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NEIL YOUNG

**ARCHIVES
1963-1972**

**THE MAKING
OF A LEGEND**

**206
REVIEWS**

THE BEATLES
Hell's Angels! Brass bands!
The madness of Apple

ARCADE FIRE
'We've got a ton
of new songs'

NICK CAVE
My brilliant career

PLUS
ROBERT WYATT
THE KILLERS
MAGAZINE
CLINT EASTWOOD
THE BEE GEES

FLEET FOXES
DAVID BYRNE
MORRISSEY
13TH FLOOR ELEVATORS
RON ASHETON RIP



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IN THIS ISSUE

DANNY KELLY



...is a music and sports journalist. Indeed a computer error saw him become British Magazine Editor Of The Year. He can be heard spouting tosh on *Talksport* every weekday eve between 7 and 10. Most of his time is taken up in a lengthy correspondence between himself and his erstwhile radio partner Danny Baker. The subject? Steely Dan vs Dubstep! For this issue, he reviews Morrissey's latest effort (page 84).

JOHN LEWIS



...was nine years old when Mrs Thatcher came to power. Two years earlier, at the height of punk, John was taken to the Grunwick picket line by his left-wing father. Lewis Senior will be spinning in his grave to see that his son spoke to a Tory MP as part of a feature on Thatcher and pop on page 50, but perhaps heartened to see him in conversation with cuddly Marxist pop maverick Robert Wyatt on page 12.

BARRY PLUMMER



...started to take photos of rock musicians in the late '60s. The Hollywood Festival in un-exotic Staffs, 1970, was just one of many festivals he attended (see Snapshot Special on page 70). The '70s was a busy time, taking shots of T.Rex, Slade and Elton John. In 1975 he started freelancing for *Melody Maker*, and added more famous names to his portfolio, including Bowie, McCartney, Page and Ferry.

THE EDITOR



In October 1977, I reviewed Neil Young's triple-LP retrospective, *Decade*, for what used to be *Melody Maker*. There was excited talk at the time about a follow-up, with more previously

unreleased material, a rumour that circulated feverishly, causing a lot of excitement among Neil fans before things went ominously quiet.

Nothing for a while was heard about what had by then been dubbed *Decade II* and the notion of another major retrospective somewhat receded. Then Neil, a couple of years later, started talking about something called *Archives*, a vast project by the sound of it, its content spread over multiple albums, a trove of unheard songs reaching back beyond the Springfield to material recorded with the first groups he was in, including The Squires, Neil's high school band of glimmering legend.

This would have been at the start of the '80s, and we've been waiting for it ever since – over half my adult life, in fact. There have along the way been tantalising hints of one sort or another that *Archives* would be with us sooner than later. Neil optimistically on occasion promising that, yeah, finally, it was on its way.

I have, though, lost count of the number of times such declarations have been made, raising excited expectations that have then been cruelly dashed. *Archives* over the years assuming a kind of fabled status, some distant misty grail, forever just out of reach, a teasing absence.

Over the last couple of years, *Archives* has continued to be mentioned as a continued work-in-progress, a variety of formats being investigated, Neil keen on all kinds of cutting-edge technologies and levels of interactivity. A 10-disc Blu-ray set was mentioned. By then, I'd have happily have settled for its release on eight-track fucking cartridge, flexi-disc, anything, just to put an end to the apparently endless saga.

And then, last December, *Archives*, to the stunned amazement of many toothless and bewhiskered veterans, appeared on Amazon's forthcoming release schedule. We even got hold of a track-listing for what would now be a 10-disc CD and DVD box-set and thus armed started tracking down as many of Neil's past-collaborators as we could for this month's cover story (starting p32), which we fearlessly predicted would coincide with its release.

Since when things, as they so often do in Neil's world, have changed again. The previously unreleased *Toast* was now apparently coming out instead of *Archives*. As I write, *Toast* may in fact be sidelined for an album of brand-new material called *Fork In The Road*, news that has got the internet forums all abuzz. What happens next is anyone's fucking guess. But who with Neil would have it otherwise?

Allan Jones

allan.jones@ipcmedia.com

FEEDBACK

Something on your mind? Email allan_jones@ipcmedia.com or write to us at: Uncut Feedback, 4th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU



MEETING THE MODFATHER

I'm a glass of red wine and one martini and a half into the evening and I just remembered that I promised myself I'd email you tonight. Your magazine is the best I've read in my life. The first edition I caught was one with Dylan on the cover - I gave it to this girl named Melinda, so I no longer have it. She was a bartender at La Pou Belle in Hollywood who I had no attraction to, but I thought there might be the possibility of free drinks - which became the case. The CD that accompanied that issue had a Ron Sexsmith track on it, "Teardrops In My Coffee". That introduced me to Sexsmith, and so it goes. Since then your magazine has turned me on to Midlake, The Felice Brothers, Bon Iver, Okkervil and Hank Thompson (I cover "Wild Side Of Life" at my shows and claim I wrote it in my sleep the night before). Thanks for reminding me there's still hope out there.

This past summer I was having drinks with a friend of mine at Barney's Beanery in Santa Monica. I was perched at the bar and as I gazed around at the crowd I spotted someone I took to be Paul Weller.

Surely this wasn't him? Weller is the Modfather, and why the fuck would royalty be in the fucking Beanery? Well, he walked by on his way for a smoke outside and I said, "Hey Paul." He said, "Yeah, mate," barely giving me the time of day.

I said, "I have a subscription to *Uncut* and I love Midlake, you too right?" He said, "Oh, yeah mate." And shook my hand and kind of rushed off. My friend felt like Paul was brushing me off and yelled some shit like, "My boy don't like too many people and he likes you, you should be happy." And Weller was cool about it and nodded. Not much of a point to the story other than because of *Uncut* I know who Weller is, and his taste in music.

TJ Brady, via email

You obviously got the ever-cheerful Weller on a good day. -Allan

WELLER: STILL DOING IT FOR THE KIDS

I just wanted to express my appreciation for your rather frequent inclusion of Paul Weller in your pages.

I'm an 18-year-old living in Western Canada, where there's absolutely nothing interesting when it comes to music, past or present (with the possible exception of DOA and The Pointed Sticks, but you know...) People here generally don't know of Weller's existence (except for British immigrants and the occasional fortysomething hipster) so it always gives me a flicker of hope when I see Paul's name on your cover.

I discovered The Jam through my all-time favourite band, The Clash, a couple years ago. I'll admit I don't

LETTER OF THE MONTH

WHY MUSIC WAS GREAT IN '08

Firstly let me do the obvious suck-up and relay the absolute delight and gratitude I feel every month when your fresh and delicious rag hits the shelves. I'm an Australian living nearby in Copenhagen, Denmark, who writes a weekly music column for the *Copenhagen Post*. All the local 7-11s here stock *Uncut*, which for me is a beautiful thing.

In 2008 *Uncut* put me on to some absolute crackers like Bon Iver (whom my girlfriend and I saw here a few months back, when they simply blew us away) and cats like Pete Dinklage, of course, 2008's darlings, Fleet Foxes. Honestly, at first listen of the Foxes' debut album, I immediately thought: "These young bastards have ripped off one of my favourite bands - My Morning Jacket!" But after reading your review I gave it another go and I was immediately hooked.

Anyways, thought the Review Of The Year booklet was spot on. Although I can't say I agree with Portishead sneaking in to top spot, I understand the patriotism involved there, and why not?

Besides, I only gave it a couple of spins so I can't really comment. After that my



Bon Iver: an "absolute cracker", apparently

Top 10 wasn't too far off, with The Felice Brothers (another one I can thank you cats for), TVOTR, Black Mountain and MMJ scoring big points. But I do feel Blitzen Trapper's album, *Furr*, was overlooked. It was a gem of an album and it probably snuck in to my top three. And the same goes for The Last Shadow Puppets and Okkervil River, who I reckon were both very unfortunate to miss the Top 50. All in all, 2008 was a great freakin'

year of solid and original albums. Shame The Kings Of Leon went all stadium and U2 on us, but you can't win them all.

Carl Coleman, via email

Couldn't agree with you more about what was great in 2008, especially Bon Iver, Fleet Foxes, Pete Dinklage, White Denim, TVOTR, Felice Brothers and Okkervil River. Didn't really get to grips with Blitzen Trapper, but there's a copy of *Furr* lurking on the shelf above my computer as I write this. Maybe it's time to take it down and give it another listen. -Allan

follow much of Paul's career after the first Style Council LP. I have *Hit Parade* and *22 Dreams*, the latter it took me ages to actually work up the nerve to buy.

I'll have to say *22 Dreams* isn't half as bad as I thought it was going to be. It's pretty brilliant apart from a couple vile tracks ("A Dream Reprise" could very well be the fucking "Mensforth Hill" of Paul's career, or even the "Play To Win"). It ranks amongst the worst songs ever.) All in all it's a bloody relief to see Paul's still doing albums with substance, and that he hasn't forgotten his Mod roots. I wish he'd do a Canadian tour so I could see how he manages these new songs live.

I'm proud of your extensive Weller coverage as well as your coverage of other previous-generation musicians, such as The Clash, Morrissey, Buzzcocks, Joy Division, The Who etc. I'm speaking for all those born at the wrong place in the wrong time - your balance between the old and new is perfect. I do hope you keep it up. Cheers!

Suzanne Hampton, via email

THE SOUNDS OF NORTH CAROLINA

I thoroughly enjoyed the year-end edition of *Uncut* and especially the bonus Review Of The Year guide. I was a

little disappointed, however, that my favourite album of the year, Railroad Earth's *Amen Corner*, failed to make the cut. It did, however, come in at 29 in the year-end listener poll at WNCW-FM, a public radio station in western North Carolina where I do some volunteer work. Give *Amen Corner* another listen and I think you'll find it is an incredibly warm album (a quality that the new Portishead lacks) with great original songs. I'm not a Deadhead, but the album reminds me of the more acoustic efforts of that band (*Working Man's Dead*, for instance), mixed with jazz and bluegrass.

The great state of North Carolina produced two stellar albums last year: The Rosebuds' (from Chapel Hill) album *Life Like* and The Annuals' (from Raleigh) debut album *Such Fun*. If you haven't heard them check out some of their songs on their MySpace pages.

Jeff Eason, Entertainment Editor, The Mountain Times, Boone, NC

MY BLOODY LOUD VALENTINE

I noticed that *Uncut* voted My Bloody Valentine at Camden's Roundhouse as the best gig of the year [*Uncut Review Of The Year, Jan*]. I agree it was

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unforgettable – but for more than one reason.

I have treasured *Loveless* since it was released all those years ago and so seeing them was like a dream come true. It didn't take long to realise that it was the loudest gig I've ever been to – but didn't give it much more thought because I was enraptured by the music. Until, that is, the last song when the volume got so loud it actually became painful. I ended up covering my ears with my hands and by the end of the 20-minute feedback finale of "You Made Me Realise" many people around me were doing likewise. But by then it was already too late. Unfortunately for me – and hundreds of others no doubt – I had no idea that the whole gig had been causing me hearing damage.

I made the mistake of believing that, in these health-and-safety-conscious times, the volume would not be allowed to exceed the level at which it could cause any damage. But when the days of ringing in my ears turned to weeks, I did a bit of research. I was stunned to discover that there is no law to protect the gig-goer from hearing damage at concerts – only venue staff.

The first thing I hear as I wake up in the morning, and when I close my eyes at night, is a noticeable high-pitched squeal in my ears. Rock 'n' roll? Not really. One of my favourite bands seems to have permanently damaged my hearing and it's something I may have to get used to for the rest of my life.

M Clarke, Leigh-On-Sea, Essex

I saw MBV at the Roundhouse, and it was at times terrifyingly loud. In fairness to the group, however, they did plaster the Roundhouse with posters warning of the excessive volume to come and ensured ear-plugs were freely available, without which things could have got painful in a hurry. – Allan

ALL WE NEED IS BEATLES, REISSUED

Now that we've all shelled out, over the years, for a fair amount of Beatles product in its various formats – and in the light of February's back-to-Beatle-mono article – maybe it's time for the surviving members of the band to sanction some really well-packaged re-releases.

Each album up to and including *Revolver*, in both mono and stereo mixes, would easily fit onto a single CD, with room for a couple of well-chosen rarities or b-sides, an essay each by Mark Lewisohn, and all the other bells-and-whistles that a Beatles reissue programme could expect to feature. Failing that, double deluxe editions with mono and stereo versions, singles, b-sides and rarities would do the legacy better justice than all that crap on the *Anthology* series. They were, after all, only bootleg-busters in the first place, and exposed the world to some truly awful clunk. "Real Love" anyone? No, thanks.

For the later albums, mono-only releases, with rarities and b-sides in mono and stereo, would fill the gap in the completist's market, and all this could extend the franchise well into the next decade. Add mono-only LPs for everything – including *Let It Be* and *Abbey Road* – and everyone wins.

Being expected to fork out 15 quid or so for a single Beatles CD, with minimal artwork and no extras is an insult, and will only encourage people to seek out those naughty download sites you can't tell us about.

Keith Rodway, Hastings

LIES, DAMNED LIES?

It's always nice to see someone sticking it to Dave Lee Travis (in the Captain Sensible Changes feature, *Uncut*, February), but I'm not entirely sure that's a picture of The Damned's farewell gig at the Rainbow above it. After all, it's not the only time that he's been starkers on stage – I've seen The Damned enough times to have been mentally scarred by the sight. He was still playing bass at the time (and commented on leaving the stage that he was never going to touch another one in his life as it was an instrument for idiots, or words to that effect), but he's holding a guitar in the photo. Mind you, I've seen them hand instruments to audience members and get them to play instead, so who knows?

Jim Steel, Glasgow

Well, it was the Captain who identified the picture and I'm sure he'd recognise his own arse anywhere. – Allan

POOR KWALITY KINKS...

I finally bought the long overdue Kinks six-CD boxset covering their whole career, only to discover that if Ray Davies has been involved in the project, he may not have been able to oversee it very closely.

The first three discs, fortunately, are devoted to the Pye period (1963-1971), but some weird choices have been made. I wonder why mono versions of songs from the excellent *Face To Face* and *Something Else* albums have been preferred to far superior stereo versions. But, most annoyingly, the unreleased demos on discs one and two sound so poor I wonder which source has been used: could it be they were not taken from the master tapes, but instead duplicated from German bootleg CDs available on the grey market for years?

Jean-Pierre Morisset, Blois, France

RUTLES: THE TRUTH BEHIND THE SPOOF?

Thanks for the high quality of the magazine of late. I especially liked the articles on Guy Clark, The Pogues and, especially, The Rutles. But when reading about them in the November issue, I was a little surprised there was no mention of Tony Palmer's TV series *All You Need Is Love*. If I recall correctly, that's not only where the name *All You Need Is Cash* comes from but also the very inspiration for The Rutles' mocking of the rock doc. Wasn't the seriousness of Palmer's series and the Beatles episode therein the real catalyst for Eric Idle and the others at Rutland Weekend Television?

Leif Wivatt, Kungsbacka, Sweden

Tony Palmer's unapologetically serious overview of pop music might well have inspired The Rutles piss-take, but I think Eric Idle might actually have taken the title for his wonderful spoof from the same not entirely unknown song by The Beatles. – Allan

LOOK LEFT, THEN READ THIS...

I was astonished by the striking similarity between David McComb – the late singer with The Triffids – and indie violinist Andrew Bird (*Reviews*, February). It brings to mind Reggie Perrin, who having disappeared off the south coast, returned to his wife's side pretending to be an Australian called Martin Wellbourne.

Can you print a picture of the two side by side?

Ken Sweeney, Dublin

LEN COHEN: STAND-UP OF LEGEND

I enjoyed the Leonard Cohen feature [*Uncut*, December 2008] including the sidebar of his stage patter. Here's another one, from the concert I attended at IMMA, Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin.

Fan: "Don't leave it another 20 years to come back!"

LC: "I don't have another 20 years."

Des Traynor, via email

It's the way he tells 'em, isn't it? – Allan



FIRST CUTS

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO UNCUT

Pure UNCUT

10 things to help you block out the numbing cold...

Never mind the Pollocks...

Here's **John Squire**, and the ex-Stone Roses guitarist's only art exhibition for 2009. The Heavy Metal Semantics collection of canvases and new sculptural pieces is on display in the Front Room at London's St Martin's Lane Hotel from January 29–February 17.

"Viddy well, my brothers"

Pour a glass of milk and ready yourself for the National Film Theatre's Stanley Kubrick season. All the films, plus docs, running from January 30. www.bfi.org.uk



The new rave on New Wave

Simon Reynolds' new book, **Totally Wired: Post Punk Interviews And Overviews** is published by Faber on February 5. Ari Up, Jah Wobble, David Byrne, Green Gartside and Edwyn Collins are among those interviewed.

Stand up, if you love Simon

Simon Amstell, the, ah, genial host of TV's *Never Mind The Buzzcocks*, takes up residence in London from February 2 for 11 nights, split between the Pleasance and Etcetera theatres. www.ents24.com

Back In Black, and white...

...and, presumably, colour, too. London's Proud Galleries host **AC/DC: Let There Be Rock**, an exhibition of early band photos from February 5. www.proud.co.uk

"That's Numberwang!"

OK, so maybe it's not "quite" *Peep Show*, but Series 3 of **That Mitchell And Webb** Look starts on BBC 2 on Thursday, February 12.

From Memphis to London

Blues Britannia airs on February 20 on BBC 4, charting the British love affair with Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker (left) and all from the 1950s through to the early 1970s.

And the winner is...

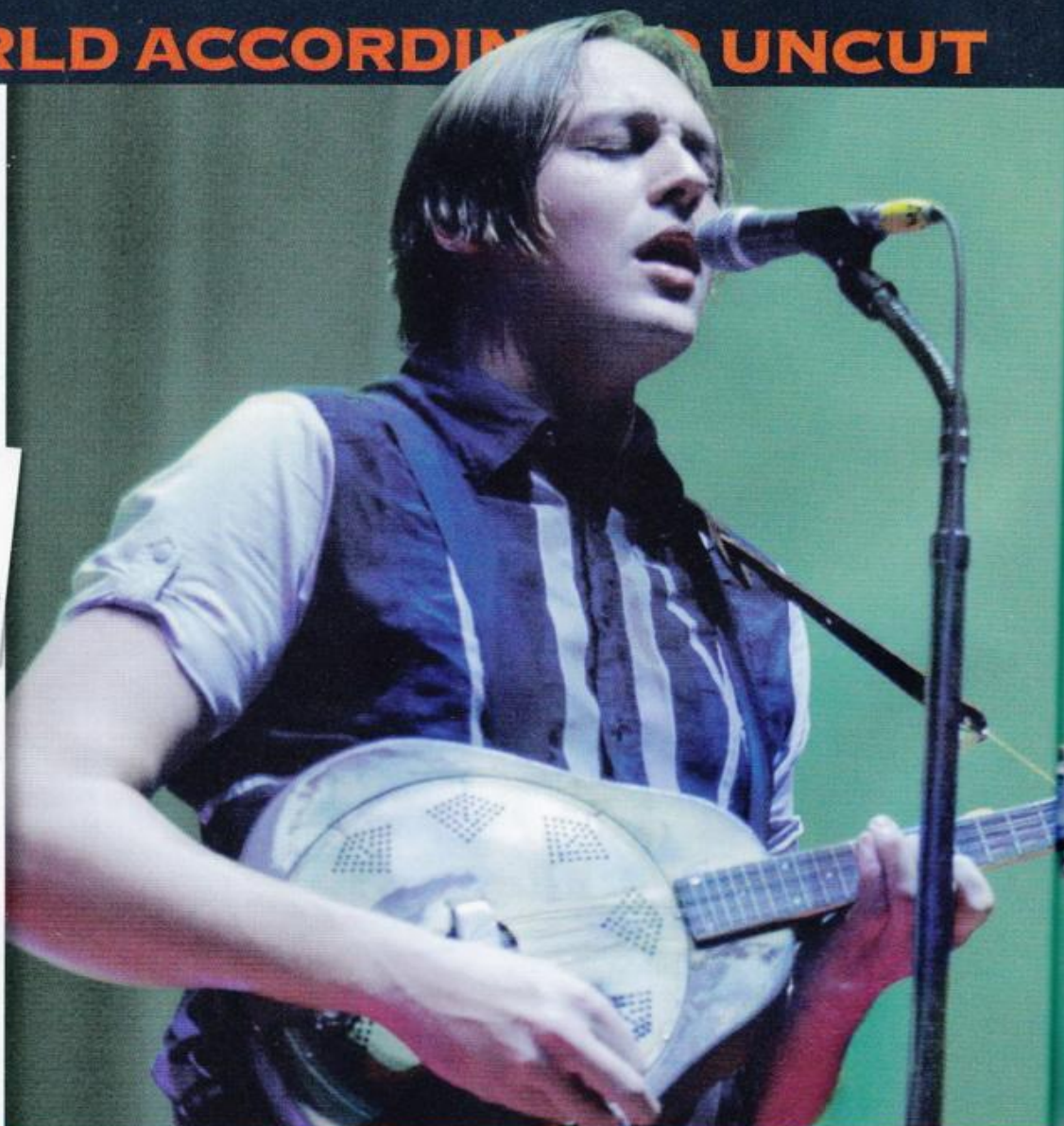
Stock up with popcorn on February 22 for the **81st Academy Awards**. Expect tears, posh frocks, more tears, even a Brit win or two.

Gig of the month!

Seattle's finest, and winners of the inaugural Uncut Music Award, **Fleet Foxes** set up camp for three nights at London's Roundhouse, on February 22, 23, 24. We'll see you there!

Lou Reed, the loo read

Great bog-side tome, this: Richie Unterberger's major new blog **White Light/White Heat: The Velvet Underground Day By Day** is published in the UK by Jawbone Press.



OPENING SHOT

What Win Butler saw

The ARCADE FIRE's frontman on his 'year off': a DVD, a soundtrack, Springsteen and Slipknot...

"We've got a ton of new songs," reveals Win Butler. "We're casually playing together, working on ideas. It reminds me of when we recorded our first album [2004's *Funeral*]. We couldn't really afford to make records, so we'd go in at weekends, whenever there was free time in the studio, and work on songs, and play some shows to raise some money to do a little more. It feels like we're in that frame this time. We've got a studio, and I've got a tape machine in my house. But the idea of banging out a record is pretty far from all of our minds."

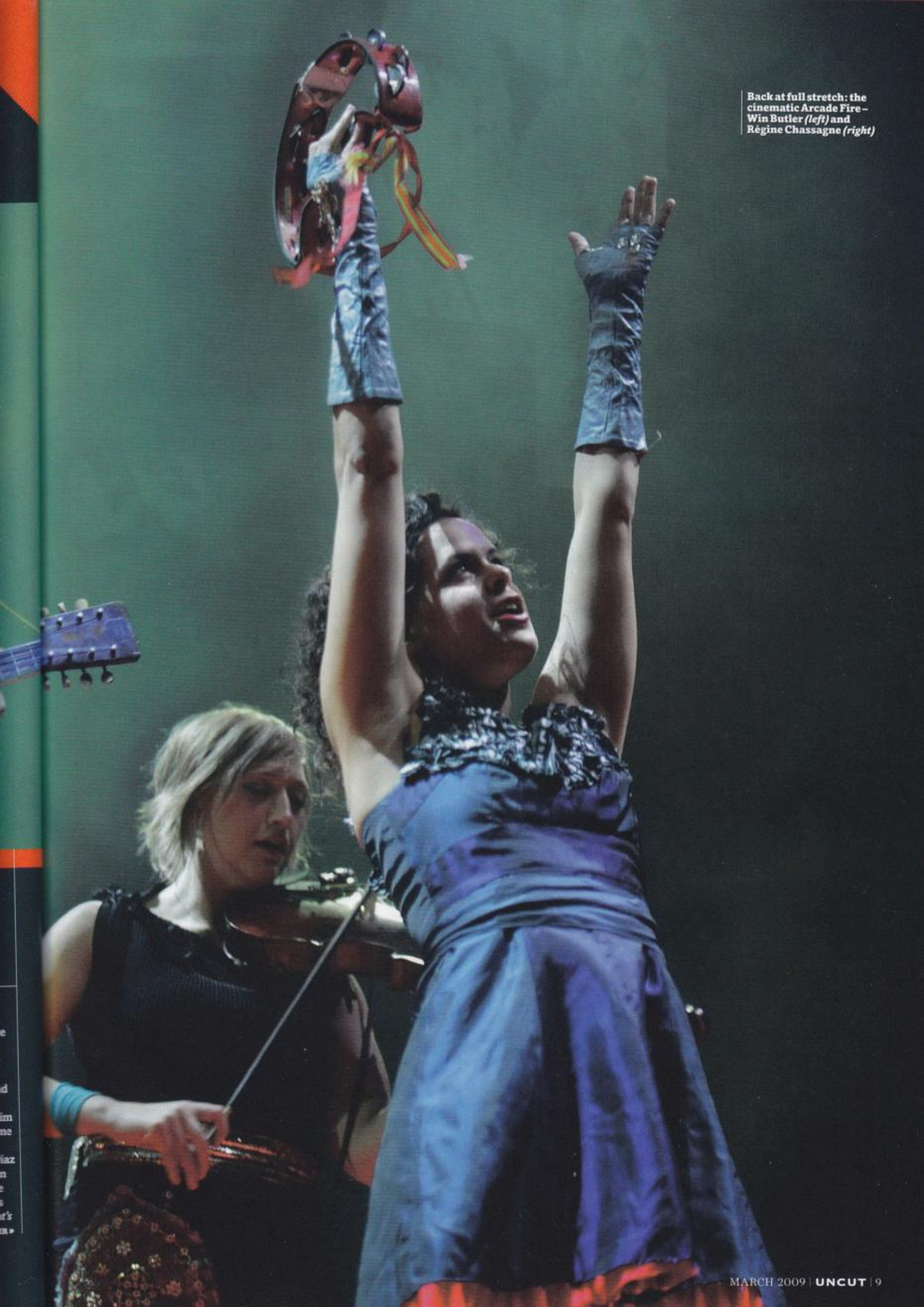
The last time *Uncut* caught up with Butler—in late 2007—he was wrestling with fatigue as the gruelling, year-long campaign in support of *Neon Bible* drew to a close. Then, he talked fondly of retreating to the splendid isolation of his Montreal home during the snow-bound winter months. All that was over a year ago, and Butler, it seems, has been a lot busier than he first planned.

For a start, he's been working with wife Régine Chassagne and *Final Fantasy*'s Owen Pallett (Arcade Fire's string arranger) on the soundtrack of *The Box*, the new film from *Donnie Darko* director Richard Kelly. "I always thought that their music was inherently cinematic," says Kelly. "I felt that they could be magnificent film composers, if the timing was right and I could somehow get them interested. I met Win at the Hollywood Bowl in the summer of 2007. So I handed him a script for *The Box*... and about a week later he called me back. They were intrigued and interested."

Due for release in autumn, *The Box* stars Cameron Diaz and James Marsden as a married couple who are given an old wooden box with a button on it; if they press the button they receive a large sum of money. The catch is someone they don't know will then die. [A bit like *Uncut*'s monthly \$500 question, then?—see p20.] CONTINUES OVER ►



Back at full stretch: the cinematic Arcade Fire—Win Butler (*left*) and Régine Chassagne (*right*)





"Anything we come up with together as a band is so much better than anything we could do on our own"

"Writing a film score was something Régine and I were interested in," explains Butler. "It's based on a *Twilight Zone* episode, and Richard wanted a Hitchcock vibe. So we got a Mellotron. We liked the idea of doing a project that is someone else's thing, as an experiment to see if we could even do it. It's very orchestral."

"It's more Nino Rota than *Neon Bible*," continues Pallett. "The movie is set in the '70s, so the Mellotron was a good starting point. In Hollywood, every decade has a sound. We put a great deal of effort into making this recording sound like an old-school Hollywood suspense movie."

Not content with working on the new Arcade Fire album and *The Box*, Butler also found time to play his first solo gig. His band are longterm supporters of Partners In Health, a charity dedicated to improving healthcare for the poor in Haiti, Chassagne's native country. Just before Christmas 2008, Butler appeared at a benefit gig in LA.

"Régine was feeling really sick, and that was the first two days we've spent apart since we met," he says. "It was also the first time ever in my life I've played by myself, just an acoustic guitar. I've never been interested in being a solo artist. In high school, there was no point where the idea of not having a band to play with me appealed to me in the slightest. What's exciting to me about our band is what we're able to come up with together is so much better than what any one of us could do on our own. I'm constantly aware of that—there's so many minds working on it, thinking about it and caring about it..."

Meanwhile, Butler has been involved in putting the finishing touches to the band's first full-length DVD, *Miroir Noir*. It ostensibly covers the arc of the band's *Neon Bible* campaign, but is thankfully much more than a meat-and-two-veg tour doc. Directed by Vincent Morisset, an old college friend of Chassagne, it's full of visual flourishes, mixing footage of the band recording the album in the converted church they own in Farnham, Quebec with live performances and allusive imagery that calls to mind *Lost Highway*-era David Lynch.

"I find live DVDs pretty boring," admits Butler. "Even the really great ones, like *Stop Making Sense*, are 45 minutes too long. My favourite part of every Stones documentary is the part where I get to see where the microphone is placed, because I'm a nerd in that way. Ours is probably not the most accessible film."

What *Miroir Noir* certainly captures successfully is the righteous cacophony of the Arcade Fire's live shows. Armed only with two hand-held cameras, Morisset and cameraman Vincent Moon throw themselves into the fray onstage, dodging the odd violin bow and flying drum. We also see the band busking through the crowd.

"Vincent Moon came to a show in Paris," recalls Butler. "At the end, we were playing 'In The Backseat', and we went through the crowd and outside onto the streets of Paris and kept going. Maybe only two people followed us. We walked down this long alley, and at the end there was this family eating dinner in a big picture window. It wasn't a planned thing. We just circled round this family's window while they're eating, they're like falafel guys."

They had all these plans, to go to some exotic place and have us play. It didn't happen. So we played in the elevator instead."

One of the most intriguing elements heard throughout the film are the "thousands" of messages left on the answering service the band set up prior to *Neon Bible*'s release.

"We didn't know what to expect," he laughs. "It was a serious expense! About six months into it, they were

like, 'You know, guys, we're paying about 1,500 bucks a month in phone bills...' 'What? Just from people leaving messages, because you pay the charge on 800 numbers.'"

Some of the messages get pretty intense. One caller even goes as far as to claim "Your product gave me my life back." How does Butler respond to things like that?

"It doesn't really seem that real, it's not necessarily about us as people. What would be weird was if it was like some celebrity connection. But it doesn't really feel creepy in that way. To be honest, I don't spend a lot of every day thinking about how the music makes people feel. But it's interesting to have a window on it. I've felt that way about music before myself. I was never the type to be in a fan club, or be a superfan, but there's definitely times in your life when music is very important."

Which bands did you feel like that about?

"I went to boarding school for the end of high school and it was pretty lonely being away from home for the first time. And that was when I got into The Cure and New Order and stuff like that. But also Radiohead and Björk. They were the two artists making records at the time when I was the most open. I listened to *Disintegration* by The Cure so much that hearing it made me chuckle instead of feel depressed, and I remember thinking: 'OK, I've listened to this a lot!'"

From listening to your heroes, to meeting them; success has ensured the Arcade Fire can now move freely in such circles themselves.

"We went to the Grammys for the first time," recalls Butler. "It was so shitty. You go to this venue, like a conference centre, at about 10am, and it's totally dry—no food, water, alcohol. Then it's two in the afternoon and we haven't eaten. Right before us was the award for Heavy Metal album. And the winner of the award that year was Slipknot. So you hear this roar behind us—'Raaarrgghh!'—15 guys going crazy. It takes them 10 minutes to get to the stage, they're all wearing the full regalia, the masks and everything. So their voices are all muffled, and the one guy accepts his award and he's like 'Gragrrh ggrhrrrrrrgghhmm', and another one is sobbing into his mask. Then they shuffle you over to the main event. No-one's eaten all day, by now it's three in the afternoon and there's people in tuxedos in the hotdog line offering \$100 for a hotdog. A total crush of humanity, trying to get hotdogs..."

"But the most positive part of all that was that, at one of the after-parties, we met Bruce Springsteen. He was really lovely. We talked to him about being married and being in a band and kids. When he was leaving, he came up to us to say goodbye and remembered our names. So in this fake, LA bullshit thing, it was a really nice moment. Then he invited us to play with him!"

MICHAEL BONNER
Miroir Noir is available to download from www.miroir-noir.com; the DVD is released on January 31

THE OFFICE STEREO

The Uncut Playlist

Bruce! Neil! Dudes with beards in sheds! Just another month on the office stereo...

1 | BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Working On A Dream COLUMBIA

He's on something of a hot streak at the moment. The Boss' swift follow-up to *Magick* takes "Girls In Their Summer Clothes" as its cue for a set of optimistic, frequently Beach Boys-indebted pop.

2 | BILL CALLAHAN

Sometimes I Wish We Were An Eagle

DRAG CITY

The Artist Formerly Known As Smog's lucky 13th album, planting his ancient, rueful baritone amid lush arrangements that belie his lo-fi roots. Much funnier than his reputation suggests, too.

3 | NEIL YOUNG

Fork In The Road

WWW.NEILYOUNG.COM

Has Neil been distracted from *Archives* yet again? First he plays 10 largely car-related new songs on his last US tour. Now this rollicking, "Roadrunner"-ish chug turns up on his website. Awesome video.



4 | BONIVER

Blood Bank JAGJAGUWAR

The romance of giving blood, a piano from Steve Reich and a vocoder on loan from Kanye West, more woods and more snow: this voluptuous new EP proves *For Emma*... was no fluke.

5 | NEKO CASE

Middle Cyclone ANTI-

The gale force-voiced siren of Americana returns, this time mixing covers of Nilsson and, weirdly, Sparks, alongside her own elegant compositions.

6 | PEARL JAM

Ten EPIC

Hey I, oh, they're still alive... An 18th anniversary reissue of the grunge archetypes' debut, complete with, on CD2, an entirely new remix of the album.

7 | ARBOURETUM

Song Of The Pearl THRILL JOCKEY

The tectonic thump of Crazy Horse, the spidery melodic sensibility of Richard Thompson, the gusto of Bob Mould, a Dylan cover... Works for us!

8 | OUMOU SANGARE

Seya WORLD CIRCUIT

First album in six years from a woman who isn't just one of Africa's greatest singers, but is also one of Mali's pre-eminent importers of 4x4 vehicles...

9 | JOSHUA BURKETT

Where's My Hat? TIME-LAG

A minor glut of out-there folk this month. But alongside newish ones by Voice Of The Seven Woods and Ilyas Ahmed, this spooked offering from the wilds of New England is our favourite.

10 | BAT FOR LASHES

Two Suns ECHO/PARLOPHONE

Natasha Khan's second somewhat theatrical album, notable for guest slots from Yeasayer and, amazingly, Scott Walker. Was Antony unavailable?

For daily album previews, drop in on the Wild Mercury Sound blog at www.uncut.co.uk

AN AUDIENCE WITH...

ROBERT WYATT

The multi-talented former Soft Machinist answers back about war, whisky, Red Wedge and 'Wyatting'. Interview by John Lewis

Robert Wyatt is sitting in the front room of his townhouse in Louth, Lincolnshire. He's slightly exhausted after having some of his grandchildren over for Christmas. "What kind of granddad am I?" he ponders. "Well, I can be jumped on and forced to do anything. I just sort of sit there and I hope to accumulate gravitas by not showing resistance." But the 64-year-old is certainly not entering his dotage; instead he's enjoying what he describes as "an Indian summer of work". In the past 18 months he's collaborated with Billy Bragg, Hot Chip, Mike Skinner, David

Gilmour, French pop god Bertrand Burgalat, Brazilian singer Monica Vasconcelos, German electronica maverick Barbara Morgenstern, David Byrne/Brian Eno and his old Soft Machine sidekick Kevin Ayers (the last two virtual collaborations in cyberspace). Oh, he's also released the acclaimed *Comicoopera*, and found time to oversee the re-release of almost his entire back-catalogue on Domino. "Still, it all feels so silly being an artist when the Israeli army are sending tanks into Gaza," he says, in a rare moment of glumness. "It seems such a whimsical occupation. What did you do in the war, daddy? Oh, I expressed my deep melancholy. Yeah, right. Fuck off!"

STAR QUESTION



You covered the Chic song, "At Last I Am Free". How did you come across that?
Paul Weller

In the late '70s, the only radio station I listened to, apart from Radio Moscow, was Radio London, because they used to play a lot of black dance music, and I was just staggered by how good it was. Most people who listen to dance music do so communally, on a dancefloor, but I was listening on my own, in isolation, on headphones. There was much beauty in that stuff, even the ballads like "At Last I Am Free", which some people regarded as album fillers. Sometimes the production on those disco tracks was so polished that you can miss that it was actually a very human music with a lot of frailty. So my version of Chic is a bit like, say, Cilla Black doing Bacharach – it's done in a much more gauche way, but it brings out something else in the tune.

You always seem to have a cigarette on the go. How has it affected your voice?
Garry, Manchester

Oh yeah, they've probably knocked out about half an octave from my top range. But I'm quite happy now singing at the lower end. It's nice down there. The weird thing is that, although people say I've got a high voice, it's never actually been that high-pitched. Technically, I'm a baritone [starts playing a middle C on the piano and sings along]. I can get to about a fifth above middle C. But it's a light voice. It's a bit like Gerry Mulligan, he plays the baritone sax so lightly that you don't notice how deep the notes are. Same with Lester Young on the tenor – people think he's playing alto. It's very deceptive.

You were at the launch of Red Wedge in 1985, which surprised a lot of people. Why?
Sam, Swansea

I thought the people involved were really nice. Billy Bragg, Paul Weller, Jerry Dammers, Jimmy Somerville – I like them all very much and I wanted to express solidarity with them. Billy is a practical person. He deals with what can be done in the real world with the real House of Lords, and so on.

STAR QUESTION



I often recall something we would from time to time discuss over cups of tea in our happy little Dulwich home that, in our dreams of when pop success might come our way, we would all buy houses in warm and sunny spots abroad. I was the only one to do this. I wonder why?
Kevin Ayers

Kevin was born in Malaya and spent his childhood swimming in idyllic rock pools, so I can understand that he wanted to move somewhere hot and Mediterranean. I never did. Alfie [Benge, Wyatt's wife] would quite like to move to Spain, but I'm never really aware of my surroundings. I'm quite happy here. It's not that I'm particularly proud of being English, although I'd happily counteract any idiotic BNP notion of Englishness with a list of things that I love that just happen to be English, be it our love of nature or Winnie The Pooh or The Beatles or The Unthank Sisters or TV comedies like *The IT Crowd*. But geography really isn't that important to me.

Politically, I'm somewhere else, in some strange dreamland. But, occasionally, I live in the real world, too, and I also want to make things better. My involvement was counterproductive, of course. I think it was *The Sun* who discredited Red Wedge, saying, "It pretends to be a reasonable, democratic organisation, but it's supported by that communist Robert Wyatt..." So, sorry lads! I'll get back to Twickenham and twiddle my knobs...

When was the last time music made you cry?
Bertrand Burgalat

The tenor sax solo on "Stolen Moments" by Oliver Nelson had me hot behind the eyes when I heard it the other day. It's such an angelic and singing thing. Actually, Bertrand's music gets me a bit teary sometimes. He contacted Alfie to write some lyrics for him, which was great. Then I ended up singing on one of his tracks. Bertrand is a real one-off. It's not an English phenomenon, the Serge Gainsbourg-style writer, producer, auteur, but he's brilliant at it.

What's your favourite Dionne Warwick song?
Evan Parker

People will be surprised that Evan, a great, avant-garde saxophonist, is also a big Dionne Warwick fan, someone who filled in some of the gaps in my Bacharach collection. But the thing about musicians is that they're not corralled into ideological ghettos the way their fans are. "You'll Never Get To Heaven (If You Break My Heart)" comes to mind [starts singing the entire chorus]. It's an absolute knockout, a real bossa nova thing, but with wonderful harmonies. There aren't many songwriters who match up to the great days of Cole Porter and Gershwin and so on, but Bacharach does.

There was a rumour that you were working with Mike Skinner – is that happening?
Jamaal, New York

We did record some stuff, but I don't think it was finished in time to go on his album. He came up to Lincolnshire, just him and his box of tricks. We went into the studio where I recorded *Dondestan* and other things, and sang on a track he'd written, which was really good. I met him when we were both shortlisted for the Mercurys – along with Franz Ferdinand, Amy Winehouse, that nice English blues singer

CONTINUES OVER ►



“I maintain that the greatest crime committed by America – with the possible exception of the carpet-bombing of Laos – was the Disneyfication of Winnie The Pooh”



With Billy Bragg at the Red Wedge launch, 1985



With Loudon Wainwright III circa '74, and (inset above) with Brian Eno and Jools Holland at the Mercury Music Prize awards, September 2004



Joss Stone and The Croutons, or whatever they're called. They're all very good, but I thought he should win, as he'd already reached a mature, innovative musical identity. Even the way he speaks on record betrays a wonderful sense of musicality.

What was your tippie of choice when you were a drinker?

Simon, Nottingham

Towards the end of my drinking career, I'd moved on from vodka and whisky. I think, stuck on my own, with nothing to live for, my desert island barrel would be very, very good whisky. But, about a year-and-a-half ago, I was advised to go to AA meetings, which I did. In terms of ticking the boxes, I'd definitely become an alcoholic, which means that when you start drinking you can't stop. I went for months and months of meetings, and I've completely stopped now. I do miss it, but I also apologise profusely if I have behaved appallingly to anyone over the last 50 years when I was drunk.

What do you love about Winnie The Pooh?

Pierre, Bournemouth

I maintain that the greatest crime committed by America – with the

possible exception of the carpet-bombing of Laos – was the Disneyfication of Winnie The Pooh. But the characters in those original books are wonderful. I relate to Pooh, the way you can almost hear his brain struggling, the pleasure he gets from articulating such simple thoughts. Then there's Eeyore, who is such a splendidly depressive figure, the kind of person Hollywood would never create. Most of all, I like the sly dig at people who profess to be wise in the form of Owl, or "Wol", as he spells it. I think that anybody, whenever they look at a silly judge or priest or mullah or rabbi or politician, or any stupid bearded git who gives himself gravitas – including myself! – should remember that there's a bit of Wol there.

British rock'n'roll drummers – Charlie Watts, Keith Moon, Mitch Mitchell, Ginger Baker, yourself – were always frustrated jazz drummers. Discuss.

Charley, Dundee

Well, I'm not sure. I don't think they need or should go together. I think that rock musicians tend to make clunky and old-fashioned jazz drummers, and jazz drummers tend to make rather

effete and precious rock drummers. I don't think they're that good at each other's jobs, on the whole. Ringo Starr was happy doing whatever he was happy doing, and was all the better for it. However, Ginger Baker was a jazz drummer who crossed over: I saw him play with the Graham Bond Organisation, featuring Dick Heckstall-Smith, and it was an absolutely phenomenal band. Same with Mitch Mitchell: I'm a bit biased because we were quite close friends, but he sailed perfectly from playing in Georgie Fame-style jazz bands to heavy rock with Hendrix. But with, say, John Bonham and Alan White – I don't hear much jazz in either of them but, gosh, you don't get too many better rock drummers than either of them.

What was Ivor Cutler like?

Karen, Tooting, London

I'd known him for some time – we'd often get solo artists to support us at Soft Machine gigs, so it would be Loudon Wainwright or John Williams or Ivor. We became great friends. He used to visit us, almost weekly, when we lived in Twickenham, as he used to visit Kew Gardens with his mate, Phyllis, and they used to stop off at our place for sandwiches and cups of tea and listen to Bulgarian folk music, then off they'd go. He was wonderful company, funny, clever, very entertaining. He did me a big favour by singing on *Rock Bottom*, as he never usually sings other people's words. The song he sang required a kind of Scots Jamaican accent, which only he could do. He was very polite about it. He only left out one syllable.

How do you feel about inspiring the concept of "Wyatting" – where pranksters hijack pub jukeboxes and play "difficult" records to baffled patrons?

Richard, Crosby, Merseyside

STAR QUESTION



What approach were you taking to music-making while making *Old Rottenhat* and the "Work In Progress" EP?

Alexis Taylor, Hot Chip

By that time, towards the mid-'80s, I was listening to Radio Moscow and going to Kurdish and Palestinian Liberation meetings. I was unsure if other musicians would go along with where I'd got to, politically and didn't want to embarrass them into playing tunes where they disapproved of the lyrics. We were short of funds and I was trying to do things almost entirely on my own. There may have been a bit of paraplegic politics in it, in honesty, to see what I could do unaided. So the music was simple, reduced to bare bones, and ideas and lyrics were distilled to their essence.

I wouldn't do it. I've never tried to get myself heard where I'm not wanted. I just make records for the kind of people who like the kind of records I make. It's as simple as that. I've never had any need to reach beyond that or to make people listen to me or to expand my audience. There's plenty of music for everybody. If I was in a pub I'd put on a Girls Aloud record, or whatever anyone else wanted to hear. The last time I put stuff on a jukebox, I put on some Ray Charles. I wouldn't have thought that was offensive to anybody! ☺

STAR QUESTION



Which jazz musician influenced you the most?

Phil Manzanera, Roxy Music

Melodically, it's Miles Davis. Whenever I'm writing a tune or improvising, I think, "Would Miles think that's a stupid note?" And if he would, I won't use it. That's the Miles in my head, of course, a tiny figure compared to the giant in real life. I also love Charlie Mingus' drummer, Dannie Richmond. But Jimmy Cobb is my biggest influence as a drummer. He plays on *Kind Of Blue*, and his style is essential to why that LP achieves lift-off. He formed a way of playing ride cymbals with the Count Basie band that was very even, no fucking around, just 1, 2, 3, 4. He'll put in the odd Roy Haynes-style crack or wallop, but his skill was, as Philly Joe Jones said, about "appreciating the length of the note you're playing". That sounds odd for a drummer to say, but it's very profound.

UNCUT.CO.UK

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



MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Fleet Foxes

From videogames to Renaissance fayres,
Robin Pecknold "just digs swords and sorcery"...

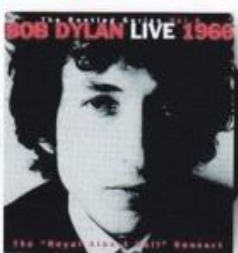
THE SOUNDTRACK OF MY CHILDHOOD

CHRONO TRIGGER OST
1995

Yasunori Mitsuda

The soundtrack to my favourite Super Nintendo Japanese role-playing game. I would leave the game running all night listening to the music of, say, Zeal Palace or Millennial Fair. Sometimes I feel like the only music I really love sounds similar to this. For a pasty-faced 11-year-old, locked in on summer days with allergies, I would just retreat into my imagination and this game.

THE REASON I PICKED UP A GUITAR

LIVE 1966: THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL CONCERT
1998

Bob Dylan

My most listened-to album by my first musical love, who offers untold treasures to those who know. I think these are really the definitive versions of the songs. I listen to this album and imagine him alone in the spotlight, dust all around... Dylan is the reason I ever picked up a guitar. I wish someday to meet the man and then die immediately, fulfilled.

THE RECORD THAT MADE ME LOVE FREAK FOLK

THE CHRIST TREE 1975
The Trees Community

An album made in the 1970s that's a weird journey into something I can't really relate to—a travelling Christian commune. I think it's an amazing, genuinely bizarre album, which isn't too common. It is not over-the-counter weird, it's RX-strength weird. I'm not Christian, but I've always loved the obvious devotion and desperation inherent in older Christian music.

THE ONE THAT REMINDS ME OF FALLING IN LOVE

JUDEE SILL 1971
Judée Sill

My favourite, most beloved singer-songwriter of the '70s. Judée Sill is a true original. Both her albums are equally wonderful, but this one is dearest to me: the plainness of her voice with the crazy complicated arrangements and chord progressions, plus the searching, pagan Christian lyrics. This will always remind me of the Christmas I met my girl. I listened to it constantly.

THE ONE THAT REMINDS ME OF MY OLD JOB

TA DET LUGNT 2004
Dungen

I think Dungen are the best band in the world. I would leave this record on loop at my line cook job until none of my co-workers could stand it any longer. The thing that draws me is the transportative quality of the music—the long instrumental passages, the insane guitar sounds, the sort of funhouse-mirror piano parts. A little *Lord Of The Rings*, perhaps, but I'm an apologist for all that...

THE RECORD THAT MADE ME AN ANGLOPHILE

HARK! THE VILLAGE WAIT
1970

Steeleye Span

Of those bands like Trees or Fairport Convention, these guys hit me hardest. The production gives the songs room to breathe and work weird magic. I've never been to a renaissance fayre but I can't get enough of this. I could make some ethnomusicology argument that British folk ballads are the roots of the blues and thus western rock, but I probably just dig swords and sorcery.

THE RECORD THAT FREED MY MIND

IF I COULD ONLY REMEMBER MY NAME
1971

David Crosby

This evokes a very strange, woozy paranoia... Half the songs mostly consist of David's multi-tracked howling. This is another record I would play constantly at work, one of those albums that sets your mind free to wander no matter where you are. Definitely an influence on the first Fleet Foxes album. And maybe beyond. We'll see!

THE RECORD THAT TAUGHT ME AUTHENTICITY

ROOM ON FIRE 2003
The Strokes

Of all the bands that were supposed to bring 'indie' to the mainstream, The Strokes were the only ones who did it with class. They sold a trillion records that sound like they were recorded with tin cans in a cardboard box and that's special in its way. When everyone else was trying to put a leather jacket on a Céline Dion song and call it authentic, these guys were the real deal.

THE RECORD THAT RESTORES MY FAITH

PERSON PITCH 2007
Panda Bear

'New music' gets a bad rap in some circles, but I think now is just as exciting a time for new music and bands as any. I haven't always felt this way and I think Panda Bear and his other band [Animal Collective] have had a lot to do with changing things. "Ponytail" is heartbreaking and beautiful, and the song we play right before going on stage. How cool is it that records like this are being made in this day and age?

THE RECORD THAT WILL LAST ME FOREVER

YS 2006
Joanna Newsom

If I had to listen to only one album for the rest of my life, I would choose this. It's like a gem to keep in your pocket, beautiful and singular. "Emily," in particular, is just a masterpiece. I love the familiar devotion and searching qualities in the music. I wasn't a believer until this drive I took to have lunch with my grandmother. I listened to it maybe four times on that drive and emerged a total Newsomite.

WELCOME TO UNCUT

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM

The New Jersey shoreline sound, re-upholstered for 2009

"That," laughs Brian Fallon, "is the one thing we spend most time wondering about." He has just been asked the obvious question: how have The Gaslight Anthem come so far so fast? As recently as 2005, The Gaslight Anthem were an idea nurtured by Fallon, guitarist Alex Rosamilia, bassplayer Alex Levine and drummer Benny Horowitz, all veterans of also-ran New Jersey bands, and holders of even less promising jobs; their collective CV includes construction, petrol station attendance, shoe retail and pizza preparation.

Less than four years later, they have their name on two fine albums, a scrapbook full of delirious reviews, tens of thousands of tour miles logged and, it is reputed, the approval of their most obvious, and most proximate, inspiration. "Springsteen is kind of impossible to escape," acknowledges Fallon. "I was born in that Jersey shore area, and he's like Elvis for us. But there are good reasons. This is what your band should aspire to. I know I'm never gonna get away from it, but I don't want to."

The Gaslight Anthem—who you can hear on this month's free CD—are unabashed about what fuels their punkish R'n'B. The title and black-and-white sleeve of current release *The '59 Sound* are deliberately evocative of Sam Cooke and Otis Redding. "Even Cowgirls Get The Blues", a characteristic essay in nostalgia for an age these twentysomethings never knew, has a narrator protesting that he "still loves Tom Petty songs". The rueful elegy "High Lonesome" gets lost for its own words near the climax and admits, "At night I wake up with the sheets soaking wet... it's a pretty good song, maybe you know the rest."

The album also contains echoes of Elvis Costello, Counting Crows and The Only Ones but, ultimately is very much a postcard of where it is from. "New Jersey has a weird pull," decides Fallon. "I don't know why. The state kinda feels like it's in a struggle, which is maybe why this just seemed like the only thing to do. We know what's waiting for us at home." **ANDREW MUELLER**



I LOVE THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM BECAUSE...



"There's something about the sincerity, urgency and melodicism that reminds me of both Springsteen and The Jam"
Nick Hornby

They're on fire: The Gaslight Anthem (l-r) Alex Levine, Benny Horowitz, Alex Rosamilia and Brian Fallon

Watch the birdie: the great Dane's music soars with confidence

PETER BRODERICK

Copenhagen's one-man Fleet Foxes!

"I find it hard to believe how a 21-year-old has such an incredible grasp on how to manage emotion inside a five-minute song," says Simon Raymonde of one of his latest Bella Union signings, Peter Broderick. And it's equally hard to imagine, listening to the ornate and confident blend of classical, pop and folk that is his solo debut, *Home*, that Broderick originally conceived the album as something of a formal experiment. In high school in Oregon, Broderick "became obsessed with trying to collect as many instruments as I could, and trying to learn to play them all. My collection is massive." But for *Home*, he set himself the challenge of writing an album without using either strings or piano. "I forced myself to fill up those spaces with other things—pump organ, glockenspiel, vibraphone, lap steel, musical saw, home-made clay whistle—

but primarily layers and layers of my own voice."

It's these vocals that have become Broderick's trademark. A trained violinist and occasional member of Copenhagen folktronic band Efterklang (he moved from the US to Denmark a few years back), Broderick is now working out how to recreate his sound outside a studio, as he tours Europe this month. "When I play the songs live," he explains, "a couple of them are simply guitar and singing. And others I build up loops and layers of instruments."

And for his next challenge? "I just finished a little album called *Ten Duets*. It's 10 songs, each

one a duet for a different pair of instruments—banjo and piano, mandolin and theremin, viola and laptop... that was a fun thing to do, make myself use a different combination for each song, and have each song be only those two instruments."

PETER SHEPHERD

I LOVE PETER BRODERICK BECAUSE...



"Home is as beautiful and honest a record as you'd hope to find in today's shallow and trend-motivated 'indie' market"
Jason Lee



BEN MARSHALL MEETS

Brandon Flowers

The Killers' metrosexual Mormon frontman, afraid of men with beards...

Despite being a timid child, it seems you always wanted to perform?

I feel like the exhibitionist in me was always there, but it definitely took some coaxing to get him out. Perhaps it says that I'm this really vulgar attention-seeker. That desire, that need, maybe comes from being a strange child who desperately craved attention. But ultimately I've got great songs. The songs come first, and I'm able to deliver them in the way they need to be delivered.

You used to drink a lot, and then you stopped. That's not very rock'n'roll of you, is it?

I guess not. But it's not such a big thing to give up. For a start, you sing better. Booze dehydrates you. I knew I would be better if I stopped. I feel like I have longevity now. We started becoming a much better live band so I knew it was the mature thing to do. Music is my job, as well as my love. I don't know how rock'n'roll it is to stop drinking and smoking, but I do think that drinking and smoking simply because you've read it's rock'n'roll is dumb and utterly clichéd. I was sucked into all of that and I somehow felt like it was expected of me. It was something I was excited about at the time. There are some great stories about people I admired getting messed up. For a time you feel like you want to be a part of that.

So I'm assuming that you wouldn't agree with the poet William Blake when he wrote "the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom"?

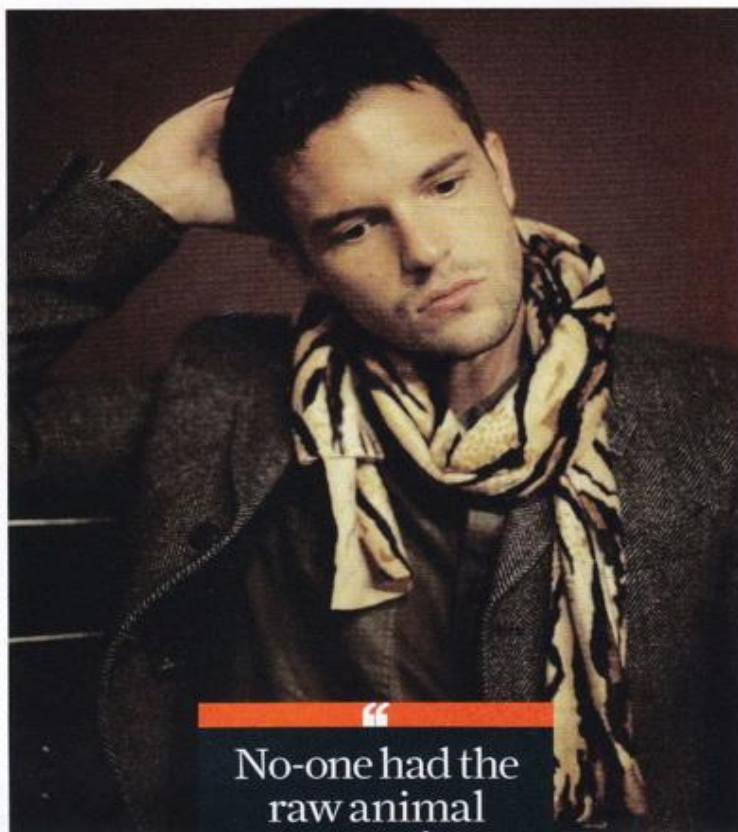
I would say that I got most of my wisdom by stopping. To me the harmful thing is the excess. No good comes of it. It's just pain.

