

ALBUMS OF 2010: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

NME

FESTIVAL
LINE-UPS:
THE INSIDER
TIP-OFFS
P6

THE
ALBUMS OF

2010

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ACCESS
IN THE
STUDIO
INTERVIEWS
+ PICS

The essential releases and the stories behind them

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WHAT'S INSIDE

SNAPSHOT

KLAXONS, LOS ANGELES



ALBUMS

OF
2010

Klaxons' elongated recording process for their second album has seen them decamp to LA for sessions with producer Ross Robinson. Read the exclusive report of how they are getting on, plus the lowdown on newbies from MGMT, Radiohead, MIA, Friendly Fires, Foals, LCD Soundsystem and every other album release that matters in 2010, starting on page 19.

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WHAT'S ON THE NME STEREO



1 COLD WAR KIDS

Audience

If you're looking for a new band to follow, Cold War Kids are the ones to watch. The four-piece band, from Portland, Oregon, has a sound that's a mix of indie rock and folk, with a touch of punk. Their debut album, *Not a Dead Horse*, is a collection of songs that are both catchy and meaningful. The band's live shows are also a highlight, with a lot of energy and a strong sense of community. **On MySpace now**



2 TANLINES

SAW

This Brooklyn production pair's moniker alone penetrates wintry depths like hot poker through snowballs. On their side of a split seven-inch with countrymen Salem it's as if 2009's cold retro-electro predisposition blinked into the New Year and decided it's about bloody time for a holiday (then a tour supporting Julian Casablancas). Half the group once graced fiddly Battles forerunners Don Caballero; this is as far removed from math-rock as aviators from itchy beards. **On MySpace now**



3 EVERYBODY WAS IN THE FRENCH RESISTANCE

GIRLFREN (You Know I've Got A)

Everybody Was in the French Resistance is a band that's been around for a while, but they've recently released a new album, *Girlfren (You Know I've Got A)*. The album is a collection of songs that are both catchy and meaningful. The band's live shows are also a highlight, with a lot of energy and a strong sense of community. **On MySpace now**

4 LUPE FIASCO

Solar Midnite

A generation of mall teens grew up dressing like Cure fans thanks to *Twilight*, but *New Moon* did offset baffling social/mental damage with a swanky soundtrack. Lupe's contribution to the expanded version usurps almost everything the web-loving MC has dribbled out between k3yboard h3ro tirades recently, forcing his flow around muscular alt.rock backing. Dude has a punk project as well, y'know. You have been warned. **On NME TV now**



5 PORTISHEAD

Chase The Tear

Continuing a fascinating latter-day drive along krautrock's autobahn (accelerated by Geoff Barrow's smart side-concern BEAK), beautiful straightforwardness propels a gently oscillating heart here, lending a pop ear to Stereolab/Broadcast-worthy loops. Beth Gibbons resumes where 'Third' left off, as a beguiling cog in the machine where once she was an overpowering force. That it's in aid of the over-worthy Amnesty simply seals the deal. **On 7digital.com/portisheadamnesty**



6 BROKEN BELLS

The High Road

This first single from Jam's 'The Shins' Mercer and Brian 'Danger Mouse' Burton is a curio and no mistake. The former betrays British indie influences, at points – and here is a mercifully rare sentence – skating perilously close to, er, The Charlatans. DM, meanwhile, lends playful arcade game production twirls and bumbles that suggest if no Amiga consoles were harmed during the recording, several were at least mildly aroused.

On MySpace now



7 MAGIK

Future Predator

Joy Orbison? Whatever, grand id. Bural? So past it. You might have been a formidable skateboard hero or a demon with the conkers, but no matter how much of a badass you were at the tender age of 10, you weren't conjuring sub rattling dubstep and jungle laced with distinct individuality. Ergo, you weren't as cool as angelic blond Bristol type Magik is RIGHT NOW. Queen of the underground and Radio 1 DJ Mary Anne Hobbs agrees, having played this little gem on her show. So do we. If this is what he can do pre-secondary school, all other producers may as well hang up their plug-ins by the time he can legally hit the clubs. Terrifying. On MySpace now

10 FACTORY FLOOR

Lying

It's a shame that the album is so short, as it's a real gem. The music is so good, it's a shame it's so short. The music is so good, it's a shame it's so short. The music is so good, it's a shame it's so short. On MySpace now

On MySpace now

8 SCOUT NIBLETT

The Calcination Of Scout Niblett

Sensible move from Nottingham to west coast America aside, Emma Louise Niblett is madder than voting Tory. Not only does the astrology-indebted madam wield a blowtorch on the cover to her new album, she is also flogging 100 different recordings of this title track. A USP indeed. Which would mean little if it weren't wonderfully deranged, the sort of downcast blues Cat Power should get back to wobbling out. On Dragcity.com now

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...AND WHAT ISN'T

FEEDER

Renegades

Renegade/ren-i-gayd/noun: one who deserts a party or cause for another. In this instance, FM 222-rock to glossy midlife crisis.

EMINEM FT DRAKE AND LIL WAYNE

Forever

Pre-Christmas, Em gave us 'Relapse: Refill', an album repackaging to fill in until 'Relapse 2'. Tired trudges like this, though, leave us feeling half-empty.

JAMMER

Party Animal

"I'm on the dancefloor like a monkey/Bashment, grime, funky/[awkward pause] Jumanji". Outta ideas after three lines, Murkle Man? Ta for the signpost!

WILEY

Never Be Your Woman

Yes, bruv, you can still rhyme for England, but jeez, enough with tawdry crossover attempts. And what is the plural of Rolex? Rolex?

SMASHING PUMPKINS

A Song For A Son

Dear internet, thanks a flipping bunch for facilitating computer viruses, child pornography and this week's Mr Jessica Simpson indulging his pompous whims.

9 THE KNIFE

Colouring Of Pigeons

After a long time, the band are back. The music is so good, it's a shame it's so short. The music is so good, it's a shame it's so short. The music is so good, it's a shame it's so short. On Theknife.net now

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WHAT'S HAPPENED. WHAT'S HAPPENING

By David Hepburn

Kings, AC/DC and Kasabian for 2010 festivals?

After all the rumours, our industry sources tell us who will be shaping your summer

Much of Britain may have been under snow last week, but the summer's festivals are already hotting up with bookers currently battling to sign up top talent for 2010.

With message boards and websites buzzing with rumours of who's at this year's events – so much so that **The Rolling Stones** took the unusual step of announcing they won't be playing **Glastonbury** – *NME* spoke to several festival sources and we can now reveal some acts that you will see on a stage this summer.

First up, June's **Download** festival looks set to be stocked with legends. Not only are Dave Grohl, Josh Homme and John Paul Jones' supergroup **Them Crooked Vultures** booked to play the Donington event's opening night, but the British home of rock will welcome back **AC/DC** and **Van Halen** over the weekend.

V Festival also have their headliners in place. **Kasabian** are set to step up to headline the Chelmsford/Stafford event, while **Kings Of Leon** will end their current hiatus by topping the August bill.

Kasabian are already confirmed to headline **T In The Park** – and possibly Ireland's **Oxegen**, which often shares the same bill – but it is understood that organisers have approached **Muse** and **Green Day** to join them.

Billie Joe Armstrong's band could also be heading up **Reading And Leeds Festivals**, while **Blink-182**, who are booked for German gigs the week before, are also strong contenders for the August bash – as are **My Chemical Romance**.

Also reuniting this year are **Soundgarden** who are talking to **Knebworth House's Sonisphere**, while **Eminem** is the top target for London's **Wireless** event.

With the latter event taking place just after **Glastonbury** it seems – with the Stones or not – the Somerset event will have no trouble filling its slots. **U2** are confirmed, while **Muse** are believed to be the unnamed second



Kings Of Leon? The Followills are rumoured headliners

headliner organiser Emily Eavis said she'd confirmed just before Christmas. **Dizzee Rascal**, **MGMT**, **Bis** and a solo **Julian Casablancas** are also expected to appear on the bill.

Finally, it seems the Christmas Number One race could have an unexpected impact on the summer. **Rage Against The Machine** promised to play a massive gig if 'Killing In The Name' beat the *X Factor* winner to the chart top slot. **Tom Morello** told *NME* the band

are "thrilled" to be playing a victory rally in the UK as, it seems, are the many festival promoters currently trying to convince the band to extend their stay.

For the latest confirmed festival news stay tuned to *NME.COM/festivals*, plus check out our guide (right) to find out when you can get tickets for this summer.

FESTIVAL PLANNER

DOWNLOAD, DONINGTON PARK JUNE 11-12 Tickets on sale late January	LATITUDE, SUFFOLK JULY 15-18 Tickets on sale March 9
FIELD DAY, WIGHT FESTIVAL JUNE 11-12 Tickets on sale now	CAMP FESTIVAL, DORSET JULY 30-AUGUST 1 Tickets on sale now
ROCKNESS, LOCH NESS JUNE 11-13 Tickets on sale now	SONISPHERE, KNEBWORTH JULY 30-AUGUST 1 Tickets on sale now
GLASTONBURY, SOMERSET JUNE 25-27 Tickets on sale now	V FESTIVAL, CHELMSFORD AND STAFFORDSHIRE AUGUST 21-22 Tickets on sale March
WIRELESS, HYDE PARK JULY 2-3 Tickets on sale now	READING AND LEEDS FESTIVALS AUGUST 27-29 Tickets on sale late March
OXEGEN, CO. KILDARE, IRE JULY 9-11 Tickets on sale now	BESTIVAL, ISLE OF WIGHT SEPTEMBER 9-12 Tickets on sale now
T IN THE PARK BALADO, SCOTLAND JULY 9-11 Tickets on sale late February	

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7 DAYS IN MUSIC



SHOCKWAVES NME AWARDS SHOWS...

Hole again – live

LONDON

Courtney Love will play her first UK gig with her band Hole in 11 years this February, as part of the Shockwaves NME Awards Shows. She's expected to preview new album 'Nobody's Daughter' at London's O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire on February 17 the same night Babyshambles play a Shockwaves NME Awards Show across the city at Camden's KOKO venue.

Hole's gig will give UK fans the first chance to see the band's new line up, including former Larrikin Love guitarist Micko Larkin. Writing on her Twitter page recently, Love called the 23 year old "the greatest young British guitarist of his generation". She has also posted a series of videos of the band rehearsing new material online (head to NME.COM to watch).

Turn to page 32 now for the full lowdown on the recording of Hole's album 'Nobody's Daughter'. Meanwhile, hard at work on the follow up to 'Shotters Nation', Babyshambles are expected to play a smattering of new songs during their KOKO gig, which is Pete Doherty and co's first official London engagement of the year.

Hole and Babyshambles join the likes of Delphic, British Sea Power, New Young Pony Club and Girls, who are among other bands also playing Shockwaves NME Awards shows in the UK capital next month.

Meanwhile, Annie Mac has signed up to curate an Awards Show at London's KOKO on February 6. The DJ's Presents... gig will feature the likes of Wiley, Sub Focus and Mac herself. See NME.COM for full details of all this year's Shockwaves NME Awards Shows.

NAILS STILL SHARP

LOS ANGELES

Despite recent y quitting touring and f ogging their gear, Trent Reznor says Nine nch Nal s wi definite y head into the studio this year. "[This year] has a number of things p anned inc uding new materia from Nine nch Nal s and something e se that isn't Nine nch Nal s," he b ogged on NIN.COM.



THOM YORKE'S A 'BETTING MAN

TIBET Thom Yorke has written three new songs for a documentary about China's occupation of Tibet and the po itica attempts to free it. The tracks wi feature on the soundtrack of the Dirk Simon directed *When The Dragon Swallowed The Sun*, which is due out after this year.

MATT OF THE TITANS

HOLLYWOOD Muse's Matt Be army has hinted that the band may work on the soundtrack of *Clash Of The Titans*. Starring Liam Neeson and Gemma Arterton and re eased on March 26, Be army said the fi m, a remake of the 1981 fantasy c assic, was the "first interesting offer we've had" regarding soundtrack work.



IGGY & THE SIMPSONS

SPRINGFIELD Iggy Pop & The Stooges have been confirmed to play Matt Groening's ATP weekend at Butlins, Minehead on May 7-9. *The Simpsons'* creator has also got Deerhunter, Panda Bear and Shonen Knife on the bill.

KNIFE ON EARTH

SWEDEN The Knife are to re ease their music for a Danish opera about Charles Darwin as an album on March 1. The duo were commissioned to record 'Tomorrow, n A Year' by Danish performance group Hote Pro Forma, and the project saw them dive headfirst into the life and works of Darwin, even attending a workshop in South America.

KNOWLES LOTTA LOVE

GEORGIA Beyoncé's little sister Solange is set to feature on indie rockers Of Montreal's new album, according to frontman Kevin Barnes. Tentative y ca ed either 'Fa se Priest' or 'The Contro er Sphere', the record is due out in late summer/early autumn.

DRAC'S BACK

TRANSYLVANIA Dracula and *Lord Of The Rings* actor Christopher Lee, 87, is to re ease an album of "symphonic meta". 'Char emagne: By the Sword And The Cross' is about a Holy Roman Emperor and is out in March.

ANDREW WK; 'I'M JUST ME'

NEW YORK Andrew WK issued a statement denying his management have created an "identity" for him. He says his intentions are far more simple than that. "Andrew WK is about partying and doing what you want! We want fun, and that really is what I'm about."



"I made them pull out the red hats and pose for a picture"

SANTIGOLD HAS REVEALED SHE'S PRODUCING NEW DEVO SONGS

KINGS 'OFF' LEONA

NASHVILLE

She's covered Snow Patrol and even Oasis, but it seems Leona Lewis is not going to get anywhere near the Kings Of Leon. "Contrary to reports out there, Kings Of Leon are not writing or recording with Leona Lewis," tweeted Nathan Followill. "No offence to her."





ALBUM NEWS

Puritans deemed too dark for the kids

SOUTHEND

These New Puritans are returning with new album 'Hidden' – but although critics are lining up to laud them, it seems that their thundering percussion-led noise is too much for some. So much so, the band have revealed, that they were banned from using a specific children's choir on their new record because the headmaster of the school they asked judged their music to be "too dark".

"I think he objected to the implication of violence – the title [of the song] 'Attack Music'," explains frontman Jack Barnett. "But they were a fairly professional choir who get asked to do a lot of work. The second lot were from a state school in Hackney. They were more enthusiastic about the whole idea."

In addition to utilising youngsters' voices the band used six-foot Japanese taiko drums to create the deep percussion sounds that define their second album, released on January 18. Barnett also experimented with a diverse array of recording tricks including the use of 'Foley techniques'. "It's the method they use in film to develop sound effects. Like, for instance, cracking a cauliflower at the stem simulates the sound of human bone breaking." Found sounds include knives being sharpened and chains being rattled. "We found out that small chains sound best, which we did by trial and error. We went to B&Q and tested all their chains. We drew quite a crowd."

Turn to page 46 to read *NME*'s verdict on the album and get next week's issue for an in-depth interview.

FUTURE HAVE LEFT 4AD

CARDIFF ■ Future Of The Left have said they will work on a new album despite parting ways with their label. The band and 4AD imprint Too Pure have gone their separate ways, so any A&Rs out there looking for an album that mixes "Freddie Mercury and Slayer's backline" should give Andy Falkous a call.



"This song is for our other bass player, in the crowd. His name is Alex, remember him?"

THE YUMMY FUR REUNITE ONSTAGE IN GLASGOW, WITH A CERTAIN MR KAPRANOS WATCHING FROM THE WINGS

TONG: QUEEN ISN'T DEAD

LONDON ■ Former Verve/Blur member Simon Tong says his band The Good, The Bad & The Queen aren't finished. The guitarist said that the group, made up of Tong, Damon Albarn, The Clash's Paul Simonon and drummer Tony Allen, have spoken about reconvening to record new material. "It definitely feels like there's another album in there somewhere," he said. "It might be a completely different project [to the 2007 debut] – it's just finding the right angle." Meanwhile Tong is in a new band, Erland & The Carnival, who release their debut on January 25.

IT'S NOT YOUR 'REBIRTH' DAY

NEW ORLEANS ■ The release date of Lil Wayne's much-delayed rock album 'Rebirth' has been pushed back again. It's now due out on June 22. The rapper is currently preparing to start his prison sentence for gun charges on February 9. He was originally scheduled to release 'Rebirth' last April.



GOLD SOUNDZ COLLECTED

CALIFORNIA ■ Pavement release a 23-track Best Of album on March 8. Called 'Quarantine The Past', the album features remastered material from across their career and comes ahead of their reunion dates.



KANYE NAMES THE BEST FOR THE WEST

CHICAGO ■ Kanye West says he's looking to "Maya Angelou, Gil Scott-Heron and Nina Simone" for inspiration on his yet-to-be recorded fifth album, because all three of those creative people "improved with time".

FAN DEATH SHOCKER!

VANCOUVER ■ Fan Death's new song 'Power Surge' has taken on a literal meaning – due to an onstage incident in Taiwan. "Some kid threw a glass and the mic fell into it and caused this intense electric shock. It was the craziest pain I've ever felt!" said Dandi Wind Opaine.

MAIL BONDING THE POST OFFICE

It's official: stamp collecting is the new rock'n'roll. Possibly. Celebrating British music, Royal Mail released a special collection of first class stamps adorned with 10 classic album covers last week. Here are some of our favourites...



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CINEMAS JANUARY 15



The xx invite fans into their album – literally

Trio have turned critic-slaying debut into a walk-in “sound sculpture” – Leonie Cooper finds out if it’s art or gimmick

So you thought that 2009 was the year of The xx? Think again. Starting 2010 with yet more of their boundary-pushing lo-fi antics, the band have kicked off the new decade by joining forces with Saam Farahmand, director of weird and wonderful music videos for the likes of Klaxons, Lightspeed Champion and Simian Mobile Disco.

Instead of a simple film though, this time Farahmand's taken proceedings a step further, creating a 3D audio-visual installation that goes by the name of *xx: A Sculpture Of The Album*. Which means what exactly? “It's this whole concept of taking a music video to a different level,” explains the band's Oliver Sim when we corner him in the underground Soho gallery curated by The Vinyl Factory where the piece

is showing for free. On view for just six days from January 7, it's a case of X marks the spot when it comes to the piece's opening night, as visitors follow the cardboard cut-out black Xs scattered artfully across the floor of Soho's Phonica record shop and down the stairs leading into the gallery. Adorned by hundreds of plain white candles stuck to the floor, the space is a fitting reflection on The xx's own musical ethic: stunning yet simple. “I think it feels like a shrine,” suggests Sim, casting a proud eye across the sea of candles “...or like an Alexandra Burke video. Amazing!”

The ‘sculpture’ itself takes the form of three tall, glossy black units, which, oddly, resemble coffin-sized iPods, one to represent each member of the band, who became a trio in November of last year after the departure of keyboardist Baria Qureshi. Arranged in

a triangle in the middle of the room, a video of each member playing their way through the band's self-titled debut album is shown on the screen of each unit, with the sound of their respective voices and instruments emitting from a circular speaker below. With all three of the clips filmed in just one shot, the installation manages to capture the intensity and drama of an *xx* live show. Lights under the three units dim and grow stronger at the same time as they do on the video screens, while the onscreen versions of the band play their way through the likes of ‘VCR’ and ‘Crystallised’. If they're doing things this exciting in January, goodness knows what the band will be getting up to come summer. Either way, we can't wait. *xx: A Sculpture Of The Album* is expected to tour later this year.



Saam Farahmand: director of The xx's audio-visual treat



A still from the installation

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WE WANT ANSWERS!

This week:

SAM EASTGATE

Late Of The Pier

NME: So this is NME's Albums Of 2010 preview issue, but there's no sign of an LP. What the hell *are* you doing?

Sam Eastgate: "It's kind of like a secret thing at the moment. It's a project I've always wanted to do – a two-piece band. I think shows with this new project will be happening before any Late Of The Pier shows."

A new band? Do tell...

"Me and this person, we're both kind of drummers. We both really want to drum, but also the thing with drumming is that you can't really do anything else when you're doing it. So we've kind of been toying with the idea of this mechanical drum monster. We've been like electricians; we've been working through these different machines. Some of the early shows will be in Japan around spring. Then we'll be coming over this way."

Go on then – let us know who your new musical partner is...

"They were in another band. I think people will be able to piece it together from what I've said so far. All those superfans will start going, 'Oh yeah!'"

People who spend their whole days on blogs about what I eat for breakfast."

So no new Late Of The Pier album for a while, then?

"We're distancing ourselves from the idea of making another album. I think the less seriously we take it, the more creative we are. The stuff we're making, we're really excited about, but we're not putting on pressure or deadlines or stuff."

So it's not like you'll never make a record again?

"We'll see where it goes. The way we see

it is as if you're writing for four or five records.

We've always written so much and sifted through it and picked the best out of that.

We're too much perfectionists to settle."

So what are the rest of LOTP doing to pass the time?

"I think Ross [Dawson, drums] is writing children's books or something. I'm just being boring, making music. We're also messing about with film and things like that. It's almost like we're considering ourselves not musicians. A lot of musicians get caught up in the world of trying to play the game. We've always been a bit of an outsider band so we're relying on that this time."

"My new band is a two-piece – something I've always wanted to do"

Still, you did recently

release a one-off single, 'Blueberry', and have another song, 'Best In The Class', out next month...

"Those are singles left over from the last album, which we didn't really manage to fit in. The reaction has been that they're bigger and better than the stuff on the last record, so we're really confident they're not out of date or anything."

Have you got any more one-off singles up your sleeves?

"I think there'll be a couple of stop-gaps. We're going to have to make sure we

don't forget our fans and people by giving them the best thing we can every once in a while."

Will we get to see you live soon?

"Yeah, that's another thing, we're looking for this club night that we don't think even exists at the moment, working out if we can start our own club thing. We've done that in the past, we want to come back with the whole package. It could be a *Magical Mystery Tour* kind of thing if it came off in a bad way. In a good way it'd be bringing back the kind of club nights that we started off playing."

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NEW TO THE PLAYLIST...

Who will be fighting it out in future charts?

NME TRACK OF THE WEEK...



CHAPEL CLUB - 'O MAYBE I'

"This London five-piece were the subject of a good-old fashioned "bidding war" last year, as over-eager A&R men fought each other to secure the band "most likely to bring White Lies-esque doom and angst into 2010". And, yes, there's a darkness in here, but they balance the chaos with soulful vocals. In a way, it's like being sung gently to sleep by an axe-wielding psycho. We were playing their debut single on NME Radio before anyone else, and we're ALL over this one, too."

Iain Baker, NME DJ



THE SOFT PACK - 'C'MON'

"The San Diegan garage monkeys leaked this two-minute face blast to the Daily Download a while back; now it rightly hits the radio chart."

Tim Chester, Assistant Editor, NME.COM



NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB - 'WE WANT IT'

"Thankfully New Young Pony Club have proved there's more to them than a big scoop of 'Ice Cream' on this ace new album track."

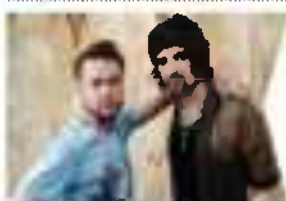
Jamie Fullerton, News Editor



VAMPIRE WEEKEND - 'GIVING UP THE GUN'

"Between the Afro-inspired oddness and the convulsive frenzies lies this moment of effortlessly good pop from the Vampire Weekenders."

Chris Martin, NME Radio



KASABIAN - 'VLAD THE IMPALER'

"The boys live out their Beastie Boy dreams while sounding like The Clash as Noel Fielding runs around decapitating evil folk."

Paul Sturges, Associate Editor

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DELPHIC

Shooting in at No.4 Manchester's shimmer-popsters prove just how tightly they're holding 2010 in their palms already. Get another free track on the Radar mixtape at NME.COM.



SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO

After soundtracking one too many upside down nights across the UK in 2009, SMD's Beth Ditto-featuring electro nugget finally gets a chart release and slides seductively around our Top 10.



MARINA & THE DIAMONDS

Marina's eccentric pop stomp sees her go a bit cuckoo and hog a high spot in the NME Chart, boding well for her forthcoming single 'Hollywood' (which you can watch on NME.COM now).

The NME Chart is compiled on a weekly basis from the sales of physical and digital singles through traditional high street retailers, internet retailers and digital music service providers. Singles are eligible for the NME Chart if they have featured on the playlists of NME Radio or TV, or in NME Magazine.

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MY MUSIC

STICKING A MICROPHONE IN THE EAR OF...

BEN LOVETT Mumford & Sons

Right now I'm loving...

'WISH I STAYED'
ELLIE GOULDING

"It's her best song – I think she's a really good acoustic singer-songwriter who's gone electro, and I like that about her. She is managed by a friend of ours called Jamie and in spring she played a show in London which she asked me down to, and I got talking to her about doing some stuff at my studio. We haven't done a show with her yet, but I've seen her play a few times and she's come to a few of our gigs."

An album by a hero...

'TILL THE SUN TURNS BLACK'
RAY LAMONTAGNE

"He's the first person who wrote songs that made me fully understand the importance of lyrics and melody. I'd listen to that album in my bedroom every night for 18 months. My girlfriend at the time had bought me a pair of tickets to see him and then we broke up so I took Marcus [Mumford, frontman] – we went up to Edinburgh and saw him play. It was just incredible; he's such an enigmatic guy."

I wish I'd written...

'ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE'
THE BEATLES



"That would have been quite a good one to have done! It's probably my favourite Beatles song. I think The Beatles' songwriting in general revolutionised music. The message in that song, and how they've written it overall, is just spot on. I'd really love to write a song that wasn't too beat-around-the-bushes, and that is what The Beatles were so good at. They could do a really simple message and then they'd move on and do another song and another message, instead of trying to get everything that you're feeling into one song."

