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2 HOT CHIP
One Life Stand

It seems like an eternity since infamous Elliott School alumni Alexis Taylor and Joe Goddard got their shit together to release some paranoid electro pop. The Hot Chip boys have finally emerged from the collaboration, compilation and solo project marathon they seem to have been running since 'Made In The Dark' though, and the first single from 'One Life Stand' is a splice of bombastic '80s electro paired with a dreamy vocal from Taylor that dances fancifully over what sounds like a computerised trombone. On MySpace now

3 DELPHIC Doubt On NME Radio now

BADLY DRAWN BOYIs There Nothing We Could Do?

It's that time of year when the icy black rock that is your heart thaws a little and where holidays and general goodwill to all men allows for a little sentimentality in your life. So the timing couldn't be better for Damon Gough to release this ballady, weepy number. It's part of a soundtrack the woolly-hatted one has written for a film by comedian Caroline Aherne called The Fattest Man In Britain, about an obese man who becomes a living freakshow by attempting to maintain the title of the UK's largest fella. Gentle, rolling and string-swept, it sounds like Damon trying to snatch the crooner crown back from Richard Hawley. On NME Radio now

FAN DEATH Cannibal

These Canadian disco witches are mistresses of high camp, and their deft way with hi-NRG basslines, itchy string-stabs and slinky sauce has allowed them to weather the demise of that whole Italo-disco revival thing (remember Heartbreak? LITIEEEES!). Don't worry about scenes, just get some wedges and glitter on and swish round the living room like you're in The Last Days Of Disco. On MySpace now



4 NME 12 December 2009

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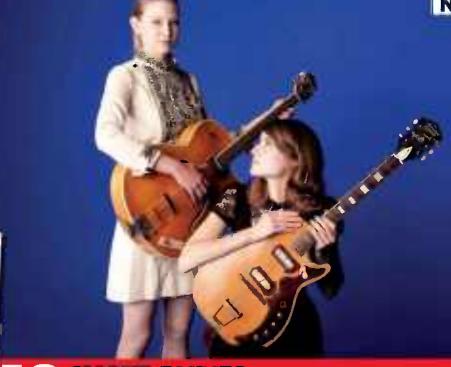
FREE

The xx captured our hearts this year with many a subtle echo of this deathless track, Yes, Chris Isaak's wounded rockabilly bad boy shtick is cheesy as hell, but don't tell us you weren't having a little swoon. London lovelies Exlovers have gone one further and smeared their mucky paws all over the original. Good job, too, On NME.COM/mp3biog now

ZATE OF THE PIERBlueberry

Many uses, the humble blueberry. Rich source of antioxidents, vitemins and of course, muffins. But now, also the inspiration for the return of our freshfaced prog voyagers. Squigglingly vibrant with heavy doses of both Kate Bush and White Album-Beatles, this new tracks unveils a maturer but no less exciting LOTP pretty much what Muse wish they could still afford to sound like. In fact, it's so scrumptiously immersive and rich, we could bake them into a pie and EAT THEM UP. On NME Radio now





SMOWE FAIRIESGastown

On seven-lach vinyl now



8 THE KISSAWAY TRAIL

SDP

This Danish quintet had us alla-flutter two years ago with their
debut album, and this first cut
from their second, 'Sleep Mountain',
has us palpitating again for their
dream-pop-tinged melodic rock,
kind of like a less proggy Mew,
or a gutsier The Pains Of Being
Pure At Heart. No-one knows
what the letters stand for, but
we're presuming not Social
Democratic Party.

On NME.COM/mp3blog now

... AND WHAT ISN'T

THE TEMPER TRAP

Fader

We've got a soft spot for 'Sweet Disposition' and that other one of theirs as much as the next commuter, but this identikit anthem-rock can't really fade fast enough for us.

MUSE

Undisclosed Desires

We really don't like it when they try to be sexy. It's like being leched over by Captain Jack Harkness or something.

BROMHEADS

Edey

Oh God, it's like when a long-forgotten ex pokes you on Facebook. And they've really let themselves go.

METRO STATION

Keisev

Wow, that's two terrible songs with girls' names in them in one week. We call that a scene. Scene, I name thee 'shitecore'.

DEPECHE MODE

Fragile Tension

Depeche songwriter Martin Gore was subpoenaed in a mad US court case recently as an expert witness on loneliness. Should they also need evidence on tedious posturing, they can kill two birds with one stone.

9 THE SOFT PACK
Answer To Yourself

On NME Radio





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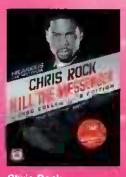
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Voting opens: have your say

Cast your vote and you could join us for the nominations party with The Maccabees, or even at the ceremony itself

oting has opened this week (December 8) for the 2010 Shockwaves NME Awards - giving you the chance to decide who will be nominated

To have your say, simply head to NME.COM/awards now and cast a vote for your favourites in the 11 categories (see box) that are live. At present it's the longlist, meaning you can vote for anyone you like as long as they're eligible for the particularly category. Despite the open vote, we're expecting that the forthcoming Awards could be the most tightly fought to date.

Established bands such as Arctic Monkeys, Muse, Blur, Kasabian, Kings Of Leon, The Killers, Vampire Weekend, Green Day and even Oasis (before they imploded) are all likely to be strong contenders, while newer acts including The xx, Wild Beasts, The Big Pink, Mumford & Sons and Florence And The Machine have impressed throughout the year. Throw in some of 2009's surprises - Animal Collective and Grizzly Bear and the newly formed Them Crooked Vultures, for instance - and it looks as though every vote will count.

"I predict the solo category will be one of the most fiercely fought categories this year, with Florence,

Dizzee, Pete Doherty and Jamie T all vying for your votes," said NME editor Krissi Murison.

"It will also be interesting to see whether Oasis can make history by being the first defunct artist to ever win the Best British Band award, or whether it'll be snatched from their clutches by a younger pretender. Only you can decide!"

You have until January 22 to register your vote, after which, our boffins will do the adding up and the shortlist will be confirmed. The nominations will be announced at a special launch party at the Tabernacle in west London on January 25, featuring an exclusive set from The Maccabees. Everyone who votes will be entered into a draw to win one of 20 pairs of tickets we're giving away for this intimate show.

Meanwhile, with preparations under way for the ceremony itself. we're also giving you the chance to be there on the night. Last year, aud ence tickets at £15 each were snapped up in seconds; so to make sure you don't miss out for 2010, you can register for tickets to the ceremony, which takes place at the O2 Academy Brixton in south London on February 24. Just complete the form on NME.COM/awardstickets and ickets will be allocated by ballot on February 1 next year.





7 DAYS IN MUSIC



LONDON

iam Gallagher's declaration that his new band may still be called Oasis could prove more troublesome than it's worth, according to media law experts Speaking about his latest plans last week, Gallagher let slip that although new songs are coming to him easily at the moment, finding a name for his post-Oasis band is proving somewhat difficult.

"If we don't come up with something else by the time we're ready to release the album it'll be Oasis," he admitted.

However, showbiz lawyer Mark Thomson of Atkins Thomson says there are a number of obstacles for Liam to overcome in order to claim the name.

"It's not a question of who sought the name but a question of who trades under it. Unless all parties

agree there could be all sorts of legal issues," he explained. The lawyer, who represents the likes of Lily Allen, added that, despite Liam coming up with the name Oasis originally, he is unlikely to own the copyright on it. "It's a question of whose rights are they, who's been trading as Oasis, and could he trade as Oasis without Noel [Gallagher]. Because there's lots of money at stake, there's probably a quite complicated agreement setting out what people can and can't do when they leave. There are all sorts of legal issues

Whatever the name, Liam has settled on his line-up saying he's recruited an unnamed bassist, so Ride fans should be happy as it looks like Andy Bell is back on guitar. Oasis' Gem Archer plus Chris Sharrock and keyboardist Jay Darlington are also onboard.

ARCADE FIRE MAKE US WAI

MONTREAL■ Arcade Fire have denied reports that they'll be back early in 2010. Online speculation suggested the band were close to finishing the album and were ready to tour. However a spokesperson for the band told us that Win Butler and co will need a little longer than that and so nothing is planned yet. They did say though that "the album will be out at some point in 2010, more likely to be the second half".

PEARL JAM CALLING

LONDON® Pearl Jam return to the UK next summer to headline Hard Rock Calling. Tickets for the June 25 event, which takes place in London's Hyde Park, go on sale on December 11. See NME.COM for details.



GORILLAZ ON



KONG STUDIOS - Damon Albarn says work on the new Gorillaz album is coming along nicely, and reveals that it already has a title - Plastic Beach [It's] about the mythical aspects of Britain. he said of the record, due out early 2010.

NIN SELL OUT

LOS ANGELES Nine Inch Nails are selling off unwanted musical instruments on eBay. Since playing their last ever live show in September, Trent Reznor and co say they don't have any use for the equipment. Items up for sale include guitars, keyboards, amps, drums, cables and pedals. Get bidding at Myworld.ebay.com/ningear.



OKLAHOMA The Flaming Lips will see in 2010 by playing Pink Floyd's 'The Dark Side Of the Moon' in full at their New Year's Eve Freakout gig in Oklahoma. Wayne Coyne previously let slip that the band have recently re-recorded the entire album, with Henry Rollins and Peaches making guest appearances, although it's currently without a release date.

LIVE NATION **GOES TO** BUTLINS

SKEGNESS® Concert promoter Live Nation has announced a new three-day festival to take place at Butlins in Skegness next April. Noisettes, Scouting for Girls and Calvin Harris are already confirmed for the bash, which takes place on April 16-18 and features five-star chalet accommodation.

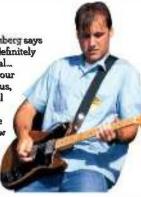
"Turn around when possible, and keep it 'G', ya d-i-g?"

SNOOP DOGG LENDS HIS VOICE TO A SAT-NAV

NEW PAVEMENT MATERIAL 'INEVITABLE'

MELBOURNE

cott 'Spiral Stairs' Kannberg says Pavement will almost definitely write some new material... providing their 2010 reunion tour goes well. "If it's enjoyable for us, I think it is inevitable that we'll make some more music," he explained. "If I was a fan of the band I'd want to hear some new music, but we're just going to see how it goes." The band kick off the tour in New Zealand next March, before heading to the UK in May.



CARL BAR-ACT ALBION Carl Barât

will be treading the boards next year when he makes his stage debut opposite Sadie Frost in Sam Shepard's play Fool For Love. Beginning on January 25, the production runs until March 21 at London's Riverside Studios, with a post-show talk taking place on January 29. "It's certainly one hell of a challenge," the former Libertine said of his new career direction.









GOLD COAST

perator Please had to brave a haunted studio deep in Australia's Gold Coast mountain ranges while making their new album, according to singer Amandah Wilkinson. The 10-track album, which was mastered last week, took a surreal turn when the band encountered an otherworldly being at Music Farm studios.

"Basically, the people who were looking after us were like, Every time we have a female here we get told that they hear things, so watch it!" I was like, Fuck off. I so don't wanna hear that!' There used to be a milk maid who died there and, yes, I could feel the presence of her actually," she said.

"It's different, I can tell you that," the frontwoman added of the resulting album, before revealing some of her favourite tracks, including 'Logic' -- "Tve never sung like that before. It's like pop -- Britney Spears pop. It freaks me out!" Although the band still haven't decided on a name for the album, which is due out next March, Wilkinson confirmed that there are already plans to tour the UK in the new year.

T IS ON FIRE

KINROSS • Kasabian have been announced as the first headliners for next year's T in The Park festival. The band will top the bill at the July 10-12 event next summer, with more headliners and acts to be announced soon. Early bird tickets for the Scottish festival are on sale now.

"Em – I call him that because we are on first name terms – the job is yours"

SIMON COWELL OFFERS EMINEM A SLOT ON THE X FACTOR

JOHNNY MARR'S BIG BANG



HOLLYWOOD Not content with just working with The Cribs, Johnny Marr is also set to branch out into the world of film soundtracks. He's writing the score for *The Big Bang*, due in 2010. The Tony Krantz-directed movie stars Antonio Banderas and Snoop Dogg. It's about a private detective in search of an ex-stripper,

KILLERS' XMAS

LAS VEGAS The Killers released their annual Christmas song to coincide with World Aids Day last week (December 1). 'Happy Birthday Guadalupe' features guest appearance from Wild Light and Mariachi El Bronx, and is released in association with the (RED) charity.

PETE'S NAZI APOLOGY

MUNICH Pete Doherty was forced to apologise after he performed a section of the German national anthem with Nazi connotations during a gig in Munich (November 28). The first stanza of 'Deutschlandhed' has been ignored since the end of the Second World War because of its use under the Third Reich, and Doherty's recital of it resulted in him being booed by fans and having his set at the city's On3 festival cut short. A statement from the Babyshambles man later said he hadn't realised the song's history, and reiterated his continued work with anti-fascist and anti-racist organisations.



THIRST FOR ANSWERS

STAFFORD Police have admitted they are to launch their own investigation into why Brixton band The Thirst were falsely arrested and held for 16 hours after a gig in Stafford last month (November 21). Despite being innocent, the band said they were held at gunpoint because it was thought they were "acting suspiciously in a car park".

EVERYONE LOVES GRAMMY

LOS ANGELES® Beyoncé has led the way in this year's Grammys, picking up 10 nominations. Lady Gaga, Kings Of Leon and Yeah Yeah Yeahs are also on the shortlist for the US music industry annual night of backslapping. Winners will be announced at a ceremony held on January 31.

Lily in disguise

LONDON

ıly Allen has stuck to her guns and confirmed she'll be going on hiatus following next March's joint gigs with Dizzee Rascal. She says she'll take "one or two" years off, during which time she'll start a clothing shop in London with her sister, called Lucy In Disguise. She also plans to set up a "grassroots" record label to help new bands break through."I don't want to compete with other record companies, but I want to support new artists," she explained of the venture.





It's Lil Wayne's world

And we just live it, or rather *NME*'s Alex Miller does. So just how did our writer end up featuring in the million-selling nearly banned new documentary *The Carter*? It's party time...

"I can see why Wayne

tried to get it banned"

ollowing its debut at the Sundance Film Festival, new Lil Wayne documentary The Carter has caused controversy. Despite letting cameras film him for 10 months, the subject went to court trying to get it banned, only to have his lawsuit thrown out More surprisingly still, is that the film features NME's Alex Miller (inset) after his interview for a feature last year was captured by the cameras. With the DVD now available on import, our man (and editor of Viceland.com) explains what it's like to share the big screen with Lil Wayne...

Alex Miller. "Me and Lil Wayne have lots in common, we're both famous, mega rich, shit at guitar and neither of us want the new film *The Carter* to be released. He doesn't want it to be released because it paints him as a drug-crippled nutter claiming that his mentor

Birdman raped him when he was 11 I don't want it released because I'm in it looking like a dork. I didn't know I was going to be in it, but I am, interviewing

Wayne in a masterclass of stuttering obsequiousness and nerves. Wayne made more of a fuss than me though, he went to court to have it banned in April, but lost. I hate America's stupid liberal law courts. I turned up in Amsterdam to do a feature for NME last year and sat around for five hours getting passively high as Wayne's mates smoked blunts in a coffee shop. I don't like getting high, and three hours later when I was sitting in Lil Wayne's hotel still waiting for the MC, I was feeling pretty edgy. I was lead into a room full of about 30 dudes all blowing smoke at the tacky-as gold ceiling. There was also a film crew. I watched a Dutch

guy interview Wayne before me, use all my questions, piss him off, and then it was my turn. Weezy smoked and drank his cough syrup throughout, barely answering my questions – except for one where I asked him about the tattoos on his eyes ('Fear' and 'God') and said something

about God "slapping him down", and the entourage looked appalled and seemed to slowly move menacingly towards me. The interview was over soon after that. Which was fine with me, I wasn't having fun. It was one of the least interesting pieces I'd ever done, so you can imagine how happy it makes me to see that it's been released as a movie and nominated for the

Sundance Award. The documentary itself is pretty sad Wayne drinks a lot of the sizzurp cough syrup which is sending him mad and smokes lots of skunk

(which can't help much either). He's in Europe to promote his biggest success, 'Tha Carter III', but he just looks lost, surrounded by flunkies who all seem to love him, but are just as strung-out as he is However, the scenes showing him making music – correcting his flow as he lets it roll from his brain into the mic – are compelling, even if only to see a man that high actually be productive. I can see why my buddy Wayne tried to have it banned, but it's an awesome documentary. The only thing that sucks about it is that they cut out the best bit of the interview, when he said he liked my Battles T-shirt."



SOLANGE IS A CHAMPION!

Dev Hynes sets to work with Beyoncé's younger sibling

ev Hynes – aka Lightspeed Champion – has shared a stage with everyone from Alex Turner to Emmy The Great, but now the collab-happy former Test Icicle has out-done himself by recording a new song with Beyoncé's little sister, Solange.

"The song's really cool," he explained. "It's about seven minutes long, in that way that early disco singles were, but it's influenced as much by Eastern, particularly Japanese, melodic scales and ideas." So how did Hynes end up in a studio with America pop's aristocracy?

Well, since moving to New York last year, Hynes has become mates with Chairlift's Aaron Pfenning who was already on Knowles' hitlist.

"He was working with Solange at the same time I was working on [side-project] Blood Orange," said Hynes. "It was like a dream for me because there's a lot of vocal things I want to do but can't, but she's a singer – that's her job! So I wrote the vocal melody and just knew she could figure it out."

As yet there are no official plans to release the track – although it may get a reworking in the new year. "Aaron might release it. It still needs some tweaking. She lives in New York now, so in January, there might be some recording," he explained. "The thing is, I'm so selfish when it comes to making these things. Like – I've got it on my iPod. What does it matter if it ever gets released?"



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NME: Will there be a third series of Flight Of The Conchords?

Bret McKenzic: "We're not sure. We still haven't decided. Me, [co-creator] James Bobin and Jemaine are meeting in LA very soon to decide. But it's unlikely, just in terms of where we can still take things. I think in a week-and-a-half we'll probably decide to do a Christmas Special, you know - kind of like the Star Wars Holiday Special, where Chewbacca goes home to his planet to a Wookiee family Christmas, I mean, I don't know if it's officially dead, but I think it'd be more likely that we'd do a film or something like that, But what exactly, we haven't really decided. We're going this month." We're going to have to figure that out

What about doing another album?

"I think it would take

us a while to write another album. We're : I, sitting there with our guitars onstage." starting to become quite busy doing other projects, so the time it takes would be difficult to schedule - it takes a lot of time to write songs. It would take a year or two of downtime to work up to that. Once we have touring and a few other things on top, it's going to be difficult to produce another album."

What were your big touchstones when writing the songs on new album 'I Told You I Was Freaky'?

"In terms of what sort of songs we wanted to take off, I think we targeted genres we hadn't already targeted. There are a lot of lady-loving jams. R Kelly was a big influence. He always is. Whenever we do a track, we think, 'What would R Kelly do?' and that generally points us right. There's a pretty eclectic mix on there from the second series. 'Too Many Dicks On The Dancefloor' seems to be the most popular one we've got. We looked to Daft Punk for that. Then we did that song 'Fashion Is Danger', which is kind of a new romantic track, a bit of Visage, a bit Eurythmics. We tried to synthesise those elements – we try not to directly parody songs. I mean, we listen to a lot of different songs in that genre, and try not to too-directly take off any one song."

The Police one is quite direct, isn't it? "You mean 'You Don't Have To Be A Prostitute"? Yeah, that's got a healthy dose of 'Roxanne' in it. But then, uh, someone has said it also sounds a bit like Men At Work. Do you know that band The Free Design, from the late '60s? They have a song called 'Kites Are Fun', and that was an influence on some of the album's more baroque moments."

Is there anyone you'd still really like to take-off but haven't managed to yet? "I really want to hit Queen. But it's so difficult: the harmonies, the complexity. We'd probably do something a bit Bohemian Rhapsody', something epic like that. We haven't really natled a rock opera yet. It's probably something to develop more as a live show piece."

Aside from deciding your fate in LA, what are you up to right now? "Me? I'm writing a film, which is still in development, and I'm also doing some acting in this film called Dukes And Broncos, which is coming out soon."

Tell us about the live show - is it coming to the UK any time soon?

"We toured North America earlier this year, and we are planning to tour Europe in the new year, yeah. We've played a lot of comedy festivals, so the live show has

developed a bit more. At the moment it's mainly songs from this new album. The other characters from the show still nip in, but fundamentally it's about Jemaine and

What comedy albums float your boat? "I don't really listen to them Well, I do like Randy Newman. He's not strictly comedy, but he has a lot of interesting ideas in there. Do you know that song 'Short People'? I think I heard it when I was a kid, and it made more of an impression on me than I realised..."

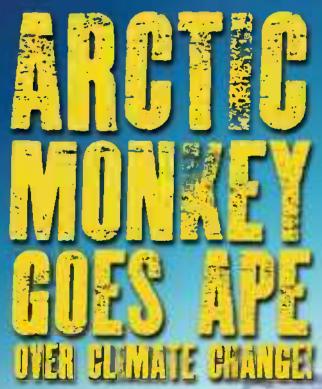
Isn't there a fundamental problem with comedy records - that once you've listened to them twice, got all the jokes, they're basically redundant? "Yeah, I've listened to ours once or twice. I think they're best when there's still some element of surprise - when people listen to it at random when it comes up on their iPod. It's funny, actually, we put so much effort into it,

but we don't really sit around playing it."



to tour Europe in

the new year"





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NEW TO THE PLAYLIST...

Who will be fighting it out in future charts?



