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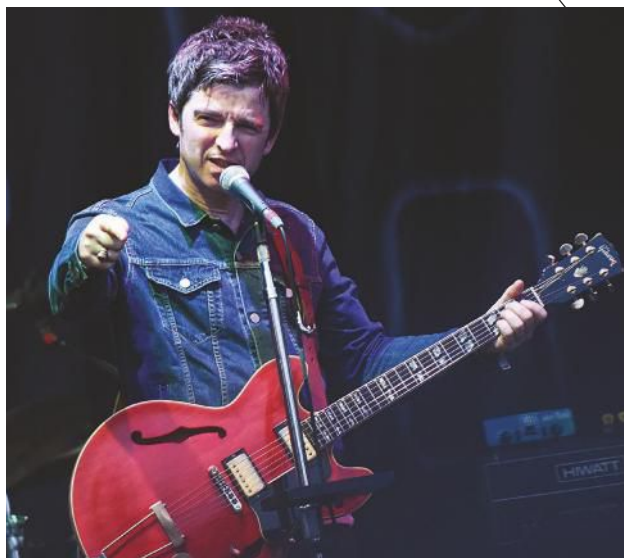
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NO NOEL? NO OASIS

Talk about giving with one hand and taking away with the other. I read the rumours of the original Oasis line-up reforming with my heart in my mouth as I've always said they lost that initial magic as soon as they started messing with the classic line-up and roped in Alan White. I've always dreamt of seeing Guigsy, Bonehead and Tony McCarroll reinstated and the true Oasis rise again. But then, what's this? An Oasis reunion with no Noel? Are you having a laugh? As central as Liam is to the band, reforming Oasis without Noel would feel like all of Queen's awful attempts to tour without Freddie Mercury. Don't blow your wad on a half-arsed reformation, lads, we'd rather wait until someone's offered Noel enough money to do it properly, surely?

David Bassett, via email



seriously, an Oasis reunion without Noel? It's not a reunion at all, is it? It's Beady Eye V2.0 with more Oasis back catalogue. There's no point. It may have looked tantalisingly likely earlier in the year when the Gallaghers appeared to have made up, but it's not going to happen. Well, at least until the promoters start waving their chequebooks, and that's not going to happen before 2016...

GC: Ahh yes, that Oasis 'reunion'. Again. Noel seems to have gone blue in the face the amount of times he's had to deny it, while Liam's thrown his toys at Noel for suggesting he's instigating the recent whispers. Either way, the rumblings are nothing if not persistent. But

future is? Last time I went to see them in 2011, it felt like the last time I might see them judging by the chemistry onstage.

Tom Littlejohn, via email

GC: The Strokes are in a very interesting place right now. There are side projects galore for Julian, Albert and Nikolai, but also murmurings from Casablanco about new music. My bet? Don't expect any new songs this summer – enjoy it for what it is. But afterwards? I think it's album six or bust.

AND FINALLY...

Can't say I was surprised to hear that the girl from 'Common People' is now married to the Greek finance minister. Pop and politics have been mixing like this for years. Katie from 'What Katie Did' is now minister of defence in Belarus and the girlfriend from 'Mr Brightside' was Sally Bercow.

Neil Thorne, via email

GC: You're right, Neil. You've probably spotted all the scary children from Aphex's Twin's 'Come To Daddy' are in Cameron's cabinet as well now.

DR YEEZY, PHD

How funny that the School Of Art Institute Of Chicago has given an honorary doctorate to that famed college dropout and self-proclaimed "proud non-reader of books" Kanye West. I guess it proves that if you keep saying you deserve something long enough, you'll get it. My only wish, while watching his acceptance speech, was that Stephen Hawking would motor onstage midway through saying, "Kanye, imma let you finish..."

Paul Grange, via email

GC: As much as I love Kanye, I don't really go in for this gifting-artists-degrees business. Sure, Kanye has made a massive contribution to his profession, but it's all a bit of a publicity stunt. He's probably not felt the pain of running

out of printer paper at 4.30am after spending three weeks without sleep, sustained on BBQ Pringles, working on a dissertation about 15th-century Icelandic folk law. That's what you *should* go through to wear a silly hat.

VAN, THE MAN

Finally, we get to see the mighty Van McCann on the cover of *NME*. Not only are his band class, but I actually look forward to reading what he's got to say. Band of the summer? Could be band of the decade if they keep doing what they're doing.

Craig Foil, via email

GC: I admire your vision for The Bottlemen. We'll see how that pans out over the summer and beyond. It's still early days, but personally McCann's cocky ambition and joy in gatecrashing the Arctic Monkeys' catering tent is quickly making him one of my favourite reads.

KEEP PALMA AND CARRY ON

I'm American and therefore my opinion has no validity when it comes to UK politics, but since you've recently discovered you're still all under a Tory government, my advice would be to sit down, plug in some earbuds and listen to the new Palma Violets album to drown out all the political bullshit. Best of luck, my friends.

Olivia Gehrke, via email

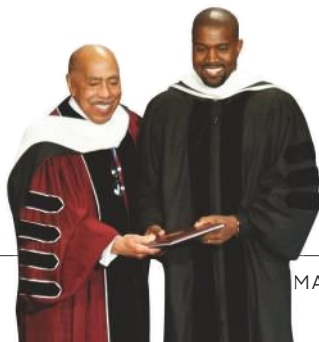
GC: Sound advice, you should run for president.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT?

I can't tell you how excited I was reading about The Strokes' comeback show in Atlanta last week! This band changed my life, and hearing they had my favourite slacker totty Mac DeMarco onstage with them for 'Last Nite' just made the whole thing sound even more like my perfect gig! The lack of new songs might not bode well for the long term, but Hyde Park can't come soon enough!

Jane Vickers, via email

Another Strokes comeback? I'm really not sure how I feel about this. The last album, 'Comedown Machine', they didn't even tour, but now they're back playing shows. What's the deal? Don't get me wrong, I love the band to death and I probably will go to Hyde Park in the summer, but I'd just like to know what the



LOOK WHO'S STALKING

Me and my pals meeting Isaac Holman from Slaves at Live At Leeds!

Olivia Nicholson, via email



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NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

**1. Sunflower Bean
I Hear Voices**

On their first trip to the UK last week, NYC trio Sunflower Bean blew minds with their psych mania. 'I Hear Voices' is the first new material since their 'Show Me Your Seven Secrets' EP at the start of the year. "Sometimes your joke is a fact/Most times your jokes are just bad", spits bassist Julia Cumming over riffs that are as hypnotic as the vocal back-and-forth between her and guitarist Nick Kivlen.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

**2. The Maccabees
Spit It Out**

Studio hell suits The Maccabees. 'Given To The Wild' saw them shake up and break down their writing process, leading to a period lost in sound. This time, they took two-and-a-half years to nail the direction for 'Marks To Prove It'. The master-craftsmen dynamics honed on this latest taster, the rougher, more expressive range of Orlando's voice, the eerie quiet passages and huge, sky-soaring releases, suggest that not a minute was wasted.

Emily Mackay, writer

**3. Metric
The Shade**

"A canopy of trees bears witness to the breeze, I'm falling like a feather", sings Emily Haines on Metric's first new music in three years. It's an electro-pop heart-melter right out of the Chvrches school of schmaltz. Lou Reed guested on their last outing, 2012's 'Synthetica', but 'The Shade' proves they're just as confident without the aid of art-rock luminaries, charming their way through four minutes of big hooks and longing for eternal love.

Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

**4. Muse
Mercy**

We've had the huge riffer ('Psycho') and the alt-popper ('Dead Inside'), so the time could hardly be riper for Matt, Chris and Dom to unveil the piano stomper. Played for the first time at the I Heart Radio Theater in New York on May 9, 'Mercy' is sort of a combo of 'Bliss' from 'Origin Of Symmetry' (the keyboard wobbles) and 'Glorious', the bonus track from 'Black Holes And Revelations' (Bellamy's vocal hysteria). Expect handclaps at gigs.

Tom Howard, Assistant Editor

**5. Shaun Ryder
Close The Dam**

Big year for Shaun Ryder – Black Grape and Happy Mondays shows and, as he told *NME* recently, he went native in the Amazon jungle for a new documentary series. Yup, imagine that. Also, this: a belter of a solo song he's releasing with his initials, SWR, splashed on the cover. Pitched closer to Black Grape than the Mondays, it's a monstrous slab of punk-funk about someone cutting the drugs with something nasty at a pool party. Ah, the memories.

Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

**6. Gweno
Patriarchaeth**

Formerly of The Pipettes, Welsh singer-songwriter Gweno has recently emerged spinning feminist yarns in Welsh and Cornish over fairy-dust synths and kraut-pop rhythms. True to type, 'Patriarchaeth' – the lead track from her debut album 'Y Dydd Olaf' – smuggles a message (the chorus translates as "Patriarchy, and your soul is under siege") beneath melodies cushy enough to stuff a pillow with.

Jazz Monroe, writer

**7. Tinie Tempah
Not Letting Go**

Two years since 'Demonstration', south London rapper Tinie Tempah is back with R Kelly-referencing, Jess Glynne-featuring new single 'Not Letting Go'. "Remix to the ignition in the back of the Jeep", he raps over bubbling, summery beats before reminiscing about "Playing R Kelly, I believe I can fly" with his ladyfriend. Glynne's chorus, meanwhile, offers a soaring extra dimension to Tinie's lovestruck verses.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

**8. Oscar
Beautiful Words**

London-based bedroom producer Oscar Scheller announces his debut EP on Wichita Recordings with the release of title track 'Beautiful Words', and it's a song that lives up to its romantic name. A lo-fi mixture of skewed string samples, bustling drums and shimmering guitar chords supplement Oscar's distinctive baritone vocals for three-and-a-half minutes of pure, heavy-hearted indie pop.

James Bentley, writer

**9. Prince
Baltimore**

Written in tribute to black American Freddie Gray, who died in police custody last month after being arrested in Baltimore, Prince's newest offering has shades of Sly Stone. Featherlight backing vocals, funky guitar and threadbare drums leave plenty of space for the lyrics, which also mention Michael Brown, the teenager who died in Ferguson last year, before a buzzing solo and chants of "If there ain't no justice then there ain't no peace".

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

**10. Albert Hammond Jr
Born Slippy**

Just a few days after The Strokes returned to the live stage with a headline set at Atlanta's Shaky Knees festival, guitarist Albert Hammond Jr announced his new solo album, 'Momentary Masters'. 'Born Slippy' – not a cover of Underworld's mid-'90s epic – is the first track to be taken from it. This tropically tinged cut is reminiscent of early Vampire Weekend, and suggests he's still got plenty of ideas away from the New York heroes.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

ESSENTIAL NEW TRACKS

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11. MIA Platforms

MIA's always been someone who's at her best when her back's against the wall. It's little surprise, then, that as her ding-dong with ex-boyfriend Diplo rumbles on, she's shrugged off the snark and tossed out a belter instead. Over a brittle, broken beat she drawls "*Guns keep it fun*", defiantly daring anyone to come and have a go if they think they're hard enough. There shouldn't be many takers.

Ben Hewitt, writer

12. Fews Ills

This track from Swedish-American quartet Fews is the 12th release in producer Dan Carey's Speedy Wunderground singles series. Like previous efforts from Telegram and Toy, 'Ills' was recorded in one 24-hour session in Carey's Streatham studio. Judging by its eight intense minutes, both band and producer must have been dribbling wrecks by the time they'd cut the record. 'Ills' is from Diiv's school of loose, simple psychedelia.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

13. Birdskulls Good Enough

Birdskulls should be familiar to anyone who's been keeping a close eye on the DIY scene encompassing peers Bloody Knees and Nai Harvest. Like the former, the trio have a knack of taking the mundane parts of life and turning them into rousing, riff-heavy tunes. 'Good Enough', the first track from debut album 'Trickle' (due on Dog Knights Production later this year), is no different. Jack Pulman drawls over sludgy riffs that'll keep you buoyant all night long.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

14. Gwilym Gold Triumph

Gwilym Gold's latest comes on like a more polite Death Grips, with fast-paced drums and a looped riff building a platform from which Gold introduces himself ominously: "*You never see me, your ass is mine now*". As the song progresses it becomes increasingly claustrophobic and tense. This is the most direct thing Gold has put his name to and is just a taste of the diverse and lush world he's created on forthcoming second album 'A Paradise'.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor

15. Lana Del Rey Serial Killer

An early version of 'Serial Killer' leaked way back in 2012, but it took until earlier this month for LDR to break out a live version. It's still a mystery as to whether the track – a typically sultry mix of languid strings and terse, glitchy beats – will feature on her in-the-works third album. Either way, seeing as it features Lana not just in thrall to a bad boy, but a homicidal maniac, we suggest she starts seriously rethinking her OKCupid matches.

Leonie Cooper, writer



16. Sharon Van Etten Remembering Mountains

Last year's Dylan tribute 'New Basement Tapes' seems to have instigated a new trend of musicians covering unreleased songs by their heroes. Now comes an album featuring unheard songs penned by late Oklahoma folk singer Karen Dalton. Sharon Van Etten's take is of utmost intrigue. Delicate yet assertive, it perfectly balances the warmth of Van Etten's vocals with Dalton's meandering verse.

Luke Morgan Britton, writer

17. Mac DeMarco The Way You'd Love Her

Last year, Mac DeMarco moved out of his shitty Brooklyn digs and into a bigger suburban house in Far Rockaway, Queens. He recorded upcoming mini-album 'Another One' there, and if this sweetly melodic first titbit is anything to go by, he's much happier than he was while making 'Salad Days'. Mac's not doing anything drastically different on 'The Way You'd Love Her', but there's a chilled-ness to it that suggests he's found a bit of peace.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

18. Vangoffey Race Of Life

While his erstwhile Supergrass bandmate Gaz Coombes is tackling fatherhood on his new album, Danny Goffey – as Vangoffey – is getting a little more, um, biological on the matter. Here he fondly reminisces on his golden minutes as a sperm shot out of his "*old man's gun*" and beating his testicle-escaping brethren ("*murderers, thieves and bankers, MPs and wannabe gangsters*") to the grand prize of becoming a human. Seminal.

Mark Beaumont, writer

19. Sleaford Mods No One's Bothered

The über-productive Sleaford Mods return with new album 'Key Markets' in July with frontman Jason Williamson saying the record touches on "the delusion of grandeur and the pointlessness of government politics", which seems pretty apt right now. 'No Ones Bothered' is a psychobilly rattler in which Williamson barks lines like "*alienation, no one's bothered*" over a simple bass riff. An ominous look ahead to the next five years.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor

20. Leftfield Bilocation (feat. Channy Leaneagh)

The latest taster from Leftfield's first album since 1999's 'Rhythm And Stealth' is markedly more restrained than March's 'Universal Everything'. Featuring siren vocals from Polića's Channy Leaneagh, 'Bilocation' inhabits a murky corner of the club. Away from the euphoria of the main dancefloor, its isolated blips and bleeps hammer away, creating an absorbing and slightly uncomfortable listen.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor



The Week

► EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN MUSIC ■ EDITED BY DAN STUBBS

Frank Carter
at Sang Bleu,
London,
May 14, 2015



Magna Carter

Former Gallows and Pure Love man
Frank Carter unleashes his new band
The Rattlesnakes and gets bloody in
the basement of his tattoo parlour

PHOTO BY WUNMI ONIBUDO

The greatest punk frontman of the last decade is back, and he's spitting more venom than ever. After leaving hardcore provocateurs Gallows in 2011 and dissolving power rockers Pure Love last year when he moved back to Britain from Brooklyn, New York, Frank Carter's latest venture sees him making a welcome return to his brutal roots.

Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes' first ever gig took place last week (Thursday, May 14) in the sweaty basement of Sang Bleu, the east London parlour where tattoo artist Carter plies his trade during the daytime. It's only been a year since he last gigged, but he's been genuinely missed: fans have been queuing outside in the rain since 11am for what is also the opening of Carter's first ever art show, *Modern Ruin*.

He's clearly as desperate for this performance as the fans, and by the time second song 'Fangs' thrashes around he's bashing his head and bleeding profusely from the wound. He tears his shirt off not long after, revealing his heavily inked torso.

But this isn't just about image. "Too many bands nowadays are saying nothing," Carter snarls, after inciting a violent pit with the 50 or so punters who've been allowed into the tiny makeshift venue. "They're just singing about fucking each other and not wearing any clothes in the summer. We already know that's cool, you idiots." Instead, Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes tackle the darker side of life: suicide bombers ('Paradise'), what happens when you die ('Rotten Blossom'), losing loved ones ('Loss').

It's musical catharsis at its most primal. "You're listening to a band that wrote these songs a month ago and only learned how to play them yesterday," admits Carter midway through the band's eight-song set, after leaping up onto a tattoo table. "So basically it's as close to perfect as it will ever be. It's only downhill from here." With a tour set for June, Carter's seventh Reading and Leeds Festival appearance in August and the band's debut album coming this summer, don't bet on that...

