

Alex James on
Cameron, Damon
& the next album



**"All politicians are
crooks and liars"**

The Prodigy

STILL STARTING FIRES

**Is protest
music dead?**

Noel Gallagher
Enter Shikari
Savages
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The Horrors

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**+
Speedy Ortiz**
A\$AP Rocky
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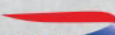
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LETTER OF THE WEEK

WINS AN ORANGE MICRO CRUSH AMP www.orangeamps.com

Orange Micro Crush practice amps pack plenty of punch with a seriously cool **British** sound. A micro amp with big soul.



A LETTER TO BRANDON FLOWERS

Dear Brandon, I hope this letter reaches you well, all the way from Yorkshire – God's Own Country and a stop-off on your upcoming O2 arena tour. My name is Adam Pickles. I am 28 years old and work as a bar manager in my local pub. I am a huge Brandon Flowers and The Killers fan, and still get goosebumps thinking about Wembley on June 22, 2013, which I went to with my girlfriend, who is the subject of this letter. She is a big fan, and I've managed to get us a couple of standing tickets for your show at the Leeds O2 Arena on May 26, which is four days after her birthday. She's had a crappy couple of years (I won't go into details, but she's been dealing with stuff you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy), so this letter is a plea to see if there's anything you could sort out for her/us, be it a meet with yourself, a T-shirt, or even a plectrum or drumstick would make her day. I know this is a long shot, but anything you could do would be amazing.

Adam Pickles, via email



Tom Howard: Adam, I have some encouraging news for you. We're hanging out with Brandon in Los Angeles very soon, so I'll implore the *NME* journalist tasked with quizzing him to pass on your request. I've never met Mr Flowers myself, but from what I understand he's a charming and accommodating human being. I'll be in touch...

OASIS REUNION: BRING IT ON

There's a lot of negativity around the possible Oasis reunion, because they might kill the legacy. But let's get real here: who wouldn't want to stand in front of the Gallaghers while they belt out 'Live Forever'?

Zac Sherratt, via email

TH: Well exactly, Zac. And I can tell you from frequent personal experience that that opening drumbeat signals the beginning of the best time of all time.

OASIS REUNION: DEFINITELY MAYBE

I was 13 when Oasis split, and never thought anything of them really. But as the years passed and I found out more about their

music, their attitude and everything they stood for, my opinion of them grew much more positive. It's stayed much the same ever since: they're not my favourite band, but not my worst. If they get back together I'll be happy, but not ecstatic. Where would they play? Somewhere big, clearly. And if I know the Gallaghers' personalities, they'll play a bunch of in-your-face shows that will be a middle finger up to the world and them saying: "We can still do it."

Tom Sandford, via email

TH: This is interesting, Tom. I think a lot of people being negative about the idea of a reunion are people who were around at the same time of Oasis. They've been there, they've seen that, they listen to Scott Walker now. It's easy to forget that there is a whole new generation of fans, like yourself, who've never experienced the joy of watching Liam prowl

a stage for two hours. I bet he's planning out his reunion haircut right now.

OASIS REUNION: NOT GONNA HAPPEN

As one of Oasis' biggest fans, I think people need to forget about the hope of a reunion. Noel has made it clear there won't be one as far as he's concerned, and why would he even want to? His High Flying Birds are a huge success, and if there was a reunion it wouldn't be as good as they were 20 years ago. Look at The Stone Roses. Their reunion didn't have the effect it should've done and it's such a shame. I think a reunion would take away what Oasis are best loved for and would only disappoint the generation they created in the '90s.

Jess Shaw, via email

Like many other Oasis fans, I was excited to hear the news about a potential reunion, but do I expect it to

happen? No. Noel wouldn't want to, not after he's just released his second solo album. And Noel and Liam may have reconnected as brothers, but I very much doubt they're ready to spend extended periods of time together on tour or even in the studio. Maybe in five or 10 years' time.

George Wilding, via email

TH: Jess – I totally agree that an Oasis reunion is unlikely to happen while the High Flying Birds are booming. He's got a bunch of festivals to headline first, to show the world how big a deal Noely G is. But you are DEAD wrong about The Stone Roses. Their three gigs in Heaton Park in 2012 were surely three of the greatest comeback shows of all time. Tears were cried and love was made. And George – yeah, exactly. 2016 at the earliest, perhaps to celebrate the anniversary of their giant Knebworth shows.

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CHEER UP, VAN

I can't believe that Catfish & The Bottlemen frontman Van McCann has said that it's a "lonely existence being in a band" and that he has "no girlfriend, no best friends, no mum or dad". What a monumental bellend. Kids will read the *NME* and dream of being in a band and playing music, then read an article from someone they think is their voice, and he's there whingeing about how tough it is. If it's that tough, get a real fucking job. There are people who actually don't have a family or a mum or a dad. He does, and he needs to stop making out that life is so difficult. He doesn't know how difficult life is.

Alfie Green, via email

TH: I hear you, Alfie. It's hard to imagine how a life of hit records and adoring fans could be anything other than dreamy. But, y'know, people react to success in different ways. Plus I do like it when my rock stars get pissed off – adds a bit of spice.



LOOK WHO'S STALKING

Me and Chilli Jesson after I was an extra in the video for Palma Violets' 'English Tongue'. The band were lovely and invited us to Studio 180 for a BBQ and an intimate gig.

Jasmine Hodge, via email



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NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

1. Swim Deep
One Great Song And I Could Change The World

Discussing his band's second album with *NME* at the start of this year, Swim Deep frontman Austin Williams said, "If the first album was about getting out of Birmingham, this one's about getting off the planet." This is suitably intergalactic; Williams' nonchalant whispers float over Cavan McCarthy's creeping bass like they're in zero-gravity territory.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

2. Refused
Elektra

As explosive as their 2012 reunion was, most Refused fans were resigned to not hearing any new music from the Swedish punks anytime soon. But here it is, a taste of the quartet's first new album since 1998's seminal 'The Shape Of Punk To Come'. Blistering, bristling and booming in all the right places, it bodes well for the future of one of the great heavy bands. "Nothing has changed", rages frontman Dennis Lyxzén. He's right.

Greg Cochran, Editor, NME.COM

3. Major Lazer
Night Riders (feat. Travi\$ Scott, 2 Chainz, Pusha T & Mad Cobra)

This latest taste of Major Lazer's forthcoming third album 'Peace Is The Mission' follows last month's bombastic 'Roll The Bass'. 'Night Riders' rolls on a marginally more sedate groove, its deep bass tempered by bursts of static that allow the impressive guest spots to shine. 2 Chainz' opulent bars hit hard, but Jamaican reggae artist Mad Cobra runs him close with a booming final verse.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

4. Everything Everything
Regret

On the latest track from the Manchester quartet's upcoming third album 'Get To Heaven', frontman Jonathan Higgs threatens "First you'll see me on the news, then never again/I'm rolling in my grave, feeling like a grenade" over '60s girl-group drums. It's one of several sharp lines on 'Regret', jabbed into the heart of a former lover with passive-aggressive niceties. Higgs saves the killer blow for the chorus, singing "Did you think that everything would change?" in a sugary falsetto.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

5. Wild Beasts
Woebegone Wanderers II

This stunning outtake from last year's 'Present Tense' sessions is a sequel to much-loved 2008 track 'Woebegone Wanderers', a teetering mini-melodrama about an unspoken love affair between two male supporters of a struggling lower-league football team. Here, the original's dark, furtive lust has been replaced by a gorgeously wistful longing. A football chant repurposed as a lovelorn plea.

Sam Richards, writer

**6. Rolo Tomassi**
Opalescent

Yorkshire terrors Rolo Tomassi dial back their usual chaos with jazzy percussion and funereal 'Amnesiac' piano chords on this new single. The quintet's chilling sense of menace remains, though, as singer Eva Spence lays breathy, wounded vocals over discordant, plinking guitars and expansive post-rock. Rolo have added yet another string to their bow on upcoming album 'Grievances'.

Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

7. Foo Fighters
Kids In America

Famously, Kim Wilde had never even been to the States when she struck '80s pop gold with 'Kids In America'. As part of Nirvana, conversely, Dave Grohl was forging the country's cultural zeitgeist when, in 1991, he recorded this knockabout cover version. Released on Foo Fighters' Record Store Day 10-inch 'Songs From The Laundry Room', it's an interesting artefact, showing that Grohl seized on the Foo's sound long before 1995's debut.

Dan Stubbs, News Editor

8. Weezer
Everybody Needs Salvation

Originally available on a fanclub-only seven-inch, this new Weezer track was recorded during the sessions for last year's return-to-form album 'Everything Will Be Alright In The End'. It begins as an acoustic, Shins-esque breezy stroll, but the crunching guitars quickly come out to back up Rivers Cuomo's passionate admission that someone or something saved his life: "Braids fall for the awaken one/He truly saved my life".

Andy Welch, writer

9. Kurt Cobain
And I Love Her

In 1989, Kurt Cobain told the University Of Washington's in-house newspaper *The Daily*: "I like The Beatles, but I hate Paul McCartney." The quote lends the Nirvana singer's cover of the McCartney-penned 'And I Love Her' extra intrigue, but what's most interesting about this sketchy 90-second home recording from the spectacularly good new *Montage Of Heck* film is how Kurt Cobain-y it is: full of melancholy, melody and heart.

Tom Howard, Assistant Editor

10. Rihanna
James Joint

If you took 'FourFiveSeconds', Rihanna's January collaboration with Kanye and Paul McCartney, as an indicator of the direction for her next album, 'R8', then think again. Recent hit 'Bitch Better Have My Money' was fierce and aggressive, while 'James Joint' does something else entirely. A stoner jam set to a backdrop of hotel-radio lounge jazz, it's another signpost for what's shaping up as RiRi's most diverse record yet.

Luke Morgan Britton, writer

ESSENTIAL NEW TRACKS

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11. Run The Jewels Bust No Moves

Run The Jewels' exclusive Record Store Day 12-inch EP was a big seller, not least because it featured a new track, 'Bust No Moves' – the duo's first release since last year's celebrated 'RTJ2' album. Both a weed and hype song, it finds Killer Mike stoned out of his mind, while Arkansas MC SJ Jones, also baked, takes the chorus lines:

"I stay higher than Messiah, I ain't never grinding".

Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

12. Vant Do You Know Me?

London-via-Newcastle quartet Vant were recently picked up by Parlophone off the back of a handful of gigs and one internet-only track, 'Parasite'.

Debut single proper 'Do You Know Me?' – a barrage of insistent guitars and vocal howls – shows exactly what got the label so excited. A hedonistic reminder of the golden early-noughties indie boom led by The Strokes and The Vines, it has the earworm effect of a familiar favourite.

Lisa Wright, writer

13. Fucked Up California Cold

'California Cold' is the eight-minute B-side to Fucked Up's forthcoming 12-inch 'Year Of The Hare', which is the latest instalment in the Canadian six-piece's Zodiac singles series. Initially it's business as usual, with chugging percussion and psychedelic guitar making one hell of a noise under Damian Abraham's gruff vocals. Suddenly, though, the whole thing melts into an ambient wash of reverb and looped flute. Totally brilliant.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

14. Jaws Bad Company

There's always been a subtle hint of grunge to Jaws' glimmering indie-pop, but on this first taste of new music since last year's debut album 'Be Slowly' they're making it blindingly obvious. *"What you say in bad company"*, drawls frontman Connor Schofield over sludgy bass and spiralling guitar motifs. It might lack the emotional depth that made originators like Nirvana really sparkle, but it's a promising start.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

15. Unknown Mortal Orchestra Can't Keep Checking My Phone

On which Unknown Mortal Orchestra nail the very modern feeling of maxing out your smartphone's services: no new tweets, nothing on Instagram and nobody to WhatsApp. *"I can't keep checking my phone"*, sings Ruban Nielson over a disco beat and a groove-laden bassline, in what is essentially a cry for human interaction. Electronic pulses push his '60s psych in fresh and exciting directions.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor



16. De La Soul God It (feat. Nas)

De La Soul recently turned to Kickstarter to fund their forthcoming eighth album. This banger, featuring Nas, isn't on it, but serves as an "indication of good music to come", say the Long Island threesome. On this evidence, anyone who has donated to the £320,000 raised so far has made a safe investment. The first hippies of hip-hop have most definitely still "god it".

Andy Welch, writer

17. Health New Coke

Health haven't released an album since 2009's 'Get Color', but in that time no-one has stepped up and taken their crown. The LA quartet are back to reiterate their dominance with 'New Coke', the first sample of their third album. An industrial drone rings throughout as the four members flex their muscles. Frontman Jake Duzsik's alien vocals add an element of weirdness, as he mournfully sings *"Life is good"* as if it's anything but.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor

18. Thee Oh Sees Withered Hand

After announcing his band's "indefinite hiatus" in December 2013, Thee Oh Sees' frontman John Dwyer clarified his comments, saying the band were merely taking a "well-earned break". Now, they're back on track. This second single from 14th album 'Mutilator Defeated At Last' is an instant classic. Twisted punk riffs compete for attention over frantic percussion and Dwyer's shouts of *"the bastard's withered hand"*. Riotous fun.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

19. Lana Del Rey Life Is Beautiful

There's only a one-minute preview of LDR's contribution to the soundtrack of forthcoming romance fantasy *The Age Of Adaline* available online, but it's enough to signal a move away from classic film-noir territory. The movie's theme (woman stays young and beautiful forever) is a perfect fit, but there's a lightness within the dappled strings here that suggests her third album might be more nuanced than 2014's 'Ultraviolence'.

Lisa Wright, writer

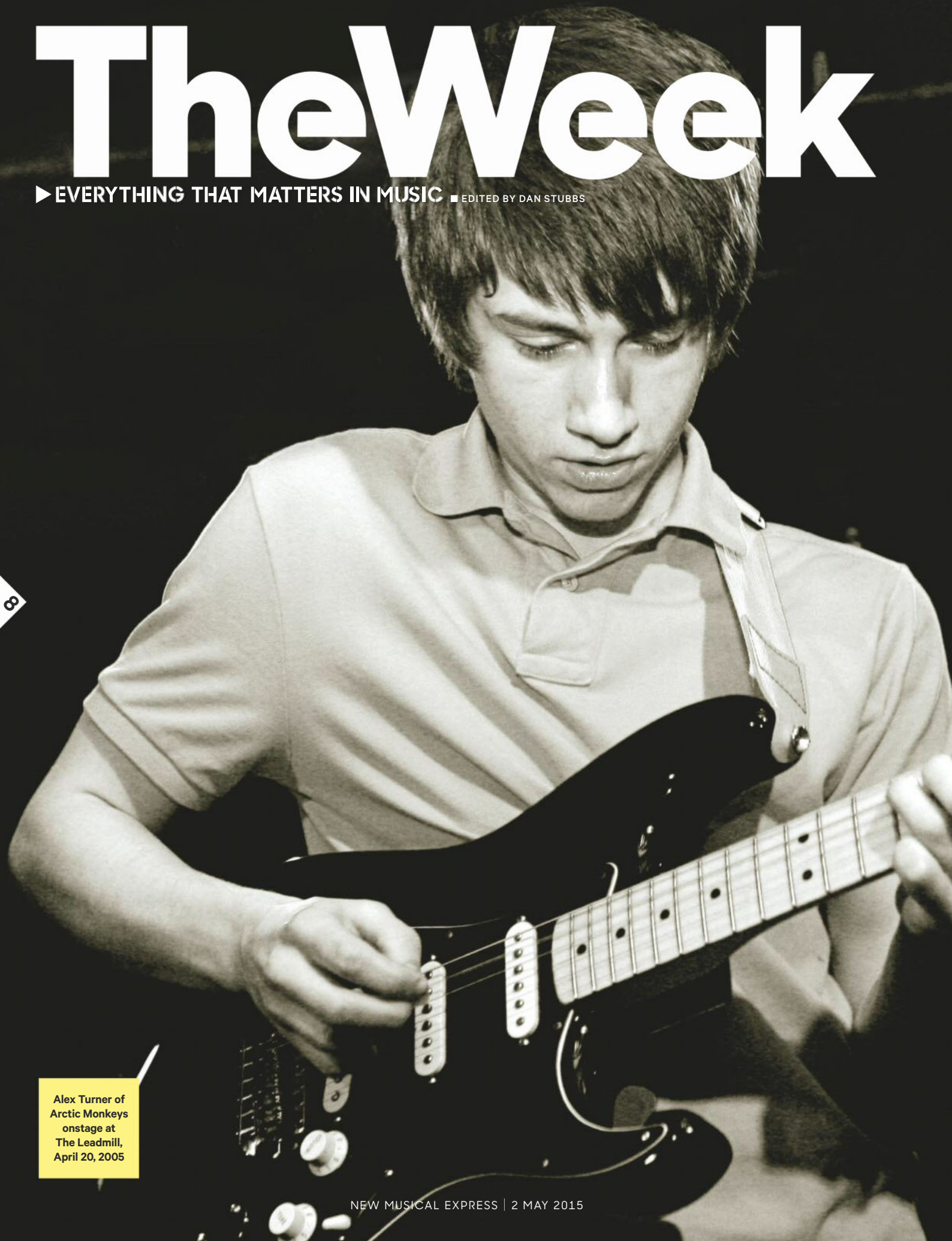
20. Girlpool Before The World Was Big

Singing about childhood is a perfect fit for Girlpool, aka Philadelphia-via-LA duo Cleo Tucker and Harmony Tividad. Their discordant, earnest vocals have a wide-eyed quality that makes them sound like kids experiencing things for the first time. When they caw *"I just miss how it felt standing next to you/Wearing matching dresses before the world was big"* it feels like they're nostalgic for a time that's only just passed.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

TheWeek

► EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN MUSIC ■ EDITED BY DAN STUBBS



8

Alex Turner of
Arctic Monkeys
onstage at
The Leadmill,
April 20, 2005

The Leadmill: 35 years young

Much-loved Sheffield venue The Leadmill – which played a crucial role in the careers of Pulp and Arctic Monkeys – celebrates its 35th birthday with a little help from Jarvis and Slow Club

PHOTO: ANDREW KENDALL



At a time when many mid-sized venues around the country have either been bought by chains or disappeared altogether, one venue stands firm. The Leadmill in Sheffield is 35 years old this week and remains a bastion of independence at the heart of one of Britain's most musically fertile cities. Founded in 1980 as a community arts co-operative, the former flour mill has since hosted more than 10,000 acts, playing a crucial role in the career of every Sheffield band from The Human League to Arctic Monkeys via Pulp, who have played there a record 18 times (not including the 1982 Christmas panto directed by Jarvis Cocker).

Jarvis returns home this weekend to kickstart the celebrations, broadcasting his BBC 6 Music show live from Sheffield on Sunday afternoon before DJing the official Leadmill birthday party alongside Pulp cohort Steve Mackey on Monday. The weekend also sees special performances from local heroes Toddla T and Slow Club.

"It's a magic room," says Slow Club's Rebecca Taylor of The Leadmill's 900-capacity main area. "You can still get an intimate feeling with a lot of people in there."

Slow Club owe the venue their very existence. "The first time I ever went there as a teenager, giddy on Smirnoff Ice, I met a boy who asked me to join his band," adds Rebecca. "I brought Charles [Watson] in as frontman, and that's how Slow Club started."

Local DJ and producer Toddla T also credits the venue with setting him on the path to a musical career. "My earliest memory of The Leadmill is the flyers on my sister's bedroom wall," he says.

Toddla reckons that The Leadmill's independence and willingness to support grassroots scenes is key to its longevity. "It's the opposite of a shiny club. It's the essence of band and club culture – a venue with good sound that's focused on the music, rather than looking fly or selling expensive drinks or any of that crap. And that's probably the reason it's still here, innit?" ■ SAM RICHARDS

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Macpherson**

Spector

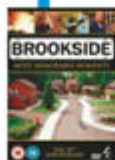
BOOK

**Fear And Trembling
by Søren Kierkegaard**



"I'm trying to get into heavier stuff, so this. For Christmas I got given Sammy

Davis Jr's autobiography, *Yes I Can*, which is a nice 'yin' to Kierkegaard's 'yang'."



BOXSET **Brookside**

"I have a DVD of the most memorable moments. There are the classics on there: the lesbian kiss, the incest, the body under the patio..."

FILM

James Bond

"During the darkest period of he band, the worst thing we ever did was buy a complete James Bond boxset in some charity shop. By the time we were halfway through the Roger Moore era we couldn't even look at each other."

GAME

**The Legend Of Zelda:
Ocarina Of Time**



"I have a Nintendo 3DS, for which they re-released a lot of N64 games, like ...Zelda: *Ocarina Of Time*."

HOME COMFORT **Vitamins**

"They're called Source Of Life Gold minitabs, and my mum buys me them. It's basically the equivalent of eating loads of vegetables, but in a tablet."



► Spector play at Live At Leeds on May 2



A\$AP gets serious

The world's most confident man has been channelling the pioneering spirit of The Beatles for his new album

No way – MGMT are the leaders. Tame Impala supported MGMT on tour!" Harlem rapper A\$AP Rocky is arguing that the duo behind one of the steepest commercial nosedives of recent times are kings of the psych-rock world right now, despite what *NME* says. It's a genre he's been boning up on ahead of new album 'At. Long. Last. A\$AP' (aka 'A.L.L.A.'), which has no confirmed released date yet and is inspired by The Beatles' more out-there moments.

"It's just so inspirational to go against the grain," he says. "The Beatles were at the top of their careers and doing all that pop shit. Then they do some leftfield shit – and it worked. Those guys were geniuses." Rocky is planning his own artistic reinvention with 'At. Long. Last. A\$AP'. Recorded between June and October 2014 at Red Bull Studios in London, he reports that the album "doesn't have any singles on it. I'll do what the fuck I want. That's the only way to do it. I'd be confused if I tried to fit in. I'm an innovator."

This year, Kendrick Lamar has topped the charts with an album ('To Pimp A Butterfly') filled with blood-drenched racial politics and beat poems, and Drake has put out a mixtape with no obvious hits ('If You're Reading This It's Too Late'). The hip-hop landscape has changed for those willing to take risks. Rocky recruited both Drake and Lamar for the hit single

'Fuckin' Problems' in 2013, but he now cites it as an example of the sort of trend-jumping he hates. "I feel like it gave people this misconception of who I am," he says. "My message is bigger than that. I have a bigger responsibility than talking about bitches, and unfortunately that's my biggest song at the moment, so I have to change that. I love the song and at one point I loved performing it, but I'm just tired of it." He says he won't play the hit at forthcoming gigs. As for the fans who might object: "They're not my fans."

