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INSIDE THIS WEEK

21/01/2012



6

"IT WILL HIT UNSIGNED ARTISTS THE HARDEST"

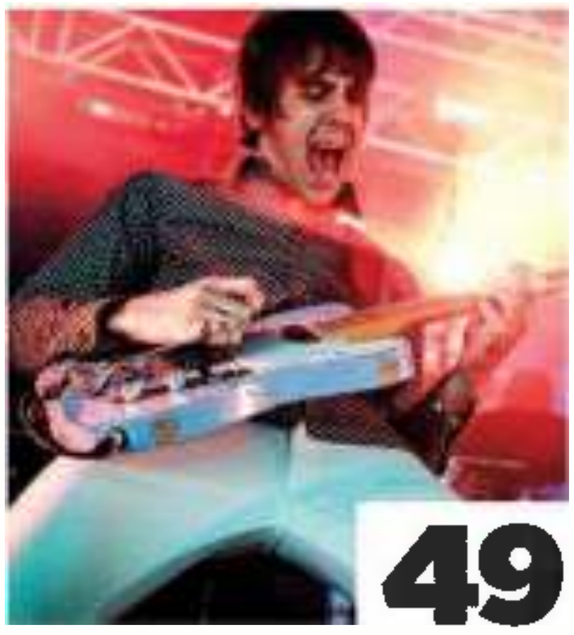
WHY NEW ANTI-PIRACY LAWS COULD STOP THE DISCOVERY OF THE NEXT AZEALIA BANKS



17

"IT'S A NUCLEAR APOCALYPSE, BUT IT'S ALSO FUN"

THE MACCABEES LIFT THE LID ON THEIR INFLUENCES



49

"HE'S SLOW COOKING IN TIGHT WHITE JEANS"

MILES KANE ROCKS OZ'S SOUTHBOUND FESTIVAL



14

"The songs aren't completely shit"

BIFFY CLYRO GET THE FANS EXCITED IN OUR GIANT GUIDE TO THE ALBUMS THAT'LL ROCK 2012



8

Win tickets to the Isle Of Wight festival!



66

"BRANDON FLOWERS IS COOLER THAN ME"

YES HE IS, ROBBIE FROM THE BIG PINK. YES HE IS

Plus

4 ON REPEAT
6 UPFRONT
11 VERSUS/NME CHART
13 ALBUMS OF 2012
46 REVIEWS
49 LIVE
57 BOOKING NOW
58 GIG GUIDE
62 THIS WEEK IN
64 FANMAIL
66 BRAINCELLS



9

"THEY'LL BLOW THE BULLSHIT AWAY"

THE AT THE DRIVE-IN REUNION HAS CERTAINLY GOT ENTER SHIKARI EXCITED

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ON REPEAT

THE SOUNDS RATTLING ROUND THE SKULLS OF THE NME STAFF THIS WEEK



TRACK OF THE WEEK

SLEIGH BELLS

Comeback Kid

So Sleigh Bells made their return at the dog-end of last year as we'd expected them to, opting for the all-guns-blazing, seek-and-destroy approach, unleashing music's very own hellfire onto unsuspecting civilians with 'Born To Lose'. The first track out of new album 'Reign Of Terror''s traps was a Jonah Hill-heavy riff rampage that belied their insistence in recent interviews that they're about to offer a more tuneful, song-based and poppy second album.

Imagine The Tings Tings stretched on a rack and turned into androids

The comeback kids' second, 'Comeback Kid', on the other hand? Now *this* is the pop hit they were banging on about. Well, kinda. It's still stuffed full of crunchy guitars (recorded, apparently, in a massive reverberation room for added effect) and demonic thumping beats, but this time they're growling and rumbling under and over much sweeter vocals and – dare we say it – a catchier structure. It's as if someone put The Ting Tings on a rack, stretched them to breaking point, turned them into lurching androids equipped with sonic death rays and let them loose at a Skrillex gig. Or something. Anyway – Alexis' increased involvement in the songwriting process has seen her add numerous pop devices to her foil Derek's demented machinations, and the resulting tussle is captivating indeed.
Tim Chester, Deputy Editor, *NME.COM*

Stored



JAY-Z FT BIC

Glory

After welcoming Blue Ivy Carter to the world earlier this month, Jigga didn't waste any time heading into the studio to wax lyrical about his and Beyoncé's "*greatest creation*". With BIC on backing vocals (of sorts) and references to previous miscarriages, it's enough to reduce any cynic to a big pile of mush.
Rick Martin, News Editor

DEVIN

You're Mine

Brooklyn newcomer Devin sets out his stall with this hyper-energetic new single. It's as frenetic as expected – a rock'n'roll retread of 'Teenage Kicks' with buzzsaw guitars nicked straight outta The Libertines' 'Horrorshow' and screamy Casablancas-esque vocals.
Matt Wilkinson, New Music Editor

AMADOU & MARIAM FT SANTIGOLD AND NICK ZINNER

Dougou Badia

The meshing of Malian couple Amadou and Mariam's sparkling harmonies with Nick Zinner's circular, rockabilly guitar riff and Santigold's chiming, ever-adaptable vocal style may have the touch of mash-up madness about it, but that's *exactly* what makes this track so brilliant. A chuffing great masterstroke of genre-less genre mixing.
Priya Elan, Assistant Editor, *NME.COM*

LA SERA

Please Be My Third Eye

Vivian Girls' bassist Katy Goodman showcases her La Sera project's forthcoming second album with a hit of cranked-up candy rock. It comes over like hair-flipping teen classic *Clueless* soundtracked by the legendary 'Girls In The Garage' '60s shakedown compilation series: splendid stuff.
Leonie Cooper, Deputy News Editor

ONEOHTRIX POINT NEVER

Rubio (demo)

Most kosmische keyboard explorers write music dealing with subjects like deserted space-stations. Not Daniel Lopatin, whose new demo – his first since 2011's 'Replica' – deals conceptually with Ricky Rubio, a basketball player for the Minnesota Timberwolves. Ricky must be hot shit, because 'Rubio''s zonked-out tropical synth oozes a sensation of splendid serenity.
Louis Pattison, writer

CANCER BATS

Old Blood

'Dead Set On Living' is probably the best album title we've heard since Paul McCartney's 'Kisses On The Bottom'. And, shortly behind this face-ripping preview track, it's one of the main reasons why we can't wait for Cancer Bats to slash hardcore a new bumhole when it's out this spring.
Jamie Fullerton, Features Editor

THE 2 BEARS

Work

2012: the year dance music remembered to have some silly good times again. Witness Joe from Hot Chip's The 2 Bears side project – proper no-nonsense, positive-energy house music made by two grown men dressed as giant teddy bears – and the most banging ode to the daily grind since Dolly's '9 To 5'.
Krissi Murison, Editor

RADIOHEAD

Fat Girl (demo)

These days Radiohead sound like a ZX Spectrum falling down a spiral staircase, but back in 1986 they were sixth formers with a penchant for double denim and sax solos. This recently unearthed demo finds them channeling The Smiths' 'Some Girls...'. Thom's sweet vocal aside, it's pretty dreadful. There's hope for crap baby bands everywhere.
Luke Lewis, Editor, *NME.COM*



SHARON VAN ETTEN

Leonard

SVE's last album, 'Epic', dealt with a vile ex who'd break her instruments and call her worthless. From forthcoming LP 'Tramp', 'Leonard' concerns learning to love again, her voice soaring amid thrumming drums and shuffling guitar, and ending in a gentle string swirl. Proof her ex couldn't have been more wrong.
Laura Snapes, Assistant Reviews Editor

DEAN CHALKLEY

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JONAH HILL

The Sitter

15

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UPFRONT

WHAT'S HAPPENED AND WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MUSIC THIS WEEK

Edited by Rick Martin



"People couldn't even find my track. It was like contraband"

AZEALIA BANKS, ON LEGAL ISSUES AFFECTING '212'

HOW NEW US PIRACY LAWS WILL AFFECT YOU

The Stop Online Piracy Act that's being debated by the US government could kill the mixtape culture, MP3 blogs and YouTube vids that launched the likes of Azealia Banks and Lana Del Rey

MAIN EVENT

While all eyes are on mainstream US politics as Republican presidential hopefuls jostle for the party candidacy, a piece of legislation is being debated in Washington DC that could profoundly alter the way you consume music online. Yes, *you*, thousands of miles away, watching '212' for the umpteenth time on YouTube. If the Stop Online Piracy Act – aka SOPA – gets through Congress this spring, rappers like Azealia Banks will find it much harder to get their music out there. She's currently in a legal battle with Lazy Jay, whose track 'Float My Boat' she nabbed to underpin '212'. "I guess it makes it more sexy," she told us back in October. "People are talking about this song – 'oh shit, we can't even find it'. It's almost contraband." However, if SOPA is passed, she'll be fighting with bigger boys than Lazy Jay, and it *definitely* won't be sexy.

SOPA is aimed at fighting online trafficking of copyrighted intellectual property, like music, film and video games. This sounds reasonable until you realise it would essentially criminalise a lot of largely innocent online music consumption and dissemination. Those Weeknd mixtapes, Lana Del Rey's 'found footage' videos, that blog where you find recommendations: SOPA could spell the end for all of them.

Under the current US law – the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, passed in 1998 – if someone uploads copyrighted material to a website full of user-generated content such as YouTube, then YouTube is only required to take it down if they receive a complaint about it (known as the 'safe harbour exemption'). That's why '212' keeps disappearing – because Lazy Jay keeps complaining.

If SOPA passes in some form – which seems inevitable despite a growing legion of detractors, including Google and Tumblr – then these are the effects for music fans...

NO MORE YOUTUBE SENSATIONS

As Azealia points out, the videos and songs that blow up online are the ones with a sense of the illicit. When the promo for Lana Del Rey's 'Video Games' first went online – full of unauthorised Disney clips and the like – it kept getting taken down. "The label don't want me to make an official video. I do them myself, for better or worse!" Lana told us at the time. If YouTube had to pre-monitor videos for copyright, clips like this would never make it online.

MP3 BLOGS KILLED OFF

MP3 blogs (as opposed to illegal blogs which upload entire albums) are curated out of sheer love. Often, a blogger's exuberance in sharing a great new song will lead them to upload it without checking whether they're strictly allowed to. Under SOPA, these blogs could be blacklisted by search engines, possibly closed, and their owners potentially subject to litigation. However, a new amendment has at least removed the provision that would require ISPs to block access to non-US sites accused of piracy.

MIXTAPE CULTURE DIES

Politicians have always viewed technological advancement with some suspicion – the rise of the cassette tape in the '70s was seen as a major threat to the record industry. Suffice to say, the industry ploughed on, and cassettes in fact became pivotal in the development and distribution of hip-hop, as Wretch 32 discusses [see panel]. While today's hip-hop artists aren't necessarily recording onto plastic C90 tapes, the same spirit lives on in the online mixtape, often a mish-mash of original rhymes and cherry-picked samples.

Last year, Toronto's The Weeknd – aka Abel Tesfaye – self-released a trilogy of mixtapes: 'House Of Balloons', 'Thursday' and 'Echoes Of Silence'. They sampled, among others, Siouxsie Sioux and French ingénue France Gall, most likely without their labels' permission. Although SOPA is gradually being defanged as it goes through Congress, it's likely to take a dim view of copyright infringement such as this.

WEB USERS CRIMINALISED

While the legalities for websites hosting copyrighted content are fairly clear, the implications for users themselves are rather less well defined. It's been suggested that getting caught downloading or streaming 10 or more unauthorised bits of music or film within a six-month period could land you with a maximum financial penalty, or even put you behind bars – though that would most likely only apply to American citizens.



Wretch 32: "SOPA is bad for hip-hop"



"Mixtapes are basically everything. You build up your core from giving out free material. They help you to understand how good you are, where you need to get to and what kind of beats you suit. Using samples is a way of introducing yourself to people who've never heard of you – when people hear familiar music, it's easier for them to get familiar with you. And sometimes it's nice to have that hook, that catchy bit that people are gonna sing along to. I think SOPA would slow down mixtape culture. It'd definitely be bad for hip-hop if those tapes couldn't exist on the internet. It's only once you're at Jay-Z level where you feel like you don't need to do them!"

REVOLUTIONARIES SILENCED

Arguably more serious, however, is the threat to proxy servers, which SOPA wishes to restrict because they can be used for illegal streaming. Yet during the Arab Spring last year, they were used to spread protest, because they can help circumvent restrictions on social networks and foreign news sources. In Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Iran, they were used by dissidents in opposition to tyrannical regimes and state-run news outlets.

WHERE WE'RE AT NOW

SOPA is still receiving early hearings, and stands to change a great deal before – or if – it is passed. Removing the provision to block foreign sites accused of piracy is just one step that's been made to make the bill more palatable and likely to get passed. The digital industry is lobbying furiously to have SOPA watered down. Musicians and users are caught between the entertainment industry, whose sliding revenues suggest they're yet to adapt to digital, and superpowers like Google and Facebook, whose lifeblood *is* digital. Ultimately, the more awareness of SOPA, the less likely it is that the bill will quietly slip through. In true Azealia spirit, let's not let it go down without a fight.

NME.COM *Stay tuned to NME.COM/news for the latest updates on the SOPA bill – and join the debate at NME.COM/blogs*



WORDS: LAURA SHAPES PHOTOS: TOM OXLEY, PHOTOSHOT, ANDY WILLSHER

FRANK TURNER PLAYS FOR HIS FANS AT NME HQ

The punk busker warms up for Wembley in our office



The things you have to do to get a cup of tea in this place...

In terms of capacity, NME Towers can't quite compete with Wembley Arena, where Frank Turner's due to play to a crowd of 12,500 in April. But Frank will probably never play to a more enthusiastic gaggle of fans than the competition winners who gathered around our production desk last week (January 10) to witness a truly unique set from the politico-troubadour. Kicking off with a cover of The Killers' 'Mr Brightside', he was soon taking requests from the floor and leading his fans through rabble-rousing singalongs. After taking time out for a meet and greet, Frank told *NME* he'd already been down to Wembley Arena to scope things out – and was "wetting himself" with nerves. "I clung onto my manager's leg like a lost child in a supermarket," he recalls. "But my band and crew are good at what they do. It's going to be awesome." To watch a clip of the session – and also find out Frank's thoughts on the At The Drive-In reunion in an exclusive interview – head to *NME.COM/video* now



CORRECTION

In last week's Gig Guide festival special we printed some inaccuracies with regards to Latitude and Reading & Leeds festivals. We'd like to apologise to Festival Republic and fans alike and correct this information.

Ticket prices quoted for Reading & Leeds were in relation to the pre-sales which ended on December 31 2011, and therefore the prices were incorrect. The ticket prices for each of the 2012 events listed will be published in the spring, along with the first line-up announcements, so be sure to check the official websites to keep up to date with all of the news as it happens.

LATITUDE 2012
Thursday 12 – Sunday 15 July
www.latitudefestival.co.uk

READING & LEEDS 2012
Friday 24 – Sunday 26 August
www.readingfestival.com
www.leedsfestival.com

NME EXTRA WIN A PAIR OF ISLE OF WIGHT TICKETS!

See Noel Gallagher, Bruce Springsteen and Biffy Clyro with our NME Extra competition



Every year the Isle Of Wight Festival mixes legendary artists with the best of the current crop of bands to kick off the festival season in style. And it looks as if this year's event will be no exception, with Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band, Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers and Pearl Jam already pencilled in as this year's headliners – and Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, The Vaccines and Biffy Clyro also on the bill.

Want to go? Of course you do. *NME* has teamed up with the festival's organisers for a great NME Extra competition – the chance for you and a mate to win two tickets to the June 22-24 event. To enter, simply follow the steps below.

HERE'S HOW

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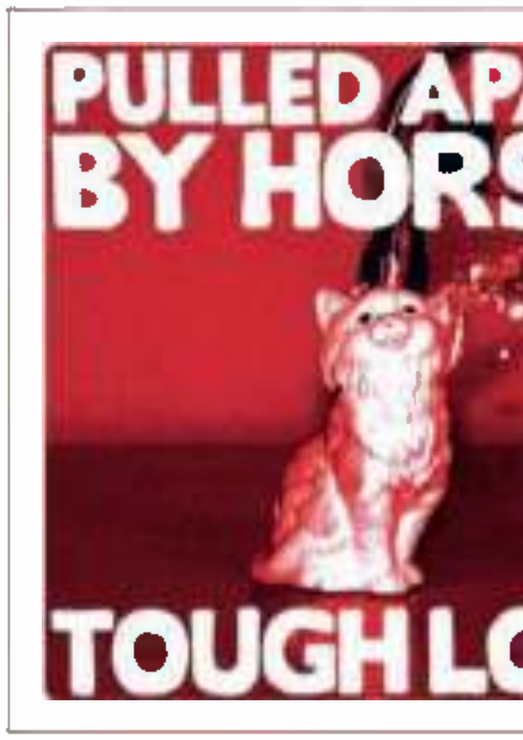
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TALKING HEADS

AT THE DRIVE-IN: THE PUNKEST BAND ALIVE

Following the post-hardcore legends' reformation last week, ***Enter Shikari****'s Rou Reynolds explains why the El Paso five-piece still mean so much to him 12 years after their last album*



"It was really weird when I heard At The Drive-In announced they were reforming last week – literally the night before, I was speaking to *NME* about how they were the one band I'd want to play with at my dream gig. Their upcoming live gigs [they'll play Coachella Festival in California later this year] are something we're really excited about – there's been a huge buzz in our rehearsal room ever since. They're a massive inspiration to us – in fact, they're the punkest band of the past 20 years." Here's why:

THEIR PUNK ETHOS

"We very much feel a kinship with At The Drive-In, because they didn't seem to be involved in any sort of scene. They existed in their own world, on their own terms. The way that they split in 2001, just as they were starting to break through and cross over, was hugely punk. Loads of bands talk about doing that, but very few follow it through. You could see that success freaked them out a bit – but I guess they've grown out of that fear now, and they're going to be bigger than they ever were, which is intriguing."

They weren't part of a scene. They existed in their own world, on their own terms

THEIR COMPLEX LYRICS

"Like most people of my generation I was brought up on the bland lyrics of Britpop – but Cedric Bixler-Zavala's words were something else. It made me want to pick up a dictionary and a thesaurus straight away to work out what the fuck he was talking about. Listening to their songs makes me want to improve my own lyrics – like them, we sing about things that we're very passionate about and, like them, we throw everything we have into our songs."

THEIR INCENDIARY LIVE SHOWS

"One of my biggest regrets is that I didn't see At The Drive-In live before they split back in 2001, which is what's the most exciting thing about their reformation. But from the clips I've seen and people I know who did see them, it's clear they brought a new dimension to live performance. One of the most interesting things about them was how on the one hand, their live shows were really physical and expressive, but, on the other hand, they hated crowdsurfing and moshing. In fact, there was an infamous incident where Cedric stopped a show to tell the moshing crowd they were all "sheep". I thought that was an incredible statement from a hardcore band. There's only a few other bands that are in that league of performance – The Dillinger Escape Plan and Refused to name two; bands who are entertaining to watch as they have no care about what they look like. You see a lot of it these days in the metalcore scene. They've got planned moves, headbanging and jumping at the same time – it's all just so over the top and cringe-worthy. I hope At The Drive-In blow all that bullshit away again."



Eventually one of them was going to have admit it: they were locked out



Cedric: "Oi you, stop that moshing..."



"... right, that's much better"

'RELATIONSHIP OF COMMAND'

"Like most people, I was first turned onto them by their 2000 breakthrough album, 'Relationship Of Command'. I fell in love with it straight away and then went back through their older albums. While their early material is shady and amateur-sounding, producer Ross Robinson did an incredible job with 'ROC', it really captures the energy they had live. My favourite track is 'Sleep Capsules' – it raises the bar of where you can go with a hardcore track. Their music is so scattergun – the time signatures are all over the place and his vocal delivery is awesome. Whereas a lot of bands today are going for big vocal switches – 'Here's the deep screams and here's the nice sing-y chorus' – Cedric's vocals are very raw and very real, and that's something I have always respected."

THEIR ABILITY TO REINVIGORATE THE ALTERNATIVE SCENE

"When At The Drive-In broke through in the early '00s it felt like they shook everything up. Now, 12 years later, I think they'll do the same – they couldn't be coming back at a better time. There's not many bands that picked up the torch and carried things on. Who knows if they'll do another album, but a whole generation of music fans are finally going to get the chance to see them live – and that's really, really exciting."

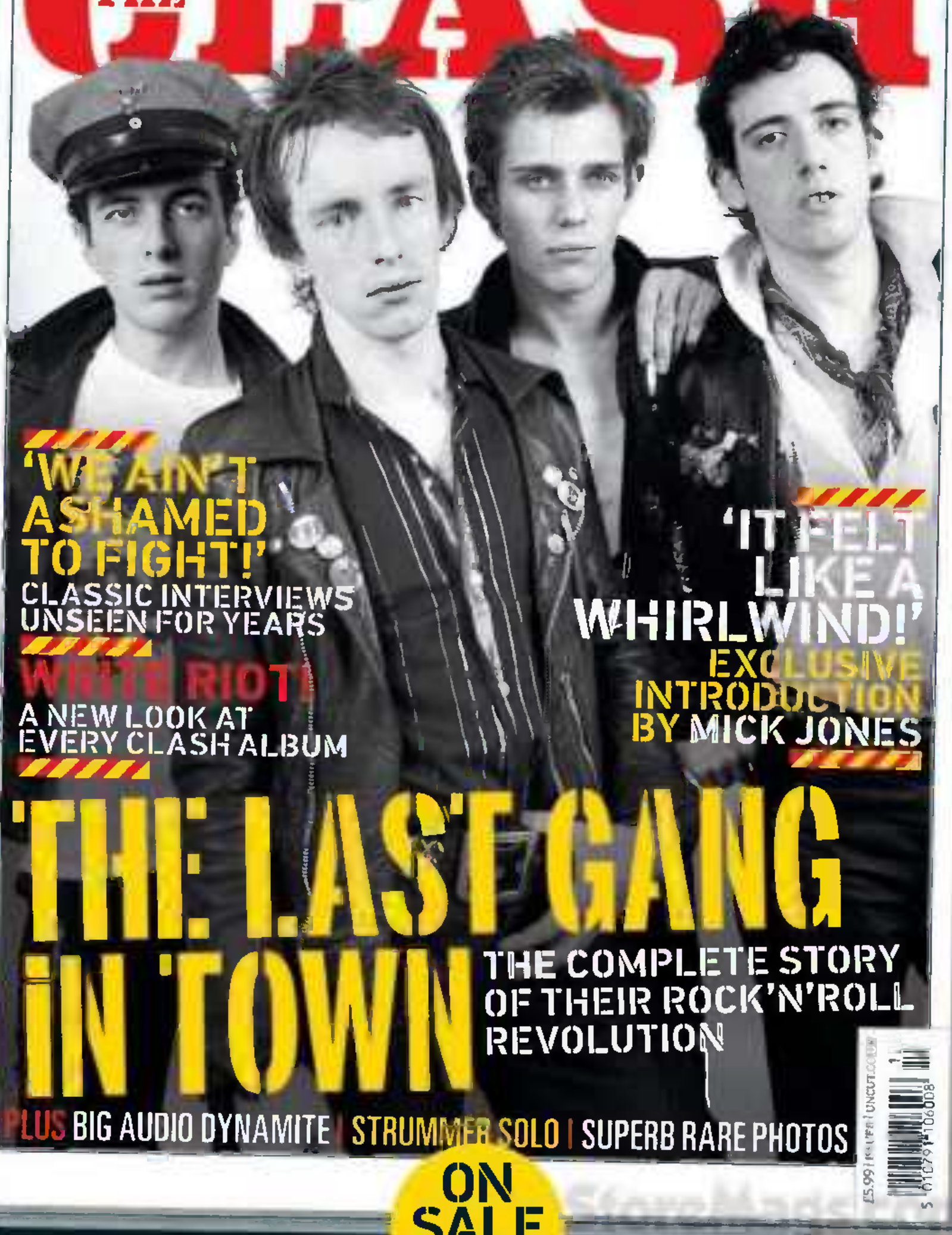
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'IT FELT LIKE A WHIRLWIND!'
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VERSUS

Peter Robinson Vs HUW STEPHENS

The Radio 1 DJ on why all you really need is new music (and loo roll... and champagne showers)



• Huw Stephens made Peter Robinson a cup of tea between Christmas and New Year

• While he did so there was an overpowering stench of fart in the air

• Peter would like to make it clear to Huw that the fart was NOT his, but that if it was Huw's, he is forgiven

Hello, Huw. I gather you are talking to me today from The Netherlands?
"I'm at the Eurosonic festival. Actually, does this interview come out next Wednesday?"

Wednesday is *NME* day!
"Well, on Wednesday night – 'tonight' if people are reading this Wednesday – I'll be having live highlights on my show from midnight onwards."

Obviously a lot of the things that will be in the show haven't happened yet. Do you think saying there will be live highlights is a bit risky? What if it's just a load of old rubbish?
"Well, I've seen good bands already. Vadoin Messico, they're good. And I've seen Spector, and they're very good too. And Lucy Rose, *she's* very good. So we will have some highlights!"

Are you as obsessed with new shoes as you are with music?
"NEW SHOES?"

Like when you get a new pair of shoes, does it excite you as much as hearing a good new record?
"No it doesn't, actually; the only thing I really like new is my music. Everything else I can do with old stuff."

LOO ROLL?
"I do like new loo roll, yes."

"It's best to have the first go on loo roll", as the old saying goes.
"Yes. Someone texted in during a show I did with Greg James last week, they were called PJ, and they said, 'The reason I like new music is that it holds no memory so it informs us who we are at a particular time'. I quite liked that."

I quite enjoyed the Specialist Takeover on Radio 1 last week.
"Why only 'quite?"

Well, there's a time and a place for Zane Lowe shouting "DON'T BE SCARED!! IT'S ONLY MUSIC!!!!" over an earsplitting Skrillex remix, and that time and place is not '7.15am, my kitchen'. Sometimes you just want to hear a nice mid-tempo Rihanna song.
"I am glad you mainly enjoyed it though. We enjoyed it a lot. I think people like hearing something a bit different. Being able to play music you love on the radio is the best thing ever."



That's all well, but are you a bit jealous of the Capital FM TV ads?
"I haven't seen those."

They're amazing. It's various popstars – and Ed Sheeran – in an exciting-looking room saying exciting things about music. It makes you think, 'I quite want to listen to Capital FM now'.
"Unfortunately I have not seen this advertisement, so I'm not jealous."

It would be odd to be jealous of an advert, I suppose. Are there any famous people you are jealous of?
(*Immediately*) "Rihanna."

She's in the Capital advert!
"Things I envy about Rihanna are: Bahamas, champagne showers."

Surely in Austerity Britain a cava shower or a prosecco foot-spa would be more appropriate. Also, the thing I always think about champagne showers is that you're going to be a bit sticky after.
"You would probably need a proper shower afterwards, yes. Maybe I'm not as jealous of Rihanna as I thought I was. I try not to be jealous."

But you're only human, Huw. Human with a w. Huwman.
"Yes I am. You've just got to carry on and make the best of what you've got."

But reach for the stars as well!
"Yes."

It's always good to terminate an interview when you've started quoting S Club 7 song lyrics.
"I agree."

TOM COXLEY, ED MILES

THIS WEEK'S TOP 20

THE NME CHART

1	16	SPECTOR	'GREY SHIRT AND TIE'
2	13	NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS	'IF I HAD A GUN...'
3	17	FRIENDLY FIRES	'BLUE CASSETTE'
4	3	BAND OF SKULLS	'THE DEVIL TAKES CARE OF HIS OWN'
5	23	THE BIG PINK	'HIT THE GROUND (SUPERMAN)'
6	34	THE MACCABEES	'PELICAN'
7	22	THE VACCINES	'WET SUIT'
8	2	FOO FIGHTERS	'THESE DAYS'
9	4	FOSTER THE PEOPLE	'CALL IT WHAT YOU WANT'
10	NEW	TRIBES	'WE WERE CHILDREN'
11	7	DRY THE RIVER	'WEIGHTS & MEASURES'
12	26	HOWLER	'BACK OF YOUR NECK'
13	9	KASABIAN	'RE-WIRED'
14	19	THE VACCINES	'TIGER BLOOD'
15	32	FRANK TURNER	'WESSEX BOY'
16	NEW	LANA DEL REY	'BORN TO DIE'
17	12	BOMBAY BICYCLE CLUB	'LIGHTS OUT, WORDS GONE'
18	25	FLORENCE + THE MACHINE	'SHAKE IT OUT'
19	9	THE BLACK KEYS	'LONELY BOY'
20	5	LANA DEL REY	'VIDEO GAMES'

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THE ALBUMS of 2012



I THOUGHT THIS YEAR WAS ALL about the Olympics, Euro 2012 and the Mayan Apocalypse? Well, er, you're probably right. But it's going to have an amazing soundtrack. So behold as we lift the lid on 2012's biggest albums. From bigtime returns from the likes of The Stone Roses and Biffy Clyro to progress reports on all the albums that'll matter, we've got every angle covered with unrivalled access, exclusive pics and in-studio updates. Sporting failure and the end of the world will have never sounded so good. *Rick Martin, News Editor*

THIS YEAR'S FIVE HOTTEST ALBUM TRENDS

1 BIGTIME JANUARY RELEASES
January has already seen releases from Howler, Tribes, Enter Shikari and The Maccabees, with the biggest of them all, Lana Del Rey, dropping January 30.

2 BERLIN
This year *everyone* is heading to, or has been inspired by, Berlin (just like Bowie and Iggy), including The Ting Tings, Frankie & The Heartstrings and The Courteeners.

3 HUGE COLLABORATIONS
A collaborative spirit has infected everyone this year – Weller has recorded with Noel and Graham Coxon, while Damon's roped in Lana Del Rey for his Bobby Womack album.

4 MAKE OR BREAK ALBUMS
Three-album slow burns are largely over. It's last chance time for The Enemy and Glasvegas, while La Roux, Klaxons and Little Boots are preparing make-or-break returns.

5 HEAD-TO-HEAD
Some intriguing duels are ahead: the Frank-less Gallows versus his new band Pure Love, and the Mani-less Primal Scream versus his new-old Roses employers.