Who's sexier? Mick Jagger in the '60s, Freddie Mercury in the '70s, or Morrissey in the '80s?

Mick Jagger. I love the other guys, but as sexy as they were, they didn't have the raw, animal sex appeal of Jagger. Jagger was a sex beast.

Someone told me that you were once terrified that men with beards would molest you. Where did that fear come from?

Yes, that's true. I have no idea where the fear came from. Maybe from thinking



No-one had the raw animal appeal of the Mick Jagger in the '60s. He was a sex beast...

that they were trying to hide themselves.

When I was six or seven years old, if I saw a man with a beard I'd cling to my mother. I was just convinced that they were going to take me away.

So if you had been a child star in the '60s, you would have banned The Beatles from your dressing room?

Yes, definitely. And Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. And The Grateful Dead.

I also hear that you are terrified of the number 621 – that's kind of inconvenient given that your birthday happens to fall on June 21.

That is also true, but I don't think about it that much. I try to make sure I'm not flying on my birthday and I make

sure every flight that I'm on doesn't have the number 621. I don't stay in that room number in hotels, that kind of thing.

What are you afraid of at the moment?

I try not to dwell on things like that.

Who or what was the most important influence in your adolescent years?

Morrissey. He was the complete opposite of what I was, of my parents, the town that I lived in. When I started listening to Morrissey, I lived in Utah in a small town, it didn't even have a stop light, people drove around in tractors. Somehow I was able to identify with him because I was in such a strange place. There was something so glamorous about him, that just didn't exist in Utah, and that never will!

In the top 100 rock'n'roll bands of all time, where would you rank The Killers?

Contrary to popular belief, I do have enough humility and understanding to know that we're not No. 1. We do have a place in there somewhere – it would be maybe in the nineties. We're still young and we're going to creep up on people.

Imagine I have a suitcase containing \$50 million. All you have to do to walk away with it is accept that in doing so a Chinese man will fall off his bicycle and die. Do you pick up the suitcase?

No.

I guess you have way too much money, then?

No! I would have given the same answer to that question if I was poor. I do believe that it's written on our hearts to be moral. It's not even about the money – it's more the perception of money. In America it's about the kind of bag that a woman has, or the car that you drive – even though you go home to a small apartment. To appear to have a certain lifestyle, that's the problem in America. It's not even the hunt for money, it's the people who don't have it being sold. That's why we're in this mess.

Do you think the world is becoming more immoral?

Yes, I absolutely do. It's getting confused with us thinking that by losing morality, we're being more progressive. I'm not against progress, but there's the suggestion that the more we spend, the more liberated we become. We're beginning to wake up to that. We've got to be smarter.

What are your hopes?

I hope we keep learning and growing, and that I don't embarrass myself and that's it. We're still developing. I look at a band like Depeche Mode and they took four or five albums to really become Depeche Mode.

Which adjective describes you? Quiet? Kind? Sweet? Sexy?

Kind! Today I feel kind!

And if you had to pick one adjective for David Gahan?

Sexy. The way his voice cuts through live, it just blows me away.

He had everything then:
Morrissey fronts The
Smiths on tour in '84

"HYSTERICAL ANIMALS..."

So Morrissey described the crowd at Brighton University in 1984. And so, it seems, you were. A couple of months ago, we asked for your memories of THE SMITHS live, and were rewarded with this fragrant bunch of reminiscences.

"Spitting is old hat..."

Yes, I was there at the Reading University show on February 22, 1984 [pictured below]. I was a skinny 19-year-old convert to post-punk, experiencing The Smiths for the second time (the first came three weeks earlier at Warwick University) and starting to compile a gig diary in a frustrated journalist manner. These two gigs were Nos 11 and 12 (the latest, No 762, was The Hold Steady at Oxford Academy), and I wrote: "The Smiths curtailed their set due to some stupid punter spitting at them and chucking beer at Johnny Marr. They returned and Morrissey warned Reading. 'Spitting is old hat.' However they exited for good halfway through 'You've Got Everything Now', when the noxious act was repeated. Marr's parting 'V' sign said it all."

I loved The Smiths and got to see them five times in total. However I have to admit I never found them the most reliable of live acts and was often as impressed by their supports, particularly James and The Woodentops, who frankly blew them offstage. My final gig was perhaps The Smiths' best performance for me—they'd matured into an impressive and cohesive unit. Morrissey had ditched the gladioli in favour of a Ramones-like "The Queen Is Dead" placard and they played a powerful and acerbic show. I also got the setlist, one of 400-plus snatched away from under the noses of roadies and security staff.

David Rose

"A Mini Metro pulled up, and who should get out the back but Morrissey..."

I saw The Smiths on that 1984 tour at Brighton University. The band were very late, and my friends and I were round the side of the building,



taking on a crafty spliff, washed down with a shared bottle of Merrydown cider, when a Mini Metro pulled up, and who should get out the back but Morrissey?

We followed him round to the front of the building, where the crowd were still queuing and Moz, in long grey tweed coat, clutching an old satchel, pushed through the throng to enter through the front doors.

It was about 11pm by the time they hit the stage, and the crowd was at fever pitch. Perfectly worked drama by Morrissey, even in the early days. They started with "Hand In Glove", with a slightly extended intro, allowing the delayed entrance of the whirling singer from the side, resplendent in beads, a white blouse and 501 jeans. He called the crowd "hysterical animals" after that first song and I have to admit we really were.

Johnny Marr was wearing a jumper round his waist and a necklace and was very cocky, understandably, dangling his cherry red Gibson 355 with gold Bigsby vibrato arm over the audience, and doing his sideways shuffle. At one point my friend Phil was slapping his

guitar with a long carnation, but he never missed a note. I watched him more than Moz. Trudging home, I knew it was a show I'd still be raving about years later. My favourite ever!

Joe Geoghegan

"Bloody Amazulu..."

I caught The Smiths, just, for the first time at Glastonbury '84. They

played on the Saturday—Elvis Costello was the headliner that day and The Smiths were due on at about 6pm. Amazulu were the first act scheduled, but they hadn't turned up.

The weather had been unpredictable that year and my girlfriend and I decided to dry off and have some food in our car, parked in one of the fields above the farmhouse, before The Smiths. We were tucking into our sandwiches when we heard that there was a band onstage. We soon realised it was The Smiths—they'd actually come on about an hour early.

We later found out that bloody Amazulu had turned up and demanded to play, so The Smiths had to go on sooner to accommodate them. They only played 10 songs in total, and we didn't get into the arena until the third number, "Handsomeness". There was pandemonium there—the pyramid stage wasn't as big as now and there was no gap between the audience and the bottom of the stage. Subsequently many attempted to climb up the corrugated metal sheets up to the stage.

The band was off in no time and there was a lot of hostility when it became apparent why they were off so early. I know Morrissey has spoken of this appearance and said there had been a lot of negativity from the crowd, but I got the sense it was because they didn't want Amazulu at the expense of The Smiths, rather than directing it at The Smiths themselves.

Mike Smith

"One of those oddly appropriate pieces of Smiths memorabilia..."

My brother Chris and I went to see The Smiths at Warwick University on the 1984 tour. Chris had managed to break both wrists in PE at school a couple of weeks before, so had to hold his arms above his head throughout the entire performance. The gig had the sense of being one of those moments in music that you, and everyone else there, never forget. Afterwards we went backstage and the band signed one of his casts. It seemed like one of those oddly appropriate pieces of Smiths memorabilia.

Adam Gillison



CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

Norman Cook

Check him out now, the funk soul brother: Housemartin, Acid House Hunter S Thompson and Iggy Pop's latest collaborator...



▲ 1985 [second left]

The Housemartins. You never forget your first shag. Me and Paul [Heaton] have known each other since schooldays, and we'd always had this dream to be on *Top Of The Pops* and be in the charts. It was mental when it actually worked. Musically it wasn't me. But there was that Dexys Midnight Runners sort of passion: we are the gang. I've still got the Fred Perry shirt!



▲ 1990

Beats International, and the most unflattering photo I've ever seen of myself. My first wife had left me, and I wasn't in the best mental state. I'd just had an international No 1 with "Dub Be Good To Me", but I was an asshole, depressed, chubby. I wore glasses in photos so people wouldn't recognise me in the street.



▲ 1994 [front right]

Freak Power. My Hunter S Thompson period. We named ourselves after Hunter's "Freak Power In The Rockies" article, and they were my gonzo days, the proper Acid House, E phase in my life. I liked Hunter's attitude. Apart from the guns, and shooting yourself. We were halfway through a third LP, then the Fatboy monster engulfed my life.



▲ 1997

The Big Beat period. The Smileys have been with me all through my life - tattooed with them, collected them, they've been synonymous with me. I just loved the goofiness. And I think it's the same Fred Perry shirt from The Housemartins! That's my photoshoot face. I look a bit stupid when I smile. So I go for the "What'd you want?" look. Demented? Stern? I can do that.



▲ 1998

Me and Zoe [Ball, Cook's wife] in our halcyon days, when we were the Posh'n'Becks of Acid House. Luckily we've escaped that level of limelight. We're at Glastonbury. We've been going there for 11 years. It looks like Zoe's trying to lick snow. She's wearing the hat I got in Moscow. And I'm in my Freak Power one.



▲ 2007 [second right]

Numanboosh, the world's best supergroup... I went to see The Mighty Boosh backstage, and I ended up in the lift with Gary Numan. He said, "They always take the piss out of me, so I thought I'd come and see whether they like me or not." Like Iggy Pop [see below], you expect them to be rock monsters. But they're surprisingly gentle.



▲ 2008

That was Brighton Beach Boutique 4. Because of what had happened before in 2002, when 250,000 turned up, we were scared we would get absolutely mobbed. That picture's the whole Brighton thing for me: the beach where I live, and where there's such an enormous warmth from people about me, and the beach parties. I'm so proud of Brighton's role in culture, from *Quadrophonia* to Skint Records. There's always been that joie de vivre, a touch of hedonism.



▲ 2008

Again the Smileys. The house used to be lined with them. Me and Iggy were recording together for my new Brighton Port Authority project, and he was staying at the house. Mates would come round and go: "Is it me? Or is that Iggy Pop in your kitchen having breakfast?" He's one of the gentlest, most polite house guests we ever had. He's really professional. He switches it on when he's in the studio and has to be mental.

INTERVIEW: NICK HASTED

THE STARS THAT FAME FORGOT

The Louvin Brothers

Charlie, his hellraising late sibling Ira, and a 16-foot plywood Satan.
The confessions of a country legend...

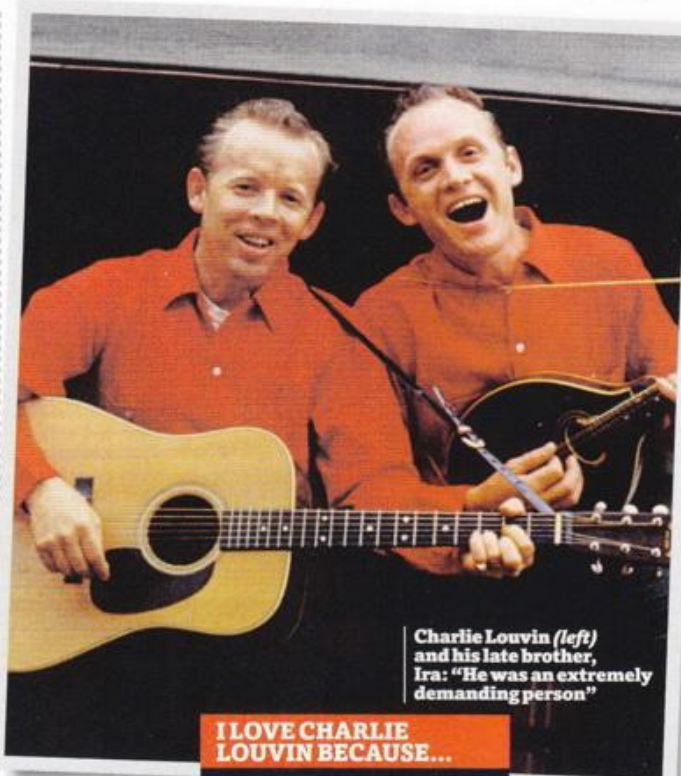
It is a singular cruelty of the internet age that, for many people, their introduction to The Louvin Brothers will have been a sniggeringly forwarded attachment. The cover of The Louvin Brothers' 1959 album *Satan Is Real* has acquired cult stature as an emblem of gauche country God-fearin': it depicts Ira and Charles Louvin, clad in white suits, standing amid flaming coals beneath the curiously cross-eyed gaze of a towering, glowering, pitchfork-toting, clearly wooden Lucifer.

"I know people laugh now," chuckles Charlie Louvin, 81, from his home, an underground house burrowed into a hill near Manchester, Tennessee. "But that's what we thought the Devil looked like. We were raised to believe that he was a big, ugly guy with horns and a pitchfork. That's the way we made the backdrop, Ira and I. We made it out of one sheet of three-quarter inch plywood. We made the Devil 16 foot tall."

The music on *Satan Is Real* was no joke. It is an astonishing record, whose continuing potency derives from the fact that where most country gospel, then as now, is a pure-hearted celebration of faith, Ira and Charles, though blessed with eerie fraternal harmonies, evocative of wolves howling in tune, were motivated by abject terror of the dark side. The difference between most country gospel and *Satan Is Real* is the difference between a love letter and the frantic pleas of a hostage with a gun at his head. Even when the Louvins pledge their fealty to God on "The Christian Life", they sound like they're begging for deliverance.

Satan Is Real is just one enduring relic of a recording career that began with 1956's self-explanatory *Tragic Songs Of Life*, ended several wondrous albums later with the brothers' split in 1963, and was sundered forever with Ira's death in a car accident in 1965, aged just 41.

The brothers were born and raised in rural Alabama under the name Loudermilk (they changed the name



Charlie Louvin (left) and his late brother, Ira: "He was an extremely demanding person"

I LOVE CHARLIE LOUVIN BECAUSE...



"He's 81, and a total punk rocker, and funny as hell. He's showing me how cool 81 can be"

Lucinda Williams

to distinguish themselves from their cousin, the singer John D. Loudermilk). Ira and Charles grew up in thrall to gospel, and to the harmonies of The Blue Sky Boys, the Monroe Brothers

and the Delmore Brothers. Ira sang the high tenor parts, Charlie the slightly less high tenor parts, both wrote songs of fabulous gothic wretchedness, and they were, for a time, superstars. And whatever one's views on the existence of Beelzebub, Ira was surely gripped by demons of some sort.

"Nobody ever got inside of Ira's head," says Charlie. "There's only

a millimetre difference between an idiot and a genius. Ira was an extremely demanding person. We'd rehearse songs for 20 days before recording them. It got that Ira

went through three wives in three years, and was drinking unbelievably. If somebody said that some important people would be at the show tomorrow, he would drink, and that would be the worst show we'd ever done."

Stories of Ira Louvin's temperament are legion and, as his brother confirms,

largely true. Though Elvis Presley idolised the Louvins, and opened for them on a 1955 tour, he never recorded one of their songs: Charlie suggests that this might have had something to do with Ira sneering at one of Elvis' backstage gospel singalongs ("My brother said to him, 'Well, you white nigger, if this is what you really like, why do you do that trash on stage?'"). On another celebrated occasion, Ira's third wife shot him five times during a domestic brouhaha, and subsequently informed reporters that, "If the son of a bitch don't die, I'll shoot him again."

Charlie enjoyed some success as a solo artist—in particular his 1971 album of duets with Melba Montgomery, *Something To Brag About*, which was exactly that. Beyond that, he seemed content tending his 48 acres of Tennessee and the Louvin Brothers museum in Bell Buckle, making the odd live appearance, and occasionally attracting attention as yet another artist recorded yet another Louvin Brothers song. A partial list of acts who've done so includes Gram Parsons, The Byrds, Emmylou Harris, Uncle Tupelo, The Raconteurs and Beck.

Recent years have seen a spike in interest. Charlie has been invited on tour with Cake, Cheap Trick and The Old 97s, and lent backing vocals to Lucinda Williams' *Little Honey*. In 2007, he recorded his first new album in a decade, *Charlie Louvin*, which included contributions from Elvis Costello, Will Oldham, George Jones and Jeff Tweedy. In 2008, he released two: the gospel-oriented *Steps To Heaven* and more worldly *Charlie Louvin Sings Murder Ballads & Disaster Songs*.

Why has the Louvins' music endured? "I don't like a song, or a movie, that does impossible things," says Charlie. "The truth is very important in country music. And as long as the Good Lord lets me sing on key, I'll keep doing what

I'm doing. When it gets to the point where I have to use Pro-Tools, I'll know that it's time to go." ANDREW MUELLER



Satan Is Real

★★★★★

CAPITOL 1959/2007
The much-mocked

home-made Beelzebub on the cover notwithstanding, a mesmerising gospel album, daring to depict faith not as an inspiration for good, but as a terror of punishment.

HOW TO BUY THE LOUVIN BROTHERS



Tragic Songs Of Life

★★★★★

CAPITOL 1956, reissued on Raven 2007
Their debut album, a wondrously mordant catalogue of heartbreak, disappointment and death, the Louvins' spectral harmonising a revelation still. Rarely has a title encapsulated an artist's oeuvre so well.

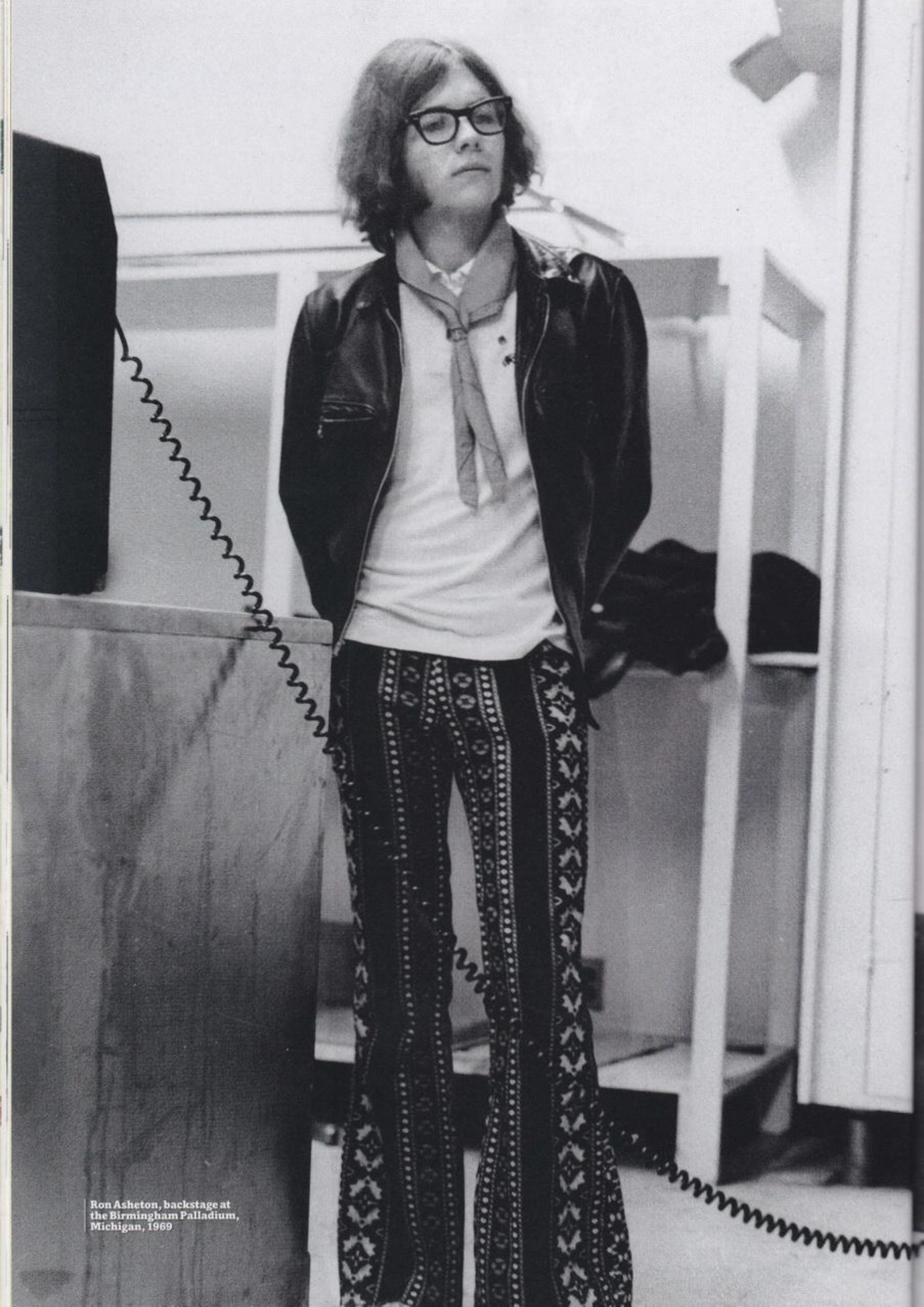


Tribute To The Delmore Brothers

★★★★★

1960/2007
Ira and Charlie tip their hat to the duo that inspired them.

Though reverent Ira plays the late Rabon Delmore's long-neglected guitar without even changing the strings, the Louvins aren't shy to stamp their names on these songs.



Ron Asheton, backstage at
the Birmingham Palladium,
Michigan, 1969

AND IT'S GOODNIGHT FROM...

RON ASHETON

1948 - 2009

No more fun... The Stooges' malevolent guitar genius remembered

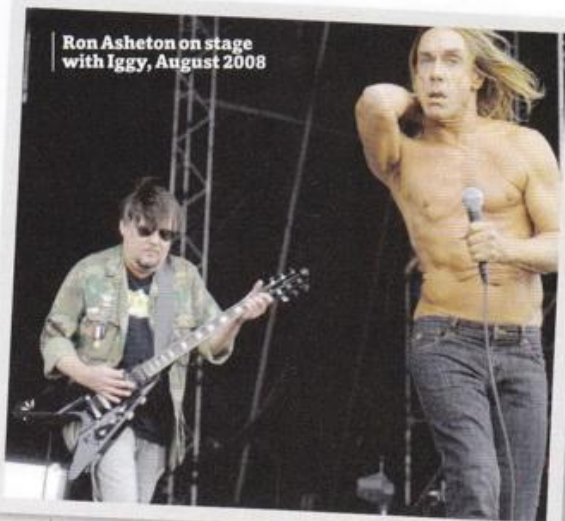
Ron Asheton, who was found dead at his Michigan home on January 6, helped to shape the course of rock without receiving much in the way of recompense, luck or glory. As guitarist and co-founder of The Stooges, Asheton had a fitful career but an enormous impact—particularly in the decades following the group's 1974 implosion. His crunching powerchords and monolithic riffs ("No Fun", "I Wanna Be Your Dog", "1969") proved inspirational to garage-rockers, three-chord punks and indie-noise architects by the million. Ironically, his death comes as The Stooges were enjoying a lucrative Indian summer on the world stage.

Asheton was born in 1948 in Washington DC, but raised in Ann Arbor, near Detroit, where he and his younger brother Scott, a drummer, met Iggy Pop (James Osterberg) in the mid-'60s. Ann Arbor was Michigan's university city, but The Stooges—formed in 1967 by Iggy, the Ashetons and Dave Alexander (bass)—were alumni of a different institute: the Primitivism School. Their songs of boredom and angst would sell poorly on initial release, but have a galvanising effect on subsequent generations (and be covered widely).

The elder Asheton, a Stones and Who fan, admitted to being a directionless misfit in his youth. "I didn't have a lot of friends," he later recalled. "I was mostly into Nazi stuff. I took German class and did Hitler speeches. I'd wear SS pins to school, draw swastikas all over my books." Asheton's account conforms to the popular view of The Stooges as social inadequates with a sick sense of humour. His gift, perhaps, was to be able to channel his feelings of alienation, rage and disgust into a shattering affront of overloaded guitar. His approach (one hesitates to call it a "technique") borrowed a trick or two from The Troggs, which he fed through a small arsenal of exceptionally mean-sounding pedals to create a fuzzy, fractious riff. He would then overlay an unrelenting lead guitar line, often using a wah-wah pedal, like a child smearing jam along a wall. On the classic albums *The Stooges* (1969) and *Fun House* (1970), it is Asheton, much more than Iggy, who instigates the violence and maintains the assault.

Yet Asheton was also capable of unexpected subtlety. "Dirt" (*Fun House*), a song he pointedly refused to perform with any singer but Iggy, has him

Ron Asheton on stage with Iggy, August 2008



On the first Stooges' LPs it is Ron who instigates the violence, and Ron who maintains the assault...

chopping out staccato statements of malevolent attitude in the early parts of the song, only to appear in the other channel gently playing some attractive arpeggios. However, it's undeniable his bone-crushing riffs on "Loose", "TV Eye" and "Down On The Street" held a greater fascination for guitarists, and all three are quintessential examples of the rock'n'roll form.

Undermined by personnel changes and drug problems in the early '70s (Asheton, who had a reputation as the straightest Stooge, was reportedly the only one not to use heroin), the struggling Detroitians were befriended by David Bowie and recorded their outrageous third album, *Raw Power*, in London. Asheton, to his displeasure, had been

superseded as guitarist by James Williamson, and is heard on *Raw Power* playing bass only—something of a waste of his talent. The Stooges fell apart following the album's 1973 release.

While Iggy recovered to collaborate with Bowie on the acclaimed albums *The Idiot* and *Lust For Life*, Asheton began a long period in the wilderness. He materialised in late-'70s underground bands Destroy All Monsters and The New Order (no relation), but was dogged by misfortune. "We just kept missing my time slot to make something happen," he lamented in a 2007 interview. "I played for as little as \$15 a night... If I made \$50 a night for playing, I was happy. That was big bread. Rent and cat food were the first most important things. Then comes alcohol and cigarettes."

A forgotten man by the early '90s (in stark contrast to Iggy's celebrity status), Asheton was reduced to sending demo tapes of his band Dark Carnival to every label in the American music business directory. Only two paid him the courtesy of a rejection letter; the others didn't even reply. Even when Asheton appeared to get a break—for instance, being approached to play guitar on the soundtrack of the 1998 movie *Velvet Goldmine*, a project that grew into a band called the Wyld Rattz (with Thurston Moore, Steve Shelley and Mike Watt)—the ensuing album fell victim to record company politics and was never released.

In 2003, Asheton received a phonecall from Iggy out of the blue (they hadn't met in 25 years), inviting him to contribute guitar to his solo album *Skull Ring*. The experiment led to a full-scale Stooges reunion, bringing the Asheton brothers out of the cold and on to the international festival stage (Europe, America, Australia, Glastonbury). An album, *The Weirdness*, came out in 2007. "Everything has really turned around," Asheton told an interviewer that year. "This is really the best time. The past is the past, and we did what we did, and it was cool. But now is the really fun time, when the songs are accepted and the crowds are great."

With unfortunate timing, Asheton died (aged 60, of a suspected heart attack) at the start of a year that might have consolidated his recent resurgence. The Stooges have been nominated for 2009 induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Of the original lineup, only Iggy and Scott Asheton now remain.

DAVID CAVANAGH

AND IT'S GOODNIGHT FROM...

DELANEY BRAMLETT

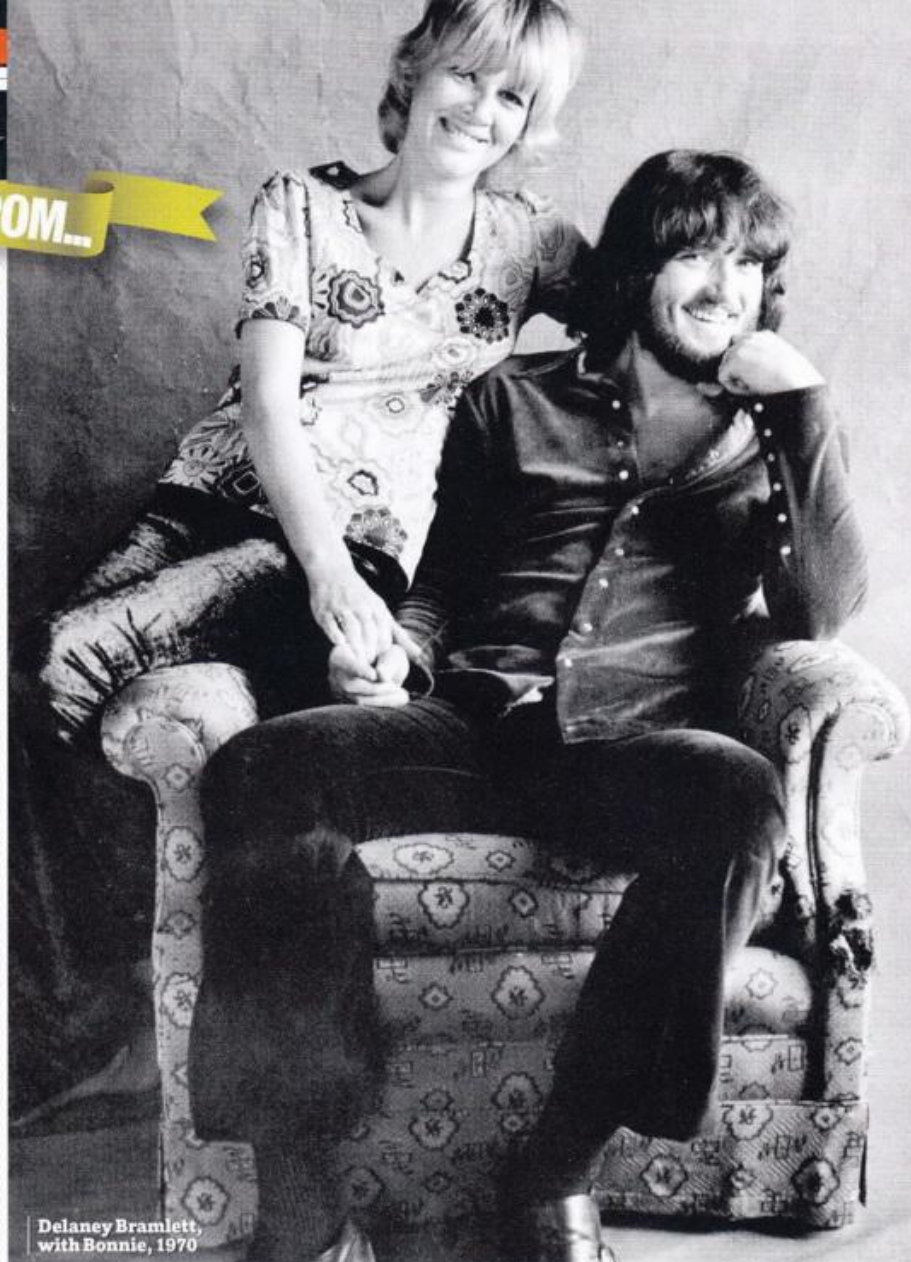
1939 – 2008

Delaney Bramlett was blessed with many talents: singer, songwriter, producer, guitarist. But he was also a great mentor, not least to Eric Clapton, who once admitted to being "totally in awe of Delaney. He was the first to instill in me a sense of purpose."

George Harrison was similarly indebted. After Bramlett had played the Royal Albert Hall in December 1969, Harrison sidled up backstage and asked him how to play slide guitar. Bramlett's Southern gospel schooling rubbed off too, inspiring Harrison to write "My Sweet Lord".

Mississippi-born Bramlett began as a session guitarist in L.A. in the early '60s, first finding success with The Shindogs, the house band on TV music series, *Shindig!* In 1967 he met a former Ikette, Bonnie Lynn O'Farrell, married five days later and, along with fellow ex-Shindog Leon Russell, started their first band. Delaney & Bonnie toured the Hollywood clubs, becoming the first white act on Stax, before releasing debut LP *Home* in 1969. Their nimble conflation of blues, country and soul prompted an invite from Clapton to open for a Blind Faith tour later that year. "[Following them onstage] was really, really tough," he wrote, "because I thought they were miles better than us."

When Blind Faith broke up, Clapton joined Delaney & Bonnie & Friends. Bramlett produced Clapton's first solo album in 1970, co-writing "Let It Rain", and also wrote "Never Ending Song Of Love" (covered by everyone from Ray Charles to The Osmonds) and "Groupie (Superstar)", written with Leon Russell and later a big hit for The Carpenters. He and Bonnie split in 1973, as did the band, after which Delaney embarked on a low-key solo career. His *A New Kind Of Blues* was released early last year.



Delaney Bramlett, with Bonnie, 1970

FREDDIE HUBBARD

1938 – 2008

Herbie Hancock cited Freddie Hubbard as "the greatest jazz trumpet stylist of my generation. His warm tone and formidable technique will be considered marvels well into the future." Hancock was one of a number of revered collaborators during Hubbard's career, a 50-year span that included stints with Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins.

Indiana-born Hubbard was a sensation as a youngster, working with Wes Montgomery while still a teenager, before founding his own band and heading for New York in 1958. Debut

Open Sesame, recorded when he was just 22 in 1960 and featuring Hank Mobley and McCoy Tyner, wowed critics and fans alike with its sophistication and melodic depth. But it was the following year's Blue Note album with Wayne Shorter, *Ready For Freddie*, that sealed his young reputation. His exuberant playing was tempered by an elegance and tonal range far beyond his years. Hubbard joined Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in 1961, staying for five years, before forming his own small groups.

By the early '70s he had bagged himself his first Grammy (*First Light*) and made the transition from hard bop to jazz fusion. 1977's tour with the V.S.O.P quintet (featuring ex-Miles Davis sidemen Herbie Hancock, Louis Hayes, Wayne Shorter and Ron Carter) saw him move back into hard bop. By the '80s Hubbard was back leading his own group around the concert halls of the US and Europe, before re-teaming with Art Blakey for a Dutch tour in 1988. In 2006, he received the NEA Jazz Masters Award from The National Endowment For The Arts, the highest accolade in jazz.

DEREK WADSWORTH

1939 – 2008

From Judy Garland and The Beatles to The King's Singers and *Coronation Street*'s Bill Tarmey, few careers were broader than that of composer, arranger and session musician Derek Wadsworth. He created the music for '70s TV series *Space 1999* and co-wrote and produced the first Cadbury's Flake commercial. As session man, he sat in on *The White Album*, *All Things Must Pass* and *Their Satanic Majesties Request*.



EARTHA KITT

1927 – 2008

Eartha Kitt's uncompromising personality and sex-kitten growl divided opinion. Orson Welles, casting her as Helen Of Troy in 1951, called her "the most exciting woman in the world" while her anti-Vietnam stance led the CIA to brand her "a sadistic nymphomaniac". Her role as Catwoman in '60s TV series *Batman* seemed ready-made, but her heyday was the '50s, and her string of hits including "I Want To Be Evil", "Santa Baby" and "Just An Old Fashioned Girl".

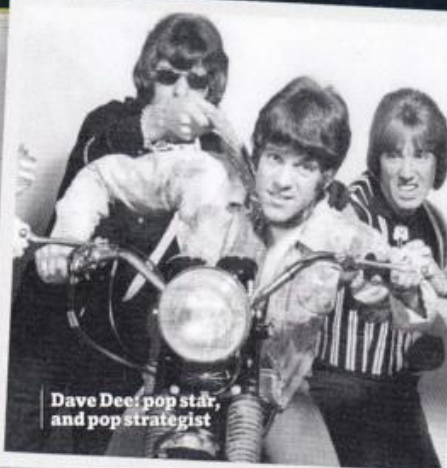


DAVE DEE

1943 – 2009

At the height of their success in the late '60s, Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick And Tich were outselling The Beatles in the UK charts. The Wiltshire band's melodic novelty pop and striking, peacock-suited image earned them eight Top Ten hits between March '66 and July '68. Their biggest hit, "The Legend Of Xanadu", in which Dee cracked a bullwhip on *Top Of The Pops*, even brought him to the attention of the Queen Mother, who called him "the one with the whip" at a charity bash.

But Dee was also a shrewd observer of pop culture. He quit the band for a cabaret career in 1969, once admitting to the BBC that "bands like Led Zeppelin and Free had started to come in and I thought for our sort of music the writing was on the wall." Dee began his working life as a police cadet, attending the A4 crash site of Eddie Cochran in Chippenham in April 1960. By 1962 he had turned to music, forming Dave Dee & The Bostons and playing the Hamburg clubs in the wake of The Beatles. It was their management team who



suggested a change of name on signing to Fontana, with "Hold Tight!", based on a football terrace chant, giving DDDDBM&T their first major hit. Others included "Bend It!", "Save Me" and "Zabadak!". Post-fame, Dee became head of A&R at WEA Records, signing AC/DC and Boney M, among others. He also became a founder committee member of the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy charity in the '70s.

ALEX McEWEN

1935 – 2008

Alex McEwen was an unlikely folksinger, an old Etonian son of a Scottish baronet and Tory MP. But together with brother Rory, McEwen took his learned mix of traditional Celtic ballads, blues and sea shanties to America in the '50s, twice appearing on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and taking finger-picking lessons from the Reverend Gary Davis. A later tour saw them backed by a young Dylan, under the guise of Blind Boy Grunt, in Greenwich Village.

JOHN BYRNE 1947 – 2008



Dublin's John 'Sean' Byrne was singer and rhythm guitarist for San Jose's The Count Five when they hit the US Top 10 with his garage anthem "Psychotic Reaction" in 1966. Their inability to produce a follow-up led to the band's early demise, but Byrne's song was immortalised as a

proto-punk classic on Lenny Kaye's 1972 garage comp, *Nuggets*. Champion Lester Bangs called it "the all-time slop bucket copy of The Yardbirds."

DICKIE JOBSON

1941 – 2008

Richard 'Dickie' Jobson's reputation was made with Chris Blackwell at Island Records, where, as director of both the label and Blue Mountain Music, he was instrumental in signing key artists to the roster. Jobson managed Bob Marley & The Wailers in the pivotal years of 1973-75, alongside Jimmy Cliff and Toots Hibbert. He's also remembered as a founding father of the Jamaican film industry.

VINCENT FORD

1940 – 2008

Ford is best known as composer of Bob Marley & The Wailers' "No Woman No Cry" in 1974, though many believe Marley wrote the melody. Ford, confined to a wheelchair due to diabetes from an early age, is also credited for writing "Positive Vibration", "Roots Rock Reggae" and "Crazy Baldheads" on Marley's 1976 LP *Rastaman Vibration*. Royalties helped Ford run a soup kitchen he ran in Trenchtown. **ROB HUGHES**

COMING UP AT CLUB UNCUT...

This month, Club Uncut is thrilled to host the return of **Richard Swift**, one of our favourite American singer-songwriters of the past few years. Swift will be previewing songs from his imminent follow-up to *Dressed Up For The Letdown* on February 24. As usual, the venue will be the famous Borderline in London, on Manette Street, just off the Charing Cross Road. Tickets are £10, available from www.seetickets.co.uk.

In March, meanwhile, Club Uncut will be headlined by Baltimore's very fine **Arbouretum**, whose third album, the Crazy Horse-meets-Richard Thompson flavoured *Song Of The Pearl*, has been a big hit in the office this past couple of weeks. Arbouretum are playing Club Uncut at the Borderline on March 18. Tickets for this one are £7, again from www.seetickets.co.uk.

And don't forget: Club Uncut will again be sponsoring a stage at Brighton's Great Escape Festival between May 14 and 16. As soon as we have a lineup, we'll announce it at www.uncut.co.uk.



THIS MONTH AT UNCUT.CO.UK



Since we filed our Neil Young cover story on the impending *Archives* box set, the possibility of a brand new Neil album also seems to have loomed into view. Uncut.co.uk's non-stop online news service is the first place to check for updates as this, and many other stories, unfold.

We'll also, however, be running extensive transcripts from our *Archives* cover story, with many more tales and revelations about Young provided by David

Crosby, Graham Nash, Nils Lofgren, Ben Keith, Billy Talbot and nearly 20 more bandmates and associates.

There's plenty to see on uncut.co.uk, too, with regular competitions, a vast and growing archive of reviews, and some meaty blogs: notably Allan's *Editor's Diary*; the daily round-up of new releases, *Wild Mercury Sound*; and our film column, *The View From Here*.

UNCUT.CO.UK Log on for daily news, blogs, reviews, competitions and more!

THE LONER

Any day now, NEIL YOUNG will finally unveil his long-awaited *Archives* project.

A 10-disc set covering the years 1963 to 1972, it plots Young's single-minded journey from high school in Winnipeg, down to LA and **BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD**, through **CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG** and on to the extraordinary triumphs of *After The Gold Rush* and *Harvest*.

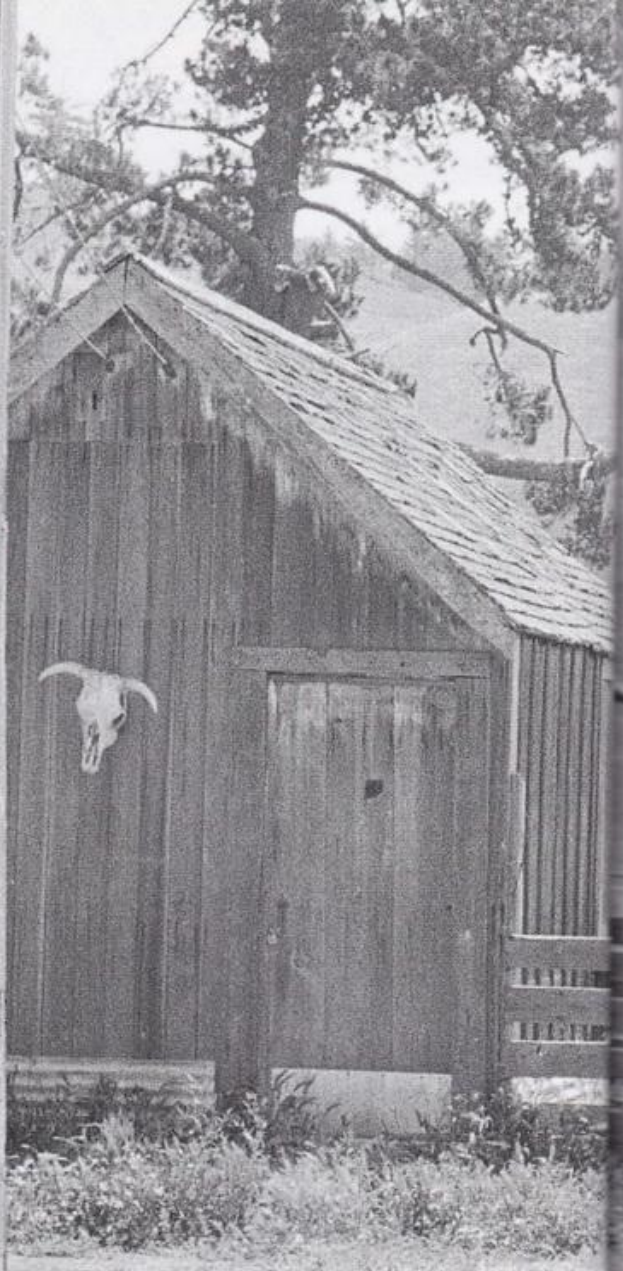
To commemorate this momentous release, *Uncut* has tracked down over 20 of his closest collaborators – including DAVID CROSBY,

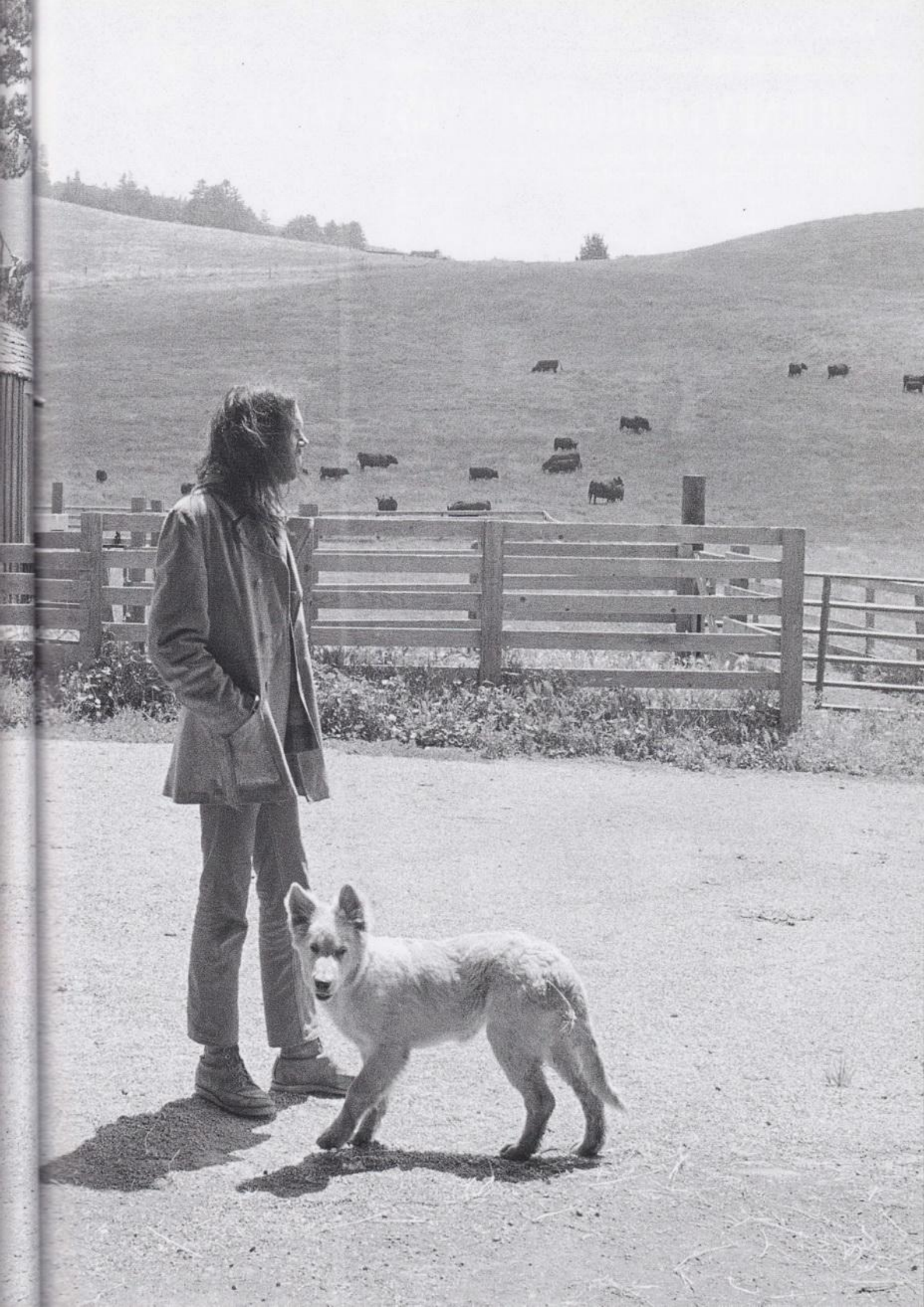
BILLY TALBOT, NILS LOFGREN, BEN KEITH, GRAHAM NASH and RICHIE FURAY – to tell the complete story of Young's first decade in the spotlight.

"He was totally committed," remembers one of his first bandmates. "That used to scare the hell out of me..."

PHOTOGRAPH by HENRY DILTZ/CORBIS

Neil at his Broken Arrow ranch in Northern California, June 1971





JOURNEY THROUGH HIS PAST

From Earl Grey Junior High, Winnipeg, to the Canyon and beyond: Neil Young's friends, colleagues and conspirators, 1960-1972



ALLAN BATES
Guitarist and founder member of Young's first signed group, The Squires



KEN KOBLUN
Co-founder with Young of The Jades in 1960, then bassist with The Squires. Koblun kept a meticulous log of gigs Young called "The Gospel According To Ken"



RANDY PETERSON
Briefly drummer in The Squires. Played on the band's last-known recording session in early 1965



RANDY BACHMAN
Winnipeg's star guitarist in the early '60s, revered by Young. Founder of The Guess Who and, later, Bachman-Turner Overdrive



COMRIE SMITH
Young's high-school buddy in early, short-lived 'bands'. Also played with Toronto folk-rockers 3's A Crowd



RICHIE FURAY
Guitarist, vocalist and co-founder of the Buffalo Springfield. Formed Poco with Jim Messina after Springfield's split in 1968



BARRY FRIEDMAN
Aka Frazier Mohawk: helped Stills put together Springfield, effectively becoming the band's manager. Later a noted producer



VAN DYKE PARKS
Composer, producer and Beach Boys collaborator: was with Stills and Young when they saw the "Buffalo Springfield" steamroller parked outside Friedman's LA home—the incident that inspired the band's name



JIM MESSINA
The Buffalo Springfield's recording engineer and producer before replacing Bruce Palmer on bass in 1968 for final LP *Last Time Around*. Also played on Young's solo debut



CHRIS SARNS
The Springfield's road manager. Played guitar on "Broken Arrow", and, briefly, bass for Young's former band The Mynah Birds in the late '60s



GEORGE GRANTHAM
Drummer on *Neil Young*. Also a member of Poco



PETER GODDARD
Toronto-based music and art critic who attended Young's shows at the Riverboat folk club



ROBIN LANE
LA singer and musician. Lived with Young for a few weeks in '66 and sang on *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*



PETER LEWIS
Moby Grape's songwriter, guitarist and founder; bonded with Young during gigs in San Francisco in '66—a 'trade' was briefly mooted: Lewis to join Buffalo Springfield for Young joining Moby Grape



DAVID CROSBY
The hard-living, Los Angeles-born Byrds' co-vocalist and rhythm guitarist. He played with Young in CSNY



GRAHAM NASH
The silver-tongued Blackpool native who left The Hollies to join CSN, later CSNY



BILLY TALBOT
Crazy Horse bassist and founder, and member of that band's previous incarnation, The Rockets



NILS LOFGREN
Songwriter, guitarist and member of Crazy Horse and Springsteen's E-Street Band. Played on *After The Gold Rush*, aged 17



DEAN STOCKWELL
Actor, Topanga Canyon resident, and longterm friend of Young. Stockwell wrote the screenplay that inspired *After The Gold Rush*



SHARRY WILSON
Long-time Young fan, and contributor to *Broken Arrow* magazine, who attended Young's 1971 Massey Hall show



ELLIOT MAZER
Harvest co-producer and engineer. Also co-produced *Time Fades Away*, *Tonight's The Night*, *American Stars 'N Bars*, *Hawks & Doves*, and more



BEN KEITH
Pedal-steel maestro, member of Young's *Harvest*, *Journey Through The Past* and *Time Fades Away* backing band, The Stray Gators



HENRY DILTZ
Official photographer for Woodstock and the Monterey Pop Festival—Diltz's work appears on the album artwork for *Buffalo Springfield* and *Déjà Vu*



LA JOHNSON
Principal collaborator on the *Journey Through The Past* film, *Archives* co-ordinator and head of Young's film company, Shakey Pictures

DISC 00 EARLY YEARS 1963-1965

After years of speculation, it transpires that the first *Archives* set covers the years from 1963 until 1972 over 10 Blu-ray or DVD discs, each containing live footage, photographs, newspaper clips and memorabilia as well as music. The story begins on Disc 00. The parents of Neil Percival Young (b. Toronto, November 12, 1945) have divorced in the summer of 1960, and he has moved with his mother to Winnipeg. There, at Earl Grey Junior High School, he forms his first band, The Jades. They last exactly one performance. His next band, The Squires, fare better, and six of their tracks open the first disc of *Archives*, including unreleased songs "I Wonder", "Mustang" and "I'll Love You Forever". By 1965, though, Young has returned to Toronto and is tentatively beginning a solo career: the unreleased demos on Disc 00, including prototypes of "Sugar Mountain" and "Nowadays Clancy Can't Even Sing", reveal a 19-year-old who already possesses a musical vision of uncanny clarity...

ALLAN BATES I met Neil in 1962, after he moved to Winnipeg from Toronto with his mother, Rassy, and we formed The Squires. Even then, Neil was incredibly driven. He was a real rehearsal guy, there was no messing around. Once, in [drummer] Ken Smyth's basement. Neil had this solid-body Les Paul Jr guitar and he kept getting electric shocks. He got so frustrated he threw it across the basement, where it crashed against the wall. That's how much Neil wanted things to be good. It's the only time I've seen him lose it. He was full of fire.

KEN KOBLUN Neil and I were classmates. We were both from split homes. He wasn't good at school, except for English, and was unhappy. He asked me to get a bass from this guy who had one for sale. It was a Danelectro that used to belong to Jim Kale of [Winnipeg band] The Guess Who.

ALLAN BATES Neil had tremendous creative energy. I'd sit in his living room and he'd say: "Here's a new one I've just written." These songs he was writing in Grade 10 and 11 were really something, like "Mustang", "The Sultan" and "I Wonder". Most bands then would only do covers, but we'd be playing Neil's original stuff.

RANDY PETERSON I was 15 when I joined The Squires. Neil was very intense. But maybe because he was like a big brother to me, I was able to converse with him. I think it worked both ways, too, with his father not being around. He was more introverted with other people, but we'd travel with each other from gig to gig, so I got to know him more than some of the others. We'd talk about music he was working on, but the thing I always remember him telling me was how he wanted to be a star. He was totally committed. That used to scare the hell out of me.

RANDY BACHMAN I remember meeting Neil at a gig I was playing in Winnipeg. He had this "look". He seemed determined to get to a place far from where he was. Some guys in bands didn't have the dream and discipline, some chose sports or girlfriends over being in a band, but the ones who stayed with it were the ones that made it. Neil was one of those.



Neil (left) with his mid-'60s high school band The Squires - heavily influenced by Hank Marvin

"We used to laugh and play games together; we found things to do in stormy weather. But now I find you're leaving me behind, casting me away from you." On his first solo album there's an instrumental called "The Emperor Of Wyoming" and that's the same melody.

KEN KOBLUN In 1965, Neil and I played a gig on Halloween at a ski resort in Vermont. Then we decided to go to New York to see Stephen [Stills]. When we got there, Richie Furay was living at the address we had. Neil had written "Nowadays Clancy Can't Even Sing" in Toronto, and he

played it for Richie. Neil may have written "Sugar Mountain" in Toronto, too. He had a 12-string acoustic guitar and would play folk houses so he could make money to live on. He was pretty scared in Toronto, because he wanted a career in music but the doors weren't opening for him. That's why he went to L.A.

ALLAN BATES When The Beatles came on the scene, they blew the top off rock'n'roll. I was playing tennis, when Neil came walking over. He said: "Man, you've gotta hear these guys from England!" Just after, we went to play some community club and got hold of some Beatle wigs. We put them on and the girls screamed. Then we played "She Loves You". It went over so well, it was beautiful.

KEN KOBLUN We were an instrumental group for some time before Neil decided to sing. He didn't do too many originals. The first one I remember with a vocal was "I Wonder". On *Zuma* there's practically a cover of that tune, called "Don't Cry No Tears". The second verse of it is the same as the first verse of the original "I Wonder".

ALLAN BATES The first time Neil sang on stage, we did "I Wonder", and then "It Won't Be Long". There was no such thing as harmony. It was an intertwining unison! But no-one threw eggs at us. In those days, you'd have thought an artist had to sing like Roy Orbison. But Neil wrote his own songs, in a way that only he could sing them. When we did our first recording session [July 1963], the DJ at [Winnipeg radio station] CKRC said: "Gee, that's nice, Neil, but for crying out loud, don't sing."

KEN KOBLUN We'd play the 4D in Fort William, a folk club, on Saturday afternoons. Neil wanted to amalgamate folk and rock, before everyone else was doing it. When we got there one night [Stephen Stills' group] The Company were playing - quite a historic moment. I'm not sure what went down, but I know they almost made a pact to meet up later. It turned out to be a year later, which was when Buffalo Springfield got started.

ALLAN BATES The Squires played anywhere, every weekend. A flatbed Coke truck in a shopping mall, proms, community clubs. We once played The Cellar, where you got bikers. Neil didn't give a damn. We had an extra solid-body guitar ready on the stand, just in case we needed it as a weapon!



"Neil got so frustrated, he threw his guitar against the wall. That's how much Neil wanted things to be good. He was full of fire!" **ALLAN BATES**

Patterson's Ranch House was another place where they'd just have cowboy bands, but Neil didn't give a shit. He was going to play his rock'n'roll there.

COMRIE SMITH Neil and I had been friends before he moved to Winnipeg in 1960. When he came back to Toronto in 1965 after The Squires, we picked up where we'd left off. It was just the two of us. The three songs on *Archives* that I'm featured on ["Hello Lonely Woman", "Casting Me Away From You" and "There Goes My Babe"] were recorded in the attic of my parents' house in Toronto, and it's just me and Neil on a couple of unplugged guitars. Neil likes things raw. The recordings were made in late August or early September, 1965. There were more than those three songs on the tape. I recall a song of Neil's called "Betty Ann" that had the line "Betty Ann, if you can, won't you mend my broken heart again." "Hello Lonely Woman" was an R'n'B number and you can hear Neil's foot tapping on the lino. There was a great version of "High Heeled Sneakers", and another one of Neil's called "Don't Tell My Friends". "Casting Me Away From You" I'd call a folk song with a little bit of rhythm. The lyrics go,

Springfield material. During the band's two-year lifespan, Stills and Young regularly come to blows, with Young briefly quitting in September, 1967. Springfield finally call time in May, 1968, with "This Is It!" appearing here recorded live at their final gig.