LATE OF THE PIER -'BLUEBERRY'

"If the bouncing techno metal Roxy-pop of Late Of The Pier's extraordinarily forward thinking debut 'Fantasy Black Channel' drew a bold line in the sand, then this, the band's follow-up, deepens that line to form a gaping chasm between them and most other modern pop music. I'd like to think the closing minute or so comprised pretty much exclusively of churning, grinding backwards synth effectively emulates the sound of Simon Cowell's gristled, scabby conscience finally imploding." Jon Hillcock, NME Radio

presenter



DINOSAUR PILE-UP - 'BEACH BUG'

"An amazing intro growls into another speaker-splitter from this year's best grunge-loving trio."

Sarah Ken, NME Radio

presenter



BEACH HOUSE - 'NOR WAY'

"With this free download topping the Hype Machine chart and a support slot with Grizzly Bear booked for next year we predict Big Things."

Tim tant

Editor NI IE.COM



SURFER BLOOD

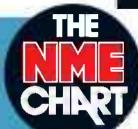
"Lurking in pale waters, this is the cold-rush accompaniment to the darker months – an anti-surf anthem." Jaimie Hodgson, New Music Editor



EMPIRE OF THE SUN "WITHOUT YOU"

"Another mystical pop wonder – this one so '80s and wonderful it could slot onto the Labyrinth soundtrack." Jamie Fullerton, Deputy News Editor

THIS WEEK'S TOP 20



1	FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE
J 1	'YOU'VE GOT THE LOVE'

2	3	MUSE 'UNDISCLOSED DESIRES'
		Holium 2 /Warner Bros

3	2	CALVIN HARRIS

Л		MUMFORD & SONS
4	4	'LITTLE LION MAN'
		ts/and



Z		RIFFY CLYRO
0	- 5	THE CAPTAIN

7 39 JAN BROWN
Fiction



9 7 CHILLE GOULDING THE SHEETS'

10	8	LA ROUX 'QUICKSAND
		PUNIT

11 DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE (MEET ME ON THE EQUINOX)

TWIN ATLANTIC

'WHAT IS LIGHT? WHERE
IS LAUGHTER? Red | N

13 9 JAMIET
'THE MAN'S MACHINE' EP

14 31 SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO

15 THE TEMPER TRAP

16 17 BLOC PARTY
ONE MORE CHANCE

17 14 'NEW FANG'

18 12 GROOVE ARMADA

19 28 THE MACCABEES

20	20	PASSION PIT 'LITTLE SECRETS'
		C. seeben

The NME Chart is compiled on a weekly fixes from the sales of physical and digital singles through moditional high street residers, internet retailers and digital music service providers. Singles are eligible for the PME Chart of they have featured on the physics of the Radio or Tyon 1981 Way graine.



BOMBAY BICYCLE

NME Radio were caning this tune ages back but have re-added it to the playlist as the rest of the radio world catches up – it's our highest new chart entry at Number 8.



TWIN ATLANTIC
With a post-hardcore
backbone and a riff
that'il tunnel into
your brain, 2010's
Biffy Clyro make an

impressive entry.



THE TEMPER TRAP

With the help of Arctic Monkeys producer Jim Abbiss, they return with another tight pop tune postmarked for dancefloors that's had the remixers and bloggerati circling like malnourished sharks.







Achtung Eavis NMECON

e: U2 and (possibly) The Rolling Stones at Glasto. Surely it's better to have a more cutting-edge band play? Pulp '95 or Radiohead '97 spring to mind. OK, so the Stones and U2 haven't played before but millions of people have seen them in the UK alone – they've both played Wembley more times than David Beckham. Playing it safe like this gives you guaranteed hits, but you're unlikely to get a performance of a lifetime. Whatbill, via NME.COM

True, but Glasto sold out again without announcing any bands, which proves that the overall spirit of the festival is more important than who's headlining – SR

PRIDE (IN THE NAME OF COWS)

Uz at Glastonbury will be awesome. If the opening to 'Where The Streets Have No Name' doesn't get you, you've no soul. So what if there's nothing decent from the last three albums? A greatest hits '84'94 set would be amazing. Neil, via NME.COM

U2'll be alright. I could think of plenty worse bands, and as long as they bang out enough old stuffit'll be good enough for the Friday. But I'll be looking out for something else to do that night. Here's your chance, Eavis—Them Crooked Vultures on the Other Stage?

James, via NME.COM

At least I can fulfil a lifelong ambition to throw a shoebox full of turds at Bono. Adam Clayton might get a splashback and The Edge could get dysentery. Beastley Boy, via NME.COM

The real people of Glasto don't care who plays. The main stages are the tip of the iceberg of what goes on there.

Ziggychaz, via NME.COM

Plenty of lively chat about the Glasto headliners on our message boards this week, U2's confirmation has received a mixed reaction; sadly, the possibility of them playing just 'The Fly', 'Lemon' and 'Where The Streets Have No Name' and then fucking off without Bono making some kind of pompous speech seems unlikely. But I'm sure there will be some decent alternatives elsewhere around the site. Your favourites for the other Pyramid Stage headline slots include Muse, Radiohead, Led Zep, The Rolling Stones, Bowle, Metallica, Noel

Gallagher (with or without Jay-Z) and, ever-optimistic, The Smiths or The Stones Roses. Personally I'm holding out for Daft Punk, Prince, AC/DC or a reformed Talking Heads doing 'Stop Making Sense'. Failing that, I'll be face-down in the dubstep/cider/holistic massage tent – SR

ROCK OFF

After picking up the latest edition of NME (November 28) to see who you felt were the greatest rock stars of the past decade, I found the majority of the Top to laughable. Alex Turner at five – why? He's so bland and has done nothing of note since 'Whatever People Say I Am...'. Dizzee Rascal on the list? Seriously? It's meant to be ROCK STAR not suburbanwannabe-urban pretentious moron (Eh? Dizzee's from Bow E3, if he was any more urban he'd be made of concrete – SR). Amy Winehouse? She's only there because of her links to Doherty and her





drug binges. And what's Jack 'Fat Zorro' White done that's worthy of being the greatest rock star of the decade? He's boring and spart from 'Seven Nation Army' and 'Icky Thump', has no decent singles. Why was Ryan Jarman missed out? He's probably had more of an impact on music than half of the pretenders you've named in the Top 10. Phil Bagwell, via email

What the hell, NME? Why on EARTH have you not included Muse frontman Matt Bellamy in your 25 Best Rock Stars Of The Decade? You deign to include such 'rock stars' as Johnny Borrell and one-hit wonders like Andrew WK. To exclude one of the most innovative men in music is a failure on your part, and in the words of the rockmeisters themselves, "you'll burn in hell for your sins." You have disappointed me, NME, Natasha, Doncaster

The biggest impact The Cribe have had on my world is soundtracking the 'yesterday's goals' segment on Match Of The Day 2. But that's no insignificant feat, mind. And as for Matt Bellamy, where do you draw the line? Justin Hawkins? Darius Danesh? Rather than treeding the bonging-your-own-puber while they're-still-attached-type insania territory, I think Muse are about a Greatest Hits comp away from having their own musical – SR

DON'T GO FLO

Do we really want Florence And The Machine to break America? She'd be playing shopping malls for two years to a bunch of bewildered Yanks, while we'd be deprived of one of the best talents to emerge from these shores in ages. Why can't we keep her all to ourselves and let her mature into the superstar she deserves to be? If our cousins across the Atiantic want one of our eccentric singers, we can send them Susan Boyle wearing a big pair of pants and a cape, belting out 'You Got The Love'. Neil Renton, Edinburgh

To be honest, most Americans wouldn't even notice the difference — SR

MONKEY BUSINESS

Arctic Monkeys have still got it. They have success, yet still seem humbled by it all. I saw them live recently and was blown away. Yes, Arctic Monkeys made it pretty big from the early days, what with the fastest-selling album and all, yet they still keep coming back for more. I have heard them criticised for their 'new direction', but if they had done a replica of their first two albums they would have been one-trick ponies. Yes, they look like gypsies but they have grown up and matured and this is evident in their new album. Long live Turner and co! Joshua Howells, via email

I waited in great anticipation for your review on the latest Arctic Monkeys gig in Manchester but whoever wrote about it didn't do them justice. In fact it was a load of bollocks. Did they mention the way Alex Turner's newly-grown locks danced as he head-banged to the classics? No! (What a criminal oversight, we'll launch an internal investigation immediately – SR) There wasn't even a mention of how sexy he looked or, considering how everyone is obsessed with their hair, the drummer's new afro. Tasha, Chester

Glad to see that the debate has moved on from 'Do Arctic Monkeye still rock?' to 'Do Arctic Monkeye still rock in spite of, or because of their new hair?' – SR

A LETTER FROM A COLD PLACE

A lot can be learned from Leonard Cohen. He thinks that one should love womens' clothes, body and spirits, and believes women are mystical and speak with a "charged language". When preparing of food is concerned, I think that the most beautiful partners cook their dinner together – and that the women make the sandwiches for their

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK AT:

men... (continues for a while quoting lyrics from Black Eyed Peas, Peter Frampton and, er, Men At Work to support an increasingly elusive point – SR)... Women are equally intelligent to men, and should have equal pay. Dagfinn Dahl (sociologist), Trondheim, Norway

This is not the only letter Dagfinn sent in this week. In another, he proposes a new set of 25 commandments to live by (brilliantly, number 23 to Be Salf-Ironic'), while in a third, he declares that "all music are existential utterances", which is almost prefound. Calum from Kinrose, the gauntlet has been well and truly thrown — SR

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Email: ketters@nme.com Post: The Letters Page, NME, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London, SEI OSU Oh, and LOTW winners should email the same address to claim their prizes







"Me and my friends with Jon Lawler from The Fratellis at his Codeine Velvet Club gig in Brighton"



"We met Damian Pink Eyes' Abraham before Fucked Up's gig at the Garage back in August"



"Hore's me with Paul Smith from Maximo Park when they were Down Under"









50

47

Ha The Shook hem Loose (Islan

They've been beloved of the underage gig-going crowd for years, but the Crouch End four-piece's debut wasn't puppyish, carefree and full of youthful frisk. Hell no. There was a far darker, more cynical and sinister heart beating beneath. Lead singer Jack Steadman possessed the voice of a middle-aged crooner mixed with the warbles of birdman Antony Hegarty, deployed to devastating effect on the line "It's that ancient love that you won't outgrow" from 'Dust On The Ground'. 'Magnet' and 'Always Like This' were drenched, nay drowning, in the burden of the blues tumbled in sonic assaults thick with emotional turmoil. "I Had The Blues But I Shook Them Loose" was the sound of four guys who had the weight of the world on their shoulders, and communicated it with such urgency and so eloquently they've more than put their elder peers in the indieverse to shame. AD

49 NEKO CASE Middle Cycl



If you're not aware of who Neko Case is, you can pretty much blame her. The American-born folk singer, best known as the honeyed voice of Canadian alt.country supergroup The New Pornographers, has drawn (spot on) comparisons to such varied vocalists as honky-tonk legend Loretta Lynn and tragic English rose Kirsty MacColl But her hatred of celebrity, refusal to appear in videos and anti-establishment behaviour (she's actually banned for life from country music's high temple the Grand Ole Opry for taking her shirt off onstage) have placed her very much on the outside of the music world looking in, alongside such cult figures as Cat Power. It's a shame - the songs on 'Middle Cyclone' demand to be heard with their widescreen beauty. Don't be deceived into thinking they're gentle, though; the tempest of the tide is her razor-sharp, seething lyricism, lashed by biting wit. Seek it out, even if she doesn't want you to. JD

48 ATLAS SOUND



"Prolific" is often just a way to say "undisciplined and piss-poor" (that's you, pin-cushion Peter D), but that could never be said of Deerhunter's busy bee Bradford Cox, whose Atlas Sound (don't call it a side) project has been responsible for some of the sweetest, most thoughtful sounds coming out of New Weird America over the past couple of years. 'Logos' is a record that seems to have arrived from another place and time - and not just the hard drive of Cox's computer. Cox wove folk, lo fi and dreampop ambience into a rainy-day quilt of understated beauty. 'Logos' was incredible, immersive stuff, even without 'Quick Canal' which featured Stereolab's Laetitia Sadier, and was the sound of the false memories of lazy summer evenings you never ended up sharing with that wonderful someone, LT

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After a few years spent to tering in no se murk, Telepathe strode boldly out towards the virtuous light of pop with the young-girl in-schoolplayground hooks of their debut full length LP, with the help of TV On The Radio's David Sitek on production duties. It's very easy to forget what a great record 'Dance Mother' is - i. was released all the way back in January, and its makers (Brooklyn's Melissa Livaudais and Busy Gangnes) have been strangely quiet since, but still it thrills. 'So Fine' is a power surge of utopian synth and harmony that sinks those pop hooks straight into the roof of your skull, while in 'Chrome's On It' and 'Devil's Trident' it boasts two of the decade's best. singles. Club bass meets indie witchcraft meets girl-group meets The Future, as Livaudais and Gangnes fire words about love and the afterlife at each other, the voices haunting Phil Spector's

46

lonely prison dreams KK



If you had any lingering doubts over whether Gallows could match the visceral thrills of their debut album, the rampaging beast that was their second tore such apprehensions to tattered shreds. The infamous five laid their bleeding heads and hands on display again, drilling a brutal hole through their nation's hollow veneer and probing directly into its grotesque, dysfunctional underbelly. Driven by Frank Carter's ferocious lyrics - the other ginger star of the year - the Watford band slammed the nihilism pedal to the bad-news metal and declared Britain little short of a lost cause. Lampooning the establishment and railing against the government, the church and big businesses may be nothing new for a punk rock band, but the monster hardcore riffs that were the foundations of 'Grev Britain' combined with the sheer might of their fury somehow made it seem like they'd just invented fighting the powers that be. TE

45 RICHARD HAVALE



There's something odd in the heart of Sheffie d - and it's not that Arctic Monkeys album. Somehow the unassuming and potty-mouthed former sideman in Longpigs and Pulp has become bigger than all the offshoots of both bands. And he did it with a casual rejection of fashion's mores. Hawley's songs are tender sketches of hesitant love that remain true to his roots: a love of a good tune and a passion for Presley (Elvis rather than Reg). His fifth ful-length album had to fo low up the massive success of 'Lady's Bridge'. Hawley did it by placing his mellifluous voice centre-stage and stripping back instrumentation to a minimum. The absence of those glorious twanging Technicolor Joe Meek confections merely underlined the richness of Hawley's voice and the lo relorn lyrics. An incredible re-casting of what the man could do, this atmosphere-driven album showed that artistic reinvention could be both subtle and heartfelt, and remain uniquely touching. AT

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LIST

† GASS MCCOMES
'Catacombs'
Lovelorn alt.fo ker not likely
to feel any more loved now

"Yours' was quite good though, No? Anyone? TORTOISE

'Beacons Of Ancestorship'
Always easy to admire,
but difficult to love..
GET BACK GIRNOZZE

'Carpet Madness'
Sweet Indie-pop, possibly
too nice to be noticeable
RATCHAM SOCIAL
'You Dig The Tunnel,

I'll Hide The Sail'
Clearly they hid their debut album undermeath that soil HERE WE GO MAGIC
'Here We Go Magic'
Definitely did not 'do an Animal Collective' this year

SWAN LAKE
'Enemy Mine'
Canadian supergroup was
more of an ugly duckling
THEFLAMMG UPS
'Embryonic'

'Embryonic'
Going back to their weirdo
roots was not popular
THE RAKES

We'll miss them, but not that much, it seems EDITORS

'In This Light And On This Evening' There is no light in which this dirge-fest looks good Rated O Gagiagn

ONEIDA

f he who laughs last laughs longest, then Brooklyn psych-rock outfit Oneida must be on the verge of the mother of all guffaws. The band, who released their debut in 1997, have been a lynchpin of the Williamsburg scene for years - they are contemporaries of art punks Les Savy Fav, have released a joint album with Liars and are favourites of Yeah Yeah Yeahs. But they've played a long game, smart enough to know that ignoring commercial sensibilities and doing exactly what they want is the best road. It doesn't matter to people that 'Rated O' is the middle album of a triptych concept album, and is a treble-album itself. It doesn't matter that it crams fucked-up metal, dub, acid house, dubstep, krautrock, raga, electronica and space rock all into one bastard Frankenstein groove monster. All that matters to them is that it rocks like a motherfucker, and is heavier than the death of the family pet. John Doran

Q&AWITH KID MILLIONS (VOCALS/DRUMS)

You' or ely cc'' ',
ver sdo you
incorporating an of the trilogy?

"We've started writing songs based on the list of music genres page on Wikipedia, there should be some interesting tunes that emerge from that."

Most bands would consider releasing a trilogy of albums, with the second part a triple album, as commercial suicide. Just how big are your balls?

"I'd say somewhere in between AC/DC's and Milli Vanilli's."



Poor old Franz were in the grip of an identity crisis for their third album. Abortive sessions with chart conquering producers Xenomania had proved that they weren't a straightforward pop band, but what they were seemed uncertain Confus on seemed to suit them, though. Within the sprawling 'Tonight...', the same lyrics appeared in both a swaggering sing-along ('No You Girls') and a delicate folk ballad ('Katherine Kiss Me'). 'Can't Stop Feeling' brought an extraordinary detour into Euro-disco, while 'Lucid Dreams' was an eightminute epic in which psychedelic pop mutated into throbbing electro. Yet for all the experimentalism, there was reassuring continuity in the album's deft lyrics (on God, jealousy and stalking) and huge choruses (see improbable festival anthem 'Ulysses'). Where Franz Ferdinand's amb tion takes them next is a mystery - here's hoping they're not sure either, NO'K

New York's Crystal Stilts ticked all the boxes on the New York Cool License Application form: a shades-wearing, passive-aggressive frontman. a stand-up female drummer and a guitar sound last heard echoing sarcastically around Andy Warhol's Factory. What separated them from generations of Velvets copyists, though, was Brad Hargett's inimitable vocal style: his urgent, echo-ladeo shouts resembled or es for help from the bottom of a well 'Alight Of Night' also revealed a human romanticism behind the Stilts' aloof posturing. "I'll love a girl someday, she'll nourish me in sympathy", he wailed amid the chiming waltz of 'Graveyard Orbit'. Elsewhere, a succession of th illing stylistic gearshifts - from the medicated shuffle of 'The Dazz ed' through the adrenaline surge of 'The Departure' to the stately elegance of 'The City In The Sea' - had us beginning to see the light. NO'K

It seems so long since the start of the year, that we're starting to wonder whether we hallucinated this lot. Made up of one guy from a slightly famous Auss e band (The Sleepy Jackson's Luke Steele) and one guy from a not-quite-so-famous Aussie band, (Pnau's Nick Litt emore), Empire Of The Sun were a stealth-fighting super-duo that proved themselves to be far more than the sum of their parts. Sure, the whole thing was ludicrous

- the album cover artwork that looked like a god-awful lost '80s fantasy flick, the bollockcrunchingly high falsetto vocals and the insanely camp costumes but admirably so, and spectacle aside, the songs more than lived up to the glitz The title track was a supersonic, bachelor pad MGMT while the demi acoustica of "We Are The People' was a DeLorean buzz through the empty streets of Sydney at 3am before watching the sunrise on Bondi Beach to the Balearic Bowie bliss of 'Half Mast' Dreamy ain't the half of it. LC



The giddy joy of Japandroids' clatter, the roughness and the glorious tinnitus they bring: in a year of precise pop and self-conscious reinvention, the unashamed fucking racket these two Vancouver dudes made was one of the year's most rewarding discoveries. "We used to dream/Now we worry about dying/I don't wanna worry about dying/i just wanna worry about those... sunshine girls", goes the second song on their first album, and it just about sums up the joyous abandon of their fuzz-punk festivities. If you'd told us 12 months ago yet another effortlessly lo-fi two-man riot masquerading as a band would would make a bid for our hearts the world's collective shrug would've puffed the planet off its axis 'Post-Nothing's unique charm, though, les in its entire lack of pretension and ramshackle exuberance. The sort of record that reminds you that the world's a pretty rad place now and then. BP



Even if the Biff's fifth huffed elephant dong (which it plainly doesn't) we'd be tempted to nudge some sympathy votes its way just out of good feeling towards the band - perennial journeymen keep trying, eventually gain commercial success, still don't shave... it really is a story to warm the most shrivelled of souls. But charity has no place here, because '...Revolutions' is a real powerhouse, offering half barmy bliss ('The Captain', the one about the way the word 'aluminium' is pronounced), half mammoth catchy rawk ('Bubbles, 'Mountains') and, of course, all thoroughly brilliant. Yeah, it's almost cosmic in its ambitions, but even in their super-early days Biffy had always aimed for nothing less than cracking the sky with a single cataclysmic chord change, this veritable monster of an album represents them both striding into the arenas their potential always suggested and leaving the laurels earned thus far entirely untouched. BP





Plaid shirts might have made a comeback, and the recently reformed Dinosaur Jr and The Jesus Lizard might have been back on the tour circuit, but stull no one was ready for this. We've had grunge reviva s before (cheers, The Vines, Nine Black Alps, don't bother writing) but Pennsylvania's Pissed Jeans shocked everyone by bursting out from the shadows with a record as savage, witty and timeless as 'King Of Jeans'. They may take obvious cues from their garage punk heroes, but they were the first band in a decade to fully grasp. the sardonic humour that made '90s alternative rock so vital, bemoaning the dreary everyday existence of the mid American man with alarming precision. From lamenting the inevitability of premature baldness to recalling a particularly pleasurable massage in lurid detail, the band reignited the grimy flattle of their label, Sub Pop, with an album that matched any from its classic early '90s canon. TE





Manners Columb

or a lot of the electro acts that have flooded our blogs, airwaves and magazines in the past 12 months, just being electro is enough to justify their own existence. For Passion Pit, though, the synthesiser is only the tool of their trade, and their trade is love, baby. On the surface, the songs constructed by mainman Michael Angelakos on 'Manners' were easy to daub with hip electro touchstones: take 'Sleepyhead''s Avalanches-esque junkyard vocal samples and 'The Reeling's almost Justice ish synth jitters and New Order lead lines. But if you dug deeper you'd discover the songs were a little more timeless than you'd think. 'Moth's Wings', for example, began like a digitised country hoedown before transforming into something which wouldn't be out of place on an Interpol album - if you took away the synths and lowered the vocals by about four octaves. Nobody I'kes 'Manners' just because it's electro, but because it's intensely personal pop music with heart, vu nerability, soul and integrity - and that never goes out of fashion Tom Pinnock

Q&A WITH MICHAEL ANGELAKOS (MOCALS/KEYBOARDS)

So 'Manners' is one of our Albums Of The Year -a J_1 n rer dream or such an accolade?