RICHARD JOHNSON, DANNY NORTH

ALBUMS of 2012

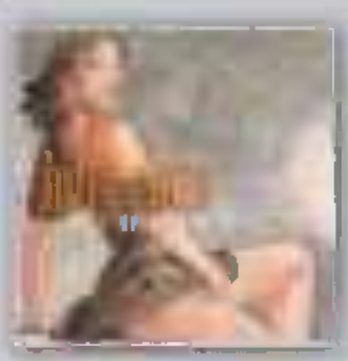
Once again, the boys failed to score Matt Cardle's autograph

ALBUM by ALBUM

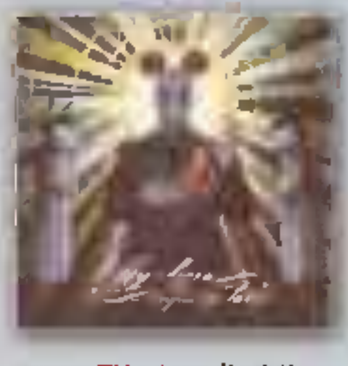
From their crazy beginnings to more recent radio-friendly gold, Biffy's discography has seen them blast into the mainstream – but will album six continue the trend?



BLACKENED SKY *(2002)*
The scratchy debut found Biffy a work in progress but bursting with the emotional melody that would come to define them. Early classics '27', '57' and 'Justboy' remain live favourites to this day.



THE VERTIGO OF BLISS *(2003)*
Set two was intense, strange and angular, throwing out fan faves like 'Toys, Toys, Toys, Choke, Toys, Toys, Toys'. Legend has it that the principal recording took just one day.



INFINITY LAND *(2004)*
The climax of their weirdo early period and still, among many fans, their finest album: a gothic concept jam that stretched through twisted disco, deranged metal prog and pure reflection.



PUZZLE *(2007)*
The giant leap forward into straightforward 'songy songs' that showed radio potential. 'Who's Got A Match?' brought the pop thrills, but here was a dark album that was often too intense to truly love.



ONLY REVOLUTIONS *(2009)*
Biffy hit the pop precipice with their shameless, flawless masterpiece. As soon as 'Mountains' exploded onto radio stations, Biffy as A Big Deal finally became a reality.

storemags

Biffy Clyro: "We're making a double concept album"

With sackloads of material already in the works, frontman Simon Neil spills the beans on a "fuck-off rock record" stuffed with songs about, er, porcupines and Kinder eggs...



With their fifth album, 'Only Revolutions', Biffy Clyro were suddenly arena-huge – which makes its follow-up their 'post-fame album'. Simon Neil, of course, protests too much. "I don't think you'd describe us as famous yet," he says. So fans will be relieved that the sixth Biffy album will definitely *not* be that classic shark-jump of a trouble-in-paradise navel-gaze wherein rock stars contemplate the emotional emptiness of hotel rooms.

"Oh yeah, because that'd be really fucking exciting," he says. "Just me masturbating and the specific sexual requirements."

We point out to Simon that there would be an audience for *precisely* such a record. He concurs, saying, "Maybe... but I think it'd be more of a side project! But no, I would hate to write songs reacting to how our music's perceived. We write songs about how life is and how life changes, but I would hate to write songs about *worrying* about *being in a band*.

"We did three indie records on Beggars Banquet which gelled together, and I think we'll probably do three big fuck-off rock records with Garth [Richardson, producer]. And the way the songs are sounding, I don't see how we can go any bigger and better in terms of the big rock songs. The next record will sound huge, and be jam-packed with big tunes and hopefully tunes that are dear to our heart. *Then* it'll be time for the post-fame record!"

This alone is cause for excitement. Since they began their glorious second phase, a three-way battle has emerged for Biffy's soul between those people who like hearing their songs at festivals, those who see their ascent into the big leagues as part of a holy mission to rewire the very mythology of modern rock'n'roll, and a vocal minority of fanboys who have never forgiven them for learning to write choruses. For their sixth outing, they're obviously not going to move backwards, but you do get a sniff that they're off back to explore their inner weird (though that never actually went away). *Then*, presumably, will be time to make their 'Nebraska'.

MANY OF TRACKS

At this point, Biffy have demoed 30 songs, which early in 2012 they'll (probably) take out to Los Angeles (or somewhere) to (probably) make the album with 'GGGarth' Richardson, the Canadian veteran who has been their producer since 'Puzzle'. "I've got a nice studio in the house now," Simon explains. "The good thing is, ideas can come and you can put them down. It's a real relief because normally I have to compile the songs in my head and remember them until we get to a town where we can record. It's the first time we've been able to demo properly. And I think they're some of the best songs I've ever written. They're all over the place. It's good that we can still feel buzzing about a record because the more you make, when you finish an album you're like, 'Oh no, where can we go next?' And it's only after the course of the year after the record comes out that you can live your life or things happen to you that you can channel into songs. So it's been a relief to hear that the ideas and songs we've had aren't completely shit!"

With 30 songs already on the plate, talk must have turned at some stage to the thought of a double album?

His face lights up. "I'm not scared of the D word, I have to say! But it's all about if the music demands it. The songs have to be good enough for a start, but there also has to be a point. It's not just about, 'Hey, we've written 30 songs and here's 28 of them'. I've got the titles, actually, which kinda shows that we're further down the double album route than I would even admit to myself. But it won't be 'Metal Machine Music', two albums of all that [noise]. For us it would be being a rock band, and then another side would just be us stripping away our tools. We've made five albums of standing in a room playing the song, and then playing it consistently better. I'd like to use things that I've learned from Marmaduke Duke where you don't have every idea worked out before you go into a studio – sometimes those instantaneous moments can bring out great things that you'd never have had if you planned them. So that's what we're aiming for. If it doesn't happen it means that our second record was shit."

FORKING GREAT

And what about the C word? "I've got the concept in my mind. It's kind of about the life you would choose to live and the life that you're forced to live due to the choices you make, so lyrically it would be taking those two forks in the road; one record would be your right fork and the other would be your left fork."

Like the Gwyneth Paltrow film *Sliding Doors*? "Yes! Yes, we're gonna make the indie rock *Sliding Doors*! Oh God, what a terrible fucking thing!"

Last time we had this conversation with Simon, the Christmas before 'Only Revolutions' came out, he had horses on his mind, a preoccupation that fed into 'Born On A Horse' and 'Whorses'. So, are any livestock informing this album?

"Definitely. I don't know what the fuck it is about me and animals. There's a song about porcupines. And there's also a song about Kinder eggs. I can never say anything in a simple way; everything's got to be ever so slightly bizarre set-pieces. I find it easier to express myself that way – but also, nobody wants to be a po-faced band or a serious band that sings about heartbreak or death or why we're here."

At this point, he can't keep it in any longer. "Do you want the working titles?" We thought you'd never ask. "'Use Your Illusion 3' and 'Use Your Illusion 4'."

With so many mixed metaphors flying around, Simon emails *NME* the next day to try and say it a bit straighter. "The records will be dripping with venom and love. But if 'Puzzle' was about death, 'Only Revolutions' was about love, this next one is about life. FULL STOP." *Dan Martin*

EXPECTED: spring/summer

THE DETAILS

TITLE: TBC
WORKING TITLES: 'Use Your Illusion 3', 'Use Your Illusion 4'
PRODUCER: Garth Richardson
TRACKS INCLUDE: 'The Joke's On Us', 'Sounds Like Balloons', 'City Of Dreadful Night', 'Opposites'

DANNY NORTH



Is there really room in Heaton Park to contain this much man-love?

Third coming of The Stone Roses

Last year's sensational reunion brought with it the promise of new material. Two huge record deals later, we can finally start believing

To understand the future you must know the past. And this is certainly the case with The Stone Roses, especially when it comes to the way they go about releasing albums. It's hardly been a straightforward process in the three decades or so since their formation – and it's that's almost impossible to second guess right up until release dates are officially announced. But this time around, the word from the camp is that things are different. Sources who've sat in on the sessions have told *NME* they're not just working on new tunes, they've finished them. There's even whispers of the songs already being recorded and ready to go. Which really shouldn't come as much of a surprise. Would Mani have really jumped ship from Primal Scream [see right] for the sake of a handful of gigs if they weren't doing an album imminently?

That said, we wouldn't head to Amazon hoping to get a pre-order in just yet. Because if history has taught us anything about the Roses it's that these things can be a long, drawn out process. Everyone knows about the infamous half-decade wait for 'Second Coming' – an album mired by insane pressure, business disaster and, crucially, being on different drugs at different times. But really, that's only half the story. Check the rock history books and you'll see there was also a five year gap between them playing their first gig in 1984 and putting out their debut. 'I Wanna Be Adored', for example, was debuted on an early Swedish tour and took five years and a couple of line-up changes to become the version we now know. Several of the songs were written when original bass player Pete Garner was in the band – 'I Am The Resurrection' appearing in the weeks after he left and was replaced by Mani in 1985.

Ultimately, the patience with 'The Stone Roses' after a number of false starts was probably the key to it being such generation defining album for British music. Yet the bullish talk about new songs at the press conference wasn't bluster. The signing of two new record deals late last year – one with Universal in the UK and Columbia for the rest of the world – rubber-stamped that. The band have given away little since, however, bar Ian telling *NME* that the album would be made up of "psychedelic pop" – a tantalising suggestion that the album will be more in the vein of their self titled debut than the Squire-driven Led Zep-esque rock outs of 'Second Coming'.

The big question is whether they'll put out the album before or after the reunion gigs, which all depends on whether they want to make Heaton Park and the European festival shows the sort of nostalgia-fests Ian was scoffing at in the press conference, or a chance to break out the new material. Our inkling is that they play the gigs, slip a couple of new songs into the setlist and put out the album in the autumn. But really, who knows? Either way, make no mistake: the third coming of the Roses is on the way. Be ready. *John Robb*

EXPECTED: autumn

PRIMAL SCREAM'S NEXT MOVE

Mani's buggered off, but My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields is back

So, it'd be safe to assume the story – if not the content – of Primal Scream's next album will be centred on the departure of Mani, given that this is their first without the Roses-bound bassist since 1997's 'Vanishing Point'. A safe assumption – but a wrong one.

The Scream's next album actually looks set to be driven by a big-time return to the ranks: My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields. And if you don't think that's cause for excitement, you need to go back and listen to 2000's techno-punk noise-terrorism masterpiece 'XTRMNTR', a cranium-fryer that *almost* hit the heady heights of 'Screamadelica'.

After touring that classic album for the past couple of years, Bobby Gillespie is keen to stress that the nostalgia is now over.

Early indications are that a return to 'XTRMNTR''s electro blast is on the cards, especially if their writing process is anything to go by. "It's not like where you write a song, you take that song to a band and the band plays it," the singer elaborates. "We'd put ideas for songs down, go back on tour, then come back to our own studio... then when I start singing it *becomes* a song. It's like a collage."

Shields has laid down guitar parts on one new song and is in line for mixing duties, while David Holmes is producing.



Bobby was blown away by the crowd's reaction...

Maccabees under the influence

'Given To The Wild' is the album of their career and maybe even the year. But just what inspired it? Orlando and Felix explain...

It may only be January, but The Maccabees' just-released third album 'Given To The Wild' already looks a safe bet to be troubling the upper echelons of our albums of the year list come December. It's the first great album of 2012, and promises to send the band stratospheric – but you probably know that already. What you may not know, however, is how '80s art poppers Talk Talk, the creator of *The Snowman* and a surrealist '60s comedy set in a post-apocalyptic London all combined to make that so. Allow Orlando Weeks and Felix White to take you through the album's key influences.

1 RAYMOND BRIGGS











Orlando: "*When The Wind Blows*, the Raymond Briggs film was on in the studio. When we were recording the intro to the album, using all that drone, we had some clips of it playing. It just seemed to have the right kind of feel to it. I think most people in this country, even if they don't know it, are Raymond Briggs fans. You're brought up with him, he's always around, he's part of the fabric."

2 THE BAND'S ELEPHANT AND CASTLE STUDIO

Orlando: "We recorded the record between Rockfield Studios in Monmouth and our own studio in Elephant And Castle [in London], and just in terms of the freedom it gave us, our studio ended up being quite an important part of the record and why it turned out the way it did. Monmouth is a beautiful place but I don't think it really impacted on the feel of the record, whereas I think that our place in Elephant And Castle did. We felt we had a lot more freedom there."

3 *O LUCKY MAN!*

Felix: "*O Lucky Man!* by Lindsay Anderson was a film that I first saw a few years ago, I think maybe when I was at college. It's a three hour psychedelic British film, and I think it informed the making of the record a little bit, because it encouraged us to experiment with things, but also to maintain a certain sort of charm and restraint as well."

4 TALK TALK'S 'THE COLOUR OF SPRING'

Felix: "I'd always lumped Talk Talk in with Duran Duran, but my manager told me a couple of years ago to actually listen to their records, and I think I've listened to them at least every other day since. When we started writing the record, I was getting interested in having enough space to set songs up, and there's something about that album that really immerses you in it. A lot of this record was about trying to capture a sense of character we didn't think we'd done on record yet. 'The Colour Of Spring' is a record that has a really strong sense of identity, so it was important in that respect."

5 *THE BED SITTING ROOM*

Felix: "*The Bed Sitting Room* is a Richard Lester film, and again, like with *O Lucky Man!*, it has an amazing palette of colours. It's also got a really understated sense of Englishness and a sense of fun, mixed with the end of the world! It's set in London after the nuclear apocalypse, but despite that, it's quite tongue-in-cheek, and really beautiful as well. I'd recommend it to anyone." *Barry Nicolson*

Orlando couldn't keep his eyes off his Raymond Briggs DVD

DAN DENNISON, PENNIE SMITH

BLUR'S big 2012 plans



About time you washed that Fred Perry, eh Damon?

Messy New Year for Graham Coxon

Blur guitarist embraces chaos for his eighth solo album – and it sounds like his most accomplished work yet

"My house in London was falling down, so I commuted to the studio in south-east London from east Kent on my motorbike. It was about 70 or 80 miles a day..." Little wonder, then, that Graham Coxon's eighth solo album, titled 'A + E', is such a noisy and exciting surprise. In fact, so maddening was its conception that Graham is threatening to make it his last. "I don't really see much point in groups making music: I don't see much point in me making music, but there's not much else I can do," he sighs. "I am really pleased with this record, though." From the tracks *NME* hears, he has every right to be.

After the finessed folk of 2009's 'The Spinning Top', Graham has gone back into the wild on this 10-track selection of wilfully obtuse freakouts. "Everything was very ordered on my last few albums. Everything was recorded very properly in a way that a very good engineer would do it," Graham explains, "and I kind of didn't really want any of that. I wanted to feel free to almost not keep up appearances with the sound of it, not feel obliged to tune guitars or clean up tracks.

"I always have to think that maybe that's [the last], every time I make an album," he adds. "The future's unknown. I'm not selling cars. People are always gonna buy cars. It'll be good when you can download cars, though, won't it?"

'A + E' has also given Graham a chance to move on from the more trad '60s sounds of his recent work to explore his influences including Wire ("almost all the inspiration you need to do whatever for the rest of your life"), krautrock, '70s avant garde collage rockers Chrome and prog outsiders Van Der Graaf Generator.

Perhaps the biggest difference from Graham's previous work is his use of electronics. "I wanted 'A + E' to be like a fictional documentary of a fucked up night, so I wanted the technology to be abused," he explains. "A lot of people have to get messed up and take drugs to enjoy themselves in a club, and that was definitely me."

Another 10 songs, which Graham describes as 'cutecore', were also recorded during the sessions, but it's not yet certain what form they'll appear in. So maybe those hints that he'll never release anything again could end up premature? "It's a weird thing being my age, and what you think about your own relevance," Graham concludes. "You sit in front of *The Wright Stuff* feeling mildly entertained, but then you've got the rest of the day and you want to kill yourself really, rather than sit with a guitar and go slowly mad that way." If it results in material as brilliantly bonkers as this, long may the madness last.

Tom Pinnock

EXPECTED: April 2

A NEW BLUR album?

Will the Britpop legends reunite for their first studio album since 2003? Here are some of the hints they've been dropping...

DAMON: "When I actually get time to do Blur, it's an amazing feeling playing those songs."

GRAHAM: "If Blur record anything, it's got to be taken seriously by us four. It can't be a casual thing"

ALEX: "Is there such a thing as an album? Does music have to come 12 tracks at a time?"

DAVE: "There are always plans for Blur..."

DAMON'S BUSY (AGAIN)

Lana Del Rey joins Albarn's Womack project

"I had never heard of Damon," says soul legend Bobby Womack, recalling the time Albarn tried to recruit him for Gorillaz' 'Plastic Beach' LP. "I said to him, 'Have you seen me lately? I know I might be an idol to you, but man, this idol is a box of saltine crackers.'"

Created alongside Damon and XL boss Richard Russell, the LP has a working title of 'The Bravest Man In The World'. "The songs are different from anything I've ever done," says Bobby, before declaring that it was his idea to bolster some tracks with "an electronic sound".

And if this is Bobby's step into the 21st century, he couldn't have chosen a more in-vogue duet partner than Lana Del Rey, who features on one of the tracks. "She's one of a kind," gushes Bobby. "I've never sung with a girl like that. We were like two people in a church."

If it sounds emotional, that's because it was. "I'm back," says Bobby. "I'm back and I'm better than I was."

Ben Hewitt

EXPECTED: spring



"Your stuff's alright, Bobby, but try 'Country House' one more time"

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Mumfords to pioneer 'doom folk'?

Black Sabbath and Nick Drake cited as influences as Marcus and co prepare a new, darker sound

Faux modesty: it's one of the oldest rock'n'roll clichés in the book. But when Mumford & Sons speak of their surprise at how long it's taken them to start work on the follow-up to 'surprise' smash 'Sigh No More', we're inclined to believe it's genuine. What started as a year-long cycle for their debut turned into almost three – including a trip across the US on a train, no less. Now back in the UK after their American adventure, singer/keyboardist Ben Lovett says the band are finally "getting [their] heads down" on the follow-up.

> "We've found it hard getting off the road and into the studio"
> BEN LOVETT

"When we released 'Sigh No More', we didn't expect it'd be so long before we got back into the studio properly," he says. "We love touring and have found so much new ground to cover – beyond the great pub tours of the UK – that we've found it hard getting off the road."

Working with producer Markus Dravs, the six-piece are planning to record a mix of the new songs they've been roadtesting throughout the year, alongside some brand-new material. Recent noises from the camp have suggested they're working on a 'doom folk' opus, Black Sabbath-meets-Nick Drake looniness. Quite how that works in practice remains to be seen, as does how much of an effect their road-weariness will have on the material. Specifically, how much has spending much of early 2011 on an old freight train travelling across America on the Railroad Revival Tour toughened up their folk-rock sound? It was a very Mumfords thing to do – something fresh and exciting that was very much anchored in the past.

For now, Lovett says, the band are simply acclimatising to being back in the UK and being in the studio environment. "It's great being back in London, catching up with friends and living our lives beyond the band, even if we do end up predominantly hanging out with each other," he says. "We're massively looking forward to presenting this record to the world once it's ready – and getting back out there playing live all over again." *Rick Martin*

EXPECTED: late 2012

ANDY WILLSHER, TOM OXLEY

Odd Future cash in!

Out with the ultraviolence, in with the bling as Tyler tells us he's in it for the money

No more gore – now Tyler, The Creator says he wants to spit about the glory. "I want to rap about how much money I have. I'm dead serious." Doesn't that risk him becoming yet another bling'n' bitches US rap cliché? "I don't know what else there is for me to rap about now," he protests. "I'm not poor anymore, you know? I have all the shit I want, so why not write about that?"

> "I have all the shit I want, so why not write about that?"
> TYLER, THE CREATOR

If 2011 was the year that Odd Future established their voices, 2012 will be when they'll bring it all together for their first collective record proper. In fact, the album itself, Tyler reveals from the LA studio where finishing touches are being applied, is all but done. He's frustratingly vague on what people can expect ("music," apparently) and when it will be released ("no idea"), but he does concede to feeling the weight of expectation. "There is pressure, yeah," he says. "We try not to let that change anything. But for sure, a lot of people expect us to deliver with this album."

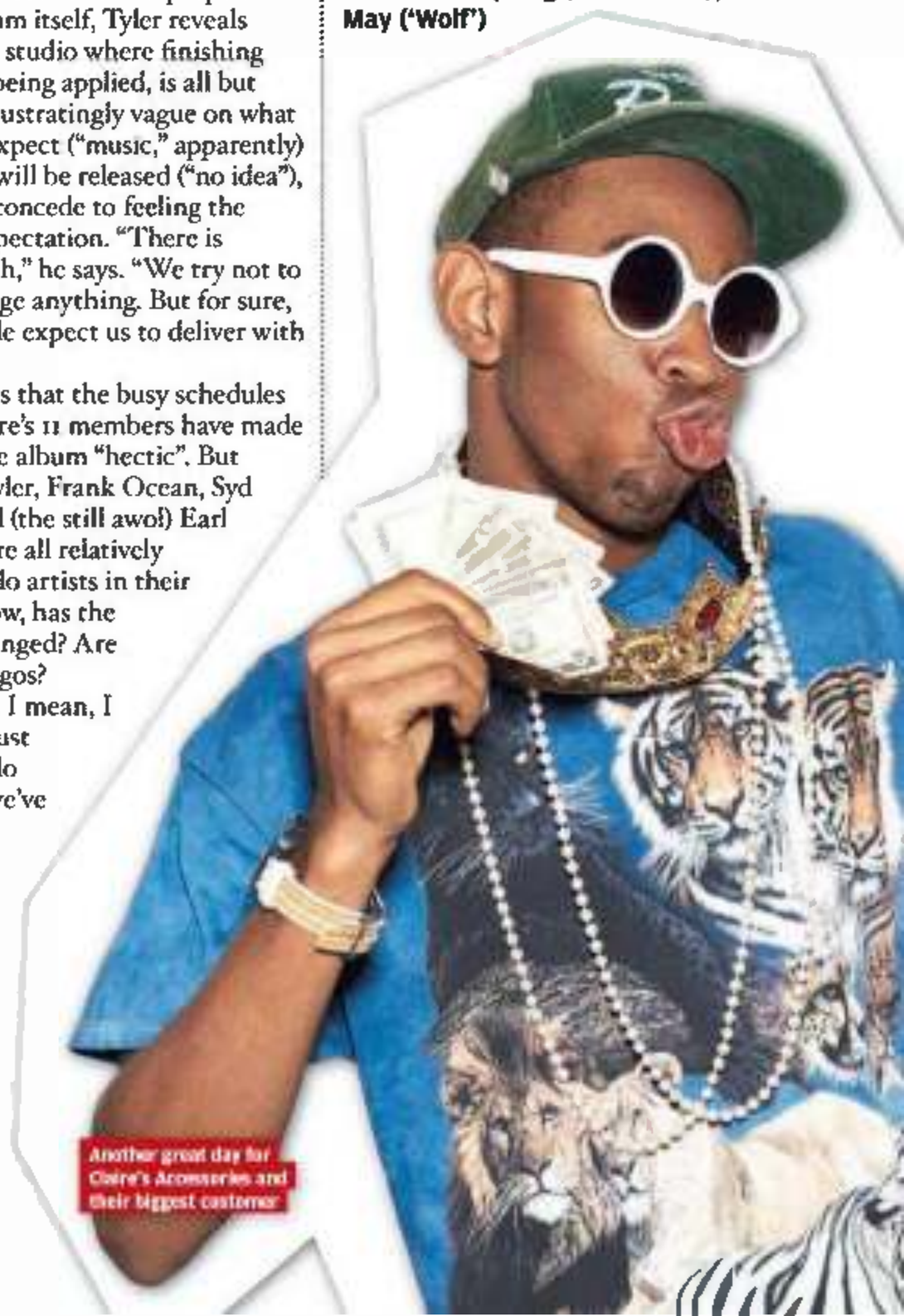
Tyler admits that the busy schedules of Odd Future's 11 members have made recording the album "hectic". But given that Tyler, Frank Ocean, Syd Tha Kyd and (the still awol) Earl Sweatshirt are all relatively successful solo artists in their own right now, has the dynamic changed? Are there more egos?

"Not really. I mean, I might have just released a solo album, but we've all had solo albums. The only difference is that, except for, like, the first thing we ever released, we've never really done an album together..."

In addition, there's Tyler's third solo album, 'Wolf'. We'd heard that it was to be more musical and production-centric than 'Bastard' and 'Goblin', influenced by the likes of Connecticut psych-jazz trio The Stepkids, but it turns out, "That was just some shit I said to sound cool."

He does, however, sound genuine when he describes it as his "best work". "Back then – and it feels like a long time ago now – I made music 'cos that's just what I did. Now, it's weird, because there's expectation. But so far, it's coming out." Time will tell – as usual, expect the unexpected with this lot. *Barry Nicolson*

EXPECTED: spring (Odd Future); May ('Wolf')



ALBUMS of 2012

"There's definitely more of a rock'n'roll element than last time" BONNIE VANNUCCI

The Killers rock back

Four years and three solo projects on from 'Day & Age', it's high time for the Nevada superstars to drop the synths and pick up the guitars

As with the last couple of Killers albums, Christmas brought the first clues of where everything was heading. Brandon and co's annual tradition of putting out a festive single – 2011's was the sixth in a row – not only raised cash for the Aids charity RED, but also gave an indicator of the mood in the band's camp after a three-year break from recording full-lengths. So what did we learn from the cheerfully silly bluster of 'The Cowboy's Christmas Ball', other than that they've been shopping for Stetsons and enjoy a bit of a hoedown? Well, for a start, it suggested that The Killers – Brandon in particular – are in a more playful mood as they enter the studio to make their fourth album, the follow-up to 2008's 'Day & Age'. No-one's going to draw any huge conclusions from the lyrics to a knockabout Christmas single, but Brandon's near-grins in the video suggested he's certainly cheered up a little since 2010 solo album 'Flamingo'. And that return to a guitar sound that Ronnie Vannucci's been promising in recent interviews may not come in the blustery Springsteen-esque form that many have been expecting after his Big Talk solo sojourn after all.

Whichever direction they take it in, it sounds as if those guitars will definitely be higher in the mix this time – the gregarious drummer let that one slip to *NME* back in September. In fact, he went as far as to comment that it was "about fucking time" the band turned up the six strings after their electro odyssey with Madonna's favourite producer Stuart Price on 'Day & Age'. A few months further down the line, Vannucci seems to be of the same mindset, revealing that sessions in a Nashville studio have been "going really well". "It's time to start writing with The Killers and get going, so that's been weighing pretty heavily on my mind," he confirms. "We've got a lot of stuff to choose from now, so we're taking our time to make sure we get it right."

By the time the new record hits the shelves – we're expecting it to be out in the autumn – it'll be four years since the release of 'Day & Age'. And a fair bit has changed in the ranks in those years. First and foremost, there's now not just one solo artist within the band, but three. No-one should have been surprised to see Brandon going it alone in 2010 with 'Flamingo', which saw him take a turn for the turgid with drivetime soft rock, while only a few people seem to have even noticed that bassist Mark Stoermer put out a solo record last year [see boxout]. Instead, it's Vannucci's Big Talk band and their album of the same name that raised eyebrows mainly because it was far better than a drummer's side-project had any right to be – in most cases, they're simply a time-filling vanity project between albums. Not here: 'Big Talk' broke the mould with its grizzled bar-room anthems and beery bluster.

So should we be ready for a less po-faced Killers, more in the vein of 'Big Talk' than 'Flamingo'?

Although the band are keeping details of their progress close to their chests, Vannucci will confirm that "there will be some curveballs" on the record. He also suggests that the blueprint for the album is far from finished – the band are heading into the studio to write new tunes as well as lay down the songs they already have. He explains: "It's hard to tell exactly which way it's going, because it's not done yet, but I can already tell it's not very similar to our last one. There's definitely more of a rock'n'roll element than last time."

Press Vannucci further and he'll hint that the band need to return to their roots to truly move forward. Whether this means scaling back the driving electro sound and whacking up the guitars, or simply going back to the simplistic majesty of 'Somebody Told Me' and 'Mr Brightside', remains to be seen. But what he will confirm is that bringing back the rock'n'roll is "intrinsic" to the four-piece's future. "It's the lifeblood of this band," he says. "The last record was sort of great in a lot of ways in that we just experimented, and we didn't take it lightly by any means, but we did things in a different way. This one's just four dudes making music."

And after the varied solo returns and a four-year wait, this will have to do for now. "Who knows what it'll sound like?" Ronnie concludes when pressed one final time on the matter. "The thing is, we just want it to be great."

Rick Martin

EXPECTED: autumn

HERE'S WHAT to expect...

MORE GUITARS
A departure from the electro of 'Day & Age' feels inevitable given the noises about rock'n'roll being their "lifeblood".

MORE SMILES
We've never seen Brandon as playful as in 'The Cowboy's Christmas Ball' video. Is stadium indie's most serious singer lightening up?

MORE RONNIE
The band's drummer holds the dubious honour of best solo album – so expect the Big Talk man to inject the Springsteen-esque bluster whenever possible.

MORE MARK STOERMER
Anything Ronnie can do? The bassist quietly put out a so-so solo album last year – so expect more input from the rhythm section on the songwriting this time.

LESS DAVE KEUNING
The only member without a solo career now – expect Sideshow Bob to live up to that never-used nickname as Ronnie and Mark come to the fore.

IN THE WORKS

MUSE

THE LATEST NOISES coming from the Devonian trio suggest they're going back to the drawing board for album number six. Bassist Chris Wolstenholme says they'll do something "radically different" this time around, and after getting to work in a London studio the band had already written a "lot of material" by the end of the year, according to their manager, Anthony Addis. But with two-thirds of the band now fathers, it's fitting that 2012 will witness a rebirth (of sorts) for Britain's biggest band.

Rick Martin

EXPECTED: October



Muse insist "this a good vantage point if you're looking for aliens"

KLAXONS

TO SAY KLAXONS' third album is make-or-break is a bit like recalling that one or two of their fans brought glowsticks to their early gigs. After the chaotic conception of their largely disastrous last album 'Surfing The Void', there's really no margin for error this time. Thus James Righton and co have called in the dance big guns, hitting the studio with James Murphy of (sort of) defunct dance kings LCD Soundsystem and, according to Fred from Spector, even The Chemical Brothers. Too many cooks or the defining dance album of the decade? Only time will tell – but as they've always stressed, it's (probably) not over yet for Klaxons.

