

NME



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EXCLUSIVE PICS
& INTERVIEWS



BOWIE

BLUR IGGY POP

OUTRAGEOUS
RIDER SECRETS
REVEALED

AZEALIA BANKS

"I WAS NEVER GONNA
END UP A BROKE BITCH"

+

THE BLACK KEYS
SAVAGES

WU-TANG CLAN

PAUL McCARTNEY

SMASHING PUMPKINS

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

INSIDE THE HOLY BIBLE REHEARSALS

"IT'S
RUINED US
ALREADY"



ST VINCENT

THE YEAR'S BIGGEST BADASS
ON HER BIG, BADASS YEAR





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LETTER OF THE WEEK

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WHY NO NORWICH?

I was really excited when I saw the NME Awards Tour line-up. Fat White Family (right) and Slaves are two of my favourite bands and I've been desperate to see them again after catching them at festivals over the summer. But I was disappointed to see that Norwich and the whole of East Anglia has been skipped over again. The nearest date to me is 100 miles away in London, and if I could afford the extortionate train fare there and back I'd have to leave halfway through the gig to make the last train home. Staying overnight in London isn't really an option for most rural teenagers.

Alistair Knifton, via email



Dan Stubbs: We really do wish we could send the NME Awards Tour with Austin, Texas tour to every town in the country, Katie, but with four of the nation's most notoriously hellraising bands in tow – Palma Violets and Amazing Snakeheads as well as the two you mention – we worry someone might be going home in a body bag if we extend it much beyond the 11 dates planned. NME has, however, shown big love for

East Anglia in crowning Norwich Arts Centre as Britain's Best Small Venue in association with Jack Daniel's for 2014, and we're putting The Maccabees on there on December 14. It's going to be a great show and we'd like to offer you two free tickets – send an email to letters@nme.com to claim them. Hopefully this will make up for not catching the tour.

he loves while Pete's getting clean, riding elephants and drinking coconut water in Thailand.

ZOMBIE ATTACK

I was recently lucky enough to catch Jamie T on his comeback tour in Birmingham. I'd been waiting years to see him, and was in disbelief at it actually happening. But was it worth being punched in the head by boys fighting their way to the front? And was it worth being called every name under the sun for refusing to move? The fact is, if you're leaving a gig with a friend who's had his nose near broken then something's definitely gone horribly wrong.

Luke Bartlett, via email

HEAR NO EVIL

It was brilliant to read this week that No Devotion (right), the band made up of former Lostprophets members and Thursday's Geoff Rickly, are recording their debut album. The members of this band have had over 15 years of hard work wiped out by the evil crimes of their former bandmate, Ian Watkins, through no fault of their own. Although these guys are no more to blame for Watkins' crimes than you or me, most Lostprophets fans would now be uncomfortable listening to their old songs. I think it's brilliant that they're able to have a fresh start with a new band and a new album. These guys are family men with mortgages to pay and mouths to feed. The songs they've released thus far are very promising, so hopefully there's a silver lining ahead for them.

Rob Williams, via email



DS: The former members of Lostprophets have been through the kind of scorched-earth experience few people could even comprehend. The fact they're bouncing back shows the kind of grit that won them those loyal fans in the first place.

BAND AID: A LOAD OF BOLLOCKS

Far be it from me to be sceptical, but isn't the whole Band Aid 30 thing a bit disillusioned? Don't get me wrong, something needs to be done about the spread of Ebola, but wouldn't it have been a good idea to include some African artists? Was Sir Bob worried if he brought them instead of the likes of Rita Ora and

Ed Sheeran, the paparazzi wouldn't have shown up to document it? And while with hindsight the lyrics to the original might have been slightly miscalculated, you can't deny its power to connect. Now they've got Bono singing a line that sounds like it's from 'Sweet Caroline'.

Alex Renton, via email

DS: Judging by recent entertaining appearances on the news, Bob would likely tell you your comments are "a load of bollocks". With Band Aid 30, as with the original, Geldof has been single-minded in his approach: he just wants to sell as many copies as possible, and that means using the biggest stars with the biggest social media profiles. But Geldof's jarring rewrite of the original song is a bit like inking over an existing tattoo: the end result is never going to be as good as a fresh one.

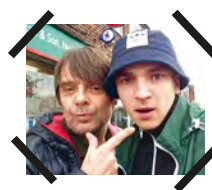
KING CARL

Just seen Carl Barât & The Jackals at the Coventry Kasbah. They were competent musicians, they looked cool and the new songs were strong, but it was the Libertines tracks and Dirty Pretty Things songs that got the biggest crowd reaction. With the promise of a new Libertines album next year, it makes you wonder how long The Jackals will last, or whether they were merely a touring band with a name. The live show was killer either way.

Joe Gray, via email

DS: NME spoke to Barât when he was recruiting for The Jackals. There was no doubt Carl was 100 per cent focused on his new band, at a time when the Libertines reunion wasn't even on the cards. It does seem like there's a chance it could derail the project that's suited Carl best since Dirty Pretty Things split, but it's great to see him playing music

DS: Occasionally, the anonymity of a crowd can bring out people's bad sides, and leaving a gig with a bloody nose is a nasty business. Perhaps some of the bullyboys should listen to the lyrics to 'Sheila' a bit more carefully. Leave your violence at the door, lads.



LOOK WHO'S STALKING

Bumped into Mani on the streets of Failssworth a couple weeks back and the Stone Roses man posed for this pic – lucky I was wearing my Reni hat.

Dylan Mitchell, via email

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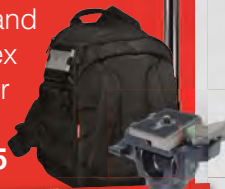
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NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

**1. St Vincent
Pieta**

Fresh from 'St Vincent' being hailed as *NME's* best album of 2014, Annie Clark is releasing two new songs – 'Pieta' and 'Sparrow' – for US Record Store Day's Black Friday event. On the restrained 'Pieta' – a reference to Mary cradling the dead body of Jesus – she sings about being "*baptised in the shallow end of a Holiday Inn*", and compares herself to a coiled sea monster. Enjoyably creepy.

David Renshaw, News Reporter

**2. Tigercub
Centrefold**

Released on Blood Red Shoes' label Jazz Life, Brighton trio Tigercub's chugging new single is a sleazy grind of guitars that's as brutal as it is poppy. It was produced by Tom Dalgety (Royal Blood, The Family Rain), who was so taken with the track he recorded it for free. Tigercub have recently been on the road with The Bronx and Pulled Apart By Horses, and if all goes well they'll soon be as big as both of their former touring buddies. Grr-eat.

Leonie Cooper, writer

**3. Trust Fund
Cut Me Out**

Although they're the brainchild of one man, Bristol-based Ellis Jones, Trust Fund are at their most enjoyable when they're a full, electrified band – one with large, gleaming hooks and rough, lo-fi edges. 'Cut Me Out' is equal parts Weezer and Joanna Gruesome (with whom Trust Fund recently released a split EP), has been integral to their live set for some time, and serves as a taster for February's debut album, 'No-One's Coming For Us'.

Noel Gardner, writer

**4. The Phantom Band
Tender Castle**

Less than a year after The Phantom Band's third album 'Strange Friend', its anagrammatic cousin 'Fears Trending' is on its way, with tracks largely chiselled out of the same sessions. Opening track 'Tender Castle' is typical of the Glaswegians' potted epics of folk, psychedelia and Silver Apples-style electronica. Alasdair Roberts guests as a softer vocal foil to Rick Anthony, with bleeps and tremolo guitars weaving mysteriously around them.

Matthew Horton, writer

**5. Alison Mosshart & Eric Arjes
Bad Blood**

In The Kills and The Dead Weather, wild-eyed indie she-wolf Alison Mosshart has always had a foil to play off; with both Jamie Hince and Jack White, there seemed to be an equally matched meeting of minds. Here, however, Mosshart is the dominant force (sorry, Nashville singer-songwriter Eric Arjes). "*I've got bad blood/You don't want none of what I have*" she snarls, broken yet defiant, over sparse and dusky guitars. It's a brilliantly bruised offering.

Lisa Wright, writer

**6. Rick Ross
If They Knew**

"As a G, a boss, the money coming fast", Rick Ross boasts in the video for 'If They Knew', inexplicably set in a launderette. If he really were that flush, presumably he'd own a tumble-dryer, but that's not the real story here; rather, it's the Maybach MC's laconic flow, slung over an unapologetically radio-bait beat, that make this single a thundering standout from new album 'Hood Billionaire'.

Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

**7. Donnie Trumpet & The Social
Experiment Sunday Candy (feat.
Chance The Rapper)**

Turns out Chance The Rapper's in a band, The Social Experiment, they're releasing an album called 'Surf' next year, it's gonna be free and this is the first track from it. Donnie Trumpet's the ideas guy, and on 'Sunday Candy' he's all about gospel, soul and Chicago's B-boy scene, just as Chance's 'Acid Rap' mixtape was last year. If it doesn't make you smile, you need your head checked.

Tom Howard, Assistant Editor

**8. Chromatics
White Light**

When most people have a clear-out, the best they find is a battered old iPod mini, but Chromatics' Johnny Jewel has been putting the rest of us to shame lately by uploading a wealth of unreleased material to his SoundCloud. This highlight showcases the Portland four-piece's sinister streak as Ruth Radelet sighs "*I am so lonely in this world*" over a ghostly electro soundbed punctuated by melancholy guitar tones. An unearthed gem.

Nick Levine, writer

**9. Circa Waves
Fossils**

Circa Waves have been threatening to write a song like 'Fossils' ever since they first emerged in 2012. Everything the Liverpool hopefuls have released so far has been great, but this is the song where everything just connects. It begins like The Maccabees' 2007 track 'Latchmere', before revving up and heading into the sunset like a huge Californian driving anthem. A proper indie-rock winter pick-me-up.

Greg Cochran, Editor, NME.COM

**10. Joker
Midnight**

Remember Bristolian dubstep/grime producer Joker, who put out an album on 4AD in 2011? It wasn't as good as people expected, and then he slipped off the radar. 'Midnight' is the first track to come off a forthcoming second album – 'The Mainframe', released on Kapsize in February – and it's a belter: a Jennifer Lopez vocal sample put through the electronic mincer accompanied by a huge drop and a thunderous, rumbling bassline.

Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

ESSENTIAL NEW TRACKS

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11. Will Butler Take My Side

Win Butler may be Arcade Fire's frontman, but now they're entering a post-'Reflektor' fallow period, little brother Will has seized his moment to go solo. As a first taste of next year's 'Policy', 'Take My Side' holds much promise: this is boozy, swaggering rock'n'roll with a crashing Iggy Pop beat and shang-a-lang backing vocals. For anyone who thinks Arcade Fire take themselves too seriously.

Dan Stubbs, News Editor

12. Enter Shikari Never Let Go Of The Microscope

For two minutes, echoing beats and isolated guitar notes shuffle as frontman Rou Reynolds references Socrates and complains of a "sinking feeling". Suddenly, though, the song – taken from the St Albans foursome's forthcoming album 'The Mindsweep' – completely loses it. Reynolds sounds desperate to make his throat bleed as he screams, "We'll harness the heat of the sun and burn you out of fucking existence". Brutal stuff.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

13. Ry X Love Like This

One third of electronic experimenters The Acid, Australian songwriter Ry X also operates on his own as a folk musician. 'Love Like This' is his latest solo track, a quiet, stirring meld of hushed vocals and barely strummed acoustic guitars that's so reminiscent of Bon Iver you'll have to do a double take. That's no bad thing, though, and its lush atmospherics provide a beautiful stopgap while the wait continues for Justin Vernon's return.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

14. Charli XCX Breaking Up

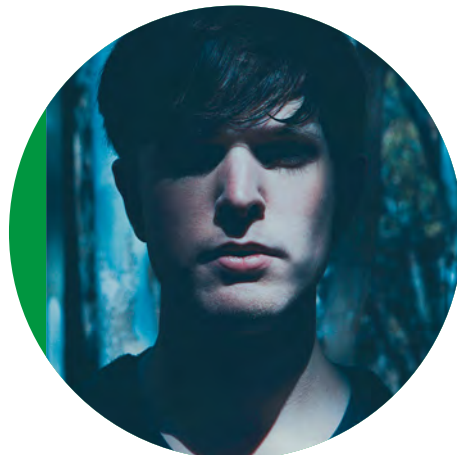
Does *anyone* have such a Midas touch as Charli XCX when it comes to gaudy, giddy pop bangers right now? Here, she's an evil-tongued miscreant taking potshots at a rival ("You have an ugly tattoo/And fucking cheap perfume") and trouncing an old flame ("Everything was wrong with you/Breaking up was easy to do"), backed by bratty bubblegum pop punk. Roll on the release of her second album, 'Sucker', out in January.

Ben Hewitt, writer

15. James Blake 200 Press

'200 Press' sees James Blake take one vocal sample from Houston rapper Devin The Dude, another from Memphis hip-hop group Three 6 Mafia and a third from soul singer Al Green, before mixing them together using some of his trademark sorcery. First played on Blake's Radio 1 show last summer, it's finally getting a proper single release. Warm, meandering and addictive, it will whet your appetite for the electronic wizard's third album.

Lucy Jones, Deputy Editor, NME.COM



16. The Garden This Could Build Us A Home

The Garden were put on this earth to confuse, and this is undeniably a very good thing. On new B-side 'This Could Build Us A Home', the brothers Wyatt sing about "running out of time" while merging at least three different songs together in one confused mess. Somehow it works. You feel that their predecessor in fucked-up weirdness Ariel Pink would be particularly pleased with their efforts.

Matt Wilkinson, New Music Editor

17. All We Are Keep It Alive

"Giving you more than I can fake/Do you feel me baby", coo Liverpool-based, Bee Gees-loving trio All We Are over subtly twinkling disco synths and smooth, hip-dipping guitar lines. The latest taste of their forthcoming self-titled debut album (released on Domino on February 2), it's their most accomplished effort so far – a svelte and sexy song that builds into something bold and sweet, getting better with every play.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

18. Cheatahs Controller

Ride reunion? A tad superfluous, perhaps, in a world where Cheatahs roam free. Snowdrift vocals, stalagmite guitars, drums like the gentle crash of car bumpers caused by stretches of sheet ice on the M40; if you ever wanted a reason to examine your Converse in 2014, it's 'Controller', what with singer Nathan Hewitt sighing mysteriously about how "outside is dead/I lie awake... I just keep on dying every day". Leaves them all behind.

Mark Beaumont, writer

19. H Hawkline Moons In My Mirror

"I never open my post/I'm a moronic morose", sings H Hawkline on 'Moons In My Mirror'. That introduction casts the Welsh songwriter in a far worse light than this song does. Taken from his debut album proper – 'The Pink Of Condition', out in February – it's a nugget of wayward guitar pop. Little is known about Hawkline, but he's close with Gruff Rhys and Cate Le Bon. This jagged tune nods to them both, but Hawkline's charm is all his own.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

20. Sun Kil Moon The Possum

My sneaking suspicion throughout War On Drugs-gate was that Mark Kozelek was – inelegantly, let's not pretend otherwise – attempting to make a point about the triviality of the rolling indie news cycle. If only he'd skipped all the dumb beef and just released 'The Possum', a flooring nine-minute meditation on death and having purpose in life that stands up alongside his 2003 epic, 'Duk Koo Kim', as one of the best things he's ever done.

Laura Snapes, Features Editor

TheWeek

► EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN MUSIC ■ EDITED BY DAN STUBBS

8

Kurt Cobain in 1980, aged 13, on a Washington beach – a still from *Montage Of Heck*, from an original photo by Kurt's mum

New film goes "deep into Kurt Cobain's psyche"

Those closest to the Nirvana frontman
tell his story in *Montage Of Heck*

Kurt Cobain: *Montage Of Heck*, the first fully authorised documentary about the late Nirvana frontman, is due to hit screens next year. It's the first film to be made with the backing of Kurt's family, and his daughter, Frances Bean Cobain, is one of the film's executive producers.

Named after the recently re-circulated collage mixtape Cobain made on a four-track cassette recorder around 1988, the film is being directed by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Brett Morgen, who previously helmed The Rolling Stones' film *Crossfire Hurricane*.

Speaking about *Montage Of Heck*, Morgen said: "I started work on this project eight years ago. Like most people, when I started, I figured there would be limited amounts of fresh material to unearth. However, once I stepped into Kurt's archive, I discovered over 200 hours of unreleased music and audio, a vast array of art projects (oil paintings, sculptures), countless hours of never-before-seen home movies, and over 4,000 pages of writings that together help paint an intimate portrait of an artist who rarely revealed himself to the media."

Bruce Pavitt, founder of Sub Pop, the label that first signed Nirvana, told *NME* he has not been interviewed for the film, as Morgen is focusing on a very small number of interviewees: "Instead of having a number of talking heads, [Morgen] told me he's interviewing three key personalities in Kurt's story: Courtney Love, Krist Novoselic and Kurt's mom. Three different takes on who Kurt was. Then there's tons of home video footage. I think it's going to be really interesting."

Pavitt added that he is very excited by what he's heard about the film so far, saying: "I think it's going to be really very good. As a psychological study of Kurt, it's going to really fascinating. From the sounds of it, it'll go deep into Cobain's psyche, and the impact of that band."

Producers of the film also claim it will feature "dozens of Nirvana songs and performances, as well as previously unheard Cobain originals". The documentary will screen on HBO in the United States at some point in 2015, although international release plans are currently in utero. ■ KEVIN EG PERRY



**"KURT COBAIN ONCE
TOLD ME HALF OF HIS
RECORD COLLECTION
WAS INSPIRED BY MY
RECOMMENDATIONS"**

Bruce Pavitt

Zine and heard

**A new book collects the best of the
fanzines that birthed Sub Pop Records**

When 21-year-old Bruce Pavitt began assembling a DIY music zine called *Subterranean Pop* in his Washington State college dorm in 1980, on a budget so meagre he hand-coloured each cover in crayon because he couldn't afford to use a colour photocopier, he had no idea that what he was creating would germinate into one of indie rock's most celebrated scenes. "It was never really my intention to do anything more than champion great music from my own backyard," says the Sub Pop founder, later responsible for signing Nirvana and, therefore, turning the Seattle grunge scene into a major cultural flashpoint of the '90s. "There were a lot of great bands I

worried weren't getting the attention they deserved in our increasingly homogenised culture, and I wanted to do something about it."

The rest, as they say, is history. Collected in a new book, *Sub Pop USA: The Subterranean Pop Music Anthology, 1980-1988*, Pavitt's zines are full of reviews, homemade illustrations and essays on cult local bands such as Beat Happening and Pell Mell. Covering the spectrum from

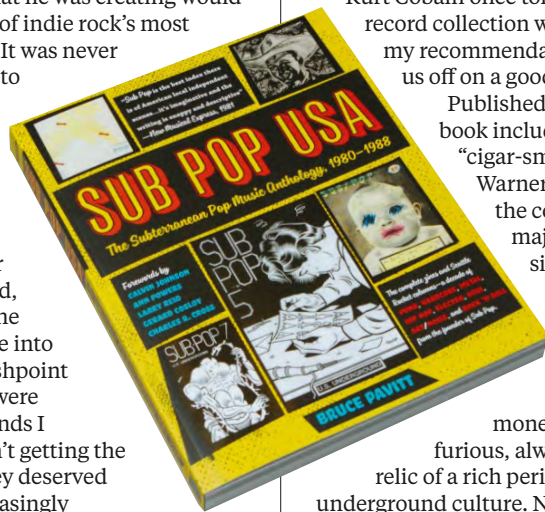
hip-hop (Beastie Boys, Run-DMC) to rock (The Replacements, Hüsker Dü), they grew quickly in popularity around the city of Olympia, leading him to release cassette compilations featuring then-unknown indie heroes like Sonic Youth. Launched in 1986, the Sub Pop label was the logical next step. But *Subterranean Pop*, the 55-year-old insists, is more than a footnote to the label's success – it formed a manifesto the Seattle imprint still lives by today. "It meant when it came to signing bands, a lot of people were familiar with our independent thinking and ethos.

Kurt Cobain once told me half of his record collection was inspired by my recommendations, which set us off on a good foot."

Published on December 9, the book includes attacks on the "cigar-smoking dough boys at Warner Bros" to homilies on the corrupting nature of major labels (bands who sign with them, argued Pavitt, become "robot-slaves who immediately become interested in only one thing – money"). It's a sometimes

furiously, always passionate relic of a rich period in American underground culture. Now retired from the Sub Pop label, does Pavitt see any similarities between then and now? "I talk a lot in the book about the localisation of culture – how the reason why you get music scenes is because there's nothing more inspiring than seeing creative people around you doing amazing things, and wanting to involve yourself," he says. "That hasn't changed, despite the advent of the internet. I don't think it ever will. There's no reason why there couldn't be another *Subterranean Pop*, or a new Nirvana."

■ AL HORNER



MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE

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ESSENTIALS**

**Oli
Sykes**



Bring Me The Horizon

**BOOK
Game Of
Thrones
series by
George
RR Martin**



"I'm on about book five. I didn't think it'd be something I'd be into – I hate *Lord Of The Rings* and all of that. But I started watching the TV series, and in the end, I just needed to know what happened next."



**BOXSET
I'm Alan Partridge**

"Who doesn't love a bit of Partridge? I've seen the film [*Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*] twice. I thought it was awesome; I was worried about it, but in the end I thought he pulled it off really well."

**FILM
Metallica: Some
Kind Of Monster**



"As a band, we like to watch this one together. It's the story of Metallica making 'St Anger', at a time when they all hated each other. It's quite a good manual for where you don't want to end up in life."



**GAME
The Last Of Us**

"You have to escort this little girl across the city. Basically, she's the cure to the disease that's been killing everyone."