My first gig...

'NO DOUBT, BRYXTON ACADEMY, LONDON, 1997'

"I was really into punk. I was 11 years old, I had a blue mohican. I was right at the front on the barrier and it was so good we went again the next night. Gwen Stefani sat down on the front of the stage and sang 'Just A Girl' to me and my friend Nick under a spotlight. I think it's actually on the tour DVD, which I never got hold of. Then the bassist gave me his plectrum at the end of the second night."

No Doubt at all: "This one's for you, Ben"



You must hear...

'DIRTY PROJECTORS'



"I only found out about them this year. We saw them at SXSW and live it's just the most insane, bizarre music, but it really works, and they've got some great songs. They were playing the End Of The Road Festival, which is my favourite, and they were the last thing we saw before we had to go off on tour. I got to sit on the side of the stage. They were just great, and they got the whole crowd going."

Before I die, I'd play...

'FUNERAL'
ARCADE FIRE



"It's my favourite album by Arcade Fire, and it's one of my favourite albums of all time. I think it's epic and everything that Arcade Fire are – it sums them up, and it's just euphoric and massive. I went to see Feist at Shepherd's Bush Empire about three years ago and then I started listening to all the whole Canadian music scene and Broken Social Scene and Arcade Fire came up – Arcade Fire are just fantastic. That's why it was such an honour to work with [AF producer] Markus Dravs."

To make me dance...

'ABC'
THE JACKSON 5



"If you're at any party it's just a great dance-along song. I love to try and swing dance and do some sort of twirling and big gestures. Massively untrained swing dancing – it's quite embarrassing, I think, and most people on the dancefloor are normally pretty angry by the end of the first song. I was at a mate's wedding on the weekend and I accidentally ripped a girl's dress."

A favourite lyric...

'LOOK AT MISS OHIO'
GILLIAN WELCH



"The lyric is 'I wanna do right, but not right now'. It's a clever play on words, but it's also very poignant. She was introduced to me by Winston [Marshall, vocals/banjo] about two years ago. There's an album of hers called 'Time (The Revelator)', which I've subsequently bought as a present for other people. In my mind she's like a gritty, almost more real version of Joni Mitchell – they're both the same calibre. I think Gillian Welch is one of the best female singer-songwriters ever to have lived."

LETTERS

YOU WRITE IT, WE PRINT IT, EVERYONE ARGUES *Edited by Barry Nicolson*



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Letter of the week

Stop the shocks

I was waiting with anticipation for the first *NME* in two weeks, so you can imagine how disappointed I was to find it was full of Oasis, with none of the regular features and stuff (*January 2*). Then I started reading it and it was mindblowing! Honestly, every piece was quality, and it opened my eyes to them, and how much of a shame it is that they've split. Even though for the most part the albums were crap, some of their tunes were out of this world.

Sean Atkinson, via email

You're not wrong, Sean; some of those old interviews read like surrealist stand-up routines. But it all means nothing without the music, and the ultimate irony is that Oasis called it a day just as they'd rediscovered what made them great in the first place. We've always had our ups, downs and disagreements with them, but few bands have shaped the musical landscape in the way they did, and we owed them an apt farewell – BN

FAREWELL, OASIS

Every time I hear the haunting echo of 'Wonderwall' or the screaming squeal of 'Supersonic', a flood of emotion overcomes me. I have laughed, cried, embraced and dared to dream listening to this superb band that brought up a whole generation of like-minded souls. If we are to believe the often venomous hype that fills the headlines, then Oasis will be no more. Never again will millions gather to witness the magical, rebellious spectacle that lifts you up and embraces you in one glorious Gallagher hug. From Noel's awe-inspiring lyrics to Liam's pure presence of freewheeling anarchy, they let us believe we too could taken on anything in the world. For all the talented bands that come and go, not one is able to capture the truthful, legendary and heart-flutteringly magnificent music that inspired an era. Forever, Oasis should remain in our hearts, and always they will live forever.

Hannah Ashcroft, Cumbria

"Alas, poor Noel! I knew him, Our Kid." A fitting elegy from Hannah there on the back of our Oasis issue, apparently written in the style of a Shakespearean

soliloquy but nonetheless conveying what we were trying to get across with our tribute issue; that whether you love them, loathe them, or flat-out couldn't care less about them, the world won't seem quite as interesting without Oasis in it, and at least some of you seem to agree – BN

When I saw the Gallaghers on the front of *NME* I groaned, thinking, 'Ain't they got nothing better to put in there?' But once I started reading it I couldn't put it down. Very entertaining and most of the pieces I hadn't seen due to reading *Melody Maker* in the '90s. Even started listening to 'The Masterplan' again.

Simon, Cannock

Your 'special' issue in tribute to Oasis was fookin' hilarious. The Gallaghers have been better than I like to say throughout their laddy jaunt, while Noel's always been quite funny. But your interviews highlighted their general humour, as well as their confusing, contradictory answers – which was funny as well.

Dave, via email

STOP MOANING YOUR ARSE OFF

I am a subscriber and I am therefore at the mercy of what your journalists choose to put into print; the choice of whether or not to buy your magazine on a week-to-week basis is effectively taken away from me. Usually I can let this slide when it doesn't quite match what I want to read (recent cover stars including Simon Cowell and Paramore for instance). However, when you charge me for a magazine that is just regurgitated interviews from the past 15 years or so and call it an Oasis 'collectors' issue' it's just lazy and poor value for money. Regardless of whether you are an



"And when I next see Rage Against The Machine I'll poke them in the eye with this..."

STALKERS

It can't be illegal if it's love... right?



THE BAKER FAMILY, VIA EMAIL

"This is our friend Waseem with Dev/Lightspeed Champion. He didn't even see his gig that night!"



JENNY, SHEFFIELD

"Four out of five ain't bad, eh? The Horrors and me after their gig in Sheffield"



EMMA, LUTON

"Me with Tom from The Horrors just before Christmas I asked him if he was a Jedward fan. He isn't"

Oasis fan or not, *NME* has ripped people off here so that their journalists could have their Christmas piss-up without having to worry about writing any articles. Poor show.
Michael Conroy, via email

But what a Christmas piss-up it was, Michael. My personal highlight was listening to 'Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants' over and over again before waking up with calcium deposits on my shoulderblades from being hunched over a laptop for 14 straight hours, trying to get my copy in on time! You should've been there, mate – **BN**

When I bought *NME* this week I didn't expect it to be all about Oasis – the most overrated band of all time – otherwise I would have saved my hard-earned money. I've been buying *NME* since the '60s and this was THE WORST ONE EVER!! Get over yourselves with this ridiculous obsession and just take time to

listen to the crap sixth-form poetry lyrics and secondhand pretend-to-be-The-Beatles tunes and write about some truly innovative music and new bands. You can send me my refund AND I WILL RECYCLE THE PAPER SO AT LEAST SOME GOOD CAN COME OUT OF IT.
Merv Lee, via email

So putting Noel and Liam on the cover and declaring it a Special Collectors' Issue wasn't enough to give you the hint, Merv? Or how about the back page of the previous issue where we previewed it in the 48-point *CAPITAL LETTERS YOU'RE SO FOND OF*? Oh, wait, you can't have caught that one because if you had, you'd know that it was our **WORST ISSUE EVER...** – **BN**

SYCO: SATAN IN A FLAT-TOP?

Oh dear, *NME*, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THINKING? You've had some LEGENDS on your cover, for example The Horrors, La Roux, Florence And The Machine. But never would I of thought you would of put SIMON COWELL on the front (*NME*, December 19/26) really? WHY? I am ASHAMED to pick up the magazine now-a-days in Tesco's. Seriously. I thought my friend was joking when she said that he was on the front cover, but obviously she wasn't joking. therefore, this letter is just pointing out, how shrt your magazine is going, and until I see the horrors on the front, it shall NEVER be in my tesco's trolley again.
Zoe, Bristol

Couple of things, Zoe. Firstly, the word is 'have' and not 'of', and 'I' should be capped up. Small things, sure, but the sooner you change it the sooner you'll stop sounding like a fool. Secondly, do you shop in Britain's hippest Tesco? Do the patrons there idle around the racks flicking through *Vice* magazine, muttering discontentedly to themselves about how it's lost its edge recently? It's just that, from the sound of your letter, there seems to be an inordinate amount of social one-upmanship going on when an interview with the most powerful man in the music industry is enough to make you 'ASHAMED' to pick up a magazine – **BN**

I am writing to thank you for the Simon Cowell interview featured in your Christmas double issue. For a man who is loved and loathed equally throughout the country, he deserved to have his say, and what better place to have it than in such a well respected magazine as *NME*. I still think he's a prat, especially with all that smoking ban flouting, but I thought Krissi Murison's article was written objectively enough so that her opinion, although made clear, wasn't forced upon me. I've been a regular reader for almost five years and I can honestly say *NME* is bloody amazing right now. I've started looking forward to Wednesdays again, so please don't ever change
Katie Stanton, via email

Well said, Katte. By any free and fair democratic standard, Simon Cowell deserved the chance to answer his accusers, and in doing so he conformed what we suspected about him all along; he is not the cause, so much as the symptom, of our culture's ready acceptance of mediocrity. Making him a scapegoat for all of indie's current ills – as La Roux and Johnny Marr seemed keen to do – just feels too convenient. Then again, what do I know? As I write this, he might be knee-deep in a pool of goats' blood, cackling maniacally, with burning silver orbs where his eyes should be – **BN**

NEW BAND MADNESS

I'm sick of all these new year tips lists (*NME*, January 9); all made up of the same bands, and all paid for with major label cash. Ellie Goulding, anyone?
Brenda Tarp, via email

Great to see The Drums on the cover of *NME* – perfect start to 2010. They're going to be THE band of the decade!
Dotty, Leeds

Tip lists are a new year's tradition to rival punching walls in a drunken rage, but they're also just good, clean fun. After all, come the year's end, we like to be able to say we told you so when we're right, and you lot love to rub our faces in it when we balls it up. It's all in the game, yo – **BN**

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Email: letters@nme.com Post: The Letters Page, *NME*, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London, SE1 0SU Oh, and LOTW winners should email the same address to claim their prizes

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ALBUMS

OF

2010

It's that time of year again – New Year's resolutions have dissolved into a fug of cigarette ash and Klaxons' second album demos, and instead we're concentrating on looking ahead to what really matters: the albums set to soundtrack our bus journeys, midnight dance skidding and 5am post-party blatherings for the next 12 months. From the promisingly weird (Klaxons, Hole, Crystal Castles) to die-or-fly second albums (The Courteeners, Friendly Fires, Glasvegas) to ol' reliables (The Coral, Supergrass) they're all here in this one issue. So, once again, go clear some serious space on your record shelf.

Jamie Fullerton
News Editor



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I'm always going to be doing Strokes stuff," laughs Julian Casabiancas – who, along with Fab Moretti, Nikolai Fraiture and Albert Hammond Jr, is to put his solo side project aside and get to work on the band's first new album since 2006's 'First Impressions Of Earth'. "We'll do a record soon I think. Sooner rather than later."

Sooner indeed – Nikolai has already declared himself "fucking excited" about January demo sessions and studio-scouting trips in New York. After the demos a break is due in February, when Julian is expecting the arrival of his first child. From then it's down to album sessions proper with the record due out later in the year – as well as those live shows at the Isle Of Wight Festival in June then RockNess in August. Naturally, we'll be tagging along in the studio when the band get down to business to bring you the full shimmy. *Jamie Fullerton*





M G M T

Forget electric eels and kids – MGMT don't want singles now. At all. Is that how you better "Oracular Spectacular"?

On a break from writing the lyrics that will complete 'Congratulations', their second album, posing for pictures around the block from the Brooklyn studio they built last year, MGMT look very much at home. In the last year, though, Andrew VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser haven't stopped traveling – both physically and mentally – in their quest to complete the follow-up to 'Oracular Spectacular'. The process began with a writing session among the Catskill Mountains in early 2009, with the pair abandoning the distractions of the city for the mind focusing austerity of the wilderness. "That was pure concentration, says Ben of this initial genesis. "There was nothing to do but just try to stay warm and play music all the time."

With firm theories on the evolution of MGMT in place, the pair then swapped the freezing cold and unforgiving mountains for the Pacific blue and pristine beaches of California's Malibu (Andrew became something of a surfing fanatic during the trip) to record the album. "When you're in upstate New York you get a super-isolated feeling," confirms Andrew. "Then to go from that to Malibu was insane!" The isolation also ended }

in the studio. Unlike debut 'Oracular Spectacular', which the duo recorded almost entirely on their own, save from the odd bit of help and re-recording with producer Dave Fridmann (The Flaming Lips, Mercury Rev), Ben and Andrew were joined by their touring band for the recordings.

"It's been really liberating because we trust ourselves more with the band around," suggests Ben of sessions with men rather than machines. "I think last time we recorded it was just weird because we hadn't played out that much, we didn't have a live band. We didn't have much confidence in what we were doing. I think this time around we feel more comfortable. We've been able to loosen up since the last album. I think it was difficult on our last album to do something and be comfortable enough to let it grow, we didn't have the confidence to leave stuff rough around the edges, leave some imperfections on there. This time around we were much more able to say, 'OK, that take wasn't perfect but it had some kind of character that we'll never get again, so that's the take that is going on the album.' For me, listening to music, I like the mistakes on albums, it's something people are afraid to do now, but if you listen to a lot of classic albums, especially all the albums from the '60s or whatever, there are mistakes all over them. They're real moments."

"When we started this band we were involved in lots of different projects, now this is a full-time thing, so any music we want to be playing we have to be playing with this band," continues Andrew. "MGMT started out as more of an electronic thing, but we needed an outlet to play the music we've always wanted to make, so the band is turning into more of that. Us making the music we wish we were hearing on the radio."

The music they wish they were hearing, it turns out, has little in common with the accessible pop melodies of 'Kids' or 'Electric Feel'. In fact anyone expecting another 'Time To Pretend' (their label, probably) should look away now. Not only are the duo keen to get the album out in the spring, which they admit might be a bit too quick for Columbia's release schedule, they'd also prefer it if there were no singles.

"We'd rather people hear the whole album as an album and see what tracks jump out rather than the ones that get played on the radio - if anything gets played on the radio!" laughs Ben. "There definitely isn't a 'Time To Pretend' or a 'Kids' on the album. We've been talking about ways to make sure people hear the album as an album in order and not just figure out what are the best three tracks, download those and not listen to the rest of it. This is definitely going to be one of those records that makes a lot more sense when everything is put in context, the whole experience will be more of a headphones album than a party album."

"On the last album we were scared the whole time, we had a sense that this was our one chance to say something and we had to get it just right," says Andrew. "This time we want to show that we're having fun and we're not caught up in having to prove something on the second album or prove that it's still relevant or something like that. We've tried not to think about any of that stuff."

Part of that confidence came from a trip to London last February to attend the NME Awards. While here, the band met up with Pete Dinklage, or, as he's better known, Sonic Boom of legendary drone-rockers Spacemen 3. Following an onstage jam at club night Sonic Cathedral the duo invited their hero out



to the beach to help with sessions. "We met Pete in London around the NME Awards last year and we started giving him some of the demos we were working on and he was into it," recalls Andrew. "We thought it might be cool to get someone whose ideas and music we really respect to come in, give suggestions and work with us. I don't think Pete worked as a producer in the traditional sense that

people might think of it, it was more collaborations working with us, hanging out together and playing us great music. That was a good match."

With those sessions completed last summer, the band briefly toured the US before reconvening with Dave Fridmann for mixing, and are now finally recording the lyrics that Andrew spent the year formulating.

"I've been writing about a variety of things. I think, overall, it's less pseudo-mystical-weird-vaguely-sorcerer lyrics and more to do with real things, whether that's relationships or friends that we've met or drugs or whatever," he explains of songs including 'Brian Eng', 'It's Working', 'Song For Dan Treacy' (about their friendship with the Television Personalities singer) and a currently untitled 12-minute track which "is a really strange song, either really fast and frantic or it's really sprawling and dirty". There's also the title track, which is no self-congratulatory MGMT high-five.

If anything it's an in-joke.

"We actually decided to call it 'Congratulations' while we were writing the songs for the first album and we thought we should stick with that because it means something different now. We think it's funny," explains Andrew. "We're excited because a lot of people will see it as a pat on the back to ourselves and really it's a bit more sinister and sarcastic than that. But the music I don't think is as sinister or ironic. We're a bit more honest and open in a way. Without getting too serious or pretentious, we don't want to make a sarcastic statement. We're proud of the music we've done, but I don't think this album will be as popular as the first album. I don't see how it could, so all the music that is coming from us is honest and from the soul. Also we're older, and it's harder to write songs about electric eels now, for better or worse!" **Paul Stokes**

"On our last album we didn't have the confidence to leave stuff rough around the edges, but I like mistakes on albums. They're real moments"

BEN GOLDWASSER





FRIENDLY FIRES

Forget sleep, FF's calendar-burning tour schedule is simply album two's launch pad

Ed, Jack and Edd have only been back in the UK a matter of weeks, having finally, *finally* pushed through their global touring commitments to their slow-burning self-titled debut. But they've already laid down all the instrumental parts for six new tracks for album number two in Hoxton lock-up, Miloko. "We've been touring that last record for God knows how long, so we were desperate to get back in the studio," explains Ed Macfarlane. As opposed to, you know, having a nap.

The trio work more like a dance act than a rock band, in that they record and refine as they go along rather than thrash songs out in rehearsal first. A proper soundproofed room was a necessity. "It's not too high gloss, though," says Edd Gibson, gesturing around at the stark breezeblocks and token ethnic wall hanging. "You don't feel the money's draining away by the hour."

"It's not even particularly soundproof," admits Ed. "You can hear the guy next door recording a Michael Jackson tribute album. That'll probably leak into the record somewhere."

Does this mean the garage doors of their St Albans home hang-out, where the Friendly Fires sound was forged, have been slammed shut for good? No, says Ed. "There's a chance I'll go back to record the vocals," he outlines, "because there are fewer distractions. And if

I'm trying to write escapist lyrics, it makes sense to be somewhere you'd want to escape from."

Edd says that there hasn't been much conceptualising as far as their second album is concerned. "We didn't sit around and draw up a manifesto of what the album is going to sound like, we just unpacked the gear, each played something, and latched onto the little hooks we all liked the sound of."

With Friendly Fires, the beats come first. One new track has a "Teddy Riley, new jack swing-inspired rhythm", others have "house grooves", while some have emerged from delving into their new toybox of Brazilian and African percussion. "We want to keep every song sounding very different," declares Jack. Ed. "I feel like our first album was quite accessible and pop. Now we've lured in a load of fans, we've got the freedom to try something a bit more out-there and interesting. We're not going to start doing nine-minute ambient soundwashes, but we don't want to repeat

ourselves." There are even two "almost ballads".

Despite being an increasingly confident frontman, on one track Ed is hoping to delegate lead vocals to Cedric from Canadian house duo Azari & III. "Jack was playing one of their tracks at an afterparty in Toronto and he just walked off the dancefloor, grabbed the mic and started singing 'Paris' over the top in this really soulful voice. I said to him, 'You're singing on our next record!' and he was like, 'OK!'"

"We've been touring with a brass section since May, so they'll probably crop up on the record too," adds Jack. The London School Of Samba troupe, who fortified 'Kiss Of Life' with their carnival rhythms, may also make another appearance, but Friendly Fires don't want to milk the Brazilian sound. "Unless we decide to make a version for the Latin market," suggests Edd. "We can be on the front in sombreros" **Sam Richards**

"We didn't sit around and draw up a manifesto of what the album is going to sound like. We just unpacked the gear and each played something"

EDD GIBSON

THREE • YEARS • I

Arcade Fire are returning, we're crossing fingers for more White Stripes and, for the third year in a row in NME's album previews issue, it's that Klaxons album again...



When Jamie Reynolds broaches the subject of why, exactly, it's come to be that his band have graced the pages of NME's annual January albums preview issue for the last three years running, he's brash, not at all embarrassed and almost comically unapologetic. "I think it's hilarious!" he laughs. "I don't have any regrets. It's just so wonderful that you're so supportive after all this time..."

Since the band started work on the follow-up to 'Myths Of The Near Future' in late 2007 (culminating in the now-legendary French sessions with James Ford being canned in February last year – see timeline below), Jamie, James and Simon have had "a truly

terrible time," Jamie readily admits. But if the gods of mercy seem to shine on any band, it's Klaxons.

Somewhat randomly, Jamie says the winds of change blew shortly after Glastonbury last year where they played a secret show in fancy dress on the Park Stage, and as a result the band finally managed to weather the storm, quickly honing 15 "celebratory" tracks which are now sounding "kind of life-affirming". Even more surprising is their new choice of producer – new metal kingpin Ross Robinson (previous clients: Limp Bizkit, Korn, Slipknot).

Firstly, though, there are a few things Jamie wants to get off his chest about the new (new) record, which – cross your fingers, thumbs, toes and eyeballs – should be finished at the end of January and released by June. Jamie: "There are a couple of elements that are really

essential to what we've done this time. The main point is us finally realising who and what we are." Fair enough – it's no secret that Klaxons were a band in search of meaning since things went loopy after 2007's Mercury win. So what else has changed? "And then we all went off with this writer who introduced us to Shamanism." Oh...

What happened next, Jamie says, essentially led to the rebirth of Klaxons. "We met this writer, Daniel Pinchbeck, who wrote the book 2012: The Return Of Quetzalcoatl. We read about him in a magazine and then all of a sudden he was just stood next to us when we finished our performance at Glastonbury. So we were like, 'Wow! Unbelievable! We've wanted to meet you etc, etc...' I mean, I was going around for the last year asking everybody that I possibly could what 'the

KLAXONS' SECOND ALBUM JOURNEY: A TIMELINE

JAN '07:
Debut album
'Myths Of The
Near Future'
released

SEP '07:
'Myths...' wins the
Mercury Prize.
Mutterings of new
songs abound

FEB '08:
Sessions with
Bowie producer
Tony Visconti
cancelled

MAR '08:
Sessions with Dr
Dre and Beyoncé
producer Focus
cancelled

APR '08:
The band fly to
Milan for sessions
with James Ford...
which are aborted

**SUMMER
'08:** Back to the
drawing board,
and to rehearsal
rooms in London

**LATE '08/
EARLY '09:**
Twelve new songs
recorded with Ford
in France

FEB '09:
Four unreleased
songs debuted at a
gig at Madame Jo
Jo's in London

N • T H E • W A I T I N G



JACK WHITE

Although we've had a tour DVD (*Under Great White Northern Lights*), *The Raconteurs* and *The Dead Weather*, we're still waiting for Jack and Meg's next album following 2007's *Jack & Meg*. Or any news of it. A Stripes spokesperson told *NME* they'd had no word of a new album from the duo for 2010. Until the pair performed together on US TV last February, Meg White had slipped out of the public eye, suffering from acute anxiety. Jack has alluded to solo album plans and *The Dead Weather* hope to get their second album recorded this winter. Jack recently telling *NME* Radio, "We'd love to have the second record out within a year of the first one." Jack is also set to produce an album by Wanda Jackson, 'The Queen Of Rockabilly'. Intriguing, but what do we need to do to earn our Stripes back? *Eddie Smeek*

message' was for our time and I wasn't getting much of a clear answer. And we met this man, and he said 'Come with me to New York and get involved with these Shamanic ceremonies. I know these people who do ceremonies with this Peruvian forest medicine called Auyhaska...'

FYI: Google the word 'Auyhaska' and you'll get one result - a brief (but positive) appraisal in an emoticon-laden post called 'What's the best "legal" high?' on a yooof drug forum.

"So Daniel and I went over to New York, and we spent two or three days hanging out with this guy and then he took us to this Auyhaska ceremony with about 40

people in it. We took part, and at the end it just felt like the answers we were looking for became completely clear." The answers, Jamie explains, were "about clarity. It's a religious experience. It just offered complete clarity and understanding and the dispelling of fear. I just felt completely relaxed in understanding myself and what I thought the message was for our time."

Ah yes, "our time". The phrase pops up more than

Jamie, James and Simon admit they've had a "truly terrible time"

once in our conversation. It's this notion - of fully realising the myths of the present day - that has seeped into Klaxons' new songs at every opportunity, and finally allowed the band to actually get album number two out of the starting blocks and onto the tracks. It all relates, Jamie says, to 2012. Not the film, not the Olympics, but the year. "2012's a realignment. It's the coming of the fifth or sixth sun, whichever way you look at it. It's the end of the Mayan Long Count. It just works - mathematically, physically and in prophecy. This whole record is just a positive message for the time. That's it." So it's not about doomsday, or the end of the world? "No, no not at all. We don't believe in the end of the world," he says, straight-faced. "We believe in the collective consciousness and the world shift, and the dissolving of boundaries and the bringing together of humanity, and everybody having the same objective and living together in harmony. That's what we're going for." Wow. That's a phrase unlikely to pass through Tom Clarke *et al*'s lips any time soon...

With the basics of the album already recorded at Robinson's LA studio house ("we work in this tiny room the size of a child's bedroom"), Reynolds says that now they've got a suitable vision and the right producer, the band are "100 per cent" confident they'll actually finish the album. "We're here until it's done and I think it's gonna blow people's minds." Robinson's been more than just a producer, though. With any luck, he'll manage to ensnare the talents of At The Drive-In/Mars Volta frontman Cedric Bixler-Zavala (aka his next-door neighbour) on one track, and Jamie - though "not completely sold on all of his music" - credits Robinson with bringing all the Klaxons closer together. "We were an idea, now we're a band," he says. "It just feels alive. There's no studio tricks, and there are no electronics. It's just guitar, bass, keys, drums and all of us singing." Live staples 'Echoes' and 'Future Memories' are likely to make the cut, but from the completed Ford sessions it's only 'Valley Of The Calm Trees' that's survived

(though Reynolds says the SMD man is still "like family" to the band, adding that his work "will appear as a six-track EP at some point").