A\$AP Rocky arrived in 2011 under the tutelage of friend and mentor A\$AP Yams. A mixtape (the same year's 'Live. Love. A\$AP') was followed by the much-loved

major-label debut 'Long. Live. A\$AP' in 2013. The only real criticism levelled at the record was that Rocky didn't have much to talk about beyond his sex life and what he saw in the mirror. It sounds like

that will be different this time out, too.

"I touch on the racial tension in America," he says before rapping a verse from a song he refuses to name. It includes the lines, "My ears are ringing, my palms are shaking, my heart is racing, somebody's momma's heart is aching, can't take it, probably feign it, found his body parts in all the places".

"I've never made music this great," he says, proving that the ability to brag is one thing he'll never leave behind. "No-one has. You'll see." He touches briefly on the tragic death of A\$AP Yams, who was found dead in January this year from an accidental overdose, and speculates on what his friend's legacy will be. It's simple, says Rocky: "The album just shows he knew what he was talking about when he told people that I was the greatest of my generation ever. He was right." ■ DAVID RENSHAW

**"IT'S JUST SO
INSPIRATIONAL TO GO
AGAINST THE GRAIN"
A\$AP Rocky**



**The late
A\$AP Yams**

10



NME PROMOTION

Everything
Everything: your
potential mentors

EVERYTHING TO PLAY FOR

In a band? Fancy playing Reading Festival? Here's your chance to be mentored by a top band and even appear at the legendary event

If you've ever dreamed of appearing at Reading Festival alongside the likes of Metallica and The Libertines, then listen up. This year, Relentless presents Here To Be Heard is offering your band the chance to join the line-up and bring your music to the festival's legendary crowd.

To win, you'll have to impress none other than Everything Everything, who will be playing the festival themselves on the NME Stage on Saturday. The Manchester-based Mercury nominees will be scouring all the entries to pick out five finalists to mentor. This will be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you to work with the band and hear first-hand how they've built a successful career during the last eight years and over three albums. Few people will be better placed to tell you what it takes to stand out. They'll also ensure your band is in top shape before

a public vote decides which band gets the chance to appear on the Reading Festival stage.

If you are successful, your band will enjoy VIP festival access, travel, accommodation and entry to the after-party on what will be an unforgettable day. More importantly, Here

'HERE TO BE HEARD' IS YOUR CHANCE TO WIN OVER BOTH AN INFLUENTIAL BAND AND THE READING CROWD

To Be Heard is also your chance to win over both an influential band and the Reading crowd on one of the biggest weekends in the music calendar.

Here To Be Heard is now returning for its third year. The competition is dedicated to providing a platform for the best new and

upcoming acts in the country, so if you think you've got what it takes to win over Everything Everything, snare the prize and rock Reading, enter before June 12 at RelentlessHTBH.com



Relentless
HERE TO
{BE HEARD}

Byrne's nights

Former Talking Head David Byrne
reveals his eclectic line-up for
August's Meltdown festival

Curated by a different musical legend each year, Meltdown is London's annual festival of the unexpected, offering 10 days of one-off collaborations and adventurous performances at the Southbank Centre in August. Following in the footsteps of David Bowie, Morrissey and Jarvis Cocker, this year's Meltdown festival curator is former Talking Heads leader David Byrne, recently seen collaborating with St Vincent and Fatboy Slim. Reflecting the upbeat, cosmopolitan outlook of his later solo work, Byrne's newly unveiled programme promises a diverse mix of music from around the world – from doom metal to flamenco – backed up by ambitious, theatrical stagings. Here are five of the highlights.

► David Longstreth

The Dirty Projectors leader is bringing a mysterious solo performance to London, with details yet to be revealed, even to Byrne... The pair have history, collaborating on the 'Dark Was The Night' charity compilation in 2009.

► **DAVID BYRNE SAYS** "I'm assuming it's not just him with a guitar, completely alone, playing his demos! But I love what he does, and every

record is completely interesting, engaging and surprising, so I thought, 'OK, you're doing something new, we'll have it.' I've done a song with Longstreth before, so if he invites me to do it I'll say yeah, but I'm not gonna force myself on him."

► Petra Haden

Experimental but light-hearted, Jack Black's sister-in-law is best known for her stunning multi-tracked a cappella recordings

– a complete recreation of The Who's 1967 album 'The Who Sell Out' and 2013's 'Petra Goes To The Movies'.

► **DAVID BYRNE SAYS** "She's done a record where it's all movie themes – there's the *Superman* theme, the theme from *Psycho* – and all the orchestral parts are done with her voice. On the record it's all her, but she's done it live where she teaches it to others so she can recreate it. I think she's gonna do one of those projects, which is just amazing. It's riveting to hear."



► Bianca Casady

One half of theatrical psych-folk eccentrics CocoRosie, Casady is bringing an even *more* out-there solo project to Meltdown. Like Longstreth, she gets a "free pass" from Byrne, who's as in the dark about her performance as anyone.

► **DAVID BYRNE SAYS** "I don't even know if this is a record... She's one of those artists who has kind of gone over to the theatre side. I don't know if this features acting, but apparently it's much more of a theatrical experience. In CocoRosie there's always a lot of visual stuff going on anyway, but this pushes that further. We'll see!"

► Sunn O)))

Stephen O'Malley's experimental, cloak-wearing drone-metal troupe are easily the darkest thing on Byrne's bill, but still very

"WITH SUNN O)))
YOU'RE NOT GOING
FOR THE SONGS"

David Byrne

much in line with the theatrical theme of his Meltdown line-up.

► **DAVID BYRNE SAYS** "I've been a fan of theirs for a while. I saw them in New York in a former church that had been

turned into a club, so it was the perfect setting. They completely upend what you think music is for and what it's about, and how you should experience it. You're certainly not going for the songs..."

► Atomic Bomb! Band

A fluid supergroup performing the fiercely funky songs of reclusive Nigerian legend William Onyeabor, the Atomic Bomb! Band are joined by a revolving cast of vocalists that has previously included Damon Albarn, Kele Okereke, Alexis Taylor and Byrne himself.

► **DAVID BYRNE SAYS** "I'll be one of the guest vocalists, yes – I've done this in New York, LA, San Francisco and Mexico. It's hugely fun. In New York, by the second song – I don't take any credit, I wasn't even singing yet – the entire audience was up and dancing for the rest of the evening! The grooves just keep going." ■ TOM PINNOCK



Stand by me

Newspaper reports suggest Oasis might reform in 2016. If so, who would join Noel and Liam?

► GUITAR



Paul 'Bonehead' Arthurs

► YEARS SERVED 1991–1999

► KEY ATTRIBUTES "It's hardly Paul McCartney leaving The Beatles," said Noel when guitarist Bonehead quit in 1999, but he's about the most popular former member. He's been in various bands, notably Parlour Flames, and performed with Liam in 2013 at a tribute for late Charlatans drummer Jon Brookes.

► VERDICT MAYBE



Gem Archer

► YEARS SERVED 1999–2009

► KEY ATTRIBUTES

Made his debut in the 'Go Let It Out' video, and quickly asserted himself as the mediator between Noel and Liam. Couldn't stop them splitting, and fell out with Noel for a time – something to do with joining Beady Eye maybe? – but they've since patched it up.

► VERDICT DEFINITELY



Matt Deighton

► YEARS SERVED Three months in 2000

► KEY ATTRIBUTES

After Noel walked out on the band in 2000, Liam recruited Mother Earth's Matt Deighton, considered a safe pair of hands. His involvement hinges on Noel not being involved – in which case, what sort of Oasis reunion is this?

► VERDICT NO CHANCE

► BASS



Paul 'Guigsy' McGuigan

► YEARS SERVED 1991–1999

► KEY ATTRIBUTES The original bass player was quiet and dependable. And while not the best musician in the world, he would be the die-hard fans' choice. He did, though, decline to appear on the band's 2004 *Definitely Maybe* DVD, saying he's not interested in looking back.

► VERDICT MAYBE



Scott McLeod

► YEARS SERVED Two months in 1995

► KEY ATTRIBUTES

McLeod temporarily replaced Guigsy, who was suffering from "nervous exhaustion" on a US tour, but he only lasted a few dates before quitting himself. Despite his short tenure, he does appear in the video for 'Wonderwall'.

► VERDICT NO CHANCE



Andy Bell

► YEARS SERVED 1999–2009

► KEY ATTRIBUTES

Now back with his first band, Ride, Bell was a new recruit, along with Gem, when Guigsy and Bonehead left. A fantastic musician, but he fell out with Noel after the band split.

► VERDICT MAYBE

► DRUMS



Tony McCarroll

► YEARS SERVED 1991–1995

► KEY ATTRIBUTES Pro:

he was the original drummer. Cons: just about everything else. He fell out with Liam and was a limited drummer. McCarroll tried to sue the band for £18 million in 1999, for unpaid royalties. He got £550,000.

► VERDICT NO CHANCE



Alan White

► YEARS SERVED 1995–2004

► KEY ATTRIBUTES "He's

a fucking great guy and he's one of the best drummers I've ever met," said Noel after White's departure in 2004, "but his personal life is fucking chaos." White's only been seen onstage once since leaving – in June 2008 with his brother Steve's band, Trio Valore.

► VERDICT MAYBE



Zak Starkey

► YEARS SERVED 2004–2008

► KEY ATTRIBUTES

Ringo's lad was an easy fit on Alan White's vacant drum stool. He didn't officially join the band, but he was there for four years, playing on their final two albums.

► VERDICT MAYBE



Chris Sharrock

► YEARS SERVED 2008–2009

► KEY ATTRIBUTES

Never an official member, drummer Sharrock played with Oasis until the end, before following Liam into Beady Eye. If it's not Zak Starkey in a reformed Oasis, it'll be Sharrock.

► VERDICT MAYBE

THE MINI INTERVIEW



Dennis Lyxzén

Refused frontman

Refused are back with their first album in 17 years, 'Freedom'. Why now?

"I was a bit sceptical at first, because our last album, 'The Shape Of Punk To Come', became a monumental record for a lot of people, and I didn't want to detract from what we were. But when we wrote 'Elektra' [the lead single from 'Freedom'] it was like, 'OK, this is Refused. This is happening.'"

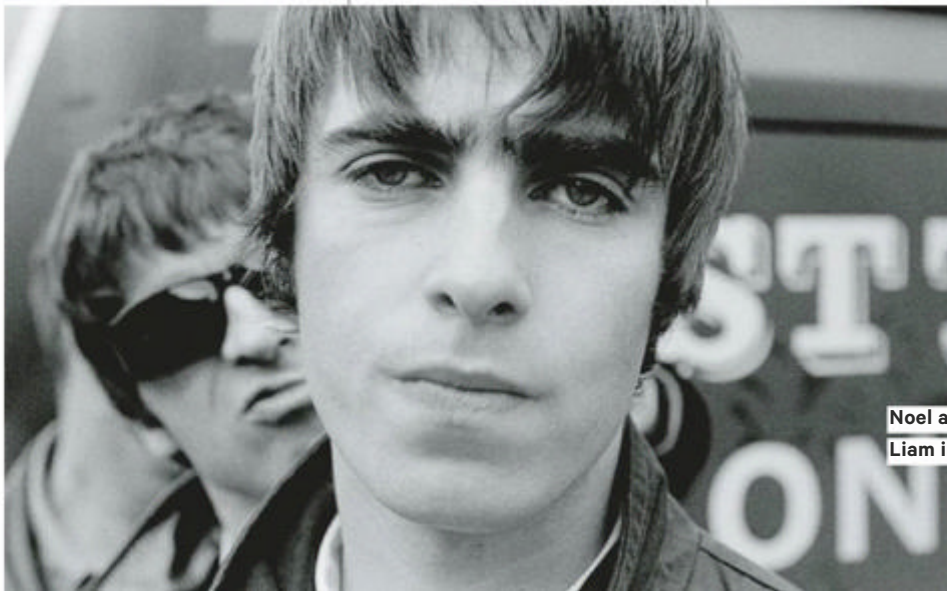
Given your last album was an anti-capitalist hardcore record, a few people might be surprised to see you've worked with Taylor Swift and Pink collaborator Shellback here.

"Yeah! We met him at an awards thing a few years ago and he told us he learned to play music by drumming along to Refused songs as a kid. So he ended up producing two songs. It must be weird to be in the studio with Adele one day, then us the next."

The adventurous, forward-thinking sound you predicted for punk on 'The Shape Of Punk To Come' never happened. Did this frustrate you?

"Right after that album came out, punk had its kind of MTV explosion, with all these big-budget music videos and a more commercial sound. But I personally didn't care. That was a statement about what punk could become. Punk, as an ideology, is a disappointment."

■ AL HORNER



Noel and Liam in 1994

STAYING IN

THE BEST MUSIC ON TV, RADIO AND ONLINE THIS WEEK



Mystery Jets will be steeling themselves for their Sheffield gig

Mystery Jets

6 Music Celebrates Sheffield

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, May 4, 7pm

Home to Arctic Monkeys, Pulp, Richard Hawley, The Human League and more, the Yorkshire city is the focus of 6 Music. The Leadmill, one of its most important venues, marks its 35th anniversary this year – listen live as Mystery Jets and Slow Club honour that milestone.

Nile Rodgers

Lost In Music: The Nile Rodgers Story

►LISTEN BBC Radio 2, April 29, 10pm

Nile Rodgers is much more than just the man who funk'd up Daft Punk and David Bowie. This show – presented by another collaborator, Duran Duran's Simon Le Bon – goes deep

into the influential Chic leader's career, featuring contributions from Bryan Ferry and Studio 54 co-founder Ian Schrager.

Kasabian Songbook

►WATCH Sky Arts, May 4, 5am

This 2010 programme explores Kasabian's writing

processes as guitarist Serge Pizzorno talks through the making of their first three albums. Also features live performance.

Tobias Jesso Jr Later... Live With Jools Holland

►WATCH BBC Two, May 5, 10pm

The Canadian singer-songwriter brings the



Kasabian's Tom Meighan

Beatles-esque gems of his debut LP 'Goon' to Jools' grand piano this week. Alabama Shakes also perform, as will the Sparks/Franz Ferdinand collaboration FFS.

Jarvis Cocker Jarvis Cocker's Sunday Service

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, May 3, 4pm

One of Sheffield's most famous sons adds his own tribute to 6 Music's celebration of the city. He'll present his show from the Winter Gardens, where he'll be joined by music fan and snooker legend Steve Davis.

GOING OUT

THE BEST LIVE EVENTS THIS WEEK



Live At Leeds

Swim Deep (above), Eagulls, Hookworms and more play.

►DATES Leeds, various venues (May 2)

►TICKETS £27.50 from NME.COM/tickets with £2.75 booking fee

Yak

The London trio set out to convert more crowds with their volatile psych-punk.

►DATES London St Moritz (April 29), Nottingham Bodega (30), Manchester Soup Kitchen (May 1), Newcastle Cluny 2 (5)

►TICKETS London and Newcastle £7; Nottingham and Manchester £6 from NME.COM/tickets with 70p–£1 booking fee

5 TO SEE FOR FREE

1. Peter Dinklage

Rough Trade, Nottingham ►April 29, 7pm

2. Frnkiero Andthe Collaboration

Pie & Vinyl, Southsea ►April 29, 5pm

3. Fake Laugh

The Stillery, London ►April 30, 7pm

4. Heyrocco

Sixty Million Postcards, Bournemouth ►April 30, 8.30pm

5. Palma Violets

Rough Trade East, London ►May 4, 6.30pm

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PRIORITY

O₂

Want to sack Dave or back Ed? Then vote!



YOUR VOTE MATTERS ON MAY 7, SO USE IT

BY JOLYON RUBINSTEIN

The host of BBC Three's *An Idiot's Guide To Politics* says the only way to start fixing a rotten system is to vote



I can't be the only one who is sick and tired of the uninspired political culture our generation is currently living in. The question is, are we to blame for this culture? The painful answer is YES. SIXTEEN MILLION ELIGIBLE VOTERS

DIDN'T VOTE IN 2010.

I believe there is a crisis at the very heart of our democracy, and while travelling up and down the country making *An Idiot's Guide To Politics* for BBC Three, it became clear that the overwhelming perception, regardless of the reality, is that people think MPs are both on the take and plain old liars.

When interviewing the MP Zac Goldsmith recently, he told me that he too thinks our democracy is dysfunctional. I wasn't shocked when he said that "lying

is a staple in parliament", but the longer I sat with that statement, the more uncomfortable I felt about it. Zac openly said: "At the moment you can lie to get elected. You can then behave in any manner you want in parliament. You can do whatever you want. You can break every single promise you've made and there's nothing your constituent can do about it."

So what do we do? We vote, in greater numbers than ever before; we fight back against the silent war that the government are waging against the young. The expectation for this year's general election is that less than 25 per cent of young people (aged 18-24) will vote – despite the future promising increases in tuition fees, cuts to the educational maintenance allowance, cuts to benefits for the under-25s, rising rents, rising house prices and more zero-hours contracts than I care to count.

The only way to change this (short of a bloody revolution) is to use our dysfunctional democratic process to our advantage and vote the shit out of politics. In order for democracy to function, we have to engage with it. Engage, and then reform it. To take back control of our futures we must kick the hell out of this political culture of fear and work collectively to solve the problems at the very core of the beast.

I believe that we no longer live in a democracy; we live in a financial system. Our generation worries about whether we are going to have enough money to pay the rent much more than we think about voting. That's sad. We should be aspiring to much more than just watching our bank accounts, shouldn't we?

You might say, "Why bother?" Wrestling control of politics from wealthy vested interests and saving the environment are insurmountable challenges, right? Well, getting women the vote and ending slavery were, too. But when the time comes, change that once seemed impossible becomes inevitable. Nelson Mandela said, "It always seems impossible, until it is done." So let's do it.

Please vote on May 7. Let's start the process of creating the world we want to see by voting out some of the scum that inhabit the corridors of Westminster. Your vote matters – use it. ■

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

LOST ALBUMS

#71

Remi Kabaka Black

Goddess soundtrack (1978)

Chosen by David Maclean, Django Django



"It's the soundtrack to a film by Ola Balogun. I've never seen the film, but it's an amazing soundtrack. I bought it in Paris recently as I recognised the name of the guy that made it – Remi Kabaka, an amazing Nigerian percussionist who's played with Paul McCartney, Paul Simon, Fela Kuti and Ginger Baker. So he's quite a legendary guy. He's also the dad of a musician who was involved in the Africa Express album and does stuff with Gorillaz. He's called Remi Kabaka too. 'Black Goddess' is an afro-jazz, weird soundtrack but it's quite funky. You could almost play it out in a club – it's quite dancey."



► THE DETAILS

- RELEASE DATE 1978
- LABEL Afrodisia
- BEST TRACKS Brothers And Sisters, Black Goddess
- WHERE TO FIND IT Recently reissued on Soundway
- LISTEN ONLINE Spotify

After shifting recording from San Francisco to Sheffield, the US garage-rock trio's first LP is finding "its full potential"

Radkey

Radkey (l-r, Dee, Isaiah, Solomon) in McCall Sound Studios, Sheffield, March 2015



If you thought for even one second that recording in Sheffield meant the debut album from American garage rockers Radkey was going to be laced with saucy Jarvis Cocker-style poetry or bleepy Warp Records beats, then think again.

"Obviously, there's Def Leppard," says bassist Isaiah Radke when asked about the local influences he and his brothers-cum-bandmates Dee (guitar/vocals) and Solomon (drums) have soaked up. "They're actually awesome," he adds, suddenly serious. "I don't care what anyone says, they made some pretty fucking catchy shit."

The city that spawned Def Lep is a long way from Radkey's small hometown of St Joseph, Missouri. The teenagers' love affair with South Yorkshire began when they supported Drenge, who now live in the city, in 2013. Through Eoin and Rory Loveless they met Sheffield-based producer Ross Orton, who – fresh from working on Arctic Monkeys' 'AM' and Drenge's self-titled debut – oversaw Radkey's initial album session in San Francisco last spring. Then, at

the start of 2015, he invited them to his McCall Sound Studio base to finish the job.

Arriving on Valentine's Day accompanied by dad-turned-manager Matt Radke, Radkey quickly adapted to a locally sourced diet of Henderson's Relish and Deception pale ale that they discovered during pub crawls round the Kelham Island district with Drenge. Now they're eager to return the Loveless brothers' favour: "They've got to come to St Jo' or Kansas City or some shit, and we'll do the same thing," Isaiah grins.

Despite a reasonable start on the album in San Francisco, it wasn't until the Sheffield sessions that Radkey's brooding punk really came together. "A lot of them were last-minute songs, which is exciting," says Isaiah. "I would definitely say it's more mature than things we've done before, a little darker."

"Heavier... groovier... catchier..." older brother Dee adds in hazy agreement. Orton's

guidance has been central to this evolution. "Ross is the only producer for us," Isaiah gushes. "His style is just what we needed to evolve. He'll make your sound 100 per cent what the fuck it's supposed to be, to its full potential."

The as-yet-untitled

album will feature souped-up versions of Radkey's fiery 2014 single 'Feed My Brain' and 'Romance Dawn', the bruising finale from the previous year's 'Devil Fruit' EP. New cuts include 'Glore', an intense barrage of early Hüsker Dü-inspired hardcore inspired by a trip to a disused mental hospital in St

Joseph, 'Sank', which marches around like peak form Iron Maiden striding into battle, and 'Parade It', a bitter breakup song built around Dee's pounding refrain, "Your love has really got me down".

"It's about a girl I know, who I used to see", explains lyricist Isaiah. "She at some point got this other boyfriend, and I was at this club, and she was fucking putting on a show, man. Basically just running around and making out with him and shit – and making

sure it was in front of me every time. She just knew how to fucking push every button."

