum*, it was during the Iraq invasion and she was really pissed off about it, and about Earth's ecological destruction. So a lot of the songs we selected were dark, but "For The Roses" is a much more poetic song. The orchestral version in the ballet is deeply melancholic. It's about the plight of the artist. When we invited her to create a ballet, we thought it was a long shot, but I didn't know that she loves dance. I think she enjoyed it because it made her do something new, and that's what she's always wanted. I call her the Stanley Kubrick of music, because she's made a masterpiece in every genre, just like he did. I was at her birthday party in LA last year, and she's got more energy than ever. Her mind never stops, it's a locomotive of thinking and feeling. She questions herself, and doubts herself, and criticises herself. I think there's always a chance of new music. She was writing a few months ago – but there was the event at the Hammer Museum in LA, so I think she put that on hold to finish the *Love Has Many Faces* boxset. The ideas are always there. As a Canadian, I can say she's one of the most important artists that our country has ever produced.



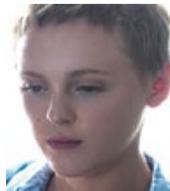
1974

## 15 | HELP ME Court And Spark, 1974



**Mike Mills, REM:** As with most people, your favourite songs are the ones which were played while things were happening in your life, and this came around at an interesting period in my life. "Help Me" was a song that always seemed magical and beautiful, and it showed what you could do that was non-traditional and yet very melodic and effective. When I heard this it must have been '74, so I would have been 15 or 16 – I was just discovering heartache, so the song made a lot of sense to me! Some of *Court And Spark* was kinda baroque, and that's what I enjoyed, the songs could be non-traditional but melodic, catchy and hummable. I know more about her singles than I do about her deeper tracks, but this was one song which impressed me with how you could have a radio hit with something which was complicated – complicated arrangements, songs and unusual melodies, and yet they were able to be big hits on the radio. She, like REM, I think, didn't care about having hits. She made the songs she wanted to make and if radio was going to move in her direction then I think she was fine with that, but I don't think she was out for hit singles.

## 16 | SAME SITUATION Court And Spark, 1974



**LAURA MARLING:** My dad gave me *Court And Spark* when I was 11 or 12, along with a few others. He really liked this song, apart from anything because the melodies were so strange. He bought me a guitar and I remember sitting

down in a room with him trying to learn a few songs, one of which was "Same Situation". The record had such an important effect on me. It's sort of a concept album in that it has a thread that follows all the way through and all of the songs connect into one, which is pretty rad for that era. I don't know what it is about that song, it hit me the most. It's funny, I feel that Joni Mitchell resonates in a special way with women; not exclusively, of course, but that song is so perceptive in the way it articulates specific thoughts and feelings.

**"She looked like an angel and out of her mouth came real life, real pain..."**

**JIMMY WEBB**



## 17 | FREE MAN IN PARIS Court And Spark, 1974



**FATHER JOHN MISTY:** I have a really distinct memory of being in high school, driving around late at night around Christmas, and the modern rock station played "River". That knocked me off my ass. Then, when I was about 20, I moved to Seattle and started listening to *Blue* incessantly. But "Free Man In Paris", I was with someone for three years who managed the band [Fleet Foxes]. We would listen to that song around the house and she would sing it. It was so specific, like it was tailor-made for this person that I loved at this point in my life. I was watching her life get overtaken by the work. So on some level, I relate to the song. You start out as a songwriter and then all of a sudden you feel like you're running a small business. You have employees and you've got the merchandise and people are asking you about budgets. So there's something about that song's portrayal of the black hole that a career in music can become. The irony is, you get into this thing for freedom and creative expression, live this lofty, spiritual existence, but before you know it, you're filling out Excel spreadsheets. But Joni is the real deal, and "Free Man In Paris" is a very special song.

## 18 | BIG YELLOW TAXI Miles Of Aisles, 1974



**MAX BENNETT, BASSIST, LA EXPRESS:** The band had just started. We were working at the Baked Potato, the jazz club, and she came in. She went crazy for the band and asked if we would like to play on a couple of songs on her upcoming album. That was *Court And Spark*. Then we



With Tom Scott,  
Victor Feldman and  
Robben Ford, at the  
New Victoria Theatre,  
London, April 20, 1974

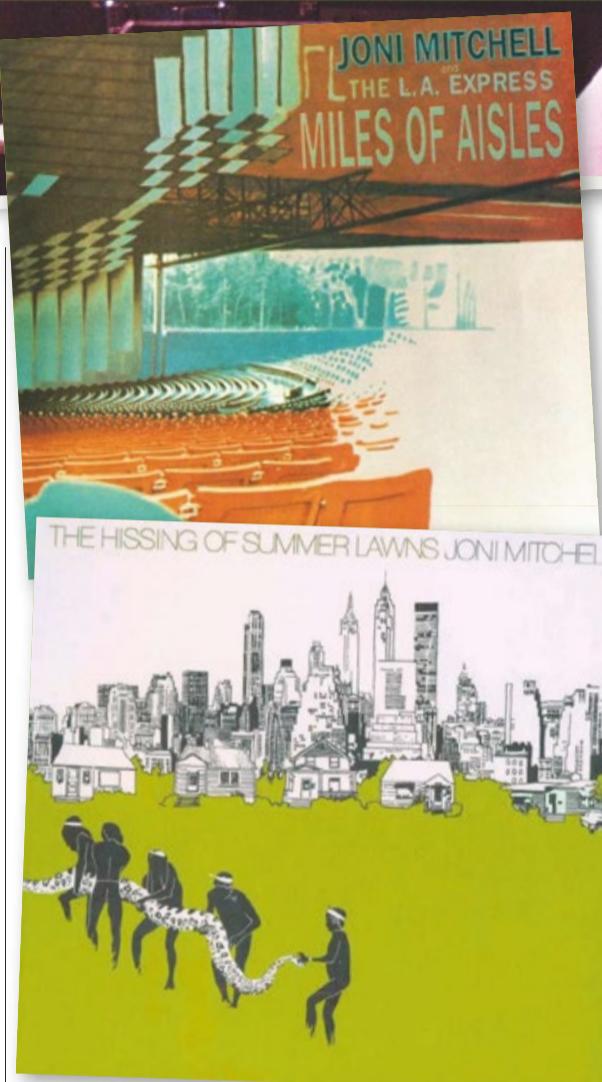
• went on tour with her. We recorded *Miles Of Aisles* at the Universal Amphitheatre. It was open air, and chilly at night, so we were onstage freezing every night for a week while they were recording us. The version of "Big Yellow Taxi" from *Miles Of Aisles* was fun to play live; we just kept adding little things to it while we were on the road. Things are never the same once you do the album and then you go on the road, you alter songs as you go along, and that tune became a lot of fun to play. Being in the studio with Joni was very different to being onstage. The studio is pretty much business; friendly business, though, because she respected the band. We were all professional jazz musicians and because she would skip beats or whatever she did to make a song unique, that never bothered us. She said once, the guys in CSNY couldn't get it because they were a different type of musician. When we were on the road, we hung out a lot together. Because we all liked to bowl, her manager would go to a bowling alley in the city where we were playing and ask them to keep it open so we could go bowling after the concert. Of all the people I've gone on the road with – Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee – she was definitely the best.

1975

## 19|THE JUNGLE LINE The Hissing Of Summer Lawns, 1975



**AL STEWART:** I went to see the first concert she ever gave in England, a little showcase put on by the record company. There were about 20 people there. Then, a little later, I played the Royal Festival Hall. Fairport Convention were the headliners and Joni was the special guest; that would have been 1968. About 10 years later, I played at a benefit concert for an American charity called Bread & Roses run by Mimi Fariña, Joan Baez's sister. Joni was on that bill, too, so our paths keep crossing. I think a lot of her style comes from those guitar tunings; because she had an illness in her youth, she had to adapt to play the guitar in her own style. Everyone around the folk scene played D-A-D-G-A-D, but not Joni. "Jungle Line", though, is quite a departure. It's a very odd chord construction; very unorthodox. I don't even think there's any rhythm guitar on it. "Rousseau walks on trumpet paths/Safaris to the



heart of all that jazz..." She is very literate. She uses words that pretty much no-one else would, but she uses them more in an emotional way than an intellectual way. So I'm always interested in what she does with the language, to conjure up a fresh take on something which otherwise would be quite run of the mill.

## 20|DON'T INTERRUPT THE SORROW The Hissing Of Summer Lawns, 1975



**ROBBEN FORD,  
GUITARIST, LA EXPRESS:** In 1974, I got a phone call from Tom Scott inviting me to tour with Joni and the LA Express. We went on the road for the most part of nine months all over the US. But my first experience working with her in the studio was on *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*. I was 22 and still very inexperienced in the studio. I remember, she would ask you to do things that weren't necessarily your instincts. For instance, on "In France They Kiss On Main Street", she said, "I'd like you to plug the electric guitar into a fuzz tone, into the console." To me, that was the most foreign request I could have imagined. But it

turned out different and unique. She was always looking for something different, and she was always very gentle about the way she suggested things, there was never any attitude, it was always "Why don't we just try it?" I remember visiting her later in the studio when she was recording *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*. She was playing some synthesised keyboard overdubs on one of the songs, and she was sitting in a chair that was quite high up off the ground and underneath her legs were swinging in the air! She was like a little girl with crayons, she just had that freedom. I love "Don't Interrupt The Sorrow", though. It's got this very slinky feel and this groove that just keeps on going. I play Dobro guitar on it, and Larry Carlton is playing this very flowy electric guitar that comes in and out. It's a great, unusual piece of music. I'm very proud to have been on it.

1976

## 21|COYOTE Hejira, 1976



**SIMON NICOL, FAIRPORT CONVENTION:** I can never get tired of "Coyote". There's a particularly good live version, from the Greek Theatre in 1979.

It has her stamp; that unusual degree of storytelling going on during that period, and she tells the story in quite a tongue-twisting way, really. The delivery is more energetic than reflective. It sounds like she's having a ball, especially when she's with Jaco and the others in the band from that period. I met her a couple of times. She was stepping out with Joe Boyd when he first signed us. This was 1967 or '68, and she found herself in London to talk publishing with somebody and she was staying with Joe for a week or so. He invited us round to meet her one afternoon. I was 16 or 17 and she was this sophisticated super hippy, with this North American aura about her. I recall she had a very smart Martin D28 guitar. We sat in the room and she sang about half a dozen songs. That's where we got "Eastern Rain" and "Chelsea Morning" and the other songs of hers that are on our early albums. Then the next time I saw her was 1970 or '71. She'd parted company with Joe by then, but somehow we ended up in her house in Laurel Canyon in the afternoon, having tea. It wasn't going to be Builders: it was Earl Grey drunk in little Chinese tea cups, the ones without handles. We sat on the deck in her lovely garden, overlooking the canyon. That was jolly.

## 22|HEJIRA Hejira, 1976



**JONATHAN WILSON:**

I was a young jazz fanatic when I heard the *Mingus* album and the recordings she'd made with Jaco Pistorius. Yet when I listen back to "Hejira", the way she melts jazz into her thing seems so effortless. Her sensibilities and her ethereal qualities speak to me, the harmonic depth and chords that she achieved being self-taught is staggering. But on "Hejira", the way she cross-pollinates between styles is very affecting. I always think about when I was in my studio with David



At the time of  
The Hissing Of  
Summer Lawns,  
October 17, 1975

“She plays by ear...  
she makes up  
colours to explain  
what she’s feeling”

ROGER MCGUINN



Crosby, and just the reverence with which David – or Graham [Nash], Jackson [Browne] or whoever – talk about her. David told me about when he first heard her, and how she blew his mind and he was so excited to bring her back to town to share this stupendous talent, and he’s like a proud parent. You know, I ended up at her 70th birthday party. It was completely random. We were downstairs at this Hollywood club and upstairs had a VIP space. I thought I’d pop up and see what was going on. I sneaked my way up and Joni sitting there. It was her birthday party. They had a beautiful cake in the shape of a Martin guitar. I spoke to her briefly and wished her a happy birthday.

## 23 | SONG FOR SHARON

*Hejira*, 1976

**JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR:** When I listen to *Hejira*, I don’t often notice the music that much. The jazz humidity, Mitchell’s remorseless journey away from folk and the expectations of her fans; these details seem at best incidental, at times irrelevant. What I hear, perhaps more than any other record I own, are the words, great measured cascades of them, and the way Joni Mitchell delivers them as a stream of consciousness that never loses its meticulous poetic poise.

*Hejira* works best as a single piece, a bittersweet travelogue of sorts. But its pleasures are most satisfyingly exemplified

by “Song For Sharon”, where bassist Max Bennett (not, you’ll note, Jaco Pastorius here) and drummer John Guerin empathetically track Mitchell’s voice and guitar for the best part of nine minutes.



Joni - John Guerin

Such is the focus on the lyrics, that the rhythm seems to be set by her ruminations, line by line.

“Song For Sharon” is about the conflicting attractions of rootless freedom and romance, about the divergent paths of Mitchell and a friend from childhood, about the consolations that music, at least occasionally, can offer. Ideas and stories rear up and evaporate – a trip to Staten Island to buy a mandolin is memorably hijacked by “*the long white dress of love on a storefront mannequin*” – but while nothing is resolved, I can think of few songs that present more effectively the contradictory impulses of a great artist. One moment, Mitchell is keen to embrace “*a wide wide world of noble causes/And lovely landscapes to discover*.” The next, she’s frankly admitting, “*All I really want to do right now/Is find another lover*.”

And always, unerringly, she has the precise words for imprecise emotions. After a friend kills herself, and her friends call up, “*all*

*emotions and abstractions*,”

Mitchell nails the vagaries of the human condition with, I think, one of my favourite couplets in any song. “*It seems we all live so close to that line*,” she sings, as if the perfect words just materialised in her head, “*And so far from satisfaction...*”

1977

## 24 | DREAMLAND

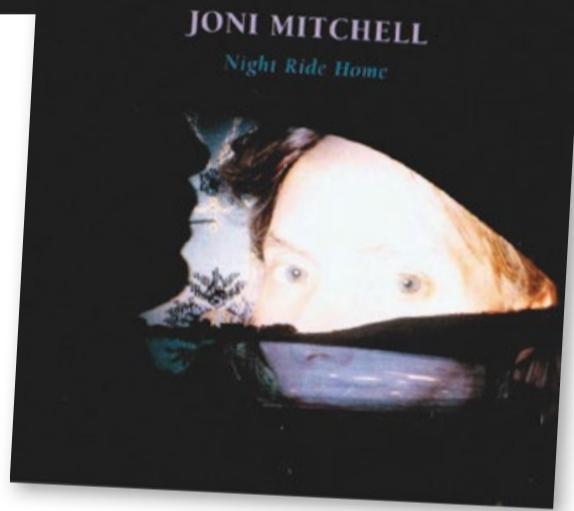
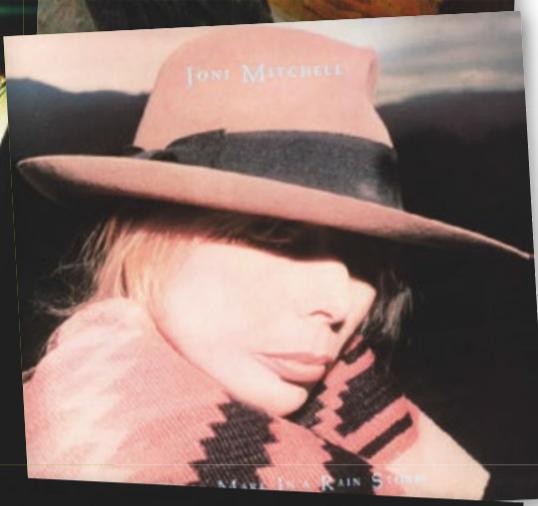
*Don Juan’s Reckless Daughter*, 1977



**ROGER MCGUINN:** I covered “Dreamland” on my *Cardiff Rose* album. I was riding on the tourbus with Joni on the Rolling Thunder Revue. Sitting next to her, she had a little composition book and she was filling it up with new songs, and I was getting ready to record *Cardiff Rose*. I didn’t have enough songs to complete it, so I turned to Joni and asked her if she had any spare. She said, “Well, McGuinn, I got this one song you might be able to use, but there’s a line in it I’m not sure about.” I said, “Yeah, what’s that?” She said, “*I wrapped a flag around me like a Dorothy Lamour sarong...*” I said, “Well... I can work with that!” [laughs] So I changed it to “*Errol Flynn sarong*”. She must have had 25 or 30 songs in there, and then she lost the book! I don’t know if she ever recovered it, somehow it slipped out of her possession. I guess she remembered some of them, but I recall she was quite devastated at losing it. On my version, I was trying to emulate some of Joni’s phrasing, on the vocals. And I remember she came to the studio, and she said, “Well, it sounds pretty good but you need to work on the vocal,” and I said “Well, no no, that’s the way I wanted it.” I don’t think she appreciated my version. It was so different from hers. Joni’s not



Mitchell in the year 2000



## 25 CHINESE CAFÉ / UNCHAINED MELODY

*Wild Things Run Fast, 1982*



**LARRY KLEIN, BASS:** I was called to play on some sessions that ended up becoming *Wild Things Run Fast*. I was 25, and she was unlike any woman that I have ever been around or worked with.

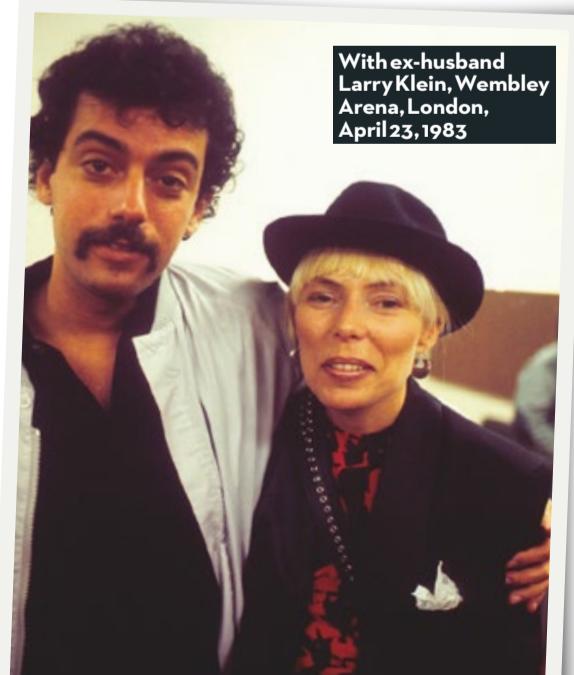
I was completely impressed with her. In the studio, she was very open and adventurous and curious and completely game for trying new ways of approaching music. We became an item and she wrote "Chinese Café/Unchained Melody" somewhat early on in our relationship. She was travelling across Canada by car, from Calgary to Saskatoon, a trip we did several times ourselves together, but this particular time she was travelling by herself. There is something in the simplicity of the song and its sentiment that is extraordinarily touching to me. It has this wistful quality to it, of someone looking out at the world changing. The hook of the chorus is, "Nothing lasts for long". She's using that line in relation to human experience but also the ecology of the planet. Then she interlocks it with "Unchained Melody", and the way in which she undulates between her new poem and snatches of that old song, is amazing to me. When we worked on that together, it had this incredible power to make me cry, or at least just make emotions well up inside of me. To this day, when I listen to the recording that we made of it, it has the same quality for me. There's just something, so evocative about it and sad. But sad in a bittersweet way, you know, in the way that melancholy is kind of sweet.

## 26 MY SECRET PLACE

*Chalk Mark In A Rain Storm, 1988*



**NICK MASON:** This came from the period when she was married to Larry Klein. I've always loved the sound of her voice, right from when we listened to her first album, and she's one of those artists where I have virtually all her albums and so it's very hard to find a single song or moment that encapsulates it all. I would never get tired of hearing a song like "Chelsea Morning" or "Big Yellow Taxi" for instance, but I love some of the work she's done on *Shine* just as much as any on her earlier albums. Part of what I love about her music is how she's changed, that's the interesting thing. I love the things that have remained constant – the quality of the singing, the



interpretation of the songs – but the music itself has also become more sophisticated, especially after she began to work with Larry Klein. He brought a real jazz influence to her music that I loved. You can hear that change on the two versions of "Both Sides, Now" [from *Clouds* and *Both Sides Now*]. If I had to pick one of the songs from the albums he produced, it would be "My Secret Place" from *Chalk Mark In A Rain Storm* because she's doing duets with various guest artists and that one was with Peter Gabriel, so it's a two-for-one as I'm such a fan of Peter, too. Their voices just combined perfectly.

1991

## 27 COME IN FROM THE COLD

*Night Ride Home, 1991*

**MICHAEL BONNER, ASSOCIATE EDITOR:**

"The '80s were very hard on me," Mitchell confessed to Texas radio station KGSR-FM in 1998. "Everybody that could, robbed me in the greedy '80s." Indeed, *Night Ride Home* – her first album in the '90s – marked a significant return for Mitchell. The songs privileged her old jazz guitar phrasings, discretely accompanied by co-producer Larry Klein's sensitive bass playing. A highlight among several graceful reminiscences that feature on the album, "Come In From The Cold" finds Mitchell chronicling a narrator's sadness – in relationships, youthful ambitions that never came to fruition, the failings of her generation, the ageing process. Its layers of nostalgic ruminations create a pervasive sense of loneliness and isolation: "I am not some commission/Like a statue in a park/I am flesh and blood and vision/I am howling in the dark".

1996

## 28 MAN FROM MARS

*Grace Of My Heart OST, 1996 / Taming The Tiger, 1998*

**STEPHEN TROUSSE, UNCUT**

**CONTRIBUTOR:** When ex-husband Larry Klein approached Joni in 1995 to contribute a song (maybe something in the vein of "For The Roses"?) to the soundtrack he was curating for Allison Anders' *Brill Building* movie à clef, *Grace Of My Heart*, she turned him down flat. What was she – some kind of short-order hack? She reconsidered, so the story goes, when her favourite cat, Nietzsche, went missing for over a fortnight and the grief hurt her into writing a song that, purely coincidentally, was perfect for the film (where it was sung by Kristen Vigard). As alibis go, it's up there with *Blood On The Tracks* being about Chekhov. When she finally released "Man From Mars" herself on 1998's *Taming The Tiger*, the song was comfortably declawed and domesticated, arranged on a plump bed of new age synth and fretless bass. But check out the original piano version with Joni's demo vocal, accidentally released on first pressings of the soundtrack album and swiftly deleted to be replaced by the cast recording, but now easily findable on YouTube, for one of the rawest reckonings of loss ("There is no center to my life now/No grace in my heart") in the entire Mitchell songbook.

2000

29 | A CASE OF YOU  
Both Sides Now, 2000

**GUY GARVEY, ELBOW:** This is the orchestral version of "A Case Of You" from *Both Sides Now*. The song itself is very nostalgic, she was talking about past love, and it's fairly melancholy. To hear her sing it as an old lady with a smoky old vocal and a big lush orchestra behind her, it's just really beautiful. The first time you hear it is unbeatable, especially if you don't know what you're listening to, which was the case when I heard it. My sister Becky has always made me compilations, especially when the band is going on tour. Becky said, "I want to be with you when you hear the first track on this compilation." She was working at Granada TV, and I went to meet her in the canteen. There was a chap from *Coronation Street* at the next table, I can't remember his name. I just remember thinking, 'I wish he'd shut up, I can't hear this.' I recognised the chords when the strings picked up and when her voice came in with its age and its richness and its experience and its longing and its heartbreak, there I am, sat blubbing next to whatever his name from *Coronation Street*. It's just really beautiful. You can hear her influence in "Starlings" or "The Bones In You". Her phrasing and her lines are organic, and it twists and it dives and it jumps around, and that's why it's so beautiful. It's as natural as birds in the sky.

2002

30 | AMELIA  
Travelogue, 2002

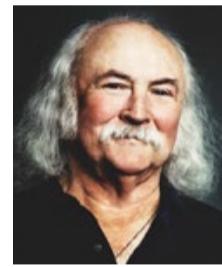
**ROBERT PLANT:** On *Travelogue*, that more recent double album with the orchestra, there's a great version of "Amelia". I love that orchestral version. If I ever commissioned anybody

to look at me for 40 years and then write a song about me, it would be that song, it's all encapsulated there. What happened on *Travelogue* is she revisited a lot of her old songs, but the thing is the emotive quality of the voice has changed – as has mine. The voice has to change or you give up, so you have to keep using it. There's a lot of muscle involved, but also a lot of it is in the mind, gaining confidence. That helps you move to a better place. With "Amelia", I love also the drama and the thought in the orchestration, it's a beautiful contrast to the emotive quality of the lyrics and combines with her vocal performance. It's so beautiful. Joni had a huge effect on me, as she did on a lot of other people. Not so much as an influence, but as a really big, strong member of the fraternity that I really

admired. She was part of that group effecting social change, attempting to embrace and demonstrate an awareness of the circumstances of America through music. I think that was a magnificent time, and all power to those people that did that. I wouldn't say I aspired to it myself. I'm a Black Country boy.

## "She is probably the best writer of us all"

### DAVID CROSBY salutes the genius of Joni



I DISCOVERED JONI in a club [*The Gaslight South, Coconut Grove*] in Florida in '67. I walked in and she was standing there singing. It was one of those early songs like 'Michael From Mountains' or 'Both Sides, Now'. I was stunned. She had the voice and the guitar playing.

She'd already been singing for a while with her husband, Chuck Mitchell, and then by herself after she got smart and realised that she was good on her own. It was a hell of an experience to walk in and run into somebody who was writing songs at that level.

I produced her first album, and left it pretty simple. If I did her any kind of favour, other than introducing her to everybody, it was to keep that record pretty pristine. What folk singers did back then was a kind of indicated arrangement. We all learned how to be the whole band on one guitar, and her arrangements were superb. I was afraid that people would try to take her stuff and translate it into a band and lose the magic of how she played.

Joni had a lot of great qualities, but one of them has always been that she was a superb musician, not just a great singer, not just a great songwriter.

I didn't like the big lush orchestrations of her stuff as much, because I really love when it's her playing the guitar and the dulcimer and her giving her own swing to it.

I think if you look back on this past 50 years from, say, 50 years from now, I don't think anybody is close to Joni Mitchell or Bob Dylan in significance and songwriting. The two of them stand out. Now, I think Bob is a fantastic poet, and I'm a huge believer in Bob Dylan, I've made records out of his songs dozens of times, I think he's fantastic – but Joni's a better musician. I don't think there's any question about it. She's certainly a better singer, 10 times the singer Bob ever was, and as good a poet in her own way. But it's apples and oranges, they approached things completely differently. If you listen to her poetry, it's hard to deny man – I mean, Christ. I've been singing 'Amelia' lately, and damn, her poetry's good! There's so many songs of hers that are so brilliantly written. You can't say which one is the best. There are 30 or 40 best ones.

At the time when I first met her and brought her back to California we were going together, and I don't know if it lasted a year but it lasted a long time. It was good, but it was daunting. I would sing her a song and she'd sing me three back that were all better than the one I sang her. Something like that can either make you feel belittled or it can encourage you to do better. And what it did with me is it encouraged me to do better. It made me write songs like 'Guinnevere'.

She's probably the best writer of us all, and I still think that. I don't think there's any question. I don't think there's a singer-songwriter in the world that hasn't been affected by Joni. If you listen to her songs, and you're a singer-songwriter you can't help but be affected by her. You want to be that good, we all did. We all do.

Interviews by Michael Bonner, Tom Pinnock and Peter Watts

We hope you enjoyed our 30 greatest Joni songs. But did we miss anything out? What are your favourite Joni songs? Why not send your Mitchell missives to [uncut\\_feedback@timeinc.com](mailto:uncut_feedback@timeinc.com)

With Crosby, Stills,  
Nash And Young,  
Wembley Stadium  
September 14, 1974



# Glad All Over

BY THE DAVE CLARK FIVE

How a five-piece from Tottenham briefly became the world's biggest band, with the help of an infectious hit that outsold The Beatles. "It didn't take long to write," says Clark. "We were blessed, you know..."

**W**E STARTED OFF purely for the fun of it," explains Dave Clark today. "Actually, I played football at a youth club, and we were asked to play a Dutch team one Easter but we didn't have any money [to get to Holland]. It was in the days of skiffle, so we formed a group to make some money, and that's how it all started."

From such unassuming beginnings, The Dave Clark Five fashioned their craft long and hard on the live circuit – with the giant Tottenham Royal Mecca ballroom their Cavern Club. The band had solidified around Clark, singing keyboardist Mike Smith, saxophonist Denis Payton, bassist Rick Huxley and guitarist Lenny Davidson – along with Clark, the only surviving member. With their breakthrough hit, the infectious "Glad All Over", they managed to knock The Beatles off the No 1 spot, conquer America at the vanguard of the British Invasion and, for a short period, become the biggest band in the world – most of this while the members held down day jobs in offices or, in Clark's case, as a stunt man. "It was a whole new ballgame when the British Invasion came along," recalls Ann Moses, then a young journalist in LA who was impressed by their hit, and would become firm friends with the group. "The DC5 were the first British group that I saw, before The Beatles or any of the other bands. To me, it was like nothing I'd ever seen – there was so much energy, they

were just so alive onstage!"

"DC5 were a dancing band," confirms the group's regular photographer Bruce Fleming. "It was a band where you just couldn't sit, you know. You were up and jumping, and these kids were. It was a different kind of excitement."

**TOM PINNOCK**

**DAVE CLARK:** We passed the audition for Mecca, and that got us to the Tottenham Royal, which was always my dream. All of a sudden there were 6,000 people in there when we played. The police station – which is still there, opposite where the Royal was – had to cancel all the police leave. That was quite funny. The Tottenham Royal was one of the best venues in London, because it was built like a plane hangar. It was huge, they had a balcony around the top, where all the bars were, and the stage revolved. As it revolved around just before you played, you heard this amazing noise. It was like being in a football stadium.

**BRUCE FLEMING:** The Dave Clark Five were just coming up, and I went to the Tottenham Royal with them, and photographed them there. The kids were getting very enthusiastic! In fact, it was a little frightening, the way they were carrying on, I've



Having a wild weekend... The Dave Clark Five in an E-Type Jag, London, 1965: (l-r) Lenny Davidson, Rick Huxley, Dave Clark, Denis Payton, Mike Smith

never seen anything like it – the audience were sort of hysterical.

**CLARK:** After [early single and cover] "Do You Love Me" came out in the UK, Brian Poole & The Tremeloes covered it three weeks later. The radio was playing our version, but the shops sold their records, as they were following up their No 1, "Twist And Shout". It worked against us, and it made me say, "Well, in the future we're going to do our own songs."

**FLEMING:** It was a very powerful band. Mike was out front as lead singer, and he was a terrific rock'n'roll singer, very underrated in a way. And they had saxophone in there, as well, which really gave it a lot of push. Dave was a damn good drummer – very powerful, very upfront, right in your face.

**CLARK:** I went to Alexander Palace once, and saw a big band called The Eric Delaney Band. On the front of the stage, he had these timpanis. He came off the drums at the back and played these timpanis, and it was quite amazing. It was showmanship. That always stuck in my mind. It wasn't very clever, what he was doing, but it was dynamite, the crowd loved it. That was a big influence. At a lot of gigs, we used to do some

## KEY PLAYERS



**Dave Clark**  
Drummer, songwriter, producer



**Bruce Fleming**  
Photographer



**Ann Moses**  
US journalist, friend



instrumentals because it was a long stint, three and a half hours. We often started with The Routers' "Half Time", and we'd stop, carry on with just the drums going, with everybody in the band stamping – all the audience would start to stamp, and you can imagine what it was like when it got to 6,000 people. The guy on the lights at the Tottenham Royal had no lighting board, but I got him to switch the lights on and off from the mains, in time with the music. It got amazing reactions, and that's how Mike and I got the idea for "Glad All Over" and "Bits And Pieces". "Glad All Over" didn't take long at all to write. Your best songs are the ones you seem to do very quickly. It was a great hook, and a very simple one. How long did it take to record? An hour, two hours...

**ADRIAN KERRIDGE (Engineer):** Sessions were broken into three hours, and we usually recorded four tracks in each one. We were recording on four-track in those days. In the '50s, we didn't even have that. Multi-tracks didn't exist until '62. And then they weren't very large, four-track – so we had to work as best we could.

**CLARK:** On a four-track, it means you can only use three tracks, and the fourth track you use to mix and bounce to, to make your quarter-inch master. So if you're going to do any overdubs, you have to do it at the

same time you're mixing down to the quarter-inch. I would have maybe put an extra drum hit on the chorus. There's a great guitar lick Lenny played under that section, too. It was primitive. Lansdowne was a big Victorian building, with huge ceilings, and the echo chamber was the stone stairwell, the stairs, right the way to the top of the building. And so you got a great sound. But if

**"We didn't even go professional when we had the No 1. The boys were in offices and I was doing stunt work"**

DAVE CLARK

somebody walked down the stairs instead of getting in the lift, you had to re-record it!

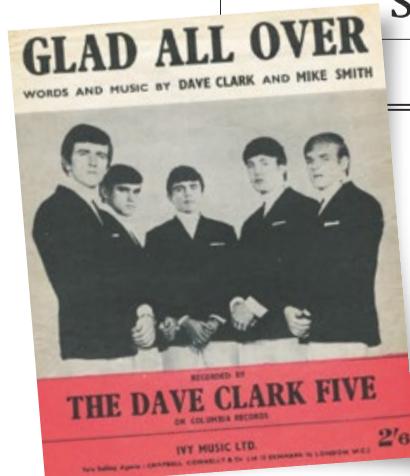
**KERRIDGE:** I always prefer to record the vocal live. And that's the way Sinatra and Crosby did it in those days. No messing about, come in the studio, put it down –

because you get a better reaction between the vocalist and the band. If they then can't do it, then of course you separate it and you overdub it. But overdubbing is not the same as everybody being live. You get the better reaction from the musicians.

**CLARK:** We were selling between 120,000 and 180,000 copies a day in the UK. The record ended up selling over a million and a half to knock The Beatles off No 1. And the final tally was over 2,500,000. We were semi-professional, so the boys were still in offices and I was still doing stunt work. In fact, we were the only band in England where we actually topped the bill on *Sunday Night At The London Palladium*, and we were all still working. We didn't even go professional when we had "Glad All Over" at No 1. It was after that.

**ANN MOSES:** I was in high school at the time when "Glad All Over" was released. We all just loved the record, that's what caught our attention. It was Dave pounding on the drums, you wanted to dance to it, and sing along. It was a great song.

**CLARK:** I turned *The Ed Sullivan Show* down originally, because I didn't know who he was. But we went down so well on it, that Sullivan said, "I'm holding you over in America for next week." Well, we were already booked in the UK for that week. He said, "I thought you'd be pleased, because I've told 70,000,000 Americans..." That's when it hit me... Wow! 70,000,000 people – that's crazy! I said, "Well, I'm sorry, I don't mean to offend you, but we've got a gig in England." And he said, "I'll buy it out!" Without thinking, I just said, "Well, I



# THE DAVE CLARK FIVE

→ couldn't stay in New York for a week..." So he said, "Where do you want to go?" On the way in from the airport, I'd seen these billboards, and one of them said 'Montego Bay – island paradise'. I didn't know where it was, but I said, "Montego Bay." So they flew us all out to Jamaica. We came back to New York on the Friday, and there were over 30,000 people at the airport, so they flew us out by helicopter, and we landed on top of the Pan Am Building. It was crazy! At the end of the show, Ed Sullivan said, "I want you to make me a promise, every time you come to America, you'll do my show." We were back in America eight weeks later! We had sold out these huge arenas! From nothing. So we were the first English group to tour America, and that was in May.

**MOSES:** It was crazy, the mania for them in the US. I was volunteering as an usher at Melodyland Theater in LA. One night I went in to work, I hadn't paid attention to what show was on, and lo and behold, it was a concert with The DC5. I watched their first show and was like, 'Oh, my God, I have to meet these guys.' It was overwhelming, especially hearing them talk in that divine British accent.

**FLEMING:** The Beatles and The DC5 were both very big bands in the States. The DC5 were as big as The Beatles, if not bigger at one point. When they got to the height of their fame it was unbelievable. And exciting, thousands and thousands of fans in a stadium, it was something else.

**MOSES:** Their manager let me come backstage in between shows, and I did an interview with them for my high-school magazine. By the time they came back to LA the next time, they played the Long Beach Arena, a much bigger venue, and by that time I was visiting them at their hotel, taking photos, and I went in the limo with them to their Long Beach performance. As we left the arena that night, girls were surrounding the limo, they were climbing on top, it was a terrifying experience. It felt like the roof was going to come in. Slowly but surely, the driver was able to inch ahead not hurting anybody and we got out of there.

**FLEMING:** I had to escape several times when I was with them at concerts or whatever, we had to escape in a van. And I think Dave had a fake van that went out first, with nothing in it, and then we went out. And we were in this van, and they stopped the van, and you could hear this roaring outside. I remember Dave saying, "Stay away from the walls!" Because the fists were making dents in the walls of the truck. It was scary, it really was.

**MOSES:** Another time the band came back to town and said, "We wanna go to Disneyland..." I was working there at the time. Well, Disneyland had a rule, I think up until the mid-'70s, that no long hair was permitted, so they literally could not go in. So I called my boss and he called the head



Dave Clark, far left, and engineer Adrian Kerridge (with cigarette) at a playback in 1964

supervisor at Disneyland, told them, "These are very nice, British young men, they dress nicely, and they only have long hair as they're performers," and so the supervisor gave me special permission and let me take them to Disneyland. We had a blast.

**FLEMING:** It was just wild, really wild. Even here back in England when they were recording, I remember one incident at Lansdowne Studios, in Holland Park. The kids heard they were there – how the hell they found out I don't know – but they found out and they broke the glass front door getting in, just smashed that. Another night I got caught – the boys ran offstage knowing what was coming, and the audience literally jumped on the stage. I was the last one out, the crowd caught me and pulled a piece of my hair right out of my head. Then they strangled me, because they got my tie, and I had to let the tie go, and then they tore the sleeve off my jacket. Mike Smith came back, and pushed them back, saved me. I've never seen anything like it.

**MOSES:** The thing that was so unique about them was that they were so grounded. They were a year or two older than a lot of the other groups, one or two of them were married, and Dave – in addition to just being a really nice person – you could tell he was a consummate businessman about the whole thing, he wasn't like a rock'n'roller who was out to get high on drugs and have a wild time, they took their work very seriously. They were fun, they were just so nice and



easygoing. Great guys.

**CLARK:** I owned all our masters, yeah. When EMI were after us, I went to them and said we'd pay for it all so we could be independent, though I didn't know where we'd find the money. By pure luck I got a gig crashing a car as a stuntman. It's nothing heroic, the car's got rollbars, you're strapped in, you go up a ramp and turn over, it's all choreographed, it's piece of cake, really. I got 100 quid a night, it was a night call. That first 300 quid paid for the first record. We did it purely to be independent, so if it failed you don't have to blame anybody else – it's your own choice. If it succeeded, you could control your own destiny in the sense that creatively we recorded what we wanted to record, and when.

And it was all fun, we were all mates from school days, so therefore it was a great relationship. When I look back at other contemporaries, with all the stuff that went on, we were blessed, you know.

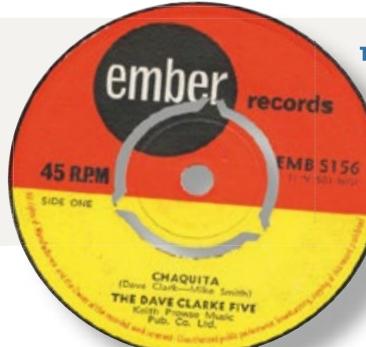
**FLEMING:** Dave's a serious guy, he didn't mess about. He was no fool. A lot of managers were taking advantage of young bands, and more or less fleecing them. But Dave was too smart for that.

**CLARK:** The best compliment I had was when Berry Gordy told me that he used a lot of my licks on the Motown records, and if you listen to The Supremes' "Baby Love", and a couple of those early hits, they came out in September '64, and we'd had the fastest-selling single in February '64 in the US. It was the combination that made it work, it wasn't the Dave Clark Five, it was Mike, Denis, Lenny, Rick and Dave. It's everybody's contribution, or sound, that made it work. It worked as a unit. ☺

*The documentary **Dave Clark Five And Beyond: Glad All Over** is available now on DVD*

## FACT FILE

- **Written by:** Dave Clark, Mike Smith
- **Performers:** Mike Smith (vocals, keyboards), Lenny Davidson (guitar, vocals), Rick Huxley (bass, vocals), Denis Payton (saxophone, vocals), Dave Clark (drums, vocals)
- **Produced by:** Dave Clark
- **Engineered by:** Adrian Kerridge
- **Recorded at:** Lansdowne Studios, London
- **Released:** November 1963
- **UK/US chart:** 1; 6



## TIMELINE

1957 The band begin as The Dave Clark Quintet  
August 1962 The Dave Clark Five release their first single, "Chaquita"; it fails to chart

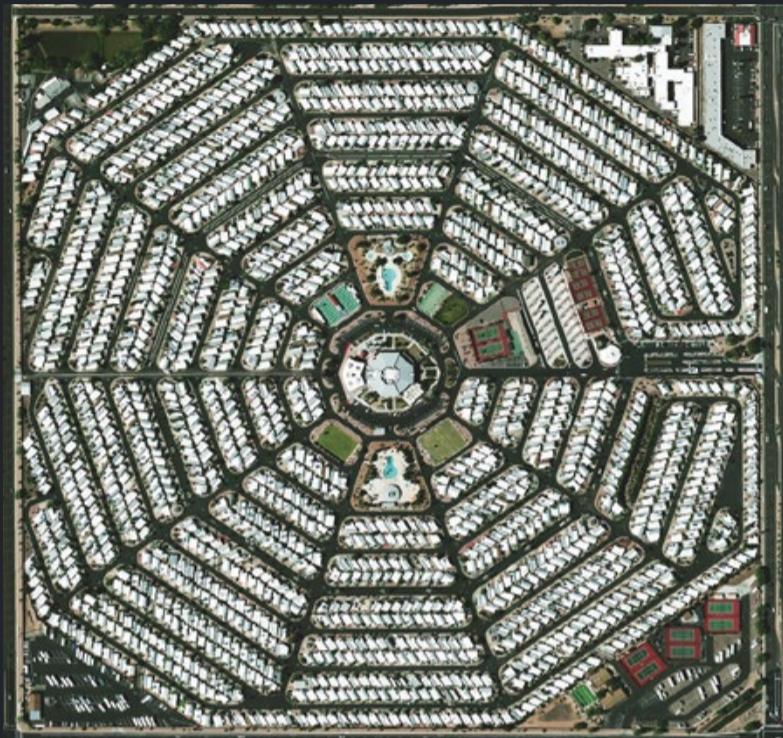
1963 The DC5 win the Gold Cup award for best live band on the huge Mecca Ballroom circuit

November 1963 "Glad All Over" is released – in January 1964, it knocks The Beatles' "I Want To Hold Your Hand" off the

No 1 spot in the UK singles chart  
March 8, 1964 The DC5 appear on America's *The Ed Sullivan Show* for the first time

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# Between the grit of Americana and the glitz of the mainstream, a new breed of country artists are seizing their moment.

*Uncut* hears the stories of **Kacey Musgraves, Brandy Clark and Angaleena Presley**, and celebrates an exciting time for country music: “Go out on a limb. That’s where the fruit is...”

**Story:** Rob Hughes

**T**HE TEXAN CITY of Frisco, half an hour's drive from Dallas, is better known for its sport than any musical affiliation. Baseball, football, hockey and soccer tend to dominate

the local headlines, especially since The Dallas Cowboys announced plans to move there for the 2016 NFL season. But it also happens to be home to Slate Creek Records, an independent label that's quietly nurturing a superior kind of country music. Founded in 2012 by Jim Burnett, Slate Creek has a growing reputation for

discovering young talent deemed too leftfield for the majors. Its tiny roster has included Brandy Clark and Angaleena Presley, both of whom have made significant debuts over the last 18 months. Presley's *American Middle Class*, released in America in October, is already doing swift business in the country charts, no doubt helped by her status as one third of big-selling girl group, Pistol Annies. Admittedly, Clark is a little further along. Released in 2013, *12 Stories* is a scintillating record – literate, wise, spare, its narratives drawn from first-hand experience – that's earned her two Grammy nominations (including Best New Artist, pitted against major-label acts like Sam Smith and Iggy Azalea). As with Presley, the secret of Clark's appeal is an innate ability to bridge the worlds of

traditional country and modern Americana.

“Lyrical intelligence is the thing that aligns them to artists we'd associate with Americana,” observes Bob Harris, presenter of Radio 2's flagship country show. “Brandy and Angaleena are writing highly observational lyrics about their everyday lives and challenges. Brandy's talking about the housewife living next door to you: the problems she's having, be it the fella coming home drunk or not being able to find work, whatever it is. They're both specifically dealing in women's issues, which is very important.” Meanwhile, Jim Burnett is keen to point out that Slate Creek strives for quality over quantity. “I started the label because I wanted a home for artists that I feel have something unique to offer,” he explains. “Labels can be



Clockwise from top left:  
Brad Paisley, Sturgill  
Simpson, Brandy Clark,  
Lee Ann Womack, Miranda  
Lambert, Kacey Musgraves  
and Angaleena Presley. Inset  
bottom right: Dierks Bentley

accused of manufacturing artists but that's really just smoke and mirrors with the music-buying consumer. And I think they can sense that. *12 Stories* got a Grammy nomination as she created a great album and she's incredibly talented. We didn't make Brandy that way, we just helped her get it out there. The same goes for Angaleena. For me, country music has *always* been about the words and the stories they tell. A return to the era of classic country is a welcome change."

Clark herself is the first to admit that it took a while for her to do what she does best. "I started out trying to chase what was on country radio at the time," she says, referring to her early experiences as a Music Row songwriter. "But I only started to have success when I decided to tell stories that intrigued me, stories that maybe

other people weren't telling. I write exactly as I feel, I'm not going to smooth out any edges of the truth. Some of my songs use composite characters, but there's always somebody in there that I know. I'm deeply rooted in traditional country, which was always an adult music form. A lot of people love [prescription drug critique] 'Take A Little Pill', for example, but the subject matter is just too dark for country radio."

The working practices of Slate Creek are pretty simple. Crucially, too, they can also be applied to a burgeoning number of Americana artists, like Clark and Presley, who've begun to breach the mainstream on their own terms, guided by the strength of their own conviction rather than the marketing muscle of the corporate giants. "How can we bring music that fills a need for

consumers?" asks Burnett, before emphatically answering his own question. "Go out on a limb. That's where the fruit is."

**C**LARK FETCHED UP in Nashville at the back end of the '90s. Having grown up in a small logging community in Washington, she worked on Music Row for years before finally making headway with two credits on Reba McEntire's 2010 album, *All The Women I Am*.





Kacey Musgraves performing "Follow Your Arrow" at the 2013 CMA Awards

She followed up with songs for Miranda Lambert, LeAnn Rimes and The Band Perry, though her true creative breakthrough came when she met Kacey Musgraves. "Follow Your Arrow", co-written with Musgraves and Shane McAnally, found the openly gay Clark offering a plea for tolerance. The thrust of the song – be true to yourself and the rest be damned – was made explicit in the lines: "Make lots of noise/Kiss lots of boys/Or kiss lots of girls if that's something you're into/When the straight and narrow gets a little too straight/Roll up a joint/Or don't/Follow your arrow wherever it points".

In November 2013, Musgraves picked up the New Artist Of The Year gong at Nashville's annual CMA Awards. The ceremony capped an eventual few months for the 25-year-old, whose major-label debut *Same Trailer Different Park* had topped the country charts and reached No 2 on *Billboard*. Televised live, the show saw Musgraves perform "Follow Your Arrow". ABC network bosses, however, saw fit to censor the "joint" reference completely (though the song's earlier reference to smoking crack was allowed to go by unedited).

It was a controversial moment, for sure. The spike in demand for "Follow Your Arrow" was immediate. Before the end of the night, it had risen from nowhere into the *iTunes* Top 30. Certain conservatives, meanwhile, decried the song as a calculated attack on Christians. Colorado pastor and radio host Kevin Swanson, not a man known for his moderate views, even suggested that, had Musgraves played it in a Denver bar in the 1920s, "somebody would've called for a rope". He accused her of promoting both homosexuality and the abandonment of the traditional church.

