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New

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For

2015

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SOUNDING OFF

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MIND

Answering you
this week:
Ben Homewood

LETTER OF THE WEEK

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MILES APART?

The last two years were the biggest of Arctic Monkeys' career so far. They released their fifth Number One album, 'AM', headlined Glastonbury in 2013, toured the world, rocked two massive nights at London's Finsbury Park, and then there was Alex Turner's Brit Awards speech last year. Miles Kane has also had a very successful couple of years, releasing second album 'Don't Forget Who You Are', playing rowdy gigs, supporting the Monkeys at Finsbury Park and increasing his flamboyant reputation. Now that the Monkeys' tour has officially ended, with the announcement of a small hiatus before another album, it seems like the perfect time for a Last Shadow Puppets reunion. It's been almost seven years since their debut, 'The Age Of The Understatement', so fans have been patient enough. Alex and Miles should rekindle their bromance and hit the studio!

Holly Robinson, via email

BH: You're right, Holly – seven years is ages, and isn't the memory of Alex and Miles skipping around sunny France in short shorts, listening to old Scott Walker albums and recording their debut a pleasant one?



But it looks like your wait for a second Shadow Puppets album will continue. Miles – doubtless clad in a ridiculous cravat – is working on a new solo record, while his old mate Alex is busy appearing on the second album from Mini Mansions, the gristly rock trio his friend and QOTSA bassist Michael Shuman is in, and starring in his own personal *Wild At Heart* in LA. There's no date for Miles' album yet, but Mini Mansions release theirs in March. Maybe try playing them simultaneously and imagining what might have been...

A STROKE OF LUCK?

Following a leg of tour dates in America last year, I think it's only fair that The Strokes do the equivalent in Europe next summer. With a Primavera headline slot in May, they'll be on this side of the pond anyway, perfectly positioned for a UK date or two. I have my fingers and toes crossed for a British summertime slot. Although, Julian, if you're listening, I have one request: can you make it any festival bar Glastonbury please? I don't have tickets.

Harisa Ashraf, via email

BH: If you ask me Harisa, that Primavera date is a massive hint that The Strokes will play at least one UK festival. They've got to, haven't they? I just hope it'll be brilliant and euphoric, rather than a static "we're doing this,

but not because we want to" disappointment. I know you're not keen, but I think Julian – and the leather vest and ripped denim crusty punk cowboy look he unveiled with solo band The Voidz – would fit right in down at Shangri-La.

COME-BACC-ABEES

After over a year of being told the next Maccabees (below) album will be released on this date, then that date, there's still no sign of it. No title, not even the slightest clue. However, after hearing the four awesome new tracks at the gigs they played at the end of last year, it's safe to say that, regardless of when it's released, it's going to be one of their best albums yet. I find it difficult to believe that their last album

'Given To The Wild' was released in January 2012 – I mean come on, that's three whole years of no new Maccabees material. We all need Orlando, Felix and the gang back in our lives!

Jolene Ward, via email

BH: Worry not Jolene.

When they played their tiny comeback show at Norwich Arts Centre to celebrate it being crowned NME's Best Small Venue in association with Jack Daniel's, The Maccabees assured us that album four is coming. Orlando said, "The new album feels more self-assured. It's got a really nice mix of all of our

different inputs," adding that the band were planning to work over Christmas to finish it. And NME's Rhian Daly described new song 'Marks To Prove It' as "one of the most immediate songs The Maccabees have ever written". So you're right to be excited.

OUT OF STYLES

I'm not the only one who's utterly outraged that you would even consider Harry Styles as competitor for Villain Of The Year. I am disgusted that you annually victimise not only Harry, but One Direction as a band. Last month, Harry jumped barriers against the wishes of his security team to help a girl having a panic attack. In 2013, he spent £2,000 on pizza that he then gave to the homeless. If these

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actions make him a villain then I am ashamed and appalled at your decisions. Holly, Daisy and Sophie, via email

BH: First of all, Holly, Daisy and Sophie, it's a reader-voted poll and nothing about the NME Awards is contrived to victimise anyone. Secondly, Harry won the award in 2013 and thanked us, tongue in cheek, on Twitter afterwards. He loved it! Thirdly, many of the nominees for Villain Of The Year also get the nod in the Hero Of The Year category, as Taylor Swift has in 2015. Over the years, Liam Gallagher (2012), Noel Gallagher and Kanye West (both 2010) have all been in the running. He's in good company...

NOT DEAD GRIPS?

This year, I think Death Grips will reunite. Callum, via email

BH: That's a short and not at all sweet prediction, Callum. If they do, we're as ready for the eardrum-mashing noise and controversial willy album covers as you are.



LOOK WHO'S STALKING

I met Temples frontman James Bagshaw after they played Bristol. Great guy, great hair. Hannah Arthur, via email



SWANS: TO BE KIND



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2015:

The BIG

questions

Experts and insiders give
us the lowdown on what's
in store for the music
world this year

PHOTO: ANDY HUGHES

1

Will The Libertines hold it together long enough to release an album?

► On December 5 last year, The Libertines announced that, 10 years after their self-titled second album, they had signed a new record deal with Virgin EMI. The move to a major from Rough Trade, the indie stable that housed them throughout their entire career, was one that whiffed of the same thinking that saw Pete Doherty announce it was “completely in the spirit of the band to play Hyde Park for the money” ahead of their 2014 summer reunion. Another point of view, however, is that the move is a declaration of intent: no more arsing around – this album *will* happen.

The signs have been positive so far. Photos showed the group inking the record deal on Ko Si Chang island, off the coast of Thailand where (a relatively healthy-looking) Pete has been staying at the Hope Rehabilitation Centre. He's also founded the Peter Doherty Hope Initiative in conjunction with the centre – a sure sign that he's making good progress battling his addictions.

Carl Barat has said that work on the record has already begun. “Pete's in a great place. We're in a great place staying together,” he said. “I have to pinch myself. These seem like great times.” Barat also revealed the pair already had five new songs “on the workbench”. Add those to the vast catalogue of unused first-era tracks that the pair have hinted at resurrecting and you have the backbone of a record.

Tellingly, Pete also seems to have regained his fighting spirit. “I honestly see it as a chance to fulfil everything we fucked up, although I never admitted to fucking up,” he said in December 2014. Heading into 2015, the Albion looks like it could finally sail on course again. ■ LISA WRIGHT

2 Who will headline Glastonbury?

►Although Fleetwood Mac are well and truly out of the picture after announcing an exclusive slot headlining the Isle of Wight festival, there are still a few good bets in the running to headline Glastonbury 2015 – and according to Michael Eavis, all three had been pencilled in by last summer.

The smart money is on **AC/DC** and **Foo Fighters**. Eavis has revealed a band who “aren’t British any more” were in the running, perhaps a reference to AC/DC’s Scottish roots. Foo Fighters will definitely be topping the bill at one UK fest and they’ve already been ruled out of Reading & Leeds by Festival Republic’s Melvin Benn. They’ve only played Glasto once, back in 1998, and are keen to return, Dave Grohl telling the Eavises to “give us a call”. Riding the momentum from their sold-out Hyde Park show, The Libertines will likely headline a festival,



but will they go for a big-money slot at T In The Park or take the less well-paid cachet of Glasto? Similarly, **Florence + The Machine** could be ready to make the step up. There are also a number of artists making bids via the press. Noel Gallagher’s said he’s “available that weekend”, although a High Flying Birds slot won’t scratch the itch of those gunning for an Oasis reunion. Take That recently revealed that the Eavises are not returning their calls – so we’ll be spared that one at least.

■ LEONIE COOPER

3 How will Radiohead release their new album?

►Expect the unexpected: that’s the only mantra Radiohead stick to these days. In the past decade we’ve had pay-what-you-fancy releases (2007’s ‘In Rainbows’), newspaper editions (2011’s ‘King Of Limbs’) and Thom Yorke’s second solo album, last year’s ‘Tomorrow Modern Boxes’, directly distributed via BitTorrent. There are no fixed rules for a band who, by now, tend to cause just as much hullabaloo for the way their albums are released as their actual music.

According to Phil Barry, one of the alumni of University of Oxford’s Said Business School who consulted with Yorke about how to release ‘Tomorrow’s Modern Boxes’, Radiohead won’t even have begun thinking about how their new LP will arrive. “Their whole attitude is to make the music first, and then see what the most appropriate thing to do is,” he explains. “So, BitTorrent worked really well for the kind of record that ‘Tomorrow’s Modern Boxes’ was, but it might



not have been chosen for another record. It all depends on how the album turns out.”

It’s unlikely they’ll go back to a bog-standard album campaign. “What’s the point of a record company for a big artist?” asks Barry. “With all the technology that’s now available, there’s a whole load of different ways of doing things that goes far beyond iTunes and Spotify, and they’re certainly exploring all kinds of different things.” ■ BEN HEWITT

4 Will Kate Bush tour?

►Kate Bush waited a whopping 35 years between her first and second set of live performances, and though it pains us to say it, it looks like she’ll be taking another epic break before she returns to the stage – if she ever does. Her 22-night stand at the Eventim Apollo in Hammersmith saw her playing to 78,000 fans from August through to October, giving a fair amount of dedicated Bush-ites a decent chance of seeing her perform. On her last night, she broke away from the script and addressed the crowd, saying: “I’m going to miss everyone so much. This is our last night... for a while anyway”.

When the shows were announced in March 2014, bookies immediately started offering odds of 9/1 on her headlining Glastonbury, but the theatrical nature of the show hardly lends it to an outdoor stage, multiple sight lines and temperamental weather. A similar run in another major city, such as New York, seems more feasible, but perhaps won’t be as appealing for homebody Bush.

Fans are expecting some activity next year. “She seems to have embraced a brand new and exciting phase of her career,” says Seán Twomey from long-running Kate Bush publication *Homeground*. “We’d love to see the live film of *Before The Dawn* released, and after that, who knows? Perhaps a new album project, or a new stage show.”

There’s a chance she may need another injection of cash, too: local officials in Devon recently revealed her multi-million pound cliff-top mansion is in danger of falling into the sea. ■ LEONIE COOPER



DEREK BRENNER, GETTY, ANDY WILLISHER, JORDAN HUGHES, REX, DANNY NORTH



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5

Who'll sing the theme tune for the new James Bond film, *Spectre*?

►With the 24th Bond film due for release on November 6, **Sam Smith** appears to have beaten off competition from Lana Del Rey to emerge as frontrunner to soundtrack the opening credits. "I think it's something everyone would love to do, but yeah, [the rumours were] all news to me. I won't say any more on it," Sam told *NME*. Professor James Chapman, author of *Licence To Thrill: A Cultural History Of The James Bond Films*, agrees that it's likely the producers will look for a contemporary artist on the rise: "The Bond films have often used top recording artistes of the day, like Paul McCartney and Wings for *Live And Let Die*, but the themes don't follow trends in contemporary music which might date them. There's a timeless quality to them."

Bond star Daniel Craig is thought to favour a return for Adele, who helped 'Skyfall' become the first 007 tune to pick up an Oscar. Even if Adele doesn't return, co-writer Paul Epworth could be invited back. Epworth and Sam Smith met at the recording of Band Aid 30, but if the pair made any plans, they're still for their eyes only. ■ KEVIN EG PERRY



6 What's next for Arctic Monkeys?

►After waving goodbye to the world-beating 'AM' album with a final show at Rio de Janeiro's HSBC Arena on November 15, Arctic Monkeys have ridden off into the sunset for a well-earned rest, and recently tweeted to confirm that – despite faked posters for 2015 gigs – there's nothing on the books this year.

Alex Turner told us last year that he's "not in a hurry" to get back into the studio. "I wouldn't think it'll be too soon that we do the next one. I don't feel, for once, that we need to rush and get on to the next thing. It seems like a good place to leave it for a minute."

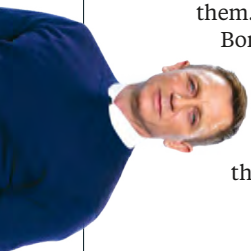
That's a sentiment that will presumably be shared by his bandmates. Within the last year, guitarist Jamie Cook got married and bassist Nick

O'Malley became a father, so it's likely they'll both jump at the chance of spending a rare bit of time with their families.

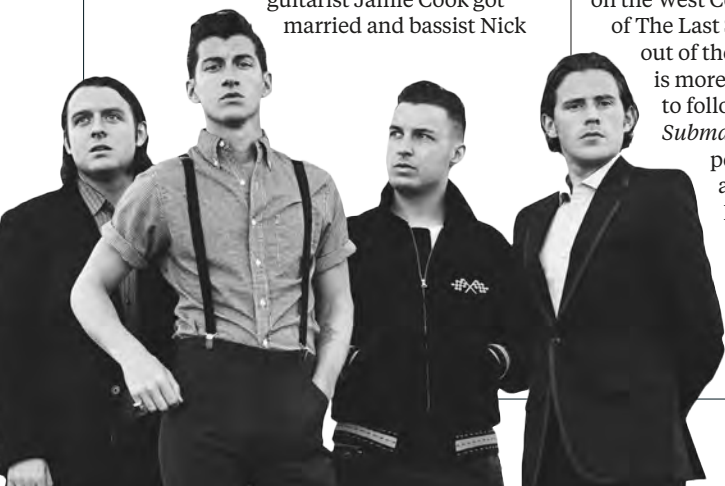
But it's also unlikely someone of Turner's prodigious work rate will stay still for too long. We already know that he appears on the track 'Vertigo' on the forthcoming album by Mini Mansions, the band helmed by Queens Of The Stone Age bassist Michael Shuman. "He wrote the lyrics pretty quickly and knocked the whole thing out in one take," Shuman recently told *NME*. "It's influenced by West Coast '90s rap and R&B. Like Sinatra mixed with LL Cool J."

Shuman says the band will "always have a mic for him" after a recent guest appearance in LA, but Turner no doubt has other offers. With Miles Kane recording on the West Coast, a resurrection of The Last Shadow Puppets isn't out of the question. Neither is more soundtrack work, to follow his acclaimed *Submarine* score. And perhaps he could be a contender for that Bond theme too.

■ KEVIN EG PERRY



10



7

Will we see a new wave of protest music after Ferguson?

►The final months of 2014 saw protests across the USA in the wake of Grand Jury decisions not to indict police officers for the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson and Eric Garner in New York. With people taking to the streets, The Roots' ?uestlove took to Instagram to "urge and challenge musicians and artists alike to push themselves to be a voice of the times that we live in".

His call was taken up by rappers including **Killer Mike** (pictured), who became a prominent voice in the media; The Game; Rick Ross, who released a collaborative Ferguson anthem called 'Don't Shoot'; and Lil B, who released a new track called 'I Can't Breathe'. D'Angelo brought the release of his album 'Black Messiah' forward after being inspired by the protests, Rage Against The Machine guitarist Tom Morello wrote 'Marching On Ferguson' and even Paul McCartney says he's working on something.

So 2015's answer to 'Fuck Tha Police' could be here sooner than you think. ■ KEVIN EG PERRY



8

Will Morrissey find a new label?

►“Fuck Harvest”. Those two words, emblazoned across T-shirts worn by Morrissey and his band, concluded a spat between artist and label that revolved around Moz’s displeasure with the promotion of his 2014 album, ‘World Peace Is None Of Your Business’. After his messy break-up with the US label, will he be able to find a new home for the follow-up he says he’s started writing?

Simon Goddard, author of *Mozipedia*, thinks so. “Of course labels will still want to sign Morrissey,” he says. “The problem is that labels don’t work or exist in the way they used to when Morrissey first dealt with them back in the ’80s. They have to speak his language, which is the traditional parlance of singles, press ads and radio play, not retweets, likes, and Spotify.”

“Morrissey still believes in a world where a three-minute song on seven inches of vinyl should get to Number One. Which in 2015 makes him clinically insane, obviously. But that’s how record companies need to deal with him if they want to avoid divorce courts.”

For all Moz’s gripes about the commercial performance of ‘World Peace...’, it still charted decently – Number Two in the UK, Number 14 in the US. But even if Morrissey is a big enough artist to work without a record label, the pop purist in him would shrivel and die at the thought. “Morrissey would never ‘crowdfund,’” says Goddard. “He is a romantic. He wants to be on Capitol, home of Frank Sinatra. He wants to be on Decca, home of Billy Fury. He wants to be on Penguin Classics, same as Dickens and George Eliot. He needs his art to be given the official kite-mark of historic quality and distinction.” ■ BEN HEWITT



9 How will the general election result affect the music world?

►The good news is that the Momentum Music Fund will be renewed for another year. That’s the Arts Council-supported scheme that has given out grants of up to £15,000 to support artists as diverse as Dutch Uncles, Kindness, Teleman, and **The Wytches**.

More impactful, however, is the looming General Election on May 7. In the run-up, both the Conservatives and Labour are proposing far-reaching benefit changes for 18- to 21-year-olds, which will make life harder for anyone hoping to support themselves at the start of a career in music. Labour have suggested replacing benefits for the long-term unemployed with a training allowance, while the Conservatives want young people to take on unpaid community work.

Martin Bright of The Creative Society has described their attitude as “bullying”.

Enough fuel there for about eight **Sleaford Mods** records.

◀ New bands such as Bad Breeding are working as labourers during the day, then ploughing their anger and energy into their music by night. That, sadly, will increasingly become the norm. ■ KEVIN EG PERRY



FIVE TOURING ESSENTIALS

George
Nicholls



Joanna Gruesome



BOOK The Physics Of Atoms And Quanta by Haken and Wolf

“It’s the only thing I could get away with reading when we were last on tour, because I had to resit an exam. It wasn’t a very enthralling read.”



FILM Slacker

“It’s pretty plotless and focuses on the interactions between people. You pick up on new funny shit people say every time you watch it.”

BOXSET Coach Trip

“It’s totally the best programme. I think watching people freaking out over really minor stuff and watching [tour guide] Brendan try and deal with it is comedy gold.”

GAME Football

“Max [Warren, bassist] usually likes to be Ryan Giggs while I am Craig Bellamy. We tend to kick it into a bin because goal posts are hard to come by.”



HOME COMFORT My dog

“He’s called Indy. He won’t fit in a suitcase and I’ve never brought him on tour but it would be great if I could. He’s a very good boy so he wouldn’t be any problem. He would also be good company for the football.”

► Joanna Gruesome play three dates at London’s Power Lunches on January 8, 9 and 10

STAYING IN

THE BEST MUSIC ON TV, RADIO AND ONLINE THIS WEEK



Catch
Gengahr
on XFM on
January 13

Gengahr

X-Posure

►LISTEN XFM, January 13, 10pm

The north London boys have been busy recording their debut album in Devon, after a year that saw them release their first single, 'Powder', and prove their worth on tour with Superfood and Wolf Alice. They'll stop by John Kennedy's programme to show off some of the songs they've been working on.

Fleetwood Mac Live In Boston

►WATCH Sky Arts,
January 7, 8.20am

The legendary band (pictured) will head back to the UK for a series of shows in May, and you can prepare for those live experiences with this concert film. Featuring footage from the group's 2003 Say You Will tour, it includes

classic tracks like 'Go Your Own Way' and 'The Chain'.

Elvis Elvis '56 Special

►WATCH Sky Arts,
January 8,
8.30pm

It would have been the hip-swivelling rock'n'roller's 80th birthday this week, and to celebrate the occasion Sky Arts are showing a host of programmes dedicated to Elvis. This documentary charts the singer's early days as he began his unstoppable rise to become the King of rock'n'roll.

Sohn X-Posure

►LISTEN XFM, January
12-13, 10pm

The elusive 4AD-signed producer drops into the XFM studios for two nights this week, as he takes up the Artist In Residence

spot. He released his debut album 'Tremors' last year, and he'll play a handful of that record's highlights over the course of his appearances.

