

The Smiths



Meat Is Murder turns 30

How it influenced a generation

"What I do best is write doggerel, so a part of me must be very childish" JOE STRUMMER



Grit, glamour and
growing pains.

Peace come of age

New Kurt film

Everything you need to know

Nick Cave

PJ Harvey, Kylie and
Murder Ballads

His darkest era revisited

+
Alt-J

New Order

Father John Misty

Gerard Way

SOME PLACES HAVE THEIR VERY OWN SOUNDTRACK.



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Waxahatchee

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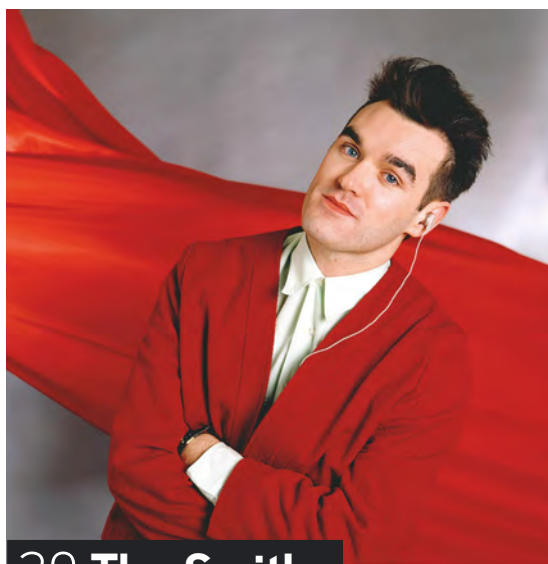
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LETTER OF THE WEEK

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LONG LIVE PJ

Further to your article about Polly Harvey recording her album in public at Somerset House – well, how times change! I remember John Peel playing her early tracks 'Dress' and 'Sheela-Na-Gig' on his radio show continuously for weeks. Then, when she finally released her debut album 'Dry,' on the day of release I made my way to the iconic Rough Trade store in Talbot Road W11 expecting to find a queue to join, but found myself standing at the counter completely alone. I bought the limited-edition two-LP version, and 30 minutes later, still hanging around near the shop, not a single additional customer had ventured inside. Where were all the PJ Harvey fans? Where was the commitment? I still believe 'Dry' to be a fantastic record, but will never forget a friend of mine, on overhearing the record a few hours later, likening it to corrugated iron. It wasn't for her, but I was in love for sure. Long live PJ.
Neil Porter, via email

Matt Wilkinson: Bravo, Neil. I'm on a total PJH trip at the moment, having been lucky enough to go to one of the public gallery recording sessions at Somerset House a couple of weeks ago. I was enthralled by what I saw – I got



lucky and had 45 minutes of Harvey, her band and producer Flood raging through an amazing flute'n'drum-led song that's still ringing around my head now – and it made me re-evaluate her entire back catalogue. First port of call? 'Dry,' of course. And then the rest. So long live Polly – and long live the notion of her *never* doing things by the book.

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Or is Paul Weller standing between Noel and the reunion? And Noel insisting Liam should go solo? He obviously still has feelings for his brother, so I think it's only a matter of time before they get back together. Don't you think?
Jeson KH, via email

MW: I don't know what to think about this any more, Jeson. In fact, all I really know is that the idea of Paul Weller playing a pseudo Kat Slater-style character in this most glorious of soap operas, beckoning Noel back to Supernova Heights 2.0 with fag-stained squawks of "Leave it aaaaah, Noel! He ain't wurf nuffink!!!" is rather appealing right now. Let's cast Damon as Dot Cotton while we're at it, huh?

THE KOISSER LURE

I recently saw Peace for the fourth time in Bristol. I don't really know what it was, but for that hour or so and ever since I have been set in a trance by Harry K and the rest of the Peace boys, and I just can't shut up about them. I don't know whether it was Harry's mesmerising stage presence or the fact that I banged my head falling off my friend's shoulders during 'Gen Strange' – all I know is that 2015 is going to bring big things for them.
Paige Hutchings, via email

MW: I know many people with similar feelings, Paige. I once saw Harry walking around Dalston Sainsbury's dressed in a red tracksuit (vintage Adidas, since you ask), trailed by a bevy of young fans gawping at his every move. I joined them on their quest (obviously) and can confirm that he buys the cheapest, crappiest frozen pizzas known to man.

PETE AND THE PIRATES

I've had Peter Doherty's new song 'Flags Of The Old Regime' on repeat for the last 24 hours. Being an ex-addict myself, and with Amy Winehouse being my wake-up call – I got to know Janis (Amy's mum) and have been fundraising for the Amy Winehouse Foundation for the last few years – I connected with the track very deeply. The imagery and the emotions the song provokes show a sincere side of Peter's recovery, and I think this is just the start of a very musically fruitful new chapter. Long live Albion!
Bryony Marie Fry (Bright Smoke), via email



When I read that Peter Doherty had released a post-rehab single in the form of 'Flags Of The Old Regime' I was both excited and nervous. Excited because I've always loved his music; nervous because I knew that if, even after a successful rehab, this single wasn't top notch, there would be no excuses left to keep his critics at bay with. I can only say that Mr Doherty delivered in every way. The track is delicate, sad, poetic and beautiful all round. I fell in love with it after one listen. Peter sounds better than he has in years and seems to be a man on a mission. I look forward to whatever he and The Libertines cook up for

2015, and I hope that this second solo album I've read about also comes good for him. Until then, I shall have 'Flags Of The Old Regime' on repeat. Go Pete!
Adriaan Slabbert, via email

MW: See, despite *everything* that's gone on over the years, I've never really thought that Pete's lost it musically. He's always been bang on when it comes to the stuff that really matters: the songs. Yet time and time again he seems to find himself in the position where critics are saying – and I'll paraphrase here – that everything he does is 'surprisingly good considering his past musical endeavours'. It's a bullshit notion that simply doesn't stand up; there's a reason the guy is still stupidly popular among music fans – the kind who continue to pack out his gigs – and it's got little to do with his tabloid persona...

OASIS REUNION: LETTER 14,698

So it seems there is a slight possibility that Oasis might reunite. They may even headline Glastonbury, judging by the recent feuds with Noel and Ed Sheeran.



LOOK WHO'S STALKING

I bumped into fellow northerners The Cribs on the streets of Soho, New York City a few weeks back. They showed the politeness and courtesy of two Mr Rochester lookalikes (as in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*). Can't wait to hear the new stuff! YOOORRRRR-KKKKKKKKSHIRE!
James Stokes, Hull

NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

**1. East India Youth
Carousel**

William Doyle has signed to XL to release 'Culture Of Volume', his second album as East India Youth. It's deserved news for one of Britain's finest young electronic auteurs. His talents are clear from 'Carousel'. As he sings mournfully of earth, a wash of organs rises to a powerful pitch, before disintegrating and quieting like a rocket breaching the atmosphere and emerging into space.

Laura Snapes, Features Editor

**2. Spector
All The Sad Young Men**

After almost two years away, Spector crept back into view with 'Don't Make Me Try', a sultry, Dev Hynes-produced one-off track released just before Christmas last year. Hot on its heels is this new single. Frontman Fred Macpherson's vocals boom over resplendent indie-disco synths and huge drums, but more interesting are the shimmers of guitar. Waiflike and subtle, they inject the song with a sadness that recalls '80s mopers The Wake.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

**3. Mikal Cronin
Made My Mind Up**

"This year's 'Lost In The Dream,'" is the industry buzz around Mikal Cronin's third album 'MCIII', and this dreamy slab of canyon Americana pop certainly seems worthy of a diss song or two from Mark Kozelek. "Tell me where it hurts", Mikal sighs like the kindly ghost of Channel 4's Dr Christian as sunbeam guitars cut through the clouds and a blissed-out stoner indie band chug by on an open-backed truck bound for Portland. Hop on.

Mark Beaumont, writer

**4. Four Tet & Emanative
Makondi**

Caribou's 'Our Love' was one of 2014's highlights because of its sheer *warmth*. Its human heart beat palpably beneath the electronics and synths. Four Tet's Kieran Hebden and Emanative, aka producer Nick Woodmansey, pull off the same trick here on their cover of 'Makondi'. A gorgeous, glowing cover of Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell's 1982 track, it's as sunny as it is slinky with soft cushions of thumb piano and skittering, rippling beats.

Ben Hewitt, writer

**5. The Prodigy
The Day Is My Enemy**

A quarter of a century into the Essex electro-punks' career – a good time to slow it down? Not on the watch of Liam Howlett, who emerges after years in the studio clutching this brutal, bruising track. An anthem for vampires and clubbers alike, it's nasty and hardcore and vital, with a section in the middle that sounds like someone hacking into a fruit machine with a pneumatic drill. They'll scorch the competition this year.

Dan Stubbs, News Editor

**6. Alex G
Sarah**

Despite already having five albums to his name, it appears 21-year-old Alex Giannascoli still has a goldmine of unreleased lo-fi delights. The Philadelphian recorded 'Sarah' in 2012, but this dreamy gem has only just surfaced online. Backed by quivering guitars and frail tambourine, Alex sings, "I can't be what you need, I am stuck in a dream". You'll want to stick right there with him.

James Bentley, writer

**7. The Cribs
Burning For No One**

"Dancing on the screen, I still see you as/The star power you used to have", Gary Jarman reminisces on the first official single from The Cribs' sixth album, 'For All My Sisters'. As synths shimmer in the background, guitar picking reminiscent of Orange Juice's 'Rip It Up' powers this wistful tune towards the dancefloor, spinning and twirling into a haze of past memories.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

**8. The Twilight Sad
The Airport**

Let's face it, airports are miserable places at the best of times, what with all that joyless frisking, the waving goodbye to loved ones and the drinking of overpriced 7am pints. The Twilight Sad understand that all too well, and are on typically morose form for 'The Airport'. "Come away with me/Darling, won't you play with me", sings James Graham in his soporific Scottish brogue. Sounds like whoever he's singing about missed the flight. Sob.

Leonie Cooper, writer

**9. Songhoy Blues
Irganda**

They first gained attention with 'Soubour', their collaboration with Yeah Yeah Yeahs guitarist Nick Zinner on the 2013 Africa Express album 'Maison Des Jeunes'. Now Malian quartet Songhoy Blues are releasing debut album 'Music In Exile'. New single 'Irganda' sets the tone, and it's a manic one. Bursts of frenzied guitar loop through an addictive call-and-response groove, driven by handclaps and cowbells. A real party-starter.

Matthew Horton, writer

**10. Sia
Salted Wounds**

Sia lines up alongside The Weeknd and Ellie Goulding on the soundtrack for the S&M-for-mums *Fifty Shades Of Grey* film. The Aussie singer's contribution is this ballad, which, with a sparse backing of harp and strings, leaves her rasping vocal exposed. It doesn't have the bombastic drama of last year's 'Chandelier', but like the film's domineering lead character Christian Grey, 'Salted Wounds' aims to leave you wanting more.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor



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11. Colleen Green TV

If you don't like telly, Colleen Green doesn't like you. *"If you're not a fan/Then I can't relate"*, drawls the LA songwriter on this fuzzed-out ode to the box. But Green doesn't care about other people. Set to power chords reminiscent of Californian pop-punks The Descendents, 'TV' is about vegging out on the sofa, watching rubbish and not talking to anyone. She makes it sound perfect.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

12. Ex's I Wanna

Late last year, London newcomers Ex's shared their creepy, dark debut track 'Oh Boy'. Their latest bid for your attention is 'I Wanna', which quickly dissolves into melancholic sadness. Chiming guitar cuts through a low, rumbling bassline as Jonathan Mead cries, *"I wanted to be everything that you ever needed"*, full of sorrow and regret. Ghostly, hypnotic and utterly gorgeous.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

13. Villagers Courage

"It took a little time to get where I wanted", admits Conor O'Brien on this first single from his upcoming third album. The Dublin songwriter's patience appears to have paid off. Entwining the wintry acoustic guitars and trembling vocals of his 2010 debut 'Becoming A Jackal' with the yawning synths of its more electronic follow-up. 'Courage' is a charm-filled folk confessional he's spent two records building towards.

Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

14. Girlpool Chinatown

"Do you feel restless when you realise you're alive?" ask Girlpool on their new single. 'Chinatown' sees LA duo Cleo Tucker and Harmony Tividad exchange harmonies over lo-fi guitars as they bat lines about feeling uncertain with their place in life at one another. The pair's tight-knit bond is palpable throughout, underlying the sense that, in the face of emotional wobbles, they'll always have each other.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor

15. Burial Temple Sleeper

Dubstep's reclusive archangel Burial is back, two long years after the 30-minute 'Rival Dealer EP'. Judging by the three-minute clip that's surfaced online, 'Temple Sleeper' is all hustling tempo, cranked up kick drum and horrorshow synths. It's available on dubstep imprint Keysound Recordings as a one-sided limited vinyl with a mix from label founders Dusk and Blackdown, if you're quick enough to get your hands on a copy.

Hazel Sheffield, writer



16. Kaytranada Drive Me Crazy (feat. Vic Mensa)

Vic Mensa and Kaytranada proved their collaborative chemistry with the inescapably catchy 'Wimme Nah' last summer. 'Drive Me Crazy' is the second single from Kaytranada's upcoming album and suggests he doesn't need Mensa's help in the slightest. Hazy, blissed out and with a hook that revolves like a merry-go-round, it sees the Haitian explore the consequences of fame.

Lucy Jones, Deputy Editor, NME.COM

17. LA Priest Oino

"How long's it gonna take to rewind time?/Wanna make you feel like you are always mine", goes ex-Late Of The Pier man Sam Eastgate on 'Oino'. This dubby first taster from his forthcoming debut as LA Priest bears some hallmarks of his old band – check the snaking synth lines and infectious dance rhythms – but is far more relaxed than the likes of 'Bathroom Gurgles'. Slower, then, but still resoundingly weird.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

18. How To Dress Well & Tälä The One

'Songs From Scratch' is a series organised by independent music and video website Yours Truly that asks musicians to collaborate and complete a song in 24 hours. Following the likes of Joey Bada\$\$ with Chuck Strangers come How To Dress Well with UK singer-producer Tälä. They've created a version of the song each. How To Dress Well's take is direct and urgent, while Tälä intertwines signature Arabic musical phrases.

Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

19. Death Cab For Cutie Black Sun

As the lead single from Death Cab's forthcoming eighth studio album 'Kintsugi', their first since the departure of founding guitarist Chris Walla, 'Black Sun' is a nod to a new era. It's more psychedelic than we're used to from the Washington trio, full of synth and fuzzy guitar riffs. But when Ben Gibbard sings, *"How could something so fair be so cruel, when this black sun revolved around you?"* a familiar melancholy core outs itself.

Nadia Khomami, Acting News Reporter

20. Lapalux Closure (feat. Szjerdene)

The first single from London producer Lapalux's new album hints at a slinkier sound than 2013 debut 'Nostalgic'. For 90 seconds, there's nothing more to it than soft drumbeats, an isolated string sound and London R&B singer Szjerdene's dusky vocals. His electronics surge intermittently after that, but Lapalux keeps 'Closure' slow and sultry. Due in April, his new album's called 'Lustmore'. It sounds like an appropriate title.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

TherWeek

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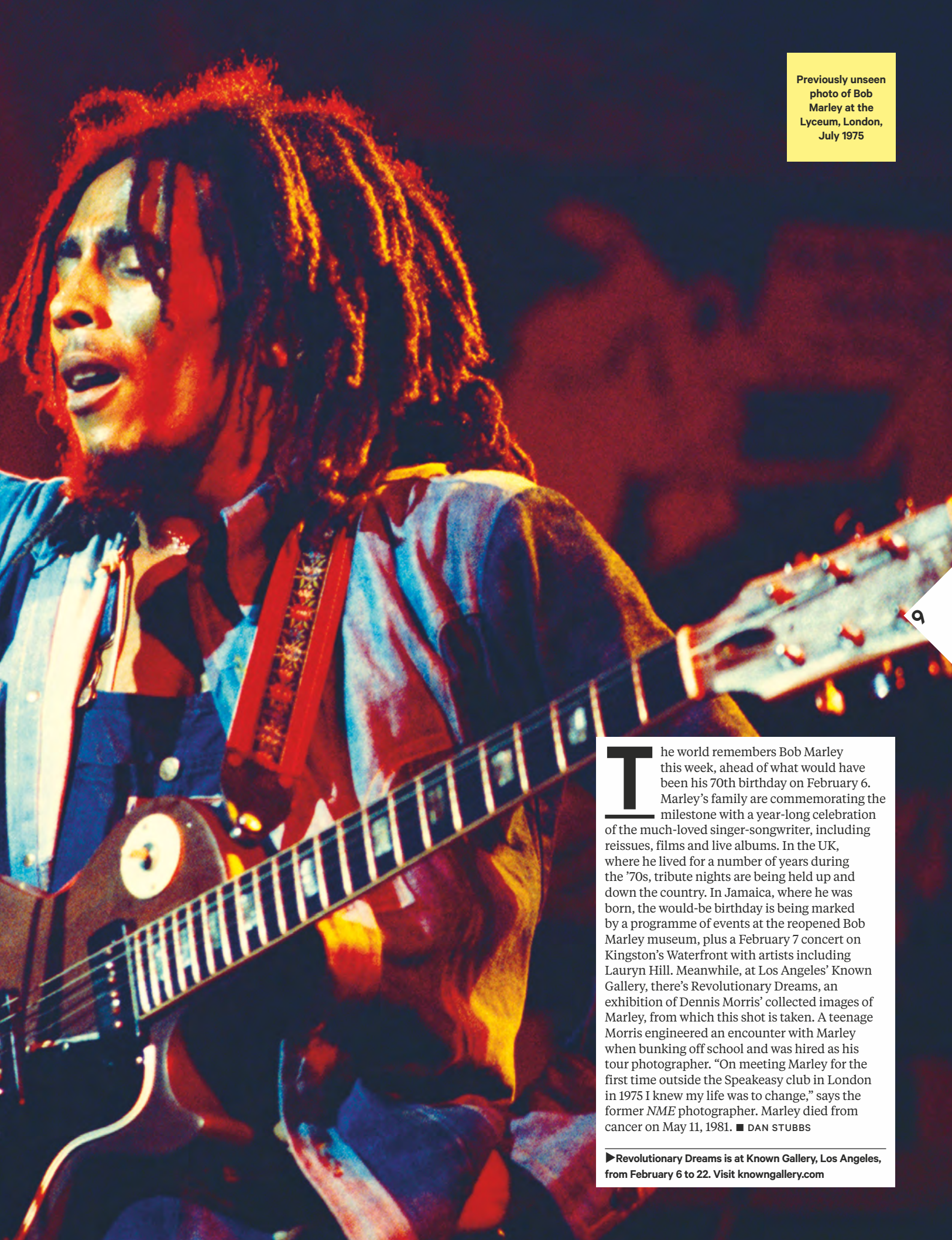
Marley

at

70

The reggae legend would have reached
a landmark birthday this week

PHOTO BY DENNIS MORRIS



Previously unseen
photo of Bob
Marley at the
Lyceum, London,
July 1975

The world remembers Bob Marley this week, ahead of what would have been his 70th birthday on February 6. Marley's family are commemorating the milestone with a year-long celebration of the much-loved singer-songwriter, including reissues, films and live albums. In the UK, where he lived for a number of years during the '70s, tribute nights are being held up and down the country. In Jamaica, where he was born, the would-be birthday is being marked by a programme of events at the reopened Bob Marley museum, plus a February 7 concert on Kingston's Waterfront with artists including Lauryn Hill. Meanwhile, at Los Angeles' Known Gallery, there's *Revolutionary Dreams*, an exhibition of Dennis Morris' collected images of Marley, from which this shot is taken. A teenage Morris engineered an encounter with Marley when bunking off school and was hired as his tour photographer. "On meeting Marley for the first time outside the Speakeasy club in London in 1975 I knew my life was to change," says the former *NME* photographer. Marley died from cancer on May 11, 1981. ■ DAN STUBBS

► *Revolutionary Dreams* is at Known Gallery, Los Angeles, from February 6 to 22. Visit knowngallery.com

All the mud slings

The fallout from Blink-182's very public laundry-airing



Blink-182's Tom DeLonge (right) is saying sayonara to Mark Hoppus

Last week, Blink-182 announced bassist-singer Mark Hoppus and drummer Travis Barker were splitting from guitarist-singer Tom DeLonge – which came as news to DeLonge, who had no idea a press release about his departure was going out. The resulting back-and-forth was played out publicly via social media and interviews, and threw up some interesting revelations about life in the pop-punk band.

They were a "dysfunctional" family

"We haven't talked in months," said DeLonge in a message to fans. "But we never did. In the years we have been together it has always been that way."

DeLonge's side projects caused friction

As frontman of Angels & Airwaves, and with ongoing interests in comics, books and film, Tom struggled to balance his commitments to Blink-182. It came to a head when he was presented with a contract demanding an album was recorded in six months. "It created a massive argument, the biggest one yet, actually," said Tom. "...From their view, I was controlling everything."

Tom and Mark had previously talked about firing drummer Travis Barker

After surviving a 2008 plane crash that killed four people, Barker struggled with flying and pulled out of a 2013 Australian tour as a result. This caused arguments with promoters and conversations between Mark and Tom about Barker's future, to which Hoppus says he was merely paying lip service. "[Tom] was really just blowing off steam," said Hoppus.

They don't get irony

Given that the band have based a career on pop punk, dick jokes and pretending to be teenagers, there was an unintended humour to DeLonge's apology to fans for them "witnessing this immaturity".

Hoppus and Barker plan to continue the band

The group's only upcoming show – at drummer Barker's Musink Festival – will go ahead, with Alkaline Trio's Matt Skiba filling in for DeLonge. Hoppus said: "I love Blink... I want to keep playing Blink songs... I love where we're going. I feel very relieved somehow. Everything is out in the open and everyone can do what they want to do." ■

Second Reading & Leeds headliner confirmed

Mumford & Sons to join metal giants Metallica

It's not often that Mumford & Sons share the same stage as Metallica, but that's exactly what will happen at this year's wide-ranging Reading And Leeds Festivals. The tweedy gents will join the hoary US metal icons at the top of the bill, bringing their live show home to the UK for their first gigs in this country since July 2013.



«READING LEEDS» 2015

The award-winning folk act lead a list of new additions to the 2015 line-up that also includes Royal Blood – who packed out the NME Stage in 2014 – Wolf Alice and Years & Years. Bastille, Deadmau5, Rebel Sound, Hannah Wants, Jack

Garratt and Merthyr Tydfil newcomers Pretty Vicious will also appear across the bill in August. ■ DAVID RENSHAW

MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE

FIVE TOURING ESSENTIALS

Rebecca Taylor



Slow Club

BOOK The Book Of Disquiet by Fernando Pessoa

"It makes me look really hot because it's a very difficult book. He's a very interesting, bizarre philosopher chap... There's bits of it where I'll be like, 'Oh my god, so true' and find myself for 10 minutes. Then I'll go on the *Daily Mail* website and forget about it."