Of course, it would be easy to laugh off all the talk of Shamanism and 2012 - not to mention the Robinson pairing - but this is exactly what Klaxons have always been about. The beauty of mysticism and the magic of the unknown. It makes perfect sense for them to be going totally over the top on it, to try and channel it through "odd, punky and melodic pop songs" - they truly have rediscovered themselves.

And anyway, it's not as far-flung as it may seem. The noughties were defined by insecurity and threats from the shadows - warfare against enemies you can't actually see; money which is there one minute and - whoosh - gone the next. It's fair to say the next decade will probably be even more so.

"We're not preachers. We're kind of vessels," Reynolds says of the band's position. "We always said we'd make the future, present and past records. And right now we think the most important thing to do is to firmly recognise the present." Sounds like Klaxons have their finger firmly back on the pulse - here's hoping they actually get round to releasing something before it's too late... *Matt Wilkinson*



ARCADIE FIRE

With nearly three years having passed since Win Butler and co released their second effort 'Neon Bible', the flames are beginning to fire up again for the Canadian troupe's third album. Never a band to give out details of what they're having on their toast in the studio over Twitter or whatnot, the gang have been moodily cagey over details of the album. However, they recently broke their silence to *NME* to clear up some rumours.

Following reports from the USA suggesting that the album would be released as soon as May (in time for summer festivals...), the band explained that it would in fact be released in the "second half of 2010" as well as cooling the rumours of live bookings that had been doing the rounds. Also, with Marcus Mumford from Mumford & Sons letting slip that their producer Markus Dravs, who worked on 'Neon Bible', had been producing AF's new effort, they explained that Dravs was actually just one of three sound engineers they were booking up with. That all we've got so far. Come on Win, get on Twitterberry... *Mick Walden*

"We believe in the dissolving of boundaries and bringing together humanity"

JAMIE REYNOLDS

LATE FEB '09:

Ford album rejected by the label. Band eventually agree it "didn't feel right"

JUN '09:

Band meet author Daniel Pinchbeck, leading to a renewed burst of inspiration

OCT '09:

New material demoed in Wales ahead of LA sessions with Ross Robinson

NOV '09:

From Robinson's home studio, Jamie Reynolds Tweets: "Now it starts"

JANUARY

2010: Album number two pencilled in for completion

A lot's changed for Maya Arulpragasam since 'Paper Planes' triumph – for her third album she's looking for the “ultimate frequency” to make sense of it all

I make music to make people feel good,” states Maya Arulpragasam. “But at the same time, I know that the American military’s invented a car with a big speaker that they can drive into the middle of a protest and play a bassline frequency that makes you explode from within. Music is something that does the polar opposite and makes people feel better. But it should be done with the same amount of aggression. I would love to find the ultimate frequency that counteracts the frequency of the government that explodes people...”

With the beat warrior firmly back on mission, it’s funny to think that there was a time when it looked like there might not be another MIA album. In 2008, she declared at the Bonnaroo festival that it would be her last ever live show, cancelling all her UK tour dates and later revealing she considered quitting music altogether. Lately, it seemed that it was not only the birth of her first child but her work with protégée Rye Rye and her NEET label that had put new material of her own on the back burner.

But shit done changed. The massive success of ‘Paper Planes’, especially in the US, has given her a far more powerful platform. And she’s got plenty to shout about.

“So much crazy stuff just happened,” she marvels down the phone from LA. “Like, Bush isn’t in power any more. So much has changed between 2007 and 2009.”

Leaving aside for a moment the convulsions the planet’s gone through since ‘Kala’ was released, MIA’s own life has undergone a revolution. The birth of her son Ikhyd has meant a very different production process this time around. Whereas the making of ‘Kala’ involved a global scavenger hunt in search of beats and sounds, for her third album she’s been homebound. The as-yet-untitled album was recorded in her new home studio, on her own terms, with baby monitors watching over proceedings – thankfully, the bass and beats through the walls only sends little Ikhyd to sleep. “To me this is completely new,” she marvels. “I don’t know how to handle it. I’m having to work it out every step of the way. I’ve never had a house or a home or a base.”

Far from just her ‘motherhood record’, though, the new album addresses not just fundamental changes in Maya’s own life, but catastrophic cracks in the foundations of her art. Her heritage is as a member of Sri Lanka’s Tamil ethnic minority, refugee identity, political resistance – in the past year, though, the ideas that have driven her music from the start have been shaken to their core.

“It’s such a weird time,” she says sadly. “Just who I am, being a Tamil that came to England and being part of the Tamil community there, even that’s been completely changed from how I knew it in my lifetime. The civil war’s come to an end, and all these crazy barbaric acts happened on the internet. As an artist I was born on the internet. And on the same vehicle, I saw my town that I came from getting like blown up to smithereens, and a lot of babies getting killed, and everybody was just like, well, I don’t know, you know – it’s on the internet, is it real? I’m not sure...”

The way the web shaped reporting of the bloody end of the long-running conflict between armed Tamil groups and the Sinhalese majority in Sri Lanka had a huge

impact on Maya’s thinking about her role as an artist. As a confused world listened to conflicting reports and the Sri Lankan government’s strident denial of any wrongdoing, she posted furiously on Twitter, alerting followers to independent news stories and drawing attention to the Sri Lankan government’s bombing of innocent civilians and detention of Tamils in camps – actions that saw her branded a supporter of terrorism.

“Even the execution video that was shown on Channel 4, if you look up it up on Google now,” she argues, “the first link is to the government of Sri Lanka talking about why it’s a fake. It’s amazing. That’s modern, 21st-century, this-millennium evidence of war crime. It’s pretty disgusting that you can have it on national television in England, and it’s not shocking. So what else can you do? That video to me is like... I wanna call it art now. If something true doesn’t count as truth, then the only place it could go into is art. The philosophy of this album is about having to figure those questions out – what’s real and what’s art, what we all have to get good at and what we’re working against.”

The album was recorded with producer and DJ Blaqstarr, with Diplo & Switch adding finishing touches. She’s also worked with bass hero Rusko, but is keen to stress it’s new ground for both of them rather than a dubstep makeover, laughing, “thankfully I missed that whole phase”. She’s also sceptical about Diplo’s recent description of it as “Gucci Mane meets Animal Collective”.

“I don’t know what it is,” she says coyly. “I think it’s just more... musical. I wanted to make something that you could play that isn’t trendy just for three months, or the length of a DJ’s attention span. I’m not putting my emphasis on sound. Everything has become really production-led, and I think it’s really important to take it back to something else, because that’s why we have so much shit on the radio. Because we don’t put enough emphasis on artists and what they have to say.”

Titles like ‘It Takes A Muscle’ and ‘Fight The Ones That Fight Me’ certainly indicate a combative mood. This album also marks the first time Maya’s vocals don’t appear on one of her songs, ‘It’s The Music’. “We got this guy who does like ‘IN CINEMAS NOW...’ announcements on the radio to do it,” she explains. “It goes, ‘If it’s not the world then it’s the people/If it’s not the people, then it’s you/If it’s not you, then it’s me, and if it’s not me, then it’s the music, THE MUSIC, THE MUSIC’”.

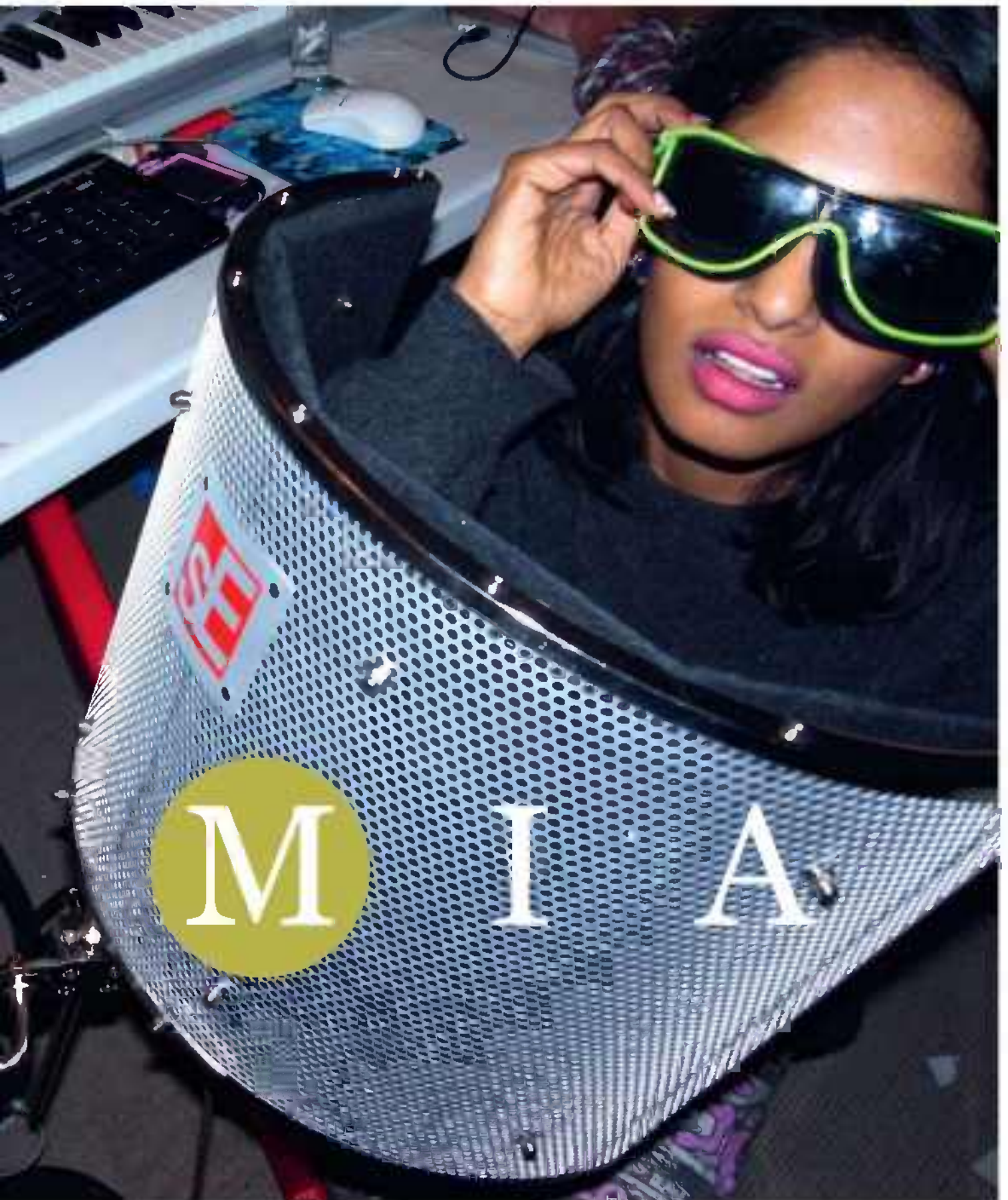
Maya’s due to start shooting a short film with Romain Gavras, director of Justice’s infamous ‘Stress’ video, in a few days, with a May or June release date likely for the album. For now, she remains hopeful that she can cancel out the world’s fucked-up wavelenghts.

“I was watching this film *Food Inc.*,” she says. “It’s about genetically modified food in America and how, like, four corporations control mass food production. And they showed a photo of a tomato and said, ‘This is not a tomato. It looks just like a tomato, and it tastes just like a tomato, but it’s not. It’s a perfect idea of a tomato. And I feel, like, for all human beings, we’re being forced to become the idea of a perfect human. And the perfect human is just someone who buys a lot of shit. That’s what they’re making us into. So we have to explore our faults and flaws and be proud of them. That’s what my album’s about. Being completely honest.” *Emily Mackay*

“We have to explore our faults and flaws and be proud of them. That’s what my album’s about”

MAYA ARULPRAGASAM





VAMPIRE WEEKEND

Frontman Ezra Koenig offers us his track-by-track guide to second album 'Contra' - released last Monday

HORCHATA

"Horchata" was a melody that I'd had in my head going way back to when I was a teacher - I remember singing it when I was fixing up my classroom. It took a long time to grow and become a proper song. We started recording it before we had finished writing it because we wanted to experiment with sounds and rhythms.

"We have a guest musician on this song: Mauro Refosco, a Brazilian percussionist who plays with David Byrne and Thom Yorke. He was cool. He showed up at the studio with a marimba and loads of other instruments that became an important part of the sound. We also play a kalimba, which is an African thumb piano. It's a unique sound because it's very pretty but it's also metallic and buzzy.

"The best horchata that I've ever drunk was in LA. It was a restaurant that did Oaxacan Mexican food. They put all these nuts and fruit in it."

WHITE SKY

"We debuted 'White Sky' at the album release show for the first album way back in January 2008. It's about exploring New York and the people who live there.

"We approached it almost like a rap or R&B song. Rostam [Batmanglij, keyboard] made a 30-second loop on his computer and I came up with a melody. Usually we'd bash out a song out in the studio between. So to me, this song is a link between our two albums."

HOLIDAY

"I hammered out the basic idea on the piano when I was waiting for everyone to show up one day. Then we played it on guitars and we liked how it reminded us of Operation Ivy and '90s ska-punk. It's about a member of my family who gave up meat when we invaded Iraq. They were horrified by what was happening and they lost their taste for meat. It wasn't even an overt protest, it was a physical reaction."



CALIFORNIA ENGLISH

"Probably the most notable thing about this song is the Auto-Tune. Some people started to have a knee-jerk reaction against it, but at the end of the day it's really just a technology. We felt it took the song to a new place and made it more original, rather than less so. I don't think anybody's going to mistake it for T-Pain."

TAXI CAB

"It's one of our first ballads. Even though it's a quiet, emotional song, it's still rhythmic. I don't like the idea that a ballad has to be mushy and lightweight, so I'm singing over these really heavy, dubby drums.

"It's about the way different people deal with problems in different ways."

RUN

"If you can hear some Springsteen on this song, that's because I'm a huge Springsteen fan. My dad has all his records and also, growing up in New Jersey, you had to be aware of him. He's the master of writing songs about running away. 'Born To Run' is a positive song, but this song deals with the fact that you could also be running away because you're trying to ignore your problems."

COUSINS

"In the middle of the album sessions we did a two-week tour of Mexico and we had all this time free. We did some tourist stuff but also booked a studio in Mexico City for two days, which was enough time to get 'Cousins' done. It's one of the most bare-bones songs we've ever made - it's only guitar, bass and drums."

GIVING UP THE GUN

"I got the idea for the song from a book my dad gave me called *Giving Up The Gun*. It's a history book about the time when Japan expelled all the foreigners from the country, closed off all trade and stopped using guns and reverted back to the sword. It seems unimaginable now that humanity could willingly go back to an older technology. It got me thinking about whether you could give up the things that you have and go back to a simpler way of life."

DIPLOMAT'S SON

"It's an MIA sample at the beginning. We used a mixture of live drumming, drum machines and hand percussion. Rostam already had some lyrical ideas for the chorus and then I came up with my own verse melody, so because two people collaborated on the lyrics, there is that sense of shifting perspectives."

I THINK UR A CONTRA

"It's the first song that I've sang entirely in falsetto. It's a conversation between two people and the way they're using the word 'contra' is to say, 'You're the opposite of me'. You can apply it to politics, culture, religion or personal relationships. We're fighting against the dumbing down of choice."



GRINDERMAN

When Nick Cave felt the itch and formed a new band with his hairiest Bad Seeds, many an ear was pleased by the brutal ruttings of *Grinderman*'s self-titled debut album. Mesochists and perverts will smile through their sausages at the prospect of 2010's follow-up.

NME speaks to mental uncle Warren Ellis and drummer Jim Sclavunos, the distasteful American in history. While both insist they're sworn to secrecy, Warren can't help frothing onto his beard. "All I can tell you is it's very much finished and is very different to the first *Grinderman* album," before blurting in his Aussie twang, "I think NME readers are going to adore it because it's very challenging, modern and psychotic. It's like stoner rock and Sly Stone meets Britney."

Sclavunos describes their general approach like this: "The first album was really well-received, we really appreciated that, and we're going to show our gratitude by absolutely refusing to give people what they want." He's similarly unhelpful with actual details, though likes to tease with a riddle or two: "No I'm not going to tell you anything about any of the songs. But they're great, and they cover a variety of topics from bloodshed to hairy animals to young girls masturbating in bathtubs... on the first album you felt the weight of distended testicles wraying in the breeze of a mid-life crisis, whereas this one is a magic carpet ride floating over the rich spectrum of life."

As with the first album, it came together during a series of jams ("I know that sounds as horrible as it feels coming out of my mouth," says Warren) at BAK in London and Battery Studios in Willesden. Warren says they'd "bask away for four or five days then pick out the stuff least appropriate and work on that." Sclavunos says the process was a "hairy orgy", in which "half the time you don't know what the others are playing." He guffaws at the suggestion the band is more democratic than the Bad Seeds and says when they reviewed the material Cave would "mercilessly slice through hours and hours of precious musical material with a butcher's cleaver."

The band are currently adding the final touches to the bloody remains, although in terms of a release date Sclavunos merely smirks. "It should be out by December 31, 2010," Warren says when it does hit, it'll do it hard. "I defy anyone to come up with something that's gonna top it. Seriously, 2010 is the year of *Grinderman*. It's the year for *Grinder*girls to meet *Grinder*boys and make *Grinder*kids." Martin Robinson



FOALS

Scrapped sessions, meat addictions and finally an album offering “delayed gratification”

Clearly, recording an album with Foals isn't as simple as having a jam, playing *Pro Evo* until you pass out and repeating until you've got 40 minutes you're happy with. “I think for the producer involved it's... not a particularly enjoyable experience,” frontman Yannis Philippakis outlines, speaking of his band's second full-length. “Not with me on their case. I'm a total control freak.” Helmed by ex-Clor man Luke Smith and currently being mixed by Alan Moulder (The Killers, Secret Machines, Nine Inch Nails), the record is set for release this spring. The Oxford band's follow-up to their 2008 debut *'Antidotes'*, if not quite verging on Klaxons territory, has had a laboured birth. After testing the waters with a variety of producers (including Paul Epworth) but not finding anything that stuck, eventually they agreed to work with Smith at the Svenska Grammofon Studio in Gothenburg. “I don't think we're ever really going to fit with a producer,” the frontman adds, attempting to explain the band's pickiness. “I don't think we'll ever find our Brian Eno or Quincy Jones. We're not the kind of band who are receptive to anybody coming in and fucking with our shit.”

The recording, which began in August in the sparse Swedish surroundings (Yannis: “The outside was just a concrete wilderness with very little joy”) was hardly the month-long knees-up in New York's Electric Lady some bands enjoy. The madness-inducing isolation combined with Yannis' control freakiness galvanised the musical will of the other four band members. Soon things

reached boiling point. “Put it this way, people were threatening to quit,” Yannis admits. “There's five people in the band and each of us had a slightly different perspective on the kind of record we wanted to make. Jack [Bevan, drums] and Edwin [Congreave, keyboards] both went beyond the call of duty and left early. Jack was only eating different hams and wearing the same tracksuit trousers. He definitely started to lose it.”

The band “fought like true centurions” to smooth out their madness (Yannis: “Within the band we talk a lot. We try and make sure it doesn't get like Ricki Lake”) and knuckle down to complete the album, which boasts the songs ‘Spanish Sahara’, ‘Alabaster’, ‘Death Surf’, ‘Two Trees’ and ‘Total Life Forever’ – although the album is as-yet-untitled. “It's like an ironic, slightly tongue-in-cheek comment on the quest for eternal youth,” Yannis says of the album's name. “I was reading a book called *Singularity* by Ray Kurzweil. He deposits this idea... the relationship between technology and man is becoming increasingly blurred. It's basically a comment on that.”

The band took “30 or 40 fragments of things, from drone pieces to poppy funk pieces” to Gothenburg to take the hammer and tongs to. And while the battle of wills escalated, Yannis soon found that the reins were

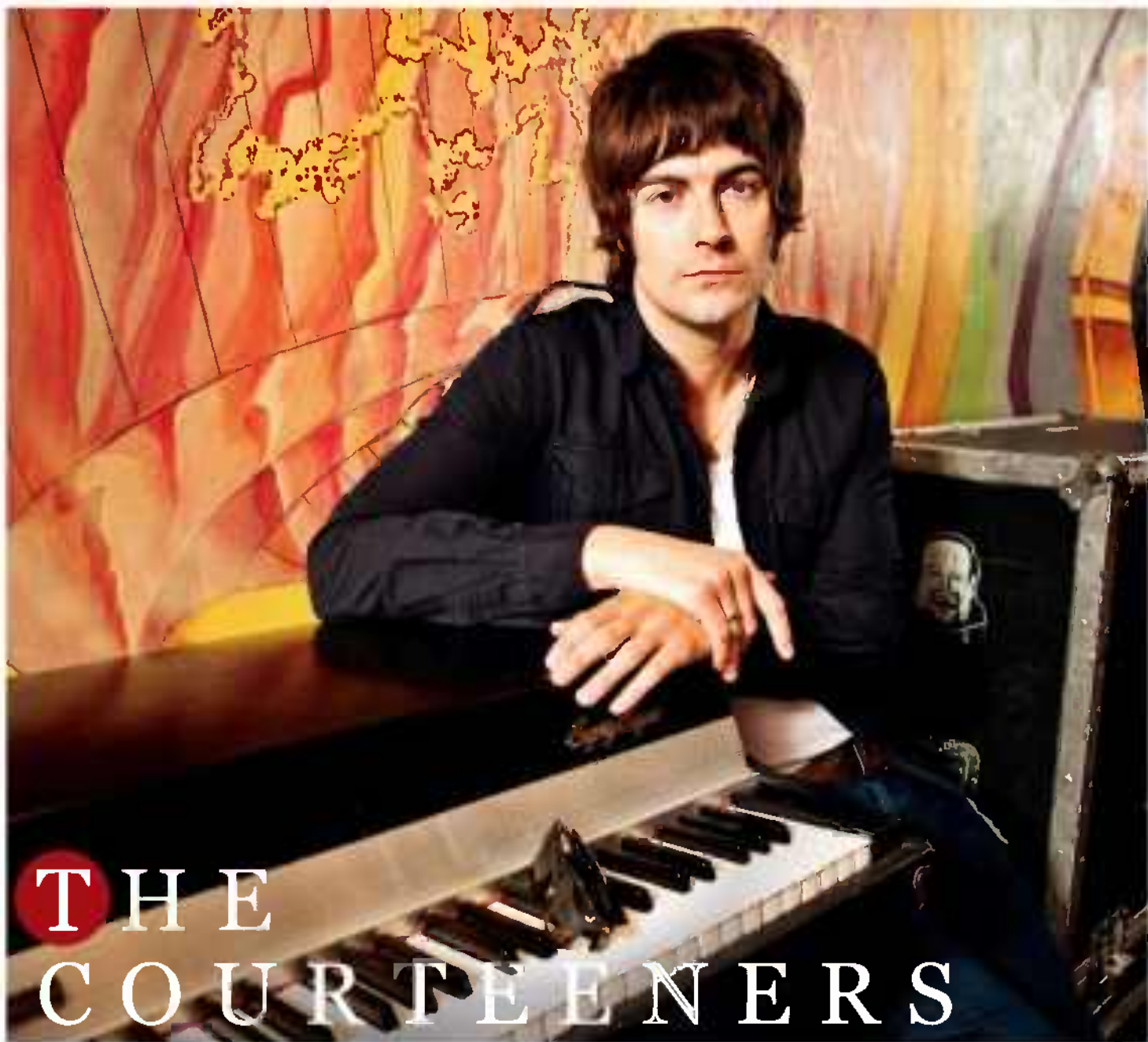
sliding from his grasp as the songs formed. Band members laid down individual takes, surrounding themselves with International Klein Blue, the colour they became obsessed with (“It seemed to fit with the mood of a lot of the tracks”) and that will define the album's artwork. “What was coming out of the speakers was a lot darker than what we had anticipated,” he explains. “It feels like there was some kind of space jump, a worm loop that happened in Sweden. You can call it the Devil if you want.”

Paring his explanations of the new sound down, Yannis says that “there isn't our normal four-to-the-floor beat through 90 per cent of the album.” Also, that it is “more expansive” than *'Antidotes'* with longer songs and “delayed gratification” to the extent that he believes ‘Total Life Forever’ represents the opposite of bite-sized digital culture. “It's at odds with the climate, musically and culturally,” he outlines. “It's less ADD corporate pop... ‘stuff it in your Nano Shuffle and multi task!’”

We may be in for a deliciously difficult listen. Yannis: “Some of our more fairweather fans will be dismayed. We're older than we were when we wrote ‘Hummer’ or ‘Balloons’. I don't want to be the musician who at 30 would be writing angst lyrics for a 15-year-old. I'd rather quit and be a boxer or something.” *Jamie Fullerton*

“We're not the kind of band who are receptive to anybody coming in and fucking with our shit”

YANNIS PHILIPPAKIS



THE COURTEENERS

With 'Falcon' almost upon us, Liam Fray's got his eye on the big league

Buoyed by both that triumphant Manchester Central gig and the fact that tickets for their March UK tour are selling fast, The Courteeners are now putting the finishing touches to their second album, 'Falcon', set for release on February 23. As suggested by recent free download single 'Cross My Heart & Hope To Fly', Liam Fray's lot have been working towards a more expansive sound. "The first album did everything that it needed to do, but it was very much a 'get in there and get it done' album," he says. "We were babies, we were still learning. I wasn't going to go in and do a fucking massive production album - it's not right on your first one. This one is more... intricate. There's much more layers to all of the songs."