"Wow! Uh, no. There's so many bands who work really, really hard at making it, but the idea of making it has never really appealed to me. To be honest, I don't really feel I'm worthy of [the success] 'cos I didn't really work super-hard. I'm really grateful for everything that's happened, though."

Wiretdovo

"It's a snapshot of what you were then, like a diary entry. There's things I'd want to change, but it's rewarding to have a snapshot of something so personal from about a year ago. I'm very proud of it."



So fucking what if it's only got seven songs on it? Firstly, that's only one less than 'Led Zep IV' and second v in those eight-minus one tunes and 25 minutes was more excitement and freshness than most of the debut albums of the year but together. It was the whistled-hook of 'Let's Go Lu fing' that initially pricked up most people's eas the the deeper you de ved the more depths the latest (actually) great Brooklyn band revealer. There were endless brill ant lyrics in the likes of 'Don't Be A Jerk, Johnny' ("Believe in something/You're full of horseshit") and 'Make you Mine' ("I'm sleepin' in the kitchen/And eatin' in the bedroom"), twisted melancholy in 'Down By The Water' and enough jangling riffs and joyous, effervescent choruses throughout to keep us all salivating until the debut album proper arrives early next year. The Drums may be set to be the band of 2010, but they didn't fare badly in 2009 either. HM



Playing right into the hands of those 'Youth? Pfffft' jokes with that title, Sonic Youth defiantly proved they might just really have access to the elixir of everlasting vigour. After filling out the scrag-end of their Geffen contract with albums that were mid paced pleasantries, they returned to the independent realm with a fire in their be lies. 'The Eternal' was the kind of punchy, pop laden record that the New York art-rock architects do so brilliantly. It gave credence to the suspicion that it's when they're most accessible that the band are at their most interesting, bringing a Trojan horse of weird time signatures and fiddled equipment into a world dominated by the dour, bearded American indie ideologues who are their descendants. On the gruntin', huffin', puffin' and scabbily infectious 'The Eternal'. Sonic Youth made one of the best records of their career while putting their tediously earnest offspring to shame. Not bad for a band with a combined age of 254 LT



For a band teetering on the edge of cult obscurity, calling your album Wolfgang Amadeus anything is going to smack of immodesty. Yet when the results are as good as this - the sound of four coolly unkempt Frenchman honing their pop formula until it's so precise it practically hurts - a little Gallic cockiness seems fair enough. indeed, in a stroke of self-fulfi ling genius, it saw the previously forgotten band hailed as maestros of the indie-pop form. Sure, between 'Lisztomania''s guitar sheen and the melodic tenacity of '1901' you'l struggle to find so much as a hi hat out of place, but this is a record that never feels contrived. Hell, when they even plumb their own background, as on Air-recalling 'Love Like A Sunset' (they once used to act as backing band for the electronic duo), you get the impression that Phoenix couldn't give a fuck about widespread adulation. Which is why they got it, finally. LB

JAY-Z

The Blueprint 3 (Roc-A-Fella)

t had to be amazing, of course: you cannot complete one of the 21st Century's greatest trilogies with something lacklustre Especially when vou consider said tri'ogy was interrupted by 'The Black Album', Yet even in the face of such gigantic expectation, Jay-Z's 11th album, one of the most anticipated in hip-hop history, did not disappoint. By aligning itself with former glories and with its creator's profile higher than ever following those collaborations with Linkin Park (remember?) and Coldplay, as well as that appearance at Glastonbury, Jigga here forced

himself to raise his game significantly after 2006's so-so 'comeback' album 'Kingdom Come'. Productions by Kanye, Swizz Beatz, The Neptunes and Timbaland were all present and correct, as were quest appearances from the requisite (Rihanna, Alicia Keys, Drake) to

the ridiculous (Luke Steele, Mr Hudson), as were the three blockbuster singles ('DOA

(Death Of Auto-Tune)' in particular being up there with his finest, not to mention the song that mercifully laid waste to one of the last two years' most irritating gimmicks). But more than all of this, it was the resharpened flows of the greatest rapper alive that made 'The Blueprint 3' one of 2009's most memorable successes. Ultimately, it's an album that will be looked back on as a landmark in the history of hip-hop culture, that expanded the audience further than anyone could

ever have dreamed, while never compromising any of its principles On it, rather than the embarrassing, halfhearted gangster posturing that some of his contemporaries still resort to, Jay-Z imparted the wisdom that only someone who has lived his amazing life could, and in doing so proved that hip-hop can grow old in the same way that rock'n'roll did before it "Heaven knows that I've made my mistakes", he offered on 'Thank You', referencing feuds past; 'A Star Is Born' celebrated the achievements of all his peers, former foes and friends past and present, Nas included; 'Off That'

> depicted the King Of New York "driving around town with my high yellow broad and my dark skin sis and my best white mate", before rhyming "Chris" with "How's that for a mix?"; the closest Jay came to any old-style attacks was telling all the (these days ambiguous) haters that they, frankly, had no chance at all of stepping up to the level of a man who by this

stage had overtaken Elvis Presley in the Number One album stakes, and so might as well let bygones be bygones. 'The Blueprint 3' was the sound of a wiser, older-but-no-less passionate man determined to propel his beloved hip-hop long into the 21st Century. "My name shall be passed down through generations" he prophesised over the climatic, melancholic Young Forever'. As an ambassador, as a rapper, as a man, it was difficult to disagree. Hamish MacBain

it's the sound of a wiser man determined to propel hip hopinto the 21st century

TOP 10 FILMS OF THE YEAR

Inglowious Basterds Why? B. caus . Hitler gets shot in the face with a machine oun

In The LOOP

Armando languera is only slightly less funny than Hitler being shot in the face

District 9

The film that made "fuckin' prawns" the geek catchphrase of the year.

The Hangeres

Las Vegas + a tiger + Mike Tyson singing Phil Collins genius

Let The Right One In

Aborror film for neople who don't like horror films. just great films

Armill The Story Of Anvill

Until Raygun: The Movie gets made, the best rock'n'roll tlick eve

Gran Torino

Clint Eastwood's last film in front of the camera. And what a way to go

Does for animation what. Güzen Kane did for live action movies Star Treb

Just for the Beastie Boys-

soundtracked James T Kirk scene Misogynist toss? Maybe.

Utterly vile? Definitely. Genius? Oh yes



BEST ALBUMS OF 2009 ?



MOAH AND THE WHALF

The First Days Of Spring (Mercary)

This was one of the unexpected triumphs of the year, if you can really call such a bleak emotional wasteland triumphant. Made in the wake of singer Charlie Fink's break-up with Laura Marling, it had the band plunging into the black quicksand of a doomed relationship. giving Noah And The Whale's formerly chipper folk a weight, resonance and power they dinever had before. In fact, such was the terrible honesty of Fink's despair, and so atmospheric the arrangements, that they achieved a level of emotional and musical integrity that touched on some of the all-time greats. The six minute title track feels like something off Scott Walker's 'Scott 4', the devastating lyncal honesty of lost love with a funereal string backing. The sparser, rawer 'Our Window' could have been Lou Reed at his 'Berlin' bleakest, with Fink paralysed with an awful inevitability: "We both know that it's over, but we both are not ready, and you're talking like a stranger, and I don't know what to do". Some complained it was gauche for Noah's singer Charlie Fink to rake over his relationship like this, but art isn't tasteful or polite. Also, you sense he had little choice but to make this album. He was looking for answers in his music, and most beautifully, he does find them, as if his bandmates are gathering to tie his heart back together with strings. It means even the rawness of 'I Have Nothing' can rise up from pathetic mournfulness to g orious dimaxes, showing it's not the end of the world The album's about the awful destruction of love but a so about building yourself back up, regaining dignity. and looking forward with a degree of hope. As such it's the the finest break-up album since Spiritualized's Ladies And Gentlemen...'. Martin Robinson

WHAT'S SO DIFFICULT ABOUT SECOND ALBUMS?

It's traditional to run out of creative steam after your debut, but, argues **Luke Turner**, this year's shining follow-ups show that all it takes is awkwardness, passion and hard graft

'ou have to block ou

everyone else's opinion"

t's tough down in the indie mine, where boys and girls in fancy clothes hew song from raw materials of melody and lyric. And with no bugger buying the once-precious ore of their songs, and record labels teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, the

pressure is on our bold toilers to hit a lucrative seam. Yet so few do With their egos tickled by hype and early adulation and indulged by labels gasping for a quick buck, there's been an alarming tendency for unfortunate groups to turn in turds of second albums that no amount of desperate marketing could polish. In this year's NME writers' poll, the lamentable second albums from The View, The Twang and The Enemy scraped a single vote between them. Creatively bankrupt, these lazy swine were nghtly pooh-poohed for peddling stale versions of what gave them their first frisson of excitement. Yet 2009 has seen something unusual happen - we've been treated with some of the tastiest, most surprising second helpings and unexpected character developments in years. The Horrors' 'Primary Colours' kicked it all off, of course, but meanwhile The Maccabees doggedly got on with things in a quiet way to make the subtle, eloquent 'Wall Of Arms', a dark and soulful record that took them unimagined light years away from their relatively lightweight (if charming) debut and found them playing to packed-out, delirious tents at the summer festivals. Even Jack Peñate sought to expand his

horizons beyond Dulwich with a sonic trip out to the musics of Africa, with infinitely more interesting results.

Charlie Fink might have made a remarkable leap from the rinky-dinky folk of Noah And The Whale's

debut to the epic sadness and strings of 'The First Days Of Spring', but he's still got sympathy for those who, unlike him, have fallen by the creative wayside

"I can see how bands fall into that, because of that classic thing where you have your whole life to write your first album and you've got a year to write the second," he says. Cannily, Fink sidestepped this by writing 'The First Days Of Spring' just as 'Peaceful, The World Lays Me Down' came out. That's the point reinventions of the kind we've seen this year don't happen by musical magic, but by hard graft. That and a bit of emotional turmoil: The First Days Of Spring' was fuelled by the pain of Fink's break-up with Laura Marling. The emotional honesty pushed the band to new heights, but also made for a painful creation

Staring heartbreak right in the face helped push Noah And The Whale to new heights, but others find inspiration in more carnal impulses. Wild Beasts' "Two Dancers' was a libidinous, accomplished and surprising svolution from their debut, 'Limbo, Panto'. While that record won the Lakelanders a devoted following, it's their second album that has delighted far more people

The acrobatically voiced Hayden Thorpe reckons post-debut fatigue comes about because of the brutal grind of the music industry. "You have this idealistic vision of what being in a band is about," he says. "And then, bit by bit, that dream is deconstructed. You begin to see the dirty cogs working, and it's quite crippling seeing that machinery chugging away."

How, then, to put a spanner in the infernal cogs, avoid creative impasse and return to the righteous path? Shoulder to the wheel and push harder, cock. Wild Beasts demanded that Domino allow them to climb a Northern hill, sit in a freezing barn and record their second album right away. "Being back in the studio was like being back in control," he says.

Charlie Fink agrees that staying true is essential if you don't want to cook yourself a turkey. "There was pressure on us to recreate some of the success of the first record, and we knew that wasn't the route that we wanted to go," he says. "You have to block everyone else's opinion out so you concentrate on yourself, how you see it going and trusting in your instincts,

not just playing up the things that people like about your music." Fink, like all musicians with an interest in creative development, believes in giving people what's good for them, not what they think they want. "That's

the biggest trap that you can fall into, to reassess what people like and try and recreate that."

Times have changed: no longer can making music be the route to unseasonal smiffles, easy tumbles and a life of riches. The age of the dilettante and the idiot is over; if you want to make music that's relevant, romantic, progressive you're going to get blisters, ball-ache, buggered and broken. It's a chain gang out there, and only the hardiest spirits are going to make it through with their dignity and creative souls intact. Yet now there's no room for skivers, shirkers or fakes, we'll all benefit the finest musical riches will be mined by the hardest-working, most dedicated hands. As Hayden Thorpe rightly says, "You can tell in someone's eyes when they don't mean it."



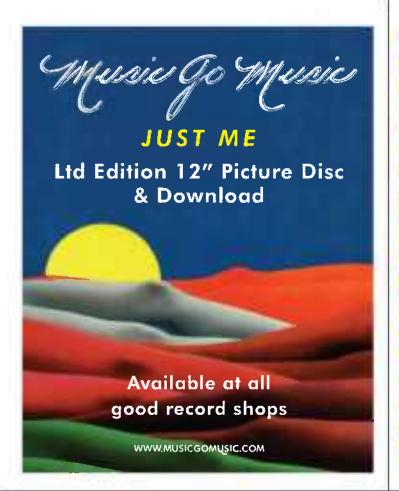
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CACHU & THE SHAPES



You can keep your YouTube videos of MJ on a stretcher or Kanye making a spiral-headed prat of himself. We all know one of the defining images of 2009 was Micachu and her vacuum cleaner. But there was more to Mica Levi than mere Hoover. prowess. A classically trained composer and grime. scene stalwart, the gap toothed, curly-mopped prodigy used her debut to push the rules well beyond breaking point, as songs like 'Vulture' were deconstructed and reassembled like Lego buildings within their running time. Sounding like it's held together through spit and sheer willpower, 'Jewellery' makes no concessions to the casual listener. For all the experimental left-turns, though, there's a finely attuned sense of melody that seeps from the likes of 'Golden Phone' and 'Curly Teeth', making 'Jewellery' a pop album with its angles slightly off and every bit as idiosyncratic as its creator. LB



Short of relocating their bedrooms to Rough Trade East or replacing their bicycle wheels with limited edition Vaselines 12-inches, there was pretty much only one thing The Cribs could do to become any indier - recruit the king of indie, former Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr, as a ful-time member. The chemistry between the Jarmans and the Marr-man instantly fizzed like a Coca-Cola and sherbet cocktail, their first album as a four-piece pushing on the band's needly, anthemic sounds to something more deft and deep. 'City Of Bugs' was the kind of slow-burner that could only be achieved with another fretboarder in tow, while 'Cheat On Me' was so subtly anthemic it was only months after release that most clocked how special a song it was. So, yes, they got a member of one of the truly great British bands on board. but the resulting album suggested that they had it in them to one day become such a band themselves. JF

As Planet Strokes collapsed into a black hole over the last few years, its members drifting to other satellite bands. Julian Casablancas remained strangely quiet. That was until this summer, when the roof of his Manhattan loft peeled back. Cape Canaveral-style, to reveal he'd been constructing a rocket-ship aimed at the stars. 'Phrazes For The Young' was a synth-heavy, often dazzling, sometimes just plain mental album. The likes of '4 Chords Of The Apocalypse' and '11th Dimension' were so packed with ideas you needed about 20 l stens to truly get them, beyond the immediate attraction of that studiedly casual drawl, soft as an arftuly battered leather jacket. Yet even in it took us on a radical space-age

journey, tril. short but satisfying album always

remained rooted in Manhattan, with the booze

anthem of 'Ludlow St' showing Casablancas is



still a Stroke at heart. MR

Beautifully out of place in 2009, the fourth a burn from Tracyanne Campbell's pastel-toned and winsome crew could easily have been made in 1969 - or 1959 for that matter, judging by their sharp suits and neat skirts. While other people experimented with electronics, genre shifts or reinventions this year, 'My Maudlin Career' was pretty much business as usual for Camera Obscura, packed with melancholic, stringdrenched and country-tinged odes and, er, melancholic, string-drenched rock'n'roll (the string drenching courtesy of Björn from Peter Bjorn And John). But what melancholia: opener 'French Navy' and its down-at-heel beat majesty could snap your heart like a dry twig, while 'The Sweetest Thing' and 'Careless Love' were singalong Motown-balladry to swell the chest until it hurt a little bit. More than anything, it was a record that ached and bloomed with love - lost, unrequited or flourishing, and anything but maudlin. TP

FLORENCE AND THE MACHIN

Lurus (Island)

on't think that NME is one big happy family. When I read Jamie Fullerton's 6/10 review of Florence's debut record in this magazine I wanted to wreak a dark and terrible vengeance. It takes a hard heart not to hear the worth in this collection. Yes, it's overwrought. Yes, it's a little over-produced. But it's heartbreaking melodrama by a woman so vocally talented that three great producers (Paul Epworth, James Ford, Steve Mackey) had to turn their work up to 11 in order up to get themselves noticed. It was always going to be an impossible task capturing the elegant fury of Florence's live performance, but on 'Rabbit Heart (Raise It Up)' and 'The Drumming Song' this record came excitingly close. Moments like these, where her voice makes the speakers breathe, are the moments which have made this record part of so many people's lives. If I was a 15-year-old girl (and God willing, I will be one day) I would want to be Florence. Jedward once said something about wanting people to know that they were "more than just guys with amazing personalities" That's exactly wat Florence did with this album - she proved she can be an artist as well as a character Seeing what she does next will be interesting. Alex Miller

Did the album end up being quite a different

"No... I a ways wanted to make something that sounded big, in my head. It's my first album, so it would be hard to say exactly what I thought it would sound like. I think I had a lot of very ambitious ideas, that maybe I didn't get to realise because of money and time constraints."

going to be an 12 mm2 "Yeah I've still got an idea in my head of

the sound I wanna create, which I think I can do live, but I'm still trying to understand how to recreate that on record."

What's be , ut or album of the year?

the intro - it's just an intro but it's one of my favourite songs of the whole year. I love the So simple, but very powerful."

0&A WITH FLORENCE WELCH

thing the n what you thought it would be wen, started?

Are the tningr to realise

"The xx'. I just thought it was beautiful, and beautiful and really complex melodies in there.

PJ HARVEY & JOHN PARISH

A Woman A Man Walked B¹¹(Island)

hile the elegiac piano and vocals of PJ Harvey's last album White Chalk' evoked a fog rolling over the Dorset hills and gravestones that were the landscape of the songs, her second album with John Parish (following 1996's 'Dance Hall At Louse Point') was a more rough-and-ready affair. That's not to say that, with Parish writing the music and Harvey the lyrics, it was any less elegant. Awkward juxtaposition and a mutual comfort in songwriting made this a perfect union, from the moment Black Hearted Love' opened with harsh cymbal cracks and plaid-shirt guitar as Harvey sings of "volunteer[ing] my soul for murder". The crowning, crowing title track, meanwhile, feels like a companion piece - or response to - her former boyfriend Nick Cave's randy Grinderman. Let's hope we don't have to wait another 13 years for their next stroll together. LT



OF THE YEAR

BRAID (Xbox Live) es, the winner sia 2-D platfo m a izzle game CALL OF BUTY: MODERN

MANFARE2 (PC) PEGGLE (IPhone) ISYLUM (PS3)

Punching the Joker in the face is our favourite thing RFA 10 (P53)

THE BEATLES, ROCK BAND (Xbox 360)

Ne cried when we broke Paul's plastic Rickenbacker LEFT 4 DEAD 2 (X box 360)

STREETFIGHTERIV **Dragonage** origins (Xbox 360)

CHAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS (Nintendo DS)

The reason we get told off for saying "fuck you you fucking fuck" on the Tube







Forget the failed TV show. Forget the unveiling of her triple nipples via the British tabloids. All you need to know about Lily Allen can be found on her second effort 'It's Not Me, It's You'. Radiant with Greg Kurstin's polish, the record is full of cutting social observations that pack more bite than her beloved English bull terrier and sees Lil getting back to what she does best - making salacious slices of three-minute pop while pissing off the moral majority. Whether she's baiting the God squad on 'Him' or dabbling with country on 'It's Not Fair,' Lily makes it all seem so effortless. While 'It's Not Fair"s famous "wet patch" moment might make former lovers and enemies alike squirm, it's pure gold to the listener "It's Not Me, It's You' was the sound of an artist utterly at home with herself, and if she really had given it all up after this then at least she'd have left us begging for more. Insert you own smutty remark here, readers. It's what Lily would have wanted. EMC



or most, the debut LP from Philadelphia's Cold Cave was a record that seemed to come out of nowhere. For those familiar with the former musical output of Wes Eisold, it felt like the sun finally coming out from behind the clouds. Formerly vocalist of artsy, aggressive hardcore bands Give Up The Ghost and Some Girls, Cold Cave marked a definite departure. There were no serrated guitars or shrieked vocals on Love Comes Close' - just nine wintery, melancholic synth-pop songs that east its maker as heir to New Order, Depeche Mode and other overcoat-clad young men of the early '80s. Most impressive was that Eisold made it practically solo, recording the likes of 'The Laurels Of Erotomania' and 'Life Magazine' with just a little help from friends (notably Caralee McElroy, formerly of Xiu Xiu, now a full-time Cold Cave member). While the mood of 'Love Comes Close' was largely uplifting - "I wanted to make a beautiful album to balance all of the ugliness I've put into the world," said Eisold - at the edges, there were hints of the industrial gloom that powered their pre-LP compilation 'Cremations'. Light and darkness bound together by drones and electronic beats, 'Love Comes Close' is twilit pop magick, and an album that will cast its shadows into the decade ahead. Louis Pattison

Q&A WITH WES EISOLD (VOCALS)

Hi Wes, how are you?