BOXSET The Trip

"We did *The Trip* on the last tour, which was great. Steve Coogan is brilliant and I think he might be the one."

FILM The Godfather

"We argue a lot in the van because I like musicals but the other guys won't watch them. We've had *The Godfather* on a lot recently but I tend to fall asleep quite quickly."

GAME Who would you rather...

"It's 'who would you rather have sex with'. We run out of names pretty quickly as there are only a certain amount of people we've all mutually met."

HOME COMFORT Wild Fig & Cassis cologne by Jo Malone

"I'm obsessed with it and it's so expensive. I spray it everywhere. It's more than my rent, buying that perfume. I've become a bit like Joan Collins with it."

► Slow Club start their UK tour at Oxford Bullingdon Arms on February 5



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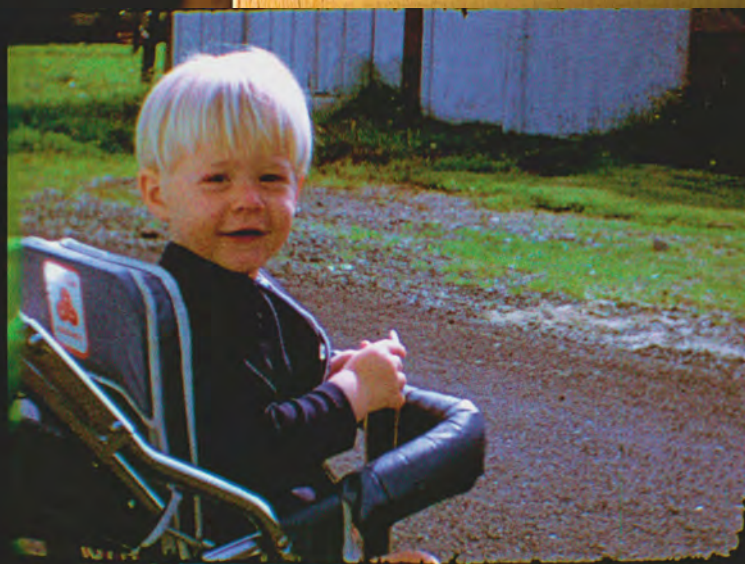
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16C

Kurt on camera



Brett Morgen's gripping documentary *Montage Of Heck*, telling the life story of Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain, premiered at last week's Sundance Film Festival. Here are 10 revelations from the film



1 KURT WAS A LIFELONG DOODLER

Even as a toddler, Kurt never had idle hands. "Once he could draw, he drew all the time," remembers his mother, Wendy O'Connor. As an adult, when Cobain wasn't onstage or wielding a guitar, he was constantly scribbling thoughts and lyrics in notebooks, mapping out meticulous chord progressions, or speaking into a voice recorder and listening to the playbacks. The archive provides rich material for Morgen's film.

2 HE WAS DEEPLY AFRAID OF BEING SHOWN UP

"Kurt hated being humiliated," remembers bandmate and friend Krist Novoselic. "He hated it. If he ever thought he was humiliated, you would see the rage come out." Kurt's mum corroborates this, and says that he was mortified by his parents' divorce when he was just nine years old, causing him to withdraw from his peers.

3 HE WAS COMPETITIVE - AND LOVED BOARD GAMES

Cobain is often considered to be the defining voice of Gen-X apathy, but he derided the label. He was quite ambitious - even competitive - about his abilities and where he

wanted to be in the world. "He always wanted to win," remembers his stepmother Jenny Westeby of Kurt and his stepsiblings. "Game nights were really important to him."

4 HE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AT 14

Kurt first attempted to take his own life aged just 14. In a voice recording, he describes walking along to the local train tracks, laying down with a pile of bricks on his chest, and waiting for the wheels to take him. Right as the train rumbled through, it diverged paths onto a different track, missing him by a hair's breadth.

5 NIRVANA COULD HAVE BEEN CALLED GODCHILD

Many of the words that pop up in later Nirvana songs, such as 'breed', 'novocaine' and 'godchild' were names that Cobain jotted down in his notebook and considered for the band before deciding on Nirvana.

6 HIS STOMACH PAINS FUELLED HIS CREATIVE FIRE

It's common knowledge that Cobain self-

"IF KURT THOUGHT HE WAS HUMILIATED, YOU WOULD SEE THE RAGE COME OUT"

Krist Novoselic, Nirvana

medicated to assuage the intense stomach pains that sometimes caused him to cough up blood while singing. He had a strange, symbiotic relationship with the condition; in an interview, Cobain tells a journalist that he "would give up everything for good health", but feared that if he ever ridded himself of the stomach problem, a strong source of creativity for his music might be lost.

7 HE USED TO MOCK JUNKIES

Kurt first used heroin in 1987, but this revelation was news to his then-girlfriend, Tracy Marander, who lived with Cobain for a number of years and encouraged him to pursue his art. She said Cobain had never used it and that he had even ridiculed people in Seattle who were addicted to it.





A montage of Kurt in *Montage...* and (below, far left) his daughter Frances Bean Cobain, the film's co-producer, at the premiere with director Brett Morgen



MONTAGE OF HECK - A FIRST LOOK

NME's take on the rough-cut version of the film screened at Sundance

Two decades after his death, what could there possibly be left to say about Kurt Cobain? Volumes, that's what. Brett Morgen's documentary, *Montage Of Heck*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival last week, is a revelatory glimpse into the soul behind Nirvana. Thanks to the cooperation of his family, Cobain is brought to life through previously unheard personal recordings – we hear him narrating his own wrenching tales of adolescent rejection and adult paranoia as

animations bring his doodles to life. Coupled with interviews and raw early concert footage, this is the most holistic portrait of an icon ever created. *Montage Of Heck* triggers the senses: it's visually striking and impossibly loud. It feels like the first document depicting Cobain as he truly was: a talented mortal seeking truth through art, while attempting to find the tribe that makes this mess all worthwhile. Cobain was not a myth, but a life writ large in all its messy, indefinable, fucked-up parasitic beauty; this documentary not only reminds you of that, but feels like you're discovering universes about someone you've known your whole life.

8 HIS MOTHER WORRIED THAT 'NEVERMIND' WOULD BREAK HIM

Kurt's family foresaw the impact that Nirvana's breakthrough album, 'Nevermind', would have on him. His mother describes almost crying – from fear – when he first brought the record's final master cut back home to Aberdeen and asked if he could put it on the stereo. "This is going to change everything," she remembers telling her son. "You'd better buckle up, because you are not ready for this."

9 HE AND COURTNEY PLANNED A BIG FAMILY

According to his friends and family, Kurt sought a sense of normalcy and a family of his own after a childhood framed by rejection. Courtney Love says that had they had more time, the couple would have had more children together. "We were all we had, so making a family as fast as possible was important," she said.



10 COURTNEY ADMITS SHE USED HEROIN WHILE PREGNANT

Kurt was profoundly affected by Lynn Hirschberg's infamous 1992 *Vanity Fair* piece, which asserted that Courtney Love had taken heroin during her pregnancy with the couple's daughter, Frances Bean, who co-produces *Montage Of Heck*. However, in the film Courtney admits it was true: "I used it once, then stopped," she says. "I knew she would be fine."

■ AUDREY ADLER

THE MINI INTERVIEW



**Tony
Visconti**

Super-producer

You've just remastered the first three *Tyrannosaurus Rex* albums. Was it emotional to revisit them?

"Very much so, because in those days my salary was £25 a week and my rent was £18 a week, so all I had was the music. Bowie and Bolan were like my brothers – this means the world to me."

You're hitting the road this summer with Bowie bandmate Woody Woodmansey playing 'The Man Who Sold The World'. How come?

"A friend at the ICA in London proposed the idea because it has never been performed live. I thought, 'I need to do this.'"

You've got Heaven 17 frontman Glenn Gregory on vocals. Why him?

"I wouldn't have gotten a Bowie soundalike, because that would be disrespectful. I had to get someone who could reinterpret the songs."

Did you try to coax Bowie into joining you at any of the shows?

"I haven't spoken to him, but he certainly wouldn't do 'The Man Who Sold The World' – he'd do something new. I'm not saying he's going to do anything, though. He's not going to perform!"

Any news on the follow-up to 'The Next Day'?

"It's very unkind of you ask that. No, I'm not going to talk about David Bowie at all."

■ BARRY NICOLSON

STAYING IN

THE BEST MUSIC ON TV, RADIO AND ONLINE THIS WEEK

GOING OUT

THE BEST LIVE EVENTS

THIS WEEK



H Hawkline
will appear on
BBC 6 Music

H Hawkline

Marc Riley

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 7pm, February 4

The Welsh wonder and recent *NME* Radar star celebrates the release of his new album, 'In The Pink Of Condition', with a trip to Marc Riley's studio in Salford. The musician – real name Huw Evans – will play some of the record's strange, psychedelic pop highlights.

Lou Reed

Classic Albums:
Transformer

►WATCH Sky Arts, 11:15am,
February 8

The former Velvet Underground man might be gone, but he's certainly not forgotten. This documentary delves deep into his celebrated solo album, 'Transformer', and its contributions from David Bowie and guitarist Mick Ronson.

Philip Selway

Guy Garvey's
Finest Hour

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 2pm,
February 8

The Radiohead drummer and solo artist in his own

right joins Elbow's Guy Garvey to provide an hour's worth of some of his favourite songs. Expect him to reveal some of the tracks that have influenced his lengthy career.

Years & Years

Launched At Red Bull
Studios

►WATCH Channel 4, 12am,
February 4
Years & Years take centre stage in the final instalment of Channel 4's tips-for-2015

series. Discover more about former *Skins* actor Olly Alexander's band and their vibrant dance-pop.

Mogwai

The Story Of Mogwai

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music,
1pm, February 8

As the Scottish post-rock band (below left) celebrate their 20th anniversary, Mary Anne Hobbs interviews Stuart Braithwaite to talk about their story so far. Former collaborator Gruff Rhys, Pop Will Eat Itself frontman turned Hollywood soundtrack composer Clint Mansell and many more also share their thoughts and memories of the much-admired group.



Kate Tempest

The south London rapper plays new single 'Bad Place For A Good Time' and tracks from her debut album 'Everybody Down'. The hotly tipped Loyle Carner supports.

►DATES Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (February 7), Bristol Motion & The Marble Factory (8)

►TICKETS Portsmouth £12.50; Bristol £15 from NME.COM/tickets with £1.50–£1.80 booking fee; Brighton sold out

Childhood

The London quartet take a break from working on new material to give 2014 debut album 'Lacuna' another airing.

►DATES London XOYO (February 5)

►TICKETS £10.60 from NME.COM/tickets

5 TO SEE FOR FREE

1. Ex Hex

Rough Trade East, London
►February 9, 7pm

2. The Twilight Sad

Pie & Vinyl, Southsea
►February 10, 6:30pm

3. Peace

Rough Trade East, London
►February 10, 7pm

4. Boxed In

Sticky Mike's Frog Bar, Brighton
►February 10, 8pm

5. Shy Nature

Shacklewell Arms, London
►February 10, 8pm

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PRIORITY

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The
Libertines
played at the
tiny 12 Bar
Club in 1999



THERE'S A WAR ON CULTURE - AND BOHEMIANS 4 SOHO ARE ON THE FRONTLINE

BY **ALAN
McGEE**

**The group occupying
London's defunct
12 Bar Club are
helping to highlight
a problem that
affects us all, says
the former Creation
Records boss**



We're facing a war on culture, fuelled by consumerism. The 12 Bar Club in Soho closed down at the beginning of the year because contractors are redeveloping the area around the new Tottenham Court Road Crossrail station. I'd been to see loads and loads of singer-songwriters at the 12 Bar, and I saw a really early Libertines gig there in '99. They were very different from the band that came out in 2002. More like Chas & Dave. The question is: where will people go to discover new music when all the small venues are gone? If our option is *The X Factor*, I'll take the cyanide pill instead.

London can't afford to lose any more venues. The city is home to eight million people and it's the centre of a lot of things. You need venues to meet the demand. But because of the unsure economic status of the world at

the moment, a lot of people are parking their money in London thinking it's the safest place. The house prices have gone through the roof, and it's making things harder for people who are trying to do something that's not solely focused on making a profit. The problem is happening elsewhere too - we're seeing music venues closing nationwide. They're trying to close down culture, to make us workhorses.

But last week, the former 12 Bar Club was occupied by a group of kids who think what's happening is a social-cleansing issue, like what happened in New York in the 1990s under Mayor Giuliani. They can see it happening in London too and they're trying to stop it, so they're working together under the name Bohemians 4 Soho.

The protestors in the venue are quite politicised - they've been trying to get Russell Brand down there. One of the girls is a Facebook friend of mine and she asked me to go down on Monday. I brought a band I'm managing, Alias Kid, because they'd have a revolution tomorrow if they could. I told them, 'You might get arrested', and they said 'You might get arrested'. I said, 'Yeah, but I've got a good lawyer - I'd be out by 9pm!'

Supposedly the police have been cool, because the demonstrators are not breaking the law, they're not taking the piss. We had a sit and talk with the protestors and the band played

a couple of tunes. Everybody was on the same page and we discussed the Greek elections and austerity. They're very clued up on the law. If there's such a thing as a professional group taking over a building and occupying it, they're it. I support their occupation because I'm down with their politics. Five years ago, people in Greece were rioting, and they've now just basically told the EU to go fuck themselves. It just shows you that you never really can predict the future - who'd have thought the Greeks would have risen up?

What the protestors are doing is really honourable, but it's part of a larger thing. Will they stop the redevelopment? I don't know. I'm not even sure if direct action is the answer. I don't know if there's a right way or a wrong way to go about a problem, I just know you have to deal with the fucking problem. ■

LOST ALBUMS

#62

Aereogramme

My Heart Has A Wish That You Would Not Go (2007)

Chosen by Sam McTrusty, Twin Atlantic

"Aerogramme are Iain Cook from Chvrches' former band. They go full scope from the heaviest, metal-sounding riff right through to the most beautiful ambient sounds. This is my favourite album of theirs. It sounds really hopeful but it's about heartbreak. They were the coolest rock band ever."

► Head to NME.COM/video to see Twin Atlantic play NME Basement Sessions supported by Dead Crow Spirit Flavoured Beers



► THE DETAILS

- **RELEASE DATE** February 5, 2007
- **LABEL** Chemikal Underground
- **BEST TRACKS** Barriers, Conscious Life For Coma Boy
- **WHERE TO FIND IT** Available on CD/MP3 from the Chemikal Underground website
- **LISTEN ONLINE** On Spotify



IN THE STUDIO

A decade on from their last fresh material, New Order are finally about to get '...Frutti' with a little help from The Chemical Brothers



The new New Order, minus original bass player Peter Hook

New Order

When *NME* spoke to New Order's Stephen Morris and Gillian Gilbert in October 2013, they said a new New Order album was slowly taking shape. Slow, it turns out, was definitely the operative word. Instead of knuckling down and finishing their first clutch of brand new tracks in 10 years, they promptly skipped town to play a huge South American and US tour, debuting only two new songs during those dates – one without a name at the time and another called 'Plastic'.

But frontman Bernard Sumner isn't making excuses about the album still not being finished – despite its New Year deadline. "It's going to be finished by spring and maybe released in the summer now," he says, smiling. "Who knows? The most important thing is what we've done sounds amazing."

The group's 10th album follows 2013's 'Lost Sirens', an album made of leftover songs from 2005's 'Waiting For The Sirens' Call'. It'll be the band's first studio album since their less-than-friendly parting of ways with founding bass player Peter Hook ("Working together became unbearable in the end," Sumner told *NME* last year), and according

"WE'RE NOT CANING IT ANY MORE. WE STILL HAVE A DRINK, BUT WE'RE NOT THE PIGS WE WERE"
BERNARD SUMNER

to the frontman at least, it sees them putting the guitars away to create something that sounds like "old-fashioned New Order". "It's an electronic-sounding album, dance-based but not housey," he says. "It's being mixed by Craig Silvey [Arcade Fire, REM, Nine Inch Nails, Portishead], and we've worked with Tom Rowlands from The Chemical Brothers on three tracks. Well, two and a half, really..." The half-track is 'Tutti Frutti', of which both New Order and Rowlands are working on their own mixes. Neither has superiority over the other and both will be released at some point. "They're just alternative takes on the same idea, so neither is a remix as such," Sumner says.

If 'Tutti Frutti' doesn't sound a very New Order song title ("It's not because it sounds like Little Richard," Sumner points out), another of the tracks produced by Rowlands is called 'Singularity', perhaps the *most* New Order-sounding song title of all time. Sumner says the band are now getting on better than ever, and without explicitly stating that it's due to Hook's departure, he does hint that it's the reason there's a better vibe in the band. He also puts their newfound excitement for touring down to being more sensible. "We're not caning it any more. Not as much, anyway. We still have a drink, but that's about it, we're not the pigs that we were."

Adding into the sense of contentment is the fact that the band are now signed to the

much-loved indie Mute Records, arguably the best fit for the band since their days on Manchester's legendary

Factory Records. It marks a move from major label Warner Brothers. "We had a long relationship with Warner Brothers and were happy, but the band has changed and we feel revitalised, so we felt we should have a change of label too. We've known Dan [Miller, Mute founder] for a long time and he's a bit of a Tony Wilson figure to us. Mute feels a bit like Factory, actually. Like Factory

but without the chaos and anarchy. And with a business manager." ■ ANDY WELCH

► THE DETAILS

- **TITLE** TBC
- **RELEASE DATE** Summer
- **LABEL** Mute
- **PRODUCERS** New Order/Tom Rowlands
- **TRACKS INCLUDE** 'Unlearn This Hatred', 'Singularity', 'Tutti Frutti', 'Restless'
- **BERNARD SUMNER SAYS** "It's difficult to describe when you're so close to it, but to me at least the more electronic songs remind me of things on [1989's] 'Technique'."



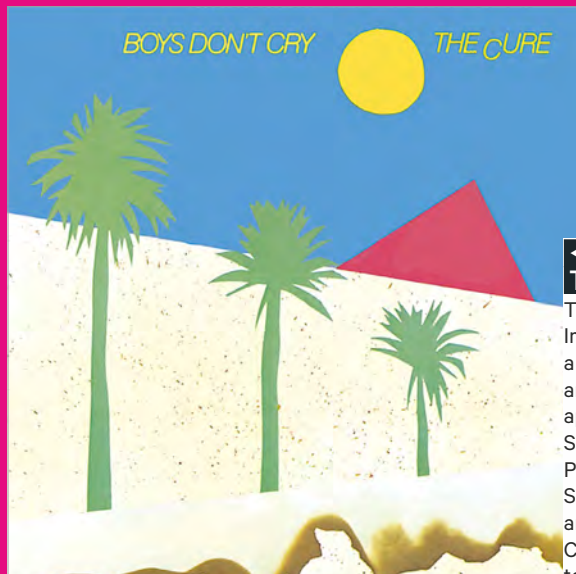
Signing with Daniel Miller of Mute Records

ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM



"EVERYONE SAID, 'THIS IS A REALLY PERFECT POP SONG'"

Robert Smith



BOYS DON'T CRY

THE CURE

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The sleeve for 'Three Imaginary Boys' featured a fridge, a vacuum cleaner and a lamp – the latter apparently representing Smith. The same designer, Polydor art director Bill Smith, produced a similarly artful sleeve for 'Boys Don't Cry', albeit one that seems to interpret the track 'Fire In Cairo' quite literally with its scorched montage of pyramids and palm trees.

THIS WEEK...

The Cure: Boys Don't Cry

Released 35 years ago this week, Robert Smith's rejig of 'Three Imaginary Boys', the band's debut album, remains a testament to his singular vision

THE BACKGROUND

Cure frontman Robert Smith was unhappy with the Crawley, West Sussex group's 1979 debut 'Three Imaginary Boys', believing that producer Chris Parry dominated the inexperienced band in the studio and that his newly formed label, Fiction, had too much control over the tracklisting and running order. "A lot of ['Three Imaginary Boys'] was very superficial," Smith said in later years. "I didn't even like it at the time." Vowing that he'd always have final say over what goes on his albums in future, Smith wanted to set the record straight before the release of 1980's follow-up, 'Seventeen Seconds', and had the album repackaged for the American and Australian markets as 'Boys Don't Cry'. Now including major singles such as the new title track – still one of The Cure's best songs – you can't help feeling he had a point.

FIVE FACTS

1 'Killing An Arab' caused controversy on its initial release as some claimed it was racist. Smith said it was a homage to the plot of Albert Camus' existentialist novel *The Stranger*.

2 At the end of the tour for 'Boys Don't Cry', keyboardist Matthieu Hartley left the group, claiming he didn't like the "suicidal, sombre music" they'd started making.

3 With a non-existent budget, many of the songs were recorded overnight in London's Morgan Studios, where The Jam were recording 'All Mod Cons' during the day.

4 Smith was angry about the inclusion on 'Three Imaginary Boys' of 'Foxy Lady', a cover of The Jimi Hendrix Experience's song taken from a soundcheck and sung by bassist Michael Dempsey. The only song on any Cure album not sung by Smith, it was excluded from 'Boys Don't Cry'.

5 Many of the lyrics to 'So What', featured on the CD version of 'Boys Don't Cry', were taken from a special-offer coupon on the side of a bag of sugar.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

**"Look into my eyes/
We both smile/I
could kill you without
trying" – 'Accuracy'**

As the later line "mirror, mirror on the wall" suggests, Smith is probably talking about killing himself here.

**"I've got no objection
to you touching me
there/Object, object"
– 'Object'**

With its objectification of women, 'Object' was an even edgier track than 'Killing An Arab'. Two tracks later, 'Subway Song', saw Smith switching perspective to that of a terrified woman walking home at night.

**"10.15 on a Saturday
night/And the tap
drips under the
strip light" – '10.15
Saturday Night'**

Written at the age of 16, this song was inspired by a night Smith spent in his kitchen feeling "utterly morose" and getting pissed on his dad's home-brew.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

**"The lads go rampant on
insignificant symbolism
and compound this with
rude, soulless obliqueness.
They are trying to tell
us something. They are
trying to tell us they do
not exist. They are trying
to say that everything is
empty. They are making
fools of themselves."**

Paul Morley on 'Three Imaginary Boys', *NME*, May 12, 1979

WHAT WE SAY NOW

Itchy, scratchy and perky, 'Boys Don't Cry' made for a more invigorating opening statement than the reedy 'Three Imaginary Boys' had, expanding the dark new-wave aesthetic with some seriously infectious pop moments.

FAMOUS FAN

"The Cure is the band that all of us in Interpol can say influenced us. When I was younger I listened to them a lot. It's one of the bands with the deepest influence on Interpol, because we all like them. They're legendary."

Paul Banks, *Interpol*

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"As soon as 'Boys Don't Cry' was released, everyone said to us, 'This is a really perfect pop song... The start of a glittering pop career.' And it sold about 100 copies, and I was really disillusioned by that at the time."