Black Sabbath Metal Britannia

►WATCH BBC Four,
January 9, 2am

The legendary heavy metal band feature in this documentary, which follows the rise of the genre in the late '60s and early '70s. The group's guitarist Tony Iommi contributes to the story, along with Bruce Dickinson, Deep Purple's Ian Gillan and Judas Priest's Rob Halford.



GOING OUT

THE BEST LIVE EVENTS

THIS WEEK



J Mascis

The Dinosaur Jr man (above) embarks on a solo tour.

►DATES Bristol Motion (January 7), London Scala (8), Brighton Haunt (9), Manchester Ruby Lounge (10)

►TICKETS £15; London £16 from NME.COM/tickets with £1.50-£1.60 booking fee

Cymbals Eat Guitars

The Staten Island quartet give recent album 'Lose' another airing.

►DATES London The Garage (January 12)

►TICKETS £11 from NME.COM/tickets with £1.37 booking fee

5 TO SEE FOR FREE

1. The Magic Gang

The Old Blue Last, London
►January 9, 8pm

2. Bad Breeding

Green Door Store, Brighton
►January 9, 9pm

3. Dignan Porch

The Shacklewell Arms, London
►January 10, 4pm

4. Bloody Knees

The Old Blue Last, London
►January 13, 8pm

5. The Long Pours

Stag & Hounds, Bristol
►January 13, 8pm

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ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM



"IT WAS KIND OF GO-FOR-BROKE"
Angus Young



STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The brief given to art director Bob Defrin was simple: the cover was to be plain black, with the album's name and the band's logo the only other features. The band had the title and the sleeve concept in mind before they started recording, with guitarist Malcolm Young recalling that "Angus [Young, guitarist] said, 'Why not call it 'Back In Black'? Make a black album cover and then it's for Bon.'"

FIVE FACTS

1 'Back In Black' is the fifth best-selling album of all time, at roughly 50 million copies. Only 'Thriller', 'The Dark Side of The Moon', the soundtrack to *The Bodyguard* and the Eagles' greatest hits have sold more.

2 Slade's Noddy Holder and Terry Slesser of Back Street Crawler were both in contention to replace Bon Scott, but the band decided to audition Johnson because Scott had been a fan since his old band, Fraternity, had supported Geordie in the early '70s.

3 'You Shook Me All Night Long' was the first song Johnson wrote with AC/DC, and became their first single to crack the US Top 40.

4 Johnson's live debut with AC/DC came at the Palais Des Expositions in Namur, Belgium, on June 29, 1980. The band's start time had to be pushed back twice so the promoter could fit more people into the venue.

5 The album's title track was the first song Kurt Cobain learned to play on the guitar he was given for his 14th birthday.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"Forget the hearse 'cos I'll never die/I got nine lives/Cat's eyes/Abusing every one of them and running wild" - 'Back In Black'

Johnson wrote the title track as a tribute to his predecessor – the band insisted the song not be "morbid", but rather a celebration of Scott's life.

"She was a fast machine, she kept her motor clean/She was the best damn woman that I ever seen" - 'You Shook Me All Night Long'

This line by Johnson – comparing a woman to a car – may not be terribly progressive or sophisticated, but it is classic AC/DC.

"Talk about the future, forget about the past/It'll always be with us/It's never gonna die" - 'Rock And Roll Ain't Noise Pollution'

While the sentiment of the song was clearly informed by the death of Scott, the closing track can also be read as a fuck-you to those who thought the band would be forced to call it a day.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"A horrible album, musically regressive and lyrically indefensible. I find the fact that it will undoubtedly be a hit terrifying." Lynn Hanna, NME, August 16, 1980

WHAT WE SAY NOW

Replacing a frontman as iconic as Bon Scott is always a risky business, but AC/DC did not simply endure in the face of tragedy, they excelled in it. In the case of 'Back In Black', the old maxim rings true: 50,000,000 people really can't be wrong.

FAMOUS FAN

"It came out during that really crucial time in my life, when I was 15 years old. At that age, when something hits you, the feeling is magnified and intensified. It just blew me away. A great, great album." **Slash**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"It was kind of go-for-broke, because we really didn't know: would the people who knew AC/DC accept this? Would they accept Brian? There was a lot of pressure. But I think everyone wanted to make it all happen." **Angus Young**

THE AFTERMATH

The success of 'Back In Black' exceeded anything anyone could have foreseen. Though their subsequent releases fell some way short of this artistic high-water mark, AC/DC's status as one of the biggest bands on the planet was assured. As for Johnson, in time he would go on to become as integral a presence in the group as Scott himself had been.

THE DETAILS

►RECORDED April–May 1980 ►RELEASE DATE July 25, 1980
►LENGTH 42:11 ►PRODUCER Mutt Lange ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 1 ►UK SALES 300,000 ►WORLDWIDE SALES 50,000,000 (approx) ►SINGLES You Shook Me All Night Long, Hells Bells, Back In Black, Rock And Roll Ain't Noise Pollution ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Hells Bells ►2. Shoot To Thrill ►3. What You Do For Money Honey ►4. Given The Dog A Bone ►5. Let Me Put My Love Into You ►6. Back In Black ►7. You Shook Me All Night Long ►8. Have A Drink On Me ►9. Shake A Leg ►10. Rock And Roll Ain't Noise Pollution

THIS WEEK...

AC/DC

Back In Black

The Aussie rockers recently sold out Wembley Stadium in just under an hour – and you can bet they'll play plenty of songs from this, their massive-selling masterpiece that pulled triumph from tragedy

THE BACKGROUND

1979's 'Highway To Hell' established AC/DC as one of the world's premier hard rock acts, but then disaster struck. Eight months after its release, frontman Bon Scott died of acute alcohol poisoning. Work was already underway on its follow-up, with two songs – the unfortunately titled 'Have A Drink On Me' and 'Let Me Put My Love Into You' – having begun to take shape. Scott's death, however, threw the band's future into turmoil. Just three days after Scott's funeral – and with the encouragement of his parents – the band decided to keep going. They brought in Brian Johnson, from Newcastle glam-rock outfit Geordie, and flew out to the Bahamas with 'Highway To Hell' producer Mutt Lange to make the album that would become their crowning achievement.

SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE



Coldplay



Elvis Costello



Brian Fallon

Singer,
The Gaslight
Anthem

**THE FIRST SONG I
REMEMBER HEARING**
**'I Still Haven't
Found What I'm
Looking For' - U2**

"I was seven, and 'The Joshua Tree' was a big deal – they were playing this constantly on the radio. It struck me as something that was important, but I didn't know what it meant. It was the first time I was affected by a song."

**THE FIRST SONG I
FELL IN LOVE WITH**
'Tiny Dancer' - Elton John

"My mom would play it on her little tape player, and it stopped me in my tracks. It was just this mystical rock'n'roll thing. I didn't know what the lyrics were talking about, but the melody made my ears prick up."

**THE FIRST ALBUM
I EVER BOUGHT**
'Ten' - Pearl Jam

"My dad had a friend whose son was three years older

than me. I'd just got a Discman but didn't own any CDs, so he loaned me his collection, with a little note. One of them was 'Ten' – I remember thinking, 'Woah, I've never heard anything like this.' It blew

"ANY SONG BY THE CURE GETS ME MOVING"

my mind. It made me want to get a guitar."

**THE SONG THAT
MADE ME WANT
TO BE IN A BAND**
'Lithium' - Nirvana

"I missed 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'. All my friends had been like, 'You gotta listen to Nirvana,' and I'd shrug, 'Who's Nirvana? Who cares?' Later, I saw 'Lithium' on MTV – that video's a live show, and at the age of 11 I'd never even been to a concert before. I took 'Nevermind' to the guitar teacher and said, 'I want to learn these songs.'"

**THE SONG I CAN NO
LONGER LISTEN TO**
'We Built This City' - Starship

"I have no memories attached to it, I just hate it. My mom would play music from the '60s and '70s and I'd think, 'Cool, I can see the Stones and Led Zeppelin in Pearl Jam or Nirvana. But in the '80s I was like, 'Music sucks. I don't like this. I don't understand it. I don't like keyboards. I don't like the way they dress. It's bright colours. It's giving me a headache.' That was before I discovered The Cure and The Smiths."

**THE SONG THAT
MAKES ME WANT
TO DANCE**
'Six Different Ways' - The Cure

"I'm a terrible dancer. I've never been to a club in my life. But any Cure song – particularly the little beat on 'Six Different Ways' – gets me moving. I got jealous recently because I saw an Instagram of Toby Morse from H2O with his arm

jumping on tables and each others' backs, hitting ourselves on the head with the mic. The reaction was not good!"

**THE SONG I
CAN'T GET OUT
OF MY HEAD**
'Viva La Vida' - Coldplay

"The minute I hear it, it's stuck in my head for a month. But I like it, so it's good."

**THE SONG I WISH
I'D WRITTEN**
**'(What's So Funny
Bout) Peace, Love
And Understanding' - Elvis Costello**

"It's weird, because Elvis Costello didn't even write it. But every time I hear it I think, 'Man! I wish I'd written that!' It sounds like The Replacements and a bunch of people from the '60s, and I feel that's what I was aiming for when I started writing songs."

**THE SONG THAT
REMINDS ME OF
NEW JERSEY**
'Thunder Road' - Bruce Springsteen

"Being from New Jersey isn't that cool, but 'Thunder Road' helps. The song changes from the beginning – it starts out tender and then goes into this big rock thing. In New Jersey, there's every landscape you could ever want – you can ski, there's mountains, there's beaches, there's farms. It mirrors the song."

**THE SONG I WANT
PLAYED AT MY
FUNERAL**
'Hallelujah' - Jeff Buckley

"Jeff Buckley's version of 'Hallelujah', the Leonard Cohen song, seems like a nice sentiment to have out there. Either that or Andrew WK's 'Party Hard'."



The Cure's
Robert Smith

50



New



for

15

Bands

Pressure. That's the overriding theme of the New Bands Of 2015 issue. We didn't realise it until late on in the design process, but it really is. Almost every act featured over the next 32 pages seems to be railing against something – from Shamir, who's so not-of-this-world that he says an average Saturday night involves crying himself to sleep, to Public Access TV, who are at war with New York's entire indie scene.

And then there's this week's cover stars, of course. Fat White Family are a metaphorical kick up the arse. Simultaneously the most hated *and* loved band around right now, they're by far and away the most exciting thing to happen to British music in years. A grim reflection in the mirror? Absolutely. But hidden among the hyperbole and goriness is that 'thing' that elevates them and makes them truly special: shitkicking tunes, played brilliantly, by weird people.

It feels like every other act we've included here could be on the same page as them – that's why they're officially our Ones To Watch in 2015. Oh, and in case you were wondering, it's not a remotely dour, depressing read at all. It's *electrifying*.

■ MATT WILKINSON, NEW MUSIC EDITOR



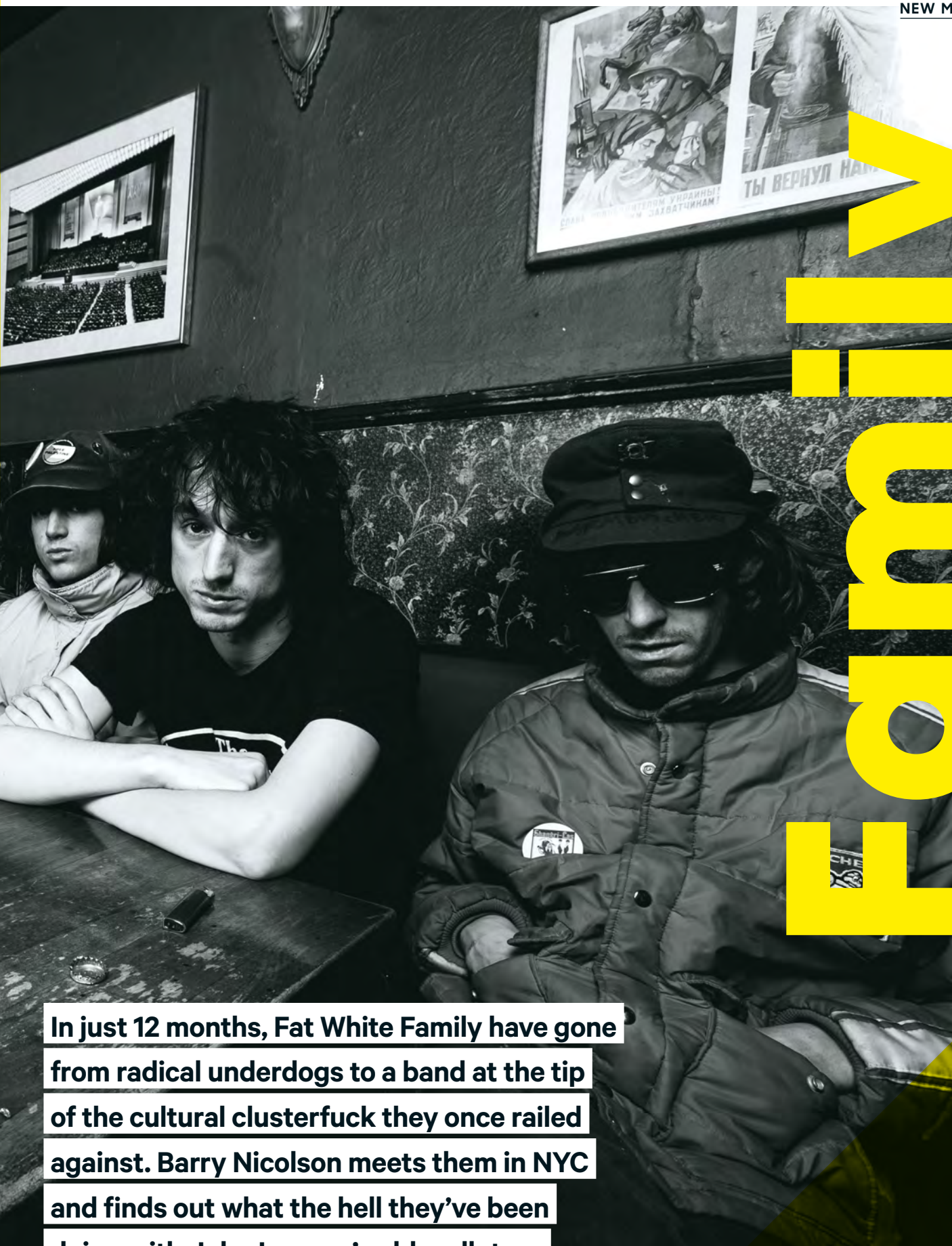
2015

Fat White

16



Fat White Family
at the KGB
Bar, New York,
December 2014



In just 12 months, Fat White Family have gone from radical underdogs to a band at the tip of the cultural clusterfuck they once railed against. Barry Nicolson meets them in NYC and finds out what the hell they've been doing with John Lennon's old mellotron

PHOTOS: DANIEL TOPETE

Some bands crave success like a drug. Others place their stock in the bankrupt notion of cool. Some are in it for the girls, or the parties, or the doors that fame might open for them. Some have noble intentions and are unwilling to compromise, while most bend over and bite the pillow. Fat White Family just want to watch the world burn. They are what happens when culture becomes so homogenised that it practically ceases to exist; when society becomes so hostile towards those on its lower rungs that the only sane course of action is to opt out of it entirely. They're the ugly truth nobody wants to acknowledge, a funhouse mirror held up to the grotesquerie of the modern world, the Stage IV symptom of its decay and the ultimate panacea against it. They are the most dangerous, most scabrous and most vital new band in Britain.

Except we're not in Britain, we're in New York, where the Fat Whites have been living and working for the past few months, playing shows and recording the follow-up to 2013's 'Champagne Holocaust'. Their lives out here have taken on a slightly surreal hue: following a chance encounter at SXSW, they've struck up a friendship with Sean Lennon, who's become a benefactor of sorts, feeding them, housing them and giving them the run of his studio, a state-of-the-art facility in a remote upstate mansion owned by Yoko Ono. As I later discover, the studio isn't the only amenity they've been making use of: "We've gone from the crisis loan centre to Yoko Ono's steam room!" cackles frontman Lias Saoudi.

"They're chaotic and out of control," Lennon warns me before I meet the band at the Soviet-themed bar in the East Village that's become their new favourite haunt. "When they first came over to stay, things got... messy. My roommates are Nels Cline from Wilco and Yuka Honda from Cibo Matto, and they're an older generation; they weren't used to the house being a den of iniquity. [Fat Whites] sort of

remind me of the Wu-Tang Clan, because they all have very extreme personalities and it feels like a miracle when you get them in the same room together. But you'll discover that they can be a lot nicer than they appear. The reputation is real, but at the same time, it isn't."

To many people, a reputation is all Fat White Family are. They're the band whose frontman slathers himself in shit and masturbates onstage. The ones who write songs about concupiscent paedophiles, coming in girls' mouths and bombing Disneyland. The same depraved rabble of sickos that Somerset House in London deemed "unsuitable" to play the venue last year. Most of what you've heard about them is true. But so is a whole lot of stuff you haven't.

As per Lennon's prediction, I don't get all of them in the same room at the same time: only the songwriting core of the band – Lias, his organist brother Nathan and guitarist Saul Adamczewski – turn up to meet me. No-one knows or cares where the other three are. "I don't ever hang out with them," shrugs Saul. Of those who are in attendance, Lias is warm and congenial straight off the bat, the friendliest and most outgoing of the Fat Whites. Nathan, who arrives wearing an anorak the size of a sleeping bag that looks like it was stolen from a homeless person, is something of an enigma, and all I really manage to discover about him is that he spends his spare time watching LiveLeak videos of people being beheaded. Saul, meanwhile, resembles some sort of Dickensian knave; you half-expect a forked tongue to flicker out from behind the gap in his front teeth. I soon realise that he's using tonight as an opportunity to suss me out, asking if I went to private school (I didn't),



whether or not I bought their album (I did) and if I'm "secretly sitting there thinking about how much you hate us" (I'm not, though I can't say how he'd answer that question).

Our interview the following day takes place at Lennon's Greenwich Village apartment, where Saul is currently staying – his host has long since given up trying to house all of them. When the band met Lennon at SXSW this year, Saul claims to have had no idea who he was; he was more interested in his girlfriend. "She's in his band and she's stunning, so we were all staring at her going, 'Oh my god, who's that girl?'" Joe [Pancucci, bassist] kept trying to chat her up; he kept approaching her, and she kept moving away. It was our old drummer who approached Sean, kissing his arse, basically, so they hit it off and he took us all out for dinner. He's a cool bloke. A *strange* bloke."

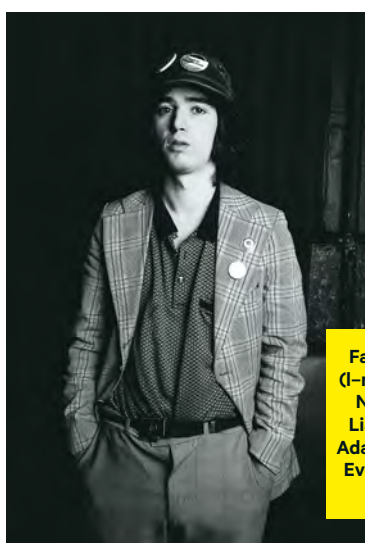
How so?

"He's a bit of an outsider. Obviously, his place in the world is unique and he's kind of an oddball because of that. I suppose we're both quite misanthropic, and that's what we have in common."

Have you been using his dad's old gear on the album?

"Yeah, almost everything we pick up, Sean'll be like, 'Oh, that was my dad's.' We've been using this old mellotron of his – I don't know if it's the one that's on 'Strawberry Fields', but for the sake of the story, let's just say that it is."