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Easy riders

A new book collects the backstage demands of some of the world's biggest artists. Here are a few selected highlights



Kasabian await delivery of "four black combs no smaller than 6in long"

Kasabian

►3 multipacks of salt & vinegar square crisps, brown sugar, 80 PG Tips tea bags, 1 box of Pop Tarts, 4 litres of Smirnoff vodka, 12 cans of Red Bull, 1 bottle of absinthe, 2 pints of milk, 4 bottles of Jack Daniel's, 1 boombox, 6 tins of oxygen, 200 Marlboro Lights, 1 set of nail clippers, 4 nail brushes, 4 black combs no smaller than six inches long

David Bowie

►12-cup Mr Coffee machine, 6 coffee mugs (china), fruit bowl for 3 people (apples, oranges, mangoes, etc), fresh orange juice, 9 large bottles of Evian, supply of boiling hot water, honey, lemons and cutting board with knife, make-up mirror with good lighting, full-length mirror, rolling clothes rack, 12 towels, 2 boxes of tissues, 110v power supply, outside phone line



The Beatles

►A black-and-white television set and a few Coca-Colas



Elvis Presley

►10 soft drinks and 4 cups of water

The Prodigy

►A packet of Crunchy Nut Cornflakes, six bowls, six spoons, and a bottle of Dom Pérignon champagne

Amy Winehouse

►Absolut vodka (must be Absolut), Jack Daniel's, selection of fine beers (for the band), PG Tips teabags, water, jerk chicken, rice and peas, pizza (margherita), vegetarian and non-vegetarian sandwiches, Doritos, nuts and bananas, Camel Lights, joss sticks (variety of fragrances), fresh towels, sign for the door that reads 'Only Big Boys Can Enter'

Graham Coxon, Blur

►Double Deckers, Welsh cakes, 5lb scrag end (or metric equivalent), bucket of hot water, tea and coffee (fresh, not instant), scrumpy with bits, local lagers, middlin' wine, ornamental rockery, old tin bath, hoof knives (inscribed with venue name), soap, towels, toothpicks, Derby County Subbuteo team, false facial hair, spare undergarments (selection of sizes)

The Killers

►12-pack Coca-Cola (from USA), 6 bottles of Snapple iced tea, 8 bottles Strongbow cider, 2 cases Evian spring water, 24 bottles Coors Light, 12 bottles Beck's beer, 2 bottles red wine (shiraz, merlot), 1 litre Maker's Mark, 1 litre Absolut vodka, 12 cans Red Bull, Sainsbury's houmous (important), pepperoni pizza, 1 loaf sliced bread, 1 jar Jif peanut butter, 1 jar

strawberry jam, 6 assorted candy bars, 1 pack Jaffa Cakes, assorted deli meats, cheese for sandwiches, fruit bowl, Spanish rice, personal masseuses, large plastic cups/bowls (no Styrofoam), 1 national newspaper

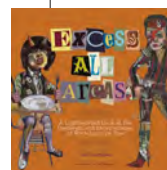
Iggy Pop

►Seven dwarves, pizza to give to the homeless, a copy of *The New York Times*, pre-chopped broccoli florets (to make them easier to throw away!)



Super Furry Animals

►2 Gideon Bibles, hot coffee, fresh milk, 10 boxes of Farley's Ruskis, a single 50-metre roll of tin foil (preferred brand Bacofoil), a genuine message in a bottle, 10oz of maggots, 2 fishing rods (coastal shows only), small water feature, 5 Tunisian camels, 2 bottles of quality red wine (no New World), 350 packs of King Dong condoms, any Vonda Shepard or best of Kenny G album, Faith Hill poster, 5 cigarette lighters, 1 litre of Gordon's gin, 5 one-hour sessions with psychologist (after show) ■



►*Excess All Areas: A Lighthearted Look At The Demands And Idiosyncrasies Of Rock Icons On Tour* by Sue Richmond is published by Backbeat Books

Paul McCartney boldly goes into new territory, scoring video game *Destiny*

Twist and shoot...



McCartney with 'Hope For The Future' video director Daniel Askill

For a man who, as much as any, was the architect of the album as we know it, you can't accuse Paul McCartney of being blind to the changes facing the music industry. It's why his new song, 'Hope For The Future', marks a major departure for him: it's the first one he's written specifically for a video game. The uplifting McCartney ballad – due for single release on December 8 – is the theme from *Destiny*, the latest mega-selling game from the makers of *Halo* (it made \$500 million on its first day on sale) – and McCartney collaborated on the score, too.

"I was intrigued by the intricacy of the music, because in a game, if you go one route a certain piece of music plays, if you go another route another piece of music plays," says McCartney, who's being whisked to the final night of his 2014 tour at São Paulo's Allianz Parque when NME calls. "I know from my kids and my grandkids, they just bury themselves in a game and I don't think they've got time to listen to my music. Their agenda is pretty full with all the other stuff, you know, so I like the idea of infiltrating into their agenda!"

McCartney likens the process of writing 'Hope For The Future' to writing 'Live And Let Die', his much-loved theme for the Bond film of the same name. "These games are bigger than some blockbuster movies, so it's an epic thing – a big, film soundtrack feel. The nearest thing I'd ever done to that was 'Live And Let Die', so that was my reference. And again, the same reason attracted me to *Live And Let Die* – it was something different."

Not a natural gamer, McCartney picked up the controller in the interests of research while working on *Destiny*. "I wasn't very good at it, but I'm not very good at games," he says. "I've got so much else to be getting on with; I can't have my face in a screen, you know, bopping along in a game. I had a go and it was great, but I got mashed almost

"THE ALIENS MASHED ME ALMOST INSTANTLY"

Paul McCartney

instantly. The aliens mashed me."

Destiny isn't McCartney's first foray into the virtual world – he previously appeared as a playable character in *The Beatles: Rock Band*. "I played that with my kids and they creamed me," he admits. "I even played the bass thinking I'd have an edge, but it's all these little bombs coming at you and it's not like playing the bass for real. I just said, 'It doesn't matter if I win or lose – I wrote it.'"

On the brink of completing a heavy year of touring – one that saw him hospitalised with a virus in Japan – McCartney's immediate plans are understandable: "Rest!" After that, the 72-year-old's relentless pace picks up again: he's scoring an animated version of his children's book *High In The Clouds* (no doubt reigniting the curiosity of Beatles drug-reference conspiracists in the process) and also plans to start working on a new album.

There's a thrash mix of 'Hope For The Future' being released – does that point to his next direction? "Me do a thrash-metal album? I don't know about that!" he says. "I'll be working on some demos on the computer at home, picking up on some things I started while I was recovering this year. Sometimes you get an interesting sound working on the computer." One thing he won't be doing is observing the multitude of Beatles 50th anniversaries coming up in 2015. "I don't mark any of them," he says. "Someone says, 'Oh, this is the 50th anniversary of when you walked in Abbey Road or the 50th anniversary of your first single. The truth is, I'm not counting!' ■ DAN STUBBS



THE MINI INTERVIEW



Mike Joyce

Smiths drummer

You appeared in the Radio 4 play *My Dad Keith* last week – how did that come about?

"I met Maxine [Peake, writer and actor] at a fundraiser for Chris Sievey, aka Frank Sidebottom. Before he passed away he came over to my house and we did a short film. She saw it and said, 'I think you have an actor in you.' Then I got a call asking if I'd be interested in doing this play."

We heard you reciprocated with drumming lessons...

"She was trying to get a part [as a drummer]. It was a good opportunity for me to start playing again, because I stopped playing for a while. Unfortunately, she didn't get the part!"

So does your recent role mean you've got the acting bug now?

"I'd love to. I'm still playing my drums, but the idea of getting in a band and doing a tour is not really a priority, because I've done it and I succeeded at it."

A recent study of lyrics named *The Smiths* one of the most miserable bands of all time. Do you agree?

"It's nonsense. We weren't boring or miserable. It's like saying ballet is shit or Bono is a twat. Ballet is amazing and they don't know Bono. People like easy targets."

■ LEONIE COOPER

STAYING IN

THE BEST MUSIC ON TV, RADIO AND ONLINE THIS WEEK



Hear Swans
on BBC
6 Music,
December 9

Swans

Marc Riley

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 7pm, December 9

'To Be Kind', Swans' third album since reuniting in 2010, made it into *NME's* Top 50 Albums Of The Year list at Number 22 last week. Michael Gira and co offer a taste of what put them there as they head into Marc Riley's show to play some highlights from the record.

soul pioneer died and this documentary celebrates his life and music. His family, the late Bobby Womack, Rod Stewart and more all contribute to the programme, which traces his creative, business and political endeavours.

Public Library for just 500 lucky fans.

Ultimate Painting X-Posure

►LISTEN XFM, 10pm, December 4
Mazes' Jack Cooper and Veronica Falls' James Hoare teamed up earlier this year to work on their side project, Ultimate Painting. On their debut album together, they delved into sounds their day jobs wouldn't allow, like whirring '60s psych. They'll play some of its highlights on John Kennedy's show this week.



Elvis Costello Live From The Artist's Den

►WATCH Sky Arts 1, 9am, December 7
Recorded in 2010, experience the bespectacled musician playing an intimate concert in the beautiful surroundings of New York

December 6

The former Ash frontman released his debut solo album 'Lost Domain' last month, which he wrote in response to the death of his father. He tells Liz Kershaw about turning that emotional time into music.

Sam Cooke (Don't Fight It) Feel It - The Sam Cooke Story

►LISTEN BBC Radio 2, 10pm, December 9
It's 50 years since the

Superstar DJs with Annie Mac

►WATCH Channel 4, 1.05am, December 3

Another chance to see the Radio 1 presenter's look at the rise of the DJ as a cultural phenomenon. In this episode, she talks to Jamie Jones, Craig Richards and more about the last decade in dance music.

Tim Wheeler Liz Kershaw

►LISTEN BBC 6Music, 1pm,

GOING OUT

THE BEST LIVE EVENTS

THIS WEEK



Metronomy

Metronomy play their biggest shows yet.

►DATES Glasgow O2 Academy (December 4), London Alexandra Palace (5), Manchester Albert Hall (6)
►TICKETS £21.50 from NME.COM/tickets with £2.15 booking fee; Glasgow and Manchester sold out

Bombay Bicycle Club

The north Londoners kick off their latest tour, with Peace and Sivu in support.

►DATES Leicester De Montfort Hall (December 3), Plymouth Pavilions (4), Bournemouth International Centre (5), Manchester O2 Apollo (7, 8)
►TICKETS £24 from NME.COM/tickets with £2.40 booking fee; Bournemouth and Manchester (Dec 7 only) sold out

5 TO SEE FOR FREE

1. 20,000 Days On Earth Screening

Rise, Bristol
►December 4, 7.30pm

2. JJ

Start The Bus, Bristol
►December 4, 7.30pm

3. Smoke Fairies

The Joker, Brighton
►December 5, 8pm

4. Andy Burrows

Rough Trade East, London
►December 8, 6.30pm

5. Silences

The Social, London
►December 9, 7pm

SAMANTHAM MARBLE, JENN FIVE, GETTY

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NME photographer Jenn Five snaps LA duo and *Radar* favourites *Girlpool* as they drop by Jack Rocks The Macbeth between sold-out shows



New Music Editor Matt Wilkinson watches Calgary punks *Viet Cong* play an exclusive session for **NME.COM** on their first trip to the UK



Liverpool-based psych-pop trio *All We Are* give competition winners a sneak preview of their self-titled debut album, due out next year, at an intimate gig

16

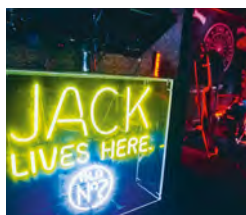
LONDON'S NEW MUSIC HUB

Jack Rocks The Macbeth isn't just about staging exclusive, intimate gigs. There's more – lots more...

Since September, Jack Rocks The Macbeth in association with **NME** and Spotify has been ushering the most exciting artists, big and small, through its doors for a host of sweaty and intimate gigs. La Roux, Only Real, Kele and Cambridge punks Bloody Knees are just a few of those who have packed the venue out so far, and there are still many more incredible shows to come before the year is out.

Jack Rocks The Macbeth is way more than just your average live music venue, though. Over the past few months, **NME's**

New Music Editor Matt Wilkinson has been working hard to turn it into a music hub that operates throughout the day, too. While bands set up downstairs for that night's gig, other artists – like recent guests *Twin Atlantic* – take a seat upstairs for video interviews and photo shoots. Other groups, including *The Ting Tings*, *Vance Joy* and *Allah-Las*, have been making the most of the time before they soundcheck to film exclusive sessions, recreating the excitement of their gigs for those who can't make it down to the venue in person.



JENN FIVE NME photographer



"The Macbeth is one of my fave east London joints. It's a small venue that lets the artist really capture the energy from the crowd – which makes for the best shots!"

MATT WILKINSON NME New Music Editor



"I've been going to The Macbeth for years, so I jumped at the chance to put on shows and sessions there. It's been great to work with the likes of *Viet Cong*, *La Roux* and *James Skelly*."

VICTOR FRANKOWSKI NME Videographer



"The Macbeth is a fantastic place with loads of history and character. It's amazing to see such a wide variety of bands here – they give the venue a different feeling every night."

► COMING UP

There's still plenty more action to come at Jack Rocks The Macbeth. Head to **NME.COM/jackrocks** for more info on the venue and how to get tickets for the gigs and sessions.

JACK DANIEL'S
JACK ROCKS
THE MACBETH



The closure of Madame JoJo's leaves (right) The Horrors' Cave Club homeless



SMALL VENUES ARE WORTH SAVING – BUT SO IS THE INDIE DISCO

BY LISA WRIGHT

It's not just live music that's suffering from venue closures – club nights are facing the axe too



Last week, it was announced that longstanding Soho venue Madame JoJo's had shut its doors for good following a violent incident involving door staff. The week before, Islington venue the Buffalo Bar was also given its notice. A week

before came news that Liverpool's Kazimier is threatened by redevelopment. It's happening across the country, and the natural response is always to worry about the impact on live music: fewer small venues = fewer small gigs = fewer places for small bands to play. But it's not just live music that's taking a beating from the loss of these places.

Behind many a venue closure lies the loss of something glorious: the indie disco. Without Madame JoJo's, what happens to the club night White Heat? Without Buffalo Bar, The Horrors' psych night Cave Club is without a home. When the Astoria was demolished, we lost indie staple Push. And it's not just London. Leeds stalwart venue The Cockpit is no more, meaning its raft of brilliant indie nights are homeless too. In Manchester, much-loved Saturday night destination Smile at The Star & Garter faces

a dead end after more than 20 years because the venue is threatened with closure due to railway developments. Elsewhere, the Charlotte in Leicester, Cardiff Barfly and so many more have seen their resident club nights fall by the wayside when the venues have shut their doors. Sure, these events can move, but unlike a gig, you're not just going to a club night for a band. You're going for the location, the people, the dancefloor, the fact that a spirit and mixer is still two quid or because the toilet attendant gives you a free lolly if she's feeling nice. If you try and uproot everything you've built and stick it down somewhere else, it just isn't the same.

A band with enough willpower and chutzpah can pretty much put a show on anywhere – I've seen brilliant gigs in kitchens, out the back of a van and in the middle of the street – a club night needs more stability. An indie disco in a kitchen is just a house party. An indie disco in the back of a van is a road trip gone wrong. An indie disco in the middle of the street will probably get you arrested. A good club night needs a regular home, and when it finds the right one, it can be a wondrous thing.

During the indie boom of the mid-2000s, there were brilliant indie nights every day of the week. Nights where you'd meet the same people week in, week out, where friendships were forged, relationships initiated and, if nothing else, you could just go and lose your shit to 'Reptilia' and make everything seem a bit better. There are still venues and promoters putting nights on and trying to keep the dream alive, but it takes time to build up the tribal, community feel that's at the heart of a good night.

As we lose more venues to the rubble pile, we're not just losing fantastic gig spaces, we're losing fantastic spaces where the pure fun of music can be celebrated in all its hedonistic, unifying glory. If you've ever had that moment of total joy when the DJ presses play on your favourite song and everyone in the place erupts, then you'll know that the good old-fashioned indie disco is an institution worth celebrating. It's not just venues that we're losing, it's the culture of everything they've built up inside them. ■

► NME supports small venues with our annual search for Britain's Best Small Venue in association with Jack Daniel's. This year's winner is Norwich Arts Centre

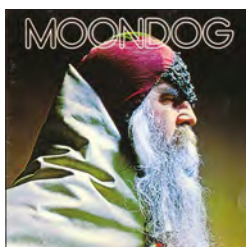
LOST ALBUMS

#57

Moondog

Moondog (1969)

Chosen by Dave Sitek, TV On The Radio



"Moondog was an American composer who was famous for standing on Sixth Avenue in New York wearing a Viking helmet and cloak. I pulled out this album the other day and I just said, 'This is fucking great.' There's a song with a baby screaming that drives me fucking bananas, but the idea that's in there... And there's all this stuff flowing in and out, and the percussion, the way it's recorded – it's a really spacey record. I didn't connect with Kula Shaker when they came out because I had heard Moondog. I thought, 'Why would I not listen to this instead?'"



► THE DETAILS

- RELEASE DATE 1969
- LABEL CBS
- BEST TRACKS Theme, Lament I (Bird's Lament)
- WHERE TO FIND IT A 2001 CD reissue collects 'Moondog' and 'Moondog 2'
- LISTEN ONLINE Full album can be found on YouTube

Pond

The space cadets from Oz fashion a more focused sonic adventure for the follow-up to 'Hobo Rocket'

Pond hard at work recording album number six



18

Pfff... I can't imagine the word 'mature' being applied to anything any of us do," snorts Pond frontman Nick Allbrook. "I spent half an hour watching *Adventure Time* in Spanish last night, then I ate Oreos until I felt sick."

The bendy-limbed singer has, probably deliberately, misunderstood a question about the Australians' new album, 'Man It Feels Like Space Again'. There have been mutterings about the record marking a more grown-up direction for the psych-dunked space cadets.

"Musically mature?" Nick repeats. "Well, OK, yes, this album is going for something more personal and not striving to emulate another genre or hero, which is what we were all about early on: being an artifice of something. We're becoming more ourselves."

A preview listen confirms this. It's a cleaner, more immersive and considered record than their 2013 cluster-bomb of a fifth album, 'Hobo Rocket', but the cosmic guitar/synth slaloms on the likes of 'Medicine Hat' and 'Sitting Up On Our Crane' are still unmistakably Pond.

"For 'Hobo Rocket', we were into brutality and unhinged psychedelic aggression instead of wearing gold jackets and having

drum machines and actually taking time to construct something," says Nick. "This is more thought out," adds bandmate Joe Ryan. "It has more care put into the recording."

Recorded in Melbourne earlier this year, the album is still a typically Pond-like pinball ping between genres, despite having more focus than its hyper-aggressive predecessor. There's slippery, Sly Stone-like funk ('Outside Is The Right Side'), brain-stretching guitar squalls (the Dennis Wilson-influenced 'Sitting Up On Our Crane') and in 'Zond', a song that sounds like The Strokes' 'Reptilia' fed through Wayne Coyne's ears.

This melding of influences is, in part, down to the fact that most of the members of Pond are prolific songwriters. Nick and Joe admit this can cause a rather "hectic" atmosphere. "It's like getting five primary school children to draw a picture with the

same pen at the same time," says Nick. "You take away all their ADHD medication and give them a bag of Fantaes [Australian sweets], and if one of them is not allowed to

hold the pen for a second they get in a mood."

"But that's chemistry," adds Joe. "Chemistry is kind of all we've got going for us."

And there it is – the classic Pond self-deprecation that also saw Nick tell *NME*, around the release of 'Hobo Rocket', about his chronic lack of confidence as a singer, and how the band "don't deserve" the success of long-time friends and collaborators Tame Impala. Nick left live touring duties with Tame to concentrate on Pond before 'Man...' was recorded, but has it helped his mental focus? "Not really, no," he sighs. "There's always a lot going on in anyone's head. I don't think it matters, what you're doing on the outside. If you're paranoid, whether you're sitting at home scratching your ballbag all day or

whether you're actually doing a lot, you're still going to be freaking out about something."

There'll be plenty of time for smoke-hazed tourbus analysis of that next year for Pond. We've got a feeling this next space adventure might be a long one. ■ JAMIE FULLERTON

► THE DETAILS

► **TITLE** Man It Feels Like Space Again

► **RELEASE DATE** January 26, 2015

► **LABEL** Caroline

► **RECORDED** Unnamed studio in Melbourne

► **TRACKS** Waiting Around For Grace, Elvis' Flaming Star, Holding Out For You, Zond, Heroic Shart, Sitting Up On Our Crane, Outside Is The Right Side, Medicine Hat, Man It Feels Like Space Again

► **NICK ALLBROOK SAYS** "This album's actually quite good. We've got an album title, 'Excalibur', reserved for when we make a shitty album and we're past our prime and everyone should stop listening to us. It'll be terrible."

"IT'S LIKE GETTING FIVE ADHD KIDS TO DRAW A PICTURE WITH THE SAME PEN AT THE SAME TIME"
NICK ALLBROOK





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ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM



"THE SCALE OF IT IS OUT OF OUR HANDS"

Ian Brown



THIS WEEK...

The Stone Roses: Second Coming

Twenty years on from its troublesome release, the Roses' second album still stands as a testament to a band in crisis

THE BACKGROUND

After their self-titled 1989 debut and massive Spike Island show in 1990, The Stone Roses were at the peak of their powers. But the quartet – singer Ian Brown, guitarist John Squire, bassist Mani and drummer Reni – soon became bogged down by court cases, family issues and creative inertia. For the follow-up, the band entered Rockfield Studios in 1993 and the sessions dragged. Acclaimed producer John Leckie was first to leave the project in August, followed a few months later by his successor, Paul Schroeder. Former engineer Simon Dawson stepped up to finish the job. By the time it was ready for release, Britpop was in full swing and Oasis had taken the Roses' vacant throne.

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

While the paint splashes and lemons of their debut became iconic, 'Second Coming' arrived covered in a crumpled, muddy-brown John Squire collage. Fans looked for meaning in it but the presence of a clock face and a handful of \$100 bills suggested Squire was mocking the amount of time and money spent on the record.

FIVE FACTS

1 The album opens with five minutes of feedback and field recordings pieced together by John Leckie from DAT tapes supplied by the band, including the sounds of running water, bird noises and baby crocodiles.

2 'Second Coming' is dedicated to Philip Hall, The Stone Roses' press agent, who had died from cancer the previous year. Hall's handling of the press campaign for the band's debut had won him a Music Week Award in 1989.

3 The band granted the first interview of their comeback to *The Big Issue*. The magazine for the homeless doubled its print run to meet the demand.

4 A new, oil field-themed video for the single 'Love Spreads' was made for the US market, replacing the band's scrappy original. Blink and you'll miss Beck in a fake white beard making a cameo.