Rick Martin

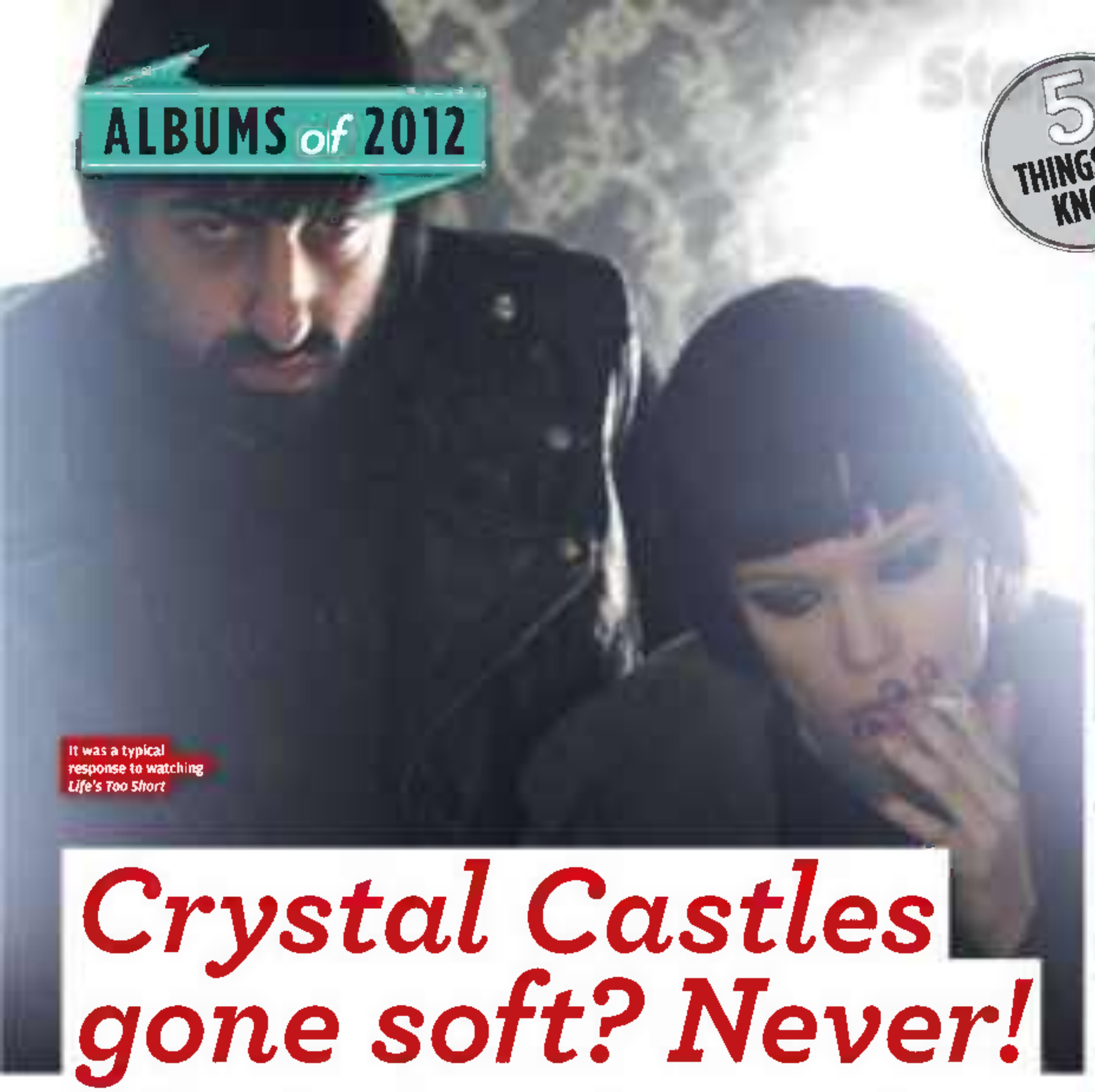
EXPECTED: summer



Klaxons insist on a group hug when they get a hint of an idea

storemaster.com

RICHARD JOHNSON, ROGER SARGENT



It was a typical response to watching *Life's Too Short*

Crystal Castles gone soft? Never!

It's OK, says Ethan – the music's still as bleak as ever, there's no compromise, no outside interference and no chatty interviews

"I just want to apologise for being the worst person to interview," drawls Ethan Kath, the none too-garrulous half of Crystal Castles. His aptitude for stonewalling hacks is almost on a par with his knack for creating the sort of stern, unholy racket capable of debilitating even the jolliest of souls. He will confirm this much: he and partner in crime Alice Glass will start work properly on the album in February. He'll be self-producing again. And it'll be out "sometime in the summer". And the sound? Ethan at least confirms that there are "elements from the second album that we'll want to carry on."

As he says today, Ethan and Alice have always seen Crystal Castles as their own private, desolate universe – and there's little chance of them pandering to a fanbase that's been steadily swelling since 2010's 'Crystal Castles II'. "I can always tell when other bands are doing that," he spits, "and I'm sure you can, too. It sounds awful.

"Or you can tell when it's art by committee, and there are people in a room deciding what songs they need to go for: 'Insert big chorus here'. It's completely meaningless. And we *never* do meaningless."

Last time around, Crystal Castles bounced between remote locations including an abandoned church in Iceland and a log cabin in their native Ontario, Canada. This time, they've chosen to hole up for sessions in Croatia.

> ***"Every song we write is bleak. We don't want anything else"***
> **ETHAN KATH**

"We played there earlier this year, and thought it was a good place to escape and seclude ourselves," says Ethan. "A good place where we can cut off from *everything*."

He's also keen to dispel any whispering that Crystal Castles may have gotten slightly... well, *soft*, after some quarters suggested they could detect a hint of niceness creeping into the last album.

"Every song we write feels bleak to me," he says. "I don't get it when people think it's beautiful. I think it [bleakness] is the only emotion we do. We don't want to do anything else."

That's the Crystal Castles mantra: stick to your guns, and fuck the naysayers. Ethan says they have a glut of material left over from the last recording sessions, but they're refusing to recycle the trash (although they might tack some songs onto a re-released version of 'Crystal Castles II').

"Some bands put records together so they have an excuse to tour for another two years, and milk their fans for money," he says. But he and Alice aren't looking to take the piss, they just want to make their most brilliant album yet. "I think people trust us," says Ethan. "And they know we'd never disappoint them." Put your trust in Crystal Castles then, folks, and thou shalt not be forsaken. ***Ben Hewitt***

EXPECTED: summer

5 THINGS WE KNOW

INSIDE THE XX ALBUM

Behind the veil of secrecy, here's what to expect

So freaked out by their 2010 Mercury Prize win were The xx, that for a while they threatened never to make an album together again. Thankfully, though, it's proved a threat as hollow as the sounds of their self-titled debut, as the band confirmed a couple of months back that they are, indeed, back in the studio, and LP number two is very much on the way. Typically, though, they've said little else – but they have left a substantial trail of clues, mainly via new blog *xx-xx.co.uk*. Here's what we've learned.

1 A stylistic about-turn is unlikely. The first demo from the album, 'Open Eyes', was uploaded last Christmas Day and could have slotted alongside anything on their debut with its spook-rock tones.

2 The music they've been listening to – according to their YouTube embeds – ranges from British soulstresses Sade and Shola Ama to newbies 2:54.

3 They are aiming for a 'club' sound – Jamie xx hinted at this in interviews last year, and the inclusion of The Streets' classic 'Blinded By The Lights' on their blog points to a dance direction.

4 This will be Jamie's record. While Romy and Oliver have kept a low profile during the band's hiatus, Jamie made a name for himself in his own right, busying himself with production and remixing for the likes of the late Gil-Scott Heron, Radiohead, Florence + The Machine and Adele.

5 It should be out in time for festival season – or least that's what they're aiming for, with Primavera Sound likely to be the first chance to hear new material. For now, though, we'll have to console ourselves with trying to follow whatever clues the band leave for us. As ever with this lot, less is definitely more.

Expected: summer



After a communication mix-up, Madame Tussauds refused to pay for their new *X Factor* display

MATT SALACUSE

Storemags.com

Weller's world

The Modfather is ready to wake up the nation all over again – with a little help from Noel and Graham Coxon

Ask Paul Weller how he feels about The Stone Roses reunion, and he will begrudgingly note that "it's good for Mani, I suppose, because he's wanted it for so long." But, as a man who doubtless has a stack of cash proffered on an hourly basis re a Jam reunion, his position on the thirst for nostalgia is firm: he doesn't get it at all.

"It's mad, isn't it, how much of all that is going on these days," he says. "I dunno what it says about our times – I guess money talks. But I'm just not interested in the past. I want to keep moving forward, learning new things."

Come the end of March, Weller will be playing an album in full at his first gigs of the year at the Roundhouse in Camden, but it won't be 'Sound Affects' or 'Our Favourite Shop' or 'Stanley Road'. It will be his new, 11th solo album, 'Sonik Kicks', which will then be available a week later. After all, why wait 20 years for an album to be declared "classic" before playing it in full? Why not just do it *now*? "There won't be much old stuff being played. That's why we've billed it as the new album in full, so that people know what they're getting."

'Sonik Kicks' ("the title just suits the sound") is a confident, masterful continuation of the purple patch that has thus far resulted in '22 Dreams' and 'Wake Up The Nation'. It has been in the works pretty much since the minute the last one was finished – indeed, *NME* was given a preview of eight of its 14 songs (plus a couple more that haven't made the final cut) back in November 2010. But there has been tinkering since then. Probable next single 'That Dangerous Age' had a slower, heavy riff feel, but now fizzes like a New Wave classic. "I went back after those original mixes, with Stan Kybert," he says. "We took a couple of tracks off, shortened a couple of the soundscape-y things, put a couple of others on. It sounds more how I thought it would – more intense."

The songs were laid down at Weller's Black Barn studio with Simon Dine, producer and co-writer on the last two albums. But there is also assistance from... well, everyone. His wife Hannah (pregnant with twins) duets on 'Study In Blue'; then there's daughter Leah and five-year-old son Mac ("who kept wanting to re-do takes!") on sweet ballad 'Be Happy Children'; his cousin plays some guitar, as does his roadie, Roger ("oh, he fucking LOVED it!"). Steve Cradock is heavily involved (he has a co-write on 'Drifters'), as are the other members of the Weller touring band. And then there's Noel Gallagher ("a great all round musician"), and Graham Coxon, who ended up contributing Hammond organ, "which he had never played before". Oh and Michael Rother of Neu! is doing a remix of 'Around The Lake'.

"I can't really remember who did what," notes Weller (and this is with having not drunk now for over a year). "It doesn't matter: it's about the inspiration. It's turned out brilliant. It's got a sort of experimental edge, but there are still loads of great pop melodies on there. It's better than 'Wake Up The Nation'." ***Hamish MacBain***

EXPECTED: March

SONIK PEOPLE

The key players on the new album

NOEL GALLAGHER



In a return to his role in early '00s Oasis sideproject Tailgunner, Noel actually plays drums on the record more than he does guitar...

GRAHAM COXON



...while Noel's old Britpop sparring partner makes the record a sort of two-decades-too-late Britpop UN peace deal.

STEVE CRADOCK



The second least surprising guest spot – the Ocean Colour Scene man plays guitar on a number of tracks.

PAUL'S FAMILY



Paul's wife, kids and cousins all make musical contributions to the album, making 'Sonik Kicks' a real family affair.

Men in macs are banned from Central Park, so Paul's in town instead

StoreMags.com

The Cribs: "This is how it's meant to be"

Now back to a three-piece after the departure of Johnny Marr, the Jarman brothers are tapping into their old punk ethos while moving forward as a band

It was the beginning of August when The Cribs went stadium indie. Ryan, Gary and Ross Jarman had driven all the way to Switzerland with a car full of guitars, Queen's 'Innuendo' on the stereo and a Johnny Marr blow-up doll propped up in the passenger seat to help them deal with the loss of their former bandmate (OK, maybe not quite) to start work on album five.

Their mission? To make the sort of super-polished rock record that seemed almost inconceivable in their pre-Marr days. And why would the gutter-kings of keepin'-it-real indie values want to do this? Blame 'Innuendo' – after getting hooked on that album, Gary thought it'd be fun to see what its producer, David Richards, could do with The Cribs.

"Gary was really into that record and he said, 'I'm going to email David Richards,'" Ryan explains, plonked on a huge leather sofa in a bar in London's Shoreditch, quelling his hangover with a plate of chips after his guitar guest slot onstage with The Vaccines in Brixton the previous night. "We got an email back saying David was in Switzerland. Gary was like, 'It's really close. Let's drive it'. So... Ross drove us there."

We can tell by his tone that Ryan relishes the spontaneity of the trip. "When it's just us three there's never anyone saying, 'Why are you doing that?'" he says. "We just do it." Wouldn't Johnny have been up for a road trip, then? "Well, we did have him like that a couple of times," Ryan laughs. "But we were considerate of what he wouldn't be up for – and that hits the nail on the head. As brothers we respect each other, but we don't consider what each other will feel about things – we'll always go along with it. If Gary comes up with a weird idea like going to Switzerland, we're like, 'Oh, that's what he wants to do – we'll make it happen.'"

Meet the new, old Cribs, returning this April with their first album as a three-piece since 2007's 'Men's Needs, Women's Needs, Whatever', and their first of any kind since 2009's 'Ignore The Ignorant'. Johnny's departure was announced in April, to almost universal approval from anyone with an interest in the plight of one of our most beloved bands. And that's no slight on Johnny; we include him in this – he was off to retake the reins on his Healers project (see overleaf).

Incorporating arguably the world's finest guitarist into the line-up was a success. But, equally, it's exciting that the shirt-ripping, microphone-butting band of old could reappear. The Jarmans are relying on their brotherly intuition as their driving force once again – and soon we'll see if we're right to be so excited.

As it turns out, the trio only recorded one song, 'Pure O', with David Richards. Then they drove all the way back home, choosing not to pursue further sessions after not being sold on the slick, polished, what Gary calls "sonically hi-fi" sound they ended up with. "The songs just weren't suited to it," he says, chatting down the phone from his Portland home the night before we meet Ryan. They chalked it up to experience, and instead enlisted New York-based producer Dave Fridmann (Mercury Rev, The Flaming Lips, MGMT). Sessions began in New York in September, with the band recording a song a day, followed by a short self-produced stint at Abbey Road and time with legend-of-loud Steve Albini in his home studio in Chicago. The result is an album that the band say harks back to their rough'n'ready first records, 2004's 'The Cribs' and 2005's 'The New Fellas', in ethos and spirit, but their broadest-reaching songs to date stylistically.


Ross realises he's deleted the new album

"Some of them are really direct – some of them are by far our most expansive work," Gary says. Many songs are untitled, but from the Fridmann sessions there's a re-recorded 'Pure O', 'Come' (a two-minute burst that's one of Ryan's favourites), 'Back To The Bolthole', 'Glitters Like Gold' and 'Anna' (which Gary describes as "like a pop song"). From the Albini sessions we've got 'Dendrophobia', 'Give Good Time', 'What Have You Done For Me' and 'Shy Town'. Then from Abbey Road we've got something no-one was really expecting: a 15-minute, four-part opus...

"It sounds quite freeform," Ryan explains. "The first song is kind of 'playground', although I know that sounds ridiculous. There's lots of discordance."

"It might sound proggy but it's not proggy at all," laughs Gary. "It's something we've wanted to explore – combining songs we've had floating about for a while."

Exploration and spontaneity seem key to the album – and relying on intuition rather than planning helped. "When we were with Dave Fridmann we'd record all day, then Dave would go home, we'd light a fire in the back yard, have some beers, then rehearse all night to get the songs ready for the Albini sessions," Gary explains. "We didn't have any leeway – we finished at midnight, then went to Chicago and began work at 10am. Albini works in his studio every day and he has dormitories there with other bands, it's like punk rock boot camp or something."

Quite the furnace of productivity, then – and one that led to the album's tentative title, 'In The Belly Of The Brazen Bull'. In case you're not down on your pre-Christian torture devices, the brazen bull was a life-size hollow bronze that the Sicilian tyrant Phalaris used to lock his victims in before lighting a fire beneath it, causing them to roast to death inside. As far as album names go, it's a step on from 'The New Fellas'.

"Everyone always says 'in the belly of the beast' when you're really involved in something," says Ryan. "And we have been. This record's not something I've taken lightly – we've lived and breathed it for a year. I guess we are sort of in the belly of the brazen bull."

Come April we'll find out if what's been cooking in that belly captures The Cribs' true spirit once more. "Working with Johnny was something I really enjoyed," insists Ryan. "But what it's made me realise is that this is the way it's meant to be. I liked the last record and it was a progression, but there was something lost in translation. It was something indefinable – but it's back."

Jamie Fullerton

EXPECTED: April

WHAT'S JOHNNY UP TO? turn the page! ▶

WHY I LOVE The Cribs



HUW STEPHENS, RADIO 1

"I would say it feels like 'The Cribs' time' – but people have said that for years. Their passion, lyrics, gang mentality and brutal, straining sound has made them stand out since day one. When Johnny Marr left, I wasn't that disappointed. The Cribs didn't need anything or anyone to take away from what they are: a fucking great band. I love their don't give a damn attitude – whatever makes them happy, they just do it."

PATRICK STANTON

"We should never have let that old fella leave... this is *hard*"

IN THE WORKS

BETH JEANS HOUGHTON

"I GUESS I'M A SLIGHTLY surreal person," says Beth Jeans Houghton. "[The album title] 'Yours Truly, Cellophane Nose' was just a phrase I liked. The song titles have nothing to do with anything – 'Franklin Benedict', I've no idea who that is. I don't even know what that song's about."

The album was recorded way back in 2009 – Beth coyly puts the delay down to "record company complications" – meaning it pre-dates even 'Let England Shake' as an immersive world. "To me it's a package," Beth says. "It's a whole person; don't just listen to the arm."

Mark Beaumont

EXPECTED: Feb 6



Tian Tian the panda described Beth as "sex on legs"

HURTS

ALMOST A MILLION copies of debut album 'Happiness' sold. Chaos everywhere they go. Induction into the Latvian Hall Of Fame. How do you follow a whirlwind year or so like that?

For Hurts, you head back to Manchester and "get depressed again". Currently holed up in synth man Adam's home studio, the pair ended 2011 by beginning work on album number two.

"We didn't really write on tour so we've had to lock ourselves away and start afresh. That's the way we work; we've just been storing it all up," says Theo.

Gigwise Wright

EXPECTED: late 2012



"Dragons, we're offering 50 per cent equity in exchange for a jacket for Adam..."

What Marr did next

No longer in The Cribs, Johnny's back with The Healers – well, until The Smiths make up...

"This isn't a project. I *hate* that word." No, if that stint in The Cribs has done one thing for Johnny Marr, it's reminded him how much he enjoys being in a band. For now – at least until The Smiths "become friends again" – that band is The Healers, who Johnny reformed late last year. Well, we say reformed, but that's not strictly true: Johnny's the only surviving member of the Healers line-up which supported Oasis in 2000 and put out their first – and only – album to date, 'Boomslang', three years later. As he explains, it's a whole new band with a new dynamic – specifically that Johnny's feeling "a lot less collaborative" with his backing group this time. "Back when we made 'Boomslang' there was something in the air that my musician friends and I were all feeling at the same time," he says. "What I'm feeling now is something much different. Now it's focused on me getting *my* ideas out."

"What I'm doing now is very different simply because of the experiences I've had with Modest Mouse and The Cribs over the past decade or so," Marr continues. "Back then, I was feeling my way into being a frontman. I've now been singing live for five years – so I certainly don't sing the same anymore."

What fans can expect, he says, is an uptempo record – and lyrical themes quite possibly influenced by spending time with Yorkshire's premier indie firebrands. "The words are more of a reflection of how I feel about Britain today. I'm much more conscious of the place and the time that I live in and I'm trying to reflect that," he muses. "The first record was difficult, this one isn't."

Although Johnny insists he's still "really tight" with The Cribs, he says there's no temptation to get on the blower to the Jarmans and get them in on his album. And he's already talking about a quick-fire Healers follow-up. "The idea is that we put the first record out and start to play live, but have a lot of other stuff recorded so that we don't have to disappear for a while and get in the whole predictable album release cycle that bands seem to be doing nowadays" – perhaps a thinly veiled dig at The Cribs, considering he quit over a reluctance to spend a year waiting around before they made a new album.

At a time when most musicians of his age are duty bound to slow down, the greatest guitarist of his generation is very much still speeding. Johnny Marr becoming predictable? How soon is never? *Rick Martin*

EXPECTED: spring





5 THINGS WE KNOW

IT'S A RAP, PLAN B

Ben Drew is returning to his hip-hop roots, but chart-topping success still looks odds-on

This time last year Ben Drew was telling us about his upcoming third album, 'The Ballad Of Belmarsh'. "It's going to be a UK hip-hop album... like my first record." He insisted it would only sell 100,000 and that there were no radio songs on it. We've heard the first single, 12 months later than promised, and can confirm that this is total bollocks. Here's the truth, and why it has taken him so long to get it finished...

1 HE'S GOT NO SOUL
When Drew first promised to ditch the soul in favour of a hip-hop rebirth, his label shat themselves and threatened not to release the new record. They needn't have worried. Comeback track 'My Manor Is Ill' is not the Dylan-meets-Skinnyman schtick of his first album, but fast, relentless dubstep that's got Number One written all over it.

2 HE'S STILL GOT ISSUES
If you thought the Plan B of 2005 breakthrough track 'Kidz' was angry (Intro: "*This is my time now, you get me? Fucking cunts*"), then you've seen nothing yet. Casting himself deep inside the riots of last year, he plays both commentator and aggressor, yelling "*Oi, oi rich boy, whatchoo looking at?!*".

3 HE'S MADE A MOVIE...
The track features in Drew's directorial debut, *Ill Manors*, a series of intertwined stories starring *Four Lions*' Riz Ahmed. According to his label, the film will be out in May and will contain six new tracks. If the opening scene – newsreel footage of London burning during the riots – is anything to go by, it's brutal.

4 ...AND STARS IN ONE TOO
He's also been busy in front of the camera, starring with Ray Winstone in a movie reboot of '70s cop show *The Sweeney*, out late September.

5 IT SHOULD BE OUT IN MAY
According to his label, the record is nearly finished and will come out around the same time as *Ill Manors* in May. But then, we did say this last year... *Mike Williams*

EXPECTED: May

TOM OXLEY, DAVID EDWARDS, CAMERA PRESS

Noel: "It's gonna be far out"

With the 'exaggerated psychedelia' of his Amorphous Androgynous collab ready to go, this High Flying Bird is set to go even higher in 2012

"It's fucking far out," Noel Gallagher warned us last summer of his under-the-radar collaboration with psychedelic hellions Amorphous Androgynous. "It's got, like, 18 tracks on it, some of it's krautrock, some of it's soul, some of it's funk... and that's just the first song. I stress again that it's far out. I don't really want to put the kids through it at the moment."

We know what you're thinking, and yes, you have heard all this before. After all, who could forget the 'groove-based' leap forward made by 'Go Let It Out' in sounding like The Beta Band and utilising a drum sample? Or the bits of blown mind that had to be hoovered off the carpet when the backwards guitar loops of 'Who Feels Love?' were unleashed on the world? The truth is, though he clearly loves psychedelic music, Noel's always been a bit too much of a traditionalist to incorporate it into his songwriting with any real success.

This collaboration with Amorphous Androgynous – AKA The Future Sound of London, AKA Gaz Cobain and Brian Dougans – sounds genuinely intriguing, though. Here's what we know: the album (still untitled, though one of the rumours doing the rounds is that it's called 'High Flying Birds And The Space Ball Sound Of Fury' – do believe that at your leisure) was originally due for release this summer but has now been pushed back to late 2012, and will feature at least 10 original songs, plus three or four dramatically reworked versions of tunes from the 'High Flying Birds' album. One of those, 'If I Had A Gun...', was used as warm up music on Gallagher's UK tour in October, and Noel's summation of what Cobain and Dougans did to the song – "they've not destroyed it, but demolished it and put it back together again" – seems pretty accurate. Oh, and anyone expecting something along the lines of Noel's old Chemical Brothers collaborations is probably going to be disappointed – Gallagher reckons "that was more electronic, this is more '70s psychedelia" and has compared the album to 'The Dark Side Of The Moon' and – of all things – Hawkwind.

> *"Some of it's krautrock, some of it's funk – and that's just the first song"*

Anyone who's familiar with Amorphous Androgynous' 'A Monstrous Psychedelic Bubble Exploding In Your Mind' compilation albums – which Noel has said "entirely changed the way that I think about music" – will have a rough idea of what to expect: stream-of-consciousness song structures, liberal dollops of sitar, space-rock improvs, myriad clashing styles and genres... in other words, the psychedelic works. "If my music in High Flying Birds has slightly psychedelic tinges to it," says Noel, "then on this next album it's been exaggerated by times 20."

Gallagher revisited the album late last year to "tweak a couple of mixes", but it's now done, in the can and awaiting release.

Whether it'll be any good or not remains to be seen, but at the very least, you can expect it to be way, way beyond anything Noel's done before in terms of experimentation, and that alone makes it one of our most eagerly anticipated albums of the next 12 months. Our tiny little minds are ready and waiting to be blown ... *Barry Nicolson*

EXPECTED: late in the year

AT A GLANCE



Who are they?
Gary 'Gaz' Cobain and Brian Dougans. They've used about a million different aliases, but are probably best known as The Future Sound of London.
What should I listen to?
You're probably safer starting with the recent 'Monstrous Psychedelic Bubble...' compilations
How did Noel get into them?
We'll let the man himself answer that one: "I seen the title ['...Psychedelic Bubble...] and I thought, it has to be brilliant. I bought it, listened to it, and life has never been the same since."

Next time you see Noel he'll be bearded and in tie-dye flares



Liam Fray, dressed as one of The xx



The Courteeners will hope to play bigger venues than this in 2012

Courteeners: "We're going Eurodance"

Where next for Manchester's laddiest lad rockers? Berlin, apparently...

So, what are you expecting Liam Fray to say about The Courteeners' third album? Talk of steady progress, express mild optimism, mention that it might be sounding, y'know, pretty good? Or simply remind everyone that he's "a genius"?

No one will be surprised at the entertaining fighting talk, the bullish confidence and that uniquely Mancunian trait for believing everything you've just recorded is nothing less than a stone-cold classic. But you probably weren't expecting Manchester's laddiest lads with guitars to have headed to Berlin and gone dance. Or, to be more precise, to have switched their sound to "industrial Motown".

So what's brought this on? Their second album 'Falcon' may have contained a precision-engineered shot at the indie dancefloor with 'You Overdid It, Doll', but that was a red herring, really – the rest of the album was filled with blustery Elbow-esque epics custom-built for the arenas the band were starting to fill. To be honest, the question is more who's brought this on – the answer mainly being their Manc mates Hurts, who put them in touch with producer Joe Cross (once of cult nu-New Order types We Are Performance). It's also partly down to Fray's nomadic existence in recent years, going back and forth across the Atlantic and making the odd trip to that German city. "I've been spending a lot of time in clubs in Berlin, seeing what brings girls to the dancefloor," Fray says. "Believe me, once the girls are on the dancefloor, the boys will follow."

How it'll all go down with their fanbase is anyone's guess. As Fray himself said during the band's last *NME* cover feature, the "people spoke louder than the critics" when 'Falcon' cracked the Top Five. So what will the disciples of their short, sharp shocks of Libsian guitar pop and widescreen epics make of this new dancier direction? "There will always be people who are a bit weirded out by your new stuff. I think that happens with every band," he says. "It's us against the world again, like it has been since day one. It's been like that since we've been at school. But this album is going to blow people's heads off."

Come the spring, once again it'll be the people – and only the people – who'll decide if he's right on that one. *Paul Martin*

EXPECTED: late spring

THE DETAILS

BEING RECORDED: In a factory in Manchester
PRODUCER: Joe Cross
TRACKS FOR INCLUSION: 'Save Rosemary In Thyme', 'Lose Control'

SPIRITUALIZED AIM FOR POP CLASSIC

"What's so difficult about making a great record?" asks Jason Pierce

It's not uncommon for bands to include the odd new song or two in their live setlist ahead of an album release, but it's pretty much unheard of for bands to play their entire new album five months ahead of its release. Yet this is what Spiritualized did last year, surprising fans at a couple of shows on their UK and Ireland tour to a full preview of 'Sweet Heart Sweet Light'.

What they were treated to was Jason Pierce's attempt to embrace pop. Not by enlisting Chipmunk to rap over his angelic orchestral swooshes, but by aiming to hit big hooks head on, rather than wrap them in strings.

Jason Pierce: "It didn't feel right to pack up [recording new material] then go and play a load of old songs. Neil Young is one of the only people who has done that before [played a new album in full before its release], and he was booed offstage, but he came back for the encore and did the whole album again."

"I was influenced by lost pop records: 'Jukebox Babe' by Alan Vega, the three albums Link Wray made for Polydor in the '70s... straight-up pop songs not hiding behind anything stylistic."

"A little, but not really. We did those shows but I thought, 'What's so difficult about making a great record?' You just need time."



Ladies and gentlemen, my eyes hurt

TOM MARTIN

THE DETAILS

TITLE: 'Sweet Heart Sweet Light'
PRODUCER: Jason Pierce
RECORDED: Wales, Los Angeles and Reykjavik
SONGS: 'Hey Jane', 'Little Girl', 'Get What You Want', 'Too Late', 'Heading For The Top', 'Freedom', 'I Am What I Am', 'Mary', 'Life Is A Problem', 'So Long You Pretty Things'

oremags.com

La Roux sex it up

Promising a "cheekier" sound this time around, Elly and Ben are back after a year-long delay

One too many gins for Elly...

"It's a lot cheekier... not 'Touch My Bum' cheeky, or *Carry On* cheeky – just slightly suggestive. The music is sexier: there's a *lot* of bassline. I've become obsessed with basslines..." Ladies and gentlemen, we present the new Elly Jackson: bell-bent on adding a dollop of sexiness to the sassy synthpop of 2009's 'La Roux' as she and her bandmate Ben Langmaid plot its follow-up, but determined not to descend into sleazy pastiche either. "A lot of music that's quite sexual is aggressive," she says, sniffing at some of pop's ruder practitioners. "The music itself doesn't sound sexy – it's more people shouting, 'Look at my bum! LOOK!' I'm not turned on by it; I'm terrified."

Lofty ambitions, for sure, but the sharp witted among you will have recalled spotting Elly in these hallowed pages a year previous. Then, she talked up the new LP by telling us the album would be out by the time festival season got underway.