Robert Smith, 1986

THE AFTERMATH

Hartley was right about the "suicidal, sombre music"; after 'Boys Don't Cry', The Cure drifted gradually graveyard-wards. With Smith's eyes opened to the power of a wall of guitars while touring with Siouxsie & The Banshees, subsequent albums 'Seventeen Seconds' and 'Faith' seemingly had Bela Lugosi on 'vibes' and instigated the goth movement.

THE DETAILS

►RECORDED 1978-1979 ►RELEASE DATE February 5, 1980 ►LENGTH 34:09 ►PRODUCER Chris Parry ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 71 ►UK SALES 300,000 ►WORLDWIDE SALES unknown ►SINGLES Killing An Arab, Boys Don't Cry, Jumping Someone Else's Train ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Boys Don't Cry ►2. Plastic Passion ►3. 10.15 Saturday Night ►4. Accuracy ►5. Object ►6. Jumping Someone Else's Train ►7. Subway Song ►8. Killing An Arab ►9. Fire In Cairo ►10. Another Day ►11. Grinding Halt ►12. World War ►13. Three Imaginary Boys

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“I’ve been waiting 30 years for him to be charged with sex offences”

Ian Brown giving evidence against TV weatherman – and former teacher – Fred Talbot

THE NUMBERS

50,000

Copies of Bob Dylan's new album given away for free in AARP, a US magazine for retired people.

5

Number of years Ryan Adams and actress Mandy Moore were married prior to the announcement of their impending divorce.



12.5%

Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne's royalties on Sam Smith's 'Stay With Me', agreed after it was deemed too similar to Petty's 1989 hit 'I Won't Back Down'.

£47,950

Winning bid for Johnny Ramone's 1965 Mosrite Ventures V1 guitar at a Boston auction.

WHO THE FUCK IS...



Firework

Firework are the band who tried to get former US president Bill Clinton to play sax on their new album. **Did they engage Bill in sexual relations?** No. The band contacted Clinton's office and received an email in which they were told his "calendar is shaping up to be quite full, and due to prior constraints on his schedule, he is unable to join." **Anyone else on their political hit list?** Yes. Chris Mojan of the band told NME: "George W Bush has taken up painting recently. I feel he would be capable of some real dark shit. Perhaps an album cover?"

+ GOOD WEEK +



Sly Stone

The '60s funk legend has been awarded £3.3 million in missed payments when a court ruled his former manager had been cheating him out of royalties for years. Enduring hard times, Stone was reported to be homeless and living in a van in 2011.

- BAD WEEK -



Lil Louis

The DJ dubbed 'the founding father of house' is facing an uncertain future after he sustained a career-threatening injury during a soundcheck in Manchester. A horn was set off near his ear, leaving the 'French Kiss' man with hearing damage.

IN BRIEF

Sheer cheek

Ed Sheeran offered Noel Gallagher tickets to his Wembley Stadium gigs after The Chief's disparaging comments in these pages. Noel wrote back, "You cheeky so and so. My daughter would love some."

Brianstorm

Former East 17 singer Brian Harvey has ranted against Radio 1, labelling the station a "shit music playing, corporate wankstain". The BBC responded by describing his claims as "absurd and offensive".

► Find these stories and more on **NME.COM**

Tapped up

Joey Bada\$\$ has claimed that the US government is monitoring his phone calls after a leaked photo of President Obama's daughter Malia wearing one of his T-shirts surfaced online. "They got my whole crib surrounded. I believe it. I don't sleep," he said.

Official RECORD STORE Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS FEBRUARY 1, 2015



The Charlatans Modern Nature

Underpinned by the tragedy of drummer Jon Brookes' death last year, the baggy icons' 12th album mixes funky pop grooves with modernist beats.

- | | | | |
|--------|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| NEW 01 | The Charlatans | Modern Nature | BMG |
| NEW 02 | Matador | Gaz Coombes | HOT FRUIT/CAROLINE |
| ▼ 03 | Girls In Peacetime Want To Dance | Belle & Sebastian | MATADOR |
| ▲ 04 | Computer Controlled Acoustic Instruments – Part 2 | Aphex Twin | WARP |
| NEW 05 | The Third | Kitty, Daisy & Lewis | SUNDAY BEST |
| NEW 06 | Man It Feels Like Space Again | Pond | CAROLINE |
| ▼ 07 | No Cities To Love | Sleater-Kinney | SUB POP |
| ▲ 08 | Hozier | Hozier | ISLAND |
| ▲ 09 | Lost In The Dream | The War On Drugs | SECRETLY CANADIAN |
| NEW 10 | FEAR | Papa Roach | ELEVEN SEVEN |
| ▼ 11 | Uptown Special | Mark Ronson | COLUMBIA |
| NEW 12 | Unguarded | Rae Morris | ATLANTIC |
| ▲ 13 | Stay Gold | First Aid Kit | COLUMBIA |
| ▼ 14 | X | Ed Sheeran | ASYLUM |
| NEW 15 | Natalie Prass | Natalie Prass | SPACEBOMB/CAROLINE |
| ▼ 16 | Modern Blues | The Waterboys | HARLEQUIN AND CLOWN |
| ▼ 17 | What A Terrible World, What A Beautiful World | The Decemberists | ROUGH TRADE |
| ▼ 18 | Wanted On Voyage | George Ezra | COLUMBIA |
| NEW 19 | Title | Meghan Trainor | EPIC |
| ▼ 20 | Viet Cong | Viet Cong | JAGJAGUWAR |
| ▼ 21 | The Mindsweep | Enter Shikari | PLAY IT AGAIN SAM |
| ▼ 22 | Panda Bear Meets Grim Reaper | Panda Bear | DOMINO |
| ▼ 23 | The Endless River | Pink Floyd | RHINO |
| ▼ 24 | Grit | Martyn Bennett | REAL WORLD |
| ▼ 25 | In The Lonely Hour | Sam Smith | CAPITOL |
| ▼ 26 | A Perfect Contradiction | Paloma Faith | RCA |
| ▼ 27 | American Beauty/American Psycho | Fall Out Boy | DEF JAM |
| NEW 28 | Fears Trending | The Phantom Band | CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND |
| NEW 29 | On Your Own Love Again | Jessica Pratt | DRAG CITY |
| ▼ 30 | Our Love | Caribou | CITY SLANG |
| ▼ 31 | Royal Blood | Royal Blood | WARNER BROS |
| ▼ 32 | Ghost Culture | Ghost Culture | BECAUSE MUSIC |
| ▼ 33 | 1989 | Taylor Swift | EMI |
| ▼ 34 | AM | Arctic Monkeys | DOMINO |
| ▼ 35 | Mechanical Bull | Kings Of Leon | RCA |
| ▼ 36 | Very Best Of | Joe Jackson | UMTV |
| ▼ 37 | This Is All Yours | Alt-J | INFECTIOUS MUSIC |
| ▼ 38 | Sonic Highways | Foo Fighters | RCA |
| ▼ 39 | Rock Or Bust | AC/DC | COLUMBIA |
| ▼ 40 | No Sound Without Silence | The Script | COLUMBIA |

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

TOP OF THE SHOPS



THIS WEEK RUBADUB GLASGOW

FOUNDED 1992

WHY IT'S GREAT As well as the latest releases, they also stock heaps of equipment and tech gear.

TOP SELLER LAST WEEK

Lory D – 'Strange Days Vol 3'

THEY SAY "We've always tried to be down-to-earth with customers. We've got a sense of humour and the best tunes in Howard Street."

SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE



The Clash

Public Enemy



James Dean Bradfield

Manic Street
Preachers

THE FIRST SONG I REMEMBER HEARING 'Summer Wind' - Frank Sinatra

"My mum was listening to Terry Wogan, I was about eight years old, and I remember it touching me deeply. Years later, me and Sean [Moore, Manics drummer and James' cousin] were watching a film called *The Pope Of Greenwich Village*. 'Summer Wind' was at the end and I nearly burst into tears. It reminds me of the first time music really, really touched me."

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH 'Garageland' - The Clash

"It's the first time I felt, 'I wanna do that.' I learned it very quickly, because there weren't many chords. It was the way they did it, the sound, and Joe's voice and expression and the lyrics. It had a massive effect on a lot of us, I think, but on me especially."

THE FIRST ALBUM I BOUGHT 'Out Of The Blue' - Electric Light Orchestra

"Just sheer wonderment. It's an overblown, unbridled expression of every kind of sense. You just felt like Jeff Lynne was catching Venus, Mars and all their moons and putting it in music. Absolutely amazing."

"THE CLASH WERE BORN TO BE SONGWRITERS"

THE SONG THAT MADE ME WANT TO BE IN A BAND 'V2' - That Petrol Emotion

"There was a handful of songs where it felt like I was being caught in their undertow and they were pointing me towards one direction, such as 'Shot By Both Sides' by Magazine – songs where I just thought, 'I can do it.' 'V2' was another, and it was just such a rush."

THE SONG YOU CAN NO LONGER LISTEN TO

'God Save The Queen' - Sex Pistols

"Being confronted by its perfection makes you feel inadequate in every sense. It crushes you. It crushes your ambition, it crushes your reality, it crushes your future, it crushes your past, it just immobilises you with fear of failure. I can't listen to it any more, because no one will ever get there again."

A SONG THAT MAKES ME WANT TO DANCE

'Under The Influence Of Love' - Love Unlimited Orchestra

"When Heavenly had their Sunday Social at Great Portland Street, they were my grand pisshead days, '93, '94. The Chemical Brothers played this at the end of every night. It always made me feel that I was at a very high-end, cerebral wedding."

THE SONG I DO AT KARAOKE 'Still Of The Night' - Whitesnake

"I've only ever done karaoke once, after Joe Calzaghe had beaten Bernard Hopkins and was unbeaten champion of the world. Kind of vaguely

fingers going again. I'm trying to think which one would be vaguely acceptable to an NME readership. None whatsoever, so fuck it, I'm gonna go for 'Limelight'."

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN

'Lost In The Supermarket' - The Clash

"Underneath the punk exterior, they were born to be songwriters. 'Lost In The Supermarket' deals with not feeling a sense of place in the time that you're in, and feeling kind of sad about it."

THE SONG THAT TAUGHT ME HOW TO MIX POLITICS AND POP

'Fight The Power' - Public Enemy

"Chuck D had the right mixture of everything. He was vitriolic, he had humour in it, he had pathos in it. You could hear the breath in his voice, you could hear the spittle, you could hear everything. He never strayed far away from politics, but made it seem glamorous."

THE SONG THAT REMINDS ME OF WALES

'Hometown Unicorn' - Super Furry Animals

It's on 'Fuzzy Logic'. I've seen some people go, 'I hated it when we got tagged with 'Cool Cymru' [the Welsh-specific 'Cool Britannia']'. I just thought, 'Why? We're selling loads of records! Don't be such a dick!'"

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

A sad old Welsh song

"Something really fucking gloomy and Welsh. I don't want any celebration, I don't want any happy faces. I don't want any concessions to modernity. I want it to be dour and densely tragic."

THE SONG I CAN'T OUT OF MY HEAD 'Limelight' - Rush

"It'd be a Rush song at the moment, because I've been practising to Rush to get my



Frank Sinatra

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

NME
NEW
BAND
 OF THE WEEK



Krill

The Boston oddballs pair hilarity with heartbreak over scrappy guitars

Listening to Boston trio Krill – whose wiry, nervous grunge scrawl is threaded with twisted tales about dead dogs, drowning in toilets and breaking into girls’ apartments – you could begin to worry about frontman Jonah Furman.

“I don’t really keep track of which bits are me and which are the song,” says the 24-year-old. “They’re all emotions that were true the moment I wrote it. I don’t think I’ve ever broken into anyone’s house, though...”

Aaron Ratoff, the drummer, pipes up with a simpler explanation: “Hey, Jon’s a weird guy!”

Weird is a good word to describe the Massachusetts band, who hail from the same DIY scene as Speedy Ortiz and share their hometown peers’ knack for guitar histrionics. Their first album, 2012’s ‘Lucky Leaves’, was originally released via a USB stick stuffed into a ball of mozzarella and sold for \$100, before a proper

release on East Coast imprint Exploding In Sound. “No-one bought it, so technically it’s still for sale,” laughs guitarist Ian Becker.

But there’s a serious side to Krill, too. For every lyric about feeling “*like a turd spinning in flushing water*” (“Turd”) there’s a line like the one at the bruised, twitching heart of fan favourite ‘Fresh Pond’, squawked nasally over scrappy Built To Spill guitars:

“*When I go home, I look out the window but all I see sometimes is the window pane*”. Their new album, ‘A Distant Fist Unclenching’, out February on 16, is even more powerful in its pivots between screwball hilarity and moments of devastating melancholy.

Years of touring – during which they would work temp jobs between three-month stints on the road – have seen the three-piece build a fierce cult following that’s now beginning to bubble over into Europe. Their debut UK tour also begins in February, and is sure to cement their rising reputation. “When we booked the plane tickets, it was a bit like, ‘Uh, this is happening, then!’” laughs Ian. “We’re still wrapping our heads around everything.”

■ AL HORNER

▼
 ON
NME.COM/
NEWMUSIC
NOW

► Stream new
 album ‘A Distant
 Fist Unclenching’

► THE DETAILS

- **BASED** Boston
- **FOR FANS OF** Built To Spill, Modest Mouse, Pixies
- **SOCIAL** facebook.com/krillforever
- **BUY IT** New album ‘A Distant Fist Unclenching’ is out on February 16
- **SEE THEM LIVE** Their first EU/UK tour kicks off at Manchester’s Gullivers on February 23
- **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** Guitarist Ian Becker shared a college dorm with a “pretty famous” major-label artist. He’s keeping schtum for now, other than saying “it wasn’t Pitbull”

Beat Cops

Tim Fletcher's deep croon was one of The Stills' most recognisable qualities but in his new band Beat Cops, he's practically incognito. Along with other members of the Montreal scene, he's ditched the Interpol-like dourness for something more fuzzy. 'Don't Give In To Sorrow' is like Queens Of The Stone Age doing '70s funk-rock, while 'When You Left Home' is manic but vibrant.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/beatcopsfever

► **HEAR THEM** beatcops.bandcamp.com

Anomie

Pennsylvania grunge outfit Field Mouse's lead singer Rachel Browne makes a hard-hitting impact as a solo artist. Her self-titled 'Anomie' EP is a time capsule to a week she spent writing music to alleviate pain during a "difficult time" – but the record is less of a sob story than a guitar-fuelled smack to the face. Fast-paced drums and Browne's '90s riot grrrl vocals pack a punch well worth taking.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/anomiesongs

► **HEAR HER** anomiesongs.bandcamp.com

NME BUZZ BAND OF THE WEEK

PPL MVR

Otherwise known as People Mover, these monster-suited yeti rockers are apparently a trio of already well known musicians in disguise. Yet their real identities are rendered irrelevant the moment you hear their storming, balls-out rock'n'roll. Like Electric Six whipping out their switchblades for a knife fight with QOTSA in a haunted biker bar, they recently rocked up at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah for their first gig outside of their hometown of L.A. Be afraid, very afraid.

► **SOCIAL** @pplmvr

► **HEAR THEM** EP out April 20



PPL MVR

The Tones

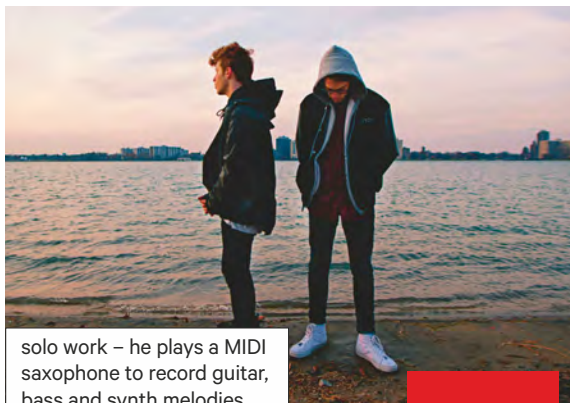
Not many bands have been pulled out of their GCSE lessons to go on tour with The Specials, but that's what happened to young London four-piece The Tones after being spotted by the 2 Tone legends' Lynval Golding at a Jazz Café gig last year. Formed in 2013, the sharp-suited 16-year-olds are infused with the smart Brit mod spirit of Steve Marriott, The Who and Arctic Monkeys and have one EP, 'Simplicity', to their name. An imminent BBC Introducing date in the capital with Welsh upstarts Pretty Vicious hints at a lively future.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/thetonesuk

► **SEE THEM LIVE** London Roundhouse (February 19)

Richard Sax Ross

Richard Sax Ross is 'The Man From The Nearly Recent Future', according to the title of his newly released EP, though he might be better known as one of the oddballs that make up Ariel Pink's band Haunted Graffiti. The Californian musician uses an interesting play in his



solo work – he plays a MIDI saxophone to record guitar, bass and synth melodies into his experimental pop pieces. Unsurprisingly, the results are mind-boggling.

► **SOCIAL** jesuswarhol.com

Daddy Issues

North Carolina oddities Daddy Issues revel in the absurd and risqué, writing sexually-charged tunes with names like 'So Hard'. The all-female surf group's first Bandcamp track sets their stall out, with lyrics including "thinking 'bout my love dripping down your thighs/That's when the feeling grows twice in size". Their first cassette EP, 'Double Loser', will be out on Valentine's Day, naturally.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/daddy.issues111

► **HEAR THEM** daddyissuesnc.bandcamp.com

Gosh Pith

Detroit's Gosh Pith manage to prove that taking inspiration from a vast selection of genres can actually work. Bringing together nostalgic melodies with luxurious modern production and just the right amount of midwestern grit, the duo's three singles to date have built up quite a buzz over the last few months. It's their latest track, 'Window', though that is the most promising – a hybrid of hip-hop beats, electronic experimentation and indie charm.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/goshpith

► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/gosh-pith

Gosh Pith

BAND CRUSH

James Bay



Eva Stone

"It's still very early days for Eva Stone, but she's got an incredible voice. She's got an enormous range which isn't exactly like Aretha Franklin but is similar. It's not balls-out soul, it's a little more acoustic guitar, but she's got the lungs!"

Powerdove

Experimental "noise folk" outfit Powerdove may sound like a racket of combusting string instruments during the opening of recent album 'Arrest', but it's a record that pays dividends to those who delve deeper. Past the screaming violins of the Nick Cave-like 'When You're Near' there are gentle lullabies and toy-box symphonies to be found, with the beautiful 'Into The Sea' being one of many highlights.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/powerdovemusic
► **HEAR THEM** powerdove.bandcamp.com

Leapling

Leapling are one of the most interesting bands to come from Brooklyn recently, with recent track 'NERVE' delivered with a claustrophobic and dystopian twist purloined from mid-'90s Radiohead. New song 'Vacant Page' is released on February 10.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/leaplingmusic
► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/leapling

House Of Laurence

Drawing influence from "the depths of space and sound", as well as bands like The Byrds and The

Boulevards

Animals, Melbourne's House Of Laurence are gloriously psych-heavy. Their debut LP 'Awake' features songs like the 'Devil's Walk' – an odyssey of acid-tinged riffs, jazzy drums and whispered vocals. With the average song surpassing seven minutes, the quartet don't do things by halves.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/houseoflaurence
► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/house-of-laurence

Haioka

Shintaro Haioka bridges the gap between dancefloors and art galleries with his intricate electronica. An alumnus of Tokyo's Red Bull Music Academy, he's soundtracked installations by a host of artists as well as becoming an attraction in clubs. Latest track 'TTHC' bears the fragility of James Blake and inventiveness of Jon Hopkins.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/haioka.jp
► **HEAR HIM** haioka.jp

Boulevards

If you haven't found the funk after Mark Ronson's latest efforts, you'd be

Woof

well disposed to look in Raleigh, North Carolina. Jamil Rashad is the man (and Prince disciple) behind dancefloor classics like 'Gimme All Of You' and 'Sundress'. On latest effort 'Got To Go' he eschews nostalgia in all but attitude to produce a two-minute distillation of all your best nights on the lash.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/imboulevards
► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/boulevards_official

Calypso

Comprised of Samantha Richman, Sheets Tucker and North Carolina singer-songwriter Jackson Scott (of 'Melbourne' semi-fame), Calypso have signed to French label Atelier Ciseaux to release their debut EP 'Oracle' on cassette. It's limited to 100 copies but you can find the menacing 'Isn't Now' online.

► **SOCIAL** atelierciseaux.com
► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/atelierciseaux

Sevenoak

This Melbourne producer's latest single, 'Fools Gold', sums up his style. Channelling a moody, Thom Yorke-like aura, Sevenoak – real name Bé Price – uses electronic pulses and simple drum machine beats alongside stirring falsetto vocals to create a dark and hypnotic atmosphere.

Radar NEWS ROUND UP

WELLER'S NEW BANDS

Paul Weller has picked a bunch of the most buzzy new bands to support him on his upcoming tour. The Modfather heads out on the road across the UK in March, where he'll be joined by newcomers including The Sundowners, The Merrylees and The Gramotones.

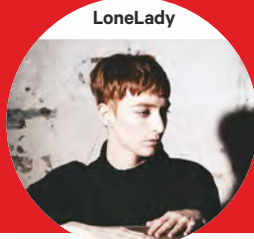
LONELADY'S RETURN

March 23 sees the release of Julie Campbell – aka LoneLady's – new album 'Hinterland'. Recorded at Campbell's home studio for the most part, she travelled to Michigan to complete the production alongside Bill Skibbe, who has previously worked with Austra and The Kills.

Benjamin Booker



LoneLady



BOOKER'S THIRD MAN

Benjamin Booker is the latest act to hook up with Jack White's Third Man Records, having recorded his live album – which is out now – at the Nashville label's HQ last September. Booker initially met with White after supporting him on the road in the US last year.

BEECH COMA'S COME BACK

The London label release their latest compilation album on March 9, featuring Bruising's new single 'Can't You Feel' alongside tracks by Jr, Bare Pale and Thalassocracy. It's available to pre-order from Beachcoma.bandcamp.com as part of a £10 bundle with a T-shirt and artwork.

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



House Of Laurence

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/sevenoakofficial
 ► **HEAR HIM** sevenoakofficial.bandcamp.com

La Bête Blooms

La Bête Blooms formed back in 2010 but they've just offered up a notable set of SoundCloud demos. 'Wishing I Could Kill' borrows some of Mac DeMarco's hallmarks, while new track 'Stay Away' is an overdriven thrasher that will appeal to those who like the feral ferocity of Nirvana's 'Territorial Pissings'.
 ► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/labeteblooms
 ► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/labeteblooms

Radar LABEL OF THE WEEK

FatCat



► **FOUNDED** 1997 by David Cawley and

Alexander Knight

► **BASED** Brighton and New York

► **KEY RELEASES** Sigur Rós – Agaetis Byrjun (2000), No Age – Weirdo Rippers (2007), Honeyblood – Honeyblood (2014)

► **NME SAYS** Initially starting out as an electronic-based shop in Crawley, FatCat has since become one of the UK's best loved labels – a suitable home for anyone with a penchant for the DIY aesthetic.

