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WILSON**

THE

NATIONAL

revive **THE  
GRATEFUL  
DEAD**

**JACK WHITE  
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*American  
Epic*

The quest for rock's

**GREAT LOST  
ALBUMS**

PLUS!

THE BEATLES

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IT'S WAR!

**PJ  
HARVEY**

The inside  
story of her  
explosive  
new  
album

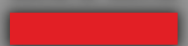
LAURA  
GIBSON

RAMONES

BRIX  
SMITH

MICHAEL  
HEAD

MOGWAI

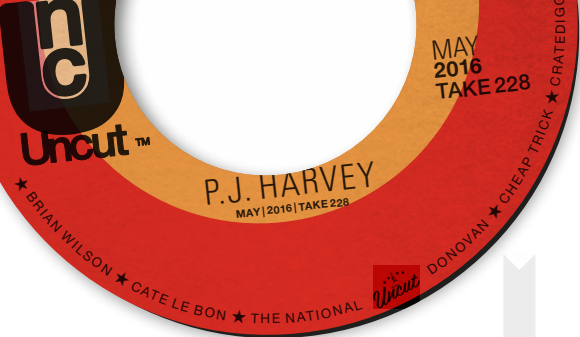


A film by Don Cheadle

# MILES AHEAD



In Cinemas April 22nd



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THE IMAGINATIVE AND sometimes heroic mechanics of actually making a record is, in many ways, the lifeblood of *Uncut*. This month, for instance, we have the inside story of how PJ Harvey made her new album in an ad hoc studio deep in the bowels of Somerset House, by the Thames in London. The space had been previously used as a rifle range and gymnasium for tax office employees, and Harvey invited members of the public to watch the sessions from behind a glass screen. "It was a really brave step to do that," recalls her co-producer and longtime collaborator John Parish, "because you're accepting that people may see you fuck up in a major way. And we all did some howlingly bad things in the session."



Fucking up, of course, is an essential part of the creative process, a process that's often elevated by a spirit of risk and experimentation, and a critical fearlessness of failing and looking daft, albeit rarely in public. The morning that this issue of our magazine was going to press, the news broke that Sir George Martin (*left*) had died. His air may have been that of a genteel patrician, but Martin's genius behind a desk enabled recording studios to become secure spaces for radical flights of fancy. Here, under his keen-eared stewardship, outlandish concepts could be proposed, trialled, subverted, fulfilled and, eventually, let out of confinement to transform our idea of what popular music could be.

In a year of miserable bereavements and attendant bold claims, it's still hard to overestimate George Martin's contribution to our multi-faceted musical world: as the open-minded and open-hearted gatekeeper who encouraged the revolutionaries to take over the citadel. According to one of them, Paul McCartney, "The world has lost a truly great man who left an indelible mark on my soul and the history of British music."

Next month, we'll be paying our full respects to George Martin, and I should also mention that the June *Uncut* will also feature Ben Watt's excellent "Gradually" on the free CD. You may have already discovered that this month's disc, while purporting to feature Ben's new song, has the meditative hum of Bitchin Bajas in its place. We're still trying to piece together the uncanny series of events that led to this mistake, but I can only apologise here for the embarrassing cock-up.

We can work it out and get it straight, as Sir George's notable charges once had it, or say goodnight...

John Mulvey, Editor. Follow me on Twitter @JohnRMulvey

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# INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF **UNCUT**  
BRIX SMITH | THE RAMONES | LAURA GIBSON



PRIMAL SCREEN

## “AMERICA’S GREATEST UNTOLD STORY!”

How Jack White, T Bone Burnett, Robert Redford, Willie Nelson and many more helped piece together *American Epic*, and the story of a nation’s musical roots

**I**N 2006, THE filmmaker Bernard MacMahon travelled to Cumbria to interview three musicians performing at the Maryport Bitter And Blues Festival. At the time, Honeyboy Edwards, Homesick James and Robert Lockwood Jr were all in their nineties. Although he admits now that he had no specific project in mind, MacMahon instinctively knew he had to document the memories of “the three oldest surviving blues men”. It has taken 10 years, but finally the interviews have been put to good use – in *American Epic*, MacMahon’s ambitious

documentary series that airs in the UK later this year as part of the BBC’s *Arena* strand.

Across three films, the series explores how and why the music of the American hinterland came to be recorded. A fourth film finds contemporary artists – including Jack White, Alabama Shakes, Beck, Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard – recording on reassembled Western Electric recording machinery.

MacMahon has assembled some storied collaborators for *American Epic*, among them White, Robert Redford and T Bone Burnett.

“It’s the story of the American recording

industry from 1926 to 1936,” Burnett explains to *Uncut*. “In 1926 the record industry fell off 80 per cent in one year because of the proliferation of radio in the big cities. The middle-class and wealthy people who were able to buy radios no longer wanted to buy records, because they could get music for free – why buy a record? So the recording companies, having lots of equipment and nothing to do, decided to go down South, where people didn’t have electricity, and therefore didn’t have radios. They started recording people down there – recording the poorest people in the country –



and broadcasting their voices around the world.”

MacMahon and his team conducted interviews with surviving family members, peers or other eyewitnesses to document the lives of artists including Charley Patton, The Memphis Jug Band and Joe Falcon. Among those, Dale Jett Carter and Fern Salyer – the grandson and niece, respectively, of AP and Sara Carter – are filmed at the Carter Family homestead in rural Maces Spring, southwest Virginia. Meanwhile, MacMahon’s investigations into Elder Burch – a pastor who brought his church choir to Atlanta in 1927 and in one session recorded nine sermons

and a hymn, “My Heart Keeps Singing” – took him to Cheraw, South Carolina. There, he filmed Ted Bradley, a community elder, and the only person alive who could remember Burch.

---

*“I sent Jack White an  
email about it. He wrote  
back in five minutes”*  
**Bernard MacMahon, director**

---

Bradley’s testimony – “He was a tall, good looking man, he would stand there rocking his spats, his shoes always shiny, he was well dressed” – is all the more remarkable considering he had not seen Burch for 70 years.

Meanwhile, the stories of Irving Williamson, Dick Justice and Frank Hutchison foregrounds the music made by the coal miners of Logan County, West Virginia. These stories are enhanced by researched archive footage and photography as well as the contextualising observations of musicians including White, Taj Mahal and Charlie Musselwhite. ➔

➤ Early in the project, MacMahon sought the counsel of Jeff Rosen, Bob Dylan's manager, who put him in touch with T Bone Burnett. "I flew to LA and met T Bone at Village Recording Studios," says MacMahon. "He was sitting at a console with Elton John, who said, 'Do you mind if I listen in?' T Bone's been telling me about it.' T Bone came on board, then two weeks later he called and said, 'I've been meeting with this Hollywood guy. I mentioned this idea and he's really interested.' That was Robert Redford. He listened to me talk for about half-an-hour and said, 'This is America's greatest untold story. I'm in.'"

Jack White, meanwhile, came aboard via a less formal route. "A friend gave me his email. I sent him three lines, 'I have film footage of Sleepy John Estes from 1914 and a picture of Son House from the early '30s. I'm working on this documentary.' He wrote back in five minutes."

Another key collaborator was sound restorer Nick Bergh, who had constructed a Western Electric recording machine. MacMahon also tracked down the Scully family, who invented the recording lathe. "The lathes were so durable, there were only about 900 made to cut records around the world," says MacMahon. "They kept a 1924 lathe in the basement. It was gleaming. At that point, I thought maybe we should go further with this, 'Why not construct a series of sessions, just like the ones in the documentary films, and see what happens?'"



Rare groovers: (l-r) American Epic producers Duke Erikson, Allison McGourty and director Bernard MacMahon

Presided over by White and Burnett, the *American Epic* sessions – which comprise the fourth film – took place at a privately owned studio in Melrose, Hollywood. "We had one artist in the morning, and one in the afternoon," says MacMahon. "They would have an hour to arrange the song with the musicians, then they'd have to record it all in one go. Willie [Nelson] and Merle [Haggard] came in at the end. I found it very moving. They would have grown up listening to the people who recorded on this machine. They were in their own world doing this. Not even Jack could talk to them. It was like they were communing with something, getting something out of this beyond what the other artists were."

Back in Cumbria, Honeyboy Edwards, Homesick James and Robert Lockwood Jr consider how the blues has changed since the days of Charley Patton. Artists today, it seems, don't quite stack up to the originals. "They never ploughed a mule," says Homesick James. "And that's what makes the voice. They ain't never hollered behind a mule."

MICHAEL BONNER

**BBC Arena Presents American Epic** will screen later this year

BLONDE AMBITIONS

# SLANG QUEEN!

The confessions of **BRIX SMITH**: "I wanted The Fall to make sense to everybody, not just left-brained jazz listeners."

"I DIDN'T GO in there to make The Fall more successful, but I thought I could add some light to their shadow. And I was pretty good at a hook. I wanted it to make sense to everybody, not just left-brained jazz listeners." Brix Smith Start is recalling her time as guitarist-songwriter in The Fall during the '80s, during which she added a splash of psych-pop to their dense sound. It was a tenure that coincided with the band's most commercial phase, including lauded albums *This Nation's Saving Grace* and *The Frenz Experiment*, plus hit covers of "There's A Ghost In My House" and "Victoria".

Raised in California and Illinois, Laura Salenger had already formed her own group, Banda Dratsing, by the time The Fall played Chicago in April 1983. Immediately seduced by "this aural Rorschach Test", she bumped into Mark E Smith in the bar afterwards. Three months later, the pair were married and Brix (so-named after her obsession with The Clash's "The Guns Of Brixton") had swapped the Midwest for a new life in the Manchester suburbs. "All I knew about Manchester was the song from *Hair*," she confesses, "so the reality was a bit of a shock. But there was a creativity there that seemed to permeate from under the earth."

The relationship lasted until 1989, which, unsurprisingly, also marked the end of her time in the band. Despite a bitter and

messy break-up, Brix's forthcoming memoir, *The Rise, The Fall, And The Rise*, tries to offer a balanced view of the often dictatorial Mark Smith. "He was so controlling in terms of all the sackings," she explains. "But he was brilliant at creating the energy around the band and keeping everyone on their toes. There was a method to his madness. That's how the band functioned. We were not U2."

Brix also recorded with The Adult Net and cut singles with The Church's Marty Willson-Piper and her one-time lover, violinist Nigel Kennedy. But the turn of the millennium saw her undertake a new career as a fashion guru, opening a series of London boutiques with husband Philip Start and regularly cropping up on TV.

*"Mark was brilliant at creating the energy around the band"*

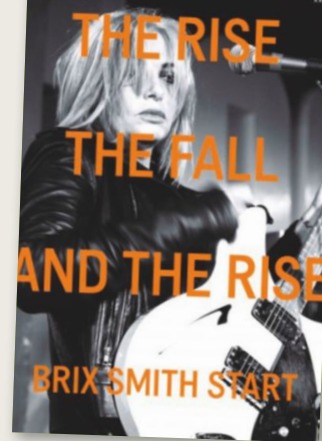
Now, she's back. Brix & The Extricated finds her fronting a five-piece band that includes ex-Fall members Steve and Paul Hanley. Having hooked up with Steve Hanley at the launch of his own book, *The Big Midweek*, the group debuted at Manchester's Ruby Lounge in December 2014. "I'd been out of music for 15 years," says Brix. "I might've had some kind of breakdown, or maybe I just needed time to heal. But writing the book freed my creativity to play again. The Extricated do new material and also reinterpret Fall songs that we co-wrote. That first gig was scary but it felt like an exorcism. And the band feels so good. I'm excited about the future."

ROB HUGHES

*The Rise, The Fall, And The Rise* is published by Faber & Faber in May. *Brix & The Extricated* are currently recording their first album



Fall guise: Mark E Smith and Brix, circa 1985



The Beatles Sessions,  
at Black Island Studios,  
London, October 2015

#### A QUICK ONE

➤ More strong additions from our friends at End Of The Road, with Teenage Fanclub, Thurston Moore, Scritti Politti and many more joining Joanna Newsom, Animal Collective, Bat for Lashes and Cat Power at the Sept 2-4 festival. Visit [endoftheroad.festival.com](http://endoftheroad.festival.com)

➤ Going to press, the future of AC/DC looks uncertain, with forthcoming US dates cancelled after doctors told Brian Johnson to stop touring at once or "risk total hearing loss". [www.acdc.com](http://www.acdc.com) reports the shows should be rescheduled "later in the year, likely with guest vocalist".

➤ Having recently reconfigured *Music For A New Society*, John Cale has now focused on *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, which he'll perform in full at the Philharmonie de Paris on April 3. Guests will include Mark Lanegan, Animal Collective and, brace yourself, Pete Doherty and Carl Barât. "Run Run Run..."



➤ Our *Ultimate Music Guide: The Beach Boys* and the latest *History Of Rock (1973, Pink Floyd on the cover)* are on sale now. Our website, [www.uncut.co.uk](http://www.uncut.co.uk), meanwhile, has the latest news on Carole King's return to the stage, Bob Dylan and Neil Young's forthcoming new albums, Jack White's Muppets collaboration, and loads more...

TAKE 1964

# Magical History Tour

Is it possible to restage THE BEATLES' studio sessions as a stadium rock event? GEOFF EMERICK thinks so...

IT'S HARD NOT to enjoy a good Beatles tribute band, especially if they've gone to the effort of getting the wigs, Rickenbackers, and multi-part harmonies right. But a new 11-date UK tour, *The Sessions: A Live Restaging Of The Beatles At Abbey Road* – is promising to take the "sounding like The Beatles" concept to another level entirely. Go, and you'll find insanely ambitious, forensically detailed recreations not just of the music, but of its birthplace – via an onstage, state-of-the-art reproduction of Abbey Road Studio 2 itself. The idea is to deliver a live musical documentary – a recreation of how rock's greatest albums were made.

This is not done by four dudes from down the pub. There's some serious "I Was There" pedigree, which gives this project necessary gravitas. The show is backed by Abbey Road engineer and multi-Grammy winner Geoff Emerick – who worked with The Beatles from 1962-'68, and again on *Abbey Road* itself. The inspiration was Emerick's 2006 memoir *Here, There And Everywhere*, which delivers insights into the technical detail of working and recording with the band.

As Geoff tells *Uncut* exclusively: "I'm proud to have been part of the team that recorded the greatest music of all time. This is the closest the audience will get to experiencing the way things worked in

the confines of the studio, when we made these records." Insiders tell us the recreation of "A Day In The Life" in particular is stunning. "That [section] takes me right back to the original recordings," adds Geoff.

*"This is the closest the audience will get to experiencing the way things worked in the studio"*

The sheer scale of the production is remarkable. To recreate music from each of the albums recorded at Abbey Road requires 45 people on the stage. There are seven vocalists (two Johns, two Pauls, two Georges and one Ringo), seven more musicians with historically accurate guitars, drums and other instruments, backed by the small matter of a 21-piece orchestra – all marshalled by eight Studio Technicians. "All the musicians are fantastic," says Geoff. "Finding the right musicians and the correct cast is one of the biggest

challenges of doing a show like this."

The concept has been developed by Stig Edgren, the man behind "Elvis Presley – in Concert", with 2012 London Olympics Creative Director Kim Gavin on board as director. The Studio 2 stage setting itself is designed and built by Stufish, who has worked on stage sets for The Rolling Stones, AC/DC and U2.

Emerick's team accessed unique insider resources, and Stig Edgren is keen to stress the show's pleasingly anal dedication to detail: "We painstakingly break down each recording, including using original stems [audio submixes] and work hard to achieve the same harmonies sung by The Beatles. We're using the same instruments, but some contemporary versions. The older Vox and Fender amps are represented, but we are also using four Kemper Profilers [boutique digital amp modellers] to recreate some sounds."

The Beatles are the most documented band in history, their hardcore fans notoriously detail-hungry. So the success of this colossal undertaking will rest on its sense of authenticity. Edgren is acutely aware of it: "This has been the hardest show I've ever produced. It's a huge responsibility to represent these tracks accurately. However, I am sure we will come closer to anyone on earth in playing these live onstage."

MARK BENTLEY

*The Sessions: A Live Restaging Of The Beatles At Abbey Road Studios* opens at Liverpool Echo Arena on March 30, and tours the UK until reaching the London O2 on May 15

Retreading the boards: The re-creation of Abbey Road's Studio 2



The Ramones: (l-r) Johnny, Dee Dee, Tommy and Joey

PUNK PIONEERS

# I WANNA BE CURATED!

Forty years on, THE RAMONES get their own museum retrospective

**A**N EXHIBITION ON the Ramones will open in the band's home borough of Queens, 40 years after the release of their debut album. "Queens is a borough with more than its fair share of musical heroes but this seemed to be a good time to pay homage to the Ramones," says Marc Miller, guest curator of Hey Ho! Let's Go: Ramones And The Birth Of Punk at the Queens Museum. "This is an art museum and we want to emphasise that synergy between the music scene and the art scene in New York. CBGB was right next to SoHo and there was a whole lot of crossover."

So while the exhibition's 350 items includes Joey's leather jacket and Johnny's guitars, it also has paintings by Dee Dee and Joey, as well as by punk-influenced artists such as Yoshitomo Nara and Shepard Fairey, original artwork by John Holmstrom of *Punk* magazine and photographs by Roberta Bayley and Ramones ex-manager Danny Fields. "We have a giant drawing by Joey that looks like tiny scribbles

but is everybody at CBGB – that's how he described it in 1978," says Miller. "We have a few of Dee Dee's paintings, including one from 1985 that looks abstract but is a hallucinatory map of New York with markings for places like 53rd and 3rd and Joey's apartment." These were produced under the influence of Arturo Vega, who designed the Ramones logo and helped define their distinct aesthetic.

*"The Ramones' pretensions were superseded by their own realness"*

Miller noticed punk's visual appeal way back in 1978 when he co-curated the Punk Art exhibition in New York. In 1991, he curated a Louis Armstrong exhibition that travelled from Queens to

Washington DC and New Orleans. For the Ramones, he notes the influence of Andy Warhol on the artfully condensed style of the group. "They grew up in the New York of Andy Warhol," he says. "He loomed large. He influenced Arturo, and Tommy Ramone consistently referred to Andy Warhol. Danny Fields was part of Warhol's circle. In that respect they were master punk-pop packagers."

One of Miller's biggest challenges was negotiating the notoriously fractured relationships between different Ramones camps, but he had access to Tommy Ramone's archive where he discovered one gem in particular. "I found a promo kit, with a return self-addressed envelope," says Miller. "It had the first press release that Tommy wrote, two sheets of lyrics, a photo – Johnny is in shiny pants and Dee Dee is wearing a scarf, so they're looking a touch glam. The most intriguing thing is a reel-to-reel tape – it has to be the earliest recording made by the Ramones, and Danny Fields says he'd never



heard it. We're hoping we can get that transferred before the show, but it's a delicate thing after 40 years." Items like this emphasise the importance of Tommy to creating the Ramones' singular street-tough look and sound. "Tommy is the one who really understood what the Ramones could be," agrees Miller. "Tommy understood their potential as an art group, but what made them authentic was their personalities. Whatever pretensions they had were superseded by their own realness." **PETER WATTS**

*Hey! Ho! Let's Go: Ramones And The Birth Of Punk is at Queens Museum from 10 April to 31 July*

## THE CLASSIFIEDS THIS MONTH: Sabbath take Croydon, Genesis in residence, and Fleetwood Mac and friends settle in at the Lyceum. From Melody Maker, April 4, 1970

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# new music



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changes  
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**pj harvey**  
the hope six demolition project  
15/04/2016



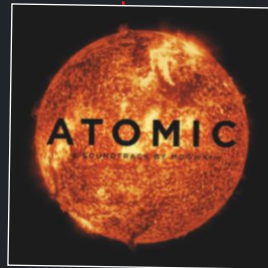
**the last shadow puppets**  
everything you've come to expect  
01/04/2016



**explosions in the sky**  
the wilderness  
01/04/2016



**mogwai**  
atomic  
01/04/2016



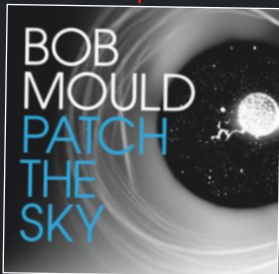
**yeasayer**  
amen & goodbye  
01/04/2016



**black mountain**  
IV  
01/04/2016



**bob mould**  
patch the sky  
25/03/2016



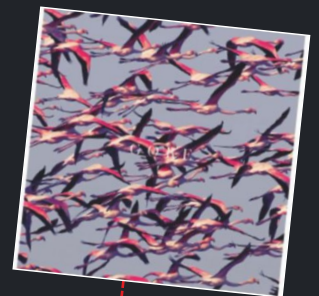
**white denim**  
stiff  
25/03/2016



**frightened rabbit**  
painting of a panic attack  
08/04/2016



**deftones**  
gore  
08/04/2016



**john carpenter**  
lost themes II  
15/04/2016



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I'M NEW HERE

# LAURA GIBSON

The intimate singer-songwriter who survived an explosion to realise, "You must change your life..."

**"T**HEY'RE SOME OF the most vulnerable and scariest songs to share," says Laura Gibson of her latest record, "because they're so personal." It suggests that the singer/songwriter, who grew up in the logging town of Coquille, Oregon, then moved to Portland to pursue music, doesn't usually "do" personal and, in a way, that's true. Across three albums to date, she's laid herself bare not in confessional torrents, but rather in elegantly wrought, poetic songs rooted deep in both her home state's landscape and history and her own emotional experience, with her warm, reedy voice their focus.

*Empire Builder*, though, which arrives four years after the atmospheric *La Grande*, is slightly different. Aside from the lilting "Damn Sure" and cheerfully swinging "Two Kids", it tilts away from her usual dusty folk towards a more clean-lined, orchestral pop intimacy. It also sees Gibson teaming up again with old friend and arranger/violinist Peter Broderick, along with musicians including Death Cab For Cutie guitarist Dave Depper and vocalist Alela Diane.

"I wanted the songs to sound like there's space within them," explains Gibson, via Skype from her record label's Berlin office, "and I wanted my vocal delivery to sound like I was discovering the songs as I was singing them. My second record, *Beasts Of Seasons*, felt very meditative and almost like I was whispering and pulling people towards me. And *La Grande* was an exploration of what it means to be confident. A lot of it felt like shouting outward – in my tiny,

quiet way! But this time I was just... in the struggle. It feels like my most present record."

It's that struggle that makes the songs on *Empire Builder* Gibson's "scariest" to date, and so much more dynamic than her 2006 debut, *If You Come To Greet Me*. In the summer of 2014, she moved 3,000 miles from Portland to New York – taking the Amtrak route to Chicago that gave the album its title – to start a two-year course for an MA in creative writing at Hunter College. Gibson left behind a close family and a boyfriend. Then, in March last year, a fire triggered by a huge gas explosion destroyed her East Village apartment building, killing two people. Gibson wasn't hurt, but she lost almost everything, including her only guitar, her notebooks and half the lyrics to the album. Small wonder that a touchstone for its hugely heartfelt songs was the last line from

Rilke's poem "Archaic Torso Of Apollo": "You must change your life."

Most of *Empire Builder*'s music had already been recorded and arranged back in Oregon on Gibson's 2015 winter break, but after the fire she was forced to write some lyrics afresh. Luckily, she could remember a lot, because she labours over them so intensively. Still, it wasn't easy emotionally. "The fire was the biggest thing to have happened to me," Gibson admits. "It felt like I was one person one day and a different person the next. But it felt so good to work on those songs, even though it felt like someone else had written them. Making music is so grounding and so healing. The record felt like a thread connecting those two people."

SHARON O'CONNELL

I'M YOUR FAN

"Her words and music have a depth and warmth that make the days feel open and bright"

JOEY BURNS, CALEXICO



Laura Gibson's *Empire Builder* is out on April 1 on *City Slang*

## THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

### STEVE GUNN

**Eyes On The Lines** MATADOR

The discreet guitar god ventures further into the world of strong riffs and songs, now as labelmate to kindred spirit Kurt Vile.

### KENDRICK LAMAR

**Untitled Unmastered** TOP DAWG

The game-changing rapper harvests raw P-funk jams, deep jazz meditations and more from his archives. A brilliant appendix to *To Pimp A Butterfly*.

### BRIAN ENO

**The Ship** WARP

A beautiful and sombre meditation on war, in which Eno exposes the gospel heart of The Velvet Underground's "I'm Set Free".

### CASE/LANG/VEIRS

**Case/Lang/Veirs** ANTI-

A mellifluous summit meeting of three great alt.country voices – a Parton/Harris/Ronstadt, perhaps, for a subtler time.

### MARISSA NADLER

**Strangers** BELLA UNION

Customarily stark and beguiling seventh album from the ethereal singer, now safely ensconced as the heir to Hope Sandoval's wintry domain.

### DEXYS

**Let The Record Show: Dexys Do**

**Irish And Country Soul** ADA

'My Beauty Volume Two'? Kevin Rowland revisits the old country standards and radio smashes of his youth.

### RYLEY WALKER & CHARLES RUMBACK

**Cannots** DEAD OCEANS

Fresh from touring with Danny Thompson, the irrepressible guitarist hooks up with drummer Rumback for a series of duels that evoke the work of Sandy Bull and Billy Higgins.



Ryley Walker

### THE LIMIÑANAS

**Malamore** BECAUSE

Umpteen albums in, the French duo's fuzzy Gainsbourg-goes-garage rock is more seductive than ever. Unlikely guest star: Peter Hook.

### SOLAR BEARS

**Advancement** SUNDAY BEST

Left frustrated by the yawning chasms between Boards Of Canada albums? The Irish duo once again provide uncanny (if not quite so apocalyptic) electronic succour.

### SUN KIL MOON?

**I Watched The Movie The Revenant With**

**Leo DiCaprio** CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE

A mercilessly precise spoof of Mark Kozilek's stream-of-consciousness blather. Our hero eats tacos; people die.

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

# new music



pet shop boys  
super  
01/04/2016



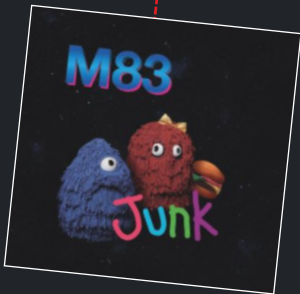
sam beam & jessa hoop  
love letter for fire  
15/04/2016



moderat  
ill  
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m83  
junk  
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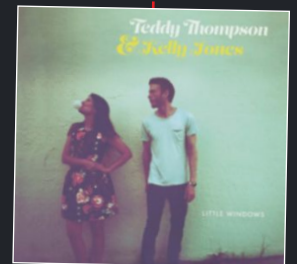
the field  
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late night tales  
presents sasha:  
scene delete  
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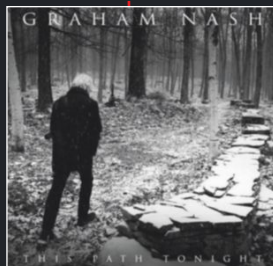
teddy thompson  
& kelly jones  
little windows  
01/04/2016



santana  
santana IV  
15/04/2016



graham nash  
this path tonight  
15/04/2016



rufus wainwright  
take all my loves  
22/04/2016



birdy  
beautiful lies  
25/03/2016

margo price  
midwest farmer's daughter  
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## the fopp list

get the lowdown on the best new music  
in this month's edition of the fopp list,  
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# LET UNCUT SHAKE

Your guide to this month's free CD

## 1 STURGILL SIMPSON

### Brace For Impact (Live A Little)

"One fine day you'll wake up/And this life will be over..." Yep, brace yourself. A rugged and apocalyptic Sturgill Simpson opens this month's eclectic mix. The restless troubadour grapples with southern rock on an appetite-whetting cut from our Album Of The Month, *A Sailor's Guide To Earth*.

## 2 MOGWAI

### Ether

Stuart Braithwaite and his Glaswegian post-rock veterans are no strangers to visions of Armageddon, either. Hence the twinkling and grand "Ether", which comes from the soundtrack to Mark Cousins' documentary *Atomic: Living In Dread And Promise*.



## 3 KEVIN MORBY

### I Have Been To The Mountain

After a longish apprenticeship in bands like Woods, also featured on our CD this month, Morby is shaping up as a deceptively laidback, politically attuned songwriter with strong historical chops. Check this gem from his third solo set, richly textured like a Bob Johnston production from the late '60s.

## 4 THE JAYHAWKS

### Quiet Corners & Empty Spaces

Morby's current vibe is not altogether different from that of The Jayhawks, of course, joining the dots on the map between Laurel Canyon and Woodstock. Mark Olson may have quit, but *Paging Mr Proust* finds Gary Louris in exceptional form. Peter Buck and Mike Mills also figure, very sweetly.

## 5 BOMBINO

### Timtar (Memories)

A bold departure for one of desert rock's key players, Omar 'Bombino' Moctar. "Timtar" is an example of 'Tuareggae', his pleasingly harmonious hybrid of Jamaican and Tuareg traditions. Dirty Projectors' David Longstreth, a keen student of the serpentine riff, adds his production skills to the melting pot.

## 6 GRAHAM NASH

### This Path Tonight

The title track from Graham Nash's first solo album in 14 years, "This Path Tonight" is a surprisingly crunchy bit of self-analysis, as the singer contemplates a new life on the other side of a 38-year relationship: "Where are we going? Where are we going?"

## 7 KONONO NO 1

### Nele Kalusimbiko [Short Version]

The junkyard thumb-piano grooves of Congo's formidable Konono No 1 are supercharged further thanks to a trip to Lisbon, where electronic producer Batida only adds to the hypnotic relentlessness of their music.

## 8 LAURA GIBSON

### The Cause

A poignant and elegant highlight of Laura Gibson's fourth album, "The Cause" showcases a talent who deserves the same sort of acclaim that kindred spirit Sharon Van Etten has enjoyed these past few years. For the full story, turn back to our interview on page 10.



## 9 BITCHIN BAJAS

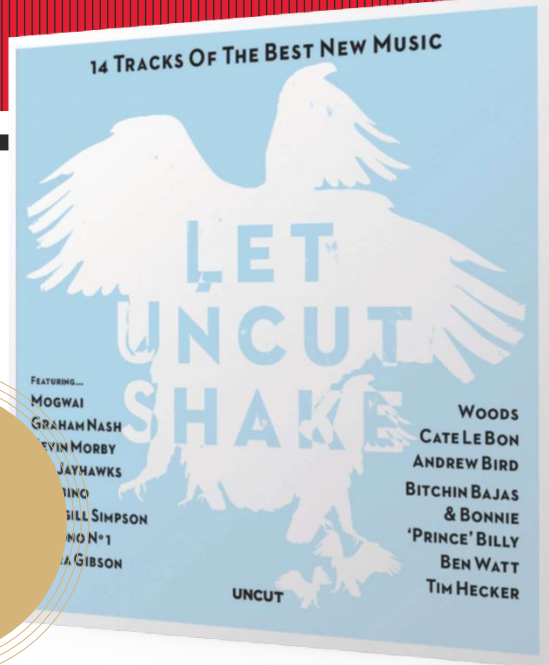
### Tilang [Edit]

Uncanny production glitches have meant that the scheduled Ben Watt track we advertised on the CD sleeve has been replaced by this meditative ambient piece from the Bajas' self-titled 2014 album. Our apologies again: Ben's tune will appear on our free disc next month.

## 10 WOODS

### Sun City Creeps

A rousing return, now, from Kevin Morby's old bandmates, who've spruced up the lo-fi jams for this opening salvo of their ninth album, *City Sun Eater In The River Of Light*. A great face-off, too, between Jeremy Earl's needling psychedelic guitar and some delightful Mariachi-flavoured horns.



## 11 CATE LE BON

### Wonderful

A mainstay of Welsh indie-rock, currently embedded in LA's hipper circles, Le Bon's determinedly idiosyncratic music becomes more creative with each release. Take "Wonderful", a jagged but exuberant slice of post-punk that is anything but austere. Read our Cate Le Bon interview (co-starring an actual rattlesnake) starting on page 46.

## 12 ANDREW BIRD

### Capsized

Another dispatch from LA, this time courtesy of the imaginative multi-instrumentalist Andrew Bird, who holds off on his trademark whistling and fiddling on "Capsized" for a sleekly funky tune that wouldn't sound out of place on a Beck album.

## 13 TIM HECKER

### Castrati Stack

A ghostly Icelandic choir drifts through the cloudbursts of noise on this radical beauty, courtesy of Tim Hecker, a leftfield darling who has finally arrived at a kind of spiritual home for his music, 4AD: "Castrati Stack" presents him as a plausible, ethereal successor to the Cocteau Twins.

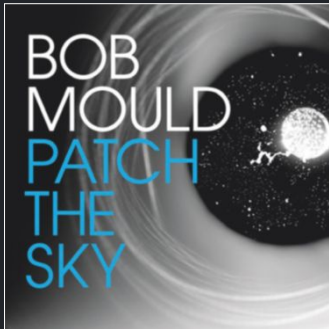
## 14 BITCHIN BAJAS & BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY

### Your Hard Work Is About To Pay Off, Keep On Keeping On

Difficult month? Life getting you down? Take solace from an unlikely guru – biblically-bearded Will Oldham, whose latest adventure brings him into the cultish circle of Chicago's Bitchin Bajas, making their second deserved appearance of the month. "Keep on keeping on..."

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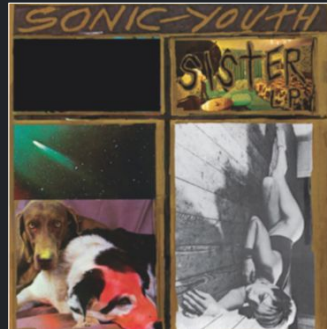
New album contains the hit singles Voices in My Head, The End of Things and Hold On.



## GNOD

**MIRROR**  
ROCKET RECORDINGS LP / CD

'Mirror' is a work of bold reinvention and raw renewal, sculpting chaos and discord into a formidable statement of intent.



## SONIC YOUTH

**SISTER**  
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Classic 1987 album is one of the band's most beloved releases. Includes a cover of Crime's "Hot Wire My Heart".

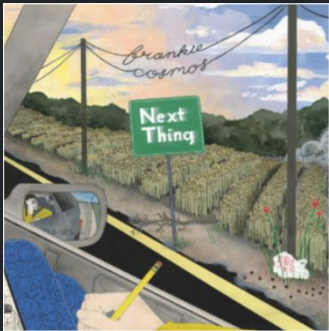
Vinyl includes digital download card with a bonus track.



## GIANT SAND

**proVISIONS**  
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

Reissue of Giant Sand's 'ProVISIONS' featuring Neko Case, Isobel Campbell, M. Ward and the PJ Harvey-penned 'The Desperate Kingdom Of Love'.



## FRANKIE COSMOS

**NEXT THING**  
BAYONET LP / CD

The beauty in Frankie Cosmos' writing can be found in her ability to examine situations & relationships with heartbreaking sincerity. "Next Thing" explores new emotional & instrumental territory for Frankie Cosmos.

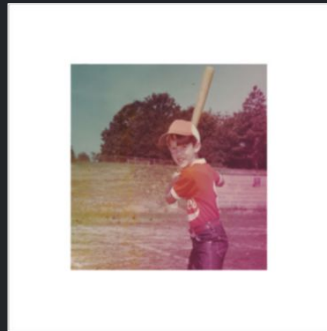


## KAITLYN AURELIA SMITH

**EARS**

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Touring with Animal Collective and Battles this spring. Dazed called her "...one of the most pioneering musicians in the world." Mary Anne Hobbs says "I absolutely love her work."



## ERIC BACHMANN

**ERIC BACHMANN**  
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

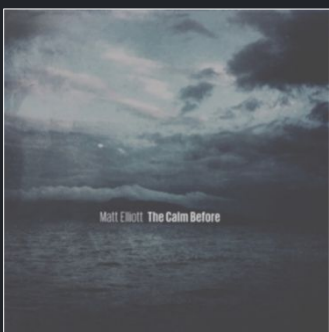
The self-titled album from the frontman of Crooked Fingers and Archers of Loaf. Contains the singles Carolina and Mercy.



## SEPTEMBER GIRLS

**AGE OF INDIGNATION**  
FORTUNA POP! LP / CD

The Dublin quintet return with an impassioned musical and political statement, their gothic psychedelia bristling with atmospheric textures and dark-hearted noise.



## MATT ELLIOTT

**THE CALM BEFORE**  
ICI D'AILLEURS LP / CD

The new masterpiece from the British songwriter is a precious stone in his path through contemporary folk music



## BABYFATHER

**"BBF" HOSTED BY DJ ESCROW**

HYPERDUB LP / CD

"This makes me proud to be British"



## SPECTRES

**DEAD**  
SONIC CATHEDRAL LP / CD

New versions of the songs from Spectres' acclaimed debut 'Dying' by Mogwai, Factory Floor, Hookworms, Richard Fearless, Andy Bell (Ride), Robert Hampson (Loop) and more.



## SUSANNA

**TRIANGLE**  
SUSANNASONATA LP / CD

70 minutes of intensely expressive, deeply felt and spiritually probing lyrics, presented and performed in layers of voice, electronics, and effects, programmed with instruments like piano, violin and tuba.

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**Interview:** Michael Bonner  
**Portrait:** Thomas Samson

# Jean-Michel Jarre

The French composer reveals his involvement in the May '68 Paris demonstrations, an abiding love for The Who, and his secret history in a rock band...

**M**AKING ELECTRONIC MUSIC IS a more solitary activity than any other kind – rock, classical, or jazz,” considers Jean-Michel Jarre. “Being in your studio on your own, not able to share your secrets or weaknesses with anybody. But there is also that exciting moment, where, like a kid with your friends, you can finally say, ‘Yes, come up to my bedroom and I’ll show you my toys.’”

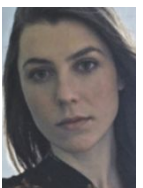
For nearly 50 years, Jarre has pursued his creative muse in splendid isolation, from his phenomenally successful *Oxygene* and *Equinoxe* albums to his record-breaking live concert events. Recently, though, he has permitted himself the pleasures of collaboration. Last year’s *Electronica 1: The Time Machine* found him working with a range of artists including Edgar Froese, Fuck Buttons and John Carpenter. A second collection, *Electronica 2: The Heart Of Noise* – out in May – sees him connect with another similarly wide-ranging assortment of musicians, from Julia Holter to Peaches and Hans Zimmer. “It’s been such a treasure for me,” he says. “Like it’s been Christmas for five years!”

Now, Jarre will participate in another ambitious project: answering your questions on everything from vintage synths to The Who...



Have keyboard, will travel: Jean-Michel Jarre, 1988

## STAR QUESTION



**You started your work with electronics and synths with Pierre Schaeffer’s GRM and in studios like**

**Stockhausen’s. How did these very particular and different worlds affect your approach to writing early on? – Julia Holter**  
I was coming from the rock scene, but I also studied classical harmony and writing composition. So my entire view of music changed through working with people who, for the first time, were considering music not in terms of notes, but in terms of sounds and noise. They said, “OK, you can record the noise in the street, you can record the noise of the rain, of the wind, of an engine... and then make music with it.” That was the starting point for me, but I also think it has been the

signal for a new way of approaching musical composition. Today, DJs are grandsons of Schaeffer and Stockhausen, because the idea that a musician can be a sound designer at the same time is now almost traditional.

**Were you involved with the May 1968 protests?**

– Max Jenkins, Sydney

I was in Paris and in London, so I saw two sides of it. I was in Paris for May 1 and then played in a club in London with my rock band. But I was in the middle of it, because I was at university in Paris. It was the first time that the youth had a word and so society realised that the youth was important. On our side, we were rebelling against more or less everything – like any teenager does, generation after generation – but in this case it was the first time there had been such a

strong revolution against the establishment. In my case, doing electronic music was a kind of rebellion against any music systems, including rock’n’roll, which was already a kind of establishment in those days. The classical world had a negative attitude to rock’n’roll, and later the rock’n’roll establishment had that same attitude to electronic music. Now, the first electronic musicians have that same attitude to the new DJs. Generation after generation, we have this reactionary attitude to what’s going on after you – that should not be the case with artists.

**You played guitar in bands called *Mystère IV* and *The Dustbins* in the late ’60s.**

**Who were your guitar heroes?**

– Sam Blair, Edinburgh

Pete Townshend. When people say, “Were you a fan of The Beatles or

the Stones?”, I was more into The Who! I was always amazed at how they created so many things. The first wall of sound, rock opera and so on. When you listen to the first Who songs, it was amazing to hear a band where each of them were playing solos. Keith Moon was doing solos, as was John, Roger and Pete was playing the role of rhythm and lead guitarist. On paper, that should not have worked; but they created the most amazing songs of that time. Because Pete is my great guitar hero, I wanted to work with him on *Electronica 1*; he was the first one to integrate synthesisers and sequencers into rock music with songs like “Baba O’Riley” and “Who’s Next”, so it was important to me that we had that connection.

**What do you think of French club music like Daft Punk and Air? – Eric Lincoln, Newcastle**

I collaborated with Air, and we used to say, “There is some ‘Oxygene’ in Air!” I think a lot of these bands are part of my family, in a sense. Electronic music





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“We were  
rebellious  
against  
more  
or less  
everything”

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## AN AUDIENCE WITH...

➤ came from Germany and France, the Berlin scene and, historically, people such as Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream. It has nothing to do with blues, jazz, rock or American pop. It's normal that French rock'n'roll is not interesting because – from our point of view – it is as if Edith Piaf came from Brazil or Maurice Chevalier came from China. However talented people can be in European countries in terms of rock'n'roll, it will never be as strong as the original ones. But electronic music is different, it is based on these long instrumental tracks that come from classical music and it's part of our patrimony.

### When you destroyed the master tapes for *Music For Supermarkets*, did you regret it at all?

– Sean Johnson, *Staines*

No, not at all. It was part of the concept I had in mind in the days when the industry was trying to damage itself. We started speaking about how CDs in supermarkets were killing record shops, and that was the catastrophic state that the music industry is all about now. It was quite premonitory at that time to say 'careful guys' about the fact that music should not be approached like any other industry. At the beginning, it had that element of madness. It is shown in the TV show, *Vinyl*, when you see these guys and they are crazy, but the passion is there. Then suddenly you had people coming in from finance, and that started to create a kind of ambiguous relationship that the artists and the musicians had with the new industry.

### STAR QUESTION



Did you write each song on the two *Electronica* albums with the collaborations in mind, or did you write a body of work and then think about who would be suitable for each song?

– Gary Numan

Seeing the light during a show in Budapest, Hungary, 2010



I wrote some music specifically for artists that I wouldn't mind to collaborate with. The music had enough space for them to express themselves, but was also quite structured, which set up a platform of discussion when I met them. The idea was to try a true collaboration – 50/50. I also wanted to travel to meet with the collaborators physically. The fact that you are sharing the same moment in a place is totally different to sharing files.

### STAR QUESTION



Explain how it's important for you to be political without preaching...

– Peaches

It's not our job as artists to be politicians. I've always thought that. Actually, where I think it is important is to convey messages through lyrics, through music and the places where you are going to play or not going to play. Artists who are able to convey emotions through messages and art forms, rather than speeches – it's a different job. Peaches is a perfect example of somebody who is using her art to promote the fact that minorities should be respected and considered as being exactly at the same level as other humans on the planet. Her message is underlined by her music, her style and artistry. The message is efficient, because it's carried by talent.

### What do you remember about playing China in 1981?

– Charles McCain, *Paris*

I played in China a few times. At the beginning of my career in the '80s and then I played more recently in 2004 at Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. The first time, it was like playing on the moon. I was the first professional musician to play China. This was not long after Mao had died. It was not easy. The kind of show I was doing was pretty new from a Western point of view, but for the Chinese it was like *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. The people were just dressed in dark green and dark blue. Everything was quite surreal. I could write a book one day about what happened there. It was a great privilege to play in those conditions in the country.

A lot of people tend to fetishise old synths: Arps, Wasps and so on. Do you see the appeal in that? Or are you glad that



Chinese rocks: Jarre playing Beijing, October 10, 2004

### technology has moved on? – Rose Rogers, Brighton

I would say that technology can only evolve if you have the kind of fetish attitude to the ancestors of the technology you use. Any classical violin player would love to play a Stradivarius. It's not only because of the fantasy, it's because nobody has succeeded in making a better violin since the 17th century. The same thing happens with a Stratocaster or Telecaster from the early '60s. It is not about a matter of ritual, it is a matter of respecting the ancestors. Do I have a favourite of my old synths? Yes, they are like pets and my favourite one is the first one I got. The VCS3 from EMS. I got it in a symbolic way. I sold my electric guitar and my amp to go to London and purchase this synth. It's still working and I always use it in each project I work on.

### Your show is very visual. Have you had any spectacular mishaps with it?

– Martha Woodridge, *Boston*

All the time! Accidents in those kind of situations are part of the day-to-day process – no accidents are more unusual because when you do these kind of shows outside, anything can happen in terms of weather or technical issues. But I love the notion of accidents, they are really at the basis of creation. We should not be scared onstage that an accident can happen. These days, where everything has to be controlled, the lack of it is more important than ever. I recall during the last tour, I had a real problem with one instrument and, instead of panicking, I shared it with the audience. So when we came back to the track, everyone was more interested... they had shared a special moment with you.

### You brought a lot of glamour to electronic music. What's the grubbiest, most unglamorous event you've ever had to play?

– Nancy White, *Enfield*

I think it was probably in a small festival in France, back in the day, where it was like a big office room

and the vibes were absolutely not musical. When I started doing concerts, they were in the theatres ready for jazz, rock or classical, or you had these big arenas, not at all made for music. On the Monday, you'd have the boxing match, on the Tuesday, you'd have a political meeting, on Wednesday you'd have something else. With electronic music, I also considered it cool to play outdoors. In a sense, it was like a precursor to a rave or a festival – hiring a place for a night and gathering people in an informal way.

### STAR QUESTION



Do you know any anagrams of your name? – Alex Paterson, *The Orb*

There isn't an English anagram but there is a great

French one: "Jean-Michel Jarre = *Ej la machine rare*." In French, it means, "Do I have the rare machine?"

### It is 30 years since the Challenger space shuttle disaster. How do you view the "Last Rendez-Vous" track now? – Thierry, *Nîmes*

The track means a lot to me, because [*Challenger astronaut*] Ron McNair was supposed to play it in space and then it was to be linked to my concert. I wanted to cancel the show [*Rendez-Vous Houston: April 5, 1986*], but the other astronauts called me and said, "For Ron, the Challenger and for all of us, you have to do this concert." So it became our tribute to Challenger, and to all these poor people; modern heroes, really. The track, "Last Rendez-Vouz" is part of the history of NASA now, when Ronald Reagan said, "Ron, we'll never forget your saxophone." It is very special to me, but it is beyond just me now. 🗨

*Electronica 2: The Heart Of Noise* is out May 6 on Sony Music International



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

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# Anthems Of The Sons

Five years in the making, THE NATIONAL's mammoth all-star tribute to THE GRATEFUL DEAD is finally complete. *Uncut* talks to the many and varied artists — among them MY MORNING JACKET, LEE RANALDO, YO LA TENGO, GRIZZLY BEAR and Dead outrider BRUCE HORNSBY — about the enduring power of Garcia and co's music, and the challenges of turning on a new generation. "This could be a bridge," says Aaron Dessner. "All this is about the future of this music."

Story: Rob Mitchem Photograph: C Flanigan



**O**NCE UPON A time there were two bands called The Warlocks. On the West Coast, one set of Warlocks changed their name and became the standard-bearers of the psychedelic scene. On the opposite side of the country, the other Warlocks changed their name, sang of even harder drugs, and pushed the limits of experimental rock. One Warlocks became the Grateful Dead, creating and influencing a jamband scene that survived stubbornly on the fringes of mainstream rock. The other became The Velvet Underground, founding fathers of punk, alternative, and indie rock.

For 50 years, these two lineages remained almost entirely separate, two rock tribes that rarely cross-pollinated. But this spring, a massive new charity tribute album curated by members of The National promises to reconcile these Warlock descendants, officially welcoming the Dead into the stable of indie-rock influences and, perhaps, setting the band's legacy for its second half-century. *Day Of The Dead*, in the works for almost five years,

comprises more than five hours of covers from a roster that reads like a Coachella poster. Members of indie forefathers Sonic Youth, Wilco and Pavement, modern-day headliners My Morning Jacket, Mumford & Sons, and The War On Drugs, and left-field contributors such as composer Terry Riley, African legends Orchestra Baobab, and ambient experimentalist Tim Hecker appear, all paying tribute to a band that was once toxic territory for the indie-inclined.

In its size and scope, the compilation also cracks open the stereotype that the Dead and their post-Jerry Garcia spinoffs were little more than country-rock noodlers, a travelling museum of tied-dyed '60s nostalgia. Lesser-known components of the Dead's sound – pastoral folk, avant-garde noise, prog complexity, jazz-level improvisation – come to the fore as artists interpret more obscure pieces of the Dead's long history. “We wanted to explore some corners of the Dead's catalogue that people don't know about,” says Aaron Dessner, guitarist for The National and organiser of the compilation. “We wanted to shine a light on the songwriting as much as we could, but also the experimental aspects of the Dead, and do that across their whole history, from early output to latter-day Dead, and the last great songs they wrote.”



“The Bridge Session” at TRI Studios, California, March 24, 2012, including from left, Aaron Dessner, Bob Weir, Bryan Devendorf, Scott Devendorf



The Grateful Dead in 1970: (c/wise from top left) Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Bill Kreutzmann, Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan, Mickey Hart and Jerry Garcia

→ **F**

OR THE NATIONAL, *Day Of The Dead* closes a personal full circle. The first time brothers Aaron and Bryce Dessner played music with their Cincinnati friends Scott and Bryan Devendorf, the four jammed on "Eyes Of The World", a jazzy deep cut and deep jam vehicle from 1973's *Wake Of The Flood*. Though the older Bryan Devendorf was the only one who

saw the Grateful Dead before Jerry Garcia's death, all four future members of The National collected and traded live tapes in high school.

"Where we come from, the Midwestern suburbs, it was the cooler, older kids who listened to the Dead and smoked weed," Bryan Devendorf remembers. "So I ended up buying the *Europe '72* cassette at the mall to play in my car. I wanted to be cool, and thought maybe that would help."

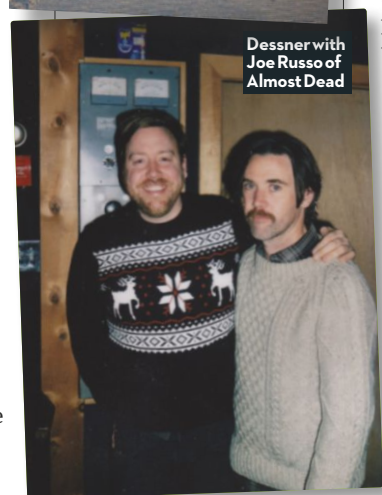
But like many kids in the '90s, the Dessners and Devendorfs gravitated towards the more aggressive alternative and punk rock sounds that seemed diametrically opposed to the laid-back hippy vibes of the Dead. When The National, with vocalist Matt Berninger, broke out with 2005's *Alligator*, few listeners could have perceived any lingering Dead influence in the band's moody, atmospheric sound.

In 2009, the Dessners curated *Dark Was The Night*, a double-disc charity compilation for the Red Hot Organisation, which raises funds for AIDS research and awareness. Stocked with original tracks and covers from favourites such as Arcade Fire, Sufjan Stevens, Bon Iver and Spoon, the album doubled as a definitive State Of Indie Rock address, a comprehensive index of the sounds that dominated early 21st-century indie.

Approached by Red Hot for a follow-up, the Dessners hatched a more subversive plan, organising the next comp round the Grateful Dead catalogue. After the Dead's camp gave them their blessing, and guitarist Bob Weir invited the group out for a 2012 live webcast session at his TRI Studios, The National members set out to find contributors.

The Dessners knew they could rely on a core group of Dead-sympathetic friends to participate – including members of Grizzly Bear, Bon Iver, The Walkmen and Real Estate. But as word slipped out about the comp and its subject matter, more and more secret Deadheads came

**"IT WAS COOLER, OLDER KIDS WHO LISTENED TO THE DEAD AND SMOKED WEED"**  
BRYAN DEVENDORF



Dessner with Joe Russo of Almost Dead

out of the woodwork. Some, such as LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy, said no, Dessner said. But more said yes.

"The most fun thing about the process was discovering the degree to which all these people I revered, from all these different corners of music world, have appreciation for the Dead," Dessner says. "It wasn't hard to find bands... most people we approached were super into it, and it wasn't like there had to be an education about who the Dead were."

As the list grew longer, it stretched beyond the boundaries of indie rock. Soul revivalist Charles Bradley agreed to remake "Cumberland Blues", the band's hyperactive bluegrass original, with Daptone stylists The Menahan Street Band. Jazz pianist Vijay Iyer claimed "King Solomon's Marbles", a baroque instrumental from their cosmic-prog era *Blues From Allah* album. Even Canadian hardcore act Fucked Up volunteered to do "Cream Puff War", an early Dead original from when they sounded like a garage-rock band worthy of *Nuggets*.

"We were blown away that they would want to be involved," Dessner says of Fucked Up. "But that's sort of the surprising nature of the Dead; some people write them off as uncool or hippy shit, but I think people that actually spent time with it, realise there's this early Merry Prankster rebellious Dead that's of a different quality to their later mega-Dead era."

**S**INCE 2009, THE Brooklyn Bowl has sat in the middle of the Williamsburg neighbourhood of Brooklyn, the early-century capital of American indie rock. This bowling alley/rock club hybrid is owned by Peter Shapiro, promoter behind the enormous Fare Thee Well concerts thrown by the surviving members of the Dead in San Francisco and Chicago last summer. It's also a descendent of Wetlands Preserve, the '90s NYC epicentre of the jam band scene that nurtured the post-Dead generation of touring stalwarts Blues Traveler, Spin Doctors and Phish.

Today, the Brooklyn Bowl symbolises the blurrier lines between indie and jam scenes, equally likely to book Dinosaur Jr and Guster. Several Dead cover bands have also made the venue their home, from drummer Joe Russo's Almost Dead, which focuses on the band's jam-heavy, "primal" early days, to occasional indie-rock all-star Dead tributes hosted by Alex Bleeker & The Freaks, a side project of Real Estate's bassist.

Brooklyn Bowl is the physical symbol of an indie-jam

merger that has been ongoing for the past 15 years, as a generation of musicians too young to have seen Jerry Garcia in the flesh increasingly find fertile territory in the Dead. In his new book, *Heads*, a history of psychedelic culture, writer Jesse Jarnow retraces the Dead's hip revival to a July 2004 issue of the underground 'zine *Arthur*, which compared a 1974 performance of "Dark Star" to "In A Silent Way as interpreted by Sonic Youth". In 2009, art-noise band Animal Collective – whose psychedelic day-glo aesthetic and debuting-songs-live practices were already very Deadish – became the first artist to legally clear a Grateful Dead sample, looping a line of Phil Lesh vocals from "Unbroken Chain" for "What Would I Want? Sky?"

As traditional barriers fell away, more and more young musicians who rejected the Dead at a younger age started to find inspiration in their vast repertoire.

"Punk 'orthodoxy' kind of pushed prog, jam and fusion music out of the picture, but it didn't yield a better crop of new music, necessarily. It's more like everybody just decides they should sound vaguely like Joy Division," says Ruban Nielson of Unknown Mortal Orchestra. "It's more fun to take threads from that punk canon and splice it with the bands that were never supposed to cross pollinate with them."

The rise of festivals such as Bonnaroo and Mountain Jam, which threw Dead alumni and indie up-and-comers together to lure maximum crowds to remote fields, further helped break down resistance, as bands such as My Morning Jacket, Wilco and the Flaming Lips found success in these newly-formed DMZs between the two worlds.

"In some ways, there has been a beautiful progression with real music listeners – it seems that more and more people just want to enjoy music instead of labelling it and judging it by preconceived notions," said Jim James of My Morning Jacket, who covers "Candyman" on *Day Of The Dead*. "We definitely want to follow in the footsteps of the Dead in trying to blend all cultures and all worlds of people and music – because, at the end of the day, it's all the same – just different shades of the same thing and every



The National with Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan, second right. Below inset: Aaron and Bryce Dessner

shade is beautiful and we need them all. You can really hear that in the music of the Dead."

More recently, the Dead's iconic 'Stealie' logo has drifted into the T-shirt art and social media profiles of younger bands such as Woods, Ultimate Painting and Chris Forsyth, a not-so-secret code signaling their psychedelic leanings. Fuelled by easy access to thousands of Dead shows through the Internet Archive and streaming services, musicians are finding flavours of the Dead that their iconic pop culture reputation had long obscured.

"That is the saddest thing about them, that a superficialising media, especially classic rock, defined them from one limited period out of 30 years," says Dennis McNally, the band's official historian and publicist. "Particularly as to their music, they covered all kinds of ground, and it isn't all just early-'70s country-rock."

**F**OR DAY OF THE DEAD, the Dessners wanted at least some of the tracks to present a cohesive sound that befitted the Grateful Dead's communal voice. So a "house band" formed, including the Dessners, Devendorf, Walter Martin of The Walkmen, Takka Takka's Conrad Doucette, and Sam Cohen and Josh Kaufman of the Yellowbirds, to arrange and record roughly half of the tracks. ➔

## HOW I LEARNED TO LOVE THE DEAD

Day Of The Dead's indie luminaries reveal all...

### RUBAN NIELSON, UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA



"I wasn't that familiar with the Dead as I'm from NZ and wasn't

exposed to that whole jam culture. I was into punk and hip hop so they weren't a natural progression when I was a kid. I just remember them having cool T-shirts and a cool name. Since the Dead were known more for the culture of their live shows, it isn't appreciated down there as much. As my band became more interested in improvisation the Dead became more relevant to us."

### IRA KAPLAN, YO LA TENGO



"The Dead loomed large in the town I grew up in, it felt like a rite

of passage. The thing that sticks out most was in Jersey City [June '74] I saw them string together songs for maybe an hour. It started with 'Sugar Magnolia', 'He's Gone', and 'Truckin', 'GDTRFB', then an hour later, they finished '...Magnolia', with the Sunshine Daydream part. I made my own cassette of that show, and I'd walk down the street humming the transitions from 'He's Gone' into 'Truckin' – it was so magical to me."

### JIM JAMES, MY MORNING JACKET

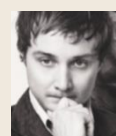


"I was so sick of hearing about them and their culture! I was

like, how many bands are there in the world and all folks can talk about is the Grateful Dead?!?! I still feel that way – but I do realise how special they are and that they are worth loving and talking about. I love to think about how similar the Dead and The Velvet Underground are. If you judge by image alone, then they seem so different, but just close your eyes and listen to 'Oh Sweet Nuthin' or 'One

More Saturday Night' and you can hear the similarities."

### DANIEL ROSSEN, GRIZZLY BEAR & DEPARTMENT OF EAGLES



"When I was growing up, it was sort of inconceivable to appreciate

the Grateful Dead's music outside of the jam band culture that surrounded them. I've enjoyed the Grateful Dead since my early twenties, but I've never become a completist. I've never delved into their concert tapes and so on, but I will say that I love the huge variation in their

catalogue over the years. There's a freedom and openness in their music that is hard to deny. And of course I love Jerry Garcia. There's so much heart in his playing."

### ANGEL OLSEN



"I had a boyfriend make me a mix of the Grateful

Dead in high school, and couldn't get into it. Then, later down the line, I watched TV series *Freaks And Geeks* over and over. It became a default comfort show. There are Dead references throughout, and it opened the door, really."

➤ During intermittent sessions in Woodstock, New York and Justin Vernon's Eau Claire, Wisconsin studio, the band jammed with visitors such as Will Oldham, Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan, and Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo, recording some songs live and shipping backing tracks on others to guests such as Jim James and Lucinda Williams for the addition of lead vocals.

With a regular core, the group could get closer to capturing the tricky balance of sloppiness, spontaneity, and serendipity that the Dead perfected. The musicians went beyond studio versions to study live versions across eras, from their raw days at the Fillmore West to the slicker, slower stadium years.

"We encouraged ourselves not to tune," Dessner laughs. "Mistakes were OK, we didn't have to be perfect about it. I guess some of it is really tight and crisp and spot on, but it doesn't feel overly tight, because that wasn't their thing, either."

The bulk of the covers originate in the band's prolific early-'70s material: nearly the entirety of *American Beauty* and *Workingman's Dead* appear, as well as a healthy chunk of the *Europe '72* live record. The collection is also overwhelmingly concentrated on Jerry Garcia/Robert Hunter songs, with only a handful of Bob Weir or Phil Lesh originals (Weir himself appears on two live "encore bonus" tracks, playing "St Stephen" with Wilco and "I Know You Rider" with The National). But still, over 59 tracks, nearly every dimension of the Dead finds representation. Into the jams? Two versions of their improvisational flagship "Dark Star" appear, one comprising a three-track suite that blends live and studio performances in the style of John Oswald's *Grayfolded*, the other a Krautrock reimagining by the Flaming Lips. Ranaldo's bowed



Bonnie 'Prince' Billy and Josh Kaufman



Dreamland Studios, upstate New York

guitar leads an exploratory take on Weir's "Playing In The Band" (sung by TV On The Radio's Tunde Adebimpe), while Kaplan's "Wharf Rat" takes its sweet time over a bed of glacial drones.

More into the weird stuff? Besides deconstructed versions of "Truckin'" from Minneapolis noise act Marijuana Deathsquads and "Estimated Prophet" by Terry Riley and his son, Gyan, there's an appropriately bonkers version of the Dead's "Drums > Space" live staple by Brooklyn's Man Forever and Oneida. "Sugar Magnolia" and "Casey Jones" are nowhere to be found, but mega-deep cuts "What's Become Of The Baby?" and "Rosemary" each appear in dramatically reworked form.

Songs such as Garcia's near-forgotten "If I Have The World To Give" and the late-'80's cut "Standing On The Moon", are rescued from their poorly aged production with stripped down versions by Will Oldham and Phosphorescent's Matthew Houck, respectively. Others are given a modern sheen; electro-pop versions of "Uncle John's Band", "Stella Blue" and "Althea" might be considered heresy by many Deadheads, but demonstrate how the band's melodies succeed in radically different contexts.



Deadheads: Bob Weir with the Devendorfs, Aaron Dessner and other collaborators, TRI Studios, March 24, 2012

# Harpichords! Weird Funk! Painkillers!

The stories behind the Grateful Dead covers...

## Bruce Hornsby Black Muddy River (w/Justin Vernon's DeYarmond Edison)

"Justin wanted to record 'Black Muddy River'; he knew my version from our live 2001 record *Here Come The Noisemakers*. I love it, and there are so many fantastic GD songs. Through the years we've covered 10 to 15 of them, here and there. "[*This version*] was a bit slower and moodier - I played two keyboards, electric and acoustic piano, one hand on each, playing them together to create a different feeling."

## Ira Kaplan Wharf Rat

"I just love the song. I settled on a slow tempo, and I thought I'd sing an octave lower than Jerry Garcia. I'd say, if anything, I felt pressure not to [*imitate Garcia*], 'cos what he does is so unique that if you end up imitating it, it's just going to sound like him, only not as good."

## Ruban Nielson, Unknown Mortal Orchestra Shakedown Street

"I thought the song was cool and tried to think about what it is I could bring to the comp. It was already like a weird funk song so I wondered if I could try to make it even weirder and funkier."

## Angel Olsen Attics Of My Life

"Something about the song reminded me of getting older and looking back at the pals that stuck around through hard times. Just gives

me that feeling. I thought it was sort of a love song about friendship. It stood out to me."

## Jim James Candyman

"I wasn't into the Dead, but someone convinced me to buy *American Beauty*. We stayed at Manhattan Beach and I lay on the lifeguard shack for hours staring at the stars and listening to 'Candyman' on repeat. It was so beautiful. There is a sweetness to the way it all happened in that song that just brings me to tears... it just feels so at home in the universe like it's a tree or a grain of sand. So natural."

## Alex Bleeker, Real Estate Here Comes Sunshine

"I was trying to think of Dead tunes with lead guitar melodies that would resonate with Real Estate's writing style. My initial thought was 'Althea' and later 'China Cat', but Malkmus had already claimed it. 'Here Comes Sunshine' was lower on my list, but I could tell the guys in The National were true heads by their insistence on us tackling this relatively 'deep' cut."

## Courtney Barnett New Speedway Boogie

"I always reminisce about old friends when I hear that song. Any time I climb a mountain, I've got that goddamn song in my head. "When we cut it for this session, I wanted to de-Deadify it a bit. I didn't want to just re-do another version. We made it a lot slower, and jumped between major and minor - I was also on painkillers which could account for the drag. The Dead do the best harms, so I made sure to get a couple of luscious harms in there."

## Lee Ranaldo Mountains Of The Moon

"I'd been listening obsessively to 'Mountains Of The Moon', which has great harpichord by Tom Constanten on it. When The National invited me to become involved, there was no doubt in my mind what song I wanted to sing with them! We recorded in this amazing studio in upstate NY called Dreamland - which is in an old church. Aaron Dessner played what's known as a 'Nashville (or High-Strung)' guitar on that song - kind of like a 6-string acoustic set up with the high strings off a 12-string guitar - it adds a really beautiful chime-y sound when layered with regular guitars."



