

FROM THE MIND THAT BROUGHT YOU PINK FLOYD

ROGER WATERS
US+THEM

A FILM BY SEAN EVANS AND ROGER WATERS

"THE MOVIE OVERWHELMS BOTH IN SUBJECT MATTER AND PRESENTATION"

- Kory Grow, Rolling Stone

"UNPARALLELED SPECTACLE"

- Mark Keizer, Variety



2CD/3LP/DVD/BLU-RAY **OUT 2ND OCTOBER**

FILM AVAILABLE DIGITALLY NOW

DVD & BLU-RAY FEATURE THE MINI DOCUMENTARY 'A FLEETING GLIMPSE'
+ TWO ADDITIONAL LIVE SONGS

amazon music

THE BUNNYMEN
TO THE RESCUE!

RAY DAVIES "I'M JUST
LEARNING ABOUT LOVE"



MUSIC

Music Magazine

161
REVIEWS

LOU REED, THIN LIZZY
MATT BERNINGER
ROGER WATERS
P.J. HARVEY
& MORE

*"We were
precocious boys..."*



**JOHN
LENNON**
UNSEEN!

**SINÉAD
O'CONNOR**
"I HOPE TO
GOD I'M NOT
A PUSSY!"

Queen

THE EPIC SAGA OF
BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

+ CARRY ON, CARRY
ON! QUEEN NOW!

**ELVIS
COSTELLO**
THE HARDEST-
WORKING SINGER
IN LOCKDOWN!

ORBITAL
ACID RAVE
FLASHBACK!

SUN RA
THE HEALING
FORCE FROM
SATURN!



Rock Royalty

Emerging from the hard rock scene of the early seventies, four friends crafted a unique sound that propelled them to global stardom. Flamboyant and fearless, when they stepped out on stage, they knew how to steal the show. Treasure the legacy of Queen, the first band to be celebrated on an official UK coin.

- Features a design that has been officially approved by Roger Taylor and Brian May
- The first time a British band has been showcased on a UK coin
- A printed acrylic block creates the effect of vintage vinyl

Prices start from £13.00



royalmint.com/musiclegends



0800 03 22 152

(Lines open 9am-6pm Monday-Friday
9am-3pm Saturday)

CONTENTS

LONDON ♦ MEMPHIS ♦ SATURN

NOVEMBER 2020

Issue 324

“*Crocodiles* pissed over every debut by any band in that time. I think U2 would agree.”

IAN McCULLOCH, ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN, P54

FEATURES

28 RAY DAVIES The Kinks’ tormented mainman on Lola, lockdown, love and lyrics. “It’s a way of withdrawing from the world, being a songwriter,” he says.

34 SUN RA Music beyond jazz, a personality out of this world: bandmates remember Herman Blount’s genius.

40 THIS IS THE KIT With her fifth LP of worldly post-folk, Kate Stables comes out of her shell. “I found it easier to have a conversation in song,” she says.

44 ELVIS COSTELLO Enter the Renaissance Man of pop, with a new album and a definitive *Armed Forces* redux. How was his recent visit to the Palace? “Nobody was unpleasant.”

50 ORBITAL How their spine-tingling 1990 single Chime

turned rave into music for homes and producers into artists. The Hartnolls, and more, remember.

54 ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN

Celebrating “40 Years Of Magical Songs” with the scaly tale of their debut LP: *Crocodiles*. Wayne Coyne, Chris Martin and ‘The Hoff’ pay tribute.

60 JOHN LENNON

Unseen photographs of the Beatle at work and play – and the inside skinny on the new mixes of his best work: an 80th birthday present from his son, Sean.

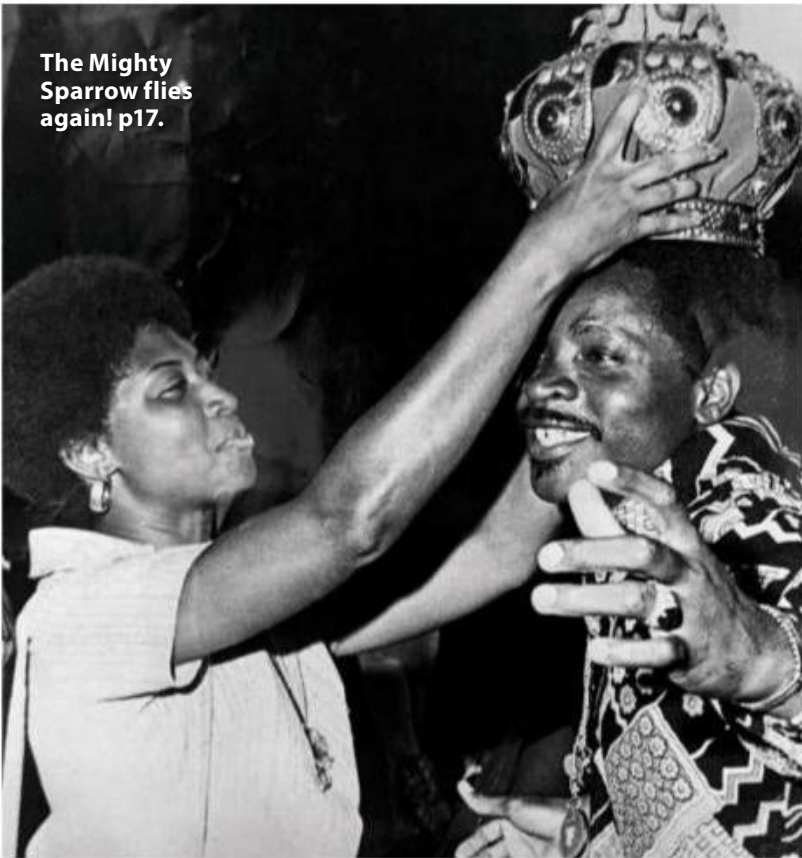
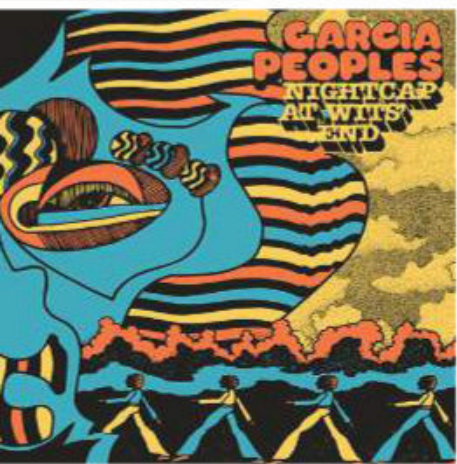
COVER STORY

64 QUEEN Brian May and Roger Taylor help MOJO immerse in Bohemian Rhapsody, history’s most outrageous rock song, 45 years young. The back story! The legacy! Plus their new live album and a photo portfolio by Neal Preston.

Shutterstock



Eternal optimists: Songhoy Blues, Albums, p81.



The Mighty Sparrow flies again! p17.



Matt Berninger on a starry night. Lead Album, p78.

MOJO

REGULARS

- 9 ALL BACK TO MY PLACE** Robert Plant, Suzanne Vega and Makaya McCraven sit you down and say, "Listen to this!"
- 107 REAL GONE** Justin Townes Earle, Trini Lopez, Wayne Fontana and others, we bid a fond farewell.
- 112 ASK FRED** The Guv'nor reflects on great jazz junkets and accidental releases.
- 114 HELLO GOODBYE** Kevin Godley on the crazy chemistry of four intense 10cc years.

WHAT GOES ON!

- 12 SINÉAD O'CONNOR** She's been out of action and dealing with her stuff. But now her primal, honest voice will be heard again. From a secret location, Sinéad discusses battling back, her memoir, why she loves Mahalia Jackson and other things stronger than death.
- 14 SEMOLINA PILCHARD?** What? I Am The Walrus namechecked a lawman who was in the Drug Squad? Aged 85, Detective Sergeant Norman 'Nobby' Pilcher spills the beans in his new memoir Bent Coppers. Involves John and George, Clapton and Brian Jones...
- 16 TODD RUNDGREN** He's in Hawaii, unable to do gigs. So he's made a record with famous friends. Read our full studio report on how it's going, and where Sparks fit in.
- 20 BOB GRUEN** He's the been-there/done-that rock photographer who brought us iconic shots of Lennon, The Clash, Led Zeppelin and more. From his new book Right Place, Right Time, here's another gem from the vaults.
- 22 KEVIN ROWLAND** Dexys' guiding mind presents his Self Portrait, and talks self-obsession, Elvis and what it all means.

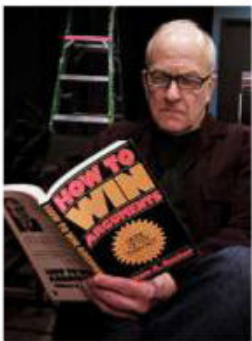
MOJO FILTER

- 78 NEW ALBUMS** The National's Matt Berninger's solo step, Songhoy Blues, Working Men's Club, Garcia Peoples and more.
- 92 REISSUES** Lou Reed's gritty *New York*, P.J. Harvey, Thin Lizzy and more.
- 104 BOOKS** New Romantics tell all, Rob Halford tells even more, plus Hawkwind...
- 106 SCREEN** It's Us + Them, says Roger Waters.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...



Neal Preston
Tour photographer for Led Zeppelin, The Who & Bruce Springsteen, Neal worked with Queen from the mid '70s in a similar role. He was on the famed South America tour of '81, at Live Aid in '85, and on the final tour with Freddie Mercury in '86. More, p72.

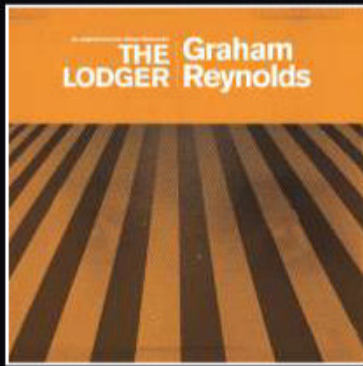


Irwin Chusid
Irwin administers the music estates of Sun Ra, Raymond Scott, and Curt Boettcher, as he strives to turn miracles for R. Stevie Moore, Beth Sorrentino, and The Mighty Sparrow. He's hosted radio shows on WFMU since 1975 and now recommends mind-expanding Sun Ra LPs, p38.



Jim Irvin
MOJO's founding Features Editor and calligrapher of our logo's tag-line, today Jim concentrates on song-writing. On page 28, he meets one of that craft's greats, Ray Davies. Jim also chats with creators of iconic songs in a podcast series, Here's One I Made Earlier.

CARGO COLLECTIVE



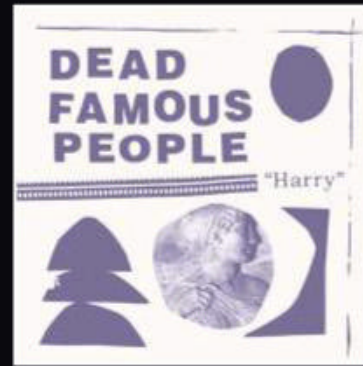
GRAHAM REYNOLDS
THE LODGER
FIRE RECORDS LP

A specially recorded soundtrack for Alfred Hitchcock's legendary Ripper-based drama by multi-award-winning composer Graham Reynolds (Where Do You Go, Bernadette/A Scanner Darkly). "A rare talent" Popmatters



WILL BUTLER
GENERATIONS
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

Arcade Fire's Will Butler returns with a magnetic new album. Thoughtfully apocalyptic, romantic, and bursting with genuine passion - with shades of DFA and Motown.



DEAD FAMOUS PEOPLE
HARRY
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

Dead Famous People's first real album 'Harry' is a document of unadorned perfection. Previously on Flying Nun, Dons Savage is an unparalleled talent, a savant of the perfect melody and lyrics.



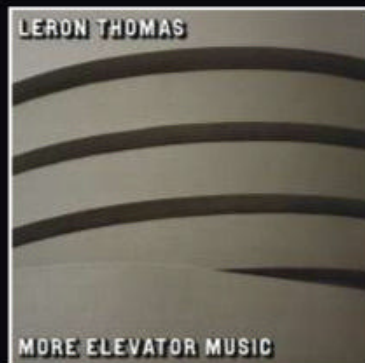
MRS. PISS
SELF-SURGERY
SARGENT HOUSE LP / CD

A new collaboration between Chelsea Wolfe & Jess Gowrie. Drawing on their collective rock, metal, and industrial influences, a collection of songs more urgent & visceral than anything either of them has created before: heaviness spurred on by punk spirit.



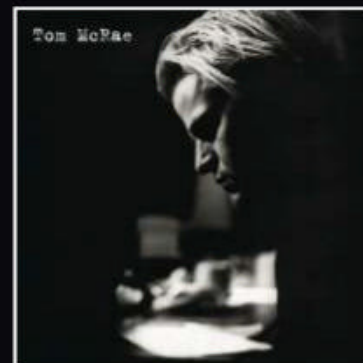
BOB MOULD
BLUE HEARTS
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

The raging-but-catchy yin to Sunshine Rock's yang, Blue Hearts nods to Mould's past while remaining firmly planted in the issues of the day.



LERON THOMAS
MORE ELEVATOR MUSIC
LEWIS RECORDINGS 2LP / CD

Leron Thomas releases his masterpiece 'More Elevator Music'. A mix of Jazz, Rap and all round craziness. It features Iggy Pop who Leron wrote and produced the 'Free' album with.



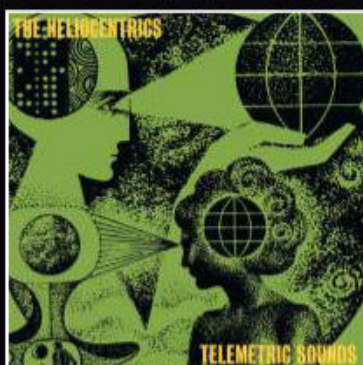
TOM MCRAE
TOM MCRAE
DB RECORDS 2CD

Tom McRae's self-titled debut album is remastered & reissued 9th October. "The voice of an angel" The Guardian. "Enduring songs and nagging melodies" Time Out. "He should become a very big star indeed." The Times.



RIAN TREANOR
FILE UNDER UK METAPLASTM
PLANET MU LP / CD

Rian Treanor returns to Planet Mu for a raw and energetic second album "File Under UK Metaplastm".



HELIOCENTRICS
TELEMETRIC SOUNDS
MADLIB INVАЗION LP / CD

Drawing from the funk universe of James Brown to the cinematic scope of Ennio Morricone and everything in between the UK psychedelic-funk ensemble issue their second album on Madlib's imprint.



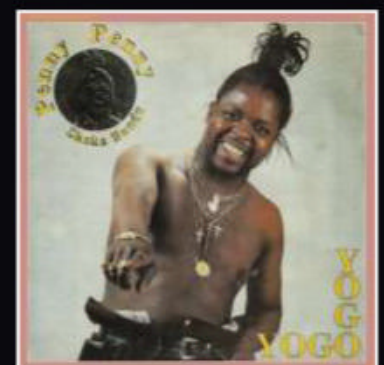
BERT JANSCH
CRIMSON MOON
EARTH RECORDINGS LP

'Crimson Moon' is some of his finest work and sees the musician at the top of his game, with appearances from Johnny Marr, Bernard Butler and many more. Earth Recordings revisits the album on its 20th Anniversary with its first standalone cut to vinyl.



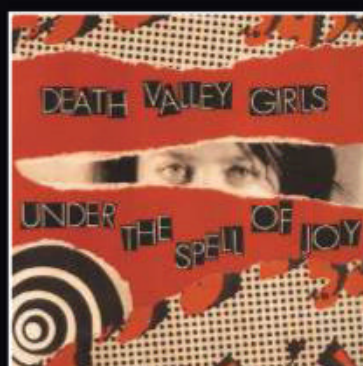
EVIE SANDS
GET OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY
R-SPOT RECORDS LP / CD

Northern Soul Legend's 1st album in 20 years stirs senses with intimate sincerity, sublime taste and innate sensuality. Wall-to-wall masterwork of indelibly melodious songs, ingenious production and "that" liquid voice - Eternal Cool.



PENNY PENNY
YOGO YOGO

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA LP / CD
South African icon Penny Penny's Shangaan disco anthems rocked the nation and beyond In the mid-90s. Long out of print, his bass booming second album Yogo Yogo will finally be available again.



DEATH VALLEY GIRLS
UNDER THE SPELL OF JOY
SUICIDE SQUEEZE RECORDS LP / CD

If you're looking for transcendental rock music, look no further.



MINT FIELD
SENTIMIENTO MUNDIAL
FELTE LP / CD

Sentimiento Mundial sees the evolution from psych-shoegaze to a more minimal, rhythmically focused approach. Guests include Callum Brown on drums (Ulrika Spacek), Cathy Lucas (Vanishing Twin), Nathan Pigott & Syd Kemp (Haha Sounds Collective).



SLOW PULP
MOVEYS
WINSPEAR LP / CD

Full of blistering energy and emotional catharsis, Slow Pulp's remarkable debut album Moveys is a compelling 10-track collection that highlights the band's resourcefulness and resilience.



EMMA KUPA
IT WILL COME EASIER
FIKA RECORDINGS LP / CD

Emma Kupa's (Mammoth Penguins/Standard Fare) debut solo LP, with nods to Dusty Springfield, The Unthanks & The Postal Service, is a mesmerising journey through early adulthood, poignant & expertly detailed.

AN AMALGAMATION OF RECORD SHOPS AND LABELS DEDICATED TO BRINGING YOU NEW MUSIC

IRELAND: DUBLIN - SPINDIZZY / KILKENNY - ROLLER COASTER RECORDS SCOTLAND: DUNDEE - ASSAI / EDINBURGH - ASSAI / GLASGOW - LOVE MUSIC / GLASGOW - MONORAIL WALES: ABERYSTWYTH - ANDY'S RECORDS / CARDIFF - SPILLERS / NEWPORT - DIVERSE / SWANSEA - DERRICKS NORTH-WEST: BARROW-IN-FURNESS - TNT RECORDS / LIVERPOOL - 81 RENSHAW LTD / LIVERPOOL - PROBE / MANCHESTER - PICCADILLY RECORDS / PRESTON - ACTION RECORDS NORTH-EAST: BINGLEY - FIVE RISE RECORDS / HARROGATE - P & C MUSIC / HUDDERSFIELD - VINYL TAP / LEEDS - CRASH / LEEDS - JUMBO RECORDS / NEWCASTLE - J G WINDOWS / NEWCASTLE - BEATDOWN / NEWCASTLE - REFLEX / SCARBOROUGH - RECORD REVIVALS / SHEFFIELD - BEAR TREE / SHEFFIELD - RECORD COLLECTOR / SHEFFIELD - SPINNING DISCS / STOCKTON ON TEES - SOUND IT OUT / WAKEFIELD - WAH WAH RECORDS MIDLANDS: BEDFORD - SLIDE RECORDS / CAMBRIDGE - LOST IN VINYL / CAMBRIDGE - RELEVANT / COVENTRY - JUST DROPPED IN / LEAMINGTON SPA - HEAD / LEAMINGTON SPA - SEISMIC RECORDS / LEIGHTON BUZZARD - BLACK CIRCLE RECORDS / LETCHWORTH - DAVID'S MUSIC / LOUTH - OFF THE BEATEN TRACK / NOTTINGHAM - ROUGH TRADE / OXFORD - TRUCK STORE / STOKE ON TRENT - MUSIC MANIA / STOKE ON TRENT - STRAND RECORDS / WITNEY - RAPTURE SOUTH: BEXHILL ON SEA - MUSIC'S NOT DEAD / BLANDFORD FORUM - REVOLUTION ROCKS / BRIGHTON - RESIDENT / BURY ST.EDMUNDS - VINYL HUNTER / GODALMING - RECORD CORNER / LEIGH-ON-SEA - FIVES / LONDON - BANQUET GRAVITY / LONDON - CASBAH / LONDON - FLASHBACK / LONDON - ROUGH TRADE EAST / LONDON - ROUGH TRADE TALBOT RD / LONDON - SISTER RAY / ROMSEY - HUNDRED / SOUTHSEA - PIE & VINYL / SOUTHDEN ON SEA - SOUTH RECORDS / ST ALBANS - EMPIRE RECORDS / WATFORD - LP CAFE / WIMBORNE - SQUARE RECORDS / WHITSTABLE - GATEFIELD SOUNDS / WINCHESTER - ELEPHANT RECORDS SOUTH WEST: BRISTOL - RADIO ON / BRISTOL - ROUGH TRADE / CHELTENHAM - BADLANDS / FALMOUTH - JAM / FROME - RAVES FROM THE GRAVE / MARLBOROUGH - SOUND KNOWLEDGE / TOTNES - DRIFT MAILORDER AND INTERNET ONLY STORES: BLEEP.COM / BOOMKAT.COM / NORMANRECORDS.COM / PEBBLERECORDS.CO.UK / RECORDSTORE.CO.UK

17 HEATHMAN'S ROAD, LONDON SW6 4TJ - CARGORECORDS.CO.UK - INFO@CARGORECORDS.CO.UK



Escape From Reality

15 Baroque'n'Roll, Art Rock Fandangos



1 James Dean Bradfield *Seeking The Room With The Three Windows*

Our overture, a widescreen vision from the MSP man's new solo LP. "I've been kind of a lifelong Queen fan," Bradfield told Pitchfork in 2009. "When people use the words 'pompous' or 'pomposity' or 'grandeur' in connection with music, they usually use it as a criticism. For me, Queen is essentially pomp, it made them work."

Written by James Dean Bradfield, Loz Williams, Richard Beak, Patrick Jones. Label: MontyRay Publisher: BMG. ISRC: QM6N2202978



2 Sparks *What The Hell Is It This Time?*

Sparks and Queen spent the early '70s jockeying for outré-pop superiority: Mercury's boys toured as support for Sparks, leading the Mael to try and lure Brian May for their band. Queen ascended to the heights as Sparks vied to become yet stranger – a continuing process. This baroque strut is from 2017's *Hippopotamus*.

Written by Mael, Mael. Published by BMG Rights Management (UK). From *Hippopotamus* (BMG). www.allparks.com



3 Todd Rundgren *Is It My Name?*

An artist with far too many brilliant idiosyncrasies to be categorised, much of Rundgren's music works under Bradfield's "essentially pomp" banner. Exhibit A: this prog-glam slammer from his 1973 masterpiece, *A Wizard, A True Star* – released a couple of years after he'd produced Sparks' debut, when they were called Halfnelson.

(2015 Remaster) Written by Todd Rundgren. Published by Earmark Music Inc./Screen Gems-EMI Music Inc. (BMI) ©1973 WEA International Inc. USRH 11509558 Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.



4 Rufus Wainwright *Trouble In Paradise*

While plenty of rock stars have classical leanings, few have manifested them as flagrantly as Wainwright, composer of two fully-fledged operas. *Trouble In Paradise* is from his recent return to ornate pop: "Coming back to the pop realm," he told us in MOJO 317, "I feel my romantic leanings are more appreciated."

Written by Rufus Wainwright. ©2019 Rufus Wainwright under exclusive license to BMG Rights Management (US) LLC General. Blake Mills appears courtesy of New Deal Records/Verve Records



9 John Grant *Sigourney Weaver*

When asked in 2015 – by Elton John, no less – which dead artist he would have liked to have written or played with, John Grant's first thought was, "Freddie Mercury, that would have been very interesting." You sense a frisson of Queen in this 2010 classic; a mordantly witty piano ballad lent anthemic heft by the soft-rock chops of Grant's backing band on career-defining *Queen Of Denmark*, Midlake.

Written by John Grant. Published by Blue Mountain Music. ©&©2010 and Bella Union. From *Queen Of Denmark*.



10 XTC *River Of Orchids*

In theory, punk wanted to erase the indulgences of Queen and their ilk. But musicians gradually emerged who could manipulate classical scale and complexity on their own terms. XTC's rigorously orchestrated *River Of Orchids* opened 1999's *Apple Venus Volume 1*: "One part Philip Glass, one part Gil Evans, two parts nursery rhyme with a slice of carol on the side," noted Andy Partridge.

Written by Andy Partridge. Published by Warner/Chappell Music Ltd. ©&©XTC 1999 under license to Ape House Ltd. From *Apple Venus: Volume One*.



11 Field Music *Sit Tighter*

In much the same vein, Sunderland's industrious Field Music have spent the past 15 or so years crafting a detailed, evolving take on British art rock, with David and Peter Brewis never shy of a stacked vocal harmony or proggy gear shift. *Sit Tighter* is a recent addition to their catalogue: a 2020 upgrade of 2007's punchy *Sit Tight*, with a squelching, funky new roll.

Written by David and Peter Brewis. ©Memphis Industries Ltd 2007. From *Tones Of Town*. Published by Chrysalis Music.



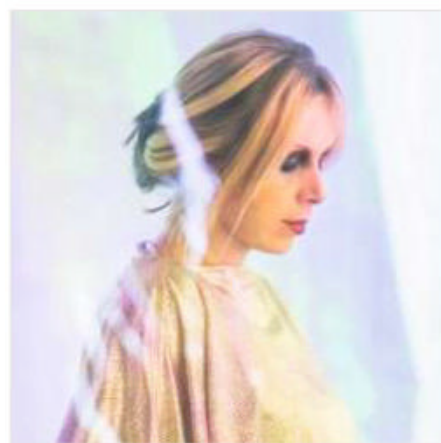
12 The Flaming Lips *Mother I've Taken LSD*

Grandiose pathos has been a constant in the unstable musical history of The Flaming Lips – a taste for soaring showstoppers amid the psych chaos. *Mother I've Taken LSD* is one of their best in years, based on a confession of Wayne Coyne's brother in 1969. "It scared me," Coyne recalls. "I didn't want my older brother to go insane... I was never the same."

Written by The Flaming Lips. Published by Lovely Sorts of Death/EMI Blackwood Music. Inc. ©&©2020 and Bella Union. From *American Head*.

AOW MANY IDEAS CAN YOU PACK INTO ONE SONG? The extravaganza of *Bohemian Rhapsody* is often seen as a one-off in rock history, but its vaulting ambition, classical aspirations, multiple movements, cavalier bombast, literary flourishes, palpable decadence and overwhelming lust for drama are not quite as rare as you might think. This month for the MOJO CD, we've plucked 15 intricately bejewelled wonders from the more rococo corners of our record collections, a quest that's taken us into the worlds of art rock, glam, chamber pop, psychedelia, space disco and, eventually, to the outer margins of prog.

Not much on this compilation exactly sounds like *Bohemian Rhapsody*, but something about all of these diverse tracks capture its indomitable spirit of adventure. An audacious concept, or six. Symphonic pretensions. A theatrical turn of phrase. A sense that the parameters of rock orthodoxy are there to be overcome, and that no excess can be too much. That's *Escape From Reality*: cue thunderbolt and lightning!



5 Jane Weaver *The Architect*

From low-key indie beginnings in the early '90s, Jane Weaver's career has blossomed these past few years, embracing and transcending genres with a boldness that recalls Kate Bush. *The Architect*, from 2017's *Modern Kosmology*, reconciles prog and spacerock whoosh with a throbbing space-age disco. A retro-futurist flashback to the past.

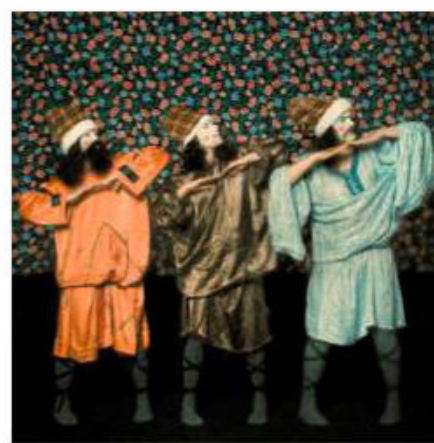
Written by Jane Weaver. ©2017 Fire Records. ©2017 Fire Records. (Heavenly Songs/Bucks Music). From *Modern Kosmology*, available at www.firerecords.com



6 Once And Future Band *I'll Be Fine*

Their CVs contain stints in psych-rock freaks Howlin Rain and stoner grunge types Drunk Horse, but Oakland's Once And Future Band now sculpt a studio sound akin to '70s prog-pop titans like ELO, Supertramp and, yes, Queen. Check the chorused guitar tones, lavish enough for Brian May, on a standout from 2016's debut LP.

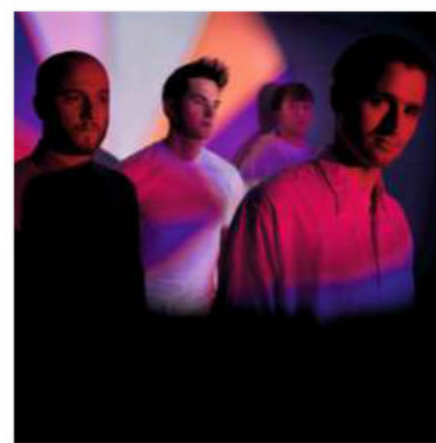
Written by Kumar, Eckert, Robinow. Published by Greasy Kid Stuff (ASCAP), OKR (BMI), Player Piano Player (ASCAP)/© and © 2017 Castle Face Records, from the album *Self Titled* (CF083/Castle Face Records) <http://www.castlefacerecords.com/>



7 Motorpsycho *The All Is One*

In a mammoth and auspicious career going back to the early '90s, Norway's Motorpsycho have tried most iterations of hard rock. Now, as showcased on the new *The All Is One* LP, they've hit a sound that's a churning, melodic reinvention of prog. It has 42-minute suites but, as a taster, this nine-minute title track is majestic – and relatively concise!

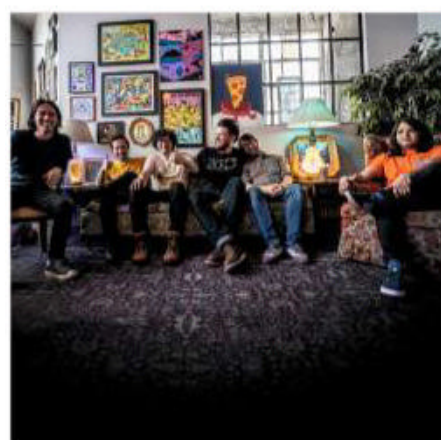
Written by Bent Sæther. Administered by Tono/NCB. ©&©2020 Rune Grammofon/Motorpsychodelic Tunes. From *The All Is One* (Rune Grammofon), www.runegrammofon.com



8 Wild Beasts *Mecca*

In the pantheon of rock falsettos, Hayden Thorpe's might not be quite as celebrated as Freddie Mercury's, but his ethereal ululations – often juxtaposed with the deeper tones of Tom Fleming – made Wild Beasts one of the most intriguing British bands of the early 21st century. Here's one of their finest, from their penultimate LP, 2014's *Present Tense*.

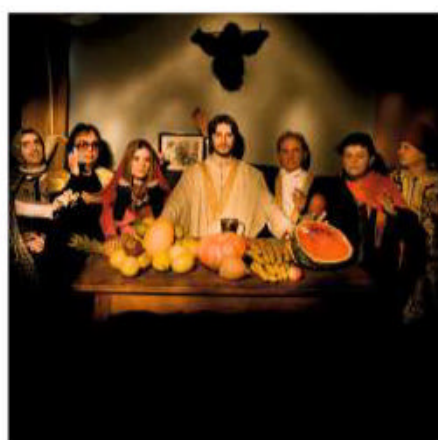
Written by Fleming, Little, Talbot, Thorpe. Published by Domino Recording Co. LTD. ©&©2014 Domino Recording Co. LTD. From *Present Tense* (Domino).



13 Garcia Peoples *Altered Place*

A young band from New Jersey with four albums out in two years, Garcia Peoples are virtuoso jammers in the Grateful Dead mould. Their records are also filled with suites, betraying a sophisticated compositional sense. Their new LP, *Nightcap At Wits' End*, is reviewed on page 84.

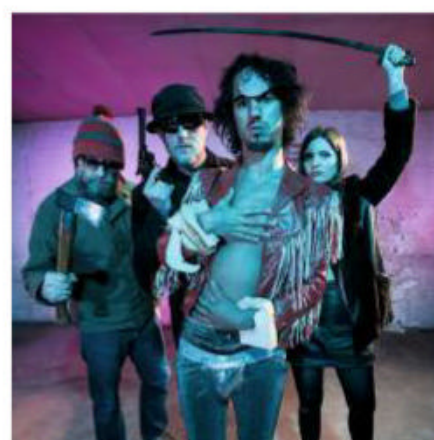
Written by Spaldo, D. Arakaki, C. Arakaki, Malach, Gubler, Cush. Published by F3. Publishing (ASCAP). ©2020 Beyond Beyond is Beyond Records. From *Nightcap At Wits' End*. <https://garciapeoplesbbib.bandcamp.com/album/nightcap-at-wits-end-pre-order>.



14 Os Mutantes *Querida Querida*

Brazil's Os Mutantes predate Queen, and their radical hybrids of Beatlesque psych, *musique concrète* and homeland traditions caused a political and musical sensation in the late '60s. But *Querida Querida* is from 2009's comeback, *Haih Or Amortecedor*: songwriting credits are shared with fellow Tropicália giant Tom Zé.

Written by Sergio Dias, Tom Zé. Publishers: Sergio Dias (Haih Publishing (BMI)), Tom Ze (Irará Edições Musicais Endereço). ©&©2009 Anti Inc. Manufactured And Distributed By Epitaph. From *Haih Or Amortecedor*.



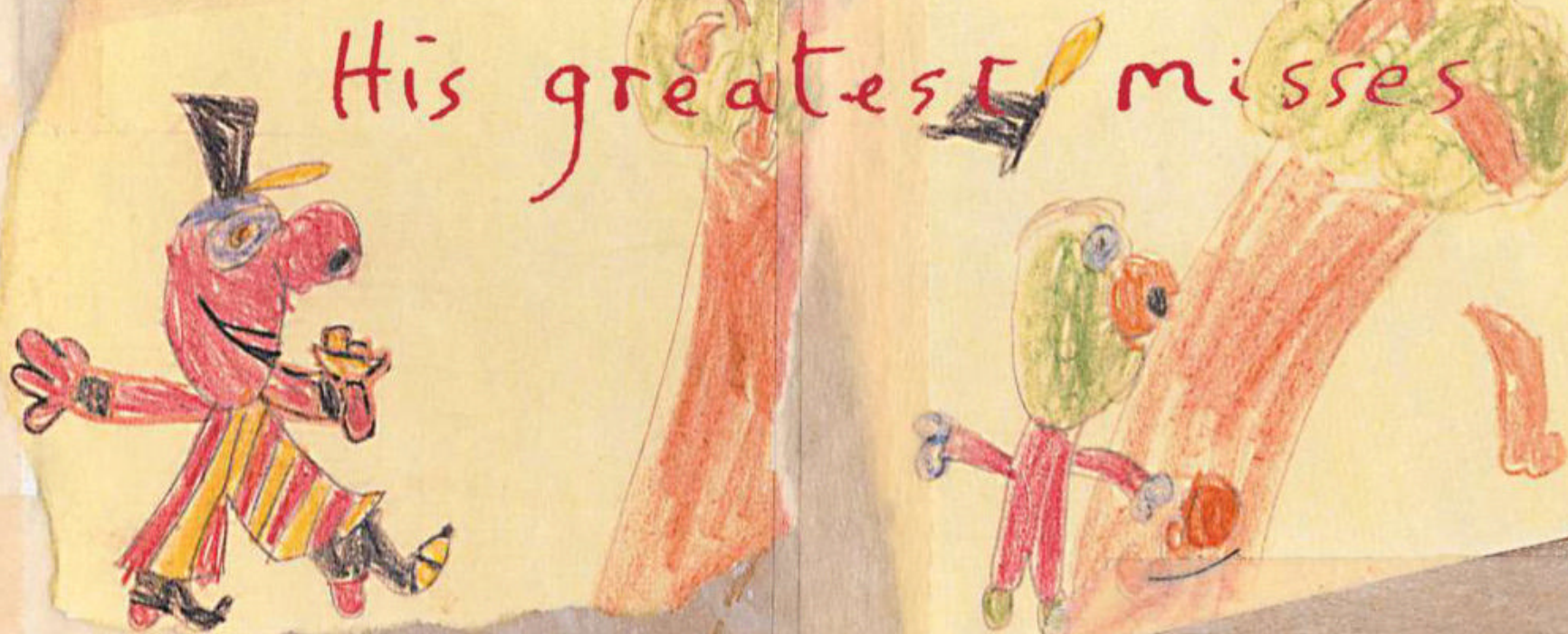
15 The Moonlandingz *This Cities Undone*

Another bug-eyed mash-up of glam, prog and disco, The Moonlandingz are the alternative reality of Fat White Family's Lias Saoudi. "A choral freakout suitable for the nuke-worshipping muties in Beneath Planet Of The Apes, with a touch of Tomorrow Never Knows," wrote MOJO upon release in 2018.

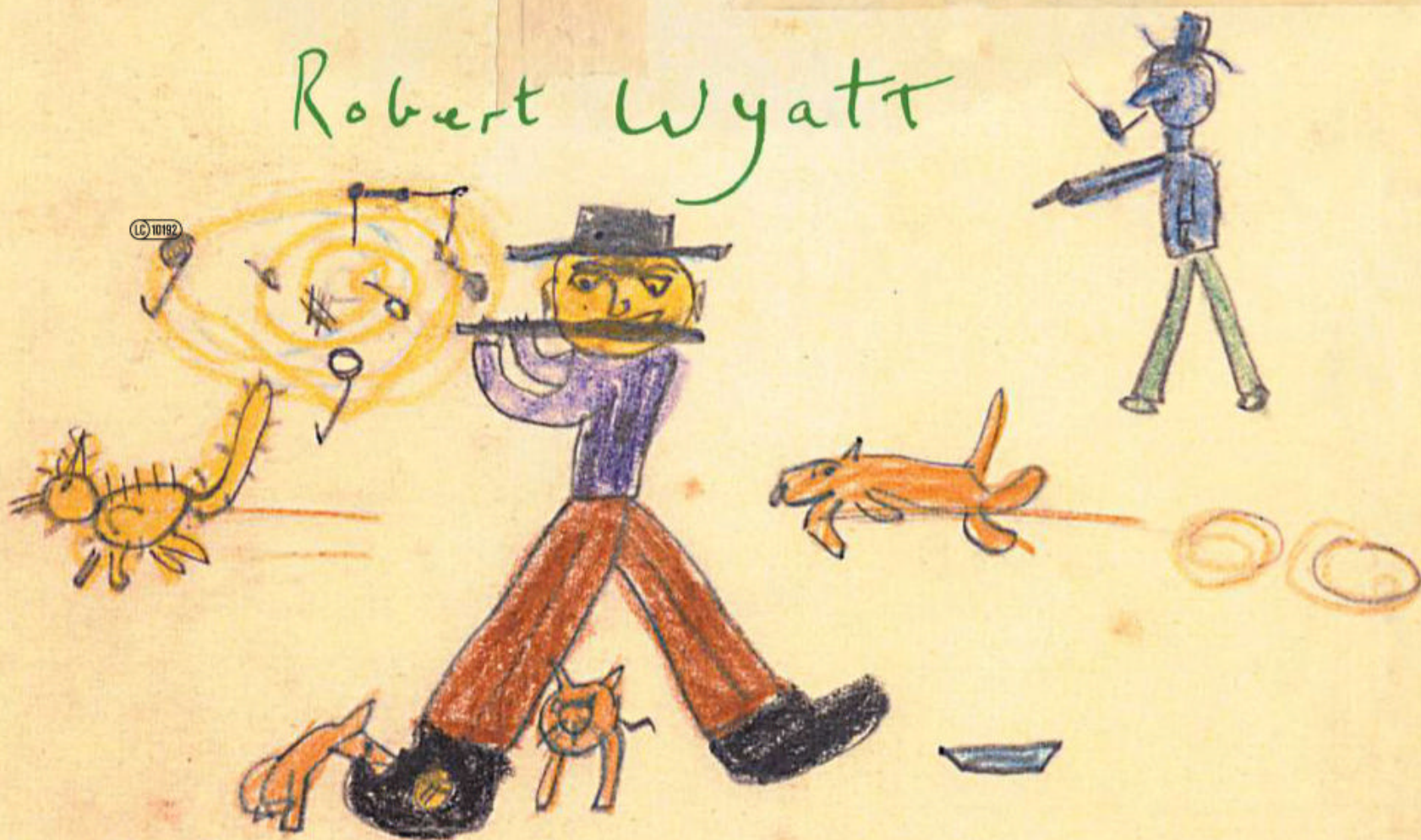
Written by Lias Saoudi/Adrian Flanagan/Dean Honer/Saul Adamczewski. Published by Domino Publishing Company Limited/Young Man Ltd. ©&©2018 Transgressive Records. From *Interstellar Club Classics* (Transgressive Records) www.transgressive.co.uk

"Sod it, we're gonna go for the whole thing!"

Queen on the making of an epic.
Begins on page 64



Robert Wyatt



A compilation spanning Robert Wyatt's decades-long career

Including selections dating from Rock Bottom (1974) to Cuckooland (2003).

Originally released exclusively in Japan.

Now widely available for the first time on Double LP, CD & download



Robert Plant

SPACE SHIFTER OF STRANGE SENSATIONS

What music are you currently grooving to?

Bob Dylan, *Rough And Rowdy Ways*. From Judas to Jehovah – beatified and crucified comes the Ragged Phoenix. This is vital stuff. From the richest vein... reflections at sunset from the Voyage of Sinbad.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Love, *Forever Changes* – no surprise here. Through all my zig-zag times I run for shelter to this incomprehensible masterpiece.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Shop Around by **The Miracles**, from Mark & Moody's record shop in Stourbridge.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

My grandad **Robert Shropshire Plant**. He played trombone, piano and fiddle. Leader of Dudley Port Drinking Band – ultimate Yam Yam.

What do you sing in the shower?

Clarence Ashley, *Coo Coo Bird*. A classic on the old tyme, Americana, Mountain music, bluegrass – agh! – folio.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Barrett Strong, (I Don't Need You) You Need Me. Set-piece macho black 'pop' from the dawn of Tamla Records. What a voice. Crazy ditty. Wonder if he ate his words?

And your Sunday morning record?

Ike & Tina Turner, *A Fool In Love*, from the church to the 'chitlin' circuit'. These two rocketed through the worlds of entertainment jet-propelled. I saw them one night at a Mod all-nighter in Brum at The Whiskey – insane and primeval. This tune reaches maximum frenzy in two mins and five secs. How can it be – the earth moves beneath my feet again.

Digging Deep is out on October 2 on Es Paranza.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Suzanne Vega

SOLITARY, STILL
STANDING

What music are you currently grooving to?

Dua Lipa. I know she's got a new one out, but it hasn't been a very dancing time since the lockdown here in New York City.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Leonard Cohen's first album. It's very intimate, it's really like a good friend. I discovered it when I was 14. I became aware of it because my name is Suzanne (*laughs*).

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?
Abbey Road by **The Beatles**. I

bought that when I was 9. I don't know where I got the money – from my birthday or something – but we had a little record shop on Broadway about a block or two from where I grew up and I loved I could go in there with my own money and pick up my own Beatles record.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

There are moments where I wanted to be **Lou Reed** because he seemed to be so uninhibited, in terms of being really cruel to people. There are moments when I've thought I could use a bit more of his approach. In interviews – he never took them seriously, he always wore these glasses to be intimidating. To the point where I sat with him once and his dog took my sunglasses and started to chew them and he was absolutely horrified – he thought they were special interview glasses.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't but I occasionally sing when I do the dishes. Always jazz standards – I was a big fan of **Ella Fitzgerald** *Sings The Rodgers And Hart Songbook*.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

The Strokes. I loved their first album.

And your Sunday morning record?

I can't help but think of Sunday Morning by **The Velvet Underground & Nico**. Slightly hungover, slightly rueful, and that twinkly sound which I always think is so ironic next to Lou's vocals.

An Evening Of New York Songs And Stories is out on September 11. She tours the UK in February 2021.

Makaya McCraven

CHICAGO BEAT
SCIENTIST

What music are you currently grooving to?

I'm working with **Jeff Parker** at the moment and I've been listening to his *Suite For Max Brown* which I am on, but I only listen to the tracks I'm not on. I've also been listening to some old classics with the family; **Miles Davis**, **Stevie Wonder**, **Bob Marley**, **Keith Jarrett**, **Mahavishnu Orchestra's** *Birds Of Fire*, **Pharoah Sanders' Thembi**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Yusef Lateef's *Eastern Sounds*, which he recorded in 1961. It's a very moving record. I've listened to it a lot through the years and been inspired by it, in particular his efforts to go back into history and play ancient flutes and oboes, to take this folkloric approach and bring it to jazz. That connects with me, and on top of that it's very melodic and really nice to listen to.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

A cassette of **A Tribe Called Quest's**

“I'm a
frustrated
bass player.”

MAKAYA MCCRAVEN



The Low End Theory from a mail order company where you got 10 tapes for the price of five. My mum and dad had so many records, all different genres, so I never needed to buy any and then this came along from my own generation and I got to introduce it to them. That was a big deal.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

James Jamerson. Bass is my favourite instrument and I'm a frustrated bass player. Not only was he such a great musician but he got to be on so many incredible records and be around so many incredible artists. I don't think he died a rich man though, so I'd change that part of it.

What do you sing in the shower?

I really don't. Too much echo.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Stevie Wonder's *I Wish and I'd follow that up with some Prince*.

And your Sunday morning record?

Some jazz, probably Yusef.

Universal Beings E&F Sides is out on K7 on September 25.



Mads Perch, David Marques

Academic House,
24-28 Oval Road
London NW1 7DT
Tel: 020 7437 9011

Reader queries: mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk

Subscriber queries: bauer@subscription.co.uk

General e-mail: mojo@bauermedia.co.uk

Website: mojo4music.com

Editor

John Mulvey

Senior Editor

Danny Eccleston

Art Editor

Mark Wagstaff

Associate Editor (Production)

Geoff Brown

Associate Editor (Reviews)

Jenny Bulley

Associate Editor (News)

Ian Harrison

Deputy Art Editor

Del Gentleman

Picture Editor

Matt Turner

Senior Associate Editor

Andrew Male

Contributing Editors

Phil Alexander,

Keith Cameron,

Sylvie Simmons

For mojo4music.com contact

Danny Eccleston

Thanks for their help with this issue: Keith Cameron, Fred Dellar, Ian Whent

Among this month's contributors:

Martin Aston, John Aizlewood, Mark Blake, Mike Barnes, Glyn Brown, John Bungey, David Buckley, Keith Cameron, Stevie Chick, Irwin Chusid, Andrew Collins, Andy Cowan, Fred Dellar, Tom Doyle, Daryl Easlea, Howard Fishman, David Fricke, Andy Fyfe, Pat Gilbert, Grayson Haver Currin, David Hutcheon, Chris Ingham, Jim Irvin, Colin Irwin, David Katz, Andrew Male, James McNair, Joe Muggs, Kris Needs, Chris Nelson, Lucy O'Brien, Andrew Perry, Jude Rogers, Jon Savage, Victoria Segal, David Sheppard, Michael Simmons, Sylvie Simmons, Ben Thompson, Kieron Tyler, Charles Waring, Lois Wilson, Stephen Worthy.

Among this month's photographers:

Cover photography: ©Mick Rock 1974, 2020; (inset) Getty Steve Double, Brian Griffin, Bob Gruen, Diana Krall, Alex Lake, Philippe Lebruman, Donal Maloney, Mephisto, Neal Preston, Tom Sheehan.

MOJO SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINE

0185 8438884

For subscription or back issue queries contact
CDS Global on Bauer@subscription.co.uk
To access from outside the UK
Dial: +44 (0)185 8438884

Theories, rants, etc.

MOJO welcomes correspondence for publication.

E-mail to: mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk

IN ALL HONESTY, EDITOR'S LETTERS

can be a bit of a contrived business, as you grasp for threads among the eclectic contents of a typical MOJO. This month, though, our two major features have the kind of unlikely coincidence that happens by accident rather than design. Much of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, by Queen, and *Crocodiles*, the debut album by Echo And The Bunnymen, were recorded at the same remote studio complex in Monmouthshire. It was here, at Rockfield, that Queen spent the late summer of 1975 stacking the vocals for what became one of rock's most ambitious productions. "We had more tracks than The Beatles had," remembers Brian May. "But, of course, it's not enough when you're trying to do the complex things we were trying." And here, five short years later, the Bunnymen opened up an expansive new frontier for post-punk, and Ian McCulloch tried to throttle his producer. "[He] was smirking at me," explains McCulloch, 40 eventful years on.

Rockfield, of course, has seen plenty more notable scraps since then. But it's always a pleasure to find that even the most disparate masterpieces might be subtly intertwined; that musical history is a tangle of connections and serendipities which, every month, it's our pleasure to uncover. Carry on, carry on!



JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

Let me bring you up to speed...

Reviewing the new Richard and Linda Thompson box set in MOJO 323, Andrew Male tells us there are no live recordings of the couple's 1972 folk club tour. Actually, there are at least two. There are 40 minutes of the couple playing the Kew Bridge Folk Club, plagued somewhat by feedback and crude edits, along with a full hour from Durham University, where they run out of songs they've rehearsed. Both feature lots of banter, a relaxed atmosphere, a wide range of material and a never-released RT song called *When I'm Prime Minister*. It's his earliest lyric from the point of view of a sociopath – one who could easily be mistaken for Boris Johnson.

Neither of these are sufficiently well recorded for official release, but Richard and Linda's set from the Memphis Folk Club at The Guildford, Leeds, in 1973 exists in good quality. This provides an interesting link between *Henry The Human Fly* and *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*, several of whose songs feature. These three were the only recordings that circulated when I was heavily into CDR trading in the mid-noughties.

David Belbin, Nottingham

It will be mine. Oh yes. It will be mine

Thanks a lot, MOJO! If you couldn't tell, that was sarcasm. My complaint? First: you force me to track down and buy that Dreamies CD you featured in *Buried Treasure* [MOJO 312]. Second: you force me to track down and spend upwards of \$200 on Terry Riley CDs [MOJO 319, *How To Buy*], and I still can't track down that damn Riley/Don Cherry disc. Third: and now, you force me to track down and buy *Fifty Foot Hose* [MOJO 319, *Buried Treasure*]. I mean, seriously, how do you expect me to finance all this? Now, for the facts: I am SO appreciative of your recommendations, not to mention all the great stuff I get from your reviews section. Keep up the stellar work, and the fine writing. I wouldn't want to live without my monthly fix.

Mark B Smith, Glen Burnie, Maryland

That's where the magic happens

Fifteen years ago I stumbled across a BBC documentary on Ennio Morricone which blew my mind – not because it showed him to be a master of film music (that was no surprise), but because of an exceedingly brief black-and-white snippet of

a 1966 Italian variety show. Here was a gorgeous pop diva in an evening gown, singing one of the best pop ballads of all time. But this wasn't Petula or Dusty or Dionne – it was their equally talented and charismatic contemporary, Mina, performing *Se Telefonando*, composed and arranged by Morricone. “Other people see the moment of creativity as magical, but it is not,” he states. But surely a timeless song like *Se Telefonando* was the product of divine inspiration? Sorry, in *Chasing That Sound*, his 2016 book of interviews, Ennio confirmed he was inspired to write *Se Telefonando* while he and his wife were waiting at the post office to pay their gas bill.

Neal McCabe, Los Angeles

We hope you found it entertaining, whimsical and yet relevant

I still, vaguely, remember MOJO issue 1, which now either moulders in a garage in Canada or a rotten landfill along with the several hundred others I avidly collected for years. Happily I have issues 266 onward here in Thailand. MOJO 322 arrived yesterday, and I was soon raving at the breadth and depth on the CD by Gail Ann Dorsey, Donny McCaslin, Chuck Jackson, Eno, and Fripp's gorgeous *Gentlescape*. Having enjoyed his work with Gabriel, Bowie et al, I was soon rummaging for last year's King Crimson disc [MOJO 308] for yet another spin, before embarking on a crash course to discover the rest of his strange, often tasty musical fruits, of which there appears to be enough to drive an old lad insane. And for providing monthly evidence of this, I offer thanks to all involved in producing MOJO and those who manage to get it delivered half-way around the world even during the largest pandemic since long before any of us rocked, rolled and pogoed.

Gary Rutland, via e-mail

Isn't it great that we're all better people?

Thanks so much for the How To Buy feature on *Yo La Tengo* [MOJO 321]. I have been a fan since buying *I Can Hear The Heart Beating As One* in 1997 on the basis of a great review. That album deservedly topped your poll and I still love it. Thank you in particular for the high places gained by *Electro-Pura*, which for some reason I had gone off but, thanks to your readers, have now reappraised, and *There's A Riot Going On*, which I did not buy based on a couple of poorish reviews. I have now, of course: MOJO Readers 1, Reviewers 0.

Ronnie Dickinson, Glasgow.

Hey, why is this guy being so nice to us?

I've been reading every issue of MOJO for yonks, but this time you guys really did it. The article on X [MOJO 322] was outstanding. I love this band and

their music has helped me to steer through difficult times. Please bring more of this quality writing on punk bands like Black Flag, Minor Threat or The Germs. And why not shed a light on those brilliant Italian bands (Negazione, Indigesti, Raw Power) that were equally mindblowing in the '80s? Their music and lyrics have lost none of their importance.

Mike Lebbling, Amsterdam

Denied!

It is hard to believe that half a century has passed since attending the Isle Of Wight Festival in 1970 with two schoolmates. Jimi Hendrix came on stage around 1am after a very long day. After two numbers I nodded off and was devastated to hear the MC thank him for a great set. Bob Geldof was in the year above us in school and we met up by chance – he thought it hilarious to destroy our deathtrap of a tent made from bin liners and straw, but we forgave him. Virgin Records was a mail order outfit then with a small marquee taking orders – I paid the man £2 for my selection (*Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out*) and was pleasantly surprised when it arrived two weeks later; I still have it. It might not have been Richard Branson who served me, but I like to think it was.

Arthur Crummie, Sunderland

It's like a new pair of underwear: at first, it's constrictive...

Just laughed my way through the MOJO Rising piece on (ahem) “Aussie Ambient Banjoist” Andrew Tuttle [MOJO 322]. The Jazz Club title is everything that's wrong about chinstroking music journalism. Let's stop the madness now. I'm an open-minded music listener but this is a giant leap too far. And yes I have listened to it – makes Eno sound like The Stooges.

Stephen Toal, via e-mail

Good call!

The film quotes in MOJO 323 are from Yesterday – amazingly that's only the second time I've got it right in 20 years. Pat on the back administered.

Gary Bragg, Chester

We're not worthy...

Thank you for including Waxahatchee's excellent single *Can't Do Much* on your covermount CD [MOJO 323]. As we are sure you are aware, Waxahatchee is the project of Katie Crutchfield. However, the caption for the song erroneously calls out Katie's sister Allison Crutchfield, who, while a musician in her own right both as a solo artist and in the band Swearin', does not perform as Waxahatchee nor does she play on this track. Waxahatchee is and has always been the solo creative outlet of Katie Crutchfield. Find *Can't Do Much* on Waxahatchee's new album *Saint Cloud* wherever you listen to music.

Christina Rentz, Label Manager, Merge Records

Group Managing Director, Advertising
Abby Carvosso
Head of Magazine Media
Clare Chamberlain
Group Commercial Director
Simon Kilby
Head Of Magazine Brands Anu Short
Brand Director Joel Stephan
Sales Operations Co-ordinator
Thomas Ward
Regional Advertising Katie Kendall
Classified Sales Executive
Max Garwood
Classified Sales Manager
Karen Gardiner
Inserts Manager Simon Buckenham
Production Manager Carl Lawrence
Sales Operations Executive, BMA Finance Helen Mear

President, Bauer Media Publishing
Rob Munro-Hall
EA to President Vicky Meadows
CEO of Bauer Publishing UK
Chris Duncan
Chief Financial Officer Bauer Magazine Media
Lisa Hayden
EA to CEO and CFO Stacey Thomas
Managing Director
Helen Morris
PA to Managing Director
Elisha Thomas
Commercial Marketing Director
Liz Martin
Managing Editor Linda Steventon
MOJO CD and Honours Creative Director Dave Henderson
Senior Events Producer
Marguerite Peck
Business Analyst Clare Wadsworth
Head of Marketing Fergus Carroll
Product Manager Philippa Turner
Direct Marketing Manager Julie Spires
Direct Marketing Executive
Raheema Rahim
Communications Director Jess Blake
Acting Communications Director
Susie Asbury

Printing: William Gibbons

MOJO (ISSN 1351-0193; USPS 17424) is published 12 times a year by H Bauer Publishing, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynchwood, PE2 6EA, United Kingdom. H Bauer Publishing is a company registered in England and Wales with company number LP003328, registered address Academic House, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DT. VAT no 918 5617 01.

The US annual subscription price is \$109.47. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named WN Shipping USA., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA.

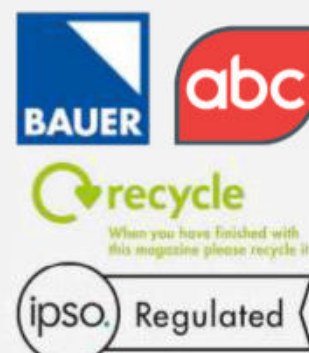
Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to MOJO, WN Shipping USA., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA.

Subscriptions records are maintained at H Bauer Publishing, Subscriptions, CDS Global, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill Street, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 9EF, United Kingdom. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent. For subscription or back issue queries, please contact CDS Global on Bauer@subscription.co.uk. Phone from the UK on 01858 43 8884. Phone from overseas on +44 (0)1858 43 8884. For enquiries on overseas newsstand sales e-mail Paul.Maher@seymour.co.uk

© All material published is copyright of H Bauer Publishing. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the prior permission of the publisher. MOJO accepts no responsibility for any unsolicited material. For syndication enquiries go to: syndication@bauermedia.co.uk. H Bauer Publishing and Bauer Consumer Media Ltd are authorised and regulated by the FCA (Ref No. 845898) and (Ref No. 710067)

To find out more about where to buy MOJO, contact Frontline Ltd, at Midgate House, Midgate, Peterborough PE1 1TN. Tel: 01733 555161.

COMPLAINTS: H Bauer Publishing is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (www.ipso.co.uk) and endeavours to respond to and resolve your concerns quickly. Our Editorial Complaints Policy (including full details of how to contact us about editorial complaints and IPSO's contact details) can be found at www.bauermediacomplaints.co.uk. Our e-mail address for editorial complaints covered by the Editorial Complaints Policy is complaints@bauermedia.co.uk.



SAVE MONEY ON NEWSSTAND PRICES!

AND GET MOJO DELIVERED FREE TO YOUR DOOR WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE!

MOJO MAKES A GREAT GIFT!!!

SAVE £££ OFF COVER PRICE!

SUBSCRIBE RIGHT NOW!
And you'll get MOJO delivered direct to your door. See page 26 for full details...

WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET MOJO

“I hope to God I’m not a pussy!”

Back after years of turbulence, a resurgent **Sinéad O’Connor** talks cash, BLM and new music.

“I’D LOVE to go to an artists’ retreat for a year and write songs,” says Sinéad O’Connor from home in Ireland, “but I’ve got kids and cats and I haven’t got time.”

While her 2020 tour dates are postponed until next year, the singer’s currently experiencing a burst of activity triggered by her live return in 2019 – a welcome relief after the disorder that preceded it. “I had a hysterectomy in 2015 and the same year one of my children became very unwell... I became very unwell and it took me five years to recover,” she explains. “I wasn’t able to work; I was in hospital for eight months up until May last year, and when I came out I had 8,000 quid in the bank and immediately got a 2,000 quid gas bill. That was my catalyst for getting the fuck back to work.”

“It began to be fashionable to treat me as if I was insane.”

Her first single in six years, released in aid of Black Lives Matter, covers Mahalia Jackson’s *Trouble Of The World*. “There became this incredible movement that I found really moving with these women in the streets saying that when George Floyd called for his mother, he called all the mothers,” she explains. “It made me feel that this was the right time to release the record, because Mahalia was a very strong mothering figure and a huge figure in the civil rights movement.”

O’Connor, who converted to Islam in 2018 and took the name Shuhada Sadaqat, stresses it is not a bleak song: “It’s written that the world will become the Garden Of Eden which it was intended to be, and that to me is what the song is saying.”

She is also working on her first album since 2014’s *I’m Not Bossy, I’m The Boss*

with producer David Holmes, and is already planning a follow-up covers long-player. “We’re only about five songs in so I’ve got to come up with five more,” she says of the record, scheduled for 2022 and to feature a finished version of online demo *Milestones*. “Like any reporter I work well when there’s a deadline.”

2021, meanwhile, will see the publication of a memoir of blog-style vignettes, written five years ago. “I’m not looking forward to having to remember everything when I read it because I’ve paid a lot of money in therapy to forget everything,” says. “I’m half-joking because if I’ve done my job properly, it’s also a very funny book.”

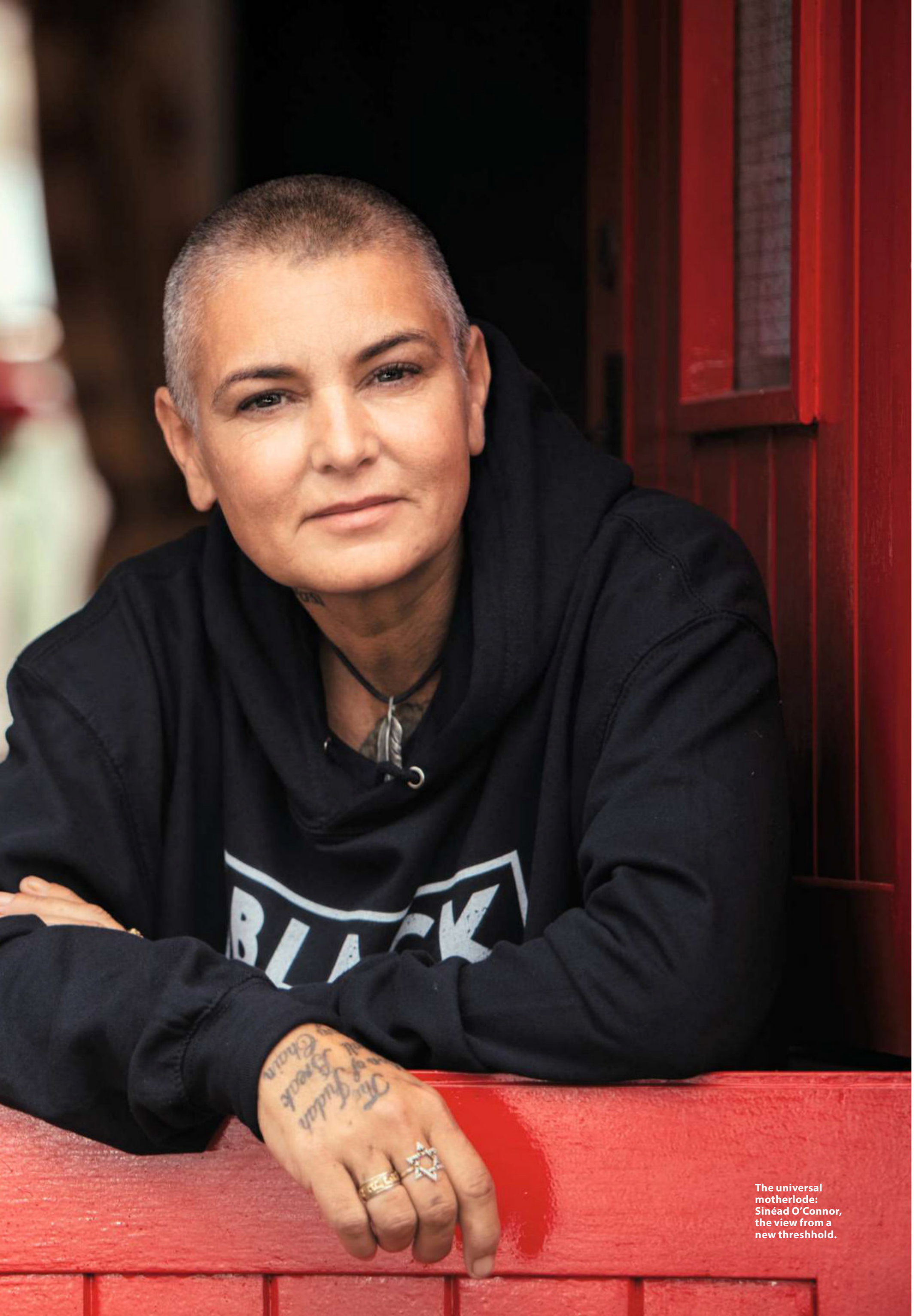
There was, she says, “about 10 years when I couldn’t remember a bloody thing” – the period after she shredded the Pope’s photograph on *Saturday Night Live* in 1992 in protest against child abuse in the Catholic Church. Being treated “like a pariah”, she says, was a trauma she “very sensibly” blocked out. “It began to be fashionable to treat me as if I was insane, which at that time I wasn’t.” She shies away from the idea of vindication but believes the incident shaped her career. “If I was going to survive, I was going to have to become a great live performer.”

Yet O’Connor knows the pandemic might not stabilise before next year’s tour. “I’m doing a healthcare assistant diploma,” she says. “I want to be what you’d call a death midwife. I had a voluntary job in a programme in America called *No Veterans Die Alone* – which is actually going to be the title of the album I’m making – and the idea was that for soldiers who didn’t have any family around, you’d be the person companioning them when they were passing on. It’s something I feel strongly that I want to do. I hope to God I’m not a pussy. I don’t think I am.”

Victoria Segal

Trouble Of The World is out on October 2.





The universal motherlode: Sinéad O'Connor, the view from a new threshold.



"They were all at it": DS Norman Pilcher (right) and DC Ron Spiers arrest George Harrison, Esher, Surrey, March 12, 1969.

EX-DS NORMAN PILCHER – AKA ‘SEMOLINA PILCHARD’ – COMES CLEAN WITH BENT COPPERS

THE BEATLES namechecked several real-life characters in song – Harold Wilson, Doris Day, Bob Dylan – but none quite as notorious as Detective Sergeant Norman ‘Nobby’ Pilcher, also known as I Am The Walrus’s ‘Semolina Pilchard’.

By the track’s release in November 1967, Pilcher was already the *bête noire* of the British music scene, leading Drug Squad raids on the homes of Brian Jones, Dusty Springfield and others. Accusations that Pilcher allegedly planted drugs on his ‘victims’ abounded, and after more high-profile arrests – John Lennon and George Harrison among them – the DS seemingly got his come-uppance when he was sent to prison in 1973 for perverting the course of justice. A fitting end to a tawdry tale.

But not quite. Aged 85, Pilcher has finally decided to tell his side in a memoir, *Bent Coppars*, spurred by the inaccurate facts he’s seen written about him. Two apparent untruths irk him most: that he planted evidence and that he relished targeting pop stars. “The Home Office wanted convictions,

but that was about four per cent of our work. I saw it as a waste of time. We wanted the big dealers. As to planting drugs... we didn’t have to, they were all at it anyway.”

Curiously, Pilcher bore his quarry no malice and enjoyed engaging with them. Indeed, his infamous bust of John and Yoko at their flat in Montagu Square in October 1968 led to a strange semi-friendship. Lennon’s view that drug-taking was a private matter had a big influence on him. “I thought he had a point. It was an honour to have a dialogue with him. He was a genuinely nice bloke.” Later, Lennon sent him a case of brandy, signed record covers and mock-taunting postcards from overseas.

Upending history’s perception of him still further, Pilcher confesses to being a huge fan of the stars he nicked – “I still dance around the room to their records” – and had, it seems, an avuncular attitude towards the musicians he raided. “When I arrested

George Harrison [in March 1969], we found cannabis in the house. But I had a tip-off that there was a larger amount in Pattie’s car – I left that alone, it might have meant possession with intent to supply, which would have *really* knackered him. I didn’t go the whole hog with George.”