Musgraves wasn't exactly surprised by the mini-backlash. In her press conference afterwards, she maintained that the tune was "a really positive anthem, just encouraging people of all kinds to do whatever

makes them happy." Country music, she stressed, was supposed to be about real life, real issues. The song was one of three co-writes with Clark on *Same Trailer Different Park*. The album, which went on to win a Grammy and shift half a million copies, also introduced Musgraves as a major commercial force, having transcended her beginnings on the Americana circuit. Musgraves had previously been signed to Lost Highway, the alt.country arm of Universal Nashville and home to artists like Ryan Adams, Lucinda Williams, The Jayhawks. She was doing acoustic shows in low-key venues, singing songs about religion, rebellion, her Texan upbringing and a heavenly ambition to "burn one with John Prine". Having grown up listening to hardcore country and the folksier end of the spectrum – a trajectory that took her from Buck Owens and Loretta Lynn to Prine and Ray Wylie Hubbard – Musgraves was busy aligning herself with a certain kind of singer-storyteller.

She'd already released three independent albums prior to the Lost Highway deal. When the label folded soon after, Mercury Nashville signed her up and duly threw their weight behind "Merry Go 'Round", a baleful, grubby evocation of smalltown life in rural America. A vehicle for her wry take on family dysfunction, "Merry Go 'Round" was a hit on

Americana radio before it fanned out further. Mercury were priming her for the big time while being careful not to dilute her artistic credibility. It doesn't necessarily follow that selling cartloads of records on a major label is the result of an artistic compromise. Aside from her lyrical themes – sexual equality, drugs, domestic bondage, the thin end of life's wedge – the physical sound of Musgraves is more akin to her heroes than any concession to a pop-country crossover. The textures are delicate and understated, often built around electric and acoustic guitars, embellished with harmonies and discreet pedal



Miranda Lambert (top) and Angaleena Presley



steel. "It's relatively unvarnished, that's the thing that separates it from the real mainstream," says Bob Harris. "All mainstream music is so much cut'n'paste, whereas this music is still made from the floor. They don't over-produce it and it does reveal the emotion of the person who's delivering it. Thank goodness for Rosanne Cash, as well. She went through her big production phase in the '80s and then, almost stage by stage, she unhooked herself from all of those machines. And for the last 15 years or so she's just been making albums that express *her*, without anything getting in the way. And it's definitely the same with Kacey and Brandy Clark and Ashley Monroe. They're all cut from a similarly honest cloth."

For those who remain suspicious of more mainstream country, Harris believes that Musgraves embodies the fresh sensibility that's swept across Nashville in recent times. "I've never liked cheesy country," he reveals. "When Radio 2 started talking to me about taking over the country show, I couldn't have considered doing it if it meant I had to play that stuff. But country has now pulled away from what was once verging over into MOR. And Kacey has to be the most obvious place to start. Typically, Americana radio is playing her, as well as people like Rosanne Cash. And it's that group of women that she's a part of – Ashley Monroe, Brandy Clark, Angaleena Presley – who I'd be playing to a diehard country fan, to say: 'Look, these are the artists who will take you across to a more roots-based approach to album-making.'"

"Americana is a type of between-the-cracks sound that may borrow from many existing genres yet belongs, strictly speaking, to none," offers Lambchop's Kurt Wagner. "These women are more about how country music proper is extending its reach, having bored itself to tears with its current subset of subject matter and cliché and typecast frontmen. Maybe it's a barometer of a larger national trend."

**C**LARK, MONROE, PRESLEY and Miranda Lambert all promise to breach the gap between Americana and the more commercial end of Nashville. These are lyrical, pithy diarists of modern society who, at the same time, provide a link to the classic tropes of another era. As with Musgraves, they tend to people their songs with rural characters often trapped in bad marriages, rotten jobs or smalltown inertia. It's a state of affairs captured in any number of tunes, from Monroe's "Two Weeks Late" ("I bet I'm the talk of this town/If you don't have a ring then he won't settle down") to the cheating rat in Clark's semi-comedic

## BUYERS' GUIDE

# A Different Country

Your guide to the best recent country albums



### KACEY MUSGRAVES SAME TRAILER, DIFFERENT PARK

MERCURY  
NASHVILLE, 2013

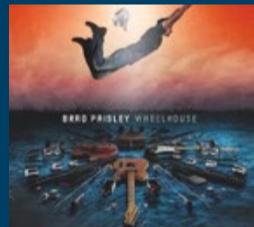
This Grammy-winning breakthrough from country's brightest new star is remarkable for its elegant songcraft (Musgraves often co-writing with Shane McAnally) and its post-Loretta take on social issues.



### BRANDY CLARK 12 STORIES

SLATE CREEK, 2013

Sharp, dry, moving and often funny as hell, Clark sings of vengeful lovers ("Stripes"), bored housewives ("Get High"), adultery ("What Will Keep Me Out Of Heaven") and fading hope ("Pray To Jesus").



### BRAD PAISLEY WHEELHOUSE

ARISTA NASHVILLE,  
2013

A rarity in the higher echelons of Nashville country, Paisley is a left-

Brad Paisley:  
left-leaning  
Southerner

leaning artist who looks the part but addresses issues of racial inequality, domestic abuse and the ambiguity of his Southern roots. This ninth studio effort is an ideal primer.



### PISTOL ANNIES ANNIE UP

RCA NASHVILLE,  
2013

Before they went their separate ways, the trio of Miranda Lambert, Ashley Monroe and Angaleena Presley delivered a second LP heaped with sass and harmonies. Bluegrass at its core, it diarised a woman's lot with sly humour, attitude and pinches of heartache.



### ASHLEY MONROE LIKE A ROSE

WARNERS  
NASHVILLE, 2013

A fine patchwork of old-school country and sharp modernity, with songs that subvert Opry tradition. "Weed Instead Of Roses", for example, suggests that flowers aren't always the best route to a girl's heart.

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

**"I write as I feel, I'm not gonna smooth out any edges of the truth"**  
BRANDY CLARK

Brandy Clark:  
dealing with  
women's issues



"Stripes" ("I can't believe you'd do that on our bed/I got a pistol and I got a bullet/And a pissed-off finger just'a itchin' to pull it") to the lost protagonists of Presley's "Pain Pills" ("The girl next door on the bathroom floor/Thinkin' 'bout takin' her a little bit more/Ain't never been this bad before").

This is no token brand of cultural tourism. Like Loretta Lynn before her, Presley comes from time-honoured country tradition: a coal miner's daughter from Kentucky. What's more, her mother is descended from the McCoys, whose notorious 19th-Century feud with the Hatfields is a central tenet of Southern folklore. The songs on *American Middle Class* are freighted with recent social history, from recession-hit families on welfare to unwanted pregnancies to cars full of "pillbillies looking to score".

"I'm a hillbilly from the mountains and in my culture we're storytellers," explains Presley. "So a lot of that is in my DNA. My mom used to sing all these Scots-Irish folk songs to me and a lot of my melodies come from that. Oral history is a big part of the Appalachian culture. Every single song on *American Middle Class* is an experience that I've lived or people really close to me have lived. 'Pain Pills' was inspired by seven different funerals that I'd gone to, for people from my hometown who died from a prescription medication overdose. All of the characters in that song

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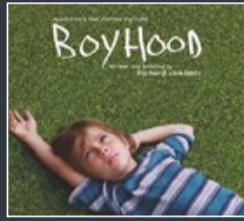
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### ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER TIME CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF 'INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS'

This two-disc collection captures a one-night-only concert held in 2013 to celebrate the music of the Coen brothers film, featuring live performances by Joan Baez, Elvis Costello, Rhiannon Giddens, Marcus Mumford, Conor Oberst, Punch Brothers, Gillian Welch, and Jack White.

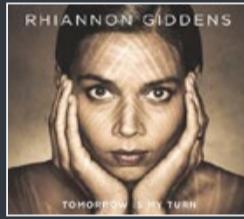
'Surprising collaborations and stately performances breathing new life into old songs and old fire into new ones. Highlights: plentiful!' *Independent On Sunday*



### BOYHOOD MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE

Shot over 12 years with the same cast, Richard Linklater's acclaimed, award-winning film is a groundbreaking story of growing up as seen through the eyes of a child who literally grows up on screen before the viewers' eyes. The soundtrack's songs range from the year 2000 (Coldplay and The Hives) to 2013 (Yo La Tengo).

'There has simply never been anything like this film. This is the kind of film you see and say, 'I may never see anything like this again.' ' *Rolling Stone*



### RHIANNON GIDDENS TOMORROW IS MY TURN

The singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and founding member of Carolina Chocolate Drops makes her solo recording debut, produced by T Bone Burnett, featuring a broad range of songs from genres as diverse as gospel, jazz, blues, and country.

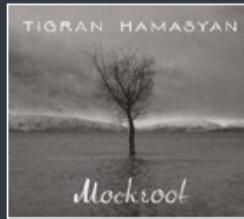
'It was clear the first time I heard her that Rhiannon is next in a long line of singers that include Marian Anderson, Odetta, Mahalia Jackson, Rosetta Tharpe. We need that person in our culture.' *T Bone Burnett*



### JONNY GREENWOOD INHERENT VICE

The soundtrack to Paul Thomas Anderson's new film, an adaptation of the Thomas Pynchon novel, includes nine works by Greenwood; an unreleased Radiohead tune performed with members of Supergrass; and recordings from the movie's era, the tail end of the psychedelic '60s, including Can, Minnie Riperton and Neil Young.

'Anderson's films have great soundtracks. And this is no exception. Its hypnotic qualities confirm Greenwood's growth into a first-rate film composer.' *Daily Mail*



### TIGRAN HAMASYAN MOCKROOT

The label debut from the acclaimed pianist comprises new tracks written by Hamasyan, as well as his arrangements of traditional Armenian songs.

'There are many brilliant and perfectly finished young jazz pianists around, but Hamasyan stands out because he has something important and urgent to say.' *Daily Telegraph*



### PUNCH BROTHERS THE PHOSPHORESCENT BLUES

Joining forces with producer T Bone Burnett, the band examines modern life, or, as Chris Thile puts it, asks: 'How do we cultivate beautiful, three-dimensional experiences with our fellow man in this day and age?'

'Brilliant, audacious, original and, above all, entertaining; Punch Brothers put on a show that pushes the boundaries of excellence in contemporary music performance in virtually all directions.' *The Times*'

are people that I've known. It's hard, but it's also therapy. Songwriting has always been my pacifier. I think a lot of people relate to the album. It might not be their exact story, but my intention was just to be real and honest, in the hope that people would connect with it."

Like the women who beat a path through the male-dominated country realm of the late '50s and '60s, these are vivid portraits of the female experience. An echo of a time when Loretta Lynn gave the all-boys club a bloodied nose with songs like "Rated X" or "The Pill", or when Kitty Wells railed against male double standards on "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels". Indeed, the classic traditionalism of Presley is tempered with a little country-soul, blues and gospel. It's not difficult to picture Lucinda Williams, for instance, purring her way through the Memphis-styled "Ain't No Man". Or Caitlin Rose crying hurt over "Blessing And A Curse".

If *American Middle Class* rings true on a lyrical level, it also rings true sonically. "There's definitely nothing slick about it," asserts Presley. "My husband [Jordan Powell] and I decided to produce the record ourselves. One of the reasons for that was that I could hear *exactly* what this record sounded like in my head. I wanted to make it sound like a real musical experience. We hired some

genius players and I think it worked."

There is a purity to Presley's vision – and that of Clark, Musgraves, Monroe and Lambert – that carries the ring of authenticity. If the key to Americana is predicated on integrity and honesty, and a certain amount of confessional truth, they all stake a fair claim. And, in Kurt Wagner's eyes, a traditional rural background can help. "It certainly doesn't hurt," he says, "and I find that compelling if handled in an honest manner. That type of background has existed for years in the bluegrass and gospel world. And it's starting to sneak through into the mainstream with people like Angaleena or Sturgill Simpson. In my opinion, Sturgill is the future and reality of what the soul of country is and should be. It's a shame the Americana ghetto is where he's being cast, as he's the real deal right before our eyes."

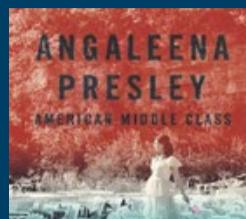
## "Sturgill Simpson is the future of what the soul of country is"

KURT WAGNER

## BUYERS' GUIDE

### A Different Country

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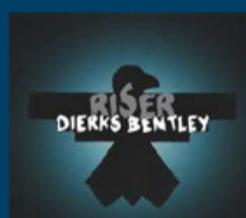


**ANGALEENA PRESLEY**

AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS

SLATE CREEK, 2014

simplicity of Dottie West or Willie Nelson while drawing on her background in a Kentucky hill community. Cue real-life tales of working struggle, dead-beat husbands, bad drugs, crises of faith and Wal-Mart ennui.



**DIERKS BENTLEY**

RISER

CAPITOL NASHVILLE, 2014

Bentley's eighth LP is a thoughtful, ballad-heavy affair, recorded in the wake of his father's death. Like *Luke The Drifter* with added twang, the Arizona native offers a bittersweet alternative to bro-country back-slapping on tunes like "Bourbon In Kentucky" and "Drunk On A Plane".



**LEE ANN WOMACK**

THE WAY I'M LIVIN'

SUGARHILL, 2014

The onetime pop-country icon

burrows deep into her traditional roots



Outlaw spirit Eric Church

for a bunch of covers – Hayes Carll, Chris Knight, Julie Miller, et al – that essay tales of loneliness, desperation and quiet despair. Womack's band offer a masterclass in understatement, allowing her voice to ring hard and true.



**ERIC CHURCH**

THE OUTSIDERS

EMINASHVILLE, 2014

The outlaw spirit of Waylon Jennings stalks the fourth LP from this North Carolina hip-shooter, albeit dashed with R&B and strafed with guitar licks that owe more to metal. Church's plural approach is best heard on "Talladega" and "That's Damn Rock & Roll".



**MIRANDA LAMBERT**

PLATINUM

RCA NASHVILLE, 2014

The Nashville Beyoncé, Lambert takes the essence of raw country to concoct a postmodern stew of Southern rock, Sly-ish funk and smart samples. *Platinum* is a riot of moods, from wise-cracking wit to broken introspection.



Sturgill Simpson: the real deal

**F**IFTEEN YEARS AGO, Lee Ann Womack was squarely at the heart of commercial country with the platinum-selling *I Hope To Dance*. Her latest, *The Way I'm Livin'*, is her first studio release in six years and feels very much like a statement of intent. It's a wonderfully uncluttered set of covers whose impact is magnified by economical use of steel, strings and guitar. "To get radio airplay these days, you have to cut stuff that I just don't care for," Womack says. "This album is not really *that* left of centre, it's just stripping away the stuff that wasn't really me. It's what I consider to be straight-up country." It's also a record that sits neatly alongside those of her younger contemporaries like Clark and Musgraves. "Lee Ann has made an album which is quite raw, from a production angle," argues Bob Harris. "She's made a record that she *really* wanted to make, without any compromises. It's an interesting process that so many artists go through. Look at Johnny Cash with Rick Rubin, for example, stripping everything back to the absolute core. That's what Americana really is: it pulls everything back down to the roots. That's what's so distinctive about it."

Harris believes that another vital factor in all of these works – from *12 Stories* through to *The Way I'm Livin'* – is a lack of contrivance. It's what sets them apart from



Lee Ann Womack:  
no longer prepared  
to compromise

⇒ mainstream country: "These artists are exposing what they really are, without letting production or record labels or anything else get in the way of that. It flips everything on its axis, because then the production is used to enhance the tone, lyrics and atmosphere of the song. They don't drown it, they *enhance* it. And that's an important distinction."

"Now I feel really free to be around like-minded people," adds Womack, revelling in her status as a new signing to Nashville roots label, Sugar Hill. "There was a time when I'd go to an industry function and, if there was a Steve Earle or a Buddy Miller in the room, I'd look over and think: 'One day I'm going to get to play with the big boys!' And that's where I'm headed now. It's like a goal for me."

*The Way I'm Livin'* was co-produced by Womack's husband Frank Liddell, Glenn Worf and Chuck Ainlay. The same team is also behind Miranda Lambert's Grammy-winning *Platinum*, a hugely successful album that gave the Nashville songwriter her first US No 1. The self-styled "backyard swagger" of Lambert (formerly in Pistol Annies with Monroe and Presley) is dry, funny, intelligent and traditional at heart, albeit with a little extra flash. It's also, crucially, a prime example of a mainstream country artist with edge, the brash simplicity of its production evoking the strident sound of '60s forebears like Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette. "Miranda's songs are so bold, you can't put your standard country-radio attitude on it," Ainlay explains. "It has to be brave new territory. This is why it's refreshing when an artist like Miranda or Kacey Musgraves or Angaleena Presley has an opportunity to get heard."

**T**HE CURRENT HEALTH of populist male country, meanwhile, is debatable. The continued dominance of 'bro-country' – focusing on boozing, partying, roaring round in pick-ups and leering at young women – is as depressing as it is baffling. One high-profile talent who prefers to do things differently is Dierks Bentley. His current album *Riser* is a bittersweet mix of drunken ruminations and sombre reflections, its mood occasionally lightened by some sparkling melodic twists. Kacey Musgraves even appears on one number, "Bourbon In Kentucky". But Bentley remains an exception. "If there is a sea change going on, it's being driven by the women," notes Michael Weston King, who, alongside wife Lou Dalgleish, is one half of Americana outfit My Darling Clementine. "Some of them are less bombastic and clichéd than what passed for country music in the past 10 or 20 years. Ashley Monroe, for instance, mines a classic country theme. The sound of her recordings harks back to a former, better time, sound-wise. And the fact she's co-writing with Guy Clark has got to be good." King also

## EYEWITNESSES

# "It's the Laurel Canyon of this decade..."

The changing face of Nashville revealed...

“**T**HERE'S FINALLY a move toward looking beyond the formula to subjects that are more in touch with a personal reality,” says Lambchop's Kurt Wagner, addressing the changing face of songwriting in his hometown of Nashville. “It's starting to become quirky and edgy, reminiscent of the '60s and the feminine vehicle of a woman's voice like Kitty Wells or Loretta Lynn. There's a plain truth, a tell-it-like-it-is approach.”

While the traditional infrastructure is very much still in place, Nashville's newfound plurality can only be a good thing. At least according to Cliff O'Sullivan, Senior Vice President at Sugar Hill Records. “Up until a few years ago the perception was that it was still hee-haw in Nashville,” he offers. “But it's just not like that. There are so many different directions of music and artists that have moved here: Keb' Mo',



The Black Keys



Jack White

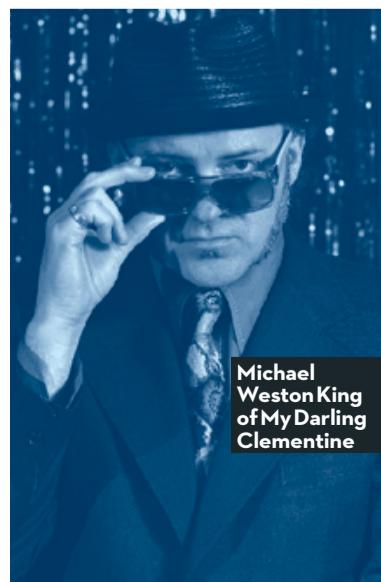
The Black Keys, Jack White, Ben Folds. It's just a thriving music world here. I call it the Laurel Canyon of this decade. And when it comes to country artists like Lee Ann Womack or Kacey Musgraves or Brandy Clark, the deal is that good singers don't really go out of style. Country music swung in a pop

direction for a number of years, but now we're ready for something more original. These people concentrate more on the songs, which of course is what Nashville was built on."

"A lot of artists you don't associate with country are coming to Nashville to record," adds Bob Harris, a regular visitor. "And they're bringing their own atmosphere, so any session musicians or producers are going to be affected by this wind of change. Nashville is the main music city in the world now. You get a sense of being at the centre of this great energy. It's an incredible feeling."

**"If there is a sea change going on, it's being driven by the women"**

MICHAEL WESTON KING



Michael Weston King of My Darling Clementine

maintains that, despite the garish public stereotype, "country was always cool. You just needed to know where to look. Real fans, like myself, go deeper and connect with the voices, the melodies and the emotion of it."

For Bob Harris, any lingering prejudice towards country music is negligible. "In the last five to ten years, the country scene has gone through a major revolution in every respect," he explains. "Especially the sound. We now have a much more authentic strain of music. People like Kitty Wells and Hank Williams are actually the touch points for what a lot of the current Americana people are going back to."

He cites Wells, in particular, as a key figure in the rise of this new generation of players. "You cannot overstate how important she is to the sound of American women in country. In the '50s she was creating the template that people like Kacey Musgraves, Brandy Clark and Angaleena Presley are building on now. That's what characterises all of them. Country music's in the best state that it's been in for years. I think everybody's agreed on that. These are exciting times." **①**

**C2C: Country To Country** runs from March 7-8 at London's O2 centre. Visit [www.C2c-countrytocountry.com](http://www.C2c-countrytocountry.com) for details

# MATTHEW E. WHITE

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# The The

**Matt Johnson's long strange trip: involves truthful music, giant spiders, jungle mindwarps and magic mushroom tea**

**F**OR OVER 30 years now, Matt Johnson has been pursuing a brilliant if idiosyncratic career in his guise as The The. There have been experimental electronic records, chart hits, social and political polemics, Hank Williams covers and, most recently, a spate of soundtrack projects. "I'd like to leave a nice body of work that is relatively unsullied," admits Johnson. As he prepares to talk *Uncut* through his splendid career highs – including his latest score for the British crime thriller *Hyena* – he reveals that work is currently underway on a new The The LP proper. "The important thing is getting yourself in the frame of mind for it," he explains. "Everything else follows from that. Having been away for so long, I have almost forgotten who I used to be. I almost forgot I was a songwriter in the first place, which is a horrible thing to say. But if it all goes to plan, the album will have freshness to it. It'll be a new start for my career." *MICHAEL BONNER*



Matt Johnson,  
NYC, 2013

## MATT JOHNSON BURNING BLUE SOUL

4AD, 1981

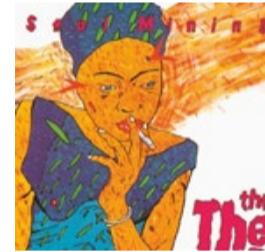


**The son of an East London publican, Johnson proved to be a prolific songwriter: technically, this was his second album. Contains tape-collages and sonic experimentation.**

I'd been in bands since the age of 11 and working full-time in a recording studio at 15, so I almost felt like a bit of a veteran by the time I released *Burning Blue Soul*. I already had a lot of recordings, including an album, *See Without Being Seen*, which was seven tracks I recorded between a little home studio that I built in the cellar of my parents' pub and the studio that I worked at in Soho. The relationship with 4AD had started with the single "Controversial Subject". I was operating a solo career and The The as a band at the same time, although it became a solo operation. Between "Controversial Subject" and *Burning Blue Soul*, I recorded a single for Some Bizzare, "Cold Spell Ahead". This was all pretty much taking place during the same 18-month period. I think the first tracks recorded for *Burning Blue Soul* were "Time Again For The Golden Sunset" and "The River Flows East In Spring", with Bruce and Graham from Wire. Around about this time, Ivo said, "You've got plenty of ideas yourself. How do you feel about producing yourself?" So they were recorded in pairs, I think. I did "Red Cinders In The Sand" and "Delirious" with an engineer called Pete Maben in Forest Gate. I went to Cambridge with Ivo to a studio, and did "Icing Up" and "Another Boy Drowning". It was done piecemeal in different studios with different engineers. The whole thing was done for £1,800.

## THE THE SOUL MINING

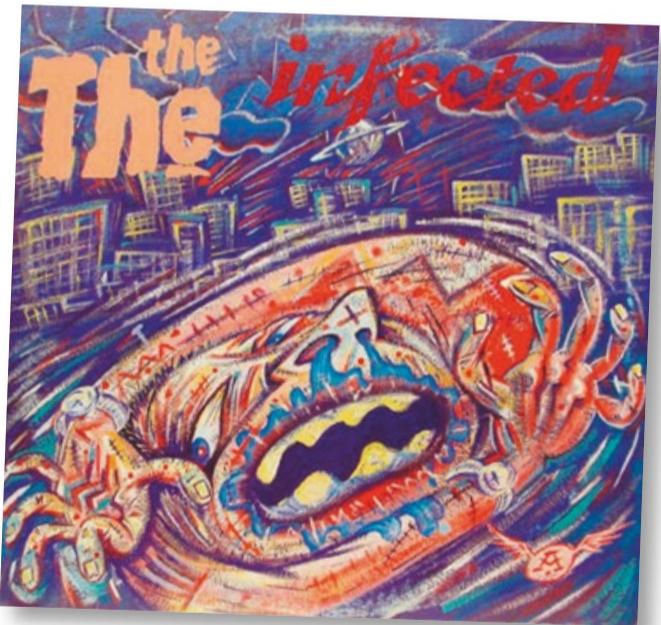
SOME BIZZARE/EPIC, 1983



**An early classic, as Johnson delivers an accomplished set, including landmark tracks "This Is The Day" and "Uncertain Smile".**

I was pleasantly surprised by last year's fantastic response to the reissue! I still get a lot of letters from people asking about it. I hadn't heard it for a long time until I went into remaster it and I thought it sounded great. So I was hopeful other people thought the same way; and I'm pleased that the album still means a lot to people. My key collaborator was Paul Hardiman. Funny enough, I saw him for the first time in 30 years a few weeks ago. I did a radio show about the Garden Studios in Shoreditch that I used to own. He came round to my place, we turned a tape recorder on and he hadn't changed. He's very, very funny. After *Soul Mining*, we did a track called "Flesh And Bones". I don't know what went on, whether there was a dispute between his manager, who was his wife at the time, and my then manager Stevo. In those days, I wasn't thinking about themes... when you're doing your early album, you just write. You have songs you'll possibly be working on for years – I was just a teenager when I wrote some of the songs on *Soul Mining*. Later, once you've established yourself you can approach a project and place certain parameters over the subject matter. In the early days, it's all instinctual, just how you feel. I grew up listening to The Beatles. Lennon used to say, "Tell the truth and make it rhyme." You can't get simpler advice than that. That's what I wanted to do, be truthful: "This is how I feel at this moment in time", rather than intellectualising it.

## THE UNCUT CLASSIC



## THE THE INFECTED

SOME BIZZARE/EPIC, 1986

**Johnson's impassioned response to Thatcherism. Tom Waits is nearly involved; a large quantity of exotic narcotics are consumed while making the accompanying 'video album' in Peru.**

After *Soul Mining*, I was eager to move in another direction. I'd always been aware politically, but *Infected* was my reaction to the growing stranglehold of Thatcherism. John Lydon told me it was the most spiteful record he'd heard in years, a huge compliment! I was a fan of Tom Waits and Holger Czukay, and thought it would be amazing to collaborate with them. I was very confident. I just reached out. I also contacted Brian Eno, who came back lukewarm. We didn't hear from Holger, but Tom Waits got back and said, "Come

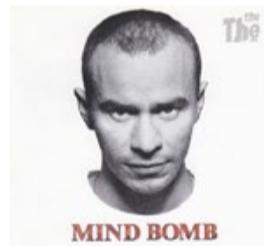


Mindbombers: The The in 1989 - (l-r) Dave Palmer, Johnny Marr, Matt Johnson and James Eller

over to New York, hang out and discuss it." So we spent a week talking about it. We played a lot of pool – he thrashed me. He wasn't drinking at the time, just soda water and bitters. But he had a big thing going on. He just fired his manager, he was living in the Chelsea Hotel, just finishing off *Rain Dogs*. So it was a fantastic trip, but he said, "I think you could produce yourself. I'd love to do it but I've got so many things going on, I just can't commit to you." The films came about because I didn't want a tour. It would have been hard without the huge, expensive cast of musicians to do it justice live. But Stevo suggested we make a film for every track on the LP, and we'd tour that instead. I knew Tim Pope through Soft Cell, and he shot films for three tracks and Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson, who I knew from Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV, also shot three. We filmed "Heartland" in an ex-gasworks in South London, but for the others we went a little bit more exotic. We went to New York to do "Out Of The Blue", in a brothel in Harlem – we had to have police protection. Then we went to Peru and Bolivia with Sleazy. It was amazing we all got back alive. You can imagine the purity of the coke down there. We started in Iquitos, where *Fitzcarraldo* was shot. We got taken into the jungle by a former Peruvian army guide who was well-connected. There was a scene in "The Mercy Beat" where we came across a crazy communist rally, and I'm handling snakes and monkeys... I was out of it most of the time, hallucinating giant spiders on the hotel walls. The stuff was too strong. I flew back from Bolivia via Amsterdam, so you can imagine what happened when Customs got hold of me. They had me in the interview room down to my underpants. Luckily they didn't strip search me! I think one of them recognised me from TV...

## THE THE MIND BOMB

EPIC, 1989



For this incarnation of The The, Johnson decides to assemble a full band – including an old friend from the North West...

Johnny Marr and I have known each other from

the *Burning Blue Soul* days. I used to go up to Manchester, I was out all the time, and I met a lot of people, including Johnny. He then formed The Smiths and used to stay at my bedsit in Highbury when taking their demos around. Then we sort of lost touch. Meanwhile, I was touring *Infected* in Australia, and I met Billy Bragg who invited me to play at Red Wedge. I enjoyed it, and I thought, 'Maybe I should start thinking about playing live again...' And so as I was writing *Mind Bomb*, I started writing it with the idea of a band. I got Dave Palmer and James Eller, and we'd already started doing the recording before Johnny got involved. We hadn't seen each other for years, then we bumped into each other at an Iggy Pop gig. He came over to my place in East London, and we ended up sitting up until 6am, by which time it was agreed he was joining the band – coming on tour, everything. The album was done over quite a long time – it cost about 300 grand! The recording was intense – I went on this diet that I forced some of the others to go on, where we'd drink distilled water and eat organic grapes for months 'til people started hallucinating! During the writing, I'd meditate and do magic mushroom tea. So that's where all this stuff was coming from: clash of civilisations, Islam... Oddly, *Mind Bomb* did well when it came out. But it's one of those records people say has become more relevant due to what's been going on since.

## THE THE DUSK

SONY, 1993



A difficult album for Johnson: recorded following the death of his brother, it also marked the dissolution of the *Mind Bomb* lineup. My younger brother died suddenly in the middle

of the *Mind Bomb* tour. I took three months off, I was devastated, we were a very close family. My mother never really recovered. I had huge support from everyone around me at the time, but when we went back on tour again, it was awful because I kept seeing my brother's face in the audience. When that tour finally finished, it really hit me, I went in a quiet, deep, sad state. So *Dusk* was focused on personal things, and "Love Is Stronger Than Death" was written for my brother. And, to be honest, I lost a lot of focus in terms of being a strict taskmaster. Things started to fall apart with that band. Dave Palmer [drums] started to get into some serious drug thing, his timing got affected, he was showing up late, and Dave was always very professional. So I warned him, then I fired him halfway through the album. I brought in Vinnie Colaiuta, from Zappa's band, and Bruce Smith from The Pop Group. The odd thing is, although it was more of a band recording – there was more live recording than with *Mind Bomb* – I felt the closeness of the band wasn't there so much anymore. Johnny had started doing Electronic with Bernard. Dave was all over the place. James was still focused, but it didn't feel as much of a band effort as *Mind Bomb*. It's funny, though. It's one of my favourite albums, *Dusk*, I love that record. Everybody did a fantastic job, but at that point, I went on tour and the band had already fallen apart.



THE THE  
HANKY PANKY

SONY, 1994

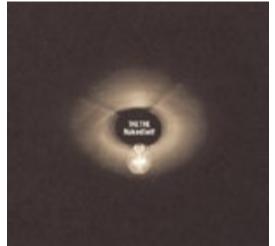


A new band, plus an unexpected career swerve: an album of Hank Williams covers, no less.

I was always a big fan of a great songwriter. Hank Williams, John Lennon... Because I was taking so long writing, I thought, 'You know what, I just want to enjoy being a singer.' I don't even think I played any instruments on that album. I put together another band, with a chap called Eric Schermerhorn, who I'd wanted to join for the *Dusk* tour but he was with Iggy Pop at the time. Brian MacLeod, Gail Ann Dorsey, who then joined David Bowie. It was a good band, but I just wanted to get inside another songwriter's songs. It was almost like a vacation in terms of my songwriting. *Dusk* was quite a hard record to write, given the subject matter, but I wanted to keep working. There were a lot of raised eyebrows at the label, but at that point I think they were used to my behaviour. There's a good phrase that sums it up: 'Making all the wrong career moves for all the right reasons'. But to be honest, they did get behind this record. It got fantastic reviews over in America. Hank's daughter wrote me a lovely letter saying, 'My daddy would be proud with what you've done with his songs.' So it was an interesting project.

THE THE  
NAKEDSELF

NOTHING/UNIVERSAL, 2000



Johnson returns to tackle familiar subjects: alienation, global corruption and urban decay.

At this point, I was living in New York permanently. I had my first child over there, so I'm taking longer than the label would have hoped to make another record. The relationship with Sony was always warm, but my main beef was how artists are generally treated for their contracts. This is where the *Gun Sluts* album comes in. They hated *Gun Sluts*, it was my version of *Metal Machine Music*. I wasn't doing it to break the contract. It's just where I was at the time, going in some interesting new directions, listening to experimental music. So I wrote *NakedSelf*, which coincided with me coming to the end of my contract. I was happy to stay with Sony, but I wanted a proper contract. They said, "We can't give you what you want at this stage, we just don't see big hits." I was quite upset, but they were right because there weren't any big hits on it. I then shifted over to Universal Interscope. I hated it. There was only one part of Universal that showed any interest, the German outlet, they were fantastic. Strangely, *NakedSelf* got the best reviews of any record I ever made! I thought it was crazy. The tour support ran out for a six-month world tour, so I started to pay for it out of my own pocket, because I really believed in the album and the band. Earl Harvin on drums, Spencer Campbell on bass and Eric Schermerhorn. It was like the Charge Of The Light Brigade, really. If I was to put another band



Johnson in New York, 2001, tackling urban decay

together again, it would probably be the *NakedSelf* band. We're still talking about playing together again.

THE THE  
TONY

CINÉOLA, 2010



Johnson forms his own company, Cinéola, to release the first major collaboration with his brother, filmmaker Gerard, and their cousin, actor Peter Ferdinando.

I played David Bowie's *Meltdown* with Jim Thirlwell in 2002. After that, I pretty much retired. I didn't pick up a guitar for years, put all my stuff into storage and started living abroad, in Spain, Sweden, and in America. I was being offered contracts by record labels but after the Universal experience I was so disillusioned. Then, gradually, the soundtrack thing came about. My younger brother and my ex-partner who is a Swedish documentary maker, started to ask me to do stuff. There was a bit of insecurity: do I want to do music anymore, and how do I do it? But this seemed a good way of getting back into the studio. I have worked on Hollywood films, I did the Sylvester Stallone *Judge Dredd* film, but I'd rather work on smaller projects and have more of a collaborative involvement with the director. Gerard, my brother, had already made a couple of short films, and he used some of my pre-existing instrumental music. With *Tony*, we talked about the sound palette. I like soundtracks that have a specific tonal range, otherwise it can end up becoming a bit too much. We decided to go with a more acoustic tone, with a bit of electronics, but the main theme would be a simple piano motif. It went very, very well. Gerard was very happy with it. He did the whole film for £40,000. That's even more impressive than *Burning Blue Soul*!

THE THE  
HYENA

CINÉOLA, 2015



Another self-contained experimental score, this time harking back to techniques deployed during the earliest days of The The.

It was a more intense experience due to the time frame. I had about two weeks to write and record it. I'd already worked with Gerard on the tonal palette, we experimented and got the right sound. I revived the old Terry Riley machinery, the Time Lag Accumulator. I used to play around with tape loops when I was younger, around *Burning Blue Soul* and I decided to bring that technology back for this as I thought it would build up these strange, quite dense soundscapes. But I had all sorts of technical problems in the studio. The speakers blew up, the tape recorders blew up, everything that could go wrong, went wrong. It was a bloody nightmare. Then between the recording and the 5:1 mixing, I had to pop to Sweden for 24 hours to deal with a personal issue. I was so run-down at this point, I got tonsillitis on the way back! So during mixing I had a jug of Solpadeine in one hand and Lemsip in the other, to keep myself going. It was like going back in time, finding that energy I had during *Burning Blue Soul*. But we got through it. I think it's the best soundtrack I've done. Gerard was thrilled, which was the most important thing for me. There's a few other soundtracks that haven't been released. I also did a Turkish/Lebanese film and a series of Scandinavian documentaries. They're going to be released as one volume, along with some spoken-word recordings. So there's a lot of stuff in the pipeline, but I'm anxious to get back to writing the music, to be honest. ©

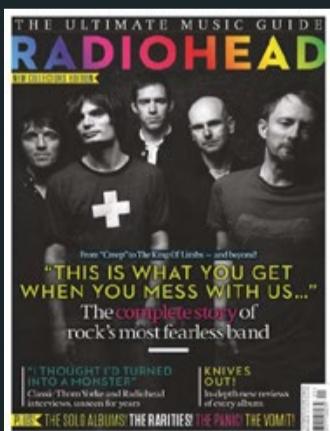
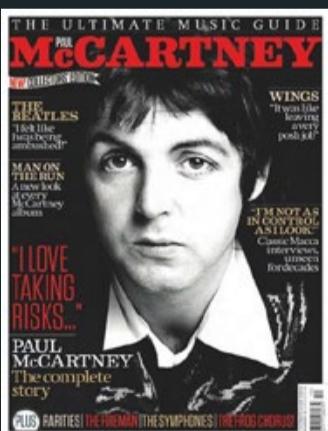
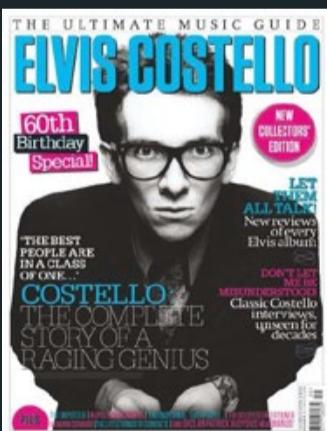
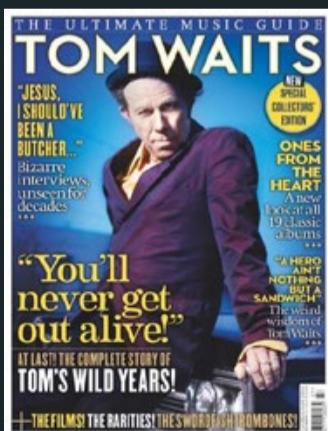
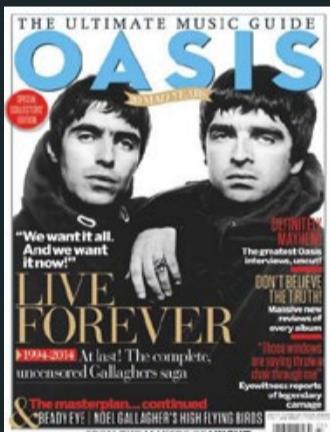
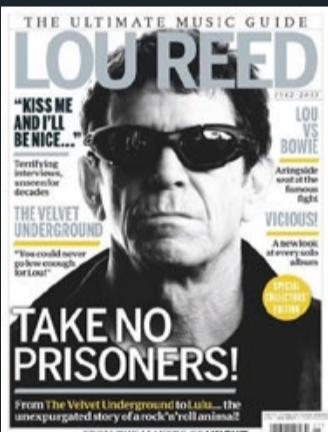
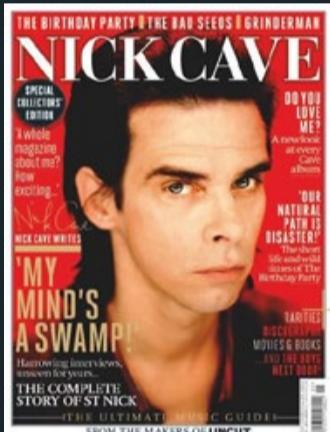
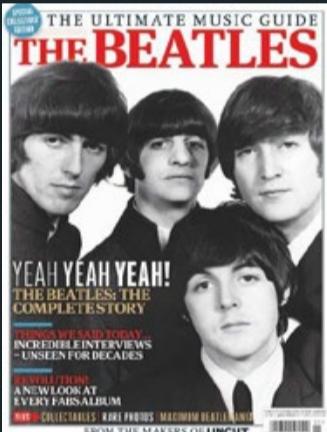
*Hyena* is reviewed on page 84

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# “I’m the most phenomenal man in the record business!”

Uncut salutes The Lord Of Garbage, one of rock’s most mercurial and charismatic figures, and rescues a hair-raising 1972 Fowley interview from the *Melody Maker* archives. “I have millions of dollars from all this crap,” he tells Richard Williams, “so to any future Beatles, this is your man!” Good clean fun? Not a chance!

**Original story:** Richard Williams, *Melody Maker*, November 25, 1972

“I CAN KILL PEOPLE, cheat, seduce, amuse and abuse people,” Kim Fowley told *Uncut* in 2005. “I know how to tear up the sidewalk with my fingers and find a rose poking through the cement.” Bold provocations were Fowley’s stock-in-trade, but during a career spanning almost 60 years there are few others who can claim as many wide-ranging accomplishments. Producer, songwriter, musician, manager and impresario, Fowley – who died on January 15, 2015 from cancer – was one of rock’s most charismatic, mercurial figures. He intuitively understood the mythological power of rock’n’roll in a way that few other people could harness. “He’d been everywhere, done everything, knew everybody,” said Steve Van Zandt. “We should all have as full a life. Rock gypsy DNA. Reinventing himself whenever he felt restless. Which was always. One of the great characters of all time. Irreplaceable.”

Kim Fowley was born into the Hollywood lifestyle. His parents were middling film and TV actors, his school friends included Nancy Sinatra, Ryan O’Neal and Bruce Johnson. Despite such promising circumstances, Fowley’s early life was hardly gilded. His parents divorced and he spent time in foster care; he later claimed in his autobiography that his father used him as a lookout while procuring drugs or women. Additionally, there was a bout of polio in his teens. It seems likely that such an unfortunate series of events conspired to alter Fowley’s perspective. His early credits – a string of novelty singles – were cynical attempts to catch onto emerging trends like bubblegum pop, garage rock and psych. But they also demonstrated how sensitive he was to the specific nuances of popular culture; Fowley understood spectacle and could spot talent in other people, and worked all these factors to his advantage. During the ’60s, he worked

with PJ Proby, Soft Machine, Gene Vincent and an early incarnation of Slade; at the end of the decade, he introduced the Plastic Ono Band at the Toronto Rock & Roll Festival.

For a man whose aesthetic was predicated around trashy flamboyance, Fowley flourished during the ’70s. His biggest success during that period was The Runaways – the LA all-girl group Fowley brought together in 1975 and managed, as well as producing/co-writing their first two LPs, before eventually falling out with them. He also worked with Alice Cooper, Kiss, Helen Reddy, Kris Kristofferson and The Modern Lovers during this time – but despite his scattershot approach to collaboration, he still managed to record nine solo LPs in the ’70s alone. Fowley’s own musical output is perhaps a lesser-documented footnote in his career; but it is possible to discern much about his lurid and outrageous sensibilities from songs like “Ugly Stories About Rock Stars And The War”, “Night Of The Hunter” and “Is America Dead?”.

While Fowley never quite achieved the same success in subsequent decades, he continued to enjoy a prolific output. Indeed, his questing spirit continued to drive his career. He moved into experimental filmmaking – titles include *Satan Of Silverlake* and *Frankenstein Goes Surfing* – joined Steve Van Zandt’s *Underground Garage* radio show and worked with Ariel Pink on *Pom Pom* (2014). He shared his idiosyncratic pop philosophy in 2013’s memoir *Lord Of Garbage*; but a more succinct personal statement is found in the song “Kim Vincent Fowley” for his 2012 album, *Death City*. There he listed details from his life, from his early days as a male prostitute, to his relationship with women, his poor credit rating and declining health. He signed off drolly: “Kim Fowley, one of God’s chosen children.” Of course, there’s no-one better to tell of Fowley’s own deeds than Fowley himself. Over the page, he does just that, recounting many splendid yarns – all about himself, of course – to Richard Williams in 1972. **MICHAEL BONNER**





Kim Fowley and friend in his LA apartment, 1972. Inset: love rival Alice Cooper...



TAKEN FROM  
MELODY MAKER  
25/11/1972

**K**IM FOWLEY'S looking for love. "Well," he says, snuffling into a wad of Kleenex, "I'm real entertaining and I have some nice human qualities... and I'm rich. Probably there's some girl out there who'd fancy me. I'm only 21 years old, after all."

Actually, he's waiting for his Pleasure Unit to return from a drunken night with Alice Cooper and the boys. It's a subject of some personal distress to him.

"I saw Alice at the Speakeasy the other night. This quite good-looking chick walks up and says 'Hi'... I'd come onto her a couple of days ago, but she didn't want to know. Alice turned his back and flirted with her, so I rushed up and since she's now talking to me because I've been seen with Alice Cooper, I give her my Kim Fowley 'How-would-you-like-to-be-my-old-lady?' rap.

"She moves in here yesterday with all her clothes and shoes – she's pretty good-looking, man, on a Raquel Welch level. So this movie star chick and I are here in my Chelsea flat, ooh wow, and the phone rings and it's one of the guys from Alice Cooper's band and he pulls her over the telephone. Now that's an interesting triangle... there's me, a legend, and there's this one-hit wonder..." He collapses in spluttering laughter.



**"I have stage presence... I move like Nureyev and Fred Astaire"**  
KIM FOWLEY

"I'm caught in a future shock time-warp, but being a liberated male I said, 'Go ahead, have a good time.' Gave her money for the cab, and she said she'd be back in an hour. Off she went, leaving this great legendary man in bed alone.

"That was last night... SO WHERE IS SHE?"

**A**MAZINGLY ENOUGH, Kim Fowley doesn't overrate himself. He is a legend in his own time, with

a track record, as erratic as it's impressive, stretching back 11 years. He's yesterday, he's today, and the chances are that we might well have to put up with him tomorrow, as well.

Son of the actor who played Doc Holliday in the *Wyatt Earp* series, and grandson of light-operetta composer Rudolf Friml, he first ventured into the LA music scene in 1957, singing with three members of a black vocal group named The Jayhawks. "They'd had a hit with 'Stranded In The Jungle', and this wasn't long afterwards, but they'd already disintegrated into working in a barber's shop. They used to fence hot goods, and Bruce Johnston and I – we'd grown up together – were into stealing car accessories, such as hubcaps, so they used to take over our loot.

"After the spoils were divided, we were invited to sing with them. The Del-Vikings were the big thing then, and we had two white guys and three black guys the same as them, so we figured we could be the new Del-Vikings... real good to drive your car fast to."

The following year, he and Bruce were joined in a group named The Sleepwalkers by young Sandy Nelson – Phil Spector even played a couple of gigs with them, on guitar. "One day we got courageous and decided to make our first record, so we went down to Dolphin's of Hollywood – John Dolphin was the man who wrote 'Buzz Buzz Buzz' for The Hollywood Flames.

"We were sitting there trembling in our schoolboy boots, when one of their songwriters [Percy Ivy] came in and killed Dolphin right in front of us. One of the bullets ricochetted off the wall and hit Sandy Nelson in the leg – which was probably symbolic, because he lost that leg a few years later.

"Everybody was scrambling around, there was blood all over the floor, and the guy was dying. Bruce, being a songwriter, went up to him and said, 'Well, I think it's a good idea if you tell me how you feel. I mean, it's your last minute, isn't it.' For a song, you understand. He wasn't being horrible... he was genuinely interested in what a dying man had to say.

"The guy was rapping and Bruce was listening and saying 'Far out...' and then he died. I think we all realised then that rock'n'roll did have its outlaw characteristics."

Fowley went into the Army for a while, and when he returned, the band had become Bruce And Jerry, He sold them to Doris Day's record company – which also had Jan And Arnie, later to become Jan And Dean.

He also made his first studio recording, with producer Nick Venet. With Bruce, Sandy, Richard Podolor (now with Three Dog Night) on lead guitar, "and a load of gunshot effects stolen from 'Western Movies' by The Olympics", the record was called "Charge!", and the group titled itself The Renegades.

He took it to American International, where they put him to work on a film called *Diary Of A High School Bride*, but he moved over to work on publishing and promotion for Doris Day's company, sleeping on the office floor at nights.

"Then came Skip and Flip – Clyde Battin and Gary Paxton – who were one of the many imageless Everly Brothers-style bands. 'Cherry Pie' came out and was a hit for them, so I became their road manager. We made a lot of records with them that were never released – like a version of 'Louie Louie' with the composer, Richard Berry, playing piano.

"We also did Gene & Eunice's 'Sugar Babe' as producers and arrangers, and then came 'Alley-Ooop' – The Hollywood Argyles. Gary and I were the artists on that, with a lot of friends helping out – like Sandy, and one of the guys who wrote 'Earth Angel'. 'Alley-Ooop' became legendary – we were the White Coasters, and we had 26 different bands touring around under the same name, because we were hungry for bread. We weren't making images then – we were making records."

