

28 MARCH 2015

NME

"This album is
new territory
for us"

blur

The first big comeback interview

**YOUNG
FATHERS**

Mercury winners
versus the world

BEASTIE BOYS

Ad-Rock takes on Hollywood

**COURTNEY
BARNETT**

Slacker rock's new anti-hero

+

Exclusive

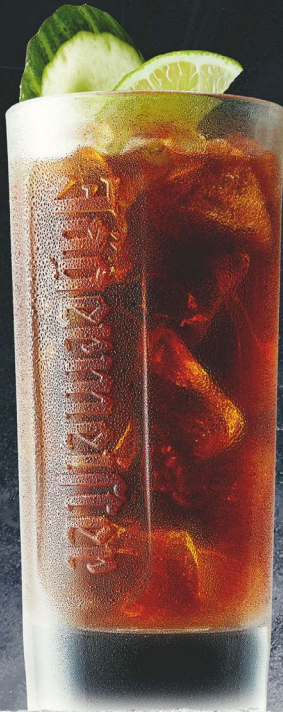
**track by track guide
by Graham Coxon**

+ Will Ferrell + Royal Blood + Django Django + Wu-Tang Clan + Drenge

"Getting the band back together might not be that easy, Jake" ELWOOD BLUES

DISCOVER OUR ROOTS

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Jägermeister

**IT
RUNS
DEEP**

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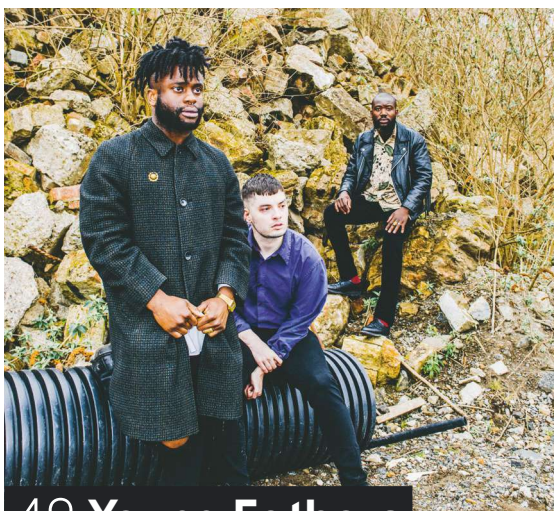
Graham Coxon gives us an exclusive guided tour of Blur's surprise eighth album 'The Magic Whip', explaining the influence of Hong Kong and North Korea, themes of biological surveillance and how they made their "sci-fi Greensleeves"

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Ahead of her hotly anticipated debut album, the Australian singer-songwriter discusses her daily crises and how she deals with being sure everyone hates her

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Tim Burgess and co mark the release of their defiant return-to-form 12th album 'Modern Nature' by rocking Worthing Pier and talking drugs, Springsteen and going to the "soul gym"



40 Young Fathers

Riling the tabloids, trolling Nestle and nabbing the Mercury, the "global pop" trio set out to provoke debate and shake up the nation

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

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KANYE AT GLASTONBURY: THE VERDICT

Getting Kanye West at Glastonbury is a major coup for the Eavis family. Although he's egotistical and at times unbearable to watch with his cringeworthy self-belief and aggressive tantrums ("I am the number one human being in music"), Kanye is undeniably a hugely talented musician. He's definitely got the presence, fan base and back catalogue to pull off a headline show at Worthy Farm. And if an Oasis reunion were ever confirmed for Glastonbury, I doubt the Gallagher brothers' equally inflated egos would be a major topic of discussion, as Mr West's has this week. Also, give Kanye credit – he's directly influenced the direction of one of the world's biggest genres of music on a number of occasions. He is hip-hop's superstar. Glastonbury isn't a rock festival, it's an arts festival, and Kanye wholeheartedly represents one of the most popular art forms today, one that's under-represented at festivals all over the country. The idea that festivals are purely for rock or alternative music



is outdated. Give Kanye a chance and you won't regret it.
Sam Birch, via email

GC: Glastonbur-ye, hey? What an almighty stir. It's the only thing you lot want to talk about this week. Our inbox was maxed out with emails flavoured with delight, venom and puns as bad as mine ("Kan ye pull it off?" etc). The announcement even sparked an online petition opposing the booking, signed by thousands of people. Sam's into it, but not all of you are...

KAN YAY? OR KAN NAY?

Kanye at Glasto. I don't often get sad. But this made me very sad.

Corey Keepence, via email

Having Kanye play at Glastonbury is a waste of a headline spot. He isn't real music. People pay hundreds for real entertainment, not a joke dancing round a stage where the greats have played like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Smiths and Arctic Monkeys.

Niamh, via email

GC: Niamh, The Beatles never played Glastonbury (although Paul McCartney headlined in 2004). Come on folks, let's look for some silver linings...

Kanye completes Glastonbury's weirdest line-up so far. It stretches from Lionel Richie to Kanye West, but that's just Glastonbury. Yeah, it's different and could

be interesting, but I'll be over at Shangri-La.

Alex Shepherd, via email

GC: That's more like it!

My thoughts? Fucking brilliant, simply because Kanye West is a grade-A wazzock – that's the reason he became a global superstar, not because of his music. Hopefully a lot of people will get a refund on their Glastonbury tickets (which I didn't get), therefore increasing the chance of me getting one on the re-sale. Then I can get absolutely off my chops in a field in Somerset.

Elliott Milburn, via email

GC: Anyone else?

Not everyone going to Glastonbury wants to see an indie band. If Kanye can build on his Brits performance, something special could happen.

Neil Renton, via email

Um, you never know, he may even bring out Macca wielding a flame-thrower.

Theo Watt, via email

GC: Cheers, Theo. The amusing thought of Sir Paul with a big blowtorch sums up exactly why Kanye is such a sensational booking. He's thrillingly unpredictable. It's already the most talked-about set of the weekend and it's still three months away.

MUSE ARE BACK

I went along to see Muse (below) for the first time in Glasgow last week. I've been listening to them for



half my life, but never been able to go; then somehow I got a ticket to their most intimate gig for years. And can I just say that it was the best live gig I have been to and will possibly ever go to. They played all the classics, plus 'Psycho' and 'Reapers', which were incredible. This makes me very excited about the new album. Long live Matt, Chris and Dom.

Sean Redpath, via email

GC: This is an important moment for Muse. The last two albums haven't particularly floated my boat. Will 'Drones' be the fidgeting, spite-fuelled riff-fest I've been waiting for? So far, the signs are good.

JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE AND WRONG-O

Gaaaaah! NME, 'Let It Be' is clearly the best Beatles song. When I picked up the March 21 issue, I wanted to totally reorder the Top 20.

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'I Am The Walrus' at number nine? It's tricky because they're the best band the world has ever known – but I can't help but disagree.

Chad Giles, via email

When I read that 'Strawberry Fields Forever' was announced as the best Beatles song in your list, I couldn't have been happier. It perfectly encapsulates The Beatles of that era and the ingredients that made them so great. Bringing psychedelia into the mainstream is one of the biggest events in music history. This song inspired acts in pop, rock and experimental music and will continue to do so because it's timeless. It doesn't even need to be your favourite, it's just the most important.

Peter McWhirter, via email

GC: There are few musical tasks harder than ordering The Beatles' music in terms of greatness. In the NME office, tantrums were thrown, chairs were lobbed, personal insults traded – and that was before we even started debating the Top 100.



LOOK WHO'S STALKING

This is me interrupting Fat White Family having a curry after their NME Awards Show in Nottingham. They offered me a papadum!

Jason Knight, Nottingham



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NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

1. The Vaccines
Dream Lover

Debuted at this year's NME Awards with Austin, Texas, the newest offering from The Vaccines' forthcoming 'English Graffiti' album comes good on frontman Justin Young's promise of charting "adventurous and stylised" new waters. Cavernous, 'AM'-style riffs underpin multi-part harmonies and synth parts Metronomy's Joe Mount would give his flappiest flares for, resulting in something intricate but expansive and utterly built for stadiums.

Lisa Wright, writer

2. Lusts
Mouthwash

Hot on the heels of debut single 'Temptation', Lusts return with 'Mouthwash', another exercise in windswept, psych-flecked indie-rock. Its motorik drumbeats and heavily effected guitar lines smack of the time The Horrors embraced krautrock on 2009's 'Primary Colours'. However, brothers Andy and James Stone are of a much sunnier disposition, and 'Mouthwash' is three minutes of pure joy.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

3. Bully
I Remember

'I Remember' is less a dredging of memory than a ritual exorcism, Bully lynchpin Alicia Bognanno furiously reeling off aspects of a failed relationship over euphorically raging guitar. Some convey humdrum intimacy, like the smell of bedsheets and Christmas family rituals; others hint at the point of dissolution – "*I remember hurting you so bad... I remember things getting better*" – and the torturous indecision that precedes a split.

Laura Snapes, Features Editor

4. Hudson Mohawke
Very First Breath

Hudson Mohawke gives us the first glimpse of his new album with 'Very First Breath', featuring French vocalist Irfane. While HudMo has talked up how different his next record is, this track, with its 50-storey high beats and fizzing synths, will be instantly familiar to fans. Irfane brings a sense of romance to proceedings, singing "*How could I ever forget to hold you tight in my thoughts?*" over the dance-tent-slaying backdrop.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor

5. Kendrick Lamar
King Kunta

Whenever new talent comes out of Compton, fans of classic Dre pray for a monster G-funk jam like in the old days. 'King Kunta', from his sudden-drop third album 'To Pimp A Butterfly', is Kendrick Lamar doing exactly that, with production by Sounwave. The title references 18th-century slave Kunta Kinte, inspiration of Alex Haley's 1976 novel *Roots*, providing a fascinating context for Lamar to basically say that everyone else is shit at rapping.

Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

**6. Pill**
Misty Eyed Porno Reader

Brooklyn band Pill fuse post-punk experimentalism with the righteous ire of feminist label Kill Rock Stars on their frenetic, alarms-blaring new track. Riddled with wild sax skronk and pungent, Crampsy riffs, 'Misty Eyed Porno Reader' sounds like a signal-crossed radio flitting between punk-club basement transmissions, David Lynch's apocalyptic jazz hour and serial-killer call-in shows.

Jazz Monroe, writer

7. Brandon Flowers
Can't Deny My Love

If you're lacing up your snakeskin boots and knotting your shoestring tie at the first whisper of a new Brandon Flowers solo track, you'd best douse yourself in disco glitter while you're at it. Yes, we're still deep in epic desert territory, but producer Ariel Rechtshaid has not only drenched the verses of the first single from 'The Desired Effect' in gated-reverb Haim slickness but its chorus in full-on Duran Duran electro crashes.

Mark Beaumont, writer

8. Future Flocka
Rotation

Atlanta's famed strip-club circuit has helped the city become a locus for cutting-edge trap and hip-hop, so it's notable that two of its key agents, Future and Waka Flocka Flame, have buddied up to set their tongues loose on the world at large. On a dystopian undercurrent of 808 Mafia beats, this woozy track lays rolling snares and suspenseful synth-warps under the pair's half-yelped, half-muttered back-and-forth.

Jazz Monroe, writer

9. Grimes x Bleachers
Entropy

After standalone single release 'Go', non-album demo 'Realiti' and now this collaboration with Bleachers (aka Jack Antonoff from NY pop trio Fun) for the *Girls* soundtrack, it's hard to imagine what will actually land on Grimes' new album proper. But the fact that this glistening tune – whose contagious mega-chorus embraces radio-friendly pop – missed the cut bodes well for the tantalisingly elusive follow-up to 2012's 'Visions'.

Luke Morgan Britton, writer

10. Jonny Greenwood
Lola Choir

Flying Lotus shared a snippet of new Jonny Greenwood music during his excellent BBC Radio 1 residency on March 12. Played just after a flash of the Juilliard String Quartet – which formed in New York in 1946 – it's a surreal fantasia of looped celestial vocals, layered and spun around one another hypnotically. Could this suggest the inclusion of a choir on the next Radiohead album? Probably not.

Lucy Jones, Deputy Editor, NME.COM

ESSENTIAL NEW TRACKS

► LISTEN TO THEM ALL AT NME.COM/ONREPEAT NOW

11. Death Grips On GP

Death Grips have finally confirmed a release date for 'the powers that b', their supposed final album, a double-discer comprising the previously released 'Niggas On The Moon' and the forthcoming 'Jenny Death'. 'On GP' is a bile-filled seven-minute taster. MC Ride snarls "Listen up, you nosy bitch" over a slow, smoky beat that speeds up and then detonates into a blast of psychedelic noise, topped with headache-inducing drums from Zach Hill.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

12. Sufjan Stevens Carrie & Lowell

The title track from the Detroit songwriter's first album in five years is quintessential Sufjan. Following a bold sonic shift with spacey predecessor 'The Age Of Adz' in 2010, the new record signals a return to his folk roots. While perhaps less groundbreaking than fans might have hoped, the song, a eulogy to Stevens' late mother, is perhaps the most intimate and heartbreaking material we've heard from the singer.

Luke Morgan Britton, writer

13. Sheer Mag Button Up

Upcoming Philadelphians Sheer Mag recently put out a new seven-inch on Katorga Works, the label that released Merchandise's excellent 'Children Of Desire' in 2012. Sheer Mag's fuzz-soaked rock'n'roll has little in common with the arty Tampa Bay punks, though, with 'Button Up' bouncing in on tin-can drums and guitars that sound like they're being played through Thin Lizzy's broken amps.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

14. Jaakko Eino Kalevi Double Talk

Jaakko Eino Kalevi sings in a wheezing murmur, as if someone trapped in his ribs were squeezing his lungs for attention, but on 'Double Talk' his tense soprano feels improbably agile. "We think double talk, we think double thoughts", goes the chorus, conjuring hazy memories of The xx, while a whirling whistle on the periphery evokes Grandaddy's playful wooziness. Expect resplendent thrills from the Finn's debut album, out in June.

Jazz Monroe, writer

15. Years & Years Worship

Saddled with the dubious honour of victory in the BBC's Sound Of 2015 poll, London's Years & Years – who also reached Number One with recent single 'King' – have plenty to prove with June-bound debut album 'Communion'. Lead track 'Worship' bodes well, easing from jittery beginnings into slinky, summer-funk hooks that sashay between R&B collar-poppers and soaring choruses, equal parts Disclosure and late-career Jacko.

Jazz Monroe, writer



16. Girls Names Zero Triptych

When they emerged in 2011, Belfast quartet Girls Names dealt in breezy shoegaze; they returned in 2013 with the icy gloom of 'The New Life'. Now, on new single 'Zero Triptych', they've built a 10-minute sonic odyssey. It begins with evil, industrial synths, swells to Joy Division-gone-technicolour and fades out in a flurry of Johnny Marr jangles. Their most adventurous song yet.

Lisa Wright, writer

17. Blur There Are Too Many of Us

Ever feel bewildered by your own species? On this basis, Damon and co have your back. A slow-building lament, our second peek at 'The Magic Whip' forebodes ecological catastrophe with disenchanted lyrics that hover over mournful string stabs like mystic omens. "We all believe in praying for our own immortality", Damon sings, sounding like a space station radio controller broadcasting his own breakdown.

Jazz Monroe, writer

18. Rolo Tomassi Stage Knives

Guitars grind against a backdrop of horror-movie synths; vocals flicker from spectral whispers to throat-shredding screams; drums jerk angrily around twisted time signatures. Yep, it's business as usual for Yorkshire rippers Rolo Tomassi, now in their tenth year. 'Stage Knives', from upcoming fourth album 'Grievances', brutalises the senses as before, but pushes the envelope even further with profound flashes of post-rock atmos.

Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

19. James Murphy We Used To Dance

While *We're Young*, the new film from Noah Baumbach (*Greenberg*, *The Squid And The Whale*), suggests that ageing hipsters can hold on to their sense of place in the world by hanging out with other, younger hipsters. James Murphy has tackled the evolution of the professionally cool before, and returns to the topic on the film's score with this synth-led instrumental, its melancholy vibe hinting at 'Disintegration'-era Cure.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor

20. Nai Harvest All The Time

Barging into pop-punk's bustling house party, Nai Harvest make the kind of melodic racket that catches your ear across the room without clearing it first. The Sheffield duo, whose album 'Hairball' arrives next month, inject a Metz-like sneer into the hardcore jangle of underground sweethearts Hüsker Dü, rolling into singalongs that make you feel like a gleaming god: benevolent and mighty.

Jazz Monroe, writer

TheWeek

► EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN MUSIC EDITED BY DAN STUBBS

8 **Master**

of puppets

RATCHET

Shamir in
Muppet and
real-life form
in the video
for 'Call It Off'



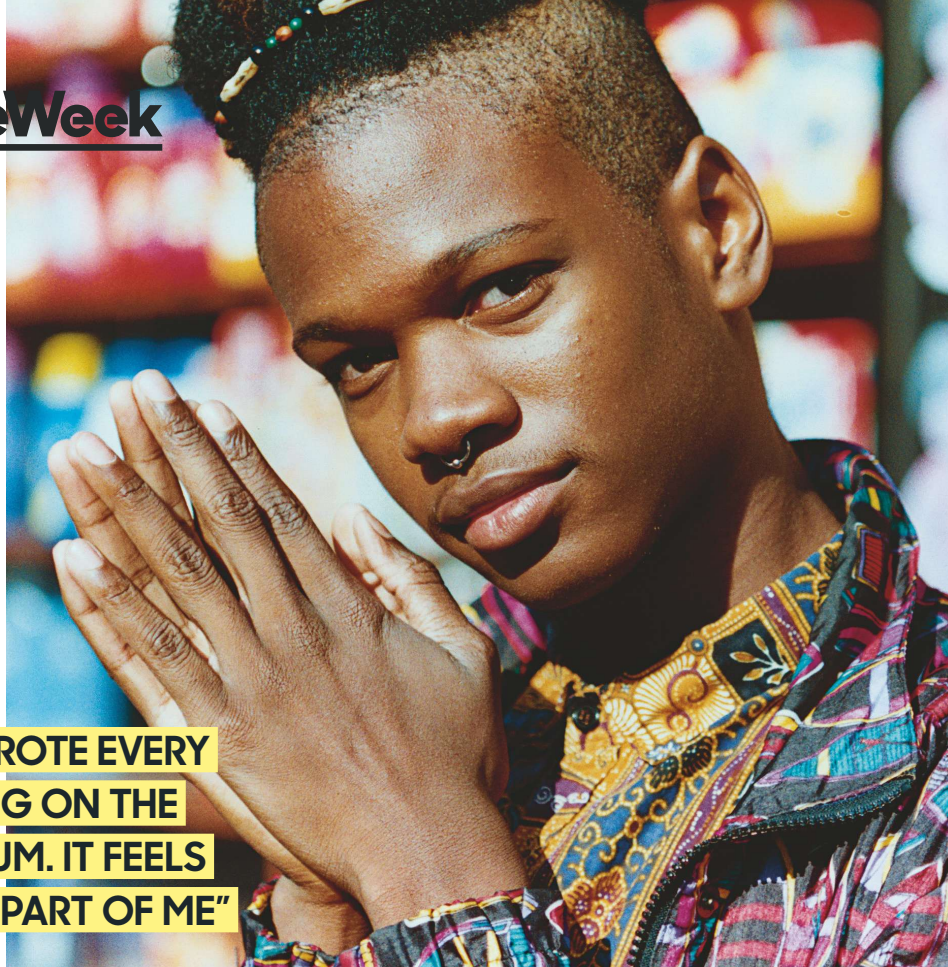
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'Call It Off', the first single from Shamir's "danceable and fun" debut album, comes with strings attached

Most singers would balk at the idea of being dubbed a pop puppet, but not Shamir, whose new video for 'Call It Off' features the androgynous Vegas star transformed into the stuff of Jim Henson's disco dreams.

"They made a Muppet version of me – it's the cutest thing ever," Shamir explains from his new home in New York. "The video starts with me like I am in real life, in the flesh, but then I take myself to this fantasy land away from all the real-life bullshit and turn into a Muppet. Seven-year-old me is dying inside." ➔





"I WROTE EVERY SONG ON THE ALBUM. IT FEELS LIKE PART OF ME"

The video was directed by Phil Hodges, who made the video for Ben Folds Five's 'Do It Anyway' featuring the Fraggles, and to whom Shamir was introduced by producer Nick Sylvester. "It looks just like me, they got it down to a T. They even gave it a nose ring and a gap in its teeth. Somebody's hand was up it and it had little strings on the hands, so it can move. It was like a Muppet movie or something, like I was Kermit the Frog."

Unfortunately, Shamir was not allowed to keep the puppet for himself. Happily, he's got plenty to take his mind off it. 'Call It Off' appears on Shamir's forthcoming debut album 'Ratchet' (right). Announced this week, it's his first for XL Recordings and an album he describes as being "really fun" and "true to the 'Northtown' EP", which he released in 2014. The album, due out on May 18, is a record of two halves. "It has really danceable, fun songs, you know; and the other half is kinda like the chill half," he explains. "I'm super excited – I wrote every song and it feels like a part of me."

As well as 'Call It Off' and last year's 'On The Regular' single, the album includes a song called 'Vegas' that Shamir wrote with his aunt, offering an insight into the dark side of his Nevada hometown, behind the neon lights and cash-rich casino excess.

"My aunt Amela is a songwriter and she was like, 'You got any tracks? Maybe you could send me one and we can work from there.' So I sent her the track to the first song



on the album and I am super excited about it because it's about our hometown. We were both born and raised in Vegas, which is rare. It's about the Vegas clichés and paints the town in a very dark and real light."

The song is central to an album that tackles Shamir's outcast experience of growing up in a city designed to serve the needs of tourists and gamblers over its residents. "What a lot of people don't get is that since Vegas is such a tourist town, the people who actually live there kinda suffer for it. Our government really don't even care about us. We try and do things for ourselves and it's like, 'Well, no, all our budget is gonna go to the strip and things to make people come here and spend their money.' There's a line in the song where we go, 'You can come to the City Of Sin and get away without bill/But if you're living in the city are you already in hell?'"

Shamir will be able to spend time as a tourist himself when he embarks on his first UK tour in May, prior to the release of 'Ratchet'. As well as performances at The Great Escape, he's also lined up to play gigs in London, Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow and Nottingham.