5 Of knockabout hidden track 'The Foz', Simon Dawson told *Melody Maker*: "Ian is playing violin, Reni a piano and John a mandolin. I can't remember what Mani's doing – he's definitely doing something, because you can hear him sniffing."

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"Every icon in every town/Hear this, your number's up/I'm coming round" – 'Breaking Into Heaven'

After a five-year absence, the Roses' intention to reclaim their crown was clear.

"Well you ain't too young or pretty/And you sure as hell can't sing" – 'Driving South'

Most of the album's lyrics were written by Squire. If he was having a dig at his frontman here, Brown was strong enough to front it.

"Are my dreams your nightmares?/I hope they all come true" – 'How Do You Sleep'

Borrowing its title from John Lennon's 1971 pot shot at Paul McCartney, the Roses settle scores with all those who had crossed them.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"Far from satisfying our more insane aspirations, they've become a Good Rock Band, shot through with a host of glaring faults." John Harris, 6/10, NME, December 10, 1994

WHAT WE SAY NOW

Gems like 'Your Star Will Shine' and 'How Do You Sleep' are under-appreciated, and the big beat intensity of 'Begging You' is unlike anything else The Stone Roses recorded. It's still only half a great album, though. Ian

Brown's vocals are patchy, not helped by some rotten lyrics, and the lengthy solos and jamming can't cover up the lack of inspiration.

FAMOUS FAN

"I still think they've left two great albums. I still play 'The Stone Roses' a lot and I think that lyrically they were very underrated." **Nicky Wire, NME, December 21/28, 1996**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I knew our first LP was going to attract attention, inspire people, give them a buzz. I think this will do the same thing but the scale of what it does is out of our hands." **Ian Brown, The Big Issue, December 5/11, 1994**

THE AFTERMATH

A chart hit couldn't paper over the cracks: Reni quit in the spring, and misfortune struck when John Squire's mountain-biking accident cost them a vital Glastonbury headline set. The band completed a triumphant tour with new drummer Robbie Maddix later that year, but Squire left the following April. The Roses limped through a derided final show at Reading Festival before admitting defeat. Afterwards, Ian Brown went solo, Squire formed The Seahorses, Mani joined Primal Scream and Reni disappeared. Tellingly, the Roses' post-reunion setlists have included little 'Second Coming' material.

THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** January 1993–October 1994 ► **RELEASE DATE** December 5, 1994 ► **LENGTH** 63:44 ► **PRODUCERS** Simon Dawson, Paul Schroeder ► **STUDIO** Rockfield Studios and Monnow Valley, both Monmouth; Metropolis, London ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 4 ► **UK SALES** 603,000 ► **SINGLES** Love Spreads, Ten Storey Love Song, Begging You ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Breaking Into Heaven ►2. Driving South ►3. Ten Storey Love Song ►4. Daybreak ►5. Your Star Will Shine ►6. Straight To The Man ►7. Begging You ►8. Tightrope ►9. Good Times ►10. Tears ►11. How Do You Sleep ►12. Love Spreads

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TheWeek NEWSDESK



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

**“When something with a good beat comes on,
I twerk around the house with my wife.
I like to shake that thing”**

Iggy Pop creates a mental image we'll struggle to shake

THE NUMBERS

20,000

Number of fans The Courteeners will play to at Manchester's Heaton Park in June

240,000

Number of fans Ed Sheeran will play to over three nights at Wembley Stadium in July



35

Years since The Pop Group released an album. They return with 'Citizen Zombie', produced by super-fan Paul Epworth, in February

1 million

UK sales of vinyl LPs in 2014, a peak last seen in 1996

WHAT THE FUCK IS...



Mikey Likes It Ice Cream

This is the New York-based ice cream company that's created a new flavour inspired by Eminem. It probably won't keep you slim though.

What does it taste of?

Inspired by Em's native Detroit, it includes cherries, hot fudge and ginger ale. You have to add your own purple pill sprinkles.

Does Mikey like any other musicians?

Naturally. There's the Ice, Ice Baby flavour (vanilla) and Salt-N-Pepa, which might be an acquired taste – it's salted caramel ice cream with chocolate ghost pepper swirl.

+ GOOD WEEK +



Dev Hynes

Dev Hynes, aka Blood Orange, has covered several Strokes songs in the past. Last week in New York he stepped up with Julian Casablancas himself to sing 'You Only Live Once' at a Voidz gig. Tweeting about it, Hynes wrote: "YOLO".

- BAD WEEK -



Scott Stapp

The Creed frontman has claimed he is "broke" after US tax officers froze his bank account. The rock singer, said to have made £19 million in his career, says he was hospitalised after being unable to buy food and is living in a Holiday Inn.

IN BRIEF

Hurricane #2

Hurricane #1, the band Andy Bell formed between leaving Ride and joining Oasis, have reformed without him in the week he announced the Ride reunion. They're currently looking to book tour dates and festival appearances.

24-hour pantry people

Shaun Ryder will appear in a Christmas special of *Come Dine With Me*. His fellow guests include comedian Mark Dolan, presenter Kirsten O'Brien and glamour model Helen Flanagan. Wonder if we'll see him twisting his melon balls, man.

Art offline age

Prince's foray into the world of the internet appears to have come to an abrupt end after his Twitter and Facebook accounts were deleted and videos removed from YouTube.

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Official RECORD STORE Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS NOVEMBER 30, 2014



NEW 01 Frank Turner

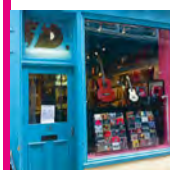
The Third Three Years XTRA MILE

The Winchester singer-songwriter hits the top spot this week with his third compilation – a collection of rarities, demos, covers and acoustic versions of his own material.

- ▼ 2 The Endless River **Pink Floyd** RHINO
- ▼ 3 Four **One Direction** SYCO
- ▲ 4 X **Ed Sheeran** ASYLUM
- NEW 5 Never Been Better **Olly Murs** EPIC
- ▼ 6 Sonic Highways **Foo Fighters** RCA
- ▲ 7 In The Lonely Hour **Sam Smith** CAPITOL
- ▼ 8 Forever **Queen** VIRGIN
- ▼ 9 Nothing Has Changed – The Very Best Of **David Bowie** RCA/RHINO
- ▲ 10 Lost In The Dream **The War On Drugs** SECRETLY CANADIAN
- 11 Love In Venice **Andre Rieu** DECCA
- ▲ 12 Wanted On Voyage **George Ezra** COLUMBIA
- 13 1989 **Taylor Swift** EMI
- ▲ 14 Blue Smoke – The Best Of **Dolly Parton** MASTERWORKS
- ▼ 15 Sun Structures **Temples** HEAVENLY
- ▲ 16 It's The Girls **Bette Midler** EAST WEST
- ▼ 17 Avonmore **Bryan Ferry** BMG RIGHTS
- NEW 18 1981–1982 **New Order** RHINO
- ▼ 19 The Hum **Hookworms** WEIRD WORLD
- ▲ 20 Partners **Barbra Streisand** COLUMBIA
- NEW 21 Going Back Home **Wilko Johnson/Roger Daltrey** UMC
- 22 No Sound Without Silence **The Script** COLUMBIA
- ▼ 23 Home Sweet Home **Katherine Jenkins** DECCA
- ▼ 24 The Basement Tapes Complete – Vol 11 **Bob Dylan & The Band** COLUMBIA
- ▲ 25 Royal Blood **Royal Blood** WARNER BROS
- NEW 26 Dublin To Detroit **Boyzone** EAST WEST
- ▼ 27 Serenata **Alfie Boe** DECCA
- ▼ 28 Our Love **Caribou** CITY SLANG
- ▼ 29 Nostalgia **Annie Lennox** ISLAND
- ▼ 30 Melody Road **Neil Diamond** CAPITOL
- ▲ 31 Chapter One **Ella Henderson** SYCO
- NEW 32 AM **Arctic Monkeys** DOMINO
- ▼ 33 A Perfect Contradiction **Paloma Faith** RCA
- NEW 34 Hope **Susan Boyle** SYCO
- NEW 35 Morrissey Curates The Ramones **Ramones** RHINO
- NEW 36 The Greatest Hits **Luther Vandross** RCA
- NEW 37 Sirens Of Song **Jools Holland & His R&B Orchestra** EAST WEST
- ▲ 38 I Forget Where We Were **Ben Howard** ISLAND
- NEW 39 Collectors Box **Bring Me The Horizon** BMG RIGHTS
- NEW 40 Don't Say That **Superfood** INFECTIOUS

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 Sunday.

TOP OF THE SHOPS



THIS WEEK

FOLK DEVILS WHITBY

FOUNDED 1997

WHY IT'S GREAT As well as stocking music from all over the world, Folk Devils also sell ukuleles.

TOP SELLER LAST WEEK

Hookworms – 'The Hum'

THEY SAY "Our USP is the range of music we sell, from Martin Carthy to Hyperdub. We're not willfully obscure, we just like good music."

SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE



Willie D,
Geto Boys



Ann Peebles

Dan

Auerbach

The Black
Keys



THE FIRST SONG I REMEMBER HEARING

**'Here Comes
The Sandman'
(traditional)**

"My mom used to sing this lullaby to me. She was a piano teacher, and my whole family played music. Nobody listened to music louder than my dad. He used to yell at the DJ if the radio station cut off guitar solos at the end of the song. The only way I could rebel was, like, if I got a job as an accountant and wore a shirt and tie to work every day."

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH

**'Smoke Rings' - Glen
Gray & The Casa
Loma Orchestra**

"This was in a Nicolas Cage movie, *Wild At Heart* [directed by David Lynch]. My parents owned the soundtrack, and whenever this song came on, I'd be mesmerised. I was in grade school at the time. It was dreamy and melodic. I still love it - it's beautiful."

THE FIRST ALBUM I EVER BOUGHT

**'We Can't Be
Stopped' - Geto Boys**

"It was the first album I bought with my own money. I was in middle school and got it - on cassette -

"I'VE LEARNED TO ZONE OUT TO LADY GAGA"

because of the track 'My Mind Is Playing Tricks On Me'. That was a big hit at the time. We used to have these school dances, and the DJ - his name was Earl The Pearl - had all the clean versions on 12-inch. Every time that song came on, everybody went crazy."

THE SONG THAT MADE ME WANT TO BE IN A BAND

**'Angel Band' - The
Stanley Brothers**

"My family would play this and it made me want to pick up the guitar and join in. I was probably about 12.

It was a family tradition; they would all sing it in three-part harmonies because they knew it so well. I was definitely encouraged to play an instrument as a kid - my dad even bought Pat [Carney, Black Keys drummer] his first real drumkit. His drums had completely fallen apart during our first gig; we didn't have any money and Pat's folks weren't too excited about him dropping out of school, so my dad got him a kit that wouldn't explode when he touched it."

THE SONG I CAN NO LONGER LISTEN TO

**Anything by
Lady Gaga**

"My daughter's seven years old and listens to a lot of pop and dance music that I'd usually turn off. She loves Lady Gaga and I've learned to zone out and go somewhere else in my mind when she plays it. That music's designed for kids - they hear that synthetic sound and they instantly love it. It's like a nursery rhyme,

THE SONG I DO AT KARAOKE

Nothing

"I've never done karaoke. That kind of stuff makes me uncomfortable. It reminds me of those talent shows, like *American Idol* or *The Voice* - they make me really queasy. If I'm working on a song in the studio, I'll sing it in the shower, unconsciously. But, to be honest, I like to avoid singing unless it's my own songs and there's an audience."

THE SONG I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD

**'OG Bobby Johnson'
- Que**

"It's like an anti-hook. An anti-chorus. They just repeat the phrase 'OG Bobby Johnson' four times, and then it's completely stuck in my head. I've got it on repeat. It's an intense and dramatic trap song. I really love it."

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN

**'Until You Came Into
My Life' - Ann Peebles**

"I don't know if it would sound as good sung by anybody else, but the way she sings it makes me wish I'd written it. When I was a teenager, I used to listen to my dad's huge record collection and I'd study this song over and over like a proper knucklehead. It's amazing."

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

**'Angel Band' - The
Stanley Brothers**

"That's the song we sing at all the funerals in my family, so I expect the same will happen at mine. We bring instruments, stand by the grave and sing 'Angel Band'. I just want my funeral to be a party - I don't want too much emotional bullshit."



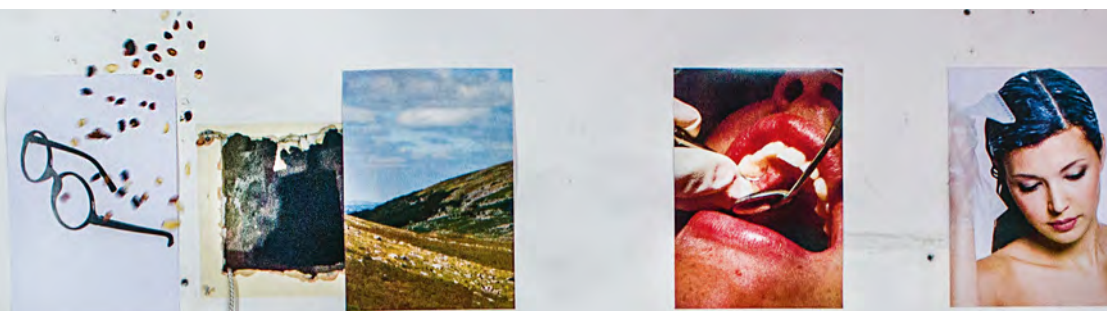
Lady Gaga

Rad ar

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► **YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST** ■ EDITED BY MATT WILKINSON

NME
NEW
BAND
OF THE WEEK



Spectres

The Bristol band carving genius songs out of punishing noise

When Spectres first heard that *NME* wanted them to support Superfood and Honeyblood in Bristol on the *NME* New Breed tour, they were having none of it. Joe Hatt, chief Spectre, said they had visions of a sea of teenagers backing out the door, hands over ears. Then they made a plan. Joe recorded a Superfood track onto an old dictaphone. In the middle of Spectres' terrifyingly loud set, they played 'Superfood' through their guitar pickups, mashing it with delay and effects. "No-one left!" Joe tells *Rad ar*, delightedly, after the gig. "I kept looking up and people were confused and shocked, but they were still there."

That's the deal with Spectres – they do everything one way: their own way. Though, frankly, if you can work out which way anyone is going during the physical experience of a Spectres gig – with the sense that at

any moment your brain might melt right out your ears – then you're doing better than most people. After the Bristol show, Spectres had kids coming up to them asking them how they made that much noise. The noise, they say, is to drag people out of their cosy reality and force them to pay attention.

▼
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NOW

► Listen to 'Where Flies Sleep' and win a Spectres 'FCK RYL BLD' T-shirt by working out the cryptic message in the photo above

As founders of the Bristol-based record label Howling Owl, Joe and Spectres bandmate Adrian Dutt are meticulous and unyielding. They do everything by hand, from screen-printing album covers to illustrating zines with a level of detail that you just don't see much any more. Their attitude to Spectres is no different. That might explain why it took them the best part of four years to carve enough genius songs out of white noise to release an album.

'Dying', out next year on Sonic Cathedral, isn't nearly as grim as its title suggests. Joe says 'This Purgatory' is a good starting point – a track that could double as the soundtrack to Batman nemesis Bane's lair. *Rad ar* prefers 'Family', which, through a kaleidoscope of screaming guitars, is the closest Spectres get to genuine pop. And even that should come with a health warning. ■ HAZEL SHEFFIELD

► THE DETAILS

- **BASED** Bristol
- **FOR FANS OF** Sonic Youth, Hookworms
- **SOCIAL** wearespectres.com
- **SEE THEM LIVE** Brighton Drill Festival (December 6), London The Social (December 15), UK tour in February and March
- **BUY IT** Debut album 'Dying' is out on February 23, 2015
- **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** They have a celebrity fan in Charlie Dimmock, who accidentally turned up to a recent Bournemouth show and has kept in contact ever since. She even asked the band to play amid her piece at the Chelsea Flower Show, but they couldn't do it because drummer Andy Came is allergic to ivy

MORE NEW MUSIC

Soft Fangs

Soft Fangs, aka Massachusetts native John Lutkevich, might make music with obvious Elliott Smith and Sparklehorse influences – just listen to his heart-rending new EP 'Soft Fangs' – but he also harbours a love of both Rod Stewart and Fugazi. These influences meld together into a tender and sparse mesh of loner anthems written on the road and recorded in his parents' attic. Songs like 'Believers' and 'Dead Friends' suggest Lutkevich won't be living in the family home much longer.

► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/softfangs

► **HEAR HIM** softfangs.bandcamp.com

Payfone

New on NYC-based label Golf Channel Recordings is Payfone, aka Londoner Phil Passera. His forthcoming A-side on the label, 'Paradise', is a rich, dubby slice of funk, while flipside 'Subconscient Lamentation' is a lavish reworking of the Black Devil Disco Club classic.

► **HEAR HIM** soundcloud.com/payfone

NME BUZZ ACT OF THE WEEK

Mitski

With a heavenly voice that could rival Angel Olsen's and an arsenal of fuzzed-out

The Rebel Light

and folky post-punk tracks, Brooklyn artist Mitski makes a big impression on her new album 'Bury Me At Makeout Creek'. Lead single 'First Love/Late Spring' mixes vulnerability ("One word from you and I would jump off of this ledge, baby") with chaotic melody, as sizzling guitars and boisterous drums battle with the divine vocals. Truly compelling.

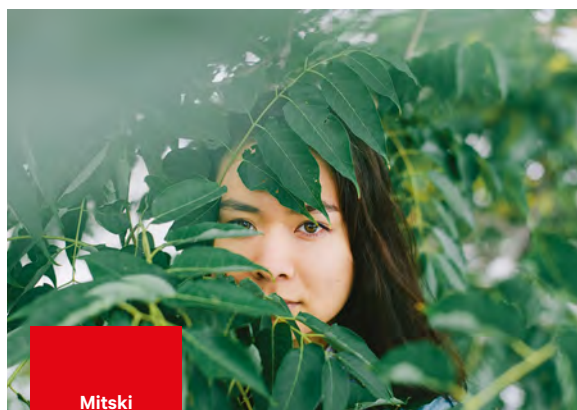
► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/mitskileaks

► **HEAR HER** mitski.bandcamp.com

The Rebel Light

If you're craving for a band with a bit of pop zest, look no further than The Rebel Light. The sea breezes of their hometown, Los Angeles, have helped them imbue their psychedelic surf sounds with a melodic sensibility: new single 'Strangers' sounds like The Beach Boys colliding with The Doors to create something that's very 2014.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/rebel.light.5



Mitski

► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/therebellight

Rory Wynne

That's no typo on Rory Wynne's Facebook page – he really was born in 1999. And at just 15 years old, the Mancunian is already a budding talent. 'Post Party Confusion' follows in the footsteps of Jake Bugg, as Wynne waxes lyrical about bust-ups and stale beer.

'The One Before The Next One' is even better – an experimental number that uses dreamy ambience and crashing guitar licks as a backdrop for his heartbroken wordplay.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/rory.wynne

► **HEAR HIM** soundcloud.com/rory_wynne

Klo

Simon Lam and Chloe Kaul are cousins from Melbourne who make soulful electro-R&B as Klo, and recent EP 'Cusp' sounds like it's dropped just in time for the Australian summer. The track 'Under Lie' is full of smoky vocals and laidback beats, making it the perfect complement to a beach sunset. Comparisons to AlunaGeorge are inevitable.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/klo music

► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/klo music

Radar NEWS ROUND UP

ZUN ZUN TOUR

Bristol band Zun Zun Egui head out on the road in March 2015 in support of new album 'Shackles' Gift' (due for release on January 26). They'll kick off the tour at Bexhill De La Warr Pavilion on March 2, before travelling around the UK and ending up at Birmingham Sunflower Lounge on March 14.

SONGHYOY SUPPORT JULES

Timbuktu punks Songhoy Blues' riff-heavy 'Soubour' appeared on a 2013 Africa Express release. Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Nick Zinner is producing their forthcoming debut album 'Music In Exile', and they're supporting Julian Casablancas + The Voidz on their European dates this month.

Songhoy Blues



Baby Strange



MINOR TOURS WITH BABY

Two of Radar's favourite new bands, Dolomite Minor and Baby Strange, are hitting the road together in February. The bands, who will have new material out to coincide with the tour, will play an NME Awards Show with Austin, Texas as part of the jaunt – at London's Electrowerkz on February 5.

BC CAMPLIGHT RETURNS

New Jersey man BC Camplight returns in the new year, releasing his Bella Union debut 'How To Die In The North' on January 19. Recorded in his adopted home of Manchester, it's his first proper release since 2007, and will be promoted at dates across the UK from January to March.

► For daily new music recommendations and exclusive tracks and videos go to NME.COM/NEWMUSIC

"One chord is fine. Two chords is pushing it. Three chords and you're into jazz"

Lou Reed said that. And new Wichita signings Girlpool are following his mantra. The latest in a rich lineage of bands wielding minimal musicianship to maximum effect, the group and their peers explain why simple doesn't necessarily mean easy

▶ Girlpool's debut self-titled EP is full of complex, intricate ideas – a stark five-song take on identity, honesty, sex and desire – but the band is simply guitarist Cleo Tucker, 18, and bassist Harmony Tividad, 19. The LA duo both sing, their voices interlocking and harmonising to powerful effect. For all the space and silence left by their lack of drums, Tucker and Tividad's voices resonate that much harder, driving their words with the full-speed force of a pounding kick pedal.

Tucker and Tividad started writing songs with such sparse instrumentation out of necessity – "There was no-one else to play music with," says Tucker. Girlpool's first gig took place less than a year ago, last December at a house show in LA. "But it kind of evolved into something that we preferred," says Tucker. "There was an absence of what's supposed to be that we could explore and embrace. The emptiness and space and simpleness of our two instruments and our vocals allows a heavier emphasis on lyrics. We enjoy the absence of distraction. It can still feel full without what's expected."

And though the sound is stripped back, Girlpool rightly reject the notion

that their music is simple. "Simple has this connotation that it's easy," Tucker adds. "Although it is stripped down, we have to fill all of that room."