He also did The Paradows' "Diamonds And Pearls" and The Innocents' "Honest I Do", before meeting Paul Revere And The Raiders in Idaho. He produced their first records for the Gardens label – "Like Long Hair", for instance.

"This was in '61, before they reappeared as teenage slick idols with Bruce Johnston producing them for Columbia. In '61 they were B. Bumble And The Stingers – Mark Lindsay wasn't into singing then. Then Paul and Mark disappeared... I don't even dare say what happened to Mark.

"Right before Mark went, Paul left because he was a conscientious objector, on religious grounds, and Leon Russell became Paul for a while. That was his first tour. And The Argyles became The Raiders... they were also The Gamblers, who did 'Moon Dawg!' for World Pacific, with 'LSD 25' on the flip – the first acid song, all those years ago."

THE SAME YEAR, B. Bumble And The Stingers made their appearance, completely conceived by Fowley. "The name was owned by a little record company called Rendezvous, who also had Dick Dale and the Del-Tones. The Stingers were black musicians, and the pianist was a guy named Al Hazan, who tried to cash in later by recording for Phil Spector's label. He called himself Ali Hassan then, and he's a photographer now."

"Nut Rocker" was, of course, a smash hit, but Kim did no more B Bumble records – "greed came into it – everybody wanted a piece of the record."

His next group was The Rivingtons, a black quartet for whom he produced "Papa Oom-Mow-Mow" and "The Bird's The Word", which a white group, The Trashmen, later turned into "Surfin' Bird".

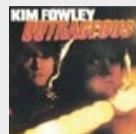
"The Rivingtons had originally been The Sharps on the Guyden label – they were Lee Hazlewood's favourite black group, and he used them on Duane Eddy's records. Hazlewood taught a lot of people, including Spector, but he never gets any credit for it."

Fowley then had a succession of flops with surfing records: "I never could get

## BUYERS' GUIDE

# Good clean fun

## Fowley on CD...



### KIM FOWLEY OUTRAGEOUS

IMPERIAL RECORDS, 1968

Fowley's third – and best – opens with career resumé, "Animal Man": "I'm ugly, dirty, filthy..." Contains guitar riffs ("Nightrider"), funky instrumentals ("Hide & Seek") and questionable foreign accents ("Chinese Water Torture"). Sonic Youth covered "Bubblegum" in 1986.



### KIM FOWLEY GOOD CLEAN FUN

IMPERIAL RECORDS, 1969

A mix of comedy and rock'n'roll, notable for strong collaborator quotient, including Rodney Bingenheimer, Warren Zevon, assorted Bonzos and "Jerry Landis", aka Paul Simon. Highlight: poignant Zevon composition, "I'm Not Young Anymore".



### GENE VINCENT I'M BACK AND I'M PROUD

DANDELION, 1969

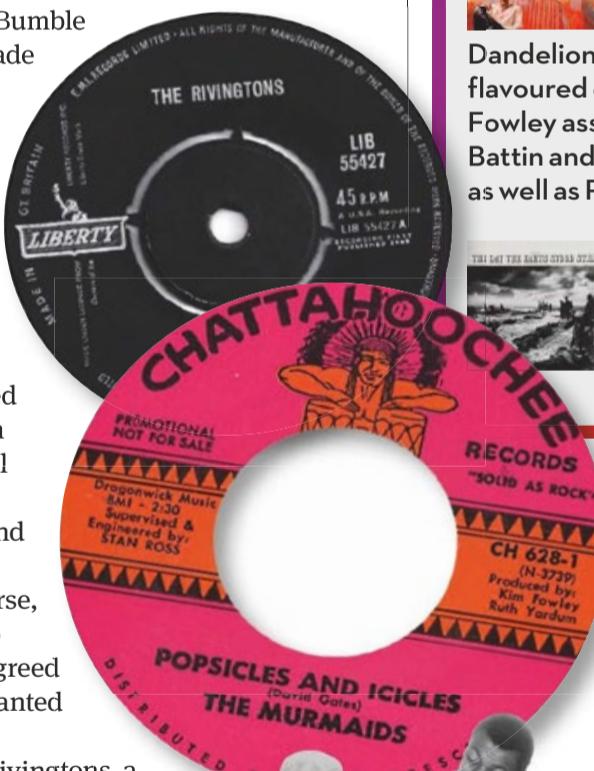
Recorded for John Peel's Dandelion label, Vincent's country-flavoured comeback album featured Fowley associates former Byrd Skip Battin and Steppenwolf's Mars Bonfire, as well as Red Rhodes and Jim Gordon.



### KIM FOWLEY THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

MNW, 1970

Made while Fowley was living in Sweden, *The Day...*



Below: The Rivingtons, 1965



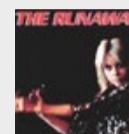
moves through freaky psych-blues-rock to experimental passages reminiscent of early Zappa. Highlight: associative, freeform epic "Is America Dead?"



### KIM FOWLEY INTERNATIONAL HEROES

CAPITOL RECORDS, 1973

Despite outward signs of glam – Fowley in eye makeup, lipstick, a fur coat and a T-shirt reading "Space Age" – *International Heroes* is relatively straightforward: "Something New" is a Dylanesque jangle, while "Dancing All Night" channels the Stones.



### THE RUNAWAYS THE RUNAWAYS

MERCURY, 1976

Fowley gets writing credits on seven of the 10 songs here, including debut single, the post-glam, pre-punk "Cherry Bomb". The Runaways fired Fowley in 1977; he never quite captured the zeitgeist this adroitly again.



### THE MODERN LOVERS THE ORIGINAL MODERN LOVERS

MOHAWK, 1983

Following John Cale's sessions, Fowley travelled to Boston to produce additional demos with The Modern Lovers in 1972. Fowley later released 10 of these on his Mohawk label. Rougher than the Cale versions, the best is a ragged take on "I'm Straight".



### KIM FOWLEY DEATH CITY

2012

Cut after Fowley's diagnosis with bladder cancer, his final studio album is understandably preoccupied with issues of mortality, filtered through Fowley's particular vision: the title song, "Dead Men Don't Have Sex" and "Kim Vincent Fowley".

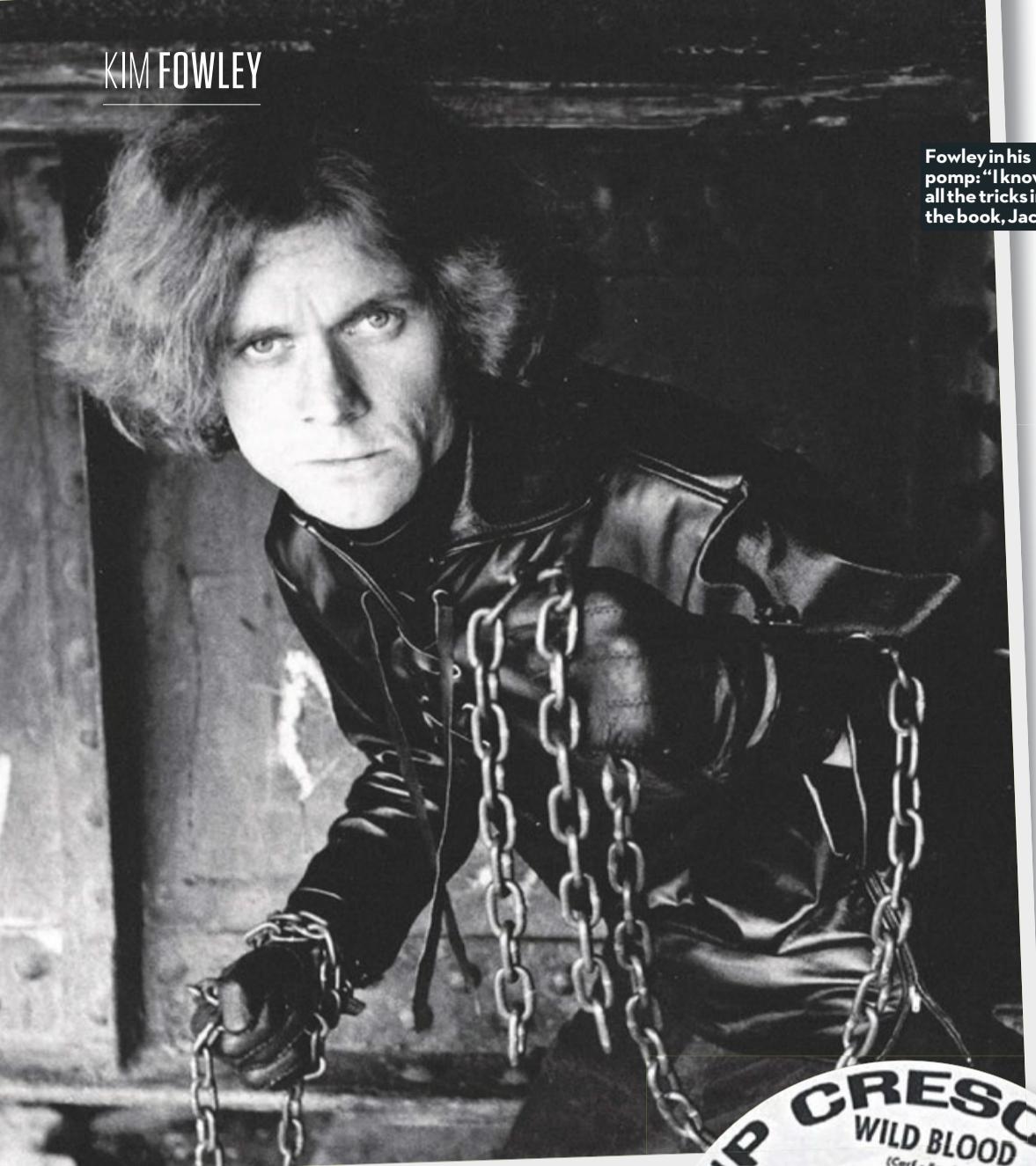
a surf hit... I made creative surfing records. But I had a hit in England with a song called 'Surfers Rule', by an English surfing group called The Rituals."

Hitch-hiking around California one day, as is still his wont, he was given a lift by a young writer named David Gates, who sang them a tune he'd just written. It was called

'Popsicles And Icicles', and Kim swiftly put together a girl-group called The Murmaids to sing it. He even

formed a new label, Chattahoochee, of which he owned half. The Murmaids were Terri and Carol Fisher and Sally Gordon, and the idea for the sound came from Candice Bergen: "I was dating her at the time, and she told me that the sound of Shelley Fabares' 'Johnny Angel' could be done over and over again in different varieties. She chose 'Nut Rocker', in fact – she should have been a record producer instead of a movie star, because she always had a real good ear for dogcrap rock'n'roll."

Chattahoochee had a No 1 with "Popsicles", a smaller hit with their follow-up "Heartbreak Ahead", and then released "about a thousand records in two years".



Fowley in his pomp: "I know all the tricks in the book, Jack"

→ In 1963, he came to England – “out of historical curiosity, to find out what The Beatles meant. I was like those people who went to the Spanish Civil War in the Hemingway era, sitting on the hillside with their picnic baskets, watching battles.”

In London, he met up with an old friend from California: PJ Proby, then at his peak of popularity. “We lived together and had a good time... as long as I was with him he was magical. I was a kind of stabiliser for him, but when I left his pants split and all those problems started.”

Back in the USA, he became a dancer with a troupe known as Vito And The Hands – “We were the dancing equivalent of Timothy Leary. This was in '65, and I also met Dylan then. We jammed together and he said, ‘Why don’t you make records?’ I took him at his word, but I recorded some real off-the-wall crap that no-one wanted.”

In '66, he appeared on the first Mothers Of Invention LP, *Freak Out!*, and performed with them at the Whisky and the Cafe A Go Go, where “The Fugs came in... we had this doll that I smashed up onstage in a pile of garbage. There was a Mothers ‘Live At The Whisky’ album, too, but it never came out.”

He came back to Britain again, and a period of intense recording activity ensued.

In just a few months, he recorded Slade (then known as The 'N Between – “same guys, same sound, no hits”), Family, Dave Mason and Jim Capaldi, the Soft Machine (“*Feelin’ Reelin’ Squeelin’*”, the B-side of their first record, Polydor single “*Love Makes Sweet Music*”), and dozens of other assorted artists.

In '67, he was back in the States, opening a House For Homeless Groups in LA.



“We had dozens of drummers and lead guitarists. Then one day a bass-player came in, and everyone applauded for 10 minutes. Jim Morrison slept there. Three Dog Night got together there, Steppenwolf came by and rehearsed, getting it together for the ‘Born To Be Wild’ era. Then the love-ins started, and I became the MC at all the Flower Contests.”

He also started working for Liberty/Imperial, and with the help of a girl friend he discovered Johnny Winter, playing at the Vulcan Gas Company in Austin, Texas. The result was what Kim says is still Winter’s only gold album, *Progressive Blues Experiment*.

“Also I was producing The Seeds, with Sky Saxon. On ‘Wild Blood’ and ‘Falling Off The Edge Of My Mind’ I stood next to Sky and gave him the lyrics. They’d bring his voice up on the tape and take mine right down. I also sang on Fraternity Of Man’s ‘Don’t Bogart That Joint.’”

In '69, he produced Gene Vincent’s *I’m Back And I’m Proud* LP for Dandelion, which led to his appointment as MC and consultant for the Toronto Rock Festival – “*Live Peace In Toronto*”, and Little Richard concert film *Keep On Rockin’*.

“Then I went to Finland and produced the immortal Wigwam [second album, *Tombstone Valentine*, 1970], which Lester Bangs said was as good as *Abbey Road*, but nobody bought it. I went to an island in Sweden, and sat in a black room, thinking dark thoughts.”

In 1970 he reappeared in Hollywood: “I went to fight for The Byrds for the three albums – *Untitled*, *Byrdmaniax*, and *Farther Along*. I had songs on all those albums, and there’s some stuff they haven’t put out yet. I also worked on Skip’s solo album for Signpost Records – that’ll be out here soon. Plus I wrote some songs for the Sir Douglas Quintet, for the movie *Cisco Pike* – and I became Leo Kottke’s lyricist for the *Mudlark* album.”

A few months ago, Kim made his return to public performance in America, with a Capitol album called *I’m Bad* and a tour. “I know how to be a performer,” he says. “All the time I was making records, I was playing – six sets a night at the Topanga Canyon Corral... and if you didn’t play it right, the local bikers beat you up in the parking lot outside. That’s as hard as the Star-Club, you know.”

“So I’m real good – I have stage presence, I’m six foot five inches, I move like Nureyev and Astaire on an electronic level. I was in at the beginning playing California rock’n’roll, so I know all the tricks in the book, Jack.”

“Hey, I’ll tell you the story about how I got on Capitol. I’m not supposed to, but here it is: Alice Cooper had a party, and he said ‘Kim, you’re the next one to make it. You’re the next star in that area.’ He said I should get a band and go out and play... I said no, I’d rather write songs. So he suggested that I contacted his producer, Bob Ezrin.”

“So Ezrin came to LA, and I played him some songs. He ordered a couple of dubs and asked me if I had any other ideas. I said yeah, what about Alice Cooper for President? Right about election time you should have this song about Alice being elected, like a kind of *Wild In The Streets* on record.”

“He said, ‘Thank you, that’s not a bad idea. I’m gonna help you out – you’ll be hearing from me.’

About two days later, Capitol called me up and said

they’d been talking to Ezrin. So I went round there and danced on the office desk and lip-synched to a couple of demos, and they said, ‘You’ve got it – you’re a Capitol recording artist.’

“So we did the sessions, and right at the end I got a call from Ezrin. He said, ‘We’re straight’. Whaddya-mean? ‘Well, I took the Alice for President thing and now it’s gonna be called ‘Elected’, as a follow-up to ‘School’s Out’. A lot of people said that was a brilliant pop record, and it came from my brain, yet I’m not even acknowledged to be alive. My

feelings were sorta hurt – I'd rather have taken a quarter of the writing royalties and had my name on it, than have a boring sort of LP on Capitol that they'll never release here.

"Actually, the album's pretty violent, there's not one slow song, and they're all about love-making. We have Pete Sears, Drachen Theaker, and Mars Bonfire on rhythm guitar."

But among his current preoccupations is Flash Cadillac & The Continental Kids, reputedly the very last word in greasy rock recreators, whose album he's just produced for CBS. "They'll take Britain by storm. We did 'Endless Sleep', 'Pipeline', and 'Crying In The Rain' – it's a cross between punk-rock, schlock-rock, rockabilly, and rock'n'roll. It's not Rock Music. For a start, they're the only revival band who use the recording techniques of the '50s. We cut it at Gold Star in LA, with that great Gold Star echo, and Stan Ross engineered it – he did 'Tequila', Eddie Cochran, all those things. He's got 180 gold records. And we did it in MONO!

"It was as decadent as any modern session – we had naked girls dancing to the music, and beer thrown around.

I'd say, 'Sing, you miserable bastards', and they'd laugh and give me the finger. So I'd say again, 'Sing, you miserable bastards' – because that's how I produce records – and they'd throw food at me. Then a naked girl would appear and start dancing, and they'd sing... it's a very interesting album.

"So here I am in London... I'm going to write some songs with Ian Hunter, Silverhead and The Flamin' Groovies came by, Jonathan King called up, I'm writing

with Kerry Scott, who's Irish and will be a star, and I'm...

"I have millions of dollars from all this crap, of course, so to any future Beatles, this is your man. I would say that I'm the most phenomenal man in the record business, so girls – and gay boys – take a look at this pretty face! I'm just sitting here, and I'm so available it's ridiculous. I'm so available that no-one's interested!

"Any more 'questions'?

Yes. What about...

"The music should speak for itself – we should spend more time on the music, and less on the people who make it. That's why Jonathan King makes sense, because he makes records without artists. Artists aren't needed – I think we should have a time of faceless people making wonderful records, like it used to be. I mean, the only reason you bothered to come was that I made great faceless records. No-one then was interested in who The Hollywood Argyles or The Murmaids were; they didn't know about Chairman Mao or Ezra Pound or cybernetics or Gestalt therapy – but those two minutes and 18 seconds meant a lot.

"I totally agree with the Back To Mono movement. The human side of the record business was more in evidence when there wasn't a technical crutch to fall back on.

"The 16-track studio has become the heroin needle of the record industry. I'm not against dope, kids, but it's overrated, just like rock intellectualising and 16-track studios. I tell you, the only new group that real did it for me were the droogs in *A Clockwork Orange*, I thought, 'There are the new Beatles, they should have a record out.' Obviously Alice Cooper thought so, too."

**"The 16-track studio has become the heroin needle of the record industry"**

## BACK PAGES

# "I HAVE POLIO, VERTIGO AND THE PENIS OF DEATH..."

**Fowley on the rampage in 2012...**

**K**IM FOWLEY is 72, but you wouldn't know it from the way he talks, or what he talks about. We're discussing his new book of autobiographical prose and poetry, *Lord Of Garbage*, but he's soon riffing endlessly about just about anything – cancer and polio, the shape of his penis ("Big, with a head like a mushroom"), the best unsigned band in Newcastle (Lyxx) and his plans to make an answer to *The Runaways*, the 2010 film about the girl band he managed to stardom in the 1970s.

He has recently had an operation for bladder cancer, but that hasn't slowed him down in the slightest. He has seven films coming out this year, he boasts, along with a couple of albums. He's also promoting *Lord Of Garbage*.

"*Lord Of Garbage* is a book that is poetry in motion and prose that glows in the dark," he says. "It's in the form of a diary exercise. It's the poetry I wrote when I was younger, and now I look back at 72 and explain to the reader what I was doing in my life at the time, whether it was crime, punishment, stardom, madness or disease." Fowley, he boasts, holds nothing back. "This is the book Iggy Pop would write, the one Leonard Cohen should have written."

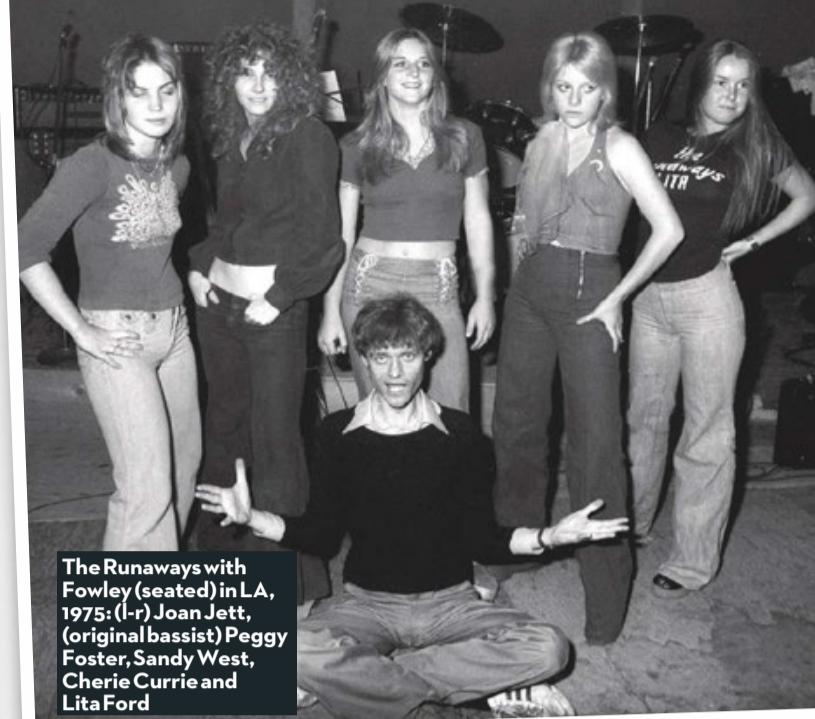
Fowley began writing poetry in 1957, "the best year in rock'n'roll, and also the year I got polio for the second time. My polio came back as post-polio syndrome when I was 50, then I got

bladder cancer in 2010. I began to write the book for Kicks Books, who also run Norton Records, while undergoing treatment. They stick needles and cameras down the penis hole and dig the tumour away. They do that every six months for five years. So I have polio, positional vertigo and the penis of death, but still get more done than most people. I go in the hospital and am on morphine with bladder bags and blood and pus everywhere, and get on the phone to the voicemail of Kicks and rattle away."

It's an unusual method, but a productive one; Fowley has produced three volumes of his unorthodox memoir. "I overwrote, but everything I do is over-the-top," he admits. The title of the book comes from a song on Fowley's cult 1968 *Outrageous* album, "Up, Caught In The Middle, Down". "Garbage means filth, sleaze, pain, horror and suffering. Somebody has to be the cheerleader for those emotions, so why not Kim Fowley, the ultimate man? I'm the only author I know who can do prose, poetry, fuck like a dog, incite a riot and write a song that will either make you drink a beer, have an orgasm or smile."

**PETER WATTS**

*Originally published in Uncut, Take 182; July 2012*



The Runaways with Fowley (seated) in LA, 1975: (l-r) Joan Jett, (original bassist) Peggy Foster, Sandy West, Cherie Currie and Lita Ford



Midnight Special: Flash Cadillac & The Continental Kids, 1972

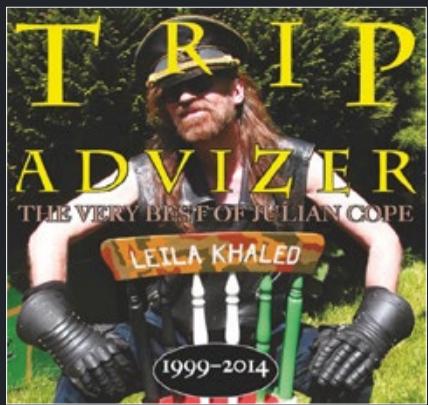
**T**HE PHONE RANG. It was the lady who'd run off with Alice's band the night before. With lavish promises that he'd get her picture in the MM, Kim lured her back with a tremendous display of persuasion. "Wow," he said, putting the phone down, "Women's Lib would have me on a meat-rack for that conversation."

The lady duly arrived, and was everything Kim had described. His nose now running like mad into the tissues, he and she went to get changed for the picture session.

They reappeared, she in hot pants and Grand Canyon-like décolletage, he in green make-up, brandishing a giant whip.

"I'm the only honest one you've met, I guess. It's easy... I've got nothing to lose."

I confess that I blushed. **© RICHARD WILLIAMS**

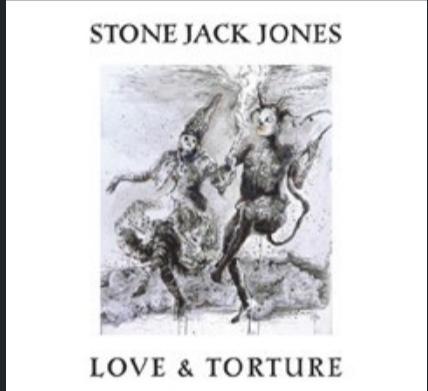


## JULIAN COPE

**TRIP ADVIZER**  
(THE VERY BEST OF JULIAN COPE 1999-2014)

LORD YATESBURY CD

Trip Advizer collects together 16 songs from the last decade-and-a-half of the Archdrude's musical career. The songs have mainly been culled from Cope's past 7 albums but also includes a couple of concert favourites – 'Conspiracist Blues' & 'Julian In The Underworld'



## STONE JACK JONES

**LOVE & TORTURE**

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Features Kurt Wagner (Lambchop) and Patty Griffin. The Times said Ancestor is "beautifully desolate...wouldn't sound out of place on the soundtrack for True Detective."



## PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

**THE RACE FOR SPACE**

TEST CARD RECORDINGS LP / CD

London duo's eagerly anticipated 2nd album features the singles 'Gagarin' & 'Go!' "They blend the voices of the past with the music of the present to astounding effect" (The Independent) "Adrenalised post-rock & electronics... Gripping" (MOJO)

## EVANS THE DEATH

**EXPECT DELAYS**

FORTUNA POP! LP / CD

More expressive, heavier & experimental than their debut, Expect Delays bristles with an underlying tension & veers from rip-roaring noise to quiet contemplation, underpinned by Katherine Whitaker's extraordinary voice.

## ERIC CHENAUX

**SKULLSPLITTER**

the wind has made a coast of me the dawn wears us like jewelry the gun powder's all over me like green light on thin ice a plum all old and rose summer lightening's got its hooks in me stuck here to an old crab tree my favourite hat is your drinking glass bitter and twisted golden spring its riches fifty blue ghosts of a heart blue bird the darkest fruit is ruby a real skulls splitter to get us through the winter a real skulls splitter to get us through the winter

## ERIC CHENAUX

**SKULLSPLITTER**

CONSTELLATION LP / CD

"An effortlessly lovely solo set that recalls John Martyn and Arthur Russell's woofily luminous songs weave trippily between improv jazz, electronica, folk-drone and lounge balladry."

8/10 UNCUT



## IN TALL BUILDINGS

**DRIVER**

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Solo album by member of Wild Belle, NOMO, and His Name Is Alive, which Stereogum called "a serene pop soundscape where gut-trusting simplicity and thoughtful modification intersect."



## WILL BUTLER

**POLICY**

MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

"A burnished gem that shares musical DNA with not only his main band [Arcade Fire], but also the Violent Femmes, Television, and Arthur Russell."

- Boston Globe



## ATA KAK

**OOBA SIMA**

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA LP / CD

Ghanaian disco-rap-highlife hero Ata Kak's 1994 tape "Obaa Sima" is remastered and issued on vinyl for the first time, after an 8-year search for the mysterious artist behind this one-of-a-kind recording.

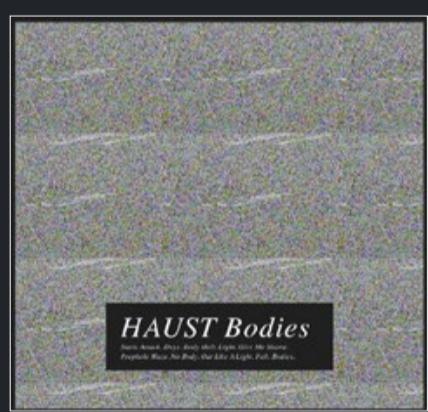


## FAWN SPOTS

**FROM SAFER PLACE**

Critical Heights LP / CD

Pulsating debut album with the cathartic energy of Husker Du and the post punk angularity of Joy Division and Mission of Burma; urgent and raw.

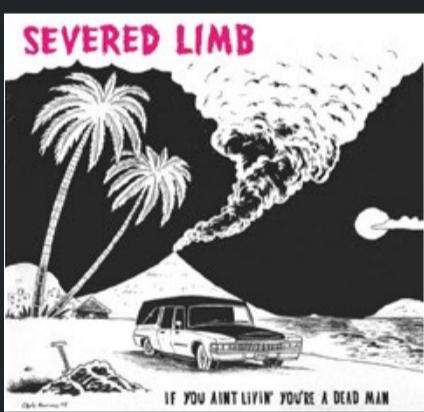


## HAUST

**BODIES**

FYSISK FORMAT LP / CD

Haust's fourth album Bodies flashes a renewed and reworked band, expanding their black-metal/punk hybrid with elements of psychedelia, hypnotic noise rock and a ghostly sense of melody.

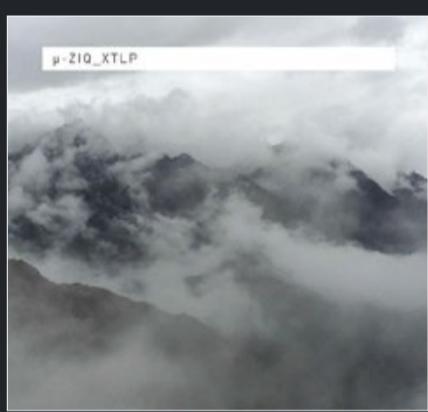


## SEVERED LIMB

**IF YOU AIN'T LIVIN' YOU'RE A DEAD MAN**

DAMAGED GOODS LP / CD

London's punky Skiffle Kings, reminds us of later Clash, Gorillaz etc. Big support from Imelda May, BBC 6MUSIC & XFM.



## μ-ZIQ

**XTLP**

PLANET MU CD

First time on CD for μ-Ziq's joyous and nostalgic vinyl-only EPs Rediffusion and XTEP combined here with exclusive track 'Forger' as XTLP. Welcome back μ-Ziq!

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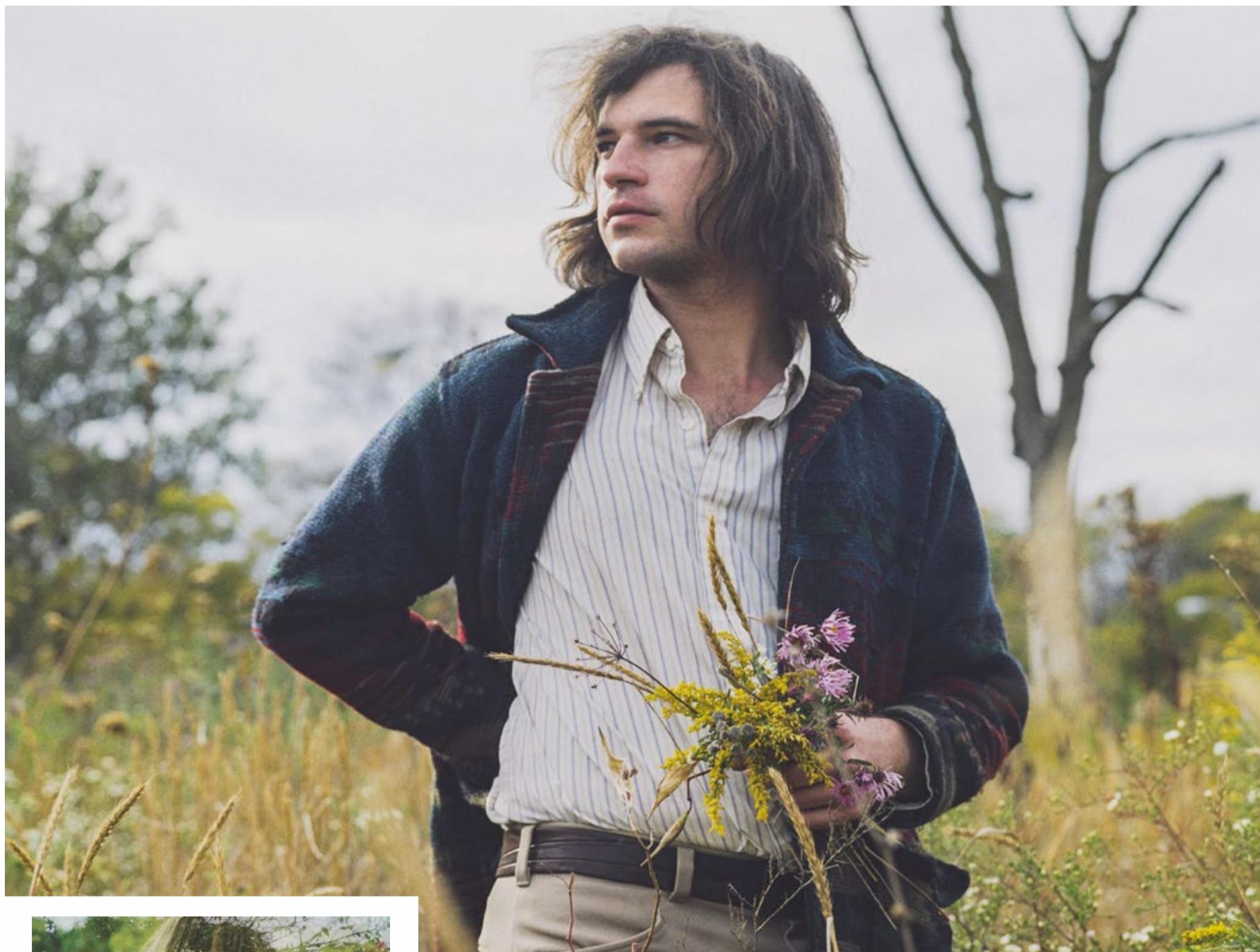
**UNCUT**

# New albums

**OUR SCORING SYSTEM:**

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

THIS MONTH: MARK KNOPFLER | LAURA MARLING | BJÖRK &amp; MORE

**TRACKLIST**

- 1 Primrose Green
- 2 Summer Dress
- 3 Same Minds
- 4 Griffiths Bucks Blues
- 5 Love Can Be Cruel
- 6 On The Banks Of The Old Kishwaukee
- 7 Sweet Satisfaction
- 8 The High Road
- 9 All Kinds Of You
- 10 Hide In The Roses

## RYLEY WALKER *Primrose Green*

DEAD OCEANS

Questing Chicagoan takes things further on restless, eclectic second. *By John Robinson*

**9/10**

IF YOU THOUGHT that the last word in folky period detail was offered by the Coen brothers in *Inside Llewyn Davis*, then you'll be fascinated by Chicago's Ryley Walker. On the cover of his debut album for Tompkins Square, 2014's agreeably low-key *All Kinds Of You*, the 25-year-old stood smoking a cigarette outside a warehouse, guitar case at his side – the image of the Phil Ochs-style workingman troubadour. On his great second album, he's pictured in dappled sunlight holding wild flowers, very much the early 1970s Elektra artist, as styled by William S Harvey.

In some ways, it's a perfect representation of the artist – Walker's new album crests warm currents of jazz, folk and rock as, say, Van Morrison or Tim Buckley did in the period. In others, it's slightly misleading. While Walker has absorbed these admirably free-roaming influences, this is clearly someone reaching for their essence, on a mission to follow a philosophy rather than to slavishly recreate a mood. A musician whose formative years were spent playing noise in basements rather than perfecting his hammering-on in drop D tuning, there's a sense that this record represents a snapshot of a restless



# New Albums

→ artist in flux, an evolving creativity. Things weren't like this last year, and seem highly unlikely to be like this next.

Walker is an appealing character to sign up with. A man able to hold his own among the current wave of instrumental solo guitar performers like Daniel Bachman (with whom he has collaborated), folk guitar is something he loves, but not unreservedly. His wry observation of a scene where guitarists play "with lamps on stage", casts him as an irreverent, unclubbable character in a world which has its anointed, unchanging gods. A comment he made on Twitter ("John Fahey still awful jack rose still God") brought comment from nearly every working guitarist in his field (Nathan Bowles, Cian Nugent, Chris Forsyth and William Tyler), approving or otherwise, as near as any of them are likely to get to a chorus. The other day, he posted a supportive email apparently from John Renbourn, "The more I drink," the elder statesman bibulously professed, "the smoker I get to enjoying you..."

Renbourn's support tells its own story. A highly technical player in his own self-articulated field of medieval folk, some of Renbourn's best 1960s albums found him in folk/jazz after-hours conversation with another pole star for Ryley Walker: Bert Jansch. Jansch's influence is maybe a little less pronounced on *Primrose Green* than it was on his superb 2013 single "The West Wind", where the influence could be read as much in Walker's diffident delivery and his bucolic subject (mentioned: sparrows) as in his virtuosic guitar. Live performances of the tune found Walker pushing at its boundaries, finding unexpectedly noisy seams to mine within it.

As it turns out, that seems a signpost to *Primrose Green*, an album in which some courtly formality remains, but as a jumping-off point for more freewheeling development. The album is parenthesised by the bucolic charms of the title track and its sister, the closing "Hide In The



## SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**  
Cooper Crain  
**Recorded at:** Minbal Studio, Chicago  
**Personnel includes:**  
Brian Sulpizio (guitar),  
Ben Boye (piano,  
harmonium), Fred  
Lonberg-Holm,  
(cello), Frank Rosaly  
(drums), Anton  
Hatwich (double bass)

Walker: bucolic charms,  
evolving creativity

## THE ROAD TO... PRIMROSE GREEN

Walker's cohorts in questing folk guitar

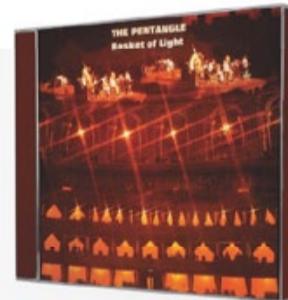


### BERT JANSCH LA Turnaround

CHARISMA, 1974

Transatlantic by nature, if not by label, this is one of Jansch's finest. Recorded in LA, and the UK home of Tony Stratton-Smith, producer Mike Nesmith drafted in crack US session men like Red Rhodes. Bert, as ever, supplied the chops and the courtly backbone.

9/10

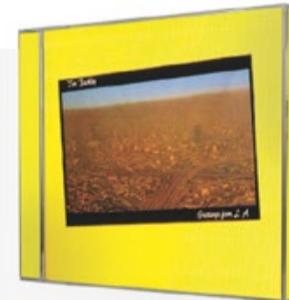


### PENTANGLE Basket Of Light

TRANSATLANTIC, 1969

The interplay of folk and jazz styles that Jansch and John Renbourn brought to *Bert And John* here took flight in a band setting. "Sally Go Round The Roses" and "The Cuckoo" are particularly nice pointers to Walker's coming mode. Jacqui McShee's voice is a bit much at times, though.

7/10



### TIM BUCKLEY Greetings From LA

ELEKTRA, 1972

The funky and sexy Buckley wasn't to the taste of every folkie. Still, the free-flowing troubadour of *Happy Sad* was present and correct, even among the tight rhythms and gospel singers. Posthumous live LP *Honeyman* indicated how much further Buckley could push things in concert.

8/10



### VAN MORRISON It's Too Late To Stop Now

WARNERS, 1974

Rightly regarded as one of the great live albums, here Van and his Celtic Soul Orchestra are caught on West Coast and UK dates, spectacularly re-invigorating favourites from his catalogue and extended jams on blues classics. "Warm Love" about covers the mood of the thing.

9/10

Roses", which ends the album on much the same note, though what takes place between them travels far and wide.

Wonderfully arranged, the album begins with Walker's acoustic guitar joined by Danny Thompson-like double bass and snaky electric guitar. Encouraging the idea of rural retreat as analogy for lightly psychedelic away-break, Walker sings "*Primrose Green, makes me high-high-high...*" breaking with formal structure and launching the album's wider trip. "Summer Dress", with its sea-worthy gait and clavinet interventions, takes things further from terra firma, hitting on a simple lyrical idea much as Tim Buckley might, and encouraging it to give up all it can, over a rolling, jazzy funk.

The truly standout tracks on the album, like "Same Minds", which follows, manage to hold both of these elements in position, retaining the best of both. Namely, a crisp sense of formal order, into which improvisation is poured until it looks like it might spill over the sides. "Same Minds" begins with a simple, trilling acoustic key change, but Walker takes it much further than it ever looked likely to go. "We've got the same heart," he sings, investing the line with everything he has. "We've got the same minds..." Like the later "Sweet Satisfaction", (which brings John Martyn into the mix in its management of order and mounting emotional chaos), it's spectacular, revealing the West Coast of the mind the album has been hinting at: the intersection of *LA Turnaround* and *Greetings From LA*.

Walker says that parts of the album were wholly improvised, and "All Kinds Of You", late in the album, seems a likely beneficiary of that policy. An electric roam through the city at night, Herbie Hancock joining The Doors, its lyric is minimal, but is delivered with such passion, it's stretched nearly to breaking point under the weight it's carrying. "Love Can Be Cruel", in which John Renbourn guests on Miles Davis' *Get Up With It*, is another free-radical. If the words don't quite catch as well as you might hope, the song's medieval science fiction gains additional texture at the close, where a J Mascis-like guitar buzz glowers over a pretty, Knights Of The Jaguar digital sequence.

*Primrose Green* is disorientating, casting new light on modes you thought you knew well. Wherever there are familiar elements, Walker and his excellent, jazzy band take them to new places. "The High Road" has something of Nick Drake's "At The Chime Of The City Clock" about it, with its strings and restless feel, but it seems characteristic that even when he's on the road ("Not a penny to my name..."), that romantic, metaphoric route of the questing beat or folkie, Walker wants to take things further. Rather than progressing to a chorus, the song keeps drifting on, returning only to the road, friendless, besieged by wild dogs and memories of the past.

Eventually, though, *Primrose Green* does come to rest, with the unadorned acoustic playing of "Hide In The Roses", Walker taking us back to something like the simple statement with which he started the album. It's like returning home after a long journey away. Glad in some ways to be back, but irrevocably changed for the better by the experience.

## Q&A

### Ryley Walker: "I want to sing the way John Coltrane plays sax..."

**T**ELL ME A BIT about the writing of *Primrose Green*. It's a pretty open-ended, wide-roaming kind of record.

It comes from a lot of jamming. The band are heavy jazz dudes in Chicago. The songs are like riffs, we play 'em live and we improvise. It's all built from improvisation, it's immediate in the songs. It came together very quickly.

**Who is on the record, and how do you know them?** They're phenomenal musicians and some of my best friends. The electric guitar player Brian Sulpizio is my roommate and my best friend in the world – he has a Jerry Garcia meets Django Reinhardt sort of style, it's super-far-out but super-in at the same time, you know? Ben Boye, who plays the keys, is one of the most brilliant musicians – he plays with Bonnie "Prince" Billy, loads of other people. Anton Hatwich plays bass, he's like a Chicago god of stand-up bass. Frank Rosaly plays drums, a very in-demand jazz guy.

**How do you fit in that world as an acoustic guitar guy?** I don't want some wussy-ass indie rock people playing with me. I want jazz guys. Chicago's a really collaborative town, you play folk tunes, but my friends are in the jazz scene so I'll play with them. All my favourite records have that: Pentangle, Tim Buckley, it's people playing with heavy-duty jazz people. Every night the tune is different. With this kind of band, you can take a different path with it each time.

**How did the writing work?** I had a record out last year and I had a goal of when I went out to not play any of the songs on that record, just new stuff. I would sit backstage drinking a beer and smoking a doobie and come up with something, and say, that's a new song, let's play that tonight. Each night it kept growing. A song is an organic thing, it needs its food and its love – if you raise that shit and if you nurture it, it keeps growing and growing. All the songs on the record are pretty much first take. The whole record we made it and mixed it in about two days.

**How did that tour go?** Nobody knows me, so it wasn't like people are going, "Come on man, you didn't play 'Stairway'?" No-one was super pissed off or anything. For me, it's really therapeutic. I like to try new things, keep it interesting.

**"Same Minds" is a great track. Did that come about the same way?** Oh, totally. You know Cian Nugent? We were on tour in the States last March. He's a classic Irish dude, like, what the fuck is he doing in the Deep South. No-one's coming to the shows, we're bombing every night. We're just getting hammered before the gig and nobody's

coming. He's like, "What the fock am I doing?" Every night we'd be in some shitty motel next to truckers doing speed and jam every night. That came out of us jamming in a hotel, doing nothing, just playing. I really like that song.

**Your voice is more of an instrument on this record...** I'm obsessed with John Martyn and people like that. It's really important to write words on paper, but the voice is another instrument, I want to sing the way that John Coltrane plays sax. I don't want to sing in a monotone vein.

**You used to play noise – what was your eureka moment for this kind of thing?**

I played noise when I moved to Chicago when I was 17. I played fingerstyle guitar growing up and listening to Zeppelin and The Beatles and shit, I was doing the two concurrently. The noise and punk people were like, "You should play your song stuff live." A lot of my support today comes from those people and that's where I got my chops, doing that, playing non-stop.

**What's your relationship with the greats of this period?** John Martyn, Tim Buckley, Van... they're huge, they're folk musicians but they reached super-far. They weren't just playing post-war blues, they reached far into jazz and Indian music and far-out stuff. They were songwriters but pushing it super-hard. I'm moved by that passion, how they reached so far. Then in the UK people like Bert and Wizz Jones and John Martyn – those people were super-far-out and into all sorts of music.

**You got a funny email from Bert's pal, John Renbourn...** I played a show with him last summer, in this festival outside Birmingham in the UK – in Nick Drake's home town. I met him backstage and he turned out to be the coolest guy in the fucking world, "Oh yeah, how're you doing?" He parties super-hard. I got his email and sent him my new song with a gushing email like 'I owe you everything, man'. He got back, "I was going to send you an insulting drunk email but I kind of liked it..."

*"I never want to get a goddamn job again, just concentrate on playing guitar"*

**Where are you headed next?** I'm already writing stuff for the next record – I think it'll keep evolving. I think the new songs are gaining in confidence. I never want to get a goddamn job again, just concentrate on playing guitar.

INTERVIEW: JOHN ROBINSON





## TRACKLIST

- 1 Elevator Operator
- 2 Pedestrian At Best
- 3 An Illustration Of Loneliness (Sleepless In NY)
- 4 Small Poppies
- 5 DePreston
- 6 Aqua Profunda!
- 7 Dead Fox
- 8 Nobody Really Cares If You Don't Go To The Party
- 9 Debbie Downer
- 10 Kim's Caravan
- 11 Boxing Day Blues

# COURTNEY BARNETT

## Sometimes I Sit And Think, And Sometimes I Just Sit

MARATHONARTISTS

Melbourne's slacker queen toughens up on expansive full-length debut. By Tom Pinnock

**8/10**

"I WAS WALKING down Sunset Strip," Courtney Barnett sings on "Kim's Caravan", the epic, noisy centrepiece of her debut album. A moment later, though, comes a wry clarification. "Phillip Island, not Los Angeles..."

This reference to the tourist hotspot near Melbourne is a relief; a sign that, despite the weight of worldwide acclaim on her shoulders, Barnett is still very much in touch with the Australian suburbs that have inspired her exceptional songs.

The best tracks on her first two EPs, compiled as 2013's *The Double EP: A Sea Of Split Peas*, were glorious confections of alternative guitar rock, lazy

*sprechgesang* vocals and artful lyrics, at once funny and deeply poignant. "Avant Gardener" was the 'hit', a true tale of Barnett suffering anaphylactic shock while trying to clear her yard, set to a charmingly repetitive groove studded with spacey guitars.

There are no humorous songs about falling ill while gardening here – although we do get a humorous song about falling ill in the pool while trying to hold your breath to impress a fellow swimmer. The track in question, two-minute sugar-rush "Aqua Profunda!", is punchier than most of Barnett's previous work, setting a pattern for the majority of *Sometimes....* The sprightly "Debbie



Downer" could spring right from the early '90s, organ and guitar seesawing over a baggy-ish beat, while "Nobody Really Cares If You Don't Go To The Party" and "Dead Fox" move away from *The Double EP*'s more laidback, slacker-esque grooves to jaunty, poppy textures that are more Britpop in nature.

*Sometimes...* is not all three-minute garage-pop, though; some songs plough a grungier furrow, with Barnett, toughened up by a year of performing live in a loud trio format, channeling Mudhoney on the stomping "Pedestrian At Best" and closing thrilling, Pavement-esque waltz "Small Poppies" with a storm of ragged soloing.