■ LEONIE COOPER

Kevin goes large

Tame Impala frontman Kevin Parker promises third album 'Currents' will be a dancefloor beast



He's had enough with 'Lonerism', and Kevin Parker is growing up and going out. Three years after the release of Tame Impala's hugely acclaimed second album, the 29-year-old says he's made their first all-out party record.

"I wanted to make something that from the sound of it could be down at the club," he says of forthcoming third album 'Currents'. "I just realised that I'd never heard Tame Impala played somewhere with a dancefloor, or where people were dancing. Listening to it was very much kind of a headphone, solitary experience. Which is cool, but I've moved on from that. I've always loved listening to music on my own, but there's another side of me that is just fascinated by... like Goa trance, for example – just a rave on a beach in India, you know? Where there's someone that's spinning the music and it's just this free-flowing continuous energy."

He "conquered the solitary" of recording his albums alone by touring 'Lonerism' solidly for almost three years, until November 2014. He then returned to his new house in Perth, Australia to start work on its follow-up, creating songs in his home studio and

putting together accompanying visuals simultaneously in an adjacent lighting room. The first songs to emerge over the spring – free download 'Let It Happen' in March and first single proper 'Cause I'm A Man' in April – suggest a funkier, more melodic take on Perthadelic psych rock, and another new track, the strident, psych-pop 'Eventually', was premiered at last week's Levitation festival in Austin, Texas (see review on page 46). "First show of the tour, it was crazy," Kevin says of the event, formerly known as Psych Fest. "I was flattered to know that we were held in such regard in the psych world."

Reflecting the dramatic shifts Tame Impala's success has brought to Kevin's life, the tracks on 'Currents' all share a common thread of personal advancement. "It's someone finding themselves in this world of chaos," he explains. "At different times in life I've felt like it's time to say goodbye from some form of myself that's been hanging around for a while – you just feel this urge to move on, like a herd of antelope. They're just standing there in a field eating grass, and then all of a sudden they start moving. You feel like that as a person sometimes. Where it's just time to move on." ■ MARK BEAUMONT

In the shadows

Twin Shadow offers tourbus crash update

Following April's dramatic tourbus crash in Colorado, Twin Shadow – aka electronica songwriter George Lewis Jr – had planned to restart touring new album 'Eclipse' at Barcelona's Primavera Sound festival this month. Twelve people were injured in the collision with a

tractor-trailer near the town of Aurora and Lewis' May UK gigs were cancelled. Yet when NME calls him for an update, it's clear others shows will be postponed a while longer. "I had reconstructive surgery, which sounds intense," says LA-based Lewis, whose hand is being held together by pins after it was



broken in four places, while drummer Andy Bauer remains in hospital near the crash site with spinal injuries. "In about two months or so I should be able to start trying to play guitar again," he explains.

Earlier this month, Lewis – with his arm bandaged – made his first live performance since the crash, covering Sade's 'No Ordinary Love' with Zoë Kravitz on US talkshow *Late Night With Seth Meyers*. When asked when he'll be back on the road, he says: "I just want to make sure that everyone's really healthy and not destroying themselves at all for the sake of playing."

■ LEONIE COOPER

MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE

FIVE TOURING ESSENTIALS

Ross Jarman



The Cribs

BOOK
The Rotters' Club
- Jonathan Coe



"Alex from Franz Ferdinand gave it to me. It's about kids growing up in the 1970s and coming of age – I'm currently getting round to reading that on the road."



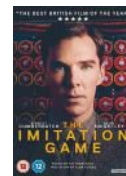
BOXSET
The Walking Dead

"It's good to get engrossed in something on tour.

Ryan's obsessed with zombies too – he's said he wants to be one."

FILM
The Imitation Game

"I watched it on a plane. When I'm on planes, for some reason films are way more emotional. The only time I've ever welled up watching a film is on a plane, and this one did it."



GAME

"We're old school, we don't play video games. On this US tour some of the drives have been really long, so we bought a bouncy ball and when we pull up at service stations we play with that."

HOME COMFORT
Foam earplugs

"We all share rooms and our guitar tech snores badly. So to get a good night's sleep I have to bring these earplugs with me."



► The Cribs play The Limelight, Belfast (May 21) and Waterfront, Norwich (May 23)

JENN FIVE

TheWeek

Capital gents The Maccabees
talk us through their fourth
album 'Marks To Prove It'

Wilder minds

Recorded over two-and-a-half years in their own Elephant & Castle studio, the new Maccabees album, 'Marks To Prove It', takes the atmospherics of 2012's 'Given To The Wild' and streamlines them into their most direct and purposeful record. Here, Orlando Weeks and Felix and Hugo White give us the skinny on all 11 songs.

Marks To Prove It

Felix: "Because 'Given To The Wild' started composed and got bigger and quicker as it went on, we wanted this album to be different."
Orlando: "The story arc of the record is of day into night into day again, and 'Marks To Prove It' feels like the entrance into twilight."

Kamakura

Felix: "We went to Kamakura, Japan on tour a couple of years ago and the music was made about that. It's a peaceful, atmospheric piece of music, but Orlando's words are about kicking-out time on the high street. They're opposite things but play together in a unique way."

Ribbon Road

Hugo: "It's a track where we tried to be more patient than we normally are with music. It

rumbles along and it's kind of repetitive and it envelopes you with that patience."

Felix: "The initial idea was for it to sound like old men playing in a Moroccan hash bar. It doesn't sound anything like that, but you have to start far out to get there sometimes."

Spit It Out

Felix: "It's a late epiphany to come to, but distorted guitars – when you just strum them – sound great.

We always found it hard for that to work for us in a convincing manner, so it was nice to find a way that suited The Maccabees."

Silence

Orlando: "There's a melancholy to the track that [corresponds with] a point in the night when everyone feels a bit down. The next day, there's real insight in those moments. It's kind of menacing, and it's poignant and it's sad, but it's also got something that suggests that there's more to come."



The Maccabees
in their studio
in Elephant &
Castle, London

River Song

Orlando: "This was about seeing people having a row. You only need to glimpse it and you know the whole story. It was sad and unkind to see, and that felt like that time of night too, when people should have gone home."

Slow Sun

Orlando: "Sam and I went and recorded people on the very early commute, when some people are still awake and some people are going to work."

Felix: "Cenzo Townshend, who mixed the record, was like, 'You know there's an Italian woman screaming obscenities at the start of this?'"

Something Like Happiness

Orlando: "It's about being really happy for someone if they've got something. You can feel like you have to rally against things, but people know their minds and if it brings someone contentment then good for them."

WWI Portraits

Orlando: "I saw an exhibition of first world war portraits and I came home thinking, 'I'm gonna do my own propaganda' – seeing all these paintings of bright young things looking every inch the hero and thinking that you can choose to make those ideals in fiction. It was a good exercise."

**"'SILENCE' IS KIND
OF MENACING
AND POIGNANT"**
Orlando Weeks

Pioneering Systems

Hugo: "It's the first time we've ventured into more old-school, natural-sounding, stripped-back territory. It's very piano-led."

Dawn Chorus

Felix: "It's the last thing that got recorded for the record, so it's fitting that it ends it."

Hugo: "There weren't any lyrics and it didn't have proper sections and then Orlando came and did one take and it didn't get touched."

■ LISA WRIGHT

WIN!



Win tickets to Glastonbury, with Tuborg

Your chance to see
Kanye, the Foo's and
The Who at Worthy
Farm this summer

Tuborg, the official lager of Glastonbury, has teamed up with NME to offer two readers a pair of weekend tickets to the world's most famous music festival. If you already have a ticket, make sure you visit the Inn On The Green at Williams Green to enjoy an ice-cold Tuborg.

To enter, just send the answer to the question below to letters@nme.com by May 27.

Which county is Glastonbury Festival held in?

- A) Somerset
- B) Yorkshire
- C) Northumberland

NME's standard T&Cs apply. UK 18+ only. Must be available June 24–28. Winners must give their full name, the name of their guest and a contact number in their email. Winner notified May 28.



Michael
Eavis

John Whittingdale (left) is a fan of Sham 69 (right)



O! CULTURE SECRETARY! THINK ABOUT PEOPLE, NOT ABOUT CUTS

BY ROU REYNOLDS,
ENTER SHIKARI

John Whittingdale likes Sham 69 but is anti gay marriage. He needs to get his priorities right – and support the arts



I'm past the 'moping about in my dressing gown with the curtains drawn' phase. Now I'm just trying work out what to expect from this Conservative government. What does five years of the Tories mean for live music? For culture?

Enter John Whittingdale, the new culture secretary. This would normally be a vibrant position supporting all that's good in society, but his job description under the next five years of Tory rule will probably be "presiding over huge cuts as the government seeks to eliminate the deficit". Depressing. Whittingdale's a real mixed bag. He consistently seems like he's a man fighting the good fight, but then goes and does something bloody stupid.

1) He intended to study astronomy at university but instead went to work for the Conservative Party and eventually found the cold, withered bosom of Margaret

Thatcher, working as her political secretary. I don't think I could think of a more efficient way to rid yourself of wonder for the universe.

2) He likes punk. His favourite bands include Sham 69 and the Buzzcocks and he once admitted he still had "one of those waistcoats with patches all over it and a Motörhead skull on the back". Incredible, right? But wait, he's also a man who voted "very strongly against" same-sex marriage. That's undeniably un-punk. And undeniably uncultured.

3) He was an apparent bringer of justice during the phone-hacking scandal a few years back and even stood up to that crevice-faced profit-octopus Rupert Murdoch, summoning the shrivelled prune to answer questions at the inquiry in person. But Whittingdale's courage in front of business moguls was overshadowed when he voted against the equal pay bill.

He's not a supporter of equality in any sense. He also voted for the Iraq war and against the fox-hunting ban. So he's bloodthirsty, whether it's humans or animals staring down the barrel.

It's hard to speculate on what his appointment means for the music scene. He did call for the abolition of the "discriminatory and completely unnecessary" Form 696 – a needlessly bureaucratic safety-assessment form that the government forced small venues to fill out

and that ended up being a way to discriminate against 'urban' music. And he's called for the removal of the "linkage of live music with public disorder", which puts him above the ignorant old council scrooges that used to shut down my band's shows back in St Albans. Perhaps there is some hope if he can keep the needs of the people above the supposed 'need' for cuts – and if he can put his prejudices to one side.

In 2013, the Culture, Media and Sport Committee talked about "the extraordinary success of the UK's creative industries", commending those that "contribute over £36 billion annually to the UK economy". It's telling that the measure of success here was economic. Under Whittingdale, I presume promoters will continue to be given a hard time, funding for the arts will continue to drop, venues will continue to be knocked down for flats or offices and we'll all keep asking: "What's the point of living or working in the city if there isn't any culture?" ■

LOST ALBUMS

#73

Benji Hughes

A Love Extreme (2008)

Chosen by Van McCann, Catfish And The Bottlemen



"He's a singer-songwriter from North Carolina. I've bought four of his albums and they're all dead consistent, but nobody I speak to ever knows who he is. Do you remember that spoof of *Walk The Line* called *Walk Hard*? He wrote the songs for that. One minute he's really dark, and the next he'll come out with a line that's really funny. He manages to sound like The Beatles or T-Rex, but it's just a dude with a big beard on a little organ. My favourite song on the album is called 'I Went With Some Friends To See The Flaming Lips' and it's about one of his mates taking too much MDMA at a gig. It's so good. He's mega."

► THE DETAILS

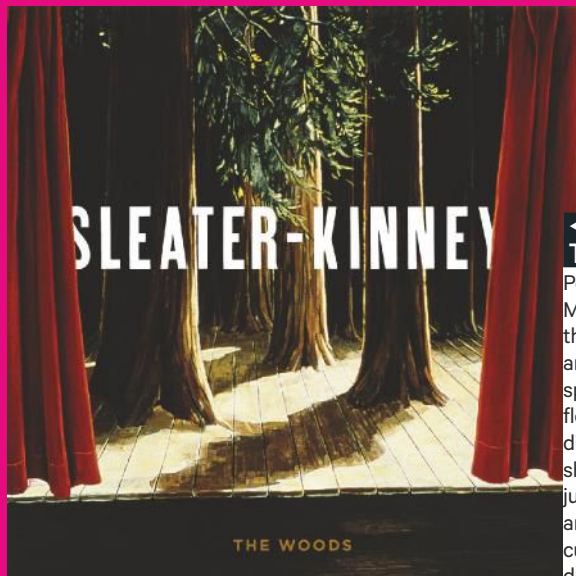
- **RELEASE DATE** July 2008
- **LABEL** New West
- **BEST TRACKS** I Went With Some Friends To See The Flaming Lips, Love Is A Razor
- **WHERE TO FIND IT** As an MP3 and on CD or vinyl
- **LISTEN ONLINE** On Spotify



ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM



"PEOPLE WILL EITHER GET IT OR THEY WON'T"
CARRIE BROWNSTEIN



SLEATER-KINNEY

THE WOODS

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Portland-based artist Michael Brophy painted the album's surreal cover art: leafy redwood trees sprouting out of a stage floor, a setting sun in the distance casting dark shadows. It's a striking juxtaposition of the natural and the staged, the theatre curtains hinting at an act drawing to a close.

LYRICAL ANALYSIS

"Took my money and bought a TV/ TV brings me closer to the world" - 'Modern Girl'

This rolling, harmonica-frilled number prickles with disgust at vacuous, apolitical mid-noughties consumer culture.

"You're such a bore, 1984/Nostalgia, you're using it like a whore" - 'Entertain'

Sleater-Kinney gave zero fucks for unoriginal bands, and weren't afraid to say so.

lifted the title of the latter for her memoir, *Hunger Makes Me A Modern Girl*, due out this October.

FAMOUS FAN

"If 'The Woods' were a live show it'd be one of the best shows I'd ever seen. It also sounds like a band's first record, all this stuff coming out at once. It's so galvanised and powerful." **Eddie Vedder, Pearl Jam**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"The songs sound urgent and aggressive and raw in a way that I feel like sonically hasn't been there for a while. I think the vocabulary is a little bit different... people will either get it or they won't." **Carrie Brownstein, 2005, AV Club**

AFTERMATH

The trio immediately announced an indefinite hiatus. All three members eventually surfaced some years later with new projects: Tucker produced two solo albums ('1000 Years' in 2010 and 'Kill My Blues' in 2012) and Brownstein teamed up with Weiss to form rock outfit Wild Flag, while simultaneously carving out a comedy career with Fred Armisen on cult TV show *Portlandia*. Ten years after their split, a vinyl boxset - 'Start Together' - appeared, heralding a triumphant return in this year's electrifying 'No Cities To Love' LP.

THIS WEEK...

Sleater-Kinney: The Woods

The recently reunited trio took a heavy-rocking turn on album seven, released 10 years ago this month

THE BACKGROUND

"A decade is a long time to be in a band - you almost feel a little bit sick of who you are," explained Sleater-Kinney guitarist Carrie Brownstein in 2005. By this point, the band had surpassed their DIY queercore roots in '90s Olympia, Washington to become fêted indie-rock champs - a success built on their inimitable dynamic: Brownstein and Corin Tucker's interlocking guitars, Tucker's unhinged vocals and Janet Weiss' bolshy percussion. But after six similar albums and a challenging tour for 2002's political post-9/11 album 'One Beat', the trio were agitated. The resulting album, 2005's 'The Woods', was the sound of the band abandoning their comfort zone while ripping into the bland careerism they saw around them: "How can you sound that much like Ian Curtis and be singing about *nothing*?" asked Brownstein in one interview.

FIVE FACTS

1 After a career-long stint on Kill Rock Stars, S-K switched to Sub Pop for 'The Woods' and drafted in Dave Fridmann to assist on what would be a radical change in sound. Said Brownstein: "I remember thinking I'd really love to make some of our fans kind of angry."

2 Brownstein, Tucker and Weiss decamped to record in Cassadaga in upstate New York for what they describe as "an intense experience" recording for 12 hours a day hemmed in by 10 feet of snow.

3 Many songs were recorded in one take, with Fridmann making surreal suggestions for inspiration. "He'd say things to Janet like, 'Play like Keith Moon, but Keith Moon with a blanket coming down over him,'" recalls Tucker.

4 The final two songs, 'Let's Call It Love' and 'Night Light', were recorded together as the band realised they were in the same key and could segue into one another.

5 Critics loved 'The Woods', but fans were divided. Brownstein was unfazed: "I'd rather have people... feel passionately that it's our worst or best record than feel nothing."