The trip to London is exciting him the most as he'll get to meet more labelmates from the XL roster. "I met Ezra Koenig [Vampire Weekend] recently; he was so nice. I need to work my way up to Adele, though; she's the ultimate..." ■ DAVID RENSHAW

► Watch the 'Call It Off' video on NME.COM now

MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE

FIVE TOURING ESSENTIALS

Stella Mozgawa



Warpaint drummer

BOOK

Tenth Of December by George Saunders



"It's a collection of short stories about things that happen, over time, on December 10 to different people. It sounds really teenage, but the author writes like David Sedaris, the humourist – he's very sardonic."



BOXSET Mad Men

"When I'm travelling, I try to time my off-nights so that I can catch up with it. When is it back?

I need to know!"

FILM Dallas Buyers Club



"[Lead actor] Matthew McConaughey is smashing it at the moment. 'True Detective' was amazing, and I can't wait to see where he'll go next!"

GAME Celebrity Cheese

"You make a pun on a celebrity's name to turn them into an ingredient or a meal. Someone came up with Krilllex last night – krill plus Skrillex. Curry Grant is another good one. We have a master list of names that we've been keeping since I started the band."



HOME COMFORT Earl Grey

"Earl Grey tea, with soya milk and honey. I'm not high maintenance."

► Warpaint continue their tour at Gateshead Sage (March 25) and London Eventim Apollo (26)

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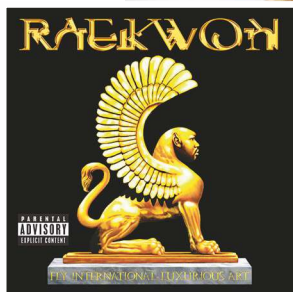
**Wu-Tang Clan MC
Raekwon reckons his
new solo album – his
sixth – is his “number
one most dope”**

Raek's progress

I'm like a Michael Jordan dude,” reckons Raekwon. “I hate to lose. If I gotta win the game all by myself, shoot on my own instead of relying on the team, that’s what I do. That’s what this album feels like.”

The Wu-Tang Clan MC is talking about *Fly International Luxurious Art*, his sixth solo album (right), in a private bar in a London hotel, where he sits in a zip-up hoodie and has one shoe on, one shoe off. His new album, he insists, is “a whole lot better” than Wu-Tang’s “disappointing” *A Better Tomorrow* – their 20th-anniversary album released last December. “That album felt kind of bored. And that’s not just my opinion. The music was just too soft, too humble. I felt like the album could have been better. I voiced my opinion, like, ‘Yo, let’s give them some real shit!’ The album was driven more to [producer and fellow founding member] RZA’s expectations. He was coming from one way. We was wanting to try something new.”

It’s unusual for musicians to be so openly critical of their own albums – especially one released only three months ago, to generally positive reviews. But then, this is the Wu-Tang: the Staten Island hip-hop pioneers whose 20-year history has been riddled with in-fighting. The day before *NME* meets Raekwon, they’re in the headlines again after Method Man calls ‘Once Upon A Time In Shaolin’ – their *other* new album, of which



there’s only one copy, safe-guarded in a Moroccan vault and not available for the public to hear for another 88 years – “fucking stupid”.

“BAHAHAHAHAHA!” laughs Raekwon when we read him

Method Man’s comments. “Eighty-eight years is a long fucking time. I do think at some point people need to hear it.”

He’s more excited for people to hear ‘Fly International...’, though – it “sounds fresh, sounds today, but at the same time keeps that signature Raekwon flow”, he says.

“I took the time to study the climate of hip-hop today to figure out how a guy 20 years in the game can still surprise,” he continues, citing Kendrick Lamar, Action Bronson and French Montana, who guests on the booming ‘Wall To Wall’, as current rap stars who inspire him. “I feel at my best. It’s my number one most dope album, sculpted from one mentality: my own. Instead of nine mentalities, nine different opinions...”

Another Wu-Tang dig. Are things really so bad in their camp?

Speaking to *NME* in December, RZA suggested there were

“poisonous attitudes” within the group intent on sabotaging their success. Does Raekwon agree? Is the end near for the ‘CREAM’ heroes?

“It’s never the end for Wu-Tang,” he insists. “It’s about recognising we still want to do it. When we get together, it’s nothing but love. You know, it’s like, ‘Yo my brother, what’s

good? I love you to death.’ It’s not turbulence in the group. It’s always just issues with the management. I ain’t going on the road with Wu-Tang this year. Fans will think it’s beef in the group, but it’s all management.”

This, he confirms, includes the rap crew’s upcoming UK tour.

“I didn’t know shit about the tour. They just assume I’m good to be there and put it all together, but by then I got obligations, a fucking schedule. It’s frustrating, ‘cos I’d love to be there.” His Wu-Tang bandmates understand, he says. “There’s nothing they can do. I already pushed back my album [‘Fly International...’ was finished before work even began on *A Better Tomorrow*] to pay respect to the family,” he says. “They know where I’m at. I wish my brothers all the best. I know they gonna represent me out there, they know I’m gonna represent them.” He pauses. “It’s all love.” ■ AL HORNER

**“THE LAST WU-TANG
ALBUM WAS TOO
HUMBLE. I SAID, ‘YO,
LET’S GIVE THEM
SOME REAL SHIT!’”**



No sleep 'til Hollywood

Former Beastie Boy Ad-Rock is turning his hand to acting, his memoirs and a show with “flags and rifles and weird shit”

Thank indie director Noah Baumbach for returning Adam Horovitz, otherwise known as former Beastie Boy Ad-Rock, to the limelight. In Baumbach's acclaimed comedy *While We're Young* (reviewed on page 47), he's cast as a middle-aged, once trendy dad who's suspicious of his friends' new bond with a couple of twenty-something Brooklyn hipsters. Speaking to *NME* from his New York home, Horovitz says he has a fair bit in common with the character, mainly due

to “getting to be the age I am now and being comfortable with not being hip”.

That's rubbish, of course. As one third of one of the world's most innovative rap groups,

Horovitz will always be the very definition of cool.

However, he confirms that since the death of his bandmate Adam Yauch (MCA) in 2012, he and Mike D

will never perform under the Beastie Boys name again. “Adam started the band, so we couldn't do anything without him,” he says. But it's possible he might re-enter the studio with Mike D, following their 2013 remix of Yoko Ono Plastic Ono Band's ‘Bad Dancer’. “At some point we'll do something,” he says.

In the meantime, Horovitz and Diamond's focus is on the Beastie Boys memoir that was due to be released later this year, but now won't come out until 2017 – largely because, Horovitz says, “I don't know what I'm doing!” Despite his uncertainty, the pair are hard at

work on the book. “I try to do a little every day – it's not like I have anything else to do!” he adds. They've come up with some passages about the group, but mostly they've been covering the city that made them. “There's a lot of New York, purposely, in the things that we're writing.”

Horovitz is also one of many artists contributing to David Byrne's upcoming Contemporary Color shows, alongside St Vincent, Tune-Yards and Kelis. “I didn't know David, but I'd seen him for years and years riding his bicycle through Manhattan,” he says. It was old Beasties collaborator Money Mark who convinced him to take part in the project, which sees a host of artists creating songs for different school ‘colorguard’ teams – a kind of marching-band performance with “flags and rifles and weird shit”

“I'D LIKE TO DO A SERIES OF MOVIES, LIKE THE BOURNE IDENTITY”

that will take place in Toronto and Brooklyn this June. That's the idea, but, Horovitz confesses, “We haven't done anything! I haven't even seen Mark in six months!”

Instead, he jokes that he's focusing on his acting career. “I got a lot of green lights,” he says, deadpan. “I had to block Hollywood on my phone.” His dream role, he adds, would be something drawn from personal experience. “I'd like to do a *Bourne Identity* kind of series of movies. I'd play a guy that just likes to order in Chinese food and watch basketball on TV.” ■ LEONIE COOPER



Adam Horovitz in *While We're Young* and (above, left) with the Beastie Boys in 1987

THE MINI INTERVIEW



Will Ferrell

Actor/comedian

What's the story with new comedy *Get Hard*?

“I play a banker framed for fraud and handed a tough prison sentence. He racially profiles the guy who cleans his car [played by comedian Kevin Hart] and hires him to help him ‘get hard’ and make it through prison in one piece. He assumes I'm a crook and a liar, and I assume he's done jail time.”

How has life prepared you for this role?

“I've been incarcerated many times... mostly for bike tickets... I robbed *one* bank. That got nasty! We shot in a jail one day and that's the closest I've got. You realise this is pretty horrible – and that's the premise: how would an upper-middle-class person survive if they were thrown into that situation? What goes through your mind as to how you'll get by? Do you flee the country, get plastic surgery and disappear, or do you just learn to survive?”

Steve Carell got an Oscar nomination for *Foxcatcher*. Would you like to take on a serious dramatic role?

“Yes, I'm in talks – deep talks – for *Foxcatcher 2: The Prison Years*.”

Is there any truth to the cliché that behind the laughter hide the tears of a clown?

“I will cry today on my ride home because my chicken salad was late and the milk with my coffee was weird. It was embarrassing to me.”

■ DAN BRIGHTMORE

STAYING IN

THE BEST MUSIC ON TV, RADIO AND ONLINE THIS WEEK



Hear Florence Welch on BBC 6 Music on March 29

Florence + The Machine

The First Time

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 1pm, March 29

As she prepares to release her third LP 'How Big, How Blue, How Beautiful' in June, Florence Welch joins Matt Everitt to dissect her career so far. Tune in to hear how, from modest beginnings in grimy east London, she built her own musical universe from the ground up, drawing on Nick Cave, Eminem and even Disney's *The Little Mermaid* to fuel her flamboyant journey to international superstardom.

Coasts

The Evening Show

►LISTEN XFM, 7pm, March 31
Join Bristol's breeziest new indie-pop fiends as they treat Danielle Perry to a live session. Blending shimmering atmospherics with choruses large enough to have

their own postcode, their tunes will convince you it's summer already.

David Byrne Ride, Rise, Roar

►WATCH Sky Arts, March 26, 3.40pm
This concert film and

documentary finds old friends David Byrne and Brian Eno on the road for their joint 2008–2009 tour. The Talking Heads singer is on top form, permanently bewildered and clad in all-white stage gear, with exuberant choreography and interwoven interview footage to shake things up.

Paul Weller The Radcliffe & Maconie Show

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, March 27, 1pm
Weller (right) drops into Mark and Stuart's studio to talk about the forthcoming 'Saturn's

Pattern', his self-produced 12th solo album. Expect equal parts wit and wisdom from the flash-haired icon.

Ray Davies Tom Robinson

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, March 28, 9pm
Join the Kinks frontman for a fascinating insight into the hidden gems from his discography.

Davies, a fine raconteur and self-confessed lover of rarities, digs deep into the vaults to shed light on offcuts and B-sides chosen by listeners.



GOING OUT

THE BEST LIVE EVENTS

THIS WEEK



Sleaford Mods

The righteous duo trundle out their pissy gutter poetry.

►DATES Doncaster Priory (March 25), Hull Fruit (26), Reading Sub89 (30), Southsea Fat Fox (31)
►TICKETS £8–£10 from NME.COM/tickets with 80p–£1.50 booking fee

Errors

Glasgow's finest electro-punks take new LP 'Lease Of Life' across the country.

►DATES Newcastle Cluny (March 26), Birmingham Rainbow (27), Sheffield Picture House Ballroom (28), Leeds Brudenell (29), Norwich Arts Centre (30), Brighton Green Door (31)
►TICKETS £9–£10 from NME.COM/tickets with 90p–£1 booking fee

5 TO SEE FOR FREE

1. Crybabycry

A Nation of Shopkeepers, Leeds
►March 25, 8pm

2. Abjects

Shacklewell Arms, London
►March 26, 8pm

3. Sivu

Sixty Million Postcards, Bournemouth
►March 26, 8.30pm

4. Department M

Birthdays, London
►March 30, 8pm

5. Fairchild

Old Blue Last, London
►March 30, 8pm

Telefonica

Tickets to see the artists you love,
48 hours before general release

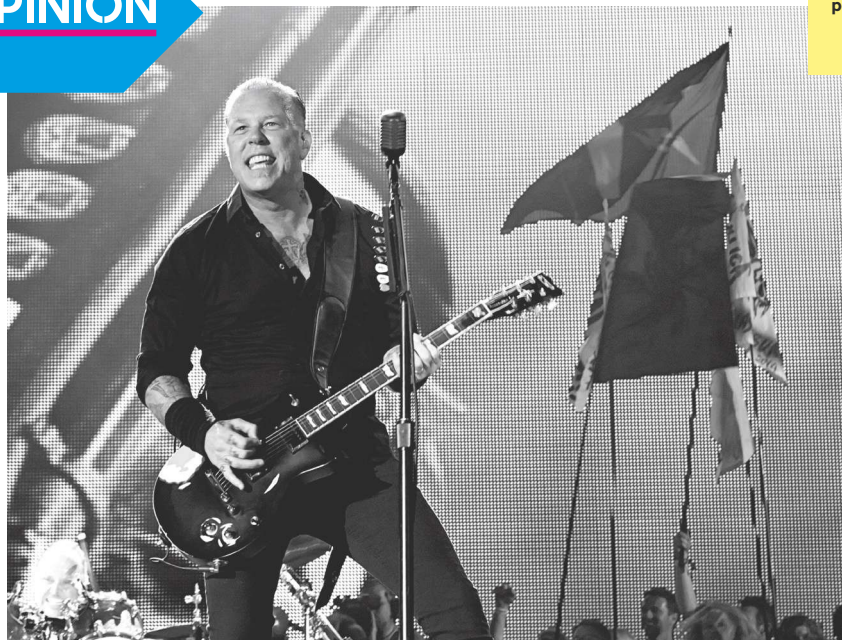
Text TICKETS to 2020

Terms apply.

PRIORITY

O₂

OPINION



(Left) Metallica's Glastonbury headline slot was petitioned against in 2014. (Right) Michael Eavis



THE AGENDAS PUSHED BY E-PETITIONS CAN BE POISONOUS

BY **BARRY NICOLSON**

With 80,000 people signing up to ban Kanye from Glastonbury, there's a danger of taking these dim-witted jokes too seriously



We've probably all put our name to an e-petition at some point, whether it's asking for Jeremy Clarkson's P45 or demanding no tax is spent on a museum for Margaret Thatcher. Most never achieve their stated aim, nor are they ever really intended to: they're simply a way of thumbing your nose and bearing your arse at something you don't like. That's especially true of petitions like the one started by Neil Lonsdale, a first-time Glastonbury-goer who last week demanded that Kanye West be relieved of his Saturday-night headline slot and replaced with "a rock band".

Lonsdale doesn't go into specifics, but presumably any rock band would suffice, as nothing could be more antithetical to the spirit of Glastonbury than

an assertive, outspoken and hugely successful hip-hop artist. The 80,000 (and counting) people who have signed it must know they're not going to get Kanye kicked off the bill, and Lonsdale himself even admitted to being "a little surprised that people have taken it as seriously as they have". I wish I could say the same, but furores like this one have become something of an annual tradition, particularly where Glastonbury is concerned – remember last year, when Metallica were *too much* of a rock band for some people?

Petitions like Lonsdale's are unfailingly pointless and ineffectual, and in that sense I've got no real problem with their existence. They're little more than temper tantrums, and are rightly ignored by the Eavises. Nevertheless, it's interesting that the biggest and best-known of them tend to be the work of rock and indie fans whose dogmatic belief in what is and isn't 'real' music has been challenged in some way. Hip-hop is the usual culprit (see also: Jay-Z at Glastonbury '08), and there are all sorts of insidious racial and cultural undertones that tend to go hand in hand with that. Yet as last year's storm in a teacup over Metallica proved, any band that doesn't fit the narrow parameters of the "Traditional Glastonbury Headliner" – as Foo Fighters evidently do – is liable to be greeted with outrage and apoplexy. Sometimes, you have to wonder if the biggest difference between an indie zealot and a Ukip supporter is their feather cut.

Some of these petitions are funny enough to make you hope they succeed – like the ones seeking to ban Nickelback from playing in London, force Bono to retire from public life or pay Weezer \$10m to split up, if only to see them reform 10 minutes later as Weezer. But the Kanye petition doesn't seem to come from a place of humour; it comes from an assumption that these people know what's best for a festival that many of them have never actually been to. I'd never argue with a person's right to have a hissy fit on the internet – that's practically what it was invented for – but, as with a monkey who starts throwing his own faeces around, it's best not to give them the attention they crave. ■

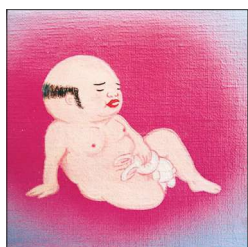
► For more opinion and debate, head to NME.COM/blogs

LOST ALBUMS

#66

Jim O'Rourke
Eureka (1999)

Chosen By Conor O'Brien, Villagers



"'Eureka' was a huge part of my insular headphone world in my college years. It has a homely beauty, and manages to feel profoundly intimate and imperfectly human while taking you on a trip into the outermost reaches of something far more otherworldly. It's unique in its ability to marry understated vocals and beautifully played acoustic instrumentation with an ever-evolving ambient soundscape and a prevailing undercurrent of dark humour – right down to the manga-esque artwork depicting a naked, middle-aged man holding the head of a teddy-bear rabbit to his nether regions. Perfect."



► THE DETAILS

- **RELEASE DATE**
February 25, 1999
- **LABEL** Drag City
- **BEST TRACKS** Ghost Ship
In A Storm, Eureka, Happy Holidays
- **WHERE TO FIND IT** Online or second-hand record shops
- **LISTEN ONLINE** On YouTube

IN THE STUDIO

Greek mythology, Damon Albarn and Afro-funk all figure in the follow-up to the art-ravers' 2012 debut



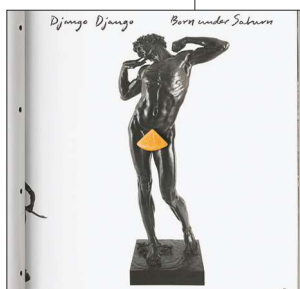
(From left) Jimmy Dixon, Vincent Neff, Tommy Grace and Dave Maclean at their studio in Hackney, London

Django Django

Django Django drummer Dave Maclean has shut himself in a car outside what he calls a “*Fawltly Towers*” establishment on the outskirts of Newcastle. He’s already fended off a hotelier trying to drag him back inside because his dinner is ready. The sound of the car heater going on and off comes down the line, then Maclean’s voice. He sounds tired but happy to be back on the road, warming up for the release of ‘Born Under Saturn’ (right), the follow-up to Django Django’s self-titled and roundly celebrated 2012 debut – even if they did get a bit rusty in the interim. “When we went back to playing live, we hadn’t played some of the songs for years. We had to watch the video of us playing Glastonbury to remember,” Maclean says, sheepishly.

They’ve been busy, though: synth player Tommy Grace had a baby, and Maclean and Grace scored the music for the Royal Shakespeare Company’s *The White Devil*.

“WE’RE NOT TRYING TO BE WACKY, WE JUST LOVE LOTS OF DIFFERENT MUSIC”
DAVE MACLEAN



Maclean also started a record label (Kick + Clap) and appeared on the Africa Express album ‘Maison Des Jeunes’ alongside Brian Eno and Damon Albarn. “Eno makes you feel very relaxed,” Maclean says. “But every now and then you think, ‘Wow! This is Eno!’”

Maclean’s had some help from his new friends on this album. When he returned from Africa, he came up with the lazy boogie piano riff that became new song ‘Giant’. He played it to Grace, who said it sounded like a giant walking, which inspired frontman Vinny Neff to come up with some lyrics inspired by Atlas, the Greek Titan who holds the planets on his shoulders.

A few phone calls later and James Mainwaring from the jazz group Roller Trio had added sax, while Lindsey Leven, singer in psych-folk band Gulp, laid down extra vocals. Even Albarn lent a hand. “We went down to Damon Albarn’s after I got back from Africa. There was an African band in the studio, so there’s an Afro-funk version of ‘Giant’ kicking around,” Maclean says.

Django wrote the rest of the album between their studio in Hackney, London, and Angelic Studios, a former farm near Banbury that’s been converted by Jamiroquai keyboardist

Toby Smith into a luxurious facility complete with quad bikes and horses. Everything Everything, Hot Chip and N-Dubz man Dappy were recording there at the same time. “Every time we went back, there was a story about what Dappy was getting up to. Apparently he had an obsession with building remote-control helicopters,” Maclean says.

Early track ‘First Light’, with its stripped-down synths and four-to-the-floor beat, suggests Django Django are leaning more heavily on the rave culture that Maclean first discovered at early-’90s revival all-nighters like Rezerrection in Edinburgh. He insists that’s not the case, and says the album actually borrows from a melting pot of influences, from The Beatles and The Byrds to techno producer Jeff Mills. The beauty, for Maclean, is mixing it up. “We’re not trying to be wacky with eclecticism; me and my mates just love so many different types of music.

▶ THE DETAILS

- ▶ **TITLE** Born Under Saturn
- ▶ **RELEASE DATE** May 4
- ▶ **LABEL** Because
- ▶ **PRODUCER** Dave Maclean
- ▶ **RECORDED** Angelic Studios; home studio in Hackney
- ▶ **TRACKS INCLUDE** First Light, Giant, Pause Repeat
- ▶ **DAVE MACLEAN SAYS** “I found the album cover on the Instagram of an art student at Goldsmiths. I wrote to her and she said it wasn’t art but that she’d been bored in the library and put a sweet on a textbook. I was drawn to it because it was so throwaway.”

We go in the studio and never know what we’re going to come out with that night,” he says. Apart from a great Dappy anecdote, that is. ■ HAZEL SHEFFIELD



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SPECIALS



A MESSAGE TO YOU
RUDY
DO THE DOG
IT'S UP TO YOU
NITE KLUB
DOESN'T MAKE IT
ALRIGHT
CONCRETE JUNGLE
TOO HOT

MONKEY MAN
(DAWNING OF A)
NEW ERA
BLANK EXPRESSION
STUPID MARRIAGE
TOO MUCH TOO
YOUNG
LITTLE BITCH
YOU'RE WONDERING
NOW

2
TONE

The cover photo was taken by punk snapper Chalkie Davies from the first floor of an abandoned building in Coventry's Canal Basin. It was Dammers' suggestion that each member should then be cut out and placed on a white background, creating the striking (and apt) two-tone image.