With this artist, the music is really only half the story, though. Australian songwriters such as The Go-Betweens, Darren Hanlon, You Am I and The Lucksmiths, to name just a handful, have long mined similar lyrical seams, telling stories laced with black humour and poignancy; and Barnett, surpassing the global notoriety of these, is easily their peer. Her narrative skills position many of the tracks here closer to short stories than songs; take opener "Elevator Operator", apparently about a suicidal commuter drone, until a twist in the tale opens up the song's horizons,

## Q&A

Courtney Barnett

**H**ow was the recording process for *Sometimes...*?

We didn't do too many overdubs, we didn't fuck around too much. I think it took 10 days, I didn't really wanna spend too much longer than that. You find yourself getting a bit too fussy, a bit too serious about it.

**Have you been very concerned with ecological matters recently?**

These kind of things always have been on my mind, but I think in the last year it's just kind of amplified a bit. I guess a lot of the time I've been writing and in my downtime, it's just been playing on my mind a bit more maybe than usual. "Kim's Caravan" is just about the helplessness of those situations.

**Did you consciously try not to write songs about touring the world?**

I wrote these songs between the second EP and last April. It wasn't so much that I was trying to avoid those things, though we'd played America and Europe, but it was just that our three-month tour hadn't happened yet! A lot of the stuff I've written since then has probably been about those kind of places or people I've met when I'm travelling around. I write about what I do and see, so there's no point trying to not talk about it. *INTERVIEW: TOM PINNOCK*

literally – it turns out the guy's just checking out the view from the roof of a building so he can pretend he's "playing SimCity".

At other moments, Barnett is increasingly impressionistic with her imagery, writing less about herself and more about the world as she sees it. On "Dead Fox", she dreamily weaves together vignettes on organic fruit and vegetables, truckers' dangerous driving and whether cars should be locked up in zoos instead of animals, until these disparate topics fold together with a beautiful sense of logic. "A possum Jackson Pollock painted on the tar," is her most gloriously kaleidoscopic line.

The seven-minute-long "Kim's Caravan" continues these ecologically driven themes over an atmospheric slow-build not dissimilar to Neil Young's "Down By The River". "The Great Barrier Reef, it ain't so great anymore/It's been raped beyond belief, the dredgers treat it like a whore..." Barnett murmurs, as an ominous bass riff is joined by echoed guitars on the edge of feedback. Highlights like this, and the caustic "Pedestrian At Best", suggest that the possibility of her pursuing more extended and out-there ideas in the future is an exciting prospect.

With such engaging and well-loved songs as "Avant Gardener" and "History Eraser" in her back catalogue, *Sometimes I Sit And Think, And Sometimes I Just Sit* could in theory have been a tough follow-up. And yet Courtney Barnett has managed to expand her lyrical preoccupations and musical interests outwards and upwards, while still retaining the magic of her past peaks. In such skilful hands as hers, it seems, even an album about touring the world and becoming rich might not be something to fear, after all.

### SLEEVE NOTES

#### ► Produced by:

Dan Luscombe and Burke Reid

Recorded at: Head Gap, Melbourne

Personnel: Courtney Barnett (vocals, guitar), Bones Sloane (bass), Dave Mudie (drums), Dan Luscombe (guitar)

# A to Z

COMING UP  
THIS MONTH...

p70 MARK KNOPFLER

p71 MARC ALMOND

p72 JOHNNY DOWD

p74 LAURA MARLING

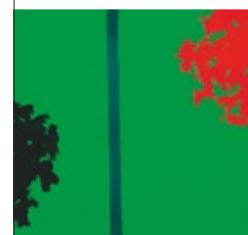
p78 MADONNA

p79 SAM LEE & FRIENDS

p82 MATTHEW E WHITE

p83 RON SEXSMITH

p85 BJÖRK



**23 SKIDOO**

**Beyond Time**

LES DISQUES DU CREPUSCLE

First music in 15 years from industrial funk pioneers

In 1983, 23 Skidoo terrified a WOMAD crowd with a performance featuring

caustic tape loops and gamelan drumming on scrap metal. But the London group were never simply industrial noisemakers. Drilled on funk, William Burroughs and martial arts, their best work blends exotic menace with a Zen-like composure. *Beyond Time* is the soundtrack to a film about sculptor William Turnbull, who also happens to be the father of Skidoo founder Alex Turnbull. It's often closer to the music the group made during their 2000 comeback – jazzy breakbeats on "Dawning (Version)", turntable scratching and spectral sax on "Interzonal" – although a retake of 1983's "Urban Gamelan" remains a thing of cold dread.

LOUIS PATTISON



**ALL WE ARE**

**All We Are**

DOUBLE SIX

Multinational trio's wholesome disco

Liverpool's All We Are describe their music as "the Bee Gees on diazepam", but,

distressing as that sounds, don't let it put you off. Hailing from Brazil, Ireland and Norway – they met at the performing arts school LIPA – the trio's tastes converge on a kind of soporific boogie laced with indie jangling and creamy falsetto harmonies that manage to stay the right side of the yearning/yelping divide. It's all very tasteful – "Feel Safe" is vulnerable like The xx's best moments, "Something About You" evokes Souvlaki-era Slowdive – and though, by the end of the album, you crave some drama, what you're left with is actually pretty serene.

PIERS MARTIN

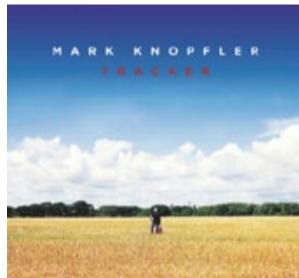


# MARK KNOPFLER

## Tracker

UNIVERSAL

Dire Straits honcho re-engages on eighth solo LP. By Graeme Thomson



8/10

THE PROSPECT OF a new solo album by Mark Knopfler is one of nature's less effective ways of setting the pulse racing. Knopfler is to hype what rain is to fire. Operating a full octave below 'low-key', by now the primary ingredients of his music – rootsy work-

outs, bluesy growlers, wry shuffles, country and Celtic touches – are reassuringly fixed.

There are, however, gradations to his doggedly unflashy craft. The 2012 double album, *Privateering*, was a genial 20-track sprawl through Knopfler's arsenal, running wide rather than terribly deep, leaning heavily on sturdy blues. *Tracker*, while never deviating far from established expectations, possesses a different quality. An album threaded with themes of transience and ruminations on time and memory, it's richly melodic, lyrically involving, and boasts an unhurried elegance and quiet intensity which elevates it to the ranks of Knopfler's most affecting work.

Befitting an album by a well-read member of rock's awkward squad, two of *Tracker*'s highlights are character studies of literary outsiders. On "Basil", which begins in a haze of mandolins before proceeding towards a stately "Brothers In Arms" ache, Knopfler summons up the ghost of North-East modernist poet Basil Bunting – best known for his 1965 epic 'Briggflatts' – whom he encountered while working as copy boy at Newcastle's *Evening Chronicle*. The distance between the pair – one, a cocky teen with the world at his feet; the other, a disillusioned poet with compromised ambitions – is laid out with empathy, Knopfler peppering his recollections with details of "five cigarettes and

two silver half-crowns", and the unforgettable triumph of "kissing a Gateshead girl".

"Beryl" is a more muscular pen portrait, revisiting another cornerstone of Knopfler's legacy. Having stolen the intro – three raps on the hi-hat and a single snare shot – from "Sultans Of Swing", it duly pilfers that song's key, tempo and stripped down, bar-band boogie as well. It's a fitting setting for a bristling homage to the late Liverpool writer Beryl Bainbridge, awarded a posthumous honour by the Booker Prize committee but unfairly overlooked while alive, according to Knopfler, who chides: "It's too late, ya dabblers, it's all too late".

If a chippy class warrior still resides within this 65-year-old multi-millionaire, so does an unabashed music fan. The easy, undemanding groove of "Broken Bones" nods heavenwards to JJ Cale, an enduring influence who died in 2013. More significantly, perhaps, much of *Tracker* was written during a period of sustained touring with Bob Dylan. Though their association dates back to 1979, Knopfler's radar remains alert for incoming traffic. "Lights Of Taormina", a charmingly weathered reflection from the Sicilian town, sounds like a campfire version of "Just Like Tom Thumb Blues". "River Towns", meanwhile, has the steady roll of latter-day Dylan, and a protagonist "looking in the mirror at the face that I deserve," to boot. They're two

### SLEEVE NOTES

#### ► Produced by:

Mark Knopfler and Guy Fletcher  
**Recorded at:** British Grove Studios, London  
**Personnel:** Mark Knopfler (vocals, guitar, mandolin), Guy Fletcher (keyboards, bass, ukulele), Glenn Worf (bass), Ian 'Ianto' Thomas (drums), John McCusker (fiddle, cittern), Mike McGoldrick (whistle, flute), Phil Cunningham (accordion), Nigel Hitchcock (sax), Ruth Moody (vocals), Tom Walsh (trumpet), Bruce Molsky (fiddle)

of several excellent, emotive songs written from the perspective of rootless men. The elliptical "Silver Eagle" frames a moment of transient tenderness recalled from a bus rolling through America; "Mighty Man" honours the itinerant escapades of a scarred Irish navvy, aptly framed by a reinterpretation of the traditional standard "She Moved Through The Fair"; "Wherever I Go", a graceful country ballad sung with Ruth Moody from The Wailin' Jennys, finds two souls crossing paths briefly on the road, their emotional bond undiluted by physical distance.

It's serious stuff, but beautifully realised. There's room for some nifty musical footwork on the wryly nostalgic "Laughs And Jokes And Drinks And Smokes", which sounds like Dave Brubeck's "Take Five"

uprooted to some 'baccy-stained folk club. The incongruous "Skydiver", meanwhile, is a reminder that Knopfler knows his pop coordinates. A Ray Davies-esque study of a carefree gambler, its nifty descending chord sequences are lit up by cascading harmonies.

It adds up to a little more than just another solid Mark Knopfler offering. His eighth solo album will no doubt satisfy dedicated fans, but for those lulled into inattentiveness somewhere along the way, *Tracker* also makes an excellent case for re-engagement.

## Q&A

Mark Knopfler

**T**here seems to be a real unity of themes on this record.

It has to do with time and memory, that's a big part of it. As you get older, you view time differently, it becomes more of a reverse telescope. I also end up here and there with Northern themes. They're part of my background and they do inform the songs.

**What prompted you to write about Beryl Bainbridge and Basil Bunting?**

I'd be standing right behind Basil as a copy boy, and it was clear that he didn't want to be there.

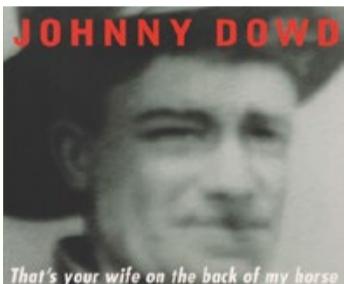
He was writing 'Briggflatts' then, which is a meditation on time and abandoned love. I was 15, and at that age the world is a rosy promise, whereas I think he was seeing it from the other side. The road ahead was shorter than the one he left behind. Beryl also had to do with time, because back then there was an Oxbridge prejudice. She was self-deprecating, a working-class Liverpool girl who never went to university. Maybe she realised how mighty she was, but she didn't want to make a thing about it.

**How was touring with Dylan?**

It definitely helped me produce a couple of songs: "Lights Of Taormina" and "Silver Eagle", I wouldn't have written that otherwise. I was back touring on buses again and I started writing from that perspective. *INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON*



## AMERICANA



8/10

### JOHNNY DOWD

**That's Your Wife On The Back Of My Horse**

MOTHER JINX

BEST  
OF THE  
MONTH

#### Sixtysomething veteran gets back in the saddle

Johnny Dowd has never run shy of a little self-mythology. The title of his latest effort cops a line from Johnny 'Guitar' Watson's 1957 tune, "Gangster Of Love", in which a no-good cowboy makes off with the town's womenfolk on his white steed, taunting the local sheriff as he heads for the prairie. "Around my neck is your mother's locket," scowls Dowd, like a man who's just decided that his is the only law that counts around here. "Your sisters will dance at my wake/Your brother will blow out the candles on my birthday cake." It's a fabulously cocky introduction to a record that, like the very best of Dowd's work, fizzes with wild tales and a mongrel approach to traditional American forms. *That's Your Wife On The Back Of My Horse*, the 13th album of his career, finds Dowd dispensing with his usual band and, save for the guest vocals of Anna Coogan, doing everything himself. In some ways it's a return to first impulses. Dowd has dusted off the same drum machine that was the bedrock of 1997 debut *Wrong Side Of Memphis*, concocting tart rhythms and overlaying them with distorted bursts of guitar and busy electronica. These are songs about getting laid and getting dumped, about women, devilry and familial dysfunction, often funny and invariably dark. As such it twists from blues and soul to punk and experimental rock, though Dowd's terrific voice (like a Texan panhandle Mark E Smith) roots everything in country soil. The lovely, gliding "Why?", a resigned ballad about the one who got away, finds a sort of companion piece in the woozy "Dear John Letter". At other times, Dowd is in full swagger, ramping up the machismo on rap-rocker "White Dolemite" and laying down an evil guitar riff as he recalls blue-eyed Linda Lou on "Cadillac Hearse". And "Words Are Birds" is an everyday tale of killer dads, grinding moms and clever-clever morticians. Suffice to say, this is vintage Dowd. **ROB HUGHES**



## THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► **Calexico's** forthcoming album, *Edge Of The Sun*, is the product of an intense writing phase in Mexico and echoes some of the elements of 1998 breakthrough, *The Black Light*. Due

in mid-April, it sees the duo of Joey Burns and John Convertino joined by a welter of guests, including Iron & Wine, Neko Case, Pieta Brown, Ben Bridwell (Band Of Horses) and various members of Greek band Takim. Calexico's UK tour kicks off at the Shepherds Bush Empire in late April and runs through to early May. Also upon us is *Wood, Wire & Words*, the latest from US bluegrass legend **Norman Blake**. The veteran campaigner (and stalwart

of Nashville sessions by Dylan, Cash and Kristofferson) strips everything to the basics, meting out narratives with just voice and acoustic guitar. The album's four instrumentals, meanwhile, have a distinct ragtime flavour.

Highly promising Texan songwriter **Cale Tyson** pays his first visit to these shores in late April. Ahead of debut LP *Introducing Cale Tyson*, due on Clubhouse Records, he'll be performing as a duo with guitarist Pete Lindberg, winding up in London after a stop-off at the Kilkenny Roots Festival. Before that though, *Uncut* favourites **The Handsome Family** begin a comprehensive UK tour at St Giles In The Fields on March 6, before bowing out at Belfast's Empire Music Hall three weeks later. Support on most UK dates come from the intriguing Daniel Knox. **ROB HUGHES**



### WILL BUTLER

#### Policy

MERGE

Win's kid brother takes off on a freewheeling side trip

The kinetic gleefulness that pervades Will Butler's onstage antics with Arcade Fire courses through his first solo album, a ramshackle, frequently over-the-top barrage of familiar rock tropes appropriated in the service of an unmitigated romp. Whereas big brother Win specialises in grand gestures, Will favours shouted intimacies and small-scale rollicks, from the Devo-esque analog synth burps of "Anna" to the Talking Heads-like art-school tribalism of "Something's Coming". And Win would never be caught dead rhyming "pony" and "macaroni". It's emblematic of the eight-song album's modest ambitions that Butler cut *Policy* at Electric Lady, but eschewed the big room in favour of Jimi's onetime living room. **BUD SCOPPA**



### BRANDI CARLILE

#### The Firewatcher's Daughter

ATO RECORDS

Seasoned American alt.country singer loosens up

Washington State native Brandi Carlile has a lot going for her, among them a fine voice which swoops from throaty roar to hushed whisper, and a promiscuous attitude to American roots music. On her fifth album, she flits between the warm, folky intimacy of "Wilder" and "I Belong To You" and something brasher and more contemporary. She's most convincing kicking up the dirt on the snarling blues-rock racket of "Mainstream Kid" and the wiry "Blood, Muscle, Skin & Bone", while the chutzpah of "Alibi" suggests a kinship with KT Tunstall. All she lacks is a really killer song. **GRAEME THOMSON**



### CAT'S EYES

#### The Duke Of Burgundy

RAF/CAROLINE

Staunch soundtrack work from Horrors' side-project

To score his previous film, *Berberian Sound Studio*, Peter Strickland employed the services of Broadcast to invoke the occult power of the film's horror soundtrack. For his follow-up, the director has engaged Faris Badwan and Rachel Zeffira's Cat's Eyes project, who bring harpsichords, flutes and stately synth drones to the party. It's less Radiophonic Workshop than Broadcast's work: "Night Crickets", for instance, glides along on dappled strings. Michael Nyman's elegant, pulsing scores are evoked on "Requiem..." and "Black Madonna", while "Coat Of Arms", with soft vocals and mournful oboe, moves with a quiet dignity. Only the title piece – retro-rustic folk-psych – feels like pastiche. **MICHAEL BONNER**



## BENJAMIN CLEMENTINE *At Least For Now*

VIRGIN

Barefoot troubadour combines French influences with London roots

**7/10**

The enigmatic Benjamin Clementine was born in London but discovered in Paris, where he'd fled an unhappy home and earned a living busking. His songs are simple – sparse and piano-led – leaving plenty of room for clever, self-referencing lyrics and stunning vocals, which he wields dramatically, with confidence and invention. Taking elements from jazz and pop, and also the French lyrical tradition of Gainsbourg, Léo Ferré and Georges Brassens, it could all feel a little too knowing were the songs not so exceptionally strong: "Cornerstone" is a sensitive gem, "London" a bravura, conflicted anthem, and "Adios" sparkles and swoons.

PETER WATTS



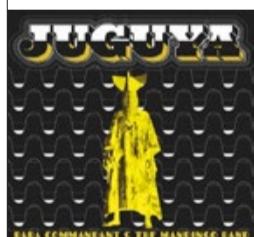
## HANNAH COHEN *Pleasure Boy*

BELLA UNION

Tearful close-up for camera-savvy chanteuse

Doing Chan Marshall's journey from lugubrious singer-songwriter to model in reverse, non-native New Yorker Hannah Cohen has followed up lonesome debut, *Child Bride*, with something more lush. A moderately gratuitous wallow in post-break-up melancholy, *Pleasure Boy* melds Cat Power's ennui with a more stylised, Bryan Ferry-ish self-regard; "You were the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen," Cohen keens on "Claremont", slyly glancing in the mirror, no doubt. The flouncing is picture perfect on "Keepsake" and the Ferlinghetti jazzbo of "Queen Of Ice", while glassy surfaces mask more intriguing depths on "Lilacs" – Beach House under mild sedation.

JIM WIRTH



## BABA COMMANDANT & THE MANDINGO BAND *Juguya*

SUBLIME FREQUENCIES

**8/10**

Gritty post-Afrobeat from Burkina Faso

Sublime Frequencies have been on a roll the last few years, particularly when it comes to finding new groups from West Africa. On *Juguya*, Baba Commandant & The Mandingo Band, who are based in Burkina Faso, south of Mali, stretch out from classic Afrobeat, sourcing both lightness and heaviness in equal measure from their peers: the fluid music's rhythms lift from the ground, while the guitar and ngoni score the sky with interlocking patterns. Commandant's music is particularly potent when electrified but allowing for space: see the wild six-minute "Waso", which dubs the mix, sax tangling with furiously propulsive electric guitar.

JON DALE



## THE CRIBS *For All My Sisters*

SONIC BLEW

Wakefield's power-pop trio return

When The Cribs first emerged, they seemed to fill a void left by The Libertines, but since then their roughly urgent pop has increasingly channelled US punks like Weezer and Green Day. Which is why an air of inevitability hangs over their sixth LP. Produced by Ric Ocasek, it comes roaring out of the traps with the grittily effervescent "Finally Free" – Gary Jarman's larynx-shredding power as impressive as ever – and cranks through 12 songs, all featuring thickly burbled guitars and endlessly see-sawing riffs that nod at Slash. It's honest and immediate, but predictable. Only "Simple Story" really breaks the pattern, by setting a slightly breathless narrative in cavernous space.

SHARON O'CONNELL

**6/10**

SHARON O'CONNELL



## CRYING LION *The Golden Boat*

HONEST JON'S

Eccentric madrigals, recorded in a Govan church

With Trembling Bells, Lavinia Blackwall and Alex Neilson have spent the past few years forging a wayward update of late '60s British folk-rock. Now, perhaps bravely, they've chosen to attempt the sort of raw harmony singing once purveyed by The Watersons and The Young Tradition. Crying Lion pairs the duo with Harry Campbell and Katy Cooper from another Scottish folk group, Muldoon's Picnic, along with odd bits of brass and strings. Like Trembling Bells, the results are idiosyncratic rather than strictly traditional – not least on the title track, where Neilson namechecks Sir John Soane and El Greco, and his bandmates dissolve into an echoing, Linda Perhacs-style banshee drone.

JOHN MULVEY

**7/10**



## CEDELL DAVIS *Last Man Standing*

SUNYATA

A surprisingly modernistic blues set from an old hand

CeDell Davis – an 88-year-old, wheelchair-bound blues veteran from Arkansas – is often marketed as some Rutles-style relic from the ancient Delta. His music, however, draws from every stage in the development of the blues, from Robert Johnson to Jack White. Opening track "Catfish" is a piece of Hendrix-style fuzz-rock powered by a "When The Levee Breaks" drum groove; while there's some limpid country blues where he plays his guitar in open-tuning using a knife as a slide. Davis' speaking voice – showcased on the autobiographical "Mississippi Story" – is slurred and indistinct, but his singing voice has a power and clarity that belies his age.

JOHN LEWIS

**7/10**



## Hannah Cohen



► "Making something beautiful out of something devastating," Hannah Cohen tells *Uncut* as she sums up the essence of her second LP, *Pleasure Boy* – a record of meaningful glances, languid ennui and "relationships going ass-up". Tapped up by a model scout while she was playing soccer in her native California (she plays midfield), the 28-year-old moved to New York to do fashion work but ended up as a singer-songwriter. Steered through her first album, 2012's *Child Bride*, by sometime National sideman Thomas 'Doveman' Bartlett, she asserted herself more this time around. "This time I was battling him for every sound," she says. "I couldn't let it just be drums, bass guitars." It isn't. Lana Del Rey shot through with Claudine Longet, *Pleasure Boy*'s glassy surfaces and sedate pace are very much at odds with the music Cohen was listening to at the time. "Old disco edits and stuff," she says. "I keep threatening to do a disco funk record. Like Severed Heads. I listen to everything. Brazilian Bossa Nova. Tropicália..." That channel-hopping outlook augurs well. "I am always morphing into something else or growing," Cohen says. "I don't think this is going to be my signature me. Right now, this is what it is." JIM WIRTH



## DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE *Kintsugi*

ATLANTIC

A postmillennial variation on *Shoot Out The Lights*

**8/10**

This brutally beautiful breakup album was tracked live off the floor at producer Rich Costey's LA studio, and the tautly controlled power of the performances meshes with the barely harnessed emotion of Ben Gibbard's impeccably sculpted, tortured lyrics. Gibbard sings with withering immediacy, imbuing simple lines like "When we kiss in the baggage claim" with unbearable poignancy. Ceding the production chair for the first time, founding member Chris Walla delivers guitar and keys parts on "Black Moon", "The Ghosts Of Beverly Drive" and elsewhere that shoot right through Gibbard's broken heart. In the right hands, the pain-begets-art hypothesis still applies.

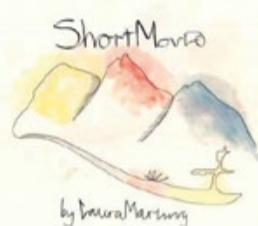
BUD SCOPPA

## LAURA MARLING

### Short Movie

VIRGIN

Singer's LA album takes giant steps. *By Laura Snakes*



**8/10**

AS A RESULT of her comparative youth and towering musical talent, it's rarely noted that Laura Marling can be a very funny songwriter. Dryness is her strongest comic mode: she often sends up her own tendency towards capital-R romance, though usually it's disappointing men who receive her withering glances. At the end of the closing number on 2013's *Once I Was An Eagle*, a song cycle lamenting another relationship, she remarked, "Thank you naïvety for failing me again/He was my next verse". Marling's acknowledgement of heartbreak as songwriting chattel recalled her oft-cited forebear Joni Mitchell introducing a new song, "Love Or Money", on her 1974 live album, *Miles Of Aisles*: "It's a portrait of disappointment, my favourite theme."

*Short Movie*, Marling's fifth album in seven years, starts similarly. On "Warrior" she casts herself as a steed throwing off an unworthy rider who would only abandon her on his path to self-discovery anyway. She cites bloodied tracks and horses with no name, these cosmic Americana jokes about solitude that she accompanies with a swarming fog of sound effects and weighty fingerpicked acoustic guitar that wouldn't have sounded amiss on Steve Gunn's *Way Out Weather*. "Tasting the memory of pain I have endured/Wondering where am I to go?/Well looking back on a bloody trail, you think that I should know", she sings distantly.

So far, so droll; another beguiling entry in Marling's symbolic scheme, where, as with Bill Callahan, the attributes and identities of various recurring creatures are rarely made clear. But then immediately after comes "False Hope", where a seasick groan of strings gives way to her plaintive question, "Is it still okay that I don't know how to be alone?" and a charging account of a crisis during a torrential New York City storm. For about the first time in her catalogue, Laura Marling sounds panicky about the future in the same way that most 25-year-olds are.

*Short Movie* is Marling's LA album, where she moved following the release of ...*Eagle*, and returned from a few months ago. Having rarely spent more than two or three weeks in one place since becoming famous aged 16, she wanted to give permanence a shot. What initially ensued was a period of indulgent Californian solitude – abandoning music, spending nights alone at Joshua Tree and experimenting with psychedelic transcendental practices. But before long, the rudderless life began to repel her and she had to return to earth.

On this record, Marling begins to resemble another sceptical LA transplant, the gimlet-eyed writer Joan Didion. Quite literally on the bluesy "Gurdjieff's Daughter" and the intermittently breezy and grave "Don't Let Me Bring You Down", both of which cut to LA's contradictory heart, where



#### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**  
Laura Marling  
**Recorded at:** Urchin  
Studios, London  
**Personnel includes:**  
Matt Ingram, Ruth de  
Turberville, Nick Pini  
and Tom Hobden

spirituality coexists with cutthroat ambition. Almost every song is rife with cynical rhetorical questions: she sounds jaded as she dismantles the motives of deceptive lovers on the rootsy, racing "Strange" and "Feel Your Love", a baroque tangle of guitar strings and a low cello drone. The chorus to "How Can I" does sound unfortunately like LeAnn Rimes' "How Do I Live", but it contains a calm distillation of Marling's intention to reclaim her own youth on her own terms: "I'm taking more risks now/I'm stepping out of line/I put up my fists now until I get what's mine." Two songs later, the title track races to a warm stream of

piercing strings and jaunty fiddle, and her comic jabs return, piercing the anxiety that she briefly cultivated in LA about whether she was making a valuable contribution to the world: "I got up in the world today/Wondered who it was I could save/Who do you think you are?/Just a girl that can play guitar". Marling's fifth takes vast steps forward musically, as ever. It's more defiant and distinct than anything she's done before, testament to her first go at self-production. But what really sets it apart from her catalogue is her desire to break the cycle, to let go and let herself be young. Next verse? It's anyone's guess, including hers.

## Q&A

Laura Marling

**A**fter your six months off music, what drew you back in? I got a bit worthy about whether being a musician was worthwhile to the planet: "Who do I think I am that I can just get up every day and play the guitar? That's bullshit, I should be doing something more important." But actually, that was the most self-important thought I've ever had, and only after being away from music for six months did I come back and think like, 'Actually, it's pretty fucking great what I do, and I'm pretty fucking lucky to be doing it.' So my ego got a good bashing and it gave me proper perspective.

You've mentioned realising that you are actually young. Did you forget that because of constant remarks on your maturity, or something within you?

Probably both. Starting somewhere else completely fresh let me feel quite young. I've been having to conduct myself with the relatively functional level of grown-up-ness since I was 16, and I don't think I let all that go but I allowed myself to take less control over things. That's how I felt young again – just to stop trying to manipulate the world to how I think it should be.

It's your first album that sounds panicky... I hadn't thought of it like that but that's definitely how I felt. I felt suddenly awake, I felt like I was living in *Blade Runner*. I was like, "Oh, holy shit, everything's fucked and I am just one person in a giant country." *INTERVIEW: LAURA SNAPE*



## THE DREAMING SPIRES

### Searching For The Supertruth Clubhouse

Charming indie jangle from talented Bennett brothers

**8/10**

Following 2012's excellent debut, *Brothers In Brooklyn*, siblings Robin and Joey Bennett have pulled off another impressive set, with lovely country slow-burners like "Easy Rider" and "We Used To Have Parties" (the latter featuring subtle backing from Sarah Cracknell) sharing space with the paisley underground jangle of "Still Believe In You" and "If I Didn't Know You". The Byrds circa 1968 are a clear touchstone, referenced in the harmonising folk of "Searching For The Supertruth" and the cosmic chime of "Dusty In Memphis", while the crunchy, neatly lyrical relentlessness of "Strange Glue" brings all these influences into one fantastic package.

PETER WATTS



## ERASE ERRATA

### Lost Weekend

UNDER THE SUN

Dissonant Californians back for first album in nine years

Sleater-Kinney aren't the only post-riot-grrrl trio to decide 2015 might be a good time to take another swing at it. Traditionally more awkward than most of their ilk, Erase Errata's angular, improvisatory racket – think The Ex, The Contortions, Beefheart – feels breezily accessible here, conducted with tunes and hooks upfront. Playful opener "History Of Handclaps" is essentially Le Tigre with a trumpet, "Watch Your Language" fills out their febrile rattle with splashes of analog synth, and 100-second blasts like "My Life In Shadows" and "Watch Your Language" prove they haven't lost their skill for a breathless brevity. Only 21 minutes long, but on the bright side, you leave wanting more.

LOUIS PATTISON



## ERRORS

### Lease Of Life

ROCK ACTION

Expansive fourth album from rocktronic Scots

It's hard to say whether art-rock circuit-benders

Errors' trip to record this latest album on the Hebridean island of Jura – where the KLF claimed to have burned a million quid – had any bearing on its outcome, but something has had a profound effect on the Glasgow trio. Loved-up and free-flowing, *Lease Of Life* is a Balearic synth odyssey in thrall to Tangerine Dream – see sax-soaked, 14-minute finale "Through The Knowledge Of Those Who Observe Us" – and finds Steev Livingstone and co drastically revamping their ankle-biting electro. Rousing epics "Dull Care" and "Genuflection" are soaked in hearty man tears.

PIERS MARTIN

**7/10**



## EVANS THE DEATH

### Expect Delays

FORTUNA POP!

London indie-rock quartet gets second wind

**7/10**

Building on the promise of their self-titled debut of two years ago, Evans The Death – whose name comes from the undertaker in Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* – throw themselves deeper into the grittier end of post punk and fuzzed-up '90s alt.rock on their second album. The departure of bassist Alanna McArdle to front Welsh noiseniks Joanna Gruesome doesn't seem to have dented the band's bruised vitality and pleasing lyrical spikiness, best showcased here on "Just 60,000 More Days 'Til I Die", a rare contemplative track in which singer Katherine Whitaker longs for an early demise.

FIONA STURGES

## HOW TO BUY... BILLIE HOLIDAY

Lady Day's finest collected



### The Rough Guide To Billie Holiday

WORLD MUSIC NETWORK, 2010

Most of Holiday's finest recordings preceded the LP age – this 20-tracker compiles material released on 78s between 1936-49. Essential standards ("Strange Fruit", "God Bless The Child", "Summertime") sit alongside less familiar classics such as "Guilty" and "Gloomy Sunday". A context-setting bonus disc features tracks by contemporaries and rivals, from Ella Fitzgerald to Dinah Washington.

**9/10**

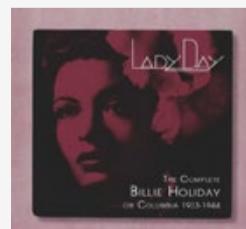


### Lady Sings The Blues

CLEF, 1956

Released simultaneously with her autobiography of the same name and recorded with top sidemen from the Goodman, Ellington, Basie and Gillespie bands. Mid-'50s remakes of songs such as "Good Morning Heartache" and "No Good Man" betray some vocal deterioration, but "Strange Fruit" sounds more harrowing than ever.

**9/10**



### Lady Day: The Complete Billie Holiday On Columbia 1933-1944

COLUMBIA, 2001

The big one – 10 discs containing 230 tracks of vocal rhapsody, backed by the finest players of the age. On release in 2001, the box retailed for a three-figure sum and won a Grammy as best historical album. Now on Amazon at about £16.

**10/10**

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## FAIRPORT CONVENTION

### Myths & Heroes

MATTY GROVES

Thirtieth studio album from timeless folk-rock veterans

The Fairports are like your favourite old aunt – although life has moved on and you seldom find time to visit, there's a warm glow in knowing they're still around. Guitarist Simon Nicol and bassist Dave Pegg are survivors from the early-'70s lineup and the album cover is a smart update on 1970's *Full House*. But these days it's the literate folk-rock compositions of lead singer Chris Leslie that dominate, mostly about historical subjects such as the tragic Victorian heroine Grace Darling. Fiddler Ric Saunders enthusiastically fulfils Swarb's role and if the results are amiable rather than arresting, at this far down the road, that's surely enough.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## REBECCA FERGUSON

### Lady Sings The Blues

SONY

Billie Holiday centenary homage from million-selling *X Factor* winner

Billed as a 'reinterpretation of Lady Day's classic album', Ferguson's collection is no such thing, for few of these songs actually appeared on Holiday's 1956 *Lady Sings The Blues* set – "Summertime", for example, predicated it by 20 years. Whether it's factual inaccuracy or dishonest marketing, it leaves a bad taste – a pity, given Ferguson's stunning voice. Her soulful phrasing on "Fine And Mellow" and "My Man" elevate her to the top tier of contemporary R&B singing, while the classy arrangements mercifully eschew brash 'updating' in favour of jazz-age authenticity. But why not simply call it a tribute album?

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## FYFE

### Control

BELIEVE RECORDINGS

Classically trained comeback kid reboots himself as an avant-soul crooner

At just 24, Paul Dixon has already survived various musical ventures and a failed major-label deal. Back with a fresh sound and a new alias, the classically trained Dixon makes a highly assured debut in *Control*, rebranding himself as a digital-age R&B crooner in James Blake or FKA Twigs mode, sighing over skeletal percussion and jazzy tonal shifts in a silken sob that breaks into woozy falsetto with ease. Sometimes these futuristic robo-pop reveries are less interesting than their glitchy ingredients, like the pixelated beats in "Holding On" or the whooshing metallic shudders in "Polythene Love", but Dixon clearly has finesse and imagination to spare.

STEPHEN DALTON

# New Albums



## NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS

### Chasing Yesterday

SOUR MASH

Inside the mind of Noel Gallagher, aged 47  
**Chasing Yesterday**

**6/10**

Noel Gallagher in apparently reflective mood. "Behind me lie the years that I mis-spent," he reveals on "The Dying Of The Light". Such flashes of soul-searching weave through *Chasing Yesterday*, whose vibe is established by the pensive opening strum and *sotto voce* delivery of "Riverman". Elsewhere, "In The Heat Of The Moment" strives for a Kasabian stomp. The best songs date from Noel's aborted collaboration with Amorphous Androgynous: "The Right Stuff" is carried along by a nifty percussive shuffle and lovely layered brass that makes you wish the entire album carried their production imprint.

MICHAEL BONNER



## DYLAN GARDNER

### Adventures In Real Time

WARNER BROS.

Teen prodigy is a kid in a candy store, but there's savvy behind the sugar rush

**7/10**

Gardner, an 18-year-old, LA-based bedroom savant, namechecks John and Yoko on "Let's Get Started", the opener of his debut LP, but he's clearly a Paul guy at heart. This set of shiny, happy hormonal pop songs fuses the formative music of his '60s avatars with modern-day digitised radio music – the kid is a rock scholar, having absorbed every detail of *Recording The Beatles*, but he's also very much of his own time. Gardner, whose father was in an '80s college-rock band, has also absorbed the work of Ben Folds and Matthew Sweet, indicating that he recognises his lineage and mission as a fourth-generation neo-classicist. And the beat goes on.

BUD SCOPPA



## JOHN T GAST

### Excerpts

PLANET MU

Underground techno pulsations from mystery man

Another mysterious emission from the orbit of the wilfully obscure band Hype Williams. Here, former Inga Copeland collaborator Gast has struck out with a hugely accomplished and banging debut LP. As you might expect there is lo-fi dub dread, brewing in the slow skank of "White Noise/Dys", "Infection" and the minimalist opener "Shanti-ites". But there is also gorgeously cheap rap production in "Ceremony", and two absolute dancefloor slayers. "Congress" is deep house lit by mall neon, while "Claim Your Limbs" features the kind of addictive melodic curlicue you find in minimal techno but surrounded with echo and decay.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

**8/10**



## GHOSTPOET

### Shedding Skin

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

Mercury-nominated MC and poet teams up with a rock trio

Obaro Ejimiwe's first two albums as Ghostpoet were laptop creations, where the electronic textures matched his elliptical poetry and his slurring, often indistinct speech-song delivery. Here he's backed by an orthodox guitar/bass/drums trio, which sometimes renders inert his unorthodox rhymes about tea and bacon sarnies and cash machines and not being arsed to get out of bed. The standout tracks feature guest vocalists: Melanie De Biasio adds a post-punk neurosis to the title track, Nadine Shah assists the spooky Portishead atmospherics of "That Ring Down The Drain Kind Of Feeling", while Maximo Park's Paul Smith deadpans throughout the slow-burning "Be Right Back, Moving House".

JOHN LEWIS

**6/10**



## CHILLY GONZALES

### Chambers

GENTLE THREAT

Daft Punk affiliate shows his classical chops

The Canadian maverick's whimsical journey round the music biz reached a critical point in 2013, when he played a key role on Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories*. That band's arpeggios are referenced in "Prelude To A Feud" here, reformatted as romantic piano flurries. After a pranksterish rapping phase, Gonzales' career now focuses on his crypto-classical work, with *Chambers* a string-assisted sequel to two elegant *Solo Piano* sets. Gonzales' conceptual stunts – arch dedications to John McEnroe and King Henry VIII, his claim that "Sample This" is based on a Southern hip-hop rhythm – never detract from the music's inherent prettiness; only a closing vocal ballad ("Myth Me") really breaks the prevailing serenity.

JOHN MULVEY

**7/10**



## STEVE GUNN & THE BLACK TWIG PICKERS

### Seasonal Hire

THRILL JOCKEY

America's rising guitar star leads avant-roots jam

The next headline release in Steve Gunn's relentless

schedule is a duo album with Kurt Vile, due springtime. For now, though, this'll do nicely: a hook-up with Virginia's reliably ornery Black Twig Pickers, that finds a common ground we might usefully term psychedelic Appalachian. Gunn has collaborated with sundry Twigs before: a sparser "Dive For The Pearl" figured on his 2014 duo LP with frontman Mike Gangloff, while banjoist Nathan Bowles moonlights in Gunn's road band. Old friendships contribute to the good vibes, and an atmosphere that's at once rambunctious and exploratory: "Trailways Ramble", last attempted on Gunn's 2013 solo set, *Time Off*, is a brackish highlight.

JOHN MULVEY

**8/10**



## THE JULIANA HATFIELD THREE

### Whatever, My Love

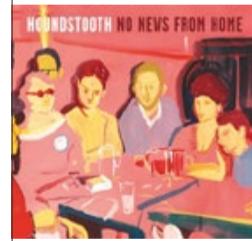
AMERICAN LAUNDROMAT

Party like it's 1993: after 22 years, indie-pop hitmakers play like they never left

With her disarming, heart-on-sleeve, matter-of-fact persona fully intact, Juliana Hatfield leads her trio through the true follow-up to their first and only album, the Billboard Heatseekers chart-topper *Become What You Are*. The intricacies and frustrations of relationships (plus a smattering of dogs) dominate, while the arrangements are kept crisp and simple ("Ordinary Guy" is positively Ramones-esque). "I'm Shy", with Hatfield leaning into the lyric as only someone who's lived it can, and "Invisible", a rocker on the plight of the unrequited, highlight a respectable comeback.

LUKE TORN

**7/10**



## THE GO! TEAM

### The Scene Between

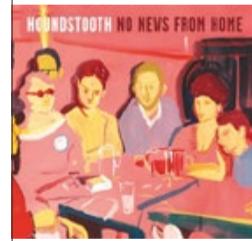
MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

More sunshine and samples from the Brighton sextet

On their first album in four years, Brighton's The Go! Team don't appear to have lost their joie de vivre, cleaving as they do to their formula of bubblegum indie-pop replete with samples and sound effects (the LP opens with the crack of a beer can) and upbeat Saint Etienne-esque vocals. If it all seems a little too familiar, the hooks here are undeniable. While the anthemic quality of the title track suggests that Ian Parton and co's aspirations remain undimmed after 11 years, "Catch Me On The Rebound" shows they've also retained their wit as they chronicle the sugar-rush of fleeting romance.

FIONA STURGES

**7/10**



## OUNDSTOOTH

### No News From Home

NO QUARTER

Beguiling second from Portland indie rockers

Houndstooth's 2013 debut was something of an overlooked gem, a mildly

psychedelic, diffident set that kept promising to freak out, but never quite did. *No News...* more or less repeats the formula, with equally pleasing results. Again, the focal point is Katie Bernstein's nonchalant voice, as endearingly affectless as Courtney Barnett. Her band are not quite as modest as they first appear, though, with a limber, chugging rhythm section and a resourceful guitarist (and occasional singer), John Gnorski, who's evidently learned plenty from Richard Thompson: check the exceptional "Bliss Boat"'s wind-out, and "Witching Hour", a late VU-style ramalam that could've been productively extended for another five minutes.

JOHN MULVEY



## IBEYI

### Ibeyi

XL

French-Cuban sisters make their debut, with a little help from XL MD Lisa-Kaindé and Naomi Diaz are twins, and daughters of the late

**8/10**

Miguel "Angá" Diaz, conga player for the Buena Vista Social Club. They have a new musical mentor, though, in the shape of XL boss Richard Russell, who previously brought his production hand to swansongs by Gil Scott-Heron and Bobby Womack. The brilliant "Oya" places the sisters' voices front and centre, swinging from Björk-like vocal gymnastics into a Yoruban spiritual. Elsewhere, Russell winds the pair's *cajón* and *batá* beats into wonky boom-clap rhythms that smartly complement the romantic "Ghosts" or "Think Of You", a nobly heartfelt tribute to their father.

LOUIS PATTISON



## I'M KINGFISHER

### Avian

KITE

Lugubrious Swede in full flight

Now into his second decade as a solo artist, Thomas Denver Jonsson remains one of Europe's hidden prizes. This fifth solo album, the follow-up to 2010's bluesier *Arctic*, sees him dish out some dolorous folk-country, softly embellished with strings and discreet ensemble play from a variety of local helpers. What lingers most is his pale, expressive voice, not a million miles from the late Jason Molina or Centro-matic's Will Johnson, giving these songs a tangible sense of longing. "My Beak May Break" and "Lovely Myra's Transmission Coat" are as good as they sound, while "Lion's Share" is an unexpected foray into electronica.

ROB HUGHES

**7/10**



## JAM CITY

### Dream A Garden

NIGHT SLUGS

Concept album of ghostly anti-capitalist funk-pop

Assuredly not your average dance producer bloke, Jack Latham's 2012 debut album as Jam City, *Classical Curves*, summoned up an '80s clubbing fantasy that was at once glamorous, poignant and brutal. *Dream A Garden* is a much more personal and political record, addressing the search for love and fulfilment under the yoke of a late-capitalism machine that teaches us to hate ourselves and each other. Accordingly, Latham's songs – frail, naïve funk-pop workouts, evoking The Blue Nile and Prince ballads – are blasted by digital debris, forcing you to strain to pick up their nuances. It's exasperating at first, but the rewards are there for the dedicated dreamer.

SAM RICHARDS

**8/10**



## JARBOE & HELEN MONEY

### Jarboe & Helen Money

AURORA BOREALIS

Ex-Swan and Anthrax/Mono collaborator in liminal song cycle

Michael Gira's Swans may be back in the ascendant, but it's worth remembering that the other key figure in the Swans' initial tenure, Jarboe, has been slowly, patiently and fiercely marking out her own musical territory for decades now. A prodigious collaborator, this album with Helen Money, aka cellist Alison Chesley, is one of her finer efforts of late. It's short, and many of the arrangements feel disarmed, with simple, graceful settings for piano, cello and electronics, like on stately opener "For My Father", or deep cuts like the coal-black drone of closing "Every Confidence", Jarboe's voice spectral and detailed.

JONDALÉ

Tobias Jesso Jr

WE'RE  
NEW  
HERE



► Although Tobias Jesso Jr's debut, *Goon*, is full of sad songs that wryly dissect the death of a relationship, the Canadian newcomer is keen to point out that the album is not an accurate reflection of his personality. On a recent press trip to Europe, journalists were taken aback when they met him, he says. "I guess they were expecting me to be a bit melancholic like the record and were surprised to see that I'm a pretty happy guy for the most part."

First and foremost a songwriter, Jesso, 29, cut his teeth as a bassist in two questionable outfits (indie-rockers The Sessions and failed popstar Melissa Cavatti) before a family illness brought him back to Vancouver in 2012 after four years adrift in Los Angeles. At home he started to write on his sister's piano, and these songs eventually became *Goon*, a classy collection of MOR break-up ballads co-produced by The Black Keys' Patrick Carney and ex-Girls man Chet 'JR' White. So if all goes well with *Goon* – "I liked the word; it was a way to make the record not so serious" – who would Jesso like to write for? "There's a long list," he says. "Adele's been at the top for a while."

PIERS MARTIN



## TOBIAS JESSO JR

### Goon

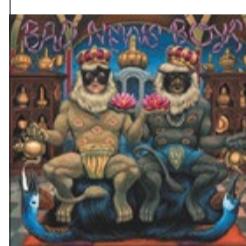
TRUE PANTHER

Timeless heartbreak from Vancouver crooner

**8/10**

Tobias Jesso Jr looks to have rolled out of bed and delivered a classic break-up album. The tall Canadian is a piano-playing singer-songwriter in the vein of Randy Newman or Harry Nilsson, whose time spent hopelessly hustling in Los Angeles during the end of a relationship is chronicled with charm and economy on his handsome debut, *Goon*. True, you've heard the likes of "Can't Stop Thinking About You" and "Without You" many times before – "Can We Still Be Friends" might be early-'70s McCartney – but it takes some skill to make these sentimental songs sound this effortless. Just don't mention Ben Folds Five.

PIERS MARTIN



## THE KING KHAN & BBQ SHOW

### Bad News Boys

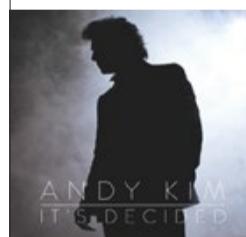
IN THE RED

Knockabout garage fun from knockout live act

**7/10**

Whether backed by The Shriners or working, as here, with Mark Sultan aka BBQ, Berlin-based Canadian King Khan is an enormously charismatic proponent of classic 1960s garage punk-rock: never encumbered by angst, just romance. On *Bad News Boys*, there are rickety melancholic waltzes, rickety mid-tempo chuggers, rickety blues swaggering, and rickety teenage thrashers like "DFO", which stands for "Diarrhoea Fuck Off" – and all of it with exactly the sloppily cooing vocal harmonies and chord changes you expect. Entirely unoriginal, but the sort of thing that, 55 years after it was invented, it's still hard to get enough of. An essential live act, too.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



## ANDY KIM

### It's Decided

ARTS AND CRAFTS

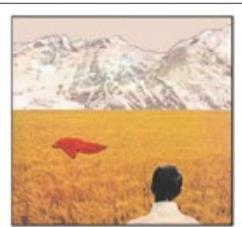
'60s popster turns ruminative with Kevin Drew

**8/10**

You may have cursed Andy Kim without knowing, for it is he that wrote 1969 bubblegum novelty hit "Sugar, Sugar" – he himself also topped the US charts a few years later with "Rock Me Gently". Now he's having a Cash-like resurrection, with Broken Social Scene's Kevin Drew his Rick Rubin. Kim has a wonderful voice, somewhere between Mike Scott, Josh Rouse, Beck and Bob Dylan, and he syncs beautifully with Drew's ramshackle sentimentality. Drum machines and brass add a little range to the prettily strummed ethereal balladry, which is at its best on the anthemic "Sail On" and the cutely soulful "(I've) Been Here Before".

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

# New Albums



## LADY LAMB THE BEEKEEPER

After  
MOM+POP

Maine songwriter imbues familiar Americana with unique voice

This is officially Lady Lamb The Beekeeper's second

album, but really it's more like her seventh. Since Aly Spaltro began recording in Maine basements eight years ago, she's honed her wandering ukulele ditties into a heavier brogue rich with Americana nous and garage band soul – somewhere between Alabama Shakes, Neko Case and Ty Segall. While *After* lacks the appealing chaos of predecessor *Ripely Pine*, it compensates with bright choruses ("Milk Duds", "Dear Arkansas Daughter") that contrast with a dark, decaying lyrical scheme. "Vena Cava" chronicles a relationship breakdown in terms of exploded ribcages.