Their fans, says Dee, are "not gonna expect what's coming". He adds: "The solos are way better." Then Isaiah pipes up: "People have been asking for a long solo, so we've got a long-ass solo on the album, man. It's gonna be awesome." ■ ROBERT COOKE

"IT'S MORE MATURE THAN THE THINGS WE'VE DONE BEFORE – A LITTLE DARKER"
ISAIAH RADKE



ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM



"NICK KICKED IN ON THAT SHUFFLE BEAT AND 'SPREAD YOUR LOVE' WAS ALIVE"
ROBERT LEVON BEEN

B.R.M.C. BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB



STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

This classic band-against-a-wall shot is also something of a premonition. Drummer Nick Jago, who would eventually leave the band, partly because of drug issues, is slumped on some steps alone while the other two look away from him.

FIVE FACTS

1 The album's biggest hit, 'Spread Your Love', has been used in ads for vodka and a Vegas hotel and also featured in the Vin Diesel film *A Man Apart*.

2 Five of the songs were taken directly from the band's original full-length demo album, of which they'd pressed up 500 copies.

3 The band name and title came from 1953 film *The Wild One*, being an appropriation of the name of Marlon Brando's biker gang.

4 The album was recorded in virtual seclusion, the band self-producing the record in their home studio and at Sound City in LA.

5 The album's sound was influenced by Peter and Robert going to see shows by The Brian Jonestown Massacre and The Verve together. The BJM show was at a house party that got raided by police.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"I wouldn't come back if I'd have been Jesus/I'm the kind of guy who leaves the scene of the crime" - 'White Palms'

BRMC's sonic debt to The Jesus And Mary Chain was bolstered by lyrics like these, lashing religious imagery to nefarious modern goings-on in the same way that the

Mary Chain's 'Reverence' declared: "I wanna die just like Jesus Christ/I wanna die on a bed of spikes".

"Now she's gone, love burns inside me" - 'Love Burns'

The lyric is self-explanatory, but it's been the subject of many comedy mishearings, including "now she's gone nuts for Mugabe".

"I fell in love with the sweet sensation/I gave my love to a simple chord" - 'Whatever Happened To My Rock N'Roll (Punk Song)'

This straightforward tribute to the redemptive power of punk rock took a turn for the ironic on later tours, when Nick Jago fell in love with a different sort of sweet sensation and hurtled towards rehab.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"BRMC... are almost mathematically cool; engineered by scientists for optimum cult appeal and smoulderability. They are the rightful heirs of the Enigmatic And Vaguely Dangerous-Looking Men In Black crown and each generation can have only one." Mark Beaumont, 8/10

WHAT WE SAY NOW

'BRMC' arrived like a bolt from the black, grinding with grotty/glam rock credibility. Along with The Strokes' 'Is This It' and other

albums, it reignited garage rock for the new millennium, and although it would turn out to be BRMC's one trick, it's a spellbinding listen.

FAMOUS FAN

"I was completely invigorated and blown away by them." Mike McCready, Pearl Jam, 2013

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I remember 'Spread Your Love' coming directly out of the ashes of 'Down Here', an old B-side which we played live a lot. At one show I just didn't stop playing bass at the end of 'Down Here' after the song had ended, because it felt so damn good. Peter and Nick looked across at me like I was a total spaz, but then Nick just kicked in on that big-ass shuffle beat and the next thing we knew, 'Spread Your Love' was alive." Robert Levon Been, 2013

THE AFTERMATH

After a presentable second album, 'Take Them On, On Your Own', in 2003, issues began to arise: Jago started acting erratically, accepting an NME Award with nine minutes of silence; Hayes stormed out of a V Festival signing session when he was asked to sign an inflatable penis; Virgin dropped them; and Jago quit. Yet BRMC soldiered on, dabbling with folk on third album 'Howl' in 2005. Seven albums in, they still command a dedicated, dark-hearted following.

THIS WEEK...

Black Rebel Motorcycle Club - BRMC

The West Coast trio's debut album first appeared 15 years ago - and they would never better its pounding update of psych rock

THE BACKGROUND

In 2001, New York was roaring. Basement bars bristled with garage rock (The Strokes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs), punk-funk (The Rapture, Radio 4) and gothic indie (Interpol). Over on the West Coast, however, only San Francisco's Black Rebel Motorcycle Club were making any serious noise. The band was formed in 1998 by high-school friends Robert Levon Been (bass) and ex-Brian Jonestown Massacre guitarist Peter Hayes - both surgically attached to their leather jackets and in thrall to psych rock, The Jesus And Mary Chain, Sonic Youth and Led Zeppelin - and completed by Devon-born drummer Nick Jago, whose parents had moved to California. The dark, revival-rock vision on their demo tape caused a label bidding war.



ACE OF BASEMENT

When a selection of artists hunkered down for the NME Basement Sessions, the results were intimate and unexpected

Over the last six months, *NME* has teamed up with Dead Crow Spirit Flavoured Beers to bring some of music's most exciting acts to play intimate and exclusive sessions in the *NME* basement. Each artist played one of their own tracks plus a cover of a song you might not immediately expect them to choose to tackle.

Much like Dead Crow's Rum and Bourbon flavoured beers, the combinations were intriguing and refreshing. First up was Kiesza, now a chart-topping



megastar, who covered Nirvana's 'Heart-Shaped Box', while singer-songwriter and 2014 Mercury Prize nominee Nick Mulvey and the ethereal, haunting Zola Jesus also stopped by. Glaswegian

rockers Twin Atlantic tackled James Bay's hit single 'Hold Back The River' with aplomb and, most recently, Domino-signed Essex quartet The Bohicas added a suave touch to Kelis' 'Rumble'. Helsinki – aka Babyshambles' Drew McConnell – meanwhile, popped in to give Lana Del Rey's 'Video Games' a stunning makeover.

The Bohicas cover
Kelis in the
NME basement



WIN TICKETS!

Head to NME.COM/win now for your chance to win a pair of tickets to The Bohicas' headline gig at London's Oslo on June 4. Runners-up will receive a Dead Crow Basement Sessions goody bag (entrants must be aged 18 and over).

Drew McConnell Helsinki



"We chose to cover 'Video Games' because it's a genius pop song. The dark

subtext in the lyrics, the absence of drums and the odd time signature in the verse all mean it really shouldn't have been as massive a hit as it was."

► If you weren't lucky enough to be one of the chosen few to witness these spectacular sessions in the flesh, don't worry. Videos of all the performances are available to watch at NME.COM/video.

Twin Atlantic were part of the NME Basement Sessions supported by Dead Crow

◀ Sam McTrusty
Twin Atlantic



"The Dead Crow session was a pretty cool set-up – we tend to talk to fans after every show we do, but this time was really nice because it felt even more natural as it was quite a small room. We covered James Bay's 'Hold Back The River' because I'd heard the song a couple of days previously and thought it was a great song. That's what drives our band – songwriting – so I always feel like I learn something when I cover a great song."



Helsinki take on Lana Del Rey's 'Video Games'

"I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I LEARN SOMETHING WHEN I COVER A GREAT SONG"

Sam McTrusty TWIN ATLANTIC



Royal Blood storm through 'Figure It Out' at the NME Awards 2015

At the NME Awards 2015 with Austin, Texas, Dead Crow were not only the official beer sponsor of the event, they supported the award for Best Live Band, too. Nominees for the prize included Arctic Monkeys, Fat White Family, Foo Fighters, Kasabian and The Libertines.

In the end, *NME* readers voted the gargantuan-riffing and meteorically rising Royal Blood to be crowned winners. The Brighton duo performed on the night, deploying a thunderous version of 'Figure It Out' to back up their victory.

Dead Crow Rum and Bourbon flavoured beers were also a winner with the bands and celebrities in attendance. What's more, Dead Crow gave some lucky fans the chance to experience all the rock'n'roll action for themselves, sending a host of competition winners down to the star-studded night, which saw the likes of The Libertines, footballer Peter Crouch, model Abbey Clancy, rock legend Jimmy Page and Suede all enjoying proceedings at the O2 Academy Brixton.



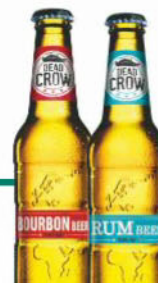
Stars including Kasabian, Royal Blood and Peter Crouch came out to party in Brixton

▼ WIN A BASS!

Want to get your hands on a Gretsch bass signed by 2015's Best Live Band themselves, Royal Blood? Follow and tweet @deadcrowbeer #DeadcrowBASS and it could be yours (entrants must be aged 18 and over).
► For full T&Cs visit NME.COM/win.



SPIRIT FLAVOURED BEERS
#FOLLOWTHECROW



**“Bring it on, motherfuckers.
Let’s see who blinks first”**

Chvrches’ **Lauren Mayberry** hits out at online trolls who continue to abuse her

THE NUMBERS

£1bn

Amount contributed to the UK economy in the past five years by independent music festivals, according to a new study by the Association of Independent Festivals

250

Number of unused riffs on the phone Metallica’s Kirk Hammett lost recently

3.72 million

Number of times Wiz Khalifa’s ‘See You Again’ was streamed in a week, breaking the UK’s all-time streaming record

12

Number of minutes it took Glastonbury resale tickets to sell out



WHO THE FUCK IS...



**Brandon
Kleinman**

The Airbnb user renting out the Fairfax, Los Angeles flat where Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love once lived. Cost: £720 a week or £200 a night.

When did they live there?

From 1991-92. They moved out after a bathtub leak damaged guitars, journals and artwork.

How does Kleinman describe it?

Any damage from the bathroom leak has been fixed and the tub remains. “I’ve been told that he wrote ‘Heart-Shaped Box’ in that bathtub,” he adds.

+ GOOD WEEK +



Karen O

The Yeah Yeah Yeahs singer is pregnant with her first child. The frontwoman, who is married to director Barnaby Clay, showed off her bump while performing at this year’s Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame ceremony in Cleveland.

- BAD WEEK -



Madonna

Madonna ran into more trouble on Instagram after posting a picture of Margaret Thatcher and then deleting it. The caption read: “If you just set out to be liked, you will be prepared to compromise on anything at anytime, and would achieve nothing.”

IN BRIEF

Rap the vote

Waka Flocka Flame has announced that he is running for president of the United States. The rapper promises to legalise marijuana, raise the minimum wage and impose harsh restrictions on people with big feet.

Better than a wave

Jay Z and Jack White are personally calling Tidal subscribers to thank them for their support of the streaming service. This might be easier than imagined, given that the app has slipped out of the UK’s Top 500 download chart.

On track

Michael Eavis has had a high-speed train – which will run between London and South Wales and the south-west – named after him. The Glastonbury major-domo becomes the first living person to receive such an honour.

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Official RECORD STORE Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS APRIL 26, 2015



Alabama Shakes Sound And Color

The Deep South four-piece add kaleidoscopic touches to the earthiness of their 2012 debut with this follow-up, which takes the Number One spot this week.

- | | | | |
|--------|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| NEW 01 | Alabama Shakes | SOUND AND COLOR | ROUGH TRADE |
| 2 | Puzzle | Biffy Clyro | 14TH FLOOR |
| 3 | Carrie & Lowell | Sufjan Stevens | ASTHMATIC KITTY |
| 4 | The Holy Bible 20 | Manic Street Preachers | COLUMBIA |
| 5 | Sometimes I Sit And Think, And Sometimes I Just Sit | Courtney Barnett | HOUSE ANXIETY |
| 6 | Join Hands | Siouxsie & The Banshees | POLYDOR |
| 7 | Edge Of The Sun | Calexico | CITY SLANG |
| 8 | John Grant & The BBC Philharmonic | John Grant | BELLA UNION |
| NEW 9 | Pills 'N' Thrills And Bellyaches | Happy Mondays | RHINO |
| NEW 10 | Get Behind Me Satan | The White Stripes | THIRD MAN |
| NEW 11 | Stages | Josh Groban | REPRISE |
| NEW 12 | Chasing Yesterday | Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds | SOUR MASH |
| 13 | 1966 | David Bowie | SANCTUARY |
| 14 | Remixes | Erasme | MUTE |
| 15 | Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake | Small Faces | CHARLY |
| 16 | Spunk | Sex Pistols | CASTLE MUSIC |
| NEW 17 | Vulnicura | Björk | ONE LITTLE INDIAN |
| 18 | Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's The ... | Sex Pistols | UMC |
| 19 | Darling Arithmetic | Villagers | DOMINO RECORDINGS |
| NEW 20 | Short Movie | Laura Marling | VIRGIN |
| 21 | Don't Stand Me Down | Dexys Midnight Runners | UMC/VIRGIN |
| NEW 22 | The Ultimate Collection | Paul Simon | SONY MUSIC CG |
| 23 | Celebrate: Live From The SSE Hydro | Simple Minds | DEMON |
| 24 | The Day Is My Enemy | The Prodigy | TAKE ME TO THE HOSPITAL |
| NEW 25 | Box Set | Red House Painters | BEGGARS BANQUET |
| 26 | Bonxie | Stornoway | COOKING VINYL |
| 27 | Strange Days | The Doors | ELEKTRA/RHINO |
| 28 | Psychocandy – 30th Anniversary Live | The Jesus & Mary Chain | DEMON |
| NEW 29 | Sonic Soul Surfer | Seasick Steve | CAROLINE/THERE'S A DEAD SKUNK |
| NEW 30 | In The Lonely Hour | Sam Smith | CAPITOL |
| NEW 31 | Chaos And The Calm | James Bay | REPUBLIC |
| NEW 32 | The Race For Space | Public Service Broadcasting | TEST CARD RECORDINGS |
| NEW 33 | Asunder Sweet And Other Distress | Godspeed! You Black Emperor | CONSTELLATION |
| NEW 34 | X | Ed Sheeran | ASYLUM |
| 35 | Live At The Bridgewater Hall | Ocean Colour Scene | MOSELEY SHOALS |
| 36 | Wanted On Voyage | George Ezra | COLUMBIA |
| 37 | My Squelchy Life | Brian Eno | ALL SAINTS |
| 38 | Extended | Bee Gees | RHINO |
| NEW 39 | Royal Albert Hall | Eels | E WORKS |
| NEW 40 | The French EPs | Small Faces | DECCA POP |

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

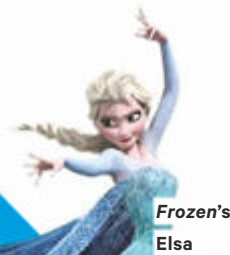


THIS WEEK NOTORIOUS AARDVARK DONCASTER

FOUNDED 2014

WHY IT'S GREAT They host Under T'Vark sessions for local musicians. TOP SELLER LAST WEEK 'Bluesy' Steve Keeton – 'God Rest These Guts' THEY SAY “We are the only outlet in town stocking local music under one roof.”

SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE



Frozen's
Elsa



Simon &
Garfunkel



Andy Bell

Ride guitarist

THE FIRST SONG I REMEMBER HEARING 'I Love You Because' - Jim Reeves

"That song 'I Love You Because', maybe. It's by Jim Reeves. He was a deep-voiced country singer, something like Johnny Cash-lite I think. I remember my dad singing it to my mum, fooling about, trying to get the low notes. Quite romantic really."

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH 'The Only Living Boy In New York' - Simon & Garfunkel

"My parents played the 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' album a lot in the house, and I really loved it, but this song almost always used to put me in a trance."

THE FIRST ALBUM I EVER BOUGHT 'Parallel Lines' - Blondie

"When I was about nine I was so in love with Debbie Harry. I played that album to death."

It's actually a great record. It has some of their best songs on - from hit singles like 'Sunday Girl' and 'Heart Of Glass' to the apocalyptic '11:59', which frankly scared me! I was only very young though. I think it cost about three quid, but I needed to save up for quite a while to get it as I remember. Worth every penny."

"WHEN I WAS ABOUT NINE I WAS SO IN LOVE WITH DEBBIE HARRY"

THE SONG THAT MADE ME WANT TO BE IN A BAND '19th Nervous Breakdown' - The Rolling Stones

"While my folks were out at church on Sunday mornings, I used to stay home playing The Rolling Stones' 'Big Hits (High Tide And Green Grass)' album very loud on the family radiogram."

Something about '19th Nervous Breakdown' - maybe the overloaded guitar and bass riffs - got me really excited and made me feel like I needed to make records. That, and the whole Beatles catalogue."

THE SONG I CAN NO LONGER LISTEN TO None

"I never rule anything out!"

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME WANT TO DANCE 'Rez' - Underworld

"'Rez' tends to unleash the horrific phenomenon of me hitting the dancefloor. For me, 'dancing' consists of sticking both my hands in the air and nodding my head, doing the bass face. It never lasts long because I have the kind of mates that don't like to see friends lose their dignity, so the shepherd's hook always comes out."

THE SONG I DO AT KARAOKE 'Know How' - Young MC

"I used to be able to do the whole of this when I was younger. I've never done karaoke, but if I did I think I would like to give this a go."

THE SONG I WISH I HAD WRITTEN 'Jealous Guy' - John Lennon

"It's got such a great melody, and the words to this are him at his very best, admitting all of his failings and coming across so sincere, but never corny."

THE SONG THAT REMINDS ME OF FORMING RIDE 'I Wanna Be Your Dog' - Iggy & The Stooges

"It was the first song we ever jammed and it always reminds me of the early Ride sound as that album was one of our big early influences."

THE SONG THAT REMINDS ME OF OXFORD 'Fearless' - Pink Floyd

"I associate the Pink Floyd album 'Meddle' very much with Oxford, and if I had to pick a song from it, it would be 'Fearless'. Something about this very easy-going, lazy era of Pink Floyd music is very Oxford."

THE SONG THAT I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT ON THE ROAD 'Fyt' - This Mortal Coil

"This is Ride's original intro music. We pulled it out for the Oxford comeback show last month and it sounded huge. So we will definitely be using this on the upcoming UK tour at the end of May - it's going to be cool hearing it blasting out of big PA systems again."

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL 'Tomorrow Never Knows' - The Beatles

"They remain the ultimate band, and this song is all about merging with the infinite, which is what I expect to be doing around that time."



Blondie's
Debbie Harry

Rad ar

► YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST ■ EDITED BY MATT WILKINSON

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NEWMUSIC

NME
NEW
ACT
OF THE WEEK



The Big Moon

Wide-eyed Londoners channelling the spirit of indie's finest

It was definitely more important to have the right people in the band than the right musicians," says Juliette Jackson (above, left) – lynchpin and leader of London's most exciting new quartet, The Big Moon (formerly The Moon). "You can just tell when you're gonna be friends with people."

This sense of togetherness is the spark that ignites the band – completed by Soph Nathan (guitar, vocals), Celia Archer (bass, vocals) and Fern Ford (drums) – and is remarkable considering the girls have only known each other for a year. A four-headed beast of tight harmonies, guitar interplay and wired, exuberant energy on stage, the group come across as more of a breezy, Runaways-esque girl gang than a songwriter and her backing band, although The Big Moon did originate with just Jackson and some aspirational dreams.

Jackson says she had all but renounced music until she found herself re-enthused by the fieriest factions

of indie's new breed. "I went to see Palma Violets and I wanted to be in a band like them, in a gang," she explains. "And then I saw Fat White Family and I just went home and started writing songs. It made me feel like I could do it and I wanted this for myself."

Soph, Celia and Fern came into the mix via friends (all three were given the thumbs up based on immediate chemistry before barely playing a note) and the band moved into a tiny rehearsal room in London's Stoke Newington that Celia describes as "lots of Doritos Chilli Heatwave in a tiny cube full of ants". It was there that they began to work on Jackson's bank of material.

'Eureka Moment' – an intensely stirring stop-start rattle that's earned them comparisons to everyone from PJ Harvey to The Slits – is the first taste, while debut single 'Sucker' is out in June.

"The first time we played together I cried because I'd wanted a band for so long, and I'd finally found the right people," Juliette smiles. "These guys think I'm an emotional volcano, but I just don't care about other things as much as this." Start the countdown now – The Big Moon are readying to shoot for the stars.

■ LISA WRIGHT

► THE DETAILS

- **BASED** London
- **FOR FANS OF** Palma Violets, Elastica
- **SOCIAL** facebook.com/comoonicate
- **BUY IT** 'Sucker' is released through Hard Up Records on June 15
- **SEE THEM LIVE** The band are on a co-headline tour with Yak from April 30 to May 13
- **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** The Big Moon's pre-gig ritual is typically endearing. Says Soph: "We hug before a gig and say, 'Well done, good luck, I love you' – even though we haven't done anything yet"

▼
ON
NME.COM/
NEWMUSIC
NOW
► Stream
'Sucker'

MORE NEW MUSIC

Honey Moon

With their (trucker) caps doffed Mac DeMarco's way, Londoners Honey Moon only put their first track 'Sunshine' online in January, but it earned them a slot supporting fellow buzz act Beach Baby at their debut London show. There, they proved they've got much to offer – appropriating Mac's knack for blessed-out lo-fi rather well indeed.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/honeymoonuk

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

Naked

It speaks volumes for Naked's potential that Glasgow electro label LuckyMe have stepped outside their usual remit to sign the Edinburgh-based trio. Naked's new 'Youth Mode' EP is a hypnotic mixture of glassy beats and thick, beautiful melodies reminiscent of Björk.

► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/___naked

► **HEAR THEM** naked.dk

Show Me The Body

This New York hardcore act are maybe the only band in the world who play banjo and hang out with rap collective Ratking. Wiki of that group pops up on killer track 'Vernon', while the gorily titled 'Bone Soup' can be heard online. The band's chest-crushing debut album, also called 'Bone Soup', is out now.

► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/show_methe_body

► **HEAR THEM** showmethebody.com

Sally Dige

Canadian darkwave artist Sally Dige releases her first album, 'Hard To Please', via Night School Records on May 11. It's a compelling affair that sees the Berlin-based musician deliver on the promise of the few tracks she's released since debuting in 2011. Here's hoping live dates are incoming.



Honey Moon

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/sallydige

► **HEAR HER** soundcloud.com/sally-dige

NME BUZZ BAND OF THE WEEK

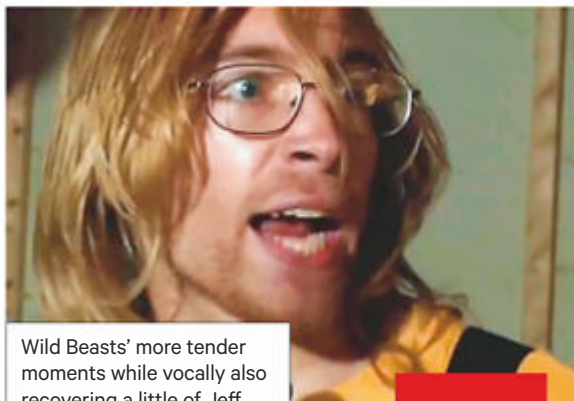
Coneheads

Set to break out from north-west Indiana's thriving punk scene, Coneheads are voraciously prolific yet tantalisingly secretive. With a sound that gets likened to a sped-up Devo, their best material – such as 2014's 'Canadian Cone' tape – is as thrilling as anything we've heard from the States in the past 12 months. Highlights include the Stooges-esque 'Way Things Am' and their weirdo cover of Talking Heads' 'Psycho Killer'.