Even in their lyrics, there is an understanding that emotional simplicity is difficult: "*It's hard to see things simply, when my thoughts are evoked within me*", Tucker and Tividad sing on 'Plants And Worms'. The duo describe their songwriting process as highly collaborative: they talk out themes, acknowledging their shared and disparate feelings, coming to agreements on words that cover both of their perspectives.

"Although it is a deep collaboration, I feel it is very important that we stick to not saying anything that we don't feel," Tucker says. "We're all about honesty and the intention of being true to your heart. It takes a toll on you when you say things that you don't feel. Words are powerful."

On record, their voices are commanding, their personal politics upfront. "*I'll never understand what it means to be a man who is white/Cos he never has to fight*", the two sing with force on 'Paint Me Colors'.

Cryptic, mid-tempo blues come out in Tucker's guitar playing; there's a

youthful sneakiness to the way Tividad's bass creeps in circles, underlining every carefully placed word. 'Jane' feels like a microcosm of everything Girlpool stand for – a call to action to their peers to stand up, have a voice, express themselves. "*Boys and girls, if you are listening, don't ever feel imprisoned, feeling like your mouth is glued tight shut*", they sing with a dark-hued sweetness and inherent rebelliousness.

"Harmony and I are both conveying what's honest to ourselves," says Tucker. "There's really no goal or theme we follow other than being as real and honest and vulnerable as possible when we're playing music. Just to go into the part of yourself that's real."

"You don't have to be what you're expected to be, just to fill a role," adds Tividad. "You can be different and still fill the space... Certain people want to see a drummer, but we don't want to. The different elements that come out in terms of instrumentation and genre are arbitrary compared to what we are feeling, basically. We're not trying to be a sound; we're just making sounds based on what we're feeling."

Girlpool's origins are in all-ages spaces in LA, like The Smell and Pehrspace, but they were fired up to make music by a combination of DIY and punk,





Girlpool: Cleo Tucker (left) and Harmony Tividad

"It takes a toll on you when you say things that you don't feel. Words are powerful"

past and present. They've acknowledged the influence of third-wave feminist punk; Tucker has cited *The Punk Singer*, the 2013 biopic of Bikini Kill's Kathleen Hanna, as an inspiration (and the band recently finished making a video with the film's director, Sini Anderson). Tividad was also encouraged by the home-recorded sounds of bedroom pop labels like Orchid Tapes and Birdtapes. "I would go through Bandcamp tags and listen to all of these different bands that were on the East Coast, and that was really inspiring: to know that existed outside of where I was," she says.

Theirs is an intriguing position, straddling the line between an explicitly punk ideology and the more scrappy, Tumblr-centred lo-fi pop of recent years. But there are clear lines of influence on both sides of that divide, all drawing on the lineage of bands who have embraced a stripped-down, accessible approach to writing and recording in order to convey powerful ideas.

"Embracing minimalism allows the songs to stand on their own," says Greta Kline, the songwriter and guitarist who records as Frankie Cosmos, whose debut studio LP 'Zentropy' was released by Double Double Whammy earlier this year. Before 'Zentropy', Kline utilised a similar approach on dozens of home-recorded Bandcamp releases, combined with a marked K Records influence. "It means you aren't relying on some professional equipment or sound to make them into songs. [K founder Calvin Johnson's band] Beat Happening's songs seemed like living proof that anyone could be a musician, and a show could happen anywhere. I think listening to bands like that encourages young people to be themselves and be brave to try new things."

Beat Happening's first two albums, 1985's 'Beat Happening' and 1988's 'Jamboree', are the spiritual predecessors of the kind of punk-inflected instrumentals wielded by bands like Girlpool. While Beat Happening may have appeared sweet and childish on the surface, to hear only that would be to miss the point: underneath was a compelling and complicated darkness, their takes on desire and death and heartbreak. But where the early K bands were known for their first-thought best-thought approach, Girlpool take all of that inspiring accessibility and expand the notion of what can be accomplished with more precision and intention, with lyrics that echo the deconstructions of gender, identity and self-empowerment conveyed by riot grrrl.

"Music and notes can be played by anyone," says Katie Bennett of Free Cake For Every Creature, a labelmate of Kline's who also makes aesthetically minimal yet lyrically playful songs. "But lyrics are the most important to me." Bennett cites a long history of songwriters as part of her path towards embracing pop minimalism: from '60s girl groups like The Ronettes and The Shangri-Las to '90s twee-pop to contemporaries like Waxahatchee and Radiator Hospital. "You can't really hide behind the music that way," Bennett says. "You have to make sure the lyrics are good and they're really saying something."

Indeed, the most subversive music of the DIY and punk underground has a long history of being about what's the loudest, the fastest, the toughest. But there is also a long history of musicians who communally acknowledge the hollowness inherent in those tired, overtly masculine sentiments. To strip back the instrumentation, to not hide behind noise and speed and flashy fills, can be just as radical in its own way. And in the case of bands like Girlpool, perhaps more so.

■ LIZ PELLY

► THE BARE ESSENTIALS

Girlpool are a powerful addition to the history of embracing minimalism as a platform for conveying difficult, emotionally complex ideas. Here are a handful of their forebears.

The Shaggs

Sisters Dorothy, Betty, Helen and Rachel Wiggin formed in 1968, playing primitive-sounding pop tunes with frank lyrics and enormous personality. Lester Bangs called them "better than The Beatles".

► **KEY TRACK** 'Philosophy Of The World' (1969)

Marine Girls

The '80s UK post-punk girl group, whose number included Tracey Thorn, were known for their simple approach to songwriting. Their 1982 debut album 'Beach Party' was one of Kurt Cobain's

favourite records.

► **KEY TRACK** 'A Place In The Sun' (1983)

Beat Happening

Calvin Johnson, Heather Lewis and Bret Lunsford started playing in Olympia, Washington in 1982, purposefully embracing lo-fi minimalism. Johnson released their records on his influential label, K Records.

► **KEY TRACK** 'Indian Summer' (1988)

Cub

Formed in Vancouver, BC in 1992, Cub existed for five years and released four full-length albums. The band embraced a simple, youthful aesthetic termed "cuddlecure".

► **KEY TRACK** 'My Chinchilla' (1993)



ST VINCENT

28



"THERE IS NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF"

St Vincent's fourth album established Annie Clark as one of the world's most fearless and thrilling artists. The creator of *NME's* Album Of 2014 tells Laura Snapes that it's all about "always having your face pressed up against the glass – and trying to make it a liquid"

PHOTOS: BELLA HOWARD

Annie Clark has no recollection of what she did during the encore of her show at New Orleans' House Of Blues on October 9, but there's a video on YouTube if she ever wants to witness it from the audience's perspective. During an exploded version of 'Your Lips Are Red' (from St Vincent's 2007 debut, 'Marry Me'), she decides to scale the balcony. Precipitously navigating its edge about 20 feet from the ground, she realises her pointy boots aren't exactly made for abseiling.

As she re-approaches the stage, security personnel quickly assemble below to help break her fall. But instead of letting them catch her, she dangles ➔

tantalisingly from the edge, a security man holding her feet while she clings firmly to the railing. After relinquishing her grip, she climbs onto the stage, bows exaggeratedly and blows a kiss to the audience. Later she tweets a photo of blood smeared down her face: "Cut knee while climbing balcony at @HOBNOLA last night. Did what anyone would do & smeared the blood on my face. #yolo"

"I wash my hands a lot," Clark says from her Swiss hotel room on tour in mid-November. "I love showering. I'm pretty fastidious as far as that goes. But I was told later that I was going and taking people's drinks and drinking them." She sounds appalled. "Like, what is this, who knows what's going on, who knows if somebody's sick or has a cold or whatever? And I was pouring the rest of it down onto the people below. I mean... I would never do that. I would never be presumptuous like that in real life, or rude. That's not how I was raised. But once you get onstage, you're an entertainer, and some id starts flowing out in a way that you can't even control."

Control has been a key element of Annie Clark's work as St Vincent – as any profile of her will mention, she's always wielded her uncanny ability to straddle light and dark, poise and danger, beauty and ugliness. But this year, in the wake of releasing fourth album 'St Vincent' – *NME's* album of 2014 – the balance has firmly shifted in favour of the latter: the darker, more extreme qualities. She called the album "extroverted", which made perfect sense even before her Glastonbury set, when she tipped some guy's dinner over his head with a deviant grin.

Clark's motto for 2014, she says, has been "just err on the side of experience". "I was listening to [comedian] Amy Poehler's NPR interview. She was saying something, which is not a new thought, but it's something that I've felt as well – she just says yes. She says yes to opportunities. And then you kind of figure, 'OK, well how can I actually buttress this thing? How can I do this? But I said yes, so I'm committed to it!'" That's been the overarching theme of the past year. I'm more excited about the process than sometimes even the product. I just have a lot more fun now. It's good to live. It feels good to be alive."

That process-over-product intuition is evident in the way the St Vincent band spent two months rehearsing this year's heavily choreographed tour (Clark took four months learning how to fall without injuring herself from choreographer Annie-B Parson), only to have spent the last nine months completely pulling it apart live. "You can rehearse and have an idea of what it's going to be," she says, "but then it gets to hit the air in a room of 1,000, 2,000, 3,000 – or 200 – other people, and it becomes something else."

The Digital Witness Tour (named after the lead single from 'St Vincent') started

in February as a kind of choreographed anti-rock pantomime. "It felt kind of scary to me to do something so performative at first, which I took as a good sign," Clark said when we spoke in June. "I don't think I would want to get into a situation that I knew was going to be a home run. That would be a little too easy." She soloed on her guitar atop a three-tier pastel-pink podium only to artfully fling herself down it a song later, and told the crowd stories about themselves that were really about her own life (such as being baptised in a sink by her paternal grandmother – who had 11 children of her own – "with a cigarette in one hand and a martini in the other").

She didn't attribute any explicit meaning to the performance, but her awe-inspiring performance at London's O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire in February seemed at once to contain religious imagery, meditations on celebrity, gender and power, and a good-humoured meta-critique of the "inherent artifice" of 'normal' rock gigs, as she put it later. "I thought the narrative arc that she chose was really effective," says electronic artist Holly Herndon, who supported on the Digital Witness Tour dates on America's East Coast. "It was like going to a movie or something."

It's now barely recognisable from its initial incarnation: Clark throws herself around violently, wielding a rictus smile as she plays cat-and-mouse with the audience, stretching her scripted stories into lectures that are equal parts terrifying and life-affirming. "I would rather fucking be here than be anywhere else, than be in a fucking coma, than be dead, be a fucking zombie," she recently told a crowd in Pensacola, Florida, "so you stand up, and you don't give up hope, and you fucking take the punches and that's what life is."

She climbed about 50 feet up into the rafters onstage at Austin City Limits in October, but today in Switzerland a friend asked her to go on a cable car – "and I'm like, 'Fuck, no, I'm

TIMELINE

Annie Clark's road to beatification

2003 Joins The Polyphonic Spree as a touring member

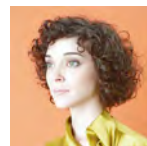
2006 Quits the Spree and joins Sufjan Stevens' touring band



JULY 2007
Releases debut album, 'Marry Me', named after a recurring joke on *Arrested Development*

MAY 2009
Releases second album, 'Actor'

SEPTEMBER 2011
Releases third album, 'Strange Mercy'



FEBRUARY 2012 Makes her first appearance on *Carrie Brownstein and Fred Armisen's* cult comedy show, *Portlandia*



SEPTEMBER 2012
Releases 'Love This Giant', a full-length collaboration with Talking Heads' David Byrne

NOVEMBER 2013 Plays with Pearl Jam live in Dallas, along with Carrie Brownstein

JANUARY 2014 Appears on Swans' album 'To Be Kind'

FEBRUARY 2014
Releases fourth solo album, 'St Vincent'

APRIL 2014
Performs with Nirvana as the Seattle band are inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame



MAY 2014 Performs on famed US comedy show *Saturday Night Live*

afraid of heights, no way!' Not in a million years will I do that. I'm very, very, very afraid of heights." Cuts and bruises don't bother her, she says, and she's superglued her fingers back together "on multiple occasions". Michael Gira witnessed the extent of Clark's industriousness and bodily sacrifice when she visited Dallas last autumn to provide guest vocals for his band Swans' 2014 record, 'To Be Kind'. "I think she sang for about six hours straight at one point, take after take, probably 20 tracks of various notes,"

Gira recalls. "And aside from taking a drink of tea occasionally, she stayed constantly able to sing and was perfect."

In Mexico City, days after ACL, Clark's production manager told her that she'd crawled back onstage after jumping into the crowd, weeping "Ow, ow", which Clark mimics in a feeble voice while laughing because she doesn't remember it at all. There's not really any conscious thought going on at these moments, she says, nor any intoxication beyond an adrenalin trip and a pre-show glass of white wine: "I want to take things further every time, and there are so many ways to do it," she says. "It's just animal instinct. I want to feel everything. It's psychic, energetic, experiential greed."

The day after this interview, Clark and her live multi-instrumentalist Toko Yasuda (formerly of the band Enon, whose 2002 album 'High Society' is wildly underrated) are going to play an immersive game called *The Door*, where you get locked in a room for an hour and given a series of clues to help you escape. "And honestly, the thought of it terrifies me, so this

could be the last conversation before a total nervous breakdown." I ask whether it won't trigger her anxiety. "Sure it will, but who cares?" she says defiantly. "It's... whatever. I can face that. I can face plenty of things. It's a game, you know?" (They survive, making it out in 54 minutes.)

Beset by panic attacks between the ages of eight and 16 or so, Clark created characters on her first three albums who appealed to greater powers to help impose structure on their lives: 'Save Me From What I Want', she implored (echoing an installation by the declarative artist Jenny Holzer) on 2009's woodwind-heavy 'Actor', and spelled out "*h-e-l-p, help me, help me*" on the funky, King Crimson-indebted 'Marrow'. 'Chloe In The Afternoon', the opening track of 2011's 'Strange Mercy', was a gasping BDSM sex scene that concretely established the roles of power, submission and control-as-succour within her work, on an album full of "sublimated pain, self-loathing".

On 'St Vincent', Clark's protagonists started throwing caution to the wind. A recluse flew in the face of certain doom to open her curtains over the scrunched riff of 'Birth In Reverse', and later even her windows on 'Regret'. Anxious devotionals 'Psychopath' and the gorgeous 'Severed Crossed Fingers' acknowledged the likelihood of fatal disaster, but decided to keep on hoping and loving anyway.

The source of her new-found artistic and personal fearlessness is a mixture of perspective and confidence. "If you're able to have the myopia to care so much about this one thing, music, so much – and I care so fucking much about music, it's my favourite thing in the entire world – but also have the wherewithal to zoom out and go 'this is just music', then there's nothing to be afraid of," she says. "There's nothing to be afraid of. Not being liked or accepted no longer feels like a scary prospect."

She was nervous about putting out debut 'Marry Me', but then "I was just anxious in my life", she says plainly. "I was just thrilled that anyone had even heard it. And then, I don't know, I just think it's a process of becoming – it sounds so narcissistic, and I don't mean it in that way – but you just get better at being *you*, whatever that is. I think we're all just trying to hurtle through space and figure out what that is, you know. That's the dialogue, that's the dialectic. But just to be better at being you, that's it. And then the rest sort of falls into place because the same intuition that's guiding your inner compass is guiding your art."

It is, to state the obvious, a method that's working out for her. 'St Vincent' sold 30,000 copies in its first week alone. It will not be just our album of 2014. In April, Dave Grohl asked her to help induct Nirvana into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame ("I fucking love that dude, he's wonderful"). Designer Diane von Furstenberg asked her to play the 40th-anniversary celebration of her famed wrap dress in February, calling her "sexy and creative and bold". Clark has been a frequent fixture on television this year, making her third and fourth appearances in Carrie Brownstein and Fred Armisen's comedy series *Portlandia* and performing in prestigious ➤

"I care so fucking much about music, but I can also zoom out and go, 'This is just music'"



Annie Clark
photographed
in London,
November 11, 2014

slots on *Saturday Night Live* and as bandleader on *Late Night With Seth Meyers*.

Although Clark says it's been "a really wonderful year in a lot of ways" (she counts any year where nobody she loves dies as "a really good year", possibly referring to the period of loss that inspired 'Strange Mercy'), she's not about to sit around trying to "reverse-engineer" whatever it is people like about her in order to replicate it. Besides, the whole thrill of watching St Vincent these past seven years lies in the forward leaps she takes with each record. "You have to cultivate an inner voice the same way you do with writing, have a lens that's uniquely your lens, and then go forward and understand that if you're lucky, people will come along for the ride," she says. "Nothing is a given – I know that, I *feel* that every day – but that doesn't mean I'm scared to move forward. Always future. Always have your face pressed up against the glass and try to make it a liquid."

"Nothing is a given, I know that. But that doesn't mean I'm scared to move forward. Always future..."

Clark estimates that the band have played over 150 shows in 2014; by the time you read this, the Digital Witness Tour will have ended last week in Lisbon, she will have briefly returned to New York for a handful of meetings, played Chicago with Future Islands, and will be preparing to start a 14-date support slot for The Black Keys, playing arenas in American cities where she'd usually only be able play tiny clubs, if at all: cities such as Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she was born before her family moved to Dallas, Texas.

"She's super talented, she's super cool, and I think she has a really unique way of playing guitar and writing melodies," says Black Keys drummer Patrick Carney. "I think she's the kind of person who will have – and is in the midst of having – a big career. That's the way to look at someone like her – this year was all about so-and-so, but really I think it's more important to look at the big picture. Take The Clash. They had a fucking massive career that's bigger than whatever album cycle they were on. More and more people will come around and listen to her music."

More than that, even, this feels like the year when Annie Clark became the kind of artist who has distinct periods within her career; maybe this is her 'maniacal futurist' age. On that note, the Bowie comparison has often been made and Clark has explicitly



acknowledged his influence on numerous occasions, but while so many of his transformations were predicated on nihilism and self-destruction even as he produced transcendent art, Clark's seem based on sucking deeper at the marrow of life to try and get closer to the root of why we're all here. 'Digital Witness' may have given the impression that she's somehow anti-internet, which is the opposite of the truth – in her scant tour downtime, she's been using it to bone up on the hierarchies within ant colonies, because she's fascinated by "anything that's a key to understanding what nature is". Earlier on the day we speak, she had visited the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, a museum of outsider art.

"My main take-away from it was that the human desire and will to create is so strong that it's irrepressible even in the most harrowing situations," she says, describing French artist Marguerite Sir's crocheted wedding dress, woven from threads pulled from the fraying sheets of the psychiatric hospital in which she was confined in the 1930s. "I love people who have very unique lenses that they're viewing the world through, like autism – there's a lot of really, really great work from people for whom that's their only form of being able to communicate with the outside world in a way that the outside world can understand. That's really, really powerful. I mean, it takes art so far out of this idea of, 'Oh, it's just *luxurious* to make *art*.' No – we're talking about something that's deep and genetic and about communication; not about self-glorification, but so incredibly entwined into existence."

Clark is too allergic to self-aggrandising behaviour to relate this back to how she approaches her own work, but when we last spoke for an *NME* feature around the release of 'St Vincent' in January, she acknowledged that music had "quite literally" saved her life. After playing with Nirvana, she often talked about how their music functioned as armour in her high school years, when she was stricken by panic attacks. Today she calls music "magic" and "transcendent", marvelling at its polarised abilities to make people angry when they don't like it, and change the lives of those who can't communicate without it: "Find me one other thing that's not a pill that you put in your mouth [that can do that]. It's incredible." Her relationship with music has changed with age (she just turned 32), in that life-changing records don't come along as often, but when

they do, the effect is "equally, if not more powerful". This year, Perfume Genius' song 'Queen' had that effect, "the sentiment and the pain".

Right now Clark is in a state where she's "seeking a whole lot of information and stimulation and excitement" to feed her brain. At this point of hyper-awareness, physical self-endangerment, vivid blue Barbara Cartland eyeshadow, consumptive-chic purple blusher and dresses rendering bleeding eyeballs in thousands of sequins, it might seem like Clark is, to put it politely, bordering on derangement. There's a temptation within popular culture to see women who behave erratically as hysterics teetering on a verge. Once she got off tour with David Byrne after touring 2012's 'Love This Giant', Clark managed to relax at home for 36 hours before starting work again. She's previously talked about filling her apartment with grotesque artwork, and she's just extended her tour into 2015. It could easily paint a portrait of a person with an aversion to home or stability.

"I love being at home," she says. "If I was home right now, to be honest with you, I'd be writing. I miss my friends, I wanna see the Turner documentary, there are things I certainly miss. But the reality of moving and being in constant motion for my adult life means that I'm kind of OK anywhere. Any place is a good place. Anything can be an adventure."

"It's an emotional thing, playing shows for people every night," she says, sighing. "We're both bringing our own psychic detritus to the shows, and it takes a lot of energy to perform." At a recent show in Copenhagen, it looked as if she was crying during 'Huey Newton', adding "*so lonely*" to the lines about "*a lonely, lonely winter*". "I don't remember crying then," she says. "I have cried, but away from the audience." She laughs. "Not like, 'Look at me, I'm crying.' Like the way you cry if you've had a great orgasm – not pain exactly, just that whole confluence of existence coming at you at once."

One of the reasons that the Digital Witness Tour has transformed so acutely is because, for St Vincent, tours don't exist as a prolonged absence from life before returning to the real world to scoop up more experiences and then funnel them back down the pipe to turn them into another album to take back on the road. Touring is her life, that process of continually becoming herself. Clark keeps it exciting for her own benefit, and because, like Bowie, she's fundamentally aware of the idea of artist as entertainer. On the eve of releasing 'The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust & The Spiders From Mars', Bowie declared, "I wish myself to be a prop, if anything, for my songs," which seems reflective of Clark's approach.

After more than 15 years on the road, whether as a roadie for her aunt and uncle, playing with The Polyphonic Spree, Sufjan Stevens or in her own band, Clark admits that it takes a lot to keep up the pace she and her team spin at, and that it would be "insane" for someone "maybe more faint of heart". She once told *The Gentlewoman*: "A lot of people work for a living so they can take a vacation. I work so that I can work some more!" Her tour finally winds up on December 22, when she'll go home to her family, hoping somehow to have done her Christmas shopping by then. The 2015 tour dates already stretch solidly into March. It's exhausting, she says, but in the best possible way.

