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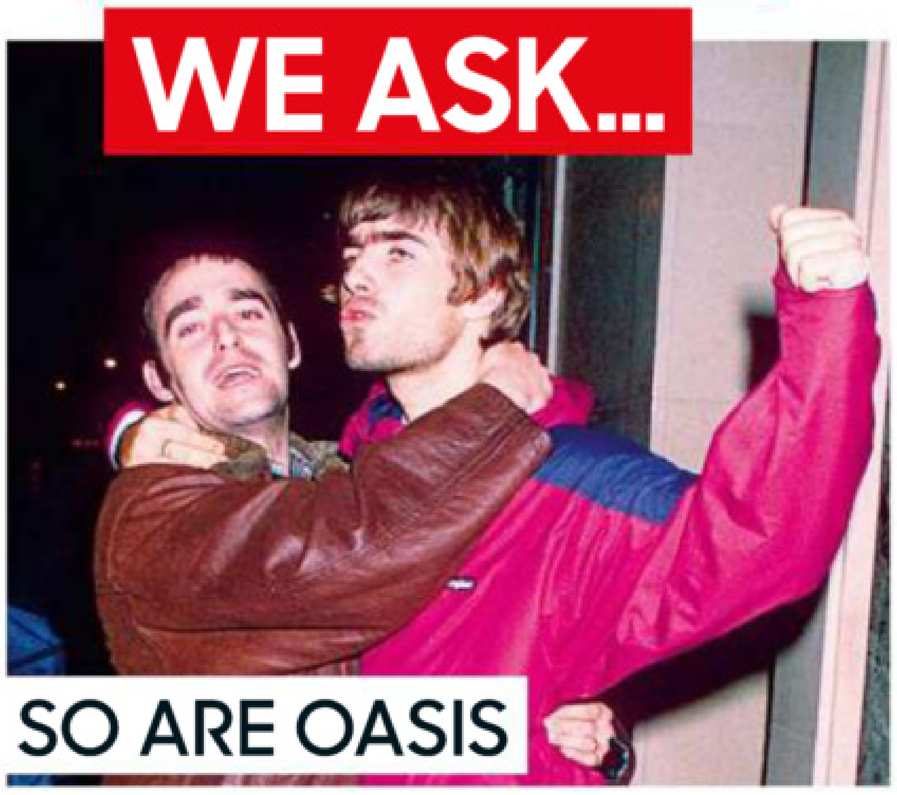

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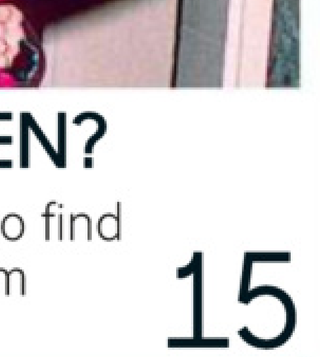

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Deputy News Editor
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Roger Sargent
Photographer
Roger took this week's cover shot of The Libertines. His reaction to the announcement of the fabled reunion? "Here we go again!"

Dan Carson
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David Wharfe. Not so far from Snowdonia.

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

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RECORD STORE DISMAY

After getting up late, I realised I was going to miss out on some of the records that I wanted, and this is only fair. I ended up happy with my purchases of 'The Stone Roses' and The Jimi Hendrix Experience's 'Live At Monterey', but I was frustrated that I didn't come home with what I set out to: 'Supersonic', Bob Dylan and Jake Bugg. I typed these titles into eBay to see what prices they were reaching on there: 'Supersonic' was £40, Dylan [debut album] vinyls were going for £40 and Bugg's live EP was £20–£25. Although RSD is great for music lovers, it's also great for people who wish to make money from fans paying over the odds for records they love. Why rip people off on eBay? Let the real music fans appreciate the music for real prices.
Steven Pritchard, via email

Ben Hewitt: Record Store Day UK's organiser Spencer Hickman [see Opinion, page 17] admitted last week that the event has encountered a few hiccups this year – cynical reissues, clogged release schedules, overworked pressing plants and the rest – and these scammers you refer to, Steven, are a problem. Those of us who cherish music as something tangible, to love and look after in our collections, seem more and more at risk of missing out on the albums that are released in conjunction with RSD, and it's a pity some cynical folk take advantage of our enthusiasm to make a quick profit. Let's hope they iron out the kinks next year – answers on a postcard for how we can make that happen, please – and may the records you did manage to bag bring you much joy.

RECORD SCORE DAY

I got out of bed early to queue – along with scores of others – in the cold outside the wonderful Record Collector in Sheffield. I eventually left chuffed to bits to get my hands on the Life Without Buildings and Bis vinyl I was after. But it was only afterwards that I realised I'd taken away a lot more than that. I'd left my other half – who doesn't really share my passion for vinyl – in bed. So for three hours I talked to complete strangers, including a doctor who's a big fan of Joy Division and a goth who told me how he once met Billy Corgan. It reminded me that flogging vinyl is only a tiny part of why record shops are so important. They have a community spirit that no message-board or social media site could ever replicate.
Dan, Sheffield, via email

BH: Dan, I feel like the curmudgeonly Ebenezer Scrooge who's just had his heart melted by you, Record Store Day's very own Tiny Tim. Because, with all the complaints about long queues and disgruntled shoppers, it's easy to forget that RSD isn't just about shoving other customers out of the way to bolster your own record collection; it's about remembering what's so special about dedicated music retailers staffed by knowledgeable fans and frequented by like-minded obsessives, and making sure they stay as vibrant and financially viable as possible. God bless us, every one.

PRAISE THE SISTERS

It might sound like I've had my head buried in the sand for a few years, but these past few weeks I discovered music's girl power. An example? Last week at Coachella, Blondie's Debbie Harry, one of the most talented vocalists I can recall, sang 'Heart Of Glass' with Arcade Fire's Régine Chassagne and it was fantastic. This on top of Joan Jett, Kim Gordon, St Vincent and Lorde all performing at Nirvana's induction to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, Haim's dynamic performance at festivals and the emergence of your recent New Band Of The Week, Honeyblood (one of my favourite new acts) shows that this girl power spark isn't going to fade away anytime soon, and I can't wait to see what comes next.
Liam Menzies, Scotland

BH: I'm sorry, Liam, but it actually sounds as if your head has been buried in the sand for a few decades, like an ostrich oblivious to the passing winds of change in gender politics. It's great you've broadened your horizons, but this 'Women In Rock' thinking – the lumping together of a hugely diverse range of artists simply because they don't have penises – is patronising claptrap that does a disservice to the innovative, individual female artists who should be lauded for their brilliance on its own merit. If you really want to pay tribute to the artists you mention above, then look beyond the chromosomes, my friend.

TAKE OFF YOUR DANCING SHOES

In the April 19 issue you claimed Alex Turner was "refusing to bask in music industry backslapping", but don't the Gucci shoes, painstakingly crafted quiff and his weirdly appealing shit dance moves seem like exactly the sort of thing that might indicate he is enjoying the post-Olympics popular attention from the idiots lapping up this new and seemingly insincere image? As for the music industry, I doubt his horribly scripted speech about "that rock'n'roll" and the fangirls fawning over him as some musical messiah could really hurt sales? Good songwriter, but he's a pop star now. The 'A Certain Romance' days of brutal honesty are over.
Harry Yip, Liverpool

BH: Harry, if rock stars were supposed to be ugly fuckers with bad clothes and zero charisma, then I'd be headlining this year's Glastonbury. But they're not: from Madonna and Morrissey to Prince, Bowie and Kate Bush, music legends are born not only by making timeless music but by cultivating fascinating, unique and often bonkers personas. Personally, I find Alex Turner a lot more engaging now he's dressing like Elvis and dancing like a seedy Butlin's Red Coat – because, really, if you can't brave a daft haircut and silly stage moves in rock'n'roll, then when the hell can you?

LOOK WHO'S STALKING

It was pretty surreal meeting Biffy Clyro in Sheffield. I told Si how great the show was and he was really appreciative, saying how chuffed he was about all the fans being so polite!
Austen Foster, Leeds

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ON REPEAT

NME 20

NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

1. FKA Twigs
Give Up

FKA Twigs could be the most hyped new artist of the last year – and for good reason. The R&B experimentalist – real name Tahliah Barnett – has fashioned a sound that's avant garde and unmistakably hers. 'Give Up', debuted recently at her first New York gig, is a longing, glitchy ballad that finds Barnett's breathy vocals recalling Janet Jackson in parts.
Lucy Jones, Deputy Editor, NME.COM

2. Lykke Li
No Rest For The Wicked (feat. A$AP Rocky)

One of the highlights from Lykke's third album gets a retooling courtesy of a few bars from A$AP Rocky. What is a sky-wide orchestral heartbreak song on 'I Never Learn' takes a sideways step into a minimal dub breakdown mid-song, with the Harlem drawler rhyming: "*wiki me*" with "*Lykke Li*". Then back in comes the Swedish singer, all angelic. Like A$AP's previous dalliances with the likes of Lana Del Rey, it somehow works.
Greg Cochrane, Editor, NME.COM

3. Jamie xx
Girl

In his own mild-mannered way, the studious production whizz behind The xx brings sexy back. Unlike the sparse, more sedate beats of last month's single 'Sleep Sound', 'Girl' feels like sweet, sticky honey being drizzled in your ear: shimmering gossamer synths, a splash of rolling percussion and the greatest, grooviest bassline of 2014 so far. It's always the quiet ones you need to keep an eye on.
Ben Hewitt, writer

4. Pharoahe Monch
Get Down

Released for Record Store Day in the US, this track finds the typically creative New York rapper in laid-back form. That's not to say his rhymes lack punch – Monch's reputation as one of hip-hop's sharper wordsmiths remains intact. Among references to R Kelly and "*ice grills*", he places himself as the vaccine to a "*game that is diseased and poisoned*". Eclectic, refreshing and hugely enjoyable.
Andy Welch, writer

5. Trash Talk
Cloudkicker

'No Peace', Trash Talk's upcoming fifth album, features cameos from King Krule and Ratking's Wiki. Also aboard is hip-hop producer Alchemist, who is currently working as Eminem's DJ. But LA's most disaffected are withholding any dope-heavy beats for now. 'Cloudkicker' offers violent, convulsing hardcore, dragged along by Lee Spielman rabidly screaming, "*I just wanted the sky*". As ever, he sounds like a crazed reprobate taking a running jump off the top of a car park.
Ben Homewood, writer

6. Happyness
Great Minds Think Alike, All Brains Taste The Same

Happyness come from the suburbs of south London, but you'd never guess it from their sunny Cali slacker rock. Killer new single 'Great Minds...' packs into a lean two minutes a knockout array of Pavement-y '90s US-college-radio hooks, cooed vocals and irreverent lyrical curios ("*You always look so ill/You ate my birthday cake/You're Jesus and you don't know*"). Gnarly, man.
Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

7. Courtney Love
You Know My Name

She's back. Raging like a ramped-up, wrong-speed 'Live Through This'-era version of herself. Retreading a few familiar lyrical tropes (the song is essentially a self-aggrandising personality overview, just in case we'd lost sight of her cultural import), on this flipside to 'Wedding Day', Courtney may well have found her form again. No room here for an essay on the pros and cons of Courtney minus Eric, Patty and Melissa, but that guttural growl is every bit as powerful now as it was in 1994.
Hayley Avron, writer

8. Kasabian
Explodes

In which Kasabian's Tom Meighan jumps into the crystal depths of a hotel swimming pool in a state of paranoid insomnia to be confronted with the sight of his own ghost, who tells him: "*You'd rather die on your feet than live a life on your knees*". An existential tale of rock'n'roll excess, soundracked by an instrumental menagerie of spooky synths and pummelling drums.
Jenny Stevens, Deputy News Editor

9. White Lung
Snake Jaw

Ahead of the release of their third LP 'Deep Fantasy', Canadian punks White Lung drop this relentless B-side to 'Drown With The Monster'. Beyond the barrage of snares is a post-hardcore onslaught against the cultural expectations of the female body image, as ferociously expelled by the vociferous Mish Way. With flecks of The Distillers and Hole's 'Live Through This' behind it, 'Snake Jaw' is a poisonous bite for the punk feminist cause.
James Balmont, writer

10. Blessa
Unfurl

Sheffield's Blessa offer up the Wild Nothing-esque first taste of new EP 'Love Is An Evol Word', due out in June. Reworked from a 2013 demo, Hookworms' MJ produced this three-and-a-half-minute cut of shimmering, literate pop in which singer Olivia Neller hints at turmoil within as she sings, "*Since you went away, I've been in the dark/I can hear your voice, I can hear your breath over the rocks*".
David Renshaw, News Reporter

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ESSENTIAL NEW TRACKS

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11. Alexis Taylor
Without A Crutch (2)

Hot Chip never had harmonica solos. No, Alexis Taylor's second solo album's shaping up to be much more like his jazz-folk side-project About Group – slower, reflective, more organic. 'Without A Crutch (2)' la-la-las into view with plucky banjo and lolloping, easy beats, and sounds both rich and delicate in its unassuming way. Taylor's responsible for every note, too, from his quivering voice to that harmonica solo. Bodes well for the full-length, titled 'Await Barbarians', in June.

Matthew Horton, writer

12. The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion
She's On It

"*There's no confusion/In her conclusion/She wants to waste her time/With the Blues Explosion*", howl TJSBE on their adapted cover of the Beastie Boys' 1985 hit. It might be an unexpected choice for the old-school troupe – and its reasonably true-to-the-original vocal might up that feeling even more – but by 2:25, when a needling guitar solo rips into a final, feral freakout, it all makes sense.

Lisa Wright, writer

13. The Magic Gang
She Won't Ghost

The latest track from Brighton's The Magic Gang is a steady strum through Weezer-esque indie rock, driven by the quartet's mob vocals and united sense of longing. "*At night I want to say that I don't know/Just what to say when she won't go*", they sigh about a ghost hanging around their house, unwanted. They might be tongue-tied in front of the spectre, but on record they sparkle with an innate confidence.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

14. Protomartyr
Down On The Street

Detroit's best new band stay faithful to The Stooges' classic but inject enough of their own venom into this cover to end up with something that more than does justice to the original. Really, it's all about the way guitarist Greg Ahee plays it – restrained at first, before losing it on the chorus. By the end, he's smashing his instrument on the ground in pure unadulterated anger.

Matt Wilkinson, New Music Editor

15. Röyksopp & Robyn
Monument

As a way of introducing 'Do It Again', Röyksopp and Robyn's May 26-released mini album, a minute-long snippet of its opening track, 'Monument', was posted online. Even at that length, the song was intriguing. The real thing, which is 10 minutes long, is astounding – a ruminative journey of a track full of left turns and mystery, which Robyn describes as being "about space in time and defining oneself", "like a dream" and "a meditation".

Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

16. The 2 Bears
Angel (Touch Me)

The 2 Bears' first album, 2012's 'Be Strong', was all about putting a big fat chunk of fun back into house music. The music Joe Goddard from Hot Chip and his pal Raf Rundell was pure good times, and songs like 'Bear Hug' were genuinely *hilarious*. 'Angel (Touch Me)', which features Goddard's Hot Chip chum Alexis Taylor, is low on the gags but big on warmth, reassurance and joyful handclaps.

Tom Howard, Assistant Editor

17. Manic Street Preachers
Walk Me To The Bridge

The one-album 'acoustic' diversion is over, replaced with – if this first taste of forthcoming new album 'Futurology' is indicative – synth-propelled '80s power rock. Conspiracy theorists are already speculating whether the "bridge" is the Severn Bridge, near where Richey Manic's car was discovered, especially for the lines: "*We smile at this ugly world/It never really suited you*". What is clear is this: the fire is back in their bellies.

Dan Stubbs, News Editor

18. Jack White
Lazaretto

Third Man's head honcho recently recorded this track live in-store as part of his mission to make the world's fastest record for Record Store Day. Now White's shared the studio version, and it's proof that his influence still reigns over new music, drawing a neat link between himself and Brighton noisemakers Royal Blood as he spits, "*They put me down in a lazaretto/Born rotten, bored rotten*" over riffs high in attitude and soaked in blues.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

19. Torres
New Skin (feat. Sharon Van Etten & The War On Drugs)

A new skin sounds like the lightest of costumes, free of old emotional stretches and scars. But on this new song Mackenzie Scott weighs hers down with the pressure of new beginnings, hoping for understanding after a defiant fall from grace. Aided by Sharon Van Etten and The War On Drugs, her weary voice turns wrathful over a melancholy country-tinged backing that crests like a stormy sea.

Laura Snapes, Features Editor

20. Theo Verney
Sound Machine

Brighton's Theo Verney is not just another slacker with a four-track. While 'Sound Machine' begins and ends with a growling riff that owes a great debt to Black Sabbath's guitarist Tony Iommi, in the middle it's a mini odyssey that includes a lurching, almost-reggae beat and the line "*I'll fuck it all, go for second best instead*". He should do better than that; 'Sound Machine' proves he's better than scores of other shabby garage-rock troupes.

JJ Dunning, writer

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TheWeek

▶EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN MUSIC ■ EDITED BY DAN STUBBS

White lightning

Jack White previews 'Lazaretto' tracks – and records the world's fastest-ever single – at Third Man event

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StoreMags

Jack White presents his record-breaking single at United Record Pressing, Nashville, April 19, 2014

Record Store Day is a special event in any decent independent record shop, but at Jack White's Third Man Records in Nashville it was a world-record-breaking occasion.

This year, the man behind Record Store Day stunts including 2012's liquid-filled 12-inch and last year's resurrection of a vintage, straight-to-vinyl sound-recording booth decided to make the world's fastest record. On the morning of Record Store Day, he would play to a tiny crowd onstage in the Blue Room at Third Man HQ; the masters would then be rushed over to the United Record Pressing plant across town to be manufactured and delivered back to fans the same day.

When *NME* arrived on Friday afternoon, a gaggle of fans were already waiting, tents in hand, outside the Third Man building in downtown Nashville, its stark black-and-yellow brickwork at odds with the dusty railroad behind it. When Jack moved in five years ago, it was a one-room operation with two members of staff. Today it's a creative hub including record shop, recording studio and label HQ. Artists ranging from Laura Marling to Beck have come to record live seven-inches in the Blue Room – the only place on earth where artists can record live straight to acetate. Neil Young even recorded his entire new album, 'A Letter Home', on the 1947 Voice-O-Graph machine.

For the 17 permanent members of staff now employed at Third Man, seeing fans queue for special releases is nothing new. Sharon Harrow was the first in line; she drove eight hours from Michigan to be here and it was the third time she'd spent the night outside Third Man. "I've got everything Jack's ever put out," she said. "In 2012 alone I went to over 20 of his shows. Jack is the greatest musician of our time."

Clayton Hodges, from North Alabama, was also camping on the Third Man pavement for the third time. "I'm a diehard Jack White fan," he said, revealing two White Stripes tattoos on his side. "I'm going to get the Third Man logo tattooed on me too. I come here around four times a year. You can feel the passion in every record recorded here. And the shop is like stepping into Willy Wonka's wonderland."

→

JO MCCAUGHEY

Jack White arrives back at Third Man and (below) performs in the Blue Room

"I THOUGHT, THERE'S 12 OR 13 THINGS THAT COULD REALLY GO WRONG"

Jack White

Inside on Saturday morning, the 300 fans lucky enough to bag a ticket (it sold out in 20 seconds) chattered excitedly in the Blue Room, where the walls are adorned with taxidermy animals, including a giant elephant head that looms at the back. At the right of the stage, a screen showed the view from the cutting room, where engineer George Ingram – who Jack White calls Dr Groove – and his team wore Third Man lab coats, ready to cut the acetate.

At 10am, White marched onto the stage flanked, inexplicably, by two men dressed as policemen from 1970s cop series *CHiPs*. "It was nice of you to join us for breakfast," he declared. A voice next door roared, "We're in the groove," as the recording process started and the band launched into new single 'Lazaretto' – the A-side of the single and title track from his forthcoming new album. The B-side – a screeching cover of Elvis Presley's 'Power Of My Love' – followed, and the booming voice declared that the record was now being cut.

"Originally we were gonna do this record and go back to sleep," Jack said, grinning. "But we thought you guys wouldn't like it if we didn't at least play a couple more." A buoyant set of 'Blunderbuss' tracks and White Stripes classics followed, plus premieres of two more tracks from 'Lazaretto' – dusty honky-tonk jam 'Just One Drink' and the brooding breakup song 'Would You Fight For My Love?'.

After the set, Jack left the stage, hopped into a black car and drove off to the recording plant, where the two fancy-dress cops, this time on motorbikes, had taken the masters.

At Third Man, an ever-lengthening queue of fans snaked around the block to buy the record, fuelled by free beer and pizza. Back inside the Blue Room, Whirlwind Heat – the first signing to Third Man Records after The White Stripes – played a one-off reunion gig to mark the reissue of their 2003 debut 'Do Rabbits Wonder?', which was produced by Jack. "He has a great mindset on how the music industry *should be*," frontman David Swanson said. "It's not about selling to the masses. It's about being original and unique."

Exactly three hours, 55 minutes and 21 seconds from the moment the masters left the building, Jack returned with the first batch of records to huge cheers. "I woke up at 4am last night," he told journalists later. "And I thought, 'Wow, there's about 12 or 13 things that could really go wrong tomorrow...' I just thought how difficult it would be to explain to people if we didn't pull it off, so thank God we did."

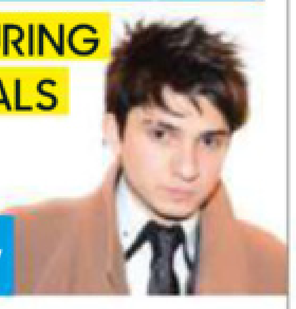
This year, he continued, is a special one for Third Man. It's their fifth Record Store Day and the fifth anniversary of the label finding a permanent residence in Nashville. Ben Blackwell was one of the first people Jack hired, back in 2009. His business card describes his job title as Psychedelic Stooge, which in non-Third Man terminology means he's one of Jack's right-hand men. "[Weezer frontman] Rivers Cuomo asked us what our mission statement is when he was here recording recently," he says. "Jack replied, 'To make things exist that don't exist.'"

Life at Third Man, he said, is "all of our employees trying to keep up with Jack. In five years it's never slowed down. We've done 200 records, pressed over a million pieces of vinyl. So there's always something keeping us busy."

As for next year's Record Store Day stunt, Blackwell said, "We could send a record into space. We could make a record out of candy. Maybe both of those things. There's a lot of options." When it comes to Third Man, *anything* is possible. ■ JENNY STEVENS

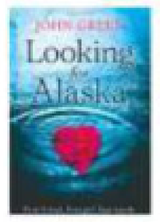
MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE

FIVE TOURING ESSENTIALS



Joel Amey

Wolf Alice

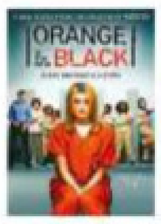


BOOK
Looking For Alaska by John Green

"Me and Theo [Ellis, bassist] shared it on one tour. It was amazing and then in the middle it got really sad. I looked up from the book and he knew I'd got to that point."

FILM
Wild At Heart

"It's a David Lynch movie with Nicolas Cage. He plays the coolest non-rock star ever. I should watch it every night before I play drums."



BOXSET
Orange Is The New Black

"My other three bandmates have got into *Orange Is The New Black*. They showed me an episode the other night and I liked it, so I'll probably watch that."

GAME
Singing sea shanties

"The only games we play involve shouting loudly and nobody winning. Ellie [Rowsell, singer] teaches us these stupid sea-shanty songs. You try and resist but you get sucked in."

HOME COMFORT
Theo Ellis

"If he wasn't there, it wouldn't be so much fun. If I had a choice to always hang around with him I probably wouldn't, but he is quite good on tour. I was thinking about [sacking him], but I'd better not."

▶ **Wolf Alice's UK tour starts on May 1**

AS TOLD TO RHIAN DALY PHOTOS: CAITLIN MOGRIDGE, DEAN CHALKLEY, REX

'PAUL WALKER CAPTIVATES IN THIS INSANE ADVENTURE'
- THE HOLLYWOOD NEWS

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There's something about Sarah

Cult indie label Sarah Records is the subject of a new film, exhibition and book

"We closed Sarah down as a pop-art statement," recalls Sarah Records' Clare Wadd, of her and co-founder Matt Haynes' decision to kill off their label in the summer of '95. "Record labels go bust, sell out to majors or start putting out shit records and fade away – and we didn't want to do any of those things. Releasing 100 brilliant seven-inch singles and then throwing a party and calling it a day was the perfect way to end."

Based in Bristol, Sarah existed for eight years, becoming a last bastion of 'C86'-style indie pop while diversifying into punk, dance, shoegaze and anything else that took Wadd and Haynes' fancy. While often derided as excessively winsome and parochial, Sarah were outspokenly socialist and feminist, using their fanzines and sleevenotes to call out other labels, bands and the music press for sexism and homophobia, and puncturing perceived betrayals of indie ethics with humour.

"Matt and Clare were great at allowing us to put out exactly the records we wanted to," says Amelia Fletcher, now of The Feel Bad Movies, but then in Heavenly with partner Rob Pursey. "They always said they'd stop at Sarah 100 and they did. I wish more people stuck to their guns like that – I swore I would never be in a band beyond the age of 21!"

This weekend, Bristol's Arnolfini gallery celebrates the label's legacy with *Between Hello And Goodbye: The Secret World Of Sarah Records*. Fletcher and Pursey, The Orchids and Secret Shine will play live when film documentary *My Secret World: The Story Of Sarah Records* receives its premiere on May 3. Wadd and Haynes, whose label artwork is now a photographic record of Bristol's past, have assembled an exhibition of record sleeves, fanzines, posters and memorabilia, with Wadd leading Sarah-themed walking tours across the city.

Lucy Dawkins, *My Secret World...*'s director, spent four years piecing the Sarah story together. "The whole reason for doing it was that it never gets mentioned in Bristol – even by people who are really knowledgeable about music," she explains. "It's always Roni Size, Massive Attack, Portishead and The Pop Group but never a squeak about Sarah Records. If you know about all the different music they released and the politics of the label, it's really misunderstood, so it's been a case of wanting to set the record straight."

This isn't just a local revival. Next year, Bloomsbury publishes *Popkiss: The Life And Afterlife Of Sarah Records*, a biography by Canadian critic Michael White. "It became apparent about five years ago that interest in Sarah was not only sustaining but increasing," White says. "The ceaseless, largely impersonal onslaught of music in the internet age makes everything about the label seem like a respite. It's intimate, specialised and was executed with a sense of care that was unusual even then."

"The renewal of interest has been gradual over the last decade," reckons Wadd. "There's definitely some nostalgia among older pop fans but there's a younger generation discovering it for the first time too. I became aware of it when bands like The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart and The Drums referenced Sarah in interviews."

"It does no harm when acts like that champion your music," points out Chris Quinn of The Orchids. "We've supported both those bands and people have listened to the music for what it was, when in the past it could be ignored because it was on Sarah. To this day you'll see us described as twee and that really pisses us off, as nothing could be further from the truth, either personally or musically. A lot of very good music was ignored by a lot of people."

"Outside of the Sarah crowd, reviewers would often overlook us because they'd make assumptions about our sound before even putting on the record," agrees Scott Purnell of Secret Shine. "Most of the reviews for [first album] 'Untouched' started with, 'I never expected this from a Sarah band...'"

"THE LABEL'S REALLY MISUNDERSTOOD"
Lucy Dawkins, director

Nevertheless, it's the label's identification with jangly guitars and sensitive lyrics that continues to bring it to the attention of new fans. "It's amazing how popular Sarah-style indie pop continues to be worldwide, all this time later," says Fletcher. "I love the fact that there are now bands from places as diverse as Phuket and Rio who sound like they could have been on Sarah."

After closing one label, Matt Haynes started another, Shinkansen Recordings, before founding long-running literary fanzine *Smoke: A London Peculiar* with music journalist Jude Rogers. Clare Wadd became an accountant and now works for a London youth charity.

"We've never regretted destroying Sarah," Wadd concludes, "but it was very difficult to just walk away from it. We walked away from our whole lives, essentially." ■ STUART HUGGETT

Secret Shine in 1993

LEE HUME, YES PLEASE! PRODUCTIONS, GETTY, POONEH GHANA, DAN KENDALL

Sarah artefacts will be on display at Bristol's Arnolfini gallery

FIVE ESSENTIAL SARAH RECORDS RELEASES

Pristine Christine
The Sea Urchins 1987

Sarah's first release, an indie-pop classic of Byrds guitar and amphetamine organ, from this mod-inspired Brummie beat group.

Unholy Soul
The Orchids 1991

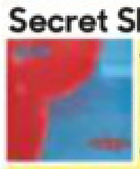
The Glasgow band effortlessly mixed delicate guitar melodies and precision electronics for Sarah's first full-length album.