1 The album was produced by UK new-wave godfather Elvis Costello, a dabbler in reggae himself on 1977's 'Watching The Detectives'. Costello also took the reins for Specials contemporaries Squeeze's 'East Side Story' and, later, The Pogues' 'Rum, Sodomy & The Lash'.

2 Veteran trombonist Rico Rodriguez – eventually to become a full-time Special – made his first appearance on ‘A Message To You Rudy’. Rodriguez had played with reggae legends Sly & Robbie and Toots & The Maytals.

3 'Too Much Too Young' became the band's first Number One as the lead track on 'The Special AKA Live!' EP. It was based on ska singer Lloyd Charmers' 'Birth Control' but sped up and updated by Dammers.

4 A cover of Toots & The Maytals' 'Monkey Man' opens side two. It would later become a live favourite for Amy Winehouse, a big Specials fan who sang with Dammers at Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday concert in Hyde Park in '08.

5 Backing vocals on 'Nite Klub' come from Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders, who were breaking into the UK charts at the same time.

"Just because you're a black boy/ Just because you're a white/It doesn't mean you've got to hate him/It doesn't mean you've got to fight" - 'Doesn't Make It Alright'

The Specials' racial mix was unusual and provocative. As Dammers told *NME*: "It's just not true at all that if you're a skinhead you've gotta be in the National Front." Specials gigs were still marred by violence, however.

"Take control of the population boom/It's in your living room" - 'Too Much Too Young'

The (albeit wry) bitterness is directed at a married woman Dammers nearly had an affair with.

"I can't dress just the way I want/I'm being chased by the National Front" – 'Concrete Jungle'

Roddy Radiation's song addressed life in Hillfields, a largely immigrant area of Coventry where he lived with his girlfriend's family. The lyrics describe a typical scrape after a night out.

"This album embraces two decades of black and white music, gives it perspective and then goes on to reflect the modern rock'n'roll culture." Tony Stewart, *NME*, October 20, 1979

▶ **RECORDED** Summer 1979 ▶ **RELEASE DATE** November 3, 1979
▶ **LENGTH** 44:49 ▶ **PRODUCER** Elvis Costello ▶ **STUDIO** TW Studios, London ▶ **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 4 ▶ **UK SALES** 100,000
▶ **SINGLES** A Message To You Rudy, Too Much Too Young (The Special AKA Live!) ▶ **TRACKLISTING** ▶1. A Message To You Rudy ▶2. Do The Dog ▶3. It's Up To You ▶4. Nite Klub ▶5. Doesn't Make It Alright ▶6. Concrete Jungle ▶7. Too Hot ▶8. Monkey Man ▶9. (Dawning Of A) New Era ▶10. Blank Expression ▶11. Stupid Marriage ▶12. Too Much Too Young ▶13. Little Bitch ▶14. You're Wondering Now

Elvis Costello's knowingly vintage production alongside fierce social commentary could have stalled The Specials' debut as a period piece, but the effect is timeless – it's a relevant kick against the pricks, delivered with musical and sartorial style.

"I think Jerry Dammers is a genius. I loved how they took all these different kinds of music such as reggae, ska and bluebeat and did something unique with it."

Jason Pierce, Spiritualized,
The Guardian, May 24, 2008

“There was a huge political statement being made with The Specials. You just had to look at a photo and you got it.” **Terry Hall, *The Guardian*, July 22, 2003**

Feeling that the ska revival was going nowhere fast, Dammers indulged his love of 'muzak' on 1980's still effective 'More Specials'. The Specials had one more grand statement in 1981's UK Number One 'Ghost Town', but Hall felt they'd then said everything. He, Golding and Staple split to go pop with Fun Boy Three, while Dammers continued under various Special AKA guises before fizzling out. The band reformed in 2008 with Dammers absent.

The Specials

- Specials

The ska legends' politically charged debut is re-released this week

Exploding out of Coventry and into the Top 10 in July 1979 with debut single 'Gangsters', The Specials were the brainchild of Jerry Dammers, gap-toothed keyboard player and boss of the 2-Tone label. With singer Terry Hall, bassist Horace Panter, guitarists Roddy Radiation and Lynval Golding, drummer John Bradbury and toaster Neville Staple, Dammers hit upon a new sound. Pegged as a ska revival, The Specials' style was a frenetic post-punk update of goodtime reggae, a splinter of the new mod movement that also fuelled northern soul's renaissance. Sharp-suited kids welcomed 2-Tone's rejection of slovenly rock tropes as well as its union of black and white culture. The Specials stood for a united youth, raging against dawning Thatcherism and inner-city disaffection, but they wanted to make you dance too.

Royal Blood onstage
at the NME Awards
ceremony in London,
February 2015

NME PROMOTION

TOUCH THE LEATHER

Supporters of the NME Awards and Bestival, Replay are helping to keep rock'n'roll traditions – and brand new music – alive

Since Elvis first picked up a guitar, curled his lip and changed the course of music forever, rock'n'roll has always had an strong and striking image. The King in his leather suit. The Beatles' drainpipes and leathers in Hamburg. The Ramones' ripped-up skinnies and battered jackets. The Strokes reinventing the effortless New York look for the noughties. For the last 60 years of modern music, denim and leather have been the official uniform of rock'n'roll.

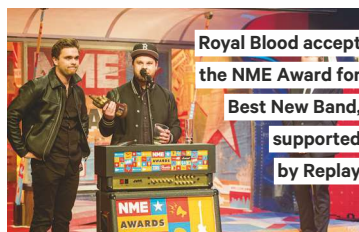
Supporting the Best New Band category at the NME Awards 2015, Replay are backing the most exciting new bands around and helping to keep this tradition alive. Not only are category winners Royal Blood one of the most vital new acts to emerge from these shores in years (a Number One debut album, countless sold-out shows and some early backing from Arctic Monkeys are testament to that), but the raw power of their streamlined, two-piece rock assault shows

that a simple and timeless idea, executed well, is still unbeatable.

Replay have been supporting new music out in the field too, putting on a stage at Bestival that played host to early shows from the likes of Birmingham scene-starters Peace and pop rulebreaker Charli XCX, while other Replay gig graduates including Alt-J, London Grammar and Sam Smith have gone on to become award-winning acts and global stars in their own right.

On this year's NME Awards Tour, meanwhile,

fans were given the opportunity to don a Replay leather jacket and pose with the iconic middle-finger NME Award, creating their own rock'n'roll image while touring partners Slaves, The Wytches, Fat White Family and Palma Violets took to the stage. And who knows, maybe one of those fans could even become a future headliner.



Royal Blood accept the NME Award for Best New Band, supported by Replay



Sam Smith on the Replay stage at Bestival 2013

THE LEATHER JACKET IS STILL THE OFFICIAL UNIFORM OF ROCK'N'ROLL



Fans try on Replay jackets – and the Best New Band award – for size

REPLAY

#REPLAYNOISE

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"It's like an army that's worse than North Korea... She has, like, 50 million people that will die for her"

Diplo compares Taylor Swift's fanbase to the forces of a brutal communist dictatorship

THE NUMBERS

\$15 million

Sum Drake could be sued for after distancing himself from live documentary film *Drake's Homecoming* days before its cinema release

\$24,000

Amount of campaign money an Illinois congressman spent on luxury items, including tickets for Katy Perry shows. He's since resigned



365

The number of new Pharrell action figures, priced at \$20,000, that would have to be sold to cover the \$7.3 million cost of Williams' 'Blurred Lines' lawsuit

9.6 million

Number of streams that Kendrick Lamar's 'To Pimp A Butterfly' album achieved in a single day, smashing Spotify's record

WHO THE FUCK IS...



Joe Irving

The New Zealand *X Factor* contestant was viciously criticised by judges Willy Moon and Natalie Kills, who called his act "creepy" and claimed: "I feel like you're going to stitch someone's skin to your face and then kill everyone in the audience."

Did he get his revenge?

And how. Moon and Kills were fired from the show after the clip went viral. **And what has Irving got out of it all?**

The love of his mush-pop peers. Ed Sheeran tweeted his support and Lorde mailed a box of cupcakes decorated with the words 'KEEP BEING JOE'. Now *that's* creepy.

+ GOOD WEEK +



Ringo Starr

Last and, frankly, least, Ringo Starr is to become the fourth Beatle to be inducted individually into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in a long-awaited nod to the eternal genius of 'Octopus's Garden'.

- BAD WEEK -



Chester Bennington

A dodgy lay-up in a basketball game left the Linkin Park frontman with a broken ankle and no choice but to cancel a planned tour. Fans – and nu-metal mockers – were treated to footage of Bennington writhing around the court in agony.

IN BRIEF

Barlow grins and bares it

Take That's Gary Barlow has started work on a musical based on the granny-porn film *Calendar Girls*. His partners in the project, Welcome To Yorkshire, no doubt envision a wrinkly version of *The Full Monty*.

Ladrock for goalposts

The Enemy, Reverend & The Makers and Liam's Pretty Green label are fielding teams in Jake Bugg's charity football tournament Football Rocks, in aid of Bugg's Robin Hood Foundation and the British Heart Foundation.

Model looks

In the same week that Madame Tussauds unveils its waxwork Miley Cyrus, Paul McCartney fans are being offered a code to allow them to 3D print a model of Macca. Meanwhile, the search for a worthwhile use for a 3D printer continues.

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

Official RECORD STORE Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS MARCH 22, 2015



Björk Vulnicura ONE LITTLE INDIAN

After charting at Number 11 on its release in January, Björk's ninth album – telling the story of her breakup with artist Matthew Barney – re-enters at the top spot.

▲ 2	Tracker Mark Knopfler BRITISH GROVE
▼ 3	Fresh Blood Matthew E White DOMINO RECORDINGS
▼ 4	Chasing Yesterday Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds SOUR MASH
NEW 5	Duets – Re-Working The Catalogue Van Morrison RCA
NEW 6	Strangers To Ourselves Modest Mouse COLUMBIA
▲ 7	The Race For Space Public Service Broadcasting TEST CARD RECORDINGS
▼ 8	In The Lonely Hour Sam Smith CAPITOL
▼ 9	Rebel Heart Madonna INTERSCOPE
NEW 10	To Pimp A Butterfly Kendrick Lamar AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE
NEW 11	The Most Important Place In The World Aidan Moffat & Bill Wells CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND
▼ 12	X Ed Sheeran ASYLUM
▼ 13	Physical Graffiti Led Zeppelin RHINO
NEW 14	Goon Tobias Jesso Jr TRUE PANTHER SOUNDS
▼ 15	Lost In The Dream The War On Drugs SECRETLY CANADIAN
▼ 16	Wanted On Voyage George Ezra COLUMBIA
▼ 17	Royal Blood Royal Blood WARNER BROS
▲ 18	I Love You Honeybear Father John Misty BELLA UNION
▼ 19	Mount The Air Unthanks RABBLERouser
NEW 20	Little Giant Roo Panes CRC MUSIC
▲ 21	Hand Cannot Erase Steven Wilson KSCOPE
NEW 22	Policy Will Butler MERGE
▼ 23	1989 Taylor Swift EMI
▼ 24	Shedding Skin Ghostpoet PLAY IT AGAIN SAM
▼ 25	A Perfect Contradiction Paloma Faith RCA
NEW 26	Froot Marina & The Diamonds ATLANTIC
▼ 27	Sour Soul Badbadnotgood/Ghostface Killah LEX
▼ 28	Liquid Spirit Gregory Porter BLUE NOTE
▼ 29	Hozier Hozier ISLAND
▼ 30	FM Skints EASY STAR
▼ 31	Chapter One Ella Henderson SYCO MUSIC
▼ 32	Black Messiah D'angelo & The Vanguard RCA
NEW 33	Medulla Björk ONE LITTLE INDIAN
▲ 34	Modern Nature Charlatans BMG RIGHTS
▼ 35	The Velvet Trail Marc Almond CHERRY RED/STRIKE FORCE ENT
NEW 36	Little Neon Limelight Houndmouth ROUGH TRADE
NEW 37	The Fade In Time Sam Lee THE NEST COLLECTIVE
▼ 38	AM Arctic Monkeys DOMINO RECORDINGS
NEW 39	Girls In Peacetime Want To Dance Belle & Sebastian MATADOR
▼ 40	Raise A Little Hell Answer NAPALM

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 SOUNDCLASH NORWICH

FOUNDED 1991

WHY IT'S GREAT Soundclash's sharp-eyed specialists cover every genre from dub to indie.

TOP SELLER LAST WEEK Moon Duo – 'Shadow Of The Sun'

THEY SAY "NME once wrote that 'Soundclash is possibly the best record shop in the East.' Thanks, NME!"

SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE



Culture
Club



The Strokes

Ricky Wilson

Kaiser
Chiefs



THE FIRST SONG I REMEMBER HEARING 'A Boy Named Sue' - Johnny Cash

"My mum and dad were really into country music, so that was the sound of childhood car journeys. I really liked 'A Boy Named Sue' – it was the first song I ever learned all the words to. It made me like music that had a story to it – and then, when I started rebelling and getting into things like Pulp and Blur, I found their songs all had a narrative too."

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH 'Karma Chameleon' - Culture Club

"My brother bought 'Karma Chameleon' and I can remember that the cover of the record was really bright and colourful and it looked like they were having loads of fun. It was the '80s but it didn't feel like music for pretty guys in suits on yachts. It felt a lot more real."

THE FIRST ALBUM I EVER BOUGHT 'Kylie' - Kylie Minogue

"I've been asked this before, and you're really tempted to make yourself sound cool and say something like Black Flag, but it's just not true. No-one really believes it if you've got a cool first record; that would just be weird. I think I must have got it from Woolworths, because

"TAYLOR SWIFT AND HAIM IS A DREAM EVENING"

I wasn't going into record stores when I was nine. It was a tape and I had a yellow cassette player from Boots."

THE SONG THAT MADE ME WANT TO BE IN A BAND 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' - Nirvana

"I bought a bass guitar because of Nirvana, but I was no good at that. Then Oasis came along and there was a guy at the front that didn't

have to play anything to be in a band. So 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' made me want to be in a band but 'Rock 'N' Roll Star' made me want to be a frontman. It just seemed a lot easier!"

THE SONG I CAN NO LONGER LISTEN TO 'Here Comes The Sun' - The Beatles

"I really wanted to go to Central Saint Martin's to do fine art, and the day I got the rejection letter I drove into Leeds to drown my sorrows. I had 'Abbey Road' stuck in the cassette player of my car, and I just kept playing this over and over again. It was great at the time because it gave me a bit of hope that everything was going to be alright, but if I listen to it now, it reminds me of that day. It seemed like the end of the world."

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME WANT TO DANCE 'Build Me Up Buttercup' - The Foundations

"This is a really good wedding song. It's a mixture of dancing and shouting the lyrics at the same time, when the dancefloor's thinning out and it's just the hardcore left."

a video of it and I'm doing it very, very badly."

THE SONG I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD 'Shake It Off' - Taylor Swift

"I'm jumping on the Taylor Swift bandwagon. I saw her at the Brits, and it's tough at the Brits because everyone's too busy taking selfies and such to pay attention to the performances, but I definitely left thinking I'll see her play on her next tour. She's got Haim playing with her, too – that's a dream evening."

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN 'Us And Them' - Pink Floyd

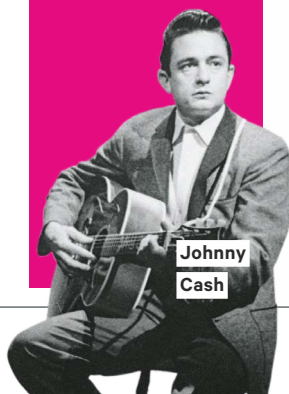
"It's only been a relatively new thing, getting into Pink Floyd. I always thought of it as something for my dad, but then you realise that dads know what they're talking about. So at the moment I'm still on this Pink Floyd high and I'm still discovering stuff as well, which is exciting."

THE SONG THAT REMINDS ME OF STARTING THE BAND 'Hard To Explain' - The Strokes

"This is [pre-Kaisers band] Parva territory, but it was just so exciting. We travelled around the country in a van playing all these small venues. We'd arrive, and they'd put on The Strokes album – and then when we finished they'd put it on again. It was the soundtrack to everyone's life around that time, for a year and a half."

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL 'Days' - The Kinks

"It's just lovely, isn't it? I really want people to be crying. I want a lot of people there and I want a lot of crying. Also free Wi-Fi."



Johnny
Cash

Radarr GOES TO SXSW

▶ YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST

BAND OF
SXSW



1

Sheer Mag

The no-nonsense Philadelphian punks reigniting classic rock

As Sheer Mag enter the final throes of their first set of SXSW, the music and film extravaganza in Austin, Texas, someone stumbles on stage, hands fumbling at the crotch of his jeans. The band continue plying their punk-tinged take on classic '70s rock, but singer Tina Halladay gives the invader a hefty shove back to the ground. "Get your dick back in your pants, dude," she spits as he falls.

"Everyone moved aside when I pushed him off stage and he completely faceplanted," she cackles later, replaying the incident in her mind. Halladay's gang are just as uncompromising when it comes to their music. In a year, they've become known for putting on exhilarating live shows and writing some of the most immediate riffs around. The latter is evidenced on their self-titled debut release – especially the fizzing standout

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track 'What You Want' – which the band originally uploaded to their Bandcamp page with an ambitious asking price of \$100,000. "We weren't ready to have people buying it 'cos the physical copy wasn't ready [at the time]," Halladay explains. "We were like, 'What if someone actually does buy it, that'd be crazy!'"

They might not have ludicrous stacks of cash in the bank yet, but that's not stopping the Philadelphia quintet. They've already recorded their second seven-inch – 'Button Up' is due for release in April – with a third to be recorded in summer. In between, they're touring hard, with a trip to the UK and Europe planned in November – a welcome break from the claustrophobia of the studio.

"We record everything ourselves so it gets kinda crazy," Halladay explains. "It wears thin on our patience for each other and so does touring, but it's fun to be around so many people all the time." After a full-on week of living up to their reputation and becoming the talk of SXSW, they'd better get used to it.

■ RHIAN DALY

▶ THE DETAILS

- ▶ **BASED** Philadelphia
- ▶ **FOR FANS OF** Thin Lizzy, Smith Westerns
- ▶ **BUY** Seven-inch 'Sheer Mag' is available at sheermag.bandcamp.com
- ▶ **SEE THEM LIVE** The band hopes to head to the UK in November
- ▶ **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** Tina is a huge fan of Meat Loaf and says he's one of her inspirations as a singer



JORDAN HUGHES, JENN FIVE, DANIEL TOPETE

2

Sunflower Bean

Sunflower Bean's members are only 19, and already the hardest working DIY three-piece in New York. Last year, they say coolly, they played more shows than any other band in the city. Bassist/vocalist Julia Cumming, guitarist/vocalist Nick Kivlen and drummer Jacob Faber are self-proclaimed "neo-psych for the digital age," but just don't call them hippies. Their debut EP, 'Show Me Your Seven Secrets', was a rough-hewn slab of melodic guitar-pop – in thrall to the heaviness of Black

Sabbath and the jangle of The Stone Roses – but their forthcoming LP is "a little bit more focused, song-based and glam-rock inspired," says Nick.

As for SXSW, Jacob says they're just happy to be in a warmer climate and eat tacos. Judging by the reaction of those lucky enough to witness their shimmering majesty live this week, it'd be criminal if they don't make it over to the UK soon.

■ APRIL CLARE WELSH

THE DETAILS

- **BASED** Bushwick, New York
- **FOR FANS OF** Tame Impala, Led Zeppelin
- **BEST SONG** '2013'

3

Seratonos

The latest signings to Mississippi's oddball blues-rock label Fat Possum are a fireball of Deep South fury, a perfect soul-punk proposition fronted by the ferocious AJ Haynes, who's decided to spend SXSW dancing on bar-tops and marking herself out as one of the most gob-smackingly talented vocalists of the week. A literature and drama teacher, she's secretly skipped out on her school

for the festival. "I just told my students, 'I'll see you next week'" giggles AJ, who first learned how to belt out a tune at Baptist Church. "I didn't get the doctrine at all, but the music drew me in," she says. Seratonos' sound is rooted in a love of the proto-garage of Dead Kennedys, MC5 and The Stooges, but with a deeply bluesy bent. "It's like alchemy," says AJ of the group's divine chemistry. "It's magic!"

■ LEONIE COOPER

THE DETAILS

- **BASED** Shreveport, Louisiana
- **FOR FANS OF** Alabama Shakes, The Black Keys
- **BEST SONG** 'Chokin' On Your Spit'

SXSW ROUND UP

▼ Scotty ATL

V Lounge

FRIDAY MARCH 20, MIDNIGHT

► **WHO?** Poker-hot new rapper from Atlanta who – as co-owner of ATown grillz – can trick out your teeth too

► **WHAT HAPPENED** The good times flowed. Scotty's primetime party set transformed the V Lounge into a raging, bumping club. And he spat bars with all the braggadocio of someone who has great conviction in what he's trying to say.

► **WHAT NEXT** He could follow in OutKast's footsteps and take Atlanta's rap scene overground.



Sophie

Mohawk TUESDAY

MARCH 17, 1:15AM

► **WHO?** One of PC Music's most treasured waveforms

► **WHAT HAPPENED** Sophie transformed the downstairs room at Mohawk into a sweaty rave cave. Post-internet bass-heavy bangers went off in all directions to projections of classic American cars.

► **WHAT NEXT** PC Music goes mainstream, proving that everyone who's written off the label as a hipster joke was wrong.



▲ White Reaper

Cheer Up Charlie's

THURSDAY MARCH 19, 8:15PM

► **WHO?** Power-punks from Kentucky fostering Ramones-inspired chaos

► **WHAT HAPPENED** Frontman Tony Esposito delivered scrappy guitar licks from his knees in a flash of rock'n'roll brilliance.

► **WHAT NEXT** Touring with Twin Peaks should hone their kinetic fun into something as formidable as their peers.