► **HEAR THEM** sudsdenim.blogspot.co.uk

Anna B Savage

This eclectic singer-songwriter has been supporting the likes of Ryley Walker and Of Montreal recently, while also loosely being part of the same scene that spawned Brit punks Bad Breeding. Her songs, recorded with upstate New Yorker DM Stith, are spine-tinglingly icy affairs, reminiscent of



Coneheads

Wild Beasts' more tender moments while vocally also recovering a little of Jeff Buckley's lost magic.

► **SOCIAL** annabsavage.tumblr.com

► **HEAR HER** soundcloud.com/annabsavage

EZTV

EZTV's latest track 'Dust In The Sky' tactfully combines the guitar work of Television with the melodic sensibility of The Beatles and laces it with back-porch Americana. If that sounds like a tasty set of references, their earlier demo 'Calling Out' also has a touch of the Pixies about it. The intensely melodic and upbeat approach they take belies their Brooklyn background.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/eztveeee

► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/eztv

Swedish Death Candy

This hectic psych band will pack a punch when they perform in London this month in support of Ty Segall-tipped stoner rockers Wand. The band's EP, 'So Long And Farewell...', is a colourful explosion of blistering solos and hard-rock riffs, which evokes head-banging greats such as Dead Meadow's 'Sleepy Silver Door' and (seriously) Ocean Colour Scene's 'Riverboat Song'. Wig out.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/swedishdeathcandy

► **HEAR THEM** swedishdeathcandy.bandcamp.com

► **SEE THEM LIVE** London Old Blue Last (May 24) ➔

BAND CRUSH

Kristian Bell

The Wytches



Broadbay

"Broadbay are a three-piece, originally from Northampton but they now live in Brighton. They're doing a grunge-punk thing, with a bit of Dinosaur Jr poppiness to it. They're really great."

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Nicky Blitz

LA enigma Nicky comes from Miami's 10K Islands stable, and his debut EP 'Hawk' veers from off-kilter pop ('Alive') to the kind of fare that pre-Killers synth kings Stellastarr once seemed destined to rule the world with ('Hawk').

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/nickyblitz
► **HEAR HIM** soundcloud.com/nickyblitz

The Britanys

'Want To Be', by fuzzy New York upstarts The Britanys, gets straight to the point, sounding like something The Strokes might have wandered into in the early noughties. A Super-8-indebted mesh of rooftops, guitar-stuffed apartments, Converse and tight jackets, it's backed up by a track that recalls the aloofness of Girls' and Smith Westerns' earliest releases.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/thebritanys
► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/thebritanys

Francesca Belmonte

Having earned her chops as a collaborator/protégée of trip-hop kingpin Tricky, Londoner Francesca Belmonte releases her debut

Nicky Blitz



solo album, 'Anima'. The LP features an urgent mix of pop, R&B and electro that is beautifully bound by her melancholic voice. It's due out Tricky's False Idols label on June 1.

► **HEAR HER** soundcloud.com/francesca-belmonte-music
► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/frankybelmonte

Soft Lit

One of the highlights from the ever-dependable Godmode Records, Soft Lit's latest track 'I Can't Help It' takes a healthy dose of Shamir, throws in a chorus the size of Manhattan and reaps the benefits of kicking off the label's latest (excellent) mixtape, 'American Music'. NYC's sounding vibrant.

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

Girl Friend

Soaring synths help to shape Girl Friend's disco-tinged pop. On 'Monte Carlo', frontman Amory's silky vocals have a suave presence, matching the glamour achieved in the whirlwind electronics and glossy riffs. The Manchester

Soft Lit



outfit's new EP 'Arrive Alone, Leave Alone' is out April 27 via Tri-Tone.

► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/girlfriendmusic
► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/girlfriendmcr

Rozi Plain

When she's not a touring musician in This Is The Kit, Rozi Plain's hard at work with her own brand of uplifting folk music. Third LP 'Friend' (out May 4) is full of dancing basslines

and dotty vocals, such as on the playful single 'Friend City' and percussion-fuelled 'Actually'. With flutes and other fairylike sounds floating over these earthy compositions, there's plenty to be enchanted by.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/roziplain
► **HEAR HER** soundcloud.com/lostmap
► **SEE HER LIVE** London Lexington (May 5), Wakefield Long Division Festival (June 13)

Slime

Innovative south-east London electronic artist Will Archer recently signed with Domino imprint Weird World, having spent several years stockpiling over 400 finished tracks. 'My Company' is his first single with the label, taken from that elusive collection. It takes inspiration from the mechanical sounds of his

Radar NEWS ROUND UP

NEW LYF FOR PINK TEENS

Former Wu Lyf bassist Tom McClung has joined Manchester hopefuls Pink Teens. The band, who also feature fellow Class of 2010 man Alex Hewett (formerly of Egyptian Hip Hop), are due to make their live debut this week at London's Old Blue Last venue on May 1.

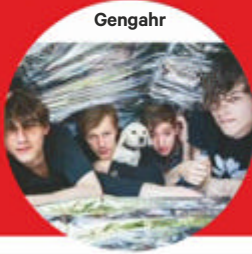
SUNFLOWER SPRING

Brooklyn trio Sunflower Bean have been added to NME's showcases at Brighton's Great Escape, after wowing us at SXSW. The band will play the Corn Exchange at 10.15pm on May 15, supporting DMA's and Django Django. They also play London's Lexington on May 12.

Sunflower Bean



Gengahr



GENGAHR'S DEBUT DETAILS

With their Coxon-like new track 'Heroine' going online earlier this month, Gengahr have announced details of their debut album. Called 'A Dream Outside', the LP is out on June 15 via Transgressive. Before then the band are set to head out on the road with The Maccabees this May.

HONNE DO DARONDO

Fresh from supporting Kwabs, electronic duo Honne have unveiled their reworking of cult San Francisco soul legend Darondo's 1973 disco classic, 'Didn't I'. Taken from the 'Coastal Love' EP, which is out Monday (May 4) via Tatamae Recordings, the track is given a suitably Balearic sprucing up.

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Slime

father's coffee factory, with soulful vocals, skewed beats and gentle synth samples creating a soundscape that recalls Flying Lotus.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/slimemusic

► **HEAR HIM** soundcloud.com/slime-music

Thomston

Thomston is 19-year-old Thomas Stoneman, a London-born, New Zealand-raised artist, who releases his new EP 'Backbone' on May 4. Brooding, minimalist production drives new single 'Grey' in a similar style to Sohn, while lyrically it delves into friends being pushed apart because of their individual ambitions.

Radar LABEL OF THE WEEK

Club AC30



► **FOUNDED** 2003

► **BASED** London

► **KEY RELEASES**

Ringo Deathstarr – 'Colour Trip' (2011), The Megaphonic Thrift – 'Decay Decoy' (2011), Taffy – 'Caramel Sunset' (2012)

► **RADAR SAYS** Specialists in sourcing fine shoegaze acts from around the world, Club AC30's output is as solid as any indie label gets. Their club nights aren't bad either.

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

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/thomstonmusic

Breeze

They may be late to the B-town party, but Breeze are a worthy addition to Birmingham's effervescent music scene. 'Dalliance' is full of youthful exuberance, while 'Sellotape' features twinkling arpeggios and heartfelt hooks. The band's dreamy sound will be a welcome addition to the Dot To Dot Festival line-up.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/breezebando

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

► **SEE THEM LIVE** Manchester Dot To Dot Festival (May 22)

Junk

This York-based trio "blend male/female vocals à la The Pastels with the Big Muff moments of Dinosaur Jr". Scrappy guitars are in order on 'Dirt In My Eye', a song brimming with effortless "doo-doo-doo" refrains. Last year the band contributed to Art Is Hard's '20 Years Since: Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain' cassette compilation, covering Pavement's 'Silence Kit'.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/junknyork

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

► **SEE THEM LIVE** Manchester Sounds From The Other City Festival (May 3), York Fulford Arms (24)

Fruit Bomb

Those who like their thrills short, sharp and fast will love Manchester's Fruit Bomb. Musically, they're the grandsons of the Ramones; lyrically, they're the quick-witted mockers of the blog generation. It's all there in their debut 'Normcore Girlfriend' – a rollicking track of compact guitar-pop perfection. A four-way split 12-inch with Living Hour, Abattoir Blues and Bruising is worth seeking out.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/fruitbombo

► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/fruit-bomb

NEW SOUNDS FROM WAY OUT

This week's columnist

DARA

KIELY

Girl Band



CRAIC TO THE FUTURE

We've been a part of the Irish independent music scene in some shape or form since we were about 15 years old, and I think I can relate to it more so now than ever before. Small indie labels are popping up everywhere. From the pretty pop-tastical Popical Island collective to the jazz-indie-inspired Trout Records, it's a lovely thing to witness. Everyone having access to any track in the world in a matter of moments has inspired some unique sounds. There seems to be no single influence on this generation of bands and it is easy to develop a personal microcosm and avoid what you don't like, however how much coverage it receives. That seems to be the plan – hopefully.

Which brings me to **Tongue Bundle**. That be evidence of no wave, and they're obviously big James Chance fans, which is cool and apparent. Their Sun Ra-inspired noise shines over the shadows of their influences. They are kin to the contemporary nature of Kendrick Lamar's recent belter 'For Free?' (minus the sass). When I saw them in The Bernard Shaw venue in Dublin last week the Batistuta-ian trumpet player was sporting an Argentina jersey. Class act!

Paddy Hanna's a good guy. I was really into Scott Walker around the time I saw Paddy play first. The haunted ghosts of 'Scott 4' linger in his playing. I'd really love him to do a cover of 'Duchess' or something. The songs share a similar gallop to Parquet Courts or Modern Lovers. He's got a wide-ranging music knowledge and is humbly opinionated in his manner. A true gent with a unique sense of humour, which is really needed at the moment.

A guy called Ian Maleney used to run a label called Quarter Inch Collective and he'd issue an annual mix cassette with Irish bands covering a track that was released within the year. We did it twice, and that's how I came across the next act I want to talk about, **Simon Bird**. I was paying more attention to krautrock and electronic music; bands like Neu!, Faust and Can were really catching my eye. Simon seemed to channel those influences in a contemporary and noisy manner. He showed me bands like Melt Banana, which makes total sense to his vibe. His first album, 'Sport', is a mindfuck and a lot of craic.



Paddy Hanna

"The haunted ghosts of 'Scott 4' linger in Paddy Hanna's playing"

Next week: The Vaccines



The

26

par



nasty

ty

Politics? Boring. Dance music? Eating itself. Heritage acts? Embarrassing. With a hit new album and a searing live show about to hit the UK, The Prodigy are gnarlier than ever, finds Gavin Haynes

PHOTOS: ED MILES

Look...

If you ask for the angry, shouty, gurney man, you're probably not going to get him."

It's mid-April 2015, and round the back of the Zenith concert hall in Paris, Keith Flint is having his picture taken. He's been asked to look, well, Keith Flint-y.

"I'm sorry, I'm not a performing monkey," he says. The rest of The Prodigy – Liam Howlett and Maxim, both in shades – giggle a bit. There's something quite exposed about seeing Keith in full warpaint in broad daylight – like seeing an armadillo without its shell.

Earlier, a bloke from Spiral Tribe – a collective responsible for free raves in the '90s – passed through the park just beyond the venue. He heard two guys talking English, asked them what they were doing there, and found out they were roadies for The Prodigy. "The Prodigy!" he said. "I haven't seen them since 1992!" Somehow, this led to this guy, Kevin, being given a triple-A backstage pass, which has in turn led to him claiming that he was on the cover of *NME* in the early '90s – holding up a sign bearing the initials 'DMT', shorthand for the psychedelic drug N,N-Dimethyltryptamine. He then tells us about the time he took DMT "in the minus-40 Berlin winter. I took off all my clothes and ran around in the snow..."

Hard to know what Kevin is going to make of it tonight when, two hours later, Keith and Maxim arrive onstage to cosh 5,000 Parisian fans over the head with 1996 UK Number One 'Breathe' and recent single 'Nasty'. The breakbeats don't skitter, they tumble like anvils. The synths don't fizz; they acid-bath.

You can rave to it, sure. Up in the cheap seats, a couple are moving in sync. He has his shirt off, she's down to her bra, and they both have the animal hips, inhuman biceps and automaton expressions of professional podium dancers as they piston through 'Rebel Radio' off their new record 'The Day Is My Enemy'. But the overall atmosphere here isn't the palms-in-the-air church of the rave. It's the angry fist-pump of something between a Miami Dolphins game and a riot.

They've been on the road to becoming this thing for a long time. The new album feels like a transformation being completed, like the first Prodigy LP actively designed to complement the live show that has become the centre of gravity for who they are. It's angry, it's nasty and it's defiantly ugly – a blunderbuss full of rusty hypodermics shot into the arse of the charts when it hit Number One last month.

As they clatter towards the maw of a closing 'Take Me To The Hospital' (from 2009), Kev The Raver's bald pate isn't immediately

visible. But if he'd blacked out after one too many DMT hits in 1992, it wouldn't be immediately obvious in 2015 he was watching the same band.

It's unsurprising that The Prodigy have made their live show the heart of what they do. They're brutal onstage, and unlike most long-in-the-tooth acts, they still love doing it. It's the albums thing – the perfectionism thing – that has become the bottleneck in their process. 2009's 'Invaders Must Die' was famous for its elephantine gestation: five years. 2004's 'Always Outnumbered, Never Outgunned' took even longer – a shoot-the-A&R-now seven years – while 'The Day Is My Enemy' clocked in at a decently decadent six years.

A pattern of ordeal has been established that habitually includes a group of scrapped tracks, tensions between Liam and Keith, and a moment where it looks like they might just junk what they've got and split up. Pinned between Liam's intolerance of things that don't have 'the right vibe' and Keith's impatience with Liam's glacial work rate, it's Maxim who, historically, ends up playing the conciliator.

"There was a stage in August last year when it totally fell apart," Liam says, sat on a stool in his studio one week before the Zenith show. "We were wondering if it would ever happen. It felt like a low point – I didn't think I was really getting it together quick enough..."

This time out, there are two albums buried

"Dance music will kill itself, because there's not enough creativity going on. It's become so attached to the pop sound now"

Liam Howlett

in the rubble under the 'The Day Is My Enemy'. One was meant to be called 'Rebel Radio'. The other was supposed to be 'How To Steal A Jetfighter', and involved five songs that the band had hawked around live in 2012, on the final leg of the 'Invaders Tour', including 'AWOL', the one track that Liam says he's still working to finish, pitched somewhere between the psycho-techno of Kevin Shields-era Primal Scream and a fat child full of Monster energy drink jumping on you in a playground.

"It's like..." Keith explains, "we lead separate lives. I'm in Essex, he's in London."



The Prodigy (l-r):
Keith Flint, Liam
Howlett and Maxim



You want to phone up your buddy and have a chat, but you also want to ask about the album. So... communication gets lost somewhere. You stop talking."

It was only when Keith brought in the lyrics for 'Nasty' that the new direction dropped into place. "I'd been ranting to a friend in a pub about someone and he said to me, 'Oooh, we are Mr Nasty, aren't we?' I thought, 'I'll have that,'" he says.

Not long after, Liam stopped working nine to five in the studio, instead finding his famous 'vibes' by working right through the night. "From then it was easy. It's just... I was waiting to drop into that mode..."

He reckons the resulting 14 tracks are "the best thing we've ever done" – something artists often say when they're punting the latest thing they've done after a six-year absence, yes, but then most aren't nearly as compulsively bullshit-phobic as Howlett.

"It's so consistent all the way through and every track complements the other. It feels like the sound of the band. 'The Fat Of The Land' [1997's breakthrough smash] had hits, but if you take four tracks off of 'The Fat Of The Land', it's not as strong as this."

The Prodigy's new studio is in the rapidly disappearing patchwork of industrial truck-hire places and paint warehouses beyond King's Cross, just around the corner from north London's semi-superclub EGG. It's pretty small, about the size of a nice bathroom, and loaded with noisemakers and kitsch toys: a skull-and-crossbones flag, a Union Jack, a stuffed crow and fox head, plus loads of keyboards and chroma-coloured vintage studio gear.

Keith Flint had arrived first, bouncing into the coffee shop opposite the studio in his trademark long-brimmed flat cap. Liam arrived not long after, but Liam doesn't bounce. He rolls. He prowls. He's 43 now, Keith's 46, Maxim 48, but there's still something very teenage about his posture, something moody and too cool for school that you can only really maintain for that long if you're the brains in a squillion-selling electro-rock rebel band.

Keith and Liam on...

...BDSM

Keith: "When I used to have the heavier look, people used to turn up with sex swings, invite me to parties 'cos they thought I was into BDSM... But I'm not really. I mean, I'll experiment and probably have it with anything. Other than men."

...The Gallaghers

Liam: "I haven't spoken to Liam in ages. I haven't seen him in about a year. Occasionally you'll get a text. That's the way it is. Everyone knows, when things like this happen, some people go this way, some go that way [Liam Howlett is married to former All Saint Natalie Appleton; Liam Gallagher recently divorced her sister, Nicole]. But when you're friends with someone you'll always be friends with them. Over the years – the laughs me and him have had. We never spoke about music, we always just had a fucking crack. That was that, really. I'm with my sister-in-law, supporting her, so I'm buzzing off her. I saw Noel the other day, actually. He was sitting outside his house, on the wall. I was driving through. Said, 'Oi! I always get on with Noel.'"

Keith's racing team

Keith: "I'm inspired by things like [terrifying Isle Of Mann motor race] the TT. Steve Mercer, the TT rider who rides for my team, Team Traction Control, he lives for this. He is so punk rock; he does it all with his own money. He won't wear a heavily branded jacket, because he doesn't want to be a showy rider, he wants to be the man in the van. He's more punk rock than I am."

Liam's a man who reaches reflexively for the term 'real', and that's how he seems to be setting himself up, as though the banal white lies of social pleasantries are fakery and shallow sham.

He's in his black bomber jacket, big sleazy rings on his fingers, the same Liam regulation dyed-out barnet he's been wearing since John Major was in power.

Next to him, Keith wears a white wife-beater and massive skull-adorned rings. He sits back in his chair, like a minor medieval monarch, half

Tyrion Lannister, half Richard III.

Maxim's not in today – a family emergency has meant he'll only be back in time for the 'Tbiza' video shoot later in the afternoon, in which the trio, plus collaborator Jason Williamson of Sleaford Mods, go postal in a travel agent offering package tours to the Balearic fun factory.

"Me and Liam are similar perfectionists, to be honest," Keith recounts, digging into an analysis of the troubles. "That's the way we are – you either do it right or not at all. It

just has to be absolutely right. Liam will hate me for saying it, but it's the perfectionism of the true artist. It comes back to the delicate point... I know Liam can smash it, so I'm waiting for it. When that track comes through, the buzz, the refresh you can get from it... it's kind of like waiting for a drug. It's like waiting for your man. So in the meantime, I got stuck into doing my racing. But I need decent interests..."

Somewhere in the past five years, while waiting for Liam to get it together, Keith won a motorcycling championship. He does a lot of mountain biking, too. And he's recently started tearing around the countryside on a horse called Captain Black ("That's his stable name, I didn't choose that"). And, oh yeah, he's just bought a pub in the Essex village of Pleshey.

"I need a buzz," he explains. "I'm not the kind of guy who can be sitting around listening to Joni Mitchell, chilling. I'd rather bash my head against a wall." ➔



If there's another reason The Prodigy have decided to pull the rock half of their sound into sharpest focus – apart from it helping a lot when touring a blistering live act – it's that these seminal pioneers have 100 per cent lost faith in the power of dance music to inspire. Liam's been vocal lately in pouring cold piss on the likes of Guetta. 'Ibiza', of course, disses the newest generation of USB-stick superstar DJs. "I definitely don't listen to electronic music, 'cos it's not good enough any more," says Liam. "It ain't got anything it could give me."

Ironically, this comes when his band, so long flatlining in America that they no longer bother touring there, are finally being held up as godfathers of EDM, stepfathers of dubstep, '90s granddaddies to everyone who ever set their synths to singe, from Skrillex to Aoki, Chase & Status to Rustie. All the while, Liam is out there shouting about how flaming shit it all is.

"I just listen for production techniques," he says. "Honestly. Dance music will kill itself, because there's not enough creativity going on. It's become so attached to the pop sound now."

And so, at a moment where rock music's stock is as low in the cultural conversation as it's been in 15 years, the Prodigy have swung against the pendulum again. "There's got to be two ends to it," Liam carps on, getting the tin of baccy back from Keith in their ongoing smoke-off. "Why should DJs represent electronic music all the time? I think everything's been rinsed. Now it's time for bands to come back. When you've got skits coming up on *Saturday Night Live*. I dunno if you've seen that 'When does the bass drop...' thing. It just becomes a joke. It is a fucking joke."

Keith: "That's just the way the world's going – everything has to be so instantly commercial that it kills anything that's a little bit underground instantly."

Hence the return of The Prodigy in an uglier and angrier form. It's a reaction against that sort of sanitisation: a turd in the aisles of Cath Kidston, a horsefucker loose in the Royal Paddock. "We need to stop it before it becomes like America," Liam says, bowing his head.

"I went past – what's that place in Islington?" Keith says, getting on one, referring to something that evades his memory. "And you know, it's a Coffee Nero's [sic] now. Again, this is so... I'm far too undereducated to talk on this, but... everything is going to get shut down on that level. Everything will be so sanitised that any form of creativity is going to be in the hands of the corporate."

That's part of the weight behind tracks like the Maxim-led 'Medicine' – "*A spoonful of sugar just to sweeten the taste, just to keep you in your place*" – or album closer 'Wall Of Death' – "*fuck you and your heart attack*". "It's like the ultimate way of saying 'we don't care about your mundane bullshit'," says Keith.