Missing The Moon
The Field Mice 1991

A 'Total Absolute Single Of The Week' in *NME*, this glorious swansong from the label's biggest band was a rippling dancefloor epic.

Atta Girl
Heavenly 1993

Riding the riot grrrl wave, Heavenly toughened up their sound with this artfully constructed yell of defiance.

Greater Than God
Secret Shine 1994

The Bristol shoegazers looked to the skies on this muscular EP of swooping, My Bloody Valentine-inspired pop.

Austin City Limits line-up revealed

NME comp winners size up their weekend

Lana Del Rey

- **WHERE** Zilker Park, Austin
- **WHEN** October 3–5 and 10–12
- **HEADLINERS** Eminem, Pearl Jam, OutKast **(Check out the full Austin City Limits line-up at NME.COM)**
- **HOW TO GET THERE** Direct flights with BA from London Heathrow to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport

Austin, Texas, may be famous for South By Southwest (and sponsoring the NME Awards), but Austin City Limits, which takes place over two weekends, October 3–5 and October 10–12, proves there's more to the city's festival scene than March's new music bonanza.

Taking place in Zilker Park in the Texas state capital, Austin City Limits recently announced a line-up headed by Eminem, OutKast and Pearl Jam. Elsewhere on the bill are Lana Del Rey, Foster The People, Chvrches, Major Lazer, Real Estate, Mac DeMarco, Temples and more. And joining them are Biggleswade-based band Moats, who won *NME*'s competition for a slot on the line-up.

"It's an incredible bill," says frontman Matt Duncan. "There's Interpol, Beck... even Jimmy Cliff. I used to listen to OutKast a lot in my early teens. I remember singing along to them with my dad, and rapping 'Ghetto Musick' on the bus with my mates." Fresh from a tour of Belgium, the band are setting their sights on October's big US shows – and putting in some study time to make sure they get it right. "I've been watching YouTube videos of my favourite festival performances," says Duncan. "One of them is Jeff Buckley at Glastonbury 1995 – we're actually recording a song about him."

Austin – LIVE MUSIC CAPITAL OF THE WORLD –

NME PROMOTION

THE UNBLEACHED SESSIONS

THE UNBLEACHED SESSIONS ROLL OUT

Watch battle of the bands victors support The Cribs

Six unsigned acts will go head to head for the chance to support indie heroes The Cribs in London as part of The Unbleached Sessions, hosted by Zig-Zag rolling papers, and you could be there to witness the winner claim their prize.

The competition begins with a battle of the bands between Secret Company, Spring Offensive, Rale, Seaside Heights, Lola King And The Kickstarts and Damon Valentine.

The three acts gaining the most fan votes will go through to the final, where Mystery Jets take the top spot. The ultimate winner will then perform as the sole support act for The Cribs at an as yet undisclosed London venue on September 11, where the Wakefield brothers will be asking fans to decide the night's setlist.

▶To enter, head to NME.COM/win now. Visit unbleachedsessions.co.uk for more information

THE MINI INTERVIEW

Bonehead

Ex-Oasis guitarist

Liam tweeted the word 'OASIS' letter by letter last week. Anything you need to tell us?
"I didn't even know he'd done it. I was drinking with him that night and he didn't mention it. I met him about half nine in the pub and woke up on his kitchen floor with my phone going berserk."

What did it mean? Is the big reunion finally on the cards?
"I don't know what he meant. Maybe he's just reminiscing. It was probably the fact that I texted him going, 'Meet me in the beer garden' that rattled his cage. I don't know about that though, because I meet him every fucking month."

Might he have been trying to steal the thunder from The Libertines? They were due to officially announce their own long-awaited reunion the next day...
"Do you think that the fact the Libertines are playing Hyde Park is going to rattle Liam's cage? It's not going to make Liam jump on Twitter and go 'OASIS'. Nah. If The Rolling Stones were going to play Hyde Park with Brian Jones, or if George Harrison walked down Oxford Street, then maybe that would get Liam out of bed and start panicking and tweeting."

■ EVE BARLOW

Brave new word

Award-winning poet Kate Tempest makes her rap debut

Kate Tempest in Kings Cross, April 15

Kate Tempest may have won the Ted Hughes Award for innovation in poetry last year – at 27, she's the first person under 40 ever to do so – but that doesn't mean her debut hip-hop album is a step into uncharted territory. Having grown up in Lewisham on a steady diet of American rap, from Big L to Bahamadia, she says 'Everybody Down', due May 19, is a return to the artform that first made her want to show her writing to the world.

"My friend was a rapper and he'd always be freestyling," she explains. "One day I rang him and told him this little rap I'd written, down the phone, and he said it wasn't bad. He took me to Deal Real, off Carnaby Street, where every Friday night all these rappers would come in, like Ghostface Killah and Mos Def. It was a real hub. It was obviously quite a male environment, and it was competitive. People thought I was a fucking weirdo, but I just fell in love with it. I developed this crazy hunger to just rap at everybody."

She formed a band, Sound Of Rum, to play "hippy festivals and protest marches", but eventually drifted into performance poetry rather than straight-up rap. "My friend told me about these things called 'slams', where you could win £100," she says. "I went down to one in Ladbroke Grove. It was very different from Deal Real, but suddenly I found this world where I could do the same lyrics that I'd do over a beat but people would be really listening. At those hip-hop nights sometimes everyone there would be a rapper, so they'd just be waiting for their turn."

"RAP MUSIC MAKES YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT LANGUAGE"
Kate Tempest

It was poetry that opened doors for Tempest – including a commission from the Royal Shakespeare Company and 'Brand New Ancients', an hour-long "spoken story" backed by classical musicians – but all the while she was keen to find a way back to rap. "My heart has been hankering after doing a hip-hop record for so long," she says. "Taking a break from music has been amazing and challenging, but it's exciting to think I'm going to be back onstage playing music again rather than telling poems."

She got the chance to put together the kind of album she wanted while recording with producer Dan Carey, who has worked with the likes of The Kills, Franz Ferdinand and Mystery Jets. "We made a few demos and then his manager said he could have two weeks to work on it," she explains. "Making it was fucking crazy. We sent it to [record label] Big Dada and I was worried people were going to think, 'What the fuck is this poet doing...?'"

Like The Streets' 'A Grand Don't Come For Free', a record with which Tempest's shares much DNA, the album follows a set of characters through their lives in London. The rapper is keen that the album's story should be understood as a whole. "Each song can exist on its own," she says, "but heard together they become part of a bigger narrative."

There are moments of sharp-toothed social comment, such as the lyric about a drug dealer who sells in boardrooms rather than bars, but Tempest didn't want it to overshadow the story. "That stuff can be so clunky," she says. "Stuff about the times that we're living in will come out, but I never begin thinking I must hit certain topics."

The inventiveness that won Tempest her Ted Hughes award is there in every bar. "Rapping is wordplay," she says. "Listening to rap was the first time I ever encountered people that really fucking gave a shit about how they could put words together. It makes you passionate about language." ■ KEVIN EG PERRY

DAN KENDALL, REDFERNS

PARTNERS IN RHYME

Kate Tempest isn't the only artist to try their hand at poetry and music

Leonard Cohen
The singer-songwriter's first poetry collection, *Let Us Compare Mythologies*, was published over a decade before his 1967 debut album.

Patti Smith
A friend of beat poets Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, Smith's debut single 'Piss Factory' was an ode to discovering Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations*.

Jim Morrison
Known for breaking into improvised poetry during gigs, Morrison self-published two volumes of his verse in 1969.

Child Of Lov
The late recording artist, who won the Radar Award at 2013's NME Awards, was a slam poet in his native Holland before inventing his musical persona.

John Lennon
The Beatle gave Edward Lear a run for his money with his two collections of nonsense verse, 1964's *In His Own Write* and the following year's *A Spaniard In The Works*.

StoreMags.com

OPINION

PAUL WELLER WAS WRONG TO KICK OUT AT RECORD STORE DAY

BY **SPENCER HICKMAN**

The Modfather's anger at Record Store Day should be aimed at his label, says RSD's UK organiser

When Paul Weller announced he wouldn't be taking part in Record Store Day in future because his release [a seven-inch single of new track 'Brand New Toy'] was being sold at inflated prices on eBay by "touts", I was really disappointed. He's been really involved in past years, putting out special releases and even playing in-stores.

I understand it's frustrating for artists when they see the result of their time and hard work being put on eBay for extortionate amounts of money, but I also think they have to look at what they're releasing for Record Store Day. I'll be really honest: we asked Paul's label three times to up the amount of the 'Brand New Toy' single they were going to release, because 500 units for the 240 shops that take part is nowhere near enough for an international artist like him. It's artificially creating mayhem for an ultra-rare item and it makes it almost impossible for stores to get a copy, let alone fans. Of course, everyone wants to be the hot ticket on Record Store Day, but it's a real balance between producing a limited edition that people want and producing enough to try and at least satisfy a few people.

Record Store Day can't control eBay touts. At the moment we are investigating allegations that stores might have sold products in advance. We take this very, very seriously, and if any stores have broken any rules or abused their position, they will be banned from taking part in any further RSD events. But if someone wants to queue up for hours to buy something and then sell it on eBay, we can't stop them – that is part of life now. There are savvy people who know that there are crazy fans who collect anything by their favourite artists and are willing to pay any cost. If everyone who wanted something from Record Store Day boycotted eBay for a month, the prices would plummet and those people would lose a lot of money. But we live in a culture where everyone wants things now.

Anything successful faces a backlash, so it's not unexpected that this year's Record Store Day had its critics. Record Store Day is big – it's the biggest sales day in the music industry in the whole year. Record labels should respect the fact that it's there to help shops and not to push to their own agenda. The ideal situation for me would be that labels press enough so you could go to the store on Saturday afternoon and be in the thick of it and still come away with a bunch of stuff that you want. From my point of view, I don't want it to solely become just a day of selling product and queuing. A record store is about the culture around it, so I want to see how we can push the celebration more in future.

I can't do anything about Paul Weller's decision not to take part in future. It's sad to see him so pissed off, but all we can do at Record Store Day is advise people to press more, and we genuinely did. But it's a very difficult balance, and you can't always get it right. ■

▶For more opinion and debate, head to NME.COM/blogs

AS TOLD TO JENNY STEVENS PHOTOS: JENN FIVE, DEAN CHALKLEY

LOST ALBUMS #27

Teedra Moses
Complex Simplicity (2004)

Chosen by Katy B

"I love female singers who are really tough, and Teedra Moses is the toughest – she's a gangsta diva with a heart. She's this strong character from a gospel background in New Orleans, with this incredible, soulful voice. It's sort of a R&B, Christina Milian type thing she has going on with 'Complex Simplicity'. It's a cult classic but not many people know it. Or not enough. The lyrics are amazing – she makes every word count. That's something I've tried to emulate in my songs. It's just the most gorgeous record. More people need to sit up and pay attention."

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** July 19, 2004
▶**LABEL** TVT
▶**KEY TRACKS** Be Your Girl, You'll Never Find (A Better Woman), You Better Tell Her
▶**WHERE TO FIND IT** Available to download from iTunes, or from independent stores
▶**LISTEN ONLINE** On Spotify

The Brian Jonestown Massacre

Anton Newcombe in his Berlin studio, April 15, 2014

A now clean and sober Anton Newcombe has self-produced the band's 13th album in Berlin

Anton Newcombe, frontman of Californian psych outfit The Brian Jonestown Massacre, star of cult documentary *Dig!* and a man notorious for getting through more than 40 band members in the 20-odd years of the BJM's career – some of whom he's had actual fist fights with onstage – is on the phone from Berlin, where he now lives with his wife Katy and 15-month-old son, Wolfgang. "A 'revelation' is something that's being made known," he begins, discussing the title of his band's forthcoming 13th studio album. "Around 2000, I'd given up opiates. It was very hard to kick that stuff. The way I did it was to drink my way out of it. When I was writing, I would really let my manic energy go, really get into character the way that an actor would. Now I've segued into taking nothing and it's just about my work and my ideas. And to be able to do that, for me, is a revelation."

"NOW IT'S JUST ABOUT ME AND MY IDEAS. AND TO BE ABLE TO DO THAT, FOR ME, IS A REVELATION"
ANTON NEWCOMBE

It's fair to say that Newcombe – now completely clean and sober and living in a state of familial isolation that he describes as "basically insular and like a ghost" – has changed dramatically since his famously hedonistic younger days. 'Revelation' – written between December 2012 and "whenever I finished it" (memory is still not his strong point), recorded in Newcombe's self-built A Recordings Studio close to his home and due for release on May 19 – is an album that reflects his new life while retaining enough idiosyncrasies to make it uniquely and recognisably his own.

Producing the record himself, Newcombe and his band – this time consisting of old cohort Ricky Maymi alongside Joakim Åhlund, Constantine Karlis and Ryan Van Kriedt, although Newcombe notes it "never matters" who he works with – upheld an almost normal workday schedule throughout the recording. "Basically, I get up every day, head out around noon and stay out until supper time, then go and eat with my family," he says. Musically, it's a more pastoral affair that takes the band's garage-psych tendencies and pretties them up a little, pinning them together with nature-referencing titles like 'Nightbird', 'Goodbye (Butterfly)' and 'Days, Weeks And Moths'.

There are still traces of the old fire. Opener 'Vad Hands Med Deem' is sung in Swedish by Åhlund (several tracks on the band's previous albums have also been in Scandinavian languages), because "it's something that nobody's really tried to do. Because I live in Europe, I don't view myself as American just because of my birthplace: I view myself as an Earth-challenged person." Another track, 'Xibalba', refers to the Mayan underworld, while 'Memorymix' and its repeated line "*You ruined it all*" tread a darker path. "I don't have to be sad to write a sad song," Newcombe muses. "I've no shortage of source material for that stuff."

'Revelation' might find him in a far clearer headspace, but his brain still seems to work in its own peculiar fashion. "I make music because, to a large extent, the music that I want to hear doesn't exist unless I create it," he shrugs. "That's changed over the years... but I still think it's true."

■ LISA WRIGHT

▶THE DETAILS

- ▶ **TITLE** Revelation
- ▶ **RELEASE DATE** May 19
- ▶ **PRODUCER** Anton Newcombe
- ▶ **RECORDED** A Recordings Studio, Berlin
- ▶ **TRACKS** Vad Hands Med Deem; What You Isn't; Unknown; Memory Camp; Days, Weeks And Moths; Duck And Cover; Food For Clouds; Second Sighting; Memorymix; Fist Full Of Bees; Nightbird; Xibalba; Goodbye (Butterfly)
- ▶ **ANTON NEWCOMBE SAYS** "There's no design or concept to the album. I'm aware of how people use streaming platforms like Spotify. They're just gonna make a playlist of what they want anyway, so I thought I'd just record the songs."

KATY LANE

ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM

"THE CURE EXIST IN ISOLATION"
Robert Smith

THIS WEEK...

The Cure: Disintegration

The Cure's biggest-selling album, released 25 years ago this week, saw them return to their dark heart

THE BACKGROUND

Making their debut with 'Three Imaginary Boys' in May 1979, The Cure had undergone many changes in style and line-up by the time they reached eighth album 'Disintegration' a decade later. A run of early LPs – 1980's 'Seventeen Seconds', 1981's 'Faith' and 1982's 'Pornography' – had placed them at the forefront of the goth movement, but singer Robert Smith had become disillusioned with that by 1983. A decision to reinvent the band resulted in the psychedelic 'The Top', and the following five years found the band at a commercial peak with the singles 'The Love Cats', 'In Between Days' and 'Close To Me'. By the time of the 'Disintegration' sessions, Smith felt the urge to return to The Cure's darker roots and, in theory, turn his back on the sound that had brought them mainstream success.

◀ STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The ghostly image of Robert Smith is credited to Parched Art, aka Porl Thompson and Andy Vella, who had created the majority of Cure sleeves but were rumoured to be out of favour. "There were murmurings that they [put Smith in the image] so their cover would be chosen," said then-keyboardist Roger O'Donnell. "It was chosen."

FIVE FACTS

1 During the album sessions, the band pinned up a newspaper clipping relating to the recent suicide of two teenagers who were said to have been listening to early Cure albums when they died.

2 Founding member Lol Tolhurst (drums and, later, keyboards) was fired during the sessions for his increasing drink habit and "atmosphere of apathy". "There is not one note on 'Disintegration' that comes from his hands," noted Smith.

3 Despite the idea to return to darker material, some of the LP was deemed too negative by Smith. "I rewrote a couple of the songs. They were too pessimistic," he said.

4 As was becoming customary, Smith declared 'Disintegration' would be the band's last album. "It's really emotionally exhausting making an album," he said at the time. "I usually end up crying in the studio."

5 The album's length was inspired by emerging CD technology. "'Disintegration' is the first real CD-LP," Smith claimed in 1989. "We started thinking in CD terms and stretched things out to get a more atmospheric effect."

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"I feel like I'm being eaten by a thousand million shivering furry holes/And I know that in the morning I will wake up in the shivering cold" – 'Lullaby'

According to video director Tim Pope, these lines were a reference to Smith's drug-fuelled past. "On one level there's this stupidity and humour, but beneath that there are all Smiffy's psychological obsessions and claustrophobia," he said.

"The need to feel again the real belief in something more than mockery/If only I could fill my heart with love" – 'Closedown'

"The biggest frustration [of getting older] is not being able to feel strong emotions any more," Smith said when discussing 'Disintegration"s lyrics. "Cynicism enters your world and you get numb."

"I've been looking so long at these pictures of you/That I almost believe that they're real" – 'Pictures Of You'

The Cure were making music for outsiders. "I suppose our music communicates a need some people feel. It communicates the desire not to be isolated," Smith said.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"From the first track, 'Plainsong', to the last, 'Untitled', Smith's lyrical agony of indecision is remorseless... A mind-blowing and stunningly complete album." Barbara Ellen, *NME*, May 6, 1989

WHAT WE SAY NOW

Containing heartbreaking career peaks ('Lovesong', 'Pictures Of You') that still sit at the top of the band's canon 25 years later, 'Disintegration' remains an emotional sucker punch of melancholy and romance.

FAMOUS FAN

"The Cure is the band that all of us in Interpol can say influenced us," claimed frontman **Paul Banks** back in 2010.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I've been in at least five different groups since I've been in The Cure... punk, goth, psychedelic, pop. Now we've drifted back to that sort of atmospheric music we did on 'Faith'. But the thing about The Cure is, we exist in isolation. We're not in competition with anyone." **Robert Smith, May 1989**

THE AFTERMATH

Though undoubtedly a curveball, 'Disintegration' went on to become The Cure's biggest-selling record. There was a brief lull in their career after 1992's 'Wish', but the past decade has seen a resurgence for the band, with epic festival headline sets, an NME Godlike Genius Award and a new album planned for later in 2014.

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RECORDED** November 1988–February 1989 ▶**RELEASE DATE** May 2, 1989 ▶**LABEL** Fiction ▶**LENGTH** 71:47 ▶**PRODUCERS** David M Allen, Robert Smith ▶**HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 3 ▶**WORLDWIDE SALES** Over 3 million ▶**SINGLES** Lullaby, Fascination Street, Lovesong, Pictures Of You ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. Plainsong ▶2. Pictures Of You ▶3. Closedown ▶4. Lovesong ▶5. Last Dance ▶6. Lullaby ▶7. Fascination Street ▶8. Prayers For Rain ▶9. The Same Deep Water As You ▶10. Disintegration ▶11. Homesick ▶12. Untitled

WORDS: LISA WRIGHT PHOTO: FILM MAGIC

NEWS DESK
THE NUMBERS

THE NUMBERS

8

Number of pizza slices actor Aaron Paul swapped with Arcade Fire for tickets to their gig at The Roxy in Los Angeles

109,000

First-week sales of Paolo Nutini's 'Caustic Love', the fastest-selling album of 2014 so far

30

Number of days RZA says Raekwon has to rejoin Wu-Tang Clan. He's on strike because of "creative differences"

$550m

Dr Dre's bank balance, taking him above Jay Z in Forbes' list of wealthiest rappers. Both trail behind Puff Daddy's $700m fortune

BIG MOUTH

"On my tour I do 2,000-seaters, but I still have to have barriers because people try to finger me. I'll see the tweets and be like, please don't! That's a violation. I don't actually like that stuff"

Rapper **IGGY AZALEA** explains why she no longer crowdsurfs

WHO THE FUCK IS...

Shane Peterson

He's the teacher at Adelaide's Northern Sound System school who taught Prince William and Kate to DJ, creating some of the most cringeworthy footage since Wills formed a band with Taylor Swift and Jon Bon Jovi.

They'll be getting a residency at Fabric then?

Not quite. Though Peterson saw promise in Kate's skills ("She was fantastic"), he recommended that William should not give up the day job.

Are William and Kate fully down with the kids now?

In a way. Following their turn on the wheels of steel, William checked out a BMX display and tried his hand at graffiti.

THE BIG QUESTION

THE VOICE COACH RICKY WILSON SAYS HE'S MADE IT CREDIBLE FOR MUSICIANS TO BE ON TV TALENT SHOWS. HAS HE?

Austin Williams
Swim Deep
"It was acceptable to be on reality TV before Ricky Wilson did it anyway. It's not a big deal."

Dan Stubbs
NME News Editor
"The problem isn't with the credibility of the judges, it's the type of contestants the shows attract. No self-respecting artist would put themselves through the reality-TV wringer."

Jadie White
NME reader
"Ricky Wilson offers encouragement for more diverse musicians to get involved in TV talent shows. He's doing the BBC a favour by widening their target audience."

GOOD WEEK ↔ BAD WEEK

Palma Violets

Chili and the boys will need to dust off their suits next month – they've been nominated for an Ivor Novello Award for 'Best Of Friends', alongside the likes of Arctic Monkeys, Disclosure and Everything Everything.

Lorde

She might be one of the biggest pop stars in the world, but Lorde found out that mum and dad still have the last word. She was forced to cancel an Australian tour when her parents insisted she rests up and gets healthy.

AND FINALLY

Turning Japanese
Avril Lavigne's 'Hello Kitty' video, filmed in Japan, was accused of racist stereotyping and cultural fetishisation. The 29-year-old's response? "RACIST??? LOLOLOL!!!"

White House music
US president Barack Obama wrote to the family of Frankie Knuckles to pay tribute to the DJ, who died earlier this year. Beat that, David Cameron.

Seal of disapproval
Canada's Minister Of Fisheries Gail Shea was not impressed by Morrissey's view on the country's seal hunt. "Mr Morrissey [has] been brainwashed," she said.

▶Find these stories and more on NME.COM

Official RECORD STORE Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS APRIL 27, 2014

NEW **01** **Paolo Nutini** Caustic Love ATLANTIC

The Paisley singer-songwriter makes it two weeks at the top of the Official Record Store Chart with his third album, beating off competition from Eels and Wilko Johnson & Roger Daltrey.

NEW	2	The Cautionary Tales Of Mark Oliver Everett	**Eels** E WORKS
▲	3	Going Back Home	**Wilko Johnson & Roger Daltrey** CHESS
▲	4	Dirk Wears White Sox	**Adam & The Ants** BLUEBLACK HUSSAR
▼	5	Indie Cindy	**Pixies** PIXIES MUSIC
NEW	6	Morning Phase	**Beck** EMI
▼	7	Demolicious	**Green Day** WARNER BROS
▲	8	Out Among The Stars	**Johnny Cash** COLUMBIA
▼	9	Smoke Fairies	**Smoke Fairies** FULL TIME HOBBY
▲	10	The Take Off And Landing Of Everything	**Elbow** FICTION
▲	11	It's Album Time	**Todd Terje** OLSEN
NEW	12	Food	**Kelis** NINJA TUNE
NEW	13	A Perfect Contradiction	**Paloma Faith** RCA
NEW	14	Born To Die	**Lana Del Rey** POLYDOR
■	15	Giant	**The The** SONY MUSIC CG
▲	16	AM	**Arctic Monkeys** DOMINO
▼	17	Live Versions	**Tame Impala** FICTION
▲	18	If You Wait	**London Grammar** METAL & DUST
NEW	19	Lost In The Dream	**The War On Drugs** SECRETLY CANADIAN
▲	20	The Pink Panther	**Henry Mancini** RCA
NEW	21	Loom	**Fear Of Men** KANINE
▲	22	Do To The Beast	**The Afghan Whigs** SUB POP
▲	23	Amphetamine Ballads	**The Amazing Snakeheads** DOMINO
NEW	24	Love Letters	**Metronomy** BECAUSE MUSIC
NEW	25	Drop	**Thee Oh Sees** CASTLE FACE
▼	26	Live With Joe Strummer	**The Pogues** RHINO
▲	27	Tokyo Quo	**Status Quo** MERCURY
■	28	Metamatic	**John Foxx** DEMON
NEW	29	Save Rock And Roll	**Fall Out Boy** DEF JAM
NEW	30	Girl	**Pharrell Williams** COLUMBIA
NEW	31	The Dark Side Of The Moon	**Pink Floyd** RHINO
▼	32	Tanx	**T Rex** DEMON
NEW	33	Singles	**Future Islands** 4AD
NEW	34	Homo Erraticus	**Ian Anderson** K SCOPE
▼	35	Meet The Vamps	**The Vamps** EMI
▼	36	Education Education Education & War	**Kaiser Chiefs** FICTION
▼	37	Never Mind The Bollocks – Alternative	**Sex Pistols** UMC
NEW	38	So Long, See You Tomorrow	**Bombay Bicycle Club** ISLAND
NEW	39	Symphonica	**George Michael** EMI
NEW	40	Love In The Future	**John Legend** COLUMBIA

The Official Charts Company compiles the Official Record Store Chart from sales through 100 of the UK's best independent record shops, from Sunday to Saturday.

TOP OF THE SHOPS

THIS WEEK
SOUTH
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

FOUNDED 2014
WHY IT'S GREAT South opened this year despite its owner having no experience, save for being a "record nerd". It's the only shop in Southend selling new vinyl.
TOP SELLER LAST WEEK
Thee Oh Sees – 'Drop'
THEY SAY "We don't stock things for the sake of it. There's always something good to get here."

NEWSDESK COMPILED BY DAVID RENSHAW PHOTOS: ED MILES, JENN FIVE, WIREIMAGE, GETTY, BBC PICTURES

SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE

Ash

Louis Armstrong

Joe Mount

Metronomy frontman

THE FIRST SONG I REMEMBER HEARING
'I Like It' – Gerry And The Pacemakers

"What I actually remember hearing first was a 'Sound Of The '60s' compilation. It was one of a few tapes that my parents would play on car journeys to grandparents' houses or garden centres. This song stuck out in particular because it was funny. One of the lines is '*I like the way you tickle my chin*'."

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH
'Ain't Misbehavin'' – Louis Armstrong

"At my primary school we had a particularly progressive teacher. Each week on a Friday, she would lead us through an hour of freeform dance in the assembly hall. The children supplied the music by bringing in tapes from home. 'Ain't Misbehavin'' was my selection. I'm not sure how I imagined everyone would dance to it, and in fact, no-one did. Still, I found Louis Armstrong's voice pretty funny. There seems to be a theme emerging here."

THE FIRST ALBUM I EVER BOUGHT
'1977' – Ash

"I bought a pirate copy of this from some man on a bridge in Dublin on a family trip to Ireland. I think when it was released it cost the same price a tape cassette did in 1977 – £7 or something. I got mine for £5, so that left me £2 for sweets. 'Oh Yeah' and 'Girl From Mars' are indie-pop gold."

THE RECORD THAT MADE ME WANT TO BE IN A BAND
'The White Album' – The Beatles

"Before I heard it, I'd only listened to 'Please Please Me', 'Help!' and 'Revolver'. To hear the same band who sang 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand' play 'Helter Skelter' was very exciting. From that point on, the idea of being in 'a band' took on a whole new meaning: a band could grow up while its members grew up."

"DRAKE PUTS PEOPLE LIKE ME TO SHAME"

THE SONG I CAN NO LONGER LISTEN TO
'Nightcall' – Kavinsky

"It's a brilliant song, but I've heard it too much. We need to leave it fallow for a few years. I guarantee it's going to be a big wedding party moment in years to come, but let's just rein it in until then. Every time I hear it, all I see are Ryan Gosling's dead eyes."

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME WANT TO DANCE
'Reasons' – Minnie Riperton

"Stevie Wonder plays drums on this track. He adds what we in the business call 'lump' to anything he's involved with and that's enough to make me move. Minnie Riperton is also deserving of praise, but not for the album artwork [Minnie in dungarees, holding a melting ice cream]."

THE SONG I DO AT KARAOKE
'Bullet With Butterfly Wings' – The Smashing Pumpkins

"I'll take any song I can at karaoke – I'm an all-rounder. Having said that, my strength is probably anything sung by Billy Corgan. I do a very good impression of him."