Fans present at December's arena show (or those who are YouTube literate) will be familiar with eight

of the record's 12 songs. That night they began their set with 'Will It Be This Way Forever?', the song that closes the album and most exhibits The Courteeners' new, bombastic dynamics with its heartbeat kickdrum and echoing "oooh"s. Similarly stadium-sized is 'Take Over The World', which is dominated by a tumbling piano motif and as such recalls Elbow or Coldplay's 'A Rush Of Blood To The Head'.

'The Opener', meanwhile, begins with acoustic guitar before building into a Springsteen-style epic, complete with strings, piano and glockenspiel. "I wasn't sure at first about it being the first song on the album and calling it 'The Opener'," Fray smiles. "But in the end it stuck. I'm really fond of that song. The structure is fucking insane. It's a love letter to Manchester, basically; a song that says, 'I miss you'."

Also unveiled were disco-tinged single 'You Overdid It, Doll'; the stop-start rhythms of 'The Good Times

Are Calling', a solo acoustic song called 'The Rest Of The World Has Gone Home' and 'Sycophant', which sees The Courteeners channelling the spirit of The Smiths more than ever before. In terms of songs that are yet to be played live, 'Lullaby' adds bubbling synths and backwards loops to the mix and 'Cameo Brooch' a slow, downbeat groove. The distorted guitars of 'Scratch Your Name Upon My Lips' make it the closest thing here to early Courtneeners, and the set is completed by the just Liam-and-piano solo song 'Last Of The Ladies'.

"I just think my songwriting's stepped up a gear," Liam notes. "In fact, I think it's stepped up two - I think it's missed one out and gone straight to fourth! We're not at fifth yet, but that's coming. The stage is set for us with this album to really impress and surprise people. I'm just desperate for people to hear it now." **Hamish MacBain**



LIGHTSPEED CHAMPION

Life is sweet on Dev's second album. Or is it his 10th?

For Lightspeed Champion, there are no difficult second albums because his second is already, he reckons, his 10th. Nowadays, Dev Hynes just opens his CD wallet to Domino Records every couple of years when they come knocking. "Cos I always have loads of albums ready," he explains, slightly sheepishly. "I kind of stock them up. And then when it comes to the time when the label needs one, I just flick through..."

Aside from the album of '80s-style pop that's come out concurrently under his Blood Orange tag, and the now-shelved album he made with legendary Beach Boys orchestrator Van Dyke Parks, and the entire record of classical piano music that he's got sitting on his iPod, Dev's also got another record of Weezer/Strokes-style indie buried in his bedroom.

This is just some of what he's been up to in the past two years. The man has basically been put on this earth to make everyone else in the universe feel like shiftless blobs whose only possible productive potential is in lifting bacon butties to their downturned mouths. There are the short stories he's had published in *Punk Fiction* collection, there's the song he wrote for Solange Knowles and his newly-published comic book. Oh – and he's moved to New York and started hanging out with the dudes from Chairlift. Busy.

"Well, I can't really afford to live in London. I live in Brooklyn," he explains. "Rent's still fairly expensive, but travel and food is far cheaper."

The new record was made in his new hometown with producer Ben Allen (Danger Mouse, Animal Collective), and a three-piece backing band. The first single – 'Marlene' – you'll probably have heard already. It's officially released a week before 'Life Is Sweet! Nice To Meet You' drops on February 1.

Whereas debut 'Falling Off The Lavender Bridge' was more on the Saddle Creek side of singer-songwriter, for his new 'un Dev has imagined himself in the vein of the baroque, baubled, booze-browed singer-songwriters of the 1970s. "For instance, 'Sweetheart', that's probably my favourite track on this record," he says "That's kind of a Lee Hazlewood thing."

Despite having no real classical training, the former Test Icicle scored all the instrumentation himself. "I thought it would be kind of cool to write parts that were really hard and if really good musicians played them it would sound cool. I wanted it to sound expensive, even though it wasn't. There's been a real drive to make music sound lo-fi recently, which is something I hate. I make music on my laptop, but I always want everything to sound so good."

So obsessed has he become with developing himself into a rounded classical musician that he's considering attending a music school. "I just want to get really good at everything," he explains. "I'm not sure touring really benefited me last time round... I wanna start from the very beginning. I'm going to use the Van Dyke Parks record to get myself into school – 'Look, I worked with Van Dyke – let me in.' " **Gavin Haynes**

MYSTERY JETS

Super Furry Animals recorded a Beetle-chewing celery for their album 'Rings Around The World'. The Big Pink reckon they got the ghost of Hendrix playing on 'A Brief History Of Love'. Gallows got a guest spot from a dying swine on 'Grey Britain'. But Mystery Jets nearly topped them all on their third full-length when they enlisted a bagpipe-playing penguin for a cameo.

"We got a weird bagpipe player in," Blaine Harrison recalls of album sessions at London's British Grove Studios. "We found him on Google, he was cheap. He came along and started playing the Star Wars theme on his midi bagpipes while wearing a penguin mask."

Alas, Plogu's efforts didn't make the cut, but the album is likely to include the songs 'Lorna Doone', 'Dreaming', 'Lady Grey', 'Flash', 'Girl Is Gone', 'Skinny Jeanne' and 'Alice Springs'.

The album, produced by Chris Thomas (Pink Floyd, Pulp, Sex Pistols – who declared MJ "a great British band" after catching them live) sees the five-piece unashamedly expand on the pop intrusions they made on the '80s-tinged 'Twenty One', but according to bassist Kai Fish they've left the shoulder pads at home this time. "We were referential of that certain style, that '80s thing," he explains. "But we're out of that world now."

Instead the band have looked back even further, listening to ELO, Fleetwood Mac and 10CC for inspiration while writing in a caravan in Cornwall before beginning album sessions last June. An added influence was the return of Blaine's dad Henry for writing sessions. "It's an interesting rivalry we've got going," says Henry, who wrote with Blaine while Kai and guitarist Will Ross paired up. He's clearly a big presence despite not being a full-time member.

The result is an album full of melodic whoops and repeated choruses. Likely album opener 'Flash' features the lyric "Have you heard the birds and bees? They've all got STDs" (Blaine: "That was from a time when Will was enjoying himself too much"), but the frontman is keen to outline that despite lyrics about animals with knob rot, he's happy to ponder to radio playlist guidelines if it means they can finally break into the mainstream.

"Radio play is important to us," he says of their quest for the most hummable choruses in the land. "We just need to give ourselves as much of a chance as possible to get to the housewives and teenage girls." Probably best they left the penguin bagpipes off, then. **Jamie Fullerton**



BACK•TO•THE

Absence makes the heart grow fonder... just ask these three not-solo-anymore artists

H O L E

Four years, two cities, five studios and three producers... and still Courtney Love believes her new Hole album, 'Nobody's Daughter' isn't done.

"I'm a crazy perfectionist. I'm never ever gonna put this out unless it comes out. So I'm putting it out," she insists.

In New York's Electric Lady studios, Love is making the final, tiniest changes to the songs with her new wingman, ex-Larrikin Love man Micko Larkin, recruited because "his guitar playing blew me away because it's just so fucking MODERN. It's Jonny Greenwood and Jack White and now, and he's not stuck in any '90s rut"). The pair are now down to the finalising of the album's track listing.

"I want every song to be an A-list song," says Love. "There's a little fat to trim; I'm talking about a song called 'Everything I Touch'. And there's a song called 'Amen' which Micko just wrote that is good. We're mixing, so we're done, but there might be one or two more songs we trade. I want every song to be as good as the one you remember six months later. It's torture!"

When the record is finally completed, it'll be released as a Hole album. This caused a bit of fuss recently, when band co-founder Eric Erlandson appeared to nix Love's intention to revive the name. Of this, she's dismissive.

E • B A N D S

BABYSHAMBLES

It's quite a feat, Pete Doherty informs us, that Babyshambles are even contemplating album number three, let alone gearing up to record it.

There are issues, but as always, 'Shambles are set to plough on regardless. "It's a different band to 'Down In Albion', completely. And it feels like a different band to the one who did 'Shooters Nation'," Pete states, before fixing his gaze on his comrades. "But really, truly, there are bones of contention that we're even on the third album." It wasn't intentional, he says, but he ended up nicking one of guitarist Mik Whitnall's tunes for his solo album. That song, 'Salome', was credited to one "Peter Doherty" because, apparently, "it just slipped my mind" that Whitnall had a helping hand on it. As a result, he continues, band relations leading up to the current state of play were, well, "kind of a shambles".

One thing all four 'Shambles do agree on, though, is that their new album is finally starting to take shape. Twenty songs have been honed so far – mostly conceived at Mik's studio in Old

Street, London – and we're promised a record of varied output: from the gobby punk of 'Fireman' (a devilish Pete classic in the same vein as 'Mayday' and 'Arbelt Macht Frei'), to their "fuck-off big Sinatra hit" 'After He' (aka "a combination of classic ska and The Smiths"), and, on 'Bonjour Tristesse', touches of classic Neil Young (citra 'Harvest'). As for producers, Stephen Street remains a favourite, though nothing's set in stone. Mik wants someone who can do a good John Leckie impression on baggy-tastic newbie 'Ocean', while all four agree that some of their best material has been made with their own grubby catts.

Regarding how he wants the album to take shape, Pete is – surprise, surprise – as aloof as ever. "You come out with something mediocre, create a big hype around it so that people have an interest in it and you're lucky enough to make some money... or, you write an album which has some fucking amazing songs that's just a great record and that's that." So which is yours gonna be, P? "Well, I suppose... it's gonna have to be one or the other isn't it?" Matt Wilkinson



"It is Hole, yes of course. How do I do this? It is because it just is, and it is because we just negotiated our thing and it'll be fine. Everyone has good lawyers. Somebody told me last night to 'follow the love' and I was like 'yeah'. That's what it is. You go where the love is, except where do you when the lawyers come around? The love stops!"

So you think he just saw a chance to make a bit of money?

"I don't want to make that comment about him. I don't wanna slam him. I'm a big sharer. Inside the business I am not known for being a stunge, for sure. In fact Michael Stupe was telling me that I buy dinner way too much. So I'm not stingy in any way, I give a lot of publishing to everyone."

She breaks, as she often does, to pick up her point.

"I can't function without a band. You've heard me, and it's not real. Micko's co-produced this for one thing. When we went to New York we had only drums, bass, a little guitar. We had no vocals, and he co-produced the rest of it. Michael [Beinhorn, the album's main producer] did these amazing black gashes of sonic, beautiful tracks that only Michael could have done, but Micko did all the strings, he did all the backing vocals, all the cello and all the keyboards."

The record's confessional centrepiece is a song called 'Honey'. A tragic, gothic, love song that seeps instantly under the skin, it's the most naked song she's ever written about her feelings of loss over her late husband. Often on 'Nobody's Daughter', in fact, Love seems to be re-visiting the most notorious part of her life in spine-tingling detail. "I knew a boy that came from the sea," runs 'Pacific Coast Highway'. "He was the only boy who ever knew the truth about me". Why has this come out of her now, at this particular point in time?

"As I said in fucking 1991, I'm not psychic, but my lyrics certainly seem to be. It's really weird that way. All of it's hard. I never knew what it was all about, this record. And then last night I was doing a photoshoot and I was suddenly weeping. But I never knew what it was about. I just went with my soul."

And what of the title? Could the current situation with daughter Frances Bean (the pair are living apart) make that a little uncomfortable, going forward?

"Am I supposed to re-name it? It's a brilliant title, it's keenly felt. And this is not about me and my daughter. I have a lot of girls who like this band because they have dysfunctional relationships with their mothers. And a lot of boys – it's more evolved dudes; some fist-pumpers, but not a lot – who are more keenly sensitive. I like our fanbase, it's really strong, and it's specific to a certain kind of person that has issues with their parents."

And are you OK with that?

"Errm, it's my lot in life."

For now though, all the verbally chaotic Love seems to really want to talk about is her songs.

"This is all about 'The Wall' to me. I don't know when 'The Wall' and 'Diamond Dogs' really came into play as aspirational albums to... not ever try and and be as good as... well fuck it, yeah: to be as good as if not better."

We talk more about 'Honey' "It's open, it's not hiding anything emotionally, it's not a smart-ass song. But in terms of tension and holding tension, 'Samantha' kills it and that's why it's the first single. It's so fucking nasty. And there's another one, 'Skinny Little Bitch', which when it's mixed will be like a fist in your face."

"Me and Micko went to the [site of the] World Trade Center at 3am and rewrote that song so it wouldn't be so clever-clever. It's just completely visceral, kind of stupid. And it's really, really important to keep that

stupid part of yourself alive, otherwise you start getting all smart and start growing stupid facial hair. Including me. I shave every day. THERE'S YOUR PULL QUOTE! But it's really important to keep that stupid, Ramones-y part of yourself alive. 'I DON'T WANNA BE BURIED! IN A PET SEMATARY!' Because there's so much clever-clever on 'Nobody's Daughter', I get to say every long word I've ever wanted." Dan Martin

INTERPOL

Paul Banks, leaving his solo guise Julian Plenti aside, says that Interpol have benefited from Carlos D's sideline as a soundtrack composer for album four.

"He's gone to new levels of crazy, sophisticated orchestration," suggests the singer. "What we've worked on is making a real step forward."

Still, though the as-yet-untitled album will be more elaborate, its DNA is resolutely Interpol.

"There was an unspoken realisation that you can't let go of your sonic-defining tag," explains drummer Sam Fogarino. "There was an effort in Daniel [Kessler]'s guitar tone; he rediscovered it playing in his left space without anybody. The quality of tone is just beautiful." Mason Lawrence



"We went to the site of the World Trade Center at 3am and rewrote a song so it wouldn't be so clever"

COURTNEY LOVE



LAURA MARLING

Things got Mumford-ly big for her – now even bigger?

Laura Marling had just turned 18 when she released her Brit-folk debut, 'Alas I Cannot Swim', in 2008. Two years down the line, having found herself at the epicentre of a Mumford & Sons/Noah And The Whale nu-folk whirlwind that's made her an Official Big Deal, the small-town teen from Hampshire is back with follow-up 'I Speak Because I Can'. It was recorded in May and June last year, first at Eastcote Studios in west London then at Real World Studios in Bath, where the album's producer Ethan Johns is based. Laura and Johns, who has produced Ryan Adams and Kings Of Leon and is the son of legendary '60s producer Glyn Johns, originally planned on a medieval direction but Laura canned the plan when the Joanna Newsom track 'Colleen' randomly played on her iPod. "I was like, 'Oh shit,'" she laughs. "Someone's already done it!"

According to Laura, 'I Speak Because I Can' became "more band-based and it's more raw" than her debut, and sees the singer dealing with the theme of "responsibility, particularly the responsibility of womanhood." Opening with 'Devil's Spoke', it was recorded as live onto tape and plays in the order the tracks were recorded. The optimistic 'Darkness Descends' saw one of the only disagreements between artist and producer: "I was in a battle with Ethan to keep it plain and simple but he was like, 'No, you've got to put a beat on it,'" Laura explains. "So there's quite prominent drums all the way through it and a bit more sunshine than I would have done, but I like how it's come out – it's fun."

As well as producing, Johns also plays a selection of 'fabulously weird instruments' including an Appalachian dulcimer, a mandocello and a sitar, which appears on the title track. Mumford & Sons have also returned to play with Marling, with the band's frontman Marcus Mumford and bassist Ted Dwane reprising their roles in Marling's backing band alongside singer-songwriter Pete Roe and Noah And The Whale's Tom Fiddle. Mumford & Sons' banjo player Country Winston guests on 'Rambling Man' and 'Devil's Spoke' as well. "Ben was busy doing his own production on other people," Marling tells *NME*, in reference to the final member of the folksy four-piece, Ben Lovett. "We didn't just forget about Ben!" As selfless as ever, then – but momentum suggests Laura may have to get used to being the centre of attention. **Leonie Cooper**

KATE NASH

Dave Sitek must really be getting sick of us Brits. First Foals scrapped their debut album sessions with him, now Kate Nash has given him the brush off.

"I went to LA with Ryan [Jarman of The Cribbs, her boyfriend] when they were recording and met some producers," she explains. "I thought I was going to work with Dave for a while but it just wasn't quite right. You have to have a bit of control freakiness going on to be that good – but I had too much of an album plan. He was like, 'Well, maybe when you run out of ideas we should work together.'"

After the Sitek idea was put on standby, Kate hooked up with Bernard Butler (after an introduction from Ryan), hitting the RAK Studios in London with the ex-Suede man and Duffy producer in July following solo writing sessions in Mill Hill. The result is the as-yet-untitled second album, the follow-up to the debut that propelled her to stardom, 2007's 'Made Of Bricks'. Some songs have the working titles 'Doo Wa Doo', 'I Hate Seagulls', 'Paris', 'Kiss That Girl' and 'Don't You Wanna Share The Guilt'. Following writing sessions interspersed with piano and drum lessons and a riot grrrl playlist for lyrical inspiration, the Londoner is confident she's developed. And she needs to be. With initial accusations that she had ridden in on a bandwagon being pulled by Lily Allen still stinging, it's this album that will determine whether Kate has more in her vintage dress pockets than a few sweet piano melodies and kooky artwork.

Early listens suggest the sound is bigger, more complex than before, with Kate arranging violin and trumpet parts herself. "Doo Wa Doo" has a girl-group '60s feel," she outlines, "but there are some acoustic songs too, like 'You Are So Far Away', played on an old Spanish guitar, the first one my dad ever had. It's got organ on it too."

And like the music, her earlier tinkly tales of teenage romances have matured into a warm analysis of her own love life. "I had never been in a serious relationship before – it changes a lot of things," she explains. "'I Hate Seagulls' is my one real honest song. It's like, 'I hate seagulls, I hate groupies and I hate being sick'. Sometimes there are things in your life where you're like, 'Fucking hell, I hate all this bullshit.' Then there's someone who you love, whether that's your friend, sister, mum or partner... that's the reason you're alright. Because you love someone and someone loves you back." **Jamie Fullerton**



ON • THEIR • OWN • AGAIN

Once they were among many, but in 2010 this lot have grand plans to fly solo...



CARL BARAT

Hoisted up on the wall of Carl Barat's north London kitchen is an enormous "LIBERTINE" sign that lights up when you plug it in. It's from an old Gene tour set-up (they had a song named that) as opposed to Carl having it especially made – he's not quite that vain. And while he might not be tearing around London squat parties, Albion flag flapping in his slipstream much these days, having dissolved Dirty Pretty Things after they became glued to the band treadmill and a Libertines reunion not on the cards until 2011, by default he's a solo artist. A new liberty, of sorts? Not that he finds it easy working for himself.

"Without focus I'm kind of... drifting," he admits, knocking back a tequila in his rustic kitchen while Gil Scott-Heron plays on vinyl in the background. "But I was claustrophobic in bands. So now I've forced this on myself and my management have cracked the whip – because otherwise I'll be there idle. I'll end up watching *Come Dine With Me* or *True Blood*. Drifting..."

Hauling himself back from a future of bad reality shows and DVD marathons, Carl has "finished the embryos" of his first album under his own name, written in his upstairs music room, mainly on piano. He'd like it to come out "the earlier the better".

Making a concerted effort to veer away from his guitar for as long as he could, Carl has looked for something more tender and introspective than the Libs' oik-rock rackets now he's been around the block a few times.

On the demos *NME* has heard, piano and cello cut deftly into songs such as 'Love Is A Graveyard', 'If Life's Too Long' and 'The Song I Never Wrote For You'. The latter is grand with Lennon-y piano hops, 'Love.' is sea shanty-ish, while 'If...' does see Carl pick up the guitar for acoustic power strums and a powerful chorus.

"You can write a song with a couple of coconut shells," Carl laughs. "You get sucked into it. I simply wanted to write a record which comes from the heart and that I want to connect with other people's hearts."

So, it's Carl's 'introspective' record, then. But if his attitude seems calm and relaxed, it is so mainly because of his relief at stepping off the band treadmill. "I experienced major label disappointment and torture," he recalls. "I knew what it was like to make a record you didn't want to make for reasons you didn't want to make it. Then to watch the label not market it because they're too busy with Mariah fucking Carey"

In contrast the as-yet-untitled (as-yet hooked by a record label, although winter talks should see its home decided) album was written with no such pressures and is something Carl claims is more honest. The worry is that, with former bandmate Pete Doherty's own solo album hardly igniting the charts, keeping things low-key could see Carl's effort make even fewer ripples. On the plus side he doesn't really care. "It's just utterly truthful," he claims, pointing out that lyrics such as "I've carved my name in the livers of my lovers" see him get personal with loves and regrets. "You've got to be honest. Otherwise all you'd ever write about is soundchecks and dressing rooms." *Jamie Fullerton*

RICHARD ASHCROFT



The first post-Verve reformation album by Richard Ashcroft is supposedly *not* a solo album. Instead he has teamed up with big name hip-hop producer No ID – the man responsible for Jay-Z's 'Run This Town' and 'DOA (Death Of Auto-Tune)' – to form a new band called United Nations Of Sound. "He heard an interview where I talked about how producers destroy albums just for the sales," says the producer, real name Dion Wilson. "He said he liked how I thought, so we went in and recorded between 20-30 songs." The record, titled 'Redemption', is being mixed by long-time collaborator Chris Potter and will be released in late March. *Hamish MacBain*

MILES KANE



He's been a Rascal and a Puppet, but in 2010 Miles Kane is set to record a solo album. "I'm back working and it feels good and fresh. The Kane is ready!" jokes the singer, who has already demoed the album he hopes to release in the first half of 2010. Assisting Miles are co-producers Craig Silvey (The Coral) and Gruff Rhys from Super Furry Animals. "It's been lovely working with them," says Miles of the pair. "I'm feeling great about the album." *Paul Stokes*

ANDY BURROWS



Having said ta-ra to Johnny Borrell last March, ex-Razorlight Andy Burrows is the latest skin-hitter to try and show he's more than a human metronome. As well as supplying drums for We Are Scientists' next record Andy has been quietly recording a solo album in London. Teaming up with Bloc Party and Noah And The Whale producer Eliot James in Eastcote Studios, he has just finished work on the album which will be with us next summer. "I started working on these songs a couple of weeks after I quit Razorlight," he explains. "I needed to get on with something creative straight away." *Paul Stokes*

PAUL EPWORTH



After a career producing for the likes of Bloc Party, Jack Peñate and Florence And The Machine, Paul Epworth is to reveal his own solo debut. Set to be released in either June or September, the album will be released under a pseudonym as "I like a bit of anonymity so the music's taken on its own merits". Paul began work on the as-yet-untitled record in his Kensall Road studio in London last October and so far he's been recording vocals himself, but "whether or not I'll be singing on the final versions, we shall see". *Leonie Cooper*

"I've forced this on myself because otherwise I'd end up idle, watching *Come Dine With Me*"

LIARS

When Liars frontman Angus Andrew went in search of Los Angeles' dark side as inspiration for his band's new album

'Sisterworld' (out March 8), he got a little more darkness than he bargained for.

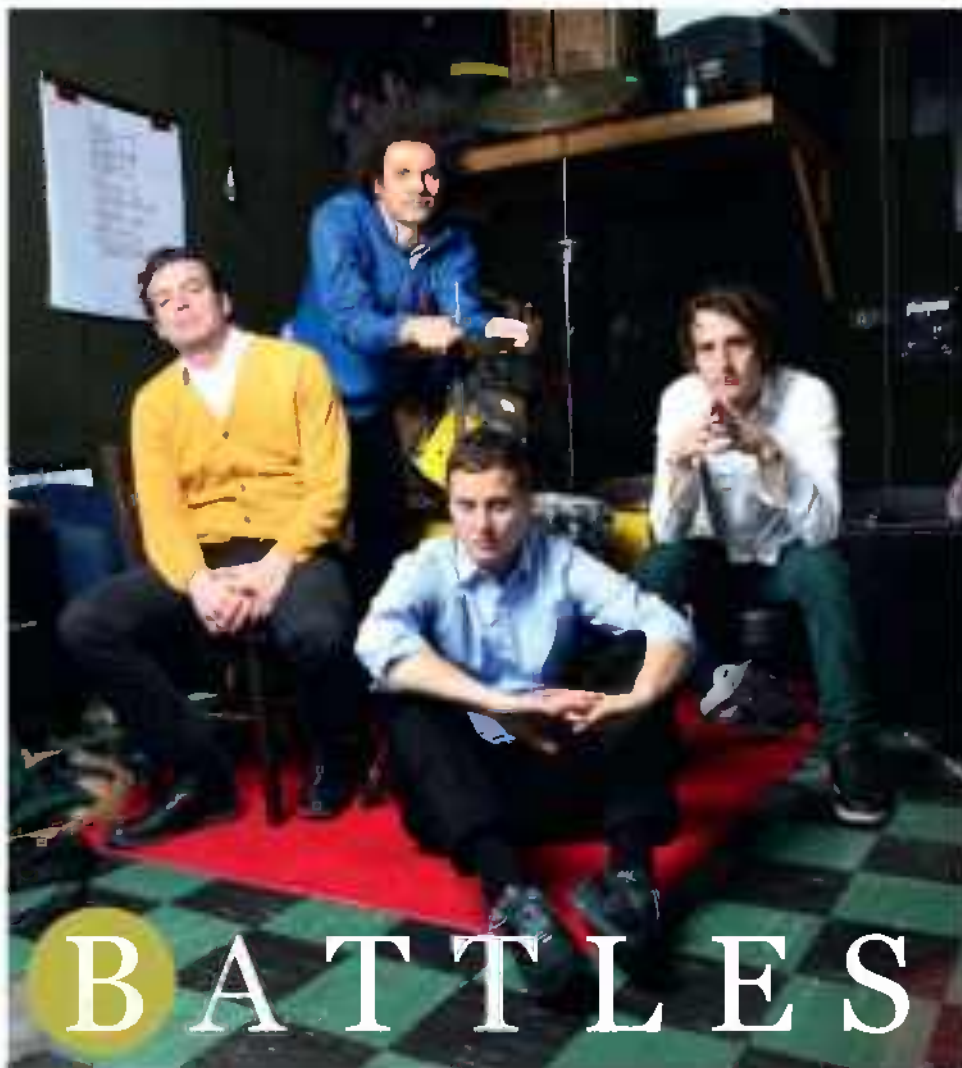
"I found an abandoned recording studio in a kind of undefined, inbetween area near the tar pits called La Brea," he explains. "I got a bed and a bunch of equipment and moved in there. I've lived in a lot of pretty hardcore places in my life, in New York and in Berlin, but this really felt like living on the edge."