Courtney Barnett: "The Dead do the best harms..."



"All of this music is sort of sacred in a way, there are times when you feel some apprehension or nervousness about doing it justice," Dessner says. "But there's also quite a bit of stuff more radical in interpretation, more modern and filtered through a different perspective. A lot of their songs are kind of open to interpretation, an inviting canvas to explore."

**A**T FIVE AND A half hours – the length of a marathon late-'60s Dead show at the Fillmore – actually putting out *Day Of The Dead* presented a dilemma. After considering non-traditional release methods such as an App or mini-albums, the Dessners broke the collection into three volumes, "Thunder", "Lightning" and "Sunshine". Taken all together, the sequencing roughly follows the contours of a typical Dead show, with folkier material up front giving way to spacier excursions. The material will also get a one-off live celebration, at this summer's Eau Claire Festival in Wisconsin, where many of the participants will already be gathered for their own sets, from younger acts such as Lucius and Unknown Mortal Orchestra to one semi-official member of the Dead, Bruce Hornsby. He is the lone carryover from the last major tribute to the Dead, 1991's *Dedicated*, which featured mostly mainstream rock peers of the band such as Elvis Costello and Los Lobos remaking their most radio-friendly material. On *Day Of The Dead*, Hornsby bridges the generational gap on a hazy sunset version of "Black Muddy River" performed with Justin Vernon's reunited first band, DeYarmond Edison.

For Hornsby, who played over 100 shows with the Dead in the late '80s/early '90s, indie rock is just the latest frontier for the Dead's influence, which he has already watched seep into Americana and jazz scenes. "Clearly the Dead music, the reach of it is broadening, it's widening, more young artists are discovering it," Hornsby says. "And really, it's easy to see why... they have fully 50 great songs to me, and another 100-150 very good ones. I'm not surprised it's catching on."

"The Dead were totally intellectually curious on a musical level, that's what interesting to me," Hornsby continued. "They are so broad and so deep and their influences ranged far afield from Reverend Gary Davis, to Milton Babbitt and electronic classical music. People just have no idea of the scope of it unless they really check it out."

Certain performances suggest the Dead had already crept into the DNA of indie rock without anyone noticing. Kurt Vile And The Violators' extra-faithful "Box Of Rain" and The War On Drugs' '80s-period-appropriate take on "Touch Of Grey" both could fit right into the bands' recent albums with ease. Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks' giddy,

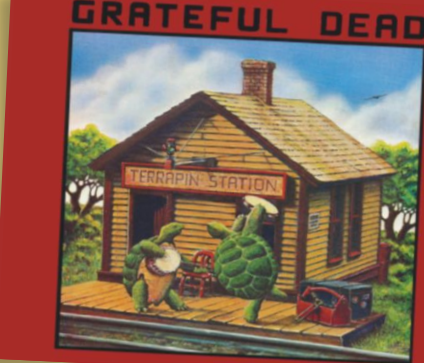
## SUITE SOUNDS

# Terrapin Station Inspiration flows...

**F**OR CASUAL FANS of the Dead, "Terrapin Station" might not make the A-list of iconic songs for the band. But the multi-part song suite, originally released as the entire Side B of the 1977 LP of the same name, holds a special place in Dead lore, combining great Robert Hunter lyrics and a classic Garcia vocal with an electrifying jam and cartwheeling composition.

The Dead themselves heavily revised "Terrapin", quibbling with the grandiloquent post-production of the studio version and chopping off the back half of the suite for all but one live performance. But for *Day Of The Dead*, the house band and Grizzly Bear's Daniel Rossen and Christopher Bear went for a full-blown restoration. "We thought it'd be great to be completist," Aaron Dessner says. "We treated it like classical music, as some of the passages are so great."

The cover, like the broader comp, is a balance between reverent recreation and dramatic reinterpretation. The band played the first half of the song almost "note for note" with the studio version, Dessner reveals, including much of the parts for strings and horns added to the original by arranger Paul Buckmaster ("Space Oddity", "Without You", "Moonlight Mile"). The biggest departure from the live abridged version comes in the "inspiration, move

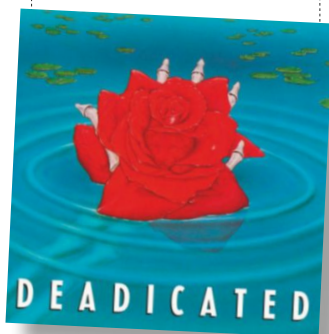


me brightly" section, which Rossen and Bear inverted from its usual role as a euphoric crowd favourite to haunting, spare interlude. "Terrapin" is so overstuffed with ideas, there's a lot to dig into, and I found myself obsessing over details, especially with the middle section," Rossen said. "I wanted that to feel more frightening than the original, to focus more on the 'mysteries dark and vast' mentioned in the lyric."

For the drum-heavy instrumental "Terrapin Flyer" stretch, they brought in modern ensemble So Percussion for a makeover, even sneaking in a tease of another Dead song that the tribute didn't get to. "The studio instrumental, sounds like a Carnival cruise," Dessner jokes. "We wanted it to be darker, to take it into 'Drums > Space', use some of the orchestral lines from the original."

But for the final refrain, they chose to reproduce one of the controversial decisions on the studio version of "Terrapin Station". On the original, Fleetwood Mac producer Keith Olsen overdubbed the Mormon Tabernacle Choir over the song's last minutes, a decision that angered members of the band. But the Dessners decided it suited the song's epic scope, and recorded the Brooklyn Youth Choir as one of the final touches of the comp. "That was the moment where we felt we could be finished with it, we'd done something so insane," Dessner says.

**"PEOPLE JUST HAVE NO IDEA OF THE SCOPE OF THE DEAD"**  
BRUCE HORNSBY



sloppy "China Cat Sunflower"/"I Know You Rider" equally evokes the Dead's brash early period and the ramshackle sound of indie legends Pavement – two bands that rarely share the same sentence. "Over the years, the Dead were often put down by punk rockers, indie rockers and later generations for being slack and for the long noodly jams at the shows," says Lee Ranaldo. "But the thing that is often overlooked is what amazing songs they wrote – and how many. Hearing all these 'youngsters' covering their music brought home how amazing their songbook was."

Whether *Day Of The Dead* will further crack open that window on the band remains to be seen. But in the aftermath of the Dead's 50th anniversary celebrations, with yet another semi-reunion on the road (Dead & Company, with John Mayer in the Jerry role), and a cultural footprint that continues to resist erosion, the compilation comes at a propitious time to help establish the next chapter of the Grateful Dead's legacy and following. "I think this could be a bridge in a way, to hear this stuff interpreted by artists and people that have spent a lot of time with the Dead's music and hear it done with such love and care," Dessner says. "All this is about the future of this music." 🍷

*Day Of The Dead* will be released by 4AD in May. Visit [www.dayofthedeat.com](http://www.dayofthedeat.com) for pre-order details

# I Know There's An Answer...

At home in Beverly Hills, BRIAN WILSON is preparing for a celebratory year of activity: a 50th anniversary boxset of *Pet Sounds*, an autobiography and what may be his final tour of Europe. All seems calm. “Brian right now is really happy,” confirm Blondie Chaplin, Al Jardine and more. But what is rock’s most storied genius really like? *Uncut* enters Brian Wilson’s study to find out...

Story: Bud Scoppa | Photo: George Jerman

**T**HE WILSON RESIDENCE, home to Brian, wife Melinda, their five adopted kids and several dogs, sits on a hillside descending from Mulholland Drive. The San Fernando Valley stretches out toward the mountain-ringed eastern horizon, and the house is large enough to be described as a mansion,

understated in its immensity. A Google Maps aerial view shows the requisite aquamarine pool nestled in a verdant backyard. Like its neighbours in this gated community boasting a Beverly Hills 90210 designation, the Wilson family home is architecturally a homage to the region’s Spanish heritage, with its white stucco exterior, red-tiled roof and balconies ringing the second storey palms and pot plants are arranged around the grounds. A basketball goal has been erected on the left side of the property; a maid eases an SUV up the drive to the garage doors on the right.

A little girl bursts through the front door as a poodle guards the entryway, barking protectively at the sight of a visitor before retreating into a sun-dappled interior. The door stays open, revealing a vaulted central space. A near-life-sized giraffe sculpture looms over a chessboard in the living room, opposite a wide staircase. A landing at the top opens to the study. It’s set up like a musical workspace, dominated by a grand piano, drumkit and keyboard. A cushion-y couch is set against the back wall and sunk deep into it is Brian Wilson, 73, dressed in patterned shirt and relaxed-fit trousers. ●



Petfriends: "Good, emotional music is never embarrassing."  
Brian Wilson at the San Diego Zoo, 1966



Brian at his piano, 2015: "I like to write with my own self"



➔ **B**

RIAN BECKONS ME To sit to his left – his good ear side – in an upholstered chair. “I’ve got lots of questions,” I begin, reeling off the topics: the impending *Pet Sounds* 50th anniversary boxset and tour, his upcoming book, *I Am Brian Wilson*, the excellent 2015 biopic *Love & Mercy*, his daily routine and his musical legacy.

**I tell him *Uncut* recently named *Pet Sounds* the No 1 album of all time in a critics’ poll. “Have we started the interview yet?” he asks.**

**We have indeed. How does it feel to be the Beethoven of your time?** “It feels proud,” he rapidly replies. “I am very proud of myself. Yeah.”

**Are you still interested in making new music?** “I might make an album later on this year.”

**What’s the concept?** “A tribute album to the great rock’n’roll artists like Chuck Berry, Bill Haley, Little Richard, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones...”

**That sounds intriguing. Who will you work with on the project?** “I haven’t figured that out yet.”

**Several of your recent records, including last year’s enjoyable *No Pier Pressure*, have been produced by Joe Thomas. “Right. Joe and I work together a lot.”**

**What is it about Joe that you like?** “His chords. I like the way he plays chords on the piano.”

“HE’S MONOSYLLABIC WITH his responses – there’s no dialogue, that’s for sure”, says Wondermints co-founder/guitarist Nick Walusko, who’s been playing with Brian onstage and in the studio since 1999. “That’s just been his style since the beginning. I’ve known him since ‘95, before we started playing with him, and he’s always been the same, with these cool one-liners and zingers. But I think he’s been like that since he was a kid. He was quick and witty, but he’d never go into detailed explanations of things; he’ll let you decide what you think it is. Sometimes he does have these moments where he’s feels like talking about stuff and he’s engaging, but if you come to him, that’s very rare, especially if you’re the ‘official interviewer’ – he knows he’s wearing this hat now.”

**Let’s talk about the upcoming tour, Brian. You’ve said this will be your final tour of the UK and Europe. Why did you make that decision?**

“I don’t know. I think that should be enough for us, you know?”

**Other than the nine scheduled dates in England, are there any other one-off shows in the works?**

“We don’t know. We’re thinkin’ about it.”

Brian says he liked *Love & Mercy* and thinks Paul Dano, who’d spent a week with him in prepping for the role, “approximated my personality very well”. He “hung out” with John Cusack, who also did a good job, although “he didn’t look like me as much as Paul Dano”.

**What people liked the most about *Love & Mercy* were the scenes of the *Pet Sounds* sessions at Western Studios in that cramped tracking room. Did filmmaker Bill Pohlad accurately capture the vibe? What was it like being jammed in there with all those musicians during the actual sessions in early 1966?**

“I gave them manuscript paper and they read the manuscript and they played their instruments.”

**When you walked into Western on that first day of recording, did you know you had something really extraordinary?**

“Yeah, I knew when we were doing *Pet Sounds*, I knew we had something very special going.”

**What was that first session like? Everyone must have been astounded.**

“Right. Well, we first did ‘God Only Knows’”. [According to the documentation, the song was cut on March 9-10, 1966, near the end of tracking.]

**And how did they react to that?**

“They reacted good. They liked it a lot.”

**Were there any foreshadowings on any of the previous records of what you were about to do on *Pet Sounds*?**

“No.”

**So this sound you’d cooked up was completely new?**

“Right.”



Boys keep singing: Paul Dano (centre) as Brian Wilson in 2014’s *Love & Mercy*

**B**RIAN IS UNEQUIVOCAL on this point; he may well also be wrong. *Today!* and *Summer Days (And Summer Nights!!)*, the studio LPs that immediately preceded his masterpiece, released four months apart in 1965, feed directly into *Pet Sounds*. If *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver* and *Sgt Pepper* represent The Beatles' exponential leap, then the trilogy culminating in *Pet Sounds* does the same for The Beach Boys. They document Brian's transition from ebullience to spirituality, from the callow to the ornate, intimated in signature Wilsonian fashion in *Today's* "When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)".

"Do You Wanna Dance" and "Amusement Parks USA" open the two LPs, but they give way to "Please Let Me Wonder" and "Let Him Run Wild". For that matter, from the orchestrated arrangement to the musicians who played on it, "The Little Girl I Once Knew" (the commercially middling bridge single between *Summer Days* and *Pet Sounds*) would've fitted far more seamlessly on the latter album than "Sloop John B", the lone *Pet Sounds* track recorded in 1965, prior to the album sessions, and inserted, according to Al Jardine, its initiator, because Capitol didn't hear any hits.

Indeed, distinct hints of existential introspection are embedded the early surf-and-cars LPs in songs like "In My Room", "Surfer Girl" and "Warmth Of The Sun", and are voiced eloquently following Wilson's 1966 meltdown, from the 1971 stunner "Til I Die", to the Landy-years 1988 declaration "Love And Mercy", in which the "you" he's addressing is very likely himself.

**Why did you choose to set aside "Good Vibrations", rather than putting it on *Pet Sounds*?**

"Ah, we hadn't recorded it yet. We recorded *Pet Sounds* in early '66; recorded 'Good Vibrations' in November of '66," he recalls with seeming certainty, though the single was released that October.

"I thought it was ready prior to the release of *Pet Sounds*," says Al Jardine, who'll be part of Wilson's band for the forthcoming tour. "But Brian determined, for whatever reason, that it was not gonna be on *Pet Sounds*. As much as we argued for it, we couldn't seem to change his mind. There were so many iterations that it probably wasn't finished in his mind, and unfortunately for us, that song would've been the cornerstone of *Pet Sounds*, and I'd just assumed it would be on there. I was militant about it, as I'm sure Mike was, and the others.

"But it was his call, and he just didn't feel it was ready. It would've catapulted that album into the stratosphere. We would've had a No 1 song right off the damn bat, not to mention that it fit the psychological profile

of the psychedelic era – so many reasons that it's painful to discuss it. And we really had our work cut out for us after *Pet Sounds* to elevate our musical status; we had to deconstruct ourselves and start all over again. Brian wasn't emotionally ready for it, and I can't criticise him for that. His psychology was changing; he was obviously very sensitive to the lukewarm reception that the project got from Capitol. That would've spurred me on to get that mother on there – 'Look what we can do.' And it really fit the milieu. But that's just me."

**Was the album Brian made any different from the one he heard in his head when he was dreaming it up?**

"*Pet Sounds*? No, it was about the same." How did he manage to get it so perfectly out of his head and onto tape?

"Well, I was pretty young, so I had it really pretty good."

**What was it about being 23 years old that made it easier for him to create?**

"Well, youth is an awesome thing, you know?"

**How does he feel now?**

"Not quite as good as I did," he says with a quick laugh.

Here's Brian quoted in a Capitol press release from the time of *Pet Sounds*: "This art form... can draw out so much emotion and channel it into notes of music in cadence. Good emotional music is never embarrassing... the stimulation I get from moulding it is like nothing else on earth. I approach my music-making as something pure from the spirit, to which I can add dynamics and marketable reality... I find it possible to spill beautiful melodies in moments of great despair... a lot of the songs are the result of emotional experiences, sadness and pain... or joy, exultation in nature and sunshine. I go to the piano and play 'feels'. 'Feels' are specific rhythm patterns, fragments or ideas. Once they're out of my head and into the open air, I can see them and touch them firmly. Then the song starts to blossom and become a real thing."

Eloquent descriptions of his music and creative process were commonplace until his meltdown. It's also believed that he was far less forthcoming after a 1967 story in *Cheetah* magazine by Jules Siegel recounting the aborted *Smile* project, which Brian felt was a betrayal of trust. In any case, he's rarely opened up since the late '60s.

Pointing at the piano, I ask Brian if this is where he writes songs. "Yeah," he responds. Could he come up with a song right now about what it's like to be at the 50th anniversary of *Pet Sounds*? "I don't know," he answers with a nervous laugh, making no move to get up from the couch.

I feel like I'm playing ping-pong with a guy who manages to return every ball with a tricky spin. How much of himself does he reveal in his stubborn unwillingness to reveal himself? Is Brian putting me on? Now and then over the years, Brian has thrown off his protective shell and discussed his travails with startling glibness and lucidity, notably in a 1991 interview on a Cleveland



Brian Wilson (centre) surrounded by his band during the *Smile* Tour, Royal Festival Hall, February 20, 2004

**"We had our work cut out for us after *Pet Sounds* to elevate our musical status"**

AL JARDINE



Brian Wilson (left) with Mike Love during the recording of *Pet Sounds*

## IN THE BAND

# PLAYING IN THE NEW CREW

**"NEVER FORGET that this is Brian Wilson, and I'm among 10 guys who are having him tell us how the song's gonna go,"** guitarist Nick Walusko says of making music with the master. "We're sorta like The Wrecking Crew in that way – we don't know what to expect. So he'll play us a song and start handing out parts, and the nice thing about Brian's stuff, on all the solo albums is, most of the time we do it old-school – live drums, guitars, bass and keyboards, with very few overdubs. That's how he cuts it and, for the most part, those are the takes you hear on the records, which is cool. Darian [Sahanaja, *Wondermints* keyboardist and co-founder] and I don't ever get jaded; we pinch ourselves to have this gig. After we finished *Smile*, I said to Darian, 'Do you realise? We knew *Smile* – we didn't read it off a page, we just knew the whole thing.' I'm not being self-congratulatory, but it's so weird that anyone would even attempt doing that."

TV station and a 1994 *Entertainment Tonight* segment with daughter Carnie; both can be found on YouTube. An extraordinary 1995 interview, in which he rails at The Beach Boys and directly discusses the subjects of breakdowns, depressions, and how they've affected his creativity, can be found in our *Ultimate Music Guide: The Beach Boys*, also on sale now.

But for the past two decades, Brian has mostly lived his life in a comfort zone created by Melinda and represented by the laid-back affluence of the home environment she's created for him, its soundtrack the barking of dogs and the laughter of children. He lacks nothing, and there's no pressure. After a lifetime of being pressured and put down by one bully or another – his father, Mike Love and Eugene Landy – he's loved, cared for and accepted for who he is, a gentle, damaged genius.

**You've spent the last 20-plus years with very little external stress.** "Right."

**Do you feel any stress at this point from any direction?** "Yeah, I do. I feel a lot of stress."

**Where's it coming from?**

"I don't know. I just feel a lot of stress in my brain."

**Still, the absence of an adversary must have dramatically improved your quality of life.** "Well, it just invigorated me, made me want to write more songs."

But he hasn't written a song in a year-and-a-half; the last two he wrote and recorded, he says, are "Shelter" and "The Private Life Of Bill & Sue" from the 2012 Beach Boys reunion set, *That's Why God Made The Radio*.

**Have you had the urge to write recently?**

"Not really. No, I haven't been inspired to write."

**Do you foresee writing music again?**

"Um, I don't know yet. I don't know."

**Who do you enjoy writing with the most?**

"I like to write with my own self."

**Do you miss making music?** "I do, yeah."

**B**RIAN THE HOMEBOY is quite different from Brian at work, according to Walusko. "Every single time we've been in the studio with Brian, usually at Ocean Way, but sometimes at other

places, he's pretty quick," he says. "It's not as if he's done his homework, but he pretty much knows how he wants it to be, and he'll play it for you, and at first you're thinking, how is that all gonna work? I don't think he plans it; I think it comes to him as just a natural progression. And for him, writing songs in the studio is just another form of writing. I know it's a cliché to say he

## THE BATHROBE SESSION

**"D**URING THE '70S, our studio musicians – Eddie Carter, Daryl Dragon, Bobby Figueroa, Billy Hinsche, all our key guys that were on the road with us – they would come in, we'd bring the road gear in with us and start recording right in Brian's living room," Al Jardine recalls. "His bedroom was right upstairs, so he knew when we were there. Sometimes he wouldn't come down at all, and we'd have to go on our own musical tangent, and if he liked what he heard, he'd come down and add a couple of notes or an idea. One day, I was banging away on the piano on a cover of The Del Vikings' 'Come Go With Me', and the music truck was there, but nobody showed up. Brian's upstairs somewhere, and no Beach Boys around. So I just started mic'ing the piano, and pretty soon I had made a track, and Brian called down. He said, 'Hey, that sounds pretty good,' and I said, 'Hey, would you help me with the horn arrangement?' Because he was obviously pretty good with brass and strings and stuff like that. So he put on his bathrobe – a big old black, diamond-studded bathrobe – we jumped in the car and went down to Sunset Sound and made up an arrangement on the spot, and we got ourselves a hit record. It was the kind of spontaneous combustion that happened with Brian every once in a while. And it got him out of the house, which was nice."

uses the studio as an instrument, but even now, that hasn't really subsided – he knows what he wants, whether it's chords, percussion, vocal harmonies or other instruments that weave in and out.

"In terms of musical Darwinism, his success could be measured by his skill at adapting really quickly to an ever-changing environment, whether it's in the studio or pop music in general. Even early on, he was able to marry disparate genres. He took The Four Freshman and Chuck Berry and, as he says, BAM – he slaps his hands – 'I just put 'em together.' Brian did all that, and it's an iconic sound. I'm gonna tell you this from my heart: Brian took it to another level. He took a nice jet airplane and turned it into a spaceship."

Along with eating at the nearby deli, Brian's daily routine involves walking for exercise in a local park. He does it every day, except when it rains. When he's home, he watches the news on TV; he used to watch movies, but not anymore. He doesn't read books; he doesn't read at all. He listens to '50s and '60s music on satellite radio. Friends rarely come here to visit him. Now and then he sits at the piano and plays "Rhapsody In Blue", his favourite piano song by his favourite composer, George Gershwin. I later learn that if Brian weren't required to be here for the interview, he'd be at his 11-year-old son's basketball game.

**Doesn't it get boring spending your days this way?**

"Boring? Never boring. No."

**What do you think about when you're not working?**

"I think about my friends and my group, The Beach Boys." Brian says he hasn't read the shockingly revealing recent profile of Mike Love in *Rolling Stone*. When I say that Mike sounds like a very complicated guy, Brian responds, "Yeah, he's real... He's a great person."

**What's your favourite memory of Mike?**

"Working with him on lyrics. Writing songs with him."

**What was it like working with Mike again on The Beach Boys reunion tour in 2012?**

"It was great to watch him perform. I would sit at my piano and I'd watch him talk, you know. I really got off on his talking ability."

**The tour didn't end well. What happened?**

"The Beach Boys anniversary tour? It did not end... No." Here again, Jardine remembers it differently. "You'll have to ask Mike," Al answers ruefully, when asked how the reunion ended. "I don't know. He just decided he wanted to call it quits, and that's his prerogative. I would've loved for it to continue. We were just getting rolling." Instead, Love repossessed The Beach Boys brand, for which he holds the exclusive licence, and resumed touring under that nameplate.

**Brian was bitter after he was forced to pay Mike an estimated \$2 million-plus in back royalties. Is he still mad about that?**

"No. We haven't talked for about three or four years."

**Does he expect to ever talk to Mike again?**

"I don't know. I have no idea... Hold on, I'll be right back."

Brian lifts himself off the couch with surprising suddenness – knocking my portable digital recorder to the floor – and hurries out of the room. Has he ended the interview? But he's back in a couple of minutes, explaining he had to go to the bathroom.

**Did you know that Mike has an autobiography coming out in October as well as yours?**

"No, I didn't know that."

**Isn't that a weird coincidence?**

"I don't know."

**Do you think that Mike still feels competitive with you?**

"No, I don't think he does. Nah. No."

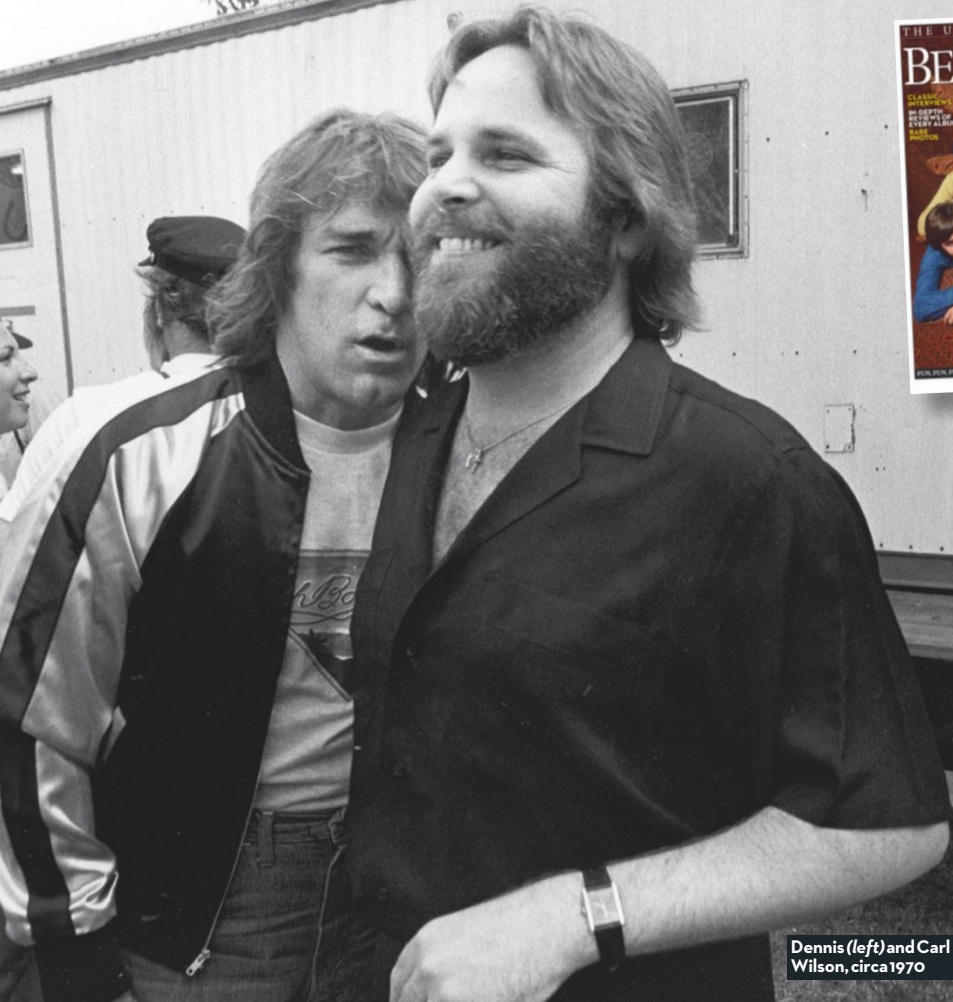
Stacks of gold and platinum plaques lean against the walls of the study, taking up every bit of available floor

"Even early on, he was able to marry disparate genres"

NICK WALUSKO



The Beach Boys, 2012: (l-r) Bruce Johnston, Alan Jardine, Brian Wilson, Mike Love and David Marks



Dennis (left) and Carl Wilson, circa 1970



## SURF'S UP

UNCUT presents *The Ultimate Music Guide: The Beach Boys*, on sale now! It gives in-depth reviews of every album and the entire story of The Beach Boys, as well as Brian Wilson's solo career.

space. At the front of one of these stacks is an oil portrait of his late brother Carl.

**That's a great picture of Carl. You must miss your brothers terribly.**

"I miss them both, my brothers."

**When you think about Carl, what's the first memory that comes to you?**

"I loved his singing; I thought he was a great singer."

**What about Dennis?**

"Great singer."

**What did the three of you do for fun when you were kids?**

"We'd go to the ocean."

**Which beach did you go to?**

"Playa del Rey."

**Dennis was the only surfer in the family, but did you like to go in the water?**

"Yeah, it was a thrill."

**Do you ever go to the beach now?**

"I haven't been to the beach for 10 years."

**Do you ever miss going to the beach?**

"Yeah, but I'm chicken to go in the water now."

BLONDIE CHAPLIN, a South African native from Durban who became a member of The Beach Boys in 1973 along with Ricky Fataar, his bandmate in The Flame, rejoined Wilson in 2013 after Joe Thomas called and asked him to do "some slight, easy singing, 'cos Brian would like to hear your voice," Blondie explains. "And that's what got me into the whole game again. I did some gigs two years ago and some gigs last year, and then I was invited to join the 50th anniversary tour. It's nice to have these young guys in his band take a shine to me; I can tell them stories and give them some perspective.

"Everybody knows about the old days, about this and that, but what I like about Brian right now is that he's really happy. He's happy with the music that he did before, he's happy to be doing it now and he's more animated onstage. I just go, fuck, yeah, thank you very much. And that's no bullshit, because I have a long history with these guys,

"I might make an album later on this year"

BRIAN WILSON

and there's times you want to run away from it, but I look at him now and for the last three years, and he likes to perform, he likes his band and enjoys having everyone be part of it. That's what I'm seeing."

I ask Brian what he enjoys most of all about being on tour. "I like the concerts," he says. What does he do when he's not onstage? "I hang out in my hotel room." And watch TV? "Yeah." London is a great city; does he plan to see the sights? "I like Piccadilly Square. I've been to that a few times."

The old gang has been reassembled on this historic occasion – Al, Blondie and Billy Hinsche will also be on the *Pet Sounds* tour, extending Brian's comfort zone to concert stages around the world. Everyone who really knows him says that all he wants to do is make music, preferably in front of adoring audiences, and that's precisely what lies ahead, on this possibly final victory lap. "I'm fading," Brian tells me, 35 minutes into our scheduled 45-minute interview.

"OK. Bud, can you help me up?" he asks, extending both arms toward me. He's surprised me yet again. I stand up, brace myself, grasp his hands and pull him to his feet, whereupon he envelopes me in a gentle hug. When he releases me, I hand him a Sharpie, and he signs my *Pet Sounds* Sessions box.

"Have fun on tour," I say, heading for the stairs.

"OK, Bud," he says, with a quick laugh of apparent relief.

"Bye-bye."

With that, Brian Wilson heads back to the TV room to watch the news. ☉

*Brian Wilson's UK tour starts on May 15; find full tour dates at [www.brianwilson.com](http://www.brianwilson.com). *Pet Sounds 50th Anniversary Edition* is released on June 10 and Brian's autobiography – *I Am Brian Wilson* – is published by Coronet in October*

KEVIN MAZUR/MPJ/WIREIMAGE FOR MPL

## BEACH BOY TO BEATLE

### Friends: BRIAN & MACCA

"PAUL AND BRIAN really have a deep mutual respect – it's not just a Hollywood thing", says Walusko. "They know each other from way back, and Paul hangs out with him every chance he gets. His favourite song is 'God Only Knows', and he played it onstage with us, jumping up and down, saying, 'I finally got to sing "God Only Knows" with Brian!' There are fringe benefits, playing with Brian. Pete Townshend, Neil Young and other legendary artists are like acolytes – they get down on one knee for Brian. They're musical equals, but they feel like he got there before them and he hit huge highs with the music."



I want to hold your hand: Macca shows Brian some respect

# THE WAR ARTIST

From Kosovo to Washington DC, from Afghanistan to an old rifle range, beneath London's former tax office... The tale of PJ HARVEY's latest album is an odyssey that takes in conflict zones and art installations, with war photographers and poets along for the ride alongside her trusted corp of musicians. On the eve of *The Hope Six Demolition Project*'s release, *Uncut* pieces together its gripping genesis, with the help of a fearless artist's closest collaborators. "There is a great openness," says Seamus Murphy. "You have to be open to all kinds of weirdness when you go to these places."

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**Story:** Michael Bonner  
**Photo:** Seamus Murphy

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Artist in residence: PJ Harvey during the *Recording In Progress* sessions, open to the public, at Somerset House, London, January-February 2015



**I**N AUGUST 1, 2011, PJ Harvey visited Bogushevci/Bogoshevë, a village in the south west of Kosovo. She was in the company of Seamus Murphy, a seasoned war photographer who had been travelling to the region since the late '90s, and Eni, their local driver and interpreter.

While in Bogushevci, they met Zagorka, an elderly widow who had remained in the village while her neighbours fled to safety during the Kosovan war. "She was looking after the village," recalls Murphy. "She had the keys to people's houses. I think there were 15. We weren't there very long, probably only about half an hour, and as we wondered around she said we could go into the houses if we wanted. She wouldn't let us in the church; probably thought we were going to nick something. We went into one house, and there was stuff the people had left behind. Clothes, photographs."

MARIA MOCHNACZ



**A**LTHOUGH HER LATEST album, *Let England Shake*, had only been released five months earlier, it seems that Polly Jean Harvey was beginning to explore possible ideas for her next project. She and Murphy were discussing loose, collaborative plans – though how those might finally take shape was not immediately clear. At this point, perhaps, the journey was more important than the destination. Engagement was what Harvey had in mind. On *Let England Shake*, she coined a phrase for herself, "Official War Song Correspondent", to document cycles of violence spilling from the battlefields of the First World War to more recent military misfortunes in the Middle East. Now, her visit to Kosovo – and later trips to Afghanistan and Washington – allowed Harvey to observe life in the trenches, so to speak, for herself. "When I'm writing a song, I visualise the entire scene," says Harvey. "I can see the colours, I can tell the time of day, I can sense the mood, I can see the light changing, the shadows moving, everything in that picture. Gathering information from secondary sources felt too far removed for what I was trying to write about. I wanted to smell the air, feel the soil and meet the people of the countries I was fascinated with."

"It's that idea of going to the front line of the issue rather than picking it out of the newspapers," says Billy Bragg. "Bob Dylan wasn't beaten up during the Civil Rights in America, but he read about Medgar Evers and he wrote about it. Whereas Polly seems to be much more like a war artist in the fact that she's actually gone there to experience it and bring it back. It's like frontline reporting."

Harvey wrote continuously in her notebooks – "black, almost like a sketchpad", according to Murphy, "no lines, stapled, very rudimentary".

Later, her experiences in the abandoned villages of Kosovo, the bazaars of Afghanistan and among the stately monuments of Washington DC provided the foundations for an ambitious new project, encompassing public recording sessions, a poetry and photography book, a tour and a documentary. "Sometimes," says Harvey, "you inhabit other people's lives in order to try and write that song that needs singing."

For those involved in making it, however, *The Hope Six Demolition Project* album reflects Harvey's ongoing artistic response to the trauma of warfare. "If one were loosely to describe *Let England Shake* as a portrait of a historical journey from the present day backwards," says Flood, her long-time producer, "this is very much a portrait of now and in the future."

But what of Harvey – resolutely outside of her comfort zone – peering into bombed-out government buildings, driving past desert airfields and walking through the cloisters of ancient monasteries? What of these other lives Harvey encountered? What was her response to the people she met? "I think curiosity," says Murphy. "Earnest curiosity. A great openness. She wouldn't have started on this project without it. You have to be open to all kinds of weirdness when you go to these places."

# THE ROAD TO HOPE

A timeline of PJ Harvey's latest project

SEPTEMBER 24, 2007

*White Chalk* released

JULY 1-SEPTEMBER 13, 2008

Seamus Murphy's *A Darkness Visible: Afghanistan* exhibition at Asia House, London

MARCH 30, 2009

*A Woman A Man Walked By* released

FEBRUARY 14, 2011

*Let England Shake* released

JULY 31-AUGUST 2011

Kosovo trip

JANUARY 21, 2012

*Let England Shake* tour ends in Hobart, Australia

DECEMBER 2012

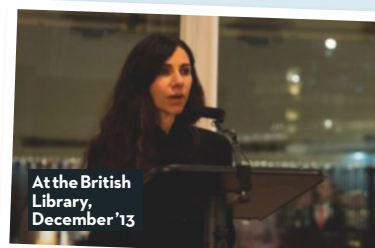
Afghanistan trip

AUGUST 3, 2013

"Shaker Aamer" released

DECEMBER 9, 2013

Awarded MBE



At the British Library, December '13

DECEMBER 13, 2013

Participates in event First World War Poetry at the British Library, London

JANUARY 2, 2014

Guest-edits Radio 4's *Today* programme

APRIL, 2014

Washington trip

SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

Honorary degree from Goldsmiths University



Recording *In Progress*: It was a really brave step," says John Parish. "People may see you fuck up in a major way"

**D**URING THE 1990s, Bristol's Portland Square held an unusual designation. One of its park benches was given its own postcode, providing a fixed address that enabled homeless people to register with a local doctor's surgery. The square has long been a focus for radical behaviour – the site of riots in 1980, activist groups and collectives once resided in its Georgian terraces. A circus school now operates out of the once derelict St Paul's church. In the nearby streets, the annual St Pauls Afrikan Caribbean Carnival celebrates Bristol's diverse multicultural community. That such a radical, progressive city was once the country's leading slave port is an irony that, you suspect, would not be lost on PJ Harvey.

It is early February, and while much of the country is battered by heavy storms, John Parish sits in the control room of a basement studio, located behind a weatherworn door on Portland Square. Like much of the area, a gradual process of gentrification is underway and soon, Parish reveals, the studio will be moving to other premises to make way for luxury flats. Parish first met Harvey on her 18th birthday. "She started bringing me tapes of her songs," he remembers. "I thought immediately she had a fantastic voice – it was really special, even then as an 18-year-old. So almost instinctively, I asked her if she'd be interested in joining my band, Automatic Dlamini."

Parish is Harvey's longest-serving collaborator, working on seven albums with her. Today, he settles in a blue swivel chair next to his mixing desk, a Trident TSN dating from 1979. The control room is at one end of a labyrinthine series of interconnected spaces that form the studio. In one, a vintage organ nestles close to a more up-to-date cousin; a Slingerland drum kit has been assembled in another; while in a third, an analogue Otari MTR-90 multi-track tape recorder sits quietly in the corner. Chains of plastic flowers

are threaded round water pipes, an elderly barometer hangs from a wall, a Cyberman helmet looms from between two speakers. One small box perched on a shelf has "ATP – Matt Groening – Pavement – May 2010" scrawled on one side in black felt tip. A Post-It Note fixed to a wall beneath a rack of CDs carries the memo, 'Monk choir'. A piece of lined A4 paper placed horizontally behind a fire alarm reads, "Break someone's heart".

Harvey recorded overdubs for her 2007 album *White Chalk*

here, while she and Parish also did the bulk of the recording for their 2009 collaboration, *A Woman A Man Walked By*. At the moment, Parish is joined in his studio by Flood – real name Mark Ellis – whose time with Harvey stretches back to 1993. "We met in the upstairs lounge of her manager, Paul McGuinness', house," he says. "She was what I expected and not what I expected. Visually, she was very much as I thought. But there was a serenity about her that I felt slightly at odds with the music I was hearing. Dignified, graceful."

Together, Parish and Flood have co-produced four albums with Harvey, beginning with 1995's *To Bring You My Love*. "Although I've worked with many different people there are a few musicians and producers with whom I can operate on a similar wavelength," Harvey explained in

the programme that accompanied the album's sessions, *Recording In Progress*. "I've worked with Flood and John Parish for over 20 years, and I don't have to explain anything to them. We understand each other."

More than a decade after *To Bring You My Love*, Harvey reunited with Flood and Parish for *White Chalk* – a record of great beauty, austerity and understated power, which Flood describes as "an album she needed to make... the point at which she felt that she could move on to a different artistic path." Located in the Dorset landscape in which Harvey

"WHEN I'M WRITING A SONG, I VISUALISE THE ENTIRE SCENE – SMELL THE AIR, FEEL THE SOIL"

PJ HARVEY

was raised, *White Chalk* was a very introspective album; evidently Harvey had a wider reach in mind for her next project. Speaking to *Uncut* in late 2011, she explained, “I had wanted for many, many years to begin to explore my feelings towards the wider world in song, to what goes on that we read about and hear about through the news. I’ve always been very affected by what’s happening in the world. Profoundly so.”

**S**EAMUS MURPHY MET Harvey in autumn 2008, during her research for *Let England Shake*. “Polly had seen my Afghan exhibition, *A Darkness Visible*,” the photographer explains. “She had been interested in Afghanistan, liked my work and got in touch. At that stage, she possibly wanted me to take some pictures. I thought when we spoke, she was serious. I travelled there [to *Afghanistan*] quite a bit and I suppose I know the territory. She seemed to be very well informed. I thought she was very



“SHE FELT SHE COULD MOVE TO A DIFFERENT ARTISTIC PATH...”

FLOOD

sincere about taking on that territory and conflict. She’d already gone into a lot of history, read American soldiers’ blogs and really done her work. This has been borne out from working with her ever since. She doesn’t do things lightly.” Harvey and Murphy’s collaboration began with a series of short films he made to accompany *Let England Shake*. Serendipitously, the pair were invited to attend DokuFest, an annual documentary film festival held in Kosovo’s second city, Prizren. Harvey and Murphy appeared in an onstage Q&A session on July 31, 2011, eight days after the first leg of the *Let England Shake* tour wrapped at Alexandra Palace. “We’d both been talking about going to Kosovo for this project,” says Murphy. “I’d been there during the war and shown her work from Kosovo. I think she’d started writing stuff around the images before she’d even gone there. We had quite a lot of ideas, too. Japan and other places. But it turned out that Kosovo was the first one.

Suddenly, there was this offer. The planets collided and we went.”

After DokuFest, Harvey and Murphy spent “four or five days” exploring the country. “There was this monastery in Peja, in the west of the country,” says Murphy. “A journalist and I rescued these icons that were being trashed by looters. We brought them to this wonderful monastery. I wanted to go back there. We ended up recording some sounds of the monks that appear on the album. It was amazing because, for me, it’s a very tight amount of time. But in just those few days, she was able to write songs and poems.”

They travelled to villages near Prizren. “They were Serbs in that region,” says Murphy. “They were in the minority and the Albanians had taken revenge for the horrible things the Serbs had done. There is a cycle of violence.” They also went to Gjakova, one of the most heavily bombed areas in Kosovo during the war. Murphy recalls Harvey “with her notepad – looking around, observing, and taking notes. Recording her responses to the place. Little things that would then end in the songs.” In Kosovo Polje/Fushë Kosovë, a town on the outskirts of Prizren, they saw a revolving fairground wheel that became the inspiration for a song, “The Wheel” – a commentary on the ethnic cleansing that swept the Balkans which carries resonances with the current migrant crisis from the Middle East and Africa.

Some of what Harvey saw became poetry in *The Hollow Of The Hand* – the collaborative book of poems and photographs she and Murphy assembled from their travels. In certain instances, the poems in *The Hollow Of The Hand* also become songs on *The Hope Six Demolition Project*; or in other cases, they’re versions of them. “Poetry and songwriting are very different, which I didn’t realise to begin with,” admitted Harvey in the *Recording In Progress* programme. “Poems have to create their own world entirely. Everything has to be contained within those worlds, and that’s it. They don’t have the support of music to create an atmosphere. They don’t have the support of music to say what is unsaid. The words alone have to make that world.”

In Bogushevci, they met Zagorka, the gatekeeper of the village, who appears in both the poem and the bluesy, swaggering album track “Chain Of Keys” (“*She reminds me of my grandmother*,” Harvey wrote in her notebook).

“There were plums that had fallen from the trees and were left in the heat to rot,” recalls Murphy. “Flies buzzing round them. We’d seen a lot of stuff. There were two things that struck me when I left. The plums and the woman [Zagorka] walking with the keys behind her back. Polly said, ‘Jesus Christ, they were the two things that I took away from that, too.’ It was strange, we both had the same recollection of it.”

Facsimile pages of Harvey’s notebooks included in the eBook of *The Hollow Of The Hand* offer some insight into



PJ Harvey & John Parish



A Woman A Man Walked By

## “SHE STUMBLED ACROSS A FORGOTTEN DEMO...”

John Parish on his two collaborative albums with Polly Harvey

“POLLY HAD SEEN a theatre piece that I’d written some music for in the early ’90s. She was enthusing about it afterwards and she said, ‘Could you write me some music in that vein? I’d like to try putting some words to it.’ So I wrote 12 or 15 pieces of music over a period of months, and gave them to her at the end, pretty much as finished pieces, and she put words to them – that was *Dance Hall At Louse Point*.

“*A Woman A Man Walked By* was done in a very similar way. She stumbled upon a forgotten demo that we’d recorded when I was fiddling around with my own albums. I’d got Polly to write some words for a song and then I’d never carried on with it. This was

‘Black Hearted Love’ – the first track from *A Woman A Man Walked By*. I think she was looking through some old tapes and stuck it on, then phoned me up, saying, ‘What are we doing? We never did anything with this track. It’s great – write me some more songs...’

“Then the same thing – I wrote a series of pieces of music and she put the words to them. So the writing process was actually very separate. I wrote the music, she wrote the words. The main collaboration, apart from the whole concept of the thing, was when we came to record them – and things start to take shape and the lines blur a little bit more. But the roles were very clear in that I was writing the music and she was writing the words.”



I'll Be Your Mirror festival, Alexandra Palace, London, July 23, 2011

TIMELINE...

SEPTEMBER 2014

Covers Nick Cave's "Red Right Hand" for second series of BBC TV series *Peaky Blinders*



With Flood (left) and Paul Hartnoll, *Peaky Blinders* preview, September 28, 2014

OCTOBER 12, 2014

Appears at the Observer Festival Of Ideas with Giles Duley at the Barbican, London

OCTOBER 18, 2014

Performs "Wing" with Patti Smith during Ann Demeulemeester book event at Dover Street Market, London

JANUARY 16 - FEBRUARY 14, 2015

Recording *In Progress* at Somerset House, London

SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

Scores *Eurydice And Orpheus* play on Radio 4

OCTOBER 8, 2015

*The Hollow Of The Hand* released



*The Hollow Of The Hand*, October 2015

OCTOBER 9-10, 2015

*The Hollow Of The Hand* event at London Literature Festival

APRIL, 2016 *The Hope Six Demolition Project* released

her working methods. One page, headed "The Plums Of Zhivinjane", finds Harvey preoccupied with how best to address the subject of the plums in her work. She writes, "Don't say the word 'plums,'" then below it, she has circled, "Carnage on a battlefield | fallen plums | describe them"; a little further down, "Plums lay heavy & silent... ripe rich | bloody | fruit | fallen | open | to lie | and | wait." Finally, at the bottom of the page, she counsels, "Think hard about what I can get a song out of; plums not good for song."

Murphy, who has seen Harvey's notebooks, likens this process to "an internal monologue". He says, "It's interesting how she's talking to herself, telling herself not to do certain things and to do certain things."

**"P**OLLY'S GOOD AT compartmentalising," says John Parish when asked about PJ's excursions. "We were working on the *Let England Shake* tour and nothing was going to break the focus. Whatever she took from Kosovo she stored up for the writing of the next album."

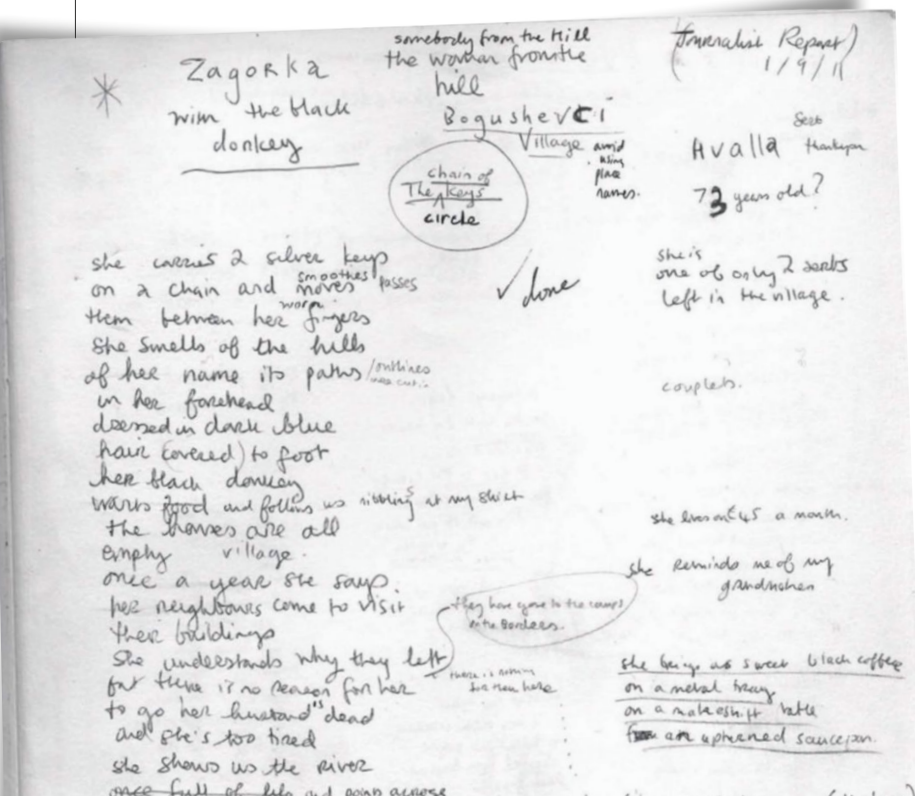
Harvey certainly gave no indication of her plans when she spoke to *Uncut* in late 2011. "I'm not sure where I'll go next," she said. "It takes quite some time for me to work out what feels right. All I do know is I won't be doing the same thing again. I've also enjoyed discovering this new way of writing and I would like to continue that more."

But with hindsight, it seems likely that she was already beginning to formulate new strategies. The *Let England Shake* tour finished on January 21, 2012 in Hobart, Australia. Then Flood estimates that "it would have been around the very end of the year - October, November - that we got the first batch [of demos]. They came incrementally after that in four or five batches." Musically, these new songs were "primarily guitar and voice, and sometimes percussion. I think there was one or two that maybe had an organ."

At the end of 2012, Harvey once again set off with Seamus Murphy, this time to Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, for a week. Murphy reveals they had planned to go in the summer - "but it was a very dangerous time, there were

a lot of suicide bombers and car bombings." Instead, they travelled in December, a comparatively quiet period: the independent website *icasualties.org* lists as 14 the total number of coalition fatalities in the country during that month. "We had the same driver I've been using for over 10 years," says Murphy. "We were driving around in his little taxi, so it was very anonymous. We stayed away from the hotels. I made sure we stayed with an Afghan NGO I know, who had never heard of PJ Harvey, so that was useful. We didn't go out to the places that Western people go to in Kabul. They're not very safe, because they're always going to be targets."

In her notebooks, Harvey documents colourful visits to





Harvey: "This is the Ministry Of Defence/ Stairs and walls are all that's left..."

the city's Shor bazaar and the market in the village of Charikar, an hour's drive from Kabul, and Bagram to the south east – which takes them past the airbase. Elsewhere, Harvey draws inspiration for her poem "The Beggars" and the album track "The Ministry Of Social Affairs" from Murphy's photograph of a derelict government building – official title: The Ministry Of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled – outside which "an amputee and a pregnant hound sit by the young man with withered arms". "The Glass" becomes the mournful, organ lament "Dollar, Dollar", with Harvey staring from her car window into the face of a beggar boy.

**F**LOOD IS ADMIRING of his collaborator's documentarian approach to songwriting. "She's prepared to say to people, 'Here you go, this is what I've seen through my eyes. I'm not making a judgment on it. I'm just drawing your attention to it to make you see what's there, and you can draw your own conclusions.' It's not political, it's being aware that there are other things going on in the world right now."

On August 3, 2013, Harvey released her first new material since *Let England Shake*. Although not specifically informed by her travels to Kosovo or Afghanistan, "Shaker Aamer" highlighted related themes, covering the plight of the last UK resident held at Guantánamo Bay. "I met her for tea at her London flat," recounts Clive Stafford Smith, Aamer's lawyer and director of human rights charity Reprieve. "I gave her a bunch of Shaker's words she could use. I think [the song] did some good. You can't succeed if you don't try. How many minds did it change? It changed a lot more minds than doing nothing. We all have to keep on working together to get Utopia established – we're not going to do that this week. But Polly made the effort and I think it had an impact. Most of all, it was deeply appreciated by Shaker himself."

The song – built round a skeletal guitar motif – detailed Aamer's four-month hunger strike, during which he

endured metal feeding tubes and restraining chairs. Stafford Smith – who also appeared on the edition of Radio 4's *Today* programme Harvey guest-edited in January 2014 – describes Harvey as "unabashedly political", though others inside her camp are keen not to couch Harvey's recent work in such dogmatic terms. "I don't see it as protest or folk music," says John Parish. "A lot of protest songs are usually more issue-specific, and usually come from a point of view that there is actually a way to fix this. I feel that Polly's work is more a commentary."

"The ballads that were sold on the streets of London 200 years ago were often based on stories from the newspaper," says Billy Bragg. "They weren't always political, but they were songs about what's happening now, and I think Polly's doing that. Neither me nor Polly are part of the folk tradition. But because of the nature of the songs we write and the way we approach them, we touch on that tradition and are appreciated by that audience. She is reacting to the world and writing about things that move her. There should be no barriers to that. I don't wish to push her in the corner herself and say 'You're political now.' She's doing something else and I respect that."

On December 9, 2013 – a little over two months after the release of "Shaker Aamer" – Harvey was appointed an MBE. ("I feel she's more deserving of it than a lot of people who have been given it," says Parish.) Four days later, she shared a stage at the British Library with former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion at an event to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. There, she read three traditional soldiers' songs alongside "The Words That Maketh Murder" from *Let England Shake* and a new piece, "The Guest Room", inspired by the simple hospitality she encountered in a small village in Afghanistan.

"I FEEL SHE'S MORE DESERVING OF AN MBE THAN A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN IT"  
JOHN PARISH

**H**ARVEY AND SEAMUS Murphy arrived in Washington in April 2014. Their visit coincided with the National Cherry Blossom Festival: an annual celebration of the gift of 3,000 cherry trees from the mayor of Tokyo to the American capital in 1912. Initially, Harvey and Murphy intended to pursue the threads from their previous expedition and document what Murphy calls "the Afghan diaspora" living in Washington. "By the time we got there, the poverty and the African-American experience was more interesting to us, so we started looking into that," Murphy explains. "It was the apparent paradox of the most powerful nation of earth – and certainly one of the most wealthy – having this population that are quite marginalised and poor. We found this place, Anacostia. Reading up on it, it seemed like a Third World country. And there it is, right across the river from Capitol Hill."

Harvey and Murphy's tour guides on this occasion included a contact at *The Washington Post* and "this great Turkish guy who runs a pizza shop in Anacostia. When we took the train out there on our own, we were chatting to him and he took it upon himself to show us the neighbourhood. He introduced us to this group of young people. One was a very interesting 21-year-old lesbian drug dealer who had a little gang. We hung out with them for a couple of hours. I've since been back and she's now in prison, apparently. She tried to pawn off some counterfeit money. Colourful people," laughs Murphy.

Among the strongest pieces to emerge from the trip is the poem "Sight Seeing South Of The River", which is slightly reconfigured as the defiant album track "The Community Of Hope". A trip round Anacostia's poverty-stricken streets, it reveals "Benning Road, the well-known 'pathway of death'... Here's the old mental institution, now the Homeland Security base and here's God's Deliverance Centre, a deli called MLK." Among the witchy incantations of



50ft Queenie: appointed an MBE, Dec 2013

## “HE DIDN'T KNOW WHO PJ HARVEY WAS...”

How does a musician of note travel internationally without being recognised? Seamus Murphy reveals all

“IT WASN'T A problem in Kosovo and Afghanistan. In those villages we went to in Kosovo, no-one would have heard of her. In Afghanistan, I deliberately set it up so we weren't staying in a hotel. Often, when I arrive somewhere, I get in touch with journalists. Journalists know their beat, share their information, and they're good company. In this case, arriving in Kabul, I was certainly not going to ring up *The Independent* correspondent or *The Guardian* correspondent. I'd be handing them a situation they'd feel obliged to write about – even if they didn't want to break the confidentiality that might have been involved in that.

“DC was funny. There was a *Washington Post* correspondent. The last piece of music he listened to was *Blood On The Tracks*. He didn't know who PJ Harvey was. When he got back to the office and said, 'I've just been driving around with a photographer from London and, I think, a musician called Polly,' the penny dropped. It was like, 'What the fuck?' I met him in January when I was back there. He told me a funny story. His son's friend's father was the drummer with Fugazi. He'd never heard of them. He hung out with this guy for two years, at barbecues and stuff. Then later he was told, 'Don't you realise he is one of the best drummers in the world?'”



Video for “The Wheel”, shot by Seamus Murphy in Kosovo

“I MAKE THE WORDS WORK ON A PAGE FIRST. WHEN I SING, MUCH OF THE WORK'S BEEN DONE”  
PJ HARVEY

“Medicinals” – another song from the album that began life as a poem – Harvey sees dark symmetries between natural remedies “*come to soothe our primal sores, come to soothe our troubles*” and the “*new painkiller for the native people*” drunk from a bottle concealed in a brown paper bag. The shimmering, eerily beautiful “*River Anacostia*”, meanwhile, finds Harvey surveying the city's heavily polluted waterway, “*flowing with the poison from the naval yard*”. The song ends with the sinister refrain “*God's going to trouble the water*” from the spiritual “*Wade In The Water*”.

“Polly's work is entirely necessary,” says Eliza Griswold, an American journalist and poet who has worked extensively with Seamus Murphy. “The more attention to these places, the better. It's a service to the world that we understand not only what is going on in Afghanistan and Kosovo and Anacostia – where I'd say her work is the strongest – but our own responsibility in what's unfolding.”

REFLECTING ON THE ways in which her writing had changed

over the years, Harvey explained in the *Recording In Progress* programme, “These days I make the words work on a page first. Lyrics have become extremely important to me. Often when I'm crafting words and looking at them day after day, slowly editing, they'll begin to sing to themselves – I can hear the melody, I can hear the rhythm that's contained within them. When I actually come to pick up an instrument and open my mouth to sing, much of the work's already been done.”

Throughout 2014, Harvey continued to work on songs informed by her travels, which she sent to Flood and John Parish. “It's the same as every record that we make with Polly,” confirms Parish. “A series of demos that come in at different times. She writes, then when she's got a batch of songs, she sends them to us, we have a chat about them, see where we are and gradually it takes shape from there.”

Parish acknowledges that in the case of *The Hope Six Demolition Project* – the title refers to a plan by the American government to revitalise the country's worst housing projects – the material was presented to them as a fully-formed concept. This wasn't the only unexpected change in their working methods. In the programme for *Recording In Progress*, Harvey describes recording spaces as “hugely significant”; citing St Peter's Church in Eype, Dorset, location for the *Let England Shake* sessions, as “magical, on a cliff-top over the sea, battered by the wind, surrounded by graves and bent trees. There was something very special about that place and you can hear it in the recordings.”

“Polly made the decision that she didn't want to record in the studio,” Parish explains. “We recorded *Let England Shake* in a church and she really liked working in non-specific studio space, and wanted to do it again. We were just kicking around ideas. I don't even know if she'd been thinking about it for a long time – whether it was just on a whim, but she said ‘What about a gallery?’ Then we said, ‘Maybe that'll be interesting...’ Then



Recording *Let England Shake* at St Peter's Church in Eype, Dorset, May 2010





## “I ENDED UP IN HOSPITAL WITH A FEW STITCHES!”

Seamus Murphy updates us on the progress of *The Hope Six Demolition Project* film

“THE IDEA WAS to do an album, a book and a film. The film will be the trips and a record of the project. When I was with Polly I wasn’t just shooting stills for the book, I was also shooting moving images. Some of them appear in ‘The Wheel’, some will appear in ‘Community Of Hope’, some of them appeared at the Royal Festival Hall in the short films that introduce each country. I shot all of Somerset House. It was just me with one camera... exhausting. There was just one eye; the idea was that there wouldn’t have been space and also it would have been very distracting for people watching to have more cameras. It would have looked a bit like *Later*...

With Jools Holland, with people running around.

“Myself and the editor, Sebastian Gollek, have been working on this material for quite a few years now. I’ve been to Afghanistan for other projects, but some of that material will be germane to this project. So there is a lot of material; once the music films are finished, then we’ll start properly putting together the film.

“I was back in Anacostia in January shooting the next music film, *Community Of Hope*. I got mugged. I ended up in hospital with a few stitches. I was unlucky; I was wandering around late at night with a camera on my own, filming stuff. Somebody knocked me over the head and got my camera.”

she said, ‘If it’s a gallery, maybe people should come and watch.’ We all thought, ‘Is that a mad idea? Maybe it is.’”

It transpires that Harvey had in fact been in discussions about where – and how – to host recording sessions for this new album since at least the middle of 2013.

Michael Morris first met PJ Harvey in May 2004 at a performance by Robert Wilson and Tom Waits of *The Black Rider* at London’s Barbican. In his capacity as director of arts commissioning body Artangel, which specialises in site-specific installations, Morris has been involved with Turner Prize-winning projects including Rachel Whiteread’s House. “After Polly and I met, I kept in touch and asked her if she was interested in a number of possible projects,” says Morris. “Nothing quite stuck apart from the *Recording In Progress*, which I suppose we began discussion about 18 months earlier.

“We looked at a number of possibilities of different sorts of places and different kinds of situations,” he continues. “She had this sense of wanting to record in public. But what that meant, we refined together and looked at a number of places and spaces. We were both drawn to this unused space underneath Somerset House. Somerset House is a familiar building, but this particular space within it hadn’t been used before and that was attractive to Artangel. Polly liked

the idea that it was uncharted territory and the fact that it had been a tax-office employee rifle range and gymnasium, it somehow added to the incongruity.

“Polly shared all the lyrics and some demos so I knew the kind of territory she was working in. It was quite a while before we actually started looking at spaces. That also helped in terms of finding the right space and the right context, the right way of presenting it to the public.”

*Recording In Progress* ran from January 16 to February 14, 2015. Described as “a mutating, multi-dimensional sound sculpture”, the sessions took place inside a specially designed studio that enabled the audience to look in through one-way glass as Harvey and her band worked. “We wanted to evoke the atmosphere of a gallery with this installation, as being a sculpture or like a vitrine or something behind

glass,” says Morris. “We wanted the atmosphere, and the lyrics lit on the wall like paintings.”

Myths that cluster round Harvey often privilege the seriousness, intensity and privacy of what people assume is her working practice. The *Recording In Progress* sessions presented a kind of mediated openness – where, in two daily 45-minute sessions, groups of 40 visitors could glimpse a very human endeavour. “It was a really brave step to do that,” says Parish, “because you’re accepting that people may see you fuck up in a major way. And we all did some howlingly bad things in the session. You think, ‘God, I hope nobody was out there at that time.’ Sometimes there were, and sometimes there weren’t. But to me it demonstrates a lot of confidence on Polly’s behalf – and on behalf of everybody – that they were prepared to go in there and be open like that.”

TO RECORD WITH her, Harvey chose old friends and new faces. The longest serving of those were Jean-Marc Butty and Mick Harvey, old hands since 1995’s *To Bring You My Love*. Among those making their debut with Harvey was Kenrick Rowe, who earned his chops drumming on the reggae circuit in the early ‘80s. Seamus Murphy, meanwhile, was on hand to film the sessions.

Flood recalls that construction work on the studio installation began at Somerset House in early November, 2014. Four days before the doors opened to the general public, a dry run took place with Harvey, Parish, Terry Edwards and James Johnston. “We got in about half nine, quarter to ten,” says Flood, outlining a typical day inside the installation. “Got your cup of coffee, croissant, got wired up and then you’d get in position. We’d usually have decided the previous day what we’d be doing, whether we’d be carrying on where we left off or starting a new song. Then we started at 10.”

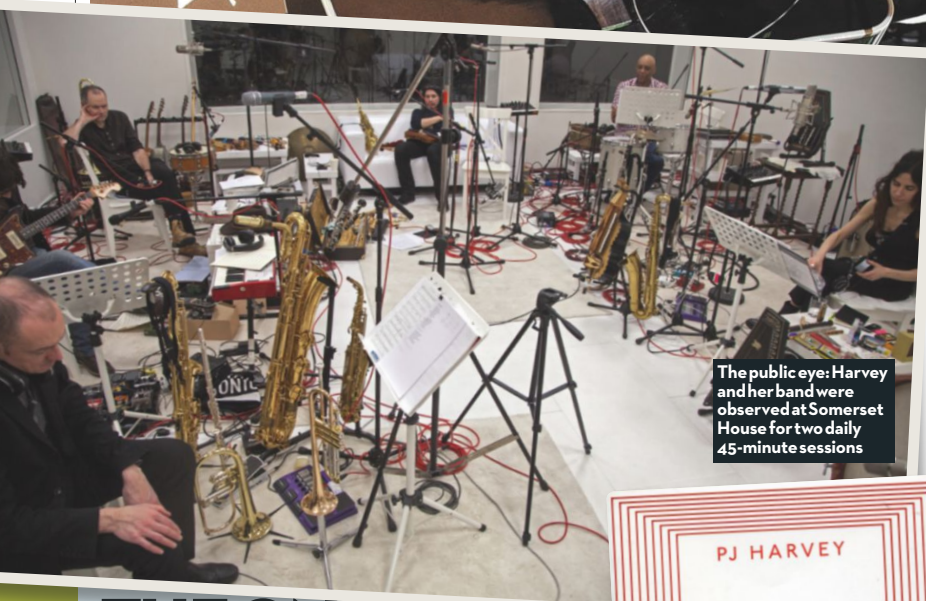
“Having the audience coming made it a very disciplined day, so we really did just get on and work,” continues Parish. “Most sessions there’s a lot of milling around usually at the beginning and the end of the day whereas this, because there were people coming in at 11, you got on with it. It felt like a working day. It was very focused because of that and we ended up getting a huge amount of work done. I don’t think we would have done it so quickly had we not had those parameters.”