"I've been working my whole sentient life, essentially, to get to play music for people all over the world," Clark explains with no small amount of awe. "I've gotten to do things that I would never have dared imagine. Life keeps surprising me in that way. I'm not saying I'm indestructible and that I never need a break. But there's so many things I wanna do – how can I do them all, you know?" ■

NEW MUSIC!

Annie Clark unveils two new songs, 'Pieta' and 'Sparrow', left over from the 'St Vincent' sessions and due for release on December 8

"They're two songs that I really loved. They just didn't fit into the bizarre landscape of puzzle pieces that is a record. 'Pieta' is beats-first – beats and a story a friend had told me about a very religious family from the South. They were concerned that their young son at age 10 was backsliding [lapsing into sin], and so they held an emergency baptism for him in the shallow end of a Holiday Inn swimming pool. And I just thought that was the perfect nexus of that particular subculture of America. So I took that image and weaved it into my own esoteric story."

"There are a couple of reference points for 'Sparrow'. There's an old hymn that I know that says, '*His eyes on the sparrow*', and this is kind of the inverse of that hymn. And then there was a reference to the last line of Joan Didion's [book] *The Year Of Magical Thinking*: 'No eye is on the sparrow but he did tell me that.'"

THE HOLY BIBLE:

INSIDE THE LIVE REHEARSALS





For its 20th anniversary, Manic Street Preachers are finally ready to play ‘The Holy Bible’ in full without Richey Edwards. Emily Mackay finds the trio squaring up to their greatest achievement and heaviest millstone in their Cardiff studio

Over the studio monitors, the metallic clank and iron-lung whirr of ‘The Intense Humming Of Evil’ slowly grinds to a halt, shuddering drums and coiled, cold guitars unspooling into collapse. The three members of Manic Street Preachers focus, eyes down, absorbed to the end. Silence falls. “Merry Christmas,” says Nicky Wire.

In Faster Studios, Manic Street Preachers’ cosy little corner of Cardiff, things are getting intense. Three weeks into rehearsals for the seven shows in December at which they’ll play their 1994 landmark album ‘The Holy Bible’ in full, Nicky describes them as “still a good 25 per cent away from playing it correctly”.

Some of these songs haven’t been aired live for nearly 20 years. There’s unfinished business here – they played one tour after the album’s release, including three shows at London’s now-demolished Astoria in December 1994, said to be among the best they ever did. In February the following year, the Manics’ rhythm guitarist Richey Edwards, chief lyrical architect of ‘The Holy Bible’, disappeared. The dates for the following year, including a US tour, were cancelled. In the years immediately following Richey’s disappearance, the band shied away from their most recent album, moving forward into survival and 1996’s ‘Everything Must Go’.

“I really enjoyed how ‘The Holy Bible’ confronts the audience, but that album confronts us, too,” James Dean Bradfield told *Select* in 1996. “You play it onstage and you can feel Damien around the corner. It feels like handling a cursed chalice. You can feel the lesions breaking out all over your body.”

Two decades on, the band are finally ready to confront and celebrate ‘The Holy Bible’, even after James told *NME* in August that there was “a massive question mark in our heads” about whether they could do it. Today, he and Nicky both admit that ‘Die In The Summertime’ and others still scare them. If there are no visible lesions, there have still been a few hiccups. Nicky has an overextended ligament in his thumb that stopped him playing bass for two weeks, and means he has to wear a support on his hand. “I haven’t turned into Michael Jackson or anything,” he reassures me. James, meanwhile, has suffered

a dental abscess. The normal solution is root canal surgery, but as that carries the risk of putting him out of rehearsal action for two weeks, he’s having to neck the antibiotics and hope for the best. “‘The Holy Bible’’s ruined us already! We’ve got fucking injuries coming out everywhere!” laughs Nicky.

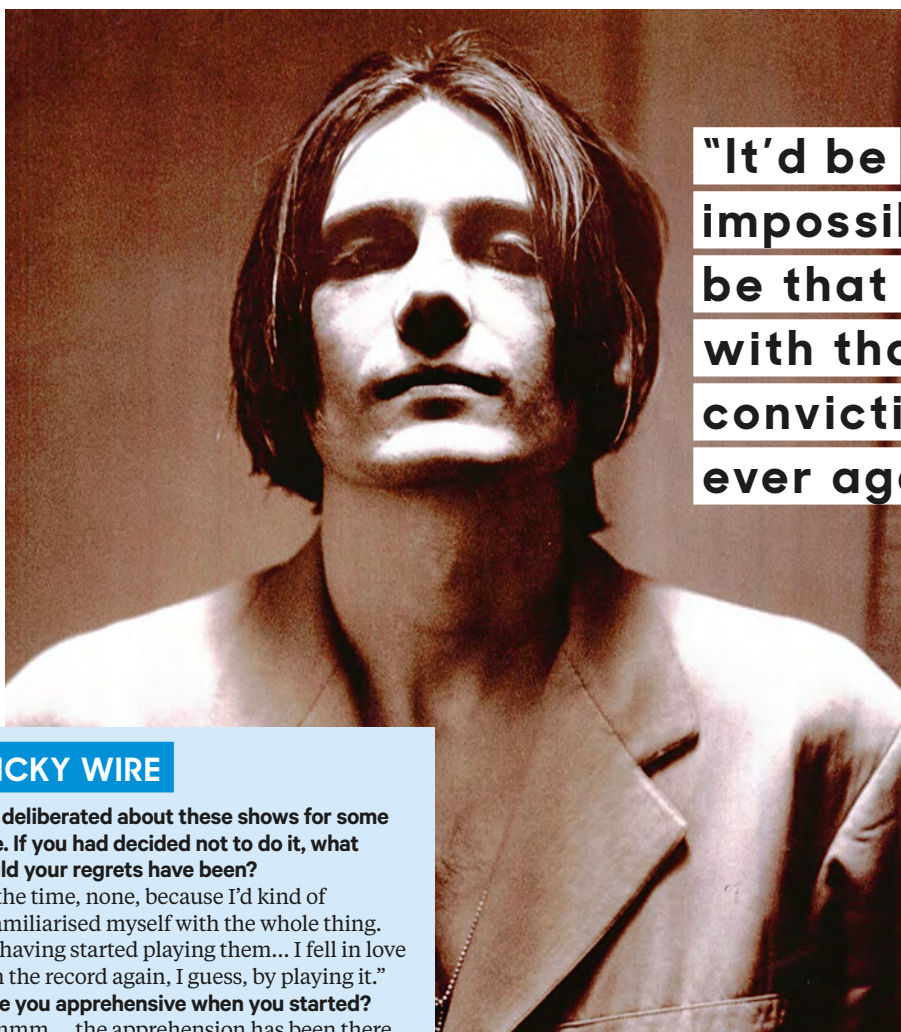
The band are pushing on; they’ve requested the master tapes of the album back from Sony, and are forcing bodies and minds into ‘The Holy Bible’’s brutal harshness – those time signatures, those fiddly bass and drum parts, that screaming, all those words, words, words...

“There’s a state of mind with ‘The Holy Bible’ that you have to be really physical,” says Nicky. “You have to go out there with deep conviction, because you just can’t coast it.”

With three weeks of rehearsals to go (and plans for a US tour being firmed up) pressure is mounting, and today’s session is drawing to a close after run-throughs of ‘Ifwhiteamerica...’, ‘4st 7lb’, ‘Die In The Summertime’, ‘The Intense Humming Of Evil’, ‘Of Walking Abortion’ and ‘Yes’ that have the intent of coiled springs. Not every lyric – or, given James’ dental state, every scream – is there yet, but that roiling, evil, under-the-skin guitar sound, the itchy ferocity of the rhythms, the furious drive... it’s eerily right. The sensation is akin to, as James describes the album, “that feeling of becoming”.

I’d asked the band earlier if they themselves had seen any bands play albums in full, and James said he’d been to see Echo And The Bunnymen’s ‘Ocean Rain’ and Brian Wilson’s ‘Smile’. “And to be honest, I went to those gigs with reservations, and you sit down, and the first song starts, and if it’s a good atmosphere you get transported to the place you listened to the record for the first time, which was my bedroom back in Pontypool. And you get into it! You can talk as much as you like about how a band can become a living museum – which is a valid argument – but when it’s done right, it’s brilliant.”

That effect is already there with ‘The Holy Bible’. I’m stunned. The Manics, however, are just drily dealing with it, heading home after a day’s work. Sean’s route is down the M4. “That’s when you’ll see the real rage,” he says. “If only you could capture that on record.” ➡



NICKY WIRE

You deliberated about these shows for some time. If you had decided not to do it, what would your regrets have been?

"At the time, none, because I'd kind of defamiliarised myself with the whole thing. But having started playing them... I fell in love with the record again, I guess, by playing it."

Were you apprehensive when you started?

"Mmmm... the apprehension has been there constantly. But on the 'Futurology' tour as well, we were doing 'Archives Of Pain' and 'Die In The Summertime', and 'PCP' we started doing at Glastonbury... so I guess we sort of eased our way into it. So I think, emotionally, when we go onstage we will be... y'know... there's a lot of bravado. We've always been, like, just push through things and not worry. But it will hit you more playing them when you're onstage."

Has it affected you as a group more than you thought it would?

"I'm not sure as a group, but it did set the tingles off, definitely. I haven't played '...Bible' through for a long time. And then sitting down... I guess the power of it did actually really resonate with me and made me think, with a slight tinge of sadness, just as a band, it'd be impossible really to be that brave, with that much conviction, ever again. And we put *everything* into 'Futurology', and it's full of conviction. But I dunno if you can ever, for sheer kind of single-mindedness, beat 'The Holy Bible'. Certain records make you feel redundant, like 'Never Mind The Bollocks' and 'Unknown Pleasures', and it made me feel a little bit like that! It's probably a good thing."

A lot of fans, myself included, have mixed feelings about seeing 'The Holy Bible' live...

"It might even hit us onstage – perhaps we shouldn't have done it! We don't know yet. I think 20 years is a long time, and the fact that we're still a functioning, kind of lively, concept of a group, it doesn't feel quite so nostalgic somehow. I guess 'cos we'd never fucking

played it, as well. So many fans out there haven't heard a lot of the songs live, and we haven't as well, for ourselves. So, musically, it's been kind of stimulating."

Even if there wasn't the feeling of unfinished business, it's not a record that's particularly conducive to a spirit of nostalgia.

"No... I think the Christmas spirit will kick in at the end of 'Of Walking Abortion'. I can see that one as a good chant-along, almost Arcade Fire-esque: 'Who's responsible? YOU FUCKING ARE!'"

Usually with your shows there's quite a bit of... let's not say banter.

"Humour! There is!"

I guess with a record like this, the mood is going to be quite different...

"Me and James talked about this, and he said, 'I'm not saying a fucking word before songs. I can't, I can't just do the old frontman shtick.' I think that element of humour will come from the audience if it's that sort of gig. The idea of screaming '*dumb cunts*' or '*who's responsible*', I think that's gotta come from them. But that's probably why we'll come back on as well, there'll be an interval and a slight stage change and everything really just to lift the mood a tad! I'm trying to get James to do 'Bright Eyes' and 'Last Christmas' like he did at those Astorias, acoustically, but I dunno if he's that keen at the moment. He's like, 'I've got fucking enough to learn as it is!' Which is fair enough. We do expect a lot of the boy."

"It'd be impossible to be that brave, with that much conviction, ever again"



JAMES DEAN BRADFIELD

I got the impression you were slightly more reluctant about the idea of these shows than Nicky was. Is that accurate?

"I think sometimes it's really surprising if you look back, how your feelings or your inclinations change so quickly. It was the same before 'Journal For Plague Lovers'... we all had those lyrics for a long time and for ages we couldn't even countenance using them. I think if there ever was a time when we felt we wanted to do this, it would be on the 20th anniversary; I think that subconsciously seeped into the battered and bruised frontal-lobe readings of our brains, they switched on. Let alone an emotional challenge, there's a technical challenge. A lot of people are gonna say to us, 'Is it hard? Is it hard singing those lyrics? Is it hard going into those memories?' And I'm not remotely belittling that aspect of it, but I've just decided to get busy getting technical rather than getting emotional about it... I want people to actually think, 'Fuck, these guys can still do *this* a long time after.'"

Twenty years later, it's easy to sum up 'The Holy Bible' in a glib, angsty way...

"And also it gets overtaken by the idea of the gathering storm of... that kind of rock iconoclastic myth that became Richey. But I think what people miss out is the actual overpowering sense of victory that you get sometimes when you listen to it. And of course that's overlooked because people think that, with the way things ended for Richey, that there's only ever a negative thing to see. But he's ripping this out of himself... sometimes he's trying to speak for other people, sometimes he's just speaking for himself,

"The 'Holy Bible' songs were like a charging, bolting horse that we'd try to hold onto"

"I want people to think, fuck, these guys can still do this"

SEAN MOORE

The internet being what it is, if someone released an album like this now, there'd be thinkpieces from here to the moon and back.

"There would be, but then again, I don't know whether people were more sensitive back then, or now, because people have become so desensitised. I don't think it would have the same effect as it did back then. Even with all the events that happened, I think it'd make the news for a couple of days, and that would be it. But that's the way progress supposedly moves forward, people are always looking for the next thing. You'll be continually shocked, but it seems to raise the bar each time. I mean those things haven't gone away since the dawn of time; we just find more ways of dealing with it, or not dealing with it or just ignoring it."

What are your worst-case and best-case scenarios for these shows?

"My worst fear is completely messing it all up – that's always been my fear at every single gig that we ever play. I mean, my worst fear's gonna be those people that arrive and go, 'Oh

God, it's like a bunch of old geriatrics onstage pretending that they're in their early to mid-twenties again.' But we watch our old videos and we know what we play like and how we sound. And yeah, it is slightly different, but back then there's a lot of naivety there, there's things that you wish you'd done that you hadn't done. And things you could have made better. But as people I don't think we've changed at all. We've probably become even more cynical, whereas then we were a bit more happy-go-lucky. If you can call it that."

Unhappy-go-lucky.

"Yeah. I think we're playing the songs better than we did back then. Sometimes they were like a charging, bolting horse that we'd try to hold onto the reins and it'd just get away. Now we've got enough experience that we can push when we need to or hold back."

While you've been rehearsing, have you made any adjustments or changes to the songs to perform them live, or is it going to be exactly as it is on the record?

"Completely as it is, yeah. I mean, maybe 'PCP' isn't played with the same venom as it was live [back then], but on record, it didn't have the same venom [as it did live then either]. But then when we played it live, we were only playing 45-minute sets. And we were a good 20 years younger! Plus we didn't have all those other hang-ups and worries and everything that you pile upon yourself as you get older and older. But the commitment'll still be there. Some days we'll get it right and some days we'll get it wrong. But we'll try our damndest to get it right."

and sometimes he's speaking for history. But he's ripped it out of the core of himself this record, and I feel a sense of empowerment. Which of course does get lost, because Richey went missing, he's not with us. But yeah, I remember playing it on the road when we were supporting Therapy? in France, and I came offstage feeling great every night."

There must be more pressure than usual in terms of nothing going wrong technically...

"(Laughs) Oh, thanks! Fucking hell, I'm gonna get the bends in a minute! Yeah, it's weird, there is a technical aspect to it where it's like, does it sound serrated, does it sound articulate, basically: does it sound like it did at the Astoria in 1994. And I think... so we'll see!"

COULDN'T GET A TICKET? Behold five rare live clips of songs from 'The Holy Bible'

If white america told the truth for one day it's world would fall apart

London Astoria
DECEMBER 20, 1994

The penultimate of the Astoria shows sees this racing, rampant version in which the fan cameraman zooms in on Sean, presumably in wonder at his drum performance.

Yes

Glastonbury JUNE 24, 1994

This blistering song about sexual exploitation levels the green fields with ire and bile. Watch the concentration in James' face as he tries to remember all the words.

This Is Yesterday

BBC Radio 4
NOVEMBER 17, 2014

Although this is an acoustic take, it gives you a good idea of how the band have got to grips with the album's most delicate moment, a nostalgic song with lyrics by Nicky.

4st 7lb
MTV Most Wanted
AUGUST 4, 1994

Another acoustic performance. Nicky and James play as a duo and give the song a downbeat, terrifying clarity.

Mausoleum

Cardiff Astoria
OCTOBER 20, 1994

This clip really shows the band at their fiercest, with the camouflage netting of that time behind them.

► Watch all five clips on
NME.COM/blogs now



**"I'M
HANGING
UP MY
FIGHTING
GLOVES.
I'M A LADY
NOW"**

Three long years after becoming an instant star with '212', Azealia Banks has finally sacked off her label to release her psychedelic wonderland of a debut album. As a result, the reformed 23-year-old tells Gavin Haynes, she no longer has time for controversy

PHOTO: NIKKO LA MERE

First, in March 2013, she wished “nothing but excrement and death” on The Stone Roses. Not long after, she implied A\$AP Rocky was gay. Five months passed, and she called Lady Gaga a plagiarist. Then, in November this year, she suggested Eminem “go back to his trailer park and eat his microwave hotpocket dinner and suck on his sister’s tiddies”. Two weeks on, she said she wanted to “punch the ugly one” in Disclosure. Times were when Azealia Banks’ mouth pretty much came with its own postcode.

“It’s not even a head thing,” she says, describing the red mist that overtakes her in these moments of confrontation. “It’s a *physical* thing. I start to get hot.”

There were also the epic song wars and Twitter battles with Angel Haze in early 2013. Cussing out Baauer. Slamming Pharrell. Getting into flame wars with Perez Hilton and Lily Allen. A fight with Iggy Azalea, and then a fight with the American rapper TI about his comments about her fight with Iggy Azalea. Yet the girl who flops into a pink sofa in a side-suite at central London’s Marylebone Hotel in yin-yang pyjama bottoms and a big black Dave Chappelle T-shirt is nothing like the designer-clad despot she’s been built up to be. “Now, when I feel that, I realise, and I go and have a glass of water or something to calm down.” She says she doesn’t have time to be a bitch any more. She’s got too much stuff to do right now.

It’s 4pm, and Azealia’s just got up, still working on New York time. She has brought with her a glass of orange juice, which she doesn’t sip once for the whole hour we’re together. She charms her manager, a huge white-haired American man, and then her tour manager, a woman of about 25 with big owl glasses. She smiles broadly as she explains her past problems in historical terms.

“If you give a 19-year-old a million pounds and a bottle of vodka and a Chanel handbag and one of these” – she points at an iPhone on the glass coffee table – “then what do you think’s going to happen? I always tell my mom, ‘Just imagine if you were coke bingeing in the ’80s and you had Twitter. Imagine if they had Twitter during the crack epidemic.’”

Back in 2011, Azealia was a 19-year-old who had a development deal with XL. She borrowed a Lazy Jay beat, wrote some snappy filth over it, and that became ‘212’. XL didn’t like it, so she stuck it on the web, and within weeks the girl with the Beretta-flow mouthing off about how “*I guess that cunt’s getting eaten*” seemed to anyone with eyes in their head like a future superstar. Here was a smart, aggressive, psychedelic rapper. Interscope threw two million dollars at her feet in tribute. The future was hers to blow. And blow it she did.

First Interscope told her the record she’d made wasn’t commercial enough and they weren’t going to release it unless she changed

Banks performing at the O2 ABC in Glasgow, September 15, 2014



it. So she wrote ‘ATM Jam’ with Pharrell as a kind of commercial battering ram, but it flopped into the UK singles charts at Number 169. And, thanks to her acidic attitude, she burnt through her industry friends and supporters at speed, until the game itself turned against her. “Of course it was fucking painful,” she says, looking away. “There was definitely a period there when it was just fashionable to hate on Azealia Banks.”

The Axl Rose of rap had become pure spectacle, total sideshow. Until she wasn’t. Until, one idle Thursday, November 6, ‘Broke With Expensive Taste’ suddenly appeared as a download on iTunes. Interscope had finally dropped her in July, leaving her free to go to court to seize custody of her record.

“I was doing a lot of drugs. My circuitry just started to switch”

Rather than announce it and risk being “the girl who cried wolf”, as Azealia’s co-manager, Angelica Cob, told *Billboard*, they opted for a surprise release. After years as a punchline, Azealia Banks is finally a musician again. And a potentially great one: “Here at last, ‘Broke...’ is a cascading flood of madcap imagination,” wrote *NME*’s Matthew Horton.

Rewind a year, though, and there were times even Azealia seemed to have given up on herself. She was spending a lot of time at home, taking tap-dancing lessons, baking, practising her scales on the piano. She was learning how to knit, thinking about taking a role in a Keanu Reeves film and wondering whether she might get a role on Broadway instead. It says something that the rap dream was only one of the possibilities she saw in herself. The kid from the famous LaGuardia stage school in New York was at heart still an

art dork, trying out poses, dicking around with whatever took her fancy. She was also writing an extended fable/activity book, which she says is still going to accompany the deluxe edition of her album (see sidebar, page 42).

“You know, when you’re just at home baking cookies, you almost forget you’re an artist and you like to make art. You tell yourself, ‘You know what, I’ll just keep making songs.’ I wasn’t that bothered that no-one else could hear them. I could. Then I guess I was, like, praying for a manager, then one just popped up. When I met with Jeff [Kwatinetz – her new manager, whom she found while trying to persuade someone to put out her record], it was like when you get with a new boyfriend and he makes you feel sexy all over again. Like, ‘Oh my god, this is fucking insane.’”

The story of how ‘Broke With Expensive Taste’ came to be the psychedelic wonderland it is has more to do with Azealia’s actual previous boyfriend. Bizarre as it seems, when Azealia broke through with the hyper-sexed bustle of ‘212’, its author was in a relationship with a middle-aged white guy, and was more likely to spend her evenings making granola bars than doing blow in The Bowery toilets.

When they met, he was 43. She was 17. “I was a little girl. Everything he said was like what I had to do. And he was very controlling. He didn’t want me to do drugs because he’d had a substance problem and been to rehab. When ‘212’ came out, I’d barely had a beer.”