THE SONG I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD
'Wrecking Ball' – Miley Cyrus

"The '*wreh-eh-eck me*' bit is solid gold. It's probably a good idea to ignore everything else that's said about her because she's growing up. Everyone knows that teenage girls are mad. Teenage girls know it more than anyone – just read their diaries."

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN
'Hold On, We're Going Home' – Drake

"It's going to be another wedding party classic, along with 'Nightcall'. It puts people like me and Justin Timberlake to shame when a rapper comes out with the best R&B song of the last 10 years."

THE SONG THAT REMINDS ME OF HOME
'My Old Man' – Joni Mitchell

"My sister went through a very protracted Joni Mitchell phase during her teens. Its legacy can be seen and heard around Christmas time, when everyone starts dipping into her CD collection; she never took them with her when she left home. This track and the album it's from ['Blue'] remind me of crisp winter mornings and not wanting to go to school. They also remind me of arguing at Christmas."

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL
'Que Sera, Sera' – Sly And The Family Stone

"I'd probably play this at my wedding for the first dance too. That would give it an unbearable poignancy. My poor wife."

Drake

PHOTOS: ROGER SARGENT, REX, GETTY AS TOLD TO LISA WRIGHT

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Wet

The electrifying, melodic Brooklyn trio sending the birth rate soaring

"A lot of people tell us that they've had sex listening to it," declares Wet percussionist Joe Valle – half proud, half bemused. He's talking about his band's debut four-track EP of melodically heartwarming but lyrically gut-wrenching R&B tunes, which has been getting tastemakers hot under the collar since its US release on trusted pop boutique Neon Gold last year. "We're really into that," grins vocalist Kelly Zutrau, whose aching, impassioned coos provide a distinctive counterpoint to the gentle, padding beats and lustrous guitars. Joe and Kelly are chatting to us over Skype from their Brooklyn apartment; guitarist Marty Sulkow has just been to pick up "two pounds of gefilte fish" for Passover – and Kelly's reaction suggests that the cold, chopped appetiser is an acquired taste.

Although the buzz has cranked up a gear recently, the trio actually penned their first lovingly arranged slow jams – 'Dreams' and 'You're The Best' – two years back, while spread across three different cities: LA, Providence and NYC. They're all settled in New York now, but their long-distance relationship was never an issue, says Kelly: "There were no expectations, and I think we all liked that process. We still do a lot of emailing back and forth, and do stuff on our own." Having just quit their vast array of "hustles" – including fixing polling machines, teaching and developing websites – the band have even more time to inbox each other from within the same four walls.

ON
NME.COM/
NEWMUSIC
NOW
▶Watch the video for 'No Lie'

Better yet, all this free time has paved the way for their debut shows in London and Brighton next week – a prospect they're palpably ecstatic about, as Kelly's only previous experience of the UK consists of an extended stopover following a security debacle en route to Prague. "I got wasted on the flight. Got to Heathrow and I got flustered. They were really sketched out, but they gave me a 24-hour pass, and I liked it!"

Border controls permitting, Wet's intoxicating night-time anthems are sure to go down a storm on these shores – just don't be surprised if there's a baby boom in nine months' time. ■ DAN CARSON

▶THE DETAILS

▶**BASED** New York
▶**FOR FANS OF** Solange, Haim
▶**SOCIAL** @wet
▶**BUY IT NOW** The 'Wet' EP is released on May 28 on National Anthem
▶**SEE THEM LIVE** London Notting Hill Arts Club (May 7), Brighton The Great Escape (8–10)
▶**BELIEVE IT OR NOT** They let a friend – who later admitted to being on PCP at the time – pick their name. "It's a little bit funny, a little bit weird," laughs Marty

EREZ AVISSAR

MORE NEW MUSIC

High Waisted

Greys

Twenty years after Kurt Cobain's death, this Toronto four-piece summon up the spirits of Nirvana, Sonic Youth and Fugazi (they even have a song called 'Guy Picciotto') on their debut, 'If Anything'. Its 11 tracks are an intense listen – Greys' songs are more 'Breed' than 'Lithium' – with jackhammer drums and discordant guitars underpinning the raw vocals of Shehzaad Jiwani.

▶**HEAR THEM** greys.bandcamp.com

Amber States

Londoners Amber States have been tipped by Lianne La Havas – but don't let that put you off. The title track of new EP 'Saratoga' displays a keen knack for crafting a euphoric brand of indie that recalls the lighter moments of mid-'90s Radiohead.

▶**SOCIAL** facebook.com/amberstatesmusic

▶**HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/amberstates

▶**SEE THEM LIVE** London The Waiting Room (May 22)

Shmohawk

The term 'shmohawk' might be familiar to fans of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, but this Seattle duo offer a far calmer alternative to a wildly aggravated Larry David. The jangling folk guitars and earnest vocals of John McFarland, alongside Tim Benway's subdued bass and drums, are satisfyingly analogous to the works of Alex Chilton on the band's self-released debut. In 10 twinkling tracks they recreate the Big Star man's wondrous sound with blissful ease.

▶**HEAR THEM** shmohawk.bandcamp.com

Wunder Wunder

Though born the same Australian scene that bred Tame Impala, Wunder Wunder's resettlement to the beaches of California has clearly provided just as much influence as their heady psych roots, as demonstrated in audio and video on breezy debut single 'Coastline'. With lucid synth patterns and effects-laden guitars creating their surf-and-spliff sound, new album 'Everything Infinite' promises to deliver a beam of summer sun.

▶**SOCIAL** facebook.com/wunderwunderband

▶**HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/wunder-wunder

NME BUZZ BAND OF THE WEEK

High Waisted

It's a great premise for your first EP: head to a haunted house in Nashville, set up some guitars, drums and a cheap microphone, drop acid and record the results. That's what NYC four-piece High Waisted did last year, and the fruits of their endeavours – two tracks dubbed 'Acid Tapes Vol 1' – are suitably spaced out, their brand of surfy garage rock given a manic, lysergic twist.

▶**SOCIAL** @gethighwaisted

▶**HEAR THEM** gethighwaisted.tumblr.com

Lost Dawn

These two Cornish dorks recently released a music video of themselves sat naked in a bubble bath, donning sunglasses and pouring wine all over each other – a prime example of the kind of sexy sleaziness they say they're into. 'Song For Robert' is a bedraggled response to T Rex's 'Children Of The Revolution' by way of The Black Keys, or 'trailer rock' as they call it. Watch out 'cos "Lost Dawn are out-ta-git-cha".

Lost Dawn

▶**SOCIAL** @lostdawn

▶**HEAR THEM** lostdawn.tumblr.com

Mirage

Mirage is the artist name of one Robin Nydal, a 19-year-old musician from Los Angeles, who allegedly recorded his debut album 'Blood For The Return' in his bedroom. Not that you can tell – it sounds like a Brian Eno or Peter Gabriel record from the '70s. Strange melodies lurch along with found sound, and Nydal's voice ranges from tender to whispering and demented. Another comparison would be Ariel Pink, but Nydal is much weirder and much more challenging.

▶**SOCIAL** @robinnydal

▶**HEAR HIM** miirage.bandcamp.com

God Damn

You'll understand why God Damn call themselves "pure attack" when you hear 'Heavy Money'. The sludgy, metallic guitar and screamed vocals resemble The Jesus Lizard at their finest. But they're also capable of more diverse offerings, as on the downtempo 'I Don't Really Mind', which sounds like a fairground ride in hell.

▶**SOCIAL** facebook.com/goddamntheband

→

BAND CRUSH

Danny Brown

Kevin Gates

"Kevin Gates is from New Orleans. I like him because he really takes music serious. You can tell that he really put a lot of effort into the songs that he writes and the way he records them. Anybody who takes music as serious as I do, of course I'm gonna listen to them."

DANIEL TOPETE

Stereogum

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Frida Sundemo

▶HEAR THEM goddamntheband.bandcamp.com
▶SEE THEM LIVE London Hoxton Square Bar & Kitchen (June 10)

TÃLÃ

TÃLÃ grew up in '90s Iran listening to hip-hop, R&B and computer game soundtracks. Now based in London, she releases debut EP 'The Duchess' on Aesop in June. You can hear a stew of different cultural influences in her textured sound, with new track 'Serbia' being a polished, addictive hit. Fans of Jai Paul, Grimes and Eyedress should check it out.
▶SOCIAL @talaofficial
▶HEAR HER soundcloud.com/talaofficial

Grand Courriers

Brady Lundy and Don Lawson aim for cinematic perfection on 'Rejoice', their first track as Grand Courriers. The Minneapolis duo scarcely stray from the North American indie/folk canon laid out by bands like Beirut, but those little bursts of brass, big joyous lifts, and scattershot beats pitch these guys closer to The National's glorious 'High Violet' than anything, or anyone, else.
▶SOCIAL @GrandCourriers
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/grand-courriers

Autumn

Crafting swirling, emotive electropop, Brisbane's Autumn follow in the footsteps of Lorde and Broods. Latest track 'Breathe Out' incorporates jarring samples, warped vocals and bone-crack percussive clacks to the tune of Purity Ring, and although their moody, chugging debut 'Ghost' smooths off those darker edges, Jay Kane's echo-bathed croon still sends shivers down the spine.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/autumnmusician
▶HEAR THEM autumnmusician.bandcamp.com

Ought

Montreal quartet Ought's kaleidoscopic earworm 'The Weather Song' is gloriously erratic. Buried under the schizoid Devo rhythms and Johnny Thunders vocals, it's one of the catchiest melodies we've heard in months.
▶SOCIAL oughtontheinternet.tumblr.com
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/constellation-records/ought-the-weather-song

Grand Courriers

Shunkan

South-west label Art Is Hard are launching their most exciting signing to date in New Zealand's Shunkan. The alias of LA-born strummer Marina Sakimoto, who has been carving out little nuggets of lo-fi indie-rock bliss since 2012, The 20-year-old's latest tune, 'Wash You Away', is a sugar-rush of distorted, squalling guitars, punctuated by a riptide wash of cymbals and snare.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/shunkanmusic
▶HEAR HER shunkan.bandcamp.com

Frida Sundemo

Another Swedish act on Best Fit Recordings, med student/pop sensation Frida Sundemo releases her second EP, 'Lit Up By Neon', next week. First cut 'Drawn To You' comes over like a more hopeful Robyn, with Frida capturing her cathartic choral parts, but filling them out with a beefier, chart-friendly production.
▶SOCIAL @fridasundemo
▶HEAR HER soundcloud.com/fridasundemo

Tacocat

Palindromic pop-punks Tacocat surfed into our hearts with 'NVM', a record

Radar NEWS ROUND UP

BELIEFS' JESSE GOES SOLO

Beliefs frontwoman Jesse Crowe has launched a solo project called Praises. The Toronto singer is promising "dream pop, freak folk, and Madchester sounds" on her forthcoming debut EP, which was recorded in the city's Candle studio. The first track, 'Breathing In', is online now.

FAT WHITE FAMILY SIGN DEAL

Fresh from tearing up the US – where they reportedly recorded new material with Sean Lennon – Fat White Family have signed to Domino Publishing and are now working on their second album. They play Radar's stage at The Great Escape, on Saturday, May 10, 1.30am, at The Haunt.

DZ Deathrays

Fat White Family

WILD SMILES ANNOUNCE DEBUT

Fresh off the back of their Invada-released 'Tangled Hair'/'Sweet Sixteen' single and support shows with The Wytches, Winchester's Wild Smiles will release their debut full-length this autumn on Sunday Best. Lead single 'Fool For You' is a decidedly blistering sign of what's to come.

DZ'S INFECTIOUS RETURN

Aussie heroes DZ Deathrays return on August 18 with 'Black Rat'. It's the band's first album through new label Infectious Music – home to Alt-J, These New Puritans and Drenge – and they previewed it on their recent UK tour. Fresh track 'Gina Works At Hearts' is available as a free download now.

WORDS: SAM LEVAN, TOM PINNOCK, MATT WILKINSON, TIM HAKKI, JAMES BALMONT, DAN CARSON, HUW NESBITT, LUCY JONES, TOM WALTERS, JAZZ MONROE, MISCHA PEARLMAN. PHOTO: ROGER SARGENT

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stonemags.com

Tacocat

of infectious tunes about, among other things, urinary infections. Its title might co-opt Nirvana's 'Nevermind' for the text-speak generation, but this Seattle quartet ditch grunge angst for a mocktail of fuzzed-out licks and sun-dappled jaunts like 'Crimson Wave', a feminist anthem that breathes new life into the phrase 'period drama'.

▶**SOCIAL** facebook.com/tacocatband

▶**HEAR THEM** tacocat.bandcamp.com

Creepoid

It would be a shame if Creepoid's music didn't live up to their moniker. Luckily, it does. The Philadelphia four-piece released their self-titled second LP at the start of March. Dreamy, dirgey and droney, it offers up a sludgy, psychedelic journey that travels to the sonic swamps of the 1990s, simultaneously soothing and unsettling. But with a name like Creepoid, what else would you expect?

▶**SOCIAL** facebook.com/creepoid

▶**HEAR THEM** creepoid.bandcamp.com

Naked

There's a whiff of Poliça in the sound of enigmatic Scottish trio Naked. It's early days yet, but 'Tell Me What Is Not Yet Said' (released as a single on June 2) and 'Lie Follows Lie' both tend towards bombastic euphoria.

▶**SOCIAL** facebook.com/welcometonkd

▶**HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/naked-naked

▶**SEE THEM LIVE** Edinburgh Sneaky Pete's (July 6)

Northern Faces

Where better to record a debut album than a studio that was once a church and is allegedly haunted? That's exactly what Northern Faces did. The four-piece from Albany, NY spent April at The Barber Shop Studios in Hopatcong, New Jersey with producer Casey Bates (Portugal. The Man). Due out in the autumn on Equal Vision Records, expect marvellously moody melodies that infuse their American heritage with some good old British rock'n'roll.

▶**SOCIAL** facebook.com/northernfaces

▶**HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/northernfaces

Scraper

San Francisco punks Scraper have recorded with Ty Segall and released limited-edition seven-inches through Drag City imprint God? Records. Their music doesn't stray from the psych-laced punk pumping out of the Golden Gate city right now, with their recent self-titled album packed full of short, sharp blasts about getting drunk and starting fights, plus a stellar cover of The Dicks' 'Kill From The Heart'.

▶**SOCIAL** facebook.com/scrapersband

▶**HEAR THEM** scraperband.bandcamp.com

Radar LABEL OF THE WEEK

Captured Tracks

▶**FOUNDED** 2008 by Mike Sniper

▶**BASED** NYC

▶**KEY RELEASES** **Dum Dum Girls** – 'Dum Dum Girls EP' (2009), **Mac DeMarco** – '2' (2012), **Diiv** – 'Oshin' (2012)

▶**RADAR SAYS** Captured Tracks is the brainchild of Blank Dogs frontman Mike Sniper. Putting out no fewer than 36 releases in their first year of operation, and having established their aesthetic and roster pedigree incredibly quickly, the label now sits alongside Sub Pop, Matador and Drag City as one of the great US indies.

NEW SOUNDS FROM WAY OUT

This week's columnist

KRIS PETERSEN

DFA

AWAYDAYS AND HOME GAMES

PYPY (above, pronounced like the food or the number) are a band from Montreal who have members of wild electro-punks Duchess Says and a couple of other Canadian bands I am unfamiliar with in them. Singer Annie-Claude Deschênes has utterly incredible stage presence, bouncing, screaming and contorting to ear-splitting psych-punk-garage rock riffs, then spending an inordinate amount of time taking off her shoes. We held hands for a minute. It was awkward. Their debut LP 'Pagan Day' came out late last year and comes highly recommended for those of you playing the home game.

La Femme have been around for a bit (cruise Discogs to check out the severely NSFW sleeve to their debut seven-inch), but it seems like they've made some strides into the English-speaking market with their 2013 double LP 'Psycho Tropical Berlin'. They entranced Glasslands in Brooklyn with their peppy post-punk surf-rock for nearly two hours, with much nudity on the part of the band and the utterly mental audience. One of the fellas in the band handed his keyboard to the crowd, then stood and surfed upon it (briefly), which was both exciting and terrifying to watch.

Sean Nicholas Savage

Weirdo anti-pop star **Sean Nicholas Savage** has put out a ton of music, mostly on cassette (with a brand-new proper vinyl LP due shortly) and is the lost child of Ariel Pink and Momus. Physically, he has gangly limbs and hair-related grooming habits seemingly inspired by Walt Disney. His songs are all really touching and sensitive until you give the lyrics sheet a deeper look while singing along in your bedroom and realise how totally pervy – and even a bit sinister – they are. He typically performs solo with a guitar, but I recently caught him in an art gallery backed by Daniel from Moon King and Doldrums playing the rhythm tracks on a totally crap keyboard which he had precariously balanced on a piece of the opening act's drumkit. Utterly beautiful.

"You realise how totally pervy Sean Nicholas Savage's songs are..."

Now's the time for me to make a cheap plug. We just got vinyl test pressings of the next big DFA release, the debut LP by **Museum Of Love**. It's Pat from LCD singing and Jee Day McNany of The Juan Maclean band playing most of the bleep-bloops and is an objectively perfect avant-pop record. I could list off all of the influences but that sorta ruins the fun, right? ■

Next week: East India Youth

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Reviews

The Horrors Luminous

Fifteen months in the making, the band's fourth album is almost entirely sublime

Music journalists aren't clairvoyants, but stay in this game long enough to get cynical and eventually you begin to fancy your ability to read from the meagre tea leaves of a debut single or a Miles Kane support slot. We like to think we're able to tell the bands built for the long run from those who'll implode unspectacularly, the ones who'll someday mortgage their souls to play an arena tour from the born also-rans whose fanbase will ultimately dwindle to the inhabitants of their hometown and the surrounding metropolitan area. Of course, everyone has their blind spots. When The Horrors first arrived in 2006, looking like Tim Burton sketches come to sickly, malnourished not-quite life, I can't have been the only one who thought they might enjoy an 18-month dominion over east London and the gothier bits of Brighton before stylishly asphyxiating on their own hairspray fumes. Such were the finite, cartoonish charms of 'Strange House'. Eight years and a couple of kaleidoscopic masterpieces later, they're one of the few British guitar bands worth giving a damn about. Colour me completely off the mark.

And so to 'Luminous', their fourth album, and one which has truly earned its 'long-awaited' epithet. 'Luminous' arrives after 15 delay-stricken months in the studio, a gestation period on a par with that of a baby giraffe, and admittedly, it sounds like something that took an age to make: opener 'Chasing Shadows' takes three leisurely minutes of synth-frippery to finally get going, while 'Jealous Sun', with its whale-in-distress mewls of guitar, quite clearly takes its cues from those old masters of procrastination, My Bloody Valentine. Which isn't to say that 'Luminous' is any sort of slog to get through; in terms of length, it's actually a few

ILLUSTRATION: JIMMY TURRELL

minutes shorter than 'Skying'. Everything just feels somehow *larger*.

For all the professorial talk of pyramid synths, Detroit techno and making the studio "feel like an extension of yourself" (whatever *that* means), it feels warmer, too, less aloof and inscrutable than previous outings. "*I fall in, far as I can go*", sings Faris on the industrial dreampop of 'Sleepwalk', a phosphene-eyed marionette whose wish to become a real boy has finally been granted. 'Change Your Mind', meanwhile, isn't as innocent as his winsome croon makes it sound: the song seems to find him dithering on the cusp of some ill-advised liasion, hoping to be talked out of doing something stupid ("*Please keep away from me/You know that it only takes one of us*"). For a band who tend to deal in abstractions, there are parts of 'Luminous' that sound positively unguarded.

Almost every part of it sounds sublime, though. 'Mine And Yours' and 'So Now You Know' pick up the Simple Minds thread of 'Still Life' and gambol off into the middle distance with it, while the dancier 'In And Out Of Sight' assimilates a myriad of electronic textures into something that still manages to sound recognisably Horrific. Only 'Falling Star', hamstrung by a structural orthodoxy all the effects pedals in the world can't make interesting, feels undercooked – indeed, it seems strange that an album that took this long to complete could contain something that sounds so tacked on. Still, mistakes are there to be learned from, and in The Horrors' case, you don't doubt they will. "*I can see your future/All the things you might do, all the things you'd like to*", sings Faris on the future-psychedelic sprawl of 'I See You'. Four albums in, their own future remains tantalisingly unwritten. ■ BARRY NICOLSON

8

THE HORRORS ON...

...psychedelia

Rhys Webb: "The entire record is supposed to be an experience. The word psychedelia essentially means experience. It's an experience you have, the way rock or electronic music can heighten your senses, alter your surroundings, change how you feel or what you're thinking."

...constructing an album

Tom Cowan: "We wrote a lot of songs this time. A lot of stuff was discarded, it just didn't fit. But then suddenly we have seven songs that were... of a piece, I guess, and we knew we were nearly there. It's got to feel like a body of work, otherwise what's the point?"

...working with Paul Epworth

Faris Badwan: "He was someone we thought might be interesting to work with for a while. He produced part of 'Falling Star'. He has a really great ear, a head for how songs are created. He was cool to work with."

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** May 5 ▶**LABEL** XL ▶**PRODUCERS** The Horrors, Craig Silvey, Paul Epworth ▶**LENGTH** 51:34 ▶**TRACKLISTING** 1. Chasing Shadows ▶2. First Day Of Spring ▶3. So Now You Know ▶4. In And Out Of Sight ▶5. Jealous Sun ▶6. Falling Star ▶7. I See You 8. Change Your Mind ▶9. Mine And Yours ▶10. Sleepwalk ▶**BEST TRACK** Sleepwalk

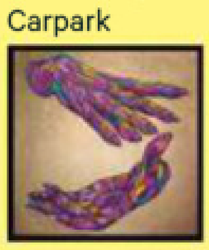
MORE ALBUMS

Fatima Al Qadiri
Asiatisch Hyperdub

On two EPs prior to this debut album, New York producer and visual artist Fatima Al Qadiri has applied her foreboding electronic futurism to obscure global influences like Muslim worship songs and Gregorian trance. 'Asiatisch', however, is even more pretentious, pairing instrumental UK grime with Asian flourishes to explore the relationship between the west and China. There is a cover of 'Nothing Compares 2 U', sung in Mandarin, where blunt mallet sounds replace drum kicks, while flutes haunt songs like 'Szechuan'. and 'Shenzen'. It's glacially paced to the point of boredom. By closing track 'Jade Stars', Qadiri's insistence on leaning on the keyboard's choir button may well have pushed you over the edge. ■ KATE HUTCHINSON

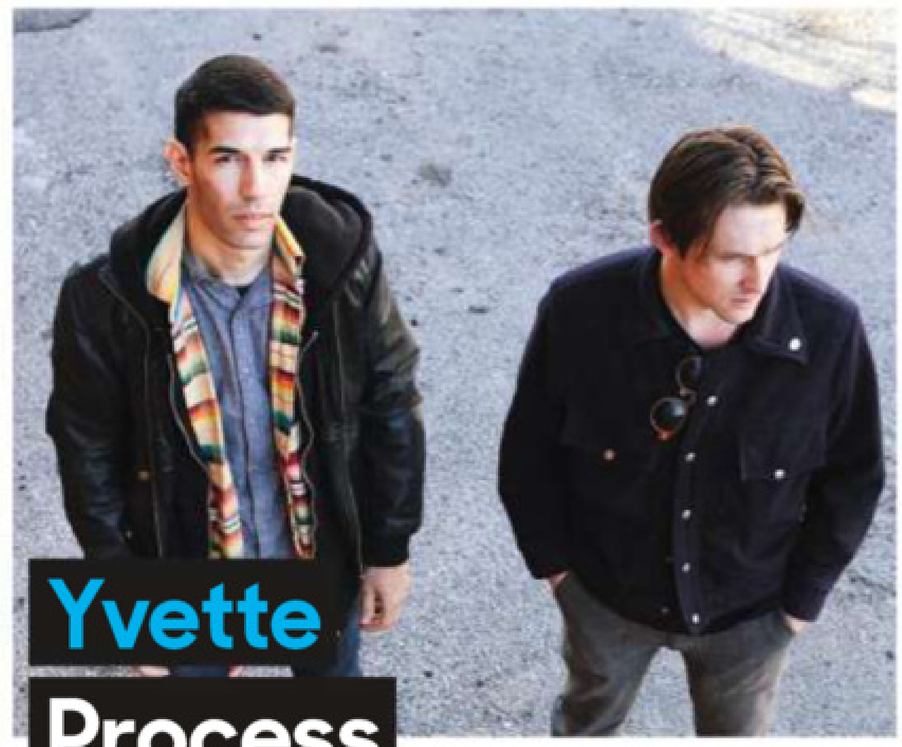
5

Teen
The Way And Color
Carpark



Teen's second album is a sharp turn away from their previous work. The quartet, led by singer Teeny Liberson, replace the raw psychedelia of debut album 'In Limbo' with a more soul-infused sound. It's an ambitious attempt at an extravagant pop record and, at their best, the band show a deft touch for layered orchestration. 'Sticky', for example, is a lush ballad, while the smooth horns and offbeat keys of 'All The Same' are pure glitter and gold. But it's a level that they fail to sustain; 'Toi Toi Toi' and 'Tied Up Tied Down', in particular, are hamstrung by droning melodies and grating synth loops. Still, highpoints like the funky bounce of 'Breathe Low & Deep' mean the group's new style suits them nicely. ■ DEAN VAN NGUYEN

7



Yvette Process

Two Brooklyn boys create a beautiful noise in their garage

Ten minutes into their debut album, Yvette ask a rhetorical question: "*Can you feel it falling apart?*" Noah Kardos-Fein's unaccompanied vocal at the end of 'Mirrored Walls' is the only moment on 'Process' that doesn't haemorrhage noise. Perversely titled opener 'Pure Pleasure' heralds a deeply unsettling 33-minute work of destruction. But describing 'Process' as a noise record is inaccurate. This Brooklyn band, completed by Dale Eisinger on drums and electronics, strike a thrilling balance between extreme industrial sound and remarkable artistry. 'Cold Comfort' marches to a bleakly accessible rhythm for 90 seconds before plummeting into a choking sequence of alarm-like crashes. 'Absolutes' is less indie-rock song, more nightmarish banshee. Its impact, like that of 'Process' itself, belies its creation. There was no army, no Armageddon. 'Process' was made by two men in a concrete garage. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** May 5 ▶**LABEL** Tough Love ▶**PRODUCER** Nick Sylvester ▶**LENGTH** 33:38 ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. Pure Pleasure ▶2. Cuts Me In Half ▶3. Mirrored Walls ▶4. Carbon Copy ▶5. Tempered Glass ▶6. Everything In Reverse ▶7. Attrition ▶8. Holding Nothing ▶9. Cold Comfort ▶10. Absolutes ▶11. Radiation ▶**BEST TRACK** Absolutes

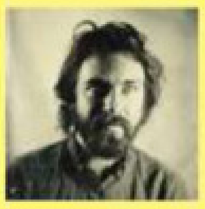
Fujiya & Miyagi
Artificial Sweeteners
Yep Roc

Fujiya & Miyagi were making music that sounded like Hot Chip – upbeat, effusive synthpop with slightly geeky indie vocals – before Hot Chip were. Thus, it feels reductive to be thinking of Alexis Taylor and co as F&M's fifth album plays, but they are disarmingly similar. The Brighton outfit's stated influences, from '70s krautrock to '90s techno, are canonical and respectable, and occasionally strike gold, notably on 'Tetrahydrofolic Acid', an instrumental raver, and the disco-punk bassline of 'Daggers'. Yet their attempts to assimilate their record collections often fall between two stools – unlikely to do the business on a dancefloor or spirit you away at home. ■ NOEL GARDNER

5

DANIEL TOPETE

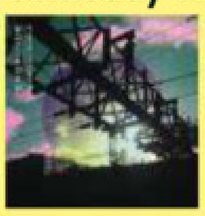
Liam Finn
The Nihilist Yep Roc



Many moments on this, New Zealander Liam Finn's third full-length solo album, suggest that he fancies himself as a bit of a musical space cadet rather than just another 'singer-songwriter'. 'Miracle Glance' swipes sonic chunks from The Flaming Lips' 'The Soft Bulletin', opener 'Ocean Emmanuelle' has flickers of Bowie's 'Ashes To Ashes', and the lurching 'Snug As Fuck' resembles MGMT's 'Congratulations', only without the rubbish drawn-out bits. The problem is, they lack that indefinable sense of oddness that makes those comparators so compelling. It's melodic, competent stuff, but if you're going to try and push the crazy buttons you've got to go full straitjacket, and Liam Finn is just a tad too straight. **6**

■ JAMIE FULLERTON

Eno Hyde
Someday World Warp



From Roxy Music keyboard freak to ambient pioneer, Brian Eno has rarely put a foot wrong. As this collaboration with Underworld's Karl Hyde shows, he's also unpredictable: 'Someday World' sounds nothing like the previous work of either musician. Essentially a straight-ish rock album that dabbles in electronics and Afrobeat, it sits somewhere between TV On The Radio and New Order but lacks the intensity of the former and the hedonistic release of the latter. Hyde's impassioned, unorthodox vocals – all swooping melody and unlikely rhythm – are the crux of the nine songs, particularly the airy 'Who Rings The Bell' and the driving 'Witness'. Not a misstep for Eno, but not quite the best of both worlds. **6**

■ BEN CARDEW

Lykke Li I Never Learn

The Swedish singer is still getting her heart broken

So, where were we at with Lykke Li? The Swede's second album, 2011's 'Wounded Rhymes', was assembled under an angry cloud of heartbreak. Sure, it was troubled, but it was also defiant ('Get Some') and dramatic ('Sadness Is A Blessing'). Most of all, it was pain-stricken ('Unrequited Love'). Stylistically and lyrically, she'd consciously uncoupled from the signature coochy-coo vocals, puppy-eyed cuteness and electronic quirks of her debut 'Youth Novels' – and grown.