RICHELIE FURAY I didn't have a clue who Neil was when he showed up at the apartment on Thompson Street, other than he was a friend of Stephen's. He was a high-energy guy, friendly, very talented. It's funny, I never once thought, "This guy has a strange voice." I liked his songs and the way he sang them. The lyrics to "Clancy" were a bit quirky, but it was folk, so that was OK. What intrigued me was the changing time signature. I heard something original in it. I had an old Revere tape recorder and had him sing it for me and that's how I learned it. When Stephen and I finally met up with Neil in L.A., we took him to Barry Friedman's house and played him a version of the song Stephen and I had done. It must have impressed him enough to stick around. Knowing Neil, if he didn't see some potential **CONTINUES OVER**

DISC 01 EARLY YEARS 1966-1968

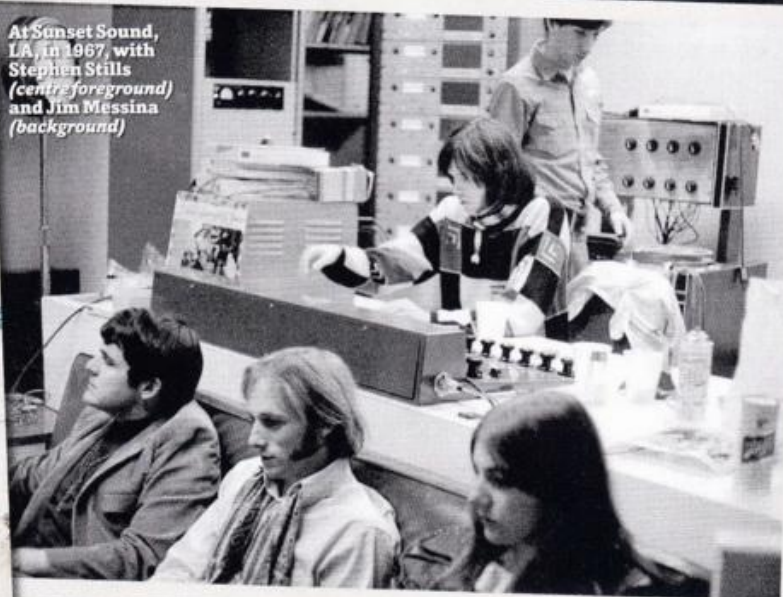
In April, Young heads to L.A. in his hearse, Mort Two. After bumping into Stephen Stills

in a traffic jam on Sunset Boulevard, they start playing together. Buffalo Springfield are formed. The 17 tracks on this disc are largely assembled from already available mono versions of



Buffalo Springfield, 1967: (l-r) Bruce Palmer, Stephen Stills, Dewey Martin, Richie Furay, Neil Young

At Sunset Sound, LA, in 1967, with Stephen Stills (centre foreground) and Jim Messina (background)



and an opportunity, he'd have left.

BARRY FRIEDMAN

I met Neil when Stephen ran into him in LA, driving his hearse. He was in the parking lot near Schwab's [Drug Store], where Laurel Canyon meets Sunset Boulevard. He seemed nice enough, very skinny. Stephen thought a lot of him. He'd worked all these folk clubs and that's where he'd first run into Neil. He knew a good songwriter when he saw one.

VAN DYKE PARKS Stills was total ambition, with an overbite. He had the aura of a field tactician. He covered more ground than anyone I knew among our peers. He was a total scenester. Neil was anything but. He was laid back, had a laconic, mellow vibe that, along with his plaintive wail, didn't portend a great or lengthy career. Or so it seemed to me.

BARRY FRIEDMAN

For a while, Buffalo Springfield lived in my house. It had 25-foot ceilings and was basically one huge room. It had a cement bathtub in the middle, with the story of Don



Quixote in tiles around it. It was all staged in front of a fireplace that took up the whole wall. It had crystal windows that would create rainbows in the mornings. We eventually found a motel on Sunset and put everybody up there. It had a little theatre, with maybe 25 or 30 seats, and that's where Springfield rehearsed. I'd watch them work up those early songs, when everything seemed to just fall into place. "Clancy..." was a pretty good song. There was an honesty to Neil's poetry, in that it wasn't written for effect. It was very direct. There were so few groups around that it was just

assumed that everyone was going to be successful and drive Porsches.

JIM MESSINA I was a recording engineer at Sunset Sound in LA. The first musician I'd worked with was David Crosby, who'd come in with a young girl looking for a record deal. She was Joni Mitchell. Then I think David went back and told Neil about me. Working on *Buffalo Springfield Again* was interesting. Editing tape with a razor blade wasn't unusual. So when Neil brought in "Broken Arrow" what was interesting was that he wanted to use all

these separate pieces. That was a first for me, but I got a chance to see how his mind worked in terms of piecing all those images together. The last part has that jazz part in it. I never understood why he

"I recall meeting Neil at a gig I was playing. He had this 'look'. He seemed determined to get to a place far from where he was" RANDY BACHMAN

Goin' home: Neil at his house in Laurel Canyon, December '67, and his Topanga Canyon home, right



being "overdubbed rather than played". It fails to make *Billboard's* Top 200.

CHRIS SARNS After Springfield split, Bruce [Palmer] got a place in the Old Canyon. When he left, he gave it to me. I was up on the ridge, Stephen ended up down in the valley, a quarter-mile away. Neil was living in Topanga, too, near The Eagles. It was really cool, two, three storeys. But there was only this one four-by-four post holding up this whole house. If somebody had hit that, they could have brought the whole house down. It was the dumbest design I've ever seen. Then Neil put a studio in, and had it lined with lead. I'm amazed that house stood up.

GEORGE GRANTHAM I did Neil's first solo album with Jimmy Messina. Neil came to a Poco rehearsal, asked us to play on this album, and we said, "Yes, sir..." Neil was hard to get to know, but I enjoyed his music a lot. Mostly, we recorded. He was in control of everything. He played everything except bass and drums. He'd give us a tape, to practise with. He didn't talk about what he wanted; the songs spoke for themselves. It was work, pretty much. It took us a couple of weeks. I didn't see much of Neil after that - I think he was more a loner than anything. He was used to being by himself.

JIM MESSINA We never socialised, it was all about the work. What made Neil unique was that he came in organised. There was no bullshit, no drugs, no drinking. Creatively, he approached things differently. When I look back now, he was trying to

be unique. I'm looking at an old picture of us and he's wearing a sweater with Indian symbols on it and a choker chain. He's got a look all of his own.

DISC 03 LIVE AT THE RIVERBOAT TORONTO 1969

Young had played the Riverboat folk club previously in 1965. He returned for a six-day stand in January/February, during breaks in the recording of *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*, where this 11-track set was recorded. It features mainly Springfield songs

CONTINUES OVER ►

wanted it there. But when it came together, it was wonderful. I would never have pictured it that way, but Neil did. I remember him standing up when it was done, with a huge smile on his face, saying: "That's it. That's great."

CHRIS SARNS We learned "Broken Arrow" in the studio. A rather expensive way of doing things, because it has a lot of time-changes. We spent all day, 117 takes. A lot of those were just two bars and stop. Stephen and Richie and I played guitar, except on the final take. Neil was producing. Then he came in and played guitar. Neil didn't write in the studio, he had everything planned beforehand. He just played it a couple of times: "These are the chords. Learn it." The Springfield were all huge Beatles fans, so it's possible Neil had been inspired by "A Day In The Life".

RICHIE FURAY The break-up of Springfield was inevitable. After the first few months, it was a struggle to progress. There were around nine

people in and out of the group in the two years we were together.

CHRIS SARNS The last Springfield show [Long Beach, CA, May 1968] was a helluva night. A bunch of teenage boys started to climb on the stage and there were police everywhere. I motioned the police to go back, and told the head of those boys to get down, we don't want a frickin' riot here. They were cool. The police got nervous, but they relaxed after that. We had a full house, 1,000 people, and they were great. It was a cool way to go out.

DISC 02 TOPANGA 1 1968-1969

Leaving Hollywood for Topanga Canyon, Young begins recording his first solo album for Reprise Records in August 1968, accounting for five of the 15 songs here. *Neil Young* is released in January 1969. Shortly after, he dismisses it as





Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young in 1969, with drummer Dallas Taylor (far left) and Fuzzy Stumulus (far right)

("Expecting To Fly", "I Am A Child", "Flying On The Ground Is Wrong"), songs from his first solo album ("Old Laughing Lady", "The Last Trip To Tulsa") and one unreleased song - "1956 Bubblegum Disaster".

PETER GODDARD When I saw Neil at the Riverboat, he'd written at least 25 songs that he played over the course of a couple of concerts there. It was him at his most naked, absolutely fearless. I recall there were six people there, maybe less. I think Bruce Palmer was there. Quite honestly - no-one was there. Some of the pieces he played were six, seven, eight minutes. He was awkward even then, the way he can't quite hold the guitar right and doesn't know quite where his voice should be.

Neil's Toronto sojourn was quite brief. He didn't leave a signature the way Joni Mitchell did, who was part of the city's life for a couple of years. Scott Young, his father, was a respected sports writer in Toronto, and when Neil came round, Scott would be the more

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FEB. 4-9 **NEIL YOUNG**
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FEB. 11-14 **DOC WATSON**

FEB. 18-23 **JOHN HAMMOND**
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Robert Staiger, New York Times

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famous of the two. Scott moved his family to Omamee, which is a dot on the map, if it's even on the map, and I suspect whenever Neil came to the area he went there rather than stay in Toronto. He seemed unconnected with everything. The New York people knew the Toronto people. It was a small group. Neil was never part of it. Maybe because his direction was to the West Coast.

DISC 04 TOPANGA 2

1969-1970

Young and his new backing band, Crazy Horse, begin work on *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* in January 1969, a period represented here by 14 songs, including the unreleased

"Everybody's Alone". In March, 1970, he joins Crosby, Stills & Nash for *Déjà Vu*, with an unreleased mix of "Helpless" and "I've Loved Her So Long" live appearing on this disc.

ROBIN LANE I was friends with these guys that had a house in Laurel Canyon, The Rockets. One night, Neil showed up. After he heard me sing a song and play my guitar, he said: "D'you wanna go for a ride in my hearse?" I liked his songs, but he was just another musician. There were a lot hanging round The Rockets' house. They sold weed, so Gram Parsons, Three Dog Night, Tim Hardin, Tim Buckley, a million people would be there.

I stayed in his cabin on Laurel Canyon for a while. It was up a hill, at the end of a cul-de-sac. You had to walk up a major flight of stairs outside, then there was a nice little patio around the garden. All I can remember is one room, with a bed you sat on when people came over to play music. It was brown, maybe made of logs. Neil was closed off, emotionally. But so were we all. People were doing a lot of drugs and hiding behind them. But I don't think he was - one time he got mad at me for smoking pot in his hearse. He was obsessed with writing songs. All he wanted was to be a success.

PETER LEWIS I remember Neil played me an acetate of *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*. I'd met this chick, a super-groupie. She told me she'd been hanging around with the Springfield, or the remnants of it, and that Neil

CONTINUES OVER ►

"Stills was total ambition, with an overbite. Neil was anything but. He had a laconic, mellow vibe that didn't portend a lengthy career" VANDYKE PARKS

was living up the street. So we went to visit. He had an A-frame and a long flight of stairs leading up to it, with an intercom. She pressed it and I heard Neil go, "Who's there?" When I said it was me, he said, "Oh, come on up." But when he opened the door and saw who I was with, he freaked out because he'd just got married. I was trying to play it cool, but I presumed that whoever knew her had slept with her.

Anyway, we went into this room where he had this big throne and he put on the acetate of *Everybody Knows...* and sat there, smoking dope and listening to it. I knew what he'd been trying to do, but had a hard time getting the rest of Springfield to let him do it. Stephen and Neil had a rivalry over who was going to play lead. Neil wanted to do that but hadn't found his voice. With his first solo record, he wasn't sure whether he wanted to be Dylan. Then he made *Everybody Knows...* in his basement. He's like that, he gets an idea in his head and executes it. The other part of it was the fact he'd been able to get in with Crazy Horse, who did whatever he told them.

DAVID CROSBY When Neil started out with Crazy Horse, I didn't understand it at all. But after I'd listened to the music, I realised it was very honest and simple and allowed him to expand as a guitarist tenfold, in a way that he couldn't do with CSNY. There wouldn't have been the room. It took me a long time to wrap my head around it, because I wanted Neil to play with us, not them. After I listened to it enough I realised what he was doing and why. They did exactly what he needed for him to be able to go there. They were experimental and big. I mean, they're big guitars. That's what he needed to achieve the kind of playing he can do now.

ROBIN LANE When I sang "Round And Round" with him and Danny [Whitten, *Crazy Horse* guitarist], Danny brought me into the studio. The three of us sat around, maybe with one mic. We all played guitar. I was just making it up as I went along - not the lyrics, but the "ooh oohs". We did it once or twice, then Neil said, "OK, that's it!" and I was amazed. My impression of singing that song with him then was of darkness. I didn't notice the sun. There was a lot that went on there that helped define me. I don't know that it defined Neil. He already knew what he was doing.

PETER LEWIS What made him special? He didn't let whatever liabilities he had become overwhelming. Other people were scared of Neil



With Crazy Horse in 1970: (l-r) Danny Whitten, Neil Young, Ralph Molina, Billy Talbot and Jack Nitzsche

"People were doing a lot of drugs and hiding behind them. But I don't think Neil was - all he wanted was to be a success" ROBIN LANE

because they sensed that about him. If anybody was going to get out of that scene alive, it was him.

ROBIN LANE Neil was mostly dancing to his own music. I never felt you could be normal with him. He always seemed to have something going on in his head. One time, his grandmother had died, and I felt really sad for him. He was crying, and he got mad at me for feeling sad with him: "She's not your grandmother!" That's kind of a funny thing...

GRAHAM NASH I met Neil on Bleecker Street, in early 1969. We'd done the first CSN record. Then we realised we'd have to go out on the road, and Stephen

wanted somebody else in the band. So it was decided to ask Neil to join. But I wouldn't entertain the idea before I met him. I wanted to know who he was. I'd heard "Expecting To Fly", and I thought it was fantastic. So I said, let me go to breakfast with Neil and then I'll make the decision. After we'd finished, I'd have made him prime minister of Canada! He was very funny, very droll, very dry sense of humour and I liked him immediately.

DAVID CROSBY I didn't fully comprehend his range as a songwriter until one afternoon when I was in front of either Joni or Elliot's [Roberts, CSNY's manager] house. I was sitting in my **CONTINUES OVER**

DISC 05 NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE - LIVE AT THE FILLMORE EAST NEW YORK 1970

In spring 1970, Young and Crazy Horse head out to support *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* - the last tour to feature Danny Whitten, who dies that November. Their superb shows at New York's Fillmore East were produced by Doors collaborator Paul Rothchild and first released as a standalone CD in November 2006.

Crazy Horse bassist Billy Talbot on life with Neil...

UNCUT: What was your first impression of Neil?

TALBOT: I liked him right away. We were young men and we had much in common. He seemed interesting and I liked his songs.

He did a version of "Mr Soul", with you and Danny Whitten...

It was slower than the version that Buffalo Springfield did. I liked the way it felt acoustically.

Was Neil a regular at Rockets HQ on Laurel Canyon Boulevard?

He came by a couple of times. I believe the last time he was there, the police also showed, so that kind of quelled the scene.

What do you remember of Neil sitting in with The Rockets at The Whisky A Go Go in August '68?

I remember Bobby Notkoff [*Rockets violinist*] sitting out and watching us from the audience, and Neil's guitar sound being big. A lot of fun.

Can you tell us about working up "Cowgirl In The Sand" and "Down By the River" at one of your earliest sessions with Neil?

We worked up "Down By The River" first, as I remember. I don't know if you would call it the Crazy Horse beat, as much as a 'feel'. Ralph [*Molina, drums*], Danny and I were used to jamming on two chords, and Neil just soared away. I think we went out on the road and then recorded "Cowgirl" when we came back - another two-chord jam song.

Can you describe the chemistry of Neil and Crazy Horse?

We were just trying to be real with the feel.

Another specific gig: you played a Mafia joint in Rhode Island. A fight broke out, the place emptied and you carried on playing. Did it really happen like that?

Yes, it did. I don't know if it was a Mafia place, but a fight did break out. Nobody bothered us and we just kept playing "Cowgirl In The Sand". When they came back in, we were still playing.

Is it true that, around 1970, Neil preferred to record during a full moon, and you'd organise recording sessions around it?

Yes it's true, still is true, and it's true for me, too.

Can you describe the dynamic in the studio during *After The Gold Rush*?

I don't remember any instructions as such. I think we were working together pretty much, coming up with our own answers. Of course, Neil was leading the way. Jack Nitzsche was playing piano on "When You Dance You Can Really Love" and we recorded that one up at Neil's house.

Was "When You Dance..." the last song you all played on with Danny?

Yes. We did harmonies for other songs on *After The Gold Rush* with him after that. Also, there were sessions with Danny without Neil, recording some of Danny's songs that were never released. The master tapes are missing. There are some heavy 'generation-loss' tapes around...

What do you think are Neil's unique qualities?

A mixture of talent, intelligence, soul and hard work. He could be the definition of an artist.



car in the driveway waiting for whichever one of those it was to show up, when Neil pulled in. I'd never sat down and had a conversation with him before, so we started talking. Then he said, "Do you wanna hear a new song?" And I said, "Fuck, yeah!" So he pulled out a guitar and sang four of the best songs I'd ever heard. One of them was "Helpless". Right there and then I said, "I wanna work with this guy."

GRAHAM NASH "Helpless" was more like a Neil solo track. Neil kept waiting for us to slow down so he could sing it in the tempo he wanted. Then some time about 2am we'd slowed down enough to catch up with Neil's coma-paced speed, then we cut "Helpless". It is a tremendously slow song, and it has to be played together, as a unit, otherwise it doesn't hang. I think it's beautiful.

DISC 6 TOPANGA 3 1970

In August, 1969, Young starts recording *After The Gold Rush*, with 11 songs from that LP on this disc, alongside a previously unreleased version of "Wonderin'". Released in September 1970, it reaches No 8 in the Billboard chart.

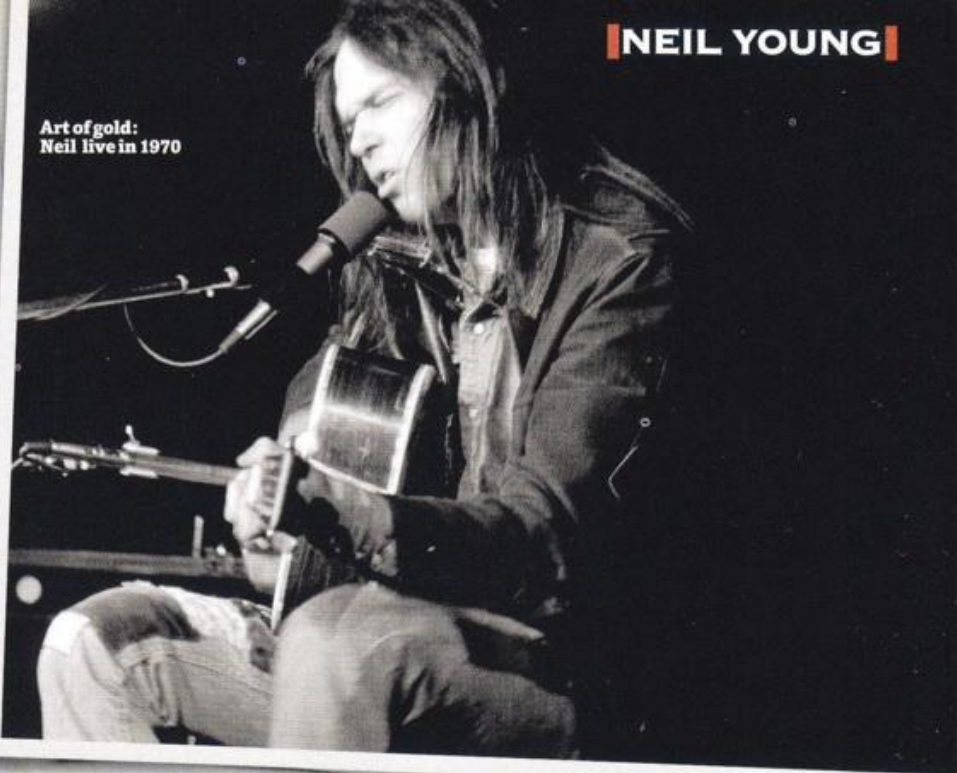
NILS LOFGREN When we first got to L.A. in early '68, my band, Grin, became the house band at [Topanga club] The Corral. It was a great hangout and Neil jammed with us occasionally. I moved into [Young's producer] David Briggs' home, so Topanga became my neighbourhood. Briggs and his cronies would chase away all the Valley people who tried to sneak into The Corral. It was a great, territorial, protective enclave of a community.

DEAN STOCKWELL My first contact with Neil was when he was living in Topanga, as I was. I'd made *The Last Movie* with Dennis Hopper in Peru, and Dennis urged me to write a screenplay. So I wrote 'After The Gold Rush'. Very loosely, it's about an artistic community living in Topanga, and an earthquake causes a tidal wave that washes them away. It never got produced. But a copy of the screenplay somehow got to Neil. As I understand it, he'd had writer's block for months, and his record company was after him. After he read this screenplay, he wrote the album in three weeks.

NILS LOFGREN Recording *After The Gold Rush* was very idyllic. We were up in the hills overlooking the valley. There was an outside patio on the porch above where we were playing. We'd play a little bit, then hang out and enjoy the beautiful nature. Topanga was this cross-section of hippies and flower people, but with some rough'n'tumble cowboy-type attitudes. David Briggs, for example, was from Wyoming and was working oil rigs when he was 13. There'd be camaraderie and also a fight or two.

DEAN STOCKWELL Neil invited me to the studio attached to his house. He was very meticulous. Everybody had to understand what they were

Art of gold:
Neil live in 1970



playing and how they were going about it just right, and they did. It didn't present great difficulties for him to communicate those songs; they snapped to and did it perfectly. Whatever was required, he seemed to come up with.

NILS LOFGREN There's a kind of haunted passion to what Neil does. He's able to get that darkness he sometimes feels into his writing, but also a sense of vulnerability and innocence. "Tell Me Why" was me and Neil sitting across from each other. We

early show, at 6.30pm, the same night. I was at the later show and it was packed to the rafters. Neil was wearing a plaid shirt, blue jeans, construction boots. His hair was dark black, parted down the middle and long to the shoulders. The stage was very bare – an Oriental-looking carpet, a single chair, a couple of guitars propped up, and to his left a baby grand or concert piano. Out of all the songs that night, I remember "Journey Through The Past". It was a nationalistic pride in Neil, the hometown boy made good. When

he sang "I'm going back to Canada on a journey through the past" the crowd went crazy. He was very chatty. At one point, he dropped a pick and remarked, "Bending over... is not so much fun." I didn't learn until after he'd had back

problems – he might even have been in a brace – but it didn't show. He seemed very happy to be there.

"Neil said, 'Wanna hear a new song?' And I said, 'Fuck, yeah!' So he pulled out a guitar and sang four of the best songs I'd ever heard" DAVID CROSBY

played live and I started doing fingerpicking. It was one of my first acoustic guitar sessions.

One of my favourite tracks on *After The Gold Rush* was "Wonderin'". I fell in love with that song and I wish it had ended up on the finished record. I believe it's going to be on *Archives*. I played this honky-tonk piano and then did harmonies afterwards. There may have been a lightness and a lilt to it that Neil felt better suited to another project.

DISC 07 LIVE AT MASSEY HALL TORONTO 1971

For much of 1971, Young recuperates from a debilitating back injury. It's the first year since 1965 not to see a new studio album featuring him. In January, he heads out on the Journey Through The Past Solo Tour, playing at Massey Hall on January 19.

SHARRY WILSON

I was 15 at the time. I'd fallen in love with Neil when I heard *After The Gold Rush*, a few months before the concert was announced. It was scheduled for 8.30pm, and when that sold out they added an

DISC 08 NORTH COUNTRY 1971-1972

In September, 1970, Young pays out \$340,000 for the 140-acre Broken Arrow ranch near San Francisco. Work starts on *Harvest* in Nashville in February 1971, with 14 songs from that time included here. *Harvest* becomes the best-selling album of 1972, with "Heart Of Gold" his first No 1 single.

ELLIOT MAZER We first met in Nashville when Neil came to do a Johnny Cash TV show along with Linda Ronstadt and James Taylor. Elliot Roberts and I had known each other in New York. We [Quadraphonic Sound Studios] invited them to dinner, where Elliot introduced me to Neil. Neil asked if he could do some work in our studio that weekend. I don't think Neil was consciously following Dylan, who'd recorded in Nashville, and he didn't select musicians for the sessions. I introduced them to Neil.

CONTINUES OVER ►



Neil at Broken Arrow and (below) The Stray Gators with Ben Keith (far left)



BEN KEITH The first time I met Neil was during the *Harvest* sessions. He wanted a steel guitar player and I lived a couple blocks from the studio. He'd already started the sessions, and I slipped in as quiet as I could and started playing along, and we cut five songs before I really met him. I didn't even know who he was. I'd heard of CSNY, but I didn't know he was doing a solo LP. He seemed like a good guy, as he did music like I do it – spontaneously.

ELLIOT MAZER I recall hearing "Heart Of Gold" the first time. Neil played the song in the control room on guitar. Kenny and I looked at each other and we each put up one finger to show we felt it would be No.1. From that point on, it was easy. When Neil plays a song it implies a complete arrangement. The band learned to play less around him.

HENRY DILTZ In the early '70s, we used to hang out at Gary Burden's house, the art

director on Neil's covers to this day. Several times Gary and I drove to Broken Arrow in northern California, and spent a couple of days there. We'd have breakfast, walk around the farm, then visit one of his barns, where he either had his studio, or his guitars. He had different barns for different things. A real country guy. The ranch is nestled in a valley, with rolling hills... there were buffalo on one hillside. He has herds of cows, Texas longhorns... he had geese walking around, and an emu. He had a blue jeep with a cow's skull attached to the grille. There's a big pond, with red-winged blackbirds. I loved walking around the ranch with Neil. He always had a couple of dogs following him. The wildlife was part of the reason Neil was there.

BEN KEITH It's a beautiful place. I loved being there, everybody did. We were blown away by the ranch, and the hands. They'd feed us breakfast, corn fritters and things I'd never had before.

HENRY DILTZ I met the "Old Man" of the song in '71, about the time Neil wrote it. He was an old rancher, wearing Levi's with

cowboy boots and a hat. He was very weathered, almost bow-legged. A guy of few words...

BEN KEITH We socialised at the big White House that had five or six rooms and a pool table. We did "Alabama" at the ranch. Neil had speakers in a gully, 600 feet down in a hollow. It acted as an echo chamber. He put mics down in another gully, and you can hear coyotes and all kinds of shit if you listen. That's the way Neil wanted it. He hears what he wants to have in his head, and unless something better comes along, he'll use that. If he's got something special in mind, he'll let us know. Otherwise, he just lets us play as we want.

NILS LOFGREN I don't think his plan was to have a hit with *Harvest*. It was about making a beautiful, emotional record. The fact that he made a record he was proud of and which turned into a massive hit gave him financial freedom to do some exploring. I don't think he's ever felt pressured to do what a record company wants. Neil's only pressure is waiting for the muse to inspire him towards the

next big thing. There are two classic things about Neil – his massive gift for songwriting and musicianship, mixed with passion. When you get passion into that mix you get something extraordinary.



"There's a haunted passion to what Neil does. He's gets that darkness he sometimes feels into his writing, but also vulnerability" NILS LOFGREN

DISC 09 JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST

During the recording of *Harvest*, Young forms Shakey Pictures. In April, 1973, *Journey Through The Past*, the directorial debut of one 'Bernard Shakey' – Young's nom de plume as a director – premieres at the US Film Festival in Dallas. The film has a limited release and remains unavailable until its DVD release on this disc, along with the theatrical trailer, radio spots and archival galleries.

LA Johnson on Neil Young the filmmaker...

I met Neil on the Woodstock movie, then I was hired to do a CSNY documentary, on the '70, '71 tour. My partner [cameraman] David Myers and I shot that, and came back and did an edit. There was indecision among the boys about what to do with it. Eventually Neil got an editing machine, and started getting involved in cutting it. Then he called up and said, "I have a couple of ideas." Those are the words we fear the most, in our world.

Neil had moved to Broken Arrow, and had a couple of things he wanted to shoot. He was getting ready to do *Harvest*, so we went to Nashville to shoot some of the sessions. It's all *cinéma vérité*, where we'd inject ourselves [into the film] in a documentary way, but in a more theatrical style. Like going to a

junkyard and shooting Neil wandering through it, then the scene where he's in a '56 Buick Roadmaster and does a rap.

It continued with other characters, like the Graduate [who wears a Woodstock T-shirt and ends by opening a fake Bible and shooting up with a cross-shaped syringe]. There's Gary Davis, a friend of ours, with an old truck who he talks to. They are symbolic of people in the songs. The ideas would gel around a song, or something topical at the time.

Then Neil took the footage and started editing. Having done a lot of music editing and sequencing, he found film editing a fascinating challenge.

He was quick to understand the process. As well

as being in the film, he was directing himself. Bernard Shakey approaches filmmaking in a homespun, folksy kind of way, which fits in with his music.

There's a motto at Shakey Pictures put together by David Briggs, which is: "Be Good or Be Gone". You'd better be ready, because Take 1 is gonna be it. That's why Neil gets so many things done. Because he's not lingering over Take 47. Also Bernard Shakey being so cheap, he always wants to get it the first take. "You shot it once, so why shoot it again? What's the difference?"

Interviews by Michael Bonner, John Einarson, Nick Hasted, Rob Hughes and John Lewis

Keeping it real: 'Bernard Shakey' edits his *Journey Through The Past*



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LONG MAY YOU RUN

As Neil Young prepares, at last, the release of his long-awaited *Archives* boxset, drawn from his vast back catalogue dating back more than 40 years, we got to thinking in the *Uncut* office how his music continues to permeate much of our favourite music in the present day. It's hard to think of anyone whose influence has been more profound on the kind of American music we've long championed in these pages – whether it's explicit in the sound itself or merely in the maverick attitude embodied in his famous quote about the perils of occupying the middle of the road: "Travelling there was really boring so I headed for the ditch. It was a rough ride but I met more interesting people there."

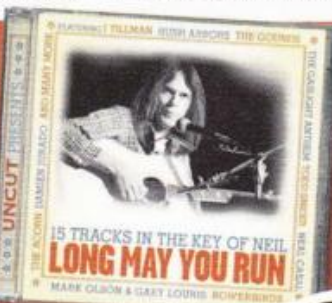
Here, then, are 15 tracks in which the spirit of his music lives.

1 AA BONDY *American Hearts*

Few current performers can more effectively evoke the acoustic spirit of Greenwich Village at its '60s height. It's a sound that inspired Neil Young in his early years and as the harmonica-rich title track of Bondy's 2008 debut album shows, it remains as compelling as it is timeless to this day.

2 THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM *The '59 Sound*

Bruce Springsteen is perhaps the more obvious musical reference point for this *New Jersey* quartet, led by singer/guitarist Brian Fallon. But in the raging guitars of this title track from their acclaimed second album, you can also hear echoes of Neil, in similarly roaring mood on something like "Rockin' In The Free World".



3 TODD SNIDER *Fortunate Son*

Oregon's Todd Snider has been around for 15 years now, since attaining a certain infamy with his "Talkin' Seattle Grunge Rock Blues" on his debut LP. This fine John Fogarty cover from his latest, *Peace Queer*, reminded us not only of Neil in acoustic vein but of another great *Uncut* favourite, Kelly Joe Phelps.

4 BOWERBIRDS *Dark Horse*

Living in an Airstream trailer in the North Carolina woods, the trio of Beth Tacular, Phil Moore and Mark Paulson make simple, otherworldly indie-folk, steeped in the supernatural traditions of the old, weird America. This track comes from their debut, *Hymns For A Dark Horse*.

5 DAMIEN JURADO *Best Dress*

A deliciously mournful pathos has sustained Seattle's Jurado through seven albums over the past decade. But he's excelled himself with the trembling, sinister gravity of this track, located somewhere between Nick

Cave and Will Oldham, and with the festering intensity of something like Neil's "Down By the River".

6 DEATH VESSEL *Bruno's Torso*

Essentially a vehicle for the Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter Joel Thibodeau, "Bruno's Torso" comes from his second album, *Nothing Is Precious Enough For Us*. And yes, the voice – even higher than

Young's famous early falsetto – does not belong to a guest female singer, but is all his own.

7 PORT O'BRIEN *Fisherman's Son*

Singer/songwriter Van Pierszalowski named his band after the Alaskan fishing town where his parents met – and his autobiographical bent continues with this arresting modern sea shanty about a Californian city boy who has to answer the call of the ocean.

8 ALELA DIANE *Every Path*

Diane made her first solo appearances supporting fellow Nevada City native Joanna Newsom. This riveting track comes from her forthcoming second LP, *To Be Still*, and comparisons with Karen Dalton and Sandy Denny are being bandied about, both of them on this evidence entirely justified.

9 HUSH ARBORS *Sand*

The bucolic name conceals a Virginian singer/songwriter Keith Wood, sometime associate of Sunburned Hand Of The Man, Six Organs... and Wooden Wand. "Sand" is one of the more pastoral tracks from Hush Arbor's eponymous recent album.

10 J TILLMAN *No Occasion*

Best known as the drummer with Fleet Foxes, Joshua Tillman is also a singer-songwriter in his own right of devastating poignancy and tremulous poise. His new solo album is full of understated rhapsody and yearning, lyrical Young-like melodies such as this.

11 MARK OLSON & GARY LOURIS *Saturday Morning On Sunday Street*

Olson and Louris put aside their country-rock origins to conjure the spirit of early Simon & Garfunkel on this spellbinding guitar-and-vocal duet.

12 THE ACORN *Glory*

Hailing from Neil Young's home state of Ontario, The Acorn are essentially a vehicle for the songs of Rolf Klausener. "Glory" comes from the band's second album, *Glory Hope Mountain* – a song cycle that tells the extraordinary life story of his Honduras-born mother, Gloria Esperanza Montoya.

13 NEAL CASAL *Chasing Her Ghost*

Sideman to the stars and currently playing in Ryan Adams' The Cardinals, Casal is also a prolific solo singer-songwriter. This haunting song comes from his new album, *Roots & Wings*, the 11th solo release of his career.

14 THE DODOS *Jodi*

Their second album, *Visiter*, appeared last year and despite the name, they're a fantastic live band, as they showed when they opened late last year for Okkervil River in Shepherds Bush.

15 THE GOURDS *Tighter*

The official bio for Austin's the Gourds refers to the band's "near-pathological need for a good time." You can hear just what that means in this slice of country-flecked guitar revelry, the closing track from their new album, *Haymaker*.



WORDS by STEPHEN TROUSSE
PHOTOGRAPH by DANNY CLINCH

"Maybe I'm just being
hopelessly
optimistic
here..."

DAVID BYRNE has a dream that the recession will bring artists flooding back to Manhattan. He is filling New York with bespoke bicycle racks, turning abandoned warehouses into giant musical instruments and writing an opera with Norman Cook about Imelda Marcos. Oh, and the irrepressible Thinking Head is back on the road, too — though even he isn't hopeful Eno will turn up...

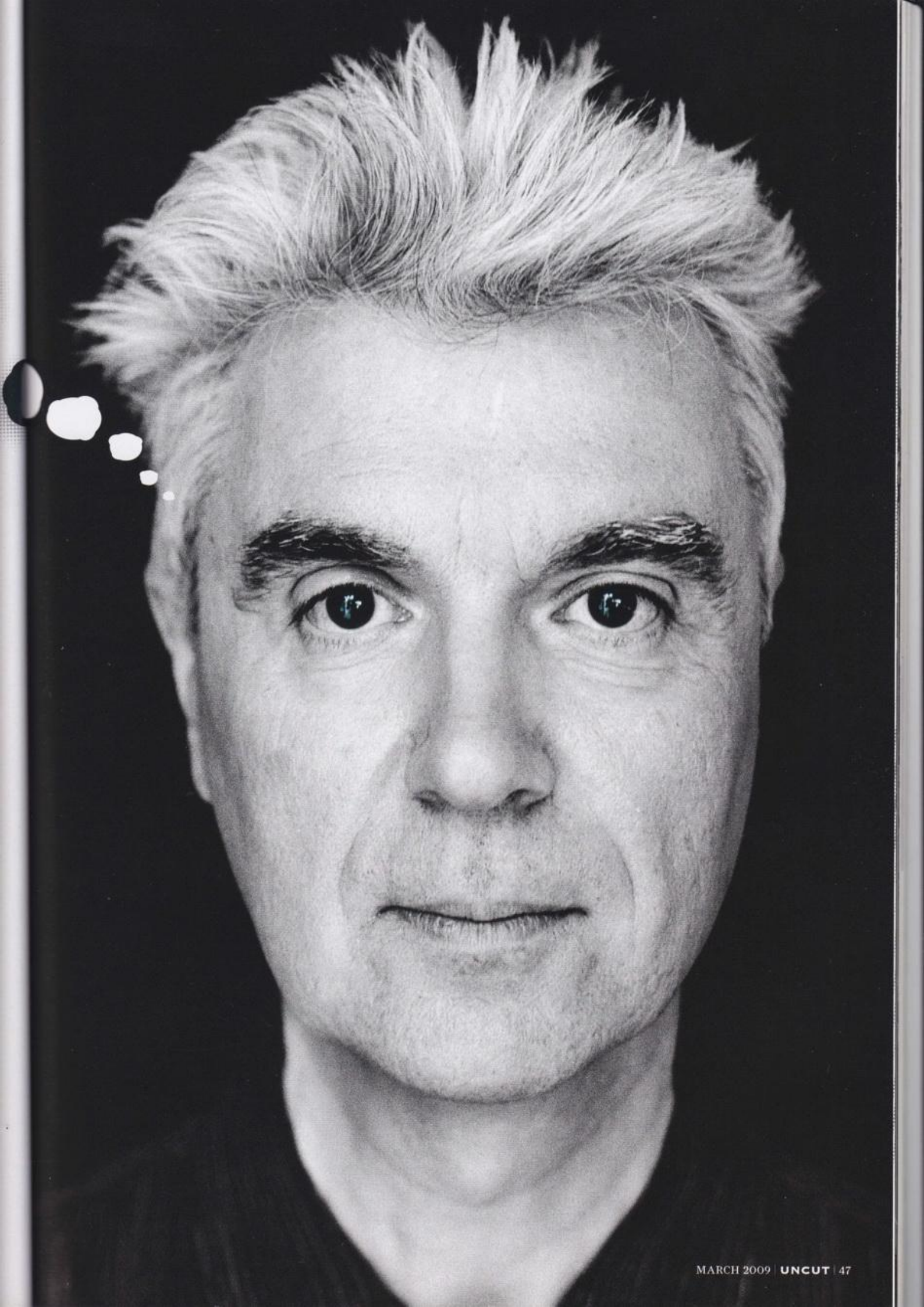
What's behind this sudden burst of activity?" wonders David Byrne in his midtown Manhattan apartment, like it's the first time it's crossed his mind. "Well, you know, I've always been pretty busy. Maybe more of it is being seen now than it was before. And it's really enjoyable! But I'm sure it's also some kind of neurotic thing — you know, filling up the time..."

We should all be so troubled. Once upon a time Byrne seemed to be the paradigmatic New York neurotic. "I was a peculiar young man," he wrote recently. "Borderline Asperger's, I guess." Onstage with Talking Heads he would twitch and shake like Anthony Perkins after ECT. He would chant of government buildings and beautiful cars like some suburban shaman. And his music journeyed from scratchy, punk bubblefunk to the soul of Al Green, the groove of Parliament and eventually the afrobeat of Fela Kuti, as though desperately pursuing some relief from the western hell of uptight self-consciousness.

Today he is supposedly resting. As if. Byrne's just returned from the first leg of his American tour, promoting his new record, *Everything That Happens Will Happen Today* — an album of folktronic gospel songs, the fruits of his first collaboration with Brian Eno since 1981. "It's been going great! It's kind of... spectacular, the reception it's been

getting," he says. "I don't know if it's the material or the whole dance element that's been added into the show or what, but it's been going over really well." He's back in Manhattan for his girlfriend's gallery opening. And he's still basking in the afterglow of Barack Obama's stunning victory. "Despite the economic stuff, which continues daily, I think people feel that at least we have somebody who has some sense guiding things and isn't making every decision based on religion and ideology..."

But you sense that Byrne might have a different definition of resting from you or me. "Yeah," he admits. "I suppose I'm one of those people who only justifies a holiday if I'm going to take along something to do..." In recent days and weeks he has also been recording singers for his forthcoming "disco opera" collaboration with Norman Cook, *Here Lies Love*, based on the life of former Philippine first lady and footwear enthusiast, Imelda Marcos. He's recorded a couple of tracks with Brooklyn bohos Dirty Projectors for the new Red Hot AIDS benefit, *Dark Was The Night*. He's been hatching plans to bring his 'Playing The Building' installation — where the plumbing of a vacant Battery warehouse has been hooked up to a wheezing old harmonium — to London's Roundhouse. On his blog he's pondering the demise of the record industry, the **CONTINUES OVER »**





With longtime collaborator Brian Eno, navigating past the border police separating art and pop: "We're more equals now," says Byrne

financial future of the American rustbelt, and the prospects of reviving the DNA of cro-magnon man. And he's scooting around Manhattan on his bike, no doubt using one of the sculptural, Keith Haring-style bike racks he was commissioned to design by the city. "While I was gone they just added 10 blocks of protected bike lane, just near me," he laughs, delightedly. "So now I can go from 34th street all the way to 14th in an area where a taxi can't go in! They put a kerb in there so the cars can't get at you. They've done it on Broadway for 10 blocks, they're adding it in little increments around town. It's pretty exciting! Who knew that New York would do this?"

And who knew that old punks could grow into middle age with such enthusiasm and vigour? Byrne is deep into his fifties now, his hair a thoughtful cloud of white, but his energy puts artists half his age to shame. Perhaps you could point to Byrne's renewed partnership with Brian Eno as one explanation for this zest. The pair first met on Talking Heads' first tour of the UK over 30 years ago and soon founded a kind of conceptual double act: Eno the obliquely pragmatic, strategic straight man, Byrne the poker-faced, metaphysical funny guy, midway between Buster Keaton and Marcel Duchamp. Byrne seemed to offer Eno a way into the mysteries of American music – the gospel, doo wop and funk that had besotted him since he was a dreamy

Suffolk schoolboy. Eno, on the other hand, offered Byrne the example of an artist who had mastered the Jedi mind trick that allowed you to navigate effortlessly past the border police separating art and pop. Together they transformed Talking Heads from preppy punks into a fourth-world funk troupe, and, with *Remain In Light*, recorded an LP that 28 years on still sounds like the future. On

"People whine about new music, but there's an awful lot out there"

their first collaboration outside Talking Heads, they drafted a blueprint for 21st-century ethnocollage with *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*.

"Did he seem like an elder statesman when we met?" wonders Byrne about Eno today. "A little bit, a little bit. Although he wasn't that much older! Just a little bit like he'd been around, and made more records than we had in Talking Heads. There was a little bit of that, and also that we were a little bit in

awe of him. So some of that wears off. We're more equals now I would think. Equals with different sets of skills, but equals in other ways."

The new record sees Byrne taking instrumental tracks that Eno had been working on for years, but which had stalled somewhere short of becoming actual songs, and transforming them into charmingly wonky, upbeat electronic folk songs.

The collaboration took place almost entirely separately, emailed back and forth across transatlantic cables and wires. Was Eno always happy with how the tracks were transformed?

"There was a couple where he said, 'Oh I wish this section could have gone on longer', but for the most part it seems like he was pretty happy with what was happening," says Byrne. "I play some of the original tracks as walk-in music at the shows; you can hear them before they had any singing on them. You can't imagine how they might end up. They're not ambient tracks, they're really nice instrumental tracks. But an awful lot has changed when they have words and vocals on! So it must be a very pleasant surprise for him to get them back in the mail and say, 'Oh, it's turned into a song!'"

Nevertheless, the partnership remains semi-detached, and Brian hasn't chosen to accompany him on the current tour of "the songs of Byrne and Eno". "Very early on I said I was going to tour the new record and I said, 'You're certainly welcome – people would love it. But I understand it's

Byrne's 'Playing The Building' installation at New York's Battery Maritime Building, August 2008

something you don't really like to do.' You can understand! Why should he? He can work on that never-ending U2 record and make a lot more money and it's easier than going on tour! I've invited him to the London shows. I presume he'll come and see something at some point. Or he can just go to YouTube. People hold up their phones in the crowd and film, and we get to watch the previous day's show on laptop everyday."

Has revisiting the old Talking Heads' songs that pepper the sets changed your sense of that material much?

"There's a continuity now, with some of the newer songs. Not all of them. But with some of them you can hear a connection with the old stuff and the new stuff, you can see the thread that connects them."

He's been playing to some of the youngest audiences of his career, teenagers and students come to check out the guy namechecked by Arcade Fire and Vampire Weekend, LCD Soundsystem and Animal Collective. After a period where he seemed terminally out of fashion, the nutty professor of pop postmodernism, his music seems contemporary once more, offering ways out of rock'n'roll conservatism that still haven't been fully followed through.

In turn, he seems to have a boundless enthusiasm for new music, and he is forever sharing his discoveries via his blog. "People whine a lot about new music, but there's an awful lot out there that I like. I guess I never got over that, you know, being a music fan and finding stuff."

Does it make it worthwhile, seeing your work prove so influential so many years down the line?

"Yeah! Though the sad thing is, if I hear one of those bands and I haven't been tipped off ahead of time. Someone says, you gotta hear this band and I'm like: 'Wow, I love this band,' and they say - well, you should, they sound just like you! So it's sad that you kind of gravitate to acts that sound a bit like yourself! Ha ha! But maybe that's not surprising."

These days he finds himself becoming something of an elder statesman himself, advising younger bands on the perils of the business, and casting a lucid eye over the demise of the recording industry, which these days can't even exploit his own back catalogue effectively. Amazingly, at a time when reissues and



Enjoying biker's rights in NYC and (right) with 'disco opera' collaborator Norman Cook

repackages seem to dominate release schedules, unheard Talking Heads material still languishes in record company vaults.

"And why? They labels don't have the personnel any more!" he hoots. "They've fired so many people they can't put out what they have. Or they'll make the priorities towards something that they believe is going to sell a shitload quickly and show good returns on their quarterly statements. All the big labels are in that situation. I'm not just pointing at Warner Bros or EMI. They're all in the same boat. And they would dearly love to put this stuff out, but they've fired so many people that they can't." But they won't allow you to release it either? "Well... the clock is ticking! We've given them an ultimatum and said hand it over. Don't let it just sit there."

One consequence of this commercial torpor is that *Everything That Happens...* was released independently, over the internet, by Byrne and Enos themselves. "It's been working pretty well for us. It's an experiment and you see what works and what doesn't. For the most part it's kind of working. I would definitely do it again, although I think we would probably revise it. There's not one way to do it that works for every project, which makes it a little bit tricky. You can't just plug a record into it and say - there it is! Each thing works a little bit differently. The fact that it was Brian and I doing something we hadn't done in about 30 years, we knew there would be a certain amount of interest across the internet. So we knew we could get a little bit of a start that way without having to pay for ads in newspapers and magazines."

It's almost as though his own indefatigable industry is an embarrassment to the suits. Not content with touring the new record, he's also taking the opportunity to investigate the changing face of the US city, taking his bike out on the road with him, documenting on his blog what effect eight years of Republican government has had on the country. One vivid entry depicted the abandoned, forsaken state of Cleveland city centre. "Oh man, it's unfair to pick on Cleveland," he sighs, "but y'know when you walk down what used to be the big main street? It's not like the high street in a village, this is the big main street in a big town. And it's all boarded up. How did they let it get this bad? You can understand the downward trend in many of those rustbelt towns but that started 15 years ago

at least... But I recall visiting Pere Ubu on our first trip to Cleveland back in the '70s. They had an hilarious story about how the mayor of Cleveland, in an attempt to instil civic pride, arranged for a parade of the new garbage trucks! It was kind of surreal!"

Where once he documented his fascination with the folk myths of the Midwest, on LPs like Talking Heads' *Little Creatures* (1985) and his 1986 film, *True Stories*, now he's looking for a way out. "Haha! It's true! I'm trying to find a life that's outside of the mall culture and the boarded up buildings. I think, fine - that's there, and I've done that. But there's got to be a way to find an enjoyable life in these towns. If I can find a little bit of it, and I'm a stranger, than maybe so can they..."

Increasingly Byrne's canvas seems to be the very streets of the city. Both his warehouse installation and his bike racks are

attempts to artistically re-imagine the fabric of everyday life. Like one of those conceptual artists in the short stories of Donald Barthelme, he seems to want to release art from the galleries and the studios, to redeem the corporate gentrified New York, to revive some of that dirty, dynamic cultural funk that ruled the city when he first arrived as a penniless art student back in the '70s.

Does it still feel like home, now that the cold-water lofts have been replaced with luxury condos for stockbrokers?

"I think that's all going to change very soon," he says, hopefully. "Those luxury high rises will start going for a pittance because the stockbrokers can't afford it any more. Can you imagine? They're still building! I can see a couple of blocks going up from my window right here. They're going to be empty and you think - 'They're building a 40-storey building, hundreds of apartments in it, who's going to move in?' Nobody has any money to move in there. Maybe the Saudis? But they've already bought their luxury apartments in New York. There's no more of them to buy apartments, so who's going to do it? They're going to have to drop all their prices. Then the artists can come back!"

For a second you find yourself buying into this vision of reborn Manhattan bohemia. But even Byrne's unstoppable idealism sometimes finds its limits, and his naïve melody falters. "I dunno. Maybe I'm just being kind of hopelessly optimistic here?" ☹

WORDS by JOHN LEWIS

Stand Down Margaret!



Thirty years on from the beginning of Margaret Thatcher's reign of terror, Uncut revisits a tempestuous and invigorating period in British pop history. **PAUL WELLER, THE SPECIALS, THE BEAT, UB40, SOUL II SOUL** and **THE FARM** recall a time when mass unemployment energised a whole generation to learn one chord, learn another, form a band – and then make an insurrectionist statement on Cheggers Plays Pop...

It's 1980, and The Beat are scheduled to play "Stand Down Margaret" on the early-evening kids' TV show, *Cheggers Plays Pop*. "We had to get the song on by stealth," laughs lead singer Dave Wakeling. "Our genial old Jamaican saxophonist, Saxa, explained to presenter Keith Chegwin that The Stand Down Margaret was an old Caribbean dance. 'Come now, Cheggers,' he was saying. 'Let me show you how to dance The Stand Down Margaret...' and he invents some ridiculous little dance routine. Then we start playing the song and unzip our jackets and we've all got T-shirts emblazoned with pictures of Maggie Thatcher..."

If it seems remarkable that an insurrectionary anthem – whose royalties were being donated to CND – could be broadcast to millions of school children at teatime, it was something that would be repeated many times during the 1980s. In quick succession came militant screeds of social reportage from the frontlines of urban Britain: "Going Underground", "The Earth Dies Screaming", "One In Ten", "(We Don't Need This) Fascist Groove Thang". As Toxteth, Brixton, Handsworth, Leeds and Bristol St Pauls burned during the riots of 1981, the No 1 single was the hypnotic prow of The Specials' "Ghost Town", where Neville Staple's eerie utterance "people getting

angry", seemed to capture the spirit of the times.

"Never before had we seen pop getting so brazenly political," says Ali Campbell of UB40. "Thatcher was a hate figure that united everyone."

Baby boomers and *soixante-buitards* will try to convince us that the '60s was the high-water mark of the protest song, but it was under Thatcher's 11 years in power that politics really seeped into pop. A prime minister whose favourite music included Patti Page's "How Much Is That Doggy In The Window" and Rolf Harris' "Two Little Boys" found herself namechecked in dozens of songs. Those few pop stars who came out as Conservatives – Gary Numan, Tony Hadley, Joan Armatrading, Billy Mackenzie, Lulu, Errol Brown from Hot Chocolate, Jon Moss from Culture Club, Lee John from Imagination – rarely escaped with any credibility.

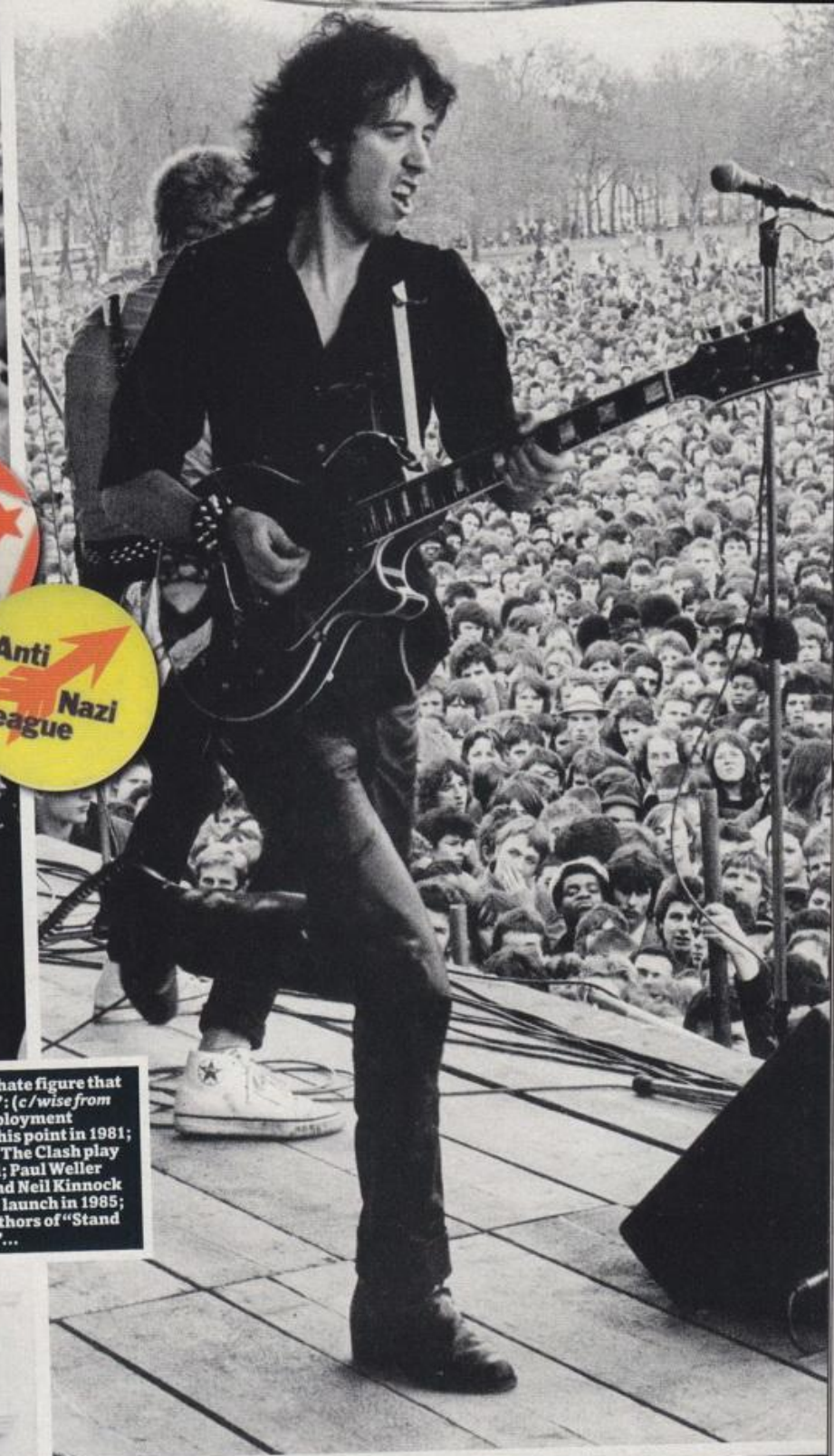
Some bands who emerged in the early Thatcher years came from a distinct ideological position, with neo-Marxists like Gang Of Four and Cabaret Voltaire influencing the "entryist" tactics of Heaven 17, The Human League and Scritti Politti. More potent was the generation of post-punk and 2 Tone bands, whose protest songs grew organically, angered by the effects of mass unemployment and urban decay.

"It's just Rule One for any songwriter – write what you know," says Paul Weller. "When you're confronted by headlines every day about mass unemployment, when you're seeing devastation of industry and public services, it's going to find its way into your lyrics. 'Going Underground' was a frustrated response to the old saying that people get the government that it deserves – 'the public gets what the public wants'. That anger fuelled a lot of my material at the time."

"We never wanted to make despondent music," says Ali Campbell. "We wanted to make happy music to lift us out of misery. We were never soapboxers. It's only because of what was going on in the wake of Thatcher – three-and-a-half million unemployed, cutbacks in public spending, threat of nuclear war – that those early tracks like 'Madam Medusa' and 'One In Ten' are so bleak."

"It helped that you had someone who was the very embodiment of evil in power," says The Specials' Jerry Dammers. "You have to remember that it was an incredibly politicised era. People were arguing in pubs about monetarism, inflation and unemployment. Everything became political. Not mentioning Thatcher, in a way, was as political as singing about her!"

Malcolm McLaren has since suggested, tongue only slightly in cheek, that punk **CONTINUES OVER ►**



"Thatcher was a hate figure that united everyone": (c/wise from top left) an unemployment protester makes his point in 1981; in the same year, The Clash play the ANL Carnival; Paul Weller with 'Red Ken' and Neil Kinnock at the Red Wedge launch in 1985; and The Beat, authors of "Stand Down Margaret" ...