Ultimately, Pilcher claims he fell foul of wider police corruption, and after serving a short sentence, he disappeared into mundane employment – and rock mythology, where misreporting has placed him at the Stones/Marianne Faithfull bust at Redlands (“nothing to do with me”) and a raid on Eric Clapton at his home in Chelsea (“Eric was on our books but we never raided him”).

In the last two years, Pilcher has been looking deeper into the mysterious death of Brian Jones. “He was murdered, no doubt about it,” he says. “I wish I’d kept a closer eye on him – if I had, he’d still be here.” And what of being ‘Semolina Pilchard’ and the shady ‘Brian Plant’ in *The Rutles* film? “If you worried about things like that, you’d top yourself,” he says. “It was all good fun.”

Pat Gilbert

Bent Coppars by Norman Pilcher is published by Clink Street, September 29.

“Lennon was a genuinely nice bloke.”

NORMAN PILCHER

GIMME FIVE... OFF-KEY EPICS

Duran Duran

A View To A Kill (Live Aid version)

(FROM LIVE AID BOOTLEG, 2019)



At the charity mega-gig in 1985, Simon Le Bon went legendarily flat while singing their Bond theme. “I hit the worst bum note I’ve ever hit in front of... two billion bloody viewers,” he later reflected. Cast not the first stone, etc.

Big Youth

Touch Me In The Morning

(FROM NATTY CULTURAL DREAD, TROJAN, 1976)



Trenchtown’s toasting legend has a spirited go at Diana Ross’s 1973 Number 1, with a dash of ‘crooning’ thrown in. Ultimately, he says ‘sod it’ and sings like no one’s listening – a wiggly dubular treat.

Mrs Miller

Downtown

(CAPITOL 45, 1966)



An O.G. of the off-note universe, this novelty vocalist-pianist-whistler who hailed from Missouri also innovated in a metre and rhythm as she chased the lyrics into a cul-de-sac of derangement. Petula Clark never knew what hit her.

The Stone Roses

I Wanna Be Adored

(FROM FINAL STAGE AT READING, BOOTLEG, 1996)

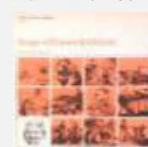


The rump Roses’ last gig at the ‘96 Reading festival was not a success. Sober relistening confirms Ian Brown wasn’t as off-key as legend has it, but at times the clanging is weirdly mesmerising. Did he know it was over?

Beans Hambone & El Morrow

Beans

(FROM SONGS OF HUMOR & HILARITY, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, 1978)



From 1931, obscure country blues duo get excited about beans for every meal until death, in a song they claim dates back to the revolution. Unrepentant odd notes on a home-made banjo abound.

Echo & The Bunnymen

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF MAGICAL SONGS

Fri 07 May 2021
Sheffield City Hall

Sat 08 May 2021
Birmingham O2 Academy

Mon 10 May 2021
SOLD OUT
Liverpool Philharmonic

Wed 12 May 2021
SOLD OUT
London Roundhouse

Fri 14 May 2021
Cambridge Corn Exchange

Sat 15 May 2021
Norwich UEA

Sun 16 May 2021
Northampton Derngate

Tue 18 May 2021
Leeds O2 Academy

Wed 19 May 2021
Bristol O2 Academy

Fri 21 May 2021
Bexhill De La Warr Pavilion

Sat 22 May 2021
Bournemouth O2 Academy

Sun 23 May 2021
Cardiff St David's Hall

Tue 25 May 2021
SOLD OUT
Glasgow Barrowland

Wed 26 May 2021
Gateshead Sage

Fri 28 May 2021
Nottingham Rock City

Mon 31 May 2021
SOLD OUT
Manchester Albert Hall

EXTRA DATES ADDED DUE TO PHENOMENAL DEMAND

Wed 02 June 2021
Glasgow Barrowland

Fri 04 June 2021
London O2 Shepherds Bush Empire

Sun 06 June 2021
Manchester Albert Hall

GIGSANDTOURS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK | BUNNYMEN.COM

Presented by SJM Concerts & Regular by arrangement with X-ray

the KILLERS

IMPLoding THE MIRAGE TOUR 2021



BLOSSOMS
25, 31 MAY & 02, 08, 12 JUNE

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS
SAM FENDER
04, 05, 15, 16 JUNE

MANIC STREET PREACHERS
27, 29 MAY & 10 JUNE

TUESDAY 25 MAY 2021
DONCASTER KEEP MOAT STADIUM

THURSDAY 27 MAY 2021
BRISTOL ASHTON GATE STADIUM

SATURDAY 29 MAY 2021
COVENTRY RICOH STADIUM

MONDAY 31 MAY 2021
SOUTHAMPTON ST MARY'S STADIUM

WEDNESDAY 02 JUNE 2021
NORWICH CARROW ROAD STADIUM

TICKETMASTER.CO.UK | GIGSANDTOURS.COM | THEKILLERSMUSIC.COM

PRESENTED BY SJM CONCERTS, DF, LIVE NATION & MCD IN ASSOCIATION WITH WME

RESCHEDULED DATES - ORIGINAL TICKETS REMAIN VALID

FRIDAY 04 & SATURDAY 05 JUNE 2021
LONDON EMIRATES STADIUM

TUESDAY 08 JUNE 2021
FALKIRK STADIUM

THURSDAY 10 JUNE 2021
MIDDLESBROUGH RIVERSIDE STADIUM

SATURDAY 12 JUNE 2021
MANCHESTER EMIRATES OLD TRAFFORD

TUESDAY 15 & WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 2021
DUBLIN MALAHIDE CASTLE

TRANSIS

plus special guests



APRIL 2021

30 BOURNEMOUTH O2 ACADEMY

MAY 2021

01 BATH FORUM

02 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL

04 MANCHESTER ALBERT HALL

05 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL

07 LEEDS O2 ACADEMY

08 NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL

09 STOKE VICTORIA HALL

11 LONDON ROUNDHOUSE

12 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE

GIGSANDTOURS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

NEW ALBUM '10 SONGS' RELEASED 09 OCTOBER TRAVISONLINE.COM

AN SJM CONCERTS PRESENTATION

Captain Todd: Rundgren, ready to assemble his space force.

“We’re essentially making records in space.”

TODD RUNDGREN

will be preceded by a series of singles. Rundgren has devised certain tactics to retain the random element. “Since I moved to Hawaii I rarely get to work with other musicians, and eventually you start to wonder if maybe you are just doing the things you always do,” he explains. “So when I can get someone to agree to the idea, I encourage them to find a demo that they were excited about but never finished.”

He then takes the demo and produces, adding vocals, instruments and songwriting input as necessary.

“Rivers Cuomo sent me about 20 different song ideas, some only 20 seconds long, and so the one that I picked eventually became co-written,” he says. “Thomas Dolby just had an MP3 demo and had lost the multi-track, so it was like a restoration project on an old piece of art, taking the grime off it and bringing the colours back.”

The Sparks collaboration is called *Fandango*, and Rundgren actually did meet Ron and Russell Mael, for the first time since he produced *Halfnelson*, their debut album, in 1971 in Los Angeles.

“I was interviewed for a documentary about Sparks six months ago, and when it was over, they had secreted the Mael brothers in the next room, and we had a reunion on camera for the first time in nearly 50 years. That was a lot of fun, and that’s what precipitated this collaboration.”

Rundgren’s restless muse is also contending with other realities of the Covid-era. When the 2020 tour was cancelled, he suggested filming his band performing, then streaming the set that he’d intended to play at each venue to the ticket holders (promoters were unconvinced, and the tour has been rescheduled to 2021).

“If we decide we can’t do it January then I’m going to demand to do it virtually!” he says.

He has, though, been hosting his live interactive online TV show *Todd’s Honest Truth*, which bucks the trend of some musicians’ lockdown broadcasts.

“I don’t sit in front of a bookcase and do acoustic versions of my songs,” he explains. “You might get a recipe. On a recent show I showed people how to cook a duck.”

Mike Barnes

FACT SHEET

Title: *Space Force*

Date: tbc

Songs: *Fandango* (with Sparks) / *Down With The Ship* (with Rivers Cuomo) / *Godiva Girl* (with The Roots) / *I’m Not You Dog* (with Thomas Dolby)

The Buzz: “The point is that none of these things would have seen the light of day unless I hadn’t first pestered someone into giving me the demo and then gone through the process of converting it into a finished product.”
Todd Rundgren

WIZARD TODD RUNDGREN HOLES UP IN HAWAII TO MAKE ALBUM 26 WITH THE ROOTS, SPARKS, WEEZER AND MORE

“I WAS SUPPOSED to wrap up an album in the spring,” says Todd Rundgren from his base on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. “And I also expected to be through with a tour already...”

With time on his hands he’s continued to finesse the album in question – *Space Force*. “It seemed a funny idea in the first place, Trump starting a space force and patrolling in

outer space,” he says. “But it all had to be done remotely, so we are essentially making records in space – you never see anyone else, you are just sending files.”

Including remote contributions from The Roots, Neil Finn, Sparks, Iraqi-born rapper Narsee, Thomas Dolby and Weezer’s Rivers Cuomo, the album is conceptually similar to 2017’s collaborative album *White Knight* and

ALSO WORKING

... Fall guitarist **BRIX SMITH**

START (right) is recording a new LP with producer **Youth**. “We were doing it remotely,” she says. “He’d e-mail music and I’d write the lyrics and music and send it back, and now we’re together in London. It’s pretty fucking special, probably what I’ve always wanted to do” ... The Independent reports that **Geoff**



Lloyd, of podcast *Reasons To Be Cheerful*, said **Björn Ulvaeus** told him **ABBA** have “recorded five new songs... he promised me that the new Abba music will be out in 2021” ... **NICK HEYWARD** is recording a new album at home in Tampa, Florida. Tracks include *Northern Souls* and *The Mudlarks*. “No idea what I’m doing,” noted Heyward, who’s also playing drums, “but it feels good.” ... **MICK**

JAGGER gave Radio 2’s Zoe Ball Breakfast Show an update on the new **Rolling Stones** album. “I’ve been finishing off the vocals and some other instruments on them, and doing some mixes,” he said. “We have got to get together and do a couple more sessions” ... **Slash** explained where the new **GUNS N’ROSES** album is at, telling audio retailer Sweetwater, “I’ve been jamming with **Duff** and I’ve



been jamming with **Axl**... I’m basically just focusing on writing new music and recording demos and recording guitar stuff for Guns and whatnot” ... **Wu Tang Clan’s RAEKWON** (left) told Tidal’s Elliott Wilson the third instalment of his *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*... album series is happening. “It’s time we closed that trilogy out,” he said. “*Cuban Linx III*, baby... it’s over after that...”

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Laura Veirs

The songwriter salutes **Bikini Kill's** *The C.D. Version Of The First Two Records* from 1994.



I first heard this [a compilation of Bikini Kill's self-titled 1992 EP and their half of '93's split LP *Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah*] when I was at college in a tiny town in a Minnesota

corn field. I was a part of a small punk scene there, getting interested in ways to combine feminism and music. I hadn't heard this kind of passion and rage and energy from women before – I grew up in Colorado Springs where I knew of no girls playing in bands, nor did I ever go out to see live music, and I had no awareness of the DIY punk scenes in places like the Pacific Northwest and Washington DC.

I love Tobi Vail's aggressive drumming on this. I also love the feedback guitars, and Kathleen Hanna's intense vocals. Songs like *Suck My Left One* really push the envelope lyrically and I love how Kathleen cusses and sings out of tune. *Resist Psychic Death* is an awesome song title. *Rebel Girl* is my favourite song on this album – it has a classic, catchy punk chorus and woman-positive lyrics.

My women friends and I would headbang and mosh in our small apartment to this. It helped us vent and gave voice to the struggles we were experiencing as young women in America. I wrote a letter to the band – their PO Box was in the linernotes – and Tobi wrote back! Twenty-five years later she is a personal acquaintance. This CD and Tobi's letter inspired me to form my first band – an all-women punk group, *Rair Kx!* We co-wrote about 10 songs. I was happily *not* the lead singer – I was the guitar player and backup singer. We played a handful of shows and recorded a 7-inch before graduating and moving to different parts of the country. Bikini Kill's music and its community-minded ethos set the stage for my independent music career. I'm grateful for the bravery and early, challenging inspiration of Bikini Kill, and other '90s feminist punk bands.

My Echo is out on October 23 via Bella Union.

CALYPSO LEGEND **MIGHTY SPARROW** RETURNS – WITH *LIVE AT 85!*

ONLY A SELECT few have been interviewed by MOJO 50 years after their death was first reported, and if knight of the realm Paul McCartney is the most famous, he shares that honour with genuine royalty, Trinidad's Calypso King of the World, 85-year-old Slinger Francisco, AKA Mighty Sparrow.

It was all Big Mouthed Lillian's fault – in 1970 she said she'd seen Sparrow's funeral on television. "People would say, 'I heard you died,'" he says, sitting in his living room in New York. "Hey, you alive, what's going on?" He launches into one of his biggest numbers, *Sparrow Dead*: "I hear he have yellow fever/Something in the bladder... Who kill de Sparrow? Nobody know." "What is it, 2020?" he laughs. "Sparrow still alive!"

And, clearly, kicking, with a new album of vintage favourites, *Live At 85!*, to talk about as well as a future slot at Glastonbury and the songs he is currently writing. Covid-19 is a fruitful topic, but unlike Presidents Kennedy and Obama, Donald Trump does not inspire a man who has been making hits out of current affairs since his first smash, 1956's *Jean And Dinah*, offered his services to working girls lamenting the US Navy's departure from Trinidad.

That year, Sparrow was crowned Carnival Calypso King for the first time, collecting a paltry \$40. Twelve months later, he refused to defend his title, releasing *Boycott Carnival* instead. "The people who were organising everything, I don't think they had much respect for calypso," he says. With other headline acts

joining the boycott, the carnival committee capitulated and, thanks to Sparrow, calypso became a serious international business, with Harry Belafonte's *Calypso* LP selling a million and sparking a worldwide phenomenon.

Present on *Live At 85!*, Jean And Dinah also opened Robert Mitchum's celebrated 1957 LP *Calypso – Is Like So...* "And up 'til now I didn't get no money from the Robert Mitchum people," protests Sparrow, "and I need help, you know. I don't mind getting paid late. Send it to me. I'm in Queens, the postman knows me, apartment 6U."

The 1960s belonged to Sparrow and his sparring partners Lord Kitchener (between 1963 and 1976, they won all but one of the Carnival Road March songs of the year) and Lord Melody ("My good buddy," Sparrow says of a man he frequently claimed had a "face like a crocodile" in the proto rap battles – "picong" – that hyped their shows). Sparrow has rarely stopped working since, writing, recording and touring the world. For a man well into his ninth decade, he looks strong and healthy – could his self-proclaimed virility be more than typical calypsonian bragging? To quote one of his songs, *Bois Bande*, back at him, does he have

any advice for any readers who feel they might be losing their vitality?

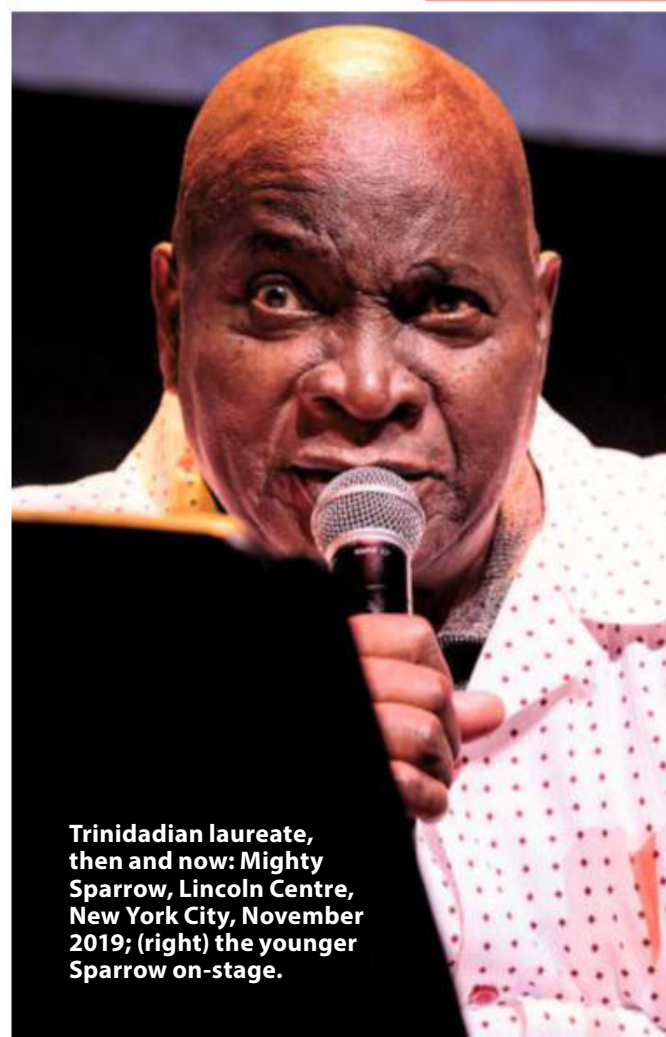
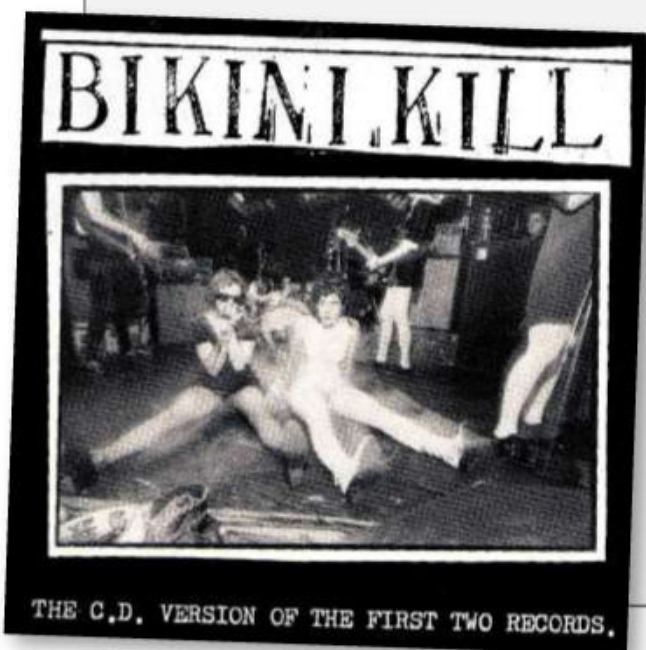
"You want me to tell you my prescription?" guffaws Sparrow. "The Viagra people would get mad! You want me in trouble?" Then, in a sly whisper: "Wait, I've got your number, I'll call you later and tell you."

David Hutcheon

Live At 85! is out now.

"The Viagra people would get mad!"

MIGHTY SPARROW



Trinidadian laureate, then and now: Mighty Sparrow, Lincoln Centre, New York City, November 2019; (right) the younger Sparrow on-stage.



Message To The Brass
Routes: possible-musics
mouthpiece Jon Hassell
explores indoor space.



DO THE HASSELL

Jon's Fourth World Five

1 Anton Webern
*Cantata No.1 For
Soprano, Chorus &
Orchestra, Opus 29*
(FROM THE COMPLETE MUSIC,
COLUMBIA MASTERWORKS,
1957)

2 João Gilberto
Saudade De Bahia
(FROM JOÃO GILBERTO,
ODEON, 1961)

**3 Karlheinz
Stockhausen**
Gesang Der Jünglinge
(FROM GESANG DER
JÜNGLINGE/KONTAKTE,
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON,
1962)

4 Miles Davis *One
And One* (FROM ON THE
CORNER, COLUMBIA, 1972)

5 Miles Davis *He
Loved Him Madly*
(FROM GET UP WITH IT,
COLUMBIA, 1974)

ornaments of the human voice. Of course, hearing the electric Miles Davis, with the trumpet going through a wah wah pedal, also opened some doors.

You studied in Cologne with Karlheinz Stockhausen. What was that like?

He was very sweet, if very German! I loved how he incorporated things like children's voices into electronic music. I happened to be in the same class as Irmin Schmidt and Holger Czukay. It was actually a great surprise when they later formed Can. I had no idea they'd go on to make music [specifically their Ethnological Forgery Series] that was so similar in intent to what I was doing.

Where did the so-called 'coffee- coloured' Fourth World idea come from?

You might not be familiar with the 20th century concept of the First

World, which meant the prosperous, industrially advanced countries. The Second World was basically the Soviet empire and the Third World was everything else. I wanted to establish a connection between the technologically advanced and the so-called primitive. Again, Miles had an influence on this – especially albums like *On The Corner*. I thought this concept needed a name. Occasionally I turn into a great advertising guy, so I came up with 'Fourth World'.

Brian Eno had you play on Talking Heads' *Remain In Light*. You were also involved in his and David Byrne's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* but dropped out. Why?

They told me they were tired of the mainstream circuit and wanted to do something entirely new. I played them albums on [pan-global field recording label] Ocora. Of course, I was interested, but Talking Heads were a big sensation and I think I might have been a bit prima donna-ish about the potential 'pop-ness' of the project. It would be fair to say I found Brian and David's attitude to African music at the time slightly touristic.

Do you regret dropping out now?

Yes, certainly in terms of money – I might now be sitting in a nice big house! Brian was already a very good friend, but he and David had management teams, whereas I had nothing like that. I do regret not arriving at some sort of compromise.

Tell us something you've never told a journalist before.

I have a book coming out, hopefully, soon – it's called *The North And South Of You*. It's a wide-ranging development of the Fourth World concept and more, and I'm reserving all my untold stories for that. You see, I'm still a great advertising guy!

David Sheppard

Jon Hassell's *Seeing Through Sound (Pentimento Volume Two)* is out now on Ndeya.

JON HASSELL

The 'Fourth World' trumpet
adventurer talks Miles Davis,
Stockhausen and deep soul.

“MY BRAIN'S NOT wired up properly,” cautions 83-year-old sonic explorer Jon Hassell.

“My schedule is either press interviews or MRI scans, and I've started mixing them up...” The scans relate to a broken thighbone sustained in a studio fall in spring. Hospital bills had the Memphis-born innovator on his uppers, but salvation arrived via a crowd-funding campaign, publicised by collaborators including Brian Eno. It's over 40 years since the latter heard Hassell's psychotropic *Vernal Equinox* and recognised a fellow traveller in imaginary ambient worlds, but with his recent *Listening To Pictures* and *Seeing Through Sound* LPs, Hassell remains relevant. “I've got enough ideas to keep me working for a decade,” he enthuses.

Your recent albums are badged as volumes in a 'Pentimento' series – named after the practice of stripping back paint to reveal older, unimagined textures.

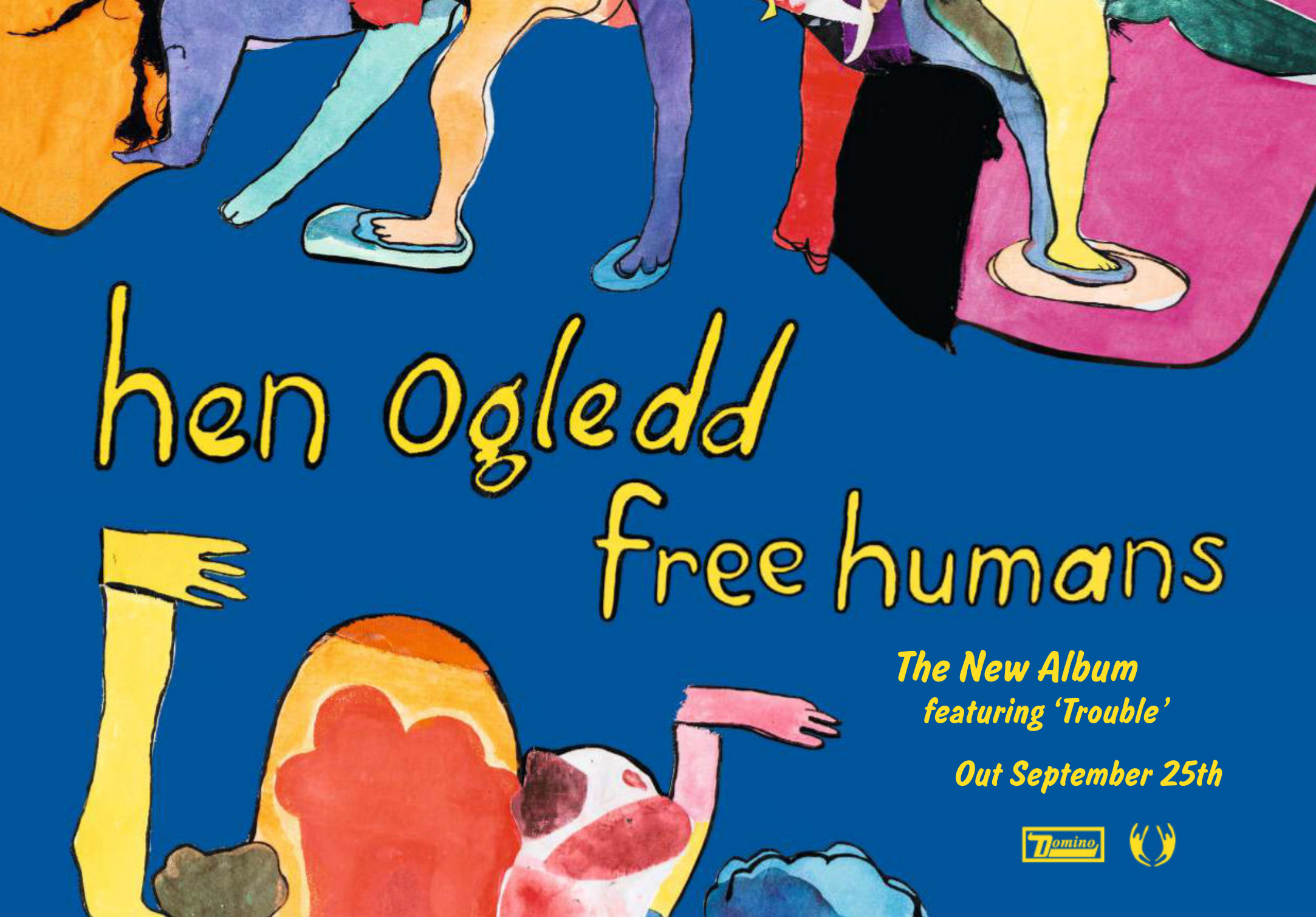
It's certainly a very useful metaphor. I'm always revisiting things that are already in the can and trying to make them into something new. I always work with the same musicians and whenever we're together we create things that might eventually wind up on a record. It's an on-going process.

The sound of your trumpet is something like an electronically enhanced conch- shell moan. How did you arrive at it?

My father had an old cornet that he'd once played in the Georgia Tech marching band, so that's what I started on. Luckily for me, Memphis was a great musical city with a strong African-American culture. There was a great AM radio station, WDIA, that played lots of deep blues and soul, the kind of thing I was initially trying to do. The real revolution for my playing came when I studied with [Indian classical singer] Pandit Pran Nath. I had to find a fluid way to simulate the slides and

“Occasionally
I turn into
a great
advertising
guy.”

JON HASSELL



hen Ogledd free humans

*The New Album
featuring 'Trouble'*

Out September 25th



THE BEST OF **RORY GALLAGHER**

THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE
COLLECTION OF HIS STAGGERING
CAREER - FROM 1969 TO 1990

2CD / 1CD / 2LP
Limited Edition D2C 2LP Clear Vinyl

9th OCTOBER 2020



UMC

WHAT GOES ON!

Touched by your presence:
Debbie Harry, captured by
Bob Gruen, in New York,
January 26, 1977.



Picture This

Rock photo legend **Bob Gruen** presents his memoir *Right Place, Right Time*.

IN 1972, the Buddah label released an LP/comic book hybrid entitled *The Amazing Spider-Man: From Beyond The Grave*. A bodybuilder was contracted to wear a Spider-Man supersuit for promotional purposes, and Bob Gruen was asked to take the photographs. "Spider-Man was my hero, an American teenager with a camera," Gruen notes in his new 400-page anecdotal autobiography *Right Place, Right Time*. "When *Creem* magazine printed the photo, I asked them to credit it to Peter Parker, just like in the comic book."

Known for such collective-consciousness images as John Lennon in his New York City T-shirt, The Clash before the NY skyline and Led Zeppelin posing with their Starship tour jet, Gruen's long career does indeed have a sense of charmed, magical unreality. His medium may have been the photograph, but so long in the game

means there is no shortage of memories and impressions to recount. The stars, clients and friends – such is the photographer's light-touch dedication to his art, the former often become the latter – which populate the book include Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder, Elton John, the New York Dolls, Salvador Dalí, The Who, Andy Warhol and many others. Along the way, Gruen saw Ike Turner's ferocious coke habit up close ("his record was supposedly 18 days without any sleep"), offered to document the Sex Pistols' 1978 US tour on Super 8 (Malcolm McLaren decided, "Nah, this isn't so important. We'll do it on the next tour") and, at a George Harrison Madison Square Garden gig, December 1974, snapped Paul and Linda McCartney in the audience disguised with wigs, shades and, in Paul's case, a fake moustache. For the record, Gruen

declares late Utopia keyboardist Mark 'Moogy' Klingman to be, "the most aggravating guy I've ever met."

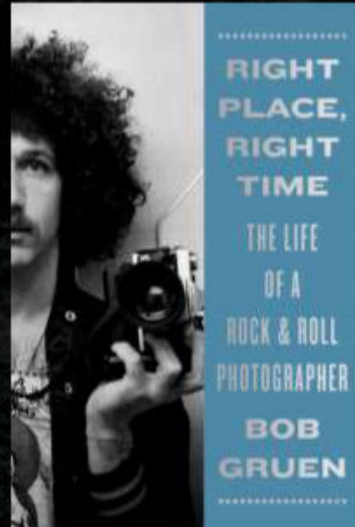
This accompanying image, taken on January 26, 1977, comes from Blondie's debut appearance on the syndicated Don Kirshner's Rock Concert TV show. Gruen filmed a three-song clip in New York, as the group were too busy with the imminent release of their self-titled debut album to make the journey to Los Angeles. The giant-sized portrait of Debbie Harry was blown up from a Polaroid taken by her neighbour, designer Stephen Sprouse. It's just one of the book's many moments to savour.

"I think I've had a rich and satisfying career because I didn't wait at home watching TV, and instead went out and got involved in things," Gruen reflects in his Epilogue, sharing a life lesson always worth heeding. "I did it by going out every night."

Ian Harrison

*Bob Gruen's **Right Place, Right Time** is published by Abrams on October 20.*

Bob Gruen

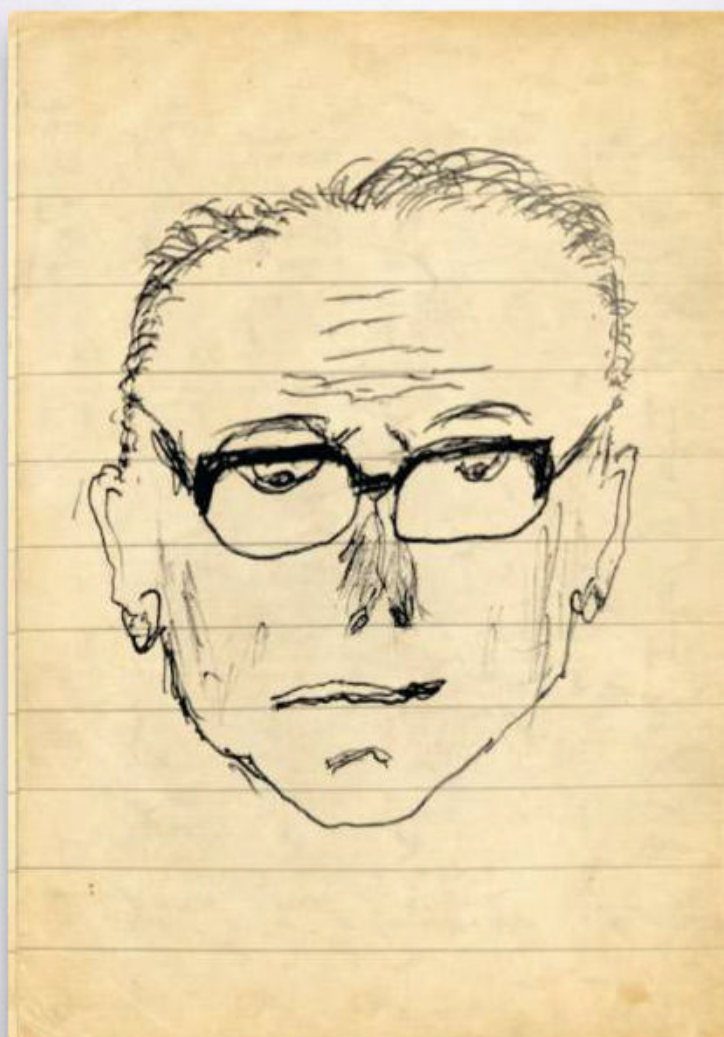


"Spider-Man was my hero, an American teenager with a camera."

BOB GRUEN



SELF PORTRAIT



“I’m a bugger for sweet things generally.”

KEVIN ROWLAND

Wolverhampton wanderer: Kevin Rowland by Kevin Rowland.

KEVIN ROWLAND



Dexys’ soul rebel in his own words and by his own hand.

I’d describe myself as... neurotic. Obsessive. Thoughtful. Sometimes self-obsessed. Too concerned with what others think about me. Optimistic, but sometimes pessimistic. I work hard on trying to get a balance. I’m trying not to be influenced by my age. I’m possibly deluded about that, but there you go.

Music changed me... because it gave me hope. Seeing Elvis at seven, eight – I loved the romance of it. You could live it, have the songs in your head. It was a transport from reality. But, you know, I don’t even like talking about music, or playing a song to people, that much, ‘cos often they don’t get it like I get it. They just go, “Oh yeah, nice”, and I’ll be, *Nice?* This is like, fucking profound! But I’ve almost got a love-hate relationship with [music], you know.

Away from music... I stay healthy, have a good diet, walk, exercise. And I like football, more for the drama surrounding it all more than actually watching the game. I support the Wolves but I’m a fair-weather fan.

My biggest vice is... chocolate. I know that might sound like not very much to some, and at one time it wouldn’t have sounded like very much to me. I’m pretty much vegan and there’s one called Om, sweetened with coconut sugar. I had a couple of small bars this morning. I’m a bugger for sweet things generally.

The last time I was embarrassed was... I’d have to think. I get embarrassed so much.

My formal qualifications are... two GCEs, English and sociology. I’d left school at 15 and three months, and I was working, so I did a day release thing one day a week and did them. And fuck me, oh yeah, I got an honorary doctorate from Wolverhampton University.

The last time I cried was... this morning, when I was thinking about my daughter. I did an interview with The Guardian, and in it I mentioned a couple of weeks of being quite low with what I presume was Covid. One night at about 3am I felt like I couldn’t breathe, and I was thinking, Fuck, are my affairs in order, is my daughter OK? So I sent the interview to her and I told her, When I thought my time was up, it was you I was thinking about.

Vinyl, CD or MP3?... definitely not MP3, they sound shit. CD. I haven’t got a record player, I just got rid of it. Friends say vinyl sounds better but I can’t really hear it. I’ll listen when people post something up on social media, and I listen on Spotify.

My most treasured possession is... a handkerchief my mother gave me. She passed in 2016, on New Year’s Eve, she was 94, nearly 95. I was doing the 2003 tour with Dexys, the first one for a long time, and had a sore throat. She sent me some cough sweets and a cotton hankie and it was so just so lovely and really touching – she was like, “Look after yourself”.

The best book I’ve read is... The Power Of Now by Eckhart Tolle. It’s all about getting you to be present in the moment, and not in the head, which is where I spend way too much of my time. It’s very simple but very profound.

Is the glass half-full or half-empty?

... more and more, it’s becoming half-full.

My greatest regret is... I’ve got a few. Kevin Archer not getting credit for the first album, and being too influenced by his demos for the second album... [I wish] I’d just been more fucking chilled in those days.

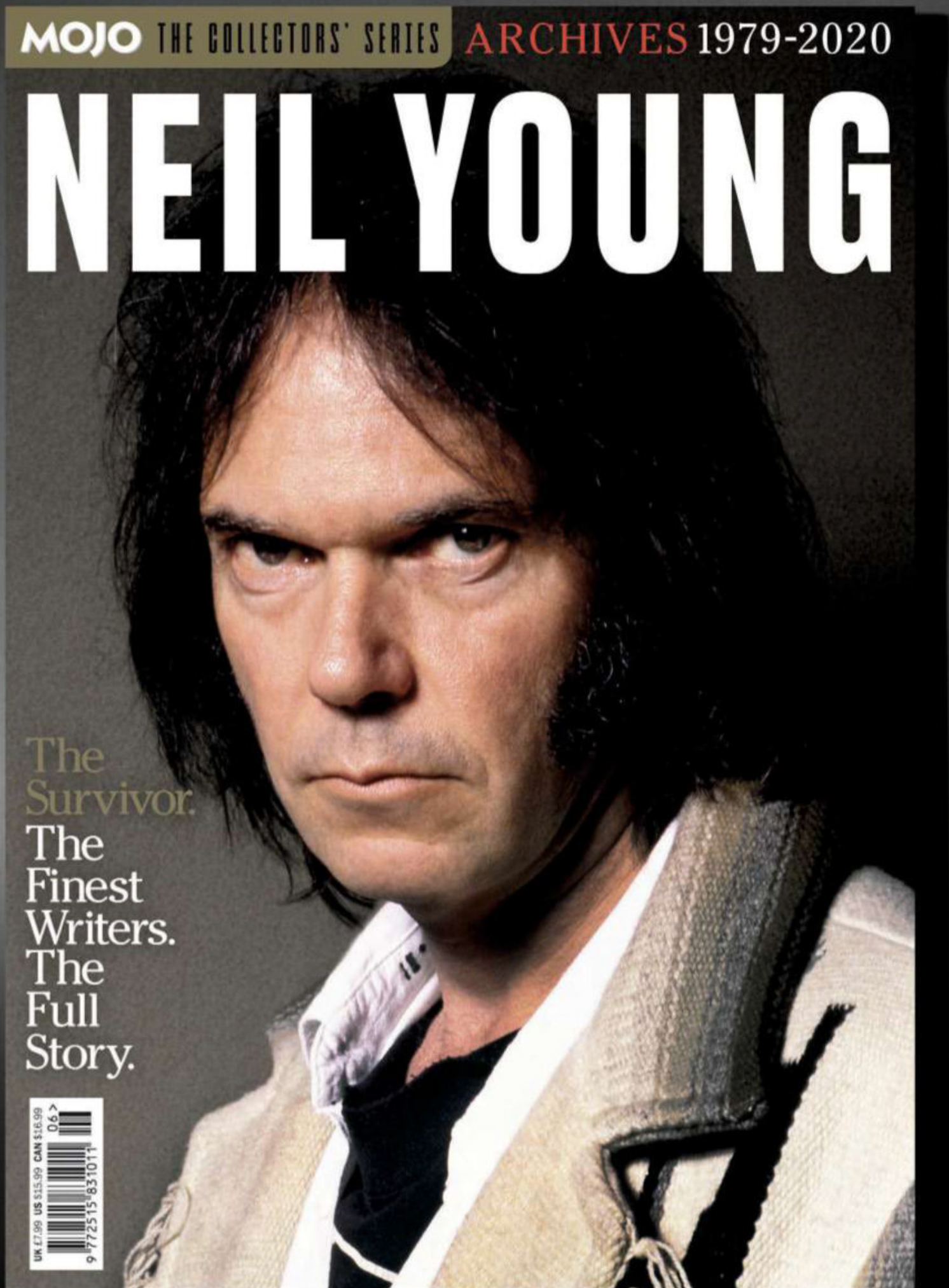
When we die... I have no idea but I don’t think it’s the end. The life force, the energy, where that goes, who knows?

I would like to be remembered as... a decent bloke. I used to believe, you make great fucking music and put your heart and soul into it, and you’re gonna feel great. You don’t. Wanting people’s acclaim is just a fix. I was having a discussion with a friend about Stanley Kubrick, about what a great artist he was and how unhappy he was. Fuck that – I’m not saying I’m a great artist, but who wants to be a great artist? I’d rather be remembered for who I am, and that’s not always been the best to people, but I’m working on it.

Ian Harrison

Kevin Rowland’s My Beauty is reissued on Cherry Red on September 25.

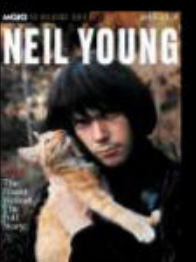
Neil Young. MOJO's finest writers.
The full story. In two deluxe volumes.



VOLUME 2 AVAILABLE NOW!

Buy online at greatmagazines.co.uk/neilyoung

Volume 1 still available



“I’ve raved a lot. I also really like John Keats and WH Auden.”

DENISE SHERWOOD

Strictly roots: beat poet Denise Sherwood.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Portishead, Little Dragon, Bim Sherman.
- Denise’s home always doubled up as On-U’s studio/HQ. “I would fall asleep to bass, dub, singing – that was just normal! There were so many people hanging around, and some were pretty odd characters I didn’t necessarily feel safe with. Others were like family, like [drummer] Style Scott and [guitarist] Skip McDonald. I was really close with [Jamaican roots star] Junior Delgado – I toured with him, he really encouraged me.”
- Denise co-wrote two tracks with another On-U legend, The Pop Group’s Mark Stewart. “Mark also loves poets, so I would lead with the melody, and he just brought in loads of old poetry that’s out of copyright – he’s a master at finding that stuff. I’d be like, ‘I’ll have this bit, that bit. That’s how we wrote Ghost Heart and Amnesia Moon.’”

KEY TRACKS

- Won’t Bow Down
- Ghost Heart
- Let Me In

HAIL DENISE SHERWOOD, SKANKING SCION OF THE ON-U DYNASTY

GOING INTO THE family business isn’t always the comfortable option it might appear. For Denise Sherwood, daughter of On-U Sound’s production supremo, Adrian Sherwood, it’s been a fraught process, riven with false starts and uncomfortable self-discoveries, all wryly summarised in the title of her debut long-player, *This Road*.

An exquisite mix of romantic trip-hop, folky poetic adaptations and skanking anthems, the genesis of the album has been rather more arduous than meets the ear. How long did it take to make?

“Like, 17 years?” Sherwood replies, with a disbelieving chuckle. “Growing up,” she explains, “I was lucky that there was always a studio downstairs in my house, with incredible musicians coming and going. Dad would be like, ‘Come on, you’re a lovely singer’, but I was always anxious about it. I did backing vocals on things, and I didn’t even

realise what I was doing. The first one was with Gary Clail, and eventually when I was 17, 18, Dad said, ‘Let’s make an album.’”

Around the same time, she made her first live appearances, including an Adrian Sherwood solo tour supporting Blur. “I hated getting on-stage,” she admits “and we played to some difficult crowds, especially up north. I had chronic anxiety, for whatever my journey was.”

When Ari Up asked her to join a new line-up of The Slits circa 2002, she had a further crisis of confidence. “Ari was just fearless, and a huge inspiration, but that didn’t feel like my expression, or how I was.”

Instead, Sherwood went to university, studying Arts And Culture Management. Through dealing with her own problems, she ended up working in psychotherapy, with

teenagers in a suicide unit, “because, on a selfish level, I guess I wanted to heal that part of *me*.”

Along the way, she acquired sufficient sense of self to stamp her own taste on her music, her interests including Björk, Massive Attack, folk, Balkan and gypsy music, drum’n’bass (see the Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry-featuring Music Shall Live) and dubstep (Sweet Love).

“I’ve raved a lot,” she admits. “I love reggae, but I’ve fucking had it so much in my life. I also really like John Keats, WH Auden and Emily Dickinson, so they’re in there, too.”

At times, Sherwood experienced “guilt for almost feeling resentful of the opportunity I was being given” by her father, but they’re now both ecstatic that she’s found her own voice.

“It’s our album, and it’s off the back of his name and all the weird and wonderful music he’s made,” she concludes. “I’m incredibly proud of that.”

Andrew Perry

Denise Sherwood’s This Road is released October 2 on On-U Sound/Evergreen Recordings.

CULT HEROES **PSYCHIC TEMPLE** SPREAD THE COSMIC CALI GOOD VIBES

“COMPOSER. TRUCK driver. Cult leader.” Chris Schlarb’s old biography, written a few years ago, made for a droll summary of the Psychic Temple frontman’s skillset. During the week, the Long Beach native drove a truck, while at weekends he beavered away on an expansive vision of Californian music that could incorporate jazz, psychedelia, country, sunshine pop and much more. Then, about, six years ago, Schlarb “made a little bit of money from this video game soundtrack, Dropsy, that I’d done. I’ve been poor my entire life. That was the only time I had any money in the bank.”

The soundtrack paid for a studio, Big Ego, that has kept Schlarb busy as a producer: “From July 2019 to February 2020,” he says, “I was producing an average of two and a half albums a month.” But it also allowed the hyper-enthusiastic obsessive to indulge his Psychic Temple project. Over a series of fine albums (and a superb jazz big band reworking of Eno’s *Music For Airports*), he has lived out his fantasies as, if not exactly a cult leader, then a music guru capable of attracting many illustrious artists to his cause.

“It’s exactly what I dreamt about doing when I was in high school,” he says, “reading about the Muscle Shoals guys, reading about Stax and the Wrecking Crew. I was like, Wow, these guys make records all day!”

An attempt to recruit one Wrecking Crew alumnus, Carol Kaye, ended in disappointment. But Psychic Temple’s revolving cast has included superlungs Terry Reid, Muscle Shoals session legends David Hood and Spooner Oldham, Joni Mitchell bassist Max Bennett and Minuteman Mike Watt, among myriad others.

“Some of these great artists end up becoming trophies for younger people and

they’re not,” explains Schlarb, “they’re brilliant individualists who really had to make a way for themselves.”

The concept has reached a new high on Psychic Temple’s fifth album proper, *Houses Of The Holy*, where each of the four sides find Schlarb joined by a different band: LA indie-rockers Cherry Glazerr; ’90s post-jazz luminaries and Tortoise affiliates the Chicago Underground Trio; Paisley Underground mainstays The Dream Syndicate; and, for

side D’s Axelrodian orch-soul fantasia, rapper Xololanxinxo.

“I love collaborating,” says Schlarb. “Having been an outsider forever, I felt deeply accepted by people whose art meant so much to me.”

The *Houses Of The Holy* title is “the punchline to a 10-year-long joke”, after Psychic Temple’s previous full-length albums were titled *I* to *IV*. But the Led Zeppelin tributes do not end there – Schlarb is about to become a father for the fourth and final time.

“I love my children and my family,” he says, “but fuck man, four is good.” The boy’s name has been preordained: it is, of course, Coda.

John Mulvey

Psychic Temple’s Houses Of The Holy is released September 25 on Joyful Noise Recordings.

“Wow, these guys make records all day!”

CHRIS SCHLARB, PSYCHIC TEMPLE

FACT SHEET

- For fans of David Axelrod, The Beach Boys, Steely Dan, Crazy Horse.
- “Every double record could use some trims,” explains Schlarb. “If Piggies isn’t the first song you take off *The White Album* maybe we can’t be friends. But if I’m gonna talk shit about a double album, I’m gonna make [one] and guard against all the problems I have with them.”
- After guesting on Psychic Temple *IV*, Schlarb is eager to produce an entire album for Terry Reid, “where Terry should be – surrounded by acoustic guitars and mandolins and percussion and great melodies.”
- Schlarb told LA underground hip-hop figure Xololanxinxo he dreamed of making an orchestral, David Axelrod-style record, but didn’t have the money. A week later the rapper turned up with \$10,000 in a Ziploc bag.

KEY TRACKS

- Lightning
- On The Slide
- In This Life

Like a prayer: Chris Schlarb (centre) convenes a meeting of the Psychic Temple.



MOJO PLAYLIST



Into the breach! For the month’s best riffs, soul ‘n’ bleeps.

1 GORILLAZ STRANGE TIMEZ (FT. ROBERT SMITH)

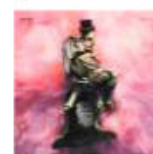
Ahead of the *Song Machine Almanac* album, the Cure frontman joins Albarn’s toon time for a whirl around the sad disco of contemporary reality. Very New Order; really good.

Find it: streaming services

2 ANOHNI R.N.C 2020

Anohni responds to the Republican Party convention with a metallic Ron Asheton riff, apocalyptic insights and looped screams from a gig in the early ’90s.

Find it: YouTube



3 ARAB STRAP THE TURNING OF OUR BONES

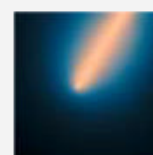
Post-rock guitar, austere funky drum machine, curdled mutterings of sex... Falkirk duo recapture, brilliantly, the rancour of their youth.

Find it: YouTube

4 BUTCHER BROWN CABBAGE

Virginian jazzers mix and match nu-soul cool with Funkadelic crunch. Meaty!

Find it: Bandcamp



5 DANIEL AVERY LONE SWORDSMAN

Bournemouth electronic producer’s vaporous, bittersweet elegy to the late Lord Sabre Andrew Weatherall, his “hero and friend”.

Find it: Bandcamp

6 YO LA TENGO WASN’T BORN TO FOLLOW

Hoboken’s cover version connoisseurs make hay with The Byrds, a prime cut from their new *Sleepless Night* EP.

Find it: YouTube



7 EDDIE VEDDER CARTOGRAPHY

Elegiac backwoods ambience by Pearl Jam’s frontman from *Return To Mount Kennedy*, a now-streaming movie that connects the Kennedy dynasty to Seattle grunge.

Find it: streaming services/Sub Pop 7-inch

8 WILCO SUMMER TEETH

Tweedy and co crack open the archives for this “Slow Rhodes Version” of their 1999 sunshine pop gem. A hefty *Summerteeth* album boxed edition follows soon.

Find it: YouTube



9 EDDIE CHACON WICKED WORLD

After years away, the ex-Charles And Eddie voice presents mesmerising, subtle-rapier modern soul. New album: *Pleasure, Joy And Happiness*.

Find it: YouTube

10 WELFARE HEROINE WHERE DO YOU GO TO MY LOVELY

Sweetly sad, baggy version of the Peter Sarstedt hit from ’92, sung by NME journalist and maverick Dele Fadele, whose 2018 death was reported last month.

Find it: YouTube



CALL: 01858 438884
QUOTE: GGAA

**ONLY
£3.40 A
MONTH**

VISIT: www.greatmagazines.co.uk/mojo

Terms & Conditions: Subscriptions will start with the next available issue. The minimum term is 12 months. Recurring payments will continue to be taken unless you tell us otherwise. This offer closes on 19/10/2020. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Cost from landlines for 01 numbers per minute are (approximate) 2p to 10p. Cost from mobiles per minute (approximate) 10p to 40p. Costs vary depending on the geographical location in the UK. You may get free calls to some numbers as part of your call package – please check with your phone provider. Order lines open 8am-9.30pm (Mon-Fri), 8am-4pm (Sat). UK orders only. Overseas? Phone +44 1858 438828. Calls may be monitored or recorded for training purposes. For full terms and conditions please visit: <http://www.greatmagazines.co.uk/offer-terms-and-conditions>

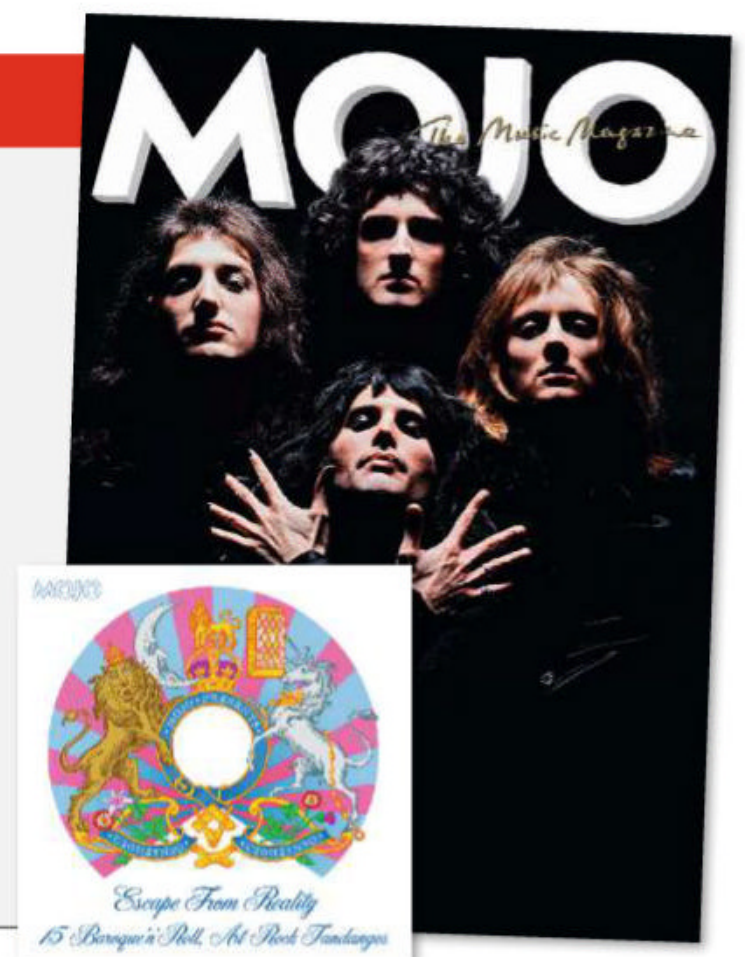
SUBSCRIBE TO MOJO FOR £3.40 A MONTH!

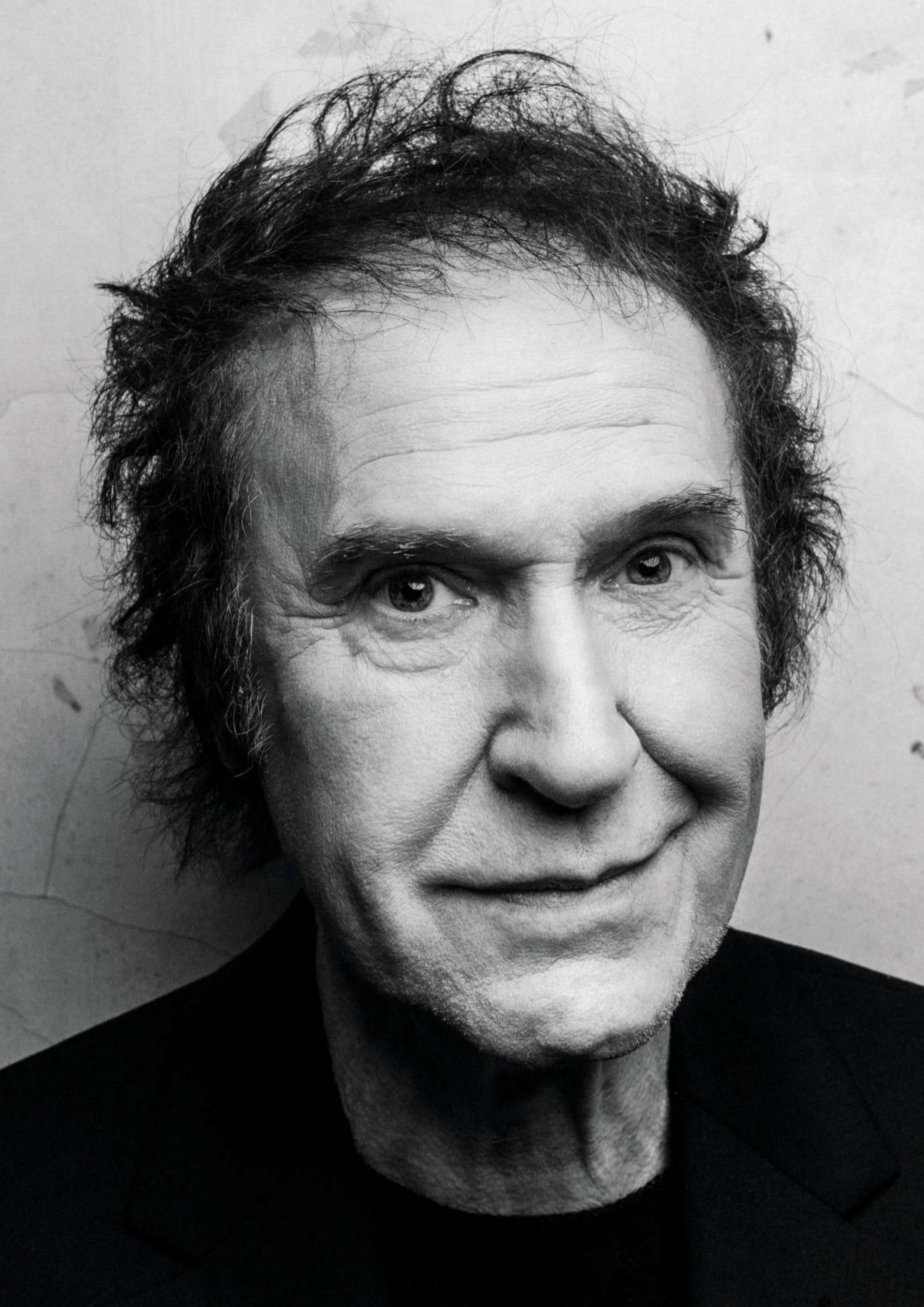
SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND BENEFIT FROM:

- ★ **We will deliver for FREE**
- ★ **Enjoy all the regular benefits of your favourite music magazine – including exclusive CDs with every issue - with our special, subscriber-only covers**
- ★ **Only £3.40 a month!**

PRINT ONLY

**£3.40 A
MONTH WHEN
YOU PAY BY
DIRECT DEBIT**





Turned on by the vibraphone, the troubled child became The Kinks' troubled star, master songwriter, and spinner of fables. He's spent lockdown augmenting one of his best. "I had a blast of creative energy," reveals Ray Davies.

Interview by **JIM IRVIN** • Portrait by **ALEX LAKE**

DRESSED IN LUDICROUSLY GARISH GARB – neon bright silks over plus fours and shoes with spats – comedian Max Miller leant across the footlights, addressed a woman convulsed with mirth and delivered his catchphrase: “There’ll never be another, lady!”

Seated in the audience at the Finsbury Park Astoria at one of Miller’s final London shows, Ray Davies, an introverted boy who barely spoke for several years, seemed a very unlikely candidate to prove Miller wrong. But mere months after the comic’s death in 1963, Davies, aged 18, would be on a stage in a green John Stephens suit, frilly shirt and leather cap, effectively repackaging Miller’s mock-cocky bravura for a new generation.

Some of Davies’s compositions, such as *She’s Bought A Hat Like Princess Marina*, would be direct descendants of Miller’s song style. During the ’60s, Davies would freak out the freaks who’d gather at his place to smoke dope, by playing a Miller album rather than the psychedelic soundtrack they were expecting. In the ’70s, at the height of glam rock – which he’d help kick-start with The Kinks’ shimmying 1970 single, *Lola* – as he resolutely swam against a tide of commercial indifference, Davies donned the full Miller regalia as Flash, the star of another of his themed, theatrical outings about oppressive leadership.

Miller cast himself as the cheeky transgressive eyeing his book of ‘blue’ material, liable to go a

bit farther than anyone else, creating a delicious, electric tension for his audience. With Davies, the tension came from watching someone wrestling with his chosen trade as if he hadn’t chosen it. Fresh out of art school, the gap-toothed teen – one of eight siblings, raised in a three-bedroom semi – had struggled with physical pain and sudden bereavement, been sent to a special school, learned to box and purposefully flunked his 11-plus so he didn’t have to attend the grammar school and pretend to be someone he wasn’t. He brought *that* electricity to the stage. That and his crazed, guitar-wielding little brother Dave. Davies apparently didn’t care if you got the joke, the plot, whatever he was driving at – he’d do it anyway, trying a wide array of personas to see if one fitted him. And he wasn’t, one suspected, doing it for laughs.

Now much slower and quieter, as befits a man of his advanced years, Ray Davies, 76, is keeping as cool as possible on the hottest August day in recent memory. He’s sat in a shaded spot in his

Highgate home. “It doesn’t feel very homely right now, ’cos I’ve got these builders in.”

His attic study is full of recording equipment and too hot to occupy, but he has spent most of lockdown there preparing the 50th anniversary reissue of his album *Lola Versus The Powerman And The Moneygoround, Part One*. An experience he has found peculiarly enlightening...

Hot enough for you, Ray?

I might get my camel out and ride across Hampstead Heath.

WE’RE NOT WORTHY

Lucinda Williams: a dedicated follower of Ray.



“I loved The Kinks from the moment they came out – the bluesiness of *You Really Got Me*, but I loved *Dedicated Follower Of Fashion*, too. When I did *A Long Way From Home* [for *See My Friends* duets LP, 2010] at his Konk studio, he was so sweet and helpful. He’s one of the great songwriters.”



◀ **You've spent the majority of your life in north London. What's its enduring appeal?**

Actually, I've been on the road all my life. But I always gravitate back to north London. It's something about the light. But it has changed. I drove past Highbury the other day. It's not the same now that Arsenal have moved. There was something special about the smell of Highbury, the smell of toilets and tea.

Number 6 Denmark Terrace, where you were brought up, is now next to a joiner's and an Indian restaurant. What did that used to be?

That used to be a baker's. I took Lucinda Williams to that restaurant. I first met her at SXSW in Austin. She came over and said, "Hiya handsome, do you want to sing a duet with me?" I thought of all a relationship's problems and pitfalls and said, "No, it's OK, some other time." When I did my collaborations album [*See My Friends*] several years ago, I remembered that and got her over. After we sang our duet I took her to that Indian restaurant. Great place.

What about the joiner's?

The knocking shop? That's what my dad called it. Because they were always knocking bits of wood together.

I've read stories about your dad coming back to the house from the pub on a Friday night, with a large group of mates, and instigating a sing-song, which you'd stay up to witness.

Yeah, dad had a great dancing style, like a Watusi tribesman. He'd do music hall songs and [Cab Calloway's] Minnie The Moocher. He loved rock'n'roll too. He liked the backbeat. Most adults were square, they'd hear something in 4/4 time they'd hit the downbeat. Dad hit the backbeat.

What did you take later from those times?

Camaraderie. Getting people to sing. When I do concerts a lot of it is community singing. I guess it also taught me to hone in on a catchy chorus.

You had quite a reserved childhood...

You mean I was mentally unstable? Yeah.

Were you diagnosed with any condition at the time?

It was the early days of the NHS. They didn't do that then. Now they've got a diagnosis for everything. They just said I was a quiet boy and my parents should watch me. I had mild depression and for two years I found it hard to talk. Then my sister, Rene, who was very close to me, died on my 13th birthday. She'd bought me [my first] guitar as a present and she died later that night.

Did that event make you withdraw further into yourself or bring you out?

I haven't really thought about it, but now you ask the question... she gave me something that would propel me as a human being, but had an element of shame to it, because I always associated the guitar with the day she died. So, a troubling time. I found it hard, because I was a creative person in an athlete's body. My dad couldn't understand why I painted and liked art.

You became very competitive at sport after Rene died, is that right?

Yeah, as if I had to prove something. A great thing with my dad – on the night when You Really Got Me got to Number 1 – he hugged me and said, "You did it!", as if I'd proved to him that I was a man.

You've said in the past that you were born when that song went to Number 1. Is that really how it felt?

Yeah. I had an identity for the first time.

Your career seems to have involved a lot of adopting identities, a sense of searching for something...

Trying out lots of characters and roles to see which one works?

Yes. Have you ever found one?

The only role I can really live is me and I'm still trying to find me. That's why I'm fascinated with people. During the last three months I've been writing character studies of people in isolation. Now millions of people are finding out about themselves.

How have you found lockdown?

I've been working all the time, I've been mixing this new *Lola* compilation at home. But I had a blast of creative energy. I started writing things down on little bits of paper and I put it all into one track. It's called The Follower.

I heard it, it's good. Who takes the role of the female narrator?

The cleaning lady. (Long pause) I can't tell you.

OK. So you added this to a track recorded during the *Lola* sessions?

It was a song called Any Time. I was playing through the tape with my engineer and wondering why we hadn't used it, because it's well recorded and very well played, and then I realised the song wasn't finished. One night, at the height of lockdown, I had this feeling of people being alone and music being timeless and giving people strength and I start walking around making notes... but fuck knows what I am doing.

You still feel like that, after all this time?

I know I've done something good when I can't remember I've done it. It's an existential thing that comes over you.

There are some nice mini documentaries on this record with you and Dave discussing songs and their demos.

Dave and I find it really hard to be together. I don't know why. Bear in mind I was the first boy in the family after six girls and then this little mite came along three years after I was born and stole the limelight. He's still trying to

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Davies diaries: shedding light on Ray.

1 Sunny afternoon: Ray (standing, right) with nephews Terry and Bobby and niece Jackie, Ramsgate, 1957.

2 "We find it difficult to be together": Ray and (right) Dave search for harmony in the studio, mid 1960s.

3 Classic Kinks: (from left) Dave, bassist Pete Quaife, drummer Mick Avory and Ray on BBC TV, December 1965.

4 No biz like show-biz: new decade, new faces (from left) Ray, John Dalton (bass), Dave, John Gosling (keyboards), Avory in 1972.

5 Local hero: Ray outside The Flask pub, Highgate, 1972.

6 "There'll never be another, lady": Ray in Max Miller-esque finery as Flash, from the *Preservation* albums, June 13, 1974.

7 Kinks ironed out: Davies goes solo, Perth, Western

Australia, March 15, 2008.

8 Dedicated follower: Ray with Blur's songwriter Damon Albarn, March 1995.

9 Davies and David: two great British bandleaders, Ray and Bowie, 2003. "I'm a vital bit of subtext," says the former.

10 We really got him: "I had an identity for the first time." Ray Davies in 1966 in the first flush of his success.

2



3



1



4



5



do it. He came round to listen to these mixes that I've done, which is a big event in our house, so I had a tape recorder running, did a crafty interview with him, sitting in my kitchen, while I was making a pot of tea. That's why they're called Ray's Kitchen Sink. People think Dave's a rebel rouser and all that, but he has very good insight. Not like me; when I get off on a creative curve I can find it difficult to communicate with people, but Dave is very precise in what he wants. He screws up his life and he does it in style!

A lot of musicians have a sense they missed a memo somewhere. That others know how life should be lived and they don't. Can you relate to that?

(Pause) I was with my grandkids the other day, they're twins, aged 13, and they're telling me all about their mental health issues. Kids now are free to talk about it. My generation, it was always taboo, mental health.

What do you wish you'd known?

Why we had to look left, right, then look left again. (Pause) And sex education, always taboo. That's why boys got together to join bands. To see girls take their underwear off. Or even just to see the underwear.

People who started bands as early on as you did... what did you think it would lead to? What were your expectations, forming a group at that point in the music industry?

That's a really big question. (Pause) I'm trying to think of something smart and witty. (Long pause) I made an album called *Americana*, there's a track on there called The Mystery Room. There's that door you only open when you're young, it opens for you when you become a teenager. There's a big light shining through it, and you're walking into it, oblivious. It's the unknown. We were in control of our music to a degree, but if the sense of the

unknown could be conquered... we had music as the language to communicate with the world.

Bear in mind that the post-war generation... (Suddenly remembering something) I was on Zoom the other day with my family, a couple of my daughters and their kids. My sister Gwen was on it too. And she told this story. When I was two days old – she would have been about five or six – she suddenly decided to pick me up and take me out of the kitchen where my cot was. And she heard a V2 bomb come over. The V2 landed just up the road from Fortis Green and all the glass in the kitchen, where I'd been lying, was

“I know I’ve done something good when I can’t remember I’ve done it. It’s an existential thing.”

shattered, all over the room, and I would have been killed. Talk about being intuitive...

Had you not heard that story before?

No. It must have been one of the last V2s, because I was born in 1944. Hitler's last attempt to destroy London. We used to play on the bomb site, though. He unwittingly gave us kids somewhere to play.

What was the first piece of music you heard that made you want to do it yourself?