Unsurprisingly for a record called 'I Never Learn', her third album sees Lykke revisiting some of the themes covered on 'Wounded Rhymes'. Once again she finds herself emerging from a failed relationship. But the bruising on 'I Never Learn' seems more severe; while the sadness was spun between tribal drums and feisty strings last time out, this time it's much rawer. On occasions it's just Lykke's reverb-cloaked vocals accompanied by an acoustic guitar, as on beautifully downbeat opener 'Never Knew' and the forlorn 'Love Me Like I'm Not Made Of Stone'. There's still the odd hook or chorus – the shuffling melody of 'No Rest For The Wicked' and the big piano-power-pop of 'Gunshot' are the closest you'll get to 'I Follow Rivers' – but the rest is consistently tearful. And Lykke sure is tough on herself – the triptych of 'Never Gonna Love Again', 'Heart Of Steel' and 'Sleeping Alone' give you a pretty good idea of where the 28-year-old is right now, psychologically speaking. Each of those songs is intimate, introverted and tremendously sad. Chinks of hope are hard to come by.

She's spoken in the past about struggling with the nomadic experience of touring, and unfortunately there isn't going to be much joy to be had in evoking the ghosts of these songs every night. But maybe that's the point. Perhaps 'I Never Learn' is a record Lykke Li had to make, rather than wanted to make. It's an album *about* love, but not a record *to* love. **6**

■ GREG COCHRANE

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** May 5 ▶**LABEL** LL Recordings/Atlantic ▶**PRODUCERS** Lykke Li, Björn Yttling, Greg Kurstin ▶**LENGTH** 33:49 ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. I Never Learn ▶2. No Rest For The Wicked ▶3. Just Like A Dream ▶4. Silverline ▶5. Gunshot ▶6. Love Me Like I'm Not Made Of Stone ▶7. Never Gonna Love Again ▶8. Heart Of Steel ▶9. Sleeping Alone ▶**BEST TRACK** Gunshot

Oliver Wilde
Red Tide Opal In The Loose End Womb
Howling Owl

Forgive him the title, which seems to be some kind of pretentious analogy about menstruation: Bristol songsmith Oliver Wilde's second LP is as dreamy and gorgeous as they come. It's part distortion-laden guitar warmth, part dappled electronics; 'Pull' – a hypnotic mix of acoustic guitar, strings and electronic drones – and the mellifluous 'Rest Less' are what you imagine Beck might end up doing if he swallowed an entire box of Xanax. The equally ridiculously titled 'Stomach Full Of Cats' soars by on gloriously giddy, swirling synths, like Deerhunter at their most doe-eyed, while 'Say Yes To Ewans' is a dusky caress that finds Wilde's vocal at its spine-tinglingly ethereal peak. Truly magical stuff. **8**

■ LISA WRIGHT

Badbadnotgood
III Innovative Leisure

Hip-hop's links with jazz reach back to Gil Scott-Heron and The Last Poets, but does jazz love hip-hop back? Toronto's Badbadnotgood certainly do: the instrumental trio scored work with Frank Ocean, RZA and Tyler, The Creator after their Odd Future cover during a performance exam at jazz college failed to convince the assembled panel of judges but succeeded in wowing the internet. Sounds like the plot to every bad 'street dancing' film ever, but new album 'III' is a fluid, inventive affair. Shades of post-rock make it feel oddly conservative in parts, but 'Can't Leave The Night' sounds like a trap version of DJ Shadow, and 'Hedron' boasts imagination to match the band's spectacular musicianship. **7**

■ ALEX DENNEY

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RALE
VS
SEASIDE HEIGHTS

SESSION 3
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LOLA KING AND THE KICKSTARTS
VS
DAMON VALENTINE

VISIT UNBLEACHEDSESSIONS.CO.UK TO GET INVOLVED

Reviews

Samaris
Silkidrangar
One Little Indian

Reykjavík trio Samaris sing 19th-century Icelandic poetry in their native tongue. This ought to be a barrier to enjoyment, but the lack of a common language doesn't stop you getting swept up in the band's slick and strangely sensual world. Vocalist Jófríður Ákadóttir rolls every consonant and veers from chanting Lynchian incantations ('Nótt') to exhaling dramatically over icy breezes of Áslaug Rún Magnúsdóttir's clarinet ('Máninn Og Bróðir Hans') as Þórður Kári Steinþórsson's spacious electronics glide along like Purity Ring in a parallel universe. Samaris are worth your attention, even if you can't understand a word they're saying. **7**

■ ROBERT COOKE

Eat Lights Become Lights
Into Forever
Rocket Girl

Having explored the propulsive krautrock beat as the house band at Brixton's Klub Motorik, Eat Lights Become Lights' fourth album in as many years finds the instrumental idealists heading deeper into electronic territory. Fizzing opener 'Velocet Vir Nesat' and the handclap groove of 'You Are Disko' aside, the painstakingly assembled tracks on 'Into Forever' owe more to Kraftwerkian techno than the raw psychedelic thrill of the band's live show. Sparkling synth melodies abound, with only the Pink Floyd indulgence 'Vapour Trails' dragging the journey down. The title track is 'Into Forever''s crowning achievement, best representing the refinement of ELBL's hypnotic sound. **7**

■ STUART HUGGETT

We Were Evergreen
Towards
Island

Had they stayed in Paris, We Were Evergreen would probably be good candidates for constant rotation on Le Mouv', France's 6Music equivalent, obsessed as it is with fey singing boys and their vampy synths. Instead, the trio have ended up relocating to London, where we still have strict legal limits on the amount of quirky, keyboard-led vulnerability young men can display in public. While 'Daughters' says they're capable of touching the smoky holiness of Erland Øye, elsewhere ('Golden Fire', 'Kilmore's End', 'Overnight') the attention to detail slips, and they end up with a load of meat patties of twee that just come across as Owl City in fashionable shoes, a whiny inner-child deserving of a smacked botty-bot. **5**

■ GAVIN HAYNES

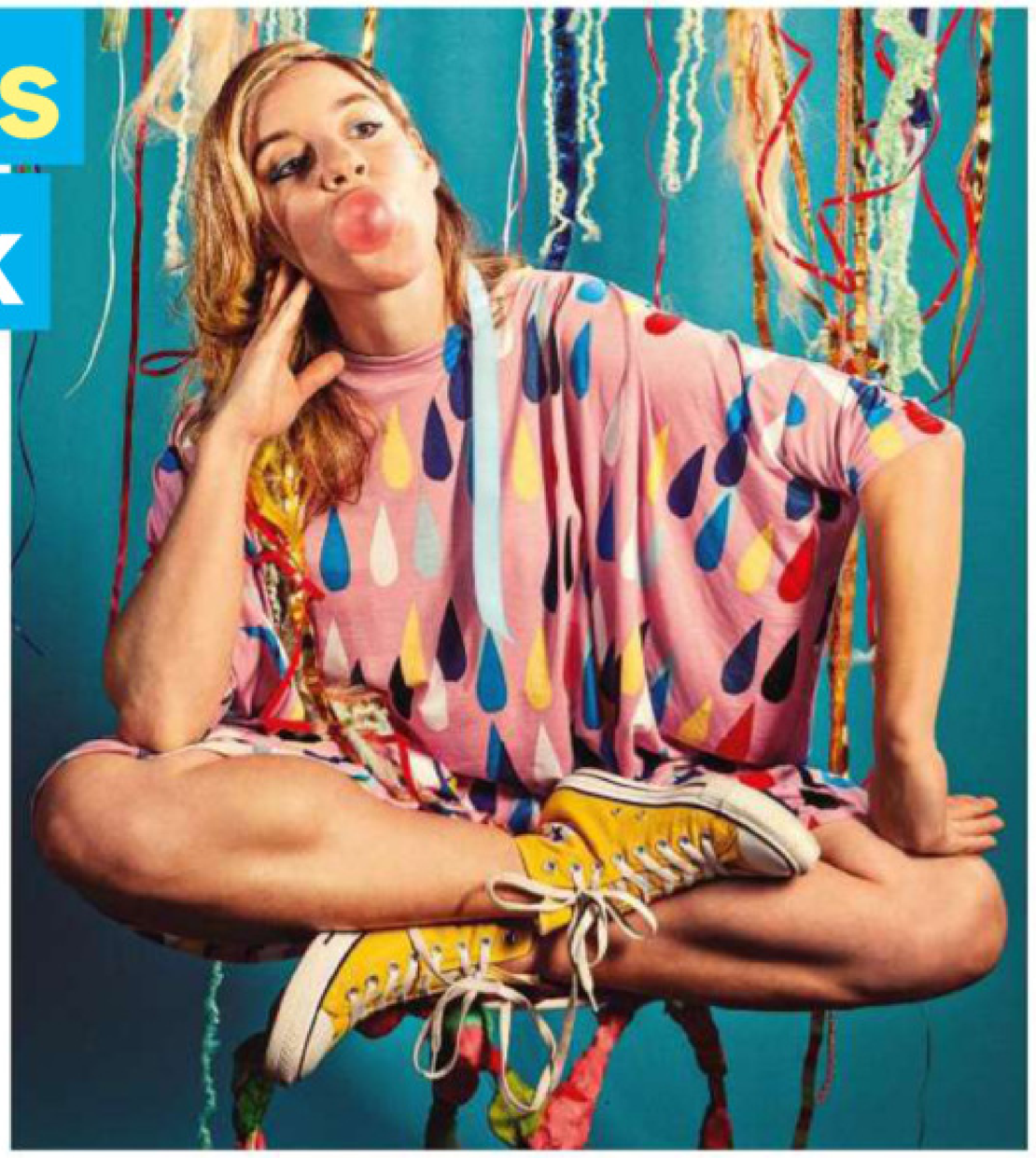
Tiny Ruins
Brightly Painted One
Bella Union

Tiny Ruins started as a solo project for New Zealander Hollie Fullbrook. For this second album it's become a proper band, with bassist Cass Basil and drummer Alexander Freer. 'Brightly Painted One' has the dynamics of folk – Holbrook's wavery trill falls somewhere between Laura Marling and Sandy Denny; acoustic guitar is plucked and picked – but stately horns and Rhodes piano shape a kind of country-soul. Over endlessly sweet melodies, Holbrook tells stories of mannered love affairs in which *"we'll lie on the lawn"* ('Me At The Museum You In The Wintergardens') or she'll be *"dreaming of when our next run-in will be"* ('Ballad Of The Hanging Parcel'). It all has an affecting, intimate power. **7**

■ MATTHEW HORTON

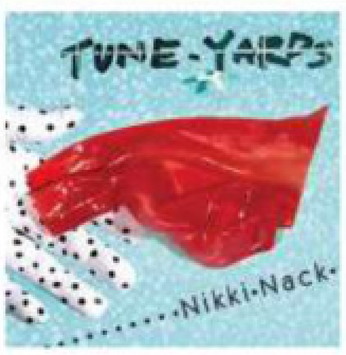
Tune-Yards
Nikki Nack

Merrill Garbus' restless third record is chaotic, eclectic and unique



'Nikki Nack' contains a dizzying level of detail, but its greatest strength is the bright and brash sense of adventure underpinning it all. Merrill Garbus' complicated but catchy songwriting dates back to her 2009 debut, 'Bird-Brains', in which she used a ukulele and some clunky beats to mash together strands of Tanzanian folk, showtunes and hip-hop. Two albums later, the New Englander's band are trying harder than ever to squirm free of convention.

Anchored by Nate Brenner's burbling basslines, 'Nikki Nack' stampedes through complex arrangements and chaotic rhythms shaped, in places, by the input of producers Malay (Alicia Keys, Frank Ocean) and John Hill (Santigold, MIA). It's easy to see why assistance was called for: the album pairs non-western musical traditions with playground melodies, then adds fizzing electronics and rapid-fire wordplay.



When those elements fall seamlessly into place, as on the opening four songs, the resulting pop sophistication is easily Tune-Yards' finest work. Garbus commands such a rousing energy, particularly on the tribal 'Time Of Dark' and the campfire feel of 'Rocking Chair', that it makes you want to experience those moments first-hand.

"Listen to the words I say!/Sound like a floral bouquet!/A lyrical round-and-round-and-round-and-round!" she wails on 'Water Fountain', the first of several times when she reveals an urgency to express herself. But beneath the restless song structures, the abstract and often improvised feel of 'Nikki Nack' makes it difficult to tell whether some of the tracks are built on solid foundations. That's most evident two-thirds of the way in, during the overwhelming jumble of 'Sink-O' and the spoken interlude of 'Why Do We Dine On The Tots?'.

In the latter case, including a poem from your previous job as a puppeteer might suggest a lack of ideas. But that kind of playful imagination has always been Tune-Yards' strength. 'Nikki Nack' is the best illustration yet of Garbus' wilful eclecticism: the songs splatter forth unpredictably with little concern for cohesion, forming a whole that is emphatically unique. **8**

■ CIAN TRAYNOR

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** May 5 ▶**LABEL** 4AD ▶**PRODUCERS** Merrill Garbus, John Hill, Malay ▶**LENGTH** 42:12 ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. Find A New Way ▶2. Water Fountain ▶3. Time Of Dark ▶4. Real Thing ▶5. Look Around ▶6. Hey Life ▶7. Sink-O ▶8. Why Do We Dine On The Tots? ▶9. Stop That Man ▶10. Wait For A Minute ▶11. Left Behind ▶12. Rocking Chair ▶13. Manchild ▶**BEST TRACK** Water Fountain

Lily Allen
Sheezus

The singer's candid but clichéd return won't win her any new disciples

Lily Allen's third album arrives after an odd publicity campaign that's mostly consisted of her apologising for it. When a fan tweeted that her first new material in five years was "docile pop rubbish", she agreed, saying her label wouldn't support "the better stuff" on it. In a way, her public stance validates lead single 'Hard Out Here', a well-intentioned critique of the industry's subjugation of women whose message was lost beneath its racially dubious video. But it also completely undermines it: how does kowtowing to your label's demands tally with being strident enough to call your record 'Sheezus'?

Allen recently explained that the low-slung title track didn't get radio playlisting because it mentions periods. If true, those stations should be ashamed for reinforcing the culture of shame around women's bodies. But for all Allen's insistence that the record itself is Actually Very Daring, the lyric concerned says little: "*It makes me angry/I'm serious*", she sings of female artists being pitted against one another. "*But then again I'm just about to get my period*". There's a sample of a crowd gasping, contriving shock factor at the weak satire. She goes on: "*Periods, we all get periods/Once a month, yeah/ That's what the theory is*". The lyric exemplifies the album's empty grandstanding, trying to say *something* about female oppression, but not knowing quite what.

'Sheezus' is an egocentric record, impossible to separate from Allen herself. Occasionally it works in her favour: her candour about post-motherhood sexuality is the relatable flipside to Beyoncé's flawlessness (the island pop of 'Life For Me'; pastichey slow jam 'Close Your Eyes'). But there's a lot of nauseating stuff about "*spicing it up*", and an overload of asinine domesticity pap – 'As Long As I Got You' sounds like a fairground organ playing country music, 'Air Balloon' is MIA-lite and 'Our Time' is a clichéd tribute to nights out. While you imagine Allen sees 'Silver Spoon' as a self-aware comment on her privileged background, it comes off as unpleasant self-aggrandising. It feels like she's trying to ape rap bravado, forgetting the generations of oppression that underpin the culture's proud materialistic streak.

The best song on 'Sheezus' is EDM wig-out 'URL Badman', an invigorating pop at internet trolls and the closest she gets to recapturing the vigour of 2006's 'Alright, Still'. But it's ironic that the album's highest point concerns the internet: the Myspace-spawned pop star's old sharp eye feels watery on 'Sheezus', squinting at the discourse around feminism, race and privilege unfolding online in 2014, and riding it as a bandwagon back to the centre of the very space she once owned, but lacking the conviction to do much with it once she's arrived. For all Allen's excuses, the naff 'Sheezus' is the sorriest.

■ LAURA SNAPES

3

▶THE DETAILS

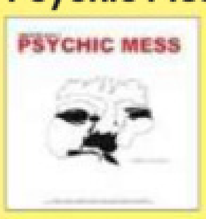
▶**RELEASE DATE** May 5 ▶**LABEL** Parlophone/Warner Bros ▶**PRODUCERS** Greg Kurstin, Shellback, DJ Dahi ▶**LENGTH** 45:12 ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. Sheezus ▶2. L8 CMMR ▶3. Air Balloon ▶4. Our Time ▶5. Insincerely Yours ▶6. Take My Place ▶7. As Long As I Got You ▶8. Close Your Eyes ▶9. URL Badman ▶10. Silver Spoon ▶11. Life For Me ▶12. Hard Out Here ▶**BEST TRACK** URL Badman

Tuff Love
Tuff Love EP Fence

Our troubled world needs many things, but another band who sound a bit like Belle & Sebastian isn't one of them. Glasgow trio Tuff Love did not get this memo, and wrote this, their heavily C86-influenced debut EP, regardless. 'Sweet Content' has the saccharine hum of The Bangles, and hazy slacker numbers 'Cooper' and 'Flamingo' plod along like The Breeders on an off day. The post-punk-meets-country din of 'Penguin', with its disjointed guitars and feedback, is the only time the album threatens to do anything original whatsoever, though even that touches on Mazzy Star territory. The rest is purely derivative. If this record showed any greater lack of imagination it would hardly be discernible from background noise and static. ■ HUW NESBITT

5

Creative Adult
Psychic Mess Run For Cover



California's musical youth seem constantly affiliated with skateboarding, drugs and hardcore. While San Francisco ragers Creative Adult recall Circle Jerks and the scene's 1980s heyday, the five-piece actually formed to move away from the hardcore sound of their previous bands, Life Long Tragedy and Purple Mercy. 'Psychic Mess', recorded in Montreal with Godspeed You! Black Emperor's Efrim Menuck, ploughs back to California through Portland and Washington, via Fugazi and The Wipers. 'Flash' and 'Psychic Message' are tense and menacing, and elongated closer 'Haunt' ends with 90 seconds of what sounds like distant roadside hammering. Exploratory, intense and without a kickflip or king skin in sight. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7

PLAY IT AGAIN

RECENTLY RATED IN NME

Damon Albarn
Everyday Robots
"Invites intimacy and the slow picking away of its layers. Albarn pulls you close and whispers the codes of his life into your ear. Switch settings to 'decipher'." (*NME, April 26*)
8

Todd Terje
It's Album Time
"Terje's infectious electronic pop beds itself deep in the brain. The Norwegian producer's debut album is packed with personality, its grooves forming a clear picture of Terje as life and soul of the party." (*NME, April 12*)
8

Eels
The Cautionary Tales Of Mark Oliver Everett
"Bereft of blues bombast, electronic trickery or bothersome concepts, when E's not coming on like Red House Painters he's getting seriously classical. Raw and deeply personal." (*NME, April 19*)
7

Woods
With Light And With Love
"Sparkles with the light and love of the title, and the lackadaisical summer vibe of '60s San Francisco. An optimistic and sprightly record." (*NME, April 12*)
8

Sleaford Mods
Divide And Exit
"Like a politicised Mike Skinner or John Cooper Clarke up for a scrap. We need artists to sneer at the stars and sing about the gutter, and right now no-one does it like Sleaford Mods." (*NME, April 26*)
8

Black Lips' Cole Alexander

Black Lips

Webster Hall

New York

April 17

Beer, bodies and bog roll fly as the Atlanta band bring the good times to the Big Apple

Black Lips' live shows have become the stuff of legend. Tonight, even though the four-piece are on their best behaviour – no dicks on show, no making out with each other – their reckless energy flows through both new songs ('Drive-By Buddy', 'Smiling') and old favourites ('Bad Kids', 'Dirty Hands'). The crowd give back just as hard, pushing and shoving and jumping and dancing the night away in a whirlwind of fiery hedonism. In particular, Jared Swilley, in his jeans and tucked-in white T-shirt, comes off like some greaser overseeing the night as beers, bodies and bog roll fly through the air throughout the frenetic 75-minute set, reduced to nothing but a floor of sticky, sweaty memories once it's all over.

8

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NME GIG OF THE WEEK

These New Puritans

London, Barbican
Thursday, April 17

Jack Barnett recreates his neo-classical opus onstage. Ovations ensue

When These News Puritans' leader Jack Barnett was doing interviews ahead of the release of 'Field Of Reeds' – their most recent, third album – he told *NME*'s Laura Snapes (then writing for *Pitchfork*) that he had deep concerns about rock bands performing with orchestras. "I don't like that whole, horrible, chummy atmosphere when a band plays with an orchestra, it's a bit toe-curling," he said. "I want the absolute opposite of that."

That quote springs to mind as 1,700-odd people shuffle into London's Barbican to be confronted by an elaborately designed stage setup, an ensemble of some 20 people (members of the Heritage Orchestra) and a choral group, Synergy Vocals, of eight. These New Puritans have played with an orchestra before; nonetheless, as Jack's compositions become more complex and adventurous on record, you wonder if he's experienced enough to avoid the pitfalls that hobble other rock bands who choose to perform in increasingly illustrious contexts. He is, after all, only 25.

Are These New Puritans even a rock band?

Jack Barnett and Elisa Rodrigues

Comprised of Jack, his brother George on drums and multi-instrumentalist Thomas Hein, they certainly used to be. Debuting with 'Beat Pyramid' in 2008, they were loosely part of a scene congregating around the Junk Club in Southend, Essex (The Horrors, Neils Children, Ipso Facto), making music that often looked back to the style, attitude and ambition of post-punk. But 'Beat Pyramid' seems an age away and the neo-classical 'Field Of Reeds' is distinct from 2010's 'Hidden', their second album.

When These New Puritans played London's Heaven last year, they meshed songs – not always unsuccessfully – from 'Field Of Reeds' with 'Hidden', perhaps in an attempt to not completely alienate fans who, if they came with closed minds, were shocked by the audacity of 'Field Of Reeds'. It does, after all, echo the work of Benjamin Britten and Hans Ek much more than, say, The Fall – from whom These New Puritans took their name – and it's an avant-garde album in the sense that it contains snippets of recorded sounds such as, astonishingly, a hawk's wings taking flight.

Tonight's extravagant setup enables them to play 'Field Of Reeds' in its entirety and in order. The album's lyrical narrative is open, although it largely concerns loss, yet there's musical structure that Barnett has considered with care. And so we begin with 'This Guy's In Love With You' and the vocal of Portuguese fado singer Elisa Rodrigues; then, from behind her, come horns, electronic textures and strings. In its simplest sense, naming the concert 'Expanded' immediately seems apt; this is not a reimagining of 'Field Of Reeds', but a reorganisation of the music to suit a larger ensemble.

It takes time for the sheer breadth of sound to settle. 'Fragment Two' is fuller, but passes with little extra impact (it's already a standout on the album, and its lead single) and it's not until 'The Light In Your Name', the third song, that the mastery in Barnett's new score, which he came up with alone, becomes clear. A kind of transitional, spacious piece on the album, tonight it becomes as immense as it is detailed.

Both Barnetts suddenly find their stride. The drums at the end of 'The Light In Your Name' lift the performance of the entire orchestra, conducted by Edwin Outwater, and

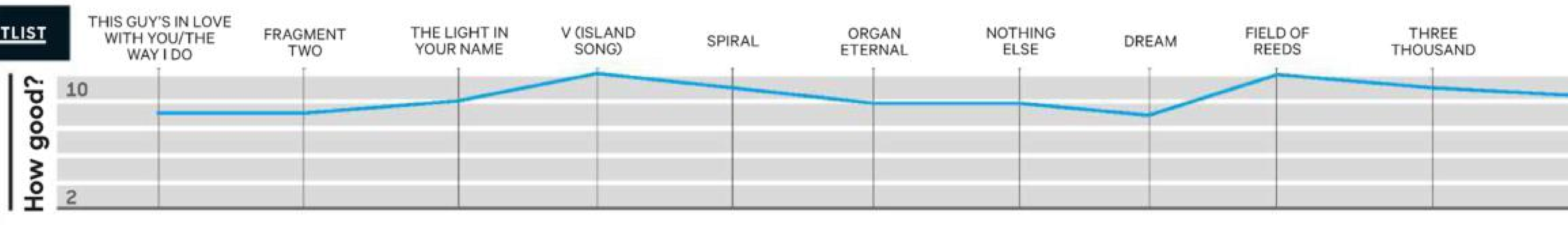
THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD

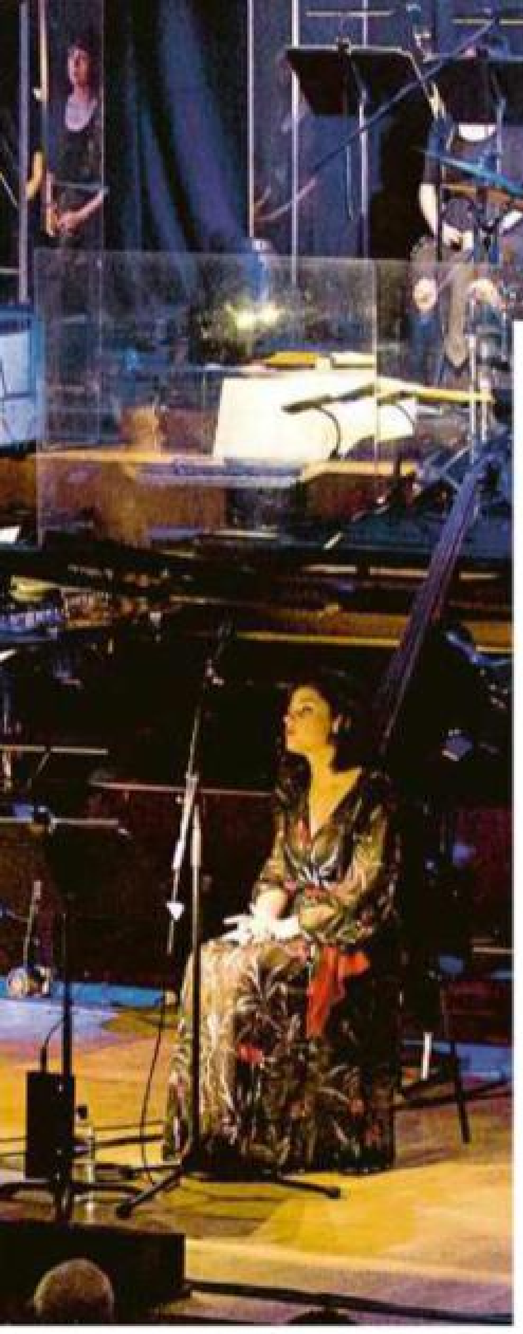
Kevin Carcrash, 26, London
"I thought it was absolutely beautiful – a work of art. They're a rare band that engage with music on a level that others just don't."

Joanna Morgan, 22, London
"It was layered in a majestic way – it wasn't cluttered, you could pinpoint every single action, even people's breathing."

Lorrianne Gypsie, 22, London
"I thought it was spectacular and very atmospheric. The sound was fantastic, but I also really noticed the lightshow and staging."

SETLIST





it's also clear that Jack, occasionally a mumbler of a singer, knows that in this vast hall he has to project his vocal further. He shines on 'V (Island Song)', perhaps the best piece on the night, and it's followed by an extraordinary rendition of 'Spiral', which becomes, if you'll excuse the lofty reference, as foreboding and devastating as Sibelius' 'Symphony No 4 In A Minor'.

Throughout the performance, Synergy Vocals offer sonic feel as much as traditional choral work. They sound like a pack of Trappist monks as they open the album's title track and tonight's set closer, after which the core Puritans leave the stage, returning to play a four-song encore that includes 'Three Thousand' and 'We Want War' from 'Hidden'. Safe in the knowledge that a difficult gig hasn't just passed without incident but has been executed spectacularly, the encore is celebratory and fun in a way people forget These New Puritans often are.