In their own crabby way, the trio have returned to oppose the great blinding out, the seemingly infinite powers of Cafe Nero-conversion, the sense that the UK, and London especially, is turning into one big airport lounge.

"I kinda fight for that a bit," says Keith. "Even if it's in my head. When we're on the stage and we're a British band, there's something like... you feel like you're one of the last surviving untouched entities. And that's a little bit of the revolution inside me, knowing that I don't work for anyone."

"We don't even work for a record company," says Liam (they haven't since 2004, releasing the last two records on their own Take Me To The Hospital imprint via Cooking Vinyl's distribution network). "There's no one else that can do that any more."



Pivotal Prodigy

The landmark shows in the dance-rock titans' career

The Four Aces, Dalston 1992

The first time Liam and Keith met Maxim was an hour before their first live gig. Keith told Liam he had a friend who was "involved in the reggae scene". The aim was for Liam to scope him out with a meeting at a record store – but he didn't turn up. Keith: "But then he just turned up an hour before the gig and said, 'Right, I'm ready to go.' He went onstage with us and pissed it." After that night, the band were offered eight weeks' worth of work, and pretty much didn't stop touring for the next eight years.



Glastonbury 1995

Keith still had his long hair, the band still had their 'Jilted' chops on – this was the last stand of Old Prodigy. Keith turning up onstage in a hamster ball was the perfect channelling of their demented energy.

Pionir Hall, Belgrade 1995

At the 10,000-capacity Pionir Hall, The Prodigy were the first international band to return to Serbia after the Balkan wars had beaten seven bells out of the former Yugoslavia. Keith: "We've probably played in four or five actual physical warzones. That's the exciting thing – we have total control over what we do live, and we'll always put on a gig if we can just physically get there."

V festival 1997

Essex local lads, the band's Chelmsford shows have always had a boys-done-good homecoming vibe to them. By 1997, they'd arrived at peak global superstardom. So many fans turned up that the show was stopped for 15 minutes to stop the front rows being crushed.

Milton Keynes Bowl 2010

Some 65,000 people went to see Liam, Keith and Maxim at what one of Britain's biggest-ever concerts. "Before the gig I was totally relaxed. You can play to that many people at a festival. But when I got onstage it was a totally different vibe, because they were all here for us. I got real emotional. Especially because it wasn't just a bunch of old ravers – it was everybody, man, young and old."

Download 2012

The Prodigy had, of course, headlined big outdoor bashes before, but not one that's aimed solely at lovers of metal. This gathering of tribes was a pivotal moment: a group of ravers gatecrashing the rockers' party. "Fucking ferocious" is how Howlett described it.

**"I'm not the kind of guy
who can be sitting around
listening to Joni Mitchell,
chilling. I'd rather bash my
head against a wall"**

Keith Flint



Keith Flint and
(opposite) Maxim
at the Paris Zenith,
April 15, 2015

Keith: "It's so hard not to sound like an old cunt, but in ancient culture you'd learn from your elders, wouldn't you? You'd have something to pass on."

What have you got to pass on then, Keith? "Herpes."

This anger is still an energy that stands outside the politics of the day. Ask The Prodigy about the general election and, like so many other folk, their attitude is supreme disaffection. "In summary," says Keith, "they're all crooks and they're all liars, and they're all just people trying to keep their jobs. And, no, I wouldn't vote for any of them."

"We need some more interesting characters," Liam concurs. "If we had Arnie [Schwarzenegger], I might vote. Someone with a good haircut. The parties are so close to each other now, there's not even much distance between them. Whatever. This is boring..."

Two decades after the 1994 Criminal Justice Act effectively banned the free party scene, directly inspiring 'Their Law' (from 1994's 'Music For The Jilted Generation'), politically, the Prodigy's philosophy is a sort of DIY

libertarianism and passionate individualism that in hindsight seems like just the sort of thing the rave generation would grow into. They distrust everyone. They keep talking about being 'real', about 'authenticity', about 'the underground' in a way that a lot of the youth o' today, with their far more flexible attitude towards their own part in the construction of their identity, would barely recognise. They're all about 'being passionate'. And they passionately hate lightbulbs.

"You see," Keith spits, "they tell you to buy a low-energy lightbulb." He curdles his face into shouty, gurney, angry man. "You have to turn your lights on on Tuesday to see what you want to see on Wednesday. They cost 28 quid a fucking pop, to save the planet. Then you look on the news, there's a country burning this or that, China pumping out that. Well, what's the bloody point?"

Politics, in other words, is futile. What can you do to change the world you live in? Be one voter in 30 million, earnestly studying nation-bankrupting manifestos in the delusion that you will pick the next Oxford PPE graduate to reign over us? Or get off your ass, get out

there, and plug directly into the stuff that fires you up?

"I'm not here to change the world," he continues, "but I do think while you're here you should have a bit of passion about life."

No-one gives a fuck about anything any more, do they? Everyone just wants to do my job, but I'm lucky – I'm the man who has that job."

Keith seems like the perfect antidote to all the rock star clichés about retreating to the countryside to live in a big white neo-Georgian pile munching cheese and playing croquet. His life of pub ownership and horse riding is not a sort of bucolic respite for a troubled mind – it's exactly the sort of fodder that makes him who he is.

"I don't need to be 'cool'," he rants. "I get all my 'coolness' from going onstage. I've got the best of both worlds in that way. But I think, too, that the band's gonna come to an end at some point. And it's got to be soon. It will end before we want it to because of the realities of age..."

It's hard to see that day coming. In a modern music market that values nostalgia and heritage branding more than ever, they'd own that. After all, "the realities of age" have never caught up with The Rolling Stones.

"But we don't have any ballads," Liam chips in. "There comes a point where you don't want to be Uncle Alan at the wedding reception."

"The people decide when we fuck off," Keith continues. "But it can't go on forever."

Liam: "We'll figure it out. We haven't set dates. I think this might be the first time we've talked about it."

Is 'The Day Is My Enemy' the final mutation? If so, then it's the way we'd all like our 25-year careers to go out: slightly too long, a couple of duffers, but still glowing with menace. The ravers were the most rebellious generation – a cynical, mousse-haired sect of disaffected Gen X. So the first 'heritage act' rave band might just take some of that fierce sense of personal independence with them and step on a grenade rather than go on and on. For all their Milton Keynes Bowl appearances, for all the consecutive UK Number One albums (six!), or the Iron Maiden-style unkillable fanbase, these are still three boys from Braintree who are as deeply suspicious of everyone else as they are wedded to each other.

"That's the thing," Keith says. "Even though I know it will end, right now I'm happier than I've ever been. I'm more settled in the band and everything else than I've ever been." He pauses. "Well, I'm still quite unhinged mentally," Liam grins at his pal. "But I've probably got more support than ever." ■



PROTEST MUSIC

IS DEAD



AGREE



DISAGREE



UNDECIDED

For years, crashing bores have been bemoaning the lack of modern protest music. On the eve of the general election, British artists tell us if, how and why politics enters their own work



Emmy The Great

"If you can change your idea that it has to be a Bob Dylan or a Clash opening up the discourse, you'll see there's a lot going on. The stuff Kanye West has been saying recently about breaking down power structures is incredibly brave. Azealia Banks has strong views on pigeonholing black artists and there's lots of discourse about music and feminism. I've always felt that, as a female DIY artist, just the act of making music was political. I increasingly feel like it's a platform to say something real, which is not to say that I've written a song about David Cameron being a less-convincing Mr Potato Head, but I'm leaving the door open for that. I think musicians are either too busy trying to survive or just focusing on the stuff that people like on Instagram – aspirational stuff – which, in a way, reflects the current situation."

Dan Snaith

Caribou



"When I see artists like Grimes and Chvrches taking a stand against online abuse, I find that really exciting. But it is hard to know how to get involved. Should I be engaging with more political issues on Twitter or should I leave my music in the world that it's in without imposing my political views on it?"

Faris Badwan

The Horrors/Cat's Eyes

"Politics doesn't mean anything to me. The stuff that gets discussed on *Newsnight* isn't relevant to me, and it's pretty much not relevant to anyone. I don't think you gain anything from voting. I find it funny that someone would vote for another person, whether it's on *Celebrity Big Brother* or as a politician, on the basis that they could imagine going for a drink with them. I just think voting is for people who don't have their own imagination. It's for a different generation. You're not accomplishing anything. The problem is, my opinion on it isn't fully formed – the only thing I do think is that, realistically, voting doesn't make a great deal of difference."



Matt Bellamy

Muse

"I don't think anyone can pinpoint any one of our new songs [on new album 'Drones'] and say that it's about a specific political issue. It's the emotional journey on the album that could be seen as a fight for free thinking or independence. Personally, I'm against the concept of party politics. If you live in Teignbridge, or wherever, the person should represent the people of that area, not what some other 'party' wants. The whip system is just a hijacking of democracy. For instance, when it comes to whether we should go to war, that voting should only be done on the basis of what the people they represent want, not what the party wants. I was thinking the other day we should start the Direct Democracy Party. The way to play the existing system is to be an MP and say that 'every vote I take in parliament, I will take an app vote from my constituents'. The argument that MPs should decide because they are better researched on the topic at hand, to me, really supports the old idea that the masses are not clever enough."

Tom Clarke

The Enemy



"Our first album was us wanting to escape the recession that was happening up north but wasn't really happening down south yet, but that's societal rather than political. Real political music is stuff like Billy Bragg, Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell. There's some brilliant political moments in music, but it's hard to find it in songwriting. There are artists who you'll think, 'Yeah, they're a political artist', but when you actually look for evidence of it in their songs, it's not there. With music and politics the risk is in letting your personality get out there, as there will always be people who don't like it. You don't make many friends."

Eoin Loveless

Drenge

"Most of our friends are our age and most feel really disaffected... I think it's important that we help other artists in Sheffield. That's the most political thing we can do. I don't want to side myself with a party. It doesn't help to moan."

Rob Graham

Drenge



"In the past, there was an alternative that people could side with. Now there isn't one – all the parties are the fucking same. It's all a fucking mess. What is there to write about that other than 'This is shit'? You might as well be abstract and do it with a mood."

Noel Gallagher

"Protest songs: fucking bollocks. 'Cigarettes & Alcohol' is a protest song, and the message in that is: 'Fuck your recession and fuck you and your government, we're gonna have a great time.' Nothing more subversive than that. Oasis were raging, but we were raging joy and the sun was out in the songs. If you can't see the rage and the yearning to better yourself in 'Rock'n'Roll Star', you're dead to me."



Jonathan Higgs

Everything Everything



"Do bands have an obligation to use their platform to talk about politics? No, not at all. Everyone has their own personal responsibility and it's nothing to do with being in a band. More than give an opinion on whether something's right or wrong, I'm trying to communicate that motive is much more important than preaching. Leave that to the news and charities, we're a band. I feel *personally* responsible about this stuff, but not as a band."

Chilli Jesson

Palma Violets



"We've tried to consciously not be political. I feel like we've got a lot more to write about before the political stuff. During the punk era everyone was writing about it, but everything is so fucking politically correct now that if you say something out of line it's almost like you're trying to provoke. When I look back at footage from the punk era, it seems there was more to fight against. At the moment, it's everyone for themselves in a weird way. We've got mobile phones and the rebellion is on the internet rather than the radio."

Rou Reynolds

Enter Shikari



"In 2015, we are saturated with utterly insipid music with little to no lyrical content other than the glorification of violence or greed and the glamorisation of narcissism. This reflects the dominant culture of consumerism and the selfish nature of capitalism. Profit is put before people, and that is no more evident than with popular music. Music is political by definition. If you're broadcasting your music in any sense, you are putting ideas out there. It then becomes a choice and a responsibility as to what ideas you ventilate. As a band, we try to empower the belief that humanity can and *must* do better. We try to stoke that fire of discontent in people as well as promulgate new ideas."

Sam Duckworth

Formerly Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly



"I get annoyed with the argument that music is less political now than it used to be – there's loads of politics in music. Groups of musicians are using their cities well, forming DIY scenes – and that's a political statement in itself. I don't want to write songs about governmental or party politics, because they're things that I fundamentally don't understand. Why are a million people using food banks? Why are the nine poorest regions in central Europe all in the UK, but also the richest region, London? It doesn't make any sense and I'm not the person to give people answers. But there are ways to be political without writing a protest song."

Johnny Marr

"Unfortunately, there don't seem to be many people talking about politics in music. I think it's a buzzkill, and no-one wants to put that out there. Maybe we need to dance while Rome burns. Maybe culturally that's what needs to happen. Maybe people feel powerless, full stop, and want to get on with being in a band. And that's OK. Thank God there's being in a band for people to fall back on."



Jason Williamson

Sleaford Mods



"Politics and music should mix, and especially at the moment because things are just miserable. But it's been like that for years and that's why Sleaford Mods started. I sometimes worry that what people think of as the politics in our songs – the opinions – overshadows the music. What's going on around us is a driving force, but we don't offer solutions. All you can do is practise a bit of compassion and a lot of intelligence, and that can be more powerful than getting on a podium and telling people they should do this or that. But there are some specific issues that are important in this election – a solid rent cap, the end of the bedroom tax, tuition fees, among other things."

Fay Milton

Savages



"It's a common feeling for people to want to do something about a number of issues – social problems, climate change, whatever – but not know what to do. While I do think musicians are a bit frightened of attaching themselves to political causes, I also think that music is just an expression of how people in general are feeling, and that fear of politics is universal. We feel cheated and at a loss. We've grown to distrust our politicians, and with that a sense of hope has gone. But you can do things. I recently got a playlist together for The Future, who are climate-change activists. They hold politicians accountable. We doorstep [Tory MP] Michael Gove to ask him why he didn't let any of our politicians go to the Lima Climate Change Conference last December. Anyone can knock on a politician's door and tell him or her what they think."

TALA



"Having a voice and a platform to voice your opinions through music can be extremely powerful, but at the same time I'm not a politician and it's not something I know enough about to speak about. I think that using your platform for the wrong reasons – or if you don't really know enough about what you're speaking about – can convey the wrong message. That's when pop and politics don't mix."

Kayus Bankole

Young Fathers

"The media simplifies everything, whether it's gender, religion or race. It's easier to put things into categories so that they can put fear into people. That confines people and makes them think that's how things should be. That's what we're getting at with titling our album 'White Men Are Black Men Too'."

G Hastings

Young Fathers



"The media shuts new ideas out systematically – and that stems from Thatcherism. New ideas have been deleted from popular culture. If you cause a fuss about

something – if you talk about Palestine or anything like that – people say, 'Oh, what are you starting that for?' That's why it's important that we do what we can do as musicians. We can say our bit and try to push the fact that we're pop music and that pop music should include us."

Cian Ciarán

Super Furry Animals



"I don't think popular music reflects the current climate. I've just recorded an album with Steve Mason,

Stephen Morrison-Burke and Hollie McNish which voices our own opposition, our disgruntled-ness and how pissed off we are, and there are various hip-hop artists out there who are singing about these things too, but it doesn't get the right amount of attention. There's always the danger of a backlash – that people will get pissed off with you, going, 'What does he know, he's just a musician?' But there's a rich history of pop and politics throughout the ages. They kind of go hand in hand."



Beth Jeans Houghton

Du Blonde

"Politics is there whether you accept it or not, and it affects you whether you think it does or not. I've written political songs and never done anything with them, because if I put it out the reaction would be, 'Here's another cheesy political song.' But the new Kendrick Lamar album is so unashamedly political, and when someone comes out with a political record that's also musically fantastic, it makes it cool. My new record ['Du Blonde'], even though it's about relationships, is also about standing up for myself and realising that what I have to say is valid even if others don't agree. Being a woman in music, you do have to deal with sexual harassment and misogyny. And if you speak out about it you're seen as some kind of man-hating bitch, which isn't the case at all. We're still in a place where I'll be onstage and someone will shout 'Get your pussy out', or grab my butt at a show. Feminism is seen as this violent outcry for justice, but it should be seen as a group effort to respect each other."

Stuart Braithwaite

Mogwai



"If you're expressing yourself through music and you're doing it to try and make the world

a better place rather than to make yourself rich – which is hopefully the reason why we do it – then that's a political act. Sadly, an awful lot of music reflects the current political climate all too well – it's very bland and safe, and tries to not upset anyone or rock the boat. The thing about people looking back at the so-called golden eras of political music – the late '60s, the late '70s and the mid-'80s – is that a lot of it was quite shocking, and it's almost impossible to shock these days. The [2014 independence] referendum made a big difference in Scotland, because people felt that their vote mattered. People in Scotland are much more politically aware and they're also more motivated to be involved than ever before."

Bez

Happy Mondays/ We Are The Reality Party candidate



"I've been listening to a lot of new music, and the younger generation seem to be turning political again, but because of the state of the music industry their message isn't getting out there. It's crucial that people should be politically aware, and it doesn't have to stop you having fun. It doesn't take away from what music's about."

Ghetts

"I have no relationship with party politics at all. I believe, no matter what, that the rich are going to get richer and the poor are going to get poorer. I've been on Earth for 30 years and I've seen nothing change. You could say that grime was political. We were just kids, speaking about things that we were seeing on an everyday basis, so I didn't really look at it like that. But in retrospect you can see grime was speaking up for a culture that didn't get heard, and that's why people took to it. I know a lot of people find listening to rappers that talk about politics and whatnot very boring, but you've got to be open-minded. There are some people who are speaking their truths and I can appreciate it, definitely. Lowkey's one of

them, Akala's one of them, George The Poet... I've learned more from them than I have anywhere else. Rappers are like the street politicians."



"When I first heard 'The Magic Whip' I was overcome. It was devastating"

Nobody was more relieved to finish the new Blur album than bassist Alex James. The cheesemaker and notorious Cotswolds socialite tells John Earls what it's like being back in the saddle – and why he buddied up with David Cameron

The first time Alex James listened back to the sessions that form 'The Magic Whip', he was in tears. It had been 18 months since Blur's unexpected five days off in Hong Kong, and the bassist had just found a video camera containing lost footage of the recordings. As far as he knew, the rest of the band weren't interested in returning to the songs, so watching the film back alone in his kitchen was like punching a bruise – a sad reminder of what should have been Blur's exhilarating comeback.

"Even on my camera's shit mic, you could hear that what we were doing was fucking brilliant," recalls Alex. He remembers pouring himself glass after glass of wine; by the end of the second bottle, he was in bits. "It was

all this brilliant music, and as far as I was aware, nothing was going to be done with it. I just thought, 'God, what a shame. What a fucking waste.'"

Alex knew the songs were catchy because "they kept popping into my head. Months later, they were the first thing I'd think about when I woke up in the morning." He singles out the echoey minimalism of 'New World Towers' as particularly addictive. "That fucker kept haunting me, but I thought it might be lost for good."

Then, just three days after his boozy kitchen mope, James got a call from Blur's manager. Damon and Graham had "bumped into each other" and agreed that the guitarist should sift through the recordings to see what was there. 'The Magic Whip' was back on. "It was amazing," laughs Alex. "I'm not a big believer in fate, but the timing of everything has





been so perfect. It does feel like now is the right time for this album to exist – it's an unexpected baby late in Blur's marriage."

Actually, Alex paints Blur as less of a marriage, more like a group of old workmates who can only occasionally organise a night out together owing to countless other commitments. Any bitterness has been healed by the two reunion tours and they get on great when they do see each other, but scheduling time to make music worthy of the Blur legacy always proves tricky. "For many, many reasons, Blur is always in danger of drifting apart," he says. "After Hong Kong, we were all thinking, 'Wow! We've fucking done it!' We were 80 per cent of the way to having an album done. But it's getting the final 20 per cent of the work done that takes up 80 per cent of the time. None of us want Blur to be our lives any more. But it's a wonderful thing to have if we want."

For the band's resident big kid, Blur is still an excuse to leave the adult world behind for a while. He jokes that their 2013/4 world tour was an escape from "the endless laundry" that having five children involves. Alex has never been bogged down by the responsibilities of writing songs, cheerfully admitting that he's happy to leave the hard work to Albarn and Coxon. "Bass players don't suffer the torment singers and guitar players do. It's one of the good things about the job. Playing bass is like bouncing up and down on a big trampoline, and that's utterly joyous."

Yet this cheery self-assessment belies Alex's crucial musical contribution. When compiling their 'Blur 21' boxset in 2012, the band sat around to listen back to their very first rehearsal tapes. "You can tell it's Blur straight away," says Alex. "You can hear our roles being defined. Graham's guitar and my bass are exactly the opposite, bouncing around each other." More than a quarter of a century later, nothing much has changed. "I'm still just bouncing away in the opposite corner, really. We're incredibly lucky to fit so well together. It's been honed over the years, but the natural empathy we have with each other – musically and as people – astonishes me. As a bassist, you have to know when to step forward and when to hang back. That's easy to do in Blur."

Has he ever quizzed Damon on the meaning of the lyrics? "To be honest, I just assume they're about Graham unless I'm told otherwise!" This response, delivered with his trademark winning grin, reveals Alex's other key role in Blur: the wind-up merchant, the cheeky disruptor doing the opposite of what everyone else wants in order to keep the band grounded and prevent it all from getting too pretentious.

But there's doing the opposite, and then there's hanging out

Blur clean up at the Brits in 1995



with David Cameron. After being famously photographed together at 2011's Harvest Festival (along with disgraced TV tyrant Jeremy Clarkson), the prime minister was recently spotted at the James family's New Year's Eve party. It's weird enough to be friendly with such a cartoon villain; weirder still when your band's own drummer is a former Labour party parliamentary candidate. When Cameron's name is mentioned, Alex's otherwise Tiggerish demeanour fades for the only time in our interview.

"Look, he's my local MP and he's very supportive of Feastival," says Alex, referring to the music-and-food festival he organises with another celebrity pal, Jamie Oliver. "That's a big deal in my local community, so it would

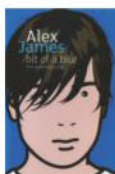
have been weird not to invite him to my party. He was fine, and he didn't mind when my son tried to get him to do karaoke. But don't forget, I've spent 27 years as half of a rhythm section with a would-be Labour MP. So I don't think having Mr Cameron over says anything about my politics."

Does that mean Alex might find himself voting against his Tory houseguest in next week's election? He refuses to be drawn. "I think party politics are best steered cleared of by musicians, really."