Something on the vibes, when I was 13. I don't know where it was. Maybe at Highgate Jazz Club. I don't know who it was, it was like a Modern Jazz Quartet kind of band.

What was it about that sound?

The overtones. On the vibes you have the note that you hit and then it rings on, and that's the sound that interested me. I discovered ambience, I suppose.

Did that make you want to explore the guitar?

Yeah. They sent me to a school where disturbed kids learn to communicate – it was in somewhere like Paddington – and I took my guitar with me. This woman said, “Is that a musical instrument?” I said, “No, it's an orchestra, because it has overtones.” On *You Really Got Me*, I had Dave on guitar and Arthur Greenslade on piano playing the same notes and all you could hear was the overtones.

It seems to me you feel things in a different way to a lot of songwriters, you react to sensory stimuli in a different way. Is that true?

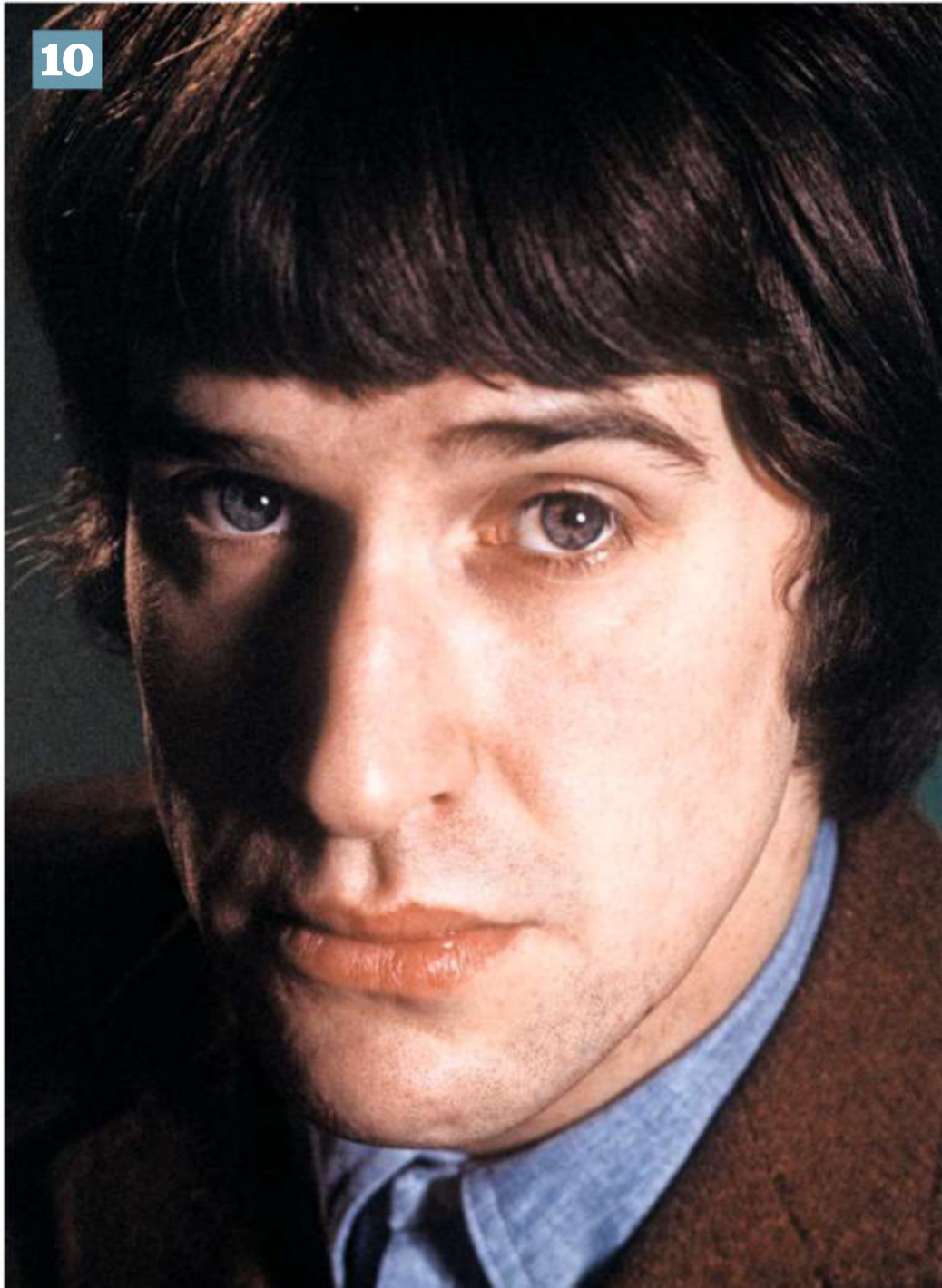
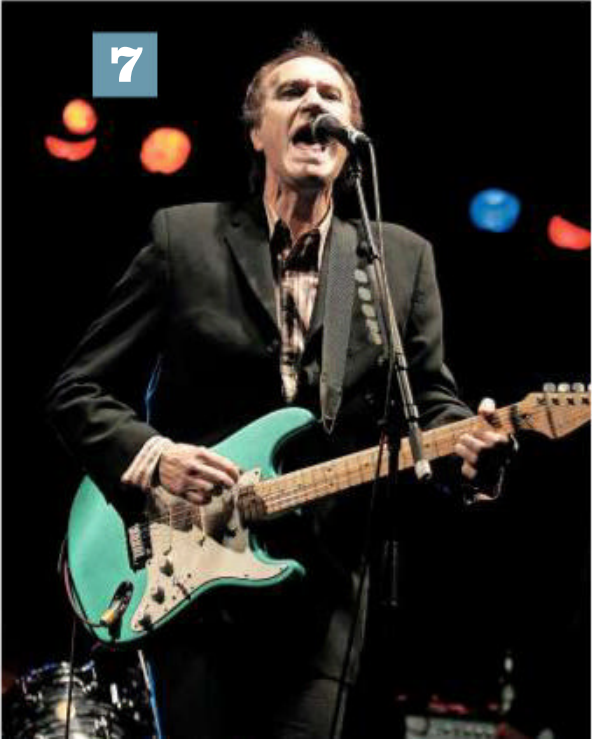
Without letting you put words in my mouth, I can relate to that. I started writing songs when I was about 12 when I went to that school. It was therapeutic then. When we put out our first single, *Long Tall Sally*, some

people liked the B-side I wrote, *I Took My Baby Home*, better. I wasn't thinking of myself as being a serious songwriter. I still don't.

When I left art school all I wanted to do was make enough money so I could go to Spain and study with Segovia. Once we made *You Really Got Me* we were on the treadmill.

Those early years sound exhausting. You had a breakdown around 1966.

Yes. But there was an element of fun to it, fun to play gigs and have people like our music. I remember writing *All Day And All Of The Night* in a day. I became good at putting things on hold. I'm always writing things, always thinking about melodies. Then I'll forget about it ➤



“I know a lot about romance and I’m just learning about love. I think I’ll be learning until I drop.”



Ray Davies, Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre: “There’s that door you open when you become a teenager. There’s a big light shining through it.”

◀ until something strikes me one day and I'll think, That's that song. Maybe I'd had it in my mind for a while, but I was sat in Eddie Kassner's office one time – he was our publisher – when he said, "We need another hit," and I just sat down at the piano and wrote it.

Tired Of Waiting For You came in increments. After I'd been in hospital as a kid [for a broken jaw], they put a gold brace on my teeth so I couldn't speak. And I made up this song on my guitar about working in the field all day like a slave – very current. Then, years later, we needed something on a session, Shel Talmy wanted to make another single, and I remembered that song and we just changed the tempo, changed the backbeat and put the track down. I told the boys I had a sore throat and couldn't sing the lead because I didn't have the words then. I went in on the tube the next morning and put the vocal on.

Did the Britishness emerge in your writing because America had just snubbed The Kinks, and you were snubbing it back?

It comes back to that indefinable overtone that comes from the vibes being hit. It wasn't about the songs so much, it was the effect they had. Some songs – Cole Porter could do it – tell a story, but are touching on something more important, emotions that come from the subtext rather than the song itself.

And a great example of that is Waterloo Sunset. Did you know immediately you'd written something that, like an iceberg, had another 7/8ths beneath the surface?

I got my family together – my sister was over from Australia and there was Jackie my niece and a couple of my nephews – and I played them the acetate of it about 20 times. I said, "That's for us, and I don't want it to come out." It was so important to me I didn't want it to come out. Shows I'm not a very good businessman. I wanted it just to be ours.

You must be pleased that everybody now feels the same way about it as you did?

I'm pleased that people connected to it in the right way. And regardless of the nationality thing, it's two young lovers looking at the sunset seeing their future.

That sense of possibility is hugely emotional. Do you miss that engine of looking ahead in your writing, now you're older?

What can a 70-plus man know about romance? That sort of feeling? I know a lot about romance and I'm just learning about love. I think I'll be learning until I drop. Love is very important to me, emotion and sensuality. Doing this revival of *Lola* I'm learning how much I was and wasn't in love, with my career, and emotionally. And it's been an amazing experience. This situation [the pandemic] has been awful, seeing people dying, but it's time for people to re-gear, life must go on in some form. I think it teaches us all to learn how to love again. Sounds like a really twee statement, but I think that's why I wrote *The Follower*. You don't realise until you're in adversity how much you care about people.

When I was lying on a stretcher in New Orleans after being shot [during a street robbery in 2004], I could sense people's emotions better, because every problem I had in my life seemed so minuscule after being shot. Every emotion comes out.

Has songwriting been a source of comfort to you, or a source of stress?

It's a way of withdrawing from the world, being a songwriter. It's psychological freedom.

You said once that songwriting is a stream of consciousness and you drowned in it!

That's right. I'm glad you picked up on that.

By the time you made the *Lola...* album in 1970 you'd been having hit singles for six years. Do you think you were seen as an important band, in the top rank of British stars at that time?

(*Emphatically*) No, of course not. The only people who thought we were important were our fans. We didn't mix in the elite circles. I was walking my baby in a pram on Muswell Hill.

That album takes a hefty swipe at the music business. It could be regarded as rather disillusioned and bitter.

I hope there's bitterness in it. I wrote a scenario for it, a one-man play, and the character [finds] the only way to defeat Powerman is to become evil, in order to become that vengeful he has to become bitter. It's like a morality tale.

You had a famously bloated management set-up. Was this album about trying to extract yourself from that?

The song *Got To Be Free* sums that up. I felt like

KINKY BEAUTS

Three times Ray went the other way, by **Danny Eccleston**.

THE PROTO-CONCEPT LP

The Kinks
Face To Face

★★★★★

(PYE, 1966)



Even among their peers, The Kinks were pathfinders (imagine *Norwegian Wood* without *See My Friends*), and *Face To Face* feels like a song suite a year before *Sgt. Pepper*, with sardonic takes on life, love and especially success, reflecting Ray's recent breakdown (disturbingly present in *Too Much On My Mind*), plus sound effects and harpsichords abounding. If any album was the model for Blur's mid-'90s, this is it.

AIN'T THAT PECUNIARY

The Kinks
Lola Versus The Powerman And The Moneygound

★★★★★

(PYE, 1970)



It's tempting to see Ray's '70s concepts as rum distractions, but here the theme (capitalism is a dehumanising racket) gives the band energy, with strong songs bedded in earthy Americana. Dave's *Strangers* could almost be The Band; *Lola* itself would be in most people's Ray Top 5; *Top Of The Pops* is rockin' satire. You could say it shut the door on the '60s if Davies hadn't been trying to do precisely that since 1965.

COWBOYS AND INJURIES

Ray Davies
Americana

★★★★★

(LEGACY, 2017)



The quintessential English pop songwriter does... America? Yet the *Muswell Hillbillies* explores the visions of the US that inspired post-war Brits with insight and undimmed skill, while drawing on The Kinks' '60s misadventures *Stateside*. The ironically Blur-esque *The Deal* is an epic comment on LA's illusions. The *Jayhawks* offer faultless backing throughout. Inevitably, since this is Ray Davies, it's the poetry of disappointment. And it sounds like a musical.

I was in prison. But it was self-imposed. I wanted to take my vengeance out, make a statement. If this was the last record I'd ever make I wanted to make sure my voice was heard. But it's a fun album too. *Moneygound* is a fun song and *Denmark Street*. We wanted to be an albums band and Pye wanted us to be a singles band, because that's how they broke us.

The album was labelled *Part One*. Was there a *Part Two* already sketched out?

Yeah, it was *The Defeat Of Powerman*, but we abandoned that when we went to RCA. I was writing a lot of what became *Preservation* down the line.

The evil Mr Black character in *Preservation* is another Powerman...

Dominic Cummings, you mean...

Do you know more about what you want, and what you're doing, than you did 20, 30, 50 years ago?

I do after making this *Lola...* compilation. Mixing the tracks, I can sense what mood I was in. What amazes me is the lack of humour between us when we're playing, particularly from [Kinks drummer] Mick Avory. When we made *Muswell Hillbillies* everyone was really happy. I think they sensed how important *Lola...* was to me.

***Lola* the single was a massive worldwide hit. Did that feel vindicating?**

No, I just did my job. (*Pause*) And I wanted something my one-year-old daughter could sing... "Lo, lo, lo, lo, *Lola*". It's not exactly *You'll Never Walk Alone*. It's shorter.

How did you feel after *Lola* when people stopped buying the singles?

I'd just made a good album, *Muswell Hillbillies*, I didn't mind. But one of my friends from art college said I'd just become an existentialist. One of the things that I learned about writing was 'Feel free to fail'. It's the only way you'll ever learn and get new ideas out.

It must be gratifying to know you've written songs that so many have connected with over the years. Surely that's all a songwriter can hope for?

It's incredible when somebody says, "Did you write *that*, mister? I'd love to have written that." The reward for writing is not how much money it makes, the sales, it's recognition from other people, that it resonates. But it's part of me. (*Pause*) Just imagine if I hadn't written *Waterloo Sunset*, what an empty place my life would be... (*Long pause*) When I lived in New Orleans I lived in Tremé. My next-door neighbour was a guy called June. He said, "Hey Ray, you the guy that wrote *Waterloo Sunset*?" I said, "Yeah, how'd you know that?" He said, "I know these things." He said he had a gig at the Funky Butt. "I need 20 bucks to get my horn there. Can you lend me 20 bucks?" I gave him 20 bucks. "Thanks man, I'll put your name on the door." I get to the Funky Butt, and there's no June, no gig. But he knew *Waterloo Sunset*. (*Laughs*)

Do you still find meeting people difficult?

Immensely, yeah.

Do you ever wonder why you put yourself through being an entertainer?

It's only a play. I'm a bit part in the world play. But you can't cut my part out of it, I'm a vital bit of subtext.

An overtone.

That sums up my career, really.



Lola Versus The Powerman And The Moneygound Part One [50th Anniversary Deluxe Edition] is released in November.

Sun Ra

He came from Saturn, could control the weather, and inspired artists as diverse as John Coltrane and the MC5. But **Sun Ra was something else, too: a prophet of the unbounded potential of African-Americans. No wonder his disciples are so desperate to keep his musical legacy alive. "It's needed now," they tell **Andrew Male**. "It's a healing force."**

Portrait: mephisto

IT WAS THE SUMMER OF 1979. TWENTY-three-year-old saxophonist Knoel Scott had just graduated from the State University of New York and was playing his first outdoor gig with the Sun Ra Arkestra, an all-day concert in Bushnell Park, Hartford, Connecticut.

"We came out and it was overcast," he remembers. "The idea was we'd open up and play 'the space jam' and then Sun Ra would take the stage. So I'm up there playing, and I go into my solo and it starts raining buckets. *Torrential*. Everybody getting wet, but we keep playing."

Backstage, in a break between sets, Scott hears that his 64-year-old bandleader wants a meeting with him: "They're saying, 'Sun Ra's mad at you.' I'd just joined the band. I go over and ask, 'What did I do?'"

Sun Ra tells him. "'You made it rain,' he says. 'You played Stormy Weather.'"

"I was young, kind of smart so I said to Sun Ra, 'What *should* I have played?' He looked at me like I was the stupidest person on the planet. 'Blue Skies!' he shouted. 'Play Blue Skies!' So, the break is over, it's still raining buckets. We jump on stage to do the second warm-up and the first solo I play is 'Do-wee-doo-doodoo doo-wee! Nothing but blue skies!' The rain went like *that*. Bop! Sun came out. Sun Ra came out. Never rained again."

Tales like this abound in the story of Sun Ra. After all, here is a pianist, composer and bandleader who rejected his own birthday – May 22, 1914 – and given name – Herman Poole Blount – in favour of a mythical biography in which he was not born in Birmingham, Alabama at all but arrived, from Saturn, on a mission to preach peace and a cosmology that linked African-Americans with the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt and "the people of the stars".

IT'S A HOT MORNING IN JULY 2020 AND SCOTT, now 64, is sitting on the porch of the Sun Ra House, in Germantown, Philadelphia, schooling MOJO in the cosmology of Sun Ra. It's a cosmology ("not a philosophy" stresses Scott), a musical wellspring and performative visual style that beguiled Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane in '60s New York and went on to inspire everything from the 'new sound' of spiritual jazz to the over-amped heavy rock of the late '60s Detroit, George Clinton's P-Funk Mothership, and Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation, and still continues to influence and inspire contemporary artists, including Flying Lotus, Janelle Monáe and Kamasi Washington.

The house, a living museum and centre of all Arkestra-related activity since 1968, is also home to the current Arkestra leader, 96-year-old Marshall Allen, who arrives to speak to MOJO a few minutes after Scott, sporting an anti- ➤

"It was a problem,
trying to figure out
what he wanted":
Sun Ra, November
15, 1983.



◀ Covid visor that resembles a B-movie space helmet. They're here to talk about *Swirling*, the first big-band Arkestra studio album since *A Song For The Sun* in 1999. Sun Ra may have left the planet in 1993, but his Arkestra carried on, first under the direction of the late John Gilmore and, since 1995, under alto saxophonist Allen.

The two work the interview as a team, with Scott often repeating questions for Allen, or restating Allen's hushed answers for MOJO. But when MOJO asks why a new album, and why now, the answers are clear and concise.

"It's needed now," says Marshall Allen. "It's a healing force." He repeats a line that used to adorn Sun Ra's business cards: "Beta music for a beta world".

As much a history lesson as a fresh bulletin of joyous noise, *Swirling* revisits live Arkestra staples from the '50s to the present, including *Angels And Demons At Play* and *Rocket No. 9*, alongside the first ever recording of the Marshall Allen swing composition that names the album. It's also a chance for Allen and Scott to reminisce about their departed leader, and the lessons he taught.

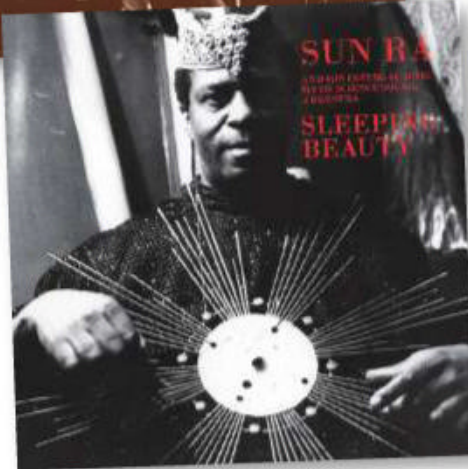
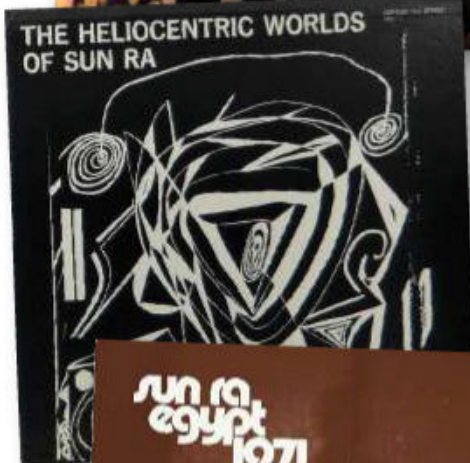
"Sun Ra had already been around for a long time in Chicago before I heard him," says Allen, who'd been stationed in Europe during World War II. "I went to a record shop, they gave me a demo of [1957 LP] *Jazz By Sun Ra*. I knew my bands and my groups but I'd never heard one with that kinda music. It was different from everyone else. I took note. I said, Oh, that's a band!"

The Sun Ra of late '50s Chicago played a kind of mutant hard-swinging bop, defined by the swirling tenor sax of John Gilmore. Hanging out with occult Black Nationalists and running his own independent company, Saturn Records, his name legally changed to Sun Ra, he'd assembled a group of committed followers called Atonites, their name referencing both "atonal music" and the Egyptian sun god Aten. The Arkestra, who called him Sonny, had also started wearing costumes on-stage, including Robin Hood outfits, white gloves, and beanie hats with small propellers on the top.

"It wasn't what people were used to," says Allen. "They had a little chaos going on. They played every *thing*, you know? Rhythm against rhythm. I didn't know what was going on but everyone was confident in all this chaos. Plus, he liked my sound. Not down, but up. Never on the beat. He said, 'We're preparing for the 21st century.' I thought, Good, that's 40 more years. Sixty years later I'm still here."

By 1961 the Arkestra were based in New York, drawn there by strange fate when bassist Ronnie Boykins' car was hit by a taxi and the Arkestra had to raise the money to have it fixed. They remained there for the next seven years. Now wearing his glittering stage robes in public, Sonny would tell curious passers-by that he'd arrived from Saturn. The band, meanwhile, were rehearsing and recording all the time.

"The real playing took place in rehearsals," explains Marshall Allen. "You played everything you didn't like. Everything you didn't want to do. Sonny'd do everything to run you away, to see if you were really sincere. It was a problem, trying to figure out what he wanted. 'That's not good, that's too sentimental, that's too correct! Play what you feel, not what you know!' But he didn't run me away. I just took everything that came along. Insults and every-



SUN-RA



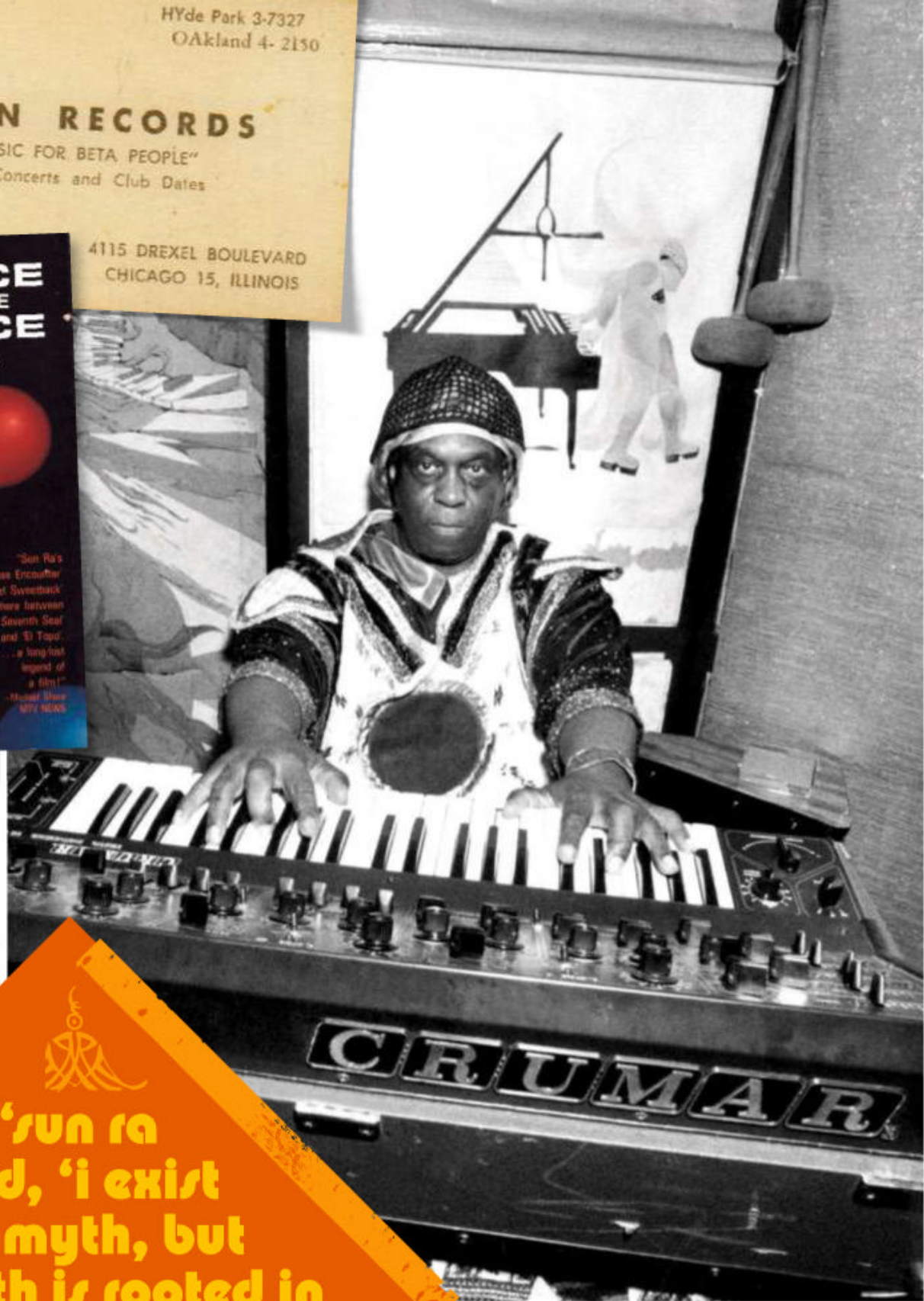
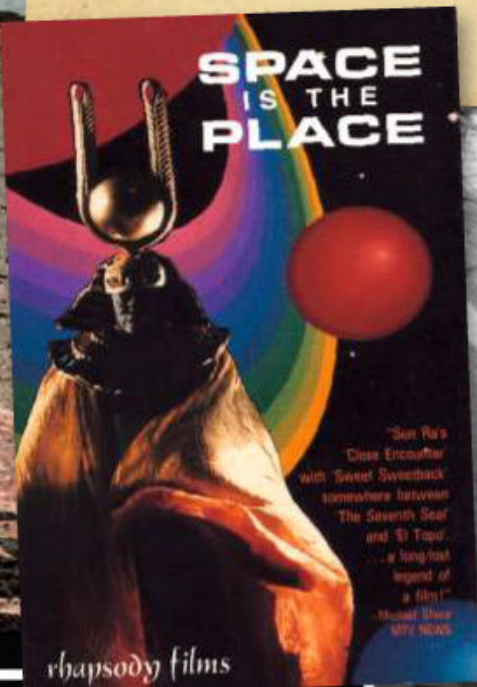
Sun rising: (above left) Herman Sonny Blount, circa 1946; (above) Sun Ra and his first Arkestra 1955 at Chicago's Parkway Ballroom, billed as Sun Ra's 8 Rays of Jazz or the Modern Jazz Band during this period (from left) Pat Patrick, Julian Priester, John Thompson, Sun Ra, John Gilmore, Dave Young, Robert Barry, Richard Evans, Jim Herndon; (top) Sun and Raymond Johnson from *Space Is The Place*, 1974; (right) with the Arkestra at the Bottom Line, June 1980; (far right) Sun in New York, 1979; (insets) Ra's LPs, movie and his label's calling card.

thing. He could see I was sincere and that I wasn't going to fall down."

The Arkestra began picking up a hipper crowd through LPs like 1965 ESP release, *The Heliocentric Worlds Of Sun Ra, Volume One*, and, from 1966, a Monday night residency at Slugs nightclub playing what Village Voice jazz critic Michael Zwerin called "an awful and wonderful... kind of chaotic order", a future jazz that blended big-band swing with frantic saxophone shrieks, gamelan chimes and Afro-futurist free-for-alls that entertained and influenced visitors such as Cannonball Adderley, Charles Mingus, Art Blakey and Max Roach.

"We played Monday nights," explains Allen. "9pm to 4am. Most musicians ain't working Monday night so that was a good night for them to check you out or sit in. Sonny put that Chicago influence on the New York scene."

SUN RA'S ARKESTRA WERE COMMIT-
ted and Slugs was popular, but following repeated complaints about the noise from



**"Sun Ra
said, 'I exist
in a myth, but
the myth is rooted in
reality.' he was a
man beyond us."**

KNOEL SCOTT

their East Village rehearsal space, the landlord put the property up for sale. In 1968, the Arkestra moved to a Philadelphia terraced house owned by Marshall Allen's father. It's the focus of Sun Ra's legacy to this day.

"Sun Ra could have taken the easy way out and sold out," says Knoel Scott. "He had innumerable skills, he could have made it scoring movies, he could have gone to Hollywood, he could have done a Billy Strayhorn and took a back seat and made other people great. And he could have got rich. But what he did instead was become self-reliant and self-sufficient in the African-American community."

The rise of Black Nationalism in late '60s America had laid what Sun Ra biographer John Szwed calls a groundwork where Arkestra performances could be seen as part of a quest for spiritual transformation and renewed bonds with Africa. The troupe – now comprising between 11 to 15 performers and including such masterly horn players as Gilmore, Allen, Pat Patrick, Danny Davis and Danny Ray Thompson – were also finding audiences further afield. Their wild pageant of costumes, flailing dancers, duelling instruments and Sun Ra's own unique experiments on his new purchase, the mini-Moog, began drawing bigger crowds in the US and, from 1970 onwards, in Europe.

One vocal supporter was John Sinclair – manager of the MC5 and founder of the White Panther Party – who identified, in the volume and spectacle of Sun Ra's music, a powerful source of influence and energy for the Detroit rock scene.

"Sun Ra was playing so many different kinds of music," says

Scott, "that bands like The Stooges and MC5 could come along and find something they liked.

At the time, white critics were writing about Sun Ra like he was funny, like this was all a joke, but these bands knew different.

If you knew, you knew. Sun Ra was the real thing."

"I first heard Sun Ra on record in the late 1960s," says UK musician and theorist Chris Cutler. "I was about 20 and earning my living as a dustman, looking around for a band to join. I wanted something with scope for heading off in new directions. A year later I joined [Cambridge avant-proggers] Henry Cow, all of whom were Sun Ra fans."

As Cutler explains, these were the glory days of the classic touring Arkestra. "I first saw them live at a European festival in the early 1970s," he tells MOJO. "It was outdoors, late in the evening. They played for maybe two hours before it started to rain. Then they somehow moved themselves into a big tent, where they carried on for another hour. I'd never seen anything like it. Neither had anyone else." Cutler remembers "15 or so black guys in bizarre clothes, completely devoid of machismo, doing their thing in a collective, highly disciplined way – and not really playing jazz as we knew it, more an inclusive invocation of shared time, channelled through sound. They'd shift on a dime from '30s big band jazz, through blues and African drum orchestras and on out to free – or conducted – improvisation, often featuring sheets of ecstatic noise and long stretches of space electronics."

As Cutler insists, Allen, Gilmore and Pat Patrick could all have been stars in their own ensembles, "doing the jazz career thing; ➤

paths to the cosmos

Five **SUN RA** albums for journeys
Beyond, by **irwin chusid**.



SUN RA *exotica*

(Modern Harmonic digital + 2-CD/3-LP, 2017)

This is the gateway drug: an accessible compilation of Ra, spanning a dozen early sessions 1956-1963. It's almost easy listening, though idiosyncrasies abound. Ra never recorded in a Miles Davis studio with a Dave Brubeck budget. The man was musically omnivorous, and the influences of Les Baxter and Martin Denny are evident. DJ set for a Tiki lounge on Venus.

the magic city

(Cosmic Myth digital + CD/LP, 2017)



If you choose to forego the seductive ... *Exotica* and start with the hard stuff, *The Magic City* will fry your synapses. This explosive 1965 *tour de force* proves the categorical futility of 'File Under: Jazz'. This is where Ra truly goes orbital – the dividing line between his early beyond-bop and his futuristic beyond-jazz. Decidedly *not* easy listening. The 2017 remaster is full stereo.

lanquidity

(Enterplanetary Concepts digital, 2014; Strut CD/LP planned 2021)



One of Ra's most popular titles. First released in 1978 on Philly Jazz,

Lanquidity was a stylistic pivot for the bandleader, who'd rarely paid attention to mainstream trends. However, the album is a work of its time, reflecting late-period disco, bottom-heavy funk, and dancefloor soul grooves. Nonetheless, very much a Sun Ra album, full of surprises and unconventional moves.

god is more than love can ever be

(Cosmic Myth digital + CD/LP, 2018)



This is a rarity – a cohesive Sun Ra album, minus the stylistic eclecticism and rotating roster

typical of his self-produced Saturn LPs. This 1979 outing is Ra's only piano-bass-drums session. With drummer Samarai Celestial and bassist Hayes Burnett, the trio cruises through an intense set of vagabond moods, the telepathic essence of small combo jazz.



haverford college 1980 solo piano

(Enterplanetary Concepts digital, 2019)

Ra was notorious for aggressive keyboard work and stylistic freewheeling, which could go from A to Z and back without transitional bridges. *Haverford College 1980...* offers a unique contrast. Ra plays the Fender Rhodes electric piano, which has a distinct chiming, celeste-like resonance. There are few pyrotechnics in this performance, and much restraint. Ra sounds relaxed and contemplative. Soothing sounds for Saturnians.

Discover and explore more Sun Ra at sunra.com



So Pharaoh, so good: Sun Ra in the John Coney film *Space Is The Place*, 1974.

◀ instead they were part of an organism larger than themselves. On top of all that, the sight of grown men acting like children was an education. The Arkestra had a mission – and they knew what it was and where it was headed.”

In fact, The Arkestra were headed to Egypt. At the end of their 1971 European tour, Ra booked a series of extra concerts and spent the money on plane tickets for his 21 musicians and dancers. A brief educational holiday turned into a two-week residency. Writing in the liner notes to Strut Records' recent *Sun Ra Egypt 1971* vinyl box set, their impromptu tour-guide, Goethe Institute employee Hartmut Geerken, recalls a nightclub performance of “dance music” where “one of the women in the audience became hysterical and tried to drown herself in the Nile”, an intense three-hour three-drummer concert at Geerken's Heliopolis home involving “dancers, light-show, liquid slides, pantomime, screaming galactic overtone orgies, shreds of shrill saxophone”, and a group trip to the royal chamber inside the Great Pyramid in Giza.

“I remember that trip,” says Allen, “because I sat for four hours on a camel named Moses. I think the people in Egypt didn't expect that we'd have a big sense of humour. We were going to dance. You're not going to sit there holding your horn – you have to know how to dance, be a comedian, that was Sun Ra's thing.”

“People didn't understand the show tradition of African-American performance,” says Scott. “In the 1950s black jazz musicians put on nice, sharp European suits to be *respected*. Yet still had no respect. Sun Ra said, ‘Put on a show, bring some fancy colours, like the colours out of space, a look that's not tied by how we are seen by white people on earth.’ Giza was the earthly representation of what that was about. We'd originally come from the stars via ancient Egypt. So let's return from whence we came. That's why he had that chant: ‘space is the place’.”

IF YOU KNOW ONE THING ABOUT SUN RA, IT'S PROBABLY *Space Is The Place*, the phrase that was his mantra and the title of the notorious 1974 movie in which he stars. Conceived by producer Jim Newman as a document of a performance at the San Francisco Planetarium, it was also inspired in part by a series of 1971 Berkeley University lectures Ra had given on ‘The Black Man In The Cosmos’. The film gradually evolved into a kind of space-age black-power exploitation movie set in 1972 Oakland, where Sun Ra and his Arkestra do battle with a supernatural pimp called The Overseer. Yet, while *Space Is The Place* contained numerous expressions of Sun Ra's cosmic philosophy and continues to magnify his legend, it also included sex scenes and comic moments he was never happy with.

“Even in the '80s,” says Scott, “you'd go into his living room and he'd be going through the *Space Is The Place* film reels with a pair of scissors and a splicer. He never stopped. He was awake for maybe 22 hours a day during those years and the result of that was a lot of us got burned out.”

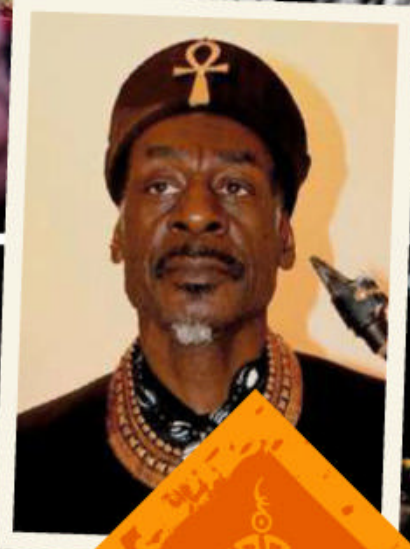
“You had to keep up,” says trumpeter Michael Ray, who joined the Arkestra in 1978 and endured a similar workload. “But that's how I learned about music and myself. It was to test you. The reward was the music. He was the same with audiences. We would play the most skull-busting music to start off a concert with, and people would be leaving, walking out and Sun Ra would be saying, ‘Yeah, well we got rid of the weak!’”

Ray, whom Ra dubbed ‘Intergalactic Research Tone Scientist’, worked closely with the bandleader during what might well have been his most intensive year of work, 1979. He began a three-year on-off residency at New York's Squat Theatre with a brace of 100-strong Arkestra performances for which musicians rehearsed in shifts for 24 hours straight. He also released nine albums of astonishing music, much of it recorded at Variety Recording Studio in New York.

“Sometimes he'd get tired,” says Ray, laughing. “But you still had to watch him. I remember we were mixing the *Black Beauty* LP [AKA *Sleeping Beauty*] at Variety. Sun Ra was asleep. I said to someone, ‘How's it sound?’ He woke up: ‘Sounds horrible!’ and



"You have to be there every day, other-wise you don't catch up": (clockwise from left) Marshall Allen, 2018; the Arkestra in Egypt, 1971; the Centennial Dream Arkestra at the North Sea Jazz Festival, Rotterdam, July 12, 2014; Sun Ra, circa 1970; (centre) Knoel Scott.



**"sun ra
could have sold
out. but what he did
instead was become
self-reliant in the
african-american
community."
KNOEL SCOTT**

started going through all these quarter-inch reel-to-reel tapes in his drum case finding the right track for the record. He'd say, 'You can't be dealing with these human frailties. You got to think different.'

Released on the Saturn label in 1979, *Sleeping Beauty* is now regarded as a defining masterpiece in the vast Sun Ra catalogue but also as an accessible entry point for the afeared neophyte: soothing, ambient movements of piano, horns and guitar; occasional passages of wild horn soloing; hypnotic vocal chants from Sun Ra's niece, Rhoda Blount, and the Arkestra's choreographer, costume designer and violinist June Tyson.

"June was incredible," says Ray. "Of all the members of the Arkestra, June never got tired of Sun Ra. I'd never seen her really get mad. She would always be humming and singing. Nobody had no money but June would just get up, come back with a bunch of potatoes and make home fries, always humming, listening to the music coming from her heart. Journalists would ask how she felt being the only woman in the group. She would say, 'I'm not a woman, I'm an angel.' She took everything with a smile on her face."

TAKING EVERYTHING SUN RA COULD THROW AT YOU was a prerequisite, but as Ray notes, it was never easy. While his mission was benevolent, his reputation as a bandleader was part Buddy Rich, part Captain Beefheart.

"He broke people, oh yeah," says Knoel Scott, laughing.

"Every day he'd change the music," adds Marshall Allen, also laughing. "The rehearsal that day, the music was built for you. If you don't come in that day, the next day you can't play the music. He done made it for somebody else. It was changing all the time. So you have to be there every day. Otherwise, you don't never catch up."

"Oh, yeah!" replies Scott.

"I remember someone asking him how he gets it to work out for him and he said, 'Well sometimes I use their jealousies!'"

"John Gilmore was a baritone player," says Allen, chuckling. "So Sun Ra brought in two more baritone players just to mess with him."

"I left in 1981," says Knoel Scott, suddenly serious.

"My wife was pregnant, we'd just played a gig at the Squat Theatre, New York and Sun Ra gave us \$2.50. After eight hours of playing and four hours of waiting. I had a baby coming. I had to do the right thing. I went back to New York, got me a job teaching and working for the Parks department. And I lasted until Sun Ra called me back in 1988. After Sun Ra died I had a nervous breakdown."

Sun Ra died on May 30, 1993, in Birmingham, Alabama. He was 79, or thereabouts. John Gilmore led the Arkestra for two years before his own death from emphysema.

"I didn't know what to do but I didn't know what else to do," says Allen of his own supervisory stint. "All I knew how to do was continue. Without the music I would have no direction. If it does me some good it might give some to you."

Living connections with Sun Ra's vision and torchbearers of his legacy, Allen and Scott still speak of their leader with awe, as if the 'fiction' of Blount/Ra's provenance could be in another sense the truth.

"He said, 'I exist in a myth, [but] the myth is rooted in reality,'" says Knoel Scott. "He was a man beyond us. He was beyond human."



With thanks to Chris Cutler whose rermegacorp.com site is still the best direct source for all the official Sun Ra estate reissues.

From juggling banjo crusty to cosmopolitan singer-songwriter supreme, THIS IS THE KIT's Kate Stables beat crippling shyness to ascend to her Rough Trade label's pantheon of offbeat distaff pop. "I'm quite contrary by nature," she tells MARTIN ASTON. "When people think something's a bad idea, I usually cling to it."

Photography by PHILIPPE LEBRUMAN

"THERE WAS A LOT OF RESISTANCE to the name This Is The Kit," reveals its owner, with an unmistakably gleeful smile. "I'd tell promoters and they'd still bill me as Kate Stables. But I'm quite contrary by nature – when people think something's a bad idea, I usually cling to it."

Inside her second-floor flat in Paris's busy 10th arrondissement, a wiry and exuberant Stables is entertaining MOJO, dressed in baggy pants and a T-shirt advertising Hull's Adelphi venue. Her unruly mop of hair, arbitrarily pinned up, suggests a determination to go her own way.

"People used to call me Kit – they still do," she says. "The name speaks about my relationship with words, about assonance and alliteration – to me, This Is The Kit is one word, not a sentence." The literal translation of 'kit' is also appealing. "I enjoy being self-sufficient and travelling around, so I like the idea of having what you need wherever you go."

Originally from Winchester, Stables has lived in Paris with her husband and fellow musician Jesse Vernon and daughter Mo since 2007. The stuffed front room illustrates a family hard at work and play.

"That's the board games shelf," she says. "The front door is disguised as a stamp collection... And these are our records. And here's my office. We basically live in here." One wall is festooned

with maps: Africa ("we need to brush up on our African country knowledge"), America ("People are always naming places I need to look up") and "the old homeland. People ask, 'Where are you from?' and I can point to it.

"I love living in Europe, and being able to get nearly anywhere by train," she continues. "Anything could change, of course, but we have so many friends here, Mo is happy at school and Jesse has his community orchestra – and Brexit is so depressing. So, here we are."

STABLES' JOURNEY AS THIS IS THE KIT IS ALREADY a trek, with another milestone – a fifth album, *Off Off On* – looming. She began as an intimate folk singer, accompanying herself on banjo ("I like the physical sensation of playing it, and the percussiveness of the sound"), resembling the spiritual heir of Hedy West (with a dash of Anne Briggs and Bridget St John). But just as This Is The Kit has become more of a band than solo artist, so her sound has expanded, embracing jazzy cadences, tranquil woodwind, soulful brass, African highlife and desert blues. Asked for her current musical obsessions, Stables plumps for Beyoncé and French-Malian pop singer Aya Nakamura. "My music is very European," she vouches, "but music from other countries seeps in. I just love things that flow repetitively and rhythmically."

Off Off On was only partially affected by Covid-19. After recording at Real World, Peter Gabriel's pioneering temple of global fusion near Box, Stables and Vernon arrived home one day before France locked down, so the album's final polish and mixing had ➤

Philippe Lebruman

**"Be honest about who
you are": This Is The Kit's
Kate Stables, Parc Des
Buttes-Chaumont,
Paris, June 19, 2020.**



Kate Stables in 2008; (right) on-stage with This Is The Kit, at the Electric Fields festival, Thornhill, Scotland, September 2017; (insets) the full Kit of Kate LPs.



“I REALLY MISS GIGS, AND THE ENERGY EXCHANGE WITH THE AUDIENCE, BEING IN THE MOMENT.”

Kate Stables

◀ to be accomplished remotely. It’s more Stables’ roving mindset that’s suffered.

“I’m a bit of a nightmare,” she says, grinning. “A bit fidgety and twitchy. My first response to lockdown was, *Yes!* I’m not good at the bit *before* something happens, so cancelled tour dates felt like getting a present, which I think stems back to trumpet lessons as a kid, which I dreaded. I thought I could recuperate. I hadn’t been at home for longer than four weeks at a time for at least seven years. But I came down with isolation-itis. I just couldn’t get anything done, or even get out of bed. Now I really miss gigs, and the energy exchange with the audience, being in the moment.”

Kate, or Kit, sometimes Kato and, to one close friend, Kattu Kattu, admits she was a painfully shy child: “If anyone even looked at me, I’d burst into tears.” She’s one half of (non-identical) twin sisters, with elder twin sisters to boot (“We were all apparently freakishly well-behaved”), and both parents were language teachers, ironically since, as Stables admits, “I’m awful at spelling and grammar. But I got a real kick from people I thought were great with words, like Bob Dylan, who was always played around the house. The way he uses words is so... *delicious*. You can feel it in your body and your mouth. I’ve always enjoyed saying, or writing, certain words.”

Tracey Chapman and, more surprisingly, The Velvet Underground, were other formative influences.

Though Stables started writing songs in her teens, for her GCSE music course, she wouldn’t perform them. “I wasn’t brave enough to sing,” she admits, “so I put forward a silly trumpet instrumental.”

But at a school arts evening, encouraged to sing Ani DiFranco’s *Sorry I Am*, something clicked. “I thought, I want to get better at this,” she recalls. “I began to find it easier to have a conversation in song rather than social situations. I secretly hoped I could make music a career, but I was too superstitious to say it out loud.”

At 11, Stables had joined a juggling class, where she met Sam Leyden and then his younger sister Rozi, who is now bassist/backing vocalist in the current TITK band. The three friends attended Glastonbury and Winchester’s annual arts and circus festival. Whisper it, but there is still something of the ’80s hippy diehard, maybe even the ’90s crusty, about Stables. “Another band I discovered for myself when I was 11 was The Level-lers,” she says. “I’d always fantasised about being a traveller, to live outside and travel around, and light fires.”

ALTHOUGH SHE NEVER JOINED the circus, Stables escaped Winchester for a year of self-discovery. “Whilst everyone else was in Thailand and



THIS IS HER KIT

Kate Stables on five
key inspirations

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND



"It wasn't just their energy, but also the way Lou Reed used gender interchangeably, playing with who he was in his songs, or who was telling the story. I hadn't come across that before and it really appealed."

P.J. HARVEY



"She has this crucial ability to create a physical sound with just her voice and her guitar. And I don't think people realise how witty her lyrics can be. She's a brilliant example of a woman not getting funnelled into what other people think she should look or sound like."

JONATHAN RICHMAN



"I'm excited and inspired by his decency, how he's stuck to his principles and how eccentric and weird he is but emotionally open and so clever and witty. He's also a complete punk without being a dick."

RICHARD DAWSON



"I'm just so blown away by his singing and guitar playing, and the language he uses is so nutritious, it's something like Under Milk Wood. You get such a good sense of the people in his stories, or the places, or the smells."

JESSE MAE HEMPHILL



"A brilliant blues guitarist and singer with a natural rhythm, plus she plays the tambourine with her foot. I play a foot tambourine too, but not in stilettos!"

Finishing on a positive note: Kate sees the funny side; (left, from top) on-stage with Jesse Vernon, Shepherd's Bush Empire, December 2012; beefed up with the This Is The Kit band, on-stage at the Newport Folk Festival, Rhode Island, July 27, 2018.

Australia, I was exploring Britain, meeting amazing people and crashing on their floors."

In Bristol, she formed the acoustic duo Whalebone Polly with singer/guitarist Rachael Dadd, and joined a community choir, led by Jesse Vernon, former guitarist of Bristol's psych-rock troupers The Moonflowers. As This Is The Kit, Stables and Vernon recorded her song Two Wooden Spoons, which Rob Da Bank's Sunday Best label picked up for the 2006 compilation *Folk Off*. Then the pair left for Paris. "We were up for a big jump," says Stables, "an adventure new to us both. Let's see if we can learn stuff you can only learn from living in a foreign country."

In 2008, the debut *This Is The Kit* album, *Krille Bol*, was produced by P.J. Harvey associate John Parish. It wasn't easy to find in the UK, and the follow-up, *Wriggle Out The Restless*, also flew under the radar until Elbow's Guy Garvey announced on BBC 6 Music that it deserved a Mercury Prize nomination. Word spread further when a TITK show in east London was gatecrashed by members of The National, whose guitarist Aaron Dessner asked to reissue *Wriggle...* on his Brassland label and to produce TITK's next album.

2015's *Bashed Out* was fleshed out by Dessner's own circle of players but Stables' band were back in the spotlight on 2017's *Moonshine Freeze*, guided by a returning John Parrish, and highly placed (at 14) in MOJO's year-end Best Album poll. Lyrically, it seemed to brood on the impact of events on personal relationships. "As the change sets in, we have lost our way," pondered the title track. "Everything we

broke today/Needed breaking anyway," concluded Bullet Proof.

"The specifics involved other people," Stables tells MOJO, "so all I'll say is, we inevitably come up against challenging situations that explode your whole world, and you have to start again."

She still feels too close to *Off Off On* to be sure of its exact thread, "but I wonder if it's about taking responsibility for our actions, owning our fuck-ups, and not to oppress others," she says. "Don't say, 'But I didn't mean to do that.' And be honest about who you are."

The new album title reflects Stables' appreciation for the texture of words, but also her need "to finish on a positive note. It's 'out of sync, out of sync, in sync'; 'not growing, not growing, growing'." She singles out *Off Off On*'s last song, *Keep Going*, as noting a world stretched to breaking point by Covid-19 and demagogue politics.

"It's good if we keep encouraging each other to keep going," she says. "I have to stay hopeful that this is the journey we're all on. Not being hopeful would be too depressing! I'd suffer from isolation-itis again. I've just got to keep going."

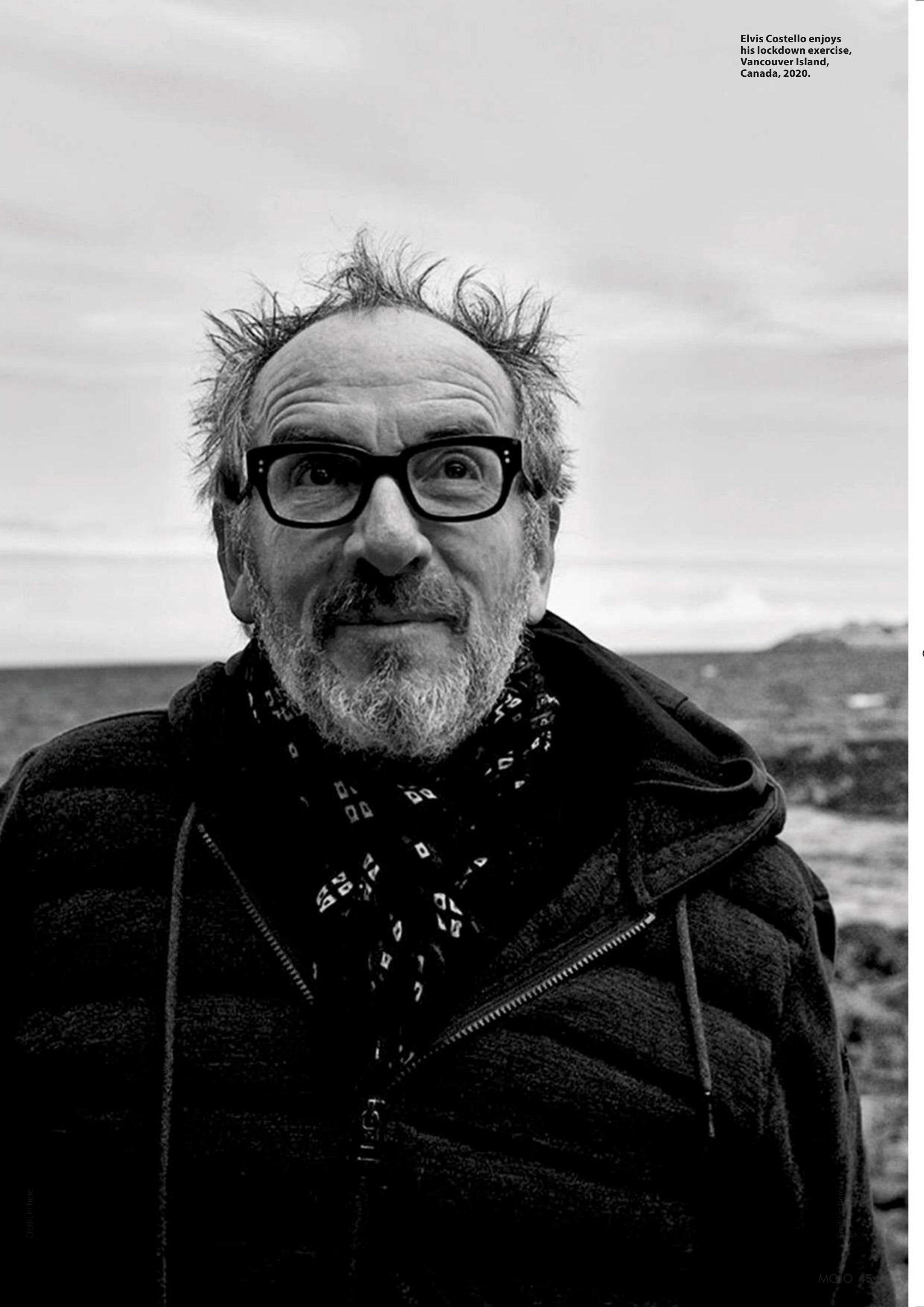


WAITING FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

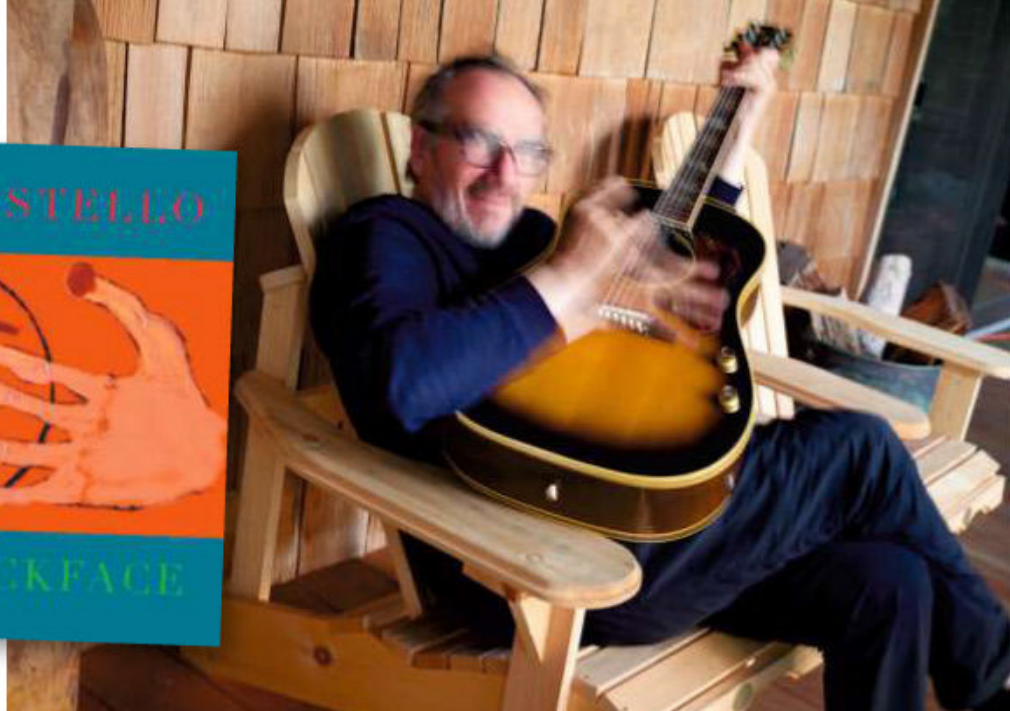
ELVIS COSTELLO (OBE!) has made the best of pandemic. More time for Diana, the kids, Facebook jams with Steve Nieve and *work* – an enhanced *Armed Forces* reissue and a serendipitous new album with myriad moods and Shipbuilding brass. Verily, a man for all seasons? “There isn’t one true church from which I stray,” he reminds **SYLVIE SIMMONS**.

Portrait: **DIANA KRALL**.

Elvis Costello enjoys
his lockdown exercise,
Vancouver Island,
Canada, 2020.



IN THE BASEMENT ROOM OF a house in Vancouver there's a jukebox and an upright piano. A little Kay guitar stands propped against a wall. Above it, an Elliott Landy photograph of The Band's Rick Danko is staring straight at Elvis Costello. "It's my good luck charm," he tells MOJO.



Costello was on a UK tour with the Imposters when the pandemic cut it short and he had to fly home. Covid-19 also put on hold a musical he was working on, an adaption of Budd Schulberg's *A Face In The Crowd*. He says he's just got off the phone with his mum, who turned 93 the other day, and he's sad that he couldn't have been there with her. But he's not complaining, he emphasises. He's grateful to be in Canada, where things are relatively safe and sane. He speaks daily to friends "who are in places that are much more challenging, trying to talk them down from the ceiling." And an upside, he says, is "the day-to-day time that I wouldn't have had with Diana [Krall, his wife, the jazz singer]" and their 13-year-old twin sons.

When the lockdown began, the family holed up for a while in a cabin on Vancouver Island. He'd take daily walks along a wild trail that led to rocks and ancient trees "that look like the stuff of fables". It's where Diana took a photograph (see previous page) of Elvis looking wholly off-duty: hatless, out-of-uniform, windblown hair and salt-and-pepper beard. "Of the many things there were shortages of, it seems razor blades were some of them," he says. Back in the city now, "my only trips are to the store to get supplies."

But mostly he's been busy working. Really busy. "It's obvious that not everybody fares well with isolation," he says, but clearly he's not among them: "I've written four scripts and I'm hard at work on a huge stack of songs" — a couple of them for a collaboration with Tommy McLain, the now-80-year-old Louisiana singer who did the version of *Sweet Dreams* that Costello covered on 1981's *Almost Blue*. There's another project with New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the upcoming *Armed Forces* box set reissue he's been overseeing and for which he's writing a new set of notes (see p48). But the *pièce de résistance* is a brand new album, his 31st, the 14-song *Hey Clockface*.

DENSE AND DELICATE, NOISY, QUIET, CINEMATIC, poetic, strange and strangely beautiful, Elvis says he had no idea what his new album would be like, other than that it would be unlike the one before. *Look Now* (2018) featured the Imposters and a handful of songs he'd co-written with Burt Bacharach and Carole King. It won a Grammy for Best Traditional Pop Vocal, beating fellow nominees Barbra Streisand and John Legend.

The new album's contrasting styles weren't "perversity" or "hubris" on his part. "I mean there isn't one true church from which I stray, let's make that clear," he says, prickling a little. "For me every one of these things is a whole-hearted thing, not detours — other than the [2015-2017] tour I called *Detour* as a satire on the idea. It starts from the place of I make the record I'm making, not the record I'm not making. Because I *can* make the other record. Maybe," he muses, "once you make one thing one way, it frees you a little bit. It makes the surprise of noise and rhythm into something you want to jump into again. That last record, I had everything worked out. This record is the opposite."

"THAT TOUR WE DID IN ENGLAND BEFORE ALL TOURS HAD TO STOP WAS, I FELT, THE FIRST TIME WE HAD BEEN HEARD IN 10 YEARS."



Something else he finds freeing is "travelling to a new location where nobody knows me. The sense of adventure." It was February 2020. You could still fly. So he got on a plane to

Helsinki. "I'm not as well-known there. I've only been there twice in 40 years. But I found this little studio and it was the jolt I was looking for."

Suomenlinnan Studio is tucked away in an 18th century fort built to keep the Russians out. You reach it by ferry from mainland Helsinki. "A great way to start the day," recommends Costello. "Walk down the main drag in Helsinki, go up on the top deck to get a lungful of bracing air, then work for eight hours."

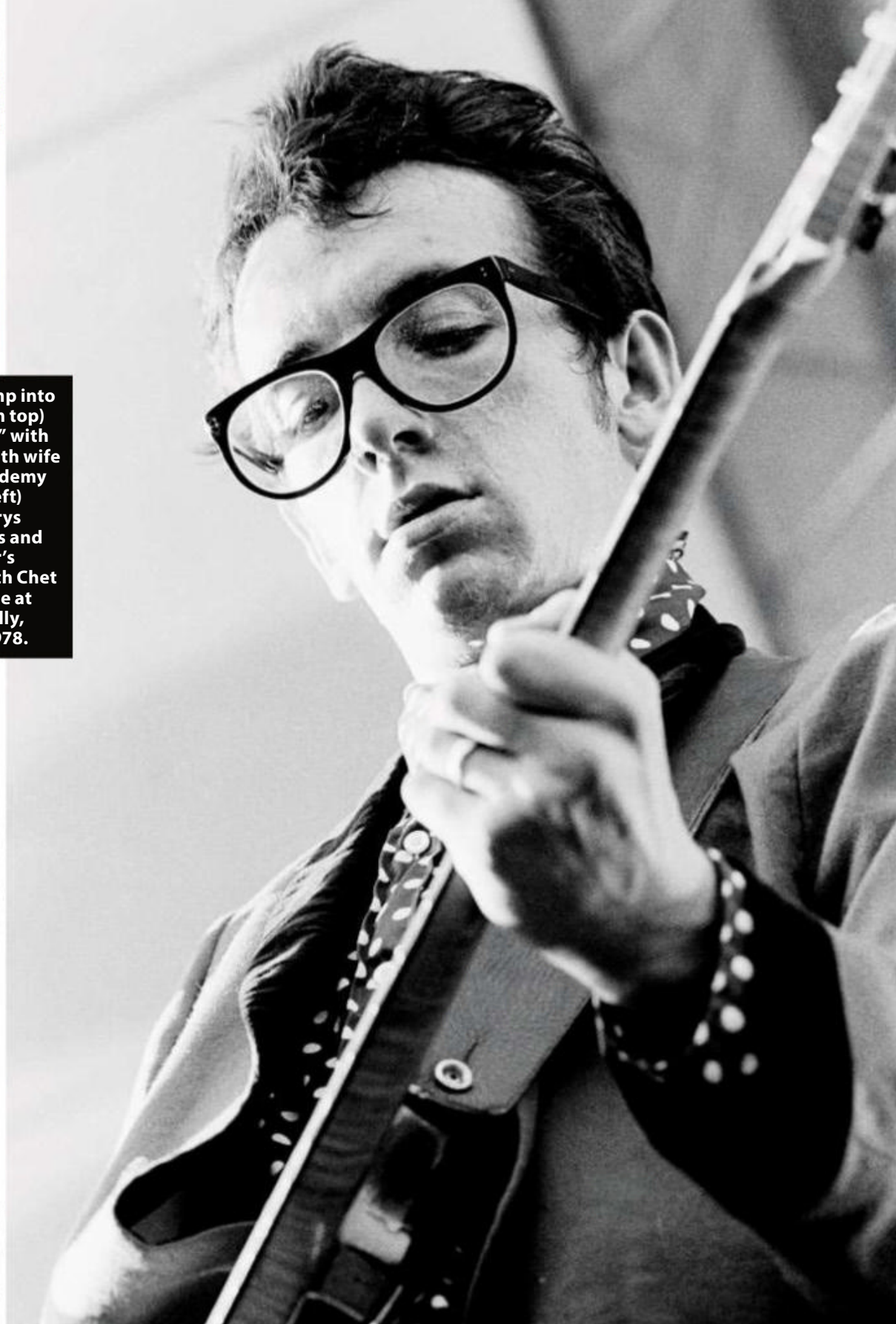
Alone bar the engineer, Eetü Seppälä, he spent three days recording three songs. "I went there to record as much music as I could, but when you're playing all the instruments it slows you down a little bit." Because Costello doesn't play drums, he sang the kick part into his phone and Seppälä's team turned it into a sample. Then Costello sang over it, playing piano or guitar. The "Helsinki Sound", he dubbed it.

All three of the songs he recorded there have been streaming well in advance of their parent album — the bitter *No Flag* the longest, since June. "They are to some degree commentary rather than emotional", says Costello. "They're not love songs, are they, any of them? Even in the three days there were three different moods. *No Flag* has a degree of anger; *Hetty O'Hara Confidential* is kind of

Diana Krall, Getty (4)



Something you want to jump into again: (opposite page, from top) Costello on his “man porch” with new album (inset), 2020; with wife Diana Krall at the 2004 Academy Awards, LA; (above, from left) with producer Sebastian Kryz and Imposters Pete Thomas and Davey Faragher at this year’s Grammys in LA; (below) with Chet Baker, 1983; (right) on-stage at the Rock Against Racism rally, Brockwell Park, London, 1978.



humorous, and *We’re All Cowards Now* is more melancholic.”

There was a report in a Helsinki paper saying that Costello had gone there to make a protest song. “That might be something lost in translation,” Costello says. “People want to see *No Flag* as a protest song but I didn’t see it like that. You’re writing and it’s like: what does it feel like when you get to the end of your tolerance? What does that place look like and feel like? I guess that’s what *No Flag* is. But I don’t send out pamphlets telling people what my songs are about and how you should feel when you listen.”

From Helsinki, Costello flew to Paris. “I went to celebrate Steve Nieve’s birthday and him getting his passport – he’s a Frenchman now, dual citizenship.” The Attractions/Imposters keyman had booked a quintet of classical musicians into Les Studios Saint Germain for the weekend.

“Steve had transcribed the songs in chord charts,” says Costello. “Classical players always tend to want a sheet of dots in front of them, but these musicians were very open-minded, cross-the-borderlines.” And in the end, much of the music was organised on the hoof, with Costello singing live.

The plan was to finish the album in New York, but first there was a UK tour. It found Costello in high spirits. “It opened really spectacularly at the Liverpool Olympia,” he says. “My mother came to the show. They had her on a platform where she sat in a wheelchair. It was so emotional, because she had danced in that ballroom as a girl in the mid ’40s after the Second World War.

“It was a beautiful way to start, and then the final show in Hammersmith...” he’s momentarily lost for words. “If that were the last

time I was ever on-stage then it wouldn’t have been a bad show to end on. That tour we did in England before all tours had to stop was, I felt, the first time that we had been *heard* in 10 years.”

Meaning?

“I felt that the audience was hearing who we actually were, not who they imagined us to be. They didn’t seem impatient if I sometimes played piano. We got to show them things that only the American audiences had seen. We had backdrops for the whole show instead of having just a bank of lights. I just felt,” he pauses, “as if we were all on level ground for the first time in years in the homeland. And it felt good. I really felt good on that tour.”

And then the world went into lockdown. Costello flew to Canada and *Hey Clockface* was completed like everything else post-Covid, digitally and long-distance. Two late additions, *Radio Is Everything* and *Newspaper Pane* – the first a *noir* poem, the second equal parts cool and urgent, almost Dylanesque – are collaborations with guitarist Bill Frisell and trumpet/flugelhorn player Michael Leonhart. Hearing the contributions of the latter, it’s hard not to be reminded of Chet Baker’s 1983 work on Costello’s *Shipbuilding*. Had Elvis made that connection too?

“That would be a very good connection,” he says. “Chet coming in and playing on that particular recording was to make it distinct from Robert [Wyatt]’s original [1982 single] version. I had this idea of a trumpet. I couldn’t believe we got Chet Baker and how beautifully he played. But I wasn’t thinking of echoing that however much I love it. I love the flugelhorn. It has a slightly rounder, more mellow tone.” ➤



Tasty! Taking on supplies at a Liverpool shop, September 19, 1979 with The Attractions (from left) Pete Thomas, Steve Nieve, Costello, Bruce Thomas.