"There is a bridge adored and famed/ The golden spine of engineering/ Whose back is heavy with my weight" - 'Jumpers'

A charged, gripping number that was inspired by the many people who leap to their death from California's Golden Gate Bridge.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"Even the most ardent fan would find it difficult to imagine that the all-girl trio had an album like this in them, but 'The Woods' is exhilaratingly loud and startlingly ambitious." **Hardeep Phull, 8/10**

WHAT WE SAY NOW

'The Woods' proved S-K were fearless, unafraid to challenge themselves. 'Jumpers' and 'Modern Girl' have aged finely into fan favourites; Brownstein even

THE DETAILS

►RECORDED Autumn 2004 ►RELEASE DATE May 24, 2005 ►LABEL Sub Pop ►LENGTH 48:03 ►PRODUCER Dave Fridmann ►STUDIO Tarbox Road Studios, Cassadaga, New York ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 143 ►UK SALES 10,000 ►SINGLES *Entertain*, *Jumpers* ►TRACKLISTING ►1. The Fox ►2. Wilderness ►3. What's Mine Is Yours ►4. Jumpers ►5. Modern Girl ►6. *Entertain* ►7. Rollercoaster ►8. Steep Air ►9. Let's Call It Love ►10. Night Light

STAYING IN

THE BEST MUSIC ON TV, RADIO AND ONLINE THIS WEEK



Dave Grohl
heads to
Norwich for
Radio 1's
Big Weekend

Foo Fighters

Radio 1's Big Weekend Norwich 2015

► WATCH BBC Three, 7pm, May 23–24

Radio 1's annual free festival rolls into Norwich. Foo Fighters and Muse will headline Earlham Park, while Charli XCX, Taylor Swift, Florence + The Machine, The Vaccines, Jamie T and Alt-J will also appear. Tune in via Radio 1 or 1Xtra, from 10am–1am on both days.

Ride Steve Lamacq

► LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 4pm, May 20
Shoegaze's latest comeback kings drop into Maida Vale for their first UK radio session since reforming. They'll play tracks from across their back catalogue in an hour-long performance and talk to Lammo about their career, past, present and future.

Street Sound And Style Channel 4

► WATCH Channel 4, 12am, May 21
The fashion and music of the b-boy scene and the early days of Ibiza's rave culture.

Best Coast Lauren Laverne

► LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 10am, May 21

Bethany Cosentino and Bobb Bruno swap LA for London as they treat Lauren Laverne to a session showcasing tracks from their latest album, 'California Nights'.

The Flaming Lips Radcliffe And Maconie

► LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 1pm, May 22
The Flaming Lips headline Liverpool Sound City this

weekend, and before that frontman Wayne Coyne will join Mark Radcliffe and Stuart Maconie to bring some freakazoid fun to Friday afternoon.

Sleater-Kinney Later Live... With Jools Holland

► WATCH BBC Two, 10pm, May 26
The reunited Olympia trio return to the UK to play tracks from latest album 'No Cities To Love'. Muse will also appear, previewing new album 'Drones', while Giorgio Moroder will stop by to chat about his own new album, 'Déjà Vu'.



Sleater-Kinney
are on Later...

GOING OUT

THE BEST LIVE EVENTS

THIS WEEK



Liverpool Sound City

Peace, The Vaccines, Stormzy, Spector, Everything Everything and heaps more line up for this year's bash.

► DATES Liverpool Bramley Moore Docks (May 22–24)

► TICKETS Three-day pass £65, one-day pass £35 from NME.COM/tickets with £3.50–£5 booking fee

Young Fathers

The Mercury winners take new album 'White Men Are Black Men Too' on tour.

► DATES Glasgow Art School (May 20), Newcastle Riverside (21), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (22), Manchester Gorilla (25), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (26)

► TICKETS £10 from NME.COM/tickets with £1–£1.20 booking fee; Glasgow/Leeds sold out

5 TO SEE FOR FREE

1. Pity Sex

Bar Bloc, Glasgow
► May 21, 9pm

2. Trash

Old Blue Last, London
► May 23, 8pm

3. Ash

Rough Trade East, London
► May 25, 7pm

4. Doldrums

The Hope, Brighton
► May 26, 8pm

5. Summer Camp

Rough Trade, Nottingham
► May 26, 7pm

JORDAN HUGHES

Telefonica

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48 hours before general release

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PRIORITY

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SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE

Radiohead's
Thom Yorke

The Smashing
Pumpkins



Murph

The Wombats

**THE FIRST SONG I
REMEMBER HEARING**
Michael Jackson -
something from 'Bad'

"I used to wear denim jackets. I had this weird brown hat that was more John Wayne than Michael Jackson but I thought I was MJ even though I had really bad dance moves with knobby knees. I remember listening to 'Bad' a lot."

**THE FIRST SONG I
FELL IN LOVE WITH**
'Creep' - Radiohead

"I was going through a really terrible happy hardcore phase when I was about 11 to 13. Then I remember hearing 'Creep' on New Year's Eve up in the den my friend and I made in his parents' house and thinking, 'What was that?' Then I became a Radiohead pervert for years."

**THE FIRST ALBUM
I BOUGHT**
'Bad' - Michael
Jackson

"He was playing in Liverpool and you could hear the bass

rumbling from miles away. It was definitely around that time that I got it."

**THE SONG THAT
MADE ME WANT
TO BE IN A BAND**
'Stripped' -
Depeche Mode

"My geography teacher played a lot of Depeche

"I THOUGHT I WAS MICHAEL JACKSON, BUT I HAD BAD DANCE MOVES"

Mode. He gave me the '101' DVD. So it would probably be 'Stripped' by Depeche Mode. Dave Gahan's arse looked great!"

**THE SONG THAT
MAKES ME WANT
TO DANCE**
'Pogo' - Digitalism

"It's a really offbeat, Kraftwerk-y kind of song. Whenever I used to do DJ sets, it was a real staple. I enjoyed playing that a lot;

I dunno if anyone else did, though! That was the song that made me realise I was a techno fan (*laughs*)."

**THE SONG I DO
AT KARAOKE**
'Hold On, We're
Going Home' - Drake
ft. Majid Jordan

"I think it's one of the best songs ever written. It's a little bit low and I always want to come in with a real sing-along vibe when I sing it but it's more chilled out. It kind of lowers the mood of karaoke bars."

**THE SONG WE
PLAYED AT THE
WOMBAR**
'Ace of Spades' -
Motörhead

"At BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend in 2009, we had this big inflatable wombat and loads of excess booze on the bus that we used to provide for everyone at the Wombar. A lot of our crew had worked for Motörhead before and they said to us that this was ridiculous - we were so proud of the fact that we had drunk more than Motörhead! Then the song became a bit of a joke from there."

and that kind of stuff, which really elevates it. Then it becomes fucking impossible to get out of your head!"

**THE SONG I WISH
I'D WRITTEN**
'Beetlebum' - Blur

"There's something that excites me about popularising very grim things. I had no idea it was about drugs when I first heard it! Whether it's about drugs or not isn't super important - it's an incredible song in its own right. When you realise there are these dark undertones to it, though, it propels it further."

**THE SONG I CAN NO
LONGER LISTEN TO**
'Take On Me' - A-ha

"Whenever I'm in a drunken hellhole at 3AM, it always involves this song. Most of my best and worst nights have ended with this song playing. I know the party's over when I hear that song!"

**THE SONG I WANT
PLAYED AT MY
FUNERAL**
'Wichita Lineman' -
Glen Campbell

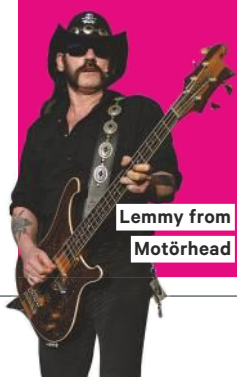
"I want something that's going to be particularly sad! I don't want anyone rejoicing at my funeral. I think it's one of the best songs ever written, and lyrically I absolutely love it."

**THE SONG
I ASSOCIATE
WITH LIVERPOOL**
'Today' - The
Smashing Pumpkins

"I would drive back home from London a lot and I'd be slightly nervous whenever I thought I had a song or an idea of a song to present to the band. So whenever I tried to calm myself down I would play this for some reason. It was melodically very poppy but had a lot of aggression to it. For some reason, that kind of relaxed me."

**THE SONG I
CAN'T GET OUT
OF MY HEAD**
'Take Me To Church'
- Hozier

"I literally can't stop singing it. There's something about it melodically that drives me insane. You listen to it and go, 'That's a good pop song', but then you properly let it sink in and realise the connotations behind it. That's when you become aware that it's about LGBTQ



Lemmy from
Motörhead

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“The music industry is mostly run by feckless idiots”

Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan is still refusing to try and make friends with his bosses.

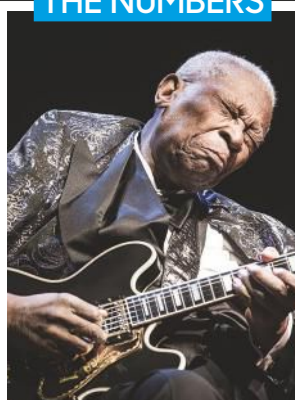
THE NUMBERS

89

BB King's age when he died on May 14. The blues legend won 16 Grammys during his long and celebrated career.

\$10,000

Amount Ozzy Osbourne sent to the Louisville Leopard Percussionists, a kids' band that covered his song 'Crazy Train' using only percussion.



150

Number of vinyl records that Caribou's Dan Snaith donated to the Dalston branch of Oxfam.

4

Number of days a woman spent in Chris Brown's house after breaking in. She was arrested for trespassing after being found.

WHO THE FUCK IS...



Danae Stratou

This is the woman who is believed to be the mystery Greek sculpture student with "a thirst for knowledge" that inspired Pulp's 'Common People'.

So why is she in the news?

A newspaper in Greece has claimed that Stratou is now married to Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, a member of the recently elected anti-austerity party Syriza.

Has Stratou commented on the rumours?

No, but Varoufakis said that while he "wouldn't have known her back then", his wife was "the only Greek student of sculpture at St Martin's College at that time". The politician added: "From personal experience, she is a very fascinating person."

+ GOOD WEEK +



James Murphy

Murphy has revealed his latest post-LCD Soundsystem venture: a wine bar. The musician and his wife will open Four Horsemen in June in Brooklyn's Williamsburg (obviously), and will serve up to 350 different wines.

- BAD WEEK -



Kim Dylla

Gwar's Kim Dylla has been fired from the band amid rumours her wild partying was affecting the band's live shows. Dylla denies the accusation. The character of Vulvatron will remain in Gwar, but played by a new musician.

IN BRIEF

Theory of Eav-rything

Stephen Hawking will visit Glastonbury this year, as part of the line-up aimed at children under 12. He will appear on the Kidz Field bill alongside magician Dynamo and CBeebies presenters.

Fake plastic adverts

Thom Yorke's picture has been used unofficially to advertise insomnia medication in Russia. The Radiohead frontman's face has also been spotted on the cover of a book in Iran about sexual and marital problems.

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

A* day in the life

The Beatles' 'Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' is to be taught to GCSE music students. Exam board AQA has outlined plans for all students to study three songs from the LP, focusing on the melody, harmony and structure of the songs.

Official RECORD STORE Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS MAY 17, 2015



Mumford & Sons Wilder Mind

GENTLEMEN OF THE ROAD/ISLAND

Out go the tweed and banjos as Mumfords move into stadium-rock territory on their third album. And with the makeover, they take poll position this week.

- | | | | |
|--------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| ▲ 2 | The Magic Whip | Blur | PARLOPHONE |
| ▼ 3 | Born Under Saturn | Django Django | BECAUSE MUSIC |
| NEW 4 | Sub-Lingual Tablet | The Fall | CHERRY RED |
| NEW 5 | Ark We Are The Ocean | BMG RIGHTS | |
| ▲ 6 | Sound And Color | Alabama Shakes | ROUGH TRADE |
| NEW 7 | Hairless Toys | Roisin Murphy | PLAY IT AGAIN SAM |
| ▲ 8 | Carrie & Lowell | Sufjan Stevens | ASTHMATIC KITTY |
| NEW 9 | Can't Forget - A Souvenir Of The Grand Tour | Leonard Cohen | COLUMBIA |
| NEW 10 | Forever Man | Eric Clapton | RHINO |
| NEW 11 | Dumb Flesh | Blanc Mass | SACRED BONES |
| NEW 12 | Dark Bird Is Home | Tallest Man On Earth | DEAD OCEANS |
| ▼ 13 | The Race For Space | Public Service Broadcasting | TEST CARD RECORDINGS |
| ▲ 14 | The Ultimate Collection | Paul Simon | SONY MUSIC CG |
| ▲ 15 | To Where The Wild Things Are | Death & Vanilla | FIRE |
| ▼ 16 | Mwng | Super Furry Animals | DOMINO RECORDINGS |
| ▼ 17 | The Waterfall | My Morning Jacket | ATO |
| NEW 18 | The Traveling Kind | Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell | NONESUCH |
| ▼ 19 | Peanut Butter | Joanna Gruesome | FORTUNA POP |
| ▲ 20 | Hozier | Hozier | ISLAND |
| ▼ 21 | Sometimes I Sit And Think, And Sometimes I Just Sit | Courtney Barnett | HOUSE ANXIETY |
| ▲ 22 | X | Ed Sheeran | ASYLUM |
| ▼ 23 | 2 | Metz | SUB POP |
| ▼ 24 | Chasing Yesterday | Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds | SOUR MASH |
| ▼ 25 | Chaos And The Calm | James Bay | REPUBLIC |
| NEW 26 | Stages | Josh Groban | REPRISE |
| ▲ 27 | I Love You, Honeybear | Father John Misty | BELLA UNION |
| ▼ 28 | Danger In The Club | Palma Violets | ROUGH TRADE |
| ▲ 29 | Tracker | Mark Knopfler | BRITISH GROVE |
| ▲ 30 | Rituals | Other Lives | PLAY IT AGAIN SAM |
| NEW 31 | Title | Meghan Trainor | EPIC |
| ▼ 32 | Edge Of The Sun | Calexico | CITY SLANG |
| ▲ 33 | In The Lonely Hour | Sam Smith | CAPITOL |
| NEW 34 | Bonxie | Stornoway | COOKING VINYL |
| ▼ 35 | Vulnicura | Björk | ONE LITTLE INDIAN |
| NEW 36 | 1000 Forms Of Fear | Sia | MONKEY PUZZLE/RCA |
| ▼ 37 | Unplugged In New York | Nirvana | GEFFEN |
| NEW 38 | 1989 | Taylor Swift | EMI |
| ▼ 39 | Short Movie | Laura Marling | VIRGIN |
| NEW 40 | Ghosts & Graffiti | Thea Gilmore | FULLFILL |

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 PEBBLE RECORDS EASTBOURNE

FOUNDED 2014

WHY IT'S GREAT It sells tape and flexi-disc as well as CD and vinyl.

TOP SELLER LAST WEEK

Blur - 'The Magic Whip'

THEY SAY "Pebble started as a specialist indie-music website with a particular emphasis on indie pop."

Radar

GOES TO THE GREAT ESCAPE

► **LISTEN NOW**
NME.COM/
NEWMUSIC

■ EDITED BY MATT WILKINSON

NME
NEW
BAND
OF THE FESTIVAL

1

Sunflower Bean

The new darlings of US indie live up to the hype at The Great Escape

In the recent past, The Great Escape has been the festival that's put Warpaint, Parquet Courts, Mac DeMarco and practically anybody from across the pond who genuinely means it on the map; the place where 'could be legendary'

newcomers get one chance to go from being merely buzz-worthy to outright contenders.

Sunflower Bean made that leap this past weekend. Their live shows, which will please anyone with a passing interest in the way Tame Impala and Pond have been making rock music feel exciting again, is all thriller. In the cavernous Corn Exchange, they jolt around like drunk kids at their first house party (it might have something to do with them all being barely 20), while a second show out of town is more nihilistic. Up close, their warped, erratic songs truly come alive, a mesmerising concoction that sucks in 'Meddle'-era Pink Floyd, stabs of '80s alt-pop like The Cure, Television's brain-melting guitar intricacy

and The Brian Jonestown Massacre's bleary cool.

But if the pressure's on, Sunflower Bean aren't showing it. "Bands that get remembered as buzz bands are the ones who never managed to make the jump," is how singer and guitarist Nick Kivlen sums things up, while bassist and co-vocalist Julia Cumming (a glam-rock obsessive whose demeanour is equal parts Alice Glass, Ziggy Stardust and Mary Poppins) wonders out loud what buzz even means anyway.

Completed by drummer Jacob Faber, the trio are a giddy proposition in person, talking up the band calendar that's Blu-Tacked to the wall of their shared Brooklyn apartment as if it's a holy script, and kookily answering each other's questions. Musically, though, the devil lurks. From the homemade video for '2013' (like occultist Aleister Crowley directing *The Goonies*), to thumping new single 'I Hear Voices' (Julia: "It's about a fight we have in the car all the time") they're anything but cutesy.

"It's 'left brain versus right brain' stuff," offers Nick, as the other two erupt into laughter behind him. A coquettish proclamation that may be, but he might just have bottled what it is that makes his band so freakishly alluring. ■ MATT WILKINSON

► THE DETAILS

- **BASED** Brooklyn
- **FOR FANS OF** Tame Impala, Neu!
- **SOCIAL** twitter.com/sunflower_bean
- **BUY IT** New single 'I Hear Voices'/'The Stalker' is out on July 24 via Fat Possum
- **SEE THEM LIVE** Nothing confirmed yet, but more UK dates are promised for later in the year
- **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** Nick and Jacob came up with the band name, because "Nick is obsessed with eating sunflower seeds and Jacob is obsessed with coffee".