▼ Institute

Hotel Vegas

TUESDAY MARCH 17, 8PM

► **WHO?** Austin's local punk anti-heroes and recent Sacred Bones signings

► **WHAT HAPPENED** Singer Moses Brown roared his way through songs like 'Salt' to a quasi-hardcore thrash, and a circle pit duly formed. Here is a band who don't give a fuck.

► **WHAT NEXT** They should come and tear up the UK with their fellow Austin punks Spray Paint.



► The Parrots

Hotel Vegas

TUESDAY MARCH 17, 6:30PM

► **WHO?** Madrid's answer to Black Lips and Hinds' best friends

► **WHAT HAPPENED** The trio thrum with dangerous energy, the swaggering 'I Am A Man' a riotous highlight. Frontman Diego Garcia finished the set from the crowd, causing a small scrum of enthralled supporters to form around him.

► **WHAT NEXT** Hopefully they'll follow in their pals' footsteps and continue to put Madrid's garage-rock scene on the map.



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4 Hippo Campus

"At the end of high school, we all wanted to make music so we could go out with a bang," says Nathan Stocker of Hippo Campus. Only two years later, the four-piece enjoy renown in their home city of Minneapolis thanks to their acclaimed, local shows and hyper-melodic indie pop. Word has clearly begun to travel, judging by their packed shows in Austin anyway. To their immense

credit, the band refuse to dial back their youthful exuberance in the face of typical stoicism from the industry crowd, feeding off each other instead. On one such night, at Maggie Mae's, *Radar* can say with absolute certainty that the band live up to at least one of the two slogans affixed to the inside of their van – "Never let anyone dull your sparkle". The other one – "No-one comes home a father" – is their own business.

■ JONATHAN GARRETT



► THE DETAILS

- **BASED** Minneapolis
- **FOR FANS OF** Foals, Vampire Weekend
- **BEST SONG** 'Suicide Saturday'

5 Wand

"Lyrically, I was thinking more about themes of death and possession, machines and mechanical qualities to things," says LA quartet Wand's mastermind Cory Hanson of second album 'Golem', released last week. Following 2014's 'Ganglion Reef', Hanson says the band actively tried to recreate the experimental feel of their live shows on the record, mixing Pond-esque psychedelics with metal flourishes. Perhaps fittingly, a torrential downpour completely drowns their outdoor set at Waterloo Records later that day, but their sludgy, bleak sound seems to fit in perfectly with such a gloomy atmosphere.

Hanson has a quiet distaste for what he calls the "paisley psychedelic music" that many people tagged Wand with last year, and that's why they shifted their approach this time around. "It's a dark place," he explains of their world now, "but it's more realistic to acknowledge that life can flip like a switch and that the world is a fucked up, terrible and beautiful place."

■ RHIAN DALY

► THE DETAILS

- **BASED** Los Angeles
- **FOR FANS OF** Pond, Black Sabbath
- **BEST SONG** 'Flying Golem'



▼ Ibeyi

Central Presbyterian Church

FRIDAY MARCH 20, 9.30PM

► **WHO?** French-Cuban twin sisters with haunting harmonies

► **WHAT HAPPENED**

Lisa-Kainde and Naomi Diaz delivered a beautifully off-kilter performance evocative of Björk in her prime. 'I'm On

My Way' saw the whole congregation singing along in a happy-clappy fashion.

► **WHAT NEXT**

A one-off London show in May, followed by The Great Escape.



Sales

The Liberty

SATURDAY MARCH 20, 4:20PM

► **WHO?** Floridian girl-boy two-piece with a penchant for ethereal guitar lines and cooing vocals

► **WHAT HAPPENED** The heavens opened, but the drizzle suited their Beach House-meets-Camera Obscura vibe perfectly. Key track 'Chinese New Year' was a somewhat soothing highlight.

► **WHAT NEXT** If they can write a handful of extra songs as good as those on their self-titled EP they'll surely take things to the next level.

Natalie Prass

Maggie Mae's THURSDAY

MARCH 19, MIDNIGHT

► **WHO?** Charming Nashville-based singer-songwriter who's recently been on the road with Ryan Adams

► **WHAT HAPPENED**

Natalie managed to float above the cacophony of 6th Street courtesy of her delicate, Dolly Parton-like vocal and fully formed vintage 1970s funk sound. Her cover of Janet Jackson's 1993 hit 'Any Time, Any Place' was beefed up courtesy of her classic rock-indebted backing band.

► **WHAT NEXT** Find her winning over folksy festivals this summer.



▼ Modern Vices

Chuggin' Monkey

WEDNESDAY MARCH 18, 6PM

► **WHO?** Underage garage punks and self-proclaimed dirty doo-woppers

► **WHAT HAPPENED** The Orwells' former classmates weren't afraid to explore their classic rock side, making like Creedence Clearwater Revival on a heavy dose of psychotropics. Spectacularly shaggy-maned singer Alex Rebek led the charge.

► **WHAT NEXT**

Recording a follow-up to their highly charged 2014 Autumn Tone Records debut.

▲ OBN III's

Hotel Vegas SATURDAY

MARCH 20, 12:20AM

► **WHO?** Austin rock'n'rollers reclaiming their hometown in a whirlwind of sweat and sarcasm

► **WHAT HAPPENED** Fist-pumping new songs and old favourites elicited a fully-fledged riot, with frontman Orville Bateman Neeley III lifted godlike above the audience's heads as things reached a raucous climax.

► **WHAT NEXT** A trip to the UK this summer should give them cult status on our side of the pond too.

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Blurred Hinds

Twelve hours at the world's craziest festival with the world's most battle-hardened new band

“Everyone we tell freaks out and says, ‘Oh my god, you’re going to die!’ We’re like, maybe...” shrugs Hinds bassist Ade Martin of the most intense schedule we’ve ever heard an act attempt at SXSW. The permanently chipper – and not to mention pissed – Spanish band have a whopping 16 gigs set for the course of the festival. “I think we’ll make it,” adds Ade, optimistically.

Guitarist and singer Ana Perrote is less convinced. “I mean, we *might* die,” she suggests. It’s a pretty extreme outcome, but SXSW’s brutal heat, rivers of booze and punishing gig rotas are

capable of breaking bands in two ways – into mainstream success or a sobbing heap on the dusty baked concrete of downtown Austin.

Hinds, formerly known as Deers, laugh in the face of such intensity. We meet them on Wednesday as the midday sun beats down on the Spanish music showcase in Brush Park. We’ve heard from one local to expect “free paella and average Spanish bands –

apart from Hinds”, and they’re not wrong.

The band down sangria as co-frontwoman Carlotta Cosials flexes her muscles like a circus strongman when talking about the week ahead. They’re still unsigned, but this afternoon the industry reps are out in full force, contracts at the ready, battling to scoop up one of SXSW’s most talked about



Onstage in Austin, Texas

acts. The latest on that? “We’re going to take our time on it,” says manager Joan.

Right now, their low-slung surf punk sounds just perfect in the heat, with the summery ‘Trippy Gum’ and ‘Bamboo’ swirling out of the PA. Industry are replaced by actual fans – “a lot of cool junkies, girls with pink hair and glitter,” says Carlotta – at their second show of the day at Cheer Up Charlie’s. Beaming through the sweat, Ana and Carlotta do their very own take on the

Pete’n’Carl dynamic. They finish, as always, with a slice of Madrid-via-Medway punk on their cover of Thee Headcoatees’ ‘Davey Crockett (Gabba Hey)’, which, as the name suggests, comes complete with shrieked, Ramones-aping “gabba gabba hey”s.

Their final set of the day is what



With Twin Peaks’ Cadie Lake James

► SUPERFAN!

The Vaccines bassist Arni Arnason first met Hinds a year ago, and produced some of their early material. Here, the SXSW veteran casts his eye over their progress



Arni: “Sixteen shows at SXSW? Insane. It takes a lot of courage to rely on such an elementary approach to playing and recording in an age where any imaginable sonic exploration is available with a click of a button. Sometimes two chords and a microphone is all you need, and not many bands do that better than Hinds.”



With Sam Fryer of Palma Violets; and (below) with beer

yet utterly alluring nonsense right into their audiences faces. Hell, at one point they even manage to get some of the stoners up and dancing...

■ LEONIE COOPER



Hinds (l-r): Ana Perrote, Ade Martin, Carlotta Cosials and Amber Grimbergen



Sloshed in the supermarket

the US garage scene is really about: taking place at an illegal, weed-infused frat party miles out of town. Stoned students lounge about while Palma Violets, Twin Peaks and Only Real neck beers in the audience, and someone jumps into the pool fully clothed. It’s midnight by the time Hinds play, but they’re not half as fucked as they should be. In fact, a solid day of drinking has only made them more

excitable. Whereas Happyness and Alex G – both also playing tonight – slot right into the foggy, doped up affair, Hinds simply bring carnage to proceedings. They fall over their instruments. They break strings. They scream indecipherable



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Blur photographed
in the former Central
Saint Martins building in
London, February 2015

"This record was a way of saying to Damon: sorry for being such a pain in the arse for the last 20 years!"

Blur's new studio album was a happy accident: one that rejuvenated the band and the relationship between Damon Albarn and Graham Coxon. In this exclusive interview, Coxon gives Barry Nicolson an intimate track-by-track preview of 'The Magic Whip'

PHOTO BY LINDA BROWNLEE

By Graham Coxon's own admission, the new Blur album should not exist. As late as six months ago, 'The Magic Whip' was still only a jumble of half-formed ideas gathering dust on a digital shelf, a relic of another unsuccessful attempt at re-establishing the band as a creative entity. That they went back to it at all was improbable enough; that it might well be the best thing they've ever done is little short of miraculous.

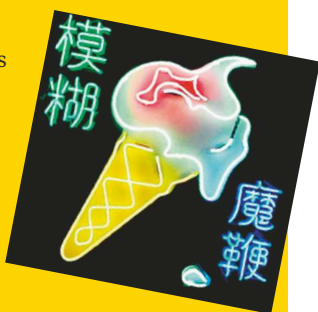
"A happy accident," is how Coxon describes the album, calling fresh from rehearsals for the band's comeback show at a west London club on March 20. "It probably shouldn't have happened in the first place – we shouldn't have had that time in Hong Kong to record it, for one thing. Then one day I was bored and frustrated and I had this idea of getting ['Modern Life Is Rubbish', 'Parklife', 'The Great Escape' and 'Blur' producer] Stephen Street to go through it all with me. Damon could easily have said, 'Nah, I don't like that idea; I don't want anything to do with it,' but instead he said, 'Great, go ahead.' It was a bit like when you're driving and you keep hitting green lights all the way home. It felt weirdly like it was meant to be." ➔

The circumstances behind 'The Magic Whip' (right), as announced at a press conference on February 19, are as follows: when the Tokyo Rocks festival was cancelled

in May 2013, the band found themselves with five days to kill in Hong Kong, where they decided to hole up in a local studio and mess around with some new material. It was all very informal, but the sessions initially went so well that Damon decided to announce their intention to make a new record during a gig at the AsiaWorld-Expo arena that same week. "We had a lot of pressure to record an album, and when the Japanese festival fell through and this opportunity to record for five days came up, Damon felt he had enough ideas on [Mac music software] GarageBand to go in and have some fun with," recalls Coxon. "We did it just to fill the time, really – I'd actually been looking forward to putting my feet up for five days! We all felt that it *could* be a start to something, but we didn't know exactly what. And for a while, it looked like it was going to be the start of sitting in an airing cupboard for eight months."

Impulsiveness soon gave way procrastination, however, and the idea was abandoned until Coxon enlisted Stephen Street. They began the process of editing and embellishing the recordings – most of which took the form of lengthy, unstructured 30-minute jams – into tangible songs. Albarn returned to the process to add lyrics and vocals following a repeat visit to Hong Kong. For Coxon, 'The Magic Whip' was not just an artistic opportunity, but a personal one. "Part of the reason why I wanted to do it was to make amends," he admits. "Damon and I have an increased respect for each other because of this record, and we're not ashamed to let each other know about that increased respect. But what we also have a lot of is history, and our friendship – like any friendship between two people who are in a band together – has had to go through a lot. It's been put to the test, and we've often let each other down. This record was a way of saying, 'Sorry for being such a pain in the arse for the last 20 years!'"

Once we start digging into the details of the record, it becomes evident that Coxon would quite happily sit and talk for hours about these songs, the city they were recorded in and the unique way it all fell into place. He's justifiably proud of the album, even if he's unsure of whether it will be the first of more to come, or the last thing they'll ever release. "I'm not saying that it wasn't difficult at times, or that it wasn't hard work, but it was a real pleasure to make this album. Whether that means we're a full-time entity again is another matter, but it was important to me to be part of another Blur chapter – even if it's the last one, I wanted it to be a positive one..."



1 Lonesome Street

There are any number of sounds and styles you might expect the first Blur album in 12 years to include, but you probably weren't expecting the brass-necked zest and buoyancy of 'Modern Life Is Rubbish' and 'Parklife' to be among them. Listening to 'Lonesome Street' for the first time, you can't help but think that it's been a long time since Blur sounded so... well, *Blurry*: just try suppressing a grin when Damon chirps about catching "the 5:14 to East Grinstead".

"There's a definite familiarity with that song," says Coxon. "It's got that cheeky-sounding vocal of Damon's, that perverse nursery-rhyme feel, and it all sounds a bit like you're careening through a night of chaos." The song seems to shoot off in a hundred different directions – a quirk of the piecemeal fashion in which it came together. "When I was listening back to it with Stephen, I thought, 'Why not go the whole hog and have a really Syd Barrett-y middle-eight in there?'" recalls Coxon. "So I wrote another section for it, which is about the way you seem to ride the tarmac in Hong Kong: you stand on the road, you don't move, and it'll take you anywhere you want to go. It's a very lighthearted way to start the record."

"It felt weirdly like it was meant to be": Graham Coxon (far right) on Blur's first new album in 12 years

3 Go Out

The first taster from the album, chosen, in Coxon's words, "because it wasn't a jolly, winking, overfamiliar Blur thing. I realise that a lot of people love Blur because of those songs, and lot of people hate them because of it, and people from the camp who hate us probably don't know much about the other stuff that we did. 'Go Out' struck me as being somewhere between the two – it's sort of casual sounding, but it's also quite powerful. For me, it felt like a place that we hadn't really gone before: it's mildly familiar because of Damon's voice, but sonically it's quite different from anything we've done before."

2 New World Towers

Following on from the arch, stylised Englishness of the opening track, 'New World Towers', with its retro-futuristic sci-fi textures and images of vast, bustling buildings "carved out of the great white sky", appears to be very much a 'Hong Kong song' – even the title is a reference to a skyscraper in the city's Central district. For Coxon, however, "it's not a Hong Kong song at all, because before Damon went back and imbued himself with the city again, it didn't have any words, it just had phrases. None of the stuff I did on the album was done to the words – the lyrics and vocals all came last. I wanted that song to be a sort of science-fiction 'Greensleeves', so I was putting my energy into making it sound very English, but in a slightly off-kilter way."



6 | Broadcast

Another track that harks back to the Blur of bratty exuberance and Fred Perry polo shirts, 'I Broadcast' starts out sounding like a slightly askew '80s pop song before Coxon's crunching guitar riff kicks down the door. Lyrically, the guitarist reckons it's all about "when you go to different places, and the people there know a lot about you, even though you don't think they do", and the song seems to depict a world becoming ever more interconnected, where your identity is indexed, your movements are catalogued and you can never truly disappear: "*I love the aspects of another city/It's got your number and your blood type*".

7 My Terracotta Heart

At the Q&A session for the album's announcement, Damon played it coy on the subject of personal lyrics, insisting that "everything was related to being in that quite claustrophobic island [Hong Kong] with millions and millions of other people". That may well be true, but the haunting 'My Terracotta Heart' is addressed to one of them in particular: "I knew it was going to be an incredibly sad song, which is why I put that crying guitar on there," says Coxon. "What I didn't know at the time was that the lyrics would turn out to be about Damon and I, our long friendship and the ups and downs we've had."

Looking back forlornly to a time when, "*We were more like brothers/But that was years ago*", Albarn lays it all out on the lumpen-throated chorus, asking, "*Is something broke inside me?/Because at the moment I'm lost and feeling that I don't know/If I'm losing you again*".

"It's a lovely song," says Coxon. "The four of us have kind of met in the middle with this album – we've all been off on our own individual journeys, but when we come together and something like 'My Terracotta Heart' is the result, that's a good marriage of all our different tastes and outlooks."

8 There Are Too Many Of Us

Underpinned by a marching beat, there's something inexorable about this song, which Damon said was partly inspired by the 2014 Sydney hostage crisis, but on which the spectre of Hong Kong – one of the most densely populated cities on Earth – is never far away. "There are a million ways you can interpret that lyric," says Coxon of the titular line, "but in Hong Kong I'd sometimes look out the window and think, 'Yeah, there are too many of us.' I started to get quite anxious about that, and the fact that we can't really go on in this way. I like how the song gets more and more intense as it goes on. I wasn't really using the guitar on that one – I thought the synthesizers would do a better job... I was using a lot of these big, fat death-ray laser sounds." ➔

5 Thought I Was A Spaceman

For Coxon, the key theme of 'The Magic Whip', both musically and lyrically, "is this atmosphere of dislocation that's running throughout, of these odd sounds that drift in and out, letting you know that you're not really in the world you inhabit, the one you're familiar with – you've somehow gone somewhere else". That's certainly the case with this track, which at a shade over six minutes is the album's longest. It offers a snapshot of an unfamiliar – perhaps even post-apocalyptic – Earth: "*The desert had encroached upon the places where we lived/People like me tried to keep the demons hid*". Eventually, in a *Planet Of The Apes*-style twist, one of the sand dunes the titular spaceman is rooting around in turns out to be none other than London's Hyde Park – scene of the band's big comeback gig on June 20.

4 Ice Cream Man

A strange little song, built around a blooping keyboard riff that sounds as if it was sourced from an early-'90s Megadrive game. In reality, Coxon pinched it from Damon's hard drive. "Damon's got all sorts of crazy things he's done on GarageBand," he explains, "and quite a bit of the album was done by building songs around those ideas and gluing them together with bits of the jam sessions we did in Hong Kong. So that song started as this little chord sequence, then Stephen and I chopped up some improvised vocals and made a chorus out of them." He also couldn't resist running with the frozen-dessert theme, echoed in the album's neon artwork: "The bass solo is supposed to be a spin on the Mr Softy tune that the ice cream van played when I was a kid – it's not exactly the same, but there's a definite similarity."

The lyrics are quite oblique, and even seem frivolous at first ("*Here comes the ice cream man, parked at the end of the road*") but there's a sinister Pied Piper air to proceedings: could the line "*I was only 21 when I watched it on TV*" be a reference to the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, perhaps? As Coxon puts it, "the song sounds jolly enough on the outside, but there are some dark undertones there".

Damon and Alex
at Blur's gig in
Hyde Park, London,
August 12, 2012

9 Ghost Ship

"Very much a Damon song," is how Coxon describes 'Ghost Ship', and he's got a point – you can imagine Gorillaz getting to grips with its lithe-sounding disco-soul. Again, Hong Kong features prominently in the lyrics; in fact, the song could even be read as a love letter to the city and the lure it seems to have for Albarn, who returned there earlier this year in search of inspiration before recording his vocals: *"I got away, for a little while/But then it came back much harder"*. Coxon recalls: "When we were in Hong Kong we were going to the studio every day with this kind of rush-hour mindset, going from the hotel through an incredibly weird glass shopping mall to this beautifully tiled subway area where we'd get on the train. And I guess Hong Kong was sticking to us along the way – we were seeing things, hearing things, and that somehow came out in the music."

11 Ong Ong

A jaunty, joyous little curveball of a song, featuring slightly wonky Beach Boys harmonies and a chorus that's just begging to be played at Hyde Park this summer. "It's a bit of a knees-up," agrees Coxon. "When Damon did the lyrics and I went to listen to the vocal he said to me, 'I've gone a bit populist with this one', but there's not an awful lot you can do with a song like that: it kind of has to be a beers-in-the-air singalong. The 'I wanna be with you' bits remind me of being on a beach and there's palm trees swaying, the colours are a bit much, you're feeling a little bit sick, there's ice cream everywhere and some rock stars scattered around getting sunburnt... It's like some kind of weird advert for the Bahamas. I really like it, but sometimes a song will ask some weird stuff of you – stuff that you might not necessarily like doing, but the song has told you to do it and so you have to obey!"

10 Pyongyang

This song has understandably been the source of much speculation – is Damon angling for a spot on Kim Jong-Un's shitlist? Talking to GQ last year about his visit to the North Korean capital, Albarn likened it to a "magic kingdom, in the sense that everyone is under a spell", and that quote is key to understanding 'Pyongyang', a bewitched metropolis of empty avenues and unspeakable sorrow, where *"the pink light that bathed the great leaders is fading"*. It's not the straightforward attack on the Kim dynasty that you might expect, but something altogether more affecting: a portrait of life in a beautiful but desolate Stalinist never-never land.

Musically, 'Pyongyang' is cut from the same cloth as 2003's 'Out Of Time', though it was the product of serious chopping and changing during the editing process. "It started off as a really bleak dirge, with those little ding-ding-ding bells and what sounds like a train pulling away," remembers Coxon. "It's got that massive chorus now, but when Steve and I were working on it, there was no chorus in place, no vocal, so I came up with one to fill the gap. Later, when Damon came back, he'd written one of his own – his was better, of course, but you can still hear mine at the end, overlapping with his. It's actually a very simple song, but it sounds epic – when Damon hits that high note in the chorus, it's one of those big moments."