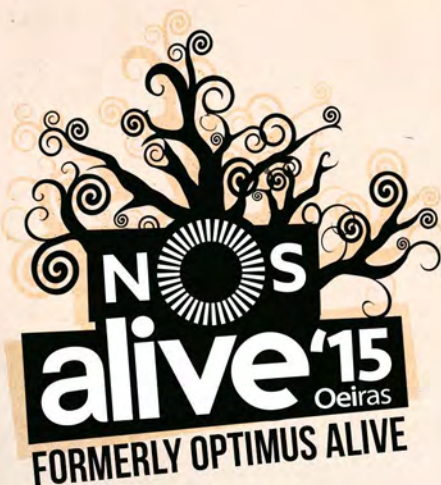
They broke up about the time she got famous. “He just got into jealousy and all that. So once we broke up, I went into this deep, deep depression. I was doing a lot of drugs. And I went a lot of places with myself. I saw a lot of things in other realms. My circuitry just started to switch. In a good way. Those things, they knock the crust off your third eye. Just like, *wowooooo* – you can see ghosts and shit.”

She started reading ‘60s acid guru Dr Timothy Leary’s psychedelic manifestos, and grazing the internet for the psychedelic experiments of Alexander Shulgin – the legendary psychonaut who first publicised MDMA as a recreational drug.

Psychedelics opened her up. She dived headfirst into the adolescence she’d missed ➔

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in her claustrophobic relationship. “My favourite album to listen to on mushrooms is Ariel Pink’s ‘Before Today’,” she says. “And [Pink’s] ‘Bright Lit Blue Skies’ – that’s like my song. I’ll be butt naked in front of the mirror with my hair weave in and my hairbrush; I’ll be just dancing, pretending.

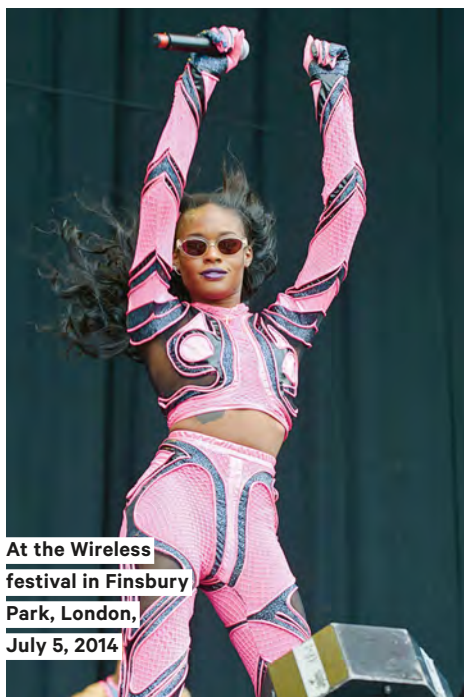
“That’s kinda how we got to [new album track and Pink cover] ‘Nude Beach A-Go-Go’. I was so obsessed with ‘Bright Lit Blue Skies’.

“A lot of the songs, I just jacked other people’s shit”

And once he was making his album, I was like, ‘Give me this song.’ And he was like, ‘No.’ For weeks and weeks, I was like, ‘Stink Pink, give me the song.’ And eventually he did.”

She’s close friends with Stink Pink (so named for his body odour). He comes to her dinner parties. As does Lana Del Rey, another good pal. They talk about “girl stuff. Like, love and life and stuff. It’s cool because I’m really loud and like, ‘Aaagh!’ And she’s really reserved and dainty. I love Lana.”

She says her own album “sounds like it’s 3D” if you listen to it on drugs, “especially the monkeys on ‘Idle Delilah’”. By now, Azealia’s reclining. She’s got her legs hooked up above the back of her chair, her bare feet pointed soles-first towards the window.



At the Wireless festival in Finsbury Park, London, July 5, 2014

‘Broke With Expensive Taste’

is definitely not your average 2014 rap production. It’s a bejewelled panther of a thing, more Chanel than Juicy Couture. Of course, the high street smash’n’grab of ‘212’ still sits dead-centre. You couldn’t toss that aside. But beyond that, sleek, ear-popping minimalism is the order of the day. Sometimes from bizarre places: one-time UK garage hero MJ Cole – last seen damaging the charts in the early noughties – turns up to produce ‘Desperado’, which is basically speed garage. There’s the CeCe Peniston-alike early-’90s commercial house feel of ‘Chasing Time’. Juke/bass producer Machinedrum also contributes, and there are a number of Brits featured, including Pearson Sound and the techno-inclined Boddika.

Azealia’s got a magpie ear for sound, and a slick, on-it taste. As someone who came up the most DIY way possible – surfing through MySpace, messaging the likes of Diplo and rapping over random beats she’d found on the internet – her MO hasn’t changed that much.

“A lot of the songs, I just jacked other people’s shit,” she explains. “Pearson Sound has a song called ‘Wad’ on iTunes. And I downloaded it. And I wrote ‘Idle Delilah’ over it. And then I wrote him an email saying, ‘Hey – I made your song really awesome. Can I have this now?’ I always do that. I guess all those guys were just really flattered that I had taken their weird, kooky white-boy things and put rap and soul and singing jazz over it.”

That DIY approach has led her to some of the freshest talent out there. Though at the same time, it’s got her into trouble. Munchi denied her the use of the track that was to have been her second single – ‘Esta Noche’. And she fell out very publicly with Baauer when she tried to release her version of ‘Harlem Shake’ and he also refused her permission.

“Fuck Baauer,” she grins. “Who gives a fuck about fucking Baauer? Seriously. Diplo had you, bro. That nigga gassed you up. He had you at the club, then he dropped you and it’s like, ‘Woop, nobody wants to fuck Baauer now.’”

She reserves a similar amount of bile for Pharrell, who she says “broke her heart” when he didn’t push ‘ATM Jam’ – a track she’s pointedly left off her new record. But these outbursts now seem done more for comedic effect than a tragic lack of self-awareness. You believe her when she says she’s tamed that famous temper. She was 19. Now, she’s 23. And in between, she may indeed have grown up.

“Am I hanging up my fighting gloves? Yeah. I’m a lady. I don’t wanna be dealing with that. Now, when you feel the adrenalin going, you stop yourself. You’ve seen me curse people out. Let’s do something else now.”

She’s already got her second album lined up. It’s called ‘Business & Pleasure’, it’s half-finished and scheduled for release in 2016. Now, she’s seeing whole album cycles play out. That’s how much she’s moved on. And the big

‘BROKE WITH EXPENSIVE TASTE’: THE BOOK

Azealia on the “fable” that comes with the special edition of her new album

Azealia Banks: “I wrote this book, this fable, that has all of these characters in it, like Idle Delilah and Wallace, that are on the album. It’s psychedelia, but not in an *Austin Powers* sense. It’s like Brothers Grimm fairytales, an activity book version, with puzzles and riddles and all kinds of fun shit. It’s going to be illustrated by a fan I met on the internet.”

Part 1: Prelude

“I make up this whole creation myth. It starts with nothingness. There’s like this pregnant dot, just hanging in space, and then it explodes. My theory is that, like, once upon a time there was dark matter and white light and space. They’re in a square, and then there’s a black dot of dark matter, and then there’s a little bit of white light poking up. The space begins to expand. The light begins to expand. The dark matter, he’s blind and he can’t move. But he’s happy with his existence. Then one day, the white light tells the dark matter he’s God. But the space is God. He sees everything. You never hear the space talk, but he’s God. And the dark matter starts asking the light how he’s God. Then he outsmarts the light without actually knowing it. Then God says to the light, ‘Hey, you’re not God, you’re just the white light.’ So space gets mad, so he traps the light inside this dark matter. Then all of a sudden you have this dark matter, with this light inside it, which becomes the sun.”

Part 2: Introduction

“So we get to today. Time passes... then the sun meets Venus and they have sex and two babies: the earth and Mercury. And everyone thinks the earth is sick, because he’s got all these forms on him. So they invite all these other planets from these other dimensions. Neptune, Uranus and Saturn come down like the three kings. So it’s reminiscent of all these different things – astrology, the Bible, sun worship, and they all play in this really fun way.”

Part 3: The Story

“It’s earth, but some *Jumanji* thing has happened. And it’s set everything all fucking awry. Humans are like a lesser state. Do you know what a therianthrope is? It’s like a half-animal, half-human person. And, in the story, these humans are this lesser slave state. They’re used for food, clothing and labour. And the therians are the people in society. Everyone’s walking around with a pig’s head or a rabbit’s head or a dog’s head. In the story, all of the people are trying to conceal their animal stuff and become more human.”

bag of money she got from Interscope to make the record they canned? She got to keep most of it. She didn’t spend it impulsively, as you might have expected. In fact, she’s saved it.

“Nuh-uh. I put it away in \$250,000 amounts. I’m still getting another \$250k payment in my account next year. Because I’ve always been very careful with money. Like, when my mom used to give me \$20, at the end of the week I’d still have \$15. I always knew I was never gonna end up a broke bitch.” ■

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COME TO DADA

A new collaboration between Savages and Bo Ningen isn't just a meeting of thrillingly experimental minds – as Nadia Khomami discovers, it's also a renewed call for art to change the world

PHOTO: DAVID EDWARDS

It's 1916, and a group of Dadaist artists including Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara and Hans Richter have started putting on performances at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. Artists, musicians and writers from all over the world come here to recite "simultaneous poetry" – a collaborative art form that mixes various languages and voices to protest against the horrors of the First World War.

Fast-forward almost 100 years and two London bands are trying to reinvigorate that concept. Last month saw the release of 'Words To The Blind', a collaboration between British/French post-punks Savages and Japanese four-piece Bo Ningen, recorded after its premiere as a live piece last year. The album comprises one 37-minute track – a "simultaneous sonic poem" in which the bands use three languages (French, Japanese and English) and a variety of instruments to represent the battle between different voices in society.

The bands met five years ago at Sing Ye From The Hillside, a tiny festival held by British Sea Power in a north Yorkshire barn (where several sheep were among the audience), and have remained close ever since. As well as making occasional live appearances together, they continue to attend each other's gigs and appear on each other's records. On a late October afternoon, the bands assembled in an east London café to discuss Dada, the power of art, and their responsibilities as young artists.

What was it that drew you to each other and to the concept of Dadaist art?

Gemma Thompson (guitar, Savages): "It was a series of coincidences around November 2012. We were in the studio recording the first Savages album; we had one day off in this intense chunk of three weeks, and we went to see Bo Ningen play at [London venue] Cafe Oto. That was an amazing show. [Producer] Johnny Hostile suggested us playing in the same space at the same time. We had a collection of books in the studio and one of them just happened to be the history of the Dada art movement. I was going through it and reading some incredible poetry and I thought, why not try simultaneous sonic poetry? The idea is as relevant today as it was then."

The Dadaists did it 100 years ago during WWI. Why is it still relevant now?

Gemma: "Because there's still a voice to be heard. It's the age-old question, really: how can art change people's lives and people's views? It's the belief that music can do that; that words and sounds are a force that can change how people see what they're doing, how they react with other people and how they go about their lives."

Jehnnny Beth (vocals, Savages): "I take pride in the fact that we've managed to have a project that's completely artistic; there's no other intention behind it. It's almost like a little proof or message that you can send, especially to this

generation, where we're maybe too oppressed by the idea of 'making it'."

What was it like when you first got into the studio together?

Kohhei Matsuda (guitar, Bo Ningen): "I've never worked in a situation like that before."

Gemma: "It's interesting about the three guitars, because at the end of the recording you can still know who's playing which guitar; you can hear all the different characters."

Taigen Kawabe (vocals and bass, Bo Ningen): "We only had two days of rehearsals."

Jehnnny: "We originally had more days booked, and the Bo Ningen boys told us, 'You don't need all that.' They come from a world that's the opposite of Savages; that's why it's been really great for us to work together – they improvise, all of them have different side projects, which leads to this experimental music as well. I'm really curious about that. There's a knowledge and experience in it."

What are the French and Japanese voices in the piece saying?

Jehnnny: "The French is a reading of a passage from this play called *Au But* by Thomas Bernhard, about a conflict between two generations. An older woman talks with a young playwright about the duty of youth today, [which she] thinks is to make new history. For me there was a statement just in the idea that two bands of our generation can achieve something together regardless of the imperatives of economics. I thought there was something free about it. And leaving in that question: are we making history? Or are we part of history? What is our duty as young artists?"

Taigen: "I decided what I would say in Japanese by referring to the context of that text. And I also improvised quite a bit, as I feel like in each performance the text has to be different."

As individual bands, what emphasis do you place on live performance?

Taigen: "Each live performance has to be different, for me. Each time we have to adjust to the venue and people; otherwise the energy would be one-sided. The audience will affect our performance and our performance will affect the audience."

Jehnnny: "At our London and Paris gigs we gave a young, unknown choreographer a budget and they put together a whole dance for our song 'Dead Nature'. We've always thought about what people see when they take their first steps into a venue. What atmosphere is there? What smell? And so

the idea of having dancers in the crowd as a first act is kind of surprising. Suddenly people react differently; maybe they drink a little less because they're captivated, and their head is a little more prepared, so they're more receptive."

"And we've played so much all around the world – as you said, Taigen – that we can't just always play the same set, we have to improvise. We've written songs like that – spoken words, extending some tracks, adding to them, speaking poetry."

Is there a special connection between music and poetry?

Kohhei: "I've never thought about the relationship because it's so natural. Poetry and music have the same root. I don't distinguish between the two."

But there's a difference between singing to music and performing a spoken-word piece, right?

Taigen: "It's the same as singing and talking, or chanting. It depends on how the audience treat it."

Jehnnny: "The interaction between sounds and words is pure, and it's very direct. I went to see Patti Smith this week; she was reading Nico's poetry at the Union Chapel with a collective of musicians, and I realised how much I love this. I have a true belief that sounds and words have a power to change consciousness and to change the world. And the relationship

between them is something we really want to push in the new Savages album."

So does recording the poem change the concept behind it, if its true purpose is to be performed live?

Gemma: "The live performance was the main intention. The recording was an experiment to see how it would work. It is an interesting question: once you record a performance, does it detract from the live origins of it? This is very much a document of that."

Taigen: "When you watch something live, it's a different experience. You use all your senses. But once you're listening to a recording, you only use one sense. I want our audience to experience both. There are so many bands that are just a representation of what they themselves like, but if I go to a show and the reference to a different musician and band is too obvious, I get bored. We didn't want to limit ourselves as a guitar band. We refer to many genres – to Dada and to spoken word in one performance. And that way we can talk to more people." ■

Words To The Blind

The inspirations

Hugo Ball

Gemma: "He curated Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire. There were many artists around him, but I think Ball was the one that really defined this idea of collaboration."

Patti Smith

Jehnnny: "She's a good example of trying to make sounds and words play together. It's something that is so free that you can have your own interpretation each time."

R Murray Schafer

Taigen: "People see the world through landscapes, but [Canadian composer] Schafer invented the idea of seeing nature and cities and society by listening to the noise."

Dadaist art

Kahhei: "I get more inspiration from the visual side of things – from Dada art, particularly the artist Kurt Schwitters, who did small sculptural collages. I see this collaboration as a collage."

Reviews

► THE DEFINITIVE VERDICT ■ EDITED BY BEN HOMEWOOD

NME
ALBUM
OF THE WEEK

46



Wu-Tang Clan A Better Tomorrow

The veteran NYC rap crew's long-delayed sixth album keeps the Wu-Tang legacy intact



me one minute, man,” yells an exasperated RZA down the phone to an awol Ol’ Dirty Bastard (four months before his death). In 2014, there’s no sign that RZA’s job as Wu-Tang’s producer and organiser has got any easier. ‘A Better Tomorrow’, the New York rap collective’s sixth album and first since 2007’s ‘8 Diagrams’ (discounting the recent one-copy-only ‘Once Upon A Time In Shaolin’, from which we’ve only heard a 51-second sample, featuring Cher of all people), arrives more than three years after it

It’s a nightmare getting the Wu-Tang Clan together; so much so that there’s even a film about it. The 2007 documentary *Rock The Bells* followed promoter Chang Weisberg’s attempt to persuade all 10 members to perform at his festival of the same name. “Nigga, you can sit on the stage – just give

was initially talked up by Raekwon. It’s being hawked as a 20-year-anniversary record, but you don’t need to be sometime Wu-Tang producer Mathematics to work out it’s now 21 years since 1993’s era-defining debut ‘Enter The Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)’.

The first track from ‘A Better Tomorrow’ – the distinctly average, O’Jays-sampling ‘Family Reunion’ (now titled ‘Wu-Tang Reunion’) – emerged in June 2013, 18 months ago. “It’s good to see the Wu-Tang under one roof”, rapped Masta Killa, but you could tell in the lazy way Method Man proclaimed “20 years later, we still bang whatever now” that all was not well in camp Wu-Tang. A spectacular falling out between RZA and Raekwon over the group’s future ensued, coupled with rumours that the album had been canned, until two better songs, ‘Keep Watch’ and ‘Ron O’Neal’, appeared in March and August this year, without Raekwon on them (although he was back in the group by May and appears on other tracks).

Then – bam! – a new record deal was announced in October and a bona fide release date was set, followed in November by ‘Ruckus In B Minor’, a genuinely exciting track co-produced by Rick Rubin that opens the album and finds Meth barking, “*Still number one!*” with actual conviction. Something had clearly happened behind

Wu-Tang plan

A brief timeline of ‘A Better Tomorrow’s’ tricky gestation

June 2011

Raekwon says Wu-Tang are working on a new album

July 2011

Ghostface says it will be released in May 2012

April 2012

GZA suggests that the album is unlikely to happen

January 2013

The group announce that work has begun

July 2013

Inspectah Deck says unheard ODB verses will feature on the album

March 2014

Raekwon and RZA fall out over the direction of the group...

May 2014

...and then make up

October 2014

Wu sign to Warner Bros/Parlophone and announce album date

December 2014

‘A Better Tomorrow’ finally sees the light of day

Raekwon and Ghostface Killah), but it’s a bold, clever album that, thankfully, is positioned away from the hip-hop zeitgeist. It’ll secure an audience sick of cheap laptop drill and trap, and if it’s Wu-Tang’s swansong, they’re dropping out with their legacy intact. ■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE

► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** December 2 ► **LABEL** Warner Bros/Parlophone ► **PRODUCERS** RZA, Mathematics, 4th Disciple, Rick Rubin, Adrian Younge ► **LENGTH** 66:39 ► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. Ruckus In B Minor ► 2. Felt ► 3. 40th Street Black/We Will Fight ► 4. Mistaken Identity ► 5. Hold The Heater ► 6. Crushed Egos ► 7. Keep Watch ► 8. Miracle ► 9. Preacher’s Daughter ► 10. Pioneer The Frontier ► 11. Necklace ► 12. Ron O’Neal ► 13. A Better Tomorrow ► 14. Never Let Go. ► 15. Wu-Tang Reunion ► **BEST TRACK** Ruckus In B Minor

MORE ALBUMS

Wild Billy Childish & CTMF

Acorn Man Damaged Goods



With more than 100 albums to his name, Billy Childish

and his current CTMF trio can still spring surprises – last year they coaxed members of The KLF out of retirement for debut ‘Die Hinterstoisser Traverse’. While CTMF revel in the uninhibited joy of overdriven ‘60s mono, ‘Acorn Man’ finds Childish’s punk-blues released from the garage into the countryside. Stinging riffs are lashed to pastoral poetry, including a sparse adaptation of US poet Walt Whitman on ‘The Song Of Myself’. Bassist Nurse Julie takes a major role, her comic turn on ‘What Is This False Life You’re Leading’ replete with manic Germanic ad-libs, but Childish’s defiant presence is the guiding force.

■ STUART HUGGETT

7

Little Boots Business Pleasure EP

On Repeat



Alongside Florence Welch and La Roux, Little Boots was

everywhere in 2009. But after Top Five LP ‘Hands’, Victoria Hesketh faded. This comeback is an EP of “DIY pop” produced by NYC synth upcomer Com Truise, Jas Shaw of Simian Mobile Disco and Chris Carmouche, a 2004 Grammy winner for Outkast’s ‘Speakerboxxx/The Love Below’. Hesketh wrote in *The Times* about feeling inspired last year, but these songs are anything but. On ‘Pretty Tough’ she sings: “You think I’m pretty/But I can be pretty tough”, while the tired structures on ‘Taste It’ and ‘Heroin’ are crushingly mundane. Relying on cliché and noughties nostalgia, this is a dancefloor-to-smoking-area cattle prod. ■ EDGAR SMITH

3



Mogwai

Music Industry 3

Fitness Industry 1

A six-track EP of ‘Rave Tapes’ offcuts and remixes makes a pleasant enough diversion

When Mogwai release an album, it’s usually safe to assume that extras will follow. And so it is with these six songs, comprising three from sessions for January’s ‘Rave Tapes’ and three remixes. Cynics may say it’s an effort to peddle chaff, but opener ‘Teenage Exorcists’ really would have been an awkward fit on ‘Rave Tapes’, a rare vocal-led effort with enveloping shoegaze guitars and REM’s anthemic tenderness. More plausible is the idea that ‘History Day’ and ‘HMP Shaun William Ryder’ were left off the album because they’re basically Mogwai-by-numbers. Of the remixes, Fuck Buttons’ Ben Power, trading as Blanck Mass, triumphs: ‘Re-Remurdered’ successfully transforms the enduring Glaswegians into



widescreen techno. Pye Corner Audio turning ‘No Medicine For Regret’ into something akin to ‘90s ambient trance and German pianist Nils Frahm taking on ‘The Lord Is Out Of Control’ are diverting but slight. ■ NOEL GARDENER

6

► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** December 1 ► **LABEL** Rock Action ► **PRODUCERS** Mogwai, Paul Savage ► **LENGTH** 31:50 ► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. Teenage Exorcists ► 2. History Day ► 3. HMP Shaun William Ryder ► 4. Re-Remurdered (Blanck Mass Remix) ► 5. No Medicine For Regret (Pye Corner Audio Mix) ► 6. The Lord Is Out of Control (Nils Frahm Remix) ► **BEST TRACK** Re-Remurdered (Blanck Mass remix)

Yung Lean Unknown Memory

Sad Boys



Is teenage Swedish rapper Yung Lean taking the piss?