2

Rat Boy

Music's cheekiest new upstart is busy making a riot of life's tribulations

"I had a nightmare last night that I went on stage at The Great Escape and it was like a primary school assembly and everyone hated us," tweeted Rat Boy, aka 19-year-old Essex newcomer Jordan Cardy, on the morning of his Brighton show. "I'm really nervous for some reason," he explains hours later, walking along the seafront. "I think it's 'cos its 18-plus and I think the older people might not get it."

It's a logical fear to have. After all, Jordan's music is innately youthful – a chaotic barrage of sounds that exuberantly clash together (a potent mix of Blur's cockney knees-up side, the urgency of The Libertines and Beastie Boys' in-yr-face raps), and lyrics depicting the highs and lows of growing up that are relatable to everyone in their teens and early twenties. It's music that matches his personality: cheeky, upbeat and always on the lookout for fun (within a few minutes of *Radar* meeting him, he manages to piss off security on the pier and photobomb a group of bemused Japanese tourists).

Even when singing about losing his job in Wetherspoons and having no money on infectious



debut single 'Sign On', he manages to make the struggle of figuring out life post-school sound like a riot. Ironically, he's since scored a deal with Parlophone (home to his musical heroes Blur and Babyshambles), keeping him far away from the dole.

Musically, Jordan's keen to follow in Mike Skinner's storytelling footsteps and is working on a third mixtape (to follow the soon-available 'Neighbourhood Watch') with a narrative thread that runs throughout. "I think it's amazing how someone can tell a story the whole way through," he says,

► THE DETAILS

► **BASED** Chelmsford, Essex ► **FOR FANS OF** The Streets, Blur
► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/ratboy ► **BUY IT** Debut single 'Sign On' is out now via Hometown Records ► **SEE HIM LIVE** Colchester Sound House (May 20), London Dublin Castle (27), Brownstock Festival (July 12), London Boston Arms (24), Reading & Leeds Festivals (August 28–30)
► **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** Jordan got banned from a Chelmsford pub for trying to get a recording of a glass smashing for 'Laughter'. "Well, my mate's banned, 'cos I used his ID," he grins cheekily.

wide-eyed. "I don't think I've got the attention span for it, but I've been writing down ideas and trying to put stuff together."

His main ambition, though, is to not mess up his chance to hit the bigtime. "I really get nervous about that, but I can't help but be a dick," he laughs. ■ RHIAN DALY

Ho99o9

Freak-rap duo from New Jersey with a penchant for gore

3



► THE DETAILS

- **BASED** Los Angeles
- **FOR FANS OF** Death Grips, Bad Brains
- **SOCIAL** twitter.com/ho99o9
- **BUY IT** 'Horrors Of 1999' is released by Family on June 8
- **SEE THEM LIVE** Reading And Leeds Festival (August 28–30)
- **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** They first met when Eaddy, 20 at the time, was turned away from a Ninjabonik show in Brooklyn after trying to use a fake ID.

Not content with merely inspiring moshpits, Ho99o9 (it's pronounced 'Horror') are the sort of band who want to be down there in them. During their Great Escape set at Patterns it doesn't take long before co-vocalist Eaddy is off the stage and in the pit, shirtless and screaming into his mic. A few days earlier, at their first ever London show at Electrowerkz, Eaddy and bandmate The OGM began the show in the crowd: one wearing

a wedding dress, the other with a plastic bag over his head.

Although they've now moved to LA, Ho99o9's shows pull together the disparate influences they witnessed growing up in New Jersey, on the outskirts of New York, where The OGM says they bonded over "girls" and going to "punk shows, rap shows and art shows". All those elements combine in a visceral mix the pair have been honing since they first played together in 2012. "We went into it headfirst with our eyes closed," remembers

Eaddy. "We weren't really expecting anything or trying to be a certain way."

There's more to them than just killer live shows. Their music – drenched in blood-and-gore imagery straight from horror films and slasher flicks – stands up to repeated playback. "A lot of it is built for the live show," says Eaddy, "but a lot of it you can take home, listen to it, drive to it, bash your head against the wall to it or just chill and smoke a doob to it."

There's a new EP due on June 8 before they return to the UK in August to play Reading and Leeds. If their Great Escape debut is anything to go by, they'll end up as one of the most talked about bands of the summer. "We want to make a statement with our presence," says Eaddy. "It's like Mike Tyson entering the ring. You're thinking, 'This motherfucker's about to do some damage.' It's heavyweight title shit." ■ KEVIN EG PERRY

JORDAN HUGHES



The Magic Gang

► THE DETAILS

► **BASED** Brighton
► **FOR FANS OF** Happyness, Wolf Alice
► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/_themagicgang
► **BUY IT** Debut single 'No Fun' is available now
► **SEE THEM LIVE** Southampton Lennons (June 6, July 11), Huntingdon Secret Garden Party (July 23), London Roundhouse (October 22)
► **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** Gus was once a contestant on CBBC gameshow *Raven*. "I was a really bad loser," he says. "I smashed it through the whole series then I went out on luck. I was fucking fuming."

**Brighton's super-prolific crew
get ready to take over the world,
one sexy pop song at a time**

Few musicians are as prolific as the four members of The Magic Gang. Soundcloud is littered with solo material and songs by other bands they once played in – or still do – like Home School, Yrres and Echochamp, a collective of Brighton groups that includes the likes of Sulky Boy and Our Girl. And they've also produced songs for their friends Manuka Honeys and Abattoir Blues.

Despite all that, the quartet describe those endeavours as "things we do in our spare time"

and have been busy harvesting over 50 Magic Gang songs that the world is yet to hear. "If there's one annoying thing about being in a band – well, *our* band – it's that we've got so many songs," says singer and guitarist Jack Kaye under a banner of fairy lights in the group's living room. And, if you thought debut single 'No Fun' – a see-sawing cut of rumbling geek-rock – meant you knew what The Magic Gang were all about, think again.

"By the time we'd put that out, we'd written a new set of songs that have a different sound," explains guitarist and singer Kristian Smith. "People have judged us by this single, but we don't sound like that any more, which is fine because it'll keep people guessing."

When the band releases an EP later in the year, expect something

a lot funkier. Kris promises that it will be "very direct, very sexy and very good", inspired by R&B and the "ambition and attitude" of the new albums from Unknown Mortal Orchestra and Tame Impala, while Jack describes their latest tracks as "'50s and '60s-influenced traditional pop songs" with a hint of Motown.

It's a sound that should make their riotous live shows all the more fun, while their recent tour supporting Wolf Alice has got them inspired and aiming for giddy new heights. "It's exciting to see a band who were in our shoes two years ago doing well," says bassist Gus Taylor. "If we play our cards right, we could be in that position soon, too." With their songwriting chops and infectious enthusiasm, you'd be a fool to bet against them.

■ RHIAN DALY

JORDAN HUGHES

Fraser A Gorman

**Melbourne singer-
songwriter crafting
eloquent pop on
Courtney Barnett's label**

Fraser A Gorman has a distinct memory of the very first time he ever met his now-label boss, Courtney Barnett, after moving to Melbourne as an 18-year-old. "I met her in a bar and tried to pick her up," he laughs. "Which is kinda funny because she likes girls!"

The pair have now become good friends, and as singer-songwriters they share an aesthetic as well as a certain lyrical wit and ability to convey their lives, hopes and fears openly. While Gorman shares Barnett's love for "wordy" artists such as Lou Reed and Big Star, his songs also bear the hallmarks of classic '70s acts like Neil Young, Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin and The Flying Burrito Brothers, not to mention the patron saint of singer-songwriters himself. "I love Dylan," he says. "I think I look a fair bit like him – I've got the hair, the harmonica and the guitar."

Having grown up in the small Australian town of Torquay, he started playing in bands in nearby Geelong along with King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard frontman Stu Mackenzie. "We all wanted to play like The Kinks, The Who and the Stones," he remembers. "There was only one venue, a hotel, so we

all used to go there to play music and it was this weird, crazy scene."

Mackenzie returned to play drums on Gorman's debut album 'Slow Gum', which is due out in June. Showcasing songs from the record at The Haunt during The Great Escape, Gorman's show runs the gamut from open-hearted confessionals to indie-disco floor-fillers. But, for Gorman, who speaks in person with a stutter

that doesn't affect him onstage, most of his songs were simply written as therapy. "I write songs to deal with my shit," he says. "Some people go boxing, play football or go to the gym. I just like to let go of my energy by sitting down and playing guitar – I probably should go to the gym a bit more though. My touring beer-belly is getting a little bit out of hand." ■ KEVIN EG PERRY

5



► THE DETAILS

► **BASED** Melbourne, Australia ► **FOR FANS OF** Courtney Barnett, The Lemonheads ► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/fraser_a_gorman ► **BUY IT** 'Slow Gum' is released by Milk on June 29 ► **SEE HIM LIVE** There are more UK shows scheduled this autumn ► **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** When he's not playing music, Gorman works as a carpenter. "It's very Zen," he says, "and I can choose what I listen to while I work."

INmusic is Croatia's
longest-running
outdoor festival



Europe's best-kept festival secret

For the last decade, INmusic festival has been slowly building a reputation as the undiscovered gem of the European festival scene, and a truly Croatian experience. This year, for its 10th anniversary, it's going to be better than ever. Here's why you need to go to Croatia's longest-running major music festival

The line-up is incredible

Placebo. Franz Ferdinand and Sparks' collaboration, FFS, playing their fourth ever show. Florence + The Machine performing for the first time ever in Croatia. La Roux. Black Rebel Motorcycle Club. Need we go on? Oh, alright then. Frank Turner making a comeback with his new band, The Sleeping Souls. Future Islands. Eagles Of Death Metal. Death Cab For Cutie. Of Monsters And Men. Kate Tempest. Plus Antemasque, the band formed from the ashes of At The Drive-In and The Mars Volta, featuring both Omar Rodriguez-Lopez and Cedric Bixler-Zavala. And to top it all off, a DJ set from Streets legend Mike Skinner.

It's got an amazing history

INmusic is Croatia's biggest and longest-standing open-air festival, and has a fine history of putting on amazing artists. In its first year, 2006, Franz Ferdinand and Morrissey were the headliners. In the years that have followed, the likes of Sonic Youth, The Stooges, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Arctic Monkeys, New

Order, LCD Soundsystem, The Flaming Lips and Pixies have all played. Legends, all of them. Easy to see why *National Geographic Traveller* had it in their top three festivals in the world list in 2013.

It's got beaches, water sports, nightclubs

The festival and its campsites are spread across three beautiful islands – linked to each by bridges – in Zagreb's stunning Lake Jarun. The beaches are stunning and the water is clean – perfect for a spot of daytime swimming to clear a fuzzy head. There are water sports available – canoeing, pedal boating, windsurfing – plus cafés, restaurants and nightclubs. No-one gets bored at INmusic.

**It's an experience
like no other in a
place like no other**

The festival is set
on three islands
in the stunning
Lake Jarun

The campsites are ludicrously luxurious

Hot showers, free WiFi, secure storage and phone/laptop/tablet charging stations are all available to INmusic's several thousand campers. It is an experience like no other, in a place like no other.

It's in Croatia's capital city

Zagreb is Croatia's biggest and best city, and the centre is just a 20-minute walk away from the festival site. You want to visit tombs, eat seafood, chill out in cafés and hang out with local creatives? You've got it. You want to swing by INmusic festival as part of your backpacking tour around one of Europe's most diverse countries? It's in a perfect location. Make a holiday out of it.

There's plenty to do
onsite aside from
watching bands



A three-day ticket to
see all of the artists
below is just €47



It's great value

INmusic charges just €74 for three days of music and seven of camping. If you fancy staying in Zagreb instead of camping, a three-day festival ticket is just €47. Just think about all the bands you could see for that – you certainly won't find anything cheaper this summer. What's more, flights to Zagreb from anywhere in the UK are cheaper than almost all other major European cities. Whichever way you look at, it's a bargain.

► THE DETAILS

- **WHERE** Lake Jarun, Zagreb, Croatia
- **WHEN** June 22-24 (Camp: June 18-25)
- **WHO'S PLAYING** Placebo, FFS, Florence + The Machine, Paolo Nutini, La Roux, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club
- **TICKETS** €47 for a three-day festival ticket, €27 for seven days of camping, both from inmusicfestival.com

► WIN! WEEKEND TICKETS TO INMUSIC

We have two pairs of tickets to INmusic festival to give away. Camping is included. To win, just send the answer to the question below to letters@NME.com

Which Future Islands song was named as NME's Song Of The Year 2014?
A) Sun In The Morning
B) Seasons (Waiting On You)
C) Spirit

HRVATSKA
Hrvatska turistička zajednica

Zagreb



INmusic
ZAGREB, Croatia 22. – 24. 6. 2015.

► INMUSIC 2015 LINE-UP

Placebo
FFS
(Franz Ferdinand and Sparks)
Paulo Nutini
Florence + The Machine
Of Monsters And Men
La Roux
Black Rebel Motorcycle Club
Antemasque
Frank Turner
And The Sleeping Souls
Repetitor
Future Islands
Eagles Of Death Metal
Halka
Aziza Brahim
Death Cab For Cutie
Rambo Amadeus
Kate Tempest
Mike Skinner (DJ set)
And many more...

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Album seven finds Muse at their ridiculous best: highlighting the atrocities of modern warfare using grandiose, experimental space-rock. "It's back to basics by our standards," they tell Gavin Haynes

PHOTOS: DANNY CLINCH

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Three years ago, thanks to his girlfriend Kate Hudson's A-list connections, Muse frontman Matt Bellamy found himself at the annual White House Correspondents Dinner, sat next to George W Bush's former secretary of state, General Colin Powell.

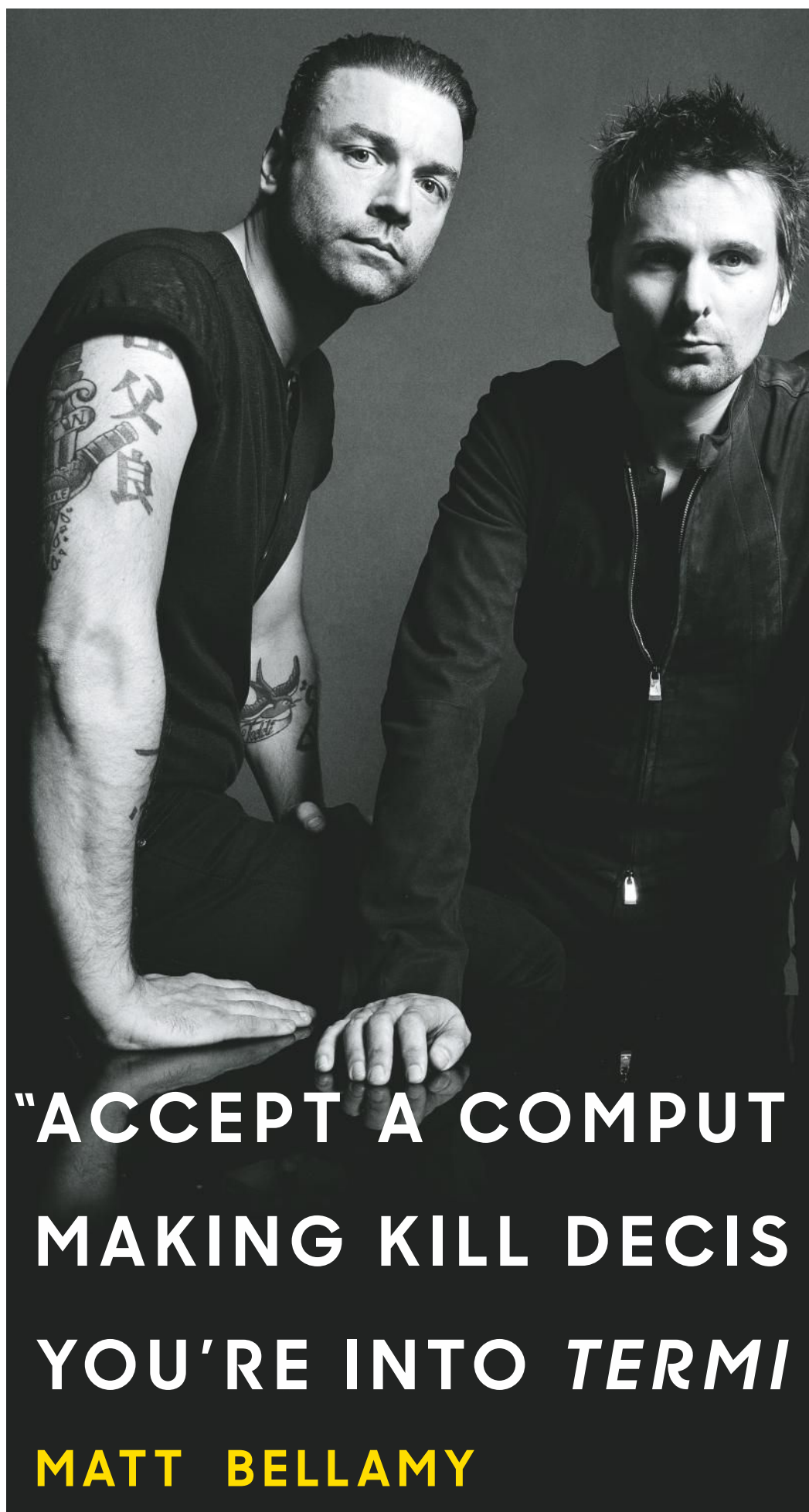
There was a failure of intelligence that night – in that the powers that be hadn't realised that you might not want to sit a man obsessed with conspiracy theories next to one of the most powerful figures in the US military-industrial complex.

