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SPRINGSTEEN

★ *By Miami Steve Van Zandt* ★

68

Discover the real Janis Joplin



P62 Guide to your free CD: 15 tracks of Springsteen's "walk in" music
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THE EDITOR



This month's cover story celebrates one of rock's most enduring friendships as Miami Steve Van Zandt takes a break from rehearsals for the E Street Band's 2009

world tour to talk to Uncut about the 40 years he has known Bruce Springsteen, the two of them growing up not far from each other in New Jersey, hearts thumping to the rock'n'roll to which they would soon dedicate the rest of their lives.

Anyone growing up anywhere at the same time as them will doubtless be stirred by Van Zandt's passionate evocation of the thrill merely of turning on the radio in those heady days when every new record you heard was more than likely to leave you breathless with an uncommon excitement, the sense of the world changing around you a tangible thing, the coming as if from nowhere of so much great music.

Not that we are in any way at the moment denied more of the same—recent terrific records by, among others, Neil Young and The Felice Brothers, joined now by the surprising arrival of a new Bob Dylan album, *Together Through Life*, a wholly unexpected treat that I've reviewed for this issue on page 80. I've also been working with a few fellow Bobcats—namely, Damien Love, Nigel Williamson and John Robinson—on *Dylan's America*, the free map/wall-chart/fashion accessory that comes free with this issue, and for which I am sure you are already clearing the appropriate wall space.

As promised, we have more news this issue on Latitude 2009, including details of the headliners across all three nights for the Uncut Arena, plus more names for the Obelisk Stage, which as per our earlier announcement is headlined this year by Nick Cave, The Pet Shop Boys and Grace Jones. For further developments, keep an eye on uncut.co.uk and www.latitudefestival.co.uk.

Finally, with the economic situation getting peskier by the day, you might want to think somewhat seriously about taking advantage of this month's subscription offer—sign up today and you can get Uncut delivered straight to your home for under three quid an issue. Full details are on page 51.

Allan Jones

allan_jones@ipcmmedia.com

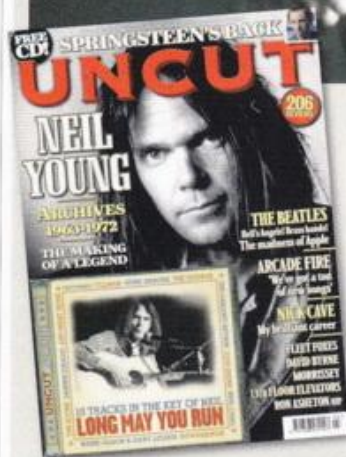
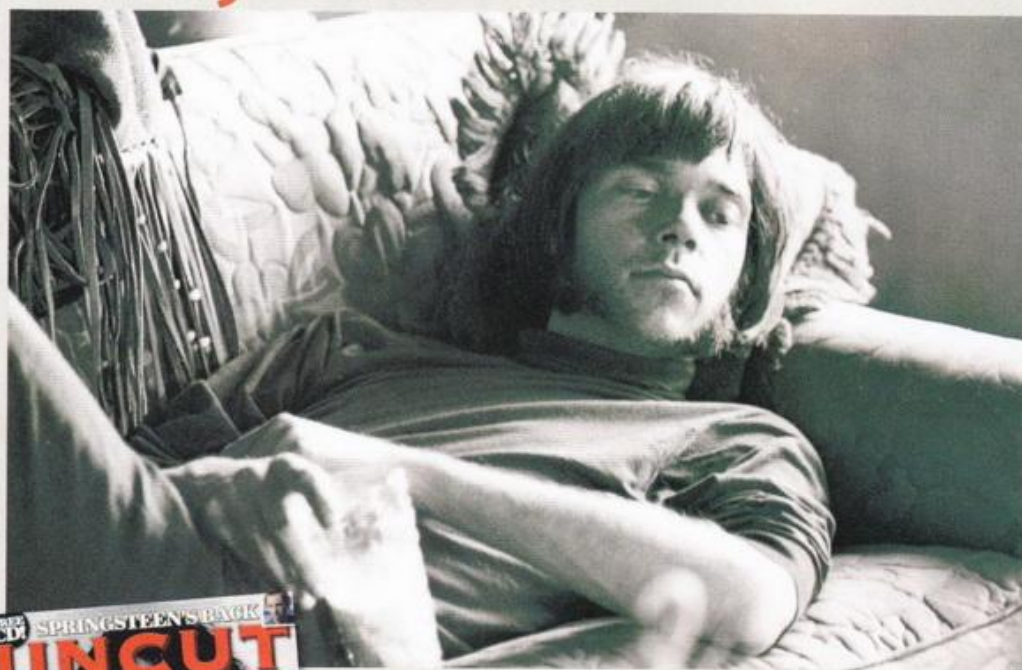
FEEDBACK



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LETTER OF THE MONTH

NEIL, BEFORE THE GOLD RUSH



Re: your recent Neil Young cover story [*Take 142, March*]. During the mid-1960s, I was working at Arc Records in Toronto, and having difficulty getting the support I needed from traditional record retailers in Canada. So I organised an alternative network of non-record retailers, including Cole's chain of bookstores. I first met Neil at Cole's head office store in Toronto during the autumn of 1965. I was 23, he was 19. Not yet famous, he was simply a gangly guy working in a bookstore. Neil didn't work for Cole's very long,

but we did chat a couple of times. He told me he played guitar and was a folk singer-songwriter. He wanted to know if I could give him some advice. I asked if he was into old groups like The Kingston Trio or new groups like The Byrds. He answered, "The Byrds." I told him a group like The Byrds could never have originated in Toronto, and if folk-rock was what he was into, he should move to L.A. I had been spending a fair amount of time in L.A. I was having great success domestically with Canadian teenage

singer Terry Black who was on the Arc label in Canada and the Dunhill label in the US. Dunhill was based in L.A.

Dunhill's first major international success was the folk-rock hit "Eve of Destruction" by Barry McGuire. It went to No 1 in the US, and I believe it reached No 3 on the UK charts. During the week of October 4, 1965, "Eve of Destruction" by Barry McGuire and "Only 16" by Terry Black were No 1 and No 2 in Toronto.

Early in 1966, Dunhill exploded internationally with "California Dreamin'" and "Monday, Monday" by the folk-rock group The Mamas And The Papas, in which Canadian singer Denny Doherty was a member. If Neil Young needed assurance that folk-rock was happening and L.A. was the place to be, "California Dreamin'" was it!

I do remember telling Neil to get a demo of his songs to me. However, I would be lying if I said I remembered the songs on the tape [Neil's associate] Comrie Smith played for me. Memory notwithstanding, I obviously liked what I heard since, as Comrie says in your article, I told him to get a band together and come into Arc's studio.

The last time I saw Neil was during the summer of 1966 when Denny Doherty took me over to the L.A. club Whisky A Go Go to hear Buffalo Springfield, the band Neil and American Stephen Stills had recently formed. A few years later, the British were able to claim that Graham Nash of The Hollies turned Crosby, Stills & Young into superstars... Just kidding... Maybe not!

Bill Gilliland, via email

TOO MUCH (WINE), TOO YOUNG

Re: The 1979 2-Tone Tour in Brighton [*which featured The Specials, Madness and The Selecter*], described by Allan Jones in his Stop Me... column [*Take 144, May*]. My recollections are as follows. I was head of promo for Chrysalis at the time and a bus was organised to take us all down to Brighton for the gig. Also on that particular day the company decided to hold the one and only gathering of the Chrysalis Wine Tasting Club - not a great idea in hindsight. We all had membership cards and, as nobody spat, consequently we were all arseholed by the time we boarded the coach. I spent the whole journey canoodling with one of the girls from accounts and if my memory serves me correctly when we got to the gig I walked

twice around the Top Rank Ballroom, made romantic overtures to another Chrysalis employee (female) and suggested we go back to her place in London thereby missing the gig and spending £29 on a cab, which was an awful lot of money in those days, believe me.

I then (sort of) remember staggering out onto the streets at some ungodly hour and somehow making my way to Chelsea where I lived and coming up with some pathetic excuses to my live-in girlfriend. Anyway, thanks for reigniting another treasured memory in my addled brain.

Phil Long, via email

Er, thanks for sharing that memory with us, Phil. I can only presume the dinner was in the cat by the time you got home. - Allan

WHO MADE ME

I really enjoyed the reminiscences of Who fans in "We Were There" [*Take 143, April*]. Last Saturday night at North Harbour Stadium, Auckland, New Zealand, after decades of waiting I finally fulfilled my ultimate triumvirate of live gigs: Zep, the Who and the Stones.

The Who were fantastic. Kicked off with "I Can't Explain", "The Seeker", "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere" and the gems followed. Pete's guitar playing was astonishing, a master at work, and Roger Daltrey delivered on vocals, getting stronger as the show progressed. The crowd was superb, right into it, the sound and visuals were excellent with Pete and Rog commanding a great rapport with the audience.

Songs of the night were "Behind Blue Eyes" and an

Pavement: once heard, not forgotten



incredibly powerful rendition of "See Me Feel Me"/ "Listening To You". I've paid my dues at hundreds of gigs, but have never experienced such a surge of energy as Townsend hammered out those chords.

It was one of the greatest gigs of my life. A bargain, the best I've ever had.

Dave Jenkins, Wellington, New Zealand

PAVEMENT? WOWEE ZOWEE!

I love *Uncut*, clearly the best music mag out there, bar none. Your magazines are so chock-full of great stuff that I have to save them to re-read at some later date. The April 2008 (that's right, 2008) issue has been up in my Master Bath next to my "throne" for the last 10 months or so. A perfect example of how your magazine is just filled with great stuff (the Stones, The Beatles and even Michael Nesmith, my favourite Monkee), plus, quite honestly, a bunch of bands I am not really too familiar with (Bauhaus, Kim Deal and Super Furry Animals among others).

For some reason, when I kept opening up the magazine for my daily read, it kept opening up to the page on Pavement. I kept reading about what a great band they were and how they were a 'bands' band'.

Although I am a consummate collector and lover of music (my personal collection includes over 10,000 discs), I had actually never gotten into Stephen Malkmus or Pavement. While searching through a local music shop, I came across the double CD of *Wowee Zowee*, from 1995. Immediately, my mind went back to my favourite *Uncut* issue, and I knew I had to get it.

I am so glad I did. Disc to disc, the CD is phenomenal (I really like the reference in your mag to the song "Emotional Trash" as a cousin to "The Father Of A Sister Of A Thought" (very clever!). Since then, I have purchased every existing 'official' release (and some not so official) of Malkmus and Pavement. I have now moved onto The Fall (after reading how Mark E Smith feels that Pavement totally ripped him off) and I have been further evaluating Kim Deal and The Pixies.

My pile of *Uncut* mags continues to grow... the impact of that is that my CD collection continues to grow accordingly! Thanks so much for turning me onto some GREAT music!

Chris Aug, Connecticut

LOWELL WRITES UM EASY

I agree with Adam Sweeting's reappraisal of Little Feat's *Dixie Chicken* [*Uncut Classics*, Take 143, April]: this superb album does indeed represent the band at its peak. The sleeve of the original gave the address of the Little Feat fan club, the Naked Snake Pub Club. I wrote off with some questions and was thrilled to receive a tiny handwritten postcard from Little Feat mainman Lowell George himself [shown below]. Depicting a hot turkey sandwich and postmarked Topanga, California, November 6, 1973, it reads as follows:

To try and answer all your questions on the back of a hot turkey sandwich may be somewhat difficult.

Neon Park is a local Hollywood artist who I shared living space with two years ago. I'm glad you like his recollecting covers.

I've recorded with lotsa other bands but not toured (ask [legendary producer] Richard Perry).

And the flute player [on Juliette] was me.

Juanita [referred to as "my sweet torpedo" on "Fat Man In The Bathtub"] (Spanish spelling) is a weed.

Yours,

Lowell

Bob Johnstone, via email

Brilliant. Do any other readers have examples of similar correspondence? We'd love you to send them in.

-Allan



HOT TURKEY SANDWICH



WONDERFUL RADIO LONDON

Thanks for your Radio London pirate radio feature [Take 144, May]. It brought back some memories, in particular being stuck in a wet field at school camp for a week in 1967! It was parents' visiting day on Sunday and my mum and dad not only brought along a transistor radio so I could listen to Radio London in our tent, but also a package that had arrived from the 'Big L' itself.

Inside was a signed Small Faces album which I'd won by correctly predicting that "Here Comes The Nice" would enter the Fab 40 at No 17! That certainly cheered me up and I've still got the album, a treasured item indeed.

Thanks also for your *London Pride* free CD. Being a born-and-bred Londoner and having lived in Cricklewood for most of my life, I appreciated the Joe Strummer song, which I hadn't heard before. Great tune!

Kyp Koumi, Cricklewood, London

If you liked "Willesden To Cricklewood" you should check out *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*. -Allan

HOW THE GUN CLUB KEPT FIRING

Thanks for the recent feature on The Gun Club [*Uncut Classics*, Take 142, March], one of my fave '80s bands along with The Replacements and Hüsker Dü (and OK, I admit it, REM). *Fire Of Love* may have the best Gun Club songs ("Sex Beat", "Preaching The Blues" etc), but for my money *Miami* and *The Las Vegas Story* were better LPs.

On *Vegas*, "Walkin' With The Beast" and "The Stranger In Our Town" keep the beastly blues going but add more lyrically, while remaining dark as hell. Who could forget "Fire Of Love" or "Texas Serenade" on *Miami*? How about that version of "Run Through The Jungle"! Surely they deserve a cover and a feature article (followed by some Mats, Dü and REM!).

Nick Moller, Mellow in Manila

ROSES IN FULL BLOOM

Today, as I write, it feels like the first day of spring. The Mediterranean sun is streaming in through the study windows and the cats are following the sun round the balcony.

And meanwhile, inside, instead of finishing the translation I'm meant to be working on, I'm writing to *Uncut*. Just to say thank you for your Stone Roses interview in the April issue. Thanks to that, spring has sprung inside, too and I'm listening again to the compilation album I bought years and years ago, and, for the first time in weeks, there's a smile on my face and a song in my heart.

Uncut has introduced me to many contemporary delights - unoriginally I'm going to mention Fleet Foxes from 2008 - and many hidden treasures from the rock'n'roll vaults.

But it has also reminded me what great music I have sitting here unloved and unlistened to. Like the

Roses, who were part of the soundtrack to my

last couple of years in London at the arse end of Thatcher's '80s. Them and the totally untalented series of bands I knocked around Camden Town and Kentish Town with.

So, I needed to get smiling again and remembering how positively uplifting rock'n'roll can be at times, how it can take you out of the pits and leave you on the peaks. Just as Ian Brown and co have done this sunny morning.

And, while we're on the subject, can anyone find a better couple of lines than "Kiss me where the sun don't shine/The past was yours but the future's mine" [from "She Bangs The Drums"] that sum up how magically

dumb the greatest rock'n'roll is? The only other contender for me is The Ramones' "The KKK Took My Baby Away".

Thanks once again for putting a smile on this wrinkled, cynical and world-weary face.

Nick Rawlinson, Barcelona

I'm touched, Nick, that *Uncut* was able to bring some sunshine and smiles into your life. Makes the job seem worthwhile. -Allan

FIRST CUTS

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO UNCUT

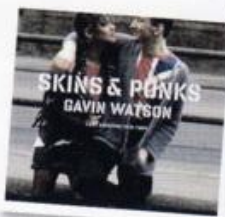
Pure UNCUT

Dylan! Live!

In case it's somehow slipped your minds, **Dylan** begins an eight-date UK tour, beginning in Sheffield on April 24.

This was England

Welcome reprint of **Skins & Punks - Lost Archives** 1978-1985, Gavin Watson's long out-of-print collection of photography documenting his teenage life in High Wycombe.



Dude, where's my ska?

Most of **The Specials** kick off their five-date London residency at the O2 Academy, Brixton, on May 6. In other reunion news, The Jesus Lizard play the HMV Forum on May 11. Yowza.

Party on...in Somerset

Book your chalet for **All Tomorrow's Parties** at Butlin's, Minehead, from May 8-10. Devo, Spiritualized and Beirut are among the lineup. Info: www.atpfestival.com

How (not) to get ahead in rock...

Svengali is an internet-only sitcom, about the attempts of a would-be music mogul from Wales trying to break his awful band in London. *Smack The Pony's* Sally Phillips co-stars. **YouTube keywords:** svengali episode one

Nurse, the screens!

As the final season of **ER** draws to a close, watch George Clooney return to the show to reprise his role as good ol' Doctor Doug Ross. More 4 on Thursday, May 14.

Conchords fly again

After, oh, far too long, our favourite deadpan New Zealand singer/songwriting duo return to BBC Four for Season 2 of **Flight Of The Conchords**. Airs from Friday, May 15.

The Mod masterpiece is back

The stage play of **Quadrophenia** starts a four-month national tour at the Birmingham Hippodrome on May 19. **Pete Townshend** discusses his magnum opus on page 42.

Island At 50

Island Records celebrates its 50th birthday this month with, among other things, a weighty coffee table book, *Keep On Running*, published on May 21. There's also a TV doc and a series of gigs. Check www.ents24.com for tickets.

Ladies And Gentlemen, We Are Shooting In Space

It's the second greatest TV programme of the last five years (yep, really that good). And now, the first half of **Battlestar Galactica's** final season lands on DVD this month from Universal.



The Stones sit in awe of Howlin' Wolf on *Shindig!*, May 1965

OPENING SHOT

Woke up this morning... Changed British music forever

Keith Richards and a cast of superstars tell the story of Blues Britannia

WORDS by MICHAEL BONNER

"I was a dopey, spotty 17-year-old from Dartford who wanted to be Muddy Waters," says Keith Richards. "And there were a lot of us. In a way, it was very pathetic. But in a way, it was very heartwarming."

It might be hard today to think of Keith Richards as remotely dopey – or, indeed, 17. But Richards and, soon, a generation of musicians, had fallen in love with the blues. In 1964, The Rolling Stones' cover of Willie Dixon's "Little Red Rooster" became the first blues song to reach No 1 in the UK, and between 1964 and '65, the

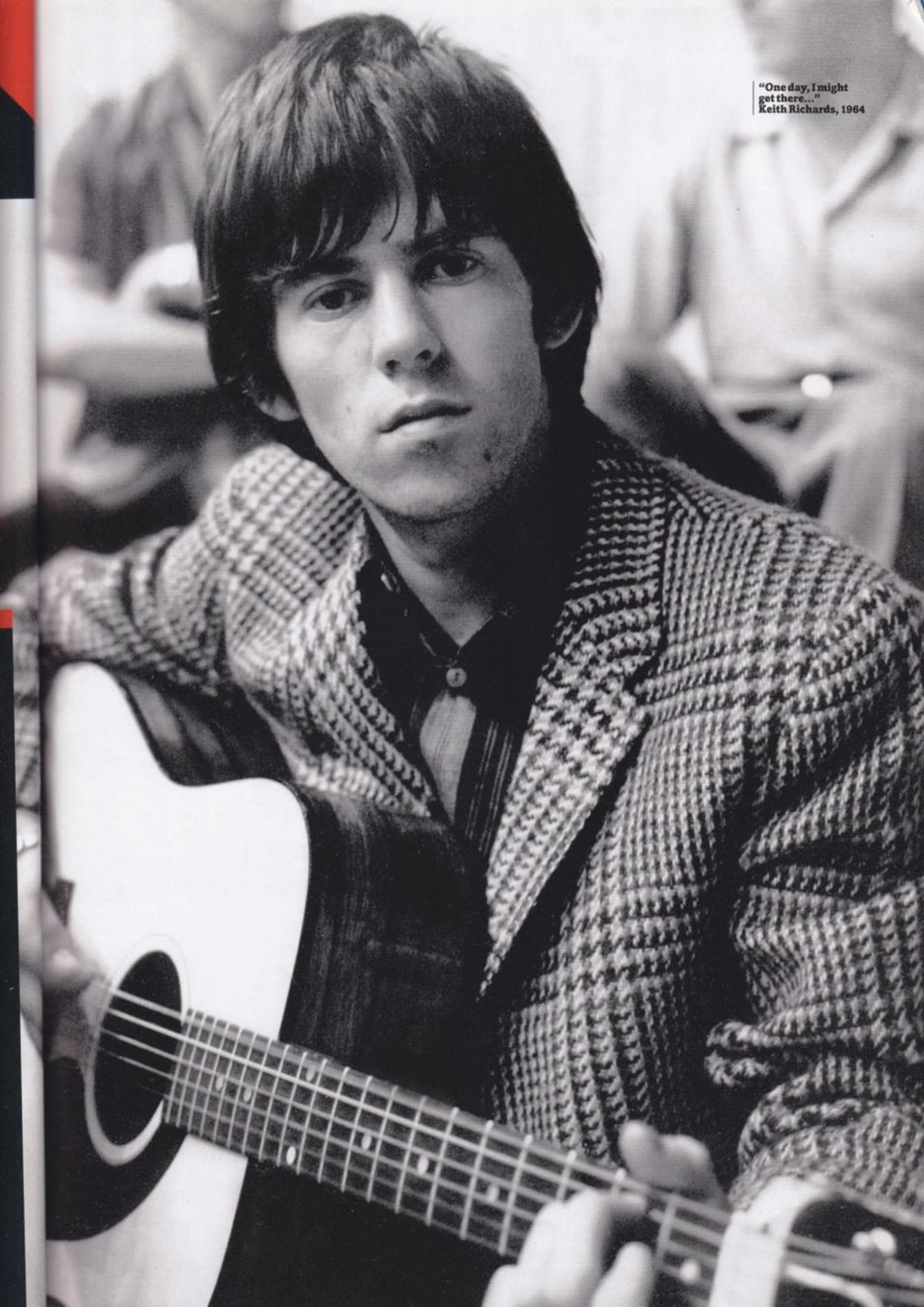
Stones recorded over 20 songs at Chess Records, at 2120 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. On June 10, 1964, their first day recording at Chess, Dixon, Chuck Berry and Buddy Guy all came down to the Stones' sessions, curious to learn quite what connected these white, middle-class boys from the English suburbs to their music.

"They wanted to know how we were doing it, and why we wanted to do it," says Richards. "Why do you want to play like me?" Because it's very good stuff. And one day, I might get there..."

CONTINUES OVER »



"One day, I might
get there..."
Keith Richards, 1964



Can white men play the blues? Or, perhaps, why would well brought-up white men from the Home Counties even want to play blues? That's the starting point for *Blues Britannia*, the latest in BBC Four's series of documentaries about the cultural impact of British music.

Blues Britannia follows a remarkable narrative sweep that sees the UK scene grow beyond its origins in sweaty west London clubs to the stage of Madison Square Garden in little more than a decade. Its hefty subject matter takes in some major *Uncut* icons: the Stones, The Yardbirds, Cream and Led Zeppelin.

Inevitably, it's hard to contain a story of this size successfully in two hours. The first half of the programme, dealing with the arrival in the UK of the blues in the late '50s, is arguably more satisfying. It's partly because the film draws on archive footage of postwar Britain—a gloomy place where, according to Richards, "You couldn't get any sweets,"—and the photographs of Val Wilmer, a teenage blues fan who documented the UK debuts of many of her heroes. But it also finds much meat in the apparent incongruity that led doxy, spotty 17-year-olds to become so passionate about the blues of the American Deep South.

"Coming out of rationing, I imagine life didn't offer much that was exciting," explains *Blues Britannia* director Chris Rodley. "They got into the blues because there was something real, authentic, exciting and interesting about it, and something they weren't—or perceived they weren't—going to get in their own lives."

"Howlin' Wolf?" echoes Dreja in the programme. "What is a Howlin' Wolf when you live in Surbiton?" "Elmore James," says Bill Wyman. "The sky is crying, look at the tears roll down the streets." Muddy Waters. "I'm going down to Louisiana somewhere behind the sun." It's magical stuff.

"These bluesmen, they're talking about getting laid, and there's me studying what they're doing," explains Keith Richards. "But I ain't getting laid. I have something missing in my life. Obviously, to be a bluesman, I have to see what this 'lemon juice' is running down your leg. And these guys are actually living a life, they're not studying, they just are. How do you become what he is?"

Richards dominates the first half of *Blues Britannia*. According to Rodley, he was one of the first musicians they approached to take part when work began in March 2008. But, "in the end, we filmed the Keith interview quite late," admits Rodley. "There was a worry that when we put him in, because he would look so different, whether he'd blow the whole thing apart. He's still living it and most of the others aren't."

And it's certainly true that when compared to Richards—with the attendant collection of skull jewellery and Interesting Things dangling from his hair—urbane and well-spoken figures like Dreja, Manfred Mann's Paul Jones and Tom McGuinness look less like musicians and more like suburban dental surgeons.

In 1969, on their album *Bread On The Night*, poetry band The Liverpool Scene wrote a parody of the '60s British blues boom. "I've Got Those Fleetwood Mac, Chicken Shack, John Mayall Can't Fail Blues". The lines "From the deep, deep south of the River Thames/The bottleneck guitar is the latest trend", poked wry fun at the way the blues had found such unlikely champions.

The love for the music was, however, completely sincere. "If you heard someone blew a harmonica in Ealing, you were there," says Dreja. "Or if someone had an album you didn't, you'd go to Claygate or wherever." "Brian Jones, big collector," says Richards. "And

that's one of the reasons I hit on him in the first place. You'd stick guys up for their record collections."

One of Rodley's coups is in securing prime archive footage, mostly of package tours organised and paid for by jazz trumpeter Chris Barber. Barber brought to the UK a number of blues greats, starting with Sister Rosetta Tharp in 1957, with Muddy Waters, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee the following year.

The hub for the blues in Britain was the Ealing Jazz Club, run by Alexis Korner, an alumnus of Barber's band. Korner opened the club in March, 1962, and, as Paul Jones remembers, "On a Saturday night, you could see most of the people who would constitute the first British blues boom."

Set against this, the Stones themselves began to move the blues overground: "We were the only young

that wanted that. They wanted to swing off the rafters and go crazy bananas. Isn't that what the blues is, as well? Even when I saw it played in ramshackle clubs in the southern states of America, there was that same electricity. We were white kids playing to white kids, but I sense there was the same vibe going on, thousands of miles apart."

Chris Dreja's logic may seem reasonable enough, but within three years of "Little Red Rooster", a second wave of bands emerged with radically different ideas of how the blues should be played. It's perhaps inevitable, with so many different characters vying for attention and so many strands peeling off, that the second half of *Blues Britannia* succeeds less well; there's just too much going on to anchor the narrative.

Conspicuously, it lacks the input of a pivotal figure from the period: Eric Clapton.

Rodley suggests Clapton might currently be involved in another film on the '60s blues explosion, which nixed his involvement with this programme. But his absence is problematic on a narrative level. Maybe more than anyone, Clapton represents the contradictory, almost schizophrenic impulses in the second wave of British blues bands. According to Dreja in *Blues*

Britannia, Clapton left The Yardbirds because he was uncomfortable with the poppier direction the band were taking with "For Your Love" (March, 1965). He joined John Mayall's Bluesbreakers for their second album, "the Beano album" (July 1966), which mostly consisted of covers of blues standards. But, with the record barely in the shops, Clapton left Mayall to join up with Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker in Cream.

"We were trying to use the language of the blues to create a new kind of music, nothing to do with Chicago or the Delta," says Bruce. Certainly, their psyched-up version of the blues was almost unrecognisable from, say, Mayall's more traditional take.

Purists, similarly, might feel a cold shiver down their spine at the mention of Led Zeppelin, who could also be charged with bastardising the blues (and are also notable by their absence here). But Zeppelin's success is proof of how extraordinarily adaptable the blues was. Rodley describes it as emergent evolution, "whereby there are fits and starts" in the development of a form.

For all the radical changes, Jack Bruce insists it's important to remember the point of the music.

"The blues is a living, breathing expression of people's suffering and desire," he concludes. "It's a woman, it's a drum, it's everything like that. It's much more important than anything you can sell or put a label on. Much more. It's humanity itself." **1**

Blues Britannia airs on BBC Four in May



"Bastardising the 12-bar..."
The Yardbirds, 1964, with
Clapton (right) and Chris
Dreja (second right)

"It was our job to pay the blues back. We figured we could pull it, and we did"
— Keith Richards

band doing it, the only sort of real, authentic band," says Bill Wyman. "And doing it in jazz clubs. And then we got banned because they didn't like us. They thought we weren't authentic enough. And then we moved into ballrooms and created a new music for England."

The tipping point for the first wave of British blues bands came in November, 1964, when the Stones took the blues beyond the Thames Delta and into the charts, where "Little Red Rooster" spent a week at No 1.

"We must have been wearing brass balls that day when we decided to put that out," laughs Richards.

"The producer said you'll kill your career if you put that out as a single," adds Wyman. "It could ruin you. We said, what they hell, it's what we believe in."

"It was our job to pay back," confirms Richards. "I think we figured we could pull it, and we did."

Richards also talks about his desire to reproduce in the studio the same techniques used by his heroes.

"Where to put the microphone, get the sound of the room," he explains. "Where John Lee Hooker would put his foot. Put the microphone a little further back, because you could hear on [Robert] Johnson's stuff where they'd deliberately put the microphone back to get more guitar so that he's wailing over the top..."

But such fidelity was not observed for long. "I know we bastardised the 12-bar quite badly," admits Chris Dreja. "And put in a lot of power chords and crescendos. But we were also feeding off an audience

AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Chrissie Hynde

The Anglophile Pretender on firebombing McDonald's, the state of Joe Strummer's squat and brewing up the perfect cuppa...

Everyone was forming bands," Chrissie Hynde recalls from her hometown of Akron, Ohio. "I guess I was the last to succeed."

At first glance, you could certainly be forgiven for wondering where it all went right for Chrissie Hynde. After relocating to London in 1973, she found herself working in Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's SEX shop. The perfect time and place, you might think, to launch a music career. But although she was involved with a number of musical endeavours – including playing in an early incarnation of The Damned – she looked in danger of simply ending up as a bit-player on the London punk scene.

Instead, she's entering her 31st remarkable year with The Pretenders, and showing no sign of slowing down. Or, indeed, tempering her often provocative opinions. Today, for instance, she happily restokes the controversy she caused back in 1989, when she called for the firebombing of McDonald's. But Hynde, of course, has always been this forthright. But, conspicuously, she's also someone who finds herself uncomfortable with celebrity culture.

"Hanging out of limousines doesn't

make me feel right," she confirms. "But I'm not that much of an artist that I'm always travelling around with a guitar. I'm more of a bum. Digging what's out there."

So here's Hynde, happy to sit back to take your questions on Dylan, Morrissey and the perils of making tea for Brian Eno...

You're known as a real Anglophile. Was London a dingy disappointment when you got there in the early '70s?

Damian, Bury St. Edmunds
I was Alice in Wonderland. I was enthralled with it endlessly. It's true everything was in black-and-white. But I loved the simplicity of it. It hadn't gone into a vulgar consumer society yet. Oh yeah, everything about it was a thrill for me. Putting the shilling in the meter for a bath. I lived in pretty dingy places. But to me they were just glorious.

How important is your vegetarianism to you? Has your friendship with Morrissey strengthened that? And did you enjoy recording with him?

Peter Finan, Howarth, W Yorks
My vegetarianism informs everything I do, and has ever since 1969. It's mainly

the reason I even do music, that I have this higher goal in mind. And Morrissey has reinforced the message over the years. The great thing about that day recording with him [Hynde cut "Shame Is The Name" with Morrissey, the b-side to his 2009 single "I'm Throwing My Arms Around Paris"] was that I got to stand in his little vocal booth he had created for himself, and see all the little icons and photos he had around. It was great to stand in his shoes for a few minutes.

What was it like kissing Jackie Wilson?

Jim Brown, Nottingham
It continues to take me higher and higher! I saw him back in Akron when I was 14. Someone from his organisation would pull a girl out to dance onstage. I was sitting right at the front with my girlfriend. I was trying to hide, but being the only white girls we stuck out like a sore thumb. It probably was the first time I went onstage. I remember he had big wet lips and he was sweaty. I guess it felt pretty good, but I was mortified. It took a few hundred Pretenders shows to get used to the spotlight.

What do you remember of the 1970 Kent State shootings?

Andrea Nettleton, Decatur, GA
I remember it crystal clear. Nixon had just invaded Cambodia. I was on my way to take my portfolio to my art-class [Hynde was a student at Kent State's Art School at the time]. A couple of days earlier we'd burned down the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] building. The National Guard had surrounded this burned-down building. They were only 19-year-olds, same as us acid-dropping hippies. They were all pointing their rifles at the students, who were telling them to fuck off of our campus. And for some reason they had loaded rifles, and killed four of us. I sat down and refused to leave. I had to be

STAR QUESTION



Where did you learn to dance – and who taught you? Ali Campbell, UB40

He's trying it on, isn't he? I certainly learned from hanging out with UB40 not to dance on the on-beat, like most of us do in Ohio. I learned from James Brown's moves, when I was a teenager. I didn't get very far. And of course the grebo dance – I'm trying to export that to America.

carried off the campus. They shut the campus down, and I hitch-hiked around Canada. The clock on the wall was talking, and I'd very soon be out of there.

Was it difficult being a rock critic without owning a stereo?

Penny, London
Ha! Not when you're blagging it like I was! [Hynde briefly wrote for the NME in the '70s] I know that we're famous as journalists for occasionally reviewing records we haven't quite got round to listening to. No, I tried not to cheat. I've always had a lot of time for the English music press. Even if it's about me, I'd rather have a stinking review that's got humour and insight than something that's glib and too serious and self-righteous. Reading the NME in the one Akron drugstore that took it increased my need to get to England.

Do the deaths of James Honeyman-Scott and Pete Dinklage [original Pretenders who died in 1982 and 1983 respectively] haunt your music? CONTINUES OVER

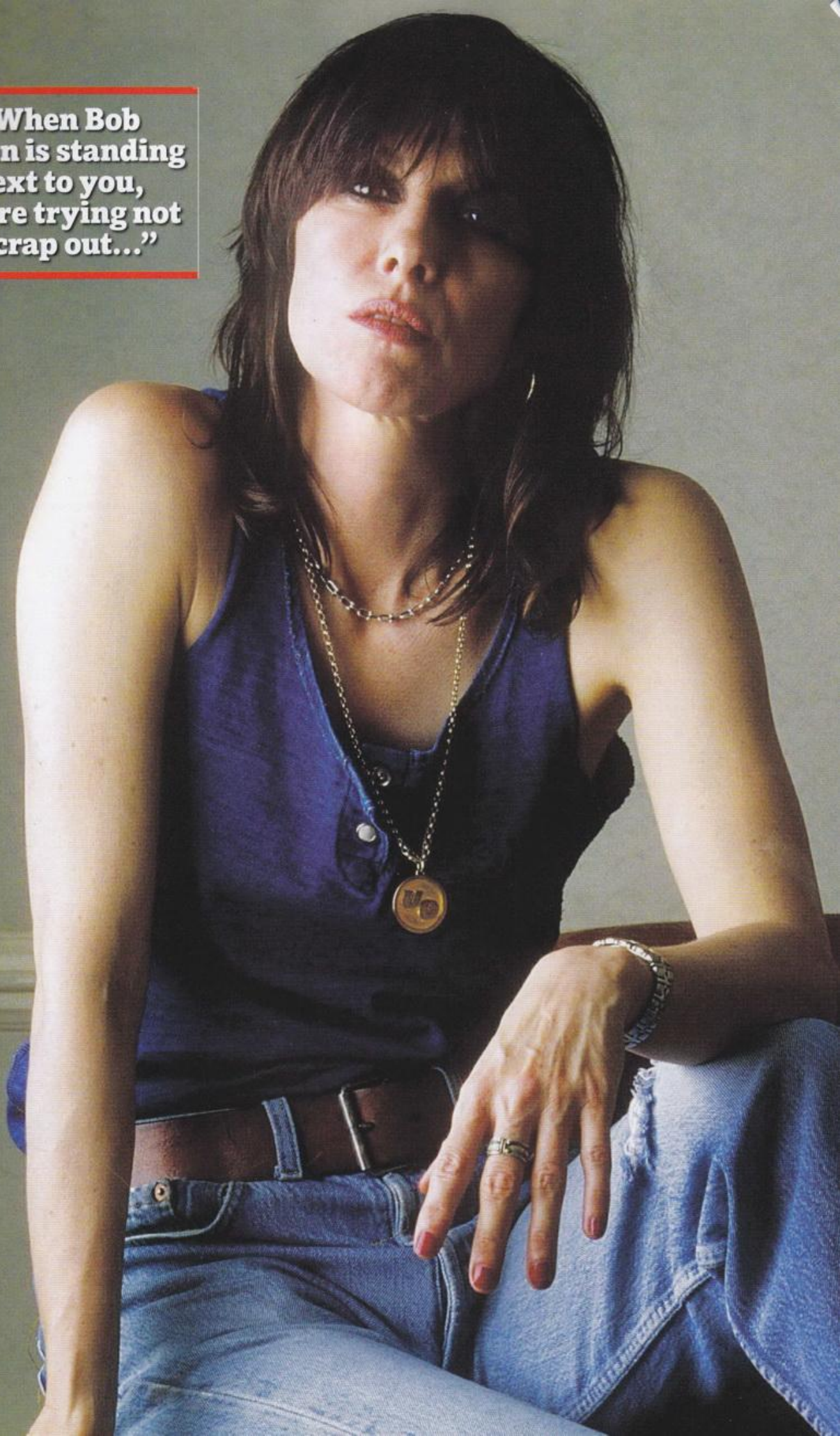
STAR QUESTION

What does Chrissie think of Jonathan Horowitz's painting/portrait of her with the quote, "I hope the Muslims win!" Malcolm McLaren

How is the old steamer? I haven't seen it. The quote was something I said onstage in Memphis in response to something some girl in the front row said. But I'm not talking about fundamentalism and terrorism – although terrorism does work when no-one's listening. But that's a tricky thing to talk about, because everyone's hysterical. What I was responding to was the way the whole Islamic population was being targeted by the West. That was my disappointment with what was going on. You have to really be in the heartland of America to feel that isolation.



**"When Bob
Dylan is standing
next to you,
you're trying not
to crap out..."**



Or does that all seem a long time ago now?

Kevin Dent, Chigwell

It's a long time ago, but they're gone. And every night when I'm onstage, we always dedicate a song and commemorate them. They were the ones who invented The Pretenders' sound, with me and Martin [Chambers,

drums], and we've always tried to stay true to that. I don't know if it haunts me. But I miss those guys. I was devastated when it happened. I was gutted.

How do you make the perfect cup of tea?

Ann, Leytonstone

Make sure the water's boiling. Use a teapot. Put the tea-bags in, and leave it for one minute. I don't need fancy tea – PG Tips, Liptons, as long as it's black and strong. It was in England that I developed a taste for it. I went over to Brian Eno's with [legendary NME writer] Nick Kent in 1973, and Brian said, "Would you like to make a pot of tea for us?" I had no idea how. I remember feeling so ashamed. Ever since then, I've always been very conscientious not to make a weak cup of tea. I was out of my depth in those days. The first time someone handed me a pair of scissors and cardboard to roll a joint, I started to cut up the hash with the scissors...

How did you like Brazil?

Juan, Rio de Janeiro

I had gone over there on a festival, and

fell in love with the place. I got lost in Brazil's street-life, that whole pageantry. Sitting at the back of the public buses, watching the day go by. That lower level's where I feel comfortable. The isolation of the suburbs here in Akron doesn't sit right with me. You know, I'm single. I'd rather be in the mix.

You went to raves in the Acid House days. How was it for you?

Sarah, Wimbledon

Oh! That was one of the great moments. Because the rave scene wasn't about getting drunk and violent and snogging each other. I don't remember waking up in someone else's bed and wondering how I got there in those days. It was just about music and dancing. I didn't go to so many of the ones out in the country where you'd go to a phonebox and find out where it was. But down in places like the Ministry Of Sound, I had my fair share. All the different scenes are informed by the drugs people are taking, and I was in it as far as Ecstasy goes. But you've gotta be careful. A lot of people don't come back. I've got friends going back to the late-'60s who were sectioned and never came out. And I've buried enough people.

When you joked that you'd firebombed McDonald's, were you treated like a terrorist?

Stacey Jones, Brixton

I said I'd firebomb McDonald's at a press conference for Greenpeace [in 1989]. They asked this panel of rock stars what concessions we'd make for the environment. They were saying they'd stop using hairspray and stuff, and it was winding me up. So I stepped up and said I'd firebomb McDonald's,

STAR QUESTION



Chrissie first met Joe Strummer in his basement flat in Notting Hill. What songs did she play him?

Antony Genn, The Hours

I do remember getting together with Joe, and playing stuff like Ann Peebles' "I Can't Stand The Rain". Everyone was hanging out in squats, smoking a lot of dope, trying to start bands. I think by then Joe had already hooked up with Paul [Simon] and Mick [Jones]. I'd been trying to write songs with Mick, he brought Paul down, and they were on the same page. I was always the odd one out, because I was a Yank. They had Mott The Hoople albums. I had Bobby Womack.

which broke the ice. And then the next day in Milton Keynes a McDonald's was firebombed, so I got the credit for that. Still one of my personal goals in life is to see the last McDonald's burn to the ground. I don't know if I was treated like a terrorist. I think that's just being a conscientious citizen, criticising establishments that are destroying everything. Anything that pushes anyone to firebomb a McDonald's – you know, I was glad. I don't want anyone to get hurt. But I want them to stop killing those beautiful cows. The kinder, gentler McDonald's ads are a big con. But a lot of people don't mind being conned, so good luck to 'em.

What was it like to share a stage with Bob Dylan?

Andrew Mills, Cambridge

Surreal. Even when you're on first-name terms it's hard to get over being such a fan. Bob Dylan is standing next to you – you're trying not to crap out. He's got a sneaky, wry sense of humour. He's one of the great humourists of all time. I wouldn't realise how funny something he'd said to me was, 'til the next day.

INTERVIEW: NICK HASTED

STAR QUESTION



I just wondered if you think that carnivores who are concerned about impending global catastrophe are aware of the massive contribution to greenhouse gases by the meat industry?

Captain Sensible

We're making them aware of it all the time, yeah. People who've been many years in human rights know the whole animal kingdom's part of the environmental issue. But the meat-eaters have tried to ignore that. It's good to hear from the Captain. I remember he and I stumbling into the Roxy club pretty drunk one night, getting onstage and doing "Me and Mrs. Jones" a cappella. They threw us out...

The Pretenders, 1979. Below: with Clapton and Dylan, 1984. Above left: brushes with PETA demo, 2000



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

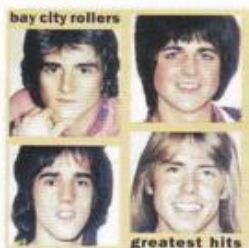


MY LIFE IN MUSIC

The Hold Steady

Craig Finn raises a glass to St Joe Strummer and his other heroes – including Billy Joel!

THE FIRST RECORD I OWNED


GREATEST HITS 1977
The Bay City Rollers

The TV companies put The Bay City Rollers on a Saturday morning cartoon show over here when I was five or six. I was just the right age for that stuff and I went out and bought this record at a Target store. In fact, the first few records I bought were Rollers ones. They were a kooky bunch, cartoon-like in a similar way to The Monkees, but they had great sing-a-long choruses. It was fun for a kid on a Saturday.

THE RECORD THAT MADE ME START A BAND


LET IT BE 1984
The Replacements

Growing up in Minneapolis, the biggest band for me was The Replacements. It was the fall of my eighth grade when *Let It Be* came out. Eighth grade is such a difficult time, but songs like "Unsatisfied" and "Sixteen Blue" really talk about the scary parts of being that age. My first band just played covers, including songs by The Replacements. They were real hometown heroes that we looked up to.

THE RECORD THAT MADE ME BECOME A SONGWRITER


BORN TO RUN 1975
Bruce Springsteen

There was a real cinematic, epic quality to these songs. They weren't necessarily confessional for Springsteen, but were full of characters and strange scenes. And that approach showed me that you didn't have to write a song just about you and your little problems; it could be something much bigger. It could all happen like a movie. "Thunder Road" is the song I wish I'd written. It's still the one that gives me chills.

THE RECORD THAT MAKES ME KIND OF EMBARRASSED


52ND STREET 1978
Billy Joel

I was reading the Slash biog recently and he was talking about meeting Billy Joel. He said he was impressed with the fact he was such a fuck-up. I know his records are kind of schmaltzy, but my parents had this record when I was young, and for a guy growing up in Minneapolis, Billy Joel was real New York. In my head, that's what I thought New York was like. His late-period stuff is really awful, though!

MY QUINTESSENTIALLY ENGLISH ALBUM


THE KINKS ARE THE VILLAGE GREEN PRESERVATION SOCIETY 1968
The Kinks

I'm a huge fan of The Kinks. It wasn't just Ray Davies' lyrics, it was the melodies, too. They're so simple and super-catchy. There was something that made sense to me the more time I spent here. The best artists write about the people and places they know, which is just what Ray Davies does. Springsteen is the same.

THE LP THAT REMINDS ME OF A NIGHT ON THE TOWN


WHATEVER PEOPLE SAY I AM, THAT'S WHAT I'M NOT 2006
Arctic Monkeys

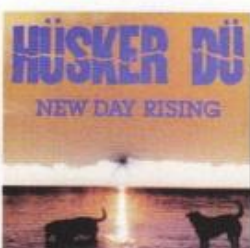
For Alex Turner to have so much talent at that age is astounding. This LP is all about a night on the town, a sense of expectation and how it all falls apart. That's from the viewpoint of being his age. Now, when I go out, I don't have to fall apart and no-one's going to lose their shoe. At his age, a night out is wrapped up in so much expectation that it just gets crazy.

THE LP THAT REMINDS ME OF LOSING MY VIRGINITY


THE STONE ROSES 1989
The Stone Roses

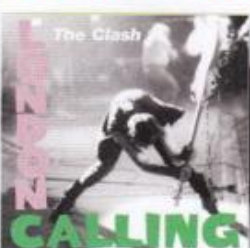
My first sexual encounter was to The Stone Roses. I wasn't super-aware of British indie music before then, but the Roses singles that started coming over to the US sparked my interest. I was in Minneapolis, about to move to Boston, and the posters were up everywhere. Before that I'd been very suspicious of British music. I even refused to listen to the first Pixies records. Being on 4AD, I thought they were from England.

THE REASON I PLAY GUITAR


NEW DAY RISING 1985
Hüsker Dü

They just made so much noise. I used to go see Hüsker Dü a lot in my teens and those shows were deafening. They were very workmanlike on stage. They'd just put their heads down and blast through it all, whereas The Replacements were sort of shambling. I'd go home after a Hüsker Dü gig, plug in my little amp, play a chord and then think, "Why doesn't it sound like them?" I still haven't been able to do it.

THE RECORD THAT MADE ME WANT TO LEAVE MINNEAPOLIS


LONDON CALLING 1979
The Clash

That line in "Lost In The Supermarket" – "We had a hedge back home in the suburbs / Over which I never could see" – taps into the idea that there's something huge out there. For a suburban kid, it felt like somewhere you couldn't get to. The Clash sang about strange places like Brixton, and Sten guns in Knightsbridge. A very romantic image. Maybe they were the reason I wanted to leave home for something else.

THE RECORD THAT REMINDS ME OF NEW BEGINNINGS


RECKONING 1984
REM

Reckoning was just incredible. I loved the way it sounded, sort of deliberately murky and blurry. I transferred schools to a private school in ninth grade, where there were more creative kids. So I met new friends and heard a lot of cool new records. That's when someone played me REM. I'd read they were influenced by The Byrds and the Velvets, but they didn't sound like them. They felt like something totally new.

WELCOME TO UNCUT

SCHOOL OF SEVEN BELLS

Ding dong! Meet the new superstars of shoegaze!

Benjamin Curtis is choosing his words carefully. Two years ago, the guitarist quit muscular space-rockers Secret Machines to form School Of Seven Bells with identical twins Alejandra and Claudia Deheza. "The difference between this and Secret Machines? Everything is more of an open opportunity now. It really is a blank canvas. There are no concrete roles. Not discounting [Secret Machines'] way of working because that's valid, too... But I'm not really into it any more."

Consequently, it's impossible to tell from listening to School Of Seven Bells' molten, dreamlike debut who's playing what and how. Curtis takes this as a compliment. "It's distracting if you can hear identifiable instruments poking out. We just want it to sound like music." Their forebears are Cocteau Twins and My Bloody Valentine, the shoegazing template updated with purposeful dance beats and spell-chant vocals—as you'll see when they play Club Uncut at The Great Escape Festival, May 14-16.

The album title, *Alpinisms*, has significance: School Of Seven Bells claim inspiration from the work of French para-surrealist author René Daumal, particularly the novel *Mount Analogue*, in which he defines alpinism as, "The art of climbing mountains by confronting the greatest dangers with the greatest prudence."

"His philosophy was that you can transpose that really delicate and careful approach into anything you do," says Curtis. "We felt like it related to what we were trying to achieve with our record."

The band are based in Brooklyn, spiritual as well as geographical neighbours to Gang Gang Dance and High Places. So why are these urban artrockers all suddenly worshipping nature? "Maybe it's because we've all reached the point where we have nothing more to say about how crazy shit is. Eventually your mind has to go to some other place... somewhere positive." **SAM RICHARDS**

Ben Curtis with spell-chant vocalists Claudia (left) and Alejandra

I LOVE SCHOOL OF SEVEN BELLS BECAUSE...



"*Alpinisms* is amazing. My friend Benjamin Curtis and his partners Alejandra and Claudia have made a wonderful record..." **Michael Rother, Neu!**

CRYSTAL ANTLERS

Vegetable oil-powered psych-soul-punk!

As befits a band who claim to make a living as chimney sweeps, and whose debut EP was originally sold through their MySpace page, Long Beach psychedelic noise quintet Crystal Antlers exemplify a blend of mischief and enterprise common to underground rock acts since the punk era. Indeed, they're so indie that last summer they drove 10,000 miles across the US on tour in an old school bus converted to run on stolen vegetable oil.

There's more to this lot than just thriftiness, though, as the lurching glory of their debut album proves. Taking 1960s psychedelic garage rock as a starting point, the band (singer and bassist Jonny Bell plus Kevin Stuart, Andrew King, Victor Rodriguez and Damian Edwards) warp it into new and unruly forms. "We all came from punk bands," says Bell, "but always loved Al Green and old soul. So with Crystal Antlers we

were trying to merge classic sounds with something new."

Honing their sound at shows in a local Long Beach steak restaurant, the band became the toast of New York's annual CMJ music festival last year, while the onstage antics of percussionist/go-go dancer Damian 'Sexual Chocolate' Edwards will make them unmissable when they play Club Uncut at the Great Escape Festival, May 14-16. Plus there's a full-length movie in the works. "It's a post-modern tour documentary-slash-horror film," explains Bell. "We've been enlisting random people that we've met on tour to act and we're also writing the score."

The only sour note is the sad decline of their label, veteran US indie Touch And Go, who announced their closure earlier this year. "They were the last ethical fully indie label" laments Bell, "so it feels like the end of an era."

PAT LONG

I LOVE CRYSTAL ANTLERS BECAUSE...



"This is a group Bill Graham would have had a boner for. They'd have played the Fillmores East and West!" **Keith Morris, Black Flag/Circle Jerks**

Punks got soul! Crystal Antlers, with Jonny Bell (right) and Sexual Chocolate (front)





Jason Pierce of
Spiritualized: Uncut
stage headliners

LATITUDE
2009

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE ARE FLOATING IN SUFFOLK...

Spiritualized, Magazine and The Gossip set for Latitude

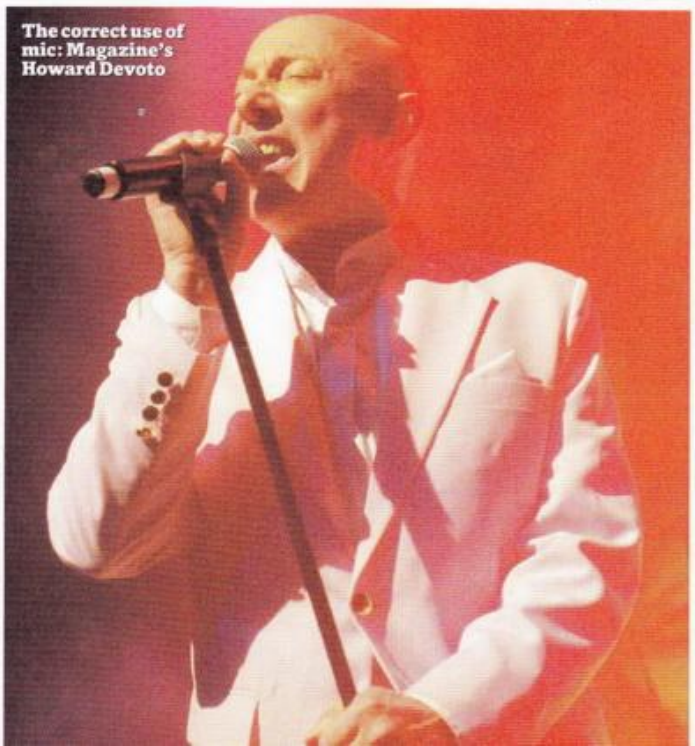
Following on from last month's news that **Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds**, **Grace Jones** and **The Pet Shop Boys** will be headlining the 2009 Latitude Festival, we can now reveal the first batch of acts confirmed to play the Uncut Arena there. This year, our stage will be graced by **Spiritualized**, **The Gossip**, **Newton Faulkner** and **Bat For Lashes** [see interview, facing page]. We're also pleased to announce that the dynamically reformed **Magazine** will also be playing the Uncut Arena at the festival, held between July 16 and 19.

Other new additions to the bill include **Editors** and the resurgent **Doves**, both earning plum spots on the main stage. Elsewhere, the charismatic singer/songwriter/cartoonist **Jeffrey Lewis** looks set to be popping up all over the place, promising a late-night set in the Poetry Arena and a lecture on venerated graphic novel *Watchmen*, of all things. And the first batch of names for the immensely popular comedy stage have come in. They include **Ed Byrne**, **Mark Thomas** and **Sean Hughes**.

As usual, Latitude will take place in the lovely surroundings of Henham Park near Southwold, Suffolk. Tickets are on sale now, with weekend tickets costing £150 each; they're available at www.nme.com/gigs. For the latest news, be sure to visit the official site, www.latitudefestival.co.uk—and remember that, as usual, *Uncut* will be providing extensive round-the-clock coverage of the festival at www.uncut.co.uk.