Woof

Who says there's no imagination left in indie? Kelan Bonislowski – the New Jersey-based multi-instrumentalist behind Woof – cites the likes of Beck, Of Montreal and Animal Collective as influences, and his self-titled debut EP is very much in that vein of magpie-eyed indie-pop.
 ► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/iamwoof
 ► **HEAR HIM** woofmusic.wix.com/woof

Beech Creeps

Fans of US punks Diarrhea Planet can welcome Beech Creeps into their weird and wonderful playlists. 'Times Be Short' is the first track from their self-titled debut album, out on March 3. Chugging riffs supply the backbone while falsetto vocal parts and infectious melodies fill out the rest.
 ► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/beechcreeps
 ► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/monofonus

Day Wave

Californian Jackson Phillips is a champion of twee laptop pop. 'Total Zombie' is his latest track, a gentle juggernaut that helplessly whisks the listener along in its slipstream with charming lyrical refrains: "Close your eyes and I'll close mine, let me close your heart it just takes time", he chirps.
 ► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/daywavemusic
 ► **HEAR HIM** soundcloud.com/day-wave

Nuclear Santa Claus

Brooklyn's Nuclear Santa Claus's first album, 'Order Of The New Age', was full of balls-to-the-wall brutality, as seen in the Ramones-like 'Government Issued Acid Trip'. Now they're back with 'Sayonara Baby' from the follow-up 'Je Ne Sais Claus'. The kind of ugly racket you can lose your shit to.
 ► **SOCIAL** dongiovanni records.com/band/nuclear-santa-claus
 ► **HEAR THEM** nuclearsantaclaus.bandcamp.com

NEW SOUNDS FROM WAY OUT

This week's columnist

ARNI
 ARNASON

The Vaccines



ICELAND, ICELAND BABY

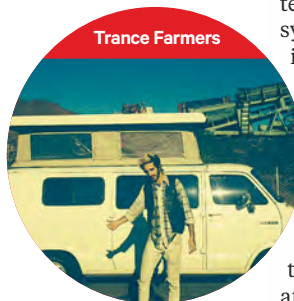
My relationship with Icelandic krautrock psychsters **Fufanu** is a perfect example of how ridiculously small our island nation is. Lead singer Kaktus Einarsson's first band Capybara spent most of its formative months playing in a youth centre I was running in Reykjavik at the time, and my unbridled enthusiasm for their loud presence in said youth centre resulted in one of their earliest songs being called 'Við Erum Pönkararnir Hans Árna' – which translates as 'We Are Arni's Punks'. A few years later Kaktus has clearly grown out of his naïve punk silliness and the duo, completed by guitarist/programmer Gulli, has signed to One Little Indian. Their first single, 'Circus Life', is a hypnotic, seven-minute long arctic-shoegaze piece that certainly got me excited for what's to come.

Fanfarlo's Cathy Lucas joined us as a live member on tour late last year, and it was then that I first listened to her solo project, **Orlando**. Described as "music for telepathic amphibians" Orlando's sub-aquatic space synthpop showcases Cathy's love for weird, wonderful instruments and sonics. I know there's no such thing as sub-aquatic space, but check out 'Earth Moon Earth' to see what I mean.

Stonethrow's love for a good drug pun (think Silk Rhodes) continues with their latest offering: **The Mild High Club**. This solo venture of LA lounge Alexander Brettin (that's an assumption, I've got no idea where he's from) is aptly named though as his woozy dreampop sounds like a stoned afternoon lazing around on Venice Beach but doesn't quite reach "throwing-up-from-paranoia" levels of high.

The king of LA stoners must be **Trance Farmers**. I've had his massively under-appreciated debut album 'Dixie Crystals' on repeat since I started writing this, and the fact it's taken me two and a bit hours to scribble down a couple of hundred words is testament to the record's haze-inducing effect. Its industrial/rockabilly '50s crooner-inspired concoction is hardly something you'd put on in a club, but it's been a while since I've heard a better Sunday record.

The best gig I've been to lately was **Febueder**. While their EP 'Lilac Lane' is a very engaging record, it's their live show that impresses the most. Think This Heat playing James Blake. Mesmerising and abrasive.



Trance Farmers

"The Mild High Club sounds like a stoned afternoon lazing on Venice Beach"

Next week: Wolf Alice

SHINY

24

Far from the wide-eyed breeziness of their debut album, Peace's second record sees them confronting growing pains and global turmoil. Rhian Daly asks tentatively: have the Birmingham scamps gone... *mature?*

PHOTOS: ED MILES

PEO



HAPPY

PLE

A

queue of keen fans snakes around the side of Bristol venue The Exchange, not letting the bitter air deter them from bagging themselves a spot as close to the stage as possible. The venue door opens momentarily as four young men squeeze through the line. “Oh my god, it’s fucking Dom!” one girl exclaims as drummer Dom Boyce leads Peace out of the building for their pre-gig dinner.

Tonight is the first of the Birmingham band’s two shows in the south-west city. It’s part of their ongoing tour of small venues (christened the J’Adore Tour) that sees them taking up residency in towns across the country for a few nights at a time. The jaunt was designed as an intimate reward for fans who’ve patiently waited for Peace’s second album, ‘Happy People’, after its release was delayed by five months, giving them a chance to hear new tracks within touching distance rather than in the much bigger venues they could be filling.

By the time the band return to the venue, it’s heaving with gig-goers eager for their sneak preview. Predictably, old favourites like ‘Bloodshake’ and ‘Follow Baby’ transform the

room into an eddying, chaotic mass, but new song ‘Gen Strange’ provokes just as strong a reaction. There’s something so fitting about a crowd of ecstatic kids roaring lines about “*generation strange’s general ache and pain*” back at the band – lost in the moment in a blaze of blissful rapture and oblivious to the song’s pessimistic take on the world.

It’s a delicious contradiction, just like Peace themselves.

It’s two days

later, and the band are back in Birmingham preparing for more of the same at The Institute on Digbeth High Street that night. It’ll be a homecoming show of sorts, a return to the stretch of road where they spent their teenage years clubbing, performing, fighting and flirting. But those days feel like a lifetime ago. Dom, bassist Sam Koisser and his younger brother and frontman Harry are all living down in London now, with only guitarist – and father of one-year-old Caspar – Doug Castle left to call the Midlands home.

Prior to the release of their debut album, 2013’s ‘In Love’, things were simpler for Peace. The record reflected that: it was a brilliantly fuzzy rush about friendship and girls that perfectly summed up the limited carefree

days that remained before the onset of proper adulthood. Its winsome naivety resonated with many – the album charted in the Top 20 and led to the band finishing that year with two sold-out shows at London’s Shepherd’s Bush Empire. The rise of Peace felt as exhilaratingly vital as the music they made.

There’s only so long you can remain that innocent, though. Over the past two years, the quartet have grown as individuals: seen the world and had their hearts broken. To put out another album about life in the bubble “between Dom’s spare room and The Rainbow”, says Harry, referencing their old Birmingham haunt, would be to get stuck in a sort of time warp. Instead, ‘Happy People’ looks beyond that bubble to tackle both personal and worldly despair.

The bulk of the album was recorded at Dean Street Studios in London with producer Jim Abbiss (Arctic Monkeys’ debut), but after the release date was pushed back, the band took a holiday to Rockfield Studios in Wales to record three new songs: the baggy ‘I’m A Girl’ and ‘Perfect Skin’ and the acoustic ‘Someday’.

“It was a win-win situation,” Dom explains. “We either went away and had a laugh or we went away and had a laugh and made some



LOCATION PHOTOS: JORDAN HUGHES



Peace take in the delights of Kidderminster and play The Institute in Birmingham

"I had five years of being ecstatic and not giving a shit"

Harry Koisser

songs. And we made a comical video as well."

"Yeah, we tried to make a rockumentary, but I just couldn't be bothered after a while," Harry says. "I'm glad those songs went on the record – it meant we could do the 18-track extended version. No-one does that!"

Dom corrects him: "Chilis do [ie, the Red Hot Chili Peppers], but they can get away with it."

When Peace released 'In Love', NME's review of the record sparked a furore among some of the music press for suggesting that just because it sounded like a wealth of older records – by Suede, Blur, The Stone Roses and more – that didn't make it any less exciting or significant. On 'Happy People' opener 'O You', Harry sings: "The '90s were cool, I have no doubt/The '80s were better, I've heard all about". A sly reference to that uproar?

"I guess, probably," the frontman says. "We were being compared to all these bands I'd never heard of. But I also spend so much of my

time thinking about what was better. Does it even matter? It's *actually* the past. Why do we care so much?"

"Because we never want to let go of our youth?" offers Sam.

Harry shrugs. "Earlier today, I looked on Insty [Instagram] and it was like being back in the '90s. 'The '90s were great' – was it that good? Was there Insty? Was there emoji? No there wasn't. I always used to be so Peter Pan about growing up. Literally to the point where people hated me because I was so immature. I don't feel like an adult right now."

In a world where social media makes it easier to reconnect with old school friends and see what everyone you used to know is doing, Harry says it confuses him to compare himself to his peers who have already got families and proper jobs; it leaves him thinking, "I've done nothing."

"I'm 24 this year and that's freaking me out," he says. "I always knew my dad was 24 when he had a kid, so that for me was always the age of being old. I always thought I'd be old by then. It's a strange thought. Is that young to have a kid? Doug's got a kid!"

The afternoon of the Birmingham gig, we accompany Harry and Sam on a trip to nearby Kidderminster, where they lived until they were eight and 10 respectively. We walk through town, Harry in a mustard trench coat and big magenta sunglasses and Sam all in black, both standing out among the more conservatively dressed shoppers. On the other side of the town centre – a small sprawl of market stalls selling hi-vis clothing and pet accessories, dilapidated vacant shops and faceless high street chains – is Mr Tee's Rock Shop, where the brothers' dad used to take them as kids. It's stuffed to the rafters with records, patches, badges, memorabilia and odd costumes. A stringless ukulele hangs from the ceiling by the till with the sign "Jimi Hendrix's first guitar? Buy as seen – no strings attached".

In one corner of the shop, hidden among precarious stacks of vintage tat, Harry pulls a furry grey onesie off a rail. "Oh my god, I need this," he gasps, holding it up to reveal a matching wolf mask attached to the hanger. Upstairs in a small, cluttered storeroom, he grabs at a sparkly harlequin costume and then pulls on a big yellow bear's head that matches his coat. Eventually, he decides on a pinstriped rubber trench coat with a layer of dust stuck to its collar. "It's so Burberry," he jokes to Sam.

Fashion is a recurring theme on 'Happy People' and in Peace's world. They've become known as a band with a flamboyant sense of

style, unafraid to dress up in women's clothes in their videos and photo shoots. In fact, they actively suggest it. One song, 'Fur', talks about a big fluffy coat as a kind of suit of armour against the world, because "*nothing matters when you're wearing fur*". Meanwhile, 'I'm

A Girl' tackles issues of masculinity and cultural expectations of young men. It was actress Emma Watson's "He For She" speech about gender equality last September that got Harry thinking about stereotypes after he found himself unable to identify with the bravado and machismo inherent in lad culture.

"Once, I was waiting for someone on Digbeth High Street, wearing a fur coat," Harry recalls, a slight smirk spreading across his face. "Two Irish guys came up to me and were like, 'You're a queer, come here and let me kick you in the balls.' So many things you can tell me to come here for and I will, but not that. I think [I'm A Girl] is a bit regressive, though – I think I was thinking how I used to feel. Now I've just learnt to live with it."

Although 'Happy People' often seems like a much deeper record than its predecessor, Harry always seems keen to shake off any serious readings of their songs. The title is at odds with his downcast lyrics about heartbreak and loneliness; on the title track he begs his upbeat friends to "let me know how you do it", while the Justin Timberlake-indebted 'Blue' sees him musing, "You used to be happy, you used to be you/Maybe it's me turning you blue". It makes the last two years seem like quite a struggle, though he insists that's not the case.

"They haven't been hard," he says, laughing.

"It's the first time I was a human being who wasn't a deluded teenager. I probably had five years of being absolutely ecstatic and not giving a shit about anything. When the party stops there's going to be at least an emotional ➔

THE BUCKET LIST

Harry's ambitious checklist of the songs he wants to write

The ultimate love song

"If you can write the ultimate credible love song that's not cheesy and just sums it up in a way that's like 'Oh my god', then that's great."

A mindblower

"I want to write something like 'Stairway To Heaven' – not too much but just really mind-blowing. It's not too much of an odyssey, just really on point, lyrically and musically."

An Eminem song

"The next album needs more Eminem on it, where the rhyming is just on form. The punctuation, the pattern and just lyrically it'd be like Eminem. I've never gone there before, but I think I could do it."

An exciting intro

"I'm bad at intros – I don't know how to do them. I want to write one that's as exciting as the one in 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'. It's so exciting on the ears. But I want it to be original – not ripping anyone off."

A song to define a species

"Not a song to define a generation but a song to define a species. Something mindblowing that's just like 'shit, that's so hot'. Actually, no! The next 'Uptown Funk!' Too hot."





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Peace (l-r):
Dom, Sam,
Harry and Doug,
January 21

hangover of two years. So maybe that's what I'm going through."

Pushed, though, he will occasionally acknowledge having had a "shit few years". Not least in relation to his break-up with TV presenter and model Billie JD Porter, who Harry proposed to at an afterparty on the 2013 NME Awards Tour. There are plenty of songs on 'Happy People' that touch on their split and Harry's hopeless feelings about it, but none are more surprising than 'Someday'. Along the lines of Oasis' 'Little By Little', it's an astonishingly mature ballad: "Maybe all of this happened so that both of us could grow", he suggests.

"I know, right? Where did that come from?!" he nods, equally impressed by himself. "I think I was having a mature week. It seems like something Sting would sing. But that was the first time I was writing about the stuff going on in my head – almost like writing songs therapeutically and then using the lyrics for stuff."

There are tentative steps beyond his own head, too. Though Harry says he doesn't feel like the band have a responsibility to comment on politics just yet, he sees the album as a stepping stone towards that. There's the likes of 'Money', a *Death Of A Salesman*-inspired take on the darker side of making paper and a modern reboot of The Clash's 'The Magnificent Seven'. 'O You', meanwhile, points at the mess of society and economics that's being handed down from older generations, the youth inheriting "something broken, twisted, pillaged, raped and burned". 'The Music Was To Blame' takes its cues from 'The Rise & Fall Of Ziggy Stardust...', and sees Harry setting out his thoughts on the state of the human race: "Oh, you're terrible people and now you've got no corners left to turn/No matches left to burn".

It's a kind of anti-'Cigarettes And Alcohol', Harry explains.



"It feels a little
bit like the party
has got to stop"

Harry Koisser

"On one level, that's about being a fuckhead and physically burning out your brain, but there's a bigger picture to that song too," Harry explains. "I love that pop culture started as 'we've been through a really shit time so let's just party'. Now it does feel a little bit like the party's got to stop. It's Monday morning, the sun's up and there's beer cans everywhere and people having shit conversations on your bed. The bathroom's disgusting and someone's been sick in the bin. I think that's where we are as a race now. It's all fucked."

The events of 2015 so far back up those feelings: we inhabit a world where terror rears

its head with alarming regularity. Harry wavers in and out of optimism as he decides we can still be saved, suggesting we're still going through a mental evolution that, at some point, will flick a switch and all the bad will end. It sounds naive and idealistic, but the wide-eyed way he explains it – using birds' emigration habits and bees' "collective intelligence" as examples – makes it seem like it's almost possible.

"If I could just alert everyone to it," the singer begins, pausing and pushing back his hair, which still holds remnants of last summer's orange dye job. "Everyone be respectful of each other and we'll be alright and we can continue. The music might not be as loud, but we can still have fun."

Backstage at The

Institute that evening, various family members and friends filter through the dressing rooms as the band down their traditional pre-show shot of vodka. It's fitting that they should be joined by the people they've grown up with as they prepare to play songs about the confusion of entering adulthood and opening your mind up beyond your immediate environment for the first time.

As they tear through a typically heart-racing set, Harry drops references to Mark Ronson's 'Uptown Funk' between songs wherever possible and the security guards are run ragged trying to halt the rolling waves of crowdsurfers and keep the barrier at the side of the room in its place. Even songs the audience are hearing for the first time, like 'O You' and 'Perfect Skin', elicit pure carnage and air-punching adulation. It's slick and professional – almost a grown-up performance.

As everyone slinks back to the dressing room, madness descends. Doug sets up four Polaroid photos in the toilet and declares it an art gallery, ushering everyone in for individual viewings. Harry and Dom DJ the club night,

using the opportunity to play 'Uptown Funk' as many times as is socially acceptable, before everyone heads to indie club Snobs for shots and dancing to Oasis and The Clash. Peace may be confused about the world around them, temporarily bereft of their once-sunny disposition and, at times, a walking contradiction, but they still manage to make those situations look like all the fun in the world. ■



STATE OF THE ART

'Happy People's cryptic cover decoded

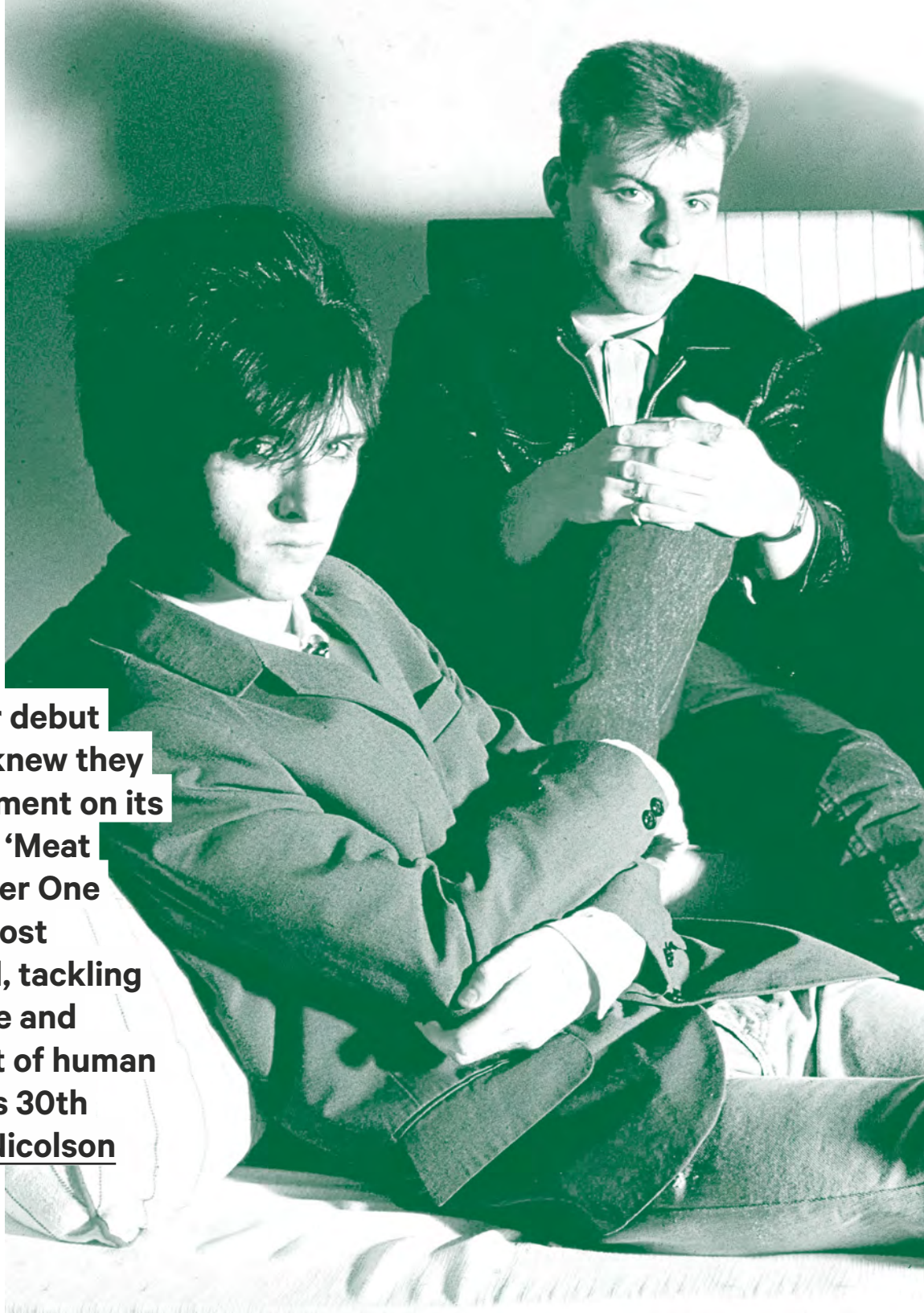
Harry: "No-one believes it's just one photo taken in the mirror. The mirror was built by a mathematical genius. The angles are so precise that when you're stood in the centre, you can see everything but yourself. We built a living room that we sat in, so the camera's at the back of the room. The only thing that's Photoshopped is

a crease on the wallpaper and the scuffs on the mirror. I liked the crease, though."

Dom: "I'm wearing a Princess Diana T-shirt in the photo, and I'll be honest, I didn't think it would be as clear as it is when it's up on a vinyl. I'm not anti-D! It's just a great T-shirt, basically."

Harry: "I like the idea that she had merch, like you can go on her Big Cartel. The cover's yellow because I got an iPad case that colour and I just thought it was nice. But everything snowballs when it gets to the label. 'Yellow?' Everything has to be yellow. Maybe it's a reference to the Coldplay song."

NO MINCED



Dissatisfied by their debut album, The Smiths knew they had to make a statement on its follow-up. And *how*: 'Meat Is Murder' hit Number One and remains their most commanding record, tackling Thatcherite injustice and the carnivorous root of human violence. To mark its 30th anniversary, Barry Nicolson surveys its legacy

WORDS



The Smiths in 1985: (l-r)
Johnny Marr, Andy Rourke,
Morrissey and Mike Joyce

A

t the close of 1984, the social and political landscape of Great Britain may not quite have mirrored the dystopian nightmare that George Orwell had predicted 35 years earlier, but nor did it seem too wide of the mark. The previous year, Margaret Thatcher had been elected to a second

term in office; across the Atlantic, her fellow neoliberal ideologue Ronald Reagan had just pulled off the same feat. On October 12, the IRA bombed the Grand Hotel in Brighton during the Conservative party conference, missing their target – Thatcher herself – but killing five and injuring 31 others. Unemployment was at a record high, and the miners' strike – led by firebrand union leader Arthur Scargill – was entering the ninth month of its doomed struggle. What difference did it make? For The Smiths – then still largely defined in the public imagination by their frontman's sexual ambiguity, his love of innuendo and their kitschy fetishisation of '60s British cinema icons laid bare on their 1984 debut – it made all the difference in the world.

As he told *Melody Maker* later, Morrissey felt that the time had come “for someone to simply rip their heart open and be brutally honest, because I don't think people had been for a long time. I wanted people to identify their lives with The Smiths. I get really tired of watching groups with bedazzling stage shows and all these ‘wonderful’ videos in Egypt or whatever. I wanted people to *identify*”.