“It was focused for a number of reasons,” says Flood. “Because the audience was coming in, we can’t be sat around talking about cheese, which has happened before. Number two – no mobile phones and computers. It’s something that we’d fallen upon a couple of albums ago – *White Chalk*. ‘Let’s work eight hours and have a normal day, have our lunch break, off we go. But no phones and no computers.’ You start to work very disciplined, very creative and focused in those periods of time.”

“SHE SAID, ‘IF IT’S A GALLERY, MAYBE PEOPLE SHOULD COME AND WATCH.’ WE THOUGHT, ‘IS THAT A MAD IDEA? MAYBE IT IS’”  
JOHN PARISH



Book launch for Sue Webster, New York, April 8, 2015



The public eye: Harvey and her band were observed at Somerset House for two daily 45-minute sessions

Flood describes the collaborative process with Harvey as “a benign dictatorship”. He continues, “The beauty of the relationship that particularly John and I have working with Polly and producing together is that it’s totally collaborative. We probably had slight pencil notes before the session, ‘Let’s try this song and this song... I’ve got a very strong idea for this, I’m not quite sure about this – all right, well, you strum it and off we go and let’s see where it goes.’ Some songs, it was literally, ‘Let’s just roll the dice and see what happens.’ Then sometimes, you don’t know. We were in there five days a week, eight hours a day for six weeks, so you’re only getting a tiny snapshot.”

Harvey and the band recorded 18 songs in total. Visitors to the Somerset House installation would have noticed among the lyric sheets pinned to the walls the earliest, called “Imagine This”, dated from 2012. Within the installation, Harvey herself was stationed centrally, facing out. Behind her, a heraldic crest – designed by Parish’s wife, Michelle Henning – hung from a wall featuring a shield supported by a goat and a two-headed dog. Progress could be measured by the dwindling number of sherbet lemons in a jar beneath a recording desk.

**A**FTER SOMERSET HOUSE, Harvey’s handful of public appearances suggested a certain benign aimlessness, popping up at parties, openings and other social events, curiously out of synch with the weighty project at hand. In March, for instance, she attended a private view for Maggi Hambling’s exhibition *War Requiem & Aftermath* at the Cultural Institute, King’s College. The following month, she was in New York, celebrating the launch of a new book by her friend, the artist Sue Webster. In May, she was photographed alongside Ray Davies in London’s Tom Cribb pub during the interval for a VIP performance of the Kinks’ *Sunny Afternoon* musical. Four weeks later, she was at London Fashion Week checking out the latest collection from designer Todd Lynn – a long-time collaborator. Her few musical engagements were a cover of Nick Cave’s “Red Right Hand” for the BBC TV series *Peaky Blinders* and an electronic score for a Radio 4 production of *Orpheus and Eurydice*. It all seemed very distant from the broken buildings and dirt tracks of Kosovo and Afghanistan or the impoverished suburbs of Washington DC.

During autumn, though, she returned publicly – with a vengeance – to the project. On October 9 (her 46th birthday) and 10, she and Murphy appeared at the London Literature

## THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY!

When *Uncut* went to see *Recording In Progress* at Somerset House, we watched Harvey and her band work on a song called “Guilty”. Sadly, it didn’t make the finished album. Here, Flood explains why...

“**G**UILTY’ WAS fascinating. It was one of the discovery songs for us – for the way songs could push forward into a new territory. I’d been experimenting with contact-micing a tom-tom, and then putting it through a whammy pedal. I suggested that maybe we could have a little bit of fun if Kenrick [Rowe] played the tom-tom and I manipulated the pitch of it through an amp. We had so much fun doing it. Then as the session went on, it became quite a difficult song to get to the place where Polly, John and I felt it should go. By the end of the process, even though it was finished, it felt a little bit outside the rest of the material – as if it had come from a different place in time. The record felt stronger as a body of work for not having it on. That’s not to say that it might not see the light of day. This is part of witnessing a small part of the process – it can be completely contradictory to the end result. I think Polly’s idea of people only getting tiny little snapshots is so brilliant, because it doesn’t destroy the mystique. It probably adds to it.”



“BECAUSE OF THE AUDIENCE, WE COULDN’T SIT AROUND TALKING ABOUT CHEESE”  
FLOOD



With James Johnston at the *Hollow Of The Hand* premiere, Royal Festival Hall, October 2015

◆ Festival for the world premiere of *The Hollow Of The Hand*. “Because she’s come from music, she understand the importance of taking a totally disciplined approach when you learn a new art form,” says Don Paterson, the Scottish poet who is credited as Harvey’s editor in *The Hollow Of The Hand*. “Writing a decent line is so much about being attuned to the feel and texture of words – basically weighing words as if they were music. So she came into my game already tooled up. Imaginatively, anyone who loves her music will know she finds a scary place – and goes there. Most of us instinctively avoid the dragons. Polly’s instinct is to march right up to them and ask them if they’ve seen any good movies lately.”

Billed as “an evening of poetry readings and new songs performed by PJ Harvey, and images and a short film presented by Seamus Murphy”, the *Hollow Of The Hand* event at London’s Royal Festival Hall was directed by Ian Rickson, the former artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre, who had presented early works by Jez Butterworth and Joe Penhall. Harvey had scored theatre productions for Rickson, while in turn he had “directed” the tour for *Let England Shake*. “I treated Polly like an actress,” he says. “I’d give her a point of concentration for songs. We’d talk about the objective of the song, just to keep her fresh.”

Rickson estimates that he and Harvey began discussing *The Hollow Of The Hand* “just after *Let England Shake*. I think she was very restless, in a good way, about not wanting to repeat herself, wanting to take it further. Like a lot of artists, they’re just completely inside their own artistic journey, almost in an autistic way, so everything is about the next artistic expression and where they are in that.” Their conversations consisted of, “A lot of mining of the sights and sounds of those trips to Kosovo and Afghanistan and Washington. Poring over images, thinking about the sensibility and feelings of a place. She did some field recordings, recorded a lot of strange trafficky noises and singing from around the world.”

The shows found Harvey joined for the new songs by Parish and James Johnston. “We rehearsed five or six days before the show,” says Parish. With the songs pared back to suit the trio – a familiar iteration for fans of Harvey’s earliest work – the setlist was imbued with a particular sense of urgency. *The Hope Six Demolition Project* is finally released in April, almost eight years after Harvey and Murphy first met, and five since they began their

travels together. Even taking into account the labour Harvey traditionally takes over a project, this has been a considerable undertaking. But perhaps Harvey – who has declined to be interviewed about this album – sees herself as having duty of care over the people she met on her travels; a very human desire to responsibly document their stories. “I guess,” says Murphy with a short laugh. “But I doubt you’d get her to say that.”

**D**URING HER TIME in Kosovo in summer 2011, Harvey gave an interview to the country’s KTV channel. She described *Let England Shake* as “a series of narratives, a series of stories told from different perspectives”. The same is essentially true of *The Hope Six Demolition Project* – which, with its own set of vivid, witness-bearing songs, deals with what John Parish describes as “very heavy subjects”. “The difference would be that she’s seen these things herself,” says Seamus Murphy. “Whereas a lot of *Let England Shake* was WWI, so necessarily diaries and letters, I’m sure she saw something living and used that in some way. Whereas this was themed, active and a lot of it is personal experience.”

“I don’t think folk appreciate the extent to which Polly is disinclined to write or sing about anything she hasn’t witnessed first hand,” says Don Paterson. “She’s a great believer in direct contact. And I think – unlike most of us – she sees her own fear as a challenge to overcome,

which means she ends up going to places in her head and in the world most of us would do anything to avoid.”

In one of her notebooks, while visiting a shrine in Afghanistan, Harvey’s precise journalistic descriptions are replaced by a series of more poetic observations. “*In the distance houses cling to the mountain / enormous cemetery’s stretch away / with no walls, so the dead can move about / as they wish / clusters of women crouch in soiled burqas / begging at the steps.*”

In a different pen, she writes one of her notes to self. It is difficult to intuit the thought processes of an artist as private as Harvey; but annotations like this, scribbled in rough columns down the sides of pages, reveal something, at least, about what she is up to. “*For me how it spun everything together made it make sense,*” she wrote, “*the connection of these people to nature, soil, dirt, they live in it, on it, no separation. They love it.*” ◆

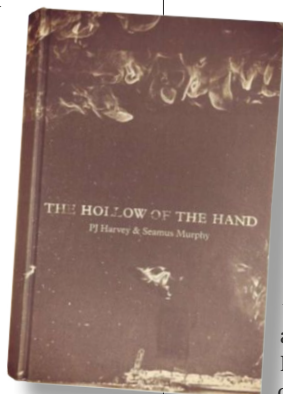
*The Hope Six Demolition Project* is released on April 15 through Island Records

## “MAXIMUM POLLYNESS!”

A preview of Harvey’s forthcoming tour

AN RICKSON, WHO directed the *Let England Shake* tour and will also helm the autumn’s *Hope Six Demolition Project* shows, gives us a sneak preview of what we can expect... “We’re trying to find a way of singing it live that captures something of the whirligig imagery of the places she visited and the feeling underneath the songs,” he explains. “The *White Chalk* tour was quite folksy. Polly would banter and people would shout requests or, ‘We love you, Polly!’ But you don’t really come to a gig for the inter-song banter, do you? You come to be immersed and opened up by the song. On *Let England Shake*, we found ways of blocking shout-outs and requests between songs so that you just buried yourself in the flow of the songs. You keep a chord or a drum beat going.

“How can a gig be completely, intensively a gig? I want maximum Pollyness! It’s a big band for this tour. A 10-piece. The theatre designer Jeremy Herbert, who designed most of Sarah Kane’s plays, has done a very simple, bold design. We’re trying to make the space really pure and rough, so that Polly is like this tribal queen or something, with this big tribe and this fantastic sound coming underneath it...”



At the Royal Festival Hall, September 29, 2007

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# Sunshine Superman

BY DONOVAN

A 1966 hit that was ahead of its time: “I wanted to bring the bohemian manifesto to millions...”

**T**HREE YEARS BEFORE Van Morrison or Tim Buckley corralled jazz musicians to create their masterpieces, Donovan Leitch was mixing his own floating, meditative folk songs with flute, double bass and harpsichord. And more than a year before The Beatles sang that they’d love “to turn you on”, Leitch, on “Sunshine Superman”, his first collaboration with producer Mickie Most, was referencing “sunshine” – slang for LSD – and singing of being “tripped out”.

As Donovan argues today, though, his mix of folk, jazz, blues and baroque music was perhaps a little too ahead of its time before the dawn of psychedelia. “I’m a difficult artist to put your finger on,” he explains from his home in Ireland. “I never stuck to one sound. The Beatles, the Stones and Dylan, for instance, every record you hear, you can recognise them straight away, can’t you? But me, I’m all over the place. So maybe I wasn’t truly recognised back then.”

“Sunshine Superman” was the first musical fruit from the singer’s brief affair with Linda Lawrence, the ex-girlfriend of Rolling Stone Brian Jones. Though many of his songs from the mid-’60s would reference Lawrence – including *Sunshine Superman*’s “Legend Of A Girl Child Linda”, a prototype for Nick Drake’s work – the couple wouldn’t meet again until the dawn of the ’70s. “It’ll take time, I know it,” sang Donovan,

prophetically, on “Sunshine Superman”, “*but in a while, you’re gonna be mine...*” Today, they’re still married.

Before the song – featuring Jimmy Page on lead guitar – could come out, however, Donovan was sued by his label, Pye, and the single was delayed for months. When it hit No 1 in the US in July 1966, and then, on its eventual British release in December 1966, No 2, Donovan became almost as well-known as his friends, The Beatles. “I didn’t want celebrity fame, though,” Donovan says. “[*Friend*] Gypsy Dave and I wanted to bring the bohemian manifesto to millions of young people who were only reading cereal boxes when they got up to go to school. The world was in a terrible state and it still is. And then poets like me and Gypsy came.

“I’ve got a new album that I’ve just made which will come out this year. I don’t know what people are gonna make of it... maybe they’ll catch up to it in five years’ time.” **TOMPINNOCK**

**DONOVAN:** There’s that lovely story of Leonard Cohen being asked by Bob Dylan, “How long does it take for you to write a song?” Leonard says, “Three years. And how about you Bob?” And Bob says, “Three minutes.” I think I’m more of a three-

## KEY PLAYERS



**Donovan**  
Vocals, acoustic guitar, songwriting



**John Cameron**  
Harpsichord, arrangements



**Spike Heatley**  
Double bass

minute guy. With me, the melody starts emerging from guitar-playing. Basically you have to play guitar quite a lot on your own. In my Maida Vale flat I’d start playing all these different little riffs and picking, and out of it came “Sunshine Superman”. So I would say it took maybe three or four minutes to come up with. But then I had to expand it, I had to relate the other verses.

**JOHN CAMERON:** Don was very much into old English myths, and the Guinevere

thing. I think he felt he was a sort of folk-rock poet, but he didn’t want to be like Bob Dylan jumping on freight trains, he wanted to go back into Celtic and early British mythology.

**DONOVAN:** The song began when I fell in love with Linda Lawrence. She’d just had a sad break-up with Brian Jones, and they had a kid. She was 16 when she met Brian. And then I met her and fell in love with her and wrote the song. “*Sunshine came softly through my window today*” – basically it’s a love song, but a very unusual love song as it was kind of trying to convince and also assure Linda that we would be together, after that wonderful summer of ’65 when I met her and we had a very quiet affair. She was the first paparazzi girlfriend of the first charismatic artist in Britain,

Rickenbacker  
glory: Donovan,  
circa '66



so in a way Linda wasn't ready for another ride around the carousel of fame. We met again in '69, and that's another story, but all the way through the '60s she was hearing my records.

**SPIKE HEATLEY:** I met Donovan when we were recording for the BBC. I recall being in the Maida Vale studio with Donovan, and I said to him, "Got any dots [sheet music]?" and he said, "Oh no, I don't write music," [laughs] so, er, I just had to listen to what he was playing then do my best.

**DONOVAN:** "Sunshine" in those days was a slang term for LSD, but it wasn't really LSD we were referring to, it was the real thing – the magic mushrooms. We'd write about it, Gypsy Dave and I. The bohemian manifesto – we were bohemians, and in the bohemian world for the last 150 years are all the answers to modern man's dilemma. And it's not just getting high, it's philosophy, it's feminism, it's civil rights, it's protest, it's literature, it's poetry, it's art.

**HEATLEY:** John Cameron was a very talented musician, he'd studied music at Cambridge, and he was a far better academic musician than myself. He'd been recommended by David Frost. I was contacted to do some recording with Donovan, and I got John Cameron involved.

**DONOVAN:** Allen Klein had been studying the British scene from America. When he saw me on *The Ed Sullivan Show* when I was just 18, I refused to cheesecake, I refused to come out and bow with the other artists. And he said, "I've got to keep my eye on that kid." Then [after second album, 1965's

*Fairytale*] Klein became my manager, introduced me to Mickie Most, and tore up the Pye contract that I had already signed.

**CAMERON:** I met Donovan in late '65. I'd just come down from Cambridge. I was vice president of the Footlights. Eric Idle and I used to write songs together, and we came down and started doing cabaret. I got a job at a place called the Take One on St Martin's Lane doing jazz cabaret. The bass player in the house band there was Spike Heatley. He came to me one evening and said, "My mate Ashley Kozak is looking after Donovan, and he needs new arrangements, do you fancy having a crack at it?" So Spike and I pitched up at Ashley's pad in Maida Vale – it was all purple drapes and zodiac signs everywhere, a real early psychedelic hippy pad. Donovan played the stuff to us and we talked about what we might do with it.

**DONOVAN:** When I used to put my ear to my little Gibson J45, the guitar I composed and recorded all of my '60s material on, I could hear distortion in the strings. I could hear bass parts, I could hear drums. I used to be a drummer at 14, I wanted to be Gene Krupa and Art Blakey. Even in my early, folk recordings – *What's Bin Did And What's Bin Hid* and the *Fairytale* album – although I was

mostly acoustic, I did venture into different styles. You can hear the beginnings of fusion. By mid-1965 I'd been listening to a huge amount of jazz and Latin music, but there was something about baroque music and harpsichords that I liked. So when I met Mickie Most, he said "What've you got?", and I played him an acoustic performance of "Sunshine Superman". He said, "That's it! That's the single! What do you hear on it?" "I hear

Latin, congas, a harpsichord and also two basses."

**CAMERON:** We came up with the idea of using electric and acoustic basses to give it more impact. The harpsichord just seemed like a good idea at the time. I'd been using them on things up in Cambridge; a lot of people had spinets and harpsichords up there.

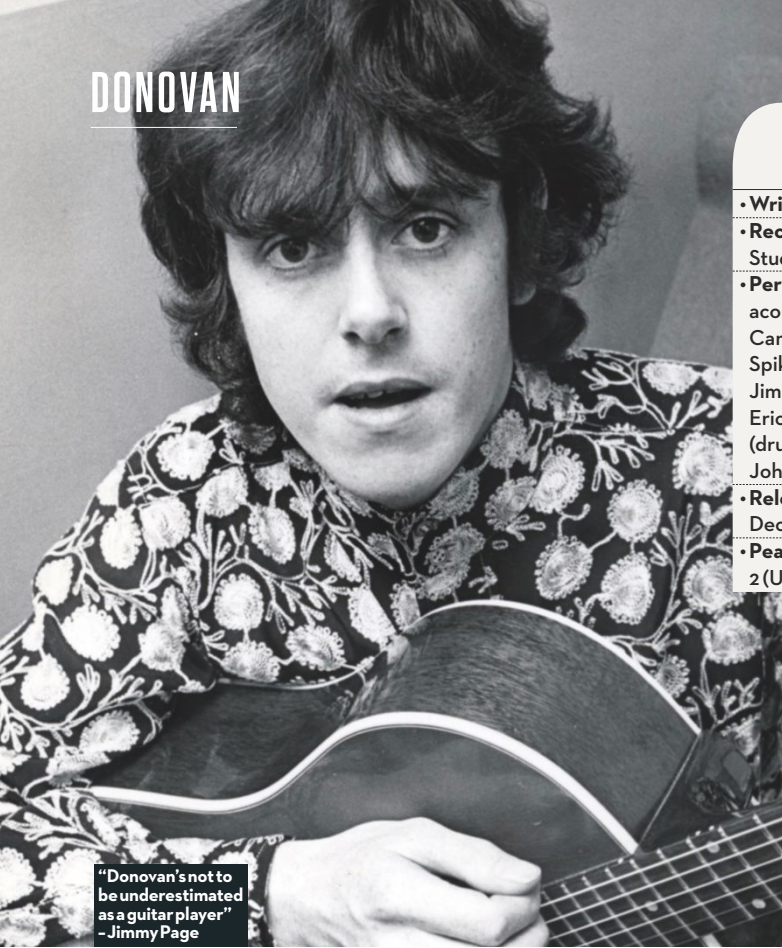
**DONOVAN:** John was perfect for me. He said, "A lot of the arrangement of the bass was in your guitar playing." When

Jimmy Page later commented on my work in general, he said, "Donovan's not to be underestimated as a guitar player."

**CAMERON:** It was way before Bob Moog had got his synthesiser down to anything smaller than 400ft-long. So basically when you were recording you used all the different things you could – on "Jennifer Juniper" we used cor anglais,

“Sunshine’  
was slang for  
LSD, but we  
meant magic  
mushrooms”

DONOVAN



“Donovan’s not to be underestimated as a guitar player”  
- Jimmy Page

FACT FILE

- **Written by:** Donovan Leitch
- **Recorded at:** Abbey Road Studios, London
- **Personnel:** Donovan (vocals, acoustic guitar), John Cameron (harpsichord), Spike Heatley (double bass), Jimmy Page (lead guitar), Eric Ford (guitar), Bobby Orr (drums), Tony Carr (perc), John Paul Jones (bass guitar)
- **Released:** July 1966 (US); December 1966 (UK)
- **Peak chart positions:** 2 (UK); 1 (US)

**CAMERON:** It couldn't have taken long to arrange or record, it never did. We did overdub, but most of it went down in the master take. The only things overdubbed were Jimmy Page's guitar solo and a couple of places where Don put the harmony on his vocal.

**DONOVAN:** For “Sunshine Superman” I did one vocal overdub. I'd be in the centre of the studio with a baffle on my left and one on my right. For the big tracks there'd be jazz boys and girls on one side and classical boys and girls on the other.

**CAMERON:** Mickie got John Paul Jones in, Spike was helping me write the chart so he was on double bass. Mickie brought in Bobby Orr, I brought in Tony Carr, We both knew Eric Ford anyway, and then Jimmy Page came from Mickie. I remember Eric recording the solo, but obviously Mickie replaced it with Jimmy Page later.

**DONOVAN:** John and I asked Jimmy to play in a cleaner jazz style. Of course, Jimmy Page knew all about folk and acoustic guitars, as well. He wasn't just a blues guitar player. It's a shame he wasn't on any other recordings from that album.

**HEATLEY:** Donovan specifically wanted jazz musicians for his sessions. They can read music well, but they also have good ears, and can pick up on things and not be thrown by odd stuff. With folk singers, the bar lengths were sometimes never the same twice [laughs] – but that's the freedom you have in folk music.

**CAMERON:** I remember Mickie going, “Don, you've got a hit here, this is just happening.” It was a really good vibe in the studio.

**HEATLEY:** Whenever he came into the studio, he always had his mate Gypsy Dave, and two or three other hangers on, with him, and they used to get in the way more than anything else!

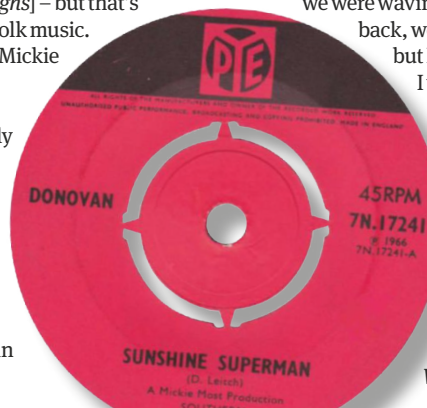
**DONOVAN:** In May 1966 Mickie and I went to LA to record the rest of *Sunshine Superman*. When Mickie and I were making the album, Pye said, “And of course this is for us?” And Allen Klein told them, “No, it's for Clive Davis' first signing on his new label Epic.” Pye sued me straight away. So we had to sit on that album for six months, but the dates prove that it's the first psychedelic album... because *Sgt Pepper* didn't come out for a year or two after that. When it was shelved, people were saying my career was over. So I went to Greece in summer '66 and wrote *Mellow Yellow*. Gyp and I were living on the island of Paros. There was one taverna, a beautiful beach and no harbour. One day the taverna guy said there was a phone call coming in two days – there was only one phone on the island in those days so they had to order the call. So we came down on the day appointed and the call came in on the wind-up telephone, and it was my UK manager Ashley Kozak, saying, “Donovan, get yourself over to Athens right away, there's a first-class ticket to London waiting. ‘Sunshine Superman’ has just been released and it's No 1 all over the world.”

**CAMERON:** Though the single couldn't come out in the UK, it was a big hit in America [*No 1 in July 1966*]. I still had to go back to Watford Palace and do pantomime 'til it came out over here, though!

**DONOVAN:** Any money I had was back at a bank in London, so I said, “We've gotta get the next ferry,” and the taverna owner said, “Yeah, maybe the ferry will come next Wednesday if the weather is good.” But we couldn't afford a ticket, as we were living on nothing. So the taverna owner said, “OK boys, that portable record player, I'll buy it from you, put you on the ferry.” We only had three albums with us – *Revolver*, Leonard Cohen's first and my white label of *Sunshine Superman* – but we left them with him, too.

**CAMERON:** I think the single gave Donovan confidence to try things. The success of that short period is borne out by the fact that so much of what he did then is still current now. The musicians themselves were very open to stuff. So it was not so much pre-emptive of psychedelia, but pre-emptive of a freedom of what you used on different recordings – that was the strength of “Sunshine Superman”. An openness to try stuff.

**DONOVAN:** When we left Paros, the old man on the hill who used to be our neighbour up on the mountain, he saw us off – he wore his best suit and came down on his beautiful mule. When the ferry was pulling away he was waving at us, and we were waving, and Gyp said, “We'll be back, we'll be back!” Gyp did go back, but I never did. And I realised later I was waving goodbye to a way of life I'd never live again. ☹



*Donovan's 70th birthday concert will take place at the London Palladium on Friday, May 6. Donovan will also be appearing at the Beat Herder Festival (July 15-17), Chagstock (22-23) and Kendal Calling (28-31). Visit [www.donovan.ie](http://www.donovan.ie)*

☉ bassoon and harp. Donovan was always looking for different sounds that didn't overpower his voice and the song, sounds that kept it light but funky at the same time.

**DONOVAN:** John would write the arrangements. He said, “You actually want to make soundtracks to your songs, which are poems.” And I said, “Yeah, think movie, we're doing movie soundtracks here.” So he would write too many parts, and then Mickie Most would hear it once and he'd come to John and say, “OK, that part, too much stuff there, take it out.” The harpsichord opened the door – it really is the sound of the Arthurian mystery. I knew the Gaelic, Celtic, British, Irish and Welsh stories of Arthur, Guinevere and Merlin, and these legends were coming back and we needed them. Of course that informed so many bands, you just have to look at the lyrics of Zeppelin, Floyd and Yes to know. I was kind of opening the door with “Sunshine Superman” with the harpsichord. And then the whole album opens the door, to psychedelic and Celtic philosophy, meditation and poetry. I kind of encouraged everybody, though I didn't know I was first at the time.

**HEATLEY:** The sessions at that time were three hours in duration, with a tea break in the middle. And you were never allowed to record more than 20 minutes of music per session – that was the Union rules. All the guys who were involved were fairly accomplished, and I don't think anything ever took more than two or three takes.

**DONOVAN:** The LP was done in two halves. At Abbey Road Studio Two, in December or November of 1965, John Cameron, Mickie Most and I recorded about a third of the album, including “Sunshine Superman”.

enters the studio with Mickie Most and John Cameron to record some of the *Sunshine Superman* album,

including the title track **May 1966** Donovan and Mickie Most head to Hollywood to record the rest of the album

**July 1966** “Sunshine Superman” hits No 1 in America, forcing Donovan to return from temporary exile on the

Greek island of Paros **December 1966** The single, finally released in the UK, reaches No 2

TIMELINE

**May 1965** Donovan releases his debut album, *What's Bin Did And What's Bin Hid*  
**December 1965** He

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# 'EVERYTHING IS NONSENSE!'

CATE LE BON, a brilliant and surreal Welsh singer-songwriter, has become the unlikely toast of LA's hippest music circles. How did a Super Furry Animals and Manics affiliate end up in the world of Warpaint and the Red Hot Chili Peppers, dodging rattlesnakes in Topanga Canyon?

Story: Laura Snapes Photograph: Ivana Kličková

**A**S WILL BECOME apparent throughout the course of one boiling February day in LA, Cate Le Bon is fairly fearless. But, the Welsh songwriter and guitarist admits, not quite fearless enough to investigate whether the gecko in the windowsill of her Highland Park home is dead or resting, just in case it leaps at her face. Le Bon's living room-cum-kitchen is all windows, a sun-trap that illuminates her thrifted furniture, piles of records, and rows of handthrown pots – the leftovers from her foray into ceramics as part of a unique (and time-consuming) limited merchandise line for her 2013 album, *Mug Museum*, which she moved here to make three years ago. As we leave her place and walk down cactus-strewn residential streets to her favourite local café, Le Bon explains how she joined a pottery club upon moving from Cardiff to LA, but quit when the more accomplished regulars ignored her amateur efforts. Still, she quickly established her own community, as becomes apparent when we step through the doors of vegan spot Kitchen Mouse. There is Josh Klinghoffer, his hair dyed Bowie orange, who moonlights as Le Bon's live guitarist when he's not working as John Frusciante's replacement in the Red Hot Chili Peppers. At the counter is Josiah Steinbrick, who co-produced Le Bon's new album, *Crab Day*, alongside freak-folk mainstay Noah Georgeson.

Given that Le Bon grew up in isolated Penboyr, a hamlet in Carmarthenshire, it's unsurprising that she's always been drawn to musical communities. Her first was Cardiff, where formative friendships with the gently iconoclastic Gruff Rhys, Euros Childs and Andy Votel taught the young guitarist to forge her own path rather than conform to pre-existing ideals or sounds. By her second album, 2012's *Cyrk*, she had landed upon her own distinctive style, which yoked the ranginess of Pavement and heat of Captain Beefheart to folk's neat repeating patterns; it made sense when that record prompted St Vincent, Le Bon's US equal, to take her on an extensive tour.







Live at Green Man Festival, Glanusk Estate, the Brecon Beacons, August 19, 2007



(l-r) Richard James, Le Bon, Sion Glyn and TWM Lewis, backstage, SXSW, Austin, TX, March 18, 2010

**C**RAB DAY, Le Bon's fourth, finds her pushing her style into wilder places, thanks to the influence of her newfound LA peers. It all started back in 2012, when she invited White Fence, whom she'd long admired, to support her in Santa Monica. She was obsessed with their drummer, Nick Murray, and told Steinbrick, who was standing in on bass, that she'd like to make a record in California, with Murray on drums. "Josiah is one of those people who gets shit done," she says over a vegan breakfast. He sorted everything out, and when Le Bon and her then-partner were granted three-year visas, they decided to make the move.

They made *Mug Museum*, then her biggest record to date, which necessitated a fairly gruelling amount of touring (along with hours at the pottery wheel to fulfill Le Bon's harebrained, and swiftly regretted, merch line). Once she got home, jaded and exhausted, an invitation to tour as a guitarist with White Fence offered the chance for her to reset. The experience brought her closer to White Fence's drummer, Tim Presley; once the tour was over, they united as Drinks, and made the hairy experimental album *Hermits On Holiday*, which was inspired by their shared love of Faust and obscure British post-punk. "I remember being awestruck watching her play guitar at that first [Santa Monica] show," says Presley. "It's that feeling where you watch someone perform and every note they play is exactly what you want to hear. She keeps you hanging on every note, and it's all so rewarding – like a mad genius with a charming stutter. She works at such a high level of creativity and originality. She doesn't know how to settle for less. She thinks apples are oranges and will show you why this is true."

Running parallel to this was the conception of Banana, a rotating improv collective whose origins lie a few doors down from Kitchen Mouse, in a venue that in the 1990s was known as Mr T's – the place where Beck debuted "Loser". When it was remodelled as the Highland Park Bowl a few years ago, Steinbrick and his friend Rodrigo Amarante were asked to arrange a DJ night there that swiftly turned into an experimental live show, drawing from New York minimalism, cosmic electronica, Arthur Russell, and Estonian folk. Among various LA mainstays, Steinbrick also invited Le Bon, and her Welsh contemporaries Huw Evans (aka H Hawkline) and Stephen Black (aka Sweet

## CULT HERO

### ST VINCENT "Cate is one of my favourite artists..."

**I** GOT TO know Cate's work because I was looking for a support act for the [2011 album] *Strange Mercy* tour, and I got sent *Cyrk*. I loved it, and asked her to come and open the US tour and all around Europe, too. Cate and Toko [Yasuda, *St Vincent* bk instrumentalist; bk vox on *Le Bon's Mug Museum*] and I became thick as thieves. It was a gruelling tour and we all became friends as Cate fits so well into my team. She's easy to have around, a great drinking buddy, friend and confidante.

One of the reasons I love the music is that it feels like a full extension of who she is – honest and down to earth, without being pretentious. It feels authentic, but it doesn't rely on tropes of what authenticity is; it's very pure, and I love her voice, her sense of melody and guitar playing. They have a charm and imagination that is ornate and interesting but

never, ever forced. For the theme tune to a [Beats Radio] show where I make mixtapes for people, I use Cate's song "I Can't Help You", which is just a bit of comedy for me. She's just great, one of my favourite, favourite artists. She's fuckin' awesome.



Baboo) to join, alongside Josh Klinghoffer and Warpaint drummer Stella Mozgawa.

These experiences were revelatory for Le Bon, who had been feeling disenchanted by a musical climate that she found "mediocre, beige and imitative", to the extent that she was unsure whether she even wanted to keep participating in it. But that feeling "gives you a freedom that you don't have when you're worried and too attached to something," she says. "Making a record with Tim reignited this love of music and the realisation that, 'Fuck, you don't have to do this, you choose to do this.' I don't think *Crab Day* would have been *Crab Day* if I hadn't had that time of complete abandonment of making a record with Tim and not giving a fuck if anyone liked it or not, because we were having the best time. We just played guitar at each other for days on end. I think we'd like to make another one this summer."

That openness to possibility shines through in *Crab Day*, her most frazzled solo record, which relishes in wildness rather than neatly resolving riffs. "I feel like the Drinks record let some of the more super chaotic elements in Cate's personality come through," says Steinbrick. "At one point on the record, I told her that it sounded like it was being played by an actual animal."

That unhinged style was also inspired by Soul Jazz compilation *There Is No Such Thing As Society*, which collected rare underground British punk cuts: "Eric Random, a band called The Shapes, a band called The Knack, but not The Knack – lots of really strange discordant punk, the really dry, direct sound of it was something that I found really appealing," says Le Bon. Key, too, was the studio they used up in Sacramento, on Stinson Beach. Le Bon and Steinbrick adopt awed tones as they talk about Panoramic House, "a castle overlooking the ocean that was hand-built in the '60s by this Norwegian eccentric," Steinbrick explains. After Cate spent three weeks locked away at home writing the

record, she spent three more weeks in the studio playing alongside Huw Evans, Stephen Black, and Mozgawa, who has high praise for Le Bon as a bandleader: "She's very good at communicating the musical environment that is in her brain," she says. "Her basic direction to me throughout the album was to play with childish abandon, not in a calculated sense – quite literally to play as if I had just sat down at the drum kit for the first time, full of wonder and the threat that everything may keel over at any moment. It was a legitimately novel approach for me. I wasn't so much a backbone as a splash of paint on the canvas."

Co-producer Noah Georgeson was also taken aback by Le Bon's ability to communicate with her collaborators. "I've worked with some great artists, but I think they'd all be a little better still if they could loosen their grip in the way that Cate does," he says. "She isn't afraid to leave the right threads loose, or let the glaze crack in the right way. This probably wouldn't be your first thought when hearing them, but her records are zen masterpieces to me."

The experiences keep feeding into each other: in March she'll take a modified version of Banana out as her touring band, and she's started working as a producer – so far, for H Hawkline, Tim Presley, and Welsh musician Alex Dingley – as an excuse to get back to Stinson as often as possible. "In the studio setting she is like a unapologetic sculptor," says Presley. "And sometimes, initially, you don't understand the method, but the result finds you at a place that you didn't think you could ever go, like finding the most creative and interesting version of you."

**W**E LEAVE KITCHEN Mouse and get into Le Bon's car to go to Topanga Canyon for a hike, driving through the hyper-accentuated LA landscape: Walt Disney Studios, gaudy ad billboards and oversized cars on the freeway. As much as the community Le Bon found in LA informed the record, so did the polarised strangeness of her newly adopted homeland and its impending election, and coming out of a 12-year relationship with Huw Evans, with whom she had originally moved to LA.

*Crab Day* takes its name from a wise observation by Le Bon's niece. Age four, she declared April Fools' Day to be "the stupidest holiday", and told her family that she would instead be celebrating Crab Day. "She spent all day drawing crabs with hair," says Le Bon. "It was like punk – you know, damn right, it is a stupid holiday!" The idea summed up her



**"I FEEL CONTENT WITH WHAT I'VE DONE – I'VE ALWAYS GIVEN MYSELF FREEDOM"**  
 CATE LE BON

headspace when she was writing the record: "That nothing made sense, everything is fucking nonsense," she says. "But within that conceit, everything is in this strange, fabricated existence. Then there's the usual feelings of anxiety and love and life, and those things go hand in hand with that. It's a coalition of the comfort and the fear that comes from realising that everything's fucking insane, and how that lives side by side."

*Mug Museum* had a fairly well-delineated lyrical scheme: inspired by the passing of her grandmother, Le Bon considered how she had shifted up in the family's matrilineal line, and how that affected her relationships. ("I love Cate's lyrics, especially on *Mug Museum*, which seemed like such a beautiful meditation on love and loss," says Nicky Wire, who invited her to sing on the Manics' "4 Lonely Roads" from 2013's *Rewind The Film*.) But the topsy-turvy state of America made Le Bon contemplate the subjectivity of all things, writing in an accordingly collage-like fashion. Across the record, she refers to herself as a motion picture film, a dirty attic filled with "milk warm monuments", "a body of dreams", and "a humid satellite with open arms". Although the images seem random, her knack for communicating an emotion – of warmth, loss, confusion – is precise and powerful.

We pull up at the entrance to Topanga Park. After a few silent, breathless minutes of hiking, the ocean appears through a clearing. "There are mountain lions, you



Drinks live, including Stephen Black and Tim Presley, Blackheath, London, September 12, 2015

LORNE THOMSON/REDFERNS

**BUYERS' GUIDE**

**ME OH MY**

IRONY BORED, 2009

Le Bon's debut is a formative outlier in her discog, owing a debt to Neil Young and minimalist Americana, as she spins stories of the dead animals of her youth into existential fables.

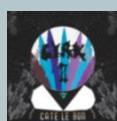
6/10



**CYRK**  
 THE CONTROL GROUP, 2012

Inspired by a trip to the Isle Of Eigg in the Hebrides, Le Bon's second starts to show off her unique guitar style and her knack for understatement.

8/10



**CYRK II**  
 THE CONTROL GROUP, 2012

Equally as lovely as its *Cyrk* counterpart, this EP collects five of the more personal songs written for Le Bon's second album. The crystalline organs of "The Eigg Sea" belie a debt to Stereolab.

7/10

**MUG MUSEUM**

TURNSTILE, 2013

Named in tribute to her crockery hoarding habits, *Mug Museum* was a place for reflecting on your place in relationships, soundtracked by Bacharach-ian ballads ("I Think I Knew") and charging Krautrock ("Wild").

9/10



**DRINKS - HERMITS ON HOLIDAY**

HEAVENLY, 2015

This full-length collaboration with White Fence's Tim Presley turned out to be a palate-cleansing wig-out, foregrounding a shared love of Faust and outsider synth music.

7/10

**CATELEBON** **MUGMUSEUM**



**CRAB DAY**

TURNSTILE, 2016

Stranger and more spartan than any of its predecessors, *Crab Day* highlights the dissonance and eeriness in Le Bon's music, along with her talent for disarmingly beautiful and affecting melodies.

9/10

“wouldn’t know until one creeps up on you – first thing you’d know would be it on your back,” she says. “What a way to go, cool story, eh? You come up here and there’s deer everywhere. It says don’t hike on your own, but I do.”

The sight of the electric-blue sea and dusky purple succulents is a far cry from Penboyr, though Le Bon’s taste for roaming alone started in the Carmarthenshire hills. She and her older sister would be kicked out of the house at weekends, and walk with their dog, cat and pet goats through the fields and forests.

When she was 11, her dad introduced her to Pavement in an attempt to wean her off the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and taught her to play guitar so she could play with him. “He was the worst!” she says of the experience. “I played the same chords for about eight years of my life so he could solo all over it. I didn’t think playing solos was even a possibility [for me]. We’d jam for a few minutes then just fight, I wanted more of a role.” As artistic relief, she joined an angsty school band that took their cues from Rage Against The Machine.

After A-levels, Le Bon was set to go and study acoustics at Imperial, when she realised she wanted to try her hand at being a musician. Age 18, she moved to Cardiff, a city that appealed as it felt like a supportive group of people rather than a distinct musical scene. “There’s no kind of sonic cement,” she says. “There’s this attitude of not having to adhere to any sort of movement that’s going on. There’s a confidence to it that’s not cocky – it’s been bolstered by having bands like the Super Furry Animals and Gorky’s Zygotic Mynci, who have this polite disregard for any scene currently going on in the UK.”

Le Bon soon met Gruff Rhys, who she calls “the most punk artist”, with real reverence. “He just does what he wants with the complete abandon of not trying to fit into anything. I think that’s what people like Bowie did, and where Krautrock came from. You can’t imitate that genesis of something – people think you can, but the only way to do it is to forget about it and just do it.” When he offered her an opening slot in 2007, “It was like I’d fucking won the lottery,” she says. “I’ve been so fortunate to have someone like Gruff, who is, to me, the greatest role model you could ever imagine for a musician or anyone creative.”

He invited her to join Boom Bip on tour, and a string of formative collaborations was set in motion: with founding Gorky’s member Richard James, and Funeral For A Friend frontman Matt Davies, and later with Rhys’ Neon Neon. Cardiff proved to be its own form of education, though Le Bon admits that now, age 33, she’s thinking of going back to school. “I’m currently torn between marine biology or furniture design and building,” she says. “You get caught up in an album cycle and then the next thing you know you’re doing another record and your next year and a half is planned out. I need to think about it sooner than later.”

Right now, however, there are clearer and more present dangers: our path to Eagle Rock has been obstructed by a rattlesnake, idly side-winding across the dirt track. Where *Uncut* is embarrassingly petrified, Le Bon is delighted at seeing one for the first time. “That’s cool!” she says, albeit quietly. “I don’t think they give a fuck unless you piss them off.” As a fairly illogical precaution, we head back to the Beechwood Café, a bright spot nestled beneath the Hollywood sign.



With Neon Neon, Hove Festival, Norway, 2008

CULT HEROES

DATBLYGU

“They’re so fucking cool...”

**T**HERE’S SO MUCH incredible Welsh music, it’s all so fucking different, and there’s a real authenticity to it because it’s in its own landscape. Datblygu are an example of that. There’s not a single person I’ve played their music to who hasn’t gone gaga for them. When Tim and I were sending songs to each other for the *Drinks* LP, I sent him *Datblygu* and he went on this wormhole of listening to everything they’ve ever done. I think they did more Peel sessions than anyone. Perfect band, y’know. I discovered them when when the Super Furry Animals did a cover of one of their songs, “Y Teimlad”, on *Mwng*. I struggle writing in Welsh, because it’s a difficult language to write in, but Gruff pulls it off and it sounds effortless, and Euros, but Dai Datblygu is just a master. He just takes it to another level. They’re one of the coolest bands ever, they’re so fucking cool.

“CATE KEEPS YOU HANGING ON EVERY NOTE, LIKE A MAD GENIUS WITH A STUTTER”  
TIM PRESLEY



**I**N THE MIDST of her formative Cardiff collaborations, Le Bon was working on her own debut album, thanks to the Super Furry Animals’ live drummer, Krissie Jenkins, who gave her unrestricted access to his studio. But, Le Bon says, the freedom ended up being detrimental, as she added layer upon layer of instrumentation to songs. “You’re so removed from the genesis of an idea, you can’t be sympathetic to it any more, and the possibilities just become more infinite in time, so I made the decision to scrap it. I couldn’t even tell you what it sounded like... just a clusterfuck with no direction.”

It was a learning curve about committing to deadlines and limitations. Her eventual debut mimicked her more refined style, and her stage name: she was born Cate Timothy, but Huw Evans jokily named her Cate Le Bon on an early gig poster, inspired by Duran Duran’s appearance on the Brits that night. The name was her only association with excess: 2009’s *Me Oh My* was released in Gruff Rhys’ Irony Bored label, and featured sparse, succinct songs about ageing and existentialism that owed a debt to Neil Young.

Le Bon’s clarion, angular guitar style came into its own on 2012’s *Cyrk*. “I’ve never been technically good so you have to make up for it with execution,” she says. “But I was terrified of playing guitar, and Sion Glyn, who was playing with me in my live band and on *Me Oh My* and *Cyrk*, he’d come over in the middle of gigs, press my fuzz pedal and go” – she mimics yelling into someone’s face – “just play a fucking solo! I had a realisation you’re trying to express something and it’s not a technically great solo but it’s got a spirit that seems to be fooling everyone. Then I started to really fucking enjoy it.”

Her love of guitar deepened further when she was invited on tour with St Vincent, who inspired her to keep honing her craft. Le Bon’s style now could go toe to toe with the likes of Tom Verlaine, Steve Malkmus, Chris Forsyth. Harking back to the lessons she got from the Furies and Gorky’s at a young age, her style is precise and masterful, yet utterly free. “She’s a great songwriter,” says Gruff Rhys. “And in this fragile time for songwriters it’s great to see her making bold artistic statements, flourishing as a writer and finding an international audience. She’s found a way to combine her dissonant and melodic attributes with great feeling.”

Later that evening, we reunite at the 30th birthday party for Warpaint’s Stella Mozgawa, who’s DJing prime cuts by the likes of Wham! and Destiny’s Child. Le Bon ends up sitting next to Alex Turner affiliate Miles Kane at the bar, which provides an unwitting contrast. Rather than come to California in search of preconceived ideas about the city as a clichéd musical rite of passage, Le Bon finds her equal in the state’s vast open borders. “I feel content with everything I’ve done. I’ve always said no to things I don’t wanna do and said yes to things I wanna do, even if it might be viewed as not cool,” she said, when I asked her about her outstanding ambitions. “I’ve always given myself that freedom.”

*Crab Day* is released April 15 via Turnstile

# BASIA BULAT GOOD ADVICE

— Produced by Jim James —

"[...] synthesized gospel colliding with stately majesty of Grizzly Bear Or Beach House"  
The Guardian ★★★★★

The Evening Standard ★★★★★

Q Magazine ★★★★★

The Observer ★★★★★

April 13 - Hoxton Bar - London, UK  
April 14 - Soup Kitchen - Manchester, UK  
April 15 - Broadcast - Glasgow, UK  
April 16 - Headrow House - Leeds, UK  
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## ALBUM BY ALBUM

# Cheap Trick

The powerpop veterans on their long career: "I hope we're still obnoxious!"

"I hope we haven't changed too much," says Rick Nielsen, as the band prepare to release their 17th studio LP. "I hope we're still obnoxious." For a group whose core members have been playing together for almost 50 years, Nielsen, bassist Tom Petersson and frontman Robin Zander have stayed remarkably faithful to the influences that spurred them into action as teenagers – primarily, the sounds of the British Invasion. "I like the same things as I did when we started," says Petersson. "We always see ourselves as a '60s band."

Aside from the late '80s and early '90s, when the band's label pushed them towards fluffier, chart-friendly fare, Cheap Trick have reliably produced witty powerpop, always performed with a tight, focused energy. At their best onstage, the band's feverishly received Japanese live album *At Budokan* is still their best-selling effort worldwide.

"It's a real live recording... it's not overdubbed," says Nielsen, still staggered by the album's success. "I always tell people, our mistakes are real!" **TOM PINNOCK**



Cheap Trick, 1977: (l-r) Tom Petersson, Bun E. Carlos, Rick Nielsen, Robin Zander

### CHEAP TRICK

EPIC, 1977



The group's classic debut – raw and raunchy melodies packed with infectious songs such as the glammy "Elo Kiddies" and aggressive "He's A Whore".

**RICK NIELSEN:** We recorded 17 songs in seven days, or something like that. We'd been playing for years by then, and we had played all these songs before in clubs. [Producer] Jack Douglas was great – for one, he loved the band, which made it easier for us, and he liked the weirder stuff, the goofier songs. "Mandocello" was, of course, written on a mandocello – it was actually an acoustic mandocello, not an electric one. It was kind of semi-popular in the 1910s or '20s, and I just liked the tuning of it – C, G, D, A. It's such a beautiful instrument that the song wrote itself.

**TOM PETERSSON:** This was done live in the studio in New York. Jack was great, he looks at the artist he is working with and tries to compliment what they're doing; he doesn't try and change them into what will sell. He just goes along with what you already do and tries to bring the best out of you. I think *Cheap Trick* really showcased what we were – but it didn't sell. "Elo Kiddies" referred to ELO, yes. We love The Move and all that. The whole British scene just captivated us, and it still does. We loved everything about it.

**NIELSEN:** We liked the first Small Faces album, and we loved The Yardbirds, The Who, and Roger Chapman and Family. When we were younger, the American stuff was Jefferson Airplane and Big Brother & The Holding Company, and that was not my kind of music.

### IN COLOR

EPIC, 1977



The cleaner, brighter follow-up included some Cheap Trick classics, such as live favourite "Hello There"; though the production still rankles with the band today.

**PETERSSON:** The first record did not sell, and the label didn't really know what to do with us. People thought we were weird and that we didn't look right, and that it was too heavy and wouldn't get radio play. They had us ditch Jack Douglas, which we did not want to do, and got us a staff producer, Tom Werman. He said, "I know how to get radio play," and all this stuff, so we grudgingly went along with it – well, we argued with him the whole time. It was not a good experience.

**NIELSEN:** Tom Werman asked us what kind of bands we liked and we said, "We like the way the Sex Pistols sounded, and The Who," and he said he didn't like the Sex Pistols but he liked The Who. It didn't translate to the finished album – we sounded more like The Guess Who! "Hello There" was written for the live shows. When we were out on tour in the early years, we never knew what to start with... That's why I wrote "Hello There", as it's like a soundcheck and intro. It's really in your face and it got the shows going in a positive way.

**PETERSSON:** It was much more fun to record in New York City – when you're in New York you can go wherever you want without a car, but in Los Angeles we were all stuck together in the boondocks somewhere in one room with no transportation! *In Color* did not sound like us at all and the only good thing was that it also did not sell, so we were kind of set free for the third record.

**NIELSEN:** We actually tried re-recording *In Color* with Steve Albini years later, in Chicago. We always wanted that album to be heavier, and it was fun to re-do. I worked with Dave Grohl recently, he talked about the Albini sessions, and said he'd like to see it released it, as well.

### HEAVEN TONIGHT

EPIC, 1978



Widely thought to be the group's finest studio effort, their third LP saw the group stretch out with "Surrender", the title track and a cover of The Move's "California Man".

**PETERSSON:** We were kind of let loose, and that's why *Heaven Tonight* is so much better. It should have been the successor to the first album, I think. We asked Werman if we could get the sounds we got live, and he didn't have any arguments against that. I think that's why it came out as well as it did – I mean, it didn't sell either but at least we were happy with it. That's the good thing about doing something you like and it's not successful, you still like it. We weren't in the studio that long, maybe for three weeks. At that time we were averaging about 290 shows a year, and recording and writing two albums a year, so it was crazy. We had shows during the sessions – it was like, "Next week we gotta go to Miami for one day then come back." It was just craziness. We just concentrated on what we were doing and tried to do the best thing we could do musically. Of course, we were broke at the time, unless someone was going to come and take us to dinner.

**NIELSEN:** I think we started playing with more emphasis on the songs here. On the first album we



**Bunch of fives:** Rick Nielsen with Cheap Trick at the 6th Annual Tommy Hilfiger Race To Erase MS, 1999

## THE UNCUT CLASSIC



### AT BUDOKAN

EPIC, 1979

**The original 'big in Japan' phenomenon, Cheap Trick's first live album, with the band assisted by thousands of screaming female fans, is still their best-selling release worldwide.**

**NIELSEN:** Queen had heard our first record before it was even released, and they asked us to go out and play Japan with them. The Japanese press were there to see Queen, but they happened to like us too, and we started getting fanmail from Japan. Later in '77, we got asked to go on tour in Japan with Kiss, and once again the Japanese press were there and that really set the ball in motion. I think "Clock Strikes Ten" was No 1 in the charts there, but we never knew that much about it. We got asked by a promoter in 1978 if we wanted

to go to Japan as headliners – it was like landing on the moon.

**PETERSSON:** That tour with Kiss was the first time I used my 12-string bass, in fact. When we came back in 1978, the Japanese label thought they'd film us for a live TV show for Japan. Then they thought, 'Hey, why don't we take the music from that television show and make it a domestic release here in Japan?'

**NIELSEN:** When we got onstage the crowd just erupted. If you watch the video, during "Ain't It A Shame", a girl jumped off the balcony onto the stage and ran over and started grabbing me – so the solo didn't happen. It was the first gig at the Budokan where they couldn't control the crowd, which was fantastic for us. When we got the tapes back, the bass drum was almost non-existent, so we had to amplify it. There were a few things that weren't done right but we didn't care, we just tried to fix what we had.

**PETERSSON:** People always say we must have boosted the screaming. No – it was drowning everything out. It's got that Beatlemania thing to it, because it was mostly younger girls in the crowd. It was crazy, that's for sure. Although there were some downsides – we were trapped, and we really couldn't go anywhere. We couldn't even look out of our hotel room. We almost got thrown out of our hotel for looking out the window – a fan saw us, ran across the street and nearly got hit by a bus. When we released *At Budokan* it just sold and sold, and started getting exported from Japan to all over the world. It started to outsell anything we'd done.

**NIELSEN:** I tell people that we made the Budokan famous and the Budokan made us famous.

did "Mandocello", but on the third album a lot of the songs were written on an electric mandocello, if you listen to the tunings. There was a lot of stuff that a lot of bands wouldn't have done, but we didn't care, we just did what we liked. Were we influenced by punk or new wave? No. By that time we were so busy touring and recording that unless we played with a band, we never heard anything.

### DREAM POLICE

EPIC, 1979



**Charting at No 6 in the US, the group's fourth studio album – featuring Nielsen's rich and sinister string arrangements – saw them reap rewards in their home country.**

**PETERSSON:** *Dream Police* was recorded before *Budokan*, and came out afterwards. The thing that really kept us afloat before was that we kept getting really good record reviews, so I think the label was kinda embarrassed, like, 'These guys are getting glowing record reviews and they're not successful... it must be the label's fault...' They hung in there with us, I think if it were anyone else, they would have dropped us.

**NIELSEN:** There were a lot of strings on this album. My parents were both opera singers and I've always been interested in that kind of music, but it had no place in what we were doing. I just thought the songs lent themselves to having strings, with "Gonna Raise Hell" and "Dream Police". Tom Werman didn't even come to the studio when we did the strings, I had to arrange and produce it along with Jai Winding, who was playing piano for us. People in the orchestra were looking at me like, 'What do you know?'

# CHEAP TRICK

➔ It was fun to do—I was like a kid in a candy store, like, ‘Wow, I can do all this stuff with the music.’ **PETERSSON:** “Gonna Raise Hell” is sort of a disco track, like the Ohio Players. It has a scary element to it. We always wanted to work with an orchestra, but Tom Werman did not want to hear about it, and he was just begrudgingly going along with it. We were in there like, “Come on, this’ll be great!” We liked to use orchestras not to sweeten things up, but to make them scarier with these violins and cellos and crazy string lines going on. That’s the way we look at orchestras — it’s really to darken things up, not sweeten it.

## ALL SHOOK UP

EPIC, 1980



**Teaming up with their heroes, Beatles producer George Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick, the group head to more experimental pop pastures.**

**NIELSEN:** George Martin had heard us and liked us enough that we asked him to work with us. We’re from the Midwest, where it’s cold in the winter and hot in the summer, but we got Geoff Emerick and George to come to our pre-production in Madison, Wisconsin, in the winter, to hear our songs — that’s an achievement on its own. They liked the stuff, so they said we’d record at their [Air] studio in Montserrat. It was kind of a paradise then, but later they had the volcano and it blew it up! We lived right on the grounds of the studio and they had cooks there. It was beautiful. We had lunch on the beach, and went out on a boat and almost drowned — all kinds of great stuff. They told us about Concorde: every Saturday it flew over Montserrat from London or Paris to somewhere in South America. Then when we resumed making the record in England, we all took the Concorde from New York to London and back. Musically, George was the best guy I’d ever worked with. He wasn’t afraid of what we were doing and we weren’t afraid of him. I think it was a good combination.

**PETERSSON:** They were so natural in their approach to everything. You’d do a great take and come back into the booth, and it was better than you expected, every time. Whatever they wanted to do they would figure out a way to make it sound as good as they could. There were never any excuses why they couldn’t do it — usually what engineers do is have a million excuses, and use these technical terms so you don’t even know what they’re talking about. We’ve worked with Geoff since then, on our *Sgt Pepper* shows, he was the soundman and arranged all the vocals — we probably did 70 shows with him.

## LAP OF LUXURY

EPIC, 1988



**Back with the original members, Cheap Trick score a US No 1 single with “The Flame” — pressures from their label are beginning to take their toll, however.**

**PETERSSON:** I was fired in 1980. We were all just really burnt out. It was a combination of us fighting with each other and with the management. Generally, if you piss a



New tricks: the current lineup with touring drummer Daxx Nielsen (far right)

couple of people off, that’s fine, but if you piss everybody off at the same time, you’re in trouble, and that’s what happened. After seven years, I came back, and we just thought, let’s start up again and keep going. We had a record of our own songs done, but the label said, “You don’t have a hit single, you need a ballad or something.” We have no problem doing other people’s songs, but we have a problem with doing other people’s songs we don’t like. The label kept throwing songs at us that were just ridiculous, they were so bad. By the time we heard “The Flame”, we’d gone through so many songs, but it came out great and it sounds like us and all that, and it was a huge hit. So as opposed to when we did our second album and it wasn’t a hit, well, now all of a sudden the label was like, “Right, we knew best...” For fuck’s sake. The next record [1990’s *Busted*] was a bit of a nightmare — their input was a bit too much, it seemed to be a watered-down version of *Lap Of Luxury*. Success worked against us in that way.

**NIELSEN:** “The Flame” was like the 10th song that the label said would be perfect for us. We’d already had nine that they thought were all the greatest, but by the time it came to 10, I was just so irritated. It’s kind of an ego-deflating thing bringing in all these other writers, and that didn’t help my self-confidence for a number of years. The success we had was fine and good, but it really cut back on me being as creative as we were on the earlier stuff.

## CHEAP TRICK

RED ANT/ALLIANCE, 1997



**Now on an independent, the group return to the intense, stripped-back sound of their first self-titled album.**

**NIELSEN:** This was a fun record to make — we did it on our own. We’d had our run of doing records for the sake of doing them. We just had fun on this one, and there’s some good stuff on there. Instead of someone bringing in a song and wanting their song on the record, by then we’d just throw it all into a pool and let the best songs come out. It needs to be fair for everyone. We’re a band, not a lead singer and a bunch of musicians, or a guitarist and a bunch of musicians — the reason we’re still together is because we’re a band.

**PETERSSON:** We were dropped from Epic, and we did one album on Warner Bros, then we were

dropped by them, too. We were then independent, and we were really left to our own devices. That’s why this stuff really sounds like us — there was no input from executives or label people. I think it really holds up. I hope someday someone can re-release it. Ian Taylor, an Englishman, engineered this album. We loved him because he had good arranging ideas and he got some great guitar sounds. We didn’t need a bunch of input, we’re not competing with anyone, we just do what we do and hope for the best.

## BANG, ZOOM, CRAZY...HELLO

BIG MACHINE, 2016



**Their 17th album finds the group, now without drummer Bun E Carlos, and lean from constant touring, still reconnecting with the spirit of the music they grew up with.**

**NIELSEN:** We recorded about 15 songs out in LA, and we also did 15 songs in Nashville, so we actually have enough for a couple of albums. We recorded whenever we could find the time to get in the studio, as we tour all the time. I would say we spent half-a-day recording every song. Pretty quick, yeah! If we get going on a song and don’t have time to finish the vocals, we’ll go back to it later. For the most part the songs were done in one or two takes, and then we take it from there. We’ve recorded a bunch of ways, but at least to get the basic track, we always play them live. It’s the best way to do it. What’s the situation with [drummer] Bun E Carlos? Well, what we say is that he is in the group, but he doesn’t record, he doesn’t tour and he’s not in photos.

**PETERSSON:** We really just go into the studio for our own enjoyment, and this is what comes out. All of us just bash ideas back and forth, and something comes out of it. If someone in the group doesn’t like a particular song, then we just won’t do it. I think this album shows what comes naturally to us. We covered “The ‘In’ Crowd” on this — we used to play it in clubs. We were doing it a few years ago in soundcheck, I think I started playing it and it all went from there. Someone came up to us and said, “Oh my God, that’s great!” So this time around I said, “Why don’t we do this song?” We keep working all the time, though... we just can’t stop. ☺

*Cheap Trick’s Bang Zoom Crazy... Hello is released on April 1 on Big Machine*

# vinyl is back?

## it never

## went away.

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**london** covent garden // **manchester** brown st //  
**nottingham** broadmarsh shopping centre



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# RAIDERS OF 'THE LOST' ARCHIVES

Are there any more great unknown records waiting to be rediscovered? *Uncut* joins the fearless sleuths and cratediggers of the world's finest reissue labels, on the trail of the next musical holy grail. "When you're able to peel back the layer and get into something that the world has never heard," says Numero Group's Ken Shipley, "that's like awesome Indiana Jones shit right there."

Story: Jason Anderson

**A** FEW YEARS AGO, Alan Bishop – a former member of the band Sun City Girls – met a man at a record shop in Indonesia. "He was a young kid, maybe 22," says Bishop, who was himself on the lookout for more of the Asian, African and Middle Eastern sounds that are the focus of his label, Sublime Frequencies. "He was well-dressed and had a driver, too. He told me, 'Yeah, I'm really into vinyl. I went to Japan and I bought a shipping container. There's 35,000 soul and R'n'B LPs inside. It's sitting at a port and waiting for my dad to ship it back here.'" The man's next stop was Cuba, where he planned to pick up another 50,000 records. "It was just insane," adds Bishop.

Every record collector likes to keep a few of these stories at the ready. They're the cautionary tales of counterparts whose compulsion to acquire vintage vinyl is so extreme, other crate-diggers respond with a mixture of awe, horror and relief that their own obsessions aren't so all-consuming. They have nightmares about places like the warehouses currently being filled by Zero Freitas, a Brazilian bus-company magnate who has so far amassed a collection of several million LPs. Like the vast building at the end of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, there's something unnerving about an archive that's too huge and unwieldy for anyone ever to sift through. And even a collection like Freitas' comprises the merest fraction of the artefacts that have accumulated on this planet over the past 140 years of recorded sound.

Yet however weighty all that history can be, the market for reissues has rarely seemed so nimble. The vinyl resurgence is a driving factor for the current boom, but it's also proof of a collective drive to discover untrammelled musical realms. South American psychedelia, Eastern Bloc electronica, spiritual jazz, Haitian funk – the range of global sounds, styles and epochs readily available to listeners continues to expand. And though the process of dissemination often takes place online, true devotees clearly regard downloaded discographies as no substitute for more tactile incarnations, hence the industriousness of Soul Jazz, Numero Group, Honest Jon's and other labels that don't just cater to these



rarefied tastes but create them, too. Signs of the market's shifting tides are many. Genres previously considered aesthetic no-fly zones – soft rock, new age – have been reassessed. Innumerable deluxe editions celebrate long-defunct acts who were ignored by or existed entirely outside the industry of their day. Meanwhile, savvy exercises in curation foster fresh takes on artists already considered heavyweights. Once regarded as craven cash-grabs, boxsets are not only back but bigger than ever – just try Magma's 12-disc *Kohnzert Zund* or the

Grateful Dead's 80-strong *Thirty Trips Around The Sun*.

There are even reissues of reissues. It can feel like no obscurity will be left in the vault, a possibility that suits Thurston Moore, a musician whose own vinyl trove has long been the stuff of legend. "It's a responsibility to share," he says, highlighting a nobler purpose behind the mania for reissues. "For me, the recordings serve as documentations of the proverbial cave-drawing proof of civilisation."

Such is the new abundance of reissues, they now outnumber new albums among the exclusive releases on Record Store Day. And though lavish editions of major back catalogues remain the biggest sellers, the market for marginalia has expanded greatly. "When we started 10 years ago, there was no competition and a hell of a lot of risk," says Andy Votel of the Manchester label Finders Keepers. "Now it seems like a pretty bankable thing to set up a reissue label."

Light In The Attic co-founder Matt Sullivan believes a wider curiosity on consumers' part is driving the growth. "People seem more open to the idea of listening to older music that is not The Beatles," he says from his office in his label's perpetually cluttered Seattle HQ.

Those buyers are also an integral part of a robust musical ecosystem they share with adventurous archival labels and savvy (if not always cooperative) collectors. Wallowing in the past has rarely felt so good, even if the potential for market oversaturation and the possibly finite number of remaining frontiers mean this golden moment may be fleeting. Best savour it while it's here.