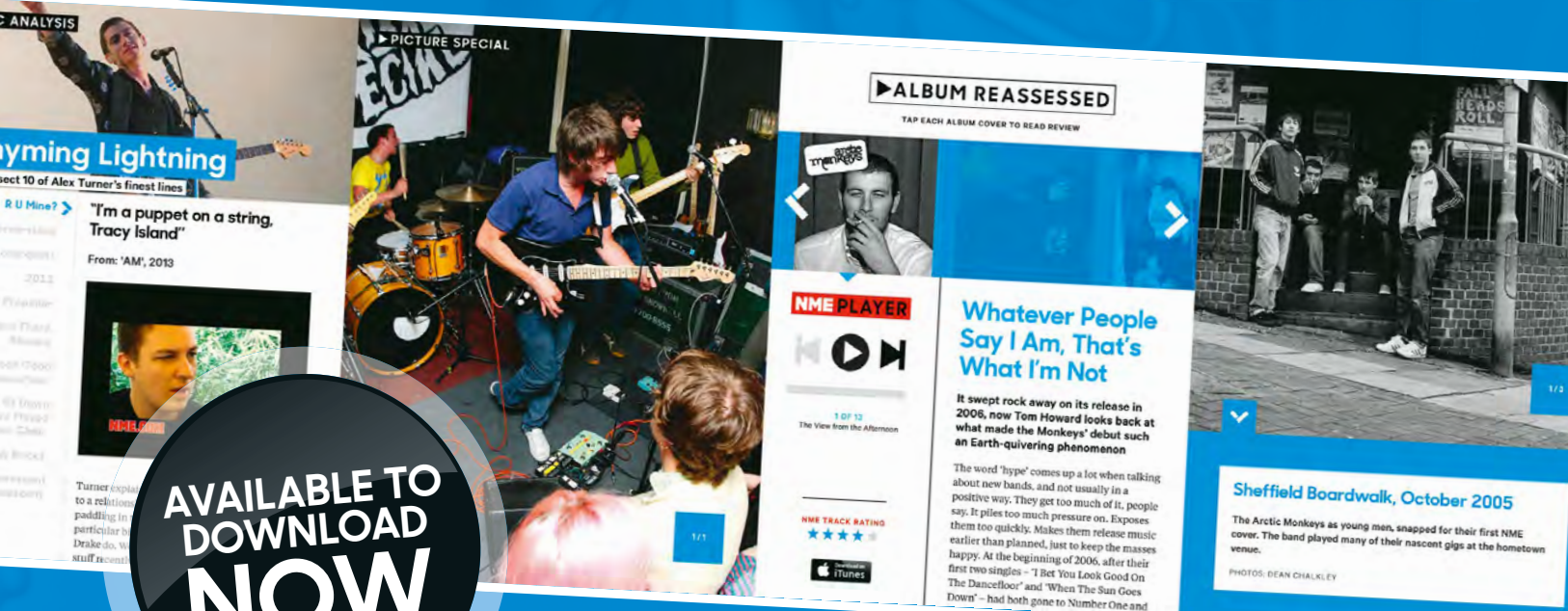
With his morose shtick and pastiches of experimental rappers like Lil B, it’s never really been clear. On his debut LP, though, the 18-year-old is ready to be taken seriously. Over these 13 tracks, produced by

Clams Casino-indebted duo Yung Gud and Yung Sherman, he’s making spacey, tripped-out hip-hop that goes some way to matching his influences. Lonely-boy anthem ‘Yoshi City’ is an early standout, and the grandstanding, TNGHT-influenced ‘Monster’ hints at a more serious future. Swedish pop has been an institution since Abba; now they’re coming for hip-hop too. ■ KEVIN EG PERRY

7

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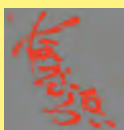
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Reviews

Nazoranai

The Most Painful Time Happens Only Once Has It Arrived Already...?

Editions Mego



As Sunn O)))'s uncom-promising drone aesthetic

takes another step towards wider exposure, thanks to the Seattle band's recent 4AD team-up with Scott Walker, here's a side project that probably won't enjoy similar reach. It's great, regardless. Sunn O)))'s Stephen O'Malley stamps his sonic identity over four long tracks of free-jazz-meets-rock destruction, along with Japanese noise icon Keiji Haino and Australian ambient master Oren Ambarchi. Some parts are sparse and creepy ('Will Not Follow Your Hoax Called History'); others are frazzled and intense ('Who Is Making The Time Rot'). An hour of intuitive excellence.

8

■ NOEL GARDNER

Neil Young

Storytone Reprise



Neil Young's 35th album, his second this year, is comprised of

two 10-track records: one solo acoustic, the other backed by a Disney-worthy orchestra and big band. He's one of the busiest sexagenarians in the game: in between April's 'A Letter Home' (recorded in a renovated 1947 vinyl-recording booth with Jack White at Third Man), his divorce proceedings and launching music download service Pono, he's crafted a tender and often forlorn eco-treatise. It skips between the deeply political and the delicately personal. 'Plastic Flowers' and 'Who's Gonna Stand Up?' see him lamenting the doomed future of the earth, and 'I'm Glad I Found You' and 'When I Watch You Sleeping' shine a light on the soppy side of Shakey.

7

■ LEONIE COOPER

The Smashing Pumpkins Monuments To An Elegy

Ever the outsider, Billy Corgan updates his sound for 2014

There's a sense of diminishing returns about the records Smashing Pumpkins have released since Billy Corgan resurrected the band seven years ago. They're now the Pumpkins in name alone. Guitarist Jeff Schroeder, who replaced James Iha for 2007's revival, is the only other permanent member involved on this 10th album and, bizarrely, 52-year-old former Mötley Crüe reprobate Tommy Lee plays drums on it. Thankfully, his influence hasn't inspired Corgan to release a hair metal album or a sex tape filmed on a yacht.

Instead, 'Monuments To An Elegy' is essentially a Corgan solo record that shows flashes of his old power while also straying into a few dodgy attempts to update the Pumpkins' sound for 2014. 'Tiberius' is a promising start, employing a Pixies-esque loud-quiet-loud dynamic and sounding fittingly imperious for a song named after a Roman emperor. 'Being Beige', in which Corgan rails against modern, selfie-obsessed narcissism, is



THE DETAILS

►RELEASE DATE December 8 ►LABEL Martha's Music/BMG ►PRODUCERS Billy Corgan, Howard Willing, Jeff Schroeder ►LENGTH 32:35 ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Tiberius ►2. Being Beige ►3. Anaise! ►4. One and All ►5. Run2Me ►6. Drum + Fife ►7. Monuments ►8. Dorian ►9. Anti-Hero ►BEST TRACK Being Beige



the album's strongest moment, casting the 47-year-old on familiar territory as the erudite outsider, always his greatest strength. 'Anaise!' catches him at his most romantic, while closer 'Anti-Hero' is the album's most raucous, most punk moment.

Slightly less successful are his stabs at synthpop. 'Run2Me' has a cringey text-speak title and opens like a forgotten 1980s Eurovision entry. The saving grace of 'Drum + Fife', which employs its titular instruments, is that at least we're spared bagpipes. Equally ill-advised is 'Dorian', which deploys clunking lyrics like "Dorian/What have you done?/As you run/A setting sun".

Corgan seems a little unsure what it is that he or his audience wants. While he's presenting this album as the central part of his 'Teargarden By Kaleidyscope' sequence – the first was 2012's 'Oceania' – at times he seems to misplace that wild, headstrong attitude that once made him great. It's no surprise that this is half the length of 'Oceania'. The final part of the trilogy, 'Day For Night', is promised for next year. His masterplan might need a tweak before then.

■ KEVIN EG PERRY

49

7

Vaults

Vultures EP Virgin/EMI



London trio Vultures deal in tepid pseudo-profundity

set to dark and weather-beaten slow-build pop. They're not half as spooky as they try to make out. They've supported London Grammar, and the more accessible moments on this three-track EP are just as supermarket-friendly as the chart-topping threesome. This feigned eccentricity,

diluted for the mainstream, is disheartening. The orchestral, R&B-tinged 'Vaults' is the best thing here, and the band have a certain way with original sounds. However, the atmosphere-free 'Poison', with its empty bombast, is unforgivable and about as 'outsider' as daytime TV's Phillip Schofield. It makes you long for the days when goth meant goth – damned, ugly and erotic – not Keane with minor chords.

■ JOHN CALVERT

3

Ronika

Marathon EP

RecordShop



Something's very rotten in the state of pop if

Ronika's still failing to notch up the chart hits. The Nottingham singer released some delicious tunes on June's debut album 'Selectadisc', but the world has been criminally slow to catch on. This EP drives the point home once again. The title track is pure rare groove, all slap bass

and disco strings; the semi-raps of 'Forget Yourself' – the lead song on 'Selectadisc' – owe something to Gwen Stefani; and Mighty Mouse co-production 'See Through You' is addictive, New York-style punk-funk. Veronica Sampson leaves us with 'World Is Turning', another perfect-pop '80s throwback with a sleek and modern electro clatter thrown in. It's high time more people checked Ronika out.

■ MATTHEW HORTON

7

Reviews

Slim Twig

A Hound At The Hem DFA



From Ty Segall to Ariel Pink, there's currently no shortage of garage-pop auteurs. Yet few are as outwardly as ambitious as Slim Twig. The Canadian actor/musician self-released this album in 2012, but hardly anyone heard it. Now out on DFA, it's a compact

treat, its lysergic gems sweetened by strings right out of Gainsbourg's 1971 concept album 'Histoire De Melody Nelson' (a major Twig touchstone). Though it's all a little too in thrall to its influences, there are some sensational moments here, including 'Heavy Splendour', a baroque epic that comes on like Liars tackling The Beach Boys' 'Smile'. If it isn't quite a masterpiece, it at least suggests Slim Twig might just have one in him. **7** **TOM PINNOCK**

Antemasque

Antemasque

Nadie Sound/Caroline



Whether with the visceral post-hardcore of At The

Drive-In or the prog-rock experimentation of The Mars Volta, Cedric Bixler-Zavala and Omar Rodriguez-Lopez have always made complex music. This time around, though, it's different. After their very public fallout in 2012, which brought about

The Mars Volta's demise, the pair have reconciled and returned as Antemasque. Although this self-titled debut contains shades of their previous bands, it's noticeably more direct, simple and straightforward. 'I Got No Remorse' and 'Momento Mori' are both punk-inspired blasts of rock'n'roll, while the jangly romanticism of '50,000 Kilowatts' is surely the most sentimental song they've ever written – and one of the best. **8**

MISCHA PEARLMAN

The Drink

Company

Melodic



With their debut album, London-based trio The Drink

take established indie-rock templates and twist them on their heads. Opener 'Microsleep' scuttles spider-like from the sort of dark, twitchy guitar loop that Mogwai might use into a breezy, Sebadoh-style fuzz-pop chorus. 'Bantamweight' chugs and chimes like Sleater-Kinney if they were a folk band, as singer Dearbhla Minogue builds a bridge between The Drink and her other, noisier DIY band The Wharves. The occasional flashes of African rhythms ('Playground') and math-pop ('Desert') add further variety to the band's spindly style. But rather than making for a disjointed listen, these flourishes fit neatly into a record that's as concise as it is intricately layered. **7**

ROBERT COOKE

David Guetta

Listen Parlophone



Of all the EDM producers making hooks for

sweat-stinking high-street clubs, David Guetta has arguably the best tunes. He's used them to lure Nicki Minaj, The Script, John Legend and Emeli Sandé onto this sixth album, which has already had the chart chewing its cheek out to 'Shot Me Down' and the gurning Morricone of 'Lovers On The Sun'. 'Listen' speckles similar crackers ('Goodbye Friend') between gushes of sizzle sewage, as if all of Ibiza's been trying to get high on glittery laxatives. 'No Money No Love' is the sound of reggae being happy-slapped, 'Lift Me Up' recruits Ladysmith Black Mambazo to help deface afrobeat and 'I'll Keep Loving You' is the folk/rave crossover that no-one wanted or deserved. **5**

MARK BEAUMONT

AC/DC

Rock Or Bust

The Aussie rock legends tackle health problems and court cases by simply doing what they do best

'Rock Or Bust' was made in tragic circumstances, as founding AC/DC guitarist Malcolm Young (not featured here) succumbed to early-onset dementia. It is not, it may or may not surprise you, a piano-led lament to the ultimate horror of losing your memories one day at a time. Instead, the Sydney veterans' 17th album is pure business as usual. Like the Ramones, or Iron Maiden, AC/DC have never released a bad album because they've never shown any interest in making a great one. Progress, art: these are not words in their lexicon. The only words in their lexicon are: 'rock', 'hell', 'noise', 'baby', 'yeah' and 'c'mon'. Everything else is overthinking. So while Malcolm's condition worsened, his bandmates did what he probably would've wanted and just kept on trucking.



AC/DC's first album without their founding member is a crisp Brendan O'Brien-produced musical wrecking ball. A few of the rear tracks can't turn over the ignition on their hooks, and typically, the Pearl Jam and Rage Against The Machine producer has taken a bit too



much dirt out from under their fingernails and over-compressed everything so even the mellower cuts stab at your ears like a tattoo machine. But these are minor sins in what must be one of the best records you've already heard to be released this year. 'Dogs Of War' and the title track are vintage-era good. 'Play Ball' is an anthem that feels like it's been written, slightly cynically, for precisely that purpose – it's already been picked up by US sports networks to fill in the foam-finger moments at baseball games.

As a creative endeavour, 'Rock Or Bust' is 99 per cent perspiration, nought per cent inspiration and one per cent raw chutzpah. It's a testament to the often-derided power of formula: these guys have spent a lifetime figuring out where to turn the screws on a lick, where to swing the drumbeat. If there were ever a band-as-franchise model waiting to be adopted, it's AC/DC. With Malcolm being permanently replaced by his nephew, and drummer Paul Rudd facing a possible seven years in prison if found guilty of threats to kill and drug possession charges, you sense they could keep on pushing that perfect formula even after all the founders have passed on. **7** **GAVIN HAYNES**

THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** December 1 ► **LABEL** Columbia ► **PRODUCER** Brendan O'Brien
► **LENGTH** 34:55 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Rock Or Bust ►2. Play Ball ►3. Rock The Blues Away ►4. Miss Adventure ►5. Dogs Of War ►6. Got Some Rock & Roll Thunder ►7. Hard Times ►8. Baptism By Fire ►9. Rock The House ►10. Sweet Candy ►11. Emission Control ► **BEST TRACK** Play Ball

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FILM

CINEMA

A Wonderful Christmas Time



Billed as "the very first Indie Christmas Movie", this film's promo poster was designed by Los Campesinos! and the wispy soundtrack features Teenage Fanclub offshoot Lightships and Sub Pop's Seapony. The film sees indie lad Noel (Dylan Edwards) dumped by his girlfriend just before Christmas. He meets Cherie (Laura Haddock) while primal screaming off the Welsh cliffs. They connect, but their path to romance proves full of mishaps. The plot is simple, but wrapped in arch humour, this film is brilliantly observed and consistently heartwarming.

BEN CARDEW

8

St Vincent

No, not *that* one. It's the name of Bill Murray's excellent new movie

If you're a fan of Bill Murray, the mere thought of *St Vincent* is dreamy. A curmudgeonly loner who spends his life flitting between bar, bookie, race track and strip club, Vietnam vet Vincent has his misanthropy challenged when he becomes the world's most unlikely babysitter after a 12-year-old boy and his single mum move in next door. Although first-time writer-director Ted Melfi initially courted Jack Nicholson, the part of Vincent could probably not have been played by anyone but Murray. Once he'd settled on the notoriously elusive actor – Murray has retained an 'anti-Hollywood' stance throughout his career – Melfi spent six months tracking Murray down, eventually meeting him at Los Angeles airport at nine o'clock in the morning on a bank holiday weekend before spending the day talking over the script in the back of a car.



DIRECTORS Theodore Melfi
RELEASE DATE December 5



That dedication has paid off, and for the most part, the film is a glowing triumph. Although everything inevitably revolves around Murray and his typically effortless-looking performance, everyone on screen excels. This is particularly true of newcomer Jaeden Lieberher, who plays 12-year-old Oscar and more than holds his own in his scenes with Murray. The pair run the gamut from flat-out slapstick through laid-back understanding to quietly raw moments of communication and connection, and their relationship powers the film along.



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THE SUN



Melissa McCarthy (*Bridesmaids*) adds real dramatic heft to her considerable comedic chops as Oscar's mum, Naomi Watts relishes her against-type casting as Vincent's Russian stripper girlfriend and Chris O'Dowd is strong as Oscar's Catholic schoolteacher. Even the slight role of Vincent's bookie, Zucko, reluctantly leaning on the cash-strapped veteran, goes to an Oscar nominee, the understated and underused Terrence Howard (who was nominated for and Academy Award for Best Actor for 2005's *Hustle & Flow*).

Yet the movie does briefly go off the rails. In once scene, Zucko confronts Vincent with particular intensity, prompting health complications that make the subsequent scenes uncomfortable and awkward. Melfi seems to realise that it isn't quite working, though, and the narrative quickly moves on. It is not as if the whole film has Murray on autopilot: Vincent has a sensitive side he keeps hidden, and in scenes where he visits a hospitalised woman he is commandingly compelling in ways his usual mode of dislocated insouciance doesn't allow him to touch.

That one brief misstep aside, *St Vincent* delights. The ending – in which we're asked to consider Vincent's credentials for the canonisation the title suggests is his by right – may tug on heartstrings not so much worn as frayed, but by then this old-fashioned, sure-footed and gently yet firmly affecting film will surely have won you over. It's the kind of storytelling cinema was invented for.

■ ANGUS BATEY

8

CINEMA

Horrible Bosses 2



This sequel to 2011's Jennifer Aniston-starring *Horrible Bosses* aims for improvised slapstick comedy but only delivers verbal diarrhoea. Alongside the ex-*Friends* star, Jason Bateman (*Juno*), Charlie Day (*The Lego Movie*) and Jason Sudeikis (*30 Rock*) return as Nick, Dale and Kurt, three men who launch a shower business. When an investor named Burt (an underused Christoph Waltz) scuppers their plans, they hatch a ludicrous plot to get even by kidnapping his son Rex, played by *Star Trek*'s Chris Pine. As the mischievous Rex, Pine emerges as the film's bright spark. But neither his performance nor a cameo from Kevin Spacey can make amends for the clunky plot and tasteless, ham-fisted stabs at humour.

■ DAN BRIGHTMORE

4

DVD

Pritchard And Dainton: The Rise And Falls



The touching and hilarious story of Welsh pair Matt Pritchard and Lee Dainton begins in 1989 when they bond over skateboarding. A homemade VHS of groundbreaking boarding and shocking self-abuse leads to 2003 MTV series *Dirty Sanchez*, international notoriety and a substance-fuelled nightmare. Motörhead's Phil Campbell shudders through a story about cocaine and Pritchard's anus. Shaving, tasing and defecating abound until, in one scene, Pritchard blows a giant globule of lumpy brown gunk from his nostril. "That's a bad coke habit," he croaks. Both men are now 40-plus, but they're still touring their stunt show, covered in piss.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

CINEMA

Men, Women And Children



Juno director Jason Reitman puts a modern spin on Chad Kultgen's 2011 novel about the difficulty of relationships. Narrated sporadically by *Brideshead Revisited*'s Emma Thompson, it follows several loosely connected plot lines. Adam Sandler's bored father spends more time with his iPad than his wife (Rosemarie DeWitt), and their teenage son Chris (*Boardwalk Empire*'s Travis Tope) is addicted to online porn and can't face "vanilla sex" with his girlfriend Hannah. With the onscreen text message bubbles a constant irritation, Reitman's film falls somewhere between a cautionary tale with a puritanical viewpoint and a comic slant on the absurd nature of modern communication.

■ DAN BRIGHTMORE

5

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LIONSGATE



King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

Hoxton Square Bar & Kitchen

London

Monday, November 24



**Aussie maniacs shake the
walls with psych grooves
and clattering noise**

PHOTO BY ANDY FORD

▶ The noise is overwhelmingly loud as soon as King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard lock into the tight psych groove of opener 'I'm In Your Mind'. The Australian seven-piece – two drummers, three guitarists, one bassist, one harmonica-blowing synth player – go on to play it for 15 minutes. Then, with frontman Stu Mackenzie thrashing like a just-caught fish throughout, they rip into a set largely drawn from this month's UK debut 'I'm In Your Mind Fuzz'. 'Cellophane' and 'Hot Water' (on which Mackenzie plays the flute) mix catchy melody with fierce percussion, before an abrasive cover of The Stooges' 'I Wanna Be Your Dog' precedes closer 'Head-On/Pill'. The latter shifts between clattering noise and quiet drum-and-bass-only moments, eventually reaching a crescendo that makes the walls shake. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

55

Jack White

London, O2 Arena

Wednesday, November 19

Power, ferocity and a mixture of White Stripes, Raconteurs and solo material realise Jack White's vision of arena rock

Jack White stomps purposefully onstage at the O2 and rips

straight into 'Fell In Love With A Girl', from The White Stripes' third album, 'White Blood Cells'. With the backing of his five-piece band, the song is bigger, bolder and fiercer than in 2001. "This is an arena show," he howls. "But there's no screens, no lasers, it's just me and you together." The vibe is enhanced by the 39-year-old's simple but expertly and intricately thought-out stage set-up, which plays the dual role of emphasising the power of both his music and idiosyncrasies.

Hanging from the lighting rig are three beams – a continuation of White's obsession with the number three that began in his days as a furniture-maker in Detroit, and a nod to the fact that he's been calling himself Jack White III for many years now. Underneath, there's an old-fashioned TV that, at intervals, fizzles with lines of static. Three of them, of course. The lighting is pale blue, White's current colour of choice, and so are his and his band's clothes. It glows throughout, but here the theatrics end.

'Fell In Love...' segues into 'High Ball Stepper', the furious instrumental from this year's 'Lazaretto' album. The heavy soloing could easily slip into self-congratulatory territory, but White and his group play with a persistent aggression that elevates it far beyond noodling. It's a rampant opening sequence that, thanks to the supreme abilities of the musicians around

him, welds White's old and new material together. The band are a mixture of The Peacocks and The Buzzards – the all-female and all-male groups that were rotated during his 2012 'Blunderbuss' tour – and they're the key to White moving away from his minimal garage-rock past and into a more ambitious future. It's exemplified by next song 'Lazaretto', which – with spat-out vocals, a snarling funk workout and a screeching fiddle solo from Lille Mae Rische – is one of the most complicated he's written. It suits the large venue.