"I didn't want to be performing the last album at the same time as recording a new one," she explains. "I need a gap – it's not like, 'Here's a new album with synths.' It's a new thing. It took us a while to get back into things. Our lives have changed: I'm not the same person as five years ago, and neither is he. That took time to get used to – not in a negative way, but in a 'we need to reconnect' way."

Irksome as having to wait a whole extra 12 months for the new album has been, it seems as if that extra gestation period has been put to good use, because change is afoot within La Roux.

This time expect a "more observational" approach, with one track – 'Upside Downtown' – approaching the realm of "lax social commentary" (although Elly quickly backtracks and dubs the description "too extreme") as she tackles the grim reality of last year's riots. She says: "I see things differently these days and wanted to write about that, and other people's actions, and what they made me think."

> *"What's the point of rushing it? I'm proud of the last album"*
> ELLY JACKSON

All of which sounds impressive, of course, but the killer question still remains: if following up 'La Roux' seemed a daunting task 12 months ago, how much pressure is there a year on?

"Pressure has been an issue," she says, hesitantly. "I'm not going to lie – I felt loads of pressure. What we did on the first record was great. If it was shit, I would have been like, 'Oh, it doesn't matter what we do because it's going to be better'; I'm proud of that record."

With Elly though, the self doubt never flickers for too long. Whether it's sexy or synthy, sassy or social commentary, she knows we're all desperate to hear what's coming next from La Roux – and she has no problem making us wait that little bit longer. "What's the point in rushing it?" she states defiantly, as bullish as ever. "I would rather it was amazing." And that's something we can all get onboard with... *Ben Hewitt*

EXPECTED: May/June

IN THE WORKS

MARINA AND THE DIAMONDS

SHE MIGHT BE AIMING to release her second album this spring, but until then Marina Diamandis is keeping pretty tight-lipped on just what will be buried in the conceptual, uber visual and "tongue in cheek" 'Electra Heart'. What she will tell us is that she's "really moved on from 'The Family Jewels'". Based around the themes of identity and American archetypes with "cyber Marilyn Monroe" artwork, Marina will also be tackling the 'big' themes on this album. Kind of. "The most common on the album are love, death and dolls," she chuckles. *Leonie Cooper*

EXPECTED: spring



Marina, definitely not posing for the camera...

LITTLE BOOTS

"LAST TIME IT WAS difficult because of all the hype," admits Little Boots, aka Victoria Hesketh, of her 2009 debut 'Hands'. "It's nice to approach it without that pressure." This time round she's returned to big and bold clubby pop numbers, and is working with a slew of crack songwriters. There isn't a title or release date, but Victoria says that her "spookier, darker" album will be out in the next 12 months. "The world's meant to end by the end of 2012... so hopefully it'll be released before then". Amen to that. *Ben Hewitt*

EXPECTED: "Before the end of the year"



Little Boots' highlights hadn't quite come out as she'd hoped



Howler shoot from the hip

Booze, guns, and "a real fuck you, dude"... Jordan Gatesmith leads us through his band's must-hear debut LP, track by track

By now you should already own 'America Give Up', Howler's excellent debut album (it was released last week, do keep up). But what about the stories behind the songs? From dissing their hometown scene to being inspired by a day at a shooting range, here's what motormouth frontman Jordan Gatesmith has to say about the year's most arresting rock'n'roll debut.

BEACH SLUTS

"We're just assholes who think putting those two words together is funny. We were having a conversation about how every band out there at the moment is fucking 'Beach this' and 'Beach that' – like Beach House, Dirty Beaches."

BACK TO THE GRAVE

"I wanted to write a Jesus And Mary Chain song, but with more of a pop slant and a chorus. So it's basically a Jesus And Mary Chain rewrite, I have no qualms about admitting that."

THIS ONE'S DIFFERENT

"That was the first song I wrote for Howler, aged 17, in my parents' basement. I'd had a great idea for a new garage-y sound, and every other Howler song was based around that."

AMERICA

"It's a joke protest song. Secretly we're all obsessed with dad-rock, stuff like Bruce Springsteen, so we had this idea that we'd be able to do a Jonathan Richman-style version of 'Born In The USA'."

TOO MUCH BLOOD

"I went to college for a year before dropping out. I remember being in my dorm room and thinking about how it'd been the worst year of my life. I'd broken up with my girlfriend, I was drinking too much and I was stuck in Minneapolis in the winter. It's all a bit emo."

WAILING (MAKING OUT)

"This the best song I've ever written. It's just a blues progression with a load of goofy lyrics, like "*I'm so tired of making out*". As I've said before, I'm really into sarcasm in music – even though I know that's not a stereotypical American trait."

PYTHAGOREUM FEAREM

"In the very beginning we were given a lot of shit for calling ourselves 'surf-thrash'. So I thought: 'I'm gonna write a surf-thrash song.' I wanted to make something disgusting."

TOLD YOU ONCE

"This was written in 15 minutes, no fucking around. That was at a point when I was busking a lot – I would go down to the farmer's market with my friends and play stuff like this."

BACK OF YOUR NECK

"This was written on Independence Day last year when I went to a shooting range. I'd never touched a gun before in my life. It was terrifying – I thought I was gonna die, my ears bled. On the way back I was listening to Chuck Berry and The Beach Boys, so I thought, 'Why not do the '50s rock'n'roll thing?'. So I did"

FREE DRUNK

"This is me making fun of the Minneapolis scene. One of the lines is, "*It's time to join a club with every has-been in town*". It's about how I'm really unsatisfied with the music scene in the city. It's a real 'Fuck you, dude'."

BLACK LAGOON

"I got really into The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion for a while, I just thought his screaming was funny. So this just came out of that. Although, y'know, it doesn't actually sound like Jon Spencer..." ***Rick Martin***

Stor NEW BAND ALERT

NME's New Music Editor ***Matt Wilkinson*** *on 2012's exciting debuts*

Serial Aussie party kings **DZ Deathrays'** first album, produced by Richard Pike of math-rockers PVT, should be with us in the first half of 2012. Canadian pop-goth Claire Boucher, AKA **Grimes**, releases her third album (but first *proper* one, according to her) in the UK on March 12. Also out in March is the first album from XL's new hope **Willis Earl Beal**, released on the label's freshly launched Hot Charity imprint. Called 'Acousmatic Sorcery', it comprises the best bits of his self-recorded, rough-as-fuck (yet utterly beguiling) 40-song strong back catalogue. His second album (and first proper one) is due to be recorded and released in the latter half of 2012.

Closer to home, **2:54** spent the last few months of 2011 holed up in a London studio with production legend Alan Moulder, who has worked with the likes of My Bloody Valentine. Soul-infused US four-piece **Alabama Shakes** have signed to Rough Trade – and word has it that they came to the label with album in hand, having already recorded a load of tracks at Alabama's legendary Muscle Shoals Sound Studios. Fellow US newbies **Friends** and **Reptar** should also come good in the next few months, while California's **Connie Fucking Francis** have just stepped into the studio with The Drums' Jonathan Pierce producing. On a similar note, Alex Kapranos has been twiddling knobs for Londoners **Citizens!**, while The Cribs' Ryan Jarman is playing the same role for Leeds' **This Many Boyfriends**. And let's not forget London four-piece **Arthur Beatrice**, who ruffled many-a-feather about 12 months ago before going AWOL to work on their debut. Word is it's finished...

DAN DENNISON, SPECTOR, TOM OXLEY



DZ Deathrays: when the flash went off, they hit the roof

storemags.com

Spector shake it up

Fred Macpherson's unconventional approach to recording his new band's debut LP takes in Mexican trips, weird political analogies and partying with NME

Former Ox.Eagle.Lion.Man and Les Incompétents singer Fred Macpherson never released an album with either of his old bands. But indie's wittiest comeback kid says that this time it's different...

NME: How's the recording going?

Fred: "OK. Are we halfway through? No. Are we a third of the way through? Maybe. Do we have to go to Mexico to make a music video that will take a week out of our recording time? Yes. Do I want to go to *NME* office parties, flirt with interns and high five over cheap bottles of Cava? Will we finish it? Watch this space. If we don't it will be one of those cobbled together debut albums that people have come to get used to. Different producer on every track, unfinished lyrics. An inlay card that hasn't finished being typed out and trails off after "Thanks granddad. I will never forget what you did for me before you passed on... No one will ever know how granddad passed."

> *"We want to expose the bullshit in the music industry"*
> FRED MACPHERSON

What are your ambitions for the album?

"We're not about being cynical, we're about being honest and exposing some of the myths about the music industry. It isn't communist and we're not either – who's the guy who got hit in the back of the head with a pickaxe?"

Trotsky?

"Yeah. We're not Trotsky. We're not Thatcher. We're probably John Major. I wanna try and expose some of the bullshit in the industry so that some of the idiots get fired and people might actually employ kids rather than 40 year-olds who are into coke and not in love with their wives anymore so wanna spend every night in a bar."

How's the album sounding?

"I want to make a modern record, not five guys in a garage bashing out a couple of old, you know, 'Oh shit my girlfriend, fuck, ching ching, gang gang gadder gang gang', like. To do that now would be backwards, making garage rock albums that's going to get me a few high fives, a few wraps of coke and a few groupies."

What are your hopes for 2012?

"Hopefully record labels are going to start getting albums made quicker. The music industry is like Dennis Hopper reaching for his oxygen tank in *Blue Velvet*. But it's just out of reach..." *Mike Williams*

EXPECTED: spring



Buy low, sell high, boys

AZEALIA: COOL IN 2012

How will 2011's coolest artist tackle 2012? By not giving a damn...

After shaking 2011 with '212', 20-year-old Azealia Banks is gearing up for an even bigger 2012, working with producer Paul Epworth in New York and, latterly, London. "I have a new song I want to put out called 'Fuck Up The Fun' that's some real rap shit," she enthuses of the material they've been working on. "But I'm playing a game of confusion with people. There are people still listening to 'L8R' that haven't heard my 'Slow Hands' cover, and vice versa. Then there are definitely people who think '212' is my first track and I haven't put out anything else." As a sign of where it's all heading, Azealia posted new track 'Liquorice' on her Tumblr last month, along with a helpful guide to the lyrics ("*yay*" is cocaine, "*kizzat*" vagina, apparently). "The album will not be for anyone – it's for me," she concludes. "I'm not worried about what anyone else is thinking, or having to cater to what's hot. I think people will really admire that sense of not giving a fuck."

ALBUMS of 2012

Two Door: high hopes and hip-hop

They slayed the festivals with their debut 'Tourist History' – now the Northern Irish trio are aiming for stadiums with a second album influenced by beats, breaks...and The Beatles

After a crazy year that saw them rise from promising young things to fully fledged, festival-slaying, forthcoming NME Awards Tour headliners, you might think Alex Trimble and his bandmates would have their noses firmly to the grindstone, frantically trying to recreate the magic with 'Tourist History II'.

Not exactly. "Some of the stuff is not really like anything we've heard before," Alex tells us from the band's Foals-style live/work house in Glasgow. And it turns out he's probably not exaggerating...

"All of us have been listening to quite a lot of hip-hop; the past year or so Sam's been really into Kanye and Jay-Z and Drake. He's been playing it around the house so it gets in your head and that has come out in the music," the singer enthuses. "The hip-hop stuff is mostly in the drumbeats and basslines, and then when you put Sam's guitar-playing and me singing on top of that it becomes a Two Door hip-hop song rather than any other kind. Little pieces of everything are filtering their way in."

> ***"Sam's been into Jay-Z and Drake and that has come out in the music"*** **ALEX TRIMBLE**

While we're probably still a fair leap from hearing Two Door do an Odd Future on us, the trio's second effort seems to be moulding itself into a pretty eclectic animal. With about 90 per cent of the album written, and with grand plans to record in America, the trio have let a wealth of disparate influences come to the surface. As well as their new hip-hop bent, there are also "songs that are a lot more poppy, some that are more rock-orientated where there's more guitars, and some where there are no guitars", and a general forward motion fuelled by Alex's reignited love of The Beatles and "their evolution and progression". But if this all sounds like a case of too many cooks, rest assured the band seem fairly certain that their melting pot of ideas will all come together eventually.

"I'm not exactly sure how it all fits together, but it seems to," Alex shrugs. "When we play together we do tend to cultivate a certain sound and when that sound is put onto a different genre it comes back to us in a [new] way."

Lyrically, the new songs strip away the broad themes of 'Tourist History' and end up somewhere more personal. "The thing that keeps cropping up is the travelling aspect – going to different places and being away from home for so long," explains Alex. "When I was starting out I didn't necessarily want things to sound exactly like what they were about, whereas now I guess I'm a bit more confident. It's more of an honest record."

Have they ditched the jaunt and become miserabilists? "It's very cathartic and maybe slightly less upbeat, but it's not depressing!" Alex laughs. Phew.


Kevin, Alex and Sam would like a bigger practice space in 2012

While the album is undoubtedly loaded with anticipation, any pressure is currently far in the distance. They've already hurdled the so-called 'death of guitar music' with one jubilant leap by sticking to their guns, "using guitars in a different way" and pulling from every corner of the musical spectrum.

"I don't worry – we didn't know how people were going to react when we wrote the first record, all we knew was that we were really proud of what we'd done," says Alex. "Obviously we wanna keep growing and playing bigger shows and bigger festival slots and selling more records, but pressure's something we never really take any notice of."

In February they'll take another step up, headlining the NME Awards Tour in front of established favourites (Metronomy), new stars (Tribes) and the coolest lady in music (Azealia Banks). And then, who knows? "Playing arenas at some stage would be amazing, but not until we're ready to. But there's no reluctance there. I'd absolutely love to play venues that size."

This time next year, we wouldn't bet against it... *Lisa Wright*

EXPECTED: summer

IN DA CLUB

Two Door Cinema Club aren't the first indie types to listen to Jay-Z and decide to delve into hip-hop – though the results are variable



THE BIG PINK
Milo: "A lot of white, middle-class bands say, 'We're going to make a hip-hop record', but we're actually going to do it". The result? The unhip-hop 'Future This'.



COLDPLAY
Bored of drumming out dad-friendly Radio 2 staples, Coldplay looked to hip-hop for "modern urban and dance"-influenced fifth album 'Mylo Xyloto'.



BOMBAY BICYCLE CLUB
'A Different Kind Of Fix' saw the mild-mannered quartet using "sampled vocals and hip-hop breakbeats", according to Jack Steadman.



ARCTIC MONKEYS
Alex Turner has often spoken of his love for British hip-hop heads Roots Manuva and Braintax, while Matt Helders has drummed with his big mate Diddy.



DEV HYNES
Whether producing for Solange Knowles or making his own music, Dev has long been a one-man melting pot, and hip-hop has always been a key ingredient.

TAKESHI SUGA, TOM SIMPSON, DEAN CHALKLEY, TOM OXLEY, PIETER M VAN HATTEM

ALBUMS of 2012

Kevin to Sam: "When did we get La Roux in on the bloody piano?"



Anyone for mat-rock?

Warpaint's new palette

Aphex Twin, disco and "a few more gadgets" on the cards for the follow-up to 2010's hypnotic debut

We speak to Emily Kokal just one day before Warpaint are due to begin work on their second album. It's fair to say she's looking forward to it: "I'm so excited! I love talking about it! I'm just so..." Excited? "Yeah, like *really* excited!"

She's says none of the four piece knows what sounds will appear on the follow-up to 'The Fool'. We know that drummer Stella Mozgawa will help out with writing (she joined late so missed most of that process for 'The Fool'). We also know – as anyone who's seen Warpaint's onstage jams in the past year will attest to – that the band aren't exactly to happy repeat themselves day after day, so expect this ethos to be brought into the studio too.

"We've gotten more into electronic music," Emily says when asked about influences. "Like, there was a phase with Radiohead when you could tell they were vibing on Aphex Twin or whatever, and that's interesting to us." Donna Summer's disco classic 'I Feel Love' is another reference point. "It's like a repetitive mantra. Total four to the floor, you know? The synthesiser's going the whole song. I'm totally into it."

So is this the end of Warpaint playing guitars? Not quite, Emily says. "That's the foundation of our band, and that'll still be the songs, I'm sure. But we just all have a few more gadgets to play around with."

> ***"There are no rules in this band. I don't know where we'll end up"*** **EMILY KOKAL**

The next step is for the band to reconvene to write and demo at their Eagle Rock rehearsal space in Los Angeles, their home city. "Me and Stella have a basement studio that we built for everyone – well, she did – and we've already started working on this one song. It's called 'Hi'. It's a good one, we've pretty much mapped out the skeleton of it. And we've got some other little bits and pieces we're working on too."

A couple more things Emily says the band are adamant about – first up, they "definitely want" the record to be released in 2012, despite having just finished a mega-hectic 12 months of solid touring for 'The Fool'. And also, the band's aesthetic, Emily says, is set to remain the same, even if their sound doesn't. "There really aren't any rules in this band," she explains, "and that means there's more room for experimentation. That's why it's so difficult to think about where exactly we're going to end up." As she pauses and again thinks ahead to starting "back in the office" on Monday, she tells us. "I mean, I'm just as excited to see what happens with it as all the fans are..." *Matt Wilkinson*

EXPECTED: late 2012

MYSTERY JETS' SMALL WONDER

FOR THE last record, the studio was like the Enterprise from *Star Trek*; you needed to make your songs big enough to fill it. This is a reaction to that – wanting to go back and make something intimate and raw," says Blaine Harrison, sat in a café near Mystery Jets' current, down-scaled studio base in Streatham. "I think the thing about the last record is that..."

"...it wasn't very good?" mutters co-vocalist William Rees. And while his lack of enthusiasm for 'Seratonin''s glossy, '80s pop is contentious, what's clear is that the band have done an almighty 180 for LP number four.

Moving to Texas for two months, they set up shop in an old Austin ranch named 'Radlands' to write and, for the first time, produce by themselves. "We came back with about four or five different families of songs," says Will. "We realised we could potentially make a record that was confusing, so we came back to streamline everything – and the songs that were strongest were quite stripped back and American-sounding".

Now working with producer Dan Carey (Hot Chip/MIA), the quartet have whittled their arsenal down to just 12 tracks, including the Neil Young-influenced 'You Had Me at Hello' and 'Sister Everett', which ends with a full choir outro and is based on a woman who attempted to convert William to the Church of Latter-day Saints. "I'd like this record to be seen as it's own thing from start to finish. It's a different world... Radlands world..." Blaine muses. They've kept the scale small, but Mystery Jets are still dreaming big. *Lisa Wright*

EXPECTED: April



It's like Johnny Cash never went away

AMY BRAMMALL, DEAN CHALKLEY, MARTIN ZAHRING



Worth the wait for The Ting Tings?

"People are more open-minded than record labels think," Katie says of new tunes and more eclectic influences

Four years after a clutch of semi-legendary gigs at Islington Mill acted as a springboard to their debut album 'We Started Nothing', The Ting Tings are back home with their infamously delayed follow-up in the bag. The venue's had a lick of paint since *NME* was last here – have Katie White and Jules de Martino given their sound a makeover to match?

When we spoke to Katie in November, she admitted that the stabilised hip hop of comeback single 'Hang it Up' wasn't exactly a giant leap. Today, she's equally unconcerned about jostling with young pretenders to their DIY-pop throne. "We're just our own thing – we're neither 'indie cool' nor mainstream pop, and we've never been part of a scene," she shrugs. "'Sounds From Nowheresville' is a perfect title for the new album."

But they'll have checked out the competition, right? "No. When we're recording, we try to avoid listening to new music," says Katie. "If we're influenced by something fresh, then it'd appear like we're trying to copy that sound." So we get 'Day To Day', a glitchy acoustic ballad that is also "really TLC". "It's potentially a very big pop song, and an interesting one for us to present to our fans. But I think people are more open minded than record labels think."

Jules de Martino points to another track as a counter to long running jibes about Katie's abilities as a guitarist. "Spending so much time touring has helped her improve, and she's brought that to the studio. We've been opening our set with 'Give it Back', watching as people wait for 'Shut Up And Let Me Go' but get this massive guitar track instead. They've been going crazy for it."

Elsewhere, the graceful post-punk drone of 'Silence' and the sleek electro of 'One By One' suggest a broader pool of influences. But four years? "People look at the date but forget that, after our first album, we were on the road, then we were seeing our families, then finding a base to live," unloads Jules. "I really don't know how some bands can knock out an album a year!"

Katie backs him up. "We can't just come up with a concept and go, 'OK, let's make an album about that.' Our songs are about our lives – we have to live a bit before we can write them." Guess we'll soon find out whether the charts have been as patient. *Neil Cameron*

EXPECTED: February 27

LYDON'S SWEET PiL

No record label, no concrete style, yet Public Image Limited's ninth album, 'This Is PiL', is recorded and ready to go

Three years on from their reunion, Public Image Limited still haven't put out their long-promised ninth studio album – mainly because, as John Lydon is never shy of reminding everyone, they're having to tour to fund the recording. He's insistent 2012 is the year though...

"As soon as we can find a label willing to put it out. There are offers but I was expecting more, because that's me.

It's a stale world out there, it needs a good shove up the jacksie and I'm the one what could do that. It took us about six weeks, including mixing and everything, which we cut to a minimum. There's nothing like technology to hide a lack of talent, and there's nothing going on like that. If anything, it's basic monitor mixes and all the more thrilling for it. We'd like to have it out in March or May."

"I wouldn't know such things, I wait for journalists to bemoan

on that level. For me, I'm telling you the story of my life as I see it and how things affect me and what they mean. I try to be rational but of course it ends up with a personal touch."

"We're calling it 'This Is PiL'. Accidentally, a great tune came out of recording where I'm just yelling 'This Is PIL' To my mind it would make a very good opening song."

"There's one that's almost a seafaring song, we did it live

when the *NME* came down to visit us. I do love being able to get a whole vocal to a song down in one take, and when you can improvise that there's an amazing sense of achievement. I worry for six months and put myself through phobias and then finally unleash. Fantastic, just as music should be."

"I think so. I think they'll be pleasantly surprised, joyously."



Lydon's Punk Rock Cardies: coming soon to a bookshop near you



Magnetic Man take it in turns to use the one chair in their studio

Magnetic Man set to 'step it up

After taking dubstep overground with their debut, the supergroup are set to reclaim their crown as kings of the genre in 2012

So high is dubstep's currency as we go half-stepping into 2012 that even the tragic likes of Korn have been laying their dubious claim to have invented the genre. This will come as news indeed to Croydon pair Skream and Benga, whose nu-metal credentials are thus far unproven, but whose first record as Magnetic Man (with bandmate Artwork) represented the tipping point for dubstep's entry into the mainstream.

Since their self-titled debut made a sizeable splash in October 2010, we've had bass-heavy assaults on the mainstream from the likes of Chase & Status, Nero and Katy B (whose career, lest we forget, was launched by MM single 'Perfect Stranger'). But none bring the same mixture of bone-quaking intensity and class that this lot do, and the world is crying out for a second instalment to the Magnetic Man story.

Over to Benga, bass wobble veteran: "Is there gonna be a new Magnetic Man record? Definitely, 100 per cent. We plan to put one out in October. We're just starting, we've had some writers in already. We're gonna write the singles early next year, which we're hoping to put out over the summer."

Early sessions for the record have apparently involved known associates Angela Hunt and Sam Frank (from 'I Need Air' and 'The Bug' on the last record respectively), with one fresh face in the shape of Marlene Strand, who, according to Benga, is causing something of a scrum in A&R circles at the moment. In addition, Skream says he'd like to see SBTRKT collaborator Sampha appear, along with a certain flame-haired Miss B.

"I don't think we planned for a second album originally," says Skream. "But we had so much fun working together on the first one we thought we'd go for it. And to be honest, why not? The first one was really successful, so we must have been doing something right."

It's no idle boast, either – the album hit Number Five in the charts and spawned a pair of Top 20 singles. But does Skream think they can go four better by installing themselves at the top of the charts? "Yeah, course we can! I don't see why not. But if it's gonna happen, it's gonna happen – we didn't plan to go Top Five with the last one, we just hoped for the best. But with the way dubstep is going at the moment – in the UK, at least – I can't see why not."

Benga adds that the first record put them in a prime position to do just that, helping as it did to sharpen their commercial instincts while giving the project new focus. "With regards to taking stuff to the mainstream, we know what works and what doesn't this time round – we're not saying that we're trying to hit Number Ones with every record, but our plan is just to make it better than the first one in terms of what audience it fits. We know exactly what we wanna do with the new record." *Alex Denney*

EXPECTED: October

The new KATY B?

He's a bloke, but Youngman is MM's next big star



Benga might think he's God's gift to the ladies, but he'll need to up his game if he's to see off competition from protégé Youngman. "Charmer isn't the half of it," he says of the Derby-born MC, whose forthcoming debut 'Me & My Music' was exec-produced by the dubstep lothario with Shy FX. "There needs to be a new word for that boy." Youngman, aka Simon Smith, has been tipped to make waves as the 'male Katy B' in 2012.

THE JOY FORMIDABLE

THEY MAY only be on album two, but if any of the current crop of Brits are going to 'do a Biffy', you'd put your splitter van and Ginsters loyalty card on The Joy Formidable.

"We've always existed in a bubble," says singer Ritzy Brian, not only of their current log cabin recording location in Portland but also their place in the Brit-rock landscape. Ritzy will confirm that upwards of "20 to 30" tracks are in contention – while also declaring that the record's got to sound "bigger" than previous material. "We're really keen to push the sound on," she enthuses. "I can tell we've moved forward." *Rick Martin*

EXPECTED: autumn

CHAPEL CLUB

"I CERTAINLY don't think it was as bad as the *NME* review made out," frowns singer Lewis Bowman, forgetting that we awarded debut album 'Palaces' a not exactly terrible 6/10. "But I also don't think it was a whole lot better."

Of course, such a confident chap as Lewis clearly has loftier ambitions than praise from the critics this time around.

"We've got some choruses and stuff for once, which is good," he says, adding that the band have already written 35 new songs and plan to have the record out by early summer. And the sound? "Very fruity and colourful." We can't wait to start dissecting this one. *Rick Martin*

EXPECTED: summer

THE SHINS

IT MAY FEEL like an eternity since 2007's 'Wincing The Night Away', but if you're expecting a repeat offering from indie's indiest you may end up waiting a good while longer...

"Working with Broken Bells has made me more comfortable stretching a little bit," singer James Mercer enthuses. 'Port Of Morrow' sees the band embracing The Big Questions. "It's about love. My life has changed – and there's a lot about death too," Mercer concludes. *Lisa Wright*

EXPECTED: March



James Mercer: momentarily distracted by the new Madonna album

TOM OXLEY, ANDREW WHITTON, AMY BRANNALL

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The National prepare for busiest year yet

They're taking their time with album number six, but juggling fatherhood with scoring a film adaptation and running their own label should keep the boys from Brooklyn occupied

"In the past, I've wondered whether the band will survive because of various reasons. I think no one doubts that now," says The National's guitarist, Aaron Dessner. Most bands don't walk this knife-edge between records, but it's precisely this volatility that charges the Brooklyn band's enduring brilliance, perversely enough.

The National have just played the final dates of an 18-month, 200-plus show tour in support of their fifth album, 'High Violet', which hit Number Five and went gold in the UK. However, just when they deserve to rest on their laurels, they revealed two new songs for a Canadian radio session, surprising – and welcome – for a band whose creative process is notoriously fraught.

"'Rylan' was a sketch that was part of 'High Violet', but we never really finished it," Aaron explains. 'I Need My Girl', however, is brand new, born of the free time Aaron had to experiment with guitar sketches in his garage studio after the birth of his daughter. "I almost didn't send this to Matt [Berninger, singer] as it was something I did quickly – it's simple, but he loves that kind of thing. There's something very heartfelt about it."

Don't start making space in your record racks just yet – as Aaron explains, album six won't be a rushed job: "We're going to take our time and really let things evolve. We don't want to write the same kinda songs [as before]. We could do a lot of work and throw it all away."

However, National fans certainly won't be left wanting in 2012: they're scoring a big-screen adaptation of Jack Kerouac's *Big Sur*, releasing a documentary filmed by Matt's younger brother, Tom, and Aaron and his brother Bryce will be putting out records by UK band This Is The Kit on their own label, Brassland. "And we might make a collaborative Grateful Dead record!" Aaron enthuses. It's a joy to hear that self-destruction isn't on the cards. Let's just hope they can ward off exhaustion... *Lovisa Snapes*

EXPECTED: late in the year



Matt Berninger has spent his time off developing his mic/shaver combo

MADONNA

Written off last time around, the buzz around 'MDNA' suggests a revival

Could Madonna be about to pull off 2012's most spectacular comeback with 'MDNA'? After the dated and derivative R&B that characterised 2008's 'Hard Candy', plenty of people felt like her time was up. But then, Madonna has always responded to write-offs by rising like a phoenix. When an unfinished demo of the lead single 'Gimme All Your Luvin'' surfaced towards the end of last year, despite snide reactions that the song was channelling Nicola Roberts (or even Cher Lloyd), the general consensus was that Her Madgesty had regained her sense of playful nous. What we do know is that at least some of the record has seen her reteam with William Orbit, who masterminded 'Ray Of Light' – the last time Madonna came back from a major critical slump. Nicki Minaj and MIA will feature on the single, and St Vincent, Kid Cudi, Sia and Nervo have been linked to the record, with artwork apparently coming from high-end Brazilian Giovanni Bianco. The buzz suggests the world is once again excited by a Madonna return. *Dan Martin*

EXPECTED: spring



Madge: she's back. Not in *Neighbours*, in the charts

LETLIVE

California hardcore upstarts ready 'Fake History' follow-up

After a year that saw their frontman Jason Butler emerge as hardcore's premiere wildcat and make a hit of their album 'Fake History', California's Letlive are already hard at work on their fourth collection.

"We've definitely widened our spectrum," says Jason, "but we're [also] just trying to play music that makes you feel something. That's always been our mantra, and it's definitely going to be very apparent on the next album. We're always striving to make a better record."

Intriguingly, he says he's been listening the likes of The Weeknd and Frank Ocean, as well as going back to the roots of punk rock. So while you maybe shouldn't expect a future soul direction, Jason's not lying when he says grooves are going to play a bigger part. "Sonically it will seem different, but in essence and attitude it's gonna be very much Letlive," he explains.

And if Jason could bottle that essence?

"It's a very forward-thinking progression," he continues. "What makes Letlive is the idea, the feeling of progress – physically or emotionally, the feeling that you're moving forward."