Released in February 1985, ‘Meat Is Murder’ would do more than that: it was a declaration of anger, principles and conviction, a crystallisation of what The Smiths were about. There would be no more innuendo, no more grey areas. This was their line in the sand.

“It was the defining gauntlet: ‘Are you with us or against us?’” says Smiths biographer Simon Goddard. “Whereas the debut album was a lot more adult and sexual in theme, this hit the bull's-eye for the impressionable end of adolescence: teachers are bastards, knickers to the Queen, don't eat animals and watch yourself on the dodgems. It sounded like a band having a knees-up while simultaneously trying to change the world, which was The Smiths at their best. I still maintain that ‘Strangeways, Here We Come’ is the artistic peak, but as a blast of joyous Smiths at full pelt, ‘Meat Is Murder’ remains my nostalgic favourite.”

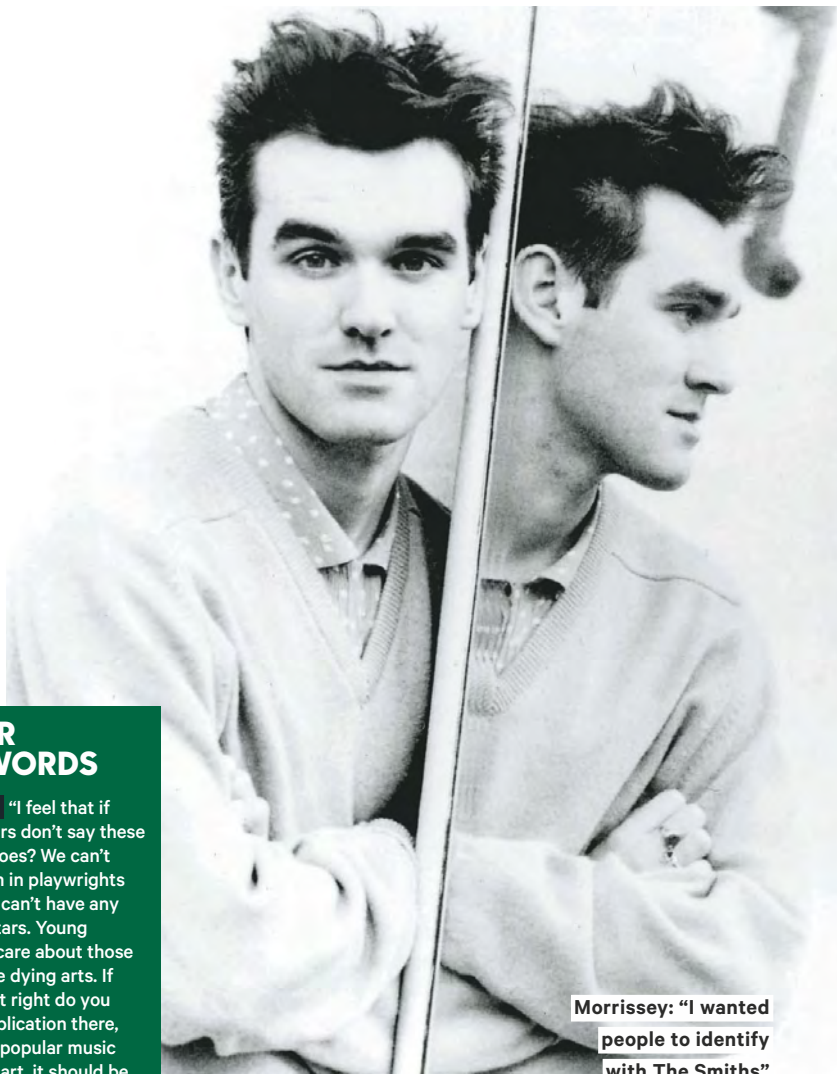
“It's hard to understand now, but the miners' strike – which went on for a year – got into absolutely everything,” recalls Billy Bragg, who in the summer of 1984 would join The Smiths on the bill at the Greater London Council's Jobs For A Change festival. “You were either on one side or the other, and pop music had become very political. It was how you showed that you weren't just making chart music, you were doing something else – something more vital.”

In contrast to the trials and tribulations of their debut, which they recorded twice with two different producers, never entirely to their satisfaction, The Smiths' second LP would prove to be a far more straightforward

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

► **MORRISSEY** “I feel that if popular singers don't say these things, who does? We can't have any faith in playwrights any more, we can't have any faith in film stars. Young people don't care about those things, they're dying arts. If you say, ‘What right do you have?’ the implication there, to me, is that popular music is quite a low art, it should be hidden, it can be there, but let's not say anything terribly important.”

► **JOHNNY MARR** “Is it the Johnny Marr Smiths record? Maybe... I was exploring what I could do. I was feeling really let loose on that second record. The first period was over – of getting known, learning to play onstage, getting a label and getting a relationship with the audience and then that's worked out. And then I went into it just rolling my sleeves up and thinking, ‘Let's see what we can do!’”



Morrissey: “I wanted people to identify with The Smiths”

undertaking. As a songwriting partnership, Morrissey and Marr were in near-subatomic sync, and the decision to produce themselves rather than rehire John Porter (a collaboration that had yielded four consecutive Top 40 hits and a Number Two album), though made by Morrissey himself, sat easily with Marr, who would undertake most of the actual ‘producing’. The only other person who would be present in the studio was Stephen Street, an ambitious young engineer who had worked with the band on their single ‘Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now’ earlier that year.

“I was surprised to get the call,” recalls Street, who thought his window of opportunity had been slammed shut when he wasn't invited back to work on the follow-up single, ‘William, It Was Really

Nothing’. “I thought John Porter had done a wonderful job, but the band's minds were made up. They wanted to make the album themselves, to see where it would lead them.”

The first place it led them was Liverpool's Amazon Studios, where recording got underway in October 1984. “It was pretty grim,” recalls Street. “I was staying in a hotel in Manchester at the time, and we'd get picked up every day in this old, white Mercedes limousine and driven over to Kirkby, which took about an hour. We were on a big old industrial estate, which had this studio on it, which was actually quite popular at the time – Echo And The Bunnymen had recently recorded there. Suffice to say, I wasn't very enamoured by it, and I don't think the band were either. It wasn't a very inspirational place to have to go and make a record in every day. Sure, it was bleak and grey

and northern, but it didn't feel like the kind of place that would be conducive to making something that everyone was happy with – certainly, I don't think Morrissey was very comfortable there. The band were having some degree of success at that time, and they felt – rightly so – that they deserved a nicer environment to work in."

Street preferred to work regimented, eight- to 10-hour days in the studio, which was fine with Morrissey, who was always eager to get back to Manchester before it got too late. The frontman had never quite warmed to John Porter and had been largely responsible for ousting him from the producer's chair, so Street knew he would have to tread lightly, "to always be on my toes, to put as much effort into getting a vocal sound as I would a guitar or drum sound. Morrissey wasn't one for doing endless vocal takes: you'd have to coax it out of him. Sometimes, in order to get one more take, I'd make out that something wasn't quite right with the previous one – that there had been a problem with the microphone, and I needed one more go at the verse. But the guy performs, basically – he gets vibed up, then goes in and does it. I'd say three, at most four takes, and you'd have it".

Amazon may have been lacking a certain ambience – after a few weeks, Street and the band decided to move to the more agreeable environs of Ridge Farm, a residential studio in Surrey – but work there progressed at a steady pace. Among the very first things they recorded was the album's opener, 'The Headmaster Ritual', whose riptide of Rickenbacker guitars would become Johnny Marr's enduring signature. Another track, 'Well I Wonder', may even have been a direct beneficiary of Amazon's down-at-heel charmlessness. "I met a guy who told me that he used to engineer there," recalls Simon Goddard. "Apparently the studio suffered from a leaky roof and every time it rained it dripped in, just like you hear on that song. He was adamant that's where Morrissey got the idea for the sound effect."

As for Marr himself, the autonomy of producing the record on his own ("with no grown-ups around") proved more invigorating than intimidating. "Johnny was pretty enthusiastic about everything at that time, because it felt as though they were striking gold at every session," says Stephen Street. "They were really finding their form as a group and as a writing team, and once we got there, he was like a kid in a toy shop. Because we were pretty much left to our own devices, it felt as though there was a certain freedom to that session – to experiment, to try things out."

When it was released in February 1985, 'Meat Is Murder' became The Smiths' crowning commercial achievement, topping the UK album charts (the only one of their releases to do so), displacing Bruce Springsteen's 'Born In The USA' in the process. Its cover, meanwhile – a still photograph of US Marine Corporal Michael Wynn taken from director Emile de Antonio's 1968 Vietnam war documentary *In The Year Of The Pig* (the graffiti on the helmet originally read 'Make War Not Love') – would go on to become the single most iconic image of The Smiths' career. It was all very fitting: there's a focus and cohesion to 'Meat Is Murder' that was missing from the band's debut. If The Smiths' other LPs – and you can include even venerated 1986 follow-up

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** Winter 1984 ► **RELEASE** DATE February 11, 1985 ► **LABEL** Rough Trade ► **PRODUCERS** The Smiths

► **LENGTH** 39:46 ► **TRACKLISTING**

► The Headmaster Ritual ► Rusholme Ruffians ► I Want The One I Can't Have ► What She Said ► That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore ► Nowhere Fast ► Well I Wonder ► Barbarism Begins At Home ► Meat Is Murder ► **DID YOU KNOW?** 'Meat Is Murder' was one of the factors in Thom

Yorke's decision to become vegetarian in the early 1990s.



'The Queen Is Dead' in this – could sometimes feel more like collections of (admittedly exquisite) songs, 'Meat Is Murder' was their statement, a nine-point manifesto stating that the personal and the political were not mutually exclusive concepts, but symbiotic ones.

The cyclical nature of violence serves as the album's overarching theme. Whether administered by "belligerent ghouls" in mortarboards ('The Headmaster Ritual'), tooled-up local toughs ('Rusholme Ruffians') or overbearing parents ('Barbarism Begins At Home'), the root cause and end result – at least according to the Morrissey Doctrine – are always the same. "It's all completely connected," he explained to a panel of fanzine interviewers in March 1985. "It all weaves in and it's all kind of embroidered to make one overall foul image. From that time that you get hit as a child, as covered in 'Barbarism Begins At Home', violence is the only answer... I think as long as human beings are so violent towards animals, there will be war. Where there's this absolute lack of sensitivity where life is concerned, there will always be war."

If violence begets violence, it's surely no coincidence that the album ends with the sound of braying farmyard animals being sent to slaughter while an adoring crowd whoops and cheers. This, Morrissey seems to be saying, is industrialised murder on the scale of Auschwitz or Dachau, committed with the blessing and for the benefit of *you* – bite-sized nuggets of cruelty processed, packaged and delivered to the kitchen table, where the whole rotten cycle begins again.

"Morrissey's lyrics didn't surprise me, not in the slightest," Johnny Marr told *Spin* in 2012. "Some of the very, very early songs we did were actually more radical. So the title track, 'Meat Is Murder', for example, I thought, 'Do I have an album's worth of music to match that kind of title?' But you think about it for 40 seconds, and then you move on to thinking, 'This is gonna be really interesting!'"

Morrissey's rapier wit and way with a pull-quote had made him a fixture in the music press in 1984, almost to the point of overexposure, but his interviews – like his lyrics – were becoming increasingly provocative and political. Of the IRA bombing in Brighton, he remarked – with a rather callous disregard for the deaths of five ➔



FAMOUS FAN

► **IAN BROWN** "My favourite Smiths track is 'Barbarism Begins At Home' because that bassline is what Andy [Rourke] would've been playing when he was about 14. That Morrissey sang with his own accent was a big deal. Obviously, the lyrics are great. The way that he arranges his songs... no-one else arranges their songs like that. He repeats lines, but each one's got a different melody."

**"YOU HAVE
TO GET
ANGRY"
MORRISSEY**



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**The Smiths in
1984: making an
album “with no
grown-ups around”**

people – that “the only sorrow is that Thatcher escaped unscathed. The sorrow is that she’s still alive.” When asked a few months later if he regretted that statement, he was absolutely unrepentant: “No! I’ll say it now and I’ll say it louder and I’ll say it any time you want me to say it.” The newly sainted Bob Geldof, meanwhile, was derided as a “nauseating character”, whose Band Aid single, released in December 1984, was a form of “daily torture on the people of England” and “the most self-righteous platform ever in the history of popular music”. As he said shortly after the release of ‘Meat Is Murder’, “We are very, very angry. We’re angry about the music industry. We’re very angry about pop music. And I think it’s about time that somebody said something and somebody did something that is of value.”

Inevitably, the album’s biggest talking point would be its focus on animal rights, which Morrissey insisted to *Smash Hits* “isn’t catchphrase of the month. It isn’t this year’s hysteria. I’m madly serious about it.” He had become a vegetarian age 11 or 12, inspired by his mother, and wasn’t the only one in Britain who was madly serious about the issue. During the recording of the album, the Animal Liberation Front announced they had poisoned the nation’s Mars Bars in protest at Mars Inc conducting tooth-decay experiments on monkeys, costing the company millions in profits. The claim ultimately turned out to be a hoax, but even if it hadn’t, it was time for such measures, said Morrissey, “because polite demonstration is pointless. You have to get angry, you have to be violent, otherwise what’s the point? There’s no point in demonstrating if you don’t get any national press, TV or radio, or nobody listens to you, or you get beaten up by the police. So I do believe in these animal groups, but I think they should be more forceful and I think what they need now is a national figure... I think they need some very forthright figurehead.”

Morrissey may or may not have been angling to fill the position, but fate would soon conspire to put him there. That June, The Smiths toured America, supported by Billy Bragg and the occasional drag queen. Following a gig in Washington, DC, the singer’s hotel room phone rang in the middle of the night; on the line was Dan Matthews, a local Smiths fan who had been at the show and was looking to finagle an interview for Peta, a fledgling animal rights group he had joined. Though he had been refusing all interview requests on the tour, Morrissey granted

Matthews’ wish, telling him that “since this is for the animals, obviously I’m duty-bound”.

Matthews is now senior vice president at Peta and credits ‘Meat Is Murder’ with “ushering in a new era” for animal rights awareness. “Before The Smiths came along,” he explains, “animal rights protests in the late ’70s and early ’80s were attended mainly by old ladies, with a few hippies and a few punk-rockers. When we did the interview with Morrissey for the *Student Action Corps For Animals* magazine, suddenly everyone was interested – everybody had to have a copy.”

Buoyed by the rise of US college radio – where The Smiths were receiving heavy rotation – the American tour was a resounding success, but the band’s managerial merry-go-round, which had begun with the resignation of their original manager Joe Moss in December 1983, was starting to take its toll. For most of 1984 and 1985, various factions – first New York-based promoter Ruth Polsky, then Rough Trade radio plugger Scott Piering, then Madness manager Matthew Sztumpf – were jostling behind the scenes to fill the vacancy, none of them with much permanence, let alone success.

“Scott Piering had no history as a manager and I don’t think he would have been powerful or experienced enough as a negotiator to succeed in the job,” says Johnny Rogan, author of *Morrissey & Marr: The Severed Alliance*. “Arguably, Matthew Sztumpf was a more promising candidate and worked with The Smiths successfully on a couple of occasions, but his powers were considerably constrained. The term ‘caretaker manager’ was used at the time, which pretty well sums up their reluctance to surrender control. I don’t think Morrissey was ever happy with the concept of a manager in the traditional sense.”

The band’s relationship with Rough Trade was also coming under strain following the label’s supposed mishandling of the ‘How Soon Is Now?’ and ‘Shakespeare’s Sister’ singles, both of which charted disappointingly. The fate of the latter was a particular sticking point (“Rough Trade released the record with a monstrous amount of defeatism,” Morrissey fumed). By the time ‘The Queen Is Dead’ was released in June 1986, the situation would escalate into full-blown cold war.

Their greatest artistic achievements were still ahead, but in the expedited world of The Smiths, ‘Meat Is Murder’ marked both the onset of their imperial phase and the beginning of the end. From this point, the peaks would be mighty, but the troughs would prove disastrous. ■

A MEATY FEAT

How ‘Meat Is Murder’ changed animal rights protests

Dan Matthews, senior vice president, Peta: “After ‘Meat Is Murder’, Morrissey instantly got involved with Peta in a variety of ways. When we did the first Peta album back in the ’80s, there was a song called ‘Don’t Kill The Animals’, and as soon as I had a cassette of it, I gave it to Morrissey when The Smiths were on the ‘The Queen Is Dead’ tour, and he started playing it before they took the stage every night to drum up support for the record – it was almost like having an opening slot on the tour. He

gets involved in a very grassroots way and he does things, not just for publicity, but to raise awareness – for example, we’ve participated in every single one of his concert tours, setting up information stalls at the venues, or showing videos onstage. Morrissey made Peta something that other bands wanted to be involved in, and that first interview with him was definitely the start of Peta using the power of celebrity. The fact that Morrissey was vouching for us so early on really broke it open for us.”

MEAT IS MURDER!

Murder he wrote



In 1996, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds unleashed the grisly 'Murder Ballads'. Disgusted by its mainstream success, they put out the defiantly hushed 'Boatman's Call'. As both albums are re-released, Ben Hewitt examines a radical volte-face

If Nick Cave hadn't been hungover, 'Murder Ballads' wouldn't exist. The Bad Seeds were in Germany in the early 1990s when Cave, blind drunk, passed out by his hotel swimming pool. Rudely awoken from boozy slumber by guests splashing in the water, he began plotting revenge.

"There was a party going on – a bunch of German holidaymakers doing whatever these people do," he grumbled years later. "I didn't have the energy to get off the banana lounger and find my room, so instead I wrote a song and gave the holidaymakers names and, well, executed them on the page."

Eleven people die in the 14-minute rampage of 'O'Malley's Bar'. It was so poisonous it couldn't exist on any other album. It needed

'Murder Ballads', its own purpose-built record, to hold its horrors: an album dedicated to the literary genre of the same name and the crimes of passion it eulogises.

By the time 'Murder Ballads' was completed and released in February 1996, it contained the lyrical corpses of 65 doomed souls. It's the highest body count the Bad Seeds have ever tallied. It's Cave as Victor Frankenstein, who with a dirty giggle starts baiting the terrified townsfolk again: you thought what I did before was foul? Wait until you see *this*. Or, as he proudly told *NME*: "This murder album is quite a comic record."

But if 'Murder Ballads' was a joke, it backfired. To his disgust, it made Cave an unlikely mainstream star. And it was a closing ➔



chapter: a last hurrah for the Bad Seeds after they'd taken ungodly characters, sick sins and monstrous deeds as far as they could. It was a watershed. Afterwards, everything changed.

For 1992's 'Henry's Dream', the Bad Seeds had opted to work with an outside producer for the first time. It was miserable. David Briggs wanted them to record live in the studio, like he'd done with Neil Young and Crazy Horse. But Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds weren't Neil Young and Crazy Horse. They bitched, they moaned. Cave and multi-instrumentalist Mick Harvey remixed the album without Briggs. "It was fraught," says photographer and Bad Seeds cohort Bladdyn Butcher, who released his Cave visual retrospective, *A Little History*, last year. "They didn't understand taking direction from other people."

In contrast, 'Murder Ballads' was a free-for-all. "It wouldn't have mattered if it was a total failure," says Harvey, who quit the band in 2009. There was no pressure, no aesthetic dogma to follow. Sessions spanned two years and various locations.

'O'Malley's Bar', with its queasy organs and gruesome slaughter, shouldn't be fun. A crazed killer slaughters a pub landlord and his family. Mr and Mrs Richard Holmes are shot in the head. Jerry Bellows' skull is split in half with an ashtray "as big as a really fucking big brick". But think of Cave sprawled on his sun lounger, idly dreaming of killing every obnoxious swimmer in that pool. 'Murder Ballads' isn't a po-faced meditation on society's ills; it's The Bad Seeds tickling themselves with just how nasty they can be. "It's a farewell to a certain conception of Nick Cave," says Butcher. "It's them exaggerating things to leave them behind, and saying, 'So this is what you think we are? OK, we'll play it up to the hilt and then abandon it.'"



"It was becoming almost formulaic," says bassist Martyn P Casey. "There was this Melbourne comedian [Tug Dumbly] who did this parody called 'Another Nick Cave Song'. It was frighteningly spot-on. 'First you take some murder/And then you take something from the Bible/And you mix it up and you've got another Nick Cave song...'"

"We didn't want to be too reverential to the history of murder ballads," he adds. "With 'O'Malley's Bar', I couldn't stop laughing. The lyrics were cracking me up. Smashing a guy's head in with an ashtray? Nick was pushing it so far it was hilarious." As drummer Jim Slavunos, who'd just joined the band, put it: "The black humour of the subject matter was very clear in our minds."

Acting like depraved kids in a candy store had another effect, too. After the stifling experience of 'Henry's Dream', they were free to improvise. The eerie 'Lovely Creature', about a woman who goes walking in the woods, never to return, was composed on the spot. "We were doing a jam to make sure the microphones worked when Nick started singing this song," says Casey. "It just popped up, like the first cab off the rank."

The sleazy 'Stagger Lee', in which Cave turns the tradition of folk songs about the famed 19th-century American murderer Lee Shelton into a cussing, shagging angel of death, was a happy accident too. "It was a real last-minute miracle," says Slavunos. "I came into the studio towards the very end of the sessions, and I showed Nick a book called *The Life*, which was a collection of black hustler prison poetry. I pointed out an old, really nasty version of 'Stagger Lee', and he got quite excited. Just a few minutes later we piled into the live room and recorded the song, fully realised, totally off-the-cuff, in one take."

Adding to the lively atmosphere were the famous faces flitting in and out of sessions. PJ Harvey popped by to play a scorned woman who stabs her unrequited love on 'Henry Lee'. Cave's on-off collaborator and former lover Anita Lane lent heaving sobs to the moody 'Kindness Of Strangers', in which poor Mary Bellows is found "with a bullet in the head". And they were both joined by Pogues frontman Shane MacGowan for the album's cheeky finale: a group singalong of Bob Dylan's 'Death Is Not The End'.



Cave and Kylie
in the video for
'Where The Wild
Roses Grow'

"I was humiliated on *TOTP*. It felt very uncomfortable"

Nick Cave

It wasn't just notable for its famous cast. It's also the only track on which no-one is killed – although, as Cave remarked to *NME*, that didn't mean it didn't belong. "That's on there because we murdered it," he said.

There was one 'Murder Ballads' guest who wasn't treated so casually. "I've wanted to do a song with Kylie since I first saw her," gushed Cave in 1995, delighted that he'd finally bagged his dream duet. "I've written several songs for her over the years, but none of them seemed right. Until now."

'Where The Wild Roses Grow', a moody country ballad in which Kylie played the murdered Eliza Day, brought together Australia's pop princess with its terrifying gothic viscount. "At the time, I didn't know much about Nick at all," says Minogue. "We came from such different worlds."

"I speed-read a biography on him which was, ahem... enlightening! But the further he seemed from my world, the more excited I was about working with him."