We'll meet you in the woods, at midnight...

The correct use of
mic: Magazine's
Howard Devoto



Khan-do Latitude:
Bat For Lashes at
the 2007 Festival

BATITUDE!

Bat For Lashes' Natasha Khan reveals her summer plans

Bat For Lashes' spellbinding turn at 2007's Latitude—with Natasha Khan dressed in a skeleton costume and wielding her maracas like a voodoo priestess—was one of that year's major highlights. It's hard to think of a group better suited to Latitude's enchanted glades.

"It's a lovely setting," Khan says, thrilled to be returning. "I remember watching Owen Pallett from Final Fantasy play on this woodland stage at night-time with the painted sheep wandering past. It was a really balmy, sunny evening and as we were walking home, we came across a group of people by the river dressed in white wigs and 18th-century costumes playing strange old instruments and doing ballet..."

It turns out that the glamorously sylph-like Bat For Lashes frontwoman is not only a seasoned festival vet but has suffered a series of festival catastrophes. "One time at Glastonbury we camped next to someone who had a gun," she remembers. "He was nicking everyone's bags. It was pretty scary. Another year, I left my stitches in too long after an operation and I had to go to the Glastonbury ambulance tent and have them ripped out. And at Reading I got stung by a wasp the minute I walked through the gates and suffered a massive allergic reaction..."

This year at Latitude, Khan will be backed by an all-new band, assembled to interpret the ambitious electro-folk vistas of her recent *Two Suns* LP for a live audience. There's Sarah Jones from New Young Pony Club on drums, Charlotte Hatherley (ex-Ash) on guitar and bass, and Ben Christophers on synths and "weird medieval instruments".

"It was difficult to get the new songs arranged and translated into a live show because we're balancing so many different layers, things like electronic beats mixed with orchestral timpanis," says Khan, who recently lived for six months in Brooklyn, drawing inspiration

"I like to keep my costumes spontaneous. For Latitude, some kind of head-dress is in order..."

from the way bands such as Yeasayer and Gang Gang Dance incorporate electronics and tribal beats into a rock band set-up.

While her band grapple with her synthetic symphonies, Khan plans to show off a couple of the more exotic instruments from her collection: the Marxophone—a fretless zither from the early 20th century—and the Phonofiddle. "It's a one-stringed violin amplified by a huge gramophone horn. It sounds like the wailing of a wounded soldier!"

The stage set continues the theme of *Two Suns* album artwork, on which a New York skyline built from candles is juxtaposed against a twilight desert landscape. Khan promises "animal heads, rugs, burlesque lighting and Jesus and Mary statues—a kind of Mexican Day Of The Dead atmosphere."

As for what she'll be wearing this year, that's all dependent upon her mood on the day. "I like to keep the costumes spontaneous but I think I'm going to design some kind of head-dress for the festivals." If it's anything like the magnificent peacock-feather creation she's been sporting in recent photoshoots, it'll need its own roadie.

This year, Khan also has the assurance of a bona fide radio smash in her arsenal. "Daniel" was written in a deliberate attempt to emulate the epic, weird pop of her childhood. "I want to challenge myself and that was my attempt to write a very straightforward, innocent pop song. I sat in my bedroom at three o'clock one morning and tried to write a song that reminded me of how I felt when I first heard 'Running Up That Hill'."

With Kate Bush unlikely to play live again anytime soon, let alone muddy her boots at a festival, Bat For Lashes is a more than adequate substitute. Let's just hope the wasps keep their distance. **SAM RICHARDS**





BEN MARSHALL MEETS

Lars Ulrich

Metallica's motormouth on sex, death and torture.
 "We were, er, loners," he reveals, amazingly

You famously sued Napster and made illegal downloading the single biggest issue in the music business. Any regrets?

Was that us? It seems like different people, a different time. I don't exactly regret it. It's just hard to look back at it almost 10 years later. It seems like a weird dream, 'cos contrary to popular belief I'm actually a really nice person. The amount of flak I took for that blew my fucking mind.

Uncool as it was, you were right, weren't you?

OK, this is tough. Record companies are banks for crazy fucked-up people who couldn't get a loan elsewhere. You take that away; you take away the ability for people like me to make music and for every young band to do so. If record companies are stolen from, they won't be able to sustain the next Arctic Monkeys or the next Franz Ferdinand.

Metallica's subjects—death, depression, violence, suicide, murder, copyright infringement—are these more relevant today than they've ever been?

Now that's a great question. In my mind they've always been relevant. Really, it boils down to this for most people. There's a before. And there's an after. There's before kids and after kids. I think when you're 20 years old and full of nothing but spunk, then of course you're going to live forever. Then you have kids and all of a sudden it's, "Fuck, DEATH!"

How do you feel when you watch CNN and see a tank trundling through Baghdad with Metallica stencilled on the side?

It's definitely a very odd sensation. As someone who is such a committed pacifist, it's very difficult for me to have Metallica music associated with anything warlike. However, I'm proud that Metallica's music helps soldiers get through their, er, difficult times. Just a month ago we spent an afternoon at the army hospital in Washington meeting kids—18, 19 years old—with missing limbs. And they're all huge Metallica fans. Metallica help them in some way, we help them fight and we help them recover. So I don't really have an



“As a pacifist, it's difficult for me to see Metallica's music associated with anything warlike...”

answer to your question 'cos I just don't feel that I have fully wrapped my head around the enormity of the idea.

Even more enormously, how do you feel about your music being a part of Guantanamo Bay's interrogation techniques? Metallica as torture?

Wow. I've heard that too, yes. Er, it's just not something I want to be involved with. Music is supposed to stir up emotions in you that ultimately have a positive effect upon you. So to hear that Metallica's music is involved in that type of stuff—rendition, torture, and all that stuff—is obviously very disturbing and disheartening for me.

Maybe you should sue them for breach of copyright?

Ha, ha, ha. Not funny. Not funny at all. Besides it's just a rumour our music

is being used. If it's true then the army aren't doing their work, 'cos I can give them the names of 20 Norwegian Death Metal bands that make us sound like fucking Wham!

Has anybody ever asked you to fuck their mother?

No. Never. But in the early days in America back in the mid-'80s, people would often ask us to fuck their girlfriend. The first time it happened to me, we were opening for Ozzy in 1986 and I was slightly taken aback. But you realise these people are serious and you say to yourself, 'So now I'm fucking your girlfriend, are you round the corner, whacking off? Are you taking pictures? Where do you fit into all this?' It's pretty depraved shit, and it's hard to wrap your head around that when you're fucking someone else's girl. It's not a good thing to ask a band to do, right?

On the plus side, sex is sex, right?

Yes, well, no. But listen; we weren't necessarily nerdy kids. But we were, er, loners. So certainly the first couple of years we were on the road we made up for not having an active, er, action with the member of the opposite species, for all those years. Made up for it big time. I mean if it had a pulse, we would. But you have to draw the line somewhere, so any time anyone wanted to get their girlfriend involved in anything sexual with us we'd nearly always walk away. It was upsetting. And the upsetting thing wasn't the girl. It was the geezer.

Is it easier working with James Hetfield now he's sober?

It's not made that much difference, to be honest. He's managed to go through this and not come out the other side as one of those finger-wagging guys who goes nuts when we have a drink. It used to be four guys who engaged in what they wanted to engage in. Now it's James and three guys who engage in what they want to engage in. I'm not just saying this, Hetfield is a poster child for the whole AA, NA, 12-step shit working.

List the following bands in order of importance. The Beatles, Black Sabbath, The Sex Pistols, Marvin Gaye and Metallica.

Well, obviously I would have to put Metallica first, 'cos they are the most important thing in my life. Then Black Sabbath, then The Beatles. Not the Sex Pistols at all, they were an English thing, they were so fucking abrasive and English. I go with the Ramones. And not Marvin Gaye. I want Otis Redding.

Finally, imagine I have a suitcase containing \$75 million. In order for you to pick it up all you have to do is accept that a Chinese guy will fall off his bicycle and die. Do you pick up the suitcase?

Noooooooo. You can't do stuff like that. Besides, speaking as someone who has some money I can tell you that money doesn't make you happier. All money does, and this is brilliant, is give you freedom to not have to whore yourself. Money has allowed Metallica to be a completely independent entity. We're answerable to no-one other than ourselves.

CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

Roger McGuinn

"To everything there is a season..." The top Byrd leafs through his back pages



▲ 1958 [McGuinn, left]

This is at Chicago's Café O'Bleek, with my first band, The Frets. I've got braces and a crew-cut. I was 16 years old, a student at the Old Town School of Folk Music. I saw a Pete Seeger solo concert at the Orchestra Hall, and I set my course for life. I get in these bands along the way. But my ultimate goal was to be like Pete Seeger. I haven't changed a lot from that picture, inside.



▲ 1965 [right]

Dylan with The Byrds playing "Baby What You Want Me To Do", at Ciro's - the club that was the catalyst for us. We hadn't even put out "Mr Tambourine Man", but we were getting a crowd. We got sculptors who danced like apes, Kim Fowley, Peter Fonda. I'd go out to his sister [Jane Fonda]'s party. Henry Fonda told us to turn it down; Peter said, "Don't pay any attention, he's just an old man." I played pool with Sean Connery... Marlon Brando hit on my wife! But we weren't writing songs about Hollywood. They were trying to be like us.



▲ 1965 [left]

The publicity people in London thought it would be just perfect to take The Byrds to where the birds are. So we went to Trafalgar Square. London was a kick, but a culture shock, too. At home, the smell of diesel would take me back to it. And the food you could only get there. Little finger-sandwiches with watercress and just the right amount of butter. Delicious. London was both swinging, and provincial. The over-thirties were stodgy. You didn't wear blue jeans out in public. I miss that. People have gotten way too casual...



▲ 1966 [second right]

The early Byrds. We've come back from London, because I'm wearing Carnaby Street gear. And Crosby [second left] is back from Chicago, where he got that green cape. He's looking like Dr Evil. Michael Clarke [centre] looks like Brian Jones and Mick Jagger. I've got my little granny glasses on, looking defiant. My haircut looks like a marshmallow. We'd just been No 1 with "Mr Tambourine Man" and "Turn! Turn! Turn!" Was I feeling cocky? Maybe. We were top of the heap.



◀ 1968 [left]

There's Gram [Parsons] in the middle. He looks like he's swallowed a bird. The cat that swallowed The Byrds! I'm looking smug, and like I don't really like what's going on. Gram had that country boy charm. He stole Crosby's girlfriend right out from under him... the way he tried to commandeer The Byrds. You've got to give him credit for being adventurous. I liked him in spite of all that. He was stimulating and disruptive.



▲ 1970 [right]

That's the Clarence White [second left] version of The Byrds, in Holland. Having Clarence was like having Jimi Hendrix in your band. Jimi would come backstage and shake hands with Clarence, that's how cool he was. He had this deadpan thing, which I guess he picked up in bluegrass bands, where they hardly move a muscle except their hands. He was like that in life. He was at my birthday party two days before he died [in 1973].



▲ 1973 [left]

The Byrds reunion album. Michael Clarke [second right] looks like he's had a couple at the bar. So does Gene [Gene Clark, right], he's feeling no pain. Crosby [centre] is chatting away, happy. He was the star by then. It's symptomatic that I'm to the side. We got together a few times afterwards. But Paul McCartney put it beautifully about The Beatles: "You can't rehearse a soufflé." You have to admire people who can just do it for the money. I couldn't.



▲ 1975

Me and Ronson [Mick Ronson], in a New York rehearsal studio for the Rolling Thunder tour. He's looking very Spiders From Mars. And I'm looking like a hippy. My haircut's 10 years out of date. I was in a time-war, but I didn't notice. Me and Ronson were drinking buddies. We'd spend a lot of time in the hospitality suite that Dylan generously provided everywhere we went. We took full advantage. I wheeled him around in a wheelchair in this huge wooden hotel in Clearwater, Florida. We were both out of our minds. Rolling Thunder was just a big party, for weeks on end. I hadn't asked for much money because it was so much fun. I was \$100,000 in the hole when I came off it. Then I got a divorce, too, because the wife didn't want to hang around. Fortunately David Carradine married her, so she didn't want money.



◀ 1978

That's the beginning of McGuinn, Clark and [Chris] Hillman [left]. Gene and I had just been a duo on a record. Then our "handlers" decided to put The Byrds back together. Crosby sat in once, but he already had a job. We're all smiling. Mine's kind of fake. The producers were taking us in more of a disco direction. I was a sideman in that. I got so sick of it I just quit and sat out the '80s.



▲ 1991 [centre]

Being inducted to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. There's Michael, on the left. He's had two bottles of wine, all by himself. Crosby was in AA, so out of respect nobody else was drinking. Michael died soon after that. So did Gene. You could look at Michael, and see that coming. It was nice to see the boys again. We had camaraderie on the road. Some of it came back that night.



▲ 1986 [left]

This was a video shoot for a Beach Boys remake of "California Dreamin'". Brian Wilson is next to me, and Michelle and John Phillips. Brian looks alert. And thinner. We don't cross paths much. I saw him in a hotel about 10 years ago. He pointed at me, smiled and said: "Ding Dang!" I called him up after his book and said, "Hey Brian, it's Roger McGuinn." He said: "It is?" And he hung up. I knew John better as he, Michelle and I lived in the Earl Hotel in '63-4, scuffling in the Village with Dave Van Ronk, John Sebastian, Woody Allen, Bill Cosby, Lenny Bruce, Bob Dylan. Talking with the Holy Modal Rounders, discussing The Beatles' folk music chord changes and modal harmonies—it gave me the idea of putting folk and rock together in The Byrds.

▼ 1992 [second right]

Dylan's 30th Anniversary show, at Madison Square Garden. It was great fun, hanging out with my old friends [George Harrison, Johnny Cash and Dylan]. I had to teach George how to sing the verses on "My Back Pages". Bob doesn't say much. He went back to his dressing-room. We've only stayed loosely in touch. Bob is kind of cryptic. But... that's the way it is. I did enjoy [Dylan's autobiography] *Chronicles*. I couldn't believe he could remember all those details. I really couldn't...



▲ 2008

I'm posing with my Martin HD-7 seven-string, my favourite guitar, and looking very happy about the whole thing. I've gone full circle here. I finally got to be a folk singer. Folk music was totally out of fashion between the late '60s and early '80s. Now, I can do it and people like it. I don't have to be in a band. I've got a good thing going, and I don't want to mess it up.

INTERVIEW: NICK HASTED



"WE RAISE THE DEAD FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LIVING..."

Meet the "psychedelic librarians" behind the planet's most determined reissue labels, dedicated to bringing you the sounds of 1920s Baghdad, Hungarian funk rock and the soul bands of Britain's working men's clubs...

When Dennis Wilson's *Pacific Ocean Blue* was officially reissued last summer, it made No 16 in the UK charts. A monumental flop on first release in 1977, *Pacific Ocean Blue* has long enjoyed "great lost album" status, its widespread unavailability only adding to its myth. Indeed, so many long-lost albums are now back in print, often bolstered by extra tracks, outtakes and deluxe packaging, you'd be forgiven for thinking that everything you'd ever want to hear—and quite a lot you don't—is already out there.

Some specialist record labels, though, are looking far beyond the major labels' vaults, focusing instead on the work of unknown musicians who once sold their privately pressed wares in coffee shops, clubs or cruise ships. These labels are free from the commercial pressures of the majors, and the musical archaeologists who run them are, at core, fans like us.

"We raise the dead for the benefit of the living," explains Ken Shipley, founder of Chicago's **Numero Group**. "Our goal is to find great, unknown music that has an even greater unknown story. Our only rule is to make records that are old enough to drink."

Lavishly packaged with exhaustive liner notes, Numero Group's releases include the sublime *Eccentric Soul* compilations, surveys of lesser-known US record

labels of the '60s and '70s, like Capsoul of Columbus, Ohio, or Miami's Tragar, as well as *The ABCs Of Kid Soul: Home Schooled*—a look at the slew of Jackson 5-alike acts of the '70s.

"The music we're dealing with was recorded in between shifts at the steel mill, or the high school gym or in a basement studio in exchange for car repairs," Shipley adds. Numero's "stars" are obscure and often nearly impossible to find. "Coincidence and luck play a surprisingly larger role than you'd expect. When we were trying to track down Offe Reese [of *Chicago label One Way Records*] we drove to his house, only to find it had burned down. While we were rummaging through what was left, Offe strolled in..."

A similar coincidence assisted the **Honest Jon's** label, co-founded by Blur's Damon Albarn, and an offshoot of London's venerable Ladbroke Grove record shop. Their superb *London Is The Place For Me* comps, surveys of Caribbean music in '50s and '60s Britain, were

kickstarted by a chance meeting with a reggae great.

"Prince Buster was coming into the shop when we were planning the series, and he sorted out licences for us," explains Honest Jon's Mark Ainley. "It meant the world to us to bring back artists like Young Tiger and Ambrose Campbell to such acclaim, and see the pride and joy it brought them, at the end of their lives." As well as dub, folk and Afrobeat, Honest Jon's remit is startlingly wide. Recent releases have seen Ainley trawl through EMI's massive vaults: the results are the haunting *Give Me Love: Songs Of The Brokenhearted - Baghdad, 1925-1929*, and the compelling *Living Is Hard: West African Music In Britain, 1927-1929*.

What is the market like for this lost music? "I don't think in terms of markets," explains **Tompkins Square** founder Josh Rosenthal. "Just in terms of what interests me." And it shows: this New York-based label's catalogue runs from forgotten US acoustic guitar virtuosos (as showcased on their *Imaginational Anthems* compilations), via repressings of 1909 Edison cylinder recordings by Polk Miller, to recent work from both 27-year-old Brit guitarist James Blackshaw and the debut of 89-year-old country dude Spencer Moore, who played with The Carter Family in the 1930s.

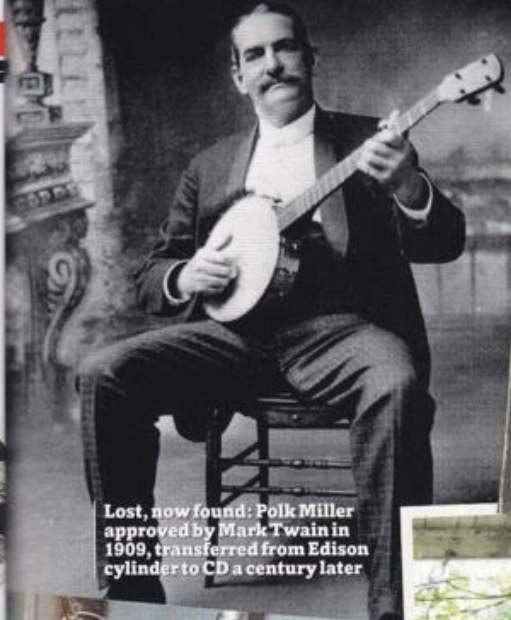


FATE IS ONLY ONCE

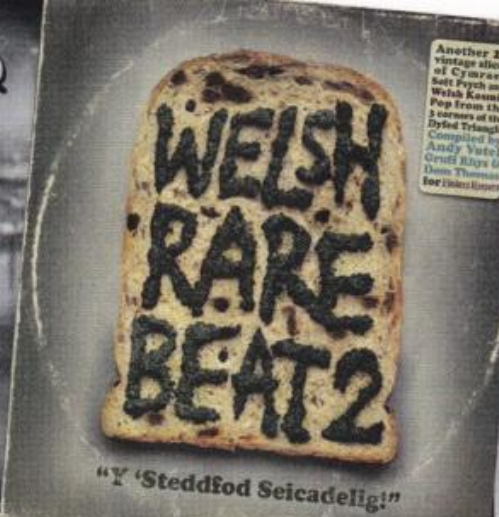
and other blues, ragtime, and fingerpicking tunes



by HARRY JONES



Lost, now found: Polk Miller approved by Mark Twain in 1909, transferred from Edison cylinder to CD a century later



Another 20 vintage slices of Cymru's soft psych and Welsh Keanie Pop from the 3 corners of the Dyfed Triangle. Compiled by Andy Votel. Great! Plays to Don Thomas for 1000s hours



...plus Spencer Moore, elusive Turkish acid-rock queen Selda, (left), and a second collection of wild Welsh 'Seicadelia', top

This is music recorded between shifts at the steel mill, or in the high-school gym

Like his acts, Rosenthal exists outside the music industry norm: "For promotion, maybe I'll service some libraries this month, maybe I'll send a one-sheet to the top 100 bookstores in the US, maybe I'll take out an ad in a cigar magazine..."

Getting his hands on the music to re-release it can be charmingly homespun, too. "The Harry Taussig record [*Fate Is Only Once*, a set of meditative, John Fahey-ish instrumentals] was fun," Rosenthal explains. "I had never seen an actual copy of his record from 1965, so I tracked down and called Harry, and he sent me one. There is no master tape, so we had to do a 'needle drop' from the LP before transferring it to CD."

With acts like '70s Turkish psych-funk heroine Selda on his books ("She has been deported and silenced all over the world... When I first began to call her she used to pretend she was dead!"), Andy Votel, "psychedelic librarian" for London-based **Finders Keepers**, finds unorthodox works for him, too. His releases include the Gruff Rhys-assisted *Welsh Rare Beat* comps, as well as *Well Hung: 20 Funk Rock Eruptions From Beneath Communist Hungary*. All are defiantly anti-mainstream.

"We don't deal with major labels. Most majors want you to commit to a certain number of sales, which puts an instant dagger in the proceedings. When you consider what a revival can do for a 'lost artist' in terms of radio play or synchs—think Os Mutantes on a TV advert—a lot of red tape is still wrapped around artists' necks."

Rediscovery can bring its own issues, though, as Votel explains. "One of our artists has changed her name and now works as a judge on *The X Factor*. She

"We unearth strange records all over the place," he says. "Car boot sales, flea markets, charity shops, European, usually soulful music." Their painstakingly assembled *Working Man's Soul* comp is culled from private pressings that sold in minuscule numbers, and sheds light on the working musicians who populated the UK's clubs and pubs in the '70s.

"All the musicians we've spoken to have been delighted that someone has taken an interest in their career. Many are surprised to find we're interested in licensing the original 30-odd year old recording," adds partner Ed Griffiths. "Some don't even own copies of their own LPs!"

But isn't there a reason this kind of music was "lost" in the first place? "Many tracks are discounted because the music wasn't up to standard, despite there being a fascinating story behind the record," says Griffiths, currently finishing off the second volume of *WMS*. "We were once given the only existing recording of a very famous, very eminent, and very stoned jazz musician playing solo bongos and humming to themselves badly in a basement in Northern Europe. It wasn't good enough to release."

All these labels have their own holy grails, from Jodorowsky film soundtracks to the recordings of Venezuelan ethnomusicologist Luis Laffer. Numero Group's Ken Shipley, however, brings us right back to Dennis Wilson: "What about a full treatment of the recordings of the Manson Family? Some material has been issued illegitimately, some was dumped into the ocean by Dennis. Much more material exists below the surface..." MARK BENTLEY



Licorice Soul's acts include Carol Lee Scott - 'Grotbags' from Rod Hull & Emu's 1980s TV show

THE OFFICE STEREO

The Uncut Playlist

This month we've mostly been kicking around with that Dylan map and playing these 10 fine records...

1 | SONIC YOUTH

The Eternal MATADOR

Back on an indie label after nearly 20 years, with a new bassist (Mark Ibold, ex-Pavement), a new producer (John Agnello, fresh from The Hold Steady) and a cover painted by John Fahey. The music: awesome business as usual. See page 36.

2 | WHITE DENIM

Fits FULL-TIME HOBBY

Flailing, eclectic and genuinely thrilling second album from the Austin trio. More Minutemen than MC5 this time, if you're foolhardy enough to try and reduce *Fits* to a single reference point.

3 | ELVIS COSTELLO

Secret, Profane & Sugarcane UNIVERSAL

The Coward Brothers are reunited, as Costello [right] hooks up again with T-Bone Burnett for an evocative Nashville session. Also implicated: Emmylou Harris and Loretta Lynn.



4 | JAMES BLACKSHAW

The Glass Bead Game YOUNG GOD

The British guitarist/pianist behind Uncut's 13th favourite album of 2008 returns with five more exquisitely crafted instrumentals that hover somewhere between folk and classical.

5 | IRON & WINE

Around The Well SUB POP

Two CDs of demos, rarities and so forth plucked from the archives of Sam Beam, and including characteristically sensitive covers of the Flaming Lips, Stereolab and New Order.

6 | DIRTY PROJECTORS

Bitte Orca DOMINO

The greatest—or the most unfathomable—band of the Brooklyn renaissance? *The Uncut* jury's still out on their latest elaborate post-punk/Afrobeat/R&B ideas riot, but we can't stop playing it nonetheless.

7 | EELS

Hombre Lobo POLYDOR

First new album in four years from E, now sporting a gargantuan beard to befit his successful second careers as autobiographer and TV science expert. Betrays a healthy interest in garage rock.

8 | TREMBLING BELLS

Carbeth HONEST JON'S

The best new British folk-rock band in quite some time, orbiting around Glaswegian drum prodigy Alex Neilson, an old running mate of Will Oldham.

9 | LINDSTRØM & PRINS THOMAS

II ESKIMO RECORDINGS

Norwegian disco-progheads make their magnum opus. An epic ride to the cosmic side, influenced by out-there Krautrock as well as '80s and '90s dance.

10 | BLACK SHEEP

Kiss My Sweet Apocalypse INVADA

Great blasted tracts of acoustic guitar and Mellotron, martial chants, and a song called "We're The Baa-aa-aader Meinhof"? That'll be Julian Cope's new band, then.

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

THE STARS THAT FAME FORGOT

Roger Chapman

The astonishing Family frontman who took on Bill Graham, Engelbert Humperdinck and the world!

I just refuse to get told what to do," insists Roger Chapman, one-time frontman of Family, outlandish showman and, perhaps, the great overlooked vocalist of Britrock's first flowering. "You go through hot and cold periods all your life. One minute you're OK, one you're not. My attitude is basically, 'Fuck you! I'm not really interested in what you think of what I do.' This is what I do, this is what I like doing. I've been quite adamant about it and realise that, in a career way, it's held me back. But in some ways it's held me in good stead – you have to be really strong to keep in this business and keep performing."

Chapman has kept going for some 45 years now, ever since the day in 1964 when he was approached by John 'Charlie' Whitney, a guitarist and Chapman's future songwriting partner, while working on a Leicester building site. Chapman, orphaned young, was already airing his astonishing, searing vibrato at singing contests in local ballrooms; he once beat Gerry Dorsey, soon to be renamed Engelbert Humperdinck. Now, Whitney invited him to join a hot local band called The Farinas. "The Farinas were a bluesy pop band with jazz overtones," recalls Chapman. "I was more of a rock-soul singer, more forceful. Everything changed with *Revolver* in 1966. People's imaginations opened up, things got hippy dippy. We went with the flow."

The Farinas were renamed Family by Kim Fowley, because of their penchant for dressing like New York Mafiosi. By '68, they'd consolidated a blistering live reputation with an eclectic, ambitious debut album, *Music In A Doll's House*.

"We were writing stuff that was very

individual, it was pure fluke," admits Chapman. "We didn't know what we were doing – it created itself. Before, I'd been singing other people's songs, but when you have your own songs you have to get your own direction – that's where the style comes from."

By now Family had relocated to London, and were also gaining a reputation as party animals, underlined by their appearance in sometime house guest Jenny Fabian's novel, *Groupie*.

"Charlie was more of a boozier and I was more of a druggie, doing anything and everything depending who I was with," says Chapman. "So we kept

I LOVE ROGER CHAPMAN BECAUSE...



"He's a guy with real soul and great ideas. Everyone should know about Roger Chapman"
Kevin Rowland

different company. At times we hated each other..."

When the band expanded into America, however, their wildness became a liability. Beginning a stint at the Fillmore East in New York, newly opened by the all-powerful US promoter Bill Graham, Family suffered a setback from which their career, commercially, never recovered.

"We were met off the plane in New York by Hendrix and the Experience and visited every debauched club in New York for two days. Then Ric [Grech, Family bassist] told us he was leaving to go with Clapton in Blind Faith. At the gig he couldn't stand up and our heads were

all over the shop. The audience hated us. I threw a bit of a wobbler – and a mic stand. I didn't realise that Bill Graham was on the side of the stage. It nearly took his head off."

Although Graham relented and allowed the band to finish their run of shows, it was on condition that Chapman performed standing still.

"There'd been such expectation it was a shame we didn't come up with the goods. Everything went wrong at the same time," says Chapman.

Following a hometown farewell gig in 1973, Family disbanded, and Chapman formed the short-lived Streetwalkers with Whitney. Then, left to his own devices, he experienced a crisis of confidence when faced with going solo: "I felt terribly alone – I'd really never had a family and being in a group was the first time I'd been with people."

Chapman finally released his solo debut in 1979, appearing on the cover of *Chappa* in a red boiler suit, inspired by a friend who worked on an oil rig.

"It was ideal for wearing onstage and became a kind of format," he says. "I'd even go down the pub in it. What a prat!"

Pushed aside by punk in the UK, he was now hailed as a 'punk jazz artist' in Germany. "I thought that was so cool. So you go with it and a TV show like *Rockpalast* opens you up to an audience of 20, 25 million people. I spent several years touring the Eastern Bloc and I've done pretty well out of it."

Now he releases a 2CD retrospective. Also scheduled is a UK tour – which promises to be as lively as ever.

"If I get a bad vibe from anybody it doesn't take me long to jump up and say, 'Fuck off! I'm not taking any shit from anybody because I'm not giving anybody any shit.'" **GAVIN MARTIN**

HOW TO BUY ROGER CHAPMAN



FAMILY Music In A Doll's House

REPRISE 1968, REISSUED 2003 ★★★★★

The classic debut, produced by Dave Mason, showcased Family's pre-eminence in the post-*Pepper* landscape – crossing prog, psych and folk. But it's Chapman's vibrato and combative attitude that sets them apart from the whimsy of the period. There's a lion in the house.



FAMILY Bandstand

REPRISE 1972, REISSUED 2007 ★★★★★

Family's sixth and penultimate LP was also their most radio-friendly, highlighting the Chapman/Whitney songwriting partnership's mastery of opposites; pastoral reflection, aggro-fuelled rock, nature prayers, and swaggering Stones raunch ("Burlesque").



STREETWALKERS Red Card

VERTIGO 1976, REISSUED 2006 ★★★★★

The second album by the Whitney/Chapman fronted outfit is a roaring, full-tilt assault overlooked in the '76 punk onslaught. The raging "Crazy Charade" and military satire "Between Us" showed Chapman reclaiming his vocal mastery, defiant and unbowed.

AND IT'S GOODNIGHT FROM...

MAURICE JARRE

Composer (1924–2009)

Had it not been for a fall-out between first-choice composer Malcolm Arnold and producer Sam Spiegel, Maurice Jarre's Hollywood career may never have happened at all. But so it was that the Frenchman was approached by Spiegel to score David Lean's *Lawrence Of Arabia* in 1962. Jarre was given six weeks to compose for the entire film. It proved as fortuitous a decision as that of recasting the lead (both Lean and Spiegel originally earmarked Marion Brando for Peter O'Toole's role). Jarre's evocative, billowing score won him the first of three Oscars and a worldwide reputation.

Jarre began studying music at the Conservatoire de Paris in his late teens, specialising in percussion, after which he spent 12 years as music director at the Théâtre National Populaire. It was there that he developed a passion for the possibilities of music as drama. A fruitful relationship with director Georges Franjou led to documentary scores in the early '50s, but their best-known collaboration was 1960's *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (*Eyes Without A Face*), in which Jarre's subtle soundscape accentuated the quiet horror of Franjou's images. Jarre (father of Jean-Michel) had already composed for WWII epic *The Longest Day* before he began working with Lean on *Lawrence Of Arabia*. It was a partnership that held for the rest of the director's career. Jarre's music brought a lavish new sense of scale, not just to the landscapes, but also to the inner turmoil of Lean's lead characters. He bagged his second Academy Award for 1965's *Doctor Zhivago*, led by the moving balalaika waltz of "Lara's Theme". 1970's Irish-set *Ryan's Daughter*, for which Lean was adamant there was to be no traditional music, earned Jarre a Grammy, but his sweeping score for 1984's *Passage To India* completed his Oscar collection.

Aside from Lean, Jarre wrote soundtracks for John Huston (1975's *The Man Who Would Be King*), Hitchcock (*Topaz*, 1969) Elia Kazan (*The Last Tycoon*, 1977), Adrian Lyne (*Fatal Attraction*, 1987) and Jerry Zucker (*Ghost*, 1990). But his other lasting collaborator was Peter Weir, for whom Jarre scored the '80s films *The Year Of Living Dangerously*, *Witness* and *Dead Poet's Society*. Perhaps his most overblown moment came with 1985's *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*, which ramped up the drama with full orchestra, choir and wall-of-sound percussion. In all he composed for over 150 films. "My life has been one long soundtrack," he said. "Music was my life, music brought me to life." **ROB HUGHES**

Maurice Jarre, Paris, November 1961



MEL BROWN

Delta Blues guitarist (1939–2009)

Mississippi-born Mel Brown was a bone fide Delta Bluesman, starting out in Sonny Boy Williamson's band, but it was in LA where he forged his reputation as guitarist and piano player. He first set out for California in 1955, becoming an in-demand sideman for Johnny Otis, Etta James, Sam Cooke and Johnny "Guitar" Watson. A gig at The Sands Club impressed T-Bone Walker so much he immediately signed Brown up for his next album. By the late '60s and early '70s Brown had a solo career of his own, beginning with *Chicken Fat*, frequently cited as a classic among blues connoisseurs. In 1971 he became Bobby "Blue" Bland's guitarist, recording and touring together for over a decade, whilst also squeezing in sessions for BB King, John Lee Hooker, Albert Collins and Lightnin' Hopkins. Brown later moved to Nashville and, in 1983, Austin, Texas, where he was a cornerstone of the house band at Antone's.



HANK LOCKLIN

Grand Ole Opry hero (1918–2009)

In many ways, Hank Locklin was the living embodiment of the Nashville dream: the poor boy from the cottonfields who graduated from the local church to marquee billing at the Grand Ole Opry. His catchphrase, "We'll treat you so many ways you're bound to like one of 'em", was an Opry staple for the best part of 50 years. Locklin began playing guitar aged nine, trouncing the competition in local talent contests and joining the Louisiana Hayride show in 1949. His easy demeanour and distinctive hillbilly tenor brought him huge popularity, 70 chart singles and estimated worldwide sales of 15 million, scoring his first country topper with 1953's "Let Me Be The One". Other hits included "Send Me The Pillow You Dream On" and "Geisha Girl". "Please Help Me I'm Falling In Love" even made the UK Top 10 in 1960. His songs were covered by Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton and Dwight Yoakam.



URIEL JONES

Motown session legend (1934–2009)

Jones was drummer with the Funk Brothers, Motown's unsung backroom musicians who shaped the Motor City sound and who were belatedly given their dues with 2002's moving documentary *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown*. It was a bittersweet moment. "A lot of people are calling it a rediscovery," he noted. "But we were never discovered. How can it be a rediscovery?" The Detroit native began playing drums in Marvin Gaye's band, where he was spotted by label boss Berry Gordy in a local club in '61. Jones' powerful, backbeat can be heard on Motown gold such as Gaye's "I Heard It Through The Grapevine", The Temptations' "Cloud Nine", Smokey Robinson & The Miracles' "Tracks Of My Tears" and Stevie Wonder's "For Once In My Life". Funk Brothers manager Allan Slutsky called Jones – "Possum" to his bandmates – "the hardest rocking. He was a beast. That's why he and [pianist] Earl Van Dyke were such a pair."



CONTINUES OVER ►



DAN SEALS (1948–2009)

Country hitmaker (aka England Dan)

Texan Dan Seals, who has died of mantle cell lymphoma in Nashville, came from prime musician stock. His father was sideman to Bob Wills and Ernest Tubbs; his cousins included country warbler Johnny Duncan and Little Texas singer Brady Seals; and older brother Jim was one half of Seals & Croft. Dan himself first found fame in the mid '70s with his own duo, England Dan & John Ford Coley, whose biggest successes were the soft-rocking "I'd Really Love To See You Tonight" and a cover of Todd Rundgren's "Love Is The Answer". Yet country music was Seals' true calling, though, initially at least, it came at a price. In 1980 he signed a solo deal with Atlantic, saddled by crippling debts and unpaid tax demands that left him homeless and bankrupt. His first two albums (*Stones* and *Harbinger*) sank almost without trace, but reunited with England Dan & John Ford Coley producer Kyle Lehning, he suddenly hit big with 1983's "Everybody's Dream Girl". Two years later, he scored a country No 1 with "Meet Me In Montana", an unlikely duet with Marie Osmond. Seals then began an extraordinary winning streak, bagging nine consecutive No 1 country singles with songs like "Three Time Loser", wedding ballad "One Friend", rodeo tune "Everything That Glitters (Is Not Gold)" and "Bop", which was the CMA's Record of the Year in 1986. The same year's *On The Front Line*, the follow-up to the half-a-million-selling *Won't Be Blue Anymore*, featured "Lullaby", a peachy ballad with Emmylou Harris.

KENT HENRY

Much-travelled US guitarist (1948–2009)

When Jimmy Page went scouting for guitarists for Screaming Lord Sutch in 1969, one of the names he drafted was Kent Henry. The Californian, who'd begun with Lost Souls as a 14-year-old, was in esteemed company, taking his place alongside Page, Jeff Beck, John Bonham, Noel Redding and Nicky Hopkins. *Lord Sutch And Heavy Friends* wasn't a hit, but by the time of its release in May 1970, Henry had joined Blues Image, led by Mike Pinera. It was Henry who provided the ripe fills and searing solo of "Ride Captain Ride", the song that took the band into the *Billboard* Top 5 that summer. Within a year, after playing on swansong LP *Red, White & Blues Image*, Henry left to replace Larry Byrom in Steppenwolf. In 1972 he played guitar on "Born To Be Wild" on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, after which he joined frontman John Kay for a brace of solo albums.

EDDIE BO

Jazz-soul pioneer (1930–2009)

Edwin Joseph Bocage was one of the pivotal figures of New Orleans music. His unique, shuffling piano style, arranging skills and bebop-influenced vocals earned him a weighty reputation as songwriter and producer, overseeing numerous recordings by artists like Irma Thomas, Art Neville and Robert Parker. As a songwriter who spanned jazz, soul and R'n'B, Bo's best-known hits were "Check Mr Popeye", "My Dearest Darling" (by Etta James) and "I'm Wise", later made famous by Little Richard as "Slippin' And Slidin'". In the '50s he headed up a crack troupe of New Orleans players who criss-crossed the US backing top vocalists Big Joe Turner, Ruth Brown, Earl King and The Platters.

ROB HUGHES



CLUB UNCUT AT THE GREAT ESCAPE

This month, as promised, Club Uncut moves to Brighton to host a stage at the **Great Escape Festival**. From May 14, we'll be presenting some of the best new bands at the Pavilion Theatre.

On Thursday 14, the bill features Canadians **The Acorn** [pictured right], Sunderland avant-popsters **The Week That Was**, and two new singer-songwriters from the USA, **Miles Benjamin Anthony Robinson**, a Brooklyn associate of TV On The Radio and Grizzly Bear, and Sufjan Stevens protégé **DM Stith**.

Friday night (May 15) sees an eclectic bill featuring the ecstatic tropical punk of **Abe Vigoda**, cosmic Scottish newcomers **The Phantom Band**, fuzzpop revivalists the **Vivian Girls**, **Crystal Antlers** (profiled on page 17) and, a late addition, **Blind Pilot** from Portland, Oregon.

Finally, we're teaming up with our friends at the Full Time Hobby label for the show on Saturday 16. Headliners are the formidable Texan garage-rock trio, **White Denim**,



THE GREAT ESCAPE
EUROPE'S LEADING NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL WWW.ESCAPEGREAT.COM

whose second LP, *Fits*, has been a big hit in the *Uncut* office this past week or so. **School Of Seven Bells** (see page 17) and two new London-based bands that both we and label Full Time Hobby are fond of, **Three Trapped Tigers** and **Banjo Or Freakout**, fill out the night.

Tickets for the whole festival, which extends far beyond the parameters of Club Uncut, are available now for £39.50. Visit the festival site – www.escapegreat.com – for full details.

Meanwhile, back in London...

Our next Club Uncut show in London is headlined by **The Pink Mountaintops**, [pictured right] the other band of Black Mountain's Stephen McBean. They'll be joined by **Django Django** and one more act; check www.uncut.co.uk for further details. The gig takes place on May 11, at our usual home of The Borderline on Manette St in London. Tickets are £10, available from www.seetickets.com.

And one last date for your diaries. We're extremely happy to announce



CLUB UNCUT

that San Francisco's **Wooden Shjips** will be turning Club Uncut and the Borderline into some kind of ad hoc psychedelic dancehall on August 19. Tickets are on sale now for £9, and once again you can get hold of them from www.seetickets.com.

THIS MONTH AT UNCUT.CO.UK

In addition to our usual service of non-stop news, reviews and blogs, have a look at *Uncut*'s website this month. There, you'll find the opportunity to win VIP tickets for **Neil Young** and **Bruce Springsteen**'s shows at **Hard Rock Calling** in **Hyde Park, London** this June.



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

Starman

by David Bowie

In 1972 this space-age hit – and an onstage “electric blow job” – turned Ziggy and his Spiders From Mars into megastars. “But the outfits... What were we thinking?”

THE KEY PLAYERS



KEN SCOTT
Co-producer



MICK 'WOODY' WOODMANSEY
Drums



ANGIE BOWIE
Wife, PR and Stage Manager

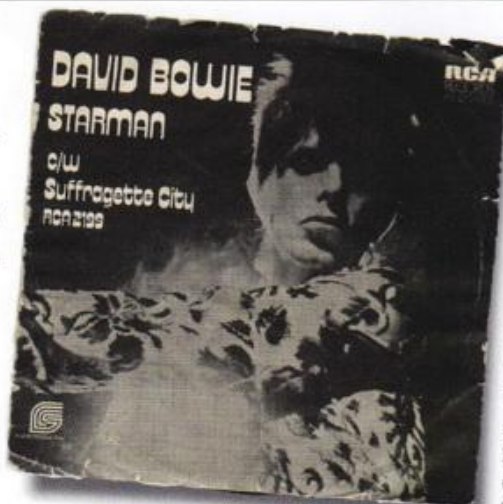


MICK ROCK
Photographer

You've no idea how much trouble we had getting exposure before Ziggy," says David Bowie's ex-wife, Angie. "It was a constant slog uphill. People didn't want to know us. David had been knocking his head against the wall as a folk singer, then he decided he needed a band."

It's easy to forget this, but in the summer of 1972, David Bowie was best known as the strange kid with the curly perm who'd scored a novelty hit three years earlier with "Space Oddity". Now here he was as alien rock star Ziggy Stardust, with a quilted jumpsuit, lace-up boots and neon-coloured hair. Inspired by '50s rock'n'roll, Marc Bolan, TS Eliot, Vince Taylor, *A Clockwork Orange* and Japanese kabuki theatre, it's fair to say that Ziggy was a more ambitious proposition than Bowie's folkier incarnation. "I packaged a totally credible, plastic rock'n'roll singer," he said later. "Much better than The Monkees could ever fabricate."

With guitarist Mick Ronson, bassist Trevor Bolder and drummer Woody Woodmansey, Bowie recorded *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* in late 1971 and early 1972. A modestly attended UK tour followed that February. But two key moments around the...Ziggy album release in June helped turn Bowie into a puissant rock star. The first was on June 17, at Oxford Town Hall, when photographer Mick Rock snapped Bowie performing an 'electric blow-job' on Ronson's guitar. Then, on July 6, the Spiders played "Starman" on *Top Of The Pops*, and Bowie – striking in his rainbow coloured suit and androgynous make-up – draped an arm limply across Ronson's shoulder. The performance inspired a generation of musicians, and "Starman" peaked at No 10, while Ziggy itself stayed in the album charts for two



“People forget that Ziggy was all projection – David wasn't a star then. ‘Starman’ was the set-up” Mick Rock

years. Bowie never looked back. "[Starman] is four minutes and ten seconds of major achievement," John Peel wrote in *Disc*. "Jesus, it feels good."

ROB HUGHES

KEN SCOTT: I'd worked with David on *Space Oddity* and *The Man Who Sold The World*, and always thought, 'Yes, he was a nice guy and relatively talented.' But a superstar? Never. But after he'd asked me to co-produce *Hunky Dory* with him, his publisher and myself were over at my house going through the demos and it dawned on me for the first time that this guy could be a superstar.

ANGIE BOWIE: They made a great job of *Hunky Dory*, but...Ziggy Stardust was

when the band came together in a way that everyone had their chops down. And Mick Ronson started to emerge as this amazing guitarist. The band would come over to our place at Haddon Hall and go down into the basement to rehearse. They more or less lived there. [Fashion designer] Freddie Burdett worked for this Greek tailor called Andreas, so I'd brought Freddie and his girlfriend, Daniella [Parmar], down to Haddon Hall. David and Freddie then got together and designed those outfits for the Ziggy Stardust thing. David designed the bomber jackets and the tight-fitting pants with the lace-up boots. I bought a lot of clothes for myself, but kind of laid them out in a way that, if David nicked them and wore them, it might not be a bad idea.

MICK 'WOODY' WOODMANSEY: The whole Bowie and the Spiders look was David's idea. We'd watched *A Clockwork Orange*, seen Alice Cooper live and it was a fusion that fitted the whole space/alien concept. At first we were very reticent about the outfits and the make-up. Mick Ronson hated the outfits. In fact, he packed his bags and left. David asked me to go after him and handle it. I spent a good hour or so on Beckenham train station with him!

SCOTT: [Laughing] I look at pictures of them these days and feel so bad about being a part of it! But hey, it suited the times. When it all came down, it was, 'Wow, this is great! This is really adding something to the recording, bringing a sense of spectacle to it all.' Looking back on it, I mean, my God, what were we thinking? But it really caught on after a while.

The...Ziggy sessions started just a few weeks after we'd finished *Hunky Dory* [September to November 1971]. David came up to me and said: "Right, **CONTINUES OVER**"



"Give me your head": Bowie, Ronson and the infamous moment, live at Oxford Town Hall, June 17, 1972. "Maybe it's the delicate way he's clutching Mick's cheeks that caused the fuss..." - Mick Rock

THE MAKING OF...

we're going to record another album. But I don't think you're going to like this one as much, 'cause it's more rock'n'roll." All of those sessions were the same: the band would quickly learn a song, we'd get it in a couple of takes, we'd do some overdubs and it was done.

WOODMANSEY: There had been one or two tracks on *Hunky Dory* where I'd given poor Ken Scott a bit of verbal abuse about the sound, saying, "I could get a better sound out of a bag of crisps and a cornflake packet!" When we turned up to do... *Ziggy*, they asked me to go down in the studio and check if the drums were set up correctly. When I got there, there was no kit.

Instead, in the middle of the floor was a cornflake packet, two coffee cups and a bag of crisps, all mic'd up properly and a pair of sticks lying beside them. All the band and crew were falling around in hysterics.

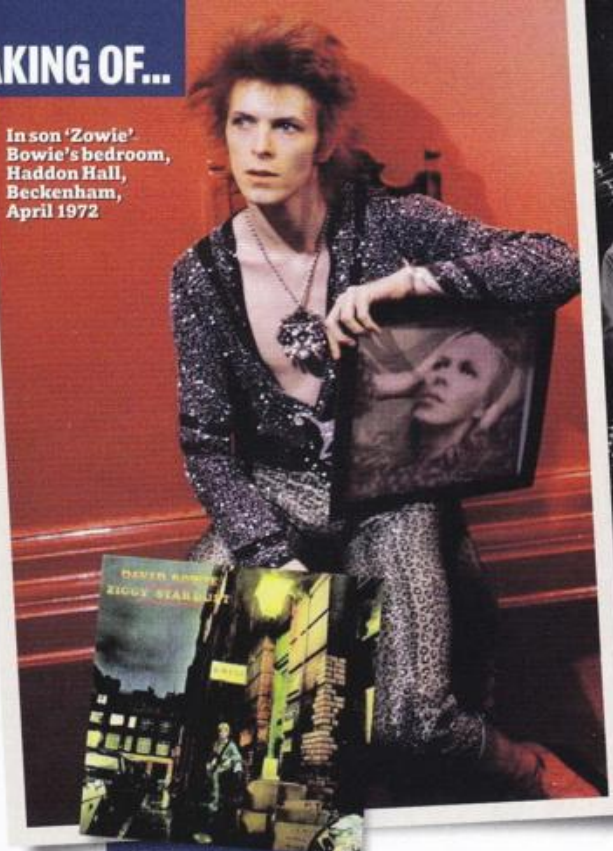
SCOTT: It was actually all different-sized cornflake packets. You could get mini ones and big ones, so I sent the tea boy out to get as many different sizes as he could. Then myself and the roadie set them up, exactly like a drum kit. Woody walked in and just fell on the floor. We went back into the studio to do "Starman" in January '72, after we'd done the rest of the album. Someone at RCA had told us: "There's no single. Go back in and do one." It came together very quickly, though, maybe in just one day.

WOODMANSEY: "Starman" was along the same lines as "Space Oddity" and "Life On Mars", two other favourites of mine. It's the concept of hope that the song communicates. That "we're not alone" and "they" contact the kids, not the adults, and kind of say "get on with it". "Let the children boogie": it's music and rock'n'roll! It made the future look better.

SCOTT: Mick Ronson did the arrangements for strings and guitar. That morse code sound is actually a piano and two guitars, an octave apart, then we bounced them all down together to make one track. It seemed to make sense in that there was this idea of something coming from some distant planet. So we then put it all through a phaser. There is one weird thing about it that I'll bring up. There are two versions of "Starman": one a loud morse code version and one a quiet version. And I only ever remember doing one mix of it, and can't tell you which was the one I did. I've no idea where the second one came from. So if anyone reading this can come up with an answer, let me know!

MICK ROCK: I think David saw

In son 'Zowie' Bowie's bedroom, Haddon Hall, Beckenham, April 1972



Starman, with Ronson on that historic *Top Of The Pops* performance, July '72

FACTFILE

Written by: David Bowie

Performers: David Bowie (lead vocals, guitar); Mick Ronson (guitar, piano, vocals); Trevor Bolder (bass); Woody Woodmansey (drums)

Produced by: David Bowie and Ken Scott

Recorded at: Trident Studios, London

Released as a single: April 1972

Highest UK chart position: 10

TIMELINE

September 1971: Sessions begin at Trident Studios for the... *Ziggy* LP

January 1972: "Starman" recorded as last-minute inclusion, replacing Chuck Berry's "Round And Round"

April 1972: "Starman" released as a single in the UK

June 6, 1972:... *Ziggy* is released; it will peak at No 5

June 15, 1972: Bowie and the Spiders premier "Starman" on Granada TV's *Lift Off With Ayshea*

June 17, 1972: Oxford Town Hall gig. Mick Rock photographs the 'fellatio' shot of Bowie and Mick Ronson's guitar

July 6, 1972: The Spiders perform "Starman" on *Top Of The Pops*. The single reaches No 10 in the charts

"Starman" as the ultimate follow-up to "Space Oddity", which had been a hit in '69. But you can see all that 'star' stuff he was projecting like mad then: "Starman"; "Prettiest Star"; "Moonage Daydream". He wanted it bad, he really did. At one point when I was interviewing him he said: "Y'know, I'm so focused on what I'm doing, Mick, that if you were to come and tell me my best friend had just died, I'd probably say, 'Oh, that's really sad', then go right back to work." That was how he thought of himself. It was important for him to be a star. People forget that Ziggy Stardust was all projection, because he wasn't a star

"Going on *Top Of The Pops* was like reaching the top of Everest. The success of 'Starman' opened it all up for us" Woody Woodmansey

at the moment he recorded the single and the album. "Starman" was the set-up. That song was the reason there were a thousand people at Oxford Town Hall [June 1972].

ANGIE BOWIE: Mick Rock was moving around at the side of the stage that night. After a while he jumped down and started taking shots. Then there was a break in one song and I saw David walk away from the mic, go to the back of the stage, turn around and kind of look at Mick. Ronno was playing away and not paying any attention. Mick Rock didn't know what the hell he meant, but he sort of concentrated.

ROCK: David didn't pre-warn me about that shot. He told me later that he wasn't actually intending to go down on his knees. And if you see the actual shot, he's

not; his feet are splayed. All he was trying to do was bite Mick's guitar. But the way Mick was swinging his guitar around, David had to take up that position. Maybe it's the delicate way he's clutching Mick's cheeks that caused the fuss.

ANGIE BOWIE: David looked like he was helping him play it with his mouth. It was brilliant. Then I saw flash flash flash! Five flashes in a row from Mick Rock. Those things are gifts.

ROCK: I was at the perfect spot at the perfect moment. It was too late to get it in the papers, so David and the management actually bought a page in *Melody Maker* to say thank you to his rising fans. The timing couldn't have been better. Of all the shots of him,

this is the one that lingers longest in the memory. It's an incredibly durable image. Then, after that, the audiences grew very fast. By the London Rainbow gigs in August, he did two nights, which he obviously couldn't have done before "Starman".

That song fuelled everything. **WOODMANSEY:** "Starman" was the first Bowie song since "Space Oddity" that had mass appeal. It spearheaded the whole Ziggy Stardust concept both musically and visually. Appearing on *Top Of The Pops* was like reaching the summit of Everest. I recall waiting to go on, standing in a corridor, and Status Quo were opposite us. We were dressed in our clothes and they had on their trademark denim. Francis Rossi looked at me and said: "Shit, you make us feel old." The success of "Starman" really opened it all up for us. Everything changed. ☺

Angie Bowie's *When The Boys Became Girls: The 1970s Sexual Revolution* is out now on Feral Press; for more on Woody Woodmansey, visit www.3-dproject.co.uk

SONIC YOUTH

THE SECRETS OF ETERNAL YOUTH

Sonic Youth might be ageing with more dignity than most, but they're still feisty enough to lash out at Oasis, Madonna and U2 when needed. We share lunch with one of America's greatest bands. Waiter! A baby pig with a donut in its mouth for Ms Gordon!