Along with Saul, Lennon is co-producing the band's second album, which will be released this



Fat White Family
(l-r): Joe Pancucci,
Nathan Saoudi,
Lias Saoudi, Saul
Adamczewski, Jack
Everett and Adam
J Harmer



"When they first came over to stay, things got... messy"

Sean Lennon, friend

summer on their own label, Without Consent. While the others are free to play a role in running it, says Saul, "the label is pretty much my thing. It's something that my friend [Jemima Carnell] and I have talked about doing for a while, and it's something I want to keep doing after the band's finished." Their first release will be an album by Sheffield's Eccentric Research Council, which Saul and Lias both appear on, but they're also keen to reissue a lot of older, obscure stuff. Top of their wishlist is Charles Manson's infamous "The Family Jams" LP.

"I called up the guy who owns the copyright and he kept asking me, 'Are you *sure* you want to do this? Do you know what you're getting into?' I've been speaking to Fat Possum [the band's US label] about it, and they're going to start investigating ownership of all the stuff we want to put out, so hopefully we can start releasing records next year."

Of their own album, Saul says, "We've really tried to go to the extremes of what's tasteful, or even good. After we did the first one, people pointed out that we had a lot of different styles going on, which wasn't intentional, but which I quite liked the idea of. I know that we're not



pushing anything forward. I know that we're not making anything groundbreaking. But what we do well, I think, is taking bits of this and bits of that – glam rock, punk, psychedelia, folk, country – and putting them all together. I've realised that we can make any kind of music; we're not stuck in one genre. That's my favourite thing about the band."

The words he throws around to describe the album – like "easy listening", "calypso", "reggae" and "Iain Duncan Smith going around stealing eggs" – would seem to back up that assertion, though what it'll actually sound like is anybody's guess, given that his latest thing is making his bandmates record each song in multiple styles. "I can be a bit of an arsehole with them," he grins malevolently.

Since arriving in New York, Saul admits, "the circles we've ended up moving in have been very, very wealthy. It's not something we set out to do, but we've somehow met a load of rich kids and they've all been morally sound." In Sean Lennon, they've encountered a genuine fan who just so happens to be the heir to a \$500 million fortune, but the band are aware of how the arrangement looks, and in the eyes of many of their friends and former squat-mates back in Brixton, they've already sold out.

"One of my oldest friends actually said to me, 'All you care about is fame', which I just found completely absurd," says Saul. "I think it's because they see us as having gone back on something that we believed in. Because I'm sat here talking to you in Sean Lennon's house, I must therefore be chasing fame."

Which isn't to say that no member of Fat White Family ever has strayed from the path. When I ask what became of their old drummer, Dan Lyons, Saul doesn't hold back: "He's a shit-stirring, sycophantic psychopath. His only desire was to be famous. He thought he was



some sort of fucking rock star: he got really into drinking champagne, and he'd always buy the most expensive cocaine. He was repulsive in almost every way."

"I don't know why we put up with him for so long," muses Lias.

"Because he was loopy and he fitted in. We're not nice people, and his horrible, spiteful personality worked within the band."

Why make music with people you can't stand?

Saul: "I don't know. The thing about our band is that we've tried lots of different musicians, but they were all too normal or too mature. You have to be a social cripple or a fucking retard to fit in. All I know is that the more I see of these people, the less I like them."

Lias: "Nice."

Saul: "It's true, though. You start a band with someone and you see them every weekend and it's alright. But then you get to see a bit more of them... there are some fucking depressing blokes in our band. I don't wanna see too deeply into any of them."

Fat White Family's first brush with notoriety came through their politics rather than their music, when Yuppies Out – a Facebook group started by Saul and Nathan – protested the opening of an upscale Brixton bistro by handing out White Ace cider and slices of Dairylea. Yuppies Out was intended as more of a situationist prank than a serious political statement, though their opposition to the gentrification of working-class London is real enough. The nuances of their politics, however, are tricky to define: they're staunch leftists, but Saul also once went on an EDL march, "not out of support, but because I wanted to see what it was like up close. Those people have genuine grievances – they see traditional working-class English values disappearing, and they're scared about it. But they don't realise it's not the Muslims who are fucking them." In an ideal world, he says, "I'd like to live in a self-governing anarcho-syndicalist

community, where everyone helps each other out." He's aware that's never going to happen, though, so he's resigned to voting Labour at the next election: "I know they're fucking atrocious, but if it's a choice between a quick death and a long, slow one, I'll go for the quick one."

Ed Miliband, however, is unlikely to satisfy Fat White Family's desire for violent retribution against the financial elite. "There's a class war being waged and we're all in it regardless of whether you know it or not," insists Lias. "When they're selling off the NHS and leaving people to rot, where do you draw the line? They're even doing away with crisis loans, because obviously these poor fucking drug addicts looking for £6.56 to make their lives tolerable for a few hours is what's sinking the economy."

Do you advocate violence as a means of achieving revolution?

"I advocate violence as a means of revenge," says Saul. "I don't think it would actually achieve anything, but revenge does need to be taken on these cunts. People need to pay for the harm they've caused. They deserve to be killed."

One of the reasons people are alternately confused, repulsed and excited by Fat White Family is that they simply don't care about the same things other bands do. All the stuff that most musicians try so hard to conceal – political beliefs, personal dysfunctions, recreational habits – they wear like a badge of (dis)honour. "Everybody in London is trapped in an irony cocoon, where you can't have an opinion about anything in case you make a fool of yourself," argues Lias. "Everybody's so hyper-conscious of what everybody else is thinking that they're afraid to put themselves on display."

Fat White Family certainly aren't afraid of that, but the result is that they're widely perceived as psychotic fuck-ups. Sure, there's a smidgin of truth to it: tales of their drug-taking are rife (and increasingly extreme), but for Saul, "there are deep-set psychological issues in this band that are a bigger problem for us than drugs. I'm not saying this to make us sound 'cool' or 'crazy', but people do genuinely think that we're mad, and I honestly think of myself as being normal."

"Everybody in London takes drugs," adds Lias. "Everybody in New York takes drugs. Anywhere you go, that's all that people seem to



Sean Lennon (left) with Saul



Lias backstage at Baby's All Right, New York, December 2014

FAT WHITES STATESIDE

How the land of the free took FWF to its bosom

Since they quit London, Fat White Family have become one of the most talked-about bands in New York City. They've also found themselves fêted by music-industry legend Danny Fields, former publicist and manager to The Doors, The Stooges and the Ramones.

"I loved their music, I loved their attitude... and I hate music!" enthuses Fields, who first saw the band at an NME showcase at Glasslands (below) during CMJ festival. "The last band I really loved was Soundgarden, who split in '97. But then I saw Fat White Family and thought, 'Oh my god, this is what I've been waiting for.'"



Then there's Matthew Johnson, who heads up the band's US label, Fat Possum: "I met the band at a soundcheck, but it was real tense. In the middle of a song, Saul walked over to the drummer and punched him in the face. After working with the band for about six months, I wanted to punch Saul in the face. And he's my favourite member."

be doing. There's nothing exceptional about us as drug abusers; we're just like everybody else."

Is there a line you won't cross?

Lias: "I would never shoot up, but there's nothing that I look down on – people can do whatever they want. But yeah, certain drugs scare me. I'm afraid of dying."

What about the really awful stuff – crack, crystal meth and so on. Is that fair game?

Saul: "The first day we were at SXSW, two of the others came back from smoking crystal meth with some redneck Jesus freak they'd met. Apparently they'd all been smoking meth and

"There are psychological issues in this band that are a bigger problem than drugs"

Saul Adamczewski

waving guns around at each other. It sounded like the hairiest situation you could imagine."

During the recording of the album, however, the band – Saul and Lias, at least – have been doing their best to avoid hairy situations. For Saul, it's been by choice: after "going feral" on magic mushrooms during the first week in the studio, he decided to scrap five days' worth of work and start over from scratch, this time sober. For Lias, on the other hand, it's born more of necessity. When he wasn't on tour, he spent much of last year "shivering and staring out the window" of his dad's house in Cambridge; his immune system was so weak that at one point his bandmates seriously thought that he might have Aids. The night before, he'd alluded to how low he was feeling when he told me that "people have an idea of what it's like to be in a band and have a bit of success, and the reality of it is quite different". When I relay this conversation to ➔



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TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION

We put five of the best myths about the Fat Whites to Saul and Lias

1 Lias starred in a 20-minute noir-style detective film.

Lias: "Yeah, that's true – *The Labyrinth Of London*, directed by our original manager Robert Rubbish. It's mostly just me wandering around London."



2 At festivals, they gained a reputation for nicking guitar pedals.

Saul: "Nah, that's rubbish. There was a myth started about us amongst certain promoters, but they were purely judging us on the way we looked."

3 They gave a member of another rising UK band a line of flour, saying it was coke.

Saul: "False, but we did do that to our old drummer. We were always leaving fake drugs out on the table for him."

4 They take their name from ex-Rough Trade A&R James Endeacott's nickname, The Fat White Duke.

Saul: "Yeah, that's partly true. James was DJing in a pub once and they forgot to put the word 'Duke' on his dressing room door, so it just said 'Fat White'. But that was years before we started the band."

5 In Switzerland, they lost £1,000 worth of T-shirts.

Lias: "We've lost loads of shit like that. We went on holiday to Barcelona once and Saul lost a grand in cash on the second day. You should've seen his face."

Saul, he simply snaps: "Lias talks out of his arse. If he feels a certain way at a certain moment, he'll swear that's how he feels all the time. He told me yesterday that he didn't like performing, that he felt embarrassed and scared. And I was like, 'I fucking *know* that you're just on coke and talking shit here.'"

Even so, those health concerns are very real: last summer, Lias even contracted pneumonia and started spitting blood during a gig in Paris. Does he worry about the mental and physical toll being in this band takes on him?

Lias: "I do, yeah. I've been trying to take it easy recently, but I still go out and get fucked up and I still get ill afterwards. I've always eaten shit food, I never do any fucking exercise. Actually, I don't know why I'm beating around the bush here: this band will probably kill me."

Saul: "That's such a cliché, though. Bands complaining about being in bands."

Lias: "So you're saying I'm not allowed to complain?"

Saul: "I'm saying it's a cliché. You're allowed to complain, Lias. It's how you spend a large portion of your time."

What do your family think of what you do?

Lias: "Half my family are Muslim, so I'll sometimes get calls from my dad, going, 'You are the shame of the Saoudis! You shame the Berber people! You're not supposed to get your todger out in public, you know? It's *haram*.'"

Saul: "Both my parents are caners, so they're fine with what I do."

Lias: "My dad thinks we should sound more like the Eagles. He says, 'Your music, the notes are all wrong, but the Eagles – *that* is perfection.' He's quite sweet, really. I know our music is rancid to his ears, but he still comes to the gigs."

"I still get fucked up. This band will probably kill me"

Lias Saoudi

Fat White Family's music is rancid to lots of people's ears, but that's part of what makes it valuable – while their contemporaries fret over how best to appeal to everyone, Saul, Lias and the others aren't remotely bothered about appealing to *anyone*. It's partly because of this that they're on the cover of *NME* this week. But inevitably there are those who are convinced that it's all an act: reviewing 'Touch The Leather' for *NME*'s Christmas issue, former Slits guitarist Viv Albertine said she thought the band were "nice boys" who didn't "live the life".

"She can go fuck herself," glowers Saul. "I hate that old punk bollocks: 'We did it first, we were the real thing...' She's got no fucking idea how we live. The only real response to that is to say that we think she's a complete fucking idiot."

"I think it's OK, if it's coming out of our mouths, to say that music isn't as good as it used to be," adds Lias. "But it's intensely arrogant for the old guard to sit there talking about how shit everything is. It's like, fuck off, you've had your moment in the sun. Maybe everything that's out there right now *does* mean nothing, but that's for us to decide, not you."

Junkies, fakers, thieves, deviants, iconoclasts... Fat White Family stand accused of everything by everyone, and give not one solitary fuck about any of it. This band answer only to themselves. If they want it – if they can *survive* it – the next 12 months are theirs for the taking. ■



Onstage at Baby's All Right, New York

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Shamir

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Fearless flamboyance, rare humility and a soaring voice make this 20-year-old from Las Vegas a star in the making

PHOTOS BY FIONA GARDEN

Shamir greets me with a hug. He's just finished soundchecking at London's intimate Courtyard Theatre, where later he'll play his first ever UK show for an audience peppered with label heads, music journalists and radio DJs. After the bouncy, Technicolor rap of his breakthrough hit 'On The Regular' and the soulful strut of 'I Know It's A Good Thing', one of *NME*'s Top Tracks of 2014, there's a gathering consensus that Shamir just might be The Next Big Thing.

Surrounded by hype, the 20-year-old from Las Vegas couldn't be further from the ambitious diva-in-the-making you might imagine. Shamir is a sweet, shy, androgynous kid who describes his perfect Saturday night as getting into bed and "curling up with my headphones, blasting Natalia Kills and crying".

Despite being from Las Vegas, he grew up in a world very different to the bright lights of the Strip. His debut EP 'Northtown', released last June, was named after the area he calls home. "It's nothing but dirt, housing complexes and a pig farm that stinks up the whole town," he says. "I'm from the desert!"

He says he "stuck out like a sore thumb" at school "because of the way I dress, the way I look, the way I talk... I decided I'd give them something to look at, so I came to school dressed crazy and did my hair a different way every day". His attitude won him a measure of acceptance, his classmates eventually naming him 'Best Dressed' and 'Most Likely To Appear On The Cover Of *Vogue*'. He was even nominated for prom king. "I didn't go to

prom, because I was too punk," he says. "But if I ran I feel like I would have slayed them."

He avoided parties, instead channelling his energy into songwriting. He'd been inspired by his aunt, a paralegal who wrote poems as a hobby. Shamir started writing songs at the age of eight, taught himself guitar at nine and by 13 had accompanied himself at his school's talent show. "I was the only person who didn't use a backing track," he says. "That was my breakout performance."

As a teen he discovered punk bands like The Slits, Vivian Girls and GG Allin. His band Anorexia, formed with his friend Christina Thompson on bass, won him blog buzz, but when she left to pursue rap, Shamir began work on solo material on a Dr Groove drum machine. "My friends freaked out when I posted 'I'll Never Be Able To Love' on Facebook," he says.



Shamir in
London,
December 2014



It's not hard to imagine why. Gone was his early scrappy punk sound; in its place a full-blooded gospel voice that shocks and swells and soars.

Shamir put a handful of these demos online and sent them to labels, hoping to make 50 tapes. Nick Sylvester, of fledgling Brooklyn label Godmode, tells me that hearing them "knocked me on my ass". He says: "I remember the email: 'I'm an 18-year-old kid from Las Vegas who makes music.' There was something so humble and honest about the way Shamir presented himself – not just that note but the tracks, too. They were super raw and

unpolished and entirely without guile, just Shamir singing over ragged drum machine loops. I wrote back to him immediately. He told me he was planning to move to Arkansas to work on a farm. I told him to come to New York first just to see if we liked working together. It was just supposed to be a cassette release, then he'd go back to that farm. Now here we are."

Shamir did indeed have a job lined up in Rogers, Arkansas, a sleepy town of 50,000 people. "There's a lot

of retirement homes there, so I was going to live there with a bunch of old people," he says. "That was living the dream for me."

Instead he took the money he had saved for his move and went to New York, although it had never been an ambition to live in the Big Apple. "It's kinda too much for me. But at that point I'd just graduated high school and I was living at home. When the opportunity came to go to New York, I knew a lot of people would die for that chance, so I took it."

He's not exactly become a concrete jungle native just yet. "I've been to a couple of big parties, but I ended up getting ID-ed and kicked out," he says. "Being underage back in home in Vegas, there's not much for me and my friends to do other than go to my room, drink and talk about life. My alcohol tolerance is pretty high, so it's been great not to have to hide it [in Europe]. I've been having a beer onstage!"

"I have no ambition. My goal has already been exceeded"

Shamir

That evening, he does indeed have a can of Red Stripe onstage, but that's not what people will remember the show for. During the penultimate song of his set, he clambers down offstage and heads into the audience to greet as many of them as he can with a hug, just as he had with me. Even within this extroverted display there's a hesitancy that reveals his

shyness, as if he's still coming to terms with his place in the limelight. After a full five minutes of hugging, he climbs back onstage to finish with a show-stopping a cappella performance of 'I'll Never Be Able To Love'. Shamir's voice fills the room, sounding unmistakably like the Next Big Thing – whether he's planned it or not.

"I have absolutely no ambition," he'd said earlier. "My goal has already been exceeded. I just want to make good music. That's it. That's what I care about."

■ KEVIN EG PERRY

SHAMIR'S DEBUT ALBUM

► **TITLE** TBC
 ► **RELEASE DATE** Mid 2015
 ► **LABEL** XL
 ► **RECORDED** In New York, by Nick Sylvester
 ► **SHAMIR SAYS** "I let Nick have free range over the music as long as my lyrics, melody and everything is intact. That's all that really matters to me. We've recorded 16 tracks, but we'll cut that down to 10 or 12. I wrote them all, but a couple were co-written with my aunt. One of those is 'Walk On By' and another which was perfect for us to write together called 'Vegas'. We're Vegas natives and I think we paint it from our standpoint."

The gifted frontman from New York's best new band is taking inspiration from the past to forge a bright new future for rock'n'roll

Public Access TV are due onstage in six hours' time, and they appear to have misplaced their frontman. His phone is dead and his manager, having struck out with the local hospitals and police stations, is starting to worry. John Eatherly was last seen necking late-night wines after a heavy night drinking in Glasgow with me and his bassist Max Peebles, and while Peebles has found his way back to the band's hotel, Eatherly, who somehow got separated from him after crashing out at my flat, has not. We begin to wonder if we shouldn't put out an APB on a baby-faced American in a black leather jacket who answers to the name of Juan.

'Juan' is Eatherly's drunken alter-ego, and by this point, I know him pretty well. I first met Public Access TV a couple of months earlier, at a dive bar of Eatherly's choosing on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The place is slightly out of temporal whack: from the decor to the beer prices to the denim-jacketed barfly holding court about the genius of The Kinks, it's as though every year since 1976 was nothing more than a rumour.

Once Eatherly arrives, I'm struck not only by his youthfulness, but his savviness: at the tender age of 24, he's practically a rock'n'roll veteran, having joined Nashville garage-rockers Be Your Own Pet on drums when he was just 16.

"That was a fun week," he remembers. "I knew I wasn't coming back to school, so I was throwing my homework in the trash. The teacher asked what the hell I was doing and I was like, 'Peace, I'm fucking outta here!'"

When BYOP imploded, the 18-year-old Eatherly moved to New York with Peebles, his best friend since childhood, and carved out a niche as a hired gun, playing with pretty much anybody in the five boroughs who needed someone to bring some spark to their songs.

"I'd been using [session work] as a crutch," he says, reeling off a varied list of acts he backed,

PUBLIC PRAISE

Eleanor Friedberger says Eatherly is a born star



"John possesses that embarrassing to admit, and hard to define quality known as 'star power'. He has the best stage presence of anyone I've ever played with. He made the best sideman. It was only a matter of time before he had the nerve to front his own band. I'm really excited to watch him take off."

including Smith Westerns, The Virgins and The Fiery Furnaces' Eleanor Friedberger. Still fast friends now, Friedberger is steadfast in her support of Eatherly, saying in no uncertain terms that he possesses "the best stage presence of anyone I've ever played with".

It wasn't until summer 2013, however, that Eatherly finally decided to start a band of his own.

"It was hard to get out of that stuff, because it was my only way of being able to eat for a while. But I'd been writing songs since I was 12, and I just got sick of doing everybody else's shit. I just started feeling like, 'Fuck everything else, I've gotta do my own thing.'"

Eatherly's 'thing' has never quite fitted in with anybody else's, and he's fine with that. When he moved to New York, Brooklyn's musical primacy over Manhattan was already

"There's too much camaraderie in New York"

John Eatherly



well-established, but for Eatherly, who talks about the Big Apple's most populous borough as though it were a hated rival school, "I moved from Tennessee because I wanted to live in Woody Allen town. I wanted to be in [legendary punk book] *Please Kill Me*. My dream wasn't to live in fucking Brooklyn."