"Good. I'm in New York, We're about to drive to Boston to play a show tonight. We go to the West Coast in a week or so."

'Love Comes Close' has been voted into NME's Albums Of The Year. Have you been surprised at the way the record took off?

"That's fantastic - I'm really appreciative of it. It's essentially just a bedroom pop record and we didn't really expect anyone to hear it. That's why we put it out ourselves [on Eisold's own Heartworm imprint] first of all - we thought 1,000 copies would be too many! For the people who were already familiar with what we were doing with Cold Cave and Heartworm, it probably made a lot of sense that we'd make a shift into pop after releasing all this noisier, industrial music. But now, for a lot of people, it's just 'here's this new pop band', and that people like it without any context for what the group has done before is equally flattering." Did you have visions of making Cold Cave more commercial?

"No, it happened organically – it wasn't pre-meditated. It's still a learning process. We'll make these noise pieces, these long drone songs, and then we'll be like, 'I wonder how this will sound with a beat under it?' Suddenly it's a pop song! We're like this brain-dead scientist that suddenly worked out the formula to make a pop song.. I'm not used to having people like the music I do (laughs) so yeah, it's interesting." What were your favourite records of the year?

"I really liked 'The Crying Light', the Antony And The Johnsons record that came out this year. I also liked Louderbach, who put out a record called 'Autumn' on Minus - it's a producer, Troy Pierce, but the singer on it is one of my old friends, Gibby Miller, who played in hardcore bands with me in Boston once upon a time."

After a four-year break since the under-appreciated "Some Cities', Doves returned with an album which could arguably match anything in their magnificent. past. They'll probably carry on making cliff-edge, fist-pumping, chest-swe ling mood-rock until they expire into three neat piles of parkas, half-smoked fags and grey beards. This is a wonderful, wonderful thing, as the pounding likes of opener Jetstream' and the title track, a subtler cousin to their career peak 'There Goes The Fear', demonstrated. Here was a band far from done with the business of stirring hearts with a brand of dance music-derived orchestral clatter that's become unmistakably their own, in the pedigree stakes it should have seen them do an Elbow and

fill arenas beyond their native Manchester, but just

to know that four albums in, Doves are still soaring

with the gritty grace of a kestrel hovering above

the M6 seems satisfaction enough. JF

Re-treading the often-thorny path of a two-year relationship, this album set out on a quest for unity and connection. The Narnia wonderland of Natasha Khan's debut 'Fur And Gold' was replaced by a very real world where souls were lost and promises broken. How can a person cope in such a painful dystopia? By distancing themselves from it. Khan invented an alter-ego Pearl (less Sasha Fierce, more Carmen Sandiego), who was blowsy, uninhibited and suicide blonde. But on tracks such as 'Moon And Moon' both sides of Khan blurred into one. Was it Natasha or Pearl who pleaded for a lover to "feed my soul milk and honey"? Neither of the myster ous twins was telling, but the answer was clear it was both. It's impossible to separate them. Natasha and Pearl were two parts of a whole. orbiting around each other until the pieces aligned

to form Bat For Lashes. Two suns, yes. But only

If their startling debut was difficult to fathom, the astounding progress LA noiseniks and Smell graduates HEALTH made on their second album was even more perplexing. Their pulverising blend of pre-Cambrian and post-apocalyptic idioms may have picked up Liars' habit of conjuring ancient ghosts from thoroughly modern machinery, but 'Get Color' does the unthinkable and applies not only structure but the merest whiff of melody to the template. 'Die Slow', the single that preceded it, was fantastic - a phuture-industrial dirge that sounded like an army of nanobots wielding tiny circular. And if the sci-fi hokum fails to move you, consider the latent melancholy tucked away in tracks such as 'Before Tigers' and 'in Heat', as resplendent and futile as one of JG Ballard's insensate dystopias. HEALTH's musical habitat may still be a shade terrifying, but 'Get Color' goes a long way towards making it a liveable one. ADe

Dirty Projectors' David Longstreth is a singular eccentric. His postmodern artistic vision has seen him deconstruct Black Flag's 'Damaged' into fragmented moments of longing and, prior to this, base a whole album on bouffant-haired Eagle Don Henley. Throughout the years it's made for tough but ultimately rewarding listening. Initially, then, the surprise was how much 'Bitte Orca' saw the expanded six-piece tackle pop tropes and surge ahead with such joyful ease. Baptist church-cum-Afropop vocal harmonies mingled with the bittersweet memories of Nico, Aaliyah and Elliott Smith. Acoustic guitars were poked, filleted and lovingly stroked, while percussion descended like confetti on a wedding day. This was the album that saw the band rising to take their place as rightful pioneers of all things Brooklynian, Longstreth still stuck to his eccentric guns though and released this beautiful post-folk classic on cassette tape. Bless his awkward heart. PE

THE MACCABEES

one star. AMI



uietly nestling their way into our hearts, the fivesome's second found their jangling, indie-pop sensibilities laced with a brooding undercurrent. From lead single 'No Kind Words" rumbling bass-line and uncharacteristically bleak lyrics, it was clear the Toothpaste Kissers of old had shaken off their unwavering youthful hope. The single foretold the wider tonal scope to come; 'Wall Of Arms', in the way that only The Maccabees know how, both reaks your heart and makes it swell in equal measure. From the romance of 'Love You Better' through the familial ode of the title track to the glorious storm-filled lust and heartache of 'Kiss And Resolve' and

> William Powers' Orlando Weeks and co took what they do best (delicate nuances of oh-so-relatable emotions) and made it soar. 'Wall Of Arms' is a sucker-punch of epic sincerity and unrivalled heart - we just couldn't love them any more LW



hen Andy Falkous selfdeprecatingly implored us to "Come join our hopeless cause" on lead single 'The Hope That House Built', he was underestimating his band: plenty of new subscribers signed up to FOTL's snake-hipped rock fury This, their second record, is characterised by seething resentment. Brand asphyxia ('Drink Nike'), Barfly venues ('That Damned Fly') and Rupert Murdoch ('Lapsed Catholics') are all in the line of fire, with the anger never less than laser-guided. This malady is mixed with melody and a ludicrous cast of characters. The finest is introduced within 'You Need Satan More Than He Needs You's a contemporary devil-worshipper contending with modern living, betraying Falkous' corrosive black humour among terrace chant sloganeering Adam Kennedy

Q&A WITH ANDY FALKOUS (GUITANS/VOCALS)

You're 18 in NME's albums of the year... "(Unimpressed) Oh, brilliant. Factually - and I can prove it - we didn't make the 18th best album of the year. To be satisfied with that position would be unambitious."

Do you feel like FOTL have now 'made it'? "The second you entertain any concept of 'making it' is when smugness sets in. Every record is written in a vacuum. If you write a song with too much self-awareness then you write within such a narrow set of parameters that there's no magic there. But I've no idea what my interpretation of making it is "

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MUMFORD & SONS

Sigh No More (Sentlemen Of The Road/Inte

o the cynic they were that band who dressed like residents of a Victorian workhouse. The guys who plied their wares under a name more akin to a firm of plumbers than a rock'n'roll and. The ones with a dude on a washboard. To anyone who listened, they were 2009's true musical revelation. And there were many who did tune in the band's debut causing a lip of excitement in October when it momentarily loked like the west Londoners were going to crash in the charts above the likes of Ma onna and Muse. Yet you do get the impression that long after that anecdote has faded, this music will live on. Mumford may have owed much to the orchestral rage of The Bad Seeds, and they may have tapped into the fragility of Low, but it's been a long time since we heard a record so defiantly opposed to the very concept of cynicism. James McMahon



If you got the whole world to agree on one song they could all bear listening to the odds are it d be fucking boring. It would probably be 'Imagine' or Tiny Dancer' or something - this is why blog sensations are normally such tame crap posing as heart-on-sleeve art. Think Fleet Foxes, think Clap Your Hands Say Yeah. Think Girls... to a certain extent. On first listen it's hard to work out what got the planet so excited about this band, after all, it's simply a well-written indie record, as unremarkable as it is competent. But then it's indie enough to excite nerds, heartfelt enough to thrill romantics, quiet enough not to piss anyone off and the lead singer has a wacky back story. So, it's not remarkable, but it's very good and there are very few people who don't like it: which is probably why it's nestled here at Number 16 in the NME Albums Of The Year - because it was every voter's 12th choice. I know it was mine. AM

THE PAINS OF BEING PUREAT HEART

Sure, Brooklyn's twee devotees TPOBPAH dug deep into the primordial indie for their self-titled debut, but listen dose to Kip Berman's whimpers on 'Young Adult Friction': "Between the stacks in the library/Not like anyone stopped to see/We came, they went/Our bodies spent/Between the dust and the microfiche". Cover your ears Stephen Pastel, C86 was never this sexy. Or this hedon stic. sacrilegious, violent, dangerous and devoid of virginity and anaemia. Dig beneath the Mary Chain scree, the Beile & Sebastian vocals and ethereal guitars and there's S&M experiments on 'This Love Is Fucking Right!', teachers shagging pupi s on 'The Tenure Itch' and kids "in love with Christ and heroin" on 'Teenager in Love'. A visceral modern classic, if this record had been released in 1986, Jay-Z would've ended up in an indie band. That edgy. MB

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With the greatest respect, this didn't turn out to really be 'Richey's album' at all. As dense and fabulous as the final cache of lyrics left by the Manics' disappeared guitarist were, not even his closest friends could hope to fathom what any of them actually meant. Neither was it really 'The Holy Bible: The Next Testament'. That album was a brutal, unpleasant work of genius. Here the source material was mainly playful, fifthy, and funny ("we missed the sex revolution when we failed the physical"). The real emotional truth to 'Journal... was that using those words gave Manic Street Preachers their confidence back. They responded with a soundtrack of skewed punk and wistful acoustics fuzzed up by Steve Albini. It ended up the perfect Manics paradox: this should have been solemn, but in striving to treat the words with respect, they were galvanised into making their most brilliantly reckless record in years. DM



Given that it was preceded by the two of the best singles of the year, the rest of La Roux's debut could quite easily have easily paled by comparison. But no. 'Quicksand' we already knew from its 2008

release on Kitsune (as good as a song that simultaneously rips off both 'When Doves Cry' and 'You Keep Me Hangin' On' has the right to be to be), while the likes of 'Tigerlily', 'Cover My Eyes', 'Fascination' and pretty much everything else here exhibited the same effortless pop poise as 'in For The Kill' or 'Bulletproof'. Yeah, the influences were clear - the tacky-yetsophisticated palettes of Yazoo, The Human League, Blancmange and so on - but the sound here is nonetheless as distinctive as the hairdo of the person behind the microphone. Plus, as great debut albums tend to, overnight 'La Roux' made the many other artists shooting for a similar kind of aesthetic seem very, very lame by comparison. HM

MORE THA JUSTA LABE

Music industry in crisis? Who cares, says Louise Brailey, now indie can really be indie again

hat have we learned in 2009? Selling out 50 comeback gigs then dying is a great way of getting the public back on your side? Nobody really likes Auto-Tune, they were just being polite? These things may be true, but what we really noticed was that unfettered greed as a business model just doesn't work. For proof, forget suicidal bankers, instead look at the music that's flourishing; of NME's Top 50 albums this year, just 16 are on major labels. But scratch the surface and something else is apparent - from The xx and Fuck Buttons to the likes of Grizzly Bear and Animal Collective, there appears to have been a wholesale shift towards the weird, the underground and the leftfield. These are bands that are pushing boundaries, redefining music and recalibrating the meaning of indie in the process, salvaging it from languishing as an empty signifier used to describe everyone from Mr Hudson to Kings Of Leon. And the best thing is, people are taking this music to their hearts like never before

So what happened? The wind began to change in January when a hazy thermal drifted across the Atlantic in the form of Animal Collect ve, one of the five bands in our Top 50 signed to Domino Records. Eight albums in and waist-deep in cult obscurity the release of 'Merriweather Post Pavilion' was accompanied by the sound of Pitchfork-quoting elitists'

heads exploding like popcorn as they went from hipster mascots to broadsheet staples. "I think people took a little while to warm up to it," says a modest Brian Weitz, aka Geologist, of their

crossover. You think? The guys had been together over 10 years without their blissful collagist psychedelia so much glancing at the mainstream through a self-effacing fringe. Yet something changed and people wanted more from their music. "I don't know if people are bored," wonders Ed Droste of the Warp signed Grizzly Bear, one of the proponents of the New Weird America school of psych-folk-pop oddballs that followed in Animal Collective's wake as they ploughed

towards the mainstream. "I think the opposite, they're excited by different types of music!"

This excitement wasn't restricted to shy savants from across the pond. On these shores outsider heroes such as Fuck Buttons on the tiny ATP Recordings overcame censorship to bring earbuggering, fu'l frontal digital noise to Radio 1 (forcing poor old Huw Stephens to describe them as "Eff Buttons" to maintain the dignity of the airwaves), while The xx brought the dub pressure that seeps from south London's high-rise estates to an audience who didn't know nor really care about the history of bass music 1987-2009. "There certainly seems to be a thirst for music that pushes boundaries,"

says Andrew Hung, one half of Fuck Buttons. "The age of communication has just accelerated exponentially and for that reason artists are able to get out there with relative ease." Benjamin John Power, the other half, elaborates. "I do think it's really the era when unconventional instrumentation and musicians can be championed just as well as the conventional rock

No-one will latch onto your

music if you're just trying

to fit in" micachu

that we've seen for years." While it's become a cliché to bang on about how the internet is affecting sales of music. perhaps less is said

about how it's altering people's tastes. It isn't just a case of chancers with TypePad accounts announcing amid reams of keyboard wank that the latest blog house EP has "£e@ked "!" Mica Levi, better known as Micachu, an artist who explored the more ramshackle outposts of pop experimentalism with her Rough Trade debut 'Jewellery', argues that this deluge of music-as-megabytes has had an irrevocable effect on what we choose to listen to. If you want to stand out

from the stream, you have to make a splash.

"If you want to go and

do music in the world now you might as well be frank, honest and maybe a bit difficult," she states. "Nobody will latch onto your music if you're just trying to fit in," she states. "No-one buys music any

more anyway, so don't water it down thinking you can make money."

There's the rub. As people's tastes become more fractious and diffuse, it's harder for labels to galvanise demographics, and the majors simply can't take the pressure. Boo bloody hoo. "It's imperative for any kind of cultural institution that they're able to bend and contort with the times, 'explains Fuck Buttons' Andrew. "That's the one thing that smaller labels are able to do because they're more compact

units, they're able to metamorphose quicker." This point is illustrated by The Horrors coming good at Number One in the year they made the change from a major to an independent. Wor d, you may rejoice now.

term we can only speculate, but the future looks pretty decent. Thanks in part to the internet, we're hungry for new, different types of music and bands are responding by challenging us, coaxing us from the cave of traditional structures and pulling us blinkingly into the light of the leftfield.

Essentially it comes down to one thing choice. "If people are more willing to listen to stuff that maybe isn't very easy to listen to that's great... I guess you can do whatever you want these days, right?" contemplates Mica. Damn right.

Of course, what this means for music in the long

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It does a massive disservice to the Monkeys' third to describe it as a risk, as if everything they ever do is to be judged against the circumstances of their debut. 'Humbug' was a piece of work with a magic all of its own, which man-of-the-moment Josh Homme talks about in just as hushed tones as the band do. Pop songs are easy to write if you can do it, it takes a band approaching the top of their game to come up with something like 'The Jeweller's Hands', the sort of track that makes you need to go for a nice lie down afterwards. Moments on 'Humbug' felt like having your skull atrophied, and it being weirdly sexual. Over on the east coast, the James Ford sessions mined 'Cornerstone', the most heart-burstingly emotional thing they've ever put to tape Indeed, far from being an awkward grower, this was the first time Arctic Monkeys have ever sounded relaxed. DM



That NME's last encounter with Kasabian involved Idris 'Stringer Bell from The Wire' Elba tootling backstage on their arena tour whistling the chorus to 'Fire' pe fectly summed up how big a deal Tom, Serge and the troupe became with their third album. Just like that character, on 'West Ryder. .' they bulanced bruce force, deft intelligence and controlled mudness into something truly captivating tunes such as 'Underdog', 'Fire' and 'Where Did All The Love Go?' sending fists high in their existing fanbase and causing those who rejected them as sub-Oasis guitar word-choppers to sheepishly apologise. 'West Ryder . a one of the truffle-rare albums of 2009 to a run ely pushed a British rock band into the Lee League a fact we might not appreciate until the last of the country's church spires finally disappears. under the wave of annoying glitter-spewing electro-pop. An essential album that duly made Kasabian an essential band. JF



Smack Jack the Cracker Man, Jilly Armeen and Maggie-aggie-aggie - does Jamie T pick his friends to match his rhyme schemes or his rhyme schemes to match his friends? Ultimately, it's a minor quibble: it's the way he tells them that matters. Following on two and a half years after debut 'Panic Prevention', 'Kings & Queens' saw Wimbledon's young Master Treays continue his guest to decode the city one lost soul at a time. And it wasn't just London that set the scene for his stories - the couple of years touring the world with 'Panic Prevention' led Jam e to wannabe mobsters in Chicago, kids with bricks in Gaza, a dead dictator in Cuba and an adulteress in Wiscons n. If the world's turning slowly to shit, at least it'll mean more fuel for this man's fire; though as ever it was in his more heartfelt moments that Jamie T most impressed, his voice cracking over sore guitar

strings on the outstanding 'Emily's Heart'. KK

FEVER RAY

Fever Ray (Exoperative)

ven in the year that gave us Let The Right One In, 2009's great masterpiece of Swedish psychological horror could only be Fever Ray. "We talk about dishwasher tablets", "Last night I drew a funny man with dog eyes...". These were whispered hysterics, the banality of madness, given an extra dimension of sinister by Karin Dreijer Andersson's obsession with using voice-manipulation software to blur gender.

Made in the hyper-exhausted tunnel between sleep and waking after she had just had a baby, its half-manic half-morbid psychosis was crystallised, she said, by the flipside of motherhood: a renewed awareness of death and the fragility of life. Whereas The Knife were always polishing their eclecticism, Fever Ray was starkly focused. Frankly, Karin sounded so complete on her own that you began to wonder what exactly Olof Dreijer, the other half of The Knife, had been doing all those years, apart from making sure their masks were polished.

In its wake, 'Fever Ray' left an avalanche of purple prose as critics knocked themselves out trying to trace its deep pathways. It invites you to dream like that. Gavin Haynes

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08.4 WITH KARIN DIVERSON

making about Charles

a ridiculously out recting. "It's called 'Tomorrow, In A Year'. I hope it will be released as an album in January. It's a collaboration between The Knife and

Mt Sims and a Danish theatre company. It's a very special thing when you're asked to write music on a special subject like that. I didn't know much about Darwin when we started, but I've read a lot of books since then."



continue with Fever Ray. But I don't have any ideas about how it's supposed to

If you did another solo project, would it

sound, or what it's supposed to look like." How do ou relate to the LP v you hear it now?

"I haven't listened to it since I made it, but I've played it live, so it has its own life now. For me, it feels very different now."



FUCK BUTTONS



id you know there is a price on love? And fear? And sadness, and joy? It's 79p; the cost of a song these days because 'albums' are 'dead'. The records on this list are all fine, but Fuck Buttons' second was an anomaly in this age of dissected art: a complete work of the purest ecstasy from its first fractured glint to the last noisy thud. 'Tarot Sport' is less severe than its predecessor 'Street Horrrsing', but the space-age rushes of euphoria are more than adequate replacements for the war-like blasts of heir past. It's a spinning galaxy of tribal beats dusted with computer twinkles. And like Aphex

Twin or Mogwai, its complexity never encroaches on its free-spirited exhortation

to shut your eyes, put on headphones and go into eternity for an hour. This album feels like victory. Ben Patashnik

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THE YEAR

Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space

The Stone Roses The Stone Roses

The Man Machine

Spacemen 3 The Perfect Prescription

Kid A Singuiste **And** The Banshers

A Kiss in The Dreamhouse St Etienne

Foxbase Alpha
Daniel Johnston Ylp/Jump Music

The Raincoats The Raincoats The Feelles Crazy Rhythms



t's Sunday 4am, the end of the party, and your friends are lolling about your front room with eyeballs like porcelain plates. What else are you going to put on? Brief History Of Love' was 2009's most immersive drug record, from the year's most misunderstood band. Many seemed convinced the duo were either well-connected hipsters (yawn) or lad rockers; more than one review bafflingly compared them to Oasis.

The album itself was barely better understood. Most reviewers, m'ssing the irony of the title, trotted out the line that it was a concept album about love. On the contrary: it's about blankness, about waiting for the pang of heartbreak and feeling nothing.

The same black thread of nihilism ran through 'Dominos' - not a song about pizza about a soul-crushing string of one-night stands. But, thanks to the band's instinct for a lung-bursting hook, the end result is never depressing, only poignant.

Beautifully produced and aching y sad The Big Pink's debut is a love letter to the exhilaration of drugs and romance, underpinned by the bleak suspicion that none of it means a thing. Luke Lewis

O&A WITH COMPANY CHARLEST INCOMES Where 'e you is

"There's some songs I love on it, and maybe a couple more which I think we shou d have changed slightly. We had lot of ongs to choose from, and we had only thre weeks in the studio. It was like a military operation!" Did you let your he 2 2 h

"Oh we had so much fun. We went to Electric Lady Studios in New York. It was like being in a big lava lamp - a massive '60s throwback.' Wh ' or f and ago

"'Velvet', I like the honesty of the lyrics."

"I rate Cold Cave, Comanechi and Girls. But my favourite is The Horrors."