Alex James' frivolous exterior might also be a way to avoid revealing anything too personal. Rather than express any frustration at his bandmates for failing to

Great escapes

Alex James' many non-Blur guises



Author

Alex's first autobiography, *A Bit Of A Blur*, is a jovial if slight memoir of the hedonistic Britpop years. Its follow-up, *All Cheeses Great And Small*, about his subsequent retreat to the Cotswolds, manages to be every bit as rotten as its title.

Classical buff

James competed in BBC2's *Maestro*, a 2008 reality show where celebs tried to become classical-music conductors. It led to a weekly show on Classic FM. "The one solo album I've considered is doing something like combining Handel with big basslines," he says.

Cheese farmer

With his 200-acre Oxfordshire farm producing such highly regarded fridge-stinkers as Farleigh Wallop, Good Queen Maude and Blue Monday, Alex has shown the same level of dedication to making cheese as he did to hoovering up *Class As* in the '90s.





"I asked Graham if he wanted me in the studio. He told me to fuck off"

Alex James

in Hong Kong, if something wasn't working, we'd move on to the next song. You can hear that sense of urgency, as well as us being so comfortable with each other. We'd done 'Ong Ong' in an hour, an incredibly simple song. And there it was now, sounding enormous."

Perhaps Alex's best work on the record is the filthy bassline on lead track 'Go Out'. "That song almost sums up why we kept the album secret," he says. "It's an album that

Having reassured Mrs James that he wasn't having an affair, James then found himself having to lie to Ben Hillier, the producer of Blur's previous album 'Think Tank', after bumping into him in the studio. "I said, 'Oh, er, um, Graham's making a record and I've, ah, come to see him to say hi.'"

Alex lets slip that the Hong Kong sessions were based on "26 or 27" song ideas that Albarn had already stored away on GarageBand. 'The Magic Whip' only has 13 songs (if you include the Japanese bonus track), so does this mean that Blur are poised for a relatively swift follow-up? "Not for a while, no. Nobody knew the answer to the question 'Will Blur make a new album?' for 12 years, so it's incredible everyone is asking again already. Whether any other stuff from Hong Kong will ever emerge, who knows? But coming up with new music has never been Blur's problem. If you get the four of us in the studio in the right frame of mind, we'll always make new music."



Blur at Hyde Park in 2009

move forward with 'The Magic Whip', he instead makes light of his apparent lack of control over the situation. When Coxon finally began sifting through the Hong Kong material with longtime Blur producer Stephen Street, Alex says he found himself barred from the proceedings. "I phoned Graham to ask if he wanted me to come down to the studio, and he said, 'No, fuck off and leave it to me!'" Alex was called in a few days later to patch up "a couple of crap bits" in his basslines, though, at which point he witnessed the album taking shape.

"When I first heard what Graham and Stephen had done, I was overcome," says Alex. "It was just devastating, really emotional. They'd done such an amazing job of turning it into this huge body of work. When we were

needed a bit of space, because if we'd made a big deal of it and gone into a big posh studio, you wouldn't have a dirty song like 'Go Out'."

Keeping the project under wraps wasn't easy, though. "The secrecy was a nightmare," Alex chuckles. "I couldn't even tell my kids, because what if they'd told their schoolmates, and it had leaked from there? I didn't even tell my wife at first, but she was asking me, 'Er, where are you going all the time?'"

Other than the big outdoor shows at Hyde Park and the Isle of Wight, plus a few warm-up gigs, Blur are unlikely to tour 'The Magic Whip' extensively. Instead, Alex will probably return to his farm in the Cotswolds to make cheese. For anyone who still thinks that's just a twee hobby, it should be pointed out that his soft cheese, Goddess, actually won a Super Gold medal at the World Cheese Awards last year. "It was only a couple of weeks after winning for Goddess that I got the call saying Damon and Graham were thinking of finishing the Blur album," he reveals.

"I thought, 'Wow, this has been a good year.'"

Cheesemaking might not seem very rock'n'roll, but Alex insists there is some crossover between his two careers. "The cheese awards are boozier than the Brits any day," he claims. "Although cheese farmers and bass players need very different physiques. I'm trying to rebalance and get my bassist's figure back." ■

TV talent show judge

Years before Ricky Wilson appeared on *The Voice*, Alex James could be seen enthusing about mediocre singer-songwriters on Channel 4's *Mobile Act Unsigned*. He's even fronted the occasional bit of 'serious' TV: his 2008 BBC America documentary *Cocaine Diaries* was pretty powerful.

Serial supergrouper

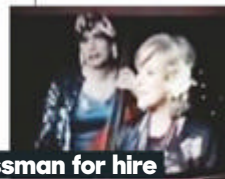
In 1996, Alex formed fleeting Britpop supergroup Me Me Me with Stephen Duffy and Justin from Elastica. Two years later he was at it again, teaming up with Keith Allen and Damien Hirst in Fat Les. Then, in 2005, he made a one-off slice of blaring disco as WigWam with his neighbour Betty Boo.

Astronomer

In 2003, Britain launched its first rocket to Mars. Beagle 2 played Blur's specially written song on a loop, thanks to amateur astronomer James' friendship with probe engineer Colin Pillinger. The rocket was eventually found on Mars in 2015 – just weeks before Blur's comeback announcement.

Bassman for hire

Outside Blur, Alex has lent his louche bass-playing skills to Florence + The Machine, KT Tunstall, Sophie Ellis-Bextor, New Order side-project Bad Lieutenant and Marianne Faithfull (dutifully cross-dressing for Faithfull's 'Sex With Strangers' video).



Life in the fast lane

After 'Major Arcana', Speedy Ortiz struggled with intra-band tension and the pains of being public property. But instead of letting it break them, it's fuelled a fierce new album, says Laura Snapes

PHOTO BY SHERVIN LAINEZ

This time last year, there wasn't going to be a second Speedy Ortiz album. Never mind that 2013's gnarled 'Major Arcana' was one of the best-received indie-rock debuts in years, its cryptic, tangled riffs making them the breakout band of Boston's renowned DIY scene, or that they were supporting collective hero Stephen Malkmus and his Jicks. Relations within the Massachusetts four-piece were so soured that songwriter and guitarist Sadie Dupuis was contemplating quitting her own band "because I was sick and stressed out constantly and I'd never had panic attacks every day until then", the 26-year-old recalls over curry in the Boston apartment she shares with Palehound's Ellen Kempner.

Hard touring didn't help, but the stress was mostly down to fractious relations between Sadie and guitarist Matt Robidoux. "He would say that he didn't respect me, and I would take that – basically, for months," she says

Speedy Ortiz:
(l-r) Darl Felm,
Devin McKnight,
Sadie Dupuis,
Mike Falcone



incredulously. Speedy was originally her solo project, which started with a lo-fi, 10-track solo album called 'The Death Of Speedy Ortiz', and she remains the band's sole songwriter. "It was like, 'Why am I not listening to this person?' He'd apologise, but if someone tells you enough times that they don't respect you, there's something wrong with you that you're not taking that seriously. I was so bad at sticking up for myself for so long."

Reached by email, Matt describes what he perceived as the "band camaraderie [disappearing] in favour of the monolith of the solo artist", and says he felt that he, bassist Darl Fern and drummer Mike Falcone "were making the shift towards [becoming] a replaceable backing band. I had less and less creative control into something that I was putting all my time, creative work and energy into."

A week after the initial interview, Sadie emails in response to Matt's claims. "If I wanted to be a solo artist, wouldn't I just be a solo artist? ...The decision to remove Matt from the band was a three-way, mutual choice. This whole [new] album is about not dedicating energy to people like that – I'd like it to speak more towards moving past toxic people and less about remaining entrenched in battles with trolls."

So on May 6, 2014, Speedy announced that Matt was going on "indefinite hiatus" from the band, to be replaced by Devin McKnight from Boston's Grass Is Green. They saved themselves, and thank God, otherwise there would be no 'Foil Deer', their dizzyingly great

"I was so bad at sticking up for myself for so long"

Sadie Dupuis

second record. Indie rock is often all too willing to just retread the past and ply simplicity as profundity; Speedy refuse to settle for an easy riff or throwaway lyric, and aggressively expand the definition of indie rock, drawing from Nicki Minaj as much as US math rock bands Chavez and Polvo, as well as Sadie's childhood in a choir that sang dissonant Russian traditional songs.

Their swagger is necessary, and found itself rebooted almost immediately once they regrouped with Devin. He was an old friend and a formative influence – Sadie openly admits to having cribbed his "super inventive" guitar playing ever since she first saw Grass Is Green play with her old group Quilty (who split in 2011): "He was getting the first Speedy demos before the people who are actually in my band now."

Later last summer, on a rare month off touring, Sadie quit drinking and embarked on a mental-health kick, the start of a process of reclaiming the band and her own identity. In February, Speedy Ortiz had released the 'Real Hair' EP, where she addressed the effects of being in the public eye for the first time, exploring the gap between perception and reality.

"Like, 'Oh shit, suddenly people are looking at me and they don't know who I am and I don't even know who I am because this is a strange pressure that I've never known before,'" she says. "So often I felt like [with] the kind of music that we're playing, I had to prove myself as one of the boys' club to coexist with a lot of these bands. That's not to say that it wasn't fun, but I felt like I was fighting so hard for these male spaces that I was not in touch with my own gender identity."

She was also grappling with the emotional exhaustion of having to play depressing songs night after night. 'Major Arcana' was a break-up album, though as far as break-up records go, it wasn't exactly "Fuck you, Brad, you broke me!", as she puts it.

After shows, young people would tell Sadie that 'Major Arcana' inspired them, or that it encouraged them to start playing guitar. "That's fucking cool, but I wish the message I was giving wasn't just, 'Breaking up is shitty and sometimes people hurt you.' I wished it was, 'Sometimes people hurt you and you shouldn't have to put up with it, and these are larger patterns that occur to all kinds of people, and you have to talk about it and you have to fight against it.'"

That message punches through 'Foil Deer', Sadie's unabashed declaration of security in self-knowledge, not giving a shit about external perceptions and firing shots at anyone who dares underestimate her: "I'm not bossy, I'm the boss", she swaggers on opener 'Raising The Skate'. "For a long time I had tried to ignore the fact that I was a woman, because I was hoping that other people would ignore the fact that gender is a factor in rock music at all. But at this point, when you're put upon enough and taken advantage of enough, you become angry and it becomes important to fight back."

Beyond toxic band politics, she had been disrespected by all-male support bands and sexist sound guys who messed with her equipment but not that of her male bandmates. Men would try and touch and kiss her at shows. There was the short-lived professional associate who stalked Sadie, told her he loved her – and, when she rebuffed his advances, that

Speedy's influences

The Cardigans

The Swedish band's 1998 album 'Gran Turismo' played a big part in 'Foil Deer's' sound: "that spacey rock that is very pop-inflected," says Sadie.

Blonde Redhead

Over their 23-year career, the Italian/Japanese/American band have gone from noise rock to beguiling, silvery synth pop.

Danny Elfman

"On 'Puffer', there's this keyboard part that Mike's playing, and it sounds like *Beetlejuice* to me," says Sadie. "I'm like, 'We finally succeeded in making a Danny Elfman song!'"

Nicki Minaj

Minaj's 2014 album 'The Pinkprint' hasn't left Sadie's stereo since its release last December, and the Trinidadian rapper's proud swagger informs her own lyrical approach on 'Foil Deer'.

Speedy would fail without him. "If you behave in these unprofessional ways, you don't deserve to have any kind of job," she says. "You should be ostracised. We would have so many things like that happen all the time, and I just have no patience for it any more."

Her aim was to write empowerment anthems, though 'Foil Deer' is less about shaking off haters than staking them through the heart: "Don't ever touch my blade, you fool/You'll be cursed for a lifetime", she seethes on the strangled wowl of 'Dot X'. The record sounds genuinely menacing, too, thanks to a more concerted studio approach with producer Nicolas Vernhes (Deerhunter, Marnie Stern). 'Major Arcana' was made in four days; this time they had three weeks.

"A lot of the sounds on our previous stuff are very much like we sounded live, because that's all we had time to record," says Sadie. "This one, every single song we had a massive discussion on tones and textures. All I ever want is to listen to scary pop music – that was a goal."

Take the blown-out, hip-hop-inflected 'Puffer', which billows with the violence of dark street corners. "I feel like a lot of the songs are like, it's so fucking stupid that we have to be scared of walking home in the dark, like someone's gonna fuck with us, but you gotta toughen up because the whole world is trying to fuck with you all the time," she says.

Having almost lost her band because of other people's shitty behaviour, Sadie is now making a point of always making a stand. She and her peers might start a database to share information about industry professionals, so they can avoid working with jerks. She describes the album's standout, sombre 'Mister Difficult' as a rallying cry for female and female-identified artists to talk about their anger and marginalisation: "I got the message/Boys be sensitive and girls be, be aggressive", she hisses.

"The mantle of fighting back can't really exist in the straight, white male sphere any more," she says, "because what are they fighting against, other than in a supporting role to women-identified performers, or queer performers, or people of colour? It's nice to see braggadocio enter the vernacular, because for so long [rock]'s been such a male space. It's exciting to see so many women reclaiming strength for themselves." ■

Reviews

► THE DEFINITIVE VERDICT ■ EDITED BY BEN HOMEWOOD

NME
ALBUM
OF THE WEEK



Palma Violets Danger In The Club

**Lambeth reprobates stick firmly
to their ramshackle roots for
a clattering second album**

Back at the beginning of last year, when Palma Violets let slip that they'd scrapped two weeks' worth of recording for their second record, bassist Chilli Jesson cited a peculiar logic for the decision. "We made too big a leap,"

he told NME. "I felt like we'd lost the element of youth." It seemed a curious thing to say, mainly because making big leaps are what second albums are supposed to be about: they're a prime opportunity to show everyone how much you've 'grown', 'matured' and 'evolved'. On 'Danger In The Club', Palma Violets reject that idea entirely: they might have hired a big-name producer (John Leckie, of 'The Stone Roses' and 'The Bends' fame) and recorded at Rockfield, the Monmouth studio where Queen did 'Bohemian Rhapsody' in 1975, but this album is – quite deliberately – an omnishambles,

perilously held together by gaffer tape and good intentions. If preserving that all-important "element of youth" was their primary aim, then you couldn't call it anything other than an unqualified success.

It takes all of 25 seconds to establish that not only have the childish things *not* been put away, they're scattered all over the floor like Lego, just waiting to be trod on and tripped over. 'Sweet Violets' is a brief, bleary-eyed rendition of the 1951 hit by Tennessee singer and TV personality Dinah Shore, a bawdy knees-up delivered from a horizontal repose that raises the curtain on the 40 cacophonous minutes to follow. The second track, 'Hollywood (I Got It)', hardly seems any more substantial than the first, and contains only four lyrics, one of which is guitarist Sam Fryer's inscrutable bleat of "*Fresh fish! I got it!*". Yet what it lacks in finesse it makes up for in demented charm and pulsating energy: when it eventually clatters to a halt – which it



ILLUSTRATION: JIMMY TURRELL

does with all the grace of a seven-car pile-up – you find yourself wanting to cheer the carnage they’ve caused.

Unsurprisingly, ‘Danger In The Club’ works best when Palma Violets are drunk on their own enthusiasm,

CLUB CLASSICS

Palma Violets on three key tracks

Hollywood (I Got It)

Sam Fryer: “It’s about going to Hollywood and realising that everything’s fucked up. People want to be actors and say things like: ‘I’ve got Hollywood in my bones’, which is the chorus. It’s probably one of the worst places you could end up.”

Girl, You Couldn’t Do Much Better On The Beach

Sam: “It has my favourite line on it: ‘We’ll probably burn out and fail, but at least it’s a marvellous failure.’”

Chilli Jesson: “I saw the inscription on Malcolm McLaren’s grave [‘Better a spectacular failure, than a benign success’], and it all tied in. It’s about a girl.”

Walking Home

Chilli: “Working with a producer this time meant we concentrated on percussion and backing vocals. Pete [Mayhew, keyboards] and Will [Doyle, drums] have stepped up and started singing. Lots of the songs will be different live to the record. That’s really cool.”

friendships to breaking point – both of which, by their own account, they have firsthand experience of. Instead, they’ve made one that sounds like it was recorded without a care in the world. You’re only young once, and Palma Violets are in no hurry to grow up.

THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** May 4 ► **LABEL** Rough Trade ► **PRODUCER** John Leckie ► **LENGTH** 40:49 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Sweet Violets ►2. Hollywood (I Got It) ►3. Girl, You Couldn’t Do Much Better On The Beach ►4. Danger In The Club ►5. Coming Over To My Place ►6. Secrets Of America ►7. The Jacket Song ►8. Matador ►9. Gout! Gang! Go! ►10. Walking Home ►11. Peter And The Gun ►12. No Money Honey ►13. English Tongue ► **BEST TRACK** Girl, You Couldn’t Do Much Better On The Beach

8

MORE ALBUMS

Passion Pit

Kindred Columbia



Passion Pit have always sounded happy, whatever

Michael Angelakos is singing about. With gleeful falsetto and splashy synths, he makes aural candyfloss of life’s challenges. Third album ‘Kindred’ finds the 27-year-old upbeat, punching the air about the day his wife “came out of nowhere” on the stomping ‘Lifted Up (1985)’, revelling in the fact that “we both know what the other wants” over shimmering Day-Glo electro on ‘Until We Can’t (Let’s Go)’ and only getting glum on the wonky but lovely ‘Looks Like Rain’. Even if there’s still a sneaking suspicion Angelakos used up his very best tunes on 2008 debut EP ‘Chunk Of Change’, this dewy-eyed record sweeps you up in its joie de vivre all the same.

■ MATTHEW HORTON

7

Patrick Watson

Love Songs For Robots

Domino



There are many adjectives you could use to

describe Patrick Watson’s fifth album, but the most accurate are: intricate, lush, entrancing. Placing it in a genre is not so easy, though ‘chamber pop’ comes closest. These 10 songs are filled with expansive arrangements that follow an unpredictable flow, steered by an adept cast of musicians (Patrick Watson is the name of the Montreal-based group, not just its singer). In less capable hands, songs such as ‘Good Morning Mr Wolf’ and ‘Bollywood’ could have been a muddle. Instead, a hodgepodge of styles (electronica, jazz, reggae, rock and classical) is finessed into something stirringly cohesive.

■ CIAN TRAYNOR

8



Best Coast California Nights

Sunny surf-rock is replaced by crunchy power-pop as Bethany Cosentino gets serious

Five years on from ‘Crazy For You’, their weed- and reverb-drenched surf-punk opus, Best Coast have come of age. The dreamy, sun-streaked yearning remains, but the humour that laced Bethany Cosentino’s bratty ennui has gone. ‘California Nights’ is, instead, full of more sobering concerns – medication, heartbreak, insomnia. Gone too is the plucky, country-dappled sound the duo (completed by guitarist Bobb Bruno) trialled on middling 2012 album ‘The Only Place’. In its place is chunkier, ’90s-style power-pop: turbo drums, crunching guitars and bombastic production from Wally Gagel, whose previous credits include Muse and Miley Cyrus. It’s not a perfect ride: the drums rip through the melodies, pummelling away the sweetness on delicate opener ‘Feeling OK’; and

things sag on the water-clogged title track. Cosentino’s honeyed vocal is the only constant. It’s a radiating sunbeam, particularly so on the shimmering ‘Heaven Sent’.

■ CHARLOTTE RICHARDSON ANDREWS

7



THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** May 4 ► **LABEL** Harvest ► **PRODUCER** Wally Gagel ► **LENGTH** 43:37 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Feeling OK ►2. Fine Without You ►3. Heaven Sent ►4. In My Eyes ►5. So Unaware ►6. When Will I Change ►7. Jealousy ►8. California Nights ►9. Get Outta My Head ►10. Run Through My Head ►11. Sleep Won’t Ever Come ►12. Wasted Time ► **BEST TRACK** Heaven Sent

Brian Wilson

No Pier Pressure Capitol



Contrary to his reclusive reputation, Brian Wilson has often

thrived in collaboration (from his work with Tony Asher on ‘Pet Sounds’ to a recent hook-up with Mini Mansions). In that sense, the central conceit of ‘No Pier Pressure’ – which finds him working with, among others, Fun frontman Nate Ruess

and She & Him – is strong, but the execution leaves much to be desired: notably on the EDM-lite ‘Runaway Dancer’. Yet there are moments – ‘What Ever Happened’ and ‘The Last Song’ – where Wilson’s genius, assisted by former Beach Boy Al Jardine, delivers something truly moving. Brian Wilson doesn’t need contemporising – he should just be allowed to be timeless.

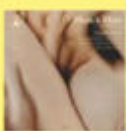
■ BARRY NICOLSON

5

Reviews

Blanck Mass

Dumb Flesh Sacred Bones



When a member of a band takes time off to pursue their

solo project, the kneejerk tabloid reader in us kicks in, looking for reasons. However, the second solo effort by Fuck Buttons' Benjamin Power sounds like a supplementary branch of the duo, not a replacement. While 2012 predecessor 'White Math/Polymorph' was a grandiose, broadly ambient affair, these eight songs employ crunching beats, encroaching on the arena-rave territory of Modeselektor ('Cruel Sport'). Soothing sonics are limited, 'Loam' and 'Detritus' bookending the album with pitchshifted gloop and brain-scrubbing synth noise. A standalone success that also whets the appetite for Fuck Buttons' return.

■ NOEL GARDNER

7

Juan Wauters

Who Me?

Captured Tracks



On 'Woodside, Queens', the rickety and acoustic fourth track

on his second solo album, Juan Wauters admits, "I know that I'm a freak". 'Who Me?' is rife with kookiness that justifies that description. Cabaret piano fills the minute-long 'Misbehave' and goofy lines like 'Grey Matter's' "In my head I have a hole/I'm so well, I look swell" abound, but the Uruguayan songwriter and frontman of garage trio The Beets has an innate sweetness that makes him compelling. When he sings "I don't care if you know that I'm all wrong" on 'I'm All Wrong', his insecurity is inescapable. 'Who Me?' then, is a weird, loveable record to file alongside Wauters' labelmate and touring buddy Mac DeMarco.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

Django Django

Born Under Saturn



The Djangos' return fights anxious lyrics with eclectic pop

In astrology, Saturn is associated with death, discipline and facing down your fears. As planets go it's kind of a buzzkill, but here's the thing: if you do right by Saturn, it'll do right by you. The trick is to know your strengths and play to them.