12 Mirror Ball

After the jollification of 'Ong Ong', the album ends on a more contemplative, melancholic note with this track, which is structured around a tremolo-heavy guitar riff that recalls, among other things, Arctic Monkeys' 'I Wanna Be Yours'. "It's another of those fairly simple songs, but again, it sounds very big and emotional," says Coxon. "I've always loved playing massive, reverberated chords and bending them with the tremolo arm – I like the dissonance you get from bending the strings, like in Chinese and Indian music." ■

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Balancing

act

Eighteen months on from her breakthrough with 'Avant Gardener', Courtney Barnett is finally releasing her debut album. In Barcelona and Brighton, she tells Laura Snapes about having a mid-life crisis "every day" and trying to wrest back control

PHOTO BY MIA McDONALD



Halfway through Courtney Barnett's set at Primavera, in May 2014, the Melbourne songwriter addresses the crowd: "This is the happiest moment of my life." The

sun is blazing, the crowd are singing her words back at her, and her girlfriend, fellow musician Jen Cloher, has flown out to see her. It's the first time they've spent together in months, having been hemispheres apart as a result of Barnett's international touring blitz – both the perk and the pitfall of being one of the world's most feted young songwriters. A life-affirming kind of day, for sure, but the happiest moment of her life?

"It felt good, I felt pretty happy," says Barnett, drinking a beer backstage after the performance, following a brief excursion to watch Television play their classic album 'Marquee Moon' (during which several fans ask her for photos). "We've been touring for six or seven weeks – we've never toured before to this extent, on this level, so there's been serious ups and downs." This is more like Barnett's natural level: even-handed and understated, a quality she carries through to her lyric writing, where she metes out plain-seeming observations that shift subtly between poignancy and humour, barbed with the occasional scathing remark.

Earlier she played a new song, 'Depreston', that encapsulates the lot: it's an account of her and Cloher going house-hunting, forced to explore Melbourne's deeper suburbs since gentrification has priced them out of where they wanted to live. The house they see exceeds their expectations based on its low price, and then the letting agent tells them it's "*a deceased estate... Aren't the pressed-metal ceilings great?*" Suddenly its selling points don't matter and Barnett is distracted by the former occupant's personal effects, the aftermath of a life. "*I wonder what she bought it for...*" she trails off, acutely aware of

her role in life's cycle, and how it so often exists at the mercy of economics: the old lady lived proudly in Preston, yet now it's being sold as an area "on the up" to young artistic types who will probably gentrify it in turn. ➔➔



"To have a whole album of rock'n'roll songs... It's cool, but it feels like: are you ever sad, are you ever sincere?"

Barnett didn't rent the house; the place she lives now is a 10-minute walk from the studio where she and her band have just finished recording her debut album proper. She says that she thinks listeners missed a lot of the themes from her prior releases (two EPs, 2012's 'I've Got A Friend Called Emily Ferris' and 2013's 'How To Carve A Carrot Into A Rose' that she eventually released as one, 'The Double EP: A Sea Of Split Peas', in late 2013) – namely allusions to the depression she experienced following a period of unemployment, then the soul-destroying time she spent working in a shoe shop. "I think a lot more people go through that than everyone thinks they do," she says. So the new material is more overt, confronting the violence in the world that brings her down and makes her cry, and her self-esteem. "There's a bit of the theme in the new songs of getting old," she says. "I'm not old; I'm, like, 26. My friends are, like, 30, 40. I don't think age is really a problem, but the majority of it is basically trying to come to terms with yourself."

For now she's trying to come to terms with the record, to stop herself freaking out about whether it fits together. "Some of them are pop songs and some of them are ballads and some of them are fucking heavy. It's weird to figure out. The album is a general overview of essentially a year of emotions – 12 months of fucking every day, up, down, up, down. I dunno what a normal person has, but every day I had a midlife crisis. I think in that sense it's representative of that time. I don't know if people will get that, but to me it makes sense. To have a whole album of rock'n'roll songs... It's cool, but it feels like, 'Are you ever sad? Are you ever sincere?' And not that rock'n'roll songs can't be sincere, but... I dunno."

Seven months later, in early December, Barnett and her band are in Brighton for their very last date of 2014 before heading back to Australia – where Barnett will turn 27, join Cloher's band on tour for a few weeks, and where she'll stay until her debut album is released in late



SOMETIMES I SIT...

The best lyrics from Courtney's debut album

"I'm not suicidal, I'm just idling insignificantly"

Elevator Operator

A young man skips work and heads to the top of a skyscraper, leading a businesswoman to assume he must be about to jump off. But it's just the view he's after, he tells her, all part of his defiantly idle protest against the inhuman nine-to-five churn.

"I used to hate myself but now I think I'm alright"

Small Poppies

Although it wasn't always explicit, a fair amount of self-loathing ran through Courtney's first two EPs – she wasn't staying in bed on 'Avant Gardener' just because she was lazy. 'Sometimes...' subtly shows the progress of a young woman learning to like herself more.

March. It was originally due out in October, but Barnett was newly paralysed by indecision about the tracklisting, the overall title, song titles, the artwork, so it's only just been mastered and signed off. "And then also, I kind of just wanted a break," she says as Wham!'s 'Last Christmas' plays in a French-themed chain restaurant. "We would have come off this tour and started another tour straight away. Instead, we got two months at home."

The album is called 'Sometimes I Sit And Think,

And Sometimes I Just Sit', which sounds very 'Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not': a defensive, deflecting pose against the weight of early expectation. Last night, Barnett and band supported Metronomy at London's vast Alexandra Palace and played a few more new songs, including 'Depreston' and 'Pedestrian At Best', a cynical, self-loathing rampage where she shouts, "Put me on a pedestal and I'll only disappoint you/Tell me I'm exceptional and I promise to exploit you". Its frenzied guitars recall Nirvana circa 'In Utero', another band reeling at the notion of being known. Today Barnett is wearing a white T-shirt that depicts Kurt Cobain stood in front of a work by the visual artist Barbara Kruger: the words "men don't protect you any more" mounted into a cinema marquee.

JENN FIVE



Performing
at Primavera,
Barcelona,
May 31, 2014

On the surface, it might seem like she's already over the position she's found herself in, but she insists that's not true. The album takes its name from a poster in her grandma's bathroom (which itself comes from an old AA Milne quote) and just felt like a good description of the songs, she says. "And I hate when my friends, if I appear to be upset, if they ask, 'Are you OK?' Obviously you like it because it means that they love you, but it's like, argh!" 'Pedestrian At Best' covers at least four different things: a relationship, friendships, the obvious references to her music career, and abiding childhood neuroses about teachers repeatedly telling the bookish young Barnett that she'd do really well. "Maybe I've just got some issues of thinking everyone hates me," she says, drinking red wine. "Actually, I think it's a lot about that, yeah."

Any amount of time spent in Barnett's company proves pretty quickly that she doesn't *do* poses; she is utterly sincere and candid (if prone to doubting and then offering counter-arguments to her own answers as she gives them) and particularly so on the album, where her procrastination forced her to write quickly. "When I finally got something out, it was rushed because we had to go into the studio, and I think that's what made it really honest, like I didn't think about it too much."

In 'Kim's Caravan', the penultimate, and perhaps best song from the album, a dying seal that keeps getting washed up on the beach leads her to contemplate mortality and significance. "*We either think that we're*

invincible or that we are invisible, when realistically we're somewhere in-between/We all think that we are nobody, but everybody is somebody else's somebody..." In lesser hands, being so equivocal could become a hiding to nothing, but through providing these counter-perspectives, Barnett whittles her own: that of a quiet but assertive person trying to grow to like herself, and trying to grow up in a world where attaining so many of the conventional trappings of adulthood – a job, a house, success – depends on your willingness to put yourself first at the expense of compassion for others.

Opener 'Elevator Operator' has traditional aspirations in its sights as a businesswoman assumes that Barnett's slovenly friend could only be headed to the top floor of a skyscraper in order to jump off and kill himself; 'Dead Fox' and 'Kim's Caravan' look at the way the world values short-term profit over the health of the environment, which sends Barnett spiralling. 'Small Poppies' relates back to 'Out Of The Woodwork' from 'The Double EP...' in its condemnation of a jerk who treats life like a game when she agonises over its every stitch. At its heart, 'Sometimes I Sit...' is an album in search of balance, honesty and decency. If there

are songs about the difficult situation Barnett has found herself in as a result of all the touring and attention, they relate to the difficulty of being away from Cloher for so long, and ring universally true. "*I think I'm hungry...*" she sings on 'An Illustration Of Loneliness (Sleepless In New York)', a portrait of anxiety-induced insomnia. "*I'm thinking of you too...*"

"This is the first year I've toured so much," she says. "You go, 'OK, three months, cool,' then it's like, 'Fucking hell, that's a really long time.' So for next year I've changed it so it's like: one month touring, one month at home. There are more important things in life than doing a radio show."

Before she's even released her debut album, already Barnett is weighing up the purpose and importance of what she does. Just from spending two days with her, it's clear that she's the opposite of self-important, and has a practical sense of perspective – as she sang on her breakthrough single 'Avant Gardener', "*The paramedic thinks I'm clever 'cos I play guitar/I think she's clever 'cos she stops people dying*". "I have that conversation all the time," she says. "The 'what's the point of making music' question. I remember talking to this lady a couple of years ago and I was like, 'I should be a doctor or doing something worthwhile', and she said, 'Writing songs can kind of do the same thing, it can help people.' I dunno, I forget how important music can be, that connection and feeling; like, you apply songs to yourself and it makes you feel like shit, less alone, or that someone else is going through the same thing."

Barnett says she has "no fucking idea" whether 'Sometimes I Sit...' is the album fans expected of her, not least because she thought people would hate 'Avant Gardener', and look how that turned out. "You can't assume anything, so don't bother," she says, effusively. "You shouldn't know how to write a song! It's like when people talk about writing songs for ads, that will

get things for syncs, and they talk about *freedom* and *summer* and *being yourself*; it's like, *fuck tha-at!* Only idiots connect with that kinda stuff. People wanna hear about real – well, people that I want to listen to my music, they should wanna listen to real stuff."

Onstage at the Drill festival that night, Barnett and her band have that end-of-term feeling. "My name's Courtney Barnett and it's our last fucking show of two months!" she yells. "I feel so good right now, I could do another two months!" In the heat of the moment, the balance between overthinking and instinct is restored. ■

**"Then I see the hand rail in the shower/
A collection of those
canisters for coffee,
tea and flour/And a
photo of a young man
in a van in Vietnam"**

Depreston

Like Roald Dahl and Spike Milligan before her, Courtney knows the impact of a smart, simple rhyme, the rolling sounds here contributing to her growing sense of realisation that the house she's viewing to rent was once a home with an inescapable history, no matter what the letting agent says.

**"I took a tumble
turn for the worse...
Sunk like a stone/
Like a first owner's
home loan"**

Aqua Profunda!

Attempting to flirt in the swimming pool convinces Courtney to show off her best move, only to flub it, then yoke her self-deprecation to a casual indictment of how hard it is for the young to grasp life's ladder.

**"We all think that
we are nobody,
but everybody is
somebody else's
somebody"**

Kim's Caravan

The resolution of the process started on 'Small Poppies': Courtney – in her own gentle, inimitable way – pursues a philosophy of balance, trying to keep herself centred.

SOUL SU

36

Inspired by the passing of their much-loved drummer and rejuvenated after swapping drugs for meditation, The Charlatans have delivered a new album that's up with their best. Mark Beaumont meets the cosmic Tim Burgess and co on their comeback tour. Nostalgia circuit be damned...

PHOTOS: JORDAN HUGHES

(From left)
Mark Collins,
Martin Blunt,
Tim Burgess
and Tony
Rogers

R V I V O R S



As icy winds batter the seaside town of Worthing, the pier starts to tremble. At the end of the promenade is the Pavilion, where posters for an upcoming Big Country and Toyah Wilcox double-header rattle on the walls, as though limp careers were being shaken back to life. For one night only, this cemetery of the nostalgia circuit is playing host to a bona fide rebirth.

In the main hall, The Charlatans are raising the roof on their own terms. Across the country for the past two weeks, ecstatic crowds have gathered to worship singer, author, cosmic groover and coffee-touting Twitter gem Tim 'The Human Light Bulb' Burgess as he punches the air and gyrates to classics 'One

To Another', 'Forever' and 'Weirdo'. The hits are joined on the setlist by their 2015 equals: sunrise anthem 'Come Home Baby', summery groovers 'Let The Good Times Be Never Ending' and 'So Oh' plus other spectacular cuts from this year's 'Modern Nature', their 12th studio album.

"The new songs are sounding fantastic," says Tim, his bleached neon bob freshly trimmed, poring over a backstage rider that's heavy on organic hummus. "The reception has been *euphoric*. It's a two-hour set, which was a goal we were trying to do."

"Two hours is feeling quite natural now," adds guitarist Mark Collins. "I was always a bit worried that we were getting into Bruce Springsteen territory."

"It's not Bruce Springsteen territory, though, because that's four hours," Tim ➤

corrects him. "When we first started we had a 45-minute set; now we've got a song that lasts for 45 minutes!"

He exaggerates; their perennial set-closer 'Sproston Green' (from 1990's 'Some Friendly') has only stretched to 15, but as it wails to a roaring close, it's clear that The Charlatans are riding another unlikely career peak right now, following the second tragedy in their 26-year existence. In a mirror image of the artistic upsurge they experienced after the car crash that took keyboardist Rob Collins in 1996, this new wave comes after the death of drummer Jon Brookes from a brain tumour in 2013. Jon's optimism and commitment to writing new music right up to the week before his death spurred them on to honour his memory with what became 'Modern Nature'. Most bands wouldn't have survived the death of one member, let alone two – and that's in addition to the years of self-destruction that threatened to wipe out The Charlatans altogether.

Hollywood, 2005. Tim Burgess crawls out of bed mid-afternoon, head heavy from the four bottles of wine he drank yesterday. He prepares himself a vodka-based breakfast, and hunting through the places he knows his wife would hide his cocaine, starts planning his drug schedule for the day.

"I enjoyed the experimentation," he admits now. "I don't miss it and I don't recognise that person really, but I know that that person enjoyed it. I can't imagine ever going back there at all, but I enjoyed the ritual of going to try and find some [drugs] just to go out and DJ. I'd wake up in the morning and think about it: 'I'd better call early...'"

Once back in London, where The Charlatans were recording their ninth album 'Simpatico', however, he found himself a mute presence. "I couldn't sing any more," he says. "I stopped being able to sing. I really wanted [dub producer] Adrian Sherwood to do the album,

and there were other forces that got us to try to turn a dub-inspired album into a rock album, and I couldn't fight the battle because I was incapacitated. So I couldn't sing and I couldn't fight any battles and the music wasn't as good, so that was when I made a conscious decision to change everything."

How bad had it got? Tim winces. "Slurring on records."

"There were moments we just went, 'Tim, come back in the morning,'" Mark says, laughing. So Tim booked himself into a hotel for a self-imposed detox – during which "everything made me want to throw up: food, television, myself" – and emerged clean but hollow. "I felt a bit like an empty shell for a while and I had to start building the stuff that makes the soul again. Coke's a pretty rubbish drug and it does take the soul out of you. So I just started going to the soul gym."

Moving back to London as his marriage collapsed, he found himself sat alone watching TV in a corner of a party in his flat, "listening to the chaos, drinking a Diet Coke and thinking, 'This is brilliant, everyone's fighting to put on a record and play it for a second.'" An old friend joined him and started talking about transcendental meditation, as practised by David Lynch and The Beatles' Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. "There's always that section in every Beatles film – me and Rob used to watch this film called *The Compleat Beatles*, and the best bit was always when everything went a bit cosmic. These things spun around in my head and I would've passed it off until my friend said she'd been doing [transcendental meditation] since she was four years old – and she's cool and really normal. So I thought about it a bit more and went to see this guy on the Isle Of Wight called Will and things started happening right away. Things I didn't need any more just disappeared."

Out-of-body experiences, tantric travel and hours spent sat in the dark mumbling gibberish to yourself – not like taking drugs at all... "I spoke to [Lambchop's] Kurt Wagner about it and he learnt when he was 14 and then gave it up because he thought it was just as addictive as being on acid!" Tim says, laughing. "John Lennon was interested [in it] because he was an addict. He meditated for nine hours at a time, and you're only supposed

to do 20 minutes. I think he came out too quick. If you come out of it too fast they say it's like the bends."

So when you talk about sensing the "cycle of life" in new album 'Modern Nature', it's all part of becoming the classic post-coke rock'n'roll Buddhist?

"I hope so," Tim says. "I'm working on it. In a lot of ways the spirit

Tim Burgess
(left) and the
band backstage



of Jon has brought us all back closer, and for me, having a little boy around the time that Jon left, sitting in an English garden writing songs with the leaves turning from brown to green... I was seeing stuff going on outside of our control, some sort of force. It's very Zen."

In 2012, Tim wrote his autobiography *Telling Stories* (a sequel, *Tim Book Two*, is in the works), made his solo album 'Oh No I Love You' with Kurt Wagner on production, and then ditched London for Norfolk to raise the son he has with Factory Floor's Nik Colk Void. Meanwhile, keyboardist Tony Rogers has bought a farm in the Irish countryside outside Dublin because "there's too much temptation in the city". So have the rest of the band been inspired to clean up too? Are they blowing Horlicks up each other's arses these days?

"No – coffee," Tim says, laughing.

"Or just smoke," says Mark, shifting in his chair. "But no, I'm not saying we're monsters, we just didn't become as reliant. Some people are take-it-or-leave-it people. Some people are all-or-nothing people. I think maybe Tim's more of the all-or-nothing. The way that Tim can immerse himself in something completely different and get a buzz off that, that's admirable. I must say I still feel a bit rough every now and again. I'm not rough every morning but we still have fun on the road."

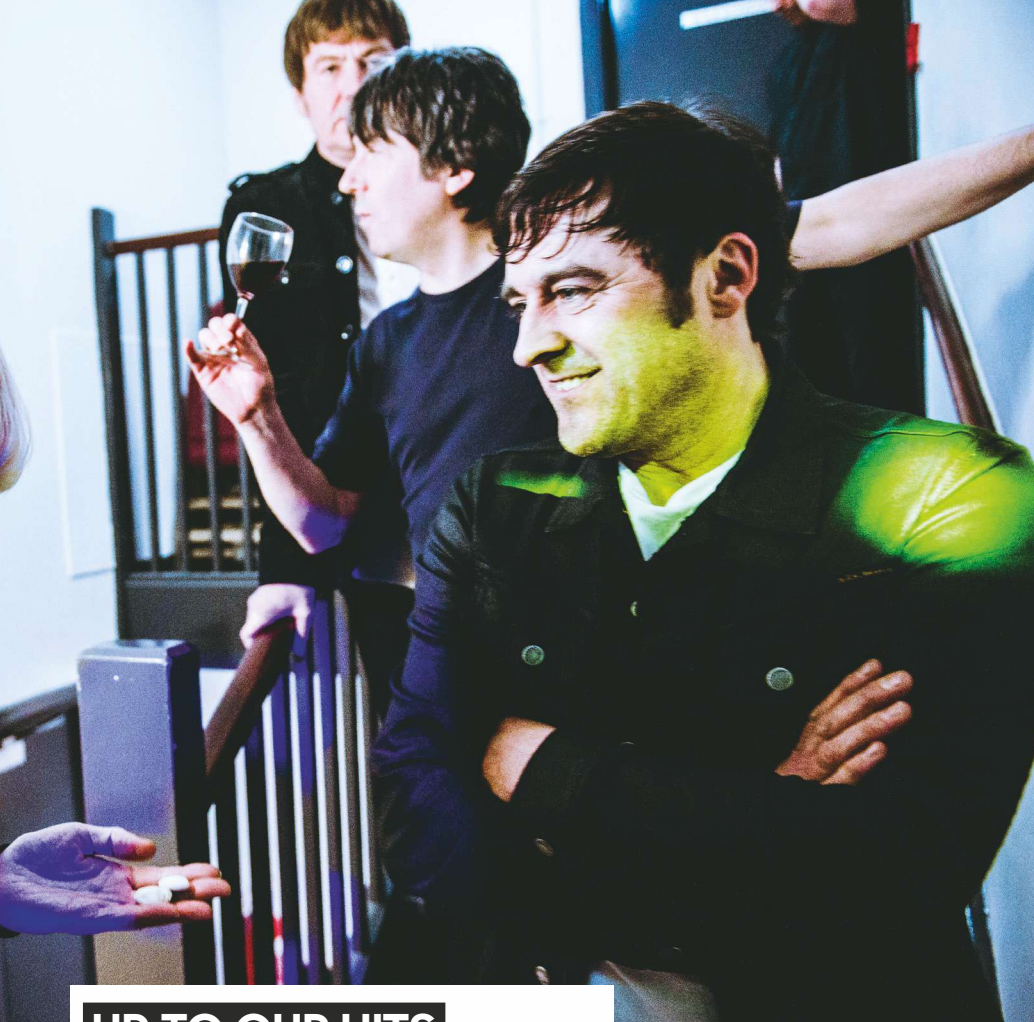
It was after the band had spent two days awake "seeing friends" in New York in 2010 that Jon, midway through playing 'Tellin' Stories' in Philadelphia, began staring at a

"I STARTED GOING TO THE SOUL GYM"

Tim Burgess

Onstage at
Worthing Pavilion,
March 15, 2015





UP TO OUR HITS

The band on their favourite Charlatans songs

Tim Burgess VOCALS

Bird Reprise (You Cross My Path)

Cooking Vinyl 2008

"It was the shortest song we ever did, the opposite of some

of the behemoth sprawling stuff that we've done.

'Forever' is seven minutes and goes through loads of changes, but 'Bird' is very simple and very emotional. I like it because it's small. If it was a bird it'd be a wren."

Mark Collins GUITAR

North Country Boy (Tellin' Stories)

Beggars Banquet 1997

"It reminds me of sitting round in Tim's place in Chalk Farm, London. We spent months sat on the floor with a couple of guitars writing a load of tunes. And it was a big hit. When I pulled into my local McDonald's, the woman who was serving me went, 'Ooh, it's that north country boy!' and got all the staff to come and point at me."

Tony Rogers KEYS

In The Tall Grass (Modern Nature)

BMG 2015

"One of the new ones. I like the vibe of it, there's lots of movement

within it. It changes from year to year and album to album, but at the moment I'm loving that song."

Martin Blunt BASS
Weirdo (Between 10th And 11th)

Situation Two/Beggars Banquet 1992

"That sums up the band in '92. We'd been built up to be knocked down and coming back with that track, it's still edgy. It's still one of the greatest Hammond riffs ever."

light-studded curtain behind him, missed some beats and collapsed with a seizure caused by a stage-four brain tumour. Their tour manager had to kick his drumkit away from him to stop him hurting himself. Unlike the sudden loss of Rob Collins, the band had several years of painful and traumatic treatment to come to terms with losing Jon, and the unbreakable spirit of this adorable giant brought the band closer than they'd ever been.