**"PEOPLE SEEM MORE OPEN TO LISTENING TO OLDER MUSIC THAT IS NOT THE BEATLES"**

**MATT SULLIVAN**



**T**HE MUSIC BUSINESS was hardly slow to realise that repackaging the past can be a sound economic strategy for the present. RCA began its stream of Elvis comps before the '50s were even finished. By the '60s, Pickwick was filling bins with discount reissues of titles deleted by more prestigious peers. In 1979, MCA's six-LP set *The Complete Buddy Holly* set a template for countless multi-disc collections to come. There were just as many comps, too. A few – like Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music* in 1952 or Jac Holzman and Lenny Kaye's *Nuggets* in 1972 – became more influential than any of the new releases with which they shared the racks.

The late 1960s and '70s saw the beginning of a subculture of DJs and collectors dedicated to the task of ferreting out the music that had been unfairly swallowed up by the mists of time. Their finds would trade hands at hallowed grounds like Bob Abramson's House Of Oldies in New York's Greenwich Village or Soul City, Dave Godin's Northern Soul nexus in London's Covent Garden. When not busy sharing management duties for Thin Lizzy, Ted Carroll ran his Rock On stall in the old Soho Market and then opened a shop near Camden Town station in 1975. The product of his devotion to the music he heard on American Forces Network stations as a child in post-war Ireland, Carroll's cache of early rockabilly, country and R'n'B provided inspiration to London's intermingled tribes of pub-rockers and punks. His work as a dealer led to the founding of Chiswick Records, the forerunner to present-day UK reissue giant Ace.

Carroll first heard the phrase "crate-digging" about 35 years ago, though collectors were already elbow-deep by then. Says the now-retired Carroll, "People, especially in America, would go to flea markets and yard sales every Saturday or Sunday, going through loads of things. People were always looking for obscure records that were great."

An avid collector whose finds in the then-obscure regions of Krautrock and easy-listening shaped the music he'd make with Stereolab and his new band Cavern Of Anti-Matter, Tim Gane figured he'd spent a year of his life in record shops by the time he was in his thirties, and reissues were always part



Goldminers: (L-r) Josh Wright and Matt Sullivan of Seattle reissue label Light In The Attic Records



**"THE BEST STUFF RIGHT NOW IS STUFF PEOPLE NEVER KNEW EXISTED"**  
KEN SHIPLEY

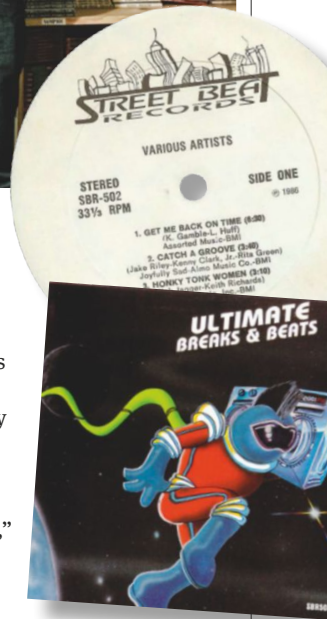
of his finds. "One of the first records I ever bought was a reissue of the first Seeds album," he admits. Since he lived around the corner from the shop, Gane remembers Moondogs in London's East Ham as a hotbed for reissue labels catering to the tastes of early rock'n'roll aficionados. "They typically operated in a very particular, esoteric area of music, not a universal or generalised one," he explains.

For hip-hop's first waves of DJs, producers and collectors, the pioneering *Ultimate Breaks & Beats* series – released in 25 instalments by Street Beat between 1985 and 1991 – fuelled a fierce trade in other vintage LPs and singles that harboured glories worth spinning and sampling. But such precious knowledge was often fiercely protected. Strut Records founder and A&R director Quinton Scott was reminded of that lesson while listening to a rare-groove show on London Weekend Radio in the late '80s. "This DJ was playing record after record that I loved and I was just waiting for him to say what they were," he says. "Right at the end of the records, he said, 'I'm not gonna tell you what this is. This is just one for the heads – they'll know what it is.' It remained a little secret. I always find that kind of thing very small-minded."

Possessive-minded collectors and DJs continue to be a pet peeve of people trying to procure rare 45s or other items needed for compilations. "These records are near and dear to them, which is great," says Matt Sullivan. "But some of these people can almost feel like these records were made for them and their basement, and that just depresses me."

Such reticence rarely does any favours to the people who made the music yet often saw little money off it. Carroll saw first-hand how reissues could rescue a recording artist from history's dustbin with the case of Link Wray. He believes the guitarist's cachet spiked in the wake of several archival releases on Chiswick in the late '70s and his new albums for Ace in the early '80s.

"Even though he was incredibly influential on people like Jimmy Page and Pete Townshend, he was virtually unknown," says Carroll. "He was living in Copenhagen on a disability pension from the US army. He's now seen as one of the most important guitarists in rock, on a par with Duane Eddy. But Eddy had countless hits at the time



I WANT MOORE

**"OBSESSIVE, UNERRING..."**

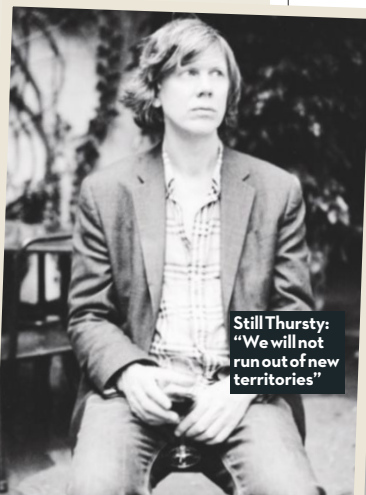
Veteran collector Thurston Moore on the state of the reissue

**D**o you still consider yourself a regular record collector? No – irregular. Yes – obsessive, unerring.

**Are you surprised by the surge of interest among archival labels in American independent rock of the late '80s and '90s?** If any sweet piece of our intellectual property falls out of print, why not bring it back into production? For much of the USA, intellectual property is the only valuable export.

**Do you worry that we'll run out of fresh musical territory to discover?** Have you ever visited archives of dialects? They're unimaginable. I am in awe of such extensive collections of our voices and their nuances. In record stores, we find gospel church choirs, obscure Cherokee peace dances, Everglade alligator songs, Maori friendship movements, poet spoken-word treaties, ballads of the Civil Rights era(s), Fado cries for sailors, modernist compositions that have had the power to elate or destroy our soul, reggae with a compassion no man has without song. In well-stocked record stores, all are welcome. These refuges are not for DJs, they're not for collector scum. These places are libraries. We will not run out of new territories in sound – perhaps if individuals become more self-obsessed, we will only run short of ears/gentle souls to listen with a present heart.

**What are some of the shops you prize above all others?** In London: Flashback, the jazz basement of Rough Trade West, the just-in bins of Lucky Seven on Stoke Newington Church Street and Honest Jon's.



Still Thirsty: "We will not run out of new territories"

whereas Link Wray was barely known apart from 'Rumble.'

That alchemical process by which an artist is rescued from obscurity by savvy collectors and enterprising reissue labels would be repeated ad infinitum over the years, thereby adding a sense of divine purpose to the grubby business of sifting through \$1 and 50p bins. Documentaries like *Searching For Sugar Man*, *A Band Called Death* and *Thunder Soul* all reinforce the popular notion of the crate-digger who stumbles upon a find of world-changing importance. This romantic myth drives newbie collectors back into well-ravaged shops in the hopes they'll find another *Inspiration Information*. As usual, the reality is different. One big difference between then and now is the internet, which has changed how we discover music just as much as it's transformed how we consume it. Gane's not the only person who's less likely to accidentally discover something great merely based on an intriguing LP sleeve – eBay and Wikipedia mean "the unknowns aren't unknown any more", he laments.

Another musician who's no stranger to the bins, Sturgill Simpson once hunted high and low for bluegrass records. "I had to literally scour the fucking earth to find some of these out-of-print recordings," he told *Uncut*. "Now it's all so magical and infuriating that the internet can lead me to things it once took me six years just to find."

Sites like Discogs have vastly reduced the chances of sellers not knowing what their wares are worth, further impairing the thrills of the hunt and the find. "Anyone with a good internet connection and a credit card can be the best record collector in the world instantly now," says Andy Votel. To Ken Shipley at Numero, crate-diggers have become an anachronism. "That's just some fantasy shit the media wants to portray of people on their stomachs crawling around basement floors," he says. "The reality is all the best records are in people's houses. And the best stuff right now is stuff that's undiscovered and people never knew existed."

Shipley has made that case with Numero's Eccentric Soul imprint, which showcases the oft-unreleased holdings of regional R'n'B, soul and gospel labels. Evidently, no bargain-bin find could compare with how it felt to end a five-year wait to open the padlocks on the Boddie Recording Company in Cleveland and behold its dusty holdings. "When you're able to peel back the layer and get into something that the world has never heard," he says, "that's like awesome Indiana Jones shit right there."

**W**HETHER THE FRUITS of their efforts are vinyl releases in editions of a few hundred or elaborate multi-format sets, the most intrepid archival labels have a common mission: to offer their buyers something richer and more revelatory than just the last few session scraps by major acts who don't need any more scrutiny. Or if they do, long-established reissue specialists like Rhino have them covered – its exhausting six-disc set for The Velvet Underground's *Loaded* is just one case in point.

Shipley first proposed his Numero MO while working at Rhino's competitor Rykodisc in the '90s. Faced with the prospect of replacing the David Bowie, Elvis Costello and Nick Drake catalogues that had been reclaimed by the majors, Shipley tried to convince his bosses that it made less sense to replace these titans than to stack up "a lot of really small interesting things that could ultimately be more profitable because they cost less money to acquire on the front end".

Another innovation was a greater emphasis on the larger stories told by all this rediscovered music. In that respect, Soul Jazz's Studio One titles are not just sublime sets of ska and reggae but part of curator Stuart Baker's tireless campaign to foster a deeper understanding of Jamaican music in all its facets. Likewise, the *London Is The Place For Me* series by Honest Jon's tells the epic saga of Caribbean



## RODRIGUEZ COLD FACT



## LOST AND FOUND

# FINALLY FAMOUS

Terrible record deals, bad timing, worse luck – any number of things can derail artists' careers and leave them far from the limelight they might've deserved. That's why the music world loves nothing more than the true-life fairy tales of acts who belatedly get their due. Ken Shipley of the Numero Group may rightly consider such cases "accidents" that happen only a few times per decade, but here are four examples that owe huge gratitude to the crate-diggers in their corner.

## RODRIGUEZ

Oscar-winning doc *Searching For Sugar Man* told the strange story of how Sixto Rodriguez (inset below left) – a Dylan-esque Mexican-American troubadour whose two early-'70s LPs sold poorly in the States – became a countercultural hero in South Africa, where he reportedly outsold Elvis. Yet he didn't earn wider renown internationally until after Light In The Attic's Matt Sullivan heard a bootleg of *Cold Fact* in the early 2000s and re-issued both albums in 2009.

## WILLIAM ONYEABOR

The Nigerian musician's dazzling albums of the '70s and '80s were much prized by Afro-funk collectors but unknown outside their circle until the 2013 Luaka Bop comp *Who Is William Onyeabor?*, the fruit of a years-long and very patience-testing negotiation with the musician, now an evangelist with complicated feelings about his early works. Quinton Scott tried to do a comp for Strut years before, but conceded defeat. "I completely take my hat off to Luaka Bop," he says. "That was a very difficult project getting off the ground."

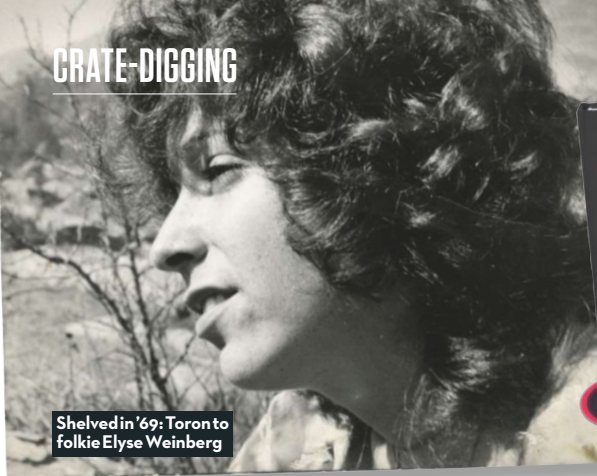
## LINDA PERHACS

After her spellbinding psych-folk debut album, *Parallelograms*, slipped into obscurity in 1970, Perhacs gave up music to become a dental hygienist. Her cult of admirers in the intervening decades included Beck and Daft Punk. Wild Places' CD reissue in 2003 turned on everyone else and admirers like Julia Holter guested on Perhacs' sophomore effort, *The Soul Of All Natural Things*, in 2014.

## SYL JOHNSON

His sides with Willie Mitchell and Hi Records in the '70s were enough to secure Johnson's status as a great of Southern soul, but it turned out that was only a sliver of the picture. Comprising the music he made for Federal, Zachron and other labels from 1959 to 1976, Numero's 81-track *Complete Mythology* box showed him to be a true giant. Shipley considers it his most satisfying achievement. "That was a years-long process to get him to come around and understand that this is a super-important thing," he says. "I knew that if done right, it could change the way people thought about him."





Shelved in '69: Toronto folkie Elyse Weinberg



➔ migration to the UK. Light In The Attic has benefited from some great stories, from the search for Mexican-American folk-rocker Rodriguez by his South African fans to the bizarre tale of Lewis, the suave Canadian who surfaced in mysterious circumstances after the label reissued his first album in 2014. "All these projects start with us liking the music, but the stories are an integral part of it sometimes," says Sullivan. "What happened with Lewis was like a Hollywood biopic."

Even larger narratives can be discerned across the wider span of reissue endeavours. One is the English-speaking world's gradual realisation that the musical traditions of other cultures must be regarded as more than exotic curios. Alan Bishop sees Sublime Frequencies as a successor to Moses Asch's Folkways label and Nonesuch's Explorer Series in that regard even if he eschews their drier, more musicologist-oriented bent. "It's an extension of the same idea," says Bishop, "of trying to grasp some of the realities that are not available to the usual American or European on a daily basis."

Along with the drive to challenge that cultural bias comes an acknowledgment of a gender bias, too, and the reissue boom has benefited many female artists who plainly deserved better. Recent examples include Elyse Weinberg, a Canadian folk-rocker and friend of Neil Young who was a regular of Laurel Canyon and the Troubadour but whose career was stymied by business troubles. (Alas, the reissue world itself is a largely male preserve, with notable exceptions such as Dust-to-Digital's April Ledbetter and

ONCE REGARDED AS CASH-GRABS, BOXSETS ARE BIGGER THAN EVER



Sheila Burgel, compiler of terrific collections of girl-group pop for Ace and Rhino.)

More such artists will undoubtedly emerge during a journey through the past that many believe will never end. "I'm not worried that we'll run out of music," says Votel. "Being in the music industry was everybody's favourite hobby in the '60s and '70s – yet it was a restrictive time, too. For every released album, there are a hundred unreleased albums. For every band that did one album, they did a failed or refused second album. That's pretty much the size of it."

What's more, the chaos of the present means there's always more past to plunder. "It's endless," says Sullivan. "Just think of the zillion bands who are on the planet right now – if you listen to music 24-7, how many of them do you even have time to listen to?"

And for all the advantages of the internet age, it's a daunting challenge to get even a tiny fraction of this music back into the hands of consumers (at least in its legally legitimate forms as opposed to the ubiquitous bootlegs). Light In The Attic's new This Heat reissues took four years to sort out. Finders Keepers needed 10 to do right by the soundtrack of Alejandro Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain*.

Numero will need many more years to realise projects currently being held under wraps lest competitors try to horn in on the same territory. "You gotta keep this shit super-tight," says Shipley. "There's room for 100,000 labels to go out and start putting out really interesting music from everywhere that isn't getting covered," says Alan Bishop. "I just think it's wide open and there isn't enough time to process it all, anyway. I know I'm gonna die before I get to hear all I want to hear or do all I want to do." ☛

BOXES OF DELIGHTS

THREE ESSENTIAL REISSUES

**ORK RECORDS: NEW YORK, NEW YORK** NUMERO GROUP, 2015

A fresh angle on the CBGB era is hard to devise, but Numero nailed it with this history of the short-lived label that released the debut 45s by Television and Richard Hell. But when it came to telling the Ork story, a stash of photos and paperwork – found in a storage locker – was even more valuable than the tunes. Says Ken Shipley, "There are people who might've looked at it and gone, 'There's nothing here, fuck it.' We looked at it and thought, 'There is something here, we just have to tease it out.'" **9/10**

**MARSHALL ALLEN PRESENTS SUN RA AND HIS ARKESTRA:**

**IN THE ORBIT OF RA** STRUT, 2014  
Released to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the space-jazz icon's birth (at least the one on Planet Earth), Strut's double-disc survey owes its impeccable selection to nonagenarian Arkestra bandleader Marshall Allen. Gilles Peterson did a great job with last year's companion mix, too. Says Quinton Scott, "You're never gonna do the ultimate Sun Ra primer, but just having Marshall Allen and Gilles

Peterson involved, we knew we could give a taster of what he was about." **10/10**

**NATIVE NORTH AMERICA**

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC, 2014  
Canadian DJ and collector Kevin "Sipreano" Howes provided Light In The Attic with its most recent Grammy nomination for this startling set of little-heard folk, rock and country by First Nations recording artists in the US and Canada. **8/10**





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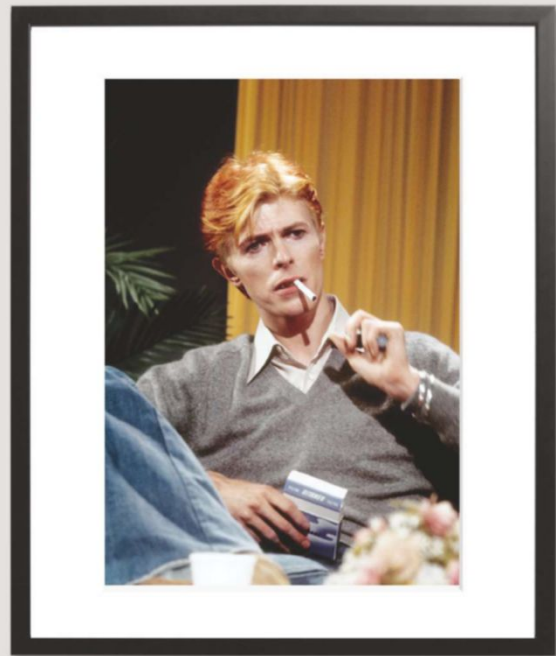
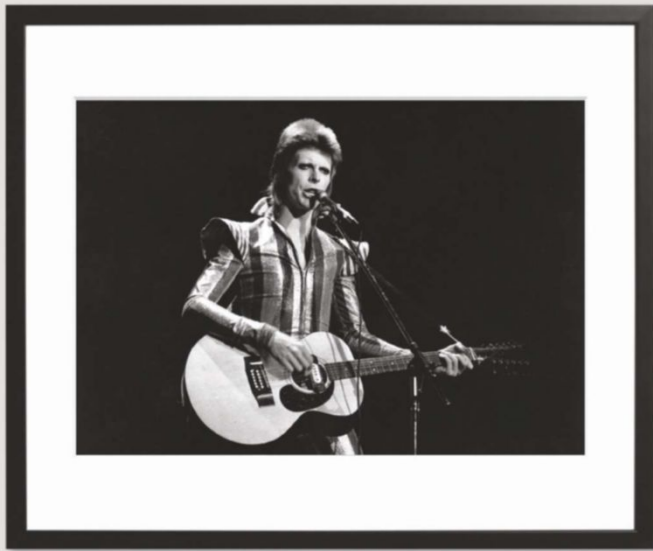
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RETO STERCHI



## STURGILL SIMPSON

### A Sailor's Guide To Earth

ATLANTIC

Nashville upstart's bold, gorgeous and wild song-cycle about a sailor's letters home. *By Jason Anderson*

**TRACKLIST**

- 1 Welcome To Earth (Pollywog)
- 2 Breakers Roar
- 3 Keep It Between The Lines
- 4 Sea Stories
- 5 In Bloom
- 6 Brace For Impact (Live A Little)
- 7 All Around You
- 8 Oh Sarah
- 9 Call To Arms

**9/10** STURGILL SIMPSON HAS a few predictions about the reactions he'll get for his third album. "I'm sure there'll be all kinds of hyperbole and pontification," he tells *Uncut* not long after *A Sailor's Guide To Earth* is ready for outsiders' ears. His tone contains a mixture of embarrassment over the effusive praise he's attracted over the past two years, as well as exasperation over some of the claims made on his behalf since he was anointed as Nashville's latest epitome of all that is good, true and real in

country music. It's a heavy mantle he shares with fellow upstarts Jason Isbell and Chris Stapleton. Simpson knows his new album – his first since signing with Atlantic last year – may not go down well in more conservative quarters. "I'm sure I've 'abandoned' country," he groans. "Whatever – I can't worry about that shit." With *A Sailor's Guide To Earth*, Simpson has thrown one giant, loopy, gorgeous and wild curveball in the direction of anyone who thought they had him sussed out. Ranging far and wide from swampy, horn-heavy

# New Albums

→ R'n'B to bucolic Moog-enhanced soundscapes to lush, string-laden balladry to unbridled rock abandon – sometimes all in the space of the same song – the album's musically expansive nature is just as impressive as its conceptual ambition and emotional heft. Drawing heavily on his own experiences, feelings and fears, Simpson's song cycle assumes the perspective of a lonely sailor who's been away from home for far too long and who expresses his love and longing in letters to his son and wife. That nautical theme is further suggested by the occasional noises of birds, water and ship bells that recur between tracks and intermingle with the string and pedal steel parts to create an appropriately watery sense of flow in the album's gentlest passages, like the graceful early moments of the opening track "Welcome To Earth (Pollywog)". "Hello, my son, welcome to the Earth/You may not be my last but you'll always be my first," Simpson croons in his sturdy baritone. It's an achingly lovely moment, but the music here never stays placid for long – what starts as a moving ballad about the transformative experience of new parenthood takes a hard left turn to become an exuberant Stax-style showstopper.

Like any work with this level of ambition and scope, *A Sailor's Guide To Earth* could've easily crashed on a reef if any single one of its elements went wrong. That may be why we don't often get to hear genre-busting concept albums about forlorn seafarers. Still, it's a telling indication of the degree of daring and sophistication at hand that artistic gestures which might have seemed contrived or ill-conceived in other contexts – like, say, transforming Nirvana's "In Bloom" into a majestic country-soul ballad worthy of Charley Pride – yield some of the most startling results.

Of course, there were early indications that the 37-year-old Simpson was hardly on the path of a new traditionalist even if that's what he most resembled at the time of 2013's *High Top Mountain*, an engaging set of old-school C&W that garnered comparisons with Waylon

Sturgill Simpson's new album let him "fully realise a lot of music that I love and had always heard in my head"



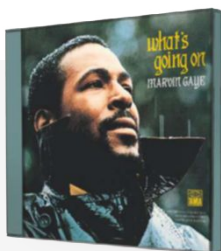
Jennings but paid more fealty to Ricky Skaggs and Keith Whitley. Before Simpson made his belated breakthrough as a solo act, he wielded a Telecaster in Sunday Valley, a band with a knack for playing bluegrass at a volume and velocity more suited to speed metal (*A Sailor's*

*Guide To Earth* includes a touching revamp of "Oh Sarah", an expression of devotion and a plea for patience that was one of the sweetest songs in the band's repertoire).

As for *High Top Mountain's* much-lauded 2014 follow-up, *Metamodern Sounds In Country*

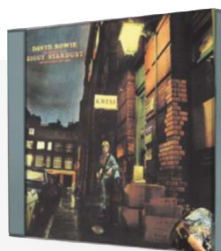
## HOW TO BUY... A SAILOR'S LIFE

The inspirations behind Sturgill Simpson's new record



### MARVIN GAYE What's Going On

Sturgill Simpson cites the influence of singer Bill Withers on *A Sailor's Guide To Earth* - his love of Stax and Motown is just as clear. But when it comes to the new album's shape, flow and thematic richness, the biggest inspiration is Marvin Gaye's 1971 masterpiece, a song cycle written from the perspective of a soldier returning home from Vietnam.



### DAVID BOWIE The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust...

Inspired by Bowie's "fearlessness of evolution," Simpson was crushed to learn of his passing upon arriving to play some UK solo shows in January. (Just by chance, he'd spent the flight listening to *Ziggy Stardust and Hunky Dory*.) A note on the sleeve of *A Sailor's Guide...* pays homage to the back cover instruction on *Ziggy*: "TO BE PLAYED AT MAXIMUM VOLUME."



### NIRVANA Nevermind

Simpson honours a record that got him through adolescence by turning "In Bloom" into a majestic piece of country-soul. It was only after recording his Cobain tribute that he realised he'd misremembered the line "Don't know what it means when I say yeah" as "What it means to love someone". "Even knowing what he said now, I can listen to the song and I still hear it my way," says Sturgill.



### T.REX Electric Warrior

The song that provides *A Sailor's Guide To Earth* with its exhilarating finale, "Call To Arms" was born out of a ferocious live medley of "The Motivator" and "Listening To The Rain", a bluegrass standard by The Osborne Brothers. Says Simpson, "I was like, 'Man, we're having too much fun with this jam - I want to write my own song like this instead of playing Marc Bolan's record!'"

*Music*, the references to Buddha and psilocybin in “Turtles All The Way Down”, the stately reinvention of When In Rome’s “The Promise” and the psych-rock flourishes of “It Ain’t All Flowers” showed an eagerness to venture beyond Americana’s established frontiers.

A grimy slice of ZZ Top-derived sleaze that serves as the theme for the HBO series *Vinyl*, “Sugar Daddy” was another harbinger of Simpson’s direction, even though that track was actually recorded several months after the new album was finished late last year.

With Simpson serving as his own producer – largely the result of his friend Dave Cobb’s jam-packed schedule, who produced Sturgill’s first two albums before handling studio duties for Isbell and Stapleton, too – *A Sailor’s Guide To Earth* was recorded in an astonishing four-day sprint in Nashville’s Butcher Shoppe studio with engineer David Ferguson. Simpson spent two more days for horns and strings at Atlantic Studios in New York, enlisting the Dap-Kings. Their contributions add further punch to “Keep It Between The Lines”, a swaggering country-rocker in which Simpson’s surrogate sailor dispenses advice to his youngster (“Do

## SLEEVE NOTES

**Produced by:** Sturgill Simpson  
**Recorded at:** Butcher Shoppe, Nashville; Atlantic Studios, New York  
**Personnel includes:** Sturgill Simpson (vocals, acoustic and 12-string guitars, Moog synthesiser), Laur Joamets (electric and slide guitars), Dave Roe (bass), Jefferson Crow (piano), Robert Emmett (organ, Wurliizer, Moog synthesiser), Miles Miller (drums), Dan Dugmore (steel guitar), Jeff Steinberg (horn and string arrangements), The Dap-Kings (horns)

*what I say, don’t do what I’ve done/It don’t have to be like father, like son”).* Elsewhere, they enhance the sweep of “All Around You”, a soul ballad with a grandeur befitting *Otis Blue*, and amplify the fury of “Call To Arms”, a crazed collision of Southern rock, hard funk and berserker bluegrass in which Simpson’s sailor angrily bemoans the state of the world his baby son will someday inherit.

Though that closer is the stormiest song on the album by a wide margin, even the most delicate moments on *A Sailor’s Guide To Earth* have traces of

its bravado. Really, the whole endeavour is born of a drive to express himself in whatever musical ways befit his needs. Rather than seem unduly highfalutin, its overarching tale of a man at sea (in several senses of the phrase) provides a through-line for a series of musical settings and emotional sentiments that might’ve seemed excessively eclectic. Simpson’s sense of humour – especially in “Sea Stories”, a caustic account of his messy stint in the US Navy – further imbues his song cycle with great warmth and humanity. And whatever the naysayers may say about the all-inclusive vision of American music he offers here, Simpson hasn’t abandoned country – he’s just made it big enough to contain all he wants to do. The man’s only boundary now is the horizon.



## Q&A

### Sturgill Simpson on missing his family, covering Nirvana and telling horn players to go “apeshit”...

**YOU MAY WRITE the songs as a sailor’s letters home, but so much of *A Sailor’s Guide To Earth* is really about you missing your young son. How did that become the album’s emotional core?** I was in a tough space last year. I’m not gonna sit here and complain because I have the greatest job in the world and everything’s sort of come into focus for me, but it was such an intense transition when things took off. I’ve lived out of a bag my entire life – I’ve always been moving. My son was born right around the time that *Metamodern Sounds...* came out and then we were gone. For a solid year-and-a-half, I slept in my bed at home about 40 times. It wasn’t so much like I felt, “I don’t want to do this anymore”, but I had all this guilt and I was homesick and I felt like I was missing a lot. It just took a big emotional toll, more than I ever thought it might. I don’t ever want to make a record unless I feel like I really have something honest to share and that’s what I was dealing with. I knew I just wanted to make something beautiful for my son. It might sound self-absorbed, but that’s where my life was at.

**The new album’s your most elaborate production by far – how did it feel to get to scale up?** There’s nothing worse than just having strings and horns for the sake of having strings and horns. A lot of people incorrectly use horns as a padding or just as some ambiguous noise in the background. For me, it was always about the Motown and Stax records where it was like a second rhythm section almost – everything had so much purpose, lift, punch and power. So we called Jeff Steinberg – he lives in Nashville now and did a lot of work for Motown. I wanted somebody who knew how to accentuate what was already there on the songs. I learned a lot from him just from the two days he was in the room. It was a lot of fun with the Dap-Kings, too. The rest of the record was so obsessively arranged and produced – it was like every note had to serve maximum purpose. With that final song “Call To Arms”, we’re talking about war and society eating itself so I said, “You guys have full rein to just go apeshit.” The reference was *Blonde On Blonde* and those early Dylan records where there’s this

intentional danger and sloppiness. I just told The Dap-Kings to *Bitches Brew* the shit out of it!

**The horns serve gentler purposes, too – how did you want them to complement the nautical theme?** I knew certain elements of nautical life had to be represented. So you have the horns pushing air, representing foghorns or ship horns. And blending the strings with the steel created a fluid, breathing movement, almost like water. I had to figure out how to capture those feelings with the right instruments. Being on Atlantic, I had this giant toolbox at my disposal for the first time. I got to fully realise a lot of music that I love and had always heard in my head.

**How’d you get the idea of covering Nirvana’s “In Bloom”?** That was my wife’s idea. “The Promise” was hers, too – maybe I should just let her pick out a covers record for me to record. What happened was, I realised, “OK, I’m talking about my life but I’m also talking to my son and my mistakes and lessons learned and what I want him to take from that. So I’ve also got to represent that awkward phase that every teenager goes through, where your identity hasn’t really formed and you’re trying to figure out where you fit in.” And my wife said, “Well, what were you listening to at that age?” And I was like, “Nirvana – who wasn’t?” I was that latchkey kid from the broken

home so I felt like those records were for me. There were a lot of days where those headphones and those records got me through some stuff that maybe would’ve been tougher without them. And I wanted to capture that. I know it’s not what he wrote it about – what the song’s actually about I can relate to too in terms of other things going on with my job. But I felt the lyrics captured that

young, sexually charged point where you’re like a loaded gun, running around cluelessly. If I was gonna do it, I wanted to try to make the most beautiful tribute to Kurt that we possibly could.

**It’s amazing to hear what it adds to this album that’s already so unpredictable and so hard to categorise. Did you really feel like you had no restrictions?** I didn’t have to compromise at all. I finally feel I’m hearing me, if that makes sense.

“I wanted to try to make the most beautiful tribute to Kurt Cobain that we possibly could”



# BEN WATT

## Fever Dream

UNMADE ROAD

Everything But The Girl's man offers an elegiac monument to middle age. *By Wyndham Wallace*

**9/10** THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN pop music, initially seen as a fleeting youth movement, and age, its sworn enemy, has come far. Neil Young's famous battle cry seems long forgotten, not least by Young himself, while the reaction to David Bowie's recent death suggests we now expect our musical deities to be indestructible, not incendiary.

As a 53-year-old, Ben Watt's not only old enough to have attended his own fair share of funerals, but has also looked death head on. His 1996 book, *Patient*, related his struggle with the rare, life-threatening disease Churg-Strauss Syndrome, and *Fever Dream* – the follow-up to 2014's acclaimed *Hendra* – confronts related themes with similar courage. Suffused in both the dread mortality inspires and the peace that comes with accepting its inevitability, it simultaneously addresses the effects that the passing of years has on one's relationships and the compromises these demand.

Not that it's written exclusively as a first-person memoir. When Watt sings of how "*there's still so much I want to do*" on "Winter's Eve", he's in character, telling the story of a man who's "*so full of rage, still so aggrieved/Stuck at the door of winter's eve*". His tone, however, is equal parts desperate and galvanised, informed by the universally unforgiving nature – and implications – of our ephemerality. "Women's Company", meanwhile, tells of a businessman who laments an irrevocable decision to let go the institution that once defined him: "*An offer came to buy him out/Recklessly he shelved his doubt/And sold up to regret it bitterly.*" The resignation in his ensuing silence – "*Can't think what I missed the most,*" Watt notes poignantly, "*Sentimental stuff most probably*" – is heartbreakingly understated.

Watt's empathy is matched by observations on time's distortion of the nature of love, something that, as he sings on "Between Two Fires", "*can last*

### TRACKLIST

- 1 Gradually
- 2 Fever Dream
- 3 Between Two Fires
- 4 Winter's Eve
- 5 Women's Company
- 6 Faces Of My Friends
- 7 Running With The Front Runners
- 8 Never Goes Away
- 9 Bricks And Wood
- 10 New Year Of Grace

# AtoZ

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

- p68 KEVIN MORBY**
- p70 THE JAYHAWKS**
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- p77 GRAHAM NASH**
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- p83 TIM HECKER**

## Q&A

Ben Watt

**You're best known as one half of Everything But The Girl and as a DJ. Do you see solo work as a radical departure?**  
I began as a singer-songwriter-guitarist in 1980. My first single was produced by Kevin Coyne. On my second release, an EP, I invited Robert Wyatt to collaborate. I was only 19. My debut album then went to No 1 on the UK indie album chart. Yes, I then took a 30-year diversion, which muddies the waters, but I feel happier now with this music than at any time for ages.

**Does it concern you that people might think some of these songs are specifically about you and Tracey (Thorn)?**  
Not at all. Some are. We have been together a long time. I try to talk about what that means: how love is complicated; how it requires compromises; how we are often trapped inside ourselves; how that doesn't stop you loving someone.

**Should people wait for Everything But The Girl to record again?**  
No. Just try to enjoy what we're both doing now. Tracey's become a brilliant writer and columnist, and I hope I'm making good records. Neither of us are nostalgists. Trying to say new things is better.  
*INTERVIEW: WYNDHAM WALLACE*

sophistication. Bernard Butler's discreet guitar licks are as seductively lazy and warmly distorted as those of Neil Young's *On The*

*Beach*, while double bassist Rex Horan (Neil Cowley Trio) and drummer Martin Ditcham provide a pleasantly unhurried rhythm section. The spacious live sound curated by engineer Bruno Ellingham helps recall Ditcham's work on Talk Talk's *Spirit Of Eden*, although Paul Weller's *Wild Wood* – which, like *Fever Dream*, is fuelled by pastoral meditations and a penchant for Traffic – offers another touchstone.

Amid all of this, Watt's voice, furthered by the richness that maturity has brought, beds in beautifully. That he's as comfortable presenting homilies like "Everyone has limits from the start/*Finding what they are is the tricky part*" ("Between Two Fires") as singing of "a liminal collusion" ("Running With The Frontrunners") speaks of both his articulacy and his relaxed, confident delivery.

He concludes with "New Year Of Grace", a metal resonator guitar providing a brittle sense of frailty as Marissa Nadler's hushed backing vocals usher us towards a certain end. "I see myself, I see a lived-in face/*If one that's in search of grace*", Watts sings, and this elegant mixture of acceptance, defiance, resignation and the wisdom gained from each, brings the album to a sanguine close. Age may wither us, Watt seems to be testifying, but it needn't provoke us to burn out or fade away.

## SLEEVE NOTES

► **Recorded at:** RAK Studio 2, with overdubs recorded by Bernard Butler at 355, and by Ben Watt and Bruno Ellingham at Northern Heights  
**Produced by:** Ben Watt and engineered by Bruno Ellingham  
**Personnel:** Ben Watt (vocals, guitars, piano, synthesiser), Bernard Butler (guitar), Rex Horan (double bass, electric bass guitar), Martin Ditcham (drums, congas, percussion), Jim Watson (organ, synthesiser), MC Taylor and Marissa Nadler (backing vocals)

a lifetime/Other times it tires". Displaying a touching sense of intimacy, "Never Goes Away" recalls fondly how he once "felt your heart beat through your dress/Showing up your tenderness", but on "Gradually" he asks, "After all this time/Are we not who we used to be?" Likewise, on "Faces Of My Friends" he exhibits a blunt candour typical of the album – "A 12-hour drunken heart-to-heart/Is as good a place as anywhere to start" – before quietly indulging his nostalgia on "Running With The Front Runners", a rumination on East London's gentrification, though "Bricks And Wood", in contrast, finds him returning to the derelict site of his childhood home, forced by its desolation – even "the beech tree at the front was gone" – to concede, "It's better to move on/Because the past is gone."

Appropriately, Watt leans throughout on the mature jazz-folk that inspired him to record *North Marine Drive*, his 1983 debut. The comparisons this earned with Tim Buckley (whose "Buzzin' Fly" also provided the name for Watt's house music label) remain valid, and there are hints here too, in the nimble bossa nova of "Faces Of My Friends" and the acoustic slip and slide of "Running With The Front Runners", of prime John Martyn and David Crosby. Watt's colleagues further underline such



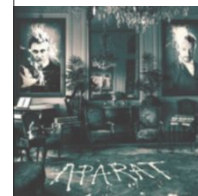
## MASAMI AKITA & EIKO ISHIBASHI

**Kouen Kyoudai**  
EDITIONS MEGO

**Noise meets prog in warped Jim O'Rourke production**

7/10

If you only know Eiko Ishibashi for the prog-pop, Steely-Dan-loving albums she's recently been releasing on Drag City, *Kouen Kyoudai* lets you in on a whole other side of her personality. Here, she collaborates with Masami Akita, aka Japanese noise giant Merzbow, on two side-long explorations of *sturm und drang*. It's particularly satisfying to hear Ishibashi illuminating Akita's deep fug of noise with all kinds of new sparks of tonal energy: there are some thrilling moments in "Slide" where you can hear the two players tussling across the stereo spectrum, Ishibashi's organ and piano storming through the haze.  
*JONDALE*



## APARAT

**Aparat**  
EXIT

**Audacious four-handed keyboard wizardry**

When Rip Rig + Panic's Mark Springer and Penguin Café's Arthur Jeffes locked themselves in the studio with several banks of keyboards including grand piano, dulcitone, harmonium, celeste and melodica, it was a safe bet they'd emerge with something intriguing and distinctive. But expectations are exceeded with a series of 13 dazzlingly inventive extemporisations that variously channel Eno, John Cage, Satie, Roedelius, Bach, Philip Glass, Jan Garbarek's *Officium*, Michael Nyman, Ludovico Einaudi and Max Richter into something that sounds fresh and original. To what degree the pieces are improvised or pre-arranged is lost in irrelevance, for the sonic variation is as seamless as it is endless.  
*NIGEL WILLIAMSON*

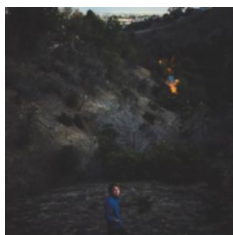
8/10

## KEVIN MORBY

### Singing Saw

DEAD OCEANS

Beautiful third solo album by former Woods man. By Peter Watts



9/10

Kevin Morby's superb third album is the sound of a man gently losing his mind to music and not caring all that much, most of the time. "My head ain't right," he confesses on mid-album rocker "Dorothy", while on "Black Flowers" he utters a detached

"Oh no, there goes my head", with the idle curiosity of a man on acid. "Will I lose my mind?" he asks matter-of-factly on the circulatory "Ferris Wheel", before answering his own question with a shrug. "Sometimes." Easy come, easy go.

Formerly a member of Jeremy Earl's laidback psych-poppers Woods, Morby takes some of that band's playfully warped atmosphere and solders it to more traditional songwriting inspired by the likes of Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. Morby's deadpan voice is scarily Dylan-like, never more so than on the album's quicksilver country waltz closer, "Water", where the verbal dexterity and sneering, "I never asked for their names, they never asked for mine," could have come from Dylan himself. Morby met his producer, Sam Cohen, while working on a project to recreate *The Last Waltz*, and *Singing Saw* was recorded in Dylan's Woodstock, though it was mostly written in LA. The album's tone hops sure-footedly between the coasts, as if Morby was taking the sepia charms of The Band and twisting them psychedelically out of shape.

*Singing Saw* begins with the sound of its namesake instrument on the acoustic "Cut Me Down", and that curious device, an instrument only by accident, is an appropriate motif for an album obsessed with the concept of turning imagined music into reality, creating sounds both ancient and modern. This is an LP steeped in nature, and pastoral allusions are rife – coyotes, vultures, gardens, mountains – inspired by Morby's nocturnal walks around Mount Washington in east LA – but Morby doesn't abandon the city entirely. On "I Have Been To The Mountain", he takes an angry swipe at police killings of black men in US cities – "Have you heard the sound/Of a man stop breathing, pleading," he sings, referring to the death of Eric Garner, who was put in a chokehold by an NYPD officer.

"I Have Been To The Mountain" is the album's second song and the point at which it bursts into life with the sound of gorgeous gospel harmonies – one of the album's constant highlights – followed by a ziggurat solo underpinned by an ominous, rumbling "Guns Of Brixton" bassline, a mix of sounds that shows the ambition and accomplishment of the LP. "Watch me sing along," Morby implores, as the tune swells. The theme continues on the hallucinatory blues of "Singing Saw": now he's "sung a song, then I came back down the mountain", chased by a singing



#### SLEEVE NOTES

##### Produced by:

Sam Cohen

Recorded at: Isokon Studios, Woodstock, New York

Personnel: Kevin Morby (voice, guitar, piano), Sam Cohen (guitar, bass, drum, keyboard), Marco Benevento (piano, keyboard), Nick Kinsey (drums, perc), Justin Sullivan (drums, perc), Hannah Cohen, Lauren Balthrop and Alecia Chakour (backing harmonies), Oliver Hill and Eliza Bag (string arr), Alec Spiegelman (saxophone, flute), Cole Kamen-Green (trumpet), John Andrews (musical saw)

saw. Here, the saw is both instrument of creativity and tool of destruction, and the music that's always in his mind is something to fear, to remove. "Got a songbook, in my head," he chants, as John Andrews' singing saw buzzes. "Up the hill and I went rid of it."

The album is beautifully structured like this, with narrative threads and recurring thoughts picked up and passed from song to song. It's also self-referential but, crucially, never arch. After the lullaby "Drunk And On A Star" ("Have you heard my guitar singing?"), comes the bracing, brilliant centerpiece, "Dorothy", laced with great piano and trumpet, and inspired by a trip to a fishing port in Portugal. Again, Morby "was thinking about a song" as he plays the distracted, needy lover. It ends with Morby describing

the constituent parts that make up the sound of the song in his head – choir, drummer, guitar, piper – the instruments joining in as it sweeps towards a frantic, majestic climax. The piano has its moments, too, never more so than on beautiful confessional "Ferris Wheel", a song inspired by Ethiopian jazz and which swoops round and round, with Morby exposed against his own faltering piano. It's followed by the see-saw "Destroyer" ("I'm out wandering the streets/Silently carrying a song...") before the album closes with the brilliant pairing "Black Flowers" and "Water". The former is again self-referential – "I am writing a songbook on a mountain", "the willow with her singing saw" – as he sings of the invasion of a personal Eden by black flowers, Morby's voice increasingly swamped by the surrounding piano, harmonies and singing saw like brambles round a rose. The conclusion arrives with "Water", a countryish stream-of-consciousness, with Morby begging for water, relief to douse his flames, still singing about songs he's sung and plans to sing.

## Q&A

Kevin Morby

### How did you write *Singing Saw*?

I moved to Mount Washington, a very beautiful, rural part of Los Angeles. I'd go the whole day not seeing anybody, writing and recording, and then in the evening walk round the neighbourhood. The house had a piano. I didn't know how to play; it was like learning a new language. I was able to mess around and wrote all the string melodies and harmonies on the piano. I met Sam Cohen and we went to his friend's place in Woodstock to record. We planned to build it up together, but Sam began to call up people and they were all incredible musicians. For the harmonies, he was able to put together three women who had never sung together before.

### Why a singing saw?

It's such an incredible instrument, because it was made for another use entirely, but then people got music out of it. When I walk around LA after sunset, it's very eerie; I always feel like the plants are watching me, and I thought if there was a soundtrack to my walks, it would be the singing saw.

### A lot of the songs are about singing – why is that?

I usually write on tour, but here I was in a quiet room surrounded by my music and it was like being in a dream. I had a profound realisation of how much I love music, how much it means to me. I had this incredible moment of love for music and I think it comes out of that.

INTERVIEW: PETER WATTS



**AUTOLUX**  
**Pussy's Dead**  
30TH CENTURY RECORDS

**Danger Mouse-approved third from Los Angeles shoegazers**

Autolux have never been much more than a niche concern, but have come

with valuable co-signs – from T Bone Burnett, who signed them to his DMZ label, or Nine Inch Nails, who took them out as support while touring *With Teeth*. Their benefactor this time is Brian Burton, aka Danger Mouse, who evidently hears something in their moody atmosphere-building. By and large, *Pussy's Dead* reveals them as a muso sort of band, “Soft Scene” and “Junk For Code” more about hypnotic rhythms and gauzy textures than especially memorable songs. It’s not totally without its merits, though, best heard on “Change My Head”, a Lennonesque piano ballad polished to a chrome gleam.

LOUIS PATTISON

**6/10**



**ANDREW BIRD**  
**Are You Serious**  
LOMA VISTA/DECCA

**More smart eclecticism, with added heart, from Los Angeles multi-instrumentalist**

His most starkly autobiographical work so

far, Andrew Bird’s eighth album dwells on his personal relationships, notably those with his wife and young son, and the weight that comes with familial responsibility. The chugging “Valleys Of The Young” is a fear-filled birth-to-death epic, while the sweetly obsessive “Roman Fade” chronicles Bird’s first few sightings of his future wife. As ever, he showcases a poetic turn of phrase and hopscoches across a dizzying array of styles: “Truth Lies Low” is ’70s soul with gentle flourishes of violin while “Left Hand Kisses”, featuring vocals by Fiona Apple, is a terrific country two-hander in which Apple’s hopefulness wrestles with Bird’s despair.

FIONA STURGES

**7/10**



**BITCHIN BAJAS AND BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY**

**Epic Jammers And Fortunate Little Ditties**

DRAG CITY

**8/10 Will Oldham zones out, over cultish ambience**

The young Oldham may have styled himself at times as dissolute preacher (cf “I Was Drunk At The Pulpit”, 1993), but the role of New Age guru, dispensing fortune cookie wisdom, is a fresh one for him. Oldham’s rustic configurations have been replaced by the fine Chicago kosmische act Bitchin Bajas, who provide authentic relaxation tape vibes and stretch the parameters of Oldham’s songcraft. The brittle guitar lines and familiar voice are gradually deconstructed until, by “Show Your Love And Your Love Will Be Returned”, Oldham is cast adrift in a sea of tranquillity, more beatific-sounding than at any point in the past two odd and remarkable decades.

JOHN MULVEY

**8/10**



**ERIC BACHMANN**  
**Eric Bachmann**  
MERGE

**Highly engaging lone effort from North Carolina stalwart**

Anyone expecting the intense crunch of Archers

Of Loaf or the folksier elements of Crooked Fingers, the two bands that have occupied most of Bachmann’s time over the past quarter century, may be slightly taken aback by the nature of this latest solo outing. These are largely piano-centric tunes, tastefully embellished with pedal steel, guitar and subtle gospel harmonies, armed with a baroque-pop sensibility that claims the middle ground between Harry Nilsson and The National. Thus, the burnished country feel of the very lovely “Belong To You” is counterbalanced by the likes of the more balletic “Dreaming”.

ROB HUGHES

**8/10**

## REVELATIONS

**Andrew Bird: “This album came from what life threw at me”**



➤ Shortly after making his 2012 LP, *Hands Of Glory*, the Chicago-raised, LA-based singer and multi-instrumentalist Andrew Bird had his first child. What should have been one of the happiest moments of his life swiftly turned into one of the more traumatic when, not long after the birth, his wife contracted a serious illness that required long and intense treatment. “So this album came from what life threw at me,” Bird says. “It’s certainly my most emotionally direct work. When life gets real, you feel like you don’t have the time to agonise over the poetics. You just say it straight.”

*Are You Serious*, his eighth LP, includes guest appearances from singer-songwriters Fiona Apple and Blake Mills, and was recorded at Los Angeles’ Sound City Studios, where Neil Young recorded *After The Gold Rush* and Nirvana made *Nevermind*. He and producer Tony Berg vowed to approach the process like a Wrecking Crew session where the tracks were recorded in the fewest possible takes.

Having worked on it “day and night”, the finished product brought Bird catharsis of sorts. “I know I’m on the right track if I’m nervous about what I’m about to put out. It’s a risk for me as it’s pretty brutal at times. But I couldn’t have written it any other way.”

FIONA STURGES



**BLACK MOUNTAIN IV**

JAG JAGUWAR

**Fabulously diverse effort from rocking Vancouver quintet**

Stephen McBean’s merry bunch have

toned down the heavier impulses of 2010’s *Wilderness Heart* on this fourth album, plumping instead for a collision of gruff psychedelia, trippy space-folk and pulsing electronica. This all comes together most strikingly on the eight-plus minutes of “Mothers Of The Sun”, with McBean swapping languorous vocals with Amber Webber. Of similar girth is “Space To Bakersfield”, a blissed-up comedown that brings to mind Spiritualized in full repose, while the hard riff of “Constellations” sounds like The Cult’s “Wildflower” with a liberal dusting of synthetics and boy-girl verses.

ROB HUGHES

**8/10**



**BILL BAIRD**  
**Earth Into Aether Parts I And II**  
TALKSHOW RECORDS

**Lovelorn gems from idiosyncratic Texan**

Endlessly prolific and a self-confessed “professional weirdo”,

Bill Baird is known for his work with Austin indie rockers Sound Team, as well as dabbling in performance poetry, filmmaking, journalism and academia. Clearly the product of a restless, febrile mind, this double album is both poignant and richly inventive, combining the archly depressive angst of Eels with the wilful eccentricity of Devendra Banhart or Anton Newcombe. Romantic disappointment is a recurring theme here, best expressed in “We’ll Meet Again Someday, Or We Won’t” (“You’re leaving me but it makes me kind of glad”) and the sweet, rollicking klezmer-fest of “Dear Friend (Falling Domino)”.

FIONA STURGES

**8/10**



**CHARLES BRADLEY**  
**Changes**  
DUNHAM/DAPTONE

**Heavy grooves and heartworn soul-funk from the Screaming Eagle Of Soul**

Charles Bradley could be the old-school soul version of Seasick Steve: a worthy, working musician in his sixties only now finding a place at music’s top table. Billed as ‘Black Velvet’, Bradley was discovered touring the US cabaret circuit as a James Brown impersonator. And it’s the raw-cut trinity of JB, Otis and Solomon Burke that informs this album – his third for the always-cool Daptone imprint. Expect delights throughout. “God Bless America” has Vegas-Elvis intensity, “Slow Love” is a masterful soul ballad, and the title track “Changes” – a cover of Ozzy Osbourne’s signature tune – redefines the black in Black Sabbath.

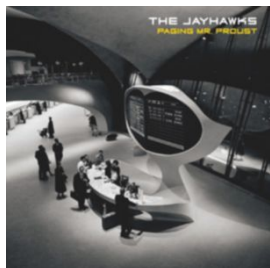
MARK BENTLEY

**8/10**

# AMERICANA



BEST OF THE MONTH



## THE JAYHAWKS Paging Mr Proust

THIRTY TIGERS

### Radiant return of Americana's founding fathers

The Jayhawks' comeback didn't last long, at least in its intended state. Having reformed for 2011's *Mockingbird Time*, the first album in 16 years to feature the core songwriting duo of Gary Louris and Mark Olson, things quickly became fractious. The upshot was that Olson quit after the ensuing tour, citing the difficulties of working with Louris and expressing his regret at taking part in the whole venture. Louris, meanwhile, carried on regardless, taking The Jayhawks out on more dates before finally returning to the studio.

If Olson's departure has had any damaging effects on the band, then *Paging Mr Proust* doesn't show it. It's a record that finds The

Jayhawks in pristine fettle, its country-rock stylings evoking the blithe warmth of 1995's *Tomorrow The Green Grass* while punching a little harder with age. Louris' decision to bring in co-producers Peter Buck and Tucker Martine (the latter perhaps best known for his work with The Decemberists and My Morning Jacket) appears to have been a shrewd one. His guests play to The Jayhawks' strengths, namely concise melodies and the ringing loveliness of their harmonies, while also nudging the band into slightly stranger territory. They've never sounded quite as funky, for example, as they do on "Ace", a song with a loose groove edged by avant noise. "Lost The Summer", too, is essentially classic pop with a disarmingly odd meter. The quality control hardly dips throughout. "The Dust Of Long-Dead Stars" plays fast and loose, the band channelling both the swampy R'n'B of CCR and, as a nod to Buck, vintage REM. Buck's old cohort Mike Mills even fetches up on "Leaving The Monsters Behind", whose smooth harmonies, led by Louris and keyboardist Karen Grotberg, recall *Rumours*-era Fleetwood Mac. And the lyrics of the gorgeous "Lies In Black And White" could well be a dig at a certain ex-bandmate, Louris getting highly personal: "I never felt at ease with you in the room... All you spew are lies." Whatever the back story, this is a very special record indeed. **ROB HUGHES**

8/10



## THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► **Brandy Clark's** highly engaging recent single, "Girl Next Door", offers a foretaste of her much-anticipated new album. Due in late spring, *Big Day In A Small Town* is a loose concept

piece centred around daily life in a specific locale. As with 2013's striking predecessor, *12 Stories*, the Nashville songwriter says it's about real people and real things, though "It's sonically a little different. The songs are rough around the edges in parts."

Her profile spiked by her involvement with the soundtrack for the second series of *True Detective*, **Lera Lynn** returns with *Resistor*. The result of spontaneous, experimental Nashville sessions with co-producer Joshua

Grange, the US songwriter promises Americana roots served with a self-styled mix of "spacey, left-of-centre rock and experimental pop-noir". Adds Lynn: "There's a slow-burning intensity that at times sounds a little spooky. It's creepy and lovely."

Pop-punk veteran **Cyndi Lauper** has also been in town, recording a bunch of vintage country classics for *Detour* (due in early May), which finds her joined by Willie Nelson, Vince Gill, Emmylou Harris, Jewel and Alison Krauss. And plenty happening on the live front this April. **Giant Sand** and **Jason Lytle** sounds like an irresistible combination, starting at London's Village Underground and signing off at The Lantern, Bristol. Look out, too, for tours from **Shakey Graves**, **Hayes Carll**, **Grant-Lee Phillips** and, for what looks like the last time ever, **Richmond Fontaine**. **ROB HUGHES**



## THE BURNING HELL

Public Library  
BB\*ISLAND

### Surreal humour and virtuoso verbosity from arch Canadians

7/10

The wordy songsmith behind Canadian quintet

The Burning Hell, Mathias Kom has a dry wit and sharp eye that elevate routine indie-rock tunes into offbeat storytelling treats. Highlights of the band's seventh album include "The Road", a surreal outsider's chronicle of touring Britain complete with stopovers at Scotch Corner motorway services, and "Two Kings", a surprisingly moving country-rock ballad about Michael Jackson and Elvis Presley in hiding. The verbose waltz-time shanty "Fuck The Government, I Love You" featured on Kom's joint album with fellow band member Ariel Sharratt last year. But the high quality threshold makes such self-recycling excusable.

STEPHEN DALTON



## JOHN CARPENTER

Lost Themes II  
SACRED BONES

### The director of Halloween delivers a second batch of menacing instrumentals

6/10

Released to coincide with

his first set of live shows, Carpenter's follow-up to last year's *Lost Themes* demonstrates the 68-year-old cult filmmaker's enduring flair for minimalist instrumentals that would ideally be paired with images of Adrienne Barbeau fleeing a Lovecraftian monster or Kurt Russell in an eyepatch. With their mix of brooding dread and relentless momentum, "Distant Dream" and "Angel's Asylum" feel instantly familiar. But that's not always a good thing. Some of the music here – made by Carpenter with his son Cody and godson Daniel Davies – illustrates the limitations of the formula, sometimes lapsing into lumpy blues-rock or new-age noodling.

JASON ANDERSON



## CHEAP TRICK

Bang Zoom Crazy... Hello  
BIG MACHINE

### American powerpop greats on terrific form nearly 40 years after storming the Budokan

8/10

Cheap Trick may seem

forever doomed to the fate of playing "Surrender" on package tours with other '70s survivors like Heart, fellow inductees in the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame this year. Yet on the band's 17th album, original members Robin Zander, Rick Nielsen and Tom Petersson (Rick's son Daxx replaces drummer Bun E Carlos) wrest new thrills from the beefed-up-Beatles blueprint that served them well on the glorious early run that culminated in 1978's...*At Budokan*. What with the wit, vim and vigour that fill standouts like "No Direction" and "Roll Me", *Bang Zoom Crazy... Hello* could very well be the band's most consistently thrilling long-player since the Carter administration.

JASON ANDERSON



**CLARK**  
**The Last Panthers**  
WARP

**Techno producer's bleak heist-drama score**  
Sky's stylish but dour Balkan noir series, *The Last Panthers*, made headlines in October

**7/10**

when Bowie's "Blackstar" was revealed as its title track. Less exciting, perhaps, came the news that director Johan Renck had booked electro swashbuckler Chris Clark to compose its, well, stylish but dour soundtrack. Very much at the top of his sound-design game following a dazzling self-titled LP and a string of theatre and modern-dance commissions, Clark turns in one continuous lachrymose piece that ebbs and flows with sinuous grace and is edgy enough to intrigue Hollywood. Those expecting the usual insane drum programming and black humour may be disappointed.

PIERS MARTIN



**THE COMET IS COMING**  
**Channel The Spirits**  
LEAF

**New London trio's raucous space jazz**  
The Comet Is Coming are a mutant offshoot of the

**8/10**

wild free-jazz family comprising members of Melt Yourself Down and Polar Bear. Saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings plays in each ensemble but takes the lead role in Comet, whose scorching intergalactic disco zooms at exquisite velocity through the canon of righteous jazz into some ecstatic Moogie wonderland, powered by Maxwell Hallett's octopus drumming and the analogue fuzz of Dan Leavers' synths. Arriving so soon after their introductory EP "Prophecy", *Channel The Spirits* is a perfectly realised and full-blooded debut that surprises at every turn. A rare find. Hail their bop.

PIERS MARTIN



**MATT CORBY**  
**Telluric**  
ATLANTIC

**Australian surf rocker makes modish and polished but ineffectual debut album**

**5/10**

A 2007 runner-up in *Australian Idol*, Corby's struggle to outrun his talent-show past has included abandoning his first attempt at this debut album. During the protracted gestation he's become a self-sufficient studio technician with a manicured line in balmy psychedelic and gospel-inflected, white-boy soul. The confessional songs such as "Wrong Man" aim for tender revelation, but the cumulative effect of the vocal preening ("Why Dream"), trip-hop manoeuvres ("Belly Side Up") and the relentless dripping of tasteful guitar attains a cloying mass. Atmosphere-rich, content-light – true to its title, *Telluric* remains stubbornly earthbound.

GAVIN MARTIN



**COYPU**  
**Floating**  
MIE MUSIC

**Six Organs man takes a cosmic Italian trip**  
Ben Chasny's work as Six Organs Of Admittance has recently taken a forbidding theoretical turn, based on

**7/10**

his new "Hexadic" compositional system. As yet, however, the radical practice doesn't seem to have infected his collaborations; either in the mighty, jamming Rangda, or on this somewhat shadowy project. Coypu finds Chasny in the company of a mostly Italian crowd, with deep underground CVs (Larsen? Blind Cave Salamander?), and a faintly gothic arsenal of effects. At times, the monkish clank and drone recalls outliers like Nurse With Wound. Highlights, though, are transcendent more than transgressive, notably "March Of The River Rats", a rippling invocation of Popol Vuh – and, indeed, the more accessible Six Organs of old.

JOHN MULVEY

WE'RE  
NEW  
HERE

**The Comet Is Coming**



► It is surely no coincidence that the arrival of The Comet Is Coming's debut album chimes with the vernal equinox, for if anything seems destined to soundtrack the cosmic beauty of Mother Nature getting her groove on, it's this London outfit's blistering electronic space jazz. "I like people to see the potential for joy and possible salvation through the euphoric potential in music," says Shabaka Hutchings, the band's de facto leader and saxophonist, whose giddy riffs spill across *Channel The Spirits*. Named after a Radiophonic Workshop track for a 1981 BBC film of the same name, the trio formed when Hutchings came to jam with drummer Maxwell Hallett and synth doyen Dan Leavers' short-lived Soccer96 in their North London studio.

Freelance sax cat Hutchings is a regular fixture in Melt Yourself Down and Sons Of Kemet, and recently toured with Floating Points, but he expresses himself most eloquently in this combustible union which lassos free jazz to swashbuckling disco. "It's the only band I play in with synth and that brings out a specific sonic energy," he says. "It's more club-oriented and less hinged on aesthetic choices steeped in the legacy of the jazz tradition." The Comet Is Coming, then: catch their drift.

PIERS MARTIN



**THE DANDY WARHOLS**  
**Distortland**  
DINE ALONE

**First the decline, now the fall**  
The Dandy Warhols' previous album, 2012's *This Machine*

**4/10**

sounded like the work of a band who had given up, or should have. Pleasant though it would be to report that *Distortland* is a swaggering return to form, it would also be inaccurate. To a bewildering extent, their profoundly boring ninth album resembles sketches towards another unnecessary Stone Roses comeback, all vague psychedelic shimmies, shuffling beats and an absence of melody that sounds almost wilful. "Catcher In The Rye" and "All The Girls In London" both threaten to turn into something, but never quite do – and that's as good as it gets.

ANDREW MUELLER



**THE DEAD TONGUES**  
**Montana**  
ITUNES

**A word-of-mouth hit from the North Carolina woods**

**7/10**

For a few of us, the fertile scene centred on Hiss Golden Messenger's MC Taylor and Phil Cook has been a revelation this decade, and Asheville's Ryan Gustafson is very much a part of that expanding fraternal network. Gustafson plays guitar in Cook's soulful live band, but his second album as The Dead Tongues mostly takes a folksier path, with plenty of elevated fingerpicking on banjo and acoustic. *Montana* is more than a showcase for a virtuoso musician, though. It reveals Gustafson as a fine artisanal singer-songwriter, often Dylanish in tone, and with at least one song – the twanging, Mellotron-dusted "Graveyard Fields" – strong enough to have sat on HGM's classic, *Lateness Of Dancers*.

JOHN MULVEY



**DEFTONES**  
**Gore**  
REPRISE

**Dark, technical eighth from Sacramento metal experimentalists**  
Along with fellow Californians Tool,

**7/10**

Deftones provided a thoughtful counterbalance to the nu-metal wave of the mid-'90s, embracing hip-hop and technology, but progressive and introspective rather than lumpen or brash. Even by Deftones standards, their eighth album is hardly immediate. Lead-off single "Prayers/Triangles" is a broiling and layered thing that finds vocalist Chino Moreno wrestling with questions of divinity, while "Acid Hologram", with its strange step and eerie vocal processing, demands a certain focus. They excel when they smoulder, though – see "Phantom Bride", an atmospheric turn blessed with guitar pyrotechnics courtesy of Jerry Cantrell of Alice In Chains.

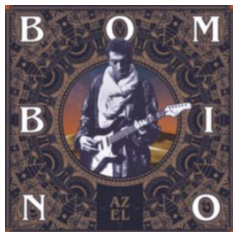
LOUIS PATTISON

## BOMBINO

Azel

PARTISAN

Elevated guitar hypnotism from Tuareg legend, now with added reggae. By *Jon Dale*



8/10

AS A KEY voice in Tuareg music, Omara 'Bombino' Moctar carries a heavy weight, not that you would notice from the lightness he has traditionally brought to his songs. He first broke international cover thanks to the

Sublime Frequencies label run by Alan Bishop of Sun City Girls – indeed, Bishop deserves greater recognition for his ongoing support of modern Tuareg rock, particularly through such series as *Guitars From Agadez*, of which Bombino's debut album 'proper' was the second instalment.

While the romance afforded to Tuareg music belies a colonial impulse that tries to inscribe its specific tonal and rhythmic properties as a subset of the dreaded 'world music', there's a lot more than generic constraint going on in the music of artists such as Bombino. It builds from specific structural conceits intrinsic to the Berber musical identity – there is not such a great leap from the call-and-response typical of Berber and Iberian song, and some of the rhythmic undertow isn't too far from the spiralling percussives of Moroccan music.