Such is the star-crossed premise for 'Born Under Saturn', Django Django's follow-up to their Mercury-nominated debut of 2012. That self-titled record – an eccentric, inventively lo-fi affair that bandleader David Maclean wrote while "pottering around in [his] pyjamas" at home – was a surprise hit, but now the London-based quartet must look to recapture its playful spirit with the stakes raised.

Throughout the album, which abounds with images of a difficult rebirth, there's a sense of a band putting on a brave front to stave off a lurking sense of anxiety. "Take it back to the start" goes 'Giant', which kicks things off in measured, confident fashion, booming piano chords crashing up against a locomotive,



THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** May 4 ► **LABEL** Because Music ► **PRODUCER** David Maclean
► **LENGTH** 57:00 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Giant ►2. Shake And Tremble ►3. Found You ►4. First Light ►5. Pause Repeat ►6. Reflections ►7. Vibrations ►8. Shot Down ►9. High Moon ►10. Beginning To Fade ►11. 4000 Years ►12. Break The Glass ►13. Life We Know ► **BEST TRACK** Shot Down

baggy-esque beat. Similarly, the weight of the world bears down on 'Shake And Tremble' ("Holding back the ocean/Just enough to say a word"), which revisits the '50s rock'n'roll vibes of oldie 'Life's A Beach' to mostly winning effect, and the excellent 'Found You' ("I've heard my name spoken in vain so many times"), which sounds like The Stone Roses breaking into a cold-turkey sweat.

Missteps arise when Django Django put a tentative foot on the dancefloor: 'Pause Repeat' is the sort of indie-house clunker Hot Chip would run a mile from, and 'Reflections' cheesy piano uplift makes for an iffy one-two that threatens to derail the record's middle portion.

But the record rallies when the Djangos rein in some of their scattergun tendencies: 'Shot Down's' darkwave electro opens out naturally into the record's most anthemic chorus, and 'Beginning To Fade' is a lovely waltz-time ballad that allows the group's occasionally grating eclecticism room to breathe – you could imagine

it on a Jack White solo record, at a pinch.

It definitely ain't perfect, then, but in concocting a scrubbed-up, carefully wrought maturation of their sound, 'Born Under Saturn' gives us something close to Django Django unchained.

■ ALEX DENNEY

7

Tyondai Braxton

HIVE1

Nonesuch



As founder member of NYC's Battles, Tyondai

Braxton proved guitar parts played in tricky time signatures could sound as catchy as the best pop music. But since quitting Battles in 2010, Braxton has begun to lean more towards the avant than the rock. His HIVE project is part band, part architectural

installation, live performances finding Braxton and four lackeys housed in LED-dotted pods, triggering samples and waves of electronic wibble. Moments have a Battles-like shimmy, 'Scout' sounding like the music a pygmy tribe might make if gifted with a studio of gleaming modular synths. By and large, though, its ideas are too cold and abstracted to really move you, in either sense of the word.

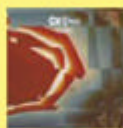
■ LOUIS PATTISON

5

God Damn

Vultures

One Little Indian



Royal Blood Not rough enough for you? Then may we

respectfully suggest the unforgiving offerings of another Brit-rock duo ready to bludgeon your eardrums into cowering submission. A caustic collection of shamanic thrash and malevolent gutter-blues, Midlands pair God Damn's debut album is

a cathartically gritty listen. A manifesto of sorts, the unfettered nihilistic chaos of 'We Don't Like You' swirls with 1980s metal meanness, while 'Horus' brings a sprinkling of Alice Cooper-style glam rock. At almost nine minutes long, 'Skeletons' trudges from acoustic balladry to stomping hard-rock behemoth and back again with a terrifying, epic intensity. The heaviest new band in the UK? Crushing so.

■ LEONIE COOPER

8

Reviews

Surfer Blood

1000 Palms Joyful Noise



After singer John Paul Pitts' arrest for domestic battery in

2012 overshadowed Surfer Blood's second LP 'Pythons' (despite the charged being dropped), the Florida Quartet, who were dropped after its release, relocated to Portland, Oregon to rediscover their DIY roots

on this self-recorded third. For those prepared to listen, the old hooks remain, Pitts' nasal tones making the likes of 'Island', 'Covered Wagon' and 'Dorian' sound like the alternative universe in which Fountains Of Wayne or They Might Be Giants somehow got cool. A modernist alt-rock chill blows through it, but Surfer Blood's spirits stay cautiously upbeat, even indulging some Foals-y math-limbo guitar fripperies on 'Other Desert Cities'.

■ MARK BEAUMONT

7

Gaps

In, Around The Moments

I/AM/ME



Brighton-based duo Gaps (singer and guitarist Rachel Butt

and producer Ed Critchley) emerged with debut single 'When I'm Gone' in 2013, and positioned midway through this debut album, it still serves as a tidy distillation of their sound – sparse electronics matched with vocals and acoustic guitars rooted in folk. Butt's

effected guitar twangs underneath her remarkable voice, which shifts wonderfully from low to high-pitched as Critchley deploys wobbling bass. They edge closer to the bassy techno sound of British/Japanese producer Maya Jane Coles (whose I/AM/ME label is releasing the album) on 'Keep You' and 'A World Away', but Gaps are at their most unusual – and most compelling – on the slow, undulating 'Your Own Sweet Time'.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

Chastity Belt

Time To Go Home

Hardly Art



On their 2013 debut 'No Regerts', Washington's Chastity Belt

– whose tongue-in-cheek press shots present them as a geeky girl-group – mixed feminist theory with grungy garage and song titles like 'Pussy Weed Beer' and 'Nip Slip'. Sounding hazy and hungover, 'Time To Go Home' does much the same. Opener 'Drone' tackles mansplaining, AKA men patronisingly explaining things to women ("He was just another man trying to teach me something") and 'Cool Slut's' empowering rally of "We're just a couple of sluts, so what?/We like to fuck" is burdened by the idea that the need to fight gender inequality still exists in 2015. Occasionally, though, they find relief, as on 'Joke', where twinkling guitars add light to Julia Shapiro's admission that "I'm getting better at forgetting anything heavy".

The Holydrug Couple

Moonlust Sacred Bones



The Holydrug Couple's 2013 debut 'Noctuary' was an

overtly psychedelic listen, smothered in hazy riffs and barely-there vocals. 'Atlantic Postcard', the opener on this follow-up, makes it clear the Chilean duo still have their heads in the clouds. Its synth pattern revolves relentlessly, before bleeding into the aptly named 'Dreamy', whose deft use of the bass guitar mirrors Kevin Parker's sleeper Tame Impala tracks. 'Moonlust's' remainder is enjoyably dozy – the reverb-splashed 'Concorde' in particular – and intrigues most when the band wheel out tricky guitar solos ('Light Or Night') or synth parts ('U Don't Wake Up') that wouldn't have sounded out of place on an episode of space-age kids' TV show *The Clangers* in the '70s.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7

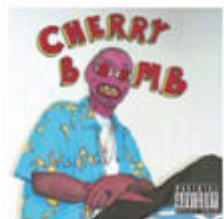
Tyler, The Creator Cherry Bomb

Odd Future enfant terrible is joined by Kanye, Pharrell and more on a chilled fourth album

"I'm rapping about diamonds and cars and money now", mutters Tyler, The Creator on 'Keep Da O's'. "What the fuck has gotten into me, man?" Five years in, it's probably about time that Los Angeles enfants terrible Odd Future started getting a little soft around the middle.

In fact, though, this is just more Tyler self-deprecation. Packed with guests including Kanye, Lil Wayne and Pharrell, but clocking in at a brief – by his standards, anyway – 55 minutes, 'Cherry Bomb' might be the tightest, leanest Tyler album yet.

In part it's because Tyler sounds pretty chill. His past albums have been weighed down by gloomy self-analysis, but here he sounds upbeat and free to experiment, smushing together silky jazz, slasher-flick synths and NERD-style party rap and rhyming over the results in a satanic gurgle that jumps around like the line on an ECG machine. More than any rapper out there, he's learned from Eminem, unleashing a rabbit



THE DETAILS

► LABEL Odd Future/Sony ► RELEASE DATE Out now ► PRODUCER Tyler, The Creator ► LENGTH 55:00 ► TRACKLISTING ►1. Deathcamp ►2. Buffalo ►3. Pilot ►4. Run ►5. Find Your Wings ►6. Cherry Bomb ►7. Blow My Load ►8. 2Seater ►9. The Brown Stains Of Darkeese Latifah Part 6–12 (Remix) ►10. Fucking Young/Perfect ►11. Smuckers ►12. Keep Da O's ►13. Okaga, CA ► BEST TRACK Smuckers



double time on 'Run' or threatening "I do bring a terror like I hate America" on the aeronautical allegory of 'Pilot'. The darkest moments are often mirrored by audacious production twists – on the bizarre title track, his voice is almost submerged under flares of static – but just as often you'll find him kicking back to chill G-funk on 'Blow My Load', or getting smooove with rare-groove king Roy Ayers on 'Find Your Wings'.

It's a mark of Tyler's good form that he can stand next to Kanye dropping some very Kanye lines ("I wanna turn the tanks to playgrounds!") and still come out sounding like top dog. The track in question, 'Smuckers', is one of 'Cherry Bomb's' best, but also vying for the crown is slow jam 'Fucking Young/Perfect', which finds Tyler falling for a girl six years his junior. Virginia soul diva Kali Uchis plays the Lolita who's only got eyes for him, while Tyler sweats and squirms and eventually runs the other way.

It's a very Tyler moment: at first borderline immoral, it turns out to be a morality tale, and after a wrestle with his conscience, our (anti)hero does the right thing. Gone soft? Maybe a little, but 'Cherry Bomb' proves there's life in Odd Future yet.

■ LOUIS PATTISON

8

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FILM

Avengers: Age Of Ultron

The billion-dollar Marvel franchise returns with another blockbuster

In September 1963, Marvel Comics published *Avengers* #1, a superhero comic written by Stan Lee and drawn by Jack Kirby. In that first story, characters including Thor, Hulk and Iron Man were brought together to fight some form of evil – as well as each other. Fifty-two years later, these Marvel Comics have become the Marvel Cinematic Universe – the second-biggest film franchise in the world, ahead of *Star Wars*, *Lord Of The Rings* and *James Bond*, and behind only *Harry Potter*. It launched with *Iron Man* in 2008, but became proper big business in April 2012 when Joss Whedon's *Avengers Assemble* – featuring characters from the '60s comics – became the third-most-profitable film ever, after *Avatar* and *Titanic*, taking over \$1.5 billion.

Now – with Avengers team members Thor, Captain America and Iron Man having all fronted huge spin-off films since – Whedon's sequel arrives on a preposterously large wave of anticipation. *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* follows the Marvel crew as they seek to defeat Ultron, an artificial intelligence service determined to eradicate mankind because it's horrified by the flaws that make us human. Ultron manifests itself as a mysterious group of super-powerful robots, all voiced by *Boston Legal* actor James Spader, who delivers his lines with snide relish.

Though Whedon establishes this epic premise efficiently and entertainingly, the film initially feels slightly laboured. Chris Hemsworth's Thor, Chris Evans' Captain America and the rest of the *Avengers Assemble* team are joined by new superheroes

Quicksilver (*Kick-Ass* star Aaron Taylor-Johnson) and Scarlet Witch (*Godzilla*'s Elizabeth Olsen), and the writer-director struggles to juggle the massive cast. Characters from other films in the Marvel franchise, including Idris Elba's Heimdall and Hayley Atwell's Peggy Carter, make frustratingly brief appearances, while French actress Julie Delpy (*2 Days In Paris*) makes a bizarre cameo in a dream sequence.

Because the film is so stuffed with talent, none of the main characters shine as brightly as they should. Scarlett

Johansson's intriguing Black Widow enjoys some heartfelt moments with Mark Ruffalo's Hulk after she confides a tragic secret to him, but Robert Downey Jr's charismatic Iron Man is underused, offering fewer zingy one-liners than fans have come to expect. Instead, Whedon becomes distracted with subplots, including a clumsy attempt to make Jeremy Renner's Hawkeye more interesting by giving him a 'normal' home life. Thankfully, Whedon chucks in enough dazzling action sequences and clever visual gags to atone. Highlights include an amusing set piece in which Thor challenges his fellow Avengers to lift his hammer and a brutal fight scene where Hulk turns on a teammate.

Though it has more flaws than its predecessor, thanks to an exhilarating climax and the characters' consistent charm, Whedon delivers another blockbuster. **NICK LEVINE**



DIRECTOR
Joss Whedon
RELEASE DATE
Out now



CINEMA

A Funny Kind Of Love



A comedy that tackles sex taboos

head on, *A Funny Kind Of Love* is the directorial debut from actor-director Josh Lawson. It explores the peccadillos of seven suburban couples, starting with Maeve (Bojana Novakovic), who's in bed with partner Paul (Lawson) discussing her rape fantasy. A series of awkwardly comic scenarios follow. Rowena (Kate Box) is aroused when her bereaved husband cries, so attempts to move him to tears again by kidnapping his dog. Meanwhile, Dan (Damon Herriman) becomes obsessed with role-play and builds a jail in his garage, to the disgust wife Evie. It's to Lawson's credit that from this absurdity he's made a dark, intricate and very funny movie.

RHIAN DALY

8

CINEMA

I Am Big Bird



Eighty-one-year-old puppeteer Caroll Spinney has played *Sesame Street*'s

Big Bird since 1969. Inspired to make this documentary after working in the show's New York offices, director David LaMattina uncovers the man beneath the costume. Spinney's life is a tale of hardship, and *I Am Big Bird* is compelling because of that. The son of an abusive father, Spinney was bullied at school. Work as a puppeteer led to a meeting with *Muppets* creator Jim Henson and a job on *Sesame Street*'s first series. Interviews with co-stars and family play out over Spinney's home videos as we learn of his divorce, depression and suicidal thoughts. The heartache that drives this story is captured best when Spinney's eyes moisten as he recalls an on-set moment when "I was crying inside the costume. Inside I was dying."

BEN HOMEWOOD

7

CINEMA

We Are Monster



Fifteen years ago, 19-year-old Feltham Young Offenders' Institute inmate

Zahid Mubarek was killed by his 20-year-old cellmate Robert Stewart. This shocking story – which resulted in an enquiry into the institute's vetting of Stewart and the possibility that his crime was racially motivated – is the subject of James Petrou's first

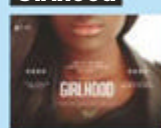
feature, a prison-set drama similar to Steve McQueen's 2008 film *Hunger*. New British actor Leeshon Alexander, who also wrote the script, plays Stewart and his racist alter ego, who goads him to attack black and Asian inmates. He gives a performance that increases in intensity all the way to a harrowing finale and the eerie credits, which remind us that Mubarek's family are still seeking justice.

BEN HOMEWOOD

8

CINEMA

Girlhood



Directed by Céline Sciamma (2011's drama

Tomboy), set in a tough neighbourhood outside Paris and subtitled from French, *Girlhood* tells the story of Marieme (Karidja Touré), a shy teen who must navigate various coming-of-age problems (romance, family) alongside darker issues (drugs, turf wars) as

she finds her place in the world. At its heart, though, *Girlhood* is about friendship; the scenes between Marieme and best friends Lady, Fily and Adiatou – sleeping four to a bed, swigging from a communal bottle – are heartwarming. Underplayed and free of Hollywood sheen, their relationships feel honest and real. Though occasionally prone to cliché, *Girlhood* resonates enough to succeed.

LISA WRIGHT

7

Carl Barat & The Jackals

Scala, London

Wednesday, April 15

48

Boys in the
other band:
Carl Barat &
The Jackals



Before more Libs recording sessions, Carl blazes through Jackals tunes and old classics

PHOTO BY JORDAN HUGHES

On the eve of his flight to Thailand to start recording the third Libertines album, Carl Barat signs off from work with his other band, The Jackals, with a raucous swagger. Helping him through his back catalogue are a four-piece brass section, backing singers and Ed Harcourt on keys. They tear through 'Death On The Stairs', 'I Get Along', 'Deadwood', 'Bang Bang You're Dead' and the entirety of this year's Jackals debut 'Let It Reign', but the real highlight arrives when Carl grabs an acoustic guitar to perform gorgeous solo renditions of old Libs tunes 'The Ballad of Grimaldi' and 'France'. A reminder of how raw and delicate his songwriting is when stripped bare, and a promising sign for those Thai sessions.

■ KEVIN EG PERRY

8

Laura Marling

Queen Elizabeth Hall, London
Monday, April 20

The enigmatic songwriter
beats a stuffy atmosphere
with an electrifying show

During her stint in California, Laura Marling toured tiny bars up and down the West

Coast to rediscover the thrill of anonymity. Her return to the UK might have restored some self-awareness – she's since played packed homecoming shows in poky venues – but her residency at Queen Elizabeth Hall, a formidable auditorium on London's South Bank where Marling plays four dates in two weeks, marks a status upgrade as steep as its seating area. A few songs in, a brave soul pierces the stuffy vibe and yells down from the heavens: "That was fucking awesome!" "Well, thank you," comes Marling's mock-formal response.

The 25-year-old is yet to release a record that hasn't seen her hailed as the songwriter of her generation. This year's 'Short Movie', though musically livelier than its predecessors, never overwhelms Marling's presence, her subtly acrobatic vocals ever more commanding. While the folk revival – potentially in remission, given Mumford &

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Bella Jackson, 31, London
"She never does anything you expect her to. Her new album is so different but so uniquely her."



Suz Ford, 28, London
"It felt a bit limited being a sit-down gig. I was like, 'I wanna get up and do a cartwheel!'"



Holly Jones, 24, Worcester
"She's amazing. The electric guitars worked really well with the older songs, and I actually quite liked sitting down."



Jess Smith, 23, Gloucestershire
"It was incredible. She's really maturing. You do wanna get up and have a dance, though!"

Sons' decision to down their banjos – suggested that fans reward tweedy earnestness, Marling retains a fortress-like composure. Her followers expect as little soul-baring from her shows as her songs, and her unsmiling facade ensures that's all they'll get.

Tonight, Marling walks on alone and opens with an eerie rendition of 'Howl', an unassuming number from 'Short Movie', before easing into another new song, 'Walk Alone', with the unhurried grace of a rower charting a private lake. Dressed in a prim jacket and long skirt, she stands perfectly still at the mic, backdropped by a vast video screen that

plays panoramic desert footage, a link to her recent reawakening in the Californian sands.

Ever so softly, the atmosphere lifts. During a breathtaking suite spanning four tracks from

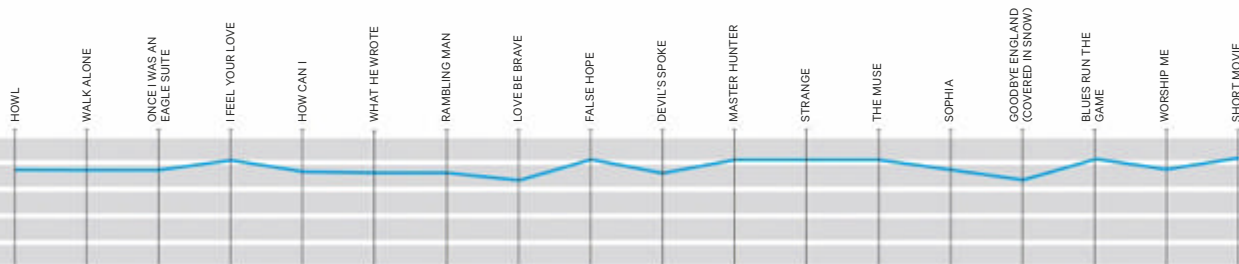
MARLING'S SUBTLY ACROBATIC VOCALS ARE EVER MORE COMMANDING

2013's expansive 'Once I Was An Eagle', Marling is joined by Nick Pini, a ponytailed double bassist, who sometimes plays atmospherically with a bow, followed by drummer Matt Ingram and guitarist Pete Randall. After 'Breathe' closes the medley, Marling acknowledges the crowd. "You look very comfortable," she says nonchalantly. "I sat in one of these seats earlier, and I know you're going to have a good night."

As an electric revamp of 'I Feel Your Love' ends, enchantment topples into rapture – helped along by that plucky yelper at the back. 'I Speak Because I Can' highlight 'Rambling

SETLIST

How good?





Laura Marling and double bassist Nick Pini onstage in London

MORE GIGS

Matthew E White Village Underground, London

Tuesday, April 21

It's the last night of Matthew E White's UK tour supporting second album 'Fresh Blood', and the thick-bearded Virginian is in high spirits. "I'm feeling loose as a goose," he smiles after his four-piece band groove through 'Love Is Deep'. During 'Fruit Trees', sweat slicks his long hair and his glasses slip down his nose. After a grateful monologue (this is the second of two sold-out dates here), the atmosphere intensifies with a noisy 'Steady Pace', which ends with a guitar face-off between White and lead guitarist Alan Parker. His songs sound much louder here than on record, and occasionally smother his husky vocal, but White conjures enough feel-good vibes for that not to matter.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7

The War On Drugs Pappy & Harriet's, Pioneertown, California

Wednesday, April 15

There's never been a more fitting place to hear Adam Granduciel's widescreen Americana than the outdoor stage at Pappy & Harriet's. Under a thick blanket of stars in the Joshua Tree desert, the expansive heartbreak of last year's 'Lost In The Dream' is wonderfully amplified. No new songs are aired, but there's no need: moshpits break out to 'Red Eyes' and 'Burning' prompts more gleeful fist pumping than a Springsteen show. "We've been looking forward to this," admits Granduciel, and the devoted hollers from the few hundred crammed into this dusty yard prove they weren't the only ones.

■ LEONIE COOPER

9

Stormzy



Sound Control, Manchester Tuesday, April 21

The rising London MC destroys Manchester with quaking grime on the last night of a UK tour

▶ "Are the 0161s in tonight?" asks Stormzy, striding onto Sound Control's small stage. The rowdy fans crammed in front of the 21-year-old respond by chanting their local area code. Tonight marks the end of a sold-out UK tour that's the latest in a series of milestones for the rising south London MC. Last October, he became the first unsigned rapper to appear on *Later... With Jools Holland* and went on to win a Mobo award for Best Grime Act. Then, in February, he was part of Kanye's flame-throwing posse at the Brit Awards.