"When we were getting the early demos [for 'Modern Nature'] together, he was the one that was always on the phone – 'When we getting in the studio?'" Mark remembers. "But it was quite clear that Jon wasn't strong enough physically, which was quite hard to see. Such a strong man and very vibrant guy not being able to do what he loves doing the most. All the way through he was totally 100 per cent behind the making of the record. Even when we went to see him in the hospital he was like, 'I've got this idea for this tune!', and this was the week before he died."

Jon was buried, with characteristic good humour, in a casket shaped like the flight cases bands take on tour. "We were outside the house when the hearse came down the

"THE CHARLATANS CARRY A LOT OF STUFF WITH US, LIKE A WHALE GOING THROUGH THE OCEAN WITH ALL THE LITTLE FISH SWIMMING ON IT"

Tim Burgess

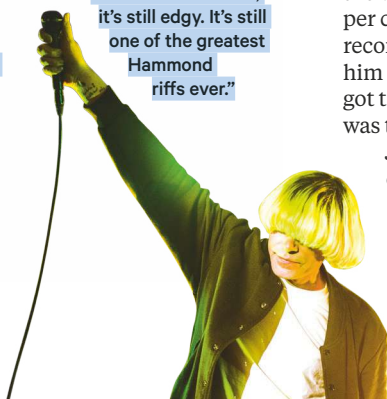
road," Mark smiles, "and my first reaction was to burst out laughing, and I think that was mission accomplished. Black was banned, colourful attire was ordered. It was called a celebration. After the service it was all back to this hotel around the corner from where they lived and it was a full-on PA system in there, DJs playing. It was a great send-off."

In October 2013, two months after Jon's death, the band played a tribute show at London's Royal Albert Hall, which inspired them to go off and write defiantly sunny songs like 'So Oh' and 'Let The Good Times Be Never Ending', which they recorded in their freezing studio the following January. It's songs like these that give 'Modern Nature' its brotherly heart, but Tim's extra-curricular activities ensure it sounds like a record for 2015 rather than a nostalgia trip: he brings his Tim Peaks coffee emporium to music festivals, where he brings a stage to host up-and-coming bands, and runs the label O Genesis, home of Hatcham Social, Throwing Up and Keel Her.

"It's all about meeting new people, really," Tim explains. "I don't think that wears off. If you're putting on a festival, which Tim Peaks essentially is, you choose bands that you like. If you've got a record label you put out records that you like, and it rubs off. The beauty of sitting down and letting something happen is the key really. Trying to let it all seep out or put it all on everybody else isn't the right thing to do. With everything we've been through, The Charlatans – without trying – carry a lot of stuff with us, like a whale going through the ocean with all the little fish swimming on it."

Having started the 'Modern Nature' project with no record deal in place and only signing to BMG when a band insider slyly slipped four early tracks to an A&R there, the Charlatans whale is set to race on at least to album 13, for which ideas are already beginning to formulate. "I hope the next one has the same feeling," Tim says, and Mark nods. "I'd like to see if we can marry this with the next one and step it up again."

"I don't feel like I've got any responsibilities," adds Tim, beaming and finally at one with the universe. "I feel like I'm on an adventure!" ■



IN THE NAME THE FATHERS

When they won the 2014 Mercury Prize, Young Fathers were pigeonholed as a publicity-shy Scottish hip-hop group. Kevin EG Perry finds it couldn't be further from the truth

PHOTO: ANDY HUGHES

Last October, Young Fathers upset the bookies by winning the Mercury Prize with their debut LP, 'Dead'. The trio were quickly sketched in the tabloid press as a publicity-shy Scottish hip-hop group making difficult, experimental music, not least because they refused to speak to any right-leaning newspapers. For the Edinburgh trio, it wasn't a case of shunning the limelight, but a clear and conscious political decision. "We've had that rule for years," explains producer and vocalist Graham 'G' Hastings. "There are certain publications that are evil to us because of their Islamophobia and homophobia."

Two *Sun* journalists discussed their refusal to speak to the paper on Twitter. "Young Fathers sound, er, pretentious utter cocks. Fuck 'em and eat 'em," one wrote. The other replied: "Absolute pricks... Never getting in *The Sun* again."

"That's the kind of cunts you're dealing with," says G. "We thought there were other bands around who wouldn't talk to them, but that way of thinking has been deleted. If you cause a fuss, like talking about Palestine, people say: 'What are you starting that for?' That's why we want as many people as possible to know we exist. Even if they hate us, it still changes their perception of what's real in the world. We're not saying that they should take all the shite songs off the radio. We're just asking for a bit of contrast."

Young Fathers' cosmic, gorgeously arranged new album, 'White Men Are Black Men Too', is purpose-built to provoke that kind of debate. "We're asking: 'What is a white man?' 'What is a black man?' 'What is a Muslim man?' 'Are women sexualised?'" says G. "The title is a



Young Fathers in Edinburgh: (l-r) Kayus Bankole, Graham 'G' Hastings and Alloysius Massaquoi

OF

multifaceted, metaphorical statement. We live in a world that's not equal. We all know that. The question is how do we start a conversation where people will feel that they can be open enough to express themselves?"

The question comes back to the essence of the band, who bristle at being pigeonholed as a Scottish hip-hop group. The truth is that Young Fathers are a global pop band. Their music is now even more rich and textured than on their debut LP, with the gospel sound of the Leith Congregational Choir interweaving with industrial noise and darting electronics working in service of irresistible pop melodies. Singer Alloysious Massaquoi was born in Liberia. Co-vocalist Kayus Bankole's parents are Nigerian and raised him partly in the USA. G was born and raised in Edinburgh, and is chiefly responsible for the beats, which blend Afropop, soul, gospel, blues and indie. Stickers on vinyl copies of 'White Men...' direct shops to 'File under Rock and Pop'.

"We keep having to tell people that we're pop," says G. He's sat with his bandmates between piles of instruments and books in their manager's basement studio in Leith, in the north of Edinburgh. "We didn't want to be considered a leftfield, strange group, and if you say that the album's hip-hop you're just lying. That's a tag that we're stuck with because of how we look. It's borderline racist. Unfortunately, eye always beats ear. People go on what they see first."

Alloysious, who goes by Ally, nods: "If we were all white and making the music we do, I don't think we'd get these comparisons."

Young Fathers see themselves as the antidote to the lazy media pigeonholing that says all black musicians must be rappers

and all white musicians play guitar. Kayus, the quietest of the three, explains it in more personal terms: "I have a little nephew and he's really into music, but if people are constantly portrayed as belonging to a certain bracket of music he's going to think that's how things should be. It's easy for the media to put things into categories, but that confines people. That's what we're getting at with the album title."

Young Fathers have been making music together since the age of 14, since meeting at a club night at Edinburgh's Bongo Club that played hip-hop, bashment and dancehall. It's there that Kayus was introduced to British rappers like Roots Manuva and Blak Twang, while Alloysious remembers discovering Sean Paul and "amazing pop songs".

G just remembers having his mind blown. "It was the sort of place I couldn't go to with my mates," he says. He was given a dead arm by his old friends when they found out he'd visited it. Their idea of a night out was drinking Hooch and having a fight at a youth centre disco. No dancing allowed.

"When I got into The Bongo Club and saw these guys and everybody else dancing I thought, 'Fucking hell! People are dancing in public!'" says G. "I joined in, like it was nothing, but inside I was thinking, 'THIS IS FUCKING AMAZING!' It was so liberating to be able to express yourself. Nobody was pointing at you and going, 'Who do you think you are? You think you're special?'"

After the music had finished and they could hear each other speak, G invited Ally and Kayus to come and visit his mum and dad's house. "They'd come round and I'd make a beat on this software that I bought for £10," he explains. "I put it onto a CD, then you'd press record on the karaoke machine. We'd put the mic up in the cupboard, and then crowd round it. We'd try and do it in an arrangement. We were literally pushing each other, because you only had one take. I think that ethos has stuck with us."

The band are all now 27, and in the intervening years have held down various jobs to support their musical ambition. That makes them a rare working-class success story in 2015. "Middle-class bands are the most content, tasteless cunts around," says G. "They're so comfy that understanding anything with a bit of bite or grit about it seems like rocking the boat.

They're taking up space. They don't realise they have a duty to show society a broad spectrum of stuff. Instead all their mates, who should have sold fucking insurance, start a band. Working-class bands have been eradicated."

'White Men Are Black Men Too' was recorded mainly in Berlin, although even with their Mercury winnings (£20,000) Young Fathers had no intention of hiring a flash studio. They just drove their usual gear over to Germany and set up in a similar basement to

the one where they made 'Dead'.

The record draws together the issues of race, power and class that pervade the band's conversation today – take 'Sirens', which deals with police violence over a driving rhythm.

But perhaps the strangest song on the record is 'Nest', which was commissioned for a Nestlé advert. Nestlé have been the subject of a long-running boycott owing to their aggressive marketing of baby-milk powder in the developing world, which has been linked to the spread of disease and increased malnutrition. When the band were approached, their first reaction was to tell the multinational to, in G's words, "go fuck themselves". Instead, the band decided to accept the commission and planned to spend their fee on a high-profile anti-Nestlé billboard campaign. Even the song they wrote was trolling: "We made them a song which says 'baby' about 100 times. All the lyrics are about 'Feed me, mama' and 'Food for the village'," explains G. "We sent it to them and they said they loved it!" In the end it fell through, but Young Fathers kept the song.

Satirising multinationals and asking difficult questions about race places Young Fathers outside of what's currently considered mainstream pop music – but that's pop music's problem, not

theirs. They're on a mission to make pop a more interesting place. That means having to put up with being misunderstood.

"It's too much work for the media to say that people are complicated," says Ally. "It's simpler to just pass judgement and place people in a box. The people in charge don't want new ideas or change because they don't know what it spells. It could be the end of their reign. That means TV and radio doesn't want change. If they were putting out interesting ideas, it would make people realise that change is possible. That's what we've got to do." ■

ON YOUNG FATHERS' STEREO

Iggy Pop - 'The Idiot'

G: "This was the only record I was listening to last year. I don't know if it influenced the new album – maybe in terms of the deadness of the vocals. We all wanted to do that anyway, but to hear it on 'The Idiot' was encouraging. It sounds like he's fucking there, over your shoulder."

NME cassettes: 'Pocket Jukebox' & 'Mighty Reel'

Ally: "We only have a tape deck in our tour van, so we listen to lots of old cassettes. We have these two NME cover tapes from 1982 and they've got some incredible songs on them, like Gene Chandler's doo-wop 'Duke Of Earl'."

American radio

G: "American radio is fucking brilliant, from the music to the chat shows to the religious stations. Going through Louisiana and listening to blues stations is where the drive of this record came from."

"Middle-class bands are the most content, tasteless cunts around"

Graham 'G' Hastings

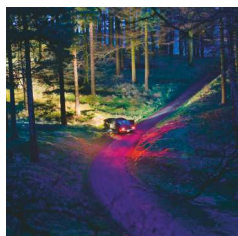
Reviews

► THE DEFINITIVE VERDICT ■ EDITED BY BEN HOMEWOOD

NME
ALBUM
OF THE WEEK

Drenge Undertow

The Loveless brothers add a bass player and a dash of classic rock to their sinister and gripping second album



When their self-titled debut clattered out of the Derbyshire village of Castleton in August 2013, it was clear that Drenge were troublemakers of the very best kind. Stroppy, pale-faced brothers Eoin and Rory Loveless looked committed to near-vampirical

levels of sun avoidance. They bashed out a thrilling, no-nonsense racket born of the frustration of living in isolated countryside. 'Drenge's controlled explosions of adolescent rage and small-town ennui were exciting, but there was a worry of one-dimensionality, of imminent burnout after such monumental punk-ass moaning.

Over a year and a half later, Drenge are still mighty pissed off, but they've channelled that mardiness into impressive progress. Album number two sees them

team up again with Ross Orton – who, based in his studio next door to a knocking shop on the outskirts of Sheffield, seems to have worked with the city's entire musical population, co-producing Arctic Monkeys' 'AM', working with Richard Hawley on Monkeys' B-side 'You And I' and playing on Jarvis Cocker's two solo albums. Under Orton's guidance, the Loveless brothers – who themselves recently moved to Sheffield – are unabashedly wading into classic-rock waters as well as holding firm to their garage roots.

Drenge might have ditched the sticks, but there's still a dogged commitment to keeping things local. 'The Woods' – the best thing they've written – is not just a beautifully evil bastard of a song, but one that sees them trudging through local landmarks ('*Burn my body by the banks of the Derwent*'), quoting the Lord's Prayer ('*Lead us not into temptation/but deliver us from evil*') and cribbing from 'Rumours'-era Fleetwood Mac on

ILLUSTRATION: JIMMY TURRELL

what is the most epic powerhouse guitar solo of 2015 so far. 'Have You Forgotten My Name?' boasts similar geographical amblings ("We lit a fire on the moors/To watch the purple heather and the gorse/Go up in smoke")

DRENGE ON...

...The Derwent Valley, Derbyshire

Eoin Loveless: "If I was being chased by police, that's where I'd ditch the car. It becomes exceptionally rural very quickly, and you can hide yourself there. It's the perfect getaway location."

...Reducing the cussing

Eoin: "I toned down the swearing a bit because my cousin's 18-month-old daughter loves our first record and sings along word for word, including the questionable language. But on 'We Can Do What We Want' the word 'fuck' is repeated four times – a bit excessive. My cousin sent me a recording of her daughter singing it and I was thinking, 'This is great!'"

...Lying to your parents

Eoin: "'Standing In The Cold' is set at a train station. It can be a miserable place. You just want a lift home from your mum or dad and it doesn't happen... It's all about telling your parents you're doing one thing when actually you aren't, which is totally irrelevant because I'm 23 and my parents don't care any more!"

of full-throttle comeback single 'We Can Do What We Want', which makes a rare excursion into a major key for some Buzzcocks punk carnage.

'Undertow' doesn't just make Drenge sound like the UK's most brilliantly disorderly band, it makes the Peak District seem utterly sinister, full of gun-toting deviants in North Face jackets and cream-tea-guzzling car-jackers. Consider our train tickets booked. ■ LEONIE COOPER

9

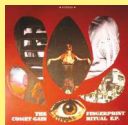
► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** April 6 ► **LABEL** Infectious ► **PRODUCER** Ross Orton
► **LENGTH** 35:40 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Introduction ►2. Running Wild
►3. Never Awake ►4. We Can Do What We Want ►5. Favourite Son ►6. The Snake ►7. Side By Side ►8. The Woods ►9. Undertow
►10. Standing In The Cold ►11. Have You Forgotten My Name?
► **BEST TRACK** The Woods

MORE ALBUMS

Comet Gain Fingerprint Ritual EP

Fortuna Pop!



Twenty years and six albums have passed since Comet Gain's debut 'Casino Classics', with leader David Feck the London group's only constant member since. Recorded during the same sessions as last year's country-leaning 'Paperback Ghosts', 'Fingerprint Ritual' is a psychedelic bomb that recalls and improves on the band's alliance with New Yorkers Crystal Stilts, in their Cinema Red And Blue supergroup. Eleven-minute opener 'Breaking Open The Head Part 2 (The Eye-Shaped Room)' jams together psych-fried lyrics, organ fuzz and backwards guitar without wasting a breath. The acid-garage remainder tackles socialism and riot-starting, injecting its mind-expanding ambitions with a political conscience.

■ STUART HUGGETT

8

JPN SGRLS Circulation



Light Organ
'Circulation' would have been lauded if it had come out in

2007, but sadly for Vancouver quartet JPN SGRLS, their debut already feels dated. Opener 'Smalls' is like Biffy Clyro fronting 'Favourite Worst Nightmare'-era Arctic Monkeys, and 'Tiger' recalls early QOTSA, only devoid of menace. 'Laughing Gas' is earnest math-rock, and singer Charlie Kerr's yelped assertions that "The media is laughing gas" are both nonsensical and overwrought. The nadir comes on the dreary 'Tennis Shoes': "It's gonna wake suburbia/And shake the colours out of their hair/Cos there's no likeability in a lack of ability". Sadly, there's not much to like here either. ■ RHIAN DALY

5



East India Youth Culture Of Volume

Ambitious producer Will Doyle's second album takes a journey through pop, techno and ambient

► 'Total Strife Forever', the entrancing, Mercury-nominated debut from East India Youth, combined singer-songwriter nous with glimmering electronica and flashes of neo-classical music, making it hard to predict where London-based Will Doyle was going to go next. Rather than settling on a unified feel, second album 'Culture Of Volume' also delights in genre-hopping, but it's less abstract and more coherent than its predecessor. There are two straight-up pop songs (the Pet Shop Boys-like 'Beaming White' and 'Turn Away'), forays into bracing techno ('Hearts That Never', 'Entirety') and ambient pieces that again show the influence of Brian Eno ('Carousel', 'Montage Resolution'). Only the



overlong 'Manner Of Words' disrupts the natural flow of this thoughtful, original record, which seems to have more studio polish than 'Total Strife Forever' but was also written and recorded by Doyle at home. ■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE

8

► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** April 6 ► **LABEL** XL ► **PRODUCER** Will Doyle
► **LENGTH** 54:55 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. The Juddering
►2. End Result ►3. Beaming White ►4. Turn Away ►5. Hearts That Never ►6. Entirety ►7. Carousel ►8. Don't Look Backwards
►9. Manner Of Words ►10. Montage Resolution
► **BEST TRACK** Hearts That Never

Toro Y Moi What For?

Car Park



South Carolina's Chaz Bundick has always had a chameleonic quality, and it's just as well – nobody wants the word 'chillwave' following them around. The 28-year-old's fourth Toro Y Moi album, however, is a more drastic change than usual: out

go the gossamer synths and minimalist production, in comes the exuberant power-pop of 'Empty Nesters' and 'Spell It Out', recalling the melodic puritanism of Big Star and the flair of Todd Rundgren. Those are high bars to clear and 'What For?' falters along the way, but its high points are charming enough to forgive the occasional low one.

■ BARRY NICOLSON

8

Wand

Golem In The Red



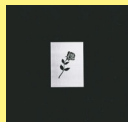
In August 2014, Los Angeles duo Wand released

their psychedelic debut 'Ganglion Reef', a record inspired by a make-believe island. They've maintained that imaginative approach for this follow-up, which is full of brain-bending riffs, effects and abstract lyrics. 'Self Hypnosis In 3 Days' mixes Pond's wackiness with the power of Black Sabbath, and 'Flesh Tour' noodles through some more dark psychedelia as Cory Hanson – who has played in fellow LA bands Meatbodies and Together Pangea – sings in riddles: "Sticks and stones, nobody knows/Life on the body, flesh tour around". The highlight, though, comes in closer 'Planet Golem', a march through blacker-than-black sludgy riffs that melts into a puddle of noise. **8**

RHIAN DALY

Shlohmo

Dark Red True Panther



Having explored the murkier corners of modern R&B

with Chicago singer Jeremih on collaborative EP 'No More' last year, Los Angeles producer Shlohmo returns with a second solo album of chiselled electronic beats. With its sparse synths, heavily skewed vocals and carefully measured pace, 'Dark Red' is a deeply atmospheric record, ringing with isolation and fright. The wailing guitar line and spacey keys on 'Buried' create a ghostly atmosphere, and 'Meet Ur Maker' shuffles and pings like a lost Aphex Twin demo. The rattling drums and broad, ambient synths on closer 'Beams' represent a rare foray into a fuller sound, but, for the most part, 'Dark Red' plays out like the soundtrack to a creepy sci-fi-horror flick. **7**

DEAN VAN NGUYEN

Gallows Desolation Sounds

After another member leaves, the Watford punks embrace aggression and dread



The final track on Gallows' fourth album is titled 'Swan Song', and considering the rate at which they've been losing members in recent years, you'd be forgiven for misreading that as some sort of omen. Gallows, however, are not the kind of band to go gently into that good night. Logic dictated that the 2011 departure of Frank Carter – the flame-haired frontman whose bilious charisma was the Watford quartet's defining trait – should've spelled the end; instead, they brought in Alexisonfire's Wade MacNeil and returned with 2012's 'Gallows', a blistering reaffirmation of intent following their brief, ill-fated major label sojourn. Carter, meanwhile, formed Pure Love and released a baffling stadium-indie record whose capital-P positivity seemed absurdly quixotic in a Britain that was only growing greyer, angrier and more desperate. Pure Love are currently on 'indefinite hiatus'. Gallows, in one of life's little ironies, are in rude health.



THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** April 13 ► **LABEL** Venn ► **PRODUCER** Steve Sears ► **LENGTH** 35:43 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Mystic Death ►2. Desolation Sounds ►3. Leviathan Rot ►4. Chains ►5. Bonfire Season ►6. Leather Crown ►7. 93/93 ►8. Death Valley Blue ►9. Cease To Exist ►10. Swan Song ► **BEST TRACK** Leather Crown

'Desolation Sounds' arrives in the wake of another Carter quitting the band – guitarist Steph, Frank's brother, who left in 2013 to focus on new project The Ghost Riders In The Sky. Once again, the upheaval only seems to have emboldened them. If 'Gallows' was about proving that they'd lost none of their piss and vinegar, 'Desolation Sounds' serves as a reminder that there was always more to them than that anyway. The ambitious 'Leather Crown' and 'Chains', whose eerie choral sections are punctuated by a malevolent piledriver of a chorus, are the work of a band who want to do more than simply measure up to their past.