Even in Manhattan, however, PATV's exuberant, exquisitely crafted rock'n'roll is something of an oddity, a throwback to the city's most celebrated sons, daughters and scenes: from Blondie, Lou Reed and The Mudd Club right up to The Strokes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and the new wave of nostalgia they ushered in when they arrived on the scene at the turn of the century. He says comparisons to the latter are "unavoidable" on account of them being the

cess TV



Public Access
TV: (l-r)
Xan Aird, John
Eatherly, Pete
Star, Max Peebles

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last “big deal” bands to break from the East Village, but he’s at pains to set PATV apart from the current indie scene there. “There’s too much camaraderie in New York,” he explains. “Everybody uses each other. Everybody tweets at each other. It’s almost a social climbing thing, to get where you wanna be. In Manhattan, there’s a lot of bands who have a built-in crowd, because they’re friends with other bands, so all their friends will turn up. But I don’t wanna play to other bands’ friends’ band members, I wanna play to strangers!”

Later, over a six-pack on the roof of the apartment he shares with Peebles and guitarist Xan Aird, Eatherly further fleshes out his manifesto: songs over aesthetics, nurturing the last kernel of mystery that social media has destroyed and catchy choruses that “you can stand behind”. PATV have a surfeit of the latter. Both the Costello-snarled ‘Monaco’ and recent single ‘In The Mirror’ would have been at perfectly home on Stiff Records in 1977, and Eatherly says he’s writing more all the time: there are currently over 35 songs in contention for the band’s debut album.

“Rock’n’roll’s been around since the 1950s,” he says, “and some of those motherfuckers are still alive – 60 years isn’t that long, man! You

can’t say to yourself, ‘Oh, all the great songs have already been written.’”

Fast-forward a few months, and Eatherly finally turns up on time for the opening show of the band’s tour in Glasgow that night. In true Juan Eatherly fashion, he’d spent several hours meandering in what he thought was the right direction, but which was, of course, completely the wrong one. Eventually he found his way. There’s probably a metaphor in there somewhere. Or at least another kick-ass chorus.

■ BARRY NICOLSON

Key players in Madrid's vibrant garage-rock scene, this four-piece specialise in raucous, life-affirming anthems

PHOTOS BY THOMAS CANET

Deers

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Let's do the interview at our place! Bring beer!" Before we've even met, Deers' Carlotta Cosials has managed to perfectly sum up the spirit the Spanish four-piece have become renowned for. It doesn't matter what they're up to – a raucous gig in the middle of a chaotic European tour, or an interview on a cold afternoon in Camden while they're still in their pyjamas – Carlotta and her bandmates (co-singer/guitarist Ana Perrote, bassist Ade Martin and drummer Amber Grimbergen) seem to be in a perpetual state of giddiness. In the past few months, everyone from Mac DeMarco to Palma Violets to The Vaccines have been found at their feet when they roll into

town, and it's easy to see why – their very presence seems to incite a party.

Deers' motto epitomises their appeal: *nuestras mierdas, nuestras reglas* translates, quite literally, as "our shit, our rules". And they are most definitely a band who do things their own way. "We want to play the music that we enjoy listening to," Carlotta says. "When we try to write a sad song we always have it going well for a bit, but then someone will come into the room and we'll all start jumping around until it turns into a happy song. We can't help it!"

Deers in their hometown of Madrid, December 2014



Originally formed as a duo when Carlotta and Ana met through their ex-boyfriends, Deers' primary inspiration comes from scuzzy American outfits like the Black Lips (who they recently supported in London), but their history is largely steeped in their home city. "Madrid is our favourite place in the world," Carlotta beams. It's the city's close-knit garage-rock community that provides the heartbeat to their energised lives.

"Barcelona is like the electronic music city of Spain, but Madrid is the place for garage

rock," Carlotta says. It's a scene the band are heavily involved in. Ade hosts Pregaming Radio, and Ana and Carlotta seem to be permanently in tow wherever The Parrots – riotous garage rockers and elder statesmen of the local scene – crop up, from starring as trouble-starting schoolgirls in the band's 'Hello Stranger' video to gatecrashing the stage and dancing with them at their first London show last September. With The Parrots' Diego Garcia producing all of Deers' released tracks so far, the two bands seem to have a symbiotic relationship, and with a split seven-inch "vinyl

"I always think everyone is better at guitar than I am"

Carlotta Cosials

of love" rumoured to be in the works, their close ties could be pulled even tighter.

"They're our favourite band," Carlotta says, laughing, "[but] every time we see our friends or other bands I always think that every single person is better at playing guitar than I am."

"Our minds are better than our hands," Ana says, referring to the years she and Carlotta spent as a duo, working out how to play their instruments. Their intrinsic charm and ramshackle nature has endured as the band have grown – anyone who's seen them live will be familiar with the outbursts of giggling, beaming smiles and constant sense of elation that comes with the carnal mayhem unleashed by their rowdy, singalong lo-fi anthems.

Sometimes things don't go to plan, Carlotta cheerily admits. "Usually we

don't do much drinking before we play, but in Copenhagen we weren't onstage until midnight, so we thought it would be a good idea to get really drunk and see what would happen." And while it's obvious where this story is going, Ana insists on getting some photographic evidence out. Carlotta's onstage, screaming, waving her arms above her head. "We were so drunk we started sliding around on our knees because our equipment wouldn't work," she explains. "We tried to come back on for an encore and we couldn't even play the rest of the song!"

Deers are a rarity in 2015. Their talent thrives alongside their sense of fun, and as a result they're one of the first bands to come along in years who are completely, gloriously free of pretension. It's little wonder they've already got rock'n'roll royalty taking a keen interest in everything they do – and you can rest assured that the party won't be stopping any time soon. ■ JAMES BALMONT

DEERS' DNA

The Spanish foursome on their listening habits

Carlotta Cosials



AGE 23
ROLE Vocals and guitar
FAVOURITE ARTIST

Britney Spears

FAVOURITE SONG The Almighty Defenders – 'Bow Down And Die'

Ana Perrote



AGE 20
ROLE Guitar and vocals
FAVOURITE ARTIST

Mac DeMarco

FAVOURITE SONG Devendra Banhart – 'Your Fine Petting Duck'

Amber Grimbergen



AGE 18
ROLE Drums
FAVOURITE BAND Arctic Monkeys

FAVOURITE SONG MØ – 'Fire Rides'

Ade Martin



AGE 22
ROLE Bass
FAVOURITE BAND The Strokes

FAVOURITE SONG The Buggles – 'Video Killed The Radio Star'

Tobias

The Los Angeles-based “hopeless romantic” offers a compelling soundtrack to heartbreak and failure

PHOTO: AARON FARLEY

Wait, let me find my weed...” In a car park behind the tiny east London recording studio where Tobias Jesso Jr has just played his fourth ever live show, a teenager rummages through his coat, looking for something to make his friend’s roll-up more interesting. A few minutes earlier, at the piano inside, Tobias, a Los Angeles-based, Canadian singer-songwriter who describes himself as “a loser and a hopeless romantic”, finished an emotional half-hour set to a gaggle of onlookers – including the two smokers – grimacing painfully as he sang. The 29-year-old is on his first trip to Europe, primarily to play a festival in Paris, but also for three unusual, low-key performances: two at a rented flat with creaky wooden floors and one at this studio.

The kid’s joint is only half-smoked when a smiling Tobias strides into the car park and beckons him back inside. “I’m gonna play another song for him,” Tobias says to me as he goes by. They sit together at the piano, Tobias twinkling his way through a beautiful Lennon-esque ballad called ‘Leaving Los Angeles’ as his admirer’s eyes redden. Afterwards, he admits he was recently dumped by his girlfriend while they were listening to Tobias’ demos, of which there were just two online: ‘Just A Dream’, uploaded in August 2013, and ‘True Love’, last July. “I’ve cried to your music a lot,” he says. “Erm, you’ll have a whole album’s worth soon,” Tobias replies bashfully.

Those two tracks were followed by five limited-edition, one-song vinyl flexidiscs available by mail order from Tobias’ label True Panther, and footage of him playing another tune, ‘Without You’, in a Los Angeles deli. All eight songs are warm and instantly familiar, pitching simple, high-pitched lyrics over drifting piano chords. ‘Just A Dream’, written about a dream Tobias had about a new father, sounds like it’s been dusted off from the ’70s, while ‘Without You’ and ‘True Love’ are stark, teary and compelling. As well as making their author’s love life sound catastrophic, they’re

perfect for wallowing in. No wonder the fan was so keen on getting stoned and having Tobias serenade him.

Since that night, Tobias has played similar shows in New York (in the kitchen of a Brooklyn apartment) and Los Angeles. He’s also just finished his debut album, ‘Goon’, due in March and produced by former Girls bassist and producer Chet ‘JR’ White, Ariel Rechtshaid (Haim, Vampire Weekend) and Black Keys

“I thrive off unrequited love”

Tobias Jesso Jr

drummer Patrick Carney. The album documents two years of heartbreak and failure. In 2008, while playing in The Sessions – a Killers-style rock band – at home in Vancouver, Tobias moved to Los Angeles with one objective: to make it.

He didn’t. After playing bass for unknown pop singer Melissa Cavatti and starting a relationship with Elvis Presley’s granddaughter Riley Keough (“The Elvis thing was never a point between us,” he says), his Hollywood life juddered to a halt. In 2012, shortly after that relationship had ended, he collided with



Tobias at his
home in Los
Angeles,
October 2014



a Cadillac on his bike, badly cutting his hand. He looked up to see someone stealing his bicycle. The next day, he found out his mum had cancer.

"Man oh man, LA kicked me in the butt and told me to get lost. There was no place I could go but home," he explains. Unhappy and bored stiff, Tobias began to write songs on his sister's old piano ("It was a romantic idea, I fell in love with it and played for 12 hours a day"). He uploaded his first demo, 'Just A Dream', to YouTube and, a week later, emailed White after stumbling across his address on a blog. Girls had recently broken up, so Tobias sent his condolences along with some demos. White replied, inviting him to San Francisco to make a record straight away.

JESS GOOD FRIENDS

Tobias has two bands on speed dial...

Haim

"The Haim sisters brought a magician to my friend's birthday party – that's how we met. The next day Danielle came to play drums on 'Without You'. Since then I've completely fallen in love with them. They come over and we sit at the piano!"

Foxyglen

"Jonathan [Rado, guitar/keyboard] and I write together at his house. We feed off each other. We're going into the studio to do something. We have ideas that neither of us could pull off, like crazy falsettos that only an Adele could manage."

'Goon' (so named because, to Tobias, "a goon is a hopeless, dumb guy who can't express love. Plus it's a lovely word") fleshes out those piano demos with guitar, bass, drums and strings, and players include drummer Aaron Sperske, who sued Ariel Pink in 2012 over songwriting credits for Pink's 'Mature Themes', and Danielle Haim, who Tobias hopes to collaborate with further (see box, below).

With titles including 'How Could

You Babe?' and 'Can We Still Be Friends', it doesn't exactly sound chirpy. On 'Hollywood', Tobias sings, "I think I'm gonna die in Hollywood". But 'Goon' isn't as desperately sad as that sounds. "I just like being as romantic as possible," he says. "I thrive off unrequited love. I've been in love in one way or another since I was 14. I go full-on in and get obsessive." He's not in a relationship at the moment but he says that even if he was he'd still be pining.

All this love stuff could come off as cheesy but he channels it into something grittier, writing intelligent, brutally simple, careworn music that sparks comparison with some of the most singularly talented (and coolest) songwriters ever – from Lennon to Elton John, Harry Nilsson and Nick Drake.

"I don't know anything other than hopeless romance," he finishes, proving his point by referring back to his east London studio performance.

"Did you see the beautiful brown-haired girl there? That was my friend." He explains that they connected in Los Angeles and became penpals when she moved to Paris. Knowing he was coming to Europe, Tobias saw a chance. "I invited her to come with me. Man, she's a real heartbreaker. Nothing ever happened, but she knows how I feel. It's an unrequited crush... London was hard." As it turns out, the lovesick teenager Tobias serenaded wasn't the only one feeling blue that night. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

Jesso Jr

After wowing SXSW last year, the four-piece from smalltown Pennsylvania have made one of 2015's most exciting albums

The Districts:
(l-r) Rob Grote, Braden Lawrence, Connor Jacobus and Pat Cassidy

PHOTO: SOPHIE HARRIS-TAYLOR



THE

More than 2,200 bands play Austin's SXSW festival each year, so it takes something pretty special to cut through the margarita fuzz and stand out from the melee. Last year, four unassuming teenagers from the tiny town of Lititz, Pennsylvania managed it. Anyone who witnessed The Districts' incendiary live show came away raving about their fully formed rock'n'roll epics, and in particular fresh-faced lead singer Rob Grote, whose voice sounded like it belonged to a man who'd been headlining festivals since Woodstock.

Nine months on, The Districts find themselves in London after a year spent spreading their gospel around the world. Their

reputation as the band who conquered SXSW could have weighed heavy, but they shrug off the idea that they've felt under pressure to live up to the hype. "When you're playing a show you're in your own little world," shrugs Grote. "We don't think about anything else."

"Yeah, it's like, once you're up there onstage, what can really go wrong?" adds drummer

"We didn't want to be known as 'that young band'"

Rob Grote



Districts

Braden Lawrence. "Apart from technical shit, but we've been doing this for a while..."

That's the real secret to the rise of The Districts – like a lot of bands, their overnight success has been a long time coming. Although they're still all only 19 or 20, Grote, Lawrence and bassist Connor Jacobus have been playing together for five years. New guitarist Pat Cassidy recently replaced Mark Larson when he went back to college.

For a time, their youth threatened to define them. When a live version of their song 'Funeral Beds' went viral on Reddit, it was headlined "They're still in high school", as if that's all they had to offer. In truth, their music was already good enough to stand up against anyone's. "We didn't want that to be a gimmick," says Grote.

"We didn't want to be known as 'that young band'. When we were still in high school it was more of a big deal, but now we're just paying rent just like everybody else. In the States, sometimes we have to leave venues when we're done playing because we're not old enough to drink, but it's not too much of an issue."

While the band's music channels the rich history of Americana, from Neil Young to Kings Of Leon, their attitude to putting out music has been pure punk DIY. They released 13-track album 'Telephone' themselves last February before signing with indie label Fat Possum. In recent years the label has released music by the likes of Fat White Family and Wavves, but it was co-founded by Matthew Johnson in the early '90s as an outlet for largely forgotten blues musicians. "Matthew was probably about our age when he first started going out and talking to those old blues guys and trying to pull off all this crazy shit," says Grote, "so I guess we have a similar music mentality."

Fat Possum flew them to Seedy Underbelly

Studio in Minnesota in September to record their album. "We arrived about midnight and the airline had lost our guitars," recalls Grote. "Then the taxi driver didn't have GPS, so we got completely lost. When we finally found our hotel, the only person there was a crazy-eyed lady eating MoonPie and making weird noises. It creeped us the fuck out!"

Fortunately they had the guiding hand of John Congleton, fresh from producing last year's *NME* Album Of The Year, St Vincent's 'St Vincent', to get things moving again. The resulting 10-track LP, 'A Flourish And A Spoil', is due out in February and proves that while you can take the band out of smalltown Pennsylvania, you can't take that small

town out of the band. On 'Suburban Smell', for example, Grote sings about a "party at the rich basements". They're a band of outsiders, and Grote explains that that song was inspired by a specific incident: "There was this one time at a ball game where a bunch of kids were taking the piss out of a mentally challenged kid, making him dance. A video of it was posted online and I got into a big internet fight with a bunch of people because I said 'you guys are fucked up'."

The band will play London's legendary 100 Club for an *NME* Awards Show on Tuesday, February 3, and they're itching to let the world hear what they've been working on. "I just hope other people understand it," says Grote. "Even if it's only two people, just as long as someone does!" ■ KEVIN EG PERRY

DISTRICTS: HEROES AND ZEROS

Rob Grote gives a high five and a thumbs down

HERO Stephen Malkmus



Rob: "We ran into Stephen Malkmus at a gas station and he's a really nice guy."

We said hi, and later we saw him play and he gave us a shout-out onstage. It was cool of him to go out of his way for people he doesn't really know. He mentioned he'd YouTube'd us!"

ZERO Chromeo



Rob: "We saw Chromeo at Austin City Limits and all his road cases were covered in chrome. People don't even see that! It's just flashy bullshit. It's pretty Spinal Tap."

Leon

He was waiting tables in Texas, but a chance meeting with White Denim opened things up for this retro-soul superstar in the making

PHOTO: ERIN MARGARET RAMBO

In 2015, the future of music sounds a whole lot like the past. Four months ago, old-school soul singer Leon Bridges was still bussing tables at a Tex-Mex restaurant in Fort Worth, Texas – birthplace of tragic country songwriter Townes Van Zandt and proclaimed “City of Cowboys”. Now the 25-year-old is poised to set the world on fire with his honeyed, Sam Cooke-worthy croon, coupling one fuck of a voice with the slickest personal style in the Southern States. Leon’s killer fashion sense is important, because if it wasn’t for his love of classic threads, his exceptional talent might still be stuck on the wrong side of a half-eaten plate of cheesy nachos. In August last year, Leon was out drinking when he was approached by someone who appreciated his sharp look. “I had my high-waist denim on and the girlfriend of one of the guitarists from White Denim followed me and was like, ‘You should meet my boyfriend, he wears Wranglers!’” Jumping at the chance to chat selvedge, Leon was introduced to Austin Jenkins and the pair hit it off immediately.

A week later, Austin happened to catch one of Leon’s solo shows. “Right after that he was like, ‘Man, we have to do a record!’” Such was his belief in Leon’s talent, Austin paid for the players and the space. The chosen studio was as much a blast from the past as Leon’s look – “It was like stepping back in time,” he remembers of being surrounded by equipment dating

as far back as 1948. The three-day session resulted in eight songs, and at no point did Austin mention that he was in a band – not that it would have made a difference. “I’d never heard of them!” says Leon, who admits he had to look up White Denim online after he found out about his vintage-clad compadre’s day job.

In October 2014, two of those eight tracks

– the silky-smooth ‘Coming Home’ and uptempo doo-wop of ‘Better Man’ – were shared on the cult blog Gorilla Vs Bear. Days later the relative unknown was getting airplay from an awestruck Radio 1 and Twitter love from Jessie Ware. “It seems like the songs have been on steroids since their release!” gasps Leon. Despite the colossal response, it’s still early days – this is his very first interview – but things have picked up fast. He’ll be supporting Sharon van Etten in New York in February, and plans to come to the UK in March.

Leon started making music three years ago, teaching himself to play guitar while writing his very first songs. “It was very frustrating at first. I wanted to give it up,” he laughs. Thank goodness he didn’t. He was so eager to play in front of people that he persevered and

THE NEW SOUND OF OLD AMERICA

Three more fast rising soul and blues acts

Benjamin Booker



Rough Trade signing Booker takes his cues from Robert Johnson by way of

The Gun Club, looking at the original blues-print through a 1980s punkabilly lens.

Curtis Harding



The former Cee Lo Green backing singer started hanging out with

the Black Lips’ Cole Alexander and now he plugs into 1970s Blaxploitation funk with style.

Madisen Ward & The Mama Bear



The Kansas City mother-and-son have already opened for BB King and

played at Third Man Records. Simple Americana with soul.

“I love the realness and simplicity of soul music”

Leon Bridges

played his first gig at an open-mic night at a local coffee shop. Singing over hip-hop beats from his iPhone, Leon’s formative neo-soul sound had more in common with Ginuwine and Usher than Jackie Wilson or Ben E King. “That was my foundation,” he states, but something about it didn’t quite click. “I just wasn’t satisfied with what I was writing. Then I wrote a song about my mother called ‘Lisa Sawyer’ and somebody asked me, ‘What are your inspirations?’ Sam Cooke?” I was like, ‘Not really.’ I’d heard about him but I wasn’t listening to him hard like that. So



Bridges

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after that I started digging into soul music and that 1950s and '60s vibe." The connection was instant. "I love the realness and the simplicity of it. The soul music they were making back then was from the heart."

