

**PAUL WELLER:** 'I'm rejuvenated!'

# UNCUT

**70TH BIRTHDAY  
EXCLUSIVE!**

'I wanted  
to stop  
telling lies...'

**PETE  
TOWNSHEND**

comes clean on Roger,  
retirement and the  
future of **THE WHO**

RICHARD DAWSON  
KAREN DALTON  
LEAD BELLY  
FELT  
EMMYLOU HARRIS

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REVIEWS**  
ROLLING STONES  
JOE BONAMASSA  
COURTNEY BARNETT  
LEONARD COHEN  
ELLIOTT SMITH  
AND MORE...

The lost genius of  
**DOUG  
SAHM**

The worst excesses of  
**HAPPY  
MONDAYS**

The  
return of  
**VIOLENT  
FEMMES**

**MY MORNING  
JACKET**  
go snorkelling  
with the Dead

**RON WOOD**  
opens up his  
secret diary  
AND

JOHN RENBOURN  
DAEVID ALLEN  
NILE RODGERS  
TOM WAITS  
BOREDOMS

HOT  
CHIP

WHY  
MAKE  
SENSE

?

18.05.15

Domino

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TETOWNSHEND-HAPPY MONDAYS-VIOLENT FEMMES-RON WOOD-MY MORNING JACKET-DOUG SAHM-NILE RODGERS

# Are we rolling?



Townshend, on The Who's US tour, 1967

WHEN A SPRIGHTLY 56-year-old Bob Dylan released *Time Out Of Mind* in 1997, he inadvertently established a new paradigm for the first generation of rock superstars.

While, at live shows, they were still expected to play the hits of their youth, they were no longer obliged to ignore the actual digits on their birth certificates. Now, their new music was often obliged to confront mortality; to admit, with appropriate gravitas, that they might soon, one way or another, fade away. "It's not dark yet," sang Dylan, "but it's gettin' there."

Eighteen years on, however, as Dylan and his peers march resolutely into their seventies, many have realised that they probably shouldn't approach each new project as if it may be their last; half a dozen rueful valedictory

albums would be enough for even Leonard Cohen. As a consequence, these artists are finding new ways to grow older – Dylan's peculiar revenant games, for example, or Neil Young's belated mid-life crisis – and are working out how to deal with playing 50-year-old anthems for a few years more, at least.

On May 19, Pete Townshend, notably vituperative voice of that generation, will turn 70 – though as Michael Bonner hears in this month's issue, he shows little enthusiasm for even acknowledging the landmark. Instead, Townshend will be busy continuing a life's exceptional and complex work: performing incendiary but conflicted gigs with The Who; re-imagining the music that has haunted him for decades (a symphonic rescore of *Quadrophenia*, in this case); dreaming up radical plots to upset expectation; and, of course, baiting Roger Daltrey.

There's a lot of the latter in Michael's exceptional cover story, one which proves yet again that Townshend remains the king of interviewees. When I was editing *Uncut*'s Ultimate Music Guide to The Who, I uncovered a great tranche of Townshend features, consistently remarkable for their intelligence and candour. Obligatory hype aside, I genuinely believe this month's instalment is one of the most compelling. Who fans, especially those resilient enough to be called "fucking cunts", should jump to page 24 soon.

In the meantime, be lucky...

John Mulvey, Editor  
Follow me on Twitter: @JohnRMulvey

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# INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT  
Featuring KAREN DALTON | BOREDOMS | RICHARD DAWSON

QUICK ON THE DRAW

## One from the art

**Rediscovered: the animated TOM WAITS.  
“There was a real shady-looking character outside...”**

**J**OHN LAMB WAS in his West LA studio waiting for the star to turn up so he could shoot a short film, when he got a call from a neighbour. “He told me there was a real shady-looking character outside,” chuckles Lamb. “I said, don’t worry, that’s Tom Waits.”

*Tom Waits For No One*, the pioneering animated film Lamb and Waits made that day in 1978, went unseen for decades but was rediscovered in 2006, when it was uploaded

to YouTube by Lamb’s teenage son. Lamb is now publishing *Tom Waits For No One: The Illustrated Scrapbook*, featuring artwork, artefacts and photos from the film. He is also hoping to re-edit the original film and make a new version using footage of Waits from the original shoot. “We will have the book in June and a film in August,” says Lamb. “All the assets are at hand, it’s just a case of doing it. This has been a long time coming.”

*Tom Waits For No One* was conceived by Lamb in 1977 to test a video rotoscope machine he’d constructed. “We needed to prove it worked because it was a mad scientist type thing,” he says. Lamb had

suit exactly the same. Everything that came out of his mouth was hilarious.” The six-minute film involved an animated Waits singing “The One That Got Away” while ogling a dancer in a seedy alleyway. “He was a complete professional,” says Lamb. “He did exactly what we asked. He’d slump to the ground between takes like a Native American round a campfire then snap to attention. The music played karaoke-style, we gave him parameters and left him to it. He was a natural. He’d worked with the dancer before so they had a repartee. Tom’s agent rustled her up. Her name was Donna Gordon, she was in *The Killing Of A Chinese Bookie*.”

The film was shot in an afternoon. “It took around half-a-dozen takes and we ended up with 13 hours of footage because we had five cameras,” says Lamb, who spent a further six months constructing the film with a team of animators, including David Silverman, later director of *The Simpsons* and *Monsters Inc.* The film appeared at a festival and the technology won Lamb an Academy Award, but otherwise it disappeared. “We had a screening at his studio with a few musicians and his agent,” recalls Lamb. “They thought the film had a future but they weren’t sure about Tom’s. It turned out that our film was the end of that period of Tom’s life. He met Kathleen Brennan shortly after and never really embraced it. He became a different sort of musician and we were part of that old suit he left behind.”

Lamb, though, still had plans. “I held on to everything for 35 years. I could have financed an army with the money I spent on storage!” he says. The film’s popularity on YouTube inspired a Kickstarter project to publish the book and restore the original film, while unused footage will be used for a new film to be exhibited at festivals.

Tom Waits’ lost video has been given a new lease of life in the digital age.

**PETER WATTS**

**“He was outrageous, and his exaggerated movements were perfect for rotoscope”**  
**JOHN LAMB**

recently seen Waits performing at the Roxy in LA and thought he would make a good subject. “He was outrageous and his exaggerated movements were perfect for rotoscope,” says Lamb. “We called his agent and he said sure. We had some meetings, did a storyboard and they sent Tom over for a shoot.”

Waits’ arrival caused a stir. “He pulled up in his Blue Valentine Thunderbird loaded with newspapers, floor to ceiling, just little patches so he could see out the windows,” says Lamb. “He was wearing this dishevelled suit and said he wanted to change, then came out in another wrinkled

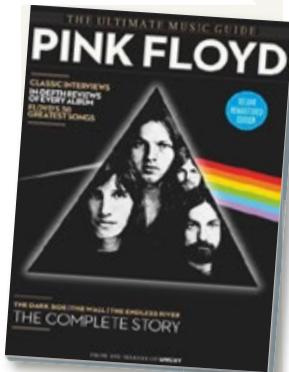
John Lamb with his original sketchpad, and above, Waits being rotoscoped...



For more on the *Tom Waits For No One* book, visit [tomwaitsfornoone.squarespace.com](http://tomwaitsfornoone.squarespace.com)



## A QUICK ONE

Fragile pioneer...  
Karen Dalton, 1970

► A quick plug for the latest *Uncut* Ultimate Music Guide – a deluxe remastered version of our edition dedicated to **Pink Floyd**. We've updated the story to include plenty of material on *The Endless River*, and given the whole thing a plush, heavy-duty makeover. In the shops now...

► Something of a golden age for music books at the moment, emphasised by two enticing volumes just announced. **Patti Smith**'s second volume of memoirs, *M Train*, will be published on October 6, while **Viv Albertine**'s follow-up to the fêted *Clothes Clothes Clothes, Music Music Music, Boys Boys Boys*, is due on Faber in 2016.



► **David Bowie**'s next project appears to be a Broadway musical based on *The Man Who Fell To Earth* (or at least on the original novel, by **Walter Tevis**). *Lazarus* will debut in New York in December, with new songs written by the revitalised Dame. He will not, however, be appearing onstage.

► **Frank Zappa**'s last studio album, *Dance Me This*, is scheduled for release this summer. Recorded before the artist's death in 1993, it's now available to pre-order from Zappa's website.

► For the latest news, reviews, longreads, playlists and more, visit [uncut.co.uk](http://uncut.co.uk)



PAST WORDS

# In her own time

**Two decades after her death, fabled folk singer Karen Dalton's own songs are being released for the first time, with help from an all-star cast**

**K**AREN DALTON HAS passed into legend since her death 22 years ago, with her two masterful albums of covers fascinating the likes of Nick Cave, Bob Dylan and Joanna Newsom.

Now, however, the myth of Dalton – the folk/blues outsider with a stunning talent and the addictions to match – is set to get a lot more rounded, with the surprise unearthing of a collection of songs written over decades by the singer herself.

"I count 42 songs and poems," says guitarist Peter Walker, a close friend of Dalton and overseer of her estate, who had many of these lyrics in his archives. "Much was fragmented, and yellowed with age and deterioration. There are chords for some of them, but others were intended to be standard folk or blues format."

Dalton never recorded this treasure chest of lyrics herself, so Walker and New York label Tompkins Square have enlisted 11 female artists including Sharon Van Etten, Patty Griffin, Lucinda Williams and Julia Holter, to set music to the pieces and record them. The results are released on May 26 as *Remembering Mountains: Unheard Songs By Karen Dalton*.

"I think it is a great tribute to a great lady," says Walker. "Karen was a pioneer in many ways. In a world of posers, frauds and wannabes, Karen was the real thing!"

"I tried to hear her voice," says Patty Griffin, explaining why she picked "All That Shines Is Not Truth" to adapt, "and this one I could hear her voice singing it. Hopefully it wouldn't be far off of something she might've done if she had finished it."

Over a rich, gospel-tinged backing, dominated by piano and churning organ, Griffin intones Dalton's words of warning:

*"In a world of posers, frauds and wannabes, Karen was the real thing!"*

**Peter Walker**

*"Real beauty rarely glitters... I was too clean..."* The artists took very different approaches, with Josephine Foster performing "Met An Old Friend" a cappella, and electronic musician Laurel Halo constructing "Blue Notion" out of her customarily jarring synth textures and samples. One of the boldest imaginings is Julia Holter's "My Love, My Love" – a seven-minute incantation that builds from industrial humming to a thicket of droning keys, it shows the evocative, mysterious qualities of Dalton's lyrics: "I will protect you from all you fear/You shall forget your troubles when close I draw you near."

"I went for the longest lyric," says Holter, "the one without a chorus. It's very spiritual but also personal, like a mantra for someone you love. Sometimes the first melody you come up with while reading a text, is the best in a way... the most interesting."

The sheer number of unearthed texts begs the question of why none of Dalton's own songs featured on her two releases, 1969's *It's So Hard To Tell Who's Going To Love You The Best* and *In My Own Time* (1971). Peter Walker puts Dalton's reluctance to record her own work down to

a combination of perfectionism, her unstable lifestyle and illness – she was homeless in New York for long periods, and died from AIDS-related complications after years of suffering from the disease. "There were no successful sessions that I know of, only a few fragments," he recalls. "At one point she tried to record some of her own songs, but she was very fragile, and the people trying to help

often just got in the way. She would have recorded more of her material if she hadn't gotten sick, or if she had not been so poor for so long, or if life had turned out differently than it did.

"Karen was a very private person, gregarious but private. I don't think she showed anything that wasn't pretty well-crafted, or 'stylised', as she put it. I don't recall her ever sharing her poetry or her own songs, with rare exception."

Patty Griffin suggests Dalton's part-Cherokee heritage may have led to her reluctance in courting the music industry, even a node as underground as the original Greenwich Village folk scene. "Being Native American here is a big task and that must take its toll," she says, "especially in the competitive, aggressive New York folk scene. I grew up around a Native American tribe, and I think there is a difference in their approach to life – it's not the same type of ambition in that culture as in the European system."

One can only speculate what might have happened to Dalton and her career if she had released these songs during her '60s

heyday, when many of her contemporaries were finding success with their own songs. Either way, Peter Walker is delighted by the acclaim his friend has received since her death in 1993, and by the efforts her famous fans have made.

"The wheels of justice grind glacially slow, but truth and quality emerges over time. Someone said that luck is when preparation meets opportunity. Karen was prepared, she just didn't encounter the right opportunity." **TOM PINNOCK**

**Remembering Mountains: Unheard Songs By Karen Dalton** is out on Tompkins Square on May 26

Cymbalism:  
Boredoms,  
with Yamantaka  
Eye, centre



CRASH COURSE

# "Internal bodily mechanisms are all part of music..."

...as are 88 cymbal players and an eight-piece Guitar Borchestra! The BOREDOMS, Japanese psychedelic superstars, bring their latest giant collective freakout to London

ON JULY 7, 2007, Boredoms convened for a special show in Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park, a green space on the banks of Brooklyn's East River. In years prior, on albums like 2004's *Seadrum/House Of Sun*, we'd heard the Osaka ensemble experimenting with massed drum jams, melding their psychedelic noise freakouts with aspects of the traditional Japanese percussion style Taiko. But 77

Boadrum was a step forward still. With the core Boredoms trio surrounded by 74 players drawn from America's underground rock community – including Andrew WK and members of Lightning Bolt, Oneida and Gang Gang Dance – the 100-minute performance took Boredoms' music and blew it up to macro scale, crowds gathering on Brooklyn Bridge as the spectacle unfolded. "The 77-drum group is

one giant instrument, one living creature!" explained bandleader Yamantaka Eye. "The 77 boadrum will coil like a snake and transform to become a great dragon!"

77 Boadrum was no one-off. In the years since, Boredoms have repeated the performance roughly annually – with more drummers, and new locations – as they go. "We have been blessed to have the opportunity to do these every year," says Eye today. "They have longevity because we have been doing them at mellow pace, and we haven't been doing them for profit. It's exciting and refreshing to create sounds for a whole day with people you're meeting for the first time."

He'll have another chance this June, as Boadrum comes to the UK in a new form. Taking place at the



The 77 Boadrum held under Brooklyn Bridge, New York, 2007

Barbican as part of Doug Aitken's *Station To Station: A 30 Day Happening*, this Boadrum will feature 88 musicians, focusing on cymbals. "People think of cymbals as round metal objects that create high-pitched sounds," enthuses Eye. "But under the surface layer of a cymbal tone is an extremely low frequency, and they create amazing overtones – when several cymbals are played together, they can create the illusion of a human voice."

In the past, Eye has spoken about Boadrum as an expression of Shinto, a Japanese religion which teaches the importance of ritual and the divinity of the natural world. He describes how two cymbal-led performances in 2014, one at the base of Mount Fuji and one by the ocean in Chiba Prefecture, "seemed to emulate the environment and the natural phenomena around us", waves of percussion accompanied by zooming electronics and an eight-piece "Guitar Borchestra", transmitted by speakers facing north, south, east and west.

Assembling Boadrum can be time-consuming, which may explain why Boredoms haven't released a studio album since 2004. Eye promises there is an LP in the works, which may shift away from the Boadrum format. "We'll probably have one drummer on a normal drum set, and have pads to trigger electronics." In the meantime, though, he's recruiting volunteers for the London performance. And what do the enthusiastic need to be able to do to take part? "It would be ideal if they are percussionists," says Eye. "But they don't need any special talents. Just the simple awareness that all natural phenomena, including their internal bodily mechanisms, are all part of music." LOUIS PATTISON

**Boredoms** play the Barbican, June 27. If you're 18+ and want to take part, email [boredoms@barbican.org.uk](mailto:boredoms@barbican.org.uk)

## THE CLASSIFIEDS

THIS MONTH: The Stones play at Ken Colyer's Jazz Club – the same day they had their first photoshoot. From Melody Maker, 04.05.1963

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CHARLIE GALBRAITH : GEORGIAN JAZZ CLUB, COWLEY.

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TRINITY JAZZ CLUB (Wandsworth Common). CYRIL DAVIES all stars. THE VELVETTES and LONG JOHN BALDRY, plus The Trinity Folk Three. 7.30 until 11. Membership free.

WOOD GREEN: ERIC SILK'S SOUTHERN JAZZBAND! (Members only.)

### SUNDAY

AT BARNES BRIDGE BULLS HEAD, lunchtime, 12.2 p.m.: THE BUZZ GREEN TRIO plus SHAKE KEANE. Admission free.

AT THE HEAD OFFICE, "George and Dragon" in High Street, Acton.

### TUESDAY—contd.

AT THE PLOUGH, ILFORD. The exciting new JOHNNY BURCH QUINTET with Stan Robinson, plus the Allan Humm Trio.

BARNET, Assembly Hall, Union Street: CLYDE VALLEY STOMPERS. EDGWARE White Lion—Roy Stevens Dixielanders.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COURT JAZZBAND: East Dulwich Hotel, Goose Green.

MORDEN: MICKY ASHMAN. Interval: Zanies Herd: "The Crown."

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TUBBY HAYES QUINTET

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inventive:  
Dawson live  
in 2014

I'M NEW HERE

# Richard Dawson

**Recommended this month: Newcastle's outsider folk hero. Sixteen-minute songs about drunken school trips a speciality...**

**A**T THIS LAST London headline gig, Richard Dawson had "a Birdman moment" – the venue was so packed, he could hardly get through to the stage. "And then I got locked outside the venue," he says. "Security wouldn't let us in." Unlike Michael Keaton's character, Dawson was, fortunately, fully clothed, and the performance a rousing success. Alone onstage, his songs sprawl over crunching, twisted guitar that evokes craggy pastorals. The effect is fairly staggering – a feat akin to Colin Stetson's sax wrangling for its sheer physicality, and Sun City Girls in the inventiveness of his playing.

The gig had sold out following the November release of the Newcastle musician's seventh (roughly) album, *Nothing Important*, through Weird World – his first for the Domino imprint. Since then he's been a pleasingly odd, semi-regular fixture on BBC 6 Music at teatime, though it's jarring to hear Dawson's voice coming out of the radio. Calling it a bellow would be reductive – for all its unvarnished force, Dawson has his own precise and peculiar sense of meter, and he says the quieter moments are the hardest to sing. With *Nothing Important*, he finished the guitar parts and then spent four months on the lyrics to the record's two 16-minute centrepieces – his music may sound unwieldy, but it's a feat of meticulous planning. The title track is a sensitive evocation of circumstances surrounding the death of the older brother he never met, Alan, who lived for just seven days. Meanwhile, "The Vile Stuff" recasts as a biblical event a Year 7 school trip where a girl mixed every spirit in her parents' alcohol cupboard and passed it around, leading to a sickly bacchanal.

Before going into Newcastle's Blank Studios to record, Dawson was careful not to practise either song too much. "I hadn't done a complete run-through of either of them 'cos I wanted to give it that kind of hobbling feel, quite dilapidated and struggling," he says. "When you see horses get born and they stagger around, that was the hope, that that would give the music those nice wonky, damp legs." His splayed, beautiful guitar style came about through discovering Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Ali Farka Touré and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan through his local library as a teenager, tastes that he honed later on while working in two record shops, Windows and Alt Vinyl.

Ultimately, Dawson is a product of his local Newcastle environment, where an experimental solo scene thrives. Dawson says seeing local folk singer Cath Tyler live was a big turning point for his singing (along with discovering Mike Waterson and the "full-heartedness" of indigenous American music), and promises that the follow-up to *Nothing Important* will be political, but personal – "about the situations people will face, which will be a little bit shaped by how things turn out in May." He is, however, allergic to explicit, didactic lyrics, and the inclination to stereotype communities based on ideas of geography. "Actually, everyone's struggling," he says. "The idea of forging a community based on place is mistaken. It should be based on thought – that would be the hope, anyway." LAURA SNAPES

## I'M YOUR FAN

**"The Vile Stuff" became most firmly my favourite record of 2014. It floored me. The story of schoolkids partaking of a 'vile' cocktail of alcohols put together by a miscreant pupil and its ensuing troubles is both hilarious and dark, my favourite combination."**

Marc Riley



## THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

**JIM O'ROURKE** *Simple Songs* DRAG CITY  
The Sonic Youth alumnus makes his long-awaited return to chamber pop. A prog-tinged sequel to 2001's *Insignificance*.

**JAMIE XX** *In Colour* YOUNG TURKS  
The xx producer goes solo, with a broader vision that still retains his trademark forlorn precision.

**MICHAEL HEAD & THE STRANDS**  
*The Magical World Of The Strands/ The Olde World* MEGAPHONE  
A reissue of the Shack man's acoustic masterpiece, plus a set of revealing outtakes from the early '90s sessions.

**MEG BAIRD**  
*Don't Weigh Down The Light* WICHITA  
Third solo album from the former Espers frontwoman; a penumbral companion piece to Jessica Pratt's equally lovely recent album.



Meg Baird

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
*Remembering Mountains: Unheard Songs By Karen Dalton*

**TOMPKINS SQUARE**  
An auspicious discovery, with Julia Holter's ethereal extrapolation of Dalton's lost lyrics a radical highlight.

**BLACK MOUNTAIN**  
*Black Mountain* JAGJAGUWAR  
The 10th-anniversary expansion of the heaviest, grooviest and by some distance finest album by the Vancouver collective. Includes the epic full-length "Druganaut".

**FUNKADELIC & SOUL CLAP**  
*In Da Kar* SOUL CLAP  
George Clinton's unexpectedly supple comeback, Funkadelic now featuring somewhat risky new keyboardist Sly Stone.

**TREMBLING BELLS**  
*The Sovereign Self* TIN ANGEL  
Fifth manic, eccentric psych-folk fantasia: as if the Fairports had pursued their early Airplane fetish to a deranged conclusion.

**LEFTFIELD**  
*Alternative Light Source* INFECTIOUS  
Sixteen years on from *Rhythm And Stealth*, the simmering techno menaces pick up where they left off. As is now obligatory, there's a guest turn from Sleaford Mods.

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Top Of The Pops Volume 74** HALLMARK  
A bold contribution from the Picture Editor. The session hacks' take on "Death Disco" is a particular wonder.



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

# LEONARD COHEN

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# UNCUT'S HIGH NUMBERS

Your guide to this month's free CD

## 1 MIKAL CRONIN

### Say

A suitably gushing opener for the first *Uncut* CD of spring, as Mikal Cronin ramps up his powerpop into something bigger and, if possible, more effervescent than ever. Blaring horns and a swift, thrilling guitar solo adorn this highlight from the sweet garage rocker's third solo album. Published, you'll note, by a company called Pop Goblin.



## 2 GIANT SAND

### Texting Feist

"A song can be a suture..." Thirty years on from the first Giant Sand album, Howe Gelb's latest displays a renewed faith in the restorative powers of a great song, and an enduring determination to make droll, slightly wonky and original music. Notably jauntier than many Giant Sand tunes, too, thanks in part to a guitar part so scratchily exuberant it could've been played by Graham Coxon.

## 3 MY MORNING JACKET

### Big Decisions

MMJ's widescreen eccentricities haven't stopped them becoming one of the best-loved bands in America this past decade. "Big Decisions", however, finds them at their most straightforwardly rousing, with a glorious, steel-tinged rock song that wouldn't have sounded out of place on 2003's *It Still Moves*. An Audience With Jim James can be found on p12.

## 4 THEE OH SEES

### Web

Always a pleasure to host Thee Oh Sees on an *Uncut* CD, and this latest hypnorock throbber is an especial delight, as John Dwyer's ever-mutating troops lock into a psychedelic groove that could, at a push, be traced back to "Lucifer Sam". From the marvellously titled new LP, *Mutilator Defeated At Last*.

## 5 EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL

### The Traveling Kind

Evidently buoyed by the success of 2013's hook-up, *Old Yellow Moon*, Harris and Crowell's engaging old pals' act is given another outing on *The Traveling Kind*. This title track catches the prevailing rueful good vibes – to whit, "We don't all die young to save our spark/From the ravages of time."

## 6 THE WEATHER STATION

### Way It Is, Way It Could Be

A favourite in the *Uncut* office this month, this comes from *Loyalty* – the third album by Tamara Lindeman's Weather Station project, albeit the



first to have reached us. The preponderance of frozen lakes, philosophical road trips and elegantly understated beauty may bring to mind another lyrically gifted Canadian, Joni Mitchell.

## 7 MBONGWANA STAR

### Malukayi

This month's eclectic middle stretch begins with this oscillating jam from a new Congolese group formed from the ashes of one of the most inventive African acts of recent years, Staff Benda Bilili. Undulating, relentless, addictive, and also featuring the other key band of the Congotronics sound, Konono N°1.

## 8 JOANNA GRUESOME

### Honestly Do Yr Worst

From Cardiff, Joanna Gruesome's daft name shouldn't detract from their skill at reviving the fine art of noise-pop. The boy/girl harmonies and barbed wire guitars here might well remind aficionados of MBV's early singles. A neat broadside against "hetero-rock macho shit", over in less than two minutes.

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## UNCUT'S HIGH NUMBERS

15 TRACKS OF THE BEST NEW MUSIC



## 9 NICK CAVE & WARREN ELLIS

### Mountain Scramble

As St Nick embarks on a new UK tour, and publishes a tour diary (scribbled on sick bags), he and faithful lieutenant Warren Ellis have found time to score yet another film, *Loin Des Hommes*, this one starring Viggo Mortensen. Atmospheric stuff, as you'll hear, that solemnly resembles an ambient remix of one of Ellis' old Dirty Three reveries.

## 10 UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA

### Can't Keep Checking My Phone

Ruban Nielson's band treat themselves to a funky upgrade on the forthcoming *Multi-Love*, a very neat expansion of the endearingly lo-fi psychedelic sound of their first two albums. Sam Richards' review on p79 tantalisingly references Shuggie Otis, Caribou and *Midnite Vultures*-era Beck. "Can't Keep Checking..." shows why UMO are on course for a *Tame Impala*-sized breakthrough any day now.

## 11 THE SONICS

### Livin' In Chaos

Forty-nine years on from their last album, the raw aesthetic of garage rock archetypes The Sonics appears magically unchanged. Producer Jim Diamond, a key associate of the early White Stripes, keeps the rough edges unpolished. Gerry Roslie's howling, meanwhile, epitomises the rowdy derangement of the whole affair; not bad for a bunch of seventysomethings.

## 12 SUPER FURRY ANIMALS

### Y Gwyneb Iau

Another auspicious reunion coming up is that of the Super Furry Animals, with a run of shows starting on May 1. The marvellous Welsh band are also reissuing one of their key texts, *Mwng* (2000),



to coincide. Here's one of the highlights of that all-Welsh set, "Y Gwyneb Iau", with some mellow trumpet invoking Bacharach amidst the dappled, intoxicating vibes.

## 13 WIRE Joust & Jostle

Guitarist Matthew Simms makes his debut as a fully-fledged member on the new, self-titled set from the ineluctably uptight post-punkers, which features some potent motorik glides like "Joust & Jostle". Keenly recommended to anyone who loved 1979's "Map Ref. 41°N 93°W".

## 14 RICHARD DAWSON

### Poor Old Horse

One of the most unlikely and heartening musical stories of 2015 has been the growing acclaim afforded Dawson, possibly best described as Captain Beefheart reincarnated as a Newcastle folk singer. Following the success of his *Weird World* debut, *Nothing Important*, this uncanny a cappella narrative comes from 2013's rare *The Glass Trunk*, due for reissue any day.

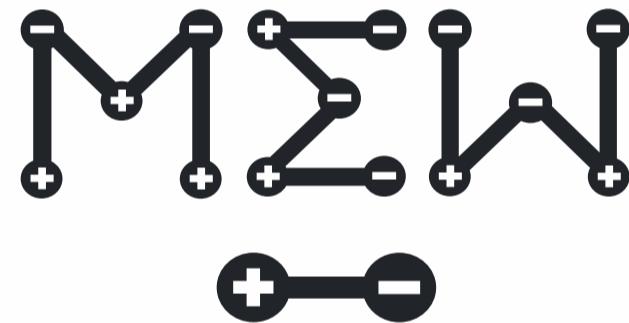
## 15 BLANCK MASS

### Dead Format

A final salute this month courtesy of Blanck Mass, solo project of Benjamin John Power, half of the splendidly Olympian techno provocateurs, Fuck Buttons. A heroic way to close what has, we hope, been another varied and stimulating sampler of this month's best music; dead formats be damned!

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# Jim James

Interview: Michael Bonner  
Photo: Danny Clinch

**The My Morning Jacket frontman on his love for crème brûlée, his collaboration with Bob Dylan, and diving with the Dead... “I’m a very scared snorkeler!”**

J

IM JAMES HAS just got back from Pilates class when *Uncut* catches up with him at home in Kentucky. “I had back surgery six months ago,” he explains. “I had a herniated disc. Since then, Pilates has been really helpful for trying to maintain alignment and keep my core strong, stay in shape.” James has currently got good cause to keep himself in top health. Apart from anything,

his band My Morning Jacket are preparing to embark on a run of shows across the United States and Europe in support of *The Waterfall*, their seventh studio album. As James explains, the LP is unlikely to be the only new material from his band. “We recorded two albums’ worth of songs,” he confirms. “The first one, *The Waterfall*, is done, and the second one is recorded but it’s not mixed. There still needs to be some editing. I’m hoping we can get it out a lot quicker than we normally would. Maybe we can get it out a year or so after this record. That’s the goal, at any rate. I guess it just depends on how busy we are with this record...”

#### STAR QUESTION



**Is there any hope for the kids of today who aspire to become “folk monsters”? Are there training schools – like the ones ninjas have? M Ward**

I do think there’s hope. Probably one of the best training schools would be with Mike Mogis in Omaha, Nebraska. He’s a ninja of folk and I think if any young kids are aspiring to be folk monsters, or monsters of folk, I would advise them to seek out Mike, and he could set them on the right path. What do I remember about working with Matt and Conor [Oberst] on Monsters Of Folk? It was one of the first collaborative things I’d done away from the band. It was like getting to watch some of your favourite artists, seeing behind the curtain. It made me want to work harder at being a better guitar player like Matt, or a better lyricist like Conor, or learning more about the studio like Mogis.

**What are your memories of playing the AmericanaramA festival with Wilco and Bob Dylan? Lois Benjamin, Boxworth**  
Bob was really welcoming onstage. He gave us fist bumps and said thanks. But we never saw him offstage. But getting to sing with Bob, that was one of those lifetime dreams you don’t think would ever happen in a million years. The tour was supposed to be more collaborative, that’s how we were talked into doing it. For the first

week or two we never saw Bob, we never heard anything from Bob. One day his bass player came and said, “All right, I think Bob wants you to come on.” We were scared shitless. We tried several different songs. The first one was called “Twelve Gates To The City”, it was Reverend Gary Davis’ song that neither Jeff [Tweedy] nor I knew at that time, so we had to kind of scramble and listen to it and learn it. Bob changed the key 15 times. He changed the key literally five minutes before we were supposed to go onstage. We had to run back, try to figure out how to play this. It was pretty hilariously nerve-wracking. I hear he does that sort of thing a lot.

**Did you go skinny dippin’ with Bob Weir last year in Mexico? Gina Rugito-Anderson, Indian Trail, NC**

No, we went snorkelling. Bob’s a really good snorkeler and he took me on a snorkelling mission. I’m a very scared snorkeler, very panicky. He’s a Zen-like snorkel master, so he was showing me some tips and we swam around, snorkelled, and he told us some cool stories about Jerry

[Garcia] teaching him to scuba dive and snorkel, catch octopuses and stuff like that. That was in Tulum, Mexico. We do a festival every year in Mexico called One Big Holiday. Bob had done his a weekend before and he stayed down there and played with us during our festival. Am I going to go see the Dead play in Chicago in July? Yeah, I’m trying to figure it out right now! I’m about 90 per cent sure that I’ll go.

#### STAR QUESTION



**I really enjoyed your 2013 solo record, *Regions Of Light And Sound Of God*. How do you find writing and recording for solo material versus MMJ?**

**Eric Pulido, Midlake**

The solo record was more of an experiment, and me learning more about the recording studio. For whatever reason, those songs stuck out to me as ones that I could record by myself. With Jacket songs, our whole thing is about capturing the five of us playing together. For these, I recorded them all by myself at home in my studio. It was fun, I love producing. I’ve been trying to produce more bands and artists. I’m trying to spend more time in the studio and learn more about the gear. So in a way, it was a point of research for me. Whenever I put out a second solo album, it’ll just be one of those things I make as time goes on. I don’t plan to sit there for a month and make a solo record; I’ll just make it when I have a day off here or there. As opposed to Jacket, where we book a chunk of time and do a record or something.



**My Morning Jacket in 2015:**  
(l-r) Bo Koster, Jim James, Tom Blankenship, Carl Broemel, Patrick Hallahan



“Bob Dylan changed  
the key five minutes  
before we were onstage...  
pretty hilariously  
nerve-wracking”

⇒ What's your go-to guitar for songwriting? *Shane, via email*

It changes. My parents gave me a Takamine acoustic guitar for Christmas, when I was maybe 12 years old, and I used that until I was maybe 22 or 23 or something. Then I got a little 1950s Martin that I liked to play around on. Recently I got a Gibson Barney Kessel guitar that I've really fallen in love with. But lots of times, the song doesn't really get written on the guitar. It just gets written in my head and then I find a guitar and try and figure out what the actual notes are.

## STAR QUESTION



You seem most comfortable with a lot of reverb on your vocals. Is this because you were raised by bats?

*Laura Veirs*

That's a good question, and yes, that is true. There's a place in Kentucky called Mammoth Cave, it's one of the biggest cave systems in the world. It's maybe an hour away from where I live – and I was raised in the cave by a family of bats, and there's a ton of reverb in there. So I kept that as I moved along. What did I learn in the cave, from the bats? When you turn out the light, it's really dark. But I can't see very well because I'm not a bat. That was tough, at times.

Whose idea was it to play "Oh! Sweet Nuthin'" at the Bridge School Benefit in tribute to Lou Reed? *David Drake, Acton*

We had been playing the first night and I remember waking up the next morning and seeing a text that he had died. Everybody was talking about it at Bridge School before the show. We had covered "Oh! Sweet Nuthin'" several times before. We'd played a couple of songs with Neil the night before so we sent over word to Neil, "Hey, do you want to do a tribute to Lou?" He came over to our dressing room and we sang through it, and he was down. A lot of the others playing were obviously really bummed about Lou dying. So it became this thing of, "Hey, if anybody wants to come onstage and shake a tambourine or sing..." It all came together; it was one of those tear-jerking moments. Neil was wailing on this deep harmonica and rocking so hard in tribute to Lou's magic. I'm getting a little teared up thinking about it...

What is the best kind of chef's torch with which to brûlée a brûlée? *Amy Jones*

When I started my blog about crème brûlées, we were going to review



Neil Young and Jim James pay tribute to Lou Reed at the Bridge School Benefit concert, Shoreline Amphitheatre, California, October 27, 2013

and evaluate crème brûlées. We did a couple and then forgot about it. I don't even know if it still exists – [cremebrullog.com](http://cremebrullog.com). We got a pretty convenient web name. We were hoping some day we could sell the domain to some crème brûlée company for millions of dollars. I actually don't like to make my own brûlée, I like to have somebody make them for me. I just like to enjoy the crème brûlée, I can cook a good

super supportive, and the show itself is super fun. But the brutality of that constant travel, it's really wrecked my health in a lot of ways. There's some injury I've sustained from every portion of touring!

**On the sleeve of *At Dawn*, the handwritten title "Death Is The Easy Way" has always also read as "Death Is My Sleazy Pony" to my eyes. Am I mad? Or is it like American Beauty/Reality?**

*Matt, Somerset*

My cousin John, when we were recording that record, we did those first three records at his grandparents farm in Kentucky, in an empty grain silo. Anyway, we'd always tease his brother and write fake song names instead of real ones, stuff like that. That was a fake song title that he'd given that title so we put it that way. "Death Is My Sleazy Way" is the way he wrote it.

## What's your opinion on men wearing velour yoga pants?

*Beth, via email*

I highly endorse it. I've got two pairs. I've got one that I use for yoga and exercise in, and another just for lounging. They're Adidas, I think. What colour? Black. I do Transcendental Meditation. There's many different kinds of meditation and a lot of them focus on the

breath. I found the TM for me, focusing on a mantra instead of breathing, was easier for my brain to settle down. I felt like I was always counting my breath, or worrying about breathing too deep or too shallow. But with the mantra, it really works for me. If everybody on earth sat down for 20 minutes a day, even if they didn't have a mantra or focus on their breath, just closed their mouth and their eyes, turned their phone off and sat there, in stillness and silence, the world would be... a better place, yeah. I did a benefit with the David Lynch Foundation maybe five or six years ago, and I learnt right after that.

My favourite track from *Lost On The River* is "Down On The Bottom"; what was your favourite track to record as part of that session? *Jackie, via email*

"Down On The Bottom" was definitely the most intense 'cause that was the first track we cut of anybody's songs. T Bone said, "Why don't we just start with your 'Down On The Bottom', Jim?" It was a pretty terrifying experience, but everybody had each other's back. How did I get the call? I got an email from T Bone. I think Elvis [Costello] and Marcus [Mumford] were already doing it. Dylan was in the studio next door, coincidentally. But we never saw him. Dylan didn't come talk to us or anything. We were freaked out he would come in. It was the first couple days that he was there too, and there were cameras recording us. I think all of us were mortified that Dylan was going to pop in at some point, during our worst moment. ☺

**My Morning Jacket's new album *The Waterfall* is reviewed on p68**



James James in the studio with Elvis Costello, working on the *Lost On The River* project

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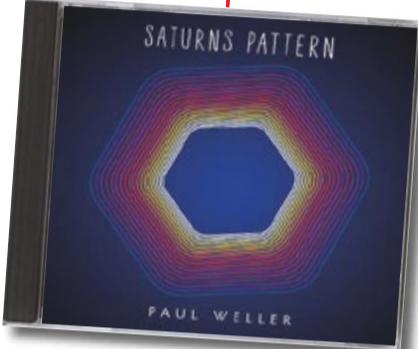


**todd rundgren, emil nikolaisen & hans-peter lindstrom**  
runddans  
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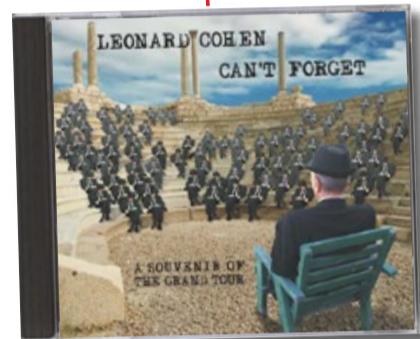


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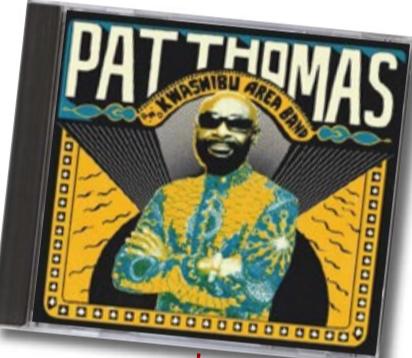
**paul weller**  
saturns pattern  
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**leonard cohen**  
can't forget: a souvenir of  
the grand tour  
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**bassekou kouyate & ngoni ba**  
ba power  
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**pat thomas & kwashibu area band**  
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The epic tale of VIOLENT FEMMES, or how a bunch of Milwaukee buskers won a record contract worth zero dollars, wrote loser anthems and biblical freak-outs, and ended up one of the biggest cult bands of the 1980s. Also involved: Chrissie Hynde, The Modern Lovers, lawsuits, a special, near-naked performance for The Smiths — and their first new music in 15 years. "Brian and I," says frontman Gordon Gano, "have the greatest difficulty in agreeing on even the simplest things."

**Story:** Rob Hughes

**Photograph:** Paul Natkin/WireImage

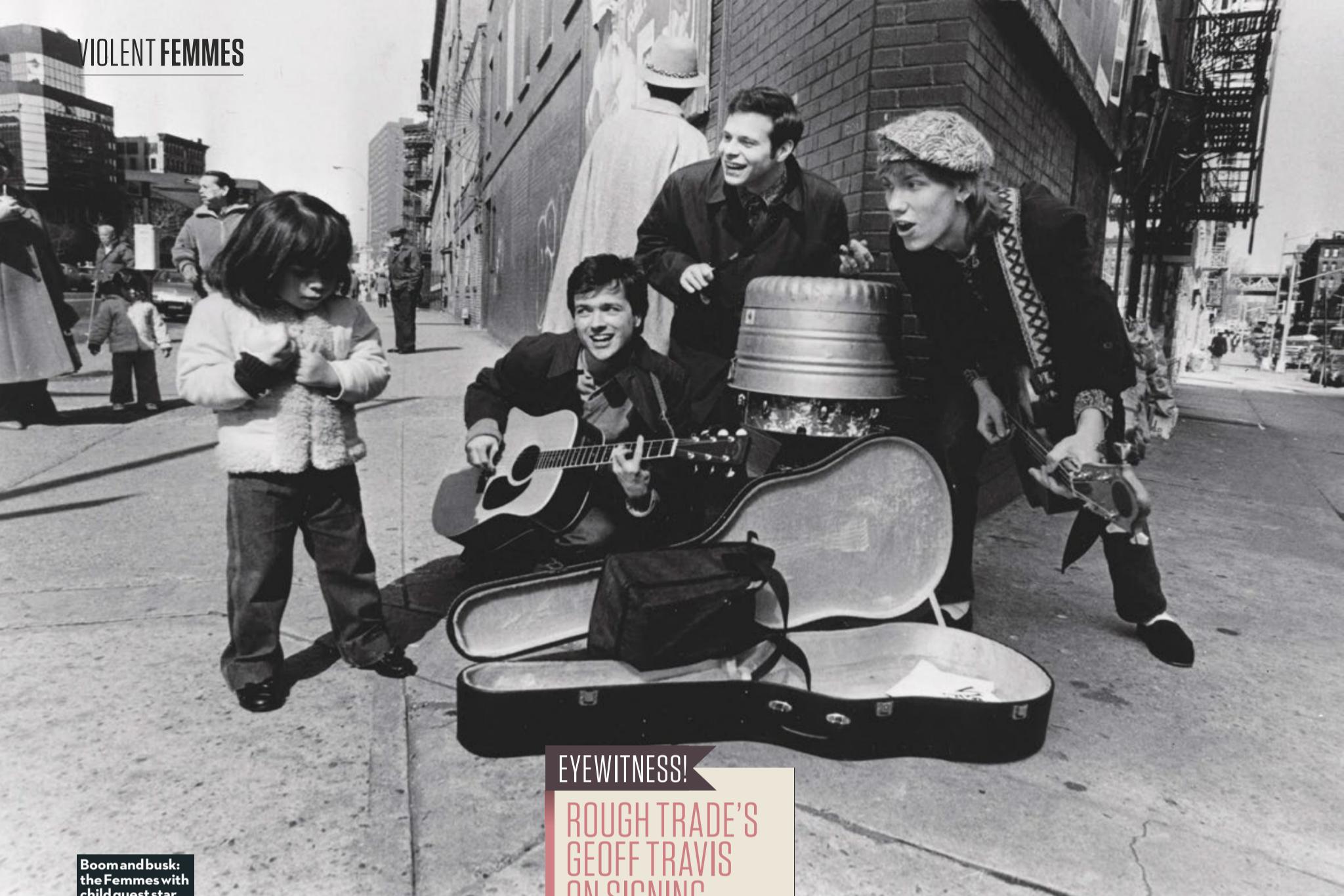


BLISTER



# ING!

Street life...the Violent Femmes in Chicago, June 30, 1983: (l-r) Gordon Gano, Brian Ritchie, Victor DeLorenzo



Boo and busk:  
the Femmes with  
child guest star...

**H**OBART WAS SUPPOSED to be a fresh start for Brian Ritchie. Away from his native America, and far away from Violent Femmes, the group that had exulted and exasperated him for three decades, the Tasmanian capital seemed as good a place as any to set up home in 2007. He fell into the local music scene and began curating MOFO, an annual music and arts festival that quickly attracted high-calibre artists including Nick Cave, John Cale and Philip Glass. Then, purely by accident, the spectre of his past rose again. One of the scheduled acts at MOFO 2012 suddenly dropped out, leaving a hole in the bill. Ritchie turned to the festival director for help, who suggested getting a band together to recreate Violent Femmes' 1983 debut album in its entirety. A group was hastily scrambled, comprising bassist Ritchie along with Mick Harvey and John Parish – from headliner PJ Harvey's band – and The Dresden Dolls' Amanda Palmer and Brian Viglione. "It was amazing, we completely slaughtered the audience," says Ritchie. "That's when I realised how potent that material still was. It totally rekindled my interest in playing Femmes songs."

A year later, again out of the blue, came an invitation to reunite the original lineup for Coachella. The three members – Ritchie, singer-guitarist Gordon Gano and drummer Victor DeLorenzo – accepted, on the understanding that it was a one-off. They enjoyed it so much, however, that they took up further festival offers.

DeLorenzo didn't last long, but with Brian Viglione as his replacement, Violent Femmes kept pushing on. To the point where, last New Year's Eve, in between headline gigs at the Sydney Opera House and MOFO, they darted into a Hobart studio and rattled through some new songs. Aside from a

### EYEWITNESS!

## ROUGH TRADE'S GEOFF TRAVIS ON SIGNING VIOLENT FEMMES

**“W**e licensed the first album from Slash in the '80s. I like things that go against the grain and I'm attracted to songwriters who use language in a way that's thrilling and unusual. And Gordon had that. It was an interesting melding of punk and folk. And there were undertones of religious ideology that put a gospel sheen on everything. They were extraordinary. We brought the Femmes over here to play and they were lovely people. They played the Royal Albert Hall and I recall saying to Brian: 'You're on the exact spot where Syd Barrett stood.' He freaked out completely, in the nicest possible way. We had a fan moment together."



2008 version of Gnarls Barkley's "Crazy" (the duo had previously covered the Femmes' "Gone Daddy Gone"), the resulting "Happy New Year" EP is the band's first fresh offering in 15 years. "It was a very spontaneous recording, live in the studio," Ritchie explains. "The same way our best recordings have been made, historically speaking. I'd say it's the only reason why we've been able to continue for as long as we have."

The EP's standout is "Good For At Nothing", a petulant song that recalls vintage Femmes. It's a keen echo of the band's rickety folk-punk debut. Like their greatest songs, it's a deceptive piece, sounding close to the brink of collapse, yet held together by a robust sense of conviction. The return of the Femmes, especially in this form, is as improbable as it is welcome. In 2007, Ritchie filed a lawsuit

against Gano, the band's songwriter, after he sold advertising rights to their most popular song, "Blister In The Sun", to American burger chain Wendy's. During the ensuing dispute, Ritchie accused Gano of "greed, insensitivity and poor taste". This wasn't the first time Violent Femmes had been at war, or broken up. In fact, they're a band with more than the average share of conflicts down the years, mostly with each other. "Brian and I have the greatest difficulty in agreeing on even the simplest things," concedes Gano. "There were years where we didn't talk at all, but what keeps bringing us together is a unique sound."

"Nobody expected us to ever get back together again," adds Ritchie. "But we have a common interest in this thing that we've created together. And every once in a while we have to be reminded that, if the Femmes are going to exist in this world, Gordon and I have to get along."

**S**PONTANEITY AND CIRCUMSTANCE have been recurring themes in Violent Femmes' career. As has an ability to endure, despite the odds. A deeply unfashionable trio from a less fancied corner of the States, even their hometown of Milwaukee shunned them in the early days. Gigs were so hard to come by at the turn of the '80s that they were left to busk for change. "We were ostracised in Milwaukee," recalls DeLorenzo, whose first calling was as a theatre actor. "We took to playing on the street because there wasn't any kind of club scene that would welcome us. We had a snobbish appreciation of music too, which did make us different from quite a lot of people. But being on the street meant that we learned how to play in any kind of situation."

Ritchie and DeLorenzo started out together in The Rhomboids. By the time they teamed up with Gano, they were a rhythm section for-hire, already trading as Violent Femmes and providing backing for various musicians around town. "I took Victor to see Gordon opening a show for Jonathan Richman," remembers Ritchie, who'd previously played with Gano at a school induction ceremony that nearly provoked a riot. "I'd also opened for Jonathan with a different band and was a huge Modern Lovers fan. The other two weren't, but we found that we had the common influence of The Velvet Underground and Lou Reed. And an aspiration of wanting to play acoustic rock'n'roll."

Gano remains slightly abashed by the events of that evening: "I discovered that I was the only person around who didn't know who Jonathan Richman was. But he came up to me afterwards and said: 'You sound just like I did when I was your age.'"

Bashing out acoustic songs on street corners didn't seem like the obvious career option in an era of hair metal and slick electro-pop. Yet Violent Femmes knew exactly what they were about. "Rock'n'roll had gotten to be so loud and over-produced," explains Ritchie. "We wanted to do rock music, but with the energy of the folk protest era or the early bluesmen. We listened to Gene Vincent And His Blue Caps in the early days. That was a really great sound. 'Be-Bop-A-Lula' has the early Femmes elements there: sparse guitar, acoustic bass, brushes. But then we liked the songwriting and improvisational edge of The Velvet Underground. Free jazz is a very big influence on us, too: Sun Ra, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane."

"We were reviled by the local music industry in Milwaukee," Ritchie continues. "They just thought we were some kind of theatre group or performance art thing. They couldn't see that we were trying to rediscover some of the essence of rock'n'roll that'd been lost. We were using acoustic instruments very aggressively, in a punk sense."

The Femmes' breakthrough moment came in August 1981. Busking outside the local Oriental Theatre, they were

spotted by a passer-by: James Honeyman-Scott of The Pretenders. The guitarist urged his fellow bandmates to listen, after which Chrissie Hynde offered them a support slot at that night's gig. The next key event arrived a few weeks later, when they opened for Richard Hell at The Bottom Line in New York. "[Critic] Robert Christgau was there and he gave us a phenomenal review in *The Village Voice*," Gano recalls. "It was one of those 'I've seen the future of rock'n'roll' kind of write-ups. We had no record deal or anything, so when we went back to Milwaukee we made copies of the article and pasted them up on telephone poles."

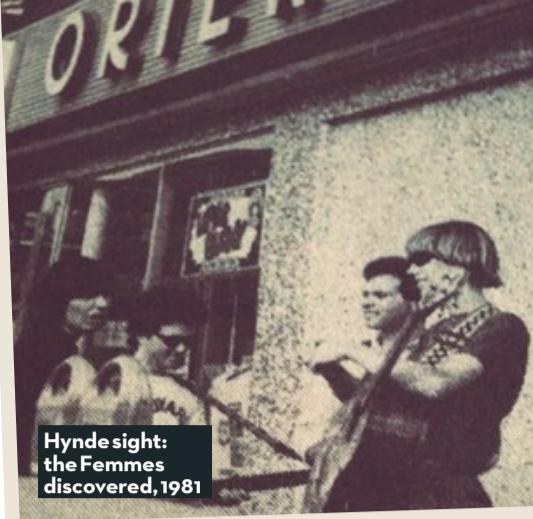
The band were soon courted by Slash Records, who literally got them for nothing ("We signed a deal for \$0 advance," rues Ritchie, "because it was the only game in town"). Ushered into the studio with producer Mark Van Hecke, and bankrolled by a \$10,000 loan from DeLorenzo's father, Violent Femmes set about transcribing their scintillating misfit music onto tape. The raw abandon with which they did it was startling enough – the product of just acoustic guitar, bass, snare drum and a dash of piano and violin – but what really caught the attention were Gano's lyrics.

These were ratty-voiced testimonies to teen angst, often delivered in a lovesick yelp that brought to mind a young Tom Verlaine. Gano sang of sexual frustration and desire, of outsiderdom and despair, with a cutting wit that went from dry to insolent. "You can all just kiss off into the air," he rails on "Kiss Off". "Behind my back I can see them stare... They'll hurt me bad, they do it all the time." On the libidinous "Add It Up", he's far more blunt: "Why can't I get just one fuck? I guess it's something to do with luck."

"When Slash signed us, I think they realised that we were three dorkadelic farmers from Wisconsin who didn't know what we were going to come up with next," says DeLorenzo. "There was a truth and honesty in Gordon's songs. He had a bead on the adolescent condition."

"Gordon was one of the first songwriters who was willing to show absolute honesty and embarrass himself, to be kind of ridiculous, in a lyrical sense," Ritchie contends. "He wasn't even trying to be cool. There are a lot more people doing that kind of thing now, so I think he needs to get credit for that."

Gano was still in high school when he wrote most of the songs. "They were just a natural expression of who I was," he reasons. "The first album feels authentic because that voice is of an 18-year-old teenager, and all the songs written previous to that. It's something that I felt very personal about. Someone once said they felt as if they were reading somebody's diary listening to my lyrics. It made them feel almost hesitant, like it was too intimate. But there's also a lot of playfulness and humour in the way that I write."



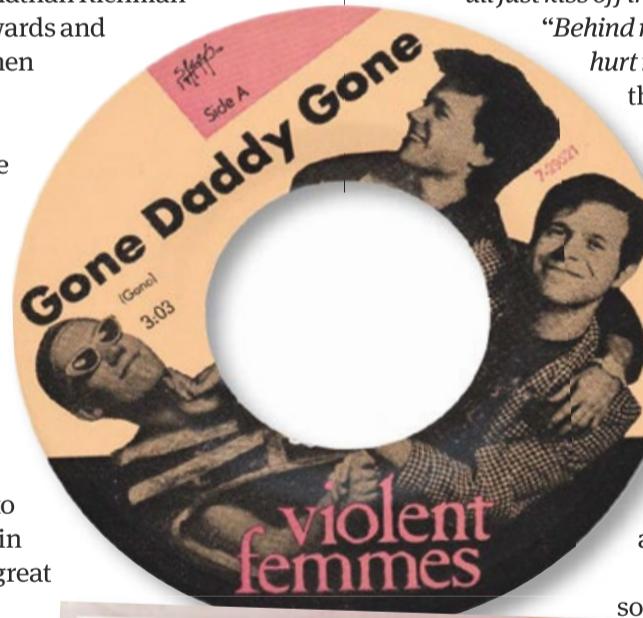
Hynde sight:  
the Femmes  
discovered, 1981

## EYEWITNESS!

# THE GREAT PRETENDERS

An unknown Violent Femmes busk for Chrissie Hynde & co

**O**n the afternoon of August 23, 1981, the unsigned Violent Femmes were busking under the marquee of Milwaukee's Oriental Theatre when the door suddenly opened. "This guy comes out, looks at us, listens for a second, then goes into the Oriental Drugstore next door," recalls drummer Victor DeLorenzo. "When he came back, he listened to us a while longer and eventually said: 'There's a band right now in England called The Stray Cats and you guys remind me of them.' We had no idea who The Stray Cats were or who this person was. It turned out to be James Honeyman-Scott of The Pretenders. He went back into the theatre, grabbed the rest of the band and brought them out to listen. We played about four songs, the last one being 'Girl Trouble', with the incredibly catchy refrain: 'Girl trouble up the ass'. We're singing this and Chrissie Hynde is just cracking up, she can't believe it. So after we get done, she says: 'You guys are fantastic. Do you want a gig tonight? Just come on and do three songs before we play.' So that night we went from playing under a marquee to playing onstage in front of a full house."



as if they were reading somebody's diary listening to my lyrics. It made them feel almost hesitant, like it was too intimate. But there's also a lot of playfulness and humour in the way that I write."

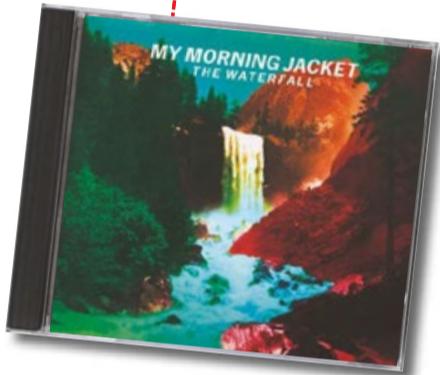
# fresh produce



**mumford & sons**  
wilder mind  
04/05/2015



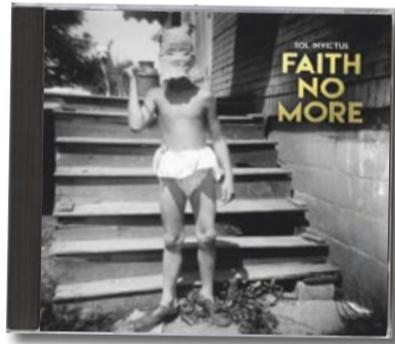
**my morning jacket**  
the waterfall  
04/05/2015



**the proclaimers**  
let's hear it for the dogs  
27/04/2015



**faith no more**  
sol invictus  
18/05/2015



**bill fay**  
who is the sender?  
27/04/2015



**lau**  
the bell that never rang  
04/05/2015

**blur**  
the magic whip  
27/04/2015



**roisin murphy**  
hairless toys  
11/05/2015



**django django**  
born under saturn  
04/05/2015



**best coast**  
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# How To Buy Violent Femmes

The dorkadelic trio's best recorded work...

WHEN *VIOLENT FEMMES* was released in April 1983, it became a favourite on college radio. "I thought they were heirs to The Modern Lovers," says fellow Milwaukee native, Jerry Harrison, a founding member of The Modern Lovers and Talking Heads. "The Femmes caught the loneliness of a teenager who's not in with the in-crowd or has trouble meeting girls. Jonathan [Richman] addressed the same issues with The Modern Lovers, especially in songs like 'Girlfriend'. But Gordon went directly at that frustration."

The Femmes suddenly found themselves caught up with a pack of new American bands – REM, The Replacements, Gun Club, Hüsker Dü. Slash duly sent them off on an extensive tour of Europe, Australia and the States. "Of course, when we came back to Milwaukee it was as conquering heroes, instead of being treated as losers," deadpans Ritchie. All this boded well for the second LP, *Hallowed Ground*, issued in June 1984. In many ways it's a better record than their debut, with a more sophisticated palette that finds room for country, gospel and jazz flavours. There are various guest musicians (sax player John Zorn and banjo great Tony Trischka among them) and Gano's songs are markedly deeper and richer. "Country Death Song", for instance, is a disturbing murder ballad drawn from a 19th-Century newspaper piece about a Wisconsin farmer who throws his children into a well. "Jesus Walking On The Water" finds Gano, the son of a Baptist minister, dealing in issues of faith: "Oh my, tell me is it true? Did he die upon that cross? And did he come back across?" And while the sinister title track is presaged by a biblical quote from Hosea 9:7, the album is laced with similar intimations of death and final reckoning. Not that they were embraced by the critics. Instead, *Hallowed Ground* brought a backlash, fostered largely, it appeared, by the simple fact that it wasn't *Violent Femmes II*. "Nearly all the songs on *Hallowed Ground* had already been played live before we recorded the first album," says Gano. "The idea was to have the first one focus more on 'rock' songs. And then the next album would be more of a variety. There was a plan to it. I remember the English press congratulating us on the mockery and cheekiness of the country gospel songs we were doing. They said it was so bad we must've intended it to be like this, which was amazing to hear. It was about making music that we liked."

Alas, Slash weren't enamoured either. "They didn't promote it in any way," sighs Gano. "Sometime afterwards we were told that it was a deliberate choice to do absolutely nothing for *Hallowed Ground*, because they wanted to teach us a lesson. They wanted to make sure it'd be a failure."

Ritchie asserts that the band deliberately provoked a backlash. "We knew we'd established a sound that'd been accepted, so we decided to go in a completely different direction. We were basically perverse in some of our conscious choices. For example, we were huge in New Zealand, where we got our first gold record, so we gave them 'Dance, Motherfucker, Dance!' as a single, which of course could never get on the radio anywhere. As for *Hallowed Ground*, that album, along with some of the stuff Tom Waits was doing, was basically the start of the whole Americana movement. It was kind of a thesis about what American music is."

The band remained a popular live draw, despite the setback, selling out New York's Carnegie Hall and the Royal Albert Hall in London. Picked up in the UK by Rough Trade, the Femmes even had an opportunity to impress one of their favourite new bands. "We were playing the Venue in London," recalls DeLorenzo, "and had heard that our



## VIOLENT FEMMES

SLASH, 1983

The unsinkable debut, rammed with jittery geek-punk anthems: "Blister In The Sun", "Gone Daddy Gone", "Add It Up" and more. Rhino's 2002 reissue includes a bonus disc of live goodies.



## HALLOWED GROUND

SLASH, 1984

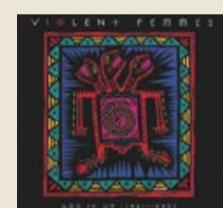
Deeper, darker and more musically ambitious, this second album offers thicket of gospel, country and roots-rock. And, in "Country Death Song", a scarifying murder ballad. Arguably the Femmes' finest hour.



## THE BLIND LEADING THE NAKED

SLASH, 1986

Jerry Harrison's production brings luminosity to gems like "Candlelight Song" and "I Held Her In My Arms". Sure, the album's flawed in places, but "Children Of The Revolution" is an admirable cover.



## ADD IT UP (1981-1993)

SLASH/REPRISE, 1993

You can play safe with 1990 comp *Debacle: The First Decade*, though this jagged rush of demos, live cuts, rarities and essentials ("American Music" and "Gimme The Car" included) nails the Femmes aesthetic.

"OUR LABEL  
WANTED TO  
MAKE SURE  
OUR ALBUM  
WOULD BE  
A FAILURE"  
GORDON GANO

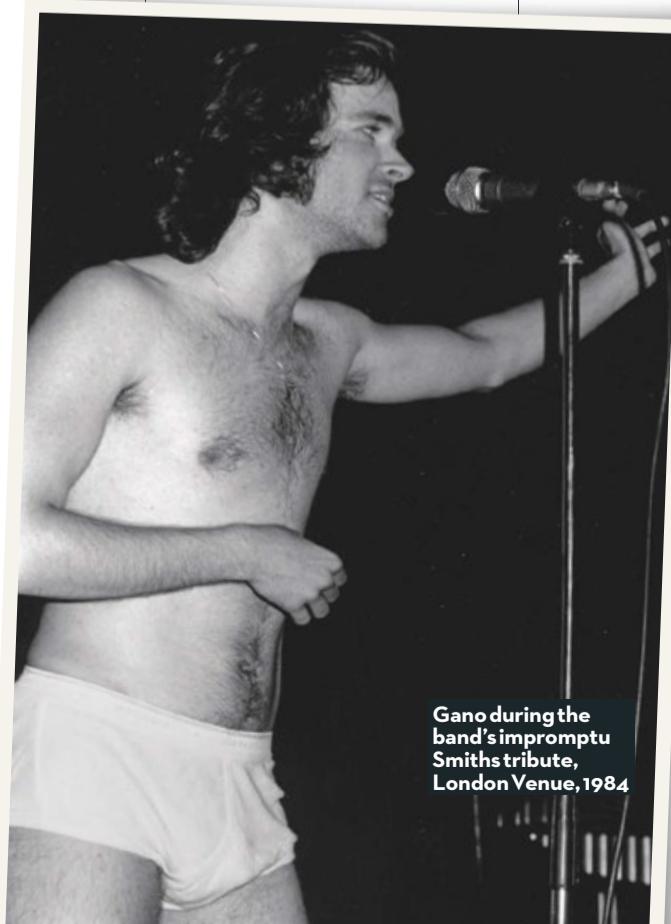
labelmates, The Smiths, were going to be there. So we were hoping to meet them afterwards and hang out. We were at the side of the stage after our set, ready to do an encore, and the crowd was going crazy. We really liked The Smiths, so I said: 'Listen guys, I've got an idea. Let's strip down to just our underwear.' Then we went back on and just stood behind our microphones for a while. Everyone's looking at us, wondering why we were standing there in our underpants, and then we started singing: 'I would go out tonight, but I haven't got a stitch to wear...' The place went nuts. The Smiths were at the back and we could see their faces getting more and more sour. And before we knew it, they were gone. They obviously didn't want to meet us after that.

"In fact," says DeLorenzo, "at a certain point, for either the second or third album, we were considering Johnny Marr to produce us. He called my house and we talked, but it never happened. We also talked to Tom Waits and, if you can believe it, Lindsey Buckingham."

The high spirits didn't last. Chastened by the *Hallowed Ground* experience, the band were told by the label that an established figure would produce their next album. Jerry Harrison was duly enlisted in July 1985 for the sessions for *The Blind Leading The Naked*.

"I was trying to bring a certain sound quality to things, in a way that might get them played on the radio," Harrison recalls. "I'd also just come out of doing the Talking Heads records, so I wanted to bring some of those ideas too. But it was a difficult time for them, because they weren't getting along and had developed into factions: Victor and Brian on one side, Gordon on the other. Something had gone down between them and I think that both sides felt injured. Gordon was a little detached at that time, so it wasn't an easy record to make at all."

Gano isn't prepared to elaborate, but



Gano during the band's impromptu Smiths tribute, London Venue, 1984



California dreaming:  
the Femmes play  
Coachella, April 2013

DeLorenzo concedes that it was “a very bad time for the group”. DeLorenzo puts it down to personality differences and the wear and tear of life as a constant touring unit. “Some of the relations between bandmembers were starting to get frayed

by that point,” he offers. “I think Gordon was feeling put upon to come up with different kinds of material, because maybe some of the stuff that was offered to Brian and I we didn’t think was really up to par. But at that time, he was just tired and didn’t really have the mind for it.”

Gano was also partly distracted by his new side-project, all-gospel band The Mercy Seat: “I hadn’t

even thought of this until now, but the other two guys in the group might’ve had some problem with me playing with The Mercy Seat. There was some friction about that. As far as the gospel stuff goes, when we were initially playing all my songs, Ritchie said he didn’t want to do any of the gospel material, because he’s very opposed to the entire message. And for a while at least, we didn’t play those songs at all.”

*The Blind Leading The Naked* isn’t a bad record, though it does betray the circumstances of its creation. Harrison did the best with what he had, coaxing a surprisingly vivid cover of T.Rex’s “Children Of The Revolution” and cleaning up the Femmes’ sound without going for the full makeover. “I guess Warner Brothers [Slash’s parent label] would’ve liked it if the Femmes could be more like Talking Heads,” reckons Ritchie. “In other words, sell more records or become more popular. But *The Blind...* was made in probably the worst circumstances the band had been in, so you have to give Jerry credit for even being able to make a record with us at that point. Plus he was good to have around because he’d been through all that shit with Talking Heads.”

After a brief tour in support of the album, Violent Femmes split. Gano admits today that it felt like the end. The irony was that *The Blind...* became their first album to chart, both in the UK and back home, albeit in the lower reaches of the Top 100.

Each member went off to do their own thing. Gano toured with The Mercy Seat, who issued a self-titled album in 1987. Ritchie signed to SST and released a

solo effort, *The Blend*. DeLorenzo appeared on records by Claudia Schmidt and Ecotour and, along with Gano, played for a time in Eugene Chadbourne’s post-Shockabilly lineup. College radio, meanwhile, continued to play “Blister In The Sun”, from the Femmes’ first album. No doubt encouraged by its durability, the band reconvened for a fourth LP, *3*. Its title, rather than being a concession to the Femmes’ sense of perversity, instead indicated they were back to a core trio, accompanied only by session players on sax and keyboards. Stylistically, *3* was a return to the minimalism of their debut, though the same thrust and inspiration, for the most part, had evaporated. Signed to Reprise two years later, 1991’s *Why Do Birds Sing?* had flashes of brilliance too (namely Gano’s

“American Music”), but was similarly patchy. And to this day, Gano has no idea who suggested doing Culture Club’s “Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?” – “We got a message from management saying that the record company really wanted us to do that song. I’d never have chosen it, but I took it as a challenge” – though nobody dared own up later.

The Femmes appeared to be merely treading water. Then something curious happened. Sales of their debut LP had been climbing steadily for the past eight years, to the point where it now entered the Billboard 200 on its way to turning platinum. *Violent Femmes* was the ultimate slow-burner. The ensuing two decades saw three largely uninspired studio albums, a handful of compilations, some live documents and the odd song for soundtracks like *The Crow*, *Mystery Men* and *South Park*. DeLorenzo quit to resume his acting career in 1993, replaced by the BoDeans’ Guy Hoffman, though he was back to celebrate a 20th-anniversary reissue of the debut. He stayed until 2009, when the Wendy’s lawsuit brought the Femmes to a dramatic halt.

Post-Coachella, DeLorenzo played his final Femmes show in June 2013, at Milwaukee’s Summerfest. He bowed out when it became clear there were still issues that were irreconcilable. “Gordon and I found we were able to agree on how to proceed, but Victor had different ideas and we weren’t able to resolve them,” offers Ritchie. But how did Gano resolve his friendship with Ritchie after the court action? When I ask the question, down the line to Gano’s home in Colorado, there’s a fairly lengthy pause, followed by wry laughter: “I’m having trouble with the word ‘friendship’. Seriously, it doesn’t make any sense to use that word in this context. It’s all over and done now. I don’t hold a grudge about it. Sometimes the situation is a challenge, but now that we’ve got some of these things resolved, it comes down to: do we want to play music together? And hearing the music just works. Brian and myself have built a shared career.”