Elsewhere, 'Bonfire Season', with its swampy guitar riff and lyrics about bodies "hanging from the trees", draws on the gothic Americana of *True Detective* (guitarist Laurent Barnard is apparently a big fan), creating an atmosphere of dread. On the caustic '93/93' they take it a step further by quoting directly from Aleister Crowley's school of occult philosophy ("Love is the law! Love under will!"). Lyrically and musically, Gallows are a very different band from the one who made 'Grey Britain', and the fact that you can't imagine them making this album (or its predecessor) with Carter will remain a deal-breaker for some. Who's to say what might have been for Gallows? All we know is that we haven't lost our appetite for what's still to come. **7**

BARRY NICOLSON

Marriages

Salome Sargent House



It's been a long wait for anyone who dug Marriages'

2012 EP, 'Kitsune'. But the Los Angeles trio have finally delivered their debut album, and it wails. 'Salome' is a reverb-steeped wash of gothic, shoegaze-y post-rock metal marshalled by vocalist and ex-Red Sparrows guitarist, Emma Ruth Rundle. Rundle's a formidable lead, breathing

otherworldly narratives into life throughout, from the serpentine seduction of 'The Liar' and the Cure-like 'Love, Texas' to the erotic, violent title track. The result is a maelstrom of noise, both ominous and ecstatic, doomy minor chords and cloud-parting major riffs. It's a shame then that 'Salome' is smothered under oddly muted production – a spellbinding storm trapped behind glass, just out of reach.

CHARLOTTE RICHARDSON ANDREWS

8

This Is The Kit

Bashed Out Brassland



This Is The Kit leader Kate Stables has a perfect folk voice

– clear, soft and soulful, like Fairport Convention's legendary frontwoman Sandy Denny – and she wraps it around oddly compelling parables about weather, sailing and nutrition. The National's guitarist Aaron Dessner produces third album 'Bashed Out', bringing

a crack team of session musicians (featuring members of The Walkmen and Beirut among them) and coating it in warm electronica and rousing brass. Synths imitate steel drums on the galloping 'Magic Spell', spiralling accordion thickens up 'Silver John' and buzzes of distorted guitar roughen the beguiling 'Vitamins' as the assembled talent takes This Is The Kit's traditional folk to the edge of the avant-garde. **7**

MATTHEW HORTON

Reviews

Milky Wimpshake Encore, Un Effort!

Fortuna Pop!



If Milky Wimpshake have ever fretted about

a creative impasse in their 20-years-plus lifespan, it doesn't show. 'Encore, Un Effort!', the Newcastle trio's seventh album, follows the template of its six predecessors – jangly,

malcontent indie-pop with a serrated punk edge. It's a jumble of the personal and political: the subject of Pete Dale's speak-sung lyrical affection is as likely to be the prospect of socialist insurrection ('Coming Soon', 'Le Revolution Politique') as a person. Elsewhere, relationships are tackled head-on and subverted: the highlight being 'Ping Pong Lovers', a duet with bassist Sophie Evans, who spits back at Dale's doe-eyed dorkiness.

■ NOEL GARDNER

7

Moonlandingz Moonlandingz EP

Without Consent



Released via Fat White Family's label, this EP is a collaborative project between FWF members Lias Saoudi and Saul Adamczewski and Sheffield artistic collective the Eccentric Research Council. The psychedelic, synth-led 'Sweet Saturn Mine' – whose video stars actress Maxine Peake

– sees Saoudi's usual howl reduced to a fag-weary croak until a final shriek of 'I don't feel alright!'. 'Lay Your Head Down In The Road' is more restrained, and 'Psyche Ersatz' sets Saoudi's creepy whispering ('I'm so hungry, baby') to sparse electronics. A precursor to ERC album 'Johnny Rocket, Narcissist & Music Machine... I'm Your Biggest Fan', this EP is a hint at something FWF have never shown: subtlety.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

Turbowolf

Two Hands Spinefarm



Since forming in 2008, Bristol's Turbowolf have made a career of recycling rock riffs from the '70s and infusing them with their own millennial psychedelia. This second album is much the same as the quartet's self-titled 2011 debut, its 11 high-octane, extremely loud tunes stuck awkwardly between those immutable influences and their own sound. 'Solid Gold' is best, infusing riotous Motörhead-tinged rock'n'roll with the ethereal shimmer of The Mars Volta, but the falsetto that charges through 'Rich Gift' sounds like The Darkness without the sense of fun. Everything stomps and swaggers just as you'd expect, but sometimes – as on 'Rabbits Foot' – it's just overdone, making 'Two Hands' more of a patchy tribute than a sincere and original piece of work.

■ MISCHA PEARLMAN

5

45

Sufjan Stevens Carrie & Lowell

The Detroit songwriter
returns to his folk roots
with a moving account of
his troubled family history

Great loss often inspires great art: Lou Reed and John Cale's Warhol tribute 'Songs For Drella', or Rufus Wainwright's eulogy to his mother, 'All Days Are Night: Songs For Lulu', for example. To this catalogue of sublime sadness we can now add Sufjan Stevens' 'Carrie & Lowell', named after his stepfather and his depressive, alcoholic and schizophrenic mother, who abandoned her family when Sufjan was 12 months old. Following her death in December 2012, the 39-year-old Detroit songwriter decided to make his seventh album a stark exploration of their fractured relationship.

Pruned to a relatively tight 44-and-a-half minutes, 'Carrie & Lowell' – with the couple pictured on the sleeve – is one of Sufjan's most fat-free and consistently stunning records, but also his darkest. There are no brass fanfares like 2006's 'Adlai Stevenson' or fancy-dress-party tunes like 2005's 'Chicago'. This is downbeat and delicate alt-folk drenched, very sweetly, in blood, grief and desolation. 'Death With Dignity' is populated by ghostly



apparitions, 'Drawn To The Blood' casts Sufjan as repentant murderer avenging a loss, and come 'No Shade In The Shadow Of The Cross' he's having a full on psychotic breakdown – 'There's blood on that blade/ Fuck me, I'm falling apart'. Most heartbreaking of all, 'Fourth Of July' revisits the experimental electronics of 2010's 'The Age Of Adz' to formulate an icy final farewell to "my dragonfly... my little Versailles". "The hospital asked should the body be cast before I say goodbye" he says of his final moments with his mother, before turning to the listener to implore: "Make the most of your life while it is rife... we're all gonna die".

No matter how desperate Sufjan gets – he coos about "cutting my arm" in a "warm bath" on 'The Only Thing' – he's resolutely serene, his emotion swathed in glistening guitar tones and angelic harmonies, spooling out his genius as casually as breathing. Last album 'The Age Of Adz' was as rich and evocative as laptop folk gets, but so decisively did he win alt-folk on 'Illinois' five years earlier that it's an (ironic) joy to hear him dust off the banjo once more and whisper his lustrous laments as though in a candle-lit attic at 3am, trying not to wake anyone up.

■ MARK BEAUMONT

9

THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** March 30 ► **LABEL** Asthmatic Kitty ► **PRODUCER** Sufjan Stevens
► **LENGTH** 44:35 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Death With Dignity ►2. Should Have Known Better
►3. All Of Me Wants All Of You ►4. Drawn To The Blood ►5. Fourth Of July ►6. The Only Thing
►7. Carrie & Lowell ►8. Eugene ►9. John My Beloved ►10. No Shade In The Shadow Of The Cross
►11. Blue Bucket Of Gold ► **BEST TRACK** Should Have Known Better

Jimmy Whispers

Summer In Pain Field Mates



At the start of Jimmy Whispers' debut album, a goofy

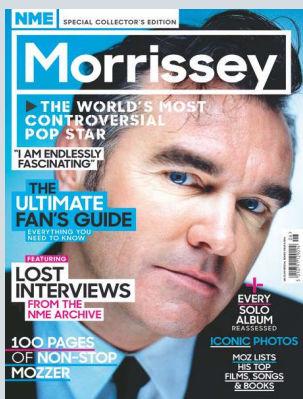
voice bigs up the Chicago songwriter – formerly of the group Light Pollution – as a "great bedroom-popper". The long-haired Whispers warbles along to fairground organ and a backing tape throughout the record, but there's a tenderness that makes it more than a jokey take on Ariel Pink's weirdo pop. The affecting 'Pain In My Love' has him singing "I wanna change the way I'm feeling" over a skittering beat and mournful keys, and he whines quietly like J Mascis on the maudlin 'I Love You', on which you can hear him clicking 'stop' on the tape at the end. There's sadness in Jimmy Whispers' heart, and this record shines brightest when he lets it out.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7



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FILM

While We're Young

Generation-gap comedy thriller meets hipster pastiche, with a score by LCD man James Murphy

What happens when Generation X-ers hit their mid-life crisis? That's the central question of Noah Baumbach's *While We're Young*, a brilliant examination of aging hipsterdom and the blind arrogance of youth. Brightly shot and pulling endless comedic punches, it might be the indie director's most deliberate shot at mainstream success, its warmth making it more accessible than 2005's *The Squid And The Whale* or 2012's *Frances Ha*. But the 45-year-old director sticks firmly to his alternative roots – former Beastie Boy Adam Horowitz (see interview on page 13) appears as a scruffy man-child, and, repeating his role in 2010's masterpiece of modern malaise *Greenberg*, LCD Soundsystem man James Murphy provides an immaculate score.

Also retained from *Greenberg* is Ben Stiller, who shrugs his way through the central role of Josh, a jaded and not particularly talented New York 'creative'. In *The Squid And The Whale*, Jesse Eisenberg (*The Social Network*) played an exaggerated version of Baumbach's teenage self. Here, Stiller appears to be doing the same but 30 years down the line, playing a forty-something filmmaker who's been working on his latest project for the past eight years. Adding to his ennui is the fact that his partner Cornelia (Naomi Watts) is the daughter of a successful director.

Finding that their friends – including Horowitz's ageing hipster – are happy to exist in a smug Manhattan baby bubble, the childless pair befriend Jamie, a young filmmaker who attends one of Josh's lectures, and his wife Darby. Josh is energised by their youth, a feeling

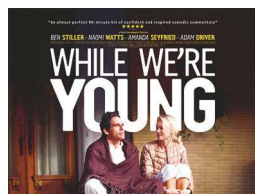
Baumbach has said is inspired by "spending a lot of time with young people". Played gloriously by *Girls'* Adam Driver and *Mean Girls'* Amanda Seyfried, the couple's bogus retro lifestyle is a biting but warm pastiche of the craft beer-sipping scenesters propping up artisan ale bars from Brooklyn to Manchester.

iPhone obsessives Josh and Cornelia are enchanted by the younger pair's rustic affectations. We see Jamie's dusty vinyl and the typewriter on a desk he made himself using reclaimed wood. "It's like their apartment is full of everything we once threw out, but it looks so good the way they have it," sighs Cornelia.

Much of the comedy comes from this clash of cultures – when the foursome collectively forget the word for marzipan, Stiller tugs at his smartphone while Darby smiles beatifically and suggests, "Let's just try and remember it." There are gross-out laughs, too, including a brilliant

scene at a shamanic ceremony where hippy hallucinogen ayahuasca is consumed and mass vomiting ensues, soundtracked jarringly by Vangelis' *Blade Runner* theme.

It's not just about taking the piss out of cool kids, though. The film takes a left turn into thriller territory when Jamie's naivety turns out to be more calculated than first thought. Driver's dark charisma shines, and *While We're Young* reveals itself as a near-perfect portrait of two conflicting generations. ■ LEONIE COOPER



► DIRECTOR Noah Baumbach
► IN CINEMAS March 27

DVD

Dead Man



First released in 1995 and now remastered, *Dead Man* is well worth

a second look, not least for the intoxicating original score by Neil Young and a cameo from Iggy Pop. The hero of Jim Jarmusch's surreal study of life and death is Johnny Depp's William Blake, who travels deep into the Wild West for a new job, only to become embroiled in a murder scandal. After fleeing town with a bounty on his head, Blake meets Native American Nobody (Gary Farmer), and they embark on an odyssey in which Jarmusch blurs the boundaries between life and death with hallucinatory set pieces, while Robby Müller creates an eerie atmosphere with his cinematography. Iggy's cross-dressing hunter offers light relief, but *Dead Man* is dark, daring and thought-provoking. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

CINEMA

Cinderella



Disney's new *Cinderella* movie isn't a straight remake of the 1950s animated

original, but it's no radical departure either. Directed by Kenneth Branagh – who, as director of 2011's *Thor*, is clearly capable of rendering comic superheroes with intense drama – this old-fashioned fantasy film is made memorable by sumptuous visuals and impressive performances.

Downton Abbey's Lily James and *Game Of Thrones*' Richard Madden are likeable as Cinderella and Prince Charming, but they're topped by scene-stealing turns from the Oscar-winning Cate Blanchett as the mean Wicked Stepmother, and Helena Bonham Carter, whose Fairy Godmother displays her bumbling charm. There's a sense that Branagh is restrained by the dated subject matter, but *Cinderella* impresses nonetheless. ■ NICK LEVINE

7

CINEMA

Dior And I



After 2011's *Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has To Travel*, a portrait of the 1960s

Vogue editor, director Frédéric Tcheng returns to the fashion world for his second documentary. *Dior And I* follows Belgian designer Raf Simons as he becomes Creative Director of Christian Dior in 2012, and prepares his first collection for the revered

French label. Tcheng over-eggs Dior's 70-year legacy, and a voiceover of excerpts from the memoirs of Christian Dior himself is distracting. But Tcheng also balances candid glimpses of Simons' fragile emotions – he sobs when the collection is unveiled – with intimate insights into Dior's workshop, where the potential for tension between Simons and his new colleagues makes *Dior And I* compelling. ■ NICK LEVINE

7

CINEMA

Blind



The directorial debut from Eskil Vogt unsettles from the outset: in the opening sequence, even the simple process of making tea is imbued with trauma and suspense. Ambient sounds throb intrusively as the vulnerable and pale Ingrid (Ellen Dorrit Petersen) feels tremblingly for the kettle in her Oslo apartment. Ingrid lost her sight to a genetic

condition, and *Blind* is driven by her internal monologue, told via a story she types on her laptop. Choppy, confusing scenes show sexual fantasy, paranoia and lies intertwining in a love quadrangle involving Ingrid's husband, a porn-loving local man and a female neighbour. However, *Blind*'s appeal lies mainly in its sensitive portrayal of the way Ingrid deals with her blindness. It's a riveting portrayal of human nature. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8



48

The Preatures

Sticky Mike's Frog Bar

Brighton

Wednesday, March 11



Taut pop, slick grooves and onstage acrobatics from the Sydney five-piece

PHOTO BY WUNMI ONIBUDO

▶ A rowdy bunch of Australian expats greets The Preatures in Brighton tonight. The Sydney quintet have played huge gigs back home – including a Rolling Stones support slot last year – and their compatriots know their taut pop hits word for word. “I came here for the fish and chips, not the Australians,” protests Izzy Manfredi, singer and icon-in-waiting. She’s a magnetic presence, cartwheeling, soaking herself in water and darting into the crowd. Opener ‘Blue Planet Eyes’ is seeped in oceanic chillwave, but the elastic-limbed vocalist is soon gyrating through the slick Phoenix groove of ‘Somebody’s Talking’ and hurling herself to the floor for a ballsy ‘Rock And Roll Rave’. A well-earned rest comes as she takes to the piano for closing ballad ‘Business, Yeah’, and the crowd hold lighters aloft in tongue-in-cheek tribute.

■ STUART HUGGETT

7

The Preatures’
Izzy Manfredi
onstage in
Brighton

Royal Blood

Rock City, Nottingham
Saturday, March 14

**The titanic rock duo end
their UK tour in suitably
heroic style**

It all ends here, at Nottingham's Rock City – a 15-date British tour during which the now pretty damn famous duo of Mike Kerr and Ben Thatcher have grown from being your new favourite band into a band to worship.

But what is it about Royal Blood that has captured the public imagination? Great songs? The thrilling sense of sexuality in their music? The subtle, turbo-driving influence of heavy rap? The added nastiness of their masterful, Zeppelin-style funkiness? One thing's for sure – the Brighton-based pair's success has a lot to do with their outrageous power as a live act.

Tonight's show is, as usual, loud and rabid. But we knew that already. What's surprising is how demonic these songs sound, and you get the feeling the demons are all Kerr's. But what else do you expect from a writer whose principal interests include self-destruction ('Blood Hands'), depression ('Hole') and sexual obsession (from 'Little Monster': "I'm your wolf/I'm your man/I say run, little monster, before you know who I am"). Though aggressively masculine, tracks such as 'Careless' are in fact concerned with Kerr dealing with his failures as a man, so the violence in Royal Blood's music is turned

inwards. To see that play out live makes for great theatre.

Kerr prowls the stage, a glaring presence, always in control. His manipulation of crystalline but thunderous guitar effects is dazzling. The crowd harass the duo, wanting more and more, then fall about in ecstasy when Kerr delivers, as all the while Thatcher's big, ceaseless bass drum tolls like the bells of doom. Ageing rock widows and bald blokes with massive arms dance and mosh to 'Figure It Out's Maiden-fast outro, 'Loose Change's punk-metal eruption and 'Blood Hand's funk meltdown.

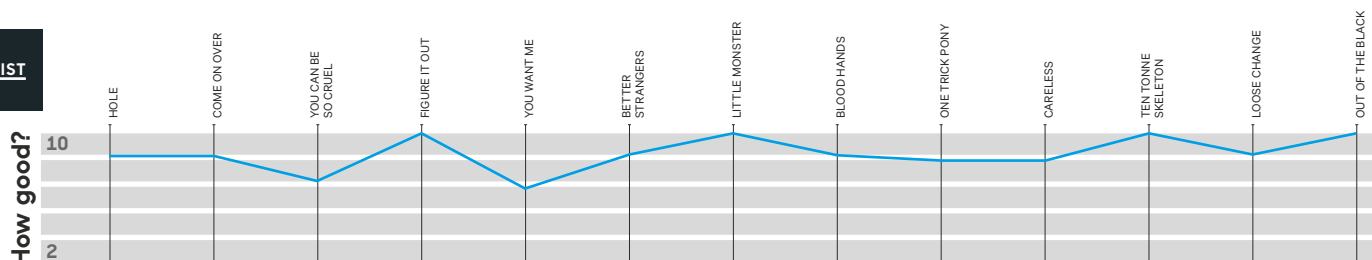
The show reaches its pinnacle with 'Little Monster'. A stadium epic in the vein of The Who's 'Baba O'Riley' honed down to a series of hooks and one huge chorus (a speciality of Royal Blood's) by expertly economic songwriting, it's greeted like the anthem it is. It's Royal Blood's very own 'Champagne Supernova', and every fan screams their heart out.

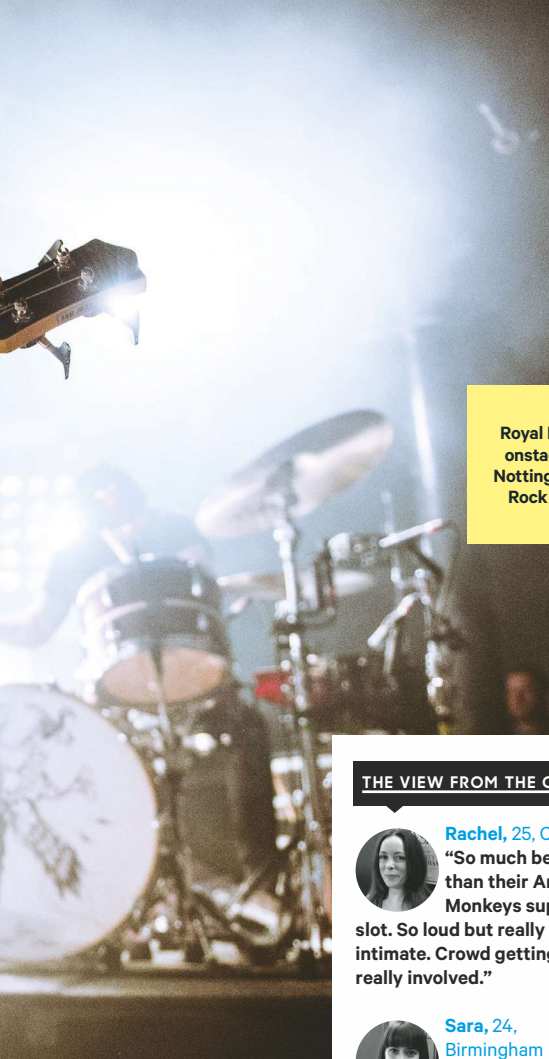
Unfortunately, so scintillating is this delicious dread that their lighter tracks seem oddly frivolous tonight, resulting in a drop in intensity. 'You Can Be So Cruel', sounding for all the world like a Fratellis-style glam-rock stomper, only steel-capped and darkly kinky, and grungy B-side 'You Want Me' are a mite too jaunty to carry the same devastating effect as, say, 'Ten Tonne Skeleton' – a cold, austere feel-bad machine with more in common with the industrial no-wave of early Swans than heavy rock. Ultimately, it falls to what you sense is the crowd's indie contingent to show their appreciation, with 'You Want Me' provoking a happy pogo fest down the front and 'You Can Be So Cruel' fulfilling its alternative function as a terrace singalong. Royal Blood, you see, have something for everyone – another reason for their success.

Kerr's air of detachment is all part and parcel of becoming Britain's newest rock god. He's not your mate, he's your idol. Rarely has a guitar looked quite so phallic as when he



SETLIST





Royal Blood onstage at Nottingham's Rock City

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Rachel, 25, Coventry
"So much better than their Arctic Monkeys support slot. So loud but really intimate. Crowd getting really involved."



Sara, 24, Birmingham
"Mike has so much stage presence, and the album sounds even better live."



Neil, 25, Leeds
"Every single song is a single. They're a breath of air. Rock'n'roll is not dead. And, fuck, the sex grooves... I wanna shag to this music!"



Jordan, 19, Chesterfield
"Amazing. We were down the front. Someone lost a shoe! Oh, and 'Ten Tonne Skeleton' was fucking mega."

points that big old four-string to the heavens in silhouette against the lighting rigs. They even manage to out-pomp Matt Bellamy with a vainglorious airing of Muse-meets-Rage Against The Machine space-blues screamer 'Hole'. Nottingham's rock rank-and-file, tonight filling a most fitting of venues for this tour's grand finale in the shape of one of Britain's last remaining rock clubs, are beyond themselves. Someone lobs a full pint at Kerr. "Mine's a gin and tonic, mate..." he retorts; grace under fire – spoken like a true rock star.