Soooooo embarrassing when you do your back in onstage



Freddie might have ditched the hat, but those pigtails are just as incredible

Hats off for Razorlight's return

Forget the comedy headgear, Johnny Borrell insists their much-delayed fourth album will be out this year

It's almost exactly one year since hatgate. C'mon, you remember *that* photo - the moment Razorlight 2.0 went from being one megalomaniacal (occasional) genius and three newly hired goons to a band whose entire future hinged on one ill judged Stetson. Really, only Johnny Borrell could have failed to realise how daft Freddy Stitz's headwear looked in that now infamous press shot [right] before it was revealed to the world. But, 12 months on, as far as he's concerned anyone who found it funny was simply a "narrow minded fucker".

"Anyone who knows him thinks he's the coolest motherfucker in the world. But I guess it'll take time for people to get him," Johnny spits in his bandmate's defence, before launching into an unlikely tale that centres on Stitz being married by Billy Gibbons from ZZ Top in Texas last year.

Despite his protestations, there's definitely a sense that the widespread ridicule the hapless hat attracted stalled Razorlight's progress, given that 12 months on, they haven't even started that much trumpeted comeback album, the follow up to 2008's similarly ridiculed 'Slipway Fires'. However, Johnny insists they *will* finally head into the studio next month and that the plan is to have the album out by the close of 2012. Early indications suggest their new song titles will be far stranger/funnier than any hat, anyway – 'Dahlia And The Masochists', 'Cyrano Masochiste' and 'Masochism And Cinderella' to name but three. "There's a bit of a theme at the moment," Borrell notes helpfully, before revealing another will be called 'Papman'. "But we haven't got an exact script. It's better for it to be an exploration." That exploration, he says, will take place with producer Dan Grech (Radiohead, Tom Jones).

Of course, licking their wounds and finally sorting out a new album is one thing. Convincing people to take it seriously will be something entirely different. So, how do a band who've fallen from headlining Reading and Leeds in 2007 to making their comeback at, er, Guilfest last year plan to blast back into the national consciousness? Bizarrely, it appears it'll involve scouring *NME*'s *Radar* pages. "We really want to support some up and coming bands," Johnny insists. "You get to a certain point where you're not allowed to do that any more, but we'd love to do it." As ambitious talk goes, it's hardly "I'm the greatest songwriter of my generation". But in reality, keeping his feet on the ground is probably Johnny's best bet if it's not going to be him making the chips rather than Dylan by this time next year. *Nick Martin*

EXPECTED: by the end of the year



If anything, this is even funnier than it was a year ago

SLEIGH BELLS

A quick dip into our chat with Sleigh Bells' front lady Alexis Krauss, she casually drops the 'P' word. Yep, that's right, 'Reign Of Terror' is apparently a pop record. Krauss reveals: "The vocals and melodies have more of a pop and R&B influence, but I think 'Reign Of Terror' is heavier than anything we did on [2010 debut LP] 'Treats'". Recorded in Manhattan over the last six months, the record also sees the duo dig deeper lyrically as well as sonically. "Derek [E Miller, bandmate] went through a really hard year, there was a lot of family tragedy," elaborates the singer. "It's not that the lyrics are a narrative, but they come from a different place." With the gloriously contrary 'Born To Lose' already whipping the blogosphere back into a frenzy, Sleigh Bells are clearly ready to reclaim their crown.

WRETCH 32

"I WANT TO WRITE AS IF MY music were a public diary," says Wretch 32, musing on how to follow a meteoric year which saw him hit Number Two with his Stone Roses-flecked single 'Unorthodox' and release breakout album 'Black And White'. He's certainly got plenty to write about: hailing from Tottenham, the area of north London where last year's riots began, his diary should be bursting with material. "The lyrics will look back on the highs, for sure, but the riots will definitely be a factor too. It's been non-stop for me, so there's a lot to think about," he says. Having also bagged guest spots from Example and newcomer Etta Bond over the past year, he's keen to pin down more. "I'd love to do a track with Jessie J," he enthuses. "Not to pull in a big name but because I'm a fan." So will he be going pop? He says: "I'm keeping it nothing but Wretch 32." *Jo Fuertes Knight*

EXPECTED: Late 2012

ANDREW WHITTON



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"You can take our record deal, but you'll never take our leathers. NEVER!"

Glasvegas: "Everything has crumbled around us"

Dropped by their label and bottled offstage at V, James Allan's crew insist their third album will prove the critics wrong...

"All work and no play makes James a dull boy". Or so it says on Glasvegas' T-shirts – a joke at the expense of frontman James Allan and his rock'n'roll soap opera lifestyle, which has included everything from serenading goldfish on hotel balconies to overdosing in front of Zane Lowe at Coachella.

Comparing James to Jack Nicholson's madman in *The Shining* made for nifty merch, but now that James is holed up in a Glasgow hotel himself, after a year that's seen the band bottled offstage at V and dropped by Columbia, it's all a bit close to the bone.

"When I think back on last year, I'm going to think about being quite lost," sighs James. "But there's always been some mad, irrational optimism in me. I cannae lie: I'd like to say the last year's been a laugh, but I guess it's not been.

"Having said that, there've been laughs as well. When I'm telling my grandchildren about being in a band... maybe it's only then I'll know how these times have been."

Despite everything, James and Glasvegas are hard at work on album number three. Most of the tracks have already been written and are ready to be demoed, with James promising to record them in live takes to harness the "furious electricity" they've touched upon in their finest moments. Not bad, considering those pesky 'split' rumours that just won't go away...

> *"It's about turbulence and trying to understand what I've been through"* **JAMES ALLAN**

"The way I described it to Rab [Allan, guitarist] was, it's not a case of whether we want to split up," says James. "I'm sure there's mothers and fathers who don't want to split up, but when there's a relationship as intense as a marriage or being in a band... when things fall apart, it's because they can't hold it together.

"I felt like everything was crumbling around me, and I'd always say the wrong thing, and I was worried because I didn't know if we could keep it together."

But Glasvegas *have* kept it together. "[The new record's] about conflict and turbulence, trying to understand the things I've been through," he reveals. There's a motif of faith running throughout: one track, 'Magazine', details a starstruck person flicking through the gossip rags looking for a celebrity saviour.

Here's hoping that Glasvegas find the succour they're after, too. As James says, "If anyone is remotely romantic, you like something that has a happy ending, that works out in the end..." *Ben Hewitt*

EXPECTED: autumn

MIRRORPIX, AMY BRAMHALL

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

CALIFORNIA'S masters of dancing-robot-sex-rock might have endured two years of false starts, but their sixth collection is now is almost complete.

Most of the album has been recorded at the Rancho De La Luna studio out in Joshua Tree. The desert site has long been the band's spiritual home, but this will be the first time Queens have actually recorded an album there.

The remote location, with home cooking and spiritual guidance from the band's longtime sound engineer Hutch, has apparently given them a renewed vigour. The results will be heard when the band break cover later in the year. *Dan Martin*

EXPECTED: autumn

PULLED APART BY HORSES

"ONE half has lyrics pushing people to give everything their best; the other half comes from the weirdo part of my brain that I can't describe," says Tom Hudson of the Leeds rockers' second album, 'Tough Love'. If there were any fears that using an actual studio would polish off Pulled Apart By Horses' lovably mental edges, then worry not. Just check this tale from their sessions in Monmouth for proof: "We kept hearing the place was haunted," Tom whispers. "So one night when James was doing this webcast we wandered around wearing sheets for ghost cameos." *Lisa Wright*

RELEASED: January 23

THE ENEMY

NEARLY three years on from the disappointing 'Music For The People', frontman Tom Clarke says they're fully focused on returning to the chart-topping form of their 2007 debut, 'We'll Live And Die In These Towns'.

"We know how important this album is so we want to make sure we're happy with it. We've been taking our time," he says. "We have to deliver."

Bronx guitarist Joby J Ford is on production duties and the band are already flagging up new songs called things like 'Bigger Cages, Longer Chains'.

"So far, it's sounding like Queens Of The Stone Age fronted by Liam Gallagher," says Tom. *Rick Martin*

EXPECTED: The first half of the year

ALBUMS of 2012

What we've learned from the Lana Del Rey leaks

She's been trying her best to keep the year's most anticipated debut under wraps – but a series of leaks have blown the lid off 'Born To Die'

Even though 'Born To Die', Lana Del Rey's debut album, isn't out until January 30, you can already hear almost the whole thing online – or at least demo versions. Some songs have been officially released, like the now classic 'Video Games', B-side 'Blue Jeans' and new single 'Born To Die'. After YouTube clips from her gigs, the rest have just... appeared, ostensibly leaked by Lana's camp.

Even though we can piece most of the album together ourselves – with the exception of 'Dark Paradise' and 'Carmen' – there's a potency to the album as a whole that Lana's keeping wrapped. As more songs appear, the intriguing web of connections between them grows. The red dress of 'Off To The Races' appears in 'Summertime Sadness' (apparently Lana's favourite song on the record); the title track's chord progression mimics that of the American national anthem, its lyrics delivered with regal poise, a trope picked up on 'National Anthem', where she's not-so coyly trying to get a guy to star spangle her banner.

The drip feed rate at which the songs have appeared has started to feel like being shown scenes from a film in the wrong order. Attempting to force these bits together reveals no particularly profound truth, but a perceptible personal insecurity at the heart of a very confident, consummate record.

She's always running from something, drunk on a death wish that craves prison – she hides out at Rikers Island on 'Off To The Races' – to escape some encroaching fear. It's not unreasonable to wager that it's the fear of being ordinary, of tragic banality. Put it this way, no-one was having these kind of discussions about Adele's album before it came out... *Laura Snapes*

EXPECTED: January 30



Lana here models Hollywood sadcore the merchandise



Kane: no more Monkey business

MILES: "I'LL PROVE PEOPLE WRONG"

The Scouse singer is ready to show he's more than just Alex Turner's mate

There's nothing in common save for the odd natty suit, but Miles Kane has been taking notes from Janelle Monáe.

"I want it to be like 'Tightrope'," he buzzes about his new track, 'Woman's Touch', pencilled in for a single release in March. "And it's sounding great!"

Miles is entitled to be brimming with brazen chutzpah after a storming 2011. At the beginning of the year, he was best known for being Alex Turner's best mate and co-pilot of The Last Shadow Puppets; 12 months later his star is burning big and bright of its own accord. And 2012 should see him continue to carve out his own identity.

"I don't know if it's because confidence is so high, but the writing's just been flying," he says of the new material. "I've got some great tunes in the bag. I don't want to stop – if it's flowing, I just want to keep it moving and get the tunes recorded."

Joining Kasabian and Arctic Monkeys on the road has helped him think stadium-sized, too, and he says he's hankering after an album with "10 tracks of just upbeat, havin' it, grooving songs". And while he's keeping schtum on whether he'll be hooking up with Alex again, he has penned more tunes with Gruff Rhys, who co-wrote 'Quicksand' for 'Colour Of The Trap'.

"I feel like I've proved a lot of people wrong," he declares. "It feels amazing." Just think where he'll be this time next year...



WILL THE PUPPETS BE BACK IN 2012?

It's nearly four years since Miles and Alex released The Last Shadow Puppets' album, and both have expressed an interest in following it up – and it could be this year. Why? Alex has got time off from his day job until at least 2013 after completing 'Suck It And See' duties. Miles has got a single and tour in the spring, and an autumn album, leaving a LSP-shaped hole in their schedules at the end of the year.



Now, to complete the look, a can of super-strength lager

Skrillex: the face of 2012?

Four (dub)steps to global domination for dance's next megastar

Shapeshifting metal-cum dubstep man Skrillex is the snake spitting in the eyes of 'serious' music fans – ie bores who pour scorn on anyone unselfconsciously making a break for the mainstream. But with a combined ONE BILLION YouTube views, five Grammy nominations, high profile link-ups with Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars, and having managed to inject nu-metal lummoxes Korn with a dubstep botox blast that wasn't entirely toxic, LA's Sonny Moore has taken dubstep into the US mainstream without a second glance at his haters.

The unlikely fact that he started off his career operating as dance music's antithesis, as singer in screamo outfit From First To Last, makes his transition even more remarkable. In 2012 he'll be perfecting his brainwashing doctrine and packaging it in the form of a full-length debut LP – tentatively titled 'Voltage' – that might just colonise the globe. Here are the four key pointers that constitute the Skrillex curriculum for world-conquering wub.

1 PUSH THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE

That well-worn, diaphragm-wobbling dubstep sound that's like a thousand circular saws swirling in a hurricane is known in scientific terms as a square-wave. Skrillex's minimalist science lab consists of just a laptop and USB microphone set-up, but he's used it to take the square wave beyond the limits of the sonic frame, unleashing his own brand of macro dub that's rocketing the genre to the unknown.

2 MASTER THE DARK ART OF POLITICS

Only a Saudi oil sheik with serious money to burn could attract such an eclectic mix of business partners with seemingly conflicting interests. As well as the aforementioned Gaga and Korn, Skrillex has had his way working with Ellie Goulding and even the surviving Doors, straddling the sonic extremes without any 'featuring Chipmunk' esque cock-ups to tarnish him.

3 LIVE OUT OF A SUITCASE

Skrillex has taken to life on the road with the same zeal Eastern European goths take to the junk food in Camden. Having played 320 shows in 2011, he's an Olympic level performer, and in the process has accrued a legion of re-tweetably bonkers Skrillite followers who tattoo his name across their chest and carve it into their arms, showing levels of devotion normally reserved for metal fans.

4 LEARN FROM HISTORY

Following the clues from 2011's 'Bangarang' EP – his fourth in just two years – with its barrage of playground-friendly samples that echo the likes of Justice and Deadmau5 in sheer fluorescent scale, Skrillex is positioning himself in a lineage of brazen dance dumbness that even the haughtiest music fan can't help tubthumping to. This will be the key to his success. *Alex Hoban*

EXPECTED: TBC

5 THINGS WE KNOW

NICKI MINAJ'S ROMAN RELOAD

BRITNEY, Guetta and Drake *all* featured Nicki Minaj's fearsome flow on their tracks in 2011 – but it's testament to her appeal that she doesn't feel over-exposed. So, what can we expect from her second album, 'Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded'?

1 MORE ALTER EGOS
Roman Zolanski, Nicki Minaj's rowdy, gay alter ego who provided 'Pink Friday' with its most lunatic moments, is about to be joined by several more of the rapper's 'personalities'.

2 BEEFS
Lil' Kim was beefing with Nicki in a big way in 2011. The one-time queen of hip-hop's mixtape, 'Black Friday' featured a sleeve with Kim next to decapitated body parts of Nicki. Could teaser track 'Stupid Hoe' (with its lyrics "*I get it cracking like a bad back/Bitch talking like a queen when she looking like a lab rat*") be aimed at Kimmy? YES!

3 GUESTS, GUESTS, GUESTS
As her appearance on Madonna's new single 'Gimme All Your Luvin'' proves, Nicki's gonna be all over in 2012. But who will we see on 'Roman Reloaded'? Drake may reprise his role, and don't be surprised if new BFFs Britney and Katy come too.

4 RO-RO-ROMANCE
Released on Valentine's Day, it's likely we'll see more slow-jam romance too, even if that means more self-loving odes like 'Dear Old Nicki' rather than the mushier likes of 'Right Thru Me'.

5 LESS POP
Working with DJ Diamond Kuts on 'Stupid Hoe' suggests she's back to the rougher, 'street' sound of her pre-'Pink Friday' mixtapes, rather than the shiny pop of her debut. *Priya Elan*

EXPECTED: February



Frank Carter: Pure Love's all you need

The punk-rock firebrand frontman is back, with his post-Gallows new band – no less combative but, by bringing a melodic edge, they could hit the big time



Frank Carter: tats entertainment

No sooner had Frank Carter quit Gallows, he was announcing his next band, Pure Love. A duo with friend Jim Carroll, they pledged to make "love songs for the sick". But since then, there's precious little of anything beyond a rumour mill that insisted that rock's snarliest redhead was on the verge of going pop.

As Frank now explains, that isn't *quite* true: "Obviously, Jimmy has a very punk hardcore background what with him playing in Clouds, Hope Conspiracy and Suicide File, so it's something we were both interested in pursuing. It wasn't forced, it's something that happened very naturally and we are both really excited to play these songs."

> "It wasn't forced, it's something that happened very naturally" FRANK CARTER

Jim, meanwhile, says, "This band is 'punk' in the sense that it will upset a lot of people who are expecting it to sound 'punk'."

Which sounds like Frank is being no less combative than usual. More tantalising is the list of artists they say they've both been listening to, an eclectic list up to and including The Vaccines, Elbow, Nine Inch Nails, Maria Dolores Pradera, The Gun Club, Hatchet Face and "that Rihanna jam 'We Found Love'".

And other than the audio snippet the duo put up online and have since taken down, that's about all that Pure Love seem prepared to give away. Ask Frank what he thinks of the remaining Gallows members' comments of his desire to "take the next step of being a big successful rock band like Queens Of The Stone Age", Frank replies simply, "I don't."

That melodic list of influences may go some way to bearing out those claims, but his only word on the apparently acrimonious split is: "It was tough to leave my brother. It wasn't tough to leave the band." New singer Wade MacNeil was "a friend for a long time before I left Gallows, and will be for a long time after".

They're planning to record the album in Brooklyn next month and it will have something to do with "life, love and death". Their live debut, meanwhile, plays out at London's Bush Hall on Valentine's Day as part of the NME Awards Shows.

And so, suitably tantalised, we can only look to the one remaining clue on their website: "All those empty hearts, they filled the tombs with blood, we are all just prisoners of love..." *Dan Martin*

EXPECTED: late summer

TOM OXLEY, TOM BARNES, DANNY NORTH

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GALLOWS?

They've lost Frank, but the fighting spirit lives on

While most bands would pack it in after losing one of the most iconic frontmen of the modern era, Gallows are soldiering on with Canadian newbie Wade MacNeil up front. And they're taking an admirable year zero approach to their first post-Frank album.

"There's stuff that's been written over the past couple of years, but we're going to throw it all out and start again," says Wade. "When the band's not a unified front, you're not going to produce the best stuff. It's back to square one."

So far we've heard the incendiary seven-inch 'Death Is Birth', from which you can totally hear a roar of that old fire back in their crotches.

"We just went in and wrote some blisteringly fast songs and pressed the seven-inch in a way that any young band would," Wade recalls. "It's like starting from the beginning."

In Gallows, there is everything to fight for, because once again they have something to lose. *Dan Martin*

EXPECTED: summer


Did Wade MacNeil (centre) actually eat Frank Carter?

And that's not all...

There's a whole host of other musicians holed up in the studio right now. Our ***Mixing Desk Mole*** *has been burrowing under the walls and listening in on bands' plans for 2012, digging up the latest on release dates, reunions and dodgy album titles...*

LIVING LEGENDS



Jarvis, dressed half geography teacher, half indie pop icon



M has done some degrading things to secure a scoop – but 'Kisses On The Bottom'? That's a step too far – and also the year's (decade's?) worst album title, courtesy of [redacted]. Expect classic standards, two new tunes and many dubious headlines for its February 6 release. Macca won't be the only Beatle with new material – [redacted]'s releasing 'Ringo 2012', a nod to his most successful solo album, 1973's 'Ringo'. Elsewhere, indie's favourite bum-wiggler [redacted] is set to make his solo return, while [redacted] have just announced they'll play Coachella after their successful reunion shows last year. Their fellow Britpop stalwarts [redacted] should finally make good on those rumours of a new album, now Brett Anderson's finished his latest solo stint. [redacted] returns this month with 'Old Ideas', an album co-produced by his son Patrick. And on the very periphery of the 'legend' bracket, [redacted] have confirmed they'll make another album with singer Kele Okereke, after 2011's 'I've been chucked out of the band, oh no, I'm kidding' shenanigans.



CRUCIAL COMEBACKS

Since graduating from the class of 2008 via career-making UK festival slots, **Vampire Weekend** (above) and **MGMT** have had somewhat symmetrical release schedules, so it's not surprising that both are due to put out third albums this year. VW's Ezra Koenig and Rostam Batmanglij have been in the keyboardist's New York studio working on new songs, with a summer release most likely for the album. MGMT, meanwhile, should be further on with theirs, given they started it last April – and if a couple of US shows in November were anything to go by, they're pushing the weirdness envelope even further this time. Envelope-pushing should also be on the cards when **The Prodigy** return to the studio soon – expect them to have new material out in time for another festival-filled summer. **Best Coast**, meanwhile, will have to prove they're not just a one summer wonder with the follow-up to 2010's 'Crazy For You' – we've heard it'll have fewer songs about Beth's boyfriend and more about "what's going on in my life". Also look out for **Gossip**'s return in May – they've just finished a fifth album with Mark Ronson – and **Frankie & The Heartstrings** who've joked that they'll call their new album, which is partly inspired by John Niven's novel *Kill Your Friends*, 'Massive Penis Vagina'...



"This one's all about me!" Bethany announces Best Coast's new lyrical themes

AMY BRAMALL, RICHARD JOHNSON, DANNY NORTH, TOM OXLEY, JAMES QUINTON, DEAN CHALKLEY, PIETER M VAN HATTEM, ANDY WILLSHER





Secretive schemers

Pete Doherty had a relatively quiet 2011 while he filmed roles in two upcoming movies, *Confessions Of A Child Of The Century* and *Rock And Roll Fuck 'n' Lovely* – but not a completely silent one. Between takes he's also been uploading demos of new tunes, mainly on the YouTube account of his 'literary agent'. With his Babyshambles bandmates Drew McConnell and Mik Whitnall touring without him acoustically later this year – and no drummer currently in place – we'd wager that a solo album is the more likely final destination for those tunes. Fittingly, considering his band's early '00s leather-clad links, Julian Casablancas finds himself in a similar situation. Although The Strokes were talking about being back in the studio within months of Angles, don't hold your breath for another album from them this year (or any year, even). The word from insiders is that another Julian solo album – the place where he keeps all his best tunes these days – is looking on the cards. And Franz Ferdinand, another graduate of the early '00s set, are also gearing up for their first album in over three years, following positive noises from guitarist Nick McCarthy late last year and summer festival dates booked.

HIP-HOP HEAVIES

Kanye West and Jay-Z have both mooted new solo albums this year, but it's the rumoured follow-up to 'Watch The Throne' that we're excited about. Meanwhile, a Kanye-featuring round-up album from his own GOOD Music stable is definitely on the way. We could get a newie from Eminem too – there are few clues yet, although Marshall M's label bought up a song called 'Dare To Dream' by London grime man Skepta last year. Lil Wayne is also teasing that sequels to 'I Am Not A Human Being' and 'Rebirth' are in the works, while MIA is set to unveil her delayed fourth album. 2012 sees R&B boy wonder The Weeknd putting out an album – well, a compilation of his three 2011 mixtapes with some "bonus features". Speaking of mixes, Drake was going to release one with rap don Rick Ross (whose latest solo album is also slated for this year), but they've decided on a full album called 'YOLO'. What we'd like to hear is the sequel to Lupe Fiasco's 2006 'Food & Liquor' album, but label battles could mean it comes out in 2013. Or 2014. On a Brit tip, Dizzee Rascal is preparing the follow-up to 2009's 'Tongue N' Cheek' after returning on New Year's Day with the 'DirteeTV' mixtape. Its 25 tracks suggest a return to his rap roots – and he'll also be showcasing his Dirtee Stank label protégés Pepper and Footsie in the year to come.


Bonkers? Dizzee must be to wear that

ROCKERS REIGNITE



COULD FOO Fighters release a successor to last year's 'Wasting Light' in 2012? Dave Grohl's hinting so, blogging recently that he'd started writing. Elsewhere on US rock's top table, Marilyn Manson is finishing off a record due out in May, while Slipknot are making noises about recording their first album since bassist Paul Gray's death in 2010. After the exit of Josh and Zac Farro, who quit in 2010, Paramore are about to start work on the follow-up to 2009's 'Brand New Eyes'. On these shores, Sheffield screamers Rolo Tomassi have been working on a third album since last summer, while Band Of Skulls' third effort, 'Sweet Sour', is out next month. Blood Red Shoes are promising an even rockier return, with guitarist Laura-Mary Carter apparently inspired by "Guns N' Roses riffs". Oh, and The Darkness are threatening a grand comeback, with the original line-up and a likely release date of March 17 – Justin Hawkins' 50th (or so) birthday.

INSIDER INFO

NME.COM *Keep checking NME.COM for the latest album updates, studio clips, photo galleries and exclusive interviews from the bands making 2012's biggest albums*

REVIEWS

THE BIG OPINIONS ON THIS WEEK'S IMPORTANT RELEASES

Edited by Louis Pattison


Storemags.com

CHAIRLIFT

SOMETHING YOUNG TURKS

Hello, is that the '80s? We're Patrick and Caroline, and we want to adopt you as our new direction – whether you like it or not



Fittingly, for a band that formed intending to make music for haunted houses, Chairlift have always been consummate shape-shifters. The Brooklynites' inspired 2008 debut album was an amorphous swirl of influences that delighted many but lacked stylistic focus. PJ Harvey, My Morning Jacket, Siouxsie And The Banshees, 'In Rainbows'... it felt like a jigsaw of a modernist art masterpiece in which no pieces quite matched up. Were they art-pop? Psych-folk? Abstract gothtronica? And, on 'Make Your Mind Up', Radiohead casting a voodoo spell on Portishead that caused them, by some magical and unlikely train of events, to end up nailed into a crate of bubble-wrap with an angry Chinese Karen O? The answers were yes, yes, yes and don't be so ridiculous (but yes).

So we should be relieved that in this period of widespread musical dislocation Caroline Polachek and Patrick Wimberley have settled on a firm direction for their long-awaited second album. But we might be a bit bemused that said direction is Hall & Oates. Nik Kershaw. The Thompson Twins. The '80s revival taken to its spangliest, synthiest, chino-flappiest extreme. Honestly, there are bits of 'Something' that sound like the actual original *Terminator* theme. Others are apparently hoping to soundtrack a remake of *The Living Daylights*. You wouldn't be surprised if Go West had produced it, with Jonathan King as engineer. It really is *that* '80s.

It seems the obvious – if frankly unnecessary – conclusion to a train of musical thought that has taken us from Ladyhawke through White Lies to Noah & The Whale's 'Tonight's The Kind Of Night' and swamped the NYC underground, all the way from Tiger City to Ariel Pink. But while Chairlift recreate the plastic decade with far less sonic sabotage than the majority of their peers, they don't play the revivalist card *entirely* straight. 'Sidewalk Safari' does Level 42 with a Siouxsie bristle and (Jean Michel) jarring synth phases. The tinkling *Miami Vice* gloss pop of 'I Belong In Your Arms' is swathed in glacial Cocteau Twins atmospherics. 'Wrong Option' is as Daft Punk and Depeche Mode as it is Fleetwood Mac's 'Everywhere'. Which it is quite a lot.

The retro songcraft of 'Take It Out On Me' (think T'Pau's lost murder ballad) and 'Ghost Tonight', a lament to romantic invisibility, is perfectly honed. But after enduring more slap bass and Genesis keyboards than our nation's young should be permitted by law to suffer (plus the soporific, illogical and bollocks 'Cool As A Fire') it's a relief to find the single 'Amanaemonesia' is a turning point. Itself a sinister and surrealist classic full of burning boats, ash-covered spectres and witchy symbols that appears to have been magicked off 'Hounds Of Love' by evil pop sorcerers Sparks, it gives way to a final third of the album full of the cranky moodtronica, surrealist electropop and lyrics worthy of a Guillermo Del Toro script – just the kind of things we loved Chairlift for in the first place.

The fantastic, fuzz-frantic 'Met Before' is the first half of the album dragged backwards through Sleigh Bells. 'Frigid Spring' is the blessed sound of a '60s psych-folk pop song being shafted sideways by a sexually frustrated Battles. By 'Turning', we're back in the haunted swamp of Chairlift past and glad to be home. Our flashback to a dead decade has thrown up both guilty pleasures and glistening horrors. So we cling to the quirky but comforting electro-doom of the final 'Guilty As Charged' and beg Chairlift not to be so literal in their revivalism next time. Please... don't send us back *there* again. ***Mark Beaumont***

7

DOWNLOAD: 'Met Before', 'I Belong In Your Arms', 'Amanaemonesia'

Hear tracks from the album and watch some of Chairlift's bizarre videos at NME.COM

PIETER M VAN HATTEM

THIS IS HARDSCORE
what our numbers add up to

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not-even-funny bad	*Barely one saving grace*	*Actively terrible*	*Woefully bad or lazy*	*Depressingly substandard*	*Dead-on average*	*Better than average*	*Really good*	*Exceptionally good*	*Of-the-year good*	*Of-the-decade good*

Storemags

ISLET

ILLUMINATED PEOPLE TURNSTILE/SHAPE

Free spirits of the world unite: as this four-piece proves, getting ahead needn't mean selling your principles



The music industry is a mess. Your band has almost no chance of 'getting big', and no guarantee of making money even if it does. So why not make yourself answerable to as few people as possible, and knuckle down to making the kind of music you want to hear? That's what Islet have done since forming in Cardiff in 2009, and that's what makes 'Illuminated People' – their debut album, following two half-hour EPs – an affecting, often exciting record.

The theme of communal self-sufficiency linked with Islet since their first slivers of attention is a little overcooked. This album is co-released by Turnstile, whose roster features the not-exactly-unknown Los Campesinos!, Girls and Gruff Rhys; they've played Primavera and other sizeable festivals and, well, they're getting a big review in *NME*. It's pleasing to report, however, that on 'Illuminated People' their percussive rave-ups, infinite loops of guitar and vocal and electronic FX, all spattered Pollock-style onto the canvas, still sounds intense and impulsive.

There's a genuine feeling of personality and warmth from songs such as 'What We Done Wrong', an unusually poppy turn driven by an undulating synth riff, or 'Filia', with its weave of earworm post-punk guitar and rumbling bassy noise. Islet make being in a band look terrific, achievable fun, and 'Illuminated People' does a creditable job of replicating the sweat, volume and improvisation of their must-see live shows.

It's not all 'fun' in the hyperactive neon sense of the word, you understand. 'A Warrior Who Longs To Grow Herbs' (and why not?) has a gothily reverbed Emma Daman wailing "Oh, *PLEASE come home*" over murky psychedelic basement rock. 'We Bow' follows it up with their least likely turn yet: wispy, hermetic lo-fi with Mark Thomas muttering like a Welsh Ian Curtis. The vaguely African guitar line of 'Shores' fools you into thinking it's going to be a perma-grinning bouncing baby – until it swiftly morphs into a clanking symphony of undanceable gloom.