According to Mick Harvey, Cave took the duet itself very seriously, to the point of giving him the "thankless task" of redoing the string arrangements, in order to get it just right. Worse still, Harvey didn't even get to witness Kylie's magical moment in the studio. "I went out to move the car so it wouldn't get a parking ticket, and by the time I came back she was done," he recalls.





Skewering Minogue's pristine persona was a typically wicked Bad Seeds thing to do. But Cave wasn't just dragging Minogue into his world; she was pulling him into hers, too. In 1995, he dismissed the fanciful notion their duet would be a hit. "I'd be highly suspicious if it was," he insisted. He was wrong. Soon he was skulking alongside her on *Top Of The Pops*, and he *hated* the fuss and fakery. "I was humiliated," he said to *NME* in 1996. "It felt very uncomfortable. Meat Loaf was on, and he was the one I'd most like to have sat down and had a hamburger with or whatever it is that he does, but he was locked away in his room."

"I had a little seven-year-old boy come up to me in Hamleys," he continued. "This little guy had a Power Rangers outfit on. He said, 'You're the guy that sings with Kylie, aren't you?' and asked me for my autograph. There was something very... eerie about that."

"Even today, people say, 'Nick Cave? Oh he

did that record with Kylie,'" says Casey. "It's the only reference for a lot of people."

The nadir was still to come. That year, Cave was nominated for Best Male Artist at the MTV Video Music Awards. He was spooked. It was a step too far. Aghast, he fired off a letter demanding his nomination be withdrawn. "My muse is not a horse," he wrote. "And I am in no horse race, and indeed if she was, still I would not harness her to this tumbrel – this bloody cart of severed heads and glittering prizes."

"It was a bit of a disappointment for him," observes Butcher. "I don't think he thinks it's his best album; I don't think it was particularly hard for him to write. He was disappointed that it was the cartoon aspect of Nick Cave – the evil, murderous, misogynistic junkie – that appealed to people."

By 1995, Cave had split with his wife, Brazilian journalist Viviane Carneiro. Six months later, he was speaking in hushed tones about another woman. "Polly Harvey," he confided to *NME*, "has the softest lips and coldest hands in rock'n'roll." The dark lord of rock'n'roll, reduced to a trembling schoolboy.

Cave would later say that his and Harvey's relationship essentially began while filming the video for 'Henry Lee'. It's all on tape: watch, now, and you can see them falling for one another, two dark doppelgangers with matching jet-black hair and chalk-white faces, circling and slithering dangerously over one another. Their brief, intense relationship, and Cave's divorce, would leave their claws all over his songs.

If 'Murder Ballads' was about death, then its follow-up, 1997's 'The Boatman's Call', was about ghosts: the flickers and memories of old loves haunting Cave's head. 'Into My Arms' is the sublime showstopper, in which he distills

his philosophy on faith, love, religion and devotion into a handful of breathtaking lines, but there are personal confessions everywhere. 'People Ain't No Good' was a mea culpa for his split with Carneiro; 'West Country Girl' and 'Black Hair' are obsessive fantasies about Harvey, mesmerised by her "lovely-lidded eyes" and "milk-white throat".

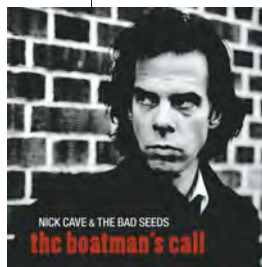
In some ways, it was the ultimate transgression: a Bad Seeds confessional record was more blasphemous and outrageous than the doomed sirens and vengeful lunatics of 'Murder Ballads' ever could be. It was Cave laying himself bare for the first time; a rock'n'roll myth turning himself mortal. "Nobody gets killed on 'The Boatman's Call,'" says Butcher. "It's more about going to church and walking outside and feeling a bit depressed."

"When I was making half that record I was furious because certain things had happened in my love life that seriously pissed me off," Cave told *The Guardian* in 2009. But however angry he was, it opened up new doors for the Bad Seeds – new approaches, new ways of

working, new ways of surprising people. "We recorded these demos with the idea it would be expanded upon," says Casey. "But it ended up sounding so good. It was a happy accident. It could have been swamped with everyone doing their thing, but we deliberately kept it stripped back."

"My immediate response to making a hit record would be to make something that absolutely everyone fucking hated," Cave had threatened in 1995. It was only a half-kept promise. 'The Boatman's Call' may have been a backlash against 'Murder Ballads', but it's equally beloved. Side by side, they're the two Bad Seeds albums that cleared the

path for the future: the Old Testament leading to the New. There's no blueprint any more: since 1998 they've flitted from the tender and gentle 'No More Shall We Part' and 'Nocturama' to the seedy 'Dig!!! Lazarus Dig!!!' and trembling murk of 2013's 'Push The Sky Away'. None of them sound alike and yet all of them sound like Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. 'Murder Ballads' slayed the caricatures, and 'The Boatman's Call' started anew: beholden to no-one and free to evolve in ever stranger, unexpected guises. ■



Lyrical postmortem

Comparing Cave's markedly different approaches to life on 'Murder Ballads' and 'The Boatman's Call'

Sex

"Yeah, I'm Stagger Lee and you better get down on your knees/And suck my dick, because if you don't you're gonna be dead"

'Stagger Lee' Murder Ballads

"To kiss her milk-white throat, a dark curtain of black hair/ Smothered me, my lover with her beautiful black hair"

'Black Hair'

The Boatman's Call

God

"All God's children, they all gotta die"

'The Curse Of Millhaven' Murder Ballads

"I don't believe in an interventionist God/But I know, darling, that you do"

'Into My Arms'

The Boatman's Call

Love

"And the last thing I heard was a muttered word/As he knelt (stood smiling) above me with a rock in his fist"

'Where The Wild Roses Grow' Murder Ballads

"I've felt you coming girl, as you drew near/I knew you'd find me, 'cos I willed you here"

'(Are You) The One I've Been Waiting For'

The Boatman's Call

Death

"Joy had been bound with electrical tape, in her mouth a gag/She'd been stabbed repeatedly and stuffed into a sleeping bag"

'Song Of Joy' Murder Ballads

"They're gonna shut me down, my love/They're gonna launch me into the stars"

'Idiot Prayer'

The Boatman's Call

Feeling bullish

Gaz Coombes made his sprawling first solo album as a way of distancing himself from his past in Supergrass. His second, 'Matador', grabs the bull by the horns and confronts the past head on. Mark Beaumont waves his red cape

PHOTO: DAN KENDALL

The sideburns remain untamed, but Gaz Coombes has mellowed with age. “I don’t feel old, but it’s definitely worth growing old as gracefully as possible,” he says. “I did find myself watching *Broadchurch* the other night...”

Wrapped in a thick winter coat to fend off the January chill in his Oxfordshire rehearsal room – on an industrial estate an hour away from his settled wife-and-two-kids life – he’s a million miles from the hirsute kid who spent 17 years fronting Supergrass. Twenty years ago they released their debut album, 1995’s ‘I Should Coco’, which turned them into Brit Award-winning pop behemoths who eventually imploded in 2010 amid backbiting and creative wrangling.

Despite coping to brief moments of on-tour psychosis with his old band (an incident in Michigan became the song ‘Detroit’), at 38, Gaz has emerged from rock’n’roll remarkably unscathed. He boasts no high-profile rehabs or bitter feuds; instead, he amuses himself in his studio, where he records every instrument on his solo albums. His 2012 debut, ‘Here Come The Bombs’, was a sprawl of ideas designed to make as distinct a departure from his old band as possible.

With his artistic decks cleared, he embarked on a more considered second effort: ‘Matador’ is a deeply personal record, touching on the death of his mother, the UK’s class divide and, on the gorgeous ‘The Girl Who Fell To Earth’, his autistic daughter, set to subtle textures akin to Caribou, Eno and Grizzly Bear.

“I’ve been getting into a lot more soundtracks and more different types of music,” Gaz says. “It’s quite liberating to hear that you can structure something any way you want to – it doesn’t have to exist within a particular formula or frame. ‘Shields’ by Grizzly Bear was the first album for ages that I thought was really good. [Daniel Rossen’s] voice is fucking great and the instrumentation was so cool – kind of raw, but complex. I think that was one thing I took on as inspiration: how far you can take a track; how far you can take an idea.”

‘Matador’ is at its darkest on ‘To The Wire’, where Gaz recalls losing his mother. “I was 27 when she died and it definitely fucked me up,” he says. “You become a little bit closer to your own mortality; it kind of comes to the forefront of your mind. So it can play with your head.”

Yet at the core of the record is a sense of security and romance that comes from the solid relationship he has with his wife. They’ve

been together since his pre-Supergrass schooldays, a period Gaz immortalises on a track called ‘Seven Walls’ about a spliff they shared in a car park when they first met. “It was the catalyst for everything that would follow,” he says. “It was the beginning of the rest of our lives, and I thought that was really beautiful to pinpoint that.”

The record is, in a way, Gaz’s ‘Everyday Robots’ – a survivor’s almanac cataloguing the loss, love and craziness of the last 20 years.

Hence the title.

“I like the metaphor of how we all have these enormous beasts stampeding towards us and we have to dodge out of the way,” Gaz says. “I have many beasts stampeding towards me. We all get that. It’s about how you get through that and keep evolving, keep improving. There’s contradictory periods all through your life; one minute you’re on top of the world, the next minute everything’s falling apart. It’s the light and dark and human behaviour. I find it fascinating.”

If ‘Here Come

The Bombs’ documented untrammelled creative release, ‘Matador’ is the real start of Coombes’ solo phase. Like Jarvis, Damon and Noel before him, he’s found his own personal post-band path, and the record oozes a tangible relief. So it’s no wonder that Gaz isn’t interested in entertaining the notion of getting the band back together five years after they called it quits.

“The quick answer: no,” he says firmly. “I think more time needs to pass, more water under the bridge. Don’t you agree that people should miss us a bit more first? I’m at the start of this phase. I was in a band for 20 years but I’ve only been a solo artist for a couple of years, it’s new to me. I wouldn’t see the point right now of writing a song where people say, ‘It’s like having Supergrass back.’ I don’t think I could recreate that anyway.”

The wave of Britpop nostalgia has yet to hit Gaz’s placid waters, it seems. “We weren’t really at the heart of Britpop, to be honest,” he says, a little cagily. “And being from Oxford, as well, that kind of Oxfordshire bubble... I think people looked at us a little bit differently as a

band. It’s one of those weird things, you get these Britpop documentaries come out and books and stuff. On one hand you’re like, ‘Yes, I’m not mentioned in it!’ and then on the other hand, ‘We’re not fucking mentioned in it!’ We lasted because we were good. We kept trying to evolve as a band and make better records.”

Gaz puts their split down to “the direction we were going in, the arguments and disagreements about who was playing what, who wrote what, how we went about it”. And as a childhood fan of Captain Beefheart, Frank Zappa and The Muppets, he’s too busy immersing himself in the current wave of psychedelia to consider releasing Supergrass’ lost final album, ‘Release The Drones’.

“I didn’t want to particularly hear it then; I don’t know why I would now,” he says. “I always used to love getting new tracks from the studio and then parking up at rehearsals, opening the boot and playing it really loud on the stereo. Being really proud of what you’d done. But the stuff we were working on, I didn’t want to play it to anyone, and that said a lot to me. It takes a lot of strength to confront

“I have many beasts stampeding towards me”

Gaz Coombes

that rather than doing whatever album and carrying on doing festivals every year and bringing the cash in playing the hits.”

While Supergrass may be definitively dormant, their influence lives on, not least in the likes of the reformed Libertines. “We toured with them as well,” Gaz recalls. “Pete would waltz into our dressing room and sing ‘Moving’ into my face from about two inches away, so I think he was into us.”

Gaz concedes that not a lot of music from the Britpop era has dated very well – “That shows it up to be not as amazing a scene as everyone seems to remember” – but still regards ‘I Should Coco’ as something of an achievement. “There were a few good bands, and Blur made some good songs – I don’t know about albums, but some good tracks. But our first album, I think it still sounds fresh.”

His cover of The Kinks’ ‘This Time Tomorrow’ for a John Lewis ad last year kept his quaint British melody muscles toned, but Gaz has no time for pop antiquity right now. “I feel more comfortable in my own skin on this record,” he admits, happily on pleasant terms with his demons. “Life’s not a cruise. It’s complicated and there’s some fucked-up moments, but I guess that’s all part of this album. Life can be really fucked up, but at least it’s interesting.” ■

PUMPING ON HIS STEREO

Gaz Coombes’ solo inspirations

Beck



“When I first started working on ‘Here Come The Bombs’ and I realised what I was doing, I thought of Beck in terms of his diversity and character and being entertaining as well as challenging himself musically.”

Paul Weller



“His exploration, his finding-himself period, was maybe The Style Council.

I think that’s probably him trying out stuff, and it was only when he’d got a couple of albums into his solo stuff that it started to click. That’s inspiring. Whether or not you get that time these days I don’t know.”

Daniel Rossen



“The guy from Grizzly Bear – he did a solo project, an EP, and I

absolutely loved it. I was really excited to hear what he did.”

Reviews

► THE DEFINITIVE VERDICT ■ EDITED BY BEN HOMEWOOD



Carl Barât And The Jackals Let It Reign

With Carl revived by the rebirth of The Libertines, this second album crackles with delinquent fervour and lyrical punch



after the first Libertines reunion, indulged his baroque theatrical bent, but didn't make space for his ravenous natural bite. Back then, he had the air of the romantic poet wasting away in some Whitechapel garret, wracked with depression and picturing himself as some kind of Dickensian Serge Gainsbourg. But look how alive he seems today. Invigorated by The Libertines' much more positive comeback and sucking the lifeblood from a bunch of fresh bandmates in The Jackals, he's part Fagin, part

Some rock'n'roll dogs were born to hunt in packs. Lifelong devotees to the last gang in town, they're tied to their brothers with a frayed guitar string, a shared uniform and the bond of WWI trench survivors. The 36-year-old Carl Barât is one such wolf that could never go lone. His self-titled 2010 solo album, coming

Iggy, part punk rock warrior leading his noble band of brothers into a battle against seemingly insurmountable odds. "*We are not afraid of anyone!*" he bawls on 'Victory Gin', pumped with all the rebel rock valour you can squeeze out of a half-litre bottle of Gordon's Special Dry. "*I defy anyone to tell me I am wrong!*"

You're not wrong, Carl. Even though The Jackals were put together by audition after much of 'Let It Reign' was recorded in LA with The Bronx's guitarist Joby J Ford and a thrown-together bunch of punk musos including former My Chemical Romance drummer Arod Alexander and Childish Gambino bassist Ray Suen, Carl's jubilation at being back among fellow rock grotbags crackles through these corroded reels. As always, The Clash and the ideals of wartime British backbone are his benchmarks. The ragged shanty of opener 'Glory Days' tacks a tribute to the 306 British and Commonwealth soldiers shot for desertion and

cowardice after World War I, to a tale of those lairy lads-together nights on the razz that – tsk, what are we like? – always seem to end up in a prison cell with no memory of who you hurt to get there, no shoelaces and a trouserful of shit. ‘Summer In The Trenches’ veers from scorching Libs thrash to ska, Carl’s vocals as

THE SECRET JACKALS

Carl’s co-writers on ‘Let It Reign’

Drew McConnell: ‘The Gears’

The former Babyshambles and Helsinki frontman played bass and co-wrote this short punk rampage.

Andy Burrows: ‘A Storm Is Coming’

A man with his finger in every indie pie, ex-Razorlight drummer Burrows contributed to this explosive album highlight.

Anthony Rossomando: ‘We Want More’

Carl’s old Dirty Pretty Things mucker helped write this summery, Manics-tinged tune.

Ed Harcourt: ‘March Of The Idle’, ‘Let It Rain’

Together with Carl, the suave piano-man attacked ignorance on the former and explored thorny relationship issues on the latter.

Carl’s reclaimed brother from another mother more likely appears in raucous centre-point ‘War Of The Roses’. Like an Oasis anthem for tramps, it employs scuzzy horns, a loping ‘All Around The World’ groove and the bombast of The Who to tell a story of a couple of double-crossing low-lives fighting over drugs and girls. It’s arguably Barât’s most ambitious song yet, and certainly the most rousing tune ever to feature the couplet “‘Give me your last line,’ said Dave, ‘and I’ll give you my dog’”. It’s testament to Carl’s reinvigoration, and to the most electric and exuberant record he’s made since ‘Up The Bracket’. ■ MARK BEAUMONT

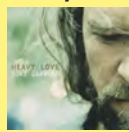
► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** February 16 ► **LABEL** Cooking Vinyl ► **PRODUCER** Joby J Ford ► **LENGTH** 35:40 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Glory Days ►2. Victory Gin ►3. Summer In The Trenches ►4. A Storm Is Coming ►5. Beginning To See ►6. March Of The Idle ►7. We Want More ►8. War Of The Roses ►9. The Gears ►10. Let It Rain ► **BEST TRACK** A Storm Is Coming

8

MORE ALBUMS

Duke Garwood Heavy Love



Heavenly Duke Garwood’s version of the blues is shaped by drugs, London squatting and some 25 years in the music biz. Over the course of five albums, he has amassed a group of cheerleaders including Seasick Steve and ‘Heavy Love’ producer Mark Lanegan. Cool advocates aside, it’s disappointing to find most of the stubborn, Beefheartian jagged edges of past releases smoothed away. ‘Supptime In Hell’ is a rare, gnarly exception, and Savages’ Jehnny Beth is a haunted vocal foil to Duke’s own burnished voice on the title track. Plausibly, Garwood has taken note of The War On Drugs’ breakout success last year, but the results amount to a muzzled, soft-rock take on Tom Waits.

■ NOEL GARDNER

5

Mourn

Captured Tracks



The first song that Barcelona teenagers Mourn wrote

was called ‘Boys Are Cunts’. If that makes the quartet – all 18 bar a 15-year-old bassist – sound angry, this debut paints them as positively feral. The prickly ‘Your Brain Is Made Of Candy’ heralds an angst, PJ Harvey-indebted, nine-song slanging match. ‘Marshall’, written about “a friend’s asshole ex-boyfriend”, asks “When will you SHUT UP, MARSHALL?” over brittle punk, and the excellent, grungy ‘Jack’ screams, “GO FUCK YOURSELF!” Just as the vitriol threatens overkill, ‘Squirrel’ offers humour (“‘Seriously, you’ve got a squirrel in your hair’”). ‘Mourn’ exhibits a band fully aware of their own qualities: fierceness, confidence and brutally simple songwriting.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7



Charli XCX Sucker

Rejection, rebellion and romance make the singer’s third record a colourful pop splurge

► This year’s first great pop record bowls in with a rapturous celebration of the genre’s rebellious, trashy potential (and a bottle of champagne and a pocketful of pills to boot). From the “fuck you”-heavy title track onwards, 22-year-old Charli XCX’s main mode is rejection – flipping off authority on ‘Break The Rules’, flicking off oneself in the face of a shit lover on the electrifying ‘Body Of My Own’ – which she executes with total aplomb. But ‘Sucker’ finds depth when Charli drops her guard. There’s ‘Need Ur Luv’, a shoo-wop collaboration with Vampire Weekend’s Rostam Batmanglij, and then, after



a fantasy about living inside a castle made of money on ‘Gold Coins’, the awed devotional ‘Boom Clap’, where she confesses to her crush, “No silver or no gold could dress me up so good”.

■ LAURA SNAPES

8

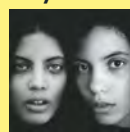
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► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** February 16 ► **LABEL** Asylum ► **PRODUCERS** Justin L Raisen, Jerry James, Steve Mac, Stargate, LLC and Cashmere Cat, Patrik Berger, John Hill, Stefan Gräslund, Ariel Rechtshaid, Mr Rogers, Greg Kurstin, Benny Blanco, Rostam Batmanglij ► **LENGTH** 43:40 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Sucker ►2. Break The Rules ►3. London Queen ►4. Breaking Up ►5. Gold Coins ►6. Boom Clap ►7. Doing It (feat. Rita Ora) ►8. Body Of My Own ►9. Famous ►10. Hanging Around ►11. So Over You ►12. Die Tonight ►13. Caught In The Middle ►14. Need Ur Luv ► **BEST TRACK** Boom Clap

Ibeyi

Ibeyi XL Recordings



Nineteen-year-old French-Cuban twins Naomi and Lisa-Kaindé Díaz admit they spend most of their time screaming at each other, but when penning their soothing songs, they’re on the same twin-telepathy wavelength. This debut is informed by tragedy: in 2006, their famed father (Buena Vista

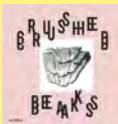
Social Club percussionist Miguel Díaz) passed away. In 2013, so did their older sister. But while there’s heartache here, ‘Ibeyi’ is uplifting and prayer-like; its songs often built only from earthy drums, piano and palm-slaps. Tracks like ‘Oya’, ‘Think Of You’ and ‘River’ have a sparse, ghostly quality reminiscent of early Regina Spektor or Björk. Innovative and comforting.

■ GREG COCHRANE

8

Crushed Beaks

Scatter Matilda



South London's Crushed Beaks have taken their

time to release their debut album. After forming in 2010, the band – recently bolstered to a three-piece by bassist Scott Bowley – released three singles before 2013 EP 'Tropes'. An album was expected but failed to materialise until now. Opener 'April' immediately makes up for 'Scatter's late arrival with chiming guitars that cut through its barrage. The powerful 'Rising Sign' is a blast of joyous noise of the kind that made Crushed Beaks such an exciting proposition way back when, and previous single 'Grim' is a bouncing pop tune. That pop feeling is what lies at the band's core, making for an exuberant record that is well worth your time.

■ RHIAN DALY

7

Atari Teenage Riot

Reset Digital Hardcore



Alec Empire's most fêted on-record incarnation remains well

titled. Atari Teenage Riot still use a 1980s Atari computer to manage the digital signals that power their sound, and the results still offer an abrasive collision of musical and political ideas. On this follow-up to 2011's 'Is This Hyperreal?', the Berlin quartet seem more necessary than ever. The buzzing throb of the title track and songs like 'We Are From The Internet' attack government surveillance of online communication, but rather than just complain, ATR use anger as an energy, urging us to wrest back control. The volume remains punishing, but this record triumphs in melodic subtlety, political nuance and conceptual clarity.

■ ANGUS BATEY

8

Former Fleet Foxes man's latest album is humorous, confessional and full of "deranged schmaltz"

Father John Misty

I Love You, Honeybear



NME
ALBUM
OF THE WEEK

Josh Tillman might look like a hipster Jesus, but he's more very naughty boy than messiah. Resurrecting himself, so to speak, as Father John Misty in 2012, the solo songwriter and one-time Fleet Foxes drummer cut the best record of his career in 'Fear Fun', an exuberantly self-loathing, druggy affair that reinvented its author as a kind of fucked-up ladies' man.

Now he's back with 'I Love You, Honeybear', a self-described "concept record about a guy called Josh Tillman", which is a terminal smartarse's way of saying it's a confessional – and what a revelation it turns out to be.