For a start, every weekend there was an "illegal late-night grey-area sex party" on his block. "I'd go and people-watch. Everyone looked a bit like Marilyn Manson and there were a lot of drugs. People would be having sex in the middle of the dancefloor with everyone watching."

Then came the really nasty stuff. "I watched a guy bleed to death from gunshot wounds on my doorstep. I was freaked out, but I was also in the mindset where this was what I wanted. Eventually there was a point when some guys were trying to break into my studio through the wall and I basically broke down, so I did escape then to somewhere more suburban to finish off the writing." Fair enough.

When it came to recording, Liars found a "spooky, junkyard" house in the more salubrious Fairfax distric. Along with *Where The Wild Things Are* producer Tom Biller, who helped to score some ambitious orchestrated arrangements, they set about experimenting with sounds that made them feel "uneasy". "We made some songs that were really good and catchy but they didn't have that mood that we needed, so we left them out," Andrews outlines, explaining that songs including 'Scissor', 'Drip' and 'Proud Evolution' made the cut.

The result is a furiously unsettling listen, with shades of Suicide, Portishead's 'Third', and minimalist composer Harry Partch, but Angus reckons that the universe he's created on the album is ultimately cathartic. "'Sisterworld' is somewhere you can retreat to, where you get to make the rules and determine exactly how things are. It's somewhere you can regain your sense of self." *Sam Richards*



It's "sink-or-swim" for the brain rockers on their second

Battles guitarist Dave Konopka can't decide if his band have gone pop or prog (or, indeed, minimal techno - drummer John Stanier is now living among the Kompakt Records techno set in Cologne). On the one hand, Tyondai Braxton is singing more, and the new tracks have what Dave calls "a playfulness" that might end up constituting their "bubblegum pop album." On the other hand, they just realised their latest track comes out at an eye-watering 16 minutes.

"It had a loop, a long loop that takes a while to set," Dave explains. "It built up and became this epic thing. And we thought, do we really want to start like this, making songs like Yes' 'Close To The Edge'?"

With an array of new pedals and programmes the four have been writing tracks "on a daily basis" and testing them out at Warp's 20th Anniversary shows.

They've also ditched their rehearsal studio on the sleepy avenues of Brooklyn for one of the busiest places on Earth, Times Square. A pretty intense place to plot an album?

"Where we are is really seedy, it reminds me of old school *Midnight Cowboy*-era New York," Dave says. "Most of that area has been Bloomberged into consumerism, ESPN zones and Broadway shows, but on the outskirts there's little pockets of vice. We're playing right above a jack shop."

Soon they'll be heading back to where they tracked

'Mirrored' (Pawtucket's Machines With Magnets studio) to record the album proper. So how does Dave expect the record to be received? "I would hope reviewers say that it's some next-level shit," he responds, "although it's borderline impossible to predict what people are going to say. At the end of the day it's important that we're putting out what we think are strong, good songs for the next interpretation of Battles. The second album is sink-or-swim, and if this bombs that really sucks and doesn't set us up - people might consider us a fluke."

Of course, there'll be a new iteration of the famous 'I Have Battles In My Life' T shirt that Lil Wayne's so fond of too.

So with tracks from 'Mirrored' having been used on everything from *Little Big Planet* to an Audi ad, where does Dave think the new songs will end up? He laughs. "Maybe they'll start doing them on *The X Factor*." Joe McElderry singing to a backing track in an 11/8 time signature? We can only hope. *Tim Chester*

"Maybe they'll start doing
our new songs on
The X Factor"

DAVE KONOPKA

BLACK LIPS



We're going to turn it into an echo chamber," grins Black Lips' Cole Alexander. "We're going to drop an Echoplex mic inside it and sing. We're hoping to tap into the spiritual world."

Cole has a new toy. It's a human skull he bought on the black market in New York and we're going to get to hear its full potential on the Atlanta rockers' next album, which they started recording this winter in their hometown Rock N' Roll Studios, with the plan to get it out in the summer.

"We're hoping the person who once lived in the skull can enhance the songs," says Cole.

Well, you didn't think the firecracker-popping, phlegm-lobbing, pig's-head-on-the-side-of-the-stage-placing four-piece were just going to get a new Marshall amp or something, did you?

New songs, currently in instrumental states, set for the follow-up to 2009's '200 Million Thousand' include 'Wildest Dreams', 'So Long' and 'This Is My Word'. The band say they're planning to balance pop hooks and rocky far out-ness with the deftness of a skull spinning on the end of a finger.

"It's going to have three-minute pop songs," he outlines, "although we're taking them as far out as possible by doing things like using the skull. I'm hoping it'll be our most fucked-up but successful album."

Cole is confident that, with early progress going well and the spirits on his side, nothing can derail the album. Especially as the band have already overcome their biggest threat so far: a local thief pawning their equipment.

"We found this local kid in a band had stolen a load of our stuff," Cole explains. "We called his dad and got it back. We're keeping a pedal steel of his as ransom now." *Jamie Fullerton*



THE TING TINGS

Can K and J transcend their singles this time around?

The fact that The Ting Tings swapped the creative community of Salford's Islington Mill for Berlin in order to record their second album isn't much of a surprise. Finding out that they've been spending their time in Germany's capital of cool watching

OAPs do their best *Strictly Come Dancing*, however, is.

"We've ended up in a lot of dancehalls and stuff," starts drummer Jules De Martino, debunking the myth that everyone in Berlin spends their time listening to futuristic techno in sweaty warehouses. "We met a guy called Frank, he takes us to watch Argentinean tango," continues singer/guitarist Katie White. "I don't know why, but we keep going and we just sit there and watch all these people dancing. It's not what we thought we'd go to Berlin and do!"

The pair haven't just been admiring fancy footwork since they moved. They've made themselves a studio in a disused jazz club and got cracking on 'Kunst' 'Kunst' being the German word for 'art' and the working title of the follow-up to 2008's 'We Started Nothing'. "Just round the corner to our studio there's a massage parlour, it's called 'Massage Kunst', it's 'Massage Art' basically," explains Jules. "We took a picture of that and sent it to our label, saying this is the title of the album. They went berserk."

After 18 months of touring, the band began recording the album properly two months ago and plan to finish in March, with the release provisionally set for June. Just like their first, the album is being made solely by Jules and Katie with no producer. They're still confident they can become more than a

singles band, though.

"The one thing that's obvious is that we've got better at playing," insists Jules. With Jules tighter on drums and Katie more proficient at guitar, when they first re-entered the studio they found themselves playing energetically with just drums and guitar, taking the lead of bands like The White Stripes. "We listened back to some of the demos and we thought, 'Hold on a minute, this is sounding too much like we're rocking out live'," says Jules, who decided to bring the synthesizers back into their sound. "We bought a couple of old weird synths in New York and smuggled them in our suitcases back to Berlin and they started to come strong on the music."

Though their new aptitude doesn't mean they've abandoned the sparky pop roots, this time around proceedings are laced with more complexity. "Parts of it are probably super-pop sounding, but other parts of it are quite dark, a little more dancey," says White.

Definitely making the final cut is the minimal 'Help'. "There are about eight words Katie sings in the whole song, it's kind of anthemic, it's very much based on guitar and groove," says Jules. Another track, about "working too hard", has the current title of 'Hands'.

So, are there plans to throw mental live playback parties in their Berlin studio just like they did in the days of Islington Mill? Well, sort of. "We used to test stuff on our drunk friends in Manchester, but we don't have enough new mates in Berlin at the moment," confides Jules. "We've got about eight... I think we need to make a few more friends in the next couple of months before we can play in our new studio." You know where to send the invite, guys. *Leonie Cooper*



BLACK LIPS: JAMES HARRIS; THE TING TINGS: JAMES HARRIS



If he's going out, James Murphy's doing it with a bang

We all know that James Murphy likes to party, but you could never accuse him of toeing the party line. Back in the early noughties, The Strokes and Interpol were forcing through a new world, New York order of skinny jeans and mardy rock'n'roll. Murphy, as co-founder of dance punk label DFA, had other ideas for his adopted hometown: warehouse parties and DJing to the sounds of Donna Summer, ESG, Kraftwerk and The Stooges.

His knack for bending multiple genres round his lyrical witticisms on 2005's self-titled debut LP and 2007's 'Sound Of Silver' proved a winning formula. Now he and we are hoping it will spill into his third as-yet-untitled studio album, due for release in April.

"I don't tend to name my albums until they're completely done," Murphy tells us. "But I always have a fake title that is the worst title I can think of while I'm working on it. The first record was fakely called 'Eclectic Warrior'. 'Sound Of Silver' was called 'Vanity Thy Name Is Sophomore Effort'. This new record is called 'Internet Sensation!' with an exclamation mark."

Murphy began recording last April in L.A. with help from longtime LCD collaborator Pat Mahoney, Al Doyle from Hot Chip plus Tyler Pope and Gavin Russom aka NYC music/performance duo Gavin & Delia. After a brief hiatus to soundtrack his friend Noah Baumbach's film *Greenberg* (including one unnamed track set to

feature on LCD's new record), Murphy decamped to New York to resume work on the album which he's declaring his best to date.

"This is definitely better than the other two," he says. "It's a little more generous. What I tried to make on the first record I didn't succeed in doing, but wound up doing on the second record. I wanted to make a cohesive album, which I don't think it was. What I tried to do on the second record was to make a much more wider and strange-sounding record, but it ended up sounding more cohesive. This time round I'm not sure what I'm trying to do... but I think I am doing what I was trying to achieve on 'Sound Of Silver', which was a wider palette of sound."

Yet despite Murphy's optimism for the future sounds of LCD, a question mark still hangs over the band.

"This should probably be the last tour," sighs Murphy. "I know I said that last time and things changed, but I don't like to repeat myself. The first song I put out as LCD Soundsystem was 'Losing My Edge', and after that I guess I was supposed to make another thing like that, but that didn't make any sense to me. I felt I'd succeeded in making that thing and then I was done with that."

So if this ends up as the last offering under the LCD Soundsystem moniker, what lies ahead for Murphy?

"I don't like saying things like that because I realise people see them as proclamations of some sort, which is not how I feel at all. When I'm working on [a record], it makes sense to think of it as the last thing you'll ever do because then you make it good." *Ash Dosanjh*

PENDULUM

Having spent last summer getting festival gurners sweatier than Keith Flint's laundry basket, the increasingly inescapable Pendulum's new album will see them return to their electronic roots. Still, they've assured us that there will still be space for their rock fans at the crossover party. The Australians have been working on the follow-up to 'In Silico' at their studio in Camden on and off for two years, and are now taking the new material on the road to gauge reaction from fans before entering the final sessions for the album: working title 'Immersion'.

"We've gone quite electronic again," confirms producer/vocalist Rob Swire before conceding that they're not exactly the trendiest underground dance heads anymore. "We're obviously not making the darkest, most underground drum'n'bass out there, which we've never done anyway," he admits. "There's also the rock elements in there... the electronic parts and much more electronic, the rock parts are much more rock. Put it that way."

While the last album drew inspiration from the extreme metal likes of Strapping Young Lad and Underoath, this time the band have been dipping back into dubstep, drum'n'bass and electro house for songs such as 'Watercolour'. But they still found time to record a track with Swedish metal friends In Flames. "Me and Gareth (McGrillen) have been talking a lot about doing a track with proper metal vocals," Rob explains. "It's melodic and leaning toward a death metal-style. We experimented with that style of guitars on the live version of the Coldplay track we did ('Violet Hill'), but this is much heavier."

He also teases two more collaborations with "major electronic artists that should be exciting". Though he could not yet reveal their identities, he did say "we wanted to do some collaborations this time, and we started off with a wish list of artists we'd like to work with. I made two, one aiming for the impossible and one of artists who aren't that big, but we'd still really like to work with. We ended up with a healthy mix of both."

Pendulum will now return to the studio after their Australian dates with the aim of a May release. "There's still a lot of work to do," Rob admits. "I think this tour's going to be very helpful to us. After we've played the show, we get to work on them again so they sound as good as they can." For better or worse, it sounds like we're not going to be able to escape the next swing of Pendulum in 2010. *Dan Martin*



"I always have fake titles. This new one is called 'Internet Sensation!' - with an exclamation mark..."

JAMES MURPHY

CRYSTAL CASTLES



Going pop? The duo are keeping it close to their chests

This is hardly a news flash, but Crystal Castles can be a little awkward. For *NME*'s 'exclusive' listen to their second album, we were allowed to hear three songs and one interlude, all without vocals. "The vocals are being done next week," Ethan Kath informs us over the phone from Toronto. It is, of course, very hard to gauge the mood of the album without hearing singer Alice Glass' input. Whispers are circulating that there are pop songs on the new record, but it's hard to tell without hearing the words. So what is she going to do next week? "I don't know," Ethan shrugs, "she's had about 30 of the songs for a while, listening to them, but I don't know how she'll sing them."

One track on the album we did hear (but weren't allowed to know the name of) sounds like it could be a huge crossover hit. It's a sweeping piece of stadium dance which, while maintaining the dissonant obscurity of their first record, also achieves a fist-punching popularist majesty – albeit one smudged by Burial-esque scratching bass. But, if Alice screams like a vulture over it, Radio 1 are likely to pass. We'll have to wait and see.

From the other tracks we heard from the album, due out in April or May, there's a progression in the sound while still clearly being Ethan's work. With the possible exception of the jaw-dropping untitled song (which features extra production from Paul Epworth – the first time CC have let an outsider work on a song) it sounds more like evolution than revolution, but the density of the new songs clearly signifies that Crystal Castles are a very long way ahead of any other digital band. That's no thanks to investment from their new label, Fiction.

"All the equipment I use is old, tape decks and stuff. And it's all borrowed because I can't afford to buy stuff," Ethan says reluctantly. "I don't really want to talk about it though, gear-heads get so pissy when I do. I recorded most of the record in the coldest winter in decades in this horrible warehouse in a car park. It was so cold that when I listen back I can hear myself shivering. I chose it because it was right."

One song fans may recognise is 'Baptism', the band's arching, voluptuous set-closer. Other than that we're kept guessing. Ethan says they haven't found a name for the record, and the notes he wrote for us weren't much help. Three track names – 'Young Love', 'Violent Dreams' and 'Pap Smear' – were the only clues. Well, that and the words "Skid Row reunion" on the back – but that's probably a joke only he gets. Enigmatic 'til the last – while they might be doing their best to cast their dark shrouds over the fact, Crystal Castles' second album might just see them shining in places other than their Toronto squat party basements. We'll see what Alice comes up with. *Alex Miller*

NYPC

There is no 'Ice Cream', there will be no more 'Ice Cream's, no more 'Ice Cream's for children. **DENIED.**"

What New Young Pony Club guitarist Andy Spence is referring to, of course, is the 2006 single which defined not only his band's sound, but also courted the 'new rave' tag that became attached to it. A tag which saw many of the bands affiliated – NYPC included – as passing fashion.

"God forbid people wear colourful clothing and glitter on their faces. Now everyone is doing it and it's fine!" laughs singer Tahita Bulmer, sitting opposite *NME* in their north London studio. She continues: "New rave' was the beginning of a particular zeitgeist, which is still playing out, obviously that sound is new and exciting if you're 13 and just hearing La Roux or Friendly Fires or something on the radio, but seeing as we've given 10 years of our life to that we can't go back there."

Where they have gone with new album *The Optimist* is 'mature'. Recent download release *Lost A Girl*, with its brooding bass and erotic exhales, may build upon a trademark sound but also offers a vulnerable sense of depth. Songs such as 'Dolls', with its critique on brain-dead celebrity culture, or the pulsating synth-abys of 'Stone', showcase a bigger, broader-reaching, deeper NYPC. The risk, of course, is that somewhere amid the thrown-out bathwater lies their baby – the unashamed pop treats of the likes of 'Ice Cream' and 'The Bomb' that gained them success in the first place. The band admit they've taken a risk.

"Mature' is a term that's been used a lot by people who've heard it," explains Andy. "I kind of didn't want to accept that because it made the debut sound like..." "Juvenilia," interrupts Tahita, before offering a reason for 'growing up'. "A lot of the album came from the fact I was ending a very long relationship, and being very depressed about that."

"Also," says Andy, "most of it comes from a period of creative frustration. A lot of the stuff we scrapped from this album was great, it was amazing, but it was only amazing for a week."

Scheduled for a March 1 release and, like debut *Fantastic Playroom*, self-produced, *The Optimist* doesn't sound like it was born out of, well, optimism. Nor, judging from Tahita, does it sound like it will be released under any. They are more than a touch concerned about where that Big Single is.

Tahita. "Any confidence we have at the moment is marred by the fact that if it doesn't achieve a certain level of success we won't be releasing anything else, so..." Andy interjects. "There are more risks being taken on this record than just the music." We'll soon hear the proof in the cold dairy product-free pudding. *Stephen Kelly*



COLLABORATION

Weller with Kevin Shields, Massive Attack with Damon and Guy, *another* new Danger Mouse project – 2010 promises a slew of potentially inspired, confounding team-ups



BROKEN BELLS

Let's get one thing straight right from the start – because Danger Mouse and The Shins' James Mercer want to – Broken Bells is supposedly *not* a side-project. Despite the musically polygamous nature of DM, who with James comprises the new outfit, the pair are as emphatic as Jack White is about The Raconteurs and The Dead Weather that they are a band, and they're here to stay. So anybody feverishly anticipating new material from The Shins or Gnarls Barkley, it ain't gonna happen for a while. Because Shins frontman and songwriter Mercer plus Gnarls member and super-producer DM (it's his real name, Brian Burton, on the album promo sleeve) have teamed up to make their first record (also called 'Broken Bells', out March 8) together and DM insists he won't be scarping off once it's released.

After meeting at Denmark's Roskilde Festival back in 2004, the duo hatched plans to team up. However, their insane schedules (has *anyone* worked harder in the last decade than Brian?) meant things didn't come together until the last couple of years. Then they were free to sporadically work in Brian's Los Angeles studio where they'd "go in spurts of about two weeks a time", as Burton puts it, him playing drums and keyboards, while James handled guitar duties.

They're excited about the record, having whittled down the 20 tracks they recorded into a succinct 10. Brian says that "at the end of the first week of working we said we considered it as a band although we didn't know the name of it yet. And we didn't want people to know about it anyway so we kept it quiet by not putting a band name out there."

He eventually chose the moniker because "the record is a little melancholic and it's reflective of that." And he's right. The LP has a laid-back, loose feel which may not shock fans of Brian's production work (there are echoes of Beck's 2008 album 'Modern Guilt', which he helmed), but may be more of a surprise to fans of The Shins' more succinct, orderly pop moments. Especially when confronted with the 21st-century update of the madder side of The Beach Boys' 'Smile' output on 'Your Head Is On Fire', or when James adopts a falsetto on the funky 'The Ghost Inside', sounding eerily like Gnarls Barkley's singer Cee-Lo. "It's funny because I often end up singing like that just for the hell of it," he laughs, "and we'll end up not using it."

But there are a few tunes, such as the playful psych of the first single 'The High Road' (now available to download), the acoustic strum of 'Vaporize' and the woozily anthemic 'Trap Doors', that betray the duo's love of a good melody.

As regards The Shins, while Mercer won't be drawn on the long-term future, he does say, "I don't want to lose what we've built up over the years, but right now we're just working on this, doing what we can to support it and solidify it as a real band." He adds: "For me it's good so many of the responsibilities are shared. It's a lighter load and more easy-going atmosphere. It's fun. In my other band it's a lot of responsibility and there's all the quality control placed on you."

Brian adds that recording "was very easy. We worked together really, really well."

The pair also have live dates planned around the record's release. Whatever happens, Broken Bells are here for a good while, it seems. **Alan Woodhouse**

PAUL WELLER

Paul Weller and My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields: sounds about as likely a collaboration in 2010 as a Noel and Liam back-up, doesn't it? But it was indeed the shoegaze god who the Modfather called up to produce songs on his April-bound new solo album 'Wake Up The Nation'.

"It didn't matter at all that our styles are completely different," Weller insists. "If the music's good enough, that's the ground you meet on. We both bring different things to the party."

Although they only spent "about three hours" in the studio together, the unlikely pair laid down previous single '7 & 3 Is The Striker's Name' – a track that still had the recognisable mod-influenced rhythms intact beneath some unmistakably Shieldsy guitar FX sounds.

Paul says they knew each other from "being around" and they "always said we'd do something together". The duo completed two tracks, '7 & 3 Is The Striker's Name' and 'She Speaks' in an afternoon, also finding time for Shields to lay down vocals for 'Find The Torch, Burn The Plans'.

Written and recorded in Weller's Black Barn studio in Surrey with producer Simon Dine, also on the album are the romantic 'All I Want To Do Is (Be With You)', the psychedelic tangle of 'One Bright Star', 'No Tears To Cry' and 'Trees', a conceptual piece about growing old.

Kevin Shields wasn't the only unlikely collaborator on this record – old Jam bassist Bruce Foxton also makes a surprise appearance. They famously only spoke a handful of times after The Jam split but reunited early last year.

"It came about because we had both lost loved ones last year," explains Paul. "He lost his wife and I lost my dad – it opened up a bit of a dialogue. In fact it was a wonderful thing." And an experience he's keen to repeat. "I want to work with loads more people," he laughs. "The older I get, the more I think the sky's the limit."

Someone phone Dixie's Rascal, Texas Harris



BEST OF THE YEAR



MASSIVE ATTACK

You'd be forgiven for thinking that Massive Attack had slipped into something of a karmacoma over the past decade. With only one studio album to their credit in the noughties (2003's '100th Window'), and a full five years between that and 1998's

'Mezzanine', remaining members Daddy G and 3D had pretty much gone cryogenic. So it was with a certain amount of trepidation that Damon Albarn agreed to work with them on a few tracks from the new record. 3D: "He was like, 'I want to work with you, but I'm not getting sucked into some nine-year-long Bristol dope-haze. We'll work 10 to six, at my studio, for five days and that'll be it...'. The irony was that it was him who ended up instigating all the bad behaviour!"

From those week-long sessions came two of the forthcoming 'Heligoland's (out February 9) best cuts – the pained 'Saturday Come Slow', on which Albarn is guest vocalist, and 'Splitting The Atom', on which he contributes the loping, Gorillaz-like keyboard riff.

Damon wasn't the only friend to lend a hand. In fact, being studded with vocal collaborators is 'Heligoland's defining feature. Famous names range from old hands such as Horace Andy and erstwhile T. Macky collaborator Martina Topley-Bird to TV On The Radio's Tunde Adebimpe and Elbow's Guy Garvey. "The sessions with Guy we recorded before 'The Seldom Seen Kid' was even released. He came cheap back then! We knocked around a few ideas – one of which became 'Flat Of The Blade'," recalls 3D.

TVOTR's Tunde came from mutual admiration. "They opened for us on a tour we did a few years ago. We eventually invited Tunde to do a couple of things. David Sitek came to the studio a few times too. He's

a very curious, techy sort of guy, so he was checking out all of our equipment."

Given that this record has been trapped in what you could loosely term 'development hell' for the past seven years, it's natural that many sessions haven't made the cut – among them recordings with former Cocteau Twin and 'Teardrop' vocalist Elizabeth Fraser, Faith No More's Mike Patton and Beth Orton.

The cover artwork is by 3D, and the title refers to a bizarre forgotten island in the North Sea. "It's a fascinating place. It was the site of the world's largest non-nuclear bomb explosion, detonated by the British in 1947. Though according to official records that never happened." There are also references to extraordinary rendition on 'Atlas Air' and banking bailouts on 'Splitting The Atom'. Is it a political record, then?

"You know us," 3D joshes. "We like to mix the cod-politics in there, but in a more subtle way..."

After curating Meltdown in 2008 and touring off the back of that, the first the world was alerted to a resurgence of Massive Attack was the release of the 'Splitting The Atom' EP, in August 2009. "Why did we do that? We needed to have something out there to remind everyone that we were still around."

In contrast to the era where they would only ever be interviewed separately because of the enmity within the band, today the two surviving Massives seem relentlessly positive and positively jovial – almost contrite about the big gaps between records. "Yeah, we are going to try and be a bit more productive in the upcoming years," Daddy G chimes in. "We've got a lot of songs suddenly. In fact, once this is out, we're going to try and put out another EP next year. You know, just showcasing a slightly different side to 'Heligoland'."

You heligoforit, boys. *Gavin Haynes*



MAGNETIC MAN

Dubstep supergroup – sounds impressive. And it is. Magnetic Man comprises the genre's two most influential stars, Skream and Benga, hooking up with their mentor, Artwork.

Signed to major label Columbia, home of heavyweights such as Kings Of Leon and Bob Dylan, it's a genuine first. Slated for a summer release, the as-yet-untitled album is being brewed in a secret hideaway in Cornwall.