Everyone involved deserved their standing ovation. ■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE

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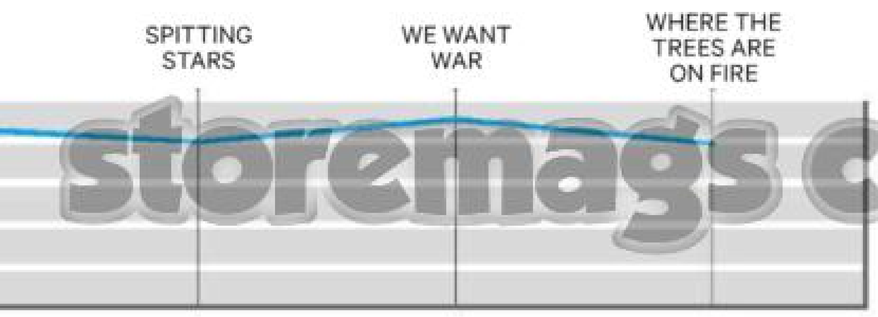

Jack Barnett on...

...preparing for 'Expanded'

"It came down to lots of tiny little decisions when you're working on the arrangements, and I worked all day and every day for quite a long time."

...how it went

"When the performance started, I was concentrating on singing it well and playing it right – trying to get into the swing of it – and then about halfway through I really began to enjoy it. It was great. I couldn't have asked for more from the musicians and everyone involved."

...performing 'Expanded' again

"We'd like to. Now that we've worked with Edwin Outwater, the conductor, there's a shorthand there and we've already dug out any ambiguities and things that can't be figured out in the writing stage. We could do it again with just a day of rehearsals."

MORE GIGS

Archie Bronson Outfit
Total Refreshment Centre, London

Wednesday, April 16

This Dalston venue is basically a scene from a '60s hippy film. Situated in a back-alley estate, showing projections of contorting lava and with a refreshingly lax attitude towards the smoking ban, it's heavy on the kind of vibes that make perfect bedfellows for Archie Bronson Outfit's psych-inflected jams. Opening with recent single 'Two Doves On A Lake's hypnotic bass, the trio give a brief nod to forthcoming LP 'Wild Crush' alongside a selection of old favourites. Best is 'Magnetic', whose heady wig-out could give The Brian Jonestown Massacre a run for their money: escapism at its most narcotic.

8

■ LISA WRIGHT

Fear Of Men
Birthdays, London

Wednesday, April 16

It's hard work being an indie wallflower. To banish the ever-lurking accusation that your music's as twee as a tearoom doily you need just the right suggestion of darkness to offset the sugary stuff. It's a line that Brighton's Fear Of Men – who got their name when frontwoman Jessica Weiss started researching mental illness – are learning to walk with debut album 'Loom'. Weiss, a vanishingly slight figure peering out from under a black bob, emits a quiet intensity onstage. 'Alta/Waterfall' recalls Electrelane's brittle majesty, and 'Descent' has morbid lyrics to rival Veronica Falls'. If at times they lack bite, they rally with 'Inside', which makes for a surprisingly muscular, psychedelic finale – twee fans need not apply.

7

■ ALEX DENNEY

Dena

The super cool Bulgarian whips up the London crowd

Trendy-as-fuck hipster electro bands have a habit of turning out to be a bit of a chore live. They're too painfully cool to even crack a smile when all you want to do is party. This is not a problem Dena suffers from, however. The moment the Berlin-dwelling Bulgarian bounces onto the stage hollering, "*Something's telling me you're playing games*", it's obvious she's having the time of her life, and she's going to make sure we all are too.

It helps that she's got the range to keep things interesting. Opener 'Games' shows off the soulful side of her voice, and she raps effortlessly on 'Thin Rope', her vocals offset by the sound of sirens.

There's an unmistakable early-MIA vibe to the way Dena combines whip-smart observations, an idiosyncratic use of language, Diplo-style rat-a-tat drums and enough energy to power Sofia for a month. Her underground hit 'Cash, Diamond Rings, Swimming Pools' creates a genuine singalong moment, but it's the hook of 'Boyfriend' that sums up the way she's got the whole room moving: "*I'm with someone else/And he's also in the place/And his name is rhythm/All I came here for tonight is to dance with him*".

This was Dena's first London show since releasing her debut album, 'Flash', back in February. She's too cool not to be invited back again soon.

9

■ KEVIN EG PERRY

SETLIST

- ▶Games
- ▶Thin Rope
- ▶Jetlag
- ▶Boyfriend
- ▶Flashed
- ▶Bad Timing
- ▶Total Ignore
- ▶Dice
- ▶You Wish
- ▶Cash, Diamond Rings, Swimming Pools

DEREK BREMNER, LAURA PALMER

storemags.com

The Amazing Snakeheads

London, The Barfly
Tuesday, April 22

A nightmarish tension descends on Camden as the punk-blues Glasgow gang vent their fury

"Fuck The Fratellis," says a dead-eyed Dale Barclay. The Barfly crowd cheers. His band, The Amazing Snakeheads, have just been welcomed to the stage by XFM DJ John Kennedy, with an anecdote mentioning the trio responsible for 'Chelsea Dagger'. It doesn't seem to have gone down at all well with Barclay, and sets the tone for an incredibly fraught hour-long gig.

The singer sets about venting his disdain with the speedy, phlegm-flecked opener 'Testifying Time'. As he twists and squirms on the stage during this and the blood-curdling 'I'm A Vampire', he seems dangerously unhinged.

'Where Is My Knife?' plunges the mood further into darkness; Barclay's hacksaw riff gives way to rumbling bass and drums from William Coombe and Jordan Hutchison. It's so sparse and sinister that a horrible tension begins to build, only reaching breaking point when Barclay, his arms outstretched, seethes the words, "*Forget the rest, I'm your daddy*". How the couple standing in front of *NME* can sway lovingly to this is a mystery.

Even the songs with romantic titles are so angry they make you feel ill. 'Every Guy Wants To Be Her Baby' and 'Memories' are highlights of tonight's set, but their twisted menace can't be masked, especially when a sweaty Barclay tugs at the collar of his now-drenched shirt and yells, "*Take it by both hands and shake it if it needs it*".

The vivid, nightmarish atmosphere the trio create – aided live by saxophonist and percussionist Andrew Pattie – is impressive, and the intensity barely drops. But The Amazing Snakeheads' biggest triumph is that they offer no escape route; their fearsome stage presence never falters. It's nearly impossible to avert your eyes. A sense of danger, of enjoyment mixed with very palpable worry, makes even the silent between-song tune-up far more compelling than it should be.

A lone dissenter near the back doesn't think so, though. "You're not the fucking Doors!" he shouts after 'Every Guy...'. If he heard, Barclay doesn't let on, choosing instead to begin 'Here It Comes Again', a move far more effective than a retaliatory punch in the face. Starting with a deceptively clean guitar line, it screeches into a brutally simple juggernaut that sounds like Nick Cave being chased out of a Glasgow high-rise. The heckler is silenced and the Snakeheads ratchet up the depravity and plough into closing pair 'Flatlining' and 'Bullfighter', the latter featuring a beautiful vocal turn from Barclay's girlfriend Laura St Jude that confirms the pair have never swapped singing tips. Barclay, of course, maintains his maniacal character until he walks offstage, wielding his guitar high above his head and gurning wildly.

In the dressing room afterwards, he's with St Jude, a beer-hunting Coombe and a now open-shirted, smoking Hutchison. Still lost in the freakish darkness of their set, the Snakeheads look like the gang you wouldn't dare rile. But even after a performance as riveting as this, the mood The Fratellis put Barclay in an hour ago hasn't mellowed. "Yeah, the show was good. But we don't give a fuck where we play, mate. Just give us a stage." ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

SETLIST

- ▶Testifying Time
- ▶I'm A Vampire
- ▶The Truth Serum
- ▶Where Is My Knife?
- ▶Every Guy Wants To Be Her Baby
- ▶Here It Comes Again
- ▶Memories
- ▶Can't Let You Go
- ▶Flatlining
- ▶Bullfighter (with Laura St Jude)

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD

Felix White (Maccabees guitarist), 29, London
"They're the best new band I've seen in a long time. Music needs bands that are aggressive, in your face and trying to shake things up."

Morad, 31, London
"I really believe they're one of the strongest live bands in the country. They have magnificent shirts and I wouldn't pick a fight with any of them."

Lydia and Rob, 32, London
"It made us feel young again! It was glorious to see a band at the beginning of their career in such a small intimate venue."

Sara, 35, London
"It's really good British music. The show was full of surprises. They do the unexpected. Their style is so varied, they can do anything."

ANDY HUGHES, JENN FIVE

The Amazing Snakeheads' Dale Barclay on...

...how he prepares his voice

"I don't do anything special for my voice at all. I don't need to, mate – I lose it very rarely. When I get a cold it goes like clockwork, but apart from that I just go for it and sing. Fuck knows where it comes from, but I enjoy it."

...public reaction to their album

"Until you make the record you don't know how confident you are about the music. You really find out if it's gonna work. And it did. We notice people digging it; you feel that at the gigs. It's a big thing for us. We never thought anyone would like our band. It's fucking wondrous."

...their amazing shirts

"Stagewear and casualwear never cross over. Dressing like this is something we've always done. It's pretty serious shirting, you'd better fucking believe it, man. They're vintage shirts – you go into a shop and pick them up quite easily, then we sweat in them. If you're sweating, you know you're working."

MORE GIGS

Sohn
London, Village Underground
Thursday, April 17
Dressed in a black, Darth Maul-style robe, Sohn and two bandmates begin sombrely by plucking 'Red Lines' from debut album 'Tremors', which hit the Top 40 earlier in the week. Initially the pace is cumbersome and the showmanship minimal: James Blake, the Austria-based Londoner's most obvious soundalike, seems like Lady Gaga by comparison. LCD poles light up in neon mauve as the flatter end of the album is played, but they flash in violent shades of red and blue as Sohn imposes himself through 'Lessons' and 'Artifice'. By the time 'The Wheel' comes up, the robe has come off and there's even a dance from behind his synths as Sohn lets us in a little bit more. **7**
■ DAVID RENSHAW

September Girls
Hoxton Square Bar & Kitchen, London
Saturday, April 19
Stubbornly dressed in black despite the sticky heat outside, Dublin lo-fi pop quintet September Girls saunter onstage for their second performance of the day, following an afternoon slot at the Record Store Day street fair in London's Berwick Street. Their power is far from diminished, though, as they whip up a mesmerising show. The group barely look at the crowd as they recreate the reverb-drenched melodies and Ramones stomp of their debut album 'Cursing The Sea', with 'Heartbeats' and 'Green Eyed' weaving dreamy, drifting guitar lines around the room. Preceded by some poetry, set closer 'Ships' amps up the bewitching edge of their show for one last, enthralling tryst. **8**
■ RHIAN DALY

Childhood

Spanky Van Dykes, Nottingham
Saturday, April 19

Local heroes journey from shoegazey pop bliss to full-on psych freakout

We're at the end of a day-long shindig to celebrate Record Store Day and Childhood are about to play the first show of their biggest tour yet in the city where they formed. Although it's not quite a homecoming (guitarists Ben Romans-Hopcraft and Leo Dobsen were only temporary residents when they met at university here in 2010), you still wonder why they haven't managed to pack out the room with all their old pals in full-scale celebration mode. Maybe they didn't have any? Maybe being Billy-no-mates is the secret to writing refreshing new music – shirking the distractions of freshers' discos, course socials and two-for-one drinks offers?

Seclusion would make sense, given how shy Romans-Hopcraft seems when performing. Most of the time he's gazing at the ground, mumbling and smudging the lyrics until his eyes roll back in his head, his expression twists out of shape and he strains for the chorus. 'You Could Be Different' is light and poppy, blissfully whitewashed with effects, but there's an agony in the way the singer delivers his lines. You see it most powerfully on 'Falls Away', all minor chords, dreamy falsetto and quiet introspection. It's slurred, sad and full of regret.

Not that the whole show is a sobfest – the skintight rhythm section is frequently funky, sourcing the energy for the carefree chord patterns that come pouring from Romans-Hopcraft and Dobsen's guitars. Mid-set, the unexpectedly fierce 'Pinballs' teases you with its piercing motorik beat. A dramatic collision of tension and release (think Kraftwerk having a crack at Parquet Courts' 'Stoned And Starving'), it suddenly shifts into a jarring sequence of percussive stamps, collapsing in a gooey haze of languid rhythms and sun-bleached guitars. Closer 'Solemn Skies' is an even wilder ride, pounding along like a preppy Tame Impala into the catchiest chorus of the night before unfolding into a delirious psych jam.

SETLIST
▶Blue Velvet
▶You Could Be Different
▶Mount Chiliad
▶As I Am
▶Pinballs
▶Right Beneath Me
▶Sweeter Preacher
▶Falls Away
▶Solemn Skies

By now, Romans-Hopcraft is booting his wah-wah pedal, improvising outlandish melodies and straddling his effects board as he chants away at the microphone, lost in his own little world. A handful of hesitant fans have even started pogoing, shaking their hips, completely enchanted. It's not enough to crown Childhood the homecoming kings just yet, but they've found themselves a few more friends in the East Midlands. **7**
■ ROBERT COOKE

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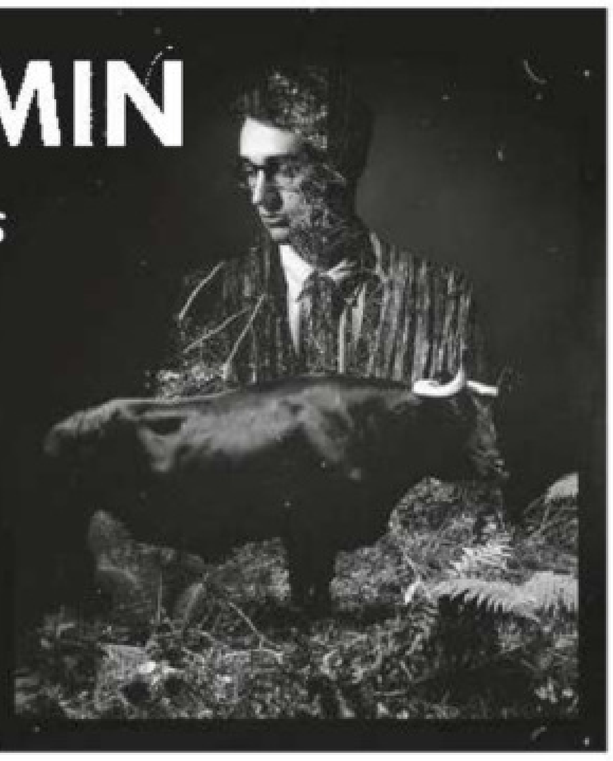

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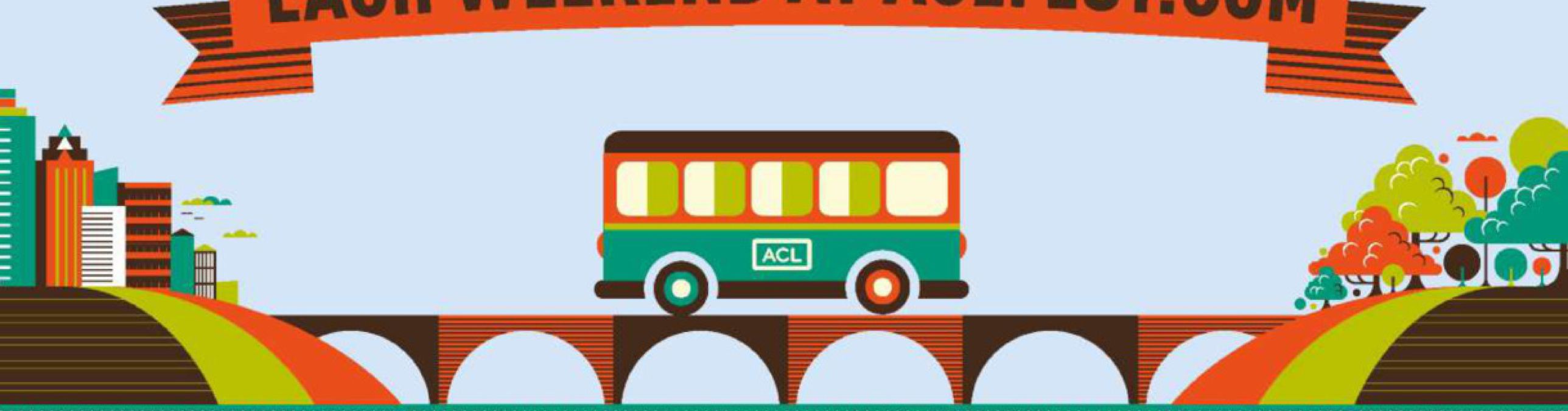

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CHAT

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BOOKING NOW

The hottest new tickets on sale this week

The Cribs

The Jarmans will play their back catalogue as they appear at several festivals over the summer.

You're headlining Wakefield's Long Division festival. How are you feeling about going home?
Gary Jarman, bass: "We're psyched to be doing it. I'm always surprised when I go back how much has changed since The Cribs were first starting out. The place we're playing is called Unity Hall, it's actually where I went to see my first-ever show in Christmas 1994 – me and Ryan got kicked out for being underage. It closed down shortly after, so it's cool to be the first band to play it when it reopens."

You're playing a lot of smaller festivals this year. Do you enjoy those more than the big ones?
"It's a different thing altogether. Big festivals become almost like national holidays these days – you get swept along with the magnitude of it. The Cribs are writing a record right now, so it's nice to come out and headline smaller festivals."

Will you be playing new songs?
"I'd like to say yes, but I think sometimes festivals aren't the best place to play them. We've got 16 songs or something, but we're just going to keep going – the idea to try and make two records has been really liberating."

▶THE DETAILS

▶**DATES** Oxford Truck Festival (July 18–19), Sheffield Tramlines Festival (July 25–27), Sunderland Split Festival (August 9–10), Wakefield Long Division Festival (September 12–14)
▶**PRICE** Truck Festival £74 weekend; Tramlines Festival £28 weekend; Split Festival £50 weekend; Long Division Festival £30 Friday, £22.50 Saturday, Sunday TBC
▶**ON SALE** now
▶**FROM** Truck Festival from gigantic.com with £4.15 booking fee; Tramlines Festival from tramlines.gigantic.com with £2.80 booking fee; Split Festival from ticketweb.co.uk with £5 booking fee; Long Division Festival from NME.COM/tickets with £2.25 booking fee

Lorde

Ella Yelich-O'Connor plays her second-ever date in the UK this summer. The Kiwi teenager previously played London's tiny Madame JoJo's, but steps up to the O2 Academy Brixton, playing songs from 2013's 'Pure Heroine'.
▶**DATES** London O2 Academy Brixton (June 6)
▶**SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
▶**PRICE** £24
▶**ON SALE** now
▶**FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £2.40 booking fee

Damon Albarn

On his debut solo album 'Everyday Robots', the Blur frontman explores society's relationship with 21st-century technology, while also making oblique reference to his childhood. He'll recreate the record's intricacies onstage at two very small shows at the end of the month as he warms up for a summer of festivals, including a headline slot at Latitude.
▶**DATES** Bristol Trinity (May 30), Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (31)
▶**SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
▶**PRICE** £19.50
▶**ON SALE** now
▶**FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £1.95 booking fee

Blondie

Bands usually play an intimate show to warm up for a festival, but Debbie Harry and the NYC new-wave heroes are doing things the other way round. After performing at Glastonbury, they'll hit the road to cool down on a smaller scale in Sheffield. Expect to hear a wealth of classics like 'Atomic' and 'Hanging On The Telephone' alongside tracks from the group's imminent new album 'Ghosts Of Download'.

DAN KENDALL, POONEH GHANA, DEAN CHALKLEY, AMY BRAMMALL

Lorde plays her second-ever UK gig at the O2 Academy Brixton in June

▶**DATES** Sheffield O2 Academy (June 29)
▶**SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
▶**PRICE** £37.50
ON SALE now
▶**FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £3.75 booking fee

Glasser

Cameron Mesirow released second album 'Interiors' late last year, on which she teamed up with Fever Ray producer Van Rivers to add elements of techno to her elegant electronic pop. The Boston-born singer returns to the UK between European festival dates for a one-off show in London.

▶**DATES** London Shacklewell Arms (June 4)
▶**SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
▶**PRICE** £12
▶**ON SALE** now
▶**FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £2.65 booking fee

Kaiser Chiefs

When drummer and main songwriter Nick Hodgson quit the band in 2012, few would have predicted Kaiser Chiefs to be topping the charts just over a year later. But since frontman Ricky Wilson took up the role of mentor on BBC talent show *The Voice*, the group have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity. Next February they headline London's O2 Arena before playing a massive homecoming show in Leeds.

▶**DATES** London O2 Arena (February 13, 2015), Leeds First Direct Arena (14)
▶**SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
▶**PRICE** London £32.50; Leeds £19.50–£35
▶**ON SALE** now
▶**FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £1.95–£4.25 booking fee

Freddie Gibbs

Indiana rapper Fredrick Tipton (aka Freddie Gibbs) collaborated with Madlib on the joint album 'Pinata' earlier this year. He steps back into the spotlight with a new solo album, 'Eastside Slim', which he'll be promoting during a short tour of England in late summer.

▶**DATES** London XOYO (August 31), Bath Komedia (September 1), Birmingham The Temple at The Institute (2), Manchester Deaf Institute (3)
▶**SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
▶**PRICE** £12.50; London £15
▶**ON SALE** now
▶**FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £1.25–£1.50 booking fee

Gentle Friendly

London-based duo David Maurice and Richard Manber make music that sits at the joyously weird end of the spectrum. Their new album 'KAUA'I O'O A'A' is out on May 26 and boasts the same experimental attitude as Micachu And The Shapes. They'll go on the road to unveil it at four dates.

▶**DATES** Bristol Start The Bus (June 4), Brighton Sticky Mike's Frog Bar (5), London The Old Blue Last (7), Birmingham The Hare & Hounds (8)
▶**SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
▶**PRICE** £6; Bristol and London free entry
▶**ON SALE** now
▶**FROM** Brighton from wegottickets.com with 60p booking fee; Birmingham from theticketsellers.co.uk with 40p booking fee

Black Submarine

Ex-The Verve members Nick McCabe and Simon Jones tour with their new band this autumn after support slots with Echo & The Bunnymen.

▶**DATES** Brighton Komedia (October 2), Manchester Ruby Lounge (3), Leeds Cockpit (4), Liverpool Kazimier (6), Preston 53 Degrees (7), Edinburgh Electric Circus (8), Glasgow Stereo (9), Bristol Fleece (12), Birmingham Temple (14), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (15), London Islington Assembly Hall (16)
▶**SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
▶**PRICE** £18; Edinburgh and Glasgow £16.50; London £19.50
▶**ON SALE** now
▶**FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £1.80–£2.25 booking fee; Edinburgh and Glasgow from ticketweb.co.uk with £2.06 booking fee

FESTIVAL NEWS

Reading & Leeds

With more than 50 new names added to the bill, The Horrors will air fourth album 'Luminous' on the NME/Radio 1 stage, Brody Dalle will make her solo UK festival debut on the Lock Up Stage and Lambeth lads Palma Violets will run through '180' and play songs from their forthcoming second album. For more info: readingfestival.com/leedsfestival.com. Tickets are available from NME.COM/tickets.

Oxegen

The Irish festival has been cancelled, with promoters MCD blaming a "lack of headline acts" and financial constraints.

TOUR NEWS

St Vincent

Annie Clark's May tour will now take place in August, with new shows in Cambridge, Gateshead and Liverpool: Cambridge Junction (August 19), Leeds Met University (20), Bristol O2 Academy (21), Glasgow O2 ABC (26), Gateshead The Sage (27), Liverpool O2 Academy (28).

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GOING OUT

Everything worth leaving the house for this week

Live At Leeds

The annual one-day festival in West Yorkshire returns, and Live At Leeds' organisers have nabbed some of 2014's hottest new bands for the bill. Fat White Family (above), Lizzo, Courtney Barnett, Gengahr, Happyness and Honeyblood will all feature, while Drenge, Wolf Alice, The Bohicas and Darlia will perform on *NME*'s stage at The Cockpit.

▶**DATES** Leeds, various venues (May 3)

▶**TICKETS** £25 from NME.COM/tickets with £2.50 booking fee

Liverpool Sound City

Fuck Buttons, Albert Hammond Jr, Jon Hopkins and Jagwar Ma will all make their way to Liverpool this week to play the city's multi-venue weekender. Local talent such as surf-pop quintet Death At Sea and folk siblings Southern will appear across the three days alongside other emerging acts such as Shy Nature, Superfood, LSA, Glass Animals and Eyedress.

▶**DATES** Liverpool, various venues (May 1–3)

▶**TICKETS** Weekend passes £60, day passes £35 from NME.COM/tickets with £3.50–£6 booking fee

Wolf Alice

Ellie Rowsell, Theo Ellis, Joel Amey and Joff Oddie are set to put out their new EP 'Creature Songs' on May 26 – their first release on their new label home Dirty Hit – before heading off to record their debut album later this year. Get a sneak preview of some of the songs that could feature as they commence a tour of the UK this week, lasting for the rest of the month.

▶**DATES** Glasgow King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (May 1), Stockton-On-Tees Ku Bar (4), Hull Fruit (5), Sheffield Leadmill (6)

▶**TICKETS** £8; Stockton-On-Tees £9 from NME.COM/tickets with 80p–£1.50 booking fee

Jungle

Since they popped up last year, Jungle have kept readily available information about themselves to a minimum. Dig a little deeper as XL's latest signings take the likes of 'Busy Earnin'' and 'Platoon' out on the road on the first two dates of their latest tour.

▶**DATES** Cardiff The Globe (May 1), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (2)

▶**TICKETS** £9 from NME.COM/tickets with £1–£1.08 booking fee

Dum Dum Girls

Earlier this year, Dum Dum Girls released their third album, 'Too True'. Keen to embark on a new chapter for the band, frontwoman Dee Dee Penny shut herself away in her NYC apartment and set about writing a record inspired by The Cure, Madonna, Siouxsie & The Banshees and The Stone Roses. Hear her and her bandmates recreate the gothic sheen of their latest album as they return to the UK for three dates.

▶**DATES** London Scala (May 1), Manchester Roadhouse (3), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (4)

▶**TICKETS** London £15; Manchester £11; Leeds £10 (£6 with Live At Leeds wristband) from NME.COM/tickets with £1–£1.50 booking fee

Neon Waltz

Caithness psych-pop six-piece Neon Waltz travel

FIVE TO SEE FOR FREE

Thrills don't come cheaper than this

1. Wild Smiles
The Monarch, London
The Winchester trio bring their sunny indie pop to London.
▶May 1, 8pm

2. Gruff Rhys
Rough Trade East, London
A show for Gruff's LP and film, *American Interior*.
▶May 6, 6.30pm

3. Pup
Banquet Records, Kingston
The Canadian punks play their debut album.
▶May 1, 6pm

4. Kiesza
Sixty Million Postcards, Bournemouth
Chart-topping dance vocalist of 'Hideaway' fame.
▶May 2, 8pm

5. Johnny Hostile & Jehnny Beth
Birthdays, London
Live electronic set team-up.
▶May 6, 8pm

Catch Pup for free in Kingston this week

Wolf Alice

to two other Scottish cities to play the reverb-drenched promise of 'Sombre Fayre' and more.

▶**DATES** Aberdeen Café Drummond (May 2), Dundee Beat Generator Live (3)

▶**TICKETS** Aberdeen £5 from NME.COM/tickets with 50p booking fee; Dundee £5 from wegottickets.com with 50p booking fee

All We Are

The hotly tipped Liverpool-based trio will follow their support slot on Warpaint's UK tour earlier this year by heading south for this one-off date. The group told *NME* recently they had a "plethora" of demos ready to record for their debut album so expect to hear some sneak previews of that material, alongside singles 'Feel Safe' and 'Utmost Good'.

▶**DATES** London Bethnal Green Working Men's Club (May 1)

▶**TICKETS** £8 from NME.COM/tickets with £1 booking fee

Traams

The Chichester trio give last year's debut album 'Grin' another airing at three small dates this week.

▶**DATES** London Lexington (April 30), Stockton-On-Tees Green Room (May 2), Sheffield Harley (3)

▶**TICKETS** London £7.50 from birdonthewire.ticketabc.com with £1 booking fee; Stockton-On-Tees £6.50 from sa1.seatadvisor.com; Sheffield £5 from NME.COM/tickets with 50p booking fee

See Lou Reed on Sky Arts, April 30

STAYING IN

The best music on TV, radio and online this week

Lou Reed
Classic Albums: Transformer

The late musician recalls how he made his seminal solo album, including the tracks 'Perfect Day' and 'Walk On The Wild Side'. David Bowie, Mick Ronson, engineer Ken Scott and former T Rex member Herbie Flowers also contribute to this 2001 documentary.