Currently working out which of the 20 songs he's recorded will make it onto his debut album, Leon says he'd like to see his first LP out by the summer. "There's a couple of ballads in there and some rock'n'roll tunes. Everything is very subtle – it's just like how they did it back in the day," he explains. And the lyrical inspiration? "For the most part it's love songs," he says, blushing.

Leon has still only played about 30 gigs since his coffee shop debut, but his shows are already suitably glossy, subtly incorporating his dance training – he once planned to be

a professional choreographer – into his retro razzle-dazzle. "I like to groove a little bit!" he says of his onstage persona. "As I get more comfortable with the audience I think it will grow and grow." Bridges-mania reached a peak at the end of last year at The Stone Fox in Nashville. A proper music-industry clusterfuck, the tiny neighbourhood show saw frothing record label execs flying out from the UK, begging to sign him. He was backed by a band that included Austin and Josh Block of White Denim, and Leon admits he plans to play with them until they have to return to their own music. "We're going to do a nice little run together," explains Leon. With or without White Denim, there's going to be nothing little about Leon Bridges' year.

■ LEONIE COOPER

Bully

Steve Albini's former studio intern has used her experience to make an album of pop-punk nuggets about lactose intolerance

PHOTO BY ANGELINA CASTILLO

36 In the Chicago episode of *Sonic Highways*, Dave Grohl gets a tour of Steve Albini's studio, Electrical Audio. Albini gestures and says, "There's a whole other studio on the other side of that wall" – at which point Grohl looks hopeful – "that you're not gonna get to see, because fuck you guys." Grohl's been a friend for at least two decades, Albini having engineered Nirvana's 'In Utero' in 1993, so imagine what it's like being an intern there. In summer 2011, that's where Bully's Alicia Bognanno found herself, after spending months emailing to get the gig.

"I wasn't with Steve every day, but he was really nice, really respectful. He knew the answers to every question I had, and he would explain things thoroughly," says the 24-year-old, who writes, records, produces, sings and plays guitar in Bully. "It was really cool to see bands come in and out in 10 days and have tracked their record and seen it mixed. It's cool to see that you can just do the best you can at the moment, then it's done and you can't go back to it, y'know what I'm saying?"

Her enthusiasm was more than reciprocated: "Alicia is maybe the top student intern we've ever had," says Albini. "Her work ethic was tireless and constant. She was a fucking joy to have in the studio. If everybody in the studio worked as hard as Alicia then everybody's records would be Number One hits."

When work is done for the day at Electrical Audio, interns are welcome to stay behind and record on a specific reel of tape set aside for them. That's when Bognanno first started writing and recording Bully's earliest material,

her familiarity with the studio taking her and the other three members of the Nashville band back there to record their debut album proper.

Bully is Bognanno's baby, but the band are all old friends: she and drummer boyfriend Stewart Copeland were in a college band called King Arthur, which they quit when Bognanno started writing her own material. Copeland was also in Saddle Creek garage rockers Pujol, as was guitarist Clayton Parker. Bassist Reece Lazarus works with Bognanno at cult Nashville bar The Stone Fox. On the road they play the board game *Settlers Of Catan* and plan routes around independent comic-book stores. "I don't really go out much," says Bognanno.

"It feels good to sing, because it's so brutally honest"

Alicia Bognanno

Those mild manners might be why it's taken a while for anyone to take notice, because their songs aren't lacking a thing. After putting out their self-titled debut EP in October 2013, it wasn't until they played CMJ a year later that the single 'Milkman' was picked up online. As euphoric as Japandroids and sweetly scabrous as Julianna Hatfield's Blake Babies, the skittish gem sees Bognanno high on independence. "I used to be a SHARK!" she yells, the song's brisk attack mimicking her working methods.

Bognanno has a knack for writing simple tracks whose sticky melodies make them sound uncannily like classics: her frayed scream recalls Kurt Cobain's, and palpable

**Bully: (l-r)
Clayton Parker,
Reece Lazarus,
Alicia Bognanno
and Stewart
Copeland**



in the six songs they've released to date are The Replacements' riffs, The Violent Femmes' poppy twang and The Breeders' basslines. But what sets Bully apart from their pop-punk peers (Swearin', All Dogs, Krill) is the sheer quality of their recordings.

"For the record, a) I wanted it to sound the way we do live, and b) I wanted each song to kind of sound like how I feel about it," Bognanno explains of the album. She did everything herself, only roping in staff engineer Jon San Paolo because it was impossible for her to run between the console and live room on two different floors. That's where Bully get their power, because Bognanno

is never fumbling to execute the noises she has in her head.

But she admits that she doesn't listen to tons of other bands: "I am not a huge music junkie," she says, naming The Replacements and The Ronettes as recent fixations. "It's not like I don't like music, but when you're around it so much" — she just quit working at Nashville studio Battle Tapes Recording — "you just need a break."

"Since I was seven I would have little notebooks that I would

write lyrics in," Bognanno says. "They were awful, but I'd always wanted to write songs. It was a way to express myself."

Unusually, Bognanno chose the technical road to stardom. After opting into a high-school studio recording class so she could produce her own songs, a teacher suggested she apply for the audio production course at Middle Tennessee State University. She was accepted, escaping from the tiny Minneapolis suburb she called home, where she didn't know "a single person in a band in high school".

A keyboard player, Bognanno didn't learn guitar until college, when the rest of King Arthur left their instruments at her house. She talks unromantically about the artistic process, giving the impression that Bully's music just appeared fully formed.

Her challenge when writing Bully's debut album was to be less abstract. "When I first started writing I would hide behind hidden meanings," she says. "But now I'm trying to be as honest as possible. It feels better to just say what you mean." It's working: 'Brainfreeze' is the opening song on the 'Bully' EP (and the name of Copeland's pop-up comic-book shop in Nashville), and Bognanno uses a metaphor about lactose intolerance for a relationship issue: "*Your lies are thicker than my milkshake/ But they both make my stomach ache/And they're both slowly weighing me down*".

Meanwhile the howled "Trying" sees Bognanno "*praying for my period all week*", crushed by society's expectations of women. "That song is definitely stuff I don't have dinner conversations about," she says. "But it feels good to sing, 'cos it's so brutally honest."

Three or four of Bully's earlier songs will

appear in re-recorded form on the album, which will probably be out in spring. There was no shortage of indie labels after them, but eventually they went with an imprint of Columbia. "We just really liked the guy who runs StarTime," Bognanno explains pragmatically.

I ask what she learned from her internship, hoping for a neat line about the famously principled Albini's ethos. Instead she raves about tape speeds, how Electrical Audio aligns half-inch tape through oscilloscopes, and microphone techniques. I'm lost, but then Bognanno's meticulous attention to detail aligns her more closely with the 'In Utero' engineer than rank sentimentality would.

■ LAURA SNAPES

STEVE ALBINI: I'M ROOTING FOR BULLY!

The producer explains
why Alicia will do well



"I've only heard [Bully's songs] since Alicia left [the studio] and it was something of a shock to hear how powerful her singing is, in contrast with her demeanour, which was always calm. You can probably tell we're all very fond of Alicia here and we're rooting for her. Everybody who came through here at the time of her internship remembers her fondly. She was relentless with her tasks, energetic about helping the bands in the studio. Some people sleepwalk through their internships without participating in the culture of the place — Alicia was not like that."

W

Neon

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Far away from the music industry, something very special is brewing in Britain's most northerly town. Meet Scotland's coolest new gang

PHOTO: JENN FIVE

"I just thought, 'You have *got* to be kidding me!'" Neon Waltz's manager, Howie, is at full pelt in the enthusiasm stakes, telling me about the first time he ever laid eyes on the band. "I'd travelled on the plane up to Inverness, then driven all this way to the absolute middle of nowhere. At one point there were deer on the road, stood there looking at me! I'd heard the songs, but never seen them, and I suddenly thought, what if they're a bunch of horrendous, fat old blokes? Anyway, the first thing I see when I meet them is this huge mop of hair getting out of the van. I went, '*He is cool as fuck.*' I knew I liked them!"

"He" is Jordan Shearer, singer in Neon Waltz and owner of indie's finest fringe this side of

altz



Neon Waltz:
(l-r) Kevin, Liam,
Calvin, Jordan,
Jamie and Darren

Bobby Gillespie circa 1990. And we – Howie and I – are entering our fourth hour of driving along the toppermost tip of the north-eastern Scottish coast, on our way to the town of Thurso (population 7933) to meet the band.

To put the area into perspective, we pass more castles than Spar shops on our way there. We see just one football pitch, no shopping centres, and endless fields. It would technically be easier for Neon Waltz to play a gig in Norway rather than London, and this is something they've actually given serious thought to –

kicking off future tours somewhere only shipping forecast enthusiasts know about, before circling their way back to civilisation. "Coming from where we do," Jordan tells me that afternoon, "we have to think about things differently to everybody else."

It's this total sense of detachment from 'cool' London (or 'cool' anywhere, in fact) that makes Neon Waltz so special. It's impressive that the six-piece have managed to stay together long enough to bond into the gang they are today. All in their early 20s, they embody that 'thing' all the best bands have by being effortlessly in tune with each other's tastes, from clothes to records to guitars to their preferred type of Adidas. That they've ended up making music that's thrilling enough for the rest of the world to come calling almost defies belief.

"It is lucky, I suppose," drummer Darren Coghill says. "There's only two schools here – Wick and Thurso. And afterwards everybody

"In most bands, it's someone's band. We're all equal"

Jordan Shearer

goes off to Glasgow. But all of us, we did that and then stopped and came back home again."

"This," Jordan adds, pointing to the North Sea behind him, "is what we're used to."

Jordan and Darren are sat in a back room at Freswick Castle, which is owned by a local

GALLAGHER'S ON BOARD

Noel called the 'Perfect Frame' video "the best he's seen all year"

Jordan: "When we got together we took over this old croft house on the coast, where we could hang out and make music. That's where the video is set."

Darren: "Perfect Frame", that was just me filming with an iPhone camera! It's one take. There's a point when my thumb actually goes over it!"

Jordan: "I love it! It's like Darren was getting all arty and then he gets to the window and you suddenly see Calvin's brother's purple Mondeo pull up! There's this whole beautiful rustic croft and then that!"

playwright who's taken a shine to the band and lets them party and play there. Down the stone spiral staircase there's an actual dungeon, they excitedly tell me. But less about that – tonight, along with bassist/co-vocalist Calvin Wilson, guitarists Jamie and Kevin Swanson and organist Liam Whittles, they're recording a video for new song 'Sundial'. Like all of Neon Waltz's tunes, it's a woozy classic; pitched somewhere between Scouse legends like Shack and The Coral, and the lilting, lo-fi period of indie heaven that came about just after The Smiths imploded and before The Stone Roses really took off. 'Perfect Frame', for

instance, is all powerhouse vocals, Jordan as a super-angelic Tim Burgess, while the demo of 'Veiled Clock' could be a distant cousin of The Field Mice's 'Emma's House'.

Even better, I get the impression the band don't really realise what they're sitting on. Every song in their live set could be an album opener, and everything they've done so far – from online demos to video promos – has been near perfect. It's not bad for a band who only really started focussing properly a year and a bit ago, and who had zero ties with the music industry until even more recently.

Both Jordan and Darren say the reason the band work so well together is because it's a complete democracy. "In most bands, it's someone's band," says Jordan. "We don't have a songwriter though – literally everybody in our band does it. We're all equal."

They wear their influences proudly on their shoulders too, from The National to The Band, The Beatles, The Walkmen and Grizzly Bear. "What is it about all those bands that ties them all together?" Darren wonders. "It's the songs. They all just write magic, magic songs."

And magic songs are precisely what Neon Waltz are all about. Oodles of them. When we first put them in *Radar* way back in April, barely anybody knew about them. The second time, with a few radio plays and gigs under their collective belt, Thurso completely sold out of *NMEs*. With the way things are going, it's not too difficult to see the rest of the UK catching on in a similar way. ■ MATT WILKINSON

Slaves

The explosive punk duo from Kent like posting lies on Facebook, are kind to animals and think playing music is like sex

PHOTO: JORDAN HUGHES

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If Slaves frontman Isaac Holman hadn't warned me he was impatient, it would have been difficult not to notice. Over an hour in an organic café in Dalston, east London, his eyes dart around the middle distance through the window. When an oldish man walks past wearing red shoes, red trousers, a red shirt and a red leather jacket, he's almost overcome with childlike delight. "Look at that!" he gasps, thumping the table. "Brilliant!"

Isaac's demeanour is reflected in the nervy, itchy, explosive punk music he makes with Laurie Vincent, his partner in Kent duo Slaves, who's two years his junior at 21. Onstage, they summon an almighty racket with minimal ingredients, Isaac banging a stand-up drumkit while singing, shrieking and shouting; Laurie tearing searing riffs from his guitar. Usually seen in smart but sweat-drenched shirts, they come across like call-centre workers having a public *Falling Down* moment, or cuddly versions of the droogs from *A Clockwork Orange*.

Or, at least, that's what they used to be like. We find the band on a break from sessions for their debut album, on which they reveal they're experimenting with synthesizers and drum machines in an attempt to fill out their sparse sound. "We've got to evolve as a band," says Laurie. "Everyone tells us we sound better live and our recordings don't do us justice. We're aiming to turn that on its head."

The LP will be the group's first since signing to Virgin EMI, but will follow the self-released mini-album 'Sugar Coated Bitter Truth'. Slaves

may have gone for the major-label contract, but their roots are fully in Kent's DIY scene. The pair grew up in towns far enough from London to mean creating their own entertainment was a necessity. "If you grow up somewhere like Kent, to find two people that are into the same thing is hard," says Laurie. "I was in bands from the age of 12, but it took me seven or eight years to find one person that I clicked with."

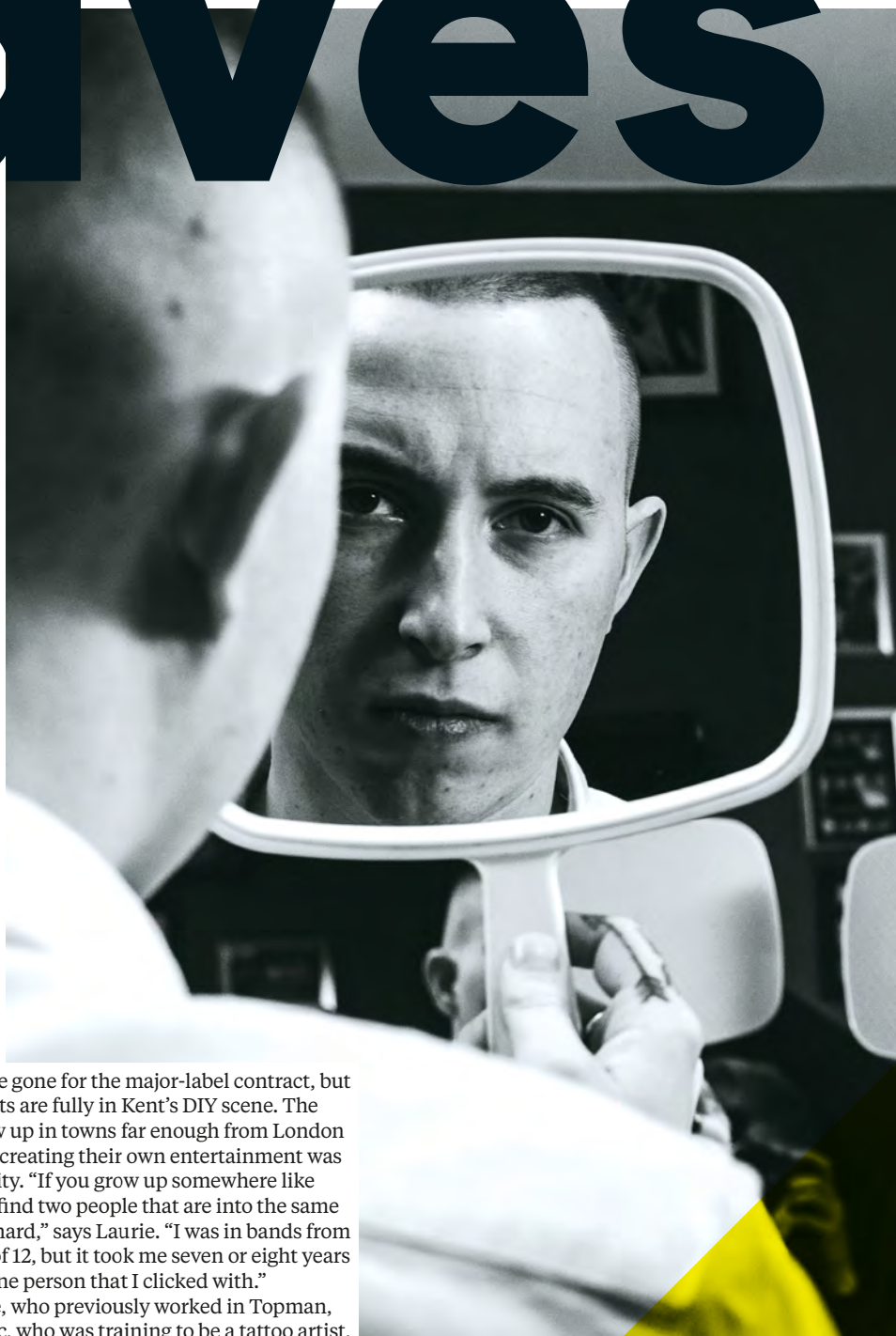
Laurie, who previously worked in Topman, and Isaac, who was training to be a tattoo artist, found each other via their previous bands. Isaac was rapping in a punk/hip-hop group called Bareface, of whom Laurie was a huge fan. Laurie later joined Bareface, then the pair

"People were going fucking crazy at our early shows"

Laurie Vincent

split off to form Slaves. Knowing that Isaac was a rapper places his vocal style in context. "I started rapping in the playground while my mate did the beatboxing," he says. "I reckon I could do most of Slaves' songs over a hip-hop beat and it would still work."

Slaves' sound came directly from their limitations. "We'd been looking for a drummer, but Laurie brought around these two drums for me to bang while we were writing," says Isaac. They didn't see how it could work



Slaves: Laurie Vincent (left) and Isaac Holman

The axe nearly fell on one of their best-loved tracks, 'Where's Your Car Debbie?', for the same reason. The song details a paranoid dash to escape an encounter with Bigfoot – in Kent. The story, Laurie insists, is real – as is friend-of-a-friend Debbie, even if they're not speaking to her any more. "She really let us down when we were filming the video," says Laurie. "She was going to play Debbie but she just didn't turn up."

The anecdotes the group post to Facebook share that song's relationship to the truth – a recent one described, in Isaac's words, "Laurie losing one of his nads in a kayak". They usually sign off with the message "Be kind to your pets". I ask why, and Isaac suddenly becomes super serious. "The thought of someone being horrible to their pet is just, like, *gut-wrenchingly horrible*," he says.

A shared sense of humour is par for the course for a pair who've spent so much time in close quarters that they seem to have fostered a sense of symbiosis. "It started off like a business friendship, but now we're like brothers," says Laurie, to nods of approval from Isaac. They dress similarly, too, abiding by a list of rules: top shirt buttons can only be fastened when wearing a tie; trouser cuffs must ride 1.5 inches above the shoe. Oddly, Laurie likens playing with Isaac to copulation. "Music is like pure passion, isn't it?" he says. "You're playing something which has just come out of you – so yeah, I reckon sex and music are linked."

And with that, the group head off to continue working on their firstborn.

■ DAN STUBBS

PLAY PALS

Isaac on the other acts on the 2015 NME Awards Tour with Austin, Texas

Palma Violets

"I prefer the blue and pink bubblegum bottles to Parma Violets. But this band live is better than both. I always loved 'em, and reckon they're going to be massively fun to tour with."