Violent Femmes begin a two-month tour of the States this June, supporting Barenaked Ladies. Both Gano and Ritchie, meanwhile, are cautiously optimistic about following up the EP with a full-length effort. “We’re going to go back into the studio,” reveals Ritchie. “We might release what we do as singles or digitally, but I wouldn’t be surprised if there’s an album. I think the results of the EP are the best feeling we’ve had on a recording for a long time. It’s similar enough to how it sounded originally, to the extent that we can start saying things again and owning that turf. People finally just want us to be nothing but the Femmes and that suits our designs pretty well. Now it can be a fun thing, rather than a job.”

**Violent Femmes’ “Happy New Year” EP was released on Record Store Day**

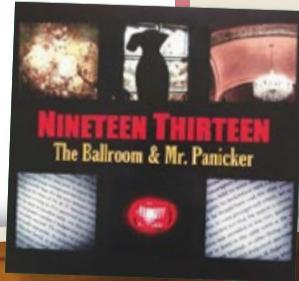
## BRUSH STROKES

### IS VIC THERE?

#### What DeLorenzo did next

**C**O-FOUNDER VICTOR DeLorenzo served with Violent Femmes until 1993, before rejoining in 2002 for what he thought was a farewell tour. This second tenure lasted seven years. In 2013 he was again behind the drumkit for their Coachella comeback, but left before the summer was out. The only original member still resident in Milwaukee (Gano’s in Colorado; Ritchie lives in Hobart, Tasmania), DeLorenzo now plays in “heavy chamber rock” outfit Nineteen Thirteen alongside cellist Janet Schiff and percussionist Nez. They’re currently working on a debut album.

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# “I might retire... from making money”

As he prepares to ignore his 70th birthday, PETE TOWNSHEND is considering his options. There is THE WHO's ongoing tour, and a new orchestral version of *Quadrophenia* to occupy him. But Townshend also longs to escape the “immense, monolithic money generator” he has been tied to these past 50 years. In this startling new interview, rock's most candid genius reflects on Entwistle and Moon, on Page and the Stones, on dying at Steve Strange's club, and on his still tempestuous relationship with Roger Daltrey. What next for The Who? “There's a desire I have to do a show which is crap. Go out in front of a bunch of devoted Who fans and say, ‘Listen, you bunch of fucking cunts. Fuck off. Don't come back...’”

---

**Story:** Michael Bonner | **Photograph:** Colin Jones



Rickenbacker glory:  
Townshend at home,  
London, 1966



The Who lean on Daltrey's Volvo P1800 Coupe, Duke Of York's HQ, Chelsea, November 1966

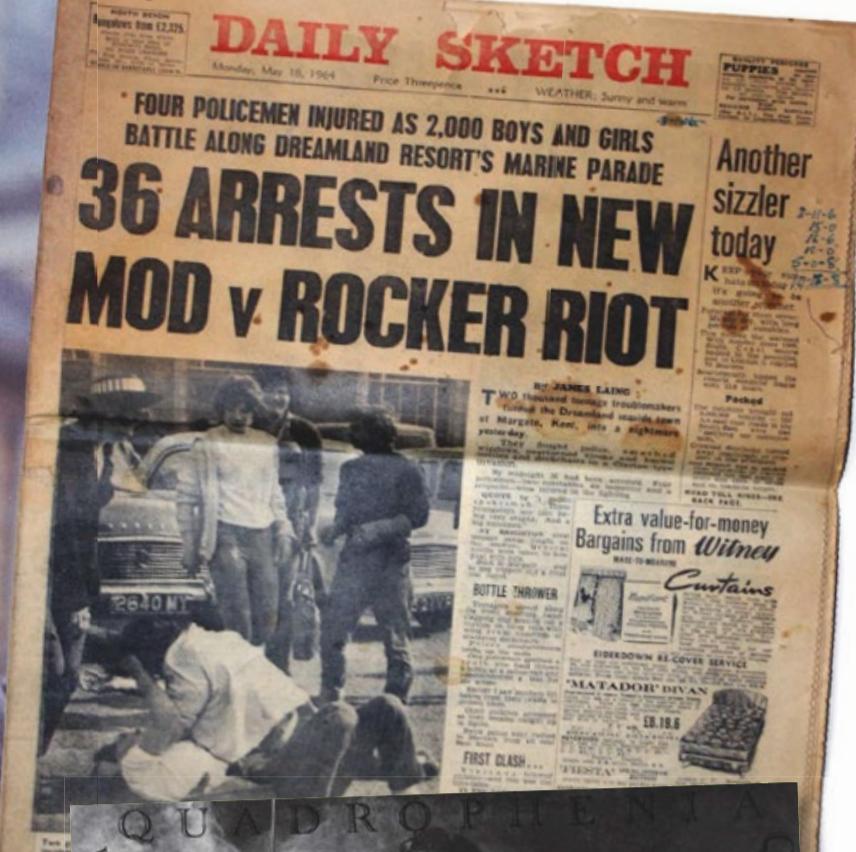
“I’VE ALWAYS HAD this feeling, ever since I came out of art school,”

begins Pete Townshend, as he slowly stirs a mug of tea with a spoon. “The decision I made was, ‘I’ll fuck around with this stupid, horrible little band for a year, get a hit record, and I’ll go back to rooms full of beautiful, intelligent women who didn’t mind that I had a big nose.’ But of course, that didn’t happen.” He looks up from his tea, a smile playing at the edges of his mouth. Today, Townshend is in a reflective, if mischievous mood. Dressed in a white T-shirt, black jeans and blue slip-on shoes (no socks), he sits in a hotel suite

in Richmond Hill. Across the road is The Wick, the Georgian house overlooking the Thames that Townshend bought in 1996 from Ron Wood. It transpires that the former owner is still a frequent guest. “He knocked at the door on Christmas Day,” Townshend reveals. “He often does...” Townshend has lived in the borough since 1967, when, as a newlywed, he and his wife Karen Astley settled in nearby Twickenham. Of course, much has happened in the intervening decades, both to Townshend himself and that “horrible little band”, The Who. On this unseasonably warm day in March, Townshend has plenty on his mind. There are The Who’s ongoing 50th birthday celebrations – marked in June by a show in London’s Hyde Park – as well as a dizzying number of archival projects. The band’s studio albums have recently been reissued on vinyl along with the first of four 7” singles boxsets, while there is talk of a comprehensive Who boxset to come later this year. Townshend’s own solo LPs are also being released digitally, with deluxe physical editions to follow. Additionally, he is contemplating taking on yet another project. “I’ve been committing some of my early demos to tape,” he confides, “and from tape to computer, to see whether I could put a collection together.”

Townshend has always been prone to tinkering. The two mainstays of The Who’s back catalogue – *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia* – have both been the subject of substantive reissue programmes and several bespoke tours. But lately Townshend – in conjunction with his partner, Rachel Fuller – has revived his enduring anti-hero, Jimmy The Mod, in perhaps his most unlikely guise yet: *Classic Quadrophenia*, a symphonic reimagining of Townshend’s ‘60s-set yarn recorded with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra that receives its world premier at the Royal Albert Hall in June, with an album on the classical label, Deutsche Grammophon. And there is more to come, Townshend reveals: “The Young Vic are working on a project at the moment to do *Quadrophenia* at the Roundhouse in 2017.”

Townshend sees his tendency to return to these greatest triumphs as part of an ongoing discourse with the work itself; a sense that whatever he does, it is never quite complete. “It’s like a certain kind of diary journalism,” he explains. “You respond to something that’s happening out there in the world, and you start a dialogue. *Tommy* was like that. *Quadrophenia* didn’t end. I realise a lot of my stuff didn’t end. When you listen to some of the key songs, like ‘I Can See For Miles’, ‘Pictures Of Lily’, ‘My Generation’, ‘Pinball Wizard’, ‘Behind Blue Eyes’, these are not songs with conclusions. They’re almost like cameos which end up



with more to do when you're finished listening to them than when you started."

But for all Townshend's attempts to codify and finesse his past, there are other, present-day concerns that require his attention. In the middle of all these reissues, boxsets, anniversary gigs and classical engagements, Townshend turns 70 on May 19. "It is," he says with commendable understatement, "an interesting year." He has no particular plans himself to mark this auspicious date – "Other people are, but I'm not." In fact, he'll be on tour in America, somewhere between Philadelphia's Wells Fargo Center (May 17) and the Nassau Coliseum (May 20), on the first leg of what he confirms is The Who's final large-scale arena tour. "Touring is an ordeal," he says. The question 'What next for The Who?' looms large during our two-hour interview. Will there be more new music? Will they ever play live again after this year? And what is the current state of his relationship with Roger Daltrey? As he reaches such a landmark age, will Townshend retire? Townshend helps himself to another cup of tea (PG Tips, skimmed milk, one sweetener), and prepares to answer all these questions – via a number of often fascinating, sometimes infuriating digressions that take in *EastEnders* plot points, his '60s peers, "dying" in Steve Strange's Blitz club and the *Charlie Hebdo* killings, as well as sharing fond memories of his fallen comrades, Keith Moon and John Entwistle.

"You just never really know what's going to happen, but it's always very satisfactory. Grim, but satisfactory." He is taking about *EastEnders*; but it seems a particularly apt description of another, esteemed and long-standing soap (rock) opera: The Who.

## PETE ON KIT

# "HIS AMBITIONS WERE NOT TO SHOCK..."

Kit Lambert is profiled along with his partner Chris Stamp in a new documentary that opens this month. Here, Townshend remembers his early mentor...

**K**IT HAD THIS difficult relationship with his dad [composer and conductor Constant Lambert]. His godfather was William Walton. When 'I Can See For Miles' came out, Walton sent a letter to Kit congratulating him on the brilliance of the harmonies, thinking he wrote it. Kit graciously passed it on to me. But his ambitions were not to shock or to intimidate or kick back at that part of his

life. He despised the snobbery around music. There was the snobbery of the trad jazzers who didn't like be-bop, the trad jazzers who didn't like skiffle, the be-boppers who didn't like either, and the jazzers who didn't like rock. Kit was anxious to hold that up to ridicule, but also to challenge serious music critics who were starting to rise. But at the same time, in the background, right the way through *Tommy*, he kept one-track free and I always felt that on that eighth track he was going to put an orchestra. When it came to me working with Ken Russell on the movie, which came very closely after Lou Reizner's classical charity thing, Kit was pretty broken by it. He felt it was a betrayal. He felt I'd blocked him on The Who LP, I'd blocked him making a film. I blocked him 'cos I didn't want to lose my mentor. I felt if he went back to movies, I'd lose him. Instead I lost him to heroin. I think he'd be excited to hear *Quadrophenia*. I brought him in to work on it as co-producer... he wasn't in good enough shape."

*Lambert & Stamp* opens May 15

Townshend with Kit Lambert, 1967



"The shows? I don't like them... But I'm brilliant at it"

TOWNSHEND

## What was the catalyst for *Classic Quadrophenia*?

I started thinking over the past 10 years, 'When I'm 70, everything's going to change.' Then I thought, 'What exactly are those changes?' I would investigate my thinking, like a journalist. I'd do long pages of writing every day, and go back and look at my progress. Basically, I felt that I wanted to stop telling lies and be true to my own needs creatively. In order to get to that place, I felt I needed to wrap up a lot of my past work. While I've been doing this for purely personal reasons, the industry has moved to back catalogue. Touring to support and exploit back catalogue has been lucrative. What I really wanted to do was just wrap everything up, so I did a huge deal with an American publisher but I kept my grand right issues. These are registered with the Library of Congress. A grand right is a combination of lyrics, music and story. The very first one was *A Quick One While He's Away*, the next one was *Rael*, then *Tommy*, *Lifehouse*, *Quadrophenia* and in my solo



SPEEDY KEEN  
THUNDERCLAP NEWMAN



## LSD! LIONEL BART! "MORE RIDICULOUS!"

Pete's early attempts at song cycles revealed!

**J**OHN KEEN WAS my driver for a while then he drummed for Thunderclap Newman. He wrote 'Something In The Air'. He was the one talking a lot about song cycles. He came up with an idea called 'Summer City', about a glass city dedicated to leisure. It was all about smoking grass and doing LSD and a new world under a glass dome. My friend Ray Tolliday and I wrote a spoof opera to celebrate Kit Lambert's birthday. It was about Lionel Bart. Kit took it all very seriously. He said to me, 'I know you're only joking. But we could do something.' For example, as I started to work towards *Tommy*, I'd already had a couple of failed attempts with other pieces, but when I got to *Tommy*, it was quite po-faced. A bit Moody Blues. It was Hermann Hesse-y, young man on a spiritual journey, appears to be deaf, dumb and blind but really he's on another spiritual plane. Kit kept saying to me, 'Pete, for Christ's sake, let's make this more ballsy, more fun and more ridiculous! Sex and drugs!' So I started to dig into that world I knew very, very well from the people around me, and other subconscious stuff that crept in for me; *Tommy* is partly about my childhood."

career, *Psychoderelict*, *Iron Man*, *White City* and another one that went by the boards in around 2003, *The Boy Who Heard Music*. I wanted grand right folios – libretto, music, lyrics in a book – so I can say, "Right, there they are," put them in with my master tapes and move on. Through this, I met my partner Rachel. I was looking for orchestrators. Billy Nicholls, my MD and friend, introduced me to her. About three years ago, Rachel and I had a conversation about *Quadrophenia* and she said,

"Can I have a go at it?" I called Hans Zimmer, who let Rachel do some tests at his studio in Soho. I loved it. I thought, 'I can record five of these tracks with a proper orchestra and have them in my back pocket. It will cost about 20,000 quid, but they'll be great on a Best Of. I can play them to people, they'll see what's possible.' So we went to Air, we got the Royal Philharmonic. The conductor, Robert Ziegler, had a lot of contacts. Suddenly, it became a proposition.

**One of the best elements of The Who was the rhythm section. How did you approach the material without the swing of Entwistle and Moon?** Rachel took the multi-tracks, put them on computer and listened to the actual notes John played. They've been extrapolated and interpolated back into orchestral form. What was interesting to discover then was that Keith Moon was an orchestral percussionist! Very decorative, not really interested in the beat at all – he left that to the poor rhythm guitarist. So it's there.

**It would sit well in the West End, alongside Ray Davies' *Sunny Afternoon* and all those jukebox musicals.** Perhaps, we've had a few tries. I worked for a while with Joe Penhall, who's worked on The Kinks musical. What Joe and I came up against was that it ends in mid-air. You draw no conclusions.

**Does that account for the enduring appeal of *Tommy* for you?** Yeah, I think so. Every time it comes to answering those questions about what happens to *Tommy*, I back off. I don't know whether it's a bold creative move. A lot of my critics regarded it as being lazy. But to be brutal, the easiest thing is writing the plot. It's not hard to have an ending. We know from theatre, TV, soaps and movies that writers can come up with endless variations on a stock plot and keep it going for centuries. Even *The Simpsons* pulls it off. *EastEnders* has got to a point now where it has the highest saturation of intense and complex plotting I've ever come across.

**What next for Dot..?** I don't watch it obsessively. But I was in the shower the other Sunday, listening to *The Archers* omnibus. There's been this huge flood. It's fucking amazing. You're thinking, 'Jesus Christ, they're really taking this seriously.' They've obviously had



Dear boy: Keith Moon with Rolls-Royce, December 5, 1974

researchers go and talk to people who've been in a flood. The fact is, we worry about our pets, where's Uncle Joe? These are the important things.

**So how does *Classic Quadrophenia* fit into the more general on-going process of revisiting your work?** It's a signpost. It's encouraging. Because in the modern world, it's quite interesting to say, "Right, what we're going to do is a lot of inexpensive writing on paper. Then we're going to gather some investment, do it, then put it out." The way we did it in The Who was not like that. I had this unfolding idea about trying to save The Who

from itself by reconnecting it with its audience; and also hopefully for the audience to reconnect with The Who. To be honest, they didn't get it. Kit Lambert felt we needed it, but nobody else seemed to give a fuck. There was a lot of fucking going on, basically. That's what it was about.

**"I was practically on the verge of a nervous breakdown"**

**TOWNSHEND**

reconnect the band with its Shepherd's Bush audience. I was also trying to make sure we could properly replace *Tommy*, which had become a yoke around the band's neck. We had this tripartite show. A few early singles, *Tommy*, then a rock'n'roll smash-up. The *Tommy* bit in the middle was where the music happened; where The Who completed their circle. I wanted *Quadrophenia* to fill that gap. It was difficult to pull off, and led to the only occasion in my entire life where Roger had ever hit me.

**What happened?** I was practically on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I couldn't communicate in normal

language with him. I said to him, "Oh shut up, you cunt." You don't say that to Roger Daltrey. You can say it now, but you couldn't then. It was really, really, really exhausting. So today to be able to look at producing music, even though orchestras are massive and expensive, it's incredibly controllable. You know what you're going to spend, you know what you have to do. It's like writing a book. You do all the work, give it to a good editor, they correct it, you put it out then you cross your fingers, but the job's done. But the rock'n'roll method is incredibly cumbersome. "Well, we've done the backing track. Now let's come in and spend two weeks..." Apparently, a lot of modern bands don't work the way we used to work. One of the reasons that The Who worked the way we did was that Keith, John and I, and our close road crew – our guitar techs, Bobby Pridden our sound man and John Wolfe, our production manager – loved each other's company. So we'd string it out. John and I used to stay late drinking brandy and telling stories.

**Do you miss those days?** Yeah.

**How does *Classic Quadrophenia* fit in with the rest of your 2015? There's a lot going on...** Most of the things that are happening for me, I have to remind myself are very, very easy. I look at a schedule. Being away from home for two months twice a year is painful for one reason only. I live a lovely life in the UK. Rachel and I have five dogs and we miss them if we're away. She won't be on the road with me all the time, so I will miss her. I don't drink, I don't do drugs and I don't go with girls, so it will be me and crime novels for two months. The shows? I don't like them. I don't find them fulfilling. But I'm brilliant at it. I find it incredibly easy. I drift through it. I get out the other end and the next day, somebody comes up to me and says, "You were fucking amazing yesterday!" It's like being able to make a pair of shoes and knowing that you've got to a point that whenever you make a pair of shoes for somebody they're going to last them for life. I don't get particularly excited about it, but I do find it easy.

**So what constitutes a successful Who live show in 2015 for you?** What jazz and blues musicians – particularly long solo-playing guitar players, Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, the heavy metal players – all talk about is getting into the zone. A lot of virtuoso playing is about learning patterns and rising above patterns. For me, in The Who, there are very, very few moments when I can do that, where I can play and watch my hands and my body do things that I don't control, that are coming from my innate musicianship. They're very brief moments, but if there are a

few moments like that in any Who show, for me that's a massive bonus. In the days of The Who riffing – the *Live At Leeds* days – I used to love that. Particularly the fact that with Keith and John I had these two guys who listened and watched so intently that they would follow me whatever I did. I was never that eloquent a player, but they [Moon and Entwistle] would be doing it at the same time. I used to snap out of it and think, 'Fuck! I've just made this extraordinary riff up on the spot and they're playing it at the same time!'

**I**N HIS 2012 autobiography, *Who I Am*, Townshend acknowledged, "Live shows

## EYEWITNESS!

### "WE HAVEN'T PLAYED IT TO ROGER..."

**Rachel Fuller** gives us the inside scoop on *Classic Quadrophenia*; the fully symphonised version of The Who's rock opera, orchestrated by Fuller and featuring Alfie Boe, who sings Roger Daltrey's parts...

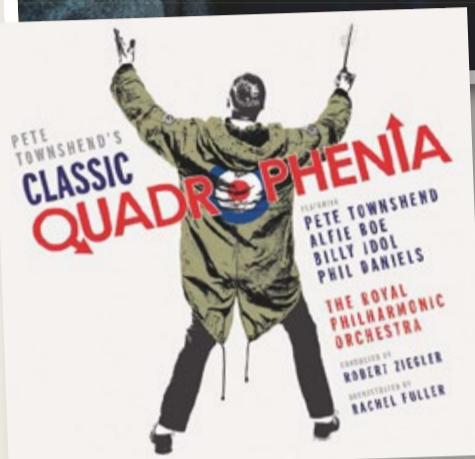
**P**ETE AND I met in a studio in 1996 and before we became involved romantically, he hired me to orchestrate some of his compositions for a show at Sadler's Wells performing 'Lifehouse'. Over the years, Pete has expressed his wish for *Quadrophenia* to be orchestrated. I started work on it just over two years ago.

"Knowing Pete as well as I do, I felt strongly that the orchestration should stay very close to the original modality and form – and I was careful to observe the details. It would have been arrogant to feel that *Quadrophenia* could be 'improved upon' in any way – I wanted the orchestral work to have the same feel or as close as possible to the original album.

"My main barometer with all the tracks as I worked through them, was



Townshend with Rachel Fuller, Alfie Boe and Phil Daniels. Below: the Deutsche Grammophon album



Pete's reaction. If he was happy – then I was happy. That sounds incredibly co-dependent! But he is the composer. "Pete was fabulous to work with on this. Poor

sod – essentially he was bombarded with ideas and demos nearly every week. As I was so faithful to the original – there were very few times where Pete felt something wasn't working, thank God – but on such occasions we were able to work together to get what he wanted. And he genuinely seemed thrilled with what I was doing. At all times I tried to produce what I felt that Pete would hear in his own mind orchestrally. How he would arrange the tracks himself.

"As of yet, we haven't played the recording to Roger – it was only mixed and mastered very recently. I look forward to his reaction, though. He met Alfie Boe some time ago and I believe they have discussed Pete's impossibly high melodic lines..."



gave us a sense of being filled and fuelled; we carried that energy from our fans and used it to fire our performances. Without live shows we lost our entire sense of function." He was talking specifically about The Who live shows in 1972, in context of his experiences trying to "reconnect" with The Who's audience.

**How relevant is the quote in 2015?** The way that we perform now live, it doesn't matter for me. Those were magical times. That is why it was so tragic to lose such wonderful, charismatic raconteurs, but also vibey people, like Kit Lambert and Keith Moon. Then the final kick in the balls was to lose John. So what we had was the clever songwriter and innovative guitar player and the singer who can sometimes hit the notes. Roger and I share slightly different approaches to The Who's history. He exalts it, and I don't. I think what I exalt, if you like, is a system that lay behind it. ↗

→ Roger sees mystery and genius and magic and what I see is very crafted thinking. Even if you look at what Keith did, the way he ran his life, it was deliberate. It was WC Fields, Mel Brooks, organised chaos. Behind it was a very strong personal thesis that disguised incredibly low self-esteem. What makes good performers is a combination of grandiosity and low self-esteem; those two things driving against one another. The best performers are like that.

**How much of that is true for you?** I think it was me. I don't think it is any more. I probably worked through that more quickly than almost anybody else I know. My songwriting revealed that to me. For example, when I wrote "My Generation", I thought, 'What the fuck is this all about? Who's it for? Who wrote it?' I could see that I had irritation and anger with the snobbery that surrounded me where I was living in Belgravia at the time. But also where is the grandiosity in "My Generation"? It's when the singer says, "Why don't you all just fuck off!" But the humility in it, the low self-esteem, is "W-w-w-why don't you all f-f-f-fade away?" I looked at the combination of those two things and I thought, 'Fuck, this comes from me.' I'd given it to Roger and he can now imagine that he came up with the stuttering – he didn't, but he can imagine it, own it. But I don't think Roger would admit to low self-esteem, though he suffers from it terribly. I think every performer must do, in order to be able to do their job properly.

**So if The Who are more of a live proposition these days, how often do you write?** All the time.

**In what ways has your songwriting changed, then?** I write more for myself and for my own needs; probably for a marked place that I anticipate may come about, but may not. I'm working much more as I did when I was a young art student. I'm looking ahead, working towards creating an event that might happen in an installation, that may or may not be possible in five years time. But also always with an eye of the mechanisms of pop. I'm working in a world that is closer to Björk and Damon Albarn than Noel Gallagher. I'm not writing songs and leading an orderly life. I'm scrabbling and experimenting. But unlike Björk and Damon Albarn, I am tied to this immense, monolithic money generator.

**The Who as a touring enterprise?** Yes. But it's not about me and Roger going out and making millions, we don't. But nonetheless when you look at the grosses, they're huge.

**You talk about these arena tours as a monolithic money generator; but isn't this supposed to be the last Who tour on this level?** I don't think Roger and I know why it's happened. Our manager, Bill Curbishley, since he came into our lives in 1973, we started to make money, because we hadn't made any before that. But he speaks about "The celebration": 50 years. "We've been through so much, let's get together and have a party." What that means is, "Go on tour." Roger looks at it, thinking, 'Am I going to get through this? Is my voice going to make it? Imagine, Pete, if what you had to do is what you did when you were 24.' It would be impossible. But I don't have to do that. He still has to sing the way that he used to sing, and I would say that he has raised the bar. But this is an ordeal for both of us. But it's about seeing where this fucking journey is going to go. I think The Rolling Stones are doing the same thing of going round and round and round and round and it looks like they're mopping up money, doesn't it? I saw the Stones at a charity concert in New York. They hadn't even rehearsed, they hadn't played together for a long time, and they were great. Mad, but great.

## SWINGING '60s

# "I COULDN'T LIVE WITH THE FREE LOVE STUFF"

Pete reflects on the permissive society...

“I LIVED THROUGH that period where we forgave people. One of the guys at the Marquee came up to and complimented me on 'I Can See For Miles'. I said, 'So you went to Paris for the weekend with Kit Lambert?' he said, 'Yep, yep. Went to Paris.' I said, 'What was it like?' He said, 'Oh, Paris was lovely.'



1968: Townshend and Karen Astley on their wedding day

said, 'You were Kit's boy for the weekend?' He nodded, 'Yeah. It was quite nice. You know, I love Kit.' So I asked him, 'Are you going to be gay now?' He replied, 'I'm going to consider it.' He's this Shepherd's Bush mod boy talking in a Cockney accent. It was all a bit *Sexy Beast*: 'You fucking cunt, you fucking cunt.' Then: 'Do you wanna come to my club?' 'Do they do steak there? Oh, all right then...' The thing about that period, it was illegal. But we all went through it. It was immoral for me to be having sex with the girl who became my wife when she was only 17. At the time, I couldn't live with the free love stuff going on around me. Others did, but I couldn't."

Fireworks: The Who live at the Newcastle Odeon, November 5, 1973, as part of the *Quadrophenia* tour



**But if this is the final tour on this scale, what do you see as being the next incarnation of The Who live? Smaller shows..? Acoustic shows..?** Oh, fucking God forbid! Roger often sidles up to me and says, "I think *Tommy* would be so great done acoustic." I reply, "So what you're saying, Rog, is that you want me to sit for an hour and a half and accompany you on my acoustic guitar? For an hour and a half, while you noodle around on vocals? There's a quick 'Fuck off!' to that idea." An unplugged show? I'll save it for the charity gigs or the occasional solo shows. Going beyond that, what I think is possible is for Roger and I to further explore our career. But there is a problem. I'm pretty sure Roger sees it, too. Since John's death, we've become polarised, Roger and I. It's very extreme, but it's also brought us incredibly close together. We're much more honest with each other. I don't think Roger would be offended to hear me say he exalts The Who and the memory of The Who in a way that I don't.

**How is that manifested?** It's a more singer-driven presentation. As I said, I find what I do easy. As long as I have a few moments of joy, I can endure the rigidness of playing the same songs every night. Roger has got the whole focus of the audience on him. He has opportunities now to employ some of his other skills – he is a more practical storyteller and dramatist than I am. When we did that last big *Quadrophenia* tour, I was hoping to revive what I call 'the Hyde Park script', which I wrote for a Prince's Trust



## VINYL WORDS

# WON'T GET PRO-TOOLED AGAIN!

**Paper and vinyl: why Townshend thinks old-school recording methods will endure**

**“**IN THE EARLY '60s, I was in art school talking about the coming of the digital age. I had a conversation with someone who was hip to modern computing, a Ray Kurzweil or a Harold Cohen disciple. They said, 'The problem with investing so much info into mainframes is the fact that it can be so easily destroyed.' I said, 'What? You mean you nuke the



show and we toured in '96 and '97. I felt I couldn't work on anything else. He came in sideways. He said, "I will do this with you, but I want complete control." This was a massive shift. I was always the one with complete control. I thought, 'Why shouldn't I let him have control? What's my problem? Let's see what happens.' He started putting together this presentation, which worried me terribly. I felt it was rather abstract and stole quite a lot of stuff from *Tommy* – a young man growing up in a post-war British world, ration books, royal weddings, coronations, all that kind of stuff. We play out first show in Florida to a non-sell-out crowd. We were about 300 seats short. The next day, everyone's very buoyant. [Who co-manager] Robert Rosenberg says, "Have you read the reviews? They're incredible. Everyone is blown away by the band." I'd had to use Roger's musicians, which I wasn't keen on. It progressed, the reviews got better. So I thought, 'Fuck, this guy knows this business.' And so he should.

But there's a desire that I have sometimes to do a show which is just crap. Go out in front of a bunch of devoted Who fans and say, "Listen, you bunch of fucking cunts. Fuck off. Don't come back. This is the last time I'm ever going to fucking say anything that's even slightly nice to you." Then what you do is plug your guitar into overdrive

and walk offstage. Roger's done a few walk-offs. We did a show in Verona in 2005, 2006. He had a hissy fit and went off into the streets and we lost him. I took over the show and turned it into an R'n'B gig. I still meet people in Italy who say, "It was the best show ever, it was like opera!" I

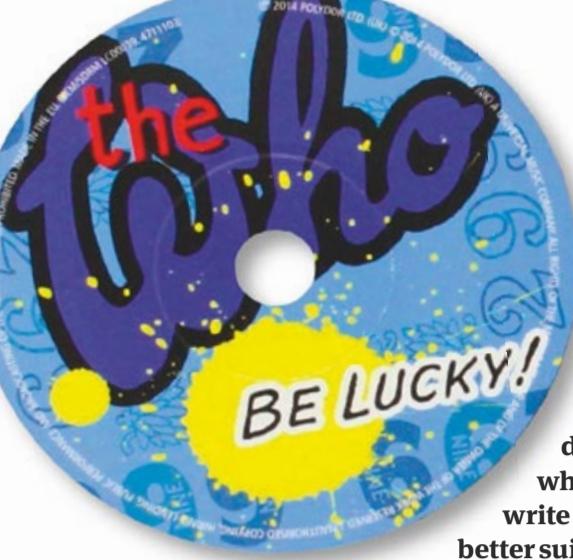
don't mean deliberately play crap. I mean allow a degree of experimentation that will allow you to make the kind of mistakes that people might say, "This is crap."

**You talk about being constricted by the setlists. Why not change them around, then? You're not exactly short of songs...** Roger thinks that way. I definitely don't. but I'm not looking for something different. I've played "Baba O'Riley" a lot of times, but no guitar player has ever been given such a great opening chord. BANG BANG BANG. FUCK OFF! AREN'T I FUCKING AMAZING? AND I WROTE IT. Why would I want to noodle around with "My name is Ivor, I'm an engine driver?" But Roger loves doing mini-opera. He laughs. He giggles. He

thinks it's an inside joke. I keep whispering to him, "It's about paedophilia. It's about child abuse." "Yeah, but that's your thing. Not mine." Those old songs, we have fans who sit at the front and, when they think I'm listening, shout for "Naked Eye" or "Slip Kid". So I'm happy with the hits 'cos

**“I woke up with this fucking six-inch needle in my chest!”**  
**TOWNSHEND**

mainframe?" He said, "There is that, but no. You can set off a magnetron bomb in the air above it and it wipes everything." So in this crazy world of no flesh and no data, I thought what would be left? Paper and vinyl. So this was a real Luddite reaction against the possibility of one of these crazy sci-fi fantasies becoming reality. For me, as an art school boy being told that one day all artists will have laptops, that has come true; so why shouldn't some of these other less lovely things happen? So I started off pursuing paper, tape and vinyl – because I thought they might survive."



the hits work for me onstage. I do it naturally. It's a better script for me.

**What determines whether what you write is a Who song or better suited to another project?**

I have a way of working now. I allow myself to do orderly writing to a brief. When I wanted to add a track to *The Who Hits 50*, I thought, 'I want to write a song Roger will like. I want to write a song that's a bit AC/DC. I want to name check Kylie Minogue. I want to namecheck Daft Punk and Pharrell Williams. What can I do?' At the end of Who shows, Roger always says, "Beeeeee luckeeeeee." Everyone in the band thinks this is like fucking Arthur Askey or somebody. I thought 'I'll write a song called "Be Lucky" and when it gets to the end and goes "Be lucky", maybe people will join in.' it's very crafted and structured.

**Are there any more like that at home?** I've been trying to gather songs to do a kind of Wilko Johnson album with Roger. We went in with the same producer that he used for that, Dave Eringa. I ended up watching him fiddle around with ProTools for three days on a computer. My part took an hour and a half. I can't make records that way, not unless I'm sitting at the computer. There's a great story about Roger when we were doing the soundtrack for the Olympics. Roger wanted absolute control and wanted to test it live. We were in the studio, moving keys. He was counting beats and he said, "No, I need to take a breath." He was aware we were going to play to 80 billion people, or whatever it was. He was keen we didn't do another Super Bowl, where he did a part recorded and part live vocal and when he came to the live bit he couldn't do it. So my engineer, Miles, was at the ProTools rig and Roger said, "Instead of going 'ding ding ding', could that bit of 'Baba O'Riley' go 'ding ding ding ding'?" Miles went, "Yep." He said, "Would it be possible if that bit could also go down so that the key is the same?" Miles said, "Yep." I could see Roger thinking, "At last, I have control of the music!"

## KINKS, CASH IN

# "YOU'D COME BACK MULTI-MILLIONAIRES!"

**Townshend reveals some advice he gave Ray and Dave Davies...**

**“**LAST YEAR would have been The Kinks' 50th anniversary. There's no question that The Kinks, if Dave had been in better shape physically, and they'd managed to get together before Pete Quaife died, they would have been the only band that could have done a tour with all the original members. They could have gone to America. I've said this to Dave and to Ray whenever I had the chance, usually in emails: 'You have no fucking idea!' I don't think they've really played the States. 'You could go and do pub gigs - that's all the Stones do - to fucking stadiums full of people. The love, respect passion and joy you'd get would just be monumental. Apart from that, you'd come back multi-millionaires!"



**How did you feel about that?** It was exciting to see. I've been disparaging about Roger here, so I should say it's been a job for me these past few years to get to a place where he and I are more like creative equals. He's much more considerate to me than I used to be to him.

**Do you see each other socially?** No, we never have and I doubt we ever will. Our families are very, very different. If he hadn't stayed with his wife, we might have spent a bit more time together, but I doubt it.

**T**OWNSHEND TURNS 70 on May 19: he is just over a year younger than Daltrey. In the afterword to *Who I Am*, Townshend writes self-deprecatingly about the ageing process. "I am growing old of course," he noted (then still a mere 67). "But I'm still in the early stages of disintegration."

**Is that still the case?** It feels like an ongoing process. It's very strange, because the signals that you get are the ones you're familiar with from reading about people who preceded you.

**Like what?** In my case, my memory is excellent. It's not about losing my keys or forgetting the name of a composer. It's about being on a country walk with your dog and there's a stile. You get to the top of it and you're going to jump down and you realise that if you do, you might break your leg. The first sign I had of it was when I fell off a bike, back in 1991, on the Isles of Scilly. I know now that if such an accident happened, it would probably kill me. I'd need new hips, new knees, new this, new that. You're reminded of being older through the things you can't do, more than the things you can.

**Are you surprised you've made it this far?** Yeah, I should be dead. I had a period in '80/'81 where I was experimenting with extreme drugs. I was very, very depressed, overworked. I thought about this recently, when Steve Strange died. I adored him. I went to his club once, with Ronnie Wood's ex-wife. I ended up taking something, or being injected with something. I OD'd. My driver took me to hospital. They gave me one of those big adrenalin injections. I woke up with this fucking six-inch needle in my chest. They should've called the police, really. But anyway. So I've actually died, nearly died.

**Keith and John aren't with us, though. How do you remember them?** Roger's done this sequence, which is in the *Quadrophenia* show, where he brought them back from the dead. There's this bit where we do "Bell Boy" and Keith appears on screen and sings his part. And on "5:15", John's extraordinary bass solos that he did in 2002... That's kind of how I've been remembering them. But I have special memories of both of them. The main one of Keith is in his last years. I set him up in a flat, the one he died in. Every night at 11



Taking a Detour: Townshend in the pub, 1981



Moon and Entwistle during the filming of *The Rock'n'Roll Circus*, Stonebridge Park Studios, London, December 10, 1968

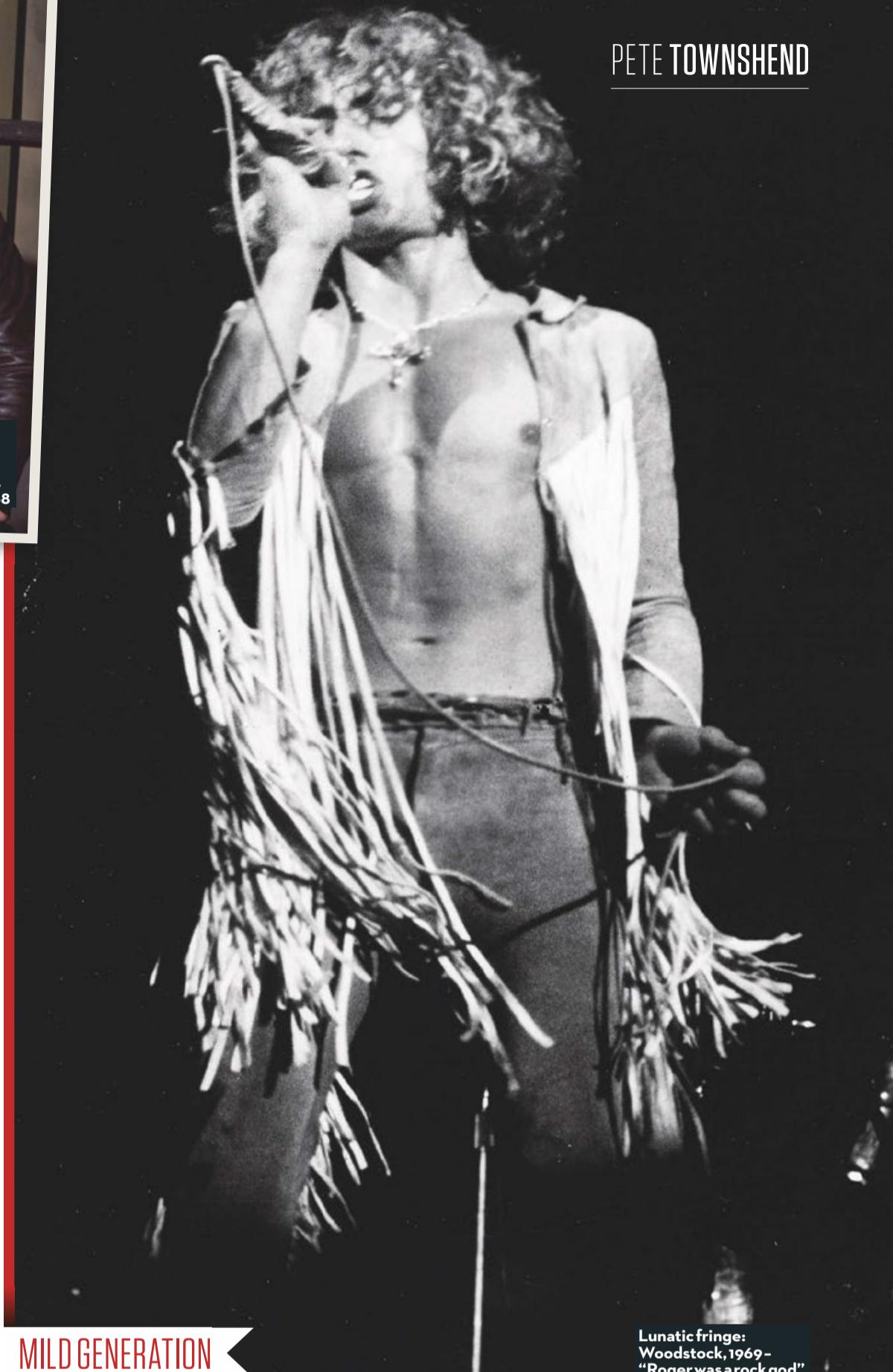
he'd ring me up. He was the first man to say to me, "I love you." With John, it's our childhood together. He never changed. I remember being in my parent's house in Acton, rehearsing. We both had little amplifiers, probably four-watt ones. My grandmother, who I hated, came in and went, "What a fucking row! Turn it off!" I got my little blue amp and threw it at her, shouting "Fuck off!" She ducked and it hit the door frame and shattered. She glared at me and shut the door. I look at John. He had this characteristic of rubbing his nose with his finger and just went [*Pete rubs the side of his nose with his index finger*], "Nice one..." That was John and to this day, that's how I remember him.

**Do you have a key memory of Roger?** My big moment with Roger was at Woodstock. He'd grown his hair long. His wife had suggested this. She'd also suggested that, to accentuate his rather wooden movements, he wear a shawl. So he had a hippy shawl with bits hanging off it. He had this chamois leather coat made, with strands on it. [Director] Mike Wadleigh lit Roger and I with single spotlights. This was about four in the morning. I'm on my knees, playing, and I look over at Roger and he looks like a god. He looks beautiful. He looks happy, he looks kind. That's when everybody in the band said, "Oh, fuck. We've actually got a singer, a star. Someone who's going to carry us."

**So what about now? What does an average day entail for you?** I always like, if I can, that there be something creative involved in it. Often it's business. Music licences, tax matters, staff, property. The average day would be to get up, see Rachel – we sleep in separate rooms – spend time with the dogs, then get into the day, after about 8.30. I spend about an hour writing, then that would bleed into whatever other creative work I was doing. I'm working on a libretto. So I might do a bit of that. I'm still doing quite a lot of archive work. Have lunch. Might read a bit, or work in my studio.

**Do you think much about your legacy?** Yeah, and I get quite angry about that. Probably due to my days at Faber, I remember Eliot's letters, and Ted Hughes: what do we do with *The Iron Man* from the Young Vic production? That kind of thinking. And the way Ahmet Ertegun and Jann Wenner wanted to turn the Rock'n'Roll Hall Of Fame into a legitimate museum of music. It's been on my mind that bits of shit I think are valueless might be interesting to people in the future. On the other hand, I don't particularly want to honour the bits of shit. What we all know as writers is once something is about to hit the public, it's a good idea to edit it.

**In the instance of Jimmy Page; his focus on curating Zeppelin's archive has been to the exclusion of making new music. Do you ever worry about falling into a similar trap?** It may appear thus, but it may be unbeknown to us that Jimmy is writing music. The problem that he would have is that everybody wants him to play



## MILD GENERATION

# WHO'S ANGRY?

**In early March, Roger Daltrey told *The Standard* newspaper, "There's not enough anger in modern music." Does his bandmate agree..?**

**"** I DON'T KNOW. We shall see. I don't know whether it's really appropriate to let one's anger out these days. There are great difficulties that we face today that we didn't face maybe 20 years ago. I just don't know that music has that function in quite the same way any more. It's not always useful. But I think as a songwriter, it is appropriate. Rap has had it for the last 25 to 30 years, since

Public Enemy. What could be more honest than that? I remember hearing the first Chuck D song and thinking, 'This is the new rock'n'roll.' Then discovering that Nik Cohn had discovered it first in New Orleans and sent me a load of stuff. That was two or three years before Public Enemy. The rap scene in New Orleans was vicious, the lyrics were extraordinary. In a way, the anger in early rock stuff, in songs like 'My Generation', was soon countered by the light musical comedy of songs like 'I'm A Boy' and 'Pictures Of Lily' and 'Happy Jack' in The Who's career. Maybe Roger's talking about the anger in the actual performance. But I think again, maybe Roger's not looking in the right place. There's a lot of heavy guitar bands, death metal and heavy metal, still have anger in them."

Lunatic fringe: Woodstock, 1969 – "Roger was a rock god"

# “IT WAS SUCH A BIG AUDIENCE...”

As The Who prepare to play Hyde Park for a fourth time, Pete Townshend reflects on a significant previous engagement in the royal park...

“**W**E’VE got The Who at Hyde Park, which in a sense is an echo of when we started getting drawn back together seriously for the first time by that Live8 concert, which Pink Floyd were on as well. It didn’t have the same effect for them, but it definitely drew us back together. Why? Because it was such a big audience. And although it was really just me and Roger on the stage – we didn’t even have Zak [Starkey] – it was so incredibly well received. So we just felt a real confidence. I suppose we’d always taken the American audience for granted: yeah, you can always get a plane, go over to America, do a load of shows and come back with a cheque. But on our home turf, it had always been a bit tougher. The idea that we could tour in the UK and compete with artists like Coldplay or Oasis, which we can’t, commercially speaking. But certainly the bands that had streaked away from us when we stopped in ’82, like Springsteen and U2, we could never compete with them. But we did suddenly realise we had a really, really solid arena in the UK.”

*The Who play Barclaycard Present British Summer Time, Hyde Park on Friday, June 26. [www bst Hyde Park.com](http://www bst Hyde Park.com)*



**Closer than before:**  
Rog'n'Pete,  
backstage on the  
2006-07 tour

“Stairway To Heaven” for the rest of his life in the same way people want me to do what I’ve been doing all my life. So there’s that feeling, yep. For me, though, I write all the time. I have record companies who are committed to support my solo catalogue with Universal and also to provide seed money for any new project I want to do.

**Do you have any ambitions left?** I shouldn’t bother to pretend to compete with Madonna, Lady Gaga and Pharrell Williams. I should just do whatever the fuck happens. I’ve been writing music for this piece that I’ve been working on which I’m describing as a possible installation since 2008. It has a working title of ‘Floss’. I want to allow myself an art school moment. When I left art school to be in the band, I walked away from my passion at the time, which was kinetic sculpture. I tried to imagine that The Who would be like an art school project. In some ways it was, but in other ways you’re dealing with other human beings who have their own stories and needs.

**Will you have time for another Who album?** I don’t know. It may never happen. Not because Roger and I wouldn’t have time to knock it out, and I think I could write songs we would love to play together. But what’s the point of doing it if we’re not going to go out and plug it and tour it and stand by it? We have to fight what every artist our age fights. Which is, we go and do a show and we’re only doing it ‘cos our record company wants us to do the shows so we can be seen to be supporting out new work and our audience don’t want to hear the new work. They only want to hear the old work. This starts for artists with their third album, as a rule.

**Can you envisage a day when you stop entirely?** No. I went through that when my hearing started to get really bad, which is one of the reasons I left the band [in 1982]. But more recently, I’ve had help with my hearing. I’m quite surprised that my hearing is as good as it is. I do wear a hearing system.

**Do you see a point where you’ll retire?** I might do a Peter Blake and retire from making money. That’s what he did, about 10 years ago. “I’m retiring, but I’m not retiring from painting. I’m retiring from painting to make a living.”

**Robert Wyatt has announced his retirement... Has he? That’s a pain in the arse. I love his albums...**

**...and Clapton told *Uncut* last year, “The road has become unbearable.”** Yeah, but he sold his Gerhard Richter for \$40m so he can keep his yacht for a few more years. It’s not just about money. I know what Eric means, but... there’s two different things. There’s retiring from touring and retiring from performing and the road.

**Are you saying The Who are retiring from touring; but that’s not the same as retiring from performing or releasing new music?** Or travelling to perform. That’s correct. If Roger and I wanted to do a series of shows in Paris for some reason, we would get on a plane and do it. I just think what we probably won’t do is what we’ve just done. Which is sell 65 shows to AEG so they take the burden of organising it and we just show up. It’s a bit like being in the army.

“Roger exalts the memory of The Who in a way that I don’t”  
TOWNSHEND

me. You keep changing your fucking mind. So what I recommend is, don’t make any announcements. Keep it in your head.” It’s good advice.

**Going back to *Quadrophenia*. What do you think Jimmy would make of Pete Townshend, age 70?** There are a few Jimmys out there. The elegance of it is that we don’t know what happens to Jimmy, you leave it to the audience. Did he jump off, did he not? This leads people to see themselves as having tremendous propriety over *Quadrophenia*. They want to finish it themselves. Bill Curbishley is one of those. Roger might be one of those, too. I hear what they think of me, which is not particularly good. “Let me take Jimmy into Chapter 2, you cunt...” As a creative individual, I flirted with my audience, which is not what I wanted to do at all. Of course, the audience have the right – and other writers and creative people have the right – to take Jimmy and do whatever they like with him. That’s really how I wanted to deal with this. To be able to freely license everything that I’ve done to other people and other creatives to do what they will. Because I know it will happen when I die. I may as well start now. **①**

**Classic *Quadrophenia*** is out on Deutsche Grammophon, June 9; the world premiere takes place at the Albert Hall, July 5

# ALBUMS



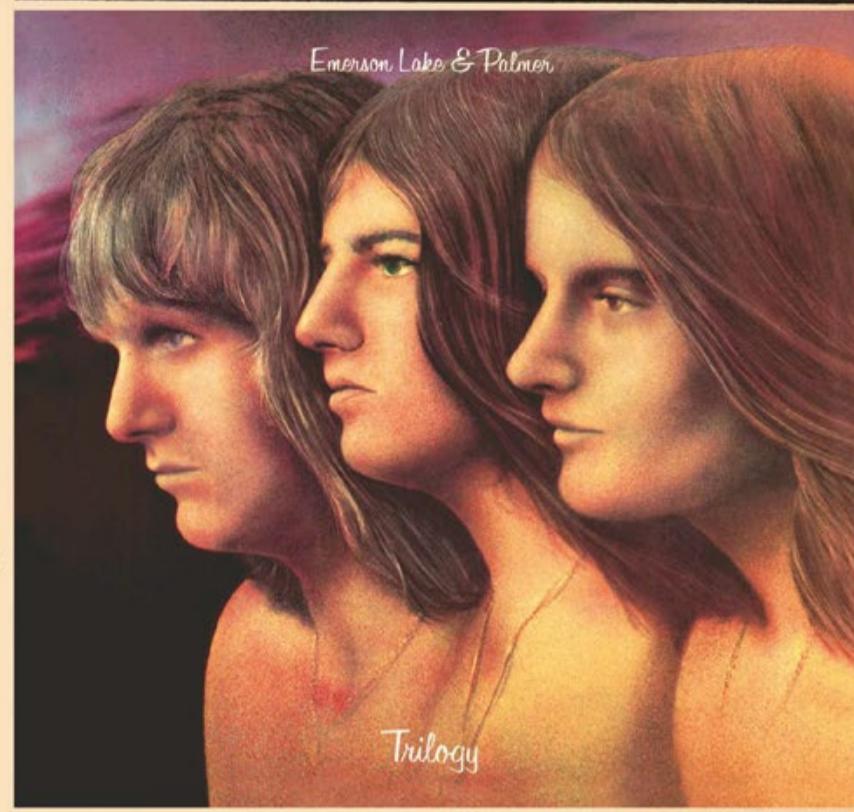
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# Primitive Painters

BY FELT

**Band in transition: a pair of Brummie aesthetes finally pen an indie hit, then one of them leaves. “It was this great statement,” says enigmatic frontman Lawrence. “It was going to be massive!”**

**Y**OU ALWAYS HEAR stories about people in the studio that are blown up out of all proportion,” reflects Felt’s frontman, Lawrence, as he considers the circumstances surrounding the making of his band’s greatest single, “Primitive Painters”. Anyone who had followed Felt’s progress since they formed in Birmingham in 1979 was all too aware of the uneasy relationship between the obsessive Lawrence and his classically trained chief collaborator, Maurice Deebank – “an odd couple”, in the words of the band’s long-serving drummer Gary Ainge. Together, Lawrence and Deebank shaped the band’s musical aesthetic – intricate guitar filigree and enigmatic lyrics – but “Primitive Painters” documents a band in transition. Along with parent album, ’85’s *Ignite The Seven Canons*, it marks the end of Lawrence and Deebank’s professional relationship while also inaugurating a new Felt lineup, featuring keyboard player Martin Duffy (later of Primal Scream) and bassist Marco Thomas.

The success of “Primitive Painters” – an Independent Chart No 1 and a rare appearance in Peel’s Festive 50 for the band at No 7 – tantalisingly suggested an upswing in the band’s fortunes. “It had that epic quality to it from the first time we played it,” recalls producer Robin Guthrie, whose then-partner, fellow Cocteau Twin Elizabeth Fraser, added additional vocals to

the track. Meanwhile, Lawrence reveals he nurtured grand ambitions for the song. “I wanted it to be like Wild Swans’ ‘Revolutionary Spirit’ or Joy Division’s ‘Atmosphere’, songs that were too big to hold on 7-inch,” he explains. “‘Primitive Painters’ was this great statement. It was going to be massive!”

*MICHAEL BONNER*

**LAWRENCE:** After [1984’s] *The Strange Idols Pattern*, I wanted to continue with [producer] John Leckie, but he said the songs all sounded the same. We tried to get Tom Verlaine, but he said he didn’t want to get involved as there was no arrangement in the songs. It was a good criticism if you were trying to write conventional songs; but we weren’t. But “Primitive Painters” is perfectly arranged, it doesn’t do what Tom Verlaine said at all.

**GARY AINGE:** Lawrence approached Julian Cope once, around the time of the *World Shut Your Mouth* album. I can’t remember him approaching Verlaine, no.

## KEY PLAYERS



**Lawrence**  
Vocals



**Gary Ainge**  
Drums



**Marco Thomas**  
Bass



**Martin Duffy**  
Keyboard



**Robin Guthrie**  
Production

**LAWRENCE:** The Cocteau Twins got in touch with us in early 1984, and Robin [Guthrie] said, “We’re doing a small UK tour...” It was five days in April. They took us with them in their minibus and they paid for everything. They were very kind to us, and we became great friends.

**ROBIN GUTHRIE:** I saw them play at Kingston Poly, at the time of *Crumbling The Antiseptic Beauty*, the first album. Beautiful record, no fucking cymbals, what a band. They blew me away. We became friends and we did shows together.

**LAWRENCE:** In late ’84, I took an ad in Virgin asking for a guitarist: “Do you want to be a rock’n’roll star?” This was one of the periods where Maurice had left the band.

He used to leave all the time. Me and Gary would carry on for a few months, then we’d come to a low point and go round Maurice’s house. We’d stay up all night with him and plead with him to come back. Anyway, I took the advert in Virgin, and a guy who worked there said, “I know this great keyboard player...” This was Martin Duffy.



Felt in 1985: (l-r)  
Lawrence, Marco  
Thomas, Martin  
Duffy, Gary Ainge

**MARTIN DUFFY:** I got Lawrence's number from my friend at Virgin. I rang him up and went to his house and that was it. I was 16. At that age, you have no fear. I loved Felt. I didn't think how Lawrence had got all these eccentricities.

**MARCO THOMAS:** Duffy joined just before me. Lawrence and Maurice came from Water Orton, a mile and a half from where I used to live. Lawrence was a bit strange, but he's a regular guy as well. He's got some unusual ideas and with hindsight, it was probably a hindrance to the band. But were it not for Lawrence, nothing would've happened with Felt! As good as Maurice was as a guitarist, it needed Lawrence as the focal point, the guy with the vision.

**LAWRENCE:** Once I got Martin in, we worked on the songs that were on *Ignite The Seven Canons*. In between then and starting the album, Maurice rejoined. He thought a keyboard player would be better for the arrangements. He bought his song, "Elegance Of An Only Dream", and the music for "Primitive Painters". It wasn't fully formed, it was like a cyclical riff. We arranged it together. I put the verses in. Maurice hardly wrote any songs himself. I encouraged him, but either he wasn't interested, or he found it too hard to work on his own. When we wrote together, we would sit opposite each other in my bedroom. Maurice liked the camaraderie of that better than sitting on his own in a cold room trying to come up with songs, which I didn't have a problem with. The poet in the garret was made for me. So

it got to the point where we had 11 days to record and five or six days to mix. I thought, 'It'd be good to work with a musician. Robin seems to know what he's doing in the studio. I'll ask him if he wants to produce us...' So we recorded at Palladium Studios in Edinburgh with Robin.

**GUTHRIE:** I'm fairly sure it was the record company that approached me, Cherry Red. I

**"Lawrence is a very singular man — he told me he was the way he was because his mother slapped him with a fish"**

ROBIN GUTHRIE

learned how to be an engineer and produce at Palladium. The guy who owned the studio, Jon Turner, was the first person that let me touch the knobs and buttons. I'd done sessions, I'd done [Cocteau's debut album] *Garlands*, which I wasn't happy with, and nobody let me touch anything. So that's why Palladium, truth be told. It was cheap as chips, as well.

**AINGE:** Les McKeown from the Bay City Rollers was always there. He'd tell us all these stories about the Rollers' heyday. He was a nice guy. I don't know if he was recording demos, or what.

**DUFFY:** I think the bloke who ran it was Demis Roussos' keyboard player or something.

**LAWRENCE:** Palladium was residential, which is the first time I've done that. I didn't like being away from my own surroundings. I had to have my own room, that was part of it. Palladium was about a 45-minute bus ride into Edinburgh. It was awful. There was a tiny village down the lane. I got attacked by a dog one day. Had to go to hospital, yeah. A wild wolf, it was. And I hated the food. The whole day was geared up to "Is he going to eat or not tonight?" It was always a big deal.

**AINGE:** I remember Lawrence saying to the cook, "We're really fussy eaters." And the cook said: "You've got a choice. Eat it or leave it!"

**LAWRENCE:** Robin thought it was wonderful that all this was going on. He's quite the joker, Robin is. He revelled in my idiosyncrasies.

**GUTHRIE:** Lawrence is a very singular man. A very particular man, a very likeable man. He once told me he was the way that he was because his mother had slapped him with a fish. He was quite driven for his work. He had a strange old relationship with Maurice.

**AINGE:** It was always rocky with Lawrence and Maurice. They just couldn't get on. Maurice was classically trained. He could play Spanish guitar and he wouldn't listen to Lawrence; he



The odd couple:  
Lawrence and  
Maurice Deebank  
circa 1984

• couldn't listen to someone who knew nothing about theory! They needed each other, but they couldn't admit it.

**GUTHRIE:** Maurice was a lovely guy. Very tall, a bit gangly, a little uncomfortable in his own skin. But as a guitar player? Extraordinary. He played with his fingers classical style, which I hadn't heard before. It all worked in context, it was great. Gary playing his drums with no cymbals was kind of irritating. I'd like to think it was a conceptual choice and not just that he'd left them in the back of his car.

**AINGE:** Lawrence hated cymbals. He still hates them! He just wanted that Buddy Holly, "Peggy Sue" sound. Just the side drum.

**LAWRENCE:** The songs were all practised, we knew exactly what we were doing. We set up in the studio, played as live as possible, then added lead guitar and vocals. While I was there, Robin was capturing it all with the engineer. He didn't make any arrangement suggestions at all, 'cause it was all set in stone before. I wouldn't have changed anything. I was very pedantic like that.

**THOMAS:** It was Lawrence's band and it was very much a closed shop. When I joined it was, 'You're the bass player and that's that.' I became a full-blown member after having a chat with Lawrence. He told me I had to buy into it a little more. "Dress like we do." I was a regular jeans and T-shirt guy, whereas Felt wore trousers, western shirts. Belts. Nice shoes. Brogues...

BLEDDYN BUTCHER

## TIMELINE

**April 1984:** Felt support Cocteau Twins on five-date UK tour  
**Late 1984:** Martin Duffy joins Felt; soon followed by Marco Thomas

**Spring, 1985:** Felt begin work on *Ignite The Seven Canons* with Robin Guthrie at Palladium Studios, Edinburgh; Maurice

Deebank leaves Felt shortly after the album is completed  
**September 1985:** "Primitive Painters" and *Ignite The Seven*

Canons released; "Primitive Painters" spends two weeks at No 1 on the Indie Chart  
**December 1985:** The song reaches No 7 in

John Peel's Festive 50  
**June 1987:** A video for "Primitive Painters" is belatedly filmed at the London flat of then-bassist Phil King



**AINGE:** Lawrence had to sign something to say he wouldn't interfere with the mix. They locked him out of the studio when we finished so they could get on with it.

**LAWRENCE:** I had to sign a contract to say I wasn't allowed at the mixing. Because I was in control of every asset of the band, I had a comment on everything, even a shoelace. I was obsessed and I think Robin thought it'd be too overbearing for him. If he was going to produce, he'd want to produce it his way.

**GUTHRIE:** I don't remember that, that's just silly. I think what has happened is, as I'd been working with Lawrence, all the time he had his hand on the vocal fader, and every time I turned it up so he could hear what he was singing, he pulled it down. He wanted his voice swamped in reverb and lost in the mix.

**LAWRENCE:** What Robin did as a producer has come to haunt me the rest of my life. He submerged us in a murk of effects. When I finally got my tape [of the album] I was beside myself with anguish. So when we decided "Primitive..." should be the single, Robin said, "It'll have to be remixed." I said, "I'm coming, too." I went with him to Barry Blue's studio in Camden. Blue had some hits in the '70s, he was like a teenybopper. Anyway, we spent an afternoon there and we remixed it together. We should've just done an EP with Robin, one of them being "Primitive...", that would've been the best outcome.

**GUTHRIE:** In retrospect, I probably should've bowed more to what Lawrence wanted, but I was interested in the new sounds we could make with the equipment. I was quite young, and naïve about producing. I wanted things done my way.

**THOMAS:** "Primitive Painters" got a great reception. It was the pinnacle. It's such a shame that Maurice left. He'd met this Spanish girl only weeks before we went up to Scotland. They fell in love and decided to get married.

**LAWRENCE:** When we delivered him back to his flat in Birmingham, he got out the van and said, "I'm finished now. Yeah, that's it. I'm finished." I knew he meant it.

**AINGE:** He went to live in Barcelona. I saw him last in the mid-'90s. It was weird, he told me he'd been playing Felt and never realised how good it was. He was saying we should reform! But I haven't seen him since. Tell him to get in touch!

**DUFFY:** I'd heard he came back to Birmingham to teach guitar. Someone heard he worked in a factory and had an accident. But these are just rumours. He's in a monastery in Birmingham? How many monasteries are there in Birmingham?

**LAWRENCE:** I'm really proud of the song, I'm really proud that Maurice got his moment. I'm proud of the fact both Liz and Robin are all over it. That's really nice. I suppose it was the high point of the first days of Felt. Wasn't it? ①

*Lawrence is remastering Felt's back catalogue for future release. Robin Guthrie & Mark Gardener's Universal Road album is out on Soleil Après Minuit*

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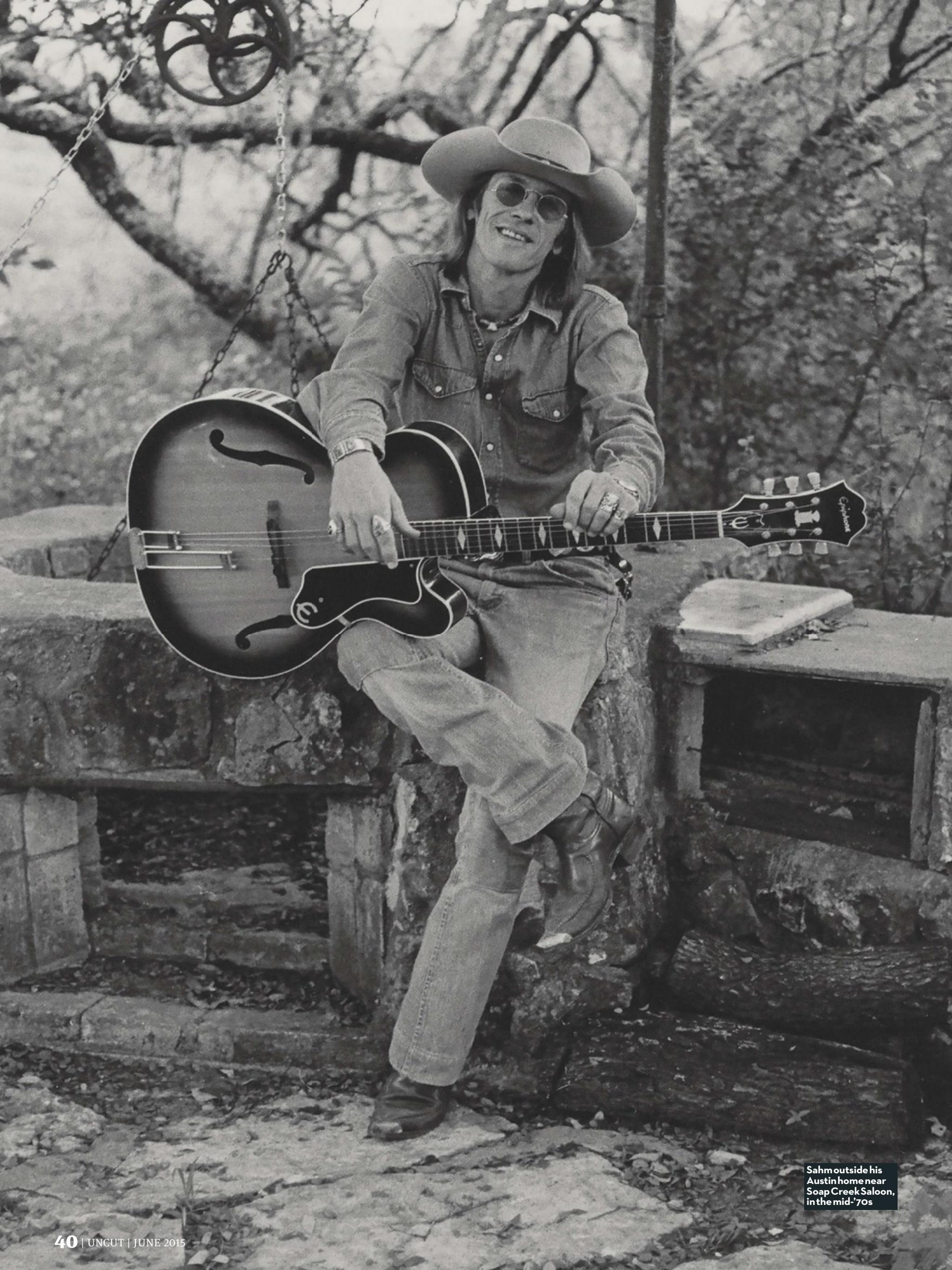
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Sahm outside his Austin home near Soap Creek Saloon, in the mid-'70s

# The child prodigy who appeared with **HANK WILLIAMS.**

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# **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

# **it's DOUG SAHM!**

**Story:** Jason Anderson | **Photograph:** Nelson Allen

**D**THE WORLD DIDN'T always cast a kindly eye on a genuine Texas groover like Doug Sahm. That was most certainly true of the lawmen in Corpus Christi, who abruptly halted the original heyday of the Sir Douglas Quintet with a pot bust in 1966. The band had been put together in San Antonio two years before by producer

and impresario Huey P Meaux. After Meaux gave Sahm a bunch of singles by British Invasion acts and instructed him to "write something that sounds like that", the singer and guitarist responded with "She's About A Mover". With its garage-rock gusto, two-step conjunto rhythm and shameless lifts from Ray Charles' "What'd I Say," Sahm's first and only US Top 20 hit was less of a Beatles forgery than a savvy synthesis of his hometown's many indigenous musical styles. It was also an early indication of the Quintet leader's career-long reluctance to settle in any single one of them for long. "Musicians Face The Music – La(w) La(w)," crowed the headline in *The Corpus Christi Times* the morning after the bust. Their efforts yielded two joints, although that could have been enough to put away the musicians for seven to ten years.

"We had to cut our hair because of that bust," says Augie Meyers, Sahm's boyhood pal, Quintet keyboardist and faithful cohort. "When we went before the judge, the judge said, 'You can't come into my courthouse because you got long hair. But before you cut your hair, my daughter wants a picture with you – she's a big fan.'" The judge's daughter must've been pleased because the young musicians only got three years probation.