ELEPHANTS MEMORIES

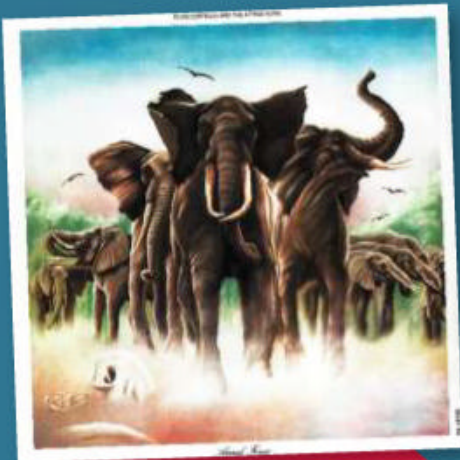
Armed Forces – returning soon in “last word” box set form – hoiked **ELVIS COSTELLO** to the next level. It was all thanks to Abba, he tells **SYLVIE SIMMONS**.

“IF YOU LIKE this record and you’ve liked it for 40 years, this is the last word on it.”

Elvis Costello is talking about the pending reissue of his 1979 album *Armed Forces*. He admits it’s been resurrected a couple of times before – the 1993 Rykodisc CD with bonus tracks; the 2002 Rhino with bonus disc and Costello’s copious liner notes. “But this,” he says, “is the innards of it as well as the outer thing, the wonderful artwork. There is nothing more to be said.”

Costello was in his early twenties with two albums under his belt when he and the Attractions – Steve Nieve, Bruce Thomas, Pete Thomas – went into Eden Studios in London with producer Nick Lowe in the summer of ’78. A few months before, he’d released *This Year’s Model*. It reached the UK Top 40 and went gold in the US. Since then they’d been on a non-stop tour. The songs for a follow-up would have to be written on the road – in his hotel room after a show (Bruce, his hotel room-mate, recalled him sitting up all night scribbling in a notebook) or on the bus heading to the next one.

“The experience and the outlook of travelling around the world, everything I saw seemed like the beginning of a song,” Elvis remembers. “Whatever came past the window got into the song.” So to some degree did the music they were playing on the bus. “We only had about five cassettes: Bowie and Iggy’s Berlin records – and Abba.” The Abba cassettes were picked up at motorway service stations on the Scandinavian tour. Elvis and the band would argue the toss over whether The



“YOU’RE GOING TO HEAR THE BAND TEARING THROUGH THIS MUSIC. THE PACE IS PROBABLY THE REASON IT ALL CAME CRASHING DOWN.”

Beatles were better than the Stones (“Me and Bruce were more Beatles, Pete was Rolling Stones and Steve claimed not to have heard either of them and listened to T.Rex”) but they all came together on Abba. Literally so at a Swedish festival where they met Benny Andersson and Frida Lyngstad and serenaded them with a four-guitar acoustic version of *Knowing Me Knowing You*.

The band had never been so solid, he says. On the reissue’s live discs, “You’re going to hear the band *tearing* through this music. In the liner notes I’ve talked more about the playing and the pace. The pace is probably the reason it all came crashing down, but it’s also what made the band ferocious. It all got up to speed very quickly. There’s a video of us playing in Swindon the night before Elvis Presley died where we seem like a youth club band. Then three months later we were making *This Year’s Model* and playing things like *Lipstick Vogue*, and by the next summer *Armed Forces*. That pace had a lot to do with melding the sound of the band.”

Two long weeks in the studio – “a luxury!” – made for a richer, more textured, sophisticated-sounding record. Costello’s version of Lowe’s song (What’s So Funny ’Bout) Peace, Love, And Understanding), previously a B-side to Lowe’s *American Squirrm* and credited to Nick Lowe And His Sound – although it was in fact Elvis and the Attractions – wound up on the US album in place of Sunday’s Best. “They didn’t really understand the English references,” notes Costello.

“They didn’t understand (I Don’t Want To Go To) Chelsea either and took that off the previous album, so I wasn’t too surprised.” Nor was he when they turned down his original album title: *Emotional Fascism*.

The upcoming box set reissue, he says, includes “facsimiles of my original notebooks, all handwritten, lines scrawled out, half verses not used and all these subtle changes. It was a way of learning the songs as I wrote them, how to sing them, and also to understand the story the album told.”

There are also comic books, postcards and six discs, including two 10-inch live records, the entirety of their June 4, 1979 Pinkpop festival show and the original album remastered directly from the studio tapes. “It sounds as close to the way it sounded to us in the studio as we could make it,” says Costello. “That’s a beautiful thing.”



“They didn’t understand the English references”: Elvis in the States, 1979.



"It wouldn't have been a bad show to end on": (above) with The Imposters, Hammersmith Odeon, London, March 13, 2020; (below) Costello's gong show, February 14, 2020; (right) on Thames TV's Kenny Everett Show in the 1970s.



"I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW YOU CAN GET AN ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHEN THERE ISN'T AN EMPIRE. IT'S A LUDICROUS IDEA."

WHILE SOME ARTISTS OF HIS GENERATION grumble about the process of recording in 2020 – flinging sound files around the world, with parts and mixes flying back – there's only going to be more of it, post-Covid. So Costello is minded to embrace the digital connectivity. It allows even more opportunities to collaborate and work.

"I was hooking up with Stevie Nieve every Sunday morning," he says. "We were cheating physics! We'd worked out a way we could play together on Facebook to a group of people who'd been tuning in to these 45-minute or hour improvisations, with his partner Muriel narrating and her son singing. We tried some tunes that I wouldn't normally sing, songs that people would never hear you sing on a stage. It was a way of connecting with people because we didn't have the prospect of doing that in person for a while."

His partnership with Nieve has spanned five decades. How would he define their working relationship?

"It was always me and Steve," he says. "Steve and I have a huge repertoire on piano, voice and guitar. . . We can literally play anything we can remember. He's a remarkable player. He can find music in all sorts of corners. I can predict in advance what he might do to something I give him – or he can completely surprise me, and he continues to. When Steve and I play together, just the two of us, in some ways the scope of the music is much greater than when it's the band."

Stuck in lockdown with a jazz pianist, did Elvis find himself making music with Krall, or did they work in their own man/woman caves?

"Diana has a record that I think might even come out before mine [Krall's *This Dream Of You* is due in September; *Hey Clockface*, November]," reports Costello. "I know it's my wife but it's been absolutely thrilling to hear her pull a record out of these beautiful performances – and the way she asked Al Schmitt [Sam Cooke, Frank Sinatra, Bob Dylan], who is one of the great engineers, to mix them was something quite different. They have an immediacy and an intimacy that you sometimes don't get on modern recordings, and some beautiful piano playing."

"So that will be going on in one part of the house," he continues, "and there's one boy mixing in one room, and another boy has got the room set up with every kind of computer for video games, and

I'm out on the back porch writing a song. This isn't my man cave. My lads populate this part of the house most of the day – they're just not up yet! I have a man *porch*. I like being in the open air. If it's not too windy I can record out there. So it's a busy house."

A final question. Elvis and I last spoke five years ago, in Vancouver. He had just published his 688-page memoir, *Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink*. If he were writing that book today, how might he see two big things that have happened since: cancer and his OBE?

"I have some things to say about those two subjects," he says. "One, cancer. Steve rang me up and said, 'Don't even say it.' And the only reason anybody knew about it was because I overestimated my own energies; I'm so used to being able to carry on regardless, and I just went out on the road before I had my strength back to do the job. I regret announcing it – although I had to – because people that I hadn't got around to telling personally yet got alarmed, and because other people go through so much worse. I have friends who are no longer with us. I lost a couple of good friends. I was so fortunate to avoid serious illness. There's nothing more to say."

"The other thing" – he doesn't spell out its letters – "I took the gong because my mum wanted me to do it. I don't even know how you can get an Order of the British Empire when there isn't an empire. It's a ludicrous idea."


Of good Irish stock, Declan MacManus/Elvis Costello's views on the British establishment have not been warm. *Oliver's Army*, *Tramp The Dirt Down*, *Shipbuilding* again, have referenced its iniquities and hypocrisies. Moreover, there was a score of sorts to settle with Buckingham Palace on behalf of jazz singer father Ross. "I wanted to see the inside of that place one time," he says. "My dad went in the back door, I went in the front door. Playing there in the late '50s, early '60s with Joe Loss, my dad used to go in through the service entrance. Eventually they've got to look you in the eye."

How did it go? "Nobody was unpleasant. I know symbolically some people don't like the idea of it, but to me it doesn't mean anything. I've been to see for myself something that's been building up in my mind for a long time. After my moment, the military band played 'Consider yourself at home/Consider, yourself one of the family' [from the musical *Oliver!*]. Somebody there," he laughs, "has a sense of humour." **M**



MOJO EYEWITNESS

ORBITAL'S **CHIME** OPENS THE RAVE BAND ERA



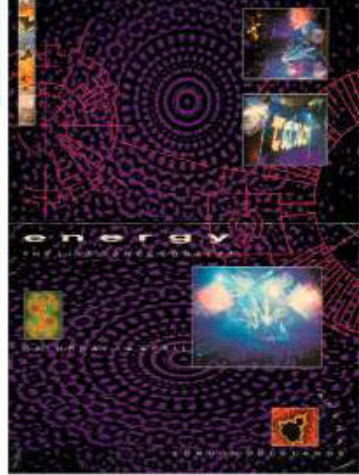
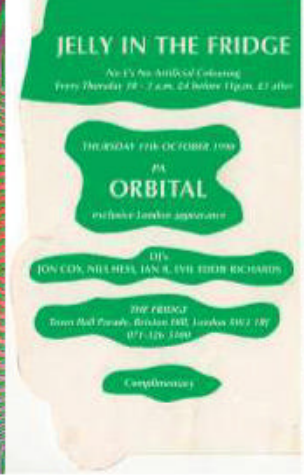
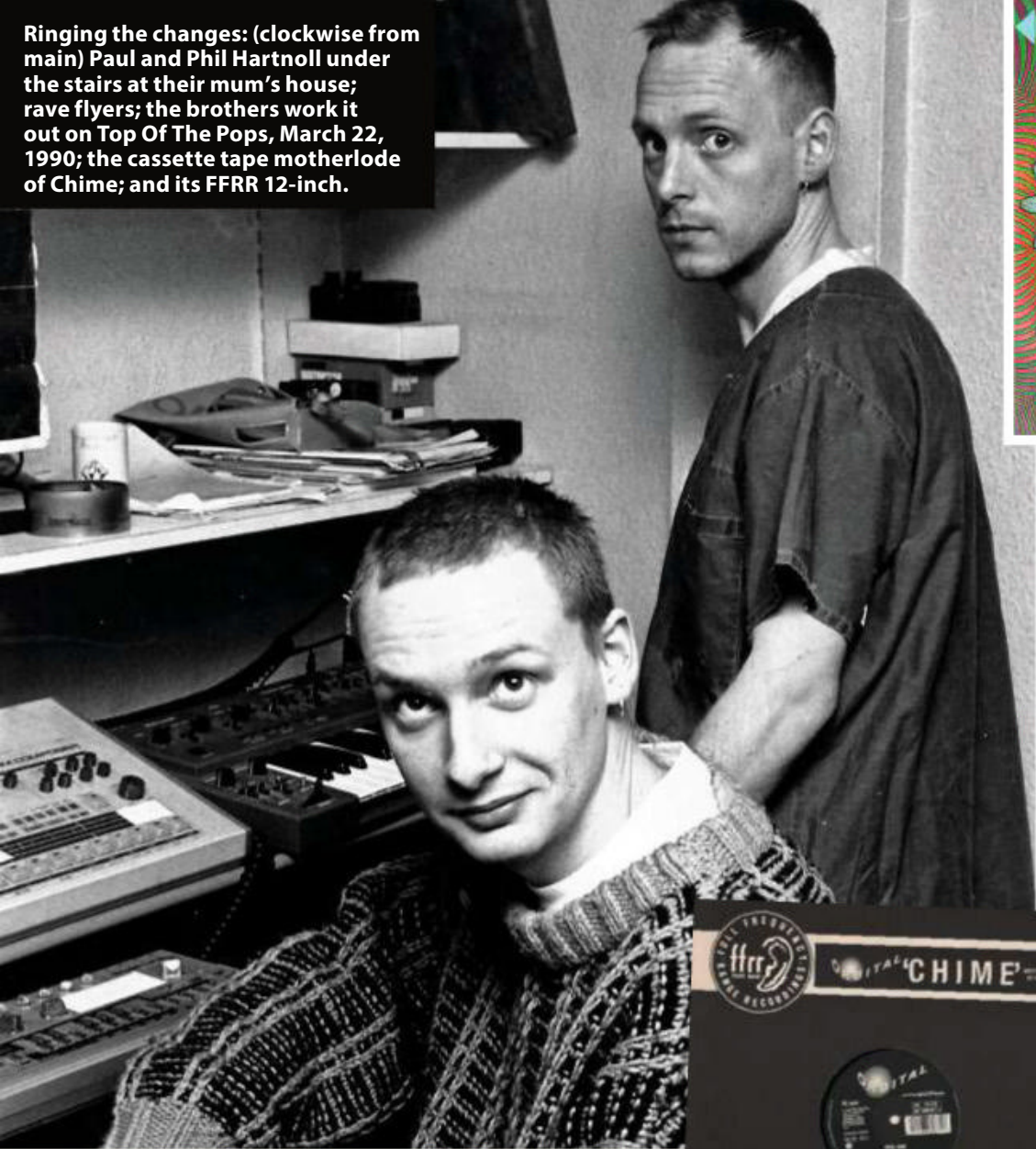
Children of the corn circles:
high on the success of
Chime, Orbital's Paul (left)
and Phil Hartnoll adopt
cunning rave disguises.

Kent electro-punks swept up in acid house via pirate radio, brothers **PAUL** and **PHIL HARTNOLL** would strike techno gold with their classic debut single Chime in March 1990. A comic Top Of The Pops appearance, touring with The Shamen and the first stirrings of the golden age of British dance music followed. "It really felt like the beginning of something," they say, "and it really did go mad."

Interviews by **JOE MUGGS** • Portrait by **STEVE DOUBLE**

Steve Double/Camera Press

Ringing the changes: (clockwise from main) Paul and Phil Hartnoll under the stairs at their mum's house; rave flyers; the brothers work it out on Top Of The Pops, March 22, 1990; the cassette tape motherlode of Chime; and its FFRR 12-inch.



“I SPENT £3.25 ON A CASSETTE TO RECORD IT ON.”

Paul Hartnoll

➤ **Paul Hartnoll:** From the age of 13 I was in school bands and local bands in Sevenoaks, usually playing guitar. Then when I was 16 and my brother was 20, about '84, '85, we started getting drum machines and what-have-you together. We were listening to electro, hi-NRG, Tackhead, Cabaret Voltaire, Chakk, Severed Heads. We'd turn up at local discos with a Front-242 or Dead Or Alive record, or a bunch of electro 12-inches, and pester the DJ to play them. Then, when house came along in '86, '87 – the stuff like [The House Master Boyz'] House Nation and [Nitro Deluxe's] This Brutal House – we immediately thought, “Great! This is like electro and hi-NRG together!”

Phil Hartnoll: I was doing an apprenticeship, so I had a bit of money, and any spare cash I'd spend on synths. I never had aspirations, I just wanted to know what synthesizer sounds were. Paul was much more driven, he wanted to be in a band. We gradually got tapes together, we'd give them to a few people, then Paul found this guy Jazzy M.

Jazzy M: My show was called The Jacking Zone, and it was the first ever proper house show on London airwaves. The stuff was already coming in from Chicago, but I wanted to hear if people could make it here in the UK – so on my radio show, I asked, “Are you making music? Come and bring it to me!”, bold as brass. So [Paul's pirate DJ friend-of-a-friend] Jack Man Jay brought me this tape. It's wondrous to think back that I had no other information but “Paul from Kent”.

Paul: I went up to see Jazzy in this record shop in Croydon, MiPrice I think. It was quite terrifying, really, because he was like a John The Baptist of house music, such an evangelist, a real character. He ran around the shop collecting all these 12-inches, then went, “What you do is brilliant,

but it's too fast, and you need to copy these records.” I said, “I haven't got any money.” He just looked at me like this was an abstract concept, and went, “Money? Nah, you can have them. Copy those, come back when you need some more.” He became my mentor right up to the time when I finally gave him Chime.

Phil: The way Paul wrote Chime was very impulsive and instinctive. Normally he's much more the musician, the nerdy one who'll sit down and work things out, where I'm just a Tasmanian devil – “Wurrrrgh, press that, what's this do?” – so actually it was funny for him to do such an unconscious, unconsidered kind of track.

Paul: I was just trying out a way of recording where I did it all live to the 4-track, without worrying about mucking about and sync-ing different tracks. I started about four in the afternoon, I think it was a Wednesday, a couple of hours before I went to the pub. I guess I was trying to do something a bit Detroit techno, but really, I just took some random samples from my dad's easy listening records, put in the ‘dum dum dum du-du-dum’ bass at the beginning, job done. Right at the end I thought, “What's that weird sound?”, and it was the descending string bit. “Sounds OK, I'll put that in...”, and that was literally it.

Phil: His mates were sitting on the sofa hassling him to finish it as he did the live recording to tape! I'll be honest, Chime never floated my boat massively because that sort of salsa-y rhythm didn't really sit right with me, but I realised it really stuck out as quirky and weird, which is why

it worked for us and helped us break through. And it really did go mad.

JM: He brought it in to me at Vinyl Zone at the weekend, the shop was packed with DJs, I put the tape on and the whole place went spare – “I want it! I want it!”, thinking it was a new 12-inch. I was really cheeky, like, “Haha, no you can't have it, it's not released!” Right that minute, I went, “I'm having this.” I'd been working on setting up the Oh'Zone label so it felt like perfect timing, spiritual almost.

Paul: Jazzy told me to go home and re-record it, but with an extra bit at the end where it all comes back in – “and do it on a metal tape as well.” I spent £3.25 on a cassette to record it on, the most expensive one I'd ever bought, and I was thinking, “It'd better bloody be worth it.”

JM: I've still got that tape, it's a TDK MA90 with just ‘CHIME’ written on it. The brilliant thing is, that's what we mastered the vinyl off – 12, 13 minutes whatever it is, no edits, nothing, just straight on to the Oh'Zone 12-inch [released in December 1989]. And that was my label launched – 1,000 copies, then another 3,000, it kept getting bigger! I even played it out off the cassette too, before the vinyl. I remember it was Clink Street or one of those really grubby underground raves. The whole place went absolutely crackers. Johnny Walker was DJing there too, he worked at Polydor, which was in the same building as Tong – so that's how he got to know about it.

Pete Tong: Soon as I heard it, I had to sign it. I did the deal with Jazzy on the track, then rolled it into a bigger deal with the boys – because I knew I wanted a longer-term thing for them with [London Records dance imprint] FFRR. It was a bit of a seminal moment for British homegrown

Twin infinitives:
Orbital's Phil (left)
and Paul bring
the experimental
underground sound
to the masses.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE



● Paul Hartnoll
(Orbital)



● Phil Hartnoll
(Orbital)



● Jazzy M (DJ, UK
house godfather)



● Pete Tong
(DJ, A&R at FFRR
Records)



● Mixmaster
Morris (artiste
and tourmate)



● Helen Mead
(dance music
journalist)

electronic music; before them we had DJs going into studios with the help of engineers – S'Express, Bomb The Bass, M/A/R/R/S – learning how to make records cut-and-paste style. Then the next big wave was the talent doing everything themselves: The Prodigy, Underworld, The Chemical Brothers and Leftfield. And Orbital really set the tone for that.

Helen Mead: My first thought on getting the record was, "Wait, this isn't The Orb!" And second – and this is how trendy everything had become – I thought, "Oh they're supposed to be named after orbital raves? God that's so over." But with their live shows, they started something else. At the time I had such a battle to make people realise that there could be any link between dance music and live music, whereas I knew they interlinked.

Paul: We'd only played one show before, as The Hartnoll Brothers, amazingly supporting a local Kent go-go band. But a friend of ours [Johnny Delafons] drummed for The Shamen, and we ended up meeting them [Orbital's first gig was supporting The Shamen at the Islington Town & Country Club 2, February 1990].

Mixmaster Morris: Doing the Synergy tour with The Shamen was their first proper live gig. I took them out to buy sequencers to make it easier to do the live sets, and the first time I ever heard them play was their first soundcheck. Everything was moving so fast in 1990,

and I'll always associate Chime with that. It was in the charts as we were touring, so it just got more and more popular, everyone got more and more crazy. The Shamen weren't in the charts at that point, they didn't have a hit 'til 91, so Orbital got bigger than everyone else on the tour. They were still only getting £10-15 a night like the rest of us, mind.

Phil: When we did Chime on Top Of The Pops [on March 22, 1990], we were a square peg in a round hole. We were so awkward standing there trying to mime – we thought we were being all clever having everything unplugged. Ugh, it was pretty painful. We had a big argument with them asking why we couldn't play live, but at the end of the day you can't refuse Top Of The Pops! Then of course we had Snap! on afterwards doing, "I Got The Power!" and they just showed us up even more.

Paul: Between us, 808 State, The Shamen and their mates, it really felt like the beginning of something, of people deciding they didn't like the old nightclub regime and wanted something new. From there we got involved with [crusty tribal rave promoters] the Megadog lot. It was very word of mouth, it was really about being evangelical for this culture.

PT: They were very much in tune with the free parties, the traveller mentality, the DIY mentality. And they presented themselves as a band from the start. Them, The Shamen, The KLF, I think

they showed the way. To this day, I tell producers starting out, "If you want to be seen as a band, you've got to act like it, not just another DJ making a record."

Phil: Playing it live was where the magic came in for me. It was so simple, just a few samples, the 303 – which was my little baby to mess around with – and couple of other analogue synths, it was really easy to jam it out. You can hear how much we'd go off on one with it on Son Of Chime [released on the *Live At The Brain* album, 1990]. Sometime around this we went up to Liverpool, that guy James Barton who started Cream asked us to do a private do for him and his mates, about 100 people. As soon as we'd played it, they'd go, "Play Chime again, play Chime again!" We must've played it for half an hour, maybe more.

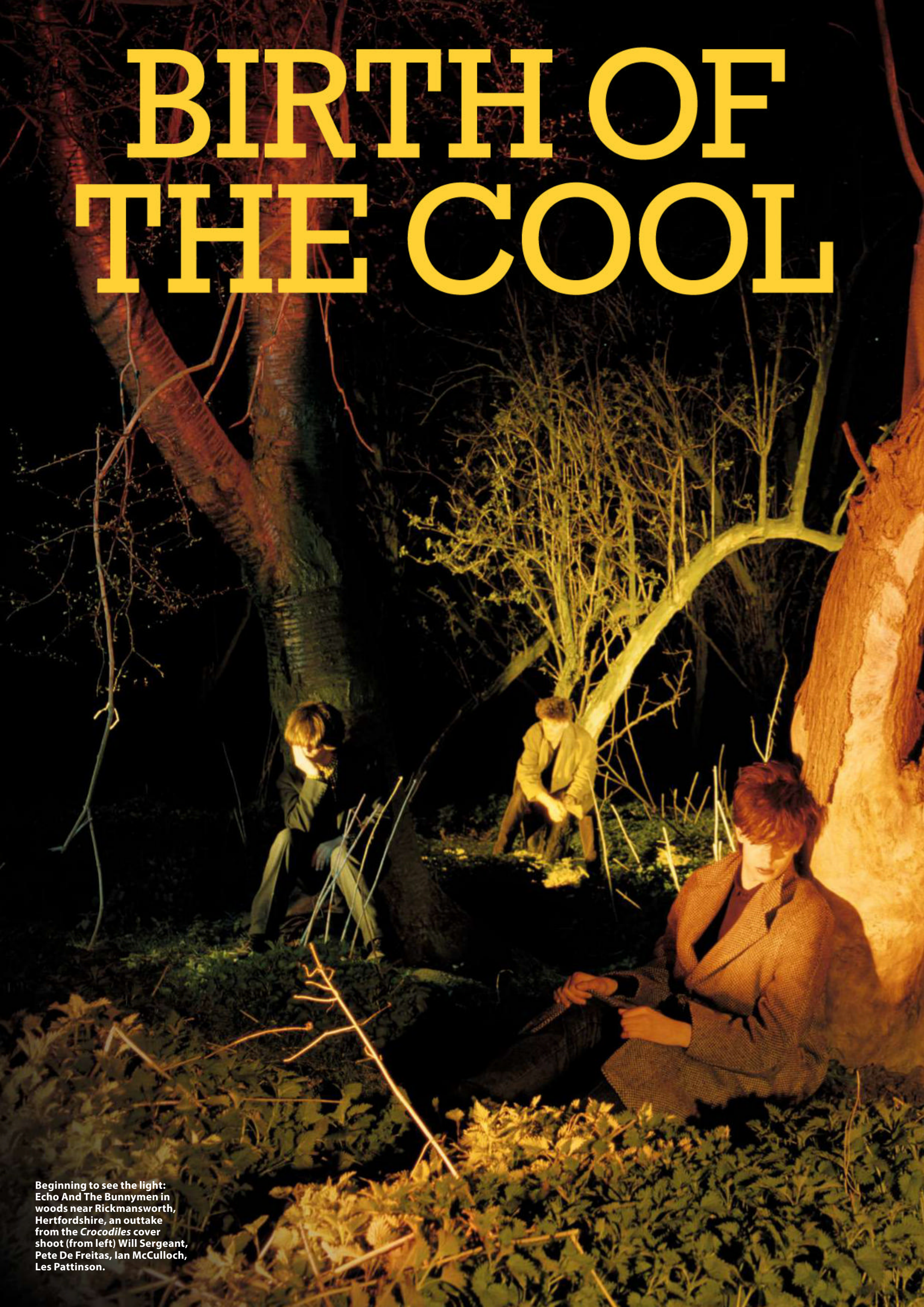
MM: They played Synergy shows all through 1990, and we were doing underground parties at the same time – the whole point of those was to do an all-night party with no DJs, only live electronic music. A classic one was at a rehearsal studio in Willesden – maybe 1,000, 1,500 people, well overcrowded – which kickstarted [touring Megadog rave event] the MIDI Circus and was a precursor to Experimental Sound Field in Glastonbury in 1992, where Underworld, Orbital and everyone played for the whole weekend.

HM: It was 1993 before people realised how big this whole scene had become: that's when you had Aphex Twin, Sabres Of Paradise, Leftfield, all coming through. So Chime was big, but I don't think anyone knew how big it was about to get.


Paul: I could never get sick of hearing Chime. Aside from just being proud of it, it's given me my entire life of doing music. How could I not get a thrill from that?



BIRTH OF THE COOL



Beginning to see the light:
Echo And The Bunnymen in
woods near Rickmansworth,
Hertfordshire, an outtake
from the *Crocodiles* cover
shoot (from left) Will Sergeant,
Pete De Freitas, Ian McCulloch,
Les Pattinson.



Scouse chancers with one 15-minute non-song, to weavers of rock'n'roll mystery *par excellence*, **ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN** flowered on *Crocodiles*, the beginning of their wild trip into legend. But as its survivors recall, 40 years on, genius rode shotgun with outrageous fortune. "The world was lucky the Bunnymen were on that stage that night," they tell **KEITH CAMERON**.

Photograph **BRIAN GRIFFIN**.

A

PRIL 1980. ON THE SOUTH WALES farm where Black Sabbath and Queen made records that defined the 1970s, Liverpool quartet Echo And The Bunnymen are making their debut album *Crocodiles* – an auspicious band and an auspicious record for a new decade. To a casual observer, however, the events in Rockfield's Quadrangle studio one evening would have seemed highly inauspicious. Especially the moment when the band's singer, Ian McCulloch, leapt at his producer, David Balfe, and grabbed him by the throat.

Forty years on, all the interested parties agree something of the sort happened. But why? Why did the singer grab the producer by the throat?

Mick Houghton, the band's then-publicist, thinks it was because McCulloch was incensed at Balfe adding trumpets to Happy Death Men, the album's epic freakout finale. Bassist Les Pattinson seems doubtful. "I recall someone put trumpet on, but didn't we drop it in the end? I do remember Dave would go berserk on the piano, and we would go, 'No, Dave.' He was Mr Commercial and wasn't afraid to admit it. You'd just tell him to fuck off if he came up with an idea. Even though now and again they'd be great."

Guitarist Will Sergeant agrees it was probably because Balfe wanted to add keyboards, doubtless the swirling '60s psych variety he played in The Teardrop Explodes, the Bunnymen's Liverpool friends-cum-rivals. "When he did the organ on Do It Clean, I was *really* pissed off," says Sergeant. "Not as in, 'Oh, I don't think we should have an organ' – more like, 'Fuck off Balfey, we're not having a *fucking* organ on it, you *cunt*.' Mac did get him by the throat on the couch in the control room." He hums Happy Death Men's trumpet part. "Actually, it might have been because of that."

Ian McCulloch, however, brusquely dismisses the Happy Death Men theory, offering an explanation that to his mind makes far more sense: "Balfey was smirking at me."

Shortly to turn 21, the three weeks in Rockfield recording *Crocodiles* was McCulloch's first prolonged time away from Liverpool, and his girlfriend Lorraine. The loving couple were in the midst of their third lengthy conversation of the evening on the studio control room's payphone. "We were sitting around twiddling our thumbs," says Balfe. "It just went on and on. Eventually, I started parroting what he was saying: 'Yeah Lorraine, yeah Lorraine...' Mac said, 'If you say that again...'"

Balfe said it again. McCulloch hung up and went for him. "You fucking twat..." But in furiously lunging towards Balfe, he hadn't noticed a pile of unspooled recording tape on the floor. "I slipped on this tape," says McCulloch, "and ended up grabbing his ➤"

◀ ankles. Eventually I got to his neck. It was funny. He just went, ‘Noooo! Noooo!’” He laughs fondly at the memory. “I like Balfey.”

Crocodiles presented itself to the world via the enigmatic Velázquez-toned tableau of Brian Griffin’s sleeve photograph: the four Bunnymen, dazed and confused amid iridescent woodland at night – a perfect image of how the record sounded. Within stretched a vivid romantic universe, encompassing the sensual world of Villiers Terrace, the remorselessly driven *All That Jazz*, the vulnerable candour of *Rescue*, the title track’s carnal shimmy, the infinite aspiration of opener *Going Up* with its fourth wall-breaching first line: “Ain’t thou watching my film...”

The album diverged from the monochrome clang of post-punk Britain, and indeed the *Echo And The Bunnymen* of just 18 months previous, a band whose first gig, on November 15, 1978 at Eric’s, Liverpool’s Bohemian social Petri dish, featured just three members and a Mini Pops Junior drum machine playing a single 15-minute song which the singer today describes as “the most turgid lump of turgidity”. How had these people, with their parochial instincts, primitive social skills and obdurate musical philosophy, effected such a transformation?

“When we were first working with them, they could hardly go from A to D as a chord change,” recalls Bill Drummond, *Crocodiles*’ co-producer, who would also manage the Bunnymen until 1984, “but when they did, they somehow made it sound great. They made it sound like there was depth there. That’s what makes a band great: four individuals making something that none of the individuals could ever do themselves.”

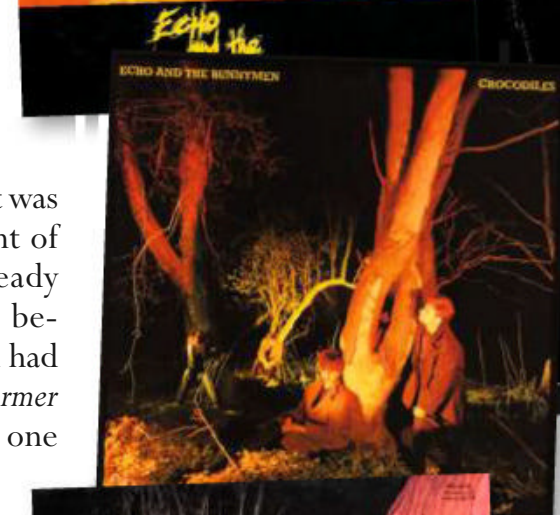
Ian McCulloch, meanwhile, believes it was simply out of necessity. At their moment of birth, *Echo And The Bunnymen* already looked like a legendary band, so it was beholden upon them to become one. “Will had a leather jacket with the cover of *Transformer* on the back. That was fucking cool, no one else had one. Les was handsome. Wore catalogue clothes maybe, but he was a very handsome-looking lad. He was like the Gerard Malanga of Eric’s! And I was born for it. Because of a certain height and a certain build, I looked the business, and could wear whatever I wanted. But at the time, I wasn’t that confident. So to go on with one song and play it for 15 minutes, when it wasn’t even a proper song, and just stand there... The longer it went on, the more I felt, ‘This is where I live now.’ That was the night I knew I was in exactly the right place, right band, right everything. We were lucky we had Eric’s, lucky the time was right. And the world was lucky the Bunnymen were on that stage that night.”

He pauses.

“Make sure you get that bit about the world in.”

THE ROAD TO *CROCODILES* CAME METAPHORICALLY dotted with a series of red triangle signs, warning: Uh?! Happy Accident Ahead! The happiest was replacing the drum machine with 18-year-old Pete De Freitas in September 1979, on the basis that Balfe and Drummond – in London delivering their new Zoo record label’s debut singles by *Echo And The Bunnymen* and *Teardrop Explodes* – saw him playing in the living room of Balfe’s younger brother’s flat.

Thus, sight unseen, the Bunnymen landed one of the great rock drummers of all time. De Freitas was certainly an upgrade on his predecessor. “The drum machine could start and stop,” says Pattinson. “Now and again, Will would flick a switch into ‘Bossa



All that jazz: (clockwise from above) Ian McCulloch and Les Pattinson at the Nashville Room, London, October 6, 1979; the scene at Zoo Records’ Liverpool HQ, August 9, 1979 (from left) Sergeant, McCulloch and Pattinson, David Balfe, Bill Drummond, and Teardrop Explodes’ Mick Finkler; Will Sergeant goes native at Rockfield: the *Rescue* single and *Crocodiles* sleeves.

Nova’ for the middle-eight. Pete came along and brought life to the songs.”

Under the sergeant-majorish Balfe’s tutelage, the newly configured band began rehearsing five days a week, thanks to the patronage of Gladys Palmer, whose son Yorkie, an Eric’s cling-on, persuaded her to let local bands rehearse in their low-ceiling’d but spacious basement. “Without Yorkie and Gladys, the Bunnymen wouldn’t have got going,” says Balfe. “They’d make a row there nearly every afternoon, didn’t cost them a penny, and Gladys would have them up for tea and cake after. I had an exercise book full of structures of songs we were honing, because they tended to just keep a riff going for half the afternoon.”

McCulloch concurs: “Balfey was all over it, he was brilliant. Especially with the drums. Pete could play drums that were in the wrong place, but in the wrong place as a pattern. ‘Wow, he’s fucking good!’ Our template of how to play was the first Velvets album: hit that chord, don’t play too many. Will was always throwing ’em in, but he didn’t know the actual chords. I was playing a major, and he was playing a minor. Like, what am I trying to sing to? But maybe it was part of the sound.”

“I didn’t know the notes went in alphabetical order until years later,” says Sergeant. “Except for Pete, who actually did know how to play, none of us knew how to structure things properly. That’s probably why things didn’t follow rock cliché routes, where you



**“I SLIPPED ON THIS TAPE
AND ENDED UP GRABBING
BALFEY’S ANKLES.
EVENTUALLY I GOT TO
HIS NECK.” IAN McCULLOCH**

know what’s coming next. We saw so many bands at Eric’s that we thought were shit, or too old, or could play too well. If anyone could play too well, we were: ‘Don’t like them, they can play too well.’ Corny, the stuff you’ve heard a million times on Eagles records.”

Even beyond the happenstance of Balfey’s brother’s posh mate or Yorkie’s mum and her big basement, Echo And The Bunnymen’s future might have evaporated had the band not offered a lift to a familiar Eric’s face stood at Smithdown Road bus stop near Penny Lane one rainy day in January 1980. Ian Broudie gratefully squeezed into the Bunnyvan, AKA Les Pattinson’s clapped out blue 1968 Ford Transit, purchased with the bassist’s wages from his apprenticeship at Douglas Boatyard near Preston. “What’s this you’re listening to?” Broudie asked. “It sounds good.”

“It’s us,” the Bunnymen replied. “We hate it.”

Newly signed to Korova, an adjunct of Warner Music Publishing set up by Rob Dickins, who knew Bill Drummond from the latter’s tenure in art-punks Big In Japan, the Bunnymen had returned from a first visit to Rockfield disheartened with the version of Villiers Terrace they’d recorded with engineer Pat Moran. “I said, ‘Play it again! I think it is good, you just need to arrange it,’” Broudie recalls. “A very throwaway conversation.”

At 21, slightly older than McCulloch and slightly younger than Pattinson and Sergeant, Broudie had also been in Big In Japan, and

was now a member of Mercury-signed new wave outfit Original Mirrors. He initially demurred when invited by Drummond to produce Echo And The Bunnymen, but then agreed to a rehearsal session, where the band ran through their newest song, Rescue. Two things immediately struck Broudie: there was a great guitar riff buried amid Sergeant’s busy playing; and McCulloch’s lyric.

“Mac would kind of mumble – he wasn’t sure whether anyone liked the lyric. I remember saying to him: ‘This is fantastic. That line, ‘Is this the blues I’m singing’, really resonates with me. I don’t think you can only sing that once, I think you have to sing it three or four times and get more emotional each time you sing it.”

Having made space for McCulloch’s disarming voice and words, Broudie excavated Sergeant’s “dang dang dang dang-dang” motif and placed it on its own at the top of the song. Over the weekend of February 10-12, he produced Rescue and Pride, another reject from the Pat Moran session, at Eden Studios in London: double-tracking Sergeant’s guitar on Rescue, clearing space for McCulloch’s extraordinary sob-soar vocal on Pride, generally marvelling at the utilitarian geometric power of Pattinson and De Freitas. “I’d never produced anything,” he says. “They were my mates. I just think I gave them a kind of self-confidence to hear themselves.”

Rescue became the fully-formed Bunnymen’s new single, released on May 5, McCulloch’s 21st birthday, exactly 12 months after its predecessor Pictures On My Wall. Suddenly, here was the band’s signature sound. “I couldn’t believe the quality,” says Drummond. “It far outshone what I was expecting.” ➤

"WHAT INSANE BEAUTY!"

Six notable Bunnyfans take their pick from 40 years of Bunnysongs.

FAN WAYNE COYNE, THE FLAMING LIPS

SONG OCEAN RAIN (ON OCEAN RAIN, 1984)



"Being a young guy in America at the time, they were kind of like our Beatles. For me, the peak was Ocean Rain closing that album. I

thought, We're living in a new world here. No other English band from that post-punk/new wave scene was doing that kind of emotional music. The Cutter had that string thing going on before the more ornate arrangements on *Ocean Rain*, and that was like, 'Fuck, what insane beauty!' Ian McCulloch is such a great singer and lyricist, and I always liked their understated power. The Bunnymen were a huge inspiration."

FAN KELLEY STOLTZ, SOLO ARTIST/LIVE BUNNYMEN GUITARIST 2016-2018

SONG GOING UP (ON CROCODILES)

"The Bunnymen are masters of mood. It's all about light and darkness. The way *Going Up* builds from nothing to a smashing crescendo of drums, bass and chords, then Pete's drum roll bringing in the lyric... Bands talk about the Pixies being masters of the quiet-loud thing, but the Bunnymen were there first. Listening to that song in my bedroom as a 14-year-old kid was the closest you'd get to tripping. There's a reason they start their sets with it: it's like a plane taking off, the beginning of a ride. And 'Ain't thou watching my film/Analysing me' – I mean, what a line to open a song with! Forty years on, we're still watching Mac's film."

FAN NICKY WIRE, MANIC STREET PREACHERS

SONG SILVER (ON OCEAN RAIN, 1984)



"I think Mac's such an underrated lyricist. The lyrics from *Silver* are seared into me: 'Swung from a chandelier, what a weird

opening line. (*Sings rest of verse*) It's genius, sheer poetry. When you write down the words, you're often not sure what they're on about; but you just *know*. It has such a flow of amazing phrases – 'a world that's true through our clean eyes'. Will's 12-string guitar solo is so understated on this song and the strings are just magnificent, the first time I realised strings could actually enhance a rock record. There is something so supremely right about them."

FAN JIM KERR, SIMPLE MINDS

SONG RESCUE (ON CROCODILES, 1980)

"Every new Bunnymen release would be truly fantastic and whatever interviews Ian McCulloch gave to promote it would invariably result in a good old slagging: U2 would get annihilated, Simple Minds... even worse! The Cure possibly got off more lightly. Witnessing the Bunnymen live in a swelteringly hot ballroom in Sydney, Australia [November 1981], sealed the deal for them being, for me, the best Liverpool scene band. Beginning their set with *Rescue*, they were majestic that night; likewise, a year or so later when they almost took the ceiling off the Royal Albert Hall."

FAN CHRIS MARTIN, COLDPLAY

SONG NOTHING LASTS FOREVER (ON EVERGREEN, 1997)

"The softest spot in my heart will always be reserved for *Nothing Lasts Forever*, because that was the first Bunnymen song I ever heard on *Top Of The Pops*. But there's loads of others. Mac's voice is one of the Big Four baritone tenors of the '80s, along with Bono, Jim Kerr and Dave Gahan. When Coldplay were recording [second album, 2002's] *A Rush Of Blood To The Head*, Mac would hang out in Parr Street Studios in Liverpool, looking like the coolest thing of all time. We did *not* look like the coolest thing of all time, but he still sat with me, and talked about music. I'll be forever grateful."

FAN DAVID HASSELHOFF

SONG LIPS LIKE SUGAR (ON ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN, 1987)

"I always loved this song and wanted to cover it, but didn't know how. One day I was at my dentist and a guy was there, humming the theme to *Knight Rider*. I said, What do you do? and he said, 'I'm Chris Martin, I'm in a band called Coldplay.' Ha! He'd just done of a version of *Lips Like Sugar* and we got talking about it. I love the lyrics: 'She floats like a swan/Grace on the water.' When I sang it [on the Hoff's 2019 *Open Your Eyes* album], I was thinking of my wife. It's such a beautiful image, and as a band they're just so cool."

As told to Pat Gilbert



➤ Ian Broudie had pinpointed the artistic faultline between the puritan Sergeant and the populist McCulloch, and as a member of their Eric's peer group was able to harmonise a middle ground acceptable to both. But he wouldn't be producing the rest of *Crocodiles*, as Original Mirrors had a European tour supporting Roxy Music. Instead, the Bunnymen returned to Rockfield, where Balfe and Drummond would produce the debut Bunnymen and *Teardrop Explodes* albums back-to-back in six weeks, with the studio's 26-year-old engineer Hugh Jones on duty for both.

"The leader dynamic seemed between Will and Ian," says Jones. "There was a very introverted side of Will and an extrovert bit of Ian, and that always seemed to be the rub. Will had a vision. Ian was very confident. Pete was a very muscular drummer. An absolute powerhouse. The way him and Les locked together was the making of that unit. Les anchored everything. To this day, I remember the backing track for the song *Crocodiles*. That was a single take, no drop-ins. Les was just extraordinary."

De Freitas and Pattinson nailed their rhythm parts within three days. Thereafter it was Sergeant and McCulloch's turns. Hugh Jones quickly learned to press record every time Will picked up a guitar, because if asked to play something again he would deny having played it in the first place. Instinctually the Bunnymen's spirit guardian, Sergeant was pathologically suspicious of any perceived agenda to commercialise the sound.

"I just thought, Everyone's out to rip us off, and what do they know about what we want? If somebody did something in the studio I didn't like, I'd say: 'Sounds a bit like The Police.' That would be the end of it. I didn't even like people buying our records. When we did *Pictures On My Wall*, I'd go over to the office to help Bill package up singles. I was like, 'What if this lad I'm sending this to is a divvy?' (*laughs*) It was all about trying to be cool. Pathetic, really."

The guitarist channelled his angst into the title track's frenzied rhythmic chops, stood on top of his amp, blood spraying from split fingertips onto his Telecaster. "I was trying to be Wilko Johnson, basically – I loved Wilko when he kicked off at Dr. Feelgood gigs. There was blood all over the place and I just had to keep going, take after take, to get it tighter."

"Will was the diehard and he would be grudging about everything," says Balfe. "Mac could be persuaded – he was so ambitious, anything that we told him could make it a hit would win him over. Will wanted to sound like Pere Ubu. We wanted them to sound like The Beatles. Or at least The Rolling Stones."

"Will almost thought changing chord was selling out," Bill Drummond adds. "He is the soul of the band in so many ways."

As with the Broudie session, Ian McCulloch's performances on *Crocodiles* were revelatory, to the producers and his bandmates alike, now hearing his lyrics properly for the first time.

"They're very grown-up, very worldly," says Sergeant. "He obviously had it in him. On *Crocodiles* his lyrics are incredible. A lot were based on stuff that had gone on around him, and he put it together. I love that line in *Going Up*: 'Rusty chalk dust walker.' God knows what it is – I just loved the imagery. He was amazing. Is amazing."

"*Crocodiles* was just the way we were," offers McCulloch. "Growing up, it was a funny household. We were skint. I liked being on the outside looking in. I was always looking out the window, but never really in it. I think I'm still a bit like that. People did things for me. Like my younger sister Julie. She looked after me, would go to the van for me, for a Topic. So I was insulated and insular at the same time. It's about journeys, all of it. And *Crocodiles* set off all these songs, different options, different worlds, all on one album, with a 19-year-old writing the sodding lyrics."



Combats rock: Bunnies in the snow, prior to the camo's last stand in Buxton, Derbyshire, January 17, 1981 (from left) Sergeant, McCulloch, De Freitas, Pattinson; (above right) engineer/producer Hugh Jones (second left) joins De Freitas, McCulloch and Sergeant for a listening break at Rockfield; (insets) 1981's *Heaven Up Here* and 1983's *Porcupine*.



"IF SOMEBODY PLAYED SOMETHING I DIDN'T LIKE, I'D SAY: 'SOUNDS A BIT LIKE THE POLICE.' THAT WOULD BE THE END OF IT."

WILL SERGEANT

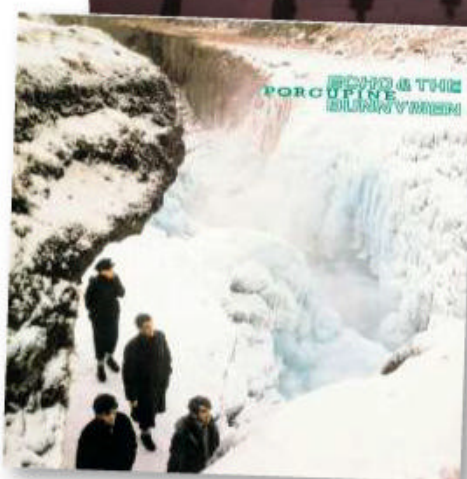
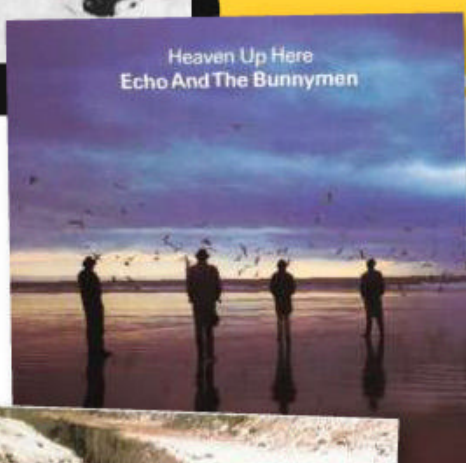
RELEASED IN JULY, TWO MONTHS after the death of Ian Curtis, *Crocodiles* felt like a fresh existentialist strategy: step away from the darkness, begin to see the light. Many heeded the call: 1980's autumn UK tour debuted a new stage concept, based upon the military gear individual members had already adopted. The now fiercely drilled band played from within a psychic foxhole, framed by camouflage nets with leaves, industrial-strength smoke machines, blinding white lights. "Apocalypse Now was out, and there was something about that cool combination of soldiers that didn't want to be in the army," says Sergeant.

Les Pattinson went the full Martin Sheen, smearing his face with blackout daub and wearing a 40lb flak jacket ("I lost a stone on-stage every night"). McCulloch gave it a foppish twist, with fluffy "banana boots" and wrapping a green jumper round his neck, à la Ian Ogilvy's *The Saint*, "on his way to play camo tennis. I was using irony, anti-machismo devices," he notes. Fans copied the look, and by the year's end, a Bunny army was on the hop. For the camouflage set's final outing, at Buxton Pavilion on January 17, 1981, De Freitas shaved off his hair – perhaps an intimation of troubles ahead.

Three further era-defining albums zig-zagged up a tantalisingly mythic peak – the mission was foggy, but the views were breathtaking. Hugh Jones produced 1981's granite-pure *Heaven Up Here*; Ian Broudie rescued 1983's *Porcupine* from internal stasis; 1984's magisterial *Ocean Rain* heralded the exit music for manager Bill Drummond. "*Crocodiles* might have been a classic debut album," he ponders, "but *Ocean Rain* was certainly a career-defining one."

Ian McCulloch is characteristically less equivocal, declaring *Crocodiles*, "the first of four classics on the trot. It pissed over every other debut by any band in that time. I think U2 would agree."

In 2020, the singer still runs the full Mac The Mouth gamut,



from incoherent to preposterous to cruel. He's often very funny, and occasionally not. He does impressions and tells jokes, Shakespeare a recurrent theme ("Knock knock." Who's there? "Yorick." Yorick who? "Yorra cunt! Not bad is it? I've got loads"). But he's also sharp, thoughtful, and reflective. Of his infamous vendetta against U2, he sighs: "I never wanted it to get the way it did. Their only crime was not being cool, and that isn't really a crime. U2 have written some brilliant songs."

Time shifts perspectives, however entrenched, and perhaps especially so during extraordinary times. Echo And The Bunnymen were due to have toured in 2020, celebrating "40 Years Of Magical Songs". It's been rescheduled for 2021, albeit Sergeant, the arch pessimist, doubts it'll ever happen. As and when, though, he'll dutifully take his place stage right and play the classics. "I love playing all the old stuff," he says. "I've got no worries about playing Villiers Terrace until I drop. We wanted to be the best group. And we always believed we were best group." Behind him will be the latest cast of hired hands replacing Pete De Freitas, who tragically died in 1989, and Les Pattinson, who quit the reunited Bunnymen in 1998, disenchanted by business machinations. "Do I miss it?" Les wonders. "I got into music because there were too many old twats playing it. I miss being young."

Meanwhile, McCulloch impatiently awaits an end to the Covid-19 impasse: "Thousands of scientists around the world – all shit!" He inevitably claims the next Bunnymen album will be "unbelievable", then sends MOJO a song that suggests it could be. The Unstoppable Force is a twilight dare with the grim reaper, like Roy Harper's *When An Old Cricketer Leaves The Crease* recast for the third Velvet Underground album: "Anyway, we all know there's a price to pay/The epilogue at the end of play/Soliloquising our lives away/Say hello to the unstoppable force."

Mac chuckles, tiptoeing over metaphysical grains of sand.

"I'm not saying I'm ready to face the unstoppable force, but... preparation's never a bad idea."



john lennon re-imagined

Unseen shots reveal new sides of the home-loving **BEATLE**, while brand new mixes show his solo peaks in their best light. Involved in both revelations: **SEAN LENNON**. “The only relationship I have left with my dad is through his music,” he tells **TOM DOYLE**

a S A FOUR-YEAR-OLD, TURNING FIVE, SEAN LENNON WAS a regular visitor to The Hit Factory in New York between the months of August and October 1980, where his father and mother were recording their joint return album, *Double Fantasy*.

Now, 40 years on, he’s revisited those sessions as an adult, overseeing the remixing of those tapes from scratch, plus many others spanning the 11 years of John Lennon’s sporadic post-Beatles solo career, for a new 36-track deluxe box set: *Gimme Some Truth. The Ultimate Mixes*.

“There’s a lot of songs on *Double Fantasy* that I really love,” he tells **MOJO** from his home in New York. “But when I listen to them, another part of me thinks, Maybe this wouldn’t have been my favourite song if I hadn’t been there when they were being recorded. Generally, the only relationship I have left with my dad is through his music.”

Lennon admits that the process of making *Gimme Some Truth* was sometimes a highly emotional one. **MOJO** gently suggests that, for instance, it can’t have been easy for him to sit in the studio and press the solo button on his dad’s vocal on Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy) – directed at him all those years ago...

“There were moments when it became a bit heavy,” he says. “It tended to be the *Double Fantasy/Milk And Honey* period, which I frankly don’t listen to casually very much because it’s a traumatic period of my life. So, listening to those was very emotional for me, and I can’t say it was fun (laughs). But it was also really nice. It’s nice to get in touch with your feelings.”

t HERE WERE LIGHTER MOMENTS, TOO. HAVING RETURNED TO the original tapes and preserved them in the latest hi-res 96k digital format (alongside Paul Hicks, the engineer responsible for 2018’s *Imagine – The Ultimate Collection*), Sean Lennon was frequently tickled by the outtakes.

“I don’t want to come across like it was a sort of sad process,” he stresses. “My dad was always funny and the musicians were funny and they were enjoying themselves. It’s nice to hear them goofing around. We tried to take a couple of snippets [of banter and ad-libs] here and there. But since this was supposed to be more refined, we didn’t throw everything in there.”

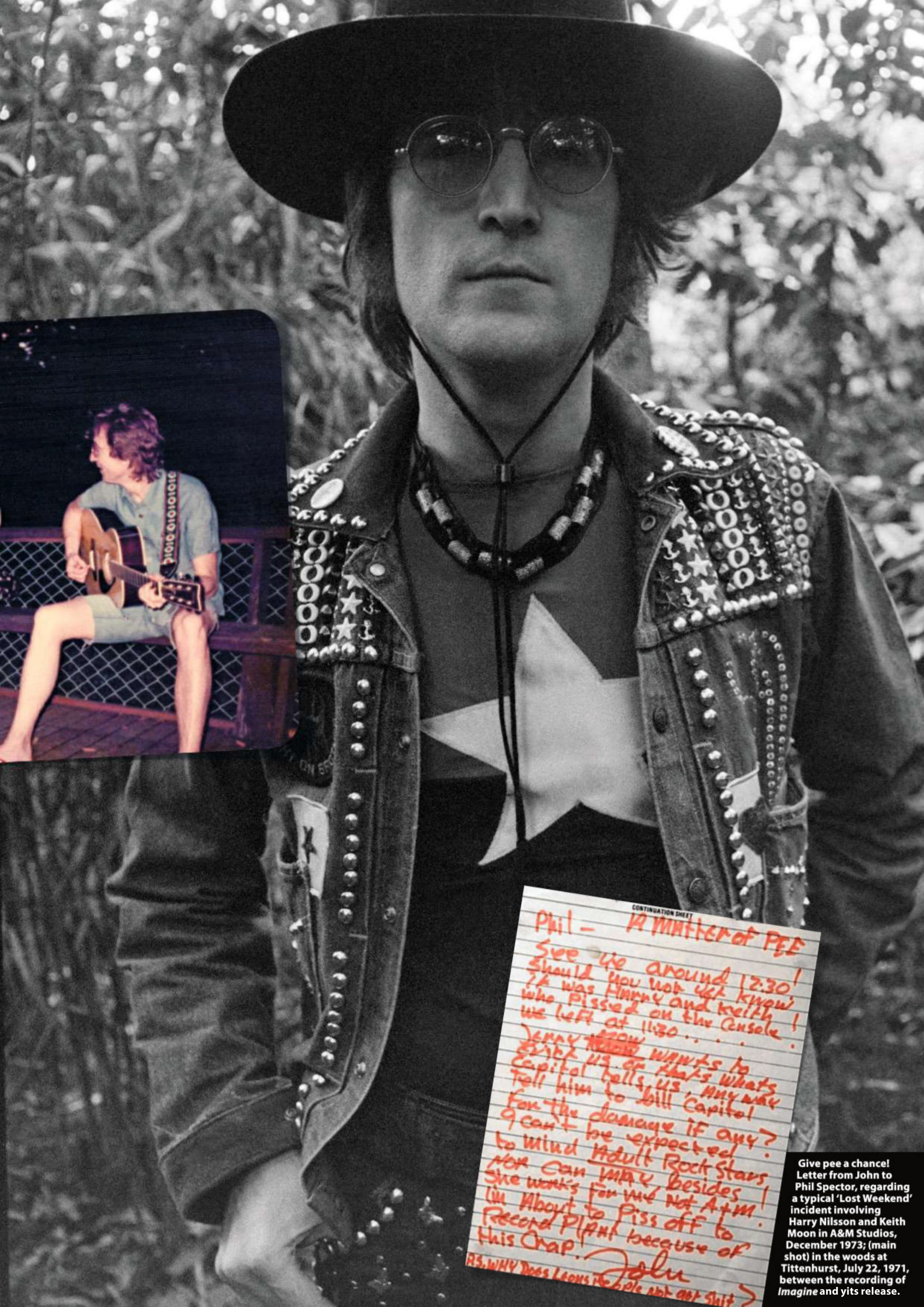
Instead, like Giles Martin’s from-the-ground-up Beatles album reconstructions, *Gimme Some Truth* was intended to bring more sonic depth to the tracks and added volume and clarity to Lennon’s vocals. Sean was keen to source the era-specific analogue and proto-digital effects his dad used when it came to processing his voice.

“I think, almost famously, my dad actually didn’t love his own voice,” he says. “My mom always told me that he would turn down his voice when they were mixing their albums. He would go to the bathroom and she would ➤



A family affair: Sean (above) and with John (right) on twin axes, location unknown; sleeves for *Double Fantasy*, *Milk And Honey* and the new compilation; John, home taping in Bermuda, June 1980. Note packet of Gitanes Caporal and enormous can of Ruddles County.





CONTINUATION SHEET
Phil - **IN MATTER OF PEE**
See - we around 12:30!
Should you not yet know?
It was Harry and Keith
who pissed on the console!
We left at 11:30...
Jenny from
Capitol wants to
tell us on that's what's
Capitol tells us. Anyway
Tell him to bill Capitol
for the damage if any?
I can't be expected
to mind Adult Rock Stars
nor can I be besides!
She works for me not A+M!
I'm about to piss off to
Record Plant because of
this crap. **John**
PS. WHY Does Leons it people not get shit?

Give pee a chance!
Letter from John to
Phil Spector, regarding
a typical 'Lost Weekend'
incident involving
Harry Nilsson and Keith
Moon in A&M Studios,
December 1973; (main
shot) in the woods at
Tittenhurst, July 22, 1971,
between the recording of
Imagine and yits release.



Beautiful boys: (from top) John, Yoko and Yoko's Fluxus colleague George Maciunas in costume in Stockbridge, MA, 1977; elder son Julian joins John and Sean at the Dakota, Christmas 1977; *Some Time In New York City* (1972); John's sketches, inspiring the artwork for *Mind Games* (1973).

◀ sneak in and turn it up (laughs). She was always trying to make sure he didn't get away with burying it. And I think it's true that sometimes his voice was too quiet."

Sean acknowledges that, for some, the new mixes will prove controversial, but points out that our ways of consuming music have changed since the original mixes were done. "It's nice to hear these tracks mixed in a way that is designed to be heard on modern speakers or headphones," he reasons.

To MOJO's ears, the new versions sound pristine and punchy. The likes of Instant Karma! (We All Shine On) and Cold Turkey really pop, and a half-forgotten track such as Angela (the Lennons' tribute to jailed political activist Angela Davis, from their maligned 1972 album *Some Time In New York City*) benefits from the sonic polish.

Some tracks have undergone more radical reshaping, including the live version of Come Together from Madison Square Garden in 1972, pulling back some of the wilder elements of the massed band, and Lennon's 1980 cassette demo of Grow Old With Me, which has never sounded better, thanks to the advances in reverse-engineering audio software.

"The live recording of Come Together was messy," says Sean. "There were a lot of people on-stage. In those days, it was kind of like, 'Oh sure, we can have Elephant's Memory and the session guys and let's all just play.' So, we had to make some choices. You can really hear what the main players were doing over the sort of ruckus."

"Grow Old With Me has always been a struggle," he adds. "There's no perfect version of that song, so that's why I didn't feel as hesitant to really push it, because it was never recorded completely. There was a lot of magic sauce that was put into that

one. Nothing to change his tone or anything. But just to bring it out so we could hear him as much as possible."

FRESH MIXES ASIDE, THE LENNON ESTATE HAS PUSHED the boat out with the 124-page book accompanying the deluxe CD version of *Gimme Some Truth*. Alongside images of the original master tape boxes, oral histories of the songs (featuring archive John and Yoko and other assorted participants), handwritten lyrics and Lennon's Q&A with himself from Interview magazine in '74 (Q: "Have you ever fucked a guy?" A: "No, I thought I'd leave it 'til I was 40"), there are a raft of unseen photos.

One Polaroid taken in the kitchen of their Dakota apartment in 1977 offers visual confirmation of John Lennon's bread-making "house husband" years – as discussed in his final Playboy magazine interview with David Sheff. There's no doubt: here he is, getting busy with the dough-kneading. "I don't remember Dad baking,"

says Sean. "I do remember him making toast every morning and how burnt the toast was. He really liked it black with butter and marmalade. When I wanted more of anything I was eating, he would just cut it in pieces. And he'd say, 'There, now you have more...'"

Other Polaroids feature John and Yoko standing in front of the Sphinx on a January '79 trip to Egypt ("They both collected ancient Egyptian trinkets," says Sean) and an in-his-element John at the wheel of the 43ft sloop he helped to sail from Rhode Island to Bermuda in June 1980, piloting it through a storm that laid low the rest of the crew.

"Singing sea shanties to the gods," Sean laughs. "I was luckily not there. I'm sure I would've been really traumatised by that. The legend has it that he basically saved the ship and the crew."

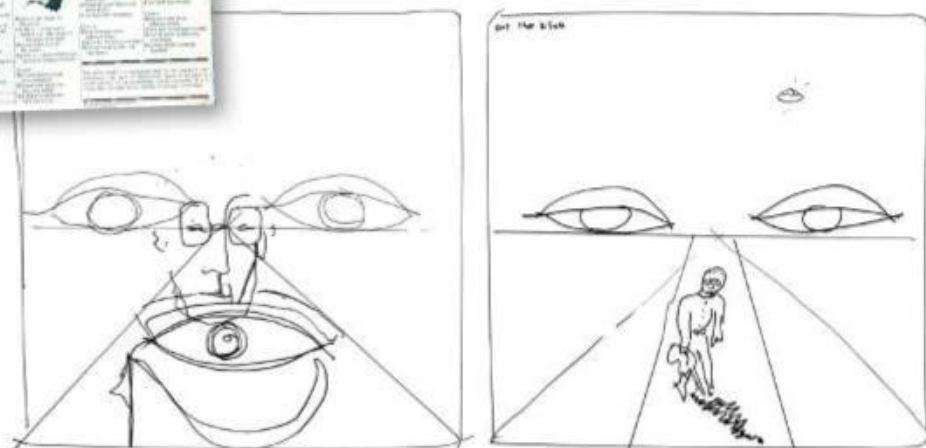
Even more illuminating are the shots of Sean with half-brother Julian – one of the pair posing with their dad, all holding guitars; another where Julian puts a protective arm around a toddler-aged, bottle-sucking Sean. "There's a lot of misinformation and rumours about Julian and I not liking each other," Sean points out. "But we've always been very close. He was a real hero to me. There may have been complicated feelings between my mom and Julian. But that never affected us."

Gimme Some Truth will be released on October 9, marking what would have been John Lennon's 80th birthday. Sean Lennon doesn't like to speculate about what his dad might have been thinking, or saying about that, had he lived.

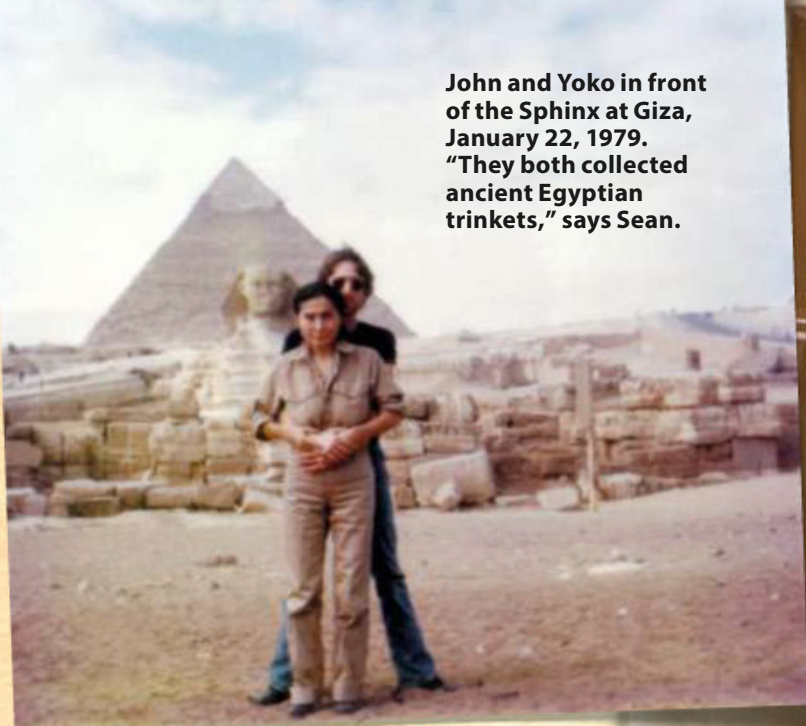
"The only thing I know for sure is that it wouldn't be the same thoughts that he had in 1980," he concludes. "Because the only thing that's sure about John Lennon is that he evolved all the time. He was never the same for two years in a row."



"I don't want to come across like it was a sad process. My dad was always funny."
SEAN LENNON



© Yoko Ono Lennon (8), Drawings by John Lennon © Yoko Ono Lennon



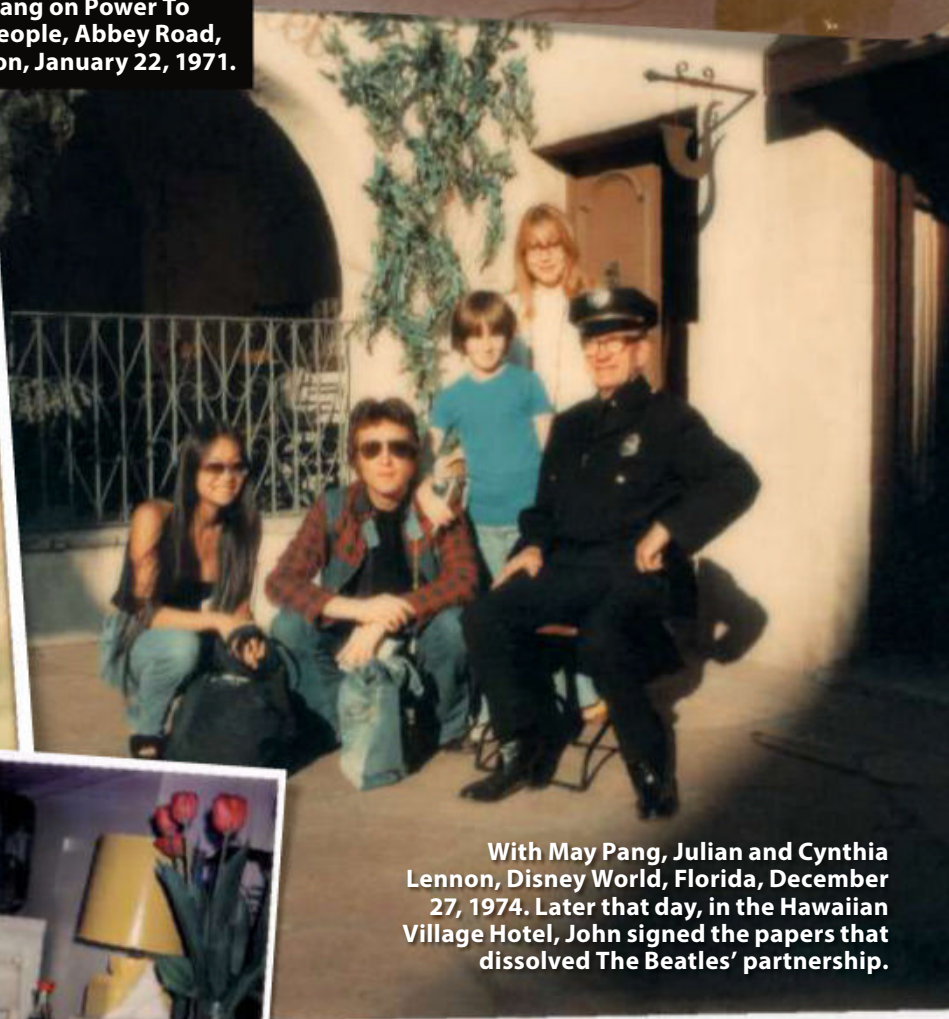
John and Yoko in front of the Sphinx at Giza, January 22, 1979. "They both collected ancient Egyptian trinkets," says Sean.