"We're all dubstep diehards," Skream says. "But we want to expand the creativity, building off the energy of our live show." *Jaimie Hodgson*



LUKE STEELE

Empire Of The Sun, The Sleepy Jackson, a punk rock album – it's all coming in 2010

When we speak to Luke Steele, he's chilling in Perth. "I got a whole bunch of bleach in my hair because I just won the GQ Man Of The Year Award," he states chirpily. "I'm keeping up appearances." Musically, he's not resting on his laurels either. He wants to release *three* albums this year.

Firstly, he stresses that Empire Of The Sun is far from over despite Nick Littlemore upping sticks to work with Elton John (see below). "The Empire's still alive. Maybe it's just part of the journey that Nick disappears for the next two years of it," Steele offers of the band's situation. The fact is he's amassed 15 songs for album two, which he's been honing with Empire's live band

(made up of Adelaide-based The Swiss). The sound, he explains, is more expansive than 'Walking On A Dream'. "We're kind of stepping off the grid a bit. Some of it is like Mylo and a bit more Prince. It's dramatic. I've always loved 1930s big band music, and stuff like the *Brazil* soundtrack. Mainly because the melodies are so epic – like a million people are singing on it."

With plans for the new material to be ready in time for mooted UK festival appearances, Steele admits he's got his work cut out – not least because there's another Sleepy Jackson album in the offing.

"It's frustrating because I've been in two worlds," he says of that band, whose last album 'Personality: One Was A Spider, One Was A Bird' dropped in 2006 and whose members currently consist of, um, Steele.

"I really want the next Sleepy record to be classic

songs the whole way through. There's a track I wrote for my wife which is kind of my Roy Orbison song, and then there's my ELO 'Balance Of Power'-era kind of track, and my Tom Petty track."

There's also a "punk rock thing" nearing completion – an album he's recording in his garage under the name Icon Python. "I'm really excited about that one because it starts on the blues and I just go rad on it," he says of the "angry" record that is "90 per cent finished".

He says Icon Python is a reaction to the successful – and pointedly formulaic – hit making machine that is Empire Of The Sun. "Once Empire started up I became regimented with grids and production. It would all be super-clean. Basically, I became a bit of a geek. But with this Icon Python record, it's kind of brought it right back to when I was 16 again." **Matt Wilkinson**



When Nick Littlemore abandoned Empire Of The Sun to return to Pnaau, the electro band he's had with Peter Mayes since 1995, people thought he was mad. Actually, Nick is a bit mad, but he's not daft: Pnaau were being courted by Elton John, and the chance to work with "the greatest songwriter in the history of the world" was too good to turn down.

Sir Elt picked up Pnaau's eponymous 2007 album while on tour in Australia and, impressed, he phoned Nick up out of the blue. Elton wanted Pnaau to work on his new album; in return, he's provided musical guidance on Pnaau's forthcoming 'Soft Universe', recorded largely at Elton's personal studios in Atlanta and London.

"He changed our lives," says Nick. "We'll never match his genius, but we can try, man."

It's been a turbulent couple of years for Nick. Not only has Pnaau uprooted from Sydney, he's had to watch a close friend dying of Aids and endure a painful relationship break-up. "I wanted to kill myself at that time but I realised there was too much worth living for," he says. "You become a better person. That's what our record's about."

While Nick objected to the idea of Empire sullying their "supernatural" aura by playing ordinary gigs, 'Soft Universe' has been written with live shows in mind. "We wanted to make something that sounded big," declares Nick, "because we want to play the biggest fucking stages in the world!" **Sam Richards**



SUPERGRASS

Krautrock wig-outs, swapped instruments, a new label and a ray of light from a man on a tractor: it seems that after "mutually agreeing to part ways" with Parlophone, Supergrass are quite happy having fun these days.

According to the band, their new album is halfway finished and is in a healthily chaotic state. "It's gonna be a psychedelic, mad Supergrass record," teases singer Gaz Coombes, adding that there are currently four fully complete songs with another nine just needing vocals. "We're using bits of drones through the tracks. What's a drone? Well, it's where we just go and do a bit of freestyle in the live room, basically."

"'Tomorrow Never Knows' is a drone," bassist Mick Quinn chips in.

"Yup. You just record it, manipulate it, plonk it on top of another track and mess around with it," continues Gaz. "You get these really odd, cool little accidents that happen."

Rehearsals for the album – set to be named 'Release The Drones' (geddit?) – started in May at Surrey's Ridge Farm Studio, where Oasis demoed 'Be Here Now'. Except nowadays it's not actually a studio at all. Gaz: "It's just a barn! We took loads of our equipment down and started recording there though. It was great."

After those sessions the band took a few weeks off, in Gaz and drummer Danny Goffey's cases to work on side-project covers band The Hot Rats (whose debut album 'Turn Ons' drops on January 25). In late autumn they reconvened, this time in Oxford at each other's home studios. "We just started recording this mad, Can-style stuff," says Gaz, of what he calls the album's "more expansive" phase. Goffey adds: "It's like an experiment, to see how we deal with not having proper structures."

There's also some instrument-swapping on "two or three" songs. The title track is one example, with Quinn playing drums and Goffey on the bass. Elsewhere, 'Tractor Man' is apparently an "ode to the working farmer", inspired by a man driving a tractor past the band's rehearsal space, while 'Shakey' sees them channel Talking Heads.

The band's new label Cooking Vinyl are gearing up to get the album out in May. Gaz: "This record's actually been very collaborative. It's been cool to try something different and chaotic."

No Elvis suits or puppets this time, then, but you didn't think Supergrass would get all serious on us, did you? *Matt Wilkinson*



THE CORAL

They lost their guitarist, but Wirral's finest are back with a legendary producer and an unlikely new influence

Losing a member of your group can be like losing a major organ – painful, sometimes crippling but often necessary. In the three years since The Coral released 'Roots & Echoes', lead guitarist Bill Ryder-Jones left to 'explore new directions', but the band are pretty confident they've lost a kidney or, at worst, a foot, rather than their heart or penis.

"It's a bit different because Bill's left, but it still sounds like The Coral," says frontman James Skelly.

"Obviously I'm not as good as him on the guitar, I'm more about holding down a rhythm but Lee [Southall, second guitarist] is a great guitarist in his own right. There's no point in trying to replace him or compete, it's just a different thing."

Reading between the lines with James, the shedding may have come as something of a relief for all concerned, as he speaks of the work so far on the album as "really easy" and "a bit more focused... it's a better dynamic than there was on the last two albums".

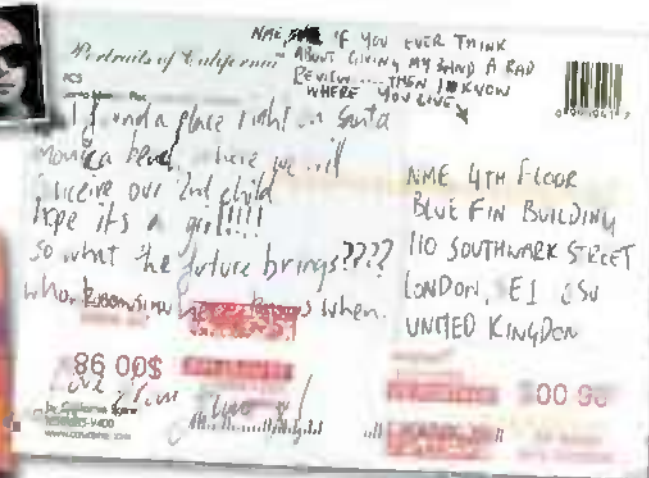
Their studio helmsman is John Leckie, legendary producer of The Stone Roses' debut and Radiohead's 'The Bends' among others. He seems to have proved to be a good bolshy fit with The Coral: "He tells you how it is. If he doesn't like something he'll say, 'That's shit.'"

James' musical inspiration may cause some alarm for Coral fans, however: "Er, Chipmunk. I've just been listening to him. My heart goes out to him." The Coral go smooove garage with a suicidal edge? Well, it'll probably actually end up sounding like The La's again – but we're still looking forward. *Martin Robinson*

POSTCARD FROM THE STUDIO

Life's a beach for James Allan and Glasvegas

The ever-Ray-Banned frontman and his band have bugged off to Los Angeles to record their second album with Rich Costey and Rick Rubin. He kindly sent us a postcard to read while we wait to hear the results...





RADIOHEAD

"We did a good six weeks exploratory stuff in the summer," Radiohead guitarist Ed O'Brien tells *NME*, explaining the roots of the Oxford band's next album. It seems they're not taking the task of following up 2007's *In Rainbows* lightly. "We've got to take it to another level," he insists. "It feels great, it feels really, really good. We've got the potential to make a really different record which is always what we're trying to do, and that's the thing that excites us."

The news that has most excited fans, though, was O'Brien's assertion to *NME* last year that the band definitely would be releasing a full-on album in 2010, on vinyl and CD as well as any fancy downloading method they may choose to employ ("We love the artwork," the guitarist explained. "That's important, the physicality"). The band are in their Oxfordshire studio this month to gear things up.

"The vibe in the camp is fantastic at present... we head off into the studio to continue on from the work we started last summer," O'Brien wrote in a message to fans online. "I am so genuinely excited about what we're doing. Ten years ago we were all collectively (that's the band) in the land of *Kid A* and although hugely proud of that record, it wasn't a fun place to be. What's reassuring now, is that we are most definitely a different band, which should therefore mean that the music is different too and that is the aim of the game. Keep it moving."

THE STREETS



This is the year Mike Skinner retires The Streets, delivering his fifth album swansong before concentrating on pumping up his video series, *Beat Stevie*. Skinner has been on lockdown recording the album, the follow-up to *'Everything Is Borrowed'*, which he has named *'Computers And Blues'*. He has revealed that he has enlisted The Music's Rob Harvey on guest vocals for a song and that the album should be expected early this year.

"I did a five-album deal and I don't think it would be right to be making Streets albums after those five," he told *NME*. "I always envisaged them as a boxset-type thing."

BRITISH SEA POWER



"Influences? I watched the Michael Jackson film, that was pretty influential. I've also been inspired by *The X Factor*. And we've got a song about a Transit van named Zeus. It's called 'Zeus'."

Considering British Sea Power's habit of trading in eccentricities, it's difficult to tell how seriously frontman Yan (Scott Wilkinson) is taking their as-yet-untitled fourth album proper. But what's true is that, locked away on a Sussex farmyard (a pig shed called Pheasant Studios, to be exact), the Brighton-based four-piece are in the final stages of self-producing with the help of Graham Sutton, who worked on 2008's *'Do You Like Rock Music?'*.

"We've got 20 tracks at the moment," explains Yan. "There's some pretty dark moods in there. The main problem we've been having is some tracks are coming in at about 10 to 20 minutes long. Also, being on a farm, we keep having mice chewing through our cables."

YEASAYER



Already being talked up as the makers of one of the first great albums of 2010 due to download song *'Ambling Alp'*'s success, the Brooklyn-based band are hoping to step out of MGMT and co's shadows by going all pop on their second. The album, which is out on February 8, was recorded in Woodstock from February to April last year, but frontman Chris Keating remains modest about the possibility of having a crossover hit with it.

"I like the whole idea that John Lennon said that they were never happy with The Beatles' stuff," he explains. "You know you are always working on it, you always feel like, 'Oh we could have done that better'. I can't tell."

BEASTIE BOYS



Having delayed the release of their eighth album *'Hot Sauce Committee Pt 1'* last year due to Adam Yauch's cancer treatment, the trio are expected to reschedule soon, with the rapper's progress now going promisingly. The album features a mash-up of hardcore and hip-hop, with song titles including *'B-Boys In The Cut'*, *'Too Many Rappers'* (featuring Nas) and *'Don't Play No Game That I Can't Win'* (featuring Santigold).

"We have a hardcore background," Mike D outlined to *NME*, pointing to the band's rock beginnings in 1979. "And we have samples and rhymes, but we've never really combined the two - they've always been mutually exclusive. We thought if anyone should put those two together, it should be us."

METRONOMY



Lock up your daughters, Metronomy are going sexy. "The plan is to make a sexual record, the kind of record you put out to woo a lady," key architect Joe Mount reveals of the album, which has a working title of *'2008'*. "I want to tread the fine line between being sexy and misogynistic, and bring some of the American rap feel to it"

What's more, Joe has recorded in a proper studio for the first time. east London's Smokehouse. "The first two records were done in my bedroom," he explains, "but this time I thought I'd get pompous and get into the idea of the studio as an instrument."

I've been watching a lot of classic album documentaries about people like Steely Dan and Quincy Jones, I want to carry on that tradition of getting lost in a studio"

GORILLAZ



With Blur put to bed again, Damon Albarn is back with Jamie Hewlett for a new Gorillaz album in 2010. *NME* will have an exclusive inside look at the album next week (January 23 issue) with a new interview and pictures - but for now we know the album will be named *'Plastic Beach'* and features guest spots from Lou Reed, the Syrian National Orchestra and The Horrors. Says Damon: "I'm making this album the most pop record I've ever made in many ways, but with all my experience to present something with some depth to it."

THE WOMBATS

"*'Motorphobia'* is probably the most ironic song I've written," The Wombats' frontman Matthew 'Murph' Murphy tells *NME*, "considering I wrote it two weeks before I wrote off my car. I smashed it into the central reservation, ended up in a hedge."

Future safe driving assumed, The Wombats' as-yet-untitled second album is due this summer. With 20 demos recorded in a studio above their Liverpool practice room, including *'Dear Hamburg'*, *'Jump Into The Fog'* and *'Shot Goodbyes And P45s'*, and recording planned for early 2010 in L.A., the band are ditching grotty guitars for synths played with every extremity. "Dan [Haggis, drummer] has developed some kind of octopus brilliance where he can play drums and synths at the same time," Murph explains. "We don't want a wall of guitars like the first record. It'll be more dream-like sounding."

But how will they tone down the costumed tomfoolery that saw them roundly slapped with the 'wacky' badcock first time round?

"I guess that was a product of how excited we were," explains Murph. "It's still gonna be full of harmonies because we love the sound and it brightens the mood, considering the dark lyrical content. The last batch we've just written are gloomy, I need to cheer myself up. I want to write some loud, dirty but relatively happier songs."





WE ARE SCIENTISTS

Ah, the rock'n'roll excess of the '70s – when recording an album meant bands occupying whole chateaus or crisscrossing the globe just to use a set of speakers in London and a mixing desk in Manhattan. Well, We Are Scientists are bringing back the transatlantic album back. Written in the Deep South, demoed in New York, then partly recorded in London, LA and the Big Apple again, the band's fourth album, tentatively titled 'Barbra', will ensure Keith Murray and Chris Cain have healthy Airmiles accounts when they finish recording.

"I'm glad people are couching our mode of recording in a rich tradition rather than an idiot's inability to schedule something properly!" says Keith of all the country hopping. "We could have actually recorded the album in a week, but instead it was stretched over three months."

The reason for the complicated scheduling was so the duo could include ex-Razorlight man Andy Burrows, who agreed to fill in on drums.

"We wanted a drummer who we would get along with and who would bring a good energy to the recording," explains Chris of the effort to include the stickman.

With songs including 'I Don't Bite', 'Foreign Kicks' and 'Rules Don't Stop' boasting a harder, riff-based sound, We Are Scientists are paying homage to another '70s ideal on the spring-released album: good, old fashioned rock'n'roll excess.

"It's definitely not a cautionary tale of excess!" proclaims Keith. "If there's judgement it's an extremely forgiving judgement of behaving excessively."

HOT CHIP



The title track of the Putney electro-popsters' new album, 'One Life Stand', has already been doing the rounds – with the album set to follow on February 1. The band's

fourth album saw them decamp from their bedrooms to a proper studio for the first time.

"Some demos were recorded at home," Alexis Taylor told *NME*, "but we brought everything to the studio and built up the tracks there. It was a big space, the record has a bigger sound as a result."

AMY WINEHOUSE



Amy made a kind of comeback last summer, playing onstage with The Specials at V Festival (and having a smooch with Pete Doherty later the same night after a few tipples) and if all goes to plan, 2010 should see her recorded

return too. That's 'if' in massive, Hollywood-sized letters. However, Island Records exec Darcus Beese recently revealed that he'd heard the demos and the album would be recorded in "fits and starts". We've always got Dionne Bromfield's album in the meantime.

MARK RONSON



He might have got frustrated with a certain Amy Winehouse not keeping to planned studio schedules, so the brass-bound producer is taking things into his own hands for the recording of his first solo album since 2007's

'Version'. Insiders have suggested that the album will contain no covers but expect the usual roll-call of famous friends. Mark's spokesperson told *NME* that the album is being recorded mainly in New York and should be out in the spring with "lots and lots of people" set to guest.

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM



After receiving Bruce Springsteen's personal blessing when he joined them onstage at Glasto and Hyde Park, Gaslight are holed up in New York with Ted Hutt, producer of debut 'The '59 Sound', to construct its follow-up, 'American Slang'.

"We recorded the last record in Los Angeles in the summer so it was very bright and warm," frontman Brian Fallon tells us. "With this one it's going to be in winter in New York so it's going to be freezing. It's going to make a rougher record."

Fallon says they're trying to step away from their influences this time. "For the last record we looked really into it and we asked, 'What are our influences and how do we jam them in?'" he explains. "And on this one we're writing songs that we feel are relevant to us"



BLOOD RED SHOES

Word on the street was that the noisy alt-rock two-piece Blood Red Shoes were heading in a more pop direction on their second album, the follow-up to 2008's 'Box Of Secrets'. We've heard it and can confirm they're not.

"The vocals are a bit more pop," explains singer and guitarist Laura-Mary Carter, "with a few more hooks... but the music is actually heavier."

Recorded at Liverpool's Motor Museum studio last summer with 'Box Of Secrets' producer Mike Crossey, the band's live energy is apparent on the album's heavier tracks, such as the sludge-rock seven-minute epic 'Colours Fade' or the peppy 'Don't Ask'.

"They ain't happy songs for happy people," claims drummer Steven Ansell. "It's slower, which makes it feel a bit heavier, and the melodies are more evil-sounding. This record will be the nail in the coffin for anyone calling us an indie band."

You didn't think we'd forgotten Liam, did you? After the departure of his brother Noel from the band, Gallagher Jr's album with his old Oasis bandmates Gem Archer, Andy Bell and drummer Chris Sharrock will come out this summer – if the singer is to be believed. Here's the shimmy in the words of the man himself...

- "We're halfway there. We've got all the songs done. We've got a bit of studio time booked... we're going to get in there, do it quick, with no stewing on it."
- "It ain't a new direction. We're not making reggae music or rap music."
- "People are still gonna go, 'It's not Oasis without Noel' – life's too short to be arsing about with what people think and that."
- "I'm feeling confident about the songs. I'm feeling a million per cent confident that they could be better than Oasis."
- "I'm always going to miss Oasis. It was my fucking thing, you know what I mean? But it's only a name. I'm still who I am and I can go and do something else. I've got music in me. I'll never leave it behind, but we'll see where it goes. It might be shit but you don't know until you try."

ALBUMS

ALL THE RELEASES THAT MATTER *Edited by Emily Mackay*



Hide'n'peak



THESE NEW PURITANS
HIDDEN
(ANGULAR RECORDINGS)

9

Former students of post-punk step out of the classroom into a league of their own

It's pretty obvious really, but noise is the heart of music. Yet, in a world where an addiction to compressed soundfiles has led to musicians smothering their songs in reverb and digital wash, sound is suffering. It's exciting then to see These New Puritans living up to their name and dragging a fresh clarity of sound into the world. You might want to go and buy some new speakers, because listening to every sharpening knife, oboe, cough, mutter, dense syncopated beat, delicate piano, and choir on 'Hidden' through your complementary iPod headphones is like looking at a photocopy of a Bruegel, or watching *The Wizard Of Oz* in black and white. Trust me, this is a record worth ram-raiding Bang & Olufsen for.

With their second album, TNP have extended themselves beyond any rock'n'roll terminology and instead are rubbing shoulders with sound artisans like Mira Calix, exploring noise like a photographer explores light. Fittingly then, as they wave goodbye to The Fall-loving art-rock group they once were, the record begins with a Last Post of sorts as, from their own Ypres, TNP roll out 'Time Xone's' mournful brass farewell to everything you thought you knew about this band.

The plaintive serenity doesn't last long though – it's shattered by a bassline more like a grenade than anything else, as track two shuffles into its dank bashment battleground and the first words of the record are heard: the computerised tremor of 'We Want War'.

The song may begin as MIA's 'Galang' reimagined as some kind of concrete avalanche, but over the course of seven minutes it dreams itself somewhere totally different, as horns and a choir take the digitalised tribal hand-claps skyward. It descends again with the sound of a knife drawn; a harsh and obtuse end to 10 of the most surprising, expressive minutes of music I can remember since I was given The Velvet Underground's debut record on my 14th birthday.

To say this record is a collage of its predecessors would undermine the invention behind it, and while there are reference points (most clearly MIA's 'Fire' on the self-consciously titled 'Fire-Power'), they are mostly dispossessed of their origins through the band's découpage of them. Like William S Burroughs did with words, they scatter their broad influences – everything from Michael Nyman ('5'), to Miles Davis ('Time Xone'), to Tricky ('We Want War') – like fans than iconoclasts; ripping up the fabric of music history for their own ends. It's tempting to see the band's dictator, Jack Barnett, standing in a studio full of shattered vinyl, obsessively destroying every accepted musical phrase and deferential cliché in an attempt to make something very rare: a record which sounds new in every way.

As is often the case with music heralded as some sort of progressive

landmark distant from trends and revivalism, 'Hidden' isn't an easy work, but it also isn't without soft moments. Glowing between the steel monsters of bass and terror is 'Hologram', and while it's hardly 'The Long And Winding Road', its channelling of Thelonious Monk's fingers over stadium rock drums, harpsichords and looped coughing is far less confounding and far more beautiful than it sounds on paper. Of course this glistening mood is soon shattered by some beast called 'Attack Music' – a squelching nightmare of broken glass and chants. This song is later reprised on the thunderous first suite of 'Drum Courts – Where Corals Lie', a song which corkscrews between a death march and a strange children's operetta which might have been scored by Moondog. It's an intense journey, but after the pummelling they've given us over the previous hour, These New Puritans hand us the album's most comfortable moment: 'White Chords', a monumental stomp, which at their dissonant peak, Radiohead would have been proud of.

Throughout, there is an obtuse lyrical preoccupation with conflict between the natural and the man-made, the pastoral and the urban. Trees, bracken and rivers are treated with reverence, while concrete and wires are mistrusted. This comes to a conclusion as on final track '5', a largely instrumental, minimal piece which groans the album to an end, like the steamboats on Björk's 'Volta'. Jack whispers that the trees and the sea are beginning to talk – and here he reaches full circle: from the mourning of 'Time Xone' to the rebirth of nature.

It's no trite environmental message, though, but an exploration of the abstract tension between nature and culture, reflected in the record's constant clash of organic orchestral poise and the industrial dissonance of beat music. It's genuinely surprising, beautifully wrought and announces TNP as one of the most powerful artistic forces in Britain today.

In a world where bands like The Horrors, The xx and Wild Beasts are becoming Britain's scene leaders, is it impossible to imagine These New Puritans' uncompromisingly brilliant second record finding wide popularity and recognition? I doubt the band give a shit, but I really hope not. *Alex Miller*

DOWNLOAD: 1) 'Three Thousand' 2) 'Hologram' 3) 'White Chords'

DID YOU KNOW...