Nearly every song here has a melodic sensibility that helps to explain why Islet have accrued an audience, without searching too hard for one. Sometimes they choose to bury these melodies in fuzz and surrealism, but they still glow from within. The album's a success on the most important terms – Islet's own – but it'd be nice if the wider world could step inside their mindset, all the same. They're a model of how a left-leaning rock band ought to conduct themselves in 2012. ***Noel Gardner*** **8**

DOWNLOAD: 'What We Done Wrong', 'We Bow', 'Filia'



FACES TO NAMES...

What the reviewers are doing this week



NOEL GARDNER
"Sat down to watch *Taken* (in which Liam Neeson stalks his own daughter BUT WAS RIGHT TO DO SO) and the Karate Kid movie where the Karate Kid is a girl. Great use of four hours, that was."



SAM RICHARDS
"I got my hair cut and tried to go to a pub quiz at a place that was closed. If anyone says they did anything more exciting in the first week of January, they are probably lying."



LEONIE COOPER
"I'm preparing for my move back to LA by obsessing over '70s Tom Waits records, selling my winter coats on eBay and working out the best way to sneak into the Grammys. Can't be too hard, can it?"

LEILA

U&I WARP

DJ, producer and Björk collaborator Leila Arab works at her own pace, her last album, 2008's 'Blood, Looms And Blooms' appearing almost a decade after its predecessor. But her missives are worth the wait – this one whips the spliced, spooked melodies and vintage rhythms of 'Blood...' into new, distorted shapes that at times recall the dark textures of Prurient's 'Bermuda Drain' or Fever Ray's debut. Where numerous vocalists graced the last album, now Mt Sims takes the lead, proving a fittingly perverse servant for his exacting mistress as he tackles industrial bangers ('Welcome To Your Life') and glacial chorales ('In Consideration') alike. ***Frances Morgan*** **7**

DOWNLOAD: 'In Consideration'

CRAIG FINN

CLEAR HEART FULL EYES

FULL TIME HOBBY

After five albums with The Hold Steady, Craig Finn has stepped away from the Brooklyn bar-room rockers for his first solo effort. With his distinctive drawl, it's difficult to listen to 'Clear Heart Full Eyes' and hear anything but another Hold Steady album, but Finn certainly takes a paddle – if not quite a dive – into fresh sonic waters. There are impressive flirtations with melancholia ('Western Pier', 'Not Much Left Of Us') and the slow shuffle of 'Apollo Bay', a prog take on Smog's reflective groove. Meanwhile, the acoustic 'New Friend Jesus' sees him swap his New York strut for downhome Southern swagger. ***Leonie Cooper*** **6**

DOWNLOAD: 'Apollo Bay'

PORCELAIN RAFT

STRANGE WEEKEND

SECRETLY CANADIAN

From Antony Hegarty to Hayden Thorpe, it's fair to say that a distinctive vocal can polarise opinion. But, while the supremely androgynous tones of Porcelain Raft (aka Mauro Remiddi) are so delicate they could be administered as an anti-Vaccines vaccine, 'Strange Weekend''s gauzy dream-pop is almost incapable of provoking anything but love. Floating between nostalgic Ariel Pink-isms and M83-recalling pop sensibilities, the dappled semi-psychedelia of 'Shapeless & Gone' or 'Unless You Speak From Your Heart' are highlights on a record that provides nothing but saccharine, hazy highs. ***Lisa Wright*** **8**

DOWNLOAD: 'Unless You Speak From Your Heart'

CARDINAL

HYMNS FIRE

American duo Cardinal released their sole album of gleaming chamber pop back in 1994. Proudly out of step with the times, it was ignored by most but loved by a few (including Gruff Rhys, who raved about it in *NME*'s Greatest Albums You've Never Heard issue). Now reformed, whatever magic Cardinal once had has evaporated in the intervening 18 years. 'Hymns'' wan vocals, arch lyrics and annoying trumpet flourishes make The Shins sound like rugged rock desperados. For a pair of wannabe pop classicists, Cardinal's cardinal sin is the failure to provide anything approaching a whistleable melody. Most pointless comeback of the year. ***Sam Richards*** **3**

DOWNLOAD: 'Kal'



FIRST AID KIT

THE LION'S ROAR WICHITA

The Swedish sisters take us on a perfect journey to Nashville via Stockholm – with the help of Bright Eyes



Who'd have thought the best Americana record of the year would come from two Swedish siblings? The answer being, of course, anyone who has heard First Aid Kit's debut album. Recorded with Mike Mogis, producer for Bright Eyes and Jenny Lewis, 'The Lion's Roar' is the sound of a duo growing up and out. And it's pretty perfect.

The title track opens the album on a note of wintry regret – but, if anyone was in doubt as to the direction of the record, 'Emmylou' lays down the law. "*I'll be your Emmylou, and your June*", croon sisters Johanna and Klara Söderberg, "*if you'll be my Gram and my Johnny too*". The folktales and characters of their debut are here replaced by first-person narratives, with the duo unafraid to show their bones. First Aid Kit have an innate talent for condensing a fear into a crushing couplet, using plain language to convey emotions far from simple. On the plaintive 'New Year's Eve', Klara's voice cries above a bare zither line: "*Sometimes when it might be hard to get up/It might be you that I call upon*". The sparse 'To A Poet' comes as a shock after the production-dense openers. Beginning on an a cappella section, the track breaks into devastating drum beat and rhythmic acoustic guitar chords, while 'Wolf' harks back to their duo's former Appalachian bent, with a *Rawhide*-style "*heya heya*" chorus. Closing track 'King Of The World' clocks in a guest appearance from the duo's icon, Bright Eyes. Filled with mariachi trumpets and signature happy-sad lyrics ("*One day I'd wake up all alone/With a big family and emptiness deep in my bones*") it's a joyous and fitting valediction.

Condensed to a soundbite, 'The Lion's Roar' is 'Nashville Skyline' by way of the Stockholm suburbs. But there's no point geotagging this. These two would be spectacular wherever they came from. ***Ailbhe Malone*** **8**

DOWNLOAD: 'The Lion's Roar', 'To A Poet', 'King Of The World'

FRANCOIS & THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS

E VOLO LOVE DOMINO



Falling between the slick FM rock of his countrymen and the wooze and waft of those looking to conjure seaside climes, France's François Marry's first album for Domino sounds strangely anachronistic, almost like a distant, rather less potent cousin to Destroyer's 'Kaputt'. Its gentle organ grooves, lightly pattered bongos and Marry's wistful croon evoke summer holidays spent in parochial French discotheques, gently swinging by dub ('Edge Of Town') and swirls of 'Piledriver Waltz'-like romance (album highpoint 'Buried Treasures'). 'E Volo Love' may seem oddly relaxed at first, but acclimatising is a breeze. ***Laura Snapes*** **7**

DOWNLOAD: 'Buried Treasures'

GONJASUFI

MUZZLE WARP

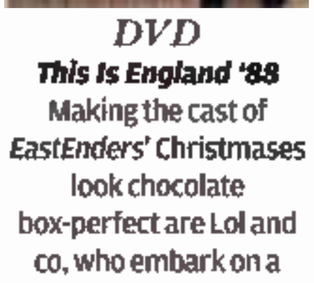


In general it pays to avoid electronic producers with dreadlocks, but let Sumach 'Gonjasufi' Ecks be your exception. Kaftan-clad denizen of the Mojave Desert, he found his way to Warp Records through the patronage of Flying Lotus, with whom he shares a similar mood of DMT-dazed psychedelia. Less wild than his debut, this self-produced second turns things down to a thick, inky gloom. 'Feedin' Birds' finds Ecks wailing like Portishead's Beth Gibbons possessed by the vengeful ghost of Captain Beefheart, while the wonderful 'Rubberband' shows off his new production chops, sounding like a lost David Axelrod score pecked at by vultures. ***Louis Pattison*** **8**

DOWNLOAD: 'Rubberband'

THE RIDER

What we're doing, watching and wearing this week



Event

Abbey Road Studios: Studio Two

From March 10, the studio opens its doors to the public, showing off unseen photos, films and archive recordings, and exhibiting equipment that made some of the world's classic albums. Book now at *seetickets.com*



DVD

This Is England '88

Making the cast of *EastEnders*' Christmases look chocolate box-perfect are Lol and co, who embark on a distinctly unfestive season with their gang in disarray. Affecting, incisive drama – as ever – from Shane Meadows.



Clothing

Fly 53 T-shirt

Featuring a deranged skull dude, grinning from his appearance on our cover with Tom and Serge a few weeks back, this Fly 53 T-shirt is sufficiently creepy, strange and ace to adorn the bodies of the Kasabian blokes themselves.

THIS WEEK'S SINGLES

reviewed by NME's **TIM CHESTER**



LANA DEL REY

BORN TO DIE INTERSCOPE



LDR's ascent towards her predetermined throne at the high court of all music ever continues apace with her almost-as-good follow-up to 'Video Games'. While its lyrical themes may come as no surprise to anyone except Peter Pan or the immortal, its sultry delivery is captivating enough to redeem, and besides, most of the eight million YouTubers were probably just watching her make out with tattoo boy anyway.

PRINCE

DANCE 4 ME PURPLE MUSIC



Packaged in an achingly retro cover, a neon rendering of that bizarre place known as The Future as imagined from the early '90s, it's like The Artist Formerly Known As Squiggle is daring us to compare this to the music of his heyday. It's the sort of confidence that pays off. The man hails his "*funky congregation*" and we can concentrate on shape-tossing to five minutes of unmistakable Prince.

DJANGO DJANGO

DEFAULT BECAUSE

A

Every so often a band such as this drops by as some kind of compensation for the fact that Clor no longer exist in a world where The Wombats do. Django Django offer an alternative oasis in an arid no-man's-land of identikit indie. If this is their default setting, lord knows how it sounds when they're going out on a limb.

FAIR OHS

SALT FLATS X-RAY



More semi-discordant cacophony from a band who get continually branded 'tropical' (presumably by people whose only association with the tropics is an Um Bongo in their lunchbox once a week). This is infinitely more tuneful (and enjoyable) than the band they're most compared to, discordant Smell punks Abe Vigoda. 'Salt Flats' is as close in DNA to LA's Fools Gold, and all the better for it.

DEAD SKELETONS

OM MANI PEME HUNG TOO PURE



You're more likely to find Liam and Noel having a nice big brotherly man hug than find a bad band in Iceland. On the whole, and especially when it comes to the instrumental stuff, they lead the charge. So to the big boys as well as Múm, Hjaltalín, and For A Minor Reflection we can add Dead Skeletons, moody noiseniks whose Suicidal drone was custom-made for this season of gloom.

CHARLOTTE GAINSBOURG

ANNA BECAUSE



On which, unlikely as it seems, Charlotte Gainsbourg decides to rock the fuck out. Of course, everything is relative, and her version of twin-necked guitars and a 360-degree rollercoaster drumkit is turning the amps up to six, breaking out of her trademark whisper a couple of times, and letting the drummer tap that snare *really* hard.

LOLA PERSTOWSKY

LIVE

FROM PUBS TO ARENAS, THE WEEK'S TOP GIGS

Edited by Louis Pattison



Miles, if you can't stand the heat, get out of Busselton

SOUTHBOUND FESTIVAL

BUSSELTON, WESTERN AUSTRALIA JANUARY 7-8

Glorious sunshine, a storming bill – really, what's not to like?

As the populace of Great Britain huddles into its slanket and disconsolately tops up its glass of carrot juice, on the other side of the world – specifically, the remote seaside town of Bussleton, two or so hours' drive up the glorious coast from Perth – people beam, and the sun beams harder. It is noted by the locals that Brits usually struggle to handle the relentless Western Australian heat, and by the looks of it, **Miles Kane** is no exception. The man who's spent his entire Australian tour slow-cooking in a pair of skin-tight white jeans has been given an early slot to show off tracks from last year's 'Colour Of The Trap'. "Here's a great one for weather like this," he announces, parched, before breaking into the breezy 'Quicksand'. 'Inhaler', in particular, draws rapturous applause, especially from the band of lads in Fred Perry polos up the front.

Kane returns about 12 hours later when he joins **Arctic Monkeys** for a storming run through set closer '505'. This is a reliably solid outing from the Monkeys, with darker new fare like 'The Hellcat Spangled Shalalala' and 'Evil Twin' slotting in smartly among festival favourites like 'Brianstorm' and 'I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor'.

A teddy boy-ish Alex Turner is still celebrating his 26th birthday from the day prior, and the Busselton crowd repay his enthusiasm the way they know best – lagered-up moshing from the boys, lagered-up moshing from the girls, plus the flashing of a fairly alarming amount of skin. You don't get that at the Sheffield Leadmill Well, not very often, anyway.

The lagered-up, moshing crowd are flashing a fairly alarming amount of skin

Playing opposite the Arctics on the Share Stage is **Crystal Castles**, whose blitzkrieg across Oz has already caused a kerfuffle online, with rumours flying that the band's representatives have been in touch with Australian indie websites, demanding they take down already published reviews of early dates. Today, Alice Glass and Ethan Kath continue this charm offensive by banning photographers from going anywhere near the stage, and they approach their set in their own inimitable fashion – that is, destroying

Continued overleaf ▶



Hands up... who never wants to go back to Britain?

COURTNEY MCALLISTER, DANIEL GRANT


Alex: "Check out my badass quiff from this angle"


Top brass: Mr Beirut, Zach Condon


Unknown Mortal Orchestra fuzz things up

So hot, Southbound's literally on fire


Lumberjack shirts, acoustic guitars? Gotta be Fleet Foxes

everything in sight without any regard for their own personal safety. Glass knows how to get the crowd onside, and that's by simply hurling herself into it. She emerges with eye make-up dripping down to her mouth, but for all the onstage chaos, there's no escaping that the current Crystal Castles set is well-practised with few surprises. Still, and let's be clear here, 'Baptism' for the umpteenth time is better than no 'Baptism' at all.

Rather less likely to incite a riot is **Kimbra**, an inexplicably popular New Zealand songstress in a puffy pink dress straight out of Molly Ringwald's fantasies who can't seem to decide whether she's white funk, jazz, or aping pretty much every successful female artist of the past four decades. A segue from Bobby Brown's 'Every Little Step' into Daft Punk's 'Robot Rock' doesn't exactly help matters. At least **Lanie Lane** knows exactly what she wants to be. Worshipping at the hem of glam country queen Wanda Jackson, she cranks out her rockabilly-tinged Third Man Records seven-inch 'Ain't Hungry' like Elvis is still king. Also looking like he might have stepped out of some portal through time, suited soul man **Aloe Blacc** proves almost indecently charming, whether leading a slow dance with his drunken mates on 'You Make Me Smile', or taking a turn to the dark with 'Hey Brother', which he dedicates, tongue-in-cheek, to "all the dudes who left their women locked up at home". He's a class act, though, and recession anthem 'I Need A Dollar' – let's be honest, the one everyone's here for – even survives a reggae makeover.

Battling it out for sea-breeze supremacy are **Beirut** and **Fleet Foxes**, modern folkies who prove two of the weekend's big draws. Zach Condon greets the crowd with a mysteriously bandaged chin, as Beirut fill the stage with an unfeasible amount of brass. Early, Balkan-tinged songs like 'Nantes' and 'Elephant Gun' are finely honed, but it's Condon's voice that leaves the crowd open-mouthed. Fleet Foxes' late afternoon set mixes up beautiful oldies like 'Mykonos' and 'White Winter Hymnal', but on newer material like 'The Plains/Bitter Dancer' things take a more subdued turn. It's a well executed but almost too pristine festival set.

One band who we can rely on to not recreate their recorded output to the finest detail is **Unknown Mortal Orchestra**. Fuzzy masterpieces 'Ffunny Ffriends' and 'Thought Ballune' show that Portland based, New Zealand bred Ruban Nielson is easily in the upper echelons of today's bedroom craftsman, timeless pop nuggets that use their lo-fi edge as a jump-off into all kinds of colourful invention. In fact, he's got more than a little in common with fellow Kiwi **Tim Finn**, who shows what can happen after more than three decades of defying trends. His former bands Crowded House and Split Enz might not be the hottest references to drop these days, but gems like 'It's Only Natural' and 'Six Months In Leaky Boat' still have what it takes to win a crowd over, no sweat.

But it's Sydney indie pop quartet **The Jezabels** that pull the biggest crowd of the weekend. Their debut album 'Prisoner' has blown up big here, and while they fall foul of the occasional tendency to emo cheese lyrics, it is clear that they are outgrowing their winsome beginnings to become a band that matters. Hayley Mary's belting falsetto – think Karen O the other end of an intensive course of singing lessons – soars mightily, and their set closer, 'Hurt Me', is a fraught and emotional thing that sets off fireworks in your stomach. Next stop, British shores. They might even bring a bit of sunshine while they're at it. ***Matthew Hogan***

Big Mouth

What the punters thought



Christopher Aitken, 28, Perth

"I remember road trippin' to Southbound years ago singing along to 'Poor Boy' by Split Enz, so when Tim Finn opened his set with that very song today, it made my whole weekend! Fuckin' A!"

MARIA & THE MIRRORS

BUFFALO BAR, CARDIFF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4

When the blowout's blown out, the last of the recreational medicine has worn off, and you've cleaned grime from crevices you never knew you had, it's back to regular, grey drudgery. We talk here of life in general – this gig comes just a few days into 2012 – but it seems especially applicable to London trio Maria & The Mirrors, who claim to have met at a crystal meth party in a hotel, and whose 2011 featured a gig at Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt. Driving to Cardiff in torrential rain to play thunderous, ritualistic synth mischief to 20 or so brave souls might not quite scale those highs. As it turns out, whether they're 'happy to be here' is quite beside the point. They're thoughtful enough to dress up – drum duo Crystabel Riley and Keira Fox in PVC trousers tighter than human skin; electronics gent Charlie Feinstein in an off-the-shoulder leopard print affair, like a vogueing Fred Flintstone. They have little to say to us, but a lot to screech, and make a terrific, transgressive racket which eclipses the "we all play synth" lazy zings likely to follow them. 'Travel Sex' and 'Blonde September' are intensified via percussion that seems to draw on the likes of Konono No1; road-drill repetition is used in a way that clearly honours Throbbing Gristle, and matches up with Factory Floor at their most industrially inclined. The months to come may see their star expand similarly. ***Noel Gardner***

TOY

HOXTON SQUARE BAR & KITCHEN, LONDON

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5

Dalston may have become such a byword for 'faux-urchin bellends' that it has spawned its own *Vice*-directed mockumentary, but it's also, thanks to the guiding arm of The Horrors, chucking out some of the most exciting new bands around. At the head of the charge stand Toy – purveyors of '60s-indebted psych-rock and the hairiest group since ZZ Top. Tonight, despite only occupying a support slot, they pack out the room, the hypnotic bass drones and shimmering guitars of 'Clock Chime' provoking nods of approval from the off. The reverb-soaked layers of interlocking melody bear a resemblance to their mates, but there's an almost proggy quality to tracks such as closer 'Left Myself Behind' that make Toy more three-hour wig-out than Radio 1 favourites in waiting. They're off after a mere five songs, but with a sound as complete as this, Toy have already got a lot of promise to be playing with. ***Lisa Wright***



CYMBALS EAT GUITARS

RELENTLESS GARAGE, LONDON

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5

Somewhat unfathomably, it's support act Milagres who've been picking up the plaudits on this tour. If these plaudits were for "sounding like Grizzly Bear with a yawning hole instead of hearts", we'd join the ranks of the adoring. As it stands, while pundits are blowharding about "the death of the guitar band", one of the most exciting sets of six-stringers in years is headlining tonight: Staten Island's Cymbals Eat Guitars.

Opener 'Indiana' is melodic college rock that makes like a bombastic Real Estate. However, calling CEG "college rock" is a little reductive – their songs never just jangle winsomely, instead skating from humoured post-rock to a softer Jimmy Eat World on 'Plainclothes', where singer Joseph D'Agostino howls like Modest Mouse's Isaac Brock. The likes of 'Wavelengths' are imbued with a knotty melodic sensibility and complex lyrics that suggest that CEG could one day occupy similar territory to the much-loved Neutral Milk Hotel.

It's not just their musical dynamic that's thrilling. During 'Definite Darkness', Joe smacks himself in the face with his guitar, tumbling to the ground and flailing around his fretboard like he's trying to strum an eel. In 2002, a scrappy little garage band called The National played across the road from the Garage at the Buffalo Bar. A decade later, they're one of the great American bands. If there's any justice, we'll be talking about CEG in the same way come 2022. ***Laura Snapes***

JACK TAYLOR, MIKE BURNELL, JESSE PEYRONEL



BRITISH SEA POWER

THE HAUNT, BRIGHTON FRIDAY, JANUARY 6

Launching a new monthly clubnight in their adopted hometown, they're wide-eyed and batshit crazy as ever

Big Mouth

What the punters thought



Lara, New York

"It rocked! I came from New York to Brighton and it was well worth it – an awesome evening, in attitude as much as anything. My two dear friends – strangers to BSP, who humoured me in trekking down to Brighton – thoroughly enjoyed themselves too."

It feels apt that British Sea Power have chosen a venue adjacent to Brighton's coach station for their new monthly Klub Krankenhaus, where they promise "nocturnal music and arts for all sexes". Such places are often the haunt of the unusual and out-of-sorts, itinerant thirsty folk who, like BSP, carve their own furrow through life. After the band's opening semi-acoustic warm-up set the poet Jock Scott – a man who looks like he has known a few coach stations in his time – mutters through verses on romance ruined by indulgence. His words scuttle awkwardly, but are at their best when half of BSP join him for a jazz-tinged jam. Next, all-female four-piece support group Savages seem moved by the rapturous response to their very first gig, but it's every bit deserved. Savages' lyrics, some subverting domestic violence, are performed in a reverbed howl, with angular dancing from their singer over disco-tinged rhythms. It's a rare treat to see such a brilliant group leaping out of the traps fully formed and, in true BSP spirit, it's a brave debut.



As wide-eyed and batshit crazy as they were 10 years ago, our hosts still have the hunger of Savages – and of savages. Like them, the crowd are fuelled and fired up and ready to go. What other band could deliver a sing-along about light pollution that gets the floor undulating like the billows of the English Channel just 100 metres away, and inspire an orgiastic lip-lock down the front? The energy and fractious oomph of Sea Power tonight is as potent as it ever has been; the maddened acid punk of 'The Pelican' and the howling 'Spirit Of St Louis' rock raucously, while 'Waving Flags' is a hymn to united Europe that stands heroically in the face of the single-currency meltdown. Like a man with nothing but 50 quid in his pocket, hunched against the winter drizzle as he waits for the 17.07 bus to who-knows-where, British Sea Power don't give a fuck for anything save the adventure. As Krankenhaus continues into 2012, you'd be advised to join them for the ride. ***Luke Turner***



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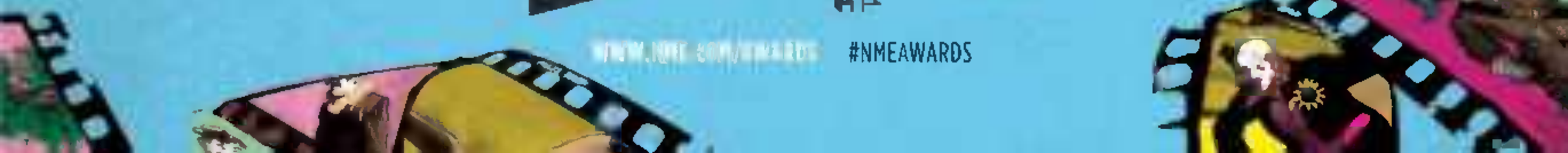
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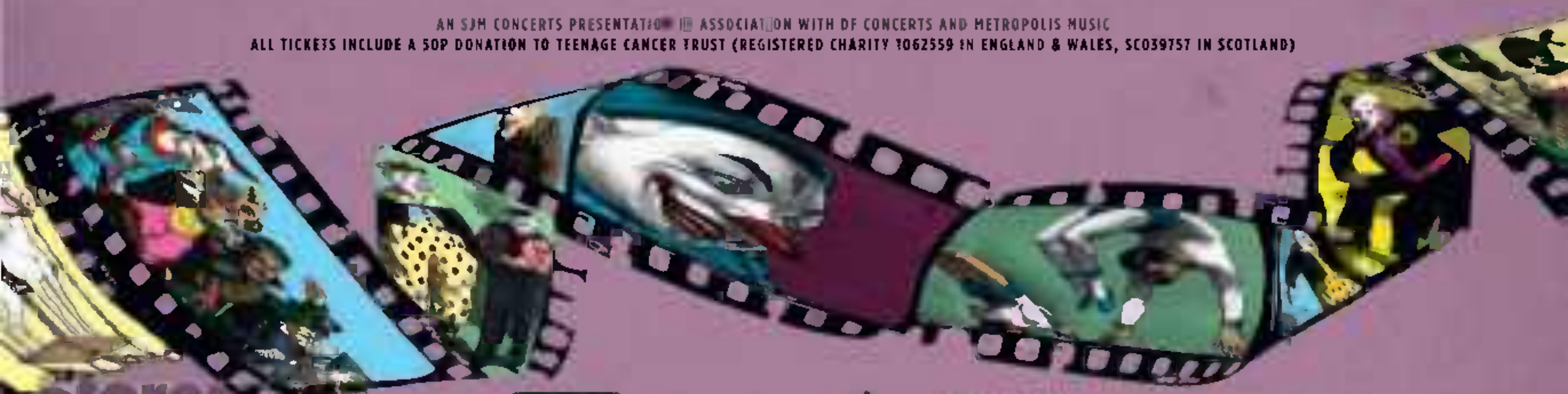
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NO DIRECTION HOME FESTIVAL

STARTS: Sherwood Forest Welbeck Abbey, Jun 8

DON'T MISS

Here's to doing it the old-fashioned way: the folk behind the wondrous End Of The Road festival announced their new summer shindig not by some viral video, but by a hand-painted sign next to the cider bus at EOTR 2011 – and sold 25 per cent of the tickets before they announced even the first act. It's testament to EOTR's beloved ethos, which they look set to repeat with No Direction Home in June at Sherwood Forest. On the bill so far are familiar names Gruff Rhys, Veronica Falls, Beth Jeans Houghton and Slow Club (pictured); exciting newcomers Diagrams, Spectrals and Django Django; and underrated legends Andrew Bird, Dirty Three and David Thomas Broughton.

TOM MARTIN, JACOB CHARBEAUX, VERENA STEFANIE GROTTO, AMY BRAMMEL, CARLO POLISANO, ANIKA MOTTERSHAW, RICHARD JOHNSON, GETTY



RINSE TOUR

STARTS: Newcastle Digital, Feb 10

For the first time ever, the London radio station fronts a UK tour, boasting headline sets from Zinc and P Money (pictured), and more acts to be announced this month.



OUTFIT

STARTS: Brighton Green Door Store, Feb 11

With a new EP due soon, mysterious art-rock polymaths Outfit plot a tour, ending with a Double Denim night at the Royal Albert Hall's Purcell Room.



SHRAG

STARTS: Brighton Sticky Mike's Frog Bar, Feb 23

The highly acclaimed art-pop band release third album, 'Canines', and tour with Atlanta, Georgia's Tunabunny.



THE MACCABEES

STARTS: Edinburgh HMV Picture House, Mar 5

After a small January tour to coincide with the release of 'Given To The Wild', the Brighton band announce a 12-date trek around the UK.



WU LYF

STARTS: Manchester HMV Ritz, Mar 15

After releasing their debut last year, the mysterious Mancs lug the WU-cifix around Blighty for a tour that culminates in two shows at London's Heaven.



KORN

STARTS: O2 Academy Brixton, Mar 25

Wouldn't want to be Jonathan Davis and co for this one: Korn claimed to have invented dubstep, and now they find themselves in the UK, the genre's home...



DRAKE

STARTS: The O2, London, Mar 26

Canada's smoochiest smooth boy announces a nine-date enormodome tour, kicking off in London and ending at Nottingham's Capital FM Arena.



DRY THE RIVER

STARTS: Nottingham Bodega Social Club, Apr 17

The folky newcomers kick off a month-long tour in their hometown, a month after releasing their debut album 'Shallow Bed'.



CANCER BATS

STARTS: London Old Blue Last, Apr 21

The Toronto hardcore band play SIX shows in one day. When you join the locations up on a map, they form a pentagram. Max metal!



FIELD DAY

STARTS: London Victoria Park, Jun 2

Death Grips, Grimes, The Men, Theme Park, Spector (pictured) and Zomby join the likes of Franz Ferdinand, Metronomy and Outfit at Field Day 2012.



MAZZY STAR

STARTS: O2 Shepherds Bush Empire, Jun 3

Been enjoying Lana Del Rey's husky tones? If you're unfamiliar with Mazzy Star, Hope Sandoval's similarly velveteen voice could tickle your LDR fancy just right.



THE STONE ROSES

STARTS: Dublin Phoenix Park, Jul 5

The Manchester legends add a one-off gig in Dublin, to take place the month after their three massive shows at Heaton Park.

PICK *of the* WEEK

What to see this week? Let us help



THE MACCABEES

STARTS: Sheffield Leadmill, Jan 21

NME PICK

Way to throw down the gauntlet for the rest of the year, Maccabees: 'Given To The Wild', the Brighton five-piece's third album, is undoubtedly 2012's first great record, and is going to prove something of a massive yardstick by which to measure releases over the next 12 months. It's sumptuous, more epic than their past efforts, yet never fails to sound like the band we've loved since 2005's 'X-Ray'. Having tested out '...The Wild' on an intimate tour late last year, this time the likes of 'Forever I've Known', the skippy 'Pelican' and trembling 'Feel To Follow' get a chance to fill the rooms and hearts they deserve to. And on Jan 24, Orlando and co grace London's KOKO, supported by buzz queens Lana Del Rey and Charli XCX. Who said January was all doom and gloom, eh?



Everyone's Talking About
M83

STARTS: Manchester HMV Ritz, Jan 18

Plenty of artists have sought spiritual enlightenment at the Joshua Tree National Park, but few come away with a record like M83's 'Hurry Up, We're Dreaming'. A double album, with one CD the brother, the other the sister, it expands on the palette of Anthony Gonzalez' former pristine synth-pop, making for a dynamic record that promises plenty of thrills live.