It's about time White played here, too. He was supposed to appear seven years ago, during The White Stripes' ill-fated 2007 tour, which was cancelled when drummer Meg was diagnosed with acute anxiety. The notorious



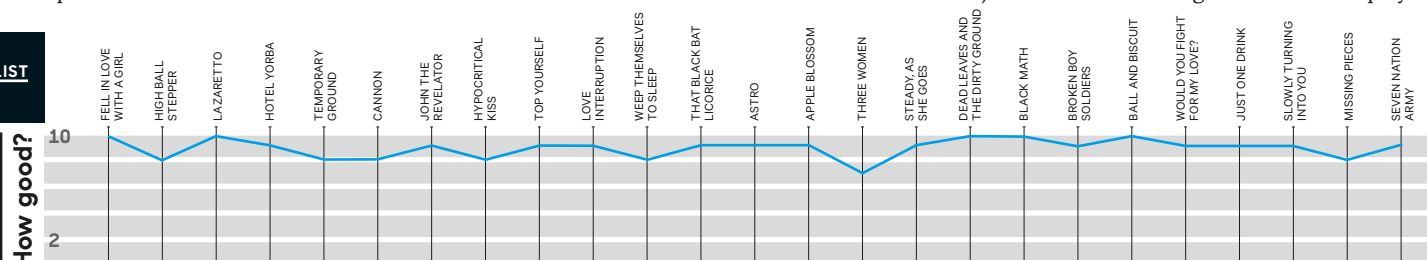
WHITE'S SONGS DEAL IN SQUALLS OF NOISE AND UNEASY ENERGY

analogue nerd is an odd match for this vast southeast London space that began life as the Millennium Dome and contains dozens of chain restaurants within. This is a man who founded the Nashville-based label Third Man, via which he releases innovative vinyl records, including an 'ultra' version of 'Lazaretto' that plays at three speeds, and whose fans have been introduced to old blues musicians like Blind Willie McTell thanks to White's endorsement.

Tonight's show, the last date of a brief UK tour, has that same singular vision: Jack White doing arena rock Jack White's way. 'Hotel Yorba' – another 'White Blood Cells' classic – is given a countrified makeover, its evocative scenes of the "little house down by the lake" complemented by more fiddle playing from Rische.

She sings on the rolling 'Temporary Ground', lending it an air of contemplation. But, for the most part, White and his band deal in squalls of noise and uneasy energy. Raconteurs track 'Top Yourself' is vastly extended, slipping into heavy jam sections as the singer introduces his players

SETLIST



Jack White
and his band
onstage at the
O2 Arena

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Jake, 24, London
"That was amazing. I never got to see The White Stripes, and I've only ever seen him solo at a festival, so this was amazing because he played everything you wanted to hear."



Lee, 28, Hertfordshire
"He's a genius. I was a bit wary of it being here, 'cos this is where Katy Perry would normally be, but it was fine. He just played the same as anywhere else. It was massive."



Anna, 20, London
"He was so, so good. He's an amazing frontman. I get why he didn't want screens even though it was a bit hard to see, but it still sounded ace, so I didn't really care that much."



Esme, 23, Chelmsford
"I'm a massive fan and I've been to see most of his bands; tonight was definitely up there with one of the best gigs. He didn't play any Dead Weather stuff, but if he played everything I wanted he'd have been on for about four days."

and pays tribute to former keyboardist Ikey Owens, who died of a heart attack in October, before racing towards a crescendo. 'That Black Bat Licorice' follows, all scornful vocals and spiky melody. It's in contrast to the short, sharp pound of 1999 White Stripes track 'Astro', which is an early-years zero-frills stomp. The pace changes again on 'Apple Blossom', from 2000's 'De Stijl', for which White jumps behind his piano. The main set ends with an extended version of 2006's muscular Raconteurs single 'Steady, As She Goes'.

When he returns for more, White really lets rip. The primal riffing of 'Dead Leaves And The Dirty Ground' cuts to the back of the room, leading into a rampaging White Stripes-heavy climax that veers from 'Black Math's frenetic garage to 'Ball And Biscuit's filthy drawl and, after some long and drawn out teasing on the guitar, the iconic 'Seven Nation Army'. With the last notes still echoing around an arena that sings along to every word, the star on the stage simply winks and says: "You've been incredible, and I've been Jack White." Then he's gone. ■ LISA WRIGHT

9

MORE GIGS

Ty Segall
Electric Ballroom,
London

Wednesday, November 12
Tonight marks the end of an era for San Franciscan psych-rock polymath Ty Segall and his band. At the start of the final show supporting August's 'Manipulator' album, the frontman announces that this incarnation of his group won't be playing together again. But this is no teary goodbye.

A topless, glitter-throwing cowboy begins a bizarre introduction with an incoherent speech, before the band chuck meat and fruit and Ty feeds cheese to the front row. Then comes 90 minutes of riotous jams like 'Feel' and 'Girlfriend' and a surge of crowdsurfers. "We're going into a black hole and we're never coming back!" Ty declares before 'Wave Goodbye' – a deafening and aptly titled closer.

■ JAMES BENTLEY

8

Alex G
Sebright Arms,
London

Wednesday, November 19
"Let's hear it for music, guys! Music rocks," joshes Philadelphiaian songwriter Alex Giannascoli, who at the tender age of 21 has released four albums via Bandcamp, becoming an internet cult sensation in the process. His first London show comes after the October release of breakthrough 'DSU'. Two of its finest tracks, 'After Ur Gone' and 'Hollow', sound like the laconic missing link between The Breeders, Yo La Tengo and Nirvana in debonair 'Unplugged' guise. He even makes a cover of the decidedly uncool Third Eye Blind's 'Semi-Charmed Life', performed with Los Angeles duo Girlpool as an encore, sound exciting. Get off the internet, Alex, and into our lives.

■ ALEX DENNEY

8

All We Are



Jack Rocks The Macbeth, London
Monday, November 24

The mood goes from sedated to hyperactive as the indie-funk trio urge the crowd to "get sexy"



All We Are describe themselves as "The Bee Gees on diazepam", and since emerging last year, the Liverpool trio have built a reputation for tranquil, disco-influenced indie with 'Feel Safe', 'I Wear You' and 'Utmost Good'. Appropriately enough, the early part of tonight's intimate gig – their last headline date of a busy year – feels heavily medicated.

Facing each other in a classic triangle formation onstage, all three members sing and their harmonies are tight from the start. On woozy opener 'Feel Safe', bassist Guro Gikling and Brazilian guitarist Luís Santos combine their voices expertly, but drummer Rich O'Flynn's vocal is most striking, a compelling mix of Joe Mount of Metronomy and Wild Beasts' Hayden Thorpe.

'Honey' is heavily dosed up too, and its low-key funk washes over the crowd like a lullaby as Santos and O'Flynn swap vocals. It's not until the epic 'Go' – before which Gikling encourages the crowd to blink repeatedly to create the effect of strobe lighting – that things pick up. Then Santos urges the crowd to "get sexy" before the shifting rhythms of 'Utmost

Good', which undulates into a pepped-up version of 'Can't Do Without You', the lead single from Canadian producer Caribou's 'Our Love'.

Tonight's opening sequence was sedated, but the final songs are hyperactive. 'Something About You' sounds like Wild Beasts on uppers and sees O'Flynn unveil a glass-shattering falsetto, and on extended closer and set highlight 'Keep Me Alive' – which builds from slinky guitar picking to a rushing crescendo – Santos hacks at his guitar with a violin bow. It's a crushing finale.

■ DAVID RENSHAW

SETLIST

- Feel Safe
- Honey
- Stone
- Go
- Utmost Good
- Can't Do Without You
- Just Give It To Me
- I Wear You
- Something About You
- Keep Me Alive

7

Reviews

LIVE

Biffy Clyro

The Troxy, London
Saturday, November 22

The Scots rockers make a welcome and rocking return to London to play Relentless Live



It's been ages since fans of Simon Neil and brothers James and Ben Johnston have been able to scream their "mon the Biff" warcry in London. The perpetually shirtless Kilmarnock band's last visit to the capital was a triumphant invasion of the O2 Arena in April last year. And actually, since headlining at the Isle Of Wight Festival and T In The Park this summer, they've hardly bothered with home shores at all, aside from frontman Neil's blazing performance of Ozzy

BIFFY HAVE BROUGHT WITH THEM ALL OF THE FIRE AND FURY HONED FOR THEIR FESTIVAL HEADLINE SLOTS

Osbourne's 1980 single 'Crazy Train' with Slash at the MTV European Music Awards in Glasgow last month.

Thankfully, though, Biffy are back for an end-of-year blowout, with tonight's Relentless Live event coming ahead of a series of homecoming gigs at Glasgow's legendary Barrowland venue later this month, during which they'll tackle their entire back catalogue. As a warm-up for those shows, this evening is impressively exhausting. Before Biffy hit the stage, there's a DJ set from Radio 1's Zane Lowe plus performances from Kent punks Slaves and

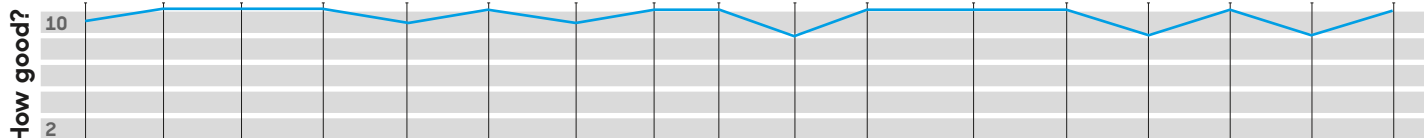
Huxtable, a fellow Kilmarnock band who secured their spot on the bill after winning the Relentless Here To Be Heard competition, a new bands contest with a shortlist of over 300.

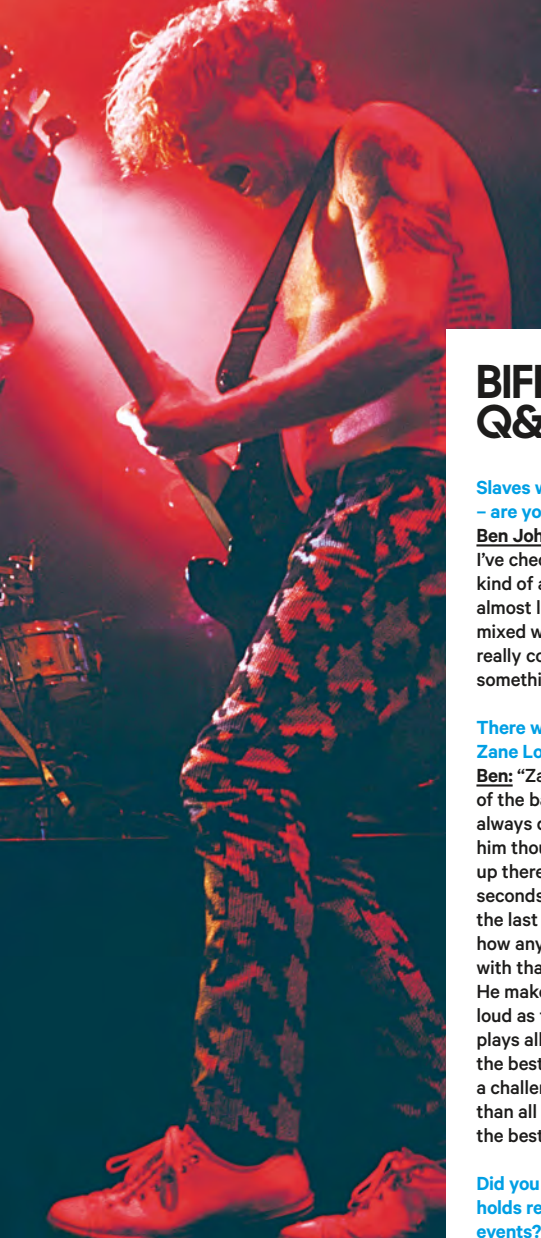
Before an excitable crowd, Biffy tear through a flawless greatest hits set that leans heavily on last year's 'Opposites' and 2009's breakthrough 'Only Revolutions', with a couple of live rarities – 'Wave Upon Wave Upon Wave' from 2004's 'Infinity Land' and 'Semi-Mental' from 2007's 'Puzzle' – thrown in as a treat for the dedicated ranks of the Biffy army, some of whom have been waiting outside the



SETLIST

DIFFERENT PEOPLE THAT GOLDEN RULE THE CAPTAIN SOUNDS LIKE BALLOONS WAVE UPON WAVE UPON WAVE BIBLICAL SEMI-MENTAL 57 BUBBLES GOD & SATAN GLITTER AND TRAUMA LIVING IS A PROBLEM BECAUSE EVERYTHING DIES MANY OF HORROR STRUNG TO YOUR RIBCAGE BLACK CHANDELIER STINGIN' BELLE MOUNTAINS





BIFFY CLYRO Q&A

Slaves were on the bill tonight – are you a fan?

Ben Johnston, drums: “Yeah, I’ve checked them out. They’re kind of a wee punky band – almost like The Futureheads mixed with Gallows. They seem really cool and like they’ve got something to say.”

There was also a DJ set from Zane Lowe – are you old pals?

Ben: “Zane’s been a champion of the band for a long time. It’s always difficult to play after him though, because he goes up there and plays the best 30 seconds of all the best songs of the last 10 years. I don’t know how anyone’s meant to compete with that! It’s almost impossible! He makes the speakers go as loud as they can go and then plays all the best music. He’s the best hype man – but it is a challenge to try and be better than all the best bands and all the best songs in the world.”

Did you know that The Troxy holds regular cage fighting events?

Ben: “Is that right?! I’m actually a lover of mixed martial arts and I watch it all time on the television. I used to study martial arts as well, so I love me a bit of cage fighting. If we’re in the same building, hopefully we channel a bit of that aggression.”

venue since 5am. That commitment is richly rewarded: Biffy set the volume dial to ‘ruthless’ from the off. The towering stacks of amps onstage aren’t simply for show – the sheer strength of the sound straddles the line between pleasure and pain, and the surging crowd lap it up like they’re at some kind of sonic S&M club. Neil and the Johnston brothers (James on bass, Ben on drums) are all shirtless, as usual, and it seems more appropriate than ever.

By Biffy’s standards The Troxy is an intimate venue: with a capacity of just 2,600, it’s an

‘Opposites’ is nearing its second anniversary, meaning that tracks from it are now properly bedded into the set and sound as if they’ve been there forever. “That was glorious,” gasps Simon after a fittingly devotional ‘Biblical’, while an apocalyptic lightshow rages behind



unusually small space for these arena regulars and festival bill-toppers to unleash their might. They appreciate the novelty almost as much as the punters. After the opening barrage of ‘Different People’, ‘That Golden Rule’ and ‘The Captain’ tests the venue’s sound system and the trembling balcony to its limits, Simon addresses the audience with a grin, a wiggle of his hips and a flick of his curtain of thick black hair. “How the fuck are you?” he hollers. “We’ve missed you!” The feeling’s mutual.

Simon then engages the extravagantly-trousered James in a headbanging battle before dropping to his knees. The crowd go in just as hard, with the reaction to ‘Opposites’ cuts ‘Sounds Like Balloons’ and ‘Black Chandelier’ as effusive as any for the older material.

Released last January, ‘Opposites’ is nearing its second anniversary, meaning that tracks from it are now properly bedded into the set and sound as if they’ve been there forever. “That was glorious,” gasps Simon after a fittingly devotional ‘Biblical’, while an apocalyptic lightshow rages behind

him. As hard as it is soft, it’s a prime example of what Biffy do so well – melding pretty melodics to big, bastardly riffs that have the power to evoke both sobbing and air punching. A powerful ‘57’, from their 2002 debut ‘Blackened Sky’, follows it, an early cast of the template that’s gone on to serve them so well.

The rhythm section, drenched in sweat, are given a moment to catch their breath and skulk offstage when Simon picks up an acoustic guitar for ‘God & Satan’. But the singalong is so strident that the volume in the room doesn’t drop a notch. Time is quickly called on the only semi-chilled moment of the night by the return of spasming strobes befitting of a Skrillex show. It feels like the Californian’s EDM spaceship is coming in to land, but instead we get the glitchy hardcore pulse of ‘Glitter And Trauma’, the brute force of which helps to defy the wintry conditions outside, leaving everyone sweaty and rosy cheeked.

Even ‘Many Of Horror’ – from 2009’s ‘Only Revolutions’ and undeniably Biffy’s soppiest song – has a meaner edge tonight. Putting a final steel toe-capped boot into the faded embers of the memory of *X Factor* winner Matt Cardle’s 2010 version, it throbs with a fresh brutality, Simon Neil’s emotion as raw as a freshly picked scab. Biffy Clyro have brought all of the fire and fury honed for their festival headline slots inside and under The Troxy’s weathered roof. The best hard rock band in Britain? No contest. ■ LEONIE COOPER

► For more info on Here To Be Heard and Relentless Live, head to relentlessenergy.com. See more photos from the night at NME.COM/photos

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9

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THIS WEEK IN 2002



TAKEN FOR A RYDER

Interviewing Courtney Love in LA, *NME*'s James Oldham is dragged along to Winona Ryder's birthday party in her Hollywood Hills mansion covered in Ramones posters. "Courtney, you brought some rock guys! How nice!" screams Winona before enthusing about her favourite *NME* review, of George Michael's 'Listen Without Prejudice Vol 1': "It just said 'listen without speakers.'" A brief house tour reveals the guitar Bob Dylan was playing when he was accused of being a 'Judas' and an unpublished JD Salinger script before dancing breaks out to U2's 'Beautiful Day'.

THE OK CORAL

The Wirral's psych-pop surrealists The Coral hit the US for a showcase gig in NYC, where everything reminds them of *Ghostbusters* and they watch WWF wrestling, rummage through record shops and drink heavily in the bar where Dylan Thomas drank himself to death. Reciting poetic new lyrics, James Skelly confides in *NME*'s Paul Moody: "There's not many bands that are romantic. They're more scientific these days. The internet, computers, the world's like that now. I still believe in magic, but how do you explain that without it sounding like cosmic bullshit?"

REVIEWED THIS WEEK

Snoop Dogg - 'Paid Tha Cost To Be Da Bo\$\$'
"For a long time he's talked the talk - now it's a pleasure to see Snoop Dogg again taking that walk." 8/10 ■ JOHN ROBINSON

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

► Liam Gallagher is 10-1 to be Christmas Number One with his guest vocal spot on Death In Vegas' 'Scorpio Rising'.
► Blur announce they've completed their new album 'Think Tank', but that it might well be their last.
► Ryan Adams calls Jack White a "little girl" and a "fucking ponce" in an ongoing war of words between the stars.

Streets poet

After hanging out with Oasis in Australia, Mike Skinner heads to the States and talks groupies, drugs and greatness

Riding high on the huge acclaim for his debut album 'Original Pirate Material', Mike Skinner of The Streets hits the States for his first tour, where he encounters groupies trying to tempt him into water sports (and failing), argues with interviewers from *Entertainment Weekly* and discusses his recent Australian tour with Oasis. "Noel's safe," he says, "he's really funny, like a Thunderbird puppet." In a frank interview with *NME*'s Alex Needham, Skinner discusses casual sex ("doing a gig, shagging a girl, doing another gig... it's like being an animal"), drugs ("[cocaine] just makes you an idiot and it destroys creativity... [crack] is fucking nasty, like charlie but a lot worse") and his worries about making a second album. "I don't know if anything else

I make will ever be as good again," he frets. "Oasis were great for two albums, truly great, and everyone's greatness is only for a certain amount of time." He then sets about sealing his place in rock'n'roll history by setting fire to his own CD and smashing a melon against his dressing room wall. Geezer.

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WITH HELP FROM Mark Beaumont, Dafydd Bynon, Tim Knowles, Daniel Whittaker

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CROSSWORD

Compiled by TREVOR HUNGERFORD



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CLUES ACROSS

1 Accusation of an attack comes at a cost to Elbow (6)

4 Melvins' latest release of a suppressed fart? (4-2-2)

10 From that moment on we were rid of the Augustines (3-3-3-4)

11 Uses sly move to get a Franz Ferdinand number (7)

12+20D "This is the heavy heavy monster sound", Madness (3-4-6)

13+14A "A freight train running through the middle of my head/Only you can cool my desire", Bruce Springsteen (2-2-4)

15 Fronted by Van Morrison they had '60s hit with 'Here Comes The Night' (4)

17 She's the singer with trip-hoppers Morcheeba (4)

18 Foolish person completes TV On The Radio's latest single

'Happy _____' (5)

20 Beach House album giving them a healthy glowing look (5)

22 'Black ____ White Noise', David Bowie album and single (3)

23 Record label for Ian Dury, Elvis Costello and The Damned (5)

24 A bit of a nasty letter from Orbital (5)

26 Mid-'80s Duran Duran side project with same name as a region of Greece (7)

28+30A+31A Sung on only the one occasion in Stevie Wonder's existence (3-4-2-2-4)

CLUES DOWN

1 Fall Out Boy song played in Cure set, perhaps (9)

2 Blink-182 number on repeat (6)

3 Above average number from Blur (4-4)

5 An encore for Daft Punk (3-4-4)

6 Difficult to see how everyone got in to see Bauhaus perform this (4-7)

7+21D It's not a place that Kirk Brandon's band loved playing (7-2-4)

8 Vaccines single that didn't really have a chance (2-4)

9 Is cute vocal arrangement used by Paolo Nutini on album? (7-4)

16 A personal request to hear an Interpol number (2-6)

19 Portishead album gets the bronze (5)

20 (See 12 across)

21 (See 7 down)

22 Petty quarrel from Polica (4)

25 Noisy quarrel from The Courteeners (4)

27 Album from legendary US band the Descendents that had everything (3)

29 Weird to include a Nelly number (1-1)

NOVEMBER 22 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1+9A Songs Of Innocence, 5 Circles, 10 Vigil, 11+18A Amy Winehouse, 13 Peloton, 16 Shame, 20 Greg, 21 Raise, 22 Sergio, 23+31A Rap God, 26 Ten, 28 Clor, 29 Alibi, 32 Hay, 35 BE, 36 Love, 38+30D Walk Of Life
DOWN 1 Spiral Scratch, 2 Nancy, 3 Sacrilege, 4+27A Funky Town, 5 Creep, 6 Revol, 7+19D Light Up Gold, 8 Silence Yourself, 14 Emerson, 15 Vig, 17 Alien, 18+37A We Care, 24 ATB, 25+12A Poison Ivy, 28 Coral, 33 ABC, 34 New

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