WORDS by MARC SPITZ

PHOTOGRAPHS by PIETER M VAN HATTEM

Given the peeling paint, dumpsters and train yard smog, you might think this industrial space, located in a disused leather refinery just across the Hudson from Manhattan, should smell like pollution, stale cowhide and garbage. Instead, the warmly lit studio it houses smells, surprisingly, of flowers. Full of thrift shop furniture, computers, vintage rock posters, strands of glittering paper stars, and dozens of plastic bins stuffed with tacks, screws and guitar lacquer, it belongs to Sonic Youth. And, as they prepare to release *The Eternal*, their 16th studio LP and first for an indie label in over two decades, you'd be hard pressed to find a more perfect metaphor for their legendary career. Formed on Manhattan's surly No Wave scene at the start of the '80s, caught in the spotlight of the '90s alt.nation star maker machine, and more or less abandoned by their major, Geffen, throughout this decade, Sonic Youth should, by rights, be broken down by fatigue, near misses and regret. Instead, the band – guitarist/vocalists Thurston Moore, Kim Gordon and Lee Ranaldo, plus drummer Steve Shelley and former Pavement bassist Mark Ibold – have hit reboot once again, avoiding, as ever, any untoward behavior that might sully their status as modern music giants.

"I want a donut. I have donut lust," Moore, still impossibly boyish at 50, mutters wearily. He is red-eyed, suffering from flu, a packet of cold remedy in one hand and a used herbal teabag in the other. Doubled over in his shiny suit pants, Moore, at 6'6", is almost as tall as a petite person standing erect.

"Thai is good," Shelley, bespectacled and genial, suggests.

"How about Cuban?" Ibold offers. "They have that baby pig."

"I want a baby pig with a donut in its mouth," Gordon quips. Icy, defiantly Botox-free, and imperious, at 56, she effects the air of a tenured art school professor. She is dressed in a black and white polka-dotted frock of her own co-design, from her line for Urban Outfitters, Mirror/Dash (named after a Thurston/Kim side project) – a sequel of sorts to her '90s X-Girl collection.

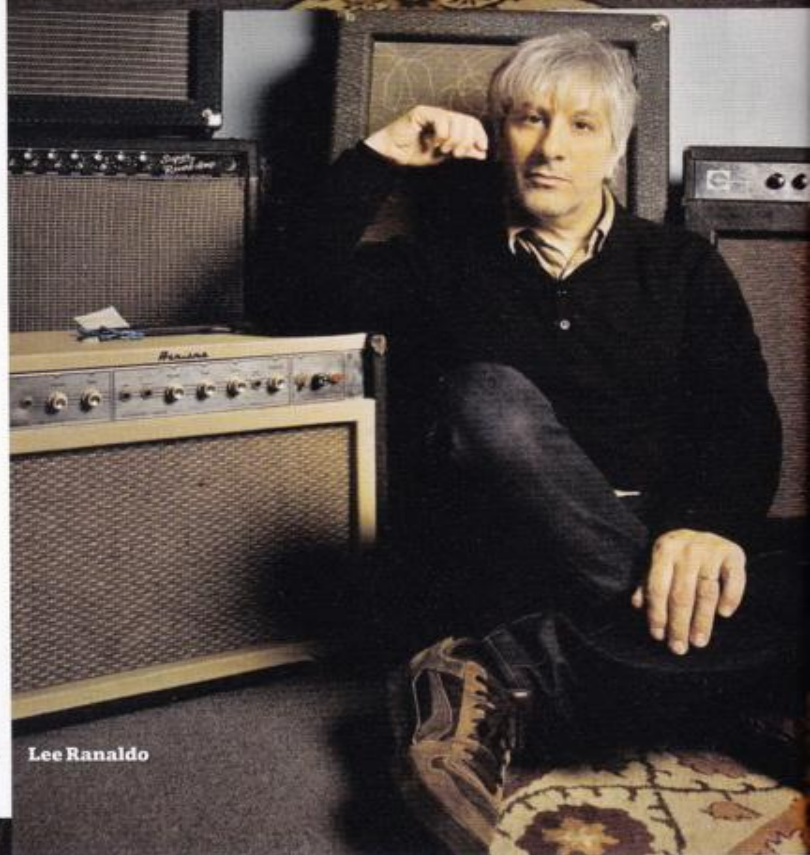
"I know some people," Ranaldo quips, mocking the tone of a swine-procuring flim-flam man.

Like Shelley and Ibold, the greying Ranaldo is as rumpled as Gordon and Moore are chic. They opt for the Cuban, but with the kind of

CONTINUES OVER »



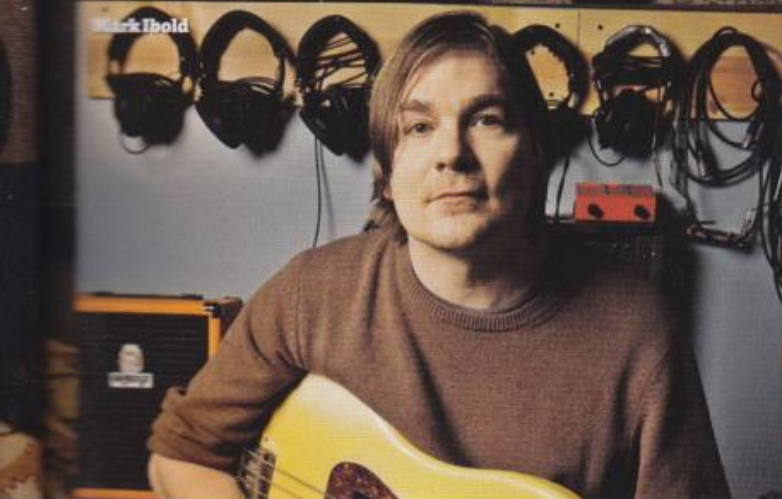
Kim Gordon, *Think Tank*, Hoboken, New Jersey, March 14 2009



Lee Ranaldo



Thurston Moore



Mark Ibold



Steve Shelley

restraint that protected them from the tragedies suffered by nearly every one of their peers and disciples, they forgo the decadent little pig in favour of chicken soup and leafy greens. Then it's to the business of self-reflection. Admittedly, this is a subject they have experience of – 16 albums promoted, and all – but it's not something they're entirely comfortable with, even after all this time. Moore cheerfully predicts *Uncut*'s first question. Do you feel like *The Eternal* marks...

"...A new beginning?" he drawls.

Ask if they anticipate any remarkable change in their business model now that they are once again "indie", and Moore shrugs.

"I don't know. Matador [their new label] has a better logo than Geffen did," he adds, unhelpfully.

Like several titanic but commercially underperforming figures – Joni Mitchell, another long-time Geffen artist, or pre-'90s Neil Young on Reprise – Sonic Youth never risked being dropped by their label. Their place on the big roster provided too much prestige, and succeeded in luring in younger acts. But the years of being treated like a b-list act have clearly wounded them.

"We felt better making a record for this label than we felt making records for Geffen," Moore allows. "That last record we did for Geffen [2006's *Ratner Ripped*], all the people who set it up were let go a week before the release. Not a good thing."

If Sonic Youth are the alpha indie band, then you could argue that Matador is the perfect home for them. Founded in 1989, its catalogue includes a dozen immortal releases from Pavement's *Slanted And Enchanted* to Liz Phair's *Exile In Guyville* and Cat Power's *You Are Free*. Written in Northampton, MA (where Moore and Gordon, married 25 years this summer, live with daughter Coco) and recorded in Hoboken with Hold Steady producer John Agnello, *The Eternal* certainly sounds like a band enjoying new-found freedom. It covers the Sonic Youth net skilfully, with two-minute punk rave-ups ("Sacred Trickster"), oblique art treatises ("Anti-Orgasm") and Byzantine space jams (the nine-minute "Massage The History"). It feels like a Best Of..., but with all new songs.

"We'll probably sell more on Matador than we did on Geffen," Gordon says. "They know how to sell um... not quite mainstream music."

Sonic Youth's love for avant-garde jazz and experimental noise is well known. But there's a contingent of modern music fans who understand Sonic Youth about as much as they do Sun Ra, John Cage or John-free Yoko. Like a foreign film or molecular cuisine, they know they're supposed to find it all interesting, but secretly they'd prefer a Judd Apatow flick and a burger. Then there are those who archive every gig and obediently consume every release on Moore's boutique label, Ecstatic Peace (the late, lamented Be Your Own Pet is its brightest light). Sonic Youth polarise, even though nobody will admit to disliking them.

When they first came to England in December, 1983, in support of their second LP, *Confusion Is Sex*, people "thought we were an art-school band," says Gordon (who did go to art school). "They dismissed us as trust-fund dilettantes."

"They thought we were a flashback," Rinaldo

adds. "Like Creedence. Guitar rock was dead."

Their sound remains unique; uncannily so. Whether sung by Moore, Rinaldo or Gordon, a Sonic Youth song is identifiable within a few notes, or feedback bursts, delivering a melancholy but tough emotional tone and the disorienting whirl of de-tuned guitars going where they will.

"Coming out of New York scene it didn't seem weird at the time," Rinaldo says of their European debut. "Everyone was tuning guitars differently." Peers like the Bush Tetras and James Chance, however, were playing skronky and funky wrong-notes down by the East River, whereas the

Youth conjured up something more like the Atlantic Ocean at high tide.

"They still make me wet myself when the sonic swell of battering guitars kicks into overdrive," says Lydia Lunch, who, with Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, was another leader of the No Wave scene (and collaborated with Sonic Youth on the '85 single, "Death Valley '69"). "It's always been about their incredibly sexy accelerations – a blood rush propelled by sound. Something suffocating yet

"In the '80s, people thought we were a flashback. Guitar rock was dead"

liberating, like a wet kiss that swallows your whole head yet breathes new life into your broken neck."

"When we first went over, though, people were really into it," Moore recalls. "They realised that we weren't playing guitar like normal guitar players play them. We didn't know how."

But by the late-'80s, with The Jesus And Mary Chain and My Bloody Valentine in full swing, Sonic Youth were considered pioneers. It behaved them to release a masterpiece. "Daydream Nation was the culmination of that period," Rinaldo says. "It took what we were doing to a certain peak."

Released in 1988, *Daydream Nation* is full of the band's most classically structured pop ("Kissability" and the Dinosaur Jr homage "Teenage Riot"), yet closes with a 15-minute trilogy which traversed a now vanished Manhattan full of drugs, crime and holy weirdoes. It was a highlight of a watershed year that brought indie rock and hip hop up from the street. It sold modestly but topped

critics' polls and drew major label attention. "It's the record we're still known for," says Gordon.

In 2005, *Daydream Nation* was added to the US Library Of Congress National Recording Registry where it sits alongside "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star", "Stars And Stripes Forever", the Harry Smith folk recordings and Buddy Holly's "That'll Be The Day". To mark its 20th anniversary, the band performed the album at dates in Europe, Australia, and America. It's the record that made Sonic Youth more of a cultural universe than a mere band. Pre-Kurt and Courtney, Moore and Gordon were modern rock's functional power couple, and only old school NYC contemporaries The Beastie Boys and Madonna did as much to build a multi-media sensibility around the music.

"We always operated within a sense of community not just about the band," Rinaldo says. "It's important to the way we define ourselves. It's the entire world in which we operate."

The artists they chose to design their sleeves (Gerhard Richter, Mike Kelly, Richard Prince) or direct their videos (Gus Van Sant, Todd Haynes, Spike Jonze), to the fashion designers they endorsed (Marc Jacobs) and the bands they took under their wing (Bikini Kill, Nirvana) became part of Sonic Youth: the aesthetic.

The decision to hook up with Geffen concerned many fans. After all, signing to a major had declawed indie heroes like Hüsker Dü. By 1990, The Replacements were spent, as well. REM hardly sounded the same. Many feared that Sonic Youth would be next.

"We were and are aware of what we represent to a lot of people who invest in us artistically," Moore explains. "So we always had an agreement that we wouldn't sell that short." Apart from minor novelty hit "Kool Thing", featuring **CONTINUES OVER**



A younger Youth in New York City, June 1992. Above, in even earlier days



Public Enemy's Chuck D's faux Panther rap, 1990's *Goo* was not exactly a Lenny Kravitz record. But the difference between 1990 and 1991, as far as tempting an arty punk band into the mainstream, was seismic. Following Sonic Youth's example, and in fact on their recommendation, Nirvana signed with Geffen's DGC imprint in 1991. Which is when everything changed.

"There was an open door for a band like us to go that route, too," Moore says. *Goo*'s follow-up, *Dirty*, was recorded with Butch Vig, producer of Nirvana's *Nevermind*. Lead by the single "100%", the band's cleanest, heaviest and most dance-able release yet, *Dirty* saw them taking a tentative step through the door that Nirvana had kicked down. But they never went through.

"It had a lot to do with being more enamoured with bands like Sebadoh and Royal Trux," says Moore. "Or outsider songwriters like Daniel Johnston. That was something we felt more affinity for than the glamour of big-time music on MTV."

1994's *Experimental Jet Set, Trash And No Star* was even less commercial-minded. "We still did it with Butch [Vig]," Moore says. "Still at a very nice studio but those songs were more introspective. The label would have loved it to have a big rock sound."

By 1995, they were headlining Lollapalooza over Hole and Beck, but the notion of superstardom had long been abandoned. "We didn't want to tour with a band like the Chili Peppers," Moore says. "We wanted to tour with Pavement. That was the community that we wanted to be a part of."

Come the end of the '90s, their lineup augmented by Chicago-based musician/producer Jim O'Rourke, Sonic Youth were making gentle and esoteric albums like *NYC Ghosts & Flowers*, *Murray Street*, and *Sonic Nurse*. Only 2006's *Rather Ripped* showed a flash of the old snarl.

But the Sonic Youth brand is stronger now than its record sales ever were. If cool is currency, then the Youth dollar has remained strong.

Last year, they released a comp through

Starbucks' record label, wryly entitled *Hits Are For Squares*, where Beck, Chloë Sevigny, The Flaming Lips, Radiohead and others selected their favourite vintage Youth tracks. The decision caused much blogosphere debate.

"It was never meant to be like 'We're going to make a lot of money,'" says Shelley. "They only printed like a thousand of them."

"The industry was starting to collapse and for some reason, Starbucks was able to sell records," Rinaldo continues. "They'd put out interesting stuff like Dylan at the Gaslight. Nobody else seemed to be able to sell records. We thought, 'Let's see what happens.'"

Although they seem a smidge defensive, flagging up the scarcity of the LP as if it was a prized punk 7", the Starbucks venture was, like every other Youth business endeavour, done with a peerless, punk-correct grace; showing younger bands how to diversify without losing mystique.

As Backstreet Boys are fast discovering, having words like "Youth" in your band name can be dicey; especially post-50. But if there's any further evidence required, beyond the quality of *The Eternal*, that Sonic Youth are getting long in the tooth with typical aplomb, and little to prove, a listen to their lunch-hour gabbling should settle things. As lunch is unpacked and prepped, Gordon commandeers laptops and fires up the new U2 video.

"I don't get the title," Rinaldo says. "There's always a line on the horizon. That's what the horizon is all about. What the fuck does that mean?"

Maybe it's the lines he put under his eyes.

We talk of the burden of having to churn out hits.

"The stakes are not the same for us," Rinaldo says, citing

the pressure he assumes bands like The Strokes and Oasis must suffer. "We haven't had one of those mega records. Musically it's the death knell. The Strokes will never get anywhere after that first record."

"And Oasis have never made a good record," adds Moore. "Wonderwall? The worst song ever! 'Sugar Sugar' by The Archies is a better song."

Is Moore wary about starting a war with Oasis? "No, I'm just saying the truth."

"Oasis really should have been called Mirage," Gordon adds.

What about Madonna? As Ciccone Youth, one of their countless offshoots (see sidebar), the band lampooned Madge on 1988's *The Whitley Album*.

"Madonna is more like U2 - don't you think?" Gordon asks. "Talk about Botox. When she sees the new Britney video - she might as well just pack it in. She's never going to be sexy like that again."

Is there a model for ageing? What about Neil Young, say?

"He's a good model, yeah," Gordon says without much commitment, as if to say, "We're not like anybody else." To say something so brash isn't their style. It would be tacky, like ordering the pig. ☺

SONIC ADVENTURE

The best of Thurston, Kim and co's many, many side-projects



HARRY CREWS 1988-90

Gordon, Lydia Lunch and drummer Sadie Mae named their one-off No Wave trio after the Southern Gothic pulp

novelist and recorded a lone album during an Autumn '88 European club tour. Several titles ("Car," "The Knockout Artist") came from Crews' books.

KEY RELEASE: *Naked In The Garden Hills* (Big Cat, 1990)



Free Kitten 1992-Present

The longest-running Youth side project teams Gordon with Pussy Galore's Julia Cafritz. Think murky garage rock. Other

members have included Boredoms drummer Yoshimi P-WE, and Mark Ibold.

KEY RELEASE: *Sentimental Education* (Kill Rock Stars, 1997)



Dim Stars 1992

Moore and Shelley recruited alt. rock peer Dom Fleming (Gumball) and original punk Richard Hell for a self-titled EP

and full-length album. The killer cover of T. Rex's "Rip Off" sounds like it was particularly fun to record.

KEY RELEASE: *Dim Stars* (Caroline Records, 1992)



Cat Power 1993-1996

Yes, that Cat Power. Shelley and Sonic cohort Tim Foldjan more or less discovered Chan

Marshall, co-producing and drumming on her first three albums and touring as an official member between Sonic duties.

KEY RELEASE: *What Would The Community Think?* (Matador, 1996)



"SYR" - or Sonic Youth

Recordings 1996-Present

An ongoing repository for the band's more avant-garde recordings, these seven

packages are often gleefully oblique (liner notes written in foreign languages) and free form.

KEY RELEASE: *SYR4: Goodbye 20th Century* (SYR, 1999)



Wyde Ratttz 1998

Moore and Shelley, alongside Fleming, Mike Watt (Minutemen), Mark Arm

(Mudhoney) and, um, Ewan McGregor, covered The Stooges' "TV Eye" for Todd Haynes' *Velvet Goldmine* film. Points for inviting actual Stooze (the late Ron Asheton) to reprise his deathless riff.

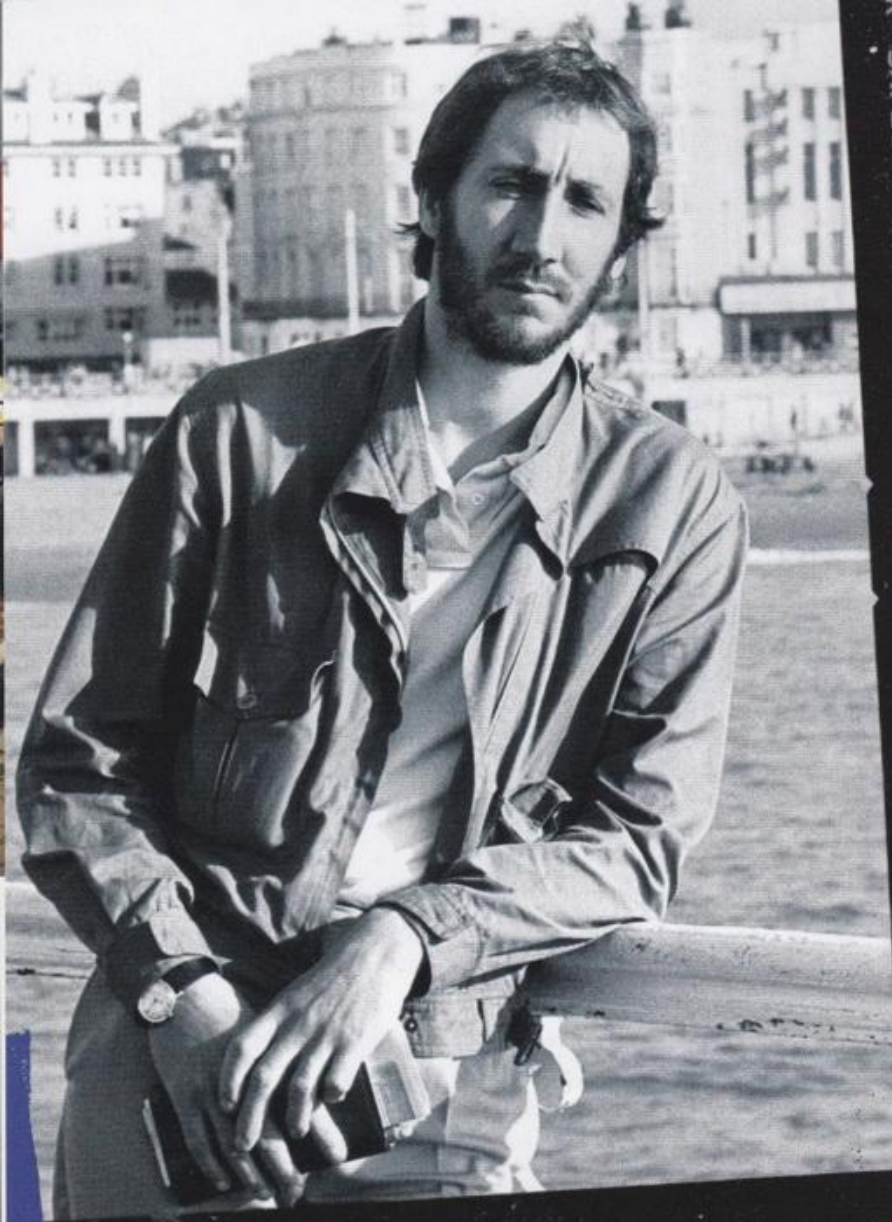
AVAILABLE: *Velvet Goldmine OST* (Fontana Records, 1998)



Text Of Light 2001-Present

Rinaldo and a revolving collective including DJ Olive, percussionist William Hooker, saxophonist Ulrich Krieger and guitarist Alan Licht perform live improv to classic avant-garde films like Stan Brakhage's *Dog Star Man*.

AVAILABLE: *Rotterdam. 1* (Room40, 2005)



“Whenever I write, I look at *Quadrophenia* and ask myself, ‘Can I do better?’ The answer is always ‘No.’”

As his masterpiece is reborn once again, this time as a stage play, PETE TOWNSHEND reflects on the phenomenon of QUADROPHENIA. Rock's ultimate perfectionist reveals all about the Mods, the scraps with Daltrey, the acting of Sting, and why he gave up on the movie. “Can you imagine such a control freak working with a film crew? I couldn't direct a school play...”

INTERVIEW by MICHAEL BONNER | PETE TOWNSHEND PORTRAIT by ADRIAN BOOT



Brighton rucks: Jimmy (Phil Daniels) leads *Quadrophenia*'s Mods into battle

I wanted to write a piece that said, quite simply: this was magnificent, you were magnificent," explains Pete Townshend on the inspiration for *Quadrophenia*, his celebration of the '60s Mod generation. Originally released as a Who album in 1973, *Quadrophenia* has since evolved to become a 21st-century multimedia enterprise – a film, a series of live tours and now a stage play, that rolls out nationwide later this month.

But while Townshend is happy to theorise about the cultural significance of Mod, he also reflects on the ongoing life of this most cherished of rock operas, from its origins as a thank you to the Vespa-riding armies of west London, to falling out with Roger Daltrey, eating pie and mash with Phil Daniels and what he really thought of Sting in the film. And, of course, what *Quadrophenia* means to a new generation in 2009. But first, what does Townshend make of the original *Quadrophenia* album, nearly 40 years on from its release?

TOWNSHEND: It's a really solid piece of work. Like *Pet Sounds* and *Sgt Pepper*, it's hard to imagine it being any different than the way it is. The last time I gave it some serious attention was four years ago when I was considering doing a 'Director's Cut', and checked the masters, and arranged them in surround sound. After listening to it, I realised that what I had achieved in 1973 would be hard to beat.

Does it mean as much to you now as it did then?

The release of the album was bittersweet for me. I kept it close to my chest through composing and recording, to maintain the poetic mood of the songs. I was used to having total creative control by this time, and had come to rely on the band trusting me to drive them blind. Even so, it's the only Who LP I produced entirely alone. I was determined to make sure the story was poetic rather than a pure narrative. I wanted the listener to inhabit and occupy Jimmy, rather than just identify with him. I also felt the package should represent an accurate documentarian's view of the Mod days, chiefly through the sleeve's photographic reconstructions by Ethan Russell. It still seems to me to be my best work for The Who, despite the fact it caused some problems for a time between Roger and me, and was impossible to perform live until '96, when we allowed ourselves video screens and a 12-piece band to reproduce some of the complexity of the LP.

How do you think *Quadrophenia* compares to, say, *Tommy* or *Who's Next*?

It's more fully realised, conceptually speaking. *Tommy* is complete as an idea, but it took a very broad swipe at post-war society in Britain, and the way my generation had turned to mysticism and fantastical celebrity as an answer



to what we saw as our parents' mistakes. *Who's Next* grew out of my *Lifehouse* sci-fi idea – society reduced to an internet-like entertainment Grid controlled by media barons. *Quadrophenia* aims lower but more accurately. It covers the events in a day, two at the most, in the life of a young man who has given up on his dreams. He's in bad shape, and inside he begins to scream. Jimmy decides that everything is shit, even Mods. Philosophically speaking, the Mods were dream-purveyor precursors to the dream-dependence of the hippies. Mods believed in fashion, style, dance, the coolness of realism. The hippies believed in fairies, flying saucers and the possibility of peaceful revolution. Both dreams were ill-founded, but wonderful on the surface. Both movements were ultimately disappointing for me in that

they failed to deliver anything lasting. Mod promised the triumph of the cool group, the stylists; but ultimately left vital social, metaphysical and psychological questions unanswered. Mod felt deep while it was happening, but seemed quite shallow towards the end. It was easy for the hippy idea to take its place, but although the hippy movement engaged the questions of the day, it didn't come up with lasting answers to the troubles we still had by the '70s, or the class problems that would lead to a cruelly divided world. The three LPs, viewed as concept pieces, cover my generation's emerging years from 1963 to 1973, but not chronologically, of course.

You once said it was the best thing you've ever written. Do you still think that?

Yes. Whenever I sit to write anything today that might turn out to have an underlying story or theme I look at *Quadrophenia* and ask myself two questions. One, can I do better? Two, could I survive that degree of intense creative work and its aftermath again? The answer to both questions is always no.

In what ways was it pivotal to the musical evolution of The Who?

Socially speaking, it re-established a link for us with our old roots that had been eaten away by our time in the US touring *Tommy*. We

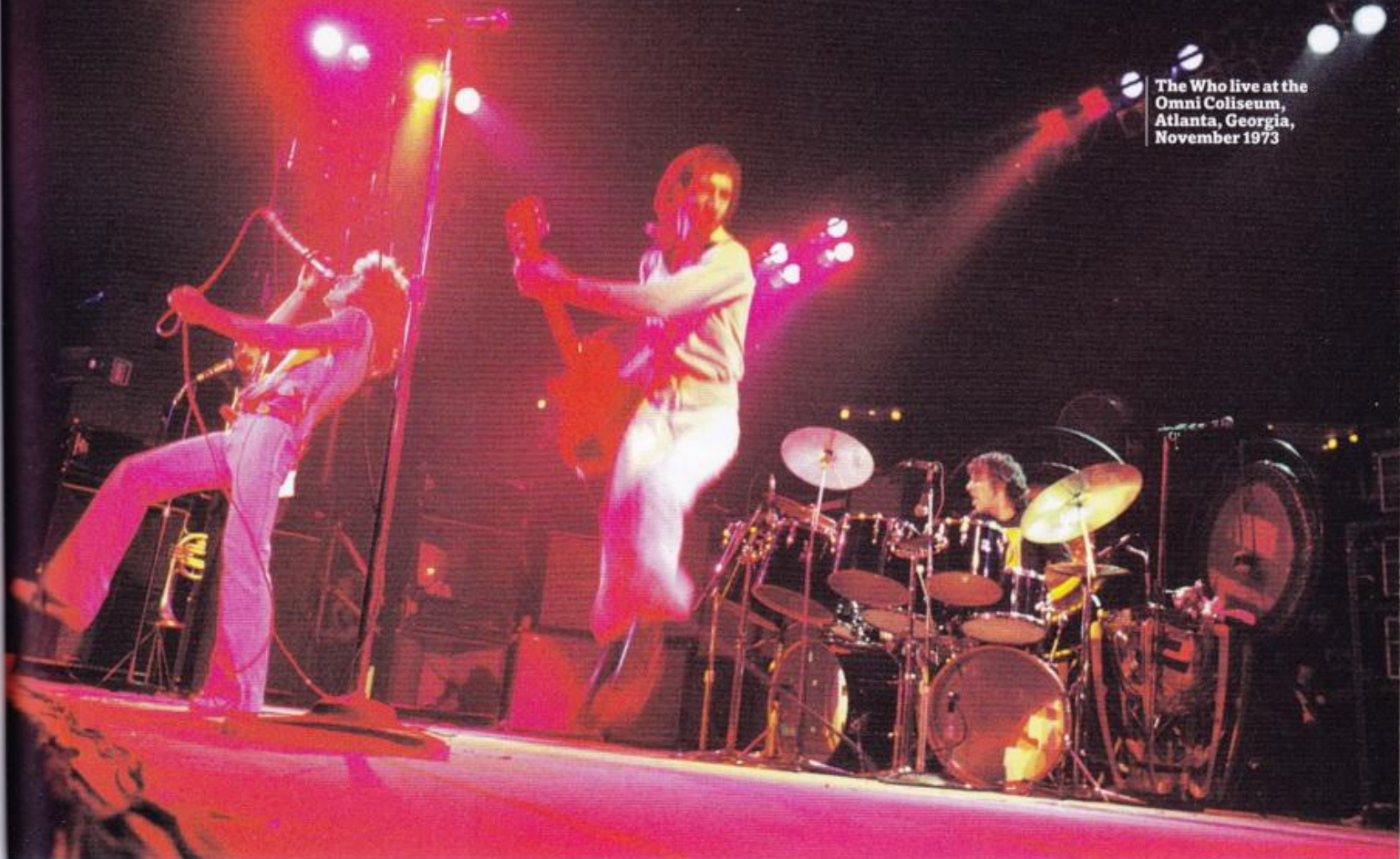
needed to remember who we were, who we had been, and where we'd come from. "The Punk And The Godfather" paraphrases the kind of attacks made on me in the late '60s by the men I'd grown up with. I needed my audience to understand that my mission was to work for them, not for the various members of The Who in their parallel but differing missions to become rock superstars. In the studio it was a miracle, the three band members playing together on the backing tracks, with Roger singing rough vocals for dozens of takes, more powerfully than at any time since *Live At Leeds*.

Looking at some of other major LPs from '73 – by, say, Pink Floyd, Bowie, Led Zep – none of your peers were writing about working-class culture. Is *Quadrophenia* a response to that?

Middle-class brats all of them, like me! The honour I wanted to pay to the mixed bag of working-class boys I'd grown up with in Acton, Hammersmith, Chiswick and Shepherd's Bush was



The Who live at the
Omni Coliseum,
Atlanta, Georgia,
November 1973



not to entertain them; I wanted to let them know they'd allowed me a sense of belonging. Remember, my dad was a touring musician, classless in a sense. To make my mission complete I needed to make my writing authentic, and reflective. I needed to look at the people I was writing about, and for. This was almost Socialist writing for me, I felt like rock music's Arnold Wesker. In fact, I called the studio we built in which to record *Quadrophenia* "The Kitchen", the name of his most famous play. A nice, almost unconscious coincidence. I knew if I could get the composition right, the band would make it fly. The Who were a very potent instrument in 1973.

Quadrophenia has enormous historical importance as a record of teen-age life in the '60s. Why did you want to document that period?

In 1973, looking back at 1963, I saw that Mod had happened at the same time that pop, and its Elvis-style rock big brother, had begun to evolve into something more than four mop-headed boys singing about love. The Beatles started something they couldn't finish. Faced with their first couple of albums, and Dylan's, it became clear music could do anything we wanted it to do. But what I felt our little Mod audience – it was little in the Mod days – wanted us to deal with was what they felt was buried deep, that they had no words to explain. It was not political. It was not fear of the bomb, or longing for filial love. It was a deep unsatisfied yearning for purpose and meaning. It was almost an abstract. That's why I veered away from love songs and political songs. I felt Who fans from the Mod days wanted to articulate something much more personal and intangible. The change in the function of the pop song and the heyday of the Mods happened in roughly the same period.

What made you place a young Mod at the centre of your story?

If you accept that the story was about that moment when pop had to change – late 1962 to early 1964 – it happened to coincide with the period when the last Mod would have realised that as a movement it was finished, and that dance music from Detroit and scooters from Milan were not going to change the world after all.

What did Mod mean to you?

At its height, it was magical. I was at art school with the Beats while it was in its most intense time, and yet I still felt drawn into it, as did a couple of my friends there. We felt we belonged in a larger and less amorphous chunk of humanity with our

soon felt that kind of open rebellion was pointless. Our parents stopped responding, they thought we were nuts. So we went underground. We kept our dreams to ourselves.

What is the enduring appeal of Mod?

Its elegance, I suppose. Its lack of macho bollocks.

What did Mods you knew make of the LP?

They all thought it was about them. That was gratifying, because it was – indeed – about them.

Was the character of Jimmy based on anyone specific?

It was based on an amalgam of four or five fans of The Who from the Goldhawk Club days, one of

"I knew if I could get the composition right, the band would make it fly. The Who were a very potent instrument in 1973"

association with the Mods. We heard new music, even though it rapidly passed into immediate classicism – especially the great Tamla songs.

How would you define Mod's outlook... its basic philosophy?

I have tried to do this in the past, and it's best that I don't go too far with it. It's too easy to turn it all into a catchy by-line. [*The Who's first manager*] Peter Meaden used to say that being a Mod meant "living clean in difficult circumstances". I'm not sure I ever saw dear Peter living clean. The main system that underpinned it was a kind of secret society. We had been used to our parents telling us that Elvis sounded like a creep, and that Sinatra should teach him how to sing properly. We whinged back, but

whom was girl by the way. They were none of them perfect Mods, none of them 'Faces'.

To what extent is Jimmy's story also the story of The Who?

In truth, very little. This is where Roger and I fell out towards the end of the recording. He felt that the story should connect we four to Jimmy, he wanted a big new Who record, and he had a valid reason for wanting both those things to happen. But I wanted each of us to play out facets of Jimmy's psychosis, not for Jimmy to be made up of four facets that stemmed from each of the members of the band. It's a subtle difference, but an important one. At the time, Roger had found himself identified in – and as – Tommy. He **CONTINUES OVER**



The Ox and Daltrey on set, with Daniels and director Franc Roddam

Do you think *Quadrophenia* was ever just meant to be an album – or did you always see the potential for a film or theatrical production?

I wrote it hoping it would provide The Who with a dramatic work they could tour as successfully as *Tommy*. That didn't

land until 1996. We needed video screens, and I needed Roger to help me sort the story without fucking up the album's poetry.

Would you have liked to direct it yourself?

Fuck off. Can you imagine such a control freak working with a movie team? I'd go nuts. I couldn't direct a school play, let alone a movie.

***Quadrophenia's* gone from an album to a film to a stage production. Do you see it still as constantly evolving?**

It will probably tighten up, become more direct. What will never change is that a poetic approach is at the heart of it all – it is a bleakly romantic story.

wanted to know exactly who he was supposed to be in *Quadrophenia*. In fact, the function of The Who has always been constrained by the brief I give myself as a songwriter and spokesman for the band. The other members might have called it bullshit at various times, but I have always been in control. *Quadrophenia* was the story of a boy who at one point berates The Who for failing him. How could Jimmy's journey then be interpreted as our story? We are the story-tellers, not the story. In the end, though, I think the four-pole device to provide Jimmy with a simple and readable psychosis has worked in both directions. Roger's framing of the story in the touring version he and Aubrey Powell devised for the *Quadrophenia* tour of 1996-1997 definitely allows for the four

“Funnily enough, I don't think I experienced the kind of extreme psychosis Jimmy endures until I was in my late thirties. Maybe I saw it coming. Maybe not. But Jimmy's story is not my story”

members of the band to give a voice to the inner frustrations of Jimmy. Funnily enough, I don't think I experienced the kind of extreme psychosis Jimmy endures until I was in my late thirties. Maybe I saw it coming. Maybe not. But Jimmy's story is not my story.

What did you think of Phil Daniels as Jimmy?

Perfect.

And Sting as Ace Face?

Awful at the time, rather wooden, though I am a huge fan of Sting and The Police as musicians. But, in hindsight, he, too, became perfect.

What was your opinion of Franc Roddam's film and has it changed from when you first saw it? Did it match your vision?

I gave up on the film and got drunk in the first week of casting. I hung out with Phil Daniels and Ray Winstone just once when shooting in the Pie & Mash shop in Shepherd's Bush. I love the film, and what it achieved, but it doesn't have very much to do with the musical journey I mapped out for Jimmy. My Jimmy ends up on a rock in the rain pleading for love – that he doesn't know how to name – to fall on him from the sky. In the movie, he throws the Ace Face's scooter over Beachy Head, and possibly jumps after it. Very different conclusions. One is a call for redemption, the other an act of defiance and resentment.

Were you involved in this stage production?

I trust the creative team and producers completely. No-one wants the author around when they are interpreting his or her work. I enjoy popping in to watch the creative process and tell the actors in the cast funny stories about Keith Moon. Today, that's mostly what I do.

How does the new stage production compare to previous incarnations – album, film, live – of *Quadrophenia*?

It'll feel like real people, I hope. The workshop I saw in Cardiff in 2007 made me feel I was watching the old Mod gang at work and at play. A theatre stage, used in the right way, brings life to life.

Has there been – or will there ever be – a “definitive” *Quadrophenia* for you?

In the creative world there is always a book, a film and a play. Or a play, a film and a book. Today we have a comic, a film and a game. Or a game, a band and film. Stories evolve in different ways, and we want those stories to touch us, or release us, in new ways. The Mod period I wrote about was – for me – more than a youth movement about fashion and R'n'B. It was a necessary expression of some untapped desire felt by a vast number of people I'd grown up with. I wanted to write a piece that said, quite simply: this was magnificent, you were magnificent, we didn't fix what was wrong, but we made a start, and we did it all with such style. Never, under the influence of any subsequent

FOUR SIDES TO EVERY STORY

Your guide to the different incarnations of *Quadrophenia*



THE ALBUM

Released in October 1973 as a double LP with hefty booklet, lyrics, story and photos, *Quadrophenia* had been a mammoth undertaking for Pete Townshend: Roger

Daltrey claimed the album was cut down from 15 hours of music. Townshend likened the story to “a sort of musical *Clockwork Orange*”, while Daltrey complained his vocals were buried in the mix. It reached No 2 in the UK and America.

THE TOURS

From October to December '73, The Who performed *Quadrophenia* in the UK. It turned out to be arguably their most frustrating tour, dogged by lack of rehearsal time and backing tapes that refuse to synch. In Newcastle, an exasperated Townshend yanked soundman Bob Pridden over the mixing desk, then stormed off stage.

In June 1996, following the release of a remixed version of the LP, The Who plus a full band revived *Quadrophenia* for 71 dates in the UK, Europe and the US. Technology, it seemed, had finally caught up with Townshend's vision, and giant video screens showed pre-recorded footage to fill in the narrative gaps in the story.

THE FILM

Director Franc Roddam altered the focus of Townshend's original text for a more linear approach. His film was premiered in Toronto in September, 1979, with Phil Daniels as Jimmy, Sting as Ace-Face and assorted future members of *The Bill* in the supporting cast. The soundtrack, released that October, included three extra Who songs.

THE PLAY

Cardiff's Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama staged the first official workshop production of *Quadrophenia* in February 2007.

Townshend attended the premiere. This month, *Quadrophenia* opens a six-month UK tour at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth. Says Townshend:

“It's taken a long time, and a lot of wrangling, to accept that *Quadrophenia* is probably never going to work as conventional music theatre.”

ROB HUGHES



drug, have so many spouted so much rubbish with such incredible grace, with such an air of cool. Never have the internal screams of rage of an army of frustrated young people been so elegantly contained and secretly shared.

What relevance do you think *Quadrophenia* has in 2009?

I'm waiting to see. Times change so quickly today. The show that opens in May might be out-of-date by June. On the other hand, it may find a new function equal to the one the Mod movement provided back in the '60s, and run for 10 years. ☺

Quadrophenia opens at the Theatre Royal Plymouth on May 9, 2009. Visit www.quadrophenia.co.uk for full tour details

ALBUM BY ALBUM

CALEXICO

"Let's see," says Joey Burns, "record labels are folding, everything's collapsing – I feel optimistic!" True, the global economy is floundering, but Calexico, the Tucson collective centred around Burns and drummer John Convertino, are busy plotting travels to fresh horizons. "For some people this band is two trumpets and the Southwest," says Burns. "That's great, but I'm more interested in moving forward..."

INTERVIEW by ALASTAIR MCKAY

THE GIANT SAND SPIN-OFF

FRIENDS OF DEAN MARTINEZ The Shadow Of Your Smile

(1995) SUB POP. PRODUCED BY CRAIG SCHUMACHER & FODM



The duo join this all-instrumental lounge band, as a side-project distinct from their 'day jobs' in Howe Gelb's Arizona rockers Giant Sand.

The collective sign to legendary indie label Sub Pop, and start to dream...

JOHN CONVERTINO: To talk about Calexico you have to talk about Giant Sand, because Howe got us together. He had a great sense of community and

experimentation and spontaneity, which we learned a lot from.

JOEY BURNS: The name originally was The Friends Of Dean Martin. We had to change it to avoid paying 30% to Dean Martin and his manager. I had just gotten off the road with Victoria Williams. We didn't have any songs written. Everyone assumed we were going to put out a record of covers, but I was very honoured to be on Sub Pop, and thought: surely we can come up with something. So John and I banged out a lot of songs at the old Wavelab studio, which is right on the train tracks in the downtown warehouse district of Tucson.

CONVERTINO: That's basically where Calexico started, right there. The idea was to imitate that which you wanted to hear.

BURNS: We wanted to play instrumentals. We played a lot in lobbies and lounges. We also played [Johnny Depp-owned nightclub] The Viper Room, where we met Kate Moss. She came out from behind the one-way looking glass to dance while we were playing. Our thing back then was to have martinis

on top of our amps. We all enjoyed doing something that was not about distortion and putting your foot on the monitor. There were elements of Pink Floyd that we would factor in. One of my favourite songs is "All The Pretty Little Horses". I remember my mother playing this lullaby as a kid. I was on tour in New York with Victoria Williams and a DJ played me an old Alan Lomax field recording from South Carolina, and inside of it I heard a whole world I never knew existed. That record captured a beautiful era, April 1995, where we didn't care so much about where we were going.

THE ATMOSPHERIC LO-FI DEBUT

SPOKE

(1996) HAUSMUSIK. PRODUCED BY BURNS, CONVERTINO



The first release under the Calexico name gets a limited run of just 2,000 copies on German label Hausmusik...

BURNS: We had 10 minutes to come up with a

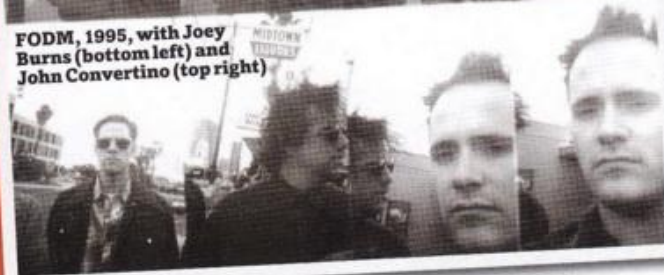
new name. John and I had made a cassette of some random smoky home recordings to give away to friends on a European tour with Giant Sand. It was called *Calexico Superstition Highway*. I thought, well, let's use that, it seems to make sense with the direction we're going in – incorporating more non-rock influences, influences from the Southwest and our experiences from travelling.

CONVERTINO: *Spoke* was recorded in our homes. I was a new father at the time, and coming out of Giant Sand – the glum period, which was probably the loudest Howe ever played. It was really good to be able to put songs together in our homes and do it so quietly. Both Joey and I were realising that subtlety becomes really prominent when you give it the space.

BURNS: John and I did home recordings in the Barrio Viejo of Tucson, which is old adobe houses where there's not one right angle in the architecture. With all these instruments that we'd collected – accordion, mandolin, marimba, vibraphone, cello – and percussion, we wound up collecting an album worth of songs, instrumentals, field recordings and snippets. It had this lo-fi quality to it which works well and paves the way for our albums to come. There's chairs squeaking, old cassette plastic cartridges being dropped. There's people knocking at the door, you can hear the sound of the ice-cream truck going by; we loved turning the mic towards our windows and our doors and the streets. Tucson was appealing, because you didn't feel like you were close to a major US city – you felt you were closer to a village, near the Mexican border.



FODM, 1995, with Joey Burns (bottom left) and John Convertino (top right)



THE FULL-BAND BONANZA

FEAST OF WIRE

(2003) CITY SLANG. PRODUCED BY BURNS, CONVERTINO & CRAIG SCHUMACHER



A diverse combination of influences, from jazz to lo-fi experiments, rub shoulders with a

mournful pop classic, "Not Even Stevie Nicks"; the result is a milestone in the band's career

BURNS: This is one of my favourites. We wanted to bring in the full band. We were really into trying and just being experimental. John and I also did a lot of two-piece work. But that album is diverse. You've got everything from the quiet, meditative elements to field recordings, answering-

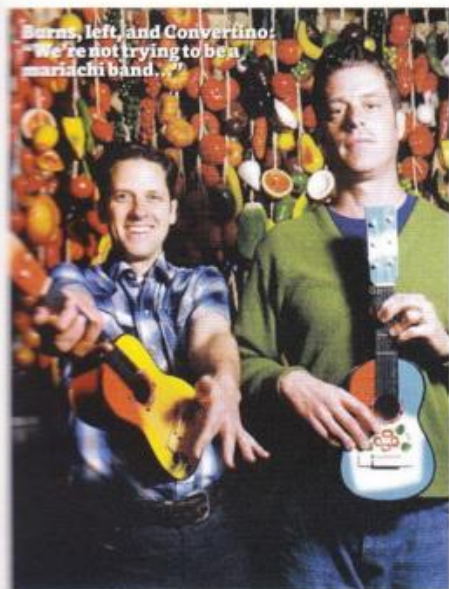
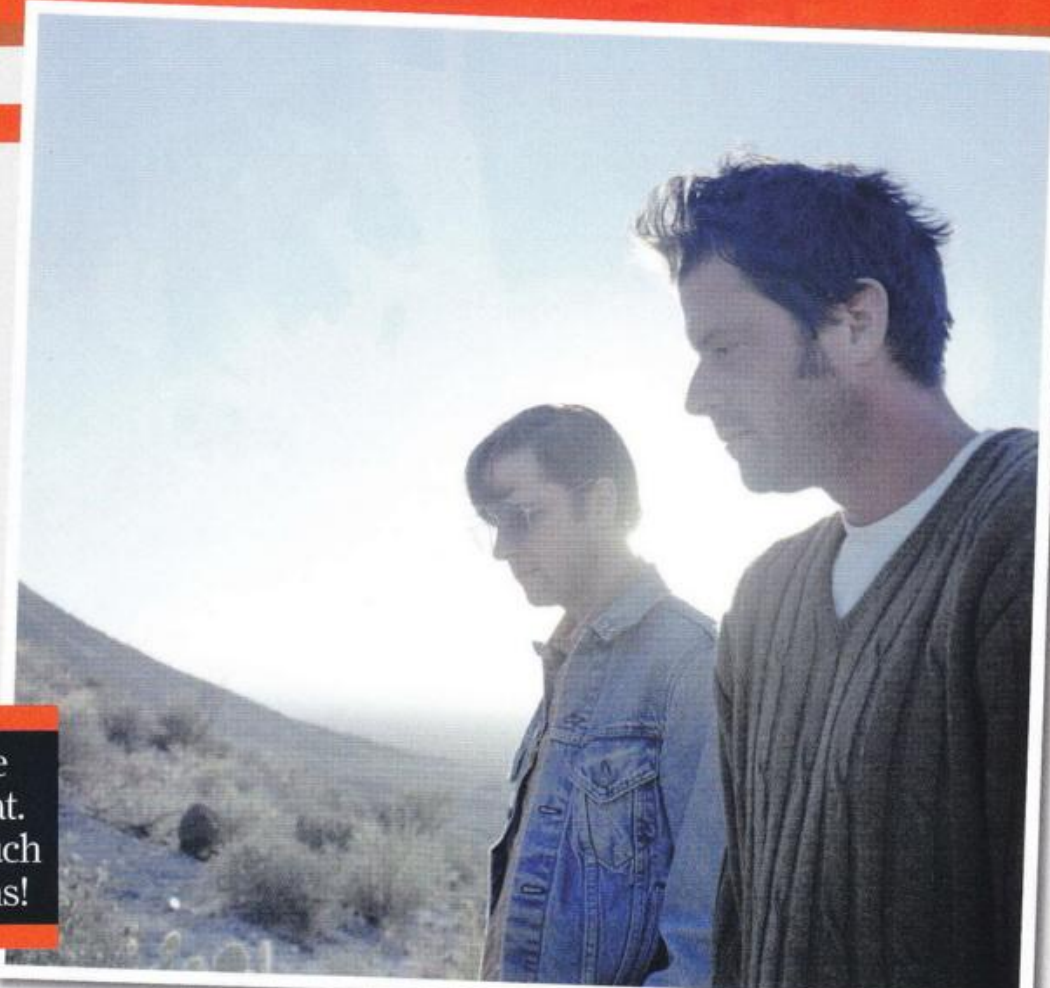
It was hard to play the pop, radio-friendly beat. We were having too much fun with Latin rhythms!

machine messages, and big-sounding songs like "Black Heart", and this massive homage to Charles Mingus, who's from Nogales, Mexico, and Gil Evans-style orchestration. "Sunken Waltz" is a big favourite. It was inspired by Elliott Smith and it wrote itself. "Guero Canelo" is an important song. Michael Mann used it in *Collateral*. It's a *cumbia* [a Colombian folk dance] - that's a great rhythm. Going to our favourite Mexican restaurant, Café Poca Cosa, for breakfast, they blast the music so loud that the waitress is screaming to take your order. But she will never turn it down. She plays everything from Johnny Cash to *cumbias* to Dylan to Manu Chao to mariachi. She just likes to party and serve food. You can't help but move in your seat, and "Guero Canelo" is one of the songs

that's inspired by the *cumbias* I'd heard there. I wanted to take these traditional elements and give them a [Latin American supergroup] Los Super 7 grit and dirtiness. So on that song you don't have a trumpet or accordion doing the melody, you have a fucked-up Casio. The vocals, similarly. I wanted to sing something, but I'm not about to bust out and try to emulate Los Lobos or our friends in the Mariachi Luz de Luna. I wanted to do something more contemporary, so into a distorted mic I started prattling off all these names and places that you might find on South 12th Avenue, or in any border town. You know - drugs, undercover cops. One of the mariachis was a policeman, so he used to tell

me; all those stores on South 12th Avenue, South Tucson, a lot of them are just money laundering for drugs and gangs. I'm like, "Not Café Poca Cosa!" He goes, "No, not them. They're good."

CONVERTINO: We were trying to get sonically better. The pop-rock influence was just starting to make itself known. I was allowing it to happen more. It was really hard for me to play the pop, radio-friendly beat. Joey would try to sneak a song on me, but I was having way too much fun doing the Latin rhythms. "Not Even Stevie Nicks" was an afterthought. But that was so much fun to play that it influenced the next record, *Garden Ruin*.



Burns, left, and Convertino: "We're not trying to be a mariachi band..."

THE DUSTY, AMBIENT ONE

HOT RAIL

(2000) CITY SLANG. PRODUCED BY BURNS, CONVERTINO



Jazzier influences take hold, and the 'desert noir' sound broadens to incorporate ambient tracks and Burns' literary explorations

BURNS: We went into the studio to work on the soundtrack to the movie, *Committed*. The director, Lisa Krueger, got us involved, which was great because that element of cinematic moods really factors into what we do. On *Hot Rail* we wanted to open the door to jazz. "Sonic Wind" is in 6/8 time which is unusual for a rock band, but it's a time signature that's become important to us. That song's inspired by a missile. "Fade" is another jazz song. It's reacting to Cat Power's *Moon Pix* album. I loved that laid-back feel. I

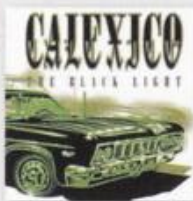
was trying to make something new. We're not trying to be a mariachi band, or a jazz band. We want to form our own voice. We lost some people on the really ambient tracks, which we loved. People were like: what happened here?

CONVERTINO: A friend gave me a copy of the piano works of Erik Satie, done on accordion by Teodoro Anzellotti. You can definitely hear that here. **BURNS:** We were in Europe for the 10th Anniversary of [the band's European label] City Slang, and we took a song that wasn't finished for the album release and adapted it with a mariachi band. That was "Crystal Frontier". The label said they wanted to add it to *Hot Rail*. I was reading Carlos Fuentes' *The Crystal Frontier*, about the maquiladoras [borderland export assembly plants]. And I was looking at the story of Fray Marcos de Niza, the Spanish conquistador, looking for the seven lost cities of gold and dying as a result of this search, and missing out on the real beauty, which is this way of life. So: different forms of greed and different interpretations of what is important in life.

MARIACHI ROCK!

THE BLACK LIGHT

(1998) CITY SLANG. PRODUCED BY BURNS, CONVERTINO



The influence of the Southwest takes hold as mariachi music clashes wonderfully with an alt. rock sensibility. The result? A

widescreen classic, complete with sound of the railroad...

CONVERTINO: We did a project with Paulo Bragança for Luaka Bop. David Byrne got us hooked up. Joey was listening to Portuguese fado [mournful, traditional folk songs] and Afro-Cuban music. That combined with the fact that the mariachi orchestra was recording when we went into the studio. We were listening back to it, going, man, this is it! This is like the concept of *Friends Of Dean Martinez* - you can play anywhere - but with classical instruments.

BURNS: We came to a session early and heard local mariachis recording. I was blown away. These were young kids, they weren't even in high school, but there were a couple of parents and professional musicians there. We met Ferni Sanchez and Rigo Pedroza, the trumpet players. Rigo had been playing in a speed-metal band, but now he'd moved to Tucson he began picking up the trumpet. That's what I like about this community - all the mariachis can play the standards, but they'll also turn round and play Led Zeppelin. We were getting inspired by the locale and by going to the Chicago music store and the fact that they had so many

strange instruments. We were very comfortable at Wavelab in the old location, right on the train tracks. We had to wait a lot of times, because of the trains that were coming. On "Minas De Cobre" we just said, "Let's keep the train on there, it sounds great."