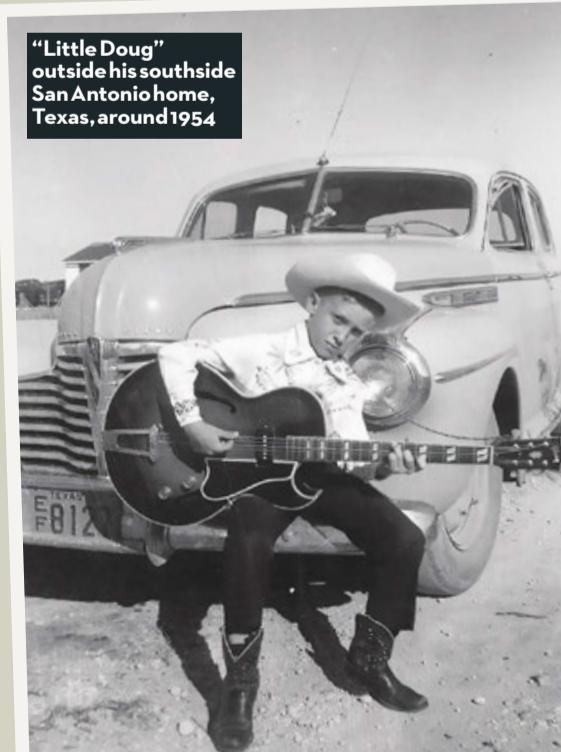
Then there was the rough business between Sahm and some badge-wearing hippy-haters at a Mexican restaurant in San

Antonio in 1973. Though they didn't catch Sahm with any illicit substances, the incident resulted in the destruction of a prized antique violin and a nasty shiner. (Calling the officers "pig-fucking cocksuckers" was probably not such a hot idea.) It also prompted his move to Austin, a city he'd help turn into a musical capital. By the time of his death in 1999, Sahm stood in far better stead among the people of Texas, so much so that Austin city officials named a hill in a downtown park after the late singer in 2008. (Some old friends noted with amusement that it was located on the highest ground along the river.) Other Texans have even come to regard the groover as the state's quintessential musical icon, with apologies to Willie Nelson, of course. More surprising is hearing Meyers talk about the flak that he and Sahm caught from people you'd expect to be a little more simpático.

"Back in the '50s, me and Doug used to go over to a friend's house and Johnny Cash would be sitting on his couch because he was seeing his sister," says the 75-year-old. "Johnny Cash would say, 'Hey, man, you got any reds? You got any yellow jackets, any black mollies?' We said, 'No, we don't do no pills, but here's this joint.' And he said, 'Oh... I don't do drugs.'

"Years later, me and Doug would go to Nashville and all these people would look at us strange," he drawls. "They had white belt buckles and big Elvis pompadour hair and our hair was just straggly and long. We'd get in the studio with a couple of these Nashville people and they'd say, 'Man, you want some white lightning?' And we said, 'Well, we don't drink.' 'No, these are acid pills.' We said, 'We don't do that, but you want a joint?' They'd go, 'No, we don't do drugs.'

"Our thing was everybody had their own kick going – don't kick us and we won't kick you. But it wasn't that way with a lot of people."



"Little Doug" outside his southside San Antonio home, Texas, around 1954

Freewheelin' friends: Bob Dylan and Doug Sahm, photographed in 1966

THANKFULLY, IT'S EASIER to find a more appreciative and understanding brand of folks nowadays. Sixteen years after Sahm died of a heart attack in a New Mexico hotel room at the age of 58, his circle of admirers is heading into an expansion phase. One reason is a new documentary that premiered at SXSW in March and heads into wider circulation later this year. Directed by Joe Nick Patoski – a veteran Texan journalist who first befriended Sahm in 1973 – *Sir Doug And The Cosmic Texas Groove* relates the colourful saga of a maverick whose talents spanned a remarkably disparate array of genres and who counted Bob Dylan and Jerry Garcia among his closest compadres yet whose own fame largely failed to extend beyond the borders of the Lone Star State. That said, Sahm was huge in Scandinavia, a fact that rates as just one strange detail in a history that teems with unlikely detours, missed chances and flukey triumphs. "If he wasn't so good musically," says Patoski, "you could look at him like some kind of Forrest Gump."

Indeed, Sahm's life took an unconventional trajectory not long after he was born on November 6, 1941. The younger of two sons in a working-class German-American family, Sahm impressed his non-musical parents with his precocious devotion to western swing music and his aptitude for the fiddle and the triple-neck steel guitar. At age six, the child prodigy performed the Sons Of Pioneers' "Teardrops In My Heart" on a local radio show and went on to appear on Louisiana Hayride, the same programme that launched Elvis Presley. At 11, he played with Hank Williams Sr and a relative of Sahm's took a snapshot of the boy sitting on the singer's lap two weeks before Williams' demise.

Even then, Sahm's musical interests deviated from the country and western enjoyed by most people of his background. After all, the Sahms were one of the few white families in a largely African-American neighbourhood in east San Antonio and their house was only a few hundred yards from a blues joint called the Eastwood Country Club. Sahm would sneak across the neighbouring field and crouch outside the club's window in the



**"He didn't believe in doctors – he had a suitcase of herbs"**

**AUGIE MEYERS**

years before he was brave enough to venture inside.

"Man, they'd open after one at night and everybody would play there," Sahm told *Rolling Stone* in 1968. Thus did Junior Parker and T-Bone Walker become as important to the impressionable Sahm as Bob Wills and Lefty Frizzell.

Sahm and Meyers originally met as 12-year-olds at the store owned by Meyers' family, bonding over baseball cards before learning of each other's additional enthusiasms. As Patoski notes, both youngsters were deeply influenced by the "tri-ethnic" nature of San Antonio's culture as well as the army town's relative openness when it came to racial barriers common in the Southern states.

"When me and Doug were growing up, we hung out with the Spanish people on the West side and we'd be the only white people," says Meyers. "Then we'd go to the coloured section of the town and we'd be the only white people hanging out with the black people. We just loved the music."

San Antonio's crop of young musicians soon felt the impact of rock'n'roll, a revolution spearheaded by such fellow Texans as Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison. Sahm followed suit on spirited early recordings with the Dell Kings, the Knights and other bands he fronted as a teen. The former kid phenomenon again secured local-sensation status in 1960 with "Why Why Why", a slow-dance number performed with the Markays. In 1964, Sahm's Markays and Meyers' band The Goldens opened for a San Antonio show by the Dave Clark Five, one of many British Invasion acts then dominating American airwaves. His own Vox

Continental organ having broken down, frontman Mike Smith was understandably grateful when Meyers loaned his for the headliners' set. (It was an especially lucky break given that Meyers owned the only one in the States.)

In the audience was Huey P Meaux, a Louisiana



The Sir Douglas Quintet: (l-r) Johnny Perez, Frank Moran, Augie Meyers, Jack Barber, Doug Sahm

producer who'd already masterminded hits like Gene Summers' "Big Blue Diamonds" and Barbara Lynn's "You'll Lose A Good Thing". As Meyers recalls, "He saw my band and he saw Doug's band and said, 'Man, both you guys got long hair – why don't y'all put a band together and let's put a record out?'"

It was Meaux's idea to sell the band as a British Invasion act, complete with the aristocratic name of the Sir Douglas Quintet. A bassist who'd played in Sahm's previous bands, Jack Barber didn't think much of the ruse but gave it a shot.

"The Beatles were hitting already so Doug figured, 'Maybe I can do the same thing,'" he says. "So some people thought we were English... at least until some of the Mexican guys in the band began to speak."

When the SDQ appeared on the American TV show *Hullabaloo*, host Trini Lopez blew their cover when he announced that the bogus Brits actually hailed from his home state. What went unmentioned is their hit's

more risqué original title of "She's A Body Mover", inspired by the female half of a frisky couple that Sahm and Meyers once saw dancing at a San Antonio club. The SDQ landed a sizable follow-up hit with "The Rains Came", which made similarly memorable use of Sahm's lusty vocals and Meyers' piercing organ sound, along with the Tex-Mex flavours that were already part of Sahm's recipe. The moptop trappings may have given them the air of a novelty act but Bob Dylan saw something genuine behind the façade and he and Sahm soon became friends. As he told *Rolling Stone* in 2009, "I'd never met anybody that played onstage with Hank Williams before, let along someone my own age. Doug had a heavy frequency, and it was in his nerves. It's like what Charlie Patton says, 'My God, what solid power.'"

**A**UGIE MEYERS FONDLY recalls visiting Dylan in New York during the Quintet's wild days at the end of the '60s. "We'd just ride around eating apples in his limousine," he says (in another age, the keyboardist would play on *Time Out Of Mind* and "Love And Theft"). By that time, Sahm and Meyers had formed a new version of the SDQ in California, having relocated after finishing their probation. From the home in the Salinas Valley that he filled with his wife Violet and their children (including future musicians Shawn and Shandon), Sahm became a heavy presence in a community that was already bustling with displaced Texans like Janis Joplin, Johnny Winter, Steve Miller and Boz Scaggs. As Patoski's doc points out, the Haight-Ashbury scene would've been a very different bag if not for these émigrés. Duly rejuvenated by new friends like the Grateful Dead, Sahm and his band made a remarkable quintet of LPs for Mercury's Smash subsidiary, taking in psychedelic jams, horn-heavy R'n'B, and the breezy pop of "Mendocino", the 1968 ode to a "teenage lover" that returned them to the charts, albeit for the final time. "Mendocino" got us out of debt and back to square one," says Meyers. "But then all of a sudden the music started changing and everyone started coming back to Texas."

Worn out by her husband's peripatetic ways – never mind the sight and smell of the hippies perpetually crashing in



**"Doug had a heavy frequency... it was in his nerves"**

BOB DYLAN

## BUYERS' GUIDE

# Book of Sahms

The very best of Doug's many-headed work

### SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET

#### The Best Of The Sir Douglas Quintet

SUNDAZED, 2000



Avoiding the dodgy live cuts and bogus stereo mixes that are the bane of so many Sir Douglas Quintet compilations, this Sundazed set offers 14 primo blasts of gritty garage oom-pah. Sahm's half-sweet, half-snarl vocals and Meyers' skronking Vox Continental compete for pole position in the original mono mixes of the incomparable single "She's About A Mover" and its fine successor "The Rains Came".

8/10

### SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET

#### The Mono Singles '68-'72

SUNDAZED, 2011



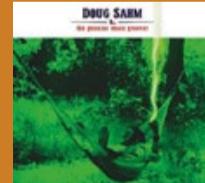
Now out of print, Hip-O Select's Complete Mercury Recordings five-disc box is the most comprehensive document of Sahm's tenure in California. But this more recent collection of ace A-sides and even punchier B-sides is a satisfying demonstration of the SDQ's potency before and after "Mendocino".

9/10

### DOUG SAHM

#### The Genuine Texas Groover

RHINO, 2003



Sahm made the most of the big budgets and big guest stars (Bob Dylan and Dr John included) that distinguished his Atlantic stint. This two-disc Rhino set combines the indispensable 1973 double whammy of *Doug Sahm And His Band* and *Texas Tornado* with previously unreleased gems like the languid extended jam of "Your Friends".

9/10

### SIR DOUG & THE TEXAS TORNADOS

#### Texas Rock For Country Rollers

EDSEL, 1976



As befits the sly title, this Doughead fave is a neglected roots-rock classic from the tail end of his Soap Creek salad days. One highlight is the ragged original of "Give The Key Back To My Heart", later covered by Uncle Tupelo and, more recently, Tweedy.

9/10

### SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET

#### Border Wave

TAKOMA, 1981



Spurred on by the new wave, Sahm, Meyers and company (including 12-year-old Shawn) show up some Stiff competition with a first-rate slate of Vox-powered originals and covers. Includes the first of two sterling versions of Roky Erickson's "You're Gonna Miss Me" that Sahm would record.

8/10

### TEXAS TORNADOS

#### Texas Tornados

REPRISE, 1990



The first album by the Traveling Wilburys of Tex-Mex is a delight from start to finish. As exuberant as the Tornados' stew of rock, country and Tex-Mex is, Sahm rarely sounded more winsome than on renditions of "Laredo Rose" by Austin's Rich Minus and Butch Hancock's "She Never Spoke Spanish To Me".

8/10

### DOUG SAHM

#### The Return Of Wayne Douglas

EVANGELINE, 2000



Named for one of the aliases he favoured when playing low-key shows, Sahm's posthumous swansong is steeped in his lifelong love of C&W. A pedal-steel-laden cover of Dylan's "Love Minus Zero/No Limit" helped ensure Sahm left this world on a high note.

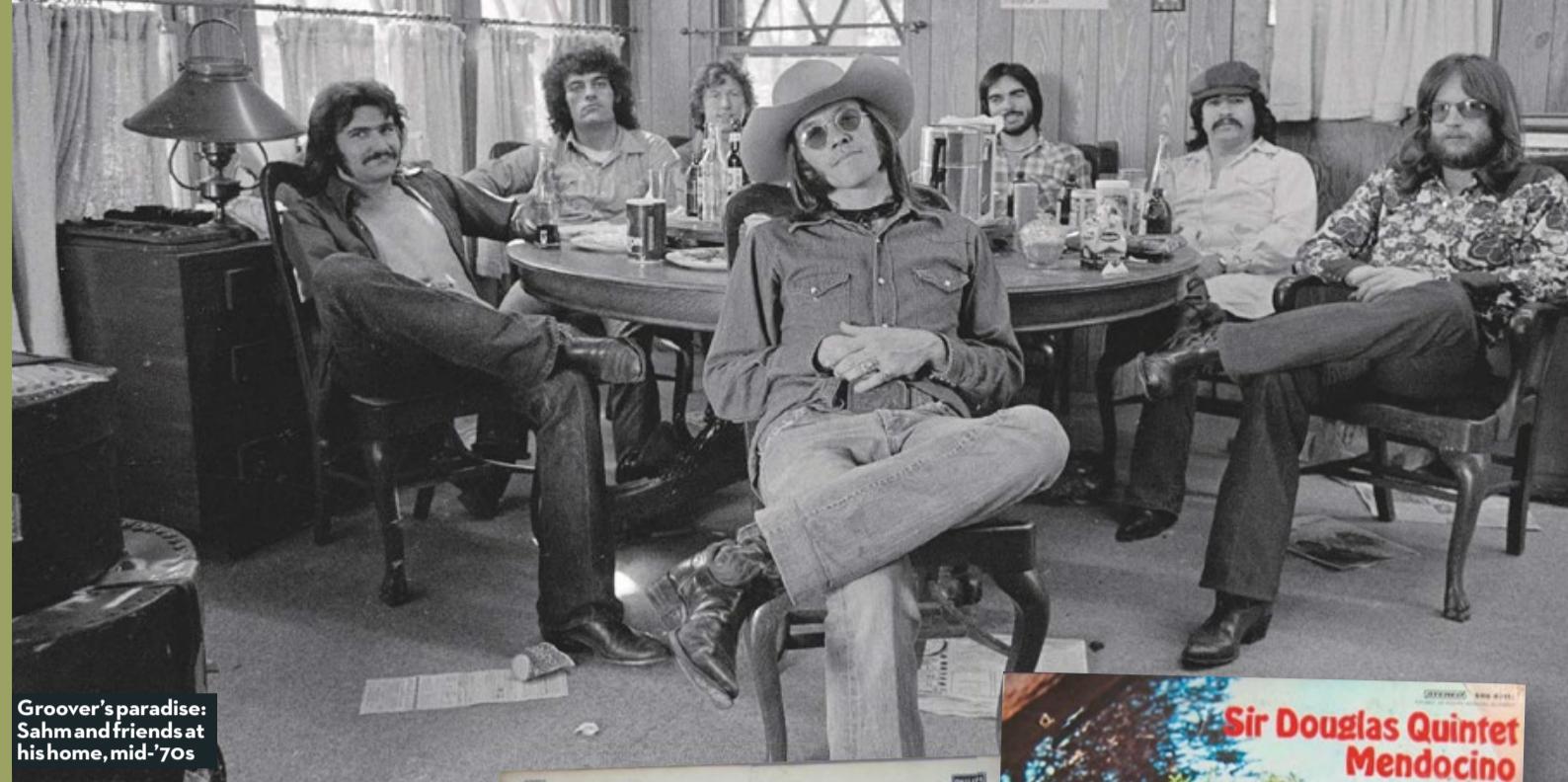
8/10

## THE GROOVE ACCORDING TO DOUG

Son Shawn Sahm reveals the secrets of being a genuine Texas groover

**D**OUG'S GROOVE is such a big part of the documentary and it's true. It all had to be right for him. There had to be the chicks, the food, the smoke. And in Doug's mind, there were all these little evil entities in the world out there trying to stop him from grooving! The non-grooves were everything you think is a bummer, like traffic and bills and the dentist and taxes. Reality freaked Doug out big time! You gotta remember he was a child prodigy so the world kinda revolved around Doug Sahm from a young age. And most of our time was making sure Doug was grooving. If Doug's grooving, then the ball is rolling. If Doug's not grooving, everything comes to a grinding halt! I remember playing in Canada with him and he wasn't grooving. His line was: "If I'm not grooving, how can I expect anyone else to be grooving?" Of course, everything came through, but that was Dad. It wasn't so much the chicks or the smoke, just the bigger picture of what was right in his head and how he needed things to happen.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES, VAN BROOKES



Groover's paradise: Sahm and friends at his home, mid-'70s

the living room – Violet precipitated the Sahm clan's move back, too. Even before those cops laid a beating on him outside that Mexican restaurant, Sahm felt the pull toward Austin, which had become a nexus for cosmic cowboys as well as older Texans who'd already had some success in Nashville but were too unruly for Music Row, like Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings. It wasn't long before Sahm was renting a house down road from the Soap Creek Saloon, a shack-sized honkytonk that became an Austin hotbed. He would also regularly play the Armadillo World Headquarters, the site of a fabled jam with Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh and Leon Russell on Thanksgiving weekend in 1972. Atlantic's Jerry Wexler had also arrived to investigate these new takes on American roots music. By '72, he and Sahm had begun working together on the album that should've turned Sir Doug into true rock royalty. "Doug reminded me so much of St Sebastian," Wexler would later say of his friend. "He had a thousand arrow wounds, and all of them were bleeding talent."

The sessions in New York included heavy-hitters like Dylan and Dr John alongside Sahm loyalists like Meyers and Barber. Another player was accordionist Flaco Jimenez, a pal from San Antonio's barrio who'd be one of many giants of Mexican-American music Sahm would introduce to wider audiences (Sahm's affinities had already fostered much confusion about his own ethnicity – in 1971, *Rolling Stone* somehow named him "Chicano Musician of the Year").

Released under the name of Doug Sahm And His Band in 1973, the star-studded result was a true melting pot of American musical forms. With its many virtues, it demonstrated both Sahm's warm-hearted, roguish charm and the formidable degree of discipline and dexterity belied by his magpie sensibility. Like the same year's *Texas Tornado* (confusingly credited to "The Sir Douglas Band"), it attracted warm reviews from Sahm's devotees in the music press and precious little attention from the rest of the American populace. One problem was the sheer diversity of styles it contained – as Meyers says, "The people in the record stores didn't know where to rack it." The same dilemma would befall just about every one of the long-



players Sahm made under a variety of guises over the ensuing years, from *Groover's Paradise*, his trippy 1974 homage to Austin, to 1981's *Border Wave*, the Sir Douglas Quintet's enterprising attempt to cash in on the popularity of organised new-wave acts like Elvis Costello & The Attractions and

Joe "King" Carrasco & The Crowns. In the meantime, he'd be usurped in commercial terms by Nelson, his labelmate at Wexler's Atlantic Nashville offshoot. He'd also be surpassed by his friend Freddy Fender, a singer whose early success had been similarly derailed by a pot bust and who had essentially retired to become a mechanic when Sahm badgered him into playing at Soap Creek, and Stevie Ray Vaughan, whose career he helped launch when he brought Wexler to see him play. A fan of the 13th Floor Elevators since seeing their early shows in Austin, Sahm also financed and produced Roky Erickson's first single after his many years of institutionalisation.

The last 15 years of Sahm's career would be marked by further excursions into R'n'B,

blues, country, rock and – most triumphantly – the exuberant Tejano music of the Texas Tornados, the Grammy-winning supergroup that he formed with Meyers, Jimenez and Fender in 1989.

Even when he was being celebrated as an architect of Americana by No Depression acts like the Old '97s and Uncle Tupelo – with whom he cut a version of "Give Back The Key To My Heart", included on the Chicago band's 1993 album *Anodyne* – he couldn't help himself from shifting gears. After cutting a ferocious cover of "You're Gonna Miss Me" with Shawn and Shandon for the 1990 Roky Erickson tribute album *Where The Pyramid Meets The Eye*, he was offered a deal with Elektra by Metallica manager Cliff Burnstein. He revived the SDQ yet again to make a hard-rock album named *Day Dreaming At Midnight* in 1994.

Newly minted Doug-heads who wanted him to revisit the



Sahm gets his groove on

rootsy glories of his Austin days had to wait until *The Return Of Wayne Douglas*, a country album that would see posthumous release in 2000. As Jeff Tweedy says in the new documentary, "You listen to all [his] records and it's obvious he was incapable of following anyone else's plan for him."

**A**NOTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR was Sahm's own tendency to throw a wrench in the works. "I used to shake my head over it," says Patoski, who shared announcer duties at SXSW's Sunday softball tournament with Sahm, a lifelong baseball nut. "If there was ever anyone I knew who was his own worst enemy, it was my friend Doug."

He figures that Sahm was done with letting anyone else call the shots after his time with Huey Meaux, who wasn't exactly upstanding when it came to his charges' earnings. Jack Barber – who quit the original SDQ over money hassles – realised just how cheap Meaux could be when the band made their first trip to New York. "He got one hotel room for all five of us and all our amplifiers and instruments," Barber laughs. "The room was so small, when you stuck the key through the damn door, you broke the window."

Patoski believes that Meaux taught Sahm how to hustle a deal. "So whenever Doug needed money, he'd go get another deal," says Patoski. "But once he got that deal, he'd blow it up because he was onto something else."

During his research for the doc, Patoski was stunned to discover that Sahm did a one-off single with Casablanca Records in the mid-'70s – turns out the singer knew Neil Bogart when the music maven behind KISS and Donna Summer was a singer doing army-base gigs in San Antonio. Similarly unexpected was the extent of the Sir Douglas Quintet's popularity in Scandinavia. Meyers attributes that to a fortuitous deal with the Sonet label in the early '80s that led to a spate of hits with names like "Meet Me In Stockholm", "Train To Trondheim" and "No Way Like Norway". (Sample lyrics: "Meet me in Stockholm, baby, we'll mess around/Take a real slow boat to Helsinki town".) The singer liked to say that the SDQ's popularity in Europe's northern hinterlands "kept the family in tacos". He also cut several blues albums while living on Vancouver Island in Canada. (Sahm famously hated the Texas heat and did whatever he could to escape it.)

All of this was proof of Sahm's restless nature, a quality that could be a liability at times. A veteran of his father's bands since he was 12 – as a three-year-old in 1968, he also graced the cover of *Rolling Stone* with his dad, perched on his knee just like Doug did with Hank – Shawn Sahm recalls a signature moment while getting ready for a performance by Sahm's Last Real Texas Blues Band at the Amsterdam Paradiso in 1997.

"So we're getting ready to go onstage and Dad walks up to me right before we play and he goes, 'Yeah, man, I can't wait to play some rock'n'roll with the Quintet, man! Then I wanna do a country record!' I'm like, 'Ah, shit, I think we have to get this gig done first, Pops.'"

Despite a family history of high blood pressure and heart trouble, Sahm was equally antsy when it came to medical matters. "Doug wouldn't go to the doctor," says Meyers. "I've had a kidney transplant, a cancer operation and a colon operation, but Doug would be at the hospital telling me, 'Don't let 'em cut you! I got some herbs!' The doctors would be like, 'Herbs?' 'Yeah, man, I got a guy in Frisco who's got the greatest herb pills – it'll heal you, Augie!' He didn't believe in doctors – he had a suitcase with about 45 bottles of herbs, pills and vitamins."

Jack Barber noted a change in Sahm in his later years, especially after he quit smoking pot. "I don't know if this could've been a sign," says the bassist, "but he told me,

## GREAT WESTERN

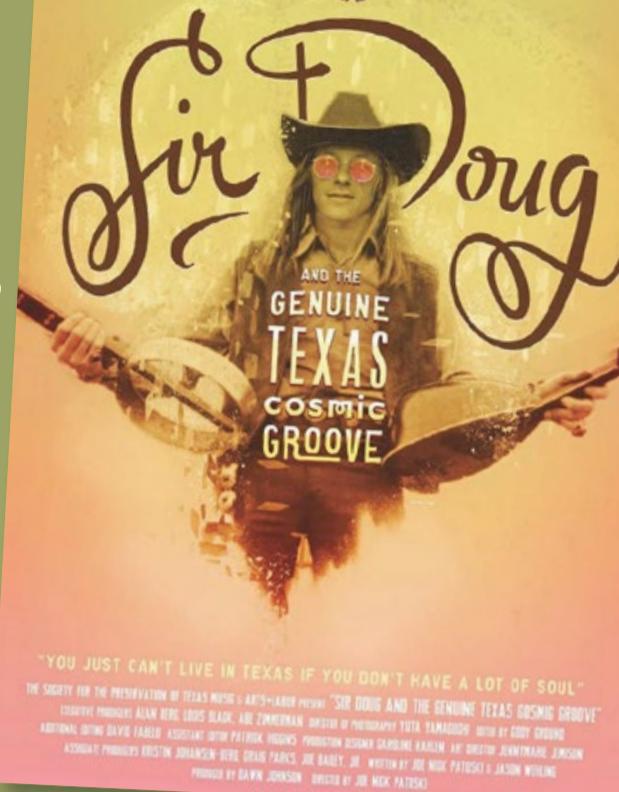
# "20 varieties of weed..."

## *Sir Doug's director on his new Sahm film*

**J**OE NICK PATOSKI's motive for making a documentary about Doug Sahm couldn't be purer. "He brought me so much joy as a music writer and just one-on-one as a friend, I felt obligated to do some payback," says the director of *Sir Doug And The Genuine Texas Cosmic Groove*, which made its world premiere at SXSW. A Texas journalist turned filmmaker, Patoski has crafted a vivid portrait of Sahm that's remarkably warm-hearted even if it doesn't shy away from the personality traits that left some folks feeling bewildered, flustered, exhausted or all at once. Among those who share their memories are his kids Dawn, Shawn and Shandon, long-time bandmates like Meyers and Jack Barber, and an enthusiastic coterie of friends and "Doug-heads" in the music world.

Jann Wenner fondly recalls Sahm's visits to *Rolling Stone* in San Francisco – "He'd open up his attaché case and there'd be 15 to 20 different varieties of weed." Steve Earle is one of several to reminisce about the half-hepcat/half-hippie patois that was a trademark of the motor-mouthed Sahm – says Earle, "It was always 'man!' and 'cat!'"

Patoski – who has written biographies



"YOU JUST CAN'T LIVE IN TEXAS IF YOU DON'T HAVE A LOT OF SOUL"  
THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF TEXAS MUSIC & ARTS-LABOR PRESENT "SIR DOUG AND THE GENUINE TEXAS COSMIC GROOVE"  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALAN RING, LOUIS BLACK, AND ZIMMERMAN. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY YUTA TANAKA. EDITOR BY ROBBY GROVES  
ADDITIONAL EDITING DAVID FARNELL. ASSISTANT EDITOR PATRICK HODGES. PRODUCTION DESIGN CAROLINE KARLEN. ART DIRECTOR JENNIFER JENKINS  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS ERICSON JOHANSEN, DAVE PARKS. JOE BABEE, JR. WRITTEN BY JOE MICK PATOSKI & JASON WILSON  
PRODUCED BY DAVID JOHNSON. DIRECTED BY JOE MICK PATOSKI

of Willie Nelson and Stevie Ray Vaughan – knew that only a movie could fully convey Sahm's essence. "All I know is the only way to tell the story of Doug Sahm 16 years after his death is you gotta see him and hear him talk," says Patoski. "But most of all you've got to hear his music to understand why people like me think he's so damn important that we sacrifice our lives to tell the story!" Much more of that music was heard at an all-star tribute to launch the movie at the Paramount Theatre in Austin – Patoski says more events may be in the offing. *Sir Doug...* has already had invitations from other festivals and Patoski's waiting to hear if it has a spot in Toronto or Venice before pursuing a wider circulation. "It's got legs, like they say," says the director. "So what the hell, let's see how far we can go."

[www.facebook.com/sirdougfilm](http://www.facebook.com/sirdougfilm)



"I can't do a D chord any more with my left hand – I don't know what's wrong.' He'd say, 'I'm not happy no more, the chicks aren't around.' That was a big motivator: the music, the chicks, the scene. I think he was depressed and didn't know it because he was going through a change in life."

Not long after recording *The Return Of Wayne Douglas*, Sahm died while visiting friends in Taos, NM. More than a thousand people attended his funeral in San Antonio. Shawn Sahm believes the things that held his father back from attaining the level of success of many friends and peers were the same things that inspire admiration now. "What people most respect about Doug is that he did take those musical chances and did what he felt instead of what people thought was right for him," says Sahm, who serves as the keeper of his dad's flame by overseeing projects like

2009 tribute album *Keep Your Soul* and performing with Meyers in the current incarnation of the Texas Tornados.

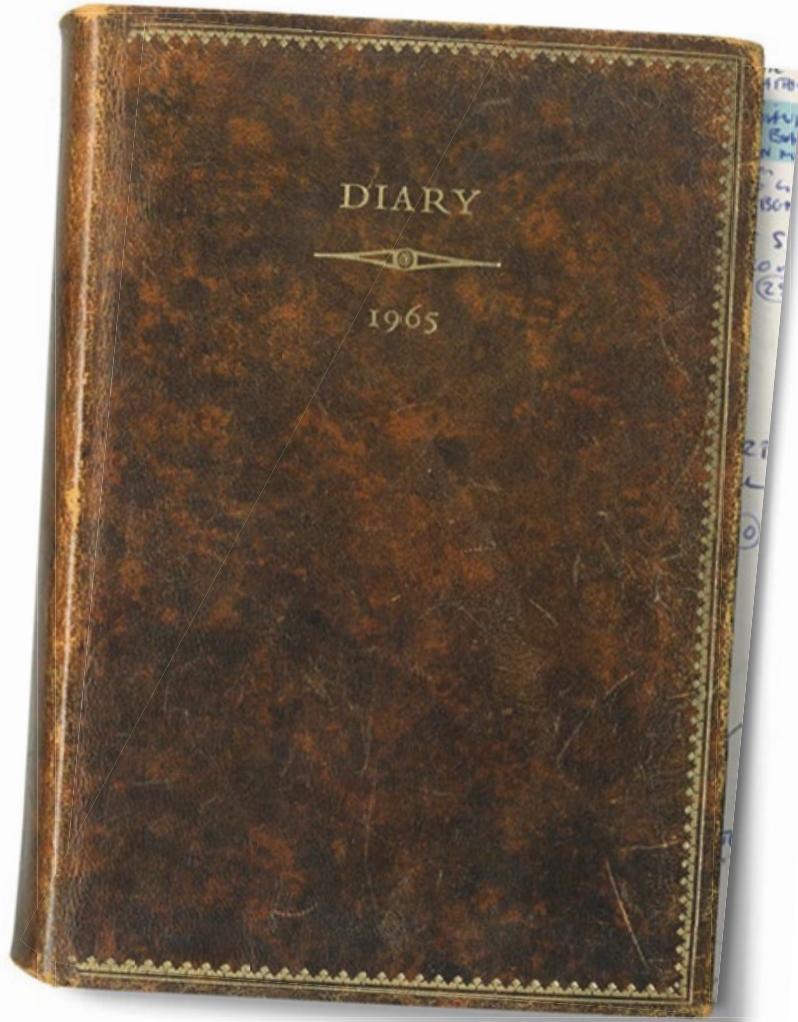
"You know somebody's pretty hip to music when they're anywhere outside of Texas, and they start talking about Doug Sahm. I always think, 'Wow, that's pretty cool – you must be a music fan.' My point is, he seems to be very well-respected by people who really admire music from the heart and people who follow the beat of their own drum and all that. And if you've never heard of Doug Sahm and then you tune in, what a world, right?"

Ron Wood at home,  
1970: "I had high  
ambitions..."

# ANOTE ISAS GOODAS AWINK...

In 1965, a fresh-faced guitarist kept a journal of his experiences in aspiring beat combo The Birds. Fifty years on, that guitarist — RON WOOD, no less — opens up his diary and guides *Uncut* back to a heady time of “gig wagons” and freezing Blackpool digs, Mods and Rockers wars, and gigs with Cliff Outburst & The Hand Grenades. “Great night last night, I was sick twice’ — that’s what I was going to call the book!”

**Story:** Peter Watts  
**Photograph:** George Wilkes







**The Birds, 1965:**  
"Our singles  
were done in  
an afternoon..."

**T**

HERE'S STILL SOMETHING of the teenager about Ron Wood. It's in the way he springs from his chair in greeting, full of eager-to-please enthusiasm and boyish bonhomie, a temperament topped up by plentiful cigarettes and swigs of energy drink.

Wood is meeting *Uncut* to talk about his latest book, *How Can It Be? A Rock & Roll Diary*. It is a facsimile of the diary he kept during 1965, a heady time when Wood – then a mere 17 years old – played guitar in The Birds and took time to keep a diligent record of daily events, wide-eyed at his good fortune for being paid to play rock'n'roll. Fifty years on, you sense some aspects of Wood's personality – as well as his delight at his chosen career – haven't changed that much.

"I brought the diary into the office and they flipped out," he says. "I hadn't really thought about publishing it, but they thought it worth doing." It's a fascinating record of the era. Bar a barren week in October when a single laden with high expectation dropped forlornly from the charts, Wood faithfully scrawled each day's happenings in his small leather diary. In its pages, you can find Wood's eagerness to tour, to play, to learn, to party, to meet his idols – but critically, you also get a sense of what life must have been like for a member of a jobbing band during the second wave of the British R'n'B boom.

The Birds were formed in late 1963 as The Bohemians and then The Thunderbirds, shortening their name after they played Eel Pie Island with Chris Farlowe, whose backing band were also called The Thunderbirds. They released a handful of singles before splitting in 1967, after which Wood barely looked back, playing with the Jeff Beck Group and The Faces on his way to fulfilling a long-held ambition to join The Rolling Stones. "We weren't high-profile, but we were still mixing with the likes of The Who, The Yardbirds, Eric Clapton, because we all came from the same part of

London," he says. "The Stones were simmering in the background, they were the gauge for where I wanted to be."

Today, wearing a pristine white shirt that highlights the deep tan of a rock star's Caribbean winter, Wood holds court from an office opposite the hulking Lots Road power station. Once known as the Chelsea Monster, it's now been rebranded as Chelsea Riverside; soon, it will be crammed with luxury apartments for pocketed investors. Chelsea crops up a fair bit in Wood's 1965 diary, usually as a venue for drinking with the scene's pacesetters – The Who, The Animals, The Pretty Things. But there are also several less glamorous locations, as The Birds' tour itinerary took them to far-flung destinations like Cleethorpes, Aberystwyth, Spennymoor, Truro, Sudbury, Morecambe and Bridgwater. This was the scene within the scene, the rough'n'ready life on the club circuit, travelling by van – or "gig wagon", Wood fondly calls it – around the country, never knowing whether there would be an audience to greet them, or, in some instances, even payment for their trouble at the end of the evening. "Some of the cities in the north were tough, you never knew if you'd get beaten up," he says.

This treadmill kept The Birds busy throughout 1965. As Wood's diary reveals, they toured constantly, released two singles, appeared on TV, drank with Keith Moon and dumped a lawsuit on The Byrds in a cynical bid to raise their profile. Meanwhile, up and down the UK, they also performed alongside Donovan, The Who, The Hollies, The Kinks and Marianne Faithfull – the latter's name being treated to an enormous exclamation mark in the diary of the teenage Wood. "She was a steamer!" he says. Then he lights another cigarette and leads us back to those exhilarating days of art schools, church halls, Marshall amps, Denmark St, Mods, rockers, Motown, future stars and teenage daydreams...

**How did you come across your 1965 diary?** It was a freak find. My brothers Art and Ted kept some old pieces of art from my time at Ealing Art College, as well as the diary, which I thought lost years before. There was so much I'd forgotten, the people, all the gigs in the north and southwest. It seems amazing, this 17-year-old making detailed notes about the crowd and the songs. "Great night last night, I was sick twice". That's what I was going to call the book! It was a great time. We'd go everywhere in a van, crammed in the back, and there were bands doing this all over England, hundreds of miles up and down the country.

**Was there any particular reason why you kept a diary in the first place?** I felt obligated, 'cos a lot of the time I was collecting the money. Even though that wasn't really me, I took that role upon myself and kept a diary to make it easier. That's why there are numbers scribbled in the margins saying how much we'd been paid.

**Tell us about your band, The Birds. What were they like?** I was living in West Drayton by the airport and we were all from the same area. The bass player, Kim Gardner, lived round the corner, the other guitarist, Tony Munroe, lived nearby. The drummer was Peter McDaniels and the singer, Ali MacKenzie, lived over the road. I still see him and we talk fondly of those days. Ali was unkempt with long ringlets like Charles I, and he'd move like Jagger. I was influenced by what Pete [Townshend] and Eric [Clapton]



Ronnie with  
his brother, Art  
Wood, left,  
London, 2004.  
Above: Ronnie  
Wood, 1965  
(courtesy of Ali  
MacKenzie)

We all had a good laugh — the noise got too much outside so we had volunteers to shift the gear inside so that we could continue the show.

Ray, Kris, Salley, Ian, Suzie were all expected — but they all got confused and lost in Oxford.

were doing. Eric didn't move much onstage, but he could feel the music and that's something I wanted. In 1964, we were still putting two guitars and vocals through one amp, but by 1965 we all had amps and that made quite a difference.



and away we'd go. We played all sorts of places, an ice rink up in Spennymoor. It could be surreal, sharing dressing rooms with singers like Dave Berry, one-hit wonders.

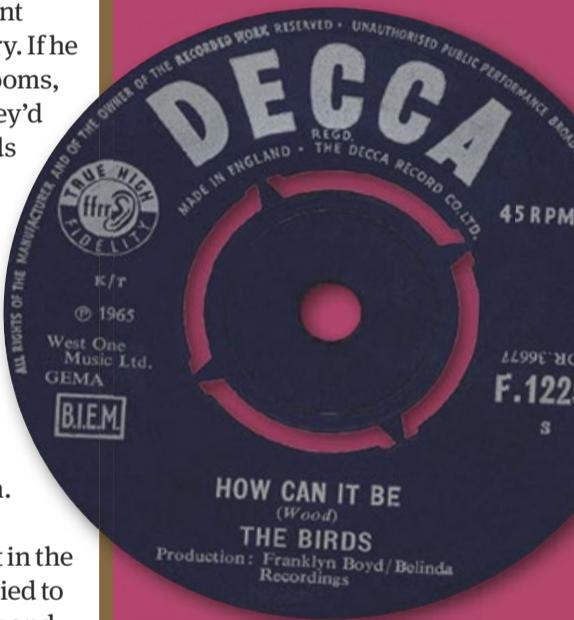
**You mentioned Mods. Would you say you were a Mod band?** There was always fear of the Mods and Rockers clashing at venues. The Rockers were frightening and the Mods were unpredictable, it could get nasty and both groups had a bad reputation. We had a severe Rocker in the band, Kim, the bass player, and a severe Mod, Ali, the singer. I was caught in the middle and looked with amusement at both sides. I tried to

go my own way. I was influenced more by the Beatnik and art school crowd. That was through my brothers. I was always copying them, whether it was art or music, and I copied the way they dressed. Mods and Rockers were interesting, but I didn't want to be either. Clothes were important. Sometimes that was the only money you got from management, clothes money. They'd pass down some cash with the requirement that you had to spend it on new clobber. The Small Faces got paid in clothes half the time. We'd go up to Carnaby St, just one great shop after another. You'd make friends with the guys who worked there and who were often out in the street trying to pull people in. They'd tell you they had the perfect jacket and PJ Proby had just bought one exactly like it, or that Mick Jagger was trying to get this pair of trousers. The other area was Chelsea. We'd go to Hung On You in 1965 or Granny Takes A Trip, and later we went to Alkasura. It was all about who was wearing what and how you could get something nobody else had got. It was important to look good onstage, so if you weren't earning much you had to skimp and save to get the right jacket or trousers and make them last, so you stood out.

**The diary is full of mentions of Leo De Klerk, your manager. What was he like?** Leo was hilarious, full of wonderful dreams for the band. They were all the same, these managers, more like slave drivers, ganging up with

**Where did you get your gear?**  
**Denmark Street?** That was for the big boys. It could get quite hairy there. We went to Jim Marshall's shop in Hanwell. My brother Art went to Denmark Street and that's where he met Ronnie Lane. Ronnie worked in one of the stores, behind the desk, stringing guitars and fixing them. Art used to tell me about a funny character who had this little band. A lot of bands were starting up, the energy was incredible.

**You spent a lot of time touring. Did you find that different regions had different tastes?** In the north, the audience would look at Londoners like we were from another planet. It got tougher the nearer you got to the Scottish border. Glasgow was terrifying. If they didn't like you, you knew about it. Down in the south-west it was like Beatlemania with The Birds, they'd be tearing at our clothes and hair. Some places were just indifferent. You had to work hard to get them off the walls. We were with a promoter, Peter Walsh. He ran the Starlite circuit, a load of different clubs dotted around the country. If he liked you, you'd play his ballrooms, a different one every night. They'd fill the venues with young Mods



“You got one or two takes so you’d rehearse, hone it so it was presentable and then get it down as fast as possible because time in the studio cost money.”

Both singles were backed by Ron Wood compositions, "Next In Line" and "How Can It Be?". He says, "It was important to me, doing my own songs. I was gradually trying to work out how to write songs. One big moment was when the first Philips tape recorder came out so you could put an idea down. You could listen back to what you sounded like, get embarrassed at the sound of your own voice for the first time. That was massive for us."

## QUICK FLIGHT

“I WAS TRYING  
TO WORK OUT  
HOW TO WRITE  
SONGS...”

## Ronnie Wood on The Birds' short-lived recording career

**I**N 1965, THE Birds released a pair of singles – “Leaving Here” and “No Good Without You” – whose progress around the middle section of the chart, Wood chronicles in the diary with teenage anxiety. “The singles were always done in an afternoon, no messing about,” he says today.

Tuesday afternoon and listen to these mad people in the studio, yelling and screaming then playing something and talking about it. That was part of it – everybody was into the idea of sharing their experiences. People like Keith Moon would talk to us, so we got this insight from people who had recorded hits, they took us under their wing, told us to keep going. We were friends with The Who. They would turn up at the Ealing Club and taunt us, singing, “We’re No 1!”, and we’d be onstage sticking our fingers up at them. It was hilarious, a very friendly rivalry. Pete Townshend was really peeved when I got a new amp. Everybody had 4x12 Marshall amps and I got one that was 8x12. That was a big thing, who could play the loudest.

→ the roadies. We were so young we needed a guarantor for anything that required money or insurance, like the gig wagon. We needed him to sign everything and we learnt through error that we put a lot of things in trust to Leo we probably shouldn't have. It's the same old learning curve most bands go through. He had a string of venues, one in Windsor, another in Reading, the Zambezi in Hounslow. He had fingers in a lot of pies, a proper Soho character. The last time I saw him, he was working as a doorman. For the gigs, Leo would get the in. The key was the Soho clubs, like the Flamingo on Wardour Street. If you went over well and got asked back, you'd build a following. That's how Georgie Fame, Manfred Mann, Zoot Money, Brian Auger and Graham Bond did well. If you could get on that circuit, you'd be sure of a good income. It was the circuit slightly above us and occasionally we'd do one night and it would raise the profile, but we never had the in to make it regular. We played some great places. One was Nottingham, where there were these three music venues by the river, and you could wander from one club to another, go and see Wilson Pickett or the Artwoods [Ronnie's brother Art's band] and then socialise afterwards. The Ealing Club was great. It was nicknamed the Moist Hoist. It was so small all the sweat would gather in a tarpaulin under the ceiling and tip on to the audience. We played a lot of art schools and university towns: Loughborough, Reading, Bristol... In most cities there was a good scene. In Manchester, Peter Noone of Herman's Hermits always liked The Birds. He'd even help us unload our equipment. Things like that really helped our confidence. We had the odd big show. We played an *NME* party at the Empire Pool. That was a huge gig. There were three stages and you got to play one song, but you'd be in the dressing room with proper stars like Cliff Richard. We wondered what we were doing there, 'cos we weren't even getting in the papers. You got some weird mixes in the dressing room at those events: Wally Whitten, Anita Harris, Alexis Korner... all on the same bill.

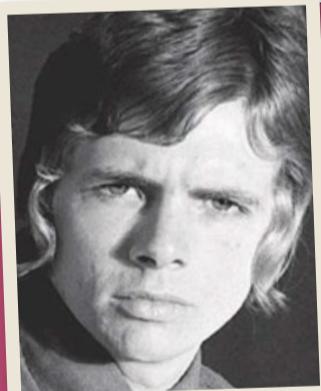
DEZO HOFFMANN/REX

## EYEWITNESS!

“EVERYTHING WAS AN ADVENTURE...”

**Birds** singer **Ali MacKenzie** remembers high-flying days with **Ron and co**

“I WAS IN my first school band The Renegades, with Kim Gardner on bass and Pip Williams on lead guitar, who went on to produce The Moody Blues. One day, in walked these two faces – Ronnie and Tony Munroe. They were an Everly Brothers type duo, singing and playing acoustic guitars, and were looking for a bass player. They asked Kim to join, and then a few days later asked me. Our first drummer was Bob Langham and then we got Pete McDaniel. It was fantastic. We were young, vibrant, spunky, and everything was an adventure, like going up the Amazon, something I'll never

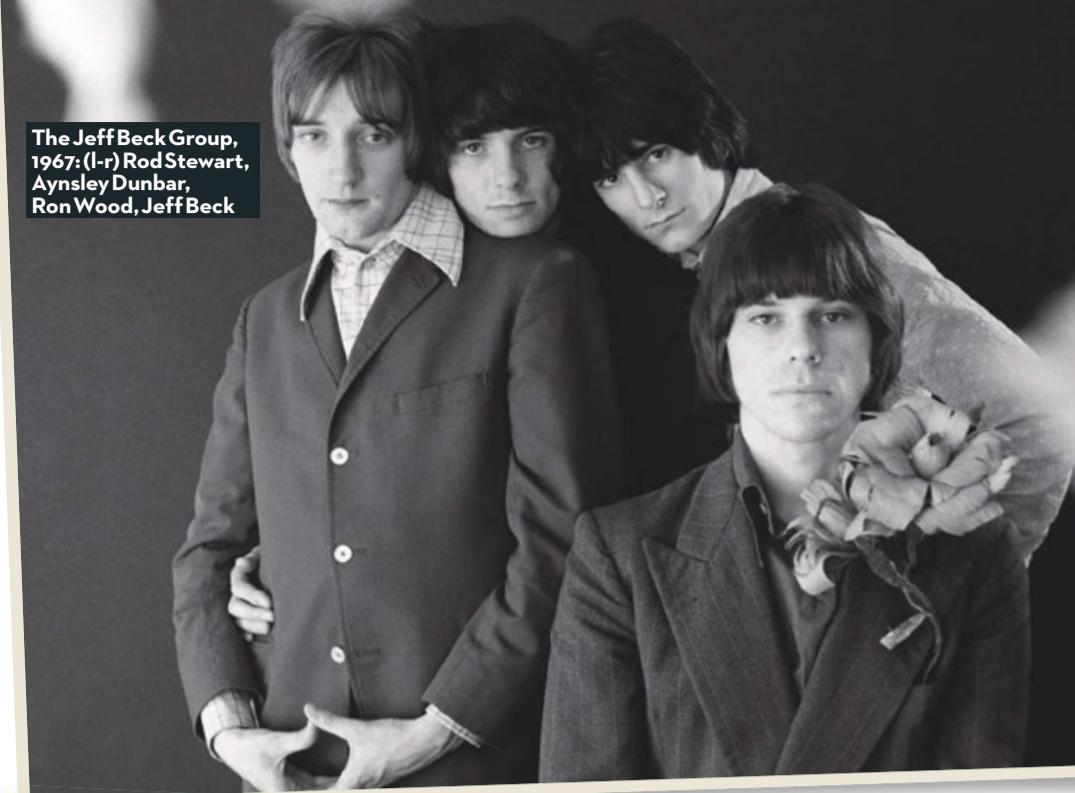


more of a chance, we'd have reaped the benefits. But we made a decision and then we had to get our own gigs, pay for the petrol, pay for hotels – that was a wake-up call. The other mistake we made was not signing with Robert Stigwood, who wanted to manage us. We were young, brash, big-headed, and thought we didn't need another manager.

“Ronnie was a great guitarist. He did phenomenal lead work. He spoke about wanting to be in the Stones many times. Ronnie always said he wanted to be in the Stones, and he always wanted to own a block of flats and call it Wood Villas.”

**Ali MacKenzie** currently plays with **Birdwood**, **Ali Mac Band** and **The Band Of 1000 Dances**

The Jeff Beck Group, 1967: (l-r) Rod Stewart, Aynsley Dunbar, Ron Wood, Jeff Beck



**What were the support acts like on the circuit? You mention one called Stammering Alec And The Cuff Links? Any great bands that got overlooked?**

That was a made-up name. Art would make up all these weird names. There was another called Cliff Outburst And The Hand Grenades. The bands we played with were flash-in-the-pans or hardworkers who never got anywhere. There were loads of bands like that, they'd either be gone in weeks or slogging along for years. There was a lot of great talent and it got recognised. The waste of time didn't. There were people that didn't get the recognition they deserved, but they are still around today, like Albert Lee, who is in Billy Wyman's band, and is an amazing country picker.

**You mention playing ‘turnovers’ a couple of times in the diary, what does that mean?** That meant we got robbed, turned over. When you went to get your money, everybody had gone home, or there was a big gorilla at the door and you stood no chance of getting past. It was the Wild West. There was nothing you could do, but at least you lived to fight another day. Some places were tough. You'd see trouble coming and hotfoot it out of there. I was looking after my hands – nobody was worth sticking one on in case I broke my finger. That was the worry of going north of Manchester. Places like Blackpool were so cold. They were too far to drive back the same night and the digs would have these one-bar-heaters and thin boards dividing the rooms. It would be criminally cold in those places by the sea... lonely, desolate places if you were there out of season.

**You went to Heathrow Airport to serve a writ on The Byrds for having a similar name. Whose idea was that?**

That was Leo's big chance to get us on the front pages. I met Roger McGuinn a few years ago and asked if he remembered when they first came to London, this bloke rushing up and suing them – well, that was me. He grabbed me playfully round the neck. Leo saw this chance to claim The Byrds had plagiarised our name even though they'd never heard of us. He told us we were going to sue them as soon as they landed on British soil. It got us on the front of *Melody Maker*. That was our biggest bit of publicity. We felt we had to tread on them to get a rung on the ladder. We were desperate for a mention in the music papers. It made such a difference, you'd get in *Melody Maker* and your attendance would go up and if you were good, it would stay up. Everybody read them, so if your name appeared it was – Bong! Lights went on! Bells rang! It was the big time and you were a star.

**You write about an audition at the BBC. What was that like?** We failed! Everybody got turned down by the BBC

unless they were top of the charts. It was done on volume; if you were anything above audible, you were out. There was this panel, this terrible crew of suits behind a desk, who'd fail you as soon as you walked through the door. If you tried to plug in, you had no chance. But you had to audition 'cos if you went on *Saturday Club* or *Easy Beat*, it put money on the doors. We never got anywhere with the media. It was hard work and we were struggling. We were doing the circuit but with nothing to show for it, nothing in the charts. We made a living but it was all about the charts, that was the Bible. If you get in the Top 100, it gave you the incentive to carry on. You'd be studying it every week, if you want from 96 to 88 you'd be made up, if you crept into the Top 50, it was everything. It was depressing when it went back down, because all week people would have given you all this false information about how it was going into the Top 5. You'd believe it, you'd think this was it, and then you'd get the papers and it had gone down. The dream would be shattered.

**You seem to have spent a lot of time socialising with other bands...**

Everything centred round drinking. Blaises was our big hang-out. It was in South Kensington. We'd all be down there boozing together: artists, managers and general hangers-on. I saw Otis Redding play there. You'd be there and Brian Jones was in the next booth. It was a place where stars like Hendrix and Clapton or the rabble of The Animals went after the gig. There were some people you avoided, and that included

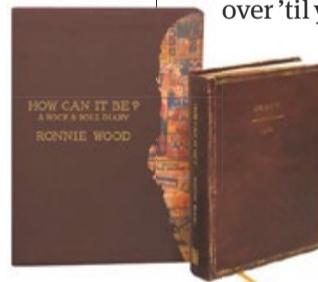
Burdon and The Animals. They were always drunk and very loud. You could wander from room to room and see somebody like Arthur Brown perform. Arthur used to come on with his hat in flames doing "Fire". Once, he set the ceiling alight. The other big thing was the label Christmas parties. You'd go to the Decca party and The Beatles would walk in, or you'd see The Pretty Things, with Viv Prince all over the place. He was one of the original drunks, worse than Moony. The biggest party was Immediate's. They were the new label, very cool, and you'd rub shoulders with whoever was No 1 at the time.

**Were The Beatles and the Stones on the scene?** The Beatles were on a different level. You'd see the Stones around and my ambition was always to be one of them. I never thought

The Birds would be the next Stones. They were just a stepping stone. The limitations were obvious and it was no surprise when it ground to a halt. It was a great learning curve... but I had higher ambitions.

**Ali MacKenzie says you always wanted to be in the Stones.** Sometimes I feel that my whole career with The Birds, Jeff Beck and The Faces was one long audition to join The Rolling Stones. I still think of myself as a fan as much as a bandmember. When I first heard their stirring music coming from the tent at the Richmond Jazz And Blues festival in 1963 something happened inside me and I knew that was the band I wanted to be in. The thought of being in the Stones is what gave me the drive to carry on. It was the atmosphere that lured me as much as the music, the raggedness, the glory, the image – it looked like a good job.

**"YOU'D SEE THE STONES AROUND AND MY AMBITION WAS ALWAYS TO BE ONE OF THEM"**



**those years ago?** Yes, and I still bring that fan aspect to being in the band and that's part of what keeps us fresh. When I'm in rehearsal, I'll ask them to play something like "Come On", the very first single. Mick or Keith will say, "Oh, nobody wants to hear that!" and I'll tell them, "Yes they do. And I know they do, because I want to hear it." There's also a fantastic dedication to being in the Stones. You sit down with Keith and play the same song over and over 'til you've got it right. That's been an incredible lesson for me as a musician: to listen to learn and learn to listen. ☺

**How Can It Be? A Rock And Roll Diary**, the signed limited edition book by Ronnie Wood and Genesis Publications. Only 1,965 copies worldwide, from [www.RonnieWoodBook.com](http://www.RonnieWoodBook.com)

**EALING GROOVY**

**"IT WAS A CHANCE TO EXPERIMENT..."**

**Ron shares his art school memories**

**T**HE BIRDS WERE part of a vibrant West London scene. Part of this came from Ealing Art College, which Ronnie Wood attended, as did Pete Townshend and John Keen of Thunderclap Newman. "I finished art school when I was 16," says Wood. "There was a café in Ealing Broadway, and I'd see these guys in there who turned out to



be Thunderclap Newman. I'd see Moony in there as well, and then bump into him all over, kicking a football round an old bomb site."

Wood feels art school was a good introduction to his chosen career. "It helped me cope," he says. "We did strange classes like live painting – driving a bicycle through paint over canvas – and that helped me be prepared for anything. But I also learnt to concentrate more. The teacher would set tasks, then say it was up to us if we did them or not. Most of the class would go home, but me and my pal would stay to try and work it out to see what happens. It was a chance to experiment, to go wherever it took us. It also gave us the chance to make a bloody big mess."



## ALBUM BY ALBUM

# Nile Rodgers

**The Chic guitarist gets lucky again with his glittering career: "You gotta keep going..."**

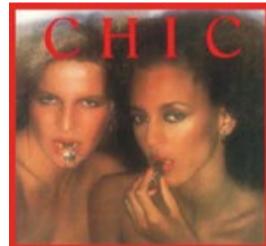
**N**ILE RODGERS IS sitting on a sofa in a London hotel munching peanuts. His flight from America was delayed by seven hours, he explains, and the nuts are a protein source to counteract the jetlag. Not that Nile appears fatigued. On the contrary. "You gotta keep going," he says with a smile, which might be a useful motto for the man himself. Since his earliest days as a member of the *Sesame Street* touring band – a vital training ground, it appears, for many contemporaries including Luther Vandross and Carlos Alomar – Rodgers has maintained a prodigious output. Along with his comrades in Chic – bassist Bernard Edwards and drummer Tony Thompson – he masterminded a peerless run of singles and albums in the '70s and '80s. As a producer, his credits run from Madonna to Bowie. After a period below the radar, his collaboration with Daft Punk and Pharrell Williams on 2014's "Get Lucky" has helped revive the Chic brand. "It sounds weird," he laughs, "but when I run into young kids, they think Pharrell and I have a band called Daft Punk with robots behind us!" *MICHAEL BONNER*



Top scorer Nile Rodgers today: "I realised I could do stuff by myself"

### CHIC CHIC

ATLANTIC, 1977



After replacing Carlos Alomar in the *Sesame Street* touring band, Rodgers undergoes an epiphany while stranded in London. Enter "the black version of Roxy Music".

Bernard and I had a band together called The Big Apple Band. We were backing up New York City, who had a hit called "I'm Doing Fine Now". We were touring that record for about two and a half years, on and off. The final leg of the final tour was in London. I got robbed – they stole my wallet, passport, everything – and I was left here, stranded. I had a girlfriend here who took me out to see her favourite band, Roxy Music. They were playing at the Roxy Theatre, or the Roxy Playhouse, or something like that. I walk in and the band is like dressed in what you would call couture rock'n'roll. I got excited as hell and called Bernard back in New York: "I just saw a totally immersive experience in music, we gotta do our version of it. We've got to do the black version of Roxy Music."

After I go back home, Luther was hiring a backup band, so Bernard and I went to play behind Luther at Radio City. In those days you would do two shows a night. Between the shows, I wrote my very first song for Chic, "Everybody Dance". We didn't get a record deal for "Everybody Dance", we got a record for "Dance, Dance, Dance (Yowsah Yowsah Yowsah)". The label, said, "What else do you have?" We played them "Everybody Dance" and they said, "Wow, this is amazing." So we ran in and we did the whole album in under a week.

### THE UNCUT CLASSIC



#### CHIC C'EST CHIC

ATLANTIC, 1978

"Le Freak" and "I Want Your Love" shore up the band's formidable songwriting skills and their commercial success ensures Rodgers and Edwards' status as in-demand producers de nos jours. But change is afoot: *C'est Chic* marks the departure of early vocalist Norma Jean Wright. Norma Jean didn't feel like a good fit for us. It's nothing against her, she thought of herself as wanting to be the star of our band. But we don't want a star. We're a collective; we want the music to be the star. It's a holistic concept here. So we said, "Well, if you want to be the star, we'll produce your record and write it for you and you can be the star." That's what we did. So we had two new artists, Chic and Norma Jean both doing

well. Norma Jean's album was gold; Chic was platinum-plus. This was early on in our career. Grace Jones invited us down to Studio 54 to see her perform because she was considering having us write and produce what would then have been her next album. We were brand new, and everything we touched was turning to gold. We had our second album basically laid out. "Le Freak" happened as an accident. "Le Freak" is the only triple-selling platinum single in Atlantic history. "I Want Your Love"? I dreamt that, every single note. I used to sleep with score paper next to the bed, and I wrote out the whole score the next day. We went in and played what I dreamt. The only thing that appears on the record that I didn't dream was when the horns come in, I put the strings up an octave. That was the idea of the concert master. He said, "Nile, since we're going this long amount of time, why don't the strings up an octave for the second part?" We tried it in the studio and it sounded great.

Bernard, Tony and myself, we started out together as working studio musicians. When Bernard and I put the partnership together, we split everything 50/50. The way I looked at it was Bernard's arranging ability was so extraordinary I considered that half the writing part. Tony was like our child. Tony was raised by women, so he was always the handsome guy who has women taking care of him. So when he joined our band, Bernard and I were like his roadies. He was an extraordinary drummer, I've never met anyone that hits the drums as hard as Tony and keeps the groove. Chic records are really in the pocket, and we don't play with any click. A lot of people say *Risqué* is our best LP, but I think it's *C'est Chic*.



The "black Roxy Music": Chic live in London, October 1979 - (l-r) Luci Martin, Bernard Edwards, Rodgers and Alfa Anderson

## CHIC RISQUÉ

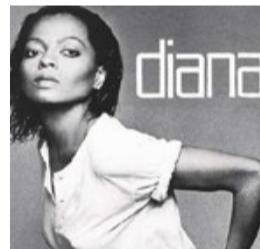
ATLANTIC, 1979



**The band's formidable run of hit LPs continues, helped along by the winning "Good Times"...**  
At that point, I started to believe that I could write songs. Typically, the way we would write songs, if it wasn't at the studio, or if it wasn't something we'd just come in with, Bernard and I would get together and have a writing session. We'd write and we'd jam and we'd play and I'd write out the music, stuff like that. We'd make changes, and then we'd go on and show it to the rest of the band. I wrote "Good Times" the morning we recorded it. Bernard was a little late to the studio, but I'd already written out the charts for everybody in the band. We were playing when Bernard walked in. He asked the engineers, "What the hell is that?" The engineer said, "I don't know, something Nile wrote this morning." Whenever Bernard was late, he was like a puppy dog with his tail between his legs. Typically, what he and I do is we'd copy each other and then develop our parts after that. We'd been trying for years to come up with this walking bassline, putting it over and over again on all sorts of songs but we could never get it right. But that day, I started screaming "Walk!" over Tony's drums. Bernard said, "What?" I was shouting "Walk!!" On that particular day, he walked. Even though my guitar part was strong on the down beats, Bernard decided to push and go to bass before I get to the chord change, I'm not even there yet, so we get this amazing extra funky thing. I just told the engineer, "Make it red!" We recorded it. That was it. One take, maybe two.

## DIANA ROSS DIANA

MOTOWN, 1980

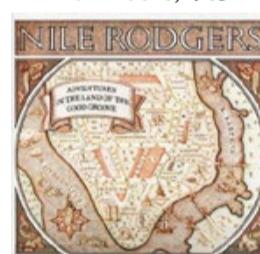


**By now, Rodgers and Edwards had begun to work as a production team for other artists. "Upside Down" and "I'm Coming Out" helped make this Ross' most successful album.**

*Diana* came about after we had phenomenal success with Sister Sledge. We had the whole album written before we even met them. We heard about them from the head of our record company. He told us how they were like family, and they stick together and all that stuff, and we turned it into "We Are Family" and a bunch of other songs. So after we had done that, after we tell these girls what their lives are like, when we got to Diana, we didn't want to make the same mistake. Now this is our first star we're working with. But, perspective: we've just had maybe seven, eight or nine gold and platinum and triple platinum and double platinum singles in a row. So we thought, 'Now that we're working with a superstar, how do we do this? How about this, let's interview her, and have her tell us what her life is, and then we'll write the songs.' So, we interviewed her. That album is a snapshot of Diana Ross, or our take on her at that point in her life. It's a snapshot of Diana Ross' life. "Upside Down" are her words – yeah, she said she was going to turn this industry upside down. And as you know, after we gave her that record, the biggest record of her life, she left Motown. No-one would ever have seen that coming but we sort of did, because we interviewed her and she told us, "I'm tired of being treated this way, blah blah blah."

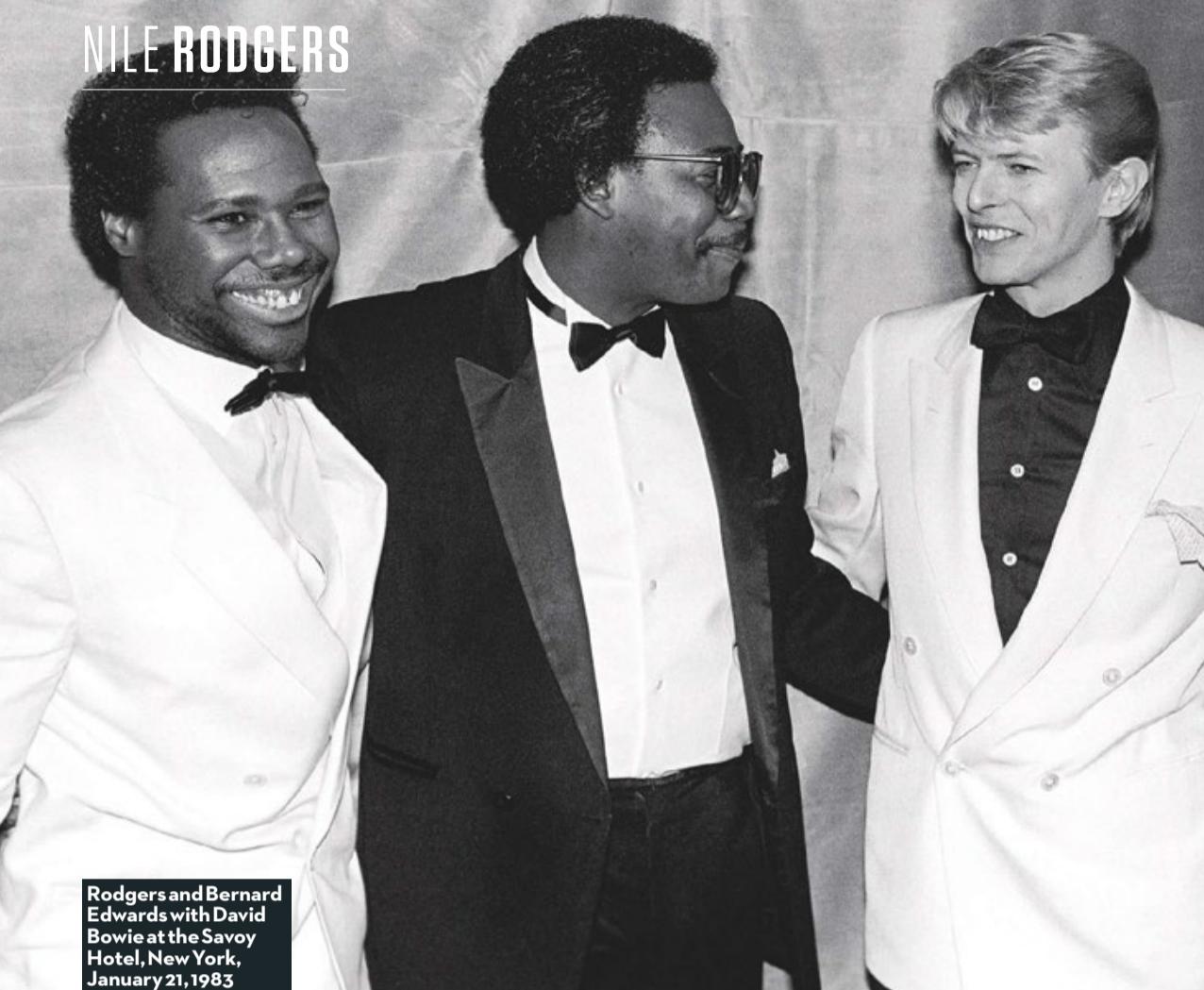
## NILE RODGERS ADVENTURES IN THE LAND OF THE GOOD GROOVE

MIRAGE MUSIC, 1983



**Essentially, a Chic album in all but name, Rodgers' only solo album to date arrived during a disharmonious time for his main enterprise.**  
The only reason I did that record, honestly, was because Chic was so dysfunctional at that point. Man, the drugs. And believe me, I was just as bad as anybody when it came to drug-taking. The only thing that I had, though, was punctuality. No matter what, no matter how much I'd party, I was going to be on time the next day, even if I'd come right from partying directly to a session, which I've done many times. Many a day Duran Duran would walk in to see me lying on the floor. But as soon as you play the tapes, I'm ready to go. So I was getting frustrated that no matter how much I begged the guys, they were still coming late. We missed days. I remember once when we made *Like A Virgin* with Madonna – now I'm skipping around – it had gotten so bad that Bernard missed a day and didn't even realise he'd missed a day. He showed up two days later, and I was like, "Dude, we already cut two songs already." So I was frustrated. I thought, 'Well, if I'm here everyday by myself, let me just make a record by myself.' So I did. I didn't get it right, but it had some interesting ideas on it. But most importantly, it made me realise that I could do stuff by myself. I listened to a test pressing of ...*Land Of The Good Groove* with David Bowie and the next record I made was *Let's Dance*.

## NILE RODGERS



Rodgers and Bernard Edwards with David Bowie at the Savoy Hotel, New York, January 21, 1983

### DAVID BOWIE LET'S DANCE

EMI, 1983



In an attempt to reinvent himself in the wake of the *Disco Sucks!* campaign, Rodgers oversees Bowie's transformation to global superstar.

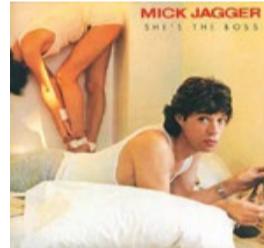
I met David at an after-hours club. I walked in with Billy Idol, who was one of my good party buddies in those days, and Billy goes, "Fucking hell, David! How you doing, mate?" Then he threw up. By the point Billy got himself back together, I was over there hanging with Bowie. He had lived in the same building with Luther and Carlos, the Young Americans: "You're down with all my boys, everybody who sang on my record sang on your record."