▶**WATCH** Sky Arts, 7pm, April 30

The Horrors
Later Live... With Jools Holland

Faris Badwan, Rhys Webb, Tom Furse, Joshua Hayward and Joe Spurgeon will celebrate the release of their fourth album 'Luminous' by performing some of its highlights in the *Later...* studio.

▶**WATCH** BBC Two, 10pm, May 6

Soak
Huw Stephens

Derry teenager Bridie Monds-Watson, aka Soak, recently released her EP 'Blud' on Chrvches' own label, Goodbye Records. Find out why they made her their very first signing as she joins Huw Stephens in session.

▶**LISTEN** BBC Radio 1, 1pm, April 30

The Amazing Snakeheads
X-Posure

The snarling Glaswegians bring the fire and fury of their debut album 'Amphetamine Ballads' into the XFM studios as they perform for two nights this week. They'll play 'Memories' and 'Bullfighter'.

▶**LISTEN** XFM, 10pm, April 30–May 1

Debbie Harry
Sounds Of The '80s

The Blondie frontwoman joins Sara Cox to reminisce about the '80s, revealing some of her personal highlights of the decade.

▶**LISTEN** BBC Radio 2, 10pm, May 3

Debbie Harry

Revolution Radio with Jolyon Rubenstein

The presenter of BBC Three series *The Revolution Will Be Televised* hosts a new show exploring the world of protest songs, including the likes of MIA and Public Enemy, and reveals the stories behind the songs.

▶**LISTEN** BBC 6Music, 12pm, May 5

Toy
X-Posure

John Kennedy welcomes the east London psych band into the XFM studio following their biggest headline show to date at London O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire last month. They'll play 'As We Turn' and 'Conductor' from their second album 'Join The Dots' and discuss the making of record.

▶**LISTEN** XFM, 10pm, May 5–6

THINGS WE LIKE
This week's objects of desire

REISSUE
Life Without Buildings – 'Any Other City'

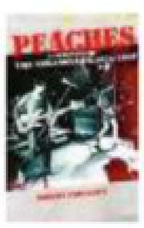
The cult Glaswegian trio reissue their one and only album on Rough Trade.

▶**BUY** £29.99, Rough Trade

DVD
When Björk Met David Attenborough

The musician and presenter investigate the connection between music and nature in this documentary.

▶**BUY** £9, amazon.co.uk



BOOK
Peaches: A Chronicle Of The Stranglers 1974–1990

Explore the punk group's controversial and rich history in this new book.

▶**BUY** £14.99, waterstones.com

BOOK
Elvis The King

Explore the rock'n'roll megastar's career in pictures with this book collated from the Graceland archives.

▶**BUY** £14.99, waterstones.com

ROGER SARGENT, RICHARD JOHNSON, LAURA PALMER, REX, DEAN CHALKLEY

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NME CROSSWORD

■ Compiled by TREVOR HUNGERFORD

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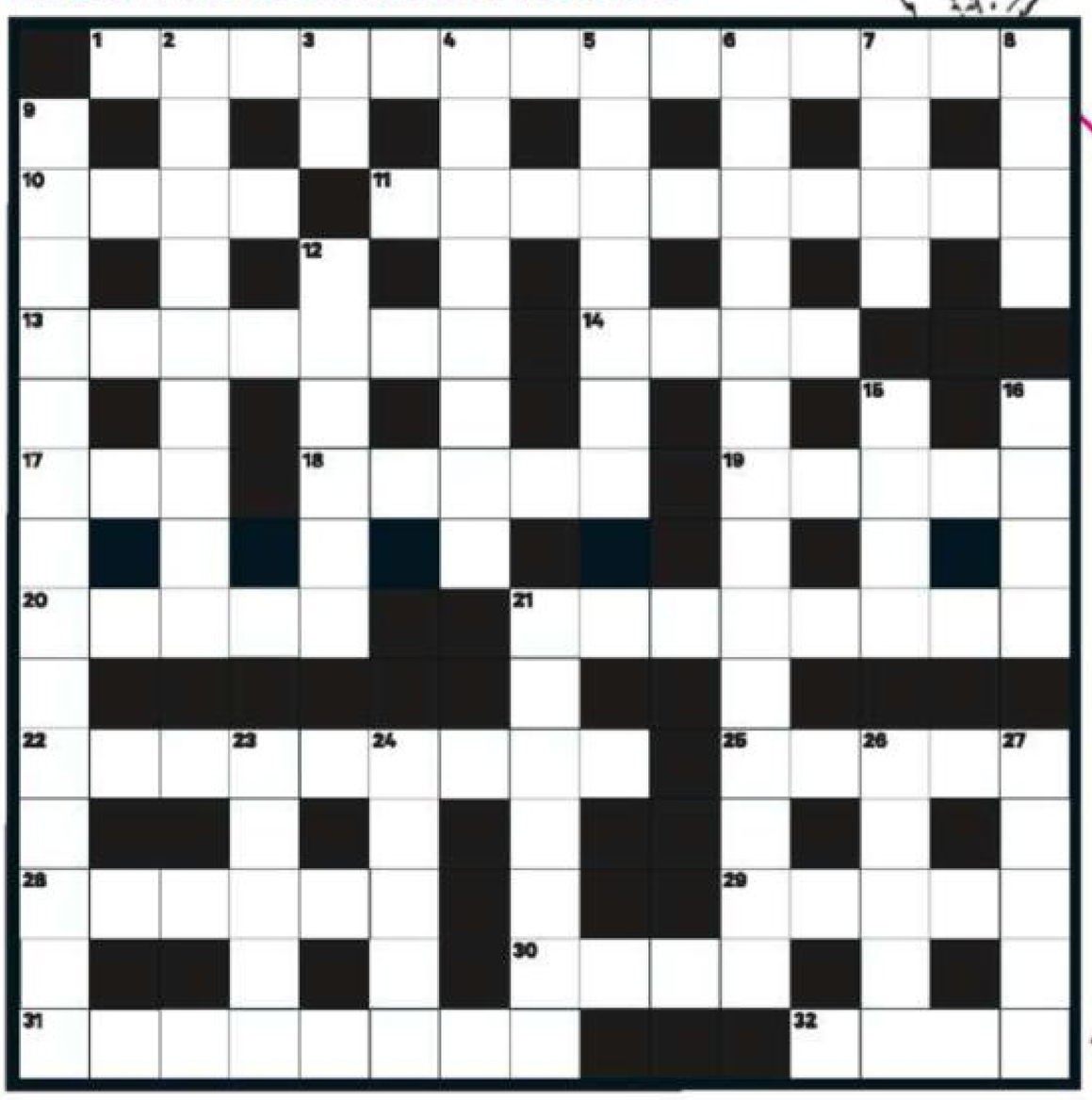

CLUES ACROSS

1+10A Maybe 'It's Not Over Yet' but it's now or never (5-2-2-5-4)
11 The oldest went crazy for The 1975 (6-4)
13+22A OK, everybody stop looking, I've found that Katie Melua album (4-3-3-6)
14 (See 5 down)
17 Poison ___, Cramps bassist who was a bit of a creep (3)
18 Funeral song from Death In Vegas (5)
19 (See 29 across)
20 *"I was a _____, I was a docker, I was a railway man between the wars"*, Billy Bragg (5)
21 *"Happiness, more or less, it's just a change in me, something in my liberty"*, 1997 (5-3)
22 (See 13 across)
25 It's 21 years old and it's still the current sound of The Smashing Pumpkins (5)
28 Kasabian's kingdom (6)
29+19A Whether or not I'm going to get something from Daughter (2-3-5)
30 Mull Historical Society were unable to make a profit in music (4)
31 Each spot somehow shows an album by Queen (3-5)
32 A bit of Gossip in the middle of doing 'The Lambeth Walk' (4)

CLUES DOWN

2 A-ha mainly wrong about Band Of Skulls (9)
3+12D Yo! Record remix for folk/blues musician (2-6)
4 Will Ed Sheeran soon be viewing the ashes of his career? (1-3-4)
5+14A Buddy Holly song that kept on going after The Rolling Stones covered it (3-4-4)
6 A similar 24 hours was spent getting the Elbow (3-3-4-4)
7 He had a catchy piece of music for New Order (4)
8 Paid by tenant to Neil Tennant (4)
9 I'll need to floss these Circa Waves out (5-2-2-5)
12 (See 3 down)
15 They arrived from LA in 2012 to be here 'Forever' (4)
16 A bit of a fake ending to That Petrol Emotion single (4)
21 I'll get into a terrible clue for this Little Richard song (7)
23 Maybe they needed pads as they were 'Wincing The Night Away' (5)
24 Barenaked Ladies have included a Duran Duran album (5)
26 Strange yodel to come from keyboard player with Pulp (5)
27 Producer, Killing Joke bassist and Paul McCartney's Fireman cohort (5)

MARCH 29 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1 Everyday Robots, 9 Go-Go's, 10 Oh! Whiskey, 11 Ill, 12+31A Last Night On Earth, 13 Husbands, 15 Fester, 17 Closer, 19 Recovery, 22 Cyndi, 24 PiL, 26 Siggi, 29 SOS
DOWN 1 English Oceans, 2 Eagulls, 3 Yes Please! 4 Aroused, 5 Rewind, 6 Bring Me To Life, 7+21D Take To The Skies, 8+20A Ryan Adams, 16+30A Royal Scam, 18+27A Oranges And Lemons, 22 Ciara, 23 Nude, 25+14D I'm Not Sorry, 28 MIA

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QUIZ

■ Compiled by ALAN WOODHOUSE (answers on page 67)

1 Matthew Healy is the frontman for which UK band?

2 Which member of Klaxons recently completed the London Marathon?

3 Which Rolling Stones track was co-written by Marianne Faithfull?

4 What was Sonic Youth's first UK Top 40 hit?

5 Which Hole single features a picture of a young Kurt Cobain on the sleeve?

6 Which Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine (top right)

album reached Number One in the UK?

7 Which legendary band's past members have included Mark Evans, Simon Wright and Colin Burgess?

8 In which London venue was the live intro to Public Enemy's 'It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back' album recorded?

9 The Clash's bassist Paul Simonon features on which Bob Dylan album?

10 Who links The Black Keys, Beck and Gorillaz?

11 Which British singer's 2008 autobiography was called *Renegade*?

12 What was the name of the official England song Embrace recorded for the 2006 World Cup?

13 According to the *This Is It* documentary, what song was Michael Jackson planning to start his 2009 comeback shows with?

14 Which Verve song is reputedly about Noel Gallagher?

15 In which British city did The Velvet Underground kick off their brief reunion tour in 1993?

THE NME COVER THAT I GONE AND DONE

■ by CHRIS SIMPSONS ARTIST

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"It's not fucking with the legacy, it's *creating* the legacy"

Pete Doherty

The Libertines are reforming to play the biggest gig of their lives in Hyde Park. But is this the "reverential reunion proper" or are they only in it for the money? Matt Wilkinson tracked down all four members to find out

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PHOTOS: ROGER SARGENT

"For me, the right reasons are, can we do it? Do people want to do it? Would it be a good thing to do? And I don't fucking know. I'm not saying for a second that it's without a colossal risk, doing this..." Carl

"We are totally putting our legacy on the line. We can't play the music half-heartedly. If they're going to be half-arsed about it then what's the fucking point? Playing isn't the problem with this band. It's everything else that's the problem." Gary

"Au contraire, Rodders. Au contraire." Pete

The previous reunion at Leeds Festival, 2010

Pete Doherty is giddy with excitement. "It's all going ahead," he says brightly, talking twice as fast as usual. "I'm dead excited. All flushed with confidence and faith anew. I spoke to him [Carl] yesterday. Everyone's grown up a bit, to be honest. Here, shall I play you a bit of 'Vertigo'?"

The Libertines are well and truly back, but not as you know them.

Last week, at the moment the worst-kept secret in indie was confirmed – that Pete Doherty, Carl Barât, Gary Powell and John Hassall were reforming to play the biggest gig of their lives in front of 65,000 people this summer at Hyde Park – all four members of the band couldn't have been much further apart. Pete is in Hamburg, recording a new solo album. Carl's in London, hungover from his brother's wedding the day before, Gary's playing with Ed Harcourt in Shanghai and John's recording with his new band in Sweden.

A planned press conference, where they were set to unite to announce it all, was scuppered in the wake of, as Carl puts it, "Mossad getting involved" – aka Pete letting the news slip to an Israeli journalist during a phone interview the previous week.

Within hours, the story spread like wildfire and *NME* was receiving late-night phone calls from the band's management. The following day, I spent eight hours in total on the phone with all four Libertines. The aim? To piece together how, exactly, after four years of stalemate after reuniting to play Reading and Leeds in 2010, plus two dates at London's Forum, the band had got themselves into a position where they're not only talking, but marching towards a landmark gig that, if certain band members have their way, might include choirs and acoustic segments.

But, as expected with The Libertines, the truth is almost always stranger than fiction...

"The only way I can get to see Carl is to agree to do these gigs. So I can at least get a word in between songs onstage." Clearly, Pete is on a mission to enliven proceedings from the very start of the conversation. For over two hours, he talks me through everything, from money to lyrics to drugs to Peaches Geldof to antique guns to new songs, old songs, stolen songs, unfinished Libertines songs and even unwritten songs (at one point he puts the phone down, picks up a guitar and begins work a brand new one right there and then, and it sounds fantastic). He's got a lot to say about his and Carl's relationship, too.

"Don't listen to what I said before," he says. "It's all good with Carl at the minute. He's grown up a bit. The way he talks to me, I can see it... his face is evolving somewhat. He's lost a bit of the crippling darkness and weariness in relation to me. I love him."

Yesterday, he continues, the two singers spoke on the phone, getting onto the subject of new Libertines material: "We were talking about doing some new songs. Or even better,

The case for
They're a filthy thrill

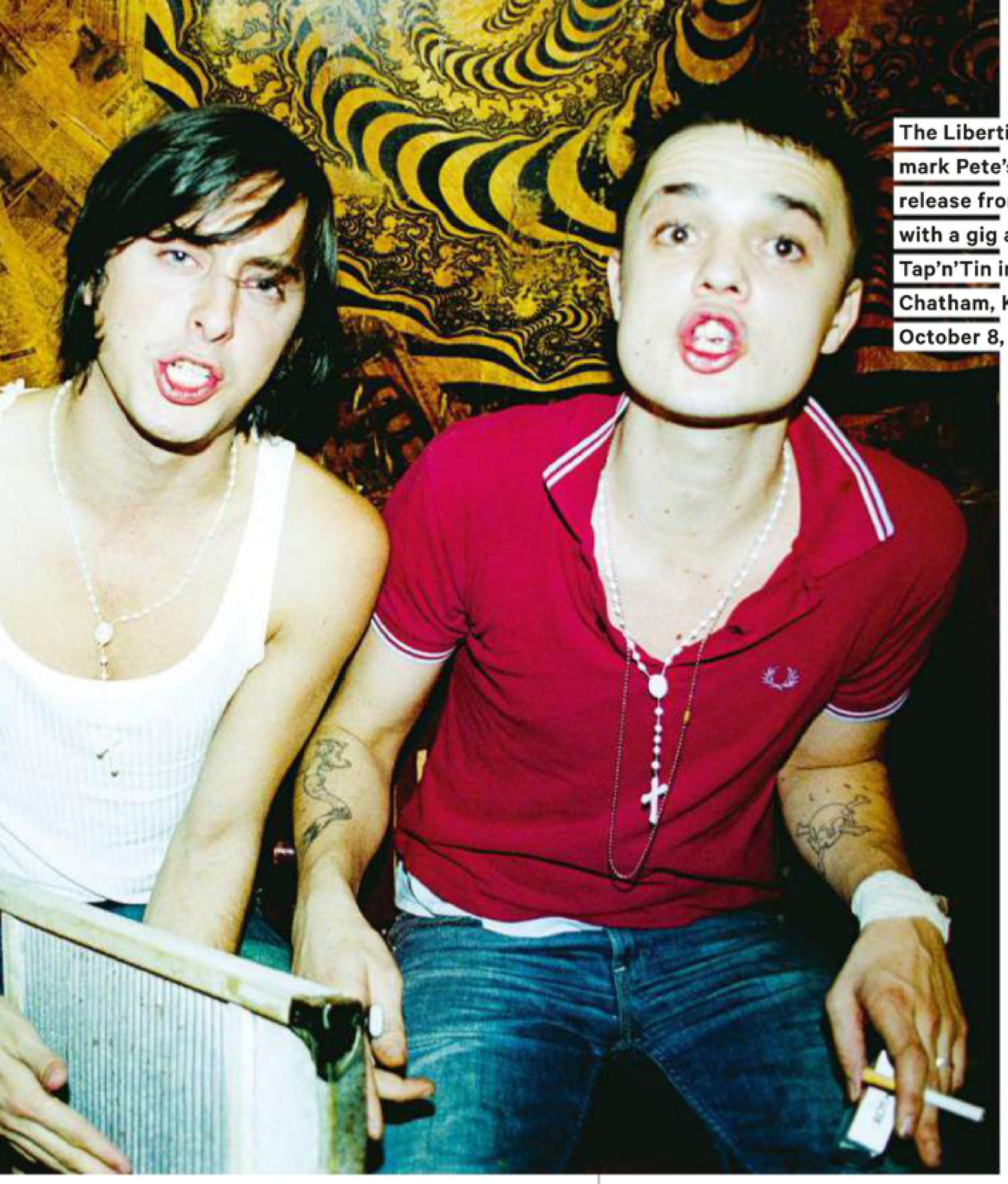
Tom Howard (NME Assistant Editor): When The Libertines come onstage at Hyde Park in July, they'll be greeted by tens of thousands of people who can't believe what they're seeing. Before Carl fluffs a chord or Pete forgets a lyric, there will be a surge of raw emotion in the crowd. To this day, The Libertines are a rock band with that rare thing: utter devotion from their fans.

These devotees are hooked in by the drama and emotion that exists between two men who despise and adore each other, but made a pair of albums that touched people more deeply than most acts ever do. They're not a band, they're an ongoing romantic tragedy, and the connection they have with their fans makes every one of us a character in it. Hyde Park is the next episode.

It won't be perfect, and there will be bum notes, fudged solos and mistimed yelps. This is the whole point of The Libertines. Pete's destructive habits became fatal for the band in 2004 and have eaten away at his relationship with Carl as well as John and Gary, but they're also what make the band such a filthy thrill.

I saw one of their 2010 reunion shows and was surprised when it brought a tear to my eye. It wasn't a reformation, it was a public display of a fragile relationship being temporarily healed. Tracks such as 'Don't Look Back Into The Sun' and 'Time For Heroes' were so potent that somehow, for that brief moment, the nasty past became irrelevant.

Hyde Park will be the same for anyone who feels something when Pete and Carl sidle up to a microphone together and sing 'Can't Stand Me Now', the words and their vocals as charged with poisoned love as they were a decade ago. They meant every word then, they meant every word in 2010 and they'll mean every word in July.



The Libertines mark Pete's release from prison with a gig at the Tap'n'Tin in Chatham, Kent, October 8, 2003

finishing some old songs that we always knew should have been on 'Up The Bracket' if we could have been arsed. I could hum them and Carl would know about them."

All four Libertines confirm that in theory they're up for writing new material, although they each stop short of saying it'll definitely happen. There is no studio time booked, and the closest we get to any kind of affirmation on album three is this, courtesy of Carl but delivered by Pete: "He said this to me: 'It's not about dusting off your uncle's old MG and taking it for a spin – you may as well get the fucker a new stereo while you're at it.'"

"We're just talking, you know? I'm going to meet Pete next week, and you never know, we might play something," says Carl. "Really, it's just lovely to speak to Peter again. It's always funny, all the same kind of emotions come up. With Peter, however long it's been... whatever the number of years or minutes, it just doesn't feel like I've ever stopped talking to him really." On the phone, the duo chatted fondly about "things that we haven't talked about for 18 years", like 'She Is Far', one of the first songs Pete ever wrote, and Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*.

"When you spend that much time growing with somebody, you're entwined, like ivy in a tree," Carl adds. "I won't say who's ivy and who's the tree, but [you do] become deeply ingrained and part of the same grain. It feels timeless when me and Peter talk."

Backstage at Leeds, 2010

While the prospect of new music is undoubtedly a good sign, it doesn't mean the band are home and dry. They haven't all been in the same room together since coming offstage at Reading four long years ago, something that's left Gary feeling particularly riled.

"Did I think we'd play together again? No," the drummer snaps, adding that he can't help but wonder whether people see the Hyde Park gig as just being a pay cheque for the band. (It's not, he insists.) In the Israeli interview, Pete declared that his prime motivation for being involved *was* the money (he owes child support for his 18-month-old daughter).

And John's take? "I don't want it to come across as though we're just playing a few shows for the sake of playing a few shows," he says. "I genuinely don't want to do that."

"It's filthy," Pete says of the money on the table. "I did actually say to the [Israeli] journalist how much we were getting [to reform] and they didn't print it, so they obviously got intercepted. Why don't you have a guess..."

More than last time?

"Last time was supposed to be £240k each after tax for me and Carl. But by the time they paid for all the buses and shit there was just a tax bill. This time I think we're getting half a million each, me and Biggles." ↦

The case against

It's a sexless marriage

Jenny Stevens (NME Deputy News Editor): I loved The Libertines. When their second album came out, I'd just moved away from the council estate where I grew up to start university. I hated the rich kids I was stuck with in halls almost as much as they hated me. I'd put 'Tell The King' on over and over again: "*You come up the hard way/And they'll remind you every day you're nothing*". I found solace in indie clubs, eyeliner smudging down my face as me and my mates would screech: "*We'll die in the class we were born/And that's a class of our own, my love*".

But that was then and this is now. The Libertines captured a specific point in history. And that's exactly where their brief but incendiary legacy should live: drenched in sweat in Whitechapel pubs, scrawled in blood in the city's crack dens and inked on the arms of their fans.

The romance of The Libertines always lived in their squandered legacy. The brotherhood between Pete and Carl, the likely lads who could have had it all but pissed it all up the wall in a haze of heroism and mistrust. They were not a band build for veteran status, playing vapid cash gigs in leafy London parks for credit card companies. Their volatility is what made them so brilliant, fuelled by the interminable tragi-farce of Pete and Carl, at one time so exhilarating, now as knackered as those dusty military jackets.

Reading and Leeds in 2010 felt like one last hurrah. This time, it's nothing more than a sexless marriage with kids to support and expensive habits to pay for.

That's why The Libertines shouldn't perform again. Because as a great lyricist once said, if you've lost your faith in love and music, the end won't be long. And sometimes it really is better to burn out than fade away.

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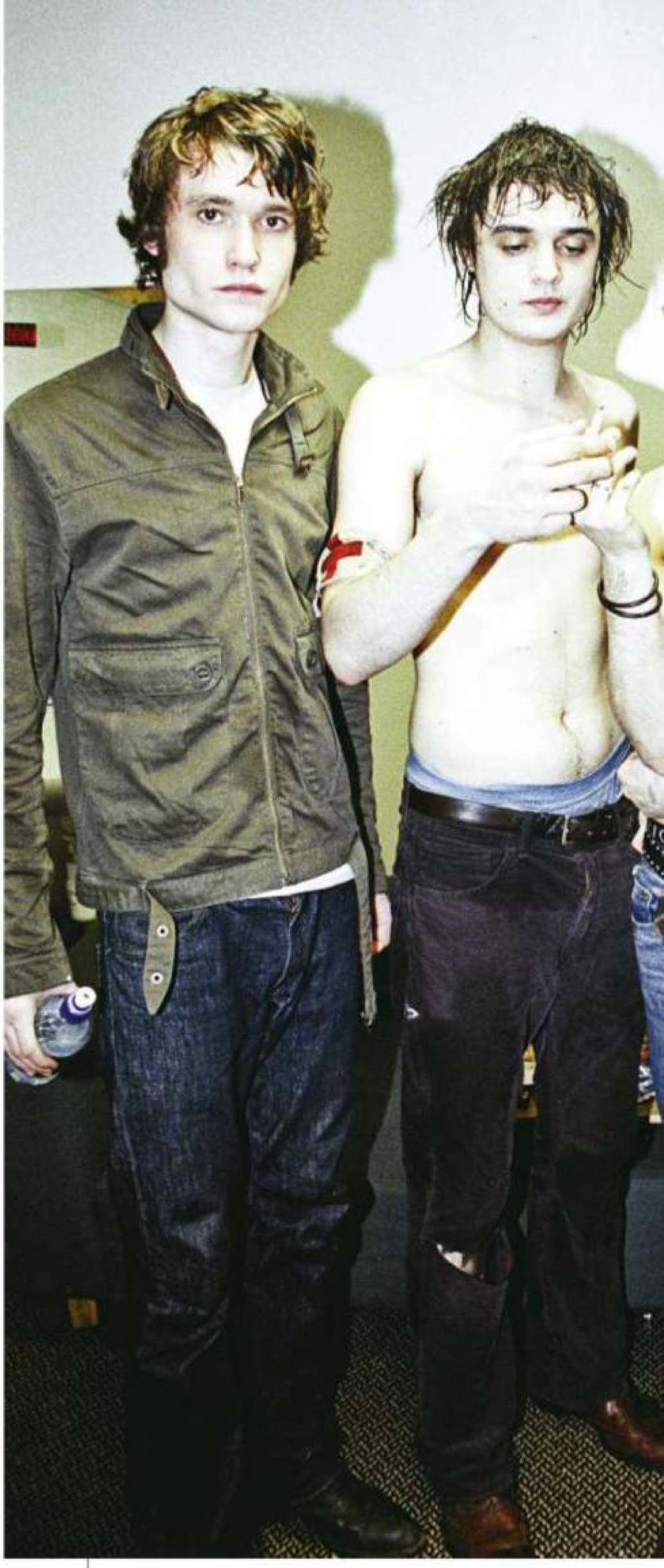
Cuff love: Carl and Pete on the road, September 2002



I ask him what he'd say to the people who'd argue that doing a gig for half a million quid isn't in the original spirit of the band, and he practically blows a gasket.

"Whoa. What the fuck? What do they think The Libertines did? After doing everything in the spirit of the band for five years, [the fans] sold out. They begged John to come back just because he was good-looking, even though he'd left us when we were at our most needy. And we signed to Rough Trade, right? *Purely* for the money. It's completely in the spirit of the band to play Hyde Park for the money! What the fuck are they talking about?! It's a fucking horrorshow. It just happens to be amazing rock'n'roll music."

He pauses for breath.

"Jesus Christ, man! Why'd you think I went mad? And ended up wrapped round steel beds in prison fighting for my life? With three Polish geezers and a huge fucking half-Italian/half-Jamaican. Why do you think all that happened? It was because we were fucking unprincipled and scurrilous, whatever that means, and completely motivated by money and fame and being part of a sickening charade that we far too late realised we weren't able to control. Even though we wanted to. And it will be the same this time – we won't be able to control it."

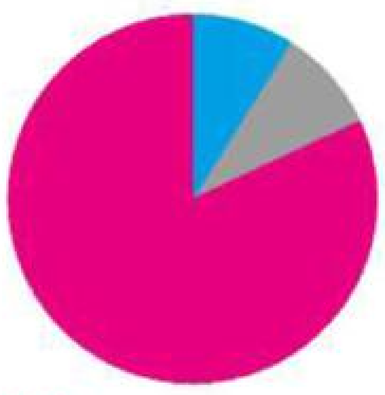
"But, at least," he says, with perfect comic timing, "at least I get to play 'Death On The Stairs' *really fucking loud* at Hyde Park."

"Pete's a very honest fellow," says Carl. "And I guess that takes it right out of the mouths of the people who are going to come sidling up with that one down the line."

"Ignore everybody else. It would leave a sour taste in my mouth," says Gary about the money situation. "In order for us to do ourselves justice we've gotta do more than just play one show. I'd liken it to a great football player having a great legacy and then taking up a management post and getting fired straight away. I mean, what's your legacy gonna be? Your legacy is gonna be that you got fired. You're a crap manager."

What you think

We asked: should The Libertines reform again?



Yes
Hand me my trilby **80.55%**

No
It'll be terrible **9.58%**

Not interested
No feelings either way **9.87%**

Legacy. It bugs the hell out of The Libertines. They're in that curious position of being able to play stupidly huge gigs now, without ever really having had the commercial success – hits – to back it up. And for Pete and Carl in particular, it eats up their insides.