Written around the time Tillman got hitched to his girlfriend, it's a hugely ambitious, caustically funny album about the redemptive

possibilities of love and being heartily sick of your own bullshit. Songs like 'The Night Josh Tillman Came To Our Apartment' ("I love the kind of woman who can walk over a man/I mean like a goddamn marching band") and 'The Ideal Husband' suggest a man whose soul needs, if not exactly saving, then at the very least putting through a high-temperature wash.

Tillman envisioned creating a "massive deranged schmaltz" for this record, and on the richly orchestrated title track and Harry Nilsson-esque 'Nothing Good Ever Happens At The Goddamn Thirsty Crow', the ambition pays off beautifully. But he saves the best for a piano ballad, previous single 'Bored In The USA', which undercuts the lyric's narcissism ("Is this the part where I get all I ever wanted?") with a canned-laughter track – an exquisite touch, and a song Randy Newman would kill to have written, you suspect.

What saves our narrator is – you guessed it – the love of a good woman, and closer 'I Went To The Store One Day' finds him finally flirting with happiness, a concept the "aimless, fake drifter" in him always figured was for squares ("For love to find us of all people/I never thought it'd be so simple").

Sometimes, it seems, the best way to grow is to admit you were an asshole all along. ■ ALEX DENNEY

9

► THE DETAILS

► RELEASE DATE February 9 ► LABEL Bella Union ► PRODUCER Jonathan Wilson ► LENGTH 45:00 ► TRACKLISTING ► 1. I Love You, Honeybear ► 2. Chateau Lobby #4 (In C for Two Virgins) ► 3. True Affection ► 4. The Night Josh Tillman Came To Our Apartment ► 5. When You're Smiling And Astride Me ► 6. Nothing Good Ever Happens At The Goddamn Thirsty Crow ► 7. Strange Encounter ► 8. The Ideal Husband ► 9. Bored In The USA ► 10. Holy Shit ► 11. I Went To The Store One Day ► BEST TRACK Bored In The USA

The Wave Pictures

Great Big Flamingo Burning Moon

Moshi Moshi



Led by guitarist David Tattersall, The Wave

Pictures have a history of rewarding collaborations. Previously, the London trio have worked with the likes of Stanley Brinks, Darren Hayman and The Mountain Goats. For their 13th album, they enlist Chatham art-punk Billy Childish as

producer and co-writer, with invigorating results. The 'Drive My Car' groove of 'I Could Hear The Telephone (3 Floors Above Me)' and Childish's clanging riff on 'Pea Green Coat' revel in bluesy '60s rock. 'Fake Fox Fur Pillowcase' proves Tattersall's love of intricate solos and way with an arresting lyric ("The fried chicken house smells worse than death") are thriving. It sounds like the start of another beautiful friendship.

■ STUART HUGGETT

7

Bob Dylan

Shadows In The Night

Columbia



On the release of his 1970 covers album 'Self Portrait',

Bob Dylan was crucified. "What is this shit?" sneered *Rolling Stone*. Now, though, he's earned the right to do what he wants. In 2010, he tackled festive favourites on 'Christmas In The Heart', and this 36th studio album collects jazzy standards once recorded by Frank

Sinatra. Irving Berlin's 'What'll I Do' and Rodgers & Hammerstein's 'Some Enchanted Evening' are delicately accompanied by a five-piece band, but with none of the strings you might expect. Dylan sounds as smooth as he did on 1969's 'Nashville Skyline', his smoky tone drawing out the melancholy of 'Autumn Leaves' and hitting a yearning note on 'Stay With Me'. It's all wildly self-indulgent, but pleasant enough.

■ MATTHEW HORTON

6

Reviews

Sir Richard Bishop

Tangier Sessions Drag City



Ex-Sun City Girls guitarist Richard Bishop

– who's established a trade in world guitar sounds over the years – self-recorded 'Tangier Sessions' in Morocco. Working at night from a tiled room in a rooftop apartment, the 54-year-old coaxed songs

out of an aged guitar of unknown provenance he'd picked up months earlier in Geneva. The result is a beguiling – albeit, at seven tracks, rather short – set of intricate, finger-picked songs. Rapid and languid by turns, the record is spiced with atmospheric, Middle Eastern licks – veering north for a choppy, Latin feel on 'Safe House' and ending with the honeyed fretboard devotional of 'Let It Come Down'.

■ CHARLOTTE

RICHARDSON ANDREWS

7

A Place To Bury Strangers

Transfixiation

Dead Oceans



Over the course of three albums, APTBS have tried varying levels of bludgeoning sound, but frontman Oliver Ackermann has never seemed content with the noise his band can make. The New York trio's live shows are consistently overwhelming, and Ackermann – who owns

guitar-pedal company Death By Audio – conceived 'Transfixiation' to be as instinctive. So it's odd that parts of it sound too careful. The emotive lyrics on 'Supermaster' ("What have I become?") are paired with a tame bass riff, and 'Deeper' is cringe-inducing ("If you fuck with me, you're gonna burn"). 'Transfixiation' fares better when it erupts into white noise, as on guitar freakout 'We've Come So Far' and punk attack 'I'm So Clean'.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

6

The Subways

The Subways

YFE Records/Cooking Vinyl



Nearly 10 years since the release of The Subways'

debut 'Young For Eternity' comes their self-titled fourth album. The hype that surrounded the Hertfordshire trio then has largely been replaced with indifference, and this record reflects that, coming off as a half-hearted attempt to revive a distant memory. Guitarist Billy Lunn's yowls feel empty, and where his riffs once thundered furiously, they now whimper tamely. 'I'm In Love And It's Burning In My Soul' is crying out for their blazing power of old, but instead can only muster by-numbers blues-rock. 'Pet Boy' is limper still, and 'Because Of You (Negative Love)' veers into insipid acoustic rock. Overall, 'The Subways' is a botched attempt to recapture the glory days of youth. ■ RHIAN DALY

3

Hey Colossus

In Black & Gold Rocket



Hey Colossus are a band with punk ethics that make

alternative, heavy rock oblivious to stylistic fashions in music, and with great consistency. 'In Black & Gold' is the London-based six-piece's eighth album in a superb 11-year run, and fittingly – as their first for Rocket Recordings, home of Goat – it finds them hitting a stripped-back psychedelic groove. Opener 'Hold On' is loose, hazy and full of foreboding, and single 'Hey, Dead Eyes, Up!' finds them in more typical Melvins-like sludge territory. On 'Lagos Atom' they experiment with dub within a post-rock setting, and they end with 'Sinking, Feeling', a slab of heavy, half-time doom. A more diverse and calculated album than a usual Hey Colossus offering, and all the better for it. ■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE

7

A second album full of fresh, infectious grunge from the Pennsylvanian teens

The Districts

A Flourish And A Spoil



The worry with still-teenage bands who've crafted an awesome live reputation is that they get too hyped too soon and spook like dogs hearing fireworks. They hit the studio only to emerge months later, blinking into the daylight, having lost the spark that made them great.

No such concern with The Districts, whose philosophy in their short life has been: record now, worry later. The four-piece, from a small Pennsylvanian town called Lititz, self-released the gravelly-sounding 'Telephone' back in 2012 while they were still at school. Last year, they followed it with an equally hard-riffing self-titled EP.

Their iron is hot, and they're striking the shit out of it. 'A Flourish And A Spoil', their debut for Mississippi indie label Fat Possum, is less polished than Shane MacGowan's bathtub, and just as full of infectious grunge.

Ramshackle opener '4th And Roebling' comes on like The

Libertines raised on moonshine instead of gin in teacups, and will rattle around your skull for weeks. There's a scrappy exuberance to tracks like 'Peaches', with its My Bloody Valentine howl, and the slower 'Chlorine' that suggests a band who heard Dinosaur Jr's 'You're Living All Over Me' and decided to see just how loud they can play.

There are misfires, like the psyche echo on 'Hounds' that sounds like hearing a gig from the toilets, or 'Sing The Song', which resembles a scratched My Morning Jacket record and renders singer Rob Grote's usually full-blooded voice a strained shadow of itself.

But it's the melancholy 'Suburban Smell' that redeems them. Essentially a Grote solo track, the 19-year-old frontman strums a sparse acoustic melody and meditates on a real-life incident when he realised that small-town life wasn't for him after seeing a group of local jocks bullying a child with learning difficulties. 'Young Blood', the album's centrepiece, is better still. Clocking in at nearly nine minutes, it's the perfect example of The Districts capturing the ferocious squall that gave them that live reputation.

This isn't the band as a finished product, rather a snapshot of them as they began to understand their power. A freshly squeezed record with the pulp left in it. ■ KEVIN EG PERRY

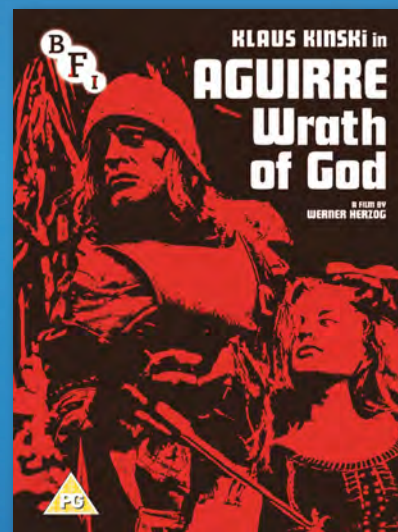
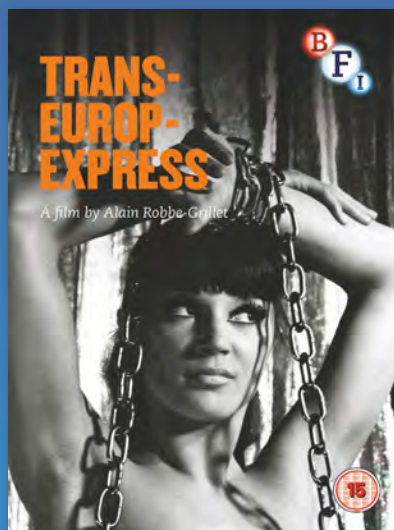
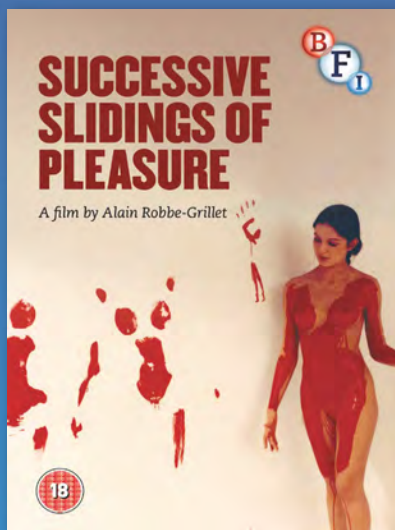
8

THE DETAILS

►RELEASE DATE February 9 ►LABEL Fat Possum ►PRODUCER John Congleton ►LENGTH 44:27 ►TRACKLISTING ►1. 4th And Roebling ►2. Peaches ►3. Chlorine ►4. Hounds ►5. Sing The Song ►6. Suburban Smell ►7. Bold ►8. Heavy Begs ►9. Young Blood ►10. 6 AM ►BEST TRACK Young Blood



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FILM

Selma

This controversial story of America's civil rights marches prickles with violence and emotion



Californian director Ava DuVernay's latest film is already engulfed in controversy. *Selma* tells the story of the 1965 voting rights marches between Alabama cities Selma and Montgomery that were spearheaded by Martin Luther King Jr. A pivotal episode in American history, it lends itself to a weighty historical drama, but *Selma* has been hit with allegations of historical inaccuracies in its portrayal of President Lyndon B Johnson. DuVernay paints Johnson as broadly sympathetic to black-American voting rights, but shows him dragging his heels until King's peaceful campaign becomes headline news, at which point he sends a bill to Congress. Several of Johnson's former colleagues have claimed he played a more active role. DuVernay – who worked as a journalist for American news channel CBS during the OJ Simpson trial and later launched a film publicity company – has defended her depiction of Johnson. In December, she tweeted, "LBJ's stall on voting isn't fantasy made up for a film." The debate is likely to continue as *Selma* competes for the Best Picture prize at the Oscars this month, but this film has plenty to recommend it.

It's driven by a brilliant performance from British actor David Oyelowo, who captures King's charisma as a leader and public speaker while also conveying the immense guilt he feels whenever his campaign leads to bloodshed. An encounter between King and an elderly black Selma resident whose grandson has just

been shot by a white policeman is especially moving. Both men's eyes fill with tears as they contemplate the overwhelming injustice of the situation, and King poignantly places a hand on the bereaved grandparent's shoulder.

Oyelowo excels at revealing King's flaws, too. There are several memorable exchanges with his neglected wife Coretta (Carmen Ejogo, who played the same character in 2001's *Boycott*). In one terrifically prickly scene, Coretta confronts her husband about his adultery. "Do you love the others, too?" she asks.

Unable to lie to his loyal partner, he simply replies, "No."

King's clashes with President Johnson (Michael Clayton's Tom Wilkinson) also crackle with tension, but *Selma* is most powerful when vividly recreating the marches along the 54-mile highway between the two cities. The brutality of the first one is shot with wince-inducing detail. As black activists begin their peaceful journey, police officers armed with whips and batons attack viciously.

A palpable sense of history in the making, intensified by clever camerawork, fuels the final march, and culminates in a stirring speech from King.

To separate *Selma* from its fug of controversy is to unearth a seriously impressive film.

Gripping and affecting, it will live long in the memory, if not solely for the reasons its maker would like. ■ NICK LEVINE



► DIRECTOR Ava DuVernay
► IN CINEMAS February 6

CINEMA

Shaun The Sheep Movie



It's been 20 years since he first appeared

alongside Wallace and Gromit in *A Close Shave*, but Shaun the Sheep hasn't aged a bit. In this typically charming, gently satirical and consistently chuckle-worthy Aardman animation, Shaun and his flock head to The Big City in search of their friend The Farmer, who has lost his memory following a bizarre caravan accident and become a celebrity hairdresser. If your inner child needs further persuasion, the soundtrack may swing it. Three pigs have a party to Primal Scream's 'Rocks', there's an inspired performance by a (cough) baa-baa shop quintet, and the unashamedly emotional theme song, 'Feels Like Summer', is an original composition by Ash's Tim Wheeler and ex-Kaiser Chief Nick Hodgson.

■ ANGUS BATEY

7

CINEMA

Still Life



Permanently downtrodden Eddie Marsan (*Tyrannosaur*, *Happy Go*

Lucky) portrays British misery expertly. He's a perfect fit as John May, a London council worker who searches for relatives of people who die alone, in this bleak film in which static camerawork and uneasy long scenes create a morose atmosphere. John's drab flat, where he arranges his dinner of tinned tuna, is depressing. His job is lonely, and his painstaking working methods result in him being made redundant. He investigates his last case – the death of an alcoholic in his own council block – in his spare time, and the hunt emancipates him; he even forgets his careful nature and swigs whisky. Ultimately, though, the stifling bleakness and an improbable ending add up to a disappointing film. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

6

CINEMA

Amour Fou



Amour Fou follows the story of 18th-century German poet Heinrich von

Kleist's quest to find a woman with whom to enter into a suicide pact. Obsessed with the idea of cheating death by finding a lover to die alongside, Heinrich (Christian Friedel) invites every woman he meets to join him in his version of happily ever

after. After being rebuffed by his cousin, he encounters Henriette (Birte Schnöink), who initially refuses his offer too. But on learning that she's terminally ill, she reconsiders her stance. As the focus shifts to Henriette and her family's reaction to her diagnosis, the film – shot with intense starkness – begins to drag. The best moments come in the dark comedy of Heinrich's bizarre search. ■ RHIAN DALY

7

CINEMA

Kingsman: The Secret Service



This adaptation of Mark Millar and Dave Gibbons' 2012 comicbook

series *The Secret Service* takes on the spy genre with its tongue lodged in its cheek. Colin Firth plays upmarket intelligence agent Harry Hart, who grooms an unlikely new recruit from the wrong side of the tracks (rising star Taron Egerton)

while battling a billionaire megalomaniac (a lispng Samuel L Jackson) who's planning global genocide. *X-Men: First Class* director Matthew Vaughn packs in dazzling, inventive action sequences – in which Firth shows off his fighting skills – and dirty jokes, but also sneaks in a serious message about the folly of judging people based on their background. Topping off this witty, entertaining film is a gasp-inducing finale. ■ NICK LEVINE

8



NME
GIG
OF THE WEEK

Fat White Family

Village Underground,
London

Monday, January 26



Lias Saoudi
crowdsurfs
during 'I Am
Mark E Smith'

**The anarchic Londoners play
a wild warm-up for the NME
Awards Tour with Austin, Texas**

PHOTO BY ANDY FORD

Barely 15 minutes into Fat White Family's first gig of 2015, frontman Lias Saoudi is in the crowd. That's no surprise given his usual antics – at one London show last year he masturbated onstage, naked – but the bare-chested singer looks especially amped up: headbanging, hip-thrusting and swigging Guinness. His bandmates are more restrained, but the yob chanting of 'I Am Mark E Smith' and 'Heaven On Earth's' creaking punk are cacophonous. They don't acknowledge each other between songs, and no-one blinks when Lias appears to fall offstage during an electric 'Wet Hot Beef'. After reacquainting himself with his audience, he staggers back to his mic, shoves a hand down his jeans, then rubs it up his torso and plunges it into his mouth. Despite recent recording sessions in New York, there are no new songs, but shambolic closer 'Bomb Disneyland' crowns a disgusting start to the year. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

Alt-J

The O2 Arena, London

Saturday, January 24

The Mercury winners' biggest-ever

UK show is a bewitching display

of sophisticated post-rock

The O2 doesn't rock, it *undulates*. Twenty thousand hypnotised fans grow jelly legs and groove to the subterranean bass rippling through their chests, until the floor looks like a sea creature with a million tiny suckers, instinctively reacting to sound. Whether to carnival synth hook, skittering insectoid drumbeat or just a gently wielded egg shaker and a sporadic click of fingers, the crowd oscillates wildly; there's some dark witchcraft afoot.

The overseers, dressed in uniform black, are Alt-J; exuding robotic calm as they take their arena bow. Their intricate folktronica began life as a hushed GarageBand project at Leeds University, singer Joe Newman and now-departed bassist Gwil Sainsbury banned from using bass or drums by their halls of residence noise restrictions. Before long they'd developed into a four-piece band, made a Mercury Prize-winning debut in 2012's 'An Awesome Wave' and infiltrated dinner parties and Channel 4 preview adverts. Now, they've expanded to monstrous dimensions, and this vast shed is full of their swaying disciples.

Bathed in sinister red, Alt-J march onstage and instantly fill the chasm with the amorphous death-ray hum of 'Hunger Of The Pine', sketched out in shuffling tin-pan percussion, icy atmospherics and Joe and keyboardist Gus Unger-Hamilton's monk-like harmonies. Like the following 'Fitzpleasure', it disguises a murderous technological intent with enthralling pastoral tones. It's all part of Alt-J's mission to seduce and unsettle in equal measure, a musical version of Charlie Brooker's subversive TV show *Black Mirror*.

Having placed us suitably on edge, they clip on their friendlier face attachments for a while. On 'Something Good' they sound like a fishing village folk band that's discovered a MacBook Pro tangled up in their nets and learned how to make it fizz. 'Left Hand Free' boasts a freak-out synth solo that resembles Ray Manzarek on fire and 'Dissolve Me' is a glorious street party skipping song, a veritable bouncy castle of synthetic buzz and twinkle.

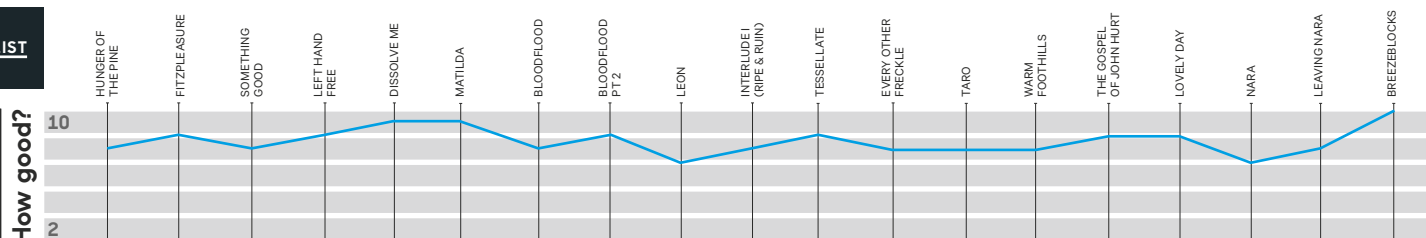
The sparseness afforded to the choruses and to adorable music-box lament 'Matilda' makes everyone feel like they're starring in *Bagpuss* for three-and-a-half minutes. It's also what makes tonight feel like the future of arena shows. It's a sophisticated post-rock happening that doesn't rely on old-world pomp, pyro and pirouetting space acrobats for its spectacle, but engulfs the vast crowd in a sonic blanket and leaves the set pregnant with electric

THEY'RE A MUSICAL VERSION OF CHARLIE BROOKER'S BLACK MIRROR

expectation. Plus, their inherent rejection of big-gig convention allows Alt-J to experiment with set structure. They form a wormhole between their two albums by linking the epic slo-mo chimes of 'Bloodflood' from their debut, to the liquid beats and cinematic piano voodoo of 'Bloodflood Pt II', from last year's 'This Is All Yours'. Wonky, esoteric rarity 'Leon' is dropped mid-set (imagine an early Cure playing at a '50s biker bop). They even throw in the stuttery madrigal 'Interlude I (Ripe & Ruin)' as intro to 'Tessellate', which sounds like Godzilla trying to tiptoe and sees the entire crowd making Alt-J triangles with their fingers.



SETLIST





Joe Newman
onstage at The
O2 Arena

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Chris, 27, Italy
"I love it, seriously!
I loved the last song,
it's my favourite,
and 'Matilda' as well."



Frederica, 24, Italy
"I love them – so
much success even
though they are
new in this business."



Piper, 20, Canada
"Fucking amazing!
'Matilda' was great,
but the whole thing
was mesmerising. I fell into
a weird zone."



Felix, 19, London
"It was incredible
– they were much
better live than
I thought they'd be."

They can't quite do 'sexy' yet. When Newman croons the immortal line "Gonna turn you inside out and lick you like a crisp packet" during 'Every Other Freckle', literally nobody turns to mush at the prospect. No woman, Joe, likes being treated like a Frazzle. But as the Eastern minuet call of 'Taro' and the Bon Iver folk of 'Warm Foothills' lull us into a false sense of security before 'The Gospel Of John Hurt' rams home the main set with a brain-haemorrhage synth assault akin to Depeche Mode gone tribal, they've certainly sexed up the art of enigmatic drone rock.