The album was mixed by Dave Cooley, known for his work with hip-hop production legend J Dilla, MF Doom and Madlib

NME.COM

Watch These New Puritans' video for 'We Want War' at NME.COM/video

THAO WITH THE GET DOWN STAY DOWN

KNOW BETTER LEARN FASTER
(KILL ROCK STARS)

7



Thao Nguyen and band's previous LP, 'We Brave Bee Stings', was the best-selling record of 2008 for Kill Rock Stars. Naturally,

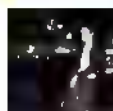
then, brows furrow at thoughts of already high expectations with album two. No need. Sticking with Tucker Martine on production, this record is far tighter and more mature. It's an album of hindsight. Bad decisions have been made, bad lovers chosen, Thao sings on 'Body'. Dependency? Opener 'The Clap' kicks that notion to one side. Despite being 30 seconds long, it sums up the LP's polemic: foot-stamping, shaman-inspired, it's the sound of a powerful female giving as good as she gets, consequences be damned. *Aibhe Malone*

DOWNLOAD: 'The Give'

ADAM GREEN

MINOR LOVE (ROUGH TRADE)

7



Adam Green's flowering from puerile anti-folk twonk with The Moldy Peaches to suave lounge-country crooner is

laudable. This sixth solo outing widens his cultural rehabilitation, carving splinters of Lamb Chop ('Cigarette Burns Forever'), Magnetic Fields ('Castles And Tassels'), Nilsson ('Give Them A Token'), The Velvet Underground ('What Makes Him Act So Bad'), The Strokes ('Goblin') and Scott Walker ('Boss Inside') from a sawdusty bar-stool. An absence of hooks, drugs and wanking - coupled with Wurlitzer, desert echo and Mexican arpeggio - suggest a wonk-country ripening, but hang on: with lyrics like "You are the flatulent one/And I am the boy who has a gun", it seems maturing doesn't involve growing up. *Mark Beaumont*

DOWNLOAD: 'Castles And Tassels'

WALE

ATTENTION DEFICIT (INTERSCOPE)

4



Olubowale Akintimehin has friends in high places. For his first album, he's called upon Dave Silek, Mark Ronson and The

Neptunes for beats, and guest vocals from Gucci Mane, Pharrell Williams, J Cole, Lady Gaga and even that K'naan fellow who's been hanging out with Keane. But with varied collaborators, you're likely to end up with a mixed bag, and one lacking in personality to boot. It's not that Wale can't flow - he proves otherwise on the clattering, elephantine opener 'Triumph' and the jazzy, dippy-toeing 'Prescription' - but he's trying to please the pop fans, skate boys, hardcore heads and hipsters. As an overview of the myriad styles of modern hip-hop, 'AD' is authoritative, but it's a bit like the album equivalent of a puppy pumping your leg, desperate to be loved. *Pete Cashmore*

DOWNLOAD: 'Triumph'

OK GO

OF THE BLUE COLOUR OF THE SKY
(PARLOPHONE)

5



Judging by the evidence presented here on their third record, it would seem that sultans of slacker rock

OK Go are finding it hard to claw their way out of the shadow left by the treadmill-toting, highly virulent YouTube-molesting video for their 2006 single 'Here It Goes Again.' It's not that they're not trying - all 13 of the tracks here sound nothing like their much-parodied clip. It's just that sadly, branching out isn't a good thing for them. While the likes of 'Needling/Getting's splicing of pervy pop with punch-drunk sea-shanties is pleasing enough, the half-arsed slap-bass, calypso guitars and shameless aping of MGMT prove that these geeks really should be jogging on now. *Edwin McFee*

DOWNLOAD: 'Last Leaf'

EELS

END TIMES (VAGRANT/COOPERATIVE)

8



We like to hope that lawyers specialising in heartbreak and bitter recriminations have Eels' eighth studio effort, aka

Mark 'E' Everett's "divorce album", looping in their waiting rooms. Still brimming with depressing song subjects ('Electro-Shock Blues' chronicles the death of each of his family members), E tells of talking to birds for lack of company ('Little Bird') and his eventual hermetic lifestyle ('Mansions'). If Christmas has made you wish you could wink-bloody-murder your partner then this probably isn't the first album you should whack on in 2010. If not, you'll find Eels' most revealing, autobiographical work-to-date to be the most beautiful break-up record since Beck's 'Sea Change'. *Camille Augarde*

DOWNLOAD: 'A Line In The Dirt'

LOSTPROPHETS

THE BETRAYED (VISIBLE NOISE)

7



The story goes that Pontypridd's most hair-gelled burned through four years, two no lesser producers than John Feldmann and Bob Rock, and not far shy of half-a-million pounds in following up their smash 'Liberation Transmission'. So how did they land up with something so much the same as they always were. 'The Betrayed' plays to their strengths in that it sounds more like the work of blue-qualified CGI-animated ninja warriors than real people with wrinkles. And on those terms, its melodramatic punk-prog-pop succeeds; 'Dstryr Ad Dstryr' is fiercer than they've been before, and while 'Where We Belong' proves that their cutlass-sharp way with a pop song is sharper than ever, 'For He's A Jolly Good Fellow' proves the same about their appalling way with words. *Dan Martin*

DOWNLOAD: 'Where We Belong'



Popscreen

BLUR

NO DISTANCE LEFT TO RUN
(PULSE FILMS)

8

New cinematic retrospective lovingly charts the road from Essex to Hyde Park

It's a bit like going to see Morrissey: not quite as big as you thought "If you're a real Blur fan and that quote doesn't mean anything to you then, well, you're not a real Blur fan."

Graham Coxon's verdict on Stonehenge is just one of a smorgasbord of wisecracks from the band's classic 1993 rockumentary *Starshaped*. It's a key part of the group's fandom jigsaw: two hours of arty snapshots and wittering asides that sowed the seeds of the pop stars they'd become. With a 17-year cinematic hiatus since, it's fair to say the stakes are pretty high for this film when it hits cinemas next week.

No Distance... is a retrospective retracing of the band's life and times in the ever-so-slightly melancholic light of their recent reunion tour. Trawlings of behind-the-scenes tapes are anchored by fresh accounts and witterings from the four band members and artily diced with footage of the key reunion gigs.

The old stuff does the job. The faded picture of a rag tag Essex art-punk outfit called Seymour hoisted into some parallel stratosphere of unfathomable pop superstardom is painted well with a patchwork of dodgy out-takes, home movies and backstage banter. Choice cuts include Alex trudging through reams of Japanese radio station IDs ("Hi, I'm Alex, the stupid one from Blur. Stop eating wh...les, you cunts"), an inebriated Graham struggling with a wine bottle backstage on 'The Great Escape' tour (before his alcoholism was deemed anything but 'a laff'), and Seymour's startlingly ace 'Superman' performed live in Harlow, Essex in 1989. True geeks might be left a little

hungry; YouTube has stolen much of the thunder here.

The new footage is largely ace too, from a surprisingly likeable and candid Damon's account of post-'Country House' Oasis taunts from Joe Public ("every single shop I walked into without fail..."), to the ever-coy Graham's attempt to reduce his entire career to a love/hate divide for spending time with painters and decorators "down the Goose And Dog".

If there's one criticism to be had, it's of the overkill of gig footage from the last tour. Because it chronologically peppers the whole thing, by Hyde Park, we've really got the idea, and with no more dusty gems in store, it gets a little sluggish. But it's a minor criticism for a major achievement. If you're a casual enthusiast it's a mammoth account. If you're looking for *Starshaped* 2, well, that was never going to happen, but there are plenty of new silly quotes to add to your nerd-out repertoire. *Jaimie Hodgson*

DID YOU KNOW...

According to director Lucas Ochoa, there's still a whole feature's supply of untouched footage from an abandoned 1995 film called *B-Roads* in Blur's filmic archive

NME.COM

Watch a trailer for the Blur film now at NME.COM/video

loaded

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LAURA VEIRS

JULY FLAME (BELLA UNION)

8



Testimony to the fact that nu-Americana can be successfully beard-free, 'July Flame', Veirs' seventh album, is impressively

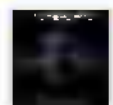
unselfconscious in its girlishness. Here is a winsome, lady-driven response to the wood-chopping likes of Midlake, Fleet Foxes and My Morning Jacket that remains refreshingly sweet. From opener 'I Can See Your Tracks', the acoustic finger-picking which trickles throughout the record flutters like soft Appalachian rainfall, setting a delicate, serene tone that Veirs rarely strays from. As the simple strings on 'Where Are You Driving?' shimmer with moonshine dregs and 'Wide-Eyed, Legless' shows off its otherworldliness, 'July Flame's' loveliness is hard to put out. **Leonie Cooper**

DOWNLOAD: 'Wide-Eyed, Legless'

TIMBALAND

SHOCK VALUE II (ATLANTIC)

5



It'd be easy to completely ignore the vacuous radio fodder of 'Shock Value II' if it didn't happen to be from Timbaland. As such we're

obliged to listen closer just in case we miss something BRILLIANT. From Jay-Z to Björk, MIA, Limp Bizkit and J-pop sensation Utada Hikaru, gathering all his past clients for a wine and cheese evening would probably descend into silence as the guests realised they had little in common but canapés. Here, appearances including Katy Perry and human spaniel Chad Kroeger smack of the same mismatched awkwardness. Nothing quite fits, giving the impression that this material wasn't good enough for the guest artists' own albums. It seems Timbaland's parties are no longer worth attending. **Alex Hoban**

DOWNLOAD: 'Carry On'

Stringing us along



OWEN PALLETT
HEARTLAND
(DOMINO)

7

Prolific arranger brings the grand flourishes to his own work

Whether it's Epworth, Rubin or Timbaland (well, once upon a time), there's no shortage of working producers who can give an album an instant shot of hipness. But think of string arrangers who can have the same affect and you'll probably only come up with one name: Owen Pallett. The Canadian child prodigy has sprayed his orchestral magic over albums by Arcade Fire, The Last Shadow Puppets and even Fucked Up in recent years. His reputation now eclipses his own two excellent solo albums (as *Final Fantasy*, a name he's ditched to avoid confusion with the game) – the last of which (2006's *The Poos Clouds*) won the Canadian equivalent of the Mercury Prize.

It comes as no surprise, then, to find that Pallett has been labouring on his Domino debut *'Heartland'* for quite some time, presumably in an attempt to restore him as an artist in his own right rather than just the guy that makes everyone else sound better. If the staggeringly dense layers of strings and synths aren't enough to keep you occupied, then the concept and narrative should. It's based around a young farmer named Lewis – a wilful chap filled with wanderlust and a penchant for ultraviolence, as on 'Lewis Takes Action'; "I took the no-face by his beak and broke his jaw/He'll never speak again", Pallett sings over what sounds like a Disney score.

There's no denying that *'Heartland'* is an overflowing well of musical creativity

that leaves you feeling like you've missed something crucial if you let your attention drift. But the array of sounds can smother the songs. It's only the more stripped tracks, like 'Oh Heartland, Up Yours!' and the closing 'What Do You Think Will Happen Now?', that give the melodies room to breathe.

That said, it's difficult to accuse him of being overambitious because that was almost certainly the point to begin with. But if this is the fruit of four years' labour, just think of what he could do in a more concise two. Mark your calendars for 2012; a true Pallett masterpiece feels very close. **Hardeep Phull**

DOWNLOAD: 1) 'Oh Heartland, Up Yours!' 2) 'What Do You Think Will Happen Now?' 3) 'Lewis Takes Action'

UNSPUN HEROES

THIS WEEK...

Luke Turner on the post-punk obscurity that warmed the young Jarvis Cocker's cockles

ARTERY

OCEANS (RED FLAME, 1982)

ARTERY



DIGGING UP BURIED TREASURE FROM THE DEPTHS OF OUR COLLECTIONS

It was not being forced to wear lederhosen as a teenager that inspired Jarvis Cocker to form a band. Nor was it a liberating, if fumbled, encounter with a housewife on the floor next to a plywood chiffoier as David Bowie played on the Dansette. Instead, it was seeing an unhinged performance by Artery in his hometown of Sheffield.

The narrative of post-punk is dominated by Manchester and London, and Artery have spent the past two decades largely unknown outside of John Peel Festive 50s and Cocker's record cabinet. Released in 1982 as Sheffield turned to pop, 'Oceans', Artery's debut, is a curious, misshapen exploration of all that made them fascinating; Artery always were cut from stranger cloth than most.

Indeed, that's if they were wearing any cloth at all. They'd shoot promo pictures that featured them hanging upside down from a tree, and during one gig frontman Mark Gouldthorpe climbed, naked, onto a balcony high above

The feeling of a group unhinged dominates the seven songs that make up 'Oceans'

Sheffield. Police called; gig over. It's this feeling of a group unhinged that dominates the seven, often narrative-led songs that make up 'Oceans'. 'Into The Garden', for instance, is a grandiose proto-gothic mix of one-two beats and slashes of lightning prog guitar backing

lyrics about taking an "Identical twin sister" for something sordid behind the geraniums. 'The Slide', on the other hand, knocks cowbells together with prowling crunch for something that'd sit nicely on a hypothetical 'DFA Comedown Collection', Gouldthorpe snapping about razorblades and moaning "I don't want a wife", as if staring disconsolately at some cheap band of gold that entraps his finger and his life. Elsewhere there's the drunken, woozy 'The Clown' and the swirling heart attack of

'Afterwards'. There's a happy new beginning to 'Oceans', too. In 2007 Cocker persuaded Artery to reform for his Meltdown Festival. Reinvigorated, they reissued this album and embarked on new material as deranged as that from their forgotten heyday.

LIVE!

UPFRONT AND BACKSTAGE

Edited by Emily Mackay

Spell



Rachel Davies
lightens the mood
with a tickling stick

binding



ESBEN AND THE WITCH

MADAME JOJO'S, LONDON,
TUESDAY, JANUARY 5

Tucked away from the wintry weather and seedy Soho, a fairy tale is taking shape...

The mercury might be heading towards zero and the radio crackling with dire warnings of apocalyptic snowfall, but in the heart of Soho the pimps and dealers are still plying their wares. On the door of Madame JoJo's, two bouncers are talking about a festive altercation: "Five fights mate, over there. Well, more like one, it just went on."

Inside this dull basement room, away from the tawdry neon selling sex and streets still encrusted with New Year's blood and vomit, Esben And The Witch create their own world. An already startlingly accomplished trio, they look under stones and into dusty cupboards to find inspiration in subjects that the fiberoptic-flash-led society that gruesomely indulges itself in the Soho streets otherwise leaves behind.

They open with 'Argyria', a track named for the silver oxide poisoning that once turned the faces of workers a strange, shiny grey. The subject matter is startling enough, but that would be nothing without what powers it. The beats are all dubstep paranoia, as if the band had picked them up passing through Croydon on nocturnal rail journeys from the capital to their Brighton home. Yet it's shrouded in a comforting waterfall of meltwater fizzing guitar. And then there's singer Rachel Davies, who looks as if she's about to take tea with Virginia Woolf, and sounds like PJ Harvey when she stopped screaming and started hymning the English landscape, or a Siouxsie Sioux who wisely left the vamp eyeliner on the dresser.

You get the impression that Davies is more likely to write an ode to the old water pump

that sits around the corner in Berwick Street – which, when it was discovered to be the source of a cholera epidemic, led to the disease's eradication – than yet another weary ditty bemoaning the cruel inattentions of a mere boy. In the same way, while Tom Fisher and Daniel Copeman resemble handsome scribes down on their luck in some smoky '20s boozier, 'Lucia' isn't a poem they've pathetically dribbled to win the attentions of a rapacious flapper. Instead, their most recent single is about the depressive daughter of James Joyce, who ended her days by her own hand. All three members crowd around a floor tom, hammering away with the intensity of Liars before suddenly parting, Davies singing a melody that twists the song away to somewhere else – perhaps a Balearic island conquered by Joy Orbison next summer.

When Esben And The Witch do eventually sing of love, they express it more intelligently than most: 'Skeleton Swoon' captures that first moment of connection, expressed as the rattling of dry bones.

Seeing this band live is like delving into some eccentric's personal musical museum, part post-rock, but cleansed of the musty smell of geeky boys' rooms. It's driven by minimal electronica and austere rhythms; Radiohead without the mithering, goth stripped of unnecessary melodrama.

They end with 'Eumenides', a piece in three parts (like 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and 'Paranoid Android' before it) that links Francis Bacon and Greek myth. In lesser hands, such ambition could become mired in pretension, or be so convoluted and arch as to lack emotion, but that's never the case here. Fairy

tales – and Esben And The Witch are named after one – contain light and darkness, warnings and hope, a lesson for real life in something magical. Outside, Soho isn't covered in some twee blanket of white, and the denizens of this part of London puke and piss and belch into a soggy, desultory snow shower. But tonight, we saw Esben And The Witch writing the first drafts of a story that, like the very best, will excite our imaginations for quite some time to come. **Luke Turner**



SHORT SETS

CHAPTER 24

BUFFALO BAR,
LONDON,
05/01/10

Toys onstage? Singer with no shoes? Indie-pop that begs the word 'shambolic' like a hungry puppy? All the danger signs are there for this south London quartet to be very irritating indeed. Yet their Fire Engines-meets-a-less-arch Long Blondes romp is too raw to be twee. Singer Claire is a kind of anti-Florence as she rocks and bounces, pulling song titles at random from her Big Yellow Teapot. Her bandmates keep the rickety rollercoaster barely on the tracks, gathering a momentum that stomps your preconceptions beneath its bare feet. **Timothy Mackay**

FIGHT LIKE APES

ACADEMY, DUBLIN,
19/12/09

It shouldn't work, but then Dublin four-piece Fight Like Apes are just bonkers enough to pull it off. Enscorced in a specially commissioned wrestling ring, blistering electro-punk pop, such as 'Jake Summers' and 'Do You Karate', comes hurled off the ropes of the Academy stage drenched in all the eccentricities of that most redneck of American sports. So hammed-up fake choke-slam, Spandex, chairs hurled across the stage and Buckfast thrash it out for attention amid the ferocious fun of the tunes. Result. **Steve Cummins**

LIVE!



OPTIMO PRIME



DIVORCE/DRUMS OF DEATH/HUDSON MOHAWKE

THE OLD FRUITMARKET, GLASGOW
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31

When it comes to New Year there's nothing Scotland enjoys celebrating so much as itself, which is why the sound of Deacon Blue and Paolo Nutini echoes around Glasgow city centre tonight, making us feel less like we're about to usher in a new decade and more like we're trapped in a hellish call-centre queue behind 15,000 people more pissed than us. Just a few hundred yards away, however, Glaswegian über-club Optimo are bringing in 2010 with three of their own local acts, and the comparison couldn't be starker. OK, so-hot-right-now aqua-crunk maverick Hudson Mohawke is sadly limited to playing other people's records, but his DJ set establishes early on the precedent of this artiest of parties.

It all feels oddly restrained, though, until Drums Of Death makes his appearance. Mongering some of the finest electro-filth you're liable to hear all year, Colin Bailey's ghoulish, skull-faced alter-ego mixes first-pill euphoria ('Voodoo Lovers') with post-club decadence ('Got Yr Thing') to delicious effect.

Meanwhile, there is very little that's decadent and literally nothing that's euphoric about nae-wave noise-goblins Divorce, whose debut EP was released on the burgeoning Optimo label and who serve as a deafening, merciless reminder of the fear, loathing and probable apocalypse we're headed for in this new decade. Or they do now that the alcohol has worn off, at any rate; when you're watching them, you're simply transfixed by their sheer power, whether it manifests itself in bassist Vic Strap-On's caustic snarl and bowel-shaking bottom-end, or by frontwoman Sinead Youth wading into the audience and screaming into their faces. By the end, the whole scene resembles the aftermath of a bar-brawl.

Which is probably quite apt. As a party, Optimo's NYE bash is every bit as messy and debauched as you would expect. But as a showcase for some of Scotland's most exciting leftfield talent, it punches above its weight. **Barry Nicolson**

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I WANT TO SOUND LIKE... MUMFORD & SONS



Pete Nowak, 21, Bradford: "After hearing and seeing Mumford & Sons I really want to learn the banjo (I usually play drums). Is it difficult?"

THE SOUND

"We're rock'n'roll," states Mumford & Sons' banjo man Country Winston, but he can't deny that the combo infuse elements of bluegrass and folk rock into their sound. Winston was inspired to take up banjo after seeing bluegrass rockers Hayseed Dixie.

THE GEAR

Winston plays an electric five-string **Gold Tone EBM-5** banjo (he also has an acoustic Gold Tone) and puts it through **Boss Distortion** and **Digital Delay** pedals to righteous effect on 'I Gave You All' and 'The Cave'. "If you're a beginner, you shouldn't pay more than £150," recommends Winston, who started out on an Ozark. "Go by the sound of a banjo, not the name on the headstock."

ON THE STAGE

"At some point you're going to make a mistake, and with a banjo everyone's going to know about it. One trick is to play the same mistake again when that part comes around, but the most important thing is to not let it spoil the rest of the gig."

THE TECHNIQUE

Winston employs the standard bluegrass technique of using metal picks on his thumb, index finger and middle finger to pluck the strings. "The important thing is to learn how to do finger rolls [where your thumb plays the three strings nearest to you, the index finger plays the

second string from the bottom and your middle finger for the bottom string]. Practise slowly, and accept the fact that when you learn a different roll you're pretty much going to have to start from the beginning and let your fingers and thumb get used to the new positions. Another important thing is timing," states Winston. "The banjo is a rhythmic instrument and even if you're playing in, say, 3/4 time [where it sounds like a waltz] there's a million variations within that."

BEST TRICK

"If you play in standard bluegrass tuning (top to bottom: high G, low D, G, B, high D), then if you hit the open strings you're playing a G. Learn that and a C and you've got a song. The parts I'm playing on

'Awake My Soul' and 'The Cave' are quite similar and aren't that difficult to learn. Maybe I shouldn't tell people this because they'll stop being impressed with my playing!"



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NME

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★ Band aim or 1 telephone
★ The Guild of International
★ Songwriters & Composers
★ Sovereign House, 12 Trowerth
★ Road, Prau Sande, Penzance,
★ Cornwall TR20 9ST
★ Tel: 01736 763826
★ www.songwriters-guild.co.uk

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GIG GUIDE

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

464 GIGS
ACROSS
THE UK &
IRELAND

PICK OF THE WEEK...



PICK OF THE WEEK

JAMIE T

WHERE: NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY (TUES)

Freshly recovered from the bout of laryngitis that saw the UK leg of his tour cancelled last year, Wimbledon's favourite troubadour finally gets round to taking the very well-received 'Kings & Queens' to the masses, with additional dates now taking place.

NME.COM/artists/jamie-t

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



MEN

WHERE: BRIGHTON FREEBUTT (SAT), LONDON HOXTON SQUARE BAR & KITCHEN (MON), LONDON MADAME JOJO'S (TUES)

JD Samson and Johanna Fateman have temporarily left Kathleen Hannah to hold the Le Tigre-shaped fort to bring their group of arty provocateurs across the Atlantic to play a handful of select dates.

NME.COM/artists/le-tigre



PICK OF CLUB NME

MEMORY TAPES

WHERE: LONDON KOKO (FRI)

Dayve Hawke's latest one-man project is an unmissable masterclass in synth-washed melancholy. Support comes from Manc miserabilists Lowline.

NME.COM/clubnme



DON'T MISS

ROLO TOMASSI

WHERE: NOTTINGHAM CHAMELEON (SUN), MANCHESTER DEAF INSTITUTE (MON), GLASGOW NICE'N'SLEAZY (TUES)

When we heard Rolo Tomassi were working with DJ/producer Diplo, our interest was piqued. These dates are the first chance to hear what they've done.

NME.COM/artists/rolo-tomassi

RADAR STARS

LOCAL NATIVES

WHERE: LONDON HOXTON SQUARE BAR & KITCHEN (TUES)

LA five-piece with a taste for plaid and 'taches should fit right in at their one-off date in east London.

NME.COM/artists/local-natives



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O₂

WEDNESDAY

JANUARY 13

Wolfmother,
Olympia, Dublin



BELFAST
General Fiasco Stiff Kitten
028 90238700

BIRMINGHAM
Polly Mackey & The Pleasure
Principle The Flapper and Firkin

BRIGHTON
The Adventurists Three And Ten
01273 609777
Funeral Hags Prince Albert
01273 730499
Saxon Shore Freebirt 01273 603974

BRISTOL
Shark Dentists Prom 0117 942 7319

CORK
O Emperor/Alessi's Ark/Sons
Of Noel & Adrian Cyprus Avenue
00 35321 427 6165

DUBLIN
Wolfmother Olympia
00 3531 679 3323

DUBLIN
Adasra The Ark 0131 226 9393

GLASGOW
Henry Rollins (Spoken Word) 02
Academy 0870 771 2000

LONDON
About Eight Monto Water Rats
020 7837 4412

Cory Chisel Enterpriser
010 7485 2659

Dead Cowboy Culture Dublin Castle
020 7485 1773

Eli 'Paperboy Reed' & The True
Loves 100 Club 020 7636 0933
Exlovers/Oh, Inverted World/
Fristram/The Boy Who Trapped
The Sun The Old Queen's Head
0207 839 7261
The Foxes/The Wutars Arts Club
020 7460 4459
The Hope Conspiracy Underworld
020 7482 1932
The Kid Jones 229 Club
020 7631 8310

CLUB NME

LOS ANGELES
THE MEETING PLACES +
WRONG WAY DRIVER +
THE ROBOTANISTS +
VIDEO

323 661 4380

Martha Walwright Jazz Café
020 7916 6060
OK Go 02 Shepherds Bush Empire
0870 771 2000 WA
Plastic Glasses/Lucinda Rosa Good
Ship 020 7372 2544
Roshambo Bull & Gate
020 7485 5358
Silent Devices Buffalo Bargooinite
020 7359 6191
Spectrum 7 Windmill
020 8671 0700
Teleserial Underbelly
0207 613 3105
Vaughan King Slaughtered Lamb
020 8682 4080

MANCHESTER
Dead Swans Moho Live
0161 834 0180
Dismal Disillusion/Cities Between
Us Rouxville 0161 1789
Nightlights Dry
0161 236 5420
Scorch The Masses/Aldra Fall
Academy 3 0161 819 1111

NOTTINGHAM
Link Maze 0115 947 5650

SOUTHAMPTON
Hold Your Horse Is Joiners
023 8022 5612

YORK
Tokyo Mafia/Wildfire Fibbers
01904 651 250 +14

THURSDAY

JANUARY 14

BIRMINGHAM
E Numbers Roadhouse
0121 624 2920
Merchants Of Menace
02 Academy 3
0870 771 2000 WA
Motherless/Sour Mash Actress &
Bishop 0121 236 7426

BRIGHTON
Autumn Red/Mike Newsham
Providence 01273 727822
OK Go Concorde 2 01273 673311
Paperface Prince Albert
01273 730499
Vivian Girls Freebirt
01273 603974

BRISTOL
City Of Fire Thekla
08713 100000
Nostalgia 77/Jeb Loy
Nichols St George's Hall
0117 923 0359
Wildier/Tiffany Page
Start The Bus 0117 930 4370

CARLISLE
Evlie/Warbringer Barfly
029 2066 7658 +14
My Tiger My Timing
Buffalo Bar 02920 310312
Underpass Arts Institute
0871 230 1094

GATESHEAD
Columbus Dixon Three Tuns
0191 487 0666

GLASGOW
A Band Called Quinn
King Tut's Wah Wah Hut
0141 221 5279
Dead Swans Capitol
0111 331 0140

I See Shapes Oran Mor
0141 552 9224
Wolfmother/The Black Angels
02 Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

LEEDS
Incantation/Hate/Severence
Rios 0844 111 2182
LIVERPOOL
Johnny Wonderland Korova
0151 709 7097