Waging war against the lady in blue: Ken Livingstone with UB40 at GLC HQ in 1984, and right, Johnny Marr onstage with Billy Bragg, 1986



The usual complaint about political pop was that left-wing bands merely preached to the converted. In fact, there were crowd elements who remained resolutely unconverted, with avowedly anti-racist 2 Tone bands such as Madness and The Specials often becoming magnets for neo-Nazi skinheads.

"What was frustrating was that there were plenty of people in the audience who just liked the sound of the music and the look of the clothes," says Jerry Dammers. "They didn't particularly agree with the lyrics. In fact, ha ha, there were people in the band – and Terry [Hall] has been pretty clear about this – who didn't agree with the lyrics!"

Most astonishingly, some who lapped up the anti-Thatcher pop of the early 1980s now sit on the Conservative Party's front bench. Shadow Chancellor George Osborne has expressed his love of The Smiths, The Jam and The Clash, as has Old Etonian David Cameron, who cites The Jam's "Eton Rifles" as one of his favourite singles.

"It helped that you had someone who was the very embodiment of evil in power. Everything became political..." Jerry Dammers

Trumping them both is the shadow spokesman for culture, media and sport, Ed Vaizey, who has come out as a fan of Socialist Workers Party-aligned band The Redskins.

"I like passion, in politics and in pop, even if it's misguided," says Vaizey. "And I got passion from all those bands – The Specials, The Beat, The Jam, The Redskins. It's become a cliché, but Thatcher was one of those Marmite figures – you either loved her or you hated her. Even those who hated her had to acknowledge that she was iconic, and as such she became a lightning rod for dissent."

Pop's most concerted effort to oppose Thatcher came in November 1985, when Billy Bragg and Paul Weller, together with MP Robin Cook,

launched the Labour Party-funded initiative Red Wedge. A seven-date UK tour followed in early 1986, with a core group of Bragg, Weller, Dammers, Johnny Marr, Jimmy Somerville and Junior Giscombe. Another tour before the 1987 General Election added The The's Matt Johnson, Captain Sensible, The Blow Monkeys and various left-wing comedians to the bill.

In retrospect, Red Wedge seemed to conclude pop's dalliance with organised politics, largely because it failed to attract young voters. The 1987 General Election not only saw another Tory landslide, but also showed that Labour were still supported by fewer first-time voters than the Tories (34%, up from 29% in 1983, but still lower than the Tories' 45%).

Political pop went into decline: that brief burst of positivist left-wing pop of the mid-1980s coinciding with Red Wedge (The Kane Gang, The Redskins, The Housemartins, The Style Council, The Christians) started to fizzle out, the messages of resistance drained from the lyrics until only the vestiges of retro soul remained.

"People became resigned to Thatcherism," says Peter Hooton of The Farm. "In Liverpool around 1980, people were angry, listening to The Clash, The Jam, The Specials. By the mid-1980s, that had been replaced by resignation. For most of the '80s, unemployed kids in Liverpool were listening to Pink Floyd and Hendrix. Partly it was nostalgia for an age they felt was better, partly it was the amount of heroin that was sweeping through the city. You can't really enjoy The Clash on heroin."

By 1987, unemployment had been stuck above three million for more than four years, with youth unemployment in excess of 60% in parts of Britain.

"Ironically, it was the ideal culture for forming a band," says Hooton. "You noticed that not just in Liverpool but all around the country. If you were in a band and you were serious about it, you certainly couldn't hold down a day job. So you had this massive explosion of bands around the country rehearsing in the daytimes and then playing live at

went hand-in-hand with Thatcherism. Both attacked the post-war consensus, both asserted the primacy of the individual, both served as a model for private enterprise. But punk's rage was quickly channelled by the left into Rock Against Racism, a coalition established in August 1976 to combat the rise of the National Front and to register disgust at Eric Clapton's inflammatory onstage comments in Birmingham earlier that month. The movement came of age when The Clash headlined an Anti-Nazi League Carnival at Victoria Park on April 30, 1978. While some of punk's swastika-decorated nihilism survived – John Lydon's socialist baiting, the dubious fringes of Oi! – the spirit of Rock Against Racism dominated pop for much of the 1980s, with several political advocacy events – including 1985's Artists United Against Apartheid – following a similar template.

In early 1981, Rock Against Racism briefly resurfaced in a small series of gigs, Rock Against Thatcher and Rock Against Sexism. In June 1981 the Glastonbury Festival renamed itself The Glastonbury CND Festival, with the likes of Madness, New Order and Aswad going on to play anti-nuclear benefits. In September 1981, UB40 played several benefits for those arrested in that summer's inner-city riots. In 1984 everyone from Test Department to Wham! played fundraisers for striking miners; at the same time dozens of outfits – including The Smiths, The Damned and The Fall – all played in a series of "Save The GLC" concerts in support of Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council, then on the verge of being abolished by central government.

night. And, with the expansion in education, there seemed to be more venues for people to play.

"The irony was that very few of these bands were that political, even at a time that the *NME*, for instance, seemed to have become a Redskins fanzine. Liverpool might have been the country's most militant and politicised city, but what pop did it produce? Frankie Goes To Hollywood! You can't get much more escapist than that!"

For some, the escapist tone of '80s pop started to chime with Thatcherism. Some started to take up the entrepreneurial spirit that Thatcher came to embody, be it the Happy Mondays or Soul II Soul.

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THIS IS THE ONLY
ACCEPTABLE CUT!

YORKSHIRE
AREA N.U.M.
CALLS FOR
TOTAL
OPPOSITION
TO THE
CUTS

HERE'S A

FIGHT
FOR
THE
RIGHT
TO
WORK

THE SPECIALS

Ghost Town
Why?
Friday Night Saturday Morning

A second winter
of discontent:
demonstrators
protesting Tory
spending cuts in
November 1979

"We were children of Thatcher," says Soul II Soul's Jazzy B. "And, for us, Thatcher legitimised a lot of things. In the old days, Arthur Daley figures were seen as rogues. But they became respectable, and so did we. The kind of parties that might have been illegal in the old days were now legitimate."

Some budding musicians, DJs and label bosses took advantage of Thatcher's business initiatives. "I wonder how many lefties like myself," said Tony Wilson in 2000, "look back now with misty eyes on the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, that great nurturer of the young." The scheme paid claimants a supplement on top of their weekly dole money to assist a business startup, providing they also put in £1,000 of their own money as capital. Although the scheme was eventually abandoned after creating thousands of short-lived business failures, it managed to assist fledgling labels like Warp, Creation and Domino.

Cumming. "If you wanted an American act to play in Britain, you had to ensure that an equivalent number of British musicians were playing an equivalent number of 'man days' in the US. There was a ridiculous degree of horse-trading involved. If there's one positive thing that Thatcher's government did, it was getting rid of that."

Other fears about trade union intransigence crept into the pop world, as Dave Wakeling recalls. "We were at No 4 in the charts with 'Mirror In The Bathroom' and we were going to do *Top Of The Pops*. We got there, and found out there was some industrial dispute with the cameramen or something. We were almost in tears, pleading with them. 'Can't you see - if we do *TOTP* we could be No 1 next week! It's what we've dreamed about since we were kids!' There was a lot of anti-union feeling in the band after that, which you could say was a little ironic."

"I still think Thatcher should be shot as a traitor to the people. We're still feeling the effects of what she did to this country, and probably always will..." Paul Weller

If much of Thatcher's legacy came in the form of union "reform" - clamping down on industrial action and breaking the closed shop - the Musicians Union provides an interesting case in point. Throughout the '60s and '70s, the MU had earned a reputation for failing to embrace the changes brought about by recorded pop music and the promotional video, drawing up byzantine agreements with government and broadcasters.

"I'm a big supporter of the Musicians Union," says Jerry Dammers. "But there were some daft, Luddite regulations that continued until the 1980s. They had a downer on synthesisers, for instance, believing they put string players out of work! Also, when you mimed on *Top Of The Pops*, unions demanded that you had to re-record the track, to ensure that no musicians were put out of work. Of course, no-one ever, ever re-recorded their tracks! They just had to book a studio, in case they got investigated by a union official, and sat in there drinking tea and watching TV. Then they'd go on TV and mime to their record. It became a racket."

Other MU regulations were abolished under Thatcher, including a joint "exchange scheme" with the American musicians unions. "It was a logistical nightmare," says music promoter John

Broadly, the Stand Down Margaret generation remain refreshingly unapologetic about their hatred of the Conservative Party. "I've probably become a bit apolitical in the last 10 or 15 years," says Paul Weller. "But I still think that Thatcher should be shot as a traitor to the people. We're still feeling the effects of what her and her party did to the country, and probably always will: the whole breakdown of communities, the dismantling of trade unions, the attack on health, education and industry."

"She dismantled everything of value to the British people," agrees Ali Campbell. "The National Health Service, the labour movement, free education. I struggle to think of a single positive thing about her reign of terror."

"I can only hope that Barack Obama's victory represents the end of the ludicrous trickle-down economic theory we've been beholden to for the past 30 years," says The Beat's Dave Wakeling. "I played a gig in California the night after Obama's victory and 'Stand Down Margaret' got the biggest cheer of the night. This from people who weren't even born when it was released!"

"That hatred runs deep..."

"When will they take her away?"

Riots, The Falklands and the dole: the Thatcher years in song

The Beat

Stand Down Margaret 1980

Joyous insurrection against the new PM, set to uptempo reggae and African hi-life guitar.

UB40

Madam Medusa 1980

From when they were great: a savage, 12-minute dub "tribute" to the "Lady with the marble smile..."

Heaven 17

(We Don't Need This) Fascist

Groove Thang 1981

"Crisis point, we're near the hour" - bedsit politicising set to a finger-popping electro-funk bassline.

The Specials

Ghost Town 1981

Eerie, doom-laden mix of dub, jazz and music hall vocals that soundtracked a summer of urban riots.

The Jam

A Town Called Malice 1982

A pumping Motown bassline drives the pioneering sounds of "soulcialism".

Robert Wyatt

Shipbuilding 1982

Themes of Thatcher's Britain, exposed: Elvis Costello's lyric tells of an unemployed man who finds work in a shipyard, only to discover his squaddie son has been killed in the warship he built.

Style Council

With Everything To Lose 1985

"Hope ends at 17... forced into Government schemes..." Weller at his angriest, later reworked as "Have You Ever Had It Blue" for *Absolute Beginners*.

Elvis Costello

Tramp The Dirt Down 1989

"England was the whore of the world / Margaret was her madam..." Costello swaps elliptical political allusions for a rather more direct approach.

Morrissey

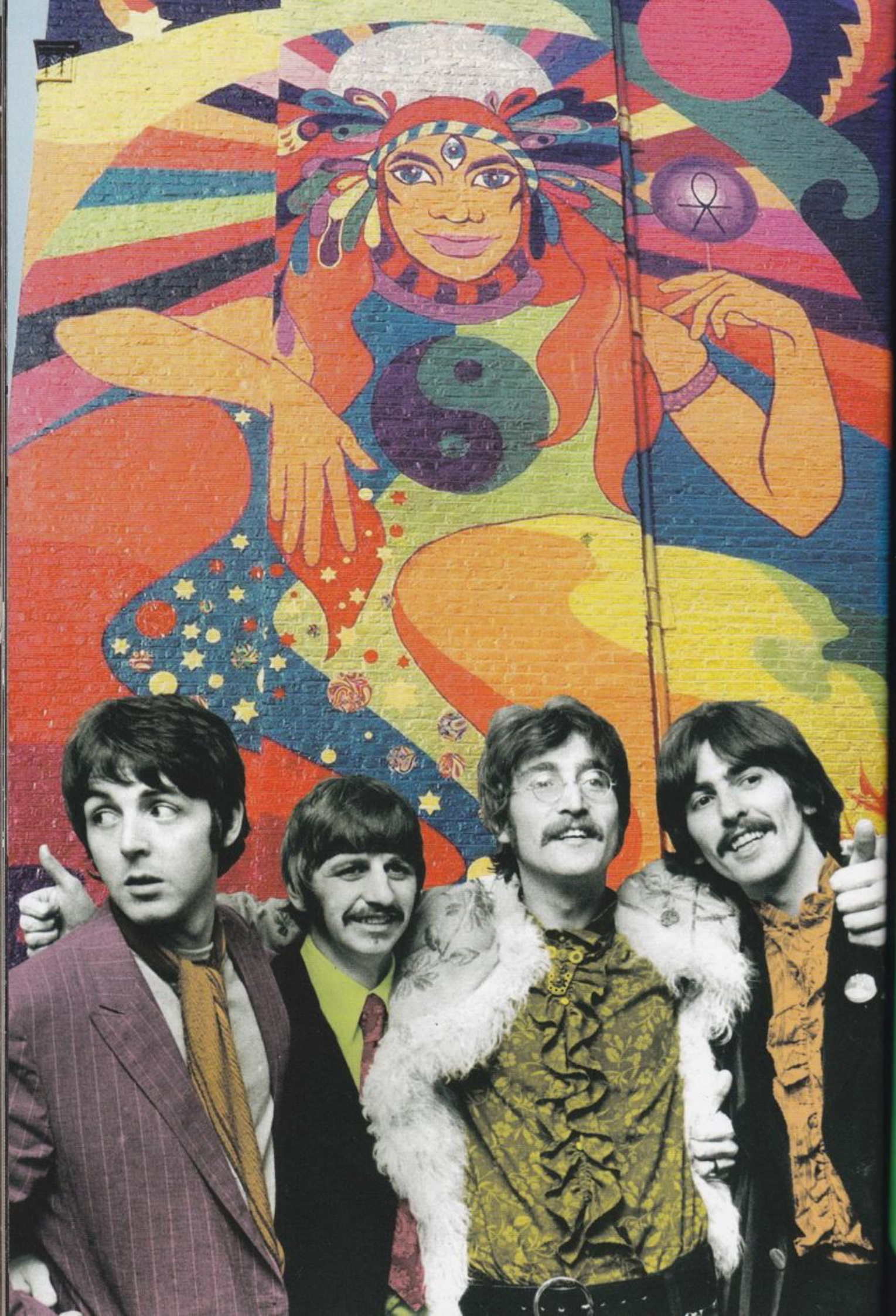
Margaret On The Guillotine 1988

Deliciously spiteful fantasy of Mrs T's execution.

Kirsty MacColl

Free World 1989

Johnny Marr assists this bile-filled letter to the soon-to-depart Iron Lady: "I thought of you when they closed down the school / And the hospital too..."





The house that John, Paul, George and Ringo built

A glass of champagne for breakfast. A gang of Hell's Angels squatting in the kitchen. A brass band on the roster. A queue of optimists – including David Bowie – outside hoping to be signed. And a studio in the basement without a tape deck. When The Beatles dreamed up Apple, they wanted it to be different from other record companies. Mission accomplished, then...

WORDS by DAVID CAVANAGH | MAIN BEATLES PHOTOGRAPH by JOHN PRATT/GETTY IMAGES

Just after 1pm on a bitterly cold Thursday in January, the music started. It was heard by office-workers and shoppers for half a mile either side of Regent Street. In nearby Savile Row, people leaned out of windows, clambered across fire escapes, or simply gazed upwards in bewilderment as the world's most famous pop group played for 42 minutes on the roof of No 3.

The Beatles' rooftop concert on January 30, 1969, gave amicable closure to a bad-tempered film (*Let It Be*), and was a rare display of unity in a sour, divisive winter. George Harrison had quit the band earlier that month, briefly, unwilling to take any more orders from Paul McCartney. Harrison, McCartney and Ringo Starr had all been horrified to see John Lennon's girlfriend Yoko Ono perched beside him during recording sessions. And Lennon had gone public about the parlous state of Apple Corps – The Beatles' mysterious business wing, based

at 3 Savile Row – warning that if it continued on its present course, they'd be penniless within six months.

"It was a tumultuous period on just about every level, personally, musically and otherwise," remembers Ken Mansfield, North American Manager of Apple Records in 1968–9, who witnessed the rooftop concert. "The whole Apple thing was a mess. You had Beatles getting married and going off in their own directions. The finances were going crazy."

On February 3, a press release announced that a New York businessman, Allen Klein, had been hired by The Beatles "to look into all their affairs". Klein, fresh from an association with The Rolling Stones, was confronted with a question that would baffle people for years to come: what kind of organisation was Apple? A record label? A multimedia conglomerate? Some sort of non-profit-making institute for the arts? As Klein soon learned, Apple was all three – and more.

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Quietly, out of the media glare, a partnership called Beatles & Co was founded in April 1967. Each Beatle was a 5% shareholder. A new (as yet unnamed) corporation, owned by all four of them, would control the remaining 80%. From now on, the vast majority of their earnings would be taxed at a corporate rate – much lower than the 90% they'd been paying as individuals. Considering its notoriety as a money-squandering venture, it's ironic that Apple was intended to save The Beatles a fortune.

When Brian Epstein, their manager, died in August 1967, Apple was still a tentative concept. Later that year, an Apple music publishing company was set in motion, and an Apple boutique opened. Trusted Beatles employees and friends were given jobs in the new empire. Derek Taylor, their ex-publicist, returned from California to run the press office. Road manager Neil Aspinall was made Managing Director of the Apple organisation (a job he'd still be doing 39 years later). Pete Shotton, Lennon's childhood friend, was put in charge of the Apple Boutique. Easily the most psychedelic of the empire's early projects, the Boutique had an eye-popping Indian-style mural on the side of its Baker Street premises. But it became the first Apple casualty, closing eight months after its December 1967 launch. On the final day of trading, £10,000 of stock was given away free.

As Stefan Granados notes in his authoritative book, *Those Were The Days: An Unofficial*

History Of The Beatles' Apple Organisation 1967-2002, Aspinall's job as MD was "not made any easier by The Beatles' lack of a unified vision for Apple". Drunk on a cocktail of woolly altruism and revolutionary zeal, the Fab Four, galvanised by McCartney, over-idealised Apple as "a company that could draw on almost every aspect of popular culture", as Granados put it, "and champion new talent in such diverse fields as literature, music, art, television and even electronics".

"It felt like this great hope," recalls Jackie Lomax, a powerful rock'n'roller from Liverpool who signed to Apple as a singer-songwriter. "The Beatles were a symbol of hope, and we had great expectations that they would do things in a new fashion." If they couldn't hack it as shopkeepers, well, retailing was only one pip in the overall apple.

In February 1968, Apple Corps was split into five divisions: The Beatles; Music (Records and Publishing);

Merchandising (Retail and Wholesale); Apple Films; and Apple Electronics. Now things were moving. Ken Mansfield, Apple Records' US liaison man at Capitol in Hollywood, recalls instances of "sitting in rooms with The Beatles as four young businessmen, and planning, scheduling and assigning everything very, very carefully." A visual identity was imperative. Apple

Records commissioned a label logo from designer Gene Mahon: a green Granny Smith on one side of the vinyl; its sliced-open white centre on the other.

McCartney, fizzing with energy, took a particularly close interest in A&R, Publishing and record production. Harrison was keen to advance the career of Jackie Lomax. And Lennon? What did he want? "A very good question," remarks Jack Oliver, former President of Apple Records from 1969-71, who started in the Publishing department in January 1968. "John thought of Apple as a vehicle to promote his ideas, but I think he thought it would be more avant-garde. The others did, too, in the beginning. They wanted Apple to be on the cutting edge of everything."

In May, Lennon flew with McCartney to New York, publicising Apple on *The Johnny Carson Show* and at a press conference. Lennon explained to journalists: "We want to set up a system whereby people who just want to make a film about anything don't have to go down on their knees in somebody's office." The previous month, an Apple advert had been placed in the *NME*. "This man has talent," it read, next to a picture of a one-man band. "One day he sang his songs to a tape recorder (borrowed from the man next door)." The advert then urged Britain's undiscovered superstars to send Apple their demo tapes. "Do it now! This man now owns a Bentley!"

What happened now seems so inevitable that it's surprising nobody anticipated it. Apple was inundated by a never-ending postbag of begging letters, poems, plays, novel outlines and movie pitches from all over the world. The staff couldn't cope. Manuscripts accumulated dust in a box room. Tapes were played intermittently, but few people who sent one ever heard back.

More assertive applicants went to Savile Row in person, in the hope of meeting a Beatle and landing



Those were the days: Mary Hopkin and Paul



Apple signing the Black Dyke Mills Band, with Paul on trumpet and Martha the sheepdog, June '68



Press office boss Derek Taylor and, left, George with 'Magic Alex'. Far left: the Savile Row rooftop 'gig'



Model employer: John and Yoko open Apple Tailoring, '68

an instant record contract. Tony Bramwell, Apple's head of promotion, tells me that most were given a fair hearing. "Jimmy, the doorman, would say, 'What are you here for?' Then send them to see either me or [A&R chief] Peter Asher."

Let's imagine I want to sign to Apple in 1968. I've come to your office. What are my chances?

Bramwell: "I've no idea. Depends what you've got. For instance, when James Taylor came in, it was like, 'For fuck's sake, you're wonderful!' The cry would then go up: 'Is there a Beatle in the house?' On that occasion Paul came running upstairs and James, sitting cross-legged on the floor, sang a song and Paul said, 'You're on.'"

Let's say I'm not as talented as James Taylor. "Well, other people got turned down. Gilbert O'Sullivan.

David Bowie. Yeah, yeah, Bowie got turned down. It was during his Lindsay Kemp period... with the clown. Crosby, Stills & Nash were turned down, too."

Jack Oliver moved from Publishing to the riotous press office on Savile Row's second floor, where alcohol and drugs were openly consumed, and where Derek Taylor, holding court in a giant wicker chair, welcomed visiting American musicians (especially if they had grass), while patiently repudiating Paul-is-dead rumours or composing emotional press releases that fictionalised the fragmenting Fabs as bosom pals.

"Derek Taylor was fabulous," enthuses Oliver. "He was always 'on', always very funny. His office was this crazy world where you had a lot of fun. Working wasn't supposed to be fun in England in

those days. It was a drudge, and you'd get your gold watch at the end of it. But we'd get to work in the morning and pour ourselves a glass of champagne from the bar."

However, Apple Records on the ground floor (where Oliver moved next) operated on very different lines. Down there, a small team – Peter Asher, Tony Bramwell and Ron Kass, President of Apple Records from 1968-9 – worked assiduously through the second half of 1968, keeping proper office hours and retreating from hedonism. Between them, these men made Apple the most successful new record company of the year.

Its star attraction was a pretty, 18-year-old Welsh folk singer, Mary Hopkin, whom Twiggy had

domain of Greek-born Alexis Mardas, nicknamed 'Magic Alex' by Lennon. In the mid-'60s, Mardas had designed a plastic box with randomly flashing lights (the 'Nothing Box') that Lennon, in his LSD phase, liked to stare at while tripping. Mardas was regarded by The Beatles as an electronics genius who could invent an array of gadgets to revolutionise people's lives. Apple gave him full financial backing. It might have been more accurate to describe him as a TV repairman.

The common image of 3 Savile Row in 1968 is of a freeloaders' paradise, where sharp-eyed burglars could help themselves to TVs, typewriters, hi-fi speakers and office furniture. Former press office employee Richard DiLello,

who wrote a hilarious Apple 'insider's diary' [1972's *The Longest Cocktail Party*], recalled a "crimewave" which saw pay-packets, cases of

wine and electric fan heaters routinely go missing, and all the lead on the building's roof get removed – in instalments – by a lowly office-boy.

DiLello also described a party of Hells Angels flying over from San Francisco in the run-up to Christmas, and being allowed not only to enter Apple, but to stay for weeks. Everyone was frightened to ask them to leave.

"Absolutely," Jack Oliver laughs. "They'd met George somewhere in America, and to get rid of them he'd said, 'Anyway, come and see us when you're in England.' Next thing we know, they've arrived at the office. And they sort of moved in, on the floor that Neil Aspinall was on. CONTINUES OVER ▶

"When James Taylor came in to the office, the cry went up: 'Is there a Beatle in the house?' Paul came running, Taylor sang one song, and Paul said: 'You're on'" — Tony Bramwell

spotted on ITV's talent show *Opportunity Knocks* and recommended to Paul McCartney. Another Macca project was the Black Dyke Mills brass band, from Yorkshire, whose single ("Thingumybob") he wrote and produced. Impressively, Apple's first two releases ("Hey Jude" and Mary Hopkin's "Those Were The Days") topped the British charts for a combined eight weeks in September and October 1968, and reached No 1 and 2 respectively in America. In all, Apple would sell 16 million records in its first year.

Other branches of the empire, though, revealed a mortal loophole: the corporation was much too abstract in its aims. Apple Electronics was the

They would raid the kitchen every night. When we had the Christmas party, they ate the bloody turkey the night before and we had to scramble to get another."

Far more serious was a problem that faced The Beatles in January 1969. They'd abandoned the first phase of their film *Get Back* (later *Let It Be*), and needed to regroup in a recording studio. 'Magic Alex' Mardas had for some months been building them a 'unique', 72-track studio (as opposed to an orthodox four- or eight-track) in Savile Row's basement. When they inspected his handiwork, they were mortified. He had installed a tape recorder, but it was a mere eight-track, and there was no mixing desk or soundproofing. Totally unusable, the studio had to be dismantled and a new one put in.

Mardas resigned his Apple directorship in 1971. He later customised bullet-proof cars for the Shah of Iran. Now 66, he received permission from the High Court in 2008 to sue the *New York Times* for describing him as a "charlatan".

Some time later, in the summer of 1972, the Savile Row offices were vacated while renovation work



Peter Brown's floor, and we were told, 'With that amount of people, you're lucky it didn't pancake the building.' Ha ha! That would have been a fitting end!"

Tony Bramwell got a phone call from John Lennon one night in 1968, asking him to take some groceries round to a flat in Montagu Square where he and Yoko were staying. "He said, 'While you're here, can you set up this camera for us?' So I set up the focus, the exposure and the automatic shutter release." Bramwell little realised



The "forceful" Allen Klein, 1970, and the band in the film *Let It Be*

and McCartney duly made his exit. "[Klein] was a very charismatic, forceful guy," McCartney told me in 2007. "I still say, if he was here today, we'd listen to him. There are just some people like that. They're very dominant. They don't make sense, necessarily. You come away from them thinking, 'Well, that was a bunch of shit - but he was very good, wasn't he?'"

When McCartney disappeared to his Scottish farm once sessions for *Abbey Road* concluded (in August), the Klein steamroller was free to flatten Apple Corps. Jack Oliver: "He arrived with all these, like, thugs. They all looked like him. They were short and stubby and gangster-looking." Klein sacked several well-liked personnel, including Ron Kass and office manager Alistair Taylor. Klein strove to consolidate his power by firing anyone he suspected of being too friendly with The Beatles.

"Like the logo, there were two halves to Apple. It was peace and love. Then Klein came in. Peace and love. Then the Blue Meanie arrives" — Jack Oliver

was carried out. The architects were shocked to find that the five-storey Georgian townhouse was in danger of collapsing. It appeared that at some point during the previous few years, someone working in the basement had removed essential structural supports, without underpinning the floors above. The whole building could have given way at any minute.

Jack Oliver: "There was one year we had a big party on [*Beatles' PA*]

he'd just become an accessory to the most controversial album sleeve in history. "The following day, he asked me to pick up the film. I got it printed. Then I went... 'Christ!'"

The sight of a full-frontal, stark-naked John and Yoko ensured that mounting scepticism towards the couple would now turn to open hostility; and that *Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins* would be rejected as pornography by Apple's distributors EMI (in the UK) and Capitol (US). It came out

independently in both countries, a week after *The White Album*.

"John had been 'Yoko'd'," sighs Bramwell. "We finished up with a lot of her [records] on Apple, which were very difficult to promote. I got into trouble with the BBC. They asked me, 'Why are you bringing this crap round?' I said, 'Listen, she's John Lennon's missus.'"

Lennon and McCartney were poles apart by early '69. With incompatible visions for Apple - an organisation that was increasingly synonymous with profligacy and exploitation, they squabbled about who should assume captaincy of the listing vessel. McCartney proposed his future father-in-law, Lee Eastman. Lennon wanted the more ruthless Allen Klein. Lennon got his way,

"Klein was not exactly sure which employees were truly close to the group," writes Stefan Granados. "So he fired almost all of Apple's senior management just to be on the safe side."

Apple Films was eliminated. Peter Asher resigned. Ken Mansfield followed Kass to MGM (having been told by Klein: "I want you to stay. From this moment, you make three times what you did 30 seconds ago"). Jackie Lomax drifted away to America. "Apple happened at the right time," he reasons. "But when the boys saw how much money they'd spent, they recoiled from it."

Jack Oliver, just 23, was made President of Apple Records. He steered it through the immediate post-Beatles era, when Badfinger, Billy Preston, and the solo Beatles all released successful albums and singles. Now a film producer on America's West Coast, Oliver believes there are "two distinct halves of Apple" - rather like its logo. "It was peace and love in the beginning," he says. "When Klein came in, it became a sort of corporate giant. Peace and love. Then the Blue Meanie arrives."

Today, Apple Corps exists as an enigmatic company (it seldom makes pronouncements of any kind, let alone the Derek Taylor kind) which fiercely guards The Beatles' legacy and image rights. Recent, high-profile Apple stories have centred on iTunes, a Beatles edition of *Rock Band*, and a long-running trademark dispute with Apple Computer (now Apple Inc.).

Sentimentality, however, is not Apple Corps' forte. The year 2008 marked the 40th anniversary of its official worldwide launch, its explosive debut on the pop scene, and a dozen memorable events besides. Not one of them was acknowledged. @

Jackie Lomax's *The Ballad Of Liverpool Slim* is released in March. *The White Book* by Ken Mansfield is available from Amazon. Thanks to Stefan Granados.

CORE VALUES

The different slices of Apple

- **Apple Corps:** Name for the entire organisation. Took shape in 1967-8. Streamlined in '69 and mid-'70s. Continues to represent Beatles' interests today. Current chief executive Jeff Jones replaced long-serving Neil Aspinall (died 2008).
- **Apple Records:** Launched 1968, to tremendous success (Beatles, Mary Hopkin). In early '70s, released ex-Beatles' solo records alongside an eclectic roster (Ravi Shankar, Badfinger, John Tavener, Billy Preston). Shut down 1975.
- **Apple Films:** Launched 1968, closed by Allen Klein 1969. Re-launched 1972, with T. Rex's *Born To Boogie* (director: Ringo Starr). Lay dormant after mid-'70s, but was reactivated in 1991.
- **Apple Retail:** Apple Boutique opened December 1967. Plagued by shoplifters, closed July 1968.
- **Apple Electronics:** One-man laboratory of 'Magic Alex' Mardas. Effectively inoperative since 1969.
- **Apple Publishing:** Launched 1967. Made enormous profits from Badfinger, notably their song "Without You", a worldwide hit for Nilsson and Mariah Carey.
- **Zapple Records:** Avant-garde label, launched '69. Folded after just two LPs (by George Harrison, and John & Yoko).



THE
MAKING
OF...



SHOT BY BOTH SIDES

BY MAGAZINE

Powered by a razor-riff, nihilist lyrics, some classic-rock chops and an infamous showing on *Top Of The Pops*, this ferocious anthem was the closest thing Devoto and co ever got to a hit...

THE KEY PLAYERS



PETE SHELLEY
Co-writer



HOWARD DEVOTO
Co-writer, vocals



MICK GLOSSOP
Producer



DAVE FORMULA
Keyboards

In 1977, Howard Devoto was NME's "Most Important Man Alive". Only 24, he had already triggered the Manchester scene by promoting the Sex Pistols' two Lesser Free Trade Hall gigs, then effectively resigned from punk by leaving Buzzcocks, the band he'd formed with Bolton college friend Pete Shelley, before their first EP "Spiral Scratch" was even out. "Howard was at college, and he'd been told that if he didn't complete the work, he'd be throwing away the last three years," is Shelley's prosaic recollection of the split.

By the summer, Devoto was ready for his next move. "Shot By Both Sides" was driven by a riff Shelley had come up with in Devoto's digs on Salford's Lower Broughton Road. The phrase, "shot by both sides", meanwhile, came out of an argument with a left-wing friend. A notice in a record shop window to record "fast and slow music. Punk mentality not essential" brought Magazine together to play it. In a year when the National Front and Anti-Nazi League were fighting in the streets, its lyric evoked Devoto's distaste for punk bands manning the barricades. "The Clash," he says, witheringly, "the whole dressing up with bullets - pathetic. I mean, what bloody side is this? I'm feeling I should get John Lydon over here. You know, they've got this little song about 'I am an...' ['Anarchy In The UK'] So, what side's that on?"

Magazine in the studio:
first of the New Wave



"Shot By Both Sides" sheer scale, gnomic lyrics propelled by that swaggering riff, shocked the punk scene in 1978. Devoto was widely thought to have sabotaged its seemingly unstoppable momentum with a *Top Of The Pops* performance in which he stood stock still, caked in white make-up. But this February, minus late guitarist John McGeoch, they'll be playing again. And, of course, the highlight of this shows will undoubtedly be "Shot By Both Sides".

"Musically they were a post-punk, New Wave band, before that had even started," says producer Mick Glossop. "There was an intellect and depth to what they were doing that very few bands had before Joy Division, who were always considered the originators of that scene. But 'Shot By Both Sides' was first." NICK HASTED

PETE SHELLEY, CO-WRITER: I was walking from the bus-stop where I was living when the riff came to me. I liked the way it ascended - a strange progression.

HOWARD DEVOTO, SINGER, CO-WRITER:

I was involved with "Spiral Scratch" coming out, helping to manage Buzzcocks, still doing a bit of writing with Pete. And that's how we end up in the back room of Lower Broughton Road, and he hands me a guitar and shows me some chords, sings me a bit and says, go on, play those. That riff was really something different. I said, "Wow, I really like that." He said, "I'll give it to you."

SHELLEY: One day I started playing this thing, and Howard came in and said, "Ooh, what's that?" I said, "It's just a riff." He said, "Oh, are you doing anything with it?" I said, "No, I've got no plans for it."

DEVOTO: When you hear it in the context of "Lipstick" [the 1978 Buzzcocks b-side in which Shelley used the riff himself], it's another Pete Shelley good tune - fine. But in the process of him showing me the chords, it suggested something else to me.

SHELLEY: He said, "Well hang on a sec," and he went into his room and came back with this folder with his bits of writing in. He had a store-cupboard, leftovers he had lying around he'd make songs from. Within minutes of hearing it, he came out with these words. It was the first time I'd heard about "shot by both sides".

DEVOTO: So, I'd been at college, still living in Bolton. I'm seeing a little bit of this lady who's even further than a socialist. I'm not saying she was my girlfriend - you didn't know her like I did. I hadn't had sex with her. **CONTINUES OVER**

Magazine, on the outside of
everything: (c/wise from top left)
Dave Formula, Devoto, Barry Adamson,
John McGeoch and Martin Jackson



**THE
MAKING
OF...**
**SHOT BY
BOTH SIDES**



And we had a political argument one day, and she attempted to finish the conversation with: "Oh, you - you'll get shot by both sides." I thought: "Mmm... I'm going to keep that." It predates me advertising for a band and meeting Pete Shelley. I'd been carrying it for two years, all the way in my hands from Bolton to Salford. If it was so bloody precious, why didn't I put it in a song with Buzzcocks? Don't know, don't know. But I had it earmarked for something.

My course ended. So there was time to stick up another notice, at Virgin's record shop in Piccadilly, Manchester this time, for another band. When Barry [Adamson] turned up on my doorstep, he'd only been playing bass six weeks. I met Martin Jackson, the first drummer, and Bob Dickinson, the first keyboard player. Once I'd played a little bit with them, I phoned John [McGeoch] up in London. "Can you come back to Manchester?" He seemed a very, very capable guitarist, in ways that Steve Diggle and Pete weren't.

MICK GLOSSOP, PRODUCER: For a so-called punk guitarist, John had a lot of chops. His technique was influenced by previous rock bands, rather than punk ones. The punk ethic was supposed to be about attitude. But were they a punk band? Probably not.

DEVOTO: The original demo tape was "Shot By Both Sides", "The Light Pours Out of Me" and "Suddenly We Are Eating Sandwiches" - text from a Samuel Beckett book that became "My Mind Ain't So Open". I didn't think we'd get to an album when we signed with Virgin. In my impoverished little psyche, that deal was signed to record "Shot By Both Sides". I couldn't see much beyond that. The demo wasn't that different. The finished thing fell into place pretty quickly. We recorded it as a four-piece, because we'd asked Bob Dickinson to leave.

GLOSSOP: The record wasn't crafted in any production sense. All the parts were already there.

DEVOTO: For me, it was a very important song. When I did the vocal, I remember feeling it was a very significant moment in my life. I remember looking at the microphone, and the bit of carpet where I was, and almost wishing, just for myself: "I'd like to take that bit of carpet." Was I excited as I sang, was the blood rushing? Yes. It was my fifth-ever recording session. I do recall Mick Glossop going: "Maybe we're getting a little over the top now." Because still, when I do sometimes catch myself listening to it, the ferocity of it surprises. We're still in the vapour-trail of punk. And the punk aesthetic had its place in Magazine in the early days - until we'd wrung every drop from its little body. And it was our first record - that's it. That's the feel of it.



Magazine's players:
John McGeoch, Howard Devoto
and Barry Adamson



FACT FILE

Written by Howard Devoto & Pete Shelley

Performers: Howard Devoto (vocals), John McGeoch (guitar), Barry Adamson (bass), Martin Jackson (drums)

Produced by Mick Glossop and Magazine

Recorded at Virgin Mobile

Released as a single: January 1978
Highest UK chart position: 41

TIMELINE

February 1977 Devoto reveals he is leaving Buzzcocks, declaring punk "old hat"

Summer 1977 Devoto hears Shelley playing the "Shot..." riff, and advertises for a new band

October 2 1977 Magazine's live debut at Manchester's Electric Circus includes "Shot By Both Sides". Virgin sign them days later

February 1978 After the single's January release, Dave Formula joins on keyboards. A disastrous *Top Of The Pops* appearance stalls it at 41

March 1978 The five-piece Magazine re-record the song for debut LP *Real Life*

GLOSSOP: Howard was serious about what he was doing. And "Shot By Both Sides" represented something. It was a consensus within the band, it wasn't just Howard, that this was something other than a three-minute pop single.

DEVOTO: "Shot By Both Sides" is about trying to be a complete individual, and suspecting that that is somewhere on the outside of the everything that is framed by the two sides. Funky chunk of talk, eh?

GLOSSOP: The riff's a classic change, particularly the last time it comes in, after that build-up [with Devoto almost talking to himself]. The guitar's got that flanging effect, all of that was doubled, there on the dominant chord that gives it a sense of suspense, then it goes back to the root-chord to play the riff. There's a very strong feeling of release there.

SHELLEY: It's a great record, it hasn't dated. It was a similar thing to what John Lydon did when he started PiL. A shock element, because it's a whole different vocabulary being used. Especially when

anathema. Would I have liked it to be as successful as it could be, reach as many people as it could - provided I didn't have to do *Top Of The Pops*? You've got it. Can you fix it?

We re-recorded it for *Top Of The Pops* because I felt I needed to downplay that vocal a bit. I felt that I simply could not do that within the... [sighs] romantic confines of the *Top Of The Pops* studio. I knew my heart wouldn't be in it. Re-recording was a practical way to deal with that. Stupid as it may have been. Was it an attempt at anti-performance? Yes. With the lousy make-up from the woman in the BBC. She just made my face a white blob. In purely practical terms, you think, that was such a daft thing to do. And it didn't help sales.

FORMULA: I remember Kate Bush on *Top Of The Pops*, singing "Wuthering Heights", and Rose Royce doing "Wishing On A Star". I thought, "There's three great songs on the show at least!"

DEVOTO: People who suggest I was trying to subvert success... rubbish.

Technically it was a bit of a hit, wasn't it?

FORMULA: There was such strength in the group to push forward. "Okay, so you missed that one. There's loads more to come."

DEVOTO: You missed that one, didn't you?

"STILL, WHEN I LISTEN TO IT, THE FEROCITY SURPRISES. WE WERE IN THE VAPOUR TRAIL OF PUNK, AND IT WAS OUR FIRST RECORD..."
DEVOTO

they added Dave Formula's keyboards. Didn't see them much in punk.

DAVE FORMULA, KEYBOARDS: ["Spiral Scratch" and future Magazine and Joy Division producer] Martin Hannett called me and said, "There's a band on Granada TV tonight who you might care to have a look at. They're looking for a keyboard player." Magazine did three songs. "Shot By Both Sides" was one. The way Howard was presenting himself was sombre. I found the ascending riff compelling. I couldn't work out if it was complex, or very clever in its simplicity.

DEVOTO: I wanted pop success. Why not? But miming and *Top Of The Pops* was

How could you miss that one? We recorded it again for the album. We wanted to add keyboards. And bloody Virgin had lost the multi-track. That's how much they cared about it. We just did it again. Then this continuing thing starts revealing itself, which is that a song stays with people. They start ear-holing you about it. And then suddenly that summer, *Rolling Stone* reviews it with the albums. They didn't usually do singles. But Greil Marcus does a whole fucking thing on "Shot By Both Sides". This is some compensation, you know? It's all right. I can settle for that. Why not? ☺

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

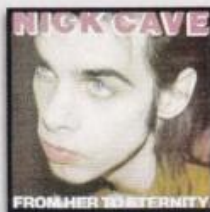
On the telephone the day before his December 2008 tour begins, Nick Cave seems drily amused by the prospect of a discussion of some of his many works with his longstanding group, The Bad Seeds. As it turns out, however, both he and founder Seed Mick Harvey are expansive with their recollections of the band's gothic Americana – even if Cave, particularly, is surprised to remember much at all. “When you wake up with a hangover and wonder what you did last night,” he says, “there’s always that sort of feeling around my records...”

INTERVIEW by JOHN ROBINSON

BAD SEEDS' BUG-RIDDEN DEBUT

FROM HER TO ETERNITY

1984, MUTE



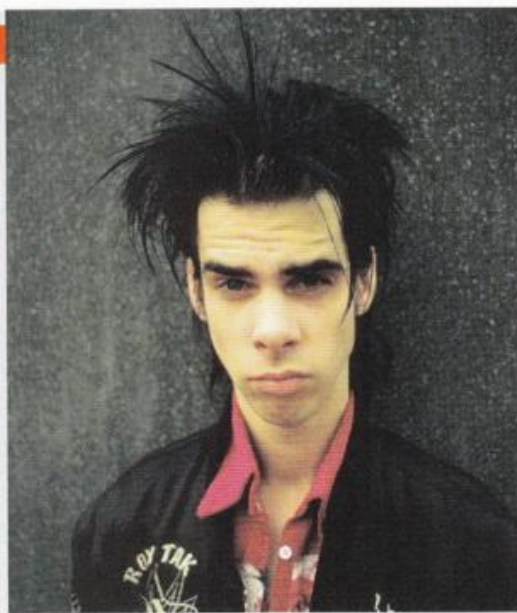
NICK CAVE Their previous band dead, if not yet cold, former Birthday Party members Nick Cave

and Mick Harvey return with guitarist Blixa Bargeld and kindred spirit Barry Adamson. Their first album establishes a palette of theatrical arrangements and dark Americana, enduring mainstays of the band's sound.

NICK CAVE: The Birthday Party very much had its end – I went back to Australia and I think we did a few shows without Mick Harvey, who basically broke up The Birthday Party, in the sense that he made the phone call to say, “I don’t think The Birthday Party should go on any longer.”

MICK HARVEY: It’s attributed to me. It was me who said “we should can it, really” – and initially Nick and Roland [Howard, *Birthday Party* guitarist] agreed with me unreservedly. But afterwards, they started to get cold feet and carry it on a bit longer. I kind of blithely charged off into the unknown, I didn’t really care.

CAVE: I think for maybe a year I just kind of wandered around Melbourne, and then Mick found me and suggested starting another band, and that ended up being The Bad Seeds. The consequence of that was that it became much more of a lyrically driven affair, because I felt that at the beginning of the Bad Seeds that was where my strength was, and



it’s taken me longer to get a handle on music.

HARVEY: There was no template at all, there was no preconception of what kind of album was going to come out at the other end. I think the last [*Birthday Party*] shows were in April. We mixed [*last Birthday Party* release] the “Mutiny” EP in August, and we were in there recording by September – there was kind of a crossover.

CAVE: What happened was we went in to the studio without any kind of idea of what band we were or might be, we just wanted to get together and make a record – we didn’t know how we were going to sound, and that was really exciting. It’s one of my favourite records because of that – you can hear a band attempting to discover something about themselves. When you make a record the wisdom is that you get the bugs out, and then you make the record – well, all the bugs are well and truly in there, and I love it because of that.

THE BLUES ALBUM THAT’S NOT

THE FIRST BORN IS DEAD

1985, MUTE



The band’s obsession with American music leads to a plan to make a blues record. With interesting consequences.

CAVE: The idea of that

record was that we were going to make a blues record. We were all – and I know Blixa was – listening to a lot of blues music at that time, but I don’t think any of us knew how to play blues music. I certainly didn’t know. I only played the piano, and I didn’t have a clue how to play blues music on the piano. I wouldn’t have a clue now.

HARVEY: Some of the songs were half written, on the first couple of albums – we’d go in and work them out in the studio. Some of them were very sketchy: we’d put down a weird bit of something and start working on it. Nick would have lyrics, so often it would push the music in a particular direction, and we’d just start doing it, you know?

CAVE: What songs are on that record? “Tupelo”? I have an idea we recorded some of this in a studio in Soho somewhere, but I could be completely wrong about that. It’s a good idea to talk to Mick Harvey, who was relatively sober. We started off making a blues album which ended up being nothing like a blues album at all.

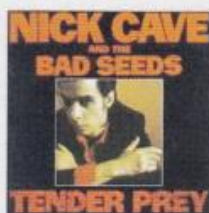
HARVEY: It became an exercise in trying to find something elemental in that kind of music and the atmospheres of that kind of music, going really deeply into that side of it, rather than going into the styles of that type of music as a genre.

CAVE: Lyrically there’s an obvious influence, but you can’t call them blues lyrics either – they’re way too florid and congested, as all my records are.

CHAOS IN BERLIN

TENDER PREY

1988, MUTE



The Bad Seeds, en masse, pitch up in Berlin. The album spawns the classic Cave compositions "The Mercy Seat", and

"Deanna" – both still in the band's live set. The recording is marked by a certain degree of chaos.

CAVE: By that stage we were hitting on something, but hitting on it a little too hard. That record was so fucked up, the making of it was seriously difficult for everybody. I think you can kind of hear that a lot.

HARVEY: Hearing it back again, I'd completely agree with that. It's a complete basket case of a record. We did tracks in Berlin, then it moved through three different studios in London, and on to Australia, different studios in Melbourne. It was a real ramshackle... mess.

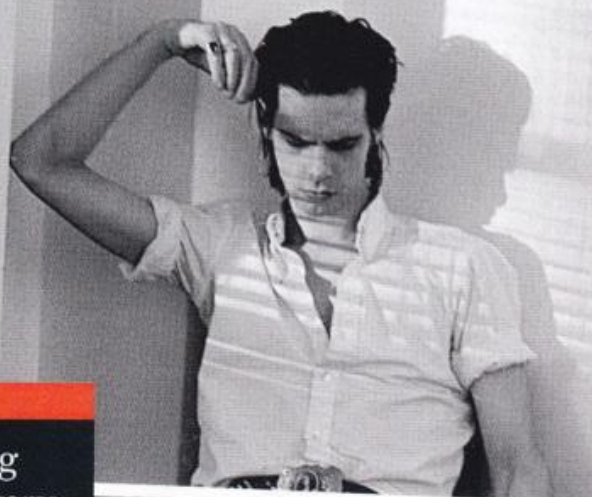
CAVE: "The Mercy Seat"... I think that was the one song I wrote when I was writing the novel [*And The Ass Saw The Angel*] – I was writing the novel on this desk, but had a notebook on the side and lyrics kept dropping into that. Every mix we did, we went back

Why was the recording difficult? Everyone was very fucked up, in a standard kind of way, and a little bit more so

and remixed it, to try to get this song we thought was monumental, to work in some kind of way, and that was really difficult.

HARVEY: At the time Nick had a room in Berlin above someone's apartment. It was a real stateless city, a haven for disaffected artists from all over. It was a bizarre setting, with the Wall. At pavement level, it was madness.

CAVE: Why was the recording difficult? Everyone was very fucked up, in a standard kind of way, and



a little bit more so. The producer, Tony Cohen, he was in pretty bad condition as well. I remember we lost him for a couple of days.

HARVEY: We were starting to get worried about him, and thought something terrible must have happened to him as he still hadn't shown by six the next evening. And eventually he just reappeared: bleary-eyed, hair matted, and said, "Ah, I feel fantastic!" He'd crawled up into the ventilator shaft and gone to sleep for 24 hours. So that was the condition he was working in.

CAVE: There was a lot of time wasted. It took a week to sing "Slowly Goes The Night", never one of my favourite songs, first of all trying to stand, then trying to sing. And still, it's woefully out of tune. It could have gone on for ever.

THE "SEXY" COVERS ALBUM

KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS

1986, MUTE



The Bad Seeds' urge to keep making records, and Nick Cave's literary preoccupations force a happy compromise – a covers record. Cash, Dylan – and, yes,

the blues – get the Bad Seeds treatment.

HARVEY: Those first couple of albums, Nick is trying to work out what sort of music he wants to make – throwing a few darts at the dartboard and see what sticks. He was listening to a lot of John Lee Hooker – it was about Nick trying to work out what sort of music he wanted to write. *Kicking Against The Pricks* was probably a continuation of that.

CAVE: I started to write a novel, *And The Ass Saw The Angel*, and I really threw myself into that, and that took me away – I sort of disappeared into this netherworld of sitting in this room on my own.

HARVEY: The excuse was that he was writing his book, so he couldn't write any songs, but in some kind of unconscious way he wanted to study the kinds of things he was interested in musically, picking out songs of different styles, to kind of help him form himself, about what he wanted.

CAVE: We decided we'd do an LP of cover versions. For me it was a revelation, that record, because it forced me to sing in a different way, which was closer in to the mic, and I sang soft, and I discovered I had something in my voice, a rather sensuous, pleasing sound, which I had no idea existed. I'd always loathed what came out of my mouth, and I found it sexy, in a... fucked up sort of way.

THE OVERLOOKED GEM

YOUR FUNERAL... MY TRIAL

1986, MUTE



A moody and surprisingly melodic effort, this album sets the tone for the occasionally shambolic, but continually

widescreen music the Bad Seeds will become renowned for...

HARVEY: It was recorded at [Berlin recording studio] Hansa, which is such a great sounding room. It's very much a Hansa/Berlin record. I was homeless at the time, I had no fixed abode. I was in Berlin for a month in the summer – maybe that's when we did it.

CAVE: This has always been the band's favourite record – or for a long time it was. We really hit on something there. We found it really beautiful – to me there's some really delicate, strange abstracted kinds of songs, that I really loved. One of my favourite Bad Seeds songs is "Stranger Than Kindness", which has a kind of unearthly beauty about it, and I think that's largely because I had nothing to do with writing it.

I mean that in the way that it remains mysterious to me, and very beautiful – Anita Lane wrote it, and Blixa wrote the music.

HARVEY: That was a real way forward for the band – the use of a lot of different elements comes to the fore in that album. Somehow they seem to indicate a way forwards for the group, and I think we continued working off that template



Writer's cramp: Cave in his Berlin "room", "above someone's apartment", 1988

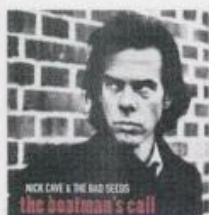
for quite some time. It was a touchstone in a way, for what we should do and could do: probably all the way up to *Let Love In*, and even the *Murder Ballads* album.

CAVE: I discovered I was a natural crooner. Shane MacGowan once said to me, around the time we made that record, "You're a crooner," and I went, "Get fucked – you can fucking talk." But in a way, he's right.

THE PARED-DOWN CAREER CLASSIC

THE BOATMAN'S CALL

1997, MUTE



A very different sort of Bad Seeds album, this pares the band arrangements down to nearly nothing, for a collection of austere, romantic, and occasionally religious songs.

CAVE: That sound was kind of an accident. We were mixing *Murder Ballads*, which at that time, I didn't really have the patience to do. So I just went out to an adjacent studio, and started to play these songs, and was just taping to DAT – just as examples of stuff that I'd begun to work on. I took the stuff away, and it was really beautiful.

HARVEY: It could almost not have been a band album. Because of the *Murder Ballads* album, there had been a lot of festival dates organised in Europe in the summer of '96, so everyone was around anyway – everyone was hanging round with not much to do. It probably would have been better if he'd just called in a couple of people and not done it with the Bad Seeds. But the Bad Seeds, to their credit, understood what

The Bad Seeds in 1997: "aware of what's required of them" says Mick Harvey (far right)

was happening and abstained from playing much.

CAVE: I think if I didn't have those original recordings, people wouldn't have been able to say, "Fuck, it *does* sound really good," and I might have had more trouble trying to convince the band not to play their instruments. There were moments of dissent every now and then: Blixa stomping round

going, "WHY AM I HERE?" That kind of thing. But he does beautiful stuff on the record, too.

HARVEY: Nick was very much on top of it all: maybe it's because it was such a personal work, he wanted to control what was

happening with the music, to keep a control of the path he wanted it to be taking.

CAVE: It was an important record for us. I guess I had those songs, and they inspired me to write songs along a similar line. That's always the concern: what is the next record going to sound like? Lyrically, what's it going to be about, and how is it going to be? So in a way I was given, by accident, the sound of *The Boatman's Call* in those little recordings.

HARVEY: In some ways it's my least favourite Bad Seeds album. But in others it's completely a Bad Seeds album, because it demonstrates the band's awareness of what's required of them – they don't want to go stomping through the whole thing with army boots. It's a totally different mindset.

There were moments of dissent: Blixa stomping around going, 'WHY AM I HERE?' – Cave

DAMAGED GOODS

HENRY'S DREAM

1992, MUTE



São Paulo resident Cave is inspired to make a harsh, "violent" acoustic record – but the band is encouraged to use a producer. Famed Neil Young man David Briggs

is chosen, but it's not a happy outcome.

CAVE: The idea for *Henry's Dream* for me came from being in Brazil and seeing these guys in the streets playing acoustic guitars that were really fucked up and hammering out these songs on them; a style of street singing that was in your face, but acoustic.

HARVEY: Nick wanted there to be a lot of harsh acoustic guitar, and a lot of that is still there. But we recorded it in the wrong studio. We recorded it in a rock studio, Sound City in Van Nuys, California – perfectly decent, but not right for the Bad Seeds.

CAVE: Those great Neil Young records sound like it's some guys standing there, playing their music, and that's the fucking end of it – so David Briggs seemed like the right kind of guy. But as it turned out... he was hugely... He... I mean, he was a fucking nightmare, that guy. I mean, [cackles] he really was. I know he's dead now and all, but, fuck, man.

Each day he took it from being a violent fucked-up acoustic record to being a fucked up electric record. But fucked up in the wrong way. I put a lot of energy into the writing of that record, and then for each day to see it drift away... it was a horrible, horrible experience.

BACK ON COURSE

LET LOVE IN

1994, MUTE



A highly produced, accessible work. Cave ponders life, love and reputation with his tongue sometimes in cheek.

HARVEY: There's a bit of a feeling that we'd got back on course. We took

the things we'd learned from Briggs. He pushed us to do really good takes: we'd normally just back off and go, "Oh, it's good enough..." That was a learning experience; to push ourselves to get the right takes.

CAVE: It's a weird one. There were influences which prevented certain people from standing back and letting the song be – you know, amphetamines. I prefer something a little more natural-sounding, I've got to say. It was Tony Cohen at his most obsessive, or monomaniacal, or something.

HARVEY: We went back to a studio with the right ambience: Townhouse III, which used to be owned by The Who... a converted church.

CAVE: It's an album of really powerful songs – we knew we had a good record before we actually recorded them. A comic element comes out in that record – there was a time when people couldn't work out whether I was being serious or not. That's very much an Australian thing. That's what our sense of humour is: no one really knows whether you're being funny or not. That record I spent most of my time doing the artwork for the inner sleeve, and a long time doing the oscillator solo – terrible oscillator solo, I might say – on "Red Right Hand".

THE FIRST WITHOUT BLIXA – ON 2 CDS

ABATTOIR BLUES/LYRE OF ORPHEUS

2004, MUTE



A double-CD set, rich in both classical allusion and contemporary detail. Contains the word "frappuccino".

CAVE: When Blixa left... it was shocking to me. I got an email saying, "Look, I

think it's over, and I'm leaving." A brief email. I rang him back and said, "Are you sure about that?" and he said, "I'm sure." He was a huge force in the Bad Seeds, no matter what he was doing. With *Nocturama*, he came in with a pedal-steel guitar, which of all the instruments in all the world is my least favourite. And he said, "THIS IS WHAT I WILL PLAY ON THIS RECORD." And I said, "You must be fucking joking." But he wasn't. And not only was that what he was going to play, he didn't know how to play it. But that was what Blixa was like, he was always into trying something else. It was a huge loss for him to go, but a new stage is healthy. There was an outpouring of material, and Warren [Ellis, violin] shifted into the fore, in terms of sonic disturbance and general chaos. It was the first really joyful record, a pleasure to make. When I write a record, I think of 13 songs – an album and a B-side – there's something difficult and painful about it. But with this one, I pushed through that, so when I arrived I had 25 songs, and they were good. We went in knowing that all we had to do was record these songs and we had a really good record. ①





Hollywood Festival

1970

In a far-from-Californian Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs, Traffic, Family, and a new-to-the-UK Grateful Dead came together with Hell's Angels, hippies and acid-spiked BBC cameramen for a musical love-in par excellence...