LAURA SNAPES

**7/10**



## MARK LANEGAN BAND

A Thousand Miles Of Midnight: Phantom Radio Remixes

HEAVENLY RECORDINGS

**5/10**

Lanegan's chart-denting masterwork retooled

Given Mark Lanegan's currently prolific output, a remixed version of last year's LP *Phantom Radio* might seem superfluous. Certainly, there's a lot of gratuitous noodling here, not least in UNKLE's version of "The Killing Season" which shows that, without Lanegan's biblical anguish, there's not much left to play with. However, Mark Stewart's treatment of "Death Trip To Tulsa", which retains both Lanegan's croon and the air of dread, is a more worthwhile exercise, as is Tomas Barfod's ambient recalibration of "Dry Iced". All in all, *A Thousand Miles...* is a diverting curio, but no substitute for the original.

FIONA STURGES



## LIGHTNING BOLT

Fantasy Empire

THRILL JOCKEY

Rhode Island art-metal duo's first in five years

Over 20 years, the furiously pummelling and fuzz-slathered, overdriven

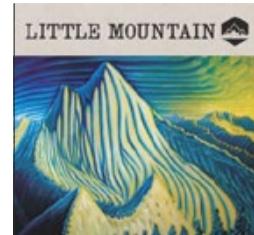
noise rock of this drums/bass duo has become almost a template of its type. So much so, that to avoid repeating themselves on their sixth album, Brians Chippendale and Gibson changed their MO, using live looping, recording in a pro studio and mixing post-performance. The result is unmistakeably LB – thrillingly primal and intuitive, with laser-cut drum patterns and riffs hammered to the precisely judged point of obliteration – but their usual murk has cleared, most strikingly on 11-minute closer "Snow White (& The Seven Dwarves Fans)", which joins the dots between Megadeth, Melvins and Mark Stewart & The Maffia.

SHARON O'CONNELL

**8/10**

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SHARON O'CONNELL



## LITTLE MOUNTAIN

Little Mountain

FLY AGARIC RECORDS

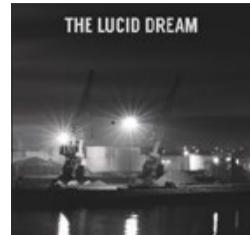
Morcheeba co-founder's new band radiates California vibes

Ross Godfrey's love for

the folk-rock sounds of Laurel Canyon has always been evident in his day job but, with his brother's hip-hop flavourings absent, this new project allows his passion to prevail. Slide guitar consequently dominates Little Mountain's debut, with opener "Giving It Up" and "Hide Me From The Darkness" full of laidback charm. Godfrey's wife, meanwhile – Amanda Zamolo, who sang sweetly on Morcheeba's 2008 release, *Dive Deep* – and Ste Forshaw, whose Joe Cocker vocals they first heard as he busked on London's South Bank, contribute convincing West Coast harmonies, especially on the serene "Catch Me".

WYNDHAM WALLACE

**8/10**



## THE LUCID DREAM

The Lucid Dream

HOLY ARE YOU?

Terrific second album from English psych-rockers

Cumbria's The Lucid Dream have a sound as big

as Scafell Pike, not so much loud as incredibly solid, building up layers of quivering keys, acid-edged jams and whimsical, fluttery vocals against a rock steady rhythm section that keeps everything intact. This is a splendid second album, which sees the band continue their yen for experimentation, trying out Krautrock ("The Darkest Day/Head Musik"), Shadows-meets-JAMC psych ("You & I"), no wave ("Morning Breeze"), dub ("Unchained Dub") and near-as-damn Suicide homages "Cold Killer" and "Moonstruck", but always under control and never forgetting to maintain a distinctive ear for melody amid the din.

PETER WATTS

**8/10**

## HOW TO BUY... POST-'90S MADONNA



### Ray Of Light

WARNER BROS, 1998

All but written off after mid-'90s potboilers *Bedtime Stories* and *Evita*, Madonna's spiritual reawakening as a techno mystic for *Ray Of Light* had a lot riding on it. Luckily, William Orbit's signature blend of pulsing electronica ("Ray Of Light") and trip-hop cyber ballads ("Frozen") proved priceless. At 67 minutes, it's long enough for a decent yoga session, too.

**8/10**



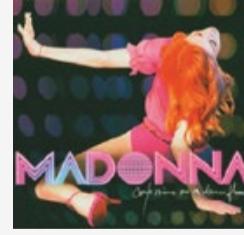
### Music

WARNER BROS, 2000

Straight back in the studio after *Ray Of Light* with Orbit and Parisian post-punk veteran turned electro sage Mirwais Ahmadzaï, the stylish *Music* reinforced

Madge's connection with the dancefloor and also brought country elements to the table, including a cover of "American Pie". And, er, who can forget Ali G's appearance in the video for the flashy title track.

**7/10**



### Confessions On A Dance Floor

WARNER BROS, 2005

Loading up on poppers and, in a master stroke, recruiting English synthpop prodigy Stuart Price, Madge followed the lacklustre *American Life* with this irrefutably camp hi-NRG romp. Sure, its Abba-sampling smash "Hung Up" masked much of *Confessions'* padding, but this fruity homage to '70s and '80s disco resonated profoundly with fans.

**8/10**



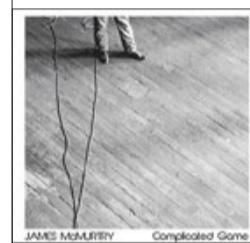
### Rebel Heart

INTERSCOPE

## JAMES MCMURTRY

Complicated Game

COMPLICATED GAME



Texas poet; features final appearance from the late Ian McLagan

Through the '90s, McMurtry composed some of the fiercest protest songs ever ("We Can't Make It Here", say) confirming his reputation as pop's most literary working songwriter. *Complicated Game* is his first studio record in six years, and though it backs away, ever so slightly, from upfront politics, and farther still into quietly elegant acoustic arrangements, McMurtry's flair for the cinematic shines brighter than ever. Sharp character sketches and gritty storytelling, hard times and dead ends dominate each song (especially the seven-minute, would-be rogue fisherman's tale "Carlisle's Haul") spinning out blunt, beatific lines on the times.

LUKE TORN

**9/10**

## MADONNA

Rebel Heart

INTERSCOPE

Material Girl bares all on patchy 13th

Recent Madonna albums have tended to recycle clichés and trends – detrimentally in



**6/10**

MDNA's case – in a bid to keep the 56-year-old at pop's cutting edge. *Rebel Heart* almost gets the balance right, but at 19 tracks, most in the industrial party-pop style of cheeseball producers Diplo and Avicii, there's simply too much going on. Booming, off-kilter electro-rap cuts written with Kanye West called "S.E.X.", "Illuminati" and "Iconic" (featuring a Mike Tyson cameo) are certainly bracing, while on "Joan Of Arc" and "Veni Vidi Vici" she's candidly confessional. Ultimately, the message seems to be, she's a survivor – and she just about gets through this.

PIERS MARTIN

# SAM LEE & FRIENDS

## The Fade In Time

THE NEST COLLECTIVE

A British song collector expands the horizons of folk. By John Mulvey



8/10

ON THE OCCASION of his 70th birthday in late January, I was re-reading my 2007 interview with Robert Wyatt. We were talking about national identity and about how, in spite of all his cosmopolitan influences and interests, Wyatt is always seen as an

indelibly British artist. "No-one," he said, "has allowed and welcomed, as a xenophile, non-English cultures so wholeheartedly into their lives and into their brains and into their food more than I have. And yet I don't feel the slightest bit compromised or diluted or melted as a human being. I'm as English as my Staffordshire great-grandparents."

The second terrific album by Sam Lee, *The Fade In Time*, is driven by a fundamentally similar mindset. Lee is, notionally, a folk singer, and the 12 old songs on *The Fade In Time* are all drawn from British tradition, in many cases learned from gypsies and travellers. For all his meticulous historical research, however, Lee is not much of a traditionalist. Instead of preserving the songs in aspic, he sees his material as part of a living tradition, and subjects it to radical, internationalist treatments. So a mystical Scottish hunting song like "Jonny O'The Brine" is given a woody, organic momentum, tabla to the fore, that makes it sound like a kind of acoustic techno, then layered with horns inspired by Tajikistan wedding bands. Japanese kotos and Indian shruti boxes underpin Romany laments and tales of sacred hares. Jazz trumpets and chamber strings tangle, elegantly, with banjos and fiddles. And, on the outstanding "Bonny Bunch Of Roses", a Napoleonic ballad is played out over a crackly Serbian 78. But whatever Lee throws at the songs, their Britishness is never diminished, but critically augmented and expanded.

This kind of cross-cultural experiment is still a risky business, of course. Often, self-consciously modern updates of folk songs can end up compromised, driven by good intentions rather than sound aesthetic choices. Nevertheless, Lee and his large band of friends (among them co-producers Arthur Jeffes and Jamie Orchard-Lisle, lynchpins of the latterday Penguin Café Orchestra) prove uncannily empathetic in their decision-making; for all the ideas and juxtapositions that illuminate these songs, none feel jarring or tokenistic.

The "Fade In Time" is a phrase lifted from "Over Yonders Hill", but Lee characterises it as "the textural decays, the transience of time we pass through while listening, and that temporal trance we enter into when listening." In that spirit, Lee slips field recordings of old singers into his mix (as he did on his 2012 debut, *Ground Of Its Own*), prefacing his subtly orientalised version of the Scottish "Lord Gregory" with a moving recitation by one Charlotte Higgins, recorded in 1956. Time, cultures, national identities collapse again and again, with uncommon empathy and grace.

Lee is a charismatic figure at the heart of all this,



### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** Arthur Jeffes and Jamie Orchard-Lisle  
► **Recorded at:** The Hideaway, Hippodrome Place, St Jude's Hall, Fossil Studios, St Mark's Hall and Convento di Santa Croce, Batignano, Italy  
► **Personnel includes:**  
Sam Lee (vocals, Jew's harp, shruti box, kantele), Josh Green (perc), Steve Chadwick (trumpet, cornet, horns, conch, piano), Jonah Brody (uke, piano, koto, bass, flute), Flora Curzon (violin), Francesca Ter-Berg (cello), Cosmo Sheldrake (banjo)

as theatrically attuned as he is scholarly: other details on his CV include burlesque dancing, anthropology, performing with the Yiddish Twist Orchestra and being taught wilderness skills by Ray Mears. Occasionally, his adventurousness – and his serene, inflected voice – can recall Damon Albarn. On "Moorlough Maggie" and "The Moon Shone On My Bed Last Night", Jonah Brody's koto and ukulele – a frequently twee instrument transformed into something ethereal – are reminiscent of the way a kora added exotic, harmonious new dimensions to Albarn's *Dr Dee* project.

"Moorlough Maggie", too, exemplifies the force of Lee's own personality on these songs, laden as they are with so much inherent and applied cultural baggage. A love song that involves grand promises of flocks of sheep, herds of cows and, perhaps optimistically, about a hundred ships, "Moorlough Maggie" is taken with such measure and emotional investment that it becomes Lee's own "Song To The Siren". In the midst of it all, he provides a calm, steady anchor; ambitious, eclectic but, ultimately, dedicated to the enduring passions that resonate through this treasure trove of great song.

## Q&A

Sam Lee

**R**obert Wyatt's often described as "quintessentially English", but he's also a committed internationalist, anything but parochial. Is that something you recognise in your work?

Yes, completely so. I look at my representation of folk a little bit how we imagine a walk in an English country garden. To anyone in it, it feels unquestionably like you're in a garden in England, but in actuality we're surrounded by imported plants from all over; the Himalayan mountainsides, South American temperate forests, Roman apothecaries. I want my music to feel local, a 'home from home'. The sonic beddings which appeal to me most are ones that

have an ability to induce, to transport, to alter the state of the listener and give the sense also of being part of a much deeper and geographically indefinite place.

**Do you think the possibilities of history and tradition are underused in contemporary British music?**

'History' and 'tradition' are such loaded words. The world of contemporary music is all about the forward-thinking, the now, the new, the next. All the stuff that references '70/'80s electronica – that's history for a lot of listeners and makers. And I think that's great. I love modern sounds and the ephemerality of it. However, I think there's much more scope to marry these styles with a musical connection to the more distant past, to explore a more 'spiritual realm' – without being millstone by stereotypes. I'm interested in re-wilding and getting back to the roots of things.

# New Albums



## JESSE MALIN New York Before The War

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

### Erstwhile D Generation

In the more assaultive passages during the course of this celebration of NYC rock'n'roll – such

as "Addicted", "Oh Sheena" and "Turn Up The Mains" – you might think you were listening to Parquet Courts. Sure, Malin and his veteran crew evidence more refinement than their younger kinsmen, but both play with ecstatically adrenalised intensity. Malin would've been wise to trim the 13 songs down to 10, thus eliminating the soggy middle of this otherwise crisp platter, but the LP's meatiest tracks, also including the epic ballad "She's So Dangerous" and the Peter Buck-powered jangle-rocker "I Would Do It For You", are at once timeless and immediate.

BUD SCOPPA

**7/10**



## KEATH MEAD Sunday Dinner

COMPANY RECORDS

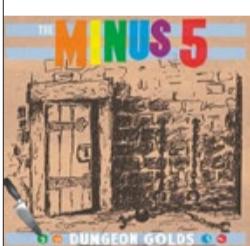
### South Carolinian's sweet'n'easy first

Given that his debut was produced by Toro Y Moi, recorded in his home studio and released on

his label, you might assume that Mead is desperately surfing a late wave of chillwave, but this unassumingly seductive set runs deeper than that. Its theme of late-adolescent innocence versus 25-year-old maturity is made most explicit on "Grow Up" and expressed in sun-struck, slacker/power pop that nods at Big Star, Paul Simon and Squeeze. But "Where I Wanna Be" and "Quiet Room" are wilder cards – the first an exercise in sweet, folkish fingerpicking that gives way to synth whooshes, the latter a psychedelic number, tricked out with electronics, that's oddly ominous.

SHARON O'CONNELL

**7/10**



## THE MINUS 5 Dungeon Golds

YEP ROC

10th disc from power pop collective, featuring Ian McLagan, Peter Buck, Jeff Tweedy

A side project dwarfing all side projects, Scott McCaughey's group now inexplicably sports a lifespan double that of The Beatles. This set combines recordings from a number of super-indie EPs, and while the ensemble always combines a bemused, tongue-in-cheek quality with a rock'n'roll fanatic's mindset, *Dungeon Golds* – spinning out smart, graceful pop hooks and hard, Dukes-Of-Stratosphere-type psych – gazes hard at mortality. "In The Ground", from the perspective of a dead man, its chiming melody giving way to a burning guitar coda, is a gem; the grinding "My Generation", meanwhile, slyly inverting The Who, staving off death, is simply a monster.

**9/10**

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LUKE TORN



## THE MONOCHROME SET Spaces Everywhere

TAPETE

### Art-pop evergreens' holey bible

Polo coaches to the four horsemen of the apocalypse, The Monochrome Set's elevated sense of the absurd helped make them the darlings of Japanese indie-pop fetishists, subtly weaving impenetrable in-jokes, death rites and freemasonry into their Salvador Dalí meets The Beatles kaftan. The London nouvelle vague-ists' 12th studio album, *Spaces Everywhere* has arch, but craft aplenty too; fans of their 1982 boutique classic *Eligible Bachelors* will swoon for the cute "When I Get To Hollywood", but "Fantasy Creatures" and the title track find singer Bid – five years post-stroke – hitting perhaps the most ecstatic high notes of his career. Inscrutably swish.

JIM WIRTH

**8/10**



## MOON DUO Shadow Of The Sun

SACRED BONES

### Trancey business as usual from drone-rock archetypes

It's rarely easy to differentiate between Moon Duo and Ripley Johnson's other band, Wooden Shjips. The problem – if it is a problem, of course – remains on the Duo's third album, compounded by the recruitment of a flesh-and-blood drummer (John Jeffrey) to augment the machine beats. *Shadow Of The Sun*, though, includes strong takes on the familiar Johnson schtick of Spacemen 3 throb and ambulatory guitar solos, best exemplified by the opening "Wilding". Fractional variations prove rewarding, too: "Zero"’s dazed hybrid of Suicide, The Stooges and Joy Division; a hint of choogle on "Slow Down Low"; and a pervading suspicion that Johnson and Sanae Yamada's affections are shifting from Spacemen 3 to early Spectrum.

JOHN MULVEY

**7/10**



## MUGWUMP Unspell

SUBFIELD

### New Wave of Belgian New Beat anyone?

Borrowing his stage alias from a fictional William Burroughs monster, Geoffroy "Mugwump" Dewandeler has been a club DJ and promoter on the Belgian club scene for over 20 years. Following a decade of irregular EP releases, including the 2008 classic "Boutade", this belated debut album brings the early 1990s New Beat sound up to date with chunky synth ripples, guest vocalists and juddering mid-tempo rhythms. Some of the vocal numbers feel like cluttered indie-dance throwbacks, but they are outshone by pure electronic creations such as "Memento Lies" and "A Quarter Heart Left", stand out, warm-blooded Euro-throbbers rolling along on a satisfying bed of analog squelch.

STEPHEN DALTON

**7/10**



## MUMDANCE & LOGOS Proto

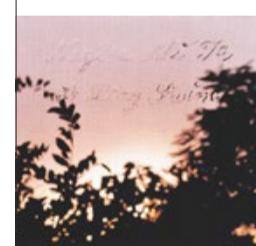
TECTONIC

### Future-facing grime duo dig into dance history

Late last year, Mumdance & Logos' label Different Circles released *Weightless Vol 1*, a compilation that pioneered a floaty, ethereal spin on London's signature urban sound, grime. *Proto*, though, takes another tack entirely, being a homage to bleep techno and hardcore seen through 2015 eyes. It's easy to imagine Vicks-smeared ravers grasping for the lasers during the rude bass squiggles of "Dance Energy (89 Mix)", but the collection is most interesting when the pair set out to pervert their source material: see the insane repetitions of "Move Your Body", or "Bagleys", a spooky tribute to the long-dead Kings Cross venue that kept clubbers spangled throughout the '90s.

LOUIS PATTISON

**7/10**



## ALLISON MOORER Down To Believing

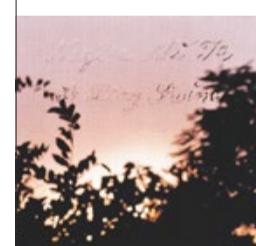
PROPER

### Troubled, heart-on-sleeve tales on Alabama troubadour's ninth album

Always a confessional writer, Moorer has never got closer-to-the-bone than on this cathartic set. Half a dozen songs ooze with candid heartache over her recent separation from husband Steve Earle; "Mama Let The Wolf In", about their son's autism, brims with guilt and hurt over a choogling Creedence riff, and the pedal-steel drenched "Blood" is a heart-felt shout-out to sister Shelby Lynne. The influence of Earle continues to loom musically, too: "Like It Used To Be" and "Thunderstorm/Hurricane" are tough-edged rockers in the mould of her ex at his most rambunctious, circa *Guitar Town*. Out of the pain and anger, Moorer has fashioned the finest album of her career.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**8/10**



## NAGISA NI TE A Long Swim

P-VINE

### Gorgeous album by Japanese indie veterans

American musician and writer David Grubbs once described the Japanese duo-cum-quartet Nagisa Ni Te as a "gentler, more otherworldly confident Crazy Horse". It's still an accurate take on their gorgeous, pastoral songs, which share the quality of an extended exhale. *A Long Swim* is their first album since 2008's *Yosuga*, and is yet to find release outside of Japan (previous albums appeared in the USA on Jagjaguwar), but it's worth hunting down: the songs of Shinji Shibayama and Masako Takeda are performed with disarming simplicity and honesty, the better to let their melodies – alternately folksy or soaring – run to full bloom.

JON DALE



## NITE FIELDS Depersonalisation

FELTE

Australian quartet turn shoegaze revival upside down

Recorded over a period of four years in three Australian cities, Nite Fields' debut album is a far grittier prospect than the neon-lit, 1980s-flavoured spelling of their name suggests, thanks largely to its predominant mood of nocturnal gloom.

Singer Danny Venzin murmurs his way through glissando guitars and Peter Hook basslines on "Fill The Void", while "Pay For Strangers" boasts a dreamy Slowdive lilt. But there are also hints of The Sound and The Chameleons in the more urgent "Prescription", and intriguing echoes of fellow Antipodean Flying Nun acts like The Verlaines in "You I Never Knew"'s chiming guitars.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

**7/10**

## NRVS LVRS The Golden West

HZ CASTLE

SNC CTHDRLL from San Franciscan CHVRCHES

Priced out of their once groovy bohemian neighbourhoods by arriviste salarymen, NRVS LVRS' songs of love and Haight paint a decidedly ungroovy picture of modern San Francisco; "You have the warmth of a hologram," chorus Andrew Gomez and Bevin Lee as they call out their new neighbours on "Troubleshooter". Their debut album, *The Golden West* is a largely blissful rush of electronically reprocessed indie pop, seemingly rooted in the fin-de-millennium angst of baroque Scots The Delgados or fellow Californians Grandaddy. Hearts heavy but melodies soufflé light, NRVS LVRS' rearguard action against encroaching blandness is a noble crusade. VV L RVLTN.

JIM WIRTH

**7/10**

## OF MONTREAL Aureate Gloom

POLYVINYL RECORDS

More torrential verbosity from veteran psych-rock visionary

Songs just seem to pour out of Kevin Barnes in vast patchwork sprawls

of shape-shifting, style-hopping, epically verbose baroque-and-roll. The Athens, Georgia-based maximalist is in unusually confessional mood on Of Montreal's 13th album, bitterly chronicling private life problems on "Empyrean Abattoir" and "Aluminum Crown". He also makes a rare political statement with the dystopian disco-funk howl of "Bassem Sabry", named after an Egyptian human rights activist who died last year. Bursting with good ideas, albeit often self-defeating in its kaleidoscopic complexity, much of *Aureate Gloom* sounds like the great psychedelic retro-glam rock opera that Graham Coxon might one day compose.

STEPHEN DALTON

**7/10**



## PANORAM Background Story

WANDERING EYE

Italian outsider's late-night reveries

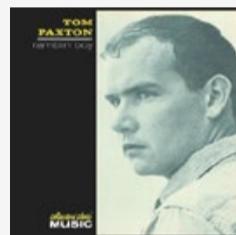
Panoram's bewitching debut album, *Everyone Is A Door*, topped a few of 2014's loftier best album lists, though part of its dusty allure surely lay in the relative anonymity of its producer, a contemplative Roman, it seems, named R Martirani. Its follow-up, released on his own Wandering Eye label, is a much more focused piece, offering several jazzy cuts of speakeasy trip-hop ("Dead Plastic", "You Are Correctly Lost") and downtempo Ninja Tune gear ("Anamnesis"). Most appealing, though, is the simple Satie of the title track and "There Was A Hole Here", which channels Massive Attack and Felt with no little insouciance.

PIERS MARTIN

**7/10**

## HOW TO BUY... TOM PAXTON

Village voice on CD



### Ramblin' Boy

ELEKTRA, 1964

Paxton may not have had the bite of early Dylan or Ochs, but he definitely had the wit, and songs. To cite two from his Greenwich

Village debut: "Last Thing On My Mind" almost instantly transcended into pantheon of the universal; while "Can't Help But Wonder Where I'm Bound" summed up the state of just about any soul-searching Baby Boomer pondering their fate.

**8/10**



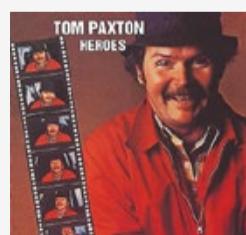
6

ELEKTRA, 1970

His weirdest, most experimental effort – backdrop ranging from cartoony to baroque – Paxton hits a kind of

off-kilter songwriting prime here. From anti-war ("Jimmy Newman") to pro-ecology ("Who's Garden Was This") to "Annie's Gonna Sing Her Song", an in-and-out-of-love song put to fine use by Bob Dylan on *Another Self-Portrait*, 6 is Paxton's most inspired work.

**9/10**



### Heroes

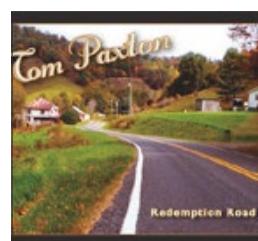
VANGUARD, 1978

Paxton the pure folksinger quietly went about his business. Includes two neglected masterworks: "Phil"

a heartfelt, unflinching, richly humanising tribute to late friend Phil Ochs, and "The Death Of Stephen Biko" a lament for the murdered anti-apartheid activist.

**7/10**

LUKE TORN



## TOM PAXTON Redemption Road

PAX RECORDS

Greenwich Village legend bids touring adieu with strongest LP in years

**8/10**

Playing like a sampler from across his 50-plus years as a folk music mainstay, Tom Paxton's 62nd album adroitly mixes traditional-style balladry with silly novelties, front-porch philosophising with political outrage. The songs, relaxed outings wrapped in fiddle and dobro, mandolin and steel guitar, are put across in Paxton's friendly, conversational delivery. While the title track, with Janis Ian's harmonising, feels like a lifetime's majestic summing up, two others – the scorching political commentary "If The Poor Don't Matter" and "Mayor Of Macdougal Street", a tribute to Dave Van Ronk – best typify Paxton's striking recommitment to imagistic songwriting.

LUKE TORN



## PEALS Seltzer

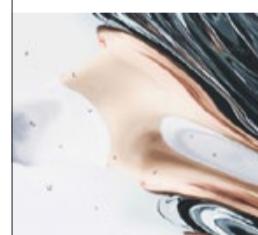
THRILL JOCKEY

A Future Island and a Double Dagger, head to head

Two of Baltimore's finest bass players in collaboration might not

be the easiest sell, but *Seltzer* has much to recommend it. Peals brings together Future Islands' William Cashion and Double Dagger's Bruce Willen, and together they make an ambient, improvisatory music with a bright, melodic centre. Recorded in the clock tower of Bromo Seltzer Tower, the 30-minute "Time Is A Milk Bowl" takes in ringing chimes, exquisite guitar layering, and machinery sounds from the building's lift, to which the pair attached a contact mic. "Before And After", meanwhile, works rehearsal-space recordings into a collage that, while lacking Future Islands' pop nous, retains something of its warm uplift.

LOUIS PATTISON



## PEARSON SOUND Pearson Sound

HESSLE AUDIO

Debut album of fractured techno from Hessle Audio co-founder

In the late '00s, David Kennedy was at the

vanguard of the post-dubstep movement that veered away from pounding bass to offer a more intellectual – yet still furiously percussive – take on underground dance culture. Since changing his handle from Ramadanman to Pearson Sound in 2011, Kennedy's compositions have become increasingly austere; here, tracks consist of little more than foreboding industrial clanking, puddles of murky bass, and rhythms that crackle into life like electricity down a train track. Its glowering landscape is reminiscent of Actress' *Ghettoville*, but without a similar supporting mythology *Pearson Sound* can feel rather cold.

SAM RICHARDS



# MATTHEW E WHITE

## Fresh Blood

DOMINO

Bigger! Groovier! Louder! Matthew E White's Spacebomb journey continues. By Michael Bonner



8/10

*they don't have no tricks". Point made, he concludes: "Everybody likes to talk/Everybody likes to talk shit". The song is lighthearted and playful – imagine the Velvets' "What Goes On" by way of Curtis Mayfield, set to lavish R&B horns and a deep rolling piano groove. But if anything, it is also emblematic of White's way of doing things: don't look too deeply into process, any attempts to codify music will essentially rob it of its magic and malleability. It's a policy that has stood White in good stead since his 2012 debut LP *Big Inner*, a lustrous country soul rhapsody cut in White's attic HQ at his Richmond, Virginia studio-cum-label, Spacebomb. Since then, he's been kept rather busy with the small matter of an 18-month tour to support *Big Inner*, along with the phenomenal heat the album generated.*

*Fresh Blood* finds White's aims coming closer to fulfilment. It feels like a natural continuation of the easygoing, R&B-driven sound dominant on *Big Inner*; but it is a more energetic, and in places darker, record than its predecessor. The focus is wide-ranging: subjects include the death of Philip Seymour Hoffman and abuse within the Catholic Church. Opener "Take Care My Baby" telescopes out from intimate, piano and guitar beginnings to

incorporate soft and low Bacharach-style trumpets before blooming into full-on psych R&B. As it turns out, White's strong grasp of layering is critical to the momentum. For instance, the choir's call-and-response (a sassy "Ooh la la ooh la la/Ooh la la ooh la la") that runs through the background of "Rock & Roll Is Cold", or the additional percussion that arrives for the final minute or so, contribute incrementally to the song's propulsive dynamic. Each song features choir, horns and strings, as well as his house band, accounting for a minimum of 30 people per track: that naturally incurs a lot of admin, writing and arranging their respective parts. White and his co-arranger Trey Pollard evidently thrive on this attention to detail. "Fruit Trees", for instance, with its stop-start melodies, burnished brass and staccato strings, sees them fully flex their grand songwriting ambitions. "Holy Moly", meanwhile, foregrounds White's more intimate qualities as a songwriter. Written in response to the child abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, it seems deliberately to reflect Marvin Gaye's socially conscious protest songs – the title is likely a gentle nod to "Holy Holy" from *What's Going On*. "What's wrong with you!" White admonishes over and over as the strings are goaded towards a rapturous crescendo by Spacebomb compadre Cameron Ralston's percussive basslines and Trey Pollard's urgent

### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**  
Trey Pollard and  
Matthew E White

**Recorded at:**

Spacebomb,  
Richmond, Virginia

**Personnel includes:**  
Matthew E White  
(vocals, guitar, piano,  
horn arr.), Andy C  
Jenkins (co-writer),  
Trey Pollard (guitars,  
pedal steel, string arr.),  
Phil Cook (piano)

soloing. The gorgeous gospel tones of "Circle 'Round The Sun", however, cushion the song's subject matter: suicide. "I'm screaming and crying, seeking shelter from the storm/Put your arms around me, Jesus, tonight", whispers White. In fact, "Circle 'Round The Sun" ushers in a more reflective phase for *Fresh Blood*. It's followed by "Feeling Good Is Good Enough", a breakup song buoyed on melancholic strings and sympathetic brass parps.

White gracefully tackles the death of Philip Seymour Hoffman on "Tranquility", his double-tracked whisper oddly unsettling as it disappears beneath sporadic flourishes of feedback and keening strings. The song's closing line – "Rid my heart of all that resists tranquility" – harks back to the idiom of '70s soul. White brings *Fresh Blood* to a close with "Love Is Deep". Across the song's blissful grooves, he communes across the decades with his old soul masters: "Love is deep and twisted/Ain't it so Marvin?/Ain't it so Stevland?" Additionally, he namechecks Billie Holiday, Judee Sill, Sam Cooke and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. These are the big cheeses in White's world, and while the sentiment of the song rings true, there is something typically good-humoured and teasing about the way White not only addresses his storied predecessors but also in the way he interprets the song's inherent message. "Love is sweet," he coos. "Love is sweet shit."

### Q&A

Matthew E White

**W**hen did you first start work on *Fresh Blood*? I've been working on it kind of in a conceptual way for a long time. I recorded *Big Inner* in 2011 and it didn't come out 'til like late 2012. Then I was touring for almost 18 months and during that time, I had some ideas for what songs I wanted to write and the direction of the record. So, I was focused on what it was that I was after, even at that early stage.

**In what ways does *Fresh Blood* differ from *Big Inner*?**

*Big Inner* was such a 'setting up the canvas' for

me. I was figuring out what the tools were gonna be and whether I could actually do this. *Fresh Blood* is taking the next step. I had a plan. The record is bigger, it's groovier, it's intensely personal at times. It's not a 180 degree spin on *Big Inner*. It has a lot of the same people, it's the same process and it will develop from that. But it's focused and louder. I'm excited.

**Was there a creative goal for *Fresh Blood*?**

There were a lot of things about *Big Inner* that I felt I could better. There was a further step to go, in every direction. How I used the team, how I used myself and how I used the arrangements; how I wrote the songs. All of those things could get better, they could get bigger and they could get more potent. For me, it's about focusing my artistic voice into something that's a little bit more emotional. *INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER*



## POLAR BEAR

### Same As You

THE LEAF LABEL

Post-jazz quintet in a bouncy, joyous mood on sixth outing Seb Rochford's outfit, twice shortlisted for

**8/10**

the Mercury Prize, started life approximately 12 years ago as a cerebral chamber jazz quartet and, with the addition of Leafcutter John (aka former performance artist John Burton), have gradually added weirder electronic textures to their palette. Their sixth album is their most direct and uplifting yet, recorded in the Mojave Desert with leftfield R&B producer Ken Barrientos. The rhythms take on a primal urgency, particularly on the skittery Afrobeat of "The First Steps" and the hymnal rave of "Of Hi Lands". Another vocal track, "Don't Let The Feeling Go", is just a spoonful of breakbeat away from pop gold.

JOHN LEWIS



## PURITY RING

### Another Eternity

4AD

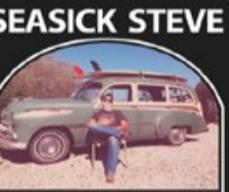
Synth-pop duo polish up their act

From the same Montreal scene as Grimes, signed to the same label, Purity

**5/10**

Ring initially struggled to distinguish themselves. This second album might do the trick. Decamping to Los Angeles, the band have employed R&B big-hitter Jaycen Joshua to help buff their sound to a blinding sheen, while Megan James now sings with the confident, shrill phrasing (and Auto-Tune effects) of a post-Disney starlet. The effect, as exemplified by "Bodyache" and "Push Pull", is Taylor Swift produced by Diplo. There remains the faintest hint of gothic romance, a kind of Dead Can Dance Class. But you are likely to slip off trying to locate any kind of edge.

SAM RICHARDS



## SEASICK STEVE

### Sonic Soul Surfer

THERE'S A DEAD SKUNK

Blues loner finally works out how to play with a band

**7/10**

When he re-emerged around a decade ago, Steve Wold's persona was that of the hobo genius who'd been discovered playing mongrelised guitars in a Mississippi shack after decades of isolation. That spartan USP still serves him best, particularly on the one-chord stomp "Swamp Dog" or the unaccompanied wanderlust of "We Be Moving". But, for once, some of Wold's tracks here with a full band don't descend into pub-blues mediocrity. "Summertime Boy" and "Roy's Gang" are pulsating slices of junkyard grunge that recall The Black Keys, while it would be nice to hear an entire album of tracks like the banjo-and-fiddle-led "In Peaceful Dreams".

JOHN LEWIS



## RON SEXSMITH

### Carousel One

COOKING VINYL

Hangdog Canadian songsmith finds his happy place

After two decades of low-level critical acclaim, Sexsmith's classic songcraft picked up commercial steam with his last two records, *Long Player*, *Late Bloomer* (2012) and *Forever Endeavour* (2013), which may explain why his latest throws generous streaks of sunshine across his trademark wry hand-wringing. "Lucky Penny", with its congas, warm organ and sharp guitar licks, is a positively feelgood affair, while "Getaway Car" has the loose good humour of early Wings. When Sexsmith does finally pull a heartbreaker out of the bag, it's a doozy, the hymn-like "All Our Tomorrows" redolent of The Band covering Gram Parsons.

GRAEME THOMSON

**8/10**



## SASHA SIEM

### Most Of The Boys

BLUE PLUM

Take me to your lieder: classically trained chanteuse slums it From last-orders bathroom dalliances to being

inexpertly felt up during a screening of *The Beat My Heart Skipped*, the romantic adventures on Sasha Siem's debut album make a compelling case for celibacy. Love, as the classically trained composer notes sourly amid the laptop bleeps and ECM euro jazz burbles of the title track, is just a "chemical reaction", but disparate elements fuse together into something bewitching on *Most Of The Boys*. An uptown fusion of Björk, The Raincoats and the *Cosmopolitan* letters page, it can be whip-smart ("So Polite"), wistful ("Valentine") and wise ("My Friend"). Highbrow, but undoubtedly knows the score.

JIM WIRTH

**8/10**

## REVELATIONS

Late bloomer: Ron Sexsmith's reasons to be cheerful

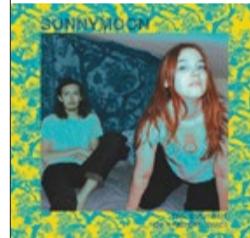


► "I feel like I'm making antique tables and chairs," laughs Ron Sexsmith. "Who will buy my wares?" Twenty-four years and 14 albums into a recording career lauded by the likes of Paul McCartney and Elvis Costello, Sexsmith is aware he's "out of sync. I'm 51 and I love guys like Johnny Mercer. I don't know how to do what Ed Sheeran or James Blake do, I'm just a traditional pop songwriter."

Traversing folk, country, '50s rock'n'roll, '60s pop and '70s balladry, *Carousel One* is an elegant and surprisingly chipper summation of Sexsmith's gifts. "Going along, I noticed there didn't seem to be too many downers on it," he says. "I wanted it to be quite uptempo. I got painted with that melancholy brush years ago, but there's always been a lot of humour on my records."

He has reasons to be cheerful. Although 2011's *Long Player Late Bloomer* was a pragmatic dip into radio-friendly gloss which nowadays he "can't listen to", it paid dividends. As part of an ongoing upward trajectory, in 2013 Sexsmith headlined the Royal Albert Hall. "I flew my parents over. It was a big deal, but the strange thing was, when I went onstage, it felt natural. I thought, 'Well, why not me?'"

GRAEME THOMSON



## SONNYMOON

### The Courage Of Present Times

GLOW 365

Boston duo step through a warped looking-glass of deconstructed jazztronica

**8/10**

Arch experimentalists Anna Wise and Dane Orr take their name from a Sonny Rollins composition, though their magpie post-pop sound owes as much to Björkish folktronica as it does to vintage jazz. The Boston-schooled, LA-based duo's second full-length album is thick with great moments, like the processed squeaks and barks that cluster around a glitchy R&B groove in "Grain Of Friends", or the siren chorus of honks and drones that coalesce into nervy New Wave art-funk on "Pop Music". Though a little sketchy and disjointed in places, this album is overstuffed with wonky charm and unexpected beauty.

STEPHEN DALTON



## SUFJAN STEVENS

### Carrie & Lowell

ASTHMATIC KITTY

A stark, sublime immersion in intimate memory

**9/10**

Good news for those for whom the jagged electro edges of 2010's *The Age Of Adz* proved hard to love. Stevens' seventh album revisits the sonic terrain of earlier albums like *Seven Swans*, its soft piano, banjo, guitar and quavering vocals creating a gauzy soundscape of unerring beauty. Named after his parents, *Carrie & Lowell* is a kaleidoscopic trawl through formative memories, cascading with melody and intimate reminiscence. "Fourth Of July" best captures the album's exquisite dance between life, love and loss, a heartbreakingly pure pop song which finds solace amid the knowledge that "We're all going to die."

GRAEME THOMSON

# New Albums



## SUSANNE SUNDFØR

### Ten Love Songs

SONNET SOUND/KOBALT

Sixth album from Swedish art-pop's best-kept secret

**8/10**

Sundfør is huge in Sweden and does occasionally sound like Abba. She also occasionally sounds like Björk, Nico, Michael Nyman and Stevie Nicks. *Ten Love Songs* began life as a concept album about violence, which explains the stormy emotions and dark scenarios that rage across this ambitious record. Everything from acoustic waltzes ("Silencer") and superior electro-pop ("Accelerate") to harmonium dirge ("Trust Me") and industrial synth ("Insects") are bent into shape by Sundfør's extraordinary voice; an instrument that slips up and down octaves and over insane chord changes with both casual ease and soulful intensity. Ten dark and lovely reasons why love hurts.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



## SWERVEDRIVER

### I Wasn't Born To Lose You

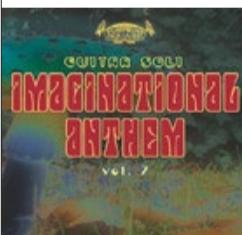
CHERRY RED

First since '98 from reformed grungey shoegazers

**6/10**

labelmates Slowdive and Ride have aroused more interest, you could just about build an argument for Swervedriver being the superior band. Live, at least, their dazed melodies and driving rhythms – part shoegazer, part petrolhead grunger – gave them more widescreen thrust than their peers. Here, the 'dazed melodies' part of the bargain is upheld by "English Subtitles" and "Lone Star", while the guitars on "Red Queen Arms Race" snarl effectively. But the point when a drive becomes a slog is reached before long. Like most albums by reformed bands, it reminds you what you liked without opening up an essential new chapter.

SAM RICHARDS



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### Imaginational Anthem Vol 7

TOMPKINS SQUARE

The classic series unveils a new clutch of American Primitive guitarists

**7/10**

When the first *Imaginational Anthem* comp was released, its collection of tracks by John Fahey, his peers and 21st Century followers seemed a noble but finite concept. Eleven years on, however, the series continues to locate wave after wave of new guitar soli: even for dedicated fans of this questing instrumental music, most of the names here will be unfamiliar. *Vol 7* mostly avoids straight-up Fahey acolytes (Christoph Bruhn and Dylan Golden Aycock being strong exceptions), showcasing players who favour delicate atmospheres over blues and folk extrapolations. A generally lovely listen, albeit one which maybe lacks the breakout stars – Jack Rose, Chris Forsyth, William Tyler, Steve Gunn – of previous volumes.

JOHN MULVEY



## THE THE

### Hyena OST

CINÉOLA

Moody, experimental score from Matt Johnson

Since The The's last public appearance at David Bowie's Meltdown in 2002, Matt Johnson has focused

on soundtrack work. Principally, this has been in tandem with Swedish filmmaker Johanna St Michaels, but lately he has found a new collaborator in his own younger brother, Gerard. *Hyena* marks the second outing for the pair, following 2009's *Tony*. Johnson's score comprises experimental electronic soundscapes that intermittently recall Bowie's "Warszawa" and the scores of John Carpenter, while stand-out tracks include "The Invisible City", with its loping guitar motif, the oscillating drones in "Splayed" and the chilly synth washes of "Tiny Blue Sirens".

MICHAEL BONNER

**8/10**

## REVELATIONS

The heavy but melodic return of Swervedriver



► It's been 17 years since they split and seven since they reformed. Now Swervedriver finally have a new album to promote – but all anybody wants to talk to frontman Adam Franklin about is the Ride reunion. "It's cool," he laughs amiably. "It's great they're back together. Mark [Gardener] actually did some of the recording for the Swervedriver album and I'm really glad for him." Equally, Slowdive "deserve their triumphant return".

Franklin has been amused by the new wave of bands proud to label themselves 'shoegaze'. "We'd never have dreamed of giving ourselves that moniker, so it's funny how the word has been reclaimed." Yet he contends that the movement's influence reaches far beyond copycat guitar groups. "You can hear it in Lali Puna, the German electronic band, or even Boards Of Canada. It has become this late-20th-Century psychedelia."

Swervedriver's new album, *I Wasn't Born To Lose You*, is a deliberate attempt to "go back to the source". Heavy but melodic is the key, says Franklin, politely rebutting the suggestion that Swervedriver were mere pedal fetishists. "We did have a poster of our guitar pedals," he concedes, "but on that poster, instead of the knobs being 'tone' and 'volume', it was 'luck', 'sweat' and 'god'! It's about using those tools to create an emotional response." SAM RICHARDS



## WOLFGANG VOIGT

### Protest - Versammlung 1

PROFAN

Stripped down techno, built to confuse

**8/10**

ago, was cause for celebration for anyone hoping for more of the majestic ambient techno he released under his GAS moniker – at least, until they heard any of his confounding new music, which takes the weirdness of his '90s records as M:I:5 and Mike Ink and squares the complexity. *Protest – Versammlung 1* collects material from recent singles in the same vein, and it's just as richly confusing. Here, the insistent thud of techno's omnipresent bass drum acts as constraint for flocks of parping tuba, woozy jazz samples, warped digitalia, and plenty more confusion.

JON DALE



## WAX STAG

II

OLD HABITS

Friendly Fires fellas easygoing electronica

Wax Stag has the ring of an outdoor clothing brand, but if there's

one thing missing from St Albans producer Rob Lee's second album, it's a sense of adventure. A touring member of long-dormant outfit Friendly Fires, Lee's unhurried follow-up to his 2008 debut uses warm, analog electronics and smudged Boards Of Canada arpeggios to paint a series of lush instrumentals that chug along dreamily in the vein of Bibio and Nathan Fake. Moments of brilliance speckle the likes of "Cloud Cake" and "Valley Of Ice", but ultimately the notion lingers that Wax Stag's gentle fantasy is more Bedford than Balearic.

PIERS MARTIN



## ZARELLI

### Soft Rains

SERIÉS APHÔNOS

Edwyn Collins' band-leader breathes new life into Leonard Nimoy

The latest from Bronze Rat Records' eccentric "music library" imprint finds

esteemed session musician Carwyn Ellis – also heavily involved in the soundtrack to Edwyn Collins film *The Possibilities Are Endless* – revivifying a 1975 spoken-word LP in which the venerable Mr Spock reads a post-apocalyptic, 1950 Ray Bradbury short story. Unlikely, unsettling and engaging in equal measures, especially on the climactic "Blaze", Ellis' retro-futuristic, synthesiser-friendly soundtrack – part Vangelis' *Blade Runner*, part Francis Lai's *Bilitis* – perfectly complements Nimoy's portentous delivery of Bradbury's bleak text, extending the original 15 minutes to nearly 40. A timely reminder of Cold War paranoia.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

# BJÖRK

## Vulnicura

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Icelandic star's unflinching heartbreak diary. By Piers Martin



9/10

thing I've done." By now, *Vulnicura* is not exactly old news, but its rushed release to digital platforms on January 20 following a leak – it was due early March, to coincide with the opening of MoMA's Björk exhibition – has provided plenty to chew over before the physical editions arrive and the campaign gets back on track.

In some ways, the sudden, forced arrival of the singer's ninth album – a shock tactic last deployed by Beyoncé – suits the brutal nature of *Vulnicura*, which chronicles in compelling detail the demise of Björk's relationship with the American artist Matthew Barney, with whom she has a daughter. For Björk, normal family life was ruptured and part of the healing process, the way in which she tried to make sense of the schism, was to write down her thoughts and, as usual, express herself through music. She wrote, predominantly, parts for strings and voice – the lyrics scan like diary entries – and though she'd lined up several technological avenues to explore after her multimedia odyssey *Biophilia*, she decided this could only work as an old-school singer-songwriter project.

And it is, as far as Björk records go. *Vulnicura* – a compound of 'wounds' and 'cured', the defining feelings of the periods leading up to and after the break-up – is, like *Vespertine* and *Medúlla* before it, intimate and musically resourceful. Against shifting sheets of strings and discreet electronics Björk contorts and somersaults, kneading syllables and winding words around others. Her astonishing voice is the real star of *Vulnicura*: "This tunnel has enabled/Thousands of sounds/I thank this trunk/Noise pipe", she sings on "Mouth Mantra", one of the more cathartic pieces written after the split in which she takes

a vow of silence – "Do something I haven't done before" – in a bid to subdue the sadness.

In the accompanying booklet, Björk has dated each song to provide chronology. Three precede the split – opening track "Stonemilker", with her anxious overtures to Barney to "synchronise our feelings", was written "9 months before" – and three come after it, including the bottomless "Black Lake", composed "2 months after", while the final three find her reflecting on love and family. The whole thing unfolds like some harrowing Lars Von Trier melodrama in which an unavoidable cataclysmic event is about to occur after which nothing will be the same. Far greater than the sum of its parts, *Vulnicura* can be a challenge but, once immersed, it's hard to tear yourself away.

Much has been made of the contribution of young Venezuelan producer Arca (Alejandro Ghersi), a lifelong Björk fan who'd worked with FKA Twigs and Kanye West. Arriving towards the end of the recording, after Björk had recorded and arranged the lion's share of the album, his subtle

### SLEEVE NOTES

► Recorded in: Reykjavík, London, New York and the Caribbean

Produced by: Björk, Arca and The Haxan Cloak

Personnel: Björk (vocals, programming, string arrangements, vocal arrangements), Arca (programming), The Haxan Cloak (programming), Antony Hegarty (vocals), John Flynn (programming), U Strings (strings)

programming provides a sensual framework for the singer. Washed-out rave stabs decorate "History Of Touches", when Björk sings of the couple's "Last time together... every single fuck we had together/Is in a wondrous time lapse", knowing that all is lost. The following "Black Lake", a funereal dirge punctuated by pounding techno, charts her journey from despair ("My soul torn apart/My spirit is broken") to tempered euphoria: "I am a glowing shiny rocket returning home/As I enter the atmosphere I burn off layer by layer".