If he begins the show as a slick, leather-clad rock bullet, by the finish Kerr is left a grizzled, sweating mountain man – as if ravaged by his own racket. They end with 'Out Of The Black'. Like an angel of death in a snapback, Thatcher stands sentry on a speaker above this church of heavy, watching as his foil loses himself once again in fits of writhing bass work. Out of the dark and into the limelight, their last night on British stages for now feels like just the beginning. ■ JOHN CALVERT

9

MORE GIGS

Spectres Sticky Mike's Frog Bar, Brighton

Thursday, March 5
Spectres' 'Dying' is one of the fiercest guitar albums of the year so far, but it's a subdued band whose tour hits the south coast tonight. As the first clouds of feedback coalesce into opener 'Where Flies Sleep', guitarists Joe Hatt and Adrian Dutt bow in concentration, sculpting the noise around them with precision. It's a slow-burning show, though, volume set to loud rather than ear-splitting, band and crowd nodding along dutifully through the morbid likes of 'This Purgatory'. It's only when the Bristol-based foursome crank up the attack on punishing finale 'Lump' that hearts flutter, but our minds remain sadly unblown.

■ STUART HUGGETT

6

Tune-Yards Liverpool Cathedral, Liverpool

Friday, March 6
"Dancing's a good way to worship!" preaches Merrill Garbus, taking in the ornate surroundings of the world's fifth-largest cathedral. A setlist heavy on last year's album 'Nikki Nack' opens with the tribal 'Time Of Dark'. Dexterously switching between instruments, the California-based artist marshals a four-piece band brilliantly. 'Sink-O' starts with chanting before erupting into a barrage of synth effects, and on the sexism sucker-punch of 'Real Thing', Garbus' effected vocal sounds like it's coming from a different dimension. The atmosphere's so joyous, it almost camouflages the music's political edge, but standout 'Water Fountain' shows Tune-Yards' scriptures are worth following.

■ GARY RYAN

9

Lucy Rose



Brudenell Social Club, Leeds Sunday, March 15

Stool-free and primed to rock out, the singer-songwriter airs a mixed bag of new material

▶ "Are you fine with me rocking out?" enquires Lucy Rose midway through this sold-out show, "I'm burning some calories up here!" Her winsome Laura Marling-tinged folk isn't exactly associated with headbanging, but as the 25-year-old songwriter notes, this is the first time she's toured without having a stool to sit on.

Opening with new song 'Köln' – the spirited guitars and disco bass of which recall Bombay Bicycle Club, who Rose has collaborated with – the setlist is heavy on material from forthcoming second album 'Work It Out'. While her last two releases – the spangly pop of current single 'Our Eyes' (think Ellie Goulding produced by Blood Orange) and the chopped-up beats of 'Cover Up' – are vibrant, songs like 'Nebraska' and 'For You' explore more familiar polite indie-folk terrain. As her four-piece band glide through 'Will You Love Me', whose title Rose blushes is "too cheesy to say out loud", she laments, "Should have realised you were more than a friend", over a tune that sounds primed to soundtrack an E4 drama break-up scene.

The whispered vocals and keening melodies of old tracks 'In The Middle Of The Bed' and 'Night Bus' create intimate closeness, and it's as if Rose is reluctantly confessing her secrets. Less impressive are 'Shiver' and 'All I've Got', which waft pleasantly and sweetly by like a harmless spritz of Febreze. However, when she launches into the fidgety electric groove of excellent new song 'Sheffield', Lucy Rose finally rocks out. ■ GARY RYAN

SETLIST

- ▶ Köln
- ▶ Lines
- ▶ Will You Love Me
- ▶ Watch Over
- ▶ Nebraska
- ▶ Night Bus
- ▶ For You
- ▶ Place
- ▶ All I've Got
- ▶ Like An Arrow
- ▶ Shelter
- ▶ Shiver
- ▶ Middle Of The Bed
- ▶ Our Eyes
- ▶ Bikes
- ▶ Sheffield
- ▶ Cover Up
- ▶ Red Face

7

Reviews

LIVE

Paul Weller

Colosseum, Watford
Monday, March 9

The neglected mods of Watford are out in droves as Weller celebrates 25 years of his solo career

In nearly four decades of gigging, it must be hard for an artist to find somewhere they've never visited. Yet tonight Paul Weller is in uncharted territory, playing Watford for the very first time. But while neither The Jam nor The Style Council paid these suburbs a visit, the queue of snappily dressed old fans snaking around the Colosseum are going to have to leave their nostalgia at the door. The 56-year-old is here to preview forthcoming album 'Saturn's Pattern', and he kicks off with the driving garage rock of brand-new number 'Long Time'.

Weller's now a quarter of a century into his solo career, and he's celebrating that milestone with intent. 1992 hit 'Uh Huh Oh Yeh' and its rootsy contemporaries 'Kosmos' and 'Into Tomorrow' (the solo debut that Weller self-released when his post-Style Council stock was low enough to leave him without a record contract) front-load the set. Since 2008's '22 Dreams', represented tonight solely by the spiralling beauty of 'Empty Ring', he's been on a rejuvenated creative streak, but the unspoken message is that he was proud of these early songs all along.

He's on cheerful form, too. Spurred on by the posters on the wall celebrating the Colosseum's own musical history, Elton John

and Marc Bolan among them, he can't resist asking after Watford's most famous son ("Where's Elton tonight? He's on the poster – him and the singer from Dodgy"). He's still bloody-minded, though, skipping many of his beloved hits and avoiding shouts for anything from 'Wild Wood' altogether.

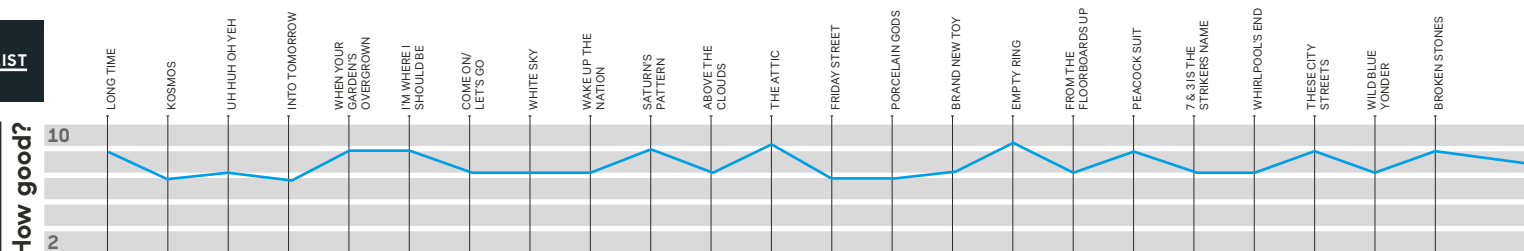
A strobe-lit 'Porcelain Gods', from hit third solo album 'Stanley Road', is drenched in cosmic synths, turning into a lengthy jam replete with the first of several drum solos for former Stands man Steve Pilgrim. With more than 20 years in the band, Ocean Colour Scene guitarist Steve Cradock gets cheers for his spotlight solo in 'Above The Clouds', too. Weller's muso instincts have long ago overtaken his political ones, which is something to regret in days like these, but a little of the old Red Wedge fire still burns in the holler of 'Wake Up The Nation'.

HE BOBS AROUND, GRINNING AND APPLAUDING HIS BAND FROM THE SIDELINES

New tunes 'White Sky' and 'Saturn's Pattern' rock with swampy psychedelia. Switching from guitar to piano, Weller leads the group through the latter's chanted call to "Get up", before the track unwinds to a loose conclusion. 'I'm Where I Should Be' fills the hall with rich, descending harmonies, its swooning melody and sense of midlife satisfaction more Paul McCartney than Paul Weller. As he bobs around, grinning and occasionally applauding his band from the sidelines, the prospect of Weller following Macca into his retirement



SETLIST





Weller makes his first ever appearance at Watford's Colosseum

decades, doggedly touring new albums and refusing to be burdened by his own legacy, seems as likely as ever.

His first encore begins with the night's final taste of 'Saturn's Pattern', 'These City Streets', one of those relaxed soul ballads he turned out so effortlessly in his Style Council days. For a second curtain call, it's back to 'Stanley Road' for fan-favourite 'Broken Stones' and a charging run through 'The Changingman'.

Thinking it's all over, the audience begin to file out when, suddenly, an energised Weller pulls the group back on stage, his sweat-slicked face lit with enthusiasm, his bandmates beaming. As Watford's mod contingent spin round and rush back towards the front, he rewards their commitment with 'Town Called Malice', draping his arm round loyal guitar foil Cradock and wolf-whistling at the close. It's an unplanned extra, the first

time he's played a Jam song on this tour, and as stiff limbs down the front pogo frantically, it makes up for leaving this town neglected for so long.

■ STUART HUGGETT

7

MORE GIGS

Leon Bridges

The Lexington, London

Monday, March 2

Despite cramming eight people – including a horn player, two backing singers and assorted members of White Denim sporting Stetson hats – onto the The Lexington's tiny stage, sharp-suited Texan soul singer Leon Bridges stands out thanks to sheer star power. Opening with the flawless vintage R&B groove of 'Better Man', the 25-year-old's first UK show kicks into a higher gear when he puts down his guitar and shimmies behind the mic as 'Browned Skin Girl' and 'Flowers' cast their spell over the bobbing crowd. Soul-revue sass comes via shoop-shooping backing vocals and the gentle manners with which Bridges charms the crowd. Expect big things.

■ LEONIE COOPER

8

Spector

The Lexington, London

Thursday, March 12

Whether you think Fred Macpherson is a heroic dreamer or an arrogant tit, there's no denying Spector's frontman has always acted like a star. Tonight's intimate comeback sees the London quartet strut through a clutch of new songs that go some way to backing up his towering ambition. The route-one indie-disco of old tracks like 'Twenty Nothing' still get fans bouncing as Macpherson looms from the edge of the stage, but the fresh material impresses most. Built around choppy funk guitar, 'Stay High' is as glossy as Macpherson's luxurious shoulder-length hair, while 'Believe' shares the unstoppable triumphalism of early-'80s pop overlords like Duran Duran. No longer all front, Spector's new songs deserve to flourish.

■ JOHN EARLS

8

Dean Blunt



Bloc Festival, Butlin's, Minehead

Saturday, March 14

The electronic auteur cranks up the weirdness and discomfort at the reanimated rave weekender

It's darker than the inside of a coffin in here, but squint and you can just make out the outline of a guitar on stage, somewhere to the left of Dean Blunt. It's a rare opportunity to see the London auteur in person, but it's just as rare to see a guitar at this mecca for electronic music – Blunt joins Jon Hopkins, Autechre and Hudson Mohawke on the bill among dozens of string-dodging artists.

Bloc and Blunt have both confounded expectations in the last few years. The former's rep was trashed by a catastrophic 2012 weekender held in a London venue that was cancelled amid chaotic scenes on its first night. Punters' trust has since been won back via a series of low-key events and the killer line-up at this, their first foray back into festivals. Blunt, meanwhile, has moved on from the arch, piecemeal electronica he created as Hype Williams, picking up the best reviews of his career (and the Philip Hall Radar Award at this year's NME Awards with Austin, Texas) in the wake of 2014's 'Black Metal' album. How will its combination of sad-eyed lo-fi indie and idly drawled rap-style lyrics come across live, though?

SETLIST

- Merlin
- 50 Cent
- Blow 100
- Blow Remix
 - X
 - X Dub
 - Punk
 - Son
- 2pacalypse Now
 - Grade
- War Report
 - Mersh
 - Coco

For a while, it seems we might never find out. The first 10 minutes consist solely of a three-second looped sample of a black nationalist speaking on a Louis Theroux documentary, after which patience is rewarded with 'Black Metal' highlight '50 Cent'. Vocalist Joanne Robertson's parts are delivered by backing tape, but the song's shy sweetness – likewise 'Blow' and '100', which follow it both tonight and on record – is upended by hefty volume and dry ice.

The set really catches fire when it cranks the levels of weirdness and discomfort.

A blurry midsection barrage of 'X Dub', 'Punk' and 'Grade' juggles background noise, avant-jazz blare, dub basslines, Sunn O)))-worthy drones and vicious strobes puncturing near-total darkness. Several feet above the audience, the perpetrator puts his foot on a monitor and, when you can see him, looks oddly regal.

After a dash through 'Mersh', whose house-style rhythm is perhaps the one nod to Bloc's broader music taste, and a reprise of the sample that opened the set, Dean Blunt departs without farewells. Whatever just happened, you're not likely to get it from anyone else.

■ NOEL GARDNER

8

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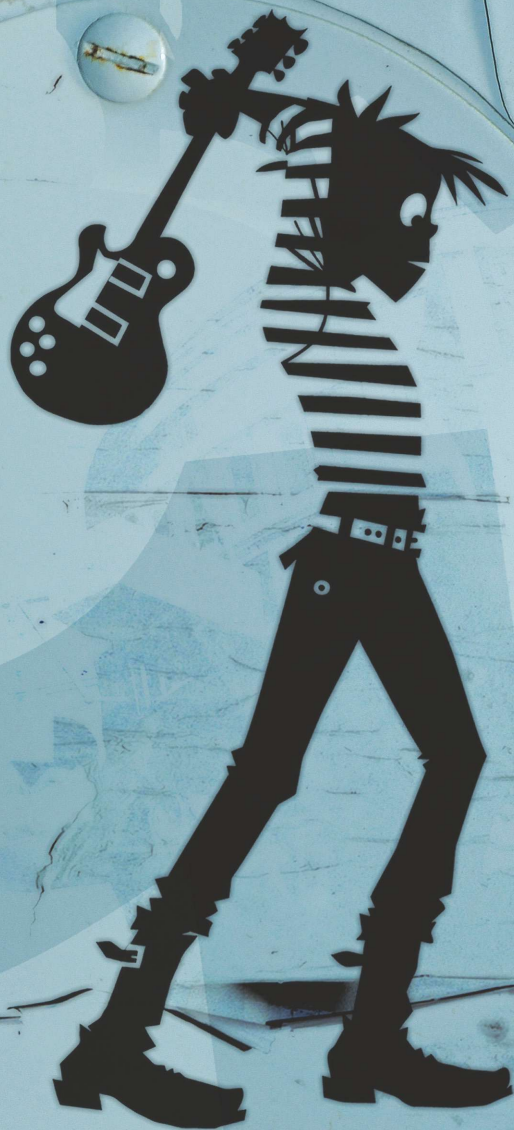
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THIS WEEK IN 1996



The high life

Black Grape ponder their drug intake after rapper kermit's near-fatal illness, and conclude that it's great when you're straight

With the US threatening not to give them touring visas due to past drug convictions, and rapper Kermit only recently recovered from a bout of septicemia that left him "on the verge of dying, twice", Black Grape bounce back to write 'England's Irie', a song for the England football team's European Championship campaign, alongside Joe Strummer, Johnny Marr, Keith Allen and Michael Hutchence. "The doctors had virtually resigned themselves to the fact I was a goner," Kermit tells *NME*'s Johnny Cigarettes. "I had me blood changed as well! I've got completely new blood cells. All the years of abuse, man, it does catch up with you."

"Obviously people thought, 'Fookin' ell, Kermit and Shaun, drug nutters, they'll either end up junkies or dead,'" Shaun Ryder adds. "But what they never understood is that we love making music more than we ever loved getting out of it. With the Mondays, that wasn't the case – we started playing music primarily because we wanted that sex, drugs and rock'n'roll lifestyle. The music came second."



RAGE WITHIN THE MACHINE

After four years away, Rage Against The Machine meet in LA to discuss a touring schedule for their second album 'Evil Empire'. They're hoping to avoid a repeat of the on-the-road aggravations that almost tore the band apart on their last outing. "Bang! Suddenly we're part of this huge business," drummer Brad Wilk tells *NME*'s John Robinson, "and people's egos are getting out of hand. The potential is absolutely there for this whole thing to completely fall apart again."

HERE COMES THE 'SUN

"It's been a roller-coaster, man," Mansun's Paul Draper tells *NME*'s John Perry of an insane 12 months. "We were sucked into a whirl of alcohol, drugs and women; the early gigs were total mayhem." They lament the departure of their samples-spinner Mark, who was left "paranoid, shaking" by their 30-date UK tour, while guitarist Chad has "smashed up every guitar he's ever owned. He runs up huge hotel bills and gets his head kicked in almost every week," says bassist Stove.

REVIEWED THIS WEEK



Shed Seven – A Maximum High

"The Sheds will always be manufactured, rather than natural champions. But every underdog has its day – and this is theirs." 8/10

■ MARK SUTHERLAND

ALSO IN THE ISSUE THIS WEEK

► Supergrass deny tabloid claims that they're due to star as The Monkees in a new multi-million dollar US TV show.
► Sex Pistols announce their reunion at the 100 Club. "We still hate each other with a vengeance," Johnny Rotten says, "but we've found a common cause and it's your money."
► Oasis are reviewed at Cardiff International Arena, with support coming from Manic Street Preachers.

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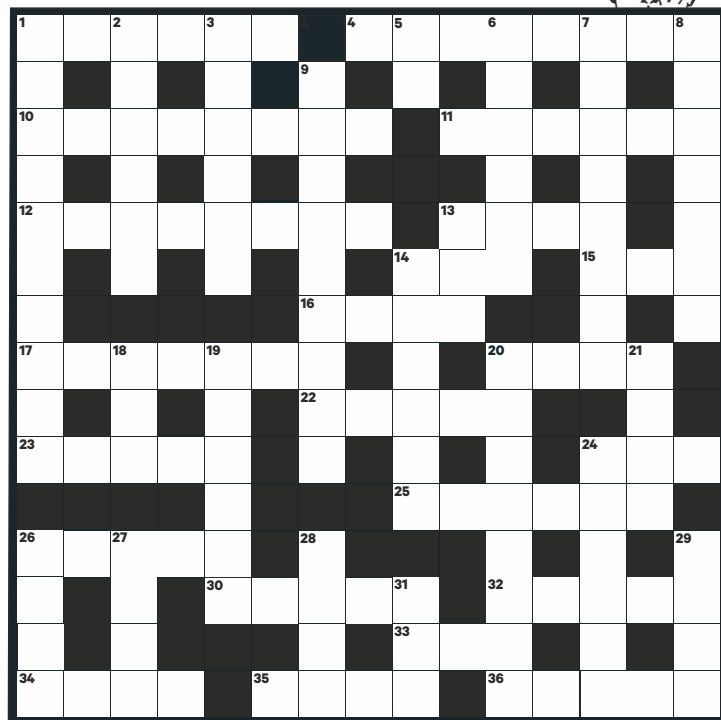
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CROSSWORD

Compiled by TREVOR HUNGERFORD



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CLUES ACROSS

- 1+4A** Kodaline aiming to get some atmosphere (6-2-3-8)
10 Demo test went wrong for all-female post-punk band (2-6)
11 Last EP turned into an album by Darlia (6)
12 "_____ and open deep conversations they got me nowhere", Morrissey (3-5)
13 Hey oh, that's a cool cover by the Red Hot Chili Peppers (4)
14 (See 14 down)
15+34A Portishead have everything belonging to me (3-4)
16+20A "_____ that lasted too long/We probably shouldn't have danced to that song", The Courteeners (4-4)
17+26A Find all vague arrangements made by US psychedelic rock band (7-5)
20 (See 16 across)
22 Jeff _____ of ELO and The Travelling Wilburys (5)
23 Outkast number partly made up of 11 across (5)
24 Skunk Anansie guitarist coming from The Small Faces (3)

- 25** Kula Shaker in an outburst at TV awards (6)
26 (See 17 across)
30 Crowded House banging on about '_____ In My Feet' (5)
32+35A My Chemical Romance notice there's something wrong with me (2-3-4)
33 To know, in a Scottish way, of the name of Jamaican singer ____ Boothe (3)
34 (See 15 across)
35 (See 32 across)
36 Inexperience shown by REM on album (5)

CLUES DOWN

- 1** An invitation sent out in Royal Blood (4-2-4)
2+3D Drum tone near to going wrong on Charlatans album (6-6)
5+27D Afternoon! Morning! We're a hip-hop act (2-4)
6 There's more than one expanse of water with Twin Atlantic (6)
7 Clap Your Hands Say Yeah in a continual manner (2-6)
8 Those scallies that Miles Kane used to play with (7)
9 "One Friday night I took

- a pill or maybe two", 2013 (4-2-3)
13 Kate Bush did this in your lap (3)
14+14A Their singles included 'Walk The Dinosaur' and 'Spy In The House Of Love' (3-3-3)
18 With whom Amy Winehouse shared a 'Cherry Wine' (3)
19 Turns silent as Kooks album plays (6)
20 Police control of large crowd at Bloc Party performance (8)
21 As Caribbean music of soul and calypso is better known (4)
24 St Etienne number to perform when they're on the road (6)
26 Liverpool band fronted by Peter Hooton (4)
27 (See 5 down)
28 Album that gives you a taste of The Lemonheads (4)
29 "Truly yours, your biggest fan, this is _____", 2000 (4)
31 "Lately I've been seeing things/Belly button piercings in the _____ at night", from Arctic Monkeys' 'Black Treacle' (3)

MARCH 14 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1 Anywhere, 5+7D Chuck Berry, 8+15D Here, There And Everywhere, 9+30A My Love, 11 Stevie, 12+2D Thom Yorke, 14 Hey Joe, 17 On Call, 20 Dime, 21+4D Lou Reed, 22 Rango, 26 LA, 27 Wee Papa, 28+23D System Of A Down, 29 Sex, 31 Delays, 33 Nerve Net
DOWN 1 Ashes To Ashes, 3 Hatfield, 5 Can, 6 Cameo, 9 Date, 13 Medusa, 16+24A John Lee Hooker, 18 Carousel, 19 Liar, 25 Enemy, 26 Lament, 31 DJ, 32 TV

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OBJECTS OF DESIRE



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Andy Warhol: The Complete Commissioned Record Covers by Paul Marechal

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T-SHIRT

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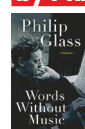
This hardback and four-DVD set features

candid interviews with band members, as well as an illustrated history and track-by-track album breakdowns.

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BOOK

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LOOKBOOK

Yeezy Season One



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lookbook for his forthcoming Adidas fashion line hit the web, full of muted greys and ragged streetwear.

► FREE sneak peek, four-pins.com

DVD

Veep Season 3



Cult comedy writer Armando Iannucci reinvented the sitcom with *I'm*

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