Don't Miss
HOWLER

STARTS: Bristol Louisiana, Jan 23

While Howler's gangly frontman Jordan Gatesmith might have waxed lyrical about how he'd be totally unfazed by playing stadiums in the future, there's still a fair old bit of leg work to put in before then. And happily so – we can testify that seeing the Minneapolis band in a toilet venue is practically the most fun you can possibly have in a pub's back room. Get involved.



Radar Stars
PATTEN

STARTS: London CAMP Basement, Jan 19

An anonymous electronic music maker, hiding behind masks and giving spelling purists heart attacks with the names of their songs – sound familiar? Well, if the blueprint's the same, Patten's resulting sound certainly isn't. His (we know that much at least) debut album, 'Glaqjo Xaacsso', was released last year on No Pain In Pop, and toes a curious line between euphoria and claustrophobia.

WEDNESDAY

January 18

BATH
Jump Mama Bell 01225 460426

BIRMINGHAM
Various Cruelties Rainbow 0121 772 8174

BRIGHTON
Dave McPherson The Haunt 01273 770 847
Fin Green Door Store 07894 267 053

BRISTOL
Nudy Bronque Louisiana 0117 926 5978
Poundshop Life/Dark Energy/Cinnamon Sister Croft (Main Room) 0117 987 4144

CARDIFF
Hark! A Shark!/The Effect/Man Of The Hour Undertone 029 2022 8883
Sugar Drop 10 Feet Tall 02920 228883
Zoo Pop Arts Institute 0871 230 1094

GLASGOW
Beerjacket/Coat Hooks King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279
My Ruin/Godsized/Long Day Fear Classic Grand 0141 847 0820

LEICESTER
Derrin Nauendorf Musician 0116 251 0080

LONDON
The Arcadian Kicks Arts Club 020 7460 4459
Blue On Blue Old Blue Last 020 7613 2478
Christina Perri O2 Shepherds Bush Empire 0870 771 2000
Crinkle Cuts/The Blueberries Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773
Damn Vandals The Bowery 020 7580 3957
Diagrams/Patterns/Fairewell The Lexington 020 7837 5387
Foxes! Slaughtered Lamb 020 8682 4080
Holy State/Listing Ships/Grave Errors MacBeth 020 7739 5095
Howling Owl/Josh Flowers/Clause 4 Roadtrip 020 7253 6787
Itchy Teeth New Cross Inn 020 8692 1866
Killaflaw/Saskilla/Sam Frank Hoxton Square Bar & Grill 020 7613 0709
Lawson O2 Academy 2 Islington 0870 477 2000
Mothership Half Moon 020 7274 2733
MR RVC Scala 020 7833 2022
Porta/Lemon/Zinc Barfly 0870 907 0999
Pyramids Cafe Oto 0871 230 1094
Spaghetti Anywhere 93 Feet East 020 7247 6095
Tom Mariarty/Smoke Feathers Green Note 0871 230 1094
Toy Shacklewell Arms 020 7249 0810
The Xcerts Borderline 020 7734 5547

MANCHESTER
The Black Dahlia Murder/Skeletonwitch Moho Live 0161 834 8180
M83/Porcelain Raft HMV Ritz 0161 236 4355

NEWCASTLE
All Time Low/The Maine/We Are The In Crowd O2 Academy 0870 477 2000

PORTSMOUTH
MC Kal/Thundacub/Outgun Empire Cellars 0871 230 1094

STOKE-ON-TRENT
Everything Everything Sugarmill 01782 214 991

WOLVERHAMPTON
Ed Sheeran Civic Hall 01902 552121

WREXHAM
GWAR/Viking Skull Central Station 01978 358780



Everything Everything, Sugarmill, Stoke-On-Trent

DAN DENNISON, TOM MARTIN, PIETER M VAN HATTEM, VICTOR FRANKOWSKI, JACK TAYLOR, DANNY NORTH

THURSDAY
January 19


Castlekids, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

The Xcerts Moles 01225 404445
BIRMINGHAM
Anti Vigilante The Ballroom 0121 448 0797
Castlekids Hare & Hounds 0870 264 3333
Lawson/One Sixth Of Tommy Rainbow 0121 772 8174
BRIGHTON
Christina Perri Concorde 2 01273 673 311
Sights & Sounds The Hydrant 01273 608 313
BRISTOL
The Antidotes/Interroband Louisiana 0117 926 5978
Fin Thekla 08713 100000
George Barnett/Ethan Proctor/Jordan Lindsay Croft (Front Bar) 0117 987 4144
Subversive Fire/The Richardson Maneuver/Brickwalls & Bruises Croft (Main Room) 0117 987 4144
Wires/Gold Trip/Hyde Fleece 0117 945 0996
CARDIFF
Asking Alexandria/blessthefall/Chelsea Grin University 029 2023 0130
DERBY
Boat To Row Venue 01332 203545
EDINBURGH
Foe Electric Circus 0131 226 4224
GLASGOW
Billy Lockett Garage 0141 332 1120
M83/Porcelain Raft The Arches 0141 565 1000
Pareto/Dilectrics King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279
Rocket #9/Skitanja/Gang Colours School Of Art 0141 353 4530
Thin Lizzy/Clutch Barrowlands 0141 552 4601
HATFIELD
Marcus Bonfanti The Forum 0844 477 2000
LEEDS
All Time Low/The Maine/We Are The In Crowd O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
Hauschka/Seeming To Howard Assembly Room 0113 243 9999
Laura J Martin/Richard James Brudenell Social Club 0113 243 5866
Primitive Echo/The Chasing Dark/Escape Hazard New Roscoe 0113 246 0778
LEICESTER
Edwina Hayes Musician 0116 251 0080
Pay No Respect/The Departed Soundhouse 07830 425555
LIVERPOOL
Lanterns On The Lake /The Big House/Secret Garden Gathering Static Gallery 01517078090
LONDON
Ben Ottewell Bush Hall 020 8222 6955
The Butterfly Culture/From The Ashes/The Chancers Barfly 0870 907 0999
The Commission/David Morgan/Concise One MacBeth 020 7739 5095
James Cornthwaite 93 Feet East 020 7247 6095
Juan Zelada Borderline 020 7734 5547
JD Twitch/Steve Reich/John Adams XOYO 020 7729 5959
Katie Dove-Dixon/Tim Morley Zigfrid Von Underbelly 020 7613 1988
Patten CAMP Basement 0871 230 1094
The Peppermint Apes Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773
Porcupine Kiss The Others 020 8802 3755
Pyramids Cafe Oto 0871 230 1094
Troumaca/Swim Deep Old Blue Last 020 7613 2478
MANCHESTER
Binary The Castle 0161 237 9485
My Ruin Moho Live 0161 834 8180
One Night Stand/Fate Dry Bar 0161 236 5920
NOTTINGHAM
Toploader Rescue Rooms 0115 958 8484
OXFORD
The Horrors O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
POOLE
Albany Down/MG & The Juggernauts Mr Kyps 01202 748945
READING
Revoker Face Bar 0118 956 8188
SHEFFIELD
The Black Dahlia Murder/Skeletonwitch/Fleshgod Apocalypse Corporation 0114 276 0262
Minny Pops Plug 0114 276 7093
ST ALBANS
Exit Ten/Floods/Change Of Plan Horn 01727 853 143

FRIDAY
January 20

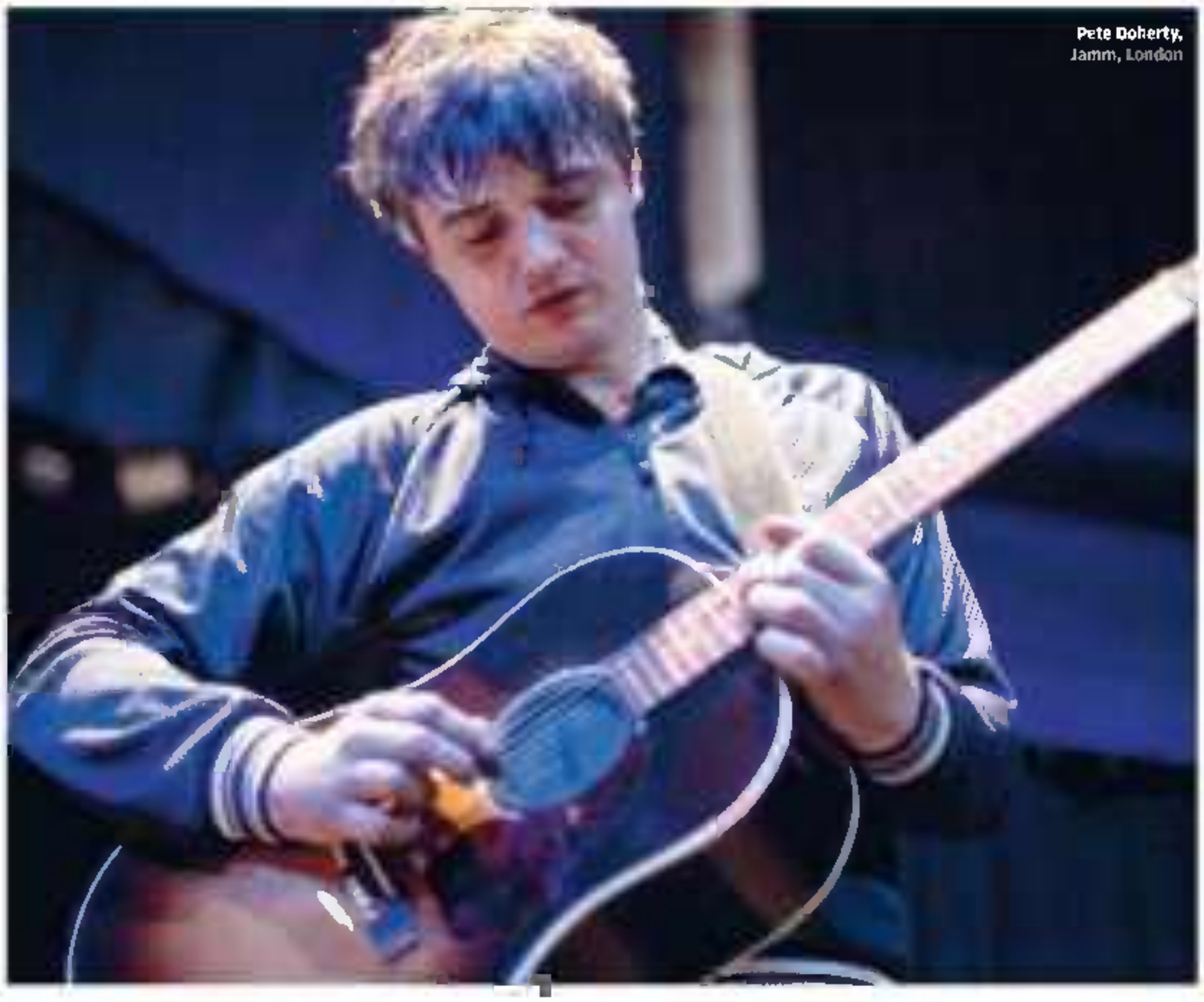

The Horrors, Trinity, Bristol

ABERDEEN
Danse McCabre Music Hall 01224 641122
BATH
Fin Moles 01225 404445
BELFAST
The Back Issues/The Strypes/Resoul Spring & Airbrake 028 9032 5968
BIRMINGHAM
Ben Ottewell HMV Institute (Temple) 0844 248 5037
Christina Perri HMV Institute 0844 248 5037
Dutch Cousin/The Session/Illusion O2 Academy 3 0870 477 2000
Never Shout Never O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
No Americana/No ID/Exodus Calling The Ballroom 0121 448 0797
BRIGHTON
The Iron Bootscrapers Latest Music Bar 01273 687 171
Screama Ballerina/Hana Piranha The Hope 01273 723 568
Two/Erstlaub/John Cohen Sticky Mike's Frog Bar 01273 749 465
BRISTOL
Area 51/The Some Off/Bad Tequila Thunderbolt 07791 319 614
Blaxar Full Moon 0117 924 5170
Captain Accident/Little Tom Mr Wolf's 0117 927 3221
Hi Fiction Science Louisiana 0117 926 5978
The Horrors Trinity 01179 351 200
Marmalade Sky/Moreton Vue/Bosc Monitor Fleece 0117 945 0996
Messl/Bearfight/STT Croft (Main Room) 0117 987 4144
Monki Thekla 08713 100000
Stone Cold Hustle Canteen 0117 923 2017
TLI/Black Elephant/Screaming For Scarlet Croft (Front Bar) 0117 987 4144
CAMBRIDGE
Standard Fare/Tigercats/The Model Village Portland Arms 01223 357268
CARDIFF
Natural Order/The Keep/Hunger Artist Clwb Ifor Bach 029 2023 2199
The Old Tire Swingers Gwdihw Cafe Bar 029 2039 7933
DERBY
Everybody Looks Famous The Vic Inn 01332 74 00 91
EDINBURGH
The Deadly Winters/Paul Gilbody/Steve Heron The Village 01314 787 810
High Contrast Cabaret Voltaire 0131 220 6176
Lindi Ortega Voodoo Rooms 0131 556 7060
GLASGOW
Carolina Chocolate Drops/ Punch Brothers O2 ABC2 0141 204 5151
Cornershop Platform 0141 276 9696
Meanwhile City/Junebug/The Blinding Maggie May's 0141 548 1350
Peter & The Test Tube Babies Ivory Blacks 0141 221 7871
Various Cruelties King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279
GUILDFORD
Josh Kumra Boileroom 01483 539 539
HOVE
The Muel Brunswick 01273 735254
LEEDS
Icebreaker/BJ Cole Howard Assembly Room 0113 243 9999
Minny Pops/Rats On Rafts Brudenell Social Club 0113 243 5866
M83 University 0113 244 4600
Stooshe University 0113 244 4600
LEICESTER
Dawson Smith & The Dissenters Musician 0116 251 0080
LIVERPOOL
The Upperhand/The Black Suns/Northern Rise O2 Academy 2 0870 477 2000
LONDON
Bear Driver/Ligers/Yngve & The Innocent Powers Bar 0207 624 6026
Catherine AD National Portrait Gallery 020 7306 0055
Chips For The Poor Wilmington Arms 020 7837 1384
Darren Hayman Hideaway 020 7561 0779
The Domino State Barfly 0870 907 0999
Eagulls Shacklewell Arms 020 7249 0810
Ed Sheeran O2 Academy Brixton 0870 477 2000



End Of The Spectrum/The Hype Theory/HAVERA The Miller 020 7407 2690
Future Rock 100 Club 020 7636 0933
The Graceful Sticks Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773
Icarus/Babs Cafe Oto 0871 230 1094
Ledisi Scala 020 7833 2022
The Membranes/The Cravats The Lexington 020 7837 5387
Million Faces 229 Club 020 7631 8310
Polaroid 85 Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358
The Rent Boys MacBeth 020 7739 5095
Skinny Machines Half Moon 020 7274 2733
Steelwing Underworld 020 7482 1932
Us Baby Bear Bones Old Blue Last 020 7613 2478
MANCHESTER
Caslokids Deaf Institute 0161 330 4019
Lawson Sound Control 0161 236 0340
My Ruin/Godsized/Sanctorum Moho Live 0161 834 8180
MILTON KEYNES
Revoker/Free Range Humans/Heid Beneath Craufurd Arms 01908 313 864
NEWCASTLE
The Black Dahlia Murder/Skeletonwitch O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
The Dee Tees The Station 0871 230 1094
Scratch Perverts/16Bit/Cookie Monsta Digital 01912 619755
The Zoos George Stephenson 0191 268 1073
OXFORD
The Severed Limb Cellar 01865 244 761
PORTSMOUTH
Bemis/Becky Jermas/Sean Fisher Cellars 0871 230 1094
PRESTON
Adam Ant 53 Degrees 01772 893 000
The Xcerts 53 Degrees 01772 893 000
READING
We Are The Ocean Sub89 0871 230 1094
SHEFFIELD
Darke Horse/Mother's Ruin/Glory Fades Corporation 0114 276 0262
One Direction City Hall 0114 278 9789
Red Hot White New Barrack Tavern 0114 234 9148
SOUTHAMPTON
Lower Than Atlantis Joiners 023 8022 5612
STOKE ON TRENT
The Event Sugarmill 01782 214 991
SWANSEA
Silver The Vault 01792 456 110
TRURO
Exit Ten B-Side 01872 241220
WOLVERHAMPTON
Asking Alexandria/blessthefall/Chelsea Grin Wulfrun Hall 0870 320 7000
Jaccals/Cheap Thrills/Swamp Snakes Slade Room 0870 320 7000
YORK
Pighag Fibbers 01904 651 250
The Lightwalks The Duchess 01904 641 413

SATURDAY
January 21


Pete Doherty, Jamm, London

ABERDEEN
The Black Dahlia Murder The Tunnels 01224 211121
Moving Pictures Lemon Tree 01224 642230
The Xcerts Cafe Drummond 01224 624642

BELFAST
A Pale Horse Named Death Spring & Airbrake 028 9032 5968
Canterbury Queens University 028 9097 3106
Lanterns On The Lake Black Box 00 35391 566511

BIRMINGHAM
The Carpels MAC 0121 440 3838
Hurricane Ray/Froz/Skamrock The Ballroom 0121 448 0797
NB3/Porcelain Raft HMV Institute 0844 248 5037

BRIGHTON
The Dark Lights/The Physics House Band/Vetoes Green Door Store 07894 267 053
Mama's Gun/Josh Bevan Audio 01273 624343
Skinny Machines/The Dunwells Latest Music Bar 01273 687 171

BRISTOL
Elliot Hall's Electric Experiment/ Molly's Confession/Mirelle Mathiener Louisiana 0117 926 5978
Exit Ten Thekla 08713 100000
The Lasting Days/A Day At The Races Golden Lion 0117 939 5506
Ruby & The Vines Canteen 0117 923 2017
The St Pierre Snake Invasion/ The Stalkers Croft (Front Bar) 0117 987 4144
Toploader/Downtown City Gardens/ Centrefolds Fleece 0117 945 0996
Waiting For Kate/Redfoot Mr Wolf's 0117 927 3221

CAMBRIDGE
Tubelord Portland Arms 01223 357268

CARDIFF
Jen Jenkro/Dan Amor/Candelas Clwb Ifor Bach 029 2023 2199
Lower Than Atlantis University 029 2023 0130
One Direction/Boyce Avenue Motorpoint Arena 029 2022 4488

COVENTRY
We Are The Ocean Kasbah 024 7655 4473

GLASGOW
Big Dish/Iona Marshall 02 ABC2 0141 204 5151
Caslokids Captain's Rest 0141 331 2722
Confusion/R-Kive/Radio Arcade Maggie May's 0141 548 1350
Laetitia Sadier/Jo Mango/Dan Haywood's New Hawks Platform 0141 276 9696
Lawson King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279
Lindi Ortega Mitchell Theatre 0141 287 4855
Taming The Savage Stereo 0141 576 5018
Zoe Muth/Turtle Dhuks The Arches 0141 565 1000

LEEDS
Foe/Various Cruelties Cockpit 0113 244 3446
Splodgenessabounds/The Gonads/ Eastfield The Well 0113 2440474

LONDON
Acid Drinkers Garage 020 7607 1818
Amos Lee O2 Shepherds Bush Empire 0870 771 2000
Asking Alexandria/blessthefall/ Chelsea Grin HMV Forum 020 7344 0044
Butcher Boy/Darren Hayman Cecil Sharp House 020 7485 2206
Ed Sheeran O2 Academy Brixton 0870 477 2000
El Kid Old Blue Last 020 7613 2478
Empire Affair/Deer Chicago/World Of Ugly Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773
Fred Borderline 020 7734 5547
The Heartrates/Akayzia Nambucca 020 7272 7366
Howlin' Circus/Forget The Down Arch Angel 020 7938 4137
Kit Richardson Roadtrip 020 7253 6787
The Mariner's Children Slaughtered Lamb 020 8682 4080
Melody & The Toyboys Concrete 020 7729 1888
My Ruin/Godsized/Sanctorum Scala 020 7833 2022
Nightowl Pacha 020 7834 4440
Patch & The Giant/Polly Poison Barfly 0870 907 0999
Pete Doherty Jamm 020 7274 5537
Ravens In Paris Heroes Bar 020 7485 6040
Star Scream/Los Pelos/Rizos Hope & Anchor 020 7354 1312
Zero Willpower Betsey Trotwood 020 7336 7326

MANCHESTER
All Time Low/The Maine/We Are The In Crowd O2 Apollo 0870 401 8000
Gary J Armstrong Night And Day Cafe 0161 [illegible]22
Skeletal Damage/Death By Monday/Yakavetta Academy 3 0161 832 1111

MILTON KEYNES
This Time Next Year/A Loss For Words Craufurd Arms 01908 313 864

NEWCASTLE
Goo Goo Muck/Dick Venom & The Terrortones Cluny 0191 230 4474
That Fucking Tank/Nately's Whore's Kid Sister/Richard Dawson Cluny 0191 230 4474
Thin Lizzy/Clutch City Hall 0191 261 2606

NOTTINGHAM
Fin Stealth 08713 100000

SHEFFIELD
Hazes/ Ripoff Britain/Q Ship O2 Academy 2 0870 477 2000
The Maccabees Leadmill 0114 221 2828
Stripey Jack O2 Academy 2 0870 477 2000

STOKE ON TRENT
Obey Sugarmill 01782 214 991

SWANSEA
Andy & Goss The Vault 01792 456 110

SUNDAY
January 22

ABERDEEN
The Maccabees Lemon Tree 01224 642230

BELFAST
Ed Sheeran Waterfront 028 9033 4455
Explosions In The Sky Queens University 028 9097 3106

BIRMINGHAM
Lower Than Atlantis/Sights And Sounds/Marines O2 Academy 3 0870 477 2000

BRIGHTON
Chris T-T/Jay Norton West Hill Hall 01273 327976
NB3/Porcelain Raft Concorde 2 01273 673 311
The Real McKenzies Prince Albert 01273 730 499
Sons Of Noel & Adrian/Heliopause/ Robert Stillman Prince Albert 01273 730 499

BRISTOL
Asking Alexandria/blessthefall/ Chelsea Grin O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
Azriel/Silent Screams/Departures Croft (Main Room) 0117 987 4144
Darkening Suns/Immersed Earth/Aeviternal Croft (Front Bar) 0117 987 4144
Everest Never Fails/House Fires/Set Your Sails Fleece 0117 945 0996
Zoe Francis Canteen 0117 923 2017

CARDIFF
Conan Buffalo Bar 02920 310312
Toy Hearts/Rebecca Pronsky 10 Feet Tall 02920 228883

GLASGOW
The Black Dahlia Murder Cathouse 0141 248 6606
Hazy Recollections O2 ABC2 0141 204 5151
Tubelord/Duke Captain's Rest 0141 331 2722
The Xcerts King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279

LEEDS
The Turnaways/Coral Caves/Red Light City New Roscoe 0113 246 0778

LONDON
Futureproof/Dive Bella Dive Barfly 0870 907 0999
Model O2 Academy 2 Islington 0870 477 2000
One Direction HMV Hammersmith Apollo 0870 606 3400
Vera Grace/The Sleepwalkers/ Anchors Down Nambucca 020 7272 7366
Wecamefromwolves/Rising Tides Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773

MANCHESTER
A Pale Horse Named Death Moho Live 0161 834 8180
Foe The Castle 0161 237 9485
Never Shout Never Academy 2 0161 832 1111

NEWCASTLE
Caslokids Cluny 0191 230 4474
Lindi Ortega Cluny 2 0191 230 4474

READING
This Time Next Year/A Loss For Words Face Bar 0118 956 8188

SHEFFIELD
Bus Pass Buskers New Barrack Tavern 0114 234 9148

WOLVERHAMPTON
The Monobloggers/Dirty Little Lies/The State Of Things Robin 2 01902 497860


Tubelord, Captain's Rest, Glasgow

GET IN THE GIG GUIDE!

DO YOU WANT TO GET YOUR BASH INCLUDED IN THE NME WEEKLY GIG GUIDE? GO TO NME.COM/GIGS AND SUBMIT YOUR LISTING FOR FREE. YOU MUST SUBMIT DETAILS AT LEAST THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE GIG DATE

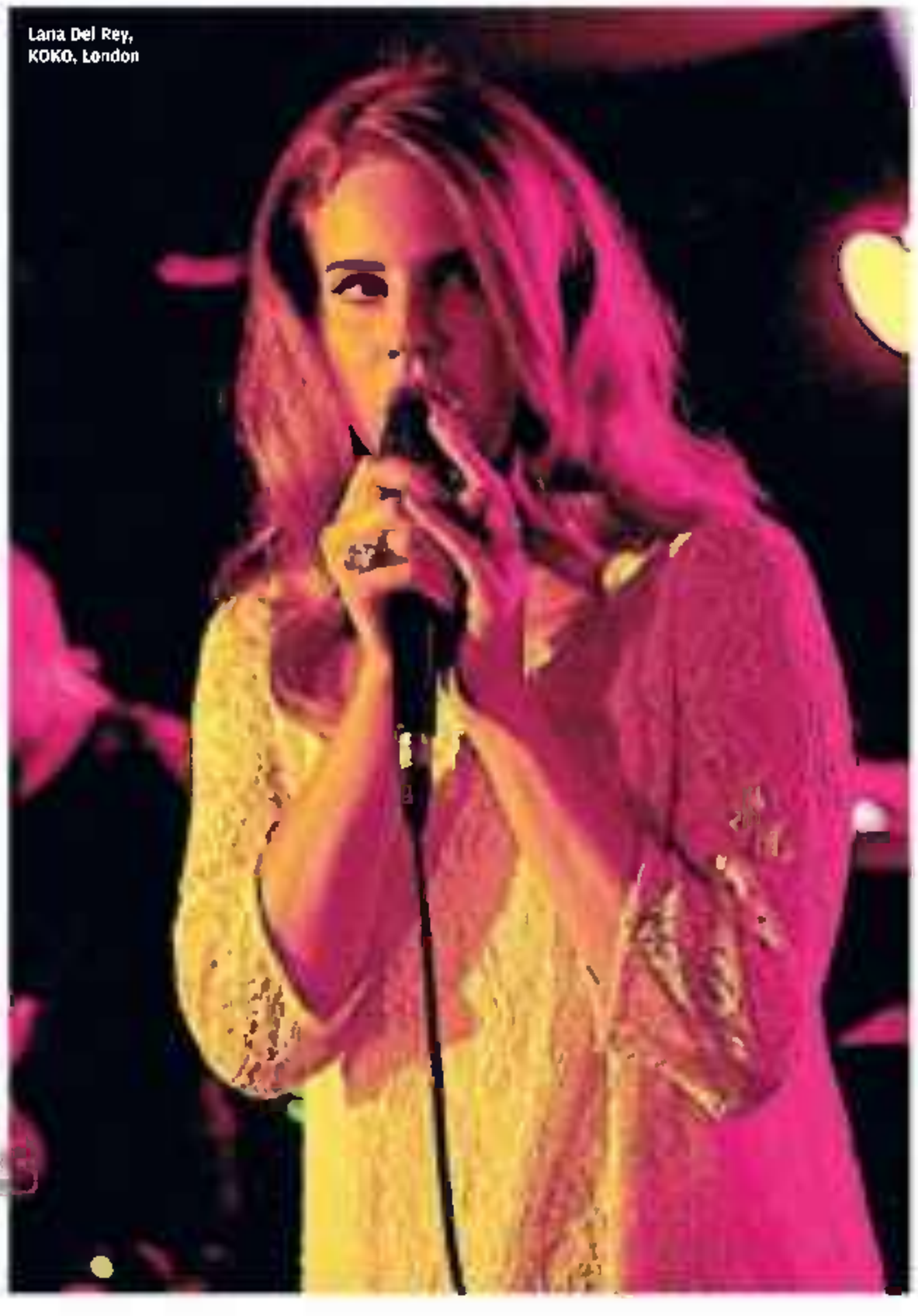
MONDAY
January 23


Dry The River, XOYO, London

ABERDEEN
Tubelord The Tunnels 01224 211121
BATH
Dakhla Bell 01225 460426
BELFAST
Never Shout Never Queens University 028 9097 3106
Snow Patrol/Everything Everything Odyssey 028 9073 9074
BRIGHTON
We Stole Fire Latest Music Bar 01273 687 171
What's Your Vice/Glass City Vice/Live Like Kings The Hope 01273 723 568
BRISTOL
Cathy Jones/Tristram Cox Canteen 0117 923 2017
Honour Among Thieves/Fell On Black Days/Ruins Will Rise Fleece 0117 945 0996
Howler Louisiana 0117 926 5978
The Real McKenzies/The Strawberry Blondes/Private Gain Croft (Main Room) 0117 987 4144
CARDIFF
Foe/Cafe Zurich Buffalo Bar 02920 310312
This Time Next Year/A Loss For Words Clwb Ifor Bach 029 2023 2199
COVENTRY
Fin Kasbah 024 7655 4473
GLASGOW
Explosions In The Sky O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
The Maccabees Queen Margaret Union 0141 339 9784
The Secret Sisters Oran Mor 0141 552 9224
Umbilical Chord Box 0161 236 4355
LEICESTER
Thin Lizzy De Montfort Hall 0116 233 3111
LONDON
Closed Circuits/Baaneex MacBeth 020 7739 5095
Coda/Aloosh Old Blue Last 020 7613 2478
Damien Jurado Enterprise 020 7485 2659
Dry The River XOYO 020 7729 5959
Gabi & The Whoremoans Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773
James Lane/Rubin Nambucca 020 7272 7366
Jason McNiff Borderline 020 7734 5547
Martha Reeves & The Vandellas Ronnie Scott's 020 7439 0747
Minny Pops/Rats On Rafts Garage 020 7607 1818
Nat Baldwin Cargo 0207 749 7840
Outfit Barfly 0870 907 0999
Rachel Sermanni Union Chapel 020 7226 1686
Radical Face The Lexington 020 7837 5387
MANCHESTER
Azriel Star & Garter 0161 273 6726
NEWCASTLE
Lower Than Atlantis O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
PORTSMOUTH
Asking Alexandria/blessthefall/Chelsea Grin Pyramids 023 9235 8608
SHEFFIELD
All Time Low/Thig Maine/[illegible] Are The In Crowd O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
SWANSEA
Stooshe University 01792 295485

TUESDAY
January 24

BELFAST
Snow Patrol/Everything Everything Odyssey 028 9073 9074
BIRMINGHAM
Civil Disobedience/Ricardo Thompson/Hayley Trower O2 Academy 3 0870 477 2000
BRIGHTON
Fear Of Men/Cinemascopes/Soft Arrows Prince Albert 01273 730 499
Howler Green Door Store 07894 267 053
Jetgio Latest Music Bar 01273 687 171
Rebecca Pronksy Sticky Mike's Frog Bar 01273 749 465
BRISTOL
Beasty Traps Croft (Front Bar) 0117 987 4144
Cantina Collectiveg Fleece 011[illegible] 945 0996
Marie Lister Canteen 0117 923 2017
Parrington Jackson/Sadie Fleming/Paul Garry Colston Hall 0117 922 3683
Waltrapas Mr Wolf's 0117 927 3221
CARDIFF
Face/Heel Buffalo Bar 02920 310312
EDINBURGH
Ron Sexsmith HMV Picture House 0844 847 1740
Tubelord Sneaky Pete's 0131 225 1757
EXETER
Apollo's Arrows/Polio Cavern Club 01392 495 370
GLASGOW
Lower Than Atlantis King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279
LEEDS
The Black Dahlia Murder/Skeletonwitch Cockpit 0113 244 3446
Explosions In The Sky O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
Nat Baiwin Brudenell Social Club 0113 243 5866
LONDON
Azriel/Silent Screams/Departures Barfly 0870 907 0999
Casiokids Cargo 0207 749 7840
Concrete Knives/Thom Cross/Radials Old Blue Last 020 7613 2478
Giant Monster Army/After An Alibi/The August September Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773
Hello Monroe/Up/The Hype Theory Garage 020 7607 1818
Jon Cohen Band MacBeth 020 7739 5095
Kronos Quartet Hackney Empire 020 8985 2424
La Disgute Borderline 020 7734 5547
Lescop/John & Jehn/Harry O'Children Shacklewell Arms 020 7249 0810
Lianne La Havas Social 020 7636 4992
The Maccabees/Lana Del Rey/Charli XCX KOKO 020 7388 3222
Michael Kiwanuka/Emeli Sande XOYO 020 7729 5959
The Pigott Brothers Slaughtered Lamb 020 8682 4080
Radical Face The Lexington 020 7837 5387
To Kill A King Arts Club 020 7460 4459
MANCHESTER
Stuart McCallum Band On The Wall 0161 832 6625
MILTON KEYNES
Madison Violet Stables 01908 280800
NOTTINGHAM
All Time Low Rock City 08713 100000
OXFORD
M83 O2 Academy 0870 477 2000
READING
Adam Ant Sub89 0871 230 1094
SOUTHAMPTON
Foe Joiners 023 8022 5612
WREXHAM
A Pale Horse Named Death Central Station 01978 358780
YORK
Dave McPherson Stereo 01904 612237


Lana Del Rey, KOKO, London

StreetMag

THIS WEEK IN 1989

DEF LEPPARD SOUND OFF, MARC ALMOND LIVES DREAM





GENE & THE GENIE

Marc Almond has hooked up with one of his all-time heroes, Gene Pitney, to record a version of the latter's 'Something's Gotten Hold Of My Heart', and the video is to be shot in Las Vegas. "I wanted it to be a magical, mystical meeting for these two singers," Almond explains. "The video is *The Wizard Of Oz* meets *One From The Heart*. And if you'd said to me a decade ago that in 10 years' time you'll be singing in Vegas with Gene Pitney... it's absurd!"