It's funny, because I've harboured a lot of negative feelings for a long time after *Let's Dance*. Every time he did an interview to support it, I'd get almost no credit. He kept talking about his past. But the reason why he was on the cover of *Time* magazine was because *Let's Dance* was huge. It's collectively because of *Young Americans*, *Scary Monsters* and *"Heroes"*. All that stuff, yes. But he'd got a smash right now, and I would see all these articles and my name wouldn't be in there anywhere. This was my chance to move beyond the disco producer guy. *Disco Sucks!* totally derailed Chic. I thought by producing David Bowie and giving him the biggest record of his life, if he embraced me and said, "Yeah, this is my man Nile," then boom, my life would be different. But it didn't happen that way. I felt weird about that. Of course, now we've kissed and made up, and I understand it from his point of view. It's like, you have this massive body of work, and then all of a sudden now you're identified with *Let's Dance*. I know many people that only have one Bowie record, and that's the one. I think probably what David may have resented the most was my blatant high-getting,

and he was trying to keep it together. I did his whole album in 17 days. We were still making records the way R&B records were made, so we only worked half a day and we'd do four songs in half a day.

### MICK JAGGER SHE'S THE BOSS

COLUMBIA, 1985



Jagger's first solo album: a starry affair, featuring the combined talents of over 30 musicians. Rodgers co-produced with Jagger and Bill Laswell.

As a matter of fact, he wanted me to produce the Stones. That would've been interesting because the Stones were the first superstar act that was offered to us, and instead we did Sister Sledge. Bernard and I knew it would've been a bad move to work with the Stones. How do you tell The Rolling Stones, "Right, we're going to write all your songs and then you come in and you play like this?"

Anyway, when we came round to working with Jagger, I had tons of collaborations behind me. He and I got along great, absolutely great. We probably got along too well. The songs I did on that record I like a lot, but I think that if I had been tougher on Mick, we'd have had a much bigger commercial success. I wanted to hear where he was going artistically, then make that the best it could be. Bill and I were friends already, and Mick and I became friends. But that was the thing: no-one could be the boss and the album was called *She's The Boss*. My personality as a producer was developing, and I was still trying to figure out the psychology of production which I think is one of the most important elements, especially when you're dealing with a superstar. How do you let them know that you really have their best interests at heart? And, even though they may not recognise this, you're actually doing something that's better?

## CHIC CHIC-ISM

WEA, 1992



Nine years after Chic's *Believer*, Rodgers and Edwards reunited for their eighth studio LP. But what place did Chic have in a new decade? We had a birthday party for my girlfriend at the time; I invited Bernard, Tony and all. Tony didn't show up, but Bernard showed up, Alfa showed up, Luci showed up, Fonzi showed up, and we did a Chic set. It was awesome playing with Bernard. R&B music was changing rapidly, and we wanted to try and be in that mix. A few years ago, I looked on the wall in a record shop and thought, 'Wow, this is all dance music. If I put a Chic record up here it wouldn't belong, because every one of these records are all drum machines.' But when we did *Chic-ism*, instead of doing a regular Chic LP, we were trying to fit into that world of new jack swing. Hip-hop was dominant. This was the era of *The Chronic*. You can't predict that. Shit was way too strong. But we bought in a girl named Princessa, who rapped a bit on the record. That's the difficult thing with music, when you have a movement that swept over everything, like hip-hop. We have this fragmented population in America. You have radio stations that only plays country music, or only play urban music. There were fewer and fewer outlets for a group like Chic.

### CHIC FEATURING NILE RODGERS IT'S ABOUT TIME

WARNER BROS, 2015



Enjoying renewed interest in wake of his collaboration with Daft Punk, Rodgers revives the Chic brand. The first order of business: paying tribute to fallen comrades.

My label found and sent me a box of cassettes of old Chic demos and music. That's the basis for the first two songs that are coming out on maxi 12-inch vinyl. The first, "I'll Be There", was inspired by a demo that we did for Sister Sledge called "Love Somebody Today". The way we learned Chic songs was we always played the end first, 'cos once we get that end groove down we knew how to interpret the rest of the song. I listened to it and thought, 'Wow, the end groove is great. We could write a song with the end groove?' So I'm reacquainted with Bernard and Tony and [keyboard player] Raymond Jones. Then I came up with an artistic concept. I decided that the side A1 is to be the symbolic beginning of Chic, and side A2 to be the symbolic end of Chic, which is a song called "Back In The Old School". That is the official last recording Chic ever made. That was three days before I did *Let's Dance*. I didn't want to release that one first, because it doesn't have the same spiritual connection as "I'll Be There". But man, it's disgustingly catchy. I know that we live in a different world now from when Chic were first making records, where the album sales are the biggest the first week it comes out, and then you die after that. But it's important that the entire Chic Organisation comes together for a final time.

*It's About Time* is released on Warners on June 2

# MY MORNING JACKET THE WATERFALL

THE NEW ALBUM  
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ON TOUR IN SEPTEMBER

5TH LARMER TREE GARDENS –END OF THE ROAD  
6TH MANCHESTER –THE RITZ  
8TH LONDON –SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE



# RYDER'S SON THE STORM

“I don’t even go and visit me nana’s grave, never mind Jim Morrison’s!”

Twenty-five years ago, the fecklessly brilliant Shaun Ryder and HAPPY MONDAYS were preparing for the release of their landmark *Pills’n’Thrills And Bellyaches*. Now, as the band reunite for a tour of the album, *Uncut* digs out a classic *NME* interview from autumn 1990, high season of Madchester, to hear once again Ryder’s considered opinions on war, the church and his chaotic first wedding... “I went drug potty!”

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**Original story:** James Brown, *NME*, October 6, 1990 | **Photograph:** David Bamber

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SEPTEMBER WAS SATURATED with the opulence and desperation of fame. In just one week the living, laughing, decrepit ghosts of superstars past and present came crashing down around us all. In the opening lines of his autobiography, *Bare*, George Michael confided, "My biggest fear was that my huge ambitions would stay just out of reach."

George Best brazenly spilt a pint or two in the name of self-preservation and Method-Promotion – getting pissed to publicise *The Good, The Bad And The Bubbly*, his book. Hilarious, cool, different, sad, pointless, fallen or starstruck? The ninth month has always been bleak for rock'n'roll. Hendrix, John Bonham, Peter Tosh and Keith Moon all withered away in September. Sucked up and spat out, immortalised in Hard Rock Coffins. It's hard to tell whether Happy

Mondays idolise anyone. Shaun certainly knows of the time Jim Morrison, whilst recording, had his cock sucked to improve his vocal, and Gaz sits in the Hacienda telling me he'd rather be a professional footballer than a drummer, but the band don't litter their conversation with hip reference points as is protocol with most musicians. Right now the Mondays are zipping around on an affluent inner-city afterburn. Giving bassist Paul a two-grand wedding present from the band, planning weekends in Amsterdam, putting down deposits on a new BMW. They're not lolling in it like fools, but the cash is there, to pass on a car or two to girlfriends and surrogate mothers, picking up watches at garages and dishing them out like Mars bars. When it was announced that the Mondays were going to record the third album in Hollywood, the idea seemed ludicrous. Out there in the sun-drenched, Pacific-lined, coke-caked capital of the music industry it seemed impossible they'd write and record an album without being distracted. They came back with the goods though, uptempo pop songs, more like their earlier cathartic nursery rhymes than the stripped down beat and jangle of their "Hallelujah" period. Rich in structure and culture and chronic social reference. Undercoated and glossed with confidence. Burping with fineries. Like the pre-Altamont Rolling Stones tangling with spangling The The. "God's Cop" and "Kinky Afro" and "Bob's Yer Uncle" and "Denis & Lois", each one a story in its own right. Up in Manchester they're already thumping out of car stereos too frail to take the choruses or the string arrangements. As far as the band are concerned they've done the work, now it's time to kick back and straighten out. Pile up a few perks, get engaged, married, or out of it depending on the company...

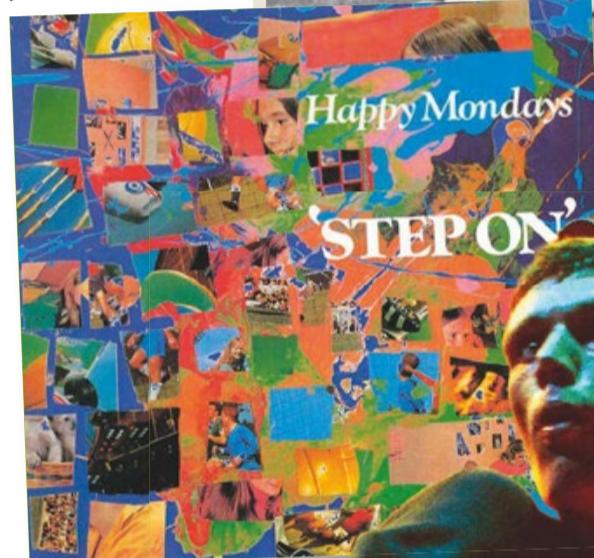
"CAN I SAY 'shit'?" burped George Best to Wogan and the recording studio went quiet.

"Look at his suit and shirt, nice gear," says Shaun gesturing towards the bloated burger face of a former idol. "We used to hang around his boutique in Manchester, just outside, hoping to see him... he's still cool, though."

Do you think you'll end up looking like George Best, Shaun?



Stonehenge!  
The Mondays  
go Spinal Tap,  
Heaton Park,  
Manchester,  
1990



"Well, George looks all right, he's 45 years old. He looks a lot sounder than he is. He's the same age as Keef, but look at the state of Keef.

Keef's stopped doing it, but George hasn't, he might not look better but he acts better. I'm not really a binger in that I don't sit and drink pints.

George is just like one of the lads in the pub, he was talking tonight like normal people talk in the pub. People want him on telly how he is in real life."

What about people like Hendrix and Jim Morrison who're being celebrated again now because it's 20 years since they died?

"It doesn't bother me, they was people in good bands, could be Robin Hood for all I care. They was in bands and they made great music and they're dead, that's all it means to me. You can talk about them when you've had a few beers or you can write books about them, but that's it. Phil Lynott shouldn't have died, there was no need, he was still alive. People have had it worse than Phil, he could have still been, well they all could have been doing something."

Jim Morrison might have ended up like Phil Collins.

"That's cool, everyone gets older and wiser or older and bonger. I've not been to Morrison's grave 'cos I'm not a tourist, never been to touristy places. I don't even visit me nana's grave, never mind Jim Morrison's."

**"Bez is Bez,  
he's totally  
natural.  
He's always  
been a  
cult star"**

SHAUN RYDER



**T**WO MONTHS IN LA and the Mondays still don't behave like celebrity morons. Assembling a gang of ex-pats around them for social excursions, Shaun was checking into the Capitol Studio at 4pm and leaving 12 hours later to head for bed, clubs or the beach. On the stereos of their hire cars they soaked up any tapes they could get their hands on. Seeing

Depeche Mode and Soul II Soul playing the Hollywood Amphitheatre certainly alerted them to the possibilities for British bands in America.

Surprisingly, there was little star-hunting and bar-haunting going on. The band bumped into 'Brian Tinsley' [Christopher Quinten aka the late Brian Tilsley of Coronation Street] who's got a bit part in *Robo-Cop 2*, and spotted Emily Lloyd out a lot but apart from going to a couple of parties with Deee-Lite, seeing The Afros, and Bez meeting *Pretty Woman* star Julia Roberts and being more interested in her minder 'Evil', the Mondays were out there with their music heads on.

"I didn't even see Electronic," admits Ryder, "Johnny and Bernard were over but I didn't even get out for a drink because I was down in the studio. The Capitol Studio is just a studio, there's no gimmicks, no Space Invaders or pool tables or nice big rooms to hang about in. All you can do down there is work, but the studio is massive."

"The most played tape over there was The Specials' collection that we picked up on some long drive from New York. I always get mixed up with Ry Cooder and the other Cougar, man, John Cougar Mellencamp. We were listening to anything, and loads of our own tapes. One of my favourite singles out there was that Sonic Youth single 'Kool Thing' with Chuck D out of Public Enemy, it's got a good vibe to it."

As usual, the Mondays made their own entertainment.

Rolling like rough-necked vagabonds through the hills and avenues of West Hollywood.

"Les who was driving us, you ever met Big Les? He's about 57-foot tall, right, drives us and hires cars for us, that sort of thing. He looks like a proper beast, man, he knows all the backroads of LA, he took us round the back of the houses where Brando lives, on the original old road that was first built from Mexico. He knows all the ways, man, he must have been dropping bodies there."

Shaun recounts the story fully animated, grinning with glee. "Last time we met a lot of Mexicans and we had them coming over the border bringing us hash, and things were cool, but it's a fucking naughty place now. There's no point in going in there 'cos you know that if you go with people like us and Bez you'll end up with trouble. Nothing really weird happened apart from me getting about 17 grams of opium for \$120, that's double cheap innit? Lasted about 10 days."

"We all had five-litre convertible sports cars. No, we haven't all got driving licences, Bez had about five or six bumps out there which he was lucky to get away with. Over there you take the car out, drive it down a road, turn round and drive back and that's your test. Then you've got to do these questions where all you've got to do is tick a box. Then you get the licence, stick a photograph on it, and it's valid over here for two years."

Collaborating with producer Paul Oakenfold and engineer Steve Osborne, the Mondays have developed their sound without losing that jarring foul-mouthed edge. Like all stunning rock'n'roll tunes, sex and scandal and evil fuse quite naturally.

"With 'Bob's Yer Uncle', Oakie said let's make this one sexy for the ladies, and the words just spieled out. It was just the way the guitar was... it sounds sexy but it's really fucking sick. The words are just like a schoolboy rhyme that any kid could make up. It sounds right. I'm not capable of writing something sexy, but I can write something dirty that sounds sexy."

## HAPPY DAYS

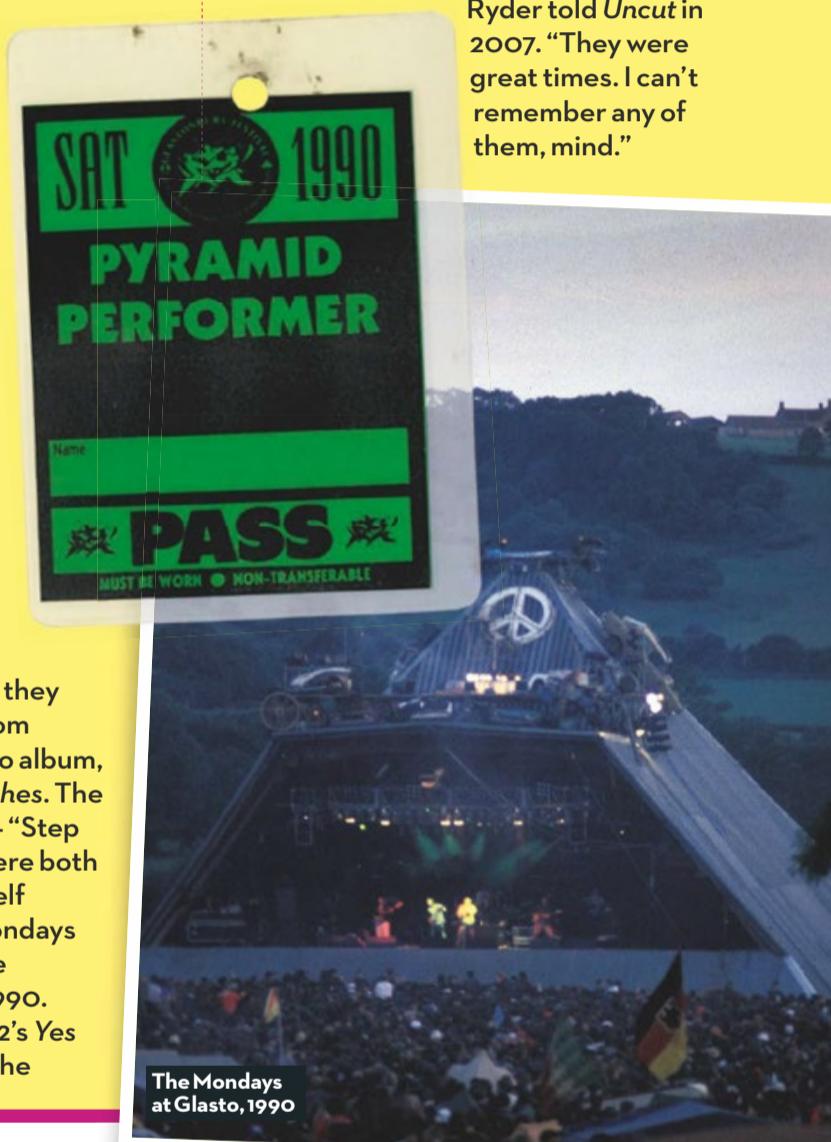
# PILLS'N'THRILLS AND LAMINATING MACHINES...

1990: a great year for the Mondays - from TOTP to Glasto

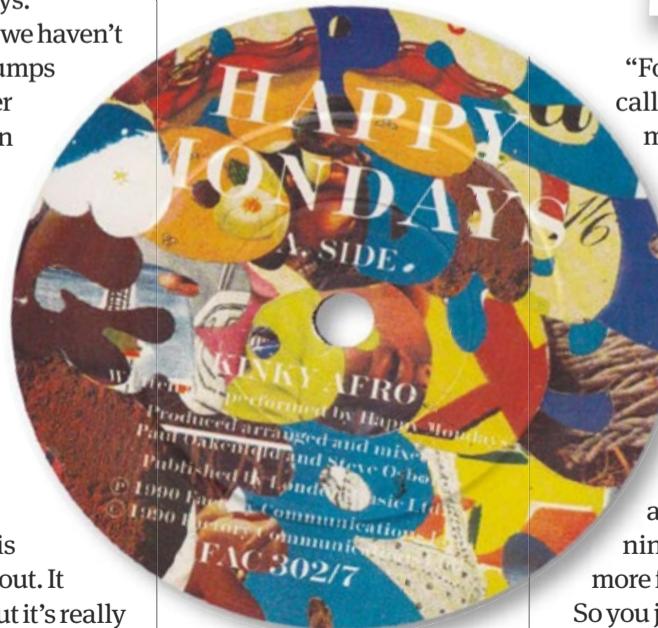
1990 WAS AN auspicious year for the Mondays. They had rounded off the 1989 with their debut appearance on *Top Of The Pops* (on the same edition as the Stone Roses). Accordingly, a picture emerged over the following 12 months of a band consolidating their successes. In spring, they played their biggest gigs to date: two nights at Manchester's 10,000 capacity G-Mex in March followed by Wembley Arena a month later. That June they headlined the Sunday night at Glastonbury; further displaying their own inimitable entrepreneurship, they even brought along a laminating machine on which to bootleg backstage passes. By the time *NME* caught up with them for this, their third cover story of the year (there would be a fourth), they were just months away from releasing their third studio album, *Pills 'n' Thrills And Bellyaches*. The record's first two singles - "Step On" and "Kinky Afro" - were both Top 5 hits, while *Pills...* itself reached No 4. But the Mondays never quite replicated the success they enjoyed in 1990. The band's follow-up, 1992's *Yes Please!*, was recorded in the

Caribbean and compromised by the band's use of hard drugs. The record's spiralling costs, meanwhile, contributed to the eventual bankruptcy of their label, Factory Records. The Mondays' split up (for the first time, at any rate) in 1994... "Regretful? Am I fuck! No chance, no chance," Shaun

Ryder told *Uncut* in 2007. "They were great times. I can't remember any of them, mind."



The Mondays at Glasto, 1990



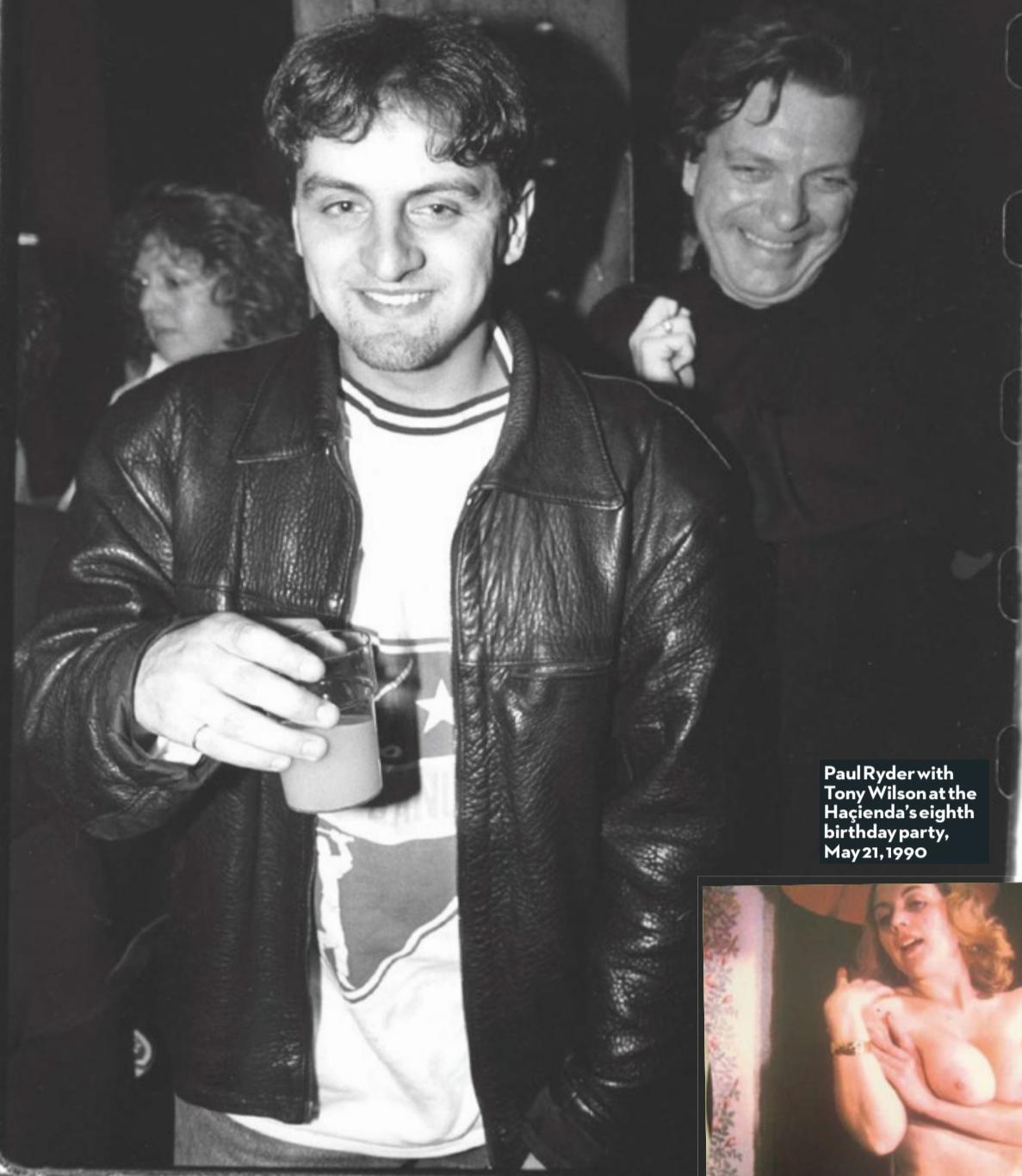
"For the percussion we got somebody who I think was called something like Fidel Castro in. Mega, the tune might be the *Daktari* theme tune. I used to watch that and all the shit that's on now like *Land Of The Giants* and *Time Tunnel*. *Time Slip* was better than *The Tomorrow People*."

At the moment, in my mind, "Bob's Yer Uncle", "God's Cop" and "Kinky Afro" are the strongest tracks on the as yet untitled album.

"Kinky Afro's not '60s music or dance music but you can groove to it, you can dance to it, but it's totally Happy Mondays," is Shaun's familiar explanation. "Us lot have always been able to get a good tune, it's just structuring it right. I've written nine songs for this album, now I don't have to write any more for a year."

So you just see songs as something you have to write a certain amount of a year?

"Yeah, I like music. If I was a musician I'd be fucking about with music all the time. Ideas are coming all the time, but the best ones are the ones you get in two minutes. I have tried



Paul Ryder with Tony Wilson at the Hacienda's eighth birthday party, May 21, 1990

writing bits down but they never work.

"I love this tune," he says of Sinéad's "Emperor's New Clothes" as it moves from the radio. "I like the way she sings it, and the video, a bit ripped off 'Hallelujah' with the feathers and that, but a top video. I don't feel any competition with anyone like Sinéad because we're us, now we're in the public eye we can make records that we all like, we've got good music taste. There's not one person in our band that's got shit music taste."

**A**S THE HAPPY MONDAYS get bigger, so the question of control rises like a bad hangover. In spirit they may be anarchists – Tony Wilson's favourite term – but in reality they are no more anarchists than George Best and he wouldn't know the FAI from the FA or the CNT from a G&T. No, the Mondays aren't anarchists, they are in control; but what of those around them? One man's honesty is another man's bullshit and that's why rock'n'roll stars employ PRs. One man's talent is another man's bread and butter and that's why rock'n'roll stars hire managers. For the last month, the music industry has had its head down sniggering whilst a fast, zinging fire fight of rumour and disbelief has continued about the Mondays' business associates. Meanwhile the head of their American record company sends the band presents of gold watches to thank them for appearing on the Elektra 40th birthday LP. It's not hard to detect the stench of bullshit and wealth rising around the band; they might have their feet on the ground but what of the rest of their brigade? It's not hard to see what will happen when the Americans suggest a professional overhaul. And what of their band's creativity? Sales of *Bummed*, Shaun tells me, faltered in the States because of the



Artwork for the *Bummed* sleeve

**"Bummed's US sales fell 'cos of that bald-fannied woman"**  
SHAUN RYDER

PETER WALSH

naked lady wrestler on the inner sleeve. To prevent the same thing happening again, the band have already changed the artwork for "Kinky Afro", which was to have featured a teenage Michael Jackson, because the line "*I had to crucify some brother today*" might be interpreted as racially dubious in the US. People are discussing the lyrics like no-one's ever written dirty, violent words before.

"When you make a good album, you don't want it not to be in the shops because of something like that bald-fannied woman," Shaun reckons. "'Bob's Yer Uncle' had bits ripped from porno films, the original had all the talking of *The Exorcist*, the Latin bits, 'Your mother sucks cocks in hell' and all that shit, it sounded mega. We took it off though because people were worried... they'll be on it for the club mixes."

As for censoring the sleeve, Shaun explains: "We're all brothers here, but in America it's blacks that're brothers. It's just shit what's going on in America with the censorship, they can put their own ideas to it because of the title and 'crucifying a brother' but it's not about that, we got the idea from a Hot Chocolate song which had 'No honkies in my family', I can't remember what it's called, it's a good one. We just wanted to do a groovy song like that. We were gonna call it 'Groovy Afro' but we changed it to 'Kinky' after The Farm came out with 'Groovy Train'."

The Mondays' public image has always been a liability.

They have triumphed in turning the violence, the drugs, and the offensive comments into a desirable commodity. The band reek of an attitude deeper than mere shock-appeal. They revel in their gang-like existence, it gives them a sense of place and security; wherever they go in the world it follows and grows with them. An extended family of groovy hoodlums, lads together, it's tight and the band feels good. Their music continues to excel and they know why.

"I'd never knock the basslines on ...24 Hour Party People..., they were mega, then *Bummed* came along and I had to write the whole side of an album in a week, but this one I really do like. Our grooves or chord changes or whatever are like the Stones, I know that, we like that sort of music."

When I first went up to Little Hulton three years ago it was clear there were no other bands like the Mondays. I wrote Shaun up as junior Bukowski, brawling, bingeing, banging, robbing. Unabashed leader of rotten-toothed rabble. They're the same today, just better dressed. Less poetic perhaps, but it's harder to romanticise about expensive clothes and nippy run-around Mitsubishi than it was the half-cut vagabond who'd spent the previous night hanging off a roof watching two women in bed together the first time we met.

Most importantly, the Mondays' music is progressing. It doesn't matter how many Managing Directors the management surprise with the depravity of their kisses, every time the Ryders write a jolting song like "God's Cop" and have it ripped apart by Mark Day's guitars and dressed for clubland by Paul Oakenfold and Steve Osborne, another nought is slipped onto the size of their estimated commercial potential. Their new album will prove that talent can grow as fast if not quicker than infamy itself. It doesn't matter how much bullshit is sewn by ill-informed associates, the songs about to be released will shock those suspecting a fall.

As individuals the band are settling down. Paul Ryder's got married and already has two kids. Mark Day was so impressed with the new tunes he went home and proposed to his girlfriend. Paul Davies doesn't go out much now and appears relieved they've dropped their old nicknames (Knobhead) in favour of initials ('X', 'PD'), Bez is Bez and Gaz is Gaz, one an enigma, the other a typical Man U flash bastard with long hair, showy shirts and a BMW. Shaun is pretty much in control of himself, knowing how to stop when

he wants to stop, and how to start when he wants to start. He's soon to be a father, and excited about it. Marriage isn't on the agenda, but then he's done that all before.

"I was married when I was 18 to someone who's married to a bomber pilot now in the RAF. I was divorced by 20. Everyone round that area got married, my wedding was mega, man. All the families were there, I was 18, tripping, stoned. Got a Barney haircut before Barney had one. Our kid was the best man. Gaz and PD were still at school. I had a few bob, I was doing this'n' that, made some money at the Post Office, had sovereigns and krugerrands on my fingers, Sabre cardigans, me own house, I was doing all right. Then you get to a stage when you just don't want it, you want to be yourself. She joined the army and I went drug potty.

"The wedding was funny. Our kid was supposed to be making the best man's speech, 'Stand up, where's the best man, where's the best man?' And his ex-wife was working behind the bar, and our kid was engaged at this time, and he was down the cellar behind the bar shagging this girl he used to go out with.

"I was greeting all her family tripping me box off, you have to greet them all at the door, all these mad women with moustaches and tattoos. I'm on me knees laughing. We purposefully had a place where the pool room was bigger than the disco room. I think it was a big Bowie and Roxy and disco music stage. I wouldn't do it again just for the sake of it.

"Our kid's just got married but he'd been going with her for seven years. The one he was engaged to when he was shagging the other one at the wedding was the one he did the dirty on to go with the one he's going with now. When I was 16, I went for the army things... I was living with me girlfriend when I was 15 in a pretty wacky house. It's funny, you look at old photos of me being 15, I look older than photos now."

Are you maturing?

"Our kid has got two kids, I'm gonna have a kid, Bez's gonna have a kid, we're just a travelling circus the lot of us, we've never changed. The reason Bez doesn't do a lot of interviews is because, especially telly, Bez is Bez – it doesn't matter where he is, he's totally natural. He's always been a cult star. Bez was Bez in Little Hulton and Salford. Our kick was walking off from that area, we walked to the Haçienda, it took five hours.

"Donovan rung me up the other day, he wants to do some material with me. I'd love to do it, me and D writing some stuff. I've never actually wrote songs with anybody, those lot won't do my ideas. It'll be great if he plays G-Mex and Wembley with us, which I think he will, it'll be fucking brilliant. Donovan's stuff was brilliant, there's singer-songwriters coming out on the road with acoustic guitars nowadays and none of them are as good as Donovan's worse records. I don't know which his worse records were, probably the ones that didn't sell."

**"We're just a travelling circus, the lot of us"**

SHAUN RYDER

## ROGUES' GALLERY

# WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...?

X, Horse, Cowhead, No Arse, Knobhead et al



### SHAUN RYDER

AKA "X" - Vocals

Varied career post-Mondays, taking in Black Grape, *Daily Sport* columnist, *I'm A Celebrity...*

*Get Me Out Of Here!* contestant and presenter of the History Channel's *Shaun Ryder On UFOs*. The author of two published books, Ryder has also recorded several collaborations, including Gorillaz' No 1 single, "DARE". Teeth replaced: 2007.



### BEZ "BEZ" - Vibes

Joined Ryder in Black Grape. Published author (*Freaky Dancin'* memoir). Won *Celebrity Big Brother* in 2005. Currently

standing as parliamentary candidate for his Reality Party in the Salford and Eccles constituency.



### GARY WHELAN

"NO ARSE"

Drums/  
Musical director

Lives in Toronto. Other bands include; Love & The Family Tree, which also features Rowetta Satchell (see right).



### PAUL RYDER

"HORSE" - Bass

Lives in Los Angeles. Other bands; Big Arm and (with Gary Whelan) Europeans. Eldest son, Jacob, deputised on drums during the Mondays' 2009 American tour.



### MARK DAY

"COWHEAD" - Guitar

The only Happy Monday not from Salford. As of October 2014, reportedly teaching guitar in



### PAUL DAVIS

"KNOBHEAD"

Keyboards

As with Mark Day and Paul Ryder, did not participate in the pre-2012 Mondays reunions. Judge on Swinton's Got Talent 2012.

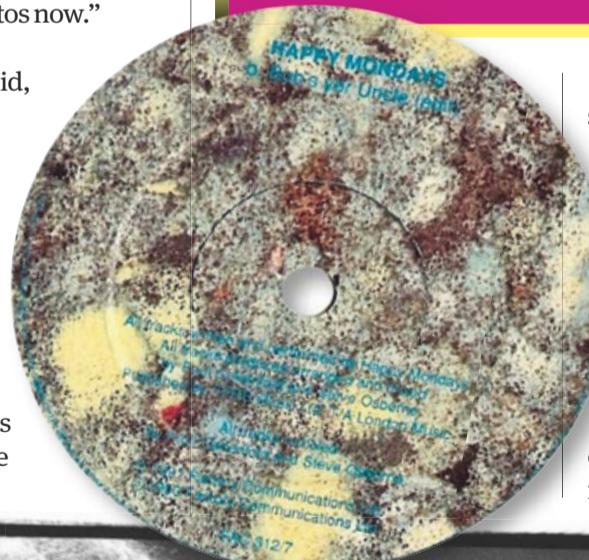


### ROWETTA (SATCHELL)

Vocals

2004 X Factor contestant. Spokesperson for domestic violence awareness.

Currently performs with Peter Hook & The Light.



Mancs united:  
Rowetta and Shaun  
Ryder, Wembley  
Arena, 1990

What about your planned solo project, covering a Donovan song with Johnny Marr and Barney?

"Oakie sent me a drum track down, Johnny added a bit to it and decided what he was going to do with the guitar, me and Barney got the vocals ready. We decided it was going to be fucking mega and one of the mellowest tunes for summer then we all went to the pub and got arseholed and by the time we got back to the studio in Johnny's house we were all bladdered and nothing got done. The next day he was off with The The, we were off after that, and Bernard was working on the Electronic album. If it had come out mega it'd have been Electronic with me singing on it, if it had come out OK it'd have been my solo venture, if it'd come out good we'd have been bitchin' over who did what."

Will the rest of the band be doing solo projects?

"Yeah, I hope so. Gaz and PD did a bit of drumming and keys on Pete Wylie's record."

**R**YDER'S PAST actions and behaviour might be distracting but he's nowhere near the ogre people portray him as. Shaun might be caught slightly in the ever-exaggerated Mondays



Mr tambourine man:  
Shaun having it large on  
the *Other Side Of Midnight*  
TV show, July 1989

legacy but as an interviewee he is particularly honest.

He sits and does things before you that no public figure should do before a journalist. Maybe it's because he feels he's constantly confronted by 'students' that Happy Mondays interviews are so caustic and so few real issues are tackled. You've only got to ask, though. He'd rather discuss the state of the world than the latest list of bizarre-anecdote-related questions which invariably began with 'Is it true that...?'

On the Gulf Crisis, Ryder is particularly well-versed. For someone interested in what can be interpreted as personal destruction (depending on which side of the drug line your morals fall), he surprisingly cares about the single man.

"Wars are down to governments and other people, I wouldn't fight one 'less it was on me front door step. I just wouldn't mither about a war over petrol unless you are being threatened. In America I saw an interview with the bloke who wrote *Born On The Fourth Of July*, and the geezer's been through the Vietnam War, he got shot, he got crippled, he was the biggest Tory going, he believed in his country and it took him a long time to know that what had happened was a load of bollocks."

"Now I saw an interview with that John Cossak or whatever his name was [Ron Kovic – Ed], live in America when they'd just sent the forces to the Middle East and he's sitting in his wheelchair and there's blokes calling him a 'Commie', a 'fucking shitbag', a 'soft-arsed motherfucking cripple' because he was saying that if the war goes off they'd be doing the same to young people as they did in Vietnam. Geezers who'd never even been in a fist fight calling him."

"I don't knock anybody going in the army, but I ain't for governments using people. But petrol... to save lives we could do without what they're arguing over and no-one would get killed, it'd change the world but we can do without it. There's even mothers saying if their sons die then it's for the good of the country. They don't remember because the shit's not on their doorstep... maybe if they'd been bombed during the Blitz. Ten years later they see films with soundtracks by The Doors and think, 'Yeah, it's great, let's have it again.'"

Ever go to church when you were little?

"Yeah, I was took to church 'til I was 10 or 11, Catholic church. All our family is really religious, me mam is always at church praying for us. All the women out of the family go, everyone's mams who we know all go to church, all the time."

I don't know why the men don't go. I suppose for the women it's probably still like going out for a few hours and meeting people they like to chat to. I can remember when we first started going to church on our own, and our Mat, we used to wag church and come back and tell me mam we'd been, and our Mat couldn't not go to church, couldn't wag it. He'd go in, even if he was just stood at the door. There was a mate from school, Jake, who I want to get in touch with, he's in London and he was my best pal up until four years ago. There are certain people from school like him I'd like to see."

While the Ecstasy-related furore whipped the Mondays into the public eye like an unwelcome piece of grit, some basics that have never been explained. You can sit in the manager's office and hear him turn calls down from *The Sun*, but you can bet your life none of them are going to enquire exactly where the band got their name from. "Our kid came over one day to Mark's attic that we used to practise in," recalls Shaun in a state of bemusement. "People used to ask us this but we always fucked them off. It came from something 'Happy', 'Happy Laws', was a Bunnymen song, and our kid said 'Happy Mondays' and we all thought it was shit so we kept it. We hated the name for years, it was corny and horrible. When we got our first review, we looked at the name and cringed."

Do you ever think about the Mondays splitting?

"I don't think about it 'cos we don't have to. There's not many bands like us who're all still mates, who like being out with each other. We're having too good a time to think about it. This weekend I'm either going to buy another car so Trish can have my car, with the kid coming she needs one. Or go to the 'Dam 'til Monday with Mani from the Roses, or invest in some new stereo equipment, it's got to be one of the three."

If you can cut through the legendary bullshit, you'll find this cruel-lipped man to be quite unique. Wagging his arse in the Hacienda, crooning like a demented cock, forgetting to fill up with petrol, he has a tale for every occasion. Unusually honest, you can only hope he won't be destroyed by the gathering clouds of success. ☺

## “Me mam is always at church praying for us”

SHAUN RYDER

### HIDDEN GEMS

## MANIC MONDAYS...

B-sides, alternate cuts, remixes and more



### “THE EGG”

“FREAKY DANCIN’” B-SIDE; 1986

The flipside to their Bernard Sumner-produced debut

single arrives on slide guitar and bongos before spinning out into a wild expansive rhythms, topped off by Ryder's murky vocals.



### “LITTLE MATCHSTICK OWEN”

SQUIRREL AND G-MAN..., 1987

From the band's debut album, this cut mixes insistent guitar rhythms with taut, expressive basslines: ample evidence that the band could keep tight focus when the mood suited.

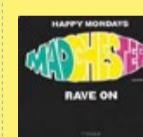


### “FAT LADY WRESTLERS”

BUMMED, 1988

Martin Hannett arguably

brought out the best in the Mondays: witness this album track from *Bummed* that brings space, clarity and texture to the band's trademark sound.



### “HALLELUJAH MACCOLL MIX”

SINGLE, 1990

Although the Weatherall/Oakenfold “Club Mix” is the big one, nonetheless Steve Lillywhite's mix, named in honour of his then wife, foregrounds the band's ramshackle, bleary-eyed qualities.



### “LOOSE FIT”

SINGLE, 1991

The Grid's remix of the *Yes Please!* single “Loose Fit” is a heavyweight Balearic/ambient crossover, with plenty of drifting keyboard motifs set against bulldozing drum patterns.

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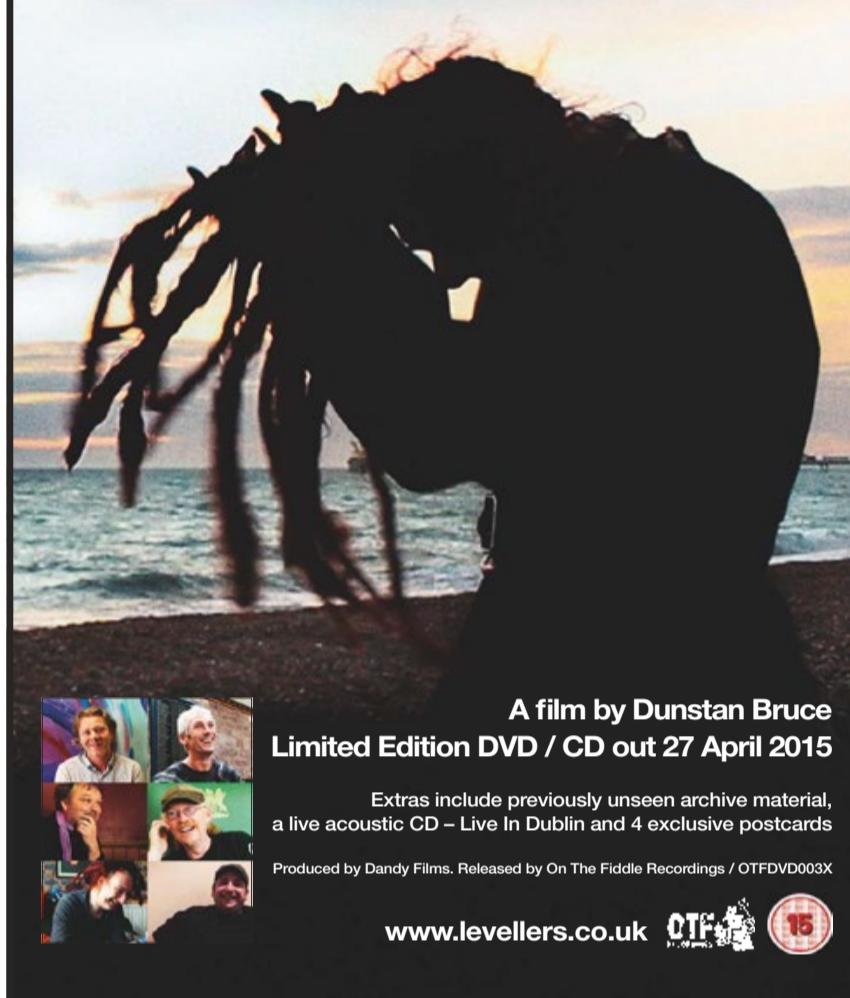
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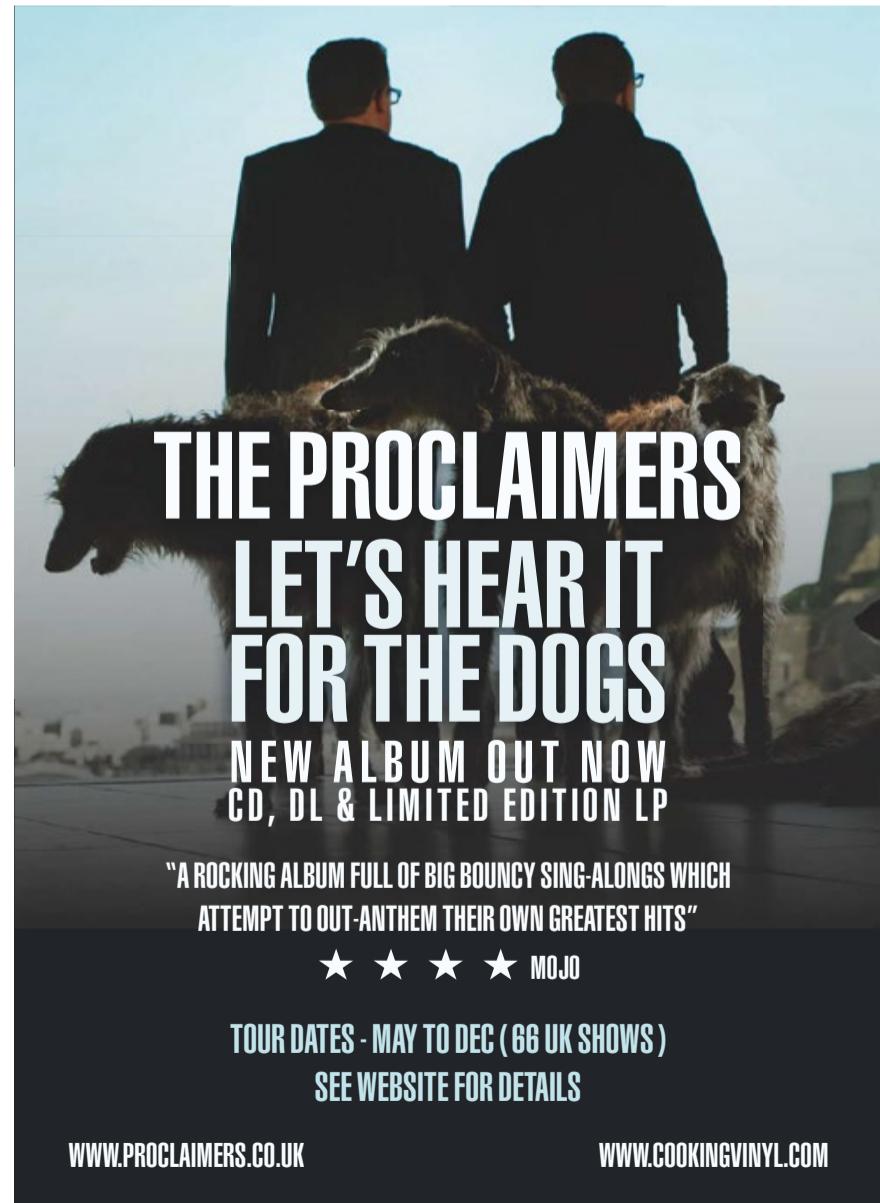
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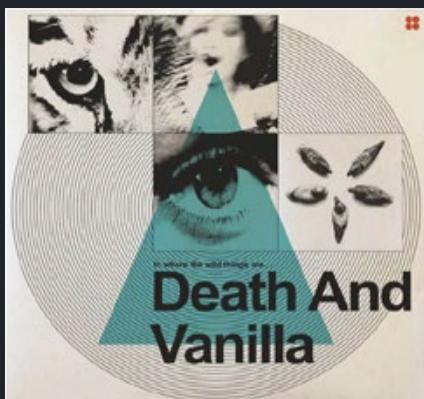
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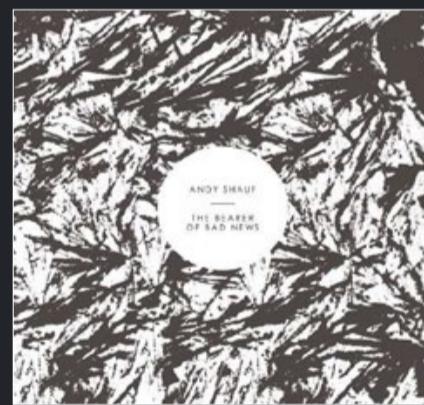
The entire B-side is a six-song cycle which serves as a short-form concept album." ~ Pitchfork



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**UNCUT**

# New albums

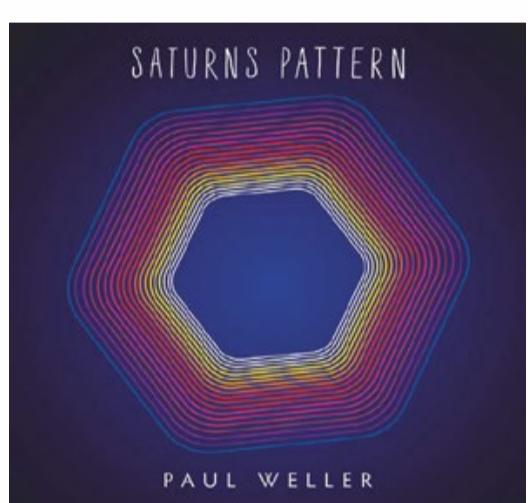
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THIS MONTH: MY MORNING JACKET | LEONARD COHEN &amp; MORE



JULIAN BROAD



## PAUL WELLER *Saturns Pattern*

PARLOPHONE

Weller's experimental phase continues apace: evolved and expansive vibes proliferate. *By Michael Bonner*

**9/10**

LAST MAY, PAUL Weller explained how his writing processes have changed over the last few years. Sitting in a busy West London café, Weller told *Uncut* that the demands of a young family, coupled with his own restless spirit, had found him abandoning traditional songwriting methods in favour of less familiar practices. "I needed to look for different ways of writing," he outlined over the chatter of the lunchtime crowd. "A good song is a good song

whichever way you do it. I know I can do it in the more traditional way. But I've also learned that there are other ways of doing it."

Recently, these "other ways" have manifested themselves as creative sessions at Weller's Black Barn studios in Ripley, Surrey, where the nine songs on *Saturns Pattern* were formed. Weller is on a roll at the moment, and *Saturns Pattern* feels like the fourth in an ongoing series of experimental albums, beginning with 2008's *22 Dreams* and including 2010's

**TRACKLIST**

- 1 White Sky
- 2 Saturn's Pattern
- 3 Going My Way
- 4 Long Time
- 5 Pick It Up
- 6 Phoenix
- 7 I'm Where I Should Be
- 8 In The Car
- 9 These City Streets



# New Albums

→ *Wake Up The Nation* and 2012's *Sonik Kicks*. While those albums involved rewarding digressions into Krautrock, pastoral psychedelia, dub, freeform jazz and electronica, *Saturns Pattern* – Weller's 12th solo album – is characterised by cut-ups and sound collages, built around riffs and grooves. There are fade-outs and fade-ins mid-song, vocals come heavily treated, instruments are strafed with sound effects. Essentially, Weller is making a virtue of his processes.

Such progressive thinking is evident in the first 60 seconds of the album's opening track, "White Skies", which shifts from an ambient intro to metallic-sounding guitar riffs, crashing "Kashmir"-style drums and electronically distorted vocals. The heavy lifting here has

been done by the Amorphous

Androgynous, who appear to have succeeded the Chemical Brothers as the go-to remixers for rock stars looking to free their minds: Noel Gallagher among them. Indeed, Gallagher once promised us an album produced by Amorphous Androgynous, but shelved it in favour of the pedestrian *High Flying Birds*. Weller himself worked on a further seven tracks with Amorphous Androgynous, but only "White Skies" has made it onto the album. Whereas Gallagher's decision implied a chronic reluctance to abandon a successful formula, in Weller's case "White Skies" appears to be a catalyst for something more evolved and expansive.

"Saturns Pattern" arrives on a sprightly piano refrain and uptempo basslines, with Weller apparently embracing his inner astrologer, "You gotta clear the decks/It's Saturn's peak". But there is a fake fade-out, a treated harmonica and

percussion loops; it's hard not to draw the conclusion that Weller is willing to push any song into experimental territory, if only to see what happens. Even the rather pretty piano ballad "Going My Way" is spun out in unexpected directions. From its deceptively placid beginning, it's animated with Beach Boys-style multi-tracked vocals and a pastoral folk interlude, before guitars forcefully drive it towards a crescendo. "Long Time" continues the album's momentum; its dense riffs recall Bowie's "Suffragette City" while intriguingly, Black Barn's long-serving studio manager Charles Rees is credited with "egg whisk". Incidentally, "Long Time" also features slide guitar from The Strypes' Josh McClorey, one of only a handful of guests on *Saturns Pattern*. Unlike the storied castlist on his recent records – Kevin Shields, Graham Coxon, Noel Gallagher and Bruce Foxton among them – this is

comparatively low-key business: McClorey, Syd Arthur's Liam Magill and Raven Bush, alongside old Jam cohort Steve Brookes.

Perhaps, though, the work done by co-producer Jan "Stan" Kybert – who also receives five music co-writes – shouldn't be overlooked. A Black Barn veteran since 2002's *Illumination* album, Kybert now seems to have been promoted to the role of chief creative foil previously occupied by Brendan Lynch and Simon Dine. If Kybert brings anything new to the party, it is a discrete refining of Weller's anti-formula formula.

The album's centrepiece is "Pick It Up", an ambitious, six-minute psych-soul opus that brings to mind Minnie Riperton's "Les Fleurs" or the Rotary Connection. Guitars and Hammond swirl round a layered vocal chant – "Rise/As we go/And we go/As we go/Rise". If "Pick It Up" appears steeped in a kind of '60s vernacular, it's tempting to view "I'm Where I Should Be" as the



## THE ROAD TO... SATURNS PATTERN

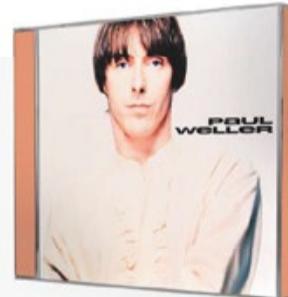
Paul Weller's interplanetary peaks



### THE STYLE COUNCIL *Confessions Of A Pop Group* 1988

After flirtations with the avant garde in The Jam, *Confessions* provided the first significant evidence of Weller's restless spirit; a diverse set including the appearance of the Swingle Singers and Weller's first attempt at a song suite: "The Gardener Of Eden".

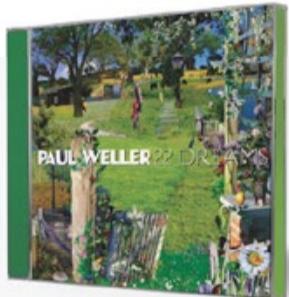
8/10



### PAUL WELLER *Paul Weller* 1992

His solo debut successfully integrated Weller's love for R'n'B with a more adventurous sensibility that he would more fully explore on his 'renaissance' albums. An important bridge, too, between the jazzy, summery vibes of The Style Council and his more forward-looking, inventive work.

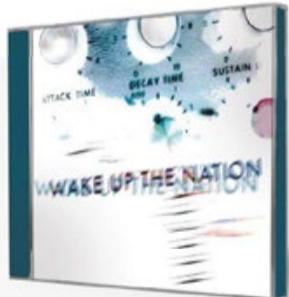
8/10



### PAUL WELLER *22 Dreams* 2008

A sprawling set of folk, alt.rock, electronica and fusion that kicked off Weller's creative renaissance. The album's high-profile collaborator is Noel Gallagher. But critically, this marks the start of Weller's productive relationship with *Noonday Underground*'s Simon Dine.

8/10



### PAUL WELLER *Wake Up The Nation* 2010

Released in the high season of Weller's 'renaissance', *Wake Up...*'s 16 songs in 40 minutes appeared like an attempt to cram as much as possible into an album already bursting at the seams with quality. Contains politics, suites, Kevin Shields and the line: "Once I was a man, my cock as hard as wood."

9/10

## SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** Paul Weller, Jan "Stan" Kybert  
**Recorded:** Black Barn Studios, Surrey  
**Personnel:** Paul Weller (vocals, guitars, bass, organ, piano, harmonica, percussion), Andy Crofts (guitars, keys, Moog, Mellotron, bass, piano), Ben Gordelier (drums), Steve Cradock (guitars, Moog), Jan "Stan" Kybert (bass, keyboards, Moog, guitar, programming), plus Stuart Rowe, The Amorphous Androgynous, Hannah Weller, Steve Brookes, Josh McClorey, Syd Arthur, Steve Pilgrim

*through the trees/There's a scent in the air/And beauty everywhere/I find it."*

The album's last two songs, "In The Car" and "These City Streets", share a thematic link – travel – but also the guitar work of Steve Brookes. Predictably, "In The Car" shifts from bluesy beginnings to a more full-on glam stomp via a brief folky stop-over. "I could spend my summer nights/Driving round the M25," he sings. "I'm self contained/And the music's loud/No-one can get in/And I don't wanna get out". *Saturns Pattern* closes with the eight-minute "These Streets". Ostensibly a love song – "I look into your eyes/And I know why/I'm in love with you" – it is more an exercise in sustaining a consistent tone (moody, epic) than continuing any of the investigative compositional techniques on the rest of the album. "We still got a way to go..." Weller sings as the song fades out: a statement of his creative endeavour, perhaps, as much as anything else. Wherever next?

**EXTRAS:** Deluxe boxset (pictured) includes **8/10** nine-track coloured vinyl LP, alternate artwork, 12-track deluxe CD plus bonus DVD album, 20-page booklet and poster.



56-year-old Weller reflecting on matters closer to home. Unlike the impressionistic cut-up lyrics on the rest of the album, "I'm Where I Should Be" finds Weller adopting a more literal approach. "I know exactly why/I'm where I should be/Not trapped by the burden of parody", he sings over a taut bassline and vaguely New Order-y guitars and synth. The summery "Phoenix" – "The blue of the sky/The cool of morning" – scoots along on chipper Northern Soul keys and tight grooves while Weller lays out an upbeat and positive message: "The birds and bees/The sun



## Q&amp;A

Weller on his new LP: "It puts us in a different place..."

**D**OES *SATURN'S PATTERN* FEEL LIKE THE START OF A NEW CHAPTER? I never think of anything as being the start or the finish, but I guess in some ways it could be. When we play some of the songs live, it feels like it's rejuvenated the band, and the audience as well. It's made us play the other songs differently. It sounds like a new band to me when we play these songs, so maybe it is.

**Most of the writing for *Saturns Pattern* was done in the studio. What were the benefits of that?** I like the challenge and excitement of having nothing at all and then watching the picture get built up and up along the course of a day or two. The more work you do, the more music you make. There's plenty of other songs I've written at home on a guitar or a piano, but none of which we used on the record! I thought there were some good songs among them – but I didn't want to make an album of those kind of tunes. I knew what I didn't want to make. It was just finding something I did want to do that took time. Once you get one or two tracks then you know where you are.

**What were the key tracks for you?** The title track, definitely. That came about from Stan Kybert, who produced the record. He took some stuff we'd jammed one night and cut it all up and reassembled it. It sounded really different when I heard it. It puts us in a different place. That was the cornerstone. "Phoenix" was important, too. It has a Frankie Knuckles feel. So between those two tracks, there's a sense of movement and fluidity that formed the basis of the record for me.

**The title track and "White Sky" in particular have a cut-up, collage-y feel. Is this the first time you've written so extensively in the studio?** *Sonic Kicks* and *Wake Up The Nation* were like that. *22 Dreams*, not so much. The

same thing with lyrics, I'm always writing. So it's just me dipping in and out of notepads, seeing what works. I don't know what make they are, mate... sort of A4-size green folder-type ones.

**What about a song like "Pick It Up"? How did that come together?** We started off with a drum beat and a funky one-note guitar thing. Quite a few of those tunes we assembled bit by bit. On "In The Car", for instance, we left a space where I thought a bridge or a middle eight would be. We'd run through it until we thought of the right part.

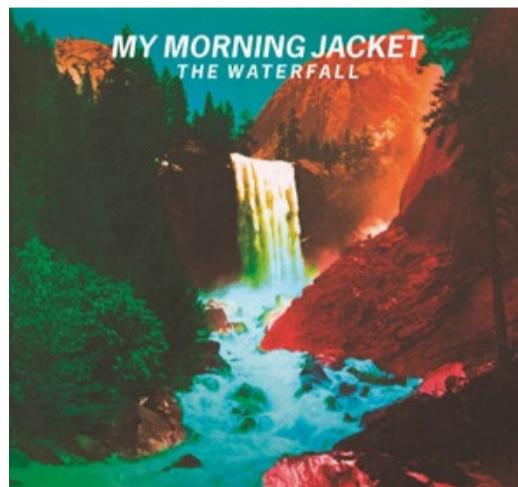
**Which songs flow more naturally?** "Going My Way". It's probably my favourite track. I've demoed it three or four times in the last two years and never really got anywhere with it. I didn't really have confidence in it at one time and then I think after finishing it, it's one of the best things I've ever done. It was just a matter of waiting for the right bits to fill the bits that were missing!

**Where does *Saturns Pattern* come from?** It just seemed to roll off the tongue. I was thinking of those T.Rex titles: "Telegram Sam". Then my wife said there's a website about a geometric shape that occurs after strong winds on the north pole of Saturn. It creates this strange hexagonal shape that we eventually used for the artwork. And there's a microphone used on the album called a Saturn. There's a little switch on it to go between two different modes, and there's patterns, too, so whether I've just clocked that subconsciously, I have no idea!

*"When we play the songs live, it feels like it's rejuvenated the band"*

**Any idea yet what's next?** In terms of new stuff? I could have kept on recording – we got into a creative flow at the time – but we had to stop as we had other things to do. There were a few things I started, new songs. I'd quite like to get on them some time. I've got a couple of things, but they're a bit more New York disco... a New York Latino disco vibe going on. You can see it now, can't you? Me with the little satin hot pants and roller skates on the front cover with a target T-shirt!

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER



## TRACKLIST

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1                          | Believe (Nobody Knows)                 |
| 2                          | Compound Fracture                      |
| 3                          | Like A River                           |
| 4                          | In Its Infancy (The Waterfall)         |
| 5                          | Get The Point                          |
| 6                          | Spring (Among The Living)              |
| 7                          | Thin Line                              |
| 8                          | Big Decisions                          |
| 9                          | Tropics (Erase Traces)                 |
| 10                         | Only Memories Remain                   |
| <b>Deluxe CD (Disc 2):</b> |  |
| 11                         | Silence                                |
| 12                         | Hillside Song                          |
| 13                         | Compound Fracture Miami Jungle Version |
| 14                         | I Can't Wait                           |
| 15                         | Only Memories Remain Jim Demo          |

# MY MORNING JACKET

## The Waterfall

ATO/CAPITOL

Recorded at a remote idyll, Jim James & co's seventh sounds familiar but distinctive. By Graeme Thomson

**7/10**

IN THE FOUR years since My Morning Jacket's last record, 2011's excellent *Circuital*, the Louisville band's singer, songwriter and spirit-guide Jim James has assumed a more visible, perhaps even vaguely statesmanlike status in the landscape of American music.

In 2013, James released his first solo album, *Regions Of Light And Sound Of God*, to widespread acclaim. Late last year he was one of the select group of musicians – among them Elvis Costello and Rhiannon Giddens – handpicked by T Bone Burnett to bring the 'new' Basement Tapes project, *Lost On The River*, to fruition. James has, in effect, undergone a promotion up the ranks, from Championship contender to mid-table Premiership mainstay.

Such shifts in the internal dynamic of a band can often prove troublesome, but My Morning Jacket's seventh studio album betrays no tell-tale signs of disharmony. The exact opposite, in fact. Recorded at Stinson Beach, a remote idyll an hour

north of San Francisco, *The Waterfall* turns easily like the seasons: from light to dark, soft to heavy, from heady psych and heavy prog to '80s MTV-rock, fluting country, steamy R'n'B and soul. Through it all runs an ingrained psychedelic streak which is organic rather than synthetic, James and co tripping out on the glory of a sunset, a beach at dawn, a mile-high mountain view.

The sense of California seeping through the pores and into the bones of this music is at its strongest on "Like A River". With its skipping acoustic guitar figure, skittish rhythm and cascading harmonies redolent of The Byrds' "Renaissance Fair", it mainlines its vibe direct from Monterey. On "Spring (Among The Living)", James emerges, as though reborn, from a hard winter – "Didn't think I'd make it" – with a driving slab of pastoral psych rock. Harnessing a weighty but soulful groove, after six minutes it climaxes in the kind of high-stakes vocal sparring which wouldn't sound out of place on *Let It Bleed*.

*The Waterfall* is, then, perfectly attuned to its



immediate surroundings, but it also seeks to channel a more all-encompassing spirit. Long beholden to Transcendental Meditation and the mysteries of the Universe with a capital U, James tells *Uncut* that the album was propelled by the feeling that, cosmically, "One chapter has ended, the page has been turned to start the next one, but nothing has been written down yet." This is the message of surging opener "Believe (Nobody Knows)", the words revelling in the promise of the coming flux, the music falling somewhere between the rush of The Who's "Baba O'Riley" and the cheap but potent thrill of Journey's "Any Way You Want It".

Several other songs draw unironically on classic rock motifs of the '70s and '80s. "Big Decisions" is an almost perfect retro-rock confection, with its crunching powerpop riff and huge, radio-friendly chorus. Perhaps honouring the fact that Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* was recorded down the road in Sausalito, "In Its Infancy" bounces between sleek, sunshine-y pop and more rhythmically complex blues-rock, as though it were a cut-and-shut experiment in welding together "Dreams" and "The Chain". "Compound Fracture" and "Thin Line" are embedded in plush R'n'B, nodding to Hall & Oates, the Isleys and Bowie's *Young Americans*. Lounging on a warm soundbed of analog synths and fuzzy guitars, James' ever-adaptable voice

## Q&A

Jim James



You could easily have called the album 'From Stinson Beach'... We try to switch it up every time. Do it somewhere different, and get the vibe of the place

into the record. Stinson Beach was like living on another planet. I felt like it was on the moon. Everything is so grand, you feel like you're jutting out into space. There are giant redwoods, you're right next to the ocean, you can climb up to the top of a mountain and watch the sunset on the beach. Every day we were impacted by the power of the air, it felt special to us. We spent two months there - living, playing and recording. There was no rush, no pressure. It was free and fun.

**Style-wise, this record is more eclectic than ever.** Music is freedom. It's there for every occasion, and the idea of limiting your musical experience is, to me, absurd. You're always growing and learning, and hopefully you don't repeat the same mistakes - at least make different mistakes, and make them with good intentions. At the end of day for us, we're having so much fun doing it, I really don't care what other people's opinions are. Who fucking cares?

**Your personal profile is higher than ever. Does that impact on the band?** We have a pretty free and open environment where we're encouraged to do whatever we want while the band isn't working. It enables everyone to explore stuff and get their ya-yas out, and when we come back together it's always a warm feeling of comfort and togetherness and home. We really value the freedom we have. It creates more of a bond. *INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON*

slinks around appealingly in falsetto.

It's not all cosmic, slightly woolly theorising. The album's two most straightforward, unabashed musical moments are also the most lyrically direct, and reserved for affairs of the heart. "Get The Point" is a beautifully unaffected back-porch twinkle. Over supple fingerpicking, slide guitar and pattering drums, James' intimate vocal bids a warm but firm farewell to a lover. The sentiment finds a bookend in the closing "Only Memories Remain", another goodbye song in which "the names and places have all been changed, but the identity remains the same." A sparse, soulful low-burn, James channels Lennon's "Jealous Guy" over the lush, unhurried groove, clipped guitar lines and bittersweet strings.

Like the nine tracks that precede it, the song's component parts are both reassuringly familiar yet never less than distinctive. It may be entirely fanciful to suggest that *The Waterfall* soundtracks the shift from

one great cultural age to the next, but it does possess a beguiling Janus-like quality, at once looking to the past and gazing into the future with open-hearted warmth and curiosity.

### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**

Jim James and  
Tucker Martine

**Recorded at:**

Panoramic House,  
Stinson Beach, CA;  
Flora, Portland, OR; La  
La Land, Louisville, KY

**Personnel:** Jim James,  
Tom Blankenship,  
Patrick Hallahan, Carl  
Broemel, Bo Koster

# A to Z

COMING UP  
THIS MONTH...

**p70 HOLLY HERNDON**

**p73 NICK CAVE & WARREN ELLIS**

**p74 LEONARD COHEN**

**p76 HOT CHIP**

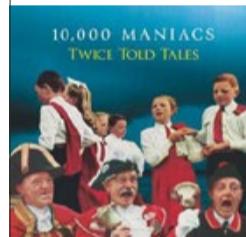
**p78 SHELBY LYNNE**

**p79 UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA**

**p81 TY SEGALL BAND**

**p82 THE WEATHER STATION**

**p85 HARRIS & CROWELL**



**10,000  
MANIACS**

**Twice Told Tales**

CLEOPATRA

Trad classics retooled by folk-rock veterans

A dozen years ago, Natalie Merchant released *The House Carpenter's*

*Daughter*, an exquisite re-imagining of trad folksong. More expansively upbeat than Merchant's sparser approach, her old band – minus Merchant – now follows suit on a set of 14 patrimonial ballads drawn from all corners of Britain's folk heritage. Standards such as "She Moved Through The Fair" and "Marie's Wedding" are given bright folk-pop makeovers much in the style of the band's 1980s recordings with Joe Boyd. But it's WB Yeats' "The Song Of Wandering Aengus", sung a cappella by Merchant's replacement Mary Ramsey, and the voice-and-keening-fiddle simplicity of "Greenwood Sidey" that are the standouts.