OP 10 DVDS OF THE YEAR

All Tomorrow's Kings Of Lean: Live At The 02, London, England Arcade fire: Mirole Heir Michel Gondry 2: lore Videos (Belero And After DVD 19 The Killiers Live From The Royal Albert Hall The Mighty Boosh Live: Future Sailors Tour David Bowle: AHI Storytellers Patti Smith: Bream Of Life





To hear Grizzly Bear hitting full stride was one of the shivenest thrills of the year. 'Veckatimest' redefined Americana, no longer the province of dull, beardy. pastiching whiners. Drawing on classic pop, modern classical, jazz, folk and early doo-wop, it forged a music that sounded both from the dawn of history and right now. And effortlessly too, easing you in with the blasful 'Two Weeks', luxuriating in soft harmones hurried along by jaunty plano. The perfect arrangements made the frustrated emotions all the more devastating, as on 'Al We Ask 's bleak, beautiful coda of "I can't get out of what I'm into with you" It was 'While You Wait For The Others' though, that sealed it, a scarily beautiful echo-chamber of heartbreak with a chorus that made us feel like we'd never swooned before. EM

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NIMAL COLLECTIVE



While the blogosphere can't claim all the credit for the critical and commercial success of AC's eighth album, the early, fevered online reception it met certainly didn't hurt. Naturally, talk on messageboards has since turned to how 'Merriweather... isn't actually as good as 2004's 'Sung Tongs', or 2007's 'Strawberry Jam', but fuck that noise. This is brilliant. Sure, you could technically call this their 'pop' album, but sonically, the Baltimore quartet were still eclectic and unpred ctable enough to have reviewers reaching for their jargon dictionaries. What was different were the angelic, Beach Boy-harmonies on songs like 'In The Flowers' and 'Brother Sport'. Add to that the gorgeously sparse and catchy electro-hymnals of 'My Girls' and 'Also Frightened' and you had the feelgood album of the year in January, Most importantly of all, however. this was probably the decade's last great album from the American underground (just as it went overground) and possibly its best one. BN

WILD BEASTS



Like a lass having to fight off the attentions of lads who think romancing means an offer to buy a pile of doner meat for her post-pub chips, the past years have seen us far from blessed with offers of courting from your British male guitar groups. But in the caress of Wild Beasts, and under the charm of the singing wingmen Hayden Thorpe (the sensitive one) and Tom Fleming (the bruiser), a nation was seduced. Yet we didn't swoon because of the obvious come on, the startling vocals and lyrics of a lurid masculine 50 uality, rampaging goons in "bovver bout"; their faces engorged and reddened with lus . 'Two Dancers' has a coherence and focus, as if created in all mucht sessions after a factory whistle has blown. While Wild Beasts are such a unique group that their audiences often seem to be confounded into standing still and gawping, 'Two Dancers was built to make the feet move, the heart quicken, and the loins stir. An impeccable piece of slap'n'tickle. LT

BEST ALBUMS OF 2009

YEAH YEAH YEAHS

It's Blitz! (Polydor)

an, I really thought this record was going to be enormous. I first heard it as I was flying to LA to interview the band. The record company had agreed to let me listen to it a few times on the flight and by the time I'd landed, I was certain that this would be the record to take New York's most consistently exciting band to the next level. Shows what I fucking know - NO-ONE BOUGHT THE BLOODY THING. Which also shows what idiots the public are, because it's a brilliant crossover record, one that sees them push themselves in all directions.

As I sat with my headphones on and a glass of ice-cold red wine spilling on my jeans, at first I struggled to listen to 'It's Blitz!' - because I couldn't get past the first song. 'Zero' was a balls-out punk dance track which was as exciting as anything they'd written since 'Bang' - and I couldn't believe it. Most bands sink into the peat bog of feedback and tasteful dissonance on their third record, but YYYs had just gone ultra pop. After about six plays I finally skipped forward to track two, and got stalled on 'Heads Will Roll'

for another hour - thank fuck it takes 12 hours to fly to LA. After the blast of the opening death disco couplet, the record exhales with poignant heartbreakers large enough to blow 'Maps' from the end of their live set. By encouraging Nick Zinner to put down his guitar, they have found a way to increase what was already a massive sound - and this bravery was exemplified by 'Runaway', a sort of Lower East Side Arcade Fire song which exploded with strings and cinematic melodrama.

This is a bit better than 'Show Your Bones' and not quite as good as 'Fever To Tell', which should really see it nestling up there in the Top 10 albums of the decade, but instead everyone gave it great reviews and then forgot it existed and so the band have failed to step up from their eternal 7.30pm on the main stage festival spot. Well don't worry about it, YYY dudes - fuck the public, they're not as clever, sexy, cool, important, fascinating or inspirational as you. You three New Yorkers helped make a long flight to LA one of the best 12 hours of my year, so cheers. Alex Miller





The xx (Young Turks)

n January, as a new flock of artists scrambled for top tip of 2009, there was one cliché on everyone's lips. "We just want to make great pop music," they'd parrot, as if that was different to just making great music.

That was never The xx When they talked about being influenced by late '90s R&B, they meant taking TLC and Aaliyah, tearing away the pomp and production until there was just a skeletal bedrock of stab-wound drum beats and overt sexuality.

From there, they built an album like a house of cards. Every note, every deadened pronunciation, every ominous silence was precariously balanced. nowing that just a pin-drop could send the whole record tumbling meant hat the songs never quite sounded settled. It's a vulnerability and volatility that makes it the most intimate record

of the year.

Their less-is more approach provided a fresh aesthetic - no opaque metaphors or musical untidiness. Just two voices, telling each other what they thought - pristine, clann, direct. Even the artwork, just a white X on a black background, is a

sleek bull's-eye on the heart of the new rave fluoro-clutter that went before it. For all the tangled insecurities that went into an album about broken hearts and sexual fears, what came out was remarkably assured - the sound of love in a Helvetica world.

Yet for an album so fearlessly forwardthinking, The xx's rise came about in a very old fashioned word-of-mouth way. A low-key release in August was followed by months of fervent chatter, when seemingly every conversation began, "Have you heard this? It's incredible."

People saw something in The xx that was different from bands with a forced agenda. Artists who seem to have too much knowledge of how the music industry works end up being the ones who are worst played by it. The naivety of this record puts it as far from the hype machine as you're likely to get in 2009 Fearless originality, an undeniable clear-cut identity and songs that connect with everyone. That's how you make great pop music. Sam Wolfson

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Primary Colours ...

Iven that Primary
Colours' - The
Ilorrors secondalbum slam-dunk
- has applied an
iron-toed winkle
picker to the flabby
behind of every other
album this year, only
hard heart would

begrudge them time to savour their success. So, while basking in the golden glow of critical praise they have been sitting atop thrones made from human skulls, having every whim ministered to by gold-leaf adorned hermaphrodite servants, indulging in perverse behaviour that would bring tears to the eyes of the Marquis De Sade.

"I think you have a strange idea of what success actually brings with it," snaps Faris Badwan imperiously In fact he and his band mates are sitting in a poky dressing room backstage in Torino, Italy. They're hanging out here before tonight's gig because their hotel room doesn't have a shower.

He then thaws slightly. "Besides, hermaphrodites are so hard to come by these days."

If their second album hasn't immediately transformed their lives into an east London, drampipe trouserwearing version of King Xerxes' sex tent from 300, it has delivered a swingeing blow to their critics. Those who wrote them off as just a new-gloom fashion band after the release of their (spanking) 2007 debut 'Strange House' have spent the last few months wiping copious egg from their faces. As the title suggests, their second album saw them effloresce into lysergic colour and clarity. They didn't shed their monochromatic garage rock/gothic lurch altogether, but instead twisted it almost to breaking point by introducing strains of krautrock, shoegaze, postpunk, glam and even acid house, creating something fresh, psychedelic and soul-stirring.

But if the album's critical success caught some off guard, it was only what the band expected as rightfully theirs. Badwan may be a charming guy, but his self-belief is unshakable. When asked if he was anxious at the start of the year he shakes his head emphatically. "Going into 2009 we were close to finishing a record that we were really happy with. We weren't apprehensive about whether our album would do well or not, we were just really happy with it"

Bassist Rhys Webb, too, has warm and fuzzy memories of the days when 'Primary Colours' was still their own thrilling secret, holed up in a little house in Stoke Newington. "We made it our own space," he explains. "There were

origami cranes hanging everywhere because it was the one origami creature that Josh [Third, guitarist] could make. That is where the record lived and existed and that's why I think it sounds the way it does. It was like living in our own world"

It was that tight knit self-belief and determination that saw them carry on unfunchingly after getting dropped by their major label, who believed that they weren't coming up with any memorable tunes. Guess who's laughing now.

"We were writing songs for the second album and I guess it was obvious to Universal that we weren't making a conventional radio record," recalls Faris, "although I happen to think 'Primary Colours' does have as much melody on it as anything that does get played on Radio 1 – that's the stuff I find tuneless. Basically, getting dropped didn't affect us. to be honest if Universal aren't kicking themselves for dropping us then I'd be most surprised."

So would we. And of course, it's not just us and you and self-flagellating label execs who have been blown away by 'Primary Colours'. All of Primal Scream are fans, Douglas Hart, formerly of The Jesus And Mary Chain, has directed one of their videos and can often be seen watching the group live; prior to producing 'Primary Colours', Portishead's Geoff Barrow added them to the bill of the ATP festival he curated,

but Faris adds, "This year has been fucking hard work – anyone who thinks this doesn't take hard work is seriously deluded, but it just so happens to be seriously rewarding." If there's one thing you take away from a chat with these two, it is their belief in forward motion rather than resting on laurels.

"How we write songs is very different now. It should always be different," asserts Faris. "Not least because if you stick to the same formula you're going to come out sounding incredibly boring. We're always trying to find new gear that's going to make the sound better. Being in this band is as much about learning different ways of expressing musical ideas as anything else."

Rhys says that, although no new

the experience that they asked the former Blur frontman to remix and re record the recently released one off single 'Whole New Way', The experience has fired their interest in collecting electronics and synthesizers to work on the third album: "I think what we're really interested in is sonics and how sound can communicate with the listener, how sound can make you feel," explains Rhys. "Our interest in electronics is a great passion. I would never say we're going to pursue a synth-pop direction, but we will be making pop music and using electronic instruments, so synth-pop might be an influence. We've got a workshop of music making machines that we all enjoy using and that will be prominent on the next record."

Not much other music has been pricking up their ears, but Rhys singles out 'Dos', the second album by San Francisco psych droners Wooden Shlips, in whose "rhythmic and hypnotic" sounds he finds parallels with The Horrors. Oddly, he also asserts that 'Horehound' by The Dead Weather was "inspirational and one of the best of the year". But, ultimately, there's only one direction The Horrors are glancing in for inspiration—forward.

"We write music for now" asserts Rhys, finally. "It's future music. It's not what has gone before..." John Doran

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Decade this Tuesday (Dec 15) at 8pm
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"If Universal aren't kicking themselves for dropping us then I'd be surprised" FARIS BADWAN

now Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine has followed suit; and it turns out that everyone from Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails to tattooed punk hard man Henry Rollins to Nicky Wire of the Manics has a fanboy crush on them.

Futhermore, the storm that surrounded 'Primary Colours' has cleared up any idea that The Horrors might be just a London hype band. To the band's delight, they now not only have an equal spread of fans around the UK, but around the world.

"We played to 3,000 people in Mexico City," enthuses Rhys. "Some of them had been camping outside from 7am so they could get a good view. And there were these weird stalls selling bootleg T-shirts, candles, calendars, bumper stickers and all this weird stuff. It was just such a great atmosphere."

It's a year of brilliant memories and high point after high point, both agree,

material has been written yet, the band are already looking forward to starting on their third album next March. "Individually we are writing new material. Faris is writing lyrics and we are making electronic music. After the Big Day Out in Australia next year, we're just going to stop touring because we're itching to get back into the studio and start writing together."

Whatever comes next in their remarkable story, if relatively new material such as the synth-pop of 'Whole New Way' or the band's recent Cramps-y cover of Suicide's 'Ghost Rider' are anything to go by then The Horrors' third should be as much of a surprise as their second.

One big influence will be their experience of working with Damon Albarn, who they've recorded a track with for the third Gorillaz album, 'Plastic Beach'. The band were so energised by

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ith a title fit for a Belle de Jour 'novel' and the rather heavy-duty lyric "You are the bearer of a womb without love", the likelihood of mainstream radio embracing the debut track from this brooding Scottish post-rock four-piece's second album 'Forget The Night Ahead' was slim to none. What was surprising, however, was the fervour with which the US has taken so wholeheartedly this year to the mardy brilliance of James Graham's aggressive vocal and magnetic onstage nonchalance. Andy MacFarlane's swathes of guitar ferocity and the ominous drums of Mark Devine. Here's hoping the UK takes a hint or two from our transatlantic brethren in 2010 and heeds their sombre solicitations. **Ash Dosanjh**

Can the Jarmans still compete now they can tie their shoelaces properly? 'Cheat On Me' showed that yes they can, sharing the same skies with the scrappy glories of the past, yet proving the addition of Marr was no hollow gimmick. Moreover, it sounded exactly as you dreamed The Cribs with an era-best guitarist bolted on would. DM

FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE Drummany Surgeous at

Florence Welch's enchanting pop songs were irresistible this year. In 'Drumming Song', she created possibly one of the most intensely passionate and physically aching love songs we've ever heard. With its dark and ethereal tribal chants, Welch cast a spell of otherworldly charisma while serenading our soul. Shivers indeed. KM

Given that their first album was as frothy as luxury bubble bath, it was inevitable The Maccabees would darken the tone on their second. What wasn't inevitable, however, was that the results would be this good. From the chugging, Smiths-y undertow to Orlando Weeks' deadpan delivery, 'No Kind Words' is a thing of bleak beauty. BN

It's an event whenever Jav-Z does anything. so his making a statement like this was a cast-iron affirmation of both his confidence - when Hova passes judgment, it's impossible to ignore - and skill. Turning a familiar playground taunt into something irresistibly catchy, it was a welcome return from the King Of New York. BP

This year's anthem for a lazy summer of drifting in boats and making daisy chains that existed only in our minds. Harmonies topp ed over one another as singer Ed Droste guided his elegant choirboy croon through a psychedelic haze of kitchen sink instrumentation, reimagining The Beach Boys' classic pop for a colder century. TE

Has there been a more consistent singles band than Friendly Fires? Each a peach, and 'Ske eton Boy', although never quite as notorious as the likes of 'Paris', was a perfect example of their ability to write cheeky, brilliant hooks, drench them in euphoria and stamp the words FUN TIMES all over the finished package. BP

Thundering drums, big fat horns, harmonies and one almighty "WOOOO!", 'The Captain' proved Biffy Clyro could combine their love of beard-scratch riffage with stadiumsized choruses. They're now using this track to single-handedly teach trainee rock tykes around the world how to hand-on-heart sing. CP

Question Time graduated

Richey Edwards begged questions of adultery, James Dean Bradfield made his guitar sound like a siren, they stuck in a maddeningly catchy chorus and gave the whole thing a fantastically pretentious title. The result? The Manics return to relevancy with their best tune in aeons. HP

It's difficult to choose between La Roux's singles, but Elly's voice never embodied heartbreak more sharply than when she keened "You don't want me, you just like the attention", tears tracking through silver eyeshadow as she cast off unhealthy love and walked away through a pinball-machine of sound, her quiff held high. EM

RABBIT

There are many songs in F'Rabbit's a t.folk arsenal eulogising love and love lost. Even more so depicting emotional meptitude. But it was this song of hope, with its calls to "Swim until you can't see land/Are you a man or are you a bag of sand?" that proved the Selkirk quintet were anything but northern miserablists. Well, almost. AD

FUCK BUTTONS

Whipped into shape by Andrew Weatherall. Surf Solar was indie electro for your head rather than the charts imixing four to the floor beats with something that sounded like My Bloody Valentine trapped inside a Dyson. Beautifully nasty, and a clear pointer that the following 'Tarot Sport' album would really be something e se TP

You can't fake such devastatingly forlorn heartbreak. With Christopher Owens' apathetic teenage Costello drawl, 'Helihole Ratrace' is an existentialist surf-rock waltz that rallies strength against fate with a searing walt of sound, while sounding like the archetypal sensitive dude Robert Pattinson could never be. LS

You barely noticed the lyrics on 'Blood Bank' at first, so saturated were they in dense. soft-focus guitars and the whisper of the high-hat. But as you listened past Justin Vernon's howling at the waning crescent moon, the elegant metaphor of blood as love appeared, resounding beautifully into his dark night. HS

imagine an Ibizan utopia from which the pricks in shutter glasses ripped to the tits on poppers were banned, Washed Out ruled, and comedowns were a gentle caress of languid sand-coated sunrises with sleazy basslines strobing sleepily through your heart rate. 'Glo-fi', we call it - here's to a gorgeously languid 2010. LS













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NME PROMOTION



phone. One integrated address book shows you who's online on Skype and when your mates update their statuses on Facebook. Couple this with MiFI4, 3's new mobile broadband which now comes with Wi-Fi, and be connected to the internet whenever you want. MiFin sends out a signal so you can connect to the internet without needing any wires, and because it's mobile you can take it with you. Check your emails on your laptop without hunting for a Wi-Fi hotspot, or connect your Pod touch to download music from iTunes. All this on 3's network, which was designed and built for the mobile internet.

> Find out what disco-rock trio We Have Band made of MiFi^o and the MIQ Mini 30:

to you find it hard to keep connected to the internet while touring /apart as a bond? DeDe: "Staying in touch with

friends and family on the road is really hard. To say 'hello', find out what's going on at home and share what we're doing is really important."

have our own YouTube channel and a mailing list."

Nave social networking sites helped you interact to fam. better?

DeDe (vocals/percussion/sampler): "The spontaniety is great. Updating or tweeting on the move is a perfect way of letting peop a know what's going on with us, and crucially people can write back to us quickly and easily." ed you like p in tows

Tom: "It's good to have these all at your fingertips and in one place. And it's quick. If someone asks us a question we can reply straight away. We just used the INQ Mini 36 to announce some new dates on Twitter, And people have replied right away to say they're coming!"

Darren (vocals/drams/sampler): "In small venues and on trains we've often got no internet access, so it's great. The first thing we normally do when we get somewhere is search for a Wi-Fi hotspot - now we don't have to."

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BEST TRACKS OF 2009



Little Boots became everyone's favourite futurist at the festivals thanks to her bellow-along calling card 'New In Town'. Never mind unicorns in space and laser harps and what have you - this chirpy song was the one that most fulfilled her pop promise, charming the charts and hearts of the nation with its promises to take every last one of us out on the razz. EMc



It shouldn't have worked. Three well-spoken white boys from the wettest country in the world playing the sunniest music ever made. But it did. From St Albans to Sao Paolo, from local lido to Lago Paranoá, it's samba summer for all mankind for ever more... at least for a few minutes. Jump in the pool? We're already there and the water's lovely. Get us a cocktail and a file, will you? AMa



'1901' could have been a one-off. a return-to-form false start, but it was 'Lisztomania' that really rocketed Pheonix out of the 'remember them?' files to band-of-the-moment status. Sharing a name with Ken Russell's film about the life and loves of Hungarian composer Franz Liszt, it took a skippy romp through barely suggested orgies of excess, light, taut, precise and dancing on air. EM

GM771Y REAR



This was the first track to ever receive a 10/10 review from Pitchfork, Well. hur-fucking-rah. Leaving aside their origins in blogland, the simple truth is: with bewitchingly gorgeous songs like the richly harmonied second single from 'Veckatimest', Grizzly Bear demonstrated why they were always destined for an audience wider than that of a few coolerthan-thou websites. HM





Listening to Gallows and Pulled Apart By Horses is all very well, but it's also a reminder of how difficult a balancing act it is to pair throat-sawing rock intensity with tunes the size of an elephant's Y-fronts. Pixies did it, Mclusky did it, and on 'Arming Erîtrea' Future Of The Left (OK, so admittedly they're two thirds of Mclusky...) did it, and they did it with a vengeance. JF



From the analogue throb that began the descent into Karin Dreijer Andersson's wintry hinterland of pitch-shifted vocals and droning tempos to the abstract lyrics about childhood, this was a song so full of tension that that even after multiple listens (which it will compel you to) you're no closer to understanding the extent of its power. LB



Forget those hairy dudes from New Moon, the only wolf we're interested in comes from Colombia and boasts more sauce than Nelly Furtado marinated in Reggae Reggae. Featuring a funky bassline and sex robot vocals, 'She Wolf' was a nulpop anthem for the ages penned by the unlikely hand of The Bravery's Sam Endicott, It may have taken Shakira two decades to release a decent tune, but she got there in the end. EMC





Not many songs on The xx's hushed and intimate debut would make sense in isolation, but the stunning 'Islands' is the exception. Propelled by shuffling drums and characterised by beautiful boy/girl vocals, it retains all the starkness that made so many fall for its creators, while in "I am yours now/So now I don't ever have to leave" it had a refrain powerful enough to fend for itself. HM



A single on Kitsune, cute, poppy female there, done that'. But then we heard 'Solo'; a terrifyingly compulsive, buoyantly innocent and then pressing 'play' again. CP



Big-bollocks mainstream rock with the weirdest of twists, the lead single from 'Only Revolutions' perfectly captured the fast-grunge/orchestral battle scenes formula of new-era Biffy. Given a good shake, the mixture effervesced into stabbing strings, vicious hooks and a tale of love, destruction and the ever-upward ascent of the scribbly armed trio. KM