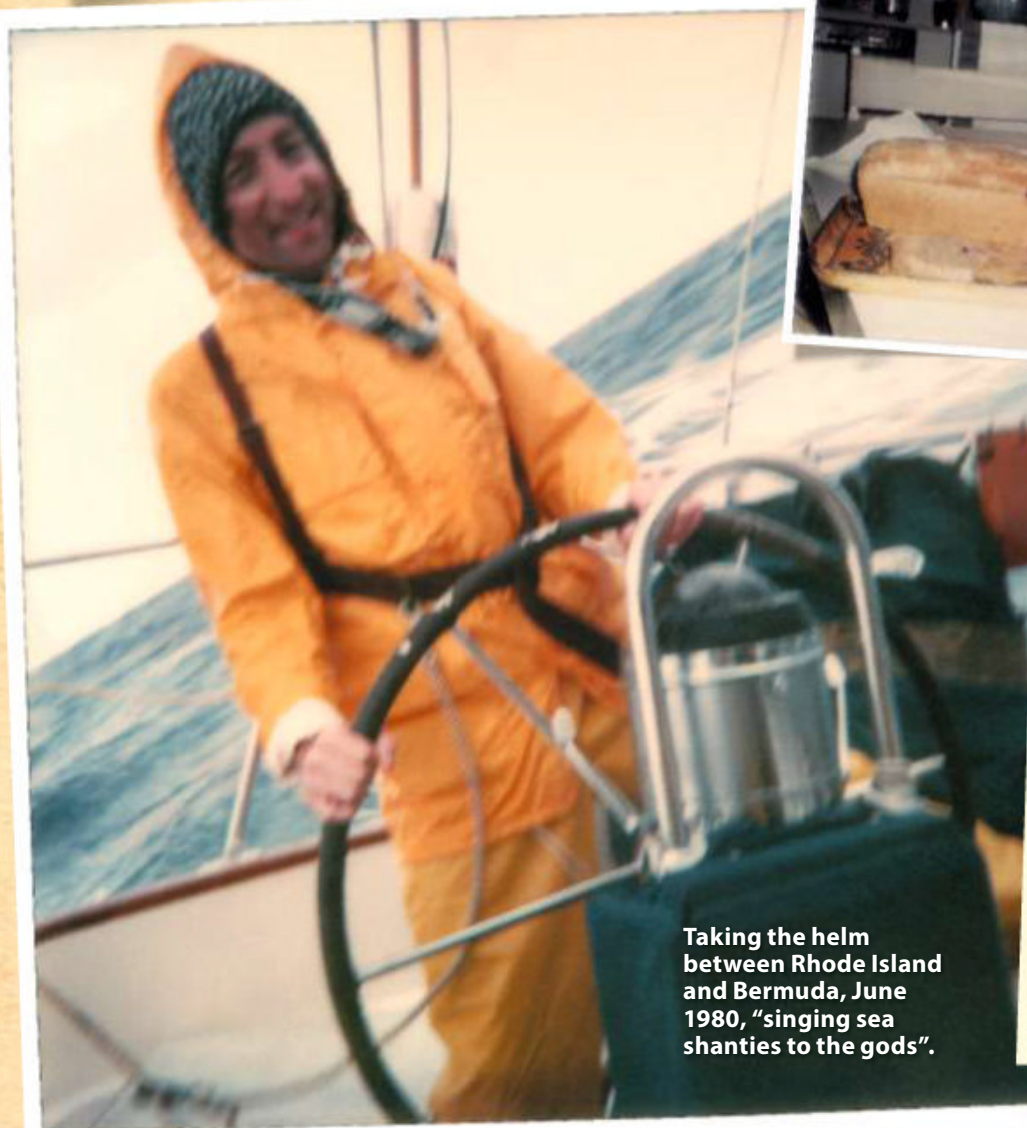
With Phil Spector (red tie), Rosetta Hightower (lilac top, seated) and the choir who sang on Power To The People, Abbey Road, London, January 22, 1971.



The Great Beatle Bake-Off? John gets kneading at the Dakota apartment. Results, centre.



With May Pang, Julian and Cynthia Lennon, Disney World, Florida, December 27, 1974. Later that day, in the Hawaiian Village Hotel, John signed the papers that dissolved The Beatles' partnership.



Taking the helm between Rhode Island and Bermuda, June 1980, "singing sea shanties to the gods".



A selfie, in Japan, 1979: "The only thing that's sure about John Lennon is that he evolved all the time."



The

A rock song on the scale of opera, fraught with drama and sonic daring: 45 years since Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody broke every rule, it has achieved immortality. But where did it come from? And how did four penniless fops come to channel it?

"We didn't have a clue what people would make of it," they tell Tom Doyle. "Didn't have a clue..."

Gong Show

A CHOIR OF PHASED VOCALS CASTS A DREAMLIKE spell. An existential question is posed: “Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy...?” A delicate piano figure enters stage left, and the tormented, remorseful singer reveals a shocking truth.

But that’s just the beginning of this extraordinary, epic trip. There’s a nervous breakdown painted in operatic colours, juggling references to a 16th century Italian clown, a pioneering astronomer, a traditional dance from the Iberian peninsula, and the central character from Rossini’s *The Barber Of Seville*. By the end of its near-six-minute span it’s travelled to heaven and hell amid a pile-up of time signatures, unearthly harmonies, melodic wonders, thumping rock drama and the boom of a Rank Organisation gong.

Forty-five years since its release in October 1975, Queen’s *Bohemian Rhapsody* is arguably the best-known piece of popular music not recorded by The Beatles. It’s bigger than Queen themselves: the exemplar for rock ambition, encoded with clues about the secret life of its singer.

Yet as late as summer 1975, such a coup would have seemed unlikely. Deep in the hole financially, owing more than £200,000 to their management company Trident, Queen were fighting to free themselves of a deal they’d signed three years earlier with company boss Norman Sheffield. 1974 had seen them bag their biggest hit yet, with the vivid production pop of *Killer Queen*, as they watched the sales of parent ➤

Mercury rising: Queen amidst the baroque nirvana of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, Hammersmith Odeon, November 29, 1975 – the week the song topped the UK singles chart.

Getty

◀ album *Sheer Heart Attack* rise accordingly, matching the single at Number 2 in the albums chart. Even so, their bank statements were a depressing sight.

"I think we had 1,500 quid between us," says Queen drummer Roger Taylor today. "So, yes, we were skint, pretty much. Y'know, we'd sold a lot of records round the world. So, we thought, This can't be right... Then the boss put in a new swimming pool (*laughs*). Which he could park his Rolls-Royce by."

Queen entered sessions for their fourth long-player *A Night At The Opera* knowing it was make-or-break. "If the album didn't do well, then we would remain skint," says guitarist Brian May, "and we probably couldn't carry on..."

"In a strange way, though," he resumes, brightly, "those brave steps that we took to force our way out of the old management situation were actually stimulating. It was an amazing opportunity to just cut ourselves loose."

A nine-month-long financial dust-up concluded in a split from Trident and, with the help of Elton John manager John Reid, Queen signed directly to EMI. May remembers Reid telling the group, "I will take care of your financial problems and your business structure. You just go in and make the best album you've ever made."

All Queen needed was the song that would unlock it.

EVEN BEFORE THE FORMATION OF QUEEN IN 1970, the future Freddie Mercury had begun toying with parts of the song that would become *Bohemian Rhapsody*. The singer's initial 1969 doodle was named *The Cowboy Song*, inviting speculation that its murder and retribution lyric was conceived as a Western tale. But Brian May reckons Mercury's working title was a reference to its melody, not its story.

"That 'dah-dah-dah-daaa-daaa'," he sings. "The loping gait of that riff. I think that's all it is. That's what Freddie heard as a sort of Western theme, as they disappear into the sunset. I don't think there was any feeling in his mind that it had anything to do with the Wild West in content."

Mentally transpose the piano riff to plaintive harmonica or twanging guitar and it's easy to imagine it as a Morricone motif. But when Mercury first began playing snippets of the song to the band in '75, the Western title was never mentioned. Among the others, it was simply "Fred's Thing".

Roger Taylor remembers his jaw dropping when Mercury sat at the piano and sang his ideas to him: "The first thing he played was the verse: 'Mama, just killed a man.' I thought, 'Oh, that is a *fantastic* verse.'"

Both the drummer and guitarist agree that from the off Mercury had a very clear vision for the song. "That was typical Freddie," May says. "It was in his head and it was a question of just clustering round and helping him to bring that vision to life. You'll find all sorts of bits in *Bohemian Rhapsody* which we fashioned in the studio. But nevertheless, Freddie had his hand on that tiller, and he knew where he was going from the very beginning."

More than an ambitiously episodic song, *Bohemian Rhapsody* was to become a high water mark studio production. The Beatles were five years gone, but their pioneer influence endured as Pink Floyd, ELO, 10cc and Queen all raced to push the hi-fi envelope.

"The Beatles really were our Bible, all along, in so many ways," says May. "But particularly in studio technique. Of course, we came in more or less where they left off, and we had a lot more toys than they had. More and more

tracks you can record on, more and more tricks you can play."

Sonically, the roots of *Bohemian Rhapsody* go back to Queen's eponymous 1973 debut album and the whimsically-titled but aurally-adventurous *My Fairy King* (skip to 2:12 for early evidence of Mercury's piano arpeggios). But it was with *Queen II*, released in March '74, that the band began to fully test the ever-growing possibilities of the recording studio. It's here that we find *The March Of The Black Queen*, another flighty, multi-movement piano creation, and a distinct pre-echo of what was to come.

"Oh, I think it's the most complicated song we've done actually," marvels Taylor today. "Just ridiculous. Freddie liked songs with lots of different movements in them. I don't know... what would you call it? Symphonic prog doodah. Songs with knobs on."

"Freddie didn't regard himself as a great pianist because he couldn't do the sort of orthodox things," says May. "But the stuff that came out of his head on the piano was just amazing. I remember recording bits and pieces from *The March Of The Black Queen* in my house on a 2-track reel-to-reel recorder that I had. Already he was making something stupendous."

FOLLOWING IN THE STILL-FRESH AND MUDDY footsteps of Hawkwind and Budgie, in August 1975 Queen traipsed to Rockfield Studios in Monmouthshire to begin recording. "I think it was quite cheap," laughs Roger Taylor. "Which was probably a major factor."

Having already spent three weeks in pre-production at Ridge Farm in Surrey – and three more in a rented 15th century house, Penrhos Court in Herefordshire – Queen were well-prepared.

"We'd had three albums," Taylor stresses, "and at that point, y'know, you don't have a backlog of songs because you've been hurling them out at the public. So, we had to rehearse-stroke-write, and really assemble our ideas."

At Rockfield the band, along with co-producer Roy Thomas Baker, recorded the opening and ending sections of *Bohemian Rhapsody* as full band takes, with Mercury at the piano. Then, the team had to get inventive. Even with 24 tracks of master tape at their disposal, the backing vocals for these parts had to be recorded even before there was a lead vocal to follow.

"We had more tracks than The Beatles had," May points out. "But, of course, it's not enough when you're trying to do the complex things that we were trying to do. You had to basically use the tracks as best you could and then bounce [or mixdown] things together in order to free up tracks. So, you had to do it in a particular order for manoeuvring space."

Moving back to London and booking into Scorpio Sound, a facility based in the Euston Tower high-rise near Regent's Park, Baker and Queen pushed the very limits of 24-track recording with the operatic middle passage of *Bohemian Rhapsody*. What was originally intended to be a 30-second segue very quickly expanded. Baker had to keep splicing in extra lengths of tape as Mercury added *Scaramouches* and *Galileos*.

There followed days upon days of Mercury, May and Taylor (bassist John Deacon being the only non-singer) overdubbing and bouncing an estimated 180 layers of harmonies, singing for up to 12 hours a day. Sounds punishing?

"Yeah – fun though," says May. "We were just boys, and it wasn't too physically tiring, really. It was really interesting all the way along the line. And we were always pushing things a little further. 'Can we put a few more harmonies on here? Can we ➤



*"Freddie was getting braver in expressing his inner emotions. I think there's a lot of autobiography in *Bohemian Rhapsody*."* Brian May



Do the fandango:
(clockwise) Freddie Mercury goes grand during *A Night At The Opera* pre-production, Ridge Farm Studios, West Sussex, July 14, 1975; John Deacon and Roger Taylor at Ridge Farm; Mercury with Queen manager John Reid, 1976; logo of Trident studios, where Queen's sound was honed; Deacon, Taylor and Brian May at Ridge Farm; producer Roy Thomas Baker.

"I remember it 'cos my mum was there. I said to her at breakfast, 'All right, mum, we're Number 1.'" Roger Taylor

◀ double and quadruple it up? Can we use three of one person and three of another?' There was a lot of experimentation."

"It was a lot of slog actually," demurs Taylor. "Then the studio broke down. I just remember sitting around, bored shitless, waiting for the tape machines to work properly."

More worryingly, the master tape wore so thin it became translucent. "Pretty scary actually," May notes. "We did hold the tape up to the light and you could see through it. That was when alarm bells rang loudly. We were gradually losing what we were recording..."

When it came to mixing *Bohemian Rhapsody*, Queen and Baker were similarly cutting-edge, attempting to use an early form of console automation. "It was rubbish," complains Taylor. "Literally an oscilloscope with a little round screen and green dots that used to move up and down. I don't remember it working very well."

To balance the third and concluding section of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, the team resorted to the manual, all-hands-on-desk approach. Taylor remembers, "We used to get six of us – the engineer, Roy Baker, and all four of the band – and we'd be working the faders and the tape machines, if you wanted to get tape phasing."

Ultimately, getting the six-minute track to the finish line involved a final mixing desk performance in itself. "It wasn't foreign to us to be clustered around that last bit of *Bohemian Rhapsody* just pushing faders up," says May. "It was definitely a performance, 'cos you'd look across and go, 'Did you go too far there, Freddie?' 'Oh yeah I may have done (*laughs*).'"

The three parts of the extravagant track were finally cut together at Sarm East Studio on Brick Lane, where Queen stood back to absorb their completed work. "We were very proud of it," Taylor says. "I didn't have a clue what people would make of it. Didn't have a clue."

Not all of the members of Queen agreed that *Bohemian Rhapsody* should be released, unedited, as the band's next single. Brian May recalls that John Deacon had his doubts.

"I remember John saying, very seriously, 'I'm sure this could be a hit, but it does need to be simplified and it needs a nice simple title.' So, I think he wanted to call it *Mama*. Now, I could be wrong, and John, don't shoot me if you read this. But that's what I remember. He said, 'Let's cut it down and it'll play nicely on the radio and people can get into it. They can have the long version on the album.'"

"It's not a silly thought, y'know," adds May. "And in a different situation that might have been necessary. That might have been the only way it'd go on the radio. Luckily for us, we were precocious boys and we said, 'No, sod it, we're gonna go for the whole thing.'"

WITHOUT KENNY EVERETT, QUEEN'S PLAN might never have worked. The then-Capital Radio DJ attended a playback soirée the band threw for industry tastemakers at Roundhouse Studios in Camden. As everyone was chatting afterwards, Everett pilfered the quarter-inch master tape.

"Brian woke up after working all night on *The Prophet Song*, hearing the unfinished *Bohemian Rhapsody* on the radio," chuckles Taylor. "Good old Ken, he played it again and again."

In truth, Everett became slightly demented about *Bohemian Rhapsody*, airing the full track more than a dozen times over one weekend. Queen fans rang the station trying to find out the song's release date, and when the single was issued on the last day of October 1975 it began a slow ascent up the charts – initially unaided by exposure on *Top Of The Pops*, to which Queen had developed an aversion.

"You had to go in there and sit in their studio and wait and eventually you'd be called up," May recalls,



"Just boys": Queen (from left) John Deacon, Freddie Mercury, Brian May, Roger Taylor; (below) key *Bo Rhaps* fan Kenny Everett.

grimly. "And you'd go up on their little podiums, with kids being shepherd around and around you, and you would mime to your song. It wasn't a very dignified experience. It wasn't creatively satisfying. So, we gambled again."

As the single entered the Top 10, the band headed off the prospect of another performance on a rickety *Top Of The Pops* stage. Figuring that if *Bohemian Rhapsody* made Number 1, the BBC would have to play the track somehow, Queen came up with a plan to shoot a video for it, at Elstree Studios on the final day of rehearsals for their upcoming British tour. The clip, referencing the gothic cover art of *Queen II* and replete with iconic visual FX, was filmed in three or four hours, using a sports outside broadcast unit.

"We lit it ourselves using our stage set," says Taylor, "and for the side set [we used] just overhead white lights, very simple, to get the shadows on the faces. A guy called Bruce Gowers directed it. We ended very late at night and then drove to Liverpool."

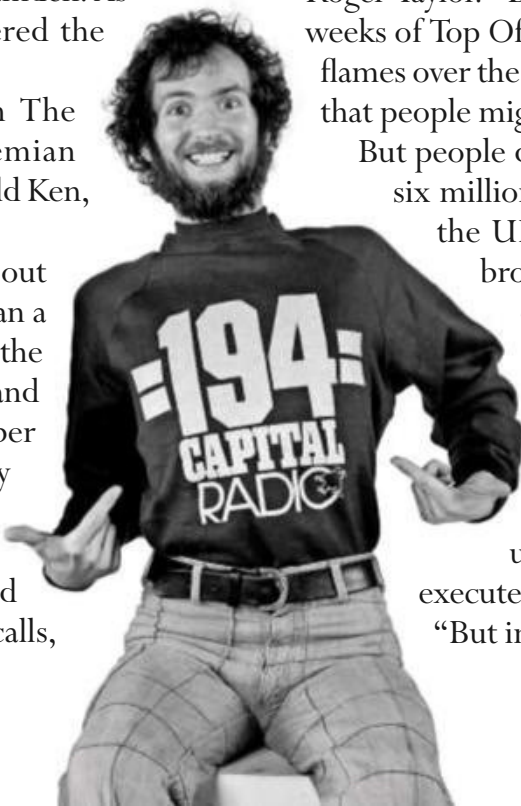
Eight nights later, *Top Of The Pops* screened the video for *Bohemian Rhapsody* for the first time. Queen watched it together in a hotel in Taunton. "We sat there watching this thing," May reminisces, "and it worked like a dream."

Roger Taylor remembers exactly where he was when he found out that Queen had scored their first Number 1 with this lengthy and eccentric opus. "We'd played Southampton Gaumont the night before," he says. "I remember it 'cos my mum was there. I said to her at breakfast, 'All right, mum, we're Number 1.'"

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY STAYED AT NUMBER 1 for nine consecutive weeks. Queen were equally thrilled and concerned by the single's success.

"It was great, the fact that it was Number 1 for so long," says Roger Taylor. "But the fear was of boring people. After about four weeks of *Top Of The Pops* showing this video, they started putting flames over the first bit to make it look different. We were worried that people might get sick of it."

But people didn't get sick of *Bohemian Rhapsody*. It sold over six million copies on 7-inch and returned to Number 1 in the UK following Mercury's death from AIDS-related bronchopneumonia in 1991. Four-and-a-half decades on from its initial release, it is the most-streamed song from the 20th century, having chalked up over a billion views on YouTube and another billion listens on Spotify. Asked to account for the staggering breadth and endurance of its appeal, Taylor says that, like many operatic librettos, it's a universal story, dealing in tragedy. "He's gonna be executed for murder, and he regrets it," says the drummer. "But in the end he's philosophical about it, I think."





Top rank: Taylor, Deacon, May and Mercury are awarded commemorative *A Night At The Opera* discs, 1976; (right) the *Bohemian Rhapsody* gong today, on Roger Taylor's lawn, Surrey.



Suite Things

*The history of the multi-part pop song in 10 'movements'.
By Danny Eccleston.*

The Beach Boys

Good Vibrations
(Capitol single, 1966)

Multi-movement pop in excelsis, where the leaps are so Bach-like in their perfection you barely see the join. The psychedelic "...tations" section from 1:40 and the churchy "gotta keep..." segment from 2:14 are insanely bold. How do you fit so much ecstasy into 3:39?

THE BEACH BOYS
GOOD VIBRATIONS



The Who

A Quick One, While He's Away

(from *A Quick One*, 1966)

Nine minutes of sinister Who madness, packing in a folk ballad overture, Beach Boys harmonies, baroque pop and revoltingly predatory Ivor The Engine Driver bit. Early indication of Pete Townshend's operatic ambitions – best enjoyed in its visceral Rock'N'Roll Circus incarnation.

The Beatles

A Day In The Life

(from *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967)

The ultimate expression of the John and Paul yin and yang – two songs (bitter and tragic; cheerful and stoic) that become a perfect whole, linked by their piano DNA and punctuated by orchestral typhoons. Later there would be the *Abbey Road* Medley.

The Mothers Of Invention

Brown Shoes Don't Make It
(from *Absolutely Free*, 1967)

A classical guy in a rock guy moustache, Zappa quickly tired of a 4/4 groove. Here the title theme – barked *à la* Beefheart – lasts mere seconds before the "TV dinner by the pool..." cod-opera bit – the first of roughly a million ADD digressions.

Crosby, Stills & Nash

Suite: Judy Blue Eyes

(from *Crosby, Stills & Nash*, 1969)

How to draw attention to the three awesome vocalists and distinct personalities in your new group? Kick off your debut LP with a schizo suite (all by Stills, mind) where each sings his ass off for seven minutes. Plus: the pseudo-Spanish finale is hilarious.

Led Zeppelin

Stairway To Heaven

(Atlantic, 1971)

Perhaps Bo Rhaps's most obvious antecedent (just add Beatles, Broadway and baroque) – and, like *Good Vibrations*, so thought-through the parts don't feel like 'parts' at all. The key-change and "da-da-dang" at 5:30 that sets up the tempestuous finale is exquisite.

Wings

Live And Let Die

(Apple single, 1973)



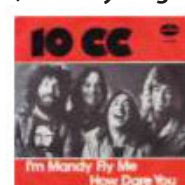
McCartney's genius for song-splicing was learned knee-to-knee with Lennon, packing their fountain of

contrasts into three minutes or less. This is a real smorgasbord – at least four cracking songs to choose from. See also: Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey

10CC

I'm Mandy Fly Me

(Mercury single, 1976)



How could pop's ultimate pasticheurs resist a suite? They couldn't. Cue: a glistening acoustic instrumental

section, Kevin Godley's "The world was spinning like a ball" bridge, and, on the LP version, a *sotto voce* snippet of their own *Clockwork Creep*.

ELC

Mr Blue Sky

(Jet single, 1978)

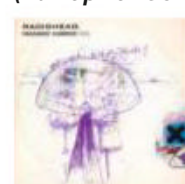


The last part of a larger suite – *Out Of The Blue's* Concerto For A Rainy Day – this is a kind of fantasia on Macca's half of *A Day In The Life* (dig those panting "hah-hah-hah"s). Masterly arrangement, though the Elgar-esque coda was omitted on the US single.

Radiohead

Paranoid Android

(Parlophone single, 1997)



The paucity of multi-movement pop, post-punk, was reflected in the jaws that dropped when Yorke & Co unleashed their own *Bohemian Rhapsody*. A wriggling mindscape building to prog chaos at 3:35, brilliantly wrong-footing quiet bit, and überchaos to close.

Queen's current singer Adam Lambert first heard the song, aged 10 in 1992, in his native San Diego. Having subsequently spoken to Brian May about the lyric, he reads *Bohemian Rhapsody* as a veiled commentary on Mercury's personal life at the time – the narrator obliged to "face the truth" and likely destruction. As Elton John was to discover in 1976, it was easy for a rock star to "throw away" a career – or at least, the more conservative elements of their audience – by coming out as gay.

"Brian said to me," says Lambert, "'Freddie wasn't necessarily super, super upfront and open about his sexuality because it was so taboo. But he talked about it a lot in coded language in these songs.' Now, having gotten to know the band better and asked a lot of questions, I wonder if some of [*Bohemian Rhapsody*] was about his identity. Y'know, he's talking about being who he is and the challenges that he faces."

"Freddie was getting braver in expressing his inner emotions," says May. "And, yeah, I think there's a lot of autobiography in the way Freddie wrote it."

Meanwhile, as a piece of music, *Bohemian Rhapsody* was widely admired – perhaps the most ambitious studio pop construction since The Beach Boys' *Good Vibrations*. High praise came from Brian Wilson himself, who told *Sounds* magazine in 1976 that it was "the most competitive thing that's come along in ages". "That's the first I've heard of it," Taylor tells MOJO today, "but that's a wonderful comment coming from somebody of that stature."

Yet the song's complexities made problems for Queen on-stage – the multi-multi-voiced middle section was impossible to recreate. Famously, they solved the problem by exiting the stage as it played on tape, before returning to slam back in with the outro. "It's a studio creation," May avers. "It would've been silly for us to try and make that kind of sound on-stage. And we still don't try."

These days the old video clip appears on-screen when Queen perform its central operatic passage, as they let Mercury and their younger, recorded selves take over once again. Modern technology has brought another boon: the gong that Taylor would dramatically strike at the track's close has been sampled.

"We don't have to cart the bloody thing around any more," the drummer laughs. "Y'know, for one moment in a song, it's a very big flight case. That old gong is my garden now."

A fitting physical monument to Queen's most monolithic song. There is a corner of Surrey that is, forever, *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

More Queen!

READ ON FOR QUEEN'S CURRENT ERA WITH ADAM LAMBERT, PLUS A NEW BOOK OF NEAL PRESTON'S ICONIC IMAGES.

Modern Times Rock'n'Roll

Covid, heart attacks, bizarre gardening accidents... can anything stop Queen + Adam Lambert? A powerful new live album suggests not, discovers Tom Doyle.

EARLY IN 2020, Queen + Adam Lambert, like many others, saw their tour planning whiteboard wiped clean. Following a leap year show on February 29, at the Metricon Stadium in Australia's Gold Coast, the European leg of their The Rhapsody Tour was hopefully kicked ahead to May 2021.

Fatefully, though, the tour would likely have been cancelled even without Covid-19. In late May, Queen's guitarist Brian May, only weeks after tearing his glutes (in a not-fully explained bizarre gardening accident), suffered a heart attack. Three blocked arteries were subsequently propped open with stents.

"I've been really sick," May tells MOJO. "There was a part of it where I couldn't even crawl across the floor."

"He's had it rough," confirms Queen drummer Roger Taylor. "He's better, he's improving, but he's had a very tough time. Ironically, I wonder if we would've actually completed the tour?"

"Well, that's the strange thing," May adds. "I've spent a lot of time thinking, This is really awful and how could this happen to me?, et cetera. But the other half of me is thinking, My God, isn't it amazing that it happened in this time when we couldn't play anyway? 'Cos I need all of this time to recover. I'm on a three-month heart rehabilitation programme now."

With their tour schedule abandoned, Taylor came up with the idea of releasing a stopgap concert album, *Live Around The World*. Its 20 tracks are culled from the more than 200 shows Queen have performed with Adam Lambert since their on-stage collaboration with the former American Idol runner-up was cemented back in 2012.

"We've cherry-picked different tracks, different performances from all over the world," says Taylor. "There's Tokyo, London, Dallas, Sydney... It's really interesting, 'cos each audience is different."

The live album and DVD (both due in October) culminate in the first-time recreation of Queen's Live Aid set, at the Fire Fight Australia bushfire relief concert in Sydney on February 16 this year. "We've never done that set since 1985," says May, "and it felt amazing. The adrenalin is off the scale."

LIVE AROUND THE WORLD also underlines the popularity of Queen's current incarnation. Back in 2009, there were only eight days between Free/Bad Company singer Paul Rodgers issuing a statement saying that his four-year association with May and Taylor was ending – having produced two big tours and a new studio album, 2008's *The Cosmos Rocks* – and the drummer and guitarist guest-performing with Lambert on the final of American Idol.

Both insist they weren't searching for a new frontman. "The last thing we wanted was to be on the lookout for a singer," says Taylor.

"When we were winding things down with Paul," says May, "Roger and I both definitely thought, 'OK, we've done it now, we've had our little resurgence. We've enjoyed working with Paul, we don't need to do this any more (laughs).' Honestly, we thought that was it. Again. And then there's this guy [Lambert] suddenly. I mean, I hate to use the words 'ticks all the boxes' but, my God, there were a lot of boxes to tick and there he was. So, it was irresistible, really."

"Look, I'd never say a word against Paul," Taylor adds. "Paul, I think, is one of the greatest singers in our business. I mean, he's incredible. But really, he is at heart a soul-stroke-blues singer. Whereas Adam brings all this sort of theatricality and flair that really suits us, probably more."

From Adam Lambert's perspective, there was one moment that provided the spark for future collaboration. He was performing *We Are The Champions* with the guitarist and drummer. "I did a little [vocal] run and Brian kind of looked at me, like, Oh?" he laughs. "I did something a bit different from

the original melody and I think he got a kick out of it. If anybody, the lead guitarist understands what interpolating a melody is. I could tell that I got a little nod of appreciation from him in that moment. And I don't know, but something felt good. Something very like a fit."

After their partnership was made official in 2012, Lambert recognised he was performing a high wire act.

"From the get-go, one of the things I was always concerned about was... how do you replace Freddie Mercury?" he says. "That's just impossible. He was one of a kind. I've always known that and the band has always known that."

"I'm always upfront with the crowd and I'm like, I get it. I miss Freddie, you miss Freddie. If Freddie were alive, I wouldn't be here. But he's not and it's very tragic and these songs deserve to live on in the live performance space."

More intangibly, Lambert confesses to feeling a kind of spiritual connection to Mercury some nights on-stage. "There are times where it feels out-of-body or otherworldly," he says. "The real magic lies in the connection with the crowd. And I think that space where that magic happens is the same type of space that spirit lies, y'know."

"I've definitely felt... something. It's hard to say. I don't know how much I actually buy into the afterlife of what happens after we're gone from this world. But Freddie's spirit feels like it lingers, maybe because people love him so much."

But even with live communions on indefinite hold, there are still no plans for Queen + Adam Lambert to attempt a new studio album.

"We haven't really discussed it," says Taylor. "I wouldn't say it's out of the question. But I think it's a way off yet."

"Is it possible to do something in the studio that's new?" Lambert ponders. "Yes, it's possible. But I don't know. How does that compare to the classics that we get to play every night? I don't know if it would ever get anywhere close. And so, I kind of feel like it's hallowed ground... that we have to tread carefully around."

In the meantime, Queen's most pressing concern is to try to get Brian May back to match fitness for spring 2021. "It's gonna be six months before I know if I have the kind of strength you need to do those shows," he admits. "But yeah... I guess my angel's looking after me, after all."

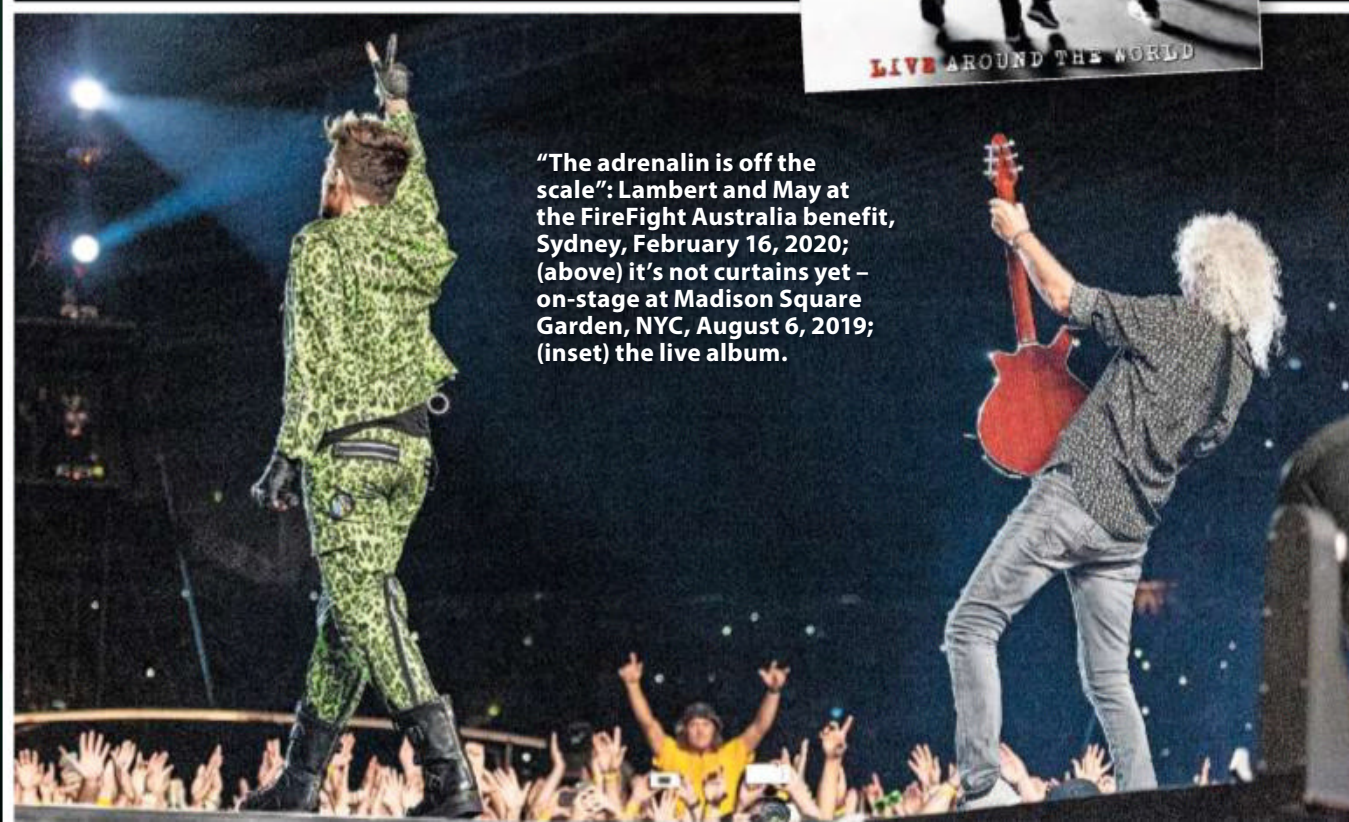
"Brian and I," says Taylor, "we're really loving it at the moment. And we can't go on too much longer. So, onwards, upwards (laughs). Before we really go upwards, y'know."

Queen + Adam Lambert Live Around The World is released on October 2.

"Freddie's spirit feels like it lingers, maybe because people love him so much."
Adam Lambert



"It's hallowed ground... we tread carefully": Adam Lambert, Roger Taylor and Brian May; (left) if the crown fits, Lambert tries on the robes, US tour 2019.



"The adrenalin is off the scale": Lambert and May at the FireFight Australia benefit, Sydney, February 16, 2020; (above) it's not curtains yet – on-stage at Madison Square Garden, NYC, August 6, 2019; (inset) the live album.

One Vision

From 1977, rock smudge Neal Preston documented Queen on-stage and off, braving machine guns and Wacko Jacko. Now there's a book of his best work with the band, some of it unseen. "You just do your job and try not to get shot," he tells Mark Blake.



NEAL PRESTON BELIEVES ONE THING, other than a knack for a snap, helped him gain access to the world of Queen. "It was having the words 'Led' and 'Zeppelin' on my resumé," he tells MOJO from his home in Las Vegas.

Preston began shooting gigs as a teenager in his native New York, before moving to Los Angeles in 1971. He landed a retainer with Atlantic Records, which led to him becoming Zeppelin's official tour photographer in 1975. Two years later, Preston was dragging his shoulder bag stuffed with Nikons across North America with Freddie Mercury and co. "Queen all wanted to hear stories about Zeppelin and their organisation," he recalls. "I told them, Let me work with you the way I do with them. Allow me to go where I want and shoot what I want..."

Queen granted him his wish, and Preston began photographing this most British of groups on their Stateside campaigns for *News Of*

The World and Jazz. "I became Queen's guy and part of the family," he says. "They were perfectionists. And when the pressure was on, they were at their best."

Preston was there when Queen transitioned into US arena-fillers with 1980's *The Game* and the hits *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* and *Another One Bites The Dust*, and joined them on two frankly death-defying jaunts around South America in 1981. "Who knew an AK-47 could get you backstage quicker than a laminate?" he chuckles.

"Neal has the knack, the skill, to always be in the right place at the right time," said Queen guitarist Brian May recently. In 1985, Preston was the only photographer on-stage during their Live Aid performance, before accompanying them on the following year's Magic Tour victory lap. Preston's world-famous shot of Freddie Mercury, bent backwards at Wembley Stadium that year, appeared in the artwork for the recent hit biopic, *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Not that Preston is the movie's biggest fan. "For me, the film treated the rest of the band a little too much like extras," he grumbles.

Preston's Freddie-at-Wembley picture, alongside many rare and previously unseen images, appears in *Queen: The Neal Preston Photographs*, published in October. "A lot of young photographers want to break into the music business and ask my advice," he says. "I always tell them, Find one band you love and stick to them like glue. That's what I did with Queen."

Preston would go on to photograph Bruce Springsteen, The Who, Bob Marley, Elton John, Madonna and numerous film and sports stars. But he never forgot the life lessons learned with Queen.

"They taught me something extremely important," he offers. "Good is only good enough, great is only great, but there is always room to excel..."

Stone Cold Crazy

**Queen, South America
Bites The Dust Tour, 1981**

"I could do a book about our adventures in South America alone," says Preston. "Our security guards on that tour were all secret police. One of them in Argentina told us he'd personally killed 50 people and thrown them in the river. This shot was taken in the armoured car they'd transport the band in, to and from the gig. The fans down there were rabid. But when you go on-stage and there are guys in front of the stage with sub-machine guns, who don't speak your language, you just do your job and try not to get shot."

235



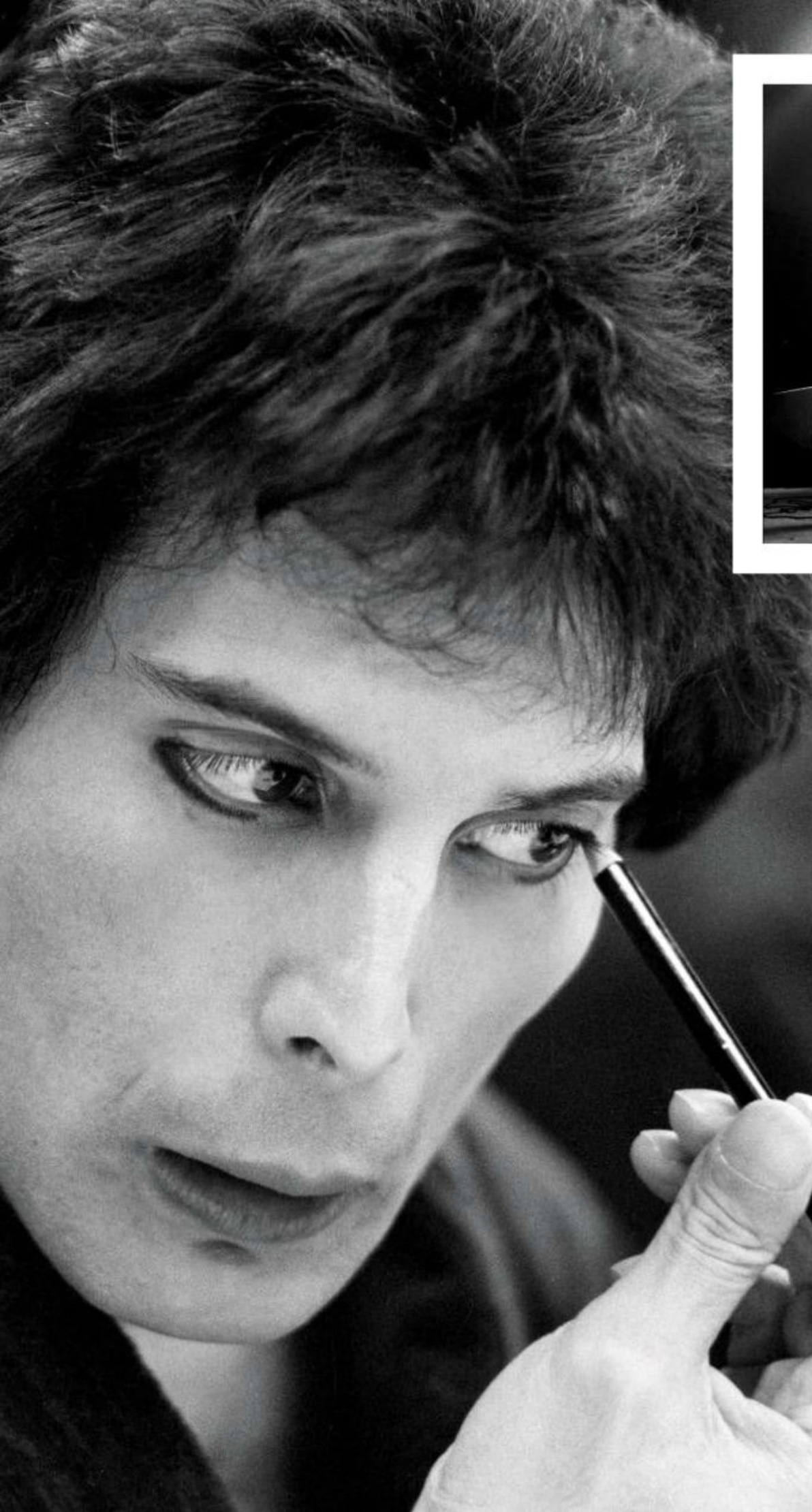
A full-page photograph of Freddie Mercury performing on stage. He is wearing a white Venetian mask and a long, form-fitting, sequined leotard. He is holding a microphone in his right hand and has his left leg extended. The background is filled with out-of-focus stage lights in red, green, and yellow.

Dreamer's Ball

**Freddie Mercury,
Jazz Tour, North
America, 1978**

Mercury in a Venetian mask and sequined leotard underneath Queen's low-hanging, red, white and green lighting rig, nicknamed 'The Pizza Oven'. "I believe this was in New Orleans, the same time as the famous Jazz launch party," says Preston. "There was never a guy on the face of the earth who loved being Freddie Mercury as much as Freddie Mercury did. He loved having his picture taken, even if he wasn't in the greatest of moods – and he was always a master showman."

*"Our security in
Argentina were
secret police." One
of them told us he'd
killed 50 people
and thrown them
in the river."*



Let Me Entertain You

Queen, Jazz Tour, North America, 1978

"Queen were always great fun to shoot," says Preston. "The band brought it every night. There was never a bad angle or camera position. Off-stage, they were all very different people. When I first met Brian May he seemed a little aloof, but that was just his personality. He's still the only rock star to come to my mom and dad's tiny apartment in Queens. I will never forget Brian – all six-foot two of him – standing in their little kitchen, while my mom cooked scrambled eggs at 7.30am. Until the day she passed away, she used to ask me, 'How is that lovely boy from the group?'"



My Fairy King

Freddie Mercury, News Of The World Tour, North America, 1977

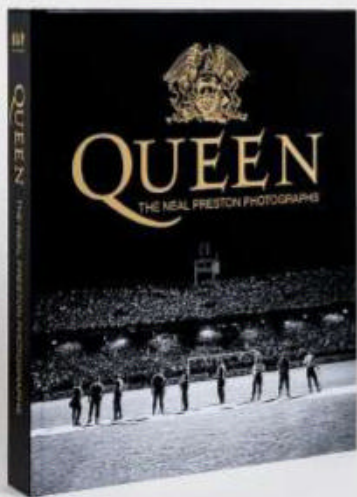
"Freddie had nicknames for everybody and mine was Linda Lens," recalls Preston. "I don't ever recall Freddie saying, 'Don't shoot this or that.' These days Mick Jagger probably has a guy to bring him tea on-stage, and that guy has someone who makes the tea backstage, and *that* guy has someone who buys the tea, brings it to the guy who makes the tea... and so on. Queen weren't like that. Freddie had his people, but I always recall him doing his own make-up."



Spread Your Wings

Queen, California, 1978

Queen drummer Roger Taylor describes their mode of transport here as "our trusty Britannia four-engine tour plane". "I think it was a prop jet," says Preston. "This was either at Burbank or Van Nuys airport. This was one of those rare times when all four band members were together off-stage and I got the shot. As a tour photographer you are there to document everything. To do that you have to become invisible. The irony is, to become invisible you have to be visible at all times, until nobody cares you're there."



All That Jazz

Queen: The Neal Preston Photographs is published by Reel Art Press on October 29.

RPP £49.95 / \$63.89 / €54.82

For further information and a full list of stockists visit www.reelartpress.com

We Will Rock You

Queen, News Of The World Tour, North America, 1977

Mercury, Taylor and guitarist Brian May all had costume changes during this tour. Bassist John Deacon remained in one outfit. Photographed here performing Bohemian Rhapsody, Mercury sports his black-and-white check leotard and May a Zandra Rhodes-designed silk poncho. "To the best of my knowledge Queen's show was never choreographed," says Preston. "But you knew the setlist, and when certain things were going to happen. Brian and I also bonded over a mutual love of photography, and he would sometimes throw me his camera and ask me to take pictures from the pit."



Cool Cat

Michael Jackson & Brian May, The Game Tour, North America, 1980

According to Mercury, it was Michael Jackson who suggested Queen release Another One Bites The Dust as a single in 1980. "He said, 'Freddie, you need a song the cats can dance to,'" recalled the singer. "As I recall, all the Jackson brothers were there this night at the LA Forum," says Preston. "It wasn't unusual to turn round backstage there and see Donna Summer or Meat Loaf or any of the stars of the day. I had been shooting Michael since he was 12, but I didn't intrude on his and Brian's conversation and say, Hey, remember me?"

Body Language

Freddie, Jazz Tour, North America, 1978

Mercury's biker cap and jacket were fixtures on this tour, reflecting the 'Castro Clone' look popular on the US gay club scene. "I shot these in a bathroom," recalls Preston. "Freddie's sexuality was never discussed. It didn't matter. Personally, I think him wearing little shorts and ballet slippers was more of a statement than this get-up. But being that big a rock star, if he decided to wear a plastic garbage bag with the words 'I Wanna Live On Pluto' written across it, he could. I never saw this image as part of the evolution of his sexuality – just something he wanted to wear on-stage. The more flamboyant, the better for me."



God Save The Queen

Freddie Mercury, Magic Tour, 1986

The Magic Tour shows ended with Mercury promenading in a crown and ermine-lined cloak. This shot was taken backstage before the gig at Dublin's Slane Castle on July 5. "Queen were bigger and more bombastic than ever on the Magic tour," says Preston. "Was Freddie's health an issue by then? I don't know, but it definitely wasn't an issue a year before at Live Aid. That's one of the reasons I found *Bohemian Rhapsody* hard to watch [the movie showed Mercury telling his bandmates he was HIV-positive before playing Live Aid – a fabrication]. But it was always the music that was going to drive that movie, those amazing songs."

Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy

Roger Taylor, Jazz Tour, North America, 1978

"Roger was a natural rock star, and I gravitated towards him," says Preston. "He loved being the rock star. He's wearing sunglasses on the plane, but guess who was more toasted? Roger or the photographer? Every night was a late night for us. Just as it was when I was with The Who, Led Zeppelin and Fleetwood Mac. But the rule was always the same: you do what you've got to do and make sure you get your ass on that plane the next day."

The Invisible Man

John Deacon, News Of The World Tour, North America, 1977

"When I saw the Queen film, something caught my eye," explains Preston. "The guy playing John Deacon [actor Joseph Mazzello], was in a band meeting, tapping his foot and shaking his leg nervously – and I remember Deaky doing that *all* the time. John could not have been more gracious to me, but he was the one out of the four I had the least interaction with. They say he was 'the quiet one' – like George Harrison was the quiet one in The Beatles – but when Deaky said something, it mattered. Everybody listened."





The Hitman

Roger Taylor, Gluttons For Punishment Tour, South America, 1981

"Roger and his gong in South America! That shot was at the end of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, as Freddie sings, 'Any way the wind blows...' in the grand finale," recalls Preston. "I don't think Queen's road crew ever worked harder than on that particular tour. The crew were always my guys. 'Crystal', 'Ratty', 'Jobby' – I wouldn't have made it through some of the tours without them. Especially in South America."



Images: Neal Preston © Queen Productions

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY JENNY BULLEY jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

CONTENTS

78 ALBUMS

- National vacation: Matt Berninger's solo debut
- Songhoy Blues find grounds for *Optimisme*
- Trade partners: Working Men's Club
- Dead good: Garcia Peoples
- Plus: Boris, Sufjan Stevens, Pauline Murray, Bernard Butler & Catherine Anne Davies, Future Islands, Carla Bruni, Makaya McCraven and more.

92 REISSUES

- Tales of the city: Revisiting Lou Reed's *New York*
- P.J. Harvey's solo blossoming
- Thin Lizzy's box of rock
- File Under early Fleetwood Mac
- Plus, unreleased Jack Nitzsche, Black Sabbath, Beverly Glenn-Copeland, Sade, Ohio Players, John Coltrane, The Replacements and more.

104 BOOKS

- The New Romantics tell all
- Plus, Rob Halford, Bob Marley, Hawkwind and more.

106 SCREEN

- Roger Waters' combative concert film.

INDEX

A Certain Ratio	83	Glenn-Copeland,	85	Sherwood, Denise	85
Abbott, Luke	89	Beverly	94	Smith, Elliott	98
Ace Of Cups	86	Harvey, P.J.	94	Sommer, Stella	89
Amidon, Sam	88	Hen Ogledd	89	Songhoy Blues	81
Apple	97	Johnson, JJ	95	Split Enz	95
Bahamas	89	Jónsi	89	Stevens, Sufjan	89
Bailey, JR	95	Joseph, Jerry	86	Sun Ra Arkestra	85
Becker, Jim & Lama		Jurriaans, Saundra	87	Taha, Rachid	99
Lobsang Palden	82	Keys, Alicia	80	Thin Lizzy	97
Beckett, Harry	95	Kronos Quartet	83	This Is The Kit	80
Berninger, Matt	78	L7	94	TJO	87
Berry, Matt	86	Lattimore, Mary	88	Travis	86
Black Sabbath	98	Lenker, Adrienne	84	Tree Trunks	83
Boris	88	Lima, Pedro	95	Ultravox	99
Brooks, Billy	98	Manson, Marilyn	80	VA: Harry Smith	
Brooks, The	84	McCraven, Makaya	84	B-Sides	99
Bruni, Carla	80	McVittie, Bróna	87	VA: Jobcentre	
Budos Band, The	83	Morby, Kevin	80	Rejects 4	98
Butler, Bernard & Davies,		Murray, Pauline	88	VA: Studio First	98
Catherine Anne	83	Nitzsche, Jack	95	VA: Door To The	
Canned Heat	98	Nude Party	86	Cosmos	85
Coltrane, John	97	Ohio Players	98	Veirs, Laura	83
Cooder, Joachim	87	O'Hara, Zephaniah	87	Von Hausswolff,	
Dyble Longdon	84	Paradise Cinema	85	Anna	86
Elbow	97	Plant, Robert	97	Wainwright III,	
Emmy The Great	88	Psychic Temple	82	Loudon	86
Fleetwood Mac	96	Reed, Lou	92	Whitney	82
Future Islands	83	Replacements, The	95	Wilkins, Rev John	87
Future Utopia	82	Rodríguez-López,		Williamson, James &	
Garcia Peoples	84	Omar	85	Deniz Tek	88
Garzón-Montano,		Rymden	88	Working Men's Club	82
Gabriel	85	Sade	94	Yarbrough, Camille	94

“Rob Halford’s dry Black Country wit is the perfect complement to his eye-popping candour.”

BEN THOMPSON CALLS FOR A (JUDAS) PRIEST. BOOKS, PAGE 105

Written in the stars

Inspired by Willie Nelson, The National frontman followed his own star into the studio with Booker T. Jones for solo debut. By **Tom Doyle**. Illustration by **ND Tank**.

Matt Berninger



Serpentine Prison

BOOK/CONCORD. CD/DL/LP

WHAT DOES a burned-out touring musician do when they're forced to stop? For Matt Berninger the solution has been: carry on and write about it. Although The National singer's first solo album was made in the months pre-pandemic, it's still very much about being frozen in a moment and trying to process dysregulated emotions. The mood is one of deep soul mining, and sometimes prescience too. As he puts it in *Distant Axis* – audibly vulnerable and baritone-crooning over a backing track that is Roy Orbison refracted through The E Street Band – “There’s a pattern to the way the world is tearing up/I think it’s happening to me”.

Serpentine Prison grew out of another album. Throughout Berninger's childhood in Cincinnati, Willie Nelson's 1978 covers collection *Stardust* – a favourite of his dad's – would often waft through the family home, permeating it with wistful moods. Berninger had long planned a similar project, and began to collect other artists' songs to record, some of which (Eddie Floyd's *Big Bird*, The Velvet Underground's *European Son*) have ended up as deluxe vinyl edition extras here.

But after approaching *Stardust*'s producer Booker T. Jones with a view to working together, Berninger found the veteran musician and studio man was more interested in the demos of his original songs he'd also sent him. These were sketches that had been worked up over pieces of music gathered from various collaborators, including Brent Knopf (Berninger's co-conspirator in their 2015 side project EL VY), The Walkmen's Walter Martin and Phoebe Bridgers' sidekick Harrison Whitford.

Grouping together all of the above, *Serpentine Prison* was recorded in the beachfront Venice neighbourhood of Los Angeles in a mere 14 days. The sense of spontaneity is evident, as is the eye-contacting, musicians-playing-together-in-a-room vibe that Berninger wanted. Gone are the burbling electronics and FX treatments of The National's recent albums, replaced by a classic country soul atmosphere.

En route, batons are passed between the younger and older musos (among the latter, *Stardust* harmonica player Mickey Raphael). In a striking moment four minutes into *One More Second*, over a shuffling groove possibly borrowed from Bill Withers' *Use Me*, Brent Knopf plays a minimalist barrel-house piano solo before Booker T. runs ahead, giving it melodic M.G.'s Hammond organ action. Assured, but non-flashy virtuosity colours the tasteful production, such as amid the murky Memphis tones of *Loved So Little*, where a guesting, violin-playing Andrew Bird singlehandedly recreates the woozy portamento strings of the *Imagine*-era Lennon's Flux Fiddlers.



“Running fast and loose suits Berninger creatively. He has never sounded so free.”

For all this musicianly togetherness, Berninger stands alone. Always brilliant when writing about the spaces in-between us, he returns to the theme of *Light Years* (from The National's most recent record, 2019's *I Am Easy To Find*) in *Distant Axis*, as he attempts to reach out to an unnamed other. Here, the distance may have been lessened, but it's still proving tough to connect. “I feel like I'm as far as I can get from you,” he resignedly offers.

Elsewhere, he's equally strong when detailing the subtleties of human interactions. Someone walks into a room in slow-burning, *Blue Nile*-like opener *My Eyes Are T-Shirts* and “the temperature drops” (through coolness, or coldness?). More pointed, yet open-ended, are his observations in *Collar Of Your Shirt*. “Whenever I approach you/Your body language changes,” he notes, like a socially anxious Glen Campbell. It's in such moments, as a tumbling, country finger-picking guitar conspires with dark uncertainty, that *Serpentine Prison* truly shines.

Midway through the song, the clouds part and the sun pokes through in the middle-eight, as the characteristically bottom-of-his-boots singer climbs an octave to convey the words, “I can feel it getting closer/Like summer on the edges.” Whatever “it” is, is never specified (but is likely, as expressed elsewhere in the lyric, the fear of his partner leaving him due to his ongoing depression). It's moving stuff, as he pushes at the top of his range, his voice gently and appropriately cracking up, highlighting the strained emotions.

Sometimes, the listener has to lean in. If played in the background, the lovely, drifty *Oh Dearie* might sound like another pretty country picker. Tune fully into the words, however, and it reveals itself as a deeply troubling cry for help, our narrator on a serious downer and wallowing in the lows. “How do people do it?” Berninger wonders, “I cannot see through it.” Ominously, he then uses skewed humour to confess to suicidal thoughts: “Bootstraps are in the basement/Guess I'll use my laces.”

If all of this sounds heavy going, the soul and country moves and comparative lightness of the music throughout help to illuminate the darkness. Lightest of all is runaway tale *Silver Springs*, wherein Berninger and Gail Ann Dorsey (reprising her vocal foil role from *I Am Easy To Find*) trade verses and then duet over a slow-trot cowboy song backing, like a pair of misunderstood teenagers desperate to escape their small town. Of course, it's not straightforward either, with its hints of pyromania and backwoods danger, as Berninger feeds Dorsey with lines such as, “You'll get hit by a car, shot by a cousin or slip off a boat”.

All roads are leading to the closing title track, a *Serpentine Prison* being a name Berninger has given to a large, snaking water pipe out near LAX airport, which channels a creek running over the beach and out to the Pacific Ocean. Cages have been erected on either end, to prevent people climbing through it, giving it to his mind a jail-like appearance. The singer uses this metaphor as a springboard into a playful and impressionistic lyric, sung over a muted '60s beat group pulse (akin to R.E.M.'s *Electrolite*), that pulls together all of the album's themes of fear and hope.

Ultimately, Berninger's great escape might be from the prison of indie rock and, with Booker T. Jones at his back, out into country soul classicism. Running fast and loose suits him creatively. He may have built a prison completely of his own imagination, but in many ways, Matt Berninger has never sounded so free.



BACK STORY: MEMPHIS CONNECTION

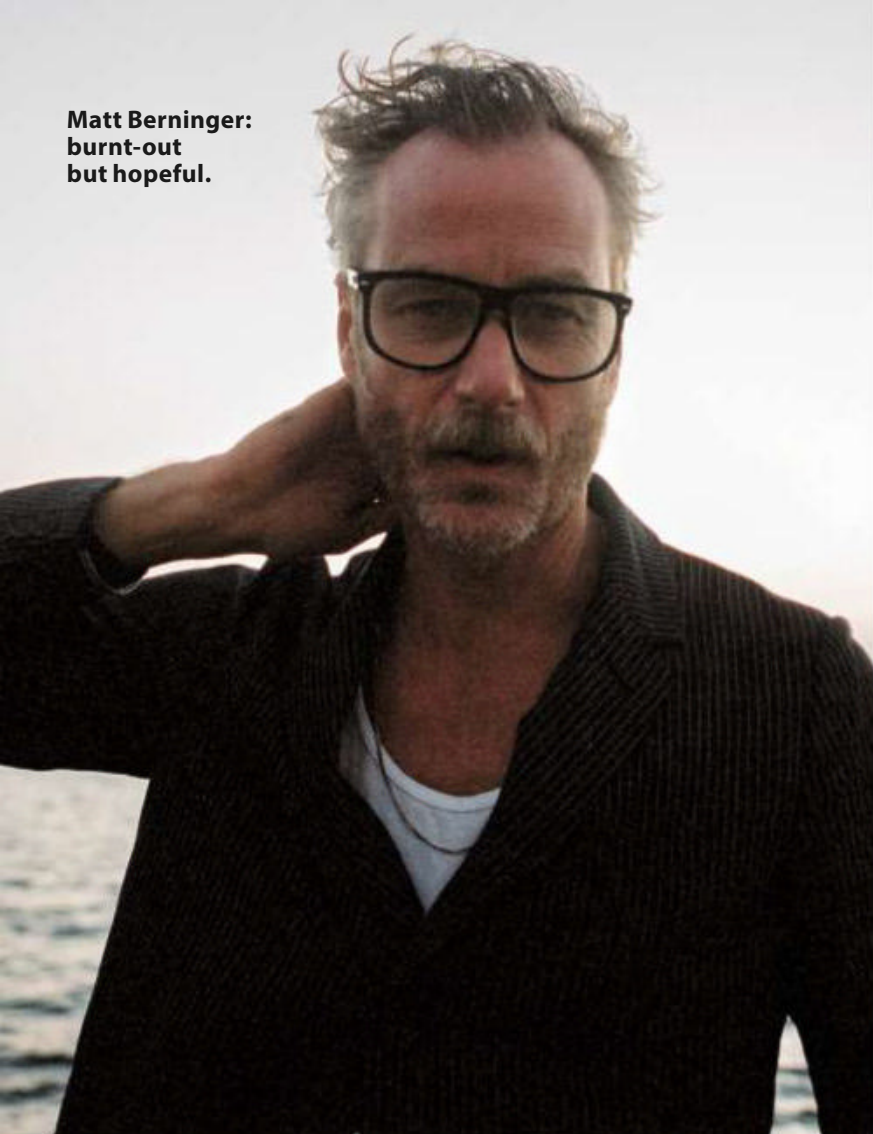
● Matt Berninger first hooked up with Booker T. Jones (above, left) when the latter asked the former to be among the guests on his 2011 album *The Road From Memphis*, specifically to duet with Sharon Jones on *Representing Memphis*. “There were all these people coming around,” Berninger recalls, having been particularly impressed by Booker T.'s skills as a studio ringmaster. “All The Dap-Kings and Questlove were there. Lauryn Hill was in and out and Lou Reed had just left the building.”

Chris Sgroi

MATT SPEAKS! BERNINGER ON BURN-OUT, *STARDUST* AND PLANS FOR THE NATIONAL.



Matt Berninger:
burnt-out
but hopeful.



“I wanted to smell the cologne in the room...”

Matt Berninger speaks to **James McNair**.

Your initial idea was to make a covers album inspired by Willie Nelson’s *Stardust*. What is the appeal of that record for you?

“It was such a part of my childhood. My parents didn’t have a lot of records, but they had about 10. A Judy Collins record, a Roberta Flack record, a Waylon Jennings record, *Stardust* and a handful of others. All those records, they were just on repeat, it felt like for years. *Stardust*, every time I hear it, there’s a glow. There’s a warmth inside. I feel safe and I feel like my whole life is ahead of me.”

When it came to *Serpentine Prison*, what did Booker T. Jones bring to the party?

“Well, when I sang on his record [2011’s *The Road From Memphis*], he was this sort of calm centre in this chaotic little tiny studio with people coming and going. He made me feel so comfortable. The National has never really let a music producer take the reins, but for this covers thing that I started doing, I really wanted a classic producer. We recorded a lot together, but he was the one who really thought we should start focusing more on the originals.”

Why was it time for a solo album?

“I didn’t intend to make a solo album. With *Sleep Well Beast* [in 2017], I started writing faster and editing less and being more reckless. I’ve been writing and writing and writing a lot for a long time. So, I had all these sketches and I didn’t want to start a new band. Then when I handed them over and started working with Booker, it developed into a real vision. And that’s when I was like, ‘OK, I guess it’s a solo record.’”

Are there any particular lyrical themes on the record, from your perspective?

“I am burnt out, and I think the record is a lot about feeling burnt out. And instead of just, like, chilling out, I made a whole other record about needing to chill out (*laughs*). I don’t actually know what the main theme is. I know it’s a lot about feeling repressed and depressed and exhausted and euphoric and hopeful.”

How did it differ from working with The National?

“The National is like a glacial lab... it’s like developing a vaccine (*laughs*). Whereas this was different. This was just everybody live in the room, trying to quickly get the best version we can of this song. We listened to *Stardust* a lot. I wanted that atmosphere. I wanted to smell the cologne in the room.”

So... any future plans for The National?

“No. We just did two records back to back. I think we needed a break for a while. But The National has always been in the best place when we don’t have any plans. That’s when things pop up. If we just don’t plan anything, all of a sudden, before we know it, a new record will be half-baked. But, until that happens, we’re kind of just chilling like everybody else.”



Alicia Keys

★★★★★

Alicia

RCA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Mononym time for an R&B juggernaut, and only a fool would get in her way.

That Oprah Winfrey chose Alicia Keys’ recent memoir *More Myself: A Journey to launch her publishing imprint An Oprah Book* says much about Keys’ clout as the kind of multi-tasking R&B superstar whose CV maps humanitarian and acting exploits as well as musical ones. *Alicia* reportedly finds her in a “more vulnerable place”, but as she pilots Janelle Monáe-like astro-soul (*Truth Without Love*), sweet gospel-folk (*Gramercy Park*) and seductive hip-hop (*Me x 7*), you wouldn’t know it. The woman with a piano sample-library named for her (Alicia’s Keys) barely tickles the ivories here, instead relying on her exquisitely malleable voice, slickly inventive production tics, and winning vocal support from south London’s Sampha and Tanzania’s Diamond Platnumz, among others. If Keys’ politicised altruism is at times a tad cloyingly expressed, it’s a small gripe.

James McNair



Carla Bruni

★★★★★

Carla Bruni

WRASSE/UNIVERSAL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Sixth album finds Bruni impressing in four languages.



Such is Carla Bruni’s portfolio – model, humanitarian, “35th most powerful woman in the world” – she rarely gets credit for what she does best. Interest, yes, but not the kudos she deserves. The worst you can say about her latest is that Françoise Hardy could have recorded it in the late 1960s, which isn’t bad company to keep. It’s her first album of (predominantly) new songs since 2013, working with a team that includes writer Michel Amsellem, producer Albin de la Simone (Keren Ann; Vanessa Paradis) and her sister, Valeria Bruni Tedeschi, on *Voglio Amore*, her first excursion into her Italian roots. Spanish classic *Porque Te Vas* gets a tender makeover, but the headline-grabber will be *Your Lady*, a debut in English that could almost be the most

French-sounding song she has ever sung. Bruni’s trans-European identity has rarely seemed more poignantly alluring.

David Hutcheon



Marilyn Manson

★★★★

We Are Chaos

LOMA VISTA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Shock-rock godhead teams up with Waylon’s son for some real outlaw music.



Touted as a return to form, the self-styled God Of Fuck’s last outing, 2017’s *Heaven Upside Down*, instead found him in retreat, retreading over-familiar tricks. But while his eleventh full-length never quite realises the intriguing Satan-goes-country concept that teaming with producer Shooter Jennings seems to tease, *We Are Chaos* thrives when Manson ditches his horrorcore shtick and actually emotes. The cacophonous, grandiose *Paint You With My Life* possesses a gothic majesty beyond its power ballad roots, while *Don’t Chase The Dead* channels neon, windswept *Psychedelic Furs*-gone-metal drama, and the epic desert-rock moves of *Keep My Head Together* redeem clunky teenager-impressing couplets like “I fucking love you/I love to fuck you”. Manson’s Iggy-esque croak begs for the pared-to-the-essence Rick Rubin treatment; *We Are Chaos* isn’t that record, but it’s a step in that direction.

Stevie Chick



Kevin Morby

★★★★★

Sundowner

DEAD OCEANS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Singer-songwriter reflects on dying of the light with sixth solo album.