LONDON
Burn Before Reading/
The Words/Death By Mau
Mau/The Bracelettes
Dublin Castle
020 7485 1773
Cheating The Reaper/Ultrateeze/
Langshore Drift/The Fuzz
Hare & A Hor
020 7164 4112
Danny & The Champions Of
The World Betsey Trotwood
020 7164 4112

Example Dingwalls
020 7267 1577
Finley Quay Jazz Café
020 716 6060
Greg Davies 100 Club
020 7636 0933
Hey Negrita Garage
020 7607 1818
House Of Strange/Luke
Leighfield/Braindead
Collective Good Ship
020 7372 2544
Khaos Alberto/Silver Springs Proud
Gallerias 020 7482 1867
Lazare/The Elrics/Tranquilizers/
Rachel Kennedy Bull & Gate
020 7485 5358

Peter Doherty/Crowns/
The Bearing Strait
Rhythm Factory
020 7247 9386
The Poor Souls Of Pompeii
Monto Water Rats
020 7837 4412
The Psychologist Windmill
020 8671 0700
The Savage Nomads 12 Bar Club
020 7240 2522
Sharks Underbelly
0207 613 3105
The Swell Season
02 Shepherds Bush Empire
0870 771 2000 WA

MANCHESTER
Scott Nicholas Dry Bar
0161 236 5920
Sinister Enigma Academy 3
0161 832 1111
The Steals/Fables Roadhouse
0161 228 1789

NEWCASTLE
Miscellaneous Adolescent Head Of
Steam 0191 232 4379

NORWICH
Delphic/Mirrors Arts Centre
01603 660352

SHEFFIELD
Silent Film Project/My Luminaries
Plus 0114 276 7093

SOUTHAMPTON
Faux Joiners 023 8022 5612

YORK
Kevin Dempsey & Joe Broughton
The Duchess
01904 641 413
Wild Honey/Trophy Club Fibbers
01904 651 250 +14

Example,
Dingwalls, London



FRIDAY

JANUARY 15



Photo: [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

BIRMINGHAM
Henry's Children Sunflower Lounge
0121 617 0766

This Legion/Desolated Eddie's Rock Club @ BUSK 0121 643 2093

BRIGHTON
Exit Avenue/Mimi Soya Concorde 2
01273 473311

Houston Has A Problem Hobgoblin
01273 602519

Jailbait Prince Albert 01273 730499

Justice Force Five/Thieves By The Code/Anst Providence 01273 727822

BRISTOL
Dr Teeth Prom 0117 942 7319

The Goodness/A Day At The Races/We Start Partys Croft 0117 987 1114

Tom Russell Redgrave Theatre
0117 974 3384

CAMBRIDGE
Glad Atamun Junction 01223 511511

CARDIFF
Eject Pilot Eject/Brother Steve Barfly 029 2066

GLASGOW
Dirty Cuts 0141 221 5279

The Fronds/The Bucky Rage/Transfer Audio Stereo 0111 576 5018

Inner Sight/Silents In Action O2 Academy 0110 71 400 1111

Lafaro 13th Note Cafe 0141 553 1638

Michael McGoldrick O2 ABC
0870 903 3444 WA

Rockburn King Tut's Wah Wah Hut
0141 221 5279

MOVIE
Roland Chadwick Neptune Bar
0 273 234 870

LEEDS
Bird Names Brudenell Social Club
0113 243 5866

LONDON
Memory Tapes + Lowline
020 7388 3222

MANCHESTER
MJ Cole O2 Academy
0870 771 2000

Sterling Rios 0844 414 2182

LIVERPOOL
John Cooper Clarke Masque
0151 707 1171

LONDON
Bop Social/Me & The Beast/
Dead Social Club/Underground
Bombers & The Vanity Bull & Gate
020 7485 5358

Danny & The Champions Of The World Windmill 020 8671 0700

Eric Ness/Milni/Silvers/We Kids Good Ship
020 7372 2544

Finley Quay Jazz Cafe
020 7916 6060

Henry Rollins (Spoken Word) Royal Festival Hall
020 7960 4742

James Rand/Alan Tyler Luminare
020 7377 7111

Jerzey Street Band Underbelly
0207 613 3105

Maths/Trash Talk Buffalo Bargoonite 020 7359 6191

The Men They Couldn't Hang 100 Club 020 636 0933

Motel Tijuana 12 Bar Club
020 7240 2622

Peter Doherty/Melody Nelson Rhythm Factory
020 7247 9386

Peter Martin Constitution
020 7387 4805

This Beautiful Thief/Ves Boys Dublin Castle
020 7485 1773

Vtredic/Backyard Flames/Zalinski Hope & Anchor
020 7354 1312

The Wicked Tongues Monto Water Rats 020 7837 4412

MANCHESTER
Affliction Of Margaret/The Money Academy 3 0161 832 1111

SATURDAY

JANUARY 16

Join NME Modified from 9pm as James Theaker brings you a selection of tunes to soundtrack your Saturday night

NME
RADIO

BELFAST

Tommy Fleming Ulster Hall
028 9032 3900

BIRMINGHAM
Terella Actress & Bishop
0121 236 7426

Vivian Girls/Veronica Falls O2 Academy 3 0870 771 2000 WA

BRIGHTON
The Beautiful Word Providence
01273 727822

MEN Freebutt 01273 603974

BRISTOL
The Atomic Rays Prom 0117 942 7319

The Bug/Plastician/Shy FX/Billinja Motion Ramp Park 0117 172 1111

Hacksaw/Bucky Croft 0117 987 4114

The Rhythmites The Lab 0371 271 0114

CARDIFF
Race Horses/Lawrence Arabia Club
0117 942 7319

The Vicars/Kurtosis/Kyener Barfly
029 2066 7658

LOULIAN
O Emperor/Alessi's Ark/Sons Of Noel & Adrian Whelan's (Upstairs)
00 3531 475 9372

EDINBURGH
Dave Henderson The Ark
0131 228 9393

Rod Jones The Electric Circus
0141 220 2987

To Catch A Thief The GRV
0141 220 2987

GATESHEAD
Vendetta Three Tuns 0191 487 0666

GLASGOW
Bright Young Nights Maggie May's
0141 548 1350

Hot Club Of Cowtown O2 ABC
0870 903 3444 WA

John Mayer O2 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

Licker 13th Note Cafe 0141 553 1638

The Neat King Tut's Wah Wah Hut
0141 221 5279

LEEDS
Jesse Quinn & The Mets Cockpit Room 3 0113 2441573

Kittie Rios 0844 414 2182

Saxon Shore Brudenell Social Club
0113 243 5866

LIVERPOOL
John Bramwell Williamson Tunnels
0871 230 1094

LONDON
The Amber Herd/Paintings Of Ships/The Neon Pop Orchestra

Good Ship 020 7372 2544

Arabella/The Medicine Show/The Final Riots/Ghost Writers Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773

Arthur Rigby & The Baskervilles
Monto Water Rats 020 7837 4412

The Carrier/Dead Swans Underworld 020 7482 1932

Detachments Cargo 0207 749 7840

The Dissodates/Longknives/Gideon's Demise Hope & Anchor
020 7354 1312

Foamo Rhythm Factory
020 7247 9386

The Outside Royalty Windmill
020 8671 0700

Sound Escape/Horseman Shakes & The Draymen/Lecarla/Geezer Tron Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358

Subterraneans 12 Bar Club
020 7340 2622

This Morning Call/The Collectable
Few Proud Galleries 020 7482 3867

Totally Enormous Extinct

Dinosaurs/Citadels/Nova 93 Feet East 020 7247 6095

Wax Tailor KOKO 020 7388 3222

MANCHESTER
Austin's Night And Day Cafe
0161 236 1822

Denis Jones Band On The Wall
0161 832 6625

Greg Davies Project Roadhouse
0161 228 1789

Inland Empire/Floone/Bony Ghosts Ruby Lounge 0161 834 1392

Memory Tapes The Corner
0871 230 1094

The Odds Academy 3 0161 832 1111

Pete Wareham Royal Northern College Of Music 0161 273 6283

MANCHESTER
Diablo Star Inn 0191 222 3111

Future Of The Left Cluny
0191 230 4474

OXFORD
Chew Lips Jericho Tavern
01865 311775

SHEFFIELD
Delphic Leadmill 0114 221 2828

Helhound New Barrack Tavern
0114 230 9148

OK Go O2 Academy 2 0870 771 2000

WA
SOUTHAMPTON
Pay No Respect Joiners
023 8022 5612

SOUTHEAST
The Goodnight Dance Chinnery's
01702 460440

YORK
Evile/Warbringer Fibbers
01904 651 250 +14

Glass The Duchess
01904 641 413

Vivian Girls, O2 Academy, Birmingham



GET IN THE
GIG GUIDE

DO YOU WANT TO GET YOUR BASH INCLUDED IN THE BIGGEST AND BEST WEEKLY GIG GUIDE?
GO TO NME.COM/GIGS AND SUBMIT YOUR LISTING FOR FREE.
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SUNDAY

JANUARY 17

BIRMINGHAM

Neon Asylum Sound Bar
0121 2362220

BRIGHTON

Crazy Arm/The Fallthrough Prince
Albert 01273 730499

BRISTOL

Blackmore/Figs The Coronation Tap
0117 973 9617
Delphic/Mirrors Thekla
08713 100000

CLUB
NME

NEW YORK
THIS IS IVY LEAGUE +
WORLD ATLAS

0871 230 1094

Seregon/Terrorform Craft
0117 987 4144

GLASGOW

Del Castillo 02 ABC 0870 903 3444

WA

Diet Pills/Corpses 13th Note Café
0141 553 1638
Evile Cathouse 0141 248 6606
Laura Vells Oran Mor 0141 582 9224

LEEDS

Nicky Phillips Hi-Fi Club
0113 242 7353

LIVERPOOL

Nickelback Echo Arena
0844 8000 400
OK Go 02 Academy 2 0870 771 2000

LONDON

Awesome Feline/Monte Carlo/
Reach For The Lasers Dublin Castle
020 7485 1773

The Meteors Underworld

020 7482 1932

Peter Doherty/Melody Nelson
Rhythm Factory 020 7247 9386
The Radics/The Intruders Bull &
Gate 020 7715 5358

Retro Crooks/Chapter 24 Buffalo
Bargoonte 020 7359 6191
Saxon Shore Barden's Boudoir
0770 865 6633

The Teenbeats 100 Club
020 7636 0933

MANCHESTER

The Living Carpet Academy 3
0161 832 1111
Paul Carrack Lowry 0161 876 2000
Vivian Girls Deaf Institute
0161 330 4019
Wolfmother Academy
0161 832 1111

NEWCASTLE

Bird Names The Cumberland Arms
0191 265 6151

Kittie/It Dies Today/Forever
Never/Malefic 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

Rainfalldown/Snake Eyes

Tyne Bar 0191 265 2950

NOTTINGHAM

The Myways Maze

0115 947 5650

Rolo Tomassi Chameleon

0115 9505097

Twenty Twenty Rock City

08713 100000

YORK

Rosie/Arctic Fury Fibbers
01904 651 250 +14
Tom Russell The Duchess
01904 641 413

MONDAY

JANUARY 18

Jon Hillcock presides over the official
NME Chart countdown, from 10am
this morning

NME
RADIO

Chew Lips, 10 Feet
Tall, Cardiff



Delphic, Thekla,
Bristol

Future Of The Left,
King Tut's Wah
Wah Hut, Glasgow



Kittie/It Dies Today Classic Grand
0141 221 583
OK Go 02 ABC 0870 903 3444 WA
The Seventeenth Century/There
Will Be Fireworks Oran Mor
0141 552 9224

LEEDS

Thrice Cockpit 0113 244 3446
Wolfmother/The Black Angels 02
Academy 0870 771 2000 WA

LIVERPOOL

The Imagined Village Philharmonic
Hall 0871 230 1094
Vivian Girls Korova 0151 709 7097

LONDON

Chigurh Monto Water Rats
020 7837 4412
Damo Suzuki/Bo Ningen/Hyrst
Cafe 010 0871 230 1094

Faster Pussycat Underworld
020 7482 1932

Headspace/Spekki Chris 93 Feet
East 020 7247 6095

Hekz/Fear No Fish/Speak Your
Heart/The Retox Hope & Anchor
020 7354 1312

Joensuu 1685 Social
020 7636 4992

John Mayer Apollo
0870 606 3400

MEN Hoxton Square Bar & Kitchen
020 7613 0709

The Night Herons Dublin Castle
020 7485 1773

One Republic Scala 020 7833 2022

MANCHESTER

Bird Names Retro Bar 0161 274 4892
Rolo Tomassi Deaf Institute
0161 330 4019

NOTTINGHAM

Evile 02 Academy 2 0870 771 2000
WA

OXFORD

Easy Tiger Bullington Arms
01865 244516

TUNBRIDGE

Avance Rising/In Mono The Forum
08712 777101

BIRMINGHAM

Fyfe Dangerfield Glee Club
0870 241 5093

BRIGHTON

Ivory Freebutt 01273 603974
The Real McKenzies/Asbo Retards

Prince Albert 01273 730499

BRISTOL

Real Big Fish 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

CARDIFF

Chew Lips 10 Feet Tall 02920 228883

GLASGOW

Laura Vells Sage Arena
703 4555

GLASGOW

Comanche/Divorce Captain's Rest
0141 331 2722

Future Of The Left, King Tut's Wah
Wah Hut 0141 221 5279

TUESDAY

JANUARY 19

BIRMINGHAM

Anal's Mitchell Glee Club
0850 241 5093
Wolfmother/The Black Angels 02
Academy 3 0670 771 2000 **WA**

GLASGOW

Henry Rollins (Spoken Word) 02
Academy 01202 399922 **WA**

BIRMINGHAM

Delphic/Mirrors Audio 01273 624343
Donna Fullman/Illustrators Prince
Albert 01273 730499

CARDIFF

Culprit One Club for Bach
029 2023 2199
Diet Pills Buffalo Bar 02920 310312
Glamour For Better/Payton/Her
Game Is Over Barfly 029 2066 7658

EDINBURGH

Comaneci/DiVorce Sneaky Pete's
0131 225 1757
Its All Fiction The Ark 0131 228 9393
Mike Vass Village 0131 478 7810

GLASGOW

Helicopter Gunships 13th Note Cafe
0141 553 1638
Rolo Tomassi Nice'n'Sleazy
0141 333 9637
Scott Matthews 02 ABC
0870 903 3444 **WA**

Thriller Garage 0141 332 1120

LEEDS

Breathe Carolina Cockpit Room 2
0113 244 3446
The Imagined Village Irish Centre
0113 248 9208

LONDON

Baroness Underworld 020 7482 1932
Buffalo Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358
Charly Coombes & The New Breed
Monte Vlatar Rats 020 7837 4412
Crew Lips Hoxton Hall 020 7739 5431

DMC Jazz Cafe 020 7916 6060
Glam Chops/Proxy Music/Ulysses
Buffalo Bargoonte 020 7359 6191
The Heart Of The Sun/The Late
Lights/The Troniks/The Rules Hope

& Anchor 020 7354 1312
Jolyon Townsend And The
Echoes Underground 12 Bar Club
020 7240 2622

Local Natives Hoxton Square Bar &
Kitchen 020 711 10709

The Midnight Lycan Party/The
Black Heart Orchestra/Generation
Of Swine/The Jackal Pack Good
Ship 020 7372 2544

MEN/Trash Kit White Heat @
Madame Jo Jo's 020 7734 2473
Neil Bryden Luminaire 020 7372 7123

Rodeo Massacre MacBeth

020 7739 5095
Stafrænn Hakon/Codes In
The Clouds Barden's Boudoir
0770 865 6633

BLACKPOOL

Future Of The Left Ruby Lounge
0161 834 1392

Fyfe Dangerfield Deaf Institute
0161 330 4019

The John Escreet Project Band On
The Wall 0161 832 6625
Laura Vells Academy 3 0161 832 1111

NEWCASTLE

Bastions Head Of Steam
0191 232 4379

NORWICH

Rupa & The April Fishes Arts Centre
01603 660352

NOTTINGHAM

Jamie T Rock City
08713 100000

OK Go/Dog Is Dead Rescue Rooms
0115 958 8484

SOUTHAMPTON

Twenty Twenty Joiners
023 8022 5612

YORK

With One Last Breath/Nailbed
Fibbers 01904 651 250 +14



TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
NME.COM/TICKETS

BOOKING NOW



MARINA & THE DIAMONDS

STARTS: LONDON DINGWALLS, JAN 26

With the release of MATD's debut 'The Family Jewels' soon, here's a chance to see what the fuss is all about.
NME.COM/artists/marina-and-the-diamonds



LAURA MARLING

STARTS: LONDON, APRIL 9

The elfin troubadour picks up her acoustic and takes to the road in support of album number two.
NME.COM/artists/laura-marling



OWL CITY

STARTS: BIRMINGHAM KOMEDIA THEATRE, FEB 17

Adam Young brings his perky laptop pop to these shores as part of a seemingly unending upward trajectory.
NME.COM/artists/owl-city



PASSION PIT

STARTS: BIRMINGHAM KOMEDIA THEATRE, MARCH 1

You've heard the album, now see Michael Angelakos terrorise the living shit out of his synths.
NME.COM/artists/passion-pit



BLOOD RED SHOES

STARTS: GLASGOW, MARCH 2

The Brighton duo herald their return with gigs in support of new album 'Fire Like This'.
NME.COM/artists/blood-red-shoes



WOODEN SHJIPS

STARTS: CHAMBERS, MARCH 11

Shaggy-haired San Franciscans play a string of gigs before supporting Pavement at Brixton Academy.
NME.COM/artists/wooden-shjips



BROADCAST

STARTS: YORK, MARCH 30

The Birmingham legends have been making flawless electronic pop with a '60s hue since the '90s.
NME.COM/artists/broadcast



JAPANDROIDS

STARTS: BIRMINGHAM KOMEDIA THEATRE, FEB 22

The Canadian noise duo embark on the UK leg of their tour in support of their stellar album 'Post-Nothing'.
NME.COM/artists/japandroids



TIMES NEW VIKING

STARTS: BIRMINGHAM KOMEDIA THEATRE, MAR 10, MAR 17

A one-off date from the lo-fi trio of Ohioans who are capable of making quite a racket.
NME.COM/artists/times-new-viking

O₂ customers can get Priority Tickets to thousands of gigs nationwide up to 48 hours before general release. Just register at o2.co.uk/priority
When Priority Tickets are gone, they're gone. Terms apply.



GEAR

STUFF WE LOVE Edited by Leonie Cooper



FLORENCE'S 'CHEST'

Florence herself worked with designer and stylist Faye Sawyer on this lush jewel box – the 'Chest' – of which only 190 have been made. Made from recycled leather, the box comes with artwork by Florence as well as a handwritten, signed letter. There's also a nappa leather bag, lined with the actual curtain that's on the front of last year's amazing 'Lungs', inside which sits your limited-edition copy of the album. flotique.florenceandthemachine.net

BAD PENNY BLUES

Penned by former music journo Cathi Unsworth, *Bad Penny Blues* is the kind of swinging rock'n'roll crime novel that your folks should have warned you about. Set in the seedy London of the '50s and '60s, it's one quality counter cultural thriller. The whole book's kick-started by a quote from no wave icon Lydia Lunch too. What more could you want for company on a dark winter's night? serpentstail.com



PARAMORE GLOVES

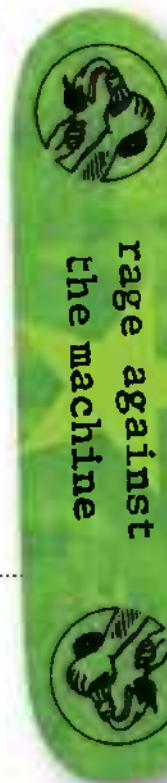
Seeing as lucky old Paramore are from sunny Tennessee, they probably have no need for such woolly warmers. For their shivering fans in the midst of a freezing UK winter however, these fingerless gloves are a necessity. They keep your hands warm, but leave your digits free for doing punk rock things like flicking the bird to The Man and texting your mum to ask her what's for dinner. paramore.warnerartists.com/en



NME
ONLINE STORE

RATM SKATEBOARD

These two Rage Against The Machine skateboard decks are more than capable of skating against the system. Choose between the artwork from 1999's 'Battle Of Los Angeles' album or, if you want to satisfy your inner anarcho-crusty, the green Molotov cocktail design. In the immortal – and somewhat paraphrased – words of Zac de la Rocha: "Fuck you, I won't skate where you tell me!" NME.COM/store



FRANKIE & THE HEARTSTRINGS MIXTAPE

It would seem that top tips for 2010 Frankie & The Heartstrings aren't just a dab-hand at spunky indie pop but are also pretty decent mixtape maestros too. They've compiled this super C-90, featuring tracks from the likes of Captain Beefheart, King Khan And The Shrines and The Ronettes, and are giving away 10 digital versions of the tape on their website for free. Hurry and nab one before they're all gone!

<http://popsexltd.com/2009/popsex002>



PETER ROBINSON VS

WAYNE COYNE (*The Flaming Lips*)

He talks martians, *Emmerdale*, MTV and the ignominy of having grey pubic hair...

Hello, Wayne. You're in Birmingham!
"It could be worse. It's actually quite nice."

It's interesting that you have used the word "actually" to somehow register surprise.

"Well, I'm surprised because it's unusually beautiful for this time of year. It's sunny! I'm sure it won't last"

The last time we spoke for this page I believe we were approaching Christmas and it proved a perfect excuse to reprint the photo of you in *Christmas On Mars* as an alien. Usually when people discuss the all-time great rock photographs they might discuss Pennie Smith and The Clash, for example. But I'm wondering whether you coloured green might be the definitive rock image.

"The enduring image will be me in the space bubble. People talk of it as the hamster ball. Me in a space bubble is my equivalent of Jimi Hendrix with the guitar on fire. Every chance I get I get in that damn thing. Of all the stupid things I've done, that's the one people will remember."

Now, steady on; everything involved in a rock'n'roll escapade happens for a reason. Nothing is purely stupid.

"Well, that's what makes rock'n'roll so likeable – on one hand it is kind of stupid, and if you take yourself too seriously it's just fucking boring. Most rock'n'roll is done by freaks with too much time on their hands, or with money and people to help them."

If you strip back the whole 'ooh it's a gig' context, there is something ridiculous about a man standing on a stage at one end of a room, singing a song.

"I agree. I was talking to an actor from... um... (*Discussion in background involving tour manager*) That's it, from *Emmerdale*."

Emmerdale is somewhere in the region of the last thing I was expecting you to say. "Do you know the series? It was an actor from *Emmerdale* who staunchly



**"IF YOU LOOK DOWN
AND YOUR PUBIC HAIR'S
GREY YOU DON'T
REALLY THINK, 'GREAT!'"**

demanding that they played 'Do You Realize??' during his death scene. And when you're sitting there with someone who's an actor you really don't know why any of this stuff you do works or communicates, but it does."

Do you feel like more of a man than you did at the start of the decade?

"I would say yes, but only slightly. I'm 48 now, which is pretty much 50, and you'll see a guy in the obituaries in the paper and they've died at age 50 and people say, 'Well, he died, he was kind of old.' The other side of that is to think, 'I am old, but I feel great.' That said, I think if you look down as you're peeing and your pubic hair's turning grey, you don't really think, 'This is great, it's making me look more wise and experienced'"

When one's hair goes grey at the temples it is a sign of being distinguished. When one's penis is grey at the sides, it means

something very different.

"My temples went grey and people said exactly that – that it seemed as if the shit I was talking about was important and real. Privately there are only a few people who see your pubic hairs."

Is music in a better place than it was 10 years ago?

"Well, we were watching MTV the day before yesterday and it was a 24-hour onslaught of pop stars: Beyoncé, Shakira, virtually naked and gyrating to some disco-esque sort of music."

I'm sorry but that sounds amazing.

"Well, yeah! (*Laughs*) But my point is that to think of 'rock guys' (*Editor's note: these air quotes are very clearly audible*) trying to compete with that, just doesn't work. I'm not sure if kids can really understand what 'selling out' meant back in the day – these days you're seen as something of a chump if you don't have at least a couple commercials! But I totally agree with them. These things should never be set in stone – why not just go with whoever's opinion is deemed cool this week?"

Whose opinion is deemed cool this week?
"Well, I'm hoping mine is. I'm talking to *NME*, come on!"

Well you say that – I experienced a three-day window in the mid-2000s when what I said was the law of cool. I'll be honest, Wayne, it was fleeting. "Did you know it was fleeting at the time, or were you crushed when you went back down to just being another insignificant person on the planet?"

I thought it was going to last forever, Wayne. I thought I was invincible. Three days later it was all over. How did you see the new decade in?

"Well, we play a show every New Year's Eve in Oklahoma City and our guestlist has grown to be about a thousand people and it's a monstrous responsibility. About 4am on the very first day of January is when I know how the new decade feels..."

I think I should leave you to continue your sightseeing in Birmingham.

"Thank you. I'll find a way to make it seem like a worthwhile experience."

TO COYNE A PHRASE

Key terms and phrases from this interview – explained...

"An actor from *Emmerdale*"

See also: 'a singer from John & Edward', 'an honest estate agent', 'a worthwhile iTunes bonus track'.

"A monstrous responsibility"

A responsibility akin to rearing a miniature monster. Despite this phrase having increased in popularity in recent years monsters have actually proved themselves to be relatively easy to bring up.

"Disco-esque sort of music"

A genre of music which contains elements of disco but is not actually disco. Other, similar genres of music include 'indie-ish', 'sort of electro' and 'a bit noisy'.

"These things should never be set in stone"

This phrase dates back to the earliest hair curling methods which saw perms literally set in place using stone (later concrete). This unwieldy solution was soon jettisoned upon the invention of hairspray.

"A couple commercials"

This is American for 'a couple of commercials'.

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