CONVERTINO: I'll never forget when Joey started working on "Minas De Cobre". He was in the bathroom because he liked the way the guitar sounded in there. I couldn't even see him, and it was

All the mariachi bands can play folk standards, but they can also play Led Zeppelin. We love that...

just one of those songs that came together. You hear musicians talk about it - the magic - where it's really a mystery. To this day when we play it I get chills.

BURNS: I loved electronic music, and I was trying to

incorporate it. But we wound up doing something more streamlined and minimal. It's a very spatial, ambient record. There's a few moments where the band explodes.

THE IRON & WINE ONE

IN THE REINS

(2005) TOUCH AND GO. PRODUCED BY CRAIG SCHUMACHER



An experimental mini-album recorded with Iron & Wine, whose vocalist Sam Beam influences Burns' singing style. It's also their first

release to break the US Billboard Album chart, making No. 135...

CONVERTINO: Joey and I have to wrestle with each other going into the studio. There's no shortage of ideas, but sometimes you have to create something out of nothing. That can be painful and hard work. But Sam Beam comes breezing in, and he's like, "Oh, I have these songs," and he sits down and plays them. And they're great songs. It was so easy. Joey and I are always trying to figure out how to be simple, when we have all these instruments and we want to try them out. Sam was like: "Don't be simple. Go crazy."

BURNS: Sam had a daydreamy sensibility, but he was looking to change that. He pushed me to try harmonies that I wouldn't normally go for. I learned a lot - looking at different song styles and using the vocal as a texture, as a way of touching on different moods. I really wanted to do that, but had always been hesitant. Sam gave me a lot of confidence. I remember him being amazed at our ability to pick up an instrument and jam with anyone. Sam doesn't know the names of chords he's playing, but he's got a great musical sensibility. It was great to get some of that in return.

THE POLITICAL ONE

GARDEN RUIN

(2006) CITY SLANG. PRODUCED BY JD FOSTER WITH BURNS, CONVERTINO



Working with JD Foster instead of usual collaborator Craig Schumacher results in a poppier album, with fewer Southwestern flourishes

CONVERTINO: I was freshly fathered and quite distracted. So it really helped Joey to have JD Foster there. I was like, "Hey guys, have fun - I got a new baby." I wanted to see what it would sound like.

BURNS: We tried to make it a whole band record. But we put aside time for John and I, where we came up with songs like "Panic Open String". I was frustrated with the success the Bush administration had in intimidating the press, or any protest. I remember seeing the Iraq war start, and touring Europe, and almost being apologetic onstage. At the same time, the record's not all heavy and dark: "Yours And Mine" is one of the most honest songs we've written. It's about procrastination that gets you into trouble with your loved ones. "Bisbee Blue" is the name of a gemstone that's only found in the mining town of Bisbee, Arizona. We were rehearsing in Bisbee and kept seeing this name come up - we went to a shop that had stones and there it was. I thought it was great - you can buy turquoise all around the world, but there's this one strain you can buy only here. That's such a beautiful sentiment; that can be said about a lot of things - especially two people.

JUST LIKE STARTING OVER...

CARRIED TO DUST

(2009) MUTE. PRODUCED BY BEN HILLIER



A mature, diverse record, where Calexico explore global influences, and reacquaint themselves with their exploratory urges

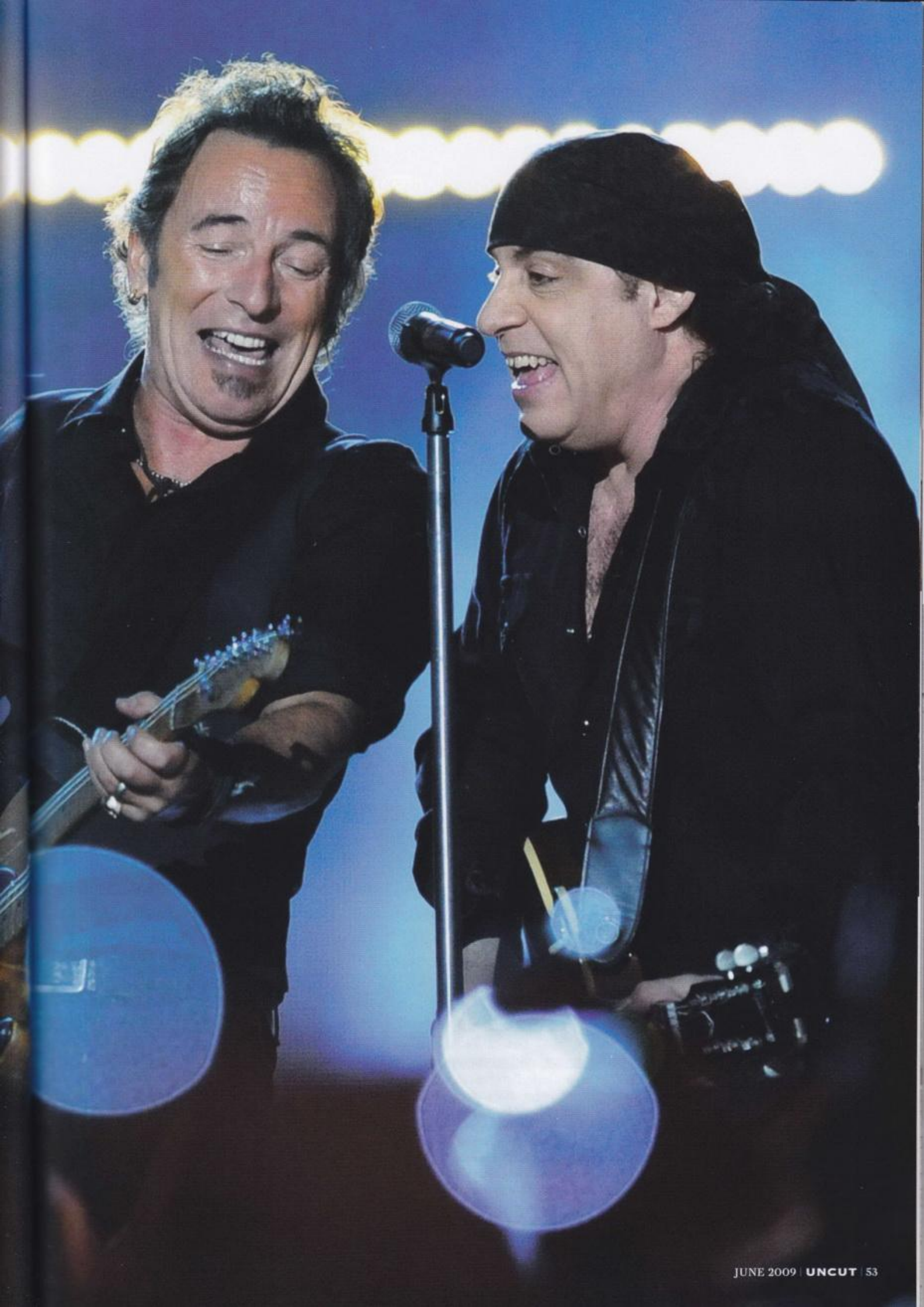
BURNS: We wanted to start in an unassuming way. Just play music. Go back to 1998, improvise and see what happens. We brought in influences from our travels to South America and musicians from Europe - Jairo Zavala and Amparo Sánchez.

CONVERTINO: Contrast is so important. Especially in singing where you hear not only a female voice, Amparo Sánchez, coming in, but she's singing in Spanish. Then you have Jacob [Valenzuela] coming up with a beautiful song, "Inspiracion". It's coming full circle - bringing our influence from Europe, coming via Spain, and then from Mexico. **BURNS:** "Inspiracion" is a great song. I was very happy that we were able to make it contemporary - adding distorted piano and recording Jacob's trumpet in the bathroom. We're tapping into that creative ways to get sounds. There's a lot of collaborations. On "Man Made Lake" we use a pedal that makes you sound like you've just been electrocuted. We're tapping into that Mexicali ambience, but it doesn't sound Southwestern. It's more like Sigur Rós. It also felt like we were getting back to keeping it low budget. Things seem to do better when they're kept low to the ground... ☺

'WE SAID WE'D WALK TOGETHER, COME WHAT MAY...'

Forty years of friendship:
**MIAMI STEVE VAN ZANDT
on BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**

WORDS *by* ANDREW MUELLER
PHOTOGRAPH *by* SPLASH NEWS



A little over 40 years ago, two young men who lived at opposite ends of New Jersey told each other they were going to be rock stars. This, of course, is not an uncommon teenage dream. But what's so remarkable is that Bruce Springsteen and Steve Van Zandt actually cashed in those promises – and, even more amazingly, remained not just collaborators, but friends. Van Zandt calls *Uncut* during breaks in rehearsals for the E Street Band's upcoming world tour in support of Springsteen's 16th studio album, *Working On A Dream* (they're breaking in a new drummer – Jay Weinberg, 19-year-old son of long-standing E Street Band drummer Max, who'll fill in for his father when Springsteen dates clash with Weinberg Sr's commitments to Conan O'Brien's house band). Springsteen, now 59, and Van Zandt, 58, constitute a rock'n'roll brotherhood almost as durable and important as that of Jagger-Richards, and very nearly as tumultuous.

Steve Van Zandt has never been entirely content serving as a sideman. His 35 years of service with Springsteen's E Street Band have been augmented and interrupted by careers as a solo artist, political activist (he convened Artist United Against Apartheid's 1985 hit "Sun City"), actor (as Silvio Dante in *The Sopranos*), radio mogul (of the Underground Garage and Outlaw Country channels for Sirius Satellite Radio), label boss (of Wicked Cool Record Co.), and trenchant commentator on the current state of the music business.

But it's Van Zandt's association with Springsteen that's been the constant of his eventful adult life – and Springsteen's as well. Van Zandt's departure from the E Street Band in '84 prompted a response notably unabashed and heartfelt even by the standards of Springsteen's writing – the song "Bobby Jean", from *Born In The U.S.A.* Though Van Zandt has always been coy about acknowledging what inspired the song, it's hard to imagine what – or who – else Springsteen could have been singing about: someone who he'd known "ever since we were 16", someone who "bung with me when all the others turned away, turned up their nose," someone who "liked the same music... the same bands... the same clothes". Someone of whom it could be said: "Ain't nobody now here nobow gonna ever understand me the way you did".

MIAMI STEVE: My 13th birthday, November 22, 1963, was the day The Beatles released their second album, *With The Beatles*. We got it a month or two later as *Meet The Beatles* – the first record we heard

by them was actually their second LP. The British Invasion hit really big on February 9, 1964, when The Beatles played *The Ed Sullivan Show*, which the entire family used to watch – a mass shared experience, which we don't really have anymore. I'd learned how to play guitar about a year earlier from my grandfather, who taught me Italian songs from his village in Calabria. So I had a bit of a head start on the guitar. But the impact of seeing The Beatles was equivalent to a flying saucer landing in Hyde Park. We'd never seen anything like it.



Miami Steve in The Source (far right), and above, Springsteen in The Castles (front row, left)

They were young, their hair was different, their clothes were different, their attitude was different, the sound was different, and they just exuded hope and the exhilaration of unlimited possibility. It was that much joy being communicated. Anyway, on February 8, 1964 there were no bands in America. On February 10, everybody had one.

In 1965 I joined a band as a singer, and by 1966 I had my own band, The Source. In our local scene there were maybe a dozen bands that got out of the garage – though everybody had one in the garage. There were three local famous bands. The Motifs, from Freehold – Bruce's area. The Mods, from the Jersey Shore. And The Clique, from Red Bank. They were all amazing. They all did a single each. I have The Mods single and The Motifs single, which I have to play on the radio show one of these days. But they all did nothing, never quite got the record deal.

Live with Clarence
Clemons and Garry
Tallent, the *Born To Run*
Tour, October 11, 1975



"We were quite a cult of misfits, freaks and outcasts..."

Bruce was in one of the dozen groups. He had a band called The Castiles. We all knew each other. Our bands played over quite a wide area around my town, Middletown, which was about 20 minutes from the ocean. To the west was Freehold, where Bruce was, which seemed a long way away, though I guess it was only 10 or 15 miles. And then another 10 or 15 miles south was Asbury Park, creating this triangle connected by the Hullabaloo clubs. There was a TV show called *Hullabaloo*, which was only on about a year and a half, but became so popular that they opened some clubs around the country, and three of them connected our circuit.

I might have met Bruce earlier than that, around

"We get along together well, because it's always been a benevolent dictatorship"

the time of the band I was just the singer in – a band called The Shadows. I don't remember the day, or anything – he was just another local kid. We were quite a cult of misfits, freaks and outcasts. It was not cool to be in a band. My parents would have preferred me to be a career criminal – at least it was a steady income. Everyone thought of you as an automatic drug addict, and the girls liked football players. You got the freaky girls, and the fat pimply

ones, but the good-looking girls didn't want to know. And your parents would reinforce it, saying, "You think you're The Beatles? You think you're gonna be The Rolling Stones?" And of course, if you thought about it, they were right. I mean, what the hell are the odds of getting out of Jersey and being a famous English band?

But there were a lot of nice places to play. For kids. Teenage nightclubs without alcohol, beach clubs, high schools. So we'd play the hit singles – Top 40 covers was what everyone did, 'cos that's where the money was, but keep in mind this was also the only period in history where the best music being made was also the most commercial. But we began to play album cuts, which is when people started going in different directions. I was into The Who, The Youngbloods. **CONTINUES OVER** »

and Buffalo Springfield. By 1968, Bruce was into Them, Love and The Doors. Everyone picked their favourite groups and reflected that in their style.

"From the first time I went to his house, he'd play me new songs..."

We were all in different groups every couple of months, really. Bruce and I came together for a while in Steel Mill. Sort of an early Southern, hard-rock kind of group, very influenced by Rhinoceros and The Allman Brothers. We got quite popular, bringing in people by the thousand. That was the biggest thing we did, but that was after five or six groups in all kinds of configurations. Sometimes I'd be in Bruce's band, sometimes he'd be in my band. But Steel Mill, around 1969, started getting popular, and Bruce started writing some interesting songs. They were long – they were all 15 minutes long, and they'd go through 10 tempo changes and key changes. The day of the muso, that whole prog rock thing, was very much at its peak. If I could have afforded a twin-necked guitar, I'd have had one. We never got theatrical about it, though, like the English groups were doing. We had the early regular guy look, the band-looking-like-the-audience thing, which I'm completely philosophically against now.

Steel Mill got close. They auditioned for Bill Graham's label. He took them to San Francisco, just before I joined. There's an audition tape of three songs from around that time – which I think Vini Lopez, the original drummer [see panel, right], released somewhere recently. But Steel Mill weren't bad. You could hear how influenced Bruce was by John Finley, the lead singer of Rhinoceros, who were never a big group, but extremely popular with us – a couple of their albums are among the greatest ever made. Steel Mill just kind of hit the wall. I quit playing entirely, thinking we'd missed it. I went and worked in construction, and Bruce got signed [by Columbia in 1972] as a folk singer, as one of this new genre called singer-songwriters.

He'd been very conscious of songwriting very early. From the first time I went to his house, he'd play me new songs he had written. He was writing right from the beginning. He was just a year older than me, but a lot more savvy in knowing where he needed to go. By the time he got signed, he was very

Hard as iron: Miami Steve and Springsteen in early band Steel Mill



"STEVE WAS BRUCE'S RIGHT-HAND MAN"

Steel Mill and early E Street Band drummer Vinnie "Mad Dog" Lopez on the birth of a friendship

When I first met Bruce, he was a skinny guitarist who played the tar out of it, and looked like a star. We all came from the same place he did, but we said: "Holy mackerel – look at that guy!" He was regular, too. We were all hippies. Then we met Tinker [Carl West, Steel Mill manager and surfboard designer], and we all became hippy surfers. That's what we used to do a lot, when his mother and father moved out to California and left him. We'd get someone to drop us off after midnight, on the beach, at this old pavilion. And we'd sleep there, and surf.

Steve had been Bruce's friend for years. I think they'd become friends playing in clubs – that's how you run into a guy. I had to call him in California and say, "Hey! D'you wanna play bass in Steel Mill?" What comes straight to mind about Steve then is his hair. And that clear bass – an Ampeg or something, that he'd just jam it out on.

into Astral Weeks, very into Tim Buckley, very into Bob Dylan. And this was a whole new thing, introducing personal experience into music – the impact of "Like A Rolling Stone" was absolutely monumental, and certainly by the time James Taylor hit, it was a whole genre.

When he got signed, we all thought it was great. We considered him the Trojan horse – sneak in, get signed, call the band. Which is exactly what he did. I didn't quite get along with his manager [Mike Appel] at the time, so I wasn't part of the first couple of albums. I went from working construction to

And that he was a gentleman, always. If I think of him and Bruce together, there's smiles on both their faces, both of them looking at each other, going: "Waa-a-ah!"

Steve was Bruce's right-hand man onstage, same as he became with the E Street Band. He and Bruce knew their lines. When they had to do stuff, they just had to look at each other. They were joined at the hip. Up-stage guys. Jamming there was their university.

Steve was just one of the guys. But none of us were exactly typical Jersey Shore guys. We were the rockers, as well as hippies. Everyone else was this multitude of Mods. That's why we stayed within ourselves. Wherever we were playing or rehearsing, or working on surfboards, that's where we stayed.

We all hung out together all the time. We had a pool table in one house. Who won was a daily thing. Me and Big Danny [Federici] decided Bruce had possession of The Belt. He was the champ. And we played team Monopoly, over at the house where Steve stayed in Asbury Park. Southside Johnny would be round there, too. Bruce was called the Baron on that board. I was Loper. Danny was the Funky Chicken. Steve, I think, was just Miami. David Sancious turned the Chance card into the Riot Card. You could just destroy property with that. We played Monopoly and rehearsed, more than anything else.

Steve and all of us had our record-players – listening to King Crimson, Van Morrison, Smokey Robinson, you could name a thousand of 'em. And it all came out. Steve was writing songs even then. Bruce and him would sit and listen to each other's songs. And then Bruce would do what he wanted to do. He still does. We were all like family. While Bruce and Danny worked on a lot of stuff, Steve was always sitting at the piano, tinkering. If we weren't rehearsing, that's what he was doing. Steve was Bruce's best friend in the band. That bond had everything to do with the music. That's why we were all there. NICK HASTED

joining the oldies circuit, as a backup for a group called The Dovells, and then for Dion. Then I started Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes, doing a residency at [Asbury Park venue] the Stone Pony. It was a great, great time. We made this hybrid of R'n'B horns and rock guitars, which would become what people now know as bar band music. We found this club whose roof had caved in, said to the owner: "You're gonna close this club in 30 days, let us play what we want. We'll take the door, you take the bar." First week, 50 people, then 100, then 200, then 300, then they decided to fix the roof and expand the place, and we had a thousand people three nights a week.

So not being part of Bruce's band at this point ended being just as well for me, 'cos I was the only one making money, and getting laid, and having fun. I mean, figure it out. Three dollars to get in, a thousand people a night, three nights a week. In 1975. My entire overheads were \$150 a month for my apartment. I'm making a grand a week and fucking every pretty girl in New Jersey. You know, forget it. I haven't had such a good time since.

"Before Born To Run came out, his career was over..."

I took a serious pay cut to join the E Street Band. About five years of a pay cut. I didn't make as much money with Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band as I did with the Jukes until *The River* broke and "Hungry Heart" was a hit. I'm not kidding. Joining E Street was a

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Radio somewhere: on-air interview March 27, 1976, Atlanta, Georgia

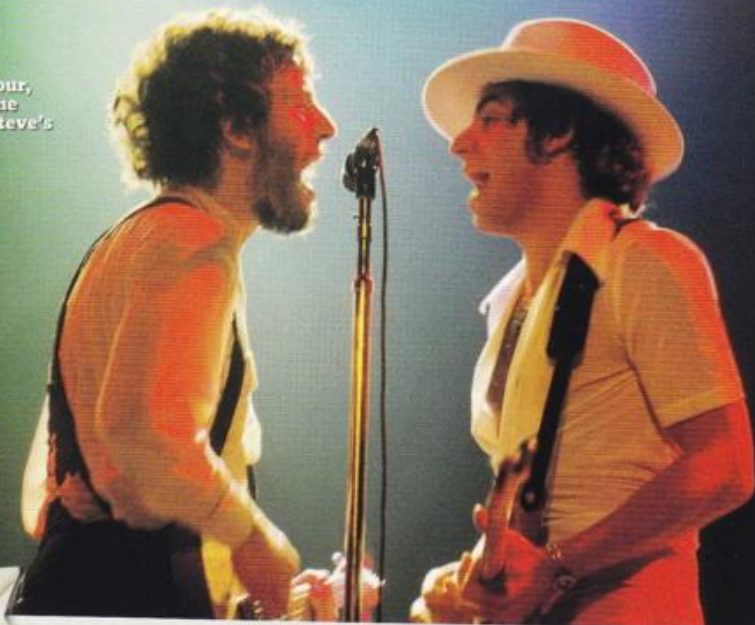
way of getting out of town for a while. Bruce's career was over. Before *Born To Run* came out, he was done. He had seven shows booked, at [Greenwich Village, New York club] the Bottom Line, he said he wanted to put the guitar down a little bit on these last few shows, and I became the guitar player.

He really thought it was over. He'd sold, like, 10,000 records. He was philosophical about it. He wasn't like it was the end of his life, he thought he'd come back and try again. So he decided to put everything he had into this one song, "Born To Run". I think I probably heard it the first time at a rehearsal - I'd just go to the studio to hang around. It was around in various forms for around six months before it was recorded. It was a tough time. There was a lot of pressure, he was feeling it. All I did on the album was the horns on "Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out". I was just in the studio, lying on the floor, hanging around. He said, "What do you think?" and I said, "I think it sucks." And he said "Well, go fucking fix it, then." So I went and fixed it. I'd been doing horns with the Jukes, and I had a feel for what they should be doing, and they weren't doing it. It took about 10 minutes to fix.

[Contrary to rumour] I didn't play that riff on "Born To Run". The first time Bruce played me what he thought was the finished record, he was bending the last note, and there was a bunch of echo, and what was happening was that you only heard the beginning of the note, and you never heard where it was bending to, so it came out as a minor chord, which I thought was quite interesting. In fact, I liked it so much I brought it up. I said, "That's a very cool chord change, it's very Roy Orbison." It was E major to A minor, rather than A major, a whole different feel to the song, and I loved it. I said "This Roy Orbison change, the minor, it's unusual, it's fucking great." He said, "What minor?" So I played him the riff, and he said, "That's not the riff," and the whole fucking session came to a screeching halt. Everybody started freaking. They'd been working on this one song for months. He does credit me with saving his career on that one.

People came to the Bottom Line basically to laugh at us. And a funny thing happened: we fucking blew their minds. We were way ahead of the game, by having been a bar band for seven fucking years. And when you were a bar band in those days, people were still dancing to rock'n'roll, which is a very important factor. Bands are skipping the bar band phase these days, which is a vital part of development. My theory is that once upon a time we danced to rock'n'roll, and then we started listening to it, and it's been downhill ever since. But

The *Born To Run* Tour, 1975, and below, the setlist for Miami Steve's first E Street gig



PALACE THEATRE,
PROVIDENCE, RI
20/07/1975

INCIDENT ON 57TH STREET
SPIRIT IN THE NIGHT
10TH AVENUE FREEZE OUT
GROWIN UP
IT'S HARD TO BE A SAINT
IN THE CITY
E STREET SHUFFLE
BORN TO RUN
THUNDER ROAD
NYC SERENADE
KITTY'S BACK
ROSALITA
4TH JULY ASBURY PARK
(SANDY)
A LOVE SO FINE
SHA LA LA
QUARTER TO THREE

"We like being together. We've been best friends since 1965. And he still makes me laugh"

you go through that development, you keep it for life. We get to the Bottom Line, which is maybe 500 people in seats, you're still compelling people to dance. That electrifying energy, forcing people to dance by sheer willpower, that's what separates the great performers from those

who are not. That's how you get big and stay big, and it's a lost craft.

"Bruce was uncomfortable with fame..."

I still don't know how we ended up on the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek* the same week, October '75. I think [Rolling Stone journalist and Springsteen's future manager] Jon Landau was friendly with both magazines. He was the most respected journalist in the country. I think they were both talking to him not knowing the other one was talking to him. Bruce was very uncomfortable with the fame. After all those years of struggle, he looked like an overnight hype. He resented that, and he resented having a sense of losing control of one's destiny, to some extent. It was an uncomfortable couple of years, and then he got hit with a big lawsuit so he couldn't record.

You'd have to assume that the darker material on *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* and *The River* was a reaction to that. It was such an important moment, and the stuff that was going on would have to show up in the writing. He'd started to think of bigger vistas already on *Born To Run*, and I think he just continued, and started looking more towards the darker side. The exuberant hope of *Born To Run* remains to some extent, but was tempered by heavy doses of reality in "Badlands" and "Prove It

All Night". *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* may still be his best collection of songs. That material really forms the depths of what we now know as Bruce Springsteen music, and maybe the circumstances of his life contributed to that. It's never completely autobiographical, and it's never completely not.

The shows were never gloomy. We were all having fun live, though we were doing four-hour shows and three-and-a-half-hour soundchecks - it became a bit work-ethic-to-the-extreme, maybe as a way of avoiding what was outside. All that reality stuff was not a lot of fun, so let's stay in the building for eight hours. So that's what we did, for years. I remember playing Madison Square Garden for the first time with the E Street Band [August 21, 1978]. I remember it because Bruce started the set with Jerry Lee Lewis' "High School Confidential" - I mean, you finally make it, and he starts with this song that nobody in the audience under 50 knows... Playing four hours wasn't my first choice, and still isn't - I'm all for 90 minutes, and get out of there. But one song at a time, they're enjoyable. He's an enjoyable songwriter. And as far as getting along with each other, we've always been good, which is because it's always been a benevolent dictatorship. It's a lot more difficult in a democracy.

There was no problem with nobody playing on *Nebraska*. It was my idea to put it out like that. He played me the four-track home demos and I said to him, "This is going to sound odd, but it should be released as it is - the fact you didn't intend to release it makes it the most intimate record you'll ever do. This is an absolutely legitimate piece of art." At first, he thought it was crazy. We may have tried a few of the songs as a band, but he kept coming back to the demos, and eventually agreed.

In 1982, I got married. Little Richard was the preacher. Percy Sledge sang "When A Man Loves A Woman", as we walked down the aisle. Bruce was best man. He did okay, but it was a little hard to beat Little Richard.

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The E Street Band in 1978: (l-r) Miami Steve, Garry Tallent, Roy Bittan, Clarence Clemons, Springsteen, Danny Federici and Max Weinberg

"Growing up, we never talked about politics. We were obsessed with rock'n'roll..."

Leaving the E Street Band was very difficult. I'd become obsessed with politics at that point. We'd broken through with *The River*, having thought we'd never get there, and suddenly there we were on the mountaintop. Filling arenas, having hits. We'd sold three million LPs, which I thought was the most we could possibly sell. It was a tough moment. I'd gotten this revelation that I didn't know anything about what was going on in the world, and that I needed to find out. It was rough for a month or two, but we sorted it out, and we've stayed friends ever since.

You can't ever predict that someone's gonna sell 20 million albums... He had seven Top 10 singles [off *Born In The U.S.A.*], which is just completely... inappropriate. By then, he'd got used to the idea of being famous, though. I wasn't worried about feeling like I'd left the biggest band in the world. I felt we were the biggest band when I left, however much bigger it got. It is hard to understand, for myself as well sometimes, but it was not like it was a career choice. I had to do what I did. It started with a trip to Europe for *The River*, the first time we really did a European tour, and a kid came up to me in Germany and said, "Why are you putting missiles in my country?" And I said: "Listen, man, I'm a guitar player. I got nothing to do with it." But it stayed in my head, and I couldn't get rid of it, and it finally hit me that this kid, like most people outside of America, don't see you as a guitar player, or as a Republican or a Democrat or a lawyer or a doctor, but as an American. I'd never thought of myself as an American before, and about the responsibilities that go with being a

citizen of a country. I'd had tunnel vision for real. But because we were successful for the first time, that tunnel started to fade. And I started looking around. So I started reading every book on foreign policy post-WWII, and it was quite a shock.

Bruce was not overly political at that time, which I know is hard to imagine, because he's so political now. His stuff was much more subtle, more social, more humanist, telling stories about reality and how difficult it can be for people, and then trying to provide a bit of hope on the other side. The best art helps us explain life to some extent. Growing up, we never talked about politics. We were obsessed about one thing only, and that was rock'n'roll.

like John Kerry, but I said, "I'd like to make a personal statement, and I'd like everyone to consider endorsing it, that we are independents who have decided to support John Kerry."

It was all very exciting being involved with the Obama campaign, but it was the most difficult time I've ever had keeping my mouth shut. When he lost New Jersey, I had to be chained to the bed.

"It was silly of Bruce to break up the band..."

I went back to the E Street Band after I'd made those five solo albums... I'd said what I wanted to say, and learned what I needed to learn.

Bruce and I had been talking all along, and one day, I started thinking, it's silly to have a band and leave it. I tell everybody now: if you have a good band, keep it always, and do what you need to do in between. That's the approach we should have taken, in hindsight. It was silly of me to leave. It was silly of Bruce to break up the band at the end of the '80s. We should have just kept it together and done other things in between. It

seems so obvious now. When we got back together in 1999, it took a minute to adjust, again, to a band situation where you don't have to do everything yourself, you've got friends around you. But as soon as we got back on the road, it's been 10 years of being closer than ever, really.

Everything has been pretty relaxed for many years. When it comes to the band, it's effortless. It's just what we do. There's no tension, or pressure. We've always tossed in ideas. I used to be quite involved in the arrangements, from *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* on - I was really an arranger before I was anything. We still throw in ideas, the whole band does, but the final

CONTINUES OVER ►

"Bruce is not even close to running out of ideas. Physically, he's in the greatest shape of his life"

There was politics seeping into rock'n'roll in the '60s, of course, and we were aware of civil rights and the war in Vietnam. But our minds were more focused on how we could make a living.

Bruce and me discuss politics now, occasionally, but there's not a lot of argument - we pretty much see things the same way. I was extremely political when nobody was, and I've always stressed that it was important to remember that I'm registered as an Independent, and was not endorsing any party.

It was a pretty big discussion, about endorsing Kerry in 2004 and Obama in 2008. To be honest, I probably wouldn't have done it if Bruce hadn't asked me to do it. But, okay, he wants my help, and I

GREETINGS FROM THE BOSS!

Your guide to this month's free CD...



Springsteen and Miami Steve with Danny Federici on the Magic tour, November 2007, Boston

decision, of course, is always his, and you contribute knowing you're contributing to his vision. So it takes the ego out of it, which is where bands can fall into conflict. You suggest 10 ideas, maybe one gets through, and as long as you're okay with that, you're gonna be fine. That's what being a team player is about. It's all very adult – really, it's nothing but fun. But it's simple when your leader is as good as he is. He's not writing bad songs.

You come to grips with a bigger audience. For Bruce and for us, there hasn't been any changes as far as the records or the artistic process, or the attitude when we go on stage – whether it's a club with 50 people in it, or a stadium with 50,000 people in it, we don't do or feel anything different. That's all been very consistent through the years. There was an odd time when he was having hit singles, which is preposterous – it happened as a last gasp of rock music getting into the charts. It was a massive, cumulative effect of being so popular live that it actually spilled over into the Top 40 for a minute. I don't know how much he was affected by the misinterpretation of some of those songs – that's something that's completely out of your control, obviously.

"We look at each other occasionally and say, 'It's nice to be standing next to you...'"

You can't help but take it a bit for granted, once you've been famous for 30 years. It is a lifestyle, after a while. But it came to us so late in life, we were always thankful that we made it at all. We don't look at each other and say, "Isn't it cool to be famous?", but we will look at each other occasionally and say, "It's nice to be standing next to you, after all this time."

We lost one of our soldiers [Danny Federici, *E Street Band* keyboardist, who died of cancer in 2008] – we're at that stage where people start to go. We know it counts now, and I think we enjoy it now more than ever. We recognise that it's something very special.

Bruce has never talked about stopping. It's unimaginable. Obviously the day will come, but as long as The Rolling Stones are out there, we're the new kids on the block. And these last three albums he's written have been fantastic. He's not even close to running out of ideas. There's no end in sight, frankly. Physically, he's in the greatest shape of his life. He may decide to do some other things, but there's no reason why we shouldn't keep the band together another 10 years, maybe more.

You need to be comfortable in your relationship to stay together this long. We like being together, and we like each other. We've been best friends since 1965. And he still makes me laugh. **Q**

Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band play the UK in June and July; Little Steven's Underground Garage Presents... The Coolest Songs In The World Vol 8 is available now on Wicked Cool Record Co

Bruce Springsteen has always paid close attention to the music that greets his fans as they walk in to the auditorium before his shows. But on his current tour, which opened in America at the start of April and arrives in Europe in May, he has excelled himself. On any given night, the audience is warmed up with selections from a playlist totalling more than 220 songs and spanning the gamut from blues, folk and gospel to country, R'n'B and rock'n'roll. Taken as an entity, these "walk in" tapes offer a unique insight into the diverse influences that have informed his career, in a similar way to Dylan's *Radio Theme Time Hour* playlists.

Here, then, we present 15 songs from Springsteen's personalised selection. If you want to know the Boss' other 200-plus choices, they're all listed on his website at www.brucespringsteen.net/live/walkinmusic

1 Robert Mitchum The Ballad Of Thunder Road

"I never saw the movie, only the poster in the theatre lobby," says Springsteen of Mitchum's '58 film *Thunder Road*, the title of which he borrowed for the opener on *Born To Run*. Mitchum co-wrote the song with Don Raye.

2 Mississippi John Hurt Candy Man Blues

Hurt recorded this classic in '28. He wasn't rediscovered until '62, when he was found driving a tractor on a farm in Mississippi and became a hero of the folk-blues revival. He died in '66.

3 Neko Case The Train From Kansas City

Springsteen has performed Leiber & Stoller's 1952 song "(Goin' To) Kansas City" a number of times in concert, but here Neko Case [right] makes the journey in the opposite direction in a cracking live version of a song first heard on The Shangri-Las' 1964 debut.

4 Hank Williams Lost Highway

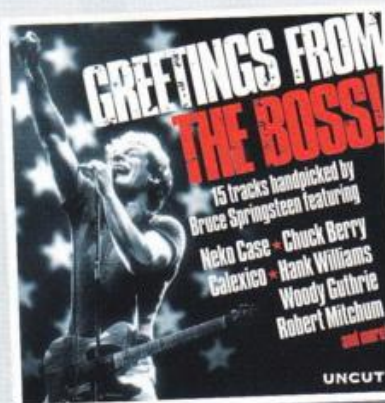
"I'm on that long lost highway," Springsteen sings on "The Big Payback", a *Nebraska*-era song released on 2003's *The Essential Bruce Springsteen*. It's hard to imagine that his song wasn't



referencing Hank's '49 cut and the country legend's songs are also regular Springsteen favourites at sound-checks.

5 Amos Milburn Chicken Shack Boogie

The full-tilt tumult of this '48 track kicked off a run of 19 consecutive Top 10 R'n'B hits for the Houston-born Milburn, who died in 1980, aged 57.



6 Woody Guthrie Hard Travelin'

Unlike Dylan, Springsteen was just too young to have a chance to meet Guthrie before his death in '67. His influence, however, was no less strong for that, and the Boss contributed two Guthrie covers to 2000 tribute *Til We Outnumber 'Em*.

7 Jimmy Reed Take Out Some Insurance

A Springsteen favourite – he was playing the song live way back in '72 – and it's still there as part of the "walk in" soundtrack on his current tour. The Chicago blues singer recorded the track in 1959 on *Rockin' With Reed*.

8 Jimmie Rodgers My Blue Eyed Jane

Recorded in 1930, the cornet, clarinet and tuba of Bob Sawyer's band give "the father of country music" a surprisingly

strong jazz influence here. Dylan later covered this song for a 1997 Rodgers tribute LP.

9 Bascom Lamar Lunsford Dry Bones

Lunsford was born on North Carolina in 1882 and spent his life collecting songs from the Appalachians. He began recording in 1922 and is best known for "I Wish I Was A Mole In The Ground", heard on Harry Smith's *Anthology*.

10 Calexico Across The Wire

With plenty of border ballads and badlands songs of his own, it's no surprise Springsteen has a taste for the evocative desert noir of Calexico. This track is from their 2003 *Feast Of Wire* LP.

11 Mississippi Sheiks The World Is Going Wrong

Formed in Jackson, Mississippi and named after the Valentino film, the Sheiks recorded 70-plus classic blues sides between 1930-35. They included "Sittin' On Top Of The World", "I've Got Blood In My Eyes For You" and this, which will be familiar to many from Dylan's '93 cover.

12 Gene Vincent Baby Blue

Rock'n'roll from the 1958 teen flick, *Hot Rod Gang*. You can find a wonderful clip of Vincent [pictured above] and the Bluecaps performing this song in the movie on YouTube: key words – Vincent Blue 1958.

13 Mahalia Jackson God's Gonna Separate The Wheat From The Tares

There's an amazing amount of gospel on the playlist, from the Staples Singers, to the Soul Stirrers. But we've gone for God's No 1 gospel queen and this 1937 recording by the mighty Mahalia.

14 Chuck Berry Too Much Monkey Business

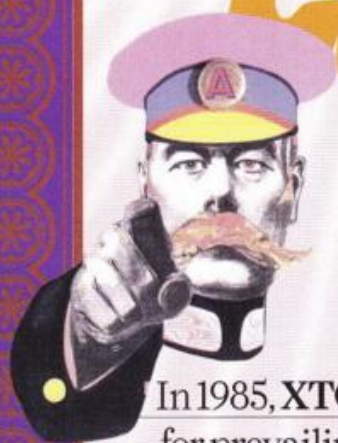
At the start of his career, Springsteen briefly backed Chuck Berry – later recalling that he never gave the band a set list and expected them to follow his lead after each guitar intro.

15 Louis Armstrong St James Infirmary

Satchmo was the first to record this trad song in 1928 with his Savoy Ballroom Five. Although now a US blues/jazz staple, its origins can be traced all the way back to the English folk ballad, "The Unfortunate Rake".



THE GREEN VILLAGE LEVITATION SOCIETY



WORDS by DAVID CAVANAGH

PHOTOGRAPH by MIKE PRIOR

In 1985, XTC were a band out of time. Nervous breakdowns and a disgust for prevailing trends had left them at odds with the public and their label. A good time, then, to become another group entirely – the superbly psychedelic **DUKES OF STRATOSPHEAR** – and save their career. *Uncut* maps their magical and sometimes traumatic journey into pastoral English pop, and ends up in a Swindon garden shed with the uncommon genius that is Andy Partridge...



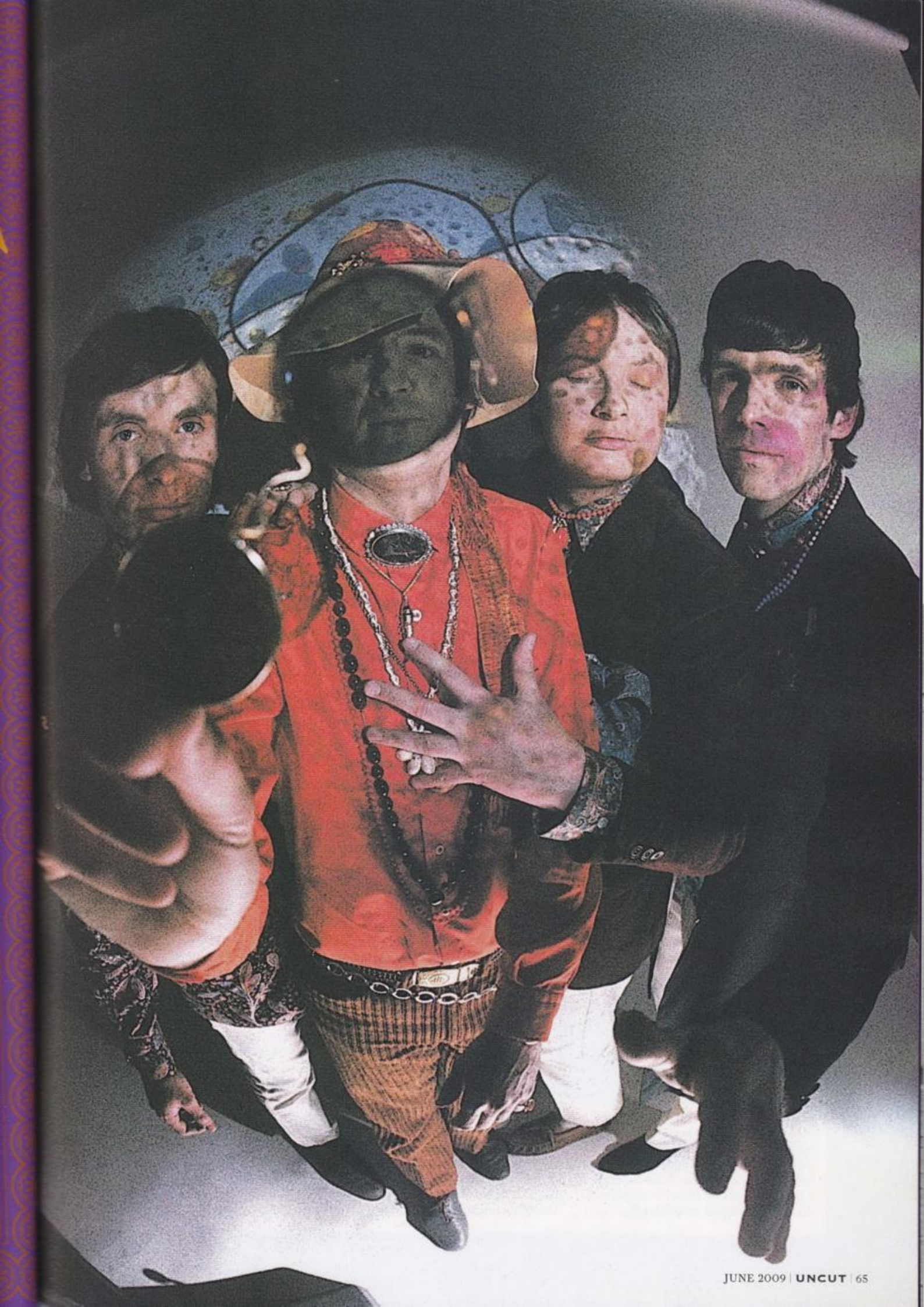
Interviewed by BBC radio in 1985, Sir John Johns predicted a rosy future for his veteran '60s pop-psychedelia classicists, The Dukes Of Stratosphear. Their six-track mini-album, *25 O'Clock*, had been lavishly acclaimed. Their manager, 'Honest' Mitch Mengele, was about to arrange prestigious concerts in Wales and Cornwall (as soon as he returned from an extended holiday in Barbados); and the Dukes, having "clubbed together to buy a liquid wheel projector", hoped to headline an all-night multimedia Be-In, where audiences could relax and enjoy dinner, mime, finger-painting, "or just bring their ironing".

'Honest' Mitch never did return from holiday, however. And there was no chance of gigs in Wales, Cornwall or anywhere else. As with all good jokes, there was a near-the-knuckle edge to the comedy. The Dukes Of Stratosphear were XTC (taking a psychedelic psabbatical from their 'proper' career), and Sir John Johns was Andy Partridge – whose 1982 nervous breakdown on the eve of a coast-to-coast US tour had turned XTC overnight into a studio band.

Widely tipped at one time for Police-style success, XTC instead moved towards a pastoral English music from '82 onwards (*English Settlement*, *Mummer*) that had more to do with Great Western steam engines and parsons on bicycles than big-themed crossover rock. Guitarist/keyboardist Dave Gregory admits the mid-'80s were troubled times, as the Swindon trio faced up to dwindling album sales (30,000 in Britain), financial woes blamed on an absconding manager, and ongoing disagreements with their label, Virgin.

"We spent most of 1984 working on *The Big Express*, going back and





forth into the studio at Virgin's behest," Gregory recalls. "We were writing good songs; we were just out-of-kilter with the trends. Then the album came out, to the faint praise with which we were traditionally damned, and there were no hits on it."

"We were dead and done in England," says Partridge matter-of-factly. "The graph went down very rapidly. Most people think we split up after 'Senses Working Overtime' [XTC's sole UK Top 10 hit, in early 1982]. You ask any London taxi driver. They know the score."

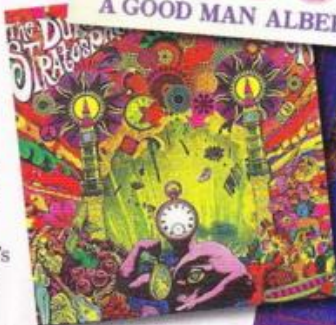
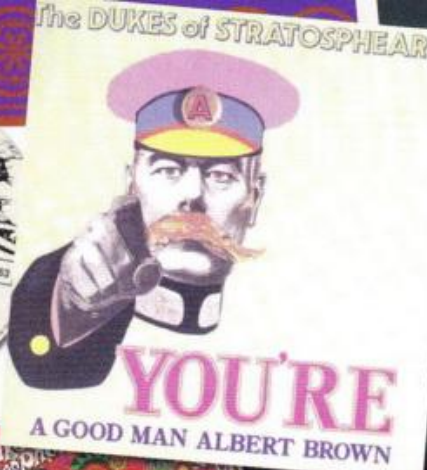
But there is a second graph in Partridge's mind. And in this one, he feels XTC never declined. This is the graph that shows consistent album-on-album improvement over two decades. Partridge believes it makes XTC almost unique. He accepts that 1984-5 was "a good time to become another band [i.e. the Dukes], but it wasn't, because we were failing as XTC". Gregory, who finally left in 1998, agrees with him: "I've felt angry in XTC. I've felt frustrated and let down, but there was never any boredom. Whatever happened, XTC wasn't going to fold for lack of inspiration."

And so, in late 1984, at a time when Virgin appeared to be despairing of them, or demanding more commercial tunes, or suggesting that the photogenic Colin Moulding (bass) should write their singles and 'front' the media coverage while Partridge played the background boffin, XTC managed to find an escape route from their low ebb. They went back to the '60s, "had the most fun we ever had" (Gregory), and were reborn as shadowy impostors from the golden age of psych.

Swindon, Wiltshire. A quiet Friday morning with a nip in the air. After 30 years in the music business, it's a surprise to find Andy Partridge living in nothing grander than a terraced house. It's something he thinks about himself on occasion – usually after reading that Elvis Costello is worth £50 million, or that Sting has bought an eighth home. While his Fulham Greyhound contemporaries from 1977 have got rich, Partridge stays local, affects no airs, and makes his music in a garden shed.

Naturally garrulous, with round glasses, a portly frame and a hairless pate, Partridge is a composite of all the characters in *The Wind In The Willows*. He wears what appears to be a hearing aid – but isn't. He suffers from severe tinnitus, after receiving an accidental blast of deafening noise through studio headphones in 2006. The attachment in his ears feeds generic white noise into his brain, he explains, so that the relentless whine of his tinnitus doesn't send him crazy.

In a front room containing a settee, a small portable telly and a stand-up piano, The Dukes Of Stratosphere begin to flicker back into life through the mists and veils of time. Partridge released new editions of their two mid-'80s albums in March (on his own label, Ape



Partridge, in character as Dukes' leader Sir John Johns, '85

Recordings) as the first tasters of a comprehensive XTC reissue programme that also involves EMI, who own most of the catalogue. The EMI side of things will get under way this summer, with *English Settlement* (1982), *Skylarking* (1986) and *Oranges And Lemons* (1989). All will come in 2CD packages and on double-vinyl.

Partridge first approached his friend Dave Gregory in '78, before Gregory was even a member of XTC, with an idea for a psych-homage LP made by a mythical band. But it was six years before the opportunity presented itself. In December 1984, finding himself with an unexpected three-week window in his schedule (after being sacked by Canadian singer Mary Margaret O'Hara as her producer), Partridge priced a modest £5,000 out of Virgin, telling them to expect "a record that sounded like everything that came out in 1967". XTC and producer John Leckie eagerly began work.

Partridge: "We wanted to say thank you to the bands who made our lives brilliant from the ages of 12 to 14." Period album sleeves were brought into the studio (*Disraeli Gears*, *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, *Mr Fantasy*) to create the right mood. From reedy-sounding organs and phased vocals to ghostly Mellotrons and backwards guitars, every trick in the book was used. Partridge warms to his theme: "English psychedelia is *Alice In Wonderland*, you see. It's a stripey blazer and a straw boater, and you're on a punt in Oxford, and then you're on a lawn somewhere and someone lets off a purple smoke bomb and you're all having blancmange from a table that somebody's set up in the garden."

Essential to the consummate artistry of the Dukes' musical mirror images was the fact that *25 O'Clock* was made in gleeful contravention of all the rules of mid-'80s music. These rules even applied to XTC, whose 1984 LP *The Big Express* had been cluttered with the most modern drum-sounds and the most fashionable synths. "A horrible time for music," Gregory now shudders. Partridge looks back on the '80s as a decade when "every instrument sounded wrong". Designed meticulously as a journey into the past, *25 O'Clock* ironically stood out as a beacon of futuristic ingenuity amid the teeth-rattling

Trevor Horn and Langer-Winstanley productions of the time. The Dukes really were as liberated as they sounded. "It was the opposite to restrictive, as we didn't have to be ourselves," comments Partridge, who places the Dukes in the tradition of pastiche-tributes like Frank Zappa's *Cruising With Ruben & The Jets* and Roy Wood's *Introducing Eddy And The Falcons*. "By having a costume ball, which is what the Dukes were, an enormous moral burden was lifted off our shoulders. We could be daft and stupid and revel in pretending to be someone else."

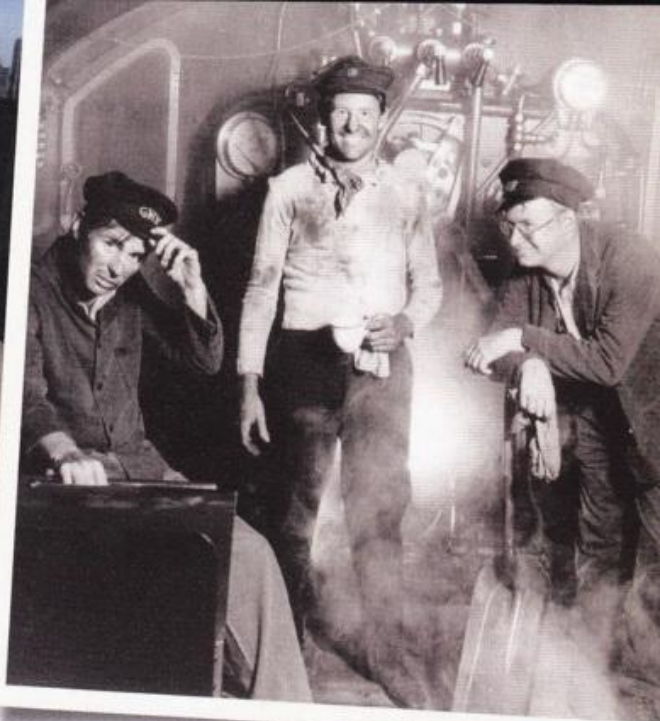
Partridge took the pseudonym 'Sir John Johns'. Gregory, who in real life speaks in an actorly voice that Partridge likens to Prince Philip, became 'Lord Cornelius Plum'. Colin Moulding was renamed 'The Red Curtain'. Moulding, too young to have total recall of the psych era, allowed Partridge, Gregory and Leckie to steer the project. "I took instruction on it," the bassist chuckles. "I got swept along by the enthusiasm, but I didn't fully understand it. I wrote a couple of songs where the guys thought, 'Yeah, we could crowbar that into the concept.'"

25 O'Clock was a runaway success. It outsold *The Big Express* "by about three to one" according to Partridge, gave the band a new lease of life, and even nurtured its own folklore: you were supposed to believe the Dukes were a long-lost band from '67 whose master-tapes Virgin had somehow acquired. Among those who enjoyed the jape were Tears For Fears, who gave Beatlesque single "The Mole From The Ministry" a resounding thumbs-up on Radio 1's *Round Table* (and almost certainly allowed it to inspire their own "Sowing The Seeds Of Love" a few years later), and the Stone Roses who, in 1988, would ask their producer John Leckie if he could make them sound like the Dukes Of Stratosphere. As it turned out, he could.

The Red Curtain and Sir John Johns don't speak to each other any more. Sadly, the Dukes' parent band, XTC, ceased to exist in 2005, when adolescent friends (and Penhill



Working overtime: Partridge in the studio and with Colin Moulding, NYC, 1998. Right: XTC promote *The Big Express* in '84



council estate near-neighbours) Andy Partridge and Colin Moulding fell out over the valuation of a studio that they co-owned, bringing a 30-year relationship to an abrupt close. Moulding even went so far as to move house and keep his new address and phone number a secret. It seems an awful way for a much-loved band to end.

"Oh God, where do you start?" Moulding wonders rhetorically, when I speak to him one afternoon. Partridge has warned me he's become a Syd Barrett figure, a troubled recluse who shuns the world and doesn't listen to music any more. Moulding is scarcely full of the joys, it's true, and he alludes to a depression that lasted a couple of years, but he sounds perfectly lucid and appears to be well on the mend.

steady upward gradient – peaks, in his eyes, with the final project that XTC embarked on as a trio. It led to two albums (*Apple Venus*, 1998, and *Wasp Star*, 2000), but was conceived originally as one. It was to be a double-LP extravaganza – half-orchestral, half-electric rock – that would signal XTC's re-emergence following a five-year period in which they had refused to record, demo or present a single note of music to Virgin. Sick of seeing no royalties, and anxious to be released from their contract, Britain's most mild-mannered group had taken the extraordinary decision to go on strike.

Eventually, in '97, Virgin blinked first – and let XTC go – but not before the three men suffered serious financial hardship. "I did get a bit thin,"

English bands. And Partridge thinks he knows why: "Lack of success was the reason our albums were allowed to get better," he says. "Lack of success was the best thing that ever happened to us. You put out a record that no bastard buys – so you make the next one even better. Right then, what about this one? Lack of success, for us, was like having a set of Duracell 'drumming bunny' batteries in our backs."

Halfway through the afternoon, as Dave Gregory phones to say he's on his way, Partridge leads me out of the kitchen and shows me his garden shed. He has a digital studio set up inside, with instruments lining the walls, and he's keen to play me something he's recorded.