"I asked him about hollow-point bullets," says Bellamy, "because Homeland Security had purchased millions of them. They explode when they hit you – I think they are banned under the Geneva Convention. This was widely reported in the conspiracy press, and the question was why were they buying so many. It looked like they were preparing for massive riots.

"And so [Powell] said – it was an amazing deflection, and also a chilling insight into the military mindset – 'When you're out in the field and you want to shoot, you want to kill: quickly and cleanly.'" Bellamy giggles one of his manic giggles. "And that was it... on to dessert."

What was Powell like? Did he seem impressive – a man who was the equal of his office? "It's hard to say in one meeting. But you know, there's a power structure there that is intoxicating to be a part of, and I think when people get offered the chance to become a part of that, they are willing to sacrifice a part of their inner morality. It becomes a culture of peer pressure – of 'This is how we do things around here... didn't you know?' And before you know it you're making kill decisions before breakfast..."

In a nutshell, that's the psychological insight behind 'Drones'. At one level, Muse's seventh studio album is ridiculously Ronseal. 'Drones' it's called, and drones it's about, front-to-back. Even the baroque studio-dwelling prog of previous record, 2012's 'The 2nd Law' – with its taped samples comparing unsustainable



"ACCEPT A COMPUT
MAKING KILL DECIS
YOU'RE INTO *TERMI*
MATT BELLAMY

Muse in 2015: (l-r)
Chris Wolstenholme,
Matt Bellamy and
Dominic Howard

economic growth to the second law of thermodynamics – felt more of a conceptual shoehorn. ‘Drones’, in contrast, is a laser-guided missile down the gullet of the listener, a capital-C Concept Album that makes ‘Pink Floyd’s ‘The Wall’ look like the latest Vaccines ditty collection.

The sense of a band putting themselves right out there starts at the cover, which is either Floyd’s ‘Wish You Were Here’ ‘two men shaking hands, one on fire’ genius, or Lady Gaga’s ‘Born This Way’ ‘do you see that my head is on a bike?’ daft. The fact that they’ve stuck it out there while barely pausing to give a shit seems indicative of where their heads are at.

End to end, ‘Drones’ has a kind of unity of purpose that seems to mark the moment at which, 18 years and six albums since they set out from Teignmouth together, Bellamy has dropped the hyper-camp rock star persona and become the globally anxious social commentator his interviews have always suggested.

The London

Edition Hotel’s foyer is what you might call ‘fusty boutique’. Full of old pink-and-grey marble, the walls of its exclusive restaurant are a National Gallery’s worth of paintings of dowager Victorian aunts and Georgian maidens draped against haywains, but there is also a giant silver space egg hung above the staircase to offset that. Behind the bar, a bearded man in black tie jabs his saw in and out of an ice sculpture he’s knocking-up. There’s a pool table just ahead of the corner where we sit, where Matt Bellamy has recently been breaking balls with the band’s drummer, Dominic Howard. It’s only 10am, but the pair have already been up hours, having just walked the two blocks down from Radio 1 HQ, where they were chortling it up with Nick Grimshaw.

Howard grins up at us from the table. He’s wearing a classic-rocker black jacket and white T-shirt that makes him look, with his sandy-blond hair and California tan, like he could have been in any group on the Radio 1 A-list from the past 40 years. His look reflects the LA in which he now lives, especially when he sits down and orders a coconut water, to which he says he is now addicted.

“Potassium,” he adds, with authority.

Is he specifically lacking it?

“I could do with a top-up...”

Bellamy’s wearing his classic-Bellamy wool-collar leather jacket. He talks very quickly.

“I read this book: *Predator: The Secret Origins Of The Drone Revolution*.” He shoots off. “It’s prolific, absolutely prolific how many people have been killed. Apparently Obama gets up in the morning, has a shave, goes down for breakfast, has a cup of tea, and before his day starts, he will sit there in the War Room and make kill decisions on those issues that are significant enough to be passed all the way to the top of the food chain. This one. Not that one. Kill. Don’t kill. And then he’ll get on with

THE MAN BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Meet Matt Mahurin, the 56-year-old Californian illustrator and photographer who created the cover of ‘Drones’



► CAREER HISTORY

He has had a long career as a poverty-highlighting photo-essayist, though he’s better known for directing videos in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, having shot the likes of ‘The Unforgiven’ for Metallica and ‘Fast Car’ for Tracy Chapman. Mahurin always prefers to keep the exact meaning of his drawings under wraps.

► HE SAYS “People refer to ‘drones’ as flying machines and robots, but a drone can be a student, a soldier, anything

that’s subject to being controlled and manipulated.

An allegory that comes to mind is the Borg – the villainous race on *Star Trek*, who are independent organisms but wear this thing over their eyes that keeps them plugged into this mother consciousness. The way we’re all connected permanently to YouTube, to Google, it makes you wonder how much we’re like that, how much messaging we let in – to the point where it controls what toothpaste we buy.”



his day, kiss his daughters good morning. So when I started reading about this term kill decision, I became fascinated by it...”

Playing the tapes back, its remarkable how few “y’know what I’m saying” or “well, when you put it like that” verbal throat-clearing moments there are. His words spool out in one focused and informed payload.

“He’s slowed down a lot,” bassist Chris Wolstenholme tells us later. “When we first started out, he was a lot faster even than that. When we went abroad, we’d go on Italian TV, say, and the live translators would really struggle to keep up with him. But I think over the years so many people have said, ‘Can you please slow down,’ after interviews that he’s learned to apply the brakes in these moments.”

And his laugh – it’s conspiratorial, it’s anticipatory. In the 1984 movie *Amadeus*, American actor Tom Hulce played Mozart like he was a man who took manic delight in every sparrow that farted, every curlicue of smoke that rose from his candle. There is something of that to Bellamy. He’s exactly ➔

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NATOR 2”

what a rock star should be – ie, someone who doesn't seem to perceive reality in the same way as the rest of humanity. A little bit celestial. A little bit neuropathological.

For now, he says, drones are still controlled by operators. Mostly good ol' boys in the Langley, Virginia car park where the CIA headquarters its programme, essentially playing video games all day with real lives in west Afghanistan or east Pakistan – insulated, alienated, from the consequences of their actions. That's a pretty bad look, but not half as bad as what's to come in the next decade or so – artificial intelligence systems sophisticated enough to take the more mundane kill decisions out of the hands of both good ol' boys and presidents.

You or I would squeeze the trigger because we have a hunch that someone is an insurgent. But a vaguely intelligent machine can have a hunch too – based on the probability that the human beings in front of them have come from a certain place, based on the type of weapon they are holding, or on the clothes they wear. So why, we will increasingly be asking, is a human hunch any better than a machine's?

"To me, that's like this is the end point. The moment you accept a computer making a kill decision, you're into *Terminator 2*. The whole thing's quite frightening, and I don't think the public are really as aware as they should be of where this is all going, what it means."

That would be an easier question to answer if it were simply down to the Pentagon's latest KillBot 3000. But there's the human side of the equation too. Simultaneously, Bellamy was reading up on psychopaths – Jon Ronson's best-selling *The Psychopath Test*, and Robert D Hare's *Snakes In Suits* – the story of psychopaths in the workplace, that contends that one in 100 of us exhibit psychopathic traits and that, overwhelmingly, these people tend to end up in the boardroom. Their lack of empathy means they have charm when charm is needed, brutality when that is the most effective weapon, and none of the confusing moral ambivalence that paralyses the rest of us.

"I saw a parallel between our obsession with efficiency and how people with no empathy seem to do very, very well in modern society. Two hundred years ago, industrialisation ruined the labour force. In the modern age, especially in the west or America, people who are 'efficient', who can bracket their emotions off, tend to win. But at what cost to the rest of us?"

The answer, he feels, is to recover some of that empathy we're all having scooped out by our atomised, technology-straitened lives. "Empathy seems to be seen as a weakness. We condition people to withdraw it to succeed. But, really, it needs to be re-seen as a strength again if there is to be any kind of hope in the world."

Chris Wolstenholme thinks Matt does have that sort of empathy. "Of course he does. I think we all do. I don't think someone without empathy could write that album. It's an album written by someone who is appalled at how the universe rejects that sort of empathy."

It's this little light of knowledge that Matt now hopes to let shine out around the globe via his time-honoured method of making a bombastic neo-classical prog record.

DRONES IN NUMBERS

An overview of the topic that's captured Matt Bellamy's imagination

\$130m

The cost of the Global Hawk – the biggest-ever drone, exported to Germany by the Americans in 2013.

18,000

The cruising height of Global Hawk, in metres.

8,700 miles

The range of a Global Hawk in a single journey.

35

Number of countries that now have their own drone capabilities.

3

UK ranking for drone exporting, behind Israel and the US.

has pinched a famous speech from JFK as the audio apex for his nameless character's transition from acceptance to rebellion. It begins: "For we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy..."

"He was talking about the rise of the USSR's bureaucracy, this mechanised system for evil. But he doesn't actually mention the Soviet Union by name, so it works perfectly in the context of the rise of actual machinery, technology and the rise of efficiency."

The top YouTube hit for it is a conspiracy-theorist re-angling captioned 'JFK Warned Us About The New World Order'.

Starting with

the classic Muse 'Supermassive Black Hole' boogie-glam of 'official' first single 'Dead Inside', 'Drones' tracks the fall and rise of some unnamed Joe Schmoe drone operator – who starts out getting the *Full Metal Jacket* hairdryer treatment from a drill sergeant on 'Psycho'. 'Mercy' then goes the full caboodle of paranoia: "*Men in cloaks always seem to run the show... We're going under, hypnotised by another puppeteer*", while 'Reapers' takes the battle for control of your mind right to the frontline of the war against terror: "*You kill by remote control/ The world is on your side/ You've got the CIA, babe*".

Our new friend descends into dead-eyed obedience to what the powers that be want. He handles things for them on 'The Handler', before developing a consciousness of his own and defecting on 'Defector', then openly revolting on 'Revolt', and seeing the aftermath of it all on 'Aftermath'.

In-between, Bellamy

After the 'Aftermath', things get particularly weird. 'The Globalist' sees the same ex-drone operator – finally having thrown off the yoke of his oppressors – becoming his own ultimate dictatorship-of-one. Long and loud, it's up there with the wiggliest things they've ever done: 'Knights of Cydonia' maximalism that begins with two minutes of soft Ennio Morricone-style violins and whistling, climaxing a full six minutes later with a countdown from 10 to the actual end of the actual world.

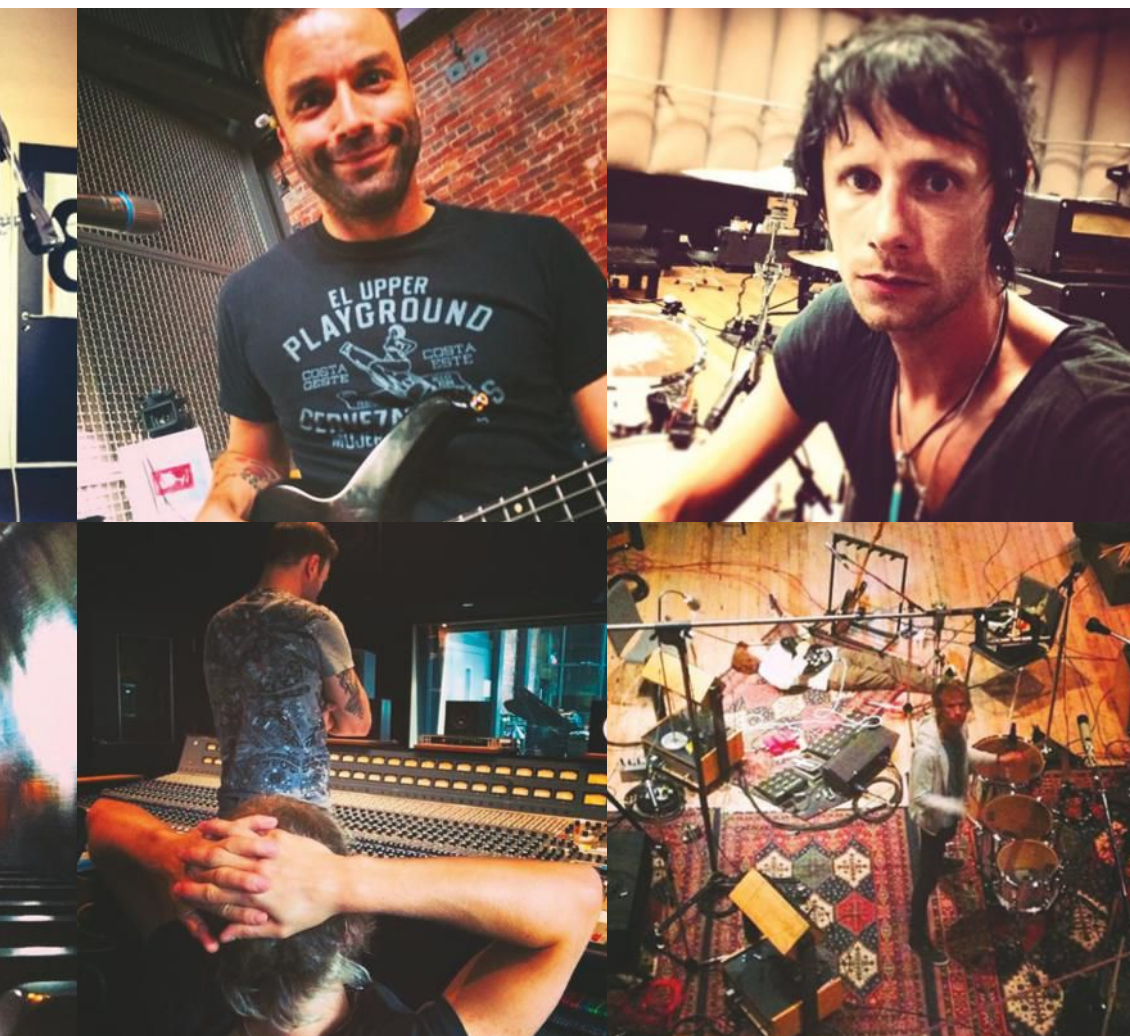
World over, the final track is weirder still in its own understated way. Based on the choral music of Italian composer Giovanni Gabrieli, there are no instruments – simply Bellamy's voice looped over and over into a choir-of-one. It's a sad, slow hymnal, in which Bellamy sings only these words: "*My mother... my father my sister my brother my son my daughter... killed by drones. Can you feel anything? Are you dead inside? Now you can kill from the safety of your home with drones. Amen*".

"It's a lament for the victims," Bellamy says. "It ends on this ghostly chorus of the forgotten. They will never see justice, and they have been killed by a robot. There's something inherently tragic about humanity there."

Musically, it often feels like a greatest hits set. Some 'Starlight'-style dapper sundowners piano riffs on 'Mercy'. 'Uprising'-style Glitterstomp on 'Psycho'. 'Defector' brings a mellow Pixies tinge to the usual Queen reign. And



Recording 'Drones' at The Warehouse Studio in Vancouver, Canada, late 2014



"IT'S THE SOUND OF US LOSING OUR MINDS"

DOMINIC HOWARD

'Aftermath' seems to be asking, 'What if Pink Floyd were asked to do an Olympics montage?'

Yet for a band who were telling reporters towards the end of their 'The 2nd Law' touring commitments that they felt they'd pushed things to their limits and now needed to be getting 'back to basics', it's not quite 'Nebraska'. It's not even 'In Rainbows'.

"But by our standards, it is back to basics," Dom Howard points out. "Yeah, it's layered and bombastic, but the start of that process was very different to how we normally do it. For the first time, the three of us in a room, eyeballing each other again. I think on 'The 2nd Law', producing it ourselves, we spent so much time in the control room that we lost sight of ourselves as a band."

Most of 'Drones' was made live. Paired off with the producer of AC/DC's 'Back In Black', Mutt Lange, even the wiggling-out of 'The Globalist' was recorded in one take. Eighteen years ago, they made much of what became 'Showbiz' in Matt's nan's basement – damp

down the walls, egg boxes up them, and "weird shiny black spiders" descending randomly into their practice space. They decided to go back to that spirit, holing up in Bellamy's much nicer basement over the summer.

"I guess," Howard explains, "we wanted to push the boat out on 'Drones'. For that reason, it's very diverse – it's the sound of us being very experimental and losing our minds a bit."