*NIGEL WILLIAMSON*



**AYE AYE**

**Aye Aye**

RICHIE RECORDS/  
TESTOSTERTUNES

**Bardo Pond and Purling Hiss combine for a damaged psych-blues jam**

Connoisseurs of gloopy, lo-fi latterday psych have

long gravitated to Philadelphia, thanks to the city harbouring bands like Bardo Pond, Birds Of Maya and Spacin'. Aye Aye are what passes for a supergroup in those parts, featuring the Gibbons brothers from Bardo Pond, current Purling Hiss drummer Ben Leapheart and local scene mascot Harmonica Dan Balcer. Sludge blues are their forte, with the self-explanatory likes of "Sleep Day" moving at the dirge pace of much Gibbons-related material. Balcer's forlorn harmonica leads, however, provide a relative sense of definition to these six instrumentals, executed with a Cro-Magnon "grace" that makes Crazy Horse sound like sprightly technocrats.

*JOHN MULVEY*

## HOLLY HERNDON

### Platform

4AD RVING INTL

Cutting-edge conceptual electronica from Silicon Valley-based techno futurist.

By Stephen Dalton



9/10

their sheer ravishing beauty. Mixing the hard-cut collage methods of *musique concrète* with sound-warping software and customised digital instruments, Herndon's second album is not ashamed to embrace blissful melody and trance-like euphoria, yet remains constantly alive to the liberating power of dissonance and disruption. There is a great disturbance in the Force.

Born and raised in Tennessee, but now based in San Francisco, Herndon's track record to date includes performing in Berlin techno clubs, studying under legendary avant-rock guitarist Fred Frith, and composing ambient audioscapes tailored to the acoustics of car interiors. Currently working on her doctoral thesis at the Centre For Computer Research In Music And Acoustics At California's Stanford University, her work has always balanced academic and populist, cerebral and sensual, Apollonian and Dionysian. But *Platform* is her most successful fusion of these elements so far, an ambitious LP that propels Herndon into the avant-pop premier league alongside the likes of Björk, Aphex Twin, Matthew Herbert and Flying Lotus.

Academic theory is one of the forces shaping *Platform*, an album Herndon describes as a "paradisic gesture", a bold appeal for electronic music to play a bigger role in forging optimistic, politically progressive new narratives to counter those of hegemonic right-wing elites. She quotes economics professor Guy Standing, who is credited with coining the modish term "precariat", and cultural theorist Suhail Malik as influences on the album. But none of this is essential to enjoying *Platform*. No background reading is necessary, no apprenticeship on the arid avant-garde fringes. Just dive in and savour the lush sonic foliage.

*Platform* is awash with squelches, clunks and loops, but the most immediately arresting feature is its variety of human voices. Herndon treats her own vocals and those of her multiple collaborators with equal irreverence: processed, stretched and desiccated, liberated from linguistic duty but never from emotional force. Drag performer Colin Self is spliced into gleaming shards on "Unequal", while soprano singer Amanda DeBoer Bartlett provides staccato trilling and heavy breathing over the deconstructed whoosh and shudder of "DAO".

There are some simply gorgeous vocalese collages here, including "Home", a "breakup song" about communication devices revealed as unfaithful lovers by post-Snowden surveillance anxiety, or "New Ways To Love", with its synthetic swirls of Liz

BOTH FASCINATED AND troubled by humankind's increasingly intimate relationship with technology, Holly Herndon makes electronic music of which the dense conceptual, theoretical and political elements are often eclipsed by



### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Recorded at:** Home recording in San Francisco, Berlin, Los Angeles, Palo Alto

**Produced by:** Holly Herndon, Mat Dryhurst

**Personnel:** Holly Herndon, Mat Dryhurst (vocals), Amanda DeBoer Bartlett, Colin Self, Claire Tola, Spencer Longo (vocals), Amnesia Scanner (co-production, "An Exit")

Fraser-ish voluptuousness. An exploded cubist choir ripples over a sleek electro pulse on "Chorus", which samples the sounds of Herndon's online browsing habits, while sublimely intertwined sighs and sobs yoke together the skeletal rhythmic framework of "Home". Occasionally, Herndon even allows herself a conventional vocal performance, notably on "Morning Sun", which sounds like a big-haired 1980s power ballad refracted through a cracked mirror of post-glitch sonics and post-dubstep percussion. Striking a darkly satirical note, the spoken-word monologue "Lonely At The Top" is the most incongruous digression here. It is voiced in menacingly soft tones by Claire Tolan, a Berlin-based artist and radio host who works in the niche field of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), a quasi-fetishist subculture in which

people experience a heightened tingling response to various sensory stimuli. Over a drifting bed of clammy sound effects, Tolan plays the role of a hostess administering some kind of non-specific pampering treatment to an important client, probably male, certainly wealthy and entitled. Reminiscent of Chris Morris' cult "ambient radio" show *Blue Jam*, this

boldly bizarre vignette is fifty shades of creepy.

Laptop electronica has now been around long enough to establish its own pantheon, its own hierarchies and its own lazy orthodoxies. In person and on record, Herndon has plenty to say about how too much digital music has become complacent and retrograde. *Platform* is not a manifesto, but it feels like a galvanising challenge to Herndon's peers to embolden their ideas, broaden their horizons and push on into an undiscovered continent of sound.

### Q&A

Holly Herndon

**Y**ou make leftfield pop while studying for a doctoral thesis in experimental music; do you see these activities as separate or connected? I tried to separate them at first, but not now. On the first record they separated more track by track, but on this LP I tried to combine things I love. *Platform* is pop and experimental.

**You have called *Platform* a "paradisic gesture"?** There's a professor of economics in London, Guy Standing, who talks about 'paradise politics' and

creating new fantasies. When the shit hits the fan with the economy, the right is good at creating paradise politics for people to easily fall into, and the left often fails to create an alternative. That was the thought behind it: how can we come together collectively to create new realities?

**So you think electronic musicians should have more political responsibility?** I just like the idea that music matters. Recently, experimental music has been invited to more mainstream stages, but what comes with that? Do we just have the experimental hour, then the dance party, and that's all that's changed? Or are we able to port over some of the values and ideas from that community? That's the ideal.



## DANIEL BACHMAN

### River

THREE-LOBED RECORDINGS

### An American Primitive masterclass

While some folk guitarists try to transcend the usual John Fahey and Jack Rose comparisons, one suspects Daniel Bachman would be happy to confront them head on. Like the clutch of evocative solo albums that preceded it (most recently, 2014's *Orange Co. Serenade*), *River* is deeply embedded in a historical continuum, with a Rose tune ("Levee") covered, along with "Old Country Rock", a 1920s Paramount blues side by one of Bachman's Virginian antecedents, William Moore. It is Fahey, of course, who looms largest: the bold 14-minute opener, "Won't You Cross Over To That Other Shore", is a demonstration of the robust, visceral virtuosity that places Bachman at the forefront of latterday Takoma acolytes.

JOHN MULVEY

**7/10**



## BACHMAN

### Heavy Blues

LINUS

### The Guess Who/BTO man gets a little help from his friends...

"Do something that challenges you. Be fierce and fearless," Neil Young advised when he encountered his old Winnipeg mate Randy Bachman at a hall-of-fame induction last year. The outcome is a raucous, rough-and-tumble blues-rock album, thick with fuzzy coats of distortion – not unlike parts of Young's own *Living With War* or *Le Noise*, say. Young turns up with 'Old Black' to lend some squalling fury to "Little Girl Lost", and Joe Bonamassa, Peter Frampton and Robert Randolph also add screeching licks to Bachman's still enviable ability to craft memorable riffs, while producer Kevin 'Caveman' Shirley keeps it all as heavy as you'd want.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**6/10**



## BANDITOS

### Banditos

BLOODSHOT

### Southern rock and deep soul from talented Alabama debutants

A six-piece from Alabama working out of Nashville, Banditos are an adaptable beast, playing various flavours of Southern sound with considerable panache and foot-tapping flair. A Doug Sahm/CCR vibe runs through much of this debut, as the band switch from the drawling, Southern groove of "Cry Baby Cry" and the Bakersfield country pound of "Still Sober After All These Beers" to the sweaty soul of "Old Ways" without missing a beat. They are helped by having two distinct singers, with Corey Parson's drawl giving way to Mary Beth Richardson's croon as needs must, and sometimes duetting with unambiguous charm, as on "Blue Mosey #2".

PETER WATTS

**8/10**



## BEST COAST

### California Nights

HARVEST

### Third time's the charm on focused set from retro LA duo

Since their lo-fi 2010 full-length debut *Crazy For You*, Bethany Cosentino and Bob Bruno have been attempting to raise the fidelity without losing Best Coast's ineffable girl-group charm. Producer Jon Brion was miscast on 2012's *The Only Place*, but Wally Gagel, who helmed the 2013 EP "Fade Away" and now *California Nights*, gets it right, cranking up the reverb and multiplying Cosentino's vocals to achieve the Spector-esque wall of sound the duo has been aiming for. Cosentino's girlish singing, playfully self-mocking introspection and singalong refrains on such confections as "So Unaware" and "When Will I Change" portray her as a Taylor Swift for hipsters, and that's not a bad thing.

**7/10**

**BUD SCOPPA**

## HOW TO BUY...

### NEW BRIT SYNTH

Into the analog heart of darkness



## MOGWAI

### Rave Tapes

ROCK ACTION, 2014

The veteran Scots instrumental rockers' eighth album finds them augmenting their poignant crescendos with an injection of electronic hardware. Tracks like "Master Card" simmer with analogue textures, while the baroque synths that erupt midway through "Remurdered" feel like a clear tip of the cap to Italian horror maestros Goblin.

**7/10**



## FUCK BUTTONS

### Tarot Sport

ATP, 2009

Benjamin Power and Andrew Hung's friskily named duo followed up 2008's vestigial *Street Horrrsing* with this brawnier outing, produced by Andrew Weatherall. A synapse-strafing blend of techno, noise and shoegaze, it nonetheless felt celebratory. Improbably, standout track "Olympians" actually made it to the 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony.

**8/10**



## THE HAXAN CLOAK

### Excavation

TRIANGLE, 2013

Londoner Bobby Krlic enters the heart of darkness on his second long-player, a journey through a murky netherworld of pitch-black synth, creaking strings, ghostly sub-bass and filmic sound design. Quite the calling card, Krlic was poached by Björk to work on her recent *Vulnicura*.

**8/10**

LOUIS PATTISON



## BLANCK MASS

### Dumb Flesh

SACRED BONES

### Further Olympian techno feats from one half of Fuck Buttons

One of the stranger cultural by-products of the 2012 London Olympics was a starring role, in the opening ceremony, for the music of power-electronics duo Fuck Buttons, and the spin-off project of Benjamin John Power, Blanck Mass. An unlikely gig for supposed noise artists, though much of Power's 2011 solo debut, *Blanck Mass*, felt purpose-built for stadiums: grandiose, martial techno, sometimes macho in its triumphalism. After such success, Power might plausibly have retreated into noise, and "Detritus", initially, is cacophonous enough for Whitehouse. But generally, *Dumb Flesh* is more gleaming and monolithic than ever, with "Cruel Sport" an epic highlight. A full-time career soundtracking military pageants still beckons.

JOHN MULVEY

**8/10**



## BOB MOSES

### All In All

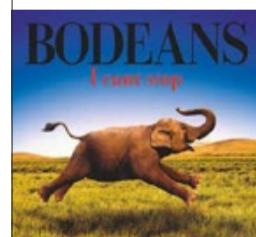
DOMINO

### Canadian club-house duo's sultry grooves compiled

Bob Moses is two people, Jimmy Vallance and Tom Howie, both from Vancouver, who met for the first time in Brooklyn a few years ago and bonded, one assumes, over tear-stained indie and club tracks. *All In All* compiles the pair's two out-of-print 12-inches with their first for Domino and demonstrates their mastery of the after-hours staple known as the "sad banger", those long, winding, lachrymose house cuts that, like "Far From The Tree" and "Too Close For Comfort", induce mild euphoria in the listener. Most revealing is an acoustic version of "Hands To Hold" that strips the duo back to their folky essence.

PIERS MARTIN

**7/10**



## BODEANS

### I Can't Stop

FREE & ALIVE

### Heartland rockers march into decade number four

For their 14th album, Kurt Neumann and company, sans singer Sammy Llanas who departed in 2012, chase the ghosts of radio-ready '70s/'80s-style AOR rock. Heavy blues dominates in places, Neumann and a honking horn section leaning into the timeworn sentiments of "Love Somebody", drifting into more familiar combinations of country, pop, and power balladry ("Your Secret's Safe"). It's all been done before; still, devotees will find plenty to like, like the sizzling "Oh Mama", delivering silvery guitar lines, sharp rhythms, and hooks aplenty, and a stomping closer, "Good Times Roll", all due apologies to The Cars.

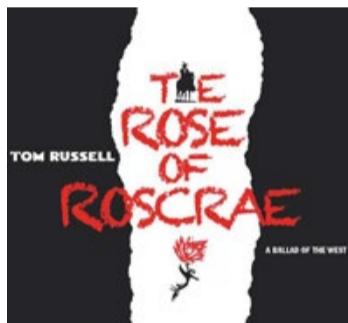
LUKE TORN

**6/10**

## AMERICANA



BEST  
OF THE  
MONTH



8/10

**TOM RUSSELL**  
**The Rose Of Roscrae**  
FRONTERO RECORDS

**Epic cowboy odyssey from ambitious singer-songwriter to complete Americana trilogy**

A songwriter, painter, essayist and thriller writer, Tom Russell could never be described as unambitious. Among his fine back catalogue of driving country, folk and sand-speckled Tex-Mex ballads, Russell has released a couple of albums – *The Man From God Knows Where* (1999) and *Hotwalker* (2005) – which used a combination of original compositions, spoken word, guest voices, refrains and folk recordings to explore aspects of America's past. *The Rose Of Roscrae* completes this cinematic trio, telling the story of an Irish vagabond on the loose in the America West, chased by sheriffs and dreams of home, as he flits from Mexico to Canada through prairie, prison and fairground. This is Russell's take on how the West was won by "Irish drunks, ex-slaves and Mexicans". It is an epic tale, a blend of Rodgers & Hammerstein, Bertolt Brecht, Cormac McCarthy and Louis L'Amour, thick with references to US history, music and myth as well as a John Ford-style appreciation of the Old Country. The roll call of guest stars is immense – contributors include Johnny Cash, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Guy Clark, Walt Whitman, Joe Ely, Tex Ritter, Lead Belly – some dredged from old recordings, others singing or speaking to fill out the story. Snippets of traditional songs ("St James Hospital", "Sam Hall", "The Unfortunate Rake") add atmosphere and provide context for 25 or so original compositions. Russell is a hell of a songwriter, and here are several fantastic examples of his craft: "Johnny Behind The Deuce", a rollicking country anthem; "Rose Of Roscrae", a gloriously sentimental Irish ballad; "He Wasn't A Bad Kid, When He Was Sober", a brilliant rocker; the Southern boogie of "Doin' Hard Time In Texas"; and the gospel love song "Resurrection Mountain". All told, it's an awful lot to listen to, but the scope is majestic, the ambition outrageous and the music magnificent. *PETER WATTS*



## THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

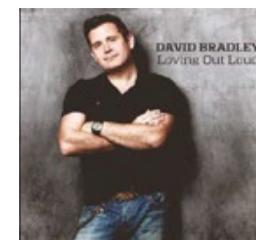
► Minnesota's **Charlie Parr** (left) is a singular talent who's spent most of his career making music in old warehouses or basements using only vintage gear,

giving his songs the feel of arcane field recordings. Now he's changed tack with latest effort *Stumpjumper*, for which he left his native state and brought in a backing band for the first time. The LP, driven by Parr's deft fingerpicking on acoustic guitar and banjo, features 11 originals and a cover of timeless murder ballad, "Delia". Out in the US on the Red House label, a UK release is hopefully pending. Also upon us is *Second Hand*

**Heart**, which marks **Dwight Yoakam's** return to Reprise, the imprint that issued debut *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc, Etc* nearly 30 years ago. The album finds him revisiting the countrybilly twang of his early days, too, including a hopped-up version of the traditional "Man Of Constant Sorrow".

There's plenty to get animated about on the live front. Esteemed folk-bluesman **Chris Smither** arrives on these shores at the back end of May, playing five dates in support of excellent new retrospective, *Still On The Levee*. And look out for **Steve Gunn**, who caps two fine recent works, *Way Out Weather* and Black Twig Pickers collaboration *Seasonal Hire*, with a solo tour. He kicks off at London's Lexington on May 18 and finishes at The Lantern in Bristol a week later.

*ROB HUGHES*



**DAVID BRADLEY**  
**Loving Out Loud**  
FOD

**Country from Nashville via Sunderland and Kazakhstan**

**6/10**

Sunderland-born David Bradley taught himself to be a country singer in downtime as an oil worker in the former USSR. He's now based in Nashville, and sounds it, for better and worse. Bradley has a confident way with country's tropes, and commands sufficient respect in his adopted hometown to have Rodney Crowell guest on opening track "Hard Time Movin' On". But he's far too deep in hock to Music Row orthodoxy (*Loving Out Loud* is largely written by one-man hit factory Rivers Rutherford). As a consequence, Bradley's promisingly unusual background becomes irrelevant: he sounds barely distinguishable from dozens of his peers.

*ANDREW MUELLER*



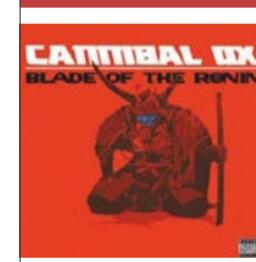
**BRAIDS**  
**Deep In The Iris**

ARBUTUS/FLEMISH EYE

**Polished third from Montreal art-poppers**

Canadian trio Braids hail from the same Arbutus stable that nurtured Grimes and conjure a spectral synthpop not a million miles from Claire Boucher's. But where Grimes deals in fantasy, Braids' singer Raphaelle Standell-Preston looks to confront more unsavoury issues – abuse, pornography, slut-shaming – that make for a compelling listen on the likes of "Bunny Rose" and "Getting Tired"; "I thank you, Canada", she sings, witheringly, in a Björkish register, on "Miniskirt". The pill is somewhat sweetened by Braids' glossy new sound, a feelgood revamp that pairs swooning electronics with upfront drum'n'bass and will do some damage at large outdoor events.

*PIERS MARTIN*



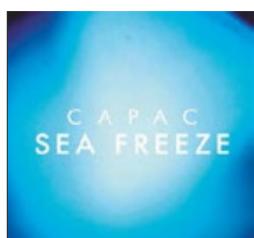
**CANNIBAL OX**  
**Blade Of The Ronin**

IRON GALAXY/IHIPHOP

**Long-overdue return of glowering New York rap duo**

In 2001, Cannibal Ox released a dense, introspective debut, *The Cold Vein*, that became something of an ur-text for the hazily-defined underground rap scene. At a time when their old Def Jux label boss El-P is enjoying unprecedented levels of success as half of Run The Jewels, Vast Aire and Vordul Mega's reunion now seems timely. Their prevailing operatic bleakness has barely changed in the intervening 14 years, however, even if the comic book reveries take more precedence these days over reflective street reportage. The title track is a highlight, not least because Cannibal Ox's enduring Wu-Tang love is enhanced by a guest verse from one of the Clan's undersung footsoldiers, U-God.

*JOHN MULVEY*



## CAPAC

### Sea Freeze

THIS IS IT FOREVER

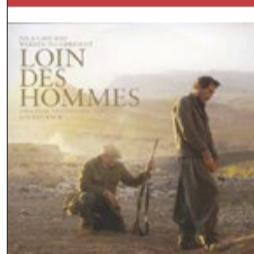
**Solid debut blends soulful soundscapes with electro symphonies**

After four years of rare but well-received EPs, British post-rocking electronic

quartet Capac shift into lush widescreen mode on their first full album. Adrift on ambient audioscapes of synthetic whalesong, amniotic pulses and half-submerged techno beats, Kate Smith's breathy vocals sound dislocated even at their most beautiful: "This is not what I was meant to be," she intones over the syncopated seven-minute drone symphony, "Prophet Of The State". There are Massive Attack traces here, notably in the sumptuous future-soul prowl of "Spirit Level", while the full-blown avant-classical string piece "Lark Lane" – a nod to the band's Liverpool roots – makes for a bracingly grand finale, both minimal and monumental.

STEPHEN DALTON

**8/10**



## NICK CAVE AND WARREN ELLIS

### Loin Des Hommes

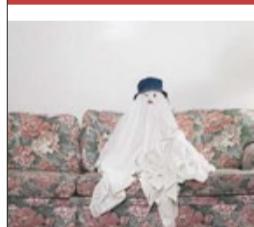
GOLIATH ENTERPRISES

**Another exquisite score from the men in black**

Between them, Nick Cave and Warren Ellis have now collaborated on 12 scores for film and theatre; a larger body of work than they accumulated with the Bad Seeds and Grinderman. This latest endeavour, for a new Viggo Mortensen drama, finds the pair downsizing their sound. While their trademark mournful violin is still in place, *Loin Des Hommes* foregrounds instead gently shifting electronic soundscapes and ghostly piano melodies. "The Teacher" consists of little more than a handful of piano chords and a low drone; "Setting Out", meanwhile, adds a fine drizzle of percussion to the Enoesque ambient electronica and plucked violin notes. A record that achieves a great deal with only a few raw materials.

MICHAEL BONNER

**8/10**



## CHASTITY BELT

### Time To Go Home

HARDLY ART

**Cracking stoner pop debut from Seattle quartet**

Chastity Belt are a four-piece all-woman band from Seattle with a deadpan approach and serious intent that comes across in both their languid, stoner, fat-bumblebee-in-autumn indie-pop melodies and the accompanying lyrics. Opening track "Drone" encapsulates the experience, combining a drowsy jangle with the serenely dismissive "He was just another man, trying to teach me something." Elsewhere, there's a shlocky tribute to John Carpenter on "The Thing", the howling "Why Try", an ennui-laden "IDC" and the rather excellent "Cool Slut". Funny, smart and so elegantly poised.

PETER WATTS

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PETER WATTS



## BEN CHATWIN

### The Sleeper Awakes

VILLAGE GREEN

**Scottish-based electronic composer goes solo**

Inspired by HG Wells' futuristic dystopia,

Chatwin's solo debut, following a string of releases as Talvihorros, is a richly melodic hybrid of ambient electronics and organic instrumentation, seamlessly woven into a cinematic soundtrack of intense beauty in which layers of synthesised sound wash over antique Dulcitone piano, hammered dulcimer, cello and violin. Echoes of Aphex Twin are inescapable, the minimalist school of Reich/Glass/Riley is a clear reference point and Chatwin also cites Satie and Arvo Pärt as influences. But he has a powerful sense of rock dynamics, too, and there's an epic, Floydian grandeur to "Atoms Of Amber" and "Mirroring".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**7/10**



## CHUNGKING

### Defender

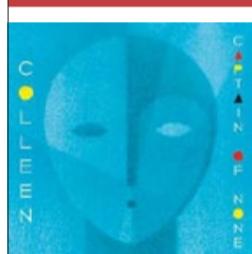
BLACK VOLTA

**Reunited classic-pop trio return to their homage-heavy roots**

Reactivated after eight years of side-projects and collaborations, Brighton trio Chungking return with a lightly remixed lineup but the same penchant for classic grown-up pop with a retro-tinted, synth-rich sound. Singer Jessie Banks, who has worked with Röyksopp and Air, moves comfortably between Alison Goldfrapp's eroticised languor and Kate Bush's diamond-sharp intensity on electro-folk ballads like "Beautiful World" and "Sapphire", with a possibly knowing nod to Karen Carpenter's sunny sadness on the allusively titled "Next To You". The core ingredients are premium quality, even if the songwriting at times feels a little too constrained by staid notions of canonical good taste.

STEPHEN DALTON

**6/10**



## COLLEEN

### Captain Of None

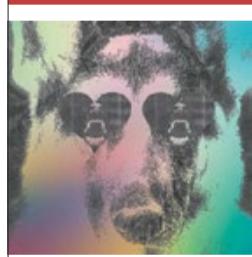
THRILL JOCKEY

**Sixth album from discreet, Björkish sound artist**

The music of Cecile (Sebastian) emerged in the early '00s, through a series of albums so ineffably delicate that the most representative one (2006's *Colleen Et Les Boîtes À Musique*) was constructed almost entirely using music boxes. Much of that atmosphere remains on *Captain Of None*, thanks to whispered vocals and a focus on the courtly pluck of a viola da gamba. "Salina Stars", however, adds a melodica and some heavier dub frequencies into the mix, while the surprisingly urgent "This Hammer Breaks" layers vocal and percussive loops in such a way that suggests Colleen's nearest contemporaries may now be Juana Molina and even Julia Holter.

JOHN MULVEY

**7/10**



## CROCODILES

### Boys

ZOOMUSIC

**Punk, fuzz-heavy fifth – with a salsa side**

Despite their obvious admiration for The Jesus And Mary Chain and BRMC, San Diego's noisy garage-popsters have always set themselves apart from the imitative pack. Over four LPs, they've rejigged the cavernous-sonics-plus-whacked-out-sneer template by borrowing from The Cramps, the Velvets and Ramones. Now, a different kind of topspin. *Boys* was recorded in Mexico City and although Crocodiles haven't gone the full merengue, local accents have made their mark – notably on salsa-punk opener "Crybaby Demon" and "Kool TV", which suggests a Latino game-show theme blasting from open windows. It's a savvy and sweetly skewed set, tiki-lounge torch song "Don't Look Up" proving the breadth of their interests.

SHARON O'CONNELL



## Lawless

SONY MUSIC CLASSICAL, 2012

Adopting a fresh strategy, for this latest John Hillcoat film, Cave and Ellis assembled a backing group (including Bad Seed Martyn Casey) and rotating guest vocalists to record bluegrass covers of songs by Townes Van Zandt, Beefheart, John Lee Hooker and, notably, the VU's "White Light/White Heat", by octogenarian legend Ralph Stanley.

**8/10**

MICHAEL BONNER

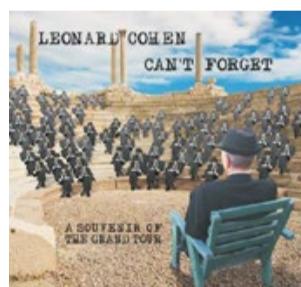


## LEONARD COHEN

### Can't Forget: A Souvenir Of The Grand Tour

SONY

In concert and at soundcheck, the great man revisits songs less explored, adding two new ones. By Neil Spencer



7/10

brace of unexpected covers, a further brace of new songs and a six-pack of lesser celebrated numbers from Cohen's sprawling repertoire, some of the performances drawn from soundchecks that are described as 'a concert before the concert'.

It is, as the title promises, a fine souvenir from the magnificent, unexpected third act of Cohen's prodigious career, one that has seen him play to larger and more diverse audiences than he ever managed in earlier days. Here Len and fedora are stalking the boards in New Zealand, Germany, Australia, Ireland and Scandinavia, as well as the US and his Canadian homeland. Wherever Len lays his hat, however, it's always the same Grand Tour, and the evenness of the performances here is

ANOTHER LIVE ALBUM a mere five months after the epic, three-hour *Live In Dublin* seems to be stretching the loyalty even of Cohen's army of devoted fans. What is left to add to that career-spanning selection? More than one might expect; a

striking. The group and backing singers purr along, leaving Cohen to emote in a voice that can be grating or soothing, commanding or apologetic.

Why does the world love Leonard Cohen? There's the charm that few in showbiz can equal, of course (maybe Tony Bennett), but also because he takes us into complex and sometimes unfamiliar emotional landscapes. Who else would write a dialogue between Joan of Arc and the fire that consumed her at the stake in 1431? Is the song about misguided martyrdom, suppressed eroticism or the cruelty of desire? All and more. Here Cohen emotes with tenderness – it's almost a spoken poem – while singer Hattie Webb takes the part of tormented Joan, who at this last moment wishes she'd given up her crusade for marriage. A klezmer fiddle adds sweetness while her imagined wedding dress is consumed in flames. It's no easy ride for her, for the fire, or for us, the onlookers.

The metaphysics and conflicts of "Joan Of Arc" might seem a country mile from the late George Jones' "Choices", with its everyman's assurance that

#### SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Quebec, Melbourne, Copenhagen, Denver, Mönchengladbach, Christchurch, Dublin  
**Personnel:** Leonard Cohen, Roscoe Beck, Alexandru Bublitchi, Rafael Gayol, Neil Larsen, Javier Mas, Sharon Robinson, Mitch Watkins, Charley and Hattie Webb

changes before it turns into "Tower Of Song" and fades, leaving one slightly unfulfilled. Maybe that was the intention. Always keep 'em wanting more. And we do Len, we do.

"I hear voices that tell me right from wrong" (which was Joan's problem), but the number slots neatly into Cohen's contemplative, retrospective terrain.

At the other end of the emotional spectrum is "La Manic" by the Quebec chansonnier Georges Dor, a song that Cohen has carried with him since it became a Canuck sensation in 1966, and which he praised in his acceptance speech at his 2006 induction into the Canadian Songwriters Hall Of Fame. It isn't, however, a song that crosses borders easily; though sentiments like "What do your silken forehead and velvet eyes become when I am not there?" sound better in French, even the version spoken in Canada. Leonard delivers its rapid-fire romantic declarations and despair with suitably Gallic passion, his vocal more animated than for his own material. For the Quebec rehearsal audience, its delivery was clearly A Moment.

"Field Commander Cohen" is the oldest song on the album (from 1974), and you can see why it's performed so infrequently, its tumble of imagery – Fidel Castro, diplomatic cocktail parties, singing millionaires – too cryptic to absorb easily, or for Cohen's more limited vocal powers to fully animate. He fares better on "Night Comes On", slow and mournful in its original form and little changed here. A crawl through the torments of conscience and the inescapable bonds of ancestry, it manages, too, to be a love song ending with a visit to Bill's Bar. "Can't Forget" likewise sounds like its original (1988) incarnation, with Cohen's baritone running smoothly as he grapples with motives he doesn't fully understand. It's a prickly love song – literally, so with its image of Len showing up at an ex's home "with a bouquet of cactus".

"Light As A Breeze", from *The Future*, is even more barbed, a paean to a lover "who looks so graceful/ And your heart's hard and hateful." It's Cohen's contradictions, his ability to hold opposing emotions in balance, that keep you on your toes.

Of the two new songs "Never Gave Nobody Trouble" is an uncharacteristic foray into blues, cast in the silky nocturnal style of BB King (guitarist Mitch Watkins is clearly a fan). It's a sly little piece, with Cohen claiming he's never caused any bother, honest, before growling, "But it ain't too late to start."

The other new number – sort of new since Leonard has featured it in shows for at least two years – is "Got A Little Secret", another soul-tinged piece with a choogling Memphis organ, where Cohen confesses he's unable to hold a woman he admires because he's "got a full-length mirror and it ain't a pretty sight."

There's more self-deprecating references to his advancing years on the closing "Stages", which is a droll rap about life's sometimes cruel



## MIKAL CRONIN MCIII

MERGE

**Solid third solo album from Ty Segall sideman**

**7/10**

of two halves from gifted songwriter Cronin. It opens with the blistering, timeless power pop of "Say", "Turn Around" and "Made My Mind Up", as well as the pleasingly mopey acoustic "I've Been Loved". The entire second side is then given over to a suite about solitude and finding your place in a strange city. It sometimes comes across a little like a self-help guide set to music, and while it blasts along happily enough – particularly on the shredder "Ready" and the glittery "Circle" – it never quite matches the promise of the excellent opening half.

PETER WATTS



## DANS DANS

**3**  
UNDAY

**Belgian trio's boneyard jazz adventures**

"Belgium is a small country," says Dans Dans' Bert Dockx. "Our national identity is full of blind spots and misunderstandings, and this probably leaves its mark on our music." For their third album, Dans Dans (guitarist Dockx, percussionist Steven Cassiers and bassist Fred Lyenn) continue to play with a mess of musical genres, creating a minimalist blend of scratchy '50s rock'n'roll, cinematic jazz and cemetery blues. It's good gear, too. Much of 3 sounds like a forgotten Jarmusch soundtrack or – better still – newly discovered instrumental outtakes from Waits' *Swordfishtrombones*. While the material is mostly self-composed, the standout is a cover: a penumbra, post-rock reading of Duke Ellington's "Fleurette Africaine".

MARK BENTLEY



## DEATH AND VANILLA

**To Where The Wild Things Are... FIRE**

**Retro-leaning Scandi duo fire up their Moogs and Mellotrons**

Sonic archaeologists with a hauntological bent, Swedish duo Marleen Nilsson and Anders Hansson share a common fascination with vintage movie soundtracks, Radiophonic burblings and all things kosmische. To this over-fetishised musical hinterland they add an extra twist of understated psycho-horror with sinister sci-fi lyrics and sleeves invoking the darkly funny retro-spoof website, Scarfolk Council. The duo's third adds little to territory explored by Broadcast and Stereolab, but there is still an alluring soft-porn sexiness to avant-Kraut Moog-pop excursions like "The Optic Nerve" or "Shadow And Shape", with their perfumed sighs and lingering vapour trails of melodic decay.

STEPHEN DALTON

**7/10**



## ALICE DIMICELI

**Swim**

ALICE OTTER MUSIC

**Oregon-based singer-songwriter does it her way**

It's heartening that, with the record industry allegedly in terminal crisis,

someone as beneath-the-radar as DiMichele can sustain a 30-year career and release a dozen independent albums on the back of a fanbase built simply by touring and remaining uncompromisingly true to her muse. Her groovesome, folk-jazz-soul in places evokes Bonnie Raitt, but there's more to her than that. On "If I Could Move The World" her multi-octave voice soars over jazzy vibraphone like a female Tim Buckley, the title track is a horns-and-Hammond funk-filled symphony and she closes with the loveliest cover of the Dead's "Ripple" you'll ever hear, with rhapsodic piano from Little Feat's Bill Payne.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**7/10**



## DJANGO DJANGO

**Born Under Saturn**

BECAUSE MUSIC

**Eclectic quartet's underwhelming second**

Django Django's self-titled 2012 debut spliced blues guitar, hip-hop rhythms

and electronic textures in a way few had done successfully since Beck's *Odelay*. The English/Scottish four-piece had a mad scientist's touch, but the sense of fun has dissipated on *Born Under Saturn*, an hour of faintly psychedelic heads-down boogie. Plodding piano house underpins many of these songs, and the forays into Kraftwerk-indebted electronica don't stick either. It's melodically underdeveloped – "Vibrations" is Animal Collective minus the mystique – and airless thanks to the layered, arch vocals. Only on "Beginning To Fade" do they sing with genuinely human affect, a revelation against its gently soaring euphoria.

LAURA SNAPES

## DU BLONDE

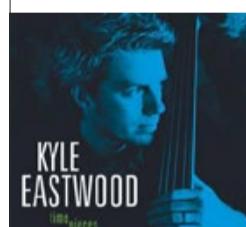
**Welcome Back To Milk**

MUTE

**New name and direction for the Newcastle-born singer-songwriter**

Du Blonde is the new moniker of Beth Jeans Houghton, whose 2012 album *Yours Truly, Cellophane Nose* introduced the world to her outré brand of folk-pop. Produced by Bad Seed Jim Sclavunos, this latest project sees her moving away from the playful whimsy of her debut in favour of looser, grittier textures. It's a sound typified on the stentorian opener "Black Flag" and the ode to youth, "If You're Legal". More melodic but no less visceral is "Raw Honey" and the gentle torch song "After The Show" which, like everything else here, reinforces Houghton as a musician of clear-eyed assurance and ferocious imagination.

FIONA STURGES



## KYLE EASTWOOD

**Timepieces**

JAZZ VILLAGE/  
HARMONIA MUNDI

**Clint's son with a London quintet**

Bass players can't really dominate a jazz band like a horn player or pianist. Eastwood, however, having scored several soundtracks to his old man's films, knows how to write a decent theme, and it's his strong melodies that shine here. Among some able hard bop pastiches and covers, Eastwood's dramatic theme from the movie *Letters From Iwo Jima* is recast as a spartan and pretty duet with pianist Andrew McCormack; "Caipirinha" is an ice-cold samba with a punchy riff played in tight harmonies by tenorist Brandon Allen and trumpeter Quentin Collins; while "Nostalgique" is a delicious ballad based around Eastwood's guitar-like chordal figures.

JOHN LEWIS

**7/10**

## REVELATIONS

**Kyle Eastwood: actor, soundtrack writer, band leader and bassist**



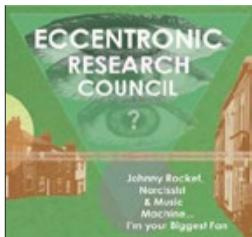
► Kyle Eastwood initially followed his old man into the acting world. In 1982, aged 14, he played Clint's nephew, Whit, in the road movie *Honkytonk Man*; in 2008 he was Juliette Binoche's boyfriend in *Summer Hours*. But it was Clint's love of jazz that influenced Kyle's true vocation. As well as fronting jazz bands, he's composed for numerous Clint movies, including *Invictus* and *Gran Torino*.

"Writing for film and making jazz records are two very different things," he says. "On film you're playing a much more supportive role; you have to compose in whatever style is called for and not get in the way of the dialogue. But jazz is about improvisation and self-expression."

Kyle lived in Fulham in the early noughties, becoming a regular around London's jazz clubs. And, though he now lives between California and Paris, he continues to work with UK musicians. "My association with pianist Andrew McCormack and trumpeter Quentin Collins dates back nearly a decade now," he says. "I find the players here are very open to different styles of music. What I wanted to do on this record was to pay my debt to the jazz from the late '50s and early '60s. The repertoire here has been designed and really worked on collectively."

JOHN LEWIS

# New Albums



## THE ECCENTRIC RESEARCH COUNCIL

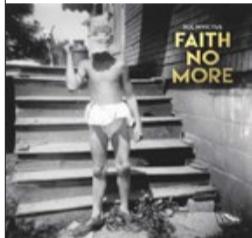
**Johnny Rocket, Narcissist & Music Machine... I'm Your Biggest Fan**  
WITHOUT CONSENT

**5/10**

It's sleazy storytime

**with the Sheffield electronic supergroup**  
The idea of matching Maxine Peake's narration with spooky synths to explore esoteric topics like the Pendle witch trials was initially intriguing. Third time around, though, the ERC's schtick is wearing thin. Set in the fictional Yorkshire hellhole of Valhalla Dale, this is a tongue-in-cheek tale of rockstar stalking gone bad, with some wry social commentary thrown in. The best bits are when we hear the fictional Moonlandingz band, played with sleazy nonchalance by members of Fat White Family. Otherwise, it's just a self-consciously naughty episode of *Jackanory* with superior sound effects.

SAM RICHARDS



## FAITH NO MORE

**Sol Invictus**  
RECLAMATION/PIECAC

**Californian veterans' first in 18 years**

When the experi-metal, alt-funk-rock quintet debuted two new songs at London's Hyde Park in 2014, a darkly angry "Motherfucker" (included here) was the first. Faith No More have often courted controversy (a prank involving human excrement and a hotel hairdryer is the stuff of legend), but at their '90s peak they dazzled, corralling wildly disparate genres into complex, Grand Guignol epics. *Sol Invictus* in no way dulls that glory; it's a dynamically compelling set that taps Black Sabbath, Chic, Killing Joke, Elmer Bernstein and Paolo Conte, Mike Patton's extraordinary (six octaves) voice its focus. Drama abounds, but "Rise Of The Fall"'s deranged rebetika and the colossal "Matador" are hard to beat.

SHARON O'CONNELL

**8/10**

## BILL FEEHELY

**Lucky Struck**  
BILLFEEHELY.COM

**Nashville actor and director's musical debut**

A renowned stage actor and director in

Nashville, New Jersey-born Feehely had a band, the Ranchers, in the early 1990s, but put music on hold when his musical instincts didn't match the expectations of Nashville. On retiring from his job as a drama professor, he's returned to his muse, and if his influences are transparent – two parts John Hiatt, one part (early) Steve Earle (notably on the mandolin-led "Thousand Stories") – he carries it well. Feehely's best songs contain a note of tenderness – see the plaintive "Wild Horse" or the sweet (Hiatt-esque) love song, "Fly Away".

ALASTAIR MCKAY

**7/10**



## JACCO GARDNER

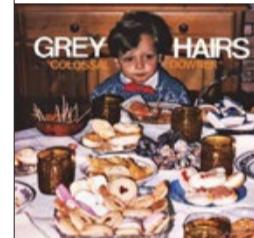
**Hypnophobia**  
FULL TIME HOBBY

**Dutch baroque pop maestro's second**  
Dutch studio wiz Jacco Gardner was born in 1988 but his 2013 debut

album evoked a specific vintage of genteel '60s psych rock. On LP#2, the equipment and the voicings are still impeccably vintage – check out the "Dear Prudence" guitars and Mellotrons of "Face To Face", or the hymnal Wurlitzer piano of "Make Me See" – but the psychedelia comes allied to grand melodies, particularly on the anthemic "Outside Forever" or the jaunty beat-pop of "Before The Dawn". Impressively, Gardner's instrumentals such as "Grey Lanes" and "All Over" show how he can effectively summon up an exquisite nostalgia for an invented '60s.

JOHN LEWIS

**8/10**



## GREY HAIRS

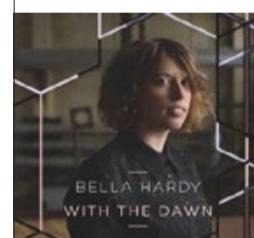
**Colossal Downer**  
GRINGO

**Striking debut from shouty Nottingham four-piece**

With both band name and album title, Grey Hairs are putting themselves somewhere in the territory of Pissed Jeans, playing bellowing hardcore that reflects on the mundanity of life in the approach to middle-age. The first side is full of punky slugathons like "Emergency Banger", but things get more interesting as the album progresses. Best of the lot is the elongated "Creepy", which starts as a sort of stoner take on "Seven Nation Army" before mutating into a spaced-out jam, but it's also worth seeking out the relentless, juddering "Badmotorfingered", the weird signatures of "The Handpisser" and the warped, malcontent "Fatberg".

PETER WATTS

**7/10**



## BELLA HARDY

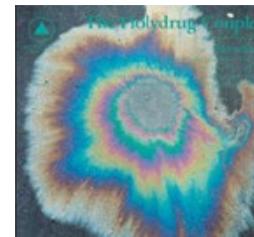
**With The Dawn**  
NOE

**Folk princess turns confessional on self-written seventh**  
Hardy has always mixed her own songs with tradition. Here

she unveils 11 originals, most heart-on-sleeve reflections on a romance gone asunder. An exception is "Jolly Good Luck To The Girl Who Loves A Soldier", an affecting tribute to WW1 women penned for the *Songs For The Voiceless* compilation. Some other numbers fall short by comparison. Hardy's agile vocals and lyricism – more Joni Mitchell-like than on her previous releases – are never in doubt, but shine brighter on light touch arrangements like the banjo and fiddle "Time Wanders On" than on the clumsy brass of "First Light Of The Morning". A coming of age album, nonetheless.

NEIL SPENCER

**7/10**



## THE HOLYDRUG COUPLE

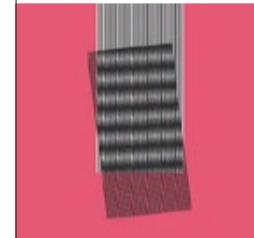
**Moonlust**  
SACRED BONES

**A taste of fromage from dreamy Santiago duo**  
Lynchpins of a thriving psychedelic underground in their native Chile, you

might reasonably assume The Holydrug Couple to be pretty far out; the musical equivalent of an Alejandro Jodorowsky film, or a peyote trip. Pleasantly surprising, then, to hear *Moonlust* takes a rather more delicate approach. Languid of tempo, lounge of style, the shimmering synths and symphonic bass of "Light Or Night" and "Generique Noir" are clearly indebted to a certain louche Frenchness – of '60s Serge Gainsbourg, or '90s Air. At times there's the sense The Holydrug Couple are still reaching for their influences, rather than inhabiting them, but to be fair, a track called "French Movie Theme" sounds like precisely that.

LOUIS PATTISON

**7/10**



## HOT CHIP

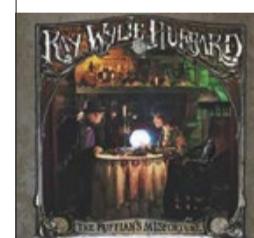
**Why Make Sense?**  
DOMINO

**Funk restoration by electropop colossus**  
Hot Chip begin LP6 by wondering whether they're out of touch, and spend its duration worrying

about domesticated love. But open-hearted vulnerability is what sets them apart – the desire to be cool dissipates with age, leaving them to restore funk, the album's major underpinning, to its maximalist glory following years of sublimation from bedroom musicians. "Started Right" recalls the Eastern grooves of Omar Souleyman; "Easy To Get" stutters around rubbery bass before a chorus declares, "Fear doesn't live here any more". The slow jams are pleasingly sentimental, the arrangements spacious, except for "Need You Now", a claustrophobic four-to-the-floor that conveys their anxiety at living in a world rife with terror.

LAURA SNAPES

**8/10**



## RAY WYLIE HUBBARD

**The Ruffian's Misfortune**  
BORDELLO

**Late-period peak from the Texas veteran**

If the first phase of his career was shaped by '70s outlaw staple "Up Against The Wall, Redneck Mother", then the second finds Hubbard, now 68, as the grizzled poet, dispensing his dry tales of a life well-lived with the gruff economy of Tom Russell or John Prine. This album, his 16th, may just be his most satisfying yet. The interplay between Hubbard's slide runs and the dual guitars of his son, Lucas, and Gabe Rhodes makes for a malicious spread, from gospel to blues to bony rock'n'roll, giving these peevish songs of identity and penance real teeth.

ROB HUGHES



## HUNTSVILLE Pond

HUBRO

Norwegian minimalists darken their palette

Over eight years, Huntsville's mixing of electro-acoustic improv, post rock, kosmische and electronics has always sounded so deeply intuitive, it's hard to figure what their first love might be. Rather than proving genre loyalty, previous collaborations (with Nels Cline, Glenn Kotche and Thurston Moore) make the case for enthusiastic adventurism, and this four-tracker underlines that drive. In places, *Pond* is a further freeing of alt.country/Americana from its boundaries, but it also describes a landscape that's more alien and darkly mechanised than before. "OK" is a brilliantly minimal example, combining brief blurs of distorted guitar and electronics, radioactive drone and the brittlest percussion to genuinely disturbing effect.

SHARON O'CONNELL

**7/10**



## GIANT SAND Heartbreak Pass

NEW WEST

Stirring anniversary marker from US-led collective

The 30-year stretch since debut *Valley Of Rain* has prompted a rare moment of nostalgia from Giant Sand's Howe Gelb. *Heartbreak Pass* is essentially the band's career in microcosm, packing in noisy sludge-rock ("Transponder"; "Hurtin' Habit"), countryish skiffle ("Song So Wrong") and the more ruminative, jazzy meanderings of late ("Pen To Paper"; "Gypsy Candle"). Gelb's semi-surreal observations lace things together ("Texting Feist" imagines a discourse with the Canadian singer at a time when life has become one long Leonard Cohen medley), while help is at hand from Grant-Lee Buffalo, Jason Lytle and Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley, among others.

ROB HUGHES

**8/10**



## IVAN & ALYOSHA It's All Just Pretend

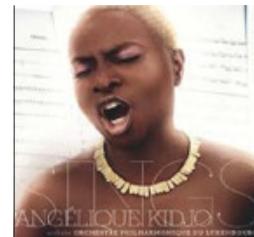
DUALTONE

Preachiness torpedoes second effort from capable indie-rock band

When this Seattle quintet jams the pedal to the metal on "Modern Man", their brand of rock is exhilarating and tuneful, the speciality of veteran producer/mixer Joe Chiccarelli (The Shins, My Morning Jacket). But when the songs get more thoughtful, as they do through the first half of their second album, they enter treacherous territory: the inspirational song. Writing separately, frontman Tim Wilson and multi-instrumentalist Ryan Carbury have come up with material that falls between the Broadway musical and the motivational speech; this combination of polish and overwrought sentiment places Ivan & Alyosha alongside another capable but problematic West Coast band, Train.

**5/10**

BUD SCOPPA



## ANGÉLIQUE KIDJO

Sings With The Orchestre Philharmonique Du Luxembourg

429

**7/10**

African queen goes classical...

Fresh from winning a Grammy for best world music album with 2014's *Eve* – which featured massed choirs and the Kronos Quartet – Kidjo further pursues the marriage of African rhythms and European conservatoire by re-imagining nine songs from her catalogue with a 110-piece orchestra. The ensemble captures the intricate rhythms on favourites "Malaika" and "Kelele" with impressive brio, while the Benin-born singer confirms the status she assumed on the death of Miriam Makeba as Africa's foremost female voice. She's currently recording a Yoruba song cycle composed for her by Philip Glass.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## JOANNA GRUESOME Peanut Butter

FORTUNA POP!

Second's out for pugnacious popsters

My Bloody Valentine but faster; The Vaselines but smarter; Veronica Falls but much more nuts; Joanna Gruesome's 2013 debut *Weird Sister* united many disparate strands of the C86 diaspora, with their fusion of righteous hardcore and cutie pop stylishly decluttered for their second outing. *Peanut Butter*'s 10 songs last barely 20 minutes, the Cardiff fivesome's disdain for "hetero-rock macho shit" underpinning the melodic intensity as Alanna Mc Ardle purrs and caterwauls through "Last Year", "Honestly Do Your Worst" and "Psykick Espionage", finally coming to woozy rest on bejewelled closer "Hey! I Wanna Be Yr Best Friend". Short, but invigoratingly sweet.

JIM WIRTH

**8/10**

WE'RE NEW HERE

## Joanna Gruesome



► Record nerd fact: Owen Williams' dad John released a DIY post-punk classic, "£100 In 15 Minutes", as Puritan Guitars in 1980. "How do you know that?" the Joanna Gruesome songwriter asks *Uncut*, bristling. Answer: we just do.

Sensible obsessives have made it their business to learn all they can about the fiery fivesome ever since 2013's *Weird Sister* first showcased their exciting fusion of Rough Trade '79 spirit, Pastels-badge angst and rocket-propelled rhythms. For their part, Joanna Gruesome have kept their back story deliciously vague. Yes, they probably are from Cardiff; no, they probably didn't meet at anger management classes, or on a wine-tasting holiday. Mission statement? "We aim to expose the radical possibilities of peanut butter, currently through the means of pop music, noise music and hardcore punk," explains Williams.

Believe what you will, but their supercharged second album, *Peanut Butter*, is a thrill a minute, Williams conspiring with excitable frontwoman Alanna Mc Ardle to forge something dense, explosive and quietly radical. "We practise very infrequently, partly to save money, partly to avoid detection but mainly to avoid any chance of becoming a tight, professional rock band," Williams explains, that independent ethos very much in Joanna Gruesome's blood. JIM WIRTH



## KENDRICK LAMAR To Pimp A Butterfly

POLYDOR

A masterpiece follow-up to *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*

The LA rapper's attempts to elevate himself above his peers would be annoying if they weren't so emphatically justified by the complexity, scope and quality of this, his third LP. Like D'Angelo's *Black Messiah*, *To Pimp A Butterfly* signals a re-engagement of mainstream music with black politics, in the tradition of Sly, Marvin, Curtis et al. George Clinton and Ronald Isley figure here, along with nu-soul vet Bilal, Snoop Dogg, jazz pianist Robert Glasper, a ghostly Tupac and many more. Still, it's Lamar who dominates; a conflicted, fluent and many-voiced rap auteur who knits this sprawling tapestry together, moving effortlessly from Last Poets-style jazz poetry ("For Free") into sprung g-funk ("King Kunta"). A genuine 2015 classic.

JOHN MULVEY

**9/10**



## LANDSHAPES Heyoon

BELLA UNION

London-based quartet turn up the volume

Landshapes used to be called Lulu And The Lampshades before a misprint on a poster

for a Paris show prompted a change in name. Thank heavens for that. *Heyoon* is their second LP in this guise and finds them shifting from the swirling folk-pop of their debut album into more robust, guitar-based territory. From the punk stomp of "Stay", the Eastern flourishes and fuzz-filled backdrop of "Moongee" and the pounding desolation of "Ader" come tales of splintered relationships and death at sea. Quieter, more ethereal tracks such as "Lone Wolf" have less of an impact, showing that Landshapes are at their best when they're loud.

FIONA STURGES

# New Albums



## LONE WOLF

### Lodge

SNWF

Paul Marshall finds an emotional groove on third album

Though it was created in the shadow of acute anxiety, *Lodge* works on the listener like a balm. Built on the foundations of Marshall's piano and his strong, emotive voice, it somehow traces an appealingly crooked line between Talk Talk – *Lodge* opens with an explicit homage to *Spirit Of Eden*, with further echoes throughout – and James Blake. The jazzy overlay of muted trumpet and splashy drums is underpinned by insistent, contemporary rhythm on stand-out tracks "Crimes" and "Alligator", while the superb "Give Up" – where Marshall's lithe falsetto communicates extreme pain over a languid groove – suggest he might just be Leeds' answer to Frank Ocean.

GRAEME THOMSON

**8/10**

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GRAEME THOMSON

## SHELBY LYNNE

### I Can't Imagine

ROUNDER

A return to inspiration on lithe 13th

An undertow of deep melancholy pulls at the songs and singing of Shelby Lynne, and on those LPs that keep the tension taut, most memorably on 1999's *IAm Shelby Lynne*, the effect is at once captivating and devastating. Since that modern-day classic, Lynne has produced herself, with mixed results, but with *I Can't Imagine* she's hit on the right combination of inspiration, kindred spirits and setting – Dockside Studios in Louisiana bayou country – re-conjuring her dark, Southern magic. Keeping the vibe laidback but funky, Lynne frequently hits her bittersweet spot, like the Ron Sexsmith collaboration "Be In The Now" and the title track, co-written by Ben Peeler, his aching pedal steel mirroring her troubled soul.

BUD SCOPPA

**8/10**

FRANCIS MACDONALD  
**Music For String Quartet, Piano And Celeste**

TR7

Fanclub drummer's classical debut: mostly melancholic minimalism

Drummer with Teenage Fanclub, sometime producer and label head, manager, ex-member of BMX Bandits and Eugenius, Macdonald has long been a fixture in the Glasgow underground; now he adds classical composer to his string of achievements. *Music For String Quartet, Piano And Celeste*, his first full-length entry into the field, displays an untrained composer – a welcome state of affairs in balance to the bland homogeneity of so much academic classical – going for melancholic minimalism and over-egging the emotion, writing pieces of simple sublime that lack any deeper resonance. These are inoffensive compositions, but that ain't enough.

JONDALE

**6/10**



## MAC McCAUGHAN

### Non-Believers

MERGE

Superchunk man's time-travel experiment

For his first solo record, the Superchunk

frontman journeys to the early '80s, where punk was dissolving, songs were becoming introspective and the straightforward rumble of rock was being corrupted by synthesisers. He does it with precision – the synthetic elements are applied lightly. Still, there's no denying the Echo & The Bunnymen-ish clamour of "Lost Again", or the Cars-like chug of "Barely There". The standout is "Real Darkness", which marries the guitar-sound of The Passions to an exultant chorus which perfectly captures the spirit of proud dismay that characterised the period.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

**7/10**

## HOW TO BUY... CONGO

Three more DRC acts to investigate



## KONONO N°1

### Congotronics

CRAMMED, 2004

Combining electrified thumb-pianos with instruments fashioned from street refuse, Konono's startling debut – the title of which birthed a genre – has arguably never been bettered, a hypnotic Afro-punk racket foregrounded by trance rhythms, which earned hosannas from aficionados of electronica and post-rock alike.

**9/10**



## STAFF BENDA BILILI

### Tres Tres Fort

CRAMMED, 2009

A bunch of paraplegic street musicians performing from

customised wheelchair tricycles was always going to attract media attention. But SBB's music was every bit as unique and striking as their back story, a funkily authentic mix of Congolese rumba and rich vocal harmonies, utilising such instruments as an electrified one-stringed lute built out of a tin can.

**8/10**



## JUPITER & OKWESS INTERNATIONAL

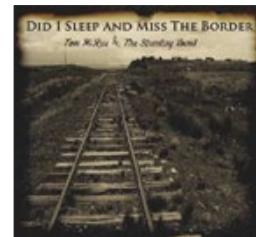
### Hotel Univers

OUT HERE, 2013

Jupiter Bokondji, the self-styled 'rebel general' of Congolese music, was 48 when he released his debut, after gaining global exposure via Damon Albarn's Africa Express. Marrying Stones and James Brown influences to African melodies and rhythms, *Hotel Univers* sounded as edgy and urgent as the mean streets of Kinshasa from which he came.

**8/10**

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## TOM MCRAE & THE STANDING BAND

### Did I Sleep And Miss The Border?

BUZZARD TREE/SONY

Apocalyptic folk and Americana from Somerset songwriter

**8/10**

Since his Brit and Mercury nominations in the early 2000s, Tom McRae has been quietly putting out albums, writing for other artists (his latest collaborator is Marianne Faithfull) and gathering plaudits from the likes of poet Simon Armitage, who called him "one of our best living songwriters". McRae's sorrowful sound has matured over time, a fact demonstrated by his seventh album that combines introspective acoustic folk with weather-beaten Americana. A thrilling air of doom hangs over the Lanegan-esque "The High Life", while "Expecting The Rain" is an elegant waltz that speaks of impending violence and death. Beautiful.

FIONA STURGES



## MBONGWANA STAR

### From Kinshasa

WORLD CIRCUIT

Stunning punk-electronics from the heart of Africa

**8/10**

The Congolese street band Staff Benda Bilili scored a surprise international hit with their African rumba-funk, delivered on tin-can guitars in exhilarating fashion from their wheelchairs. But after a brace of award-winning albums, the band imploded in 2013 when two of its leaders, Coco Ngambali and Théo Ntsituvuidi, quit. Re-emerging as Mbongwana Star, their debut takes SBB's percussive 'Congotronics' sound and twists it into dramatic new shapes, courtesy of Paris-based producer Liam 'Doctor L' Farrell, who has fattened the throbbeing beats and clattering Afropop rhythms and given them an electro-hip-hop vibe, heard to thrilling effect on "From Kinshasa To The Moon" and "Malukayi".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## MEKLIT

### We Are Alive

SIX DEGREES

Culturally mixed singer-songwriter spans Afro-folk to avant-jazz

Born in Ethiopia, raised in Brooklyn, now based in San Francisco, Meklit

Haderro balances her musical career with work as a TED senior fellow, co-founder of border-crossing musical collective The Nile Project and UN-backed campaigner for gender equality in Africa. Produced by Eli Crews, whose credits include Deerhoof and Tune-Yards, Haderro's second album is full of offbeat surprises. Between smoky-voiced Joni-folk, Afro-soul fusion numbers and minimal jazzy ballads lurk some terrific avant-pop digressions, from the glitchy, polyrhythmic "In Sleep" to the gloriously sloppy "Stuck On The Moon", a junkshop waltz slouching its way to the next whiskey bar. Smooth surface, hidden depths.

STEPHEN DALTON



# UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA

## Multi-Love

JAGJAGUWAR

Psych's what you make it: joyously funky third from Ruban and the family Nielson. By Sam Richards



9/10

PSYCHEDELIA IS TYPICALLY characterised as an inward journey. Over the course of two albums with Unknown Mortal Orchestra, Ruban Nielson seemed to be following the prescribed route, with 2013's slow-burner *II* defined by pensive, quasi-baroque guitar figures and woozy pleas for solitude. "I'd hide 'til the end of time... asleep and constantly floating away," he daydreamed on standout track "Swim And Sleep (Like A Shark)", sounding very much like a man content to while away his hours in the company of his own thoughts.

In both style and subject matter, the album felt like a companion piece to Tame Impala's *Lonerism*, released a few months previously. Like Tame Impala's Kevin Parker, Ruban Nielson plays almost everything on Unknown Mortal Orchestra records himself, the band only convening for live performances. And Nielson is originally from New Zealand, which made it easy for commentators to lump them in with the Antipodean psych revival. But *Multi-Love* finds Unknown Mortal Orchestra surging ahead of their fellow psych-pop voyagers, abandoning the hazy introversion of previous albums for frisky, rainbow-coloured optimism.

The album opens with a moody harpsichord motif – so far, so psych – but as soon as Nielson opens his mouth it's clear he's upped his game. There's a

whole new bluesy contour to his reedy falsetto, redolent of new-school R&B crooners like Miguel and The Weeknd. "Multi-love's got me on my knees," he testifies, a giddy submission to love's three-pronged assault on head, heart and groin. "It's not that this song's about her/Most songs are about her."

"Like Acid Rain" is even more of a revelation,

## Q&A

Ruban Nielson



Your last album was quite introspective, whereas this one's almost the opposite. What changed?

I didn't realise how sad the last record was until it was finished and I noticed that I'd used the word "lonely" three times. I didn't want this one to come from the same place emotionally, I wanted it to be a happy album. So I took a year off and I used my advance to buy time at home. That had a huge effect on me, to be off the road after three years of touring. A lot of it was just spending time with my family, especially my kids, because they're so funny and keep me from getting too cynical.

Your dad and your brother are on the album too, so it's a real family affair...

It's part of the whole idea of trying to make a happy record. I played with my brother Kody in my old band The Mint Chicks and we ended up not getting along so well because the band put a lot of pressure on our relationship. But I really missed him, so I flew him out to Portland so we could just hang out and make music again. My dad comes from a jazz background and this record is the first thing I've ever done that's genuinely impressed him. I sent him "Necessary Evil" and he said, "I'm hearing some horn parts!" So I suggested he record what he was hearing and it was just perfect.

What does 'multi-love' mean to you? Well, how many forms of love do we have? Obviously not enough. We're always figuring out new futuristic ways to hate people but not really equalling that with any movement in the other direction.

a frenetic two-minute whirl of funky powerpop by way of "Alphabet Street". By the third song, Nielson's channelling Stevie Wonder and singing about sex in cars. For a man who'd previously expressed a desire to spend the rest of his life at the bottom of the sea to escape the burden of human interaction, it's quite a transformation.

Nielson has evidently been listening to a lot of Sly & The Family Stone, but his interpretation of psychedelic soul is pleasingly broad: "Necessary Evil" – featuring a winning trumpet hook courtesy of his dad Chris – evokes Shuggie Otis, while "The World Is Crowded" is an impressive stab at the kind of lush, weird neo-soul peddled by Bilal and D'Angelo. "Can't Keep Checking My Phone" even works up a wonky psychedelic disco groove not unlike Caribou's "Odessa".

To be fair, there were harbingers of this new direction in the rubbery funk basslines and brisk rhythms that kept *II* zipping along nicely, even in its most solipsistic moments. Again, Nielson employs the distinctive technique of looping his live drums so they sometimes sound more like sampled beats, in tribute to the '90s breakbeat records that provided his gateway into soul music. Combined with his idiosyncratic, lo-fi recording techniques – drums incredibly dry and present, everything else a little bit glazed – you're unlikely to confuse *Multi-Love* with an actual R&B record. Perhaps the best comparison is with Beck's funk fantasia *Midnite Vultures*, although Nielson's songs retain a dreamy otherness that wards off accusations of pastiche. There's even evidence of an emerging social conscience, judging by his game attempt to float the idea of failing relationship as political metaphor on "Extreme Wealth And Casual Cruelty".

Containing only nine lithe and varied songs, *Multi-Love* is anything but a whimsical indulgence. In a climate where the tag "psychedelic" is applied to any band of mop-haired chancers with a delay pedal, Nielson has attached the rockets and blasted off somewhere new – acknowledgement that the true psychedelic voyage is not inward but onward ever onward.

# New Albums



**JOHN METCALFE**

**The Appearance Of Colour**

REAL WORLD

**Peter Gabriel's string arranger turns on his studio toys**

**8/10**

Many reasons exist to compare John Metcalfe's fourth album to neoclassical composer Jóhann Jóhannsson's *IBM 1401, A User's Manual*, not least sweeping strings and processed vocals. But there's much more here, including a fondness for *Timeless* Goldie drum'n'bass, which regularly erupts through the 20-minute instrumental opener "Sun". Red Snapper bassist Ali Friend lends a further plethora of jazzy grooves, while elsewhere Natasha Khan's vocals are seductively distorted on "Just Let Go". There are nods, too, to former bandmate Vini Reilly on "Gold, Green", as well as Penguin Café Orchestra on the lovely "Besançon".

WYNDHAM WALLACE



**METZ**

**Metz II**

SUB POP

**Brawny second from Toronto trio**

Sub Pop has branched out over the years to encompass everything from the bucolic folk of Fleet Foxes to the Afrocentric rap of Shabazz Palaces, but you wouldn't know it from *Metz*: a record that comes on like a loving homage to the venerable Seattle label's gnarly rock of yore. Vocalist Alex Edkins' musings lack the USP of, say, Matt Korvette of fellow Sub Poppers Pissed Jeans, whose lyrics send up toxic masculinity even while inhabiting it. But the stop-start hardcore of "Nervous System" and the Jesus Lizard lurch of "IOU" hit hard, and they have a knack for sneaking in the odd poppy melody; see "Spit You Out", in which hooks glint inside the cacophony like shrapnel.

LOUIS PATTISON

**7/10**



**MUMFORD & SONS**

**Wilder Mind**

GLASSNOTE/ISLAND

**Mumfords go electric, though it's no creative rebirth**

Mumford & Sons seem proud of ditching banjos from their new album, but abandoning their trademark has forsaken their identity. Their hugely successful authentic folk enabled countless imitators, but with *Wilder Mind* the London four-piece re-establish themselves at the dog-end of electric Americana. Aaron Dessner helped out early on, and much here sounds shamelessly like The National – racing drums, seasick guitars – but Mumfords never commit to disaffection, bringing every song around to an uplifting resolution. "The Wolf" and "Only Love" are as emptily priapic as late Kings Of Leon, but what's most surprising is how torpid the rest of the record is. My kingdom for a rousing chorus.

LAURA SNAPES

**5/10**

**Peter Gabriel's string arranger turns on his studio toys**

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WYNDHAM WALLACE



**RÓISÍN MURPHY**

**Hairless Toys**

PIAS

**Flamboyant diva's alluring fourth**  
Former Moloko star Róisín Murphy has forged a career out of going

against the grain. Her 2007 acid-house album *Overpowered* still sounds gloriously out of step, while no-one outside Italy has made a record quite like *Hairless Toys* since 1986. In its own peculiar way, this set of sentimental cappuccino funk is as intimate and provocative as anything Murphy's put her name to, the eight songs a fussy fusion of Balearic soul and bohemian synthpop. Eccentric jams like "Exploitation" and "Uninvited Guest" pull Murphy all over the place, but she keeps a cool head throughout, at her best on freaky misfit anthem "Gone Fishing".

PIERS MARTIN

**8/10**

## HOW TO BUY... ALBUMS ASSISTED BY THE NATIONAL



**SHARON VAN ET滕**

**Tramp** JAGJAGUWAR, 2012

Van Etten's third featured a host of collaborators, among them Julianna Barwick and members of The Walkmen and Beirut. This august ship was steered by National multi-instrumentalist Aaron Dessner, who, as co-producer alongside Van Etten, helped bring out a more rugged side of the New Jersey songwriter than on the preceding *Because I Was In Love* and *Epic*.

**9/10**



**LULUC**

**Passerby** SUB POP, 2014

Composed of Zoe Randall and Steve Hassett, Australian duo Luluc met Dessner through a mutual friend.

His vision for this, their second album, led them to scrap sessions recorded in Melbourne to remake the hushed, folky record with him. Among others, National frontman Matt Berninger, Sleater-Kinney's Corin Tucker and DJs at NPR named it their record of 2014.

**9/10**



**THIS IS THE KIT**

**Bashed Out**

BRASSLAND, 2015

Released on Brassland, the label he runs with twin brother Bryce and associate Alec Hanley Bemis, Dessner's latest full-length production is the third album by This Is The Kit, the shapeshifting folk outfit led by Bristol-born, Paris-based songwriter Kate Stables. Dessner's trademark electric guitar embers add underpinning warmth to the songs' robust rhythmic backbone and Stables' clear voice.

**9/10**

LAURA SNAPES



**OZMOTIC/FENNESZ**

**AirEffect**

FOLK WISDOM/SOJECT

**Unconvincing conceptual work – approach with caution**  
Grounded in questions around postmodernism

**5/10**

and, in their own words, "the discovery of a 'black box' lost in the Anthropocene era [that] brings back to life extinct sounds, images of places in the middle of nowhere, voices of daily life, and excerpts of conversation", *AirEffect* could potentially manifest some real Borgesian time-space confusion. But the unfortunate reality of this recording, from European glitchtronica master Fennesz, and Italian duo OzmotiC, is rather more prosaic: field recordings, indistinct electronics, and awkwardly placed soprano sax and drums, placed in service of a half-baked narrative of sorts, a sadly unconvincing collaboration.