NIMETY'S TOP 10

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Skipping through a condice

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La Rous

Balletproof

"I'll never let you sweep me off my feet". So (La Rou)X defiantly marked the spot where, no regrets, and hard as nails, the vulnerable girlette of 'Quicksand' became an androgynous, adamantium-clad automaton that marched ever onwards up the charts on the back of this bouncy, bubbly wonder. In the words of Jordin Sparks - "better go gitcha armour". La Roux was taking no prisoners. AMa



erty Projectors



The crowning glory of their agreeably knotty 'Bitte Orca', this one sublime song succeeds in doing something the great guitar-wielding unwashed had failed to do: it gives wirv post-punk a liquid, libidinal R&B weave that stems from a genuine fondness for late-'90s black soul. Thanks to them. we've been reunited with our Aaliyah records, which is never a bad thing. CPk



It might not have been ecstatic enough to self satellite TV, but The Big Pink's second single certainly crystallised the decade; the circuit-blowing culmination of new shoe with an ultramodern throbtronic pulse and a filthy smack rock stench to its trouser. Apparently every drug in London has already been through The Big Pink five times and it shows: 'Velvet' was the mother of all coming-ups. MB

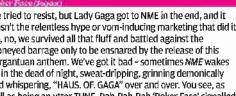


Power Face (Februar)

We tried to resist, but Lady Gaga got to NME in the end, and it wasn't the relentless hype or vom-inducing marketing that did it. No, no, we survived all that fluff and battled against the moneyed barrage only to be ensnared by the release of this gargantuan anthem. We've got it bad - sometimes NME wakes up in the dead of night, sweat-dripping, grinning demonically and whispering, "HAUS. OF. GAGA" over and over. You see, as well as being an utter TUNE, Pah-Pah-Pah 'Poker Face' signalled the arrival of an extraordinary star, the best since Ma-Ma-Ma

Madonna was good. It was THE POP MOMENT of 2009. CP







The Fear

o much more than simply funay cos it's, y'know, TRUE, Lily's takedown on vacuous tabloid-anointed

celeb culture is also her finest record musically see the moment when the glistening synths in the chorus nudge transcendental. Catchy, clever and riddled with angst even as it laughs heartily at itself, this is popreappraised for the modern age. Oh, and also the line "It doesn't matter, 'cos I'm packing plastic/And that's what makes my life so fucking fantastic" is shamelessly laugh-out-loud brilliant - so many reasons to clasp 'The Fear' to your heart. LB

F 1 2 2 2

vocals, stripped-back synths, a run of east London gigs. At first glance, everything about Chew Lips seemed pretty 'scene sugar-rush combining Mano-bleeps and heart-in-mouth desperation, the only sane response to which was bouncing, flailing,



Coming on like a mad old effeminate uncle, Hayden Thorpe and his band blindsided everyone with this first single from their (fucking awesome) second album. A slice of exquisite English eccentricity worthy of Kate Bush herself, even in a renaissance year for the strange and the left of field, its confessions of rowdy revelry and lust still sounded like nothing else out there. BN





THE ALBUM 2009

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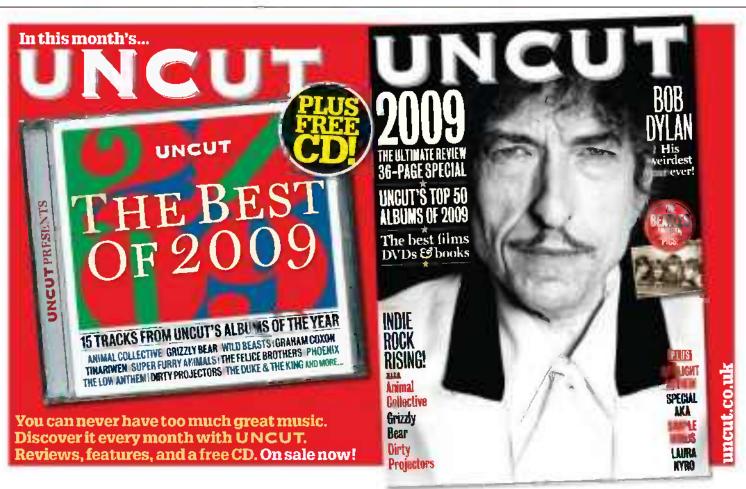
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LA ROUX

In For The Kill (Skream Mix)



La Roux's original was taut with double meanings: was she asking someone to love her, telling someone to fuck off, or something more sinister? Trouble is, when you're off your tits on mephedrone at three in the morning it's difficult to explore this

ambiguity. So Skream took 'In For The Kill' at face value and turned it bloodthirsty: the prowling tempo of his remix stalked you from behind, every off-kilter self-assured menace got caught in torrential reverb and soon killing "for the thrill" sounded less like a threat and more like a prophecy about to be fulfilled.

Skream's 'Let's Get Ravey' remix wasn't just made for a night out, it was sub-woofer reliant. If you I stened on iPod headphones, you only heard half the song; some high-pitched synth noodling with a mew ed a cappella and eight seconds of pointless silence before a tacky 90s dance drop. Plug in the gigawatts, though, and from nowhere comes that bass. Snarling, arrhythmic, merciless: one deep pulse that took dubstep from south London warehouses to every party, dub and festival in the country. While the high-pitched Mosquito alarm was keeping young people away from street corners, so the sub-zero bass of 'In For The Kill' drew teenagers of every stripe towards Skream's filthy drone. 'In For The Kill' had been transformed from La Roux's most accessible chart hit to the darkest remix to ever come from these shores. No surprise then that at

Bestival, La Roux opted to cover his vers on rather than perform her own. By the end of the summer, those eight seconds were no longer silent, but filled with an eruption of hollers from desperate revellers impatient for one more go. Sam Wolfson



Skream's was just one of a host of revamps shaping online listening this year, argues **Gavin Haynes**

wo hours. That's how long it took Skream to take dubstep overground and plug himself into the national consciousness in a way few remixers could dream of. "I had this piece of music already written, and that became the bed of it. It was... not an accident, but something like it, 'cos I'd already made the first bit so I just slotted them together. It took a couple of hours, start to finish."

La Roux still remembers the first time she heard it. "It was our first night of our first tour. We listened to it on a laptop, and my first thought was 'It's just vocal—what the hell?' I couldn't hear the bassline—because it's so low it doesn't come out of laptop speakers. Then I listened to it through headphones and thought it was amazing. I think it's a really brave remix, because most people would just pack it with beats. But he just left it to its kind of raw state. You can hear that with it—he's stripped it back to the bare bones, and then he's gone, 'You know what—it doesn't need that much else. .'"

As it boomed from far-flung fields and basement club nights, the 'Let's Get Ravey' mix made itself as inescapable as Alcatraz in the first half of 2009. Just how inescapable was that? Well, consider it's the first remix in over a decade to hit the NME Tracks Of The Year Top 50, the last being My Bloody Valentine mainman Kevin Shields' 'Arkestra' remix of Primal Scream's 'If They Move, Kill 'Em' in 1998. Before that,

you have to look back to 1991 and the Scream team's Andy Weatherall-helmed standard 'Loaded'. Of course, in one way its ability to bust into the end-of-year charts was aided by the way focus in the musical world has

shifted from just singles, in an age where music oozes from every silicon pore, to leaks, YouTube clips, weird mash-ups and reworkings, eliminating the masterservant distinction between tracks and their remixes.

But the other, more important, side of the equation, is that we're now living in the age of the machine. The Hype Machine. As The xx disassembled Florence's 'You've Got The Love', Dizzee Rascal's 'Bonkers' got a knuckle-sandwich of rave-step courtesy of Doorly, and Boy 8-Bit scrambled the brains of Calvin Harris' 'I'm Not Alone', beyond the age of blogs, in 2009 the blog-aggregator had become the terrordome where the music industry fights its battles. And as any fool knows, blog-aggregators are a world in which the remix is king

while labels will still fire out firstfuls of cease-and-desist notices if you post the original track, remixes offer more of a legal grey area

With 320kbps quality becoming the norm, DJs are now well-served enough to be able to pull up-to-thenanosecond sets entirely from free downloads, pumping out enough diverse remixes in order to get yourself in the faces of clubbers as diverse as drum'n'bass, dubstep and electro. "I suppose if you look at it from a work perspective," La Roux continues, "you've got the slightly leftfield ones that the cool kids are going to listen to on their iPods. But you've also got pumping ones for the DJs to hype the crowds with, so you hit all kinds of fans who wouldn't otherwise have heard of you." Diplo and Switch knew this as well as anyone, which is why, as Major Lazer, they capitalised on the mania for massmanipulation, tossing 'Pon De Floor' out in a panopticon of different views.

But if you really wanted to get your name into a really big font on The Hype Machine's wordcloud, you could let an army of volunteer remixers take you there. At around the same time 'Let's Get Ravey' was kicking off, Phoenix were booting their often-underperforming career into the big leagues by handing over '1901' to market forces, releasing its raw components and allowing anyone to have a go at reworking it. An estimated 10,000 versions later, they had become an inescapable over-underground

cause celebre.

"It turned out to be the best thing we've ever done," singer Thomas Mars ponders "We just give things away. People always give you back in the end. For me, I think you have to be able to steal whatever

you want. It's as interesting to steal the physical components of a song as it is to steal someone's ideas. And we have have nothing against that." Phoenix have gone on to release a entirely remixed version of album 'Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix', with the likes of Devendra Banhart, Animal Collective and Chairlift getting stuck in. The online gurus are always telling us that information yearns to be set free, but what they don't emphasise enough is how it could return to delight you in ways you hadn't even imagined. Mars reveals, "My dad only listens to reggae – he doesn't even listen to our music. But one guy made a reggae remix of '1901', and now he listens to that in his car. So that makes me happy...".



DEANCHALKLEY



ho? Well, I'll tell you In a year when new, British guitar music sometimes seemed stuck in a lo-fi rut, it was dance music - and, in particular, those producers and DJs escaping dubstep's own stagnant ditch just as the wider world finally woke up to it - that volunteered the most stunning advances. Emerging slowly from a subdued version of itself, 'Hyph Mngo' burst from its chrysalis of an intro after a minute-anda-half and proceeded to bounce off walls and through floors like a butterfly the size and weight of a wrecking ball, intent on seeing all the world at once before it got caught in the rain and fell fluttering to the floor. It bangs hard, basically - 'til death. Go and find it, before it finds you. Kev Kharas



For the first few seconds, it sounded like just one more bit of faceless, dull blog electro... then that ittle-boy-lost vocal kicked in. Then about a minute in, it went all ravey. Then about two minutes in, it went twinkly. Then about five minutes in. it went gospel-pop... Basically, it didn't know what the fuck it was doing; neither did we, and we loved it. EM



It was difficult to know what part of 'Daniel' stood out the most. The lyrics read like romantic poetry, the atmospheric synths sounded like score music to an '80s French melodrama and Natasha Khan's voice could make a bollard shiver. But for NME, it was the song's association with the lad from The Karate Kid films that really sold us. HP

ARCTIC MONKEYS Crysing Zighaming (C.



Ever the expectation-averters, Arctic Monkeys' first offering from 'Humbug' was worlds away from any fruit machines or tykes in balaclavas. The structure, churning tune and downright strangeness shoved fair-weather fans off the bandwagon, leaving the rest of us dinging on to the most fascinating transformation of the year. CA



It was essential Jamie T moved on from his (albeit great) bubble-mouthed warblings on album two - and the song that heralded it was so runaway it only feels right listening to it while hurtling down a hill holding your arms out like an aeroplane. Three minutes that crumpled any doubt his comeback would be anything but exhilarating. JF

TULIAN CASABLANCAS



Or, the moment that JC ripped open his legendary scuffed leather to reveal a pulsing '80s pop loving heart. As unexpected, compelling and - erk - fun as his bizarre dance moves during live performances of it, '11th Dimension' oozed into our brains and then stuck fast. The standout Strokes solo effort by a mile. CP



Only a singer like Meighan could mine such drama out of such a stupid pun as feeling 'on fire' and being on fire. And only a band with as comprehensive an understanding of the stupid/profound fine line as Kasabian could pull it off into such a transcendent rave. Now, people don't use 'Kasabian' as a byword for 'dumb' anymore. DM

INCTIC MONKEYS



A louche ode to The One That Got Away, Alex's poetry sliced straight to the heart of ovelorn obsession, while Jamie teased the sound of snapping heartstrings from his guitar. Though it's probably the pre ude to imprisoning some innocent girl in a well in their basement, 'Cornerstone' spoke to the seatbelt-sniffing stalker in us all. MB



When HEALTH sudden y got sexy, we didn't know where to look. Not flirty, but sexy in the way 'Venus in Furs' or 'Swastika Eyes' are sexy - a wrong way. A driving, relentless riff, guitars put through pedal after pedal until they sound like hell's own rave, Jake Duszik's ghost v. coldly lustful voca s oozing contempt and desire at the same time. EM

LADY GAGA

Paparazzi (Intermispe)

n Paparazzi, a year's worth of spouting off about 'fame', 'excess', art and glamour finally gathered form and cohesion Lyrically both absurd and inspired (My lashes are dry/Purple teardrops I cry"), it's a treatise on the nature of fame, disguised as a tale of relentless romancing. Gaga presents obsession as a lifestyle choice. The video is almost as important as the track, a frantic chimera of film, music, fashion and may hem it's Gaga's dream (or nig tmare) finally realised Referencing everything from Hitchcock to House Of Holland, it culminated in our gal Gaga killing her oyfriend as a publicity stunt. Post-modern comment? Or simply par for the course? One thing's for sure, Lady Gaga has devoured Stefani Germanotta for good. The Haus Of Gaga always wins, and this Lady's not for moving AMa





On 'La Roux', Elly and Ben understood the best pop concerned that glimmer of hope in the dark, and nowhere more so than on 'in For The Kilf. An emotional leap of faith set to stabbing synths and Miss Jackson's vocal acrobatics, it was strangely powerful yet angel-wing-light at the same time. This will still sound staggering in a decade's time. BP



The sort of tune that screams "play me!" 12-months-a-year, eight-days-a-week, packing as it does the three key ingredients of perfect pop: nagging riffs, swooninducing harmonies and handdaps aplenty. Brilliantly simple, it signalled the arrival of one of 2010's brightest hopes with an endorphin-infused bang. RW

b IAY-2



Just as with songs about DJs and dancing, songs about New York are never shabby and usually awesome. But when the city's most lucrative son finally wrote one, it was always going to be something heavy. Towering over the rest of 'The Blueprint 3', here was the perfect synergy between Sinatra's swing standard and the Beastie Boys' 'To The Five Boroughs', referencing and updating them both; when he performed it at the Yankees' new stadium the huge ovation he received was proof the city embraced him back. Jigga was both back on form and in lavishly playful mood, and Alicia Keys blew away any trace of anything drab she's ever been involved in with the most inspirational chorus ever. "The city never sleeps, better slip you an Ambien" he spat, but this had a power way beyond pharmaceutical. DM

NUMBER COLLECTIVE



My Girls' was the closest Animal Collective have come to making a 'hit'. Until it landed, many saw them as just a niche concern for cagoule-wearing mind-scramblers. What made it so special, in part, was that it was the moment their glucose-drenched acid-sonics met something approaching big beat. Indeed, here AC played the part of reclusive blog darlings as dance heroes, making something both effortlessly populist yet niche enough to ensure their fervent lanbase didn't fose their shit. For nearly six minutes it teetered on the edge of Frankie Knuckles' classic 'Your Love' (also the base for the much-covered 'You Got The Love'), but teasingly never quite dived in. Plus the gradual realisation that the "I just want four walls and adobe slabs" lyrics were a paternal rumination over the housing conditions of Noah Lennox's '...Girls' showed a more human, emotional side to the band. PE



Sometimes, the best thing a song can do is make you shut your eyes and jump up and down rapidly on the spot. Or strut around like a newly-titled baron, or just throw your hands in the air like caring is not a major priority right at this present moment 'Bonkers' did all of those, a quite staggeringly barmy rave up with that stillhysterical robot voice, bass so fat it sweated gravy and Mr Rascal's churming lyrical middle finger to normal life. After 'Dance Wiv Me' annihilated dancefloors nationwide, no one expected its follow up to enjoy anything like the same level of success. Howe er, Bonkers' was such a cast-iron belter it made et ar yone from skinny-jeaned fops to sportswear clad trainee muggers make the letter 'T' with their hands and bellow "TUNE!" long and loud. And not only did it cement Dizzee's status as a total star - not just as grime's most famous son, but a real pop star - it reminded everyone that Armand Van Helden shouldn't be turned into glue just yet, and that's no mean feat. BP

THEBIG PINK



If you ever see or hear The Big Pink using the hideous old band adage of 'We make music for ourselves and if anyone else likes it, it's a bonus' then get on the first thing smoking to London, pin them down in a dark alley, shove a copy of 'Dominos' in their face and scream "You filthy LIAAAARRRRRS!" as loud as possible until the police come and take you away. With this gigantic track, the electro-rock duo showed the music world that they're here to command, conquer and plunder. And if they carry on like this, we will be their willing serfs in double-quick time. It's a song that bleeds belief, thanks to M lo Corde I's swaggering beats and Robbie Furze's coldly nonchalant lyrics, which combine to create something with the rage of a whirlwind trapped in a very small room. But the moment of majesty comes during THAT chorus; It's the Big Pink's equivalent to 'I Wanna Be Adored; big, brash and absolute y magnetic. HP

THEHORRORS



Drumbeat from Neu!. Morbid croon from Nick Cave. Bassline from Can's 'Yoo Do Right'. Synths from Portishead's 'The Rip'. Yep, The Horrors' 'Sea Within A Sea' wasn't the most original song of the year. Talent borrows, genius steals though and when the aural patchwork quilt is as enthral ing, scary and menacingly euphoric as this, who cares. We thought we had them sussed, but the cartoon organ, bloodthirsty lyrics and Sonics rip-offs had been traded in for something a lot more serious. glamorous and obtuse. From the second the motorik bass and drums appeared, right through the scratchy surf-noise detour and all the way to the glistening coda, it was impossible not to give 'Sea Within A Sea' your full attention. Impressive, since it's eight minutes long and doesn't have a bloody chorus. Yes, they're the children of their influences, but bratty, disobedient children. For all 'Primary Colours' brilliance, it's this, their most forward-thinking moment, that shines the darkest. TP

Eagles Of Death Metal Black Noth Super Baimbe Born On A Day The Sun

eginning with a synth pulse straight from Studio 54, 'Zero' was immediately, grippingly the sound of Yeah Yeah Yeahs emerging from their red booth in the shadows onto the dancefloor. Not just emerging either, as the song stepped up its disco beat with Karen O exhorting you to "climb, climb, climb high up", then exploded into an ecstatic, multiplyclimactic thriller, it was apparent they were storming the floor astride a strutting mirror: "Il horse. Talk about stealing the limelight With 'Zero', Karen O made Lady Gaga look ike Christopher Biggins in panto in Nuneaton, unleashing the grin that always lurked beneath her hips ter fringe, and freeing the bounce within her art star soul. It was the true coming out of Karen O as priestess, the new Debbie Harry, a punk icon turned diva shown in the way the entire song was of course a celebration of herself, O pronounced 'Zero'. She even started wearing a leather jacket with

'KO' written with studs on the back, a knowing bridge between street-cool and cheeky showbiz. Yet with Brian Chase cymbal showering like never before, and Nick Zinner coming up with some gregarious guitar to match his new propulsive synth bravado, this was also the sound of the entire band putting aside their past difficulties and just having fun for the first time Indeed, the video in which Karen O and her usually sullenbandmates pissed about on shopping trolleys giggling their heads off, was almost shocking. Karen O said at the time, "We've got a death grip on the adolescent way of feeling things.. It almost feels like a John Hughes '80s movie.' And that's basically it put this song on, and you're immediately transformed into Ferris Bueller, singing 'Twist and Shout' on a parade float in downtown Chicago, your girl, your best mate, the entire world, all celebrating you Idiot cokeheads could never get anywhere near that 'Zero' feeling. Martin Robinson



Zero (Polydor)

Empire 01 The Sun

islands Band OI Skells

Non I'm A Fool Darker My Love

Talking Words

Ordn't Rise

Jer'tit

Thundarhaist

Little Bragon

Yeah Yeah Yeahs

C The Joy Formidable

Thexx

Walfring On A Dream







NME CALLING VARIOUS VENUES, LONDON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27 - SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29

For our inaugural London weekender, we burned the candle bright at both ends

magine how good Camden Crawl would be if you could cut out the tiresome queuing all night for a view of nothing but drummers' mullets' flyaway strands. Dream no more, you boys and girls, for NME Calling is upon you. Who better to slam the 'go' button on this weekend of underground and established talent than a woman who has soared from one to the other this year? Swirling onto centre stage at the Tabernacle in a beautiful draped gown, Florence Welch is a blaze of elegance and confidence as she delivers a stripped back Hurricane Drunk'. Watching her masterfully orchestrate her Machine bandmates and devoted crowd, it's laughable to think that not so long ago she was just that gangly girl with the voice, dressed in pumps and a sailor dress. "Tonight's all about collaborations and people who have inspired me," she announces, a 'Florence And Friends' banner towering behind her. Patrick Wolf takes on piano duties for a dramatic duet of 'Cosmic Love', and Jack Peñate lends a hand on 'My Boy Builds Coffins'. Yet for now, returning from tonight's support slot, it's the presence of Kid Harpoon which is most welcome. His ever-wide-eved. honest demeanour teamed with Florence's ghostly howls make for a raw and utterly winning cover of Bruce Springsteen's 'I'm Goin' Down'.

Only one man, thoug , can be Florence's best friend tonight: surprise quest of honour Jarvis Cocker. Triggering audience hysterics, he takes the second verse of 'Girl With 1 Eve' and magnifies its warped lyrics by pulling sultry slowworm dance moves and eerily singing into Welch's ear. "I could probably die now," she sighs after an unrehearsed duet of Pulp hit 'Underwear'

Clearly, Cocker induces the same feeling in all onlookers, for the day after the Flo show extravaganza it's all sofa-lolloping and juice-supping at Proud Galleries. This is the first of the weekend's Youth Music showcases, and the mass recuperation process is eased along gently by Mica Townsend's soulful rendition of Michael Jackson's

'Rock With You'. Headlining the session is former Central Park busker-turned-Adele's "favourite new artist", Marques Toliver. It's not just his bright blue acrobat leggings ("I forgot I was going to be onstage today") which silence onlookers, for the bluesy Brooklyn vocalist is also a dab hand at the viol n.