The most recent wave of Tuareg music, though, politicised by uprising, has a feverish cast, something you can hear throughout *Azel*, even if Moctar's voice weaves gently around the melodies, an instrument of grace skimming across the turbulent undercurrents of geopolitical address in some songs. It's particularly pertinent given *Azel*'s introduction of his new, self-named sub-genre, 'Tuareggae', a development explored keenly by both the group and their producer, Dave Longstreth of Dirty Projectors.

Moctar's reasoning is fairly simple: "I love reggae music," he states, "it makes me instantly happy... it is just another influence that has come into my music as it evolves in the same way that Western rock music mixes with Tuareg music in other songs that I play." But it's also clear enough to see another level – the meeting of two musics of protest, the eschatological fervour of reggae, chanting down Babylon, delivered on the graceful wings of dub's pressured production, meeting the gracious heart and tangled melodicism of Tuareg desert rock.

Throughout *Azel*, the mix of the two genres allows for an even greater sense of uplift and collectivism in a music that always carried the communal at its core. Moctar's guitar playing is often the focal point of *Azel* – a limber guitarist, he rarely gives in to flights of fancy: while he can charm the instrument through curlicues of melodic invention, each riff tightly woven, he never gives in to any tendency to showboat. The end result is an approach to the guitar that lets the instrument breathe, even as it's being wound around itself with rare physicality.

### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Recorded at:** Applehead Recording, Woodstock, NY, with additional recording at Studio Youba, Brussels  
**Produced by:** David Longstreth  
**Personnel:** Omar 'Bombino' Moctar (vocals, lead and rhythm guitar), Youba Dia (bass), Corey Wilhelm (drum kit, calabash, congas, shakers, djembe), Abdoulahi 'Koutana' Mohamed Van Loon (backing vocals, djembe), Mama 'Mahassa' Walet Amoumene (backing vocals), Avi Salloway (rhythm guitar), Dave Longstreth (Hammond organ)



As with other Bombino albums, *Azel* often feels like an ever-changing same. For some artists, this would suggest one-trick pony. For Bombino – much like Marc Bolan, oddly enough, whose vocal lilt Moctar strangely reminds of – each repetition has incremental power, resulting in a sum greater than the parts. But certain songs do stand out, such as the album's centrepiece, "Iyat Ninhay/Jaguar (A Great Desert I Saw)", a six-minute monster that maintains a paradoxical 'laidback intensity' that, these days, feels peculiar to Tuareg music. It also shifts effortlessly between sections, from a luxurious, extended introduction that lets riffs fall from the guitar strings, to a low-slung middle section,

Moctar teasing out a gently oscillating solo before accelerating to a fever-pitch finale. The following "Igmayagh Dum (My Lover)" has Moctar on the

acoustic guitar, his introductory string-tangle reflective, drifting between notes before landing on a dime, the song pivoting on a pedal note that's insistent in its restatement. It's one of Moctar's most gorgeous melodies, too, for the way it threads through the central riff. His playing here accesses a wild freedom even as it stays pinned to the ground by the song's hypnotism: it reminds of one of his statements, in an interview with Bob Baker Fish, when asked what it means for Moctar to play guitar: "Freedom. That's it. Pure freedom."

This second half of *Azel* is where Bombino's elemental power really accrues. This is often the case with Tuareg rock – a music of cumulative force, it can take a while for LPs by Bombino, or peers like Tinariwen or Tamikrest, to work their magic. The hooks are there, though, waiting for a moment of enchantment to sink into the skin. By the time you reached the penultimate song on *Azel*, "Timidiwa (Friendship)", whose guitar tone is just the right side of rough'n'ready, Moctar's songs have located the tightly wound spring at the core of Tuareg music.

## Q&A

Omara Moctar



**The title, *Azel*, has multiple meanings: it's a place; it's the roots and stems of a tree; it's an expression of enthusiasm.**

I love the name for the album because it has multiple meanings and each one works correctly with the music. I really wanted to dedicate a project to the town of Azel for a long time, and here I saw the perfect opportunity. Meanwhile, for the younger Tuaregs, the word "azel" is something that they relate to easily. So I think in one small word we are able to make a connection with a lot of people and inspirations for this album.

**How did recording with David Longstreth shape the album?**

Dave is a very cool and relaxed guy. With Dave the music was able to be natural and pure, and he would add a little colour or shape here or there. The biggest example of this is with the harmonies in the vocals, which is something we have never tried before. This is where he put his signature on the album.

**You've come up with a new genre for this music: Tuareggae.**

Tuareggae is quite simply a mix of Tuareg and reggae rhythms. This album is the first instance in which this style is recorded in a studio, but I have been developing this style in my performances for more than two years, little by little.

INTERVIEW: JON DALE



## DREAMBOAT

### Dreamboat

MIE MUSIC

**Portland underground crew set sail into uncharted waters**

Much like the Coypu album also released this month by the boutique UK label, MIE

**7/10**

Music, *Dreamboat* serenely pits a folkish singer/guitarist – in this case Ilyas Ahmed – against kosmische-inclined new collaborators; here, the Thrill Jockey duo, Golden Retriever. Ahmed cuts an appealingly desolate figure on these two long pieces, given plenty of space in Matt Carlson and Jonathan Sielaff's humid synthscapes. The tools are slightly different, not least Sielaff's processed clarinet looming out of the murk at intervals, but the prevailing atmosphere often resembles that found on late '90s records by Flying Saucer Attack: a gentle music in which melancholy is given apparently boundless time and space to work itself out.

JOHN MULVEY



## THE DRONES

### Feelin Kinda Free

TROPICAL FUCK STORM

**Serious skronk with political bite on Aussies' seventh**

It opens with a swinging, cinematic cacophony that suggests Zappa tackling

**7/10**

John Barry and the claim that "the best songs are like bad dreams", but here, it's more feverish nightmares. The quintet's gnarly and existentially fraught blues-rock has now morphed into something more abstract and unhinged, part post-punk film score, part swearsy manifesto. Gareth Liddiard's flattened-vowel whine might be an acquired taste, but it's the right tool for the job, whether winding its way around the malevolent "Private Execution", spitting venom at Murdoch's press and "the gulag Union Jack" ("Taman Shud") or providing percussive counterpoint on the bonkers "Boredom". All up, a convincing shift.

SHARON O'CONNELL



## EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY

### The Wilderness

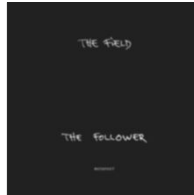
BELLA UNION

**Music that unspools slowly but inexorably in a peculiarly muscular kind of slow motion**

**8/10**

Made up of great surges of sound that break over the listener, this expansive, cinematic music cries out for sync. No surprise, then, that Explosions In The Sky have become known as film composers: this sixth album is their first non-soundtrack release since 2011. As the title suggests, there's something bleak about this music, but it is spacious, often epic, too: track titles such as "Infinite Orbit" and "Colours In Space" reflect a cosmic sense of scale. Appropriately, the album, which begins with globules of electronics, has a good dash of kosmische mingled with the post-rock. Music that extends to the horizon and beyond.

MARCUS O'DAIR



## THE FIELD

### The Follower

KOMPAKT

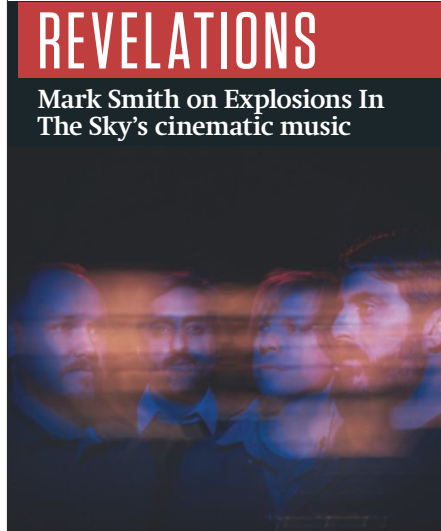
**Swedish producer's fifth album breaks little new ground**

Some find Axel Willner's lengthy excursions into trance-techno formulaic:

**7/10**

the repetition of hypnotic loops lies at their heart, and each track's musical developments are as subtle as his work's stylistic changes over the past decade. *The Follower* delicately shifts the emphasis from trance to techno, continuing the slow descent into darkness begun with 2013's *Cupid's Head*. But although the spiralling results are yet more claustrophobic, they're less appealing than the more familiar sounds of "Pink Sun", where the foggy drones that once provoked shoegaze comparisons remain audible, and "Reflecting Lights", which betrays Willner's long-term fondness for Gas.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



## REVELATIONS

**Mark Smith on Explosions In The Sky's cinematic music**

► Mark Smith still finds it strange to think that his group, formed with modest ambitions in 1999, have been so successful. "When we started playing 17 years ago, our only goal was to put out a 7-inch vinyl," the guitarist says. "If you'd have told me back then that we would be able to sell out shows at the Royal Albert Hall or Radio City Music Hall or be on late-night TV shows, or soundtrack a big-budget war movie, all while continuing to play these instrumental songs that have elements of ripping distortion and atonality and pop music and classical and whatever else, I would have found it ludicrous."

As well as releasing their own albums, such as 2016's *The Wilderness*, produced by John Congleton, the Texas four-piece have also soundtracked a number of films, including 2013's Mark Wahlberg-starring *Lone Survivor* and David Gordon Green's *Manglehorn* (2014); as Smith explains, working this way comes naturally to them. "There is a symbiotic relationship between the two types of projects – techniques we've learned from soundtracks have informed our album writing, and certainly vice versa. In both cases, we do ultimately look for our music to either be cinematic or feel cinematic."

MARCUS O'DAIR



## FRIGHTENED RABBIT

### Painting Of A Panic Attack

ATLANTIC

**Super-size treatment for sulky Scots**

Singer Scott Hutchison's move to the United States

**6/10**

is, perhaps, indicative of Frightened Rabbit's ongoing Snow Patrol-style conversion from timid indie beasts to glumbo rock colossi. Produced by The National's Aaron Dessner, their fifth album inflates Selkirk's hand-knitted Coldplay to vast proportions; gigantically lachrymose on "I Wish I Was Sober", cavern-hearted and Travis-twinkly on "Still Want To Be Here". Somewhere amid the dry-ice fog, a thistle-spiky lyricist still lurks, but genuine ambition may underpin the barbs on Hutchison's sneery closing statement here, "Die Like A Rich Boy". Kudos all well and good, but nothing you wouldn't trade for a helicopter.

JIM WIRTH



## ROBBIE FULKS

### Upland Stories

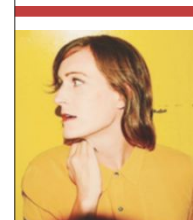
BLOODSHOT

**Historical perception, musical tradition, meet life's endless shades of grey**

**8/10**

Both haunting and contemplative, *Upland Stories*, like Chicagoan Fulks' recent work, peers in at life from a wide, introspective lens. The writing, revealing literary influences and the deep, weird old America depicted by, say, Merle Kilgore (whose "Baby Rocked Her Dolly" is covered here), is astute, while stripped-down, archaic Appalachian arrangements play tricks with time. Parts are playful or starkly resolute; others, quite the opposite: "America Is A Hard Religion", a devastating view of suffering anchored in the South, and "Never Come Home", disturbing observations of a dying man sung in an authoritative, Willie-Nelson-in-1961 tone, are cold-blooded visions of a merciless world.

LUKE TORN



## LAURA GIBSON

### Empire Builder

CITY SLANG

**Portland emigrée's elegant, alt-pop fourth**

Laura Gibson's latest – named after the Amtrak line that helped deliver

**8/10**

her to a new life on the East Coast – is a triumph hard won after she lost almost everything in 2015, when her NYC apartment burnt to the ground following a gas explosion. With a band featuring members of The Decemberists and Death Cab For Cutie, she addresses transformation, loss, connection and apartness in literate, finely turned pop songs centred on her sweet, pellucid voice and filled out with dreamy loops and strings. "Five And Thirty" is a standout, a deliciously sombre, piano/synth ballad that suggests Julia Holter backed by Villagers, or a left-field Lana Del Rey.

SHARON O'CONNELL

MIRROR

## GNOD

**Mirror**  
ROCKET RECORDINGS

**Experimentalists shift shape on their dark umpteenth**

Launched in 2007 as a collective working out of the Salford arts/music

centre Islington Mill, Gnod have now settled on four core members. Their latest album sees a change in approach, form and content from 2015's triple-LP *Infinity Machines*, a complex and considered synthesis of psych-drone, avant jazz and industrial noise/techno. The three tracks of *Mirror* run at just 35 minutes and were recorded mostly live, in three days. Stripped-down, baleful and clamorous, they nod to early PiL and Swans, the 18-minute, pulverising death-jam-cum-Gregorian invocation "Sodom & Gomorrah" proof that Gnod's vision of modern Britain becomes no less bleakly realistic as time passes.

SHARON O'CONNELL

7/10



## PJ HARVEY

**The Hope Six Demolition Project**  
ISLAND

**Polly Jean's first album for five years is well worth the wait**

Harvey's ninth studio album takes the

temperature of our times. A collection of tatterdemalion anthems built from skew-whiff saxophone, lairy Greek choruses, martial drums and thick, heavy textures, the combined effect, aptly, is of a ragtag army on the march. Harvey wrote these songs in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Washington DC, but this is also the world of Aleppo, Lesbos and Calais. "A Line In The Sand" gazes on camps of displaced families; "The Ministry Of Defence", which features Linton Kwesi Johnson, is a kingdom of syringes, razors and graffiti. Even when the mood turns slow and swampy on "Chain Of Keys" and "River Anacostia", the intensity never wavers.

GRAEME THOMSON

8/10



## HINTERMASS

**The Apple Tree**  
GHOST BOX

**Psychedelic folk and rural English kosmische from Ghost Box pairing**

So immaculate is Ghost Box's aesthetic that in the long haul, their releases can feel a little easy to typecast: library-music sounds, public information films, lingering sense of unease. But that's not all there is to the label, as *The Apple Tree* – the first album-length collaboration between The Advisory Circle's Jon Brooks and Tim Felton, formerly of Broadcast and Seeland – demonstrates. The vibe is mannered psych-folk embellished with simmering electronics, recalling Super Furry Animals at their most reflective on "Patterns Somewhere". Here and there, meanwhile, they abandon the song: the gorgeous "Luftglider", in particular, imagining Klaus Schulze transported to a rural English idyll.

LOUIS PATTISON

7/10

THE GOON SAX

## THE GOON SAX

**Up To Anything**  
CHAPTER MUSIC

**Teen trio's fragile pop smarts**

The Goon Sax will get plenty of attention for family connections:

one of the group's songwriters, Louis Forster, is the son of Renaissance man Robert Forster. The droll self-awareness and blunt strum of their songs may have you thinking of The Go-Betweens, but it's more a general stylistic flourish that has The Goon Sax coming across as classic Brisbane pop: observations of the mundane minutiae, the everyday strange, are arranged with the barest of frills, the occasional organ or curling guitar line shading the songs' simple outlines. Unexpected flourishes, too – "Telephone" starts out just like The Only Ones.

JONDALE

7/10

WE'RE NEW HERE

## Imarhan

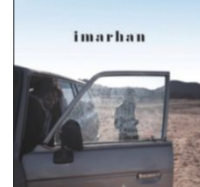


► Part of a notional 'next wave' of Tuareg music, Imarhan's debut, self-titled album surprises for its fluency: the group seem effortlessly to switch things up across its 10 songs, embracing a multiplicity of influences without exactly alighting on any one point. When pressed on this aesthetic foraging, leader Iyad Moussa Ben Abderrahmane, aka Saddam, reflects, "We listen to traditional Tuareg music up to American pop, and music from Arabic cultures, ancestral songs to today's worldwide hits or Western rock classics of the '70s."

"Lately, we've been discovering the last album of Daft Punk and love it," he continues. "But when we were recording our album, no specific artists were important... Our songs are our own style, they are Tamashek above all." Indeed, their grounding in the music of the "Tamashek guitar revolution" is as much down to family as it is about aesthetics, with Saddam's cousin, Eyadou Ag Leche, a member of Tuareg masters Tinariwen.

"Eyadou has been a great help to the band since we started, supporting and stimulating us," Saddam concludes. "I had the chance of touring with Tinariwen and learned a lot from them. They have their own style and it's a good inspiration for us to do our own music, too."

JONDALE



## IMARHAN

**Imarhan**  
CITY SLANG

**Tuareg sextet: the new generation of desert blues**

Imarhan are part of the next wave of *assouf*: with blood connections to elders Tinariwen, they're well placed to take the music to its next stages. For Imarhan (the name means 'the ones I care about'), this means stretching the syncretic possibilities of Tuareg song, while respecting its history, articulating its political power through the weave of guitar strings that mark out Imarhan's collectivist melodies. But for all the received wisdoms that encircle the desert blues of these groups, what's most seductive about songs like Imarhan's "Alwak" and "Addounia Azdjazzaqat" is the intimacy of the performance, a hushed wonder that breathes its poetry on the neck of the listener.

JONDALE

8/10

BEN HARPER & THE INNOCENT CRIMINALS CALL IT WHAT IT IS

## BEN HARPER & THE INNOCENT CRIMINALS

**Call It What It Is**  
STAX/CAROLINE

**Reunited with his original band for the first time since 2007's Lifeline**

A dozen albums into his career, there aren't too many surprises here, just a well-honed primer in what Harper does best, fusing blues, rock, folk, country, R'n'B, gospel and reggae with politically conscious lyrics into a dynamic roots stew. "Pink Balloon" cranks up a Black Keys-style ramalam riff. "Bones" could've found a home on the last Alabama Shakes album, and the bombastic thump of "When Sex Was Dirty" sounds like a Kings Of Leon hit. At the other end of the spectrum, "Deeper And Deeper" is a lovely slice of dappled Americana and the haunting "All That Has Grown" reminds us of Harper's prowess on lap-slide.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

7/10



## JEALOUS OF THE BIRDS

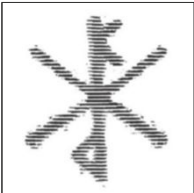
**Parma Violets**  
BIG SPACE RECORDS

**Absorbing debut from Northern Irish grunge-folk singer**

The young singer-songwriter behind Jealous Of The Birds hails from Portadown in County Armagh, but her sublimely sulky-sad, bruise-coloured voice is steeped in Americana. Citing Kurt Cobain, Elliott Smith and Courtney Barnett as influences, Naomi Hamilton laces her introspective indie-folk confessionals with grunge-rock flourishes and wry, self-consciously literary lyrics. Punching boys is a recurring theme, from the softly sinister love ballad "Marcus" to the more muscular "Russian Doll", which contains the terrific line, "Despite how much I want to punch you in the face/My favourite smell is still your pillow case." A debut full of intrigue and promise.

STEPHEN DALTON

7/10



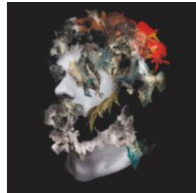
**K-X-P**  
**III Part II**  
SVART/ÖM

**Finnish cosmonauts ramp up the pomp**  
K-X-P may not be the heaviest rock band in Finland – heck, they’re not even the

gnarliest dudes in Helsinki – but when they play together they’re possessed by a fearsome feral energy, with shamanic frontman Timo Kaukolampi their ungodly conduit. Essentially the second half of their epic third album, the trio are in blistering form on *III*’s seven tracks, hammering out a delirious voodoo Krautrock on “To Believe” and “Freeway” – “Freeway of mind is so sublime,” croons Kaukolampi – and violating ripe Italian prog for “Sub Goblin”. Camp as Christmas, it’s the glam racket of “Siren” that reminds you K-X-P are more fun than you think.

PIERS MARTIN

**8/10**



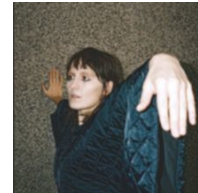
**ASH KOOSHA**  
**IAKA I**  
NINJA TUNE

**Iranian exile converts neurological glitches into vivid audioscapes**  
Iranian-born Ashkan Kooshanejad has carved a dramatic career as a

musician, composer, actor and filmmaker. Now exiled to London after his Tehran-based indie-rock bands were torn apart by police raids, assaults and arrests, Koosha’s debut album for Ninja Tune is an attempt to grapple creatively with his synaesthesia, a neurological condition that converts sound into visual signals. *IAKA I* is a feast of deluxe glitchy electronica, slithers and shudders, ripples and dissolves, whirling fractal rhythms and nods to Persian classical instrumentation on tracks such as “Make It Fast” and “Shah”. The disparate elements feel abstract and abrasive in places, yet the whole is sumptuously melodic and sonically rich.

STEPHEN DALTON

**8/10**



**CATE LE BON**  
**Crab Day**  
TURNSTILE

**Weird pop fantasia from the Nico of West Wales**  
Since rising to attention with 2009’s *Me Oh My*, Cate Le

Bon has turned out four albums of arch, otherworldly guitar pop, of which *Crab Day* is surely the best yet. Her noble enunciation remains a close ringer for a certain German chanteuse, but the tableau that she and her band paint is hardly dour, a thing of unlikely imagery and surreal energies. “Love Is Not Love” and “I’m A Dirty Attic” talk intimately while avoiding the familiar language of the love song (“Paint me in a picture with a new face,” goes the latter), while “Find Me” is a playful tale of hide-and-seek played through spindly guitar and blurts of sax.

LOUIS PATTISON

**8/10**



**KING**  
**We Are King**  
KING CREATIVE

**Ecstatic dream-R&B from LA trio**

Not be confused with the “Love And Pride” hitmakers, the new King

instead conjure up a seductive alternative ’80s, as if an R&B production machine like Jam & Lewis had become infatuated with the downy textures of the Cocteau Twins. The aquarian soul of Erykah Badu is another antecedent for this meticulous debut, written, produced and performed by Paris Strother, along with twin sister Amber and Anita Bias. *We Are King* is too laidback and classy to be anywhere near as triumphalist as its name implies, and the 12 lovely songs have such a languid unity of purpose, it can be hard to tell where one stops and the next starts. Still, try “Red Eye”, with its melodic richness redolent of peak ’70s Stevie Wonder.

JOHN MULVEY

**8/10**



**THE KYB**  
**Of Desire**  
INVADA

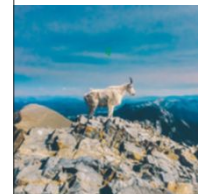
**Pulsing gothic electronics, mastered by Sonic Boom**

We have become accustomed to lengthy

albums, but at least Geoff Barrow’s synths are being put to good use in the meantime. For their second long-player on Barrow’s label Invada, this UK-formed, Berlin-based duo had the run of his vintage gear, setting it in the service of a murky synth-wave that crackles with analogue energies. Vocalist Nicholas Wood’s doomy proclamations are frequently buried amid murky guitar and electronic textures, which can obscure the songs somewhat. But “V11393” revels in its sense of breathless propulsion, while “Unknown” and album standout “In Deep” gesture to The Cure’s *Faith* in their sense of sustained, magisterial gloom.

LOUIS PATTISON

**6/10**



**LIIMA**  
**ii**  
4AD

**Ex-Efterklangers man up for new outfit**

Hearts were heavy when Danish art-rockers Efterklang called it a day

two years ago, so the arrival of Liima – the three members plus Finnish percussionist Tatu Rönkkö – is cause for moderate celebration. Liima means glue in Finnish, and there’s something immediately more substantial about this new ensemble, who wedge a meatier groove beneath purring electronics and Casper Clausen’s soaring vocal as they blur the line between Eno-era Roxy Music (“Trains In The Dark”) and the yearning euphoria of Coldplay (“Black Beach”, “Change Of Time”). Sentimental yet experimental, *ii* suggests Liima could be the band Efterklang always wanted to be.

PIERS MARTIN

**7/10**



**KONONO NO 1**  
**Konono No 1 Meets Batida**  
CRAMMED

**Latest instalment in the amazing Congotronics journey**

No strangers to Western

art-rock collaborations after working with Björk et al, the Congolese band – whose junkyard electrified thumb pianos combine motorik urges with hallucinatory African roots and a punk ethic – travelled to Lisbon to record the follow-up to 2010’s *Assume Crash Position* with the Portuguese electronic producer Pedro Coquenao (aka Batida). Fluidly fluctuating rhythms slot felicitously into Batida’s metronomic programmed grids, and guest vocalist Selma Uamusse and slam poet MC AF Diaphra step up from Lisbon’s vibrant Afro-fusion scene to lend cosmopolitan richness to a set that feels avant and outré and yet deliriously danceable at the same time.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**7/10**



**THE LAST SHADOW PUPPETS**  
**Everything You've Come To Expect**  
DOMINO

**A certain bromance, impressively rekindled**

Back in 2008, Alex Turner and Miles Kane’s *The Age Of The Understatement* confirmed that their ambition extended far beyond scratchy guitars and chip-shop scuffles. Its suave decadence fed back into both their regular projects, to the point where this follow-up feels almost like business as usual. Luckily, there are a clutch of standout songs. Snarling first single “Bad Habits” is a bit of a red herring; instead the album is defined by plush, Spector-esque swirls such as “Miracle Aligner” and “Dracula Teeth”, on which the highlight, as always, is discovering which old English sayings Turner has corrupted into wry sexual come-ons.

SAM RICHARDS

**7/10**



**THE LIMIÑANAS**  
**Malamore**  
BECAUSE MUSIC

**Peter Hook guests on this '60s-saturated stunner by French husband-wife duo**

French duo Lionel and Marie Limiñana sound as if they have stepped out of Quentin Tarantino’s dreams – a supercool French couple whose lush cinematic music is like a mash-up of the best elements of the *Pulp Fiction* soundtrack. “Kostas”, “El Beach” and “Prisunic” sling some low-level funk under Lionel’s seductive vocals, while “Malamore” has a little more bite, “Dahlia Rouge” a fair bit of jangle and “Zippo” the perfect amount of bottom end. A fuzz-tinted spaghetti-western vibe holds it all together – epitomised by the shimmering “The Dead Are Walking” – while the sultry “Garden Of Love”, purred by Marie, is embellished by Peter Hook’s guest contribution.

PETER WATTS

**8/10**



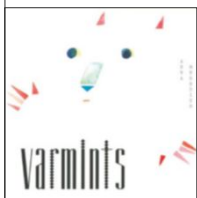
**THE LUMINEERS**  
**Cleopatra**  
DECCA

**Further amiable Americana-lite from the Denver five-piece**  
The startling success of The Lumineers'

self-titled 2012 debut left a key question unanswered: did it light up the world's charts despite or because of the fact that solid songwriting chops, and a discernible measure of anguished soul, were often diluted by a tendency to drift into superficial prettiness? On the evidence of the follow-up, The Lumineers aren't taking chances, in any sense of the phrase. The likes of the title track and "Sleep On The Floor" are pleasingly Ryan Adams/Gaslight Anthem-ish; elsewhere, as on "Gun Song" and "Angela" it all gets a bit Mumford & Sons.

ANDREW MUELLER

**6/10**



**ANNA MEREDITH**  
**Varmints**  
MOSHI MOSHI

**From Last Night Of The Proms and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra to magnificent Moshi Moshi debut**

London-born composer Anna Meredith says her debut album was inspired by "really tiny things", and there are moments of the minute in these 11 tracks. From sometimes fragile beginnings, however, layers accumulate; typically culminating in a dramatic collision of dance and rock as well as folk and classical influences. Despite the almost archaic titles – "Dowager", "The Vapours" – this is thoroughly contemporary music, with echoes of Animal Collective and Mara Carlyle as well as (steam) punk and a euphoria reminiscent of rave. Largely instrumental, but with some strong vocal hooks, this is music of ascension.

MARCUS O'DAIR

**8/10**



**MING CITY ROCKERS**  
**Lemon**  
MAD MONKEY RECORDS

**Lincolnshire punks find fire and fun on Steve Albini-recorded second**

Making a hearty advance on their stirring self-titled 2014 debut, Immingham's finest are obviously emboldened and liberated by Albini's copper-plated sonics. Whether wielding the sardonic buzzsaw of love ("All I Wanna Do Is Waste My Time With You") or offering up sharp, funny, searing social diatribes as on the swaggering "How Do You Like Them Apples?", they wreak reliably splenetic destruction. The Hawkwind cover "Death Trap" and "Scatter Brain", with its feral gob iron and Pretty Things-go-grunge lurch, show just how wide their roots, expertly tended by Albini, stretch.

GAVIN MARTIN

**7/10**



**MODERAT**  
**III**  
MONKEYTOWN

**Berlin electronic supergroup vie to be the Radiohead of EDM**  
Given that the group combines three prime movers in the Berlin

electronic music scene – Sascha Ring, aka Apparatus, and Gernot Bronsert and Sebastian Szary of Modeselektor – it's no surprise that Moderat's third album is so rich with clattery rhythm tracks and subwoofer-rattling bass pulses. If the template is Basic Channel, however, they add a more overtly melodic sensibility, woozy textures and Ring's yearning, Thom Yorke-like vocals. Though "Running" and "Animal Trails" demonstrate Moderat's ability to construct EDM with formidable scope, III's weaker tracks are more diffuse, lacking the verve that Underworld once brought to this kind of prog-influenced, epic-scaled electronica.

JASON ANDERSON

**7/10**

## REVELATIONS

**Aidan Moffat on his mission to help "keep traditions alive"**

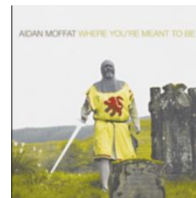


➤ Usually when musicians embrace the traditional songs of their homeland, it is with much earnest beard-scratching about reconnecting with their roots. Not so with Aidan Moffat. "Not at all," he says. "I'd read reviews, even in the Arab Strap days, that mentioned a folk influence in my stuff, but it was purely coincidental, so I was always curious. It was only when we started researching the tour and film that I really delved into it in any depth."

Despite or because of his late arrival on the folk scene, Moffat avoided the common trap of regarding the old songs as fragile and venerable artefacts. "Adapting songs is a folk tradition in itself," he says, "so it seemed like the natural thing to do. Folk's got a pretty austere reputation, but it's not like that at all, so I wanted to make sure the set was mostly fun and lively."

Moffat's idea for a tour evolved into a movie when director Paul Fegan signed on, initially as tour manager. "We found pretty much what we expected," says Moffat. "Older generations struggling to keep traditions alive while they go mostly ignored by the young. There's a thriving trad scene, of course, but that's not what we were looking for – we wanted to find communities where the songs were still part of everyday life, and that's very rare these days."

ANDREW MUELLER



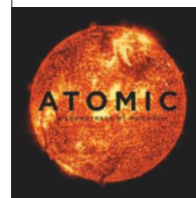
**AIDAN MOFFAT**  
**Where You're Meant To Be**  
KISS MY BEARD

**Former Arab Strap frontman updates Scottish folk**  
*Where You're Meant*

*To Be* documents Aidan Moffat's recent labour of love for Scotland's folk tradition, he and documentary-maker Paul Fegan setting out to depict Scotland's geographical and cultural byways. The album, recorded live in a village hall on the shores of Loch Ness, is tremendous fun. Moffat has enough respect for these songs not to revere them as museum pieces, and hauls them bawdily into the present day. It is not all pie-eyed singalong, however: "The City Tonight" is as perfectly lachrymose a ballad as Moffat has crooned.

ANDREW MUELLER

**8/10**



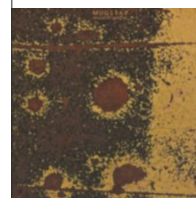
**MOGWAI**  
**Atomic**  
ROCK ACTION

**Scots get surprisingly subtle on this nuclear score**

You'd think that a documentary about nuclear atrocities would be the perfect excuse for Mogwai to summon every ounce of heft in their considerable arsenal. Instead, *Atomic* finds them in ambient mode, responding to the "dreamlike qualities" of these disastrous fallouts. The guitar in "Ether" is as textured and vast as a Rhys Chatham orchestra; "Scram" has the grimy, glacial heft of Tim Hecker, while the lovely "Are You A Dancer" evokes a dripping cave. Even though it's a soundtrack, there's no mistaking Mogwai's strange weather for anyone else. It's undeniably awe-inspiring and effective stuff, but for fans, there's the sense of well-worn tropes entering half-life.

LAURA SNAPES

**6/10**



**MUGSTAR**  
**Magnetic Seasons**  
ROCK ACTION

**Majestic meanderings from Liverpool underground titans**

Scouse heavyweights Mugstar have downsized their amps and upped their ambition considerably on this latest record, a double album that sees them dampen their rockier instincts in favour of a more mysterious, hypnotic approach. This passes almost gently at times, notably on the ambient, meandering "Sky West & Crooked" and subtle, pulsating "Remember The Breathing", the 15 minutes at the heart of the record. Six Organs Of Admittance are one reference, especially on the folksy "Flemish Weave" and "Regency Blues", while the shadowy "Ascension Island" is a slight, fascinating trip round the cocoon of a cranium that is rather like spending 17 minutes inside a lava lamp.

PETER WATTS

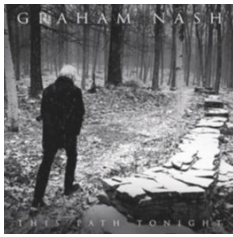
**8/10**

# GRAHAM NASH

## This Path Tonight

BLUE CASTLE

More survivors' songs: a veteran takes stock. By Graeme Thomson



7/10

FOURTEEN YEARS HAVE passed since Graham Nash's last solo album, *Songs For Survivors*, but as he tells *Uncut*, he has hardly been idle in the intervening period. Since 2002 Nash has released a mammoth retrospective boxset, *Reflections*, been

involved in CSN and CSN&Y tours, and overseen compilations of the band's demos and greatest hits. He was also engaged in the writing of his 2013 memoir, *Wild Tales*, a process that appears to have brought about a period of intense and very personal reassessment.

Belying the time that has elapsed between solo releases, *This Path Tonight* was conceived in haste and born of compulsion. At 74, Nash was inspired by what he describes as "dramatic and traumatic changes" in his personal life – notably the end of his 38-year marriage to his wife, Susan. His response was to write 20 songs in a month with sometime CSN guitarist Shane Fontayne, and record the results in a little over a week.

The 10 tracks chosen for the record cluster around themes of regret, separation, new love and an enveloping awareness of mortality (three excellent bonus tracks are more politically agitated in their themes, and were presumably sheared off to preserve the album's sense of unity). Musically, the mood is warm and intimate. The styles range from hushed acoustic balladry to driving electric rock, but the performances share a spare and sinewy immediacy. Nash and his five-piece band recorded together live in the studio, and you can tell. Even when the prevailing mood of introspective understatement threatens to sink into the maudlin or overwrought, there's an urgency about *This Path Tonight* that keeps things buoyant.

Many of these songs are set in the middle of the night, Nash wide awake and agonising over old choices and pressing new decisions. The solid, satisfying thud of the opening title track establishes the questioning tone, Nash hovering at the crossroads and wondering, "Where are we going?" On the twilight ruminations of "Myself At Last", he asks "Is my future just my past?" as a lonesome harmonica wails out a warning. Bittersweet nostalgia is a recurring theme. The first verse of "Golden Days" gazes back fondly to The Hollies – "We sang with all our hearts and everything we had" – before taking in the somewhat more turbulent narrative of CSN&Y: "What happened to all you need is love?" Nash wonders. By the end, the good old days give way to a hard-won appreciation of the here and now.



### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** Shane Fontayne  
**Recorded at:** The Village, Los Angeles; Mile End Studios, California  
**Personnel:** Graham Nash (vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica), Shane Fontayne (electric and acoustic guitars, vocals), Jay Bellerose (drums, percussion), Todd Caldwell (Hammond organ), Jennifer Condos (bass), Patrick Warren (keyboards, piano), Brenda Lee Eager, Cynthia Bass, Arnaé Batson, Shane Barakan (vocals)

"Cracks In The City", a country-folk lament in waltz time, is a richly allegorical gaze on a crumbling world, where "all the king's horses are dying of thirst". Keening pedal steel sends a chill wind whistling through the alleyways. At this point, the thought occurs that *This Path Tonight* could be Nash's very own *Blood On The Tracks*, but he's too much the idealist to let darkness entirely overpower him, while his gentle, conversational voice – still with trace elements of no-nonsense Lancashire – has always leaned towards optimism.

It helps that his winning way with a good tune hasn't deserted him. "Another Broken Heart" is Nash's most direct comment on his marriage breakup and subsequent relationship with photographer Amy Grantham, but the soul-searching is leavened by the album's sweetest and most instantly memorable melody. "Fire Down Below" is a

crackling minor-chord rocker, with something of the prow and punch of plugged-in Neil Young. Perhaps in acknowledgement of the fact that he's inhabiting such familiar terrain, Nash surrounds his voice with a starburst of glorious harmony.

The most evocative and otherworldly vocal performance, however, is saved for the terrific "Back Home". Subtitled "(For Levon)", it's a meditative and downright spooked take on mortality, concluding with a kind of cosmic acceptance. It's followed by the closing "Encore", nothing less than a rock valediction, a measuring out of what matters and what endures beyond the adulation and the acclaim. "What are you gonna do when the last show is over/What're you gonna do when you can't touch base?" Nash sings softly. "And what're you gonna do when the applause is all over/And you can't turn your back on what you face?" The answers provided by *This Path Tonight* to these thorny questions are conflicted and equivocal: take each day as it comes, face up to the burdens of the past, and embrace love where you may find it – and somehow keep on keeping on.

## Q&A

Graham Nash

### After 14 years, why release a solo record now?

It was just me responding to changes in my personal life that are dramatic and traumatic. A lot of it is a continuation of *Wild Tales*. Once I looked back at my life for the book, I realised that for part of it I wasn't happy, and I need and deserve to be happy. I'll take it any way I can get it, kid!

### What was the process?

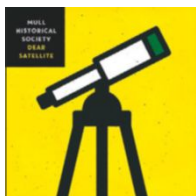
It came together very quickly. In October of last year while [CSN] were on tour, my friend Shane Fontayne – who was the second guitar player in

the CSN band – and I wrote 20 songs in a month and then recorded them in eight days. These words were pouring out of me. I'd send Shane the words first, and the next day on the bus he'd have something for me. It was an incredible process. In 98 per cent of the cases they are all my words, and in 98 per cent of the cases it is Shane's music. He is a brilliant musician, and his melodies and my words make a beautiful combination. He put together a great band for me, and we recorded it mostly live. It's as real as I can get.

### What can we expect from your tour in May?

You can expect a lot of good music. I've written a lot of interesting music in my life! It's just me and Shane – two guitars and the songs.

INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON



**MULL HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**Dear Satellite**

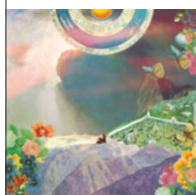
XTRA MILE RECORDINGS

**Hebridean songwriter continues his purple patch**

**7/10**

2015 was a quite a year for Mull Historical Society's Colin MacIntyre. First came his debut novel, *The Letters Of Ivor Punch*, which won the Edinburgh Book Festival's First Book Award, and later a Best Of collection that similarly showcased his talent for wonky storytelling. Now he arrives with his seventh album, a series of typically charming, if not overly adventurous, indie-pop songs. "Sleepy Hollow" and "This Little Sister" effortlessly underline MacIntyre's ear for a pop hook, though it's the quirkiest numbers that best showcase his songwriting skills, in particular "Bones", a witty, syncopated gem buoyed by tinkling percussion and off-key whistling.

FIONA STURGES



**NIGHT MOVES**  
**Pennied Days**

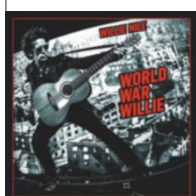
DOMINO

**Excellent Kurt Vile-style widescreen studio rock**

**8/10**

Three years in the making, this second album by Minneapolis trio Night Moves was worth the wait. Guitarist/vocalist John Pelant soaks his melodies in a blurry shine, steering a passage between Fleetwood Mac and Bruce Springsteen that fans of Kurt Vile might appreciate. The tone is key here, with "Kind Luck", "Leave Your Light On" and "Border On Border" sharing the same sense of sustained, muted drama, whether dealing in country, disco or rock balladry. There are poppy moments, too, such as opener "Carl Sagan" and "Staurolite Stroll", but this is the sort of album you want to get into bed with, pull up the covers and listen.

PETER WATTS



**WILLIE NILE**  
**World War Willie**

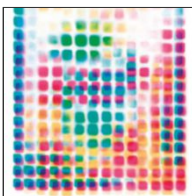
RIVER HOUSE

**Play it loud: The re-emergence of Willie The Rocker**

**7/10**

Riding a writing-and-recording renaissance with a recent string of populist, spiritual studio albums, Nile here takes a playful step back from the hard questions to simply crank up and stomp feet. Marking youthful reminiscence ("Forever Wild") and the passage of time (the novelty "Grandpa Rocks"), *WWW* rocks with gleeful, guitar-driven, singsong abandon. Homage is paid to Lou Reed (a pounding "Sweet Jane") and Levon Helm ("When Levon Sings") and "Let's All Come Together" and "Hell Yeah", sporting a rockabilly underbelly, are more feel-good anthems than in-depth studies. "Trouble Down In Diamond Town" is a detour, though, a harrowing narrative worthy of Nile's savviest storytelling.

LUKE TORN



**NISENNENMONDAI**  
**#N/A**

ON-U SOUND

**Refined minimalism from Japanese Krautrockers**

**7/10**

The three women of stoical Tokyo instrumentalists Nisennenmondai have made a little go a very long way in their 10 years together, during which they've become a compelling live act whose obsession with repetition has a ritualistic quality. Their fourth album, recorded with some restraint by On-U Sound boss Adrian Sherwood (the titular A to their N), sees them refine their extraordinary technique – a rubbery industrial judder – to the point where the introduction of a bassline eight minutes into a strictly percussive track (on "#4") is cause for excitement. Sherwood's two live mixes almost capture the intensity of their stage show.

PIERS MARTIN



**PALEHOUND**  
**Dry Food**

HEAVENLY

**Terrific, self-assured, solo alt. pop introduction**

**8/10**

There are plenty of young acts now mining the variform seam of '90s American alt. rock, but few as affectingly as Boston-based Ellen Kempner. As Palehound, the 21-year-old weaves a scribbly path around Pavement, Pixies and The Breeders, but these are markers in the distance, not touchstones. Her UK debut – on which she plays everything except drums – is the short, deceptively sweet-voiced documenting of a year's difficulties, including dropping out of college, her first break-up and mental ill health. But, like Courtney Barnett and Kimya Dawson, Kempner's raw honesty encompasses the droll as well as the despairing, as in "Dixie", where she's gagging while cleaning out a plughole.

SHARON O'CONNELL



**PARC EN CIEL**  
**Path Integral**

LUCKY ME

**Scotch egghead adds math rock to intellectonica**

**7/10**

Mathieu Thomas, a Parisian-born producer now based in Scotland, won't win prizes for rock'n'roll conduct with his inscrutable, instrumental debut, but at least its inspiration – atomic bomb co-developer Richard Feynman – won plenty as a theoretical physicist. Parc En Ciel is inevitably a complex equation balancing intricate time signatures, a cerebral sense of melody and an astronomical collection of analogue keyboards, often recalling the work of Tortoise, especially on the oblique, prog-jazz of "Telomare". Hints of Marcus Miller's basswork for Miles Davis' *Tutu* and Wally Badarou's cult synth-jazz collection, *Echoes*, are also hidden amid the experimental electronica.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



**PARQUET COURTS**  
**Human Performance**

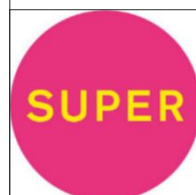
ROUGH TRADE

**Egghead NYC indie, old-school style**

**6/10**

Running on 'idiot energy', channelling the perpetual nervousness of New York's guitar-rock underground, Parquet Courts often hit the right spots on their fifth album: an opening volley of "Dust" and "Human Performance" has guitars strung like elastic and melodies drawn from the side of the mouth. After that, it gets shakier: "I Was Just Here" aims for the structural complexity of Talking Heads or MX-80 Sound, but falls flat. Elsewhere, they're still a little too in thrall to their obvious precursors (The Fall, Pavement) to take flight, but there are some great, clanging pop songs here, too.

JON DALE



**PET SHOP BOYS**  
**Super**

X2

**Thirteen albums in, still nothing and nobody like them**

**7/10**

The Pet Shop Boys have long since passed that point at which the release of a new album serves substantially of a reminder of how many great albums of theirs one already owns, prompting some pretty searching questions about whether another is a necessary purchase. But *Super*, their first long-player since 2013's *Electric*, has some darkly twinkling moments – especially the melancholy tyrant's lament "The Dictator Decides", with its goose-stepping percussion and echoes of "Go West", and the mournful, Visage-ish ballad "Sad Robot World". The rest is at the very least a reminder that PSBs remain a lively genre of their own creation.

ANDREW MUELLER



**IGGY POP/TARWATER/ALVA NOTO**  
**Leaves Of Grass**

MORR MUSIC

**Iggy reads Whitman: "I am he that aches with love!"**

**8/10**

In all the clamour surrounding his hook-up with Josh Homme (*Post Pop Depression*), a second new Iggy project has rather slipped under the radar. *Leaves Of Grass* finds him reading a clutch of Walt Whitman poems, while a coalition of German electronicists provide discreetly glitchy soundscapes. Thanks in no small part to Iggy's voice, a tool now of great visceral gravitas, it works brilliantly. In his notes, he compares Whitman to Elvis. Pop himself, though, is a better embodiment of Whitman's muscular sensualism: "Lusty, phallic, with the potent original loins"; "Singing the phallus, singing the song of procreation."

JOHN MULVEY



**PUBLIC MEMORY**  
**Wuthering Drum**  
FELT

**Mournful synth pop from the Brooklyn-based auteur**

**7/10**

Public Memory is the nom du band of Robert

Toher, who has clearly spent some time mainlining Krautrock, Depeche Mode and Massive Attack. All 10 tracks on his debut solo album are effectively reiterations of the same song, but it's a terrific one: a minor-key epic, built around a throbbing sawtooth synth bassline, featuring doomy, motorik drums, and sung in a slightly strangled falsetto whisper, as if in the throes of death. Digital wind chimes clatter arrhythmically over the top, like shattered crystals. The dubby swoops of "As You Wish", the fidgety drum 'n' bass of "Domino" and the cut-glass electronica of "Cul De Sac" are the standouts.

JOHN LEWIS



**SHONEN KNIFE**  
**Adventure**  
DAMNABLY

**Legendary Japanese punk-pop veterans stick within their retro-kitsch comfort zone**

**6/10**

Currently celebrating their 35th anniversary, the

"Osaka Ramones" continue to enjoy international cult success despite a limited and essentially conservative bubblegum garage-rock formula. Reuniting singer and chief songwriter Naoko Yamano with original drummer Atsuko Yamano, who rejoins on bass, Shonen Knife's 21st album is skewed a little more towards 1970s hard-rock signifiers than usual, notably on the cheerfully dumb double-denim retro-chugger "Rock 'N' Roll T-Shirt" and the Motörhead-style machine-gun riff-grinder of "IMI". But despite the odd dreamy detour into girl-group psych-pop, this slender 10-tracker is bulked out with a little too much autopilot retro-kitsch filler.

STEPHEN DALTON



**SILVER SUN PICKUPS**  
**Better Nature**  
NEW MACHINE RECORDINGS/  
ADA

**LA rock quartet ramp up the drama, to no benefit whatsoever**

**4/10**

Produced by Jackknife Lee

(Crystal Castles, U2), this is Silversun Pickups' first album in three years and it's everything they've done before but bigger and louder. Their overcooked collision of rock and electronica is executed here with maximum effort (everything is scrupulously polished) and minimal imagination. Typical of their approach is the opener, "Nightlight", a song with empty portentous lyrics ("Now we have the right to be the masters of the tangles of disaster") and crescendos that build to not very much at all. The Pickups are better when they dial down the melodrama, but these moments are disappointingly rare.

FIONA STURGES



**THE RANGE**  
**Potential**  
DOMINO

**Internet explorer's innovative slow jams**

**7/10**

Most musicians fritter away their time online, but for *Potential* the US producer The Range

(James Hinton) has put his endless surfing to good use by composing tracks around snippets of videos he came across on YouTube's outer reaches. Plucking samples from wannabe grime MCs and unknown divas and weaving these into his uplifting electronica – a mix of manicured jungle and Jamie xx-style sad bangers – proves surprisingly moving: "Right now, I don't have a back-up plan," a London rapper says as "Regular"'s soft-synths twinkle, while for "Florida" Hinton recontextualises a line from a dodgy cover of an Ariana Grande hit. He turns shit into hits.

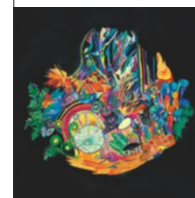
PIERS MARTIN

I'M  
NEW  
HERE

**Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith**



➤ Raised amid nature on the remote Orcas Island some 100 miles north of Seattle, Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith began her career in music, playing classical guitar. But while studying composition at Boston's prestigious Berklee School Of Music, a chance encounter with a Buchla synthesiser nudged her onto a different path. Soon she found herself entranced by the organic, malleable possibilities of analogue synthesis – and in particular, the functions of the Buchla Music Easel, a rare and ergonomically beautiful example of '70s synth design. "Buchla synths have always resonated with me, because I first taught myself synthesis on various Buchla instruments," she says. "It feels like an extension of my voice. I don't limit myself to just Buchla synths – but they are a feeling of home for me." The natural world still manifests in Smith's work: her debut LP *Euclid* employed ideas taken from Euclidean geometry, while new album *Ears* blends the blissful arpeggios of the Music Easel with woodwind inspired by the sound of slowed-down birdsong. "*Ears* is inspired by my sonic experience of when I am out in nature and the intense, appalling and perfect beauty of things destroying and creating," she says. "But my intention is for listeners to feel like they are on their own sonic journey, not through mine." LOUIS PATTISON



**KAITLYN AURELIA SMITH**  
**Ears**  
WESTERN VINYL

**Enchanting ambient synth music from Bay Area composer**

**8/10**

*Ears* is a record that makes heavy use of the Buchla

Music Easel, an obscure '70s modular synth – but it's what Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith does with it that makes this such a special record. Based in the Bay Area but hailing from the remote Orcas Island off the coast of Seattle, Smith's compositional approach winds in vocals and even a woodwind quintet to make music that feels organic, in touch with the natural world. "First Flight" and "When I Try, I'm Full" are guided by electronic arpeggios that ripple like the surface of a lake, while "Envelop", with its processed vocals and orchestral flourishes, winds up somewhere between Fever Ray and Van Dyke Parks. A modern new-age gem.

LOUIS PATTISON



**SEPTEMBER GIRLS**  
**Age Of Indignation**  
FORTUNA POP!

**Muddily produced all-female Dublin five-piece**

**6/10**

The second album from this Dublin quintet comes wreathed in gothic guitar

riffs, thunderous tom-toms and a wall of feedback, all of which bleed into a rather muffled mess. The standout songs harness this wall of distortion effectively: "Blue Eyes" is a galloping post-punk stomper with a terrific guitar riff; "Age Of Indignation" melds together Banshee wails and organ drones; while "Love No One" and "John Of Gods" see the whole band creating austere, medieval vocal harmonies. The lyrics cover some heavy subjects – feminism, Catholicism, corrupt Irish institutions – so it's a pity that the hopelessly muddy production means that they might as well be singing in Icelandic.

JOHN LEWIS



**STARWALKER**  
**Starwalker**  
PROTOTYP

**Icelandic producer meets Air man. Air man prevails**

**7/10**

Renaissance man Barði Jóhannsson may be an iconic

figure in Iceland, but his presence here is overshadowed by that of Jean-Benoît Dunckel. The Air member not only has a higher profile, but it's his musical style that's most evident on tracks such as "Everybody's Got Their Own Way", which recalls the French duo's "Kelly Watch The Stars", and the beatific "Blue Hawaii"'s slow-motion grace. Keren Ann, Jóhannsson's colleague in French conceptualists Lady & Bird, adds her voice to the gracefully optimistic "Losers Can Win", but it's the naïve charm of opener "Holidays" that flies highest.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



## SAM BEAM AND JESCA HOOP

### Love Letter For Fire

SUBPOP

Earthiness and abstraction in equipoise on alt.country/folk duo's first collaboration. By Sharon O'Connell



8/10

FOR BOTH SAM Beam and Jesca Hoop, *Love Letter For Fire* could have gone horribly wrong. Like any untested working relationship, it risked ending up as either an underwhelming compromise or (worse) an awkward clash of two distinctive artistic

expressions. There's a world of difference between a nose-to-tail collaboration and a guest spot – and there are no guarantees.

Beam as good as trademarked a genre in the early noughties with his fine-boned and melancholic, acoustic alt.country/folk recordings as Iron & Wine. Since then, he's shifted towards a more expansive and poppy, instrumentally lush sound, which peaked with 2013's sonic travelogue *Ghost On Ghost*. Jesca Hoop's articulation is very different. The spry, eloquent songs of her four albums to date are country-folk in only the loosest sense, as much in line with the work of modernists such as Susanna Wallumrød and Bill Frisell as, say, Joanna Newsom. Beam released an album (of covers) with Ben Bridwell last year and, in 2014, he duetted on a song from Hoop's *Undress* (the pivotal connection point for this record, it turned out); she'd supported Beam on a leg of his *Ghost On Ghost* tour and has often welcomed guests to her records. But writing music and lyrics in a partnership was uncharted territory for them both.

That *Love Letter For Fire* is a triumph of rustic minimalism and unforced, chamber-pop poise, with charm by the skipload, is down to what Beam describes as “a conscious releasing of the reins on both our parts, a giving in to what the combination

could and would become on its own, without too much manipulation.” He had in fact been looking for a female writing partner for some time and was already a Hoop admirer. “Jesca's voice is incredible,” he told *Uncut*, “her sense of melody exquisite and her turn of phrase unique. I think we both just kind of dove forward [after the “Hunting My Dress” hook-up] with the faith that if we liked the sound of our voices together, then the rest would fall into place. So much of this kind of work is done alone; it was fun to have a trusted teammate that I could lean on for inspiration or helpful criticism.”

Recorded in 10 days and produced by Tucker Martine, the largely acoustic *Love Letter...* employs understated, jazz-literate players including Robert Burger (on piano/keys), Eyvind Kang (violin, viola) and Wilco drummer Glenn Kotche. It was conceived as a set of odes to the ephemeral nature of love, in duet form, in line with the country convention, although only one song (the tender and lowering “Valley Clouds”) really satisfies that brief.

According to Beam, what he and Hoop were after was, “George and Tammy singing a modern-classical take on ‘Islands In The Stream’, produced in the vein of Big Star’s *Third*. I’m not sure we reached those lofty heights, but it was a fun place to launch off from.” For the lyric-writing process, the pair had practice sessions involving the free and unedited composing of poems, with lines traded back and forth via email. They got together for a couple of extended songwriting sessions, but much of the work was done down the wire, from Beam’s home in North Carolina and Hoop’s in Manchester.

The album opens with the minute-long “Welcome To Feeling”, which signals the emotional warmth

within. Both Hoop and Beam have sensual voices and the interplay between them packs a sweet emotional punch throughout. They switch between singing solo, trading conversational lines and harmonising, with oversinging rationed to maximise its impact, as on the knockout “Soft Place To Land”, which addresses the idea of love as a safe haven. The finger-picked and Fred Neil-ish “Bright Lights And Goodbyes” is another vocal highlight, southing strings and simulated wind noise conjuring a late-night bonfire beneath the stars. Musically, the standouts are a hushed “We Two Are A Moon”, which pivots on a short but highly effective outbreak of jazzy guitar twangling, the strikingly rhythmic “Midas Tongue”

and “Every Songbird Says”, a sprightly mix of cello, fingerpicked guitar and percussive chattering, with echoes of Ralph Vaughan Williams.

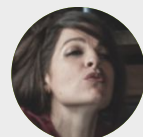
A deceptive simple, calm record, *Love Letter...* sounds both intuitive and direct, and any wrangling along the collaborative way is undetectable. Hoop has a new album, *Memories Are Now*, due later this year and Beam, who previewed two new (unrecorded) songs on Pitchfork Radio in January, is presumably now working on his next full-length. This seems to have been a transformative experience for them both; time will tell to what extent.

#### SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Tucker Martine  
Recorded at: Flora Recording & Playback, Portland, Oregon  
Personnel: Sam Beam (guitar, vocals), Jesca Hoop (guitar, vocals), Sebastian Steinberg (bass), Glenn Kotche (drums, percussion), Robert Burger (keys), Eyvind Kang (violin, viola), Edward Rankin-Parker (cello)

## Q&A

Jesca Hoop



**Was the idea of sharing artistic control daunting?**

Yes, but in a positive, “What is going to happen here?” way. For me, this was a practice largely in surrender and shape-shifting.

We were interested in the malleable potential and what could be created by letting the words and melodies of one be affected, influenced and changed by the other. It did not come without challenge – to the ego, in particular. This is where trust came in. I trust Sam as a writer, so I had to bend and stretch.

**In what ways are your sensibilities aligned?**

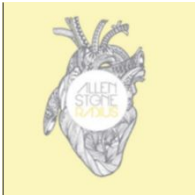
Coincidentally, the year before I met Sam, I’d started developing my own sort of country style. The song “Pegasi” on my upcoming solo record

is a good example. I found this dabbling with old American stylings useful in blending sensibilities. Sam and I share a love of poetry and language. Like me, he’s a storyteller, but he has the ability to be more simply spoken, whereas I find it hard not to abstract. I think I also shift personality quite a bit more, whereas Sam is constant. He can be more like garden soil; I am like smoke.

**What is it about the classic country duet that appeals?**

It seems to me that country duets are generally feelgood songs – even if they are about heartbreak. There is a sense of togetherness, teamwork and the aim to uplift. There is a light-heartedness, humour and sweetness that I really enjoy. Like Johnny Cash and June Carter – theirs is a simple charm and playfulness that endears you to characters in the songs. Also, perhaps, as an American living in England for seven years now, I am more than happy to draw upon my American roots.

INTERVIEW: SHARON O’CONNELL



## ALLEN STONE

### Radius

ATO/PIAS

**Hard-working blue-eyed soul man's determined but ersatz third outing**

**5/10**

Stone's skills – vocal phrasing that recalls Hathaway and Wonder, undeniable warmth and candour – have been finessed by tireless live work. But the attractiveness of the old-school soul grooves that producers Benny Cassette (Kanye) and Malay (Frank Ocean) provide here remain hidebound in earnest but clunky songwriting. The work-song handclaps and funk references hang heavy on “Perfect World”, while the social commentary of “American Privilege” and cloying confessional “I Know That It Wasn't Right” lack conviction. “Fake Future” offers a sour take on modern technology but, as so often, the attempt at relevance is laboured, the effect strained.

GAVIN MARTIN



## TELEMAN

## TELEMAN

### Brilliant Sanity

MOSHI MOSHI

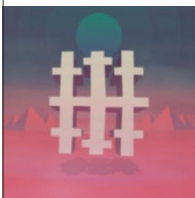
**Joyous, smart and soulful second**

“Put on your favourite song,” exhorts singer-songwriter and guitarist Tommy Sanders in

**8/10**

driving opener “Dusseldorf”, which nods at the city's electronic music history while recalling a trip to a fairground. It's a tall order on this record, though. Produced by Dan Carey and leaning on a trio of vintage synths, it's a structurally savvy set stuffed with impeccably wrought pop hooks. Highlights are “Fall In Time”, which shows off Sanders' sweetly forlorn voice, and “English Architecture”, a gently effervescent ode to the dislocation of touring. Telemán now stand alongside Metronomy, Field Music and Dutch Uncles in the smart pop ranks, yet sound unlike any of them. Neat trick.

SHARON O'CONNELL



## THREE TRAPPED TIGERS

### Silent Earthling

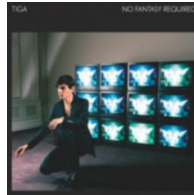
SUPERBALL MUSIC

**Instrumental prog/math/post-rock – a lot more fun than it sounds**

**8/10**

Boffinish London trio Three Trapped Tigers are a living experiment in how to wring maximum joy from the synth-rock format. Untethered from rock's traditional structures but retaining its thrust and immediacy, they resemble latter-day Mogwai, with a touch of Rustie's Megadrive euphoria and Muse's bombastic riffage. On “Strebeek” and “Kraken” there are moments when their proggy impulses threaten to take over, but these chewier tracks are tempered, as on “Tekkers”, with passages of streamlined sci-fi funk and towers of glistening chords. There are clearly mad skills at work, but *Silent Earthling* is rarely anything other than a simple pleasure.

SAM RICHARDS



## TIGA

### No Fantasy Required

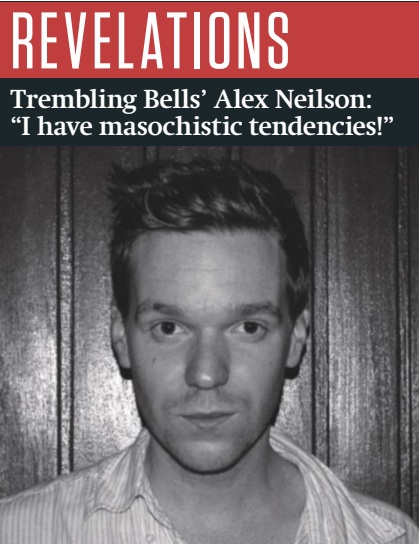
COUNTER

**Canadian electro maestro takes irony to the disco**

**8/10**

His last studio album was seven years ago, but Montreal electronica producer Tiga James Sontag has been busy making singles, remixes and collaborations, dabbling in acting and hosting a 6 Music radio show. Mechanised and minimal, yet playful and sensual, *No Fantasy Required* is club-friendly dance-pop lubricated with deadpan mirth and suave irony. “Plush” may be almost four years old, but it still rattles along with an addictive electro energy. “Having So Much Fun”, which reworks Lene Lovich's vintage new-wave hit “Lucky Number” into a bubbly techno earworm, and the sleek Hudson Mohawke collaboration “Planet E” prove there is depth to Tiga's studied shallowness.

STEPHEN DALTON



## REVELATIONS

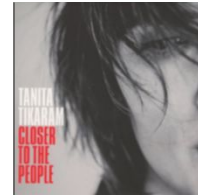
### Trembling Bells' Alex Neilson: “I have masochistic tendencies!”

▶ “Sleeping's cheating!” laughs drummer and vocalist Alex Neilson. “I think I have masochistic tendencies and I like to push myself very hard.” Neilson certainly has a busy schedule – as well as his continuing work as a quarter of Trembling Bells, the Glasgow-based musician is also planning to team up with Shirley Collins, and release a live album drawn from shows he's played with Will Oldham. Rumour has it that he's even helming a collection of traditional songs sung by Stewart Lee.

“I've learned a hell of a lot while travelling the world with Josephine Foster, Current 93, Will Oldham, Baby Dee, Alasdair Roberts and many more,” says Neilson, who's also performed with Mike Heron and Jandek. “The fact that these people even know my name is still pretty baffling to me, because I have learnt so much from listening to their music over the years and by taking dictation at their feet.

“I have a very restless creative sense,” he explains, discussing the influences on the Bells' new mini-album, “and tend to immerse myself in everything from Frank Sinatra to Jean-Paul Sartre – they all become grist for the mill. And it can be literally anything; from The Ink Spots to Kanye West to Ovid to something that someone says in the pub.”

MARCUS O'DAIR



## TANITA TIKARAM

### Closer To The People

EAR MUSIC

**Mature return for the “Twist In My Sobriety” singer**

**8/10**

Tikaram has ripened from teenage pop sensation into singular artist in a process so subtle it has been almost imperceptible – not least, perhaps, because this is only her third album in 18 years. Her influences are highbrow and the assimilation of them impressive. “Glass Love Train” rides on a Nyman-esque keyboard pattern. “Night Is A Bird” is a Thelonious Monk-inspired jazz workout. The title track with its insistent double-bass motif, urgent trumpet and off-beat vocals is dedicated to Anita O'Day. “My Enemy” is a sombre piano nocturne for a friend who was a victim of child abuse. Dignified, discriminating and richly rewarding.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## TREMBLING BELLS

### Wide Majestic Aire

TIN ANGEL

**Open-eared mini-album from Glasgow band who have worked with Mike Heron and Will Oldham**

**8/10**

Drawing on psychedelic folk of a vaguely Incredible String Band hue, Glasgow's Trembling Bells might seem retro, even pastiche. Outside the band, however, these musicians have played everything from Renaissance music to free jazz, and these currents all feed the music. The lyrics to a single song take in the Central Line as well as “carousing with my lass” – and the subject of that song, avant-garde American filmmaker Maya Deren, is hardly Ye Olde Albion. Named for a Yorkshire river of founder Alex Neilson's childhood, this seven-track mini-album is more reflective than 2015's *The Sovereign Self*, but not without its moments of abandon. Magnificent.