WORDS by BARRY PLUMMER

I arrived late," admits photographer Barry Plummer, there to shoot the first UK appearance by the Grateful Dead on the weekend of May 23/24, 1970, for the long-defunct music weekly, *Disc*.

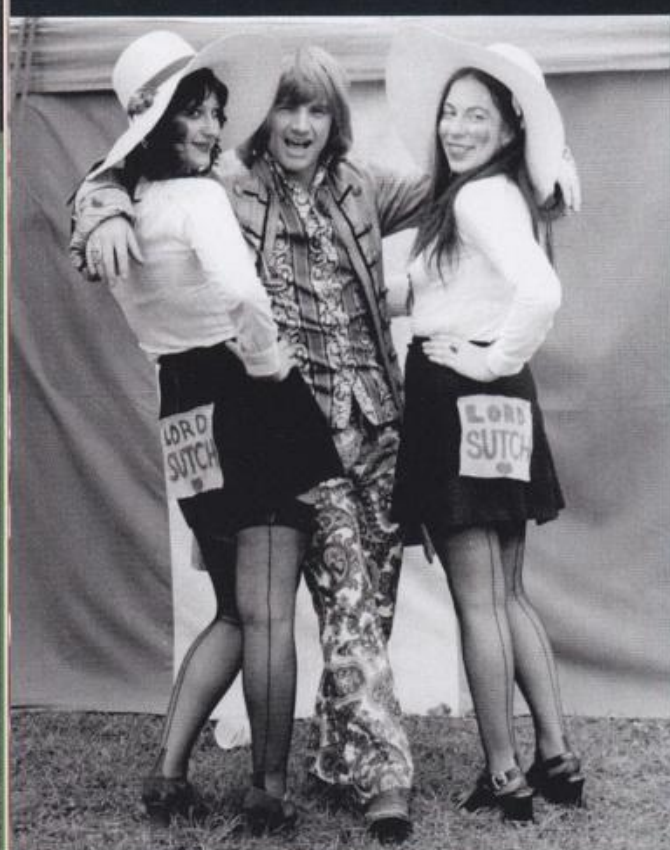
"I set out from London up the A1 and had gone a fair way before I realised I was meant to be heading for Staffordshire, not Newcastle-Upon-Tyne! When I finally got there, the Hare Krishna people were doing their thing and there was a really relaxed atmosphere – but then all festivals were like that in those days.

"The big story was the Dead, because we'd never seen them before. Most of the other American acts billed to play, like The Flying Burrito Brothers and The James Gang, didn't show. But the Dead played well on the Sunday afternoon and backstage they seemed really amiable and friendly. In fact, maybe a little too friendly. There was a BBC crew there to film them, but allegedly someone in the Dead's entourage generously dosed them with LSD and the cameramen were so out of it that the footage was unusable..."

CONTINUES OVER ►

11

WERE
YOU
THERE?



★ "Family were really all about Roger Chapman. He was extraordinary on stage – the only parallel you can think of is the way Joe Cocker used to flail about. His voice was remarkable, too. I remember someone saying he sounded like a throttled chicken."

« "It was difficult to take Screaming Lord Sutch too seriously, but he always gave you a good picture. I seem to remember rumours that all sorts of his 'heavy friends' like Clapton, Page and Townshend were going to show up and play with him. They didn't, of course."

» "The main thing I remember about José Feliciano was that the audience were all lighting matches. I suppose it was meant to symbolise 'Light My Fire'. Perhaps that's where all that stadium lighter-waving started – with José at Hollywood!"



✂ "The Hell's Angels were a fixture at every festival at the time. They mingled with the hippies and the freak dancers and they seldom, if ever, caused any trouble. Hollywood was six months after Altamont, but I don't think what had happened there had really sunk in over here."



DID YOU BLISS OUT IN STAFFS?
If you were there at the Hollywood Festival in May 1970, than email allan_jones@ipcmedia.com with your memories, and we'll publish the best stories...



★ "I was under firm orders from *Disc* to get lots of shots of Peel. In fact, everywhere I went they told me to get pics of him. They almost had me following him around. Why? At the time he had a weekly column in *Disc*!"

✂ "Jerry Garcia with Steve Winwood. The Dead weren't the headliners - Traffic were. They closed the festival on the second night, but they were hanging around checking out other bands."



✂ "Mungo Jerry were the big surprise. Nobody knew who they were, but as soon as I heard them I knew they were going to be big. They just sat down and stomped away, and no interminable solos! They went down so well, they ended up playing twice - and a few weeks later 'In The Summertime' was No 1."



ALBUM OF THE MONTH

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Working On A Dream COLUMBIA



After the furious state-of-the-union of *Magic*, the Boss returns to the home front – where things are rather better, says *Andrew Mueller*



It's hard to imagine how Bruce Springsteen could have conceived for this album

a title more much more emblematic of himself and what he stands for, than *Working On A Dream*. In Springsteen's moral universe, after all, the pursuit of happiness is always a job, not a hobby: he unveiled the title track, appropriately, at a campaign rally for Barack Obama, with whom he shares a belief that working and dreaming are essentially the same thing.

"Working On A Dream" – the Byrds-ish song in question – subscribes so enthusiastically to this creed that it actually has whistling on it, of the sort, presumably, that one does while one is working. As it turns out, both the song and the album title are *faux amis*, in no way representative of what follows elsewhere. Though a near-neighbour of *Magic* – as he was finishing up on it, Springsteen was already writing tracks for *...Dream*; it was recorded during breaks on the 2007-8 *Magic* tour – *...Dream* is something else entirely. His 16th full-length studio recording is by some distance, Springsteen's weirdest, and most constantly startling to date.

The album's mission to confound expectation begins with the first track, "Outlaw Pete", a ballad chronicling the travails of the titular brigand, is an eight-minute epic in several movements which, at various points recalls '70s Beach Boys, respectable Motown compilations, the more dementedly over-produced early works of Warren Zevon, and the static-encrusted tapes of Woody Guthrie. It's a dramatic summit meeting of the arch poesy of Jimmy Webb's "Highwayman" with the glorious musical hubris of Richard Harris' version of Jimmy Webb's "MacArthur Park". And it's not the oddest thing here.

That distinction is claimed by "Queen Of The Supermarket". Whereas much

of 2007's *Magic* was a baleful indictment of George W Bush's misdirection of 21st-century America, it still contained a giddy pop high in the shape of "Girls In Their Summer Clothes" – and such highs are what Springsteen shoots for during much of *Working On A Dream*. In "Queen..." a snare drum ticks down to a detonation of gaudy psych, against which Springsteen declares his ardour for an unwitting shop assistant.

The pay-off is a deftly wrought channelling of the tongue-tied gaucherie of the besotted: "As I lift my groceries from my car/I turn back for a moment and catch a smile/That blows this whole fucking place apart."

This playful, often whimsical, zest is a defining motif of the album – even to the extent that when Springsteen offers up something ("Tomorrow Never Knows") that shares a title with one of The Beatles' best-known experimental extravaganzas, it turns out to be a sweet, straightforward, if all-too-brief, Billy Sherrill-style country trundle. "My Lucky Day" is a comfortingly familiar E Street Band tear-up, an unmistakable descendant of the ilk of

"Two Hearts" and "Glory Days", iced with a signature Clarence Clemons sax solo and bearing one of the adroitly backhanded compliments in which Springsteen has specialised since wooing the Mary of "Thunder Road" with "You ain't a beauty, but bey, you're all right"; "I lost all the other bets I made," he informs his doubtless delighted paramour this time, "Honey, you're my lucky day."

Delight in everyday domesticity

recurs throughout, on great big pop grin "This Life", understated sigh "Life Itself" (notable for an utterly unabashed backwards guitar solo) and especially "Kingdom Of Days" – an immense soul devotional in which producer Brendan O'Brien again encourages

the Spector-ish tendencies of the E Street Band. The lyric is another of Springsteen's affectingly gruff *billets-doux* in the manner of "All That Heaven Will Allow", his narrator considering the awesome irrefutables of passing time and changing weather and concluding that they matter rather less to him than the woman he has wrapped his jacket around. It's Springsteen swinging for a hybrid of Sam Cooke's

"Wonderful World", and Louis Armstrong's "What A Wonderful World" – thrillingly, he hits it.

The menace and mourning that defined *Magic* has not been entirely expunged, however. "Good Eye" is a fantastic, feral country blues pitching somewhere between Alabama 3 and 16 Horsepower, Springsteen's distorted vocal carried over from the monstrous, Skynyrd-inspired reworking of "Reason To Believe" that lit up the *Magic* tour. "Last Carnival", the closing track of the album proper ("The Wrestler", Springsteen's terrific contribution to the soundtrack of the eponymous film, appears as a "bonus") is an obvious elegy to Danny Federici, the veteran E Street Band keyboardist who died of cancer in April 2008, aged 58. It mourns Federici as a lost performer in the Boss' long-standing big top ("I won't be facing the lions with you by my side...you throw the knife, it lands inches from my heart"). His addressing of Federici as "Billy", it seems safe to assume, refers to "Wild Billy's Circus Story", from '73's *The Wild, The Innocent & The E Street Shuffle* – the first Springsteen LP on which Federici played. The song fades on spectral *a cappella* gospel, the E Street Band lamenting the first of their group to fall.

"Last Carnival", though inevitably sombre, is an apt finale to an LP which all but abandons the solemn portent of *Magic* in favour of the minor, pure joys of the day-to-day – days lent meaning, of course, by the fact that we run out of them eventually. It's the kind of album whose most significant track may be its most willfully throwaway. "Surprise Surprise" is a gleefully daft jangle, by all appearances a birthday salutation for the missus. It's a cleverer song than it first appears, but its true potency lies in its very lack of subtext.

Like much of this album, and like much of what this album is about, it is what it is, and it sounds like Love – not just Arthur Lee's band, but the sensation itself. For Springsteen there's nothing he won't do for it, and, evidently, still nothing quite like it.

This is by some distance his weirdest and most constantly startling album to date

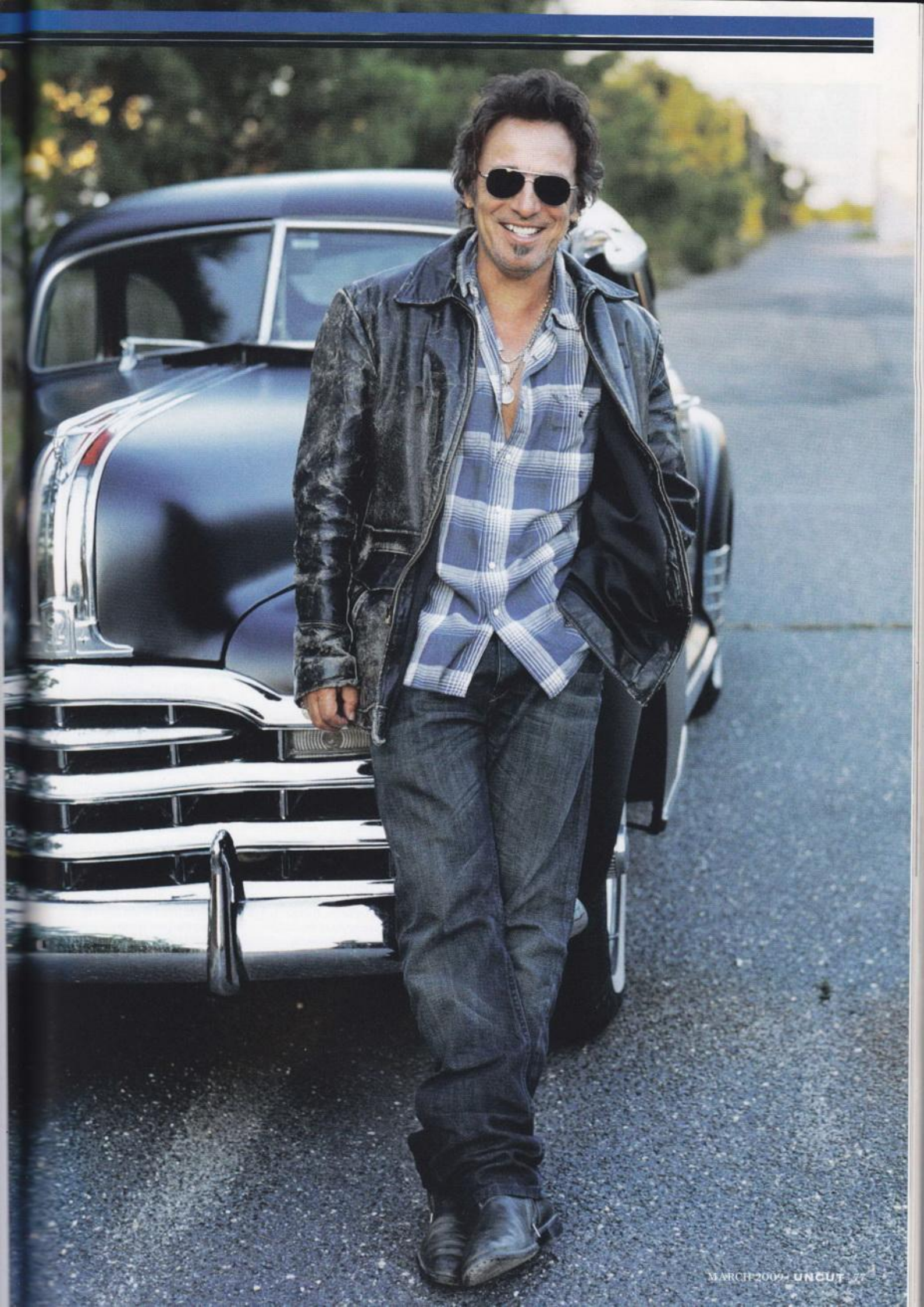
TRACKMARKS

- 1 | Outlaw Pete
★★★★
- 2 | My Lucky Day
★★★★
- 3 | Working On A Dream
★★★★
- 4 | Queen Of The Supermarket
★★★★
- 5 | What Love Can Do
★★★★

- 6 | This Life
★★★★
- 7 | Good Eye
★★★★
- 8 | Tomorrow Never Knows
★★★★
- 9 | Life Itself
★★★★
- 10 | Kingdom Of Days
★★★★

- 11 | Surprise Surprise
★★★★
- 12 | The Last Carnival
★★★★
- 13 | The Wrestler
★★★★

Produced by Brendan O'Brien



A TO Z

New albums, reissues and compilations alphabetised for your convenience, including **Deep Purple**, **Tim Hardin**, **Magazine**, **Peter Tosh** & **The View**

KEY: C COMPILATION R YEAR REISSUE

ABAVUKI

Africa Got Soul

PRESTIGE ELITE

★★★★

South African Township musicians re-imagine the classics of soul

Why mess with perfection? Abavuki – a collective of young South Africans working with operatic voices and Township rhythms – provide the answer. Recorded by Londoner Barney Rattle, the thrilling percussion work on this collective's interpretation of "Papa Was A Rolling Stone", the loving loping groove they invest in "Hold On I'm Coming" and ghostly finery of the voices on "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" all provide winning evidence of a distinctive sensibility at work in these reinterpretations of soul classics. Excellent stuff all round. **GAVIN MARTIN**

A CAMP

Colonia

REVEAL

★★★★

Languid MOR from the sometime lead Cardigan

When Nina Persson stepped out from The Cardigans to indulge her Americana enthusiasms on A Camp's 2001 debut it was beautifully incongruous, as though Ingrid Bergman had decided to make a western. Having relocated to New York and married ex-Shudder To Think mainman Nathan Larson, Persson is now pretty much a native and *Colonia* is an album of sophisticated American adult pop – rather in the vein of Joan As Police Woman (Joan Wasser is among the supporting cast). It's rich, beguiling stuff, best of all on the duet with Nicolai Dunger "Golden Teeth And Silver Medals". **STEPHEN TROUSSE**

LILY ALLEN

It's Not Me, It's You

REGAL

★

Lacklustre second LP from the MySpace minx

The Ronson reboot of Britpop increasingly feels like a farcical historical re-run. Two years after the tart charms of *Alright, Still*, Lily Allen returns with an extended moan about tabloid culture, chemical burn-out, crapshags and societal hypocrisy that she might as well have called *This Is Softcore*. If once she was sweetly

sardonic, now she sounds utterly bored, and collaborator Greg Kurstin hardly helps with an anodyne synthpop production that makes excruciating excursions into rawhide country, pallid polka and Bontempi showtunes. "Him", which manages to make Des'ree's "Life" seem like a witty, weighty metaphysical inquiry, feels like it must be the nadir. But then you have to consider the closing "He Wasn't There", a nauseating ditty dedicated to her dad. "Who'd Have Known?" does at least have a perky melody – pinched from Take That's "Shine". **STEPHEN TROUSSE**

ASOBI SEKSU

Hush

ONELITTLEINDIAN

★★★★

Brooklyn pop scientists leave nu-gazing behind

A fondness for heavily reverbed guitars and hypnotic looping and layering may mark them out as big fans of MBV and the Cocteau Twins, but Asobi Seksu are still more than nu-gazers. Their third LP takes up where 2006's breakthrough, *Citrus*, left off, proving them as experimental pop practitioners who have as much in common with Holy Fuck, Animal Collective and Deerhoof as Kevin Shields. The dozen tunes here are sumptuous slices of bliss-pop with an art-punk edge, the trippily naive "Gliss" and dynamically eccentric "In The Sky" particular highlights. **SHARON O'CONNELL**



AZITA

How Will You?

DRAG CITY

★★★★

Classy third album for Chicago's poet-priestess

With *How Will You?*, Chicago-based pianist Azita cuts back on the elliptical songwriting of previous LPs *Enantiodromia* and *Life On The Fly*, replacing their circuitous logic with linear development. Consequently, *How Will You?*



It's not good, it's bad:
Lily Allen's bored second

lacks the quizzical tone of earlier records, though it benefits from dropping Azita's occasional tendency toward obfuscation. And her playing and singing is still lovely, the slightly sour tang of her voice a fine framing device for her unique wordplay, tracing melodies that dip and weave like an acerbic Rickie Lee Jones. **JON DALE**

CHARLES AZNAVOUR

Duos

EMILIBERTY

★★★★

Chanson veteran excels in mother tongue

Once artists ascend into the ionosphere of all-time legendariness, it seems all they want to do is sing duets with each other. Here's a double-CD's worth of French/Armenian maestro Aznavour doing just that, in both French (disc 1) and English (disc 2). The French versions are much better, allowing the impeccable Charles to get all torrid and emotional with Céline Dion and his early mentor, Edith Piaf. The English disc gets you Bryan Ferry ("She") and Sinatra ("Young At Heart"), but somehow the soul isn't quite there. **ADAM SWEETING**

BARZIN

Notes To An Absent Lover

MONOTREME

★★★★

Slow-core Canadian songsmith's third

The third LP from Toronto troubadour Barzin is sodden with sentiment about a break-up, but admirably understated as expressions of sorrow, bewilderment and regret go.

The big thing about *Notes...* is emotional universality – it's as reminiscent of Take That as it is of Red House Painters. Musically, the comparisons hold less true: melancholia washes over these nine hushed elegies to love, Barzin's spare guitar work fleshed out with strings, double bass and pedal steel – on "Look What Love Has Turned Us Into", to surprisingly upbeat effect. **SHARON O'CONNELL**

BASHY

Bashy.com

GGI ENTERPRISES

★★★★

London MC advances grime with good vibes

The mass defections from grime to more dancefloor-friendly forms of London club music like electro and funky house have left behind a hardcore of embittered young men with war on their minds. Not Bashy, though. Active since 2003, this MC has engaged his witty, bubbling bars in the practice of pushing grime with a upbeat spin: "I love being black!" he chants on "I See People". *Bashy.com* seldom feels airbrushed, mind: "Blacks And Gold" dissects materialism intelligently, while "Just Say No" is an anti-drugs track neither pious nor po-faced, dropped atop Amy Winehouse's "Rehab". **LOUIS PATTISON**

BBC RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP

A Retrospective

MUTE/BBC MUSIC

★★★★★

Treasures of the Beeb's laboratory of sound

This double-CD contains almost everything you could want from Auntie Beeb's sound lab, covering a 1958 piece by Daphne Oram right through to the Workshop's last official project, the soundtrack of Michael Palin's 1997 *Full Circle*. The *Dr Who* theme is here along with "Quatermass And The Pit", and the famous "Major Bloodnok's Stomach" from *The Goon Show*; plus Desmond Briscoe's confrontational cut-up of the Eric Coates fanfare that opens each day's BBC broadcasting. Britain may not have produced a Stockhausen or a John Cage, but the music here is among the most inventive postwar creations. **ROB YOUNG**

BEACHES

Beaches

MISTLETOE

★★★★

First pass from Aussie psych-jam team

Frankensteining themselves from other groups (Panel Of Judges, Love Of Diagrams), the existence of Melbourne's all-girl quintet Beaches, whose debut album documents their sprawling yet punk-primitive takes on the "jam band", suggests their home city's incestuous scene is in rude health. And while it doesn't always work – sometimes the jams are haphazard or ungainly, and the vocals can feel like an afterthought – when Beaches lock into place, they've all the grace of Electrelane and the fire of those roughshod, metronomic instrumentals the Swell Maps used to trade in. **JON DALE**



DARK WAS THE NIGHT

Various Artists 4AD ★★★

Generation-defining comp of the grandchildren of college rock. *By Stephen Troussé*



Back in 1993 with grunge at its height, the Red Hot Organisation's AIDS fund-and-awareness raiser

compilation *No Alternative* seemed to capture a generation coming of age. The record featured contributions from Smashing Pumpkins, Sonic Youth, The Breeders, and, in the kind of commercial contradiction that so tormented them, a song by Nirvana – "Verse Chorus Verse" – that their record company insisted could not be listed on the album sleeve.

But amid stiff competition, the stand-out track was "Unseen Power Of The Picket Fence" by Pavement. In his ramshackle, elliptical way, Stephen Malkmus paid tribute to REM ("Southern boys, just like you and me"), harking back to the days of the "Chronic Town" EP, and even imagining an alternative pop prehistory where Buck, Stipe, Berry and Mills stood up to the might of Sherman's Confederate army. Obliquely, amusingly, it defined the "alternative rock" generation as the cultural children of those first inklings of college rock in early-'80s Athens.

Sixteen years later, the latest Red Hot comp rounds up the grandchildren. Compiled by Aaron and Bryce Dessner from The National, the two-disc, 31-song tracklisting of *Dark Was the Night* reads like a roll call of US indie rock of the last five years, a scene that's burgeoned from the 2004 debut of the

Arcade Fire (who contribute a new track, "Lenin") to the overwhelming success of last year's critics' darling Bon Iver (who donates "Brackets, WI", plus a spontaneous collaboration with Aaron, "Big Red Machine").

The comp seems to have had two major inspirations. The first was Red Hot founder and DWTN Executive Producer John Carlin's sense that a lot of these younger indie kids seemed to be practically chamber orchestras, putting a baroque 21st-century spin on American roots music. And the second was Feist's appearance on *Letterman* a couple of years ago, where she assembled a scratch backing choir comprising members of The National, The New Pornographers, Grizzly Bear and Broken Social Scene – the real tipping-point moment when, according to Aaron, the sense of a scene or a movement – the kind of thing musicians love to deny to trend-chasing journalists – seemed undeniable.

Carlin's "baroque folk" concept explicitly inspires a clutch of tracks, though their roots are not necessarily American: The Books and José González cutely cover Nick Drake's "Cello Song", while Feist and Grizzly Bear's Ben Gibbard offer a winsome take on Vashti Bunyan's "Train Song". Closer to that old weird America are Kronos Quartet's spare, stunning reprise of Blind Willie Johnson's moaning blues for the title track and Antony Hegarty and Bryce Dessner's elegiac take on Dylan's "I Was Young When I Left Home".

Q **A** Aaron Dessner

How did you hook up with Red Hot?
I actually worked for John Carlin from Red Hot in New York, at his design company. And I was playing music on the side and leaving all the time for little tours, and he was nice about it, and we bonded over it. He was always cool about me taking off, and when The National finally got big enough that we didn't need to have a job, he was very supportive of us

leaving – and that was kind of when the idea of trying to do a Red Hot record came up. **Did you intend to document a scene or movement?**
When people used to ask us this question, we used to say we live in a little vacuum and we make the songs we make, we're not part of a scene. And that was true back then. I think now, what we've found is by touring, your friends more and more become the



people whose music you've listened to for years. Things come together when you're out at festivals. And we discovered trying to make this record that people are willing to go the extra mile.
STEPHEN TROUSSÉ

However, even Hegarty's startling voice struggles to escape what you might call the generic gravity of the record. Listen to successive tracks by Feist, Bon Iver, Grizzly Bear, Yeasayer, Decemberists, Iron & Wine and the repeated force of the folksy plucking and briney voices can prove almost overwhelming. This is the polite, less freaky end of modern American indie folk: earnest, well-intentioned, Obama-fundraising, National Public Radio-supporting... and cumulatively a little dull. Even the Arcade Fire can't quite get the party started: "Lenin" is a rumbling, oddly low-key number, recalling The Beatles' late attempts to get back to their rock'n'roll roots.

But such an extensive, stellar lineup can't fail to hit the mark and *Dark Was the Night* features some real highlights, notably The National's own track, "So Far Around The Bend", augmented by a wonderful woodwind and string arrangement by classical wunderkind

Nico Muhly, and Sufjan Stevens' sprawling pan-genre odyssey through Castanets' "You Are The Blood".

But best of all is "Knotty Pine", a collaboration between Dirty Projectors, and David Byrne, who provided the lyric – "Here is the sound that photographs make/When I see them when I hear them/I see regions of sharp precision/Overabundance/Overindulgence" – from an old scrap he'd held onto since the early days of Talking Heads, and suggested lead Projector Dave Longstrech come up with a new setting. The project seems to have energised both parties – Byrne sounds thrilled to be jamming with the new art house set, while The Dirty Projectors seem inspired into rare focus, their beguiling tangents resolving into something resembling a pop song. But more importantly, like Pavement paying homage to REM back in 1993, it suggests that college rock can still find fresh inspiration in returning to the old school.

BLUE ASH EST. 1973
No More, No Less

COLLECTOR'S CHOICE MUSIC

★★★★

Primitime powerpop manifesto makes it to silver disc, finally

A Youngstown, Ohio quartet that'd been kicking around the club circuit for years, Blue Ash were already a rock'n'roll juggernaut when Mercury A&R man Paul Nelson swooped in on them in 1973. Heavier than Badfinger and Big Star – more akin at times to The Who – and adventurous enough to tackle a long-forgotten Dylan composition ("Dusty Old Fairgrounds"), the group effectively assimilated everything from Byrds jangle to Tin Pan Alley. While popanthem "Abracadabra (Have You Seen Her)" is their moment of immortality, the rest resonates with significance.

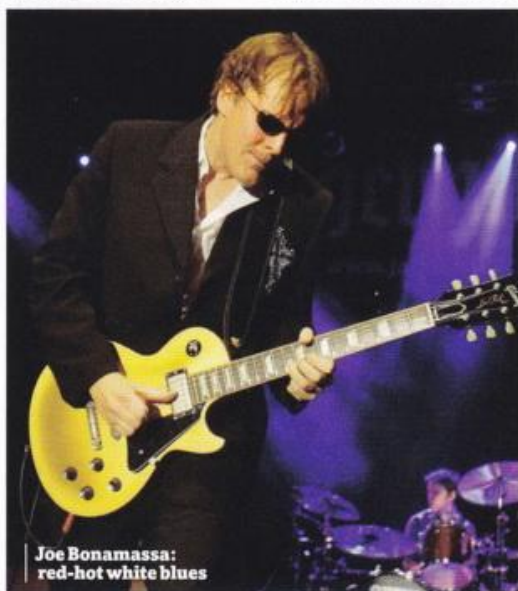
LUKE TORN

JOE BONAMASSA
The Ballad Of John Henry

PROVOCUE

★★★★

Seventh album from postmodern blues hero
Bonamassa's last album, '07's *Sloe Gin*, spent months on top of the US blues chart. Fusing electric blues licks, Delta tradition and rock'n'roll chops, Bonamassa's greatest virtue is that unlike many virtuoso guitarists, he recognises that fretboard showboating and a fluid tone are not enough. Duly, there's more to consider: the gritty voice, the sturdy songwriting, astutely chosen covers (Waits/Nina Simone/Tony Joe White) and even an epic "Kashmir"-style string arrangement on the title track. All help to confirm Bonamassa as the most exciting white bluesman



Joe Bonamassa:
red-hot white blues

DEAN FARDELL

since Stevie Ray Vaughan.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

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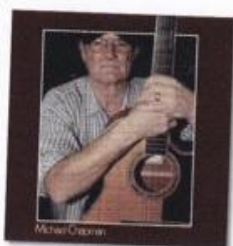
THIS IS MUSIC

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Orbison lite on Yorkshire troubadour's second album

Brown's 2007 debut established him as a sensitive and assured singer-songwriter in thrall to Paul Simon, Nick Drake and the Laurel Canyon crowd. His follow-up represents a shift that the less charitable might view as a calculated attempt to ride the current wave of enthusiasm for retro soul-pop. With Duffy's producer Bernard Butler in charge, it aims to pack the kind of full-bodied, strings-soaked, vintage punch that decorated The Last Shadow Puppets' album. Brown's voice is engagingly sonorous and his songs have all the signifiers of Orbison's style, but are utterly bereft of his crucial ache.

SHARON O'CONNELL



MICHAEL CHAPMAN
Time Past Time Passing

ELECTRIC RAGTIME

★★★★

More from Brit guitarist, once signed to Harvest

Whereas some folk/blues guitarists thrive on mystique – their invented personal histories and bizarre technical



Chairman of the bards:
Lloyd Cole reinvented
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practice – Michael Chapman is all about openness. On the sleeve, he reveals his tunings. On the album, amid horrible digital delay effects, he bears his heart. Eventually, however, the album dispels most misgivings – in spite of several gruff, open-mic-at-the-Three-Pheasants vocal tracks, Chapman's picking revealing itself to have a persuasive, hypnotic power. "Little Molly's Dream", particularly, places him in the Fahey tradition, while earlier tracks had seen him reside, less comfortably, in the Knopfler. JOHN ROBINSON

THE COAST
Expatriate

APORIA

★★★★

Perfect big pop, Toronto-style

Part of a vibrant Toronto scene that nurtured the likes of MSTRKRFT and Broken Social Scene, The Coast are effectively an orthodox powerpop outfit who combine hook-laden melodies, glistening harmonies, Motown drums and chiming guitars, but occasionally like to unsettle things with some pleasing drones and some low-budget intimations of U2-sized stadium rock. They're less interesting when they enter lumpen, pseudo-Springsteen territory but the uptempo tracks (the piano-pounding powerpop of "Nueva York", the widescreen '80s pop of "Floodlights", the shimmering "Ceremony Guns") are very fine indeed. JOHN LEWIS

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Cleaning Out The Ashtrays

TAPETRECORDS

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Four-CD retrospective from the Commotion man's lean period

Cole wouldn't cast himself as a victim, but he's struggled to match his 1984 debut, *Rattlesnakes*, a commercial fusion of Lou Reed and Leonard Cohen that made him the thinking girl's pop star. In truth, he's made better records, but by moving to Massachusetts and reinventing himself as a kind of folk troubadour, that brilliance has gone unnoticed. This set is a labour of love, produced in response to fans' requests on his website, and while none of it should frighten Commotions fans, there's a delicacy to the performances and a care in the lyrics which surpasses that early work. About half of the tracks are b-sides, the rest are unreleased. Some quirks of production aside, it's lovely stuff, and at its best ("Late Night Early Town", "My Alibi") Cole surpasses his influences to create plangent, lyrical pop.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

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Pebble To A Pearl

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Workmanlike "modern" take on retro-soul

The daughter of Rat Pack producer Don Costa undoubtedly has a powerhouse, full-throated voice, and has recorded with Mark Ronson. The material on what's intended to be her big breakthrough is however uninspired, landing in the by-numbers ersatz soul area

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EDDY CURRENT SUPPRESSION RING
Primary Colours

GONER

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Needling garage grooves from Australians

This quartet – who met while working at a vinyl-pressing plant in Victoria – are the latest invigorating representatives of the Australian garage-punk tradition catalogued on the lively *Do The Pop!* comp. Like The Saints and Radio Birdman before them, then, ECSR sound formidably skinny, *Nuggets*-y and indignant, with plenty of extravagantly drawn consonants by Mr Suppression. But there's also a hefty dose of The Voidoids in "Memory Lane", and a metallic judder to "Colour Television" and "I Admit My Faults" reminiscent of Can – or, perhaps, of The Fall at their most Can-indebted.

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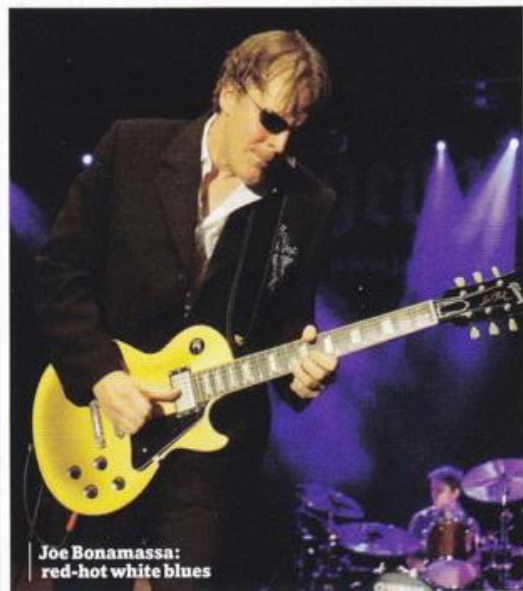
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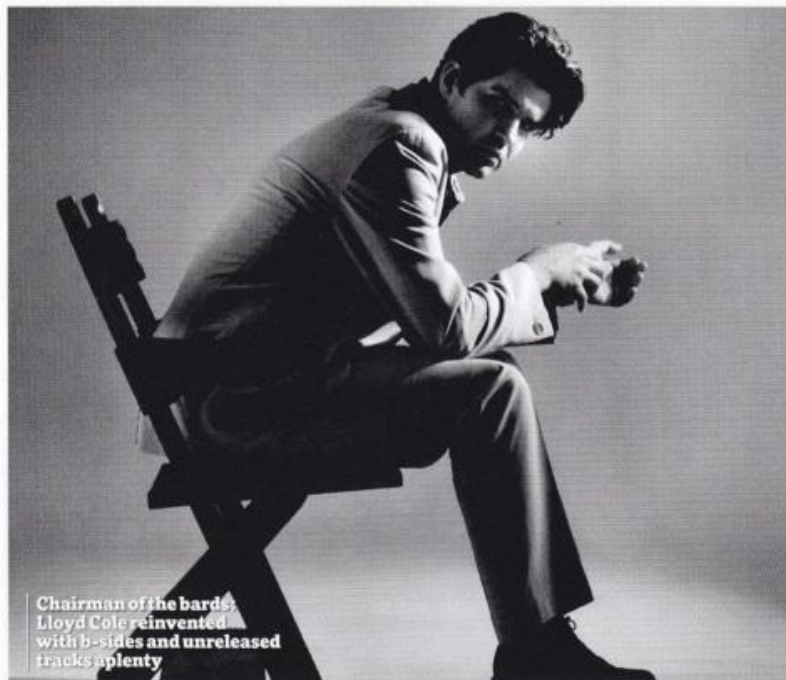


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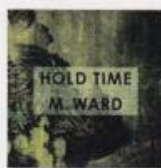
JOHN MULVEY

M WARD

Hold Time 4AD



Lo-fi tinkerer completes his transfiguration into major artist, says *Bud Scoppa*



When Matt Ward released his first solo album, *Duet For Guitars* #2 in 1999, he appeared to be

another bedroom hermit with a four-track recorder, inhabiting his private universe on the margins of indie. But through the course of the '00s, the Portland, Oregon, native has progressively shown himself to be multitiered, popping up all over as guest musician and general creative go-to-guy.

His accomplishments are many.

Touring and recording with the comparably ambitious Conor Oberst, co-producing and playing guitar on *Rabbit Fur Coat*, the first album of Rilo Kiley's Jenny Lewis. Forming She & Him with actress/singer

Zoëy Deschanel and concocting 2008's soft-rock homage, *Volume One*. Not to mention making significant contributions to the records of artists ranging from Cat Power to Beth Orton and Norah Jones.

Meanwhile, Ward's own albums have incrementally expanded on the artist's lo-fi roots, which put him alongside such fingerpicking solipsists as the Mountain Goats' John Darnielle, Smog's Bill Callahan, Will Oldham and fellow Portlander Elliott Smith. His studio output, which now stands at six LPs, reveals him as a virtuoso guitarist and expressive singer; a passionate conservator of American roots music and a purveyor of Big Themes. All that is special about Ward is encapsulated in the captivating "Chinese Translation" from 2006's *Post-War*, an epic metaphysical parable enclosed in a lilting alt-country song, embedding poetic verbiage about the cycle of life into a playful arrangement.

The heady and ambitious *Hold Time* finds him delving deeper into the sounds and themes of *Post-War* and "Chinese Translation". The album will

"I wanted a balance: both rich strings and pawn-shop sounds" – Matt Ward

be perceived by some as a religious tract because its rich Biblical imagery and intimations of immortality – and yes, he does

thank God in his acknowledgments. But *Hold Time* is not an album-long testimony of belief; instead, it plays out as an extended meditation on the preciousness of time, the dance of life and death, and what evidence man can perceive of a spiritual dimension in the physical universe.

After hushed opener "For Beginners", the first of several contemplations of sin and salvation, Ward wastes no time connecting divine love with its human corollary. On "Nobody Like You", he describes the redemptive power of true love via a lyric that mixes the language of traditional songs ("I trusted liars and thieves in my blindness") and Motown ("But now it's just like ABC/Life's just like 1...2...3"), in a finger-snappin' arrangement à la Dave Edmunds.

Then comes the sprightly, string-enhanced shuffle "Jailbird", the final minutes of a condemned man – one human who knows precisely when the life will go out of his body, which is what interests Ward in the subject. The words he puts in the mouth of his dead man walking directly address the album's prevailing theme: "Save my

Q & A Matt Ward

Your arrangements are lush than ever, and yet you've retained your trademark lo-fi character. Growing up with making so many four-track tapes, that sound is forever in my head. Production-wise, I wanted a balance between rich string sounds and thin pawn-shop sounds. What prompted the Buddy Holly and

Don Gibson covers? The short answer is that I've loved those songs as long as I've loved any song. The long answer is that I'd like to erase any kind of timeframe on these records I'm making. I like it when I hear a song on the radio and I don't know how old it is, or where sounds are coming from. **What's the overarching theme of *Hold Time*?**

It's inspired by being asked where my inspiration comes from. It's the hardest question in the world, so I decided to make a record that tried to answer it. I like stories and songs that raise questions instead of pretending to have all the answers. There's not many elements of life that can take you to those areas – but music can. **BUD SCOPPA**

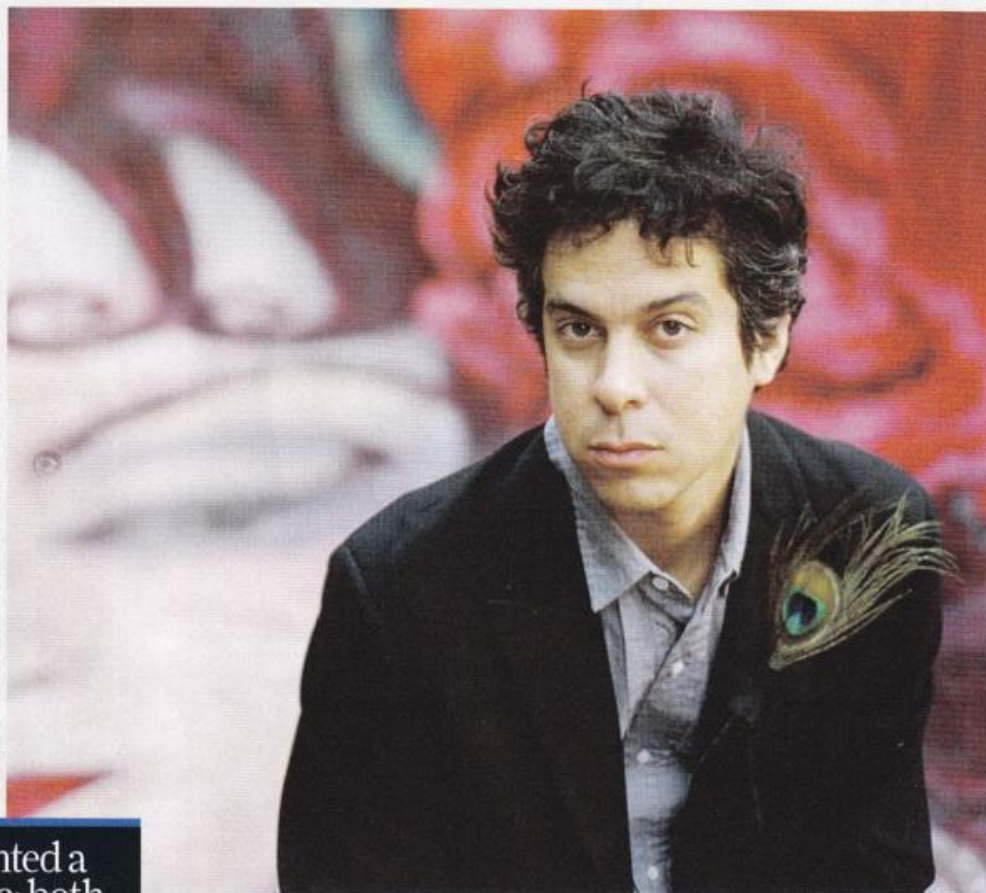
soul 'fore they lay my old body down."

It's easy to get lost in Ward's lyrics, but this artist's thematic concerns can't be separated from his sonic impulses, which deftly draw on the hand-made sounds of Appalachian music, country blues, clapboard-church gospel and early rock 'n' roll. At the same time, the album has all the lo-fi signifiers, from Ward's imperfectly doubled lead vocals to the gauze of reverb he throws over the tracks. But these intimate elements co-exist with the most expansive arrangements of Ward's career.

The album's leitmotif is its lush, dreamy string sections, which bring a gorgeous poignancy not only to the

metaphysical songs "For Beginners", "Hold Time", "Save Me", "Fisher Of Men" and "Epistemology", but also to his radical reworkings of a pair of '50s rockers, Buddy Holly's "Rave On" (a duet with Deschanel) and Don Gibson's "Oh Lonesome Me" (with Lucinda Williams). A third cover closes the album; it's the Sinatra ballad "I'm a Fool To Want You", with Ward transforming it into the end-title theme for an imaginary Spaghetti Western that doubles as a wordless hymn.

"I have a lot of questions about that relationship between love and death," Ward said in 2003. He's pondering those questions in earnest now.



The SPECIALIST

This month... Weird America

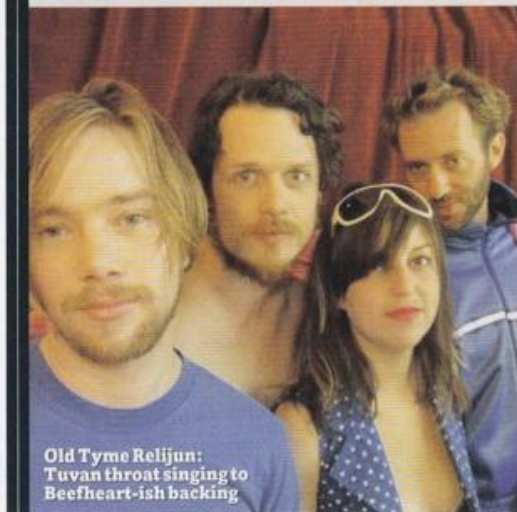
As frontman of Portland's **Old Tyme Relijun**, Arrington de Dioniso makes music that harks back both sonically and in attitude to the jazzy, mutant mish-mash of Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica*. De Dioniso's second solo album, however, proves he's not wedded to any template. Assembled using little but voice and blasts from a bass clarinet, *I See Beyond The Black Sun* (RECORDS) ★★ is far from technically showy by jazz standards. But de Dioniso's vocals—long, wordless harmonic drones in the tradition of Tuvan throat singing—are rich in tone, and his playing is packed with fiery motion, making this a compelling listen.



While long in thrall to indie-rock or, more recently, a sort of post-Devendra hippy jamming, like de Dioniso, America's rock underground feels to be digging rather deeper, more ambitious sources. **USA Is A**

Monster are vaguely reminiscent of their cacophonous **LOAD** RECORDS labelmates **Lightning Bolt**, but this Brooklyn duo boast a lighter, jazzier touch reminiscent of '70s prog rockers like **Gentle Giant**, and a pronounced interest in Native American storytelling. A strange mix, granted, but the duo's new LP *Space Programs* (RECORDS) ★★ is their best yet, complex on a micro-level, but melodic and grand in scope, building to expansive vistas that form a backdrop for the adventures of wandering Eskimo and Indian braves. Equally bemusing in its initial incongruity is *Secular Works* (PLANARIA) ★★, the debut from **Extra Life**. Fronted by youthful New York vocalist/composer and sometime Dirty Projector **Charlie Looker**, it's an ambitious attempt to fuse slamming art-metal with medieval chant. Best is "Blackmail Blues", where Looker's voice undulates like a Gregorian monk over Glenn Branca-like guitar clang.

California's **Journey To Ixtlan** draw their name from Carlos Castaneda's metaphysical desert memoir, and make music of a similarly lysergic stripe. Their self-titled debut *Aurora Borealis* (RECORDS) ★★ is psychedelic metal that burns long and slow, a dusty tapestry of growled vocals, vintage keyboards and lumbering riffs that could be the soundtrack to some lost Jodorowsky Western, or Kyuss with heatstroke. Totally baked, by either definition. Meanwhile, Ixtlan's *Aurora Borealis* labelmates **Fauna** turn their hand to an overseas sound—the grim clang of Norwegian black metal—but in relocating the sound to their home in the rainforest of the Pacific Midwest, make a good argument for the flexibility of the form. Consisting of one track, strung out in excess of an hour in length, *Rain* (RECORDS) ★★ builds from a hiss of torrential rain into a circling, minor-key acoustic guitar lament slaked in reverb, before taking flight on blackened wings just before the mid-point, and gliding home on frantic drums and scything guitar. **LOUIS PATTISON**



Old Tyme Relijun: Tuvan throat singing to Beefheart-ish backing



DÄLEK Gutter Tactics

IPECAC

★★★★

Sixth album from cacophonous New Jersey rap duo

Dälek might be hip hop in the straightforward "beats, rhymes and life" sense, but set against the backdrop of modern rap, they remain an alien presence. MC Dälek and producer Oktopus have inhaled something of the industrial character of their Newark neighbourhood, dystopian rhymes set against rigid, clanking beats and foggy, heavyweight drones that recall Swans or My Bloody Valentine in full white-out mode. *Gutter Tactics* lets a little light in, though, the glimmering, shoegazey "We Lost Sight" being the surest glimpse yet of redemption within the gloom.

LOUIS PATTISON

DAT POLITICS Mad Kit

CHICKS ON SPEED

★★★★

Frantic French electro-punk remix your brain

On their eighth album in a decade, France's prolific pranksters of helium-voiced laptop-punk show no shortage of ideas. *Mad Kit* continues the Lille foursome's drift from rowdy glitch-techno towards melodic Eurodisco, but a subversive twist of art-punk attitude still lurks beneath the shiny surface of even pure-pop moments like "Bad Dream Machine" or "Magnetic Attraction". Their fast-forward bleepscapes may be relentlessly synthetic, but their pidgin-English lyrics

and sugar-rush enthusiasm are addictive, summoning up the euphoric innocence of early 1980s electro.

STEPHEN DALTON

DEATH ...For The Whole World To See

DRAG CITY

★★★★

Exhumed! Lost proto-punk classic from 1974

As the multitude who own their sole single, "Politicians In My Eyes" (current value: \$1,000), will testify, Death were an energetically disgruntled garage rock band who briefly impacted on Detroit in the mid '70s. According to the yarn told by Drag City, the African-American Hackney brothers were almost signed by Clive Davis at Columbia, on condition they change their name. Refusal, disbandment, God and reggae followed, and Death's debut album was left unreleased. Belatedly, it turns out to be great: seven precise, insurrectionist ramblings that fit somewhere between the MC5's *High Time* and the Dead Boys' "Sonic Reducer".

JOHN MULVEY

DEEP PURPLE Stormbringer

EMI

★★★★

Surprisingly funky work from heavy rockers

This 1974 album marked a "Jazz Odyssey"-type change of direction for Purple. And to give them credit, as facsimile, opportunist blues/funk goes, tracks like "Love Don't Mean A Thing" and "Hold On" are little feats indeed, with David Coverdale abandoning his

pomp rock vibrato for soulful growling, bassist Glenn Hughes making like he just joined the Isley Brothers and Jon Lord reviving the "Black Night" boogie of yore. Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore, however, was contemptuous of this version of DP—and soon after quit to form Rainbow.

DAVID STUBBS



THE DELFONICS The Delfonics

ACE

★★★★

Tell Me This Is A Dream

ACE

★★★★

Soul stylists' early '70s peak, on CD for the first time

These soft soul giants peaked too early to exploit the Philly Sound boom, but their work with writer/arranger Thom Bell was where he learned his craft. 1970's *The Delfonics* finds them flourishing, with the enduring "Didn't I (Blow Your Mind This Time)" and "When You Get Right Down To It" showcasing William Hart's wonderfully subtle voice. Bell had shifted his affections to The Stylistics by 1972's *Tell Me...*, and Hart's brother Wilbert was penning songs, but the slip in standards was only marginal, as shown by the ethereal "Hey Love".

CHRIS ROBERTS

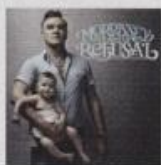
MORRISSEY

Years Of Refusal POLYDOR



Middle-aged Moz
on throbbing,
souped-up form.

By Danny Kelly



This LP, the third studio album since Morrissey began his near-miraculous recovery from commercial and

critical oblivion with 2004's *You Are The Quarry*, was always going to be a bit tricky. *Quarry*... reminded us that he is still capable of marvellous song-writing, as well as providing him with his first ever million-seller, solo or otherwise. 2005's *Live At Earls Court* allowed him to reclaim his past – and especially his past in The Smiths – without appearing like The Human League or Tony Hadley on one of those I ♥ The '80s tours. And *Ringleader Of The Tormentors*, with its tantalising glimpses of love found and celibacy abandoned (“explosive kegs between my legs!” – ooh matron!) was, after two decades of smokescreen and hairshirt, both revelatory and winningly upbeat. In a little less than two years, Morrissey had engineered one of music's great resurrections.

After that fabulous piece of Lazarus-meets-Liberace hoopla, the build-up to *Years Of Refusal* has been inevitably accompanied by a certain amount of “what next?” angst. And Moz himself may well have been disquieted by another dawning realisation. Many of his heroes – Joe Orton, Billy Fury, Oscar Wilde, James Dean, Elvis – did their best work young, then slipped away before the passing years took their inevitable toll. But a vegetarian lifestyle, and a robust Irish constitution, have thankfully denied our man any such get-out. By the time he tours this new album in the summer, Steven Patrick Morrissey will be 50...

So, how's he coped? Very well, in truth. *Years Of Refusal* is an excellent album. Not an excellent “rock album”, or an excellent “pop album”, but an excellent Morrissey album. It's a distinction worth making because these days Moz's appeal is confined, surely, to his large and unswerving horde of adherents. He's unlikely to attract new fans, but still has more than enough devotees to sustain him artistically and to keep the wolf a very healthy distance from the door. It's an enviable position for an artist to occupy

and a really simple deal: Morrissey makes decent Moz disc (none of that self-parody nonsense like *Kill Uncle* or *Maladjusted*, the 1999 clunker that almost blew the whole arrangement) and his gang will adore him forever. The faithful (though they might gripe about the paltry ration of just nine new songs) will be largely delighted with this latest offering.

To details, *Years Of Refusal* looks both back and forward. Produced in LA by pop-punk pioneer Jerry Finn (who died soon after the sessions) it's a souped-up revision of the arena-ready rock sound he cooked up for... *Quarry*.

Guitars hammer where they used to twinkle; the music is crunchy and insistent; there are refinements (Hispanic brass and guitars flavour at least three of the songs), but mostly the band throbs like one of those electricity substations. And after the vaguely autobiographical

bent of... *Tormentors*, this is a return to more traditional Morrissey lyrical content – low-speed love chases (“Black Cloud”) and gleeful put-downs (“You Were Good In Your Time”). But there's something else as well. Maybe it's the imminent arrival of that important birthday, but there does seem an

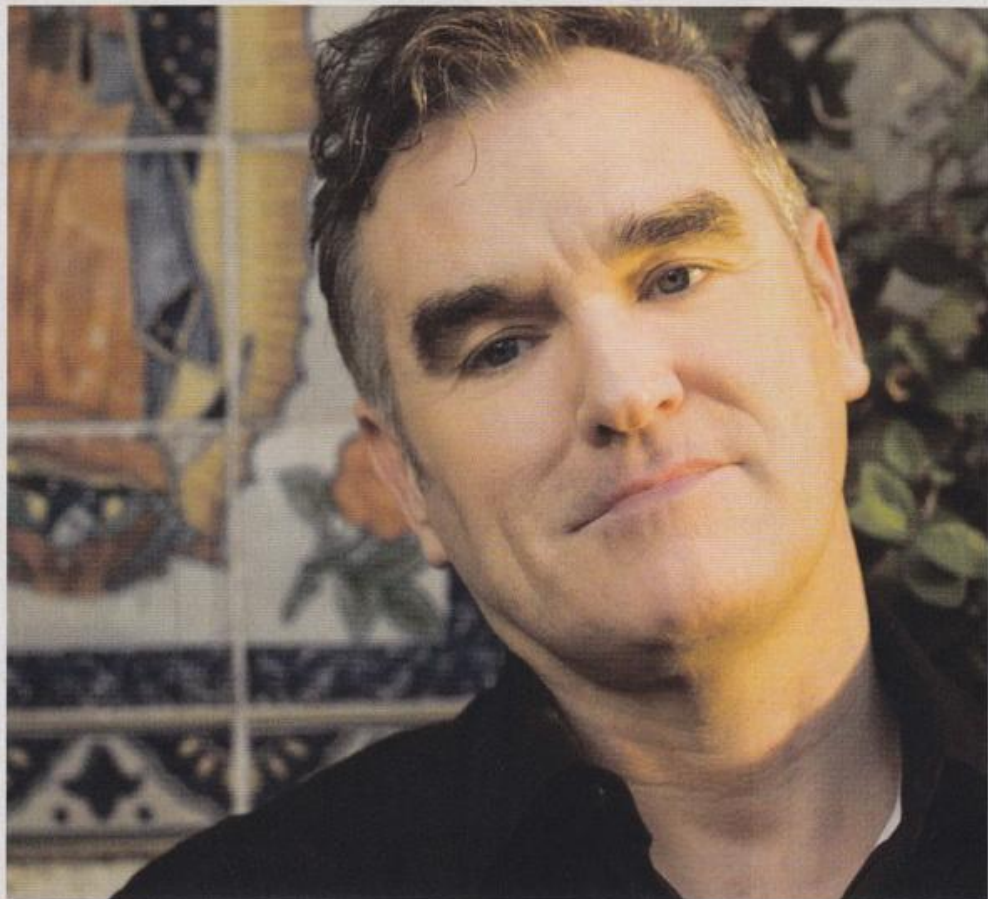
even greater pre-occupation than usual with the passing of time, the transience of things and the certainty of death. “When Last I Spoke To Carol” and “One Day Goodbye Will Be Farewell” confront the Reaper head on, while “Mama Lay Softly On The Riverbed” (“Life is nothing much to lose/

It's just so lonely bere without you”) is so painfully poignant that the listener ends up hoping that it's not a chapter from the singer's real life.

Even the best Morrissey records have their moments where it all sounds a bit phoned in (here, even the most ardent admirer could live without “Black

Cloud”, “Sorry Doesn't Help” and “All You Need Is Me”), but when it all comes together, this is still one of the most thrilling landmarks in the musical landscape. “Something Is Squeezing My Skull”, “Mama...” and “That's How People Grow Up” are all welcome new gems in the Moz treasure chest, but the shiniest jewel – and irrefutable evidence that he is still the master of a pop scene he often surveys with utter disdain – is “When Last I Spoke To Carol”. A gorgeously controlled vocal is augmented by flamenco guitars and festooned with a swirling mariachi horn battery, the latter clearly influenced by recent collaborator Ennio Morricone. It is truly wonderful, better even than the White Stripes' equally trumpet-drenched “Conquest” and the best bits of the lovely Last Shadow Puppets record, with which it shares some widescreen, string-driven DNA.

As he heads into middle age, Morrissey (the man) seems as confrontational as ever, still mad for the spats, gaffes and feuds that have studded his life and career. Records as bright and occasionally beautiful as *Years Of Refusal* make us forgive Morrissey (the artist) even his most juvenile foibles.



Irrefutable evidence that Morrissey is still master of a pop scene he often surveys with utter disdain

DJ SPRINKLES Midtown 120 Blues

MULEMUSIC

★★★★

Who said dance music was apolitical? Not DJ Sprinkles...