JON DALE



**ROZI PLAIN**

**Friend**

LOST MAP

**Quirky pop gem from This Is The Kit member**

A singer with excellent alt.folkies This Is The Kit, left to her own devices – and with some help from Hot Chip's Alexis Taylor – Plain makes seductively off-kilter pop. Her third solo album, *Friend* abounds with sly, concentric melodies and oblique lyrics, sung softly in a disarming cadence, as though English were her second language (it isn't). These ingeniously arranged songs never clamour, preferring to cast a quiet spell. The slow glide of "Quarry" drifts like an indie-jazz "Albatross"; "Red Dot" is half anthem, half lullaby; "Jogalong" imagines New Order and Prefab Sprout dreaming by the river. Lovely stuff.

GRAEME THOMSON



**ROSE WINDOWS**

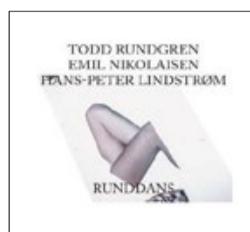
**Rose Windows**

SUB POP

**Sumptuous stoner-psych on Seattleites' second LP**

Given that they tend to be summarily compared to Black Sabbath, there's a strangely disarming quality to Rose Windows' second album. Sludgy guitars and doomy chords dominate fine opening tracks "Bodhi Song" and "Glory, Glory", but the sextet eventually settle into a hazy groove that sounds like it might be happiest on a sleepy Southern porch. And while singer Rabia Shaheen Qazi often summons the spirit of Grace Slick, she's also blessed with caressing tones, allowing "A Pleasure To Burn" and "Hirami" to drift along at their own unhurried pace, guided by a very psychedelic kind of ambience.

ROB HUGHES

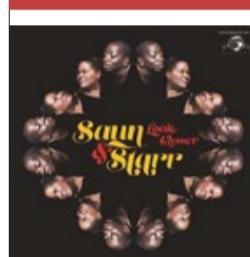


**TODD RUNDGREN  
EMIL NIKOLAISEN  
HANS-PETER  
LINDSTRØM**  
**Runddans**  
SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

**7/10**

Utopian cosmic disco summit... Wizard! Rundgren's dilettantism and short-attention span have made for some frustrating records over the years. Here, though, he's forced to play a long game by Norwegian prog-disco maestro Lindstrøm and Nikolaisen, from shoegazers Serena-Maneesh. *Runddans* is 39 minutes of continuous music, most closely related to the percolating grooves of Lindstrøm's *Where You Go I Go Too*. Rundgren drops in and out of this spacious environment, working and reworking saturated melodic themes, finessing wordless, Beach Boy harmonies. "I've waited for this moment for what seems like nine lifetimes," he sings, ecstatically; relieved Todd fans who've endured myriad sketchy experiments may feel likewise.

JOHN MULVEY



**SAUN & STARR**  
**Look Closer**  
DAPTONE

**7/10**

Sharon Jones' Dapettes deliver suitably soulful debut From the ever-reliable Daptone label comes another slice of retro soul, faithful to the sounds and techniques of vintage R'n'B. Saundra Williams and Starr Duncan-Lowe are better known as The Dapettes, backing singers for Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings. This is their first own-brand release, recorded – in analog, naturally – at Brooklyn's House Of Soul, and it's stuffed with Stax beats, clicking bass and Hi-Life bounce. Saun & Starr's vocals are the star turn here, blending beautifully on the upbeat ("Sunshine (You're Blowing My Cool)") and dark-alley downtempo ("In the Night"). For a slinky, confessional take on Isaac Hayes' hot-buttered grooves, check out "Another Love Like Mine".

MARK BENTLEY



**TY SEGALL  
BAND**  
**Live In San  
Francisco**  
CASTLE FACE

**8/10**

Thunderous, unhinged live album from West Coast garage rocker The unstoppable songwriter is joined by his powerful band, including Mikal Cronin and Charlie Moothart, lynchpin of Segall spin-off Fuzz, on this blistering live set put out by SF scene chroniclers Castle Face. It's largely drawn from the band's 2012 LP, *Slaughterhouse*, including twin peaks "Wave Goodbye" and "I Bought My Eyes". But the set is most interesting the more it delves into the songwriter's prodigious output, generally beefing up what it finds, as on the thrilling version of "Feel" from 2014's *Manipulator*, the electric "Skin" from 2009 and the thundering "Thank God For Sinners" from 2012's *Twins*.

PETER WATTS



**SHAMIR**  
**Ratchet**

XL

**Androgynous alt.disco crooner fluffs his entrance**

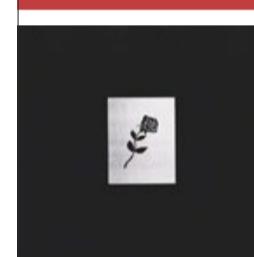
Admittedly it's a good story: Shamir Bailey is a flamboyant black 20-year-old from the dusty outskirts of Las Vegas with a startlingly high singing voice and a fondness for lo-fi punk and Nina Simone. His naïve rap single "On The Regular" was one of 2014's sparkiest debuts, but nothing else comes close to matching it here. Producer Nick Sylvester opts for a flimsy backdrop of dated electropop while the only insight Shamir provides about his endlessly fascinating hometown is that "in Vegas/A sin is all right/At least at night". An engaging vocal performance on the beatless "Darker" hints at Shamir's potential, but this one needed longer in the incubator.

SAM RICHARDS

**5/10**

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SAM RICHARDS



**SHLOHMO**

**Dark Red**

TRUE PANTHER

**Murky sci-fi business from LA producer**

Pitched between the horror soundtracks of John Carpenter and the slacker electronics of Björk's favourite noise label, Tri Angle, US beatsmith Henry 'Shlohmo' Laufer makes the kind of dread-fuelled music his name suggests: sluggish, heavy-handed and a bit clichéd. *Dark Red*, Laufer's third album, is his most sophisticated effort so far, though, and sees the 25-year-old getting plenty of mileage out of his overwrought style of plaintive trap jams and health-goth tearjerkers. Laufer's skill lies in marrying a grainy, straight-to-video aesthetic with commercial pretensions. He roughs up synth-wave and jungle on "Apathy" and "Fading", but does so with a certain tenderness.

PIERS MARTIN

**6/10**

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PIERS MARTIN



**CATHAL  
SMYTH**

**A Comfortable  
Man**

PHOENIX RISING  
RECORDING COMPANY

**Madness clown gets serious**

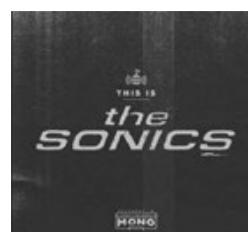
Cathal Smyth is better known as Chas Smash, the Bez of Madness, but his debut album is not the work of a gurning showman. Instead, it follows the breakup of a 28-year-relationship and the ensuing years of rehab and therapy. The LP springs to life when Smyth (the co-writer of the deathless "Our House", lest we forget) ignores the ponderous ballads and hits the pop jugular. "Do You Believe In Love" and "She's Got The Light" are joyously naïf; "Love Song No 7" tugs effectively at the heart-strings; while "Are The Children Happy?" is the most gut-wrenchingly poignant divorce song you'll ever hear.

JOHN LEWIS

**8/10**

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JOHN LEWIS



**THE SONICS**  
**This Is the Sonics**

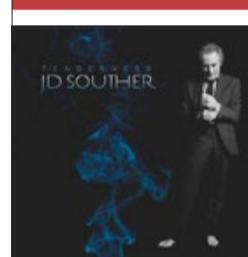
REVOX

Set to stun: Seattle rockers du jour pick up where they left off – in 1966

**8/10**

It's obviously rare that septuagenarians manage to reclaim more than a sliver of their wild youth, a truism that makes *This Is the Sonics* even more shocking. Paired with White Stripes producer Jim Diamond, the Seattle punk/garage pioneers cut a beeline for their primitive roots – a wild, manic sound, topped by Jerry Roslie's anarchic, sexually frustrated, scream-it-out vocals; Larry Parypa's riotous bash-and-slash guitar; with horns, harp and sax in the mix. The repertoire is frozen in 1966, too, evident just by song titles ("Bad Betty"), though they do bludgeon their way through The Kinks' 1976 classic "The Hard Way", a major highlight from a wonderfully anomalous effort.

LUKE TORN



**JD SOUTHER**

**Tenderness**

SONY MASTERWORKS

With typical understatement, master singer-songwriter hits late-career peak

Souther's third studio LP since belatedly resuming his career in '08 connects LA's '70s golden age – during which he wrote many memorable songs sung by his higher-profile contemporaries – with the Great American Songbook. Throughout the LP, but especially on the five tracks enriched by Billy Childs' gossamer strings, Souther, producer Larry Klein and a core group of LA's most song-serving sessioners have crafted what could serve as the companion to Nilsson's *A Little Touch Of Schmilsson In The Night*. But these are originals, and several, notably the poignant "This House", sound like standards themselves. On this luminous nine-song LP, Souther adheres to the old adage – leave them wanting more.

BUD SCOPPA

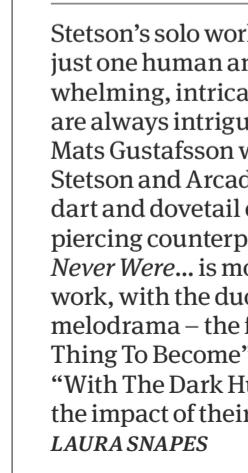


**COLIN STETSON  
AND SARAH  
NEUFELD**

**Never Were The  
Way She Was**

CONSTELLATION

Harrowing, cinematic collaborative full-length from Canadian auteurs



**8/10**

Stetson's solo work derives impact from the fact just one human and one sax are making an overwhelming, intricate sound, so his collaborations are always intriguing. A 2012 LP with saxophonist Mats Gustafsson was overcrowded, but here, Stetson and Arcade Fire violinist Sarah Neufeld dart and dovetail elegantly, her playing the piercing counterpoint to his imposing lower end. *Never Were...* is more dramatic than Stetson's solo work, with the duo's tendency towards cinematic melodrama – the funereal pace of "Won't Be A Thing To Become", the horror film shrieks of "With The Dark Hug Of Time" – slightly lessening the impact of their unparalleled techniques.

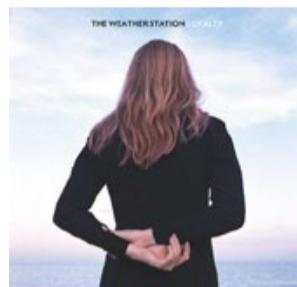
LAURA SNAPES

# THE WEATHER STATION

## Loyalty

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

New night rides home. An auspicious singer-songwriter drives out of Canada. By John Mulvey



**8/10**

JONI MITCHELL  
WAS not, of course, the first artist to ever find solace in the refuge of the roads. Nevertheless, the journeys that inspired 1976's *Hejira*, the idea that the space and concentration of a road trip can bring

some clarity to emotional confusion, has been pervasively connected to Mitchell ever since. Just this last March, Laura Marling's *Short Movie* provided a compelling – if sometimes rather self-conscious – update of the tradition. Marling's beatnik odyssey took in yoga, tarot, Jodorowsky, and Gurdjieff's daughter; Mitchell's involved Furry Lewis, Sam Shepard and the Buddhist master Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. "I'm porous with travel fever," Mitchell considered, on "Hejira" itself, "But you know I'm so glad to be on my own."

*Loyalty*, the third album that Tamara Lindeman has made using the name of The Weather Station, is also full of voyages of self-discovery, or at least full of acute observations and small, significant epiphanies. Most any folk-inflected female singer gets compared with Mitchell at some point, but it's hard to avoid dragging her name into a discussion of The Weather Station. Lindeman is a Canadian who writes literate songs with unusual precision, and who sings them in an understated, open-hearted way that lends good poetry the directness of conversation.

The gently pulsing opener, "Way It Is, Way It Could Be", finds her navigating a path through Quebec towards New Brunswick in -40 degrees weather. Lindeman and a companion spend some time on the frozen St Lawrence river, but something disturbs her – "Was it a look in your eye? I wasn't sure" – before they return to the car. The trip, she sings, is a manifestation of "living out the dream". But the prevailing tone of the song, and *Loyalty* in general, is of measured uncertainty; a sense that while travel can bring issues into focus, it doesn't necessarily resolve them. "How long is it going to go on?" she sings, beautifully. "I'm gonna count on... I'm gonna hold out for... nothing much."

"Way It Is..." is a tremendous song; insidiously constructed, and scored with such subtlety that the craftsmanship of the playing can easily go unnoticed, so engaging are the words and Lindeman's voice. This is very much how the following 10 songs work, too, empathetically recorded and produced with Afie Jurvanen (who releases his own music as Bahamas) and Robbie Lackritz (a frequent Feist collaborator) in a 19th-Century château, filled with analog antiquities, just outside of Paris.

*Loyalty* has a fuller, more realised sound than the first two Weather Station albums (the shift



### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**  
Afie Jurvanen,  
Robbie Lackritz and  
Tamara Lindeman  
**Recorded at:** La Frette  
Studios, La Frette  
Sur Seine, France  
**Personnel:** Tamara  
Lindeman (vocals,  
gtrs, piano, Hammond,  
vibraphone, banjo),  
Afie Jurvanen (drums,  
bass, gtrs, piano,  
Rhodes, Wurlitzer),  
Jeremy Strachan (bass  
clarinet, clarinet,  
sax, flute), Anthony  
Wallace (violin)

reminds me of that made by Alela Diane, a comparable voice, between *The Pirate's Gospel* and *To Be Still*, a little more finessed, more removed from rootsy affection. Lindeman is also an actor, but talks about how she strives to be "scrupulously truthful" in her music. "I'm not interested in fantasy or wish fulfilment-based storytelling," she says. "Personal Eclipse" takes in the "dry grass of Nebraska", "smoky cups of coffee at the continental divide", the "subtlety of canyons", all absorbed during a drive to California and back when she turned 20. "I drove out west with my sister, she talks more than I do/When she fell silent, still I'd miss her, the sound of the wind coming through."

Words, then, are chosen with exquisite care, and never wasted. They present a reflective

woman on the move who, one suspects, does not take pleasure in being rushed. On "Floodplain", she takes the same journey that was mapped out in "Way It Is, Way It Could Be". It is spring now, the rivers have flooded, and the guitar picking is more dappled, a fractionally lusher expansion of the first song's sonic palette. Lindeman, though, remains in flux, wondering how to

reconcile the extremes of emotion – "all joy and all trouble" – that she feels, and to some degree resigned that her state will never necessarily be in sync with the states of the people she loves. There are many wise, deceptively simple insights on this wonderful album, and few are more important than this one. "I trust you to know your own mind," she sings, at the death. "As I know mine."

### Q&A

*Tamara Lindeman*

**D**o you feel the Joni Mitchell comparison is just?

I think it's pretty reasonable, and of course, I'm quite flattered. I actually didn't listen to Joni Mitchell for most of my life – in part because every time I sang somebody told me I reminded them of her. The first few times I listened, I actually disliked her. But over the last couple years I've taken the time to dig deep and I'm glad I did.

**Are you shy in real life – and if so, in what way? In "Shy Women", you seem to be talking about the weight of knowledge, and a certain discretion, rather than anything resembling timidity?**  
I've been shy for most of my life, but it never really was timidity – I was reticent to speak

because I actually had so much to say. I think that's generally true for most 'shy' people.

**Discretion seems a guiding principle for the whole album. Do you generally prefer music that tends towards subtlety and understatement?**

Totally. Bill Callahan is someone I always come back to. To me, though, it's less about understatement and more about just reflecting reality. Pop music is often based on these declarative statements – "I will always love you" – and those songs are cathartic and helpful, I think. But in life, such moments of clarity are fleeting – it's complexity that endures. I guess it's natural to me to want to reflect that.

I find it interesting that there have been a few great records lately by female musicians who do the same thing – Courtney Barnett, for example, writes with a specificity that comes across as understatement but to me is just precision.

INTERVIEW: JOHN MULVEY



## ROB ST JOHN Surface Tension

SURFACE TENSION

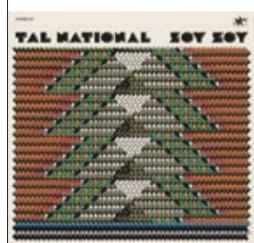
The unexpectedly pretty sounds of a polluted London river

The Lea is one of north-east London's secret wonders, a toxic river that flows through

ever-changing landscapes: decaying, gentrified, sometimes surprisingly bucolic. On *Surface Tension*, Lancastrian artist St John documents it all with field recordings (and photos, in an accompanying book) of boats, locks, dogs, footballers and profoundly polluted gurgle. The conceptualising extends to soaking tapes in Lea water, then replaying them as they fall apart, echoing William Basinski's *Disintegration Loops*. Over 31 minutes, though, St John's music is as inspired as his process, ebbing through chamber piano and cello (reminiscent of post-classical ensemble, Rachel's), analog kosmische and, at 18 minutes, eerily euphoric, Boards Of Canada-style techno.

JOHN MULVEY

**8/10**



## TAL NATIONAL

### Zoy Zoy

FAT CAT

Delirious Afro guitar works from "the most popular band in Niger"

Onstage six-strong, but as a collective

numbering 13, Tal National have plied their trade on the streets of their native Niger for over a decade. Fronted by bandleader Hamadal "Almeida" Moumine, they feature amongst their ranks Songhai, Fulani, Hausa and Tuareg members, and accordingly, their music is a melting pot; a spry fusion of electrified desert blues, male and female vocal parts and rolling, cyclical percussion that combines technical virtuosity with an ebullient demeanour. Undeniably, they are a dance band first and foremost, but fans of Tinariwen will find plenty to love in raw, soulful numbers like "Koana" and "Farila".

LOUIS PATTISON

**8/10**



## TENDER PREY

### Organ Calzone

BIRD

Sharp lyrics and smart tunes from Welsh singer

Laura Byron begins with a sigh, before she launches herself into a catchy and charismatic debut as Tender Prey. The Welsh songwriter's distinctive personality is all over *Organ Calzone*, which trades in sharp lyrical observations and the sort of angular guitar lines not heard since Franz Ferdinand in their pomp. "Strong Feelings" is a fine example, featuring stuttering new wave riffs and a conversational, confessional vocal that never betrays any sign of weakness. As her stage name suggests, there's also a Nick Cave vibe: "Blood Simple" is deliriously sinister and "The Tequila Worm" is a chunkier, unmistakably gothy, ode to alcohol.

PETER WATTS

**7/10**



## TERAKRAFT

### Alone (Ténéré)

OUTHERE

Justin Adams transforms the Tuareg rockers

Terakraft are a Tuareg rock band closely linked to Tinariwen, with guitarists Khiwaj and Diara and

bassist Sanou Ag Ahmed all guesting on separate Tinariwen albums. On the evidence of this, their fifth album, they're heavier, more linear and more groove-based than their pals. Certain tracks will immediately resonate with rock ears: opener "Anabayou" ("Awkward") is a glam rock masterpiece, all spangly guitars and Glitter Band drums, while "Karambani" ("Nastiness") is a thrilling, one-chord rockabilly stomp. But producer Justin Adams also moves the wonky percussion and spiky guitars of tracks like "Itilla Ihene Dagh Aitma" ("To My Brothers") into heavy rock territory.

JOHN LEWIS

**7/10**



## THEE OH SEES

### Mutilator Defeated At Last

CASTLE FACE

Heads-down business as usual from the garage-rock greats

Since John Dwyer moved from San Francisco to LA,

the wonderful Oh Sees have become a more streamlined garage-rock vehicle, albeit one that retains the speed of a dragster and the heft of a juggernaut. *Mutilator* is very much in the vein of 2013's career-topping *Floating Coffin*: throbber hypnorpunk predominates, sometimes – as in "Lupine Ossuary" – slashed apart by some notably wild guitar solos. The variety of last year's *Drop* has been mostly sacrificed to bug-eyed momentum, while the backing vocals and keys of old are used sparingly. Nevertheless, "Sticky Hulks" is an enterprising digression, being an organ étude that conjures up the tantalising notion of a dronerock Procol Harum.

JOHN MULVEY

**8/10**

## REVELATIONS

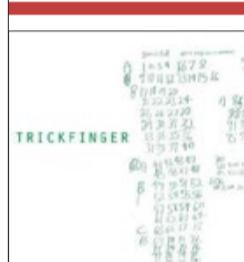
Tal National: inside the world of "the U2 of Niger"



► "Almeida, leader of Tal National, was in Chicago to participate in an arts festival," begins producer Jamie Carter. "He collaborated with two Chicago musicians on a few songs, and they asked if they could come into my studio to record. During the process Almeida asked me pointed questions like 'Do you have the equipment to record in other places?'" Two days later, the African bandleader again made contact. Did Carter fancy a trip to Niger, all expenses paid?

This was Carter's introduction to Saharan guitar music, and specifically to Tal National – a 13-strong group of Songhai, Fulani, Hausa and Tuareg musicians so famed in their home country he describes them as "the U2 of Niger". Very much a band of the people, they work constantly, busking or playing wedding parties by day, before a five-hour show most evenings. Says Carter: "I think of them like the Stax session musicians, who while inherently talented, were also in peak condition because of the amount they work." He's now recorded two Tal National albums, 2013's *Kaani* and the new *Zoy Zoy*. Recording in Niger is always interesting – you don't get dust storms or electric shocks in Chicago – but there's chemistry there. "We share a strong DIY ethic," says Carter. "Mine chosen from other options," he admits, "theirs out of necessity."

LOUIS PATTISON



## TRICKFINGER

### Trickfinger

ACID TEST

Ex-Chili Pepper guitarist's acid epiphany

Most know hippy misfit John Frusciante as the mercurial guitarist behind

the Red Hot Chili Peppers' prettiest songs, but beyond that group he's also a wildly prolific solo artist with a voracious appetite for experimenting – in 2004 alone, he released five albums and recently collaborated with Venetian Snares as part of glitch crew Speed Dealer Moms. His interest in electronics is well known – see 2012's absurdist *PBX Funicular Intaglio Zone* – but there's a softness and elegance to Trickfinger, his new acid-house alias, that's seldom seen in Frusciante's work. "After Below", for example, like any classic acid track, revels in the sinuous beauty of repetition.

PIERS MARTIN

**8/10**



## WAND

### Golem

IN THE RED

Psychedelic drone from LA four-piece

Wand are produced by hard-working Californian producer Chris Woodhouse,

and there's more than a trace of his close associates Thee Oh Sees in Wand's swampy sound and devotion to unsettling rhythms, bending songs in and out of shape. A track such as "Self Hypnosis In Three Days" is typical, clicking into a wicked groove before keyboards appear, scattering random sounds to trip you up like salt on a luge run. Despite that, the band are at their best when they put their heads down and rock, on the churning "Cave In", pummelling "Flesh Tour", with thundering guitars and Buck Rogers keyboards, and thrash metal "Floating Head".

PETER WATTS

**7/10**

# New Albums



**PATRICK WATSON**

**Love Songs For Robots**

DOMINO/SECRET CITY

**There's nothing mechanical about this grand romance**

Perhaps there's no room in a *Top Gear*-loving world for Patrick Watson's sensitivity, but it's a mystery why he's not long usurped the tired likes of Coldplay from stadia. While his keening, falsetto croon provides the initial seduction, this Montreal master proves himself, yet again, a consummate songwriter and master of atmospherics. Echoes of Radiohead remain on his fifth album, not least on "Bollywood", whose muted *Bends* beauty takes several dramatic detours towards its closing synth drones, but "Turn Into The Noise" boasts a dry, D'Angelo funk given a deluxe, but shrewdly psychedelic, Rufus Wainwright makeover.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

**8/10**

**BILL WELLS AND AIDAN MOFFAT**

**The Most Important Place In The World**

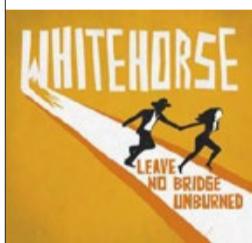
CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND

**7/10**

**More songs about piss and puke**

The second collaboration between Arab Strab's morose wordsmith, Moffat, and the multi-purpose indie-jazzer, Wells, takes its title from an Ikea slogan. Ironically, because Moffat is the laureate of ennui and alienation, whose poetic ejaculations take place in scuzzy clubs, and rarely in ideal homes. There is, if you search, some romance: Tom Waits could sing the almost tender "Far From You", and there's humour; he rhymes "pizzeria" and "diarrhoea" on the sardonic "We're Still Here". Happily, the overarching bleakness is sugared by Wells' brisk, sometimes cinematic instrumentation.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



**WHITEHORSE**  
**Leave No Bridge Unburned**

SIX SHOOTER

**Toronto conjugal duo gets even racier on sophomore spin**

Some great albums have been made by married couples in dissolution, but fewer have been made by married couples in heat. Whitehorse's Luke Doucet and Melissa McClelland have mastered the latter category on 2013's *The Fate Of The World Depends On This Kiss* and again on *Leave No Bridge Unburned*. The new LP beefs up their spaghetti-Western guitars and intimate boy-girl vocal tradeoffs with aggro fuzz bass-lines and mortar-thud drums. Molten licks and cool vibes cement a diverse tracklist, from the supercharged Bo Diddley rave-up "Downtown" and the Tarantino dramedy of "The One I Hurt" to the edgy pillow talk of "Fake Your Death (And I'll Fake Mine)". Smart, sexy stuff.

BUD SCOPPA

**8/10**



**WILLIAM ELLIOTT WHITMORE**

**Radium Death**

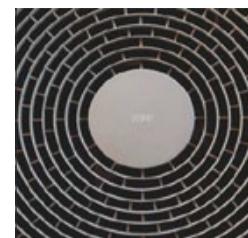
ANTI-

**Middling misery from the Midwest**

Although Whitmore's grainy calling card remains a stark, hardscrabble depiction of Iowan rural life, on his eighth album he sets aside his trademark voice-and-banjo dirt blues in favour of a more muscular form of folk-punk minimalism. On this evidence, less is more. "Healing To Do" is Jake Bugg's "Lightning Bolt" hollered into a milking bucket, while elsewhere there are unadventurous echoes of The Lumineers ("Trouble In Your Heart") and Seasick Steve. "Can't Go Back" possesses a more-ish country flavour, but mostly these dry, derivative, rather dreary songs of endeavour are a hard slog.

GRAEME THOMSON

**5/10**



**WIRE**

**Wire**

PINK FLAG

**Arch art-punks, still moving forward**

Wire have pulled off the reformation racket better than most, cranking out five albums since 2003

comeback, *Send*, never quite recapturing the alchemical perfection of their early work, but hardly tarnishing their legacy either. Today their rock is machine-like, as if plotted to grid, all arid riffing and sleek motorik. New guitarist Matthew Simms keeps his head down, with most of the melody coming through Colin Newman's quizzical *sprechgesang*, musing on a connected world of eBay and Amazon wishlists ("Blogging") and love as salvation (the Beatlesque "Burning Bridges"). Elsewhere, a touch of monotony creeps in, although they keep it at bay through sheer volume on the closing, eight-minute "Harpooned".

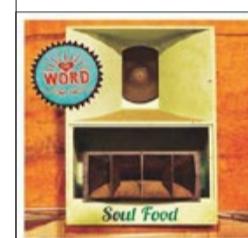
LOUIS PATTISON

**7/10**

**THE WORD**

**Soul Food**

VANGUARD



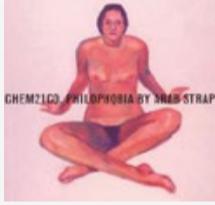
**Virtuosity meets fervour on belated second outing from roots stalwarts**

The Word – an instrumental band comprising pedal steel player Robert Randolph, keyboardist John Medeski and the North Mississippi Allstars that pushes gospel and sacred steel elements through an improvisational meat grinder – pick up where they left off on their 2001 self-titled debut. On such burners as "Play All Day" and "Soul Food II", the interplay of Randolph and Allstars guitarist Luther Dickinson, with Medeski leaning on the Hammond organ, strikingly evokes the explorations of the original Allmans, while "Swamp Road" chugs along amiably on a syncopated Booker T & The MG's groove. A fine companion piece to the Allstars' terrific 2013 LP, *World Boogie Is Coming*.

**7/10**

**HOW TO BUY...  
AIDAN MOFFAT**

**Sleazy does it: from Arab Strap to Grease**



**ARAB STRAP**  
**Philophobia** CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND, 1998

Moffat's reputation as the laureate of morning-after sleaze rests on his decade-long partnership with Malcolm Middleton in Arab Strap, with Middleton supplying low-blank musical backing to Moffat's introspective, maudlin vignettes. *Philophobia* is the Strap's best, opening with a chorus of "She was the best shag I ever had", and deepening into an episodic examination of guilty, insecure sex.

**8/10**



**AIDAN JOHN MOFFAT**  
**I Can Hear Your Heart** CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND, 2008

Moffat's most literary album comes disguised as a book. You have to read the enclosed story before listening to the closing track; a mini-opera of two-star hedonism. It's not all grim – there are moments of comedy, found answer-phone messages, and nods to Springsteen and Dorothy Parker amid the porno panting, plus an astute deconstruction of the film, *Grease*.

**7/10**



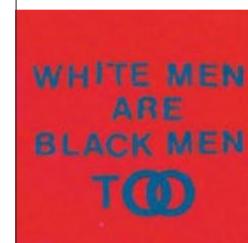
**BILL WELLS & AIDAN MOFFAT**  
**Everything's Getting Older**

CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND, 2011

Moffat's first pairing with Scottish indie's go-to jazzman Wells, won the SAY Award (best Scottish album). Wells has a lovely way with a melody and his playful tunes help soften the impact of Moffat's lyrical self-immolation. Moffat even attempts some tender singing on "Ballad Of The Bastard".

**8/10**

ALASTAIR MCKAY



**YOUNG FATHERS**

**White Men Are Black Men Too**

BIG DADA

**Second LP proper from Edinburgh upsetters**

Winning the 2014

Mercury Prize was a shock triumph for a trio whose attitude and erratic career path marked them as outsiders as much as their tag-averse music. Young Fathers' follow-up to *Dead* is less obviously indebted to hip-hop, more a set of thoroughly modern, mutant global pop songs, at times suggesting TV On The Radio mixing it with Spoek Mathambo, or Prince hanging with cLOUDDEAD. What most impresses is its warmth, dynamism and unforced difference, the darkly lurching "Old Rock n Roll" – whose lyrics supply the provocative title – just one of many highlights.

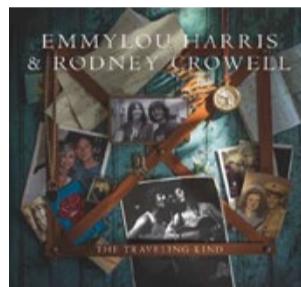
SHARON O'CONNELL

# EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL

## The Traveling Kind

NONESUCH

Underwhelming follow-up to 2013's splendid *Old Yellow Moon*.  
By Andrew Mueller



6/10

40 years, going back to Harris' 1974 solo debut, *Pieces Of The Sky*, before finally releasing their first proper album together in 2013. It was the highest imaginable praise of *Old Yellow Moon* that it ranked high among the best things either of them had ever put their names to, an album that managed to be both careworn and rumbustious, not so much a rage against any dying of the light as a genial agreement to make the most of what was left.

*Old Yellow Moon* was also helped by the fact that it genuinely sounded – and by all accounts was – something the pair had decided to do for fun, with no particular expectations for it. They rifled through Crowell's formidable back catalogue for songs, and included other favourites by Roger Miller, Hank DeVito, Patti Scialfa, Allen Reynolds, Matraca Berg and Kris Kristofferson. It gave every impression of being the kitchen table singalong the project had apparently started life as. On *The Traveling Kind*, the pair have decided to take matters a little more seriously, co-writing six new songs for the project; the rest of the tracklisting is made up by Crowell, Crowell in cahoots with other collaborators, and a couple of covers. It is, unfortunately, only a partial success.

It starts promisingly. The title track, written by Harris and Crowell with Wandering Sons frontman Cory Chisel, is an amiable front-porch strum which leads the album as an obvious continuation of the theme established on *Old Yellow Moon*, a reflective assessment of the road thus far travelled ("We don't all die young to save our spark/From the ravages of time," and so forth). The best of the rest of *The Traveling Kind* is that which most closely adheres to this template: the lovely parting lovers' duet "You Can't Say We Didn't Try" (another Chisel co-write); Crowell's '70s-vintage "No Memories Hanging Around" (originally recorded by his ex-wife Rosanne Cash and Bobby Bare); the Crowell/Mary Karr drunkard's waltz "Just Pleasing You" (previously recorded by Vince Gill).

Elsewhere, sadly, *The Traveling Kind* is rather a plod. The pair attempt environmental consciousness-raising on "The Weight Of The World", but succeed only in burdening this slight jazzy truffle with a weight of apocalyptic portent it cannot support. Of the two covers, Amy Allison's



### SLEEVE NOTES

#### ► Produced by:

Joe Henry  
Recorded at: Sound Emporium, Nashville; House Of Blues, Nashville

Personnel includes:  
Emmylou Harris (vocals), Rodney Crowell (vocals, guitar), Jedd Hughes (guitar, mandolin), Steuart Smith (guitar, piano), Byron House (bass), Bill Payne (keyboards), Chris Tuttle (keyboards, accordion), Jerry Roe (drums)

regrettably discernible on the dreadful "Higher Mountains", a vapidly yearning potboiler that will doubtless end up soundtracking the closing credits of some enragingly uplifting triumph-against-the-odds movie.

Nevertheless, there is enough that is good to prompt hope that Harris and Crowell produce at least a third album together. By far the best cut is one they wrote together, "If You Lived Here,

You'd Be Home Now". It's an estimable contribution to the canon of bickering country duets, full of well-crafted zingers – and, crucially, the track on *The Traveling Kind* on which it sounds the least like they're making much effort.

## Q&A

Emmylou Harris



Was it always the intention before *Old Yellow Moon* that there would be at least another album by the pair of you?

I don't think we thought that far ahead. We were just so happy to be actually doing the record we had said we would do for almost 40 years.

How different was the process of writing songs for *The Traveling Kind* from choosing songs for *Old Yellow Moon*?

Writing songs for me is a lot harder than choosing or finding songs, but enjoyable.

Why the decision to bring other writers in on some tracks – were there specific things you were looking for from the likes of Cory Chisel and Will Jennings?

Rodney and I have both written with Will before and we were excited to see him and work with him again. Rodney introduced me to Cory. He is a big fan of Cory's singing and writing, so it was an experiment that worked out really well.

How big a pool of covers were the Lucinda Williams and Amy Allison tracks chosen from – and why did they make the cut?

Their tracks were considered for the first record very strongly but we just never got around to cutting them, but we still love these songs so we revisited them for this record.

ANDREW MUELLER

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10 Masterpiece

1 Poor!

SCORING: EXTRA MATERIAL

10 Untold riches

1 Barrel-scrapings



## TRACKLIST

## DISC ONE

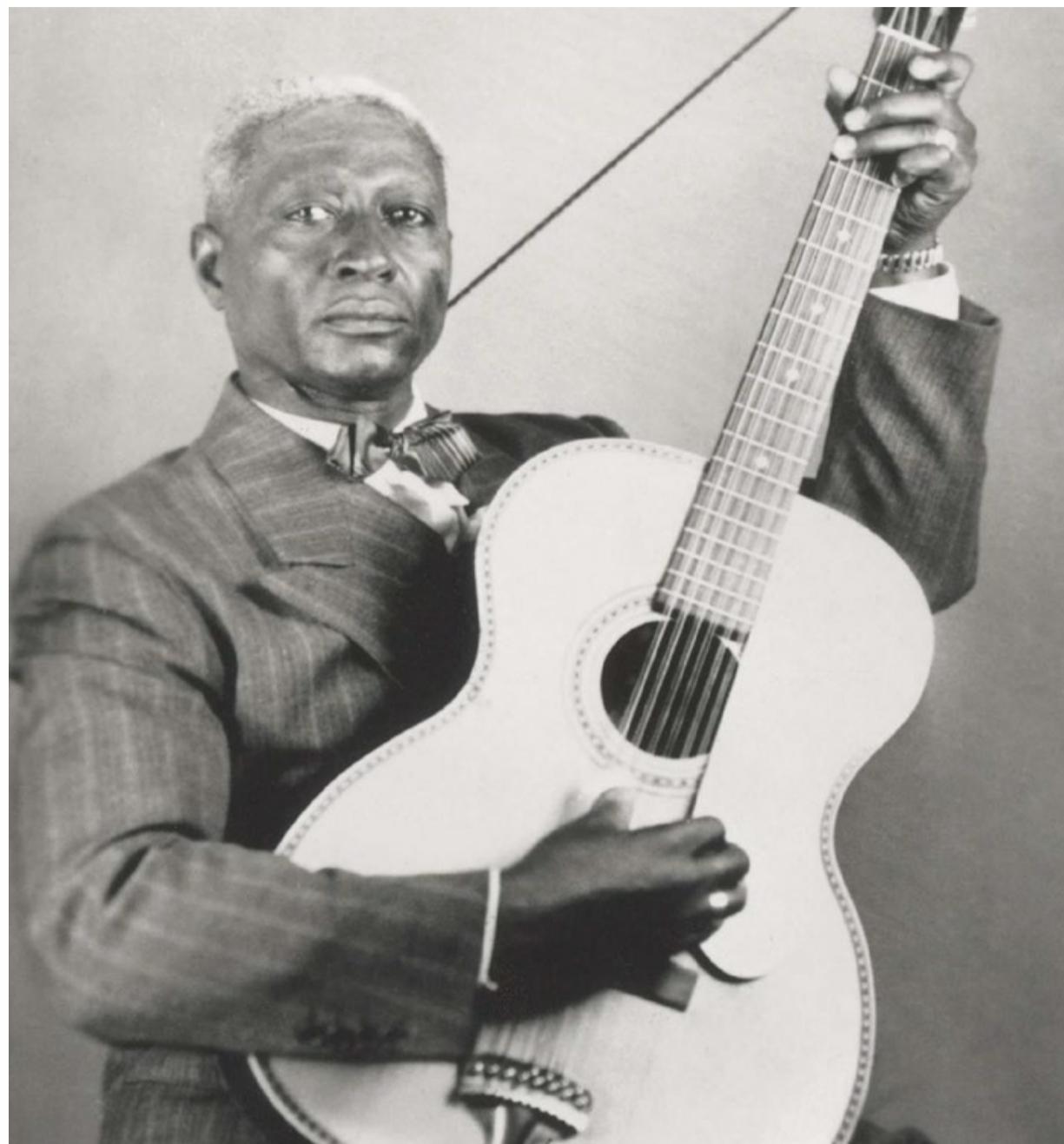
- 1 Irene (Goodnight Irene)
- 2 The Bourgeois Blues
- 3 Fannin Street (Mister Tom Hughes Town)
- 4 The Midnight Special
- 5 John Henry
- 6 Black Girl (Where Did You Sleep Last Night)
- 7 Pick A Bale Of Cotton
- 8 Take This Hammer
- 9 Cotton Fields
- 10 Old Riley
- 11 Rock Island Line
- 12 The Gallis Pole
- 13 Ha-Ha This A Way
- 14 Sukey Jump
- 15 Boll Weevil
- 16 Scottsboro Boys
- 17 Governor OK Allen
- 18 Governor Pat Neef
- 19 There's A Man Going Around Taking Names
- 20 On A Monday
- 21 You Can't Lose Me, Cholly
- 22 Keep Your Hands Off Her
- 23 We Shall Be Free

## DISC TWO

- 1 Alabama Bound
- 2 Almost Day
- 3 Fiddler's Dram
- 4 Green Corn
- 5 Sally Walker
- 6 Bring Me A Little Water, Silvy
- 7 Julie Ann Johnson
- 8 Linin' Track
- 9 Whoa, Back, Buck
- 10 Shorty George
- 11 Ham And Eggs
- 12 Moanin'
- 13 Out On The Western Plain
- 14 Noted Rider
- 15 Meeting At The Building
- 16 Good, Good, Good (Talking, Preaching)/ We Shall Walk Through The Valley
- 17 Ain't You Glad (The Blood Done Signed My Name)
- 18 I'm So Glad, I Done Got Over
- 19 The Hindenburg Disaster
- 20 Ella Speed
- 21 Haul Away Joe
- 22 Old Man
- 23 Sweet Jenny Lee
- 24 Jean Harlow
- 25 Laura
- 26 Queen Mary

## Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



## LEAD BELLY

## The Smithsonian Folkways Collection

SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

The definitive, five-disc primer for the brawling folk-blues master. *By Nigel Williamson*

10/10

WITH HIS THICK, knife-scarred neck, barrel chest, huge hands and intimidating stare, you wouldn't have wanted to pick a fight with Huddie Leadbetter. He had a mean temper, killed a rival in a brawl over a woman, was convicted a second time for attempted murder and, off and on, spent nearly 20 years on chain gangs in Texas and Louisiana.

But the legend we've come to know as Lead Belly – "the hard name of a harder man", according to his friend, Woody Guthrie – was also a "musicianer", whose passion for song was as strong as his love of a fight.

Born on a Louisiana plantation in 1888, he spent his childhood picking cotton, working in the fields alongside sharecropping parents who had known the evils of slavery. But plantation life also offered opportunities to learn to play the accordion and the guitar. By his early twenties he was hoboing around Texas with Blind Lemon Jefferson, absorbing a huge repertoire of songs and switching to the ringing 12-string guitar, which became his trademark; he felt the instrument's fuller sound was better able to simulate the sound of the barrelhouse pianos he'd heard and fallen in love with in the whorehouses and juke



## TRACKLIST CONTINUED

### DISC THREE

- 1 Good Morning Blues
- 2 Sail On, Little Girl
- 3 Easy Rider
- 4 Poor Howard
- 5 Duncan And Brady
- 6 How Long, How Long
- 7 TB Blues
- 8 Jim Crow Blues
- 9 Pigmeat
- 10 John Hardy
- 11 Outskirts Of Town
- 12 4, 5, And 9
- 13 In The Evening (When The Sun Goes Down)
- 14 Red Cross Store Blues
- 15 Diggin' My Potatoes
- 16 Blind Lemon
- 17 When A Man's A Long Way From Home
- 18 Alberta
- 19 Excerpt From The Lonesome Train
- 20 National Defense Blues
- 21 Hitler Song (Mr Hitler)
- 22 Big Fat Woman
- 23 Been So Long (Bellevue Hospital Blues)

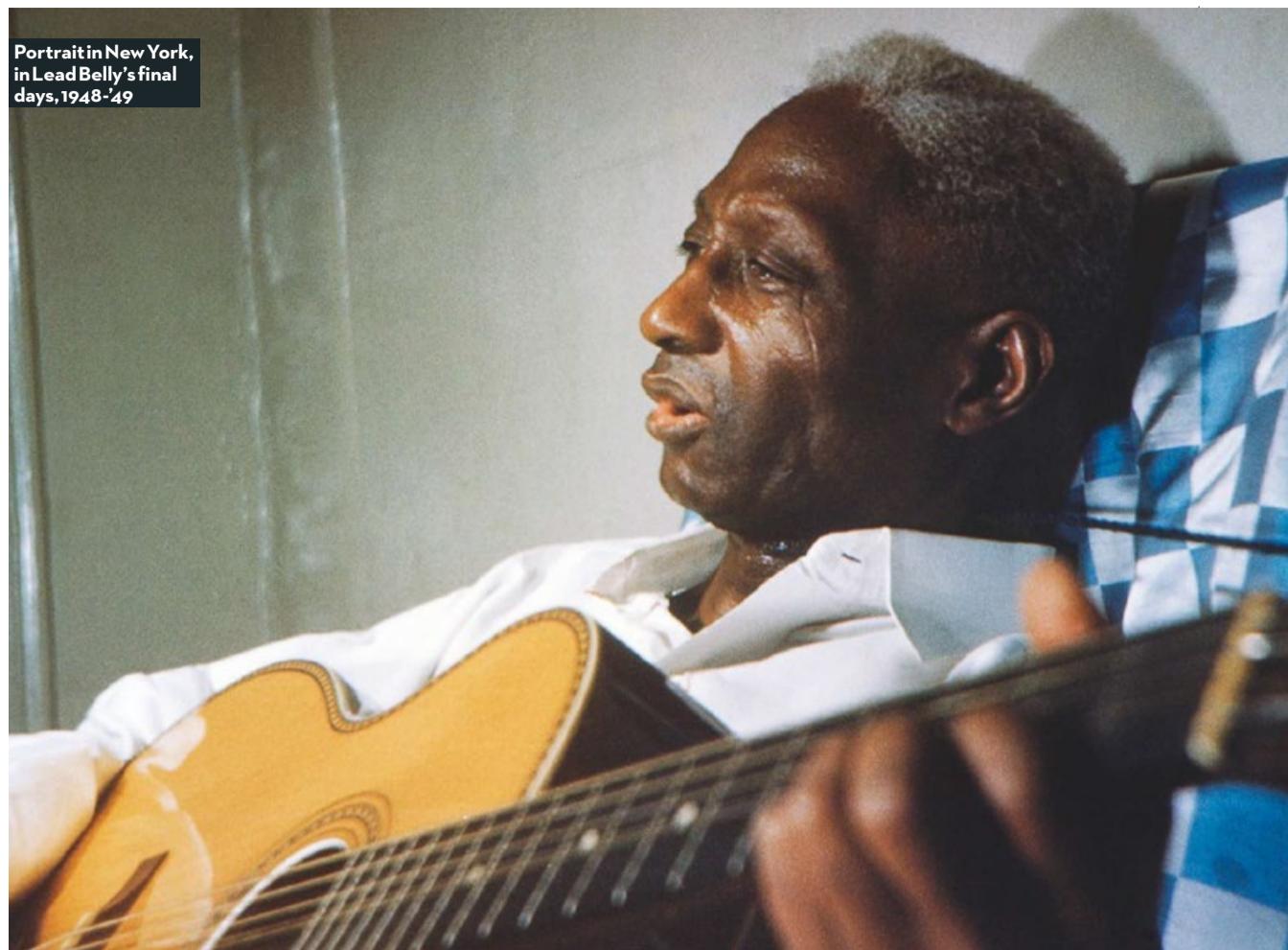
### DISC FOUR

- 1 WNYC Folk Songs of America Lead Belly (Grey Goose; Boll Weevil; Yellow Gal; Ha-Ha This A Way; Leaving Blues; Irene (outro))
- 2 WNYC Folk Songs of America Lead Belly and the Oleander Quartet (Almost Day; Blues In My Kitchen, Blues In My Dining Room; I Went Up On The Mountain; Good Morning Blues; Baby, Don't You Love Me No More; T.B. Blues; Irene (outro))
- 3 If It Wasn't For Dicky
- 4 What's You Gonna Do When The World's On Fire (with Anne Graham)
- 5 Rock Me (Hide Me In Thy Bosom) (with Anne Graham)
- 6 Packin' Trunk Blues
- 7 Leaving Blues
- 8 How Come You Do Me Like You Do?
- 9 One Dime Blues
- 10 I'm Going To Buy You A Brand New Ford
- 11 Jail-House Blues
- 12 Shout On
- 13 Come And Sit Down Beside Me
- 14 Red River

### DISC FIVE

- 1 Yes, I Was Standing In The Bottom
- 2 Ain't Going Down To The Well No More (Version 2)
- 3 Everytime I Go Out
- 4 Go Down, Old Hannah
- 5 Black Betty
- 6 Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out (with Bessie Smith)
- 7 Stewball
- 8 Ain't It A Shame To Go Fishin' On A Sunday
- 9 Relax Your Mind
- 10 Princess Elizabeth
- 11 Silver City Bound
- 12 The Titanic
- 13 House Of The Rising Sun
- 14 It's Tight Like That
- 15 Diggin' My Potatoes
- 16 Springtime In The Rockies
- 17 Backwater Blues
- 18 Didn't Old John Cross The Water
- 19 De Kalb Blues
- 20 They Hung Him On The Cross (Version 1)
- 21 They Hung Him On The Cross (Version 2)
- 22 In The World

Portrait in New York, in Lead Belly's final days, 1948-'49



→ joints of New Orleans and Shreveport.

The manner in which his twin careers as brawler and songster intertwined lies at the core of the Lead Belly legend, and not once but twice his musical ability secured a prison pardon. In 1925, while serving 30 years for murder, he appealed in song to Texas state governor Pat Morris Neff and was freed after serving seven years of his sentence. He was at liberty for just five years before his readiness with a knife put him back on the chain gang in the Louisiana state penitentiary, where the folklorist John Lomax and his son Alan discovered him languishing in 1933.

The Lomaxes were astonished by the capacity of the human jukebox they had stumbled upon. Lead Belly's repertoire ran to more than 500 songs, although on that first prison visit they were only able to record him singing a dozen of them. They returned the following year to record some more and agreed to submit a petition seeking his pardon to state governor Oscar Allen, together with a recording

of Lead Belly singing "Midnight Special". Once again his skill as a songster worked its magic and he was freed.

Employed as John Lomax's chauffeur on a field trip around the South, he then joined his patron in New York, where he was lionised, not by northern urban blacks – who didn't want his songs reminding them of the Jim Crow South which they were relieved to have left behind – but by white liberal society.

The Lomaxes were not racists, but they were paternalists with a patrician streak and have since been much criticised for the way they exhibited Lead Belly as an exotic curiosity, a "singing convict" and musical primitive,

dressing him in overalls or prison stripes when his preference out of jail was for a smart, dark suit. The manipulation of their protégé's image was evident in such newspaper headlines as "sweet singer of the swamplands here to do a few tunes between homicides" (*New York Herald Tribune*), while an article headlined "Bad Nigger Makes Good



Minstrel" in *Life* magazine was accompanied by a photo of Lead Belly fingering his guitar with the caption "These hands once killed a man". An early recording was released under the title *Negro Sinful Songs*.

As Lead Belly's managers, the Lomaxes allegedly took two-thirds of his earnings, even the tips he made passing the hat at shows. The result was that he attained fame but not fortune and they parted company when Lead Belly pulled a knife on John Lomax over disputed payments; he also went back to prison following another knife fight, for which he spent eight months on Riker's Island.

But if the back story is the stuff of folklore, his musical legacy is even more remarkable, a body of work that exceeds even that of Guthrie as the 20th Century's greatest repository of indigenous American folk music, encompassing blues, ballads, field hollers, country dance tunes, spirituals, minstrelsy, work songs, prison songs and even children's songs, many of them traditional, but all given Lead Belly's unique touch of vernacular genius and augmented by his own topical commentary (he wrote songs about Hitler, Jean Harlow and even Britain's Princess Elizabeth).

His songbook has been covered by The Beach Boys ("Cotton Fields"), Creedence Clearwater Revival ("Midnight Special"), Ry Cooder ("Bourgeois Blues"), Led Zeppelin ("Gallows Pole"), Van Morrison ("Rock Island Line"), Nirvana ("Where Did You Sleep Last Night") and The White Stripes ("Boll Weevil") among countless others, as well as being sung by just about every American folk singer of the last 70 years.

Lead Belly's own recordings have been repackaged and reissued extensively over the years, but this five-disc, 108-track set housed in a handsome, LP-sized 140-page book with extensive notes and historic photos, supersedes most if not all previous releases to lay claim to being the definitive primer.

As you'd expect, the striking, declamatory original versions of the celebrated rock'n'roll era covers are all represented, but they're only one aspect of a broad-ranging collection, which spans his first sides recorded in prison by the Lomaxes to his final sessions in New York in 1948, a year before his death.

Despite its heft, the set makes no claims to be exhaustive, for Lead Belly recorded several hundred songs in his 16-year recording career. But it is a finely judged and compendious overview that also serves as a survey of American popular music spanning almost two centuries, many of the songs handed down over generations by oral tradition until eventually preserved in these recordings. With the hiss and crackle of the original fragile masters eradicated by digital transfer and clean-up, what emerges is a voice that not only has indisputable historical importance but which sounds astonishingly vigorous, vital and virile in the here and now, the pulse true and strong as life is breathed back into the legend and the myth is made man again.



Robert Santelli

## Q&A

Producers Robert Santelli, director of the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles, and Jeff Place, archivist for the Smithsonian Centre For Folklife And Cultural Heritage, on the heavy legacy of Lead Belly....

### **H**OW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE CONTRIBUTION OF LEAD BELLY TO POPULAR MUSIC AND WHY DOES HE CAST SUCH A GIANT SHADOW?

ROBERT SANTELLI: His songbook is like taking a trip down the river of American roots music. He knew the forms and sang them with authority and authenticity, like a man who'd seen life's underbelly. To tell the story of Lead Belly is to tell the story of the blues and folk roots of rock'n'roll.

JEFF PLACE: He was a walking and singing collector of American song. He possessed an amazing memory for lyrics and melodies. He would hear a song in passing and commit it to memory; then he morphed and combined these memories into his own music and new compositions. His songs have lived on and people know them, whether they know the singer or not.

### **WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT LEAD BELLY'S CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY?**

RS: He was a man of contradiction and complexity. It was hard to get to know him, according to the people who tried. He moved through American musical genres and song circles naturally and effortlessly, never seeing the boundaries and categories that were created for commodity's sake by men with bow ties and clean suits. He was the very definition of the songster, an old-time human jukebox who never quite realised just what an American music treasure he had become in his life.

*"Lead Belly knew the pain of the penitentiary and the passion for life that free men have"*

### **HOW SHOULD WE SEEK TO MARRY THE VIOLENCE OF HIS LIFE WITH THE LEGACY OF HIS MUSIC?**

RS: His life had been hard and strained, and he probably slept half his time with one eye open. But although he possessed a powerful voice he could also be remarkably gentle. For example, "Irene" is a beautiful lullaby. He liked to fight and yet he also had a tender touch. He knew the pain of the penitentiary and the passion for life that free men have, and both emotions were often evident in his best songs.

### **WHY IS THERE SUCH CONTROVERSY OVER THE ROLE OF THE LOMAXES IN HIS CAREER?**

JP: John Lomax believed Huddie couldn't manage his own money. Lead Belly felt it was his to spend as he wished. He also bristled at being dressed up in prison clothes and playing up his prison history. Adding insult to injury, Lomax's book *Negro Folk Songs As Sung By Lead Belly*, portrayed him in a way he and his family hated. But if John Lomax hadn't found him, hired him and promoted his career, we may never have heard of him.

### **HE WAS ANGERED BY THE WAY HE WAS PRESENTED, AS THE WILD AND DANGEROUS 'SINGING CONVICT' AND SO ON...**

RS: He endured the insults because he had to. He never had a hit record in his lifetime and it was through performing that he made his living – although barely. Yet he'd come onstage proud and purposeful and deliver his songs with the authority of a man who'd seen hard times but, through music, had survived and carried on.

### **LEAD BELLY WAS ON WELFARE WHEN HE DIED. HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?**

JP: The commercial labels that recorded him didn't know how to market his music. Producers and impresarios couldn't understand the variety of his music and assumed it wouldn't sell. Unfortunately for him, he came along just before the great revival of folk music in the US. The surprise hit of 1950 was The Weavers' recording of Lead Belly's "Goodnight Irene". It sold two million copies and newspapers wrote articles about the man who wrote the song everybody was talking about, so the recognition came within a year of his death. Had he lived to take advantage of it, he would have had offers from major labels. Pete Seeger said that if he'd lived 10 more years he'd have seen all his dreams come true, with young people by the millions learning and singing his songs.

### **THERE HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF COMPS OVER THE YEARS. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS ONE?**

JP: I worry about someone who cares about the context and history of music. Downloading means missing all of that story, so we wanted to create a book that has CDs with it, rather than the other way around.

RS: We wanted to select the tracks that not only best told his story but revealed the landscape from which he worked, and allow new people who are interested to get it in one place. Dare I say it is the definitive Lead Belly collection, a musical story of a man and his songs, powerful statements about the many sides of life and the humanity that is somewhere in all of us, with the hope that they are never forgotten and are sung by folk singers now and in the future.



## Sticky Fingers 2009 REMASTER

- 1 Brown Sugar
- 2 Sway
- 3 Wild Horses
- 4 Can't You Hear Me Knocking
- 5 You Gotta Move
- 6 Bitch
- 7 I Got The Blues
- 8 Sister Morphine
- 9 Dead Flowers
- 10 Moonlight Mile

## Sticky Fingers Bonus AUDIO CD/2ND VINYL LP

- 1 Brown Sugar (feat. Eric Clapton)
- 2 Wild Horses (Acoustic)
- 3 Can't You Hear Me Knocking (Alternate Version)
- 4 Bitch (Extended Version)
- 5 Dead Flowers (Alternate Version)
- 6 Live With Me (Live The Roundhouse 1971)
- 7 Stray Cat Blues (Live The Roundhouse 1971)
- 8 Love In Vain (Live The Roundhouse 1971)
- 9 Midnight Rambler (Live The Roundhouse 1971)
- 10 Honky Tonk Women (Live The Roundhouse 1971)

## Get Yer Leeds Lungs Out! SUPER DELUXE ONLY

- 1 Jumpin Jack Flash
- 2 Live With Me
- 3 Dead Flowers
- 4 Stray Cat Blues
- 5 Love In Vain
- 6 Midnight Rambler
- 7 Bitch
- 8 Honky Tonk Women
- 9 (I Can't Get No) Satisfaction
- 10 Little Queenie
- 11 Brown Sugar
- 12 Street Fighting Man
- 13 Let It Rock

## DVD SUPER DELUXE ONLY

- 1 Midnight Rambler (Live At The Marquee, 1971)
- 2 Bitch (Live At The Marquee, 1971)



# THE ROLLING STONES

## Sticky Fingers

ROLLING STONES/POLYDOR

Zipped up! Mick and Keith's masterpiece, now with a set of live and alternate tracks. By Andy Gill

**10/10**

THE STONES' DEBUT album on their own label didn't just become their first to top both the British and American charts. *Sticky Fingers* symbolised the new, brashly decadent culture into which rock was moving as the '70s dawned. Its Anglo-American musical heritage was spiced with hints of hard drugs and demi-monde celebrity – afforded by an Andy Warhol-designed cover featuring a bulging male crotch begging to be unzipped.

This reissue of *Sticky Fingers* features the 2009 remastered album alongside an additional disc of five alternate takes and five live cuts from the

Roundhouse in 1971. On the deluxe edition, a third disc adds the Leeds date from the 1971 tour – widely bootlegged as *Get Your Leeds Lungs Out!* – in its entirety.

The live material, performed before the new album was released, displays a band emboldened by the input of new guitarist Mick Taylor, on a set leaning heavily on *Let It Bleed*. With Nicky Hopkins prominent on piano, the Roundhouse "Live With Me" is looser and raunchier than the album version, and Taylor contributes neat, wheedling solos to "Stray Cat Blues" and "Love In Vain", while the Leeds take of the latter is just superb, conveying true blues pain. Versions of "Midnight Rambler"

## Q&amp;A

Mick Jagger

**Where was *Sticky Fingers* actually recorded?**

We recorded three tracks in Muscle Shoals, three tracks in Olympic, three tracks in my house in the country with our mobile studio, and one was already recorded, so it's a collection of songs from all over. Muscle Shoals was a lovely place, but for a band it was just another studio. It was a place you go if you were, like, Aretha Franklin, to go and play with this funky band that they got together there. But we didn't need the funky band kind of thing. We were our own funky band.

**"Brown Sugar" was an instant classic.**

I wrote "Brown Sugar" in Australia when I was filming *Ned Kelly*. I wrote it in the middle of a field, playing an electric guitar through

from both venues shift confidently through gears, swinging like mad as they stretch out to between 11 and 13 minutes.

But it's *Sticky Fingers* itself that still impresses most, the power of its blend of grit and sophistication undiminished nearly half a century on, in a beguiling union of country and city, the raw and the cooked. Keith Richards' opening "Brown Sugar" riff heralds the quintessential Stones loose/tight groove, and Mick Jagger's vocal seethes with lascivious menace. The alternate version, meanwhile, shows a song still en route to perfection, with slide guitar diminishing the chunky impact of the intro, and Bobby Keys' sax solo truncated to accommodate a guitar break – apparently from Eric Clapton. And there's as yet no closing "Yeah!/Yeah!/Yeah!/Woo!" chant, the final additional hook that brings the song home.

Like "Brown Sugar", "Wild Horses" was one of the tracks recorded at Muscle Shoals, bringing the Stones' bluesy mettle to the West Coast country-rock style. It's one of Jagger's best vocal performances, the aching vulnerability of his delivery set off beautifully by the tragic warmth of the chorus harmonies, paralleling the way the delicate lead guitar dances through the plangent acoustic strumming. On the outtake, there's no lead guitar, but some nice acoustic harmonic picking set against 12-string. It's the first of what Jagger acknowledges is a large complement of slower material that includes "I Got The Blues", a brooding country-soul number in Otis Redding style; the country-blues staple "You Gotta Move". The eerie "Sister Morphine", dates from the *Let It Bleed* sessions, with Ry Cooder's haunting slide guitar casting shivers through the song, backed up by Jack Nitzsche's extraordinary, atmospheric piano. It's almost a travesty, albeit a relief, when it's followed by the corny country parody of "Dead Flowers", where the drug theme is more ironically weighted via a reference to being "in my basement room with a needle and a spoon". The outtake version is, if anything, even more excessively cartoonish, Jagger hammering it up terribly with an uptight cowboy drawl. Ironically, it's since become one of the album's most covered songs,

headphones, which was a new thing then. We did an earlier version of "Brown Sugar" in Olympic, and Eric Clapton played on that, before the Muscle Shoals one.

**"Sister Morphine" was recorded earlier than the other tracks.**

Yeah, we were in Olympic, and Ry Cooder came and guested on a couple of tracks with us. He creates these great moods with his slide guitar style. Ry taught the rest of the band how to play in different tunings, and subsequently we used these different tunings on other numbers, like "Brown Sugar" and "Sway".

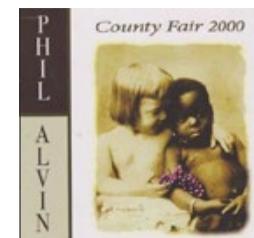
**Andy Warhol created an iconic album cover for *Sticky Fingers*.**

He came up with the idea of having a real zip on a pair of jeans and got the nice fold-out sleeve with the inside underwear. It had all kinds of production problems 'cause putting a real zip on a piece of cardboard is tricky. And the record would get ruined because when you have piles of them, the weight pressed the zip down and ruined the vinyl.

not least by mainstream country artists with, one hopes, a sense of humour.

Despite the overall downtempo character, *Sticky Fingers* doesn't seem an underpowered album thanks to the potency of the rockier tracks. "Bitch" has a great rolling power, with the riff's funkified Chuck Berry groove punched home by louche horns. Keith Richards peels off one of his best lead lines, and Charlie Watts adds a masterstroke with his tom-tom flourish as Jagger delivers the line "my heart is beating louder than a big bass drum". The alternate version is more than two minutes longer than the album cut, but save for a few lewd sax honks, remains substantially the same. Elsewhere, the languid grace of the opening riff to "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" is so engagingly funky that you don't really notice how the tempo drops for the Santana-style jazz-rock breakdown section underpinned by the keyboard dream-team of Nicky Hopkins' piano and Billy Preston's organ. The alternate version is half as long as the one on the album, with no breakdown. Instead, there's a counterpoint guitar line by Taylor which doesn't really work, followed by a better one from Richards.

Finally, "Moonlight Mile" is as natural an album-closer as "A Day In The Life", with Jagger's hoarse falsetto on the chilly verses giving way to warmer choruses, underscored by Paul Buckmaster's strings, and Taylor's delicately threaded lead line. Hugely atmospheric, with the final chords bestowing an epiphanic grace upon its homesick loneliness, it's a captivating conclusion to one of the most satisfying album sequences in rock history.

***Sticky Fingers* retooled: super deluxe edition box****PHIL ALVIN**  
**County Fair 2000**  
(reissue, 1994)

RETROWORLD

**Master Blaster flies solo, sort of**

Phil Alvin's second album was intended as a hasty precursor to a more considered batch of songs with The Blasters. It didn't quite work out that way, though. Alvin instead co-opted his bandmates (minus brother Dave, who'd quit some years earlier) into helping him realise this loose concept piece, based on the American tradition of the wandering minstrel, soaking up styles and rural idioms from town to town. Thus, *County Fair 2000* offers a dust storm of flavours, from country-blues to straight-up balladry, rockabilly to jazz and beyond. It's a plurality that extends to the hired help too, with Alvin roping in blues legend Billy Boy Arnold for a busy extrapolation of Pete Wheatstraw's "Wreck Your V-8 Ford", alongside New Orleans favourites The Dirty Dozen Brass Band ("Turnin' Blues Into Gold"; "The Old Rugged Cross") and various guest singers. The results are almost unrelentingly chipper, from "The Terror"'s odd mix of flapper jazz and deep-bellied horns to the boisterous Speakeasy vibe of "Low Down Rhythm", backed by the Faultline Syncopators. Alas, it was to be Alvin's last recorded work until 2005, when he finally ushered a reconstituted Blasters into the studio.

**EXTRAS:** None.

ROB HUGHES

**7/10**

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**EXTRAS:** None.

ROB HUGHES

**ATA KAK**  
**Obaa Sima**  
(reissue, 1994)

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA

**Cult Ghanian highlife tape finally resurfaces**

In certain circles, Ata Tak has been a figure of mystery for close to a decade, ever since intrepid US blogger Brian Shimkovitz uploaded the Ghanaian rapper's *Obaa Sima* tape to his website, Awesome Tapes From Africa, in 2006. Shimkovitz came across the obscure cassette at a stall in Ghana's Cape Coast in 2002 and, obsessed by its chirpy style of highlife rapped in the local Twi dialect and streaked with homemade attempts at pop, rap and disco, felt compelled to share his find with the world. Ata Tak's seven-song tape became the inaugural post on ATFA, now a well-regarded resource for out-of-print sounds from the continent, and then the search began for the man behind the music. Shimkovitz's quest – the subject of a Radio 4 documentary last year – led to him reissuing *Obaa Sima*, mastering it from his own cassette, having discovered that only 50 copies of the tape were produced in 1994 and distributed among friends in Ghana and Toronto, where Ata Kak – one Yaw Atta-Owusu – lived and had recorded it. As with William Onyeabor, events surrounding the record threaten to overshadow the music, but this fresh and goofy example of a truly international sound – heavily indebted to prime Michael Jackson – outshines the saga.

**8/10**

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**EXTRAS:** None.

PIERS MARTIN

# Rediscovered! ▶

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



Peter Walsh of  
The Apartments



9/10

## THE APARTMENTS

**The Evening Visits... And Stays For Years**  
(reissue, 1985)

CAPTURED TRACKS

### No Song, No Spell, No Madrigal

RILEY RECORDS

One reissue and – after nearly two decades – one new album from the well-connected Aussie chamber poppers

“I seem to be meeting the guy who wrote them for the very first time,” reflects Peter Walsh, the architect behind the songs of love and displacement that make up *The Evening Visits...*, the first album by The Apartments, “but each time he appears, he’s on some different set.” For Walsh, songwriting takes on a spectral cast: “It’s not just a bunch of former selves in there, there are the cities and situations, the rooms and the nights and those you have loved, all the people in and out of your life. A parade of ghosts.”

Living in Brisbane, Walsh spent his early musical years in two more great Australian groups: he was an early member of The Go-Betweens, whose Able Label released the first Apartments single, 1979’s “Return Of The Hypnotist”, and he was also part of Ed Kuepper’s Laughing Clowns. But with *The Evening Visits...*, Walsh hit upon a melancholy music of metaphysical exile, fleshed out by glinting musicianship from members of Orange Juice, The Triffids and Everything But The Girl. Released on Rough Trade, it

slowly adopted the mantle of cult classic: This Mortal Coil, the project of 4AD’s Ivo Watts-Russell, covered one of the album’s most moving songs, “Mr Somewhere”, on 1991’s *Blood*.

Captured Tracks’ reissue of *The Evening Visits...* arrives just as Walsh readies the first Apartments album in 18 years, *No Song, No Spell, No Madrigal*. Played with quiet grace, the eight chamber-pop songs here are alternately harrowing and redemptive, anchored by loss. “I had been playing most of these songs, on the piano, slowly, for a long long time and I once believed they would never be heard,” Walsh says. “The years of silence, I think, they’re somewhere in the album too.” It’s a moving, stately album, circling around memories of Walsh’s late son, Riley. As Walsh concludes, “You don’t choose songs – songs choose you. So to me it was never really about making the next record, but the last. And not a record, but a memorial.”

JON DALE



9/10



## BAD COMPANY

**Bad Company**  
(reissue, 1974)

RHINO

Before the stadium bombast, a no-frills hard rock debut

8/10

Bad Company must shoulder their share of the blame for the formulaic stadium excesses and macho posturing that engulfed heavy rock in the mid-1970s. Yet the group’s 1974 debut was masterful in its pared-down simplicity. Although the ex-Free duo of Paul Rodgers and Simon Kirke had replaced guitarist Paul Kossoff with Mott The Hoople’s Mick Ralphs, songs such as “Rock Steady”, the title track and the ballads “Ready For Love” and “Don’t Let Me Down” are closer in spirit to Free’s soulful, unpretentious Brit-funk than to the riff-heavy bombast of stadium-rock that would soon take over. Even when the riffing was pursued with a no holds-barred vigour, as on “Can’t Get Enough”, it was done with a panache that meant it was still danceable. At the time, Rodgers was Robert Plant’s only serious rival as Britain’s premier hard rock vocalist, but Kirke’s drumming is also striking in its pleasingly subtle minimalism. Bad Company never sounded this good again.