Fat White Family

"Out of all of the bands, the Fat Whites are the only ones we've met. They're a very exciting live band and nice guys. They get their tops off, too! Laurie looks pretty nice with his kit off, but there's more of them to look at."

The Amazing Snakeheads

"They're ballsy, with character and an authentic sound. I love how they're more Scottish than Irn-Bru! Bands should be proud of where they're from."

live until Isaac's dad sat them down and educated them in the long history of garage-rock bands with stand-up drummers.

Early gigs were raucous and the group gained a reputation as trouble-starters. They were banned from playing in Maidstone once; as a result, audiences expected things to get lairy and it became a self-fulfilling prophecy. "It's like good old family fun now, but our shows early on were way more aggro," says Isaac. "It was never actual violence or anything, it was just people going fucking crazy."

The songs are fast and furious. One, 'Girl Fight', tells of a rough night out in Royal Tunbridge Wells. It's disappeared from recent setlists because the duo fear its two-minute, spoken-word intro and 27-second running time might mark them out as jokers. "I feel like we're a small percentage a comedy band – like, we're not a joke, but at the same time, it is a joke?" says Laurie. "I think you've got to have both sides."

Loyle

Having rapped with Kate Tempest and released a crushingly heartfelt debut EP, the Londoner is one of UK hip-hop's hottest prospects

PHOTO: JACK DAVISON

When Loyle Carner was 10, he and his primary school mates would have rap battles wherever they could, whenever they could.

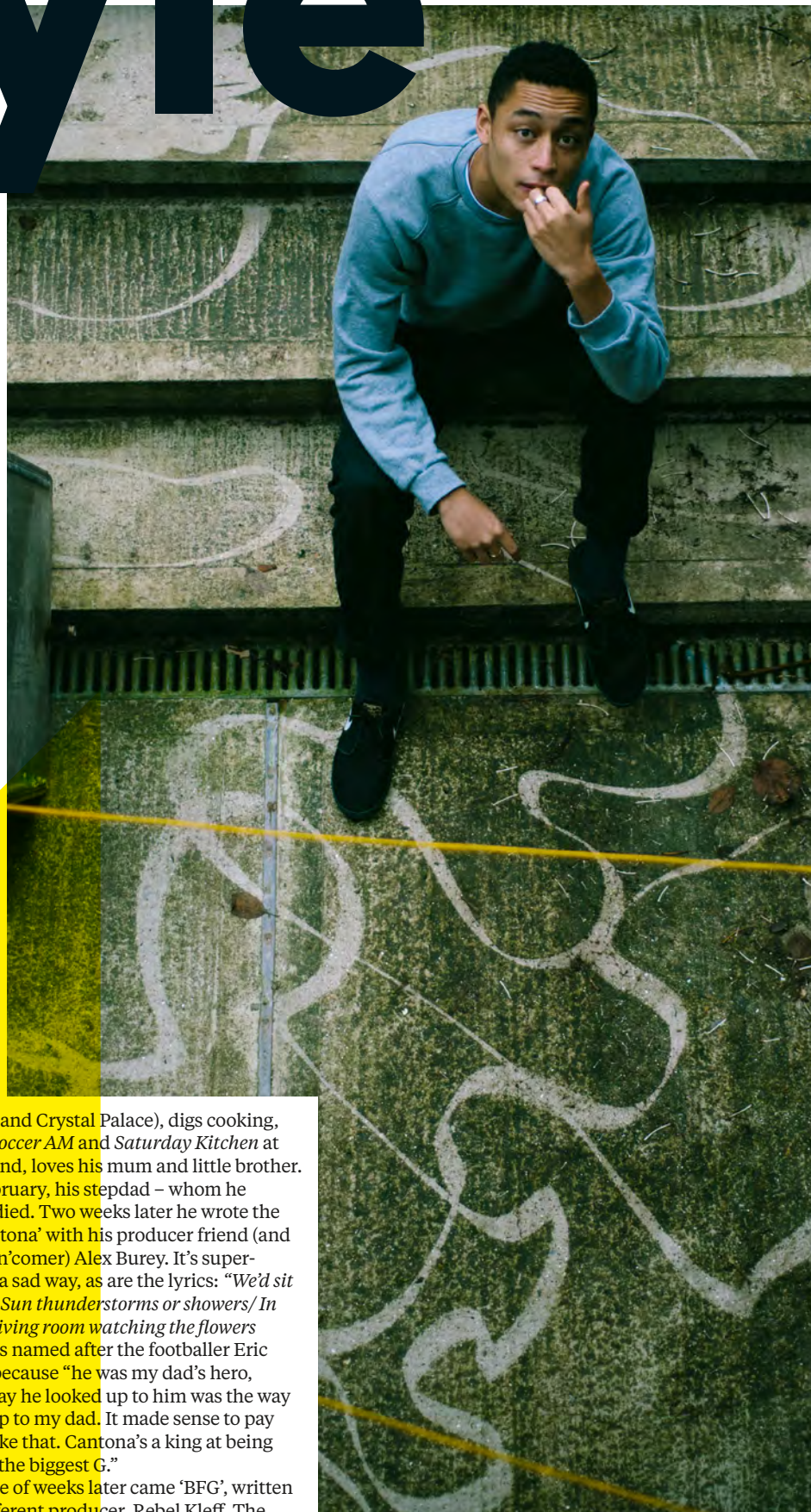
Classroom. Playground. Before maths, after English. Two kids squaring up to each other – sometimes over a basic beat, sometimes not – to try and outwit each other. “We used to go for the year above,” he says, fidgeting about on a sofa in a café. “The year sixes, the 11-year-olds. But I was shit, *veeery* shit.”

It was grime, rather than US hip-hop, that caught the kids’ attention, especially artists like Skepta, Ghetts, Kano and Lethal Bizzle. The genre that emerged in east London in the early ’00s appealed to Carner, he says, because “it was so accessible”. He adds: “I grew up on it. It was my life for a long time, and it changed my life. I could just go to school and be like, ‘Yeah, this is me.’ It gave me a voice. It’s the one thing we all latched on to, because it’s just so fun. Before, I was just running around being loud. Then I was like, ‘If I rap, I’ve got 16 bars, and space for someone to at least listen.’ It’s sick!”

Eleven years on, Carner is a sensitive and eloquent rapper, responsible for last year’s heartbreaking six-track EP ‘A Little Late’. In the next year there’ll be an album, as well as “an interesting project, some kind of video with a score”. But for now he’s reflecting on 2014 being one of the best and worst times of his life. In many ways he’s a normal 20-year-old from south London: likes football (supports

Liverpool and Crystal Palace), digs cooking, watches *Soccer AM* and *Saturday Kitchen* at the weekend, loves his mum and little brother. But in February, his stepdad – whom he adored – died. Two weeks later he wrote the track ‘Cantona’ with his producer friend (and fellow up’n’comer) Alex Burey. It’s super-chilled in a sad way, as are the lyrics: “*We’d sit for hours/ Sun thunderstorms or showers/ In the same living room watching the flowers bloom*”. It’s named after the footballer Eric Cantona because “he was my dad’s hero, and the way he looked up to him was the way I looked up to my dad. It made sense to pay homage like that. Cantona’s a king at being sick. He’s the biggest G.”

A couple of weeks later came ‘BFG’, written with a different producer, Rebel Kleff. The



Carner

Loyle Carner
photographed
in London,
December 2014

lyrics hit harder than those of 'Cantona', because Carner just tells it like it is: *"Everyone says I'm fucking sad/ Course I'm fucking sad/ I miss my fucking dad"*. Unsurprisingly, 'BFG' was hard to write. "I showed the lyrics to Chris [Rebel Kleff] and was like, 'Do you think it's too much?' He was like, 'No, it's true and honest,' and I was hoping for that. But it was difficult to do justice to. I wrote the first bars then left it for a couple of minutes, then had to make sure I reflected what it was like. It was difficult, because in all stories you can twist the truth a little bit, but in that one I couldn't say anything that wasn't... I had to be very, very honest."

The heat of those rap battles, and the honesty of grime, taught Carner how to express himself. But the production sounds he and Kleff create are inspired by the legendary J Dilla's work with mid-'90s hip-hop groups Slum Village and A Tribe Called Quest. "Slum Village is the goal," he says. "I watched the Stones Throw documentary [*Our Vinyl Weighs A Ton*] recently; Kanye West was interviewed in it and he said whenever he was making a beat, if it didn't sound like A Tribe Called Quest beat he would scrap it. If you're making beats, you make 10 – and when you listen back, if one sounds like A Tribe Called Quest or Slum Village, you're like, 'That's the one.'"

The first gig Carner played was at The Button Factory in Dublin on October 11, 2012 supporting MF Doom, one of hip-hop's most mysterious and admired figures. In

"If a beat sounds like Slum Village, you know that's the one"

Loyle Carner

FAMOUS FRIENDS

Loyle Carner on...

...supporting MF Doom

"We never met him! I was gutted. He wasn't in the backstage at all, but we saw him at soundcheck. I was just like, 'It's MF Doom, man!' His dressing room was completely empty, there was just loads of masks. Just like cardboard cutout ones, that's all he left. Imagine the metal-face Doom masks; they were just paper masks with little strings at the back. Loads of them. No idea who they were for. I took quite a few actually, easily five. I gave one to my little brother and just have the rest in my room. I haven't put them on eBay yet, but the longer I leave it..."

...recording 'Guts' with Kate Tempest

"I was petrified, but it was cool. She's a joy to work with. So enthusiastic about words and stories. We sat down with our ideas, wrote it together. Then we had two mics looking at each other. She upped my game big time. That's the beauty of it. I was over the moon with the song, and she was fantastic."

a roundabout way he got the gig via his friend Archy Marshall, known to most as King Krule, who was in the year above him at Brit School, which he had got a scholarship to attend.

"I was at his house once and [Irish rapper] Rejjie Snow was there. We got talking, got on, so when he was back in Dublin he was all, 'I've been asked to support MF Doom.' He hadn't done many live shows so he wanted some support and was like 'come down', so my nan hooked me up and flew me out there."

He studied theatre, not music, at school, and at the time hip-hop was just something he did on the side. Supporting Doom was when things started to change. After Brit School he went to Drama Centre in north London, but dropped out one year into a three-year course when his stepdad died. These pre-rap interests are all in his music. In 'Eleven', for example, he raps about taking his girlfriend to the theatre: *"It's autumn and he didn't want to lose her so he bought them two tickets to the National Waterloo"*. And last year he wrote the fluid and weird 'Baby Grey' after being asked by the Tate to write a musical response to the stream-of-consciousness spoken-word Turner Prize entry by Tris Vonna Michell.

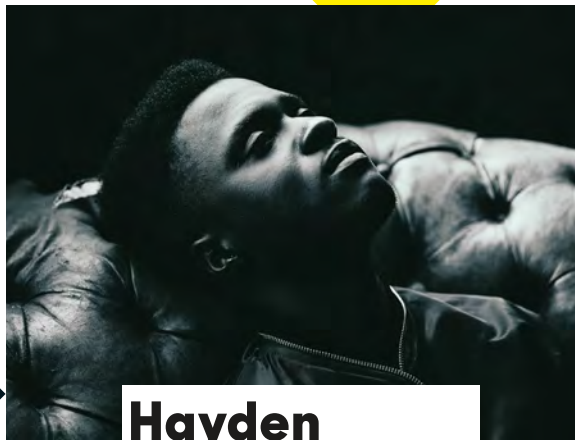
This broad creative spectrum is something Carner shares with another of UK hip-hop's new stars, fellow south Londoner Kate Tempest. She writes poems and novels, and is one of Carner's heroes ("lyrically, I'm just really inspired by her"), so he was psyched when the opportunity arose for the two of them to record together as part of London producer Dan Carey's Speedy Wunderground project, where people cut an entire track within 24 hours. The result was 'Guts', an absolute stomper in which Carner and Tempest exchange bars like they've been performing

together for years. It's great, and currently doing big business on the radio.

This breakthrough came after Carner's biggest ever tour, with American rapper Joey Bada\$\$, in autumn 2014. "A year ago I was sat in my bedroom listening to his music," Carner says. "Watching his videos and thinking, 'Look at him, he's so famous.' And then I was backstage with him, talking random stuff." And it was at these shows that Carner realised just how hard his words hit. "What moves me the most is people coming up to me going 'I lost my dad' or 'my mum's got cancer', and they come and say 'thank you, your music helped me'. The amount of hugs I've had from people who've heard 'BFG' is touching. It means more than they can imagine." ■ TOM HOWARD

Tips for the top

Rock'n'roll heroes join NME staff in naming the acts they think should make it big in 2015



Hayden Thorpe, Wild Beasts



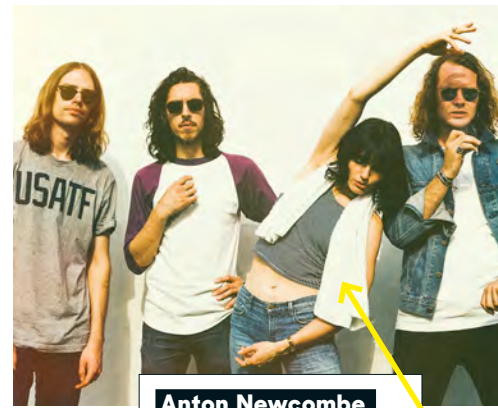
Kwabs is amazing. His voice is incredible – very deep, soulful and beautiful – and he's had some production done by Dave [Okumu] from The Invisible. It's really good.

Mike Williams, NME Editor

Huw Evans has been making music as **H Hawkline** for a few years now, but his recent signing to Heavenly signals a big change. Part of the same scene that's given us Cate Le Bon, his recent album 'Salt Gall Box Ghouls' is essential listening.

Mark Beaumont, writer

Silken-voiced 17-year-old singer-songwriter **Soak** (aka Bridie Monds-Watson, from Derry) has found her Cat Powerish crooning feted by Chvrches – who signed her to their Goodbye Records label ahead of her current deal with Rough Trade – and lauded as the next phase of Beach House-style chillwave.



Anton Newcombe, Brian Jonestown Massacre



I caught **The Preatures** set at Glastonbury last year, and noticed

Isabella [Manfredi, singer] really going for it like only an amazing performer does. They work very hard and it's interesting to watch them apply that energy to getting out there globally.

Tom Warden, writer

Alex G is my hope for 2015. He's a brilliant songwriter from Philadelphia who's been putting out albums online for ages, but he's just crossed over with his latest one, 'DSU'. If you're a fan of Pavement and The Flaming Lips, you need to hear him.

Sarah Pope, writer

A couple of sultry online teasers have provoked comparisons to Lana Del Rey's school of sensuality, but live, **Black Honey** are a far more giddy proposition. Shoegaze-tinged but with melodic nous, this is leftfield pop with serious smarts.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

From hosting riotous house parties to writing indie earworms like early track 'Shallow', **The Magic Gang**

Harry Koisser, Peace



Real Lies used to be more electronic, but then they got a drummer and a bassist and changed a bit. The first time I heard them I thought they sounded like Pet Shop Boys! They've got a couple of absolutely amazing songs.

Lisa Wright, writer

Having graduated from the Vines-esque rattle of their earlier output into riff-heavy, Queens Of The Stone Age swagger, Brighton quartet **Demob Happy** have already penned two fine slices of hedonistic guitar sleaze – 'Succubus' and 'Suffer You'. Lock up your daughters.

Killer Mike, Run The Jewels



I say **Scotty ATL** from Atlanta. I think he's going to usher in an Atlanta renaissance sound. His music sounds like Atlanta progressed. It's some real player shit. It sounds like early OutKast.

Greg Cochran, Editor, NME.COM

The success of 23-year-old **Jack Garratt** seems something of a safe bet. Since dropping 'Worry' last year (700,000 streams and counting) his star has continued to rise. His sound is a mix of James Blake's swerving electronics, Pharrell's falsetto choruses and, occasionally, Future Islands' growl.

Sharon Van Etten



I got to see **Torres**' first show in New York at Cake Shop a while back. She was so nervous – she shyly said where she was from and that it was her first show, but as soon as she started playing you could feel that nervousness go away. It reminded me of when I first came to New York. She's been kicking ass recently though, and I'm really excited for her.





have been quietly staking their claim as new stars since forming in Brighton a year ago. See-sawing debut single 'Babylon' should boot them further in the right direction.

Britt Daniel, Spoon



There's this band called **A Giant Dog** from Austin: amazing songs, amazing frontwoman, just so much charisma. They've put a couple of albums out and they're just about to release another. They have a guy and a girl singer [Andrew Cashen and Sabrina Ellis], who write the songs together. It reminds me of [LA punk band] X.

Lucy Jones, Deputy Editor, NME.COM

Berlin-based **Lief Hall** uses her voice to explore harmony, texture, mood and rhythm. Her solo work outside of Myths – an electronic duo she was in while in Canada, where she toured with Grimes – is warm, glacial and additively experimental.

Joe Mount, Metronomy



We've taken this band **Virginia Wing** with us on tour. There's something of Stereolab to them, with a nice indie girl/boy vocal.

Justine Matthews, writer

There's a bunch of teens from Merthyr called **Pretty**



Vicious who channel '94-era Oasis attitude, but twin it with a mainstream production sound that's getting a lot of major labels very excited indeed.

Joel Amey, Wolf Alice



Gengahr don't sound like any other band in London right now – outrageous guitar work, crystalline vocals and the grooviest rhythm section together create some beautiful pop music. 'Fill My Gums With Blood' is a Wolf Alice fave.

Kieran Shudall, Circa Waves



Spring King are a five-piece based in Manchester. They make cool garage rock and they're the best live band in the world. So much energy! It's like five people screaming down the microphone at once. Check out their track 'Mumma'.

Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

Previously in grizzled Philadelphia pop-punk trio The Ambulars, Michael Cantor's new solo album 'Silver Blues', as **The Goodbye Party**, has a soft, sun-kissed, Brian Wilson feel. It's a lilting college-rock dream that deserves to be a sleeper hit in 2015.



NEW SOUNDS FOR 2015

NME New Music Editor

MATT WILKINSON



New year, new breed

If Sleaford Mods' rampant truth-telling flipped your mind in 2014, you could do a lot worse than look up **Mark Wynn**. Having spent the past year running acoustic nights in York and releasing his music via local 'zines, he's been hailed as everything from the UK's next great street poet to the bastard son of Mark E Smith. One thing's for sure: songs like the Paul McCartney-baiting 'Battenburg' stick out in the current climate. On a similar Mike Skinner-esque tip is **Rat Boy**, who's hot on **Only Real**'s heels as the capital's most likely to make 'Original Pirate Material 2.0'. Irish four-piece **Girl Band** – who've just signed to Rough Trade – could be 2015's loudest band, while XL's big homegrown hope is Scouse chanteuse **Lápsley** – if you thought FKA Twigs was beguiling, God help you when you hear her.

Across the pond, **Twin Peaks**, **Heat**, **Viet Cong** and **The Garden** all proved garage rock was still kicking it at SXSW and CMJ last year, while Minneapolis newcomers **Hippo Campus** (pictured above) are – despite the dodgy name – the biggest word-of-mouth frenzy to emerge over the past six months. Think of them as a Yank Foals, if you will, with killer choruses to boot.

Meanwhile, Australia continues to throw up stupidly great bands galore, with **King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard** leading the current pack. Sydney's **DMA's** offer something a little different, sounding like they want to be Oasis in 1996. If we're talking comparisons, then you can't really mention London collective **Palace** without bringing up Wu Lyf, while Telford newcomers **Hyena** have clearly

been looking closely at what Royal Blood did last year. If it ain't broke...