For all the group bonding, the process of making 'Drones' can't have been a breeze for Bellamy, because in December of last year he finally, definitively split from the mother of his child and his fiancée for several years, Kate Hudson. The break-up seems to have been as amicable as these things can ever be when a child and the love of a lifetime are involved. Yet there's a glaring irony in a man taking perhaps the tenderest, most naked moment of his adult life and turning it into an album about unthinking, unfeeling killing machines. Fleetwood Mac's 'Rumours' it is not.

The answer he gives sums up the contradiction between the exuberant man who embraced rock's batshittiest clichés and the private, nerdy, emotionally guarded soul who hides in facts and details, who does not wish to bring those feelings into it: "Look. We had a great relationship, she's a lovely person, we're better off as friends."

But that never fed back into the music? You left it at the door?

He looks dead ahead. "It's difficult for me to pinpoint anything on the album specifically about that... except that when someone suddenly finds themselves outside of a relationship, they ponder things, they think over the points in their lives when they think things didn't go the way they expected them to... It's the fact that I reconnected with all the points in my life where I felt alone or outside."

Did you contemplate where you'd gone wrong in your life, Matt? Did you go for long walks in the countryside? "Of course," he says. "I always go for walks in the countryside. The south Devon countryside... I used to go letterboxing, actually." Letterboxing is a wholesome country pursuit

whereby you go out and find boxes based on clues, like an orienteering treasure hunt.

Bellamy still denies being a political songwriter, anyway. "I wouldn't say I'm concerned by politics in that sense. Everything we've done – it's been more about responding to the emotions involved in the situation." But perhaps if one emotion could be said to be binding together his outwardly directed socio-political stuff with the heart of the man himself, it's that sense of the loner, of the outsider trying to find his way through the maze.

"When I think about my teenage years, when my parents broke up, and feeling alone and being out of control and having to survive... And then other times when you've had to find your own way... that's always been a dominant theme in what I've done."

Is there actually catharsis there? Do you feel happier now?

"Yeah... I'm getting there," he pauses, a rare event. "Definitely in the last few months I've been feeling much better. Actually, I've been feeling really good..."

It's a new dawn, it's a new day. Seven albums in, Muse have built one of the most ardent, most genuinely international fanbases of any modern pop band. What do you do with a group like that? If you're Matt Bellamy, you push them right up into the ugly, abstracted meat-patty factory of modern warfare. This is new ground, even for them. ■

Circa Waves (l-r):
Joe Falconer, Sam
Rourke, Kieran
Shudall, Colin Jones



The Fab Four

A group of lads from Liverpool being chased around by fans? Sounds familiar, and so does Circa Waves' revivalist indie pop. Lisa Wright dodges the champagne corks at the climax of their biggest tour to date

PHOTOS: ANDY HUGHES



It's 11am

– seven-and-a-half hours before Manchester Ritz's doors open and more than 10 hours before Liverpool quartet Circa Waves take to the stage – and there's already a queue of moon-eyed teenagers outside the venue. For a new generation who were in nappies when The Strokes released 'The Modern Age' EP, Circa Waves' high-energy indie bounce is blowing minds. "It's not dubstep or that kind of thing that's everywhere; it's completely different!" enthuses 16-year-old fan Emily Tabberner, who's at the front of the queue. "They're unique!"

Eighteen months ago, the group, fronted by chief songwriter Kieran Shudall plus Joe Falconer (guitar), Sam Rourke (bass) and Colin Jones (drums), were yet to release a single. Now, they stand with a Top 10 album under their belts (March 2015's 'Young Chasers') at the end of a completely sold-out tour, looking like one of the most likely new acts to cross over into the big leagues. Not bad for a band who, basically, have taken the sound of the noughties indie boom, dusted it off and given it a quick polish.

It's not just a dedicated portion of the north that's coming round to the quartet's charms. "We played London [O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire] last night and a mate of ours said he'd never seen a crowd go that mad in that venue," grins a leather-clad Shudall backstage, where the band are trying to cobble together the ingredients for whisky sours – the benefit of having a roadie who used to be a professional cocktail maker. "He saw Arctic Monkeys there back in the day and apparently it wasn't even like that for them."

The entire nine-date tour, taking in venues all roughly the size of the 1,500-capacity Ritz, sold out long ago and the energy in each city has been, as Falconer puts it, "unbelievably consistent. From the moment we started we went everywhere, we never confined ourselves to the north-west, so there's never a place that's had ownership of us," he says. "We see the same people every time, from the first gigs when we had 20 people in the room to now." Now, however, it's likely that 20 people might turn up to catch a glimpse of Circa Waves having a drink in the pub. Inciting their own mini Beatlemania across the UK, the band have found their whereabouts being intently traced via Twitter, with packs of boggled-eyed fans trying to catch up with them at every turn. "It's started

Circa Waves on sparkling form, stage front and back, Manchester Ritz, April 18, 2015



happening on this tour. We have to watch what we're tweeting," says Shudall. "When we do pub crawls, we tweet one pub behind. People will tweet us like, 'I thought you were at the Sebright Arms?' Well, we were at the Sebright Arms... It's like a treasure hunt." Later, when the band head to the restaurant of nearby venue Gorilla (the site of Circa Waves' last Manchester show), several fans stand outside the glass window and openly record videos of the band as they eat. Entirely unfazed ("Oh yeah, I refuse to eat unless there's a film crew there," chuckles Shudall), it's clearly a strange new norm that the group are becoming rapidly accustomed to, yet it's one that seemed unlikely given the group's less-than-explosive beginnings.

The Circa Waves story goes like this. In spring 2013, a 26-year-old Shudall – having been in

a standard array of average-but-unsuccessful musical projects and with a day job pulling the hair out of plugs in student houses – wrote some demos in his bedroom. One, 'Young Chasers' – the track that would go on to name their album and become their free-spirited, escapist rallying cry – started to blow up, and so Shudall recruited Falconer, Rourke and former drummer Sian Plummer in order to play live (Plummer was replaced by Jones earlier this year). So far, so unremarkable. However, things quickly took off. Fuelled by the hype created by 'Young Chasers', the band played a host of industry-packed gigs so buzzy they would often be forced to perform under pseudonyms such as Wet Wet Wet Wet Wet. They signed to Virgin EMI, played the prestigious opening slot on the NME Awards Tour with Austin, Texas in 2014 (previous openers have included Florence + The Machine, The Vaccines and Coldplay), released relentlessly infectious debut AA-side 'Get Away'/'Good For Me' and watched things escalate around them.

In September, they were invited to support musical heroes The Libertines at the likely



lads' final Alexandra Palace show in London, and on tour in Europe, which still leaves Shudall grinning like a kid in a candy shop. "The first thing Carl said to me was whether I wanted some champagne. 'Yes please, Carl Barât, I would like some champagne, please,'" he laughs, still visibly tickled by the memory of teenage daydreams made reality. "Pete and Carl are so tight and they talk so poetically. It's almost like they're speaking in limericks sometimes," he says. As Circa Waves worked the tour circuit, their own inter-band dynamic cemented too. While Falconer and Rourke admit that before they had to "tiptoe around a bit" ("It was very much Shudall's baby; we had to spend time with each other to get used to it," says Falconer), the band are slowly edging towards being more of an equal unit. "This last year's been mental. We've taken every step together and we're all aware of what's happening and we're the only people who understand what it feels like," says Falconer. "Apparently now we're like the UN, but Kieran is America and I'm

Russia," Rourke jokes. Maybe there's still a little way to go, then.

Tonight, on the final date of their current tour, the crowd's enthusiasm is undeniable. From the opening chords of the LP title track to the final strains of feel-good summer hit 'T-Shirt Weather', which is accompanied by celebratory confetti cannons, the entire crowd, from barrier to bar, is bouncing. Sure, the venue is equipped with a spring-loaded floor, but tonight that's an aid more than a necessity.

Of course, away from the sweaty teenage adulation, there are those who suggest that Circa Waves' sprightly riffs and feel-good shtick are nothing more than a recycled version of what's only recently come before. "Perhaps we just pre-empted the 20-year cycle [where trends seem to resurface two decades after their original emergence] by 10 years?" suggests Falconer, as post-gig champagne is popped and sprayed over the room and each other. But while pre-empting a trend might be a savvy move, many of the bands who directly formed the foundations of Circa Waves are still very much alive (or at least reborn) and kicking. The Strokes have recently announced that they've started work on a sixth record, The Libertines are reunited, on a major label and midway through album three, while other latter-decade favourites such as The Futureheads and Maximo Park still tick along. Are Circa Waves just clutching at the coat-tails of a generation that they narrowly missed out on being a real part of? "I understand that people need a signpost when you've not heard a band yet," admits Falconer. "But imagine if The Libertines came out now and it was the first time people had heard of them – they'd just say that because they worked with Mick Jones they sound a bit like The Clash. So I think people say that [we're like those bands] now, but hopefully people will eventually realise it's something else."

Following this summer's festival season and a huge autumn tour when the band play London's 5,000-capacity O2 Academy Brixton among others, Circa Waves intend to return straight to the studio to prove that they're more than just copyists. "This first record

was something we had to get off our chest; it was a snapshot of us quite early on," Shudall states. "The next one will be more considered, maybe a bit more '70s-style stuff." The main prerogative, he maintains, is to do something that pushes them. "[Sticking to one thing] is just boring. Imagine if The Beatles had said, 'Oh, we're just gonna do lad rock and that's it.'"

For now, however, Circa Waves' relentless, inclusive enthusiasm is what's fuelling their rapidly spreading fire. "It felt like everything went really black

and white for about four years and then suddenly now there are some bands that are technicolour," says Rourke. "Music in the past few years has been a bit cynical. There's not been a lot of stuff like us for a while, a lot of fast-paced guitar music that you can lose your shit to," adds Falconer. "If you're The xx then you can stand there and be still, but we want to put on the greatest rock'n'roll show every night. And at the end, we're bleeding and sweating and being sick because we're so tired, but that's what you have to do."

It is, of course, not all work, work, work. Part of the beauty of Circa Waves is that they're part of a group of young acts (Peace, Wolf Alice, Swim Deep) who are making being in an indie band look like *fun* again. From tales of Bill Murray watching them at SXSW ("I think he was there to see Best Coast, but I'll take it") to inventing new DJ alter egos ("We're coming up with famous horse names – I'm DJ Seabiscuit, Sam's DJ Warhorse," chuckles Falconer) to grinning about the weird and wonderful array of gifts they've received (marshmallow penises and

intricate drawings of the band in Halloween costumes, in case you were wondering), they're boundlessly excited about what's happening. If it's unclear exactly where the balance between inspiration and perspiration lies, it is obvious that Circa Waves have struck on something that matters to people – more even than the band dreamed it might. "At first we couldn't believe it was happening, like, 'How are we doing this?' But now I think we're all starting to believe that it's real," says Shudall, reclining on the sofa in a fug of post-gig euphoria. "It feels like anything could happen now," nods Rourke. And, as 1,500 sweaty fans fall out of the venue having uniformly lost their shit, you have to agree that it really does. ■

Making Waves

Circa's indie influences

Foo Fighters

Kieran: "I like how Dave Grohl started as a drummer and then formed his own band, 'cos I started off as a guitar player and then formed a band. He's an inspiration for anyone starting on their own."

The Strokes

Colin: "My upbringing was in heavy rock and when The Strokes came out it was my transition into something different. They were the band that got me into indie."

Bloc Party

Joe: "Their debut album 'Silent Alarm' blew my mind. In 2005, when Bloc Party, The Futureheads and Maximo Park came out, I remember thinking, 'God, music is good at the moment.' It felt like something was happening."

Arcade Fire

Sam: "A lot of indie bands release the same album a few times, but Arcade Fire question themselves every time and that's really important. The energy and ferociousness of what they do onstage is something I want us to emulate too."



"At the end of a gig we're bleeding and sweating and sick"

Joe Falconer

HOT STREAK

Dance-pop survivors **Hot Chip** are back with their quietly political sixth LP. **Jazz Monroe** finds why they're still proud to be outsiders

PHOTOS BY JORDAN HUGHES

The Hot Chip HQ in Shoreditch, east London is a dingy, underlit basement studio with peeling paint and a ceiling so low even the keyboards look cramped. To get in, we barge open a stiff door that barely opens halfway and shuffle through behind the five-piece's core duo, Alexis Taylor and Joe Goddard. Inside the den, stacked gadgets and murky lighting give the impression of a deceptively brilliant scientist's laboratory; one mysterious contraption, peeping out from behind an elaborate synth, features two lightbulbs affixed to a plank of wood. "There's no daylight down here," Joe grins as we settle in. "You could go mad."

The place seems ramshackle, but there's a certain order among the clutter. It's an apt reflection of Hot Chip's modus operandi. Dance musicians are often an obsessive bunch – behind every scene of manic rapture are many solitary nights fine-tuning rigid 4/4 beats – but few bands marry order and chaos quite like Hot Chip. For starters, Alexis and Joe look, talk and perform less like superstar DJs than dance-

pop's stuffy uncles, meticulously doing their ironing while the party blares downstairs. Joe is the chattier of the two, which isn't saying much, while Alexis – dressed today in bright overalls that suggest a house painter gone raving – speaks in a worrywart whisper, as if seeking permission to finish the sentence. On record, as you know, this translates perfectly. Even on their bona fide bangers – 'Over And Over', 'Night And Day', 'Ready For The Floor' – Alexis sings in a shy, domesticated mewl that suggests he'd rather be filling the kettle than the dancefloor.

Party chops or no, the London five-piece are insurgent stars of Britain's pop institution, following the Pet Shop Boys into a hallowed tradition of bright outsiders unbothered with looking cool. But press them on world-takeover plans and you'll struggle to get so much as a "maybe next year". "I don't ever really feel that successful, honestly," mutters Joe, swaying idly on an office chair. Alexis concurs: "I just see other bands going up and up. I don't think we've ever been that big a success. 'Over And Over' is probably the song we're most well known for and it charted at Number 33 or something."

It peaked at 27, actually – and 'Ready For The Floor', the eminent crossover anthem of recent years, hit Number Six two years later. Still, you catch his drift: this May, when Hot Chip release sixth album 'Why Make Sense?' 11 years on from their debut, its very existence will be an unlikely triumph against indie-dance orthodoxy. As nu-rave, dance-punk and electroclash bit the dust, giving way to subtler fusions of mellow house and yearning indie vocals, Hot Chip

Hot Chip: (l-r) Felix Martin, Al Doyle, Joe Goddard, Alexis Taylor and Owen Clarke



"We try to keep the music awkward – in a pleasing way"

ALEXIS TAYLOR

were shuffling quietly into oddball-pop legend. "We see it as a marathon and not a sprint," Joe reflects loftily, cuing giggles from Alexis. "And when we see the carcasses of all the overnight sensation bands that then split up or something, we slowly drive past, look at them, and get a smile of joy out of those moments."

It's been three years since Hot Chip released fêted fifth LP 'In Our Heads'. The delay stems not just from family commitments (both Alexis and Joe are married with kids) but their hefty musical workloads. Alexis has

ED MILES



– and this is rare for Hot Chip, at least on a press day – heartily enthused. “Besides, after slumming it with side projects, it’s nice to have a budget. We’ve always talked about going to the Bahamas and making an album. It’s just, so far, we’ve always ended up in Kilburn.”

Even by the band’s unfussy recording standards, ‘Why Make Sense?’, recorded in this studio in Shoreditch and two others, came together quickly. They insist on recording spontaneous, improvisation-heavy jam sessions, before architect Joe swoops in to make sense of the chaos. To avoid endless nights toiling away in the studio, the band booked two five-day sessions at Angelic Studios in rural Oxford. ‘Huarache Lights’, the lead single, materialised in one day, with little consideration for its radio suitability. “We tried to keep it awkward, in a pleasing way,” smiles Alexis.

Although spending downtime apart means in-band vibes are generally positive, there are, Joe says, “disagreements about a million different things – sometimes the music, sometimes someone’s annoying habit”, born out of the brotherly comfort that’s developed since the band met in high school. Asked what habits rattle his cage, Joe answers immediately: “Owen [Clarke, multi-instrumentalist] has a habit of aggressively trying to tickle me if we’ve both been drinking.” Alexis emits a delighted snort. “You get moments like that on tour,” Joe reflects. “One time, Owen was bent over talking to someone out of a window, and I could see his bum a little bit. So I put a brazil nut between his jeans and his bum – just balanced it. And he was annoyed by that, so he forced the same brazil nut into my mouth. It’s OK, though. I don’t bear a grudge. That’s just rock’n’roll.”

Traditionally,

’80s disco music has been a sanctuary for social outcasts, and throwback producers like Hot Chip have caught flack for abandoning its political principles in favour of cheap thrills. One challenge to that school of thought came last year, when the group covered Arthur Russell’s mutant disco gem ‘Go Bang’ for ‘Master Mix’, a tribute album to the pioneer, with Aids-awareness charity Red Hot. “In Arthur Russell’s day, there was that idea of disco as a unifying thing, helping groups that

were politically under the cosh in New York to feel like they had somewhere they could be free,” Joe explains. “In Arthur Russell disco records you feel like the production echoes that – they feel very free and alive. They wanted it to feel like a place you could be free at a time when, out on the streets, maybe you’d get beaten up if you were gay or Puerto Rican.”