For an album made on home ground, *Sundowner* often sounds painfully adrift. Written on a garden-shed 4-track after Kevin Morby left

Los Angeles to return to his native Kansas City, the follow-up to 2019’s *Oh My God* is steeped in loss and confusion, bearings jammed by bad dreams, worse luck and the same hallucinatory wobble as 2016’s *Singing Saw*. “You will not outrun the burn,” he sings on the pleading *Don’t Underestimate Midwest American Sun* and, despite his writing’s steady assurance, these are songs touched by grim reckonings, from the roadkill of *Provisions* to *A Night At The Little Los Angeles*, pushing the sky away with clammy *Bad Seeds* visions. Campfire and Jamie honour lost friends more starkly, but even without explicit elegies, there’s a sense Morby is permanently watching something sink into the horizon, suspending what’s left in beautiful songwriting amber.

Victoria Segal



This Is The Kit

★★★★★

Off Off On

ROUGH TRADE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Back after three years, following Kate Stables’ spell touring with The National.



This Is The Kit have developed a peculiar intra-band empathy with guitars, bass, drums and occasional horns responding to the rhythm of Kate Stables’ vocal cadences. So while, on the surface, *Found Out* sounds reassuring in a folkish kind of way, the underlying mood is tense, restless. The banjo-led *This Is What You Did* is disquieting, with bass guitarist Rozi Plain joining in on backing vocals with the sort of insistent questions that nag away at the sleepless mind in the small hours, and the title track feels like a code that the listener needs to crack. But the overall message is of gentle positivity. *Carry Us Please* is a call to stand up and be counted in these difficult times and the closing song, *Keep Going*, drifts off serenely with the refrain, “Forward is the doing, keep going.”

Mike Barnes



Kevin Morby:
grim reckonings.

Chantal Anderson



Positive energy

A third helping of hard rock from the deepest Sahara.
By **David Hutcheon**.

Songhoy Blues

★★★★★

Optimisme

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP

HOW DO WE feel about a desert blues band releasing an album called *Optimisme*? Their 2015 debut, *Music In Exile*, set out Songhoy Blues' stall succinctly: Saharan Islamists had overrun their region of Mali, causing them to flee south, to Bamako. Their second, 2017's *Résistance* ...well, there's a lot to unpack in that title, too. However, you have to possess a real brass neck in 2020, of all years, to issue 11 new songs and lump them together under the banner of *Optimisme*.

Yet, the three unrelated Tourés – Aliou (vocals), Garba (guitar), Omar (bass) – and percussionist Nathanael Dembélé are determined to walk it like they talk it. The first track to get a promotional push, Worry,

screamed “calculated radio hit”: English lyrics, classic-rock guitars (Keith Richards playing an ngoni riff in one ear, Robby Krieger soloing in the other). Readers may remember Songhoy Blues' contribution to the *Physical Graffiti Redrawn* covermount CD (MOJO 257, April 2015), a pummelling Kashmir; Badala, the opener here, rewrites Good Times Bad Times by way of Killing In The Name Of, and is sung from the perspective of a young woman standing up to the patriarchy, its title translating, crudely, as “I don't give a fuck”.

“We wanted to make a rock-club crowd get involved with Songhoy Blues,” Aliou has said, once more underlining the difference between his band and previous generations of Malian bands. Even if it doesn't bring an influx of Metallica fans to the next Blues tour, I Don't Give A Fuck is a mould-breaker, and between Badala, Worry and the similarly muscular Bare, the quartet back up the promise of their last British dates, when they made the leap from exciting to truly thrilling.



Play the whole album, though, and a more complex picture appears, showcasing a band still tentatively feeling their way into their potential. Tracks open with a fanfare then leap off in another direction altogether – as tropes go, very Franz Ferdinand – the sort of ear worms that make an instant impact over the airwaves but never outstay their welcome.

In fact, five of the songs are shorter than anything the band have recorded before, making the first half of the album a particularly punkish experience. And it's this ramalama (ramamali?) that knocks a star off in the end. It's an adrenalin rush to experience rather than listen to, and the 11 tracks are over too soon. You won't have heard quite enough of Garba's furious fretwork and you'll undoubtedly want more, knowing you'll never be entirely sated.

So, as autumnal clouds signal the close of a dismal year, is *Optimisme* justified? Is the glass half full or half empty? Well, it's a very big glass and – more importantly – what it contains is extremely tasty.

Working Men's Club: the spirit of youth.



Rave new world

Live from Todmorden, Britain's most urgent new young band. By Jude Rogers.

Working Men's Club

★★★★★

Working Men's Club

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

COSY, OLD-FASHIONED institutions don't usually propel listeners back to the sound of explosions of youth culture. But Working Men's Club make music that recalls the pulsing energy of the late 1980s, one foot in the mosh-pit, one foot in the rave. It is released, fittingly, on Heavenly, for whom Andrew Weatherall

and Flowered Up made records 30 years ago, fuelled by the same raw ebullience. However, this album was made by people who don't remember that time at all. They were born over a decade later, in the 21st century.

Working Men's Club's central force is Sydney Minsky-Sargeant, an 18-year-old from Todmorden, West Yorkshire, who sounds like he's plucked his name from a black-and-white photograph above the optics and drip-trays. An underage regular at Hebden Bridge's Trades Club five miles up the road, he spent two years studying songwriting at the British and Irish Modern Music Institute in Manchester. WMC's arresting first single, Bad Blood, was released in early 2019: back then they sounded more like Black Midi and Black

Country, New Road. Minsky-Sargeant's original bandmates were excused, and four new bodies were brought in (guitar/synth players Mairead O'Connor and Rob Graham, bassist Liam Ogburn, and someone, with a Bez-like flourish, called Craig). Minsky-Sargeant's new fascination with dance music was allowed to blaze brighter.

WMC V2.0 marry Minsky-Sargeant's acerbic, half-spoken word vocals with primitive drum machine beats and crunchy synth melodies; their eponymous album title shows the confidence they have in themselves now. Valleys is its hands-in-the-air opener, perhaps the Covid era's first rave classic, about being "Trapped inside a town/Inside my mind". Its burbling arpeggios and piano house stabs won't leave you.

Ghosts of *Technique*-era New Order shudder in A.A.A.A.'s crunchy Peter Hook bass line, and the softer, synth moments of Angel. There's also a delicious, nervous funk about White Rooms and People that recalls both A Certain Ratio and Orange Juice, the band who first took a Roland TB-303 into the Top 40.

A compelling, grimy darkness ripples throughout. Shadows of Soft Cell's Bedsitter snarl around previous single Teeth, and there's mordant wit in a track they call John Cooper Clarke ("He may survive/The 50 foot woman/But still, one day/He will die"). The mood gets darker on the bleak Be My Guest ("Wet prison piss/Stained to cream white cords"), and it rages on Cook A Coffee, which Minsky-Sargeant wrote about BBC Politics presenter Andrew Neil ("Tune into the BBC/And watch me/Defecate"), finding an outlet in the pulsating techno rhythms.

For now we'll just imagine how fantastic this would sound in a cramped club, but the spirit of youth culture is here to be imbibed. Get in the biggest round you can and drink up.



Lama Lobsang Palden & Jim Becker

★★★★★

Compassion

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Buddhist healer and post-rock connect. Transcendence ensues.

Diligent students of liner notes might recognise the name of Jim Becker, a Chicagoan musician and producer with lengthy shifts in Iron & Wine and Califone prominent among his credits. Lama Lobsang Palden, however, will be a new one to even the most esoteric rock scholar, a Tibetan meditation and yoga master and "practitioner of holistic energy medicine" who treated Becker some years back. The music they make together can be initially forbidding: *Compassion* begins,

ostensibly, like a field recording of a Tibetan Buddhist ritual. But gradually, an artful and spiritual meeting of worlds is achieved, as the chants and bells evolve into beautiful drone-folk tunes such as Blessings, Oneness and Purification. Better yet, when Becker picks up his trumpet on Calling The Spirits (Emptiness), the results resemble a kind of Himalayan adjunct to Jon Hassell's Fourth World soundscapes.

John Mulvey

Future Utopia

★★★★

12 Questions

PLATOON/70 HZ. CD/DL/LP

Producer/songwriter Fraser T Smith's epic response to some major questions.



For this ambitious record, Fraser T Smith (Stormzy, Dave) invited collaborators to respond to questions on everything from faith and freedom to race and ecology. The result is a moving symphony of styles and voices, with stand-out track What's The Cost Of Freedom? featuring Kano's taut verses inter-

twined with elegiac jazz-soul sax and former Black Panther Albert Woodfox's quiet dissection of what it means to be free. There's also a redefinition of The Lovin' Spoonful's 1966 classic Summer In The City, featuring Tom Grennan and new UK rapper Tia Carys. However, with 22 featured artists including Stormzy, Dave, Bastille, electro-pop singer Ruelle and Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, the LP is a little cramped. Spread across two albums, this ambitious project would have had more room to breathe.

Lucy O'Brien

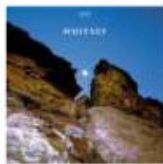
Whitney

★★★★

Candid

SECRETLY CANADIAN. CD/DL/LP

Idiosyncratic covers collection from Chicago band.



There's something of the thought experiment about this long-player, with drummer and vocalist Julien Ehrlich and guitarist Max Kakacek using the selection of songs to imagine different lives for themselves, different

ways of making music after their last album, 2019's *Forever Turned Around*. Their choices are quietly ambitious and off-beam – Bank Head by Kelela; David Byrne and Brian Eno's Strange Overtones; Rain by SWV – but the results often feel curiously polite, wine bar sounds for the early evening Bon Iver set. Katie Crutchfield of Waxahatchee is on hand to roughen up the surfaces a little on John Denver's Take Me Home, Country Roads, while the closing version of Blaze Foley's Rainbows And Ridges is lovely, but *Candid* leaves the impression that Whitney could have pushed these songs a little further out from the shore.

Victoria Segal

Psychic Temple

★★★★★

Houses Of The Holy

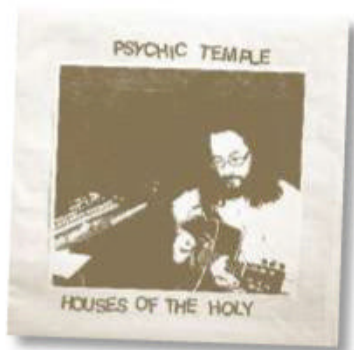
JOYFUL NOISE. DL/LP

Long Beach psych-jazz outlier's magnum opus – not a Led Zep tribute.

A studio auteur with a bulging old-school Rolodex and a vision that straddles jazz, psych, Californian pop and more, Psychic Temple major domo Chris Schlarb's ambition has long outstripped his

success. On his sixth PT album, though, his conceptual audacity reaches a new high. Each of *Houses Of The Holy*'s four vinyl sides feature a radically different band configuration: the raggedy, beatnik-country session with indie types Cherry Glazerr that kicks things off is sweet, but relatively slight. Side two ramps up affairs, enlisting post-jazzers the Chicago Underground Trio and strings to track Schlarb's singer-songwriter meditations. Side three is a monster, as Paisley Underground vets The Dream Syndicate are folded into Schlarb's band – check the Crazy Horse firestorm of On The Slide. But even that's topped by side four, a cosmic jazz extravaganza fronted by LA rapper Xololanxinxo that roughly resembles a daisy-age Rotary Connection. Quite a trip all round.

John Mulvey



A Certain Ratio

★★★★

ACR Loco

MUTE. CD/DL/LP

Manc punk-funkateers' lively first outing in 12 years.



The core Factory band who rarely get fair props for splashing funk, disco and

Brazilian music onto the post-punk palette, ACR perhaps lost that battle as their spikier idiosyncrasies were gradually expunged in a quest for crossover success. Rarely absent across four decades, their overdue follow-up to 2008's *Mind Made Up* certainly has moments that would've been unthinkable in their initial angular gameplan, such as gooey ballad *Always In Love*. However, *ACR Loco* lives up to its title via some blistering dancefloor grooves, including cowbell-propelled house stomp *Yo Yo Gi*, Berlin's gleaming New Order-y hi-tech pop, and *Family*, which auspiciously lollops on a bass line akin to Sly Stone's *Thank You* (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin). Taxi Guy closes out with world-class sticksman Donald Johnson battering over slo-mo jazz-funk, before full-tilt Latin percussion mania takes over, only for another shapeshift towards squelchy house delirium to complete this seven-minute world-party monster. At such times, ACR unquestionably rule.

Andrew Perry

Ditto cool, percussive *Girl From Ipanema*-ish *Another Space And Time*. The 10 songs drift between intimacy and rich instrumentation, with the occasional male voice (most notably in closer *Vapor Trails*). Among the many highlights: *Turquoise Walls*; upbeat *Burn Too Bright*; and lovely *I Sing To The Tall Man*.

Sylvie Simmons

Future Islands

★★★★

As Long As You Are

4AD. CD/DL/LP

Apocalyptic themes and high intensity, from Baltimore's strangest sons.



Six albums into their career, Future Islands have hardened their distinctive, jarring melancholy. It still shouldn't work. Samuel T. Herring's Ian-Curtis-in-the-laundromat delivery often threatens believability, and their retro synthesizers peel too naively. Their combination, however, is blissfully, magically intense, which suits the apocalyptic themes shuddering through *As Long As You Are*, recorded in their hometown of Baltimore. On opening track, *Glada*, they yearn towards hope ("New canopies arrive/From the crumbling framework"). In *Born In A War*, a song pocked with shotgun shells, they explore male fallibility ("a strong man cries"). Despite no huge leaps forward sonically, there are some fantastic

scenes set to song, particularly *Hit The Coast*'s narrative of an old tape being played as a man leaves a relationship behind ("just static – an absence"). As long as they're here, they continue to intrigue.

Jude Rogers

Kronos Quartet

★★★★

Long Time Passing: Kronos Quartet And Friends Celebrate Pete Seeger

SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS. CD/DL/LP

San Francisco string quartet salute the music and politics of the late folksong legend.



At first glance this might look a respectful collection with a whiff of the predictable by the eclectic and right-on quartet. Recruiting sympathetic vocalists – Sam Amidon, Aoife O'Donovan and more – they cover Seeger's big protest hits: *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*, *If I Had A Hammer*, *We Shall Overcome*, etc. But the project is done with imagination and a lot of love. The Kronos, who have sawed through scores from Henryk Górecki to Jimi Hendrix, enlarge Seeger's clawhammer banjo licks into colourful but authentically folksy arrangements. In the midst comes a 16-minute sound collage, *Storyteller*, on which the players respond to archive clips of Seeger talking and singing. With the music

switching from hoedown to lament and back, it's the moving and poignant stand-out here.

John Bungey

The Budos Band

★★★★

Long In The Tooth

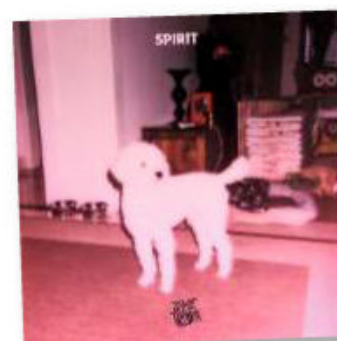
DAPTONE. CD/DL/LP

Cinematic follow-up to last year's V.



The Daptone nonet have effortlessly moved forward, from their 2003 Afro-soul beginnings to the incorporation of a melting pot of influences on this sixth. The album stretches from Ethiopian funk to Link Wray rumble to Morricone soundtrack – the last evident not just in sound but in track titles such as *SNAKE HAWK*, *DUSTERADO*, *THE WRANGLER*. Of course, The Budos Band's playing has always been impressive, technically precise, and more importantly defined by a curiosity and deep understanding of the musics they explore. Here across 11 instrumentals, it's a totally entrancing journey as grooves are saturated by horn swells, eerie organ, bad-trip backwards guitars and drum breaks ready for sampling. Recorded live to tape over five days in Budos Band leader and guitarist Thomas Brenneck's Diamond Mine Studios in Queens, they call *Long In The Tooth* a celebration of life. It sounds just like that.

Lois Wilson



Tree Trunks

★★★★

Spirit

SLOP. DL/LP

Intelligent pop that wears its '80s influences well.

In 2012, Kindness released *World, You Need A Change Of Mind* which offered a romanticised version of the '80s pop sound. Since then, that decade has become a musical touchstone. London three-piece Tree Trunks explore this territory further with *Spirit*. There is no shortage of ambition here. *Spirit* typifies the inspiration and refreshing lack of snobbery amid streaming culture – a huge breadth of influences perhaps without the depth of those that went before. Exploring modern love and blending boundaries, it may be difficult for older ears not to become swamped with Tree Trunks' references, especially when you realise that Nik Kershaw is now a benchmark (*The Word*), while *Girl* is almost the whole of *Songs From The Big Chair* and *Peter Dinklage* in one track. However, it is far more than the sum of its parts: *Spirit* shimmers, it swoons, it's an encouraging debut.

Daryl Easlea



Laura Veirs

★★★★

My Echo

RAVEN MARCHING BAND/BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Portland-based singer's 11th LP. Bill Frisell, M. Ward, Karl Blau and Jim James guest.

Laura Veirs and husband-producer Tucker Martine started recording this album last summer. By the autumn, when it was finished, so was their marriage. A divorce album, then. But it's not gloom and vitriol, it's gorgeous. Many songs are more downtempo than up and some lyrics refer to impermanence, infidelity, even death, but there's a lot of nature images too. If you didn't know otherwise, you might think it a lockdown-inspired album – particularly opener *Freedom Feeling*, where Veirs' intimate voice and guitar morph into something so lush and bright it feels like someone switched the sky on.

Eva Vermandel

Catherine Anne Davies & Bernard Butler

★★★★

In Memory Of My Feelings

NEEDLE MYTHOLOGY. CD/DL/LP

One they made earlier: when former Suede man met The Anchoress.

WITH HER perfect pop voice evoking Chrissie Hynde, Catherine Anne Davies was fielding interest in her 2016 debut as The Anchoress when, mindful of Bernard Butler's success producing Duffy, one major label suggested she try writing with him. Partly inspired by P.J. Harvey's work with John Parish, the experimental glam-pop songs they hatched in 14 days soon veered wildly off-piste, languishing on Butler's hard-drive until writer and



They live to tell: Catherine Anne Davies and Bernard Butler.



Needle Mythology founder Pete Paphides invited their release. Pleasingly, *In Memory Of My Feelings* is an often terrific record with unexpected arrangements, Butler's feral guitars and Davies's perfect diction

distinguishing the theatrical I Know, the lacerating stomp of *Sabotage* (*Looks So Easy*), and the muscular crunch of *Judas*. All this, and a spare, newly recorded cover of Madonna's *Live To Tell*.

James McNair



Astral and earthy:
Garcia Peoples
zero in on the
cusp of the '70s.



tireless standard-bearers for this small but exciting musical cult. If 2019's *One Step Behind* focused on a 32-minute mathematical freakout, *Nightcap At Wits' End* is punchier and more accessible, while still showcasing the sextet's psychedelic *bona fides* – check, for a start, the brown acid Yellow Submarine graphics on the sleeve. The Dead influence remains, of course; the ceremonial grandeur of Terrapin Station might be a decent reference point for something like *Crown Of Thought*.

But from the opening lurch of *Gliding Through*, there's a more bombastic edge this time – a bit of role-swapping within the band now means three guitars to the fore – and a sense that these insatiable music scholars have

zeroed in on a spot at the cusp of the '70s where psychedelia, folk and nascent prog interweaved in fruitful ways. While the brackish fingerpicking that opens *A Reckoning* immediately summons Led Zeppelin's *III*, other antecedents are more esoteric: a hint of Quintessence here, of Dando Shaft there; the stateliness of Popol Vuh.

Most noticeably of all, there is a heavy whiff of Mighty Baby to the likes of *Wasted Time*, a rococo grooviness that's at once astral and earthy.

As with their previous records, the vocals – split between guitarists Danny Arakaki, Derek Spaldo and, occasionally, Tom Malach – are the weakest point; the melodies can be too quick, too high, too ambitious for their voices to cope. It's a small quibble, though, in the face of such ornate and torrential jams. Side two is a continuous stream of music, a suite seemingly held together less by conceptual pretension and more by natural exuberance. When you sound this joyful and fluent playing together as a band, Garcia Peoples imply, why would you want to stop, even for a moment?

The living Dead

Psychedelic upstarts stretch out even further. By **John Mulvey**.

Garcia Peoples

★★★★★

Nightcap At Wits' End

BEYOND BEYOND IS BEYOND. CD/DL/LP

MOST OF US are probably uncertain what happens at a Phish gig, let alone after it. At the death of 2019, the much-loved and much-reviled jam band rolled into Madison Square Garden for a four-night stand of improvisation and japery; who knows, cosmically, where many of the audience were transported? On December 30, though, a few

of them adjourned to Le Poisson Rouge, in Greenwich Village, for an aftershow gig featuring the avant-rock correlative to Phish's freeform exploits. Ryley Walker topped the bill, joined by the guitarist Chris Forsyth and a younger band from New Jersey whose giddy virtuosity had already made them darlings of what we might tentatively refer to as the indie-jam scene. They were called Garcia Peoples, and it wasn't just the Grateful Dead allusion in their name that made them so easy to love for a diverse crowd of heads: here was a band with the energy, skill and positivity to keep the party going all night long.

In just over two years, Garcia Peoples have released four albums, been captured on innumerable bootlegs, and become cheerful,

freshly-cut voice, her jingle-jangle mornings full of emptiness and self-doubt on *Not A Lot*, *Just Forever* and *Zombie Girl*, or lost to circling memories on *Anything*. "I'm starting over," she says quietly as *Music For Indigo* peters out, and these records reflect that quiet announcement: clearing the decks, scorching the earth.

Victoria Segal



Adrianne Lenker

★★★★★

Songs/Instrumentals

4AD. CD/DL/LP

Solo fruits of Big Thief singer's productive lockdown.

It's not as if Big Thief's records have ever been cluttered with modish gimmicks, but these two albums from singer Adrianne Lenker seem to have rolled away from the modern world entirely. Recorded in a cabin in western Massachusetts during the first months of lockdown, this is music that stopped wearing shoes a long time ago, muddy guitar pastoral splashed with birdsong and raindrops. *Instrumentals* is a collage of unhulled, wood-smoked acoustic guitar improvisations; *Songs* draws itself into clearer focus through Lenker's sweet,

Ethan Covey

Dyble Longdon

★★★★★

Between A Breath And A Breath

ENGLISH ELECTRIC. CD/DL/LP

Wonderful swansong from Fairport Convention's original vocalist.



The late Judy Dyble was always wary of being labelled 'folk' – she was more influenced by The Lovin' Spoonful and Julie London, and since her re-emergence from a three-decade hiatus in 2004, she had explored trance, psychedelia and chamber ensemble settings. Her collaboration with David Longdon, vocalist and multi-instrumentalist with neo-progressives Big Big Train,

began in 2015 and her cool, clear vocals and his richer tones combine beautifully in inspired arrangements that encompass the lush borderline-pop of *Astrologers* – in which the false hope of finding love given by horoscopes is drolly debunked – and the lengthy, semi-autobiographical song-story *France*, with its colourful instrumental passages. Lyrically the mood turns more sombre on *Whisper* as she muses on loss and ageing, but *The Heartwashing* closes the album in the most poignant way with the protagonist preparing, in hope "...for what will be the next adventure/Should there be such a thing."

Mike Barnes

Makaya McCraven

★★★★★

Universal Beings E&F Sides

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. CD/DL/LP

Chicagoan jazz drummer recruits Shabaka, Nubya et al for extra jams.

How much good stuff, realistically, can have been left over from a 22-track LP? Another 14 tracks, it seems, given this equally fine second



tranche from McCraven's *Universal Beings* sessions, following his full-album remix of Gil Scott-Heron's *I'm New Here*. The fundamentals remain the same as on the original 2018 album: aqueous jam sessions from Chicago, London, Los Angeles and New York, given coherence by the work of McCraven as community organiser, collagist producer (think a hip-hop-literate Teo Macero) and, of course, percussion wiz. His energy brings an often furious momentum, so that *Half Steppin's* kinetic breakbeats resemble an organic take on drum'n'bass. Occasionally, a familiar tone cuts through, such as Shabaka Hutchings' sputtery tenor, but it's McCraven's gift to integrate radical individuals into his inclusive sound design; exuberant groupthink in action.

John Mulvey

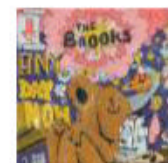
The Brooks

★★★★★

Any Day Now

UNDERDOG. CD/DL

Soul therapy for Montreal, ready to spread worldwide.



A soul-funk octet from Québécois culture's heart, The Brooks write, play, sing and produce music out of Montreal that's firmly rooted in Cincinnati-New York-Detroit-Los Angeles-Chicago. Turn Up The Sound, the penultimate track here, is a frisky testament to James Brown's funk, with later explorers George Clinton and Sly Stone more influential on Game Play's loose Funkadelic booty and the groove of *Never Thought*. Growing out of Soul Therapy nights at Montreal's Dièse Onze jazz club started by bassist Alexandre Lapointe, The Brooks' strong ensemble playing, which is also informed by Ohio Players, Cameo and AWB, has crisp horn/keyboard arrangements, a strong rhythm section, and in Florida-born Alan Prater, a talismanic singer and extra brass-player who landed in Montreal in '91. This is therapy that works.

Geoff Brown

Various

★★★★

Door To The Cosmos

ON THE CORNER. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Around the world in six sides of vinyl.



Tenth full-length release from Pete Buckenham's globe-trotting label is a tasty staycation smorgasbord. The flutey echo dub of opening act Azu Tiwaline, featuring Cinna Peyghamy, sets the tone of a selection whose ethos might be characterised as that of a less insular Transglobal Underground. From the pan-pipes house of shadowy Peruvian duo Dengue Dengue Dengue to the adroitly rebooted Weather Report of Edrikz Puzzle's Jonny Buck Buck, the extensive gamut of styles here can't quite take the shine off the fantasy that the whole album could be the work of one guy with a laptop in his mum's basement. Either way, the culling of a few routine moments of globalist clank would have elevated it all from good to exceptional.

Ben Thompson

Gabriel Garzón-Montano

★★★★★

Agüita

JAGJAGUWAR/STONES THROW. [CD/DL/LP](#)

First generation American expands R&B-slanted world following 2017's *Jardin*.



Garzón-Montano opened for Lenny Kravitz in 2014 and a vocal hook from his first EP was later sampled by Drake, but such signposts mislead. On his second album, the Brooklyn-raised French Colombian resembles the spawn of Prince and Frank Ocean, smitten by Thom Yorke, cumbia, reggaeton and Tropicália – though Garzón-Montano seems most interested in the sensual, mesmeric aspects of those sounds. In other words, *Agüita* ("little water" in Spanish) isn't aimed at pop stardom, but at laying

down a more personal marker. It's not playlist-friendly either, with the occasional jarring transition, such as Fields' love-lorn agony into Mira My Look's sassy charge. But Garzón-Montano's aching vocal over-views a spellbinding flow and, like Prince, he's a multi-instrumental, self-sufficient act able to emulate Frank Ocean's current level of acclaim.

Martin Aston



Denise Sherwood

★★★★★

This Road

ON-U SOUND/EVERGREEN. [DL/LP](#)

An On-U family affair, produced by papa Adrian.

"I am a queen of very rare kind," affirms Denise Sherwood on Won't Bow Down. Her upbringing as 'daughter-of' amid the hectic Anglo-Caribbean runnings at various On-U home-studio HQs certainly puts her musical pedigree beyond reproach. Offered the chance to join the late-'00s Slits reunion, as well as The Pogues' touring band, she chose uni, biding her time. A wise move, as she here finally breaks cover with an assured debut. There's audibly been paternal guidance in the zesty production, plus contributions from 'uncles', including Lee 'Scratch' Perry's rap on junglist opener Music Shall Live, Mark Stewart's authorship of the spooked Ghost Heart, and various beats from late Dub Syndicate sticksman Style Scott. Sherwood Jr emerges as a poised, connective singer, compelling during Let Me In's Portishead-y orchestral drama, but also delivering frequent jolts of empowerment that bring an invigorating generational-slash-feminist freshness to the On-U story.

Andrew Perry

Omar Rodríguez-López

★★★★

The Clouds Hill Tapes Part I, II & III

CLOUDS HILL. [DL/LP](#)

At The Drive-In guitarist's female-fronted side band, on three LPs or a vinyl box set.



It's been three years since Puerto Rico-born Omar's last solo manoeuvre – the fortnightly digital deposit of 23 unreleased albums across 2016-17. With both ATDI and The Mars Volta on hold, that vault clearance led to a pause in OR-L output unprecedented in over 20 years. It didn't last long. An invitation to perform at Clouds Hill festival in late 2018 prompted him to form a live group – with little bro' Marcel on keys, and singer Maria Garcia-Alvez – then stick around for five days' recording at a funky Hamburg studio. Like every triple-decker release since *Sandinista!*, *The Cloud Hill Tapes*... invite the accusation that judicious pruning could have produced a more meaningful single LP. It's not that they're littered with improv detours, more that these tightly structured songs, mostly written on-site, rarely achieve the catchiness of alt-pop stand-out Winter's Gone, or Fool So Bleak's urgency, too often plumbing a default sub-Kills moodiness. Suffice to say: Omar doesn't do editing.

Andrew Perry

Sun Ra Arkestra

★★★★★

Swirling

STRUT. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Superbly representative Ra remnants under the direction of Marshall Allen.



At the time of writing it's uncertain if the joyous carnival of Philadelphia's most venerable galactic outreach institution will ever reach the UK again, but we were lucky to have them as often – and for as long – as we did. From the crowd-pleasing vaudeville swing of Unmask The Batman to the 12-minute ritual disrobing of Seductive Fantasy, this first new Arkestra studio LP in over two decades offers many perfect showcases for their ability to take lounge inside a groove 'til something remarkable happens. Whether you experienced the Arkestra in person and want a souvenir of their earthy brand of other-worldliness, or you didn't but can give house room to one more reason to kick yourself, *Swirling* is just the ticket. And if the first 90 seconds of final track Door Of The Cosmos don't take you to another place, your feet are set in concrete.

Ben Thompson

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN



Paradise Cinema

★★★★★

Paradise Cinema

GONDWANA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Portico Quartet's Jack Wyllie makes magic with mbalax percussionists Khadim Mbaye and Tons Sambe.

AFTER COMPLETING perhaps Portico Quartet's finest album, last year's *Memory Streams*, Jack Wyllie decamped to Dakar in Senegal for a fresh challenge. The results are eye-opening. Transcending what could easily have become a busman's holiday, Wyllie builds on Khadim Mbaye's saba and Tons Sambe's tama drums – sometimes counter-intuitive, at tempos at odds with tradition – his often heavily treated saxophone runs creeping through the gaps like ethereal snakes. It's even more impactful when he tones down the FX to ride Paradise's lilting breeze or punctuate the distant voices just detectable amid Casamance's hallucinatory synthetic drift. As with Jon Hassell's *Pentimento* series, *Paradise Circus* is a dreamy, mutating work, the mesmeric undertow of its rhythmic intricacies camouflaging slowly unfurling melodies as jazz, experimental and world music coalesce.

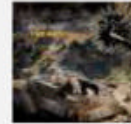
ALSO RELEASED

Django Bates' Belovéd With Norrbotten Big Band

★★★★★

Tenacity

LOST MARBLE. [CD/DL](#)



Loose Tubes pianist Bates celebrates 40 musician's years with a deeply personal Charlie Parker tribute. That doesn't stop him and partners Petter Eldh and Peter Bruun taking extreme license with the source material. Norrbotten's ornate big band skills shine on 12-minute original *The Study Of Touch*, full of Bates's signature quirkiness.

Lionel Loueke

★★★★★

HH

EDITION. [CD/DL/LP](#)



Praised by Herbie Hancock as "a musical painter", Benin guitarist Loueke repays the gesture with an impressionistic swish through his mentor's catalogue, playfully teasing at its nuances. Chiefly rendered one-take on his nylon-stringed acoustic, Loueke's intimate style and breathy vocalese rejuvenate the familiar (*Watermelon Man*; *Cantaloupe Island*) and add unexpected rhythmic ballast to more technically challenging pieces (*Rockit*; *One Finger Snap*).

Takuya Kuroda

★★★★

Fly Moon Die Soon

FIRST WORD. [DL/LP](#)



Kuroda's penchant for genre-bending is unabashed on his sixth LP. Inspired by his stint in DJ Premier's Badder Band, the Japan-born trumpeter meshes home-made beats and samples with live collaborations, which tightens up his rich, funk-driven hard-bop hybrid. For all its rhythmic bustle, it's Kuroda's interplay with singer/trombonist Corey King, sharp riffs and lithe, streetwise solos that hold sway.

Cosmic Vibrations

★★★★★

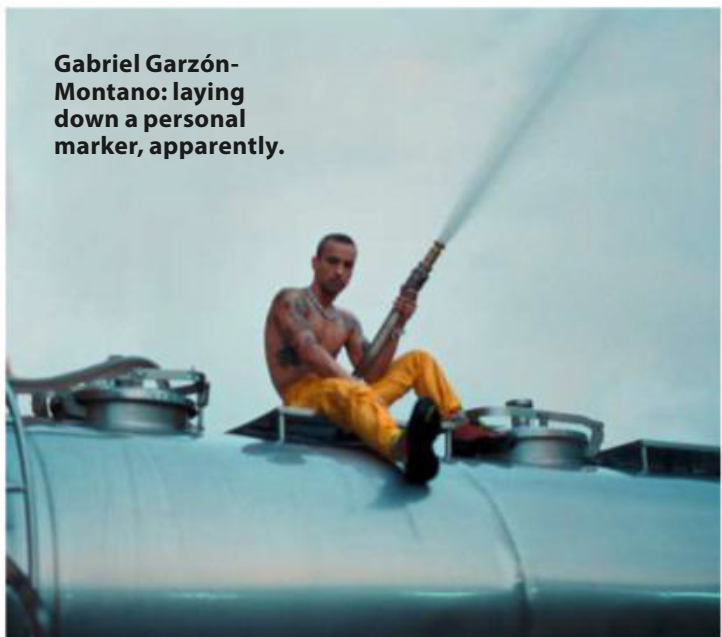
Pathways & Passages

SPIRITMUSE. [CD/DL/LP](#)



Dwight Trible has such a spiritual voice he could wring emotion from an old Argos catalogue. This slow-burn double – spawned from wildly improvisational sessions with Derk Reklaw, Breeze Smith, Christopher Garcia, John B Williams and Pablo Calogero – finds him at his ache-filled best, as in a deep, celestial reading of the old spiritual *Motherless Child*. All human life is here. AC

Gabriel Garzón-Montano: laying down a personal marker, apparently.



Jack McCain, Anna Wood



Antique horror:
Anna Von Hauswolff
at the gates of doom.

Anna Von Hauswolff

★★★★★

All Thoughts Fly

SOUTHERN LORD. [DL/LP](#)

In the nightmare garden: Swedish singer-songwriter on an arcane trip.

IN THE Gardens Of Bomarzo, the 16th century Italian sculpture park of grotesques beloved by Salvador Dali, looms the massive head of

underworld god Orcus. Anna Von Hauswolff's fifth album is named after the inscription on his lip, a warning about the way the acoustics inside his cavernous mouth make any whispers within audible to those outside. *All Thoughts Fly* is a similar act of amplification, running its psychic static through a replica of a 17th century German pipe organ so it can be heard as an expansive



thrum: heat-stroked Philip Glass on the title track; antique horror on *Persefone*. Without Von Hauswolff's astringent vocals, this solo instrumental album feels lighter on gates-of-doom atmosphere than previous work, but even so, whispers and echoes start to bounce off this record's walls, promising revelation at every turn.

Victoria Segal

Ace Of Cups

★★★★★

Sing Your Dreams

HIGH MOON. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Legendary ladies from the Haight still rock.



All-women rock'n'roll quintet Ace Of Cups were named for the Tarot card of love, compassion and new beginnings. They still embody those principles, which are more desperately needed now than ever. Revered by San Francisco freaks of the late '60s (and Jimi Hendrix), the band didn't release their first studio long-player until 2018. Any thought that these septuagenarians might be twee flower girls is dispelled with tough feminist hard rocker *Put A Woman In Charge*. A technically challenging Kenyan benga feel in *Jai Ma* is nailed with nimble instrumental skill. And lush group harmonies support hippy icon Wavy Gravy performing his *Basic Human Needs*. Other guests include Sheila E., the Grateful Dead's Bob Weir, and Jackson Browne, who sings with bassist Denise Kaufman on closer *Made For Love* – a mantra (with rapped interludes) for our better angels.

Michael Simmons

Loudon Wainwright III

★★★★

I'd Rather Lead A Band

THIRTY TIGERS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Veteran songsmith grapples with the Great American Songbook. Wins.



Aside from Willie Nelson, when contemporary singers embrace the pre-rock'n'roll era, tears usually follow. Taking a punt seems a tired way for Loudon Wainwright III to celebrate 50 years of releasing LPs, but he sizzles. Dumping guitar, he's rekindled his *The Aviator*/Boardwalk Empire collaboration with swing band Vince Giordano & The Night-hawks to attack 14 songs, from the classic (*Ain't Misbehavin'*) to the more obscure, like *I'm Going To Give It To Mary With Love* – so earthy it was given an under-the-counter British release in 1936 – via the direct *You Rascal You* (*I'll Be Glad When You're Dead*). If the band add jauntiness, Wainwright – who in an act of hubristic *lèse-majesté* alters Irving Berlin's lyrics to the title track – brings worldly charm by the bucketload and the understanding that these wonderful songs deserve. A gleeful reboot.

John Aizlewood

The Nude Party

★★★★★

Midnight Manor

NEW WEST. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Quintessential Southern garage band thrillingly embrace the moment.



In any other post-'50s pop era but now, these all-American garage-rockers would surely already be big-time contenders – certainly, circa The Strokes' *Is This It?*, they'd have swept all aside. Six near-neighbours and stepsiblings from Boone, North Carolina, The Nude Party properly formed at their hometown's Appalachian State University, where they'd play dorm hops minus apparel – hence the name. Moving to the Catskills with Black Lips drummer Oakley Munson as producer/mentor, 2018's self-titled debut revealed them as superior garage revisionists, with boozy country tinges – think *Mouse & The Traps*. The follow-up packs a whole heap more precision ramalama, from uptight piano-pumping opener *Lonely Heather* through to glam-stomper *Judith*. Perhaps nudged from that comfort zone by contemporary realities, *Shine Your Light* fashionably busts more complex Laurel Canyon moves, with Patton

Magee's nasal Lou-and-Bobisms giving way to a heart-string-tugging soulfulness. In whatever idiom, top class.

Andrew Perry



Travis

★★★★★

10 Songs

BMG. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Unsinkable Glaswegians' Bangles and Granddaddy-enhanced ninth album.



Midway between 1999's *The Man Who* and 2001's *The Invisible Band*, Travis seemed set for world domination. It wasn't to be. Instead, the band whose line-up has remained unchanged since 1994 embarked on a more singular path and, after nine albums sprinkled with grit and style, they occupy a position adjacent to the mainstream. The 10 songs of *10 Songs* include curveballs such as Granddaddy leader Jason Lytle's stentorian piano on *A Million Hearts*, the layered harmonies of *Butterflies*, and Susanna Hoffs' breathy vocal turn on *The Only Thing*. But the real joy is in how Fran Healy – now a resident of Los Angeles – has honed his songwriting. The string-drenched earworm

Kissing In The Wind is his song of this century, but the jagged kitchen sink assault of *Valentine* runs it close. Travis remain curiously unrevered, but *10 Songs* is fine work nonetheless.

John Aizlewood



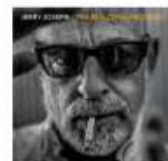
Jerry Joseph

★★★★★

The Beautiful Madness

DÉCOR. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Patterson Hood at the desk shines a light on overlooked 59-year-old US singer.



Remarkably, given the fact that he's been operating since the early '80s, this is Californian Jerry Joseph's first UK release. Among those who've sung his praises down the years are Willy Vlautin, Woody Harrelson and Patterson Hood, whose *Drive-By Truckers* – here renamed *The Stiff Boys* – provide the ram-bunctious backing. *Truckers* alumnus Jason Isbell returns to the fold, providing slide guitar on *Dead Confederate*, sung by Joseph from the perspective of the statue of a slave trader. This isn't straight Americana – Good has something of the snarl of Elvis Costello, *Bone Towers* echoes the Stones' *Beast Of Burden* – while Joseph is possessed of a gutsy, expressive voice rich in hard-won experience. "Very little I hear these days has any fucking soul," he spits in *Sugar Smacks*. *The Beautiful Madness* is brimming with it.

Tom Doyle



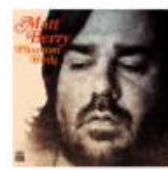
Matt Berry

★★★★★

Phantom Birds

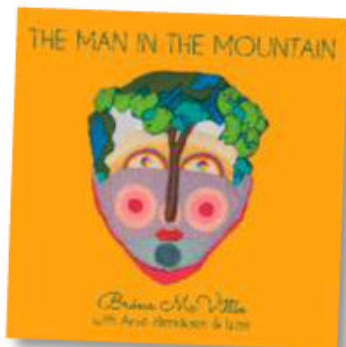
ACID JAZZ. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Sixth solo album from Laszlo Cravensworth's alter go.



Side careers in music haven't always worked out well for others in Matt Berry's main profession, but the star of *What We Do In The Shadows* and *Toast Of London* has made a good fist of changing that narrative. There's no denying his music fan bona fides: he bought a flat in London's Royal Victoria Dock because it overlooked the site of Jean Michel Jarre's 1988 *Destination Docklands* concert. On *Phantom Birds* he discards his thespian tendencies and writes and sings from the heart like never before, drawing on his love of Dylan's Nashville albums and playing nearly the entire LP himself, alongside a little pedal steel help from BJ Cole. There may be a couple too many mid-tempo chugs among *Phantom Birds'* 13 tracks, but Berry has a knack for lyrics that pick away at self-doubt and brave public faces.

Andy Fyfe



Bróna McVittie

★★★★★

The Man In
The Mountain

COMPANY OF CORKBOTS. [CD/DL](#)

Hypnotic, exploratory second album, haunted by folk horror.

Bróna McVittie's 2018 debut *We Are The Wildlife* managed a tricky balancing act: marrying folk and electronics in a beautiful miasma of sound that didn't wash over the listener, but presented fresh ideas and textures that needed long in the mind. *The Man In The Mountain* sees the Northern Irish musician ramp up her ambitions further. It recalls the psychedelic wonder of Jane Weaver (*The Green Man*), the hushed cleverness of Emiliana Torrini (*Falling For Icarus*, with electronic duo Isan), Virginia Astley and Talk Talk (especially on *The Lark In The Clear Air*, featuring Norwegian improv trumpeter Arve Henriksen) and '70s folk-horror (eerie flutes and harps are legion). McVittie's voice is clear, hypnotic and uncannily timeless, floating between Broadcast's Trish Keenan and Clannad's Moya Brennan. A fantastic, exploratory record that draws you in.

Jude Rogers



Joachim Cooder

★★★★★

Over That Road
I'm Bound

NONESUCH. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Chip off the old block finds his own seam of inspiration.



There's something of his dad Ry's lightly worn musicalogy about Joachim Cooder's Nonesuch debut. A buoyant and joyful long-player that gives props to the collected

songs of Uncle Dave Macon, country music progenitor and Grand Ole Opry star of the early 20th century, it includes vaudeville tunes, folk songs and spirituals, many of which have themes of travel and transience. Dad guests on banjo, guitar and bass, and Rayna Gellert's fiddle-playing shines, but the all-important twist is the welcome ubiquity of Joachim's electric mbira, a chipper relative of the African thumb piano which can twinkle like a Fender Rhodes or chink like a tiny gamelan ensemble. The instrument's percussive plinks and sunny tonalities lend things a cross-continental flavour, Macon-curated tunes such as the title track and *Come Along Buddy* not just celebrated, but tastefully reinvented, too.

James McNair



Reverend John Wilkins

★★★★★

Trouble

GONER. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Second album from the Memphis pastor, recorded at the city's Royal Studio.

His father was Reverend Robert Wilkins, the pre-war blues singer-turned-preacher, who authored songs made famous by Muddy Waters and The Rolling Stones. Always destined to be overshadowed by him, Wilkins Jr nevertheless became a force in his own right, recording with OV Wright in the '60s, the M&N Gospel Singers in the '70s and making a terrific solo debut, *You Can't Hurry God*, in 2011. Like its predecessor, *Trouble* pushes the boundaries of gospel, mixing it with hill country blues rhythms to produce a singular organic style. At its best, as on the title track and covers of *Grandma's Hands* and *Wade In The Water*, it infuses history and legacy with deep

spirituality to offer sweet succour to the soul.

Lois Wilson



Saunders Jurriaans

★★★★★

Beasts

DECCA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

After 20 years, NYC-based soundtrack specialist makes his solo debut.



Jurriaans was part of the prog-minded Tarantula AD and the earthier Priestbird

before making more lauded advances as half of a soundtrack-writing duo with Danny Bensi (*Ozark*, *The OA* and *Boy Erased* all feature on their joint CV). Over time, he's accumulated solo songs and has finally bundled 11 of them together here. Given his diverse background, it's little surprise that *Beasts* tries on various guises: glowering piano ballads (*All The King's Men*), uncoiling rock drama (*Miles To Go*), guitar instrumentals (*The Small Follower's crackly jazz*, *Brittle Bones' flamenco flourish*), the Morricone-like *The Three Of Me*. But a unifying vision slowly emerges, until *Beast* resembles an alternate-universe, one-man Radiohead. In its aching melodies and darkest recesses, this is arguably the Thom Yorke solo album many Radiohead fans wish he'd make.

Martin Aston



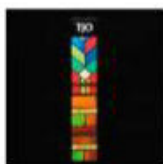
TJO

★★★★★

Songs For Peacock

ORINDAL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Tara Jane O'Neil repurposes the songs of her youth.



Memory does some strange things to pop. Arrangements fall away, period production is forgotten. What remains are loops of lyrics and ghosts of melody, suspended in hazy dream states. That appears to be the operational philosophy behind Tara Jane O'Neil's new album. Intended as a "mix-tape" for the California-born artist and songwriter's late brother Brian, these 12 covers draw on car journeys through the Orange County of their childhood. Recorded simply, at home, with bass, guitar and voice bounced into reverb, these '80s FM madeleines (*Cruel Summer*, *Happy House*, *Everybody Knows*) are arranged as one long phantasmal reverie. Ethereal, dissipated and forlorn, with open-window highway drone running through everything, this is an evocation of a pop radio golden age rendered as hallucinatory echo state; teen fun turned ghostly, elegiac and as fleeting as the years.

Andrew Male

AMERICANA

BY SYLVIE SIMMONS



Zephaniah OHora

★★★★★

Listening To The Music

LAST ROUNDUP. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Second album from Brooklyn-based urban cowboy.



YOU'D BE hard-pushed to find an album with a better sound than this. Lush, warm, sepia-tinged, but sparkling – it's just so listenable. As is Zephaniah OHora's deep, rich voice, as equally inviting on country crooners like *We Planned To Have It All*, *Listening To The Music* and the excellent *It's Not So Easy Today*, as on songs evoking Waylon Jennings and Merle Haggard, *Bakersfield* and honky tonks (or, on jaunty *Time Won't Take Its Time*, *Jimmie Rodgers*). Though the 12 songs are originals, there's an instant familiarity, many having their roots in '50s/'60s countrypolitan, though at times with more contemporary lyrics (*All American Singer*). The 14 musicians – including Jon Graboff on pedal steel and John Lee Shannon and Neal Casal on guitars – do a very fine job. The album is dedicated to Casal, who produced it, and died shortly after its completion.

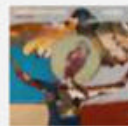
ALSO RELEASED

Steep Canyon Rangers

★★★★★

Arm In Arm

YEP ROC. [CD/DL/LP](#)



Grammy-winning bluegrassers' 13th album, recorded in Nashville with John Prine producer Brandon Bell, is among their best. The instrumentation is spot-on (*Sunny Days*; *Afterglow*), but there's more going on: gentle folk (*Crystal Ship*); a song with a near-rock riff and soaring fiddle (*In The Next Life*); and highlight *Everything You Know*, sounding like a long-lost early Band song.

Greg Copeland

★★★★★

The Tango Bar

PARAPLY. [CD/DL](#)



High school friend Jackson Browne produced Copeland's debut back in 1982. It took 26 years to follow it up, and 12 more for these nine new songs. There's a stellar band, including Don Heffington, Greg Leisz, and singers Inara (daughter of Lowell) George and Caitlin Canty. They sometimes sing lead, but the best songs feature the 74-year-old's worn, whispery voice. Highlights: laid-back blues rock *Scan The Beast*; cool, narcotic Lou Reed; churchy *Coldwater Canyon*.

John Lee Shannon

★★★★★

In & Of

TOMPKINS SQUARE. [DL/LP](#)



Eleven guitar instrumentals, or as John Lee Shannon describes them, "Songs without words." There's quite a variety too: slow, horseback-tempo *Americana* (*Trail Song*); sprightly sea shanty (*Mid-Atlantic*); American classical (*Big Soul*); cinematic (*Palm Reader*). Together, they create a mood as comforting as a patchwork quilt on a chilly day.

Dawn Landes

ROW

★★★★★

CROP DUSTER. [CD/DL/LP](#)



The follow-up to Dawn Landes' folk-country album *Meet Me At The River* is a self-released set of songs from her upcoming musical about the first woman to row solo across the Atlantic. Nothing much solo about the songs, since musicals mean a cast of performers to sing lead, duet or chorus, and an orchestra for dramatic arrangements. There's gospel (*Row*); folk (*Third Storm*, *King Lear*); an instrumental (*Calm Sea*); and a new take on the US national anthem (*Home Of The Brave*). SS



Joachim Cooder: paying tribute to Uncle Dave.

Jammi York,



Emmy The Great

★★★★★

April

BELLA UNION. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Emmy The Great's latest combines Canto pop with warm neo-folk.

BORN IN Hong Kong to a Chinese mother and English father, Emma-Lee Moss (née Great), has lived in London and New York, feeling “caught between destinies”. These

songs grew out of a visit to Hong Kong, two years before the anti-Extradition Law protests in 2019, and form an exploration of home, belonging and her Cantonese identity. Recorded in Brooklyn with singing bowls, prayer bells and field recording of the gentle chug of the Hong Kong subway, *April* has sonic traces of all these places – blending Canto pop strings, for instance,



Dreams of escape: Emmy The Great, blending sonic traces.

with loose country pop and melodic distortion. Her songs are beautifully,

tentatively constructed, the arch quirkiness of her early albums now replaced by the lush writing of songs such as Chang-E or Okinawa, with its standout line, “Our parents dreamed of escape/Now all their dreams are ours.”

Lucy O'Brien

stay cool”, etc). As such, it's retro, but it's rocking.

Andrew Perry



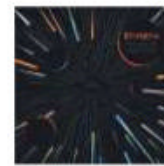
Rymden

★★★★★

Space Sailors

JAZZLAND. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Prog rock meets jazz rock with a side-serving of club beats.



Join up keyboardist Bugge Wesseltuft with the rhythm section of the late,

great EST and you have what in Scandinavian terms is a jazz supergroup. This record builds on the trio's debut, *Reflections & Odysseys*, with a more striking set of musical ideas and a more coherent group sound. They may not have the free-wheeling daring of Esbjorn Svensson's EST but they still make involving instrumental music that builds a potent head of steam. Rymden can be breezily catchy (Terminal One), they can mine metal as Dan Berglund's fuzz bass rampages through The Final Goodbye, and while Wesseltuft is usually a polite soloist he goes full Rick Wakeman on the mighty synth splurge of Arriving At Ramajay Pt II. Rymden are a blunter instrument than EST, but there's music here to rival that band's great moments.

John Bungey

Boris

★★★★★

NO

BORIS.BANDCAMP.COM. [DL](#)

Digital-only career highlight from the Japanese multi-form metal trio.



The Boris trio of drummer Atsuo, guitarist Wata and guitarist/bassist Takeshi

have been irking metal purists for close to 30 years now. Irreverent, unknowable, inspired as much by Bolt Thrower and Pink Floyd as Merzbow and Melvins, Boris are a band entirely at ease when moving through the gears, from sludge to hardcore to shoegaze to death metal across individual albums. They also possess, in Wata, one of the finest guitarists in the world, a shy woman of reserved stagecraft whose delicious echoing riffs destroy male rock egos with effortless ease. Their 26th(!) long-player, *NO* is also their most ruthlessly focused. Self-recorded during quarantine before being rush-released digitally, it is the sound of boundless energy in too-small rooms, repurposing the anger and despair of 2020 as a kind of hardcore doom-punk onslaught of delirious harmonic fury. They call it “healing music”. They are correct.

Andrew Male

Mary Lattimore

★★★★★

Silver Ladders

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Meditative LA-based harpist, with ex-Slowdive guitarist Neil Halstead.



Recorded at Neil Halstead's studio in Newquay, Cornwall, the follow-up to 2018's

expansive, multi-instrument *Hundred Days*, is a lower case delight, Mary Lattimore's harp recast as a thing of lambent, semi-ambient beauty, by turns couched in soaring and soft focus synths and crystalline, delay pedal guitars. Inspired by the Cornish landscape and atmosphere, this is largely discreet, impressionistic music, but there are transcendent passages, not least the middle of the bafflingly-titled Chop On The Climbout, as Lattimore's plucked arpeggios wash languidly against vertiginous drones – summer waves against an imposing Atlantic shoreline. Elsewhere, Halstead's suddenly erupting plumes of Vini Reilly-like guitar elevate Sometimes He's In My Dreams from contemplative to elegiac at a stroke, while the melancholy Don't Look holds back the accompaniments, showcasing the harp's natural plangency before the by now inevitable

garland of echo-laden guitars and electronics arrives, to dreamily poignant effect.

David Sheppard



Pauline Murray

★★★★★

Elemental

POLESTAR. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Third solo album from Penetration and the Invisible Girls frontwoman.



Pauline Murray fronted '70s punk band Penetration before forming the Invisible Girls in the '80s. As a soloist she sounds more like the latter, with these 10 songs, all written in minor keys, exploring the emotional contours of synth pop. Another touchstone is Strawberry Switchblade, borne out on single Secrets, a song from the late '80s first recorded on 4-track but shelved. “I'm putting on my face, to hide the feelings that I keep inside,” she sings over a tumultuous wash of dark electronica. Recorded piecemeal over three years in France and Newcastle, with producer Rob Blamire and a band comprising members of Penetration, the Invisible Girls and Roxy Music, there's a genuine beauty to Murray's melancholy and existential pondering. To these ears, she's never sounded better.

Lois Wilson

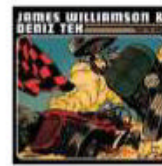
James Williamson & Deniz Tek

★★★★★

Two To One

CLEO. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Stooges six-string pyrotechnician teams up with Radio Birdman primo.



It's a marriage made in proto-punk heaven: Williamson's jugular-grasping riffage in The Stooges' *Raw Power* line-up so inspired Ann Arbor native Tek that, on his mid-'70s relocation to Melbourne, he excitedly drilled Birdman in that idiom, making a vital step towards punk rock. Forty-plus years on, both men have enjoyed reunion victory laps with their original combos, but in neither case did fresh recording catch fire. Williamson, remarkably, still has both the chops and the attack, palpable here on opener Jet Pack Nightmare's propulsive riff and a bunch of white-hot solos (Progress, etc). Still, with Tek on growly vocals, *Two To One* feels closer to Birdman's hypermelodic chug than any Stooges explosion. Pervasive, too, is the influence of Lou Reed, from Take A Look Around's melodic echo of Femme Fatale to the hilariously say-it-like-it-is lyrics of Climate Change (“everybody's tryin' to

Sam Amidon

★★★★★

Sam Amidon

NONESUCH. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Full realisation of Amidon's elaborate approach to reworked folk song.



To release an eponymous album seven LPs into your career is to fix a flag in the sand, one that flutters in the heady airs of authenticity. Unsurprisingly, Sam Amidon considers his latest set of radically reworked, largely traditional songs the “fullest realisation to date” of his artistic vision; it includes songs he's sung all his life, and is also self-produced and self-arranged (albeit mixed, again ambitiously, by Eno disciple Leo Abrahams). Several songs here feel swamped, however. Ambient washes and beats that recall early '00s duo The Books overburden Maggie. Amidon's simple, pretty voice gets lost when Pretty Polly takes on the shrugging insouciance of an acoustic bar-room jam. Nineteenth-century shape-note song Hallelujah and the gorgeous Sundown fare far better, with smaller, sharper ornamentations twisting them into curious, compelling new shapes, rather than confusing ones.

Jude Rogers



Bahamas

★★★★

Sad Hunk

BRUSHFIRE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Finnish-Canadian award-winner's funk-rock lushness.

Afie Jurvanen has spent his career detailing inner turmoil – depression, a troubled background – in the most laid-back way, and on this fifth outing the hypnotic vocal (a blend of Curtis Mayfield and early Lou Reed), bare-bones production and blissful hooks still mesmerise. He's moved with his young family to the Nova Scotia coast, but packed his wry self-doubt too. So flawless opener Trick To Happy, with its crooning female chorus and narcotic bass, finds him picking at groundless fears: "Was it goin' on behind my back? Is this the price for doing well?" There's a Paul Simon acuity to Up With The Jones, a look at living beyond your means, going bust and being free. Wisdom Of The World steps right out of line, a feedbacky Hendrix-style howl that resolves into mellow catharsis: "Guess the whole thing's about forgiveness." A happier hunk, perhaps?

Glyn Brown



Hen Ogledd

★★★★

Free Humans

WEIRD WORLD. [CD/DL/LP](#)

More "avant-bangers" from the Richard Dawson-associated quartet.



Alongside disappointingly trad offerings of guitar, bass and drums, the credits for Hen Ogledd's fourth album – though this line-up's second – credits include celery bites, The Crayon, Aqueduct, Bubbletron and crisp packet. In a similar vein, they've

enjoyed a free rein in the studio; *Free Humans* lasts 80 minutes. Clearly, editing themselves goes against the grain of four musicians (avant-folk magus Richard Dawson, harpist Rhodri Davies, multi-taskers Dawn Bothwell and Sally Pilkington) who share a love of improvisation, but whose stated aim is to make pop music, and prolonged exposure to this scattershot approach can be exhausting. In smaller chunks, however, *Free Humans* is exhilarating, and unpredictably so: Trouble and Crimson Star are gorgeous and featherlight; Paul Is 9ft Tall is a winningly creepy lurcher; and the fluid, prog-minded Skinny Dippers provides a giddy finale.

Martin Aston



Stella Sommer

★★★★★

Northern Dancer

NORTHERN DANCER. [DL/LP](#)

German singer-songwriter's arresting second solo album.

The impressive *Northern Dancer* is the second solo album from Germany's Stella Sommer, mainstay of the Hamburg-based art-poppers Die Heiterkeit. While their four albums were delivered in her native language, the lone and less poppy Sommer sings in English. Although piano or strummed guitar beds each song, colour comes from measured arrangements incorporating brass, strings, massed voices and distant percussion. Despite this corpus, what's captured is resolutely intimate and reflective. Though she sounds a little like Dory Previn and *Broken English*-era Marianne Faithfull, Sommer has a uniquely rounded intonation. The songs – especially the country-tinged 7 Sisters, the gently rolling Young Ghost, Old Century and the impressionistic We Only Part – have a filmic ebb and flow. If David Lynch wished to

soundtrack a contemplative journey through a shadow-filled forest, he need look no further than Sommer.

Kieron Tyler



Jónsi

★★★★

Shiver

KRUNK. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Unfocused solo album from Iceland's musical maverick.



The Sigur Rós frontman's first solo album in 10 years concludes a spate of activity. Last year, he exhibited at an LA art gallery and issued the ambient-leaning *Dark Morph* album, made with Swedish artist Carl Michael Von Hausswolff (Anna's father). A few months ago, he was on loop-guru Julianna Barwick's *Healing Is A Miracle* album. *Shiver* is produced by Brit tech-head Alexander Cook, whose highest-profile associate is Charli XCX. With broken beats, glitchiness and abrupt slabs of electronic noise redolent of Thom Yorke's *Amina*, the songs are sonic patchwork quilts. Liz Fraser and Robyn feature on a couple of tracks, and the more straightforward cuts work best. Salt Licorice (with Robyn) is relatively linear, Swill's space allows the vocal melody to breathe, and Grenade is agreeably restrained. In all, more a series of disconnected building blocks than a cohesive album.

Kieron Tyler



Sufjan Stevens

★★★★

The Ascension

ASTHMATIC KITTY. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Uneasy listening for 2020, on Stevens' eighth album.



There was never going to be a *Carrie & Lowell* Part 2, given the personal cost of making that most intimate album. It's unsurprising, then, that its follow-up has an arms-length quality to it, dealing in crises global and existential via densely layered, '90s-toned electronic arrangements. Befitting our current times, its dissonant moments make you work to find meaning and, at times, pleasure; its most impenetrable songs play like remixes, where you're curious to hear the originals. But at its best it is delicious and seductive, as on Landslide; lithe and restrained on the Kraftwerk-conjuring pop shrug of Video Game; gloriously careening on Ativan (named for the anti-anxiety medication), where Stevens sings of pants-shitting, Buffalo Bill and the blood of Jesus. His songwriting here is as superb as ever. Both beguiling and frustrating, *The Ascension* is complex, bold and oddly lovable.

Sophie Harris

ELECTRONICA

BY STEPHEN WORTHY



Luke Abbott

★★★★★

Translate

BORDER COMMUNITY. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Norfolk synth magician navigates upheaval with striking results.

BY LUKE ABBOTT's own admission, the six years since his previous solo album were personally turbulent. Then, just as he was about to release this, his third album since 2010's vivid debut *Holkham Drones*, Covid happened. It may be late arriving, but *Translate* is, serendipitously, entirely in tune with today, while returning to the twisted, motorik grand sweep that characterised his early work. The heavily-distorted Our Scene is a tantalising exercise in build and decay, the gloriously portentous Flux a surge of storm-tossed heavy ARPs, while Earthship – like a slow yomp across tundra – is John Carpenter-like in breadth and mood. Every so often, Abbott weaves in foley recorded outside the west London studios of his mentor, James Holden. The chatter of children or car horns act as subtle reminders that whatever our personal vicissitudes, in the wider world, life trundles on. This is memorable music for exceptional times.



ALSO RELEASED

Acid Pauli

★★★★★

MOD

OUIË. [DL/LP](#)



MOD is a celebration of 25 years of electronic music-making by Martin Gretschmann and the limitless possibilities of modular synthesizers. Recording first under the soubriquet Console, this fourth album as Acid Pauli finds the Bavarian embarking on a wide-eyed sonic odyssey, discovering a magical dream-state where notes burst with delicious unpredictability and grooves float like feathers in the breeze.

Tom Jarmey

★★★★

Amber Glass LP

DISTANT HORIZONS. [DL/LP](#)



There is a woozy, narcotic quality to Tom Jarmey's music. It's big on breakbeats, elegant, twinkling melodies and bold ambient chords, and it glints like summer sunlight on top of Mediterranean waves – moving in a very modern Balearic direction. For the optimum experience, this is a long-player best consumed while lying in a semi-recumbent position.

Tim Engelhardt

★★★★

Idiosynkrasia

STIL VOR TALENT. [DL/LP](#)



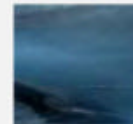
The second studio long-player from Tim Engelhardt is at its most affecting when exploring the panoramic vistas of early 20th century minimal house. A Cologne musician, Engelhardt uses his classical piano training to embellish tracks with fine filigree, allowing the spaces left in between to carry even more weight. He manages to say a great deal while using very little indeed.

Sophia Loizou

★★★★★

Untold

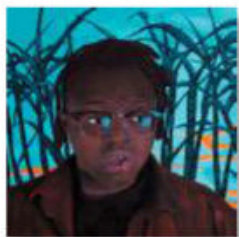
HOUSTOOTH. [DL/LP](#)



Sophia Loizou's new project is more than an album – her sprawling multi-disciplinary project takes in a poetry collection, lectures and an audiovisual show. The music itself is inspired by sounds and movements borrowed from nature – a lion's roar, wave undulations – reformulated as artful, exotic drum'n'bass, dark ambient and experimental rave, weaving a glittering, electronic tapestry. SW



Stella Sommer: filmic ebb and flow.



Anjimile

★★★★★

Giver Taker

FATHER/DAUGHTER. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Missing Sufjan Stevens' pastoral nuance? Anjimile Chithambo's Boston-recorded debut fills the gap as songs probe identity and spirituality via warm, folky arrangements with African pop intonations that reflect Malawian parentage. In all, a very promising debut. *JB*



Bad Boy Chiller Crew

★★★★★

Full Wack No Brakes

HOUSE ANXIETY. [CD/DL](#)

Bradford's belated answer to The Streets hit upon a fist-pumping formula that mangles millennial UK garage to their own ends. From sing-along dirt bike anthem 450 on, their swaggering bass line bangers are polished and addictive. *AC*



Will Butler

★★★★★

Generations

MERGE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Melodic snap and guileless sentiments from the Arcade Fire dynamo, dancing away the pain with upbeat gospel on Surrender, Hard Times' brittle funk or end-of-life disco Not Gonna Die. Shares AF's propensity to over-egg though (see jazz hands finale Fine). *JB*



Chiminyo

★★★★★

I Am Panda

GEARBOX. [CD/DL/LP](#)

On his production debut, Maisha percussionist Tim Doyle travels beyond the London jazz scene for genre-fluid adventures triggered from his kit. Mood vaults from squelchy funk (Breathin') and Afro-pop (See Me) to piano-led self-reflection (...into the sunkiss...). *AC*



Death Valley Girls

★★★★★

Under The Spell of Joy

SUICIDE SQUEEZE. [CD/DL/LP/MC](#)

Inspired by Ethio-jazz, a rattling cacophony of voices, percussion and skronk marks many of these 11 songs. Highlights such as Hey Dena or the cavernous I'd Rather Be Dreaming pare things back to an insistent Banshees-like boom and groove. *JB*



Hey Elbow

★★★★★

We Three

ADRIAN. [DL/LP](#)

Solid one-two combo – Missit's amniotic disco and Nurture/Aptitude, Julia Ringdahl's gossamer voice topping a martial beat – opens the Swedish trio's third ethereal, avant-pop LP. Plus tumbling percussion (Life Hack) and brooding jazz (Vignette). *JB*



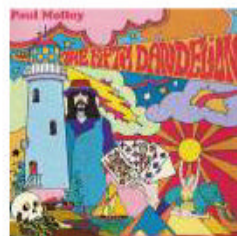
Mama Odé

★★★★★

Tales And Patterns Of The Maroons

FIVE EASY PIECES. [LP/DL](#)

Brothers Omas Mamode IV and Jeen Bassa's lo-fi, percussive patchwork of reggae, jazz, funk, blues cut-ups is matched by breathy, old school flows. They call it 'Creole Sega Rap Roots music', laidback summery vibes like early Tribe Called Quest. *AC*



Paul Molloy

★★★★★

The Fifth Dandelion

SPRING HEELED. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Recorded at home on an old tape machine, polished at Bill Ryder-Jones' studio, the Coral guitarist delivers escapism for troubled times. A joyful blend of 'Ba-ba-ba' vocals, carefree guitars and glistening strings and horns. Plus piano, tympani, Turkish baglama, mellotron. *LW*



Octavian

★★★★★

Love Will Win Evol Will Die

BLACK BUTTER. [CD/DL/LP](#)

South London rapper's debut builds on the downtempo ambience of his mixtapes, with a throaty, malleable voice wed to ever-switching flows and rap/grime/R&B hybrids. High-profile guests abound, but Octavian's charm wins out. *AC*



Tobin Sprout

★★★★★

Empty Horses

FIRE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

GBV alumnus has a Bill Fay-ish quality here; crumpled yet precise, confronting American ghosts, most vividly on Antietam. Often just voice and guitar or stately piano, his wistful songs impart wisdom quietly, but on All In My Sleep gloriously lets rip. *JB*

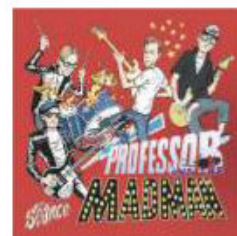
EXTENDED PLAY

Inspired By Jara

Transferring his frontman skills, Manic Street Preacher James Dean Bradfield presents a three-part podcast on the influence of Chilean musician-activist Victor Jara, subject of JDB's *Even In Exile*. Part one looks at Jara's influence on musicians, speaking to Simple Minds' Charlie Burchill and Calxico's Joey Burns, who agree that Jara's abstract lyrics and emotional weight make covering his songs virtually impossible (only Bruce Springsteen emerges unscathed). Parts two and three expand the remit to dance choreographer Christopher Bruce, whose 1981 *Ghost Dances* made a big impact on Jara's cultural legacy. Actress/writer Emma Thompson is brilliant: frankly discussing a film script she tried and failed to write about Jara; even learning Spanish before several trips to Chile to meet his wife Joan. Thompson's painful tale starts as a pupil at Camden School For Girls, where Jara's grieving daughters were sent after his brutal murder during the Pinochet coup of 1973. The theme of trying and failing to tell Jara's story concludes with Verses Echo, With Tear Flow, a song JDB couldn't finish in time for his album. A wonderfully deft guitar anthem to perdition, it provides closure to a story with no happy ending.