MARCUS O'DAIR



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### A Hard Day's Night Treatment

ECC100

**The Beatles get a gentle massage**

**5/10**

Originally commissioned to accompany a new Lush Spa treatment, these 18 Fab's reinterpretations meet politely at the intersection between folk and jazz. Although the choices are imaginative (ranging from “There's A Place” to “Sun King”) and the participants include Eliza Carthy, Martha Tilston, The Imagined Village and Marry Waterson, the results rarely rise above the pleasantly soporific. Standouts include Rosie Doonan's swooning “A Hard Day's Night”, while Jackie Oates' “Golden Slumbers” is undeniably gorgeous, but a little more of the chutzpah evident in The Space Cadets' hazy “Flying” and Sheema Mukherjee's terrific “Norwegian Wood” would have been welcome.

GRAEME THOMSON



## VELCRO HOOKS

### Velcro Hooks

HOWLING OWL RECORDS

Cracking psych-pop debut from Bristol-based quartet

8/10

Whether blasting garage rock from behind a shield of feedback or delivering an echoey and insistent surf-indie strum, Bristol's Velcro Hooks make quite an impact on this punchy debut. It's all very changeable – "Severin The Mind" has some of the pummelling simplicity of hardcore, "Wheatglove" strips it all back with menacing success, while "Marshfly" has a gluey indie-pop urgency – but there's plenty to enjoy, whatever the styling. Pick of the lot is "Galaxy Police Club", which straps an array of splendid guitar solos to a tight martial rhythm that keeps the whole song from flying off into the stratosphere.

PETER WATTS



## WOODPIGEON

### Trouble

WIAIWYA

Canadian's sixth: Mary Margaret O'Hara and Sandro Perri guest

7/10

Mark Andrew Hamilton hadn't planned to make *Trouble*. Post-heartbreak, he went travelling for two years and, despite having recorded as Woodpigeon since 2005, thought he might quit music for good. The fruits of his change of mind are bittersweet and eloquent alt-pop songs that recall Bon Iver, The Apartments and (on "Faithful") late-'80s Fleetwood Mac. He can overdo the hushed restraint, but a fresh breeze ruffles both the melodic crosscurrents of "No Word Of A Lie" and the lowering "Whole Body Shakes", which features reverbed whistling and the lyrical barb, "You're always first in line for happiness."

SHARON O'CONNELL



## WOODS

### City Sun Eater In The River Of Light

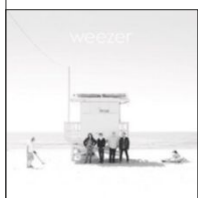
WOODSIST

New York indie mainstays stretch themselves, a little

7/10

While their former bassist, Kevin Morby, makes rapid strides in his solo career, the progress of Woods is gentler, more incremental. *City Sun Eater...* is the ninth album by Jeremy Earl's shifting cabal, and one that compounds the advances of *Bend Beyond* (2012) and *With Light And With Love* (2014). Where once there was lo-fi whimsy, a certain crispness is now prevalent, along with expanded horizons and budgets that can accommodate the occasional horn section, or the tentative funk of "Can't See At All". Earl's songcraft, meanwhile, continues to be refined: if only his voice were as strong as the guitar soloing that knocks the likes of "Sun City Creeps" and "I See In The Dark" off their axes.

JOHN MULVEY



## WEEZER

### Weezer

ATLANTIC

Tenth long-player by the grunge Beach Boys

Fan tradition dictates that self-titled Weezer albums are to be known by the colour of their sleeve,

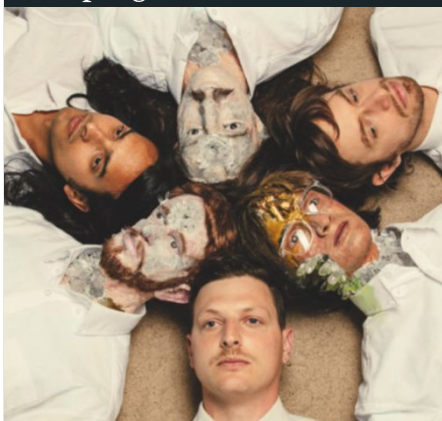
7/10

but 'The White Album' has little in common with its sprawling Beatles namesake. Inspired by Los Angeles beachlife, this is a focused record by Weezer standards, one that plays to their strengths (sun-kissed tunefulness, nerdy introspection, loud guitars). "Californian Kids" is an effervescent hymn to West Coast youth, while "(Girl We Got A) Good Thing" sweetly channels Brian Wilson and Bacharach. The beta-male fantasising of "Thank God For Girls" reminds you Rivers Cuomo can get a little weird when writing about women, but *Weezer's* goofiness here largely falls on the side of endearing.

LOUIS PATTISON

## REVELATIONS

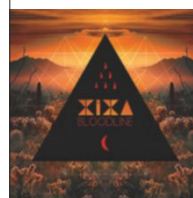
Yeasayer's Chris Keating on sculpting different sounds



Since they emerged from Brooklyn with their 2007 debut, *All Hour Cymbals*, Yeasayer have spent close to a decade wrong-footing fans with unexpected hits tucked away on elaborate concept albums. "I have no idea what people like or see in our music," says Chris Keating, the band's frontman. "We always try to do something different with our records – I want every album to have its own identity – and that can be to our detriment in terms of maintaining a fanbase."

Fortunately, the band's fourth album *Amen & Goodbye* is a return of sorts to the shaggy kaftan pop of their debut, and finds the philosophical Keating, whose family is half-Jewish and half-Catholic, grappling with religion. "The US is particularly consumed by religiosity," he says, "but I find my morality elsewhere." Keating, Ira Wolf Tuton and Anand Wilder recorded the album in upstate New York and Brooklyn with former Beck drummer Joey Waronker and singer Suzzy Roche, and Keating is particularly thrilled to have collaborated with sculptor David Altmejd on the artwork. "His art always looks like the music we want to make: deconstructed and refilled and otherworldly, with strange, humorous narratives. I was like a kid in a candy store every time I went to his studio."

PIERS MARTIN



## XIXA

### Bloodline

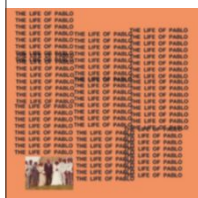
GLITTERHOUSE

Giant Sand/Calexico spin-off yields opulent Latin flavours, outré psychedelic overtures

8/10

Built on grooved, natural Latin rhythms – courtesy of one-time Dylan drummer Winston Watson, percussionist extraordinaire Efen Cruz Chavez, and bassist Geoffrey Hidalgo – this expansive, ambitious sextet represents not so much a culture clash as a smooth, fervent exploration of rarely traversed (by Americans, anyway) musical paths. In this case, it's chichi, a form of Peruvian cumbia music popular decades ago, which XIXA enhance with stout vocals, weird electronic flourishes and dusty, guttural blues. At its best, it's a haunting, mesmerising stew – "Dead Man", "Down From The Sky" – the sum, ultimately and rather impressively, outdistancing the parts.

LUKE TORN



## KANYE WEST

### The Life Of Pablo

GOOD MUSIC/DEF JAM

Ambitious but flawed, the seventh gospel of Kanye West

7/10

It can be difficult to separate any new Kanye West record from the social-media circus surrounding it, especially because at the time of writing, its maker is threatening to release a revised version of the record now streaming on the music service he co-owns, Tidal. Whatever happens to *The Life Of Pablo*, it should remain inspired and maddening in equal measure. Soul and gospel samples intermingle with bracing electronics, Rihanna duets with a sampled Nina Simone (on "Famous"), and moments of religious redemption buttress dull misogyny and unfettered ego ("For all the girls that got dick from Kanye West", and so on). Still, for better or worse, no-one else is making records quite like this.

LOUIS PATTISON



## YEASAYER

### Amen & Goodbye

MUTE

Hipster beatniks' colourful prog folly

7/10

Never a dull moment with Brooklyn minstrels Yeasayer, whose identity crisis continues on a peculiar fourth album (with another terrible sleeve) that sees them ditching the gauche R'n'B of *Fragrant World* for a set of celestial folk jams with a vague biblical bent. Frontman Chris Keating wears his Technicolor dreamcoat well on a typically excellent set of unusual songs: four short instrumentals punctuate nine tracks ranging from sunshine singalongs ("Silly Me", "Dead Sea Scrolls") to Brian Pern cosmic jigs ("Half Asleep", "Prophecy Gun") and prog fantasia ("I Am Chemistry"). Sounds ominous, but hopefully *Amen & Goodbye* won't be Yeasayer's last.

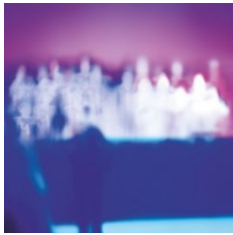
PIERS MARTIN

# TIM HECKER

## Love Streams

4AD

Heavenly choirs and fiendish noise: the radical beauty of a Canadian sound artist. *By John Mulvey*



8/10

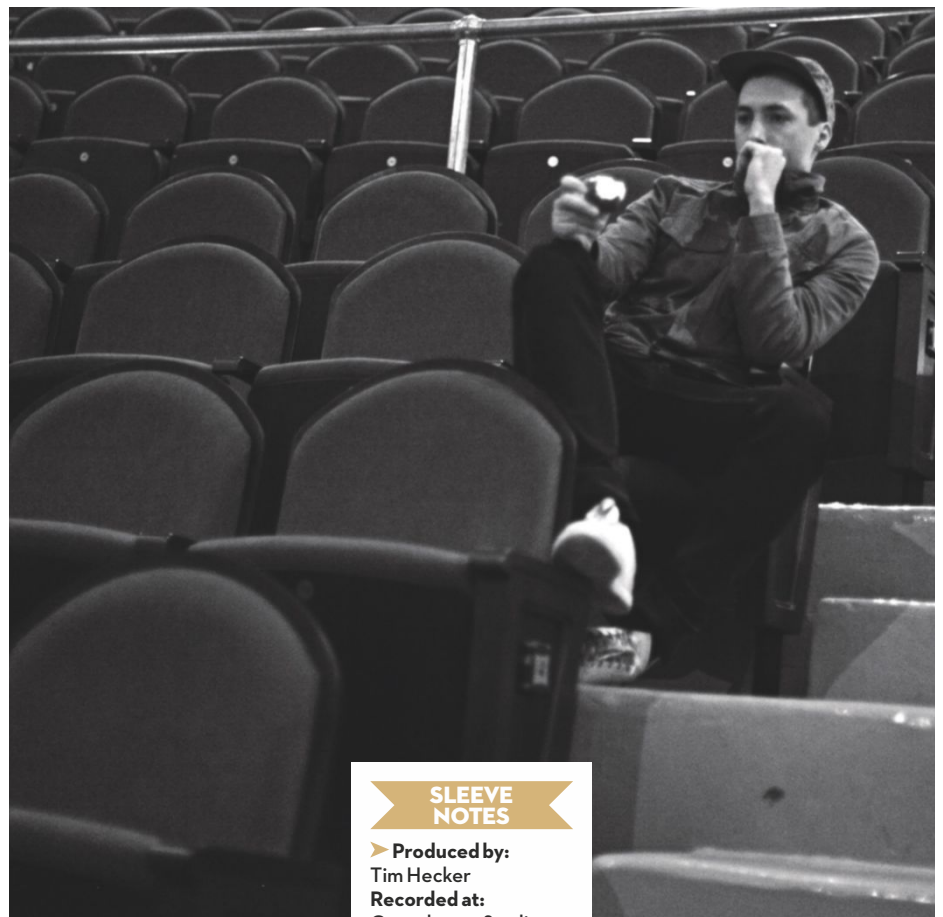
When My Bloody Valentine disappeared from view after *Loveless* in the early 1990s, it left the newly emboldened young noise aesthete with something of a dilemma. Kevin Shields may have taught them that noise

could be profoundly beautiful as well as transgressive, but where might they find similar succour now he had apparently retired from the game?

For a while, the ranks of shoegazers worked well enough. But when Ride and their kin were revealed to be essentially orthodox indie-rock bands with a mild effects-pedal fetish, a more daring, avant-garde scene gradually revealed itself, located somewhere in the hinterland between post-rock and electronica. The billowing fuzz pastoralia of Flying Saucer Attack proved a strong entry point, the deeper ambient recesses of Boards Of Canada and the Warp label a satisfying next step. Then came murky drum'n'bass subversive Third Eye Foundation, and on into an experimental zone occupied by painterly sound artists like Pluramon, William Basinski and, perhaps best of all, the Viennese guitarist Christian Fennesz.

It is into this discrete musical continuum, this expanding index of possibilities, that we can usefully plant Tim Hecker. Hecker, originally from Vancouver, has been around for about 15 years now, releasing a series of albums (*Love Streams* is the ninth) on which melodies are often processed, smashed and re-imagined in endearing new contexts. There are plenty of other ways to categorise his consistently lovely music. Sometimes he's been bracketed alongside the ambient creatives who populated his old label, Kranky. At others, he's been seen as one of those ADD digital collagists like Oneohtrix Point Never, an occasional collaborator. A third perspective ranks him as part of the burgeoning post-classical movement, though his music is rarely quite as polite as much of that scene. *Love Streams* might have roots in the 15th-century chorales of Josquin Des Prez, but it's emphatically not a gauzy updating of classical music for Sigur Rós fans.

That said, Hecker's new home of 4AD also allows him to be seen as part of yet another tradition of radically beautiful music; *Love Streams* wouldn't look out of place in a record collection between Le Mystere Des Voix Bulgares and the Cocteau Twins' *Treasure*. The 4AD-friendly old trope of "sonic cathedrals" might be worth dusting down, too, given Hecker's recurrent meddling with liturgical music, a procedure which often unmoors the ecstasies of those original pieces from their devotional purpose. The core of 2011's *Ravedeath 1972* was played on a Reykjavik church pipe organ, casting Hecker as a potent millennial Bach, and *Love Streams* finds him back in Iceland, exploring what might happen when he feeds the



### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**

Tim Hecker

**Recorded at:**

Greenhouse Studios,

Reykjavik, Iceland

**Personnel:** Tim Hecker,

Jóhann Jóhannsson

(vocal arrangements),

The Icelandic Choir

Ensemble, Kara-Lis

Coverdale (keyboards),

Grímur Helgason

(woodwind)

voice into his elaborate systems.

The genesis of *Love Streams* is complex, but seems to involve Hecker tampering with Josquin recordings on his computer, using a programme to print out a new score, then employing the local composer Jóhann Jóhannsson to help create living choral performances out of the adulterated work. To complicate matters further, Hecker reportedly asked the singers to imitate Chewbacca at critical points. Then, of course, he artfully mangled the heavenly voices once more, subjecting them to all manner of buffeting interference, and came out with an album where divisions between the fleshly and the digital are seductively blurred.

Hecker evidently delights in high concepts, in an Eno-like sense of theoretical play, and some of his titles – "Voice Crack", "Castrati Stack", "Collapse Sonata" – keenly celebrate his *modus operandi*. But it never feels like he is more interested in the process

of making music than the actual end result. As a consequence, the likes of "Music Of The Air" and "Violet Monumental I" weave innumerable snatches of the choir, ebbing synths and phased white noise together into a remarkable filigree construct. Elsewhere, there's more space than in some previous Hecker records. "Bijie Dream" begins like one of those oddly

courtly Aphex Twin pieces – "Girl/Boy Song", say – and even when the noise billows in, like a fractious weather system, it still leaves room for the melody to work itself out, relatively unadorned.

Maybe this is the key to *Love Streams*' success. For all its diverting technical backstory, for all our attempts to manoeuvre Tim Hecker into various neat genre boxes, ancient and modern, his music is ultimately ravishing in a way that transcends method and context. When the ghosts in the machine sing so sweetly, it's not strictly necessary to know how they became trapped there.

## Q&A

### Tim Hecker

**What attracts you to sacred music?** It's so loaded with the promises of transcendence, and reverence for something that isn't obvious and material. A lot of art is devotional, in the sense that it is committed to or affirms something, but I'm more interested in using the veneer of transcendental music as an elastic surface to bend, mutate and replicate it into something else. I started this record overtly appropriating musical scores from 15th-century composer Josquin Des Prez. Even at that time he wrote both sacred and secular music, so the distinction

isn't all that important. I worked on mutations of those pieces with a synthesiser, then worked with the composer Jóhann Jóhannsson to write choral arrangements that interacted with the original reworked pieces as an almost ouroboros of the voice. Interesting things come from misalignment and discord.

**How do you think you've evolved as an artist over these past few years?** It's hard to survive as a 'composer' or musician these days. I haven't gone the route of radically rebuilding from scratch on each album, but I do question whether I need to make music and whether releasing work adds anything to the world. Without feeling that hopefully it does, I probably wouldn't bother. *INTERVIEW: JOHN MULVEY*



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# Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



8/10



6/10



7/10

## TRACKLIST

### ON THE LEVEL

#### DISC TWO:

- 1 Down Down (Single Edit)
- 2 Roll Over Lay Down  
(Live At The Kursaal, Southend/1975)
- 3 Gerdundula  
(Roll Over Lay Down EP Version)
- 4 Junior's Wailing (Roll Over Lay Down  
EP Version/Live From The UK/1975)
- 5 Roadhouse Blues (Live At The  
Kursaal, Southend/1975)
- 6 Backwater (Live In Mainz,  
Germany/1975)
- 7 Just Take Me (Live In Germany 1975)
- 8 Claudie (Live In Germany 1975)
- 9 Little Lady (Live In Germany 1975)
- 10 Most Of The Time  
(Live In Germany 1975)
- 11 Bye Bye Johnny  
(Live In Germany 1975)
- 12 Down Down (Demo)



Quo, circa '73: (l-r) Francis Rossi, Alan Lancaster, John Coghlan, Rick Parfitt

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

## STATUS QUO

On The Level/If You Can't Stand The Heat.../

Whatever You Want (reissues, 1975, 1978, 1979)

UMC

Double-disc reissues of a selection of the Quo's diverse '70s output. *By David Cavanagh*

IN DECEMBER THIS year, Status Quo will cease to exist as an electric band. Once they finish their 2016 touring commitments, Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt will pack away their Telecasters and bring down the curtain on half-a-century of Quo rock'n'roll. No more Frantic Four reunions. No more heads-down boogie. No more pounding out the riffs of "Big Fat Mama", "Little Lady" and the 180bpm speedrush of "Down Down". Today's public may view them as

veteran light entertainers, but Quo's setlist, for 67-year-old guitarists, is one of rock's most punishing assault courses. And Parfitt's already had three major heart scares.

While Quo fans wait to see if Parfitt and Rossi might re-emerge in future for acoustic shows – their 2014 album *Aquostic (Stripped Bare)* featured the famous hits performed on mandolins and accordions – UMC release another trio of 1970s

## TRACKLIST CONTINUED

### IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT...

#### DISC TWO:

- 1 Accident Prone (Single Edit)
- 2 One By One (Early Demo)
- 3 One By One (Demo)
- 4 No Time Left To Cry (Early Demo)
- 5 No Time Left To Cry (Demo)
- 6 Keep Me Guessing (Early Demo)
- 7 Keep Me Guessing (Demo)
- 8 Late Last Night (Demo)
- 9 Late Last Night (Early Demo)
- 10 Invitation (Demo)
- 11 Invitation (Early Demo)
- 12 Again And Again (Demo)

### WHATEVER YOU WANT

#### DISC TWO:

- 1 Hard Ride (Single B-side)
- 2 Living On An Island (Single, Edited)
- 3 Bad Company (Demo)
- 4 Shady Lady (Demo)
- 5 Rearrange (Demo)
- 6 Living On An Island (US Remix)
- 7 Who Asked You (US Remix)
- 8 Whatever You Want (US Remix)
- 9 Come Rock With Me (US Remix)
- 10 Rockin' On (US Remix)
- 11 Runaway (US Remix)
- 12 High Flyer (US Remix)
- 13 Breaking Away (US Remix)
- 14 Living On An Island (Early Demo)
- 15 Living On An Island (Demo, Backing Track)

→ Quo albums in two-CD expanded editions, following last December's initial batch (*Hello!, Quo, Rockin' All Over The World*). As before, all three contain previously unreleased tracks and, as before, all three tell very different stories. *On The Level* (1975) sailed to No 1 on a wave of confidence and popular appeal. *If You Can't Stand The Heat...* (1978) alienated the fanbase with a controversial, hi-tech production. *Whatever You Want* (1979) got the fans back on-side with a superb title track and a re-establishment of Quo priorities. So much euphoria, angst and rebirth in four short years. So little margin for error.

Appearing a month after its advance single, "Down Down", topped the UK singles chart, *On The Level* was the follow-up to *Quo* (1974), a hard-boiled, heavy album on which bassist Alan Lancaster had been the dominant singer. *On The Level* saw the softer-voiced Rossi



reassert himself as lead vocalist, but it was Parfitt's "Little Lady", opening the album like a bat out of hell, that laid down the mission statement. There was a girl walking down a street, there was a blizzard of guitars and that was pretty much it. But the song's structure was quintessential Quo: start rocking, keep rocking, don't stop rocking, drop down to a quiet bit, build it up again, louder, louder, and then – this was the key moment – resume rocking with absolutely ferocious intensity. Rossi's songs ("Most Of The Time", "What To Do"), tended to be lighter, more country-ish, presenting Quo as the crossover act they would later become, a denim-rock phenomenon with the melodic hooks to catch the ear of every generation. Music critics despaired of them ("a poor man's Canned Heat" – *NME*), but Quo were a band, like Creedence Clearwater Revival, who had more skill than outsiders imagined. Quo's job often looked

easy, even facile, but no other configuration of people could have clicked with the same chemistry. Audiences could sense it; Quo would feed off it. The second disc of *On The Level* has a pulverising "Roadhouse Blues" from Glasgow Apollo, 12 minutes long but not an ounce of flab in it, with Rossi working the crowd like Steve Marriott at a Humble Pie gig. There's 26 minutes, too, from a show in

Mainz, Germany – a mono recording, alas, though not as lo-fi as the unlistenable Paris bootleg on the reissue of *Quo* – providing further evidence of how the Frantic Four crossed the language barrier. They did it by adhering to the time-honoured curriculum of the three Rs – Rock. Roll. Rock'n'roll.

Attracting fans from eight to 48, Quo were never troubled by the rude uprising of punk in 1976-7 (they were faster than many punk bands, for one thing), but other reproaches did annoy

## For Quo, in the era of Hotel California and Rumours, the US was tantalising territory unrocked

them. Their lack of airplay on US radio became an unfortunate obsession. For Quo, in the era of *Hotel California* and *Rumours*, the US was a tantalising territory as yet unrocked. But when they did something about it, their fans reacted like football supporters whose half-time pies have been swapped for crab vol-au-vents. *Rockin' All Over The World* (1977) introduced a new type of Quo production: textured, cushioned and toned down. However, *If*

## DOWN DOWN TO THE VAULTS Four demos on the deluxe editions

### DOWN DOWN

#### DEMO ON THE LEVEL

At the end of *On The Level*'s second disc is this 1974 Rossi demo of Quo's future chart-topper, sounding like he recorded it into the cheapest tape recorder he could find in his local Woolworths. He's got some of the lyrics, and most of the chords, but struggles hilariously with the framework of the song, stopping dozens of times. "What's this? No 116?"

### KEEP ME GUESSING

#### EARLY DEMO IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT...

On a bonus disc filled with work-in-progress demos from 1978-79 – including "One By One", a Parfitt song unreleased for 20 years, and "No Time Left To Cry", a Rossi tune later retitled "Another Game In Town" – "Keep Me Guessing" has the closest thing to a standout riff. A slide-guitar instrumental, it has similar swagger to "Backwater" on *Quo*.

### LATE LAST NIGHT

#### DEMO IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT...

As the demos mount up, here's a poppy, Marshall Crenshaw-style Parfitt song written in the late '70s and later

earmarked for his solo LP (*Recorded Delivery*), which he recorded in '85 but never released. The track came out as a 12-inch B-side on that year's Quo single "In The Army Now". Quo in the '80s: oh dear.

### LIVING ON AN ISLAND

#### DEMO/BACKING TRACK WHATEVER YOU WANT

This Parfitt ballad appears four times on the WYW bonus disc in various stages of completion: an early demo, a radio edit, a US remix and this instrumental backing track, the best version by far. The way Quo play the same three chords over and over at the end – something their critics argue they're rather good at – is hypnotic.



*You Can't Stand The Heat...* (1978) was an even more comprehensive makeover. The songs were submerged in keyboards, horns and female backing singers. One of the first instruments heard on the LP was a synthesiser. As Quo de-Quo-ified their music in an effort to woo new suitors, "Again And Again" at least resembled a familiar boogie. But "Accident Prone", co-written by their producer Pip Williams, made a virtue of a disco hi-hat and the whole point of Quo – their *raison de wossname*, as Rossi would've put it – was that their songs were a different kind of floorshaker.

Williams was retained for *Whatever You Want* (and went on to produce eight Quo LPs in all), but the horns and the girls weren't invited back, which allowed Rossi's and Parfitt's guitars to take up their rightful positions again at the forefront of the mix. The intro of "Whatever You Want", their best single since "Rain" in '76, seemed to last forever, enjoying its rediscovery of ancient Quo rituals, while "Breaking Away", the six-minute closing track, became an epic of self-validation as first Rossi, then Parfitt, sang of life in the belly of Quo ("Hot wax, jacked-up on the television/Skin me another and pass along the whisky and Coke"). The song moved into a dreamy middle section, then into a viciously fast shuffle just like the old days. It felt like something akin to an atonement.

All the same, the bonus disc of *Whatever You Want* includes eight tracks from what's ominously described as an 'American remix' of the album, US-released in 1980 under a new title (*Now Hear This*). The remix, needless to say, made no more impact on US radio than Quo's own self-produced albums *Piledriver*, *Hello!* and *On The Level*. Whatever they had, whatever Britain and Europe couldn't get enough of, America simply didn't want it. To this day, Quo's only US Top 40 hit is "Pictures Of Matchstick Men", all those years ago in 1968. Ironically, it's one of their most English-sounding songs ever.

## Q&A

### Francis Rossi on giving up on the US and Cliff Richard's recording woes

**YOU'D BROKEN INTO the Top 5 in 1973 with *Piledriver*. By the time you made *On The Level*, did it feel like Quo were moving through the gears?**

It did to me, yes. We'd been labelled a 'pop band' in the '60s – like, ooh no, that's some sort of bad thing – but to be honest, I think we've always been a pop band. Status Quo seems to be a mixture of rock, pop, blues and country, but a master of none of them, if you like. *On The Level* had some of our most commercial stuff and it's probably one of my faves.

**There's an unmistakable live-in-the-studio feel to it. Would the four of you always record together in the same room at the same time?**

Yeah, doesn't that seem weird now? It's not really the most efficient way of doing things. We'd do take after take after take – 30, 40 takes – and "No, that one's not quite right", so you go again. The studios would be saying, "Fine, carry on. Do as many as you like." Various engineers going into overtime and such. And yet, back in '68, when we only had X number of hours to do it and the pressure was on, we somehow managed to just get on with it. We were a little bit overindulged by the time of *On The Level*.

**Status Quo were known in the 1970s as a heavy rock band. Did you consider yourselves in the same league as Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Deep Purple?**

No, they were far more musical than us. I'm still about 20 years behind that lot as a guitarist, though I do practise diligently. In terms of our music being heavy, I suppose it was. People used to ask us how we got the bass sounding like that. "Eh? He just played it like that... we dunno."

***On The Level* has some great rockers – "Down Down", "Little Lady", "Bye Bye Johnny" – but it also has some gentler material like Rick Parfitt's "Where I Am". Was that side of Quo important?**

Rick's got a lovely voice and he's always written nice tunes. But somewhere along the line, somebody made Rick feel inadequate as a songwriter and so he went off on this rock thing, almost like a caricature of who he really is. He thinks you have to stand with your legs open and write songs that you pout your lips to. Maybe it's that Purple-Zeppelin thing, as you said. They've got those types of singers. But that's never been us. One of the most distinctive things about Quo is my strange, nasally voice and our sweet harmonies over the top.

**You changed the classic Quo sound for *If You Can't Stand The Heat...*, using synthesisers, brass sections and female backing singers. Remind us why again?**

We'd brought Pip [Williams, producer] in. Our management and record company were thinking, "What the fuck can we do to try and make this band appeal to Americans?" Pip is a great producer, but sometimes he's overly flowery. Some of it is possibly my fault, because I thought by having keyboards and synths it would open up various new musical areas to us. There's some interesting material on it, but we got loads of letters from fans saying we'd made a horrendous mistake.

**Is that why *Whatever You Want* was a return to a more recognisable Quo, without embellishments?**

The thing is, all these decisions would have made sense at the time. I remember reading a review of a Cliff Richard song years ago. I call it "Ipso Facto". (Sings) "*Ipso facto... how we don't talk anymore*." It said they spent 30 hours mixing it! Now you'd think Cliff, after all his success, would find that making records gets easier over time. But it doesn't. It gets harder. You start thinking: 'God, that sounds shit.' The sound seems wrong, or the tempo seems wrong, and you have to come away. Then two or three days later you go back to it and you're into it again. "Wow, it sounds great!" That's happened on every single Quo album from *Piledriver* onwards. And even though it means nothing financially to us anymore, we still worry about every record and we still hope it's going to be a hit.

**Did Quo give up on America in the end?**

We did. It just wasn't worth it. But we've been very lucky with what we've had. The only danger is you start believing it's all down to your own musical brilliance. You could sit

"One of the most distinctive things about Quo is my strange, nasally voice"

there playing with yourself all day if you weren't careful. I've read articles that we're the bestselling thing in such-and-such a country, or we were this big or that big. Well? So are Mars bars. So is Tate & Lyle sugar. So are condoms. **INTERVIEW: DAVID CAVANAGH**

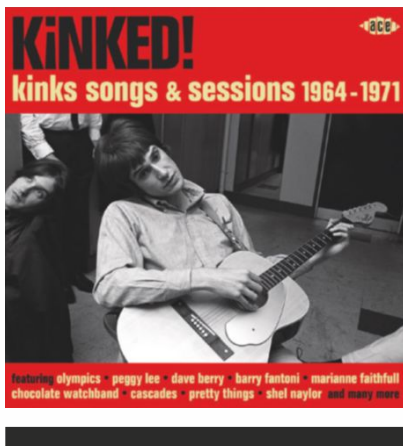
Francis Rossi: as big as Mars Bars



The Knack



The Olympics



## TRACKLIST

- 1 King Of The Whole Wide World - *Leapy Lee*
- 2 I Bet You Won't Stay - *The Cascades*
- 3 Look For Me Baby - *Goldie & The Gingerbread*s (PREVIOUSLY UNISSUED)
- 4 I Go To Sleep - *Peggy Lee*
- 5 This Strange Effect - *Dave Berry*
- 6 All Night Stand - *The Thoughts*
- 7 So Mystifying  
- *The Olympics* (PREVIOUSLY UNISSUED)
- 8 Un Jeune Homme Bien - *Petula Clark*
- 9 One Fine Day - *Shel Naylor*
- 10 Oh What A Day It's Gonna Be - *Mo & Steve*
- 11 Little Man In A Little Box - *Barry Fantoni*
- 12 A House In The Country - *The Pretty Things*
- 13 When I See That Girl Of Mine - *Bobby Rydell*
- 14 Nobody's Fool - *Cold Turkey*
- 15 Act Nice And Gentle - *Duster Bennett*
- 16 I've Got That Feeling - *The Orchids*
- 17 Emptiness - *The Honeycombs*
- 18 Rosie Won't You Please Come Home  
- *Marianne Faithfull*
- 19 I'm Not Like Everybody Else  
- *The Chocolate Watchband*
- 20 Who'll Be The Next In Line - *The Knack*
- 21 Dandy - *Herman's Hermits*
- 22 The Virgin Soldier's March  
*The John Schroeder Orchestra*
- 23 A Little Bit Of Sunlight - *The Majority*
- 24 Big Black Smoke - *Mick & Malcolm*
- 25 Mister Pleasant - *Nicky Hopkins & His Whistling Piano*
- 26 End Of The Season - *The Uglys*

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### Kinked! Kinks Songs & Sessions 1964-1971 ACE RECORDS

A 26-track collection celebrating Ray Davies' lost career as a songwriter for hire. *By John Lewis*

**8/10** THERE HAS BEEN no shortage of major artists covering Kinks song over the years – from The Jam to The Fall, from The Stranglers to the Pretenders, from Bowie to Costello, Madness to Blur, Van Halen to Metallica, Big Star to Bruce Springsteen. Not to mention the Blue Aeroplanes, Yo La Tengo, Kirsty MacColl, The Raincoats, Jimmy Buffett, Green Day... and on, and on.

However, less well known are the many Ray Davies songs that were barely even performed by The Kinks before being farmed out to other artists. By the start of 1964, even before "You Really Got Me" and "All Day And All Of The Night" had turned The Kinks into stars on both sides of the Atlantic, manager Larry Page was touting the Davies brothers around Tin Pan Alley. Dave's rudimentary three-chord number "One Fine Day" was released in March 1964 by 17-year-old howler Shel Naylor – the recording is notable for featuring both Jimmy Page

and John Paul Jones in the backing band. Released simultaneously came the girl-group the Orchids' shouty version of "I've Got That Feeling", a slightly more sophisticated Ray composition that The Kinks would later record on their debut album.

From this point on, it was Ray's songs that Larry Page started to sell as he tried to break the States. "So Mystifying", a Rolling Stones-indebted thrasher from the first LP, was recorded in December 1964 by African-American doo-wop band The Olympics (best known for their version of the rock'n'roll standard "Hully Gully"). This wonderfully chaotic recording – featuring Glen Campbell, Don Randi and Sonny Bono among the stellar sessionmen – has remained unreleased until now, possibly because the vocals stray out of tune on more than a few occasions. Another Californian vocal outfit, The Cascades, performed Ray's "I Bet You Won't Stay" – a fine piece of baroque pop with massed harmonies surfing over an elegant harpsichord backing.



GOLDIE & THE GINGERBREADS  
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Even more prestigious was a commission from Peggy Lee: Davies provided the bel canto verses and precise, staccato chorus lines of "I Go To Sleep" with her in mind. Lee's reading of this waltz sounds a little fast and flippant (especially compared

with the Pretenders' funereal 1981 hit) but it remains a fascinating example of how Davies wrote for other artists. "I'm Not Like Everybody Else", for example, was written for the Animals, although the howling, proto-metal 1968 version by California's Chocolate Watchband turned it into something of a garage-rock standard.

Dave Berry's version of "This Strange Effect" was a minor hit in 1965, as was The Honeycombs' "Something Better Beginning" (which has been replaced here by their version of Ray's Beatle-ish "Emptiness"). But, surprisingly, little else made the UK chart. One rare success was "Dandy", a jaunty music-hall number about a womanising cad, apparently inspired by Michael Caine's Alfie and brother Dave in equal measure. Never released as a single in the UK, it was – much to Ray's chagrin – a Top 5 US hit for Herman's Hermits, who add a rather wobbly string line to The Kinks' own acoustic arrangement.

The Kinks sold well in France, and, in 1966, Petula Clark recorded a French-language version of "A Well Respected Man" ("Un Jeune Homme Bien"). Produced by Tony Hatch, it fits Frank Gérald's lyric so comfortably that you'd barely imagine that it was anything but a French song. Other Ray Davies compositions also resemble Gallic chansons: the uncharacteristic "Oh What

A Day It's Going To Be", is rendered as a dramatic Jacques Brel-style ballad by Mo & Steve (a budget-priced Walker Brothers from Manchester). Meanwhile, Davies' art-school pal Barry Fantoni – a caustic TV presenter and *Private Eye* cartoonist – sings a wonderful obscurity called "Little Man In A Little Box" that sounds like one of Serge Gainsbourg's low-key epics.

The removal of Ray Davies' voice also forces us to see his songs as theatrical constructs, performed in character, not least when they're being sung by female singers such as Marianne Faithfull. "End Of The Season", here recorded by Brummie mods The Uglys, is sung in the character of a dissolute aristocrat. "I just can't mix in all the clubs I go," complains the gently reactionary narrator. "Now Labour's in, I have no place to go." Likewise, when Ray sang the boss-baiting "A House In The Country" – surely an unheralded precursor to Blur's "Country House"? – he did so with a rather embattled fury; The Pretty Things here provide a Stones-like version that treats the protagonist with a gleeful envy.

There are other fine songs on this album, and equally fascinating stories. "All Night Stand", for instance – performed by Peter Beckett's Scouse combo The Thoughts – was commissioned as the soundtrack to the movie adaptation of a racy piece of pulp fiction about the dark side of the music business. And there are dozens of other covers that didn't make it: by among others Cher, Lesley Duncan, Ray McVay, Formula One, Majority, Lemmy and the Rockin' Vickers, not to mention a whole LP of easy-listening instrumentals from Larry Page's *Kinky Music*. A Volume Two surely awaits...

## The removal of Ray Davies' voice forces us to see his songs as theatrical constructs

**THE CARS**  
**THE CARS**  
**THE CARS**  
THE ELEKTRA YEARS | 1978-1987  
**THE CARS**  
**THE CARS**  
**THE CARS**

**THE CARS**  
**The Elektra Years**  
RHINO

**The Cars that ate New York: Bostonians' new-wave digest**  
Pushing 30 and produced by Queen

favourite Roy Thomas Baker, The Cars were toxically naff to Britisher punk rockers, for whom 1978 hit "My Best Friend's Girl" was an inexcusable Showaddywaddy-fication of 'new wave'. This retreat of their first six LPs casts Ric Ocasek's Bostonians as savvy magpies, their spirit of '66 chops subtly coloured with the latest in hipster noise. Their self-titled 1978 debut features snatches of skronky new-wave sax on "I'm In Touch With Your World", while its Irish twin *Candy-O* boasts a flat-out Suicide homage in "Shoo Be Doo" and an assortment of Pere Ubu bleeps on the title track. Talking Heads-envy bites hard on 1980's *Panorama*, the Byrds-esque guitar and Devo clatter of closer "Ups And Downs" eerily prefiguring Arcade Fire. Returns diminish for 1981's *Shake It Up*, 1984's *Heartbeat City* (featuring MTV-monster "Drive") and 1987 fade-out *Door To Door*. Cut-and-shuts all, but decent runners for all that.

**EXTRAS:** All albums remastered by Ocasek, **6/10** with a limited-edition vinyl version – each record pressed in a different colour – in the offering. An 18-track greatest hits comp, *Moving In Stereo*, also on the way, including three "meh" rarities.

JIM WIRTH



**JAMES CHANCE & THE CONTORTIONS/ JAMES WHITE AND THE BLACKS**

**Buy/Off White**  
(reissues, 1979) ZE

**8/10**

**Chance's early No Wave takes on funk and disco**

Of the four No Wave groups immortalised on Brian Eno's *No New York* in 1978, James Chance's Contortions were the odd gang out: while Mars, DNA and Teenage Jesus & The Jerks were all deconstructing rock, Chance's band were also



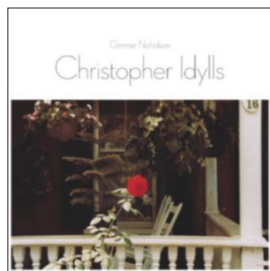
**6/10**

paying homage to their funk and rock heroes, wearing dinner jackets and covering James Brown. A year later, their ferocious debut, *Buy*, took this to the limit, with Chance howling wryly nihilistic exhortations ("I don't think people are very pretty inside," he sings on "Don't Want To Be Happy") over atonal slide, a funky, syncopated rhythm section and his own squawking sax. Keen to alienate everyone – even the NY underground – Chance then formed James White And The Blacks, embracing disco and a slicker sound. Though conceptually more interesting, *Off White* was less engaging than *Buy*, with only "Stained Sheet", featuring a deranged-sounding Lydia Lunch, and "Almost Black", with Mudd Club founder/Chance's girlfriend/guru Anya Phillips on vocals, piercing the slightly tongue-in-cheek surface.

**EXTRAS:** *Buy* features three bonus live tracks, **8/10** including a fiendish "Jailhouse Rock"; *Off White* has four extra songs. TOM PINNOCK

# Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



## GIMMER NICHOLSON

### Christopher Idylls

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

8/10

#### The missing link between John Fahey and Big Star...

Most of us generally assume that the story of Ardent Records, crucible of Memphis rock, begins at John Fry's studio in the early '70s, around the time Alex Chilton ambled his way into Big Star. In reality, though, Fry had been releasing 45s out of Ardent Studios since 1959 (The Ole Miss Downbeats' honking

version of "The Hucklebuck" being the first).

What came between primitive rock'n'roll and genre-defining powerpop is a little murkier, but the first full-length album planned for release on Ardent was, of all things, a proto-ambient collection of guitar instrumentals, played by a jobbing musician-cum-guitar-maker called Larry "Gimmer" Nicholson. Nicholson moved in a local music scene populated by rowdy figures like Jim Dickinson, Sid Selvidge and Ronnie Milsap, but it seems he had an epiphany at some point in the mid-'60s, when he witnessed a Memphis show by John Fahey in his Blind Joe Death phase. "Gimmer saw that," remembers Jimmy Crosthwait, a musician, artist and puppeteer quoted in Andria Lisle's superlative sleeve notes, "and he went off by himself for about a year and re-emerged with the ability to play circles around Fahey."

A bold claim; and while *Christopher Idylls* doesn't quite bear it out, Nicholson does come across as a remarkably sensitive and innovative musician, suddenly at odds with the Southern music tradition that surrounded him. The six pieces were actually composed and demoed in San Francisco, where Nicholson moved for a while. In 1968, his brother Gary handed the tapes to Terry Manning at Ardent, who recalled Nicholson to Memphis and recorded the album using a few guitars and a new delay pedal. Listening to the aqueous, courtly likes of "Charon's Crossing" now, they sound less like a product of the late '60s, more a new-age project from a decade later – as if Fahey had become beatific rather than ornery, perhaps, and found a place on the Windham Hill label alongside Robbie Basho.

As the first album release on Ardent, *Christopher Idylls* would certainly have been incongruous, but it was Nicholson himself who pulled the release, reputedly unhappy with the mix. In the intervening decades, the album has briefly surfaced twice: in 1981, on Selvidge's Peabody label alongside Chilton's *Like Flies On Sherbert*; and in 1994, on Manning's Lucky 7 imprint, with Nicholson's collaboration. The guitarist died, a marginal figure to the end, on December 30, 2000.

Before that, though, Nicholson's masterpiece caused discreet reverberations across the musical landscape. Manning recalls a night in April 1970 at his apartment, playing *Christopher Idylls* to Jimmy Page (who would return to Ardent in the autumn, to mix *Led Zeppelin III*) and Chris Bell. On one level, Nicholson's intimate meditations are a world away from the punch of early Big Star. On another level, though, they act as a kind of ghostly pre-echo of, say, "Watch The Sunrise". "Here's the deal," John Fry told Andria Lisle, before he died, "music brings people together." JOHN MULVEY

## CLUSTER

### CLUSTER

1971-1981

BUREAU B

#### Kosmische masters' first decade collected in full

While Dieter Moebius and Hans-Joachim Roedelius' catalogue of work with Michael Rother in

9/10

Harmonia was packaged in last year's 5LP *Complete Works* box, the duo's efforts as the untethered, improvisational Cluster are a little more extensive. Ignoring their early, noisy incarnation Kluster, or Roedelius' more recent *Qluster, 1971-1981* instead concentrates solely on the eight albums Moebius and Roedelius made in their most productive decade. The records seem to exist in pairs – *Cluster '71* and 1972's *Cluster II* are freeform and moody, with Roedelius' organ melodies submerged under Moebius' industrial noise. The 12 phased minutes of the latter's "Im Süden" signpost 1973's *Zuckerzeit*, their most accessible offering, and 1976's more ambient *Sowieso*. The following year's *Cluster & Eno* and *After The Heat* saw Suffolk's biggest Cluster fan contributing vocals, synths and Afrobeat rhythms that predict his and David Byrne's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*; while, closing the set, the overlooked *Grosser Wasser* (1979) and *Curiosum* (1981) move from the epic (the side-long "Grosser Wasser") to the wonky (*Curiosum*'s eerie "Helle Melange"). Though disparate, it's some legacy.

**EXTRAS:** Booklet, plus two previously unreleased 20-minute live excerpts: 1972's is churning and mechanical, 1977's spacier and more melodic. TOM PINNOCK



## PHIL COLLINS

### Hello, I Must Be Going/Dance Into The Light (reissues, 1982, 1996)

ATLANTIC/WARNER

8/10

#### Two albums from different ends of PC's career



5/10

From 1982, *Hello, I Must Be Going* continues where *Face Value* left off – this is still the art-rock drummer trying on the threads of a pop star. The punky "Like China" sees him playing cockney sutor; "I Don't Care Anymore" and the wonderfully creepy "Thru These Walls" are

largely self-recorded bedsit productions; while three blue-eyed funk tracks ("I Cannot Believe It's True", "It Doesn't Matter To Me" and "The West Side") feature wonderfully staccato fanfares from the EWF Horns. However, it's the throwaway cover of the Supremes' "You Can't Hurry Love" and the gloopy, string-drenched piano ballad "Why Can't It Wait 'Till Morning" that forged his persona henceforth. A very definite reaction comes from 1996's curious, worldbeat-tinged *Dance Into The Light*.

"Lorenzo" and "River So Wide" sound like a budget-priced Peter Gabriel; "Wear My Hat" and "Take Me Down" might have kept Paul Simon's lawyers busy. Weirdly it's the meat-and-potatoes rockers – the Beatlesy "That's What You Said"; the Tom Petty-ish "Love Police" – that stand out.

**EXTRAS:** Demos, B-sides and live tracks.

6/10 JOHN LEWIS



## DEEP THROATS Good, Bad, Pretty

CASTLE FACE

Sin-stained 1990s queer/art punks' final LP released for the first time.

**8/10** San Francisco punk outcasts Deep Throats

– they were banned from their local punk hang-out for writing “punk boys rape” on the walls – never released this late-1990s album because of health issues, but it has been salvaged by John Dwyer of Thee Oh Sees, who recalls seeing the band in SF and being captivated by their aura of drugs, violence and “general snottiness”. Aggressive, smart and sneering, Deep Throats consisted of a female drummer (Sugar Fixx), a cross-dressing guitarist (Tracy Lourdes) and an artist bassist (Ron Draino, aka Chris Johanson) and come over like a cross between New York Dolls and Bikini Kill, mixing art, music and queer politics round sinewy guitars and claustrophobic production. “*Why do the good kids want to be bad?*” asks the opening title track repetitively, while the thrashy “Last Request” insists “*get back, down on your knees*”. The tone is nasty and brutish, with guitar lines like breaking strings and drums like coshes, but also utterly compelling. Everything is sodden in an aura of violence, with each song sculpted to sound as evil as possible, from the sardonic “Dirty Secret” to “Eyes”, with the titular topic recast as “*the holes inside my head*”.

**EXTRAS:** None.

PETER WATTS



## HOOKWORMS Hookworms

GRINGO

Seven early songs from weighty Leeds drone-rockers

**7/10** With two excellent studio albums under the belt, Leeds psychonauts

Hookworms have gone back to their archive to reissue this debut EP, showcasing their earliest material alongside three other rarities as bonus tracks. First released on cassette and then vinyl, this EP captures the band right at the start of their career, with much basement thrashing and a handful of live shows under their belt. The band’s fondness for heavyweight density is apparent on opener, “Medicine Cabinet”, a six-minute juggernaut that slowly crushes everything beneath its weight as it trundles along a post-rock highway, letting off starbursts of meaningless vocals. “Resolution” is an interesting but overlong essay in experimentation, while “Teen Dreams” has more of a strut, with endearingly callow vocals and jaunty rhythm that sounds surprisingly like Flowered Up’s “Weekender”. “I Have Some Business Out West” is the standout track from the EP, bristling with urgency and growing maturity. The bonus tracks are taken from a variety of cassette and seven-inch releases and include the rollicking drone “Form And Function”, the rhythmic “Deu” and “The Correspondent”, which has a wonderfully ominous roll and is all muscle, showing a band inching towards genuine excellence.

**EXTRAS:** Three bonus tracks.

**7/10** PETER WATTS



## FELA RANSOME KUTI AND HIS KOOLA LOBITOS

Highlife – Jazz And Afro-Soul (1963-1969)

FAK/KNITTING FACTORY

**8/10** Three-CD set charts the Afrobeat

bandleader’s origin story

In 1963, after a period of five years studying at London’s Trinity College Of Music, Fela Kuti returned to his native Lagos with the ambition to become a jazz musician. For the next six years he fronted Koola Lobitos, a highlife dance band with whom he began to lay out the musical tenets of his new self-coined genre – Afrobeat. This is not the Fela Kuti that we hear fronting sprawling ensembles such as Africa ’70, or Egypt ’80, but a number of transitory and often very rare early recordings for labels like Philips or Decca – some freshly remastered – that show an ensemble gradually groping out the parameters of their sound. It can sometimes be surprisingly trad: “Great Kids” and “Amaechi’s Blues”, a couple of 1963 cuts, are polite jazz instrumentals with Fela on trumpet. We can hear the flowering of the Afrobeat sound on Disc Two cuts such as “Lai Se” and “Mi O Mo”, which embrace complex polyrhythms and roaring brass. Disc Three is given over to live material, showing how Fela’s ensemble melded Nigerian highlife with the raucous soul and R’n’B filtering over from the United States. Fela newbies should start elsewhere, but for collectors, this is a valuable primer.

**EXTRAS:** Twelve-page booklet.

**5/10** LOUIS PATTISON



## GIANT SAND The Sun Set Vol 1

FIRE

Hefty first instalment of “plunk rock” A-Z retrospective

**7/10** As laconic lynchpin Howe Gelb has it, “Thirty years seems an adequate

number to utter ‘I kinda quit’. There’s plenty enough here; more than imaginable.” He’s not kidding. Released as Tucson’s gnarly and sun-weathered, Americana originals (formed as Giant Sandworms in 1980) call it a day, this six-album set runs to 100 tracks. Here are *Ballad Of A Thin Line Man*, their second LP, from 1986, 2010’s *Blurry Blue Mountain*, *Center Of The Universe* (1992), *Chore Of Enchantment* (2000), *Glum* (1994) and 1995’s *Goods And Services*. Alphabetical rather than chronological ordering is a smart idea; it presents each LP as self-defining, rather than simply part of a continuum, and casts stylistic shifts in sharper relief. Gelb is best known as a kind of desert-dwelling composite of Dylan, Neil Young and Tom Waits, but there’s plenty to counter that: the late-night, New Orleans funk of “Brand New Swamp Thing” against a touchingly rueful “Fields Of Green” (both from *BBM*), the sludge-punk lumbering of “Seeded (Tween Bone And Bark)” (from *COTU*) and a sweetly fragile “Bird Song” (off *Glum*), sung by Gelb’s daughter, Patsy. All of that, and some damn fine covers, including “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry” (with Claude “Pappy” Allen) and “All Along The Watchtower”.

**EXTRAS:** Bonus tracks on each album.

**7/10** SHARON O’CONNELL

## REVELATIONS

Howe Gelb on finally putting Giant Sand to bed...



► Reflecting on Giant Sand’s endless reinvention down three decades and their hefty body of work (nearly 30 albums), Howe Gelb chooses to describe himself as “a painter more than a performer. I’ve dabbled in song paint and the recording thereof,” he says, “and when this place got too cluttered with ‘em, I bundled ‘em up and took ‘em to market. It’s been an invigorating process and has allowed for such unexpected longevity.” Which begs the question as to why he’s decided to call time on the band: “At my age, sensible notions take hold, like putting Giant Sand to bed at an even 30-year interval, especially after such a perfect LP (for us) [2015’s *Heartbreak Pass*] and since it’s been more fun and inspiring than ever with this current lineup. Also, to go out while it’s this good, so the band’s memory will thrive instead of lamenting in any regret. That said, we’re not breaking up, nothing broken – we’re just putting it to bed, perhaps one day to be awoken. So, no more LPs and tours, but festivals are cool. Maybe weddings... or the occasional bar mitzvah.” SHARON O’CONNELL



## LARRY LEVAN Genius Of Time

UNIVERSAL

Another trip to Paradise with the fabled New York DJ and producer

**8/10** Larry Levan was just 38 when he died in 1992 from heart failure brought

on by drug use, and by then he was already considered past his prime. The DJs’ DJ who presided over New York’s legendary Paradise Garage nightclub between 1978 and 1987, when disco withered only to emerge revitalised, Levan brought the spirit and attitude of that club to the studio when he remixed and produced acts in the early ‘80s. He knew what worked on the dancefloor, and the labels knew that, too: one spin from Levan could break a record. Several compilations have documented his production for disco powerhouses Salsoul and West End, but *Genius Of Time*, this 2CD collection assembled by Universal, paints a broader picture of his studio skills, which reflected the sounds going down in the Garage: not just soul and disco but synthpop, funk, electro and new wave. Levan applied an electronic post-disco template to his remixes, most of which drift past seven minutes, as he dubs out Smokey Robinson’s “And I Don’t Love You” or “Tell You (Today)” by Arthur Russell’s Loose Joints, slowly teasing the tracks to life just as a DJ would probe the crowd. Highlights – and there are many – include his fruitier Peech Boys and Man Friday reworks.

**EXTRAS:** Sleeve notes.

**6/10** PIERS MARTIN



## MIRACLE LEGION

**Portrait Of A Damaged Family**  
(reissue, 1996)

MEZZOTINT

**Mark Mulcahy's under-appreciated college-rockers mark reunion with reissue of swansong**

7/10

Despite the good will – and REM comparisons – this Connecticut outfit attracted with their Rough Trade releases in the late '80s, Miracle Legion never attracted the audience they deserved for frontman Mark Mulcahy's melancholy yet wryly funny brand of Byrds jangle. Peers have eagerly praised them in recent years – The National and Thom Yorke contributed covers of Mulcahy songs to 2009's *Ciao My Shining Star*. But ML could have used more of that love 20 years ago, when a long battle with former label Morgan Creek left them largely spent. Originally released in 1996 and reissued to coincide with this summer's reunion shows, *Portrait Of A Damaged Family* was their fourth album and first on Mulcahy's Mezzotint imprint. It disappeared swiftly, the band splitting shortly after. Inevitably, an air of dashed hopes hangs over many songs here. Nor do the otherwise charming likes of "Say I Had a Lovely Time" benefit from the thin-sounding, mid-'90s production. But despite the album's troubled circumstances, Miracle Legion weren't out for the count. A hilariously caustic break-up song, "Good for Her" breaks through the morose mood with a burst of raucous energy. "Gone To Bed At 21" brings the album – and the band's original 13-year run – to a very satisfying finish.

**EXTRAS:** One previously unreleased track from original sessions. **5/10** JASON ANDERSON



## CHRIS REA

**La Passione**

JAZZY BLUE

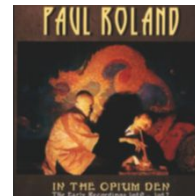
**Extravagant four-disc musical and visual reworking of his magnum opus**

7/10

Twenty years ago, Rea made a film telling the semi-autobiographical tale of a 10-year-old North-Eastern boy born to an immigrant Italian family who develops a lifelong obsession with motor racing and the Formula One driver Wolfgang Von Trips, who was killed along with 15 spectators when he crashed his Ferrari in the 1961 Monza Grand Prix. Rea's now revisited the project to present it how he intended before "94 record company men decided they wanted to be Hollywood producers" and messed it up. He's also revised the soundtrack, combining elements of the original score with new music spread across two CDs. When separated from the visuals, the sweeping orchestral arrangements and shimmering guitars are richly atmospheric. Rea's original ambition before he became a guitarist was to be a film composer and the instrumental passages are highly cinematic. But the soundtrack also features several wistful, lyrical songs such as "When The Grey Skies Turn To Blue" and "You Must Follow", sung affectingly and with genuine *passione*.

**EXTRAS:** Two DVDs including not only the 1996 movie, but archive footage of the fatal crash and an interview with Rea, plus a 70-page coffee-table book featuring his photos and paintings.

**8/10** NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## PAUL ROLAND

**In The Opium Den: The Early Recordings 1980-'87**

CHERRY RED

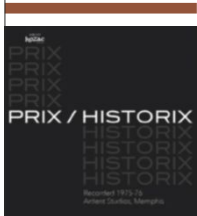
**Occult hero's eccentric, psychedelic post-punk**  
Born a decade too late, not unlike sometime

7/10

collaborator Robyn Hitchcock, Paul Roland's patchouli-oil scented, esoteric pop just about passed for post-punk when his faintly glamorous debut single "Oscar Automobile" was released – under the name Weird Strings – in 1979. This 2CD collection documents how the wispy-voiced Kentish bohemian gradually found his HG Wells-ish calling, through the mannered T.Rex-isms of 1980 album *The Werewolf Of London* (highlight: The Soft Boys-ish "Blades Of Battenburg"), to the lace-cuffed sweep of 1985's *Burnt Orchids*. His paisley-shirt recidivism peaks with 1987 Victorian-rama *Danse Macabre*, "Opium Den" and Hammer house of horror fable "The Puppet Master", some kind of analogy to the latter-period Damned smoking Paul McCartney's "Pipes Of Peace". Not as jarringly weird as hyperdelic regency dandies like Zarjaz (aka Ziro Baby) or Genesis P-Orridge – or as knowing and agile as fellow fantasists the Monochrome Set – Roland has been acclaimed a steampunk prophet overseas nonetheless. Not without honour in his own land, either.

**EXTRAS:** Nothing entirely new, but a useful cluster of orphaned tracks, not least both sides of the "Hot George" 45 – the A-side an unreleased Bolan track, acquired from ex-wife (and Roland's sometime manager) June Child.

**7/10** JIM WIRTH



## PRIX

**Historix**

HOZAC

**The complete works of Big Star's first disciples**

8/10

Justly marked at being cast as the baddie in Alex Chilton biography

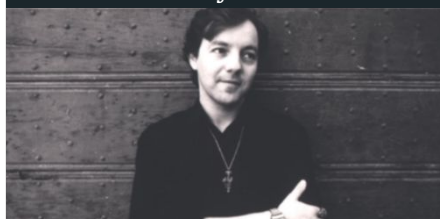
*A Man Called Destruction*, Jon Tiven produced and backed the former Box Top in his punk-era wilderness years. His kiss-off from Chilton reputedly came when the singer asked a retainer to pin the sometime music writer down so he could stub a lit cigarette out in his face. It was good loving gone bad; Tiven – and late Prix singer Tommy Hoehn – had walk-on parts in Big Star's waning days, and with Prix slavishly emulating the sound of #1 *Record and Radio City* with a tiny hard-rock twist, ill-fated original Big Star man Chris Bell lent support. Their two posthumously released singles – 1977's deliriously spangly "Girl" and the following year's "Love You Tonight" – are the work of master Chilton/Bell forgers, and cupboard-clearing collection *Historix* glistens with further Badfinger-ultra classics like "She Might Look My Way", plus versions of Chilton favourites like "Free Again" and "All Of The Time".

**EXTRAS:** This CD and vinyl reissue of a collection only issued in Japan in 2002 boasts alternate takes of "Love You Tonight", "Love You All Day Long" and "Every Time I Close My Eyes".

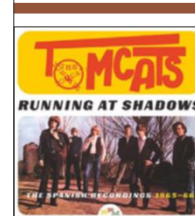
**7/10** JIM WIRTH

## REVELATIONS

**Paul Roland ponders his true musical identity**



► "I had out-of-body experiences as a child that led me to explore my own psychic sensitivity," Paul Roland tells *Uncut*, explaining his parallel careers as psychedelic fantasist and expert in the arcane and occult. "The more I experienced, the less fearful I became, and the more hungry I became to discover the significance of such phenomena." Bewitched by Marc Bolan and the faerie queenishness of his early Tyrannosaurus Rex albums, Roland moved into the post-punk landscape with a series of indie releases, subtly masking his love of pastoral Anglicana and prog, mindful that even playing an acoustic was "a hanging offence at the time". Letting his true, crushed velvet colours show, Roland flipped the switch on his musical Frankenstein's monster in the mid-'80s, as exemplified by '87's Love/HP Lovecraft fusion *Danse Macabre*. "It is a form of wish fulfilment," the 56-year-old says. "I'd love to have had the leisure to idle away my youth in an opium den." The prospect of a trip to the 19th century in HG Wells' time machine still appeals. "I'd have enjoyed shocking polite society with my chamber orchestra arrangement of 'Gary Gilmore's Eyes!'" JIM WIRTH



## THE TOMCATS

**Running At Shadows: The Spanish Recordings 1965-'66**

RPM

**R'n'B archives: period pieces from displaced second-tier Brits**

7/10

The British R'n'B explosion, blasting popular culture open towards the end of the 1950s, was top-heavy with also-rans – for every legendary name to emerge from the scene, there were clutches of fly-by-night groups, or hard-gigging, rough-housing gangs who were just one connection away from 'making it'. The Tomcats came through this scene, though in reality there were two distinctive versions of the group – the first, up against rivals The Second Thoughts, were managed by Alexis Korner for a period; they fell apart in early 1965, after losing their equipment to the bankruptcy of their home venue, London's Oxford Street club Beat City. A chance encounter with French singer Teddy Ray, who had spent some time in Spain, had members of The Tomcats and The Second Thoughts regrouping and moving to the Continent to pursue mop-topped infamy. The group's recordings in Spain are, to be honest, a bit of a grab-bag of sorts – some good, if not revelatory, covers of songs like "Roadrunner" and "La Neurastenia (19th Nervous Breakdown)", but some of the performances, like a cover of local hit "A Tu Vera", are lifted by the wild acid sting of Peter Cook's guitar. Worthy research, though.

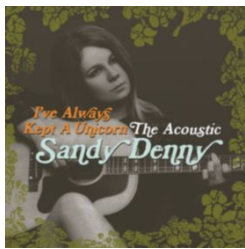
**EXTRAS:** Liner notes. **7/10** JON DALE

# SANDY DENNY

## I've Always Kept A Unicorn

UNIVERSAL

The album that nearly never was finally... is. By John Lewis



8/10

WITH THE EXCEPTION of some tentative, fledgling recordings made before she had found her wings as a singer and her flight path as a songwriter, one of Britain's finest folk singers never recorded an acoustic album.

With Fairport

Convention, Sandy Denny helped to birth electrified English folk-rock, singing Dylan songs, original compositions and trad ballads to a backbeat. She followed a similar course with Fotheringay and her heavily produced solo albums featured alumni of her former bands and/or grandiose orchestral arrangements.

Yet there are many who will tell you that Denny was at her dazzling best as an intimate performer in a solo setting, either accompanied by her own six- or 12-string guitar or seated at a piano. Linda Peters (née Thompson), who first met her at The Troubadour on London's Old Brompton Road in 1966, is convinced of it. "Sandy was much better solo," she says. "I wish she had recorded an acoustic album, and told her so. But Sandy loved the craic and camaraderie of other musicians."

Roy Guest, who managed her, agrees. "I could never convince her that she didn't need other musicians. She felt the sound was better with other textures," he recalls. "But that wasn't true. She was wonderful on her own and had the ability to be a completely solo artist. She was a great singer and she didn't know it."

Further support comes from Mick Houghton, author of an acclaimed 2015 biography of Denny and who came up with the concept for *I've Always Kept A Unicorn*, named after a line in her 1974 piano ballad "Solo" and which also doubles as the title of Houghton's book. "The pure, solo, and most untouchable Sandy Denny was never captured on record," he says with regret.

Yet plenty of glorious hints and tantalising fragments are littered around in demos, live recordings and radio sessions and this two-disc compilation generously collects together 40 of them in an attempt to create the solo acoustic album she never made, a painstakingly researched assemblage of stripped-down takes of songs we are more accustomed to hearing with embellished arrangements on recordings by Fairport Convention, Fotheringay and on her four solo albums.

To claim that these unvarnished acoustic takes are 'better' than the more familiar 'finished' versions would be to miss the point. But the beauty of, say, her first acoustic recording of "Who Knows Where The Time Goes" with The Strawbs, or "Fotheringay", before Richard Thompson's guitar and harmony vocals were dubbed on to the track, lies in the way the spotlight is directed exclusively



on Denny's voice – and what a heartbreakingly pure and potent instrument it was, seeming to come from the very depths of her soul.

In fact, Denny had the rare ability to carry almost any song without accompaniment and one of the most breathtaking moments here comes on an exquisite "Lowlands Of Holland" from an early Fotheringay session for the BBC's *Folk On One*, sung a cappella because the band hadn't had time to work out an arrangement.

Several compositions – notably a lovely, intimate version of "Solo" from a John Peel session and a deathless piano demo of "No End" recorded on a Bechstein concert grand – breathe with a simple freedom and an uninhibited emotion that the overblown orchestral arrangements on *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz* smothered.

The unvarnished voice-and-guitar demos of "By The Time It Gets Dark" and "One Way Donkey Ride" are equally striking, home recordings on which Denny sounds liberated by the absence of what Fotheringay guitarist Jerry Donahue described as her "fear of the studio red light". "That was good," she says at the end of "One Way Donkey Ride", sounding more surprised than boastful.