Joe finds the “mindless escapism” of much modern dance music depressing and enjoys injecting club culture with “more serious and interesting things”. Take ‘Why Make Sense?’ highlight ‘Need You Now’, a euphoric, soul-infused house cut that explores the disorienting effects of terrorism and global hyperawareness on the modern psyche. “*Never dreamed we would belong/In a world that’s just gone wrong*”, Alexis mutters, dwelling on images of British terror hostages. “I find it really hard to read newspapers or watch the news,” says Alexis. “I find it more difficult since having a child. I feel more depressed by things. Sometimes I feel like there’s a lot more that we, as a band, could maybe be doing. ‘Need You Now’ was a direct response to reading the paper [about] the latest person that is about to be beheaded. It’s quite hard to get away from that and go about your business writing a love song. So it was an emotional response to that – just feeling helpless and accepting that you can sometimes feel helpless.”

If Alexis seems glum, he needn’t be: it’s Hot Chip’s willingness to be mystified, to ask the unanswerable, that marks a band of brainy pop overlords fidgeting into a pop cult of their own – a status they’ll steel-plate this summer, with festival headline slots ranging from leafy Green Man to Sonar’s party pandemonium. Not that they’ll be adding EDM bangers to their repertoire. “This modern dance music that’s enjoyed by thousands of people, it’s basically Mumford & Sons but with a trance beat,” Joe concludes of Hot Chip’s latest adversaries. “What I’m interested in is the old, clichéd idea of house music, which basically works best with a few hundred people and no lights. No staring at the stage and it all being about a spectacle.”

That very wobbly sound, readers, is Skrillex quaking in his spaceship... ■

WHERE HAVE THEY BEEN?

Here’s what the Hot Chippers have been up to since 2012’s ‘In Our Heads’

THE 2 BEARS ‘The Night is Young’ 2014

Famed for prancing about clubland stages wearing – yep – enormous bear outfits, The 2 Bears sees Joe Goddard and Raf Rundell sweat out their deep-house tendencies. Second LP ‘The Night is Young’ nailed their trademark blend of melodies and playful beats.

ALEXIS TAYLOR ‘Await Barbarians’ 2014

Six years after making his solo debut with ‘Rubbed Out’, Alexis Taylor holed up at home and recorded another bedroom-blues curio. ‘Await Barbarians’ is often unfocused, the singer diving deep into his dreamy subconscious.

ABOUT GROUP ‘Between The Walls’ 2013

Alexis Taylor gets free improvisational rein in About Group, his skewed, late-night soul quartet. Musically, third LP ‘Between The Walls’ weaves a beguiling path between blues, country and funk, all underpinned by the band’s spontaneous jazzy flourishes and Taylor’s soulful whimpers.

released two albums since ‘In Our Heads’: an exquisite solo LP, ‘Await Barbarians’, and ‘Between The Walls’, with soul outfit About Group. Joe, meanwhile, helms house revivalists The 2 Bears, as well as co-running celebrated underground label Greco-Roman. Given that they’ve found their creative niches, are there question marks over Hot Chip’s future?

“I don’t think I’ve ever questioned it,” Joe muses, “although, if I had some enormo mega-hit outside of Hot Chip, I’d obviously leave the band and pursue that...” What keeps everyone coming back? “It’s fun!” Joe exclaims, sounding

Mael bond

Art-rock provocateurs Sparks and Franz Ferdinand first met a decade ago, bonding over a love of off-kilter pop. A promise to collaborate has since become a full album under the name FFS, and as Chris Cottingham finds, it has reinvigorated both bands

PHOTOS BY ED MILES

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It would never have happened if Alex Kapranos hadn't cracked a tooth. In 2013, the 43-year-old Franz Ferdinand frontman was in Uruguay on tour with his band when misfortune struck, and he didn't fancy braving the country's health system. The next stop was San Francisco, where the band's manager had an in with Huey Lewis' dentist. Yes, Huey Lewis of cheeseball '80s pop rockers Huey Lewis And The News. Apparently, Lewis' dentist was the best. "So there I am wandering around San Francisco looking for Huey Lewis' dentist," explains Alex. "I hear this voice behind me saying, 'Alex, is that you?' I turn around and it's Ron and Russell."

That's Ron and Russell Mael, better known as Sparks, the Los Angeles brothers who set down the benchmark for art rock with their 1974 album 'Kimono My House' (featuring 'This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us'). They've done a fine job of living up to it on 19 subsequent albums released during an unbroken 44-year career. Sparks were playing that night and invited Kapranos and Franz Ferdinand down. By the end of the evening, they'd agreed they should work on something together – a couple of songs, who knows.

Two years later, they've recorded a whole album together as FFS. It's less of a collaboration, more of an entirely new band, a six-piece composed of all four members of Franz Ferdinand and both Mael brothers. The result is similar to both, but with a distinct identity of its own. The choppy, rhythmic guitars and dance-influenced groove on

'Police Encounters' are very Franz, but the "bam bam diddy diddy" chorus and swirling keyboards are pure Sparks. Together it adds up to something neither party could manage alone. Likewise, the jabbing chords and tightly intertwined vocals on closing track 'Piss Off' see the two bands' different visions of art-rock combine into four minutes of instantly likeable off-kilter pop. Meanwhile 'Collaborations Don't Work' (a typically Sparks tongue-in-cheek title) is a pop operetta that opens with simple strummed guitar, which then fades into a grand sweep of orchestral/choral pop over which Russell and Alex trade barbed put-downs. "I don't need your navel gazing/I don't get your way of phrasing/I don't think you're really trying/What pray tell are you implying". No, this is not your average collaboration.

Right now, Russell, Ron and Alex are sat drinking tea in the bar of the Montcalm Hotel in London. "Apologies for the level of hipness," deadpans Ron, a man so unconcerned with what other people think of him that he's spent a good part of the last 40 years wearing a Hitler-style toothbrush moustache, although today he sports ➡➡



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FFS: (l-r) Nick McCarthy,
Bob Hardy, Paul Thomson,
Russell Mael, Ron Mael,
Alex Kapranos

a less-controversial pencil variety. Russell is a joker. "Tell us about the señoritas in Uruguay," he teases Alex, adding in a stage whisper: "That's how he broke that tooth." "I wish I could say it was as a result of something as rock'n'roll as a señorita," Alex corrects.

The two bands have known each other for over a decade. When the Maels heard Franz Ferdinand's second single, 'Take Me Out' (2004), they "reached out". The result was an art-rock blind date in a West Hollywood coffee shop. "We were very excited," remembers Alex. "Sparks had a big impact on us. At our very first rehearsal we tried a couple of covers and one of them, was 'Achoo' [from Sparks' 1974 album 'Propaganda']. It was a bloody awful. People say you should never meet your heroes, but it's nonsense."

They talked about recording together at that first meeting and Sparks wrote 'Piss Off', but Franz Ferdinand were just about to release their debut album, things got "crazy" and the nascent project never came to anything.

The chance meeting in San Francisco nine years later happened just as Franz Ferdinand were about to release their fourth album, 'Right Thoughts, Right Words, Right Action', but Alex was determined not to let the opportunity slip by this time. "I remember sitting down with the others and saying, 'It doesn't matter how busy we are, we have to make this happen,'" he says.

Sparks started the process in provocative style by sending Franz Ferdinand the song 'Collaborations Don't Work'. "It was kind of like a joke to see if we were on the same level," says Alex, eyeing Ron and Russell just to check for sure. "When Nick [McCarthy, Franz Ferdinand's guitarist] and I heard it for the first time we thought it was really funny," he continues. They responded with a double dare in form of a section featuring the line "*We ain't no collaborators, I am a partisan*", equating musical collaborators with Nazi collaborators in WWII. As we were sending it off we said, 'They're either going to find this funny or they're never going to speak to us again.'



"We don't feel any affinity with the term 'supergroup'"

ALEX KAPRANOS

I think that song underlines the fact that both bands were aware that collaborations can be pretty rotten. We approached it not wanting to do something bland and half-arsed."

Hence they worked in secret for 18 months, sending tracks back and forth. "We kept it all under wraps so there wasn't any expectation," says Russell. Alex adds: "Collaborations are usually along the lines of so-and-so featuring so-and-so. They always seem like a shitload of hype. Rather than building it on hype we wanted to have a good body of work before we told the world. We didn't want to work to other people's expectations." They also wanted to avoid the word 'supergroup' as it's two entire bands coming together, not cherry picked members. "We don't feel any affinity with that term," sniffs Alex.

It wasn't the original intention, but in the end they wrote a whole album's worth of material. It was recorded in RAK Studios in London in three weeks. The whole thing was,

they say, incredibly easy, like they'd been playing together for years. The only problem was Franz drummer Paul Thomson's thick Glaswegian accent, which Alex had to translate for the Maels. It was Thomson who came up with the name. "We knew it must be funny because everybody laughed," says Russell. "Once Alex told us what Paul had said, we agreed it fitted perfectly."

There was much talk during recording about the state of pop music, which they all agree is dire. Ron, no chatterbox, becomes animated on the subject. "It's really disappointing," he sighs. "I guess part of it is that we have been around for a while, but it just seems like so much pop music is formulaic now. There are so many possibilities

within pop music, stretching things but still relating to people. It angers me that people are doing it for the wrong reasons. It seems abusive to what pop music can be."

Alex agrees: "We share a love of pop music but we've never tried to do it in the predictable way other people around us do it. You run the risk of it flying over people's heads, but when it does connect, my god, it's great. That sums up the attitude of this record."

FFS is meeting of kindred spirits, for sure, but you also get the sense that both bands know that, at this moment in time, they are more interesting together than separately. It's been five years since Sparks released an album, while Franz's last outing, although decent enough, failed to make much of an impression. It's why Sparks and Franz Ferdinand as separate entities are on hold for the foreseeable future. FFS have a full summer's worth of live dates ahead of them, including Glastonbury. After that? "We've no idea," says Alex. "When we started this we didn't know what the hell it was going to be. That's a great way to feel about a band. Not knowing what the future is and not having it mapped out for you. Let's see what happens."

They all nod in agreement. "Let the public speak!" says Russell. Ron fires back: "And then ignore them." ■

FLYING SPARKS

Alex Kapranos' guide to the best of the Mael brothers' albums

Lil' Beethoven 2002



"I love the track 'The Rhythm Thief'. It showed the progression

of the band moving away from what people associated them with, which was dancefloor music. They abandoned that here and concentrated more on melody."

Gratuitous Sax & Senseless Violins 1994



"This contains possibly my favourite Sparks song, which is 'When Do I Get To Sing 'My Way''. It's quite a tragic song. It makes you want to dance, has a really direct melody, but also has a depth and complexity."

Angst In My Pants 1982



"I love 'Sherlock Holmes'. It's a misleadingly simple song. You don't know what level it's coming from, whether it's someone singing about Sherlock Holmes or whether it's about the relationship between two people."

No.1 In Heaven 1979



"Sparks were forerunners of electronic dance music. They worked with Giorgio Moroder in the late '70s and made the kind of music that was alien to their fan base. I was surprised when they told me it was critically panned at the time."

Kimono My House 1974



"The obvious one. There are very few bands fortunate to have a song like 'This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us', the kind of song that changes the landscape. I know a lot of people saw that song on *Top Of The Pops* and their jaws hit the ground."

NOS SURRENDER!

Some European festivals offer beautiful beaches, some have stunning scenery, some take place in a thrilling city and some have huge headliners. NOS Alive, in the Portuguese capital Lisbon, has the lot

This year, NOS-goers are spoilt for choice for huge acts with two massive, headliner-sized performers on each of its three days. On Thursday (July 9) it's bombastic rock juggernaut Muse and cerebral art-pop merchants Alt-J – each topping the bill at festivals elsewhere in their own right. On Friday (July 10) it's rave legends The Prodigy and world-beating folk-rockers Mumford & Sons. And rounding the weekend off on Saturday (July 11), soulful singer Sam Smith helps Disclosure take the event to a beat-driven conclusion. Elsewhere on the main stages are breakthrough singer-songwriter James Bay, indie-disco kings The Wombats and many more.

The Heineken Stage is where you find cutting-edge artists and cult heroes: headliners include Metronomy, James Blake and The Jesus And Mary Chain, and further down bill are rapper Azealia Banks, synth-pop heroes Future Islands, Mercury Prize winners Young Fathers and soul singer Jessie Ware. Those seeking harder beats can head to the

NOS Clubbing Stage for Tiga, Julio Bashmore, Erol Alkan and many more.

The festival kicks into gear in the evening and runs late, meaning days can be spent relaxing on the city beach, visiting the nearby resort of Cascais to soak in the coastal idyll or exploring vibrant Lisbon, with its old town (Bairro Alto), fado bars, tapas and sloping cobbled streets.

The event itself takes place on an open ground festival site close to the estuary of the river Tejo – a walk or seven-minute train ride from downtown Lisbon (the same train will get you to the beach in 15 minutes). And here's another bonus: there's no chance of mud, even if the balmy summer climate lets you down. Tickets for the festival are a ludicrously reasonable €109 for three days with camping options ranging from €126 for three nights to €138 for five nights. Camping is a five minute ride from the festival site on free transfer shuttles, and there are endless accommodation options in the city.

Founded in 2007 and formerly known as Optimus Alive, the festival has become a major fixture on the summer circuit (The Prodigy, Mumford & Sons and Metronomy are all making their second appearance). Find out what keeps them coming back at the late-night party of the summer.

► Head to nosalive.com to buy your tickets. A day pass starts from only €55



NOS KICKS INTO GEAR IN THE EVENING. DAYS CAN BE SPENT ON THE BEACH

► WIN!

You and a mate could be living it up at NOS Alive 2015 thanks to our competition. To be in with a chance of winning, put a picture of yourselves getting in the festival spirit on Instagram, and tag it #FlyToNOSAliveNME. The two Instagrammers behind the most compelling entries will each get two festival travel packs, comprising three-day tickets, flights from the UK and a hotel. The winners will be announced on May 29.

The beautiful city of Lisbon



Reviews

► THE DEFINITIVE VERDICT ■ EDITED BY BEN HOMEWOOD



Florence + The Machine How Big, How Blue, How Beautiful

That voice is still in gloriously full effect, but Flo curtails the bombast for a more restrained, introspective third album



During the performance – which included three tracks from 'How Big, How Blue, How Beautiful' – Florence leapt like a flame-haired dervish from the stage to dash towards her adoring crowd, breaking her foot in the process. Subsequent shows at Los Angeles' Ace Hotel, at the second weekend of Coachella and on *Later... With Jools Holland* saw the 28-year-old perched on a stool, her injured foot dangling limply. For someone about to embark on a massive global tour, it was far from ideal.

► It's fair to say the run-up to the release of Florence + The Machine's third album hasn't gone to plan. After three low-key dates in London and San Francisco during March and April, Florence Welch's first big gig back was at the daddy of high-profile festivals, California's Coachella.

But, as annoying – and downright painful – as the injury was, it might have been a backhanded stroke of luck. The follow-up to 2011's lavish 'Ceremonials' shows a more introspective side to the singer than we've heard before, and Florence's new songs fit perfectly with the kind of intimate, subdued performance that can only be offered up after mangling your metatarsal.

With Mumford & Sons and Arcade Fire producer Markus Dravs picking up the production reins from Paul Epworth (Adele, Coldplay) and James Ford (Arctic Monkeys, Haim), who both worked on Flo's 2009 debut 'Lungs' and its follow-up, you'd expect his trademark brassy bombast to be in full effect. Yet the three-time Grammy winner has succeeded in doing something many imagined impossible – reeling in those belting vocals. The tranquil 'Long & Lost' represents Florence's most delicate delivery to date. Sounding as floaty as one of her voluminous stage gowns, she weaves a jazzy

TOM BEARD

but minimal melody around hushed chants from her back-up singers. If John Milton had written a wine bar into *Paradise Lost*, this would be humming out of its soundsystem. Similarly serene is 'St Jude'. Against a

gentle keyboard drone, she sings a mellow ode to "the patron saint of the lost causes". It's as pleasingly underplayed as 'Caught', where she somewhat disingenuously sings "I can't keep calm/I can't keep still/Pulled apart against my will" while sounding more settled than ever before.

That's not to say the record doesn't offer up some super-sized bangers. 'Third Eye' is every bit as beefy as 2009's 'Dog Days Are Over', with Florence going into full-on preacherwoman mode, calling out "you deserve to be loved" like a self-help guru. Florence confessed that Dravs tried to ban her from writing any more songs about water, but her disobedience is pop's gain. 'Ship To Wreck' sees a drunken evening spiralling out of control and ending up in a disaster of Titanic proportions. Its lusty life force is offset by the weighty 'What Kind Of Man'. The album's ominous first single utilises a moody guitar riff nabbed straight from the Interpol vaults to add oomph to a bitter tribute to a lover so indelible they "inspired a fire of devotion that lasted 20 years".