Londoners **Yak**'s gigs are already the stuff of legend, and frontman Oli Burslem is without doubt one of the best

personalities around – and boy, do we need people like him. Stevenage punks **Bad Breeding** look set to pick up the Brit-punk baton from Eagulls. **Novelist**, from Lewisham, is another name to watch, and seems almost on the verge of being anointed the new Dizzee, just as Bromley producer **Bo En**'s infrequent yet brilliant remixes single him out as a special talent.

I couldn't really end this without mentioning **Yung** and **Sheer Mag**. The latter make me think of The Strokes playing T Rex covers – with the best female singer since Beth Ditto ripping it up out front – while the former are fresh out of Denmark, with "hundreds" of songs apparently written. If Iceage covering Nirvana sounds like your thing, check out 'Nobody Cares'.



"Think of Hippo Campus as a Yank Foals"

What 2015 holds

for new mu

From topping the charts to soundtracking crisp adverts, life can be tough if you're a new band trying to make it. So we asked four of the brightest brains in music to tell it like it is



Noel Gallagher
You know this guy.



Courtney Barnett
Aussie DIY hero with a penchant for churning out melancholic modern-day classics. Also runs Milk! Records in her spare time.

The Panel



Jason Williamson
Sleaford Mods
Mouthpiece for the angriest band in Britain. Speaker of truth.



Elly Jackson
La Roux
Singer and face of La Roux. Notable for falling out with her record label Polydor following the release of second album 'Trouble In Paradise' last year.

NME: How important are record labels for new bands in 2015?

Jason: "There's gonna be a lot more apprehension from artists with a bit of integrity about liaising with record labels. People who have a clear vision about what they want to do or be will be a lot more hesitant about signing with labels, because you don't really need to these days."

Noel: "I just think there's no independent way of thinking [any more]. Oasis never had an A&R at Creation – we were given the fucking keys to the kingdom and they went, 'Off you go, see you in a bit,' and it was great. Now, the manager is accountable to the A&R guy, who's accountable to the guy above him, who's gonna lose his fucking job. Mostly we were all working class in the '90s, but we've all been fucking pushed to the side. Music suffers for that."

Courtney: "Milk! is a very small label, and the stuff I've released so far has been by friends or people I've become friends with who I admire. I don't really have the brainpower to go and search through for struggling bands – but what I want to work with is the stuff I love."

NME: Where's the next bedroom superstar going to come from? Or is that

"Everyone's super quick to attack people who speak out"

Courtney Barnett

level of hugeness just restricted to people from *The X Factor* now?

Courtney: "Those shows make me feel sick to the stomach. They make me wanna spew over the television. It's an unrealistic goal for someone else to find that success by a different means."

Jason: "Someone like Amy Winehouse was very good, and she went to that music school [the Brit School], didn't she? But she was really good – she had an edge. Then you get bands like Run The Jewels coming from nowhere, and Fat White Family have come up from nothing too. *They're* doing it the traditional way."

Elly: "You've just got to play the long game. I don't have a clue who the next self-made star is, but I think you can have an incredible career that eventually becomes commercial and international if you just keep at it."

NME: More and more new bands we speak to say they feel pressurised to write songs that will be played on mainstream radio. Some like it, others loathe it. Is it healthy to make fledgling acts jump through so many hoops?

Noel: "If Oasis were starting tomorrow we would nowhere near have the impact, because you're judged instantly on your first gig, and then Radio 1 will judge you on how many fucking followers you've got on Facebook. Sadly, that's what happens. There's no going to gigs. The guys who

make the actual decisions – 'are we gonna get behind this band?' – are going, 'Let's have a look at the fucking [statistics].' And then they're going, 'Oh, no-one else is into them – why should we bother?'"

Elly: "Stations should be more confident in what they play, and the taste of the people who work there, rather than just going by what's rating highly on some app on the internet."

NME: How can a new indie act really make a dent in the charts in 2015?

Jason: "I didn't realise the charts even existed any more. I'm not sure if they're valued that much. No-one I know really talks about the charts these days."

Courtney: "The stuff in the charts is popular for a reason – maybe it's because people just like that music, or maybe it's because the people who make other music just don't give a shit and don't wanna play the stupid games that get you high up in the charts. I don't know, but since people started buying songs as ringtones, everything has changed."

Noel: "If you're Number One in the charts now, it automatically means you must be shit. Bands now go cap-in-hand to the industry and the industry has already decided what it wants for its fucking chart stars. But the charts are all the fucking same. Every single song in the Top 10 is the same shit with a different voice. The thing that drives me mad about it is, the artist used to drive the industry, but the industry reacted to Britpop, or whatever it was. And now bands go to the industry and go, 'What is it you want again? OK, I can

"Every song in the Top 10 is the same shit with a different voice"

Noel Gallagher

do that.' But when we all came along – and it wasn't by design, it was completely accidental – the industry took a step back and was like, 'What the fuck is this? These people are all drug addicts and maniacs, they're gonna fuck the fucking share prices up! We need to get rid of these people!'"

NME: Gone are the days when bands cosying up to brands was seen as a bad thing. For a new band, doing an advert or sponsored gig is often now essential to help them stay afloat. How comfortable are you with it?

Elly: "The branding stuff I used to find difficult, but unfortunately it is very difficult to stay away from it. I just funded half of a tour by doing a corporate gig. I think as long as I'm still performing and it's still to do with music and I'm not having to hold up some product and be in an advert, then I have much, much less of a problem with it."

Jason: "If you need the money in order to keep creating, then that's just the way it is. I really don't have a problem with that."

NME: There's a culture of bands playing it safe when it comes to press, with fewer artists truly speaking their minds. Why don't bands have more balls these days?

Courtney: "For me personally, that's just the kind of person I am. I'm quite reserved. Aside from that, maybe it's just drugs?! Or people used to have no inhibitions? Or just the terror of the internet. That mobile phone, Facebook, YouTube culture where everything ends up on the internet;

maybe that terrifies people. I think it's sad, but then also everyone is super quick to attack people who speak out. It's a funny environment – people want that, but then they feel threatened. Look at Russell Brand..."

Noel: "It's because they're shit scared of social media! They're shit scared of somebody killing it before it's started. One of the main differences for me is that bands these days are careerists. I know for a fact that nobody in Primal Scream ever thought about a career, or Oasis, or The Verve. Everybody was thinking, 'We're having a great time here, this is amazing!'"

Jason: "People moan about Britpop and say it was such a negative time, but at least there were still people knocking each other; they might have been the wrong opinions, but now no-one knocks anybody. It's a load of crap. There's also a lack of education – I'm not educated, I educated myself – but there's a lack of interest and awareness around young people. There's no energy. I'm mindful of pointing the finger at younger people, because there probably are some that are tuned in, but it's probably not best communicated by dancey, wishy-washy, Foals-esque-type bands, which is what we've been infiltrated with on the younger side for a while."

Elly: "It's very difficult. People say [to me], 'Oh, you don't play the game.' And I don't, thank God."

Reviews

► THE DEFINITIVE VERDICT ■ EDITED BY BEN HOMEWOOD



Sleater-Kinney No Cities To Love

After nine years away, the influential punk trio return hungry and energetic with a set of short, taut, lethal tunes



chance to explain their motivations clearly. Firmly, Carrie Brownstein, one of Sleater-Kinney's two singer-guitarists, says "we need this", and to hear 'No Cities To Love', the band's first album since 2005, is to sense their return is driven by the same fundamental necessity.

They certainly have nothing left to prove: their catalogue of seven albums in 10 years (beginning with their self-titled debut in 1995 and all recently remastered) is among the most consistent and culturally vital in all of punk rock, and

In 2000, Sleater-Kinney were interviewed on a long-forgotten American teenage TV show called *Trackers*. As you can see for yourself on YouTube, the hapless host asks spectacularly mundane questions, but she does at least offer the then Olympia, Washington-based (they now live in Portland) trio the

it's hardly like they went out on a whimper – for many fans, and for Brownstein herself, their greatest album was their last one, 'The Woods', produced by Dave Fridmann (The Flaming Lips). And it's not like they're reforming out of boredom: since they went on indefinite hiatus in 2006, the band's exemplary drummer Janet Weiss played in her previous band, Quasi, and Stephen Malkmus' Jicks, as well as being a member of Wild Flag, alongside Brownstein. Brownstein also co-created and stars in the ongoing hit TV show, *Portlandia*, while Corin Tucker, now a mother of two, released a pair of well-received solo albums in 2010 and 2012. Rather, as Brownstein told NPR recently: "We have to really want it. And you have to feed that hunger and have the energy to." All of a sudden, they "need" Sleater-Kinney again.

From the outset, 'No Cities To Love', produced by long-time collaborator John Goodmanson, reeks of confidence. Opener 'Price Tag' is a thunderous rant

against consumerism. The second song, 'Fangless', concerns a man once "a saviour, a mountain", now "flimsy and fangless, drooping and drowned". Devastatingly, it ends with: "You were born in a shout/ But you will die in a silent skull".

If Sleater-Kinney – who combine the political ire of Bikini Kill with the musical inventiveness of Minutemen and the pop nous of The B-52's – have a trademark, it's the double vocal/guitar attack of Tucker and Brownstein and also their dedication to never repeating themselves. Where 'The Woods' was dense and loose – proggy even, by punk standards – the songs on 'No Cities To Love' are short, taut and lethal, harking back, if anything, to their earliest albums. But they're more complete songwriters now, and there isn't a track on 'No Cities To Love' that doesn't have a killer chorus. "We win! We lose! Only together do we break the rules", yell Tucker and Brownstein on 'Surface Envy', a brazen celebration of what it means to be back. Elsewhere, they lay themselves bare, tackling ennui on the Gang Of Four-like 'A New Wave', need ('Gimme Love'), self-respect ('Bury Our Friends') and death ('Fade').

the Sleater-Kinney catalogue naturally, like they've never been away. Enjoy it for what it is, and if it provides an entry point to discover their other albums, all the better – you've got a feast ahead.

THREE KEY SLEATER-KINNEY RECORDS

The trio's finest long-players

'Dig Me Out'
Released: April 8, 1997
Perhaps the best-loved of Sleater-Kinney's albums, and the first to feature Janet Weiss on drums, giving the band increased thunder.

'One Beat'
Released: August 20, 2002
A response of sorts to 9/11 that found the band experimenting with more detail in their songwriting. It was a triumph, with overtly political lyrics, particularly on standout track 'Far Away'.

'The Woods'
Released: May 24, 2005
This was unlike anything the band had attempted before. Recorded by Dave Fridmann, it had a swampy, slackened feel. Taughtness gave way to space on these 10 songs, which were longer than usual and heavier.

the Sleater-Kinney catalogue naturally, like they've never been away. Enjoy it for what it is, and if it provides an entry point to discover their other albums, all the better – you've got a feast ahead.

■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE

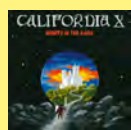
THE DETAILS

► RELEASE DATE January 19 ► LABEL Sub Pop ► PRODUCER John Goodmanson ► LENGTH 31:03 ► TRACKLISTING ► 1. Price Tag ► 2. Fangless ► 3. Surface Envy ► 4. No Cities To Love ► 5. A New Wave ► 6. No Anthems ► 7. Gimme Love ► 8. Bury Our Friends ► 9. Hey Darling ► 10. Fade ► BEST TRACK Bury Our Friends

MORE ALBUMS

California X Nights In The Dark

Don Giovanni



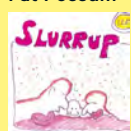
In January 2012, California X released 'Sucker', their six-minute debut single. It's endless, pulverising riffs turned over like a motorbike engine. A year later, the Massachusetts quartet followed it with a debut album of mega-fuzz rock. 'Nights In The Dark' has taken two years to surface and is a surprising diversion. The opener and title track is fearsome, channelling Motörhead's oily noise. Afterwards, though, come an acoustic instrumental ('Ayla's Song'), a tender ballad ('Garlic Road') and midtempo dirges with flagrant cock-rock soloing ('Blackrazor Pt 1', 'Summer Wall Pt 1'). 'Blackrazor Pt 2' is heavier and pacier, but California X's intensity has waned. Let's hope it's not forever.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7

Liam Hayes Slurp

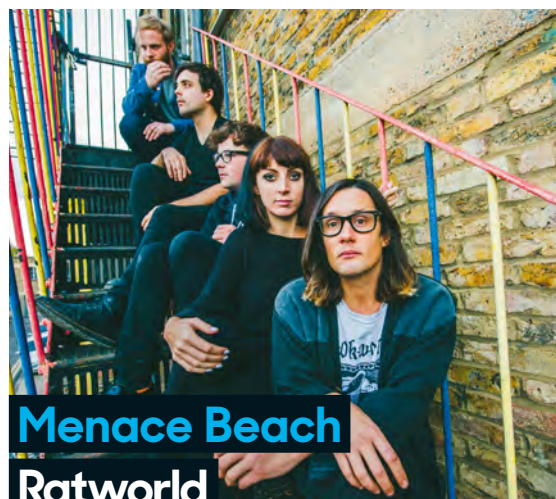
Fat Possum



Liam Hayes' output under his own name and as Plush is marked by an infuriating habit of burying his talent behind lo-fi production and sporadic release schedules. On 'Slurp', the reclusive Chicagoan seems to be up to his old tricks: the sleeve is a hand-drawn horror with a scrawled price tag of 12 cents and it begins with a rumble of studio chit-chat. Elsewhere, though, Hayes puts melody to the fore: the sunny 'Nothing Wrong' is reminiscent of The Lovin' Spoonful and 'Fight Magic With Magic' evokes early Pink Floyd. Between them are noodly interludes and slurping noises. Unlikely to move him from the best-kept secrets list, but a solid record nonetheless.

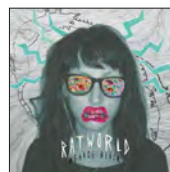
■ DAN STUBBS

7



Leeds band set nihilism to blistering grunge and shoegaze on their Hookworms-assisted debut

"The wheels have gone and fallen off", announces Menace Beach's Ryan Needham on the Nirvana-ish title track from the Leeds five-piece's debut. Produced by Hookworms' MJ, 'Ratworld' is full of gritty, low-slung basslines and finds the band cackling nihilistically as everything around them crumbles into disarray. "Lately I've been wondering if the world could break down", begins the Britpoppy 'Come On Give Up', before urging, "Fuck everything you ever wanted to be/Come on, give up, get lost with me". There's plenty to get lost in here. 'Infinite Donut' injects early Pixies grunge with snarling attitude, 'Dig It Up' is a two-minute blast of shoegaze transcendence and rampaging single 'Lowtalkin' remains a thrilling punk joyride. Menace Beach's debut may relish a world on the brink of chaos, but this is a band with their shit together.



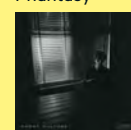
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THE DETAILS

► RELEASE DATE January 19 ► LABEL Memphis Industries ► PRODUCER MJ ► LENGTH 30:42 ► TRACKLISTING ► 1. Come On Give Up ► 2. Elastic ► 3. Drop Outs ► 4. Lowtalkin' ► 5. Blue Eye ► 6. Dig It Up ► 7. Tennis Court ► 8. Ratworld ► 9. Tastes Like Medicine ► 10. Pick Out The Pieces ► 11. Infinite Donut ► 12. Fortune Teller ► BEST TRACK Come On Give Up

Ghost Culture Ghost Culture

Phantasy



There's beauty to behold in a well-paced dance record. On his debut as Ghost Culture, 24-year-old Londoner James Greenwood starts slow. 'Guidecca' is a colourful hybrid of LCD Soundsystem and New Order, but the not-of-this-world lyrics – "How strange,

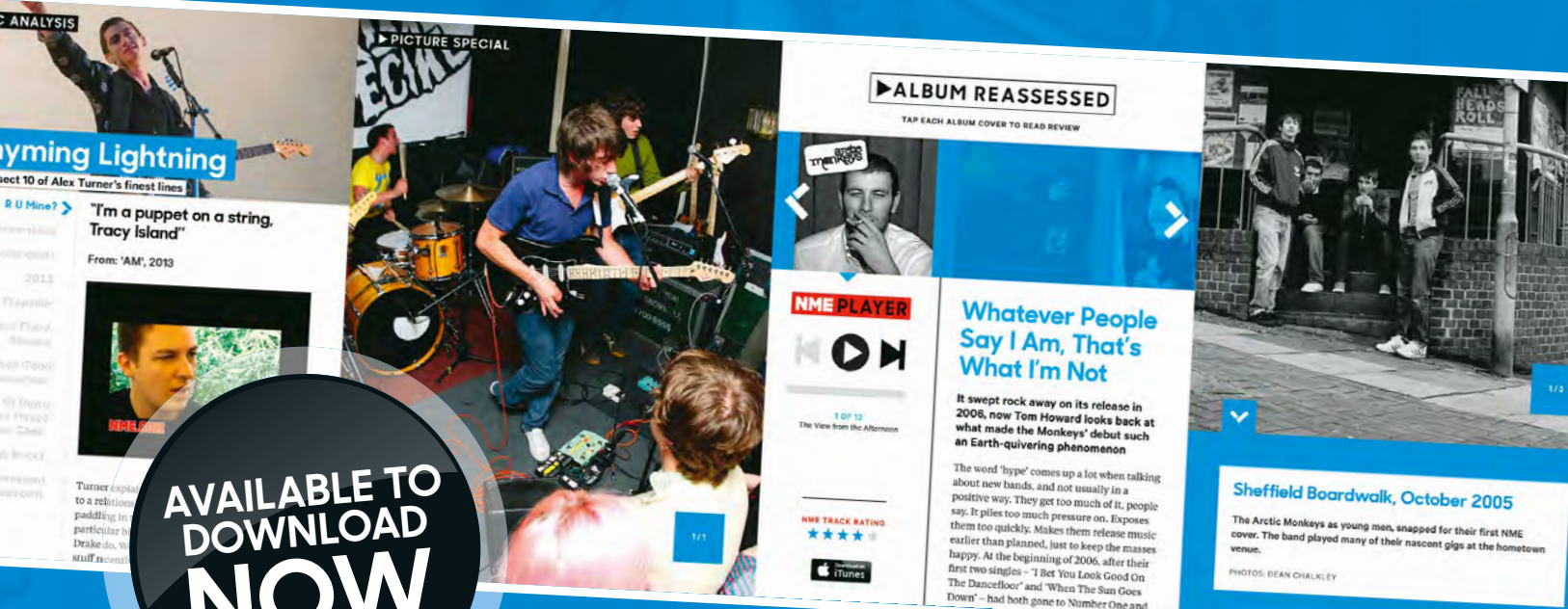
I'm satisfied" – are cold, detached and monotonous. The effect is robotic and eerie. As the album unravels, though, warmth floods in. Greenwood worked as an engineer on Daniel Avery's excellent 'Drone Logic' and knows how to climax. 'Glaciers' and 'Lying' force out melody, and as penultimate track 'Answer' takes hold we enter banger territory, frostiness long forgotten.

■ TOM HOWARD

7

NMESPECIAL
COLLECTOR'S
EDITION

Arctic Monkeys

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FILM

US Office star Steve Carell
excels in a chilling, violent
wrestling drama

Foxcatcher



With Channing Tatum in spandex, Steve Carell hidden behind an impressive prosthetic nose and indie hearthrob Mark Ruffalo disguised as a balding, bearded amateur wrestler, *Foxcatcher* could easily pass for an offbeat comedy. But though it raises a few wry smiles, it's actually a subtle but powerful drama from director Bennett Miller (*Capote*, *Moneyball*) based on a true story of sporting ambition and soured friendship.

Carell plays John Eleuthère Du Pont, a lonely multimillionaire and heir to a chemical corporation who's vain enough to write his own introduction as "ornithologist, philatelist, philanthropist" at a black-tie dinner held in his honour. Driven by his own lack of sporting ability, he becomes obsessed with amateur wrestling and makes the Olympic gold medal-winning Schultz brothers an enviable offer: to train for free at his Foxcatcher Farm estate in rural Pennsylvania. Older brother Dave (Ruffalo) declines because he doesn't want to uproot his family from California, but his younger sibling Mark (Tatum) accepts, seeing Du Pont's offer as his way of finally emerging from Dave's shadow.