The encore drifts a little, dipping from a cover of Bill Withers' 'Lovely Day' into takes on 'Nara' and 'Leaving Nara' that meander as much as the deer in the titular Japanese city. But a final 'Breezeblocks' pulls it back from the brink, a hug-your-mates climax more unifying than a billion 'Fix You's. Alt-J's robot revolution has a warm-blooded heart after all. ■ MARK BEAUMONT

8

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O2

MORE GIGS

Menace Beach Broadcast, Glasgow

Sunday, January 25

The '90s revival may well be rock's final frontier, before we boldly go back to the noughties and everything becomes a facsimile of the already facsimiled. There's no doubting Menace Beach's affection for the decade, but they reference it so capably – and so loudly – that you can't help but be impressed. Combining the sass of Elastica with the loose charm of Pavement and the melodic scuzz of major label-era Sonic Youth, the Leeds five-piece are a patchwork of easily identifiable influences. But they're no slackers when it comes to tunes, as evidenced by searing pair 'Come On Give Up' and 'Drop Outs'. Their crowd tonight may be minuscule, but they all leave as converts.

■ BARRY NICOLSON

8

Twin Atlantic The Macbeth, London

Monday, January 26

Twin Atlantic postponed this acoustic set back in December, when singer Sam McTrusty was struck down with laryngitis. Now fully recovered, he leads the Glaswegian quartet through a diligent performance that marks an intriguing diversion from their usually raucous live show. The frontman's vocals are afforded more space, as the band strip the heaviness right out of 'Rest In Pieces', 'Crash Land' and hit single 'Heart And Soul', replacing it with a wistful charm. Most impressive is 'Brothers And Sisters', from last year's 'Great Divide' album. Its chest-beating chorus pared down to simple strumming and McTrusty's vocals, it floats gently over the crowd.

■ DAMIAN JONES

7

Waxahatchee



St Pancras Old Church, London Monday, January 26

Katie Crutchfield plays twice in one night on her exquisitely confident UK return

Demand for Waxahatchee's first UK appearance of 2015 forces Katie Crutchfield to play back-to-back shows tonight. The Alabama songwriter arrives at this beautiful 18th-century church armed with a fistful of unheard songs, some fairy lights and a few vintage lampshades. She makes us wait for the new material, though, opening with a breathtakingly sparse 'Catfish', from 2012 debut 'American Weekend'.

Though ostensibly a solo show, she's joined by sister Allison – a member of Philadelphia basement punks Swearin' – for the close harmonies of 'Blue Pt II' and the sweetly melodic 'Blue'. The latter provides the first taste of upcoming record 'Ivy Tripp', during which the sisters' voices meld together with eerie seamlessness. The propulsive 'Under A Rock' shows off the heavier side of the new album, before Katie switches her meditatively strummed electric guitar for a keyboard on two more untested tracks. 'Stale By Noon' is pensive, lullaby-soft and deceptively simple. The plinking melody on 'Half Moon' is even more delicate, paired with confessional, tender lyrics ("I invite myself in/And I think I kissed you first").

The darkly atmospheric 'Singer's No Star' – released by Crutchfield's Great Thunder project last year – and the longing 'You're Damaged' stun the audience into a reverential silence broken only by the fizz of opening beer cans. Crutchfield withholds any more new material, closing with dreamy 'American Weekend' cut 'Noccalula'. It caps an exquisitely confident return.

■ LEONIE COOPER

SETLIST

- ▶ Catfish
- ▶ Grass Stain
- ▶ Peace And Quiet
- ▶ Chapel Of Pines
 - ▶ Blue Pt. II
 - ▶ Blue
- ▶ Under A Rock
- ▶ Stale By Noon
- ▶ Singer's No Star
 - ▶ Half Moon
 - ▶ Bathtub
- ▶ I Think I Love You
- ▶ You're Damaged
- ▶ Noccalula

9

Gerard Way

O2 Guildhall, Southampton

Wednesday, January 21

Former My Chemical Romance singer remains a voice for disaffected youth as a solo artist inspired by Bowie and Britpop

Five months ago, in front of 400 people at the nearby Wedgewood Rooms in Portsmouth, Gerard Way played the first gig of his solo career. Tonight's 1,700-capacity show sold out in five minutes, and some of the former My Chemical Romance frontman's most dedicated followers spent the past 24 hours camped on the cold flagstones outside the Guildhall. The Black Parade that was ever-present in MCR's mid-'00s pomp has dismissed itself, and you can count the number of band T-shirts on the fingers of one skeleton-gloved hand. Everyone's grown up a bit.

When Way's four-piece band The Hormones strike up the marching beat of 'The Bureau', the opener from last year's 'Hesitant Alien' album, they're almost drowned out by the crowd – his fans don't just scream, they create an overwhelming din. When their hero eventually emerges the caterwauling surges to a level that may well be audible across the water on the Isle Of Wight. Way drinks in their adulation. Then, during the sugary pop of 'Action Cat', purposefully stalks the stage, eyes darting around the crowd. Satisfied the audience is in his hand, he relaxes.

"I like this room," he announces after the pulverising Pixies-like riffs of 'Zero Zero', "It's nice and big and old. Just like me." Self-deprecation aside, Way is confident, cheerful and wearing a grin that shows he's still enjoying the spotlight. The electric-blue suit and shock-red hair of last year have gone, replaced by punky bleached spikes and a

familiar Green Day look of black shirt and red tie. He's magnanimous, too, acknowledging ex-Thursday frontman Geoff Rickly's new band No Devotion – formed from the ashes of Lostprophets after Ian Watkins' imprisonment for sexual offences in 2013 – who provide support tonight. "I love all those guys," he states pointedly. "I'm very happy to have them back."

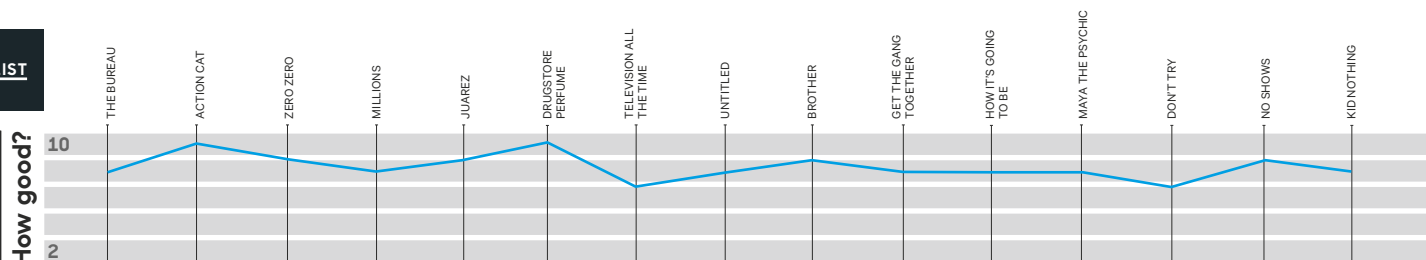
Way's interviews last year made much of 'Hesitant Alien's Britpop influence, and it's the era's more theatrical side – the Bowie/Smiths lineage – that's most evident tonight. You can hear a '90s echo in Mansun flashback 'Television All The Time', the swaggering Menswear drama of 'No Shows' and the epic Suede swell of the gorgeous 'Drugstore Perfume'. It's also in the Radiohead balladry of a show-stopping, as yet untitled voice-and-piano tune with an attention-grabbing hook ('How can I stay/In the ambulance?') straight

HIS FANS DON'T JUST SCREAM, THEY CREATE AN OVERWHELMING DIN

from the Thom Yorke songbook. Earnest ballad 'Brother' is just as tender, Way straining to ask, "Does anyone have the guts to shut me up?" during the verse.

When he pulls a young fan – dressed head to toe as Lola, the furry pink mascot he invented for 'Hesitant Alien' – onstage to play tambourine on 'Get The Gang Together', he dons her feather boa. It's a Nicky Wire look that's a reminder of how My Chemical Romance and Manic Street Preachers, working-class bands from either side of the Atlantic, rallied thousands of disaffected teenagers. Way continues the fight tonight, pausing at one

SETLIST





Gerard Way onstage in Southampton

MORE GIGS

Hinds

Boston Arms, London

Wednesday, January 21

Hinds – who until a threat of legal action from Canadian band The Dears were called Deers – exude the carefree charm of Mac DeMarco or The Moldy Peaches. Tonight, nearly half the audience is onstage by the time the Madrid band reprise floorfiller ‘Bamboo’.

There’s barely room to move, and someone keeps accidentally unplugging frontwoman Carlotta’s guitar, but nobody minds. Drummer Amber beats out a rhythm and everyone dances the macarena. On opener ‘Warning With The Curling’, co-singer Ana makes the kazoo sound cooler than it has at any time since ‘Crosstown Traffic’. ‘Easy’ sounds like Shania Twain’s ‘You’re Still The One’ with a garage-rock chorus. A joyous indie-rock fiesta.

■ KEVIN EG PERRY

9

Alvvays

Deaf Institute, Manchester

Wednesday, January 21

“I used to be really obsessed with Noel Gallagher,” gushes Alvvays guitarist Molly Rankin at the band’s first Manchester show. “Because I’m from Nova Scotia, the first Oasis record I heard was – deep breath – ‘Heathen Chemistry’. I backtracked, don’t worry!” The Toronto band’s travels through indie history are apparent in the Smiths grooves of ‘Atop A Cake’ and a take on Deerhunter’s ‘Nosebleed’. Alvvays achieve a perfection of their own in the jangles of ‘Adult Diversion’ and ‘Next Of Kin’, before the sublime hooks on ‘Archie, Marry Me’ swell into an emphatic portrayal of how it feels to be young and in love.

■ ROBERT COOKE

8

The Wytches



Trades Club, Hebden Bridge

Thursday, January 22

Spilt pints, headbanging and circle pits at Heavenly Recordings’ 25th birthday bash

There’s a lot riding on The Wytches tonight. The Brighton-based trio are in Yorkshire for the 25th birthday party of their label, Heavenly Recordings. Headliners Temples are absent; their slot cancelled after guitarist James Bagshaw injured a hand. It’s time for The Wytches to step up.

They charge straight into the droning intro of unheard tune ‘Wasteybois’, frontman Kristian Bell roaring its lyrics from behind a curtain of lank black hair. There’s a short pause for breath, then the whole thing erupts again.

Spiky two-minute thrash ‘Beehive Queen’ gallops into ‘The Holy Tightrope’, while the rapid chug of ‘Riding On Horseback In The Desert’ is like The Eighties Matchbox B-Line Disaster fucking around with Kings Of Leon’s ‘Molly’s Chambers’. The tattered waltz of another new song, ‘Hanover’, is comparatively calming until its final bars boom out.

The dirgey riffs of ‘Tricks And Dance’ sprawl into the menacing ‘Burn Out The Bruise’, before smouldering closer ‘Wire Frame Mattress’ provokes the night’s most dangerous-looking circle pit. With the band lost in its extended surf-rock jam, fans dive from the

stage. Suddenly an overexcited punter spills his pint all over the tangle of pedals and wires and the sound cuts out. Bell and bassist Daniel Rumsey boogie to Gianni Honey’s unamplified drums until he loses his patience, chucks over a cymbal stand and storms off, bandmates in tow. Roadies scabble around in vain to find a fix, but it’s too late: the night ends in carnage. ■ ROBERT COOKE

SETLIST

- Wasteybois
- Gravedweller
- Beehive Queen
- The Holy Tightrope
- Riding On Horseback In The Desert
- Circle Of Blood
- Hanover
- Tricks And Dance
- Burn Out The Bruise
- Wire Frame Mattress



point to say, “If you have a friend who’s transgender or non-binary and you give them your support, I love you.” David Bowie would be proud.

The new songs aired tonight suggest Way’s yet-to-be-recorded second album may be even deeper in love with the Starman. Coming late in the set, the stomping ‘Don’t Try’ falls a little flat, and isn’t familiar enough even for the hardcore fans. Saved for the encore, however, the strutting ‘Kid Nothing’s’ mock-egocentric chorus (“Say my name! Say my name! Kid Nothing!”) gives Way his own alter-ego, unleashing his fullest Ziggy Stardust fantasies. Next stop Mars, or at least some arenas. ■ STUART HUGGETT

7

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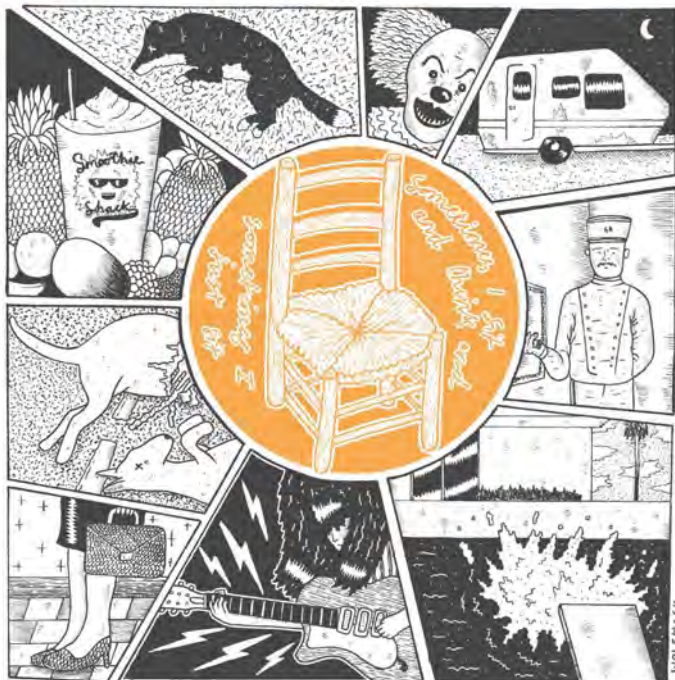
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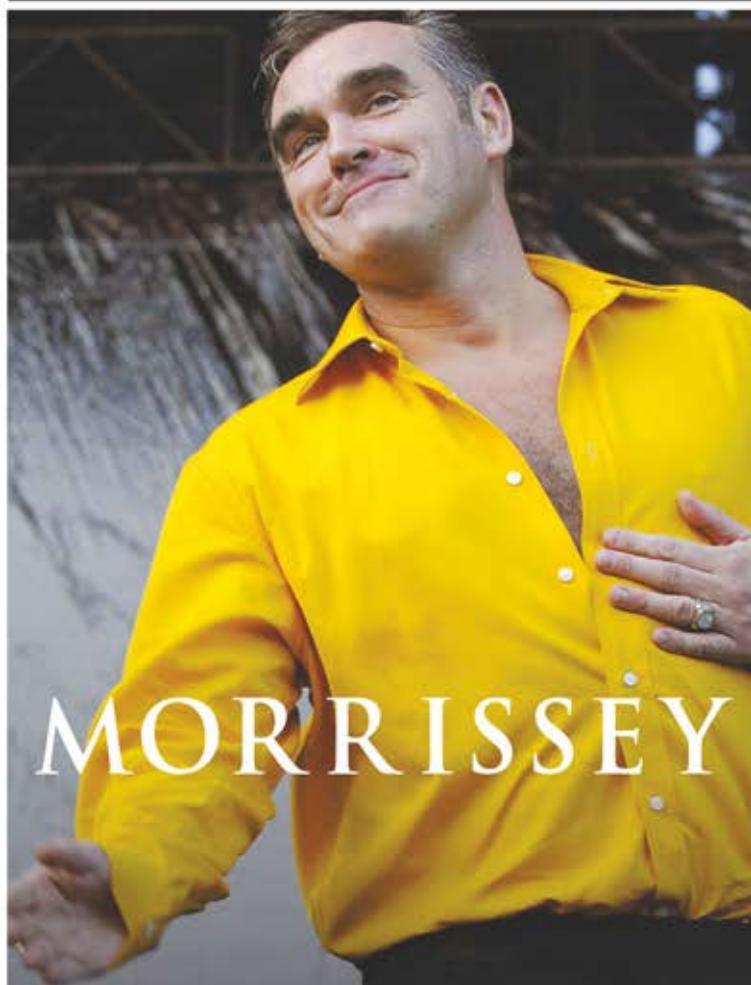
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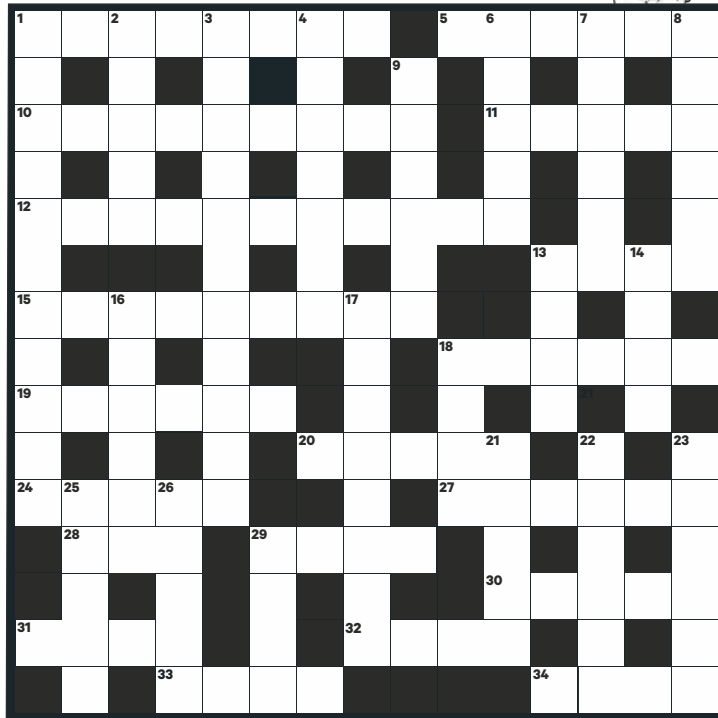
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CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Young and good looking (8)
5+14D "Don't believe in fear, don't believe in faith/Don't believe in anything that you can't break", 1996 (6-4)
10+11A Tom heard silent arrangement made of The War On Drugs' music (4-2-3-5)
12 "I try and laugh about it, hiding the tears in my eyes/'Cos _____", 1986 (4-4-3)
13 They help you stand the music of ZZ Top (4)
15 Puddle Of Mudd to confess there will be no dirt on album (4-5)
18+6D Ariel Pink album that was available yesterday (6-5)
19 Paul Weller's Style Council partner in a bit of temperamental bother (6)
20 (See 1 down)
24 (See 29 across)
27 "It's a little _____, just the Robinsons' affair", from Simon And Garfunkel's 'Mrs Robinson' (6)
28+23D Neither Chuck Berry nor The Rolling

- Stones were in the mood for a ballad (3-2-4)
29+24A Sade lived somehow as Death In Vegas killed off a music legend (4-5)
30 US folk-singer Arlo Guthrie gets a Spanish friend in on album (5)
31 The Aphex Twin's work located in a messy room (4)
32 "This old _____ don't smell too pretty", from Oasis' 'Half The World Away' (4)
33 Linkin Park music featured in *Outnumbered* (4)
34 Last year he went through a 'Morning Phase' (4)

CLUES DOWN

- 1+20A** The current challenge for James Bay (4-4-3-5)
2 Sweet and Nice sound nothing at all like The Prodigy (5)
3 Do no scripts get rewritten for New York City band? (4-7)
4 An afternoon performance from Franz Ferdinand (7)
6 (See 18 across)

- 7** Here's a request for a song by U2 (6)
8 Evil people encountered by both Imagine Dragons and The National (6)
9 Two Door Cinema Club's guiding light (6)
13 (See 16 down)
14 (See 5 across)
16+13D Morrissey was being rather personal with this song in 1991 (2-4-4)
17 Kodamine, Offspring, Reef, Evanescence, Skunk Anansie... oh, and Wet Wet Wet, please (3-1-4)
18 'Sunshine Hit Me' with their debut album (4)
21 Fionn _____, Irish musician at 'The End Of History' (5)
22 "I'll take a _____/I know you're worth it, hit me hard", from Biffy Clyro's 'Many Of Horror' (6)
23 (See 28 across)
25 Dolly mixture on Television (5)
26 Flowered Up's positive power switch (3-2)
29 Japan's album 'Tin _____' is one to beat (4)

JANUARY 24 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1+4A Being Beige, 7 Jet, 9 Sedated, 10+26D+34A Neither One Of Us, 11 On A Ragga Tip, 13 Mud, 14 Yusuf, 16 OMD, 18 Rio, 20 Run It, 21 Ummagumma, 22 Tanx, 27 Euros, 29 Urban, 33 Tango
DOWN 1 Best Of You, 2 Indian Summer, 3+32A Gotta Get Away, 4 Bid, 5+28D I'm Not Okay, 6 Exit Planet Dust, 7 John Martyn, 8+19D+24A Tired Of England, 12 Gloom, 15 Fugees, 17 Dramatics, 23 Gedge, 25 Gary, 30 Band, 31+31A Bad Brains

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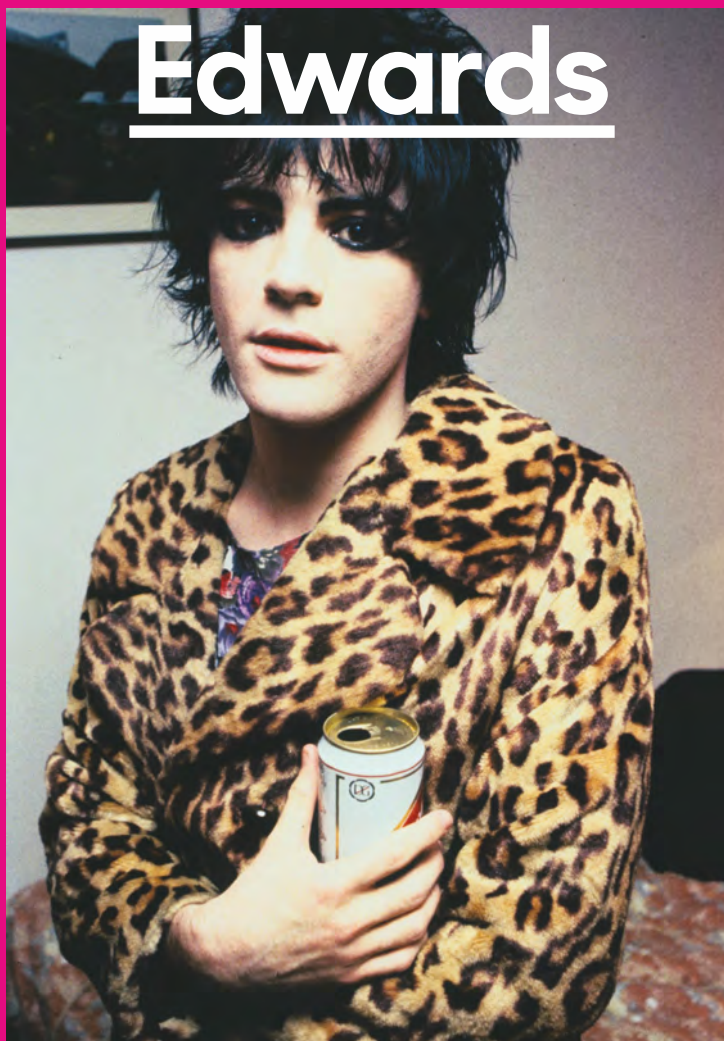
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