Pete: "It's not like the Roses, or if The Smiths reformed or The Specials. All those bands, they were big-time at their peak back in the day. And England saluted them. It didn't salute us. We didn't have hits, you know? We weren't recognised as a band for our music. It was only by a few people, and since the split it's trickling through. Or in some cases like a boot in the door."

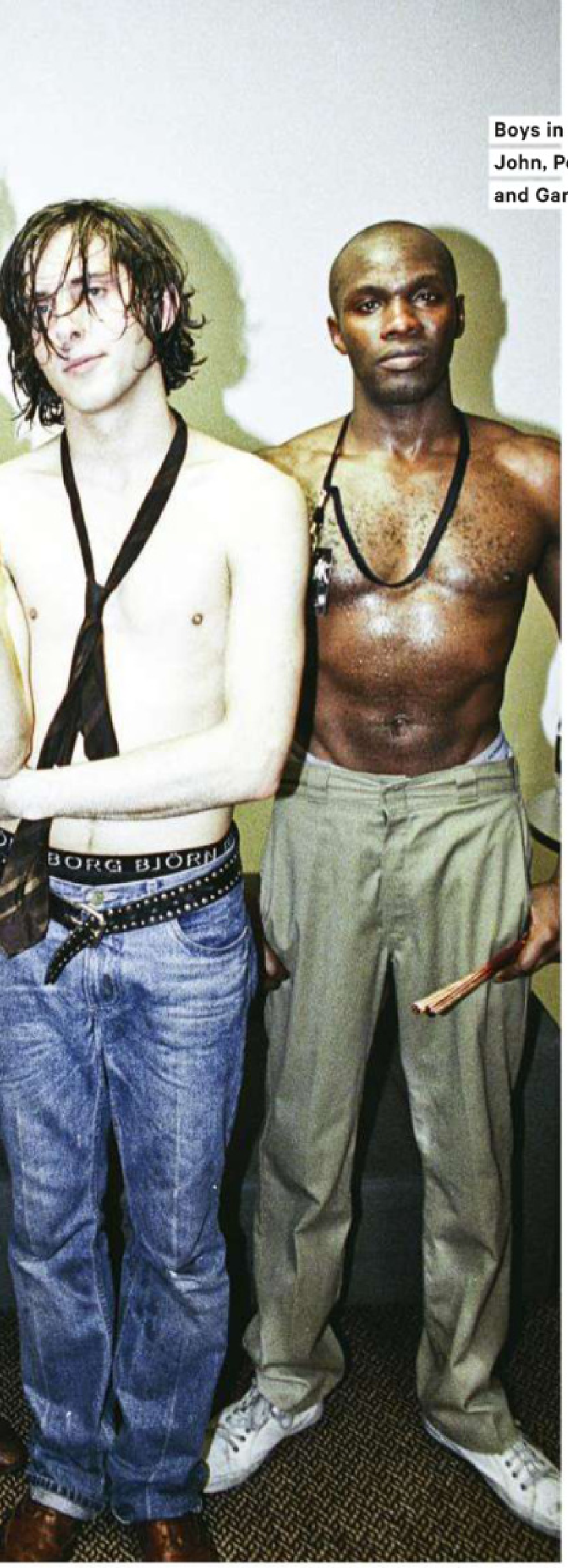
"I think we're still young, fresh, flowering and savage," says Carl. "That's the ingredients of The Libertines. Water under the bridge. You know, we worked so hard for such a long time with that band, doing what we did. You could quite rightly say that we never quite fulfilled what we should have done gig-wise. We should have those moments."

"*This* is it, *this* is the time when we get to actually play our music to people in the way we never did," continues Pete. "It's not fucking with the legacy, it's *creating* the legacy. I love it, and this is what we wanted – to play Hyde Park to the people. We never did and this is our chance."

In retrospect, all four would now admit that they got away with it by the skin of their teeth in 2010.

"We were all getting on great and I loved every minute that I spent with those guys, I loved hanging out with Pete," says Gary. "But we were all winging it, on a wing and a prayer. The thing that got us through it

RICHARD JOHNSON



Boys in the band: John, Pete, Carl and Gary

was the audience. And we shouldn't have to rely on them."

Pete: "When I watch the footage back, and I see the crowd... the immensity of the crowd, and the faces. There's a girl on someone's shoulders, she's got a lovely neckline and she's got Pete and Carl written on her cheeks. Just loads of kids going fucking apeshit, singing along to every word... And then hearing that we didn't really let them down – now and again we even got it right – when I did that, sat there on my own in the middle of the night, then I was able to see a positive in a way that maybe I didn't know how to [before]. It really was special... But I mean, Jesus, we needed security just to get through the security! And that's not even a joke. It all became about getting to the stage on time..."

This time, he adds, the band won't be needing any of the extra heavies. In fact, Pete wants "everything" to be different: "I'm actually gonna turn up and not just close my eyes and hope for the best. I'm gonna take control and make it work. I feel like I let the side down a bit [in 2010]. Only because we didn't rehearse like we were supposed to, and we literally were working out guitar lines in the dressing room before the gig. You know? That was almost the prequel to the sequential and hopefully reverential reunion proper."

While John jokes about getting a choir to join the band on some of their punkier numbers, they are serious about changing the dynamics of their set, with Gary adamant that he doesn't want to repeat the 2010 Reading and Leeds set-up: "We couldn't do another one – it would be almost as if you saw a great film and loved it and then saw the same film again four years later. I want to get John a lot more involved in what we're doing, and instrument changes; make it look a little more acoustic and go back to the realms of Pete and Carl's time when they first started playing."

"It's in the spirit of the band to play for money!"

Pete Doherty

"To be honest, I'd love to do that," Carl agrees, but ever the pessimist, he's keen not to let things get out of control. "I'd love to make it more interesting and give it more of a dynamic. But you know our band – that's more of an afterthought. Firstly, we've got to see how the four of us are ticking over..."

Next in the plan is for Carl and Pete to meet up in person – this week, hopefully. "I was saying that when I spoke to Pete; he seemed happier than I've known him to be in some time and he's in a really good place," Carl says. "The excitement was genuine and that's a beautiful thing – that's what's most important to me. If I'd seen that it hadn't been like that, then I'd probably have a few more doubts and less strength in it than I do right now."

Before finishing the call with Pete, I ask him if Carl's right – whether the excitement really is genuine. "Yeah," he says, seriously. "I really think the time is right. I had my fingers crossed that it was gonna happen, because I anticipated some kind of a backlash. But this should be like a new band."

It's stupidly easy, he tells me, to make The Libertines work now there's no animosity. The answer? "All we really have to do is just get together with our guitars..." ■

The big questions

Will they, won't they – and *should* they? NME on the biggest reunion of the year

Are they right to reform?

"If it bothers anyone that much, they don't have to come, you know? Don't come and be a fucking naysayer." So says Carl. Eighty-two per cent of NME.COM users polled said they thought the band should reform, so it doesn't look like he's got too much to worry about.

NME VERDICT **100%**

It's the reunion of the year, no question.

Will they write new material?

All four members have told *NME* they want to write new material, although Carl also said he's keen for the band to not get too far ahead of themselves. All we know is it's been 10 years since we've had an original Libertines song and it's about time that changed.

NME VERDICT **50/50**

If rehearsals go well, then the signs are looking good.

Are they just doing it for the money?

Pete's quotes about cash don't lie – and in some ways you have to admire his honesty. But both John and Gary say they think there's something deeper at play here too, with the latter telling us it would leave him cold if he thought they weren't doing this for the 'right' reasons.

NME VERDICT **60% yes**

Tough to make a call on, given Pete's quotes.

Are Pete and Carl getting on?

Everything in Libs-land rests on whether Pete and Carl are seeing eye to eye. At the moment – despite only speaking on the phone – it seems like they're in a better place than they've been for years. Carl's set to meet up with Pete this week...

NME VERDICT **80%**

Which for these two is, let's face it, bloody brilliant.

Will the band still be together by July 5?

And will they all even turn up? Of course, everyone looks at Pete as being the Libs' loose cannon. But John – easily the calmest and most collected member – says he's totally convinced there won't be any problems. "I don't have any doubt about that. Pete will give it 110 per cent. I just trust him and know that he will definitely, 100 per cent be there."

NME VERDICT **100%**

We're going with John.

COM

ARTIST

Despite his fight against extradition, Megaupload founder Kim Dotcom wants to rule New Zealand and have a Number One album. Dan Stubbs pays the file-sharing renegade a visit in his mansion

Mega man: "If I'm a criminal, so are the founders of Google, YouTube, Dropbox..."

On April 10, 2014, Kim Dotcom was hit with a lawsuit from the Record Industry Association of America and several major record labels. It claims he "willfully engaged in, actively encouraged, and handsomely profited from massive copyright infringement of music". It's unlikely to be worrying him much – they'll have to get to him first.

Cyber-fugitive Dotcom is the wasp at the music industry picnic. Megaupload, the online storage facility he launched in Hong Kong in 2005, provided the means for fans to easily share large files – an album's worth of MP3s, for example. It was unpoliced, meaning the sharing of copyrighted material was left to the discretion of the uploader. Unsurprisingly, it was wildly popular. At one point, it was the 13th most visited website in the world, accounting for one per cent of all internet traffic in North America.

Its associated video-streaming service, Megavideo, was worrying Hollywood too, and the film industry set out to take him down in dramatic fashion. In January 2012, two helicopters and 76 armed officers descended on Dotcom's New Zealand mansion, where they found him sitting in a panic room in his dressing gown. He was arrested on charges of copyright violation and racketeering, assets worth more than £10 million were seized and the 12 websites under the Mega umbrella – including one selling plus-size clothing – were closed.

Though placed under an extradition order that he's still fighting, Dotcom returned a year later with a new file-sharing facility, Mega. Then came plans for his own music-streaming service, Baboom. And then – bizarrely – he decided he would become a recording artist himself. The result is 'Good Times', an album that has no message beyond the title's platitude, repeated in 16 shades of banging, R&B-tinged EDM. "Always upbeat, always happy, always putting you in a good mood," he says. "That's what I want to achieve with my music."

"It depresses you when you are facing 80 years in jail"

Kim Dotcom

I meet Dotcom at an Auckland radio station where he is recording a series of commercials for his album – or, as he pronounces it on the mic, "al-boom". Though Dotcom hasn't lived in his native Germany since 2001, when he fled an investigation for insider trading, he retains a strong north German accent.

Technically, Dotcom doesn't play anything on the album, and doesn't sing either. "David Guetta doesn't do that," he shrugs. "Benny Benassi doesn't. Tiesto doesn't. I'm just like that." He describes his role as that of a "sound designer", applying the skills he used as a teenage computer hacker, painstakingly working soundwaves through programs and plug-ins. "I know what people will think," he says. "They'll think I just bought some people to do my music for me, but they're totally wrong."

Dotcom's reasons for doing the album, he says, are fourfold. He wanted to make something that will be loved by "millions of people around the world", and an album to speed along the German autobahn to (if he's ever able to leave New Zealand). He also saw it as therapy following the raid on his property and his month on remand in custody. "It depresses you when you are facing 80 years in jail," he says. Finally, he wanted to understand artists in order to create Baboom, which he believes "could be the salvation of the music business".

Dotcom thinks that in Baboom, he's come up with a "win-win" service for fans and musicians. Artists decide what their album is worth, and receive a cut of ad revenue even if they decide not to charge anything. Ad revenue is inflated because premium users install an adblocker that replaces web advertising when browsing the internet. In exchange, they get free Baboom credit allowing them guilt-free free downloads. "On Spotify, a million streams pays the artist 1,500 bucks [it's actually around US$7,000] – it's shit," says Dotcom. "If you get a million hits on Baboom, you will make at least three times more, if not five times." The main problem is convincing labels to get in bed with him. He says one major has been pressuring radio and distributors in an attempt to sabotage the 'Good Times' campaign. "It's a total abuse of power," he says. "They're not allowing me to be an artist." ↦

storemags.com

Kim Dotcom: "the salvation of the music buisiness"?

Today, Dotcom has hired two vocal artists to assist with his commercials, which follow a comic theme of farmyard takes on EDM. One of them – 'Sheepstep' – cracks Dotcom up with childlike glee. He laughs for minutes, then pauses: "Why does he say, 'Three bags full, yo'?" It's a Friday in January, the height of summer in New Zealand, but the towering Dotcom is in his unseasonal uniform of black hoody, black trousers and black Croc shoes. The plan is to take him to Big Day Out, where Arcade Fire and Snoop Dogg are playing, but Dotcom rubs his aching back and grumbles about being "mobbed" by fans.

Nevertheless, we travel to the site in his enormous SUV, which is glossy, black and boxy, leathery on the inside, combat-ready on the outside. Dotcom's LP is on the stereo and his face swooshes past on the side of a bus, an advert for fast broadband. I point it out but Dotcom dismisses it with a shrug, lost in the music. I later comment that it's not normal for people to listen to their own album. "It's still brand new!" he snaps. "Once I've heard it 100 times I'll probably not listen to it any more. OK, I *admit* it, I *love* my album." At the festival gates on the outskirts of Auckland, Dotcom is denied permission to drive straight into the VIP area and it's quickly decided that he won't be leaving the vehicle. As he speeds off, two girls point, mouths agape, then bowl over to ask if it's really him. "Maddest day *ever*!" they exclaim.

Since taking residence in New Zealand, Kim Dotcom has worked hard on his PR. A cab driver explains he likes Dotcom because he paid for the country's biggest-ever New Year's fireworks display, at a cost of half a million dollars. I ask Dotcom if he was trying to curry favour with the locals, but he explains that the motivation was selfish. "My whole life, I've always wanted to be *inside* the fireworks," he says. "Because I paid for it, I was allowed to watch from an EC130 helicopter 250 metres away from the explosions. It was absolutely epic." Here and elsewhere, Dotcom's answers are rarely what you'd expect to hear. Asked why he moved to New Zealand, he cites "nature. Peace. No nuclear power."

Over time, Dotcom managed to shift his public image from fearsome gangster to loveable oddball. Then he decided to seek power. He recently launched the Internet Party, which will field candidates in the country's next elections with policies including the repeal of the country's controversial spying legislation and the creation of a new, digital economy. And he's being taken seriously – the leader in the day's paper lauds him as "the breath of fresh air New Zealand politics needs". Part of the motivation is revenge: **"The injustice I have experienced has triggered my desire to go into politics and punish the people who did it [to me]," he says. Top of the list is Prime Minister John Key, so it's some surprise to find Key at Dotcom's mansion two days later. It's odder still to find Barack Obama, too.**

Dotcom has hired a Key lookalike and flown out America's premier presidential impersonator to record a series of party political broadcasts. The final scene involves him feeding them strudel. Dotcom claims to have been awake for 30 hours straight. His split ambitions – musical and political – are causing problems. Dotcom gave away 15,000 tickets for an album launch party that was due to take place tomorrow, with Snoop Dogg the rumoured special guest. Days ago, he received notice from his lawyers that such an event would be considered 'treating' (currying favour), a violation of New Zealand political law, and it was cancelled, with great contrition from Dotcom. It was intended to be a triple-purpose occasion, marking not just the release of 'Good Times' but the second anniversary of the raid on his home and his 40th birthday. "Old," he grumps. "I don't feel good about it."

Last year, on the same day, Dotcom hired actors to recreate the raid as he launched Mega. Marking the anniversary is his way of dealing with the trauma. He remembers feelings of "helplessness. Fear. They hit me and punched me and hurt me. They didn't let me see my kids or calm down my seven-months-pregnant wife. They were laughing and having fun, touring the house and asking how much I paid for things. There was no humanity."

Kim Dotcom's £13 million Auckland estate

Fundamentally, Dotcom thinks he's done nothing wrong. "I built a massive hard disk that was connected to the internet for everyone to use. How is that criminal?" he asks. "If I'm a criminal, so are the founders of Google, YouTube, Dropbox – all these guys." He says he's been scapegoated because his lifestyle and prior convictions make him an easy villain. "Who would have sympathy for someone who's done Gumball rallies and yacht parties with naked go-go dancers?" he asks. Tellingly, Dotcom sees Wikileaks founder Julian Assange and NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden as kindred spirits. He says they join him for video chats on specially encrypted channels: "We talk about how to encrypt the internet, how to beat the NSA surveillance with innovation, how to create the tools that people need to communicate privately."

Does he think people should be allowed to share copyrighted material? "Absolutely. Innovation always has to overrule copyright or patent rights," he says. True to his word, his own album is available for nothing – on

GETTY, REX

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Baboom. "I want as many people as possible to listen to it and like it and know my brand," he says. Easy enough for a millionaire to say. When pushed, Dotcom says he has sympathy for struggling artists. "I think if you download a song and listen to it 100 times, you are doing something unethical. Go and buy it already. But you know, a lot of albums these days have one or two hits and the rest is boring and shit."

Even with frozen assets, Dotcom is far from struggling. He rents New Zealand's most expensive private residence, a £13 million estate in Coatesville, Auckland, which he shares with his family and staff. Its 60 acres include a privet maze, pool and a lifesize, ornamental giraffe. The interior walls are decked with portraits of Dotcom: Dotcom and his wife, Dotcom on a yacht, Dotcom and a leopard. And there's a chrome coat of arms bearing the word 'Kimpire'. When the authorities raided, they seized supercars with licence plates including 'HACKER', 'STONED', 'GUILTY', 'MAFIA' and 'GOD'. Today, Dotcom insists it was all a joke. "I've never done drugs in my life, I've never once been drunk." He says he's a "boring guy" whose focus is on his five children and his wife, Mona, a Malaysian ex-model. He even asks if I'll remove the swearing from his quotes so his kids won't see it.

"I'm a lucid dreamer. When I dream, I'm in charge"
Kim Dotcom

It's just another aspect of Kim Dotcom's surprising character. A man with an astute business brain, he's prone to spending vast amounts of time on fruitless projects. He's the world's number-one player of *Call Of Duty: Ghosts*, a staggering achievement considering there are 40 million players across the globe, and something that's made him a celebrity in the gaming community. "People ask to play me and even if I shoot them 10 times in a row they think it's awesome," he says. I ask why a man with the capacity to generate great wealth would expend great effort on something that's ultimately a waste of time, and he explains it helps him enter an *Inception*-like dream state achieved through long periods of intense concentration. "I am a lucid dreamer," he says. "When I dream, I am in charge. If I jump off a bridge, I can fly. If I go into a bar, I can pick up a girl and I can fuck that girl."

Dotcom says he became "addicted" to lucid dreaming in his twenties. "I would be exploring space, seeing things in higher resolution than is possible with your eyes," he says. "You experience things that make you question everything in life. Am I visiting my energy past? Is this where I'm going when I'm dead? The gambling, the risk-taking, it was because I don't know fear due to the things I've experienced in my dreams." Dotcom's album could be seen as yet another of these great follies. The record exists in a vacuum. He's not able to tour owing to his bail conditions, and his single gig to date – the midnight slot at New Zealand's 25,000-capacity New Year's Eve gathering Rhythm And Vines – came with the condition that he pay for the festival's fireworks display.

Whether or not Dotcom clears his name, the Mega empire looks set to grow. I ask if he plans to take on Google. He scoffs and says, "Google is sitting on the internet. I want to do a new internet." He details wild plans for Meganet, a decentralised server network that's totally encrypted, private and self-policing. Uploading data, he says, will be like pouring a glass of water into the ocean: you can't remove the data because it's always in motion. "If you decided you want to pick up a knife and stab me right now, there's nothing that can stop you," he says. I suggest his bodyguards might disagree. "If you did it quickly enough, even they couldn't stop you. I want the internet to be like that, the real world, where people choose their own options."

I don't want to stab him, though. I leave feeling strangely warm towards the man. Driving away, I pause at the tollhouse. Scorched into the grass on a knoll, big enough to be seen from the air, is the word 'Mega'. Beneath it, a stream feeds into a pond where a cotton-tailed rabbit gambols along by the side of the water. Then a rat streaks past. It seems apt. There are two Kim Dotcoms: the comic outlaw of public renown and the quirky, razor-sharp, enthusiastic, ambitious man I meet. Not quite the dirty rat, but not quite the cuddly bunny either. ■

FULL STREAM AHEAD

The subscription music services going head to head

PonoMusic
FRONTED BY: Neil Young
USP: Vinyl-like sound thanks to higher quality audio files – plus a proprietary PonoPlayer to stick in your pocket.
PROS: Audio quality. "Once you hear this, you can't go back," says Young.
CONS: You might not even notice the difference.
COST: Expected $15 to $25 (£9 to £15) per album download

Baboom
FRONTED BY: Kim Dotcom
USP: It's the audio streaming service that's fair to artists, according to Dotcom.
PROS: Artists choose what they charge for their music.
CONS: Premium users are required to download software that puts Dotcom-approved ads on their screens.
COST: Varies

BeatsMusic
FRONTED BY: Jimmy Iovine, Dr Dre and Trent Reznor
USP: Like Spotify, but with emphasis on curation and sound quality.
PROS: Editors and guest programmers bring a human touch to the platform's recommended listening.
CONS: The feeling it's all a marketing ploy for Beats Audio headphones.
COST: $10 (£6) for a month's subscription

I'LL BE YOU

StoreMags.com

On her fourth album, Sharon Van Etten takes an unflinching look at the trials of long-term love and personal anxiety. She lays her revelations bare to Laura Snapes

PHOTOS BY GUY EPPEL

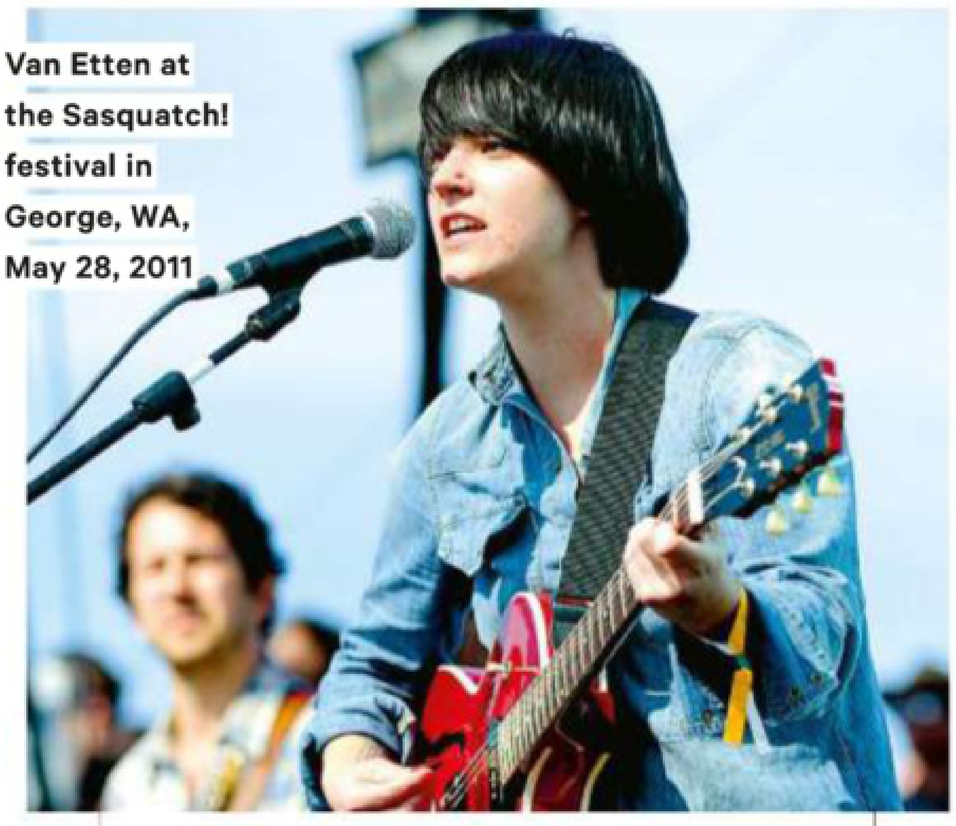
There's plenty to distract while waiting for Sharon Van Etten on the stoop of her West Village apartment on a late March lunchtime. Every other shop on her icy street corner (it's -4°C) is a sex shop aimed at the hen party trade: there are inflatable, chocolate and curly straw penises, and crotchless lacy underwear that looks like an invitation to rash city. She arrives five minutes later, swaddled by a big coat, apologising for being late back from buying toilet roll. It's fine, I say, motioning at the benignly seedy surroundings. "I needed to be near the buttplugs," she says, deadpan, unlocking the door to her building.

The smudgy-eyed 33-year old is a bit hungover from her older sister's bridal shower at their parents' home in New Jersey last night, a more family-friendly affair than anything her neighbouring shops cater for. It's Sharon's last week at home in her minuscule one-bedroom apartment, where she's lived since December, before leaving for a European press trip to promote her new, fourth album, 'Are We There'.

She has a lot to squeeze in: seeing family and friends, rehearsing with Heather Woods Broderick, her backing singer/confidante, all while dealing with the very recent end of the relationship chronicled in the record she's having to talk about as if it's a complete artefact, rather than a constantly changing state of affairs. Something that can't be cured, but managed.

At the beginning of the touring cycle for her 2012 album, 'Tramp' (her first for Jagjaguwar), Sharon and Christian, a barman and DJ, committed to each other for the first time, following seven years of being on-again-off-again and drifting in and out of each other's lives. They "weren't ready to be together", she says, but on the new album's first song, 'Afraid Of Nothing', she sings about knowing that they'd "*be in trouble for a long time*" from the minute they met.

It was bad timing for a breakthrough: the rugged 'Tramp' received the most attention of any of Sharon's albums to date, keeping her on tour and away from him for nine months a year, two years in a row, as dates were extended and bands like Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds invited her to support them. "Stupidest thing," she says as we huddle around her small writing/dining table. "No, just kidding. It was amazing. And it put us through the wringer. I was writing during that time, and so of course it's what this record is going to be about." ↦



Van Etten at the Sasquatch! festival in George, WA, May 28, 2011

Seven days ago, however, they separated, remembering how hard it was to try and be together during that tour rather than endure it again. 'Are We There' serves as a constant reminder of that pain. Sharon has always written songs about heartache; although she started out as a boy-crazy teenager in love with rock goofs Weezer and Ween, she later came to appreciate the cathartic nature of songwriting, discovering Leonard Cohen, John Cale and Jeff Buckley, along with her own voice.

On this record, she's bloodletting with a blunt knife: song titles like 'I Love You But I'm Lost', 'Break Me' and 'Your Love Is Killing Me' shine an often unforgiving light on what it is to live and die by someone else's love, and the accompanying shame, anxiety and pride. "*Break my legs so I won't run to you/Steal my soul so I am one with you/From a distance, I am onto you/But I'll stab my eyes out so I can't see*", she cries on the latter, a raging, Morricone-indebted torch song. It's a dramatic record, more so than the warm-hearted Americana of 'Tramp', leaving space for her wearied but powerful voice to fray at the edges.

Although 'Are We There' is often incredibly brutal lyrically, it's an "ongoing joke" that she and Christian don't talk about the words; the distance is the problem, rather than her subject matter. They first met when she played an acoustic show in at the New York bar where he worked, just after she moved to the city. He was the only one listening – a galvanising moment. "*What's with the eyes in the back of the room?/The only ones shining, the only ones I had met in years*", she eventually wrote in 'Give Out', on 'Tramp'. As soon as he realised she was writing about him, he opted never to ask about the content of the songs, quickly becoming aware of how hard-won Sharon's free expression was.

As an emotionally inarticulate kid, her mum gave her a notebook to try and work out her feelings. When she and Christian met, Sharon was still a few years off releasing her debut album, 2009's 'Because I Was In Love', tentatively playing shows and giving away handmade CD-Rs of songs she'd recorded in her parents' basement. The Van Ettens had been estranged for almost five years while Sharon was in a long-term, emotionally abusive relationship in Tennessee with a man who would break her guitar and tell her that her music was worthless. She eventually ran away, turning up unannounced on her parents' New Jersey doorstep one Thanksgiving. They began repairing their relationship while Sharon learned how to live again.

"I was so broken," she says. "That relationship was really controlling and I felt like I had to de-program myself. I didn't know what I liked to eat. I didn't know what I wanted to listen to. I didn't know what I wanted to do every day. I didn't know who I was."

In an attempt to regain some semblance of normality, Sharon signed up for part-time classes in psychology and photography at the local college. She takes a box of her old black-and-white photos from the table – she's planning to release an annotated book of them – and starts sifting through. Many of them depict her reconnecting with people she had barely spoken to in 10 years: there's her sister with her fiancé (Sharon's the middle child of five siblings); shots from a trip to Chicago with her mum, where they went in search of her childhood home; her friend Erica, who died last year. "See, I'm still learning how to frame things," she says, flipping past lively pictures of Puerto Rican Day Parade. "I know I'm not a good photographer, but these moments are so important."