Much of the material here has appeared on various retrospectives and compilations over the years, although it has never been thematically

collected together before. But Houghton and researcher/compiler Andrew Batt hit gold dust when they unearthed three previously unknown acoustic demos for *Rock On*, the album of rock'n'roll covers recorded by the Fotheringay/Fairport extended family in 1972 as The Bunch. There's a thrilling joie de vivre to her covers of Buddy Holly's "Learning The Game" and "Love's Made A Fool Of You" and her tender duet with Linda Thompson on the Everlys' "When Will I Be Loved" is a sheer delight.

The comparison that comes most readily to mind when listening to the demos for her more introspective songs such as "No End", "One Way Donkey Ride" and "By The Time It Gets Dark" is the early acoustic work of Joni Mitchell. If Denny hadn't been so fond of "the craic and camaraderie" that came with being in a band, she might have made a series of intimate solo troubadour records to equal *Clouds*, *Ladies Of The Canyon* and *Blue*.

We cannot complain that she opted for a different path, because then we wouldn't have had *Unhalfbricking*, *Liege & Lief* or *Fotheringay*. But 38 years after her death, it feels good finally to have something approaching the Sandy Denny acoustic album that never was.

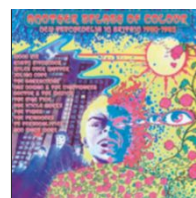
**EXTRAS:** Erudite liner notes by *Uncut*'s own 7/10 Mick Houghton.

# The Specialist

## Träd, Gräs Och Stenar



Branching out: Swedish psych outliers Träd, Gräs Och Stenar



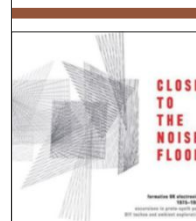
### VARIOUS ARTISTS Another Splash Of Colour

CHERRY RED

**7/10** Nu psych compendium from 1982, expanded across three CDs

Julian Cope's biography *Head On* memorably describes the moment he discovered LSD and its attendant head music, adding a whole new dimension to The Teardrop Explodes' clattering post-punk. They weren't the only ones. In early 1982, WEA released *A Splash Of Colour*, corraling a number of short-lived bands, including Mood Six and The Earwigs, who'd left punk and mod behind to worship at the temple of Syd. This was psychedelia on a shoestring, replete with wobbly harmonies, Nuggets rip-offs, cheap backwards effects and numerous songs about strawberries. Some tried to paint it as a new dawn: "Just 'cos the blank generation blew it/Don't mean we have to," sang Miles Landseman of Miles Of Matter, his point only slightly undermined by the fact that his band sound rather like The Stranglers with added phasing. This vastly expanded re-release widens the remit to include more assured, Beatlesque efforts from the likes of Scarlet Party and The Heartbeats, as well as early solo tracks from Robyn Hitchcock and Cope himself. The appearance on Disc Three of the original Creation Records crew underlines how this scratchy collision of post-punk and psychedelia laid the foundation for the UK indie scene of the '80s and beyond.

**EXTRAS:** Sleeve notes by NME man Neil Taylor.  
**5/10** SAM RICHARDS



### VARIOUS ARTISTS Close To The Noise Floor: Formative UK Electronica 1975-1984

CHERRY RED

**8/10** Four-disc primer of early British electronica

By the end of the period covered by *Close To The Noise Floor*, the charts were besieged by over-coiffed androgynes armed with Roland Jupiter 4s. Yet this superb four-disc primer on UK electronic music explores murkier corners of synthpop's past. The few hitmakers who make the cut are represented by selections far more in keeping with the compilation's prevailing mode of sonic brutalism and grim, Ballardian futurism. Thus does "Being Boiled" trump "Don't You Want Me". Compiled by Richard Anderson with Dave Henderson – whose "Wild Planet" series for *Sounds* in 1983 was the closest thing to an underground moment for many acts here – *Close To The Noise Floor* demonstrates the vitality of a cassette-based subculture of musicians-slash-engineers who rigged early synths with homemade contraptions and patches to create nightmarish soundtracks for a post-industrial future just coming into view. But not every act aspired to Throbbing Gristle levels of abrasiveness. With its traces of psychedelia, the Legendary Pink Dots' "God Speed" anticipates acid house just as starkly as tracks like Storm Bugs' "Little Bob Minor" map a trajectory for techno years before Detroit, never mind Sheffield.

**EXTRAS:** Forty-eight-page booklet.  
**7/10** JASON ANDERSON



### TRÄD, GRÄS OCH STENAR

#### Träd, Gräs Och Stenar

ANTHOLOGY RECORDINGS

**9/10**

Off-the-grid psychedelia beamed from Sweden's cultural revolution

One of the key groups from the Swedish free music counterculture, Träd, Gräs Och Stenar's history is complex, but tracing their narrative is essential to anyone getting to grips with the Scandinavian underground. They first came together as Pärson Sound, whose music, performed at Free School happenings and experimental art festivals, revealed a heavy totality, predating the free-rock of groups

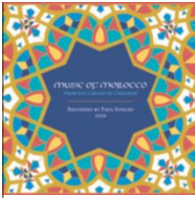
like The Dead C. From there, they shape-shifted through various other collective projects – as International Harvester, they released *Sov Gott Rose-Marie* in 1968, and then, the following year, as Harvester, the lovely *Hemåt*. Their fourth mutation, Träd, Gräs Och Stenar (Trees, Grass And Stones), was by far the longest-serving, and the one that worked hardest to realise the collective's early aims, as articulated by organist Torbjörn Abelli: "How could one find a music with potential to transform the sense, a music that could make way for the new world order?"

This boxset contains their two, self-released live albums – 1971's *Djungelns Lag* (The Law Of The Jungle) and *Mors Mors* (Mother Mother), from 1972 – along with a third double-album of previously unreleased material, *Kom Tillsammans* (Come Together), drawn from archival recordings of early '70s performances. To be fair, it's hard to peg the unreleased material as revelatory in any real sense: it's more of the same, but with a group who pinned their aesthetic to the ever-changing singular, these newly unearthed live tapes confirm that the startling quality of Träd, Gräs Och Stenar's music was not a construction of judicious post-performance editing – they naturally played at such a level.

You could make comparisons with the Grateful Dead, perhaps, as good parts of Träd, Gräs Och Stenar come across like the Dead just before they get truly gone: Träd, Gräs Och Stenar never quite enter the rudderless zones of, say, "Dark Star" at its most elliptical, but the way the group's guitars wrestle with each other – quietly, slowly, winding around each other like DNA double helixes – can feel like Garcia and company either working to a head, or unspooling from a peak moment. This only makes Träd, Gräs Och Stenar more compelling: it's as though the group are collectively holding a moment, looking at it from all angles, letting light refract from the prism with multi-hued force. It's a great example of 'free festival', traveller psych-rock, totally absorbed by and in thrall to the moment, heading towards the no-mind and fully intent on getting there.

**EXTRAS:** Liner notes, images, flyer reproductions and downloads of extra material.

**8/10** JON DALE



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

**Music Of Morocco: Recorded By Paul Bowles, 1959**  
DUST-TO-DIGITAL

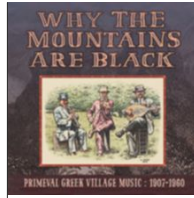
9/10

Collective hypnosis and solo dream-tone: Jajouka and beyond

The recordings made between July and December 1959 by writer, composer, poet and artist Paul Bowles have oft been spoken of almost as a Holy Grail for Bowles aficionados. Long languishing in the vaults of the Library Of Congress, a determined effort to disinter them and restore them to their rightful place in the musical firmament has led to this four-disc collection. It's easy to be seduced by both Bowles' story, from his position as father of the Beats to the narrative arc of his engagement with North African culture, and the myths accrued around Moroccan music, especially the Master Musicians Of Jajouka, long known for their work with Ornette Coleman. But with the totemic document of Moroccan music still *Brian Jones Presents The Pipes Of Pan At Jajouka* set, bastardised by Jones in post-production with phasing and echo, *Music Of Morocco* gives the clearest vision yet of this music. The group playing, grounded in call-and-response chants and collective drum polyrhythms, scoured with pipes and scratchy strings, is devotionally hypnotic; the solo performances reel out dream-drone tattoos from heat-warped instruments.

**EXTRAS:** Liners from Lee Ranaldo and 9/10 extensive notation from project mastermind Philip Schuyler.

JONDALE



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

**Why The Mountains Are Black: Primeval Greek Village Music 1907-1960**  
THIRD MAN

8/10

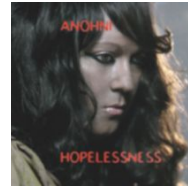
The essential sounds of an ancient culture, courtesy of Jack White

"No ancient Western culture valued music more highly than the ancient Greeks," writes Christopher King in the sleeve notes to this 2CD set of revelations, taking a longer view of cultural history than most CD compilers. The music harvested by King from precious 78s provides a connection between this formative civilisation and 20th-century America, as the Greek diaspora bring their traditions to the States. The duelling bagpipe music played here by Zembillas And Mailles on two tracks, for instance, originates on two small islands in the Aegean. By the time of the recordings in 1950, however, this *tsabouna* music had migrated to Tarpon Springs, Florida, where many of its practitioners had relocated to ply their trades as free-diving sponge fishermen. King, also a noted collector of old blues records, makes big claims for the social necessity of this music: "It was an essential tool for survival," he claims, "as natural and as necessary as any object crafted for hunting." Critically, it's also wildly entertaining in a way that transcends historical context: check "Enas Aetos-Tsamiko", a nimble and uproarious jam, recorded in 1926, that King identifies as kin to the hot jazz of the time.

**EXTRAS:** None.

JOHN MULVEY

COMING NEXT MONTH...



With spring in bloom, it seems it's time for rebirths in the release schedule, too - **Antony Hegarty** is now known as **Anohni**, and the more electronic, outgoing *Hopelessness* is the debut album from

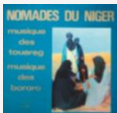
the New York-based singer's alter ego. **Beth Orton** releases her first full-length for four years, *Kidsticks*, a return to the electronic sound of her '90s work, this time produced by Fuck Buttons' Andrew Hung. Meanwhile, **Brian Eno** launches *The Ship*, his first solo LP since 2012's *Lux*. Unlike that ambient treasure, this dark, meditative work features vocals from Eno, a poem read by Peter Serafinowicz and a cover of The VU's "I'm Set Free". Fresh from appearing on **Ben Watt**'s new LP, Boston singer-songwriter **Marissa Nadler** releases *Strangers*, her seventh and perhaps darkest and most intense album yet. Elsewhere, **Ronnie Spector** reads *English Heart*, **The Kills** promise *Ash & Ice* and **M83** follow up the huge *Hurry Up, We're Dreaming* with *Junk*.

In the ever-fruitful world of archive releases, there are remastered LPs from the **Associates**, including their twisted classic, *Sulk*, a collection of vinyl live albums from **Eric Clapton**, and reissues from **The Replacements**, whose Sire years are compiled in one set. Most excitingly, perhaps, **Terry Reid**'s overlooked stunner *River* receives a companion: *The Other Side Of The River*, which collects previously unreleased material from the 1973 *River* sessions, including six brand-new songs, and some illuminating alternate versions.

TOM.PINNOCK@TIMEINC.COM



HOW TO BUY... MORE SOUNDS FROM NORTH AFRICA

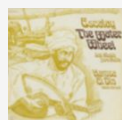


**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Nomades Du Niger**

OCORA, 1965

Made in the Republic Of Niger's northwest, *Nomades Du Niger* documents call-and-response songs of praise and healing from Tuareg women, accompanied by the *tinde* drum, and ornamented lyricism from the Tuareg men. Particularly thrilling is "Tekaleit", an intricately woven solo performance for the one-stringed *inzad*.

8/10

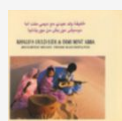


**HAMZA EL-DIN**  
**Escalay: The Water Wheel**

NONESUCH EXPLORER SERIES, 1971

The late Nubian oud player Hamza El-Din's *Escalay* is an object lesson in cumulative impact, the title track thrumming with heavy-lidded drones as El-Din plots the constellations via his instrument. It's no surprise the Grateful Dead and Sandy Bull were acolytes.

9/10



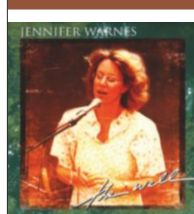
**KHALIFA OULDE IDE & DIMI MINT ABBA**  
**Moorish Music From Mauritania**

WORLD CIRCUIT, 1990

Eide and Abba are two of the best vocalists from Mauritania, and this is a fine introduction to their music. The rough-hewn voices are stunning, as is Eide's fluency on West African stringed *xalam*.

8/10

JON DALE



**JENNIFER WARNES**

**The Well**  
(reissue, 2001)

BMG

7/10

Overlooked easy-listening gem rescued from obscurity

Despite Warnes being admired for her decades-long collaboration with Leonard Cohen, her album *The Well* passed many people by on its release in 2001 - indeed, this neglect undoubtedly contributed to it being her final solo recording to date. Yet *The Well*'s reissue reveals a quiet and understated gem. With Warnes singing in a richly nuanced voice over subtle, semi-acoustic arrangements and understated orchestration, it's a spaciouly recorded set that spans folk, country, jazz and soul in a late-night kind of way that fits somewhere between Judy Collins and Norah Jones. The choice of material is exquisite, too. Just four of the dozen songs are Warnes' own compositions, led by the standout spiritually tinged country of the title track, which evokes Emmylou Harris in her *Red Dirt Girl* period. For the rest, Arlo Guthrie duets winningly on his lullaby-like "Patriot's Dream" and there are terrific reinterpretations of Tom Waits' "Invitation To The Blues", Billy Joel's "And So It Goes" and, best of all, Allen Toussaint's "It's Raining", which produces her most deliciously expressive vocal on the album. Better late than never; but anyone who appreciates timeless songcraft should be kicking themselves if they missed this first time around.

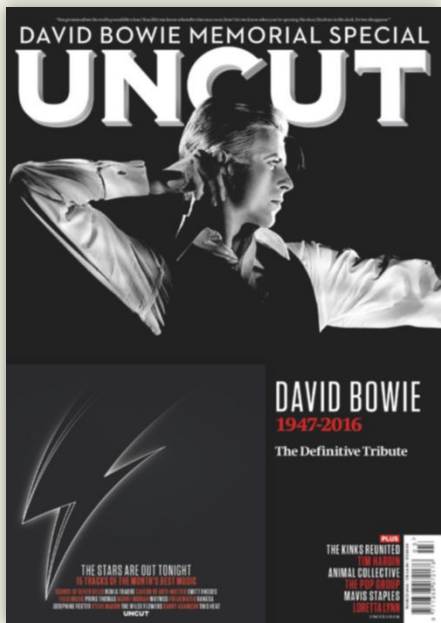
**EXTRAS:** None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

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I'll be doggone: Townes Van Zandt and friend

## HEARTWORN HIGHWAYS

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

How a documentary on alternative Nashville in the '70s became an accidental triumph. *By Alastair McKay*



9/10

TO FULLY APPRECIATE James Szalapski's sketchy documentary about the music of Nashville and Austin in 1975, you have to understand what the film isn't. It is not a film about outlaw country, though it does include footage of David Allan Coe playing a show in Tennessee State Prison. It's not even a film about New Country, though that was the working title, and it does include the teenage Steve Earle, who would be a leading player in what became known as the New Country movement a decade later. It is, slightly, a lament for a lost Nashville, because it was made at a time when country music was becoming more corporate, and the Grand Ole Opry was betraying its heritage by abandoning its historic home downtown in the Ryman Auditorium in favour of a soulless new

venue in a theme park and hotel complex. But really, the flashes of old Nashville filmed inside the Wigwam Tavern are used as seasoning, and their links to the new music celebrated in the film are tangential. Certainly, the denizens of the Wigwam – the tavern's owner, Big Mac McGowan, "Smoky Mountain" Glenn Stagner, and the extraordinary singer Peggy Brooks (about whom nothing is known) – are right to be bemused by the commercial turns taken by country music in the 1970s. But, then, a conversation in which someone suggested to Guy Clark that he was a country musician would have been a short one.

The film, in essence, is a beautiful accident. Szalapski, a New York director who had previously worked on the *Miss Nude America* movie, had a plan, and he executed it. Roughly, this was to capture the mood and the lifestyle of a group of alternative, younger musicians who were operating on the fringes of the Nashville establishment. At the time, Music City was

The film has a point of view, but it's not stated overtly. The music, and the imagery, do the talking

in a post-Kristofferson moment. The success of "Sunday Morning Coming Down" had given hope to a new generation of songwriters, who really had more to do with the folk revival than country. As a filmmaker, Szalapski took a 'direct cinema' approach. There is no narrator, no interviewing. The resulting film is a collage. It has a point of view, but it's not stated overtly. The music, and the imagery, do the talking.

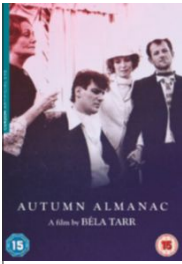
It is probably a bit harsh to suggest that Szalapski got lucky when he decided to focus on Guy Clark and Townes Van Zandt. Both musicians had growing reputations at the time, even if major commercial success remained elusive. They were close friends, too, offering different interpretations of a form of narrative songwriting that was particular to Texas. Neither man explains that in the film. Clark, an accomplished luthier, is pictured working on an old guitar, while Van Zandt offers a chaotic guided tour of the grounds surrounding his trailer home. (Drink, clearly, has been taken.)

Then there is the music. Much of the best of it takes place at a Christmas Eve jam at Clark's home, with the host, his songwriting artist wife Susanna, Rodney Crowell, Steve Earle and others swapping songs. The drunker they get, the harder they play, and they get pretty drunk. Meanwhile, in Austin, Van Zandt plays "Waitin' Around To Die" and reduces his neighbour, 'the walking blacksmith' Seymour Washington, to tears. (The sleeve notes suggest that "Unk", who had only a year to live, may have been playing to the camera, but that seems overly cynical.)

A previous DVD reissue added an hour of extras, including more great clips from Clark, and John Hiatt (with hair!) doing "One For The One". They're included here. If anything, the extras show how Szalapski didn't quite know what he had. With hindsight, the comic country monologues of Gamble Rogers should have been sacrificed, and the David Allan Coe material could have gone into a different film. But Szalapski wasn't to know that history would judge Clark to be the true artist of the period, with Van Zandt as his inebriated Tonto.

**EXTRAS:** A double vinyl soundtrack LP with five 9/10 essential songs from Guy Clark, a couple from Van Zandt, and three from Steve Earle. The album ends with a chaotic chorus of "Silent Night", led by Rodney Crowell. Also included is an 80-page book with liner notes by Sam Sweet.





## AUTUMN ALMANAC

ARTIFICIAL EYE

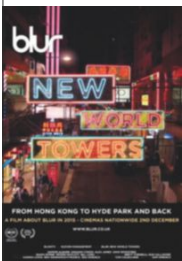
**Transitional work from Hungarian maestro Béla Tarr** Nothing to do with the Kinks song, this 1983 film is the odd one out from director Béla Tarr, master of the slow and sombre. *Autumn Almanac* is a transitional film,

coming between director Tarr's early, almost Loachian working-class realism and the hyper-atmospheric severity of nightmare masterpieces such as *Satantango* and *The Turin Horse*. Featuring assorted characters squabbling over an old woman's money, it's set in a single apartment – and shot in eerily artificial colours. Not Tarr's very best work, but essential watching for admirers.

**EXTRAS:** Unconfirmed.

JONATHAN ROMNEY

7/10



## BLUR

### New World Towers

BLINK TV

**Beautifully shot film of the band reunited in 2009**

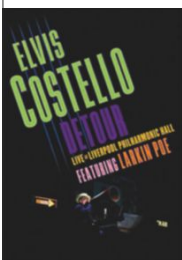
Twenty-five years ago, Blur's *Star-Shaped* doc caught the young band in a slump, and yet on the brink of a major breakthrough. This beautifully shot, new film offers something like that same candour, and at

an oddly similar juncture: the band at peace following their 2009 reconciliation, but with no great expectations of making new music. And yet, when a gig in Tokyo (possibly Taipei, they can't agree) was cancelled, they recorded a new album in Hong Kong. Impressively frank and surprisingly charming, this also reveals how, while in the studio, Damon and Graham accidentally wrote "Whatever" by Oasis.

**EXTRAS:** None.

JOHN ROBINSON

8/10



## ELVIS COSTELLO

### Detour: Live At Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

EAGLE ROCK

**EC solo in 2015, with added Larkin Poe**

A companion piece of sorts to last year's memoir, *Detour* finds Costello performing hits and deep cuts ("Watch

Your Step", "Ghost Train", a superb "When I Was Cruel No 2") in front of a giant TV broadcasting selected scenes from his past. Embroidering the songs with lengthy anecdotes, the effect is akin to a family slide show with a musical soundtrack. The voice takes time to settle, and the disjointed entries and exits of the excellent Larkin Poe hinder continuity, but this is a genial trawl through a life in music.

**EXTRAS:** Four bonus tracks

6/10 GRAEME THOMSON

6/10



## MISSISSIPPI GRIND

ENTERTAINMENT ONE

**Fine study of gambling addiction and friendship**

Writing-directing team Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck follow *Half Nelson* with a loser outing this time around. The unfailing Ben Mendelsohn plays Gerry, a loser hooked on gambling, taken under

the wing of smarter, younger player Ryan Reynolds for a journey south from Iowa towards a high-stakes game in New Orleans, funding themselves at casinos and race tracks en route. Seasoned poker-movie watchers might wait for the big sting, but a hazier journey through America's fringes unfolds, stirring the spirit of '70s road movies and, particularly, Robert Altman's *California Split*.

**EXTRAS:** Unconfirmed.

DAMIEN LOVE

7/10



## MR. ROBOT: SEASON 1

UNIVERSAL

**Creepy TV series about a vigilante hacker**

In this modish, binge-bait television show, Rami Malek plays Elliot, our hero with de rigueur hints of autism and hurt. A brilliant, lonely young cybersecurity technician keeps companies safe by

day, and by night is a vigilante hacker, devoted to bringing bad clients down – particularly conglomerate E Corp, on which he obsesses as the root of all evil. Things get shadier for our unreliable narrator when he encounters Mr Robot (Christian Slater), an Anonymous-style super-hacker who wants to recruit him for revolution. It feels like Young Adult fantasy, but looks great and gets creepier as it goes on.

**EXTRAS:** Deleted scenes, Making Of...

6/10 DAMIEN LOVE

7/10



## LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY

### Vision Of Paradise

FUFOO FILM

**Suitably eccentric portrait of dub maverick**

Editorial coherence isn't necessarily what one would expect from a documentary on the Upsetter, and so it proves. Director Volker Schaner follows Perry around

Jamaica, Switzerland, Berlin and London, recording his singular views (mostly on Satan), bizarre rituals and creative sessions. As Perry toots car horns, dons yellow Afro wigs, paints with his feet, lights fires and bangs stones, The Orb, Youth and Adrian Sherwood pay tribute to the "ultimate space traveller". Despite low production values, this is an entertaining film that succeeds in shining some light on Perry's dark arts.

**EXTRAS:** None.

GRAEME THOMSON

6/10



Science friction: the cast of *Doomwatch*

# DOOMWATCH: Series 1-3 - The Remaining Episodes

SIMPLY MEDIA

Trailblazing '70s sci-fi finally gets the DVD release it deserves



**HYPER-INTELLIGENT** rats with a lust for human blood! Plastic-eating bacteria causing planes to fall from the sky! Sound waves driving people to madness and suicide! Just some of the entertaining cases of unconstrained scientific development gone hideously wrong confronted by the Department For The Observation And Measurement Of Scientific

8/10

Work in this pioneering, slightly paranoid, often prescient BBC drama from 1970-72.

Created by Gerry Davis and Dr Kit Pedler, who had famously co-created the Cybermen for *Doctor Who*, *Doomwatch* was one of the first British pop-cultural products spawned by the rise in ecological awareness and militant environmentalism. The series focused on a team of government scientists in interesting neckwear and cardigans, given the remit to investigate "any scientific research, public or private, which could possibly be harmful to Man" – even though, in a precursor to *X-Files* paranoia, it would often be their own government they were investigating.

Leading the unit was the no-nonsense Dr Spencer Quist (John Paul), a veteran atomic scientist haunted by his involvement in the Manhattan Project, battling to ensure his department was more than simply the "green" window dressing the politicians had envisioned. To this end, he employed his own black-ops specialist, Dr Ridge (Simon Oates), a cravat-sporting espionage expert and sex pest on the side. Joining them was young scientist Toby Wren, played by Robert Powell, whose instant pin-up appeal made the show a phenomenon. Indeed, his character's shock departure at the climax of the first series prompted more letters to the BBC than any single subject since the Second World War.

Unfortunately, Powell's last story is among the missing episodes. Blighted by the BBC's calamitous tape-wiping years, five of the first series' 13 episodes are lost, and only three from the third still exist. But what's left in this 7-disc set shows why *Doomwatch* remains a cult.

The budget was low, but the ideas were big, the passion genuine. *Doomwatch* stuck its nose into genetic engineering, noise pollution, pesticides, chemical waste, subliminal advertising, surveillance and other increasingly pressing topics. But, of course, it's when *Doomwatch* kicks into full weird-'70s fantasy nightmare mode that it's at its best. Those rats are bastards.

**EXTRAS:** Unbroadcast episode "Sex And

7/10 Violence"; *The Cult Of Doomwatch* documentary. DAMIEN LOVE

# Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

*This month: Don Cheadle keeps it swinging in *Miles Ahead*, Whit Stillman does corsets, sci-fi gets serious, art and rock'n'roll converge...*

**M**iles Ahead In the production notes for his Bob Dylan film *I'm Not There*, the director Todd Haynes recounted a conversation he once had with Dylan's manager, Jeff Rosen. "I said, 'This is a big honour! I feel I have to represent Dylan to the world and I want to do it accurately and carefully.' And Jeff just said, 'Todd, don't even think about that. This is your own weird interpretation of Bob Dylan, and that's all you have to worry about.'" You could apply Rosen's point when discussing *Miles Ahead*, Don Cheadle's audacious, prismatic film about Miles Davis. As with Haynes, Cheadle is less concerned with straight biographical detail than the magic of Davis' wild, elusive spirit.

*Miles Ahead* is set in the 1970s, during a five-year period where Davis absented himself from both the recording studio and the stage. Here, Cheadle concocts entirely fictional events concerning the efforts of Davis and a tenacious *Rolling Stone* journalist (Ewan McGregor) to track down a precious reel of new music that has fallen into the hands of an unscrupulous record exec (Michael Stuhlbarg). The tape is a McGuffin, naturally; but its contents provide Cheadle with the opportunity to flashback to an earlier part of Davis' life and his fraught relationship with his first wife, Frances Taylor (Emayatzy Corinealdi). In this respect, *Miles Ahead* superficially recalls *Love & Mercy*, another excellent biopic that ignored a plodding cradle-to-the-grave narrative in favour of settling on two thematically connected periods, decades apart, in the life of Brian Wilson.

In the hairy '70s, Davis is trying to account for his many losses – both personal and financial – and Cheadle is terrific as Davis, straining to find his place in a time he views with increasing disdain. "A lot of shit goes through your mind when you're quiet," he says. For much of these sequences, Davis comes across as gruff and unlikeable, his moods provoked by writer's block, depression and drug abuse. At times, the scenes set during this period resemble a '70s caper movie, including a car chase and even a gun battle. But these moments of seasoning swing. And why not? As Davis said, "It's not the notes you play, it's the



Cool customer: Don Cheadle as Miles Davis in *Miles Ahead*

notes you don't play." And while there are enough 'notes' here – at the recording sessions for *Porgy And Bess*, getting beaten by a policeman outside Birdland, chasing Taylor from their apartment with a knife – sometimes it is possible for facts to obscure greater truths.

► **Love And Friendship** In a delicious piece of counter-intuitive programming, Whit Stillman's first film for 14 years – *Dansels In Distress* – was released in UK cinemas on the same day as Marvel's superhero team-up, *Avengers Assemble*. An elegant, eccentric and distinctive film, it mixed references to the works of obscure British novelists with lengthy discussions on "the decline of decadence" and the unusual sexual proclivities of a 12th century religious order. As a reminder of Stillman's core strengths after so long an absence, it was perfect. Notionally set during the present day, it felt a lot like Stillman's previous dispatches from the drawing rooms of Manhattan's Upper East Side; artful chamber pieces that in turn evoked earlier eras.

For *Love And Friendship*, Stillman has adapted a Jane Austen novella, *Lady Susan*. Austen's comedy of manners is an easy fit for Stillman, and he is reunited here with Kate Beckinsale and Chloë Sevigny, the stars of his 1989 almost-hit, *The Last Days Of Disco*. Beckinsale plays widowed Lady

Susan Vernon – "a genius of an evil kind" – out to secure her position in society via favourable marriages for herself and her daughter. Confronted at one point with some unflattering truths, she simply brushes them aside, "Facts are such horrid things."

Stillman directs with the zing of a Howard Hawks comedy while his screenplay ingeniously translates Austen's formal prose (in this case, *Lady Susan* was an epistolary novella) into sharp, accessible dialogue. Around Susan orbit a series of largely clueless, if often well-meaning male characters. They are described by on-screen captions as, variously, "a divinely attractive man" or "a bit of a rattle". There is Tom Bennett as a considerably wealthy but hopelessly dim suitor; *The Thick Of It*'s Justin Edwards as Susan's soft-hearted brother-in-law; Stephen Fry as Sevigny's gouty husband; James Fleet as the concerned father of one of Susan's intended victims. Thankfully, Bill Nighy is nowhere in sight.

► **Midnight Special** There are a lot of furrowed brows in Jeff Nichols' new film. And a lot of staring, pensively, into the middle distance. These are Nichols' ways of signaling that *Midnight Special* is a serious and thoughtful film, although essentially it is a variation on a hoary old sci-fi conceit – the child with special powers. To bolster

## Reviewed this month...



### MILES AHEAD

Director  
Don Cheadle  
Starring  
Don Cheadle,  
Ewan McGregor  
Opens April 22  
Cert 15  
8/10



### LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Director  
Whit Stillman  
Starring  
Kate Beckinsale,  
Chloë Sevigny  
Opens May 27  
Cert U  
8/10



### MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Director  
Jeff Nichols  
Starring  
Michael Shannon,  
Adam Driver  
Opens April 8  
Cert 12A  
6/10



### MAPPLETHORPE: LOOK AT THE PICTURES

Director  
Fenton Bailey and  
Randy Barbato  
Starring  
Debbie  
Harry, Fran Lebowitz  
Opens April 22  
Cert 18  
7/10



### DISORDER

Director  
Alice Winocour  
Starring  
Matthias  
Schoenaerts,  
Diane Kruger  
Opens March 25  
Cert 15  
8/10



the weightiness of his undertaking, Nichols has attracted a quality cast – Michael Shannon, Kirsten Dunst, Adam Driver, Joel Edgerton and Sam Shepard – while David Wingo’s sussurating, ambient drones evoke ruminative moods. It is safe to say that like other recent genre pieces *Cloverfield*, *Monsters* and *District 9*, *Midnight Special* has aspirations beyond its B-movie origins. Although it’s a laudable intent, it’s hard to locate gravitas in a story that feels largely like an episode of *The X-Files*. Much as the grounded and serious tone of Christopher Nolan’s *Batman* movies was inherently implausible – it’s a man, dressed up in a bat suit! – so Nichols’ attempts to imbue *Midnight Special* with similar qualities often feel ponderous.

The first 30 minutes of his film are arguably the strongest. Shannon and Edgerton appear to have kidnapped an eight-year-old boy called Alton (Jaeden Lieberher) who has unusual powers. “Things would break. Lights, cars,” says one eyewitness. “A visible spectrum of light came from his eyes,” says another, rather dogmatically. Around this, Nichols slowly shades in some detail. Shepard heads up a religious cult who have attached their own beliefs to the boy’s gifts. The FBI are also interested in Alton, keen to monitor his destructive capabilities. As Shannon and Edgerton escort the boy through the back roads of Louisiana and Arkansas, *Midnight Special* has an intimacy and focus that recalls Nichols’ earlier films – the excellent *Mud*, a kind of updated Huck Finn that marked the start of Matthew McConaughey’s career upswing, and *Take Shelter*, a thriller with Shannon as a man who experienced

apocalyptic visions. When the scope of *Midnight Special* gets bigger, it falters. The pacing is out of whack, it’s too long and for a chase film there is remarkably little dramatic tension. It’s all a bit Spielbergy; but critically, it lacks the warmth and sense of wonder (or even fun) of the obvious antecedents, *ET* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. Adam Driver – as an NSA analyst drafted in to assist the FBI – has a little of Richard Dreyfuss’ gangly charm and deftness. But everyone else is taking it all far too seriously.

➤ **Mapplethorpe: Look At The Pictures**

The title for Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato’s documentary comes from a phrase repeatedly used by American senator Jesse Helms during his attempts to demonise Robert Mapplethorpe during the 1990s. In some ways, the controversy Mapplethorpe attracted during his life and after his death – in 1989 from complications arising from AIDS, aged 42 – is the least interesting part of Mapplethorpe’s story. Raised in the suburbs of New York by Catholic parents, he studied at the distinguished Pratt Institute in Brooklyn where he met Patti Smith. Although Smith herself doesn’t appear in Bailey and Barbato’s film, there is ample footage of her and Mapplethorpe together at the Chelsea Hotel: “a 25-hour art show,” according to their next door neighbour. There, Mapplethorpe began to develop an interest in more transgressive work. “I went away for a summer. I got back and Robert was suddenly into S&M,” says Bob Colacello, the former editor of Warhol’s *Interview* magazine. Bailey and Barbato – who covered similarly controversial subject with their *Deep Throat* documentary – assemble a strong cast of talking heads. Some of the best are Debbie Harry, an early boyfriend David Croland, and author Fran Lebowitz, who delivers the best line in the film: “He looked like a ruined cupid.”

➤ **Disorder** Recently, Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts has taken an unexpected detour into period drama. Roles in *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *Suite Française* and *The Danish Girl* have all distanced Schoenaerts from the tightly wound characters for which he made his name, in *Bullhead* and *Rust And Bone*. Director Alice Winocour returns Schoenaerts to familiar ground. Here, he plays Vincent, an

Afghanistan vet struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder, who is hired as a security guard to protect the family of a shady Lebanese businessman: his wife Jessie (Diane Kruger) and their young son. But Vincent is prone to paranoid episodes, which makes things hard when Maryland – the businessman’s plush coastal villa – comes under siege. Essentially, *Disorder* is a hybrid, starting out as an exercise in empathy for Vincent and his condition that gives way to a more traditional genre piece. Both elements are expertly handled. There are nods to Hitchcock, too, in the use of sound designed to manipulate tension; and in disorientation, as Winocour blurs the lines between reality and Vincent’s imagination.

*Cheadle is less concerned with biographical detail than the magic of Davis’ wild, elusive spirit*

Also out...

**BLACK MOUNTAIN POETS**

OPENS APRIL 1  
Alice Lowe (last seen in Ben Wheatley’s *Sightseers*) and Dolly Wells play a pair of on-the-run sisters who find refuge at a poetry/camping weekend.

**EDDIE THE EAGLE**

OPENS APRIL 1  
Biopic of British Olympic skier whose persistence in the face of failure earned him the epithet ‘much loved’. If we leave Europe, expect more of this kind of thing.

**RAN**

OPENS APRIL 1  
Kurosawa’s late-period samurai epic based on *King Lear*. Remastered and restored.

**BOULEVARD**

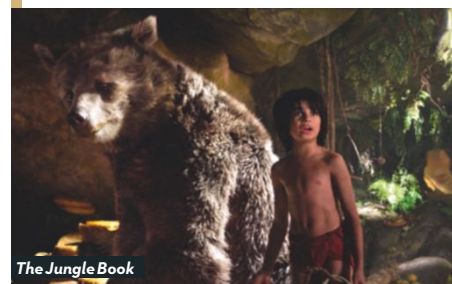
OPENS APRIL 8  
A final screen role for Robin Williams, as a married man whose real sexual identity emerges when he pays a male hooker (Roberto Aguirre) for companionship.

**CRIMINAL**

OPENS APRIL 15  
Kevin Costner is a convict implanted with the memories of a dead CIA operative. Tommy Lee Jones is a neuroscientist.

**EISENSTEIN IN GUANAJUATO**

OPENS APRIL 15  
From Peter Greenaway. Filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein travels to Mexico to shoot his new film after being shunned by Hollywood.



**THE JUNGLE BOOK**

OPENS APRIL 15  
Big screen remake of the Kipling classic, ‘cos only Bill Murray could play Baloo The Bear, right? Christopher Walken is King Louie.

**THE SWEENEY: PARIS**

OPENS APRIL 15  
Jean Reno as a suitably hard-nosed flic chasing down the bad guys en France. Can possibly only be an improvement on the UK remake from 2012.

**EYE IN THE SKY**

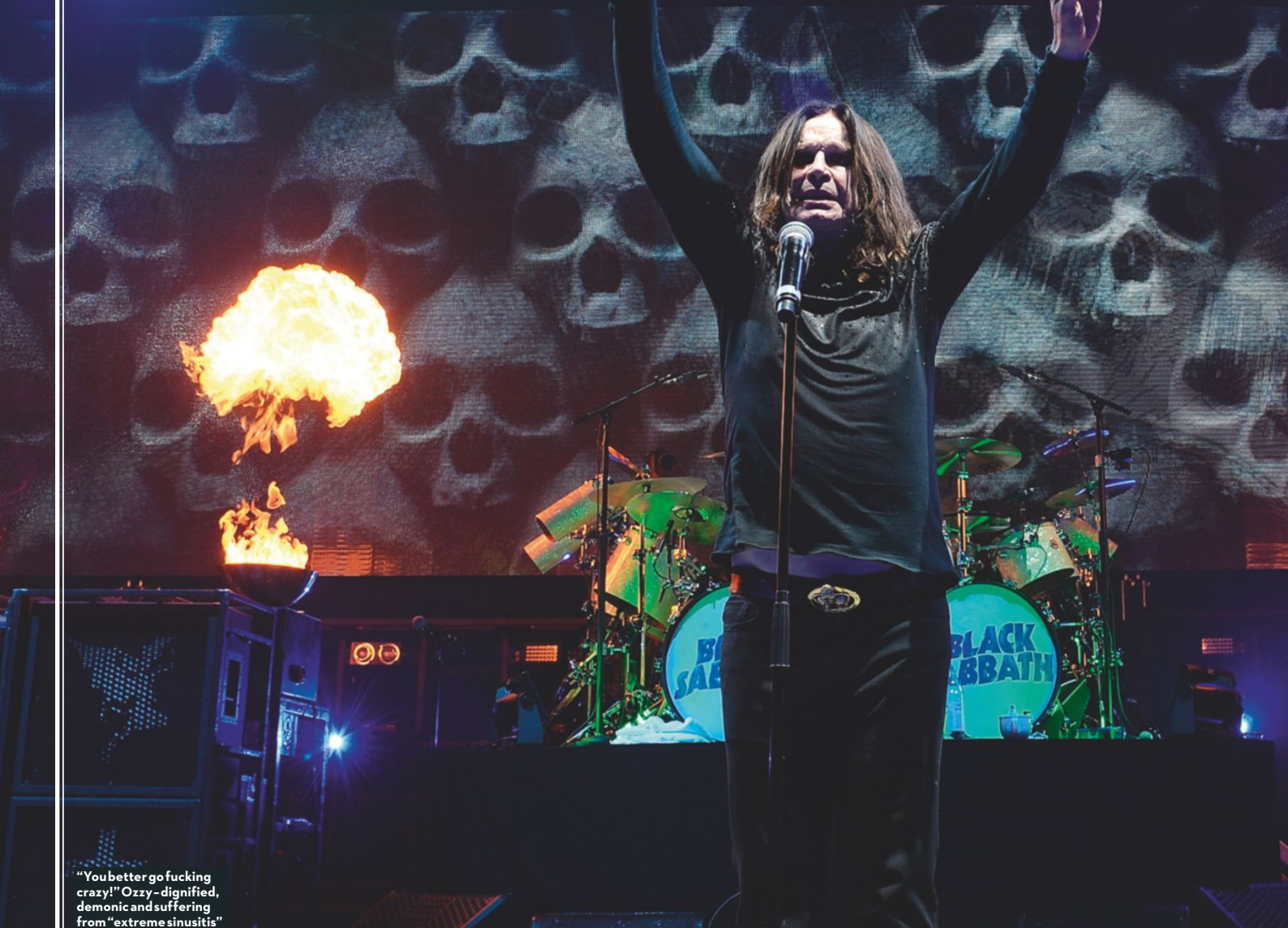
OPENS APRIL 22  
English political thriller, with Alan Rickman and Helen Mirren ordering a drone missile strike to take out a group of terrorists in Nairobi.

**WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT**

OPENS APRIL 22  
Tina Fey plays a broadcast journalist who accepts an assignment to cover Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

# Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD



"You better go fucking crazy!" Ozzy—dignified, demonic and suffering from "extreme sinusitis"

## BLACK SABBATH

FIRST ONTARIO CENTRE, HAMILTON, CANADA, FEBRUARY 21, 2016

*"Is it the end, my friend?"* The Sabs approach judgment day; sniffles proliferate...

**M**ANY CONCERTGOERS INSTINCTIVELY scoff at the announcement of a farewell tour. And who can blame them, what with so many ticket-buyers having been burned at least once by the most transparent of rock-biz tactics? Various broken by The Rolling Stones in 1981, The Who in 1982, KISS in 2000 and Cher every time she ever has the chance, these covenants have rarely been treated as sacred, especially once the revenues are tallied. Even Phil Collins

mocked the notion when he set out on his "First Farewell Tour" in 2004. (In a doubly ironic twist, there may never be a second one.)

To their credit, Black Sabbath have avoided the f-word in the name of what's purportedly their last blitzkrieg of the world's large-scale sporting venues. Instead, "The End" are the words emblazoned next to the band's logo on the video screens inside the FirstOntario Centre, a hockey arena in Hamilton, a gritty former steeltown west of Toronto where 14,000 fans have come to see them off.

The suitably doom-laden opening video links the conclusion of Black Sabbath's 46-year reign as heavy metal's mightiest gods with a wider planetary apocalypse, signified by lurid images of a burning city and the emergence of a giant winged Satan eager to roast us all. And while the momentousness of the occasion is somewhat undermined by those false-farewell-tour precedents—lest we forget, Ozzy Osbourne swore he'd be done with the road after his solo tour 24 years ago—the event's air of finality feels legitimate for once.

After all, 2016's casualty rate of rock icons has been so dramatic, it's dangerous to treat the idea of farewells so flippantly. The three original members of Black Sabbath onstage tonight—Osbourne, Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler—will all be nearing 70 by the time *The End* winds up later this year. (Replaced by Tommy Clufetos from Osbourne's solo band for the new tour, drummer Bill Ward remains out of the picture due to bad blood with Osbourne and contractual disputes with the management.) Iommi also



Blunt force and finesse: Tony Iommi and his trusty SG

“Black Sabbath”. Sporting his signature black mascara and fingernails, Osbourne gamely tries to maintain an aura of evil over the next 90 minutes, but his energy levels and vocal ability are compromised by what’s clearly a ferocious cold. Of the many songs affected by his problems, “NIB” is hit the hardest. There’s only so much

icy dread in the song’s most quoted line – “*My name is Lucifer, please take my hand,*” – when Osbourne has to follow it by retreating to the drum riser and sipping from an oversized white teacup.

With their frontman in rough shape, it’s up to the guitarist and bassist to assume the helm, but wasn’t it always thus for Sabbath? Looking demonic and dignified in his black leather coat, boots and giant cross necklace, Tony Iommi – or, as Osbourne calls him, “the one, the only, Tony I-fucking-ommi!” – allows himself the occasional smile as he batters the audience with an arsenal of expertly delivered riffs and solos drawn almost exclusively from the band’s first three albums. (The set list’s most recent song is the bawdy “Dirty Women” from 1976’s *Technical Ecstasy*, though other shows on the tour have included “God Is Dead?” from the band’s Rick Rubin-produced reunion album 13.) “Fairies Wear Boots” and “Into the Void” are delivered with all due ferocity, and “Iron Man” hardly needs the pyrotechnical explosions to leave witnesses feeling awed and battered.

While countless metal guitarists have done all they can to replicate Iommi’s blend of blunt force and finesse, far fewer have demonstrated the

## With Sabbath’s frontman in rough shape, it’s up to the guitarist and bassist to assume the helm

same understanding of Butler’s contribution to the Sabbath template. There’s always been more than the usual speaker-rattling thumping and rumbling going on in the lower regions of the band’s bombast, as he consistently demonstrates tonight. The influence of Jack Bruce on Butler’s style is clearest in the busy rhythm

parts that underpin “After Forever” and “Behind The Wall Of Sleep”, the latter being the closest the band ever veered toward Zeppelin-esque funkiness. Drummer Tommy Clufetos may not exactly qualify as a supple player – the heavily tattooed fill-in spends much of the set with his arms aloft like he’s about to deliver a fatal blow to a very large animal. But he still grasps the fact that Black Sabbath’s display of power is not just a matter of pummeling the audience into submission.

Indeed, it’s wiser to ensure that the fans in Hamilton have some energy left so they can help Osbourne make it to the end of the show. Since the current state of Ozzy showmanship largely consists of lurching back and forth at the microphone stand, chastising the crowd for not screaming loud enough or insisting that they “better go fucking crazy” for the next song, it’s not like we’re missing out on much. But it’s still dispiriting to see him peter out well before the final pyro blasts for “Children Of The Grave”.

The audience handles most of the singing chores for the encore of “Paranoid”. Still, Osbourne manages to cross the finish line and Iommi, Butler and Clufetos join him for a last bow at the front of the stage. The singer then heads off into the frigid Canadian evening, hopefully to resume whatever health regimen he needs to replenish his strength and storm all the cities left on the itinerary. And even if The End may not be the end that some fans might have hoped for, Black Sabbath’s long goodbye delivers way more bang than whimper.

JASON ANDERSON

### SET LIST

- 1 Black Sabbath
- 2 Fairies Wear Boots
- 3 After Forever
- 4 Into The Void
- 5 Snowblind
- 6 War Pigs
- 7 Behind The Wall Of Sleep
- 8 NIB
- 9 Hand Of Doom
- 10 Rat Salad
- 11 Iron Man
- 12 Dirty Women
- 13 Children Of The Grave
- ENCORE
- 14 Paranoid

continues to battle lymphoma that was diagnosed in 2012. So while cover bands will churn out sludgy renditions of “War Pigs” in divebars for time immemorial, Birmingham’s finest may soon be finished with the task.

Actually, at several points during the show in Hamilton, it looks and sounds as if Black Sabbath’s most famous frontman might be done with it a whole lot sooner. Though Osbourne’s been officially sober since 2013, concerns about his condition have dogged the first North American leg of the tour, and several Canadian dates were abruptly cancelled a few weeks earlier due to the singer’s case of “extreme sinusitis”. Rumours of laryngitis raise worries about the fate of the Hamilton show, too, but Osbourne is right where he should be as the curtain is whisked up into the rafters and the set begins with a thunderous



Michael Head:  
"He's not a  
jukebox!"

Head looks well, which he attributes wryly to a "crystal meth and carbonara" diet

*Waterpistol*, an album lost in 1991 around the time people could have done with a gentle alternative to The La's, and rediscovered when the world could have used a chilled-out Oasis in 1995. It was, no coincidence, around this time that the mismatch between Head's music and the expectation of what it might achieve commercially began to emerge.

The Red Elastic Band, greeted in London by a warm reception from his faithful hardcore, seem finally to provide Head with the balance of structure and freedom that he and his music require. The other day, he says, he played with a choir. "I learned that we've got a *septet*," he says of his band tonight, grinning at the formality of the term, as applied to this collection of men in their middle years. "I just thought there was a lot of us..."

No more and no less than required, however, to elucidate the bittersweet domestic psych that Mick has been chasing down for over three decades. Brass and electric guitar feature in the band at full tilt as they play the wonderful "Undecided" or "Comedy", but they also play as a trio, and Mick takes a solo turn. This, amid stiff competition, is the most popular section, as requests are bellowed for favourite tunes from across his career. He's endearingly uncomfortable with adulation, makes wry comments about his health (he looks well, which he attributes wryly to a "crystal meth and carbonara" diet). Nonetheless, he seems genuinely grateful that he's outgrown the drug narrative that once ran in tandem with his career, and that his talent for entropic, waltz-time romance has stuck around, along with an audience willing to patiently seek it out.

Solo, Head plays the consoling "As Long As I've Got You" the rolling, crestfallen "Streets Of Kenney", but such is the low-key, hand-to-hand way that people know this music, everyone in the crowd has one song that means something special to them. Amid the chorus of requests, one perceptive soul makes a pertinent contribution: "He's not a jukebox!"

Which about nails Michael Head's situation – someone with the kind of music that no-one should be deprived of, but who won't fit into a conventional system. The travelling ministry that is the Red Elastic Band might finally provide an answer: growing and shrinking in number, with no set mission, but happily converting new believers as they pass along the way.

JOHN ROBINSON

# MICHAEL HEAD AND THE RED ELASTIC BAND

ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON, MARCH 4, 2016

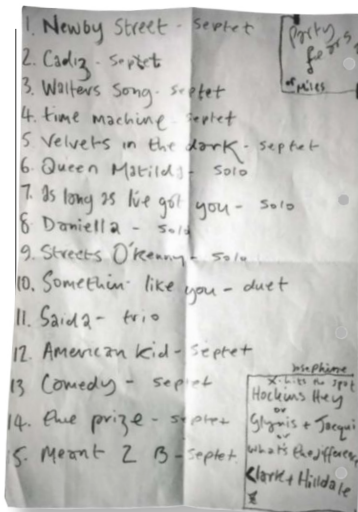
The magical world of a rare talent, revisited once again

**L**AST SUMMER, Mick Head played a low-key solo show in a Stoke Newington church, for a small audience of invited guests. The show, the venue, and the small devoted congregation seemed to articulate a long implied truth – that being a fan of Head, and his groups Shack, the Strands or (stretching back as far as the early 1980s) The Pale Fountains, was an act of faith.

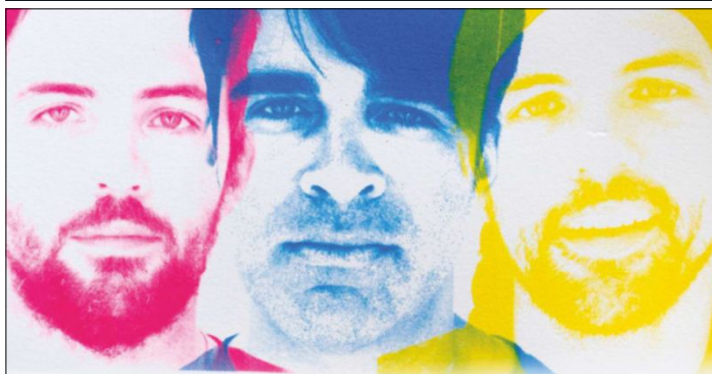
And a belief, ultimately, in a favourable outcome for Head, whose warm psychedelic music has in its time faced challenges, both from the music business and from its own maker. Bands have expectations

made of them, but such expectations have generally seemed unimportant to Head, who receives inspiration, he strongly contests, from dreams, and sees his music as part of a blissful continuum.

Indeed tonight, he and his band make effortless connections between different stages of his career, and with historically great music. Coming onstage to Miles Davis, they play "Newby Street" and "Cadiz" from the Red Elastic Band's 2013 "Artorius Revisited" EP, which sit happily alongside "Queen Matilda" from his fleeting, brilliant mid-'90s incarnation The Strands, and "Time Machine" from



KILIMANJARO PRESENTS



AN EVENING WITH

# THE AVETT BROTHERS

ONLY EUROPEAN HEADLINE DATES IN 2016

TUESDAY 30 & WEDNESDAY 31 AUGUST  
LONDON O2 SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

TICKETS: MYTICKET.CO.UK | SEETICKETS.COM



THEAVETTBROTHERS.COM  
f/THEAVETTBROTHERS d/THEAVETTBROS

A KILIMANJARO PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SPIDER TOURING

KILIMANJARO AND FRIENDS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY PRESENTS

# THE JOYFORMIDABLE

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| MAY                       | 16 LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB   |
| 07 NEWCASTLE THINK TANK   | 17 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS       |
| 09 EDINBURGH LIQUID ROOMS | 18 NORWICH OPEN                  |
| 10 SHEFFIELD THE PLUG     | 19 LONDON OVAL SPACE             |
| 13 COLCHESTER ARTS CENTRE | 22 OXFORD O2 ACADEMY2            |
| 14 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2   | 23 HIGH WYCOMBE BUCKS UNIVERSITY |

TICKETS: MYTICKET.CO.UK / SEETICKETS.COM

THEJOYFORMIDABLE.COM f/THEJOYFORMIDABLE d/JOYFORMIDABLE



THE NEW ALBUM 'HITCH' OUT 25TH MARCH

# THE BOXER REBELLION

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| APRIL                            | 03 LC SOLD OUT LO           |
| 29 GLASGOW STEREO                | 04 BRISTOL THE EXCHANGE     |
| MAY                              | 05 BIRMINGHAM HARE & HOUNDS |
| 01 MANCHESTER THE DEAF INSTITUTE |                             |

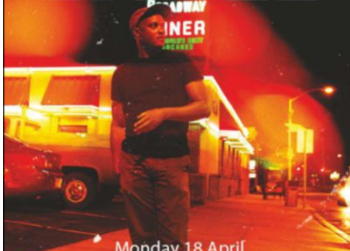
NEW DATE ADDED  
WEDNESDAY 07 DECEMBER  
LONDON O2 SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

TICKETS: MYTICKET.CO.UK | SEETICKETS.COM

f/THEBOXERREBELLION THEBOXERREBELLION.COM d/BOXERREBELLION

A KILIMANJARO & FRIENDS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH ATC LIVE

# SON LITTLE



Monday 18 April

London The Lexington

TICKETS: MYTICKET.CO.UK / SEETICKETS.COM

f/SonLittleMusic d/SonLittleMusic

A Kilimanjaro presentation by arrangement with Primary Talent International

MANDOLIN ORANGE  
SUCH JUBILEE



Saturday 07 May  
LONDON BUSH HALL

MYTICKET.CO.UK / SEETICKETS.COM

MANDOLINORANGE.COM • YEPROCC.COM

A Kilimanjaro presentation by arrangement with Spider Touring



- APRIL
- 10 BRIGHTON THE HOPE & RUIN
  - 14 MANCHESTER NIGHT & DAY
  - 15 LIVERPOOL LEAF
  - 17 BIRMINGHAM HARE & HOUNDS
  - 18 SOUTHAMPTON JOINERS
  - 19 LEICESTER THE COOKIE
  - 21 GUILDFORD THE BOILERROOM

MAY

- 04 LONDON THE 100 CLUB

TICKETS: MYTICKET.CO.UK  
SEETICKETS.COM  
TREETOPFLYERS.CO.UK

A KILIMANJARO & FRIENDS PRESENTATION  
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH ATC LIVE & GRIZZLY MANAGEMENT



# HIGHASAKITE + GORDI

MONDAY 23 MAY  
MANCHESTER DEAF INSTITUTE

TUESDAY 24 MAY  
LONDON VILLAGE UNDERGROUND

TICKETS: MYTICKET.CO.UK | SEETICKETS.COM

HIGHASAKITE NO. d/HIGHASAKITEMUSIC d/HIGHASAKITERAND  
NEW ALBUM 'CAMP ECHO' OUT MAY 20TH ON PROPELLER RECORDINGS

A KILIMANJARO & DMP FAMILY PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH COCA

# DAR WILLIAMS



Wednesday 01 June  
THE BORDERLINE  
LONDON

TICKETS: MYTICKET.CO.UK | SEETICKETS.COM

DARWILLIAMS.COM f/DARWILLIAMSTOUR d/DARWILLIAMSOFFICIAL

A KILIMANJARO & DMP PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH HONEYPOINT

KILIMANJARO PRESENTS



# THE JAYHAWKS

SEPTEMBER  
 01 | GLASGOW ARTS SCHOOL  
 02 | LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB  
 03 | BRISTOL COLSTON HALL  
 06 | LONDON ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL  
 07 | LONDON ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL

TICKETS: MYTICKET.CO.UK | SEETICKETS.COM  
 JAYHAWKSOFFICIAL.COM

NEW ALBUM **PAGING MR PROUST** AVAILABLE APRIL 29

A KILIMANJARO & FRIENDS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY



# RICHMOND FONTAINE

+ FERNANDO



## APRIL TOUR DATES

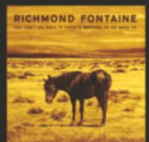
15 BRIGHTON - BLEACH  
 17 WINCHESTER - THE RAILWAY  
 18 BRISTOL - THE TUNNELS  
 19 BIRMINGHAM - HARE & HOUNDS  
 20 LONDON - DINGWALLS  
 21 OXFORD - THE BULLINGTON  
 22 BEDFORD - ESQUIRES  
 23 MANCHESTER - THE DEAF INSTITUTE  
 24 LEEDS - BUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB  
 25 SHEFFIELD - THE GREYSTONES  
 26 NEWCASTLE - THE CLUNY  
 27 GLASGOW - THE ART SCHOOL  
 28 BELFAST - VOODOO  
 29 DUBLIN -  
 WORKING MAN'S CLUB

WEGOTTICKETS.COM MYTICKETS.CO.UK  
 SEETICKETS.COM

THE NEW ALBUMS  
 ON DECOR RECORDS



OUT FEBRUARY 5TH



OUT MARCH 18TH

9/10 UNCUT 5/5 RECORD COLLECTOR 8/10 LINE OF BEST FIT 4/5 FINANCIAL TIMES

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT MYTICKET.CO.UK

EDGE ST LIVE PRESENTS

## DR JOHN COOPER CLARKE

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS  
 Mike Garry, Luke Wright,  
 Clare Ferguson - Walker  
 or Salena Godden

- APRIL**  
 2 Luton Lutonia Festival  
 6 Reading Sub 89  
 7 Weston-super-Mare Playhouse  
 8 Stoke **SOLD OUT**  
 9 Scarborough **SOLD OUT**  
 14 Worthing **SOLD OUT**  
 15 Gloucester Guildhall  
 21 Torquay Princess Theatre  
*Very Special Guest*  
 SIMON DAY as Geoffrey  
 Appleton, Yorkshire Poet

- 22 Falmouth Princess Pavilion  
 23 Cardiff Tramshed

- MAY**  
 3 Belfast Festival  
 4 Thurles Arts Centre  
 5 Dublin Pavilion

- JUNE**  
 2 Kendal Brewery Arts  
 3 Glasgow ABC  
 4 Edinburgh Queens Hall  
 9 Gateshead Sage 2  
 10 Manchester **SOLD OUT**  
 11 Liverpool Guild of Students  
 16 Milton Keynes Stables  
 17 Birmingham Town Hall  
 18 Bath Forum  
 23 Portsmouth New Royal Theatre  
 29 Margate Theatre Royal  
 30 Southend Palace Theatre

- JULY**  
 1 London Shepherds Bush Empire

Selected shows include 'The Nation's Ode to the Coast', the poem Dr JCC collaborated with the National Trust on to celebrate 50 years of their work on the coastline.