SETLIST

- ▶ 0 To 100 (Drake Refix)
- ▶ Break From Toronto (PARTY NEXTDOOR Refix)
- ▶ Gold Thoughts
- ▶ Woo Riddim
- ▶ Second Quarter
- ▶ Big
- ▶ Storm Trooper
- ▶ All That Matters
- ▶ The Only One
- ▶ Ghetto Kyote
- ▶ Not That Deep
- ▶ Delete My Number
- ▶ Know Me From

Tonight feels like a coronation. Over hypnotic, woozy beats from DJ Tiny, Stormzy performs with the aggressive hunger Dizzee Rascal displayed on 2003's 'Boy In Da Corner', spitting bars like broken teeth. After opening with a take on Drake's '0 To 100', he promises something "mellow". 'Gold Thoughts' is snappy and steady, but Stormzy unleashes furious flow on 'Second Quarter'. 'Storm Trooper' is a compellingly raw account of domestic abuse, and an unlikely version of wayward star Justin Bieber's 'All That Matters' contains pillow-talk so sleazy ("Look, got me tied with some handcuffs/Shit, don't dare put your pants up") even Prince would blush.

By the time 'Not That Deep' booms out, the front rows are bouncing like bad cheques. During an incendiary 'Know Me From', a handful of his mates suddenly flood the stage from the wings and the crowd bellows its call-and-response chant "Talk about me, you better hashtag #problem". On its third run-through, he commands, "We need to fuck up this city. Make it epic!" The quaking noise that follows leaves you in no doubt that Stormzy is the crown prince of grime. ■ GARY RYAN

Man' gets the night's biggest cheer, newly electrified with bluesy swagger, but Marling wrote the song aged 20, and she has a clutch better. The electric 'False Hope' earns its PJ Harvey comparisons in style, sending the double bassist into wild, head-nodding spasms, his ponytail whipping around his face.

From then on, shit gets heavy. Most enlivening is a rapid-fire, unassailable trio of 'Master Hunter', a raucous, half-rapped nod to Dylan's 'Tangled Up In Blue'; 'Strange', in which Led Zep riffs scurry madly up her fretboard; and 'The Muse', a brusque barn-dancer transformed into a last-saloon jig, with a wild Marling solo that sounds like a rooster being frightened to death. As the backing players skulk away, night falls on the onscreen desert-scape, and Marling plays two songs solo: a fey 'Goodbye England' and her Jackson C Frank cover 'Blues Run The Game'.

Marling's posse reassembles for the reverent 'Worship Me', before closer 'Short Movie' reveals its alter ego as a roof-raising anthem: "I think I could get away with/Saying only half what I say", she growls, a teasing play on her own enigma. As the beat kicks up a final time, Marling steps back, gazes calmly at the floor and returns to the mic, letting us in on the briefest of smiles. A glimpse is all you need. ■ JAZZ MONROE

8

8

NME
GIG
OF THE WEEK

Will

Butler

The Art School, Glasgow
Monday, April 20

Opening his first solo UK
tour, the Arcade Fire man
replaces bombast with heart

Stage left, wearing a garishly
coloured suit, looking like
a man enraptured

by the Mardis Gras going
on in his head: that's
where we're accustomed
to seeing Will Butler,
Arcade Fire's jack of
all trades and drum-
juggling daredevil-in-
chief. Tonight, opening
his debut UK solo tour
at Glasgow's intimate
Art School, he's centre
stage, he and his three
bandmates sporting
plain black sweatshirts
with their names
printed on them, and
not a papier mâché
puppet or Haitian drum
in sight. Butler even
performs his own
changeover after local
support band White
finish, which is
something he probably
didn't have to worry
about when he
headlined Glastonbury
last summer.

Then again, given
the increasingly grand
canvas on which Arcade Fire operate, perhaps
it shouldn't be too much of a surprise that he's
dialled things down for his debut solo album.
There are inevitable similarities between

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



**Joel Stone, 32,
Glasgow**
"I didn't really know
much about him and

I'm not a big Arcade Fire fan,
but I enjoyed the dynamics of
the gig, especially the two girls
at either side, singing those
great girl-group harmonies."



**Samuel Burton, 20,
Mansfield**
"I was pretty
surprised – there
was a proper energy, and for
an album that only lasts about
25 minutes, he had a lot to
play. It's good that he's doing
something a bit different from
the same old stuff."



**Gunter Schweitz,
22, Frankfurt**
"It was very good.
I was already a fan
of Arcade Fire, but I heard his
album the other day and really
liked it. The best song for me
was 'Take My Side.'"

Sun Comes Up' lifts the opening line from
Dylan's 'All Along The Watchtower', just as
'Take My Side' knowingly evokes his 'Outlaw
Blues'. The frenzied doo-wop gospel of



THERE'S NOT A PAPIER MACHE PUPPET OR HAITIAN DRUM IN SIGHT

'Witness' nods to Marvin Gaye's 'Can I Get
A Witness', while 'Son Of God' finds Butler
sounding like Elvis. In fact, listen closely
enough and you can pick out most of the
great names (and some of the lesser ones) in
the American canon – Springsteen, Spector,
Jonathan Richman, Pixies, even Meat Loaf.

Live, there's a far greater cohesion to all
this than you'll find on the album. Whereas
'Policy' was a rough diamond that may have
been a little too eclectic for its own good, the
sparseness of his live set-up – just Butler, two
keyboard players and a drummer – gives the
songs a directness and uniformity that make
them feel more of a piece with each other.
'When The Sun Comes Up', 'Madonna Can't
Save Me Now' and 'Something's Coming' are
even performed as a sort of mini-suite, where
the disparate threads of punk-funk, piano
house and off-kilter country are expertly tied
together with a metronomic kick-drum beat.



Will Butler onstage in Glasgow

SETLIST

- You Must Be Kidding
- Son Of God
- When The Sun Comes Up
- Madonna Can't Save Me Now
- Something's Coming
- Anna
- Anna II
- Clean Monday
- Sing To Me
- Luckiest Sailor
- Cold
- The Death Of Ferdinand De Saussure
- Surrender
- Witness
- What I Want
- Take My Side
- Public Defender
- American Music

This also extends to the ones he recently wrote for *The Guardian*, where he churned out a song a day based on whatever headline caught his fancy: Butler plays three of them tonight, and considering the hurried nature of the exercise, they're remarkably well formed, particularly 'You Must Be Kidding', which sounds like Springsteen's 'Johnny 99' if it had been written about a water shortage in São Paulo instead of economic desperation in New Jersey.

Butler has talked about how "part of the goal of this record is to make people excited enough to pay attention when I'm 80", and the number of new or unreleased songs in the evening's set give the impression that this project is rather more far-sighted than the usual cycle of 'band member steps out of the shadows, records album, quietly returns to day job'. We certainly hope so. 'Policy' may have flown under most people's radar, but as Arcade Fire balloon to ever greater proportions, tonight is proof that scale matters a lot less than heart. ■ BARRY NICOLSON

9

MORE GIGS

Låpsley Leaf, Liverpool

Friday, 18th April

This hometown show is the first date of a tour that will take new XL signing Låpsley from the UK to the US via Europe. Things are moving fast for 18-year-old Holly Lapsley Fletcher. She walks out to an expectant crowd, but five minutes in, disaster strikes. "Sorry, can I start again? My backing track is, er, glitching," she grimaces during the aptly titled 'Glitch'. Thankfully, the set continues without interruption, and the crowd fall into silent reverence for the ambient dub of 'Station' and the beautiful 'Falling Short'. The latter, from the recent 'Understudy' EP, backs up comparisons to The xx. New track 'Take A Minute' hints at chart-busting balladry to come, and she leaves the stage with cheers ringing in her ears.

■ JAMIE CROSSAN

7

Screaming Females Brudenell Social Club, Leeds

Monday, 20 April

"We're not using those monitors – you can stand in front of them," says Screaming Females' frontwoman Marissa Paternoster, beckoning the crowd towards the floor space in front of her. The New Jersey three-piece treat them to material from sixth album 'Rose Mountain': the brooding title track is held together by Paternoster's shredding, while 'Ripe' is even better, Paternoster's fiery vibrato mixing powerfully with Jarrett Dougherty's aggressive drumming and tumultuous bass from 'King' Mike Abbate. As the last note rings out, Abbate puts down his guitar and strides to the merch table; a concise farewell.

■ HAYLEY AVRON

8

The Magic Gang



Bleach, Brighton
Friday, April 17

Local underground heroes make good on their earlier promise at a riotous hometown show

There's an eager knot of fans pressed up against the front of Bleach's stage as local lads The Magic Gang saunter out for the last night of their debut UK tour and launch into Weezer-like opener 'You Don't Want Me'. It's been part of the quartet's live set for more than a year, and guitars chop cleanly as the hardcore leap in unison, punching the air to its simple sentiment ("My girl thinks that she's the only one for me"). Frontman Jack Kaye, in Rivers Cuomo specs, sings the first verse, fellow guitarist Kristian Smith takes the second and bassist Angus Taylor jumps in for its raucous chorus.

While their acceleration from trashing house parties at last year's Great Escape to releasing recent debut single 'No Fun' has been swift, The Magic Gang remain overlooked by Brighton's broader music scene, at least compared with contemporaries like Demob Happy. Despite their deep roots in the city, their reputation currently lays within a tiny DIY network of blogs, zines and bands who've come out in force tonight – as well as support acts Sulky Boy and Our Girl, the crowd is stuffed with members of next-generation Brighton acts like Abattoir Blues and Tigercub. The sense of proud ownership makes it even more special.

The crowd push harder through the stoned Beach Boys swagger of 'She Won't Ghost', during which Smith wheels out a guitar solo straight from the Teenage Fanclub school of fizzing pop. Following punchy live favourite 'Happy Birthday', two new songs show The Magic Gang's knack for casually sung, universal choruses. 'Jasmine' shines brightest, with the crowd soon bawling its breezy couplets ("The sky turns from blue/It starts to rain on you") back at the band.

Things take a turn for the chaotic as the steady tension of 'Shallow' sees the first crowdsurfers hoist themselves up. The Magic Gang join in, pouring wine down each other's throats before they growl into 'No Fun'. A rampage through 2013's 'With My Baby' ends with drummer Paeris Giles taking off on a drunken tumble over the audience's heads as the night collapses to a close. ■ STUART HUGGETT

SETLIST

- You Don't Want Me
- She Won't Ghost
- Happy Birthday
- Jasmine
- Lady Please
- Alright
- Shallow
- No Fun
- With My Baby

7

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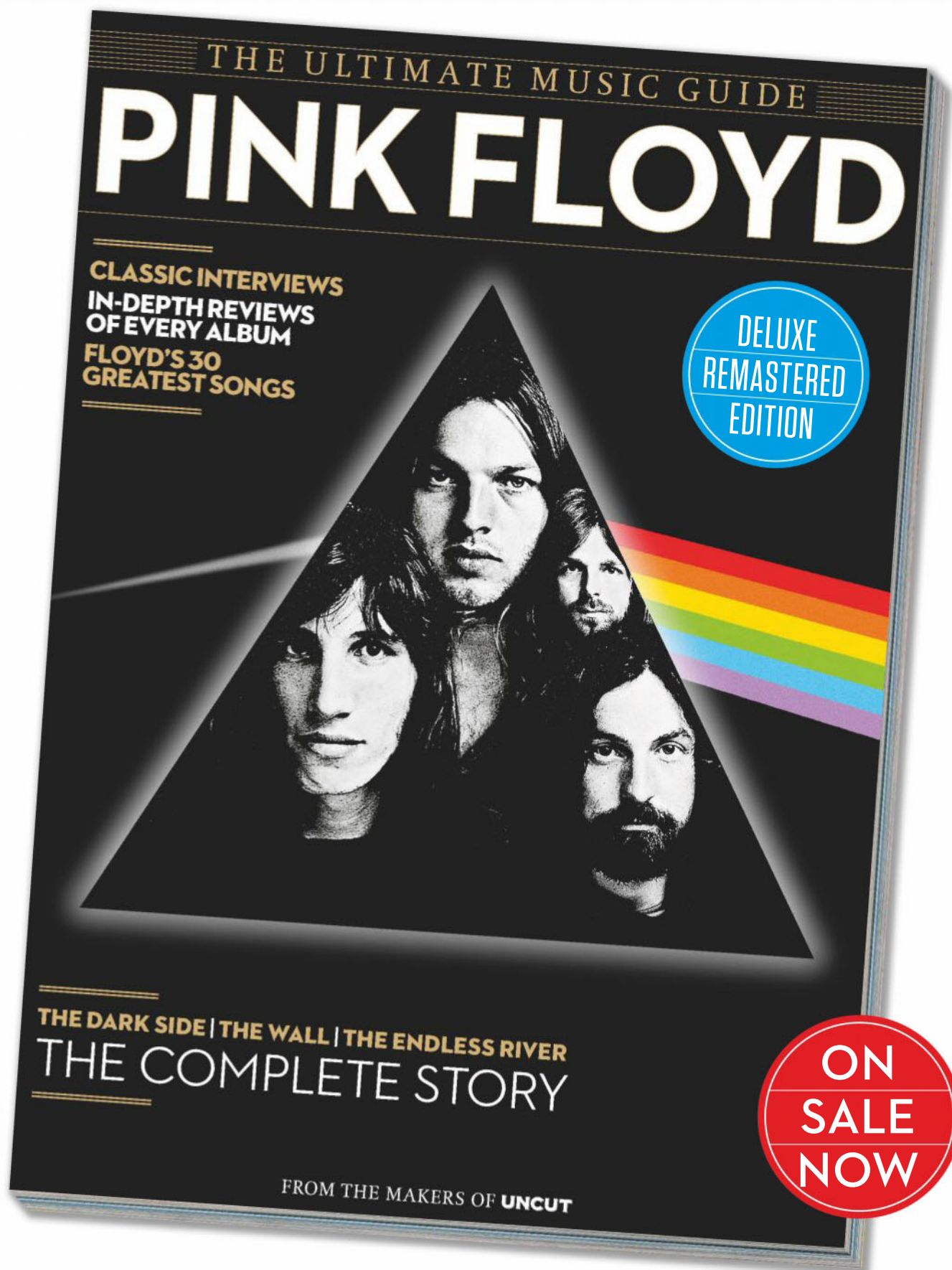
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THIS WEEK IN 2001



A decade into their career, R&B trio Destiny's Child are in London to celebrate their first UK Number One and cock a snook at former members

With 12 million sales of their recent 'The Writing's On The Wall' album under their camouflage gunbelts as well as their first UK Number One single in the shape of 'Independent Women Part 1', Destiny's Child have reached the peak of international success they've been training for "since we were about 11 or 12 years old". As they prepare to release their new single 'Survivor', NME's Alex Needham meets the trio in London's Metropolitan hotel and finds them in confident mood. "I think we changed the industry," the 20-year-old Beyoncé Knowles claims. "I just want to make history."

The original members were just nine when they were signed (and 13 when dropped), so Destiny's Child have had a long, bumpy ride to the top. Recently they lost two members, LaTavia Roberson and LeToya Luckett, just as 'Bills, Bills, Bills' became a huge hit. "I think that they see how successful Destiny's Child is without them and it's eating them up," Kelly Rowland says, but they deny that 'Survivor' is aimed at their ex-bandmates. "It's for people who've been in a relationship with a dog," Kelly explains.

GREEN GARVEY

A fresh-faced Elbow meet NME's Stevie Chick in a rainy Austin, Texas during SXSW to talk over their rise from Chuck Berry covers band to the new downbeat darlings of the experimental-pop brigade, via at least one failed major-label stint. "A lot of the songs are about the mishaps we've had to face along the way," says Guy Garvey before explaining how close the band have become. "I know these lot better than I know my own family. I can cry in front of them," he says. "It can get awkward," adds bassist Pete Turner.

COME TO PAPA

Touting songs about teenage binge-drinking, broken homes and, um, bedwetting, California rockers Papa Roach have broken America just 18 months after singer Coby Dick quit his job cleaning hospital toilets. Now in the eye of the storm of US success, he's asking Eminem for advice on how to cope. "He just laughed and said, 'Dude, you are me, like, a year ago. Fucking wasted all the time.'"

REVIEWED THIS WEEK

Mogwai - 'Rock Action'
"They spit insurrection and punk disgust, yet their music is beauty, emotion and sudden strings as far as the ear can hear. Every note wins every fight they've ever started." ■ VICTORIA SEGAL

ALSO IN THE ISSUE THIS WEEK

► Eminem has inspired a gay porn model called Matthew, who appears on the cover of *Euroboy* in Marshall Mathers' trademark dungaree costume doing unspeakable things with a chainsaw.
► Fans are outraged when Madonna tickets go on sale for an "astronomical" £75, only five pounds less than a ticket for the Reading & Leeds weekend.
► Following their famous 'Blur: Are Shite' T-shirts, Mogwai are now producing garments reading 'Gorillaz: Are Worse'.

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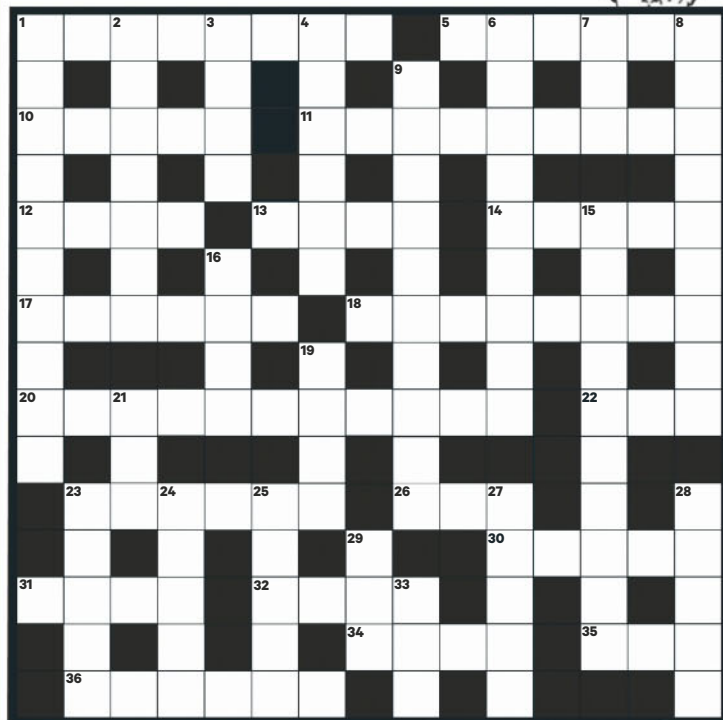


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CLUES ACROSS

- 1** Noel Gallagher holding a current account between two banks (8)
5 Wrapping for singles by both Catfish & The Bottlemen and Ash (6)
10+11A Spots the evidence of a Maccabees single (5-2-5-2)
12+6D "If Joan Of Arc had a heart would she give it as a gift?", 1982 (4-2-7)
13+31A Hail a Bob Dylan album (4-4)
14 Change of roles for Beck (5)
17 Bob Marley recording to get on the way out (6)
18 One brain malfunction responsible for 'Before And After Science' (5-3)
20 They were 'Two Doors Down' from 'Twenty One' (7-4)
22 'We Are ___' From Glasgow, Scotland', band's 2007 compilation album on Cherry Red label (3)
23 A place ruined by Wild Beasts (6)

26 (See 8 down)

- 30+33D** Stereo headphones not working properly with Cage The Elephant (2-3-3)
31 (See 13 across)
32 Comedies that include music by The Cult (4)
34 Aimee ___ American who came out with a 'Stupid Thing' (4)
35 Sidekick conceals the missing part of Primal Scream's 'Echo ___' (3)
36 Why one mistake was made by London Grammar (3-3)

CLUES DOWN

- 1** Don't forget I'll be with British Sea Power, The Zutons and Hoobastank (8-2)
2 Alex Turner getting giddy with Mini Mansions (7)
3 (See 29 down)
4+28D The stars took time to appear on Van Morrison album (6-5)
6 (See 12 across)
7+15D "This is the heavy, heavy monster sound",

1979 (3-4-6)

- 8+26A** He was born in May 1972, died March 1997 (9-1-1-1)
9 We originally got The Horrors with this name (6-4)
15 (See 7 down)
16 They started off in 'Showbiz' in 1999 (4)
19 Namely a connection between The Futureheads and Underworld (4)
21 "Jealousy, turning saints into the ___, swimming through sick lullabies", from The Killers' 'Mr Brightside' (3)
23 (See 27 down)
24 Supergrass number making a comeback in a Jeff Lynne live show (5)
25 Dr Coe turns up for The Human League (5)
27+23D A big fruity one from Wolf Alice (5-5)
28 (See 4 down)
29+3D It's more changes from the man who sang in the 'Morning Dew' (3-4)
33 (See 30 across)

APRIL 18 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1 Can't Deny My Love, 8 Yo La Tengo, 9 Tales, 11 Toy, 12+13A Urban Hymns, 14 Look Sharp, 17+22A Go For It, 19 Trick, 21 Stop, 23 News., 25+10D For All My Sisters, 28 Rae, 29 Aha, 31 Rome, 32 Otzi, 33 Bez, 34 Peace, 35 Take On Me **DOWN** 1 Crystals, 2 Nelly, 3 Datsuns, 4+30D Nine Black Alps, 5+24D My Own Summer, 6 Let's Hang On, 7 Volume, 15+20D Out In L.A., 16 Post, 18 Open Road, 22 Iyaz, 25 Froot, 26 Arise, 27 Le Bon

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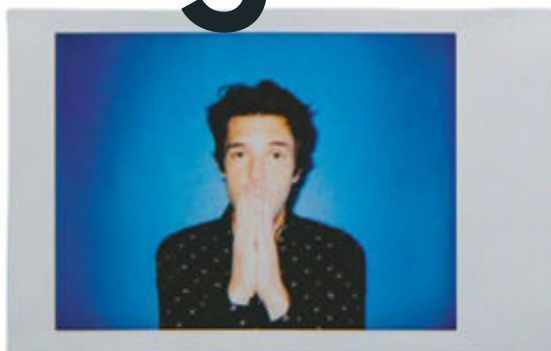
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