The photo on the cover of 'Are We There' comes from this set. It's of her best friend from Tennessee, Rebecca, engaged in their usual post-work ritual. After finishing up at Books A Million, a bookshop-cum-café, they'd buy a packet of Winston Lights and two Diet Cokes, take a drive, listen to music and scream out of the car windows. This photo is from their last such excursion; Rebecca was moving back to Indiana to be with her family, though first she had to moonlight Sharon to the airport in the middle of the night, facilitating her escape.

"I gave the photo to Christian when I first met him," says Sharon, propping the mounted shot against the wall. "It was the first gift I ever gave him. I never saw it again – we've been on and off for so long that I thought he threw it away. Then it resurfaced when I moved in the summer – pulled it out from under the bed with everything I'd ever, ever given him."

It's a lot to expose, especially for a woman who purposefully cut her hair into a long bowl cut when she moved back from Tennessee so that she didn't have to make eye contact with anyone. But Sharon's confident expression on 'Are We There' stemmed from another moment of insecurity. 2012's 'Tramp' was produced by The National's Aaron Dessner, and featured members of Beirut and The Walkmen among others. She emphasises what an amazing, fortuitous experience it was. But ultimately, she fretted that the record's success was only down to its famous guest stars, overshadowing her songwriting. "It freaked me out, and made me ask myself questions about why I'm doing this," she says. "That's why, yeah, for this new record, I wanted produce it myself, with my friends. I'm more confident."

After the upheaval of the 'Tramp' tour, she once again did her best to infuse the recording sessions for 'Are We There' with a sense of normality, taking a regular commute to work: catching the subway to the Port Authority, then a bus to Weehawken, New Jersey. There, she and her band recorded at Hobo Sound, a studio owned by Grammy Award-winning producer Stewart Lerman, who offered gentle guidance to the first-time producer.

We take the same journey today, Sharon holding *NME*'s photographer's hand on the bus as he talks about a recently ended relationship; her collaborators have often said that they'd do anything for her, but she also exudes a sincere sense of comfort and trust. Back in her flat, she lent me a copy of Joan Didion's *The Year Of Magical Thinking*, saying she'll see me again soon even though we live thousands of miles apart; there's a note from Mackenzie Scott, aka Torres (who sings backing vocals on 'Are We There'), in the front, thanking Sharon for her friendship since the young Nashville musician moved to New York.

At Hobo Sound studio in New Jersey

ALBUM BY ALBUM

Because I Was In Love
Language Of Stone 2009

"Please don't take me lightly", she pleaded in a wounded, reasoning tone on her hushed debut, comprised solely of acoustic guitar, keys, and a few overdubbed harmonies. The title serves as the "what are you gonna do?" answer to the difficult emotional situations she confronts here: from moments of weakness to the sound of steely resolve.
▶BEST SONG 'For You'

Epic
Ba Da Bing 2010

More ferocious than its predecessor, she introduced harmonium, electric and pedal steel guitar plus a sense of fearlessness to this mini-album, released through the label where she once interned. It contains the gorgeous 'Love More', which Bon Iver and Aaron Dessner covered live onstage in Cincinnati, leading to the creative partnership that underpinned 'Tramp'.
▶BEST SONG 'DsharpG'

StoreMags.com

"I'M LESS CENSORED EVERY TIME I DO A RECORD, NOT FREAKING OUT"

SHARON VAN ETTEN

He takes us into the live room for a demonstration of two key instruments on 'Are We There'. The first is a baby grand piano played by John Lennon at NYC's famed Record Plant studio, which Lerman rescued from an upstate soundstage that was flooded in Hurricane Sandy. The second is a bobble-head, animatronic James Brown, which yowls a tinny version of 'I Got You (I Feel Good)' when its feet are pressed – irritating, but useful for diffusing a vortex-circling studio crisis, says Sharon.

Tramp
Jagjaguwar 2012

Newly signed to Jagjaguwar and featuring numerous NYC indie luminaries, 'Tramp' was recorded in Dessner's Brooklyn garage while Sharon couch-surfed around New York City, giving the record its title. It expanded Sharon's vision again, adding space and rockier hooks to her oblique confessionals.
▶BEST SONG 'In Line'

Are We There
Jagjaguwar 2014

By some stretch the 'biggest' record she's ever made, 'Are We There' opens with an almost Hollywood-worthy swell of strings, peaking to huge crescendos on the likes of 'Break Me'. Leaving behind the Tennessee relationship, it's more emotionally tumultuous than any of her previous records, demonstrating a painful understanding of the challenges inherent in long-term love.
▶BEST SONG 'Your Love Is Killing Me'

We step off the bus into pretty desolate surroundings: there's a Thai restaurant, a strip bar and a petrol station that Sharon would frequent during recording, earning herself the studio nickname 'Snacks'. As a *Sopranos* nerd, I ask whether she noticed the Mafia's presence growing up in Clinton, an hour's drive away. She nonchalantly recounts stories of people getting whacked, including a woman who was shot in the back while she washed up, but says her family never worried as the targets weren't random. "My parents weren't scared I was going to run away and join the mob," she says, laughing.

The studio is hidden in an industrial walk-up behind the petrol station. Inside, Sharon gives us a tour, taking us inside the bathroom-cum-kitchen, which features in the last song on 'Are We There', 'Every Time The Sun Comes Up'. Initially, she just had the gorgeous, soulful chorus and never found time to finish it, but one free night in the studio, her band convinced her to try ad-libbing the whole thing, which is how it ended up containing the defiantly drawled line, "*I wash your dishes but I shit in your bathroom*".

"We smoked, we drank, we were hanging," she recalls. "We broke a glass, we were clumsily trying to clean it up in our silly states. Took a shit in the bathroom, did the dishes, all these things like that while we were tracking. I didn't think we were going to keep any of these lyrics, but it ended up being really fun. And I don't write fun songs, so that was cathartic."

'Your Love Is Killing Me' wasn't the kind of song she could re-track over and over. "Singing it once takes the wind out of me, every time," she says. "But I'm less censored every time I do a record. I'm like, 'I think this is OK. I don't think I'm freaking out. The only one I'm freaking out is me.' This is really intense stuff to write and sing about. Almost everyone I'd worked with [on records] up until that point, I'd just met. But I'd been touring with my band for two years, and I had this comfort level I'd never had before. We're like a family – I'd do anything for them."

Just as we're about to leave the studio, Lerman appears from nowhere, a short man with a flat cap, round glasses and silver beard. "Hey, you!" she cries, as they embrace. "The record would be nothing without this guy," she insists while he tries to shrug it off. They first worked together on Sharon's contribution to the *Boardwalk Empire* soundtrack, and then a Christmas collaboration with Rufus Wainwright. If it hadn't been for Christian convincing her to ask, they would never have worked together on the record. When they finished recording the album, Lerman looked her in the eye and said, "This record may be over, but you and me, we've got a lot of stuff to do. This is just the beginning."

On the bus on the way back to the Port Authority, she likens making the album to "going to war", only half-joking. She's always said that songwriting has been her therapy (in addition to bouts of actual therapy), but it sounds like she has to subject herself to reliving more pain to access that clarity. That's where the outside world comes in, why she shares this intensely personal material with an ever-growing audience. "I have this great hope," she says, "and it sounds kind of high and mighty, but if I'm helping people, great, you know? That's why I'm doing it. Because otherwise it's just for me."

Without wanting to freak out her record label, she talks about being in transition, eventually wanting to have a life and "live somewhere" – not a tiny flat with a single bed – and have a regular job. "There's a part of me that wants to go back to school and become a therapist," she says. "And help people in a different way, where I *know* I'm helping somebody. I've been in and out of therapy for years to try to understand what I've been through and how it affects me now. You feel happier, even if you're going through a hard time, just to be able to talk and relate to people. At certain times in your life, you may not realise that you're completely blocked off to the world. I meet people that are so closed off, and it makes me really sad. You know, I just... I want you to live. I want you to be happy." ■

The truth is out there... Black Francis keeps his eyes peeled for extra-terrestrials

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS | 3 MAY 2014

FROM THE VAULTS

Cock and bull stories

NME, JULY 21, 1990

Lost in Mitteleuropa, Pixies' Black Francis tells Stuart Maconie about astronaut school, UFOs, and why being a Beatle must have sucked. Now, what does it take to get a beer round here? Photos: Kevin Cummins

"Breast of chicken 'Grandmother's style'!... with a glass of Bull's blood!"

Even the menu can get a little weird when you're thousands of miles from home, having spent your nights driving through strange lands, pockets crammed with unfathomable currency, when you spent the last evening in the throes of a minor international incident, and today you have clambered on statues and got a little *relaxed*, shall we say. Black Francis is confused.

"It's a glass of wine," I offer. Bavarian church bells peal out. The waiter licks his pencil. Black Francis is on holiday. Or to give him his more sensible name, Charles Michael Kittridge Thompson IV is on holiday. He's 'doing' Europe with his girlfriend in a rented car, unwinding from the punishing schedule that's seen the Pixies touring for nine months of the 12 and, when they weren't doing that, holed up in some recording studio or other. The glamour of the pop life masks a tiny million boredoms.

But for the Pixies, it was a schedule that paid off. It's only 40 or so months since Kim Deal was answering an ad in a Boston paper for a bass player in a 'Hüsker Dü/Peter, Paul And Mary' band. In the interim the Pixies became the kings of college rock, laureates of art-thrash. But today, with a single and album soon to be released, and a headline slot at Reading Festival, the Pixies stand on the verge of becoming something more than interesting. Whisper it, they're pop stars!

In the beginning I was suspicious of the Pixies. Their champions seemed to be dull neurotics of unreliable opinions. No Abba fans. Then I noticed sensible folk liked them too, but that didn't stop me getting left cold by 'Come On Pilgrim' and 'Surfer Rosa'. I couldn't see what all the fuss was about – this arid, shrieking paranoia, this soulless grind, produced by Steve 'Interesting' Albini. Sure, 'Gigantic' was an anthem, but when people told me it was 'sexy' I couldn't help but laugh. I had missed the whiff of greatness.

"Rock'n'roll should be like pornography"
Black Francis

All that changed with 'Doolittle'. Those wild and expansive claims didn't seem so wild any more. Some obsessives said that they had gone a little soft, made concessions to the mainstream. This is a good sign. What it meant was that the Pixies, up 'til then, had only threatened. Something truly new and thrilling. A vocabulary of their own that mixed the exhilaration of weirdo noise with the formality of the pop song. They sounded like the world's best-read garage band and a little more. Astonishingly, it made the Top 10, the real one. Something was very definitely afoot.

Which brings me to here, where Charlie Thompson pushes a shred of radicchio around his plate and says, falteringly, "Let me try and clear my head. I'm actually having a thought."

Though ostensibly on a get-away-from-it-all break, imminent new single 'Velouria' and a forthcoming album means even here in Munich he's having to entertain the continental press, check artwork and be intercepted by me. It's an amiable character in sweatshirt and ripped jeans, rounder and less menacing than the pictures sometimes imply, that greets me with a handshake in the bar of Hotel Hungaria. Can we get a beer? Yes, it will be brought to the table in seven minutes' time. Seven minutes? How reassuringly *vorsprung durch technik*.

He explains his somewhat dopey state by relating how he and his girlfriend Jean watched They Might Be Giants, whom he thinks very highly of, last night in Freiberg. Having hung around for the traditional post-gig drink, they then had to negotiate a strange land's road system by night, which naturally meant a night of wrong turnings, curses and sleep snatched in lay-bys. They are genial, nonetheless, and it is a pleasant evening but one that ends rather dismally. ↦

Black Francis in Munich, 1990

Back at the Hotel Hungaria, the year of study the barwoman put in at Tetchy School have not been wasted. She brings photographer Kevin Cummins the wrong drink and when this is pointed out, goes into a huff that the weather satellite probably picked up. Jokily, one of our party remarks, "What did we expect? Beer takes seven minutes." At this our genial hostess closes the bar. An unholy row breaks out with hand signals for the hard of hearing. The desk clerk threatens to call the police. A drink is not forthcoming. I slope off to bed. The civilised, bemused Charles is left unconvinced. He goes quietly to bed.

It's late and we're brooding in the political hangover from the night before. Still, the sun's out and the coffee's hot. In check workshirt and sneakers, Charles looks even more the sophomore... which, of course, he was before he high-tailed it to Puerto Rico, dropped out and came home to the drooling maw of rock'n'roll. He's spent the morning driving his little car across the city in search of photo opportunities and, on his return, we get together over lunch. It's an odd conversation, littered with wild digressions, eccentric alleyways, pregnant pauses. Yet its oddness is illuminating; a frail ribbon of woozy narrative among the clinking plates. I ask Charles about his mood. He tells me about his disrupted night. So, I ask him about the Pixies' mood.

"Good, I guess. We're in a good frame of mind. We're getting ready to do the rounds again. You have to face the fact that there's been a real process of standardisation in the music industry. It's all about circuits, about treadmills. Too bad it can't sometimes be a little more... sci-fi, you know? A little more futuristic. Like you imagine Ziggy Stardust's band might have been. Like the idea of rock'n'roll that you have inside your head."

I'm only half-sure I'm following this. This sets a pattern for the conversation. But the half that does get the drift warms to this talk of Ziggy and sci-fi. Is he saying that rock is dead?

"No, but... it's not that cool, you know? Like if we'd had electricity 200 years ago it might have been cool. These days it's astonishingly safe. In the States, people are talking about a wave of censorship, warning stickers on albums and that stuff. Big deal, I can't get too worked up over that. In a way, I think rock'n'roll should be like pornography. Better still, make it illegal. Then we might get some of the edge back, some of that feeling of a subculture.

"Then again, being The Beatles must have sucked," continues Charles, apropos of nothing. "Those shitty little hotels, those shitty aeroplanes. Those tiny little amps. But I just get the feeling right now, there's no frontier. It's boring, a development period. There's no major land masses to discover. So let's hope we start building some rockets again."

This thread runs throughout Charles' conversation; a childlike fascination with the possibilities of the future, of comic-book potentialities. In his songs it manifests itself as a deliberate avoidance of the mundane or down-to-earth, a playful sense of (often black) fantasy.

"It's not much fun to write about the present. So I write about the future. Hey, do you know about *The Billy Goodman Happening*? It's this crazy radio show in LA. I like to cruise late at night and I listen to this show. The guy is just so intense. He's, like, the worst talk show host but it's the best show. All these people phoning from everywhere from Oregon to the Mexico border with these tabloid UFO stories. But it's all got this kind of desperate spark. Mary from Burbank talking about the aliens that killed her husband. And Billy has this obsession with radios feeding back, even though most of his callers don't even have radios. He's a fuck-up. He has no control..."

Clearly, such things could only happen in America. Does this mean that Pixies are quintessentially American?

"I don't think so. We could have happened anywhere. Half of all good rock music is British anyway. I know it's cool to say 'hey, music belongs to the world', but basically rock music is creatively owned by Britain and the States. There's a whole body of English rock that's very important to me... The Kinks, stuff like that..."

For the uninitiated, glancing at 'Doolittle' could have been a worrying experience. Titles like 'Debaser' and 'Wave Of Mutilation' promise sicko art exploitation of the college variety. Does Black Francis consider them a difficult band?

"No. I happen to know for a fact that we're not. In the early days, people kind of focused on certain eccentricities. They noticed that we were fast and squawky and chose to ignore the pop element. Now we've got more money, we get better production and our technique is better. All our reference points are pop: the music you hear on TV, at the store, Top 40 radio. I don't like this 'us and them' mentality. It's just people making records."

Two nights before I met Charles, he went to a Jason Donovan party where Jason smiled a lot and got presented with a new guitar. Charles thought this was cool. They may even bump into each other again soon down at Television Centre if everyone's predictions are correct and Pixies' irresistible rise to stardom continues.

"I'm making a living. But I could make a living doing lots of things. It's not like I went to astronaut school and now I'm going to the moon. Maybe I'm taking it for granted. It is fun to sell records, to compete with some bozo band or other. It would be nice to get into the Top 20 significantly, for a year or so. But it would be just as nice to make records on the weekend and be obscure." ■

"In the early days, people focused on certain eccentricities"
Black Francis

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

Madchester, madness, breaking up by fax

TROMPE LES CHARTS

'Velouria' is released on July 16, and becomes the Pixies' first UK Top 40 hit, reaching Number 28. The band are invited to appear on *Top Of The Pops*. They can't make it, so record possibly the world's most half-arsed video instead. Bizarrely, the song ends up on an influential Madchester compilation, cementing the Boston band's honorary Brit status.

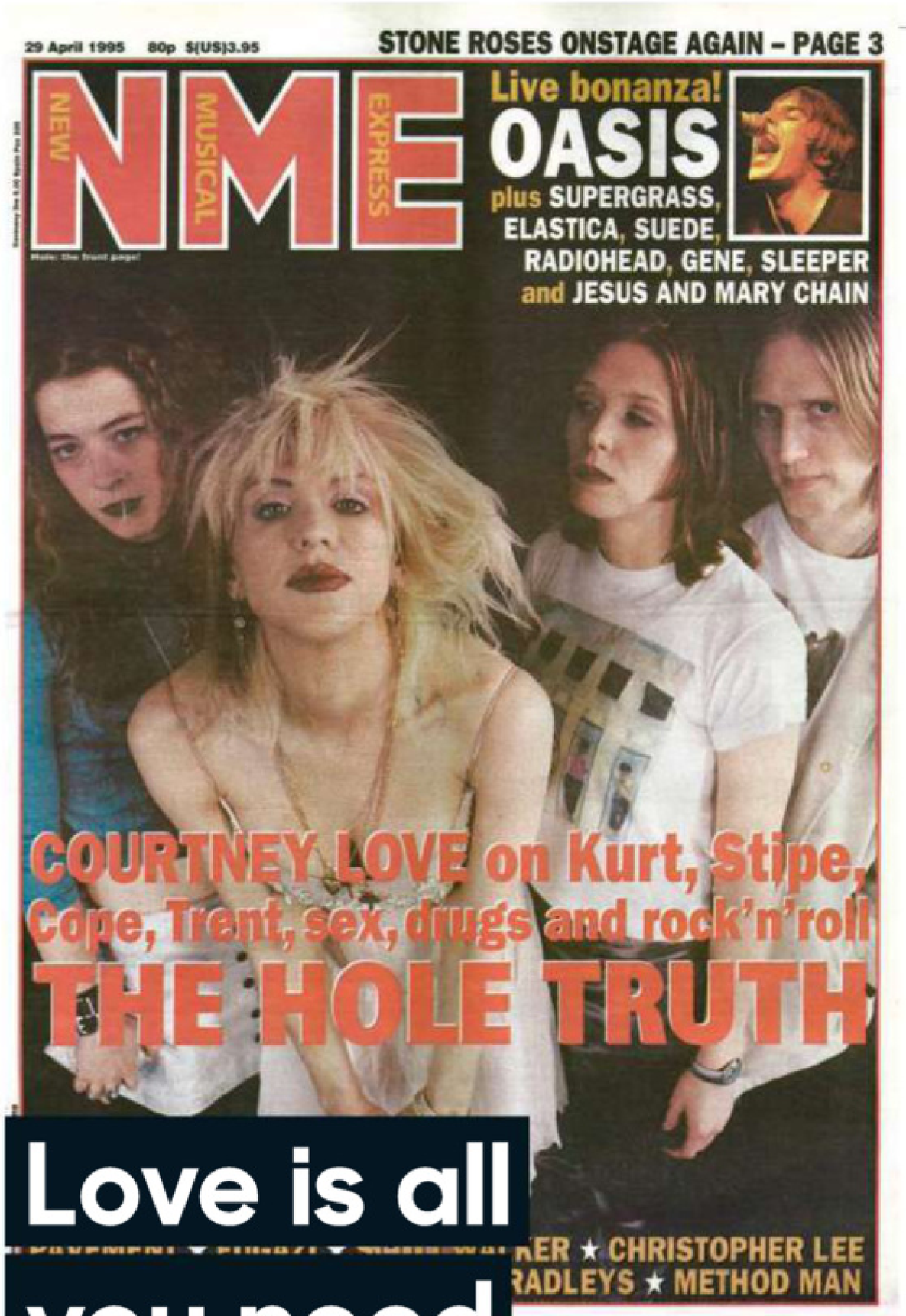
BOSSING IT

Pixies' third full-length album, 'Bossanova', is released on August 13, reaching Number Three in the UK album charts. The band moved to LA to record, with Black Francis taking complete creative control, evinced by the space-heavy lyrics. "None of it makes much sense," writes *NME*'s Terry Staunton, awarding the album 9/10. "The truth of the matter is that Black Francis is totally barmy."

THE END

In September 1991, the Pixies release 'Trompe Le Monde', their final album with this line-up. Heavier than 'Bossanova' and with Kim Deal reduced to a supporting role, it's widely interpreted as Frank Black's first solo album, and marks a fatal breakdown of relations: a tour with U2 is the final straw. Black Francis breaks up the band in 1993, notifying the other members by fax.

THIS WEEK IN 1995



Courtney takes a break midway through a Hole tour to get naked and chat self-mutilation and Trent Reznor

A year on from the suicide of Kurt Cobain and the release of Hole's 'Live Through This', Courtney Love is in a hotel in Zurich, midway through a European tour. Constant touring, explains writer Amy Raphael, "has helped keep Courtney alive". But despite the darkness that's recently surrounded her, Courtney is chirpy, and wondering whether she should "get her tits out for the *NME*" at the photo shoot. She decides yes, and proceeds to run around naked. Later, in her room, she gets into bed, "spills ash all over the bedding and herself" and eats a banana before discussing Julian Cope, Michael Stipe, the Oscars, Aids, self-mutilation and Trent Reznor. Especially Trent Reznor, with whom she says she had a two- or three-month affair. "Everything he says about me is true: I am manipulative, I am careerist," she says, adding: "But if I am, he's times 10. He thinks he's the biggest fucking star since Elvis."

KEVIN CUMMINS

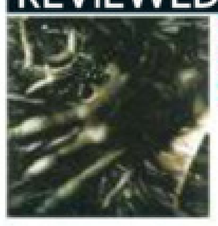
METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Following the release of his debut solo album 'Tical', Wu-Tang Clan's Method Man is in Florida for Spring Break, preparing to play a Def Jam "rap package" with Redman and Naughty By Nature at the Conference Centre. Thousands of police have been drafted in especially and the atmosphere around Daytona Beach is tense, but the rapper's feeling philosophical: "You never know when your day is gonna be your last... I come in peace but I'm always prepared for war."

CHASING PAVEMENT

Pavement's third album 'Wowee Zowee' is out, and frontman Stephen Malkmus is in London's Maida Vale talking about his feelings towards bands who attempt to be ironic in their music –something his own band, he says, would never do. "Like, the whole Elastica thing scares me," he says. "I know it's fun and the record goes by and it's a gas... but that wholesale nihilism about creativity and stuff is just a totally '90s disease. It's not for me."

REVIEWED THIS WEEK



Scott Walker – 'Tilt'

"The overall effect is one of incomprehension, then admiration, and, finally, something approaching awe." ■ JOHN MULVEY

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

▶Eddie Vedder's new band Hovercraft play their first ever show at Seattle's Velvet Elvis.

▶The Verve cancel four dates on their UK tour after guitarist Nick McCabe breaks his hand in a fight in Paris. McCabe had lost his backstage pass and was refused entry to a venue. Disaster ensued.

▶Ian Brown is "out of key almost all the time" at The Stone Roses' first gig in five and a half years, at Oslo Rockefeller. John Squire and Robbie Maddix, however, are on form: "The new drummer was the best part. The guitarist was also good."

NME

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DOES ROCK 'N' ROLL KILL BRAINCELLS? Vs THE FANS

WE FIND THE ROCK STAR, YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

St Vincent

aka Annie Clark

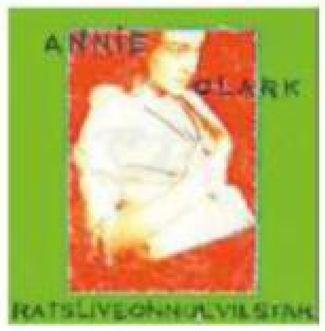
1 What do you drop on the floor outside a gas station when you're kidnapped in the video for 'Cruel'?
Wes Morris, Newcastle, via email
"I have no idea. A broom."
WRONG. It's a teddy bear
"That's weird. I just remember that sweet little girl in that video. She was so smart and so bizarre, she was a really special kid. I liked her a whole lot. I hope she's doing well."

Kirk Hammett

2 What did you once say you would call your metal band if you were ever to form one?
Jenny Sanger, Luton, via email
"River Of Eyeballs. I was in a museum and I was looking at some paintings and my eyes played tricks on me for a second. It was a placid nature scene, but I saw that the river was made of disembodied eyeballs."
CORRECT

3 How did you once describe Metallica guitarist Kirk Hammett?
Chris Milner, Finsbury Park, via email
"I have no idea."
WRONG. You said he was like "a heavy metal puppy"
"OK. He just seems like a nice guy – if you watch *Some Kind Of Monster* he just seems like the sweet peacemaker of the group. I am a Metallica fan, I really am."

4 How much does a St Vincent T-shirt cost on your website?
Anne Stephenson, Manchester, via email
"No idea."
WRONG. They are all $20. Do you have a favourite?
"Um... I don't know what's on there! But I definitely approve them. A long time ago I was on a tour in the early days and I ran out of clean clothes and I put my own shirt on inside out."



5 Where did you first meet Talking Heads frontman David Byrne?
Dave Matthews, Falmouth, on Facebook
"I met him after a Dark Was The Night benefit [at Radio City Music Hall] – at the afterparty in a hotel on the west side of New York."
CORRECT. What do you remember from that meeting?
"I was totally starstruck."

6 What is the closing track on your 2003 EP 'Ratsliveonnoevilstar'?
Tom Perkins, Norwich, on Facebook
"Oh Jesus Christ! I don't know! I have no idea."
WRONG. The final track is 'Circle'. Can you tell us a bit more about the record?
"That is not a record, that is a shitty demo that I'm glad is not more widely known! It's like showing your awkward teenage photos."

7 In a recent interview you named five bands you listened to in high school – can you name three of them?
Davina Welch, London, via email
"Stereolab? Er, Solex. Cibo Matto. Big Black? I dunno!"
HALF A POINT. You got Solex and Cibo Matto. The others were PJ Harvey, Nick Cave and Tool
"Oh yeah! I remember really liking 'Undertow' by Tool. I haven't heard Tool in a long time."

8 Which *Arrested Development* character were you quoting when you named your first album 'Marry Me'?
Mark Crumpton, Bideford, on Twitter

Radio City, NY

"Maeby Fünke."
CORRECT. What do you love about that show?
"It was just so smart and funny and subversive. One of the comedy greats!"

9 What is on your rider for after every show?
Ricky Johnson, Deptford, on Facebook
"There is champagne on my rider!"
CORRECT. Do you have a preferred brand?
"Well, a little Chandon is nice. Just the one, and I don't hog it – it's for all of us on tour, because every night is a celebration."

10 Which of your tracks did rapper Kid Cudi sample on his 'Man On The Moon II: The Legend Of Mr Rager' track, 'Maniac'?
Danny Webb, Salford, via email
"'The Strangers'."
CORRECT. Did you ever meet him?
"Yeah, I think on Conan O'Brien or Jimmy Fallon's show or some other chat show."

SCORE = 5.5

"It's a little bit bizarre to be answering questions about myself. I think if I remembered all of it, that would be the worst thing."

WORDS: LEONIE COOPER PHOTOS: SHAMIL TANNA, REX

NEXT WEEK

The Rolling Stones

It began with a debut album...

50 years on,

the 10 Greatest Moments that made the world's most rock'n'roll band

-/- Skrillex

A week later than planned (blame Pete and Carl), we infiltrate Sonny's LA lair

On sale Wednesday, May 7

NME

GETTY

ALSO IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

INTERVIEWS

- Manic Street Preachers
- Biffy Clyro
- Danny Brown
- Gruff Rhys
- Tune-Yards

REVIEWS

- The Black Keys
- Swans
- Bo Ningen
- Matt Berry
- Little Dragon

LIVES

- Pulled Apart By Horses
- Superfood
- Lily Allen
- Sleaford Mods
- Toy

QUIZ ANSWERS 1. The 1975 **2.** Simon Taylor-Davis **3.** 'Sister Morphine' **4.** '100%' **5.** 'Beautiful Son' **6.** '1992 – The Love Album' **7.** AC/DC **8.** Hammersmith Odeon (as it was then) **9.** 'Down In The Groove' **10.** Danger Mouse (he's produced them all) **11.** Mark E Smith **12.** 'World At Your Feet' **13.** 'Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'' **14.** 'A Northern Soul' **15.** Edinburgh

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I NEVER LEARN

NEW ALBUM
OUT MAY 5