Dr. John Cooper Clarke  
 3xCD & 1xDVD  
 BOOK SET  
**AVAILABLE NOW**

www.johncooperclarke.com

Presented by SJM & ESL

## NEW DAWN FADES

A PLAY ABOUT JOY DIVISION & MANCHESTER  
 Written by Brian Gorman, Directed by James Foster

29 MARCH ~ 1 APRIL  
 LONDON HIGHGATE,  
 JACKSONS LANE

4 APRIL  
 BURY ST EDMUNDS  
 THE APEX

7 ~ 9 APRIL  
 LIVERPOOL  
 THE EPSTEIN

14 ~ 16 APRIL  
 MANCHESTER  
 THE DANCEHOUSE

18 ~ 19 APRIL  
 LEEDS CITY VARIETIES

22 ~ 23 APRIL  
 SHEFFIELD  
 THE LEADMILL

@allroadsmeeet www.newdawnfadesplay.wordpress.com



FOUR ORDINARY LADS,  
 ONE EXTRAORDINARY CITY,  
 ONE LEGENDARY BAND

"A Spellbinding  
 and Brilliant Play"  
 John Robb  
 Louderthanwar.com

## Mary Chapin Carpenter



WED 27th JULY  
 LIVERPOOL  
 PHILHARMONIC HALL

NEW ALBUM  
 THE THINGS THAT  
 WE ARE MADE OF

OUT MAY

www.marychapincarpenter.com

## RUBY LOUNGE MANCHESTER

**DAVE ALVIN AND PHIL ALVIN**  
 with  
**THE GUILTY ONES**  
 18 APRIL  
 NEW ALBUM  
**LOST TIME** OUT NOW

Celebrate Victor Brox's  
 75th Birthday  
 with The Legendary  
**Victor Brox**  
**BLUES TRAIN**  
 In an evening of  
 Blues and Soul  
 with Special Guests  
**Dave Formula & the Finks**  
 Kyla Brox, Bren Gore Band & More  
**Sun MAY 8th**  
 Doors 4pm

Not The Tremblin' Kind - 15-year UK Anniversary  
**Laura Cantrell**  
 14 MAY  
 Laura Cantrell at the BBC Out Now  
 www.lauracantrell.com  
 TICKETS FROM TICKETLINE & SEE

**GOING TO A GIG?** Our manifesto is simple - we recommend great places to eat & drink in Manchester, Brighton & Leeds



TASTE OF MANCHESTER



TASTE OF BRIGHTON



TASTE OF LEEDS

# BEN HARPER & THE INNOCENT CRIMINALS

## CALL IT WHAT IT IS TOUR



BEN HARPER & THE INNOCENT CRIMINALS CALL IT WHAT IT IS

WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER 2016  
**O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON LONDON**

LIVENATION.CO.UK • TICKETMASTER.CO.UK  
 BENHARPER.COM • BENHARPER

NEW ALBUM OUT ON 8TH APRIL 2016

A LIVE NATION PRESENTATION IN ASSOCIATION WITH ITB

SJM CONCERTS PRESENTS

SJM CONCERTS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH WME ENTERTAINMENT PRESENT

# JEAN-MICHEL JARRE

## ELECTRONICA WORLD TOUR

SATURDAY 23 JULY 2016 JODRELL BANK CHESHIRE	SATURDAY 08 OCTOBER 2016 BIRMINGHAM BARCLAYCARD ARENA
TUESDAY 04 OCTOBER 2016 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA	MONDAY 10 OCTOBER 2016 DUBLIN 3 ARENA
THURSDAY 06 OCTOBER 2016 BRIGHTON CENTRE	THURSDAY 13 OCTOBER 2016 LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
FRIDAY 07 OCTOBER 2016 LONDON THE O2	FRIDAY 14 OCTOBER 2016 GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM GIGSANDTOURS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

CODEX PRODUCTIONS LTD

ELECTRONICA 1 AVAILABLE | JEANMICHELJARRE.COM | ELECTRONICA 2 MAY 6TH

# THE HEAVY

PLUS GUESTS



MAY 2016

THU 12	BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY 2
FRI 13	MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
SAT 14	NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
SUN 15	GLASGOW ORAN MOR
TUE 17	LONDON HEAVEN <b>SOLD OUT</b>
WED 18	BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY

GIGSANDTOURS.COM TICKETMASTER.CO.UK TICKETWEB.CO.UK

NEW ALBUM 'HURT & THE MERCILESS' RELEASED 1 APRIL  
 THEHEAVY.CO.UK

A METROPOLIS MUSIC, SJM CONCERTS & DF CONCERTS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH X-RAY

2016 THE BEST OF THE BEST 2016

# THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW



'Perfect in just about every way'  
 ★★★★★ THE TIMES

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2016

FRI 14 OCT BIRMINGHAM BARCLAYCARD ARENA	TUE 25 OCT NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL	FRI 04 NOV BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
SAT 15 OCT CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA	THU 27 OCT LIVERPOOL EMPIRE THEATRE	SAT 05 NOV BLACKPOOL OPERA HOUSE
MON 17 OCT OXFORD NEW THEATRE	FRI 28 OCT LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA	MON 07 NOV SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
TUE 18 OCT BRISTOL COLSTON HALL	SAT 29 OCT MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO	TUE 08 NOV GRIMSBY AUDITORIUM
THU 20 OCT PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL	MON 31 OCT LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL	THU 10 NOV EDINBURGH USHER HALL
FRI 21 OCT BRIGHTON CENTRE	TUE 01 NOV SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION	FRI 11 NOV GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
SAT 22 OCT LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO	THU 03 NOV GUILDFORD G LIVE	SAT 12 NOV NEWCASTLE CITY HALL
MON 24 OCT IPSWICH REGENT		

GIGSANDTOURS.COM / TICKETMASTER.CO.UK  
 0844 811 0051 / 0844 826 2826

A SJM CONCERTS & LIVE NATION PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY



GIGSANDTOURS.COM FIND US ON 0844 811 0051

**CHARLES BRADLEY**  
 & HIS EXTRAORDINAIRES  
**CHANGES TOUR 2016**



**SELAH SUE**  
 BOBBY BAZINI

**WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH**  
**LONDON, O<sub>2</sub> FORUM**

**THE pharcyde**

+DJ FORMAT  
 +Too Many T's  
 + DJ SNUFF



"LACABINGCALIFORNIA" 20TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT  
**FRI 01 APR, LONDON, ELECTRIC BALLROOM**

JACQUI McSHEE'S  
**DEXTANGLE**



**SUNDAY 03 APRIL**  
**LONDON, 100 CLUB**

**CEU**

+ D. Vyzor (DJ Set)



*Wednesday 06 April!*  
*London, The Forge*

Hackney Colliery  
 Band



**FRIDAY 08 APRIL**  
**LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE**


THE  
**VARD BIRDS**

+ CHLOE MARRIOTT



**LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE**  
**FRIDAY 15 APRIL**

**ALBERT CUMMINGS**



"A Great Guitarist" - B.B. KING

**MONDAY 18TH APRIL**  
**THE 100 CLUB · LONDON**

**G I A N T**  
 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



**THURSDAY 21 APRIL**  
**LONDON, 100 CLUB**

**THE WOODENTOPS**

**FLAMIN GROOVIE!**



**Friday 22 April**  
**Manchester, Club Academy**

THE  
**BLOW MONKEYS**



**Sat 23 Apr, London, Under The Bridge**

**SHALAMAR**  
 HOWARD HEWETT | JEFFREY DANIEL | CAROLYN GRIFFEY



**Sunday 24 April**  
**Cambridge Junction**

**incognito**  
 + Citrus Sun



**FRIDAY 06 MAY**  
**LONDON • ELECTRIC BALLROOM**

THE BLOCKHEADS



**Sat 07 May, London**  
**Under The Bridge**

**Cutting Crew**  
 + RETURNED VISION



**Sunday 8th May**  
**London, The 100 Club**

**OSAKA MONORAIL**  
 + DJ SNOWBOY  
 (THE SOUTH LONDON SOUL TRAIN)



**MONDAY 09 MAY, LONDON, 100 CLUB**

THE DANIELLE NICOLE  
 BAND



**WED 11 MAY, THE 100 CLUB, LONDON**

**Terry Reid**  
 + special guests



**THURSDAY 12 MAY**  
**LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE**

CLOSE LOBSTERS



**saturday 14 may**  
**london, 100 club**

**NOW BOOKING:** COMPLETE MADNESS DUB PISTOLS THE FLATMATES SUN RA ARKESTRA DREADZONE ROY HARGROVE THE SPITFIRES INTRODUCING LIVE PLAY DJ SHADOW'S "ENDTRODUCING..." THE MIGHTY MOCAMBOS NEVILLE STAPLE BAND + DANDY LIVINGSTONE IMMACULATE FOOLS MODS MAYDAYS 2016 - THE LAMBRETTAS, THE CHORDS UK & SQUIRE NEW STREET ADVENTURE SIAN EVANS OF KOSHEEN MARK BILLINGHAM & MY DARLING CLEMENTINE TOYAH JAZZ JAMAICA JOE LOUIS WALKER THE PRETTY THINGS RHODA DAKAR RADIO BIRDMAN CUNNINGLYNGUISTS FOTHERINGAY

Buy Online at **EVENTIM.co.uk**Ticket Hotline **0844 249 1000 & 0203 239 2732**

**SPEAR OF DESTINY**  
+beautiful  
mechanica



Birmingham, Hare & Hounds  
Thursday 28 April  
London, Under The Bridge  
Friday 29 April  
Manchester, FAC251  
Saturday 30 April

**THE LONG RYDERS**



"Final Wild Songs" Tour 2016  
Bristol, The Fleece, Tue 03 May  
Brighton, Concorde 2, Wed 04 May  
London, Under The Bridge, Thu 05 May  
Leeds, The Wardrobe, Fri 06 May  
Manchester, Club Academy, Sat 07 May

**ROYAL SOUTHERN BROTHERHOOD**



WEDNESDAY 31 AUGUST  
MANCHESTER, CLUB ACADEMY  
THURSDAY 01 SEPTEMBER  
LONDON, JAZZ CAFE

**PAUL YOUNG**



Soul Classics and the Hits  
FRIDAY 24TH JUNE  
CLAPHAM GRAND | LONDON

**STONE FOUNDATION**



Saturday 14 May  
London, Under The Bridge

**BIG BOY BLOATER**  
& THE LIMITS



SUN 15 MAY  
LONDON  
100 CLUB

**EDDIE & THE HOT RODS**



FRIDAY 20 MAY  
LONDON, 100 CLUB

**PRIMITIVES**



Birmingham, Hare & Hounds, Thu 26 May  
London, Under The Bridge, Fri 27 May

**ESG**



Saturday 28 May 2016  
London, Under The Bridge

**Nazareth**



SUNDAY 17 JULY, LONDON  
under the bridge

From the SMALL FACES, FACES & THE WHO  
**Kenney Jones**  
& THE JONES GANG



FRIDAY 26 AUGUST, LONDON  
under the bridge

**PENETRATION**



FRIDAY 19TH AUGUST  
LONDON - THE ICC CLUB  
SATURDAY 20TH AUGUST  
BRIGHTON - THE HAUNT

**THE SMYTHS**  
"The Queen Is Dead" 30th Anniversary Concert



Fri 29 & Sat 30 July  
London, 100 Club

**THE CHILLS**



Wednesday 8th June  
London, KOKO

**ANGELIC UPSTARTS**



Friday 17 June  
London, 100 Club  
Saturday 18 June  
Birmingham, Hare & Hounds

**keb'mo' band**



Tuesday 05 July  
Union Chapel, London

THE BLUES BAND DEXYS BOOTLEG RUNNERS VICTOR WOOTEN JOHN COLTRANE'S A LOVE SUPREME PEE WEE ELLIS & HUEY MORGAN TUNDE - THE VOICE OF THE LIGHTHOUSE FAMILY FRED WESLEY & THE NEW JB'S THE OUTSIDE TRACK ERIC ROBERSON THE STYLE COUNCILLORS THE COMPLETE STONE ROSES ALBERT HAMMOND CYMANDE THE BIBLE THE TUBES EARTH, WIND AND FIRE EXPERIENCE FAY HALLAM NINE BELOW ZERO BIG COUNTRY DR. FEELGOOD SECRET AFFAIR THE DYLAN PROJECT POPA CHUBBY ERIC SARDINAS DAVID KNOPFLER AND MORE...

Academy Events present

HOME GROWN AND ACADEMY EVENTS PRESENT

## ROY AYERS & LONNIE LISTON SMITH

with FULL US BAND  
plus guests **PUSH**  
+ DJ DEAN RUDLAND

**SAT 28 MAY**  
**O<sub>2</sub> FORUM**  
**KENTISH TOWN**  
TICKETWEB.CO.UK · 0844 477 2000

**25**  
1991-2016  
FOUR BROTHER RECORDS

**JAZZ FUNK FEST 2016**

**S** **U** **L** **T** **I** **M** **E**!

## SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY & THE ASBURY JUKES

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

**WEDNESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2016**  
**O<sub>2</sub> SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE · LONDON**  
TICKETWEB.CO.UK · 0844 477 2000  
AN ACADEMY EVENTS PRESENTATION

**MONDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE**  
**OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY**

**TUESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE**  
**SHEFFIELD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY**

TICKETWEB.CO.UK  
0844 477 2000  
PILOFFICIAL.COM

AN ACADEMY EVENTS PRESENTATION  
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH  
PRIMARY TALENT

ACADEMY EVENTS by arrangement with UTA presents

# LESS THAN JAKE

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

**TRASH BOAT**  
(ALL SHOWS)

**KENNETHS**  
(ALL SHOWS EXCEPT LEICESTER)

**LIONIZE**  
(ALL SHOWS EXCEPT OXFORD)

**MAY 2016**

MON	2 <sup>ND</sup>	KINGSTON HIPPODROME
TUE	3 <sup>RD</sup>	LIVERPOOL O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY
WED	4 <sup>TH</sup>	LEICESTER O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY
THU	5 <sup>TH</sup>	OXFORD O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY

TICKETWEB.CO.UK | 0844 477 2000 & ALL USUAL AGENTS  
NEW ALBUM LIVE AT THE ASTORIA OUT IN SPRING

WWW.LESSTHANJAKE.COM | FACEBOOK.COM/LESS THANJAKE | TWITTER.COM/LESS THANJAKE

Academy Events & Friends by arrangement with Rhino Agency proudly presents

# Renaissance

With Special Guests

## curved air

**APRIL TOUR 2016**

17 BUXTON OPERA HOUSE	21 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
18 MILTON KEYNES THE STABLES	22 GLASGOW O <sub>2</sub> ABC
19 WOLVERHAMPTON ROBIN 2	24 BOURNEMOUTH O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY
20 NEWCASTLE O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY	26 LONDON O <sub>2</sub> SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE

ticketweb.co.uk · 0844 477 2000 & all usual agents  
renaissancetouring.com · curvedair.com · rhinoagency.co.uk

academyevents presents

# GUNS 2 ROSES

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

**MAY 2016**

**SAT 21 LIVERPOOL O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2**

**SEPTEMBER 2016**

**FRI 02 BRISTOL O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY**  
**FRI 23 GLASGOW O<sub>2</sub> ABC2**  
**SAT 24 NEWCASTLE O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2**

**OCTOBER 2016**

**SAT 08 LONDON O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY ISLINGTON**  
**FRI 21 OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2**  
**SAT 22 SHEFFIELD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2**

TICKETWEB.CO.UK · 0844 477 2000

academyevents presents

# Definitely Mightbe

The definitive tribute to **oasis**

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary of those historic Oasis gigs at Maine Road and Knebworth, DEFINITELY MIGHTBE will be performing a set list made up from both iconic shows followed by a greatest hits set on the same night

FRI 09	SEPT	NEWCASTLE O <sub>2</sub> Academy
SAT 10	SEPT	GLASGOW O <sub>2</sub> ABC2
FRI 16	SEPT	LEEDS O <sub>2</sub> Academy
SAT 17	SEPT	LIVERPOOL O <sub>2</sub> Academy3
SAT 01	OCT	BIRMINGHAM O <sub>2</sub> Academy3
FRI 18	NOV	BOURNEMOUTH Old Fire Station
SAT 19	NOV	OXFORD O <sub>2</sub> Academy2
FRI 25	NOV	LEICESTER The Scholar @ O <sub>2</sub> Academy
SAT 26	NOV	SHEFFIELD O <sub>2</sub> Academy2
SAT 10	DEC	LONDON O <sub>2</sub> Academy Islington
FRI 16	DEC	MANCHESTER O <sub>2</sub> Ritz

ticketweb.co.uk · 0844 477 2000

academyevents & friends presents

# MAGNUM

THE "DIVINE" LIES TOUR 2016

**MAY**

11 SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK	21 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
12 CARDIFF TRAMSHED	22 NEWCASTLE O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY
13 LONDON ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL	24 ABERDEEN GARAGE
14 OXFORD O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY	25 GLASGOW GARAGE
16 NORWICH WATERFRONT	27 BELFAST LIMELIGHT I
17 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY	29 BRISTOL O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY
19 BIRMINGHAM O <sub>2</sub> INSTITUTE	30 LEAMINGTON SPA ASSEMBLY ROOMS
20 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME	

ticketweb.co.uk · 0844 477 2000 and all usual agents  
NEW ALBUM SACRED BLOOD "DIVINE" LIES OUT NOW  
magnumonline.co.uk

ACADEMY EVENTS PRESENTS

# THE CLONE ROSES

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

## THE SMITHS

**SATURDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> MAY**  
**O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY LEEDS**  
TICKETWEB.CO.UK · 0844 477 2000

academyevents presents

30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tour 2016

# THE SMYTHS

The Queen Is Dead

**Sat 26 March**  
LIVERPOOL  
O<sub>2</sub> Academy2

**Sat 7 May**  
GLASGOW  
O<sub>2</sub> ABC2

**Fri 13 May**  
SHEFFIELD  
O<sub>2</sub> Academy2

**Fri 20 May**  
BIRMINGHAM  
O<sub>2</sub> Academy2

**Fri 27 May**  
NEWCASTLE  
O<sub>2</sub> Academy2

**Fri 23 September**  
BRISTOL  
O<sub>2</sub> Academy

**Fri 7 October**  
LEICESTER  
O<sub>2</sub> Academy

**Fri 14 October**  
BOURNEMOUTH  
Old Fire Station

**Sat 15 October**  
OXFORD  
O<sub>2</sub> Academy2

Ticketweb.co.uk · 0844 477 2000

academyevents presents

# ELECTRIC SIX

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS **WE-ARE-Z**

**TUES 22 NOV**  
NEWCASTLE O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2

**SUN 27 NOV**  
LIVERPOOL O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2

**WEDS 30 NOV**  
BIRMINGHAM O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2

**THURS 01 DEC**  
SHEFFIELD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2

**FRI 02 DEC**  
LONDON O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY ISLINGTON

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**APRIL 2016**

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**FRI 22nd BIRMINGHAM O<sub>2</sub> Institute2**  
**SAT 23rd GLASGOW O<sub>2</sub> ABC2**  
**SUN 24th LIVERPOOL O<sub>2</sub> Academy2**

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PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS



**APRIL 2016**

**Thu 07 EDINBURGH** Liquid Rooms  
**Fri 08 WHITEHAVEN** Civic Hall  
**Sat 09 MANCHESTER** Academy 2  
**Thu 14 SHEFFIELD O<sub>2</sub>** Academy2  
**Fri 15 LEICESTER O<sub>2</sub>** Academy  
**Sat 16 BIRMINGHAM O<sub>2</sub>** Academy2  
**Fri 22 NEWCASTLE O<sub>2</sub>** Academy  
**Sat 23 LEEDS** Brudenell **SOLD OUT**  
**Sun 24 GLASGOW O<sub>2</sub>** ABC

**Thu 28 BOURNEMOUTH**  
The Old Fire Station  
**Fri 29 BRISTOL O<sub>2</sub>** Academy  
**Sat 30 LONDON O<sub>2</sub>** Shepherds  
Bush Empire

**EXTRA DATE ADDED**  
**SAT 17 DECEMBER**  
**LIVERPOOL O<sub>2</sub> Academy**

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# SPACE

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**APRIL**

07 SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK  
08 BOURNEMOUTH OLD FIRE STATION  
15 OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
16 BRIGHTON HAUNT  
29 NEWCASTLE O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
30 STOCKTON ARC

**MAY**

21 BIRMINGHAM O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
28 LEICESTER THE SCHOLAR @ O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY  
29 LONDON 100 CLUB

**JUNE**

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11 STOKE EXCHANGE

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**SEPTEMBER**

30 BRISTOL FLEECE

**OCTOBER**

21 SHEFFIELD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
22 BIRMINGHAM O<sub>2</sub> INSTITUTE2  
28 OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
29 LONDON O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY ISLINGTON

**NOVEMBER**

12 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME  
18 YORK FIBBERS  
19 STOCKTON ARC

**DECEMBER**

03 SOUTHAMPTON 1865

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**FRI 28 OCT NEWCASTLE O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2**  
**SAT 12 NOV LIVERPOOL O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2**  
**FRI 18 NOV LEICESTER THE SCHOLAR @ O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY**  
**SAT 19 NOV SHEFFIELD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2**  
**FRI 25 NOV LONDON O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON**  
**SAT 26 NOV OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2**  
**FRI 09 DEC GLASGOW O<sub>2</sub> ABC2**

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# THE ICICLE WORKS

**UK TOUR 2016**

**APRIL**

14 ARLINGTON Arts Centre  
16 DERBY Flowerpot  
22 OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> Academy  
23 ST. HELENS The Citadel  
29 MORECOMBE The Platform

**MAY**

05 BRIGHTON Komedia  
06 BIRMINGHAM O<sub>2</sub> Academy2  
07 LEICESTER O<sub>2</sub> Academy  
12 HARPENDEN Public Halls  
13 STOCKTON Arc

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# MIKE PETERS PRESENTS THE ALARM

## Spirit of '86

**APRIL**

22 BOURNEMOUTH OLD FIRE STATION  
29 YORK DUCHESS

**MAY**

04 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS  
06 NORWICH WATERFRONT  
11 BRISTOL THEKLA  
12 PRESTON NEW CONTINENTAL  
15 BIRMINGHAM O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY3  
18 EDINBURGH THE CAVES  
21 OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
28 SHEFFIELD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY

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Playing The Album in full plus a Best Of Set

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**Fri 18th** SHEFFIELD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
**Sat 19th** LIVERPOOL O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
**Fri 25th** OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
**Sat 26th** LEICESTER @ THE SCHOLAR O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY

**December 2016**

**Fri 2nd** NEWCASTLE O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
**Sat 3rd** GLASGOW O<sub>2</sub> ABC2  
**Fri 9th** LONDON O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2  
**Sat 10th** ISLINGTON MANCHESTER CLUB ACADEMY

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**FRI 27 MAY OXFORD O<sub>2</sub> Academy2**  
**SAT 28 MAY LIVERPOOL O<sub>2</sub> Academy2**  
**SAT 03 JUNE BIRMINGHAM O<sub>2</sub> Academy3**

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WEEKENDER  
2016

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CAST / BLACK GRAPE  
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THE RAILWAY CHILDREN / S\*M\*A\*S\*H  
THE SEX PISSED DOLLS / MARION  
BENTLEY RHYTHM ACE / CUT LA ROC  
WILL WHITE (PROPELLERHEADS)  
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APRIL 2016 UK TOUR

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 10 YORK / THE DUCHESS                     | 16 BRISTOL / THE LANTERN        |
| 11 GATESHEAD / SAGE 2                     | 18 LONDON / UNION CHAPEL        |
| 12 GLASGOW / ORAN MOR                     | 19 PORTSMOUTH / WEDGEWOOD ROOMS |
| 14 MANCHESTER / GORILLA                   | 20 MILTON KEYNES / THE STABLES  |
| 15 BIRMINGHAM / O <sub>2</sub> INSTITUTE3 | 21 NORWICH / WATERFRONT         |

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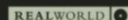
PLUS SUPPORT FROM  
TWELFTH DAY



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>APRIL</b>                            | 13 MILTON KEYNES The Stables           |
| The Brook <b>SOUTHAMPTON</b> 29         | 14 MORECAMBE The Hothouse              |
| Folk Festival <b>BRISTOL</b> 30         | 15 BRIGHTON Komedia Studio             |
| <b>MAY</b>                              | 19 LONDON Bush Hall                    |
| Theatr Mwldan <b>CARDIGAN</b> 01        | 20 STOWMARKET John Peel Centre         |
| Hare and Hounds <b>BIRMINGHAM</b> 04    | 21 <b>CARDIFF</b> The Globe            |
| The Deaf Institute <b>MANCHESTER</b> 05 | 25 <b>CAMBRIDGE</b> Junction           |
| La Belle Angele <b>EDINBURGH</b> 06     | 26 <b>KEIGHLEY</b> The Octagon         |
| Sage <b>GATESHEAD</b> 07                | 27 <b>CAERNARFON</b> Galeri Caernarfon |
| The Bodega <b>NOTTINGHAM</b> 11         | <b>JUNE</b>                            |
| Arlington Arts Centre <b>NEWBURY</b> 12 | 03 <b>SOMERSET</b> The David Hall      |

NEW ALBUM "ANIAN" OUT 29TH APRIL

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HOLD TIGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH IAA AND DHP



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SPECIAL GUEST SUPPORT  
JACK CARTY



THE GILDED TOUR

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>APRIL</b>                    | <b>MAY</b>                        |
| 22 BIRMINGHAM / THE RAINBOW     | 01 DORSET / MARNHULL VILLAGE HALL |
| 23 OXFORD / JERICHO TAVERN      | 02 MANCHESTER / BAND ON THE WALL  |
| 24 BRISTOL / FOLK HOUSE         | 05 BEDFORD / THE PLACE            |
| 25 LONDON / THE LEXINGTON       | 06 WINCHESTER / THE RAILWAY INN   |
| 28 KENDAL / BREWERY ARTS CENTRE | 25 LIVERPOOL / PHILHARMONIC       |
| 30 DEVON / THE PLOUGH           | 26 DERBY / THE FLOWERPOT          |
|                                 | 27 SHEFFIELD / GREYSTONES         |

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no Manchester

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13 BRISTOL THEKLA

14 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM

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25

**WOLFMOTHER**  
SATURDAY 9TH APRIL

**CAST**  
SATURDAY 9TH APRIL

**FRIGHTENED RABBIT**  
TUESDAY 9TH APRIL

**ELIZA AND THE BEAR**  
FRIDAY 15TH APRIL

**PATENT PENDING**  
SATURDAY 16TH APRIL

**HEY! HELLO!**  
SATURDAY 17TH APRIL

**AUGUSTINES**  
WEDNESDAY 20TH APRIL

**KORPIKLANNI + MOONSORROW**  
THURSDAY 21ST APRIL

**HOLLYWOOD UNDEAD**  
FRIDAY 22ND APRIL

**STEVE MASON**  
SUNDAY 24TH APRIL

**KIP MOORE**  
TUESDAY 26TH APRIL

**THE RAINBAND**  
FRIDAY 29TH APRIL

**BAD MANNERS**  
SATURDAY 7TH MAY

**KING KING**  
THURSDAY 12TH MAY

**THE HEAVY**  
FRIDAY 13TH MAY

**THE JOY FORMIDABLE**  
SATURDAY 14TH MAY

**THE SUMMER SET**  
TUESDAY 17TH MAY

**HANDS LIKE HOUSES**  
WEDNESDAY 25TH MAY

**IN THIS MOMENT**  
FRIDAY 27TH MAY

**KINGS KALEIDOSCOPE**  
FRIDAY 27TH MAY

**GIGANTIC INDIE ALL DAYER: VOL. 3**  
SATURDAY 28TH MAY

**ST. PAUL & THE BROKEN BONES**  
WEDNESDAY 22ND JUNE

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Norwich

WEDNESDAY 13 APR 2016  
**THE CAT EMPIRE**

WEDNESDAY 04 MAY 2016  
**RAT BOY**

FRIDAY 15 APR 2016  
**THE DOORS ALIVE**

THURSDAY 05 MAY 2016  
**SON OF DAVE**

SATURDAY 16 APR 2016  
**GAVIN JAMES**

MONDAY 09 MAY 2016  
**JAMES**

SUNDAY 17 APR 2016  
**HOLLYWOOD UNDEAD**

MONDAY 16 MAY 2016  
**MAGNUM**

SUNDAY 17 APR 2016  
**UDO DIRKSCHNIEDER**

THURSDAY 19 MAY 2016  
**HAYSEED DIXIE**

WEDNESDAY 20 APR 2016  
**MOLOTOV JUKEBOX**

SATURDAY 11 JUNE 2016  
**ABSOLUTE BOWIE**

THURSDAY 21 APR 2016  
**NERINA PALLOT**

WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE 2016  
**NELLY**

FRIDAY 22 APR 2016  
**SURCO**

THURSDAY 23 JUNE 2016  
**VINTAGE TROUBLE**

SATURDAY 23 APR 2016  
**MARTIN TURNER**  
EX WISHBONE ASH

WEDNESDAY 6 JULY 2016  
**AVERAGE WHITE BAND**

SATURDAY 23 APR 2016  
**HAWKWIND**

SATURDAY 9 JULY 2016  
**PETER ANDRE**

MONDAY 2 MAY 2016  
**THE BLUETONES**

SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2016  
**NATHANIEL RATELIFF**  
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- 28 **BEARDED THEORY FESTIVAL**
- 29 **CARDIFF** TRAMSHED
- 30 **SUNDERLAND** THE POINT

**JUNE**

- 01 **LINCOLN** ENGINE SHED
- 02 **BLACKBURN** KING GEORGES HALL
- 04 **LONDON** INDIGO AT THE O2
- 06 **OXFORD** O2 ACADEMY
- 07 **SHEFFIELD** O2 ACADEMY
- 08 **HOLMFIRTH** PICTUREDOME
- 10 **FALKIRK** WAREHOUSE
- 11 **INVERNESS** IRONWORKS
- 12 **EDINBURGH** LIQUID ROOMS
- 14 **WOLVERHAMPTON** **SOLD OUT** TRADE ROOMS
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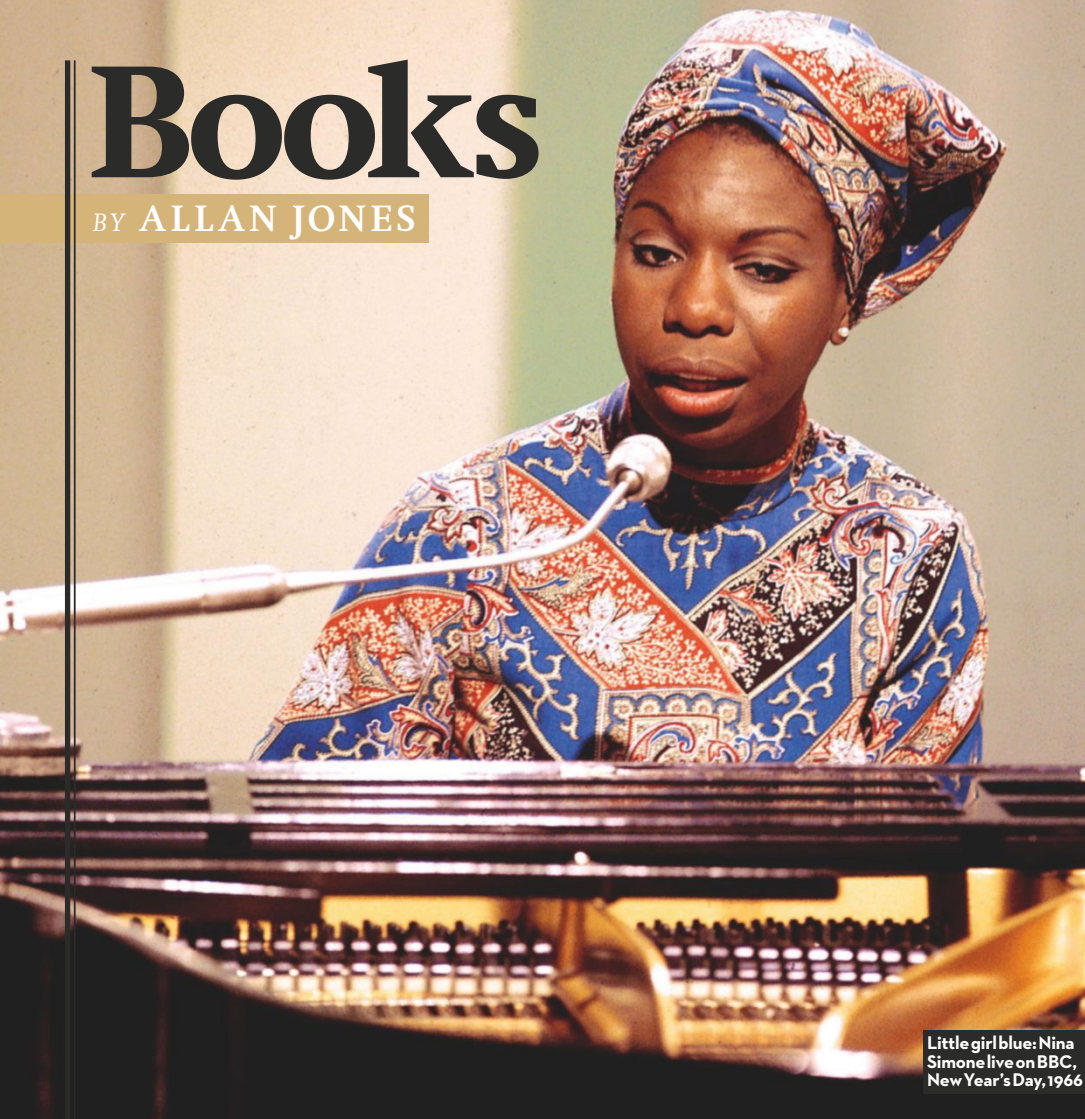
The **Waterfront** NORWICH

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DOORS OPEN 4PM | AGES 14+ | TICKETS £22.50 ADVANCE.  
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# Books

BY ALLAN JONES



Little girl blue: Nina Simone live on BBC, New Year's Day, 1966

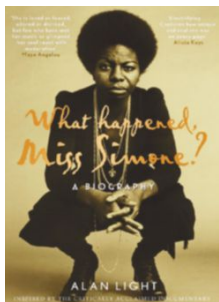
dispersed, the spirit of the original acid tests – “that moment of pure unknown promise” – somehow survived the helicopter raids, lab busts, mass arrests and land seizures, was revived at festivals like Burning Man, Coachella and Bonnaroo. Prominent original Deadhead and Bob Weir’s songwriting partner, the fascinating John Perry Barlow, meanwhile, resurfaces towards the end of the book as a cyber-visionary with links to the Occupy movement, NSA whistle-blower Edward Snowden and Anonymous, the hacker chaos-makers in whom Barlow may have recognised something of the early acid pranksters, whose sense of psychedelic mischief clearly yet endures.

➤ Alan Light’s **What Happened, Miss Simone?** is based on the Liz Garbus-directed Netflix documentary of the same name. Like the film, it’s decent, respectful, conscientiously crafted and even-handed. Given the raw drama of Simone’s life, the book is also a little underwhelming, the rather plain telling of Simone’s story diminishing her imperious legend, her career at times reduced to backstage melodrama, the stuff of showbiz memoir. Light had some terrific material to work with – including much archive material assembled by Garbus’ researchers, Simone’s letters and diaries and new interviews with, most notably, Simone’s daughter Lisa Simone Kelly, long-serving guitarist Al Schackman and Andrew Stroud, the charismatic bully who became her second husband. When she met him, Stroud was a Harlem police detective, feared on the streets for his brutal temper, with which Simone was soon painfully acquainted. After one row, he beat her for 19 hours, threatened to shoot her, tied her to a bed and

## Reviewed this month...



**Heads: A Biography Of Psychedelic America**  
Jesse Jarnow  
DA CAPO  
9/10



**What Happened, Miss Simone?**  
Alan Light  
CANONGATE  
7/10

Jesse Jarnow’s **Heads: A Biography Of Psychedelic America** is flat-out brilliant. But don’t, please, mistake it for a history of American psychedelia, that much-told story. The book is principally about the transformative impact of LSD on American society, and how across a half-century it shaped American art, music, movies, spirituality and technology (who knew so many of the original Silicon Valley cyber-geeks, including the Apple boys, were such dedicated trippers?)

Music is part of its adhesive narrative, but almost exclusively the music of The Grateful Dead, which for their fans, the Deadheads of legend, was a portal to an unregulated psychedelic otherworld. This was a place best accessed by listening to, say, “Dark Star” while your mind was being blown by righteous hits of the best available LSD, the eventual source of

which would have been one of the so-called “acid families” who attached themselves to the Dead, mysterious underground cabals who controlled an elaborate manufacturing and distribution network across the US and beyond. The vast profits from the black market drug trade fed back into the “hip economy” and funded everything from soup kitchens to the revolutionary Weather Underground.

Much as Stephen Witt’s similarly revelatory *How Music Got Free* was a guide to a dark subculture of pirate music sharers, dissident fraternities who believed in the free exchange of music across the internet, so Jarnow here introduces us to a mesmerising cast of pioneering communards, utopians, pranksters, graffiti artists, outlaw chemists, hipster entrepreneurs, clandestine tapers, DJs, acid shamans, religious cults, variously wiggled-out cliques and some pretty far out people with sinister connections to the CIA, the Mafia, Red Brigades and the PLO. And then there are the acid distribution collectives like martial arts-trained drug smugglers the Judo Gang and the notorious Brotherhood Of Eternal Love – “light wielding surf-gangsters from Laguna Beach” – who seem to have wandered into the piece from the pages of some outlandish fiction by Thomas Pynchon, or *Great Jones Street*, Don DeLillo’s psychedelic riff on *The Maltese Falcon*.

It’s overall a giddy, amazing story, terrifically well told by Jarnow. This is writing with a hard-boiled backbeat, the book driven by an urgent thumping tempo. There are also parallel narratives about the accumulation and dissemination by Dick Latvala of the entire Dead archive of concert tapes (“talismans with their own mystic power”) and the War On Drugs, the federal government’s brutal militarised assault on what was left of the counterculture. A lot of the original psychedelic illuminati were by then dead, on the run or behind bars. But even as the Dead’s hardcore tribal following was systematically

raped her. They were married weeks later, against the advice of two psychiatrists she made him see.

Stroud also became her manager, with plans to turn her into a mainstream entertainer, a feasible enough ambition that was scuppered by her increasingly radical outlook. She had grown up in North Carolina, was no stranger to segregation and racism, but was not involved with the Civil Rights movement until the September 1963 bombing by the Ku Klux Klan of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama that killed four young girls. Her response was the furious “Mississippi Goddam!”, and an alignment with Black Power radicals like Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, James Baldwin, Angela Davis and The Black Panthers. As Stroud feared, she began to alienate her white audience, who in concert she berated fiercely and at length.

At the same time, she began to suffer more acutely than ever from the mental health problems – depression, anxiety, paranoia and stress that led to full-blown manic episodes and onstage meltdowns – that affected her for the rest of her life. She got a reputation for being unreliable and impossible to work with and giving erratic performances. By the mid-70s, her career unravelling, under investigation by the IRS, she began to drift, leaving America for Africa then settling in Europe, usually unhappily and nowhere for long. She attempted several times to rebuild her career, had a huge hit in the UK when “My Baby Just Cares For Me”, a track from her 1958 debut album, *Little Girl Blue*, was used in a TV ad. After years of neglect, she started receiving Lifetime Achievement Awards, honorary doctorates, various gongs and medals of honour. She was terminally ill with cancer by then, Light mentions almost in passing, rushing through her final years like a man with a bus to catch. She died in the South Of France, aged 70, in April 2003. Light seems keen for us to know Elton John sent flowers to her funeral.

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13 Apr BELFAST, IRELAND Empire  
15 Apr LONDON, ENGLAND Islington Assembly Hall  
16 Apr OXFORD, ENGLAND North Walls Center  
17 Apr NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND The Maze  
18 Apr MANCHESTER, ENGLAND Ruby Lounge  
19 Apr GLASGOW, SCOTLAND The Art School  
21 Apr BERGEN, NORWAY Madam Felle  
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# Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

## COLIN VEARNCOMBE

"Wonderful Life" singer, aka 'Black'

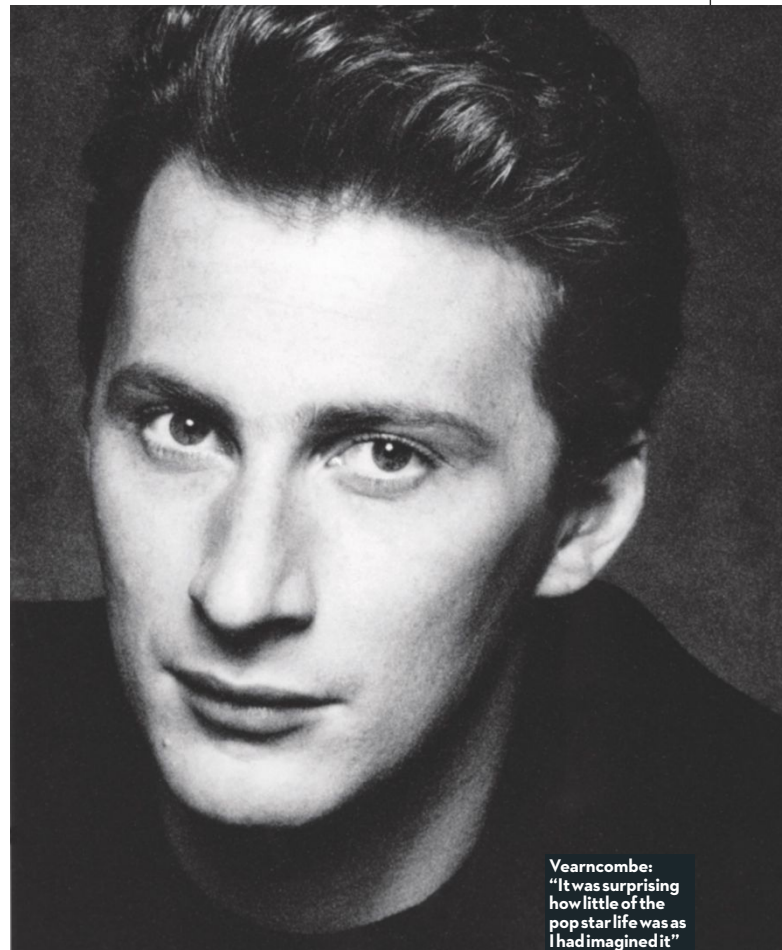
(1962-2016)

IT'S FAIR TO say that Colin Vearncombe was being deeply ironic when he conceived "Wonderful Life" at the back end of 1985. "I'd been in a couple of car crashes, my mother had a serious illness, I'd been dropped by a record company, my first marriage went belly-up and I was homeless," he recalled later. "Then I sat down and wrote this song called 'Wonderful Life'".

Delivered in his luxuriant baritone over a melancholy backdrop, and recorded under Vearncombe's stage name, Black, the single only grazed the charts when it was released the following year on indie label Ugly Man. It did, however, attract the attention of A&M, who snapped him up for a debut album, *Wonderful Life*. Similarly reflective ballad "Sweetest Smile" soon landed Black his first major UK hit. Reissued in August 1987, "Wonderful Life" followed its predecessor into the Top 10 and led to two million worldwide sales of its parent LP.

Commercial success had been a long time coming for Liverpool-born Vearncombe. Having made his live debut on New Year's Day 1981, first single "Human Features" swiftly sold out of its limited pressing. Later that year he met Pete Wylie's manager, Pete Fulwell, who oversaw a follow-up, "More Than The Sun". Vearncombe, who has died after a car accident in Ireland, was by then performing as Black with David Dix, and touring with the Thompson Twins and Wah! Signing to WEA in 1984, Black's future looked promising, but the duo were dropped soon after. Stardom, when it did finally arrive, didn't rest easy with Vearncombe either. "It was surprising how little of the pop star life was as I had imagined it," he confessed. "I was frustrated by how few of the people in the music world I respected."

A&M clearly felt the same way. 1988's *Comedy* and *Black* ('91) both failed to repeat the sales of *Wonderful Life* and Black parted company with the label. Following '93's self-released *Are We Having Fun Yet?*, he decided to take a six-year sabbatical. His post-millennial years were, by contrast, pretty prolific, yielding multiple LPs, the most recent being last year's *Blind Faith*.



Vearncombe: "It was surprising how little of the pop star life was as I had imagined it"

## MICK LYNCH

Stump vocalist

(1959-2015)

The departure of original singer Nick Hobbs in 1983 led to Mick Lynch joining fellow Irishman Rob McKahey in London-based combo Stump. Lynch, who'd previously been in an iteration of Microdisney alongside McKahey, Cathal Coughlan and Sean O'Hagan, quickly made his mark with his subversive wit, surreal lyricism and hyper-kinetic performing style. 1986 mini-LP *Quirk Out* featured signature tune "Buffalo", which

also cropped up on *NME*'s celebrated *C86* compilation. Stump's cult status was then assured after a couple of anarchic appearances on Channel 4's *The Tube*, though the band broke up after 1988's *A Fierce Pancake*. Lynch eventually returned home to Cork, developing a typically bizarre one-man show as Don For Chickens and, later, co-founding a street theatre company Downtcha Puppets.

## LENNIE BAKER

Sha Na Na saxophonist

(1946-2016)

The passing of Sha Na Na's sax player Lennie Baker comes just six months after the demise of vocalist Dennis Greene. Formerly a member of Danny And The Juniors, Baker joined the retro rock'n'roll group in 1970, a year after their breakthrough moment at Woodstock. He sang lead on their

hit version of "Blue Moon", as featured in *Grease*, where they were cast as Johnny Casino & The Gamblers. A fixture of the band's self-titled TV show, which aired from 1977-'81, Baker retired in 2000.

## VI SUBVERSA

Poison Girls singer and guitarist

(1936-2016)

As leader of Poison Girls, singer-guitarist Vi Subversa was a key finger in the emergent anarcho-punk movement of the '70s. She was already a 44-year-old mother of two when the band issued 1979's debut EP, "Hex", whose radical soundscapes echoed Subversa's hardline views on feminism and socialism. Poison Girls often performed alongside fellow politicians Crass (Subversa loaned them £8,000 to record *Stations Of The Crass*) and released three albums before splitting

around 1987. More recently she'd been involved with cabaret trio, Vi Subversa's Naughty Thoughts.

## PAUL GORDON

Composer/New Radicals pianist

(1963-2016)

Much-in-demand composer and producer Paul Gordon created a plethora of musical pieces for film and TV in recent years, among them the themes for *Digimon*, *Transformers: Robots In Disguise* and Stan Lee's *Stripperella*. He was also pianist for alt-rockers New Radicals, performing on their sole LP, 1998's *Maybe You've Been Brainwashed Too*, before going on to back Goo Goo Dolls, Lisa Marie Presley, The Devlins, Charles and Eddie, Nona Hendryx, Chaka Khan and others. Since 2007, Gordon had also been guitarist and keyboard player with The B-52s.

RICHARD BURRIDGE



Mick Lynch with Stump, 1988

# OBITUARIES

## VANITY

Singer with Vanity 6, model, actress  
(1959-2016)

CANADIAN MODEL DENISE Matthews was scratching a living in Hollywood when she met Prince at the American Music Awards in 1980. The pair soon began dating and, on learning that Matthews was an aspiring singer, Prince invited her to Minneapolis to front an all-girl trio he was putting together. Renamed Vanity (“He wanted me to call myself Vagina,” Matthews later told *People* magazine), she became the figurehead of Vanity 6, alongside Brenda Bennett and Susan Moonsie. 1982’s self-titled debut was produced and part-written by Prince, who fashioned the group as libidinous R&B funksters dressed in lingerie, singing provocative tunes like “Drive Me Wild” and “Nasty Girl”. The latter’s explicit lyrics prevented it from becoming a major US hit, though the single was a sizeable success on the *Billboard* R&B chart.

Vanity 6 supported Prince on tour up until 1983, at which point Matthews began preparing for her proposed female lead

role in the film, *Purple Rain*. She quit the project before it began, however, due to the lure of a solo career in LA and the break-up of her relationship with Prince.

Signed to Motown, she released two albums, 1984’s *Wild Animal* and *Skin On Skin* (’86), and kept up a hard-partying lifestyle that would eventually exact a heavy toll. Her romantic liaisons around this time included Mötley Crüe’s Nikki Sixx, whose 2007 memoir *The Heroin Diaries: A Year In The Life Of A Shattered Rock Star* detailed their time doing crack cocaine together in 1987.

Vanity featured in the movies *The Last Dragon*, *52 Pick-Up* and *Action Jackson*, before suffering renal failure in the early ’90s. She blamed her failing health on years of drug abuse, renounced her stage name and became a born-again Christian. By the time of her 2000 autobiography, *Blame It On Vanity: Hollywood, Hell And Heaven*, Matthews was an ordained church minister, spreading the word across the US.

On hearing of her death caused from multiple kidney-related issues, Prince dedicated several songs to Matthews during his Australian tour. “She loved me for the artist I was,” he said. “I loved her for the artist she was trying to be.”



Vanity, aka Denise Matthews, performing on US television, 1983

## CLARENCE REID

R’nB singer, songwriter, producer  
(1939-2016)

Clarence Reid was already established as a songwriter before he emerged as alter ego Blowfly in 1971. Co-writer of hits for Betty Wright (“Clean Up Woman”; “Girls Can’t Do What The Guys Do”), Gwen McCrae (“Rockin’ Chair”), Irma Thomas and Sam & Dave, Reid styled Blowfly as a capped superhero who specialised in sexually explicit rap parodies of contemporary pop songs. His own output, including 1980’s “Rapp Dirty”, perhaps his best-known composition, was sampled by the likes of Wu-Tang Clan, DMX, DJ Shadow and The Avalanches.

## JIMMY BAIN

Rainbow and Dio bassist  
(1947-2016)

Watching him perform at the Marquee, Ritchie Blackmore was so taken with Jimmy Bain’s dexterity on bass that he invited him to join Rainbow for 1976’s breakthrough album, *Rising*. Bain also featured on subsequent live effort, *On Stage*, before forming his own group, Wild Horses. He went on to play with Roy Harper, Kate Bush and Phil Lynott and, in 1983, reconnected with ex-Rainbow singer Ronnie James Dio. His tenure with Dio lasted from debut LP *Holy Diver* through to 2002’s *Killing The Dragon*.

## LC ULMER

Blues singer/  
songwriter  
(1928-2016)

Lee Chester Ulmer may not have been a prolific recording artist, but he was a legendary figure on the blues scene for seven decades. Inspired by the slide guitar of Blind Roosevelt Graves, he played around Kansas and Arizona before returning to his native Mississippi during the ’60s. Another

move, to Joliet in Illinois, led to gigs with such luminaries as Muddy Waters, Elmore James and Howlin’ Wolf. In 2008, he debuted at the Chicago Blues Festival and, three years later, issued *Blues Come Yonder*.

## JIMMIE HASKELL

Composer, arranger, conductor  
(1936-2016)

Brooklyn composer Jimmie Haskell balanced his work for film and TV with a successful career in the music business. He began at Imperial as Ricky Nelson’s arranger-producer (often uncredited) in the ’50s, following him to Decca sometime later. Haskell then went on to arrange for The Grass Roots, Blondie, Steely Dan, Barbra Streisand, CSN and The BeeGees, among others, as well as picking up Grammys for Simon And Garfunkel’s “Bridge Over Troubled Water”, Chicago’s “If You Leave Me Now” and Bobbie Gentry’s “Ode To Billie Joe”.

## BILLY FAIER

Banjo player and folk revivalist  
(1930-2016)

A left-wing contemporary of Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie, Billy Faier was one of the most prominent banjo players in Greenwich Village

during the post-war years. His radical politics and erudite performances, be it clawhammer or three-finger style, chimed with the urban folk revival that centred around Washington Square in the late ’40s. Highlights of a modest back catalogue included 1958’s *Travelin’ Man*, *The Beast Of Billy Faier* (1964, featuring John Sebastian on guitar and harmonica) and 1973’s *Banjo*, recorded for John Fahey’s Takoma Records label.

## ANDY ‘DOG’ JOHNSON

Artist and The The sleeve designer  
(1959-2016)

The anguished, confrontational figures depicted on The The’s record sleeves were the work of Matt Johnson’s brother, Andrew. Credited to ‘Andy Dog’, Johnson’s most striking illustrations – disturbingly surreal portraits rendered in vivid colours – can be found adorning *Soul Mining*, *Dusk*, “Perfect” and “Infected”. He had trained at Camberwell School Of Art before fronting post-punk quartet Camera 3 in the late ’70s. “Andrew was, and will always remain, the single biggest influence and inspiration upon my life and career,” said Matt Johnson in tribute.

ROB HUGHES

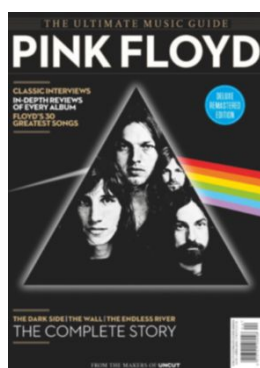
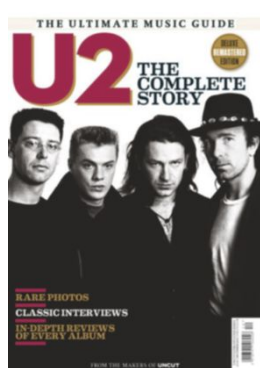
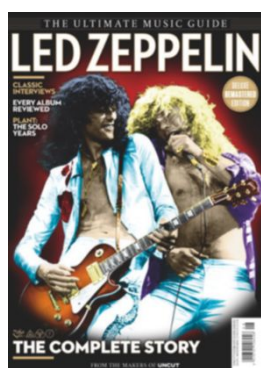


Bugged out: Clarence Reid onstage as his rap alter ego, Blowfly, in New York, 1991

CATHERINE MCGANN/GETTY IMAGES; RON WOLFSON/WIREIMAGE

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## THE MAGNIFICENT SEVENS (OUT OF TEN)

As a longtime reader of *Uncut*, I have to tell you that I am sceptical of your album reviews. In nearly every issue, your magazine gives nearly every album a minimum rating of 7/10, with many higher and just a smattering of 6/10. At no time in the history of music has there been this many releases that deserve the praise you currently heap on new releases and reissues. While some albums truly do deserve high ratings, I seriously doubt every album being issued today is of such great quality. *Uncut* is not alone in this; I see the same thing in many other music publications. The fawning over superstars is even worse. To read most music reviews, U2, Prince, and Springsteen have apparently never made a less than great album. Don't get me started on The Rolling Stones. Every new Stones album is met with a review that states it's the best thing they have done since *Exile On Main Street*, or at least, *Some Girls*, yet I haven't seen *A Bigger Bang* or *Bridges To Babylon* in your Top 200 albums list.

It makes me suspicious that your magazine is just another promotional division of the music companies. Are you afraid you won't get the interviews with the stars or the record companies will stop sending you promo discs? How am I or other readers expected to trust your reviews or the credibility of your writing if you can't be more objective? I can say for certain that I don't trust your reviews any longer. **Chris P, Connecticut, USA**

I guess we might strive for objectivity in our reviews, but it's never something that can realistically be achieved, not least because our reviews pages are populated by a multitude of opinionated, knowledgeable writers of radically different tastes, united by their ongoing enthusiasm for new music. Clearly, it can be weird when a canonical album's reissue gets a similar score to a marginal new release; our marking system isn't perfect, but we do remain convinced that it's a useful tool in helping readers navigate the great wealth of music we write about every month. We figure that's more valuable than

muzzling our positivity and trying to measure up every new record against our Top 200 albums.

Three more things: U2 and Prince, at least, have received equivocal reviews from us; we're emphatically not a promotional division of the music companies, since the music we cover is very specifically focused on the stuff that many of our readers love; and hey, 11 years on, I still think *A Bigger Bang* is the best Stones album since *Some Girls*. 7/10 - JM

## BOWIE REMEMBERED (IN A DRESSING GOWN)

Monday February 14, 1972. David Bowie was still touring small venues to promote the *Hunky Dory* album released in autumn 1971. As a 15-year-old adolescent, the album was a kind of soundtrack to where I was at the time ("Changes" etc). Bowie was supporting The Groundhogs at the Brighton Dome. I worked in a local indie record store on Saturdays, and the owner had arranged for Bowie to make a personal appearance in the late afternoon. There were about 10 people in the shop to witness the newly coiffured Bowie (Ziggy haircut). He also walked through Brighton Centre, wearing that looked like a dressing gown. Nowadays no-one would bat an eyelid at the sight of what appeared to be an extraterrestrial alien, but in 1972! Sadly I never had a photo taken, but he personally signed my *Hunky Dory* album, which will remain one of my most treasured possessions.

**Paul Johnston, via email**

## DEEP PURPLE IN (HISTORY OF) ROCK

Congratulations. Not only did your experts deem none of Deep Purple's output worthy of inclusion in your Top 200, you have now written the band out of *The History Of Rock*... I assumed it was a simple mistake that caused *In Rock* to be ignored in 1970. And, while I love the album, *Fireball* perhaps didn't set 1971 alight. But your 1972 retrospective omits both *Machine Head* and, perhaps the greatest live album of all time, *Made In Japan*. I would have thought that, even if you are not fans (and *Uncut's* history would

suggest you're not), the burning down of the casino in Montreux during a Zappa gig, the genesis of THAT RIFF, would have warranted at least a mention. Maybe you're big fans of the Coverdale/Hughes lineup... I await 1974 with bated breath. **Alan Taylor, via email**

## REG STRIKES BACK!

It's nice to see Elton John getting plaudits from serious music critics, but the John Lewis review of the new album [*Uncut, March 2015*] is kinda weird. He went on quite a bit about the 1980s, but there was a whole decade in-between in which EJ released some strong

other singular acts of more than 40 years' profile, Elton John's felt it necessary to keep working at making great new albums – as if it's part of the job description. And, just like the aforementioned, the 21st century has truly been a golden age for his art.

**David Weber, North Fremantle, Western Australia**

## ONE RAINY WISH...

Hi. I'm really enjoying your *Ultimate Music Guides*, especially the deluxe remastered versions as I lost my early issues and these are an absolute godsend. I always look



singles and albums while continuing to play to sold-out houses. It was the 1990s, with its sometimes cathedral-level productions, which led to a pull back to a more organic, "time clock" approach. This was at least partially inspired by Ryan Adams, and has provided us with the considered, thoughtful, highly satisfying Elton John albums of the past 16 years.

Elton John could easily run around playing the hits – to the extent that he does, they're always bracketed (always have been) with fresh tunes. Like McCartney, Dylan, Van, Ferry, Eno, Cat/Yusuf, the late David Bowie and a few

forward to see who you're going to cover next. I've come up with about 30 other artists you might include in the future. Any chance of a Paul Simon issue? What about Hendrix? And if, and hopefully when, you print the REM deluxe remastered *Ultimate Music Guide*, can you please have the real band on the cover, not the three-legged-dog version? **Gary Cottier, via email**

## SOCK IT TO 'EM, JB!

Shame on you *Uncut* for such a meagre piece on the death of John Bradbury, in comparison to the obituaries of jazz musician Paul Bley and conductor Pierre Boulez [*Uncut, March 2016*]. I'm sure they were giants in their own right and



...One of three copies of Kevin Morby's *Singing Saw* on CD

have been championed as such in jazz and classical publications. You've a right to mention their deaths, but you have to realise (and have failed to state) the massive social and musical impact 2 Tone, and The Specials in particular, had on British youth culture between 1979 and 1981, of which Bradbury's drumming was central.

Gavin Alexander, via email

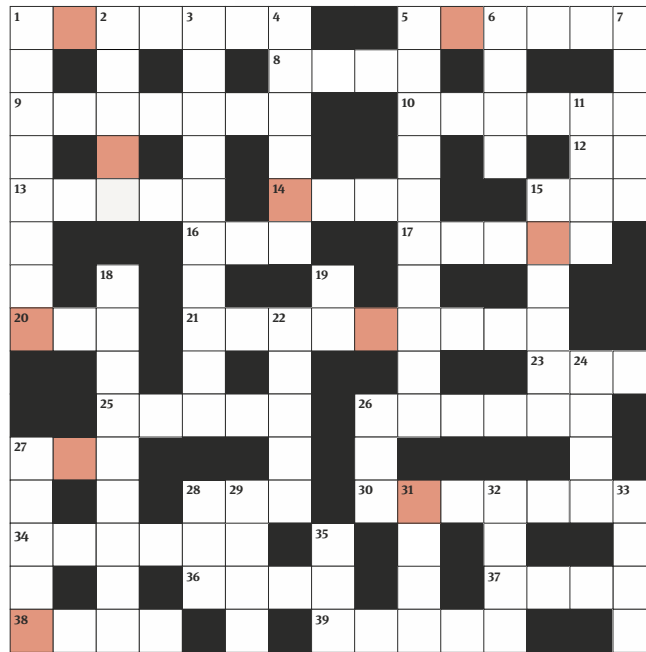
THE BOWIE AND LOU REED BACKLASH?

Not one album from a '50s pioneer like Chuck Berry, Little Richard or Buddy Holly [Uncut Top 200 Albums, February 2016]? Hendrix and the Stones' soulfest *Exile On Main Street* nudged out of the Top 10 by dilettante frauds like *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy Stardust*? The contractual filler of 'The White Album' at No 5? The sub-argue of *The Velvet Underground* at No 4?! This list should be titled, "The Favourite 200 Albums By Post-Boomer Music Journos Who Remember First Being Laid To Bowie And Getting To Interview Lou Reed," with "Greatest" left out entirely.

Stephen Conn, Las Cruces, New Mexico

...I imagined when you produced your Top 200 that it would provoke a response from readers upset at a particular favourite having been omitted, or due to the prominence given to some item not considered worthy. The problem of calling your chart "200 Greatest Albums Of All Time" is that you are consciously or unconsciously setting yourself up to fail. The collection of writers connected to your magazine are predominantly white, middle-class and British, as well as primarily coming from a rock perspective. This would be fine if the remit was a focused narrow objective, but not realistic under the banner you chose to run with. The project would be more valid, and accurate, if you had used the title: "200 Greatest Albums Which Are Primarily From The Rock Mainstream, Accepting A Handful Of Crossover Albums From Soul, Reggae And Jazz, Largely Ignoring Anything Not Recorded In The West Of The Planet, And Excluding Anything From The Classical World."

I accept this is not the snappiest of titles, and that you may have struggled to fit it on the front page. But it would have been accurate, and would have caused less angst to readers. Unless, of course, causing angst was your intention, in which case, forget everything I've said. Lionel Smith, via email



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by PJ Harvey. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* April 2016 Xword Comp, 8th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: **Monday, April 25, 2016**. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1+5D After you, Iggy, with the blues (4-3-10)
- 5 Credit different albums to Vangelis and Tower Of Power (6)
- 8 Came around with album by the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion (4)
- 9+30A It's not a pleasure doing business with Steely Dan (4-3-1-6)
- 10+14A "Is it tomorrow or just the end of time?", 1967 (6-4)
- 12+13A Routine changes made to Nirvana's music (2-5)
- 14 (See 10 across)
- 15 \_\_\_ Harvey, Stone The Crows guitarist (3)
- 16 Scottish duo \_\_\_ And Cry had 1987 hit with "Labour Of Love" (3)
- 17 He's so wrong about US powerpop act (5)
- 20 "Look for the girl with the \_\_\_ in her eyes and she's gone" (3)
- 21+7D English group who backed Jerry Lee Lewis on legendary *Live At The Star Club, Hamburg* album in 1964 (9-5)
- 23 They came *Straight Outta Compton* (1-1-1)
- 25 (See 1 down)
- 26 Stiltskin song can't be out-performed? (6)
- 27 HM band at the heart of Radiohead (3)
- 28 Their LPs include *Dazzle Ships* (3)
- 30 (See 9 across)
- 34 "Somystic and soulful", 1980 (6)
- 36 \_\_\_ Franklin, older sister of Aretha, she charted with "Piece Of My Heart" (4)
- 37 (See 6 down)
- 38 "Shiny tops and soda pops when I hear your \_\_\_ make a sound" (4)
- 39 US rapper getting into Bruce Channel lyrics (5)

CLUES DOWN

- 1+25A "I've been looking so long at these \_\_\_\_\_, that I almost believe that they're real.", 1990 (8-2-3)
- 2 Lightning Seeds album and title track performed with feeling (5)
- 3 Oh boy, an ELP remix sounding like Radiohead (5-5)
- 4+27D Valid EP they turned into an album for Van Morrison (3-3-5)
- 5 (See 1 across)
- 6+37A "Sympathy" for prog-rockers hardly ever found getting into a flap (4-4)
- 7 (See 21 across)
- 11 No really, Guns N' Roses second album was *G N' R \_\_\_* (4)
- 15 Bob Marley certainly made a name for himself after his death with this comp (6)
- 18 Genesis song for those who dig them excessively (2-3-4)
- 19+24D Sounding mildly disappointed with Fleetwood Mac (2-4)
- 22 Band fronted by Adrian Borland (5)
- 24 (See 19 down)
- 26+35D Confirmation of sex from both Bo Diddley and Spencer Davis (2-1-3)
- 27 (See 4 down)
- 28 A single from U2! (3)
- 29 "Me and \_\_\_\_\_, we met in high school when she was just 17...", from *The River* (4)
- 31 As used to hammer out their heavy metal sound for 10,000 Days (4)
- 32 "Due to lack of interest tomorrow is cancelled...", 2007 (4)
- 33 "My \_\_\_ D'arbenville, why do you sleep so still?" by Cat Stevens (4)
- 35 (See 26 down)

ANSWERS: TAKE 226

ACROSS

- 1 Bluenote Cafe, 7OK, 10Heart FullOfSoul, 11+15D NoOne Knows, 12High Hopes, 14+32A TinSoldier, 16Jam, 22MyHeart, 23Songs, 25Sir, 27Sebadoh,

DOWN

- 1 BehindTheMask, 2Up AroundTheBend, 3Nutter, 4Truth, 5Cal, 6+18AFifth Dimension, 8Kills, 9Doop, 13GetItOn, 17Mat, 19+16DMe

- 29 Rain, 30 Acid, 31 Red. And Mrs Jones, 24 Grace, 26+21A Ready Or Not, 28+20D In A Nutshell.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"The Bewlay Brothers"

XWORD COMPILED BY:

Trevor Hungerford

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## MY LIFE IN MUSIC

# Stuart Braithwaite

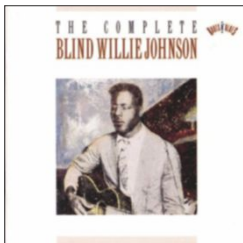
The Mogwai mainman's musical epiphanies. Gaelic psalm-singing in the skate park, anyone?



**My first exposure to art-rock**

**The Velvet Underground**  
**White Light/White Heat** 1968

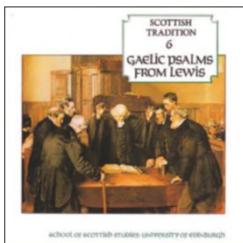
I heard this as a young teenager, and it was my first exposure to leftfield, wild, psychedelic art-rock. It blew my tiny mind. I've always been fascinated by it, especially the solo in "I Heard Her Call My Name". "Sister Ray" was one of the first long songs I heard. It's got a hypnotism to it. I didn't imagine they were white, I'd never seen a photo – but I'm sure they'd have taken that as a huge compliment, given what I know of Lou Reed.



**The artist who got me into blues**

**Blind Willie Johnson**  
**The Complete Blind Willie Johnson** 1993

I first heard Blind Willie Johnson on John Peel's show. I'd never heard a voice like that, so captivating and spiritual, deep and sincere. There's something about the early recordings; it's like a time machine, as you can never really imagine life back then, how unfair the world was. Before I got into Johnson, I just thought blues was a type of music where all the songs were the same.



**A Scottish spiritual discovery**

**Various Artists**  
**Scottish Tradition 6: Gaelic Psalms From Lewis** 1975

I'm not religious, but I'm drawn to church recordings. I was listening to this recording of Gaelic psalm-singing earlier at the skate park. It's wonderful. There is a connection between the Gaelic psalm-singing and the call and response of the American blues, which is pretty sinister, because it's probably the Scottish slave owners who influenced the songs of the African slaves.



**An album that showed me less is more**

**Nick Drake**  
**Pink Moon** 1972

I'd never heard anything like this: just Nick Drake, his acoustic and one line of piano, so minimal. There's something about it that showed me you don't have to bombard people with music to accomplish something better. It's really beautiful – sad, but oddly hopeful. I must have been in my mid-teens when I heard it. Definitely at the stage where I'd hear of a record then go find it for myself. I think I heard Robert Smith mention it.



**My ultimate gateway album**

**Spacemen 3**  
**Playing With Fire** 1989

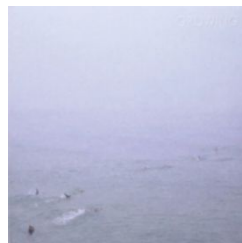
This stands on its own as an amazing piece, but I also found out about other bands through Spacemen 3's interviews. They celebrated the music they were influenced by, like Suicide and the 13th Floor Elevators. Nothing quite sounds like *Playing With Fire*, the Casio keyboard and other instruments they used. They reintroduced psychedelic noise, and that was a great period for me, with My Bloody Valentine, the Mary Chain and Loop.



**An album by a visionary**

**Joanna Newsom**  
**The Milk-Eyed Mender** 2004

This is an amazing record. Joanna Newsom is one of these people who have a talent that couldn't be replicated. She is a visionary songwriter with an exceptional voice. I love her other albums, as well, but when I think about music I think about the impact it has when you first hear someone. Even though some people may have made their best record years into making music, I remember the first time I heard them.



**An overlooked classic**

**Growing**  
**The Sky's Run Into The Sea** 2003

This debut is somewhere between early Earth and neo-classical. We've toured with them and they're so loud. It sounds like they make it up as they go along, but they know what they're doing. Their early stuff was all guitars and bass, with an insane amount of pedals. They moved to Brooklyn, became a trio and added more beats and electronic sounds. I find my favourite bands change so much, they never get as popular as they should do. It's like sabotage through creativity.



**One of my favourite debut albums**

**The Wu-Tang Clan**  
**Enter The Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)** 1993

This is one of the rawest, most creative LPs I've heard. It's truly lo-fi, recorded in a basement, with a bunch of talented people making great music. It is one of the best debuts of all time. The funny thing about the rest of the stuff is that the band albums aren't as great as some of the solo ones, which are amazing. They've been responsible for so many amazing solo records, obviously helped by the fact there are so many of them.

Mogwai's *Atomic* soundtrack is out on April 1 on Rock Action. Stuart Braithwaite's new band with Rachel Goswell, *Minor Victories*, release their debut LP through PIAS on June 3

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