Partridge hasn't produced anything significant since XTC ended – he claims to have several hundred songs in progress, but lacks the confidence to finish them – so these days he makes music alone, in his shed, for his own private enjoyment.

He presses a button and the sound of Can pumps out of the speakers. Except it's not Can. There's a great Krautrock-type groove, straight out of *Tago Mago*, and the sounds of Michael Karoli's squealing guitar and Holger Czukay's thrumming bass are perfectly replicated. But the free-associating Japanese vocalist has just the faintest hint of a recognisable Swindonian twang as he sings something ludicrous about "drinking the sky". Partridge is in fits of giggles, pointing at the speakers and shaking his head in disbelief. He's cut this fake-Can track himself – for no professional reason whatsoever – and he knows how forensically spot-on every sound and nuance is. When it comes to homage, Partridge is an expert. This small, sound-proofed potting-shed is where the spirit of The Dukes Of Stratosphere will live on, probably forever, and Sting, for all his nine homes, will never know fun quite like it. ☉

"Lack of success was the best thing that ever happened to XTC. You put out a record that no bastard buys - so you make the next one even better!" Andy Partridge

"Most bands fall out over musical differences or money," he says. "In our case it was money. Never go into business with one of your best friends, I suppose, is the lesson... I don't know what happened to us over the last few years. I wish I could ask Andy, 'Where did it all go wrong?' I just felt like that scene in David Lean's *Great Expectations* where you see Magwitch die in the prison and the world starts turning round and he [Pip] goes into a big illness. That's what it's been like for me the last couple of years. If I could have grown my nails like Peter Green, I would have done. But I've started picking up a guitar again, and I'm enjoying hearing music. Before you came on the phone, I was listening to 'Birdhouse In Your Soul' by They Might Be Giants. It cheered me up."

But if XTC ended acrimoniously in the personal sense (Gregory, too, went through a period of not talking to Partridge), their music was still full of invention and often startling beauty right up to the last gasp. Partridge's aforementioned 'second graph' – the one that shows their LPs getting better and better in a

recalls Moulding. "I can't remember what I did... I think I drove a van for a while. A dark period. They were trying to smoke us out."

Apple Venus (the more orchestral one) and *Wasp Star* (more electric) came out as separate albums, on independent labels, and with hindsight they provide a fascinating conclusion to a story that had begun on the manic side of punk ("Statue Of Liberty", "Science Friction") before finding its vocabulary in the panic and paranoia of Cold War new wave. Partridge doesn't like to boast – actually, Partridge does like to boast, but he asks you a week later not to print bits where he compares his music to The Beatles – but it's clear that the current XTC reissue campaign shows the blossoming of one of the more adventurous





BURIED ALIVE IN THE BLUES

"JANIS JOPLIN

redefined what it meant to be a woman in rock music," says Patti Smith. Seasick Steve calls his late friend, "The most incredible singer I have ever seen." With the help of her bandmates, friends and admirers, Uncut looks behind the rock-casualty myth to discover what Janis Joplin was really like...

WORDS *by* JOHN LEWIS

PHOTOGRAPH *by* JIM MARSHALL

It was, at the time, the biggest music festival ever staged. Some 200,000 hippies saw Otis Redding and The Who burst on to the US scene; they saw Hendrix set fire to his guitar.

Way down the Monterey '67 bill, though, was a band no-one had heard of, who had never released a record and who were only known to a few hundred hippies. Big Brother And The Holding Company were fronted by a chubby 24-year-old from Texas called Janis Joplin, and they were about to unleash the acid-rock counterculture upon Middle America. "Janis just ripped the place up," says Seasick Steve, a friend of Janis Joplin from a spell in mid-'60s San Francisco. "She was singing 'Ball And Chain', bashing her heel into the stage like a flamenco dancer, screaming at the top of her voice. Many big names at Monterey tanked. But Janis seemed to get bigger in stature as the gig went on. Watch the film and you see Mama Cass with her mouth open, shaking her head in disbelief. That's how we all felt."

A year later, Joplin would walk out on her band. Two years later she'd be the biggest female singer in the US. And three years later she'd be dead.

Janis Lyn Joplin was born in January 1943 into a conservative, lower-middle-class family in Port Arthur, Texas. Her father was an engineer for Texaco, her mother a college registrar. She talked of being unpopular and shunned at school ("I was a misfit: I read, I painted, I didn't hate niggers"). Overweight, short-sighted, acne-scarred, and with a fascination for unfashionable strains of folk and blues, she was quickly labelled a "freak" and "weirdo" by the jocks at University Of Texas in Austin, who voted her "ugliest man on campus".

Aged 20, she dropped out of college and headed for San Francisco, and spent 10 months struggling to make a name on the Bay Area's folk and blues circuit. She returned to Texas to re-enrol in college, but the lure of San Francisco was too strong, and by June 1966 she was back.

In between her two spells in San Francisco, the city had changed. The folkies and beatniks of North Beach had disappeared, to be replaced by a new scene near the junction of Haight and Ashbury.

Janis was invited to San Francisco by gig promoter Travis Rivers, who met her performing in folk and blues clubs in Austin. He recommended her to one of San Francisco's bigger local bands, Big Brother And The Holding Company, then looking for a "chick lead singer" to give them stronger stage presence. The band had been playing in various iterations since late 1965 and already comprised four strong personalities. Their bassist and de facto lead singer was San Francisco native Peter Albin; their drummer was New Yorker Dave Getz, an academic who taught at the San Francisco Art Institute. And key to their sound were two guitarists Sam Andrew (who brought some military band training to the chaos) and James Gurley ("a tall, long-haired mystic," says Andrew, "a wild, untutored, hillbilly visionary").

"Some bands were still copying The Beatles in 1966," says David Getz. "We were more inspired by Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders and Moondog." Big Brother played improvised psych-rock at a breakneck speed, including manic reinventions of folk, blues, jazz and spirituals. "It was the Great American Songbook done by white punks on dope," laughs Sam Andrew.

Gurley remembers the band's first rehearsal with Janis in an old Victorian firehouse in Henry Street where the band practised. "She was dressed very modestly," says Gurley. "Mexican sandals and blue jeans and a blue workshirt. Kind of a peasant costume. Her hair was long and pinned up. But she had this tough attitude and this incredible voice."

"My first reaction was that she sounded like a 78rpm disc from the 1930s that you'd play on a Victrola," says Andrew. "A big, wide voice that stayed in tune no matter how loud she got."

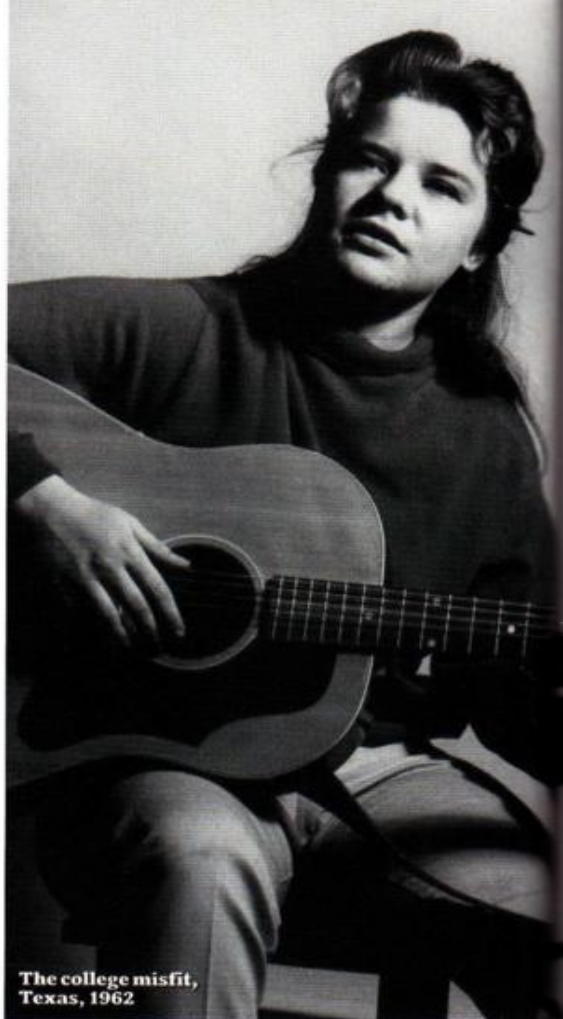
The band started to adapt their set around Janis' voice, slowing down their material and leaving room for her improvisations. "They were an excitingly unpredictable band," says Lenny Kaye, guitarist in the Patti Smith Band and an early

"Janis never did psychedelic drugs. She didn't like to lose control" Joe McDonald

follower of the San Francisco scene. "They had this sense of barely unrestrained energy, always teetering out of control. James Gurley's guitar was like some savage beast that you had to keep in a cage otherwise it would leap off the stage and bite you."

Big Brother quickly landed a residency at The Avalon, becoming the stars of a tight-knit local scene that also included the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane.

"The use of psychedelics led to a sense of deep exploration with all those San Francisco bands," says Kaye. "Their performances weren't rock concerts as such, they were environments where the musicians and the audiences could have space



The college misfit, Texas, 1962

to explore themselves. Big Brother were taking jazz and blues into some abstract future."

Janis fitted uneasily into this burgeoning acid culture. "She never did psychedelic drugs," says Joe McDonald, lead singer of Country Joe And The Fish. "She didn't like to lose control. With her it was always the booze, and later heroin." But she was keen to escape her conservative upbringing in Texas, and Haight-Ashbury was the perfect place to embrace the ethos of creativity, self-exploration, racial integration and free sex.

It was the sex that particularly appealed. Within weeks of her joining Big Brother, the band were scandalised when she started an affair with James Gurley - despite her being close friends with Gurley's wife, Nancy. Janis' sexual conquests later included Sam Andrew, Joe McDonald, Kris Kristofferson, Hendrix and Jim Morrison. There are also rumours linking her to Eric Clapton, Leonard Cohen, talk-show host Dick Cavett, comic actor Howard Hesseman, New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath and musician Janis Ian.

"Being voted 'the ugliest man on campus' must have hurt her bad," says Gurley. "She was unconfident about her appearance, so she jumped at any chance she got to self-validation. I guess you could call it over-compensation."

For some, like her first biographer Myra Friedman, Joplin's sexual promiscuity went hand-in-hand with her live performances - both were "screams of liberation of the female spirit that roared right up to the stars". But that lusty hedonism was trammelled by a masochistic edge. For Julie Burchill, she represented "the rock-chick as victim... filled with treat-me-like-a-doormat whimpering".

"I think some of those criticisms are unfair," says Patti Smith, a long-term fan of Janis Joplin. "Take her version of Irma Franklin's 'Piece Of My Heart'.

Irma's version is saying you can't defeat me, no matter how much of my heart you take, there is still something left. Janis's version puts a slightly different spin on the lyric. In her version, she's going through every possible form of humiliation and pain in order to come out the other side, changing him and herself in the process. It's more about transcendence than victimhood..."

Janis herself was certainly not enamoured with the first-wave of '60 feminism ("Geez, it looks like these radical feminists hadn't a good time in months!" she said to one reporter when shown a feminist newspaper). But she certainly called into question the traditional gender roles in rock'n'roll.

"Haight-Ashbury was a pretty sexist environment by today's enlightened standards," says Sam Andrew. "Men were creative and adventurous. Women were expected to hold the fort. They'd make the food, they'd do the cleaning, they'd babysit for us while we'd drop acid."

Janis was too tomboy-ish to acquiesce to the house-mother role ("she liked being one of the guys," says Gurley), but she still had to live up to the certain expectations of feminine conduct.

She was certainly keen to placate the worries of her parents. Her sister Laura Joplin's biography *Love, Janis* features dozens of letters that Janis wrote to her family, which constantly reassure her parents that she is doing well and earning enough money to get by. "She knew how upset her parents were about her quitting college," says Laura, "and was eager to placate their worries."

Those worries receded after Monterey. Janis and

Big Brother ditched their manager, a slightly paranoid local stoner called Julius Karpen (who didn't even want them to be filmed at the festival) and signed with heavyweight Albert Grossman, who also repped Bob Dylan. After a year of wrangling with their old label, Mainstream, Grossman got them signed to Columbia and eventually released Big Brother's finest album, *Cheap Thrills*. An approximation of their blistering gigs, it spent eight weeks on top of the US chart.

Monterey also represented a key power shift within the group. Janis became the undisputed star, Big Brother merely her backing group. "Where she was once the icing on the cake, she became the cake," says Dave Getz. "When we watched the *Monterey Pop* film, the first thing we noticed was that it was just Janis. The rest of the band were barely in the movie!"

A few months later, in November 1968, Janis announced that she was leaving Big Brother. "We were devastated," says Sam Andrew, "but I guess we could see it coming. She was a pretty materialistic person who felt, quite rightly, that instead of us splitting everything equally five ways, she should have got a bigger slice of the pie. But there were also artistic differences - she wanted to move into R'n'B and always suggested getting in a horn section or a keyboard player. She was frustrated when people said no."

Sam Andrew was the only Big Brother member to stay with Janis after the split, helping to assemble her first solo outfit, the Kozmic Blues Band, which

featured a Stax-style horn section: "In some ways, it was closer to what she'd always wanted to do, that old Victorola sound we heard at that first rehearsal," Andrew explains.

The Kozmic Blues Band's debut, *I Got Dem Ol' Kozmic Blues Again Mama*, was a fair stab at R'n'B but it lacked the manic urgency of her earlier work. It was dismissed by the rock cognoscenti loyal to Big Brother and suspicious of her "poppier" ambitions. Janis consciously turned her back on the underworld and embraced mainstream culture. She appeared on prime-time chat shows and in the pages of *Time*, *Life* and *Newsweek*. The latter even had her lined up as a cover star in April 1969, but she was bumped off the front by the death of General Eisenhower ("14 heart attacks and he had to die in my week," she quipped. "In my week!")

By the time she was touring with the Kozmic Blues Band - at venues like the Royal Albert Hall, Madison Square Garden and the Hollywood Bowl - her earnings had increased massively, and she was spending huge amounts on drink and drugs. A doctor who examined her in 1969 was shocked to find such a swollen, alcohol-ravaged liver on a twentysomething woman. She was also having trouble controlling her 12-piece ensemble.

"Although she was an amazing frontwoman, she wasn't a natural leader," says Sam Andrew. "I think she went through three drummers and tried at least two musicians on each instrument. She sacked everybody eventually! I don't think she had the skills to put a band together."

In November 1969, she fired most **CONTINUES OVER ►**



Big Brother And The Holding Company: David Getz, Janis, Sam Andrew, James Gurley, Peter Albin

A LITTLE PIECE OF HER ART A buyers' guide to Janis



BIG BROTHER AND THE HOLDING COMPANY Big Brother And The Holding Company

MAINSTREAM, November 1967 ★★

An endearingly ramshackle set, featuring chaotic garage rock versions of Powell St John's "Bye Bye Baby" and Moondog's drone-laden "All Is Loneliness", two traditional folk tunes ("Down On Me" and "Coo Coo") and a host of ropery originals.



BIG BROTHER AND THE HOLDING COMPANY Cheap Thrills

COLUMBIA, September 1968 ★★

Presented as a live album, but actually recorded in New York and L.A. studios in between tour dates, this is the finest representation of Big Brother's incendiary gigs, featuring "Summertime", "Piece Of My Heart" and "Ball And Chain".



JANIS JOPLIN I Got Dem Ol' Kozmic Blues Again Mama

COLUMBIA, October 1969 ★★

Her first hired band – the Kozmic Blues Band – pits her against a full horn section as she tries to match the soulful drive of Stax and Motown. Includes cracking stabs at the Bee Gees' "To Love Somebody" and Rodgers & Hart's "Little Girl Blue".



JANIS JOPLIN Pearl

COLUMBIA, January 1971 ★★

Her most polished album, recorded in the four weeks before her death in October 1970 with her five-piece Full Tilt Boogie Band, features the massive hit single "Me And Bobby McGee", the anthemic "Mercedes Benz" and several creditable stabs at funk. There are fewer histrionics, too – Janis' vocal improvisations are more restrained, and more musical.



Janis in London, 1969

of her Kozmic Blues Band – including Sam Andrew, the one professional constant in her career – and replaced them with The Full Tilt Boogie Band. This lineup removed the unwieldy horn section, instead stripping everything down to five musicians recommended by Albert Grossman. They included guitarist John Till (the only survivor from the last incarnation of Kozmic Blues) and pianist Richard Bell, who had both played in Ronnie Hawkins And The Hawks (replacing Robbie Robertson and Richard Manuel after they joined Dylan's band). "We had exactly the same configuration as The Band," says John Till. "Piano, bass, guitar, drums, organ – and like The Band we had four Canadians and one American on drums!"

Perhaps aware of Janis' failings, Albert Grossman took full control of the Full Tilt Boogie Band. "He definitely called all the shots," says John Till. "Janis was definitely more comfortable with that situation. Kozmic Blues was a great band, but Janis couldn't control 12 people. She was much more comfortable with a smaller, more organic outfit like Full Tilt, where everyone had room to stretch out and explore. It was more democratic than Kozmic Blues, more of a gang." Ironically, after two years and countless lineup changes, she had reverted to the dynamic she had with Big Brother.

According to rock myth, Janis' heroin addiction increased after she left Big Brother and spun steadily out of control. But in fact, her habit seemed to have peaked by late 1969. By early 1970, she appeared to have quit after a detox holiday in Brazil.

"She would rip herself inside out every time she performed" Seasick Steve

"She was put on a methadone treatment programme, she was receiving counselling and she was clean," insists Till. "In the last days of the Kozmic Blues band, we had gotten used to people having to walk Janis around the block a few times after a bad dose, to prevent her from passing out and never waking up again. But from the time she formed the Full Tilt band in early 1970 until the time that we started recording that last album she was bright and chipper and right on top of it."

In September 1970, The Full Tilt Boogie Band went to Sunset Sound in Los Angeles to record *Pearl*. "It was an incredibly productive time for everyone," recalls Till. "And Janis was on top form. She'd turn up every day on time for every session. Except for that final day, when she didn't show."

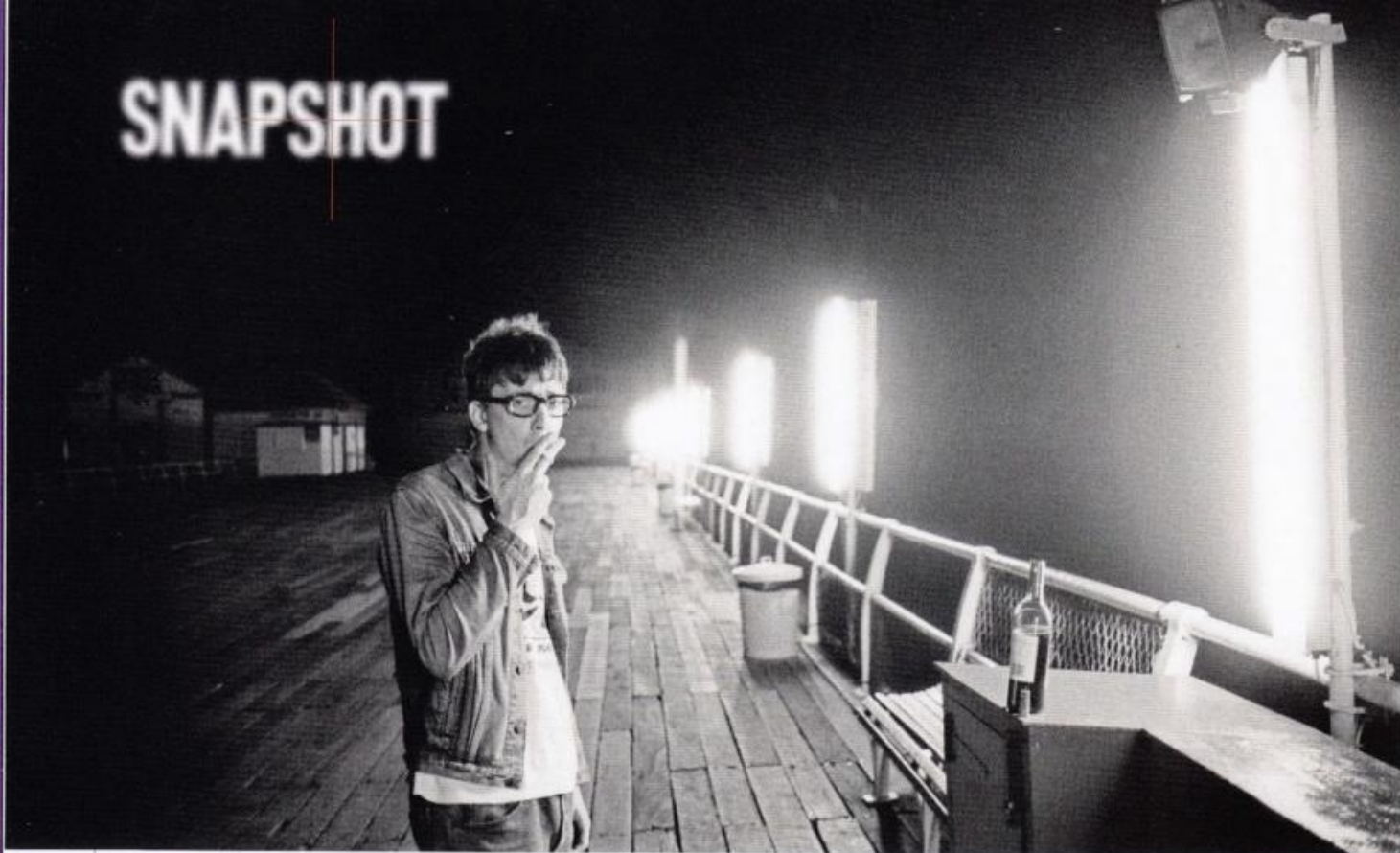
On October 3, Janis was due to lay down the vocals for the very last track on the album, a new song called "Buried Alive In The Blues" by her old friend Nick Gravenites from Electric Flag. When

she didn't turn up, Full Tilt's road manager John Cooke became suspicious and got a pass key to her hotel room, to find her dead body crumpled between the bed and a bedside table. The general agreement is that Janis started dabbling in heroin a few weeks before her death, and accidentally overdosed on some unusually pure opiates.

Death turned Janis Joplin into a legend. Released in January 1971, *Pearl* topped the US charts for nine weeks. Lead single "Me And Bobby McGee" sold more than a million; 1973's *Greatest Hits* package went on to sell seven million copies in America alone. But her name, even more than that of Hendrix (who died three weeks before her) and Jim Morrison (ten months later), became a byword for the perils of hedonism. In the words of Kurt Cobain's mother, she's part of that "stupid club" of 27-year-old rock casualties.

What survives is that remarkable voice. "Janis laid the foundations for all of us," says Patti Smith. "She redefined what it meant to be a woman in rock." For Seasick Steve, "Janis was the most incredible singer I have ever seen – she would rip herself inside out every time she performed."

"It's difficult to say whether things would have been different if she'd stayed with Big Brother," says Sam Andrew. "I think we could have certainly accommodated most of her demands. I think she might have had more grounding in her career. There was something magical about the music we made. I don't think she ever emulated that."



Blur: 1995

No sleep 'til Cleethorpes! It's late summer in the year of the Britpop wars, and Blur have ditched the stadiums for a tenner-a-ticket tour of the country's seaside towns...

WORDS AND PHOTOS by PAUL POSTLE

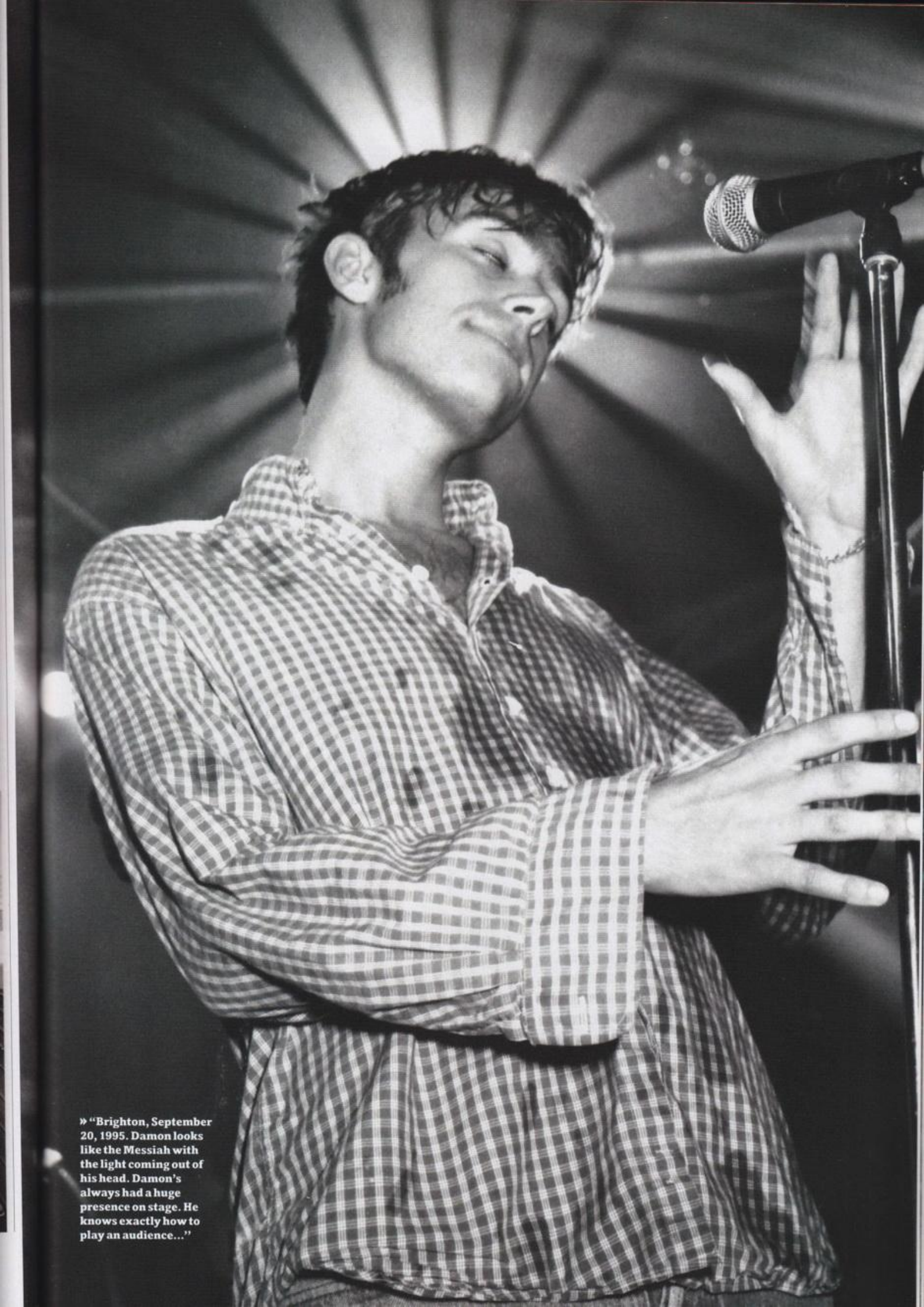
★ "This is the first time this has ever been published. After the Clacton gig there was the usual after-show party, but Graham Coxon decided to go for a walk on the pier. He liked to party, but he liked his solitude, too, and this shot just seems to sum him up..."

"After I'd done the shots for their *Parklife* album, I had the idea that it would be good to do a book of Blur photographs, like Pennie Smith's book on The Clash," recalls photographer Paul Postle. "I bumped into Damon Albarn in Soho and suggested it to him and he said, 'OK, come away with us next week.' That's how I ended up on their September 1995 seaside tour – Cleethorpes, Dunoon, Morecambe, Eastbourne, Clacton, Great Yarmouth and Brighton. They were the biggest band in the land – 'County House' had just beaten 'Roll With It' to No 1 to see off Oasis in the Britpop wars – and there they were playing these out-of-the-way places nobody else ever went. The tickets were a tenner and it felt really special – in fact, I'd say it was the best tour they ever did."

"In the middle of it, Noel Gallagher came out with his infamous interview in *The Observer*, saying he hoped Damon and Alex caught AIDS and died. They were playing in Clacton that night and although the people around them were outraged, Blur themselves just took it in their stride. *The Great Escape* was coming out the next day and they realised the publicity wouldn't do them any harm. Damon has a habit of usually having the last laugh..."

» "Blur never liked doing set-up publicity shots and this one just happened. We were strolling along Brighton beach after the soundcheck and even though they knew it was stupid, they couldn't resist. I don't know where Alex James was. Still looking for sea-shells, I think!"





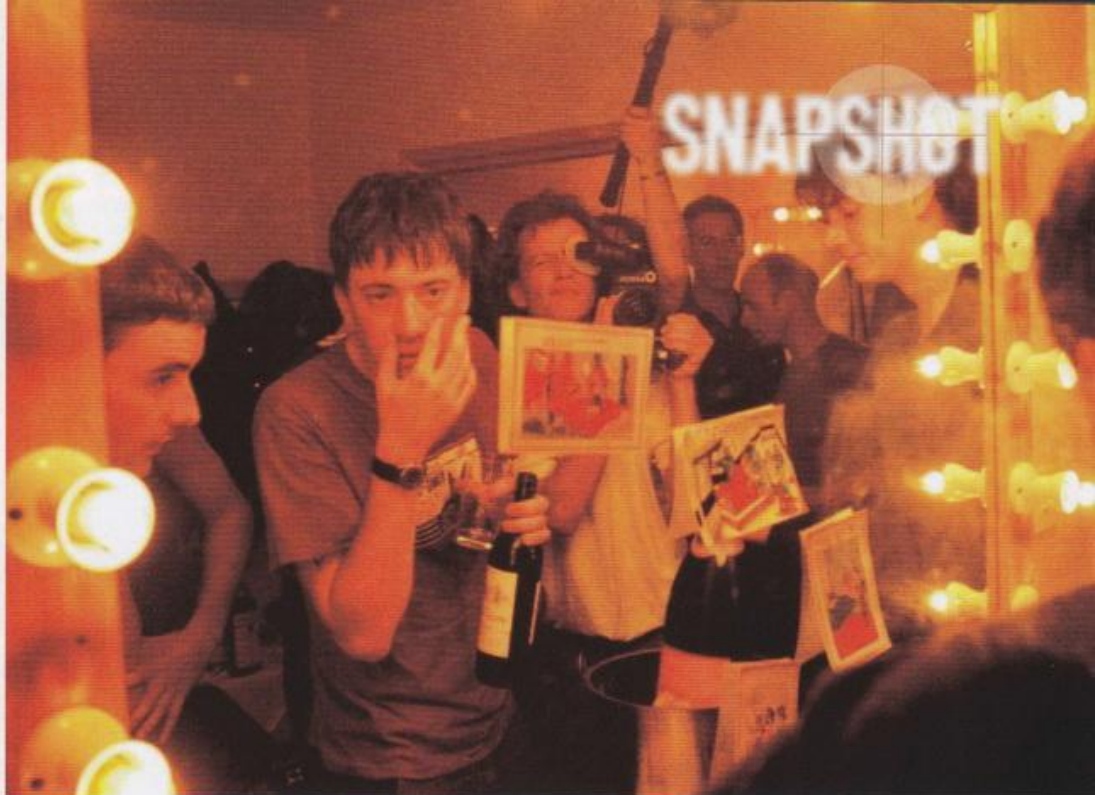
» "Brighton, September 20, 1995. Damon looks like the Messiah with the light coming out of his head. Damon's always had a huge presence on stage. He knows exactly how to play an audience..."



★ "What massive band had ever played Clacton? You can see the passion, both on stage and in the crowd. They'd never seen anything like it. There was Damon, literally falling off the stage..."

» "We found this abandoned theme park next to the pier in Clacton and Damon insisted on jumping over the wall to have a look. He loved the run-down feel of the place. Somehow it seemed to chime with his vision of English dilapidation..."





★ "They had this ridiculously tiny dressing room in Great Yarmouth, but everyone piled in, anyway. Graham caught sight of himself in the mirror and started complaining he was looking really old"

» "Alex could sleep anywhere. That's backstage at Dunoon. If Alex wasn't drinking, he was invariably sleeping. It used to drive Damon mad"

✧ "Because I was their 'official' photographer, I was onstage right next to them. Alex decided it would be great fun to try to ruin all my pictures by pulling faces"



★ "My main memory of the tour is of laughter. Backstage at Dunoon, Alex and Damon started dancing around the dressing room. It wasn't for the camera. They were just full of joy..."

WERE YOU THERE?
Did you see Blur that September? Is that you in the crowd at Clacton? And was it really only £10 a ticket? If you caught the band's seaside jolly, then email allan_jones@ipcmmedia.com with your memories, and we'll publish the best stories...



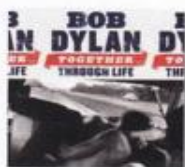
ALBUM OF THE MONTH

BOB DYLAN

Together Through Life COLUMBIA



A glorious, ramshackle rag-bag stuffed with good times, black humour and great swathes of accordion, says *Allan Jones*



Dylan had the devil of a time working on the soundtrack for Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*, caught up

in the director's typically tempestuous war with the film's producers over a movie they didn't understand and eventually butchered, Dylan's musical contributions suffering a similar fate in the fragmented version originally released in 1973.

Hollywood, though, has been kinder since to Bob. Asked in 2000 to write something for *LA Confidential* director Curtis Hanson's *Wonder Boys*, he came up with "Things Have Changed", his first new song since 1997's *Time Out Of Mind*. It duly won him an Oscar and a Golden Globe – awards that could have as easily gone to "Cross The Green Mountain", a sombre Civil War epic full of gloomy portent he wrote for 2003's *Gods And Generals*. The song, however, was played over the closing credits of a film no-one went to see and before it was rehabilitated on last year's *Tell Tale Signs* collection, was available only on a soundtrack CD hardly anyone had heard.

Now apparently we have another movie project to thank for not just a single song, but an entire album. Last year, French filmmaker Olivier Dahan, director of Edith Piaf biopic *La Vie En Rose*, invited Dylan to write some songs for his new film, *My Own Love Song*, a romantic road movie of sorts starring Renée Zellweger and Forest Whitaker. Dylan responded with "Life Is Hard", an aching ballad, mandolin, pedal steel and Dylan's dark and wounded voice to the fore. Suddenly inspired, Dylan, as legend now insists, kept on writing and the next thing anyone knew he had nine more new songs and not long after that had finished the album, which is now upon us in all its rowdy glory.

It sounds pretty much like you hoped

it would – like something recorded and written quickly, not quite on the hoof, but close to it, Dylan apparently eager to get these new songs down with a raw immediacy, which he largely has. My immediate opinion, since it seems that's what's required here, is that *Together Through Life* is in many respects as raffishly ebullient as any record Dylan has put his name to since *The Basement Tapes*. It was great to hear him sounding so wry and playful on, say,

"Love And Theft", an album of bountiful humour. But here Bob sounds like he's having a ball in different ways, the joint jumping with him, everybody digging the groove, Dylan's redoubtable touring band augmented by David Hidalgo from Los Lobos, whose accordion is featured just about everywhere, and Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell. The album's a gas, a riot, a hoot.

And this despite the disconsolate mood of key tracks and the hard look the album takes at what's left of the world at the time of writing ("Widows cry, orphans bleed/Everywhere you look, there's more misery"). There's an inclination to see Dylan's late songs – let's say from *Time Out Of Mind* on – as largely preoccupied with mortality, principally his own, the general passing of things, among them youthful vigour, and the bad bits life has waiting for us, licking their chops. This is perhaps because of *Time Out Of Mind*'s "Not Dark Yet", a great song that yet casts a somewhat distorted shadow over a lot that's followed, as if it alone defines his later repertoire.

Much of *Together Through Life* can be seen as further unflinching reflection on life's transience, it's true, as Dylan dwells on time doing nothing but running out fast and the hostility of an unfriendly world, from whose clutches, repeatedly, the singer wants to escape – into dreams, memories, a past that haunts him, the arms of those he's loved now lost to him. The lyrics allude frequently to sinking suns, chilly winds, eternal loneliness,

twilight reveries, final voyages to unspecified destinations, the seeping away of the day's last light. But despite the admittedly bereft mood and musical voicings of songs like, say, "Life Is Hard" (the only example of the crooning vocal style latterly favoured by Dylan), "Forgetful Heart" (its stalking tempo reminiscent of "Ain't Talkin'"), "This Dream Of

You" (a fiddle-led waltz), or the gorgeous "I Feel A Change Coming On" (passingly reminiscent of "Workingman's Blues #2"), the album can barely be described as mordant or particularly downbeat.

The record, you could say, in fact is characterised by a kind of boisterous fatalism, a stoic swagger that may remind you of the old blues dictum: "You might get better, but you'll never get well." By which is meant, I suppose, that while what's waiting for us is nothing we'll be especially happy about, there may yet be adventure and high old times in the getting there. In other words, if life is something we lose, the least we can do is make the noisy most of it.

Thus, blues romps like "Jolene" and "Shake Mama Shake" share a carnal jauntiness, full of rollicking good humour, sound more sulphuric, less formal than their comparatively more stately equivalents on *Modern Times*, "Rollin' And Tumblin'" and "Someday Baby". Opener "Beyond Here Lies Nothing" does much to set the rambunctious tone of a lot that follows, Hidalgo's accordion fronting a flurry of horns, tumbling drums and a wonderfully lithe instrumental groove, Dylan's vocal gloriously growly. The sardonic "My Wife's Hometown", meanwhile, is another stripped down blues, at once wry and exclamatory, as cracked and leathery as an old saddle or the nag it sits upon. On the sheerly irresistible Texas jump of "If You Ever Go To Houston", the band are uncommonly lively company, powered by Hidalgo's riffing accordion and kicking up the dust like people who turn up at a party and before you know it are blowing doors off their hinges, juggling cats and running around with their hair on fire, that kind of crowd. "If you ever go to Austin, Fort Worth or San Anton," Dylan sings, "Find the barrooms I got lost in and send my memories home".

The album's inclination towards bleak humour finds its most vivid expression on darkly ironic closer, "It's All Good", a litany of personal and national woe on which Dylan takes a jaundiced look at the republic – "Big politician tellin' lies/Restaurant kitchen all full of flies" – and finds little to admire, much that draws his contempt.

More scholarly types than myself are already hovering over *Together Through Life*, no doubt to tell us from which obscure blues or classical source Dylan has imported lyrics ("Beyond Here Lies Nothing" is apparently a quote from Ovid, a very funny couplet in "My Wife's Hometown" is evidently derived from Chaucer). I'll cheerfully leave them to it, turn the record up real loud and shake this mama one more time.

Together Through Life is as raffishly ebullient as any record Dylan has put his name to since *The Basement Tapes*. It's a gas, a riot, a hoot...



MACK
89 LB

A TO Z

New albums, reissues and compilations alphabetised for your convenience, including **Elbow**, **Motörhead**, **Peaches**, **Elvis Presley** and **The Specials**

KEY: **C** COMPILATION **R** YEAR REISSUE

JUSTIN ADAMS & JULDEH CAMARA

Tell No Lies

REAL WORLD

★★★★

Unlikely pair's second desert blues excursion

Take an old Etonian who plays guitar in Robert Plant's band and a Gambian maestro of the one-stringed West African violin (the *riti*, since you ask), and what do you get? Interestingly, some of the deepest trance-blues this side of Timbuktu. On their second LP, Adams' blues-rock riffs are tougher, louder, edgier and the wailing of Camara's *riti* is more elemental than ever. There are quieter moments of great beauty – but if you've seen the YouTube clip of Tinariwen jamming on "Whole Lotta Love", the same spirit is at work.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

A HAWK AND A HACKSAW

Délivrance

LEAF LABEL

★★★★

American duo continue Grand Tour of Eastern European margins

Jeremy Barnes (accordion) and Heather Trost (violin) have journeyed far by simply following their musical instincts, immersing themselves in the enthralling musical life of the Balkans. They have become peculiarly absorbent musical personalities, moving to Budapest to soak up Hungarian folk's vital juices. But far from vampirically sucking the life out of an exotic culture, AHAH channel Transylvanian people's music through outsiders' ears, abandoning themselves to the hypnotic switchback rhythms of "The Man Who Sold His Beard", with Trost's sour Bartokian fiddling a particular highlight on "Raggle Taggle".

AKRON/FAMILY

Set 'Em Wild, Set 'Em Free

GRAMMED DISCS

★★★★

Former freak-folkers kick out the jams

On their fifth album this East Coast trio make it patently clear this is not the same band whose 2005 debut placed them in the rustic shadows of former Young God Records labelmate Devendra Banhart. "Everyone Is Guilty" picks up where Yeasayer left off,

jamming Fela Kuti afrobeat and Family Stone funk into six jubilant minutes. But in case anyone suggests they're jumping on Vampire Weekend's bandwagon, they throw dub into "Creatures", fingerpick their way through the melancholy "The Alps & Their Orange Evergreen", while "MBF" deafens with its skronk thrash. **EDEN PARKE**

TORI AMOS

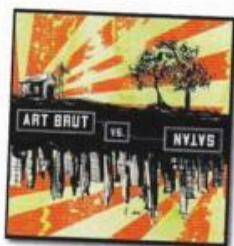
Abnormally Attracted To Sin

ISLAND

★★

72 minutes inside Tori's tortured poetry book

The title is pinched from *Guys & Dolls*, but unlike that swell party, Tori's 10th refuses to get into anything illuminating. Instead, this is a wearisome 18-track trudge through the Amosian heartlands of religion and sexuality gone wrong. The tremulous vocals and simmering strings sound forever on the verge of revelation, but what's delivered is empty impressionism: "Banga Tango but do not get tangled" or "Veronica's America is not like Charlotte's, one to savor cosmic flavor". The music, a faltering, neo-prog jumble, likewise lacks shape. It's a relief to arrive at the simple piano of "Oscar's Theme", not least because the record's finally over. **NEIL SPENCER**



ART BRUT

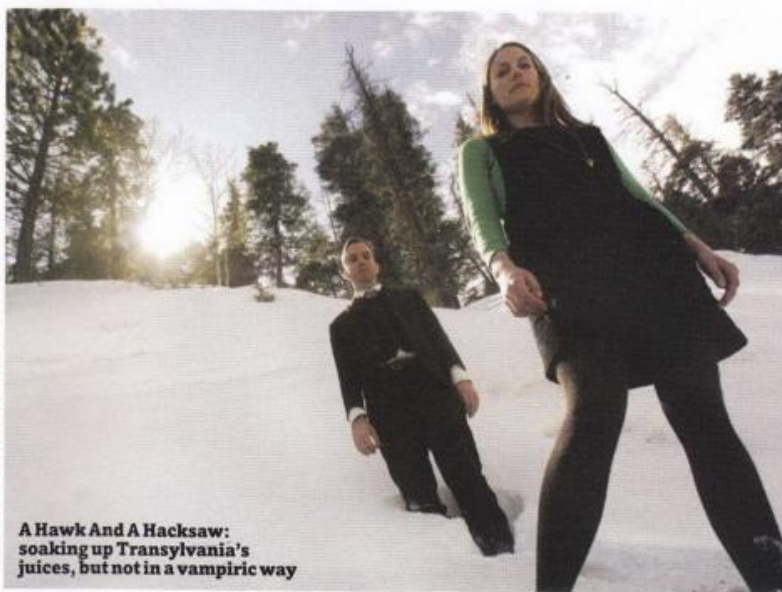
Art Brut vs Satan

COOKING VINYL

★★★★

Eddie Argos' indie losers narrate their own failure, hilariously

Imagine you're one of Britain's funniest and most perceptive bands, loved by critics, Hollywood A-listers and hip hop heavyweights alike. Yet you sell pitifully and get dumped by your label. Eddie Argos, speechifying poet behind pop-punk mavericks Art Brut, turns these travails into art, takes swipes at rivals



A Hawk And A Hacksaw: soaking up Transylvania's juices, but not in a vampiric way

and ponders his relationship with the rock canon ("How have I only just discovered *The Replacements*?/Some of them are nearly as old as my parents"). One trick ponies, yes, but it's a good trick. **JOHN LEWIS**

AU REVOIR SIMONE

Still Night, Still Light

MOSHI MOSHI

★★★★

More lo-fi lullabies from toothsome threesome

Though they're now on their third album, and despite their appearance on last year's sensational Aeroplane remix of Friendly Fires' "Paris", very little has changed in the world of Au Revoir Simone. They still seem like a Sofia Coppola teendream of lovestruck librarians. There's still that sinister Julee Cruise-y innocence that so endears them to David Lynch. There's a couple of tunes – "The Last One", "Only You Can Make Me Happy" – that rise above the general lo-fi languor. But you get the feeling they could carry on like this, lost in unchanging adolescent reverie, forever.

STEPHEN TROUSSE

BEATNIK FILMSTARS

The Purple Fez 72 Social Club

SATISFIED

★★★★

More wry musings from the Britrock margins

Fixtures on the Bristol music scene since 1991, the West Country's answer to Pavement recently returned from a long sabbatical with a reconstituted lineup and a more mellow sound. After years of being

championed by the likes of Flaming Lips, Guided By Voices and Lambchop, these former Peel session regulars finally make the logical leap into twangsomes, husky-voiced, pastiche Americana. These songs feel a little too laidback in places, but Andrew Jarrett's droll lyrics repay close attention: "I've lived my life like a kitten in a sack with a brick". **STEPHEN DALTON**

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART & HIS MAGIC BANDS

Magneticism: The Best Of Live 1972-81

VIPER

★★

A score of Van Vliet field recordings

Even completists might balk at the muffle and squeak on 20 tracks clearly culled from the fifth row of the crowd, with several duplicating Viper's 2002 *Magnetic Hands* compilation. They range from the mud of 1972's Bickershaw festival to five relatively clean cuts from 1981 California. Despite his reputation as a radical, Beefheart rarely strayed far from good ol' 12-bar blues – witness 1973's "I'm A King Bee", '77's "China Pig" – though '81's "Veteran's Day Poppy" has the band contrapuntally, saxily cooking. The Cap'n's vocals are always captivating, even in this mire, but really, you had to have been there. **NEIL SPENCER**

BLACK MOTH SUPER RAINBOW

Eating Us

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

★★★★

Acid-fried robo-pop from Pennsylvania

If Huey, Dewey and Louie, the shuffling ecobots from *Silent Running*, formed a band it would doubtless sound as cosmic, beatific and vocoderised as Black Moth Super Rainbow. For their fourth album the bucolic retrotechies have left their treehouse studio and hooked up with kindred spirit, Mercury Rev/Flaming Lips' Dave Fridmann. *Eating Us* is consequently a little too tidy, their frazzled wildness cultivated into ordered orchards, but on tracks like the typically titled "Bubblegum Animals", BMSR still conjure a ravishing, stoned cyber-soul picnic. **STEPHEN TROUSSE**

BLANK DOGS

Under And Under

INTHERED

★★★★

Outsider punk scuzz from – yes – Brooklyn

Until recently, the identity of Blank Dogs – an anonymous figure, features obscured by hood, who's released several dozen cuts of murky post-punk since his debut in 2007 – has remained firmly under wraps. Turns out he's a guy called Mike who works in a record store, but such knowledge shouldn't spoil the creepy mystique of *Under And Under*. Curious webs of blurry guitar, analogue keyboard and cranky drum machine, songs like "Blue Lights" resemble a lower-than-lo-fi Cure, where ramshackle recording and budget texture becomes part of the appeal. **LOUIS PATTISON**



MADNESS

The Liberty Of Norton Folgate

LUCKY SEVEN



A concept album, and refreshingly, unexpectedly excellent. *By David Quantick*



As the Specials reunion – reunion, my copious arse – gets more publicity, one can only hope that this far more interesting 2-Tone-related event will get more coverage. Because Madness not only keep reforming (with all their old members, including their best songwriter), they also release new records with original songs on them. And now, in 2009, at a point in their history when you'd confidently expect them to be creeping about the gaff in elderly slippers looking for their reading glasses, Madness have instead made a really good album. Ambitious, tuneful, exciting, wise, and with a finale that kicks them up a level into an undreamed-of musical dimension.

Over the years, Madness have had quite a few false-ish starts. There was *The Madness*, a very odd semi-reunion album. There was Suggs' skaraoke solo album, there was the *Dangermen* collection... all target-missers on various levels. But *The Liberty Of Norton Folgate* – a title which makes sense in context but is otherwise unlikely to be jamming up the ringtone sites – is Madness in both their pomp and their prime.

Like most grabs for reheated glory, it sounds like their entire career in one go. There are echoes of melancholy

stompers like "The Sun And The Rain"; there's the rocksteady, bass-heavy (lots of bass on this album!) "Forever Young", which is a slightly less-grey cousin of "Grey Day". Any number of brilliant Madness character sketches are recalled in the splendid "Idiot Child" (which also has the spectral quality of the post-Mike Barson *Mad Not Mad*). But none of these stylistic revisits are retreads. "Everything" is infused with some of the best melodies of the band's career, and everything is enthused, too. The tiredness of *Keep Moving* and *Mad Not Mad* has been replaced with an older, but fresher, sound. Songs like "Forever Young" and "Sugar And Spice" sound like singles, and should be. Everything seems to gel – the arrangements are the best ever, the production is thoughtful and smart, and the influences melded perfectly (we all know that Madness were more than the sum of Ian Dury and The Kinks, but we all chose to ignore the huge, conspicuous chunks of Motown and The Beatles also in there).

And there's a new layer to Madness, as well. Previous efforts suffered because the band seemed unkeen to leave their comfort zone. Every musical territory that Madness had ever visited was revisited again and again, with diminishing returns (by the time Suggs got round to covering "I'm Only Sleeping", the template was starting to look like tracing paper). But this time

round, things are different. "Idiot Child" may be a short sharp character sketch, but it's more barbed and less cosy than before. "Africa" is Madness' most extraordinary lyric in which for once they stop banging on about London (on an album obsessed with the capital to the extent it contains a song called "We Are London") and write a song about, amazingly, leaving the capital and going to Africa in a dream. It's a lyrical fantasia slightly related to Michael Nesmith's "Rio" and unlike anything else in the Madness jukebox.

What else? Well, there's "Clerkenwell Polka", which is a spookier cousin of "Waiting For The Ghost Train" and contains the best and possibly first use of the word "rectilinear" in a song. There's "NWS", as good an entry point single to this album as anything. And – oh yeah! – there's "The Liberty Of Norton Folgate" itself. Which gets its own paragraph.

There's a lot to say about "The Liberty Of Norton Folgate". For a start, it's 10

minutes long, which is unusual for a tune by Britain's Official Greatest Singles Band. It's a song simultaneously influenced by Ian Dury, Peter Ackroyd, Bollywood, Charles Dickens, Kurt Weill, John Barry, and, so far as I can tell, Muffin The Mule. It is in some ways The Pogues doing "Good Vibrations" and in others *Oliver!* performed by Prince Buster. Best of all, for a band who began their career in skinhead controversy while writing great songs about miscegenation, it's a song that takes their obsession with London, the city of nations, to its logical conclusion, being a historical and musical tribute to a brilliant mixed-up mongrel culture. "In the beginning was the fear of the immigrant," they chant, implying that such fears are for the weak of mind and chin. It's a song that only Madness could write, and it is quite mad, a great argument against racism that makes you proud to be British, and a fantastic conclusion to a very, very good album.

Q & A Suggs

Why a concept album?

We'd just done the *Dangermen* album of ska and reggae covers to reinvigorate ourselves, reminding us why we wanted to make music in the first place. So we wanted to follow it with something really dense, something with more depth. Aren't all Madness songs about London? Yes! I suppose we wanted to explore

that even deeper. Me and Chas [Carl Smyth, aka Chas Smash] are fascinated by the psychogeography thing explored by Peter Ackroyd, Ian Sinclair and Robert Elms. All the tracks are interlinked by the fact that we live in a complicated city of never-ending stories and never-ending change, something that's an endless source of inspiration for us. How do the band

tend to write?

We all write separately; we bring our ideas into rehearsals and try them out. If enough people like them, they get recorded. This time was slightly different. We wanted to clear out all the songs people had stored up, so we recorded everything, which is why the collectors' edition of the album has about two dozen tracks!

INTERVIEW: JOHN LEWIS

TOM BROSEAU

Posthumous Success

FATCAT

★★★★

Laconic alt.country strummer's eighth album in as many years

After decamping to Bristol with John Parrish for 2007's *Cavalier*, North Dakota-raised Brosseau has fashioned his latest with two separate groups on either American coast. It's not always clear which recording comes from which location, although the rustic shuffle of "Miss Lucy" suggests Lou Reed dropping in on The Band at Big Pink, while the fuzzy grunge-lite of "You Don't Know My Friends" sounds straight outta Oregon. Mostly, it's Brosseau's unfussy acoustic picking that gives the album its signature sound, which especially pleases on the dreamy folklore love poem "Wishbone Medallion".

TERRY STAUNTON

FINDLAY BROWN

Love Will Find You

THIS IS MUSIC

★★★★

Yorkshire troubadour goes back to the future

Abandoning the psych-folk aesthetic of his '07 debut, Brown has turned to Bernard Butler's production skills for a complete makeover on the follow-up. Together they've fashioned a clever but conservative smörgåsbord of '60s/'70s pop styles that ranges from Orbison ("Love Will Find You") to Neil Diamond ("Holding Back The Night") via touches of Spector ("Nobody Cared"). It's a thrilling concoction in many ways, but there's an element of pastiche that suggests Brown hasn't yet worked out what he really wants to do with his talent. The Dave Edmunds of his generation, perhaps?

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

RAVI COLTRANE

Blending Times

FREEWORLD

★★★★

Gifted son of John and Alice plays tenor sax

Coltrane moved beyond the shadow of his illustrious parents with 2005's *In Flux*; here he reiterates that he's his own master. At times his fluid, warm tenor uncannily recalls his father's. There's a 50/50 split between "improvisations" and compositions, the former allowing the quartet to chew on funkier pieces like "Nacine", the latter giving licence to mercurial pianist Luis Perdomo, notably on Monk's "Epistrophy". Best is

"For Turiya", written by bassist Charlie Haden for Ravi's late mother, Alice, in 1976, and here her eulogy, played by Haden with shimmering harp from Brandee Younger and tender playing by her son. Magical.