The Saturday afternoon calm is brutally swatted by the announcement: "I started my period about four minutes ago, so please shout if you see the red October." Not an eyelid is batted. In fact, Gossip's squeam free crowd at the HMV Forum seem to grind even harder to trailer-trash-triumphant opener 'Dimestore Diamond' when Beth Ditto throws in some menstrual banter, belches and phlegmy hacks (she's "got the bronchitis," you see) Multiple bodily crises aren't curbing Ditto's fun either,

for she's busting out the sparkly Lycra and impromptu covers like nobody's watching. A few bars of Usher's 'U Don't Have To Call' lead the band into Four Letter Word', while Amy Winehouse's 'Rehab' and the theme tune to nerdy '90s teen TV series Saved By The Bell are also thrown in for kicks. Giving the nimble-limbed drum hero Hannah Blili i hance to sparkle, the en l f the set sees she and Ditto remain onstage to perform Queen's 'We Are The Champions'. A

touching and unifying finale to what started as a filth-laden Saturday night; we file out and collect the airs and graces which we ditched at the entrance.

Good job too, for the next day we pay a visit to Proud to see Josh Weller, who has gone to the effort of clobbering up in tweed, knee high socks and erecting an Eraserhead-esque quiff. All saucer-eyes and deadpan vocals, it's hard not to be drawn to his tales of dirty girls 'neath the London river, and we're seduced into christening him the highlight of this weekend's Youth Music gigs.

Upstairs at the Old Queen's Head pub



that night, there's more of an afterparty than a full-fireworks finale. Literally swinging from the rafters and dancing on the tables and chairs are support band Hoodlums, but it's newcomer MPHO who finally puts the lid on the weekend. 'Fix Ya Face' invites a singalong from any Callers still standing, while single 'Box N Locks' gives some Ebony Bones attitude to Martha & The Muffins' 'Echo Beach'. Sofa sprawling, '80s gold and hoodlums tearing up the furniture: this is how all great parties end, right?

The Jarv'n'Flo show

Hoodlums:

Camille Augarde





in the diary for December 14. The intimate show, set to take place at the Leeds Cockpit, is the kind of gig that'd normally see tickets flying around between unscrupulous fans for the kind of fees that'd make a bank chief weep into his redundancy package, But it's free! Gratis! Nowt! Like the previous adidas House Party gigs in association with JD featuring the likes of Esser, The View and Tinchy Stryder, the show costs nothing other than the

come first served.

Plus, it's not just Doves you'll be watching - who will be warming up for their enormous homecoming show on December 18 at the Manchester Central Hall venue. Leeds whimsical types Olf2r are also on the bill meaning it couldn't get more brilliantly beardy without Brian Blessed popping up for a solo support slot.

Doves, you see, have had a rather fantastic

up close and personal live - oh, and did we mention it was free? - so make sure you do all you can to bag your free ticket to this event - set to be the most memorable NME Radio Presents adidas House Party Gig exclusive to JD yet! See nme.com/adidas for all the details.







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I'M FISHING FOR BANDS, SHOW ME YOUR MAGGOT. Doug: "We're Pleasure Mob and we're a rock/ dance two-piece originally from

Bath, now in



London. There's me on vocals, guitars and bass, and Nathan does electronic and acoustic drums. We make upbeat dance rhythm tracks, with vocals focused on popmelodies. We've been called 'the male Gossip'."

WHAT'S YOUR POTENTIAL MARKET TAKE-UP? "Broad. I think we do pick up some of the younger

types – we've got an electronic influence a bit like Friendly Fires, but my taste is for a lot of heritage bands like Talking Heads and Elvis Costello."

WHAT MAKES YOU A UNIQUE 360° PROPOSITION? "What separates us is that we've got really big tracks - we've spent a lot of time really analysing what makes good dancey pop songs. And for our lyrics, we put better things together than 'I love her' bollocks. We've got a single coming out called 'So Hard' - it's about incest. We've got another track called 'Boxcar Killer' and it's about a massmurdering hobo based on a true story."

POTENTIAL RED FLAG. WHAT ABOUT RADIO PLAY? "They may need an edit, but despite the nasty nature, the strength of the tracks and the melodies give us leeway to be a bit crazed with our subjects."

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MARKETPLACE









I WANT TO SOUND LIKE... PARAMORE



Fiona Duffy, 21, Dublin: "I'm looking to buy a new guitar and amp and want to sound like Paramore on their last album. What do I need to get?"

THE SOUND

The American alt.rockers may be young, but their winning brand of emotive riffage and melodies bears the hallmark of a veteran outfit. Lead guitarist Josh Farro and rhythm man Taylor York work together in righteous harmony, citing the likes of U2 and emo legends Jimmy Eat World as being influential in developing their sound.

THE GEAR

While Taylor keeps things chugging along using a Fender Jazzmaster, Josh uses a Fender '72 Deluxe Reissue with a Seymour Duncan Phat Cat pickup at the neck and an Ajnico II Pro Humbucker at the bridge, if you're looking for cheaper versions, go for a Squier Telecaster Custom and a Squier Jagmaster. They both use Marshall DSL100 amp heads for their power, As for pedals, the mainstays are a Boss DD-20 Glga Delay and a Digitech Whammy.

IN THE STUDIO

Going in with Green Day producer Rob Cavallo for the recording of 'Brand New Eyes' the Paramore guitarists found some working methods that really worked for them. One of the most important ones was their overdriven amps. This means cranking them up way past the point that's healthy for your ears or your amp. At the noise level you start to get some biting sounds and some real tension. On building the parts up, Taylor recorded his rhythm parts first so that Josh could put some lead melody parts over the top.

NEXT WEEK: The XX

Words by John Callaghan from ...



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Knowing the basic chords will get you into Paramore territory, but it's how you play them that will get the sound. For lead parts and solos, getting some sustain out of the notes will be necessary, but for a lot of the time you need to really attack the chords rather than strum them nicely. To practise, start off on one chord and practise getting a short, sharp sound (use the palm of your fretting hand to press against the strings to kill the sound if you need to).

BEST TRICK

Two guitars complementing each other offer more possibilities than one. If you only like (or are good at) playing guitar in a certain way, find another guitar player who can fill those gaps.

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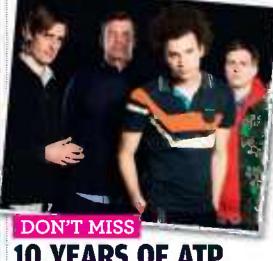
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THE UK'S BIGGEST GUIDE TO THE WEEK AHEAD Edited by Ash Dosanih

PICK OF THE WEEK...





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The legendary indiefest kick-starts its 10th anniversary celebrations a little early. Featuring the likes of The For Carnation, Shellac, Dirty Three, Mudhoney, Sunn O))), The Breeders, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Fuck Buttons, Battles (above) and many, many more. you'd be a fool to miss out on this one. WWW.NME.COM/festivals

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

EM CROOKED



TURES WHERE; PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS (THURS), **PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL (FRI),** BLACKPOOL EMPRESS BALLROOM (SUN), BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY (MON), EDINBURGH CORN EXCHANGE (TUES)

The rock über-supergroup hit the UK, hard. WWW.NME.COM/artists/

them-crooked-vultures



PICK OF CLUB NME

WHERE: LONDON KOKO (FRI)

In the run-up to the release of their debut album 'Acolyte', the Manchester-based indie dance outfit get revellers warmed up for the party season. Go see. WWV. Coul/countine

RADAR STAR

WHERE: BATH MOLES (THURS), CREWE THE BOX (FRI), STAFFORD UNIVERSITY (SAT),

JAM BRIGHTON (TUES) Teaching us all a lesson or two in the ways of indie rock, the Stoke-on-Trent four-piece head out on the road in the run up to Christmas. WWW.NME. COM/artists/



Julian Casablancas is playing O₂ ABC Glasgow. If you're on O₂ you can get Priority Tickets to all gigs at O₂ venues up to 48 hours before general release.

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A 02 Islangton Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Acoustic Ladyland Borderline 020 7734 5547 The Answer Forum 020 7344 0044 Athlete O2 Shepherds Bush Empire 0870 771 2000 WA **Beau And The Arrows Comedy**

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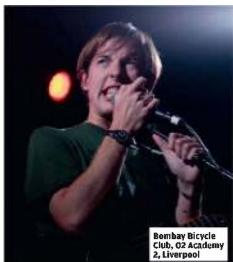
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Howlin' Lord Mother's Ruin 0117 925 6969 Seth Lakeman 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 964

Ezio Junction 01223 511511 Sunday Driver Portland Arms 01223 357268

Jugganote Barfly 029 2066 7658 Tiger Please Clwb Ifor Bach 029 2023 2199

Johnny Farelener Cyprus Avenue 00 35321 427 6165

New Education The Box 01270 257 398

Dividing The Line The Victoria Inn

The Coronas Olympia 00 3531 679 3323 Rodrigo Y Gabriela Academy 00 3531 877 9999

Dillinger Four Cavern Club 01392 495370

Any Colour Black Stereo 01415765018 Edwyn Collins O2 ABC2 0141 204 5151 WA Goldie Lookin' Chain King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279 Logan Garage 0141 332 1120 Porcupine Tree 02 ABC 0870 903 3444 WA You Aiready Know (3th Note Cafe

Blighters Boller com für Ett. 440022 HARLOW This Distance Square-01279 305000

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LERDS Beyond All Reason Rick

0844 414 2182 The Bookhouse Boys Cocknit Room Die Video Die Elbow Rooms 0113 245 7031 Ian Brown O2 Academy

0870 771 2000 WA The Little Blackhearts The Library 0113 2440794 Loose Covers New Roscoe

The Magic Numbers Brudenell Social Club 0113 243 5866 Set Your Goals Metropolitan University 01/3 283 2600

Shaun Reeves Mint Club 0113 244 9474 Wolf & Lamb Wire Club 0870 444 4018

0113246 0778

You Animals Sumo 0116 285 6536

Back To Paris 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA



DELPHIC+OU EST LE SWIMMING POOL 020 7388 3222

The White Labels Bumper

0151 707 9902

As Tall As Lions Rarfly 0870 907 0999 Beak- Garage 020 7607 1818

The Bluetones KOKO 020 7388 3222 Comet Gain Buffalo Bar 020 7359 6191

Copy Haln/Mistakes In Animation The Lexington 020 7837 5387 Deaf School 100 Club 020 7636 0933 The Frank And Walters Luminaire

020 7372 7123 Joe Carnall & The Book Club Bull &

Gate 020 7485 5358 Joe McPhee Cafe Oto 0871 230 1094 King Salami/The Kits Hope & Anchor 020 7354 1312 La Shark MacBeth 020 7739 5095 Let Our Enemies Beware

Constitution 020 7387 4805 Little Boots 02 Shepherds Bush Empire 0870 771 2000 WA London Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773

Man Of Kin Hoderworld 020 7482 1932 Mostly Autumn 02 Islington Academy 0870 771 2000 WW

The Quireboys Forum 020 7344 0044 Soulsavers Electric Ballroom 020 7485 9006

Soulwax OZ Brixton Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Stuck in The Sound 93 Feet East

020 7247 6095 The Twelves Legion 020 7613 3012 WhiteTrashParty Good Ship

Yolanda Brown Jazz Cafe 020 7916 6060

The Albinos Roadhouse 0161 228 1789 The Circus Electric Retro Ban

0161 774 4897 The Count & Sinden Warehouse Project 0161 835 3500 Dragonforce Academy 016f 832 1111

Hawkwind Academy 2 0161 832 [111 Julian Casabiancas Ritz 0161 236 4355

Race Horses Deaf Institute 0161 330 4019 Skin Club Academy 0161 832 1111 The Strays Ruby Lounge 0161 834 1392

omble, Drever & McCasker Westgarth Social Club 01642 242164

ATP featuring: Yeah Yeah Yeahs/ Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks/ Alexander Tucker/J Mascis And The Foe/Fuck Buttons/Tortolse Butlins Holiday Camp 0871 230 1094

Electric Six 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Heaven's Basement O2 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA O Children The Other Rooms 0191-261-9755

Ian Broudle Roadmender Centre 01604 604222

The low Formidable Arts Centre 01603 660352

Zoey Van Goey Bodega Social Club 08713 100000

Borderville Port Mahon 01865 202067 Gunfire 76 OZ Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA Terrorvision 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA We Aeronauts Jericho Tavern 01865 311775

Kki Carpet Drift Bar 02392 779 839 Them Crooked Vultures Guildhall 023 9282 4355

My Emergency! 53 Degrees

Aynsley Lister Plug 0114 276 7093 Shed Seven 02 Arademy 0870 771 2000 WA

Does It Offend You, Yeah? Junk Club 023 8033 5445

Not Advised Jourers 023 8022 5612

The Scratch Horn 01727 853143

The Alfonz The Vlc 01793 535713 Heart in Hand The Furnace 01793 534238

Cyrano The Forum 08712 777101

Fifth Avenue Snooty Fox 01924 374455

Monster Magnet Wulfrun Hall

SATURDAY

DECEMBER 12

Goldie Lookin' Chain Warehouse

Ulysses Makin C1225 404445 FORD

The A Rand Euro (res 01234/240120) BELFART

Bad Manners Spring & Airbrake 028 9032 5968 Horse Feathers Speakeasy 028 9027 3106 Johnny Foreigner Auntie Annie's 028 9050 1660

Electric Six O2 Academy 2 0870 771 2060 WA Octane OK 02 Academy 3 0870 771 2000 WA Shed Seven Q2 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

Tweak Bird 41 King Street 0871 230 1094

The Crave Preebutt 01273 603974 The Fallen Leaves Engine Room 01273 728 999

Har Mar Superstar Concorde 2 01273 673311

Diffinger Four Fleece OLI7 945 0996 Pete Molinari Thekia 08713 100000

The Bookhouse Boys Portland Arms 01223 357268 Terrorvision Junction 01223 514544

Rahvshambles University 029 2023 0130

Kof The Box 01270 257 398

Chris Farlowe Flowerpot 01332204955

The Answer Academy 00 3531 877 9999 The Blizzards Olympia 00 3531 679 3323 Paramore The 02 01 819 8888 Secret Affair Whelan's 00 3531 475 9372

Junior Priest The Ark 0131 228 9393 UK Subs The GRV 0131 220 2987

Smiley's Heroes Working Men's Club

Basement Jaxx Barrowlands 01415524601 Black Hack 02 ABC2 0141 204 5151 WA

Cassidy 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Depeche Mode SECC 0141 248 3000

The Dirt 13th Note Café 01415531638

The Hidden Cameras Stereo 01415765018

Julian Casabiancas 02 ABC 0870 903 3444 WA The Phantom Band Arches

0141 221 4001 Remember Remember CCA 01413524900 Set Your Goals King Tut's Wah Wah

Hut 0141 221 5279 Tigers On Vaseline Garage The Naturals Guildhall Arts Centre

Neurodriver Bolleroom 01483 440022

John Otway Square 01279 305000

Monaco Bears Club 85 01462 432767

Bootscrapers Adelphi 01943 468615 Gunfire 76 Cockpit 0113 244 3446 The Last Resort Rios 0844 414 2182 Little Boots Stylus 01132 431751 The Mars Volta University 0113.244.4600

Monster Magnet Metropolitan University 0113 283 2600 The Moves Elbow Rooms 0113 245 7011 Ouack Ouack Parkhorse

0113 245 3980 The Rodley String Band The Owl 0113 256 5242

The Saw Doctors 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Vendemmian The Library 0113 2440794

The Yalla Yallas Cardigan Arms 0113 274 2000



02. Dublin

Mick Flannery Dolans Warehouse 00 35361 314483

Dragonforce 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Ian McNabb O2 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA

Birmyo Project Good Shin 020 7372 2544 Bluesmix Troubadour Club 020 7370 1434

Charly Coombes & The New Breed Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773 Chicane Forum 020 7344 0044 The Destroyers Troxy 020 7734 3922 The Exiles Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358 Grovesnor 93 Feet East

IO 02 Istington Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Joe McPhee Cafe Oto 0871 230 1094 Naked Shout Monto Water Rats

020 7837 4412 Neck MacBeth 020 7739 5096 The Notwist Umon Chapel 020 7226 1686

020 7247 6095

The Only Ones Garage 020 7607 1818 Random Hand Underworld 020 7482 1932

Seth Lakeman 02 Shepherds Bush Empire 0870 771 2000 WA She Hit Me First Punk 0871 971 5418 Soulwax 02 Brixton Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Tom Hingley Barfly 0870 907 0999 Vuk Hope & Anchor 020 7354 1312 Yolanda Brown Jazz Café 020 7916 6060

The Bluetones Academy 2 01618321111 **Honestly Express Yourself** Roadhouse 0161 228 1789 Wayne Hussey Academy 3 0161 832 1111

ATP featuring: The Breeders/ Battles/Dirty Three/Melvins/ Shellar/The Drones/Modest Mouse/Sunn O)))/Growing/Anse/ The For Carnation/Beak> Butims Holiday Camp 0871 230 1094

Madness 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

John @ Public TJ's 01633 216608

The Cinematics Roadmender Centre 01604 604222

The Dave Vegas Project Racehorse D1604 456373

The Paddingtons Arts Centre 01603 660352

Glenn Tilbrook Rescue Rooms 0115 958 8484 Skin Rock City 08713 J00000

Echo & The Runmonan O2 Arademy 0870 771 2000 WA

The Xcerts Twa Tams 01738 634500

Six Nation State Drift Bar 02392 779 839

The Wookles Plug n Play

High Roller Bigge Venue

0118 958 1447

0871 230 1094

01724 270077

0870 771 2000 WA

Chris Helme The Priory

Grendel Corporation 0114 276 0262 Hawkwind Plug 0114 276 7093 The Pogues 02 Academy

Kumiss Joiners 023 8022 5612

New Education University 01785 52331

Heaven's Basement Sugarmill 01782 214991

The Corsairs The Rolleston 01793 534238

Wasted Angels Snooty Fox

01924 774455

Sinner Men Glyndwr University 019 78 29 30 72

Aynsley Lister The Duchess 01904 641 413 Club Smith Fibbers 01904 651 250 W/

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SUNDAY DECEMBER 13

Cherry Lee Mewis & Her Blues Gems Esquires 01234 340120

Fight Like Apes Limelight 028 9032 5942

Depectie Mode LG Arena 0127 780 4133 Marilyn Marison OZ Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Phantom Limb Yardbird 0121 212 2524

0121 212 2524 Pint Shot Riot 02 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA

Them Crooked Vultures Empress Ballroom 01253 625928

The Abyssinians Concorde 2 01273 673311 The Bookhouse Boys Freebutt 01273 603974

John Bramwell Louisiana 0117 926 5978 Shed Seven 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

Electric Six Clwb Ifor Bach 029 2023 2199 Har Mar Superstar Barfly 029 2066 7658 +16

Rodrigo V Gabriela Opera House 00 35321 270022

Bad Manners Academy 00 3531 877 9999 Bell XI. Olympia 00 3531 679 3323 Christy Moore Vicar St 00 3531 889 4900

Evita Cavern Club 01392 495370

BAIN Bandits Captain's Rest 0141 331 2722 Chunks 13th Note Cafe 0141 553 1638 Neaven's Basement Cathouse 0141 248 6606 Maddaleine Pritchard Nice'n Sleazy

0141 333 9637

Madness O2 Academy 0870 774 2000 WA Make Sparks King Tur's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279

The Phaetons Stereo 0141 576 5018 Wayne Hussey 02 ABC2 0141 204 5151 WA

Drive Like Casey Club 85 01462 432767

Karma Picturedrome 01472 349222

David Gray 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Gentleman's Dub Club Hi-Fi Club 0H3 242 7353 Rodina Grove Inn 0H3 243 9254 Winny Peculiar Joseph's Well 0H3 203 1861

Who's Next New Roscoe
0113 246 0778

Amerie 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA The Horrors 02 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA

Ariel Pink/Cleckhuddersfax/ Former Bullies The Lexington 020 7837 5387 Florence And The Machine O2 Brixton Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

Grendel Underworld 020 7482 1932 Hawkwind 02 Shepherds Bush Empire 0870 771 2000 WA Ian Broudle Borderline 020 7734 5547 Miley Cyrus The 02 Arena

0870 701 4444 Peaches KOKO 020 7388 3222 Ray Emure/Zecond Class Citizen/ Dirty Avenues/The Bizets/

Lucky Rainhow Club Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773 Sabaton Garage 020 7607 1818

Sabaton Garage 020 7607 1818 Secret Affair 100 Club 020 7636 0939 Soundescape Monto Water Rats 020 7837 4412

Vendernmian/Grooving in Green Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358 Whateverland Barfly 0870 907 0999

The Paddingtons Ruby Lounge 0161 834 1392

Set Your Goals Academy 3 0161 832 1111

ATP featuring: The Mars Volta/ Explosions in The Sky/Devendra Banhart/Shellac/Mudhoney/ Deerhoof/Sunn 01)/Tall Firs/ Sleepy Sun/Polvo/Lightning Bolt Buffins Holiday Camp 687(230 1694