At first, an unlikely friendship blossoms between the socially awkward Du Pont and the amiable Mark, the older man becoming a self-styled father figure to the hulking but insecure young wrestler. Du Pont boosts Mark's brittle confidence by telling him he's more talented than his brother and sharing the trappings of

his wealth, including a steady supply of alcohol and cocaine. But when their hedonistic lifestyle affects Mark's training, Du Pont lashes out and slaps his protégé in front of the wrestling posse that he's branded Team Foxcatcher. Desperate to restore Mark's focus, Du Pont hires older brother Dave to guide Team Foxcatcher's training programme, a move that undermines Mark so brutally that their friendship is never able to recover.

As director Bennett steers *Foxcatcher* towards its tragic conclusion, fine performances from Carell, Tatum and Ruffalo ensure an engrossing journey. Tatum is perfectly cast as vulnerable, over-trusting Mark, an athlete who certainly has the physique but definitely not the temperament for sporting greatness, while Ruffalo is hugely affecting as his smarter, more stable older brother. As the increasingly delusional Du Pont, Carell delivers a haunting turn that really lingers: a scene in which the

multimillionaire awkwardly takes over a wrestling training session in order to impress his elderly mother (a stony-faced Vanessa Redgrave, predictably great in the few scenes she's given) makes for wonderfully uncomfortable viewing. But the film's secret weapon is director Bennett's restraint. With subtlety and intelligence, he lets the story unfold without overly concerning himself with explaining his characters' erratic behaviour – a move that makes *Foxcatcher*'s terrible climax all the more chilling. ■ NICK LEVINE



► **DIRECTOR**
Bennett Miller
► **IN CINEMAS**
January 9

CINEMA

National Gallery



In this revealing documentary, 84-year-old American filmmaker

Frederick Wiseman exposes the soul of the National Gallery in London. *National Gallery* follows Wiseman's recent films on the Paris National Ballet and the University Of California at Berkeley. With no narrator or talking heads and a running time nudging three hours, it profiles the world's fourth most visited art museum through a thorough observation of its public and private workings: scenes showing curators analysing masterpieces by Holbein and Da Vinci for groups of visitors are interspersed with footage of board meetings, exhibitions being assembled and paintings undergoing restoration work. It begins to drag in its final hour, but this is an interesting and sympathetic insight into a national institution.

■ NICK LEVINE

7

CINEMA

Whiplash



This fantastic film opens with jazz drumming student Andrew Neiman (Miles

Teller) practising hard at the end of a dimly lit corridor. That image – the isolated obsessive honing his skills in the darkness – never dissipates, as Neiman fights to win the respect of his unkind teacher, Terence Fletcher (JK Simmons). Writer-director Damien Chazelle worked *Whiplash* up from a critically acclaimed short film in under a year, and on a shoestring budget: it's a lean, powerful study of the demands great art makes of its practitioners, with two outstanding performances at its core. Teller played the astonishing drum parts himself, while Simmons, so often a provider of light relief (*Spider-Man*, *Juno*), makes Fletcher at once charismatic, inspiring and terrifying.

■ ANGUS BATEY

9

CINEMA

Erebus: Into The Unknown



On November 28, 1979, an Air New Zealand jet flying in blizzard conditions crashed into Mount Erebus, Antarctica's second highest volcano, killing all 257 passengers. This gripping docudrama from co-directors Peter Burger and Charlotte Purdy combines dramatic recreations with interviews, telling the story

of the police officers sent to recover the bodies in treacherous weather conditions. The recreations sometimes feel contrived, especially when an officer is seen poignantly reading a notebook supposedly found in the wreckage, but the interviews are candid and very moving. By the end, you'll understand why one man involved says the recovery mission "slowly killed me inside, from an emotional point of view". ■ NICK LEVINE

8

CINEMA

Into The Woods



From *Chicago* director Rob Marshall comes this glossy Disney adaptation of James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim's 1986 musical. An inventive plot cleverly intertwines several fairy tales by Germany's Grimm brothers as a couple (James Corden and Emily Blunt) made childless by a curse from a vindictive witch (Meryl

Streep) head into some fantastical woods hunting the random objects needed to lift the spell. In fast-paced scenes they cross paths with Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella and Rapunzel, but this murky shot, big-budget adventure is no fairytale. It's Streep who provides the darkest moments, taunting the film's younger characters in one scene by singing, "I'm not good, I'm not nice, I'm just right".

■ NICK LEVINE

7

JACK DANIEL'S
JACK ROCKS
THE MACBETH

NME Spotify

Superfood,
December 18



Four months of mayhem

Last September, Jack Daniel's in association with NME and Spotify flooded intimate London venue The Macbeth with live gigs, video sessions and DJ sets

Superfood caused chaos

Excitable Birmingham band Superfood wrapped up the three-month-long Jack Rocks The Macbeth party (December 18) with a rollicking set featuring cuts from their debut album 'Don't Say That', which was released last October. Right from the off, the mini moshpits raged as the band ran through the carefree chorus of 'Bubbles' and 'TV's ramshackle riffs. 'Melting' was smooth and slow, a breather as the set threatened to boil over into boisterous chaos early on.

"Is everyone fucking excited for Christmas?" asked frontman Dom Ganderton before galloping straight into a rollicking 'You Can Believe', as three girls in the audience clambered onto their friends' shoulders,

tipping towards the edge of the stage to get even closer to the fun. A buoyant 'Mood Bomb' followed, its explosive "Open up your eyes/Let the sun inside" chorus thundering powerfully around the small, intimate venue.

As the crowd got rowdier and the drinks flowed – as much onto the floor as down the audience's necks – the band followed suit, their playing becoming sloppier yet increasingly raucous and more party-like. 'Right On Satellite' thrummed with loose, drunken energy and the ecstatic closer – the quartet's debut song 'Superfood' – saw bassist Emily Baker jump into the crowd, where she was swarmed by sweaty fans.

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Anna, 18, London

"Superfood make us feel alive. They weren't going to do 'Pallasades' but then we told them to and they did. It was lustful."



Michelle, 21, New Zealand

"They were really awesome. I really enjoyed 'TV' – that was the best bit I think. It was the first time I'd seen them and it was great."



Kirsty, 25, New Zealand

"I'd never heard them before, I just came along with my friend. I was totally new to them but I'm a fan now. They were fun!"

Ghetts was grimy

▶ The penultimate gig of the residency (December 17) saw grime MC Ghetts (aka Justin Clarke) take to the stage to play a selection of songs from last year's debut album 'Rebel With A Cause'. The rapper, who has collaborated with the likes of Dot Rotten and Giggs, invited a number of guests to the stage to perform with him, including singer Cameron Bloomfield, who provided vocals on 'What I've Done'. "This song is for my daughter," Ghetts announced before the impassioned 'Fatherhood'.



Only Real,
October 9

Reviews LIVE



All We Are,
November 24

New bands laid siege

▶ All autumn, exciting upcoming bands descended on Jack Rocks The Macbeth. West Londoner Niall Galvin's Only Real project and Chicago party-starters Twin Peaks provided a double dose of excitement (October 9) with sun-kissed stories of the city and messy garage-rock riffs respectively. *Radar* favourites Dracula Legs (October 8) impressed with a set of spiky slacker rock, and later that month, Bloody Knees and Crows celebrated Halloween (October 30) with face paint and crushing punk anthems. In November, Liverpool disco trio All We Are (November 24) played a set that slinked from woozy to hyperactive, splicing in a cover of Caribou's 'Can't Do Without You' along the way.



Citizens!,
December 16

Citizens! made a comeback

▶ Citizens! also made their return at Jack Rocks The Macbeth (December 16), having kept a low profile in 2014 while working on the follow-up to 2012's 'Here We Are'. Judging by the bouncing piano riff on comeback single and opener 'Lighten Up', the five-piece might well have spent the year aboard a catamaran in the Balearics. Replete with yo-yoing bassline and slippery vocals, the sleek 'Reptile' prompted jerky dance moves from an audience in thick winter coats, and 'True Romance' provided a joyous conclusion to a short but sweet seven-song set that hinted at a hectic 2015 to come.

La Roux and Kele got sweaty

▶ Back in the Indian summer, La Roux kicked things off at Jack Rocks The Macbeth (September 15), bringing a mini heatwave to Hoxton with her second album, 'Trouble In Paradise'. Even the staff got involved, with one barman clambering up and dancing around the pumps during 'In For The Kill'. The following month, Bloc Party frontman Kele celebrated his birthday at the venue (October 13) by airing tracks from second solo album 'Trick', with a minimal setup that saw a wildly gyrating Okereke wailing his heart out over the throbbing backing tracks.



Kele, October 13



La Roux,
September 15

THE VIDEOS

Jack Rocks The Macbeth wasn't just home to some incredible gigs. The venue also acted as a music hub, inviting bands in for interviews and video sessions. Carl Barat & The Jackals dropped by (December 17) to preview debut album 'Let It Reign', including recent single 'Glory Days'. Los Angeles '60s obsessives Allah-Las paid a visit (September 24) to chat about their love of tiny sweatbox venues and play cuts from second LP 'Worship The Sun', and Canadian newcomers Viet Cong introduced themselves with some arty post-punk (November 19).

▶ Head to NME.COM/jackrocks to watch live performances, sessions and interviews with all the bands

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THIS WEEK IN 1989



The Wedding Present are the latest in a string of NME's favourite bands to take a major label's money

Following the shock news that The Primitives, The Fall and Pop Will Eat Itself have all signed to major record labels, The Wedding Present – indie originators, “people’s champions” and pioneers of the C86 sound on their seminal album ‘George Best’ – are the latest to jump ship from independent labels Red Rhino and Cooking Vinyl to RCA. “I drew up a list of six fundamental things,” says singer David Gedge, “and said, ‘If a major label will offer these I’d be more than happy to sign.’ And I never imagined any major would, but RCA have.”

NME’s Stuart Maconie attributes the band’s immense popularity in the indie community to their everyman ordinariness. And they don’t expect their major deal to change that by making them huge pop stars. “It’s a silly way for a grown man to make a living,” says Gedge. “It must be a drag to be famous. Even at our level we can’t go to a gig in peace... I would bloody hate to be Boy George.”

GETTING ADDICTED

NME’s Edwin Pouncey meets LA rockers Jane’s Addiction and finds them filthy but refreshing. “Working in the music business in LA is like being in a big corporation,” says singer Perry Farrell, “only the work clothes are different. Instead of wearing a suit and tie, people go to work in a shag hairdo and spandex.” The band’s own version of individuality includes videos featuring Farrell and his girlfriend naked, and songs about Ted Bundy. “We write about serial killers and violence,” Farrell explains, “but also about cats and bees too.”

DURAN DO ROME

Tangling with Prince, the Italian Prime Minister and thousands upon thousands of screaming fans, NME’s Jim Shelley finds Duran Duran living up to their ‘Wild Boys’ reputation on tour in Rome, even after 10 years together. “We’d been playing rock clubs in America,” says John Taylor, “then, when we hit Italy and the screamers, the whole thing fell apart. Suddenly Simon [Le Bon] was behaving in a certain way, so was I, so was Nick [Rhodes]. We just fucked up.” However, the fans are as ardent as ever. “[My wife] Yasmin spent half the summer telling these kids in our garden to go and look around London,” says Le Bon.

REVIEWED THIS WEEK

Ciccone Youth
– ‘The Whitey Album’
“The exorcism of a tormented hippy-hell and a love of bouncy basslines.” 8/10 ■ JAMES BROWN

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

► ‘70s disco sensation Sylvester dies of Aids in San Francisco.
► A Tory MP launches a slur campaign against the burgeoning Manchester Gay Radio Project.
► A Spaceman 3 gig in Camden ends, according to reviewer Simon Williams, with “a distortion pedal... left to eat itself while 500 people stare at an empty stage”.

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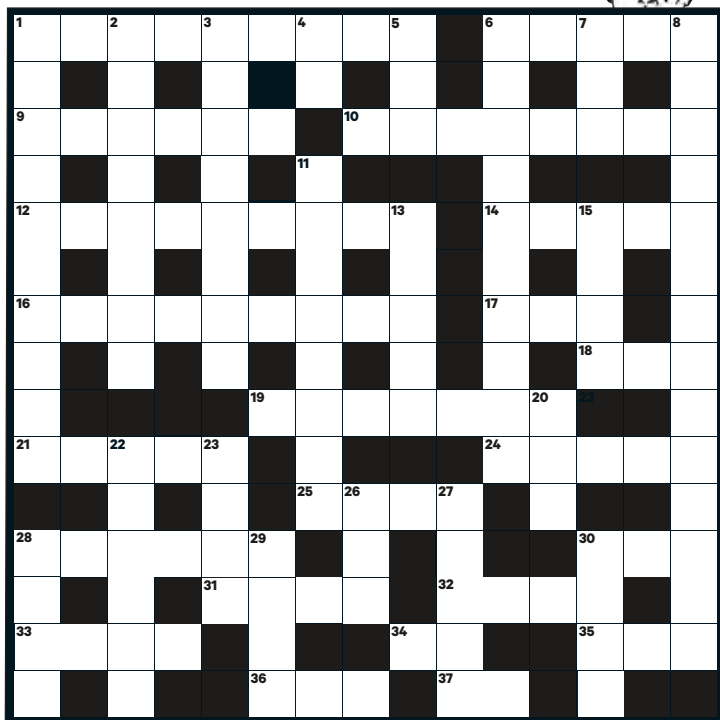
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CROSSWORD

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1 'So Long, See You Tomorrow'. What, back already? (4-2-3)
 6 (See 10 across)
 9 Do many turn up for a Johnny Marr performance? (6)
 10+6A "I'm losing you, I'm losing you/Ain't love the _____", 1998 (8-5)
 12 'Everyone's Got One' by this Britpop band (9)
 14 (See 28 across)
 17+16A Genesis began with this music for Manic Street Preachers (3-4-5)
 18 Using Nine Inch Nails is just so very wrong (3)
 19+31A 'Hang Me Up To Dry' with these Americans (4-3-4)
 21 Sid or a different person associated with Earl Sweatshirt (5)
 24 Morrissey took his time with album '_____ Of Refusal' (5)
 25 Their albums include 'Electric Warrior' and 'Futuristic Dragon' (1-3)
 28+14A This group are 'Harder Than You Think' (6-5)

CLUES DOWN

- 30+33A Dance band who were 'Ready For The Floor' (3-4)
 31 (See 19 across)
 32 Courtney Love's debut solo single had a single source of sound (4)
 33 (See 30 across)
 34 Make a move for a single by Common (2)
 35 Canadians to 'Steal My Sunshine' were half stolen themselves (3)
 36 (See 8 down)
 37 Record label for Jack White, Radiohead and The Horrors (1-1)
- 1 Kept out of sight the cards dealt by Dry The River (6-4)
 2 HD McLain rewrites a song for Neneh Cherry (8)
 3 "For every kiss you give me, I'll give you three", 1963 (2-2-4)
 4+5D Perhaps have a little flutter, though, with The Kills (2-3)
 6 Tomorrow's sound from David Bowie on album (3-4-3)
 7 "The ____ age is coming, the

- sun is zooming in", from The Clash's 'London Calling' (3)
 8+36A George Harrison was thinking of only one person on this song (3-2-4-3-2-3)
 11 Music venue with 12-inch discs of Kasabian music? (4-4)
 13 Name an album by Pearl Jam? I give in (5)
 20+15D The War On Drugs having problems with flash photography (3-4)
 22+30D Jamie T number's turned into a real hit, Bob (6-4)
 23 '70s group, fronted by Midge Ure, who had Number One hit with 'Forever And Ever' (4)
 26 Sigur _____, post-rockers from Iceland (3)
 27 Dutch goth-rock band, originally known as Clan Of _____ (5)
 28 'The _____, The Sickie And The Shovel', album dug up by hip-hop group Gravediggaz (4)
 29 'Cruel _____' by Augustines or 'Living In The _____' by Stevie Wonder (4)
 30 (See 22 down)

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See opposite for December 20-27 Crossword answers

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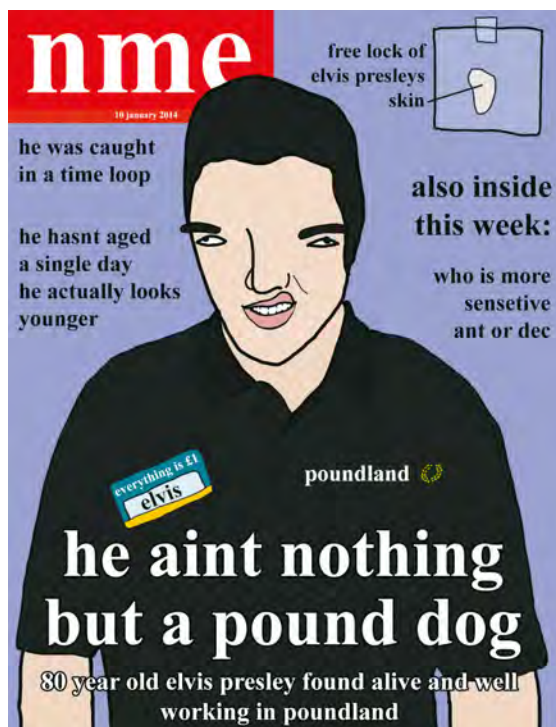


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The Cure

Superfood

SHAMIL TANNA

NME DECEMBER 20/27 CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS 1 Present Tense, 7+72D What Do I Get, 10 Take It Back, 16 Cupid, 17 Off And On, 18 Reality, 22+33D That's All Right, 23 Tomorrow, 24 Sting, 25 Enola Gay, 28 Edge, 29+81D Give It Up, 31 Hit, 32+33A No Rest, 34 Hard, 35 Spark, 37 Vega, 38 Nerve Net, 40 Geno, 41 Insane, 45 Noddy, 47+99D Glass Boys, 48 Stills, 50+114A+111A Divide And Exit, 55 Ritual, 57 Toy, 58 Tidal, 60+19A Sleepy John Estes, 63 I Told You Once, 64 Words, 66 Brains, 69 Woods, 70 West, 71 Playland, 74 Alcoholic, 75 Indie Cindy, 78 One, 79 Still, 82 Vee, 83 Envy, 84 Gene Vincent, 86 Reni, 87 Sisters, 90 Clowns, 94 Popes, 97 ELP, 99 Byrd, 101 Uno, 102 Call Me, 104 Tin Drum, 106 Job, 109 Don't Go, 112 Asian, 113 Romeo, 115+53A Wild Onion, 116 Pasadena, 117 Serafin

DOWN 1 Pacifier, 2 El Pintor, 3 Eddie, 4+20A Two Fingers, 5 EMF, 6 Sunshine, 8 Hard To Explain, 9 Trafalgar, 10 This Love, 11+12D Keys To The World, 13 After The End, 14+80D Kiss With A Fist, 15+100A Won't Get Fooled Again, 21+92A Stan Getz, 26 Angels, 27 Youth, 30 Rain, 36 Kindness, 38+44A Nights In White Satin, 39 Ready To Go, 42 Savages, 43 Energy, 46 Ditto, 48 Seasons, 49 Intact, 52 Lobo, 53 Old Ways, 54 In Dreams, 56+73D Anna Calvi, 59 Odyssey, 61 Porsches, 62+68D Jailhouse Rock, 65 Clinic, 67 So Lonely, 70 White Is Red, 76 Devil, 77 Dreng, 85 Expanded, 88 Sade, 89 Benji, 90 Cocoon, 91 Wallow, 93 Zutons, 95+108D Samba Pa Ti, 96 Saved, 98 Pub, 103 Step, 105 Ruin, 107+51A Otis Blue, 110 Odd, 112 Air

Django Django

First Light



12 JANUARY 2015

available digitally & limited white label 12"
djangodjango.co.uk

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