Japanese-based, American expat and transgender electronic musician Terre Thaemlitz has always made a point of not flinching from the problematic politics of identity and music. As DJ Sprinkles, he calls house music's bluff, elegising the genre's descent from queer-related specificity to global impotence. That he's done so while producing some of the most erotically charged, seductive and hypnotic deep house since the genre first broke cover in the 1980s makes his intervention simultaneously all the smarter, and all the more uncomfortable. **JON DALE**

DR STRANGELY STRANGE

1968

Kip Of The Serenes

HUX

★★★★

Collector's Edition of Anglo-Irish acid-folkies' wild and free first

Formed around Trinity College Dublin students Ivan Pawle and Tim Booth, plus Tim Goulding and Caroline 'Linus' Greville, Dr Strangely Strange's raggedly philosophical freak-folk often plays second fiddle to The Incredible String Band. This well-annotated edition, remastered at the correct speed, should redress that impression. Producer Joe Boyd sat them in a circle and let the tapes run, creating a spontaneous, psychedelic campfire vibe, huffing harmonium, giggles and all.

Kip...'s lysergic pageant of waking dreams summons an Ireland of wonders: the hubbub of Dublin's streets; the weird country of "On The West Cork Hack"; Dr Strange dispensing emetics and purgatives for paranoiacs; the multi-panelled depiction of Irish revolutionary history on "Donnybrook Fair"; "Dark Haired Lady" includes a jazz solo for Baroque recorders, while misty bells ring out on "Ship Of Fools". The definitive package of this late-'60s Albion dreamtime oddity.

ROB YOUNG



Dr Strangely Strange: no longer second fiddle to the String Band

EFDemin

Carry On: Pretend We Are Not In The Room

CURLE

★★★★

Deep house in the mix, German-style

Though Phillip Sollmann (aka Efdemin) is best known for his minimal/techno sides on the Dial label, with *Carry On...* he lets his fondness for deep house dictate the mix. With deep house on the ascendant again in dance music circles, Sollmann's DJing should slide right in with the zeitgeist, particularly as he's able to trace a straight line through his selections, so they nestle comfortably next to each other, all recumbent contours, gorgeous chords and gently guided melodies. **JON DALE**

TERRY EMM

White Butterflies

LONGMAN RECORDS

★★★★

Striking debut from teenage English troubadour

For a 19-year-old, Emm's songs boast a remarkable maturity and poise: even within this 10-song debut, you can trace a rapid development from the Nick Drake/John Martyn folkisms of what one presumes are his earliest songs such as "Sapphire Eyes" and "New Horizons" to a richer, fuller chamber-pop sound. The effortless, understated craft of songs such as "Dove" and the title track, suggest that if he doesn't make it as a performer in an already over-crowded field, a career as a writer awaits. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

EMPIRE OF THE SUN

Walking On A Dream

VIRGIN

★★★★

Sleepy Jackson synth-rock side-project

There aren't enough genuinely loopy pop stars around these days, so it's always a pleasure to hear from The Sleepy Jackson's Luke Steele, who has imagined himself as a particularly flamboyant *Tekken* character on the cover to this collaboration with Pnau's Nick Littlemore. If the art concept is grand, the musical MO is fairly straightforward: immaculately observed '80s yacht rock and Hollywood new wave, forged from the same influences as Ladyhawke and Neon Neon. "Half Mast" and the "Without You" are exquisite pangs of millionaire's melancholy, even

if there aren't enough of them to sustain a whole album.

SAM RICHARDS

THE FRAY

EPIC

★★★★

Epic by record label, epic by nature

Maybe it's because they come from mile-high Denver, but The Fray always sound like they're stretching skywards, desperate to find salvation. You can hear it in "You Found Me", the first single from this second album, as the band build from Isaac Slade's quiet voice and piano to a maelstrom of rolling chords and pleading guitars, while the album concludes with a vast choral crescendo ("Happiness"). Best of the lot, though, is the epic "Never Say Never", where they erect a Himalayan edifice of voices, strings, keyboards and guitars. Not only a radio-friendly unit-shifter, but also a bona fide guilty pleasure.

ADAM SWEETING

visceral and darkly driving nu-blues are a dime a dozen these days, but this sibling London duo distinguish themselves. Minimal guitar, heavily fuzzed bass and stylishly clattering drums suggest that The Gun Club and PJ Harvey loom large in their record collection, but it's Lou Reed, Johnny Cash and Bill Callahan who provide the template for Gideon's compelling stories, whether he's recounting a singer's failed audition for The Rayettes ("Kathy Ray") or recalling a hapless, hated schoolmate ("Hide And Seek"). **SHARON O'CONNELL**

DAVY GRAHAM 1968

Large As Life And Twice As Natural

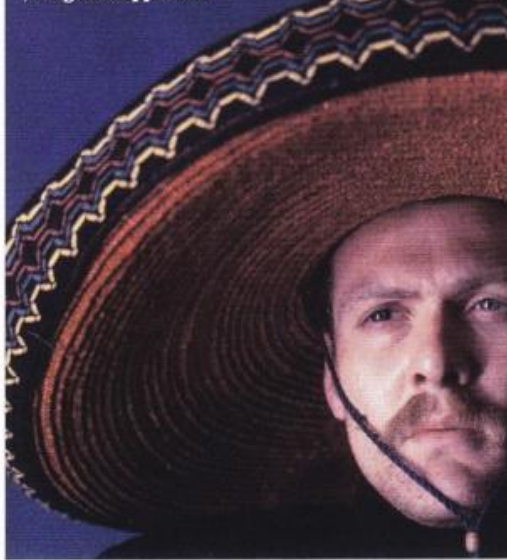
WWW.ANTHOLOGYRECORDINGS.COM

★★★★

Late-great guitar wizard's unjustly forgotten effort

Relaxed, straightforward, performed without pretence but with a maestro's touch, guitarist Davy Graham's late-'60s output has long been an underrated treasure trove. *Large As Life*, centred around Graham's peerless acoustic guitar, double bass, dappled drums and occasional sax, is thick with atmosphere, flashing back to pre-war times for a rumbling, percussive take on Mississippi Fred McDowell's "Freight Train Blues". While two extended raga pieces show Graham at his dazzling, deep-in-the-moment best, it's an extended, loose-limbed take on Joni Mitchell's then-new "Both Sides Now" that burns brightest. **LUKE TORN**

Viva Davy Graham! Late acoustic guitar maestro's '68 gem reappraised



There aren't enough genuinely loopy pop stars around these days, so it's always a pleasure to hear from The Sleepy Jackson's Luke Steele, who has imagined himself as a particularly flamboyant *Tekken* character on the cover to this collaboration with Pnau's Nick Littlemore. If the art concept is grand, the musical MO is fairly straightforward: immaculately observed '80s yacht rock and Hollywood new wave, forged from the same influences as Ladyhawke and Neon Neon. "Half Mast" and the "Without You" are exquisite pangs of millionaire's melancholy, even



JOE GIDEON & THE SHARK

Harum Scarum

BRONZERAT

★★★★

Terrific debut from Bad Seeds-approved brother and sister

Bands versed in the ways of

GRANDMASTER FLASH The Bridge: Concept Of A Culture

ADRENALINE/STRUT

★★★
Rap pioneer's first LP release in 22 years

In the years since Flash helped define hip hop as a new form, it has become the international musical language of choice – here, Spanish, Japanese, Senegalese and Swedish MCs are corralled to emphasise this point on the declamatory “We Speak Hip Hop”. Flash’s desire to assert his primacy in the rap world – assisted by Busta Rhymes, Big Daddy Kane and KRS-One – is understandable, but the concept here outweighs the content. Many come to praise him, but the album’s ersatz old school mode inevitably pales when judged against the revolutionary Flash sides. **GAVIN MARTIN**

GRAND DUCHY Petit Fours

COOKING VINYL

★★★★
Frank Black and wife make sweet music

Payday with the Pixies come and gone, the former Black Francis can get back to the more important business of following his muse. Here, it takes him right back home to his better half, Violet Clark, with whom he’s made a record of angular guitar-pop with girl/boy vox. It’s a formula that’s done Frank very well in the past, and at its best – say, “Black Suit” – there’s a glimpse of where we might be had the Pixies never splintered. Elsewhere, though, the lyrics lack the ingenuity of Black’s

best, and Clark’s synth work feels like an awkward fit.

LOUIS PATTISON

HACIENDA Loud Is The Night

ALIVE/NATURAL SOUND

★★★★
Woody sunshine pop from upstart Texans

Led by the brothers Villanueva and originally based in San Antonio, Hacienda’s unique blend of offhand harmonies, songwriting rooted in Brill building classicism, and summery keyboard-drenched ditties conjures a mystical late-’60s vibe, a world in which Doug Sahm and Curt Boettcher might cross paths. *Loud Is The Night* is less about individual songs than tugging listeners into Hacienda’s all-enveloping, sepia-toned world. That said, the strengths of “Shake Ya,” a sweet, shimmering hit-single-in-waiting, and the haunting, Drifters-like “Hear Me Cryin’” are undeniable – **LUKE TORN**

TIM HARDIN 1966

WATER

★★★★★
A folk-rock Tim’s confused but spellbinding first

Like Tim Buckley, Tim Hardin is one of those ’60s folk-rockers whose back catalogue could probably do with a thorough overhaul. In the meantime, this straightforward reissue of his 1966 debut is useful enough: an oddly harmonious hodge-podge of bluesy demos and more folk-inflected material, recorded over a

couple of years and subjected to some string overdubs that Hardin personally disliked. Actually, Artie Butler’s arrangements on the likes of “How Can We Hold On To A Dream” are discretely lovely, never overwhelming the rueful charm of Hardin’s songs. *I*, really, is a testament to the potency of Hardin’s songcraft as much as his own character. No-one, least of all Hardin, seems entirely sure where he’s heading – but with “Reason To Believe” and “Misty Roses” in his portfolio, why worry?

JOHN MULVEY



HARMONIC 313 When Machines Exceed Human Intelligence

WARP

★★★★★
Latest solo project from Mark Pritchard turns up the bass

Mark Pritchard has been a denizen of “post clubbing” electronic music since 1993’s *Reload*, his every new release a metamorphosis. Now based in Australia, he’s nonetheless tapped into the UK bassline house scene as inspiration for his latest release. There’s the familiar echo of the Warp soundlab on tracks like “Dirtbox”, but running



Post-Pixies project: Frank Black and wife Violet Clark, aka Grand Duchy

through this album are snaking Moog synths which burrow a wormhole through to the sci-fi scenarios posited on “Battlestar” and “Quadrant 3”. From present to future at Warp factor.

DAVID STUBBS

HELL Teufelswerk

INTERNATIONAL DEEJAY GIGOLO

★★★★★
P Diddy, B Ferry assist Bavarian dance titan

German techno icon DJ Hell – 46-year-old Helmut Geier – is a stylish master pasticheur who pillaged Moroder and Suicide for previous albums. Wiser in his ways and better able to express himself, on the first half of *Teufelswerk* (Devil’s Work) he and Peter Kruder compose an hour of lush, shimmering *kosmische* that spills into a curdled cover of “Silver Machine”. The second “Night” half offers a P Diddy collaboration and the usual Hell sprawl of sleek jacking electronics, the highlight of which is “U Can Dance”, a serpentine disco burner crooned by one Bryan Ferry.

PIERS MARTIN

THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE 1968 Electric Ladyland

UNIVERSAL

★★★★★
Jimi’s classic (slight return)

As much as the world was in turmoil while *Electric Ladyland* was being made, so, undoubtedly, was The Jimi Hendrix Experience. Made by an over-worked, over-managed group led by a guitarist keeping demandingly odd hours, 40 years on the album displays an unquestionable power and

beauty, but also records a huge tension. Split between brain-frying psychedelic epics (“1983 (A Merman I Should Turn To Be)”) and off-the-floor live jams like “Voodoo Chile”, the album is the bridging point between the flowery-shirted psychedelic pop records of Hendrix’s London days, and the self-determining war funk of *Band Of Gypsies*, somehow containing elements of both within its borders. This supplants the previous reissue only in bundling it with a DVD [reviewed on p113] of the *Classic Albums* doc, while sleeve-wise, this continues to use neither the original “nude ladies” shot (that Hendrix loathed), nor the Linda Eastman shots (that he wanted). **JOHN ROBINSON**

MARY HOPKIN 1968 Recollections

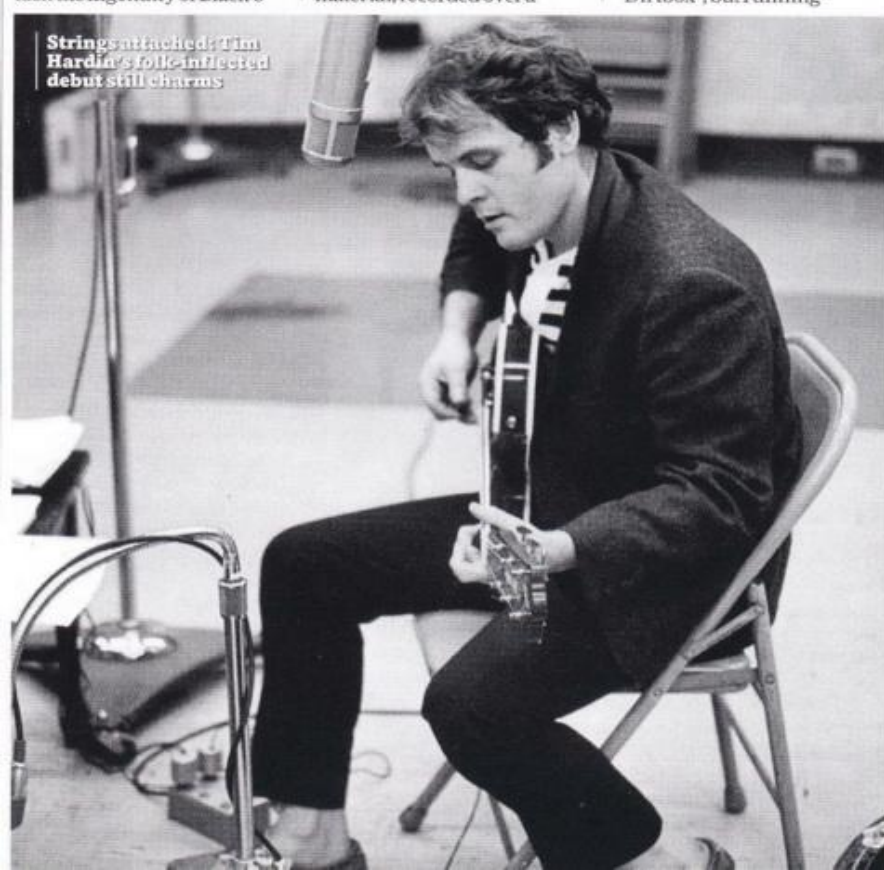
MARY HOPKIN MUSIC

★★★
Land of the twee, and home of the none-too-hip...

Though scarcely an icon of cool, Mary Hopkin can justly claim to have done it her way. The former Apple signing chose to abandon the pop biz treadmill in 1972, preferring to base herself in Wales and work at her own pace. *Recollections* is an archive collection, produced by her ex-husband Tony Visconti and spanning the years 1970-1988. Tweeness lurks like a ticking bomb (beware “Perfect Love” and “Quiet Moments”), and Hopkin’s warbling soprano is quite annoying, but she can spring a few surprises – “A Leaf Must Fall” features an impressive multitracked vocal arrangement over its stark minor chords.

ADAM SWEETING

Strings attached: Tim Hardin’s folk-inflected debut still charms



The month's best...

DEBUTS

TITUS ANDRONICUS

The Airing Of Grievances XL

Sly-smart punk energy, straight outta Stepford. *By Pat Long*

Judging from its official website, the small New Jersey town of Glen Rock looks like it might be a nice place to retire to. With its neatly trimmed lawns, plentiful fishing and active bee-keeping club, the town (population: 12,000) certainly offers

plenty for those of an advancing age to keep active.

If Glen Rock's Titus Andronicus are anything to go by, though, growing up there is hellish. As well as being a group named after Shakespeare's grisliest play, this debut album opens with them all bellowing "FUCK YOU!" in unison – and then goes on to spend half an hour noisily articulating the frustrations of being the only punk band in Pleasantville.

So, they're unfulfilled and overeducated, then (vocalist Patrick Stickles' lyrics reference Albert Camus and Bruegel, Public Enemy and *Seinfeld*). As the album's title suggests, there's a certain amount of personal score-settling on offer here, but, crucially, it's accompanied by a sly sense of humour. Most of the lyrics were written by Stickles while he was still at high school, but he's self-aware enough to know that angry meditations on suburban misery will only go so far – so suicide song "No Future Part One" is followed immediately by "No Future Part Two: The Day After No Future".

Sure, it'll take you a few runs at it to begin to pick up words and phrases – even this remastered re-release (it came out on a tiny US indie in spring last year) is thrillingly muddy-sounding, which



means that when the band attempt some Galaxie 500-style shoegazing the songs are stretched past their breaking point.

This is a small quibble in the light of the rest of the facts, though: *The Airing Of Grievances* is one of the smartest, most joyous records in an age, channelling the spirit of other too-clever-by-half suburban punks from The Replacements to Nirvana and adding a dash of fellow New Jerseyite Bruce Springsteen's eye for detail. Here's hoping they don't move to the city any time soon.

THE AIRBORNE TOXIC EVENT

The Airborne Toxic Event

MAJORDOMO

★★★★

Roots rock, indie-style

As a novelist-turned-songwriter with a genetic autoimmune disease liable to shave 20 years from his life expectancy, TATE's mainman Mikel Jollett sounds like a tragic alt. hero in waiting. For his band – reminiscent of a rootsy Arcade Fire – things are going well: an unmastered, home-recorded mp3 of stupendous orchestrated scorchers "Sometime Around Midnight" has become the most 'added' alternative track in the US, above Metallica. TATE's debut, meanwhile, touches on Stogies garage rock, sultry blues, Strokesian pop, all swaddled in opulent Americana. **MARK BEAUMONT**

EMMY THE GREAT

First Love

CLOSE HARBOUR

★★★★

London folkstrel wields

her lyrical rapier
Emma Lee-Moss has sung with Lightspeed Champion and Noah And The Whale, and initially her pretty, polite emo-folk appears to be cut from the same (plaid) cloth. However, you soon realise that Emmy's startlingly pure voice is a vehicle for some smart, candid and subversive lyrics. "MIA", for instance, is a dazed, dispassionate account of surviving a fatal car crash, while "City Song", "24" and the self-explanatory "We Almost Had A Baby" work together to construct one of the most eloquently savage skewerings of a feckless ex-lover since Patti Smith's "Revenge". **SAM RICHARDS**

GRAMMATICS

Grammatics

DANCETO THERADIO

★★★★

Epic salvo, more Yes

than Yeah Yeah Yeahs
There's vaulting ambition on this young Leeds-based band's first, which hungrily embraces the grandiose. So epic are elements of their art-rock approach that sometimes they make Muse – even Queen – sound understated. This actually turns out to be a very good thing, urging you to discover the hidden nooks and crannies of their world. In "The Vague Archive" alone there seem to be three equally intriguing songs tussling for prominence. The blend of Owen Brinley's choirboy vocals and a raft of prog-tinged riffs is a source of promise, magic and drama. **CHRIS ROBERTS**

MONGREL

Better Than Heavy

WALL OF SOUND

★★★

Political hip hop, with

added Arctic Monkeys
Reverend & The Makers' debut album promised to lay bare *The State Of Things* but only got so far. Thankfully Jon 'The Reverend' McLure has reversed his musical retirement to team up with Babyshambles Drew McConnell, Arctic Monkeys Matt Helders and Andy Nicholson and a high-rise of UK hip hop artists led by Lowkey for this superior rattle through his manifesto. Laced with grime squelches, riot-inducing raps and dark dub, it tackles gun crime, political deceit and terrorism – but also features enough tunes to sugar the pill. **MARK BEAUMONT**

SINGLES BAR

Possibly the greatest Valentine's Day present on record, **Passion Pit's** "Chunk Of Change" EP COLUMBIA began life as a Feb 14 token from songwriter Michael Angelakos to his girlfriend. Twelve months and one almighty transatlantic label scrum later, its six yelping, skittering tracks are the gifts that keep on giving with "Smile On Me" its big-hearted bliss-pop being the chunk of choice.

Tommy Sparks was the guy who could be seen stage right of Kele Okereke when bassist Gordan Moakes' new-found fatherhood forced him to miss Bloc Party's headline Reading and Leeds festival shows last summer. More than just a four-string stand-in, "I'm A Rope" **ELECTRIC EYEBALL RECORDS** is his glamorous, robo-disco debut – even if it's slightly eclipsed by Drums Of Death's gloopy garage remix.

As the first ever Norwegian-language act to get a UK release, **Casiokids** (below) make brain-over-brawn, electronica that's rather pleasant in an uneventful Røyksopp-ish type of way. If



you're going to check them out though, it might as well be live where they use a shadow puppet theatre (!), rather than here on "Verdens Største Land/Fot I Hope" **MOSHI MOSHI**.

Whether it is misplaced political correctness or potential Wikipedia-related confusion that's made this band renounce their original name (The Muslims) for the infinitely more rubbish moniker **The Soft Pack** we may never know, but luckily their louche Cali punk has survived the rebrand unscathed. Debut split 7" "Brightside"/"Nightlife" **CASPIAN RECORDINGS** is their misty-eyed tribute to Jonathan Richman, seemingly written in the belief that it's still 2002, CBGB's is open seven nights a week and The Strokes are in this for the long-haul. Happy days. **KRISSI MURISON**

This month in...

AMERICANANA

By Rob Hughes

PHOSPHORESCENT

To Willie DEAD OCEANS



Enchanting love letter to the first hippy of country, Mr Willie Nelson



It's ironic, not to mention strangely fitting, that this tribute to Willie Nelson is partly made up of other people's songs. Aside from his reputation as composer and the coolest man in country, Nelson is best known as an interpreter of song, prone to plumbing the works of Hank Cochran, Merle Haggard, Hoagy Carmichael and myriad others. It's no coincidence that two of his most celebrated albums, 1975's *Red-Headed Stranger* and 1978's *Stardust*, are mostly covers.

Brooklyn-based songwriter Matthew Houck (Phosphorescent to you and me) clearly understands Nelson's motives, for this artful, understated record is deftly weighted between homage and reinvention. "Can I Sleep In Your Arms", for instance, is recast as a forlorn winter hymn, a lone tambourine shucking behind the same Tabernacle harmonies that made Willie's last LP, 2007's *Pride*, such a treat.

Houck's great trick here is nailing the weary sadness in Nelson's songs, but with the same deceptively carefree gambol as Bonnie 'Prince' Billy when countrifying his catalogue for *Greatest Palace Music*. If it's vocal comparisons you're after, look no further than the forsaken tones of Will Oldham, or perhaps the humid whispers of Iron & Wine's Sam Beam.

Houck is smart, too. There's nothing too familiar here – no "Always On My Mind", no "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain", nothing as crassly obvious as "Crazy" – which gives more room for manoeuvre. Willie never sounded quite as ghostly as Houck



does on the folksy "Walkin'", lent extra chilliness by Ricky Ray Jackson's pedal steel. And if you love that gorgeous choral stuff that he does so well, then "Pick Up The Tempo" (Houck's gentle overdubs set to plucked guitar) is the ticket. Of course, he can go a fair clip, too, bunkering down with a barrelhouse piano on "I Gotta Get Drunk" and twanging heavy on a fabulously expressive "The Party's Over".

It's earthy and it's eloquent – no doubt Willie will approve.

NEAL CASAL Roots & Wings

FARGO

★★★★

Cardinal relocates his fireside manner

Casal has been rocking out as part of Ryan Adams' Cardinals of late, and his recent solo albums – along with the Southern-styled racket of his Hazy Malaze band – have favoured electric over acoustic. But *Roots & Wings* is very much a return to Casal's folksy late-'90s records. There's a yearning, reflective ache to these songs that, despite a welter of back-up, feels like the work of a lone wolf. Guitars crackle and there are glints of pedal steel, even some banjo, with Casal's voice finding the sweet spot between Gram Parsons, Big Star and Jackson Browne.

STEVE EARLE & THE DEL McCOURY BAND

NEW WEST

★★★★

Brilliant "high risk, low tech" bluegrass

When country legend Bill Monroe joined him on stage in Tennessee in 1995, Steve Earle called it "the biggest thrill of my life". The confession that bluegrass was his favourite tittle may have sat uneasily with fans of his hard-driven roots records, but a full foray into mountain territory was always likely. More surprising was the result: this nimble set of originals, backed by Del McCoury and his band, charged with the rough-house spirit of rock, with Emmylou Harris and Gillian Welch among the guests. But why not an expanded version?

CHIP TAYLOR Songs From A Dutch Tour

TRAIN WRECK

★★★★

He's lived it. CD-plus-book of travellin' tales

The revival of the man who brought us "Wild Thing" and "Angel Of The Morning" seemed highly improbable just a few years back. Taylor gave up performing in the early '70s, a gambling addict never far from the racetrack. The only respite was a brief tour of Holland in 1975. This warm, conversational set of acoustic tunes was inspired by a return to those shores with Texan singer Carrie Rodriguez in 2007. Taylor's pithy observations come framed by the leanest of backings and lonely harmonica, his wry voice full of sad, peculiar wisdom. Highly compelling.

WILLIAM ELLIOTT WHITMORE

ANTI-

★★★★

Oak-voiced Iowan offers up bluesy fifth

You can imagine archivist Harry Smith stumbling across Whitmore on his farm on the Mississippi, such is the ageless, rural feel of his voice and stark guitar. But he's less of a throwback than he appears. After a trio of bony folk-country albums, this one is more bluesy and soulful, a kind of semi-protest record that takes stock of post-Bush USA. "Old Devils" and "There's Hope For You" sound like new missives from The Reverend Gary Davis, while "A Good Day To Die" is an old cowboy's last testament. And the boy's still only 30.

ROUND-UP

Early tip for 2009 are Nashville-based foursome **The Deep Vibration**, so named by Lou Reed when they approached him after a show last year. They look like the bearded backwoods sons of The Band, but sound like Neil Young propping up the bar with Richmond Fontaine. Five-track EP "*Veracruz*" DUALTONE ★★★★★ is a weather-bitten beauty, Matt Campbell's wobbly voice like Neil in full prairie mode on "Third Day Of July", messed up by distorted guitar. Guests include Spooner Oldham, pedal steel veteran Al Perkins and Gillian Welch, who adds vocals to standout "Tennessee Rose". Led by two brothers from Southern California, **The Quarter After**

[pictured] wear their influences proudly. Second LP *Changes Near* THE COMMITTEE TO KEEP MUSIC CIVIL ★★★ often sounds like a spirited homage to The Byrds, with chiming 12-string riffs and crystal harmonies. It all sails a little too close to



pastiche, but there are some genuinely great tunes here – "Sempere Avanti (Johnny Marr's Not Dead)" is the Canyon's own "How Soon Is Now". There's more of a campfire vibe to *One For The Ditch* BLUE ROSE ★★★★★, the three-way tryst that is *ESP* (aka Tim Easton, Leeroy Stagger and Evan Phillips). Apparently recorded during a winter storm in an Alaskan cabin, it all feels loose and laid-back, with Whipsaws leader Phillips offering the gutsiest songs, like "Goodbye Blues". Last up, two country titans: *Waylon Jennings And The Kimberleys* RIGHTeous ★★★★★ is a smooth country-politan oddity from 1969, a clean-cut Waylon joining the harmony troupe for a bunch of Jackie DeShannon, Joe South, Gordon Lightfoot and Jimmy Webb covers. Meanwhile *Live From Austin TX 1978* NEW WEST ★★★★★ finds **Merle Haggard** and his Strangers in fine fettle, rumbling through gems like "Silver Wings" and "Sing Me Back Home".

LARS HORNTVETH

Kaleidoscopic

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

★★★★

Jaga Jazzist drummer's orchestral workout

Lars Horntveth's feet have barely touched the ground since he formed the electronica-jazz big band Jaga Jazzist at the age of 15. Aside from that, he has slipped off the drum stool to compose film scores and the insistent digi-funk of solo album *Pooka*. Here, with the Latvian National Orchestra, he improvises a 37-minute composition into being: a richly textured, widescreen tone poem that begins in rhapsodic mode and travels through twitchier rhythmic interludes. Horntveth himself folds in piano, horns and breathy clarinets, and while it never reaches Jaga's ecstatic peaks, he manages to flex some of the orchestra's little-used muscles. **ROB YOUNG**



HOT LEG

Red Light Fever

BARBECUE ROCKS

★★★★

Darkness man believes in a thing called rock

The cock-rock opera of The Darkness has been turned down a notch on the debut from Justin Hawkins' new band, but there's still plenty of well-worn hard rock clichés to go round. The AC/DC riffing of "You Can't Hurt Me Anymore" is typical of the overall unrepentant nagging familiarity, as is the casual – possibly ironic – sexism of its lyrics ("...just a glance of your behind used to make my day..."). "Trojan Guitar" is boot-stomping sky-punching-by-numbers, while "Ashamed" puts one in mind of either Meat Loaf or Queen trying to please the Zeppelin crowd. **TERRY STAUNTON**

HOWLING BELLS

Radio Wars

INDEPENDIENTE

★★★★

Bigger is better for classy Aussie four-piece

Howling Bells earned rave reviews for their self-titled 2006 debut, and the Brit-based Sydney natives live up to that early promise with this



Howling Bells: Aussie practitioners of epic indie

grandiose sequel. Produced by Nigel Godrich's right hand man Dan Grech-Marguerat, *Radio Wars* is unashamedly epic in scope, awash with windswept beauty and darkly romantic lyrics. Singer Juanita Stein shoots for the disdainful cool of a young Debbie Harry, whether yearning for an unattainable pin-up lover on "It Ain't You" or hankering for lost innocence on "Let's Be Kids". Meanwhile her guitarist brother Joel piles on the huge, chiming melodies. A palatial record. **STEPHEN DALTON**

HP LOVECRAFT

Dreams In The Witch House: The Complete Philips Recordings

REV-OLA

★★★★

Psych-folk adventurers' trippy '60s fare

A patchwork of American rock'n'roll styles circa 1967, Chicago's HP Lovecraft were bursting with enough creative energy for half a dozen bands during their 1967-68 run – a scattershot quality that worked both for and against them. Traces of folk, rock, spooky goth, Airplane-style psych, incipient prog and even ragtime crop up here. It's a bumpy ride, but the group had at least two stone classics – "The White Ship" and the phased-out freak-out "At The Mountains Of Madness" – that still stand proud among the landscape of '60s psych. **LUKE TORN**

ISO TOPE

Golden Section

CUNEIFORM

★★★★

Unreleased live stuff from British jazz-rock pioneers

When Miles Davis cut *In A Silent Way* at the end of the '60s he electrified jazz and inaugurated jazz-rock to the horror and derision of purists from both genres. Isotope were one of the first UK fusion combos, and with the immersive qualities of jazz-rock now recognised, they can be retrieved from ignominy. This lineup featured Soft Machine's Hugh Hopper on bass and his compositions such as "Lily Kong" are among the best things here. They funk and splash nicely in Miles' wake, but tracks like "Atilla" are marred by Gary Boyle's fretboard meandering. **DAVID STUBBS**

MILTON JACKSON

Crash

FREERANGE

★★★★

The renaissance man of deep house impresses

Glasgow's Barry Christie has his finger in an impressive variety of digital pies. The producer – who studied classical guitar for eight years – has teamed up with fellow Scot, DJ Mylo as The Pretty Boys, dipped into summery dance pop as one half of The Rainbow Family and released an LP of down-tempo electronica as Napoleon Solo. It's as Milton Jackson, however, that he's been making waves and winning plaudits from the likes of Laurent Garnier. *Crash* typifies his style of darkly sophisticated, tech-edged deep

house, adding judicious samples of exotica and sci-fi soundtracks to laudably fresh, clean and moodily funky effect. **SHARON O'CONNELL**

JEM

Down To Earth

DRAMATICO

★★

Another ride along a familiar route

Five years on from *Finally Woken* and the hook-happy hit "Just A Ride", Jem Griffiths returns with a second helping of the soft-pop electronica so beloved by TV producers.



Duly, more than half of the unremarkable songs here have been premiered on the soundtracks of episodes of *One Tree Hill*, *Gossip Girl* and their ilk, non-intrusive mid-tempo shufflers like "It's Amazing" and "Got It Good" all. The languid vocal delivery does little to dispel the Dido comparisons of old, the polite and impassionate tones irking the listener even in the smallest of doses. **TERRY STAUNTON**

DIANA JONES

Better Times Will Come

PROPER

★★★★

Hypnotic mountain

ditties from new American songbird

Working on the same borders of country and folk as Nanci Griffith and Kate Campbell, Jones' story-telling songs sound like they've spent a couple of generations being marinated on an Appalachian mountain porch. In fact, they're all new compositions, and at her best Jones conjures the world-weariness of Townes Van Zandt. Elsewhere, as on "All God's Children", she sounds like a long-lost Carter Family cousin while the death-bed lament "Henry Russell's Last Words" (recently covered by Joan Baez) has the kind of serene resignation you'd expect to find on a Gillian Welch record. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

ANTHONY JOSEPH AND THE SPASM BAND

Bird Head Son

NAIVE

★★★★

Trinidad-born poet locates the funk

Joseph is a poet who has long seemed lost to academia (he lectures at London's Birkbeck College), and his second album shows there's some seriously raw funk that he needs to get out of his system. Joseph intones funny, funky, Gil Scott-Heron-ish rhymes as his Spasm Band – featuring tenor sax, wah-wah guitar, bass, and bongos – produces a remarkable racket, flirting with Ethiopian jazz ("River Of Masks"), Nigerian Afrobeat ("Cutlass"), and James Brown's garage funk ("Vero"). Guest slots from Nigerian guitarist Keziah Jones and Defunkt trombonist Joseph Bowie are a bonus. **JOHN LEWIS**

KEITH

Vice & Virtue

LUCKY NUMBER

★★★★

Lily Allen's backing band show their range

Manchester's Keith have been a discreet musical presence since their 2006 debut *Red Thread*. They were the uncredited backing band on Lily Allen's *Alright, Still*, and they've provided incidental music to *Dragon's Den*. *Red Thread*'s mix of Manc-centric guitar pop and Krautrock suggested a jazzy Kasabian, but the follow-up *Vice & Virtue* crystallises its promise, "Runaway Town" bristling with the feral tensions of *In Rainbows* and "You Don't Know" joining the disparate dots between the Arcade Fire, Six By Seven and XTC. **MARK BEAUMONT**

ALELA DIANE

To Be Still NAMES



US folk siren adds muscle to her delicate songcraft, says John Lewis



Alela Diane Menig gained her a fair bit of attention in the UK a couple of years ago, when her first album

The Pirate's Gospel, earned rave reviews in all points from the *NME* to the broadsheets, even topping the Rough Trade record shop's end-of-year list. It helped that the 25-year-old songstress came from Nevada City, the tiny, bohemian hamlet in northern California that is also home to maverick singer and harpist Joanna Newsom, leading some to conclude that they were part of some unified freak-folk scene. However, while they share many friends and musicians, Alela has a less eccentric voice and makes simpler, less self-consciously rococo music, music that is much more rooted in traditional US folk forms.

While showcasing her remarkable voice, *The Pirate's Gospel* played like an unfinished demo from an inexperienced singer-songwriter. The songs seemed to leak out, unstructured almost, while the patchy musical accompaniment (which she now admits was "almost flung together" by herself and her producer father) betrayed some of the lazy tropes you find in much contemporary alt. folk: the one- or two-chord drones; the repetitive, skeletal guitar vamps; the static, nursery-rhyme melodies.

To Be Still is a quantum leap from its predecessor, and one which establishes Alela Diane as a significant figure in contemporary Americana. This time the instrumental backing is a more handsomely orchestrated, with each song given colour by the sparing addition of drums, bass, cello, pedal steel, banjo and fiddle. Most remarkable is the development in Alela's voice: where it sometimes sounded neurotic and cramped, it has



now been pitched up a few semitones and sounds full-throated, open, hillbilly wild, with a heart-rending yodel on certain intervals that recalls Karen Dalton or Emmylou Harris.

It's the way in which the grain of her voice defines the melodies on *To Be Still* that helps to elevate this collection above the morass of freak-folk shamans and ho-hum singer-songwriters, linking Alela Diane's music to older US folk forms. The melody of "White As Diamonds", for instance, is mapped out by a series of

yodels, which flow like an Appalachian mountain song, an association that isn't harmed by the baroque drones of a cello, or the Nashville swagger of drums and bass.

"Dry Grass And Shadows" – a feast of woozy slide guitar and mallet

drums – bursts into life when Alela's voice slurs up at the end of each line. The lyrics can be surreal and impressionistic ("Thinking I'd like to look at your teeth/Lined up in perfect rows... Where the flat lands stretch inside your mouth/And when you laugh all the stars tumbled out") but it's Alela's white gospel delivery that gives the whole piece a splendidly giddy feel.

That voice is remarkable: full-throated, open, hillbilly wild...

Q&A Alela Diane

What are the lyrical differences between *To Be Still* and the last album?

The Pirate's Gospel came out of a darker time in my life, and a lot of it was about feeling uprooted and not having a proper home. *To Be Still* was written mostly when I was living in this little cabin in Nevada City and when I was living with my boyfriend up in Portland, so they're definitely more domestic, more settled. It's coming

out of a more contented place. **Is the yodelling a conscious thing?** Sometimes I write songs in a lowish key and then maybe put the capo on my guitar, one or two frets up, and then realise that my voice is opening into all these more comfortable places. The yodelling is just one of those things that tends to happen when I'm singing. **What music have you been listening to recently?**

I've got some old Sandy Denny records because people kept saying I sound like her! I adore them, and Fairport Convention, too. Same with Karen Dalton, I only heard her after I'd released *The Pirate's Gospel*, and I really appreciate her music now, her voice is incredible and very special. Other stuff? I love *Songs For Beginners* by Graham Nash, and I've always got some Fleetwood Mac on my record player. JOHN LEWIS

The guest musicians – Rondi Soule's swing violin, Matt Bauer's bluegrass banjo, Pete Grant's slide guitar, and the sweet harmonies of Alina Hardin and Mariee Sioux – signify rural America, but a couple of tracks also make links with late-1960s British folk. "My Brambles", with its self-consciously bucolic chorus ("Oh your love calms my brambles/And your hands bring me sweet lavender") recalls Sandy Denny, while the hypnotic Motown drums recall Fairport Convention or Pentangle at their trippiest. Likewise, the drum stomps and austere minor-key drones

of "The Ocean" bring to mind The Incredible String Band.

Best of all is "The Alder Trees", a lyrical evocation of an America where basket-weaving women sit in rocking chairs and pretty-robed belles "weren't allowed to sing". Alela's modal melody suddenly, startlingly, comes to life two minutes in when she talks of the "girls clapping" – cue an avalanche of Missy Elliott-style handclaps that disrupt the Victorian reverie and take us into the 21st century – Alela's voice serving as it has throughout, the invisible link between ancient and modern.

KTL
IV

EDITIONS.MEGO

★★★★

Drone duo's black ambient epic

What began as a simple soundtracking job for SunnO)))'s Stephen O'Malley and Editions Mego owner Peter 'Pita' Rehberg, who first convened as KTL to score Gisele Vienne's theatre production *Kindertotenlieder* back in 2007, has attained an impressive prolificacy. Essentially a blend of the pair's chosen disciplines – O'Malley's pitch-black guitar drones and Rehberg's dense, tumultuous noisescapes, wrrenched from the depths of some infernal powerbook – come *IV*, the project has evolved into something foreboding and abstract, but loaded with dramatic tension, cathedral drones dirtied by dark buzzes and spidery guitar. **LOUIS PATTISON**

**BEN KWELLER**
Changing Horses

ATO RECORDS

★★★★

Selling Texas by the Gram

Kweller's fourth album finds the Texan tunesmith travelling back to his country roots, and the 10 tracks encompass roadhouse knees-ups, ballads and old-time folk. Kweller keeps his melodies clean and his arrangements

simple, frequently teaming pedal steel or dobro with his acoustic guitar. There are echoes of Neil Young (conspicuously so on "Old Hat") and the occasional Dylanism, though it's Gram Parsons who springs most often to mind. The rollicking honky-tonk of "Fight" sounds like Gram's Fallen Angels at chucking-out time, while on "Things I Like To Do" Kweiler perfectly resurrects Parsons' fragile vocal croak.

ADAM SWEETING

LAFAYETTE AFRO-ROCK BAND**Darkest Light: The Very Best Of...**

STRUT

★★★★

Greatest beats of the voodoo jazz-funk outfit

Best known for three tracks – "Voodounon", "Darkest Light" and "Hihache", which have all been sampled to death by dozens of hip hop producers – this lot hailed from New York but, like numerous jazz musicians of the '60s and '70s, found a more welcoming reception in Paris, where they started to explore the densely layered, trance-like rhythms of West Africa. This collection features the itchy congas, liquid basslines and martial horns of their initial incarnation (including their peerless version of "Soul Makossa"), and a series of progressively less interesting disco tracks. **JOHN LEWIS**

BUZZY LINHART 1968
Buzzy's Buzzy

BUZZART

★★★★

Studio

BUZZART

★★★★

Career survey for pioneering jazz-folkie

Voodoo style: the Lafayette Afro-Rock Band collect their best

After following chum Fred Neil's course from Florida to Greenwich Village, Linhart (best known as a vibraphone session man for Hendrix, Richie Havens and more) was ultimately signed to make his first album, *Buzzy Buzzy*, while on tour in the UK supporting Mitch Ryder. Hooking up in London's Chapel Studio with Welsh outfit Eyes Of Blue his careening psychedelia ("Wish I Could Find") is determined to explore the furthest reaches of the post-*Pepper* landscape. This winning sense of exploration also powers the best tracks on *Studio* – a set of unreleased recordings from across his career. '80s production techniques intrude in places, but Tim Buckley and Fred Neil fans will sense a kindred spirit. **GAVIN MARTIN**

MAGAZINE 1978
Touch And Go: Anthology 02.78-06.81

VIRGIN

★★★★

Devoto and Adamson in their post-punk pomp

Howard Devoto fled The Buzzcocks just in time to miss their success, though his work with Magazine suggests his ambitions were never commercial. This remastered two-disc compilation includes all singles and b-sides, and selections from all four albums, all weighted towards their masterpiece, *The Correct Use Of Soap*. It's bracing stuff, and if the remastering detaches the synth from the body of the sound – nodding towards Joy Division – there's still something thrillingly persuasive about the marriage of Devoto's alienated lyrics and the funky muscle of Barry Adamson's bass: think Cold War Kafka set to Sly Stone. At

their best – "Song From Under The Floorboards", "Give Me Everything", "Sweetheart Contract" – Magazine are a collage of misshapes, getting funk slightly wrong, with Devoto viewing love as a puzzle with no solution in "a bright and clever bell".

ALASTAIR MCKAY

**MAGIC MAGIC**
Magic Magic

EARTH CALLING MUSIC

★★★★

Youthful Boston quintet's stirring debut

Arcade Fire fans looking for a worthy cause to champion would do well to investigate Magic Magic. They're a preppy ensemble with two drummers from spooky Salem in Massachusetts who arrive fully formed with a gift for tumbling indie. Main attraction here is mercurial singer and songwriter John Francis Murphy, whose delivery suggests a more balanced version of Clinic's Ade Blackburn. On "Over Your Head" and "French Song", he steers his band from endearingly ramshackle beginnings to the soaring, goose-bump chorus, and does so in a captivating manner that rarely sounds contrived.

PIERS MARTIN

MALAKAI
Ugly Side Of Love

INVADA/B-BLOCK

Portishead protégés' warped funk rock

Signed to Geoff "Portishead" Barrow's label, Invada, this mysterious duo started a couple of years back making dubby, psych-influenced electronica. Their first album, however, sees them moving into a curious, studio-treated take on funk rock. It sounds, variously, like '60s garage rock played by Adam And The Ants ("Shitkicker"), Elton John fronting Funkadelic ("Snow Flake"), or Norrie Paramour orchestrating Fela Kuti ("Lay Down Stay Down"). In the end it's all a little exhausting – like a hyperactive DJ spinning between a *Nuggets* boxset and a Mo'Wax compilation – but they're definitely on to something. **JOHN LEWIS**

MATMOS 1999
The West

VAGUE TERRAIN/AUTOFAC

★★★★

Cowboys with laptops. Still sounding fresh

Matmos' intellectually playful twosome Drew Daniel and MC Schmidt specialise in tugging sounds out of context, crossbreeding high art with low and teasing unexpected new forms out of dusty tools. 1999's *The West* remains one of the strongest releases in their catalogue, so-called "hybrid computer/folk" played with the tools of traditional Americana – slide guitar, Jew's Harp, tuba and banjo – disassembled and re-assembled in the belly of a laptop. Best is "Sun On 5 At 152", where a scuttling jam played on jazzy drums and stand-up bass is rearranged into chopped-up junglist rhythms at the touch of a button.

LOUIS PATTISON



Matmos: still in bloom

**DENT MAY & HIS
MAGNIFICENT UKULELE**
The Good Feeling Music Of
Dent May & His Magnificent
Ukulele

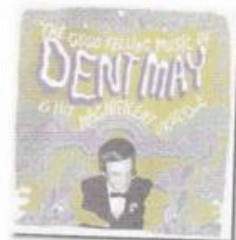
PAW TRACKS

★★★★

**Old-time stylist, signed
by Animal Collective**

Dent May could easily be a novelty act devoted to early 20th-century Americana – but Animal Collective think otherwise of this Oxford, Mississippi resident. In truth, there's some good stuff here: waggish lyrics – "College Town Boy/Get off your ass and do something" – are crooned against guileless, Jonathan Richman-style arrangements, doo-wop vocals, sneakily infectious melodies and, inevitably, a ukulele. As such, the Thin Lizzy distorted guitar in "Girls On The Square" is an unexpected treat.

EDEN PARKE



**MEGAPUSS
Surfing**

VAPOR

★★★★

**Jokes! Tunes!
Devendra Banhart!**

In the world of career indie, Megapuss are a blessed relief. Some musicians go to The Priory to purify themselves – others, like Devendra Banhart, and Strokes man Fabrizio Moretti, two of the players here, relax in a band

like this. Here songs like "Surfing", "Hamman" and "Duck People" ("Don't tell me we look like ducks...") create a sound that's part commune record, part free-folk children's album. What's more surprising is just how good it all is, the tunes great, the mood fun, the album infectious. Like Fab Moretti's other band Little Joy, Megapuss are a great argument for giving up the day job. **JOHN ROBINSON**

**MICACHU
Jewellery**

ACCIDENTAL

★★★★

**Precociously talented
London grime girl**

Still just 21, Mica Levi is one of those annoyingly gifted musical prodigies who has somehow already managed to play the Electric Proms and earn cult acclaim for her grime mixtapes. Produced by avant-garde studio boffin Matthew Herbert, Levi's eclectic debut strikes a winning balance between electro-glitch cacophony and shouty grrrrl-pop. There are echoes of vintage Mark E Smith here, but also exhilarating blasts of Squarepusher-style sonic extremism. The beats are raw, mechanical and jerky while the vocals sound like Kate Nash falling into a car crusher – a terrific, gnarly racket.

STEPHEN DALTON

**BUDDY & JULIE MILLER
Written In Chalk**

NEW WEST

★★★★

**First in eight years for
Americana royalty**
Sounding thematically more like simultaneous Buddy and Julie solo efforts than a cohesive whole, *Written In Chalk*

**The Nerves: spiky '70s
powerpop, reclaimed**



is a bit jarring in presentation. But it hardly matters: Julie Miller's vocal on the delicate, deep soul cut "A Long, Long Time" is spellbinding; throw in Buddy's sharp Muscle Shoals move, "One Part, Two Part" – straight out of the Arthur Alexander songbook – and an impeccable blues vamp with Robert Plant ("What You Gonna Do, Leroy") and...*Chalk*, despite a few rote moments, becomes an early contender for 2009 Top 10 lists. **LUKE TORN**

**AIDAN MOFFAT & THE
BEST OFS**
How To Get To Heaven
From Scotland

CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND

★★★

**Off-key love songs
from Arab Strap man**
Given some of Arab Strap's more lurid confessions, you might be dubious as to what a Valentine's greeting from Aidan Moffat would involve. In fact, emotionally frank love poems have always been part of his oeuvre; the problem here is that while Moffat is the perfect bleary raconteur, when he tries to sing straight he makes Shane MacGowan sound like Caruso. The clumsy pot-banging campfire folk of his new backing band doesn't help make it all any more listenable. Great lyrics, though.

SAM RICHARDS

**HUDSON MOHAWKE
Polyfolk Dance**

WARP

★★★★

**Introductory mini-LP of
wonky bleeps and beats**

Along with Glasgow buddy Rustie and Warp labelmate Flying Lotus, former UK DMC mixing championship finalist Hudson Mohawke is making

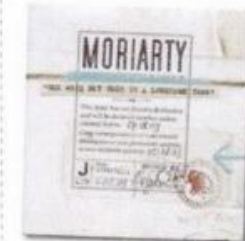
some of the freshest electronica around. His melding of J Dilla-style abstract hip hop with pitch-bent synth melodies is curiously euphoric: "Overnight" frolics gaily in the hitherto unexplored middle ground between Luke Vibert and Jay-Z producer Just Blaze. Mohawke overdoes the squiggle and gurgle in places, but this is a confident first effort. **SAM RICHARDS**

**MORIARTY
Gee Whiz But This Is A
Lonesome Town**

KARTEL

★★★★

**Folk-blues storytellers –
they're big in France**
Multinational quintet Moriarty ("Franco-American") would be the most expedient description of their diverse parentage) defy category as fluidly as they ignore any prevailing trends.



Occasionally evoking an old-school folk-blues outfit who might have played, moonshine-fuelled, in Terrence Malick's *Days Of Heaven*, they effortlessly burrow into your consciousness. Four Moriarty brothers back Ohio vocalist Rosemary with acoustic dexterity, as the storytelling spawns Waitsonian characters from diverse bygone decades. **CHRIS ROBERTS**

**MOUNTAINS
Choral**

THRILL JOCKEY

★★★★

**Bringing the attitude
back to ambient**

Mountains' third album comes highly recommended for anyone who's recently been feeling the vibes of White Rainbow, Cloudland Canyon or Brightblack Morning Light. The title track recalls Popol Vuh, finally breaking down after 12 minutes of pillow wondrousness into a plaintive acoustic guitar figure; "Add Infinity" is a tremulous waltz slowly descending into a lagoon of fuzz. This is ambient music reclaimed as meditative, Eno-ish experimentation as opposed to new-age wallpaper. Mountains' skilful manipulation of texture and space creates a sound that stealthily envelops you like an Appalachian fog.

SAM RICHARDS

**THE NERVES
One Way Ticket**

ALIVE RECORDS

★★★★

**Lost LA powerpoppers'
first-ever retrospective**

Revered by those within their brief 1975-1978 orbit, The Nerves were more legend than band. They had talent to burn – three fine songwriters in Peter Case, Paul Collins and Jack Lee – you can still feel their adrenaline three decades on. Their signature song, Lee's "Hanging On The Telephone" later perfected by Blondie, is an edgy skitter, a jittery memoir of its time. Better are Collins' Byrds-at-150-mph thumper "Walking Out On Love" and Case's dark, unrequited "When You Find Out", a brilliant example of the *Nuggets* aesthetic. **LUKE TORN**



**Mountains:
natural highs**



DAN AUERBACH

Keep It Hid V2/COOPERATIVE MUSIC



If '66 were '09: Black Keys man cuts vintage-sounding solo set. *By Alastair McKay*



When celebrated producer Rick Rubin signed ZZ Top in 2008, his first thought was to put them

together with The Black Keys, the Ohio-based duo in which Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney do strange things to the blues—rendering them swampy and psychedelic, and faintly reminiscent of Led Zeppelin. Rubin's move made sense. Even though ZZ Top made their millions from an image every bit as cartoony as the Ramones, they were, at root, a psychedelic power-trio. The Black Keys share the same influences, to the extent that—apart from the odd sonic flourish by producer Danger Mouse on 2008's *Attack & Release*—there's very little in their sound to anchor them to today. Listen to "I Got Mine," and you might as well be jamming in the garage with a young Billy Gibbons.

Or so you might think. But *Attack & Release* sounds positively modernist alongside Auerbach's solo debut, recorded and self-produced at his Akron Analog studio. Apart from the drum machine on "Real Desire," it's a timeless-sounding work. But if you had to date it, the languorous rhythms and the sense of control in the playing would point to somewhere around 1966. This is a heavy rock sound from

the time before that music slid into self-parody: there is no screeching, no displays of virtuosity, and not a whiff of Spandex. The roots of the music are still evident, so there are shades of gospel and soul, and you might even catch a hint of Auerbach's earliest influence—

the bluegrass music played by his mother—in the harmonies.

It is an album in the original sense of the word, offering a coherent display of Auerbach's influences. "Streetwalkin'" comes loaded with the fuzzy swagger of The Stooges (though Auerbach prefers to credit earlier purveyors of

This is heavy rock with its roots still evident: shades of gospel and soul, even bluegrass...

Q & A Dan Auerbach

What was your idea for the album?

I focused on making an album. It wasn't a collection of singles—I wanted it to grow and have some different pacing going on. I didn't want a record where everything sounded the same.

How does it differ from a Black Keys record?

There's no Pat [Carney] on it. That's the biggest part. Pat and I have a certain

way that we go about making a song that would turn into a Black Keys song. When it's just me I get to have all the say. So I got to explore vocal harmonies with different people, and different rhythms and song structures.

It doesn't sound like it was made in 2008...

I'm finding it increasingly difficult to listen to any piece of music that was

recorded past 1971. It's not even that I like the sound of that period, it's just that things sounded more real, more vibrant, more alive. When you start sectioning off instruments—and the drums are on their own, and the guitars are on their own—everything's very dry. It starts to sound like canned soup, compared to home-made soup.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

that primal rhythm, tracing it back through Link Wray and—a primary influence on The Black Keys—North Mississippi bluesman Junior Kimbrough). The lovely lullaby "When The Night Comes" owes a debt to Van Morrison (Auerbach admits to having had Van's 1967 LP *Blowin' Your Mind!* on heavy rotation), and "My Last Mistake" judders from the speakers like a lost beat-boom classic.

The Black Keys have always been ambivalent about being labelled as blues, largely because of the staleness of the music that salutes that flag in the US, but Auerbach is more relaxed about the term than his partner, Carney. "I Want Some More" and the reverb-heavy "Heartbroken, In Disrepair" have the muscle of early Zeppelin, or—if you must—The White Stripes, while the opener, "Trouble

Weights A Ton" exists in the space between the folk-blues and a spiritual. There's something odd, too, about the timekeeping. Auerbach plays in human time. Often that means holding back, and playing more slowly than the rhythms would seem to demand. The songs often sound as if they are on the point of collapse—an effect that suits the singer's weary worldview.

The album ends sweetly with the gorgeous melancholy of "Goin' Home," a song which carries faint echoes of "Here Comes The Sun", and shuffles out in a breeze of wind chimes. In traditional blues, going home is a metaphor for death, and while Auerbach is enough of a traditionalist to embrace that possibility, there's an odd note of optimism here. It's redemption, and heaven, and rebirth, though not necessarily in that order.



THE NIGHTINGALES
Insult To Injury

KLANGBAD

★★★★

Further adventures of West Mids Magic Band

Now four albums into their 21st-century rebirth, Robert Lloyd's post-punk veterans sound as sardonic and ramshackle as ever here. The Nightingales are, in essence, an ever-changing lineup playing rowdy garage-punk, rockabilly and Krautrock behind Cannock native Lloyd's wry monologues, and these former John Peel favourites frequently earn comparisons to The Fall and Captain Beefheart's Magic Band. That said, the knowingly crappuns and very English self-deprecation on *Insult To Injury* probably owe more to the bedsit surrealism of Half Man Half Biscuit. This album is uneven, undisciplined and overlong,

but much the same could be said for Lloyd's sporadically brilliant career. **STEPHEN DALTON**

NOVALIMA
Coba Coba

CUMBACHA

★★★★

Wine-bar sheen tames wild Afro-Peruvians

Formed in 2001, Novalima blend the sounds of Peruvian folk traditions and an African culture forcibly initiated when slaves were brought over to South America in the 16th century. It's a potent, pan-continental mix, with African rhythms coloured by Latino flourishes. It's just a shame that it was felt necessary to bring in the likes of British producer Toni Economides, whose involvement here has the inadvertent effect of deodorising these tracks, making them just a little too Hoxton friendly. Novalima would be best consumed raw.

DAVID STUBBS

PAN AMERICAN
White Bird Release

KRANKY

★★★★

Labradford man back with aquatic ambience
Since his '90s postrock outfit

Labradford disintegrated, Mark Nelson has been further sculpting that group's mutable, oblique aesthetic as a solo artist. It's been over four years since Pan American's last album, *Quiet City*, but *White Bird Release* starts from its predecessor's clutch notes – near-silent pulses act as foundation for waves of filigree ambience and the mournful drawl of E-bowed guitars. It may be no great leap forward, but on this showing Nelson can still produce graceful electronica with a rare poise and reserve.

JON DALE

PANEL OF JUDGES
Bad Vibrations

MISTLETOE

★★★★

Wry Aussie indie veterans still working the formula

Melbourne-based trio Panel Of Judges have changed little over the past decade – their guitars still peal and ring as though they'd fallen off a mid-1980s single from Kiwi label Flying Nun, and their lyrics are as droll as usual, delivered predominantly by leader Dion Nania in his distinctive, nasal burr. But that's also what makes *Bad Vibrations* stand out

alongside much of the independent music coming out of Australia: no-one else trades in such dry humour, chained to such endearingly ramshackle songs.