Road to perdition: James Dean Bradfield celebrates Victor Jara.



Professor And The Madman

★★★★★

Séance

FULLERTONE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Fifth album from a supergroup powered by The Damned's *The Black Album*-era rhythm team, Rat Scabies and bassist Paul Gray, infused with psych/prog rock/pop vibrations and ornate Brian Wilsonisms. Ambitious, often mindblowing. *PG*



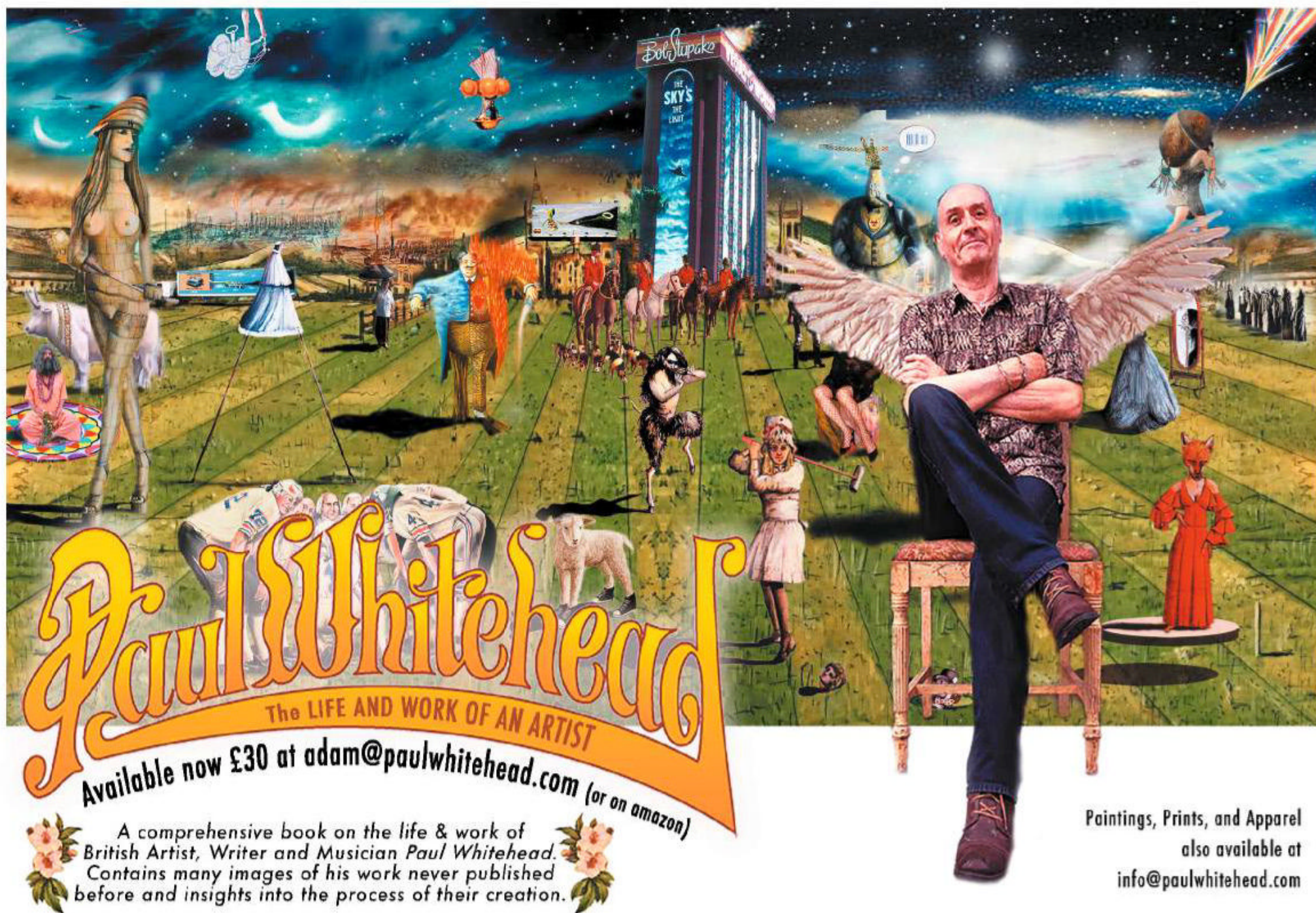
White Dog

★★★★★

White Dog

RISE ABOVE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Unreconstructed roots rock thrills from Austin, TX group citing Alice Cooper, Sabbath and heavy prog as influences. Add Black Crowes, too. Their debut is best at its most psych: Crystal Panther brings high-octane riffing, free-festival folk and strung-out soloing. *JB*

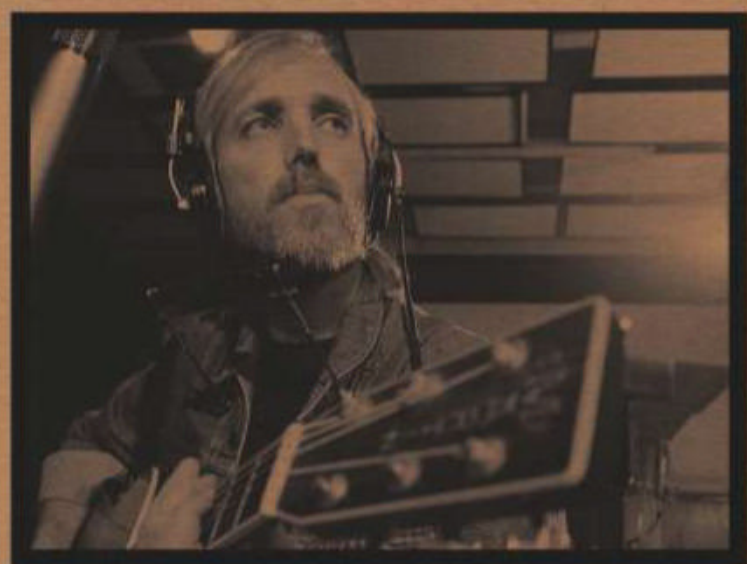


Paul Whitehead
The LIFE AND WORK OF AN ARTIST

Available now £30 at adam@paulwhitehead.com (or on amazon)

A comprehensive book on the life & work of British Artist, Writer and Musician Paul Whitehead. Contains many images of his work never published before and insights into the process of their creation.

Paintings, Prints, and Apparel also available at info@paulwhitehead.com



Tom Petty

'Wildflowers' & All the Rest

16th OCTOBER 2020

Finally gathering all 25 songs from the original Wildflowers recording sessions plus rare and unreleased tracks

2CD/3LP

Original Wildflowers Album Plus All The Rest (10 tracks from the original recording sessions). Includes 5 unreleased songs

4CD/7LP Deluxe Edition

Original Wildflowers Album, All The Rest Plus Home Recordings/Demos And Wildflowers Live. Includes 8 unreleased songs and 24 unreleased versions

5CD/9LP Super Deluxe Edition

Includes bonus disc 'Finding Wildflowers': 16 alternate versions, 9 unreleased songs and 34 unreleased versions

AVAILABLE TO PRE-ORDER NOW

tompetty.com



Mean streets

Lou Reed's famed 1989 solo relaunch paints a bleak portrait of his city. Now over 3-CDs, 2-LPs and a DVD, with unreleased live show and outtakes. By Jon Savage.

Lou Reed



New York

RHINO. CD+LP+DVD

RIGHT FROM the beginning, Lou Reed wrote about New York. Brought up in Long Island and moving to Manhattan in his early adulthood, he had a fascination with the city's brutal environment and the devices through which its denizens sought escape. Parsing the terse cadences of both literary and street language, he delivered and sang lyrics that often sounded like bullets in a war zone – with a very specific location: up to Lexington 1-2-5, down to 47th Street and Union Square.

Reed could be lyrical about Coney Island, wryly wistful about Long Island, but Manhattan was at the centre of his life and work after 1965. Already installed in the Lower East Side, he was thrust into the centre of the city's social and artistic life when The Velvet Underground were picked up by Andy Warhol and installed as the house band in the 47th Street Factory: a perfect setting for the observation of human desperation and psychosis that bore fruit in *The Velvet Underground And Nico*, and beyond.

Aside from blues and jazz, Reed was fascinated by the city's pop culture: its musical past in mysterious girl group records like The Jaynetts' Sally Go Round The Roses, doo wop dreams like Alicia And The Rockaways' Why Can't I Be Loved – fragile moments of tenderness and loss within a harsh environment. He was also steeped in the city's outsider literature, the exposé novels set in the outer margins of human experience: Hubert Selby's *Last Exit To Brooklyn*, William Burroughs' *Junkie*, John Rechy's *City Of Night*.

Then there were the films. In *Doin' The Things That We Want To* (from *New Sensations*), he sang about "the movies Marty made about New York/Those frank and brutal movies that are so brilliant/Fool For Love meet The Raging Bull". In his introduction to the recent collection of Reed's lyrics, Martin Scorsese returned the compliment: "Lou's lyrics... could only have come from someone who grew up in the New York area and came of age in Manhattan, who moved and wrote and sang from the pulse of life in this city."

Released at the beginning of 1989, *New York* was at once a major relaunch for Reed – his first album for Sire after a lacklustre end to his longstanding association with RCA – and a big challenge: this was his town and his patch, so it had to be good. His previous few albums had been somewhat disparate in approach and

instrumentation, and on *New York* he was determined to keep it simple, with rock instrumentation of guitars and drums – with guest spots from Dion and Maureen Tucker – and a tightly focused sequence of 14 songs.

Written and recorded in the last month of Ronald Reagan's second presidential term, *New York* crackles with anger at the degradation of American life during those eight years – the city seen as an extreme microcosm of

greed, selfishness, disregard for human life. Reed's fury boils over in the blistering *Dirty Blvd*: "Give me your hungry, your tired, your

poor I'll piss on 'em/That's what the Statue of Bigotry says/Your poor huddled masses – let's club 'em to death/And get it over with and just dump 'em on the boulevard."

The opening track, *Romeo Had Juliette*, sets the scene: a rolling rock rhythm, reminiscent of Creedence, with a recitative vocal at once intimate and insistent: you are going to listen to what I tell you. Reed's voice is foregrounded throughout, focusing us on the lyrics, which are not easy listening. In *New York*, racial violence, crime, AIDS, drugs – particularly the plague of crack – are everywhere, delivered in individual hardscrabble stories, like that of *Romeo Rodriguez*, *Pedro in Dirty Blvd*, or *Sammy the Viet vet of Xmas In February*.

The travails of the city are only part of a wider picture. Last *Great American Whale* conjures up a huge animal spirit, beloved of Native Americans, that is brutally killed for no reason: "Americans don't care too much for beauty/They'll shit in a river, dump battery acid in a stream/They'll watch dead rats wash up on the beach/And complain if they can't swim/They say things are done for the majority/Don't believe half of what you see/And none of what you hear."

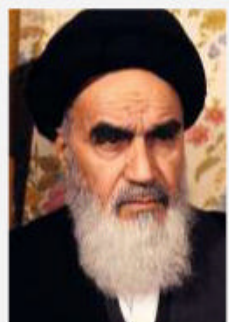
There are songs where Reed relaxes a little. In the shuffling goofiness of *Beginning Of A Great Adventure*, he imagines having a whole tribe of children, a little liberal army: "I'd teach 'em how to plant a bomb, start a fire, play guitar/And if they catch a hunter, shoot him in the nuts." The closing *Dime Store Mystery* ponders the last moments of Jesus and Andy Warhol: "What must you have been thinking/When you realised the time had come for you/I wish I hadn't thrown away my time/On so much human and so much less divine."

His own history comes into focus on *Halloween Parade*, with references to *Rotten Rita* – one of the Mole People around Warhol in the late '60s – and *Johnny Rio*, the hustler hero of John Rechy's *City Of Night*. Reed's account of the gay Halloween Parade – with all its freaks and drag queens – is suffused with a sense of loss made explicit by his intro on the live version: "This is a song about a parade they have every year down in the Village around Halloween. A lot of people haven't been able to make it there lately. That's what this song is about – AIDS".

New York is one of Reed's strongest solo albums, with its tight focus, impassioned lyrics, and spare, almost punky music. This is a deserved reissue, but the extras – a complete, energetic live rendition of the record from 1989, and some outtakes including the unissued *The Room* – are for fans only. *New York* takes you on a trip into a crisis, crime and disease-ridden city where the hopes of previous generations have come to die: there is redemption, but little hope. It's a bracing but bleak listen.



"Crackles with anger at the degradation of American life in the eight years of Reagan's presidency."



BACK STORY: DRAMATIS PERSONAE

● *New York* is littered with references to then contemporary figures, like Kurt Waldheim, the then Director General of the UN, and Democratic presidential candidate Jesse Jackson, both of whom Reed thought were anti-Semites. *Sick Of You* also mentions the Ayatollah (above) and Oliver North – leading figure in the Iran-Contra scandal of the time – but also excoriates "the Trumps" and Rudy Giuliani: some of the same 'men' still running and ruining the world.

Getty, Tom Sheehan

Bracing but bleak:
Lou Reed, ready to
walk those dirty
boulevards in
January 1989.





Amplified mythology: P.J. Harvey, rising fast.

Raw power

Remastered vinyl of a thrilling conversion from bandleader to perverse solo star. By **Jude Rogers**.

P.J. Harvey

★★★★★

Rid Of Me/4-Track Demos

★★★★★

To Bring You My Love/To Bring You My Love Demos

UMC/ISLAND. LP

AFTER RELEASING her third LP in February 1995, P.J. Harvey bluntly laid out her mission: “I can make an album which people will,

frankly, embrace – yet I’ve done exactly what I’ve wanted to do, and made a record which is as perverse as I wanted to make it.”

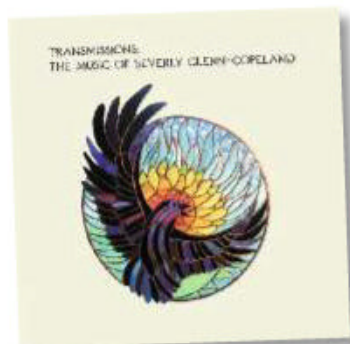
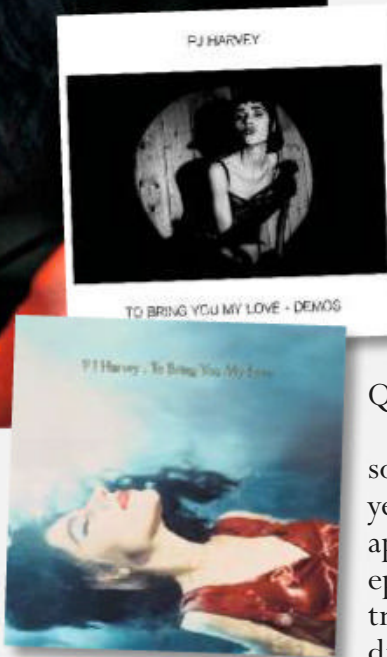
The 25-year-old had made quite the transition in recent years. Before *To Bring You My Love*, her deviant, epic masterpiece, she’d left behind the punkier, coarser approach on 1993’s *Rid Of Me*, as well as her band. Now, she was twisting the archetype of the bruised, ancient blues singer into something garish, dragged-up and extreme. Imagine a post-modern Beefheart funnelling her ideas through a Technicolor lens but making her music weirdly more accessible in the process. Her imagery helped: recalling Cindy Sherman’s lurid photographic alter-egos, or

Warhol’s silkscreen portraits, with a macabre twist. Here was Harvey, heavily kohled, lipstick-slicked, singing from her guts and glands, amplifying her own mythologies.

These two reissues – of remastered albums, plus demos – show the exhilarating process Polly endured to get there. *Rid Of Me* and *4-Track Demos* present a particularly intriguing first chapter to this story, packaged together here as a set, instead of being the separate releases they once were (released five months apart in 1993). Harvey’s songs in this period are glorious, bloody creatures in both skeletal and fleshed-out forms, but she often sounds as big a sonic being on the demos as she does in the studio. Her final guitar fuzz on the demo version of Rub ’Til It Bleeds and the more direct holler on Ecstasy see her soul flashing through; the remasters make the legends of Yuri-G and 50 Foot Queenie even more stratospheric.

While *Rid Of Me* is all sex, lust and hunger, sounding fiercely vengeful and young all these years later, *To Bring You My Love*’s subjects appear wider, widescreen even. We’re on an epic journey from the moment the title track’s headstrong wanderer leads us through dry earth and floods, until we reach the girl in Send His Love To Me, left alone in the desert, for whom love becomes “a tether”, her room “a cell”.

The fabulous final versions of these songs often haven’t travelled far from their rougher cuts, possibly because Harvey’s voice, matured into a sumptuous growl, anchors the mood in enough grandeur. Teclo retains its intensity without the piano, chimes and bells she added later; Meet Ze Monsta still slams and pounds; the demo of flamenco-flecked finale The Dancer has a celebratory exclamation at its opening and the sound of whirling feet, its final version lending a cinematic dimension. These records show how brilliant it is to rise fast, like a phoenix out of fire flames.



Beverly Glenn-Copeland

★★★★★

Transmissions

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP

Songs from across 40 varied years of former Sesame Street writer’s music.

In the 2018 live version of Deep River included here, BGC invites us to sing along to the chorus and I’m reminded of the pleasure in seeing Glenn-Copeland in London last year – trying to get to grips with the “Wala-lala-lala wala-layyy oh-layyyy wala-lay” and being taught once again the unfailing power of communal play. It’s a modern spiritual, based on the beloved original, that begins in Copeland’s lone voice, settles into a snaky and determined drum beat and

leads us up into the joy of that chorus. Like the rest of this album, from meditative Sunset Village to Durocher to La Vita (a soaring beauty of a track to make you weep), it strikes a gorgeous balance of humour and grace; musical greatness carried without pomp.

Anna Wood



Camille Yarbrough

★★★★★

The Iron Pot Cooker

CRAFT. LP

First vinyl reissue of cult proto-hip-hop album.



Occupation-wise, there’s not much that 82-year-old Yarbrough hasn’t tried her hand at. Starting as a dancer, she moved on to stage, TV and movie acting before writing children’s books and becoming a university professor. She’s probably best remembered for this 1975 album, based on her one-woman stage show, Tales And Tunes Of An African American Griot. A collection of spoken-word meditations on

ghetto life set to music, the LP languished in obscurity until Fatboy Slim famously sampled its gospel-infused funk track, Take Yo’ Praise, whose vocal chorus formed the basis of his 1998 hit Praise You. Yarbrough is a compelling storyteller whose angst-ridden polemics bristle with a righteous indignation at racial injustice. In the Black Lives Matter era, the album’s relevance is greater than ever; its messages still resonating powerfully.

Charles Waring



L7

★★★★★

Smell The Magic

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

The LA noisers find their dream home at the House Of Grunge.



L7 opened their second album by gate-crashing a discarded Mudhoney jam, recording over their label-mates’ old tapes in a classic act of Sub Pop cost-cutting. A perfect fit with their new label, their fusion of metallic fuzz and punk-rock attitude sig-

nalled their kinship with early grunge. *Smell The Magic* showcased Suzi Gardner and Donita Sparks’ paint-stripping snarls, a gift for sneaking pop hooks within their butchered biker rock, and a black humour that would serve them well in the years to come. Their cover of the Fiends’ Packin’ A Rod wickedly inverted the original’s repellent violence, while their own Fast And Frightening (“Got so much clit she don’t need no balls”) applied their signature blowtorch wit to dumb rock misogyny. A crossover hit – Pretend We’re Dead – would follow later, but everything that made L7 great was already in place here.

Stevie Chick



Sade

★★★★★

This Far

SONY. LP

London soul/jazz pioneers’ albums discography, remastered for vinyl.

The tasteful tailoring of 1984’s debut *Diamond Life* led some to mistake Sade’s mesmeric soul for yuppie lifestyle muzak. However, their six-album oeuvre portrays a group of true

substance, quiet storms crackling with delicate but emphatic power. A hermetic entity unto themselves, these six LPs betray little influence of the eras surrounding them – a little dubby undertow filters in circa 2000’s *Lovers Rock*, but with characteristic subtlety. Rather, Sade’s evolution has been one of refinement, their eponymous singer/songwriter developing the emotional articulacy of her restrained lyricism and performance. Simple lines like By Your Side’s “If only you could see into me” and King Of Sorrow’s inconsolable “I wonder if this grief will ever let me go” are only more powerful for their understatement, while the magnificent, suffocating gloom of Haunt Me showcases an oceanic depth beneath the arctic stillness of their waters.

Stevie Chick



The chaos of genius:
Jack Nitzsche on the set
of Robert Downey Sr's
Greaser's Palace
in 1972.



Harry Beckett

★★★★★

Joy Unlimited

CADILLAC. CD/DL/LP

Long-awaited reissue of elegant jazz-rock LP, with Latin leanings.

Arriving in London in the mid-'50s, expressive Barbadian trumpeter Harry Beckett worked with Ambrose Campbell, Graham Collier and Jack Bruce, his solo albums issued by Philips and RCA. Beckett formed Joy Unlimited in 1974, and recorded this debut fusing open-ended jazz solos to a rock backbeat, underpinned by Latin percussion, as well as Caribbean and South African elements. The hefty extended jam of opener No Time For Hello sets the tone, with each musician soloing to spur on Beckett's unfettered horn to greater heights. Glowing has a relaxed calypso lilt and Bracelets Of Sound edges towards township territory, while crate-diggers will love the funky drum breaks on Ring Within Rings. Throughout, Ray Russell's funk guitar tremolos are given melodic counterbalance by Daryl Runswick's animated bass meanderings, as Martin David's percussion invigorates, conjuring a joyful backdrop for Beckett's explorations.

David Katz



JR Bailey

★★★★★

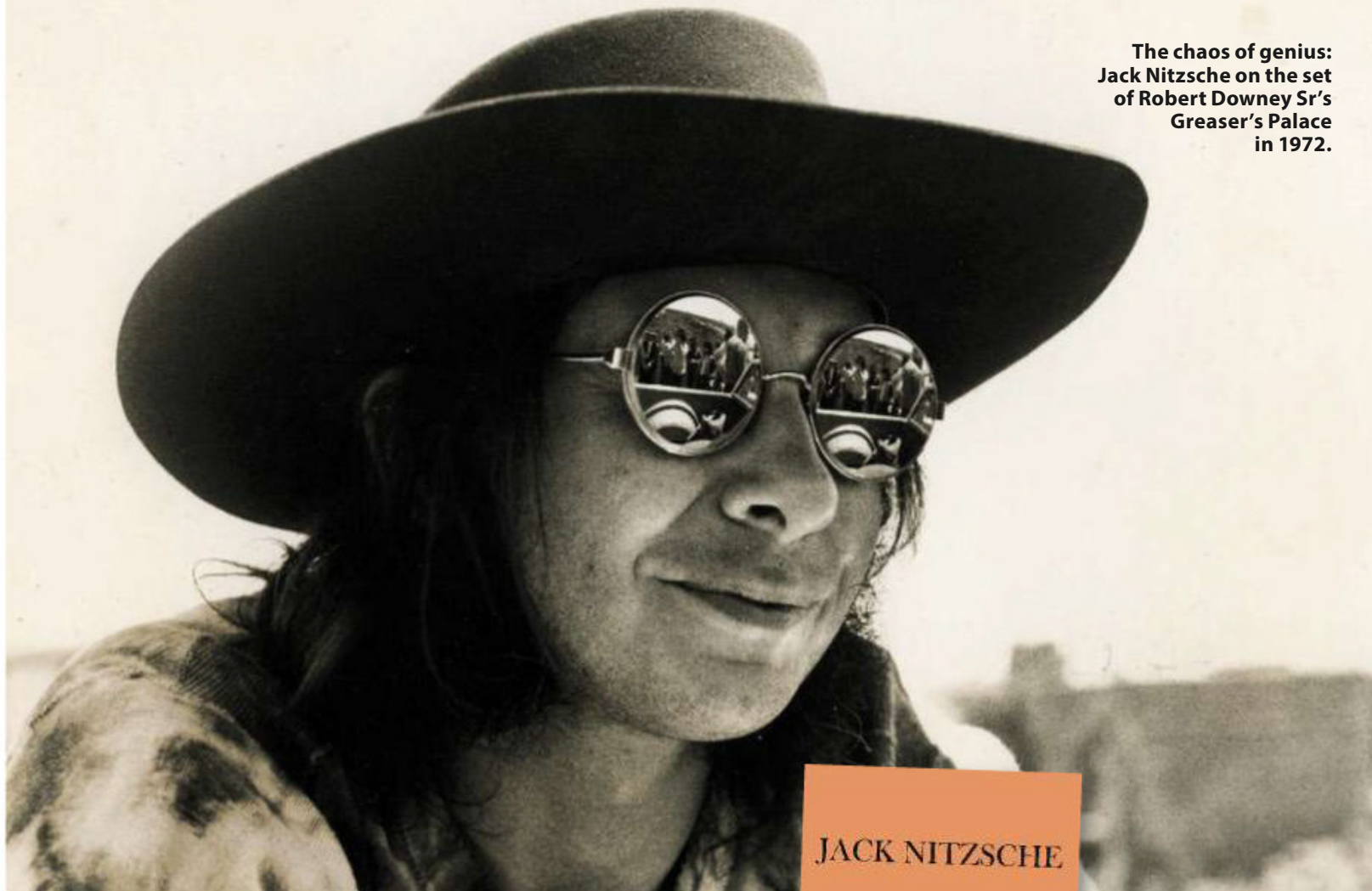
Just Me 'N You

BE WITH. LP

Beautifully remastered '70s soul rarity from one-time doo wop vocalist.



When JR Bailey recorded his debut LP in 1974, Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* had been out three years, its defining sound – soaring strings, pleading vocals, socially conscious lyrics – a calling card for artists such as Donny Hathaway, Eddie Kendricks and Billy Paul. Bailey, who'd previously sung with The Cadillacs, and written songs for Hathaway and The Main Ingredient, was surely hoping for a sprinkling of that success. It didn't come and that's a real shame. Opening track, After Hours, sets out Bailey's concept, the pursuit of happiness, "or just the idea", as release from the nine-to-five struggle. Taking the fuzzed rhythm guitars, inner-city bass lines, and ascending violins of socially conscious soul, Bailey goes looking for love, his Al Jarreau-style vocals caught



Jack Nitzsche

★★★★★

Jack Nitzsche

HANKY PANKY/MAPACHE. LP

The 'Lost 1974 Reprise Album' on vinyl for the first time.

HALF-WAY INTO a sleazy rocker entitled Who Say What To Who, Jack Nitzsche reaches a kind of chorus. "I haven't slept for days and days," he sings, "and days and days and days and days and days." It's

funny because it's true, and scary, as mid-'70s studio life with the former Phil Spector arranger and Wrecking Crew producer could be. Shelved by Reprise boss Mo Ostin, possibly as punishment for Nitzsche's drunken conduct, this co-production with underground film-maker Robert Downey Sr is one of the '70s' more beguiling "failures". A scenic libretto about a coming Los Angeles apocalypse/rapture, with John Fahey adding

occasional "voodoo" slide guitar, its balance of rock braggadocio and grand orchestral

arrangements sits somewhere in the middle of David Ackles' *American Gothic*, Van Dyke Parks' *Song Cycle*, and Neil Diamond's *Just For You*, a seemingly chaotic mess of sentiment, high ambition and regret that resolves itself into something approaching genius.

Andrew Male

between mellow confidence and desperate melancholy, the knowledge that "deep inside... something's missing".

Andrew Male



Pedro Lima

★★★★★

Maguidala

BONGO JOE. CD/DL/LP

1985 classic produced by Jose Augusto.



A musical giant and man of the people, Pedro Lima used his music both as entertainment and political activism. From the Portuguese-speaking African island of São Tomé off the coast of Gabon, he was a keen supporter of the revolutionary MLSTP party and a chief ambassador of puxa, a zesty dance music which blended homegrown rhythms with Angolan rebita. It's heard best on this 1985 LP's glorious title track: a nine-minute-plus onslaught of percussive energy – drums, congas, reco-reco – and intricate, improv guitar by Leopoldino 'Gundu' Silva. While Lionensi Sá Tindadjji is another fervid track, the final two, Sâma Nanzalé and Cxi Compa Sá Cá Batéla, are ruminative rumbas, soft harmonics and gentle in feel.

Lois Wilson

Various

★★★★★

Sir J.J. Special

DOCTOR BIRD. CD

Two discs of JJ Johnson's ska and rock steady productions 1966-68.



Karl Johnson ran a Kingston bus service before opening a record shop on Orange Street, making his first foray into music production with Lee Perry's swipe at his former boss, Coxson Dodd, titled Give Me Justice. This 2-CD set collects most of the producer's early output, with gritty songs of determination from Carl Dawkins, rude reggae from The Kingstonians and broken-hearted ballads from The West Indies, led by a young Eric Donaldson. Much of the compilation is delightfully obscure and some of it really deserved to hit: David Isaacs' Music Flames describes sound system battles, Soul Food is a deconstructed jam by house band Lyn Taitt And The Jets, and there is the original track that inspired The Clash's Wrong Em Boyo, here delivered by unknown act, The Rulers. Despite some rough audio in places, there is plenty to discover here.

David Katz

Split Enz

★★★★★

Mental Notes

DEMON. LP

When the NZ legends were arty costumed freaks: their second LP – on white vinyl.



The original Split Enz's outlandish look/antics and art-rock/pop inventory positioned them as an Antipodean Genesis, though twin singer-songwriters Tim Finn and Phil Judd were clearly mad for Victorian music hall. They were an odd bunch (a spoons solo was a stage highlight) with memorable observations ("you wouldn't know me from a bar of soap" from Sweet Dreams). Their 1976 UK debut, produced by Roxy Music's Phil Manzanera, conjoined re-recordings from their first NZ-only album (also titled *Mental Notes*, confusingly) with new songs. Made by a septet, *Mental Notes* is busy without ever sounding crowded; even prog-minded shape-shifters Sweet Dreams, Stranger Than Fiction and The Woman Who Loves You are delicate rather than stodgy. Follow-up album *Dizrythmia* – Split Enz morph into more familiar new wave-pop with Neil Finn replacing Judd – is also reissued, on red vinyl

Martin Aston

The Replacements

★★★★★

Pleased To Meet Me (Deluxe Edition)

RHINO. CD/DL/LP

Their last truly great album, from 1987, plus outtakes and previously unheard tracks.



Often seeming less a band than a prolonged exercise in self-sabotage, The Replacements' second Sire LP contained brilliance – the powerpop of Alex Chilton, the bruised soul of Skyway – as their chaos raged unabated, guitarist Bob Stinson exiting during the demo stages. This exhaustive reissue includes his final contributions, though the real gold comes in their studio sessions with Jim Dickinson. If the finished album trod a thin line between juvenile bloody-mindedness and maturing profundity, these outtakes find the band flailing in both directions. The rockabilly vamps eventually outstay their welcome, but charming Kick It In, brooding Learn How To Fail and happy/sad Birthday Gal offer precious extra moments with a group that never again made such thrilling sense of their chaos and contradictions.

Stevie Chick



FILE UNDER...

Peak to peak

Fleetwood Mac's metamorphosis from UK blues gold to US platinum gets boxed. By Jim Irvin.

TWO KEYSTONES of Fleetwood Mac left us recently. The band's incomparable founder, Peter Green, of course, but also crucial to their history, their brilliant recording engineer Martin Birch, who cut the majority of the work audible in *Fleetwood Mac 1969-1974* (★★★★) (Rhino). This CD box gathers everything Mac released on Reprise before Buckingham and Nicks joined. Seven albums, from Green's last and finest, *Then Play On*, up to later linchpin Bob Welch's swan-song, *Heroes Are Hard To Find* (the only album Birch didn't record), plus a previously unreleased full-set radio session broadcast on December 15, 1974 on KSAN-FM, performed at The Record Plant in Sausalito, California. This new album and the last three studio releases, *Penguin*, *Mystery To Me* and *Heroes*... also make up a new vinyl box, *Fleetwood Mac 1973-1974* (★★★★), (1969-1972 came out a few years back.)

Then Play On, a still undervalued album, seethes with possibility. It isn't quite the album-length motherlode of Green's genius his admirers go looking for, but it gets close. The band sailed on shakily without their captain, the titular stewards filling the unfillable gap with whatever was at hand, until lightning struck a second time. Named after their communal living quarters, *Kiln House* — with original compositions by resident Elvis impersonator and court jester Jeremy Spencer (who'd just cut an underwhelming solo album for Reprise) and

brooding junior bluesman Danny Kirwan — is part charming, part awkward. Christine McVie, not yet in the band, drew the cover, which may be better than its contents. Curiously, *Kiln House* sold better in the US than any previous Mac LP, and the band, still based in the UK, began to face in that direction, like a hopeful sunflower.

With Spencer suddenly absorbed into the Children of God, Christine McVie stepped up and American Bob Welch joined for *Future Games*. Two excellent long pieces, Welch's title tune and Kirwan's *Sands Of Time*, supply the weight missing from *Kiln House*. Kirwan blossomed on the moodier *Bare Trees* (irony klaxon), but fell out with the band on the subsequent tour and left, to be replaced by guitarist Bob Weston and Savoy Brown singer Dave Walker, who didn't fit in. The album they're on, *Penguin*, is a directionless collection that hasn't aged well, sounding like five different, mediocre bands. Christine's signature sound emerges on opener *Remember Me* with Welch's moody *Night Watch* the lone highlight. Nice sleeve, though.

Walker was let go, and the band tightened

for *Mystery To Me*. Christine's *Just Crazy Love* could be something from the next, diamond-selling iteration of the band. Welch's *Hypnotized* is probably the best Mac track featuring neither Green nor Buckingham & Nicks. His *Emerald Eyes* and *Forever* are also strong, making this a very decent Mac album housed in their worst ever sleeve. During the accompanying tour, Weston was found to be having an affair with Fleetwood's wife, Jenny, and was fired. Duly slimmed down for their first American-made album, *Heroes Are Hard To Find* is where their future, glossy AOR sound seems to materialise, just in time for Welch to slide away.

Fruity-voiced Tom Donahue introduces the excellent radio session, recorded with Bobby Hunt on extra keyboards. They start with Green Manalishi: "This is a song Peter Green wrote about the devil a long time ago," says Welch. (It was four years, tops.) Lengthy versions of *Bermuda Triangle*, *Future Games*, *Rattlesnake Shake* and *Hypnotized* reveal the band on smoking form, especially John McVie, though Welch's long spoken passages might not bear repeated listening.

In short: these are spotty albums, most with flashes of greatness, coming in attractive, carefully replicated packages.



"Mystery To Me... a very decent Mac album in their worst sleeve."





Apple

★★★★★

An Apple A Day...

GRAPEFRUIT. CD/DL

First band-approved reissue of 1969 psych pop rarity plus mono singles.

Apple were an obscure psych pop group from Cardiff who made two singles, one album, and then disappeared. Issued on Larry Page's Page One label, produced by Caleb Quaye and typical of the time, their 45s Let's Take A Trip Down The Rhine and Doctor Rock were the band's poppiest moments, aimed at securing radio play, while this album, a mind-expanding trip combining Floydian melody and lysergic intensity borne out on Buffalo Billycan with its fantastical nature and lyrical whimsy, was part Syd Barrett, part Alice In Wonderland. Note also The Otherside, a queasy freak out, previously included on 1980's *Chocolate Soup For Diabetics*, and Photograph with its parping brass band treatment à la Sgt. Pepper's. A true buried treasure, an original copy last sold in 2017 for nearly £4,000.

Lois Wilson



John Coltrane

★★★★★

Giant Steps

ATLANTIC/RHINO. CD/DL/LP

Trane's iconic LP reaches 60.



While 1958's *Blue Train* is considered Coltrane's first masterpiece, 1960's *Giant*

Steps confirmed the Philadelphia saxophonist as jazz's new Messiah. This expanded 60th anniversary edition is bolstered by numerous outtakes, including false starts and studio chatter, but as interesting as they are to Coltrane disciples, the motherlode is the original album's seven tracks rendered even more glorious through fresh remastering. On the classic title tune and Countdown, where blizzards of notes swirl in vortexes of chord changes, Coltrane stretched bebop's language to breaking point. But, as the haunting ballad Naima shows, he could also blow his horn with a tender lyrical beauty. At the time, *Giant Steps* was a quantum leap forward, both for Coltrane and modern jazz. Sixty years on, its combination of hummable tunes with the saxophonist's jaw-dropping virtuosity still impress.

Charles Waring

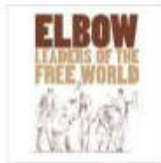
Elbow

★★★★

Leaders Of The Free World

POLYDOR. LP

Their third album, reissued on vinyl.



Their best was still to come, but when Elbow returned to their Manches-

ter base to produce 2005's *Leaders Of The Free World* themselves, it represented the moment the band really began to shape their own destiny. It's now reissued on vinyl with its two predecessors *Asleep In The Back* and *Cast Of Thousands*, both recorded with outside producers away from home. This was also the moment when Elbow embraced both what would become their subsequent trademark warmth and the uplifting power of a chorus, most winningly on Mexican Standoff and Station Approach, while Forget Myself was their first truly great song and the first which would make sense in the arenas they would soon be frequenting. However, this was still evolution rather than revolution, and Guy Garvey's lyrics were still bereft ("I look for a plot where I can bury my broken heart"), while The Stops and My Very Best overly meandered. But from here it was time to soar.

John Aizlewood



Robert Plant

★★★★★

Digging Deep: Subterranea

ES PARANZA/WMG. CD/DL

Led Zeppelin frontman incentivised by his podcast.



The success of Digging Deep, Robert Plant's podcast, has spurred this 30-song trawl through his diverse solo career. Plant's recent work with the Sensational Space Shifters is well served by the trippy folk noir of Rainbow and Embrace Another Fall. But, to his credit, he hasn't erased the 1980s from history. Twittering synths and windswept power ballads also get a look in; 'Percy' going brilliantly off-piste on Wreckless Love (like Peter Gabriel jamming with Led Zeppelin). Three previously unreleased songs provide a hook for completists. The spelling of Charlie Patton Highway (Turn It Up – Part 1) – not *Charley*? – niggles, but the song is a filmic blues stripped to its bone marrow, and Too Much Alike is a cheery duet with country singer and former partner, Patty Griffin. The whole thing zigzags restlessly between genres; Plant's solo journey in a nutshell, then. Unpredictable, contrary and sometimes brilliant.

Mark Blake



Thin Lizzy, 1970-73: (from left) Brian Downey, Phil Lynott, Eric Bell.

Stories for boys

Mammoth 6-CD plus DVD box with rarities, live tracks, a book and more. By James McNair.

Thin Lizzy

★★★★★

Rock Legends

UMC. CD/DL

IN SUMMER 1976, the BBC's somewhat staid entertainment schedules got a shot in the arm when Thin Lizzy guested on Rod Stewart's TV special *A Night On The Town*. All angles and no curves, luminously alluring and lightly high, Lizzy looked and sounded like God's idea of hard rock heaven. That same year they recorded *Live & Dangerous* and *The Boys Are Back In Town* was a hit both sides of the Atlantic. "We would leave that fucking stage smeared with blood if we had to," Scott Gorham told this writer recently. This was the swashbuckling vibe Lizzy brought to the BBC of Mike Yarwood In Persons.

Rock Legends – a cringeworthy if accurate title – includes a DVD of that stunning performance, but with 74 of this set's 99 tracks previously unreleased, there's gold aplenty here. Accessing newly discovered tapes, including some from the 8-track machine the classic Phil Lynott/Brian Downey/Gorham/Brian Robertson line-up used during rehearsals, the tracklisting Gorham compiled with renowned Lizzy head Nick Sharp includes fascinating demos of the band's most iconic songs.

It's also a snapshot of their whole career from *Whiskey In The Jar* through to 1983's final, somewhat underrated LP *Thunder And Lightning*, with all of the band's key guitar players – Eric Bell, Gary Moore, Snowy White and John Sykes also served – represented at their best.

Though the adroit Latin feel of 1973's Randolph's Tango is a winning example of Lizzy's early versatility, and an RTE Radio session incorporates the Dr Who theme into 1969 Rock thrills, you'll want to speed to the demos. Here is Jailbreak with a beat-box intro; Emerald with extra bits about "Africa, Ethiopia, America and that city beneath the sea"; Cowboy Song with placeholder lyrics that bring Lynott's evocation of touring's dissolute highs and lows into starker relief. "Lord, all these Southern girls seem the same," he sang on the keeper, but here it's "Lord, all these pretty girls they feel the same."

In the set's A4 book, which has new quotes from celeb fans, countless Lizzy musicians, and the band's managers and producers, *Chinatown* enabler Kit Woolven recalls, "When Phil walked into a room, every head would turn." His magnetism was paramount, and we are reminded, too, what a fine singer he was. Always committed, perfectly in tune, he pilots a 1980 live version of Still In Love With You with a touching sadness.

Rock Legends is a fine commemoration of 50 years of Lizzy, and Break Out Pictures' new Lynott biopic *Songs For While I'm Away* arrives this autumn. Once again, the boys are back.





Elliott Smith

★★★★★

Elliott Smith: Expanded 25th Anniversary Edition

KILL ROCK STARS/UMC. CD/DL/LP

A quarter-century later, this second LP still articulates intense despair singularly.

Years before Elliott Smith's fragile missives from the edge of a depressive abyss became soundtrack fodder for Wes Anderson or Gus Van Sant, he was a proper rock band's singer trying to stake out some quiet solo songs, too. His second such album, recorded just as said band Heatmiser began to combust, softly seethes at memories of an abusive stepfather, sweetly longs for heroin's release, and warmly recounts nights spent amid a malt liquor fugue. Sharply remastered here, Smith's muted but pointed woes crackle with renewed intensity, reinforced by a restoration of what may be his first solo live recording. "I was sticking up for my friend/When there's nothing much to defend," he half-gasps during the charged closer, captured in 1994 at a Portland café. "It's a lost fight." But his battles, well documented in the years that followed, remain powerful to witness.

Grayson Haver Currin

Various

★★★★★

Jobcentre Rejects Vol 3: Ultra-Rare NWOBHM 1978-1983

ON THE DOLE. CD/DL/LP

Deep trawl through provincial rock and metal in Thatcher's Britain.

Instalment three of On The Dole Records' ongoing series again pans for gold in the barren wastelands of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. A genre cooked up in the late 1970s by music weekly Sounds, the NWOBHM helped launch Iron Maiden, Saxon and Def Leppard, but most of the groups flying its flag of convenience were at best so-so, at worst wretched. However, the youthful DIY spirit here is infectious and oddly nostalgic, especially for those who caught, say, St Albans' local heroes Clientelle opening for Angelwitch in a pokey theatre in Rickmansworth nearly 40 years ago. That said, it's hard to regard Pali Gap, Jameson Raid and Dragonfly (despite their fine guitarist, east Londoner Rudi Riviere) as part of a great lost musical movement or worthy of bigger, better things. Fantastically obscure, occasionally fun, but sadly, mostly inessential.

Mark Blake



Black Sabbath

★★★★★

Paranoid: Super Deluxe Box Set

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Hard rock colossi's second album gets a 50th anniversary paintjob.

So ubiquitous is *Paranoid's* title track, it's odd hearing a 22-year-old Ozzy Osbourne introducing it "as a number off our new album" in 1970. You get a lot of *Paranoid* for your money on this 4-CD/5-LP edition: the original album; a 1974 quad mix; 1970 live shows from Montreux and Brussels. Everything about the original album – be it bassist/lyricist Geezer Butler's stoner poems about bloodshed and pestilence or Tony Iommi's concrete-mixer guitar riffs – still sounds like an instruction manual for metal bands in 2020. War Pigs, Hand Of Doom, even that fleeting moment of subtlety, Planet Caravan, haven't aged a jot. Elsewhere, the live shows demonstrate what an unholy din the young Sabbath conjured away from a sterile recording studio; the malevolent, disembodied voice introducing them on-stage at Brussels' Théâtre 101 – "Bleck Sebbeth!" – sounding like Lucifer himself.

Mark Blake



Black Sabbath, 1970: wrote heavy metal's instruction manual.

Canned Heat

★★★★★

Future Blues

ELEMENTAL MUSIC. LP

Classic Heat's last blast.



There was always something ghostly about Al Wilson's otherworldly falsetto, most famously heard in Canned Heat's *Going Up The Country*. The singer/harmonica player/guitarist was the band's secret weapon. While the others were all superb musicians, Wilson brought a striking originality to the Heat's interpretation of the blues. In addition to that voice, he experimented with Indian music in the mix, heard here in the title cut, while the juxtaposition of his clean fingerpicking and Harvey Mandel's electric single notes on *Shake It And Break It* makes for thrilling teamwork. This was the last album featuring Heat's classic line-up – Wilson overdosed a month after its 1970 release. Also notable is the group's hit cover of Wilbert Harrison's *Let's Work Together*, sung by frontman Bob 'The Bear' Hite, capturing a yearning that, like Wilson, would be too soon gone.

Michael Simmons

Brooks' nyabinghi funk groove, *The Great Ball*, are seeing the light of day for the very first time, along with alternate takes of Joseph Hill's devotional *Behold* and Prince Jazzbo's exuberant DJ track *Jah Dip*. Landmarks such as *The Soul Vendors'* *Darker Shade Of Black* and Slim Smith's *Happy Times* are presented in split-channel stereo, and there are other obscure treasures from Dennis Brown, Larry Marshall and The Silvertones. The limited-edition vinyl album has two extended bonus tracks.

David Katz



Billy Brooks

★★★★★

Windows Of The Mind

WE WANT SOUNDS. CD/LP

1974 funk rarity from the Ray Charles protégé.

From Mobile, Alabama, Julius 'Billy' Brooks studied trumpet at New York's Juilliard School before moving to Los Angeles to play with Lionel Hampton and Ray Charles, the latter issuing Brooks' sole album on his Crossover Records label in 1974. Recorded at Ray's RPM International Studios, with Ray co-producing and a crack band including bassist Larry Gales and drummer Clarence Johnston, its nine tracks, all vehicles for Brooks' vivacious, melodious blowing, are either swinging big band funk made for dancing, soulful grooves that lean towards acid jazz, or in the case of *The Speech Maker*, crime jazz full of drama and suspense. *Forty Days*, Brooks' cop show theme in waiting, meanwhile, was sampled by A Tribe Called Quest on 1990's *Luck Of Lucien*, causing originals of the album to fetch three figure sums and thus making this first official reissue very welcome.

Lois Wilson

VINYL PACKAGE OF THE MONTH

Ohio Players

WESTBOUND.

FOLLOWING *Pain's* re-release a couple of month's ago, Ace now have an equally clean, rich-sounding pressing of *Pleasure*, second chapter in the Players' triptych of early-'70s funk blasts. The

Ohios lived up to their name back then and *played*. The fluid line-up's core included Walter 'Junie' Morrison on piano/organ, who takes off on Walt's *First Trip*, with Leroy 'Sugarfoot' Bonner on guitar/vocals, the sharp horn arrangements of Clarence Satchell and Ralph Middlebrooks, and

hip-shaking rhythm from Marshall 'Rock' Jones (bass) and Gregory Webster (drums), who stay right in the pocket. The album's title track and its Number 1 R&B single *Funky Worm* – a silly song but crisply done, it was their US breakthrough – are notable, and of two ballads *Our Love Has Died* has the stronger foretaste of

later Ohios, while Joel Brodsky's bondage-themed cover shoots with model Pat Evans still raise an eyebrow. Series climaxes with *Ecstasy*, promised before Christmas.

Geoff Brown





Rachid Taha

★★★★★

Rock'n'Rai

BARCLAY. CD/DL/LP

Two years on from his death, the Franco-Algerian rebel gets the definitive farewell he deserves.

There are few acts whose 'Best Of' would cover quite as many bases: Rachid Taha's diverse tastes reflected not just his magpie eye but the experience of the immigrant growing up in an unwelcoming melting pot. Open with Abdel Kader, a tribute to a 12th century Sufi saint, throw in a sarcasm-heavy chanson cover (Charles Trenet's Douce France), the glorious global club anthem Ya Rayah, big-beat anti-racist house bangers Indie and Voilà Voilà, and the back-to-its-roots Rock El Casbah (Taha cheekily liked to claim to have inspired The Clash song in the first place), and you have a measure of the man and his many faces. Previous compilations have attempted to pin him down – the Arabic Strummer, the rootsy rocker – but found his essence elusive. He was all those things and always a wee bit more.

David Hutcheon



Ultravox

★★★★★

Vienna

[Deluxe Edition]

CHRYSLIS. CD+DL/LP

Conny Plank-produced fourth LP, on 5-CD+DVD, 4-LP or 2-LP sets; unreleased tracks plus the band's sleeve notes.

In 1980, Ultravox transformed (or transmogrified, for many lovers of the original line-up) into chart contenders; nothing whatsoever wrong with that. The title track, with a self-funded video, broke them big in the singles charts across Europe, and became the most famous Number 2 in UK pop history. Elsewhere, the opening instrumental Astradyne is a prime slab of synth-pop virtuosity, while Sleepwalk and All Stood Still, all post-punk rush and brio, are both better singles by miles than Vienna. The original nine-

song album is supplemented on this 40th anniversary box set: Disc 2 has Steven Wilson's subtly different new stereo mix; CDs 3 and 4 offer demos, B-sides, alternative versions, and the raw sonic crutch of rehearsal cassette recordings; while CD5 features Live In St Albans 1980, in which newly-instated Midge Ure has a crack at Foxx-era material. This is a lovingly complete package.

David Buckley



Various

★★★★★

The Harry Smith B-Sides

DUST-TO-DIGITAL. CD

All the flip sides for the 78s assembled on *Anthology Of American Folk Music*.

Harry Smith's 1952 *Anthology Of American Folk Music* was the ur-text for the folk revival, and to this day entrances musicians like Jack White and Jeff Tweedy. Now the meticulous enthusiasts at Dust-To-Digital present – gorgeously, as always – the B-sides of the cuts Smith culled from blues, country, and gospel originally waxed between 1926 and 1933. Alongside work by such beloved names as The Carter Family, Charley Patton, Dock Boggs, Mississippi John Hurt sit intriguing headscratchers like William & Versey Smith's Everybody Help The Boys Come Home: why were they cutting WWI propaganda nearly a decade after its end? Why does it sound like such a party? But the music speaks to us – maybe especially in 2020. Tell Spotify you want a multi-genre playlist by folks who quite obviously have been through some shit, and you'd plausibly get the *Anthology* and these *B-Sides*.

Chris Nelson

COMING NEXT MONTH...

Bruce Springsteen, Joni Mitchell (below), Public Enemy, Tom Petty, Motörhead, Melody Gardot, Gillian Welch, Jeff Tweedy, Ólafur Arnalds and more.



Solomon Burke

★★★★★

The King Of Rock 'N' Soul

SOULMUSIC. CD/DL

For all the excellent LPs of his career's late flowering post 2002, these 79 tracks on 3-CDs are his true legacy. Subtitled *The Atlantic Recordings 1962-1968*, it offers Stupidity, Down In The Valley, great country soul, great gospel ballad, great pop covers. GB



Kellee Patterson

★★★★★

Maiden Voyage

BLACK JAZZ/REAL GONE. CD/DL/LP

With her swooning voice, the first black Miss Indiana might have felt at home at Motown, who offered to release her 1973 soul-jazz debut, but she went with the politically astute Black Jazz. Flautist George Harper elevates the Herbie Hancock-penned title track. JB



Various

★★★★★

The Last Shall Be First

BIBLE & TIRE. CD/LP

Pastor Juan Shipp of Memphis had a gospel label, D-Vine Spiritual. Groups deemed not good enough went on JCR. The pastor was a *hard* judge, for the 18 JCR sides here – often raw, always real, brusque leads, flutey harmonies, flights of vocal fancy, sincerity and power – are a righteous riot. GB



Bert Jansch

★★★★★

Crimson Moon

EARTH RECORDINGS. LP

Twentieth anniversary vinyl for a late-era gem by Scotland's original guitar hero, featuring Bernard Butler and Johnny Marr (who also adds harmonica and vocals to The River Bank). Jansch's wife Loren Auerback sings Owen Hand's minor-key ballad, My Donald. JB



The Tremeloes

★★★★★

The Complete CBS Recordings 1966-72

CHERRY RED. CD/DL

When Brian Poole left, his backing band hit big. Giddy singles Here Comes My Baby and Even The Bad Times Are Good still sound great. This 6-CD box has their expansion into prog plus mesmeric 1970 soundtrack *May Morning*. LW



New Order

★★★★★

Power Corruption & Lies: Definitive Edition

RHINO. CD+LP+DVD

Peter Saville-designed box set of 1983's keystone dance-rock hybrid: a new remaster, 1982's Peel Session, '82-84 live sets on DVD, 13 unreleased 'writing' recordings (all *sans* vocals). A revelatory glimpse into New Order's digital Big Bang. KC



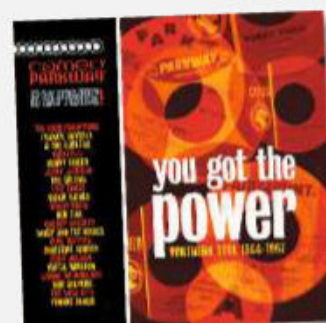
Robert Wyatt

★★★★★

His Greatest Misses

DOMINO. LP

Covetable double LP of 1974-2003 comp, a testimony to Wyatt's individuality as a singer/songwriter of pop, prog, jazz and beyond. His sweet, sad voice pricking your conscience on Shipbuilding, or *Rock Bottom's* queasy Sea Song ("when you're drunk you're terrific"), just two highlights. JB



Various

★★★★★

You Got The Power

ABKCO. CD/DL

Twenty Cameo-Parkway dancers that hit the Northern soul decks: future Maze-man Frankie Beverly & The Butler's' Because Of My Heart, Twist king Chubby Checker's You Just Don't Know (What You Do To Me), The Orlons, Bunny Sigler, Eddie Holman and Candy & The Kisses' The 81. GB

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VIDEO DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★
MOJO CLASSIC

★★★★★
EXCELLENT

★★★★
GOOD

★★★
DISAPPOINTING

★★
BEST AVOIDED

★
DEPLORABLE



"She had so much going for her." Connie Converse, Schenectady, Christmas, 1955.

CREDITS

Tracks: Talkin' Like You (Two Tall Mountains) / Johnny's Brother / Roving Woman / Down This Road / The Clover Saloon / John Brady / We Lived Alone / Playboy Of The Western World / Unknown (A Little Louder, Love) / One By One / Father Neptune / Man In The Sky / Empty Pocket Waltz / Honeybee / There Is A Vine / How Sad, How Lovely / Trouble

Personnel: Connie Converse (voice and guitar)

Restoration/production: Daniel Dzula and David Herman

Recorded: By Connie Converse and Gene Deitch

Chart peak: n/a

Current availability: connieconverse.bandcamp.com

"Connie believed in herself. She wanted to be known," Deitch recalled when I interviewed him for a forthcoming book about her life and music. On one of his original tape reels – from which many of the tracks on *How Sad, How Lovely* were extracted – he can be heard peppering her with questions between the songs she performed for him and a select gathering of friends.

Deitch remembered Converse as stand-offish, almost rude, though these impressions belie the playful, buoyant voice found in such songs as The Clover Saloon and Johnny's Brother, and in her letters from that time.

"Hallo! I am me. Are you somebody too?" she wrote to her brother Phil and his wife Jean that same year. "Can you see over the top yet? Is there any top? ... I see a black cloud coming, no bigger than an elephant's behind, so excuse me while I run for cover. Tally ho, Lady Chatterley's Mother." This was not the Converse that Deitch experienced. "She looked down on all of us," he said. "She didn't think that we understood the meaning and depth of her lyrics."

But Converse was writing music for which there was not yet any context, and her over-arching themes of alienation, confusion, and despair had not yet found their way into popular song. Although she presented as mild-mannered (Deitch told me she looked like a librarian, or a nun), inwardly she was a radical, wanting to be accepted on her own terms, or not at all. Sadly, it turned out to be the latter.

Having tried and failed to find an audience for her work during her musically active years in New York City (a decade or so that also included a rash of remarkable compositions for classical voice and piano), she reinvented herself as a social thinker, spending the '60s and early '70s working within the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution, then housed at the University of Michigan. But a series of personal and professional crises led to a breakdown. In August 1974, a week after her 50th birthday, she disappeared, leaving behind notes for

family and friends that spoke of her desire to start afresh somewhere else "with no benign umbrella", telling them not to come looking for her. She drove off into the warm, summer Ann Arbor night and hasn't been seen since.

Yet she can still be heard, and, remarkably, there is even more to come. This year saw the release of *Sad Lady*, an EP featuring six previously unreleased tracks, which hint at the material that remains in the vaults.

"This woman had so much going for her," reflected Deitch, who died on April 16 this year. "And nobody wanted it." A lifetime later, we're lucky to have her.

Howard Fishman

Verse, Chorus, Converse

This month's perfect gift you never knew you wanted: a 1950s mystery singer-songwriter steps into the light.

Connie Converse

How Sad, How Lovely

LAU DERETTE, 2009

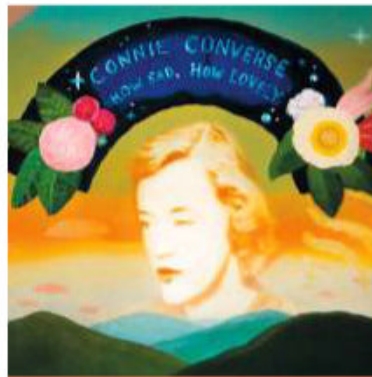
THAT THE MUSIC Connie Converse recorded in the early '50s did not vanish utterly is nothing short of miraculous – a stroke of the luck that otherwise seemed to elude her.

Producer and audio engineer Dan Dzula encountered the unknown songwriter one night in 2004 when he was listening to New York public radio while driving. The show's guest was the animator Gene Deitch, a lifelong audio hobbyist who'd made important recordings of artists including John Lee Hooker, Pete Seeger and Eubie Blake. Deitch was talking about some of his favourites, and introduced his tape of Converse made at a 1954 gathering at his house. She was heard quietly singing her haunting song of disconnection, One By One, accompanied by her acoustic guitar. Stunned, Dzula pulled over.

In 2009, Dzula and sound designer David Herman pressed 2,000 copies of *How Sad, How Lovely*, the first-ever commercial release of Converse's music. Her songs have since been covered by the likes of Jeff Tweedy, Margaret Glaspy, Chris Thiele, Laurie

Anderson and others, who see in her out-of-time emotional investigations a prototype of the DIY composer-voice. Her work can now be properly understood as anticipating not only the singer-songwriter revolution of the '60s, but also the oddball idiosyncrasies of this century's freak-folk movement. Such songs as There Is A Vine and Empty Pocket Waltz contain the same vulnerability, intelligence and subtle wit to be found in Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen, while the lyrical sophistication and musical whimsy of Playboy Of The Western World point towards Joni Mitchell's catalogue. The insouciance of We Lived Alone and Trouble seem forerunners of the work of Will Oldham, or Devendra Banhart.

More than a footnote to the music is the strangeness of her story. Born to strict, teetotal parents in 1924 New Hampshire, Converse rebelled. Abandoning her New England background, she dropped out of college and moved to New York City. After dabbling in fine art, illustration, prose, and poetry, she began writing songs in earnest around 1950, recording them herself on a Crestwood 404 tape recorder in her tiny Greenwich Village apartment.



"I am me. Are you somebody too?"

CONNIE CONVERSE

Courtney Marie Andrews

Old Flowers



*"this really is a beautiful album:
crafted, moving and sophisticated"*

★★★★★
THE TIMES

"perfectly formed songs"

★★★★★
THE MIRROR

*"a really beautiful,
beautiful new record"*
NPR MUSIC

*"devastatingly intimate and
open-hearted"*

★★★★★
NME

*"Andrews has an unforced
and unobtrusively
beautiful voice"*

★★★★★
Q

*"quiet and still and unbearably sad,
but somehow leaves the listener feeling better"*

★★★★★
Album Of The Week
THE EVENING STANDARD

*"bracingly and courageously
unfiltered"*

Album Of The Week
THE SUNDAY TIMES

*"there simply isn't anything to
dislike about Old Flowers"*

★★★★★
MOJO

*"a potent collection of
emotionally raw songs"*

★★★★★
UNCUT

*"these are high quality songs written
by someone who knows her craft"*

★★★★★
Album Of The Week
FINANCIAL TIMES

*"like a Neil Young piano ballad
as it unveils its increasingly
entangled romantic dilemmas"*

NEW YORK TIMES



FILMMAKERS AND TEAM EMPIRE DIG
DEEP INTO THE BEST NEW RELEASES

THE
EMPIRE
SPOILER
SPECIAL
FILM PODCAST

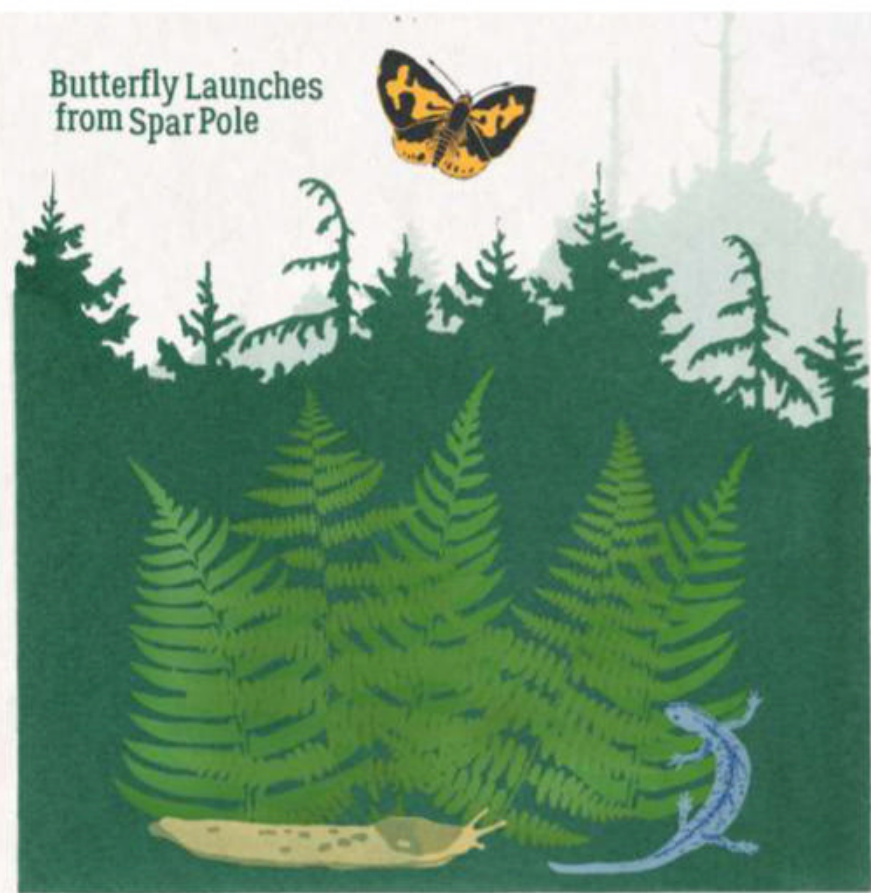
Subscribe now for two new
episodes per month + **exclusive**
access to the archive

FIND OUT MORE AT EMPIREONLINE.COM/SPOILERSPECIALS

@empiremagazine



Butterfly Launches
from Spar Pole



Butterfly Launches from Spar Pole

—Eleven Pieces of Art Music—

Dr. Robert Michael Pyle

Krist Novoselić

Vinyl LP £16.00 + Post
ButterflyLaunch.com



Smother me brother: the Gallaghers Liam and Noel (right).



10 Oasis *Heathen Chemistry*

BIG BROTHER 2002, £5.76

You say: "A breath of fresh air when it was released amongst all the nu-metal, R&B and dance music at the time." *Music Only, Twitter*

Though the final two Oasis LPs had their moments, such as ultimate piledriver *The Shock Of The Lightning* off '08's *Dig Out Your Soul*, this fifth studio outing was the last consistently thrilling one. Having booted out all three of Liam's original bandmates from *The Rain* and supplanted them with hand-picked indie-rock pros, for *Heathen Chemistry*, Noel opened the door to others writing songs. Gem Archer's *Hung In A Bad Place* and, particularly, Liam's *Songbird* – a breezy love letter to his then-fiancée Nicole Appleton – brought fresh energy, while Noel's perennial England-out-of-the-World Cup weepie *Stop Crying Your Heart Out* topped off a promising new blend that never quite matured.



4 Oasis *The Masterplan*

CREATION 1998, £5.68

You say: "Name another B-sides album that blazes out the speakers like a Greatest Hits. You'll fail." *Andy Dodds, Facebook*

A central plank to Oasis's mid-'90s dominance dictated that Noel's songbook was so stuffed with classics, the extra tracks on singles packed more chart-topping potential than any other band's A-sides. Here, as a stopgap after their 1996 Knebworth mega-gig and *Be Here Now*, they reinforced the point: *The Masterplan* trounces all later Oasis LPs, too. Three cuts – opening brotherly-solidarity duet *Acquiesce*, bittersweet soul-searcher *Half The World Away*, and the orchestral title track – really were Number 1s that slipped the net. Others, like acoustic tearjerker *Talk Tonight*, clearly weren't, but their variety of mood and instrumentation make a fine companion to the Oasis-in-overdrive 'proper' LPs. *Getty*



CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Oasis albums. Next month we want your Tony Allen Top 10. Send your selections to www.mojo4music.com or e-mail your Top 10 to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Tony Allen' and we'll print the best comments.

Oasis and solo

Let's have it. By **Andrew Perry.**

"SOMETIMES BEING a brother," American children's author Marc Brown famously wrote, "is even better than being a superhero." Sibling rivalry has certainly driven the brothers Gallagher to extraordinary heights, both together within the uneasy alliance of Oasis, and thereafter in their solo capacities since the band split in 2009.

What they shared while growing up in suburban Burnage, south Manchester, was a passion for two rock idols, The Beatles and the Sex Pistols. After much in-studio huffing, puffing and pugilism, 1994's Oasis debut, *Definitely Maybe*, delivered a confident amalgam of those two influences, and almost single-handedly reinstated home-grown rock in the British pop charts. For the next couple of albums, Noel drew on a stockpile of anthems composed pre-fame, but the problems started thereafter, when he felt increasingly straitjacketed by the imperative to write for stadiums. Successive albums lacked creative movement and, increasingly, zip.