**EXTRAS:** A dozen bonus tracks, eight

6/10 previously unreleased, including demos, alternate takes and three songs that didn’t make the album. A simultaneous expanded two-disc edition of Bad Company’s second album, *Straight Shooter* (1975), is also available and includes 13 previously unreleased tracks.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## PETER BELLAMY & LOUIS KILLEN

**Won't You Go My Way**  
TALKING ELEPHANT

Ill-fated folkie putting Norwich on the map

8/10

The art-school-educated son of a Mosley-ite Blackshirt, the late Peter Bellamy had a voice – and a personality – which divided opinion. The anagrammatic nickname ‘Elmer P Bleaty’ summed up the former Young Tradition man’s leathery but tender style rather well, with this long unavailable live album, recorded in Norwich in 1971, further testament to his vibrato-heavy gifts as a ballad singer. His channeling of traditional pieces like “Here’s Adieu Sweet Lovely Nancy” is nuanced but powerful, while the eerie “Testimonial” – his mystical evocation of the Norfolk landscape of his childhood – gives weight to his still-burgeoning reputation as a creator of memorable songs, as well as a conduit for old ones. Bellamy – who committed suicide in 1991 – produced more substantial works, with 1977’s *The Transports* and his many musical settings of Rudyard Kipling poems much appreciated by modern traditionalists, but *Won’t You Go My Way* – complete with accidental comedy classic sleeve – may be an easier way in for the uninitiated. The presence of another revival notable, Louis Killen, and some able harmony singers in the audience, certainly give a unusually festive heft to Bellamy’s assaults on “The Sweet Nightingale” and “When Spring Comes On”. Harsh but more than fair.

**EXTRAS:** None.

JIM WIRTH



## MICHAEL CHAPMAN

**Window**  
LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

**Unfinished, rejected by the artist – a troubled album, revisited**

"It is a piece of my history for those interested in that, even though I think it sounds like a piece of crap," is Michael Chapman's own evaluation of *Window*, his 1970 album, recorded for Harvest Records quickly, with a minimum of fuss, and pressed by his label in an unfinished state – as Chapman tells it, he was planning on returning to the album after touring to complete the acoustic guitar tracking. You can kind of hear why he's not happy, too – *Window* does indeed have a slightly empty, unfinished quality to it, though perhaps the listener's expectations, guided by Chapman's derisive comments, read that into the finished product. The songs don't seem quite up to snuff, either, compared to the heights Chapman scaled on *Fully Qualified Survivor* and *Rainmaker*. But neither is it a disaster. *Window* picks up steam after its unconvincing, meandering opening tracks, with a stretch of gorgeously deep acoustic laments – "Among The Trees", "An Old Man Remembers" and, particularly, the drifting "In The Valley" – that match Chapman's finest. And if parts of it sound threadbare, now we know it wasn't by the artist's design.

**EXTRAS:** CD-only bonus tracks, "The Hobo's 6/10 Lamentation" and "Never In My Life".

JON DALE

**7/10**



## COACHWHIPS

### Bangers Vs Fuckers

CASTLE FACE

**In-the-red garage mayhem from the future Oh See**

Before his mid-'00s re-emergence at the helm of San Francisco psych troupe Thee Oh Sees, John Dwyer plied his trade in a string of garage-rock groups that delighted in a heady fusion of athletic live performance and in-the-gutter production values. Best of the bunch were Coachwhips, a Californian trio who hammered out four records between the years 2002 and 2005. Probably they never improved on *Bangers Vs Fuckers*, a breathless garage charge that sounds like *Nuggets* psychedelia stripped down, sped up, and as playfully aggressive as a poke in the eye. You could draw comparison to fellow garage revival groups like Mick Collins' Gories, but there is something art-damaged and high concept to Coachwhips' commitment to a brutish simplicity. On "You Gonna Get It" and "Purse Peeking", Dwyer's staccato riffing and strangulated vocals are powered forwards by keyboardist Mary Ann McNamara and drummer John Harlow, who pound away as if swatting bugs; the harp-powered "I Knew Her, She Knew Me", meanwhile, comes on like Howlin' Wolf with a rocket in his pocket.

**EXTRAS:** This Record Store Day reissue sees

**7/10** *Bangers Vs Fuckers* recut and remastered, although Weasel Walter's upfront, no-fidelity production – integral to the whole enterprise – thankfully remains intact.

LOUIS PATTISON

**8/10**

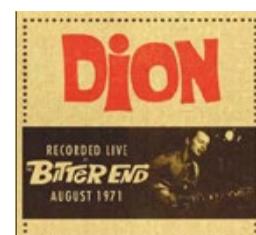
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JON DALE

**7/10**



## DION

**Recorded Live At The Bitter End, August 1971**  
OMNIVORE

**The Wanderer in the land of singer-songwriters: an elegant solo acoustic set**

As a testament to the eloquence and intensity of Dion's unjustly forgotten early-'70s oeuvre, original songs like "Your Own Backyard" (about his struggles with addiction) and "Sunniland" blend in perfectly with heartfelt interpretations of the era's standards – works by Bob Dylan, The Beatles, Leonard Cohen, among others, on this never-before-released set. DiMucci, standout of New York's doo wop era, was a renaissance man by 1971, rising out of a heroin haze, a singer of astounding range and depth. Years spent in the Village folk scene morphed him into, among other things, one of Dylan's most sympathetic interpreters (here doing "One Too Many Mornings", "Mama, You Been On My Mind") and a blues singer with authority (an exquisite, gorgeously picked version of Sonny Boy Williamson's "Don't Start Me Talkin'"). At times the experimentation is left wanting. Chuck Berry's "Too Much Monkey Business" doesn't quite work as a wayward scat blues; still, a soulful take of Dick Holler's "Sanctuary" is worthy of Tim Hardin, one of Dion's inspirations. A breathless manoeuvring through 'White Album' nugget "Blackbird," meanwhile, is pure atmosphere, and a brilliant recasting, reflecting the world-weary, war-weary tenor of the times.

**EXTRAS:** None.

LUKE TORN

**8/10**

## HOW TO BUY... SOLO DION

From folk-rock to Wall Of Sound



### Wonder Where I'm Bound

COLUMBIA, 1969

Every pre-Beatles rocker hit turbulence in the '60s/'70s' "new normal", but Dion's issues were more business/personal than musical, considering the devastating folk-rock he was making. This disc includes definitive covers of Paxton, Guthrie and Dylan, but shockingly they're out-distanced by "Now", a Dion original.

**9/10**



### Suite For Late Summer

WARNER BROS, 1972

Dion never quite put together that one knockout LP during his singer-songwriter renaissance, but individual cuts could be stunning. *Suite...* featured two masterpieces, "Jennifer Knew", and "Soft Parade Of Years", a devastating testimony on the passing of time.

**8/10**



### Born To Be With You

PHIL SPECTOR INTERNATIONAL, 1975

This lost classic teams Dion's sweeping voice with Spector's Wall Of Sound, plus a Brill Building writing presence, capturing the '70s peculiar mix of hope and ennui. Fascinating performances reign in the title-track's seven-minute unfolding, and Dion's terrifying heroin-survival tale, "Your Own Backyard".

**9/10**

LUKE TORN



## BERNARD FEVRE

**Cosmos 2043/  
Suspense**  
(reissues, 1975, 1977)

**BLACK DEVIL**  
**Disco Club (1978)**

LO RECORDINGS/  
SOUND OBSESSION

**French synth doyen's early work revisited**

At 68, Fevre has more reason than most to be grateful for Aphex Twin. When Richard James' label Rephlex stumbled across the Frenchman's exotic 1978 *Disco Club* mini-LP at a car boot sale and later released it over two singles in 2004, the attention it received lured Fevre out of semi-retirement and gave his long-dormant career a second wind that's still blowing strong. As the rejuvenated Black Devil, Fevre has released five LPs of new material since 2006, but the template for each is the peerless *Disco Club*, which he made with the help of a drummer. Even today, these six tracks of opiated cosmic disco manage to sound otherworldly and street-tough, weird yet familiar. This remastered Lo Recordings edition presents the trippy LP in its full six-track incarnation for the first time since '78 and is the pick of the label's three Fevre reissues. Though equally rare, *Cosmos 2043* and *Suspense* are LPs of quirky space-age library muzak that Fevre wrote solo in '75 after a period hawking chansons in Paris. Of note chiefly because The Chemical Brothers sampled "Earth Message" for *Surrender*'s "Got Glint", these seem insubstantial next to the mighty *Disco Club*.

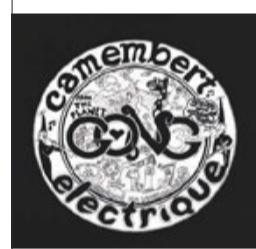
**EXTRAS:** None.

PIERS MARTIN

**7/10**

**7/10**

**9/10**



## GONG

**Camembert Electrique**

BYG

**Busy farmhouse freak rock from Daevid Allen, Pip Pyle and co**

Though once a member of Soft Machine, Daevid Allen (who died in March) and his band Gong bore as much relation to the original group as a unicorn does to a horse. On the inner of their album *Third* of 1970, the Softs are resting in studious contemplation. On the back sleeve of this, 1971's second Gong album, Allen and his crew look as if they're on their way to a costume party, theme elves.

This is a busy album. As much as their private iconography seemed to involve nothing more than time-travelling teapots and smoking pot, tracks like opener "You Can't Kill Me" are antic, many-tentacled pieces, with a perverse internal logic, nursery rhyme inanity and outré sensibility they would see adopted by the likes of Cardiacs.

This either works for the passport holder or it does not. Rather against type, it may be the – relatively – quieter moments ("And You Tried So Hard"; "Selene") which travel best: leaving some room to take a breather and consider the French bucolic dream that allowed Gong to produce this music.

**EXTRAS:** This French jazzbo release, 5/10 remastered for vinyl, adds a gatefold sleeve and lyrics to the original slimline Virgin records package, which is OK, but won't blow your mind.

JOHN ROBINSON





## BERT JANSCH

**Bert Jansch (reissue, 1965)**  
SANCTUARY

Folk maestro's first, remastered for its 50th anniversary

**9/10**

Few albums have proved as influential or arrived with as much mystique as Jansch's 1965 debut. The 21-year-old Glaswegian had hit London's folk scene like a meteor, dazzling it with his intricate fingerpicking guitar and the plaintive counterpoint of his world-weary vocals. Recorded in a North London kitchen on a borrowed guitar (and sold for a paltry £100 with no royalties), *Bert Jansch* oozed bohemian mystique, from the glowering, intense cover shot to its most celebrated number, "Needle Of Death", a stark rumination on heroin. That, however, is too dark a song to spend time with, whereas "Strolling Down The Highway" evokes beatnik freedom, "Dreams Of Love" and "Oh How Your Love Is Strong" are romantic paeans touched with folk imagery ("knots of silken lace"), and the ringing "Do You Hear Me Now?" brings a touch of Dylan-esque protest. Yet there are as many nods to jazz and blues as to the hallowed folk tradition in nimble instrumentals like "Veronica", "Casbah" and Jansch's string-snapping cover of Davey Graham's "Angie", which swiftly became a test-piece for every aspiring picker. Remastered from the original half-inch tapes of producer Bill Leader, the album sparkles anew.

**EXTRAS:** None.

NEIL SPENCER



**MULL HISTORICAL SOCIETY/COLIN MACINTYRE**  
**The Best Of**  
XTRA MILE RECORDINGS

Choice cuts from the Hebridean songwriter.

When Colin MacIntyre – for

he is Mull Historical Society – emerged in the dying days of Britpop, he was easy to overlook amid the glut of bands clinging to the smart-alec lyricism and perky hooks of the previous decade. You only need re-visit "Lights" and "The Final Arrears" to know that MacIntyre's hooks were up with the best of them but, still, he had more substance than most. As well as pointing both to his ear for a melody and his wonky approach to artwork, this compilation – released to coincide with MacIntyre's debut novel *The Letters Of Ivor Punch* – underlines his credentials as a storyteller. "The Supermarket Strikes Back" couches parochial concerns within a larger philosophical framework ("Honey there's a store, a new place in town/ They're selling new blades for my mower"). Elsewhere, humour is replaced by melancholy – "The Final Arrears" hovers over an uncle's deathbed, while "Instead" recalls his father's final days, as he looks for something lasting to remember him by. MacIntyre comes from a family of writers – his father was a journalist and his grandfather was a poet – so stories are in his blood. Going on this evidence, a novel was the obvious next step.

**EXTRAS:** A jaunty new single called "Keep Falling".

FIONA STURGES



## ORANGE BLOSSOM

**Everything Must Change (reissue, 2005)**  
ECC 100

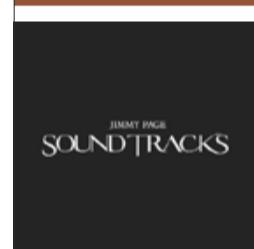
Vinyl/USB reissue for French 2005 worldbeat cult classic

**7/10**

Formed in the mid-'90s by a renegade classical violinist and an electro-oriented percussionist, this French outfit blossomed in an unexpected way when Egyptian singer Leila joined, becoming a world/fusion jam band. They collaborated with Ivorians Yelemba D'Abidjan and Egyptian group Ganoub, and even toured Egypt itself. This second album finds them underpinned by European synthlines on opener "Hababi", but supplemented by polyrhythms over which Leila's delicate vocals hover and soar. Tracks like "Desert Dub" and "Maldito" fit snugly alongside contemporaries like Jah Wobble and Natasha Atlas, though with a rockier, neo-prog bent. "Blama" is straight Middle-Eastern pop, "Bedimina" a sinuous chunk of North African roots, while "Souffrance" mixes Egyptian strings with PJ Chabot's Western violin. It's an improbable mélange at times, but their daring usually pays off. Sonically, it's likewise adventurous, clear and loud, which is presumably one reason it's been picked up by dedicated vinyl label ECC (home of Sheema Mukherjee), who have given it the full gatefold sleeve and lush artwork treatment (with USB included). A fine rediscovery.

**EXTRAS:** Bonus track "Ayoub".

**6/10** NEIL SPENCER



## JIMMY PAGE

### Soundtracks

SELF-RELEASED

**Drones! Synths! Michael Winner!**

As above; so below. After gussying up the Zeppelin catalogue, Page delivers a similar redux treatment

for his two soundtracks: Kenneth Anger's *Lucifer Rising* and Michael Winner's *Death Wish II*. The bewitching drones and incantatory qualities of the former are already a powerful trip; the companion disc, *Lucifer Rising: The Second Coming*, offer additional lysergic delights, especially the gorgeous 12-string wash through the title track's "Early Mix". Five "Sonic Textures" showcase Page's interest in the theremin and bow. Admittedly, they're a bit Radiophonic Workshop; but interesting in what they reveal about the path not taken. Indeed, as Page says in the sleeve notes, these pieces were recorded close to *Death Wish II*: yet they could scarcely be more different. If the *Lucifer Rising* material is all about atmosphere and texture, *Death Wish II* operates less successfully in a more recognisable rock idiom. Commissioned 10 months after John Bonham's death and worked on under a veil of heroin, Page creates an uneven set including strings, guitar solos and – Valhalla forfend – slap bass, aided by the likes of Chris Farlowe and Fairport's Dave Mattacks.

**EXTRAS:** The Expansion disc foregrounds **6/10** orchestral versions and other curios: best of the lot, "A Mirror Sketch", dates from the early '70s and displays the kind of nuanced, far-roaming playing that is, alas, absent elsewhere.

MICHAEL BONNER



## STEVE REICH

**Four Organs/Phase Patterns/Pendulum Music**  
KARLRECORDS

Early works from American minimalist master

He may have gone

conservative in his later years, much like his peer Philip Glass, but across the late 1960s and the 1970s, Steve Reich was compositionally some of the most maddening yet compulsive music within modern classical. By reducing composition to its bare essentials and really teasing out the parameters of a limited set of constraints or variables, Reich and his minimalist colleagues stripped the realist and romantic sheen away from classical, removed the unneeded complexities of the then-modern avant-garde, and focused in on sound as phenomena. This approach is particularly evident on these three early pieces, performed here by German collective, Ensemble Avantgarde, with intelligence, patience and a sure hand. Both "Four Organs" and "Phase Patterns" rely on substitution, subtraction and addition to build intensity from simple gestures; the way the varying organ notes weave together and then cleave apart in the latter, the entire piece going in and out of phase, is serious psychedelia from minimal means. "Pendulum Music" strips things back further, with mics swinging over arms, sharp sparks of feedback spiralling in and out of alignment. Each piece is exhilarating, yet quietly provocative.

**EXTRAS:** None.

JONDALE



## THE REPLACEMENTS

### The Studio Albums 1981-1990

RHINO

All eight albums in one place to mark the big

**9/10**

2015 reunion tour

The Replacements often gave the impression that no-one was driving, but they forged a new path for American alternative rock, even if they veered into a ditch just before the early '90s goldrush reached town. The early snotty punk stuff is fun, but the group come into their own on 1983's *Hootenanny* when they stop trying to keep pace with Minneapolis rivals Hüsker Dü and confess their love for country and classic rock. As the albums come thick and fast, the good-time boogaloo is increasingly complemented by Paul Westerberg's bar-stool wisdom. Some maintain the spark left the band along with guitarist Bob Stinson in 1986, although "Alex Chilton" (from '87's *Pleased To Meet Me*) remains an exhilarating hymn to the power of rock'n'roll. *Don't Tell A Soul* and swansong *All Shook Down* – originally intended as a Westerberg solo album – angle self-consciously for a more mainstream audience, but they also contain some of the band's best songs that seem to look back wistfully over a career of compelling heart-on-sleeve skirmishes and glorious nearlydom.

**EXTRAS:** None. While this boxset boasts the "remastered sound" of the 2008 re-releases, the demos, alternate takes and covers included on those are omitted here. Although, to be honest, you're not missing much.

SAM RICHARDS



# RED HOUSE PAINTERS

**Boxset** 4AD

Heavy vinyl by name, heavy vinyl by nature. Mark Kozelek's first band, reissued. By Laura Snaps



**8/10**

MARK KOZELEK IS virtually alone among music mid-lifers. Over 25 years into his career, his current records are considered as vital as the Red House Painters albums with which he made his name. Rarer still is that this new material engages deeply with his past without attempting to relive it, or lapsing into its defining self-pity. The relationship between now and then remains complex: Sun Kil Moon's 2012 *Among The Leaves* saw Kozelek griping about his audiences – middle-aged blokes who turn up to hear ancient Painters songs. If there's any reconciliation between the two, it's in the form of gratitude: 2014's opus *Benji* referenced getting his 4AD deal from Ivo Watts-Russell in the early '90s. "He signed Red House Painters when we couldn't draw 20 people," said Kozelek.

Decades before the Kozelek we know today, the waspish essayist, he was a depressed Ohio kid who had been through rehab at 14. After moving to San Francisco in the late '80s, he met his Red House Painters bandmates and forged his forlorn Midwestern gothic built on smoky coils of guitar. A 20-track cassette demo eventually made its way to Watts-Russell via American Music Club's Mark Eitzel. Kozelek's

music came from a deeply lonely place, but he wasn't plumbing this furrow alone. There was Low in Duluth, Idaho in California, Codeine in New York and Bedhead in Texas – the "slowcore" movement was fittingly isolated. But no-one else had a frontman like Kozelek, a Morrissey fan of such equal melodrama and self-loathing that he refuted any comparison. "Morrissey is funny, charming and intelligent," he said in '93. "I am none of those things." He is openly misanthropic on the Painters' debut, 1992's *Down Colorful Hill* (six cleaned-up songs from the demo tape), rendering a break-up in obsessive excess on "Medicine Bottle", and declaring, "This dictionary never has a word for the way I'm feeling" on the bleak "Japanese To English". Basslines prowl gently, while Kozelek plays down-tuned, disquieting guitar. But there's humour on the Lemonheads-junty "Lord Kill The Pain", and a single compassionate note: the warm "Michael", a study of a lost soul that

prefigures his current approach. The prospect of wider attention begat paranoia and cruelty on the Painters' next record, a mass of music divided across two self-titled albums. The first pushes the debut's sound in two opposing directions: sentimental ("Grace Cathedral Park") and dirt-kicking ("Funhouse"). But it's still the sad centre where Red House Painters thrive:

understandably, "Katy Song" – a tribute to an unsuccessful relationship with a woman who offers escape from his "cold solitary kingdom" – remains his calling card. As if to underline Katy's importance, it's sandwiched by "Down Through", where he admits domestic violence, and the equally spiteful and beautiful "Mistress". But *RHP II* sounds like the wound bled dry. It's grandiose and Kozelek's lovelorn lyrics become obsessive: "Helicopter" imagines him

dying with a woman he hasn't met yet. By the penultimate "Blindfold", he's screaming with rage; closing with a Crazy Horse-styled "Star Spangled Banner" feels perverse. 1995's *Ocean Beach* is more polished and expensive-sounding than its predecessors. The reverb is gone from Kozelek's vocals, and he even attempts balladeering on "Shadows". There are just two standout songs – acoustic devotional "Summer

Dress" and "Drop", about his inability to reciprocate love. It would become Red House Painters' final album for 4AD, the relationship between Kozelek and Watts-Russell severed because the songwriter wanted to record covers and unwieldy solos.

In 1993, Kozelek declared that he didn't want to sell tons of records and be on MTV: "Respectability and recognition don't interest me." But Red House Painters soon signed to John Hughes' Island imprint, Supreme, for \$100,000 and sold their cover of The Cars' "All Mixed Up" to a Gap ad. Although their comparative mainstream success was a brief cautionary tale, it's hard to begrudge the notion of this hypnotic, quiet music being heard, however brief their moment in the sun.

**EXTRAS:** None.



# The Specialist

Motörhead



Daze of speed:  
the classic lineup,  
1980—(l-r) Lemmy,  
Taylor, Clarke

► IT'S HISTORICALLY BEEN in the nature of **Motörhead** to make things seem like a rush job. Their first album was recorded in a session meant only to provide a single, while the delivery of their subsequent albums rode a demented momentum which saw the band travel from post-Hawkwind obscurity to the top of the album charts.

The band entered its golden period with the cementing of its classic lineup (Lemmy (bass/vocals), Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor (drums) and "Fast" Eddie Clarke (guitar) after only a year's existence, but similarly couldn't keep it contained for long. Good records would occasionally follow but by 1982, the band's initial magic had vanished.

Even though the band's 40th anniversary is an event that shouldn't surprise anyone, these new vinyl issues of the band's classic early records feel rather hastily put-together. They certainly don't radiate the audiophile perfectionism nor the attention to detail that one would hope for in this market. These aren't remastered, the sleeves are shoddily scanned and the main selling point seems to be that they include a download code.

Which is a bit of a pity, as it wrongly implies that Motörhead's music warrants no better, when **Overkill** (9/10) and **Bomber** (8/10) (both 1979, and both produced by Jimmy Miller) are at root hard-swinging R'n'B records, with space and after a fashion tunes, the band's rhythm section making a virtue of "drops" and rendering

them a kind of skanky biker version of dance music.

**Ace Of Spades** (10/10), from unpromising beginnings, came to deliver the band's mightiest riffs ("Shoot You In The Back") as well as their two most enduring, canonical classics ("Ace Of Spades"; "We Are The Road Crew"), which see the birth of the deadpan fatalism that is at the heart of their best records.

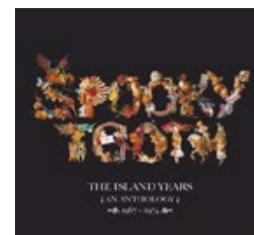
The fruits of all these are found on **No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith** (1981) (9/10), which went to No 1 in the album charts, and elevated Lemmy's notoriety immensely. No longer was he a musician in an underground music community, but a shorthand in the wider public imagination for "dangerous heavy rock person".

The pace of their rise (and arguably lifestyle) meant that 1982's **Iron Fist** (7/10) (co-produced by "Fast" Eddie Clarke, but in which his guitars are paradoxically mixed too low) was commercially popular but rather

undercooked. Clarke's exit after the band's abortive "Stand By Me" sessions with Wendy O Williams ended the band's classic lineup, but it's definitely worth hearing 1983's **Another Perfect Day** (7/10) with new guitarist Brian Robertson (formerly of Thin Lizzy).

Considered treasonously elaborate by some (there are some admittedly difficult chords and proggy breaks), Phil Taylor's personal admiration for Robertson saw the pair never dropping the classic Motörhead pace, even if there's not a great deal for Lemmy to do. Inevitably that arrangement wasn't going to wash for long. Even for a band who didn't hang about, it was the band's shortest-lived lineup.

JOHN ROBINSON



## SPOOKY TOOTH

**The Island Years 1967-1974**  
ISLAND

Six-disc boxset  
from underrated  
blues rockers

7/10

Nowadays, Spooky

Tooth are primarily remembered as a recurring motif in Pete Frame's *Rock Family Trees*. But, at their best, these blues-rockers were as heavy as Sabbath and as funky as Led Zep. They start here as Art, Mike Harrison's modish psych-rock incarnation, whose 1967 LP features the terrific, disjointed "African Thing" and the hypnotic "Flying Anchors". By 1968 they'd morphed into Spooky Tooth, with NJ organist/singer Gary Wright adding a bluesy muscle to their debut, *It's All About*, and their '69 *pièce de résistance*, *Spooky Two*. Disc Four, *Ceremony*, is their wildcard – a gospel-edged "church service" electronically mutilated by French *musique concrète* pioneer Pierre Henry. It wasn't even supposed to be a Spooky LP (each member only received a £400 session fee for it) and the ensuing ructions split up the band. Without Wright, Harrison and assorted Grease Band members jammed some covers on 1971's *The Last Puff*. Later albums are confident nods to soul and funk, particularly 1974's *Mirror*, where Harrison is replaced by Mike Patto.

**EXTRAS:** A ton of fine B-sides, covers and **8/10** *Gear* sessions appended to *It's All About* and *Spooky Two*, some original mixes of *Ceremony*, and a fiery '72 German live date.

JOHN LEWIS

## SUPER FURRY ANIMALS

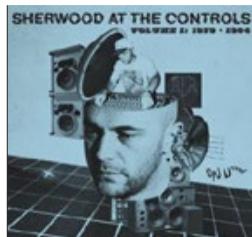
**Mwng (reissue, 2000)**  
DOMINO

SFA expand their Welsh-language masterpiece As the Furries return to the stage, this reissue of their quietest, sparsest and

saddest album is a timely reminder of one of their many peaks. *Mwng* is somewhat of an anomaly in their Technicolor, high-production catalogue, being sung completely in Welsh and recorded in ten days for just £6,000 – all the better to highlight their gorgeous way with melodies, and Gruff Rhys' keening vocals. The mood is intimate and nocturnal, a little like the Velvets' third album if John Cale had in fact been replaced by Meic Stevens instead of Doug Yule. "Ysbeidau Heulog", driven by fuzz guitar and buzzing sax, is the most outgoing cut here, with the folkier "Y Gwyneb Iau" and "Y Teimlad", highlighted by subtle horns and twinkling Rhodes, more typical. Two tracks, "Pan Ddaw'r Wawr" and "Sarn Helen", even appear to take inspiration from Morricone's Sergio Leone soundtracks, repositioning the verdant Welsh countryside as the scene for dusty heroism. Throughout, Rhys breaks down any language barriers; on the mournful "Gwreiddiau Dwfn", he sounds close to tears. This being the Furries, though, happily they can't resist the temptation of a motorik freak-out soon after.

**EXTRAS:** Welsh B-sides, including the fine "Trons  
8/10" Mr Urrd", and two live mini-sets, one from a 2004 Peel Session, the other from 2000's ATP, previewing *Mwng* material for the first time.

TOM PINNOCK



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### Sherwood At The Controls Volume 1: 1979-1984

Punk reggae party as On-U Sound man opens the vaults

The founder of London independent label On-U Sound and a prolific producer and remixer in his own right, Adrian Sherwood is architect of a dub reggae strain that sounds quintessentially homegrown British. In large part, you could attribute his unique sound to his schooling in the strange flux of post-punk, where groups like The Clash and The Slits laced their sound with techniques derived from Jamaican dub production. *Sherwood At The Controls* collects 14 tracks produced or mixed by Sherwood in his early career, and while on paper the tracklisting is a meeting of two worlds – bands such as The Fall and The Slits sit alongside Jamaican heavyweights like Prince Far I and Congo Ashanti Roy – his production fingerprints are everywhere, smudging at the lines of genre. Annie Anxiety's "Third Great Kills" is a great example of his signature sound, the sometime Crass vocalist witchily evocative over a fuggy lope of conga hits and lurking bass. Elsewhere, it's a story of lost gems and smart innovations. Medium Medium's "Hungry, So Angry" is evidence that white groups playing slap bass needn't be verboten, while the echoing percussion of The Fall's "Middle Mass" – from 1981's *Slates* – was reportedly captured by Sherwood lowering a mic down the studio toilet.

#### EXTRAS:

None.

LOUIS PATTISON

8/10

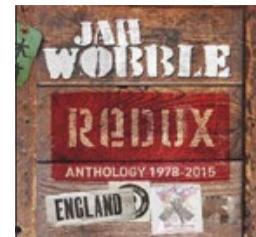
## REVELATIONS

Mike Harrison on Spooky Tooth: from blues-rock to Beech-Nut ads



► Kanye and Eminem sampled them, Judas Priest covered them, Steve Winwood and Joe Cocker guested with them, Jimmy Miller produced them, and they provided members for Foreigner, Humble Pie, The Only Ones and Mott The Hoople. However, Spooky Tooth remain an obscure and undersung outfit in British blues rock history. "Having two keyboard-playing lead singers made us unique," says the band's singer and pianist Mike Harrison. "Gary Wright played Hammond, I'd play electric harpsichord; Mike would usually sing falsetto, but even I can't tell the difference between our normal voices."

They started out as a blues band from Carlisle called The VIPs. By 1967, they were called Art, backing psych oddity Hapshash & The Coloured Coat. "Guy Stevens produced our early stuff, then introduced us to Chris Blackwell," says Harrison. "We were the first white band on Island." Disappointingly, Harrison says that the much-circulated Bird's Eye press advert featuring Spooky Tooth isn't authentic. "Sadly not. But me and Mike did write jingles for Pepsi and Beech-Nut chewing gum..." JOHN LEWIS



## JAH WOBBLE

### Redux: Anthology 1978-2015

CHERRY RED

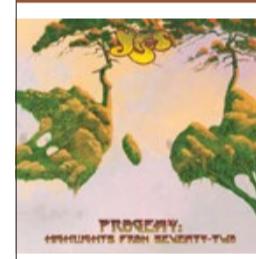
Six-disc overview of an artist sui generis

After three dozen hugely varied LPs, the polymath bassist, songwriter, producer and occasional broadsheet book reviewer John Joseph Wardle has long deserved the boxset treatment. This lavish six-disc set starts as an update of his 2004 *I Could Have Been A Contender* comp, with a disc of "greatest hits" (including two PiL singles and two versions of his deathless "Visions Of You" theme), a second of '80s collaborations (including Holger Czukay, Jaki Liebezeit, The Edge and Ollie Marland), and a third with world music lineups. Disc Four features Miles Davis-indebted jazz projects, including the *Bitches Brew*-like junglism of "Rush Hour", an *On The Corner*-inspired "Virus B" and *Tutu*-like 7/4 groove of "West End". Disc Five features some fine ambient and spoken-word pieces: "Post Modern" sees him rail against dumbed-down cultural relativism; "I Love Everybody" is epic funk that casts Wobble as a cockney William Blake, finding beauty in a decrepit East London ("The Mile End Road, once a blood-stained battlefield of Bacchanalian excess, becomes the Garden Of Gethsemane").

**EXTRAS:** Previously unreleased extras include **7/10** the gleefully thuggish single "Let's Go Psycho" and most of the covers on Disc Six, including an Indo-funk "Get Carter", a growling reggae skank through "The Sweeney" and an imperious dub reading of "The Persuaders".

JOHN LEWIS

8/10



## YES

### Progeny: Highlights From Seventy-Two

RHINO

Prog at its pinnacle, before it drowned in topographical oceans...

After releasing their fifth album *Close To The Edge* in 1972, Yes embarked on a world tour that was captured on the triple live LP *Yessongs*. In retrospect, it was probably prog-rock's high tide, when invention rather than pretension still reigned and ambition had not buckled into self-indulgence. Tapes from seven further shows from the tour have now been compiled into what is, in effect, a companion to *Yessongs* (although that release also included material from an earlier tour, and a number of pre-'72 concerts faves including "Starship Trooper" and "Perpetual Change" are not represented here). It's easy to mock Jon Anderson's pseudo-visionary lyrics and the soloing sometimes outstays its welcome, but the grandiosity of the musical imagination behind compositions such as "Heart Of The Sunrise", "Close To The Edge" and "Yours Is No Disgrace" has to be admired, and the band's ability to recreate their elaborate, quasi-classical arrangements onstage is daring and impressive.

**EXTRAS:** True enthusiasts will eschew the **7/10** abridged two-disc version for *Progeny: Seven Shows From Seventy-Two*, a 14-disc set that contains every note from seven complete shows from the band's 1972 North American tour, and comes in a flip-top box with new artwork by Roger Dean.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

JOHN LEWIS

7/10

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NIGEL WILLIAMSON

## COMING NEXT MONTH...



► Mark Kozelek's output since 2012 has been something to behold. After years as a writer of melancholic ballads, his *Among The Leaves* album of that year marked a eureka moment: he turned away from traditional songcraft to an outpouring of wry song/essays. His records since have meditated on the touring life, death and serial killers, at times in a quasi-rap. Judging by recent material like "The Possum", his latest, *Universal Themes*, will be just as strange and compelling.

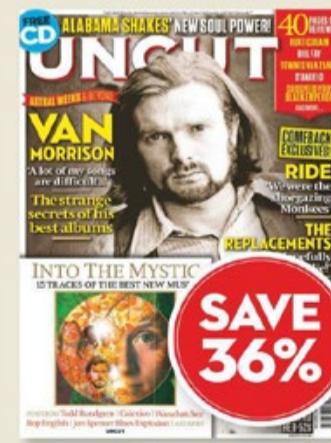
Other June records worth looking out for include new ones from both **Jim O'Rourke** and **Meg Baird**, and the solo debut album proper from **Jamie xx**. Through his work with his band, (the minimal, emotive **xx**), and in collaboration – as with his remix/reboot of the Gil Scott-Heron album *I'm New Here* – Jamie Smith has built a strange and powerful headphone rave aesthetic. This now finds full expression on the great *In Colour*, in which the moody electronic headspace is periodically punctuated by sampled rave tapes.

Out the back in the archive section there's a release for **Frank Zappa**'s final LP, *Dance Me This*, completed in 1993, and a 10th anniversary reissue of the debut, Deep Purple, heaviness of **Black Mountain**. Fans of jawdropping Scouseadelia, meanwhile, will vibe to an expanded edition of **Mick Head**'s spectacular 1996 work, *Michael Head... Introducing The Strands*.

JOHN ROBINSON

JOHN.ROBINSON.101@FREELANCE.TIMEINC.COM

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THIS MONTH: VIKINGS | THE FALL | VEEP SEASON 3

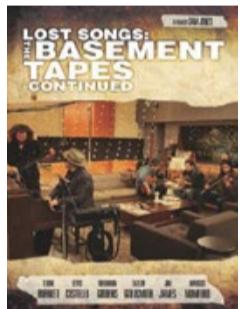
**SCORING:**  
 10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent  
 7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor



## LOST SONGS: The Basement Tapes Continued

BEWARE DOLL

A look inside the project – with added Dylan! By Andy Gill



9/10

BEST KNOWN FOR his Wilco documentary *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*, Sam Jones is a filmmaker who combines an artist's eye – his photographic portraits of such as Obama, Dylan, Clooney and Nicholson have made various high-end magazine covers – with a peculiar sensitivity to the artistic process. The right choice, then, to helm this

documentary bridging the recent recording of unrecorded Dylan lyrics from 1967 with the original *Basement Tapes*.

In documentaries, access is everything, and Jones has the ultimate access coup in Dylan himself, albeit not onscreen: his brief voiceovers, however, are some of the most fascinating parts of the film, revealing the headline inspiration for songs like "Tears Of Rage" and "Too Much Of Nothing". At first, it seems that Jones also has access to a time-machine, with the modern studio scenes intercut with gauzy footage of what appears to be Dylan and The Band wandering through the trees in Woodstock, riding bikes on the lawn of Big Pink, and even doing a tightly synced run through "Apple Suckling Tree" in the basement. But of course it's just actors, chosen for their similarities to the original musicians (Rick Danko and Garth Hudson are especially convincing).

The film opens with a figure riding a Triumph motorbike through wooded roads, representing

Dylan approaching the crash that provided the fulcrum of his career. His voiceover sets the scene, depicting the casual but crucial nature of the subsequent recordings at Big Pink: "It was that kind of music that made you feel you were part of something very, very special," he says. "And back then, it was hard to get to." And, as the film makes clear, it's essentially no easier to get to today – perhaps even harder, as the secretive spontaneity of the original sessions is contrasted with the self-consciousness of the new recordings. *The Basement Tapes* worked so well in large part precisely because the participants were unobserved, making music that was never intended for public consumption; while the players gathering around T Bone Burnett at Capitol Studios – Elvis Costello, Jim James, Marcus Mumford, Rhiannon Giddens and Taylor Goldsmith – are never away from the camera lens, and painfully aware they're making a record. What's amazing, in the circumstances, is how well the project turns out.

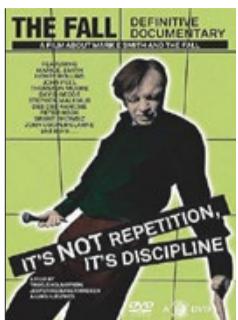
Most of the participants realise the significance of the undertaking, being fans of the original album. For Taylor Goldsmith of Dawes, *The Basement Tapes* was "like stumbling upon a secret I wasn't supposed to hear"; for Jim James of My Morning Jacket, it was "the sound of my musical heroes being themselves". For Rhiannon Giddens of Carolina Chocolate Drops, however, it means rather less. Astonishingly, she's never heard *The Basement Tapes*. T Bone tries to explain their origin, saying that "[Dylan] was the most visible star in the world at the time, and he just... disappeared." In voiceover, Robbie Robertson

explains their significance as a musical event: "You've got to remember, at this time nobody was doing this. Back then, if you were going to make a record, you went where they made records."

Which is what the *New Basement Tapes* band are doing at Capitol, running through songs they've prepared from the tranche of Dylan lyrics. Elvis Costello plays the others a smartphone demo of one song, sung in an airplane toilet. He and Jim James and Taylor Goldsmith all arrive with sheaves of planned songs, often with detailed ideas for arrangements, which rather worries Marcus Mumford, who frets over bringing just "one song and one riff" to the party. He had hoped it would be a more impromptu collaborative process, as too does Rhiannon Giddens, whose discomfiture is plain. When the others enquire about her arrangement ideas for a demo she's just played them, she clearly expects that to be a collective decision. The potentially awkward silence is pricked by Jim James, who says, "How about if you play it like that and we all gathered around a microphone and didn't do anything at all?" The laughter is like much-needed balm to loosen the joints of an exercise which is sometimes in danger of seizing up through excessive self-consciousness: when someone apologises for singing the wrong word on "Hidee Hidee Ho", T Bone assures them it was "enthusiastically the wrong word", in effect asserting the relaxed vibe of the original *Basement Tapes*.

Perhaps surprisingly, the real hero of the new sessions is Marcus Mumford, who struggles alone to write another song, eventually coming up with one of the standouts, "Kansas City"; he's also a fantastic drummer, not overwhelmed by playing alongside such practised percussionists as Jay Bellerose and Carla Azar. And he's a true gent, instigating collaborations and championing Giddens' work, helping boost her morale to contribute two of the project's more spine-tingling performances. It may seem odd, but it turns out that the truest embodiment of the original *Basement Tapes* spirit can be found in this Brit interloper.

**EXTRAS:** None.



## THE FALL

**It's Not Repetition, It's Discipline**

DANDELION RECORDS

**MES keeps his secrets in low-budget doc**

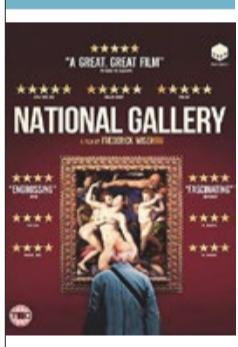
Assembled over 13 years by three Danish fans, this documentary is clearly no-budget, but committed obsessives will still find gems.

Around a short,

amusingly abrasive backstage 2004 non-interview with Mark E Smith come compliments from well-known faces (Henry Rollins, Thurston Moore, Stephen Malkmus) caught in passing. The real draw, though, is the lengthy contribution from longterm Fall associate and producer Grant Showbiz. The essential Fall doc remains the BBC's too-short 2005 film, *The Wonderful And Frightening World Of Mark E Smith*.

**EXTRAS:** A bonus MES interview.  
**6/10**

DAMIEN LOVE



## NATIONAL GALLERY

SODA PICTURES

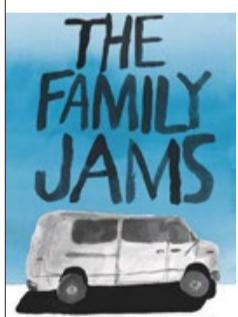
**Strong work from veteran documentarian**

With the Maysles and Richard Leacock dead and DA Pennebaker on hiatus, only Frederick Wiseman remains active from the great generation of documentary artists. His latest goes behind

the scenes at London's National Gallery. The theme here is the life of an institution – a favourite of his since '67's *Titicut Follies* – from restoration work done by the craftsmen to the bureaucratic haggling on an executive level. All human life is here, Wiseman posits, from the toffs at private events to the visitors queueing for a glimpse of the Leonardo exhibition. A rich and fascinating film.

**EXTRAS:** None.

MICHAEL BONNER



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**The Family Jams**

FACTORY 25

**Torpid "freak folk" home movie rife with missed opportunity**

"This is a significant moment for culture," says Antony Hegarty of the 2004 US tour led by Devendra Banhart, Joanna Newsom and

Vetiver that catalysed "freak folk", though Kevin Barker hardly captures it. Topless irritant Banhart is too often his focus, forsaking Joanna Newsom at a crucial point: she briefly leaves to attend the wake of her oldest friend, who she commemorated in "Emily" on 2006's *Ys*. Elsewhere, Newsom performs an unfinished "Monkey & Bear" in Vetiver's hotel room, outstripping her peers at a rapid pace.

**EXTRAS:** None.

LAURA SNAPES

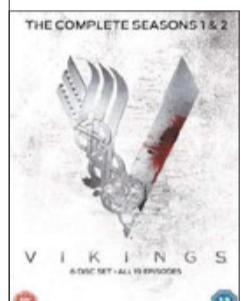
**4/10**



## VIKINGS

### The Complete Series 1 & 2

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT



**9/10**

**Steadily impressive Norse-gore drama**

AT THE TIME of writing, the third season of *Vikings* is coming to the end of a thunderous run on Amazon Prime. Fans of the show will be bracing themselves therefore for another ferocious, blood-soaked climax to a series that after a slow start has become as addictively enthralling as *Game Of Thrones*. It doesn't have any dragons, which may

be a disappointment to some. But it otherwise matches in most respects the HBO juggernaut for havoc, slaughter, gore, heroism, honour and lashings of duplicitous intrigue. The first two series are available to stream or download from Amazon, but anyone who hasn't yet seen it may prefer to catch up via this six-disc boxset of 19 episodes.

An Irish-Canadian production, created and written by Michael Hirst, who worked previously on *The Tudors* and produced *The Borgias* for Showtime, *Vikings* was the first original drama series commissioned by the History Channel and premiered in March 2013, the second series following in February last year. The first season

introduced us to Ragnar Lothbrok, a looming figure in 8th Century Norse legend as the pioneer of Viking raids against England and France, whose rise to power is accompanied by much of the usual blood-letting conflict, betrayal and the increasingly fierce elimination of whoever stands in his way, principally Gabriel Byrne, terrific as a vulpine Viking earl. As played by Australian Travis Fimmel, Ragnar is a warrior mystic, beguiling psychopath, a convincingly charismatic leader, as flamboyantly tattooed as a West Coast rapper and utterly, utterly ruthless.

The series started a little tentatively, perhaps being a little too self-conscious about being compared to an inferior *Game Of Thrones* knock-off, but soon accumulated a swaggering confidence, especially with the appearance of buggy rival chieftain Jarl Borg. The second series, however, was entirely sensational. The ominous hum of Fever Ray's "If I Had A Heart" became a regular overture to 10 pulsating episodes of marauding raids against England and an incredible amount of Viking-on-Viking über-violence. Ragnar was at war by now with the colourfully demented Jarl Borg and simultaneously dealing with the conniving King Horik, twin conflicts resolved in "Blood Eagle" and "The Lord's Prayer", two stupendous episodes of mounting horror, that riffed on *Apocalypse Now* and *The Godfather* and were on an unforgettable par with the Red Wedding and "Watchers On The Wall" episodes of *Game Of Thrones*.

**EXTRAS:** Commentaries, deleted scenes, **6/10** featurettes. ALLAN JONES



## VEEP SEASON 3

WARNER HOME VIDEO

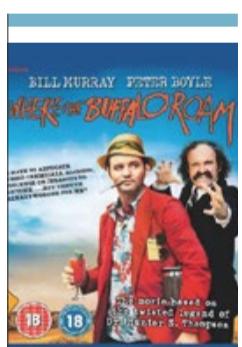
**Veep becomes POTUS: Armando Iannucci's ever-improving politcom**

Serendipitously released as Hillary Clinton begins her presidential campaign, Series Three finds Selina Meyer (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) gunning for the White House, too. Dense, manic, nuanced,

*Veep* is now stronger than *The Thick Of It*, thanks to the lack of a Blackadderish attention magnet like Malcolm Tucker, and to the surprising sympathies elicited for its power-crazed wonks (number-crunching Kent Davison making puppy eyes at the Veep's formidable scheduler, Sue, is a recurring delight). Look out for the superb fourth episode, in which the Meyer monolith visits an agile, repellent Silicon Valley company.

**EXTRAS:** Commentaries, deleted scenes. **5/10**

JOHN MULVEY



## WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM

FABULOUS FILMS

**Bill Murray as Hunter S Thompson, Neil Young scores**

Murray beat Johnny Depp by 18 years to playing Thompson in this original 1980 attempt to put gonzo onscreen. It flopped, widely panned. The stoned-zany is a little

stilted: but, y'know, it's Murray, so there's stuff here. What's shocking about this Blu-ray debut, however, is that – like every home video release has since 1980, due to licensing issues – it removes from the soundtrack songs by the likes of Dylan, Hendrix and The Temptations, and substitutes anonymous, generic 1980s rawk "approximations". Neil Young's original score pieces survive, but float weirdly, in bad company.

**EXTRAS:** None. DAMIEN LOVE

# Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

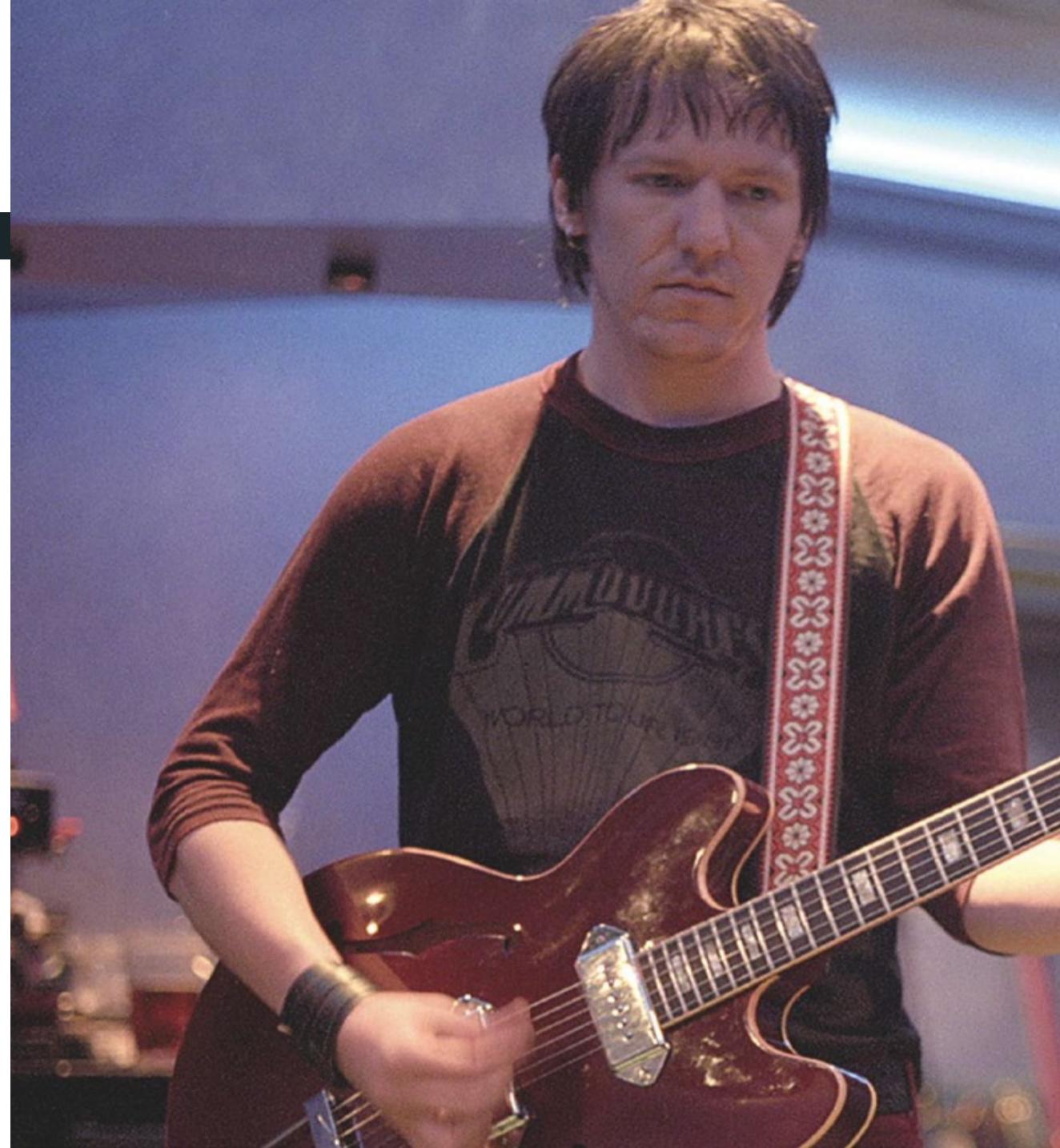
*This month: Iranian vampires and Who managers, a Gallic French Connection and a precious, yet impressive Elliott Smith doc*

**H**eaven Adores You There is an instructive anecdote that video director Ross Harris tells in *Heaven Adores You* about the first time he worked with Elliott Smith. In 1995, Harris, then a photographer and musician, was commissioned to film a video for Smith's song, "Coming Up Roses". After explaining that he didn't want to make an "LA video", Smith instead stayed with Harris and his family in the country north of Los Angeles for almost a fortnight. "We just shot a little bit every day," explains Harris. "Certain days, we'd wake up and he'd be like, 'I don't really want to film today.' And we'd just hang out." The image of an artist who is creative on his own terms, supported by like-minded and sympathetic collaborators, is very much on-message with the rest of Nickolas Dylan Rossi's rather precious documentary.

Rossi follows Smith from a suburban childhood in Texas, then on to the insular music scene in Portland, Oregon, his gradual success, move to New York and California and, finally, his death in October 2003 aged 34. Rossi makes strong use of the wealth of archival material he's granted access to: cassettes, photographs, handwritten lyrics, radio interviews, live recordings. He also has a cast list of Smith's friends, collaborators and peers, including Smith's sister Ashley Welch and former girlfriend Joanna Bolme. Admittedly, it's a good haul. Although with no objective, critical voice it's hard to see beyond the overriding view reinforced here of Smith as a troubled, saintly genius.

There is, though, one revelation that suggests another side to Smith, as his friend and Jackpot! studio owner Larry Crane explains. "One day he [Smith] snuck Gus [Van Sant] in when I wasn't there and played it ['Miss Misery'] for him. Then they pretended he wrote it for the movie so it could get nominated." It seems uncharacteristic behaviour for a man who admits in one interview, "I'm the wrong kind of person to be really big and famous." When things get too hot in Portland, he moves to New York; apparently in pursuit of greater anonymity. Such behaviour seems at odds with his appearance at the Oscars, in front of a domestic audience of 57 million, or on a high-profile chat show like *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. There is good content here, but a more rigorous investigation of what drove Smith would have been welcome.

► **Lambert And Stamp** At first glance, it's hard to work quite what Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp had in common. One, the Oxford-educated son of a classical composer; the other the son of a tugboat



captain from London's East End. As one bemused interviewee reasons, "If you'd made this up as a sitcom idea... it wouldn't work. It's too far-fetched." But Lambert and Stamp's interests converged in film: they met in the early '60s while both employed at Shepperton Studios as assistant directors, and both harboured dreams of directing. Their entry point, they reasoned, would be to document the emerging London music scene by following an upcoming band: The High Numbers. What they lacked in experience and knowledge of rock'n'roll, they compensated for in what Stamp calls ideas-driven "balls in the air" tactics. Pete Townshend, recalls the sharpness of Lambert's thinking: "We need to have an address in Eaton Place, because then we won't ever have to pay our bills."

Lambert died in 1981 and appears here in archive footage; Stamp, meanwhile, was filmed at length before his death in 2012 by director James D Cooper. Stamp is terrific value, his thoughts windmilling at a ferocious rate. For once even Townshend is relegated to supporting player; though, of course, he still finds time to lecture Roger Daltrey on a particular aspect of their band's history. Other interviews with Terence Stamp, Heather Daltrey and Richard Barnes

add shading to this intimate portrait of the unlikely partnership behind one of rock's greatest bands. The final sequences, of Stamp visiting Lambert's grave and reunited on screen with his former charges for a black tie award's ceremony in America, are especially touching. "There are a lot of things we could have done and should have done and didn't do," reflects Stamp finally. "But we did enough."

## ► **A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night**

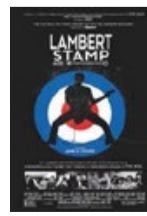
Intriguingly billed as an 'Iranian vampire Western', *A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night* is certainly a curious hybrid. Set in Iran but shot in California by a Margate-born director, and with Elijah Wood listed among its executive producers, the dialogue is entirely spoken in Farsi. To further display its cross-cultural credentials, our nocturnal protagonist is also a skateboarding hipster, no less, with a taste for '80s 12" vinyl. The score, meanwhile, mixes Iranian pop, Morricone-inspired guitar riffs and noughties English indie. Taking place in the derelict Bad City – which resembles a cross between Detroit and a frontier town in a Western – it introduces the film's titular vampire (Sheila Vand) as a kind of feminist avenger, meting out justice first to the abusive local

## Reviewed this month...



### HEAVEN ADORES YOU

Director Nickolas Dylan Rossi  
Starring Ashley Welch, Joanna Bolme  
Opens May 7  
Cert 12A  
**6/10**



### LAMBERT AND STAMP

Director James D Cooper  
Starring Pete Townshend, Roger Daltrey  
Opens May 15  
Cert 12A  
**8/10**



### A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT

Director Ana Lily Amirpour  
Starring Sheila Vand, Arash Marandi  
Opens May 22  
Cert 15  
**8/10**



### TOP FIVE

Director Chris Rock  
Starring Chris Rock, Rosario Dawson  
Opens May 8  
Cert 15  
**7/10**



### THE CONNECTION

Director Cédric Jimenez  
Starring Jean Dujardin, Gilles Lellouche  
Opens May 29  
Cert 15  
**7/10**



Roman candle:  
Elliott Smith in  
*Heaven Adores You*

pimp before gruesomely eliminating a number of male characters who have somehow transgressed. She befriends a prostitute (Mozhan Marnò) and scares the Bejeezus out of a young boy; critically, she also strikes up a relationship with Arash (Arash Marandi), a James Dean wannabe who improbably owns an impressive vintage Thunderbird. They meet, incidentally, when he's high on Ecstasy, returning from a fancy dress party dressed as Dracula. She wheels him home on her skateboard.

Jim Jarmusch is evidently an influence on the film's sharp black and white cinematography, coolly enigmatic characters, dry humour and pervasive mood of existential ennui. There's a touch, too, of David Lynch and 1950s delinquent films; stylistically, it falls in with the current trend for original and stylised vampire films. But it would be disingenuous to suggest first-time writer/director Ana Lily Amirpour's film is simply the sum of its influences. Her camera work is lithe and fluid; she heightens drama through supple camera movements and otherworldly silence. A tracking shot of the girl skateboarding along a silent residential street at night, her chador flapping behind her like wings, is one of many memorable images.

► **Top Five** *Top Five* finds an actor wanting to break away from a successful long-running franchise in order to make more serious, mature work. This is Chris Rock's ex-stand-up comic André Allen, who is seeking to legitimise his career after leaving the profitable *Hammy The Bear* series with *Uprize*, a historical drama about the 19th-Century

*It's hard to see beyond the view reinforced here of Elliott Smith as a saintly genius*

structurally programmatic; while the occasionally sombre detours into Allen's personal life are frustratingly underdeveloped.

► **The Connection** A kind of Gallic flipside to William Friedkin's *The French Connection*, director Cédric Jimenez's film tracks Marseilles magistrate Pierre Michel (Jean Dujardin) and his attempts to bring down the drug smuggling operations along the French coast during the 1970s. The heroin trade is, notes one police commissioner ruefully, "An import-export business to make Danon jealous." Of particular interest to the intrepid magistrate is crime boss Gaëtan Zampa (Gilles Lellouche), who has problems of his own as rivals threaten to take over his business. Jimenez goes at length to demonstrate how similar the two men are: both strong on family and both are surrounded by a close-knit group of trusted associates. Admittedly, it's a well-worn storytelling device; and certainly Jimenez

isn't shy when it comes to showing his influences. *GoodFellas*, *Heat* and *The Godfather* are all clear reference points. You want a montage sequence detailing the workings of the mob from the ground up? You got it. You want the two leads to share only one scene, halfway through the movie? That can be yours also. But despite the director's audacious riffing on other sources, Dujardin and Lellouche give dependable performances. Neither are quite as light, say, as Delon or Belmondo – who surely would have been cast had this been made contemporaneously to Friedkin's original – but nevertheless it is possible to admire their suave brooding and nonchalant way with an unfiltered cigarette.

Haitian slave revolution. As part of his promotional duties for the film, Allen is shadowed by journalist Chelsea Brown (Rosario Dawson) for a *New York Times* profile. In other business, he is due to marry reality TV star Erica Long (Gabrielle Union); an arrangement he increasingly finds he has little or no influence over. Written and directed by Rock, *Top Five* attempts to fulfil a number of briefs, not all of them entirely compatible. It is a rom-com; a media satire; a meta-examination of fame; a character study. *Top Five* is at its best when Rock and Dawson are walking round New York – the influence of Woody Allen is palpable – or in one concentrated moment when Rock, Jerry Seinfeld, Adam Sandler and Whoopi Goldberg try to out-riff each other at Allen's bachelor party. Elsewhere, Tracy Morgan, Kevin Hart and Cedric The Entertainer round out an impressive cast. As you'd expect, there is plenty to laugh at here – connoisseurs of gross-out comedies will particularly enjoy a flashback set in a Houston motel room involving Allen, two hookers and the local pimp – and there is an all-too-brief glimpse of Allen/Rock in full stand-up mode.

But elsewhere, the film feels

## Also out...

### CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT

OPENS MAY 1

Big-screen restoration for Orson Welles' stunning Shakespeare adaptation. Recommended.

### FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

OPENS MAY 1

Thomas Vinterberg remakes the Hardy novel with Tom Sturridge and Carey Mulligan as Terry 'n' Julie.

### I AM BIG BIRD

OPENS MAY 1

Excellent human interest doc about 80-year-old Caroll Spinney: Sesame Street Muppeteer since 1969.

### MONSTERS: DARK CONTINENT

OPENS MAY 1

Brit drama alumni Joe Dempsie and Johnny Harris top line this sequel to Gareth Edwards' sci-fi actioner.

### BIG GAME

OPENS MAY 8

When Air Force One is downed in Finland, US President Samuel L Jackson must fight terrorists and pesky fjords in a bid for freedom.

### SPOOKS: THE GREATER GOOD

OPENS MAY 8

The BBC spy drama gets upgraded for cinema, with *Game Of Thrones*' Kit Harrington joining the cast. The name's Bourne. Eastbourne.



### MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

OPENS MAY 15

With Tom Hardy replacing Mel Gibson, director George Miller revs up the engines once again for more outlandish car chases.

### TOMORROWLAND - A WORLD BEYOND

OPENS MAY 22

A quiet year so far for George Clooney, who stars in this live action sci-fi drama from *The Incredibles* director, Brad Bird.

### DANNY COLLINS

OPENS MAY 29

What to make of this? Al Pacino plays rocker Danny Collins who re-examines his life after finding an old letter written to him by John Lennon.

### TIMBUKTU

OPENS MAY 29

Acclaimed African drama. A nomadic family come into conflict with the Jihadist regime ruling the Malian city.

# Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD

Tapping a latent taste: Bonamassa onstage in London



## JOE BONAMASSA

HAMMERSMITH APOLLO, LONDON, MARCH 21, 2015

What's the secret of a 21st-Century blues-rock phenomenon?  
"I go out looking like a complete nerd..."

**W**HEN I SHOWED up in the UK in 2004," says Joe Bonamassa, "I assumed, wrongly, that every kid on a street-corner would have a Gibson Les Paul, playing like Peter Green and Eric Clapton. And what I found was this community doing bastardised Texas blues very much in the Stevie Ray Vaughan tradition. I found it shocking. Now you see kids in the UK embracing the legacy and tradition of Alexis Korner and early Fleetwood Mac, and all that stuff I hold in such high regard."

If this is truly the case, Bonamassa himself has a lot to do with the renaissance. A 37-year-old from upstate New York, who began his career by supporting BB King when he was only 12, Bonamassa is a self-described "nerd", a reverent disciple of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, early Jethro Tull and Led Zeppelin. On the last of four sold-out nights at the Hammersmith Apollo, there is little of the instinctive mystery, natural charisma and maverick flair with which, say, Jack White jumpstarted his own version of the blues.

But it's the way Bonamassa compensates for

this, emphasising the arrangements of sometimes average songs with at least some of Jimmy Page's skill, and building production values and stagecraft to balance his shortage of starry magnetism, which has bolstered his rise. His last two solo albums, part of a relentlessly prolific discography stuffed with collaborations and side-projects, nearly cracked the UK Top 10. In the US, resistant for much longer, this year's *Different Shades Of Blue* made it to No 8. More than any of his contemporaries – Gary Clark Jr, say, or Kenny Wayne Shepherd – Bonamassa has tapped a latent taste for a genre which seemed set



to fade away with Eric Clapton. Clapton's guest-spot at Bonamassa's sell-out Royal Albert Hall gig in 2009 – a dream venue since childhood for this fervent Cream fan – felt like an heir being anointed.

Tonight's show is remarkable in several ways. Bonamassa's seven-piece band maintain rampaging momentum for two hours. A brass section sometimes recalls James Brown's JB's, at other times stretches into fusion territory. The high-pressure organ vamps of Reese Wynans (a grey-bearded veteran of

Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Double Trouble*), meanwhile, push affairs closer to Southern gospel-soul ("So What Would I Do"), early '60s R'n'B ("Hidden Charms") and even swampy Appalachia during the intro to "Never Give All Your Heart". All the American pop roots of classic British rock seem fair game for Bonamassa, who calls himself a "journeyman"

versed in many styles, who found his early years in a straight rock band "stifling".

His own high-wire showmanship on guitar is gripping enough, as when, during "Double Trouble's" Chicago blues, he leans back to bend a note for half a minute, before his left hand flashes up the neck for a solo of sustained, needling intensity. But Bonamassa's ability to construct and think through an improvisation goes far beyond mere technoflash, and brings to mind Ginger Baker's belief that Clapton at his best was essentially a jazz player. The atmosphere tonight, when so

many gigs have become backdrops to thunderous chat, is also one of serious attentiveness, more like a jazz gig than any recent rock show I've seen.

When, during "Look Over Yonder's Wall", Bonamassa's solo ripples faster even as it fades to murmuring quiet, scattered cheers almost surreally encourage him to go softer. His long-time bassist Carmine Rojas adds punctuation, then the rhythm section return in thunderous contrast, jolting into the red limit of comfortable volume, Lee Thornburg's trumpet buzzing as if trapped in the field of sound. This is the soft-loud dynamic taken to extremes. Like his Louis Armstrong-style penchant for screamingly high notes, dramatic intensity is the motive. Clapton's own playing is rarely so coherent these days.

"Blues music for a lot of people, especially in the media, is almost like saying 'fusion,'" Bonamassa tells *Uncut* later, considering the low ebb in which he found the music – an interesting comparison for a man who at Hammersmith sometimes suggests tasteful, resourceful jazz-rock. "Really bad fusion destroyed the genre for the rest of us. The same goes for blues, after it became so rehashed and almost a parody of itself, with a seemingly inexplicable amount of young white guitar-players copying Stevie Ray Vaughan. I've seen a lot more interesting music

being made in the genre in the last five to seven years."

Bonamassa recognises that his British success, more swiftly potent than in the US, is part of the ongoing cultural exchange which saw the Stones introduce young white Americans to Chicago blues. "I was this American kid, basically repackaging British blues and selling it back to the British public," he admits.

His dogged climb towards something like mass acceptance has been in partnership with his manager for the last quarter-century, Roy Weisman. Both adhere to the "BB King school" of building audiences by constant, repetitive touring, regardless of record releases. "Where Roy's genius lies," Bonamassa believes, "is that

## SETLIST

- 1 Hey Baby (New Rising Sun)
- 2 Oh Beautiful!
- 3 Never Give All Your Heart
- 4 Hidden Charms
- 5 Living On The Moon
- 6 Trouble Town
- 7 Double Trouble
- 8 Gave Up Everything For You
- 9 Look Over Yonder's Wall
- 10 One Less Cross To Bear
- 11 Don't Burn Down That Bridge
- 12 So, What Would I Do
- 13 Love Ain't A Love Song
- 14 Sloe Gin
- 15 The Ballad Of John Henry
- ENCORE
- 16 All Aboard

we own all of it. We make the record, sell the merchandise, own the publishing, book our shows. We fired our agents. Because there was no vision. They weren't going to book me into the Albert Hall, they were happy with me playing Shepherd's Bush Empire for the rest of my life – which is not a bad gig. We said, 'You guys are fucking useless.' All they had to offer was hyperbole. Am I in the 'music business'? Not really. We just want to do our thing, and be left alone. I go out looking like a complete nerd, and I'm only recognised in guitar shops."

Mahalia Barnes, the daughter of Australian blue-collar rock veteran Jimmy Barnes, has just recorded *Ooh Yea! – The Betty Davis Songbook* with Bonamassa, who contributes uncharacteristically filthy funk guitar. She experienced his work ethic first-hand. "He flew straight out from a European tour to Australia, had one day off. We did the album in three days, he did some press commitments, and then he flew straight to America to continue touring. Without even knowing us. We hung out a bit the last time he was in Australia, and his friends are the band, they're his family, too. It's where he's most comfortable, and what he loves to do. Just to play guitar, all the time."

Barnes' album was produced by the final member of Bonamassa's core circle, Kevin Shirley, his musical director on record and stage. "When I got involved with Kevin in 2005," Bonamassa remembers, "his belief was it was a good act, but there were no songs. Eric Clapton could play the guitar better than most. But he also had 'Bell Bottom Blues', and 'Layla'. So over the course of a decade, trying to come up with a catalogue of tunes that can mean something to someone is where we've put our focus."

Bonamassa admits, though, that writing still isn't his natural suit, and few songs at Hammersmith stand out as more than starting-points for jams. The two obvious highlights of his writing to date, not coincidentally, inspire the fiercest performances. "Sloe Gin" manages a lyrical hook – "Mayday, Mayday, I've been shot down over stormy sea!" – on what begins as a slow-burning soul torch song, then smashes into weighty rock. With this and "The Ballad Of John Henry", exploratory solos and Bonamassa-led, rampant band choruses become an exponentially building ritual. He doesn't have the dandyish allure of Plant or Page, but some of what made them special has filtered down into this sound.