Bombay Bicycle Club 02 Academy 2 0870 77t 2000 WA

The Magic Numbers Roadmender Centre 0:604 604222

The Saw Doctors UEA 01603 505401

Drag The River Rock City 08713 100000

Marc Block Maze 0115 947 5650

The Cinematics Bullingdon Arms 01865 244516

Bemis Cellars 0871 230 1094

Pete And The Pirates SUB89 0871 230 1094

Terrorvision Q2 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

Acoustic Ladyland Joiners 023 8022 5612

Crippled Black Phoenix/Part Claimp The Forum 08712 777101

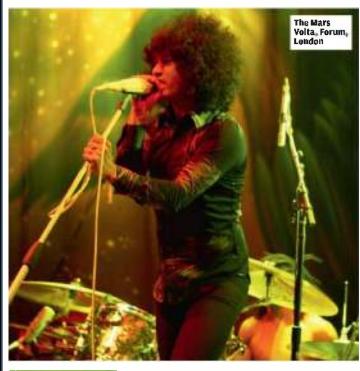
China Crisis Jack Rabbit Slims 0151 632 7545

Basement Jaxx Civic Hall 01902 552121

Black Paper Cats The Duchess 01904 641 413 Lost Effect Fibbers 01904 651 250 WA



MONDAY DECEMBER 14



Kids Can't Fly Moles 01225 404445

The Answer Lister Hall 028 9032 3900

Copy Haho The Victona 0121 633 9439 Set Your Goals OZ Academy Z 0870 771 2000 WA Them Crooked Vultures OZ Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

Dillinger Four Engine Room 012**73** 728 999

Eddy Grant Fiddlers 0£17 987 3403 Hawkwind 02 Academy 0870 77£ 2000 WA Sloppy Joe Louislana 0117 926 5978

0117 970 6886 Gallows Junction 04223 514541 Leatherface Portland Arms

Paper Aeroplanes Barfly 029 2066 7658 +14

01223 357268

7th Suite The Portculis

Exit Ten The Victoria Inn 0133274 00 91 The Paddingtons Venue 01332 203545

Alison Moyet Olympia 00 3531 679 3323 Christy Moore Vicar St 00 3531 889 4900 Julian Casablancas Academy 00 3531 877 9999

Phil Wilson Cavern Club 01392 495370

Bealo- King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279 Bombay Bicycle Club Oran Mos 0141 552 9224 Eagleowi 13th Note Café 0141 553 1638 Placebo SECC 0141 248 3000

Rather Splendid Boileroom 01483 440022

Fracture Club 85 01462 432767

Dowes Cockpit Room 2 U13 244 3446
Johnny Foreigner Nation Of
Shopkeepers 0112 203 1831
The Pogues O2 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA
Spy Catcher Rios 0844 414 2182

Babyshambles 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

Bridgette Amofah Underbelly 0207 613 3105

The Cinematics Garage (Upstairs) 0871 230 1094 Dirty Heroes Albert And Pearl

020 7354 9993

Drag The River 02 Academy 2
Islington 0870 771 2000 WA
Esoterica Old Blue Last

020 7613 2478 Father Murphy Cafe Oto 0871 230 1094

Florence And The Machine 02 Brixton Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Jay Craig And His Orchestra 100 Club 020 7636 0933 Josh T Pearson/Tenebrous Llar

Josh T Pearson/Tenebrous Lta. Windmiñ 020 8671 0700 The Mars Volta Forum 020 7344 0044

Michael Eden 12 Bar Club 020 7240 2622 Miley Cyrus The OZ Arena 0870 701 4444

Modest Mouse 02 Shepherds Bush Empire 0870 771 2000 WA Pharaohs/Femmepop Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358 Robb Blake/Kismetic Hope & Anchor 020 7354 1312 Rob Cowen And The Dissidents Monto Water Rats 020 7837 4412 Slum Village Jazz Cafe 020 7916 6960

Sonz Of Mecha/Duke Raoul/ Fortune Rookle/Last Stand Grenade Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773 Sunn 03)) KOKO 020 7388 3222

Taken By Trees Garage 020 7607 1818 Urusen Slaughtered Lamb 020 8682 4080

Vallent Thorr Underworld 020 7482 1932

Goldle Lookin' Chain Academy 3 0161 832 1111 Kurt Vile And The Violators Deaf

Kurt Vile And The Violators Institute 0161 330 4019 Marilyn Manson Academy 0161 832 1111

The Raveonettes Ruby Lounge 0161 834 1392

Echo & The Bunnymen OZ Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

Shed Seven UEA 01603 505401

The Magic Numbers Bodega Social Club 08713 100000

Wayne Hussey 02 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA

The Crave Celiars 0871 230 1094 Frankmusik Wedgewood Rooms 023 9286 3911

Odd (1994) Drift Bar 02392 779 839 SHOT COLUMN Plug 0114 276 7093

Kurtica SCM: 0114 276 7552

Vicini Barrieri Jo ners 023 8022 5612

Maybe This Friday Sugarmill 01782 214991

Simon Friend 12 Bar 01793 535713

TUESDAY **DECEMBER 15**

The ax Queen's University 028 9024 5133 Alison Moyet Waterfront 028 9033 4455 BIDDLINGHAM

Public Image Ltd 02 Academy 0870 77 2000 WA

Doves Engine Room 01273 728 999 Electric Six Concorde 2 01273 673311 New Education Jam 087L230 1094

The Twang Bierkeller 0117 926 8514 We Start Partys Louisiana 0117 926 5978 CAMPDIDGE

The Ocean Bottom Nightmare Band Portland Arms 01223 357268

Not Advised Barfly 029 2066 658 • 14

Colm Mac Con Iomaire Vicar St 00 3531 889 4900

Placebo Olympia 00 3531 679 3323 EDINBURGH

Fiood Of Red/The Xcerts The Electric Circus 0131 226 4224 lan Brown Picture House 0844 847 1740

Them Crooked Vultures Com Exchange 0/31 443 0404

The Twillight Sad Voodgo Rooms 0131 556 7050

EXETER Hatesphere Cavern Club

01392 495370 GLASCO .

Codeen 13th Note Café 0141 553 1638 Marilyn Manson O2 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA One Good Reason Nice'n'Sleazy 0141 333 9637

The Rayeonettes D2 ARC 0870 903 3444 WA

Thea Glimore King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279

GUILDFORD

The Cinematics Boileroom 01483 440022 LEEDS

Echo & The Bunnymen 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA The Gillrowd Parade Packhorse

Heaven's Basement Cockpit 01132443446

INCEPE Elderside O2 Academy 2

0113 245 3980

0870 771 2000 WA Shack 02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

Ali Towers/10p Short/Grand Marmonic Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358 Amilina Barbican Hall 020 7638 8891 Benzine 93 Feet East 020 7247 6095 Black Dollar Bills/Stony/The Jokers Hone & Anchor 020 7354 1312 The Cartel/The Tearaways/Fix

Monday/Inca Hoots Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773

Depecte Mode The O2 Arena 0870 701 4444

Devendra Banhart O2 Shepherds Bush Empire 0870 771 2000 WA Dogs Inderworld 020 7482 1932 Holy Coves Barfly 0870 907 0999 Jay And The Boys Borderline 020 7734 5547

Julian Casabiancas Forum 020 7 44 0044 Kurt Vile And The Violators The Lexington 0 to 7837 5387 Lilsa Henriksson 12 Bar Club

0.07.4 Lily Allen OZ Brostun Academy 0870 771 a 00 WA The Lovebirds/Prints Of Whales/

Franck Alba Winom | | 020 8671 0700 Modest Mouse Electric Ballroom 020 7425 9006 Neurotic Mass Movement Comedy

020 7839 7261 Nile Scala 020 7833 2022 Paper Route Monto Water Rats 020 78:17 4412

Part Chimp Madame Jojo's 020 7734 2473

Phantom Limb Bush Hall 020 8222 6955

Roger Chanman Jazz Cafe 020 7916 6060

Saint Jude 100 Glub 020 7636 0933 Stephen Fretwell/I Am Blackbird

Luminaire 020 7372 7123 Tape The Radio Garage (Unstairs) 0871 230 10 94

Trash Talk Buffalo Bar 020 7359 6191 The Winter Kicks Good Ship 020 7372 2544

MANCHESTER

Matt Berry Moho Live 0161 834 8180 Richard Dutton Night And Day Café

MEWCASTE Goldie Lookin' Chain 02 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA

MOTTENGHAM

Beak> Rescue Rooms 0115 958 8484

The Saw Doctors O2 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA Silvanito OZ Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA

PLYMOUTH UB40 Pay flons 01752 229922 PORTSMOUTH

Set Your Goals Wedgewood Rooms

SOUTHAMPTON Futures Juners 023 8022 5612 STOKE ON TH

One Room House Sugarmill 01782 214991

ST ALBANS Three Bottles Behind Horn 01727 853143

SWINDON Gallows The Furnace 01793 534238

The Magic Numbers Fibbers 01904 651 250 WA



Tickets are subject to availability. Exceptions apply.

TICKETS WALLASIE OT

ING NOW



JACK PENATE

PYRAMID, DECEMBER 31

The London singer-songwriter welcomes in a new year with a special one-off appearance. NME.COM/artists/jack-penate



HADOUKEN!

FEBRUARY 2

The hyperactive electro noise five-piece from Leeds spearhead a series of NME Awards Shows next year. NME.COM/artists/hadouken



LOCAL NATIVES

U-RE BAR &

The former Radar Tour darlings get ready to go tribal. NME.COM/artists/local-natives



THE BIG PINK

ACADEMY, FEBRUARY 3

The indie shoegazers take part in the Shockwaves NME Awards Tour supporting The Maccabees. NME.COM/artists/the-big-pink



MASSIVE ATTACK

Trip-hop cohorts Robert Del Naja and Grant Marshall

tour in support of fifth studio album 'Heligoland'. NME.COM/artists/massive-attack



SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO

The remix duo play a one-off date as part of the

Shockwaves NME Awards Shows. NME.COM/artists/simian-mobile-disco



FEBRUARY 23

Stoned West Coast indie rockers return to Britain to cause mischief and mayhem. NME.COM/artists/girls



YEASAYER

EDITOR OF THE WEY, FEBRUARY 23

With a new album that outshines their magnificent debut the New Yorkers head back to the UK. NME.COM/artists/yeasayer

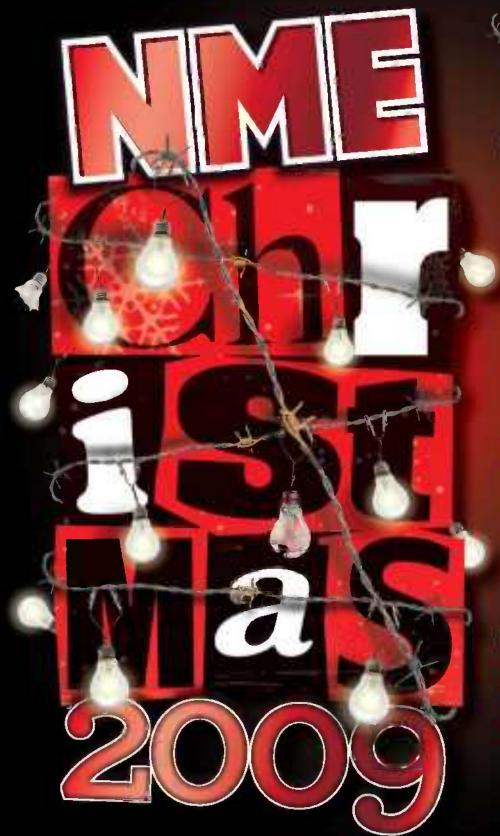


MAY 10 Malkmus and his former Pavement bandmates set

aside their differences to reform. Do not miss. NME.COM/artists/pavement

If you're on O₂ you can get Priority Tickets to The O₂ and O₂ Academy venues up to 48 hours before general release. Text PRIORITY to 2020 to register.

NEXT WEEK IN NIME



Featuring:

The Clash, KASABIAN,

Dizzee Rascal,

The Big Pink, THE LIBERTINES,

Blur, Spike Jonze

December

Gossip, La Roux,

THE MACCABEES, Fucked Up, White Stripes,

Biffy Clyro, The xx,

Little Boots,

AND YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE WHO'S ON THE COVER...

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INNOVATOR - INSERT SALES Ad Marager 250 From the Fold 17071 Accessed Executive Policy con 1 (pp. 100-1021)

IPC sprise: Preduction Of any Material Wilhout Permission to Mirkelly Perhitian

IPCIIGNITE Grecycle

Win a Walkman MP3 and video player

he Sony Walkman has moved on a tad since the clunky cassette players of the '80s Just check out the current S-540 Series model - the first ever combined Walkman video and MP3 player -for proof As slim as Kate Moss after a week-long fast, you can listen to your tunes with the headphones supplied or use the built-in stereo speakers. With an FM radio, voice recorder and, if you're listening on those headphones, a whopping 42 hours of listening playback, this is one impressive little device. We've got three of these babies to give away. To be in with a chance of winning, correctly answer the below question:

In what year did the Walkman first go on sale?

To enter the competition go to NME.COM/win*



THE NME CROSSWORD

IN A BAG OF **NE SWA**

1+160 Can't wait for the next Prodigy release? I'il need to be patient (4-2-2-3-8) 8 (See 1 down)

10 Wrongly mocking demo of album by Jay-Z (7-4)
11+22D The end of acting work
for Mary J Blige (2-4-5)

13 " was swinging, all the drunks they were singing", from The Pogues' "Fairytale Of New York' (7)

15 Her album 'Yes, I'm a Witch' involved appearances by numerous acts including The Flaming Lips and Cat Power (4-3)

16 "Get your passport and your bikini", 2009 (7) 18 (See 4 down)

23 It's all written down for the

band and 'The Man Who Can't Be Moved' (6) 24 Interfere with a song by Little Boots or album by Pink Floyd (6)

27 Their albums include 'Around The Sun' and 'Accelerate' (1,1,1) 28 Lou Reed album 'Live in recorded on European jaunt m 1984 (5)

29 (See 7 down) 30 (See 25 down)

CLUES DOWN

1+8A Formerly of The Concretes. Victoria Bergsman is now feeling more rural (5-2-5) 2 Loz Hardy spent '10 Years Asleep' in the '90s with this band

3+21A As this place seemed for Tears For Fears, so it seemed for Gary Jules (3-5) 4+18A When The Libertines listen to a David Bowie album (4-3-6) 5 As Frederick Hibbert was better

known when fronting The Maytals

6+18D Somehow felt real name should be used on hit by The Bangles (7-5)
7+29A "I've been to Hollywood,

I've been to Redwood/I crossed the ocean for a _______", Neil Young (5-2-4)

9 (See 19 down)

12 "Her name is__ and she dances on the sand", 1982 (3) 14 Only one speaker functioning during this Courtney Love number

16 (See 1 across)
17 It was a challenge for Gorillaz

(4) 18 (See 6 down) 19+9D Band from the old days, perhaps (4-6)

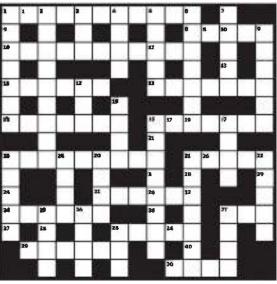
20 "I could be wrong, I could be right/I could be black, I could be white", PIL (4) 21 Your accompaniment is sought

by The Subways (4-3) 22 (See 11 across)

25+30& Partnership who did their 'Homework' and then made a 'Discovery' (4-4)

26 Solo opus that includes a whole indie band (4) 27 Albums 'Combat ___' by The Clash or '___ Action' by Mogwal

28 'Oh My God' it's __ Maria from



NOVEMBER 14 ANSWERS

1 The Fountain, 8 ATX, 9 Drums, 10 Dominos 11 Hit, 13 Relapse, 16+30A It's A Sin, 18+240 Four Kicks. 19+2D After Hours, 21 Afraid, 22 Stewart, 23 Black Kids, 26 Hay, 28 Cul, 29 C55, 32+27A Nick Cave, 33 Two, 35+124 What A Waste

Dipwin 3 Faster, 4 Underdog, 5 Timelords, 6 Ian, 7+140+250 Extt Planet Dust, 8 Ashes To Ashes, 9 Down In Albion, 15+200 Pretty In Pink, 17 Surfacing, 27 Crow,

PETER ROBINSON

The 'new Billy Bragg' won't tell us any jokes. But this doesn't mean he's no fun, though...

ello, Frank. I gather you're stuck in an airport? "Yes, I've got another couple of hours until my flight but I've got a good book."

What's the book?

"It's a new one - it's a history of finance. I like reading about history but I don't know much about finance and it strikes me that I should."

I suspect the book starts off with an overview of the bartering system. How wealthy do you think you would be in a world of bartering? Let's say someone has fixed your garden fence. Would you be able to sing them a song as payment? "I often feel like there's a certain amount of confidence trickery in terms of being

a paid musician anyway, but I'm always pleasantly surprised when people come to shows or whatever. I think I could get my fence fixed for a few songs "

In the age of Spotify, recorded music now is free, of course, so you will have to give away your songs. You won't be able to give someone a CD to mend your fence.

"It's a big change in the way things happen, with music online. But it's impossible to police."

Do you think that is a good thing?

"Yes, yes it is, because it can be extremely subversive and is very good at subverting large powerful institutions. The free exchange of information is very exciting.

You only have to look at China. They have just been able to start selling iPhones. Surely if someone wants to purchase a phone with incredibly poor battery life and no proper keyboard. they should be allowed to do so.

"Well, there's a difference between policing and control. If I'm mugged I want to have someone I can call who'll do something about it. But then you have the government doing insane things like announcing that they're going to legislate to guarantee a good education. It's me mingless. There's no meaning in language I think it's symptomatic of the fact that we have a government who believe they can legislate to make things how they'd like



MY BID FOR X FACTOR FAME I'LL CALL MYSELF FRANCIS"

> them to be, and I think that's a hugely totalitarian and evil mindset."

Have you got any good jokes? "No repeatable good jokes."

I wanted a joke because sometimes when people are, in inverted commas, 'serious' they are never asked about being 'a laugh'. Mr Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly, for example - seems boring. actually isn't.

"Do I come across as serious?"

"I'm a deeply unserious person"

Well you're called Frank for a start, that's a serious name.

"Well, you can interview my mum and dad about that one."

Isn't your actual name Francis? "Yes, it is."

Francis is a better pop star name.

"Well, I've never really wanted to be a pop star, so I'll respectfully decline."

By 'pop star' I mean in the sense that if you read The Daily Telegraph everything that isn't classical or opera is termed 'pop'.

"Ah, like popular beat combo The Beatles. Well, when I'm launching my bid for X Factor fame I ll consider reverting to my passport name."

You might joke about it but surely you're coming up for your next abrupt change of style. You are rather like Doctor Who, on the verge of regenerating, perhaps in a Christmas special.

"I think I've got a couple more years left in this one before I transmogrify into the new Pet Shop Boys."

Now you're talking. The thing is Frank you do have a way with a tune, and your lyrics are alright, and you've got a good voice. Chuck a drum machine in and finally everyone will be happy.

"I think I could make it happen. It could be done. I was having a conversation

with Jim from At The Drive-In last night about putting together a metal band. It would be the best band ever."

What else do you talk about on the tourbus? Is it mainly economics and totalitarianism?

"We have a lot of fun. I'm a music geek."

What surprising hobbies do you have? "I'm really into crosswords! I'm a big crossword guy .. That's really boring isn't it? That's rubbish.'

I'm trying to give you a hand here Frank. I'm trying to say, do you know what, he might have extremely socially aware lyrics BUT he's also fun. He doesn't just read books about finance.

"Well, touring with me is interesting, although it makes me a functioning alcoholic and I wake up in various places doing strange things. This tour has been pretty wild I've been climbing PA stacks and everything, although I did get stuck up at the top of one and realised that I was no longer in a hardcore band, nor was I 19. It was a sad moment."

I'm glad you had that moment of clarity. "Who knew that it would have been in Atlanta, Georgia that I experienced the revelation that I'm too old to climb PA stacks any more.

It's a very important city - it's the place the Sugababes recorded their song 'Ugly', a touching and beautiful pop tune.

"Well, that's my pop fact for the day."

TO BE FRANK

A handy guide to four fab Franks

Job: Second-hand car salesman Conspicuous social consciousness: 5% Poshness of voice: 12%

Penchant for boring books: 1% Likelihood of Number One single: 78% SINATRA

Job: Overrated warbler Conspicuous social consciousness: 3% Poshness of voice: 27%

Penchant for boring books: 13% Likelihood of Number One single: 100%

Job: Jockey

Conspicuous social consciousness: 56% Poshness of voice: 77%

Penchant for boring books: 12% Likelihood of Number One single: 34% TURNER

Job: Pop star

Conspicuous social consciousness: 95% Poshness of volce: 82%

Penchant for boring books: 85% Likelihood of Number One single: 0%



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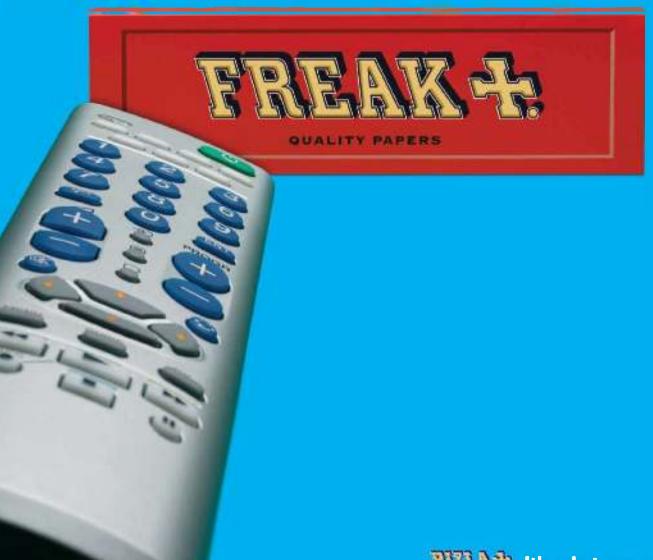
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