JON DALE

THE PARTIES
Can't Come Down

RAINBOW QUARTZ

★★★★

Familiar, but fine, jingle-jangle indie

The debut album from this San Francisco-based four-piece is a glorious exercise in powerpop with a slight psychedelic twist. Opener "Love For Sale" is a dead-ringer for The Telescopes' "Everso", while elsewhere there are echoes of early Stone Roses, too, as well as The Hollies, Teenage Fanclub, Rain Parade, The Byrds, The Brian Jonestown Massacre and many more. What *Can't Come Down* lacks in originality, though, it more than makes up for with its enthusiasm and energy.

NATHANIEL CRAMP

RICHARD PINHAS AND MERZBOW
Keio Line

CUNEIFORM

★★★★

Japanese art-noise meets French ambience. Results conclusive

Masami Akita, aka Merzbow, is a prolific creator of dissonant, militant, electronic noise music, while French trance specialist Richard Pinhas purveys treated guitars and electronics. Together, across the luxuriant, hypnotic, industrial expanses of these two discs, they're a match made in both heaven and hell. On "Tokyo Electric Guerilla", Pinhas' elegantly



squeezed strains of guitar are assailed amidships by Merzbow's forceful, locomotive interventions, while on "Shibuya AKS", it sounds very much as if Pinhas' ruminant, ambient musings are being put through a giant, mechanised meat grinder.

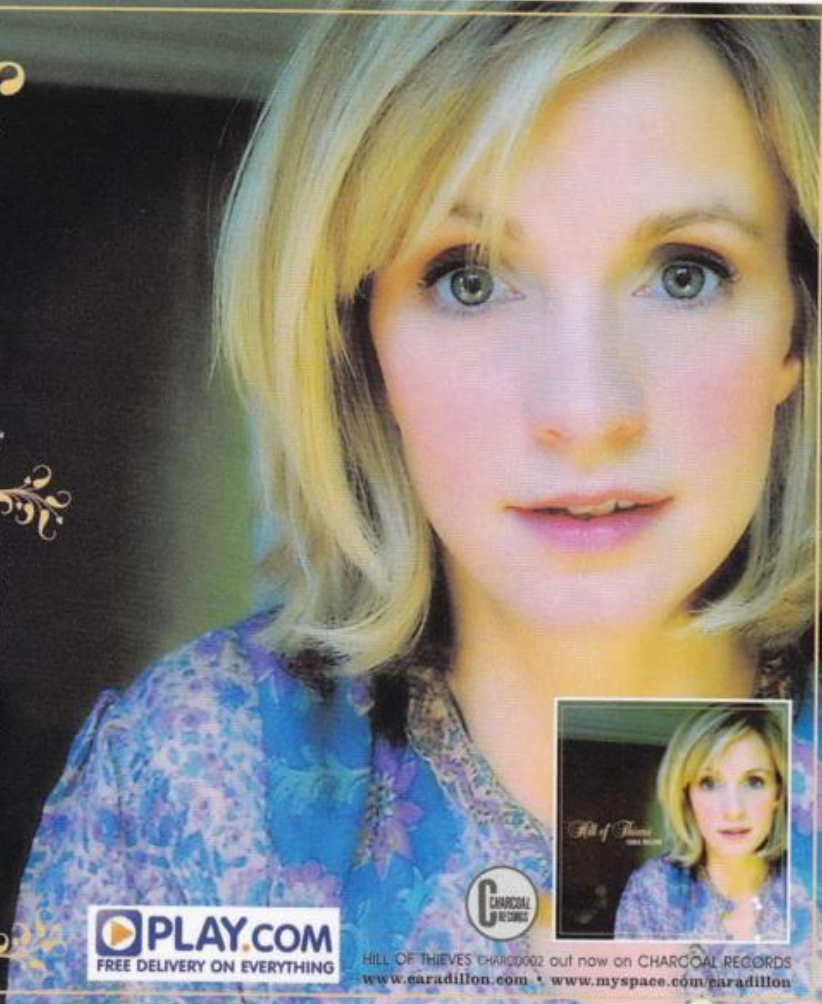
DAVID STUBBS

Hill of Thieves

the new album by **CARA DILLON**

'perfectly executed... easily her most gripping record yet'
THE WORD

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GILLIAN WELCH

Revival R1996



Hell Among The Yearlings R1998



Time (The Revelator) R2001



ALLACONY

Reissues of first three albums by the
high priestess of "American Primitive".
By Barney Hoskyns



The title made it plain enough. As the alt.country movement built up its head of steam in the mid-'90s, here was a debut album that unabashedly looked back. Combine that with a cover portrait that made Gillian Welch look like some raw-boned Depression gal in her Sunday fineries and you had some idea of what was in store before you even put the record on.

But what a record 1996's *Revival* was. Jerry Moss, who'd signed the Flying Burrito Brothers to A&M a quarter of a century earlier, knew instantly that Welch and partner David Rawlings were the real deal when he snapped them up for the new Almo Sounds label. The startling austerity, the keening rawness, of the duo's sound had a grace and class absent from most of their lo-fidelity Americana contemporaries. Here were two middle-class music students teaming up to make high art out of one of America's most primitive music forms. How were we to know that the opening "Orphan Girl" was veiled autobiography rather than the imagined plaint of an abandoned waif in 1930s Kentucky?

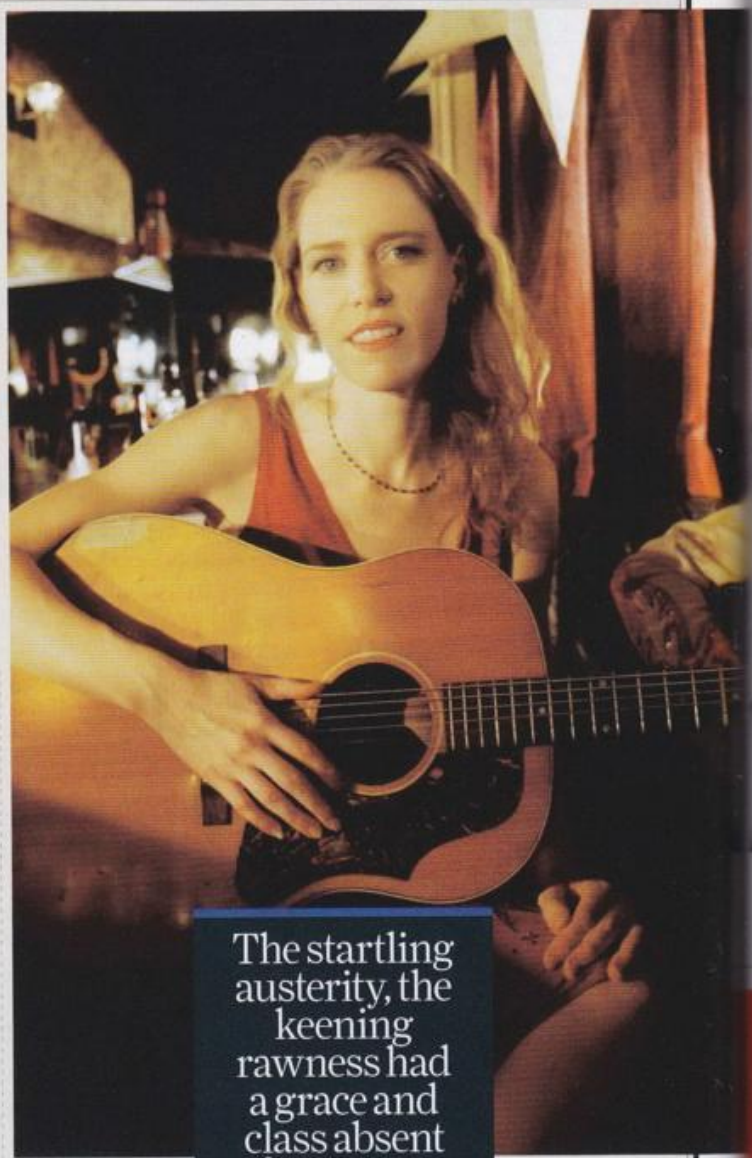
With T-Bone Burnett at the controls – and fleshing out the starkly beautiful songs with contributions from such legendary sidemen as Jim Keltner and James Burton – *Revival* was an utterly

convincing mix of Appalachiana ("Annabelle", the pining "One More Dollar") and lurching rockers ("Tear My Stillhouse Down" and "Pass You By", the latter's neo-rockabilly groove riding on Roy Huskey Jr's stubby upright bass).

T-Bone was still around for the apocalyptically titled *Hell Among The Yearlings*. Having seen reason and pared *Revival* back to basics at mixdown, he kept things more minimal still for the second album. Here were Welch and Rawlings in pure mountain mode, their softly graceful harmonising complemented by brittle, almost tinny guitars that recalled Willie Nelson (no newgrass Union Station slickery here, folks). Plus for half the album Welch turned to an Appalachian standby – the banjo – that she hadn't used on *Revival* at all.

Where the first album had certainly hinted at the tragic provenance of so much "old-timey" bluegrass, *Hell* reeked of darkness and despair – devils and early deaths and even (on the brilliantly blithe "My Morphine"), drugs. *Revival*'s retro sheen made way for austere acoustic sorrow, never more affecting than on "One Morning", a mother's agony on beholding her murdered son return on the horse that had borne him away. Chuck in a Tennessee miner's lament, the rape-revenge opener "Caleb Meyer", the gospel singalong "Rock Of Ages", and the listless suicide note that is "Good Til Now" and you can see this record could be a bit of a downer. It isn't.

I remember being a mite disappointed by 2001's *Time (The Revelator)*, Welch's third album and the first following the closure of Almo Sounds. Self-produced at Nashville's legendary Studio B, it seemed to lack the Burnett touch that infused *Revival*



The startling austerity, the keening rawness had a grace and class absent from most lo-fidelity Americana contemporaries

(and that infuses the masterful Plant/Krauss opus, *Raising Sand*). Or maybe I just missed the Appalachian morbidity of its predecessor. Welch and Rawlings seemed to be making a point in "I Want To Sing That Rock And Roll", recorded live at the Ryman Auditorium. No getting stuck in an antiquated rut for this pair, evidently: a decision made only too clear by the subsequent *Soul Journey* (2003), with its Band and Neil Young trappings.

Hell, *Time*... sounds pretty damn good today. The six-and-a-half-minute opener "Revelator" (the title a nod to Son House et al) is exquisite, as is the Titanic-themed "April the 14th, Pt 1". I love the referencing of Steve Miller's "Quicksilver Girl" on the surly, proud-sounding "My First Lover", while the charmingly personal "Elvis Presley Blues" steers us well away from the stark landscapes of The Carter Family and their kind. "Everything Is Free" is a bemused response to the post-Napster world of entertainment, voicing a

determination to continue singing even if there is no money in it. The album finishes up with the drifting, entrancing 14-plus minutes of

"I Dream A Highway".

What does it mean to be making this "American Primitive" music in the hyper-technologised 21st-century? Is it a denial, or just a blessed respite from the insanely disembodied touch-screen world we all now inhabit? (Is it a music that in fact befits what increasingly looks like a Second Great Depression?) When all's said and done, it's about nothing more than great songs, played with real care and seriousness. "I tend to think this kind of music is, you know, art," Rawlings told me in 1997. "And I think you can make art out of it if you love it."

Can it be almost six years since the indomitable duo released a new album? While they're always busy – guesting, collaborating, performing in and around Nashville – they've kept us starving for too long now.

Let's trust that their soul journey makes its next stop soon.

13TH FLOOR ELEVATORS

Sign Of The 3 Eyed Men

Only available from www.internationalartistsrecords.com



Lavish 10-disc salute to the Texan psych lords. *By Mick Houghton*



Even if their music had not been great, the bizarre history of the 13th Floor Elevators would have earned the band a place in rock folklore. Consider the state of its members, shortly after the group's 1969 demise. Busted for parole violation, guitarist Stacy Sutherland was beginning an eight-month prison stretch. Lyricist and "amplified jug" player Tommy Hall was living in a cave, run by an "acid mafia cult". Lead singer/guitarist Roky Erickson, meanwhile, having pleaded insanity to avoid the Vietnam draft, was confined to the Rusk Maximum Security Unit for the Criminally Insane, a stay destined to affect his health for years to come.

Small wonder, then, that until the release of *Sign Of The 3 Eyed Men*—like the recent Elevators biography *Eye Mind*, a testimony to the enduring scholarship of Elevators expert Paul Drummond—the work of this great band has been in a similar kind of disarray. Hitherto ill-served by muffled vinyl with lousy stereo definition, shoddy transfers and wrongly identified tracks, here the music has been remastered and remixed by Walt Andrus, the band's original engineer and producer.

Undoubtedly, it's been a hugely worthwhile project. Even in their scrappy early incarnations, the

three Elevators LPs proved hugely influential. Issued in the UK in 1978, they nourished the open minds of post-punks like the Teardrops, Bunnymen and Mary Chain. Later, Primal Scream covered "Slip Inside This House" on their euphoric *Screamadelica*, its lyrics of "limbs dissolving" and "surroundings evolving" resounding with a new drug culture. Spacemen 3 experimented with "Roller Coaster", the band's Jason Pierce describing the Elevators' sound as "beautiful fucked-up music".

Lovingly restored and meticulously expanded, the versions here of the band's three highly innovative LPs—1966's *The Psychedelic Sounds of the 13th Floor Elevators*, 1967's *Easter Everywhere* (both presented in mono and alternative stereo editions) and *Bull Of The Woods* from 1969—are fucked up, but only in a good way. The set—limited to 3,000 copies worldwide—also includes two "lost" albums; one a thwarted work in progress, the other corralled their early 1966 sessions.

These last recordings provided their sole breakout single, the scornful, fizzing "You're Gonna Miss Me", plus a bunch of formative originals and "hallucinogized" covers. In 1968, these were overdubbed with crowd noises by the band's record label, International Artists, and issued as the fake live LP, simply titled *Live*. Rightfully, this is omitted here—but there are three CDs of (genuinely) live stuff from their earliest, raw radio broadcasts to an ill-advised partial



"Beautiful fucked-up music"—13th Floor Elevators in New Orleans, 1966. (l-r) Tommy Hall, Benny Thurman, Roky Erickson, Stacy Sutherland, John Ike Walton (drums)

reunion in 1973. The sound quality may fluctuate but there's no doubting what a force the Elevators were on stage, especially in 1966 as they rip the heart out of Beatles and Stones covers, brutalise Them's "Gloria" and transform "You Really Got Me" into something dark and threatening.

The Elevators came together in November 1965, after drummer John Ike Walton, bassist Benny Thurman and guitarist Stacy Sutherland (from Texas garage rockers The Lingsmen) were introduced by mutual acquaintance Tommy Hall to Roky Erickson, frontman with Austin hotshots, The Spades. Hall sat in during the band's first jam, accidentally defining the Elevators' trademark sound by dementedly warbling into an amplified jug. His bizarre, mouth-percussion runs gave a perceived acid rush to the band's stinging guitars, while Erickson unleashed a voice equal parts

Buddy Holly, Little Richard and James Brown.

The music the band created was a wild Texas R'n'B, infused with a Brit-invasion amphetamine pulse, yet with a flight plan indicating a voyage to loftier psychedelic realms. If Walton and new bassist Ronnie Leatherman were more abstemious, the nucleus of Erickson, Hall and Sutherland was perpetually high both on stage and in the studio. In Texas, notorious for meting out harsh sentences to drug offenders, the Elevators were marked men. A series of busts both turned them into psychedelic martyrs, and sowed the seeds of their self-destruction.

Their 1966 debut embodies the psychedelic experience, with songs like "Reverberation", as discordantly edgy as anything the Velvets ever produced, and the terrific "Fire Engine". *Easter Everywhere* saw the departure of Walton and



Leatherman (replaced by Danny Thomas and Danny Golinda), and a dominant collaboration between Erickson and Hall, whose lyrics, often drawn from the writings of mystic G.I. Gurdjieff, found the group seeking and propounding spiritual enlightenment through righteous consumption of LSD and peyote. *Easter Everywhere* aimed to turn tripping into an art form: mellow and meditative, the songs here flirt with folk rock ("I Had To Tell You", covering "Baby Blue") but the distorted rumbling of "Earthquake" and warped proto-metal of "I've Got Levitation" restore the intensity.

The band soon began disintegrating. Roky's mental turmoil meant that throughout 1968, he was convinced "they" were out to get him. He and Tommy Hall duly absconded to

California leaving only three tracks completed for 1969's *Bull Of The Woods*. These include Roky's "May The Circle Remain Unbroken" and Stacy and Tommy's "Dr Doom", an open letter to Dylan – who Tommy believed to be specifically addressing the Elevators, via his *John Wesley Harding* album. Generally dismissed, this LP more than holds up against its predecessors: Sutherland's lovelorn songs inhabiting a bluesier cosmic sound reminiscent of the Dead, Moby Grape or Blue Cheer –

This is wild Texas R'n'B that still climbs to lofty, psychedelic realms...

for whom the Elevators, early guests at the San Francisco ballrooms, were an undeniable inspiration.

The unhinged, Texas boogie style of *Bull Of The Woods* offered a lifeline but Sutherland was also now spiralling

downwards, dissolving the band in 1969. By the time of his death (he was shot by his wife in 1978) he was a washed up ex-con with 36 drug-related arrests against him. During his detention at the Rusk Maximum Security Unit for the Criminally

Insane, Roky Erickson was subjected to a brutal three-year ordeal of violence, Electro Shock Therapy and extreme medication. His subsequent career has been as erratic as his mental behaviour, only recently recovering to a point where he has regained control of his life and his music. Tommy Hall, however, is still apparently on his psychedelic voyage. Living in a flop house in San Francisco, he's writing a book, exploring the mystical, philosophical concepts which underpinned the Elevators. Some observers have even suggested that he still drops acid once a week.

But who can separate the Elevators' myth from their reality? Here, after all, was a band that lived, perilously, on the margin between the two.

THE 13TH FLOOR ELEVATORS SPEAK!



UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

Were the Elevators marked men because of their open drug use?

DANNY THOMAS (drums, '67-'68): We were constantly under surveillance. I got busted off stage, so did Stacy [Sutherland] and Rocky [Erickson]. Just about every city we'd go, the sheriff's department would show up as part of the audience. In New York they had real crime to worry about. In Texas, they were handling calls about noisy dogs. So, to be credited for busting one of the 13th Floor Elevators, was a way to get a promotion—you scored points for busting us.

JOHN IKE WALTON (drums, '65-'67): I didn't have any actual desire to 'psychedelice' the world and be thrown in jail as a result. I was mainly concerned that I was the one who owned the vehicle and, I was driving with them, so I'd have to go to jail, too. I kept saying "don't bring any dope in the car", but they would stash it away in the dashboard—that hacked me off. They had to have the dope with them all the time.

CLEMENTINE HALL (ex-wife of Jug player/songwriter Tommy Hall, and lyric writer): The constant threats and harassment made life in the Elevators terribly stressful. Our first marijuana trial, we were told by an attorney that the judge was a "hanging" judge who believed in sending people to the "cotton farm" for hard labour for even the smallest bit of dope. As it transpired, a wholly different outcome was obtained, because a retired judge from another county was called in last minute. The outside threats brought the guys closer together, but in other ways, they were individually stressed. Stacy had had a childhood fear of incarceration. He became sick with fear at the thought of ending up in prison and being raped or killed.

Was the drug use exaggerated?

HALL: John's consumption of drugs was minimal. Benny [Thurman, bass] and Stacy began consuming meth, which distressed Tommy and me and Rocky considerably. Stacy said that on meth, for the first time in his life, he felt loved. They were using escapist drugs, which were "unrighteous" in our eyes. LSD, peyote, magic mushrooms, etc., were not used to escape reality, but to get to a deeper, otherwise unavailable, reality. As to these drugs, I think the consumption was not exaggerated. We turned on virtually every day.

WALTON: The drugs were not necessary to do what we did—they

were a hindrance. The uniqueness was already there because other bands, they didn't have Rocky. He was something, believe me, Rocky had rhythm, he had tonality, he had enthusiasm, he had soul. We would have done those songs a whole lot better without dope—of any form.

How did Tommy Hall's philosophising affect things?

THOMAS: His idea to use the music as a vehicle to get his philosophy out to the public helped move the band on so they weren't just one-hit wonders. We weren't wild party animals who tore up hotels. We were more intelligent than that. We thought it was important to do more than provide a good beat.

HALL: I believe the music was truly revolutionary. The musicianship was exceptional and Rocky's performance abilities were very special. Combined with all this, the lyrics were exceedingly valuable and inspiring... They speak to the modern quest for spiritual understanding of one's place in the cosmos, for balance in one's life. Tommy had final veto on any words being considered for a song, but not much in terms of editing melodies. Rocky's melodies poured out of him at such a rate that it was not possible to catch all of them and give them lyrics.

WALTON: I never paid too much attention to the words. I was just back there playing. The drugs led the band to search for something that was not there

—something philosophical, some message, some meaning. Tommy heard about Gurdjieff and somebody told him that's what Dylan was into so he bought the book [*All And Everything*] and he would pull out phrases, rhymes, ideas and hand them to Rocky.

Was Stacy under pressure once Tommy and Rocky left?

THOMAS: There was never any animosity. You had to bide your time and wait for your chance and Stacy stepped up. *Bull Of The Wood* has a unique regional sound, a Texas combination of country, blues and a little bit of flamenco. Stacy's spiritualism was less ethereal than Tommy's, a common man philosophy. There wasn't time for it get—people would turn up at the ticket office and ask: "Is this the Elevators with or without Rocky?"

HALL: Stacy was one of the sweetest spirits. And believe me, when you turn on to LSD with someone time after time, you know them intimately. He was both loving and fearful. His nickname, "Dark Angel," fit only his appearance.

WALTON: He was troubled, unhappy a lot of the time. Stacy was always one step from finding what he was after.

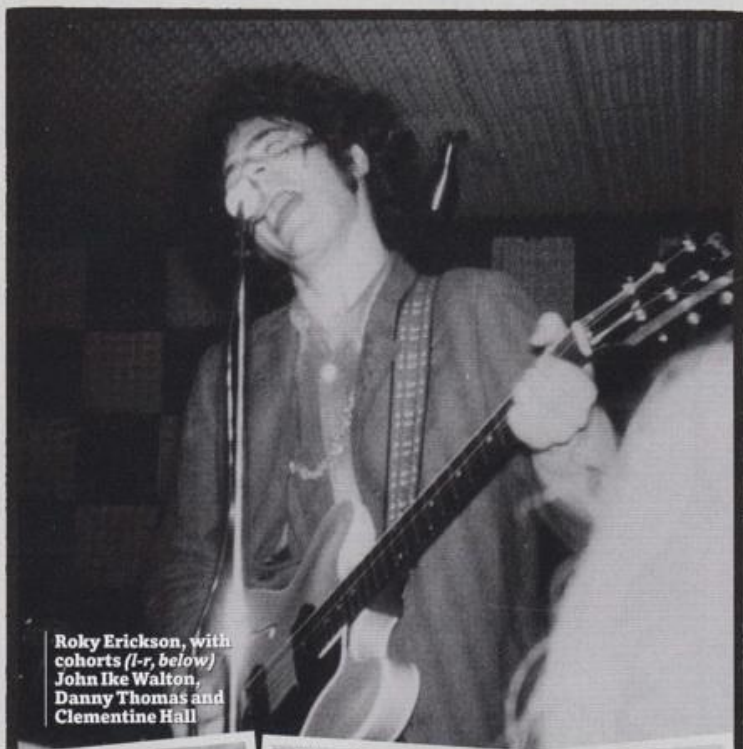
How is Tommy doing?

HALL: Tommy is well. I see him frequently. Although divorced, we are still the same good friends we were before we married. I admire and respect him. I wish I could say I understand what he is interested in now—a life's spiritual work based on mathematics, which sounds like an oxymoron to me. I know he is intensely focused on a book he is writing.

Have you seen Rocky recently?

WALTON: Yeah. He doesn't talk much but does a great job on stage again. He hasn't lost the fun, he's playing the guitar very well and that voice, you cannot take that away from him. I'm flabbergasted at his recovery.

HALL: I have seen Rocky twice in the last few years and I have been in frequent contact for some years with Rocky's brother, Sumner. I first got a call from Sumner around the time that he wrestled legal custody of Rocky from his mother. I consider Sumner to be Rocky's saviour. He could have gone on controlling Rocky's life after he got custody, but once he had helped him physically and spiritually onto his feet, he relinquished custody and helped Rocky become his own person legally, at last. He saved him from a sad and deadly existence. **MICK HOUGHTON**



Rocky Erickson, with cohorts (l-r, below) John Ike Walton, Danny Thomas and Clementine Hall



"The police scored points for busting us..."

A wild ride in the 13th Floor Elevators with founding member John Ike Walton, drummer Danny Thomas, and lyricist Clementine Hall

FRED C PRELLBERG III Ten Pennies Make A Dime

DENMARK STREET RECORDS

★★★★

Flashes of fierce talent on Chicagoan's second Riding waves of gloriously trashy guitar, "No Man's Land" – the lead track on singer-songwriter Prellberg's *Ten Pennies...* – hits on an irresistibly, subterranean Tom-Verlaine-meets-The-Cramps groove. It's an auspicious introduction: Prellberg's flat, Midwestern voice a perfect vehicle for his shaggy, fatalistic lyrics. Subsequent rockabilly, guitar pop and balladry can't quite match that incendiary opener, still, the cinematic "Tornado Alley" and the scorching "The World Today" (dedicated to Swell Maps' Nikki Sudden) prove Prellberg is an up-and-comer. **LUKE TORN**



THE QEMISTS Join The Q

NINJA TUNE

★★★

Unholy alliance of metal and drum'n'bass. Mike Patton guests Ninja Tune aim to defy genre, but this album from metal-drum'n'bass three-piece The Qemists confounds even the most open-minded expectations of their brand. Mining the aggression and adrenaline of both genres, they take Asian Dub Foundation and Rage Against The Machine to a deeply unfashionable conclusion where hyperkinetic jungle rhythms are thumped through guitars polished for maximum velocity and booming 'live' drum sounds. It's proven a lucrative formula for Pendulum, so The Qemists may yet make the Radio One playlist. But, really, that's not good enough.

JAMES POLETTI

EDDI READER [2003] The Songs Of Robert Burns Deluxe Edition

ROUGH TRADE

★★★★

Those readings of the Scots Bard, expanded Not every custodian of Celtic tradition was impressed by Reader's renditions of the

Ploughman Poet, but her passion for Burns' words, allied to some fine playing, won her many friends and an MBE. To coincide with the poet's 250th birthday, this expanded volume adds two outtakes from the 2003 sessions, four cuts from 2007's *Peacetime* and a jaunty all-new "Coming Through The Rye". Reader sings the songs with the same mix of tenderness and irreverence that characterised her hero, and the standout "Wild Mountain Side", by Trash Can Sinatra John Douglas, underscores Burns' enduring influence. **NEIL SPENCER**

REBOTINI Music Components

PROCESS RECORDINGS

★★★★

Black Strobe founder's first solo ravings

Though his day job with Black Strobe draws upon industrial electronica, Arnaud Rebotini's debut seeks to locate the heart behind the beat. To that end he insists here upon employing analogue equipment only, with the closing 11 minute-plus "Mnll" suggesting a wilder Vangelis, and "CM" a pensive Orbital. *Music Components* still offers enough sonic experimentation and clattering percussion amid the swirling arpeggios to put teeth on edge. But the resulting techno-house is a largely palatable and euphoric experience rooted in both '80s and '90s rave culture.

EDEN PARKE

REIGNS The House On The Causeway

MONOTREME RECORDS

★★★★

Third album of eldritch folk-prog soundscapes

Reigns – actually brothers Tim and Roo Farthing – here eschew their names to go by the rather more anonymous "Operatives A & B". This is strange, because although their music furthers the sense of mystery – unfathomable titles such as "Crex, Crex, Crex" and "Mab Crease", for example – there is, nonetheless, a very human quality to it. A low-key blend of folk, neo-classical and prog noises (think John Cale's productions for Nico with added beats and glitches) it acts as the perfect soundtrack to their spooky spoken-word lyrics. **NATHANIEL CRAMP**

EDWARD ROGERS You Haven't Been Where I've Been

ZIP



Eddi Reader offers a wee, sleekit, tim'rous re-release

★★★★

Byrd adds gravitas to expat's '60s-style set

English-born New Yorker Rogers, together with song-writing partner George Usher, here shows his love of all things Beatles/Byrds-based and Rickenbacker-riffed. Roger McGuinn joins in for "Blind Man's Blue" and (on banjo) "It Took Years And Years", while The Church's Marty Willson-Piper cuts loose with guitar on "Graveyard Voices". While the core of the work is '60s-spawned powerpop with a wannabe-Replacements flavour, there's a melancholy in its bloodstream that surges forth on the affecting ballads, their sense of mortality as arresting as their time-honoured chord sequences.

CHRIS ROBERTS

OUMOU SANGARE Seya

WORLD CIRCUIT

★★★★

Africa's premier diva restates her dominance

Mali's current domination of African music owes much to its sheer stylistic diversity – and the wailing, 'Wassoulou' diva-funk of the now-veteran Sangare comes from a different place again to the desert blues of Tinariwen, or the Afro-pop of Amadou & Mariam. Her first album in six years mixes traditional epic grooves with jazzier, more experimental arrangements on a set of songs that boldly deal with the most taboo issues of African life, including

polygamy, forced underage marriage and female emancipation. With Miriam Makeba gone, *Seya* finds Sangare slipping effortlessly into her mantle as "Mama Africa". **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

SCHWEFELGELB Alt Und Neu

TAPETE RECORDS

★★★★

Butch machine pop from German electro pin-ups

A pair of wiry art students out to provoke, Jonas Förster and Philipp Graf blend the leather-chaps post-punk of DAF with the rum synth-funk of Fad Gadget, producing a style of aggressive machine-pop that hasn't been taken seriously outside Belgium since 1987. It's still hard to imagine the gnarly likes of "Schwer Zu Verstehen" or "Alles Verspielt" really catching on, but placed next to the zooming electro of, say, Boys Noize, Schwefelgelb makes sense. Twinkly tear-jerker "Kleine Sylvia" reveals their sensitive side, a moment of tranquility amid the Teutonic turbulence.

PIERS MARTIN

SERGEANT BUZFUZ High Slang

BLANG

★★

Punk musical comedy, for Catholic tastes

Not many albums are dominated by an obsession with the history of the Papacy. Sergeant Buzfuz (Sheffield-born Joe Murphy and friends) here offer parts two to four of an ongoing series of songs

called "Here Come The Popes". Thus we learn that John XX fed his 2000 horses on wine and that "Anacletus II liked to rape nuns". Some will find this hilarious, others may yawn. Elsewhere there's rather self-consciously zany lampooning – over random genre backing – of cabbies, celebrities and arts sponsorship. Fleeting it hits upon The Soft Boys' surrealism, but more often it lurches into jilted John.

CHRIS ROBERTS

THE SHACKLEFORDS

[1966]

The Shacklefords Sing

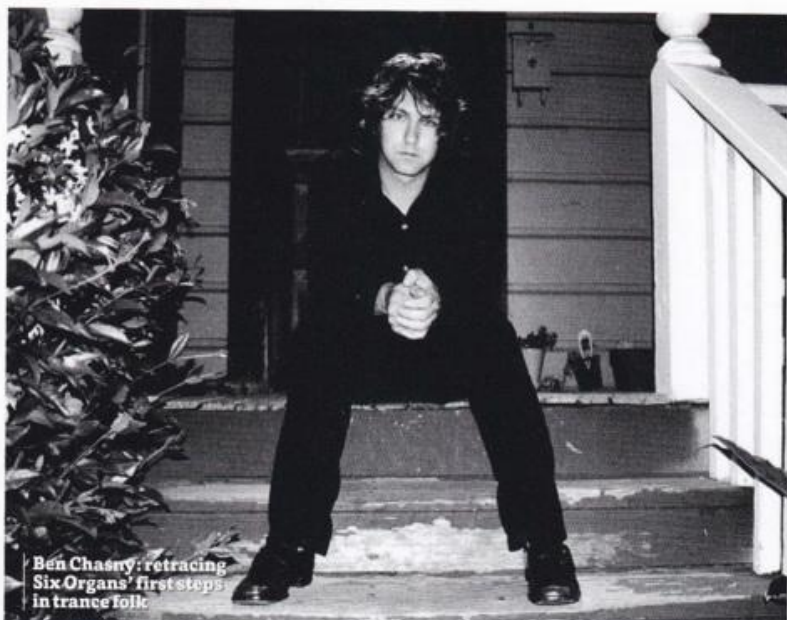
REV-OLA

★★★★

Lee Hazlewood project plucked from obscurity

United by a bottle of Chivas Regal at Jack Nitzsche's mid-'60s home, songwriters/producers Lee Hazlewood and Marty Cooper (whose "The Lonely Surfer" appears in Tarantino's *Death Proof*) formed The Shacklefords with Nitzsche's wife Gracia and Albert Stone. Sharing vocal duties, they marketed themselves as a 'sound' rather than a group, confusing potential audiences. But interpretations of Hazlewood classics like "The City Never Sleeps" and Cooper's spectral "Mansion Of Tears" render such concerns irrelevant, while the inclusion of an ornate version of Hazlewood's "First Street Blues" makes this worthwhile reissue particularly appealing.

EDEN PARKE



Ben Chasny: retracing Six Organs' first steps in trance folk

SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE

DRAG CITY

★★★★

Entrancing marginalia of free-folk grandee

Ben Chasny is so prolific, it's hard for even the most diligent fan to keep up with all the music he has released: the *Nightly Trembling* album, from 1999, was originally limited to just 33 copies. RTZ helpfully collects together a bunch of Chasny's rare early jams, proving that his eldritch guitar studies – at once intense, devotional and not a little creepy – have remained consistent for a decade now. Alongside brackish tracks that first surfaced on shared releases with Charalambides and the Vibracathedral Orchestra, the songs from *Nightly Trembling* stand out here, notably "Creation Aspect Earth (Reprise)", an epic, circling invocation that stands comparison with 2006's "River Of Transfiguration".

JOHN MULVEY

SPECTRE Internal Dynasty

WORD SOUND

★★★★

Seventh manifestation of experimental hip hop's 'Ill Saint'

Skiz Fernando's WordSound label was home to an impressive consortium of illbient hip hop for most of the 1990s, though in recent years he's gone to ground in Baltimore. *Internal Dynasty* is the seventh release by Fernando's own alias, Spectre, awash with film samples from the supernatural edge of Hollywood. Fernando's inventive, soupy beats frame

an international Babelogue of MCs, from Germany's Plagiat and Japan's Gebo to Wu-Tang affiliate Killa Bamz and WordSound's resident freakstyler, Sensational. Mystical paranoia abounds, as if corner-dwellers from *The Wire* watched *The Matrix* once too often and started ranting. **ROB YOUNG**



CANDI STATON Who's Hurting Now?

HONEST JON'S

★★★★

She got the love, again: gospel queen back in the country-soul saddle

In 2004, an Honest Jon's retrospective of Candi Staton's early '70s work in Muscle Shoals sparked enough interest to tempt her away from the gospel world and back into country soul. The result was the rather fine *His Hands*, and *Who's Hurting Now?* is essentially the sequel. Similarly recorded in Nashville with Lambchop's Mark Nevers, its best track is a Will Oldham original (the aching "Get Your Hands Dirty"), and it features some interesting covers, including a deep-fried funk reworking of Bonnie Raitt's "I Feel The Same". It's also particularly satisfying to hear Candi getting deeply Country & Western on "I Don't Know" and "Dust On My Pillow".

JOHN LEWIS

TOMMY STEELE The World Of Tommy Steele

DECCA UMC

★★

Death by Light Entertainment

Though ostensibly "Britain's first rock 'n' roll star", on the strength of his 1956 hit "Rock With The Caveman", Steele will be remembered as a middle-of-the-road entertainer whose natural habitat was the London Palladium. In a career spanning 50 years, no musical novelty was too grotesque for the ever-grinning Bermondsey Boy – check the pseudo-calypto of "Water Water", the bowdlerised C&W of "Knee Deep In The Blues" or the crass fake-Afro of "Nairobi", if you dare – but Steele found his place in musical theatre.

ADAM SWEETING

JAYME STONE & MANSA SISSOKO Africa To Appalachia

FACTOR

★★★★

World-folk fusion that defies boundaries

We've grown accustomed to albums exploring the links between West Africa and the Delta blues, but here Canadian banjo player Stone and Malian kora maestro Sissoko set out in search of the common threads of the folk traditions of their respective continents. The two instruments are balanced to perfection, supported by a cast that includes a full-throated Guinean diva, the grainy textures of ngoni maestro Bassekou Kouyate, a bluegrass fiddler and the trumpet of David Travers-Smith. More push-and-pull would have been welcome, but the results are never less than melodic.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

SHORT CUTS

This month... Compilations

The Best Of Burlesque: 50 Original Club Classics

MUSIC CLUB ★★★★★



Drawing from the rich seam of swing, jazz, blues and rockabilly that has soundtracked the contemporary Vogue Burlesque strip scene, this is an unashamedly retro but near faultless collection of risqué (Julia Lee), ribald (Bullmoose Jackson) and gleefully uninhibited (Louis Prima) sides. The most fun you can have with your clothes on. Or off.

GAVIN MARTIN

Iberico Jazz

CALANDRIA ★★★

Antoliano Toldos began his career writing music to be played during testcard transmissions on Spanish television – a kitsch notion that it's not easy to shake while listening to these amiable, but ignorable jazz-funk tunes. Genre-hopping stylistic workouts are the norm, cool and hot jazz modes all explored – but it's not too long before you switch over. **JOHN ROBINSON**

Mighty Superfunk Volume 6

BGP ★★★★★

BGP is a subsidiary of Ace Records, a reissues label whose archeological efforts have unearthed reams of doo-wop, Northern and Deep Soul from warehouse extinction. Rare '60s and '70s funk is the new territory for "diggers" like compiler Dean Rutland and every track here is a lost, polished gem, from Eleanor Rigby's forlorn "Queen Of Losers" to James Carpenter's uplicious "Party Time".

DAVID STUBBS

Dimension Mix

EENIE MEENIE ★★★★★



With children's dance teacher Esther Nelson, the late Bruce Haack formed the Dimension 5 record label in 1962, recording children's educational records which drew on Haack's pioneering work in electronic music. Beck, Stereolab and The Eels rework Haack songs here, but it's Fantastic Plastic Machine's "I'm Bruce" which really captures the spirit of childlike/avant-garde inquisitiveness.

DAVID STUBBS

Tarantino Death Mix

MAN IN A CHAIR

★★★★

Woah – what is this, 1995? Then, Quentin's clever use of music in his films was a fresh commodity, the inspiration for a number of exploitation comps, for those with the severed ears to hear them. Hard to knock the tunes here – "Little Green Bag"; "Miserlou" etc – but easier to knock this uninspired dig in another chap's crates. **JOHN ROBINSON**

JAMES TAYLOR Covers

HEAR MUSIC

★★★

Tasteful sounds of a legend on autopilot

You always get suspicious when a great songwriter turns in an album of cover versions. Listening to this, you wonder what motivated Taylor to abandon his own muse in favour of a bunch of soul classics by The Temptations, Junior Walker and Wilson Pickett, a few rock'n'roll standards ("Hound Dog", "Summertime Blues") and a somnambulant version of Cohen's "Suzanne". Immaculate arrangements, a crack band and Taylor's exquisitely tasteful vocals go some way to make up for the over-familiarity of the material, and the more soulful tracks recall his own "Steamroller Blues" all those years ago. Pleasant, but utterly inessential. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

TEITUR The Singer

A&R RECORDS

★★★

Cold, smart chamber pop from Faroe Islander

"I never meant to be a singer, but I'm slowly getting used to the idea" declares Teitur Lassen in his sweetly keening tone on the title track. Given that this is his third LP, it might seem somewhat disingenuous, but a wry matter-of-factness is part of his charm. Teitur's elegant and slightly chilly music favours delicately plinking piano, sensitively wrangled guitar and lugubrious woodwind, alongside mariachi brass and an occasional Swedish women's choir. Whether pondering his own idleness ("Start Wasting My Time") or delivering an affectionate paean to late Texan bluesman Chris Whitley ("Legendary Afterparty"), his aim is true. **SHARON O'CONNELL**

TERRY AND THE PIRATES Too Close For Comfort

EVANGELINE/ARCADIA

★★★

Comanche Boots

EVANGELINE/ARCADIA

★★★

California heroes' rowdy rock'n'rolling

Although featuring many Bay Area luminaries (including Quicksilver Messenger Service's John Cipollina), the rather rough-and-ready approach of Terry Dolan's band insured they remained a local West Coast cult. But 1979 Italian release... *Comfort*, now

augmented with studio rarities and a terrific take on showstopping favourite "Something To Lose", contains much to savour. Rowdy western romances and covers of Dylan and Tom T Hall all make their appearance on *Comanche Boots* - a career-spanning collection of outtakes and demos. All add weight to a colourful and expansive legacy. **GAVIN MARTIN**

PETER TOSH Legalize It

EMI

★★★

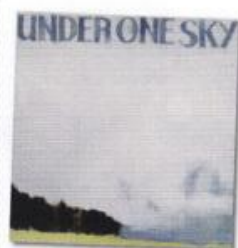
Equal Rights

EMI

★★★

Wailer's bids for solo stardom, remastered

By the time Tosh launched a solo career in 1976, his former sparring partner Bob Marley was already established as a global superstar. This pair of albums follow Marley's example in marrying JA roots with modern studio tech and rock tinges, though rarely so dramatically. Tosh's militant swagger still carries an edge, but song quality is patchy, and recasts of pioneering glories ("Get Up Stand Up", "Brand New Second Hand") prosaic. Still, the title anthems remain in place and Tosh's gravelly drawl speaks with unusual directness across the decades - true charisma never fades. **NEIL SPENCER**



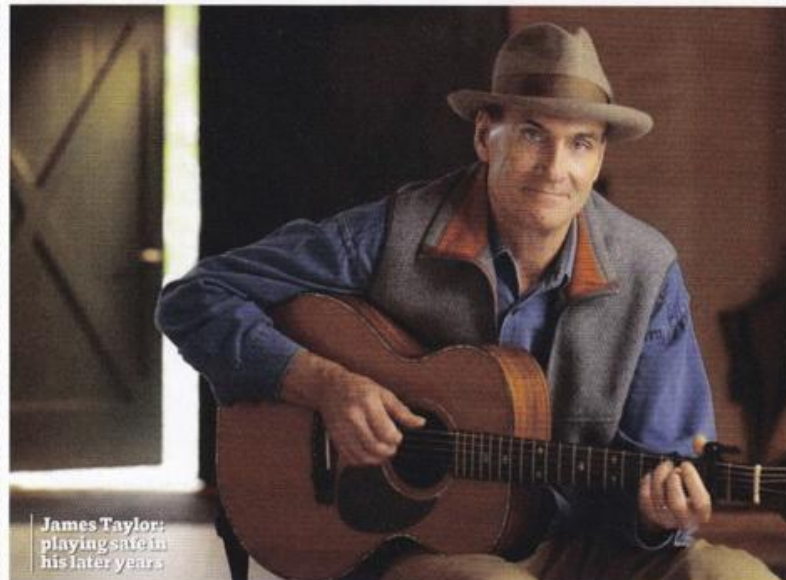
UNDER ONE SKY Under One Sky

NAVIGATORS

★★★

Scots folkie gathers supergroup for 60-minute "suite"

The cast of John McCusker's latest project reads like a masterclass in modern folkery: singers Julie Fowlis, Roddy Woomble and Jim Causley, piper Iain MacDonald and, er, Graham Coxon. The gathering proves too august for one studio, for while *Under One Sky* groans with good playing, it rarely catches fire. Stately reel follows generic jig and well-enunciated vocal. Woomble injects a touch of angst and Fowlis' bright charm forces the pace, otherwise it's an ooze



James Taylor: playing safe in his later years

of contentment. It doubtless looked good on Arts Council notepaper, but it lacks a peck of dirt. **NEIL SPENCER**

VARIOUS ARTISTS Fabric 44: John Tejada

FABRIC

★★★

Gleaming club sounds from US techno titan

A rare American name among the current techno hierarchy, LA's John Tejada has been a key figure in electronic music for well over a decade. As a producer, his prolific output errs from chunky mathematical tech house to more organic analogue meditations. This painstakingly crafted mix for Fabric sticks in the former territory: great club dynamics, if a little synthetic. Things peak with Tejada's own "Torque", taken from 2008's excellent *Where* album, and a couple of releases from the consistently fine Hard Wax Records. **JAMES POLETTI**

VARIOUS ARTISTS Fly Girls: B-Boys Beware!

SOUL JAZZ

★★★★

Sisters, doing it for themselves rather well

This 2CD compendium of female hip hop - from the Afrocentric poetry of Nikki Giovanni (1971) to the sci-fi erotica of Missy Elliott (1997) - serves as a thrilling corrective to rap's lumbering machismo. There are a few early 1980s classics (Tanya Winley's "Vicious Rap", Roxanne Shanté's "Bite This") but most date from hip hop's late-'80s daisy age - including Miami bass diva Annette, New York teenager MC Lyte and London's own Cookie Crew. Big, ballsy, funny and funky as hell. **JOHN LEWIS**

VARIOUS ARTISTS Rinse 07: Spyro

RINSE

★★★

A Greatest Hits Of Grime, of sorts

DJ Geeneus' Rinse FM has been the epicentre of grime and its related urban strains for the past decade. Spyro holds its primetime slot and in the words of celebrated producer Joker "is to grime what Zane Lowe is to indie". That's why his bag is full of exclusive "VIP" versions, many of which get aired on this ADHD-inducing mix of 30 tracks. Spyro flips between grime and early 2step with lightning fingers, making a little too much time for classics like "Fly Bi" by Teebone and DJ Deekline's "I Don't Smoke". **JAMES POLETTI**

VARIOUS ARTISTS Roll Your Money Maker: Early Black Rock'n'Roll 1948-58

TRUKONT

★★★★

Essential alternative history of rock

Had America not been culturally segregated at the time, just about every one of these 24 tracks might have topped the charts half a century and more ago. Instead, such records were all confined to the 'race' (later R'n'B) chart and Elvis got the glory. Chuck and Bo are represented, of course, but only specialists will be familiar with many of the others. There are stunners from Lazy Lester, Ann Cole and Ike Turner. But most striking of all is Johnny Guitar Watson's "Space Guitar", which sounds like Hendrix playing The Ventures, but was actually recorded in 1954. Revelatory stuff. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

VARIOUS ARTISTS Rough Trade Shop: Counter Culture 08

ROUGH TRADE

★★★★

Some we have loved; some we will come to

The "if we build it, they will come" spirit of indie survives, unconcerned by the economic downturn. With CD1 concentrating on contemplative Americana (Bon Iver and Fleet Foxes, the clear victors in 2008's quiet revolution), electro and dubstep influences (Emperor Machine, Dusk And Blackdown) make their presence felt on CD2. The scowling skuzz rock of Boris, Gun Outfit, and a myriad of other bands mutating lo-fi forms, meanwhile, all spill across the 44 tracks here to demonstrate rude health on the shopfloor. **GAVIN MARTIN**

VARIOUS ARTISTS Veros Artis Volume 2

DISSIDENT

★★★

Twelve-inch helpings of leftfield dance

For a new record label with no online presence, a vinyl-only sales policy and a pathological dislike of digital downloads, London's Dissident imprint is performing surprisingly well. On this second singles round-up, Dissident's back-to-basics approach is echoed in the rudimentary acid house of Invincible Scum and Kruton, as well as the gooey trudge of Casionova and Ali Renault's opiated jams. What's more, in "Gone Blue", a slice of frosted bliss by Glasgow's Truffle Club, and "This Is Not..." by The Off-Key Hat, Dissident released two of 2008's finest dancefloor moments. **PIERS MARTIN**

THE ONLY ONES

The Only Ones ★★★★★ SONY **Even Serpents Shine** ★★★★★ SONY
Baby's Got A Gun ★★★★★ SONY

An unholy trinity, beautifully remastered, says *David Cavanagh*

With a thinning-on-top guitar virtuoso, a bassist who could play chords, and a drummer who'd been in Spooky Tooth eight years before punk rock, The Only Ones were surely the most accomplished, if not anomalous, band to emerge in the '77/'78 wave. Rather than slam a door on the pre-punk era, their albums referenced Main Man glam and the Mick Taylor-era Stones. And whereas other songwriters dealt in politics or fashionable paranoia, the ever-honest Peter Perrett opted to present an internal monologue, an open-ended *comédie humaine* starring himself and his friends in all their rueful, existentialist fallibility.

Perrett, an ex-boarding school boy with a Dylan obsession, was a south London drug dealer [see *Q&A*], and a certain hardness of the heart pervades the work of The Only Ones. His world-weary voice, an Anglicised version of Lou Reed, seems to scold those who would be judgmental: I may be dangerous company and prone to disastrous life-choices – his subtext reads – but let's not cry over spilt milk. His band's three albums (1978–80), beautifully remastered here with bonus tracks, don't so much trace a journey as reiterate a fatalistic proposition.

The Only Ones' most famous 'hit' is "Another Girl, Another Planet", which didn't chart in 1978 but made No 57 when reissued in 1992. It's the second song on their debut album. Why it isn't the first is an enduring mystery, since it boasts one of the most atmospheric introductions ever: a scratchy guitar riff, a swirling psychedelic crescendo, a joyful bursting-out into freedom, a guitar solo before the vocal(!), and then the typically Perrettian shrug of the lyrical shoulders: "I always flirt with death... I look ill but I don't care about it."

Because Perrett could rely on his bandmates to excel at fast tempos, slow ones and in-between (as a new wave rhythm section, bassist Alan Mair and drummer Mike Kellie were rivalled only by Farndon/Chambers of The Pretenders), The Only Ones sounded convincing as punks ("Language



"If I die tomorrow, at least there'll be another Only Ones album"
 – Peter Perrett

Problem"), white soulsters ("Breaking Down") and rock'n'rollers ("City Of Fun"). They also had a

laid-back, sexy groove of their own ("No Peace For The Wicked"; "From Here To Eternity" on *Even Serpents Shine*), which clearly appealed to their silky-skilled, string-bending lead guitarist, John Perry.

Though they struggled to convert

critical acclaim into sales, The Only Ones, on the basis of these recordings, were doing almost everything that a great band ought to, across the whole spectrum of writing, arranging and production; it's telling that their first two, self-made LPs don't sound dated, while the third one (for which CBS insisted on a producer, future Duran Duran man Colin Thurston) betrays a turn-of-the-'80s studio gloss. Why so timeless on the first two? Almost certainly because Perrett's songs had such wonderfully natural momentum.

The lyrics and chords sound 'pre-complete', full of pleasing hooks and concurrences, like the way everyone stops dead in the line "I'm always in the wrong PLACE in the wrong time" ("Flaming Torch", *Even Serpents Shine*).

Perrett's attraction to risk, and his determination to see how far he could push his luck, meant that he duly became hooked on heroin. By his account, he was still on the cusp of addiction when he wrote "The Beast" (*The Only Ones*), his mordant portrait of a dabbler who believes he'll never get sucked in. There is black humour as Perrett flits from autobiography to sceptical commentary ("No one doubts the wisdom of this move"), but the thought processes become more disturbing, more self-justifying, as the ominous music wills Perrett towards the vortex. "The Beast" is a shattering highpoint of the first album, and, along with "Another Girl...", probably The Only Ones' definitive statement.

After they split up in 1982, Perrett spent the remainder of the '80s in obscurity, lost to his drug habit. Following a brief reappearance as a solo artist in the '90s, he fell into crack addiction. He was barely seen for 10 years. Then, in 2007, The Only Ones were unexpectedly reunited (with the original lineup) for some well-received gigs. Enjoying their second life, they've since begun work on a new studio album, recording seven songs in a day in December 2008. They would have recorded more, but Perrett, who now has emphysema and is on a methadone programme, got tired.

Q & A Peter Perrett

You made the first album before you signed to CBS. Who financed it?

Zena [his wife] and I were in the drug trade, importing coke from South America. Obviously that's quite a profitable business. We went to the studio whenever we wanted. CBS knew what they were getting.

Where did The Only Ones fit into the punk scene?

I was at all the early Pistols gigs because of my friendship with Malcolm [McLaren] and Vivienne [Westwood]. We were

lucky punk came along, because it opened up the music business to new bands. **What were your recording sessions like? Decadent?**

Yeah, it got more and more like a freak-show. To begin with, I was reasonably professional, but the more drugs got involved, the more it became 'open house'. That's how Rabbit [Bundrick, ex-Free] came to be on the second album. He staggered into Basing Street Studios, drunk, and we asked him to play keyboards.



Junkies would ring the bell, ask to see us, and sleep on the couches in reception. **Any regrets?** What happens, happens. If I'd been a success in the '80s, and '90s, maybe I'd have no passion left. If I die tomorrow, at least there'll be another Only Ones album.

DAVID CAVANAGH

THE BEE GEES R1969

Odessa RHINO/REPRISE



Spellbinding restoration of the Gibb masterpiece.
By Luke Torn

SEE GEES
ODESSA

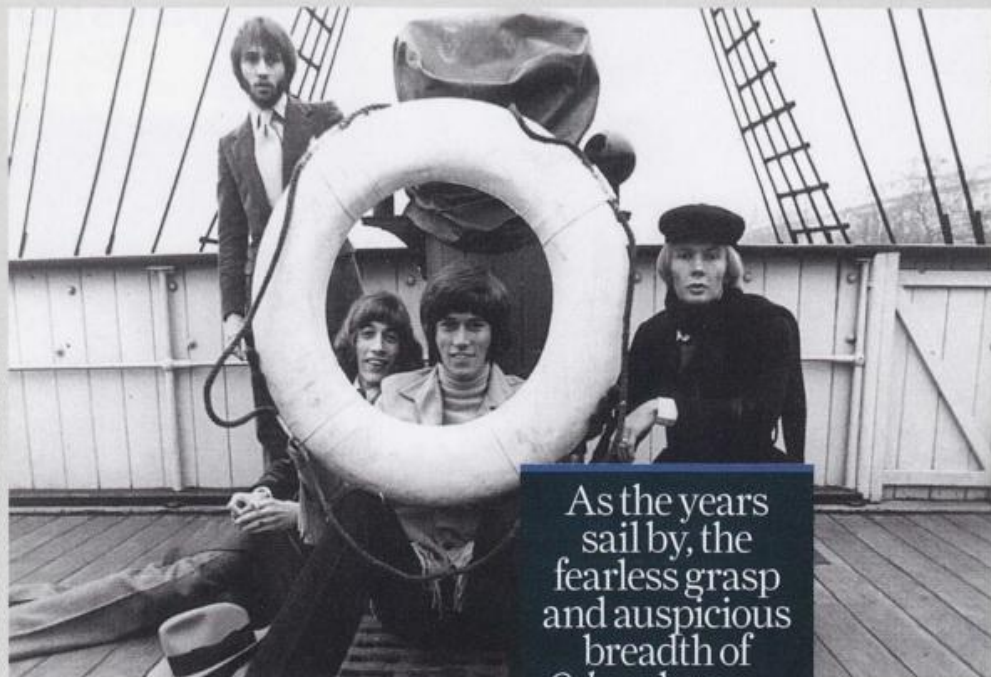
With its opulent cover—"Bee Gees Odessa" stamped in gold into its fuzzy velour—the Australian-bred pop quartet's

fourth announced itself as one of the last major statements of '60s rock. A double album, brimming with shimmering orchestral texture and gorgeous melodies, *Odessa* nonetheless was doomed to be misunderstood from the get-go.

Not least by the Gibb brothers themselves, whose group was on the verge of splintering, and who later derided producer Robert Stigwood for (allegedly) browbeating them into such a grandiose venture. The record-buying public, too, hooked on sugary Gibb singles like "I Started A Joke" and "Words" were flummoxed—chart action was disappointing. The critics simply wrote them off as lightweight, or worse.

But as the years sail by, the fearless ambition of *Odessa* becomes more difficult to dismiss. Like sonic landmarks with similar histories—*Pet Sounds*, *Forever Changes*—*Odessa* finds its authors amid personal crisis, yet working at the absolute peak of their powers. Capping a furious two-year whirlwind in which the group produced four albums and half-a-dozen Top 40 singles, arguments over *Odessa*'s birth, coupled with an exhausting schedule, would create a battle between Barry and Robin Gibb for leadership of the group. Though they finally reconvened in 1971, they never again produced a work as focused and affecting as *Odessa*.

Few realised, when *Odessa* appeared in early '69, that The Bee Gees had been making records since '62. Their career trajectory in Brisbane roughly paralleled that of The Beatles and other beat groups, though their teenaged moon/June/swoon confessions lacked the swagger and grit of those bands. In 1966, Fab comparisons were bolstered when the brothers moved to London and signed with Brian Epstein protégé Robert Stigwood, churning out irresistibly catchy 45s like "Massachusetts" and "Gotta Get A Message to You". Still, for all the group's success, little in their teenybop-



As the years sail by, the fearless grasp and auspicious breadth of *Odessa* become more difficult to dismiss

oriented CVs pointed to a kind of *White Album*-style magnum opus.