NEIL SPENCER



DEAR READER

Replace Why With Funny

CITYSLANG

★★★★

Startlingly assured debut from (white) South African duo

It's a surprise to discover the strength of South African rock'n'roll across a range of styles from alt.rock to alt. country – and the best of these are Dear Reader. With the production/arranging assistance of Menomena's Brent Knopf, the duo of Darryl Torr and Cheri Mitchell have created a sparkling debut that combines classic folk influences (Vashti Bunyan/McGarrigles) with the kind of agile, post-pop sharpness associated with Rilo Kiley. Intricate, left-field lyrics, haunting melodies and the sexiest new female voice since Jenny Lewis add up to one of the most significant new arrivals of '09.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

DEVIANTS

Disposable

ESOTERIC

★★★★

Proto-punk agitators

Mick Farren's counter-cultural activities in the '60s overshadowed his role as leader of The Deviants whose albums are as much artefacts of the then underground as *IT* or *Oz*. This, their second album (both debut *Ptooff?* and the uneven *3are* also being reissued), has a rowdy cynicism befitting release in the year of the Hornsey art school sit-ins and Paris student riots. Mick Farren was heavily influenced by New York boho-activists The Fugs, notably on the amphetamine fuelled "Let's Loot The Supermarket" but there's also a crude Stooges backbeat and an intent which recalls the MC5's mix of revolution and rock'n'roll.

MICK HOUGHTON

THOMAS DOLBY

The Singular Thomas Dolby

EMI

★★★★

CD/DVD tour of Dolby's secret pop laboratory

This 19-track collection of brainiac pop goes right up to Dolby's early-'90s work with George Clinton, but it's the mid-'80s singles that are the real selling point. "She Blinded Me With Science", complete with ranting Magnus Pyke, is a nerd-o-funk masterpiece. The neon-bright production of "Radio Silence" and "Hyperactive" winds the rhythmic clock to snapping point, while the temperature drops on spooked ballads "Airwaves", "I Scare Myself", and the Cold War micro-opera "Dissidents". There's also his "Fieldwork" collaboration with Ryuichi Sakamoto, plus an extra DVD of videos.

ROB YOUNG

ELBOW AND THE BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA

The Seldom Seen Kid Live At Abbey Road

WWW.ELBOW.CO.UK

★★★★

As stated on tin. Also features choir, and DVD

Ten years ago the phrase "live at Abbey Road" served as a warning that the likes of Embrace were off to St John's Wood to do battle with strings and timpani. By contrast Guy Garvey's band make this event a pleasant if inessential treat. Elbow showcasing their humility, and also their great skills – so effective were the band's original arrangements, the orchestra add weight, but not a lot of additional charm. "Grounds For Divorce" is a highlight, though, and "Weather To Fly", always a

song to make you call your mother, may make you do so sooner.

JOHN ROBINSON

FAIRPORT CONVENTION

Live At Cropredy '08

MATTY GROOVES

★★★★

Fame And Glory

MATTY GROOVES

★★★★

Fairport and friends in their element, at Cropredy and Camelot

Fairport devoted a portion of last August's Cropredy Convention set to memorialising their departed member Sandy Denny, who died 30 years previously. Stately versions of "Fotheringay", "John The Gun", "Reynardine" and others were topped by a surprise appearance by Robert Plant, to duet with Kristina Donahue on Led Zep's "Battle Of Evermore", captured here in a beautiful recording. *Fame And Glory* collects the group's Celtic/Breton/medieval-tinged music for Alan Simon's Arthurian song cycle, *Excalibur*. Despite occasional overbright studio ambience, it's an evocative rendering of the frequently psychedelic Grail legend.

ROB YOUNG

NATHAN FAKE

Hard Islands

BORDER COMMUNITY

★★★★

Emboldened second album from East Anglian IDM prodigy

Nathan Fake's 2006 debut, *Drowning In A Sea Of Love*, was a timely classic of bedroom techno – transplanting Boards of Canada to the Broads of Norfolk, suggesting a kind of Ulrich Schnauss-y deck-

shoegaze. Since then Fake has moved to Hackney, and though this mini-album has titles like "The Curlew" and "Fentiger" (a reference to a rural-mythical big cat), his tunes have taken a tougher, more urban tone, with stand-outs "The Turtle" and "Basic Mountain" building to hard-edged concrete peaks, drenched in acid Rephlex bleeps.

STEPHEN TROUSSE



DOOM

Born Like This

LEX

★★★★

Masked man finally returns

Following an extended period of inactivity, accompanied by rumours of Doom impersonators performing his live shows, the man formally known as MF returns with 17 tracks and barely a skit between them. Taking its title from a Charles Bukowski poem, *Born Like This* finds the New York MC triumphing with content rather than form. The often slightly monotonous musical style is forgivable as his words sparkle and his excellent taste in guests – Ghostface, Raekwon, Kurious – provides ample contrast. Outrageously funny at times, it's worth noting he has also inherited something of Bukowski's taste for offending people.

JAMES POLETTI



The often seen Guy Garvey of Elbow, live in 2009

FINK Sort Of Revolution

NINJA TUNE

★★★★

Third album in as many years from Brighton-based ex-DJ

The Fink template is simple enough, but it seems to grow richer with each release. He now effects an improbable fusion of Nick Drake's folk-jazz melancholy with the soulful uplift of Lighthouse Family's Tunde Baiyewu on this series of gentle but muscular songs. John Legend gets a co-write on two of the best and a lovely, stripped-down cover of Jeff Barry's "Walkin' In The Sun" rounds it all off. Hard to locate where exactly Fink fits in the current musical landscape. But it's fine, quietly captivating stuff, all the same.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



FLOWER-CORSANO DUO The Four Aims

VHF

★★★★

Raga-noise jams featuring Björk's radical drummer

Not that you'd know from the name, but the "Japan Banjo" played by Mick Flower here turns out to be an Indian electrified autoharp of some kind, which lets out an ecstatic barrage of static and drone. This is the second duo album from Flower (of Leeds' Vibracathedral Orchestra) and free drummer-for-hire Chris Corsano, and takes up where 2007's *The Radiant Mirror* left off. But after the opening volley of "I, Brute Force" – as fiery as Hendrix's "Star-Spangled Banner" – *The Four Aims* spirals into comparatively meditative terrain: joining the dots between underground noise, improvised jazz and the ragas of Ravi Shankar.

JOHN MULVEY

ROBBIE FULKS 50-Vc. Doberman (Download only)

WWW.ROBBIEFULKS.COM

★★★★★

Alt.country curmudgeon unloads 50 tracks online

This rich trove is being disseminated from Fulks' website for an abundantly

reasonable US\$35. Fulks' own assessment of what he's wrought is "100 minutes' worth of A-grade, and another 100 minutes of passable entertainment". He does himself a disservice: Fulks remains without peer in the alt.country sector. The recording is mostly fairly rudimentary. While some of the 50 tunes could have benefited from the lush country-politan splendour of Fulks' 2005 masterpiece, *Georgia Hard*, the sparse arrangements have their compensations. Fulks' astonishing virtuosity on the acoustic guitar has never been so gloriously emphasised, nor his promiscuous stylistic meanderings allowed such a long leash, from the swaggering boogie of "No Girls Allowed", to the hook-laden whimsy of "Angela", to the monumental pop eruption of "Coastal Girls".

ANDREW MUELLER

NOEL GALLAGHER The Dreams We Have As Children

ITUNES EXCLUSIVE

★★★★★

Highlights of 2007 charity show. The Modfather guests

Fifteen years ago, Noel Gallagher faced the Albert Hall alone at Creation Records' "Undrugged" benefit. Then, as a supposedly ailing Liam heckled him from a balcony, it felt a bit of a swizz. Come 2007, Noel solo (actually with a full band and strings) feels like a proposition with considerable charm. This charitable set for the benefit of Teenage Cancer Trust features an excellent appearance from Paul Weller to perform "The Butterfly Collector", and "All You Need Is Love", but it's Noel's own "Half The World Away", turned into a mass singalong, that best captures the benevolent mood of the night.

JOHN ROBINSON

GALLOWES Grey Britain

WARNER MUSIC

★★★★★

Second from Hemel Hempstead punks

Punk purists have their knives out for Gallows, who rose out of the underground with 2006's *Orchestra Of Wolves*, but signed up to a major label as it blew up. Happily for all concerned, *Grey Britain* builds upon its predecessor without diluting any of its rabid energy and grinding, oppressive negativity. The first half is a pretty peerless display of aggressive Brit punk, dirgey

The Horrors: a formidable band beneath the haircuts



discord loaded full of needling guitars and effectively bile-ridden chorusing: "You have no redeeming features!" barks Frank Carter, like a hoarse Mick Jones, on "Leeches". At the midway point, "The Vulture" unleashes unexpected acoustic guitar, cello, and actual singing, but the second half goes on to balance contrast nicely, "Misery" and "Crucifixes" inter-weaving sombre orchestral segments with jagged turns and jaundiced social commentary. Right now, Gallows are probably the best punk band the UK have to offer. LOUIS PATTISON



BRUCE HAACK 1978 Haackula

OMNI

★★★★

"Outsider electronica" milestone, reissued

American Bruce Haack was one of the pioneers of early synthesiser pop – his *Electric Lucifer*, released in 1970, was concurrent with White Noise's *An Electric Storm* and bristled with sanguine possibilities for an Aquarian dawn of Moog-inspired future pop. Come '78, however, and Haack languished in embittered commercial failure. Made the same year as Kraftwerk's *The Man Machine*, *Haackula* is synth-driven yet antithetical to the serene spirit of the German pioneers. Tracks like "Blow Job" and "Play Me Your

Album" flip the bird to the record industry that had long ago spat him out. DAVID STUBBS

DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES Live At The Troubadour

SHOUT FACTORY

★★★★

White soul duo go back to the old house

Returning to their early LA stomping ground for the first time in 35 years, H&O offer up the obligatory crowd-pleasers, the majority thankfully shorn of the glossy '80s productions that tended to bury what was already pretty decent AOR fare. Daryl may struggle with the high notes on "I Can't Go For That" these days, but the intuitive band compensate for the occasional vocal glitch, while lesser-known songs like the stripped-down "Had I Known You Better Then" suggests they could have given James Taylor a run for his money. TERRY STAUNTON

LEE HAZLEWOOD 1977 Movin' On

ACE

★★★★★

Some Velvet afternoon: first CD issue of late-period oddity

Hazlewood's songs tend to hover between kitsch and poetry, with the singer sounding unsure which to favour, but on this welcome reissue from his exile in Stockholm, the irony is (mostly) held in check. It's a ragbag, with only two originals ("Come On Home To Me" and "LA Lady", both reprised from 1971's *Requiem For An Almost Lady*) and retreads of four covers from 1969's *Forty*. But, oddly, it works. There are straight, affecting versions of "Paris Bells" and "It Was A Very

Good Year", a splendid novelty ("Kung Fu You") and a funky trucking song ("I've Got To Be Moving"). Note also the vintage sexism of "Hello Saturday Night" in which our hero has trouble with his beer goggles: "In the evening through a beer glass, she was outta sight to me/Next morning, outta sight's what I wanted her to be." ALASTAIR MCKAY

THE HORRORS Primary Colours

XL RECORDINGS

★★★★★

Cherished misfits expand palette

Almost anything would have been an improvement on *Strange House*, The Horrors' debut, but next to that record this follow-up feels positively kaleidoscopic. The quintet's transformation from schlocky garage urchins to ambassadors of thrilling new-wave can largely be attributed to Portishead's Geoff Barrow, who, alongside Chris Cunningham, produced *Primary Colours*, uncovering a formidable band beneath the haircuts. Swaddled in luminous noise, the seductive opening trio of "Mirror's Image", "Three Decades" and "Who Can Say" mesh the druggy euphoria of My Bloody Valentine with The Cramps' neurotic energy. Equally appealing is the Horrors' new-found tunefulness: searing riffs pierce "Scarlet Fields"; "I Only Think Of You" drunkenly serenades "Be My Baby", each carried by Faris Badwan's confident croon. The shimmering mini-odyssey "Sea Within A Sea" offers exquisite closure, and then it slowly dawns on you that The Horrors are your new favourite band. Surprised? You will be. PIERS MARTIN

GRIZZLY BEAR

Veckatimest

WARP



Enigmatic, hype-justifying loveliness
says David Cavanagh



One day in 2006, a fat package arrived at my door, from the techno label Warp. Ten CDs: a whole lotta

techno. Ever listened to nine techno albums consecutively? "This has been a character-building afternoon," I thought, slipping the tenth CD (*Yellow House* by someone called Grizzly Bear) into the machine. Then, amazingly, out poured flutes, banjos, church-y pianos from *Little House On The Prairie*, haiku-like lyrics about rooms with frozen pipes, and heavenly vocal harmonies. The ghosts of *Smile* and *Music From Big Pink* wandered close at hand. This was a masterpiece.

Warp's anomaly turned out to be a precociously talented Brooklyn four-piece, whose mysterious folk-pop-chorale hybrids can sometimes sound like they're reconfiguring 150 years of Americana at the drop of a hat. With three ex-music students in the lineup, Grizzly Bear are both versatile and punctilious. Bassist Chris Taylor, for example, plays a lot of woodwind and keyboard instruments, while drummer Chris Bear has the precise technique of a trained percussionist. Grizzly Bear's admirers—a growing army—include Radiohead (with whom they've toured), Paul Simon (see *Q&A*) and Fleet Foxes' Robin Pecknold, who has already called *Veckatimest* the album of the decade.

A 12-song set lasting 53 minutes, *Veckatimest* has a different atmosphere to *Yellow House*. Grizzly Bear have made a big virtue of its dynamic range—the fourth track, "Fine For Now", climaxes in a violent ensemble shit-storm, which would never have happened on *Yellow House*—and they've spoken of its increased sonic clarity. True, we hear not only the words and instruments, but even the click of Daniel Rossen's tongue on the roof of his mouth as he sings the word "gone".

Yellow House felt like it took place entirely indoors. It was hushed, dusty and you could imagine creaking

This mysterious music is ambitious, elegant and an absolute bugger to describe...

floorboards. *Veckatimest* is an outdoor record. Part of it was made on Cape Cod (a peninsula linked by bridges to

mainland Massachusetts), and the album is within sight of blue water from the moment Rossen sings its opening line ("A haven on the southern point is calling us") over a gently rolling groove. The song flickers with subliminal images. With a tiny glint of a Cornish accent, Rossen delivers one line ("Avert yer eyes from all o' this") that had me seeing visions of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Hispaniola*.

Veckatimest—named after one of the Elizabethan Islands off Cape Cod—is ambitious, elegant and an absolute bugger to describe. As on *Yellow House*, Grizzly Bear juxtapose forms as wide apart as post-rock, doo-wop, Philip Glass and *The Threepenny Opera*, to say nothing of the thrilling Beach Boys references that got some of us so excited in 2006. But what's becoming clearer, particularly since Rossen's second band, Department Of Eagles, released a fine album (*In Ear Park*) last year, is the distinction between the Grizzly Bear tunes that he sings, and the ones sung by his fellow lead vocalist, Ed Droste.

A Rossen song ("Dory", "Hold Still", "I Live With You") will often feature unusual guitar chords and have a dreamy, Disney-esque quality, accentuated by the sweet, Van Dyke

Q A Ed Droste

Fleet Foxes have praised *Veckatimest* to the skies. Are you friends? Is there a shared purpose?

I wouldn't say a shared purpose, but I greatly respect them. I've never met Robin [Pecknold], but we talk all the time via email or Twitter. He lives in Seattle and I'm in New York, so we haven't crossed paths yet. I'm sure I'll meet him this year at some festival.

Grizzly Bear are often compared to Van Dyke Parks. Do you play his music much?

I didn't grow up listening to him as much as my band-mates, but I went to college with his daughter and she became one of my best friends.

Ironically enough, I'm sitting in her house in California right now, so it's funny you should bring up his name...

You performed at Paul Simon's concerts in Brooklyn last year. How did that happen?

A total fluke, actually. He met our friend Feist at a taping of *Saturday Night Live*,



and said he needed bands who could perform his music. She mentioned that Grizzly Bear cover "Graceland". He was like, "Great, when are they playing?" She said: "In about 90 minutes, about four blocks away." Next thing you know, he's sitting backstage with us.

INTERVIEW:
DAVID CAVANAGH

Parks lilt in Rossen's voice. Droste, for his part, is a remarkable combination of blue-eyed soul, 10cc and Benjamin Britten. Droste's tunes ("Two Weeks", "Cheerleader", "About Face") can sound facile in their early stages, a bit too simple, but when their sumptuous arrangements kick in, the melodies quickly attain grandeur and become lethally infectious. Rossen is a pure original, but it's the Droste songs that you may find yourself

humming around the house.

Hints of Radiohead are also discernible here and there, which may be unintentional. As things stand, ovations from Radiohead and Fleet Foxes look sure to propel Grizzly Bear to wider renown. While I'm not sure *Veckatimest* is the huge improvement on *Yellow House* that some blogs claim it to be, it's unquestionably a lovely record and it deserves to be heard on land, sea, indoors and out.

SHORT CUTS

This month... Soundtracks

GENE PAGE [1972]

Blacula REV-OLA

★★★★



He's black! He's a vampire! This fine score to the two-for-one exploitation flick finds its soul in Harlem more than Transylvania, and as such is a blood relative of *Shaft*—all choppy wah, horns and snaky bass, as well the swooning strings that would become Page's trademark with Barry White. Funk fans will find the instrumentals work best. **MARK BENTLEY**

AR RAHMAN [9]

The Best Of BOLLYWOOD RECORDS

★★★★



Cashing in on Rahman's double-Oscar-winning score to *Slumdog Millionaire*, this lazy 13-track comp doesn't actually include any *Slumdog* tracks. Buried among the slushy ballads, however, are a few pearls: the wobbly d'n'b of "Warriors In Peace", the effervescent "Shakalaka Baby" among them. **JOHN LEWIS**

VARIOUS ARTISTS [4]

The Sound Of Wonder! FINDERS KEEPERS

★★★★



Bollywood tracks have long been sample fodder for Western crate diggers—now this 15-track collection unearths some similar funk and psych rock gems from Pakistan's largely ignored '70s/'80s film industry. Beautifully remastered from old vinyl, it's a blizzard of squelchy Moogs, twangy guitars and ramshackle beats, with Punjabi vocals that are rather more restrained than those you'll hear on Hindi movies. **JOHN LEWIS**

VARIOUS ARTISTS [4]

Gonks Go Beat/ I've Gotta Horse

RPM ★★



I've Gotta Horse starred Billy Fury, and was so awful, it made Cliff's *Summer Holiday* look like *Citizen Kane*—the soundtrack including duets with Amanda Barrie and Jon Pertwee. The *Gonks* OST provides more enjoyable fluff featuring Lulu, The Nashville Teens and Graham Bond grinning through the daft pop "Harmonica". **MICK HOUGHTON**

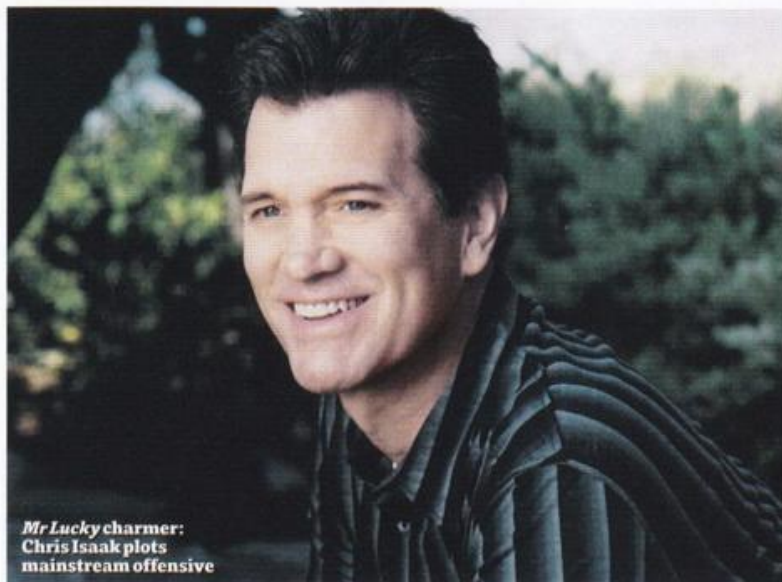
VARIOUS ARTISTS [4]

Midnight Massiera FINDERS KEEPERS

★★★★



Jean-Pierre Massiera has been dubbed "the French Joe Meek", but there's nothing on this 18-track career survey to remind you of "Telstar". Self-consciously avant-garde, and not a little disquieting, Massiera's '60s and '70s sound collages sound like some unholy amalgam of Zappa, Morricone, Goblin and Herbie Hancock. Must hear: "Inside My Brain" by Les Maledictus Sound. **MARK BENTLEY**



Mr Lucky charmer: Chris Isaak plots mainstream offensive

THE HOURS See The Light

IS GOOD LTD/WARNERS

★★★★

Duo's stadium-sized "pub rock" delivers

Antony Genn, formerly of Elastica, Pulp and Joe Strummer's Mescaleros, formed The Hours with pianist Martin Slattery five years ago and their 2006 debut album should have made them huge. Unfortunately, they're still playing their stadium-sized anthems on the pub-rock circuit, which is a pity because, lyrical banalities and few dreary fillers aside, they're as good as anyone at this kind of thing. Co-producer Flood adds a sonic gigantism to piano-led ballads such as "Come On", while Genn's background in dance music (he produced UNKLE, among others) helps lend a subtle propulsion to tracks like "Big Black Hole". **JOHN LEWIS**

ASHLEY HUTCHINGS & ERNESTO DE PASCALE My Land Is Your Land

ESOTERIC

★★★★

Fairport Convention founder leads Anglo-Italian pooling of collective memories

Ashley Hutchings currently works in a mature pop/rock idiom some distance from his better known rustic folk. This collaboration with Italian musician, author, broadcaster and producer De Pascale explores common cultural ground: "The Lion Of Highbury" retells a 1934 soccer date between England and Italy, while "Song Of Two Bridges" shuttles between Westminster and Florence's Ponte Vecchio. "Working

Underground", sung by Hutchings, clearly refers to Fairport's UFO heyday. A genial, often touching exploration of the way art and culture can help friendships flourish across borders. **ROB YOUNG**

IN CASE OF FIRE Align The Planets

SEARCH AND DESTROY

★★★★

Alternative Ulstermen forge blueprint for superstardom

Some say the explosive potential of Portadown's angst-metal trio In Case Of Fire is reminiscent of Muse a decade ago, and they're already exhibiting similar transatlantic ambitions. This debut album reveals them to be, unsurprisingly, more than a trifle earnest, but the power and intensity of their music grabs you by both ears. The staccato barrage of the title track is like being physically battered, while "Do What I Say" is by no means the only song which skates on the edge of a neurotic precipice. However, behind the euphoric rush of "Landslides" ticks a shrewd commercial brain. **ADAM SWEETING**

CHRIS ISAAK Mr. Lucky

WARNER BROTHERS

★★★★

After a seven-year absence, a whopping mainstream album

It's tough to call Isaak an underachiever—he writes, sings, acts, and has a TV talk show—yet those operatic, Orbisonian vocals might surely have reached further than the odd hit and a huge Australian fan base. Chris clearly agrees, returning with an album fashioned to sit

alongside the MOR rock of U2 or Coldplay. Why not? He can outsing either, and writes as good a stadium ballad in "Cheater's Town", one of numerous wracked love wails. The efforts are inconsistent, though, and his affinity with the fun and doom of '50s R'n'R is mostly lost to the demands of commercial bombast. **NEIL SPENCER**



ISIS Wavering Radiant

CONSPIRACY RECORDS

★★★★

Elegant devastation from Mike Patton-approved avant-metal

Progressive/doom metal quintet Isis have been ploughing their electronics-flecked furrow for 12 years, but arguably defined their sound in 2002 with second LP *Oceanic*. Not that anyone looks to the Boston outfit for constant reinvention: despite the densely textured melodicism and ambient-grunge/post-rock tendencies of their fifth album, it's clear that they still rate monolithic mass and irresistible force pretty highly. Theirs is a sophisticated, finely nuanced sound, lynchpin Aaron Turner's vocals—apparently vomited up from the bowels of Beelzebub—notwithstanding. **SHARON O'CONNELL**

JOYCE

Visions Of Dawn
FAR OUT RECORDINGS

★★★

Lost '70s recordings from Brazilian folkie
Rio de Janeiro-born singer Joyce has been a prolific presence on the Brazilian music scene since the heyday of Música Popular Brasileira in the late '60s and a staple of Far Out's contemporary roster for the past decade. This issue of previously unavailable tracks made with frequent collaborator Nana Vasconcelos and Mauricio Maestro brings together nine typically charming songs recorded in Paris in 1976. Don't be misled by Andy Votel's psych sleeve art though; this is jazz-infused Brazilian folk of a fairly conservative stripe. A fine record, whatever its affiliation.

JAMES POLETTI



JUNIOR BOYS

Begone Dull Care

DOMINO

★★★★

Canadian electronic pop duo's timely return
The slick purr of these grooves could be well-timed, as their strict adherence to synth stabs and '80s rhythms will stir both ice-veined Pet Shop Boys fans and adolescent Ladyhawke devotees. Inspired by animator Norman McLaren (his masterful 1949 short gives the album its title) this lolls with a neat mix of languor and subtle urgency through the kind of smart-pop/funk The Beloved mastered 20 years ago. They're shameless in their appropriation - The System, Moroder, even George Michael - but single "Hazel" aside, the knowing wink is warm rather than cocky. CHRIS ROBERTS

KASMS

Spayed

TROUBLE RECORDS

★★★★

UK crew make their inventive debut
You're nothing these days without your very own genre, it seems, and to that effect, London quartet Kasms have coined the term "shriekbeat" to describe their sound. What that appears to involve is needling, garage-punk

guitars, a mix of deranged whooping and sullen *sprechgesang* and beats of a gloomy, malevolent urgency. Recorded live and mixed by guitarist Rory Brattwell (formerly of hipster noiseniks Test Icicles), *Spayed* hints at an affinity with the US goth-punk likes of Subtonix, Sixteens and The Vanishing, but Kasms' manic energy and dark intensity is very much their own. SHARON O'CONNELL

LADY SOVEREIGN

Jigsaw

MIDGET

★★★

Second, crossover-tinged LP from "biggest midget in the game"

Like so many enterprising Brits before her, Lady Sovereign set out to break America, only to find America seemed keener on breaking her. *Jigsaw* finds the diminutive London rapper shorter on cheek than on her early singles, and the moments of mischief, when they come, ring a little hollow. "So Human", perky electro-pop that cribs heavily from The Cure's "Close To Me", is an unexpected success. But the troubled, emo-tinged title track feels a little cloying, and a slow jam called "Food Play" is a case of too much information.

LOUIS PATTISON

BRENDA LEE

Queen Of Rock'n'Roll

ACE

★★★★

Rockin' early singles

Following her debut in 1956, aged just 12, Brenda Lee was heading for an orthodox country career till she recorded "Sweet Nothin's" in 1960 with its suggestively mature vocal and honking sax. The hits kept coming till just after The Beatles came along, often classy, despairing rock ballads with pizzicato strings but she could also sing grittier, bluesy material (much admired by Lennon) alongside such quality novelty hits as "Let's Jump The Broomstick". This set closes with a belting, beat-sound version of "What'd I Say", recorded by Mickie Most in London in 1964.

MICK HOUGHTON

LHASA

Lhasa

WARNERS

★★★★

The full English for Mexican/American singer-songwriter

Lhasa de Sela won a BBC Radio 3 world music award for '03's *Living Road*, but it's her US influences rather than her



The Louvin Brothers: heart-breaking songs of Old Weird America

Mexican heritage that dominates on the follow-up. On previous releases she's sung in Spanish and French, but here she sings entirely in English on a dozen highly poetic and original songs that veer between Tom Waits-ish off-kilter jazz and deathless acoustic Americana, only a step or two removed from Gillian Welch's starker work. If the idea of Rickie Lee Jones singing the Jacques Brel songbook excites, you won't be disappointed. NIGEL WILLIAMSON

THE LIGHTNING SEEDS

Four Winds

UNIVERSAL MUSIC

★★★★

Seeds in bloom with born-again pop formula

Liverpool veteran and football anthemist Broudie brings back the Lightning Seeds brand-name for the first time in a decade, and slots comfortably back into that familiar comfy-pop groove. The floaty and wistful "4 Winds" is an impeccable mood-setter, teeing up ensuing adventures in perky electropop ("Don't Walk On By"), '60s-evoking folk-pop with 12-string guitars ("I'll Be Around"), and the almost-rock of "I Still Feel The Same". Broudie could find his way round a studio with a bucket over his head, and the disc teems with crafty production touches. Charming, but not quite devastating.

ADAM SWEETING

BM LINX

Black Entertainment

CRAZY FACTORY

★★★★

Punchy electro-rock from Manhattan trio

A threesome from NYC who play a bold, pounding electro-rock, BM LINX at their best

sound like a stylish cross between Thin Lizzy and the Chemical Brothers ("Kids On Fire", "Red House") and at their worst sound like they are covering rejected b-sides from Zooropa-era U2 ("123Cat", "Understanding Orange"). But before the decline there is fun and imagination on display, plus, in country-blues instrumental "White Limousine" at least, one markedly successful deviation from the formula.

PETER SHEPHERD

BOB LOG III

My Shit Is Perfect

BIRDMAN

★★★★

Riotous one-man garage

One-of-a-kind, one-man-band Log the third, the dude who wears a jumpsuit and belts his vocals through a motorcycle helmet, is much more than just a garage blues gimmick. His fourth LP is an ass-shunting medley of wickedly concise blues anthems, which come off like the jauntier helpings from latter-day Tom Waits' LPs, or Dan Reeder covering the best of The John Spencer Blues Explosion, replete with nice finger-picking. "Shake A Little, Wiggle It, And Jiggle It Too" is probably representative of Log's mode - a cheerful brio it's hard not to get caught up in.

PETER SHEPHERD

THE LOUVIN BROTHERS

Tragic Songs of Life

RIGHTIOUS

★★★★★

Landmark trad country

There's a direct line from the Louvins to the Everlys to Gram Parsons, who recorded a couple of Louvins classics; "The Christian Life" and "Cash On The Barrelhead", virtually defining his style.

This was their first LP, from 1956, steeped in what Greil Marcus called the Old Weird America: woeful stories that touch every life enhanced by Charlie and Ira's emotive singing and sublime harmonies. A dark and truly beautiful album, it's impossible not to be profoundly moved by the heartbroken tale of "A Tiny Broken Heart" or the savage murder of the "Knoxville Girl".

MICK HOUGHTON



LYDIA LUNCH

Queen Of Siam

CHERRY RED

★★★★

Punk diva's solo debut, first released on Ze.

Now including videos

Having emerged from punk (with Teenage Jesus & The Jerks) Lunch established herself as a sort of cracked torch song icon of the No Wave generation. On *Queen Of Siam*, she enlisted the assistance of multi-instrumentalist Pat Irwin. His spare, darkly elegant arrangements and sax playing, which falls somewhere between Bernard Herrmann's score for *Taxi Driver* and the new jazz, are the perfect backdrop for Lunch's vocals - an embittered but frightened monotone. Songs like "Lady Scarface" and "Gloomy Sunday" see her perpetually revisit a past, indefinable trauma.

DAVID STUBBS

JARVIS COCKER

Further Complications ROUGH TRADE



Old obsessions get the sap rising for the Greatest Living Yorkshireman, says *Stephen Troussé*



After the demise of Pulp, some of us hoped Jarvis Cocker might gracefully retire from pop. There were so many other things he seemed capable of: transforming into a quizzical documentarist; becoming the natural radio heir to John Peel, riding with a single bony arse the twin saddles of shambling provincial punk and domestic bafflement; or just gradually settling in as the Britpop Alan Bennett, unsentimentally recording his voyage into middle age with cosmic Yorkshire diffidence.

His first solo record, 2006's *Jarvis*, didn't necessarily convince us otherwise. Though it was only a hidden track, the sentiment of "Cunts Are Still Running The World" overwhelmed the album, so bitterly depressed did it seem, and so unable to dramatise this despair.

So it's a wonderful surprise that *Further Complications* turns out to be such a reinvigorated piece of work. Much of this freshness must be down to the working methods of producer Steve Albini – on the face of it an unlikely collaborator, but one whose unfussy insistence on recording a live band simply and quickly seems to have sparked Cocker back into life, inspired him to have a last shot at making a filthy rock'n'roll album before he hits 50.

He sets the tone on "Angela", a classic Cocker lust song dedicated to a 23-year-old on £4.15 an hour, who provides overzealous handjobs and complimentary showers. "Feel the sap rising tonight," he hisses. What daffodils were to Wordsworth and deprivation was for Larkin, single mums, provincial discos and seedy shags are for Jarvis Cocker. Midlife crisis becomes him. If his solo debut was about the murderous thoughts at the heart of domestic contentment, *Further Complications* is the sound of the dirty old man being let off the leash.

He's fully aware of how ridiculous it might seem. "I met her in the Museum of Palaeontology and I make no bones about it," he sighs, revisiting the opening couplets of "Common People", on the hilarious "Leftovers". "I said, 'If you wish to study dinosaurs, I know a specimen whose interest is undoubted.'" The drummer can only underline things with a rimshot.

The raucous Albini-fied rock'n'roll also rather suits Jarvis. At times it's like The Bad Seeds trying their hands at working men's club cabaret, at others it's like one of those confessional, tightly wasted early '80s Lou Reed records. Surreally, on "Homewrecker!", featuring the skronking sax of Steve Mackay, it's the Stooges doing the *Batman* theme. Mostly, on tracks like the almost instrumental "Pilchard" it's a kind of steampunk grebo, a creaking Fall, or, as Cocker puts it "a complicated boogie". It's tremendously enjoyable.

The stamina might not be what it was, and, by the 19th nervous breakdown of "Caucasian Blues", the

Albini seems to have inspired Cocker to have a last shot at making a filthy rock'n'roll album before he hits 50



strain is beginning to show. And "Slush", an oddly gospel number, partly inspired by a trip to the Arctic

Circle and a premonition of the approaching environmental deluge, seems to belong on another album entirely.

But with the closing "You're In My Eyes", the album is back on track. It's an eight-minute "disco hallucination", of the type that was the centrepiece of

those classic Pulp albums, a Proustian rush whereby a mirrorball in a provincial disco on a Thursday evening dazzles the grey floaters in middle-aged eyes. "One day my eyes will be full / A snowstorm every time I shake my head," he sighs. "But that day is not tonight and if we keep moving – dancing tight – they might never catch us / I don't want to lose you again." It's a glorious futile attempt to outrun mortality, and in a funny way it's Jarvis singing to his own muse. Somehow, this late in the day, against all odds, Jarvis Cocker has got his groove back.

Q & A Jarvis Cocker

How was working with Steve Albini?

It was very enjoyable. I didn't really know very much about him to be honest. It was [Pulp bassist] Steve Mackey's idea to see him while we were playing in Chicago. And it worked out really well. He's the opposite of most people you meet in this business, the rampant egotism, people who want to put their stamp on everything. He aspires to a kind of transparency...

You sound reinvigorated on this new record...

Well, I wouldn't want to sound

de-invigorated. Was the last record depressed or depressing? Well it was a much more considered affair. And it was a funny time in the world, weren't it?

But you have more fire in your belly this time around?

Well it's amazing what drugs can do, isn't it?

Is it awkward to sing about sex and lust as a married man, with kids?

It is. You get into terrible trouble. I used to think one day I will become a sensible upstanding member of society

and I won't be bothered about sex and I'll be nice to people. And then you realise, well it's not going to happen. Unless you have some kind of operation.

You currently seem to be reconnecting with what inspired you in Pulp: single mums and discos...

Partly you realise what you're interested in. I say on the record: "I am profoundly shallow" – that's something I've realised about myself. I am profoundly interested in things like discos. Which are pretty frivolous things, really. STEPHEN TROUSSE

JASON LYTLE
Yours Truly, The Commuter

ANTI RECORDS

★★★★

Ex-Granddaddy dude makes downbeat debut

Granddaddy made their cultish mark in 2000 with *The Sophtware Slump*, a batch of dreamy, collegiate rock songs treated with lo-fi electronics and delivered at a mid-tempo pace by Jason Lytle. Despite frequent talk of the impossibility of eking out a living at this, he hung on until 2006 before calling it quits. Considering how long he's been away, Lytle's new material sounds surprisingly familiar: necessarily leaner, but sweetly melancholic alt. rock is still his thing. There is the odd suggestion here of a campfire Mercury Rev, but nothing to spook former fans.

SHARON O'CONNELL

THE MACCABEES
Wall Of Arms

FICTION

★★★★

Art popsters' second LP

Abetted by Arcade Fire producer Markus Dravs, Londoners The Maccabees fill out the skittering indie pop of their debut with horns, and sonorous atmospheres in the vein of Sigur Rós. Singer Orlando Weeks' new themes of intimacy and dependence, (as opposed to the wave machines and x-ray visions of 2007's debut, *Colour It In*), add emotional scope to a band blossoming from their spindly beginnings into a meaty prospect capable of doing goth XTC ("Love You Better"), jolly Joy Division ("No Kind Words") and sword-dancing Strokes ("Can You Give It"). At times, you imagine Arcade Fire phoning their lawyers, but in the main, no jury would convict them.

MARK BEAUMONT

ANDY MACKAY & THE METAPHORS
London! Paris! New York! Rome!

METAPHORIC

★★★★

Art rock alert: Roxy Music reedsman swaggers back

Mackay's new group exist somewhere on the improv-post-rock axis, a meld of his oboe/sax with piano, synth, guitar and the divine harp of Julia Thornton (a former EMI "classical babe"), underpinned by Roxy drummer Paul Thompson. Their debut offers a weird and surprising ride through half a dozen standards linked to cities. "I Love Paris" morphs from classical keyboards to surf guitar to sax squall. "Three Coins In The Fountain" is a honking stomp, and "Love Is The Drug" and "Waterloo Sunset" are lovely, ambient deconstructions. The Metaphors' mission - "to create disturbing beauty" - is thrillingly fulfilled in just 31 minutes. NEIL SPENCER

MAGIK MARKERS
Balf Quarry

DRAG CITY

★★★★

Leftfield fun from Connecticut. Rocks, obviously

The duo of Pete Nolan and singer/guitarist Elisa Ambrogio started out as a skronky noise act, but of late they've become a band more in the Sonic Youth mould. Ignoring the landslide of CD-Rs released in the interim, this follow-up to 2007's Lee Ranaldo-produced *Boss* finds them flitting dynamically from Royal Trux-ish fuzz blues ("Don't Talk In Your Sleep") to incantatory pieces like "Shells", that cross *Experimental Jet Set*-era Youth with Nico. Best of all are two

excursions into hardcore, notably "The Lighter Side Of... Hippies", in which Ambrogio indicts a generation as wasters and coke-addled hypocrites.

JOHN MULVEY

MALAJUBE
Labyrinthes

CITY SLANG

★★★★

Ambitious indie pomp from Quebecois quartet

Arcade Fire's triumphant march around the mid-sized arenas of the world has sparked a wave of young Canadian indie bands eager to ride on their coattails. Montreal's Malajube hardly seem the most craven; they sing in their native French, for a start. But what third album *Labyrinthes* lacks in instant anthems, it makes up for in rich melodies, grand orchestration, and blooming arrangements that, thankfully, stop short of bombast. Best is "Casablanca", sunny choruses winding home on gentle eddies of piano and intricate post-rock swells, before a final climactic clamour of guitars. LOUIS PATTISON

MARMADUKE DUKE
Duke Pandemonium

14TH FLOOR RECORDS

★★★★

Conceptual nu-disco. From Scotland

Biffy Clyro's Simon Neil has yet to set the world alight with the intricate metal/hardcore of his main band - perhaps that's why he's trying a "disco" side project. In fact, it's a serious commitment: with partner JP Reid, Marmaduke Duke have now run to two LPs, and plan a third. Claiming to document the hedonistic years in the life of (fictional) Victorian knave Marmaduke Duke, this is an enjoyable romp through the fields of synth pop, indie electronica and bass-weighted

digital funk, that's enthusiastic and - given their backgrounds - laudably adventurous.

SHARON O'CONNELL

JOHN MARTYN
May You Never: The Very Best Of John Martyn

ISLAND

★★★★

Slightly unnecessary posthumous comp

Given that last year's box, *Ain't No Saint*, struggled to encapsulate the breadth of Martyn's talent, this posthumous "Greatest Hits" seems superfluous. It's a predictable selection, rooted in the early, Island years (three from *Solid Air*: title track, "May You Never", and "Don't Want To Know") where Martyn developed his unclassifiable blend of folk, blues and jazz. As a singer, Martyn had a way of sounding both distracted and involved, using his voice as an instrument. The way he transcends style is clear on his beautiful arrangement of "Spencer The Rover". The harmonies (with ex-wife Beverley) on "John The Baptist", are quite lovely. But the limits of Martyn's musical catholicism are evident on "Over The Rainbow" from 1984, where the Linn drums leave him sounding like a saltier Paul Young. Beginners are directed towards *Solid Air*.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

MAXIMO PARK
Quicken The Heart

WARP

★★★★

Paul Smith's bookish Tynesiders beef up

Like the archetypal skinny wretches tired of having sand kicked in their faces, Maximo Park are a group who have spent two LPs adding musical muscle, as if on some indie rock Atlas course. Sadly, as this third proves, it's been at the expense of some of the band's delicacy - there's nothing here as good as "Nosebleed", the standout from 2007's second, *Our Earthly Pleasures* - but there are still some good points here. Bombastic synth rock at times threatens to become their default setting, but the driving Killers style tune "Questing, Not Coasting" makes it well worth a look. MARK BEAUMONT

MEXICAN INSTITUTE OF SOUND
Soy Sauce

COOKING VINYL

★★★★

Spiced up electro-fusion with a south-of-the-border edge

Sounding like the Mexican

cousin of Buraka Som Sistema, Camilo Lara departs from the plundered samples of his debut in favour of live instruments and vocals, although they're so heavily treated that mostly you'd never guess. "White Stripes" fuses Hispanic rhythms, hip hop beats and laptop wizardry. The Beastie Boys' Ad Rock remixes "Alocate!" into a radical Spanish rap chop-up, while the send-up of "Bittersweet Symphony" ("Sinfonia Agridulce") is guaranteed to raise a smile, unless your name's Richard Ashcroft. NIGEL WILLIAMSON

MOCKY
Saskamode

CRAMMED DISCS

★★★★

Hip hop maverick does mellow soul-jazz

Dominic "Mocky" Salole has developed quite a reputation for making mischievous hip hop and electronica, both as Mocky and with other Berlin-based Canadian mavericks (Peaches, Gonzales, etc). This project, however, sees him enlisting a host of likeminded pals (Leslie Feist, Jamie Lidell, Joel Gibb) and exploring a certain vintage of '70s soul music. Multi-tasking wildly, Mocky brilliantly pastiches Bob James' smooth jazz ("Chubby Cheeks", "Jiinti") and Shuggy Otis' folk funk ("Birds Of A Feather", "Music To My Ears") but, oddly, the whole project has a nostalgic feel that earns comparisons with Brian Wilson's *Smile*.

JOHN LEWIS

MOKIRA
Persona

TYPE

★★★★

Exquisite noise from electronica student of Kosmische

Swedish producer Andreas Tillander is one of the few followers of the Berlin school of dub electronica whose efforts travel far beyond pastiche into a realm where Pole meets Cluster in perfect machine ambience. Much truer to the spirit of '70s Germany than Jan Jelinek's groundbreaking 2005 LP, *Kosmischer Pitch*, Tillander avoids the propulsive rhythms that he's pursued on 12-inch releases in favour of an exquisite attention to texture. Recorded with an entirely analog studio there is warmth and tactility to tracks like "Valla Torg Kraut" and wonderfully fragile melody weaving throughout "Invitation To Love". Challenging but hypnotic stuff. JAMES POLETTI



John Martyn: lazy Best Of not the finest epitaph.

The month's best...

SLEEPY SUN

Embrace ATP RECORDINGS



Santa Cruz sextet relight the American psych-rock fire. *By Louis Pattison*



Perhaps it's just a product of familiarity, but the more bands you hear rising out of California in a cloud of hashish and enthusiastically applied

wah-wah, the more the current swell of heavy psych feels less the stuff of '60s nostalgia, and more like a kind of indigenous folk – something sown in the soil, like giant redwood roots. Latest of the bunch are Sleepy Sun. Born from the same Santa Cruz neighbourhood as Comets On Fire and sharing a producer – Colin Stewart – with Black Mountain, at first they seem to occupy a familiar territory. "New Age", the opener here, is pleasingly straightforward in its fried intent, bluesy acid-rock built from lumbering toms, clattering rim-shots, and craggy guitar solos that wrestle for space with Brett Constantino's frazzled cry. But *Embrace* plies its trade with a neat mix of musical proficiency and stylistic flexibility. Following is "Lord", a languid gospel number on piano and acoustic guitar that Constantino approaches somewhat pensively, as if uncertain if real salvation truly comes from above. And then there's "Red/Black", which is just plain weird – a lysergic excursion led by the



chant "Paint my face with chocolate..." over jaunty guitars and ringing cymbals before a sudden fanfare of drums fires the whole thing with a lurch. Certainly, there are few bands in the idiom that can flip the mood from hall of mirrors to downhill rollercoaster with quite such natural effortlessness.

Sleepy Sun's secret weapon, however is Rachel Williams, only a part-time member – her angelic tones appear on just half the tracks – but deployed with killer timing. In part, she's there to hold the whiff of testosterone at bay – see the closing "Duet With The Northern Sky", a sweet campfire chorus with shakers like chirruping cicadas. But she's also there like a keening banshee as "Sleepy Sun" tips over the precipice from stoned Spacemen 3 stasis to butch Blue Cheer riffage. That's the real strength of *Embrace*: how it swoops from rough to smooth with virtue and ease; and how you'll dig it both ways.

SINGLES BAR

All eyes are on **The Big Pink**, the latest recipients of *NME*'s Philip Hall Radar Award for promising new bands, and "Velvet" ^{4AD} doesn't disappoint. The song itself is simple and direct, but there's an air of opiated menace to the music – ghostly backing vocals, clumps of steel-wool guitar and a clanking, quasi-industrial beat – that makes it all sound deliciously deviant.

We have an inkling that the new Dirty Projectors album is going to be astonishing, a feeling only intensified by the stunning debut solo EP from the band's **Angel Deradoorian** "Mind Raft" LOVEPUMP UNITED is a sultry, spectral five-tracker, in the same vein as High Places and Bat For Lashes – but arguably better than both.

The band name alone should tell you that there's more than a hint of prog about



Apes & Androids [above] although debut UK single "Nights Of The Week" ^{A&A} RECORDS is by no means a whimsical beard-off. Instead it recalls the moment at the dawn of the '80s when the prog dinosaurs briefly hit on a seam of sumptuous stadium pop, "Owner Of A Lonely Heart", etcetera. Alternatively, you could just say it sounds like a geekier MGMT.

Refreshingly for a hotly tipped UK guitar band, **The XX** don't seem desperate to court daytime Radio 1. Their debut single "Crystalised" ^{YOUNG TURKS} is spooked and skeletal, clashing boy/girl vocals heightening the funky tension. To give you a further idea of where their heads are at, the b-side is a cover of Aaliyah's "Hot Like Fire" in the style of The Chills' "Pink Frost". Confoundingly good.

SAM RICHARDS

GOLDEN SILVERS
True Romance

XL

★★★★

Lovestruck Londoners mine '60s psychedelia to great effect

Eschewing the ubiquitous '80s influences of their peers, London trio the Golden Silvers have instead channelled the spirit of Sly Stone to make a debut of inspired pop-psych. Classic pop songwriting with a twist is the order of the day, with watertight barbershop harmonies spooned onto layers of intricately arranged organ – like Keane's evil twins, they don't use guitars – while lyrics are unabashedly lovestruck. "True No 9 Blues" sounds like Dylan if he'd discovered funk in 1966, while the standout "Magic Touch" manages to make a song about heartbreak evoke a mad Carnaby Street doo-wop party.

MATT BOLTON

PASSION PIT
Manners

FRENCH KISS/COLUMBIA

★★★★

Latest preppy blog-rock darlings

Boston's Passion Pit are currently America's hottest 'buzz band', and you can hear why. *Manners* shares plenty of common ground with a couple of last year's cult crossover albums, namely Neon Neon's '80s homage *Stainless Style* and Oracular Spectacular by MGMT. "Little Secrets", all squiggly Paisley Park synths and childlike glee, is one of several killer pop songs here but Michael Angelakos' helium voice – allied to the relentless sugar rush of the music – does begin to make you feel a bit peaky. *Manners* is impressively slick and sparky but probably just a little too toothpaste fresh.

SAM RICHARDS

ROLO TOMASSI
Rolo Tomassi

HOLY ROAR

★★★★

Hyper-complex UK punk crew's debut EP, reissued and expanded

Recorded back in 2006 when most of the band were still in their teens, *Rolo Tomassi* nonetheless marks out this Sheffield quintet as one of the most creative and original in British rock. Six tracks veer between dynamic, scattershot bursts of Napalm Death-style thrash, demented jazz fusion, and Dario Argento-tinged horror flick synth excursions, while a pair of bonus reissues pad the package out with stuttering beats and Game Boy pings. The core tracks here work on a formula the band would later refine on 2008's debut album proper, *Hysterics*, but what's here sparks with ingenuity and intensity.

LOUIS PATTISON

THE VIRGINS
The Virgins

ATLANTIC

★★★★

Former models from NYC manage to keep irritation to a minimum

With white funk bass and a mention of a "cocaine brunch" within the first seconds of opening track "She's Expensive", The Virgins plant themselves firmly in the rolled-up suit sleeves camp of '80s yuppie rock. Not the best way to win friends in the current climate perhaps, but the New York threesome have just about enough tunes to pull it off. "One Week Of Danger" is a head-down, feet-first piledriver reminiscent of Tom Petty, while "Private Affair"'s perky synths successfully manage to evoke images of model-filled yachts and socialite parties, pretty much guilt-free.

MATT BOLTON

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Journal For Plague Lovers COLUMBIA



Richey's lost lyrics set to music? It shouldn't work, but somehow does, says Sam Richards



With all the lyrics culled from Richey Edwards' notebooks and a cover painting by Jenny Saville, the Manics appear to

be touting *Journal For Plague Lovers* as a follow-up to their tormented masterpiece, 1994's *The Holy Bible*.

It's a risky tactic - imagine if New Order announced they'd uncovered a new stash of Ian Curtis' lyrics and were planning to record *Unknown Pleasures 2*. Yet the Manics must have agonised for years about using Richey's lost verses: pointed but poetic, crackling with intelligence, bleak but often also very funny, they're far superior to anything Nicky Wire has come up with since *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours*. Only now, with Edwards officially declared presumed dead in November, have the band felt comfortable about setting them to music.

If there's any lingering unease about this endeavour, it's instantly dispelled by the first few ferocious chords. Richey would surely be proud of the way his words have galvanised the remaining Manics into making some of their most vital music for years.



This blends punk instincts with stadium flourishes. That taut urgency is back

Just like old times, "Peeled Apples" is heralded by a sampled voice (from *The Machinist*, the film for which Christian Bale lost 62lbs). Then comes an oil-boring bass rumble, a searing post-punk guitar line and a slew of unmistakable Richey aphorisms: "The figure eight inside out is infinity"; "The Levi Jean has always been stronger than the Uzi"; "Falcons attack the pigeons in the West Wing at night".

It's a pulsating opener. The Manics have recaptured that taut urgency, accommodating both their punk instincts and their stadium rock flourishes. Some of the credit for this must go to producer Steve Albini, hired partly because the band openly hoped to emulate Nirvana's *In Utero*. In practice, though, the Manics' innate musicality places them closer to early Smashing Pumpkins than Nirvana, more Killing Joke than Pere Ubu. Wire nails it when he says of the terrific title track: "The idea was to write music inspired by Rush then pretend we were Magazine playing it."

"Jackie Collins Existential Question Time" is a breezier number, with its chiming chorus line "Ob mummy, what's a Sex Pistol?" reminding us of the mordant wit that often flickered behind Edwards' hollow-cheeked grimace. "Me And Stephen Hawking" - a brisk, pithy pop song, the Manics' best since "PCP" - provides a punchline to that old gag, "What did the anorexic say to the quadriplegic?" ("We missed the sex revolution when we failed the physical" - boom tish!) If that all sounds like too much fun, there's "She Bathed Herself In A Bath Of Bleach" - a grungy dissection of love as masochism.

We've missed the phenomenon of James manfully struggling to wrap his gums around Richey's knotty prose.

"Facing Page: Top Left" - a slightly heavy-handed acoustic harp duet - finds him grappling with "tinted UV

protection" and "dipping neophobia". On the electrifying "Pretension/Repulsion" it sounds like he's singing "Won't release my address"; the lyric sheet has to be consulted to discover that he's actually referring to the controversially curvy 1814 portrait *Grande Odalisque* by Ingres.

Album closer "William's Last Words" sounds like nothing the Manics have ever recorded before, and not just because Nicky Wire takes lead vocals. The worry that Wire can't really sing is circumvented by a gorgeous acoustic backing, all halcyon chords and wilting strings, that makes him sound like Lawrence from Felt. Lyrically, it's a poignantly stoical farewell to the world, and it's hard to resist the temptation to read it as Richey's suicide note.

Of course, there's something faintly ridiculous about *Journal For Plague Lovers* - as, indeed, there was about *The Holy Bible* - which makes it unlikely to win any new converts. But this is also a brave, compelling record that stands shoulder to shoulder with the Manics' best. Even if they may struggle to make another album as good as this without Richey's lyrics, *Journal...* provides a satisfying sense of closure.

Q & A James Dean Bradfield

Why choose now to use Richey's lyrics?

It's something we've always talked about. As time elapsed, it became clear that he'd deliberately given us these lyrics very shortly before he disappeared - kind of bequeathed them to us I suppose - so I imagine he did intend them to be Manic Street Preachers songs. I'd been a bit daunted by the lyrics at first but more and more I began to feel a sense of responsibility that we should be doing something with them.

How much did the lyrics dictate the style and mood of the music?