Just as *Volta* and *Biophilia* found Björk questioning universal concerns such as identity, politics and our place in the cosmos, here she gives her heart a vigorous examination and draws equally profound conclusions. The costume she wears on the cover illustrates this: out of the blackness, her chest cleaved open, emerge brightly coloured shoots. Heartbreak has a familiar narrative – pain is weakness leaving the body; what doesn't kill you makes you stronger – and there's seldom a happy ending. But as *Vulnicura* makes clear, it does end.

### Q&A

Björk

**H**ow did you end up making this record? I guess I found in my lap one year into writing it a complete heartbreak album. I was kind of surprised how thoroughly I had documented this in pretty much accurate emotional chronology – like three songs before a break-up and three after. So the anthropologist in me sneaked in and I decided to share them as such.

**After *Biophilia*, which explored fundamental issues, this seems intensely personal.** First I was worried it would be too self-indulgent

but then I felt it might make it even more universal. And hopefully the songs could be a help, a crutch to others and prove how biological this process is: the wound and the healing of the wound, psychologically and physically. It has a stubborn clock attached to it.

**Was there a moment when everything fell into place?**

A magic thing happened: as I lost one thing, something else entered. Alejandro (Ghersi, aka Arca) contacted me late summer 2013 and was interested in working with me. It was perfect timing. To make beats to the songs would have taken me three years, like on *Vespertine*, but Arca would visit me repeatedly and a few months later we had a whole album. It is one of the most enjoyable collaborations I've had.





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8/10



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## TRACKLIST

## SPECIALS (2 CD SPECIAL EDITION)

## CD1: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM &amp; SINGLE

- 1 Gangsters
- 2 A Message To You, Rudy
- 3 Do The Dog
- 4 It's Up To You
- 5 Nite Klub
- 6 Doesn't Make It Alright
- 7 Concrete Jungle
- 8 Too Hot
- 9 Monkey Man
- 10 (Dawning Of A) New Era
- 11 Blank Expression
- 12 Stupid Marriage
- 13 Too Much Too Young
- 14 Little Bitch
- 15 You're Wondering Now

## CD2: EXTRA SPECIALS

Too Much Too Young EP (live)

- 1 Too Much Too Young
- 2 Guns Of Navarone
- 3 Skinhead Symphony
  - a) Long Shot Kick The Bucket
  - b) Liquidator
  - c) Skinhead Moon Stomp
- BBC In Concert At the Paris Theatre (15/12/79)
- 4 (Dawning Of A) New Era
- 5 Do The Dog
- 6 Rat Race
- 7 Blank Expression
- 8 Rude Buoys Outa Jail
- 9 Concrete Jungle
- 10 Too Much Too Young
- 11 Guns Of Navarone
- 12 Nite Klub
- 13 Gangsters
- 14 Medley: a) Long Shot Kick The Bucket  
b) Skinhead Moonstomp



CHALKIE DAVIES

## THE SPECIALS

**Specials** 1979 **More Specials** 1980  
**In The Studio** 1984

2TONE/CHRYSTALIS

All three albums, released with extras. By John Lewis

IN '70S BRITAIN, a mixed-race band from the Midlands emerged in an era of industrial strife and social disorder. They revived music and fashions that were at least two decades' old, played riotous gigs to rowdy audiences, and had a string of massive Top 10 hits. They were called Showaddywaddy, and nobody mentions them much anymore.

We still talk a lot about The Specials, though, and for good reason. Unlike Showaddywaddy, their revivalism was utterly rooted in the here

and now. The band's frontmen – the fey, oddly camp football hooligan Terry Hall and the growling jailbird Neville Staple – were the very ideology of Rock Against Racism made flesh. Their leader, Jerry Dammers, seemed to have rebuilt Jamaican music from rain-sodden English industrial concrete. His lyrics – kitchen-sink dramas of fighting and fucking, fear and loathing – resonated so strongly with teenagers that few of them thought of it as being in any way "retro".





## CONTINUED

### MORE SPECIALS (2 CD SPECIAL EDITION)

#### CD 1: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

- 1 Enjoy Yourself (It's Later Than You Think)
- 2 Man At C&A
- 3 Hey, Little Rich Girl
- 4 Do Nothing
- 5 Pearls Café
- 6 Sock It To 'Em J.B.
- 7 Stereotypes/Stereotypes - Pt 2
- 8 Holiday Fortnight
- 9 I Can't Stand It
- 10 International Jet Set
- 11 Enjoy Yourself (Reprise)

#### CD 2: MORE EXTRA SPECIALS

Singles, B-sides and rarities:

- 1 Rat Race
- 2 Rude Buoy's Outa Jail
- 3 Stereotypes Pts 1 & 2 (John Peel session)
- 4 International Jet Set (single version)
- 5 Rude Boys Outa Jail (version) (featuring Neville Staples aka Judge Roughneck)
- 6 Do Nothing (single version) (featuring Rico with the Ice Rink String Sounds)
- 7 Maggie's Farm
- 8 Raquel
- 9 Why? (extended version)
- 10 Friday Night, Saturday Morning
- 11 Ghost Town (full version)
- 12 Sea Cruise (John Peel session) (featuring Rico)
- 13 You're Wondering Now (Kid Jensen session)

### IN THE STUDIO (2 CD SPECIAL EDITION)

#### CD 1: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

- 1 Bright Lights
- 2 Lonely Crowd
- 3 What I Like Most About You Is Your Girlfriend
- 4 House Bound
- 5 Night On The Tiles
- 6 Nelson Mandela
- 7 War Crimes
- 8 Racist Friend
- 9 Alcohol
- 10 Break Down The Door

#### CD 2: RARITIES BY THE SPECIAL AKA:

- 1 The Boiler (Rhoda and The Special AKA)
- 2 You Just Can't Get A Break
- 3 Jungle Music (Rico and The Special AKA)

BBC Peel Session 12/09/83

- 4 Lonely Crowd
- 5 Alcohol
- 6 Bright Lights

Instrumentals

- 7 Break Down The Door
- 8 Racist Friend
- 9 War Crimes
- 10 Theme From The Boiler
- 11 Bright Lights
- 12 Nelson Mandela

The Specials in their prime:  
(l-r) Roddy Radiation, Staple,  
Dammers, Panter, Hall,  
Golding and John Bradbury

The band's 1979 debut, *Specials*, includes some pretty faithful cover versions of old Jamaican ska singles. "A Message To You, Rudy" even features Rico Rodriguez, the veteran trombonist who played on Dandy Livingstone's 1967 original. But, generally, The Specials' versions blow the genteel originals out of the water, with producer Elvis Costello recording them virtually live and capturing the manic energy of their shows. Dammers' organs and Lynval Golding's rhythm guitars bubble and skank in all the correct places, but Horace

Panter's basslines punch hard while Roddy Radiation's punky guitar snarls and fizzes, all the time kept on a tight leash by Costello (who never much liked his histrionic blues solos).

Often the covers mutate into whole new songs. Prince Buster's 1965 Blue Beat single "Al Capone" is reworked as the ferociously punky "Gangsters" (a reference to an ugly gun-related episode that happened when Bernie Rhodes took the band to Paris). George Fame's 1964 version of Rufus Thomas' "Do The Dog" is completely rewritten by Dammers as a state-of-the-nation address ("All you punks and all you teds/National Front and natty dreads/Mods, rockers, hippies and... skin-heads"). And an obscure Lloyd Charmers single, "Birth Control", is transformed into "Too Much Too Young", the bawdy, Benny Hill lyrics replaced by a sense of disgust ("Try wearing a cap!").

If the debut album was teenage male fear writ large, 1980's follow-up, *More Specials*, presents a dread that's more existential than adolescent. Even the daft opener "Enjoy Yourself", a Prince Buster-inspired reading of Guy Lombardo's 1949 big-band anthem, hints at impending nuclear war, as does Terry Hall's first

songwriting credit ("I'm just a man at C&A/and I don't have a say in the war games that they play"), while the well-upholstered exotica of "International Jet Set" tells of a plane crash that kills the narrator along with the "well-dressed chimpanzees" in business class. But the most interesting development is the sonic shift from monochrome into Technicolor: the complicated, Bach-like chord cycles on "Stereotypes"; Dick Cuthell's mariachi flugelhorn flourishes; and the Yamaha home organ rhythms – beguine, cha-cha, bossa nova – that came plastered all over Side Two

## Dammers' organs and Golding's rhythm guitars bubble and skank in all the correct places

an extended patois-drenched toasting section, wilfully misunderstanding the lyric.

### THE BOILER Rhoda And The Special AKA (FROM IN THE STUDIO DISC 2)

The most harrowing single to ever make the UK Top 40, buried in a seemingly innocuous mix of woozy syn-drums, Morricone guitars and muted trumpet riffs. Written by Rhoda Dakar's original band The Bodysnatchers, it sees Dakar narrating a story about being picked up by a "hunk" in a bar who ends up sexually assaulting her. What starts as a disarmingly blank, spoken-word vocal ends in a horrifying barrage of guttural screams and sobs.

### JUNGLE MUSIC Rico And The Special AKA (FROM IN THE STUDIO DISC 2)

An alumnus of the Alpha Boys Kingston orphanage – breeding ground for Jamaica's finest jazz and ska pioneers – Rico Rodriguez played trombone on hundreds of reggae singles before starting a solo career, with 2 Tone reviving his fortunes just as he was dropped by Island. This spacious, tropical montage shines a much-needed touch of Montego Bay on The Special AKA's grim universe.

## BURIED TREASURES

### SPECIAL SOUNDS...

Four hidden gems you'll find on the second discs of these reissues...

#### MAGGIE'S FARM (FROM MORE SPECIALS, DISC TWO)

This forgotten gem comes from the B-side of Lynval Golding's lovely, languorous "Do Nothing". Based around an African-style drum section (with shades of Serge Gainsbourg's "New York USA"), it sees Hall and Golding howling in impassioned octaves, adds jabbering pianos, and ends up recasting Bob Dylan's cryptic, surrealist, anti-conformist lyrics for Thatcher's Britain, slyly turning "National Guard" into "National Front".

#### STEREOTYPES PTS 1 & 2 John Peel Session (FROM MORE SPECIALS DISC TWO)

All of the Peel sessions on these discs are significantly different from the LP releases. Here, the Casio tone rhythms of the originals are replaced by a band playing the uptight tango beats, Dick Cuthell's mariachi flugelhorn is given space to breathe, and Neville Staple goes into

(Dammers saw it as a DIY punk appropriation of Muzak). "Ska was just a launching point," said Dammers, years later. "I didn't want us to end up like Bad Manners."

As the band fractured, Dammers' studioholic tendencies started to overwhelm proceedings. *Smash Hits* readers jokingly voted the (newly rechristened) Special AKA as 1983's "most miserable group" and they weren't far wrong. "There was a whiff of mental illness in the air," says vocalist Rhoda Dakar of the joyless, endless sessions for the third album, while bassist Horace Panter says that attending rehearsals was "like going to a funeral every day".

*In The Studio* was eventually released in 1984 after three cripplingly expensive years of sessions. Aside from the literally world-changing anthem "Nelson Mandela", it's often dismissed as preachy and sanctimonious. A reappraisal is due: "What I Like Most About You Is Your Girlfriend" is a hilariously spiteful slice of lovers rock, sung by Dammers himself in a demented falsetto; "The Lonely Crowd" has that same prowling skank, fronted by Stan Campbell's keening tenor; while "Alcohol" is a suitably woozy reprise of "Ghost Town". Even if the didactic lyrics on tracks like "Racist Friend" get on your nerves, CD2 here has dub versions of each song, which suggest that this incarnation of The Specials could well have been Britain's finest ever reggae band.

**EXTRAS:** This was an era when bands were **8/10** reluctant to put singles on LPs for fear of shortchanging loyal fans. As a result there are plenty of stand-alone singles, B-sides and 12" mixes that pack out the second discs of each reissued album, alongside live recordings and radically different Radio 1 sessions.

The *Specials* package sees "Gangsters" fittingly installed as the intro to CD1, with CD2 featuring live sessions, including the chart-topping "Too Much Too Young" EP. But it's CD2 of *More Specials* that's the pick of the bunch. A version of "Rude Buoys Outa Jail" – taken from a bonus 7" that came with early copies of the LP – mixes Dammers' boogie-woogie piano with Neville Staple's extended toasting (although this package curiously omits its flipside, "Braggin' And Tryin' Not To Lie", a track that Roddy describes as "the birth of ska-billy"). And the triumphant three-sided single that closes the *More Specials* chapter – "Ghost Town", "Why" and "Friday Night, Saturday Morning" – might still be the finest 7" package in pop history.

All three LPs were re-released 13 years ago, without the abundance of extra tracks, but now seem rather more relevant. What then appeared to document a sealed-in, closed-off aberration in British popular culture has been re-energised by the reunion shows. Amy Winehouse, Lily Allen, Kasabian, Arctic Monkeys, Damon Albarn, Hard-Fi and Jamie T have covered Specials songs, while others – Tricky, Mike Skinner, Hollie Cook and dozens of grime, 2step and garage acts – have drawn explicitly from band's music. Their gleefully grey take on Jamaica is now an inescapable component of British pop. Unlike dear old Showaddywaddy.

## Q&A

### Jerry Dammers on the perils of the music biz and the proudest days of his life

**T**ELL US ABOUT your songwriting process? How did you usually write? How did it change as each album went on?

My songs were normally autobiographical or personal political statements of my opinion. Mainly things I wasn't happy about. Sometimes words came first, sometimes a tune, sometimes both together. With the second album our lives had changed so completely, "International Jet Set" was still autobiographical but I was aware the public probably wouldn't be able to relate so easily. "Stereotype" and "Pearls Café" were more or less invented characters with elements of different real people.

**How much collaboration was there when it came to the writing and arranging?** I was very generous with credits. "Gangsters", "Blank Expression", "It's Up To You", "Nite Klub", are sometimes credited to the whole band, but really I wrote those songs. Roddy added guitar licks, Terry contributed one line to "Nite Klub" – "All the girls are slags and the beer tastes just like piss". I also contributed lyrics to Lynval's two songs "Do Nothing" and "Why?" and contributed some lyrics to Neville's toasts on "Stupid Marriage" and "Why?". I also helped Terry with the music on "Friday Night And Saturday Morning", all without credit. On "Man At C&A" I wrote the music and Terry and I collaborated on the lyrics. The rest of the credits are more or less as it was.

I was arranger overall but people contributed some bits. Roddy made up most of his guitar lines. His songs were basic punk, Lynval's very basic reggae. I wrote a lot of the bass lines. "Concrete Jungle" ... I think Horace may have contributed the high bits and I wrote the heavy dub bass line, those made the song what it was – jungle 15 years before jungle! As we moved towards the second album my idea was to move from monochrome to Technicolor, sonically as well. I added plucked piano to "Rat Race", Ice Rink Strings to "Do Nothing". I think it would be fair to say that the more arranged the songs became, the more resistance I encountered from Roddy and Lynval. Roddy didn't like the ironic "shoo-bee-doos" on "Hey little Rich Girl". Lynval thought the horns on "Ghost Town" sounded "wrong! wrong! wrong!"

**Did you write specifically for Terry or Neville to sing?**

I was aware that Terry and Neville were the lead singers, I wrote some of "Ghost Town" and some of my contributions to Neville's toasts in patois, and I intended him to sing those bits, but I didn't tailor any of my lyrics or what I wanted to say specifically to any singer. In fact, a lot of my songs were written or part written before the band was formed, or before Terry and Neville joined. ("Nite Klub", "Doesn't Make It Alright", "Blank Expression", "Too Much Too Young", "I Can't Stand It", "Little Bitch" – written when I was 15!) "Pearls Café" and "Man At C&A" were new lyrics to tunes I'd written before the band.

*"I ended up on my own, imprisoned in the record contract with a large debt"*

**How "live" was the first album?** It was more or less recorded with everyone playing at once, then some vocals redone and maybe some brass done as overdubs. On the second album, we started moving towards recording Roddy's guitar and my additional keyboard parts separately as overdubs, even the drums where I used the cheesy home organ rhythm machines and arpeggiators. I thought that was quite a "punk" idea, but Roddy didn't really see it that way. I was getting more interested in the sonic possibilities of the studio.

**On the second album, it sounds like you've been picking up influences from lots of different sources...** I went out of my way to listen to anything that had been regarded as rubbish in the rock world, muzak, exotica, it was quite groundbreaking, everyone from electro pop to 2 Tone were trying to consign rock music to the dustbin of history at that time.

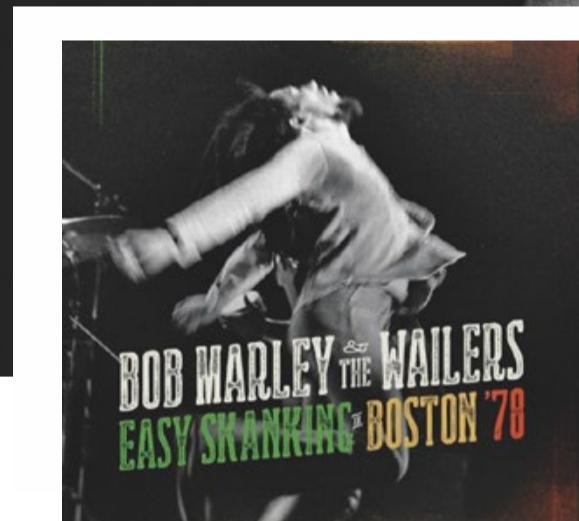
**With *In The Studio*, was The Special AKA actually a "band" or was it more a collection of hired hands?** No, it was intended to be a proper band, and the few sessions we did for TV or radio actually sounded quite good. It's a shame everyone had left before we attempted a gig.

**Did the experience of the last album put you off recording for a while?** I ended up on my own, imprisoned in the record contract, with a large debt to the record company, so there was no real point involving anybody else in doing any more recording until they released me from the contract.

**How did you meet the son of ANC President Oliver Tambo?** After I wrote "Free Nelson Mandela", Dali Tambo approached me to organise the British Artists Against Apartheid. I couldn't really record for the reasons I explained above, so I did four years hard work unpaid in an office! During that time an agent of Apartheid walked in the ANC office in Paris and shot Dulcie September dead so I wouldn't describe it as fun times, exactly. There was creativity, of course, in approaching artists like The Smiths and New Order for the series of concerts, and

putting the bill together for the massive concert on Clapham Common with Gil Scott-Heron, Hugh Masekela, Peter Gabriel, Paul Weller, Big Audio Dynamite and more. That attracted 200,000 people. Then I secured the commitment of Simple Minds, and Dire Straits followed, which got the Mandela 70th Birthday concert at Wembley off the ground. My musical creativity was put on hold, apart from playing "Free Nelson Mandela" at Clapham, and then at Wembley, which was broadcast to millions around the world, then again when Mandela came and spoke. Those were the proudest days of my life.





## TRACKLIST

**DISC: 1 CD**

- 1 Slave Driver
- 2 Burnin' And Lootin'
- 3 Them Belly Full
- 4 The Heathen
- 5 Rebel Music
- 6 I Shot The Sheriff
- 7 Easy Skanking
- 8 No Woman, No Cry
- 9 Lively Up Yourself
- 10 Jammin'
- 11 War/No More Trouble
- 12 Get Up Stand Up
- 13 Exodus

**DISC: 2 DVD or BLU-RAY**

- 1 Rebel Music (Video)
- 2 I Shot The Sheriff (Video)
- 3 No Woman, No Cry (Video)
- 4 Lively Up Yourself (Video)
- 5 Jamming (Video)
- 6 War/No More Trouble (Video)
- 7 Exodus (Video)

## BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS

### Easy Skanking In Boston '78

UNIVERSAL

Marley's 70th birthday celebrations open with a CD/DVD package. By Neil Spencer

**7/10**

BY THE SPRING of 1978, Bob Marley was ready for a new challenge. His media status as 'The First Third World Superstar' was attested by soaring global record sales. That he had ended 15 months of exile from Jamaica following the attempt on his life – returning to play the 'Peace Concert' that brought a truce to Kingston's bullet-prone streets – also marked a turning point. He'd done his bit for his country. What was next?

Marley's answer was to undertake the biggest tour of his career, one that renewed his wooing of the all-important North American market

and which would take him to Milwaukee, Maryland and Montreal, as well as the already conquered capitals of the East and West coasts. Also in his sights were Japan, Australia and, of course, Africa. All would fall to Trenchtown's conquering lion and his strange music – strange because, for most of the world, roots reggae was still an odd, scarcely heard quantity.

But first we take Manhattan... and Boston, a city that had always been kind to the Wailers, and whose Music Hall hosted two shows (early and late) on June 8, the former supplying this live album, the fifth in Marley's canon after

## Q&amp;A

Ziggy Marley



**This album is the first celebration of Bob's 70th. What else is coming down the wire? Books of photos and interviews, a big concert in Jamaica later in the year, we're creating events as we go.**

**The film features animation of Bob for the first time.** The concert footage I found compelling, and there's a moment when Bob screams out, I wanted to show that side of him. The man who shot the film had to be changing reels during the show, so we put animation in the gaps... it's an artistic interpretation of the music, art.

**You have done a lot for kids, UN work, Sesame Street and Disney soundtracks, a Grammy for**

*Live!* (cut 1975), *Babylon By Bus* (cut 1978), and the posthumous *Live At The Roxy* (cut 1976) and *Live Forever* (his last performance, cut 1980).

Unusually, Marley had personally allowed dispensation to a young fan to film the show from the front row. The resulting footage is an engaging addition, though better concert film is already freely available (the Boston stadium show of 1979 for example).

It proves a sweet enough set, entirely typical of the well-drilled band Marley oversaw in his pomp (and make no mistake, Bob ruled over his group with an iron hand). The rhythm section of the Barrett brothers had always synchronised effortlessly, Family Man's loping basslines weaving around Carly's snapping rim shots. The duo were the lynchpin around which the Wailers turned – for much of this set Tyrone Downie's keyboards and the guitars of Junior Marvin and Al Anderson do little more than punctuate their rhythms, at least in this somewhat muddy sound mix. Most of the musical action is otherwise contained by Marley's vocals – always committed and rarely less than extraordinary, even in the midst of a gruelling tour – and the under-valued choral counterpoints of the I Threes, a trio more distinguished than the usual 'backing vocals' description suggests, and whose discipline allows Marley to improvise and wander.

Though this was the 'Kaya Tour' – said album had been released in March – the only track from that record is "Easy Skanking", which drifts past unremarkably. *Kaya* was a kick-back album. In concert, something tougher was called for, and Marley invariably relied on a mix of militant anthems and greatest hits – the opening quartet of "Slave

the Family Time album... The charity we have, Urge, focuses on children and education, especially in poor countries, where it's a route out of economic and cultural deprivation. If we're trying to change the world through music, start early. Don't wait 20 years. Making *Family Time* was liberating... you're writing for kids, who are more open-minded.

**You have six!** In my family I'm in the middle where offspring are concerned [laughs].

**You have also become a fashion icon according to a photo spread in GQ.** [Laughs] My wife showed that to me yesterday. I find that really funny. But you have to be open-minded to it, get out your shell!

**Any favourite tracks by your father?** When I was in high school the record I played was *Survival*. It was after my father passed, and that entire album was an education, a lesson in becoming a man. *INTERVIEW: NEIL SPENCER*

Driver", "Burnin' And Lootin'", "Them Belly Full" and "The Heathen" is a salvo of anger and defiance, after which comes a clutch of lighter crowd-pleasers; "Rebel Music", "I Shot The Sheriff", "No Woman No Cry" and "Lively Up Yourself", a number present in almost every show Marley and his band played.

By 1978 other constants had emerged. "War", containing the words of Hailie Selassie, was like scripture for Marley, and he and the band had cleverly segued it into "No More Trouble", thus balancing the songs' messages. "Lively Up Yourself", a number that had started life as languid rocksteady back in the Bob/Bunny/Tosh era, had evolved into a high-spirited celebration of livity. "Get Up Stand Up" (co-written with Peter Tosh, let's not forget) was another ever-present, a catchy singalong on one level that was also combative and Rastafarian in outlook.

As the show proceeds, the numbers grow longer, partly to allow Marley to do more dancing and gesticulating, but also to give the twin guitar attack of Anderson and Marvin more space. Their squealing blues-rock guitars had always been a bone of contention among reggae fans, with accusations of 'sell-out' not uncommon. The squalls of guitar over the last 30 minutes of this show certainly have their tedious moments. The reality was that Marley was engaged in the reinvention of reggae, and just as black American acts like Funkadelic had adopted rock elements, so had he. Transforming the Wailers from a studio-stuck vocal trio into a fully functioning band had itself been a revolutionary act; turning Jamaican music into something less alien to a global audience was, for Marley, a continuation of the same process.

His real aim, one that would never be fulfilled in his lifetime, was to engage and revolutionise black America, to fulfil the prophecy of "Exodus". That number ends *Easy Skanking...* in a thunder of double beats that the sound quality here turns into an uninteresting thump. It isn't really reggae at all, but it is uniquely Bob Marley.



**WILLIAM S BURROUGHS**  
**Nothing Here Now But The Recordings (reissue, 1981)** DAIS

**"Fully operational. Even to cucumbers."**  
**Burrough's beat archive raided and reissued**

When Brion Gysin discovered the "cut-up" technique at the Beat Hotel in Paris, it helped bring literature up to speed with painting, where montage had been used for 50 years. On this documentary recording of tape experiments, readings and spliced news broadcasts, originally the final release on Throbbing Gristle's Industrial Records, you can hear the audio application William Burroughs made of that idea. Compiled by Genesis P-Orridge and Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson after visits to Burroughs in New York and Lawrence, Kansas, this draws on the writer's audio archive, rejuvenating it with additional editing. A little drunk in company, we hear Burroughs cut up a "creepy letter" to "see what it really says". In private, he arrives at abstract juxtapositions and moments of great humour ("Find death. Embrace death. Bring a halibut"), the wows and flutters of his tape like primitive scratching. It's strange and compelling, as much Beat time-capsule as live art object. For all the humour, though, it is in the closing "The Last Words Of Hassan Sabbha" – in which Burroughs rails against inherited money, vested interest, the boards, syndicates and corporations who "sell the ground from under unborn feet" – that it becomes vengeful and transcendent.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
**JOHN ROBINSON**



**JULIAN COPE**  
**Trip Advisor**  
**LORD YATESBURY**

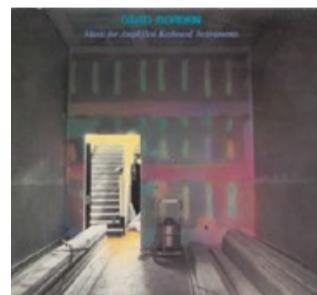
**The best of the Archdrude's last 15 years. Good title, too**  
For most people au fait with The Archdrude, a product subtitled "The

Very Best Of Julian Cope 1999-2014" would most likely be a literary anthology, given the flood of acclaimed books that culminated in 2014 with *One Three One*, his first novel. *Trip Advisor*, however, compiles "16 visionary songs" from 15 years of generally neglected albums, and reveals that Cope's pop imperative has somehow survived all the contrarian strategies he imposes on it. The likes of "Woden", "I'm Living In The Room They Found Saddam In" and "They Were On Hard Drugs" have the sort of nursery-rhyme insidiousness that flourished at the start of Cope's solo career; "These Things I Know" – a memorable anthem thinly disguised in the trappings of cosmic folk – would have usefully adorned *Fried*. The militant apostasy of that song, and many others here, can be wearisome, but it remains a critical part of Cope's wide-ranging agenda, set out in a CD booklet (designed by daughter Avalon) that commemorates the centenary of the Armenian genocide, recounts the four-month "psychedelic fallout" of a 2009 salvia trip, and reveals, finally, his favourite Krautrock band: "Amon Düül"!

**EXTRAS:** None.  
**JOHN MULVEY**

# Rediscovered! ▶

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



## DAVID BORDEN Music For Amplified Keyboard Instruments

SPECTRUM SPOOLS

9/10

Lost classic of kaleidoscopic synth minimalism, rediscovered and remastered...

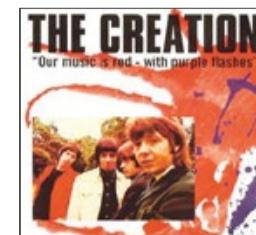
You can't go far these days without coming across a reissue purported to be a landmark in the history of analog synth. *Music For Amplified Keyboard Instruments*, though, is the real deal. David Borden was a friend of Bob Moog, who he met while composer-in-residence at New York's Ithaca City School District in the late '60s. He and Borden struck up a relationship, and the inventor was keen to get his prototype into the hands of a promising young composer. Borden, more musician than technician, promptly fried much of Moog's experimental circuitry. "But Bob thought it good," says Borden. "He redesigned all of the modules so that no matter how they were hooked up they still functioned."

Borden later joked that Moog was out to idiot-proof his synthesiser, and he was the useful idiot. But 1981's *Music For Amplified Keyboards* is proof Borden grasped this instrument's possibilities in a way few others did. Its dense layering brings to mind a masterpiece of minimalism such as Reich's *Music For 18 Musicians*, but the sweep of its melodies is altogether something else: the perfect collision of technology and composer.

Two pieces titled "The Continuing Story Of Counterpoint" come from a 12-part cycle Borden toiled on for 11 years, honed with his live group, Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Co. "We were the world's first ongoing synthesiser ensemble," says Borden. Mostly, this music was regarded as a curio. "Later, some critic called it electronic minimalism," says Borden. "But we never paid attention to genres."

Borden is proud of *Music For Amplified Keyboard Instruments*, but it was no commercial success and has been out of print for years. Today, Borden has retired from teaching, but Mother Mallard is again a going proposition – albeit, now a laptop ensemble with USB keyboards. "So I am interested in modern technology," he says, "and still seem to be ahead of the curve in some cases."

LOUIS PATTISON



## THE CREATION Our Music Is Red - With Purple Flashes

DEMON

Vinyl re-release for freakbeat compilation  
7/10

For a whole generation of mod revivalists and garage rock fans, it remains a scandal that The Creation weren't as big as The Who or The Kinks. Like their fellow Londoners, The Creation were produced by US expat Shel Talmy and plied a similarly high-octane British take on R'n'B which was later venerated by the likes of The Jam. With The Creation, however, the factors that hindered them are exactly the things that endear them to '60s obsessives. Their singles – even their only hit, "Painter Man" (later covered by Boney M) – are disjointed, chaotic affairs that sound like they were pasted together as *musique concrète* experiments; while the guitars sound utterly deranged, with Eddie Phillips either stabbing his strings with sharp objects or scraping them with a violin bow. This vinyl re-release of their definitive compilation contains all the best moments of their sole LP (1967's *We Are Paintermen*) and the half dozen or so 45s they released for Polydor between '66 and '68. It also corrects some of the odd stereo separation that characterises some CD releases. The psychedelic Edwardiana of "Can I Join Your Band", a punky take on "Cool Jerk" and the proto punk "Making Time" all sound particularly fresh.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS



## DR FEELGOOD

### I'm A Man: The Best Of The Wilko Johnson Years 1974-1977

PARLOPHONE

7/10

Worthwhile, if inessential, compilation from 1970s R'n'B kings

Given the glut of compilations already out there, it's safe to say the world really doesn't need another Feelgoods best-of. Here it is nonetheless, released, no doubt, to coincide with Wilko Johnson's commercial rebirth (*Going Back Home*, last year's surprise Top 3 hit with Roger Daltrey) and his recovery from the cancer that was first diagnosed as terminal. *I'm A Man...* is essentially a truncated version of 2012's four-disc box *All Through The City*, cramming 16 tracks under its roof. The omissions are pretty startling (no sign of "She Does It Right" or "All Through The City", for starters); instead it's a democratic spread of the band's four albums with Wilko. Regardless of familiarity, the urgent fizz of "Roxette" still sounds genuinely thrilling, as does one of Johnson's final efforts, "Lights Out". And if Talking Heads ever borrowed a template for their own strain of jerky guitar-pop, then "Cheque Book" could easily have been it. Johnson's disdain for heroics is admirable, the live version of "Back In The Night" being the closest he gets to a solo. Overall, a terse reminder that he and Lee Brilleaux were as belligerent a frontline as '70s rock threw up.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES



**BC GILBERT/ G LEWIS**  
**3R4 (reissue, 1980)**  
SUPERIOR VIADUCT

**Mesmeric lo-fi minimalism by members of Wire**

**8/10**

By 1980, English post-punk band Wire had reached a seeming point of no return. As their albums mutated from brief flashes of lightning – the stop-start shocks of *Pink Flag* – to the almost Floydian density of *154*, they increasingly chafed at the limitations placed upon them by the music industry, and the expectations of onlookers. Perhaps the moment of greatest confrontation was their Electric Ballroom gig, released (and recently re-issued) as *Document & Eyewitness*, where they premiered dislocated new songs, of sorts, amid post-Dadaist performance art interventions. In many ways, it was the group members' art-school history come back to haunt them. Gilbert and Lewis, in particular, would further mine this area, with projects like Dome, Cupola, P'o and Duet Emmo, and their album, *3R4*, originally released by 4AD, where the duo, aided by Angela Conway (aka AC Marias), artist Russell Mills, and bass player Davyd Boyd, scratch out two percussive interludes, both entitled "Barge Calm", as punctuation points for the album's two long pieces, "3, 4" and "R". Often using simple riffs from Boyd's bass as pivot, Lewis and Gilbert move blocks of grainy, low-fidelity noise around the metaphoric room, their compositional methods abstruse, the studio their muse.

**EXTRAS:** None.

**JON DALE**



**JAMES**  
**Laid/Wah Wah**  
**Deluxe Edition**

UMC

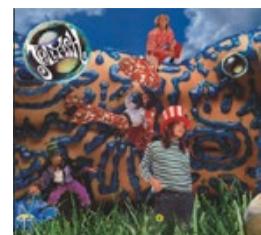
**James' first outings with Eno, reunited as a double-album**  
After spending most of 1992 touring – including

**7/10**

a headline show at Glastonbury and an unplugged US tour opening for Neil Young – Tim Booth and co had a backlog of around 350 songs by the time they entered Peter Gabriel's Real World studios in February 1993. With Brian Eno as producer, they ended up with what was initially intended as a double album – one "song-based" disc (*Laid*) and a looser, more improvisational companion (eventually held over for release until late 1994 as *Wah Wah*). Eno's presence is more subtle on *Laid*, where you can hear him assisting an Edge-like "hands-free guitar" line on the slow-burning opener "Out To Get You", or a stadium-rock expansiveness to their folk whimsy on "Sometimes", but Booth's wry lyrics ("I'm a member of an ape-like race/At the asshole end of the 20th Century") still have room to breathe. Eno is much more evident on *Wah Wah*. Indeed many tracks resemble U2's *Zooropa*, recorded a few weeks later but released earlier. You can almost hear the Oblique Strategy cards being deployed on the glitchy "Jam J" ("Honour thy error as a hidden intention") and on the metallic pulse of "Honest Joe", while the howls of "Arabic Agony" are rich with Eno's "direct-inject anti-jazz ray gun".

**EXTRAS:** None.

**JOHN LEWIS**

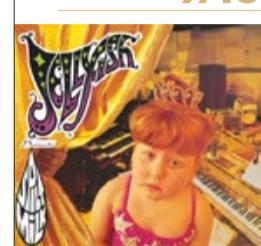


**JELLYFISH**  
**Bellybutton/**  
**Spilt Milk**

OMNIVORE

**Bay Area power-pop in excelsis**

Unshaken by the prevailing winds of grunge, alt.rock and dance culture, Jellyfish's arrival in 1990 couldn't have been more conspicuous, driven by all things retro and decked out like extras from *H.R. Pufnstuf*. Not that it fazed them one bit. Debut LP *Bellybutton* was a glorious rush of candy-coloured guitar-pop, loaded with big hooks and keen echoes of



**8/10**

Cheap Trick, XTC and The Zombies. Such was the quality of writers Andy Sturmer and Roger Manning ("The Man I Used To Be", "The King Is Half-Undressed"; "Bedspring Kiss") that guitarist Jason Falkner hardly got a look-in, prompting him to quit after the accompanying tour. Two years in the making, follow-up *Spilt Milk* (1993) was more elaborate, Sturmer and Manning creating sumptuous arrangements and strafing it all with fuzz guitar. The result is a compelling hybrid of Bacharach, Queen and The Beach Boys. It's no surprise that it sometimes feels overloaded, though there's plenty to celebrate, not least the gorgeous "Russian Hill".

**EXTRAS:** *Bellybutton* has 26 bonus tracks, **8/10** including demos and live cuts from LA and Wembley. *Spilt Milk* has 25 extras: demos, radio sessions and fan club-only releases.

**ROB HUGHES**

## REVELATIONS

"Wobble!" James' Jim Glennie on working with Brian Eno



► James were collectively shocked when Brian Eno rang them in response to a 1992 demo tape, and was keen to produce them. Until then, James sessions had been tormented rituals. "We needed Eno's playful approach," says bassist Jim Glennie. "While we rehearsed he'd hold up a card for a single bandmember: 'STOP', 'WOBBLE', 'CHANGE KEY', 'TURN UP'. It completely changed how you worked." The relationship between *Laid* and *Wah Wah*, says Glennie, was similar to that between U2's *Achtung Baby* and *Zooropa* – the second being a by-product of the first. "Our songwriting process was to laboriously whittle down our jam sessions. Brian, however, loved our jamming. With *Wah Wah* he'd record our jams, join in, and then get engineer Markus Dravs to experiment with the tapes. It was his way of taking our mind off the 'big songs'. He would say: 'Always aim to do two albums and you'll end up with at least one!'"

**JOHN LEWIS**



**KANSAS**  
**Miracles Out Of Nowhere**

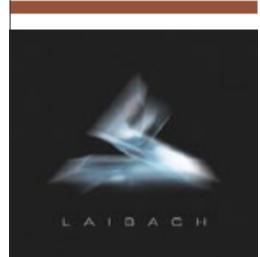
SONY

**The peak years of prog's wayward sons**

All round, it's a fairly unjust title. Topeka, Kansas isn't exactly nowhere, and the success of the city's most famous export – this boogie-turned-prog/soft rock band can't completely be attributed to divine intervention. As this compilation (including a full-length documentary DVD charting their 40-year career) makes plain, this was a band with serious chops. Lauded by their peers as highly accomplished musicians and scoring Top 20 hits with "Dust In The Wind" – which began as a finger-picking exercise for guitarist-songwriter Kerry Livgren – and magnificently harmonised, AOR radio staple "Carry On Wayward Son", the sextet have nevertheless been sidelined by history. True, Robbie Steinhardt's demon violin is very much of its time ("The Pilgrimage" is especially testing) and their '80s transformation into peddlers of air-brushed balladry is regrettable, but Kansas endured through countless lineup changes and, despite vocalist/songwriter Steve Walsh's retirement last year, tour still. Wisely, this LP focuses on their 1974-'77 peak, although the dialogue interludes that help tell the band's story are intrusive. It's unlikely to convert the novice, but listen to sprawling, 10-minute opus "Song For America" and you will suspect Sufjan Stevens to have more than a nodding acquaintance with it.

**EXTRAS:** None.

**SHARON O'CONNELL**



**LAIBACH**  
**Spectre**  
**(reissue, 2014)**

MUTE

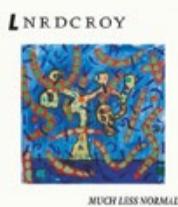
**Slovenian "pop" stars remodelled eighth**

The reissue of any record just 13 months after the original suggests hubris

and optimism in equal measure, but if Laibach are known for anything other than their robotranc take on "The Final Countdown", it's for doing their own (often confrontational) thing. Anyhow, the focus of this deluxe edition is a full album of remixes (also available separately) from the likes of Marcel Dettmann, Diamond Version and fellow Slovenian Gramatik. Against a backdrop of chilly martial disco, *Spectre* has plenty to say about oppressive political systems and those who brave loss of liberty or life by challenging them, but the nine Spectremix edits defy expectations of severely minimal, industrio-techno gloom. In iTurk's hands, "Koran" becomes a rapturous, Technicolor rave-up, while Gramatik's take on "Eat Liver!" goes down the squelch-heavy, disco-house route, and for his epic rinse of "The Whistleblowers" (one of two here), Berghain's resident DJ Dettmann lays a hypnotic, three-note loop over a compelling techno beat – and omits the original's whistle.

**EXTRAS:** Five bonus tracks, including an **7/10** adaptation of Serge Gainsbourg's "Love On The Beat", a live version of same, recorded at London's Tate Modern and a spin on Blind Lemon Jefferson's "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean".

**SHARON O'CONNELL**



## LNRDCROY Much Less Normal

FIRECRACKER

### 2014 synth curio gets vinyl upgrade

Now on vinyl after a cassette-only release last year via 108op, Lnrdcroy is part of the improbable

**8/10**

micro-scene in Vancouver that puts out sunkissed Balearic nu-disco as if it wasn't murkily drizzling half the year (see also: the superb Mood Hut label). The least successful tracks here are a pair of awkwardly rigid pastiches of early '90s breakbeat house, but when the tempo dips and the beats right themselves, it becomes gorgeous. Boards Of Canada and early Aphex are clear touchstones, as poignant, mildewed chords merge into each other – most beautifully on the drowsy waltz "Ad In The Paper" – while "Sunrise Market" could have been made by Prins Thomas or Studio in that other bleak outpost of disco, Scandinavia. But there's a definite North American sensibility, with the loose noodling and bleached lo-fidelity down an underground line from James Ferraro, Spencer Clark, Mark McGuire et al. "I Met You On BC Ferries" is the highest point, an Afrobeat tattoo pattering under a beautiful, boiled-wool melody, with ever more synth lines creeping to join it. The US chillwave scene has had plenty of chancers muddying synths with weak songwriting – Lnrdcroy wisely focuses on pulses and psychedelics, creating a very Pacific Northwestern take on dance.

**EXTRAS:** None.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



## SHELBY LYNNE

### I Am Shelby Lynne

ROUNDER

### Expanded anniversary reissue of US singer-writer's career landmark

Fifteen years ago,

Alabama-born Shelby Lynne walked out on a career as a manufactured Nashville pin-up to make a record that was "real and true". After years of corporate manipulation, the self-assertive title of *I Am Shelby Lynne* said it all and revealed a sensuous and poetic singer-songwriter with a seductive Southern drawl, more Lucinda Williams than Reba McEntire. The album won her a Grammy and while she's continued to release impressive and challenging records since, it remains her unrivalled masterpiece. Vaulting effortlessly across country, Southern rock, blues and jazz, and combining a warm intimacy and sassy sex appeal with some profoundly dark themes, the songs continue to sound as fresh today as when they were minted.

**EXTRAS:** With Lynne in such a rich vein, **8/10** one always suspected the sessions had produced more quality material than she could use – and so it proves. Every one of six previously unreleased tracks could've shone on the original release, from the sultry "Bless The Fool" with its moody strings to the dream-pop of "Wind", and from the brazen funk of "Should Have Been Better" to the confessional rawness of "Miss You Sissy", addressed to sister Allison Moorer.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**8/10**



## MOTORPSYCHO

### Demon Box

RUNE GRAMMOPHON

### Multi-disc reissue of early-'90s behemoth

Motorpsycho's early work suggested they were a decent, if unspectacular, jam band with a thing for American blues and metal. All that changed with 1993's *Demon Box*, their third album, which saw the Norwegians forsake the power trio format with the addition of Helge 'Deathprod' Sten and his bank of noisy electronic effects. Cue monster blowouts, freeform psychedelia and a whole new sense of exploratory otherness. Expanded to its intended double-LP size (the record label truncated the original to fit onto a single CD), *Demon Box* now comes with restored versions of "Gutwrench", "Dr Who" and the 11-minute "Mountain". Its most striking moments, however, remain the same, namely the colossal title track, the oscillating space-folk of "Tuesday Morning" and a droney cover of Moondog's "All Is Loneliness". Disc Three consists of a couple of EPs that followed the album's release, with a freaky version of Jefferson Airplane's "The House At Pooneil Corners". And while Disc Four (outtakes, rarities and live cuts) is likely to appeal to completists only, it's worth hearing for wiggy takes of the Grateful Dead's "Mason's Children" and an extrapolation of The Groundhogs' "Cherry Red" that makes fair use of a cowbell. Disc Five, meanwhile, is a live DVD from Groningen in September '93.

**EXTRAS:** None.

ROB HUGHES

**8/10**

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ROB HUGHES

**8/10**



## PRIMITIVES

### Galore: Deluxe Edition

CHERRY RED

### Chart-topping Coventry quartet's secret last stand, vastly expanded

Fizzy, irrepressibly melodic, good-natured, with a fistful of mega-catchy songs, the Primitives were everything one might want out of a pop combo in 1991. In the trend-obsessed crossfire of Madchester and grunge, though, they barely registered. After a spate of '80s hits, *Galore* was album number three – inexplicably delayed a year by RCA – the last gasp of the group's original incarnation. With an up-front radio-ready sound (perhaps its ignominious doom), predicated on a funky beat here, a jangly guitar there, the songs are impeccable. Charismatic singer Tracy Tracy comes on like a more versatile Debbie Harry, delivering devastating hooks with aplomb. "You Are The Way" – akin to an amped-up Shirelles sent through a meat grinder – should have been a hit; the gentle jangle of "Slip Away" is simply drop-dead gorgeous. Meanwhile, "Earth Thing", punk-funk wound taut with an insane guitar onslaught by main songwriter Paul Court, argues vehemently against perceptions that the Primitives were mere lightweights.

**EXTRAS:** Eighteen extra tracks, ranging

**7/10**

from import bonus tracks, single remixes, and almost an hour of live tracks, plus some fine contextual liner notes by journalist Andy Davis.

LUKE TORN

## SIMPLE MINDS

### Sparkle In The Rain Special Editions

VIRGIN



### Remastered five-disc boxset for Kerr and co's 1984 stadium breakthrough

**7/10**

With U2 producer Steve Lillywhite at the helm, *Sparkle* was where the Minds flexed their rock muscle and defiantly mapped out the big music. Lyrically more direct than ever, channelling a sense of awe and revelation, the impassioned Kerr rides a newly liberated powerhouse sound foregrounding mighty Mel Gaynor's drums and Charlie Burchill's searing and calamitous guitar lines. The prescient "Waterfront" provided the anthemic focal point, but all around, a heightened drama was at work. Kerr, indefatigable on the giddy high jinx of "Speed Your Love To Me" (where the late Kirsty McColl provides vocal foil) welcomes vast peaks and invokes heady visions amid the shimmering atmospherics of "White Hot Day". Time has been rather kinder to the Minds' vaulting ambition than more successful contemporaries – *Sparkle*'s compositions' strong structure and valiant earthiness, particular evident on the ebullient live cuts, earths the grandiose leanings. Majoring in resourcefulness and imagination, *Sparkle* marks a key '80s transformation – from post-punk new pop into Teflon-coated rock powerhouse.

**EXTRAS:** Alternative edits, Radio 1 session, **7/10** February '84 Barrowlands live show, and DVD with 5.1 mix and promo videos.

GAVIN MARTIN

**7/10**

## SIMPLE MINDS

### Sons And Fascination/Sister Feelings Call

VIRGIN, 1981

Three years before U2 hooked up with Brian Eno, the Minds' liaison with prog-icon producer Steve Hillage mined mutual Krautrock inspirations, gave vent to their exotic melodicism, shimmering synth-pop and the rabid mean-eyed funk of "Sweat In Bullet". Originally released as two separate albums.

**8/10**

## SIMPLE MINDS

### New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84)

VIRGIN, 1982

A newly abundant and optimistic mood brought big hits with the erotic crooning of "Someone Somewhere In Summertime" and the billowing swagger of "Promised You A Miracle". With Kerr's high-flown romanticism, it's a resplendent '80s highpoint.

**9/10**

**9/10**

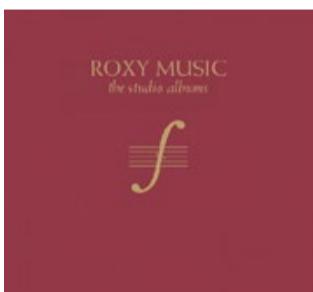


# ROXY MUSIC

## The Studio Albums

VIRGIN/BACK TO BLACK VINYL

All eight, from dazzling debut to vaporous swansong. By Andy Gill



rendered the lush, expansive sound of the later Roxy thin and pasty, a sort of flock-wallpaper version of their velvet smoothness. So this set of 180g vinyl albums is to be welcomed, even though it charts more clearly than ever the gradual artistic desiccation that came hand-in-hand with commercial success.