Odessa's songwriting—credited democratically, although Barry Gibb was the driving force—is leaps and bounds beyond the group's simplistic early (and later) fare. The title track is the stunner. Flamenco guitar calmly leads us into the shipwreck tale of the British carrier, *Veronica*—a devastating vision of both personal and collective loss. With its other-worldly crescendo of wailing voices, anchored by choppy acoustic and mournful cello, "Odessa" is a musical and lyrical tour de force.

Though much of the rest of *Odessa* is not quite as daring, tracks like Robin's signature love song, "Lamplight", and the emotionally wounded "You'll Never See My Face Again" exploit industrial-strength pathos, an appropriate tone circa 1968. Two of the more surprising cuts—"Marley Purt Drive" and "Give Your Best"—are unlikely country hoedowns, signs that The Bee Gees, like everyone else, were listening to The Band, Bob Dylan and The Byrds.

Still, *Odessa*'s elegant tension springs from interlacing the group's skeletal acoustic framework with Bill Shepherd's spectral string arrangements and dramatic orchestration. Shepherd, who had worked with Joe Meek, provides sonic density and an empathic counterpoint to the brothers' peerless singing. "Melody Fair", for instance, perhaps the most fetching cut in The Bee Gees' entire catalogue, glides on a subtle but sweeping string arrangement intertwined with cascading vocals, while "Black Diamond", melodramatically echoing the loneliness and isolation of "Odessa" achieves a chiming, celestial apogee.

From the Zombies-like "First Of May" to Maurice Gibb's hymn to new love, "Suddenly", the group returns to a simple-but-effective formula: tremulous vocal intro accompanied only by guitar or piano, which upon reaching chorus, dissolves into a soaring flurry of hooks, merry-go-round harmonies, and Shepherd's stately orchestral flourishes. Ornate and fanciful, yet emotionally direct, pop has seldom retraced this territory.

Not long after *Odessa*'s release, The Bee Gees hit the skids: 19-year-old Robin, who'd pushed for "Lamplight" to be the first single (and it's hard to argue with that judgment), split for a solo effort (the seldom-heard *Robin's Reign*). The others soldiered on for 1970's middling *Cucumber Castle* before

rifts were mended for 1971's *2 Years On*. By 1975, teamed with R&B producer Arif Mardin and

flashing a newly minted Philly soul strut, The Bee Gees were disco icons on their way to the watershed *Saturday Night Fever*. But that's another story.

For this one, this edition's third disc (disc two is the original mono mix in full) captures the spirit of *Odessa*'s creation, affording a fly-on-the-wall glimpse at the sessions in progress. Only two true outtakes are included here ("Pity" and "Nobody's Someone") but in among the scratch vocals and rough sketches are moments of offhand beauty: especially, an embryonic, stripped-down version of "Melody Fair" and a stunning alternate "Odessa", key elements of its narrative altered.

Q & A Robin Gibb

Did the late-'60s Bee Gees feel limited creatively by their success?
Any song freshly written is also experimental as thoughts, words, and harmonies come together to create something new. Once you're experimenting on the frontiers of music you are out there on your own anyway. The late '60s was a much more experimental and liberal period music-

wise than it is now. We never felt limitations when we were songwriting, and neither were we limited by the style of our hits. **Early Bee Gees' songs brim with hope and melody, yet there's an undercurrent of melancholy as well, especially on *Odessa*.**
Life is hope and life is melancholy. These things don't change. They are part of



human nature. However, we were always great observers and I suppose, like poets, we were able to put into sounds and words the emotions of love and lost love around us.
LUKE TORN

VARIOUS PRODUCTION FEAT. GERRY MITCHELL

The Invisible Lodger

FIRE

★★★★

Dank skanktronica from grime'n'rhyme alliance

Famous for not being famous, Various are a fiercely private duo from dubstep's experimental fringes who maintain Burial-style anonymity despite remixing star names including Thom Yorke, Ian Brown and Cat Power. Their collaboration with Scottish-born, London-based poet Mitchell is an almost comically dour affair, all solemnly intoned despair and creeping paranoia set to grinding, slithering, slate-grey semi-acoustic dronescapes. Beneath the forbiddingly grim surface, however, lies a novelistic mix of morbidly funny narratives and beautifully textured sound paintings.

STEPHEN DALTON

THE VIEW Which Bitch?

1965

★★★★

Further Caledonian teenage kicks

The dishevelled urgency of 2007's Mercury-nominated *Hats Off To The Buskers*, with its Undertones and Buzzcocks adolescent adrenaline, was one of the most charming and refreshing debuts of recent times. That quality is still prevalent here on catchy girl trouble odes like "5Rebeccas" and "Gem Of A Bird", but there's been tangible progress in the writing and arrangements elsewhere; the moody strings of "Distant Doubloon" bring to mind no less a figure than Randy Newman, while the folky "Realisation" is how The Clash might have sounded if Mick Jones had picked up a recorder instead of a guitar. The thick brot of Kyle Falconer's Scots vowels remains the signature sound - but don't let it distract you from some genuinely adventurous and witty indie guitar rock.

TERRY STAUNTON



The View:
Bitchin'!

DELROY WILSON Meets Sly & Robbie Downtown

KINGSTON SOUNDS

★★★★

Assorted sides from Cool Operator's '70s heyday

A teen star in the '60s, Wilson became one of the dominant voices of the Jamaican '70s, much of his best work cut for producer Bunny Lee, who used (as did others) the young Sly'n'Robbie in his studio band. Hence the fanciful title of this collection. It includes "Cool Operator", the track that supplied Wilson with his soubriquet, "I'm Still Waiting", his smash-hit, small-hours weepie, and the lesser known "Money". Even on the lesser cuts (there are several) Wilson sings his soulful heart out, as on a cover of his own hit, "Better Must Come". Not a definitive volume, but agreeable enough.

NEIL SPENCER

WOODPIGEON Treasury Library Canada

END OF THE ROAD

★★★★

Bittersweet pastoral folk-pop from Calgary oddball

Canadian alt.folk collective Woodpigeon's debut album *Songbook* was an understated gem. Meanwhile, their founder and musical director Mark Hamilton already had this fuller sequel waiting in

the wings. *Treasury Library Canada* feels less whimsical and more polished, although Hamilton still sticks closely to his signature mix of rich acoustic chamber-pop arrangements and quietly barbed lyrics: "good things come to those who baste". Belle & Sebastian and Sufjan Stevens remain the most obvious references points, but with occasional flashes of Arcade Fire's celestial exaltation.

STEPHEN DALTON

ZERO BOYS Vicious Circle

SECRETLY CANADIAN

★★★★

Early '80s hardcore punk document, unearthed

The Zero Boys weren't so much written out of US punk history as never written in: unless you had your ear to the ground and your nose in the 'zines, it's probable this Midwest quartet would have passed you by. But while their 1982 debut, unearthed here by Bloomington indie Secretly Canadian, might not be wildly original, it is lean, crisply produced hardcore played with a deft proficiency to match the breakneck pace. The wistful, Ramones-like "Trying Harder" is a highlight, and while relatively little here transcends its genre, it nails that frustration and energy endemic to the best of its ilk. LOUIS PATTISON

ZION I The Takeover

GOLD DUST MEDIA

★★

Post-OutKast hip hop confusion

The sixth LP from Oakland hip hop duo Amplive and Zumbi was concocted over ISDN connections and flits from their traditional rap style to electro and '80s pop. It's a worldview mapped out in Amplive's recent remix work for Linkin Park and Jamie Lidell along-side his celebrated addition to the open-source versions of Radiohead's *In Rainbows*. Seven years ago a major might have packaged *The Takeover* and sold it to a post-OutKast audience. Now though, its wilful eccentricity distracts from the Native Tongues style that's their strongest card. JAMES POLETTI

NEXT MONTH...

U2

A globally popular band; a globally flavoured album. *No Line On The Horizon* is held to be long on characters, strong rockers, and at least one classic. Sounds OK to us.

POLLY HARVEY

Peej returns mob-handed: collaborating again with multi-instrumentalist John Parish. Sometime Beefheart guitarist Eric Drew Feldman said to be on board, too.

THE WHO

Art school prankery in *excelsis* on this two-disc edition of... *Sell Out*, as the band parody Radio London, ads and all. "I Can See For Miles" is still a brain-frying highlight.

UNCUT RECOMMENDS

The best releases, new and old, from the last few months



Antony And The Johnsons The Crying Light

ROUGH TRADE ★★★★★

After the drama of his Mercury Prize-winner, for the follow-up, Antony kept things low-key, but spellbindingly so.



Animal Collective Merriweather Post Pavilion

DOMINO ★★★★★

The year's first classic: this is ecstatic music, and it deserves an ecstatic reception...



The Smiths The Sound Of The Smiths

RHINO ★★★★★

A terrific comp, serving to remind of the inspirational singles band behind the gladioli-strewn mystique.



Neil Young Sugar Mountain

WARNERS ★★★★★

Who is this chatty young musician? From 1968: general bonhomie comes from the singer; acoustic majesty from his songs.



Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison: Legacy Edition

UNIVERSAL ★★★★★

This wasn't the first time Cash played a prison - but it was surely the most significant. The show that saved his reputation, plus DVD doc.



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THE GUN CLUB

Fire Of Love SLASH RECORDS

Hard-living LA quartet's feral debut still burns, says Sharon O'Connell

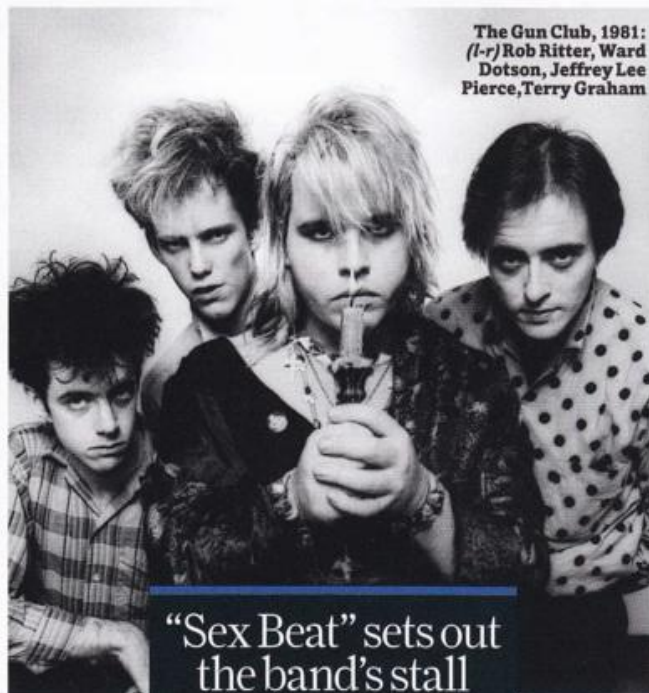


With a mix of overweening confidence and the steady self-belief that all trend-buckers need to sustain them

through years of commercial indifference, Jeffrey Lee Pierce once declared The Gun Club to be "the difference between shamming and shamanism". Certainly, no-one could deny that the LA quartet were "4 real" – their stew of feral blues, Southern Gothic country, jazz-toned punk and souped-up rockabilly was hardly conceived with the charts in mind – while singer-songwriter and guitarist Pierce's dark, serially addictive private persona dovetailed perfectly with his public projection. The Mexican-American with the bleached barnet and Blondie fixation dubbed himself "Marilyn Monroe from hell" and fronted the band like a glam-punk-cowboy incarnation of Robert Mitchum in *The Night Of The Hunter*. The Stooges, The Cramps and The Birthday Party might have stalked similarly unsettling territory, but this was the West Coast of America. In LA in 1981, The Gun Club were plenty weird.

Hammered out "on speed, in two days, for two thousand dollars", their debut LP was informed as much by Marty Robbins (whose *Gunfighter Ballads And Trail Songs* was one of Pierce's favourite records) and Ornette Coleman as by Robert Johnson, Bo Diddley and Howlin' Wolf. Produced by Humberto "Tito" Larriva of The Plugz and Chris Desjardins from The Flesh Eaters – perhaps the only LA band who shared anything like The Gun Club's aesthetic – it was part of an emergent, strikingly contemporary style of American roots music. Pierce and co's apocalyptic juju folk, however, set them miles apart from The Blasters, Rank And File and the rest.

Fire Of Love's schema was announced by its dramatic sleeve, depicting three figures in Haitian voodoo get-up on the front, and on the back, drawings of potion bottles. It opens with the perfectly named "Sex Beat", which sets out their stall with its clattering, amphetamine urgency and lock-jawed tension, "Johnny B Goode" guitar coda and Pierce's slightly menacing, Lou Reed-like delivery. One of two terrific covers follows. To Robert Johnson's "Preaching The Blues", The Gun Club



The Gun Club, 1981: (l-r) Rob Ritter, Ward Dotson, Jeffrey Lee Pierce, Terry Graham

"Sex Beat" sets out the band's stall with its clattering, amphetamine urgency and lock-jawed tension

add lashings of deranged, highly dramatic slide guitar and open up a vast gulch mid-song, marking it with only a murmur of drum beats and the softest of twanging strings, before Pierce swoops in with manic rodeo whooping and demonically possessed ululation. The other cover is Tommy Johnson's audaciously extended "Cool Drink Of Water", perfectly suggestive of simmering evil and the stoking of lust's fire.

Guitarist Ward Dotson and Pierce's personalities may have clashed, but

Dotson's style – informed by Chuck Berry, Scotty Moore and Johnny Thunders – is crucial to the record's

flavour. It ripples throughout "Promise Me", offset by Pierce's slurring, vocal glissando and Tito Larriva's violin. It drives both the powerful, freight-train blues of "For The Love Of Ivy" (a swampy homage to The Cramps' Ms Rorschach, with Pierce coming on like a jabbering Screaming Jay Hawkins) and the haunted "Black Train". Dotson's guitar also helps reinvent The Flamin' Groovies' "Shake Some Action" as frantic, cow-punk ditty

"She's Like Heroin To Me" and it closes the otherwise easy-rolling "Jack On Fire" in a filthy squall of noise. Ex Bags players Terry Graham (drums) and Rob Ritter (bass) were no slouches, either, even if there was no love lost between them and Pierce. "There were many years I had this recurring dream of hitting him in the face with a golf club," Graham once said of his frontman, so it's safe to assume that being in this band was no easy ride.

The Gun Club's provocation wasn't limited to Pierce's speed, heroin- and booze-fuelled bad behaviour and control freakery. Lyrically, *Fire Of Love* has two decidedly questionable moments. "I was bunting for niggers down in the dark," Pierce sings on "For The Love Of Ivy" and, in "Jack On Fire", "some Creole boys was lying dead, I used their blood to paint the costumes red." In their early days, when The Gun Club once opened for The Blasters and the venue's security staff was almost exclusively black, Pierce changed the first line to "I was bunting rockabilly asses in the dark," so clearly recognised it as unacceptable. Also, the track was co-written by Kid Congo Powers (who was replaced by Dotson when Powers quit to join The Cramps, before the LP was recorded) and, as both men were mixed-race, it's far more likely a case of assuming a Southern redneck persona to make a point, rather than giving dumb and deliberate offence.

If *Fire Of Love* worships at the altar of blues and country music, in however perverted a form, then legions of contemporary artists similarly melding genres owe it a huge debt. Jack White, whose White Stripes have covered both "For The Love Of Ivy" and "Jack On Fire", once declared that "the song-writing of Pierce and Kid Congo Powers has the freshest white take on the blues of its time". Blanche have covered "Jack On Fire" and 16 Horsepower have tackled "Fire Spirit", while Mark Lanegan has admitted that Pierce remains probably his greatest influence. The two were set to work together at the time of Pierce's death from a brain haemorrhage in 1996, aged just 37. And Henry Rollins – not a man given to mawkish platitudes – has said of The Gun Club's troubled frontman: "One of the great things that sets Jeffrey apart from most musicians is the man had a vision. He didn't have a career in music, he had a life in music." **U**

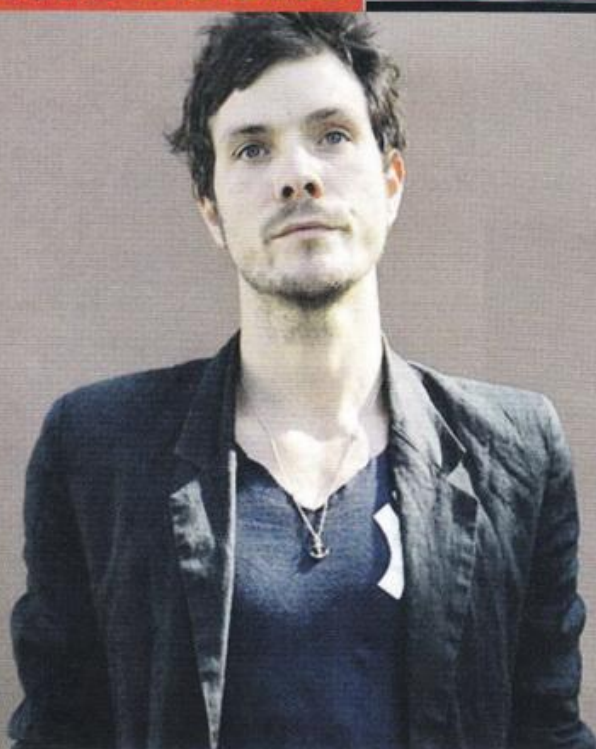
TRACKMARKS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Sex Beat ★★★★★ | 7 Ghost On the Highway ★★★★★ |
| 2 Preaching The Blues ★★★★★ | 8 Jack On Fire ★★★★★ |
| 3 Promise Me ★★★★★ | 9 Black Train ★★★★★ |
| 4 She's Like Heroin To Me ★★★★★ | 10 Cool Drink Of Water ★★★★★ |
| 5 For The Love Of Ivy ★★★★★ | 11 Goodbye Johnny ★★★★★ |
| 6 Fire Spirit ★★★★★ | |

MUSICIANS

Jeffrey Lee Pierce (vocals, guitar); Ward Dotson (guitar); Rob Ritter (bass); Terry Graham (drums)

LABEL Slash Records
PRODUCER Chris D and Tito Larriva
RELEASED 1981



HAIL MARY FULL OF HOLES

Simone Felice BURROWSINK



Fine first novel from Felice Bros' drummer. *By Allan Jones*



The Felice Brothers won a lot of new fans last year – especially among *Uncut* readers, for whom the band's eponymous second LP has become something of a favourite according to the many letters and emails I've received.

One of the many things great things about the album – shortlisted for the inaugural *Uncut Music*

Award – was the band's consummate story-telling, the burlesque universe, populated by sometimes outlandish characters, they created, their songs in this respect like short stories, by turns darkly chilling, sardonic, surreal, hilarious and haunting. Given the often unusual literacy of these songs, it's perhaps no surprise to find that drummer and occasional singer Simone Felice has made a full-on foray into fiction with this startling novel.

From songs like "Frankie's Gun", I was expecting *Hail Mary* to loudly echo the stark country noir of a Daniel Woodrell thriller, a tale of terror and grubby living in Appalachian hollers like *The Death Of Sweet Mister*, *Tomato Red* or *Winter's Bone*. *Hail Mary*, however, is something entirely different. Felice forsakes the meticulous realism of Woodrell, aspiring instead to something more epic, metaphorical and rhapsodic, hymnal almost, Faulknerian for sure. His ambition means he frequently overreaches himself and there are passages here of giddy incoherence when the words seem to have fallen at random onto the page – but the

story he has to tell is wholly gripping, the more so when the book's disparate narratives are brought finally together.

Briefly, *Hail Mary*... opens in 1980, Reagan about to be voted into the White House, bad times ahead. Mary Washington, 17, survives the violence of an extraordinary opening chapter – a pounding overture to the symphony of horrors to come – and begins a long walk through the New Jersey countryside to an unreachable home. In a parallel story, we meet Isaiah, hounded and bullied in a brutal foster home, overseen by a born again, apparently childless widow, a frankly terrifying creation.

The second half of *Hail Mary* is set 13 years earlier, in 1967, and introduces us to Julia and Elliott, lovers who find brief solace together in scenes of rare tenderness (there's a touching moment when they listen to Dylan's "Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands" in Elliott's shabby apartment and are transported by its exhausted beauty). Elliott plans to take the by-then pregnant Julia away from the grim circumstance of her life with her oppressive, God-fearing mother and escape to a new life.

They don't get far, however, the pair paying an appalling price for their love, in ways that link them, terribly, years later, to Mary, Isaiah and the ghostly maven who runs the foster home where Isaiah has grown up in such sad torment.

You will have wondered how these separate strands will come eventually together – and wish perhaps when they do that they hadn't, the accumulated woe that befalls everyone in the book by then almost more than you can sensibly bear.

Hail Mary Full Of Holes can be ordered from www.thefelicebrothers.com



THE SONGS HE DIDN'T WRITE: BOB DYLAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Derek Barker



CHROME DREAMS

Take virtually any band you can think of and make a list of the songs they've covered. Unless I'm totally mistaken, it would run barely into double figures. Apply the same exercise to Bob Dylan, as Derek Barker has here, and the results are wholly different. *The Songs He Didn't Write* runs to over 500 pages, with at least that many individual entries for the songs over the past 40 years Dylan has either recorded or at some stage played live, alphabetically listed with well-researched annotations.

The range of music Dylan has covered is more wonderfully varied than might be imagined. There are many, many interpretations of old blues, country and folk songs, as you'd expect, but you might be surprised to learn that the Stones' "Brown Sugar" was regularly performed by Dylan on his October-November 2002 US tour – I have a version, truly a gas, on a bootleg called *Uptown Theatre, Kansas City*, which also includes cool covers of Neil Young's "Old Man", the Dead's "Friend Of The Devil", Van's "Carrying A Torch" and Warren Zevon's "Boom Boom Mancini", all of which are duly catalogued in this endlessly entertaining and fascinating book.



IT STILL MOVES: LOST SONGS, LOST HIGHWAYS AND THE SEARCH FOR THE NEXT AMERICAN MUSIC

Amanda Petrusich



FABER

Petrusich is a Brooklyn-based music writer who in 2007 hit the road to 'discover' the diverse roots of the music that has inspired what is broadly known today as 'Americana'. Despite the book's title, there is nothing truly 'lost', either about the music she writes about or the highways she travels, which we have been down many times before. Petrusich is a frankly clueless guide who bulks up this slim, often gormless, tome with tiresome retellings of familiar stories about Elvis, Woody Guthrie and Sun Records. Elsewhere, she relies heavily on classic texts by scholars and musical historians, such as Robert Gordon, Peter Guralnick and Nick Tosches. She is also endlessly given to padding out her own woolly insights with lists of hotel furniture and what she has to eat at any given diner, truck stop or bar, information she has somehow convinced herself will be of interest to her readers, most of whom will have lost the will to live long before she haplessly completes her sorry journey.

ALSO OUT...

Burial SIMON & SCHUSTER ★★★★★ is another gripping tale from Neil Cross, the follow-up to the clever and disturbing *Natural History*, which will greatly appeal to fans of Patricia Highsmith. There's also a welcome reissue for James Young's *Songs They Never Play On The Radio* FORTUNE TELLER PRESS

★★★★★, a funny and touching memoir about Nico's last tour.

Also recommended: Castle Freeman's *Go With Me* DUCKWORTH OVERLOOK

★★★★★, a very smart, taut thriller in the style of Scott Phillips' *The Ice Harvest* and *The Walkaway*.

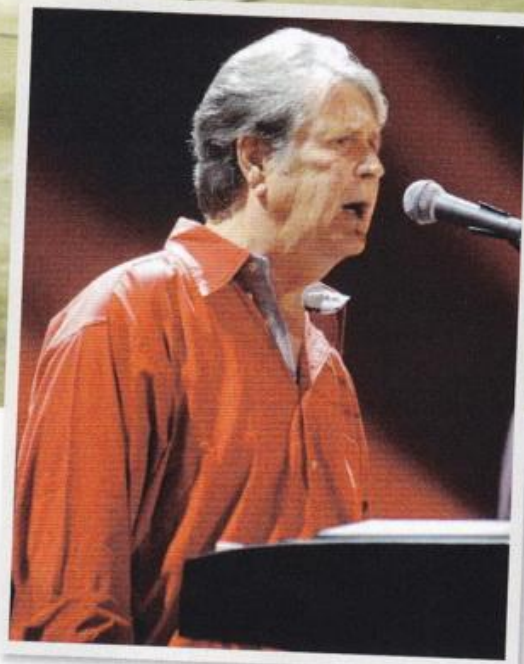


LUCY HAMILTON REEFERS

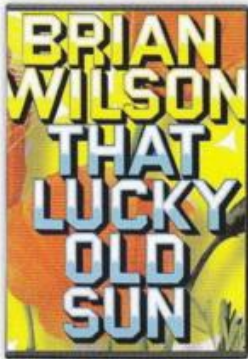


BRIAN WILSON

That Lucky Old Sun RETAIL DVD (CAPITOL/EMI, WIDESCREEN)



A fine album, beautifully performed. But it's the extras that fascinate, says *Alastair McKay*



Brian Wilson's story is beguiling, not least because Wilson shows little sign of being beguiled by it himself. Everywhere he goes, he is treated with reverence, and he responds with nonchalance. There is, for example, an interview by Zooey Deschanel on this DVD, in which the actress – all bubbly and excited – attempts to engage Wilson in discussion. They are at the Hollywood Bowl, so she asks about the shows he has seen there. The first was The Beatles, Wilson says blandly. "And I saw Andy Williams one time."

So, while he can just about reminisce about hanging out at Skippy's hotdog stand in the early 1960s, it seems as if memories, for Brian, are best left unpacked. Yet sometimes, in the flatness of his conversation, Wilson does reveal himself. Deschanel enquires whether he always knew that his brothers could sing, and he replies that he did. It's a story he has told before, but the phrasing here is precise. "We used to sing in our bedroom. A song called 'Come Down From Your Ivory

Tower And Let Love Come Into Your Heart' [presumably Porter Wagoner's "Ivory Tower"]. And just two years after that we recorded 'In My Room', which is the same three parts we used to sing in our bedroom. So we got some practice. If you can learn the parts and you can do the harmonies, and do them right, it's going to sound like angels."

This DVD focuses on Wilson's 2008 album, *That Lucky Old Sun*, which marked a new stage in his creative recovery. There is a beautiful performance of the album in LA's Capitol Studios, but just as interesting is the footage of it being recorded. It shows that while Wilson can be diffident, he is the boss in the studio. There are flashes of temper, and odd moments of humour – his impersonation of an Elvis karate kick – but mostly what you see is how Wilson's whole life is concentrated on music. "Music is probably the biggest source of mental and emotional healing that I have in life," he says. "When I'm at the piano, I dream."

That Lucky Old Sun saw him back at the piano, dreaming

with an intensity he hadn't approached in decades. The tone was set by the title track, an inspired reworking of a Louis Armstrong song, but there does seem to have been an element of collaboration in the decision to frame the album as a kind of autobiography: of Wilson, and Los Angeles.

The song "Oxygen To The Brain", Wilson explains, was "about how I laid around, didn't do anything, gained weight, didn't wash my face, and then one day I stepped on the gas and started exercising." Inspired by the confessional tone, one of Wilson's collaborators Scott Bennett wrote the lyrics to "Midnight's Another Day", in which Wilson sings about how his memories made him feel like stone, and how "all these people made me feel so alone". "That's exactly how I felt!" Wilson says, faintly amazed. "And he knew that!"

That wistfulness now permeates all of the Beach Boys' material. Watch Wilson performing "California Girls" (on the Yahoo live set included here),

and it's apparent that the youthful complexion of the song is now barnacled with sadness. It is terribly poignant.

But, despite the reverential tone of the interviewees (among them Fleet Foxes' Robin Pecknold), this is no obituary. What you see here is a gentle man, in sympathetic company, trying to cope with the burdens of genius by refusing to acknowledge them, even when everyone around him remains awed by the myth. My favourite moment comes when Scott Bennett explains how his lyric for "You'll Be My Surfer Girl" was inspired by his sense that Wilson was making a musical reference to the first song he wrote, "Surfer Girl". So, "in addition to it being an ode to your first love, it's like a love song to your first song."

"I just think it's all about how I still love my wife," says Brian. And he sings it like an angel.

EXTRAS: Track-by-track commentary, feature-length Making Of, Yahoo! Nissan Live Sets performance, Interview by Zooey Deschanel, Black Cab Sessions performance. ★★★★★



MARC ALMOND In "Bluegate Fields"

★★★★

RETAIL DVD (NETWORK,
WIDESCREEN)

This enchanting 2008 live show from Wilton's Music Hall - "London's oldest surviving music hall for one of England's oldest surviving artists," laughs Almond - proves the one-time electro sex-dwarf has matured into a truly deft deliverer of heartbreaking torch standards like "Yesterday When I Was Young" (and Russian folk songs). He has the voice, the venue and the life story to bring these dusty ballads of regret and yearning into their own.

EXTRAS: Interview, bonus tracks including "All The Beautiful Strangers." ★★★★★

CHRIS ROBERTS

DAMON & NAOMI Shibuya O-Nest Tokyo, Japan 2008

★★★★

RETAIL DVD (www.damonandnaomi.com,
WIDESCREEN)

Recorded, as you might expect from the title, on tour in Japan last year, this finds the former Galaxie 500s on excellent form, if pretty much in business-as-usual mode. With an augmented lineup, including occasional collaborators Michio Kurihara and Masaki Batoh from Ghost, we get a career-spanning set heading back to "This Car Climbed Mt Washington". It's mournful, soft focus melodies all the way, although hardly the most visually arresting live DVD you'll ever see.

EXTRAS: None.
MICHAEL BONNER

THE FOUR TOPS Reach Out: Definitive Performances 1965-1973

★★★★

RETAIL DVD (UNIVERSAL MUSIC,
FULL SCREEN)

A timely tribute to the recently departed Levi Stubbs, this continues an essential series of vintage TV clip compilations that has already featured The Supremes, Smokey, Marvin

and The Temptations. The groovy stage gear raises a few chuckles, but the purity of the voices (no miming here!) still astonishes, confirming the Tops as Motown's most powerful and durable players. **EXTRAS:** Interviews, photo galleries, a cappella audio tracks. ★★★★★

TERRY STAUNTON

PUNK IN LONDON Various Artists

★★★★

RETAIL DVD (ODEON
ENTERTAINMENT, FULL SCREEN)

German filmmaker Wolfgang Buld's 1978 documentary was arguably the first in-depth examination of the punk scene, although his decision to give more screen time to The Lurkers and Chelsea than the likes of The Clash raises eyebrows now. The static, single-camera performance sequences are predictably flat, but the wit and articulacy of his interview subjects, Poly Styrene especially, helps convey the chaos and upheaval of the times.

EXTRAS: Live footage of The Clash in Munich, director interview. ★★★★★

TERRY STAUNTON

KLAUS SCHULZE Rheingold: Live At The Loreley

★★★★

RETAIL DVD (SYNTHETIC SYMPHONY,
FULL SCREEN)

There's long been a Wagnerian scale to ex-Tangerine Dream/Ash Ra Tempel synthesist Klaus Schulze's epic ambient voyages. *Rheingold*, a suite of long pieces featuring the keening vocals of Lisa Gerrard, filmed at last summer's outdoor island festival, names its tracks after characters from the legend. Schulze genially interacts with his public but his immersion in this solemn, symphonic music is absolute.

EXTRAS: *Real World Of Klaus Schulze* documentary, interview. ★★★★★

ROB YOUNG



THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

Electric Ladyland 40th Anniversary Collectors Edition

RETAIL DVD (UNIVERSAL, WIDESCREEN)

★★★★★

The classic Jimi doc, expanded. *By Barney Hoskyns*



Chas Chandler, whose avuncular Geordie tones weave in and out of this absorbing documentary, recalls the sessions for *Electric Ladyland* as "a long-

drawn-out grind". But then he would: everything about this sprawlingly eclectic double album ran counter to the former Animal's pop-rock aesthetic, which had kept things more or less tight and punchy on the first two Jimi Hendrix Experience albums, *Are You Experienced* and *Axis: Bold As Love*.

By the spring of 1968, when Hendrix finally hunkered down in New York and applied himself to *Electric Ladyland*, rock had broken radically free of its lingering constrictions. Like everyone from The Beatles on down, the freaky rocker from Seattle wanted to bring everything into the mix - to experiment with form, sound, texture, and of course the sonic playpen that was the studio itself. As his very middle-class-sounding drummer Mitch Mitchell notes in this film, "[he] was becoming the king of the overdubs".

Reissued as part of the 40th Anniversary edition of *Electric Ladyland*, this exhaustive deconstruction of the album tells the story of its expansive, collaborative creation in the standard *Classic Albums* manner. Original engineer Eddie Kramer sits at the mixing

desk tweaking faders and waxing hagiographical, intercut with an impressive supporting cast of talking heads (many of them - Mitchell, Noel Redding, Chas Chandler, Buddy Miles - now of course dead themselves). Thanks to the intimate involvement of the official Experience Hendrix website, there's also a ton of grainy home-movie footage of Jimi in the studio (and cavorting in the New York streets with Noel and Mitch) that genuinely brings the vibe of the sessions to life.

Harpsichords, electric sitars, kazoos, horns; Dave Mason, Jack Casady, the Sweet Inspirations: anything was valid on *Electric Ladyland* and everything was worth a go. ("LPs are like personal diaries," Hendrix remarks in one after-the-fact interview. "Every little thing you hear on there means something.") One sympathises with Chas Chandler as he watches his charge stumble back into the studio with another 30 liggers he's picked up at The Scene, but this was how music was being made in 1968. You either went with the chaotic flow or you packed your bags and split. Which was what Chandler eventually did, 45 takes of "Gypsy Eyes" later. A tale of psychedelic excess this may be, but Track Records' Chris Stamp is spot-on when he opines that listening to *Electric Ladyland* on its release "you were thrown into the future". Meet you in the next world and don't be late.

FILM OF THE MONTH

GRAN TORINO

Directed by Clint Eastwood

Starring Clint Eastwood, Bee Vang, Ahney Her

Opens February 20 | Cert 15 | 116 mins



If this is to be Clint's final role, it's a powerful, cussed farewell, *says Allan Jones*



What makes *Gran Torino* more than the merely watchable, well-meaning, but heavy-handed parable about racism and redemption it may have been in the hands of a lesser filmmaker is Clint Eastwood, directing himself in what, at 78, he's hinted may be his final screen performance.

If this is truly the case, it's a rousing last hurrah, a snarling salute to the leathery invincibility of every uncompromising, provocative, mean-eyed motherfucker he's ever played – from the Man With No Name, to Dirty Harry, Josey Wales, William Munny in *Unforgiven* and even Frankie Dunn, the veteran fight manager in *Million Dollar Baby*. No-one over the years has filled the screen with as much seething pent-up violent menace as Clint, and even pushing 80, you would not fancy your chances if you had to go up against him. "Ever notice how you come across somebody once in a while that you shouldn't have messed with?" he asks someone here, squinty-eyed and scowling, fury growing within him, his voice a wholly intimidating growl. "That's me." Later, after giving one punk a severe beating, he leaves him with a terse warning: "If I have to come back, it's going to be ugly." You have no reason to believe this will not, painfully for someone, be the case.

Eastwood in *Gran Torino* is Walt Kowalski, a retired veteran of Detroit's once-thriving automobile industry,

recently widowed. Walt is bitter and cantankerous, a brutally intolerant racist, a man with a grudge against everything in the world that doesn't conform to his own crude opinion, including his own sons and their ghastly children. He lives alone, with his dog and his guns, in a neighbourhood that has changed around him in ways he can't accommodate, a recent influx of Asian immigrants, Hmong refugees, former allies of America in Vietnam, especially inflaming his angry prejudice. About the only thing that lights up what's left of his life is the 1972 *Gran Torino*, a car he helped build on the Ford assembly line that now sits in his garage, a gleaming metaphor for what Walt no doubt believes was a better America.

Walt makes you think of the crude and mirthless Archie Bunker, the American incarnation of Alf Garnett, and Peter Boyle as the eponymous homicidal blue-collar bigot of John Avildsen's 1970 cult classic, *Joe* (just out for the first time on DVD). There's nothing remotely likeable about Walt, he's an unpleasant furnace of hostility, and Eastwood doesn't attempt to make him to any extent sympathetic.

Walt has elsewhere been described as "Dirty Harry in retirement" and there is merit in this apparent flippancy. You can certainly imagine Walt going to see the original *Dirty Harry* movie, for instance, and cheering Harry



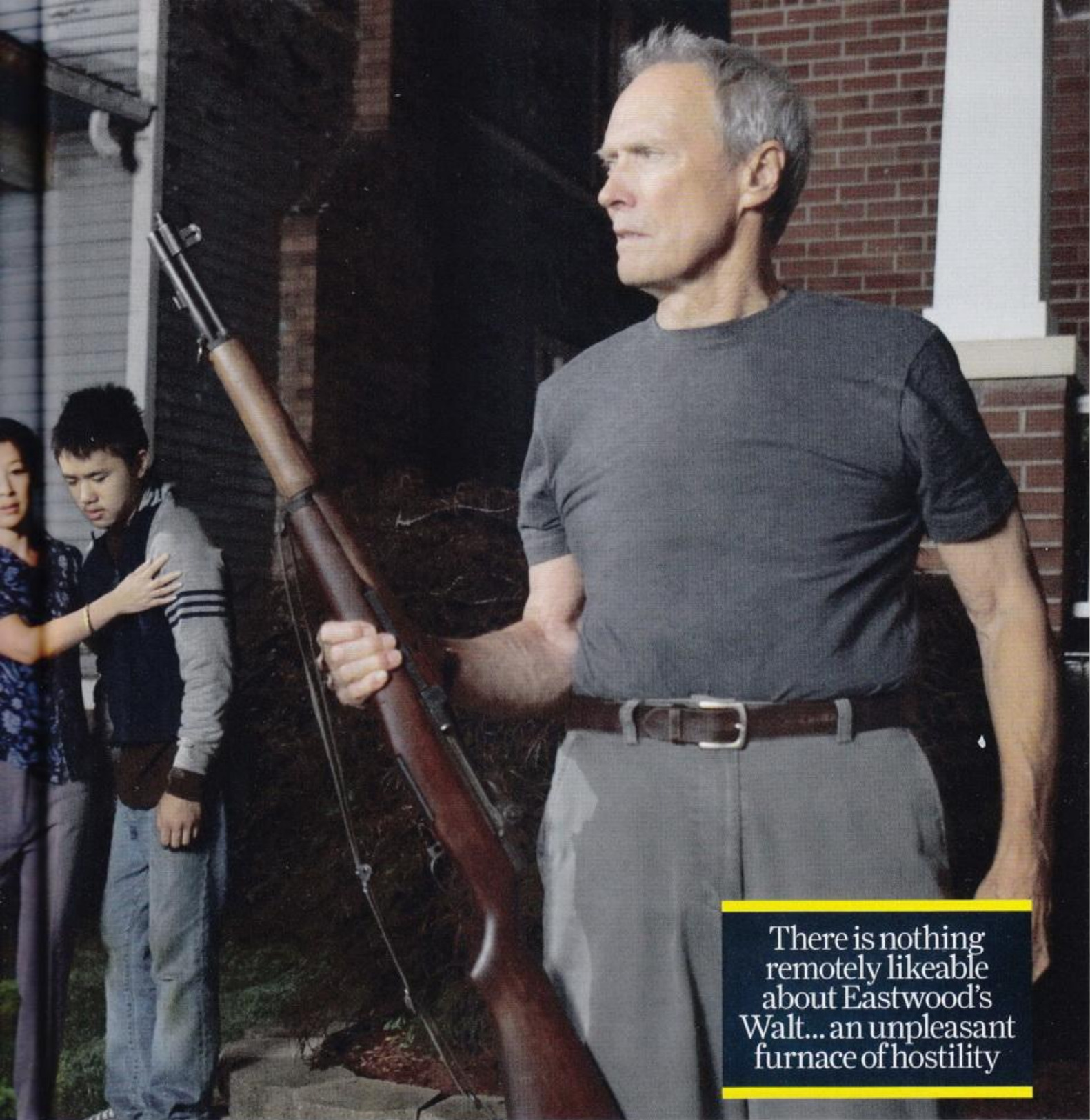
My enemy's enemy is my friend: mean-eyed old bigot Walt Kowalski (Eastwood) finds unlikely allies in his war against everything

Callahan's vigilante brutality, thus missing the point of Don Siegel's ambiguous, provocative challenge to liberal America. By the time his own story is told here, however, you like to think Walt would have seen Harry not so much as Travis Bickle with a badge, but a tragic hero as flawed, dangerous and frighteningly heroic as John Wayne's Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers*, which *Dirty Harry* so often resembles (both films crucially involve the search for an abducted girl).

Back in Detroit, meanwhile, Walt finds himself

incrementally drawn into the world of his previously despised Hmong neighbours, specifically the sparky Sue (Ahney Her, wonderful) and her younger brother Thao (Bee Vang), a likable dreamy kid being pressed by his machine gun-toting cousin to run with him and his gangbanger buddies.

When Walt takes the kid's side in a rowdy confrontation between the gang and Thao's family, he's celebrated as their saviour, a hero to Thao, who comes quietly to idolise him. For his part, Walt is touched by the uncomplicated



There is nothing remotely likeable about Eastwood's Walt... an unpleasant furnace of hostility

generosity shown towards him by the grateful Hmong, who he finds are altogether more preferable company than his own family. He has for a moment, it seems, found a kind of peace, a truce declared in his ongoing war with everything around him.

Then it all goes bad in a hurry. Humiliated by Walt, the gang take dreadful revenge, recklessly inviting a final showdown. And now we think we know where we are going here, and prepare to be returned to the savage universe of, say, *High Plains Drifter*, Clint about to become

an agent of bloody retribution. We also think inevitably of *Unforgiven*, and Clint as William Munty, the retired gunfighter who by the film's end has once again become a formidable killing machine, violence his answer to everything and bodies piled up around him. You may also be reminded of David Cronenberg's *A History of Violence*, in which Viggo Mortensen as Tom Stall, a reformed former mob killer, reverts to murderous type when his peaceful family life is threatened by men from a past he believed was behind him.

We know already, for instance, that Walt is familiar with violence. He fought in Korea, that appalling forgotten war, where he did things he would prefer to forget. We get a harrowing glimpse of his experience there when Walt confronts one of the Hmong hoodlums terrorising Thao's family, shoving the barrel of his old army-issue M1 in the punk's face and telling him in one of the most powerful scenes Eastwood has performed in: "You're nothing to me. We used to stack fucks like you five feet high in Korea and use you for sandbags."

The growing intimacy between Walt and Thao by now also inevitably recalls *Shane*, in which the young Brandon de Wilde is besotted by Alan Ladd's haloistic gunfighter, and also *The Shootist*, in which in his own valedictory screen appearance John Wayne as the dying gunman John B Books must similarly resolve a violent conflict without encouraging a young man's emulation of his gun-toting ways. *The Shootist* was, of course, also the last great film directed by Don Siegel, Eastwood's most influential movie-making

mentor, whose terse, understated, classic visual style informs every crisp frame of *Gran Torino*.

I'm not sure the way in which Eastwood here resolves an identical dilemma is the unequivocal denial of his violent cinematic past that has been suggested elsewhere. But the way Walt in the end deals with the havoc he has partially unleashed suggests levels of human contact that have not always been evident in his films and in this wholly vintage performance he has perhaps found a new kind of heroism.

ASK UNCUT

...because knowledge is power, baby. Email allan_jones@ipcmedia.com with your questions, or write to: Ask Uncut, 4th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU

PELVIC POSER

Can you confirm the identity of the jeans-wearing cover star on The Rolling Stones' iconic Andy Warhol-designed *Sticky Fingers*? Would I be right in thinking it's Factory regular Joe Dallesandro, who also featured on the sleeve of The Smiths' debut album? **Eric Rice, via email**
Numerous theories circulate about the

be-denimed model, although most agree that the photograph used on the sleeve was not taken specifically for the project, but was pulled from a box of unused earlier Warhol snaps. Michael Ferguson's 1998 biography, *Little Joe Superstar*, claims it's a picture of Dallesandro, but Bill Wyman's 2002 book, *Rolling With The Stones*, suggests it was one of two other Factory hangers-on, either make-up artist

Corey Tippin or art assistant Jed Johnson. Other names proffered by Warhol scholars are actor and dancer Eric Emerson, the photo supposedly taken during his screen test for Warhol's 1967 film, *Chelsea Girls*, but there appears to be no conclusive proof as to who the model was.

ELT DOES DYLAN

Your knack for hunting down info on Bob Dylan covers has impressed me in previous columns, so what do you know about Elton John recording a few in the early '70s? Were they perhaps part of an aborted covers album project, along the lines of Bowie's *Pin-Ups* or Bryan Ferry's *These Foolish Things*?

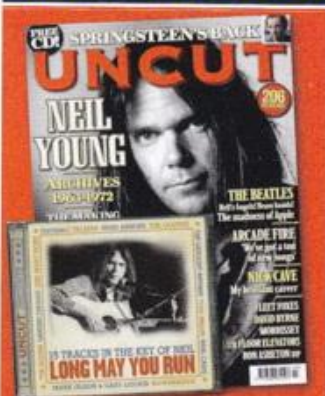
Martin Lock, via email

There was nothing as grand as an album in mind when Elton "did" Bob. He recorded a four-minute instrumental medley of three Dylan tunes ("Blowin' In The Wind", "She Belongs To Me" and "Mr Tambourine Man") for a special John Peel Radio 1 broadcast on Christmas Day in 1973. The conceit was that the show was coming "live" from a traditional British pub, with Elton playing knees-up piano in the background while Peel spoke between records. The tapes may yet be released commercially, as Universal are currently working on a boxset of Elton's BBC sessions.

RUFUS REISSUES?

Now that Rufus Wainwright has established himself as a major artist,

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would you know if there are any plans to reissue his earlier albums with bonus tracks? I'm especially keen to hear his version of The Hollies' track "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother", which I believe was recorded during the sessions for his second release, *Poses*, but never used.

Lynn Skelton, via email

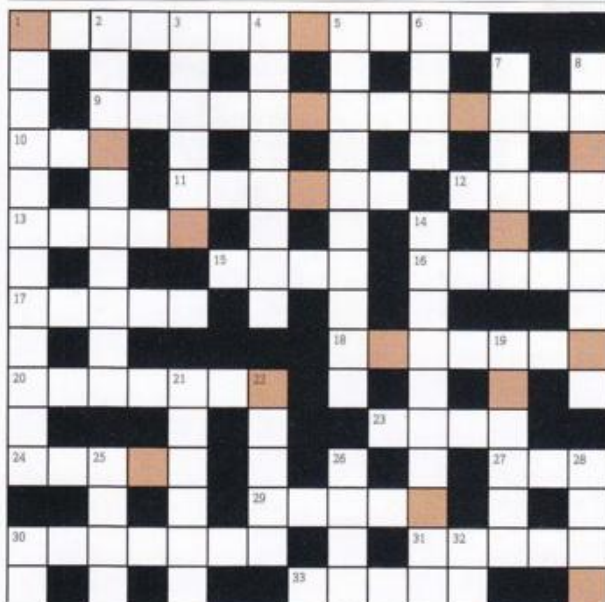
No Rufus reissues are in the pipeline at the moment, but the original albums are still in catalogue. However, his recording of The Hollies' hit is currently available on the soundtrack to the 2001 Ben Stiller comedy, *Zoolander*. The Wainwright version plays over the closing credits of the movie.

TERRY STAUNTON

Sticky question: just whose crotch was it on the Stones' infamous album cover?

PRIZE CROSSWORD

WIN Neil Young's 2007 CD, *Chrome Dreams II*



ACROSS

- 1+8D This evening we have for you some Glaswegians. You could have it a much better (7-5-9)
- 9 (See 1 down)
- 10 American vocalist starting out from Nashville (3)
- 11 (See 33 across)
- 12 Tom _____, producer who's worked with Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart and Dusty Springfield (4)
- 13 Stage turn for the Bread man (5)
- 15 (See 14 down)
- 16 Rotten change of name (5)
- 17 Tracks from this album include "Eyesight To The Blind" and "Fiddle About" (5)
- 18 (See 2 down)
- 20 Steve _____ guitarist whose solo albums include *Spectral Mornings* (7)
- 23 Celebrity associated with Primal Scream (4)
- 24 Country singer Jimmie "The Singing Brakeman" Rodgers was renowned for putting this into a song (5)
- 27 David Bowie music that started off 30 across (3)
- 29 Peter Crouch doing a dance to The Tornados? (5)
- 30 Indie band not high on valuable material (7)
- 31 Racer turns number to always keep at arms' length (5)
- 33+11A A major style altered by singer / songwriter (5-6)

DOWN

- 1+9A+25D "Like my father before me, I'm a workin' man / And like my brother above me, I took a rebel stand", 1969 (3-5-4-5-3-5-4)
- 2+18A "Happy" to "Trust" a group "Until You Find Out" their name (4-6-7)
- 3 "The World Is Outside" for this UK band on the Atlantic label (6)
- 4 _____ Play Dylan was a 1980 compilation of their 13 earlier cover versions (3-5)
- 5 "Hey _____ you're spinning away on my time / Hey, who cares what you play", 2003 (8-2)
- 6 Suede's record label that didn't provide covers? (4)
- 7 Vampire Weekend use university connection with "_____ Comma" (6)
- 8 (See 1 across)
- 14+15A Yes album gets near the guitar work of U2 (5-2-3-4)
- 19 Lou Reed's third album which was based on a track from his first (6)
- 21 Marna Cass _____ of The Mamas And The Papas (6)
- 22 Portishead had already released a couple of albums before this (5)
- 25 (See 1 down)
- 26 Their debut single in 1973 was "Ring Ring" (4)
- 28 Hope in some way that this is a Cure album (4)
- 30 Amy MacDonald gets something from Glasgow (1-1)
- 32 In the way that George Michael and Mary J Blige got it together (2)

HOW TO ENTER
The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a track by Neil Young. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer on a postcard to: Uncut March 2009 Crossword Competition, 4th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win the prize. Closing date: February 23, 2009

THE ANSWERS TO OUR JANUARY CROSSWORD (TAKE 140) WERE:

ACROSS
1+5A Slipway Fires, 10 Melvins, 12 Waterboys, 13 No Radioactivity, 15 No Woman No Cry, 18 Rip, 20 Haig, 21+5D Little Feat, 23 EMP, 25 Lavis, 27 Colours, 28+4D King Tubey, 30 Go, 31 Tishbite, 32 Dalton.

DOWN
1 Summer In The City, 2 Island, 3 Wait For Me, 4 Yes We Can, 6 Roar, 7 Spooky, 8 Post, 13+28D I Don't Mind, 14 Israel, 16 Whiplash, 17 Jini, 18 Rev, 19 P F Sloan, 22 It's A 26 Angel.

HIDDEN ANSWER
"How Many More Times"

Crossword compiled by Trevor Hungerford

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Stop Me

if you've heard this one before

WHO: TOM VERLAINE **WHERE:** LONDON, APRIL 1978

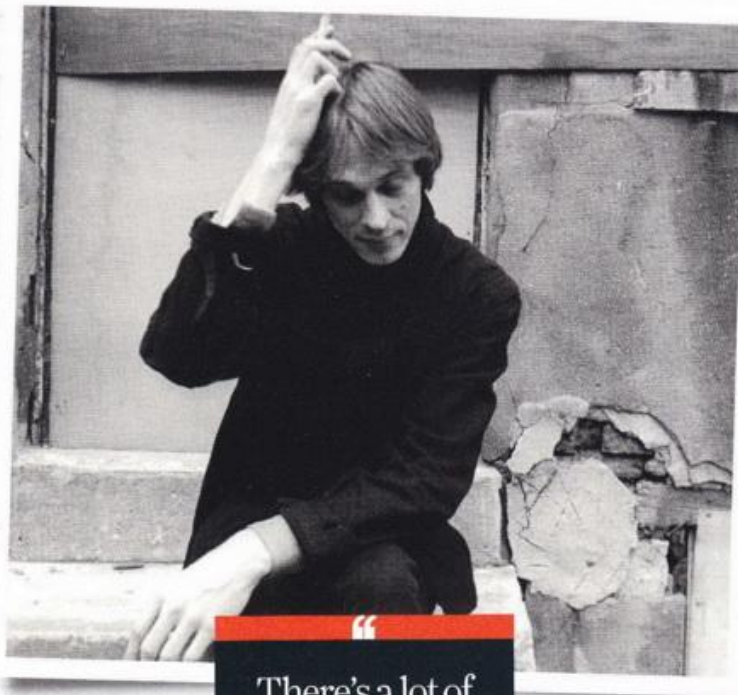
Tom Verlaine, thin as a nail, rips the filter from a Lucky Strike, lights what's left of it and leans back against the wall of the bleak little dressing room somewhere in the depths of Bristol's Colston Hall.

It's the last night of Television's first UK tour, so this would be June 1977, and the band are riding high. Their debut album, *Marquee Moon*, has recently been released to ecstatic reviews and the tour has been a triumph. It won't get much better for Television than this and Verlaine apparently knows it. He takes a long drag of his cigarette, winces as the dull thud of Blondie's opening set momentarily reaches us and then answers the question I've just asked him, which is: how exactly are Television going to follow one of the greatest debut albums ever made?

"I simply don't know," he laughs nervously. "I've don't have a clear idea what the second album will sound like. I keep thinking in terms of, I don't know, atmospheres. It'll be different, I think, but I don't know how. I can't hear it yet. I mean, we haven't even started writing anything for it. I think we might go for a more spacious sound, though, and a way of exploring atmosphere, sensation, feelings that are maybe beyond emotions. I don't know how to explain it. These are just, like, thoughts I'm having about one possible direction we might follow."

"The only thing I do know is that whatever we do, people aren't going to like it as much as *Marquee Moon*. That's just inevitable. But since I know it's coming, it's something I'll be prepared for, you know. It's not anything that, like, worries me, you know, what critics think. I don't take any notice, you know." A year later, we're sitting in a record company office in central London, and Verlaine's fuming.

Television's second album, *Adventure*, has just come out and the reviews have been largely hostile, most of them more than vicious, critics falling on the record like jackals on carrion. The thing has been ripped apart. Julie Burchill, in the *NME*, has been especially savage, as she is paid to be. I think the only good review *Adventure* gets in the UK is the one I write for what used to be *Melody Maker*. Contrary to the indifference he'd earlier expressed for critical opinion, Verlaine is baffled, angry and hurt.



"There's a lot of fucked-up people out there writing about music. They're not critics. They're just plain stupid!"

"I think there's a lot of fucked-up people out there writing about music and they're just stupid," he says, clearly not taking the critical flak in any kind of measured stride, getting, in fact, quite worked up here. "It's ridiculous what some of them have written about the album. I mean, these reviews I've read, they weren't like music reviews. They seemed like some other kind of review I've never encountered before. They're unbelievably funny, you know," he goes on, no hint of laughter. "There are very few critics who ever get it right, but these reviews, they didn't even talk about the music. That's what upsets me. These people, they're not critics. They're not writers. They're just plain stupid."

"It seems," he continues, really no stopping him now, "like every first album that gets a good review, especially in England, is bound to be followed by a second album that gets slammed. Whatever its merits, you know. It's almost like a whim the critics have. I'm not indifferent to criticism," he says, stating the somewhat obvious.

"Like anybody else, I like to read good reviews of the band and what we do or what we've done. But I'm not afraid of someone tearing the music apart if there are grounds for it and if the writer is thoughtful in his criticism."

"But most of the stuff I've read is just nonsense. And I find it, you know, really offensive that critics should ignore the music and attack the personality of the musician, especially when they don't even know the people involved. Like, I don't think I've even met these people. They don't know what they're talking about. They don't know a thing about me."

A recurring criticism of *Adventure* echoed claims that Television in performance were often cold and detached and their music lacked emotion. They had also been described as "the prodigal sons of doom, gloom, destruction and general slash your wrist downess".

Verlaine laughs derisively when I quote him this line.

"I just don't know where people get these ideas from," he snorts. "These people just don't listen. I don't think

there's any doom on the records. I don't hear any doom at all. To me, doom is like - what? - no life or something. I just don't hear what they're talking about. As for lacking emotion, it could be the more feeling you have, the less you show it. I think that may be the case with Television. I mean, I don't know what we look like onstage, but if you look at, like, Muddy Waters or any of those classic blues performers, you could say they look pretty cold, too. They don't move around a lot. They just, like, stand there and do it. Just because a guy doesn't want to make an object of himself and throw himself around the stage, that doesn't mean he has no emotion. I mean, I don't move around the stage a lot. In fact, I hardly move at all. So what? If that's a problem, go see Elton-fucking-John."

Another thing about *Adventure* that had uncommonly annoyed its many rabid detractors was the fact it had been pressed, for reasons not apparent to anyone, on red plastic. Verlaine nearly goes through the roof when I mention this.

"Oh shit," he seethes, and is that steam coming out of his ears? "Christ, I got nothing to do with red vinyl. I come over here and some guy hands it to me in a taxi on the way in from the airport. So the album's pressed on red plastic. I don't care. I happen to, you know, like red plastic. But to criticise the band for anything like that is plain stupid. What did people criticise it for - that it's a sales gimmick or something? It's stupid. I just happen to think it looks better than black plastic. I think it's great, regardless of the reason it was done. I like it. I like red. Big deal. I wouldn't have given a fuck if they'd pressed it on clear vinyl."

"I've got an Albert Ayler record that came out in the United States that was done on white vinyl with a silkscreen on one side and music on the other. I think it's great. Did anyone accuse Albert Ayler of cheap promotional gimmicks? What a fuss about red vinyl."

"Will somebody please remind these people there's music on the record?"

Marjorie