Completely and utterly. There were also other things in the lyric booklet - collages, quotes, etcetera - so in a sense Richey left us a visual demo of how he wanted the record to feel. What kind of emotions did you go through when you were singing Richey's lyrics? It wasn't as if I was having to choke back the tears, although there were certain

lyrics that felt as if they were driving me towards an emotional response to the situation we've had with Richey since he disappeared. I remember hearing Nick singing "William's Last Words" in the studio and thinking, 'I'm glad it's not me' because I felt quite affected by it. But I've got to say mostly it felt like Richey was back in the room. I'm just glad we followed through on what we imagined to be his wishes. INTERVIEW: SAM RICHARDS

MOTORHEAD 1981 No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith Deluxe Edition

UNIVERSAL

★★★★

Superb live set. Not actually recorded at Hammersmith

While most rock bands needed a live double to get the job done, Motörhead, going like the clappers in 1980, got the same weight of hard rock onto a single disc. This, the happy result, recorded in front of pissed Vikings in Leeds and Newcastle, captures Lemmy's trio at their undoubted peak, touring material from the *Ace Of Spades* album, the ensuing mania sending *No Sleep...* at the time to No. 1. This – a repackaging of the 2001 Complete Edition – includes a disc of alternative takes, but the original set ("The Hammer", "No Class", "(We Are) The Roadcrew") finds Motörhead sounding at this stage in their career (as they have subsequently gone on to prove), that while obstacles can get in their way, nothing can actually stop them. **JOHN ROBINSON**

MY LATEST NOVEL Deaths And Entrances

BELLA UNION

★★★★

Greenock bookworms live up to early promise

There are worse things than being hailed as Strathclyde's answer to Arcade Fire. *Deaths And Entrances* is even more of a clamouring widescreen epic than its predecessor, drawing lyrical themes from scatter-shot literary sources including Dylan Thomas and Joseph Heller. Their Celtic folk-rock euphoria is uncomfortably close to Snow Patrol in places, but averts sinking into soggy bombast with its prog-symphony arrangements and spiky circular lyrics like "If The Accident Will", inspired, bookishly enough, by Kurt Vonnegut novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*. **STEPHEN DALTON**

MY TOYS LIKE ME Where We Are

DUMB ANGEL

★★★★

Dazzling debut from post-rave pop oddballs

Are you ready for the most playful, inventive, life-affirming British debut of the decade? My Toys Like Me flirt with electro, dub, jazz, trip hop and old-school rave, but their instantly addictive left-field pop is greater than the sum of its parts. Singer Frances Noon has one of those priceless signature voices, drowsy and slinky like Martina Topley-Bird, but with a dash of Lily

Allen's observational wit. Her songwriting partner Lazlo Legezer surfs the musical spectrum from glitch techno to Eastern European folk, producing a charming new strain of sexy, syncopated, storytelling groove-pop.

STEPHEN DALTON

WILLIE NELSON Stripped

RCA NASHVILLE

★★★★

Nelson declares "I told you so" to late-'60s production values

You've heard these songs before, and you haven't. Everything on *Stripped* was recorded in Nashville between 1966 and 1970 – but, as was the style at the time, drenched in torrential strings by RCA producers Chet Atkins and Felton Jarvis. Nelson, it seems, long resented the interference: this is the "un-producing" of the original tracks by Nelson's long-serving harmonica player Mickey Raphael. Even those who furtively admire the lachrymose splendour of late-'60s Nashville should marvel at the results. Nelson during this period was in swaggering form as a writer, as capable of bleak comedy ("Laying My Burdens Down") and venomous protest folk (the anti-Vietnam "Jimmy's Road"), as he was with his workaday output of classicist country. His voice, as he approached 40, meanwhile, was subsiding into the careworn croon that would shortly define the "outlaw country" movement and make him a superstar with "Stardust".

ANDREW MUELLER

NEWHAM GENERALS Generally Speaking

DIRTEE STANK

★★★

Dizzee Rascal protégés drop a stinker

This might be the Generals' debut LP proper, but they're no mere pups: you can trace the careers of twin MCs D Double E and Footsie back to grime's first wave, when a generation of young London rappers and producers hotwired UK dance culture with urban grit and lyrical ingenuity. *Generally Speaking*, which lands on Dizzee Rascal's imprint after several years' wait, says a lot about how the sound has lost momentum. Grime's snappy rhythms and black humour have ossified into a trudging, joyless nihilism, while "Head Get Mangled" is sub-Prodigy techno-metal with little to recommend it.

LOUIS PATTISON



The Mystic Valley Band, with Conor Oberst third left

NEW YORK DOLLS 'Cause I Sez So

ATCO

★★★★

Thirty-eight years after they first formed, the Dolls creak back

When the Dolls last released an album the buzz round their reformation was still loud enough to have celeb guests queuing up to make a cameo appearance. Somewhat tellingly, however, Michael Stipe and Iggy Pop are nowhere to be heard this time. Still, original producer Todd Rundgren is back on board and – against considerable odds – *'Cause I Sez So* is a bit of a hoot. No matter that only



Johansen and Sylvain Sylvain remain from the original lineup or they've included a totally superfluous reggae makeover of "Trash": there are enough daft glam hooks here to keep the faithful happy, while "Making Rain" might be one of the prettiest songs that they've ever recorded. **FAT LONG**

CONOR OBERST AND THE MYSTIC VALLEY BAND Outer South

WICHITA

★★★★

Bright Eyes boy gives backing band the mic. Results: mixed

After Oberst recorded his self-titled album, he took his five

cohorts on the road, whereupon he came up with 10 new tunes, including two co-writes, while three bandmembers penned an additional six on their own. Recorded in a West Texas studio, the resulting LP is a shambling, intermittently engaging sprawl, the songs jammed with verbiage, the lead vocals spread among the principals, most of whom make Oberst's frayed, wobbly singing seem Bono-esque by comparison. The LP's saving grace is the dexterous playing of the ensemble, which brings to mind The Band and Brinsley Schwarz, with Nate Walcott's churning Hammond leading the way. Bubbling under the lilting roots-rock performances is a prevailing sense of unease, which finally boils over on "Roosevelt Room," a zeitgeist-capturing rant targeting those villains responsible for systematically dismantling the American Dream. Oberst's vocal is venomous, the guitars brittle and howling, the result a post-millennial companion piece to Dylan's "All Along The Watchtower". **BUD SCOPPA**

FREDA PAYNE 1966 How Do You Say I Don't Love You Anymore

POKER RECORDS

★★★★

Before Band Of Gold, some gritty '60s soul

Long consigned to the same easy-listening charity racks as Nancy Wilson – their gutsy soulful deliveries overshadowed by big band arrangements – *How Do You Say...* proves Payne's early output is worth revisiting. The title track, extensively sampled by J-Walk's "Soul

Vibration", should be instantly familiar, while a brassy "On Easy Street" set the template for "Band Of Gold". Her sultry take on "Feeling Good" also proves she'd have done better providing theme tunes for Cubby Broccoli rather than appearing in front of the camera in the likes of *The Nutty Professor II*. **EDEN PARKE**

PEACHES I Feel Cream

XL

★★★★

Career high from so-sharp art-punk rapper

On previous Peaches albums, music sometimes took a back seat to post-feminist critique as the artist formerly known as Merrill Nisker wittily deconstructed rock's sexual objectification of women. All very smart and laudable, but more conceptual art than great pop. This time, however, Peaches finds the sweet spot between brain and groin, fleshing out her finest songs yet with help from Simian Mobile Disco, Soulwax, Digitalism and others. *I Feel Cream* is rich and eclectic, adding lush love balladry, lustrous "Sexual Healing" pastiche and dreamy Goldfrapp-style disco-pop to Nisker's default settings of beatbox sleaze-rap and rock-chick riffola. Her high-speed rhymes are also sharper and funnier than ever: "Fuck you like a billionaire/Debonair in my Fred Astaire footwear". She even pays sly homage to her new comedy playmates the Mighty Boosh: "big trouble in little mangina" indeed. High art, low humour and deluxe filth: a hugely seductive combination. **STEPHEN DALTON**

This month in...

AMERICANA

By Rob Hughes



STEVE EARLE

Townes NEW WEST



All-covers homage to his mentor, Townes Van Zandt



Steve Earle's apprenticeship with Texan legend Townes Van Zandt was never remotely conventional. An inveterate boozier, Van Zandt once had Earle tie him to a tree in the addled notion that it might make him quit drinking. They first met in the early '70s, Townes heckling a 17-year-old Earle at a gig in Houston, after which the pair bonded over music, politics and a reckless determination to do things their own way. As Earle later noted: "He was a really good teacher and really bad role model."

This tribute album could have easily fallen on its arse—a pet project overrun with sentiment and reverence. But Earle was clearly wary of the pitfalls. Rather than trying to mimic his mentor, he instead teases out and magnifies Van Zandt's own musical influences. So "Loretta" takes what was originally a pretty straight country tune and fashions it into a whiskey-warmed Celtic reel, wife Allison Moorer's vocals flitting around at

the hem. It's Earle re-imagining Townes as a team player rather than lone wolf. "Brand New Companion" is likewise accentuated into a more deliberate blues throb than Van Zandt's 1971 version. Earle also seems acutely aware that it's impossible to forage deeper under the skin of these songs than Van Zandt did himself. But he's able to summon the same air of desolation and disquiet by other means. "Lungs", the song that its creator said should be screamed rather than merely sung, is here given a tumultuous makeover with distorted voice, feedback and a snarling guest spot from Rage Against The Machine guitarist Tom Morello. "Fort Worth Blues" was the song Earle wrote on hearing of Van Zandt's premature death in 1997, aged 52, but there can be no better monument than this version of "Mr Mudd And Mr Gold", in which he's joined by aptly named son Justin Townes Earle for a truly enthralling duet. Van Zandt could be both masochistic thrill-seeker and gentle poet, and Earle knew his subject from the outside in.

ROUND-UP

Americana is a pretty broad church these days. Take **Chris Eckman**, co-singer and songwriter for The Walkabouts, the Seattle-based alt-country combo who've been on-off since the early '80s. Eckman now resides in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where he roped in local musos and his old mate, Steve Wynn, for his solo album, *The Last Side Of The Mountain* ★★★ GLITTERHOUSE. It's all very moody in tone, Eckman rarely rising above a whisper as he puts the words of Slovenian poet Dane Zajc to somber, finely wrought arrangements. Gothic chamber music, if you like. **Wayne 'The Train' Hancock** is more of your conventional country boy. The sultan of juke-joint swing does his old-time thing to full effect on *Viper Of Melody* ★★★ BLOODSHOT, a lively set of honky-tonk, rockabilly and western swing, complete with stinging guitar and doghouse bass. Who needs a drummer when you can make a racket



like this? On a more artful tip, our own **Ian Siegal** (above) finally gets a European release for *The Dust* ★★★ NUGENE. He's a killer guitar player, his spidery blues dashed with country inflections and lots of slide. And if there's a more impressive example of controlled speed-picking than "The Silver Spurs", I've yet to hear it. Pedal steel legend BJ Cole plays on a couple of tunes (including Mary Gauthier's "I Drink"), along with occasional vocalist Sam Hare, but this really is a solo tour de force.

Equally deserving is *Sea Of Tears* ★★★ SIGNATURE SOUNDS, the third LP from Boston's **Eilen Jewell**. She's not unlike *Uncut* favourites Neko Case and Kate Maki in her lovely balance of strident country and rural balladry. Last up, Canadians **Immaculate Machine** impressed with 2007's *Fables*, but *High On Jackson Hill* ★★ MINT doesn't quite deliver the same pumping thrills, opting instead for a folksier course.

GREAT LAKE SWIMMERS
Lost Channels

NETTWERK

★★★★

Canadian minimalists
get perky

Toronto's Tony Dekker has been making records in the ambient surrounds of old churches, seed silos and rural spaces for the past seven years. The results have suggested his studious search for atmosphere has been worthwhile: wispy acoustics, horizontal voice, soft guitar. This fourth LP doesn't exactly ring the wholesale changes, but he's now dressing his delicate tales with percussive banjos and, as on standout "Still", the feel of some forgotten Irish folk shanty. "Concrete Heart" and "Stealing Tomorrow", meanwhile, are as sepulchral as we've come to expect. Fans of Iron & Wine and The Acorn take note.

DEVON SPOULE
Don't Hurry For
Heaven

TIN ANGEL

★★★★

Fragrant fifth from
Virginia songstress

There's something deceptively simple to Devon Sproule's songs. Maybe it's the languid arrangements, the undertow of '40s swing or the conversational air of her lovely voice. But it's far more imaginative than that. *Don't Hurry For Heaven* is cleverly assembled, making sophisticated bedfellows of banjo and blue-note jazz on the wry title track (in which she bemoans her lover's preference for a Martin guitar over her) and the sad peal of "The Easier Way". And she could be Kitty Wells or Laura Veirs on "Bowling Green", lacing up folk, country and Texan swing into a gorgeously inviting whole.

DAVE ALVIN AND THE
GUILTY WOMEN
Dave Alvin And The Guilty
Women

YEP! ROC

★★★★

All-girl delights for the
ex-Blaster

The death of best friend and bandmate Chris Gaffney has led Dave Alvin temporarily to shelve his back-up troupe, The Guilty Men. He's on an imminent Gaffney tribute LP (alongside Calexico, Tom Russell and Los Lobos) but has now also recruited an all-girl Texan ensemble who clearly know their way around a rockabilly lick and a country ballad. Cindy Cashdollar and Nina Gerber are guitarists capable of real fire and stealth, with Alvin's worn-in voice counter-weighted against the sweeter pipes of Christy McWilson. It's all hugely engaging, even a boogie-woogie "Que Sera Sera".

KIMMIE RHODES
Ten Summers

SUNBIRD

★★★★

Star guests abound
on reissued Best Of

Last year's *Walls Fall Down* was Rhodes' 12th album of poetic, deceptively simple country-folk. The West Texan has long been admired by the likes of Willie Nelson, Emmylou Harris, Joe Ely and Rodney Crowell. A fair chunk of them appear on *Ten Summers*, a 1995-2005 retrospective that pits her angelic, unhurried tones against the gruffer mutterings of Townes Van Zandt ("I'm Gonna Fly"), Waylon Jennings ("Maybe We'll Disappear") and Willie Nelson ("Love Me Like A Song"). And there's more than a hint of gospel in the languid Emmylou Harris duet, "Love And Happiness For You".

JASON ISBELL & THE 400 UNIT

Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit LIGHTNING ROD ★★★★★



Confident country-soul from former Drive-By Truckers. *By Andrew Mueller*



As the third-string songwriter in The Drive-By-Truckers, Jason Isbell had an enviable gig. For six eventful years and three magnificent albums, all that was required of him, with the prolific Patterson Hood and Mike Cooley contributing most of the material, was the odd carefully burnished gem. These, Isbell delivered – among them the title track of 2003's classic *Decoration Day* and that album's clear highlight, the careworn, hilarious, father-to-son lecture "Outfit".

Isbell outgrew the arrangement – and also, it seems reasonable to assume, the novelty of touring in the same band as one's ex-wife (DBT bassist Shonna Tucker). He left the Truckers and made his solo bow with 2007's *Sirens of the Ditch*, a frustratingly uneven album which contained the best thing Isbell had written to date (the stunning "Dress Blues", a bitterly eloquent elegy for a school acquaintance killed in Iraq), but was burdened by much lesser stuff that might have struggled for space on a DBT album: the question of whether Isbell was cut out to be a solo artist remained an open one.

Not any longer. Isbell's second studio album redeems his promise in spectacular fashion, though a slight retreat from the spotlight is an important reason for this. It is telling that Isbell's touring group, The 400

Unit – named after a psychiatric facility in Isbell's native Florence, Alabama – are elevated to equal billing in credits and title: this sounds like it was made by a confederation of equals, the curious employment of a session drummer notwithstanding. Though the songs – and that fabulous, wracked drawl of a voice – are recognisably Isbell's, The 400 Unit impose themselves confidently: the keyboards of Derry deBorja (ex-Son Volt) are especially commanding, recalling the backdrops created by Drive-By-Truckers collaborators Spooner Oldham and Booker T Jones.

This is best thought of as 'country soul'. Isbell's words, in style and content, are old-school tears-in-the-beer laments, deftly lightened by exquisite deadpan payoffs: the stumbling barfly of "Streetlights", who thinks "I blocked just a park away, but I can't really say"; or the haplessly besotted wastrel of the Tom Waits-like "Cigarettes & Wine" reminiscing that "She kept me happy all the time/I know that ain't much of a line/But it's the Gods' own truth". The 400 Unit's music, however, forsakes pedal steels and strings for those grand, gloomy keyboards of deBorja's, guitars both delicate and destructive – "Good" and "However Long" rock like Slobberbone or The Damnells – and, on the adulterer's confessional "No Choice In The Matter", pugnacious horns summoned straight from Muscle Shoals (this was recorded at the same Shoals studio, FAME, as any number of cuts by The

Allman Brothers and Wilson Pickett, whose ghosts are prominent here).

Whether encouraged by the triumph of "Dress Blues", or fuelled by other preoccupations, Isbell is again at his best when contemplating the intersection of those two realms of endeavour in which all is said to be fair. On the knelling ballad, "Sunstroke", he scourges himself and a vexatious paramour for their insistence on creating further strife in a world full of people who can't avoid it, along with all other such self-dramatising grandstanders "who sleep while the

soldiers get sunstroke/And make little fools of ourselves". And "Soldiers Get Strange" is a brilliantly effective sketch of the derangement of a returning serviceman. The 400 Unit sound like Tom Petty's Heartbreakers. Isbell's staggering veteran like a man who can no longer see life unless it's defined by death ("Maybe you'll re-enlist/It couldn't be worse than this"). The song, much like the rest of this terrific album, is an acknowledgement that while love is assuredly a battlefield, a battlefield, in its way, can almost offer love.

Q & A Jason Isbell

Why did you decide to credit The 400 Unit so prominently?
Sirens of the Ditch was more of a solo project – I just used whoever I could find. But I'd been touring for a couple of years, and found quite a cohesive group of people, and they contributed quite a bit. Rather than me dictating, I'd play the songs and they'd come up with the arrangements.

You've a big soul sound here. Is that a consequence of recording at FAME studios?

It definitely didn't hurt. Being in that room does put you in that mindset, but that was how the songs presented themselves – and it's what I listen to and what I write most. It wasn't something we did on purpose, but I'm sure the atmosphere added to that.

Post-Truckers, do you find yourself writing about different things?
The goal is still the same as what it was. When I was writing for the Truckers, I knew there was a certain thing we had



as a group, so that would put me in a storytelling mode, and leaning towards Southern-oriented topics and sound. In this band I don't feel that pressure. I can make any kind of music. But the material isn't difficult to find. I write a lot. What's hard is pacing myself for shows – to sing for two hours.

ANDREW MUELLER

VINNY PECULIAR & THE BLUE POPPIES OF AMBROSIA

Sometimes I Feel Like A King

SHADRACK & DUXBURY

★★★★

Oddball Vinny keeps it simple, reaps rewards

Peculiar revels in his reputation of being one of pop's square pegs, loitering on the fringes of The Smiths or making mischief with Bill Drummond, but here he brings craft and discipline to his warped tales. Assisted by producer Rob Ferrier, he has concocted a batch of songs that conform to the simple but bomb-proof formula of being either fast and loud or slow and quiet. The deadpan "Welfare Statement" ("lazy public sector workers... all they ever do is moan") is one of the latter, but punkishness abounds in "Uniform". All he needs now is a sensible name.

ADAM SWEETING

PHOENIX

Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix

V2

★★★★

Impeccable fourth from French pop aesthetes

Though the title of their fourth album suggests extravagant megalomania, Phoenix are characterised by a modest genius. Just as Zidane could make a 10-yard pass seem like a thing of casual beauty, these Versailles dwellers make records that initially seem like delicately generic powerpop, but gradually emerge as vivid, bittersweet epiphanies. *WAP* is no different: a subtle retreat from the Strokesy stylings of their last outing back to the featherlite funk of their debut, almost every song feels like it could soundtrack some epic montage of young love gambolling through the sunset capitals of Europe.

STEPHEN TROUSSE



PINK MOUNTAINTOPS

Outside Love

JAG JAGUWAR

★★★★

Black Mountain man's side-project gets bigger

Away from the expansive psych of Black Mountain, the Pink Mountaintops initially seemed like Stephen McBean's

outlet for smaller, odder music: 2004's self-titled debut essayed a kind of hillbilly motorik. On this third album, however, McBean's ambition has pushed him - and the massed ranks of Canadian rock helping out here - into grandiose indie-pop terrain. The Spectorish opener, "Axis: Thrones Of Love", is certainly impressive, and a few reverberated country jaunts work well enough. The suspicion remains, though that heavy cosmic rock is probably the best vehicle for his apocalyptic romances. JOHN MULVEY

PONTIAK

Maker

THRILL JOCKEY

★★★★

Superior, Julian Cope-approved psych-blues adventurers

The fact that stoner-rock cum heavy psych-blues practitioners Pontiak once recorded a couple of John Cage covers suggests they do things differently. And *Maker* - recorded mostly in one take in their home-built studio in Virginia - proves as much. Baltimore brothers Lain, Jennings and Van Carney favour the slow-chugging, meaty riffs and hypnotic, shape-shifting drones the genre demands, but it's the crackle and stutter of overloaded amps and blasts of sheet-metal noise that up the physical ante. It's not all peyote-at-dawn portent either - "Semenal Shining" recalls early Screaming Trees and even Calexico in its grizzled languor. SHARON O'CONNELL

ELVIS PRESLEY

I Believe: The Gospel Masters

SONY

★★★★

The Gospel according to the King

However much Elvis' life resembled a pantomime towards the end, his love of gospel continued throughout, these recordings stretching from his earliest in 1956 till well into the 1970s. Gospel music provided a backbone for Elvis' music, performing Southern hymns and songs to warm up for sessions or relax before shows. Significantly, on his second Ed Sullivan appearance, Elvis performed "Peace In The Valley" as a way of toning down his lascivious image. He also successfully crossed spiritual music over to pop on songs like "Crying In The Chapel". This 4CD set features all Elvis' gospel and inspirational masters, the core provided by the albums, *Peace*



Gospel truth: Elvis helps us to believe

In The Valley, His Hand In Mine, How Great Thou Art and *He Touched Me*, plus gospel songs from his movies and live shows. Among Elvis' simplest and most effective work, and no less innovative than his secular music. MICK HOUGHTON

GERT-JAN PRINS

Cavity

CAVITY

★★★★

Solo improviser's anatomical dissection of electronics and timpani

Gert-Jan Prins is one of the wildest and most unfairly underappreciated improvisers in modern music. His electronics performances, particularly with Cor Fuhler in *The Flirts*, are phenomenal - dense, busy, buzzing with neon-light energy. On *Cavity*, Prins christens a new label with a set of coarse, minutely changing yet oddly detailed improvisations. Sure, it's a little dry, but as an almost dispassionate documentation of the interaction of electronics and analogue instruments, it's fascinating - imagine resting your ear against a microscope, trying to "hear" science in action. JON DALE

RED RED MEAT

Bunny Gets Paid

SUB POP

★★★★

Overlooked Chicagoans reissued with bonus disc

The post-grunge years were a strange time to be on Sub Pop - possibly accounting for the

regrettable short changing of this great album. Built around the pained moans of Tim Rutili (later of Califone), and a loose, inspired meeting of drone grooves and the electric blues, the band were a tough sell, but on a mesmerising mission: to emulate "the great bumper albums". *Rosewood, Wax, Voltz + Glitter* illustrates the band's mode perfectly. Apparently slothful, here the band simply bide their time, the better to unleash their terrific riffs, like Portishead jamming with Spiritualized, on misfiring equipment.

JOHN ROBINSON

MILES BENJAMIN ANTHONY ROBINSON

Miles Benjamin Anthony Robinson

TRANSGRESSIVE

★★★★

...or M-Bar to his friends in the Brooklyn musical mafia

Celebrity friends don't always guarantee quality but the presence of various Grizzly Bear/TV On The Radio alumni here is an entirely reliable seal of approval. Here, Robinson fashions his turbulent life into a gloriously wasted set of songs, from the opener "Buriedfed", in which he describes his own funeral, to the psychic tempest of the closer "Boneindian" which recalls the damaged dislocation of mid-'70s Neil Young, complete with *On The Beach* references. In between these epically disfigured

bookends, he plots the high and lows of his stormy existence with unvarnished honesty. NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE ROCKINGBIRDS

1992

The Rockingbirds

HEAVENLY

★★★★

Back to Nashville, NW1 with Camden's cowboys

The Rockingbirds' debut appeared in 1992, earning the London-based sextet plaudits for its trend-defying mix of country and indie-attitude. This reissue gets you a remaster of the LP plus a bonus disc of b-sides, alternative versions and live takes, but despite the combo's evident expertise, particularly Patrick Arbuthnot's acrobatics on pedal steel, you're never certain where the line between sincerity and irony lies. Tunes like "Gradually Learning" and "Further Down The Line" betoken earnest study of the Nashville greats, but the band are much better on the primitive punkish vamp of "Time Drives The Truck" or the tougher, tighter "Searching". ADAM SWEETING

RODRIGUEZ [1971]
Coming From Reality

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

★★★★

Rare second album from the Detroit folk-funker

The debut album by Mexican-American singer-songwriter Sixto Diaz Rodriguez, 1970's *Cold Fact*, flopped in America and Britain but became a cult classic in South Africa and Australia. This is its ultra-rare follow-up, a 10-track album recorded in London in 1971 with producer Steve Rowland. Session guitarist Chris Spedding adds a heavy-metallish vibe to several tracks; slightly better are the folkier acoustic tracks, where the cryptic, hippy-dippyish lyrics bring to mind Donovan backed by Arthur Lee's Love. Better still, the three previously unreleased tracks tagged on the end, all recorded in Detroit with Motown's Funk Brothers.

JOHN LEWIS

**TOM RUSH**
What I Know

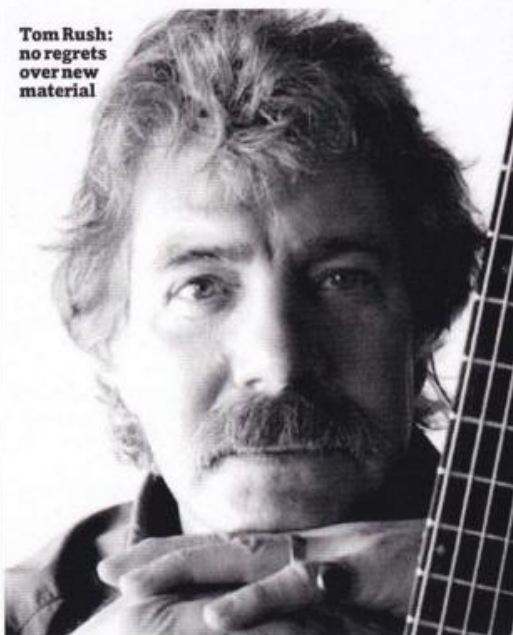
APPLESEED

★★★★

Folk-rock pioneer returns after 35 years

Rush is best known for writing the Walker Brothers' hit, "No Regrets", was influential in the Boston folk-rock scene of the early-'60s, and was a noted influence on James Taylor.

Tom Rush:
no regrets
over new
material



Stylistically, he's like a less lyrical Guy Clark, singing with warm-hearted weariness about love, life and loneliness. At times he's a little too understated: "One Good Man" needs to be borrowed and brutalised by Jerry Lee Lewis. Still, there's much to like, notably the elegiac "Too Many Memories", with Emmylou Harris singing sweet harmonies.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

THE SENSATIONAL ALEX HARVEY BAND
Hot City

MLP

★★★★

Cabaret rockers' "lost" third album, unearthed

Approaching their third album in 1974, SAHB hoped to translate live popularity into record sales. Who/Kinks producer Shel Talmy was hired, and while he introduced coherence and clarity, the band disliked the results, and the songs were reworked for *The Impossible Dream*. While it's clear that while Talmy distorted the musical direction of SAHB into a straight approximation of Broadway rock, he did capture Harvey in fine voice, and had the good sense to leave his Glaswegian growling high in the mix on early versions of "Vambo" and "Sergeant Fury".

ALASTAIR MCKAY

SIMPLE MINDS
Graffiti Soul

UNIVERSAL

★★

A faded Xerox of former high watermarks

Heralded as "a full-blooded record of ballsy pop songs" in the marketing blurb, the Minds' first new material



Goth she said so:
Siouxsie in total
control in '82

since their 30th anniversary tour last year attempts to re-connect with the anthemic glories of old, but sounds disappointingly lacklustre. Love declarations packed with militaristic metaphors ("Moscow Underground", "Rockets") are more than a little laboured, while the earnest "Kiss And Fly" could be a runner-up in a write-atypical-U2-sky-puncher competition. Deft guitar lines from Charlie Burgess never quite paper over the cracks in numbers that would have been consigned to b-sides in the band's heyday.

TERRY STAUNTON

SIOUXSIE & THE BANSHEES [1982]
A Kiss In The Dreamhouse

POLYDOR

★★★★

Goth's year zero. Best of a bunch of '80s reissues

Released in 1982, *A Kiss In The Dreamhouse* is arguably, Goth's founding and indeed finest moment - though this is Goth coloured in with brilliantly calibrated neo-psychedelic flourishes, from the pan-like flutes of "Green Fingers" to the treated loops of "Circle". Steve Severin's bass, in true post-punk style, is dominant, carrying the melody and creating cavernous possibilities in which the music can fly about. Siouxsie herself is in total control, pacing about like some Amazonian torch singer on "Obsession" or stooping to conquer on "Slowdive". 1982 was a high point for post-punk pop and today this sounds, if anything, more evolved than at the time when this kind of thing was more commonplace. Also re-released are 1983's live

Nocturne, 1984's *Hyaena* and 1986's *Tinderbox*, but none quite measure up to this.

DAVID STUBBS

SOFT MACHINE
Drop

MOONJUNE

★★★★

1971 live recording. Post-Robert Wyatt's departure

The admirably frank sleeve notes to *Drop* reveal the internal dynamic at play with Soft Machine in 1971. With Robert Wyatt out of the group, so departed any hopes that Soft Machine would pursue any sort of pop direction. Although the majority of these compositions are by organist Mike Ratledge, it is clear that saxophonist Elton Dean was now leading the group, and leading them away into "completely structureless situations" reminiscent of the near-cacophonous heights of John Coltrane's *Ascension*. This is exhilarating, but bassist Hugh Hopper in particular seems to be struggling to enjoy this new direction.

DAVID STUBBS

THE SOOTHSAYERS MEET THE RED EARTH COLLECTIVE
One More Reason

RED EARTH

★★★★

Best Brit reggae since The Specials, seriously Mercury-nominated pianist Zoe Rahman has served as a music director for both Terry Hall and Jerry Dammers in recent years, so it's no surprise to see her behind one of the finest slices of Anglo-Caribbean fusino since The Specials in their prime. This London-based outfit, led by

Zoe's clarinet-playing brother, Idris, have previously made promising but slightly tame ska and Afrobeat albums. Here they fully immerse themselves in reggae, enlisting a host of British and Jamaican veterans (Johnny Clarke, Linval Thompson, Mad Professor, Nick Mannesseh), artfully mixing in funk and Afrobeat into their deep dub stew. JOHN LEWIS

**THE SOUNDCARRIERS**
Harmonium

MELODIC

★★★★

Spaced out retro futurism. From the East Midlands

Though Nottingham isn't an obvious place for a '60s baroque pop revival, such is The Soundcarriers' attention to detail - split stereo, Joe Meek reverb - you'd be forgiven for entirely revising that opinion. Here, the presence of a harmonium updates some lava lamp psychedelic freakouts, David Axelrod's jazzy grooves and the feathery female harmonies of The Free Design, whose Chris Dedrick provides sleeve notes for the vinyl. "Uncertainty" consequently recalls Broadcast, albeit less aloof, while "Let It Ride" sounds like Portishead if they'd jammed harder on *Third*.

EDEN PARKE

GRAHAM COXON

The Spinning Top TRANSGRESSIVE

★★★★★

Blur guitarist's eccentric talents are a delight, says *John Robinson*



While it's tempting to think of Damon Albarn as Blur's most restless and evolving member, it's

worth remembering that all four members of the group have not been slow to experiment with change. The years since '97 have seen Dave Rowntree turn from drummer and aviation enthusiast into animator, candidate for office and *pro bono* trainee solicitor. Alex

James has reformed from roué and man about town to writer, broadcaster, and happily married cheesemaker. And Graham Coxon?

Well, Graham Coxon has the most long-standing

reputation as Blur's square peg. The arranger of some of the band's most exquisite music, he was also agent of the strafing noise that helped the group find a way out of the falling Britpop market. The first to experiment with a solo career outside the confines of the group, Coxon was, it seemed, not even fully liberated by the purgative, half-formed skronking that comprised his first solo albums. He participated in cheerleading for the talents of British folkie Bert Jansch. He made two powerpop albums. A man given to radically changing his lifestyle, Coxon has likewise changed his methods, never staying in one musical place for too long.

The Spinning Top, a really very enjoyable record, displays some of the finest aspects of the guitarist's talents, but chief among them, those that pertain to Coxon the folkie, and acoustic guitar stylist. Of late he has been heard bringing some degree of togetherness and musicality to Peter Doherty's *Grace/Wastelands* album, and much of the same warmth and intimacy attends *The Spinning Top*. Candour, for a long time near the top of Coxon's agenda, is here to be found in abundance. Whether it's in the nakedness of his thin but affecting voice (on "Sorrow's Army"), the lyrics

This reminds the world of his strengths as musician, arranger and tunesmith

("Did myself no favours/Stay in every night...") or the transparent nature of the influences

(Bert Jansch, Nick Drake, and Paul McCartney's "Blackbird" are key; folk bassist Danny Thompson is a guest), the 15 tracks here feel at first glance like a very guileless enterprise.

Avoided a concept album charting a man's journey from cradle to grave, *The Spinning Top* is, however, very far from the work of a wide-eyed musical innocent. Although the dominant mode is simple, acoustic and pastoral—on one occasion, birds tweet; "Caspian Sea" evokes the youthful Granchester psychedelia of the early Floyd—this is a record that's been made by someone perhaps rather more anxious to flex their muscles than perhaps they're letting on. Reminding the world of his strengths as musician, arranger and tunesmith, Coxon is perhaps giving a public account of them before his prodigal son-like return to the fold of Blur.

Opener "Look Into The Light" would, in this respect, seem to set the tone for the whole LP. On the surface, a breezy acoustic number, reminiscent of Nick Drake in its minor-key picking, the singer's voice worn on his sleeve, it nonetheless contains the capacity to surprise and delight in unexpected ways. Early on, a beautiful arrangement of wind instruments gives the song a celestial lift; just the



Q & A Graham Coxon

There's some great Bert Jansch-style playing on the album...

I'm not as good as Bert—but I'm a huge fan of him, Davy Graham and Martin Carthy. And instead of thinking "It'd be wonderful to play like that..." I thought I'd give it a go. So I sat down and tried to learn "Jubilant" by Davy Graham at 11 at night. I'd got it at five in the morning—I thought that was quite

quick, considering. I just started writing songs that way. So, it's a concept album?

I had these songs, and I wanted to get them into some sort of order, and I thought that one way of doing that was to give them a story. I hadn't written all the lyrics. So I put them in a story to get them in order. It evolved. The more I started to think about it the more nuanced it became,

and then the artwork began to form. How come it's not on EMI?

We went our different ways. They were cutting the chaff from their books, and I was happy. To be honest I thought they'd done a bit of a shitty job on my last two albums. They'd put a lot of limitations on the kind of artwork I could do, and that was turning into a frustration.

INTERVIEW: JOHN ROBINSON

kind of intelligent pop arrangement that one would expect to have found on a Nick Drake track, or for that matter, on a Blur album.

"Blur-like" in fact becomes a formulation you find yourself turning to more and more with *The Spinning Top*. "If You Want Me" picks out its melody on a xylophone, before exploding into the kind of angular, spooky guitar oompah that characterised say, "He Thought Of Cars" from *The Great Escape*. "Dead Bees", musically, is a cousin of "Beetlebum". That band's ability to incorporate wild noises into its pop compositions is found on the likes of "In The Morning", which

appears as if it may unspool into a Sandy Bull-style raga. The preceding "This House", though raw, is still Kinksian in its melody and phrasing. It's this last reference which is probably the most telling. The album's many musical excursions and its professional agenda notwithstanding, *The Spinning Top* is an album with a strong unity of place, namely that it's tied into a tradition of faintly whimsical, British songwriting.

Graham Coxon is swell bunch of guys, certainly, but of the power popper, the neurotic wannabe punk, and the English eccentric, it's the last that's the most rewarding to be around.

THE SPECIALS 1992 Live At The Moonlight Club

EMI

★★★★

Band-sanctioned reissue of much-bootlegged landmark gig

Recorded on the eve of the 1979 General Election that swept Margaret Thatcher into power, this show from a modest basement in West Hampstead is widely credited with kick-starting 2-Tone's assault on the national consciousness. The performances are so well-drilled, the songs so well-formed it suggests that, a few months later, the most arduous task that first-album-proper producer Elvis Costello faced was to tell the engineer to press the button marked "record". Much has been made of Jerry Dammers' non-participation in the current reunion, but it's worth remembering he was not the band's only songwriter. Roddy Radiation's "Concrete Jungle" is a frenetic chronicle of urban decay and simmering street violence as articulate as any of their self-penned numbers, while covers like "Monkey Man" and "Long Shot (Kick De Bucket)" were always integral to the setlist, cementing the group's formidable live reputation.

TERRY STAUNTON

CAT STEVENS 1971 Teaser And The Firecat

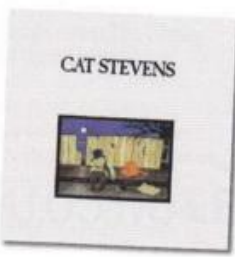
UNIVERSAL/ISLAND

★★★★

Hits-packed hippy pop

While still exploring his more folksy philosophical side, *Teaser...* found Stevens equally embracing the early career pop sensibilities he'd briefly tried to suppress. "Moonshadow" leisurely straddles both camps, the bouzouki-led "Rubylove" references the singer's Greek heritage, and "Peace Train" gives his spiritual quest a nifty backbeat. As with the *Tea For The Tillerman* reissue, the bonus disc replicates the full LP in period demo and live form, although the compilers cheat slightly by opting for the version of "The Wind" first heard on the 2007 DVD, *Yusuf's Cafe*.

TERRY STAUNTON



ST VINCENT Actor

4AD

★★★★

Impressively ambitious second from one-time Polyphonic Spree-ette

If multi-instrumentalist auteur Annie Clark, AKA St Vincent, were an actor she would doubtless be Meryl Streep: technically impeccable, awesomely versatile but somehow a little... chilly. Still it seems churlish to pick fault with her stunningly audacious second album, inspired equally by prime Prince and film soundtracks, and reminiscent of Jane Siberry's prog-pop ambition circa *The Walking*. If she can write more songs as devastating as "The Party" she may yet win hearts as well as minds. STEPHEN TROUSSE

SYNTHÈME Lasers 'N' Shit

PLANET MU

★★★★

Debutante's acid-kissed neon pop

Synthème emerged a couple of years ago with a perfect track entitled "Red" that blended acid and disco in such a tantalising manner some assumed it to be the work of Richard D James. Turns out the producer is one Louise Woods, a 24-year-old Berlin-based Brit whose playful approach and pop sensibility lends *Lasers 'N' Shit*'s 20 tracks an addictive trashiness. On "Mimro" and "Thraqqwa", for example, Woods sets her controls for 1992, mingling the fun bits of acid house and vintage electronica to forge priceless rave moments, the goofiness of which belies considerable charm.

PIERS MARTIN

SUNN O))) Monoliths & Dimensions

SOUTHERN LORD

★★★★

Drone-metal dons let in some light, with huge guest list

Guitarists Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson have been sculpting their monstrously powerful, tar-black and apocalyptically dense soundscapes for a decade. Perhaps better known for their hooded crows than their sonic abstractions, they owe as much to spectralist composers Grisey and Dumitrescu as to the doom-metal fraternity, despite the terrifying incantations of vocalist Attila Csihar. Their seventh LP is a(nother) case of "none more black", but "Big Church" - in which a Viennese women's

choir provides the counter to crushing, sustained chords are striking departures from Sunn O)))'s awesome canon.

SHARON O'CONNELL

SWIMMING The Fireflow Trade

COLOURSCHOOL

★★★★

Innovative live act break the waves

An inventive rock quintet, Nottingham's Swimming consistently thwart easy labelling, often switching genres and twisting textures mid-song. On the opener, "Panthalassa", vocalist John Sampson lures us in with a lick of Ziggy feyness before the track builds into an emotional post-punk-ish surge that recalls Magazine or Mansun. Elsewhere they drift into dreamy Nu-Gaze that might echo Ride or Chapterhouse before lurching into proggy flourishes that grandstand like Muse. Single "Crash The Current" is flush with phased guitars and trippy falsetto, while the effect of the whole is hyperactive and often exhilarating. CHRIS ROBERTS

THE TED TAYLOR ORGANSOUND/THE MIKE SAMMES SINGERS 1969 Hymns A'Swinging

TRUNK

★★★★

Rejoice! First CD release for religious-jazz-funk novelty

The clue's in the title: 12 songs of praise, defused and garlanded with grooves from the best British jazz had to offer (the legendary Tubby Hayes included) and light-entertainment harmonies. Beatifically cheesy in the main, this has long been a crate-digger's favourite, thanks to the crisp drum

breaks, raga-drones and David Axelrod-style big band funk that thoroughly debases "Glorious Things Of Thee Are Spoken". If the concept is laughable, the musicianship is deadly serious, and Hayes' vicious, sleazy sax on "He Who Would Valiant Be" might even convert you.

MARK BENTLEY



THE THERMALS Now We Can See

KILL ROCK STARS

★★★★

Celebratory pop-punk from West Coast trio

That old chestnut about punk rock prospering under repressive regimes seemed to make sense with The Thermals, who squeezed two impassioned albums - 2004's *Fuckin' A* and 2006's *The Body, The Blood, The Machine* - about life under the Bush Administration. With Dubya gone, *Now We Can See* feels a sunnier listen, bracing indie-rock with few frills but a joyfully juvenile energy and choruses to spare. "You should have seen us in our prime!" barks Harris on "When We Were Alive", and you wonder why he's talking in the past tense. LOUIS PATTISON

TOM ALLALONE & THE 78s Major Sins Pt 1

NETTWERK

★★★★

The schizoid sound of young Gravesend

They may be suited and booted like latter-day Mod revivalists, but there's a wider brief to the Allalone posse blueprint. The opening stomp of "Crashland" borrows from the same Stax motifs favoured by The Attractions of *Get Happy!!*, whereas "Wounded" and "Get Down And Dirty" go for the knockabout rockabilly of The Stray Cats. As the band liberally flick through the classic pop stylebook, Allalone's voice veers between an excitably young Lennonesque rasp and a more controlled doomy balladeering quiver, with "Ten Little Cuts" strolling the same bluesy boulevard as a hungover Richard Hawley.

TERRY STAUNTON

TOSCA No Hassle

1K7

★★

Viennese stoner electronicists' fifth

Richard Dorfmeister is one half of down-tempo electronica duo Kruder & Dorfmeister, whose *The K&D Sessions* is a benchmark of the genre. The pair were always better known for their joint remix and DJ work than for their own artistic endeavours and Dorfmeister's latest outing with Rupert Huber as Tosca is unlikely to change that. As the title suggests, it's an exercise in mellow, groove-based glitch, but 11 years on from their debut, it fails to resonate. However superficially seductive, Balearic chillout now sounds dated and irrelevant when set against such masters of dystopian ambience as Burial, Vex'd and Various.

SHARON O'CONNELL

ALLEN TOUSSAINT The Bright Mississippi

NONESUCH

★★★★

The roots of N'Awlins, with added swamp

Toussaint has long been celebrated as the embodiment of swampy New Orleans pop, but producer Joe Henry has directed him towards the music which formed the foundations of the city's heritage, jazz. It's a gloriously unprecious recording, with a group that includes Marc Ribot's spiky guitar and Don Byron's clarinet. Toussaint's piano is both urgent and utterly relaxed, as he rattles through standards such as Jelly Roll Morton's "Winin' Boy Blues", and Thelonius Monk's "Bright Mississippi". There is sleaze here, and funereal swing, and sass to spare. **ALASTAIR MCKAY**

TRADER HORNE [1970] Morning Way

ESOTERIC

★★★★

Baroque-folk rarity, remastered

Named after John Peel's nanny, Trader Horne was the shortlived vehicle for Them's keyboardist Jackie McAuley and recently sacked Fairport Convention vocalist Judy Dyble, in the same basket as Bread, Love And Dreams or Mellow Candle. McAuley's rich harpsichord, celeste, piano and flute tapestry is key to *Morning Way*'s organic folk-pop blend, from the Tolkien-esque "Three Rings For Elven Kings" to the Latin-tinged "Better Than Today" to their graceful take on Bessie Smith,



"Down And Out Blues". The title track, with its atonal organ intro, remains the best indicator of potential unfulfilled by their swift demise. **ROB YOUNG**

THOMAS TRUAX Songs From The Films Of David Lynch

PSYCHO TEDDY/SL RECORDS

★★★★

London-based New Yorker's lost highway
An original songwriter and inventor of instruments, Truax here performs an album's worth of songs



The Vaselines, early-'90s:
lubricating Kurt Cobain

previously used in Lynch movies to great and disturbing effect. It's a slightly indulgent exercise, but his ramshackle versions and clanking rhythms are not without charm (his vocal technique veers worryingly close to a dodgy Bowie impersonation on "I'm Deranged", though). Lynch sceptics often ask: "But what is it saying?" and might apply the same question here. **CHRIS ROBERTS**

VARIOUS ARTISTS [1992] Atlantic Gold – 100 Soul Classics

ATLANTIC/RHINO

★★★★★

Impeccable four-CD, 100-track soul banquet

It would be simplistic to claim that soul music began with Ray Charles' "What'd I Say" and expired as the Philly Sound gave way to disco in the mid-'70s, but the quarter-century represented here is a true golden age. With the obvious exception of Motown, Ahmet Ertegun's Atlantic was the big daddy in introducing African-American musicians to a broader public. From the sweet (The Drifters, The Coasters) to the gritty (Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin), from the upbeat (Eddie Floyd, Betty Wright) to the yearning (The Spinners, Donny Hathaway), this is one canonical textbook that transcends criticism. **CHRIS ROBERTS**

VARIOUS ARTISTS [1992] Dirty French Psychedelics

DIRTY/DISCOGRAPH

★★★★

Perfumed avant-pop from the '70s

Not for the first time, noted selectors Guillaume Sorge and Clovis Goux of Paris' Dirty Sound System appear to have raided their parents' record collections for this meander through the backstreets of Gallic pop. More a hazy impression than a definitive account, *Dirty French Psychedelics* unites the fondant fancies of Brigitte Fontaine and Christophe with hallucinatory jams by François de Roubaix and Cheval Fou, pieces composed under the influence of Ennio Morricone which in turn affected the likes of Air and Sébastien Tellier. Edifyingly groovy, all told. **PIERS MARTIN**

VARIOUS ARTISTS [1992] Britain Learns To Rock!

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

★★★★★

The birth pangs of British rock'n'roll

Britain absorbed the US phenomenon of 1950s rock'n'roll with hidebound naivety, but also wit, energy and resourcefulness. Bob Stanley's affectionate compilation disinters some of the stranger gems of this transitional era, including Humphrey Lyttleton's skiffle-tinged jazz outing "Bad Penny

Blues", a reverb-drenched version of "Chain Gang" by MOR-crooner-turned-DJ Jimmy Young and "Move it", Cliff Richard's finest moment from 1958. In between, there are choice cuts by Alma Cogan, and Lonnie Donegan, all redolent of Brylcreem, coffee bars and torn up ration books. **DAVID STUBBS**

VARIOUS ARTISTS [1992] Fabriclive 45: A-Trak

FABRIC RECORDS

★★★★

Fluoro-electro from Kanye West's DJ

Former World Champion DJ and Kanye West's chosen touring turntable maestro, 26-year-old Alain 'A-Trak' Macklovitch has already tired of contemporary hip hop. Now a regular on the hipster party circuit, he lets his sets adhere to the simple, foursquare electro template that pleases rock fans who dress up for a Saturday night. Here there's everything from Baltimore club to jacking Chicago classics by way of Daft Punk and Aeroplane, and while his crossfader skills remain a pleasure, the frenetic mash-up of styles quickly becomes tiring. **JAMES POLETTI**

VARIOUS ARTISTS [1992] Loving Takes This Course

BAKED GOODS

★★★★

Heartfelt homage to the songs of Kath Bloom

Few tortures are as exquisite as condemnation to the ranks of "cult artist". On the downside, nobody buys your records. On the upside, your fans assume an evangelical zeal, resulting in such fine things as albums like this. Connecticut songwriter Bloom is best known for her contribution ("Come Here") to Richard Linklater's film *Before Sunrise*, but an impressive cast turn out to support the claim that there's more to her than that. The contributions from Devendra Banhart, Mark Kozelek and Bill Callahan are especially persuasive. **ANDREW MUELLER**

VARIOUS ARTISTS [1992] Marvellous Boy: Calypso From West Africa

HONEST JONS

★★★★

More African gems from Damon Albarn's label

Proving that the transatlantic ping-pong between black America and mother Africa predates the fusions of Fela Kuti, this 18-track compilation catalogues some of the quirkier examples of calypso from Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Ghana from the 1950s. The most interesting tracks bring a definable Africanness to this Trinidadian genre, like the spangly high-life guitars on the Mayor's Dance Band "Bere Bote", or the ramshackle brass bands of Famous Scrubbs' "Poor Freetown Boy". **JOHN LEWIS**

THE VASELINES [1992] Enter The Vaselines

SUB POP

★★★★★

Kurt's darlings get 36-track 'career survey'

This is a reissue of a reissue. Much of it first appeared as 1992's *The Way Of The Vaselines* – itself a jerry-rigged comp of the Scottish noisemiks' only album (1990's *Dum Dum*) and a couple of EPs. This collects all that, plus demos and live tracks, into a demonstration of how a fabulously obscure Glasgow indie group became one of the most influential of their time. The Vaselines managed this by captivating Kurt Cobain, whose adoration was explicit (Nirvana covered several of their songs) and implicit (The Vaselines' melding of melody and din is heard in Kurt's poppier moments). "Teenage Superstars" and "Molly's Lips" still sound irrepressible for Eugene Kelly's deadpan delivery – a trait that reaches apotheosis on a stab at Glitter's "I Didn't Know I Loved You (Till I Saw You Rock And Roll)". **ANDREW MUELLER**

REISSUE OF THE MONTH

THE GRATEFUL DEAD

Winterland 1973: The Complete Recordings

GRATEFULDEAD/RHINO



Staggering nine-disc boxset of the psychedelic road warriors at their peak, says *Jon Dale*



1973 was a tumultuous year for The Grateful Dead. Early in the year, original member and keyboardist Ron

'Pigpen' McKernan died. While he'd been sharing keyboard duties with Keith Godchaux since 1972, his death removed one of the earthiest and most charismatic presences from the lineup – Godchaux had a lot to live up to. More positively, the group had released *Wake Of The Flood*, the first record on their own label, and they were playing in a wildly accelerated form, as though their losses and gains, their struggles with inter-band demons, somehow forced them into a particularly feverish phase of creativity.

Near the end of 1973, November 9-11, the Dead played three shows at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom venue. This band and Winterland would quickly become synonymous – the Dead were the group to play the most shows at the venue, and they famously played Winterland's closing night in 1978 (where they were joined by John Cipollina from Quicksilver Messenger Service, a dream lineup for San Fran psych heads). But in 1973, after shows alongside The Band and The Allman Brothers, East Coast and Midwest tours, the Dead's gigs were poised and incredibly articulate events that still allowed for great leaps into the void, shuttling between breathless group improvisations and ragged country/blues numbers.

The '73 Winterland shows have long been legendary within Deadhead circles, and their official release in this nine-disc box set documents one of the strongest runs of shows in the group's history. There's little missing – just the encore from the first night – and the recordings are wonderfully clear, produced astutely. (Though the artwork leaves a lot to be desired.) This is as good a representation as you're

likely to get of the Dead in full flight in the early-to-mid-'70s, especially if you're not inclined to go the way of most all Deadhead flesh and swim through thousands of hours of live tapes.

It's certainly a lot more enduring than the (admittedly also fantastic) 'official live' Europe '72 set, from which the Winterland shows plunder some song selections. The long-standing line on the Dead is that their studio

recordings are a pale shadow of their abilities as a touring unit, something *Winterland 1973: The Complete Recordings* does little to dispel. But it also proves that they often overlooked their best performances for official release at the time. Songs like "Jack Straw", adequately documented on *Europe '72*, are represented here by superior renditions.

This was a great lineup for the Dead – Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh and Bob Weir were potent frontmen, Keith Godchaux was fully integrated into the Dead's peculiar dynamic, his wife Donna had joined on vocals, and Bill Kreutzmann's rhythms had been subtly re-focused from the days of the dual assault of the Kreutzmann/Mickey Hart back-line (Hart had left in 1971). Garcia, in particular, is on fire for much of *Winterland 1973* – perhaps it's to do with the legendary quality of the group's 'Wall Of Sound' travelling PA, but his playing here is razor-sharp in sound yet exceptionally fluid and agile in its warp and weave. You can hear his early days as a banjo player in the pointillist strings of notes he paints

across these songs, whether they be Marty Robbins' "El Paso" or the group's own extemporisations on "Playing In The Band" or "Dark Star".

But it's also worth noting how gorgeous Jerry Garcia's voice is on songs like "To Lay Me Down", how his delivery – slightly worn and cracked, wavering, sometimes shaky – is rich with humility and humanity, how it's his singing that really acts as the

ideological force in the Dead's conceptualisation of their music. Garcia's singing, for all its faults, is also better than Donna's wail: charmingly off-kilter as a backing vocalist, her 'soulful' outbursts in the second disc's extended "Playing In The Band" almost derail one of *Winterland 1973*'s most enduring performances. 'Caterwaul' just about does it justice.