NOW PAINLESS

Suicide are generally accepted to have influenced every electro band on the planet... but their debut album arrived over a decade ago, and now "everyone in the music biz knows who we are". Alan Vega notes that "people were more complacent 10 years ago, I mean, I wanted to go out and shake 'em up a bit, bring the streets to 'em. But now everybody knows the streets, so the idea is to maybe try and bring something else."

BIGGER... AND BETTER

Love them or loathe them (most *NME* readers would fall into the latter category), Def Leppard are absolutely enormous. They have overcome drummer Rick Allen's loss of an arm in a car crash to release a fourth album, 'Hysteria', that's sent them into the stratosphere. That figure on the cover is just the start: it will go on to sell 20 million copies.

"All we've ever wanted is to be quite simply the biggest rock band in the world," their singer Joe Elliott shrugs. "It's not calculated, we just thought – why can't a rock band sell as many copies of an album as 'Thriller'? And you don't get there by sounding like Napalm Death."

They've got little time for their fellow Sheffield bands, either. "Most Sheff bands are notoriously arty, one-fingered rubbish. We supported The Human League once and they had five keyboard players behind plexiglass. I thought, 'What the fuck's going on here? This isn't music!'"

And Joe isn't short on opinions in general.

"I would castrate rapists," he says. "I would rather we spent the thousands of pounds we spend feeding and clothing these fucking perverts on nurses. And I would kill all murderers. I'd vote for that. Is it right to keep that bloke in a nice warm prison while a nurse gets puked and shat on for 45 quid a week?"

Bold words, from a man whose audience is only getting wider. "We get Vietnam vets who stand unembarrassed next to a 16-year old that's wetting her knickers," he notes.

Also In The Issue That Week

- Family and friends of Bob Marley hit out at the Jamaican government for selling off the singer's estate to Island Records boss Chris Blackwell for a fraction of its worth.
- Single Of The Week is They Might Be Giants' 'They'll Need A Crane'.
- Lou Reed's 'New York' album is awarded 10 out of 10. Gavin Martin writes that it "will stand as a testament to Lou Reed's claim that he and rock'n'roll can grow old together".
- My Bloody Valentine's 'Isn't Anything' is Number One in the Indie Charts.
- Happy Mondays play Dingwalls: "There are no obvious '60s derivations to their jaundiced dance psychedelics", writes Jack Barron.

NME

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THE LEGENDARY NME CROSSWORD

TAXING THE FINEST MINDS IN ROCK'N'ROLL FOR SIX DECADES

Compiled by Trevor Hungerford

Win!

A BAG OF NME SWAG



CLUES ACROSS

1+8A Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a Big Pink flop (3-3-6-8)
9+22A *"I don't have to sell my soul, he's already in me"*, 1989 (1-5-2-6)
10+28A Events there are ruined by this Goldfrapp album (7-4)
12+5D All in run-out for reworking of Little Dragon album (6-5)
13 Smashing Pumpkins get thuggish at the end of this recording (4)
15 (See 14 down)
17 The Orb are into greasy lumps (6)
19 The Goo Goo Dolls had a bit of an eye for a flower (4)
20 Rise from bed and put on a costume, all for a 50 Cent piece (3-2)
22 (See 9 across)
24 In my own interests I've got an '80s single by Fuzzbox and a '70s album by Quintessence (4)
26 Tina's partner at 'Nutbush City Limits' (3)
28 (See 10 across)
29 Queens Of The Stone Age have time to complete the album '___ Vulgars' (3)
31 Pixies unearth a burning issue (3-3-4)
32 (See 18 down)
33 'Take Me To The Clouds Above' as the act stay in calm control (1-1-1)
34 Dominic Masters' band, not including himself (6)
35 (See 10 down)

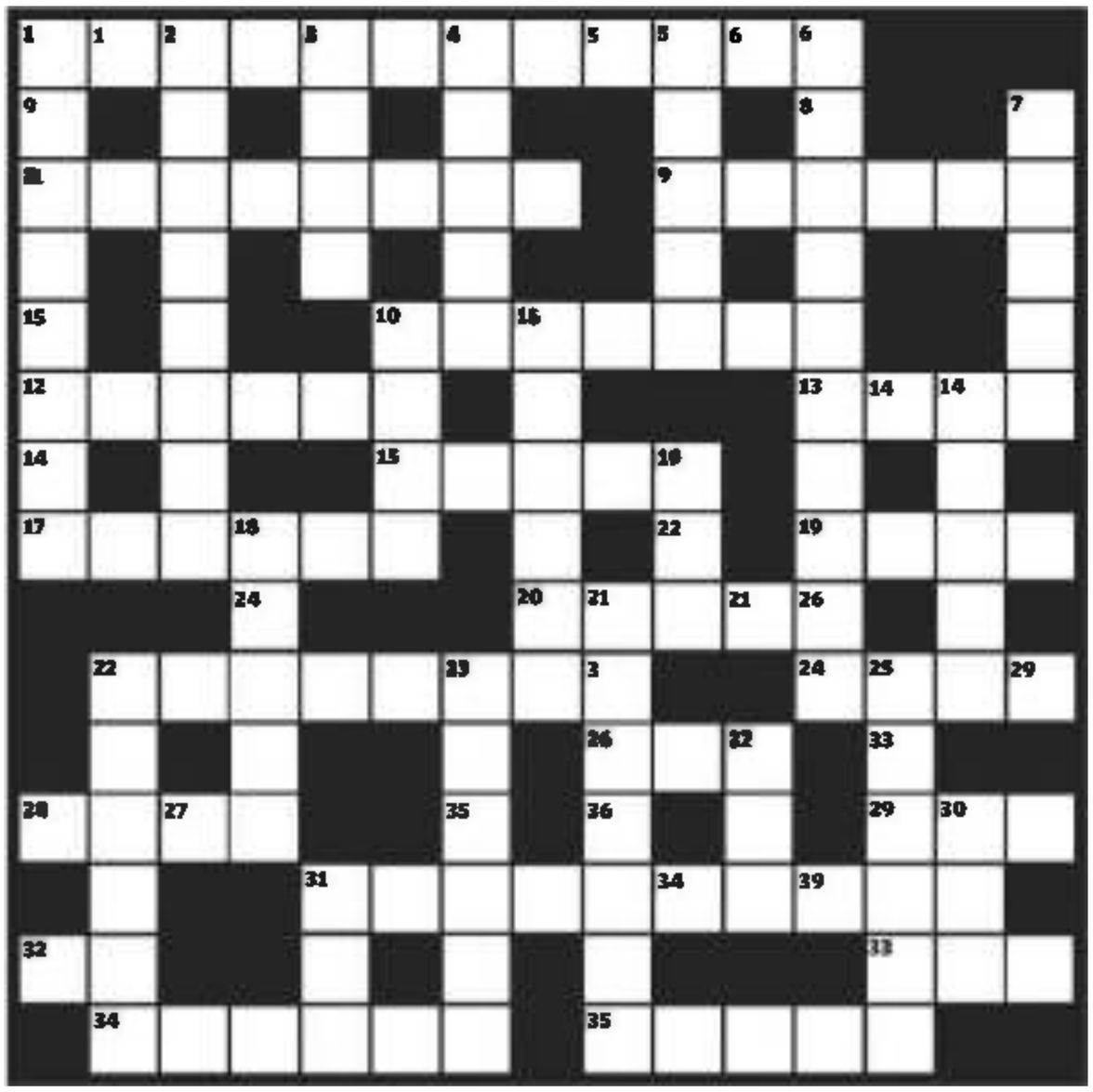
CLUES DOWN

1 *"'Cos I want it now, I want it now, give me your heart and soul"*, Muse (8)
2 Try tapes in a different order for Carole King album (8)
3 Peter Frampton's old band coming through another door (4)
4 The beauty of having either an album by Jeff Buckley or a single by The View (5)
5 (See 12 across)
6 The third pages get ripped up by hip-hop group (5-5)
7 Cure tune has a hook, although that could be a drawback (5)
10+35A That slightly dodgy character, Eminem (4-5)
11 Gives a new look to old '70s group (6)
14+15A Even now, The Yardbirds are unable to cheer me up (5-2 3)
16 '70s hit from Pluto Shervington performed in a bad atmosphere (3)
18+32A Don't take that Bombay Bicycle Club song (5-2)
21 So tired of changes being made to a band (7)
22+31D Lana Del Rey publishes her life story (4-2-3)
23 Singer is wrong for Ja Rule number that rules (6)
25 The ____ Brothers, US duo whose hits included 'Cathy's Clown' (6)
27 Hit makers in system failure (3)
30 Band who were 'Out Of Time' 20 years before they disbanded (3)
31 (See 22 down)

DECEMBER 17-24 ANSWERS

ANSWERS ACROSS: 1 High Flying Birds, 9 This Is The Day, 17 Vomit, 18 Up The Junction, 19 Surrender, 20 Airport, 21 Echoes, 22 Reverence, 23 Webb, 25+71A Whistle For The Choir, 26 Evil Woman, 29 Saltwater, 34 Yazoo, 35+41A Marti Pellow, 36+60A Thorn In My Side, 37 Finelines, 38 Gene, 39 Kiss, 43 Dime, 45 Bob Lind, 48 Blood, 49 Over You, 50 Voice, 51 Can Can, 52 Anvil, 53+108A Metal Mickey, 55 Tupelo, 56 Trippy, 57 Saturn, 63 Far Nearer, 66 Grow, 68 Wetsuit, 69 Aerial, 72+84A Oopsy Daisy, 73 Town, 76 Mad, 78+70D Oh My God, 79 Neighbourhood, 81 It, 82 Rainbow, 86 Hiss, 87 Dirt, 88+115A Ice Cream, 90 Toad, 92 Stuck, 94 Ellis, 95 Krupa, 98 Kung Fu, 102+117A Ruby Tuesday, 104 Inni, 106 Felt, 110 Mensi, 112 Kensit, 113 Bees, 116 Stay, 118 Naish

ANSWERS DOWN: 1+16D Have A Nice Day, 2 Gem Archer, 3 Fatboy Slim, 4+63D You Stole The Sun From My Heart, 5 Nutter, 7 Rouse, 8+44D Suck It And See, 10 Hunger, 11 Sisters Of Mercy, 12 Strickland Banks, 14 Dr Dre, 15 Yardbirds, 24 Holy Ghost, 27 Land, 28 Naked, 30 Wild Beasts, 31 Ten Silver Drops, 32 Smoke On The Water, 33+6D Roll Over Beethoven, 40 Sleep, 42 Whisper, 46 Doll, 47 My Plague, 48+103D Be My Baby, 54 Angel Of Harlem, 58+83D Get Back, 59 Manchild, 61 Do It, 62+96A It's Written In The Stars, 64 No Honestly, 65+101A All Mod Cons, 67 Waysted, 69 Argos, 74 Down, 75 Grocer, 77 Adamski, 80 Aston, 85 Yo, 89 Elsie, 91 Alf, 93 Krafty, 96 Twist, 97 Third, 99 Gun, 100+13D Uriah Heep, 101 Cake, 105+110D NYC Man, 107 La's, 109 Key, 111 EMA, 114 Be



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Simply cut out the crossword and send it, along with your name, address and email, marking the envelope with the issue date, before Tuesday, January 24, 2012, to the following address: Crossword, *NME*, 9th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU.

First correct one out of the hat wins a bag of CDs, T-shirts and books!



COLLECTORS' CORNER

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Call yourself a superfan? Here are the gems that no fan of The Boss should be without



WORDS: ALAN WOODHOUSE PHOTO: ANDY WILLSHER

HAMMERSMITH ODEON LONDON '75 (2006)



The much-hyped European concert debut of The Boss and The E Street Band on November 18 1975 was finally made available over 30 years later. By this time, the 'Born To Run' tour had been going for over a year, and the setlist contains all the classics you'd expect from 'Thunder Road' and 'Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out', to 'Born To Run'.

Need To Know: Monty Python's Michael Palin was in attendance at the concert.

TRACKS (1998)



A career-spanning four-disc box set containing a treasure trove of unreleased material, as well as hard-to-find B-sides, demos and alternate versions of songs already released by Springsteen. The compilation starts with Springsteen's audition for John H Hammond, the producer who discovered Bob Dylan, and ends with a 1995 outtake from 'The Ghost Of Tom Joad' album.

Need To Know: A condensed, single CD version appeared a year later called '18 Tracks'.

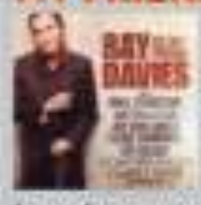
THE PROMISE (2010)



Originally meant to have come out in 2008 to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the release of 'Darkness On The Edge Of Town', this double CD of outtakes taken from The Boss's 1978 album was released as a standalone album or as part of a more expansive three CD and three DVD box set.

Need To Know: Peaking at Number 16, 'The Promise' was Springsteen's lowest-charting studio album in the US since 1973's 'The Wild, The Innocent & The E Street Shuffle'.

RAY DAVIES - SEE MY FRIENDS (2010)



The Kinks mainman released an album featuring brand new versions of songs by his band, featuring guest vocalists that included Metallica, Mumford & Sons and Springsteen. The Boss – a confirmed Kinks fan – duetted with Davies on a version of 'Better Things' from the 1981 album 'Give The People What They Want'.

Need To Know: According to Davies, Springsteen took "about two or three hours" to record his part.

StreetAgs

FANMAIL

YOU GET IN TOUCH, WE RESPOND, THINGS GET OUT OF HAND

Edited by Jo Fuertes Knight

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The Big Issue

What everyone's talking about this week



DEATHRAY OF SUNSHINE

From: Jodie-Mae Finch
To: *NME*
I was surprised (and excited) to see Jordan of Howler on the cover of *NME* last week, but the thing that amazed me most was DZ Deathrays. Along with Howler and Tribes they're going to be the most exciting band of 2012, and it's brilliant to see them in your pages because they're so underrated. I saw them in Norwich last year and no-one in the audience was moving. HOW? They're brutal and insane on stage, and really nice guys off it. They're DFA 1979 with more (I wish I didn't have to use this word) swagger. WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE? They should be everywhere, so THANK YOU for giving them paper-time!

NME's response...
Couldn't agree more, Jodie-Mae, and we'll just about forgive you for paraphrasing Cher Lloyd. Though we must admit, it's difficult to imagine a completely motionless crowd at a DZ Deathrays gig unless they'd been mistakenly booked to play a funeral. But you're right, for starters we've got Tribes' long-awaited debut 'Baby', Howler enthusiastically offering to "suck England off" and a buttload more exciting young hopefuls from all corners of the world who'll be gracing our ears in 2012. So many, in fact, that it's hard to know where to stick our big greedy faces first. My advice? Sod any further chin-scratching and predictive pre-empting about who will blow up in the next 12 months – why not just make the most of being spoilt for choice and embrace whatever is in this end-of-the-world air that's keeping the flood of good music rolling in? Best. Apocalypse. Ever – JFK

Get in touch at the above addresses. Winners should email letters@NME.COM to claim their voucher

TELLING US ONCE

FROM: Jamie Pritchard
To: *NME*
I just wanted to say how much I'm loving Howler at the moment, definitely my favourite out of the new bands. I saw them a few weeks ago supporting The Vaccines and they were as good as if not better than them and I *love* The Vaccines. The drummer is incredibly talented, and they have a great vibe and fresh attitude about them. They remind me of an even ballzier young Kings Of Leon before they got so shit. The band to watch.

FRED'S CRED: DEAD

From: David H
To: *NME*
Are Spector for real? All Fred spoke about in *NME*'s new bands issue was money, while claiming The Strokes made the top two albums of all time and hinting that he's using 'Is This It' as a template. Seriously, they're nothing like them, The Strokes are a gang playing music for the hell of it, not to seek fame. You can just imagine Fred now rubbing his hands with glee because he's made the pages of *NME* and stroking his figurative beard wondering what the next stage of his plan should be. In fact, didn't he have one once, when he was calling himself Blood Royale or something? Reinventions are behind some of the best music made – Bowie, recently Lana Del Rey and hopefully, after their hiatus, the Manics – but not all. Just go away Fred.

From: Mikey Walsh
To: *NME*
Fred out of Spector = a young David Mellor.

From: *NME*
To: David H, Mikey Walsh
Aww, c'mon, Fred might come across as a bit of a dickhole, but we're pretty sure he was just trolling us harder than a 14-year-old browsing a conspiracy theory forum. Or maybe he really is lolling about on a mattress stuffed with cocaine and 'gun money' right now, planning his route to superstardom. Either way, Spector are barely out of their Pampers yet, so at least give the album a chance before you completely write them off, eh? – JFK

THE WHACK KEYS

From: Danny Angove
To: *NME*
The Black Keys need to wind their necks in. One week they're saying they want to punch Carl Barât in the face, and now they're saying that rock'n'roll is dying... because of Nickelback. Fair play, Nickelback are shite nowadays, but who are The Black Keys to say so? The last time I checked The Black Keys are the biggest posers in music – full of the bravado and arrogance that one would associate with *shudder* Justin Bieber. On behalf of the music-loving population of Britain I have a message for The Black Keys – shut up and make a decent album for once.

From: Amalia Pantazi
To: *NME*
All the buzz this past week was about that Patrick Carney/Nickelback thing. What really troubled me was Carney's statement that "rock'n'roll is dying". Is it true? Is rock dying? Is this the end of the world the Mayans predicted?

AMY BRAMHALL

I say NO. Rock'n'roll is NOT dying. Rock'n'roll, to me, is turning up the radio and feeling free and powerful and wanting to sing at the top of my voice, even though I really suck at singing, and maybe even jumping and dancing around. Rock is not just about guitar riffs. It's a way of thinking, a way of living. Rock is about living your life exactly as you want, trying new things, getting passionate about things. This is how rock music was born and this is why it will never die. There are so many good bands out there right now. From Foo Fighters, The Strokes, The Stone Roses and Radiohead to Kasabian, Kings Of Leon, Muse, Arctic Monkeys, Florence + The Machine and so many new promising artists, The Horrors, Mumford & Sons... I could go on and on and on. There's still some badass rock spirit out there. We have the chance to create our own rock legacy for the generations to come. I truly believe in that.

From: *NME*
To: Danny Angove, Amalia Pantazi
Crikey, who knew slagging off Nickelback could provoke such a reaction? Does mud-slinging at another band in a magazine still count as being rock'n'roll? It's marginally more rock'n'roll than idly threatening to thump Carl Barât, anyway. The Black Keys' drummer is right in lamenting that there is a drought of rock singles in the charts, which nowadays can feel like they're commanded solely by the furious fist-pumping of tweenagers to David Guetta remixes. But picking a fight with fellow "rock" band and the already universally panned Nickelback is kind of like kicking in your local Tesco Express to show your distaste at the demise of the local high street. We all know Nickelback are a Goliath example of bad, bland music, so there's no need to exhaust yourself pointing it out. Especially when the makings of a titanic music feud falls on its ass after your bitching is rebuffed by a solitary Chad Kroeger tweet of, "Thanks to the drummer in The Black Keys calling us the biggest band in the world, Hehe". I think an additional, well-placed emoticon may have sent Carney spiraling into an uncontrollable rage. For everyone's sake, guys, why not stop picking fights and let your music do the talking? – JFK



STALKER
From: Isobel
To: *NME*
"I met Miles Kane at a Kasabian afterparty. He was great live and lovely to meet"

Web Slinging

The highlight of this week's NME.COM blogs

THE SONG THAT CHANGED MY LIFE: OASIS, 'LIVE FOREVER'

it was the first CD I ever bought. Hearing it in the privacy of my own room, on my own proper stereo, at maximum volume was joyous. Within a week, I was stretching my fingers across the battered old fretboard of the nylon stringed guitar downstairs trying to play the F-chord that ushers in the end of the "*you and I are gonna live forever*" bit. When I could finally play and sing it on guitar, it felt so simple. All I would have to do is stick five chords together like this, and sing some words over the top. It made it seem so easy, so effortless.

From there on in I lived and breathed Oasis for the rest of my teens. I got my start at *NME* when I wrote in to the Letters page, about Oasis, and the then-editor wrote back saying he liked the passion in my writing. I never would've dreamed of being "a writer" but they – and "Live Forever" – had ignited something. All of which I would say counts as a song changing my life, wouldn't you?

Read Hamish MacBain's blog in full on NME.COM



Best of the responses...

I understand why you liked it. You were young and impressionable. It sucks.
Evan Parsons

I remember hearing it, lying in bed half asleep on a Sunday afternoon in April '94. Went to Woolies the next day to buy it on CD single and became Oasis obsessed from that moment on.
Gregory Jones

This song was also the first song I learned how to play, sitting there with a $70 acoustic guitar, looking up G, spending hours trying to go to D quick enough.
Yilin Xu

The amount of people who love this song is amazing, from all walks of life. It's perfect. Could have been a Beatles song – one of the best Beatles songs as well.
Joe Fox

SWEET CHILD O'WINE
From: Irma Karoline Iversen
To: *NME*
I pretty much agree on your guitar solo list on *NME.COM* this week, but that Guns N' Roses' 'Sweet Child O' Mine' is in first place? I think there are many other solos that are worthy too. My opinion is that Pink Floyd's 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond' is a much more powerful song than 'Sweet Child O' Mine' will ever be. While I'm on the case, why aren't Deep Purple's 'Child In Time' and Pink Floyd's 'Comfortably Numb' on the list?

From: *NME*
To: Irma Karoline Iversen
Each to their own, though we'd argue back that what 'Sweet Child O' Mine''s solo may lack in power, it more than makes up for in inclusivity. There aren't many people who can say they have never air-guitared to it – inebriated, face scrunched, knees bent and imaginary Slash hat at a jaunty angle – at least once in their life – JFK

NEXT SHADOW PUPPETS
From: Colm Pablo
To: *NME*
Thrilled to hear about The Last Shadow Puppets making another album. Also good to see that in 2011 Miles was released from Alex's metaphorical musical teat and went it alone. However, this reunion should be nice. 'The Age Of The Understatement' is a cracking album – let's hope they make another one that is on par or even better than their first.

From: *NME*
To: Colm Pablo
A hundred quid says Alex has ditched his quiff and returns with dreads. No but really, we agree, it's not all about Mr Turner right now, and a second helping from The Last Shadow Puppets is a more than welcome treat – JFK

JING-JANG-GONE
From: Tom Smith
To: *NME*
Whatever happened to Joe Lean?

From: *NME*
To: Tom Smith
Peaches Geldof – JFK

TRIPLE X ADELE
From: Steven Vanberghen
To: *NME*
I think the most interesting news combination this past week was. 1) Adele wants to 'sex up her image' and then 2) Tinie Tempah: "I want to work with Adele this year." This could result in wasted time, hot porn or the album of the year.

From: *NME*
To: Steve Vanberghen
I can see it now: a brief but blustery affair that inspires a series of x-rated bonus tracks on the songstress' next album, such as 'Rolling In The Creep', 'Chasing Shavements' and 'Hometown Glory Hole'. I'm sorry, I'll show myself out – JFK



STALKER
From: Kate & Clare
To: *NME*
"We met Alister and Heidi from Cloud Control when they supported The Drums at Manchester HMV Ritz"

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DOES ROCK'N'ROLL KILL BRAINCELLS?

TESTING MUSICIANS' MEMORIES AFTER A LIFETIME OF ABUSE

This Week

ROBBIE FURZE
THE BIG PINK



QUESTION 1
You covered 'Lovesong' for NME's 2009 compilation, 'Pictures of You: A Tribute to Godlike Geniuses The Cure'. Name three other bands who contributed
"I didn't realise it was going to be this difficult. Did Muse do one? Crystal Castles?"
Wrong. Mystery Jets did 'In Between Days'. Lostprophets did 'Boys Don't Cry', Biffy Clyro's side-project Marmaduke Duke did 'Friday I'm In Love' and more...


Cure legend Robert Smith

QUESTION 2
Who is credited with providing 'vibes' on final 'A Brief History Of Love' (right) album track, 'Count Backwards From Ten'?
"James Reynolds from Klaxons. He did some production on that track before we did the final version so we felt that some of his vibes were left in."
Correct

QUESTION 3
Nicki Minaj sampled 'Dominos' on 'Girls Fall Like Dominos'. What colour hair does she have on the front of the single?
"Pink. The album is called 'Pink Friday', isn't it?"
Correct

QUESTION 4
What did you tell NME was the problem with touring with Muse?
"I loved touring with Muse. I don't think there was a problem."
Wrong. What you actually said was, "One of the only problems with the Muse tour was that the audiences were ugly."
"That's not true. Well, I can't believe I said that. Can we officially put that in *NME*? I did not say that."

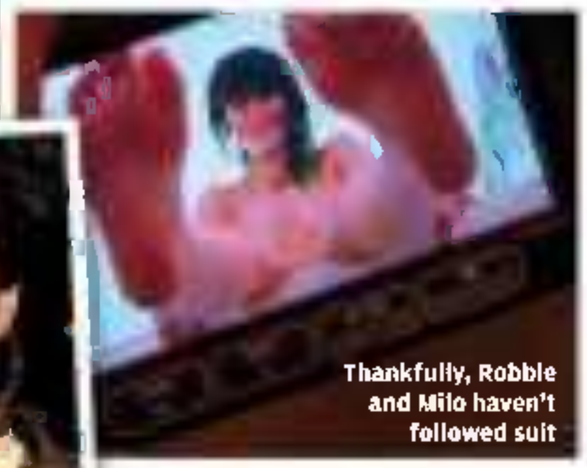
QUESTION 5
You partied with Brandon Flowers (left) after the NME Awards in 2009. But who was cooler, according to NME Cool's List 2008 – you or Brandon?
"I think Brandon was cooler than me."
Correct. Brandon was number 37. You came in at 39
"So he just beat me..."

QUESTION 6
The Big Pink covered Beyoncé's 'Sweet Dreams' for Radio 1's Live Lounge in 2009. What is Beyonce's new baby girl called?
"Oooh. I don't know."
Wrong. Blue Ivy. Weird, eh?
"Yeah, that is weird."

QUESTION 7
You used to be known as quite the touring party animal – but where does your next one kick off, on February 8?
"Portsmouth?"
Wrong. Bristol's Thekla. Haven't you got a reminder pinned to your fridge?
"You'd think I would. In my defence, it does change a lot."

QUESTION 8
Who did your girlfriend Mary Charteris tell the Daily Mail was the coolest person she knew in 2010?
"Er... me. Ha! I bought her a neon sign of her signature. I also got her signature tattooed on my arm."
Correct. You old romantic, you
"Shucks."

QUESTION 9
What is the name of the photographer who persuaded former Big Pink drummer Akiko Matsuura to get her kit off for a nudey film "project" in 2010?
"Richard Kern. I'm a big fan."
Correct. Are you next?
"I doubt he wants me, really."


Thankfully, Robbie and Milo haven't followed suit

QUESTION 10
The tabloids once got that idea that you'd had a fling with Lily Allen (left). What did your bandmate Milo tell them was actually the case?
"He explained that she just stayed at my house. She was going through a rough time."
Correct. Tops and tails, cuddles or spoons?
"No. Separate rooms!"



Total Score
6/10

"That's not too bad. I thought I was going to do a lot worse!"

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DEAN CHALKLEY, OLIVER EDWARDS, VICE

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Out Wednesday January 25

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LANA DEL REY

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