Sadly, the restored analog warmth can't really surmount Pete Sinfield's odd production of Roxy's debut album, which features the drums upfront and punchy, but leaves the other elements less confidently presented in the mix. But it's a remarkable record nonetheless, with the track title "Re-make/Re-model" virtually constituting a manifesto of the group's eclectic, postmodern approach, which featured alongside the modernist strains of tracks such as "Ladytron" hints and tints of doowop, cabaret and even country, and also drew influences from the film, fashion and art worlds. Bits of it might have

ROXY MUSIC WERE not best served by the mid-'80s shift to CDs and especially the subsequent move to mp3 files. At one end of their career, this condensation process made their earlier, more experimental recordings sound tinny and hollow; at the other end, it

seemed familiar, but en masse it sounded unlike anything else – as did Bryan Ferry's mannered crooning, which was a hyper-real representation of the emotional ballast commonly associated with popular music, from Bing Crosby to Marvin Gaye.

Chris Thomas' production makes the follow-up *For Your Pleasure* much more assured and propulsive – "Do The Strand" leaps from the speakers with solidity and purpose, as does "Editions Of You", with its succinct solos by Andy Mackay, Brian Eno and Phil Manzanera. "For Your Pleasure" and the nine-minute "The Bogus Man" reflect the influence of Can, but it's the blow-up-doll devotional "In Every Dream Home A Heartache" that really pushes the pop-song envelope, shifting from eerie spatiality to crazed climax, with the false fade and phased return cementing its abstruse weirdness.

Following Eno's replacement by Curved Air violinist Eddie Jobson, *Stranded* and *Country Life* offered a focusing of forces on tracks like "Street Life" and "All I Want Is You", which extended Roxy's run of hit singles. Their eclecticism was still in operation – as witness the New Orleans second-line shuffle and gospel choir underscoring Ferry's testifying on "Psalm" – but the notion "strange ideas mature with age" (from "The Thrill Of It All") effectively defined Roxy's developing sound which, despite Manzanera's terse, edgy guitar striations, was becoming more solid and stable. Ferry's delivery of hipster slang like "Stay hip/Keep cool", meanwhile, was still abundantly freighted with irony.

But it was the lumpy funk-rock of "Casanova", with Ferry's sardonically punning line about "Now you're nothing but second hand in glove with second rate" that hinted at what was to come on 1975's *Siren*. "Love Is The Drug" irresistibly refined this chic funk style, but the album overall seems sluggish and weak. Even "Both Ends Burning", the LP's

### CONTENTS

ROXY MUSIC	1972
FOR YOUR PLEASURE	1973
STRANDED	1973
COUNTRY LIFE	1974
SIREN	1975
MANIFESTO	1979
FLESH + BLOOD	1980
AVALON	1982

other standout, lacks impetus, and it's no surprise that they decided to take a four-year hiatus: the band sounds wiped out, ground down, used up.

By the time they returned, punk had employed its scorched-earth flamethrower, and the fresh buds of new-wave energy were poking

through the ruins. Perhaps this explains the uncertainty of *Manifesto*, an album split between the fizzy, brittle sound of "Trash" and the more expansive, funk-jazz style of the title-track and "Stronger Through The Years", with its fretless bass and prog-scape noodling. Ferry may have claimed, on "Manifesto", that he was "for a life around the corner, that takes you by surprise", but the use of sessioneers like Steve Ferrone, Rick Marotta and Richard Tee indicated the more mainstream territory being mapped out. "Dance Away" was divinely mousse-light, but the album's other single, "Angel Eyes", was stodgy rather than elegant, limp rather than louche.

The following year, *Flesh + Blood* became the album which crystallised the synthetic glamour and bogus elegance of the nascent New Romantic movement, offering a template for the likes of Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet and ABC. There was a wafer-thin charm about "Oh Yeah" and "Over You", singles almost entirely lacking in ambition; but the band were struggling for decent material, to the extent of including dilute covers of "In The Midnight Hour" and "Eight Miles High", the latter re-cast as sylph-like funk – it fits the Roxy aesthetic, but conveys none of the spaced-out alienation of The Byrds' original.

The band's swansong came with 1982's *Avalon*, the sleekest entry in their catalogue, so vaporous that the title-track could be the soundtrack to a scent advert, while Phil Manzanera's guitar, for so long the supplier of Roxy's more exploratory frissons, reached on "Take A Chance With Me" a rarefied, emotive quality akin to Norwegian angstmeister Terje Rypdal. But the true signifier of the band's fate could be found in its most crucial component, Bryan Ferry's voice, which had lost all trace of the irony and bite of early Roxy. Trapped with the enervated swoon of a jaded lothario, he had effectively become what he once parodied.

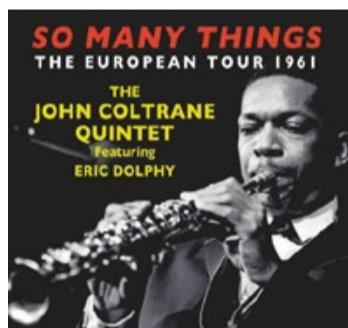


## The Specialist

Live jazz



Early '60s Trane: blowing in the wind of change



### JOHN COLTRANE So Many Things: The European Tour 1961

ACROBAT

9/10

IF YOU THINK Dylan going electric or the punk revolution caused a stir in the music press, you should have been around when John Coltrane brought his quintet to the UK to start a 27-city European tour in November 1961. Bob Dawbarn, the *Melody Maker*'s representative, returned from the opening show at the Gaumont State in Kilburn, North London, with a piece that ran under a headline screaming: "WHAT HAPPENED?"

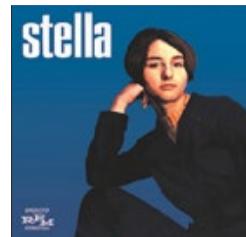
Dawbarn was a knowledgeable fan of modern jazz – including the music of Dizzy Gillespie, whose band topped the bill that night – but Coltrane's new sounds had him "baffled, bothered and bewildered", reflecting the opinion of a large chunk of the audience unready for the changes jazz was starting to undergo.

Part of the problem was that Coltrane's UK album release schedule lagged far behind the US. The fans who knew him from his work with Miles Davis and his own earlier records as a leader were expecting a tenor saxophonist who expanded the rulebook but did not rip it to shreds. They had not heard his latest Atlantic album, *My Favourite Things*, containing a version of the title song in which he used the major-to-minor shifts of Richard Rodgers' harmless little melody (from *The Sound Of Music*) as the vehicle not only for his discovery of the soprano saxophone but for his assault on jazz's established limits of harmony and timescale.

No fewer than six extended versions of the song are included in *So Many Things: The European Tour 1961*, a set of four CDs on the Acrobat label compiled from two shows each in Paris and Stockholm and one apiece in Copenhagen and Helsinki. The sound quality varies from patchy to excellent, but the flame of discovery burns throughout, nowhere more thrillingly than on the second Paris version of "My Favourite Things", where Coltrane attacks his long solo from a variety of different angles, with increasingly jaw-dropping results.

Other highlights include a gorgeous version of "Naima" featuring the bass clarinet of Eric Dolphy, who is also heard to advantage on alto saxophone and flute. McCoy Tyner (piano), Reggie Workman (bass) and Elvin Jones (drums) show themselves completely attuned to the rapidly evolving needs of a leader who would die in 1967 without having visited the UK again. This diligently compiled set is as close as we'll get to a souvenir of his profound effect on European listeners.

RICHARD WILLIAMS



### STELLA Stella: Expanded Edition

RPM INTERNATIONAL

Curious parody and avant-pop from French '60s teen star

French singer Stella Vander (née Zelcer) cut

her first single at 12 in 1963 and released her first LP in '67, before abandoning pop for jazz and then joining French proggers Magma. Her departure was not unexpected. Stella had made her name recording smart, satirical pop songs that sent up the yé-yé style that had swept Europe in the wake of The Beatles, and this had a limited shelf-life. She was operating firmly with a strong French tradition of gleeful peer mockery – and one that would soon be followed by Serge Gainsbourg – but also one that would easily get tiresome even when the music was so fabulous. This 26-track CD collects her debut album plus other EP releases from the era, and includes genteel crackers like "Gaspard" and "Le Vieux Banjo" alongside splendidly assured pop songs like "Je Ne Peux Plus Te Voir En Peinture" and "Poésie 67". "J'Achète Des Disques Américains" and "Beatnicks D'Occasion", the latter a 1960s take on "Weekender", offer a good insight into her humour, while the brilliant "Si Vous Connaissez Quelque Chose...", is a sort of garage rocker featuring cut-up montages of animal sounds and "La Marseillaise" that shows she had a sense of adventure as well as one of mischief.

**EXTRAS:** Sleevenotes.

PETER WATTS



### UB40

#### Present Arms - Deluxe

UMC

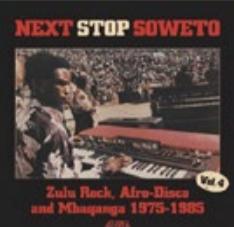
Expanded reissue of socially engaged second album

8/10

boys tackled Thatcher, race riots and the indefatigable medicinal properties of "sensimilla", UB40 could give The Specials a run for their money when it came to combining socio-political suss with quality sounds. Their second album, released in 1981, is a vibrant stew of reverb-drenched reggae and righteous opinioneering. Top 10 single "One In Ten" (a reference to the West Midlands' 10 per cent unemployment rate) epitomises the album's heavy, mid-paced melodicism. The sweetly soulful "Don't Slow Down" has a deceptively spiky underbelly, "Silent Witness" smuggles an uncompromising vision of urban hopelessness underneath its mellifluous groove, but there's light(er) relief in a trio of instrumentals, while "Lamb's Bread" is a silly, squelchy demand to legalise the herb. UB40's fourth album, the hugely successful covers LP, *Labour Of Love*, has also been given the deluxe reissue treatment, but by then the band's muse was showing clear signs of fatigue. On *Present Arms*, it burns hard and bright.

**EXTRAS:** The companion album, *Present Arms In Dub*, originally released towards the end of 1981, alongside a third disc of unreleased BBC sessions and live tracks, also from 1981.

GRAEME THOMSON



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Next Stop Soweto Vol 4: Zulu Rock, Afro-Disco & Mbaqanga 1975-85**

STRUT

**8/10**

**Rocking the townships like never before...**

The latest in Strut's ongoing archive series revisiting the sounds of the ghetto during the long, cruel years of apartheid should nail once and for all the myth that international isolation and internal oppression meant black South African township music developed in an environment hermetically sealed from the influence of the outside world. While previous volumes have concentrated on distinctively indigenous South African styles in the Masekela/Makeba tradition, the fourth set finds Soweto rocking to a more international and eclectic beat. Isaac & The Sakie Special Band show that Chic's influence in the early 1980s reached as far as the shebeens of Johannesburg. The Movers' "Soweto Disco" evokes The Average White Band. Almon Memela's "Things We Do In Soweto" borrows its DNA from The Fatback Band. The gospel-fired disco of Harari's "Give" would have moved dancefloors all over the world if we'd been allowed to hear it, while Kabassa's Zulu-riffing and duelling lead guitars improbably owe more to the prog-rock of Wishbone Ash than to the Afrobeat of Osibisa. A bit of a shock for world music cultural purists, but a thrilling eye-opener for the rest of us.

**EXTRAS:** Informative booklet with track notes, **6/10** evocative photos and sleeve artwork.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

## REVELATIONS

Pete Wiggs' London lives



► Reflecting on his group St Etienne's intensification of interest in the life and lives of London, Pete Wiggs says, "Because London is a vibrant city it means it is always changing, for better or worse, and documenting some of those changes feels necessary."

With their most recent film, *How We Used To Live*, Wiggs and Bob Stanley, along with collaborators Paul Kelly and Travis Elborough, were looking "for images that told stories, showed unfamiliar views of the everyday and things that had changed beyond recognition. The film covers the 1950s to early 1980s. I wanted the music to incorporate elements from those decades without pastiche or being period accurate to a particular scene."

It's a fascination that has long been part of St Etienne's music: in many ways, their LPs play out as psychogeographies of the changing fates of the city. "When we started out in 1990, we'd just moved to London," Wiggs continues, "having grown up on the outskirts and been caught in its spell since childhood. We were obsessed with it and the freedom of leaving home and being in a band." JONDALE



## PETE WIGGS

**Saint Etienne Present How We Used To Live**

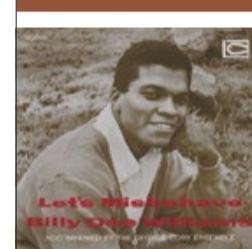
HEAVENLY FILMS

**8/10** Back, further back: St Et's hymn to London, scored

As the grand arc of Saint Etienne's career comes into focus, they're starting to look more and more like a secret barometer tracking pop music's socio-cultural complexities. Their early '90s music captured the thrill of acid house and the alluring oddness of techno; later, they'd detour through elegant modernism, sleek electronica, arms-aloft house, and the clarity of modern pop production. Beside that narrative, though, runs their constant eulogising of London, one of pop's pressure points, and interest that has blossomed in recent years, due to collaborations with the BFI. On *How We Used To Live* – a film named after one of the group's finest singles – two members of Saint Etienne, Wiggs and pop historian Bob Stanley, along with collaborators Paul Kelly and Travis Elborough, re-edited old Central Office Of Information films into a poised narrative of everyday life in the city. Wiggs' soundtrack captures the tone of the film perfectly – an admixture of the nostalgic, the futuristic, the cautiously optimistic and the quotidian. Wiggs uses classic tropes from soundtrack and library music – minimal electronics, simple, plunking double bass, percussion that sashays across the stereo spectrum – and effortlessly makes new the London we knew.

**EXTRAS:** None.

JONDALE



## BILLY DEE WILLIAMS

**Let's Misbehave**

EXPLORE MULTIMEDIA

**6/10**

Early '60s curio from renowned American thesp

Years before he starred alongside Diana Ross in *Lady Sings The Blues* and *Mahogany*, and later as Lando Calrissian in two *Star Wars* films (*The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*), Billy Dee Williams was a stage actor with one eye on a singing career. This fascinating, if flawed, exercise in sub-Sinatra swing dates from 1961 and was first issued as part of Prestige Records' Lively Arts series of experimental releases. Williams certainly had a rich voice, far more mature than his 23 years might suggest, nestled in the cosy arrangements of George Cory. The folksy, largely unadorned "A Taste Of Honey" fares best, lifted from the Broadway play in which Williams had recently drawn positive reviews. And he does get to flex his tonsils on more strident tunes like "Red Sun Blues". But most of it, from Cole Porter's title track through to "Life's A Holiday" and Johnny Mercer's "I Wonder What Became Of Me", takes the form of wee-small-hours jazz, all brushed drums, tinkly piano and Williams' wounded balladeering. The album's easy sophistication might well have been enough to warrant a follow-up. Alas, the Prestige-Lively Arts label failed to set the tills ringing and opted to cut its losses soon after.

**EXTRAS:** None.

ROB HUGHES

# COMING NEXT MONTH...



► Those of a folksy persuasion are well served next month. There's the new one by Conor O'Brien's band, **Villagers**, who have managed to find a dark and even Elbowy

kind of path through acoustic music. Maybe more persuasively, out the back in the Archive section there's some compendious historical work afoot with a boxset compiling the work of **Fotheringay** – Sandy Denny's band with her husband Trevor Lucas. Not only that, there's a new remastered issue for the first album by **Bert Jansch**. From cover image to spellbinding music, Jansch's 1965 debut helped focus the idea of the British guitar troubadour, its technical wizardry and crisp, passionate songwriting rendering its maker a role model for a whole generation of players.

Back after a while away, frontman Jim James detained on a variety of other musical and curatorial projects, **My Morning Jacket** also return with a long-gestated record. The first since 2011's *Circuital*, **The Waterfall** is produced by Tucker Martine, and the lengthy sessions seem to have produced not just this record but a follow-up, too. In other news, there's a new one from **Brian Wilson**, and the superb new Blake Mills-produced effort of much-changed garage/R&B from the all-new **Alabama Shakes**.

JOHN.ROBINSON.101@FREELANCE.TIMEINC.COM

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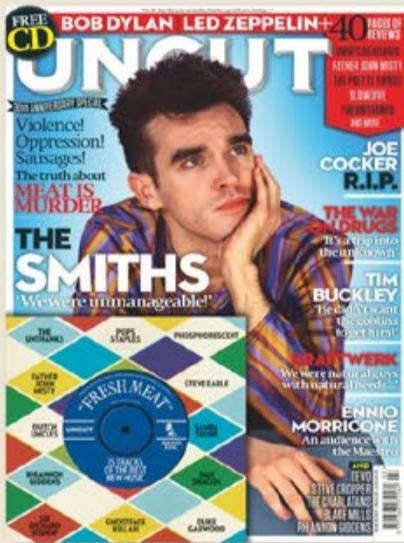


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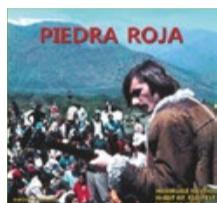
# DVD & Blu-ray

THIS MONTH: JOE STRUMMER ON THE RUN | DEAD MAN | LEVIATHAN

## PIEDRA ROJA

WWW.PORTALDISC.COM

Chile's hippy revolution uncovered. By Andy Gill



8/10

THE "WOODSTOCK GENERATION" was not confined just to North America and Europe. Across the world, countercultural ripples among the young caused ructions in societies normally bound by strict traditional ways. After the *Woodstock* film was screened

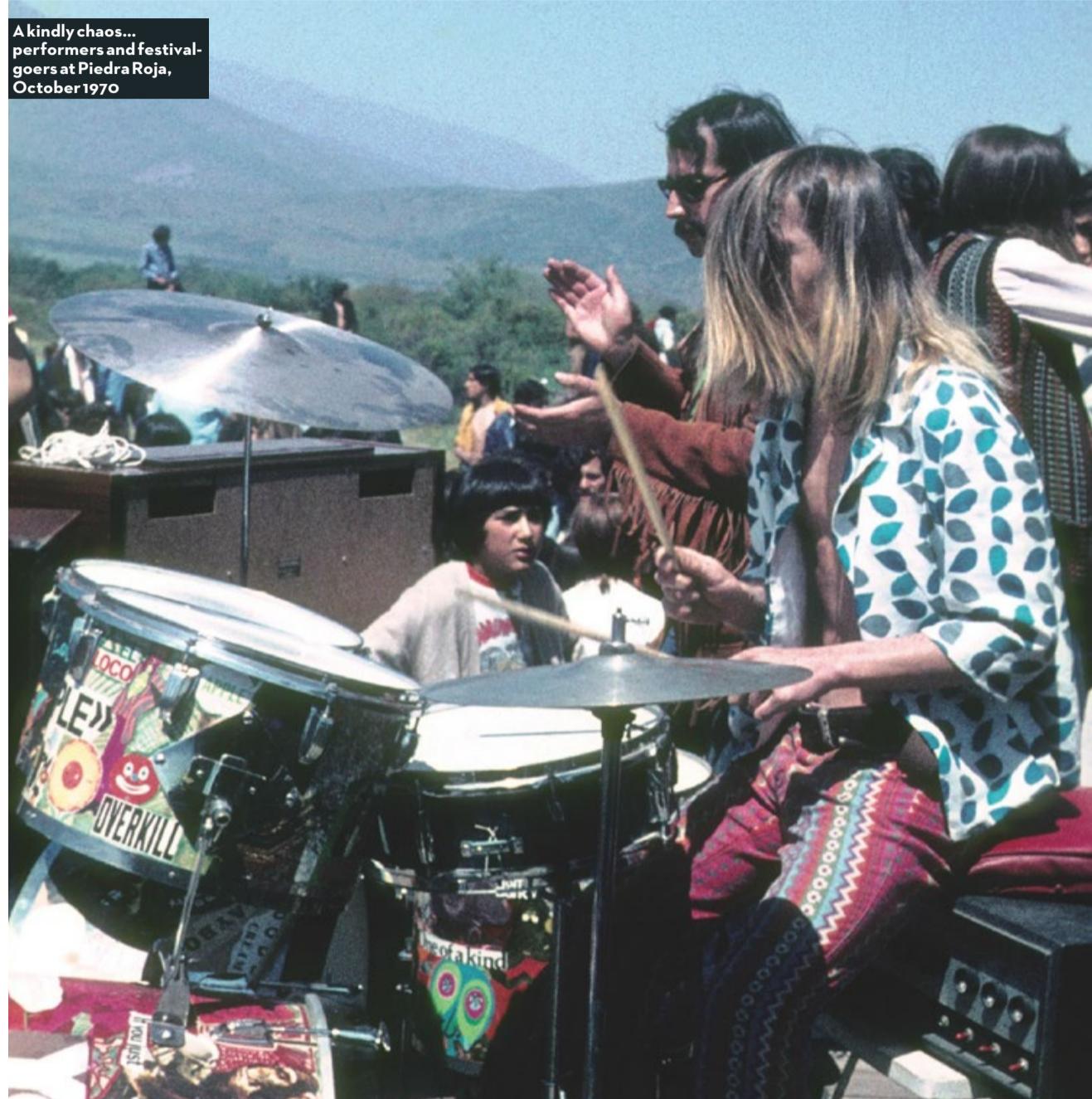
in Chile, 19-year-old student Jorge Gómez was inspired to put on a free festival, Piedra Roja, which would become an emblematic moment in the life of the nation. Taking place on a stretch of land in the hills outside eastern Santiago between October 10 and 12, 1970, it seemed to presage the election the following month of Salvador Allende as president. "We had an intuition that the world could be different," says actress and playwright Malucha Pinto, who attended the festival. "A world in which liberty, solidarity, community, understanding and justice existed." Through copious interviews with participants and scraps of period footage, this fascinating documentary paints a picture not just of the festival but of the social conditions which spawned it, and the repercussions which followed.

In the late '60s, the Chilean music scene was on the cusp of change. Bands like Los Ripios, Trapos and Blops were beginning to explore the boundaries between pop, traditional Chilean music and more exploratory modes, producing a sort of local variant of Tropicália with flute-based folk-rock and harmonies. Los Jaivas ditched their bowties and gold-buttoned blazers in favour of a more freewheeling look, and changed their sound accordingly: within months, they had produced their first "symphonic" work, a Zappa-esque piece "based on sonic distortion". And inspired by Lennon & Ono's *Two Virgins*, the band Aguaturbia decided that they, too, would appear naked on their album sleeve. It was a sensation, instantly outselling every album in Chilean history. "We were young, naïve, talented and marginalised," laughs singer Denise Corales today.

The hippy scene in Santiago was split between two locations: rich, middle-class kids tended to stay in the upmarket suburb of Coppelia, while the more militant leftists, intellectuals and lower-class congregated in the Parque Forestal, across from the Military Academy, whose inmates would sometimes cause trouble for the hippies, notably in one brutal, bloody confrontation when hundreds of sword-wielding cadets put the peaceniks to flight. There was constant underlying tension: on other occasions, Blops would arrive to perform on the back of a flatbed truck, until the police turned up to disperse the crowd with water-cannon.

The establishment were genuinely scared of this new cultural shift, particularly the way rich, bourgeois kids were attracted to hippiedom. Engineer and astrologer Caroli Aparicio tells of how his professor recruited him as a spy, to infiltrate the burgeoning hippy movement and

A kindly chaos... performers and festival-goers at Piedra Roja, October 1970



discover what its motives and aims were. It was the kind of request that, once made, can't be refused. But when he infiltrated the hippies at Parque Forestal, he soon went native and joined them.

So when Jorge Gómez decided to stage a free festival, he was preaching to a swelling congregation – far bigger than he had anticipated. The naïve teenager was fundamentally ill-equipped for the challenge. Sure, he was able to persuade Coca-Cola to provide a stage (12ft x 20ft!) in return for the drinks franchise; and while his mother wrote blank cheques to cover local damage, and the cost of bringing electricity from a pylon 3km away, he was soon overwhelmed by events. There was no PA. The entire lighting system was one bulb in a coffee-can. The single cable couldn't carry enough electricity to power bands' equipment fully. Some performers could find neither the tiny stage, nor any organiser, and departed without playing.

It was chaos. But a kindly chaos. Bands jammed enthusiastically, the crowd eagerly expressed the peace and love vibe, and as at festivals throughout the years, youngsters had their first tastes of sex and drugs and rock'n'roll. It was front-page news, and by the second day, bus companies had organised trips for gawkers to come see the hippies. Spotting an opportunity, van-loads of booze-sellers and prostitutes arrived at the site. The following day, the police arrived and shut the festival down.

The repercussions were quick in coming.

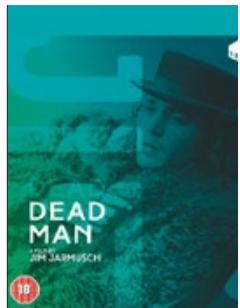
### SCORING:

10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent  
7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

Questions were asked in parliament. There was widespread persecution. Hippies became outcasts, attacked by both sides – by the church and right-wingers as degenerates, by leftists as bourgeois. Jorge Gómez was expelled from school, and forced to leave home, escaping to establish a commune in the mountains. As Allende's socialist policies began to bite, poverty spread. Suddenly, it got "hard, ugly and conflictive".

A few years later, it got even harder and uglier. Surprised at the absence of traffic in the mountains, Gómez and a pal jumped on a motorbike and drove down towards Santiago, only to find machine-guns facing them in the road. A military coup had resulted in the probable murder of Allende, and Pinochet was in power. Narrowly avoiding being killed or imprisoned, Gómez cut his hair and disappeared back into the mountains. Other musicians fled for Argentina or Ecuador or Europe, taking advantage of the junta's immediate focus on hunting leftist activists rather than hippies. Those that didn't get out got hurt. But the documentary closes on a more positive note, with young musicians, inspired by the legend of Piedra Roja, reviving the hippy spirit in a land now mercifully more open to change. "Piedra Roja occurs at a moment in which David confronts Goliath," reflects Malucha Pinto. "And somehow, the weak won."

**EXTRAS:** None.



## DEAD MAN

SODA PICTURES

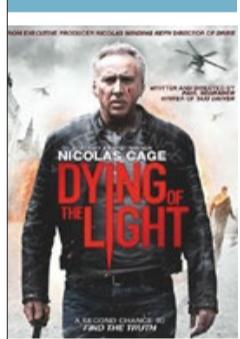
Jarmusch's metaphysical Western, featuring a solo soundtrack from Neil Young. Little seen and long underrated, Jim Jarmusch's 1995 black-and-white Western – remastered and re-released separately and in a Blu-ray boxset –

endures as one of his most daring and substantial films. Johnny Depp plays William Blake, hapless and aptly named hero of a metaphysical odyssey in which English poetry meets native American lore. Severe, strange and deeply haunting, *Dead Man* is notable for Robert Mitchum's final role, an eerie, masterful solo guitar score by Neil Young – and Iggy Pop in a bonnet.

**EXTRAS:** None.

**JONATHAN ROMNEY**

**8/10**



## DYING OF THE LIGHT

SIGNATURE ENTERTAINMENT

**What's left of Paul Schrader's new movie**

When writer-director (Schrader), star (Nic Cage) and executive producer (Nicolas Winding Refn) all condemn their film, you have to check it out. A counter-terrorism thriller, Cage is a CIA agent fighting early dementia, while battling to bring down an old (terminally ill) Islamist nemesis. The real thrills occurred behind the scenes, when the backers took the movie from Schrader and drastically re-edited it. What's left is a fitfully entertaining popcorn B-movie, ghosted by curious shades of fever and anguish, held together by some wired Cage.

**EXTRAS:** None.

**DAMIEN LOVE**

**6/10**



## LEVIATHAN

ARTIFICIAL EYE

**Brave, bleakly brilliant fable of modern Russia**

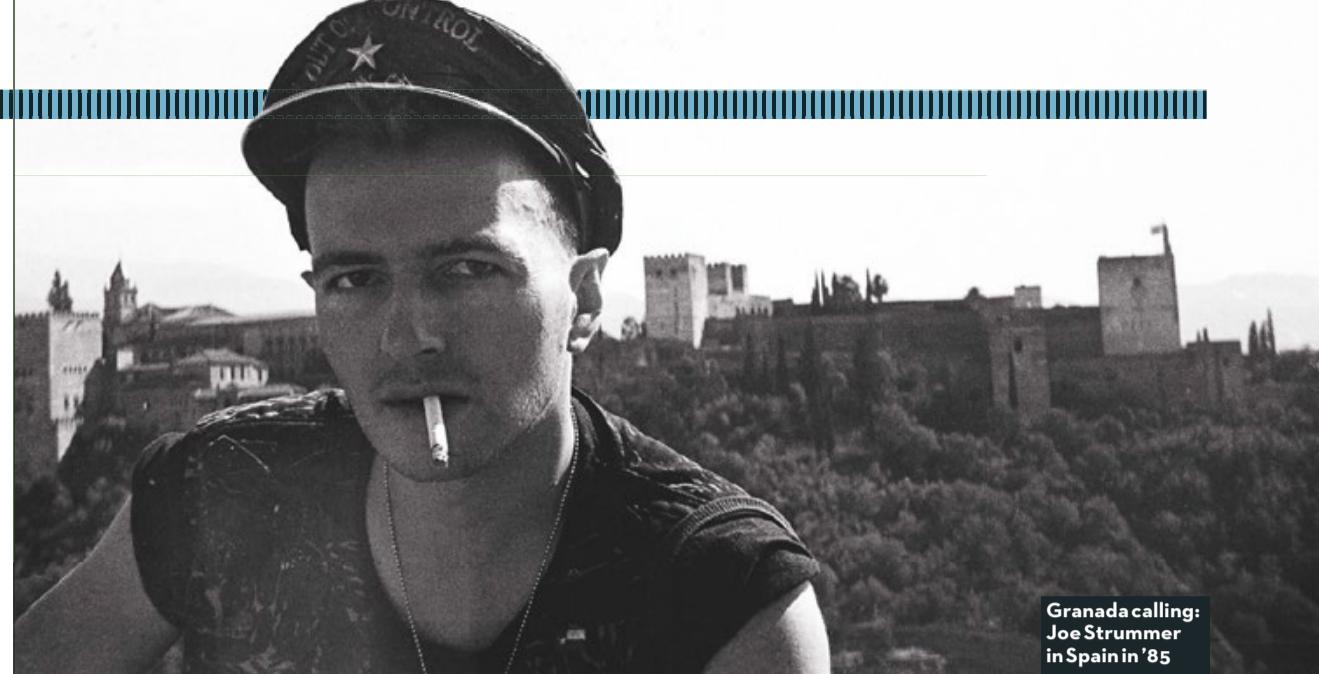
Andrey Zvyagintsev's strange, slow drama has sparked considerable controversy in Russia, with political, religious and cultural voices denouncing its unpatriotism in

language that Soviet censors would have recognised. The tale of a surly mechanic on the Barents Sea coast losing everything when the monstrous local mayor decides that he wants his property, it moves on waves of alcohol, corruption, cynicism, history and hopelessness beneath portraits of Putin and blessings from the Russian Orthodox Church.

**EXTRAS:** Director interview, Making Of, trailer.

**DAMIEN LOVE**

**8/10**



Granada calling: Joe Strummer in Spain in '85

## I NEED A DODGE! Joe Strummer On The Run

CADIZ MUSIC

**Strummer's Spanish summer of 1985**

WE'VE NOT REACHED the full-on Tupac/Johnny Cash situation yet, perhaps, but a thriving mini-industry has sprung up in Joe Strummer heritage documentaries: Dick Rude's snappy Mescaleros tour film, *Let's Rock Again!* (2004); Julien Temple's possibly definitive profile *The Future Is Unwritten* (2007); and now Nick Hall's sweet, low-budget documentary, itself an inadvertent semi-sequel to Danny Garcia's enlightening Clash Mark II doc, *The Rise And Fall Of The Clash* (2012).

Hall's film zooms in on the end of the Clash II chapter to focus on a brief, lesser-known moment in Strummer's story: when, in 1985, with that rebooted version of the group collapsing, the singer left the UK. As Clash II members Nick Sheppard and Pete Howard reflect, the sudden disappearance was a virtual repeat of the headline-making vanishing act Strummer had performed back in 1982, when he "went missing" on the eve of the *Combat Rock* tour – with one crucial difference. This time when he disappeared, no-one cared enough to notice.

Sporting a bruised ego and the beginnings of

a beard, Strummer went to ground in Spain – a country for which he'd felt a deep, obsessive romantic attachment even before he got around to expressing it in songs like "Spanish Bombs" – to lick his wounds and try to work out the way ahead.

The title of Hall's film refers to the car Strummer bought while he stayed there, a boxy boat that became a legend among slack-jawed local punks as he cruised it around the streets and bars of Granada, "a miraculous apparition". Strummer lost the car when he eventually returned to the UK and his then-partner Gaby Holford, just in time for the birth of their first daughter, Lola: he parked it somewhere, and forgot where.

Hall mounts a little attempt to find that long-lost Dodge again as a slightly gimmicky framing device. But the real worth of his documentary lies in the memories, diaries and fading photographs of the members of Radio Fortuna and 091, Spanish bands Strummer befriended during his sojourn, and, in the latter case, tried to produce an LP for, with disastrous results.

Strummer had many adventures, and made a lot of good, forgotten music between the end of The Clash and his critical rebirth with The Mescaleros. It's easy to imagine more such films appearing: surely, the tale of his reconciliation with Mick Jones and the creation of BAD's *No 10, Upping Street* album deserves the documentary treatment next? But future historians should bear in mind the words of Gaby, who has the best line in the film: "What do they call it: 'The Wilderness Years'? That was our life!"

**EXTRAS:** Unconfirmed.

**DAMIEN LOVE**



## SILICON VALLEY

HBO

**Hi-tech, geek-chic startup sitcom**

This comes from Mike (Beavis And Butt-head) Judge, and that wicked stoner eye remains, but the tone is closer to his cult 1996 movie *Office Space*, albeit seriously rebooted. Thomas

Middleditch stars as a charming geek programmer, dreaming of creating his own start-up. When he writes an algorithm whose implications are so far-reaching he doesn't understand them himself, he becomes the centre of a bidding war between rival tech billionaires. The Palo Alto scene satire is sharp yet shaggy, and it all leads to one incredible, incredibly crude, incredibly sustained gag about handjobs.

**EXTRAS:** Making Of, commentaries.

**DAMIEN LOVE**



## MR TURNER

ENTERTAINMENT ONE

**Classy, gripping biopic of artist**

**JMW Turner**

There's no mistaking the Mike Leigh touch, even when the director steps away from modernity and into the Victorian age.

Leigh's superb portrait of painter JMW Turner is as much about the subject's times as about his career and private life. In the title role, Timothy Spall is magnificent: a grunting, brutish leviathan of a man, as well as a visionary artist and delicate soul. This ambitious panorama of a film brings grit and gusto to the usually decorous English costume genre.

**EXTRAS:** Interviews, deleted scenes, featurettes.

**JONATHAN ROMNEY**

**7/10**

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# Films

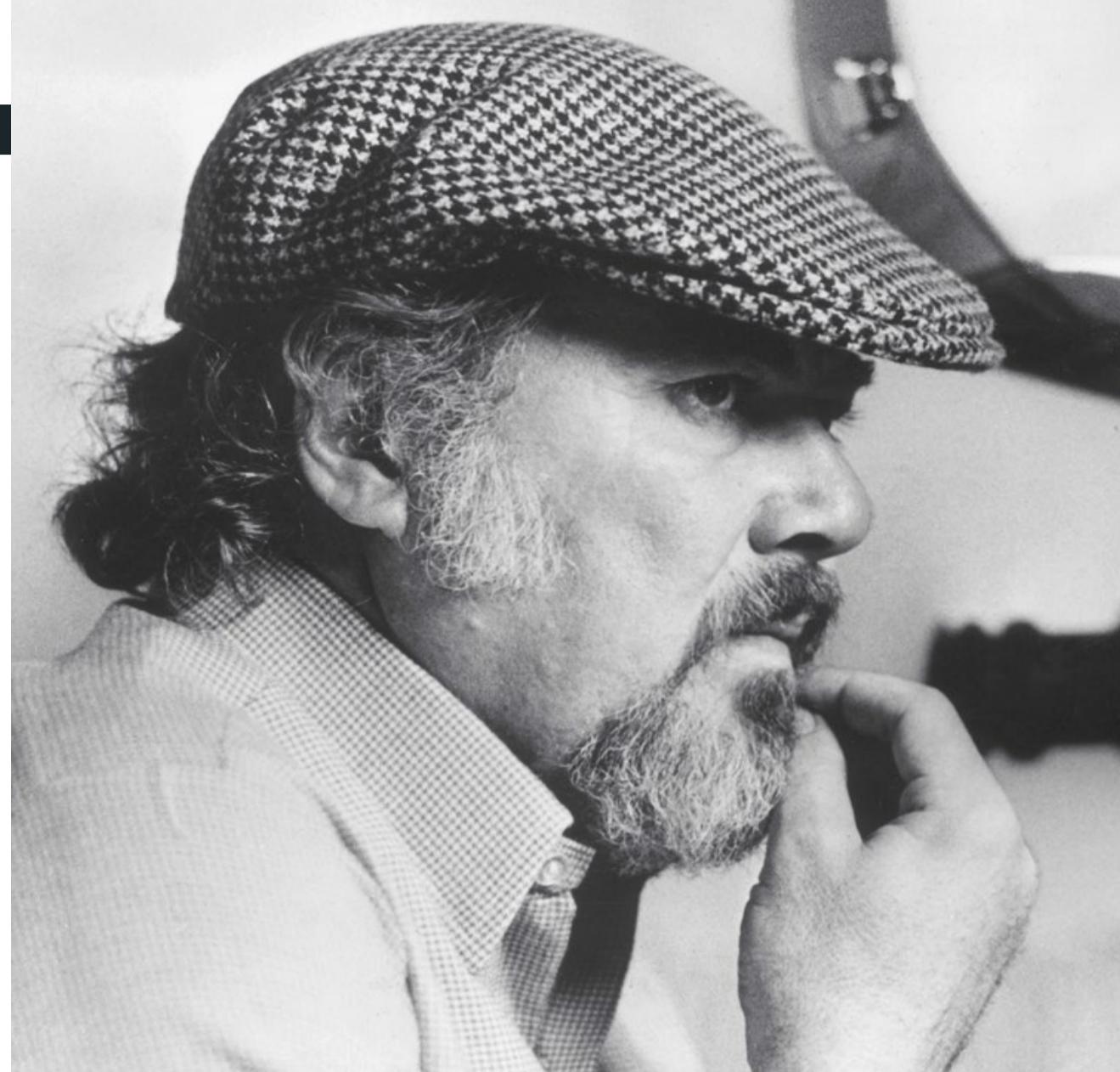
BY MICHAEL BONNER

*This month: A tribute to Robert Altman, two wildly different takes on real-life murders, and the Brit gangster flick reinvented*

## TALES OF THE GRIM SLEEPER

During a career spanning nearly 40 years, Nick Broomfield has often turned to crime investigations that raise larger questions about gender, race and social inequality in America. The exploitation of Aileen Wuornos, for instance, in *Aileen: The Selling Of A Serial Killer*, or the deep levels of corruption he exposed within the LAPD in *Biggie & Tupac*. Indeed, for all his genial qualities, one of Broomfield's most consistent attributes is the compassion he carries for many – though, as viewers of *Kurt & Courtney* will recall, not all – of his subjects. It is an approach that has benefited Broomfield well; and one that he brings into sharp focus in his latest documentary, *Tales Of The Grim Sleeper*. His subject is Lonnie Franklin Jr, a resident of South Central LA who was arrested in 2010 and accused of a string of killings spanning 22 years. Franklin was a well-liked figure in his community – a neighbour admits, "He was a nice guy, I'd never put anything past him like that [murder]; it makes no sense" – and initially Broomfield's film resembles a critical biography of the accused. 180 photos of missing women are found at his house; how does that square with his public reputation as a stand-up guy? But beyond investigating Franklin, Broomfield has a broader scope in mind. As the film develops, he digs around in the neighbourhood, revealing an area blighted by poverty, drugs and crime, where the disappearance and murder of African-American women is not a significant priority for the LA judicial system. Assisting him is one of Franklin's neighbours, a colourful former prostitute and recovering crack addict named Pam Brooks, who provides a diverting foil to the soft-spoken Broomfield.

► **Still Alice** In his 2012 film, *Amour*, the Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke depicted the effects of a stroke on an educated, successful family. The film was a typically rigorous attempt to dismantle one of the last great taboos in cinema, delivered with the director's typically unfussy, scrupulous sensibility. *Still Alice*, by directors Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, focuses



on the degenerative affects of Alzheimer's on Julianne Moore's title character. Alice is a successful linguistics professor with a doting and successful husband and three successful children. While delivering a speech about linguistic education (irony klaxon), Alice loses her thread. Several other indicators suggest something is wrong; naturally, the diagnosis derails the family. It's a rare genetic type, with a significant chance it will recur in her children; one of whom is undergoing fertility treatment. But fortunately, her husband is a senior research physician who can offer more than the usual level insight into Alice's debilitating condition. It is hard to fault the sentiment behind Glatzer and Westmoreland's film; however like *Philadelphia* or *The Diving Bell And The Butterfly*, *Still Alice* perpetuates the notion that illness is more tragic when it strikes well-heeled high-achievers. It is hard to find a reason to feel sympathy for Alice's condition, beside the fact she has Alzheimer's. There is strong work here from Moore, Alec Baldwin as her husband and Kristen

Stewart as her youngest daughter. But because Glatzer and Westmoreland elect to portray Alice's decline in as tasteful a manner as possible, the result feels more middlebrow TV Movie Of The Week than anything more significant.

## ► The Face Of An Angel

Michael Winterbottom is clearly no stranger to unusual methods of storytelling. *A Cock And Bull Story*, his adaptation of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, was really about two actors trying to adapt Sterne's unfilmable novel; meanwhile, *Everyday*, his TV drama about a family coping while the husband is in prison, was shot over five years. His latest film, *The Face Of An Angel*, is ostensibly a fictionalised account of the murder of an English student in Italy; but congruent to that, it appears to be a journey through the mind of a struggling film director.

Evidently, the source of the film is the murder of 21-year-old British student Meredith Kercher in 2007. One character here, Simone (Kate Beckinsale), an American journalist, is based on Barbie Latza

## Reviewed this month...



**TALES OF THE GRIM SLEEPER**  
Director Nick Broomfield  
Starring Nick Broomfield  
Opens now  
Cert 15  
8/10



**STILL ALICE**  
Director Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland  
Starring Julianne Moore, Alec Baldwin  
Opens March 6  
Cert 12A  
6/10



**THE FACE OF AN ANGEL**  
Director Michael Winterbottom  
Starring Daniel Brühl, Kate Beckinsale  
Opens March 27  
Cert 15  
6/10



**HYENA**  
Director Gerard Johnson  
Starring Peter Ferdinando, Stephen Graham  
Opens March 6  
Cert 18  
8/10



**ALTMAN**  
Director Ron Mann  
Starring James Caan, Kathryn Reed Altman  
Opens April 3  
Cert 12A  
7/10



An affectionate tribute to the late, great Robert Altman

Nadeau, who wrote *Angel Face*, one of the first books published about the trial. It is Simone who advises Thomas (Daniel Brühl), a director hoping to make a film about the case: "If you're going to make a movie, make it fiction. You cannot tell the truth unless you make it a fiction." Indeed, as the film develops, the attention drifts away from the murder to settle with Thomas and his attempts to formulate an approach for his film.

Essentially, this is Winterbottom combining the topical qualities of *Welcome To Sarajevo* or *In This World* with the meta-narratives familiar from *24 Hour Party People*, *A Cock And Bull Story* and, on TV,

*The Trip*. You sense Thomas is possibly an analogue for Winterbottom himself; figuring out how best to make the film. But Winterbottom pushes Thomas into *Don't Look Now*-style spasms of paranoia as he stalks the labyrinthine cobbled streets of Siena, experiencing hallucinatory passages involving, on one occasion, a nocturnal assault by gargoyles. It's a shame. There is plenty of interesting gear in the early part of the film about how the media creates narratives, and the moral responsibility of journalism.

► **Hyena** Much has been made of the strong work done in recent years by British filmmakers like Peter Strickland, Ben Wheatley and Jonathan Glazer. Between them, they favour a certain

heightened, sensory type of filmmaking – rich in metaphor and explicitly tied to the experimental cinema of the '60s and '70s. Gerard Johnson, meanwhile, is pursuing a different agenda. His two films – *Tony* and *Hyena* – are both gruelling thrillers, set in London's less salubrious districts. Both are scored by the director's brother, The The's Matt Johnson, and both feature the same lead actor, their cousin, Peter Ferdinando. In *Tony*, Ferdinando played a serial killer stalking Bethnal Green; in *Hyena*, he plays Michael Logan, a policeman who employs violence indiscriminately and abuses his authority to take a cut from local gangs. Ferdinando plays Logan with commendable restraint, and even allows us to glimpse what remains of his moral code: he will not tolerate violence against women, particularly. *Hyena* takes place in starkly lit nightclubs, grotty pubs and council flats, with Turkish gangs competing with their Albanian rivals for drug routes and prostitution rings. In many respects, it operates like a sobering counterpoint to the early noughties Brit crime flicks; but also the largely repugnant tranche of straight-to-video gangster films that propagate a brutal, geezerish type of violence. Accordingly, there is little daylight in *Hyena*: the action largely occurs at night, and when scenes do take place during Logan's office hours they have a clammy, hungover feel. Matt Johnson's score – reviewed on page 56 – offers bursts of dissonance and reverberative loops. Gerard Johnson, meanwhile, brings a documentarian's eye to the proceedings: even when a key character is disembowelled with a kebab knife, the filmmaker remains dispassionate.

► **Altman** For a filmmaker whose preferred style of movie-making was loose and digressive, this affectionate tribute to the late, great Robert Altman is remarkably straightforward. That's not to demerit the film unduly, but the narrative moves in workmanlike fashion when it should ideally amble along, occasionally pausing to truffle out some interesting minor detail. Certainly, Ron Mann's film is at its best when exploring Altman's nascent career: his time as an airman during the war and his apprenticeship in network TV. An early supporter was Hitchcock, who invited him to direct episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents...* during the 1950s. His formative attempts at filmmaking were compromised: for instance, he was fired from *Countdown*, about a space mission to the moon, before it was even finished. Admittedly, much of Altman's initial forays into filmmaking are less well-told than, say, the stories of

*M\*A\*S\*H* or *Nashville*. It would be nice to dig a little deeper, too, into *Brewster McCloud*, *California Split* and *3 Women*. Along the way, Mann assembles an impressive list of collaborators to offer confirmation to Altman's skills – James Caan, Julianne Moore and Bruce Willis among them. But their testimonies are warm rather than illuminating. At its most infuriating, Mann's film is crushingly literal: "Bob loved to throw a party," his widow Kathryn Reed Altman tells us in voiceover – cut to an early, unreleased Altman short called... *The Party*.

*Mann's film is best when it explores Altman's war service or apprenticeship in network TV*

## Also out...

### THE SECOND BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL

OPENS FEBRUARY 26

Take your mum! Dench, Nighy, Imrie and co return for more of the same high-end luvviedom.

### FOCUS

OPENS FEBRUARY 27

Will Smith plays a globe-trotting conman, who is pitched against a former flame in a hustle.

### CHAPPIE

OPENS MARCH 6

Sci-fi gear from *District 9*'s Neill Blomkamp, about a robot rebelling against his nasty creators. Poor robot.

### LIFE OF RILEY

OPENS MARCH 6

The late Alain Resnais' third – yes, third – adaptation of an Alan Ayckbourn play. Yorkshire, mon amour!

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

OPENS MARCH 6

Vince Vaughn plays a businessman whose trip to Europe goes disastrously wrong – with hilarious results, etc.

### WHITE BIRD IN A BLIZZARD

OPENS MARCH 6

Robin Guthrie and Harold Budd score the latest from Gregg Araki: a teenager unravels in '80s suburbia.

### FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

OPENS MARCH 13

Ahead of Thomas Vinterberg's new adaptation, the classy John Schlesinger version from 1967 gets a welcome reissue.

### MY NAME IS SALT

OPENS MARCH 13

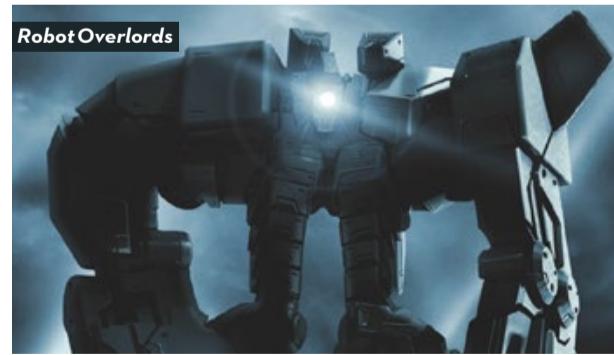
Doc following Indian families who spend eight months a year extracting salt from the desert.