Randy Bachman, another of the grey-haired elders the guitarist attracts, appears for the encore. He and keyboardist Wynans, who both played this kind of thing in the '60s, end up nodding with mutual approval as Bonamassa takes another solo, breathing more life into a genre which had become one long, dying jam.

NICK HASTED



Raw might: the  
deceptively casual  
Barnett onstage  
in Manchester



# COURTNEY BARNETT

GORILLA, MANCHESTER, APRIL 3, 2015

A droll new star in a Torvill & Dean T-shirt.  
Put her on a pedestal...

**Y**OU COULD NEVER accuse Courtney Barnett of bottling things up. Her rich story songs, often drawn from first-hand experience, offload the stresses and trials of life with the kind of attention to detail that most artists might disregard altogether. Barnett has a habit of locating the surreal amid the commonplace, be it undergoing anaphylactic shock while pulling out garden weeds or pondering the merits of palmistry as she stares at a hotel ceiling. Crucially, too, she has a rare gift for pulling the profound from the prosaic.

That Barnett delivers all this with a nonchalant shrug of a voice, over insouciant guitar hooks, only adds to the appeal. And, judging by tonight's sell-out gig, at the end of a week in which debut album *Sometimes I Sit And Think, And Sometimes I Just Sit* has gone Top 20 both here and in the US, the Australian already has a sizeable audience.

Most of her musical cues, stylistically at any rate, seem to emanate from America rather than back home. Backed by a hirsute rhythm section of Dave Mudie and

Bones Sloane (who could easily pass as Dave Grohl's scrawny younger brother), Barnett's grungy chug has tended to elicit comparisons with Nirvana. Her deceptively casual way with a song, however, appears closer in spirit to Evan Dando's Lemonheads. For all the lyrical

*What's most striking is how readily adaptable her songs are to a noisy jam*

intricacy, there's very little that jars in Barnett's work.

The new songs certainly lend themselves to the live format. "Elevator Operator" and "Nobody Really Cares If You Don't Go To The Party" are both given a garage-punk kick, Barnett clearly enjoying herself as she squares off against Sloane's driving bass runs. But what's most striking is how readily adaptable the

songs are to a noisy jam. In particular, an extended "Lance Jr" builds to a dissonant, rousing finale that's little short of heroic. The same can be said of "Are You Looking After Yourself?", another from 2013 comp *The Double EP: A Sea Of Split Peas*, whose raw might is enough to make its studio counterpart sound positively sedate.

The popularity of Barnett's two EPs is evident by the huge roar that greets the opening chords of both "Avant Gardener" and "History Eraser", both of which served as the strongest early indicators of her talent. The latter is a knotty reverie that somehow winds its way downstream from an arts school party to the doors of a casino and then back home in a taxi while singing a Triffids song.

For all her wordiness, it has to be said that Barnett doesn't say a whole lot onstage. There's a quick vox pop to see how many people have star-sign tattoos (none) and a few seconds fielding compliments about her unusual choice of T-shirt (Torvill & Dean, no less), but otherwise it's heads down and to business.

Not that anybody's complaining. At just over the hour mark, it's a terrific set with precious little fat.

The trio close with "Pedestrian At Best", in which Barnett unloads a discursive torrent that veers from existential time crises to rats in the head, before declaring: "Put me on a pedestal and I'll only disappoint you." It's a fabulously stroppy send-off. One that finds a mirror in a fierce encore of "I'll Make You Happy", a cover of The Easybeats' tune by way of Divinyls.

Barnett has recently invited the kind of praise that she probably doesn't know quite what to do with (NPR declared her the greatest lyricist in rock today; SXSW awarded her the Grulke Prize for best non-US act). But, on the strength of tonight, it really is no more than she deserves.

ROB HUGHES

## SETLIST

- 1 Elevator Operator
- 2 An Illustration Of Loneliness (Sleepless In New York)
- 3 Lance Jr
- 4 Are You Looking After Yourself?
- 5 Dead Fox
- 6 Small Poppies
- 7 Depreston
- 8 Debbie Downer
- 9 Nobody Really Cares If You Don't Go To The Party
- 10 Avant Gardener
- 11 History Eraser
- 12 Pedestrian At Best
- ENCORE
- 13 I'll Make You Happy

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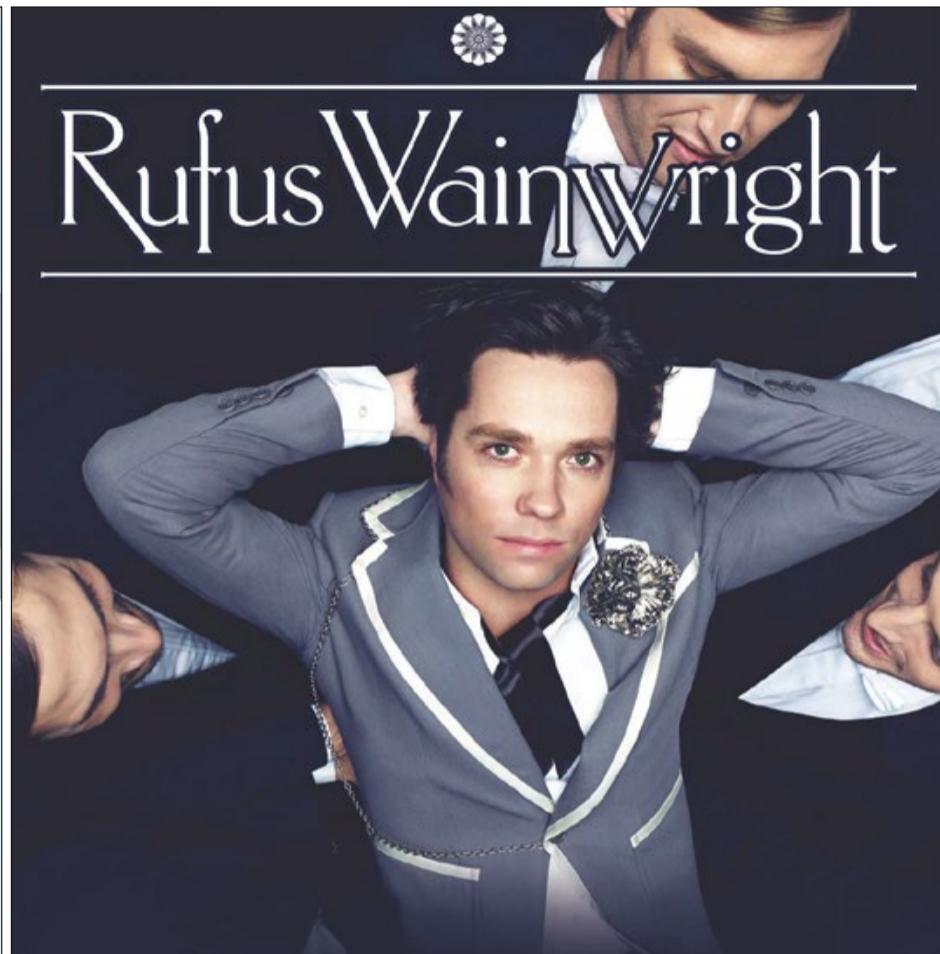
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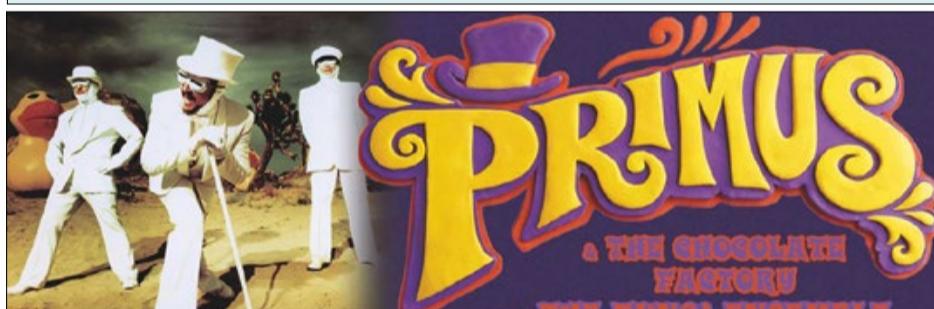


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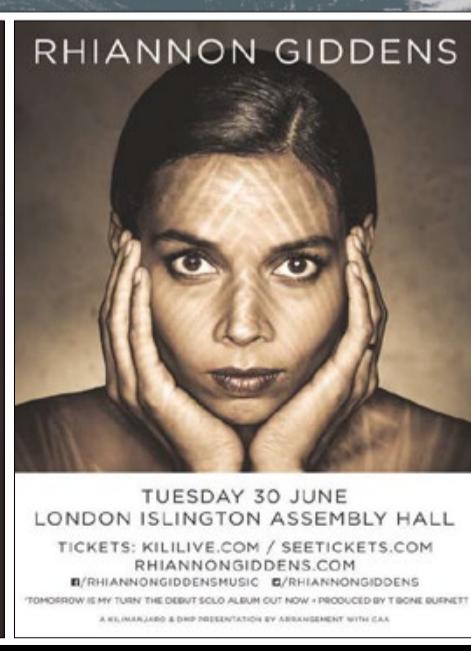
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SUNDAY 28 JUNE

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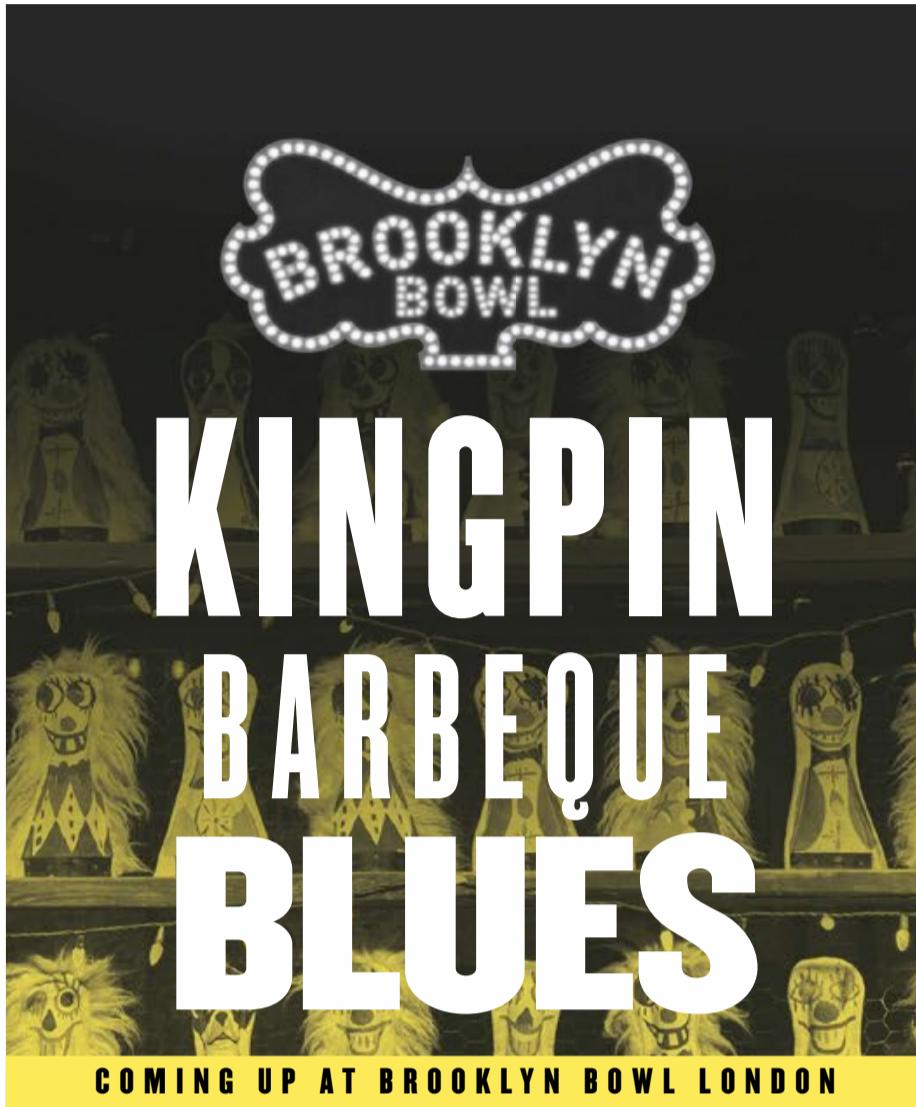
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A METROPOLIS MUSIC PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH X-RAY



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 TUE 16 / LONDON KOKO  
 WED 17 / MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2  
 THU 18 / BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2  
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AND  
8/5 **OLD DIRTY BRASSTARDS**

SAT  
25/4 **AMBER ROSE**

SAT TURN IT LOOSE FEATURING  
2/5 **NEW STREET ADVENTURE**

CROWD COMPANY / THE SOUL IMMIGRANTS

THU  
21/5 **CHOP & QUENCH: THE FELA! BAND**  
FEAT. AMAYO FROM ANTIBALAS

SAT LONDON SOUL WEEKENDER PRESENTS:  
23/5 **ALICE RUSSELL**

SAT GYPSY HOTEL PROUDLY PRESENTS:  
30/5 **THE URBAN VOODOO MACHINE**

THU  
4/6 **BRAND NEW**  
DINOSAUR PILE-UP

FRI  
12/6 **GOLDIE LOOKIN CHAIN**

WED  
17/6 **RAGHU DIXIT**

SAT PUNKS N PINS!  
8/8 **LESS THAN JAKE + ANTI-FLAG**

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|---|-----------|
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| SHOWADDYWADDY                                     | 29 MAY    |
| COURTNEY PINE WITH SOWETO KINCH AND YOLANDA BROWN | 5 & 6 JUN |
| BROTHER STRUT                                     | 11 JUN    |
| MONOPHONICS                                       | 16 JUN    |
| GINGER BAKER                                      | 27 JUN    |
| GENO WASHINGTON                                   | 5 JUL     |
| JOE BOYD  | 16 JUL    |

|                    |        |
|--------------------|--------|
| RATPACK NIGHT      | 23 JUL |
| SLIM JIM PHANTOM   | 13 AUG |
| NEARLY DAN         | 16 AUG |
| BERNIE MARSDEN     | 22 SEP |
| SIMPLY DYLAN       | 24 SEP |
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|        |                             |
|--------|-----------------------------|
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| Sat 26 | Manchester Arena            |
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|----|----------------------------|
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| 12 | POCKLINGTON, Arts Centre   |
| 13 | BRIGHTON, Komedia          |
| 15 | GATESHEAD, The Sage        |
| 16 | BINGLEY, Arts Centre       |
| 20 | CHELTENHAM, Town Hall      |
| 22 | EDINBURGH, Pleasance       |
| 23 | MANCHESTER, RNCM           |
| 25 | MILTON KEYNES, The Stables |
| 26 | BURY ST EDMUNDS, The Apex  |
| 27 | LONDON, Cadogan Hall       |

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Out on 27 April



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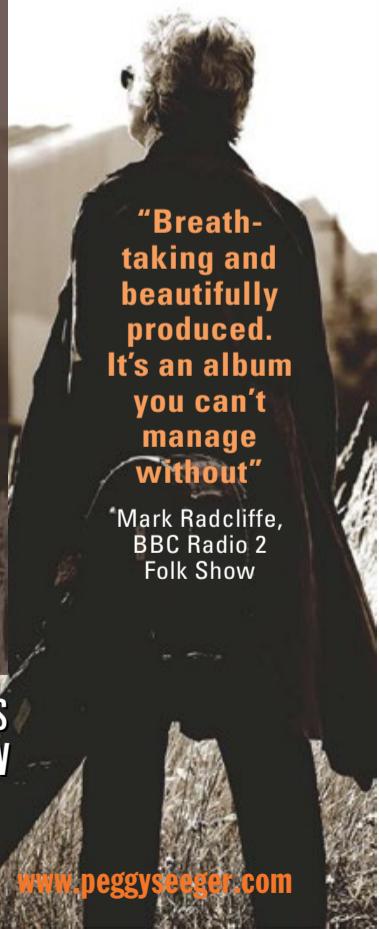
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with Calum and Neill MacColl

JUNE 2015

|    |                              |
|----|------------------------------|
| 3  | Shoreham, <b>SOLD OUT</b>    |
| 4  | Harpden, Public Halls        |
| 5  | Bromsgrove, Artrix           |
| 6  | London, Queen Elizabeth Hall |
| 10 | Milton Keynes, The Stables   |
| 11 | Bury St Edmunds, Apex        |
| 12 | Kendal, Brewery Arts         |
| 13 | Liverpool, Capstone          |
| 16 | Salisbury, Arts Centre       |
| 18 | Manchester, Band on the Wall |
| 19 | Sheffield, <b>SOLD OUT</b>   |
| 20 | York, NCEM                   |
| 21 | Gateshead, The Sage 2        |
| 26 | Stirling, Tolbooth           |
| 27 | Glasgow, Oran Mor            |
| 28 | Aberdeen, Lemon Tree         |



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i wasn't born to lose you

tour : may 2015

|        |                        |            |        |             |            |
|--------|------------------------|------------|--------|-------------|------------|
| tue 12 | wedgewood rooms        | portsmouth | wed 20 | o2 academy2 | liverpool  |
| wed 13 | the haunt              | brighton   | thu 21 | fibbers     | newcastle  |
| thu 14 | clwb ifor bach         | cardiff    | fri 22 | o2 academy2 | oxford     |
| fri 15 | o2 academy2            | birmingham | sun 24 | thekla      | bristol    |
| sat 16 | the ruby lounge        | manchester | mon 25 | the bodega  | nottingham |
| mon 18 | corporation            | sheffield  | tue 26 | social club | nottingham |
| tue 19 | king tut's wah wah hut | glasgow    | wed 27 | arts centre | norwich    |

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02 WOLVERHAMPTON ROBIN 2  
03 PORTSMOUTH WEDGEWOOD ROOMS  
05 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS  
06 GLASGOW CLASSIC GRAND  
08 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY  
09 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2  
10 LONDON O2 SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

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THU 18th JUNE / ST. ALBANS THE ALBAN ARENA

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# Lagwagon

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| JUNE   | JULY       |
|--|------------|
| 27 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY                           | SOLD OUT   |
| 28 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY                           | EXTRA SHOW |
| 29 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY                            | EXTRA SHOW |
| 30 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY                            | EXTRA SHOW |
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THURSDAY  
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LONDON  
O2 ACADEMY  
ISLINGTON

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with special guests



Fri 22nd May - Glasgow, O2 ABC  
 Sat 23rd May - Newcastle, O2 Academy  
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 Mon 25th May - Liverpool, O2 Academy

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June 2015

Sat 13th - Oxford - O2 Academy  
 Sun 14th - Bournemouth - O2 Academy  
 Mon 15th - Bristol - O2 Academy  
 Thu 18th - Liverpool - O2 Academy  
 Sun 21st - Leeds - O2 Academy  
 Thu 25th - Glasgow - O2 ABC  
 Fri 26th - Newcastle - O2 Academy  
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 O2 Shepherds Bush Empire

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 SAT 21ST NOV • O2 ACADEMY2 SHEFFIELD  
 FRI 27TH NOV • O2 ACADEMY2 LIVERPOOL  
 SAT 5TH DEC • O2 ACADEMY2 OXFORD  
 FRI 11TH DEC • O2 ACADEMY2 BIRMINGHAM  
 SAT 12TH DEC • O2 ACADEMY ISLINGTON

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PLAYS STRAY CATS

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+ THE SMITHS  
(LEEDS ONLY)

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 SAT 14TH NOV O2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON  
 SAT 12TH DEC O2 ACADEMY NEWCASTLE  
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ANNIVERSARY  
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DAVE WAKELING

----- SEPTEMBER 2015

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BOURNEMOUTH  
 17 O2 ACADEMY2 SHEFFIELD  
 18 O2 ACADEMY2 LIVERPOOL  
 23 O2 ABC2 GLASGOW  
 24 O2 ACADEMY LEEDS  
 29 O2 ACADEMY2 NEWCASTLE

----- OCTOBER 2015

1 O2 ACADEMY ISLINGTON  
 2 O2 ACADEMY2 OXFORD  
 3 O2 ACADEMY2 BIRMINGHAM  
 4 O2 ACADEMY BRISTOL

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AUTUMN 2015  
PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

11/09 O2 ABC2 GLASGOW  
 12/09 O2 ACADEMY2 NEWCASTLE  
 07/11 O2 ACADEMY3 BIRMINGHAM  
 13/11 O2 ACADEMY2 LIVERPOOL  
 14/11 O2 ACADEMY2 SHEFFIELD  
 27/11 O2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON  
 28/11 O2 ACADEMY2 OXFORD  
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## Definitely Mightbe

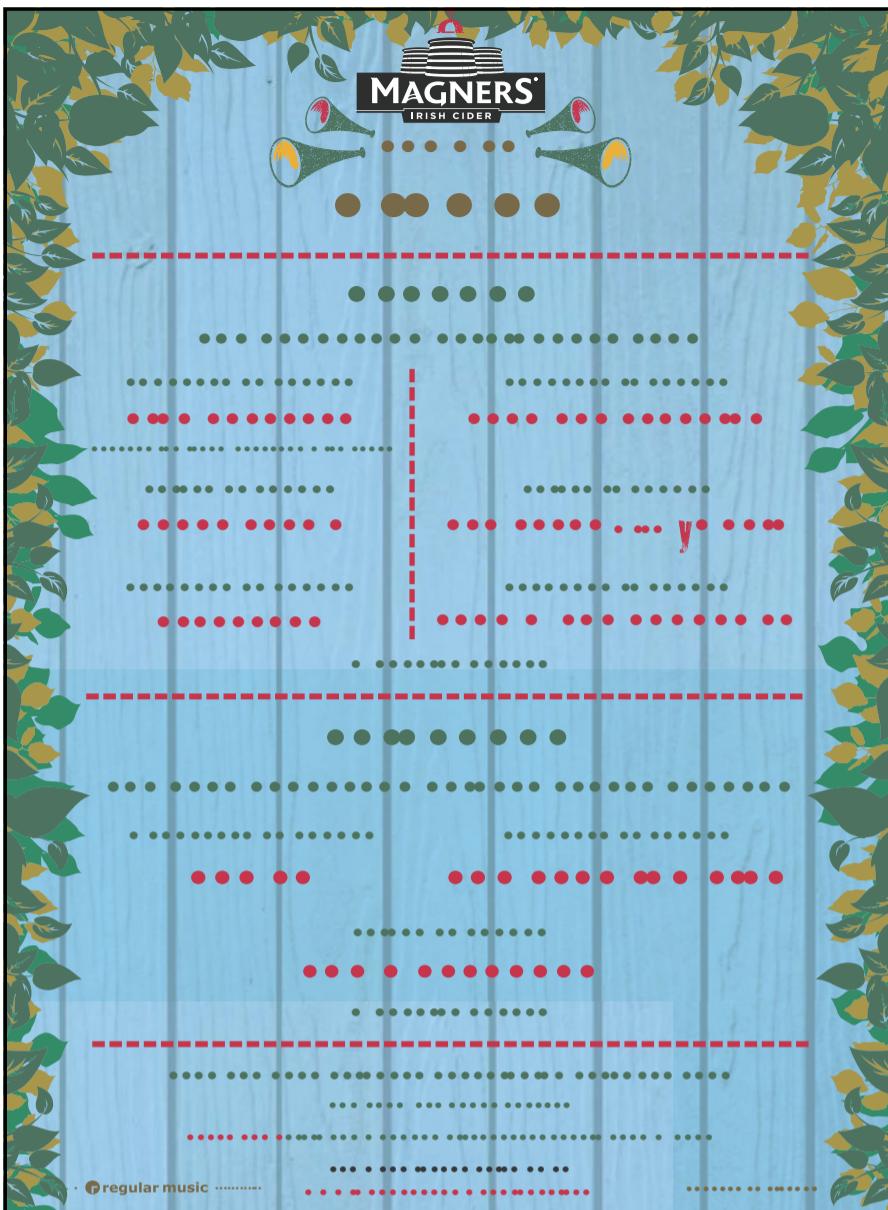
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'What's The Story,  
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greatest hits set

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 Sat 5th Sept O2 ABC2 Glasgow  
 Fri 11th Sept O2 Academy Leeds  
 Fri 18th Sept O2 Academy3 Birmingham  
 Sat 19th Sept O2 Academy2 Liverpool  
 Fri 25th Sept O2 Academy2 Islington  
 Fri 6th Nov Old Fire Station Bournemouth  
 Sat 7th Nov O2 Academy2 Oxford  
 Fri 27th Nov The Scholar, Leicester  
 Sat 28th Nov O2 Academy2 Sheffield  
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SAT 18 APR LEICESTER O2 ACADEMY2

FRI 24 APR BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY2  
 FRI 15 & SAT 16 MAY GLASGOW O2 ABC2  
 FRI 22 MAY SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY  
 SAT 29 MAY NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY2  
 SAT 10 OCT LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY2  
 FRI 16 OCT OXFORD O2 ACADEMY2  
 FRI 23 OCT BOURNEMOUTH  
 OLD FIRE STATION  
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UK TOUR

JUNE 2015

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| 10 | BRISTOL    | LOUISIANA                |
| 11 | LONDON     | ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL  |
| 12 | READING    | SOUTH STREET ARTS CENTRE |
| 13 | OXFORD     | BULLINGDON ARMS          |
| 16 | COLCHESTER | ARTS CENTRE              |
| 17 | NORWICH    | WATERFRONT               |
| 18 | WAKEFIELD  | HOP                      |
| 19 | PRESTON    | THE CONTINENTAL          |
| 20 | GLASGOW    | BROADCAST                |
| 21 | NOTTINGHAM | THE MAZE                 |
| 26 | BRIGHTON   | BLEACH                   |

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June 10 Chipping Norton, Chipping Norton Theatre

June 11 Cambridge, The Junction 2

June 14 Devizes, The Wharf Theatre

June 21 Beverley, Beverley Folk Festival

June 26 Newbury, New Greenham Arts

July 19 Southwold, Latitude Festival

August 28 - 30 Edinburgh, The Assembly Rooms

September 5 Barnard Castle, Witham Arts

September 18 Cockermouth, Kirkgate Centre

September 19 Carlisle, The Old Fire Station

September 22 New Milton, Hants Forest Arts

September 23 Fareham, Ashcroft Arts

September 26 Selby, Town Hall

October 1 Leeds, Carriageworks

October 2 Northallerton, The Forum

October 3 York, The Basement

October 8 Brighton, The Old Market

October 15 Birmingham, Literary Festival (@ the Rep)

November 28 Havant, Spring Arts Centre

Full Details & Ticket Links [theotherhalfshow.com](http://theotherhalfshow.com)

[markbillingham.com](http://markbillingham.com) | [mydarlingclementinemusic.co.uk](http://mydarlingclementinemusic.co.uk)

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**From The Jam**

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**Buzzcocks**

Saturday 1 August 7.30pm



**Laurence Jones + Red Butler**

British Blues  
Awards Winner will be showcasing songs from new album Temptation

Tuesday 15 September 7.30pm



**King King**

Friday 23 October 7.30pm



**Livewire AC/DC**

Halloween Show

Saturday 31 October 7.30pm



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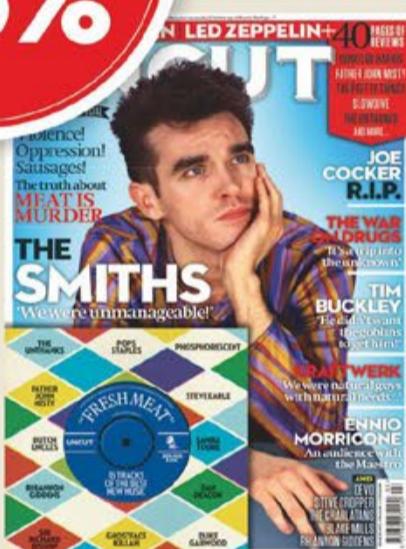
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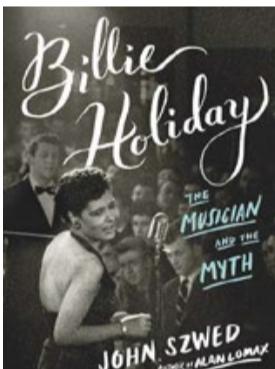
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# Books

BY ALLAN JONES

Billie Holiday,  
Carnegie Hall,  
March 26, 1948

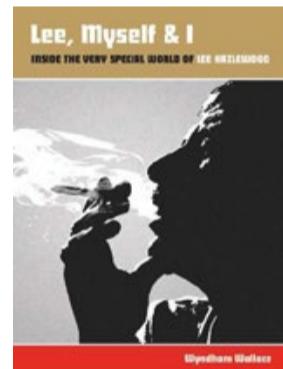
## Reviewed this month...



**Billie Holiday:  
The Musician  
And The Myth**  
John Szwed

WILLIAM  
HEINEMANN

**9/10**



**Lee, Myself & I:  
Inside The Very  
Special World Of Lee  
Hazlewood**  
Wyndham Wallace  
JAWBONE

**8/10**

**P**RIOR TO HIS own *The Musician & The Myth*, John Szwed, the director of the Centre For Jazz Studies at Columbia University and previously the author of well-regarded studies of Miles Davis, Sun Ra and Alan Lomax, estimates there have been more than 40 books on Billie Holiday. The most famous, of course, is her 1956 autobiography, *Lady Sings The Blues*. Because it's her own story, in more or less her own words, it's the text to which all subsequent biographers have deferred, even as they struggled with its contradictions, inaccuracies and fabrications. In Szwed's exasperated opinion, just about everything written subsequently about Holiday has been overly in thrall to the tribulations described in the book – poverty, rape, prostitution, racism, brutal husbands, police persecution, heroin.

Szwed believes Holiday has been increasingly ill-served therefore by "writers who aspire to understand her art through the suffering of her life", as if her great significance as a singer was dependent entirely on personal tragedy. As far as Szwed's concerned, insisting on the indivisibility of her life and art diminishes Holiday's standing as one

of the most innovative vocal stylists in the history of popular music. He rather rails against the suggestion she sounded the way she did because of the life she led, a notion he contests. His argument, crudely put, is that whatever prison or scrubbing whorehouse floors taught her, it wasn't how to hold a note, phrase a song, sing behind the beat, all that.

He believes, not unreasonably, that we can better appreciate her artistry if we attend more closely to the music she made than the unhappy details of her life. This was one of the prevailing inclinations he hoped to redress in the writing of his own book, which he describes as less conventional bio than a meditation on Holiday's music, with copious close examination of key collaborations, performances and recordings, inevitably prominent among them '39's "Strange Fruit", to which 20 pages of exemplary musical and political analysis are dedicated.

The book, whose publication coincides with the centenary of Holiday's birth, is comparatively slight at less than 300 pages, its tone conversationally brisk. It's nevertheless rich in anecdote, learning and revelation, especially in the chapters on crucial passages redacted on legal advice from the published version of *Lady Sings The Blues*, including an account of her relationship with Orson Welles. There's also a fascinating early section on the African-American vocal traditions that takes in minstrel shows, tent shows, blues singers, red hot mommas and torch singers, and what Holiday took from them, made her own in a career certainly afflicted by the life she led but also independent of it. In front of a microphone, in a nightclub or recording studio, she was beyond mortal tribulation. Even towards the end, her body failing at barely 40, Holiday's talent, her art, remained transcendent.

► Wyndham Wallace's *Lee, Myself & I* is the rather incredible story of the author's unlikely friendship with his musical hero, Lee Hazlewood, that reads in parts so much like a screenplay you can't help casting an imaginary film version of it. My first thought was posh Jack Whitehall as Wyndham, the puppyish English toff, with Jeff Bridges reprising his grizzled old codger roles in *Crazy Heart* and *True Grit* as the crusty Hazlewood. Former public school boy Wallace (a regular *Uncut* contributor) was a

23-year-old music fan looking for a job in what in 1993 still passed as the music business, when in amusingly recalled circumstances he discovered Hazlewood's music. Once famous for the hits he wrote and recorded in the 1960s with Nancy Sinatra, including "These Boots Are Made For Walkin'", Hazlewood had long since dropped from sight, the majority of his subsequent solo albums hard-to-find treasures by the time Wallace started to hunt them down. Coincidentally, there had been a wider revival of interest in Hazlewood. Nick Cave and Mark E Smith were fans, as was Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley, who by 1998 was preparing a raft of Hazlewood reissues on his Smells Like Records label.

Overhearing Shelley discussing the albums he was about to put out backstage at a Sonic Youth show in London, Wallace introduced himself as a devoted fan and offered his PR services. He was shocked when a little later Shelley hired him as Hazlewood's European publicist, a thankless task as Lee's opinion of journalists was not high, describing them as "illiterate assholes", "brain-dead, scum-sucking, uninformed cretins" and "snivelling little motherfuckers". Wallace was evangelically determined somehow to excite further interest in Hazlewood's much-neglected music, to somehow revive his career. In the process, he became ever closer to the cantankerous old man, who treated him like one of the family, called him "Bubba" and eventually appointed him as his manager. Many hilarious adventures followed, lovingly recounted.

Hazlewood had a reputation, fully justified, as Wallace quickly found out, for being difficult, short-tempered, rude, impatient, quick to take offence, relentlessly demanding. In every other respect, he was of course a sweetheart. He thought of himself as no more than a journeyman songwriter and was reluctant to talk about his own music, but Wallace relished his endless stories about "the Sinatra Girl", her father and his Rat Pack cohorts, Elvis, Phil Spector and more, his affection deepening when Lee was diagnosed with terminal cancer. At this sad point, with Wallace attending his idol in his final weeks, the book assumes a grave poignancy. "This is what happens when you meet your heroes," he writes, in rueful acknowledgement of the old adage. "It always ends in tears." It does, too.

# Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

## DAEVID ALLEN

Co-founder of Soft Machine and Gong

1938-2015

**I**N MARCUS O'DAIR'S recent biography of Robert Wyatt, *Different Every Time*, Wyatt recalls the impact that Daevid Allen had on his younger self. "He made me realise, just by the way he lived, that you could have a life that was nothing to do with anything you'd done at school," says Wyatt, seven years Allen's junior. "That was really where I got the confidence, or the insight – from seeing Daevid operate on that basis."

An Australian poet, guitarist and fellow jazz fiend, Allen was by then a 22-year-old beatnik lodging at Wyatt's family home in Canterbury. He'd already followed the trail of his beloved Beat Generation to Paris, where he'd embraced the boho lifestyle and conducted tape-loop experiments with composer Terry Riley. His eccentricity (in lieu of a dog, he'd wander the streets with a tin can on a piece of string) chimed with the non-conformist sensibility of the teenage Wyatt, eventually leading to the formation of Soft Machine in October 1966. Inspired by the writings of William Burroughs and the free jazz of Sun Ra and Ornette Coleman, the band became a key fixture of the psychedelic scene that centred around London venues such as Middle Earth and the UFO Club. Allen, likened to a father figure by bandmate Kevin Ayers, played bass on debut 45 "Love Makes Sweet Music", issued in February 1967. The single turned out to be one of his final acts with Soft Machine. On returning to the UK after a successful tour of France that summer, Allen discovered that his visa had expired, upon which he set up camp in Paris.

He and his partner, poet/professor Gilli Smyth, began creating avant-garde music in the Left Bank, loosely based around Allen's glissando guitar and an array of 19th-Century instruments played through an echo box. Attracting like-minded souls, the troupe soon expanded into a six-piece and secured a residency at La Vieille Grille, where they set about realising Allen's concept of 'Total Space Music'. He described it as a conglomeration of "the maddest musicians imaginable... improvising around nothing for hours on end, completely stoned." Allen fled the police during the Parisian riots of 1968, briefly escaping to Majorca before returning to France to record *Magick Brother*. The album, released in 1970, was his first as leader of Gong. Robert Wyatt, Spooky Tooth's Gary Wright and Stone The Crows singer Maggie Bell were among those who fetched up on Allen's solo effort, *Bananamoon*, the following year. By that time he'd also started work on Gong's *Camembert Electrique*, an absurdist mix of freeform jazz, electronica and tape effects that introduced the Planet Gong mythology. It was a vision as



The Gongfather:  
Daevid Allen in 1972

compelling as it was bizarre, one rooted in both mischief and radicalism, detailing the interplanetary dialogue between humans and a bunch of Pot Head Pixies from the planet Gong. Initially available only in France, it was given a belated UK release in 1974 by Virgin, following the cult success of *Flying Teapot* and *Angels Egg*. Allen quit Gong after 1974's *You*, the last in the self-styled 'Radio Gnome Trilogy'.

He went on to record a series of anarchic solo albums and collaborated with a variety of leftfield talent, including Acid Mothers Temple, US bassist Bill Laswell and longtime ally David Tolley. There were sporadic Gong reunions over

the years and, in 1992, a belated sequel to *You* in the form of *Shapeshifter*. Allen combined this activity with membership of similarly proggy outfits like The University Of Errors, Brainville 3 and Spirits Burning. Last year's *I See You*, with Gilli Smyth on guest vocals, was a commendable addition to Gong's recorded canon. Allen had by then been diagnosed with cancer. Refusing to undergo endless surgical operations, he issued a statement in which he surrendered to his fate: "I can only hope that, during this journey, I have somehow contributed to the happiness in the lives of a few other fellow humans."

# JOHN RENBOURN

Pentangle co-founder, solo guitarist and music scholar

1944-2015

JOHN RENBOURN RELEASED a prolific flow of solo albums throughout his five-decade career, but he's best remembered as a cornerstone of pioneering folk-rock avatars Pentangle.

His nimble interplay with fellow guitarist Bert Jansch, another great virtuoso, enabled the group to work in a broad spectrum that combined folk, blues, jazz and classical elements. At their populist peak in the late '60s and early '70s, Pentangle made big-selling albums like *Basket Of Light* and appeared at the Isle Of Wight Festival and the Fillmore West (where they opened for the Grateful Dead).

Renbourn and Jansch had co-founded the band in 1968, along with singer Jacqui McShee, bass player Danny Thompson and drummer Terry Cox. It was a professional relationship that had its seeds in the folk cellars of Soho, when the guitarists were both regulars at Les Cousins. Jansch appeared on Renbourn's eponymous 1966 debut, while the latter repaid the compliment on the same year's *Jack Orion*. The duo's fusion of intricate textures and deft harmonies, in full effect on collaborative effort *Bert And John*, became known as 'folk-baroque'.

Renbourn was both a scholar and innovator. Having studied classical and early music from a young age, he discovered American folk-blues as a teenager. In 1964 he met black US singer Dorris Henderson and forged a creative union that resulted in two albums, the following year's *There You Go* and 1967's *Watch The Stars*. McShee, meanwhile, cropped up on Renbourn's second opus, *Another Monday*.

After a sixth album with Pentangle, 1972's *Solomon's Seal*, Renbourn resumed his solo work and published a first book of compositions, *Guitar Pieces*. At the height of punk, he issued *The Hermit* and *A Maid In Bedlam*, recordings that were partly rooted in Elizabethan and Renaissance styles.

In 1982, ever eager to expand his knowledge, Renbourn enrolled

Renbourn live  
on TV, 1974



on a three-year degree course at Dartington College, where his studies included tuition in sitar and shakuhachi. He then contributed to John Paul Jones' film soundtrack for *Scream For Help*, recorded with frequent foil Stefan Grossman and cut a self-titled LP as *Ship Of Fools*, with flautist Tony Roberts, guitar player Steve Tilston and lyricist Maggie Boyle.

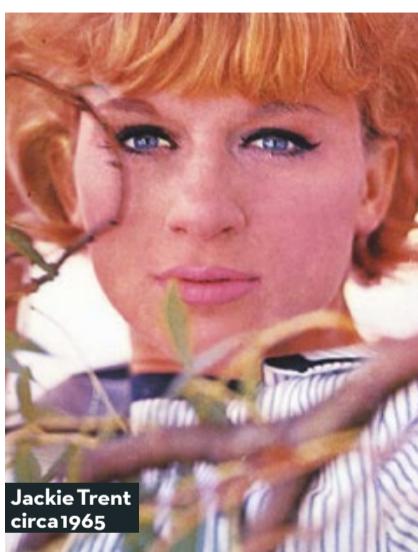
The original Pentangle lineup reunited in 2007 for the BBC Folk Awards, where they received a Lifetime Achievement honour. They undertook a highly successful tour of the UK the following year and played their final concerts in 2011.

## MICHAEL BROWN

Left Banke songwriter, keyboardist

1949-2015

The Left Banke's slim yet formidable legacy rests largely on the songwriting acumen of Michael Brown. The yearning sentiment of "Walk Away Renée", the product of an infatuation with the girlfriend of bassist Tom Finn, was heightened by harpsichord and strings. Written with Tony Sansone and Bob Calilli when Brown was just 16, it became a US Top 5 hit in 1966 and defined a new form of baroque-pop. Follow-up single "Pretty Ballerina", again inspired by Renée Fladen, made the Top 20 the following year. "I was just sort of mythologically in love, if you know what I mean," Brown tried to explain later. The New Yorkers' debut LP, *Walk Away Renée/Pretty Ballerina*, featured other bittersweet cuts like "I've Got Something On My Mind" and "Shadows Breaking Over My Head". Tensions within the band resulted in Brown's departure prior to 1968's *The Left Banke Too*, although the album did include two co-written efforts, "Desirée"



and "In The Morning Light". He went on to play with Montage, The Beckies and Stories (who scored a No 1 hit in 1973 with a cover of Hot Chocolate's "Brother Louie"). At the time of his death, Brown had been writing new songs for a planned Left Banke reunion.

## JACKIE TRENT

Singer, songwriter, actress

1940-2015

Jackie Trent took an immediate

dislike to producer Tony Hatch when they were first introduced, but together they forged a partnership that lasted more than 20 years. In 1965, they co-wrote Trent's No 1 single "Where Are You Now", initially for TV series *It's Dark Outside*. By 1968, the couple, now married, had penned hits for Scott Walker ("Joanna") and Petula Clark ("I Couldn't Live Without Your Love" and others). After a spell in musical theatre, Hatch and Trent settled in Australia during the '80s, where they wrote the theme to *Neighbours*.

## SAMUEL CHARTERS

US folklorist, musician

1929-2015

"My work is not academic," US folklorist Samuel Charters once declared. "I wanted people to hear black music." Charters' extensive studies on rural blues, including books and field recordings, helped popularise the music of Lightnin' Hopkins, Robert Johnson, Sleepy John Estes and others in the post-war years. His first volume, 1959's *The Country Blues*,

accompanied by a Folkways album of the same name, became a key text of the folk revival. He also played with Dave Van Ronk's Ragtime Jug Stompers and produced the first four albums by Country Joe & The Fish.

## JIMMY GREENSPOON

Three Dog Night keyboardist

1948-2015

Three Dog Night established themselves as one of the most popular American draws between 1969-1974, racking up seven million-selling singles and no less than 21 Top 40 hits. Central to their harmony-rich pop-soul were the refined keyboards of Jimmy Greenspoon, a former student at LA's Conservatory of Music. Greenspoon, who remained with the band until last October, was also a highly regarded session player and live performer. His impressive list of credits included The Beach Boys, Beck, Bogert & Appice, Lowell George, Eric Clapton, Stephen Stills and Jimi Hendrix.

# OBITUARIES

## ANDY FRASER

Free bass player and songwriter

1952-2015

FREE DRUMMER SIMON Kirke always maintained that Andy Fraser "had the most talent of the four of us". Something of a prodigy, the bassist was still only 15 when Free formed in 1968, having already played in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers and been mentored by Alexis Korner. His elegant, melodic style was as much a feature of Free as Paul Kossoff's ringing guitar or Paul Rodgers' bluesy vocals. In tandem with Rodgers, Fraser also co-wrote the bulk of the songs, including 1970's "All Right Now", a global hit that also became, for better or worse, the band's signifier. "We didn't think we'd written a classic song at all," Fraser told *Uncut* in 2006, recalling its post-gig origins in the dressing room of a North-East club. "We just regarded it as a kind of throwaway three-chord trick."

Fraser's agile bass run took a lead role on "All Right Now", much as it did on others like "Mr Big" and "The Stealer". A classically trained pianist, his multi-instrumental prowess brought added nuance, most notably on the loose piano-blues of another chart success, "My Brother Jake". Tensions between Fraser and Rodgers led to Free's temporary break-up in 1971, though they returned the following year for fifth studio album, *Free At Last*. Kossoff's ongoing drug addiction, however, meant that live shows became increasingly more erratic, resulting in Fraser quitting for good later in '72. He went on to co-found Sharks, with guitarist Chris Spedding and others, but left after 1973 debut *First Water*. The Andy Fraser Band didn't last long either, issuing two albums before splitting in the mid-'70s.

Relocating to California, Fraser then spent much of his time writing for others, his biggest success arriving in 1978 with Robert Palmer's "Every Kinda People".

Andy Fraser's final solo offering was 2005's *Naked... And Finally Free*.



## CYNTHIA LENNON

John Lennon's first wife, writer

1939-2015

The attraction between Liverpool art students John Lennon and Cynthia Powell appeared to be one of opposites: he the lippy rebel, she the reserved, diligent type. Having met at college in 1958, they married four years later, when Cynthia discovered she was pregnant.



Cynthia Lennon,  
November 8, 1968

Beatles manager Brian Epstein deliberately kept her existence low-key as she stayed home to raise Julian. John's affair with Yoko led to their divorce in 1968, after which she remarried three times. Their life together was detailed in two volumes of autobiography, *A Twist Of Lennon and John*.

## PRESTON RITTER

Electric Prune; jazz-rock drummer

1949-2015

Preston Ritter's tenure in The Electric Prunes may have been short-lived, but he provided the beat for "I Had Too Much To Dream (Last Night)" and "Get Me To The World On Time", both of which were US hits in 1966. His jazz-rock stylings, inspired by Sandy Nelson, Gene Krupa and Joe Morello, were a feature of the band's self-titled debut LP. However, artistic differences meant that Ritter was replaced during 1967's *Underground* by original drummer Michael Weakley. He went on to play with Linda Ronstadt, James Brown and The Beach Boys.

## BOB BURNS

First Lynyrd Skynyrd drummer

1950-2015

The carport at Bob Burns' parents' house served as the early practice space for the prototype Lynyrd Skynyrd in the mid-'60s. After signing to MCA in 1972, Burns drummed on the band's debut, *Pronounced 'Lĕh-'nĕrd 'Skin-'nĕrd*, for which he co-wrote "Mississippi Kid", and 1974 follow-up *Second Helping*. The stresses of touring, however, had begun to exact a toll and he was replaced by Artimus Pyle later that year. Burns, who has died in a car crash, joined Skynyrd for their induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2006.

## JOE B MAULDIN

Crickets double-bassist, engineer

1940-2015

Double-bassist Joe Mauldin was still at Lubbock High School when he teamed up with Buddy Holly, Jerry Allison and Niki Sullivan in 1957. When the latter dropped out, Buddy Holly & The Crickets went on to cut

a wealth of rock'n'roll classics, among them "That'll Be The Day", "Peggy Sue" and "Not Fade Away". The Crickets continued to record in the wake of Holly's death in 1959, before Mauldin became an engineer at Gold Star in LA, where he worked with Phil Spector, Herb Alpert and Leon Russell.

## MIKE PORCARO

Toto bassist

1955-2015

The middle brother of Steve and Jeff Porcaro, bassist Mike joined his siblings in Toto in 1982, when he took over from David Hungate. He remained an integral part of the band for the next quarter-century, playing on big-selling LPs like *Isolation* and *Fahrenheit*, until he was diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 2008. His condition prompted his Toto colleagues to undertake a series of benefits over the following years. As a valued sessioneer, Porcaro also played with Aretha Franklin, Donna Summer, Jefferson Airplane, Sparks and Stevie Nicks.

ROB HUGHES

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# Feedback...

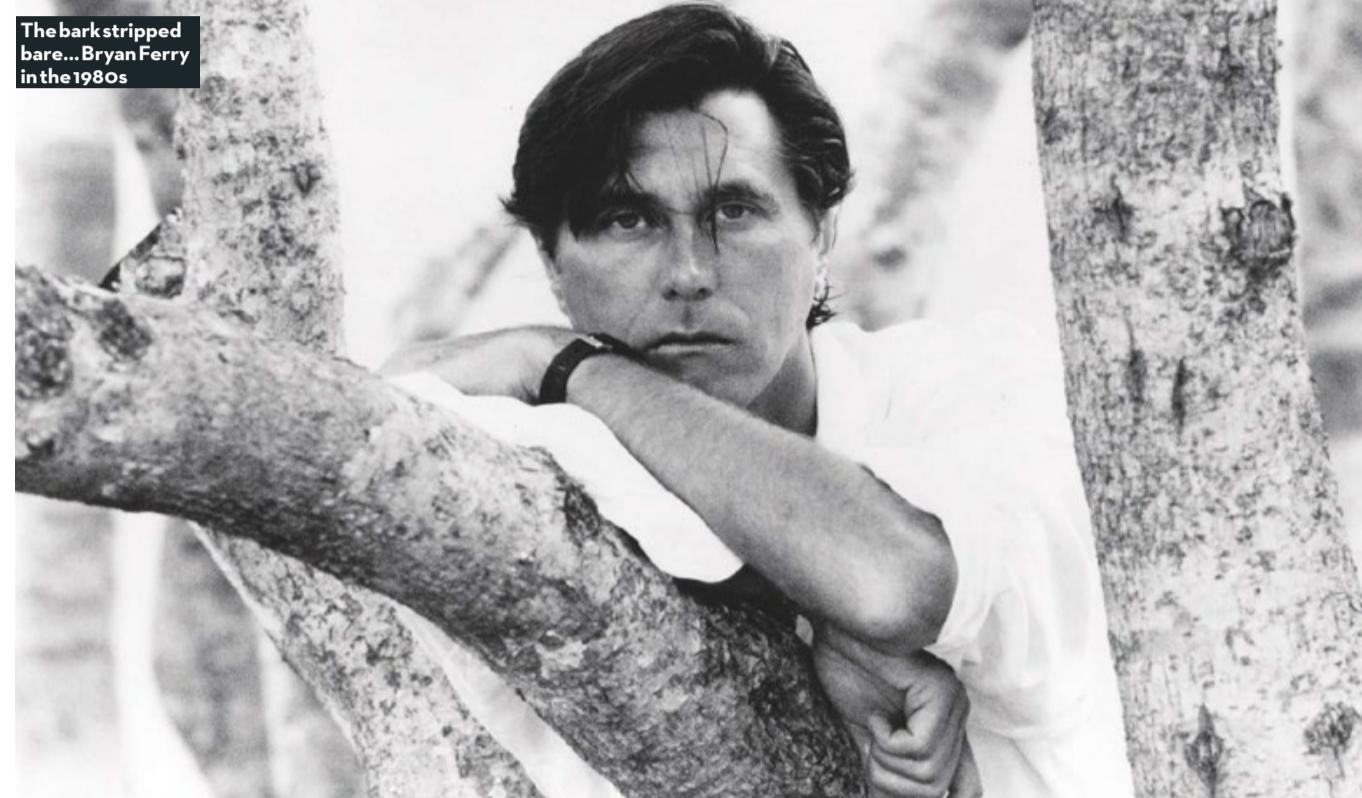
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## HIGH TIMES WITH JONI MITCHELL

I've been a subscriber to *Uncut* pretty much from day one, but this is the first time I've bothered to write anything. While I have several songs from Joni Mitchell's early catalogue to mention [*Uncut*, April 2015], I'd like to start with my most vivid Joni memory. I had just graduated from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1970, and was a hippy in full bloom. Not a lot of chances for kids to get starter jobs looking like most of us did. I had long hair, the moustache and the American flag patch on my jeans. But there was this lovely woman named Peggy who owned a tiny little local artist's shop in Shadyside called Knack Knack. She gave me a job! The store was filled with home-made pottery, candles, the local artists' staples. It opened at 11 but I would get there at 10. With the doors locked, I'd light every candle, sticks of incense, smoke some grass and put on *Ladies Of The Canyon*. I played it non-stop for an hour before I opened the doors and let out the smoke. I was in my own private world, and Joni permeated every part of it. The songs, though, that I'd like to mention are "Electricity" – is there any better interpretation of why we write (lost) love songs? And then, because it's such a wonderful heartbreak story, with amazing music, "Judgement Of The Moon And Stars" – goosebumps. And finally, from *Court & Spark*, "Just Like This Train": "I'm always running behind the time, just like this train..."

**Alan Siegel, Pacific Palisades, California**

...When I saw last month's front cover I smiled because I'm a massive Joni fan. I heard my sister play *Ladies Of The Canyon* one weekend, and that was me hooked. Favourite songs? There's just so many, but one big omission for me is "For Free" from the aforesaid album. I was with a crowd of old schoolfriends down in London for that Wembley concert in 1972. What a lineup on the bill that day: Joni, The Band and CSNY. I remember distinctly Joni's set, ably supported by Tom Scott and the LA Express. She played "For Free" and her last high note was sublimely picked up by a clarinet



solo that just drifted around the packed crowd in the warm London afternoon sun. A wonderful memory. Thanks again, *Uncut*: keep up the good work.

**Hugh O'Neill, via email**

## FERRY'S BÊTE NOIRE

So good to read Bryan Ferry's take on his solo oeuvre in *Uncut* [Take 216, May 2015]. He is one of the most underrated and underappreciated artists in popular music. But one quibble... why the absence of any albums released between 1985 and 2010, apart from *Mamouna*? OK, so that period included three strong and very disparate covers albums – *Taxi*, *As Time Goes By* and *Dylanesque* – but also produced *Frantic*, a feast of contrasting styles, moods and timeframes, and, even better, *Bête Noire*. By no means his best album – that accolade goes unquestionably to *In Your Mind*, in my opinion – but not far short, *Bête Noire* is a Ferry solo high-point. Experimental tracks such as "Limbo" and "New Town", sumptuous ballads "Day For Night" and "The Name Of The Game" and, towering above them all, the superlative "The Right Stuff"... this is Ferry at the top of his game. Well worth an extra page in your august rag. More than this, *Bête Noire* is the closest thing to a precursor to Ferry's latest album, *Avonmore*, a thumping return to form after the

pedestrian *Olympia* and the off-piste *The Jazz Age*. Viva *Bête*!

**Mark Tonkiss, Wallington, Surrey**

## MISSING CHARLIES

Firstly, thanks for a great issue in Take 214, nice to read such an insightful and detailed piece on The Smiths' *Meat Is Murder* era. The Adam Granduciel interview, the forgotten late-era Tim Buckley, *Autobahn*'s making, Steve Cropper's recollections and, not least, the album-by-album of one of my personal favourites, The Charlatans. I was aching to read Tim's takes on these – especially how he sees *Between 10th And 11th* all these years later, only to not find it there! I know I'm not only speaking for myself when stating this as their best album – it has been widely mentioned as a fan favourite and every Charlies admirer I know regards it as their masterpiece. I knew they wanted to leave it behind initially, due to commercial failure, but all these years later and they still neglect the album that fans hold dear – that's the one thing that baffles me about this wonderful group.

**Sander Varusk, via email**

## MARK KOZELEK'S "HOTEL STALKER" WRITES...

There has been lots of talk about Mark Kozelek being taciturn,

hostile and abusive – a kind of Jeremy Clarkson of the music scene. I have been a fan for ages but really started to appreciate his work more since he seemed to change gear on the *Among The Leaves* album. I had read of his berating of audience members for sniffing and coughing in the front row, but was still desperate to experience him in concert. He was playing in Tokyo, an expensive and long trip from my home in Kyoto, but I felt compelled to investigate further.

By some strange quirk of fate, he strolls into my hotel foyer in Tokyo looking quite the bruiser, and I feel a mixture of excitement and terror, but hear myself say, "Hey Mark!", expecting to be ignored or worse. But he charmingly acknowledges me, comes on over and chats, appreciating my travelling all the way to see him, and talks about needing raw garlic to gargle on to help a sore throat that he caught from the sneezers on the way over from Seoul. Can I help?

That night, he stands centre-stage banging on a drum and alternatively singing beautifully and bellowing saliva into his microphone as if his life depended on it – the garlic must be working! A new song, "Ali/Spinks 2", is premiered, and I am given a dedication but now I am his "hotel stalker". The man is just having fun and playing with us. I don't feel any

# CROSSWORD

WIN!



One copy of Pete Townshend's Classic Quadrophenia on CD

real animosity, just teasing. He asks the audience why they think *Benji* was such a success even though every Asian distributor rejected it on hearing the song title "Richard Ramirez Died Today Of Natural Causes". The audience shouts out that the album is honest and confessional, and he says, "But all my songs are honest..." He is baffled why that was the album that hit big.

The next morning, I am checking out of my hotel and Mark strides over for a handshake. He is mute due to his bravura performance and, through a series of gestures, we say farewell and he initiates a hug from me. He obligingly poses deadpan for a picture then asks me to take one of him with his superb keyboard player on his battered disposable camera. He then mimics chopsticking a bowl of ramen and is off into the Shibuya sun for lunch, leaving me wishing I were going with one of the most charismatic people I have ever met.

**Mark Weisner, Kyoto, Japan**

## ALL DISAPPOINTED PEOPLE?

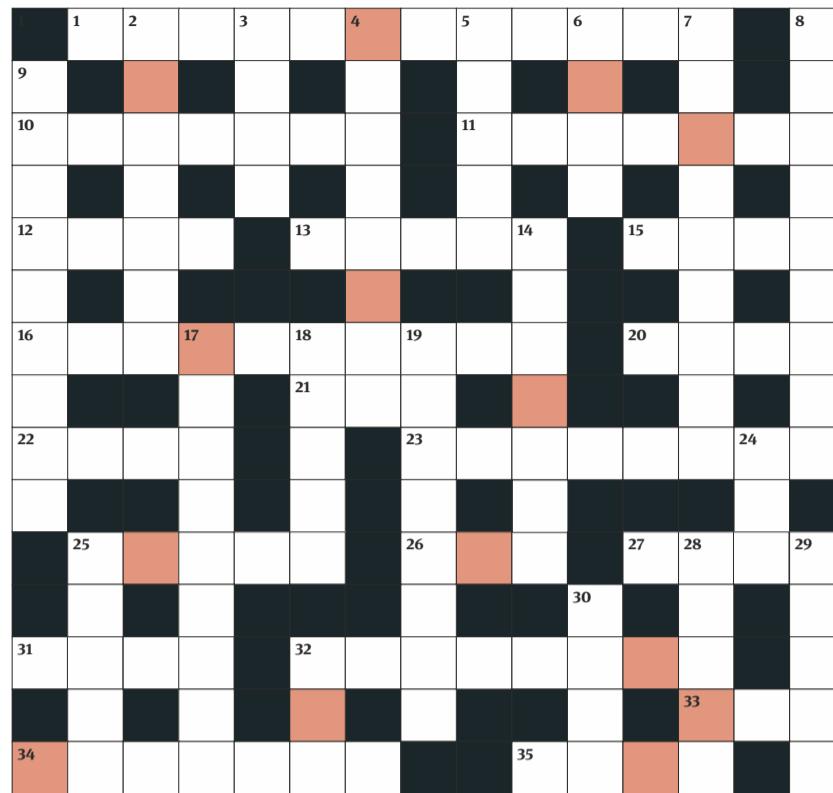
Thanks so much for the Sufjan Stevens article in the April *Uncut*. But, I am so confused and, to be honest, pissed off that no mention was made of "All Delighted People" that I cannot wait until I get home to write this. What is the deal? Why does this incredible piece of art continually get overlooked?

**Ken Meyer Jr, Orange, California**

## JACKSON BROWNE: THE LIBERALS FIGHT BACK

The outrage of Jeff Hyatt in your letter's page at Jackson Browne was quite baffling [April 2015]. As if the opinions of leftist MSNBC viewers were the dominant ones in America. The top-rated, incendiary Fox News network piledrives a 24-hour portrayal of President Obama as the Antichrist for every bit of progressive legislation he tries to sneak past the corporate-owned Republican Congress, while the fantasia *American Sniper*, which as your own magazine noted was practically a two-hour ad for Fox News, was the No 1 movie at the box office here for well over a month. Calm down, Jeff; any of Jackson's gripes about a political agenda that denies climate change, and is against teaching evolution in schools, and the rights of gays and the working class will surely be ignored by the vast majority of a public too intellectually lazy to care.

**Stephen Conn, Las Cruces, New Mexico**





# MY LIFE IN MUSIC

# JD Souther

## The records that inspired a key architect of country-rock: Puccini, Sinatra, Miles Davis – oh, and CSN!

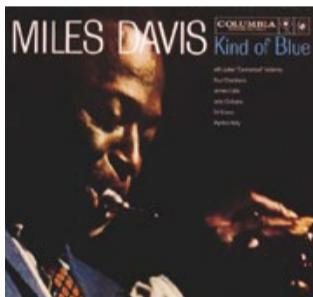


### A tearjerking performance

#### **Luciano Pavarotti**

#### **Nessun Dorma** 1972

My father would play me older records of [Puccini's opera] *Turandot* when I was three or four. If there's one performance of "Nessun Dorma" that could be the greatest, it's Pavarotti's... it makes grown men cry! It's got a very simple melody, a very elegant, simple structure, but the mood is breathtaking. It's just that octave gap! That's a really remarkable bit of melody writing there.



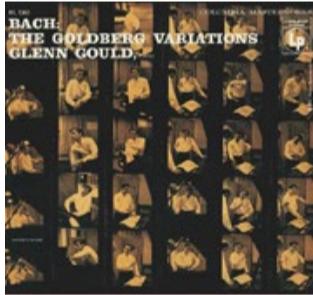
### A perfect album

#### **Miles Davis**

#### **Kind Of Blue**

1959

It's perfect. I thought so the very first time I heard it, and I thought so just listening to it on the weekend. I hear *Kind Of Blue* all the time – it's just a magnificent piece of work that I think has influenced everyone who plays that kind of music. Also, it's amazing that you find that album in the homes of people that don't even have any other jazz records in their collections. It just works on so many levels.

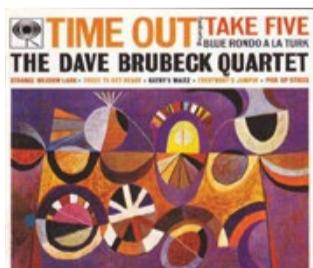


### An organic masterpiece

#### **Glenn Gould**

#### **Bach: The Goldberg Variations** 1956

This is a magnificent piece of music. You can hear breathing and groaning and the pedals – it really changed the way classical pianists approach recording. It was like a spring day, just this freshness, it's everything good that music does. And then he did it again in the '80s with a lot of cutting and a lot of work towards making it absolutely perfect. He crossed all the Ts and dotted all the Is, but it doesn't really have the breadth or the depth it had in the first version.



### A teenage favourite

#### **Dave Brubeck**

#### **Time Out** 1959

It changed the future of jazz – making it a little more available, a little friendlier and a little more colourful. I mean, you've got to applaud him: "Take Five" was a hit single when everything else on the air was either rock'n'roll or R'n'B. You couldn't believe that something like that was coming from the radio in your dad's car! I grew up with jazz; I played tenor sax and drums. I didn't have a guitar until I was 22!



### An album by a hero

#### **Frank Sinatra**

#### **In The Wee Small Hours** 1955

I think Sinatra is the greatest white pop singer in history; no-one had that incredible voice and phrasing, or jazz sensibility equal to his. I heard him from the time I was little, because my dad was a big-band singer and my mother just loved Sinatra. He was even great in the '70s – "Theme From New York, New York" was a hit at the same time as I was having them! It was unimaginable, because he was a big star before I was born.



### A songwriting influence

#### **Tim Hardin**

#### **Tim Hardin 1** 1966

There are some singer-songwriters that are very important to me, too – Tim Hardin was an enormous influence. This first album absolutely blew my mind, because Hardin would sing like a jazz singer, but while playing this acoustic guitar with not very many chords. And, of course, Bob Dylan changed everything, and gave everyone permission to write and talk about any topic they wanted to write about.



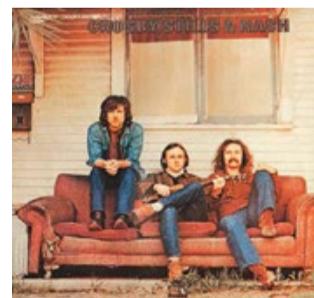
### A country hero

#### **Hank Williams**

#### **I'm Blue Inside**

1968

I didn't hear Hank's music until quite late – my family didn't like country music at all, so I got to him through the rockabilly guys, Roy Orbison, the Everly Brothers... then I heard some Hank Williams. I really loved this album, with tracks like "I'm So Lonesome, I Could Cry". There's just something in his voice that doesn't exist anywhere else in our universe.



### A huge Eagles influence

#### **Crosby, Stills & Nash**

#### **Crosby, Stills & Nash** 1969

When I first moved to California, we were all thrashing about thinking what we were going to do with acoustic guitars. When we heard this, everyone stopped and went 'Wow'... it's just a really interesting sound with those guys. They sounded like no other combination of voices. Crosby used to call it 'formation flying', and it really is – their harmonies just weave in and out. And then the Eagles took it to another level, took a four-part harmony and wrote contextual songs.

*JD Souther's new solo album, *Tenderness*, is out May 12 on Sony Music Masterworks.*



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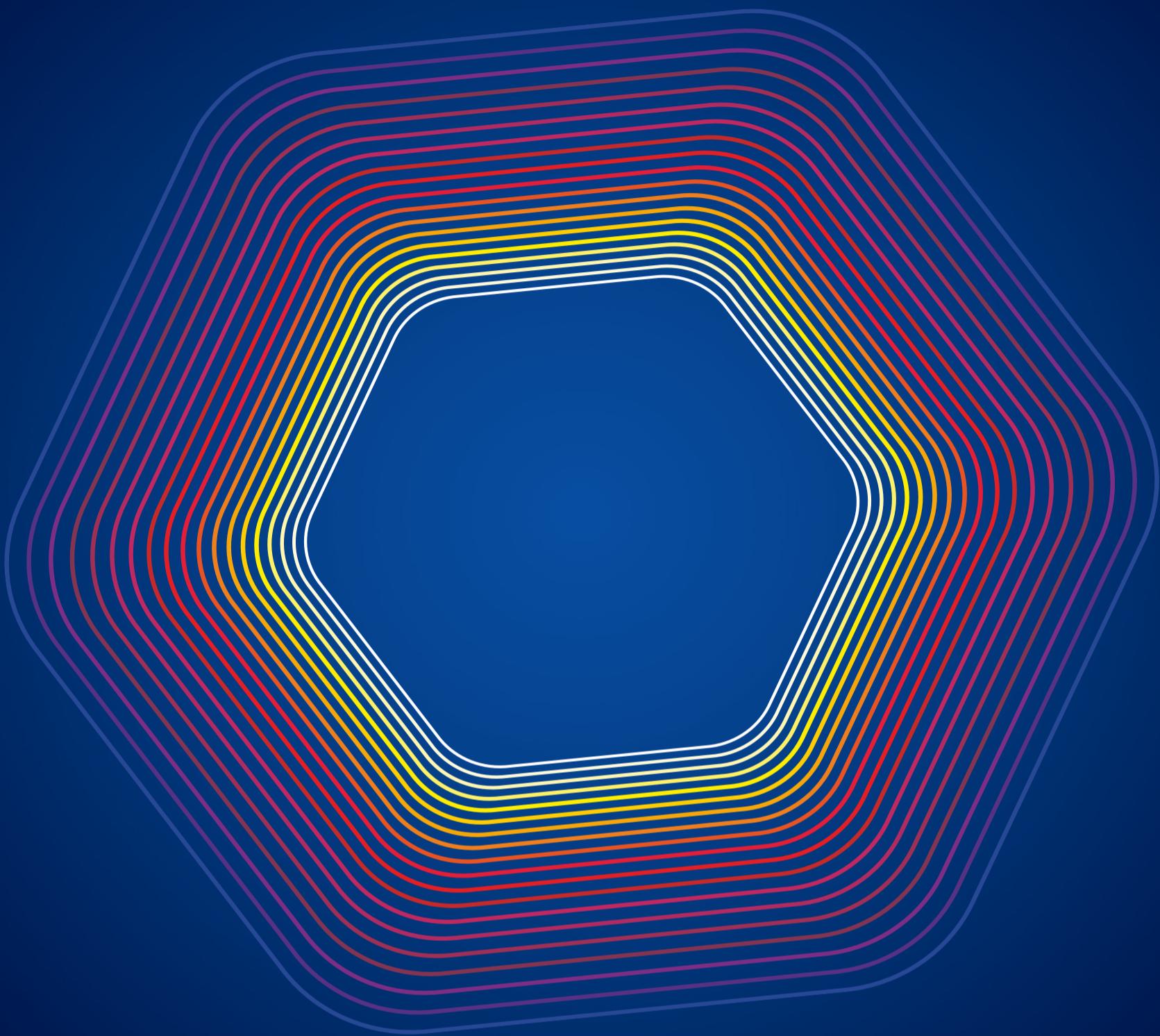
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