For fans, the bust-up in Paris

which finally terminated Oasis in August '09 has brought the inescapable benefit that each makes livelier, more interesting music alone. Initially, it appeared that Noel held all the cards, as the songwriter extraordinaire breezily cast off his shackles to embrace disco beats and Laurel Canyon vibes, while Liam's neo-Oasis efforts with Beady Eye rather unjustly foundered. When Liam began trading under his own name, with help from high-end co-writers, the tables turned.

Now, it's an even fight, with a delicious added frisson of speculation, relentlessly piqued by Gallagher Jr on Twitter, about the chances of an Oasis reunion

– he even wheeled out OG guitarist Paul 'Bonehead' Arthurs for his recent MTV Unplugged bonanza. Amid ever-depleting numbers in the classic-rock superleague, the heritage wages would surely be astronomical.

A quick recap on the torrid fraternal track record hitherto, of course, always makes it feel less of a good idea.

"Definitely Maybe reinstated home-grown rock in the British pop charts."



9 Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds Chasing Yesterday

SOUR MASH 2015, £6.89

You say: "Hits the sweet spot between Oasis nostalgia and a new direction for Noel." *The Joshua Treehugger, Twitter*

On release of his second solo record, Noel recalled how he and Gem Archer would reflect on critiques of late-Oasis stodginess, wondering, "What do they expect – space-jazz?" This, clearly, was to prepare the troops for *Chasing Yesterday's* expansion on solo Noel's first freedoms, to include sax solos (hear blissful, West Coast-ish opener Riverman) and two revised outtakes from a shelved collaboration with cosmic '90s dance troupe Amorphous Androgynous. Themes of middle-aged ravers regaining the old magic, and an appearance by Johnny Marr on wonderfully dreamy disco-pumping closer Ballad Of The Mighty I, sealed another chart-topping victory.

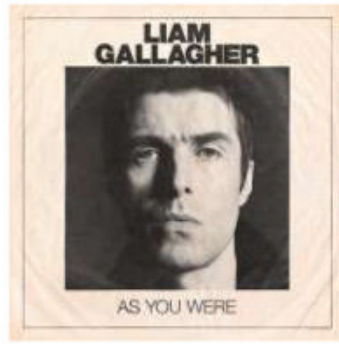


8 Oasis Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants

BIG BROTHER 2000, £5.80

You say: "A stand-alone record. The hangover and anxiety from Britpop." *Os/Oasis, Twitter*

The sixteenth-fastest-selling album in UK chart history got a universal kicking at the time of its release, as critics perhaps detected, of all things, a crisis of confidence in Oasis's leader over creative direction, after the "cocaine expansionist" lunacy of 1997's *Be Here Now*. Despite side two's Noel-sung missteps, the lumpy Gas Panic! and Little James's cheesy new-father lyrics, the rest of *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants* has weathered much better than later records. Opening breakbeat instrumental Fuckin' In The Bushes is a pulse-quickening Zeppelin-esque monster, while the hazy-lazy Go Let It Out offered a superb, acoustic-rattling response to the hot post-Britpop sound of The Beta Band.



7 Liam Gallagher As You Were

WARNER BROS 2017, £4

You say: "A great come-back full of Liam's thoughts." *James Atkin, Twitter*

Even while Beady Eye was failing commercially, it was Noel who advised, with a winner's smirking disinterest, that his younger brother should go solo, with "his name in lights" – an obvious reference to late-'60s Elvis. The parallel wouldn't be irrelevant when Liam ultimately did so two years later. With the push of a major label behind him, a raft of elite-class songwriters helped sculpt material that essentially celebrated Liamness. Thus, while Noel's solo records sought routes away from Oasis-style rabble-rousing, *As You Were* simply gloried in it (Wall Of Glass; Greedy Soul), while also, on For What It's Worth, mining the singer's troubled private life with winning vulnerability.



6 Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds

SOUR MASH 2011, £4.98

You say: "He had something to prove again and it did him a lot of good." *Malcolm Turner, via e-mail*

Even on first listen, Noel's solo debut felt like a liberation. Swapping Oasis's stampede of multitracked guitars for a strummed acoustic, and his strained bark for a more natural, choirboy-esque vocal purity, ...*High Flying Birds* birthed a sound that played to his own strengths (thoughtful, sophisticated), rather than Liam's (headlong). Everybody's On The Run and If I Had A Gun... saw him take his foot off the gas to wonder at the world, while proven pop smarts resurfaced in Kinksian whimsy (Dream On) and piano-house-like euphoria (AKA...What A Life!). Britpop's songwriting master had got his edge back.



5 Beady Eye Different Gear, Still Speeding

BEADY EYE/DANGERBIRD 2011, £4.99

You say: "Of course." *Lucian Medesan, Facebook*

Following Oasis's split, it spoke volumes that, within weeks, Liam had announced a new band alongside the other three members (guitarist Gem Archer, bassist Andy Bell and final-tour drummer Chris Sharrock), leaving the increasingly isolated 'Chief' Noel to go it alone. By the time *Different Gear...* emerged, its sense of 'continuity Oasis' felt mistimed – quite simply, the world wasn't ready to welcome Oasis back yet, in any guise. Beady Eye's debut is, however, something of a lost classic, delivering flagrant Lennonisms (The Roller), Who-esque thrills (titled Beatles And Stones, oddly), and piano-trashing rock'n'roll (Bring The Light) with a vitality that bespoke years of repression under the old regime.



3 Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds Who Built The Moon?

SOUR MASH 2017, £8

You say: "Noel seems to have gotten better with each one, the further from the Oasis sound he's gone the better." *Neil Partington, Facebook*

Following his team-up with The Chemical Brothers on '96's *Setting Sun*, Noel had experimented with 'going dance' in Oasis circa '03-04 via abortive sessions with Death In Vegas, then solo with Amorphous Androgynous. He doubtless felt pressure to modernise, and things eased in that direction with 2017's team-up with Belfast producer/movie soundtracker David Holmes. *WBTM* upheld solo Noel's sense of casting off shackles, echoing New Order, Phil Spector and The Prodigy, and, in Holy Mountain's use of the glam-y horn riff from Bryan Ferry's Let's Stick Together, reconnecting with early Oasis' 'genius steals' mentality.



2 Oasis (What's The Story) Morning Glory?

CREATION 1995, £6.80

You say: "Could've been their *White Album* if they'd held back the B-sides and released it as a double." *Andy, Twitter*

It's hard to overplay the breathless, pre-social media phenomenon of Oasis through 1994-95, and how their ascent was mirrored in their second LP's expansion on the debut's raw materials. Most importantly, in *Wonderwall Morning Glory* had the heartstring-tugging megahit to facilitate the band's crossover worldwide. At every turn there was growth, from Noel's primetime vocal debut on the anthemic Don't Look Back In Anger, to Champagne Supernova's *Quadrophenia*-on-steroids finale. Quite how much was 'held back' for LP2 by career mastermind Noel is still questionable, but these mighty choruses would soon resound around Earls Court, Maine Road and beyond.



Oasis Definitely Maybe

CREATION 1994, £6.03

You say: "Everything you want from a rock'n'roll band's debut album... lads, gun-slinging guitars and shooting for the stars." *Andrew Gutteridge, Twitter*

Their second album may have become the UK's third biggest-selling studio long-player of all time, but with every passing year this debut becomes more established as an unassailable career zenith. Often plausibly compared with *Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols*, this album's cultural impact was in some ways as far-reaching (if not politically), as it reignited British rock. It also took endless tinkering mix-wise to finesse Noel's beefed-up guitars, but there was a purity and purpose to his songs on *Definitely Maybe* that can never be repeated. From Live Forever's gutter-level stargazing and Slide Away's desperation to Rock'N'Roll Star's magical self-fulfilling prophecy, it simply cannot be bettered.

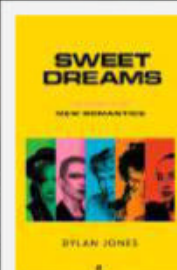
NOW DIG THIS



Oasis are better served with rock-docs than any other band of the past 30 years. A definitive hour-long *Definitely Maybe* documentary is available free on the band's official Vevo page, but Mat Whitecross's unmissable movie about the road from Burnage to Knebworth, 2016's *Supersonic*, requires payment. For the full jaw-dropping spectacle of Oasis in their stadium pomp, head to YouTube's complete 2005 concert from the City of Manchester Stadium. Also on YouTube, there is abundant fraternal silliness in the full audio from 1994's *Wibbling Rivalry* interview. The best book, Paul Mathur's *Take Me There* (Overlook, 1997), is currently out of print but well worth seeking out.



"Like panto": Adam & The Ants set out on "an MTV-feeding whirligig of reinvention".



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Future Wag club founder Ollie O'Donnell remembers "The Bowie Twins": two stick-thin scenesters whose catchphrase "Never mind the bollocks, darling!" would be filched by the Sex Pistols.
- Visage frontman and Blitz club mastermind Steve Strange turned up to the New York launch of Visage's useless second album on a camel. "It rained," recalls bandmate Midge Ure. "Steve's make-up ran, and the camel shat all over the floor outside the club."

Sparkle hard

An oral history of New Romantics joins the dots between Bowie, punk and the Lacy Lady in Ilford. By **Danny Eccleston**.

Sweet Dreams: The Story Of The New Romantics

★★★★★

Dylan Jones

FABER & FABER. £15.49

FEW MUSIC scenes have received more opprobrium than the New Romantics – that grab-bag of musicians, entrepreneurs and boulevardiers who emerged from London's post-punk club scene to dominate commercial pop culture in Britain in the first half of the '80s. A bunch of fame-grubbing clothes-horses? Certainly. But also, a progressive force that opened new routes for music while embracing most genders, ethnicities and sexual preferences. It was elitist but democratic, aspirational but skint, fixated on self-invention.

As Dylan Jones's hulking oral history makes clear, glamour was a touchstone from the start – in the pre-punk discos where a young, somewhat feral contingent obsessed over David Bowie and Roxy Music. Crackers, Louise's and the Lacy Lady in Ilford nurtured punk's early adopters and its earliest

apostates, turned off by the grot and violence and ossifying style codes. As scenester and future costume designer Fiona Dealey recalls, "I wanted to be someone more glamorous."

In the places this crowd invented to frequent – notably, Bowie Night at Billy's on Dean Street, Blitz in Covent Garden, Le Beat Route – dressing up, the more fabulously the better, was an escapist response to the grey city and, worse, beige suburbia. The soundtrack – Kraftwerk, gay disco, soul, Bowie, Roxy – was narrowly defined, so much so that Blitz DJ Rusty Egan would run out of records to play. Made-to-measure bands – Spandau Ballet and Visage – arose to plug the gaps, enabled by a 'new' instrument that was easy to play and made everything sound like the future: the synthesizer.

The scene was eye-catching enough to attract rubbernecks: David Bowie and Jack Charlton, plus the record labels that would turn this DIY subculture into a look-book and mood-music for high streets and shopping malls worldwide. For a band like Adam & The Ants, it was life *and* death, as their career turned into an insane, MTV-feeding whirligig of reinvention – "indians" to pirates to highwaymen – in which the music was quickly sidelined. "We were like panto," notes Ants guitarist Marco Pirroni.

The groups from outside Blitz-world – Soft Cell, OMD,

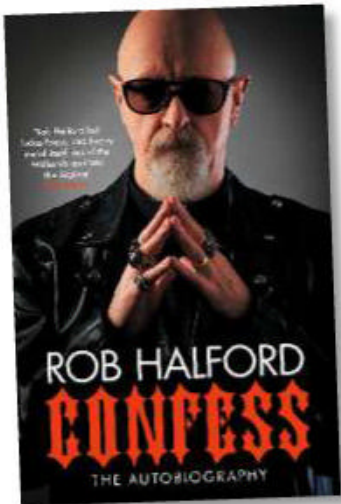
ABC, The Human League, Depeche Mode, Frankie Goes To Hollywood – but whose overlaps draw them into Sweet Dreams' narrative, have fared better, reputationally, than its flagship bands: 'The Spands' and their brummie counterparts, Duran Duran. But they were all, to one degree or another, sucked into the glam boys' wake. In one of his well-judged authorial interjections, Jones writes that for its high-fliers, "the fame was all-consuming and almost completely self-referential. The interesting thing about their success... was their success."

Jones's New Romanticism has a long tail, perhaps too long to make for a punchy ending to his book. But its legacies are well drawn. That there were mainstream, gay-signifying pop stars like Boy George, Marc Almond and Holly Johnson seemed extraordinary at the time and had a long-term positive impact. Black music and dance music would break down some of the rock-snob barriers they faced at the end of the '70s. Street styles, and

their creators, would ascend to high levels in international fashion. Club culture in Britain was transformed. We are all individuals now.

Fiona Dealey, there at the start, gets something like the last word: "I don't think that I've ever really felt that it's over. I really don't."

"The fame was all-consuming and self-referential."



Confess

★★★★★

Rob Halford
(With Ian Gittins)

HEADLINE. £20

Revealing, hilarious memoir by man who trademarked the phrase 'Metal God'.

As a 12-year-old Judas Priest fan opening the programme for their 1980 British Steel tour, I remember a clear but unspoken disconnect between the pop-up centrefold of a leather and studs-clad Halford on his motorbike and the relentless hetero-normativity of NWOBHM. Not the least entertaining of Confess's many revelations is its brief account of Halford's unsuccessful attempt to seduce support act Iron Maiden's then-lead singer Paul Di'Anno. Whether he's handcuffing himself to Andy Warhol, stealing the perspex obelisk from John Lennon's Imagine video, or leaving a US toilet cubicle after an anonymous sexual encounter to discover that his unseen partner on the other side of the Glory Hole had been dressed from head to toe in Judas Priest regalia, Halford's dry Black Country wit is the perfect complement to his eye-popping candour. And bonus points to Walsall-born co-writer Ian Gittins' for his pinpoint transcription of the dialect linguists' term "Fluent Yam-Yam".

Ben Thompson

Right Place, Right Time: The Life Of A Rock & Roll Photographer

★★★★★

Bob Gruen (With Dave Thompson)

ABRAMS. £25

Rock history as seen from behind a camera.



Famed rock lensman Bob Gruen's career is both a fan's daydream and a history of music from a time when "the unexpected was the norm". With classic portraits and action shots of Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, John Lennon and The Rolling Stones, The Ramones and Green Day, Gruen captured rock's

indomitable spirit, beginning with his first propitious photos of Bob Dylan going electric at Newport 1965. While this book has plenty of his legendary work (and many rarities), this is a proper memoir with war stories from an artist who almost gave his life for rock'n'roll. (He was threatened with grievous harm by a cane-wielding Dylan, as well as Japanese gangsters from the Yakuza.) Given his oeuvre, it's not surprising Gruen has adventurous, play-it-loud instincts and a photographic memory. His masterpieces – such as Lennon giving the V-for-victory salute in front of the Statue of Liberty – remain awe-inspiring.

Michael Simmons

Hawkwind: Days Of The Underground

★★★★★

Joe Banks

STRANGE ATTRACTOR. £22

Space-rock's sonic terrorists get their own multi-dimensional directory.



If you were travelling from the future, into the radical past of Ladbroke Grove in the 1970s, you might require a gazetteer to navigate the musical and political underground. This appears to be the role that Joe Banks has adopted in his attempt to analyse and understand the strange, head-spinning history of this unique countercultural collective. Aware that he is telling a Rashomon-style tale with as many versions as members, he divides the book up into alternating sections: Chronology; Album; Essay; Interview. It may disappoint those looking for a standard soup-to-nuts biog but it works in its intended aim, to make sense of the chaos, pick out the numerous themes at work in the music and give all the surviving members a chance to tell their own version of the saga. All it needs now is a set of Top Trumps so we time-travellers can battle for the soul of the band all over again.

Andrew Male

John Lennon 1980 The Last Days In The Life

★★★★★

Kenneth Womack

OMNIBUS. £14.99

Beatle scholar's insightful study of that final year.



First, this isn't a book about John Lennon's murder. His killer isn't mentioned, and the death is given a couple of paragraphs before writer Kenneth Womack dives into

the aftermath. Its absence is no great loss. This is a book about the months leading up to December 8, 1980. Womack details the domestic minutiae of John and Yoko's life, but also how the lesser-spotted Beatle's absence had made him "a figure of legend". One day a fan blags his way into the couple's New York apartment, desperate to glimpse the legend. Lennon thinks he's a VCR repairman, but good-naturedly signs an autograph even after realising he's been duped. The making of his swansong, *Double Fantasy*, brings Lennon's story up to its fateful, final minutes. At the end, he's a musician awed by his back catalogue and unprecedented celebrity, but finally rediscovering his muse. Sadly, too little, too late.

Mark Blake

It Takes Blood And Guts

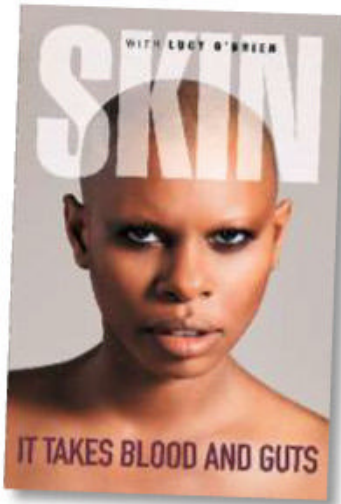
★★★★★

Skin With Lucy O'Brien

SIMON AND SCHUSTER. £20

The epic tale of Glastonbury's Black British Brixton-born headliner.

When Stormzy headlined Glastonbury in 2019, many forgot another Black British Londoner who had done similar 20 years earlier. Skin's



story is one of the Britpop decade's forgotten epics: the granddaughter of a Windrush immigrant leaving her Christian family in Brixton behind, to discover herself through art, rave and rock, and find global fame with her band, Skunk Anansie. She nimbly navigates the Top 20, band politics and festivals, before becoming Alexander McQueen's muse, befriending Lemmy, singing with Luciano Pavarotti, and hanging out with Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama. Despite this immense cast list, Skin's feet are positioned firmly on the ground throughout; she's a winningly genial, swearsoul on paper. She also offers the best rejoinder ever to racist barbs: "Nineteen-fifty-two called...it wants its wanker back!"

Jude Rogers

The Marley Files: One Foundation

★★★

John Masouri

JOOK JOINT. £14.99

Anthology exploring key albums, Marley's offspring and contested legacy.

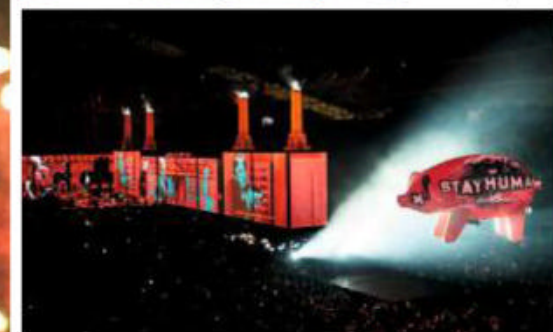
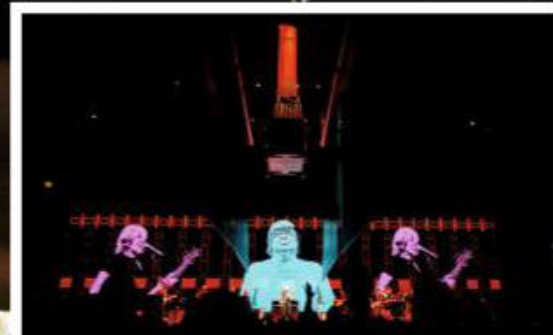


The second volume of John Masouri's self-published *Reggae Chronicles* focuses on Bob Marley and The Wailers and family, reprinting articles from Echoes, Riddim and Reggae Vibes. An opening examination of *Natty Dread*'s uncredited songwriting is followed by explorations of *Exodus*, *Kaya*, *Survival* and the final Uprising tour, plus Marley's funeral and later claims of exploitation by band members, culminating in bassist Aston 'Family Man' Barrett's failed court case against Island and the Marley Estate. Chapters on sons Ziggy, Stephen, Damian, Ky-mani and The Melody Makers are strong, Masouri's analysis spot-on and objective. Elsewhere, former flame Esther Anderson gives a glimpse of her time with Marley, and a tribute to keyboardist Earl 'Wire' Lindo is fleshed out by a rare interview, though Bunny Wailer's internet rants seem superfluous. Marley fans will find plenty of interest.

David Katz



Judas Priest's Rob Halford, in search of the Maidens.



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Waters' *Us + Them* band numbers US alt rock royalty: drummer Joey Waronker, of R.E.M., Beck and Thom Yorke's Atoms For Peace fame.
- Now reclaimed by Waters, the Pink Floyd songs *Dogs* and *Pigs (Three Different Ones)* were never performed live by the band after 1977.
- Some fans at Waters' date in New Orleans in July 2017 walked out when the show flashed up images of President Trump with what the press described as "an exceptionally small penis".

Animal magic

Roger Waters sticks it to the dogs, the pigs and "the man" in new concert movie. By **Mark Blake**.

Roger Waters

★★★★★

Us + Them

SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT. DVD CD V

"US + THEM is not standard rock'n'roll fare," cautioned Roger Waters, before his juggernaut tour of the same name lapped the globe throughout 2017 and '18. "Some in the audience may 'Yee haaaa!' But many will weep. That is what I hope for."

Waters has always been all about the message *and* the show. His navel-gazing introspection helped shift millions of copies of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, but he was also the driver behind Pink Floyd's *The Wall* concept and stage production. Wedding a serious message to a bells-and-whistles rock show is not easy.

Nonetheless, Waters achieves this monumentally big ask. First, there's a lot to shout about at this 2018 date from Amsterdam's Ziggo Dome: namely, a setlist crammed with Floyd hits and deep cuts, couched in a jaw-dropping \$4 million set. You can almost

smell the money. But while there's plenty of "Yee haaaa!" to be had at his rock'n'roll Cirque du Soleil, Waters drives his message home with tireless conviction. Basically, world leaders are pigs and not to be trusted, and you must care for yourselves and your fellow man — even when you're busy gawping at a peerless CGI recreation of Battersea Power Station.

Songwise, this is Waters sticking his flag in the Floyd back catalogue. He still sings like he's dispersing rioters through a loud hailer, but, lest anyone forget, Waters wrote most of this stuff, and a judiciously chosen setlist means he gets away with not having Floyd's David Gilmour around. His interpretation of *Wish You Were Here* proves the point. He strips away the original's beauty to show the wounds. It's harrowing, but great.

Entries from his most recent solo album, 2017's *Is This The Life We Really Want?*, slot perfectly next to *Welcome To The Machine*, *Pigs (Three Different Ones)* and *Dogs*, because they're cut from the same black cloth. *Pigs*, originally from Floyd's brilliant, unlovely *Animals*, is especially good. Waters spits the words, while screens flash up reams of Donald gibberish and the closing statement,

"Trump Is Een Varken". At times, he takes a sledgehammer to crack a nut, but when has he not? *The Final Cut*, anyone?

Elsewhere, Waters' expansive band manoeuvre through the back catalogue, while never forgetting who's in charge. The DVD's bonus feature shows him drilling them like a black T-shirted headmaster. On-stage, he stalks, gurns, scowls, wrings the neck of his bass and mouths the words, even when guitarists/vocalists Jonathan Wilson and Dave Kilminster are singing them for him. Then, in contrast, he grins proudly as kids and teenagers in orange prison uniforms appear on-stage for a choreographed routine during *Another Brick In The Wall (Part 2)*.

The show closes with a people-pleasing

Brain Damage and Eclipse and a *Dark Side*... prism strafed with lasers hovering over the throng. Look closely, and some seem on the verge of tears. Mission accomplished, then.

"Whether this show has any effect on us, I've no idea," Waters wearily suggests at the end. But you suspect he'll die trying.

"He stalks, gurns, scowls, and wrings the neck of his bass."

Navigator of the peaks and valleys: Justin Townes Earle at Southern Fried Festival, Perth, July 23, 2011.



Saint Of Lost Causes

Hardcore troubadour **Justin Townes Earle** left us on August 20.

ALTHOUGH HE'LL always be bracketed with his father Steve Earle, Justin Townes Earle was one of the few musical offspring to approach matching his more famous parent artistically. When he died of a suspected drug overdose in Nashville, aged just 38, Earle Jr left behind eight albums that mixed the long-planted roots of ragtime and bluegrass with modern country and folk, digging deep into his troubled life for inspiration.

Always determined not to be his father's son, musically at least, Earle's early albums still seemed to measure himself against his heritage. But it wasn't necessary. When he released the self-explanatory twin albums *Single Mothers* (2014) and *Absent Fathers*

(2015) it seemed to purge that need from his songwriting, and his final album, 2019's *The Saint Of Lost Causes*, took a more widescreen look at life on the wrong side of America's tracks, revealing a social conscience that was subtler than his father, but just as strong.

Born on January 4, 1982 and partially named for Steve's mentor Townes Van Zandt, Earle was just two years old when his father left home. His mother, Carol Ann Hunter, was the third of Earle Sr's seven wives. Justin's childhood with his mother was so unstable that at 12 he left to live with his father, himself only recently released from prison for possession of drugs and firearms. Troubled by ADHD, his issues with substance abuse began soon after – he first shot heroin aged 12 – and he rapidly became a hardened addict. "I was a junkie, so I know about struggle," he told MOJO in 2009.

Earle went in and out of

"I was a junkie, so I know about struggle."



THE LEGACY

The album(s): *Single Mothers* (Loose, 2014) *Absent Fathers* (Loose, 2015)
The sound: Earle's myriad parental issues are bundled into these twin albums, recorded at the same time but released separately. *Single Mothers* is more stylistically diverse, taking in heartache ballads and ragtime, while *Absent Fathers* has a rockier sound, but the catharsis is deep and brave, and even helped improve his relationship with dad.

rehab, and in 2000 was infamously sacked from his father's band after nodding out while putting bright red Manic Panic dye in his hair (it cost \$10,000 to repaint and carpet the formerly all-white room). A relapse in 2010 saw Earle jailed overnight after a fight with a nightclub owner, and in 2016 he admitted to actively following a marijuana maintenance programme.

"Sobriety to me means I don't shoot heroin and cocaine together," he told Rolling Stone in 2019. "[I smoke] a lot of weed. A quarter-ounce a day."

In the tributes after his death, musicians talked of Earle's generosity and kindness. Singer-songwriter Samantha Crain, who toured twice with Earle in the US, said he "always treated me kindly... he understood struggle, he understood joy... I saw him at the peaks and valleys of both".

Earle wasn't just kind in spirit, however. It wasn't unknown for him to peel off a couple of hundred bucks and just hand them to his support act for walking around money. He's survived by his wife, Jenn Marie, and two-year-old daughter Etta. A public memorial is planned in 2021.

Andy Fyfe Getty



One track mind: Walter Lure, demon Heartbreaker.

Walter Lure

Last of the Heartbreakers
BORN 1949

Always sporting his trademark girl's school tie, Walter Lure was the lanky linchpin, singer and guitarist who drove Johnny Thunders And The Heartbreakers through New York and London's '70s punk scenes. He survived heroin addiction to become a successful Wall Street stockbroker, though he always carried on playing.

Born Walter Luhr in Queens, he was working for the US Food and Drug Administration when he discovered CBGB's nascent punk scene around 1973-74. Already fronting the Demons, Lure joined the original Heartbreakers line-up of Johnny Thunders, Richard Hell and Jerry Nolan, initiated into the band by a heroin shot. The group soon found a following for their gutter anthem rock'n'roll, and hit London in November 1976 for the ill-fated Anarchy tour. They stayed. Punk audiences loved their seasoned street attitude and incendiary stage act, and the band loved them back. At the time, Lure told this writer: "Now we're just going to go to the top of the world and take it for as long as they'll let us!"

But the recording of their sole album in London degenerated into a production nightmare so fraught

it split the band, although 1977's *L.A.M.F.* remains one of the landmark '70s NYC albums. Lure was a live wire presence, co-writing *All By Myself*, *Get Off The Phone*, *One Track Mind* (and live fave *Too Much Junkie Business*). "You tend to forget the unpleasant things as the years go on," he told me in 2013. "It was just a great band."

After occasional reunions in the '80s, Lure quit heroin and hit Wall Street, getting lucky and finding he liked it. By the mid '90s he was managing 125 people, forming The Waldos as his "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" hobby, and releasing 1994's *Rent Party*. He carried on gigging, playing *L.A.M.F.* in its entirety at the 100 Club in August 2019, his final UK show. His autobiography, poignantly entitled *To Hell And Back*, was published in March. He succumbed to cancer at Flushing Hospital on August 21.

Kris Needs

"You tend to forget the unpleasant things as the years go on."

WALTER LURE ON LIFE AS A HEARTBREAKER

Balla Sidibé

Orchestra Baobab founder
BORN 1942



A policeman by day, Balla Sidibé was poached from Dakar's Star Band in 1970 to be one of the founders of the house band at the prestigious Club Baobab in 1970. And it was after a day's rehearsal for Orchestra Baobab's 50th anniversary tour that the singer, percussionist and writer of their 1978 hit *On Verra Ça* first complained of feeling unwell. For more than a decade, Baobab had dominated Senegal's airwaves, playing songs that wove Cuban son into the rhythms of West Africa, until they were supplanted by Youssou N'Dour's new mbalax sound. Twenty years later, however, Baobab reunited, prompted by N'Dour and World Circuit, the label that had reissued their 1982 album *Pirates Choice*, and with Sidibé at the helm, their star rose once again, 2002's *Specialist In All Styles* proving they had lost none of their old-school magic.

David Hutcheon

Wayne Fontana

Main Mindbender
BORN 1945

Part of the first wave of '60s beat bands from Manchester, Wayne Fontana And The Mindbenders found huge success on both sides of the Atlantic with their jaunty spring 1965 single *The Game Of Love*. By the end of that year, Fontana – born Glyn Ellis in Levenshulme – had quit to go solo, and The Mindbenders were preparing to record their second UK Number 2, a cover of *A Groovy Kind Of Love*. But the best solo Fontana ever achieved came in early 1967, a Number 11 UK hit with

Pamela, Pamela, written by Graham Gouldman, who later in the decade teamed with Mindbenders guitarist Eric Stewart, first in Hotlegs, then in 10cc, while Fontana's fortunes dissipated. He relaunched his career in 1973 without conspicuous commercial success. Drink disrupted further attempts and in the 2000s led to brushes with the law, but later in life he was back on-stage, a genial presence in '60s revival tours. He died from cancer on August 6.

Geoff Brown

Barry St John

Big soulful voice
BORN 1943



Born in Glasgow, Eliza Thomson sang in her late teens in West Germany with Bobby Patrick's Big Six – whose saxman Alex

Young would later front Beatles faves Grapefruit, and whose siblings Angus, Malcolm and producer George would find success with AC/DC. Going solo with a new sobriquet, her cover of nuclear war vignette *Come Away Melinda* was a UK Top 50 hit in 1965, while *Everything I Touch Turns To Tears* would eventually fill Northern soul dancefloors. Her soulful solo album, *According To St. John*, was released in 1968. She later sang with Alexis Korner and Long John Baldry, and joined The Les Humphries Singers in 1972, embarking on a session career which saw her appear on *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, as one of the four female voices on Time, and recordings by Elton John, Bryan Ferry, Kevin Ayers, Daevid Allen, Memphis Slim, SAHB, Viv Stanshall, Mott The Hoople, Jorge Ben and Whitesnake. Later in life she worked in law.

Clive Prior



Wayne Fontana: no long face from him.

Paul Tomlins/Bridgeman Images; Getty (2); Shutterstock

Jan Savage

Seeds guitarist

BORN 1942



Born Buck Jan Reeder in Oklahoma, Jan Savage played with surf and folk bands before meeting frontman Sky Saxon and joining

proto-punks The Seeds in Los Angeles in 1965. The group was on tour with the Buffalo Springfield when their garage rock cornerstone Pushin' Too Hard went Top 40 in the US in February 1967, winning lifelong fans including Iggy Pop, Lenny Kaye and George Lucas. Their increasingly psychedelic third album *Future* reached the Billboard Top 100 later that year, but the same year's *A Full Spoon Of Seedy Blues*, recorded with Muddy Waters' sidemen and credited to the Sky Saxon Blues Band, fared less well. Savage left in 1968, but

rejoined the group for a 1989 tour with Love, and then for a short-lived 2003 reunion. Of Native American descent – he wore a feather headband on the sleeve of '66 debut *The Seeds* – later in life Savage lived on a reservation in Oklahoma. He took part in interviews for the 2014 documentary *Pushin' Too Hard* – proud of, if a little perplexed by, The Seeds' enduring legacy.

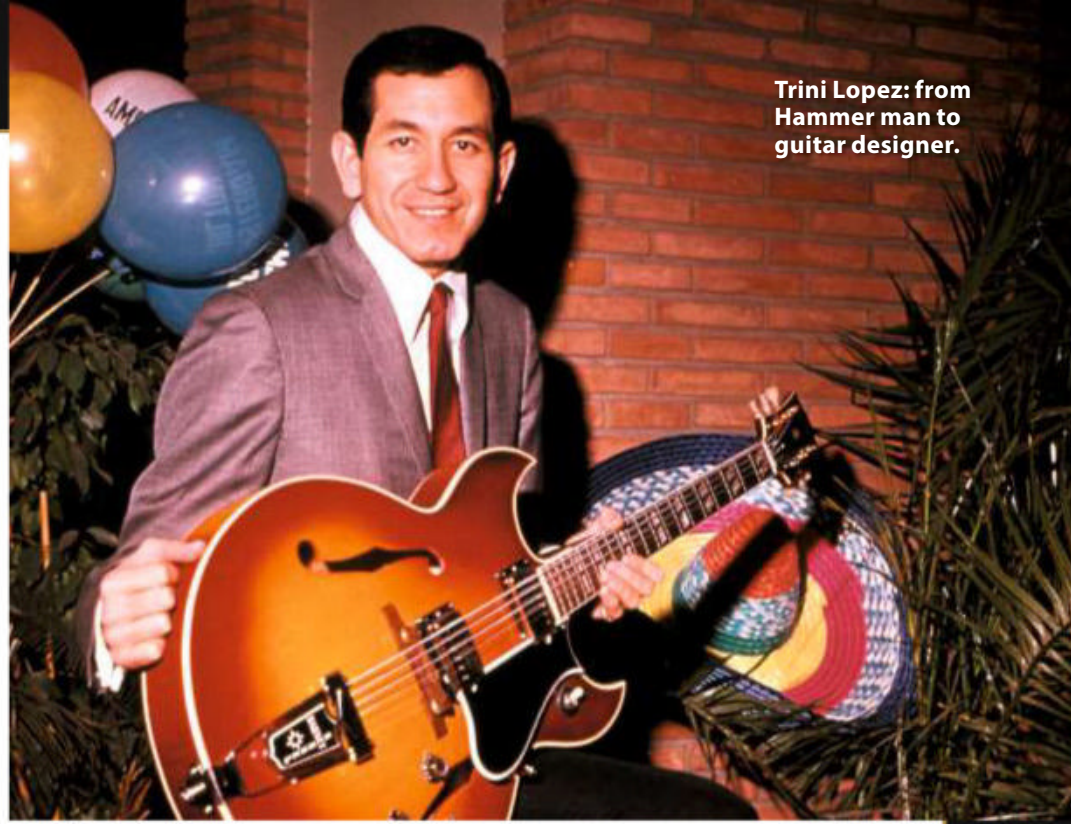
Clive Prior

Trini Lopez

Singer, actor, entertainer

BORN 1937

The young Trini Lopez's life was changed by a \$12 guitar from a Dallas pawnshop. A fan of blues and rock'n'roll, in his late teens he played The Vegas Club, owned by Lee Harvey Oswald's assassin Jack Ruby. Though rockabilly and instrumental releases and a plan to replace Buddy Holly in The Crickets came to nothing – he also spoke soberly of the anti-Mexican



Trini Lopez: from Hammer man to guitar designer.

discrimination he experienced – after coming to Frank Sinatra's attention he signed to Reprise, and hit big in 1963 with his solo debut *Trini Lopez At PJ's* and its breezy Latin-folk global smash 45 If I Had A Hammer. He was back in the Top 20 with Lemon Tree in 1965. He continued to record and perform, enjoyed screen credits including the 1967 movie *The Dirty Dozen*,

and designed two guitars for the Gibson corporation (writing in tribute, Dave Grohl said he recorded every Foo Fighters album with his red Trini Lopez model guitar). Active in charity work, his last song, *If By Now*, was written to benefit food banks during the pandemic. He died after contracting Covid-19.

Ian Harrison

THEY ALSO SERVED

TROMBONIST **HELEN JONES WOODS** (b.1923, below) played with the **International Sweethearts Of Rhythm**, the first integrated all-female swing orchestra. The big band was founded as **The Swinging Rays Of Rhythm** in 1937

by her adoptive father Dr Laurence C Jones at the Piney Woods Country Life School in Mississippi (also the birthplace of The Five Blind Boys Of Mississippi). They shared bills with **Billie Holiday** and **Ella Fitzgerald**, played for the troops during the Second World War and were praised by DownBeat, but were mismanaged. They disbanded in 1949, and Woods gave up music when the all-white Omaha Symphony Orchestra fired her because of her race. She later worked as a nurse and social worker.

BASSIST and guitarist **PAT FAIRLEY** (b.1946) formed **The Gaylords** in Glasgow in 1961. The band changed its name to **The Marmalade** in 1966, shared stages with **Pink Floyd**, **The Who** and **Traffic** among others, and had 10 UK hits from 1968, including their 1969 Number 1 cover of Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da and *Reflections Of My Life*, a US Number 10 in 1970. Fairley left in 1972 to work in music publishing, and later relocated to Los Angeles.



GUJARATI **JACK SHERMAN** (b.1956) played on the **Red Hot Chili Peppers'** 1983 debut album. He was replaced by the returning **Hillel Slovak** in early 1985, but not before co-writing six songs on the band's follow-up *Freaky Styley*. He also sang on the RHCP's *Mother's Milk*

and *The Abbey Road E.P.* Sherman's other credits included *Dylan's Knocked Out Loaded*, and recordings by **George Clinton**, **Feargal Sharkey** and **Peter Case**.

POST-COLTRANE sax-player **STEVE GROSSMAN** (b.1951) replaced **Wayne Shorter** in **Miles Davis'** band in 1969 aged just 18, appearing on albums such as 1970's *Jack Johnson* and *Live-Evil*. He then played with **Elvin Jones** until 1973. As a leader he worked with **Lenny White**, **McCoy Tyner**, **Michel Petrucciani** and **Jan Hammer** among others, and recorded with the trio **Stone Alliance**. His friend and fellow Miles alumni **Dave Liebman** called him "the best of all of us".

DRUMMER **TODD NANCE** (b.1962) played with future **Widespread Panic** bandmate **Michael Houser** in his Tennessee high school band **Just Us** in 1978. In 1986 he joined the

Georgia jam-rockers, playing on their first 11 albums and at their 1998 Athens homecoming to a 100,000 strong crowd. After missing a 2014 tour, he finally left the group in 2016. "Widespread Panic was born the night of Todd's first show," said the band in tribute. Nance also played with **Barbara Cue**, **brute** and **Interstellar Boys**.

NEWCASTLE guitarist **CHARLIE HARCOURT** (b.1946) joined **Lindisfarne** when the group's original line-up splintered in 1973, and played on the *Roll On Ruby* and *Happy Daze* albums before their first disbandment in 1975. Previously he'd played with Tyneside R&B men the **Junco Partners**, resident band at the Newcastle Club A GoGo, who also shared UK stages with **Howlin' Wolf**, **The Moody Blues**, **Jimi Hendrix** and others. In 2013 he rejoined Lindisfarne, staying with them for another five years.

HARD ROCK bassist **PETE WAY** (b.1951, below) formed **UFO** in 1968. Their sludgy, psychedelic early sound would give way to metal, and the group found their biggest UK success with 1979's Top 10 live album *Strangers In The Night*, and its Top 40 single *Doctor Doctor*. Way left the band in 1982 and later played with **Fastway**

(briefly), **Waysted**, **Ozzy Osbourne**, **Mogg/Way**, **Michael Schenker** and **Damage Control**, also



reuniting with **UFO**. His drugs and carnage-strewn memoir *A Fast Ride Out Of Here: Confessions Of Rock's Most Dangerous Man* was published in 2017.

BRITISH jazz alto saxophone eminence **PETER KING** (b.1940) was working as a government cartographer when, inspired by **Charlie Parker**, he decided to devote his life to music. Playing the opening night of **Ronnie Scott's** aged just 19, he would go on to work with big bands led by **Johnny Dankworth**, **Stan Tracey**, **Tubby Hayes** and others, and in smaller group settings with the likes of **Zoot Sims**, **Philly Joe Jones** and **Jimmy Witherspoon**. Later (under the influence of Bartók) he combined jazz with classical music, appeared on albums by **Everything But The Girl**, and played with **Charlie Watts'** jazz groups.

BASSIST **IAN MITCHELL** (b.1958, right) joined teenybop phenomena the **Bay City Rollers** in early 1976. Appearing on 1976's UK Top 5 and worldwide hit album *Dedication*, and its attendant hit version of *I Only Wanna Be With You*, the Northern Ireland-born Mitchell quit after just seven months. His later projects included **The Ian Mitchell Band**, **Rosetta Stone** and **Identity Crisis**, and he also played with

Splojgenessabounds and reconstituted line-ups of the **Bay City Rollers**, often in Japan.

ROCK PRODUCER **MARTIN BIRCH** (b.1948) engineered LPs by **Fleetwood Mac**, the **Faces**, **Canned Heat** and **John Lee Hooker**, **Jeff Beck**, **Wishbone Ash**, **Peter Green**, the **Groundhogs** and, on 10 LPs, **Deep Purple**. He moved increasingly into production from 1973, his credits including records for **Black Sabbath**, **Blue Öyster Cult**, **Wayne County & The Electric Chairs** and **Rainbow**, while he also enjoyed long working relationships with **Whitesnake** and, throughout the '80s, **Iron Maiden**. He retired in 1992.

SUPERSUCKERS guitarist **RON 'RONTROSE' HEATHMAN**

(b.1967) played with the Tucson rocker/cowpunks from 1988 to 2009, except for a hiatus for 1996's third album. Turned on to the guitar's power by AC/DC and the riff to *UFO's* *Rock Bottom*, he counted playing *Bloody Mary* Morning with **Willie Nelson** on *The Tonight Show* among his proudest moments. He also played with **The Screwmatics** and **The Hangmen**, and in later life became a master coffee roaster in Long Beach.

Clive Prior





The unforgettable fire extinguisher: (clockwise from main) Kurt Cobain and drummer Chad Channing on-stage at the SOAS, October 27, 1989; tour posters; Novoselic hands out refreshments to the moshers: co-headliners Tad; Bleach.



October 1989 ...Nirvana hit the UK

OCTOBER 23 To the music-happy youth of Britain, late 1989 was bowl-cut, wide of trouser, and looning out of the north-west of England with a penchant for ecstasy and house music. The following month, The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays would ally these traits with guitars and dance beats and appear on a proclamatory 'Madchester' edition of Top Of The Pops. In the Top 10 was another Manchester club track, 808 State's Pacific State.

But there were other sounds approaching from a north-western Pacific state – namely, Washington in the US. On a wet October day, Nirvana prepared to play the Newcastle Riverside alongside Sub Pop labelmates Tad. It would be the first date of a five-week, rotating-headliner, 37-show Euro-jant dubbed Heavier Than Heaven. Nirvana's debut *Bleach* had been released in Britain just two months earlier, and to those in the know, appetites were well and truly whetted. For Nirvana frontman Kurt, or 'Kurd', Cobain – a devotee of British bands including The Beatles, Led Zeppelin and the Sex Pistols – this first UK tour had extra piquancy. "We're looking forward to it," he told Cincinnati radio journalist Mark Shafer on October 6, in between joking about Tad frontman Tad Doyle's snoring and hash brownies in Amsterdam.

Yet the headliners, and the Seattle sound

in general, was still a specialist taste. The Riverside was far from packed. After support from the Edinburgh rockers The Cateran, Nirvana's 14-song set drew mainly on *Bleach*, and having recently lost their guitarist Jason Everman to Soundgarden, some observers considered they were playing erratically. "It was pretty chaotic. The music was loud and fast," attendee Carl Taylor told the BBC in 2014. "I thought they sounded a little bit like Hüsker Dü, but their songs were not quite as structured." During their version of Shocking Blue's Love Buzz, a gig-goer hit bassist Krist Novoselic on the head with a bottle, after which he smashed his bass into his amps.

The touring experience, with both bands in one van, staying in inexpensive bed and breakfasts, also had its challenges. Doyle suffered from gastrointestinal problems and had to vomit every morning before the bus could hit the motorway. Cobain's job was to hold the sick bowl, a duty he undertook with seriousness and apparent pleasure. Doyle's

medication of choice, Imodium, would later inspire the Nirvana song Breed.

Even here, though, there was ambition. "[Kurt] was a conflicted individual," Sub Pop co-founder Jonathan Poneman told MOJO's Keith Cameron in 2002. "On one hand he wanted to be true to his friends and his culture. On the other he wanted to be fucking rich and famous. He knew how good he was."

Playing to regional moshpits, communication difficulties may have been inevitable. Cobain lost his microphone after plunging into the crowd at the Manchester Poly Students Union on October 24, and had to ask for it back to continue the gig. On the 28th at Portsmouth Poly, his stage-diving caused a guitar lead snarl-up and delays between songs. The following night at Edward's No.8 in Birmingham, Novoselic was obliged to sing when Cobain's guitar packed up and

he threw it to the floor.

There was chaos all right, but would cash follow? With their super-heavy riffing, satires of American small towns and minds, and Doyle's obese

"We can do whatever the fuck we want!"

KRIST NOVOSELIC



a huge
ever growing
pulsating
brain

orb

that lies
from the
centre of
the
ultra world

ing
g
rain
orb
that
lies
from the
centre
of
the
ultraWorld

**Ultraworld
In Motion: Dr
Alex Paterson
goes globular.**

**Ultraworld
In Motion: Dr
Alex Paterson
goes globular.**

Nirvana could, in those simpler days.
Ian Harrison



big self-therapy thing now." A Top 20 success across Europe, it reaches Number 2 in the UK. In 2011, Kate will re-record four songs from the album for her *Director's Cut* LP, where *The Sensual World's* title track is renamed Flower Of The Mountain, after she is belatedly granted permission by the James Joyce estate to quote Molly Bloom's soliloquy from *Ulysses*.

28 Janet Jackson's *Rhythm Nation* 1814 hits Number 1 in the US. Her 45 single Miss You Much has been at Number 1 all month.

10 TOY SOLIDERS
MARTIKA (CBS)



**Jammy devils:
Felly at 4, with
Technotronic.**

ALL FUDGE.

NO PUDGE.

Sugar Free Fudge Pops® Brand Fudge Pops. Just 35 fudgy little calories.

So sweet the fudge loves to kiss. "Gimme they're made with 100% Natural Sweetener" and all that has great taste of the original Fudge Pops. Brand Fudge Pops. Try delicious Sugar Free Fudge Pops® Brand Ice Pops and Creamsicle® Brand Cream Pops, too! Because we just love the calories to the original. With no get real pop to lose!

25 calories

35 calories

18 calories

SUGAR FREE Fudge Pops®

SUGAR FREE Creamsicle® Brand Cream Pops

SUGAR FREE Fudge Pops® Ice Pops

AlmaSweeten

AlmaSweeten is a registered trademark of AlmaSweeten, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

"All Fudge," promises a svelte gym-goer on behalf of Sugar Free Fudge Pops, **"No Pudge."** Yum, yum! Why wasn't the jingle by Mudhoney?



Who issued the wrong songs?

Get ready, 'cos here come rock team-ups, **Euro 45s** and **jazz nirvana** reveals.

I recently discovered the French mono *Blonde On Blonde* with unique reverb-y mixes on sides two and three. Why would a major artist want alternative recordings of this sort to be released on what looks like a standard version of an album? It seems to make little sense.

Neil Humphreys, via e-mail

Fred Says Dylanologists have long obsessed over *Blonde On Blonde*, which can be enjoyed in an estimated 10 or more different mixes, both stereo and mono, as well as with different sleeve art permutations. The 18-disc version of 2015's box set *The Bootleg Series Vol. 12: The Cutting Edge 1965-1966* even included released *Blonde On Blonde* songs alongside even more alternate takes. Is there method in the madness? Well, there probably wasn't when a 1997 reissue of Dylan's *Biograph* box set featured tracks not intended for release and was consequently withdrawn. Other examples of human error include a 1971 edition of The Rolling Stones' *Hot Rocks* compilation with alternative versions of Brown Sugar and Wild Horses, a 1991 CD reissue of Sly & The Family Stone's *Fresh* when the wrong master tape was used – meaning all but one of the songs appeared as different takes – and more random mislabelled reels fun on reissues by Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and Peggy Lee, among others. We have to admit a certain fondness, though, for an unfinished outtake of The Smiths' How Soon Is Now? which somehow ended up on the Italian 12-inch of William, It Was Really Nothing in 1984. When Morrissey is heard to ask, "OK?"



before the track loosely fades back in again, it's a reminder that to err is human, to forgive divine!

WHO MADE SONGS FOR EUROPE?

I was in a flea market in Amsterdam a few years ago and picked up the Dutch 7-inch single of Madness's Tarzan's Nuts from 1980. In a unique sleeve, the single was never released anywhere else. I believe the country-by-country approach used to be widespread. Has anyone else got any good examples of local releases for local people?

Graham McNally, via e-mail

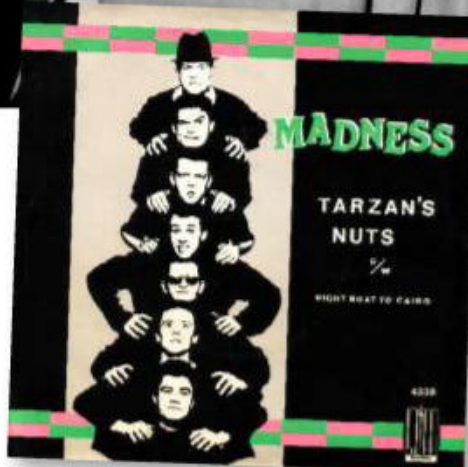
Fred Says Immediately springing to mind are JJ Burnel's Girl From The Snow Country and The Specials' Concrete Jungle, both Dutch-only 7-inch releases in 1980 and 1981, and an Ireland-only 1984 Queen 45 of Man On The Prowl. Who can help Graham out with more?

WHAT WAS THE GREATEST JAZZ JUNKET?

Woodstock has been acclaimed by many as the greatest gathering of rock acts ever. In your opinion what was the essential live jazz get-together? Perhaps one of the Newport Jazz Festivals?

Colin Parker, via e-mail

Fred Says I think I'd maybe nominate the Massey Hall Concert which took place in Toronto, Canada on May 15, 1953. The line-up, though not huge, was incredible, featuring just about everyone who shaped the face of modern jazz. Dizzy Gillespie was the trumpet star, Charlie Parker, billed as 'Charlie Chan', played white plastic alto sax, while the rhythm section was formed by Max Roach (drums), Bud Powell (piano) and Charles Mingus (bass). Dr Alain Presencer, father of trumpet star Gerard Presencer, actually witnessed the



All mixed up (clockwise from main): Bob Dylan and little friend giving nothing away in 1966; Charlie Parker plays his white plastic alto; a nutty Netherlands-only Madness 45; missing soul Maxine Nightingale, is she back where she started?

concert and later wrote how Mingus, at one point,

asked a smashed Powell to raise the lid of his Steinway, only to be greeted by the response, "Why don't you take a fucking flying jump at yourself?" A show that resulted in standing ovations at several points, it was not well attended due to the fact of being scheduled for the night when most of North America was listening to the Rocky Marciano-Jersey Joe Walcott World Heavyweight title fight rematch on the radio! Recorded on Mingus's own tape recorder, the concert first appeared on the bassist's Debut label, and has since been reissued under the title *The Greatest Jazz Concert Ever*.

DID FLOYD GET THE CAN?

I've read on several occasions that David Gilmour played with Can, and even wrote with them. But I haven't been able to find any evidence of it. Is there some live tape out there waiting to prove they worked together?

Simon Cooper, via e-mail

Fred Says It's a great idea, but sadly the claim, still repeated online, is false. The Gilmour who did collaborate with Can was their friend and soundman Peter Gilmour, whose credits included co-writing the band's UK Number 26 hit I Want More in 1976.

HELP FRED

Does anyone know what Maxine Nightingale is doing these days? Right Back Where We Started From is a classic!

Paul Miller, via e-mail

CONTACT FRED

To get your questions answered, conundrums clarified or help untangle a puzzle, e-mail:

Fred Dellar direct at
fred.dellar@bauermedia.co.uk

Strictly Personal (Stereo)

Win a Sony NW-A105 Walkman® with High-Resolution Audio!

THE ORIGINAL – and iconic! – Sony Walkman® blew minds in 1979. Building on that classic original, Sony's NW-A105 Walkman® pays tribute with its vintage cassette tape user interface and screensaver complete with the most cutting-edge technology. Blending the old and the new, with outstanding Hi-Resolution Audio and a premium compact design available in five stylish colours, it's supported by Android™ with Wi-Fi, and grants you access to millions of songs. You can also access download services directly from the NW-A105 Walkman® to store your favourite tracks. And with a battery life of up to 26 hours, the Walkman can keep going as long as you do.

Its RRP is £320, and we have two to give away! For a fighting chance to win, fill in this crossword and send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk making sure to type CROSSWORD 324 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered.

Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number.

The closing date for entries is **November 2.**

For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com.

Visit www.sony.co.uk for more info.



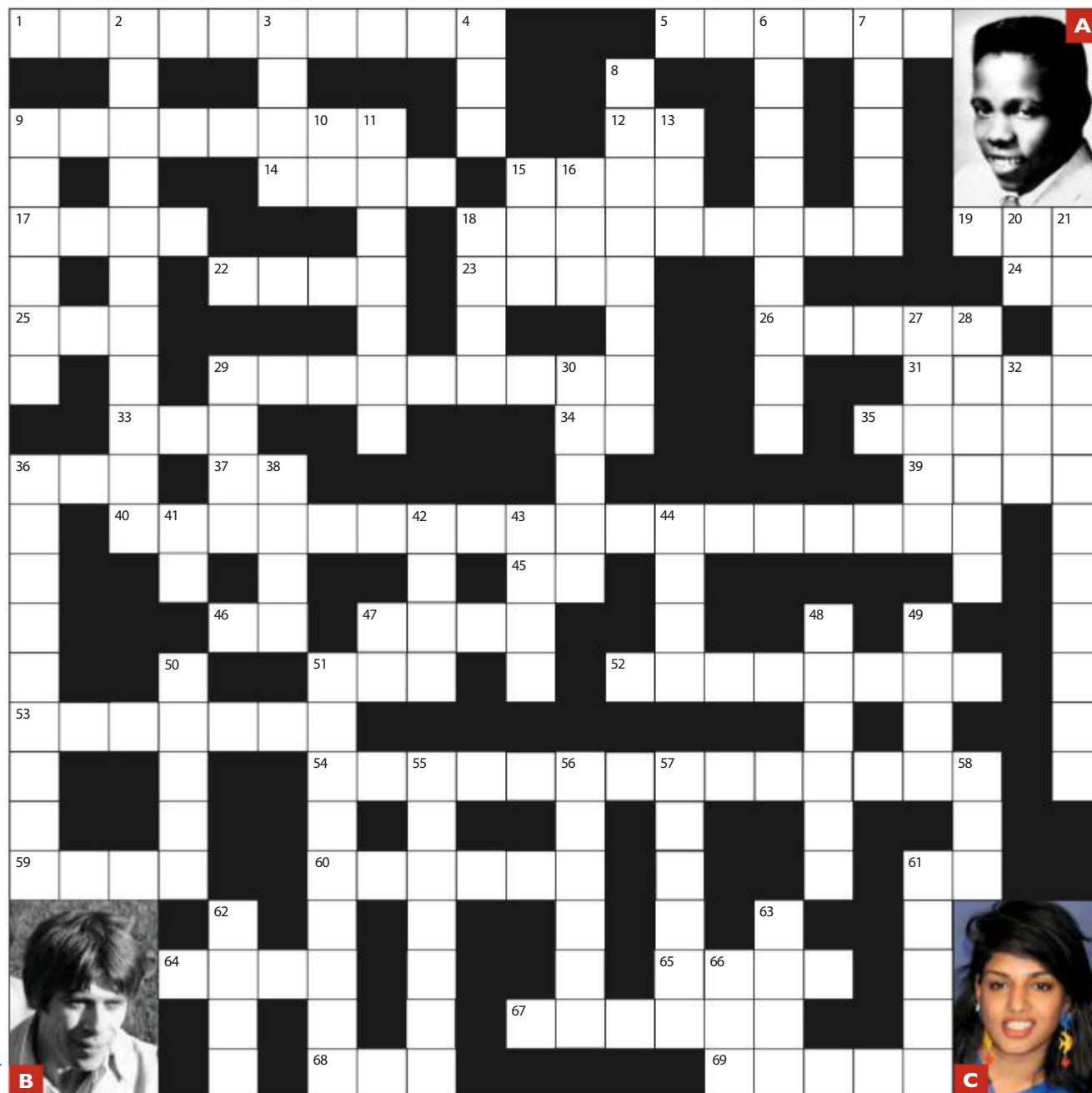
ANSWERS

MOJO 322

Across: 1 Joni Mitchell, 7 Red, 9 Holidays In The Sun, 10 Animals, 12 The Zutons, 15 Harp, 20 Short Fat Fannie, 22 Naomi, 23 Meek, 24 Eskimo, 26 Sean Lennon, 29 Bend It, 30 One, 31 Nuisance, 33 Pearl, 35 Hid, 36 Down On The Upside, 38 Domino, 39 Sin, 40 Own, 41 I See You, 44 Edwin Starr, 45 Ace, 46 Reg, 48 Taking, 50 Bang Bang, 52 E.M.I., 54 Metronomy, 57 Mel Tormé, 59 Lee, 60 Abyss, 61 RCA, 62 Noel, 63 Echo.

Down: 1 John Martyn, 2 Nils Lofgren, 3 Made, 4 Toyah, 5 Heinz, 6 LP Title, 7 Roses, 8 Dinah, 11 No Home Record, 13 Ennis, 14 Nine, 16 Around The Sun, 17 Private Dancer, 18 U-Turn, 19 Unkle, 21 Idi, 23 Moon, 24 Ennio Morricone, 25 Kristin, 27 Lol, 28 Nero, 29 Bessie, 32 Axe Victim, 34 Raising Hell, 36 Dogs, 37 Wu-Tang Clan, 42 Sea, 43 Yankovic, 44 EOB, 47 Gemma, 49 Kit, 51 Aimee, 53 Dobro, 55 Easy, 56 Yeah, 58 Ebb.

Winners: Barbara Fuller of Faversham, and Dinah Pyatt of Ramsgate win hotel and film screening entries for Mick Fleetwood & Friends celebrate Peter Green, plus album box sets.



Getty (2)

ACROSS

- 1 Also known as Duncan Jones (5,5)
- 5 He played drums for Mott The Hoople (6)
- 9 In 1973, this band promised Nirvana For Mice (5,3)
- 12 Chant the name of this '67 Coltrane LP (2)
- 14 The Vibrators' frontman (4)
- 15 Clannad's Brennan (4)
- 17 The Chemical Brothers' was private and psychedelic (4)
- 18 Jazz piano great (4,5)
- 19 Mickie Most's label (3)
- 22 Parping Stones comp? (4)
- 23 Kenny Rogers' Lionel Richie-penned hymn to her (4)
- 24 Willie Mitchell's soul label (2)
- 25 Nick Cave's monarch (3)
- 26 Nashville label that took over the King catalogue (5)
- 29 See photoclude A (6,3)
- 31 Atoms For Peace run wild? (4)
- 33 Where Mike Nesmith wanted to go in '77 (3)
- 34 Songs In The Key Of Life's last 45 (2)
- 35 Cambridge punks who were Sick Of You (5)
- 36 Messy Sonic Youth LP (3)
- 37 In short, a long-player (1,1)
- 39 NWOBHM panzers (4)
- 40 The Fall's discerning bellyful, in '85 (3,2,3,10)
- 45 1992 Peter Gabriel LP (2)
- 46 -- Music, for New Order side projects (2)
- 47 London boutique beloved of Bolan and Bryan Ferry (4)
- 51 They reunited at the Rite Time (3)
- 52 See 55 Down
- 53 The Jacksons' 1980 success (7)
- 54 AKA the Dixie Dewdrop (5,4,5)
- 59 Brian Epstein's shop (4)
- 60 Kevin Coyne and Dagmar Krause talk fast? (6)
- 61 '85 Velvets rarities set (2)
- 64 Ex-Buffalo Springfield country rockers (4)
- 65 Futureheads' 2005 EP (4)
- 67 Scott Walker's US solo debut (5)
- 68/42 down Co-writer of Dancing In The City (3,4)
- 69 Hawkwind odds'n'sods collection from 1983 (5)

DOWN

- 2 Mick Weaver's amphibious organ? (6,1,4)
- 3 Purveyor of Stereopathic Soulmanure (4)
- 4 Helen Reddy had candy for it (3)
- 6 AKA Frank Tovey (3,6)
- 7 Leonard Cohen's were old (5)
- 8 See photoclude B (3,5)
- 9 Spacemen 3's alternative to revolution (6)
- 10 Jarvis Cocker directed this 1993 Aphex video (2)
- 11 Macca's type of classical (7)
- 13 Jazz entertainer Ms Barnes (3)
- 15 See photoclude C (3)
- 16 Danny Brown, getting on a bit in 2013 (3)
- 18 Former Birdland cigarette girl Carla (4)
- 20 Enrico Rava, pensive in 1980? (2)
- 21 1965 US album for Ray, Dave, Pete and Mick (5,7)
- 27 Rory Gallagher's first band (5)
- 28 Mumford & Sons-affiliated London venue (6)
- 29 Abrupt California punk-poppers (4)
- 30 Albert saluted in song by Neil Diamond (5)
- 32 Sugarcubes' Einar (3)
- 36 The Specials' second Number 1 (5,4)
- 38 A glitching Berliner, or a steel one in a bathtub? (4)
- 41 Chaos, Subs or Decay? (2)
- 42 See 68 Across
- 43 Stereo, doubled (4)
- 44 Laura who hit big with Up On The Roof (4)
- 47 Bassekou Kouyate's band Ngoni -- (2)
- 48 Bert Kaempfert's was Swinging (6)
- 49 Da Da Da was their big hit (4)
- 50 My Cherry Is In Sherry, they said (5)
- 51 Portly hip-hopper with a door key? (5,4)
- 55/52 across Nagging Sheffield trio (7,8)
- 56 Refuel with Xpress-2 man? (6)
- 57 Mr Spock's reggae label? (6)
- 58 AKA Dinger and Rother (3)
- 61 Shocking Blue's planet (5)
- 62 The minds behind The Ape Of Naples and Horse Rotorvator (4)
- 63 Nickname of the late Martin Hannett (4)
- 66 Live, this Underworld banger often merges into Cowgirl (3)

Denimy, at the gates:
10cc at Cardiff Castle in
their prime (from left)
Lol Creme, Eric Stewart,
Kevin Godley and
Graham Gouldman.



GOODBYE SUMMER 1976

It was a very intense four years. The last gig we did was supporting The Rolling Stones at Knebworth [on August 21, 1976]. We were going on later than normal, because we'd got some new lights, and suddenly a stark-bollock-naked guy ran onto the stage and had a wank in front of a quarter of a million people... a fitting end. Was it a tribute? Either that or he was saying, 'don't watch this band, they're wankers!'

Two things had happened. When we recorded the *How Dare You!* album [1976], Lol and I became aware that we were about to move into an era where we knew what we were supposed to be doing – a long song, a slow one, a funny one, a complicated one... to us, not knowing was what was exciting. The album turned out really well, but when it came to the album after [*Deceptive Bends*, 1977], Eric and Graham played [Lol and I] a new song, either *The Things We Do For Love*, or *People In Love*, I'm not 100 per cent sure. Frankly, we were underwhelmed. We were not jumping around.

Both songs are absolutely fucking fine and good, but we were in a different place. Prior to this, Lol and I had spent a couple of weeks experimenting with this device we'd invented called the Gizmo, which was designed to play guitar strings and make them sound like an orchestra, and it was very exciting. Had the inevitable not happened, I'm sure the Gizmo album [1977's *Godley & Creme Consequences*, a triple concept LP starring Peter Cook and Sarah Vaughan] – which was insane, our grand folly – would have turned out to be a one-off vanity project.

I think the last time we met was at our manager Harvey Lisberg's house in Prestwich, near where we lived. It was, you're in or you're out, boys, and we just decided to bale [Stewart and Gouldman carried on]. There was disappointment, rather than anger. It was very sad. Afterwards, we probably just went home. But it had to be done, because had we not left, all the adventures after that would never have happened.

In 1992, Lol and I performed a little bit on Eric and Graham's final album, *Meanwhile*, which was lovely. The memory of how it used to be instantly worked again, and all the bad vibes were forgotten. Graham still takes a touring version of 10cc out on the road, so the music's still out there. In a sense, it doesn't really matter who's playing it.

As told to Ian Harrison

Tracks from Kevin Godley's debut solo album (with crowdsourced collaborations) Muscle Memory will be released every two weeks until the LP's full release on December 17.



Brand new days: the group at the start; (left) Godley now.

Kevin Godley and 10cc

It began in Stockport thanks to Neil Sedaka. And ended with on-stage onanism in front of 250,000 people...

HELLO SUMMER 1972

We were essentially already a band. We just didn't know it yet. Myself, Lol Creme, Graham Gouldman and Eric Stewart were a production team and the house band at Strawberry Studios in Stockport. A few years prior to that, myself, Lol and Eric were briefly in a group, Hotlegs, and we had one hit record, *Neanderthal Man*, and a flop album. The idea of doing a band again hadn't really cropped up.

We were doing an album for Neil Sedaka, called *Solitaire*. Why was he working with us? Good question. But we got on extremely well. One day we were probably in the live area of Strawberry – drum kit in one corner, microphones, amps, grand piano at the other end – talking about the next take, and as part of the general conversation, Neil Sedaka

says, "You guys are great, you play really well together, why don't you form a band?" A moment of silence, four lightbulbs go on...

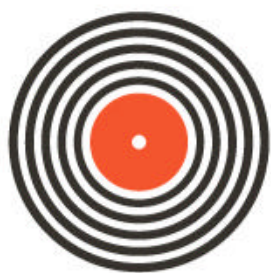
There wasn't much of a discussion. Eric and Graham were virtually the owners of Strawberry, so it was, Let's use some downtime and see what happens. We went in and recorded a track, *Waterfall*, a quite nice pseudo-Crosby, Stills & Nash kind of song written by Eric and Graham. Apple knocked it back, but while we were waiting for a response, Lol and I came up with a B-side called *Donna*, which sounded like an old doo wop song. It was throwaway, a pastiche written in half an hour. Eric knew Jonathan King [of UK Records] who freaked out and said, "This is a smash!", as they used to do in those days, and signed us up.

I think what you might call, I dunno, the 'audio identity' of 10cc began to exist with *Donna*. We thought, This has got something – it was some kind of crazy chemistry, as all these things are. We had no sense of how far it could go. It was great fun. And then suddenly we were pop stars, and that in itself was a bit of a thrill.



"It was, you're in or you're out, boys..."

KEVIN GODLEY



THE
SOUND
MACHINE

DO YOU HAVE A VINYL RECORD COLLECTION TO SELL?

We are interested in viewing ALL quality collections of vinyl records and CDs ANYWHERE throughout the UK and Ireland. We'll travel to you.

Contact The Sound Machine if you would like to talk with one of our specialists or to arrange a viewing appointment.

Reading's Longest Established Independent Record Shop

Specialists in buying and selling new and second-hand vinyl records and CDs across all genres.

✉ info@thesoundmachine.uk.com
☎ 0118 957 5075 📞 07786 078 361



24 Harris Arcade, Reading,
Berkshire RG1 1DN

thesoundmachine.uk.com