### THE GUNMAN

OPENS MARCH 20

Shunted back a month, this finds Sean Penn chasing a bit of Liam Neeson's mature action-hero vibes.

Robot Overlords



### ROBOT OVERLORDS

OPENS MARCH 27

Earth has been conquered by robots from a distant galaxy. Only Gillian Anderson and Ben Kingsley can save us now.

# Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD



Still Saint Julian...  
Cope in full flow  
in London

## JULIAN COPE

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND, LONDON, JANUARY 29, 2015

The “ultimate intuitive non-career mover” makes a rare visit to London. Expect psychedelic revolutions and, erm, Comsat Angels nostalgia...

**S**IX-FOOT-SOMETHING, wild of hair and straggly of beard, Julian Cope tears into his as yet unreleased Christmas single, “Cunts Can Fuck Off”. “*Here comes a priest in the pay of a Nazi pope*,” coos the indie pop Mad Max, standing in the shadow of a gigantic Salvation Army-style drum bearing the motto ‘YOU CAN’T BEAT YOUR BRAIN FOR ENTERTAINMENT’. “*Do like Black Sabbath, swing that fucker on the end of a rope*.” It sounds not unlike Dave Dee, Dozy,

Beaky, Mick & Titch after an extreme debrief at White Panther HQ.

In his younger days, Cope worked hard to assume an unhinged air; at 57, it seems that he no longer needs to make an effort. Slamming away at his acoustic 12-string in his Jim-Morrison-directed-by-Ken-Russell look, he looks entirely natural. Funny, but not joking.

“I got into rock’n’roll to wind people up and it never left me,” Cope explains later. In that regard, his current look may be the most striking, most

defiantly out-there avatar of a career not short on brilliant costume changes: the punk-rock Biggles of *The Teardrop Explodes*; the washed-up Skip Spence turtle of *Fried*; the leather messiah of *Saint Julian*; the cosmic joker of *Brain Donor*. Crucially, the sleeveless biker jacket and military cap he wears are anything but stage gear; they are a 24-hour-a-day commitment.

“The most important thing to me is the way that I look when I’m putting diesel into my car on the M4, because most people – that’s what they see



of me," Cope tells *Uncut*. "And I want them to see somebody who is evidently different from the rest of the world. Some businessmen are going to be put out 'cause I have a good-quality, hot car, and they are going to see evidence that you don't have to be a cunt."

Not being a cunt is, if Cope's MO is any measure, a significant commitment. Cope effectively signed off from the mainstream music industry in the late-'90s. He tells the crowd in London how his flat refusal to do a US tour to support 1994's *Autogeddon* – an unlikely one-off alliance with Def Jam's rock division Def American – caused substantial bemusement, but, as he shrugs to the crowd: "I am the ultimate intuitive non-career mover."

A completely solo recording artist since establishing his Head Heritage label in 1997,

Tamworth's singular gift to gnosticism has followed his muse to remote places since; the drone records; the glam metal project; the Sunn O))) collaboration; last year's *One Three One* – his unhinged novelistic riff on football hooliganism – and associated fake rave singles. That's before the research into prophets and pre-history. At the Village Underground, he talks through a typically heroic voyage to visit a megalithic site in a cave in Armenia, under heavy manners from local peasants and an ever-present spook/interpreter, which culminated in Cope being flung off the wagon after 21 years without alcohol. To an outsider, it could all seem like a psychedelic ramble – a bad-trip gap year gone mad; to Cope, the music, writing and indeed the music writing are elements of a rigorously pursued mission.

"My career has been based on being a truth-seeker; my career has been based on observation and research," he says, insistent that he stakes his reputation on being "a motherfucker whose endgame is not to get as much money as they can; whose endgame is to go to as many of the shadowy corners of culture that I can find and to bring back what I can see is the root cause of our misunderstandings".

It sounds a bit heavy going for the singer Paul Morley once described as "the only man who can sing 'ba ba ba' and mean it", but Cope on stage remains a blissfully easy sell. His basic theory on pre-history and how great cultural shifts are never a "product of the smug and the cynical", is expressed with cheerful clarity on "They Were On Hard Drugs". Elsewhere, sugarcube-sweetness softens the acid-edges of Cope's 'spike Parliament' fantasy "Psychedelic Revolution", while there is even affection redeeming "Liver As Big As Hartlepool". The latter is a snipe at former Crucial Three cohort Pete Wylie's alcohol consumption at the time of his near-hit

"Heart As Big As Liverpool", but one that morphs into an unexpectedly nostalgic tour of northwest inner-space.

Cope's past is not an entirely foreign country. "I think you will all remember my band... the Comsat Angels," he says, teasing manfully as he introduces a revelatory stripped-down version of

The Teardrop Explodes' slice of scenester paranoia, "The Culture Bunker". "Take me to the moon – it's safe and I want to lie down," he intones, momentarily the lost boy of post- "Reward" chart success again, while renditions of early solo standards "Sunspots" and "The Greatness And Perfection Of Love"

## SETLIST

- 1 I'm Living In The Room
- 2 They Found Saddam In
- 3 The Culture Bunker
- 4 Double Vegetation
- 5 They Were On Hard Drugs
- 6 Sunspots
- 7 Psychedelic Revolution
- 8 As The Beer Flows Over Me
- 9 Liver As Big As Hartlepool
- 10 The Greatness And
- 11 Perfection Of Love
- 12 Cromwell In Ireland
- 13 Cunts Can Fuck Off
- 14 Soul Desert
- 15 Pristeen
- 16 Autogeddon Blues
- ENCORE
- 17 Treason
- 18 Robert Mitchum

give reason to regret that the supremely uxorious Cope doesn't really do love songs anymore.

Love, however, may be a task he has already completed, and with another book and a collection of beer-drinking songs in the works, Cope's greatest passion is once more for the next challenge, the next pocket of darkness to illuminate.

"I don't dwell on it – it's all part of a great journey," he shrugs to *Uncut* as he ponders past musical indiscretions, adamant that his absolute commitment to his passion of the day remains his ultimate USP. "My wife found a picture [from 1978] that Marc Riley had tweeted of me at a Fall

gig, and I'm at the front; I'm not at the back, I'm not some la-de-da fucker – I'm there because I believed, and that's what's kept me going." That tunnel-vision, that passion, might ultimately be what has kept his devoted followers interested in the latter part of his career, now helpfully abbreviated on his new *Trip Advizer* comp. The reason people stick with Cope may be because they know he is never just going to do another *Fried*, another *Peggy Suicide*. They pay attention to his pop writing because – as he did with *Krautrocksampler* and *Japrocksampler* – there's a good chance he's going to get somewhere first.

Back at the Village Underground, Cope spins round after a valedictory whirl through traditional set-closer "Robert Mitchum" and – not for the first time – raises a fist. A slightly wimpy, skinny-armed fist; a slightly sarcastic, ironic fist; a fist that, tagged to that outfit, and the frequent, faux-American "yeeahs!" suggests an artist who's not sure where to draw the line between big bad Billy Gibbons and Billy Connolly; but a genuine, defiant fist nonetheless. Not seriously insane at all. Insanely serious.

JIM WIRTH

ANDREW BENG/REDFERNS VIA GETTY IMAGES

**Cope's greatest passion is for the next challenge, the next pocket of darkness to illuminate**





Kurt Wagner and co  
deal Nixon a fresh  
range of dynamics



# LAMBCHOP PLAY NIXON

HEIMATHAFEN, BERLIN, FEBRUARY 5, 2015

Kurt Wagner's troupe bring their breakthrough album back to life

**T**HERE COMES A point during every Lambchop show when Kurt Wagner hands the floor over to Tony Crow, pianist and raconteur par excellence of the old school. Tonight his moment comes as the Nashville band complete their live reimagining of *Nixon* on the eve of the album's 15th anniversary. While raucous cheers resound through the elegant, 150-year-old theatre, Crow asks Wagner mischievously, "Did you know back then your music was gonna be making a social change for so many people?" "I didn't hear that," Wagner replies bashfully, shaking his head in disbelief.

But, in many ways it did, and not least for Lambchop. Topping countless Album Of The Year polls, not least *Uncut*'s own, *Nixon* saw their sales surge, gave them an unlikely radio hit in the shape of the exuberant "Up With People", and ensured years of performances in prestigious European venues. Its Philly strings and Nashville stylings

also joyously, if unwittingly, underlined a growing suspicion that country music had always been the white man's soul music. A decade and a half later, *Nixon*'s influence on the likes of Matthew E White and Natalie Prass is clearly audible.

If anything has changed, however, it's initially hard to tell. Wagner still sports a humble baseball cap and heavy, black-rimmed glasses, with only his formal blazer evidence of the passing of the years. Closer inspection, though, reveals just two of the original *Nixon* lineup: William Tyler, returning to the ranks after

*This ramshackle collective is now a tight, well-drilled, slimmed-down unit*

carving an impressive niche for himself as a Fahey-esque solo guitarist, and bassist Matt Swanson, whose nimble fingers have made him indispensable since he and Tyler joined for *Nixon*'s studio sessions. The endearingly ramshackle collective that was Lambchop 2000 is now a tight, well-drilled, slimmed-down unit, gently propelled by drummer Scott Martin, and subtly embroidered by Ryan Norris' keyboards, Matt Glassmeyer's brass, and, of course, Crow.

It becomes clear that Wagner, too, has evolved, overcoming the limitations of his voice to abandon the unconventional falsetto he was once able to employ, instead twisting his melodies into new shapes. A note-for-note replication of the original album is of little interest to the frontman: "The Old Gold Shoe" is dealt a fresh range of dynamics, its crescendos unexpected and invigorating, and the smooth languor of "You Masculine You" swells from its opening supper club mood towards a surprisingly noisy climax, Glassmeyer's sax honking fruitily while Crow hammers away to compensate for the lack of strings.

In addition, the sombre tension of "The Petrified Florist" is further embellished by Norris' fondness for electronic trickery, Tyler's subdued feedback and the ominously low notes Crow teases from his instrument. Meanwhile, "The Butcher Boy" – always a troublingly discordant end to the album itself – is rendered unrecognisable by a rearrangement that emphasises the distance Wagner's aesthetic has

travelled from Lambchop's raw, unpolished beginnings.

Of course, "Up With People" remains the most rapturously received song tonight, its bassline rolling like the *Batman* theme as it careers towards its joyful climax with added urgency. But encores of Curtis Mayfield's "Give Me Your Love" and Bowie's "Young Americans" – the latter slyly recognising that Lambchop were hardly the first to explore soul music's potency outside its original context – ensure a fittingly celebratory conclusion. Much has changed in 15 years, and Wagner may find it hard to believe, but *Nixon* is nonetheless still the one.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

## SETLIST

- 1 **The Old Gold Shoe**
- 2 **Grumpus**
- 3 **You Masculine You**
- 4 **Up With People**
- 5 **Nashville Parent**
- 6 **What Else Could it Be**
- 7 **The Distance From Her To There**
- 8 **The Book I Haven't Read**
- 9 **The Petrified Florist**
- 10 **The Butcher Boy**
- 11 **Give Me Your Love**
- 12 **My Face Your Ass**
- 13 **We Never Argue**
- 14 **Gone Tomorrow**
- ENCORE**
- 15 **Young Americans**

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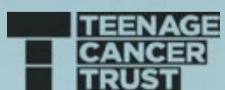
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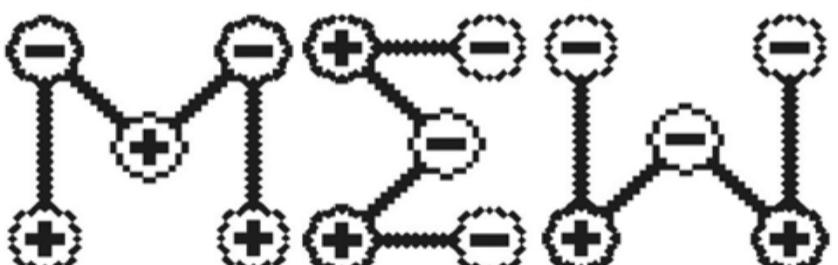
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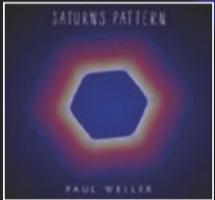
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- 19 Sheffield, Greystone
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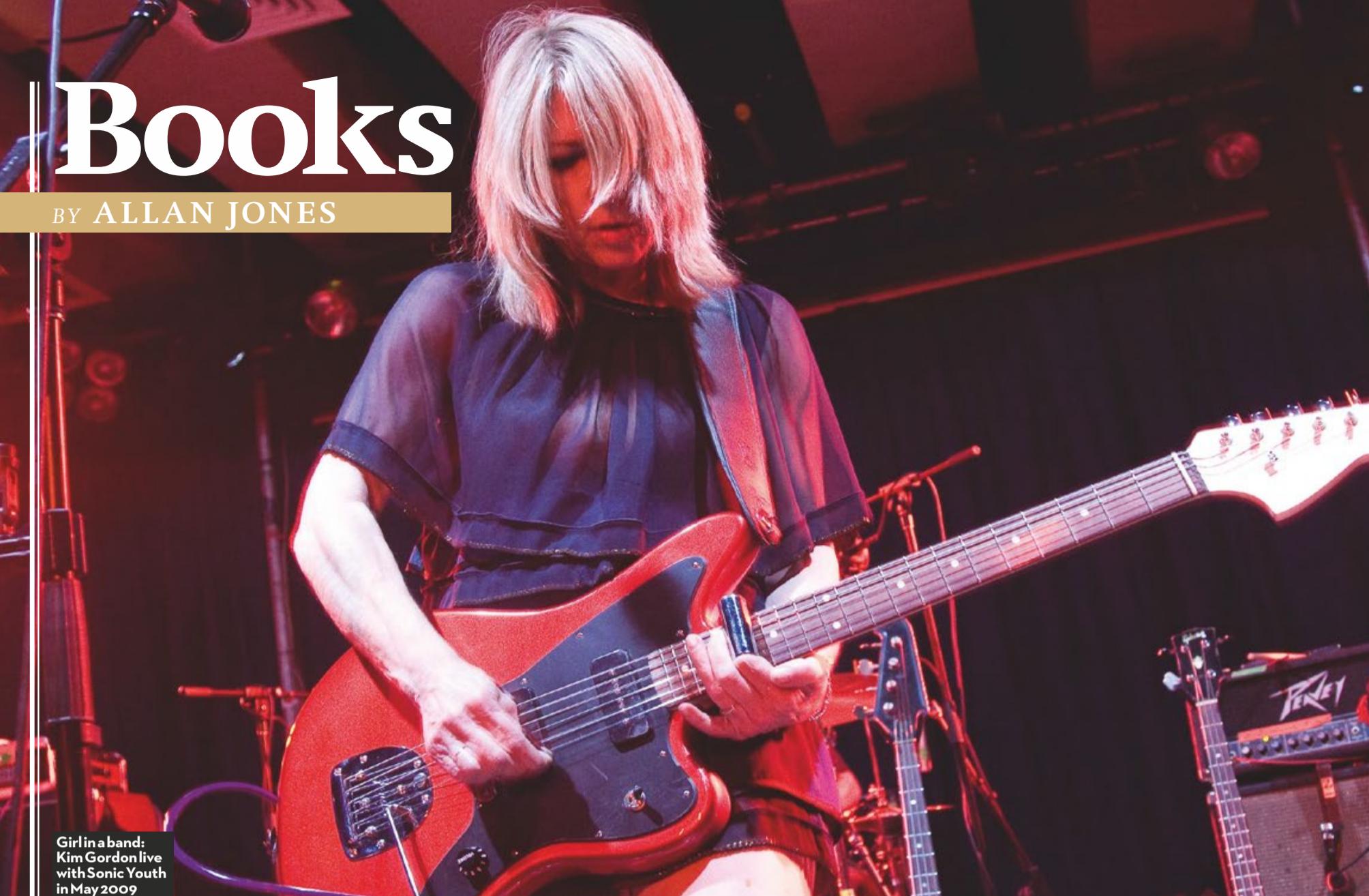
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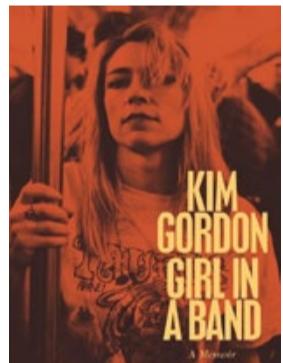
# Books

BY ALLAN JONES

Girl in a band:  
Kim Gordon live  
with Sonic Youth  
in May 2009

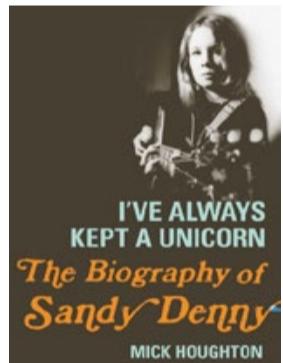


## Reviewed this month...



**Girl In A Band**  
Kim Gordon  
FABER & FABER

**9/10**



**I've Always Kept  
A Unicorn: The  
Biography Of  
Sandy Denny**  
Mick Houghton  
FABER & FABER

**8/10**

**K**IM GORDON'S *Girl In A Band* opens with Sonic Youth onstage at the SWU Music And Arts Festival near São Paulo in November 2011. It's their final show together, the last date of a South American tour made fraught by the announcement just before it started that Gordon and Thurston Moore, her husband and bandmate of nearly 30 years, were splitting up. Indie rock's former golden couple had been reduced by Moore's infidelity to what Gordon sourly describes as "just another cliché of middle-aged relationship failure – a male midlife crisis, another woman, a double life."

Moore's betrayal of Gordon hangs like a pall over the book that follows, and she returns to it in painfully explicit detail at its end. But for all the anger in these pages, the seething bulk of it directed at her errant former husband and the woman – Gordon refuses to even acknowledge her by name – he preferred to her, *Girl In A Band* is substantially

more than an extended essay in post-marital bitterness. The first third of it, especially, is a rich, well-written account of Gordon's childhood and adolescence and the relationships that shaped her life before, in New York in 1981, she met and fell in love with Moore, with whom she was soon making a fearsome noise in Sonic Youth.

There are vivid memories of time spent in Hong Kong and Hawaii, before her family returned to Los Angeles, where as a teenager in the late '60s, Gordon cultivated a beatnik image, smoking pot, dropping acid, painting and "getting sad listening to Joni Mitchell". Her brother, Keller, was an important, if volatile, early influence, turning her onto Sartre and Baudelaire, avant-garde jazz and French New Wave movies before being consumed by full-blown psychosis; dressing in white, growing a long beard, carrying a Bible, answering only to the name of Oedipus and speaking in his own private language.

Keller also had vague connections to Charles Manson – the Manson Family allegedly later murdered one of Keller's ex-girlfriends, Marine Herbe. Kim also kept sometimes wild company. As a student at Santa Monica College in 1972, she knew Bruce Berry, whose death in 1973 from a heroin overdose partly inspired Neil Young's *Tonight's The Night*.

Sonic Youth's long career is negotiated in a somewhat piecemeal fashion, memories provoked by specific songs from their 15 albums, a litany of recording sessions and video shoots briefly enlivened by anecdotes of touring with Neil Young and Nirvana and catty recollections of Courtney Love, whose first album with Hole was produced by Gordon. The heat rather goes out of the book here, but comes bubbling back to boiling point when she returns to Moore's duplicitous philandering.

Gordon dates her estrangement from Moore to their decision to quit New York, to bring up their daughter in rural Massachusetts, where Thurston seemed increasingly "lost in his own weather patterns, his own season". There is unsparing detail about her discovery of his affair via secret texts,

emails, explicit videos, erotic images saved on his computer, a sad and tawdry conclusion to their life together, which she recalls with a martyr's ruthless forbearance.

"I did feel some compassion for Thurston," she writes. "I was sorry for the way he had lost his marriage, his band, his daughter, his family, our life together – and himself. But that," she adds, stinging, "is a lot different from forgiveness."

► Her more bedazzled admirers were sometimes in her brief heyday prone to compare Sandy Denny to Joni Mitchell. When she died in 1978, however, the more appropriate comparison was with Janis Joplin, another sloppy drunk with a fatal taste for hard drugs, in Denny's case cocaine, under whose influence her behaviour tested even her most faithful friends. By then, also, she'd been dropped by Island Records, her label since she joined Fairport Convention in 1968, after the dismal sales of her much-delayed fourth solo album, *Rendezvous*. Denny's original audience, already much diminished by the deterioration in her music, had now deserted her almost entirely. No-one could see a future for her that wasn't bleak.

Denny's story has already been well told by writers Clinton Heylin and Jim Irvin and there's a typically good chapter on her career in Rob Young's *Electric Eden*, but Mick Houghton's exhaustively researched *I've Always Kept A Unicorn* lays legitimate claim to being the most comprehensive account yet of a career of often unrealised promise. There is copious and illuminating new testimony here, notably from Richard and Linda Thompson, Joe Boyd, Richard Williams and many others who knew Denny well and despaired at her decline. Houghton also enjoyed access to the private archive of Denny and her husband, the Australian folk musician Trevor Lucas, usually cast as a dire influence, an opportunistic womaniser who attached himself to Sandy for the benefit of his own career, but more sympathetically portrayed in these pages, from which Denny emerges as the author of her own desperate fate.

# Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

## EDGAR FROESE

Tangerine Dream leader

1944-2015

**G**ROWING UP IN West Berlin had a profound effect on Edgar Froese. It was a community still ravaged by the effects of conflict (his father had been killed in the war), where suspicion and mistrust ran rife. “Decades later, I moved into the political and musical underground because my deep aversion against the phoney establishment was engraved into my system,” he told this writer in 2010. “I’ve never sympathised with governmental politics, commercial interests or the mediocre taste of the masses.” It was a worldview that fed directly into the radical music of Tangerine Dream, the experimental band he founded in 1967. Their synth-driven kosmische, often incorporating tape collages and sequencers, made little or no concessions to populism in the early ’70s. Alongside Can, Neu!, Cluster and Kraftwerk, they were at the vanguard of a new form of German expressionism. By fifth LP *Phaedra* (1974), the trio had almost entirely dispensed with standard instrumentation. Perversely, though, their avant-rhythms and textures struck a chord in the UK, where the album made the Top 20. It didn’t stop some extreme reactions in the press, though. Not least from *Melody Maker*, who offered a derogatory headline above their review – “Eat more shit: 100,000 flies can’t be wrong” – and labelled Froese “a failed heavy guitarist”.

A year later, Froese issued *Epsilon In Malaysian Pale*, which drew high praise from his soon-to-be Berlin neighbour David Bowie. It was the second of over a dozen solo albums during a parallel career that found Tangerine Dream, with Froese as the only constant, moving into Hollywood soundtrack work in the late ’70s and ’80s. Among their most prominent scores were *Sorcerer*, *Legend* and *Risky Business*. By 2014, they’d amassed over 100 albums. “Hunger for new adventures, knowing that nothing is perfect, is my driving energy,” Froese explained.



## TREVOR 'DOZY' WARD-DAVIES

Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich bassist

1944-2015

The story goes that Trevor Ward-Davies acquired his nickname after unwrapping a chocolate bar, throwing away the contents and eating the wrapper by mistake. As the bass-playing Dozy, he co-founded Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich (originally Dave Dee & The Bostons) in Salisbury in 1961. The group eventually devised a formula – unashamedly commercial pop songs, wacky boys-next-door image, Carnaby Street togs – that reaped dividends.



Their first major UK hit was 1966’s “Hold Tight”, soon followed by “Bend It!” and “Save Me”. A number of similar successes carried

them through into 1968, when novelty tune “The Legend Of Xanadu” gave them their only UK No 1. Between 1965 and 1969, the fivesome spent more time in the singles chart than The Beatles, The Kinks and The Who. Dozy declared that his own particular favourite was “Zabadak” (1967), mainly for its mass orchestra of violins. Despite their popularity in Britain, Europe and Australia, the band failed to breach the US market. Dee quit in 1969, upon which they pressed on as a quartet, before breaking up in 1972. By last year, after a series of lineup changes and reunions, the band was down to two original members: Ward-Davies and guitarist John (Beaky) Dymond.

## DON COVAY

Soul singer and songwriter

1938-2015

“I’m always looking for experiences we all know and try to relate them through both my writing and my singing,” soulman Don Covay told one interviewer in 1967. It was an approach that brought him a fair degree of success, often for other artists, over a career that bridged five decades. The son of a Southern Baptist preacher, Covay started out in the late ’50s with the Little Richard Revue. His first minor hit was 1961’s “Pony Time”, though Chubby Checker’s version became a Billboard chart-topper soon after. He also wrote for Solomon Burke,

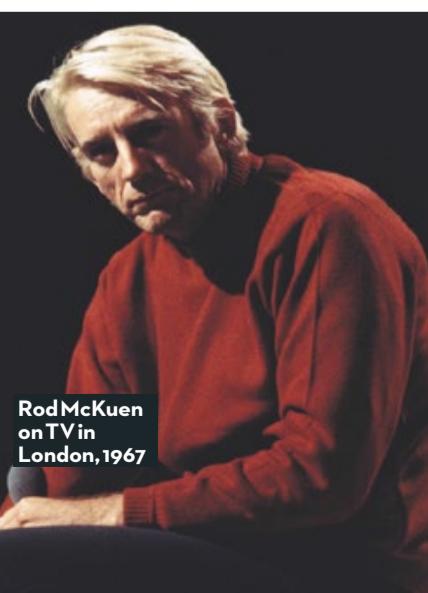
Gladys Knight & The Pips and Wilson Pickett, before scoring a Top 40 single in 1964 with "Mercy, Mercy" (featuring the unknown Jimi Hendrix on guitar). The song was covered the following year by The Rolling Stones. Perhaps his best-known composition was "Chain Of Fools", which gave Aretha Franklin one of her biggest US hits in 1968. He refocused on solo work in the early '70s and, in 1986, sang on the Stones' *Dirty Work*. At the turn of the millennium he released *Adlib*, a star-packed affair that included Paul Rodgers, Wilson Pickett and Otis Clay.

### ROD McKUEN

Singer-songwriter, poet, translator

1933-2015

At the height of his fame, Rod McKuen was dubbed "the unofficial poet laureate of America" by *The St James Encyclopedia Of Popular Culture*. Others, like *Newsweek*, merely saw him as "The King Of Kitsch". He was an artist whose mellow evocations of love tended to divide opinion, selling over 100 million albums while being derided by critics for his sentimentality. Many of his peers seemed to adore him: in 1969 Frank Sinatra recorded *A Man Alone: The Words And Music Of McKuen*, and his compositions were also covered by Johnny Cash, Barbra Streisand, Waylon Jennings, Chet Baker and Dusty Springfield. McKuen's work spanned pop, poetry, soundtracks and classical music. One of his most significant affiliations was with the Belgian singer-songwriter, Jacques Brel. Having met in Paris, McKuen set about translating Brel's work into English, including "If You Go Away" (based on "Ne Me Quitte Pas") and "Seasons In The Sun" ("Le Moribond"), which became a huge hit for Terry Jacks in 1973. When Brel died five years later, McKuen locked himself in his bedroom and drank for a week, listening to their songs on his turntable.



Rod McKuen  
on TV in  
London, 1967

### DEMIS ROUSSOS

Singer, *Aphrodite's Child* member

1946-2015

Such was Demis Roussos' popularity in the '70s that the BBC commissioned a TV documentary, *The Roussos Phenomenon*, that sought to explain how a former prog-rocker was now the toast of Europe. By then he was on his way to selling 60 million albums, propelled by a colourful image (kaftan, beads, Biblical facial hair) and a high tenor ideally suited to yearning love songs. "Forever And Ever", the lead track from "The Roussos Phenomenon" EP, was a UK No 1 in the summer of '76. Other major successes included "Happy To Be On An Island In The Sun" and "When Forever Has Gone". Born in Egypt but raised in Greece, Roussos joined his first band, The Idols, at 17. It was there that he met Evangelos Papathanassiou, aka Vangelis. Together with Loukas Sideras, they formed Aphrodite's Child, scoring a minor European success with 1968's "Rain And Tears". Their first two albums consisted of hippy-ish psychedelia, but it was 666, a weighty concept piece based on the "Book Of Revelation", that turned them into bona fide prog warriors. The standout, "The Four Horsemen", found Roussos in full cry. His work with Vangelis also extended to soundtrack appearances on *Chariots Of Fire* and *Blade Runner*.

### DALLAS TAYLOR

CSNY bassist

1948-2015

The figure peering from behind the door on the cover of CSN's 1969 debut was drummer Dallas Taylor. Formerly in psychedelic outfit Clear Light, whose sole LP had been issued on Elektra two years earlier, Taylor was instrumental in shaping the rhythm tracks with Stephen Stills. He remained part of the set-up when Neil Young was brought in for CSNY's *Déjà Vu*, even finding himself billed on the front sleeve alongside bassist Greg Reeves. The dynamic, however, had shifted. "I really gave him a rough time," Young admitted in Jimmy McDonough's *Shakey*. "It was like he felt I shouldn't be in CSN and I felt like he couldn't play my music." The association with Stills, meanwhile, spilled over into the latter's 1970 solo debut and 'supergroup' Manassas. Taylor also played with Van Morrison, toured with Paul Butterfield and co-wrote "Things Will Be Better" on The



Demis Roussos  
at home in  
Paris, 1973

Byrds' 1973 comeback LP. By then the rock'n'roll lifestyle had exacted a heavy toll on Taylor, who'd become hooked on alcohol, cocaine and heroin. It would be another decade before he kicked his vices, after which he began a new career as an addiction counsellor in LA.

### ANDRAÉ CROUCH

Gospel singer, arranger

1942-2015

Known as "the father of modern gospel", Andraé Crouch pioneered the crossover into secular music. He and his backing group, The Disciples, released a series of albums throughout the '70s, housing favourites like "The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power" and "My Tribute (To God Be The Glory)". But it was his association with Michael Jackson and Madonna that brought him a mainstream audience. He conducted the choirs on Jackson's "Man In The Mirror", "Keep The Faith" and "Will You Be There", as well as Madonna's "Like A Prayer". Crouch also contributed to the soundtracks of *The Colour Purple* and *The Lion King*.

### A\$AP YAMS

A\$AP Mob founder

1988-2015

Steven Rodriguez was better known as A\$AP Yams, co-founder and creative visionary of US hip-

hop crew, A\$AP Mob. The Harlem collective forged a reputation as cultural tastemakers, uniting the worlds of rap, film, art and fashion. Yams' extensive Tumblr page became the visual focus of their activities and he was also credited as executive producer on A\$AP Rocky's 2013 solo breakthrough, *Long.Live.A\$AP*. Rocky called Yams, whose cause of death is yet to be announced, "the mastermind behind the scenes". He negotiated Rocky's deal with Polo Ground/RCA and introduced the rest of A\$AP Mob to a wider appreciation of the national hip-hop scene.

### IAN ALLEN

Negativland member

1958-2015

Without the input of Ian Allen, who has died from complications following heart surgery, it's doubtful whether Negativland would ever have developed the idea of tape-splicing as a songwriting tool. It was a technique that Allen introduced on the US collagists' second album, *Points* (1981), and which reached full fruition on 1983 follow-up, *A Big 10-8 Place*. The band also cited him as a major contributor to the subversive art of culture jamming. Though he quit Negativland in the late '80s, his former colleagues stated that his "impact, inspiration and influence on the group is impossible to overestimate". ROB HUGHES

# Feedback...

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## TANGLED UP IN OL' BLUE EYES

Bob Dylan's recent album *Shadows In The Night* is a timely reminder of what made Frank Sinatra so great. A very recent addition to his reputation is the release of *Live In Seattle 1957*, which passed without any fanfare at all. This is regrettable, because it should be viewed with the same reverence as Bowie's legendary *Live At Nassau Coliseum'76* show. Featuring Nelson Riddle's orchestra, this is an utterly crucial addition to any serious music collector. Easily his greatest live performance.

At the heart of those magnificent albums he made for Capitol in the 1950s are the flawless "suicide sets", namely *In The Wee Small Hours*, *Where Are You?*, *Only The Lonely* and *No One Cares*. What is so astonishing is how each set becomes progressively bleaker. I have listened to Nick Drake, Neil Young, Joy Division, Iggy Pop, Swans, The Smiths, Scott Walker and Leonard Cohen at their most desolate, but none of them have matched the astonishing sorrow of Sinatra on those recordings. Frank was on Desolation Row long before Dylan had thought of the term.

A heartbreaking example would have to be "I Could Have Told You", recorded three days after his suicide attempt over the failure of his marriage to Ava Gardner, who comes across as utterly destructive to all who encountered her.

I asked many friends to listen to the "suicide sets" back to back for a small bet. None of them have taken up the offer. Even after 30 years of owning them, I still find them difficult to listen in complete chunks. Who can blame Sinatra for becoming Mr Ring A Ding Ding, champion of wanton good times? At least he got out alive, unlike so many others.

**Rob Jones, Huntingdon**

## NEIL YOUNG AND ISRAEL: PART TWO

With reference to the letter about 'nasty' Israel, written by David Keay, it's amazing how many people



Frank Sinatra, 1957

think that just because Roger Waters

says something, it must be true. His rants carry the same gravitas as Alan Partridge's hatred of farmers. When I hear Waters calling Israel an apartheid state, all I really hear is: "You make pigs smoke and feed beefburgers to swans."

If any of these 'caring' musicians really did care, then they wouldn't take the action they do. When they call for boycotts of Israel or for Israeli companies to pull out of the West Bank, they are actually harming the Palestinians they think they are looking out for. They are calling for the Palestinians to lose their jobs and harming the Palestinian economy. And comparing the situation in Israel to apartheid South Africa or the Holocaust is an insult to black South Africans and Jews, respectively. If these musicians really cared, then they should go to Israel to perform but also take time to see some of the projects which are trying to bring Israelis and Palestinians together. They might be surprised. There are plenty of Palestinians who say they prefer to live under Israeli rule than Palestinian. And they should visit

the hospitals near the Syrian border. There is no prejudice there. Injured Syrians secretly cross the border for treatment in Israel.

I'm not an Israel apologist. I criticise Israel when I think it deserves it. But it's funny how when people talk about the conflict with Gaza last summer, they seem to forget to mention the thousands of rockets which were fired into Israel.

How would England react if 4,000 rockets were fired from Wales, especially if the rockets were being launched from schools and hospitals? There is also no mention of the tunnels built to allow Gazans to commit terrorist acts inside Israel. The materials for the tunnels actually came from Israel and were meant for the reconstruction of Gaza. But Hamas decided to use it for hatred. And do Mr Waters and Costello know how many children died building those tunnels?

So let's have some balance when you print one-sided tripe as written by Mr Keay.

I read David Keay's letter in the same week that the latest figures on anti-Semitism in Britain were announced – and were at a record high. While people claim that being against Israel doesn't make you anti-Semitic, you only have to read

between the lines to see the truth.

**Mike Cohen, Deputy Editor, Jewish Telegraph Group Of Newspapers**

I am appalled that *Uncut* has been lured into publishing an email headed 'Neil Young and Israel' in its letters page [March 2015]. It is totally inappropriate for a respected music magazine to stumble head first into printing an individual's personal political point of view without any editorial comment whatsoever. The Gaza-Israel conflict in summer 2014 is a highly problematic one. It is complex and tragic, and one which sadly may rage for years to come.

I'm certain that everyone – whether it's people like us, or 'rock stars' like Neil Young – were utterly saddened and disturbed by the graphic images, and first-hand or journalist's descriptions of the tragic consequences of warfare.

I certainly do not buy *Uncut* to be immersed in the quagmire of political turmoil in the Middle East and I cannot stand silent when I am subjected to an individual merely using *Uncut* as a platform to unleash his personal point of view about Israel and the Palestine question, camouflaged in the guise of second-guessing what a rock musician should or shouldn't stand for.

You must understand that to publish any such letter is offensive to many readers (some of whom, like myself, have subscribed for over 10 years) and to all those who buy your magazine to enjoy articles about the thing we all love – great music – and not being subjected to someone's barbed political whims. By the way, anybody who thinks Wire is an "apolitical" group (except citing just one track written almost 40 years ago) is way out of touch.

**Lawrence Elf, via email**

## UNSOULD JUDGMENTS

I'm sorry, but what book was Allan Jones reading when he decided to give Glyn Johns' abysmal memoir, *Sound Man*, a rating as high as an 8/10? [February 2015] "A little tight-lipped" is putting it mildly; Johns' "not my place to say" approach to memory lane has the reader wondering why he bothered to write anything in the first place. There are some mildly interesting vignettes, like Keith Richards nodding off during the 1971 Marquee Club show, but any rock memoir that spends

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One of three copies  
of Courtney Barnett's  
*Sometimes / Sit... on CD*

more pages recounting waiting on the docks with Ian Stewart and the Stones equipment than it does working on The Beatles' *Let It Be* sessions (he ran some cable to the speakers for the famous rooftop concert; be still my heart) is one sorely in need of an editor's lance. If you're looking for a truly satisfying account of a producer's work with a major band, on both a technical and personal level, check out EMI Geoff Emerick's sumptuous 2006 book, *Here, There And Everywhere: My Life Recording The Music Of The Beatles*. **Stephen Conn, Las Cruces, New Mexico**

## BRING BACK ALLAN!

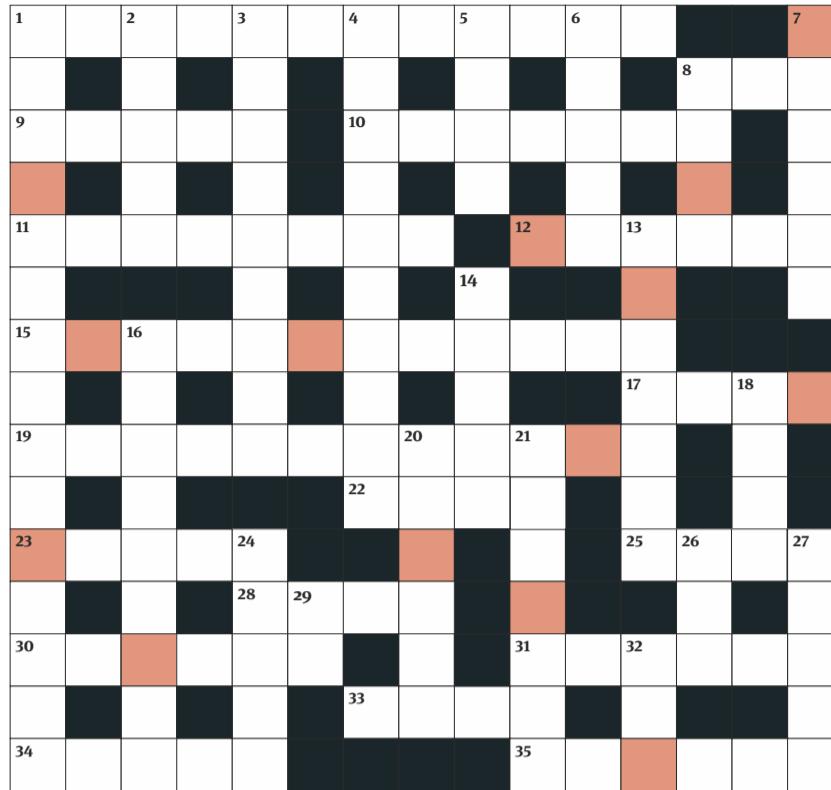
Thank you, thank you Allan Jones for the wholly apt piece on Joe Cocker [March 2015]. You are the only popular music writer still writing today who appreciates the sheer heft of the heritage lived through by your contemporaries, and I really, really fucking miss you editing this magazine! God bless Joe Cocker. There will never be another tour like Mad Dogs because it would never be considered viable today. If readers haven't already done so, they should rush and listen to that joyous rabble lift those songs to another place, led by one of the greatest singers who ever lived. RIP Joe and come back Allan, all is forgiven (not that I don't appreciate John Mulvey. He's all right for a young lad).

**Karen Banwell, via email**

## A WORLD-CLASS LIBERAL MORON!"

Big fan of Jackson Browne, the artist, but he is a world-class liberal moron. I love the part in Nick Hasted's review of a recent Browne concert about the "...Fox-watching masses of America are people you can't really talk to..." Don't worry – the MSNBC-watching masses are lovely people! They are smart, engaging people who are right about everything! It's not about arguing Browne's point – he can believe what he wants – but it just shows he is the type of liberal that only sees one side of a story, always blaming someone else. Instead of pointing the finger at a few folks on his team, Browne is happy to blame 'the other guy' for all the problems of the world. I cannot stand these types of jackass people (especially entertainers!). It's the Fox-watchers who are ruining the country! Yes! That's it. The Liberals who watch MSNBC, or read *The New York Times*, can do no wrong where Jackson Browne is concerned, which is why he is a major dumb-ass.

**Jeff Hyatt, via email**



### HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Joni Mitchell. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* April 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, March 23, 2015. This competition is only open to European residents.

### CLUES ACROSS

- 1+9A** Difficult to see how Hank Marvin and others played with Bob Dylan (7-2-3-5)
- 8** Scorch of a single from Two Door Cinema Club (3)
- 9** (See 1 across)
- 10** (See 2 down)
- 11** (See 35 across)
- 12** Emily Haines' band measure up to her *Fantasies* (6)
- 15** "Johnny come lately, the \_\_\_\_\_ / Everybody loves you, so don't let them down", 1977 (3-3-2-4)
- 17** A Flock Of Seagulls made me take flight (1-3)
- 19+18D** Not facing up to the situation in *AMomentaryLapseOfReason* with Pink Floyd (2-3-7-4)
- 22** (See 8 down)
- 23** As Ella Marija Lani Yelich-O'Connor is better known (5)
- 25** Plays with Funkadelic on album (4)
- 28** Lou Reed's final album was this collaboration with Metallica (4)
- 30** I'm taking ages to name this album by The Walker Brothers (6)
- 31** A bored sort of performance from Marc Bolan (6)
- 33+5D** Glaswegians who took *A Walk Across The Rooftops* (4-4)
- 34** Prickly kind of person into Frankie Goes To Hollywood (5)
- 35+11A** Somehow girl rips in half an album by The Go-Betweens (6-4-4)

### ANSWERS: TAKE 213

#### ACROSS

- 1 Rock Or Bust, 8 Hold On, 9 Are We There, 10 Heaven, 12 Our Frank, 15+17A+24D Drums And Wires, 20+35A Friday On My Mind, 21+2D Blue Cheer,

- 22 Ott, 23 Law, 25 Set, 27 Red Eyes, 31 WFL, 32 Let Go, 34 Easter.

#### DOWN

- 1 Reason To Believe, 3+7D One Love, 4+18A Behind The Sun, 5 The Hum, 6+29D Clear Spot, 11 Nadine, 13 Faster,

- 14 Krafty, 16 Side, 17 Anyway, 19 No One, 25+30A Steve Earle, 26 Town, 27 Relay, 28 Dulli, 33 Tad.

#### HIDDEN ANSWER

"Eight Line Poem"

#### XWORD COMPILED BY:

Trevor Hungerford

# UNCUT

TAKE 215 | APRIL 2015

Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, 8th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Tel: 020 3148 6982 www.uncut.co.uk

**EDITOR** John Mulvey

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR** Michael Bonner

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR** John Robinson

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**SENIOR DESIGNER** Michael Chapman

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**SUB EDITOR/WRITER** Tom Pinnock

**PICTURE RESEARCHER** Phil King

**EDITOR AT LARGE** Allan Jones

**CONTRIBUTORS** Jason Anderson, Ben Beaumont-Thomas, Tom Charity, Leonie Cooper, Jon Dale, Stephen Dalton, Andy Gill, Nick Hasted, Mick Houghton, Rob Hughes, Trevor Hungerford, John Lewis, Damien Love, Alastair McKay, Geoffrey Macnab, Gavin Martin, Piers Martin, Andrew Mueller, Garry Mulholland, Sharon O'Connell, Louis Pattison, David Quantick, Sam Richards, Jonathan Romney, Bud Scoppa, Peter Shapiro, Hazel Sheffield, Laura Snipes, Neil Spencer, Terry Staunton, Fiona Sturges, Graeme Thomson, Luke Torn, Stephen Troussé, Jaan Uhelszki, Wyndham Wallace, Peter Watts, Richard Williams, Nigel Williamson, Jim Wirth, Damon Wise, Rob Young

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**PHOTOGRAPHERS:** Seamus Murphy, Emmanuel Afolabi, Kevork Djansézian, Henry Diltz, Cat Stevens, Stefan Höderath

**THANKS THIS ISSUE:** Joe Lillington, Savanna Abbey-Nayake, James Hanman

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Printed by Polestar Group, Uncut, 1368-0722, is published monthly by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London, SE1 0SU, England. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc, 156-15, 146th Ave, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: send address changes to Uncut Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc, 156-15, 146th Ave, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London, SE1 0SU, UK. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

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## MY LIFE IN MUSIC

# Jim Kerr

The Simple Mind recalls his otherworldly influences, from The Doors to Bowie to John Cale at “the peak of his madness”



### The first album I bought

#### T.Rex

#### Electric Warrior 1971

I bought this from a classmate in 1972. I think he was into heavier stuff and was keen to dispose of it. I'd first seen T.Rex on *Top Of The Pops*, and for me, in terms of the style, the look and a lot of the sound, there was no precedent. T.Rex were quite good because both boys and girls loved them... so there was an 'in' there with girls if you were walking around with a copy of *Electric Warrior* under your arm.

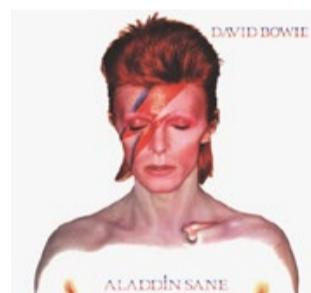


### The record that introduced me to keyboards

#### The Doors

#### The Doors 1967

I loved the sound, the lyrics, the imagery, and particularly Jim Morrison and the whole otherworldliness of it. This was an album that introduced the idea of keyboards to me, not just electric guitars. And to this day we still listen to The Doors – in fact, we will be playing a Doors song as one of the encores on this tour.



### The record that reminds me of seeing Bowie live

#### David Bowie

#### Aladdin Sane 1973

The week after this came out, Bowie opened his tour. They made their way to Glasgow and I was so lucky to see them. I played the record for hours leading up to the show, but nothing could prepare me for the visuals and sounds. The brother of a guy in my class even got us into the backstage corridor, and as Bowie and band were leaving, they swished past in those clothes that turned up in the V&A. They were creatures from another world.



### An album that got me into electronics

#### Stevie Wonder

#### Innervisions

#### 1973

Stevie Wonder was one of the first to use Moogs and synths, albeit in the most funky way, and *Innervisions* is the album I bought and played a lot. As well as having some of the most romantic and spiritual songs, he'd throw politics in as well – writing about the black urban experience and some of the more deprived cities of America. It seemed very, very special to me.



### An album that's perfect for off-Broadway

#### Lou Reed

#### Transformer 1972

I hadn't heard of the VU, so Lou Reed came to me via the whole Bowie connection and *Transformer*. The songs sound like they were written for some stage play off-Broadway, and they do sound theatrical. There are horns and double basses and beautiful ballads, like "Perfect Day" and "Satellite Of Love". You can hear Mick Ronson all over this – not only was he an amazing guitar player, but he was a great arranger, too.



### A touching record

#### John Cale

#### Slow Dazzle 1975

I remember a great '75 Cale concert in Glasgow City Hall. It was a weird atmosphere, not very busy, a summer's night, and they didn't pull the curtains. So we're in this hall, daylight streaming in, and Cale was at the peak of his madness, onstage anyway – he wore a huge ski mask. The LP at that time, *Slow Dazzle*, has some of his most touching tunes, though. "Mr Wilson" is a plea from Cale to Brian Wilson, about how much his music meant to him. It's a beautiful track.



### A great debut album

#### Patti Smith

#### Horses 1975

Me and Charlie Burchill got the first wave of punk coming in from New York, really starting with the Ramones and Television, but before that there was Patti Smith's *Horses*, produced by John Cale – a great, great debut. There was something about when punk came to the UK... it seemed to ignite, almost overnight. We owe our careers to the fact we were around at that time as, a year or two before, it would never have dawned on us you could actually do it yourself, but there I was.



### An album that showed us life after punk

#### Magazine

#### Real Life 1978

Punk was burning itself out, there was a lot of dross. But, ages after leaving Buzzcocks, out of nowhere Howard Devoto appeared again with this sophisticated, dangerous sound. They featured the great, great guitar player John McGeoch. It still had that punk energy, but for me it was the first album that showed that things were moving on. This was the prototype. Music like this, XTC as well, was leaving punk in its wake.

*Simple Minds' UK tour begins March 27, with the Sparkle In The Rain boxset out now. [www.simplenminds.com](http://www.simplenminds.com)*



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