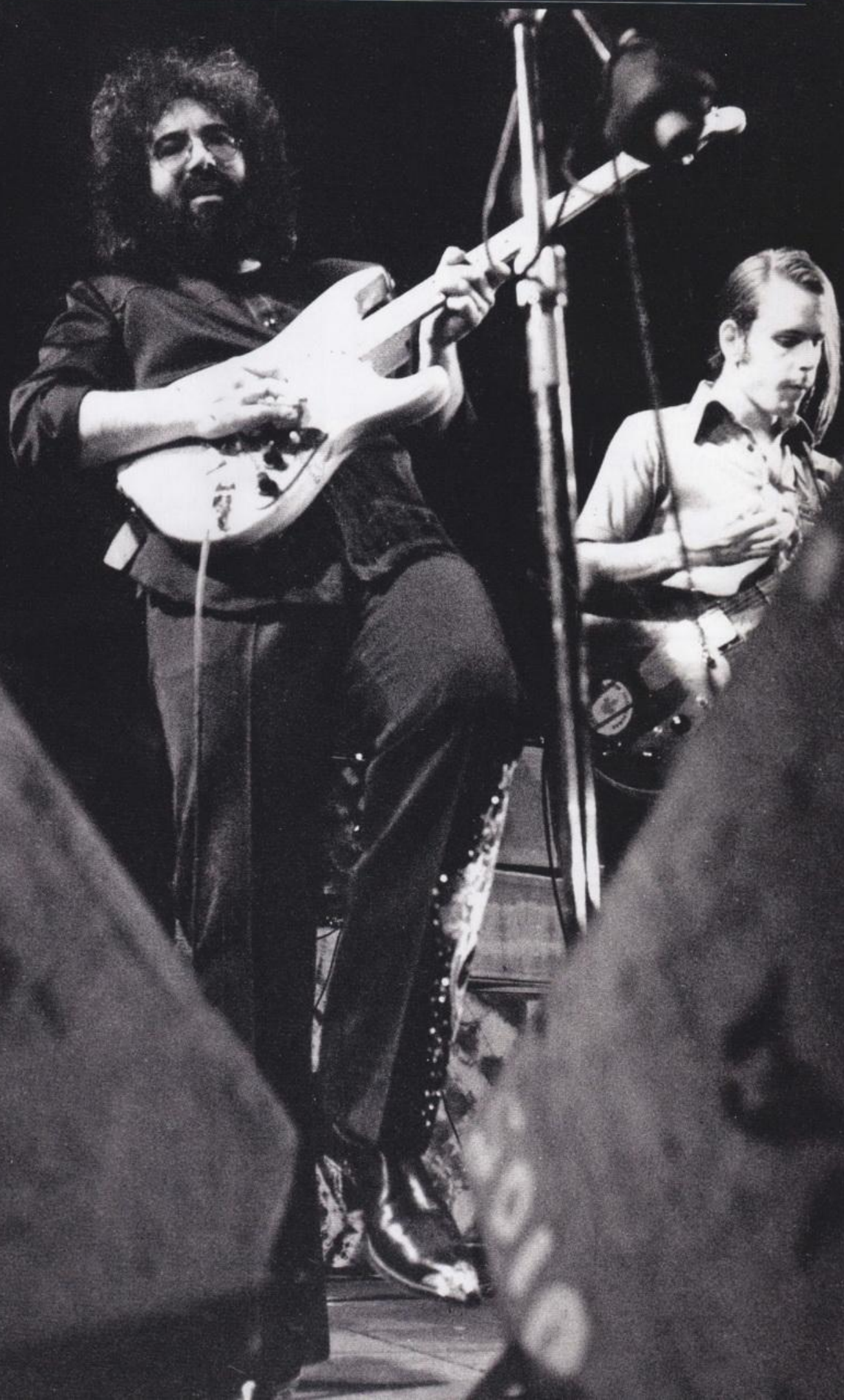
Plucking highlights from a nine-disc set of such quality is hard work: for one thing, listening to the Dead is all about the extended stretch, steeping yourself in four-hour gigs (as documented by the *Dick's Picks* series, for example). To cherry-pick is almost counter-productive to the entire Dead experience. But there are certainly performances here that stand out. The first set from November 9 takes a while to get moving, but there's a gorgeous "Row Jimmy" about 45 minutes in, after which things accelerate, through a needling, rigorous "China Cat Sunflower", and a 20-minute "Playing In The Band" that hints at the kinds of alchemy the group would fully reach later in the three-night stretch.

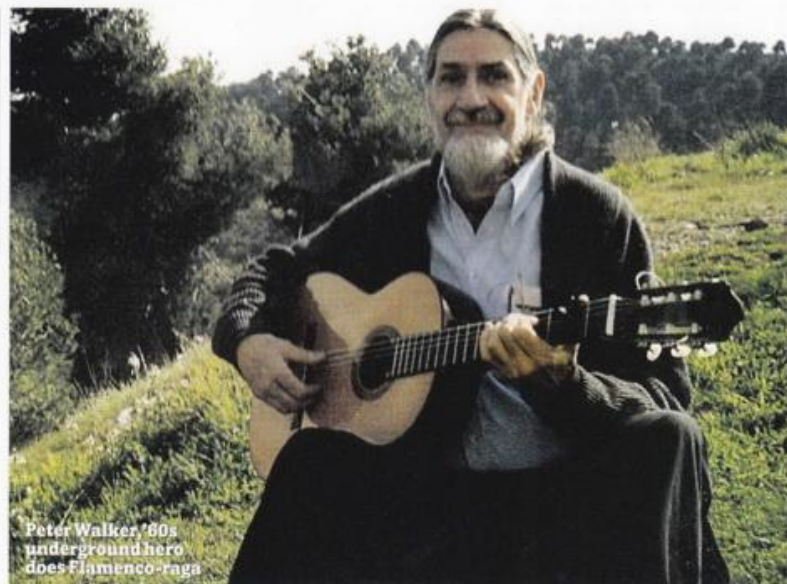
The three versions of "Weather Report Suite" function nicely as comparative indicators – through careful listening you can hear how open to the elements the group were, as though the piece is a litmus test for the potency of the Dead's group-mind on any given night. But *Winterland 1973* really revolves around two staggering performances – the second night's psycho-acoustic transmutations around the "Playing In The Band"/"Uncle John's Band"/"Morning Dew" axis, which fully capture the fluidity of the Dead when they're at their headiest peaks, and November 11's take on "Dark Star".

Stretching across 35 captivating minutes, on "Dark Star" the Dead harness all they have going for them, their transfigurative capacities and their 'nobody solos, everybody solos' aesthetic, and shoot the song out on wild webs of guitar interplay, ducking and bending notes around each other as though they're made of spun sugar, firing bolts of rhythmic disturbance into the steady contours of the opening section, drifting with Garcia's spotlight guitar in gloriously indistinct freefall until they flip on a dime into the song's opening passages 'proper'. And while it's almost cheesy to highlight "Dark Star" on any given Dead set – it's kinda like calling out for "Freebird" – they've no better song to showcase just how rich and developed their improvisations could be.

But while it's performances like "Dark Star" that reel this listener in, the real importance of a set like *Winterland 1973* is how it both reminds of and confirms The Grateful Dead's effortless ability: how they could connect the dots between psychedelia, free improvisation, country, R'n'B, rock, and sanctified Americana, and to make it sound effortless and logical. It's alchemy in its truest sense – in front of your very eyes and ears, turning base elements into gold.

These shows are legendary among Deadheads, and this release is as good a representation of the band in full flight that you're ever likely to get





Peter Walker, '80s underground hero does flamenco-raga

THE VERONICAS Hook Me Up

SIRE

★★★★

Promising Australian turbo-pop

Antipodean ironists from Cut Copy to Ladyhawke have long aspired to the airbrush sheen of '80s MTV, but the most successful stab yet is



"Untouched" by the less hip, more ambitious Veronicas. In pop algebra these Brisbane sisters are Kylie plus Dannii multiplied by TATU, and the track is Robyn's "Be Mine!" times Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone", but the result is deliciously unformulaic. Nothing else on this their second album runs it even close, but that moment alone suggests their next record could see them emerge as genuine global pop contenders. **STEPHEN TROUSSE**

THE VON BONDIES Love, Hate, And Then There's You

PIERCE PANDA

★★

Flat stuff from Jack White's former sparring partners

Much like everything else, it would appear that Detroit's music culture is facing a period of recession. While Jack White only diversifies and prospers, former contemporaries The Von Bondies are left with

diminishing returns. This, their third album – post the departure of founder member Marcie Bolen – is certainly energetic, but those who disliked the band's shift to powerpop with the "C'mon C'mon" single will find little solace here. Jason Stollsteimer's yearning vocals remain a strong point, but the predominant anglophile feel is more Morrissey solo album than Motor City Burning – all round, an unsettling development. **JOHN ROBINSON**

PETER WALKER Spanish Guitar

BIRDMAN

★★★★

Supple instrumental folk from counter-cultural legend

A former associate of Timothy Leary – he was 'musical director' at Leary's Millbrook estate – Peter Walker is most famous for his 1966 album *Rainy Day Raga*. Inspired by a period of study with Ravi Shankar (George Harrison was his classmate) while still a Greenwich Village folkie, it comprised fingerpicked folk takes on Eastern ragas and was an underground sensation. Walker retired from public performance in the early '70s, but endorsement from the latest wave of psychedelic folk guitarists resulted in an album a couple of years ago and, oddly, an appearance on Radio 4's *Today* programme. The 72-year-old's second set since his re-emergence is a bewitching delight: tracing the influence of gypsy guitar on Indian music led Walker to Spain and flamenco, and here he combines dextrously picked folk with an evocative Hispanic twist. **PAT LONG**

PATTY WATERS Sings

ESP DISK

★★★★

Astonishing free-form vocalist's debut

Patty Waters' legend rests on the final song of this, her first album. Her interpretation of "Black Is The Colour Of My True Love's Hair" is simply staggering – one of the most mind-boggling "out" vocal performances of the 20th century. Waters draws tortured nuance and feverish intensity out of one syllable, turning the word 'black' into an incendiary device. Don't ignore the rest of *Sings*, though, as her beautifully breathy renditions of chestnuts like "Moon, Don't Come Up Tonight" are as dreamily engrossing as "Black..." is hair-raising. **JON DALE**

PATRICK WATSON Wooden Arms

PEACEFROG

★★★★

Montreal piano man's fantasy voyage

Watson's 2007 debut, *Close To Paradise*, promised much – Jeff Buckley without the baggage, essentially – but he's lost his way a little bit here. Fragile songs are swamped by choreographed junkshop percussion and rococo strings, with only the pretty "Big Bird In A Small Cage" escaping relatively unburdened. As the title of "Where The Wild Things Are" suggests, this sometimes sounds more like the soundtrack to a superior kids' fantasy movie than the work of a potentially spellbinding singer-songwriter. **SAM RICHARDS**

The SPECIALIST

This month... Synth pop



A photo of a man wearing a lifejacket with a lampshade on his head? It must be the sleeve of the new **Fischerspooner** album.

Entertainment LO RECORDINGS ★★ The New York art-pop ensemble will forever be associated with 2001's summer of electroclash and the hysteria that fuelled their ascent, yet by and large their music – conservative, delicate electronic pop – warrants few fanfares. There's still a sterility to their sound on this third album, but, laced with sax, treated guitars and memorable choruses, it ranks as their best.



A graduate of that same class, Canadian DJ and producer **TIGA** Sontag has cultivated an image as an endearingly shallow Bowiesque pop. His frothy second, *Ciao! PIAS* ★★, does little to dispel this, even if the pouting electro-funk of "Shoes" or "Sex O'Clock" feels rather dated. By working closely with more able collaborators such as Soulwax, Gonzales and James Murphy, TIGA can cross as a mascara'd mannequin guesting on his own record, but there's enough here – "Mind Dimension", "Gentle Giant" – to suggest he exerts some influence.



Six years after their debut, TIGA's former sparring partners **Miss Kittin & The Hacker** reunite for *Two Nobody's Business* ★★, on which the cherished first couple of French electro burn brighter than at any point in their recent solo careers. The pair's chemistry is undeniable, resulting, effortlessly, in purring Moroder Eurodisco ("1000 Dreams", "Party In My Head") and noirish prowlers ("Ray Ban"). Their synth-soaked cover of "Suspicious Minds" is a delight.



With their snazzy logo and oh-so-'80s retro look, new Nantes trio **Minitel Rose** are perched atop the crest of the next wave of hip Gallic electro-pop. Their debut *The French Machine* FUTUR ★★ offers an elegant take on the Ed Banger aesthetic, but their plundering of Sébastien Tellier, Sparks and Daft Punk often turns sickly sweet.



Most of these acts could learn a thing or two from **Stereo**, a French synth-wave duo actually from the early-'80s, whose brief but brilliant career is compiled on *Somewhere In The Night* MINIMAL WAVE ★★. Amid a good deal of fizzing disco and queer white funk, the title track – a simmering sci-fi love song – remains Stereo's masterpiece. **PIERS MARTIN**

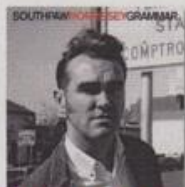


Fischerspooner: art-pop conservatives

MORRISSEY

Southpaw Grammar | Maladjusted SONY MUSIC

One singles-rich cracker, and one tampered-with turkey. *By John Lewis*



1995 ★★★★★



1997 ★

At a recent concert, Morrissey announced that he was about to play a song from his 1995 album, *Southpaw Grammar* – at which point an excited whoop went up from the audience. It was a response that the singer clearly wasn't expecting. "Really? Did anyone buy it?" he enquired. "Could you furnish me with receipts?"

These days, Morrissey is a National Treasure. His arena gigs sell out in minutes, his singles go Top 10 on both sides of the Atlantic, his half-baked

opinions on immigration are earnestly debated on *Question Time*. Once-hostile publications slaver over his new LPs and prominent Labour and Conservative front benchers fight over his oeuvre. So it seems difficult to believe that, little more than a decade ago, he seemed all but washed up.

On its release, *Southpaw Grammar* seemed to be the point where the Great British Public officially fell out of love with Morrissey. The casual Smiths fan had all but lost interest while even the scary Moz obsessives were a little puzzled. Unlike all other Morrissey albums, *Southpaw* came illustrated with a picture of a person who wasn't Morrissey. It kicked off with a terrifying 11-minute track that sampled a discordant eight-note phrase from Shostakovich's Fifth. It had a track that started with a three-minute Buddy Rich drum solo. Its two lead singles seemed to be blatant paeans to man-love, both based around fiendishly complicated chord cycles. The album, which Morrissey initially approached Brian Eno to produce before sheepishly returning to Steve Lillywhite, was dismissed as Moz's bonkers prog album.

As bonkers prog albums go, it was scarcely a *Kid A*, a *Sandinista!* or an *Achtung Baby*, as is confirmed by this rejigged and remastered edition. The previous opening track, "The Teachers Are Afraid Of The Pupils" (a towering, majestic, dystopian sequel to "The Headmaster Ritual"), has been pushed to the back, while the album is frontloaded with some of Morrissey's finest three-minute pop gems.

"Dagenham Dave" was savaged at the time as the nadir of his homoerotic class tourism, but it now stands up as one of his finest singles – a maddeningly catchy tangle of spiky chords, Motown drums and Morricone strings. The Angus Young-meets-Phil Spector rampage of "Boy Racer" is almost as good; "Reader Meet Author" and "Best Friend On The Payroll" are equally memorable. There are four previously unreleased tracks – "Honey, You Know Where To Find Me" (which sounds like the backing track to "You're The One For Me, Fatty", but with better lyrics), the punky "Fantastic Bird", and two faintly forgettable ballads, "You Should Have Been Nice To Me" and "Nobody Loves Us".

Morrissey was clearly hurt by the muted critical response to the efforts of *Southpaw*... and, in response,



Southpaw Grammar is frontloaded with some of Morrissey's finest three-minute pop gems. *Maladjusted* is not

he reverted to his comfort zone. *Maladjusted*, however, merited only passing mention in 1997 and its status has not improved since then. Rather bafflingly, this package sees Morrissey remove the album's only decent single, "Roy's Keen", and – even weirder – its best song, the Syd Barrett-ish "Papa Jack". It only emphasises the sheer lack of memorable melodies on the rest of the album. There are bruise-coloured ballads, only one of them, "Trouble Loves Me", being any good ("on the flesh rampage/at YOUR age?"), there is a so-so rockabilly number ("Satan Rejected My Soul"); and there is Morrissey's worst single, "Alma Matters".

This time there are seven extra tracks. Moz's ballad about the Northern Ireland troubles, "This Is Not Your Country", somehow manages to be worse than Spandau Ballet's "Between The Barricades"; written before the Good Friday Agreement, it now sounds about as relevant as a song about the repeal of the Corn Laws. "Sorrow Will Come In The End" (previously omitted from UK releases) sees Morrissey whining about his treatment in the

Mike Joyce court case and is the sonic equivalent of being emailed a tiresome list of "hilarious lawyer jokes". "Heir Apparent" has one nice guitar riff. "Now I Am A Was" probably wouldn't have even made it into a Smiths rehearsal room.

Much more than The Smiths, Morrissey as a solo artist lives or dies on his singles – or, at the very least, standout album tracks that serve as talking points. His steroid-injected albums since *You Are The Quarry*, while variable, are at least redeemed by a string of cracking singles. *Southpaw Grammar* has at least half a dozen. *Maladjusted*, in this version at least, has none.

MOBY GRAPE

The Place And The Time SUNDazed



Summer Of Love stalwarts reclaim their legacy (again), says *Luke Torn*



By the time they signed to Columbia in the lead-up to the Summer Of Love, Moby Grape were already San Francisco's foremost musical alchemists, veterans (unlike the Airplane or Dead) of garage bands up and

down the West Coast. By 1966, they were expertly mixing nascent psychedelia, high-octane blues, twangy country, lethal pop hooks, and Byrds jangle—sometimes all in the same song.

Packed with talent, including five sharp singer/songwriters (guitarists Peter Lewis, Jerry Miller, and Skip Spence, bassist Bob Mosley, drummer Don Stevenson), the Grape made a 1967 debut that is timeless in its transcendence: hinging on sizzling singles like "Omaha" and "Fall on You" among quieter, more reflective/regretful fare, it's a kind of 'Frisco *Forever Changes*.

From the outset, Moby Grape presented a devastatingly potent brew, but the glow of their masterpiece faded instantly, as internal tension, a sex-and-drugs scandal, and Spence's mental deterioration cracked them up. To top it all, their manager-turned-worst-nightmare, Matthew Katz, sabotaged and ripped them off at every turn, beginning a decades-long legal clusterfuck that continues to this day.

Some 38 years later, though, in 2005, the Grape had (decisively, it appeared) won back rights to their name and their catalogue, clearing the way for a warmly received 2007 reunion performance in Golden Gate Park and Sundazed Records' deluxe reissue series. Naturally, a Katz countersuit, based on ownership of LP cover art, immediately succeeded in blocking distribution of the key early albums *Moby Grape*, *Wow*, and *Grape Jam*, turning them into pricey collectors' items, and starting the legal zaniness all over.

The Place And The Time, representing the Grape's tug-of-war retort to Katz's latest legal shenanigan, collects the bonus tracks from Sundazed's five-album reissue series, resurrecting vital pieces of the group's sonic legacy. For the discerning consumer, the disc presents no cache of truly unreleased goodies (sadly, no breakthrough discovery of Spence's long-lost "Dark Magic"), though any self-respecting Grape fan would be hard-pressed to deny the group's right to release this material on their own terms.

While Moby Grape never managed to recapture the magic of that first album, a judiciously chosen playlist culled from *The Place And The Time* would complement it nicely. Entailing outtakes, alternate takes, live tracks, and demos, it delves into the nether regions of the Grape's 1967-68 prime.

They come out swinging, beginning with "Indifference", a track from their 1967 Columbia



Including outtakes, alternate takes, live tracks and demos, this delves into the nether regions of the Grape's '67-'68 prime

audition tape, later re-cut for their debut LP. A bluesy Spence composition outfitted with psych guitar and trademark ricochet

vocals, it lends credence to the notion that the band was at their best from the start. Lewis' playfully bouncy "Looper" follows, its elliptical melody melting into group's creamy backing harmonies.

Though the group's blues workouts sink into the realm of the merely ordinary four decades on—not everything here rewards repeat plays—the group's effervescence and originality shine through. There are highlights aplenty: Lewis' "Stop," a loping guitar pop tune reflective of the band's cross-pollination

with the Buffalo Springfield; two tryouts of Spence's "Seeing/Skip's Song," as scarifying a piece of psychedelia as has ever been waxed; Mosley's guileless ballad "It's a Beautiful Day Today," a wistful, finger-picked slice of California sunshine; and perhaps best of all, the title cut, a thundering, threatening Miller/Stevenson collaboration with a blood-curdling guitar riff, capturing—Arthur Lee style—a sense of wonder and desolation as San Francisco slipped toward its late-'60s abyss.

The Place And The Time lags a bit toward the end, but a handful of strong live cuts, in particular a keening 1968 version of "Changes"—all spiky guitars and stampeding rhythms—whets one's appetite for a legitimate soundboard of the band in their prime.

Q & A Bob Mosley

The version of "Bitter Wind" on the new Sundazed disc—it sounds like you're pouring your soul into that song...

Well, it was my life story then. I was a young guy, I just had a baby boy and my wife divorced me, and I was being a rock star.

What do you remember about the notorious Moby Grape album release show at the Avalon in '67?

It was just a big party, where CBS put five singles in a boxset, brought some wine, and invited special guests. Janis Joplin was there, I remember talking to Janis because I got her a bottle of wine and a box of singles. It was a pretty good show.

Are there more tapes in the vault?

That's what Sundazed is doing now. They got the bootleg stuff, all live, and they're going through that. Lynn Quentin, my publisher, sent them some live material. There'll be a live CD, stuff from the Avalon, Fillmore and Winterland.

What are Moby Grape up to now?

We're recording right now with Dane Clark from the [John] Mellencamp band. He's got his whole band, except for Mellencamp, on it. We've got Peter [Lewis], Jerry [Miller], me, and Skip Spence's son Omar on it. We wrote all the songs. INTERVIEW: LUKE TORN



THE WAVE PICTURES If You Leave It Alone

MOSHI MOSHI

★★★★

Generic indie almost breaks its chains

As the opening title track bursts in with a throb of horns (from Stanley Brinks) that wouldn't shame one of Stax's finest moments, this Wymeswold outfit threaten great things. Dave Tattersall's florid lyrics and flamboyant vocal also promise scale and majesty. Sadly, the album then lapses into a run of thin, shuffling busker ditties, with the singer increasingly emulating George Formby, or Pete Doherty without the boho cool. It's a pity the acoustic stuff turns so timid, as Tattersall's no shrinking violet. When those horns return for "Strawberry Cables", redemption is glimpsed. Without them, he's huffing and puffing.

CHRIS ROBERTS

BILL WELLS & MAHER SHALAL HASH BAZ GOK

GEOGRAPHIC

★★★★

Wonky chamber pop team-up

Bill Wells is an eccentric Scottish jazz-naïf bandleader; Maher Shalal Hash Baz are a Japanese instrumental collective so twee they've been known to sell their own pottery at gigs. Together they do sound like bit a school band tackling the Bacharach & David songbook, but with so much evident determination that you soon begin to forgive the plentiful bum notes. On delicate wonders like "The Dust Of Months" and "On The Beach Boys Bus", the ensemble's very fragility becomes their strength.

SAM RICHARDS

MURRY WILSON EX1967 The Many Moods Of Murry Wilson

CHERRY RED

★★

The Beach Boys' dad takes it very Easy. Inessential



Far from smokin':
Beach Boy pa Murry
Wilson in pipe-and-
slippers mellow mood

While his former charges were grappling with *Smile*, Murry Wilson's own solitary album offered a tantalising glimpse of what The Beach Boys' musical future could have been. No quixotic musical innovation for him: instead, the long-thwarted composer fronted a dozen instrumental pieces much in the vein of easy-listening types like Bert Kaempfert. *The Many Moods...* title proves misleading: a pipe-and-slippers mellowness dominates. Wilson completists, though, may find succour in a peremptory sashay through "The Warmth Of The Sun", and "Italia", a confection written by Al Jardine and produced, anonymously and conservatively, by the prodigal Brian. **JOHN MULVEY**

WISP The Shimmering Hour

REPHLEX

★★★★

Aphex acolyte's enchanting debut

Wisp is one Reid Dunn from Niagara Falls, though even the keenest listener would be forgiven for assuming this to

be another Aphex Twin alias, such is the degree to which Dunn mimics the lush electronics of his master. On curdled opener "Teddy Oggie", for example, he has the rhythmic and slurred synths down pat, but lacks the mischievous wit. That said, Dunn is a gifted pupil whose wholesome personality blossoms as *The Shimmering Hour* unfolds in a buttery haze of rustic drum and bass.

PIERS MARTIN

WILDBIRDS & PEACEDRUMS The Snake

THE LEAF LABEL

★★★★

Second extraordinary album from Swedish drums-and-vocals duo If 'unique' is the most overused word in the critical lexicon, it's genuinely hard to conjure any meaningful analogues to describe *Heartcore*, the 2008 debut from singer Mariam Wallentin and percussionist husband Andreas Werlin. Wallentin's uninhibited vocals fuse Diamanda Galás weirdness with an explosive diva soul power, but it's the

skeletal accompaniment that lends the sound real brawn – primitive and intuitive, yet sophisticated at the same time. Siouxsie's more extreme work with the Creatures is a vaguely pertinent starting point, but even she sounds like a simpering maiden compared to this intoxicating otherness.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

WOODEN SHIPS Dos

HOLY MOUNTAIN

★★★★

Tight grooves, loose jamming, on second from SF psychers

Though the band's early work bore the stamp of their San Francisco home (it reminded some of SF scene regulars The Doors), Wooden Ships have progressively been journeying eastward. To judge from some of the music on *Dos*, that journey has taken them across country to 1970s New York – the treated vocals of both "Motorbike" and "Down By The Sea" here, a great take on Suicide's mechanised, reverberating death trip. Elsewhere, Wooden Ships continue their work in simple but effective grooves, around which the band discursively noodle. It's not, it must be said, a method which changes much, but one which weaves a certain hypnotic spell.

JOHN ROBINSON

NEXT MONTH...

ELVIS COSTELLO

Secret, Profane & Sugarcane was recorded in Nashville with T-Bone Burnett in just three days, and features Elvis in a country-ish vein, accompanied by Dobro, fiddle. There's even a Loretta Lynn co-write...

RAY DAVIES

Suburban? Him? For *The Kinks Choral Collection* Ray takes the bells-and-whistles approach to his impressive catalogue – taking on 15 of his best-known tracks, with the assistance the Crouch End Festival Chorus.

BERT JANSCH

Even English folkies had their California period. Three long-out-of-print 1970s LPs are reissued, showcasing a different side of Bert. Pick of the bunch *LA Turnaround* includes a woozy take on "Needle Of Death".

UNCUT RECOMMENDS

The best releases, new and old, from the last few months



The Felice Brothers Yonder Is The Clock

TEAM LOVE ★★★★★

Being at Americana's forefront, it was logical they should turn to Mark Twain for inspiration. The result: rich songwriting in a grand tradition.



13th Floor Elevators Sign Of The 3 Eyed Men

INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS

★★★★★

Ten discs of psychedelic Texan madness, sumptuously and respectfully compiled.



Bruce Springsteen Working On A Dream

COLUMBIA ★★★★★

The Boss is always working – that's how he got to be The Boss. Great, weird tunes, recorded in downtime on the Magic tour.



Neko Case Middle Cyclone

ANTI- ★★★★★

Boyfriends ditched, the Virginian queen sounds unfettered on this glorious set of pop-country, with its roots in rock, folk, even Motown.



The Who The Who Sell Out

POLYDOR ★★★★★

Yes, the little jingles are great, but it's the songs – peerless psych, adrenalinised pop and mini operas – that show the band at their most entertaining, and endearing.

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New York jam session, 1943:
Duke Ellington (at the piano),
Dizzy Gillespie (front, second left) and
behind him, Mezz Mezzrow on clarinet

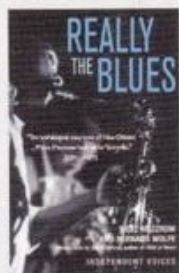


REALLY THE BLUES

Mezz Mezzrow and Bernard Wolfe SOUVENIR PRESS

★★★★★

A riveting trip into the sub-culture of black America



Mezz Mezzrow fell in love with jazz in 1917, when he was 16, a white kid from Chicago's tough North Side, doing time at the Pontiac Reform School, where he played saxophone in the prison band. He quickly became besotted with the blues and black culture generally, which he found to be hipper, kinder and altogether

more enlightened than the small-minded, violent, intolerant, largely square white world into which, unasked, he'd been born and yet never felt at home.

Jazz, then, for Mezzrow, became the passion of a life it would also save, which was something else for Mezz to thank it for down the many years of turbulence, addiction, dope dealing, prison and poverty that followed.

"I fly right now," he writes, a hepcat survivor, in this brilliant autobiography, first published in 1946, by which time Mezzrow, after one last spell in prison, finally clean of a debilitating opium habit, was president of King Jazz Records, a legitimate businessman and, to the great surprise of someone who'd mostly lived on the wrong side of the law, "a solid citizen".

"The other cats from the corner of Division and Western didn't do so good," he adds, looking back at the world he came from. "Bow Gistenson shot it out with his best pal in a gang war and wound up in the morgue.

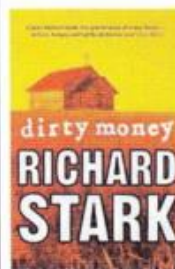
"Mitter Foley, who gave it to Bow, was laid to rest on a slab, too. As for Emil Burbacher, he messed with

the law some kind of way and got 20 years in Joliet. Those boys didn't live healthy."

I'd never previously heard of Mezzrow or the colourful place he evidently holds in jazz history and I am about as familiar with the jazz he mostly writes about, which is the hard stuff from New Orleans, as I am with the dusty by-ways of far off Hindustan, which is to say not at all. But I was nevertheless enthralled by *Really the Blues* and its hard-boiled poetry, its tales of woe and wonder, told in the racy vernacular of a hipster's tongue. Imagine Dylan's *Chronicles*, written by Damon Runyon, and you'll get an idea of the book's conversational intimacy, the feeling that you could be listening to someone telling you all this in a bar, the anecdotes coming as fast as the drinks, more of them than you can easily keep up with.

Mezzrow takes us on an incredible trip through the underworlds of Chicago, Detroit and New York, where he rubbed shoulders with gangsters like Capone, Legs Diamond and Dutch Schultz, some of whom took an unhealthy interest in his drug dealing, which by the time he'd moved to Harlem in the 1930s had made him a local legend, his weed the best available, people from all over coming to check out his stuff. He knew also many of the jazz greats of the era and there are vivid snapshots here of Bessie Smith, King Oliver, Bix Beiderbecke, Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong and the young Gene Krupa.

More than anything, though, this book is an extended celebration of the redemptive power of the jazz that inspired it, in Mezzrow's words "the only language in the whole wide world that would let me speak my piece".



DIRTY MONEY

Richard Stark

QUERCUS ★★★★★

Richard Stark is a pseudonym used by crime writer Donald E Westlake for a uniquely hardboiled series of hardboiled thrillers featuring Parker, a ruthless career criminal, apparently ageless. *The Hunted*, the first of the Parker books, was published in 1962 and filmed in 1967 by John Boorman as *Point Blank*, one of the key American movies of the '60s, with Lee Marvin perfectly cast as Stark's amoral anti-hero (re-named Walker). Robert Duvall played the same character – again re-named, here as Earl Macklin, due to an ongoing dispute with the author over copyright issues – in John Flynn's tough B-movie, *The Outfit*, which memorably co-starred Joe Don Baker and the great Robert Ryan. Less memorably, Mel Gibson took on the role in *Payback*, the ill-advised '99 re-make of *Point Blank*. *Dirty Money* is the bracing sequel to *Nobody Runs Forever*, in which Parker and associates knock off a cool \$2m from a rural New England bank, but have to stash the money when things go bloodily awry.

Dirty Money describes Parker's attempts to retrieve the loot and in Stark's typically stripped-down narrative has to deal not only with heat from the cops, but also his own double-crossing confederates and crooked fence Oscar Sidd and his thuggish goons. It's fast, laconic, brutal stuff – and sadly probably the last in the series. Westlake died in December 2008.



THE WOMEN

TC Boyle

BLOOMSBURY ★★★

Boyle is an old *Uncut* favourite, admired for books like *Budding Prospects*, *The Tortilla Curtain* and *Drop City*, a terrific satire on the post-'60s hippy diaspora. He has come an occasional cropper, however, when in previous novels like

The Road To Wellville and *The Inner Circle*, he has taken on the lives of great American iconoclasts (respectively John Harvey Kellogg of breakfast cereal fame and sex researcher Alfred Kinsey) and rendered them stifled, dull and inhospitable.

He fares somewhat better with this account of the great American architect Frank Lloyd Wright and his turbulent relationships with the women he shared his life with – three wives and assorted mistresses – but it's still an awkward, frustrating read. The book's unengaging narrator is a young Japanese student, Tadashi Sato, an enthralled apprentice who works for Wright at his Wisconsin mansion, the fabled Taliesin. Tadashi is witness to the turbulence of the architect's life, his professional struggles and personal strife, which many years later he is moved to recall, although there are times the reader may wish he'd kept a discreet silence.

The book is less cleverly structured than it is somewhat irritating, Boyle via Tadashi telling the story backwards, ending with the terrible events involving Wright's first wife, the demented Kitty, the circuitous narrative route at least providing Boyle with a conveniently dramatic climax, hinted at throughout and shocking when it finally arrives.

ALSO OUT...

Bill Bruford: The Autobiography

JAWBONE ★★★, an urbane, witty memoir from the former Yes and King Crimson drummer.

Ian McEwan's Mersey Beast

TRINITY MIRROR ★★★, an affectionately wrought autobiography, available from www.merseyshop.com

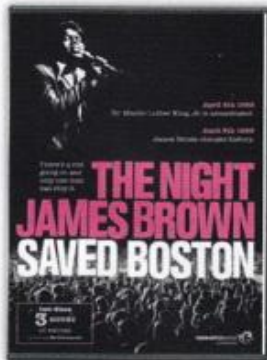
JAMES BROWN

The Night James Brown Saved Boston

RETAIL DVD (FREMANTLE MEDIA, WIDESCREEN)



Double-disc story of how the godfather of soul kept a city from burning. *By Neil Spencer*



The night after a sniper's bullet struck down Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968, 150 US cities were ablaze, their streets turned into battlegrounds between police, guardsmen and incendiary, looting mobs. It remains the greatest civil insurrection in modern US history. The fury of black America at the assassination of its political figurehead burned even deeper than the ghettos put to the torch. "We were a people whose hearts had been shattered," says Princeton professor Cornel West.

Boston, the city dubbed the 'Cradle of Liberty' on account of its leading role in US independence, had escaped with a few ugly scenes and minor fires in its Roxbury ghetto, but no-one doubted the potential for something far worse. To add to the edgy atmosphere, the city's premier arena, The Garden, was due to stage a James Brown show for a 14,000-strong crowd. Fearing it would be hosting a riot, the Garden was already issuing refunds.

The city's only black councillor, Tom Atkins,

realised that this could only make matters worse, as flocks of young fans, faced with a no-show, roamed uptown streets to vent their compounded fury. The only solution, he realised, was to get Brown – the biggest star in the black American firmament after Muhammad Ali – to perform. Better still, to get the show broadcast live on TV, to keep the black community at home.

It was a brilliant yet almost impossible strategy, requiring a TV station to throw over its primetime schedule, and for the Garden and Brown to accept an empty stadium – for how many cash-strapped fans would pay for a show they could watch at home for free? The only solution was for the city to underwrite the losses, estimated at a colossal \$60,000. The financial equation presented to newly elected mayor Kevin White was brutal: "If we didn't come up with the money, the blacks were gonna burn the city."

White had never heard of James Brown, but he learned fast, negotiating with a furious Soul Brother No 1 in the limo from the airport. For their

part, Brown and his manager were unequivocal – they would be paid in full – while Brown quickly absorbed the situation. Though he would describe King as "America's best friend", Brown was no pacifist, nor was he a militant – his version of "Black Power" involved neither saintly non-violence nor the gunplay urged by hardliners like Stokely Carmichael. Brown believed in empowerment through success – like him, owning radio stations and a restaurant franchise. Just the previous year the ex-jailbird and shoeshine boy had urged "Don't Be A Drop Out".

Amazingly, a deal was cut. Public TV channel WGBH would broadcast the show (displacing a Laurence Olivier drama), while Brown would be paid by the city and maybe, just maybe, Boston wouldn't burn, baby, burn.

The two discs here tell the breathless story with panache. The second offers the show, in grainy b/w, as witnessed by the stay-at-homes and the 2,000 fans who attended. And what a show. Clips of Brown's dazzling showmanship – the

knee-splitting dance routines, the sobbing ballads, shrieking funk work-outs – are familiar enough. Here you get the entire arc of the JB experience; his squat physical presence, the canny interplay between hammer-drill vocals, spins and struts, cooking, compliant band and shimmering, razor-sharp tailoring. It's a compelling performance, culminating in a stage invasion that threatened to trigger the riot everyone feared. Brown seizes the moment heroically, keeping cops and kids apart, but the tension is palpable. "I thought we were gonna leave in a ball of fire," admits drummer John Starks. Instead, the stadium and streets stayed quiet (the show was quickly re-run).

The background footage on disc one is scarcely less arresting, a montage of interviews with many of the original protagonists, footage of King's ascendancy and the riots that followed his murder. The show's the thing, but here it's rounded into a historical chapter. Essential viewing. **EXTRAS:** Interviews with some key players. ★★

HAACK The King Of Techno

★★★
RETAIL DVD (KOCH VISION, WIDESCREEN)

Electric sound machines invaded Bruce Haack's head while training as a composer in the 1950s, so he built them in waking life. His mind-blowing journey, from utopian children's records like *School For Robots* and transistorised TV commercials to the psychotic vocoder album *Electric Lucifer* (1970), the peyote-addled disco of *Haackula* (1977) and his 1983 Party Machine collaboration with Def Jam's Russell Simmons, is charted in this 2004 doc. Though Haack's tragic story is downplayed to make way for unnecessary plugs for a new remix comp.

EXTRAS: Radio interviews, '68 *Mister Rogers* episode.

★★★ ROB YOUNG

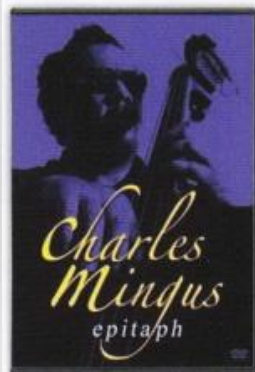
HEAVY LOAD

★★★
RETAIL DVD (KALEIDOSCOPE, WIDESCREEN)

Heavy Load are a band from Lewes, who perform versions of punk standards with more enthusiasm than proficiency. What makes the quintet worthy of documentary-length study is their determination to make their racket despite three of their number suffering from learning disabilities. Their story is funny, moving and well told - though director Jerry Rothwell's occasional introspective soliloquies are well worth fast-forwarding.

EXTRAS: Trailer, extra scenes and songs, docs. ★★★

ANDREW MUELLER



CHARLES MINGUS Epitaph

★★★
RETAIL DVD (EAGLE ROCK, WIDESCREEN)

Between 1940-62, Mingus wrote 500 pages of music, fragments for an epic jazz symphony he knew he would never hear performed. *Epitaph*, the longest orchestrated piece in jazz history, was premiered

at this televised event at New York's Lincoln Center in '89, conducted by Gunter Schuller and featuring George Adams, Wynton Marsalis, John Handy and John Hicks among the huge ensemble. Mingus' restless imagination is in full flight throughout, from the soulful "Monk, Bunk And Vice Versa" to the avant garde "Chill Of Death", which packs 100 micro-solos into 11 mins.

EXTRAS: None. ROB YOUNG

STEVIE NICKS Live In Chicago

★★★
RETAIL DVD (REPRISE, WIDESCREEN)

Not many singers namecheck their top hat roadie in DVD credits, but this is the scarf-twirling world of Stevie Nicks. Away from the Fleetwood Mac powerhouse, she's tended to get bogged down in cod mysticisms ("Enchanted", "Sorcerer"), and even safe bets like "Rhiannon" and "Dreams" suffer from a half-hearted vocals littered with flats and sharps. One for the most forgiving of fans only.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

SID: BY THOSE WHO REALLY KNEW HIM

★★★
RETAIL DVD (ODEON ENTERTAINMENT, WIDESCREEN)

The significance of Sid Vicious won't detain future cultural theorists for too long, but this doc corrals interviews from a spectrum of Sid's friends and contemporaries and puts some human flesh on the spindly cartoon character he became. Viv Albertine, ex-Pistols tour manager John Tiberi and Jah Wobble are insightful, Caroline Coon is hilariously pretentious, and Glen Matlock makes Sid sound daft but loveable. There's nothing new from Cook, Jones, Lydon or McLaren unfortunately.

EXTRAS: Trailer, punk film plugs. ★ ADAM SWEETING

THE ZOMBIES Odyssey & Oracle (Revisited)

★★★
RETAIL DVD (RED HOUSE, FULLSCREEN)

From Shepherds Bush Empire last year, the centrepiece is the debut performance of the band's exquisite, timeless 1968 album. Only guitarist Paul Atkinson is missing in action and, right from "Care Of Cell 44" onwards, this is a faultless, joyful accomplishment. Colin Blunstone's soaring voice adds sheen and, unlike Brian Wilson's comebacks, nobody else is pulling the strings.

EXTRAS: Documentary extract. ★★★ MICK HOUGHTON

LISZTOMANIA

RETAIL DVD (DIGITAL CLASSICS WIDESCREEN)

★★★

Wigs! Wagner! Rick Wakeman! By Rob Young



One hundred years might separate "Lisztomania" (a term coined by German poet Heinrich Heine) from Beatlemania, but for director



Ken Russell they had much in common. The real Franz Liszt was the original hurled-knicker magnet, a flamboyant piano superstar teetering on the highwire between Romantic sincerity and hollow showmanship. *Lisztomania* - made immediately after *Tommy* in 1975 - portrays the composer's life as a rock'n'roll circus; historical accuracy is traded for a bloated pastiche of Gothic horror and prog operatics. Roger Daltrey stars as the composer; Ringo Starr cameos as a sardonic Pope; Paul Nicholas, fresh out of *Hair* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, is Liszt's rival and eventual nemesis, Richard Wagner.

There's a telling scene early on, as a horrified Wagner sits among an hysterical audience watching Daltrey's spangly, Liszt-as-Liberace act, playing to the gallery and mashing up serious Wagnerian themes with "Chopsticks". In 1975, at the height of stadium rock, glam and prog, these were conflicts facing rock's dinosaurs, too - former revolutionaries who suddenly appeared reactionary.

Russell had a real bee in his bonnet about Wagner, who married Liszt's daughter Cosima and, in Russell's view, parasitically sucked the lifeblood from the older man's music. Hey presto: Russell depicts Wagner in later years as a fanged vampire, gnawing through Liszt's neck. Wagner and Cosima conceal an Aryan death cult and Frankensteinian laboratory in their

Bayreuth castle, reanimating Thor (a robotic Rick Wakeman) to scourge the Jewish race. In an act of sacrilegious revisionism, Wagner is resurrected as Hitler, spraying hot lead around the Ghetto from an electric guitar-cum-machine gun. Liszt swoops to the rescue on a heavenly Spitfire-lyre, with righteous cannons blazing.

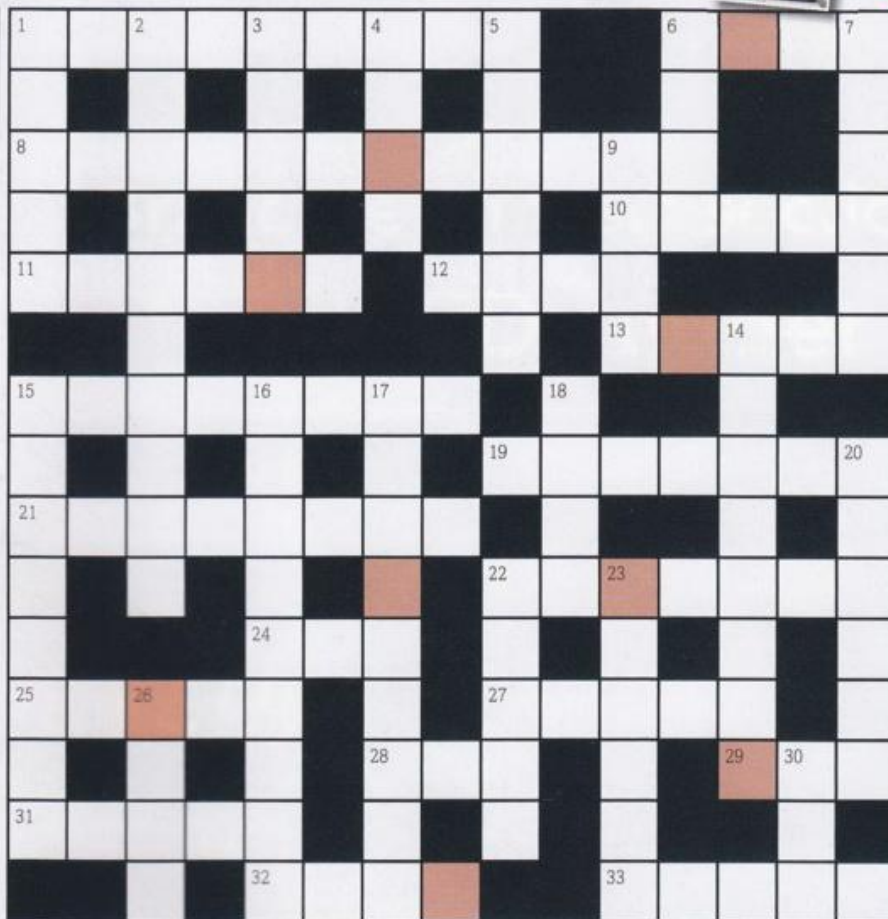
Set at an uncomfortably hysterical pitch, *Lisztomania*'s patent absurdity appears determined to outdo even *Tommy*'s rock follies. Rick Wakeman's synthesised Liszt transcriptions make for a freeze-dried soundtrack, while Daltrey's vocal cords sound tired and stretched on the original songs. The scene where Liszt makes a Faustian pact with his mistress and patron, Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, where the composer propels his 10-foot dong towards his lover's loins, only to find it thrust into a giant guillotine, must be a contender for the worst 15 minutes in the history of cinema. Buried under the grandstanding are serious points about compromise and artifice - it's just that the boobs, knobs and cartoon Nazism fog the picture ever so slightly.

EXTRAS: Exit music. ★



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WIN *Greetings From E Street* by Robert Santelli in hardback



ACROSS

- 1+6A** Comes A Time to choose between *Old Ways* and *Freedom* (4-2-3-4)
8 "Some people say a lie's a lie, but I say why deny the _____". Paul Simon (7-5)
10 Swiss group comprising Dieter Meier and Boris Blank (5)
11 The reason that this band were a *Long Time Coming*? (6)
12 (See 23 down)
13 (See 27 across)
15 "Mama, do you see what I see / On your knees and pray for me / _____ has come back for me". Scott Walker (8)
19 Come into this world on a *Jet* (3-4)
21 Not at all quick to applaud Eric Clapton (8)
22 Someone who broadcasts a *Yes* album (7)
24 Producer for Frank Zappa and XTC going through any exit (3)
25 In which Liverpoolian brothers Mick and John Head can be found (5)
27+13A Ask in every possible way for a member of the '60s Canterbury scene (5-5)
28 A U2 single (3)
29 Brother of Phil Everly (3)
31 Their albums include *Summerteeth* and *Sky Blue Sky* (5)
32 The Beatles were back in it (4)
33 What Brian Wilson completed 37 years after its conception in 1967 (5)

DOWN

- 1** They Might Be Giants' outpourings were just too much (5)
2 "The _____ is just a T-shirt away, waiting for the great leap forwards". Billy Bragg (10)
3 (See 14 down)
4 Fleetwood Mac LP had a point (4)
5 As heard for the entire second side on vinyl copy of Pink Floyd's *Meddle* (6)
6+15D A playful invitation by The Moody Blues while *In Search Of The Lost Chord* (4-2-3-3)
7 Demos put around the north of 1997 Super Furry Animals single (6)
9 "I've waited for a thousand years for you to come and blow me out my mind", 2005 No 1 (4)
14+3D Any video by Ron, perhaps, of a 1982 No 1 hit (5-3-5)
15 (See 6 down)
16 Gratitude expressed by Sam And Dave (1-5-3)
17 Organ used badly on Michael Jackson album (9)
18 Half-sister goes off Genesis for a different band (4)
20 A song for all fair weather fans of Blind Melon (2-4)
22 Indie band making a *Klang* (5)
23+12A Hello Elvis! Strangely, it's a Ryan Adams' recording (4-2-4)
26 Woody Guthrie's folksinger son (4)
30 Aussie outfit, *Midnight* ____ (3)

HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a track by The Boss. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut June 2009 Xword Competition, 4th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win the prize. Closing date: May 25, '09

THE ANSWERS TO OUR APRIL CROSSWORD (TAKE 143) WERE:

ACROSS

1 Working On A Dream, 9 In Bloom, 10 Right On, 11 Exit, 12 Never, 19+30A Tell Her No, 21 Ultra, 23 Accept, 24 Enid, 25 Thirst, 27 Cold, 28 Aisha, 29 Ruffin, 32 Lynott, 35+15D Led Zeppelin, 36 Ride, 37+6D Straw Dogs, 38 Mary

DOWN

1+2D White Rabbit, 3+18D Iron Butterfly, 4+17A Gimme Shelter, 5 Nerves, 7 Eat, 8 Mona, 13 Rhoads, 14 Black Cherry, 16 Starsailor, 20 Lunch, 22 Triffids, 26+34D Tiny Tim, 31 Over, 33 New

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Made Of Stone"

Crossword compiled by Trevor Hungerford

UNCUT

JUNE 2009 | TAKE 145

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Stop Me

if you've heard this one before



WHO: SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY

WHERE: KNEBWORTH, AUGUST 1979

Southside Johnny," Bruce Springsteen writes in his sleeve notes for *I Don't Want to Go Home*, his friend's debut album with The Asbury Jukes. "One of the weirdest guys I ever saw. He used to dress just like my old man. He was definitely comin' in from the outside. Once I talked to him, I realised he wasn't as weird as he looked... he was weirder. And his general conversation consisted of insulting everyone within 50 feet. But he was the only white kid on the Jersey shore that you could stand to hear sing straight R'n'B five sets a night."

Springsteen's sleeve notes go on to evoke memories of other Jersey musicians - "lost soldiers", Springsteen calls them - like Mad Dog Lopez, Fast Eddie Mariachi, Little John Margaret & The Disciples, people who used to hang around The Stone Pony and The Upstage, new Jersey clubs where the spirit of R'n'B and rock'n'roll burned through the summer nights "when there was no particular place to go and nothing to do... except play. All night long."

I'm thinking of Springsteen's description of Southside as I walk into the busy lobby of the Swiss Cottage Holiday Inn, here to meet Southside and The Jukes, who later today are on the bill for Led Zeppelin's Knebworth extravaganza, the bus that will take us there already parked outside the hotel. And here he is, Southside, a boxy little guy, something about him that suggests a short fuse, a temper easily lost, a hint of Harvey Keitel in the roll of his shoulders.

"Let's roll," he is telling various members of The Jukes, enough of them here to field a soccer team, plus a couple of substitutes, and not long after this we are on the coach, heading through heavy traffic towards Knebworth, plenty of time therefore to talk, which is just as well because it quickly strikes me that when Southside starts talking only bullets will stop him.

He's telling me now about the accident nine months earlier in Sacramento, at a party to celebrate the 10th anniversary of local radio station KZAP-FM, that very nearly killed him and was anyway in many respects ruinous for The Jukes, who'd just

released their third album, *Hearts Of Stone*, the record that was intended to break them, their *Born To Run*, if you like.

Southside's talking in a whisper, like he's about to mutter one of the secret names of God and doesn't want anyone else to hear, and what he says is that he remembers, that night in Sacramento, at The Turf Club, leading the band through their final number, Sam Cooke's "Havin' A Party", which is what up to this point the evening had been. He recalls stumbling over a monitor, putting out his arm to break the fall that followed, landing on an empty glass that shattered as he landed on it, his left arm gashed open, from his wrist to his elbow, the glass slicing through an artery and severing tendons.

"These things happen," he says, trying to downplay the accident. "I just fell on some glass, cut my arm and lost a lot of blood."

Jukes keyboard player Kevin Kavanaugh, who's just joined us, offers more dramatic testimony.

"We saw him go over, you know, and he got up and there was this fountain of blood. It just spurted out, over everyone. We watched him stagger off

"
We saw Johnny go over... he got up and there was this fountain of blood that just spurted over everyone
"

pieces. He was still bleeding furiously, but the roadies had tied a tourniquet around his arm. That saved his life, I think. He was so lucky, man."

Seven hours of intensive surgery saved the arm, and Southside's life, but The Jukes' tour in support of *Hearts Of Stone* was thrown into chaos when he was flown back to New Jersey to recuperate.

"The doctors," Southside now adds, "told me to take three months off. That would have killed us, man. Our career would have been over."

They were back on the road in a couple of weeks, but Southside's mood was dark.

"The two weeks we were off the road, and the period after we went back on tour, were probably the worst times of my life. I didn't want to go on stage. I was drinking heavily. I was in a lot of pain. And I thought I just looked stupid going on stage in a fucking cast."

Worse followed, when *Hearts Of Stone* sank virtually without trace,

which led to a falling out with their label, CBS, who had done little to promote it, and also a split with Miami Steve Van Zandt, until then their manager and producer, who by now was also a full-time member of Springsteen's E Street Band.

"That was just inevitable," Southside recalls. "Steven couldn't go on managing the band. He was on tour a lot with Bruce - Bruce had done that 161-date tour or whatever it was, a hell of a tour. They were on the road from May to December. And Steven was trying to manage the band from his hotel room in whatever city he was in at the time. The record company found it very easy to ignore him, because he was just never around."

The failure of *Hearts Of Stone* was a bitter disappointment, still keenly felt.

"It was supposed to be the culmination of everything we'd been working towards and I just wish it had gotten a fair shake. We lived and died with that fucking record. It was a long and arduous process making it. The pressure all round was barely tolerable. It was a killer, just fucking gruelling."

The coach is pulling into the backstage area at Knebworth, Southside still talking, telling me about Asbury Park, where it all started for him.

"The place is sinking into the sea," he says. "Financially, it's a disaster area. It's deserted. The city council, they're not treating the city very well. Lots of businesses have closed down, moved out. It's like a ghost town. We tried to do our best for the city. We were gonna play all these benefits, get involved with the community. But the council turned us down. We were willing to play free concerts on the beach, do anything to help. But they really fought us. They wanted to close all the bars, impose a curfew, ban rock'n'roll from the clubs."

"I'm moving out," he says, putting an amen to an era. "It'll be a painful fucking move. I've lived there all my life. I knew every inch of that town," he adds a little mistily. "Every bar, every shadow."

Marjorie