Happily, moments of light far outweigh those of darkness. Closer 'Mother' tempts Epworth back for one last job – a glossy Jefferson Airplane-style slice of blues with an unmistakable debt to 'Screamadelica'-era Primal Scream's gospel psych. Overflowing with stately songwriting and lyrical craftsmanship, 'How Big, How Blue, How Beautiful' makes for a restrained but joyful return, and a collection that will last long after Welch's broken bones are mended. ■ LEONIE COOPER

► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** May 29 ► **LABEL** Island ► **PRODUCERS** Markus Dravs, Paul Epworth ► **LENGTH** 48:46 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Ship To Wreck ►2. What Kind Of Man ►3. How Big, How Blue, How Beautiful ►4. Queen Of Peace ►5. Various Storms & Saints ►6. Delilah ►7. Long & Lost ►8. Caught ►9. Third Eye ►10. St Jude ►11. Mother ► **BEST TRACK** Ship To Wreck

8

MORE ALBUMS

Girlpool Before The World Was Big



Wichita Recordings
Girlpool have a message for anyone who thinks there's

something unappealing about two LA females lamenting their teenage feelings in earsplitting unison: up yours. Guitarist Cleo Tucker, 18, and bassist Harmony Tividad, 19, haven't made an overtly angry debut album. But, as their lo-fi lullaby riffs and snappy lyrics form scrapbook collages of childhood nostalgia ('Before The World Was Big'), sleepy road trips ('Dear Nora') and tricky friendships ('Emily'), they create something truly rebellious. Because, let's face it, in a world largely run by men in suits, teenage girls are rarely heard. This brilliant half-hour of punky Americana is a chance to read the journals of the coolest kids in town.

■ ROBERT COOKE

8

Damaged Bug Cold Hot Plumbs

Castle Face



As the experimental outlet for Thee Oh Sees' main

man John Dwyer, Damaged Bug is a one-man jumble of squawking synthesizers and eccentric songwriting. Though this second solo album is a more consistent effort than 2014's 'Hubba Bubba', the quality control does Dwyer a disservice. Yes, it's supposed to sound glitchy and ramshackle, but the better moments ('Very', 'What Cheer') are indebted to innovative psych-rock artists like Can and Cream, while the weaker segments, like 'Grape Basement', drift monotonously. There is great potential here, but the project may take another album or two before it comes together. Knowing Dwyer's work rate, that may not take long.

■ CIAN TRAYNOR

6



Ten years and four albums in, the mathcore tearaways remain as incendiary as ever

► Rolo Tomassi founders and siblings Eva and James Spence are the only survivors from the Sheffield band's original line-up. The mathcore tearaways have been together a decade now, and fourth album 'Grievances' shows no sign of their powers waning. Heralded by the pulverising drums of new member Tom Pitts, it's on the offensive from the first second of opener 'Estranged'. As the song unfolds, guitarist Chris Cayford and bassist Nathan Fairweather trade dagger-sharp Mars Volta riffs as the Spence siblings yell their throats to shreds, spitting angry lyrics of breakdown and betrayal ("Ten years on the run left me damaged and ragged"). The record's barrage of noise is linked by stuffy interludes of piano ('Prelude III (Phantoms)')

and strings ('Chandelier Shiver'), which skate near pretension. But it's on calm, clear-headed highlight 'Opalescent' that the emotional strength at the heart of Rolo Tomassi shines through. ■ STUART HUGGETT



7

► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** June 1 ► **LABEL** Holy Roar ► **PRODUCER** Lewis Johns ► **LENGTH** 41:06 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Estranged ►2. Raumdeuter ►3. The Embers ►4. Prelude III (Phantoms) ►5. Opalescent ►6. Unseen And Unknown ►7. Stage Knives ►8. Crystal Cascades ►9. Chandelier Shiver ►10. Funereal ►11. All That Has Gone Before ► **BEST TRACK** Opalescent

DMA's DMA's Infectious



There are, you'll note when listening to the DMA's'

debut EP, moments when the Australian trio resemble early Oasis. Liam Gallagher circa 1994 is right there in Tommy O'Dell's voice on 'Feels Like 37'. What you'll also note is how much they sound like any number of British pop bands whose

main reason to exist can be summed up like so: massive choruses. 'Your Low' is a take on Blur's 'Coffee & TV', 'Laced' does romance like The La's did it and 'The Plan' has its way with The Coral. Best, though, is 'Delete', which builds to something glorious. "You know that I belong to be, reflections of myself", sings O'Dell. It makes no sense all, but since when did that matter?

■ TOM HOWARD

8

Soak

Before We Forgot How To Dream Rough Trade



Songwriters have long chronicled life on the teenage

frontlines. This eloquent debut from Northern Irish 18-year-old Bridie Monds-Watson, aka Soak, stakes her claim to be what *Girls'* Lena Dunham might call either the voice of her generation or at least a voice, of a generation. From the Beach House-influenced 'B a noBody' to the rushing Cat Power pop of 'Hailstones Don't Hurt', there is beauty and wisdom in Soak's music. She observes adolescent high jinks ('Reckless Behaviour') and familial strife ('Blud') with the same keen eye, while her voice recalls Joanna Newsom's at its most fragile. Less teenage kicks, more teenage contemplation.

8

■ KEVIN EG PERRY

Bleachers

Strange Desire RCA



Fun. guitarist Jack Antonoff says he named this

solo project after the tiered seating found at US high school sports fields because he wanted to tap into the "disconnected, darker side" of American adolescence. Though he sings about "boys at home with broken hearts" on the Springsteen-esque 'Rollercoaster', this '80s-inspired pop album isn't dark, just nostalgic and unabashedly romantic. Guest vocals from Yoko Ono on glitchy piano ballad 'I'm Ready To Move On/Wild Heart Reprise' and previous collaborator Grimes on 'Take Me Away's dreamy electro decorate his more experimental moments, but tracks like 'Shadow' and 'Wild Heart' are so catchy, they could slot onto the John Hughes movie soundtracks he clearly wants Bleachers to evoke.

7

■ NICK LEVINE

Unknown Mortal Orchestra

Multi-Love

Inspired by a three-way relationship, Ruban Nielson's third album expands UMO's sound to mind-blowing levels

While touring 2013's 'II', Ruban Nielson nearly threw up in his favourite Japanese restaurant. The 34-year-old mentions that same sushi joint in the first verse of the funky, drums-driven opener and title track of his third album. "She wants to bury me in Austin under Uchiko", he sings, over dancing piano and breakbeats. It's his poppiest song yet and the restaurant is one of few links to his past work. But the 'she' he's singing about lends things a darker undertone. While making 'Multi-Love', Nielson and his wife were in a polyamorous relationship with a woman he met on tour in Tokyo. Subject matter aside, the new record moves away from the woozy Beefheartian psychedelia of 'II' and its self-titled 2011 predecessor, expanding every aspect of the UMO sound.



THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** May 25 ► **LABEL** Jagjaguwar ► **PRODUCER** Ruban Nielson ► **LENGTH** 42:00 ► 1. Multi-Love ► 2. Like Acid Rain ► 3. Ur Life One Night ► 4. Can't Keep Checking My Phone ► 5. Extreme Wealth And Casual Cruelty ► 6. The World Is Crowded ► 7. Stage Or Screen ► 8. Necessary Evil ► 9. Puzzles ► **BEST TRACK** Multi-Love

Communions

Summer's Oath EP

Tough Love



Communions hail from Copenhagen, but you'd be forgiven

for thinking the Danish quartet had been raised in Manchester on a diet of The Stone Roses. On 'Forget It's A Dream', the opening track on this new five-song EP, baggy beats and drawled lyrics swirl between guitar lines pickpocketed from John Squire. 'Wherever'

chimes with optimism that's backed up by frontman Martin Rehof's assertions of "My heart, it never sleeps", while the title track slinks towards the shadows, Frederik Lind Köppen's pummelling drums creating a threatening atmosphere matched by thundering bass and post-punk guitars that recall Joy Division. Closer 'Out Of My World' is a Cure-esque exercise in unrequited love. A brilliant, Continental take on classic British sounds.

■ RHIAN DALY

8



NME
ALBUM
OF THE WEEK

It begins with four joyous examples of the step up the New Zealander – who has lived in Portland, Oregon since 2007 – has made. After 'Multi-Love' comes 'Like Acid Rain', a two-minute carnival of thick drums (played by Kody, Nielson's brother and former bandmate in punk group The Mint Chicks), prodding bass and guitar pitched as high as the "La, la, la, la, yeah!" chorus. 'Ur Life One Night' has chopped vocals and a guitar solo made all the more dizzying by the synth jarring underneath. Most of the keys on the album come from vintage synthesizers Nielson reconfigured in his basement studio. 'Can't Keep Checking My Phone' deploys them extravagantly, ending the opening sequence with a springy mesh of brass, beats and electronics.

The trumpet – played by Nielson's father Chris, who worked with his sons in The Mint Chicks – adds gloss to 'Extreme Wealth And Casual Cruelty', a six-minute journey through strident guitar and urges to "abandon extreme wealth and casual cruelty".

It forms a bridge from a lighthearted first half to a second portion that explores immigration and socially conscious paranoia. 'The World Is Crowded' swaddles its titular warning in a ballad, but closer 'Puzzles' is harsher. Windows smash, guitars lurch from acoustic to Led Zep-loud and Nielson goes from singing "America, open up your door" to screaming "I don't want to solve your puzzles any more".

After seven disorientating minutes, it fades with Nielson's acoustic, a perversely simple conclusion to a dense, detailed and wildly engrossing album.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

9

White Manna

Pan Cardinal Fuzz



Hailing from the pocket-sized Californian city of

Arcata, White Manna play the sort of space-rock that pegs them as both hippies and punks. The six songs on their fourth studio album in three years average around seven minutes but are rarely slothful: their oil-smeared biker-psych riffs move at pace and tangle with

reverb-weighted vocals. Touchstones include free-fest legends Hawkwind ('Dunes I', 'Beta Travellers'), recently reformed '80s indie faves Loop (rare slowburner 'Dunes II') and Bristolian weed enthusiasts The Heads. While White Manna are pursuing this sound to its zenith, it's at the expense of anything hugely original. As modern psych hairballs go, it's above average: better than The Warlocks, not as good as Gnod.

■ NOEL GARDNER

6

Reviews

Kid Wave

Wonderlust

Heavenly



London-based four-piece Kid Wave's debut is

aptly titled. Its songs are full of a desire to explore life's experiences, but it's also a record that sounds wide-eyed and awestruck. Even a song called 'Gloom' can't help but sound like it's on top of the world, with its

breezy guitars spiralling in tight circles. 'Honey' shares that vibe, Swedish-born singer Lea Emmery's lyrics summing up the record's head-in-the-clouds approach: "Some say dreaming is a waste of time/I've got nothing else in my life". 'I'm Trying To Break Your Heart' glides slightly closer to earth, Emmery sighing "I wanna be on my own" over searing guitars. A dreamy debut that'll get under your skin and into your head. ■ RHIAN DALY

7

Nozinja

Nozinja Lodge

Warp
New Warp
signing
Nozinja
(real name
Richard



Mthethwa) is a pioneer of Shangaan electro, a South African musical style that's influenced by Kwaito house and the African/Latin throb of Tsonga disco. The 44-year-old's seventh album balances Afropop vocals with bewildering rhythms and kids'-toy keyboard sounds, swinging

between the naggingly familiar and the utterly alien: 'Baby Do U Feel Me' marries a dusty soul sample to lolling Latin chords and a super-fast beat, like an African take on the footwork of Chicago's DJ Rashad. The gorgeous 'Xihukwani' pits New Order chords against juddering drums. This mixture could be confusing, but Nozinja irons out potential tensions with sweet pop melodies and guttural funk. A beguiling, uplifting listen. ■ BEN CARDEW

8

Algiers

Algiers



Matador
The debut
album by
Algiers, who
formed in
Atlanta and

currently reside in London and New York, exemplifies the difference between 'influenced by' and 'sounds like'. The trio's lionising of free jazz (Peter Brötzmann), no wave (DNA) and rap (Public Enemy) prepares you for a noisy barrage. In fact, 'Algiers' is often akin to a more abrasive UNKLE album: full of lung-busting gospel vocals, drum machines and scrawly goth guitar. 'Irony. Utility. Pretext' toys with camp industrial techno, and the gaunt menace of Suicide lurks throughout, but generally this is fairly accessible stuff. And that's no bad thing, as Franklin James Fisher's politically insurgent lyrics deserve to be heard.

■ NOEL GARDNER

7

Slaves Are You Satisfied?

The larger-than-life Kent duo
crash and bang giddily on
their rousing debut album

▶ Their borstal-boy beats and primitive style might lead you to believe Slaves are angry, but they're not, they're just disappointed. Disappointed with complacent, grumpy Londoners, disappointed with apathetic twenty-somethings for not getting off their arses and taking a stand before they're too institutionalised to care, and disappointed by the lack of personality in pop. Singing drummer Isaac Holman and guitarist Laurie Vincent are so larger-than-life they're practically cartoon characters. Two tattooed tearaways who came together in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, they channel their despair into a modern rendering of Sham 69's raw, charismatic punk and the gritty 1970s pub rock that's shot through Palma



Violets' recent second LP, 'Danger In The Club'.

'Are You Satisfied?' follows 2013's self-released mini-album 'Sugar Coated Bitter Truth', which featured 'Girl Fight', a 15-second observational storm about females brawling. They've used their major-label



debut to rally the troops rather than just jeer at them from the sidelines. Every song here is a call to arms or an affirmative flip of the table. 'Do Something' is the most literal of the duo's punches to passivity. "You are not stuck in traffic", insists Holman over Vincent's rusty-razor guitar and his own rattling drums, "You are traffic... Move". 'The Hunter' shares the same relentless rhythm and exasperation, while 'Cheer Up London' picks up the pace for a barbed attack on the rat race ("Put another O on your paycheck/Are you done digging your grave yet?").

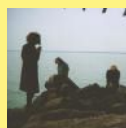
The closest Slaves get to a love song is 'Sockets', essentially The White Stripes' 'Fell In Love With A Girl' whacked through a meat mincer, but the most unlikely of these 13 songs is the title track. Over acoustic strumming, Vincent does his best girl-group backing coos and a croaky Holman searchingly asks "Brother, are you satisfied", coming on like Jamie T in dire need of a Lemsip. It's only a minute and a half long, but on the bones of a melody strangely reminiscent of long-forgotten 1998 Mercury Prize winners Gomez's 'Whippin' Piccadilly', they drive home their anti-indifference stance with a sensitivity that's just as striking as when they stomp.

■ LEONIE COOPER

8

Sunflower Bean

Show Me Your Seven
Secrets EP



(self-released)
The third
track on
Sunflower
Bean's debut
EP is a

revealing introduction to the New York band's sound. 'Tame Impala', a dizzying, Sabbath-like tribute to Kevin Parker's band, has bassist and singer Julia Cumming – a former model – yelping "You always say what's on your mind" over heavy riffs. (Tame Impala's 2012 album 'Lonerism' included a bonus track called 'Led Zeppelin'). The other five songs more than justify the buzz around the trio (completed by guitarist Nick Kivlen and drummer Jacob Faber), melding wandering psych with glimmers of metal and post-punk. 'Somebody Call A Doctor' is largely instrumental, Kivlen's chiming guitars wrapping around Cumming's dancing bassline, and 'OK Mr Man' has a glint of Joy Division to its whirling noise. Astonishingly good.

■ RHIAN DALY

9

▶ THE DETAILS

▶ RELEASE DATE June 1 ▶ LABEL Virgin/EMI ▶ PRODUCER Jolyon Thomas ▶ LENGTH 37:36 ▶ TRACKLISTING ▶1. The Hunter ▶2. Cheer Up London ▶3. Sockets ▶4. Despair And Traffic ▶5. Do Something ▶6. Are You Satisfied? ▶7. Wow!!! Tam ▶8. Hey ▶9. Live Like An Animal ▶10. Ninety-Nine ▶11. She Wants Me Now ▶12. Feed The Mantaray ▶13. Sugar Coated Bitter Truth ▶BEST TRACK The Hunter

The future of streaming

Raumfeld's Wi-Fi speakers combine high-fidelity sound with easy access to a huge catalogue of music

Founded in 2008, Raumfeld started with the belief that streaming is the future of music. Since then, they've gone on to create a distinctive suite of Wi-Fi speakers and stereo systems that allow music fans to experience music just as the artist originally intended it.



► Raumlfield One S

How does it work?

Preset buttons allow you to programme streams from Raumlfield's partners like Tidal, your favourite radio stations or your own music library. You can add other Raumlfield devices to the One S, including another One S to set up a wireless stereo experience.

What does it sound like?

The One S might look small

but it packs a punch thanks to powerful bass speakers, meaning the pummelling riffs of Queens Of The Stone Age will never sound weedy on this speaker.

What makes it unique?

A humidity-resistant design means you can use the One S anywhere, making it ideal for the bathroom or kitchen.

How much does it cost?

£199.99



► Raumlfield Stereo Cubes

How do they work?

Use the Stereo Cubes to stream the same or different music in multiple rooms via the Raumlfield app.

What does it sound like?

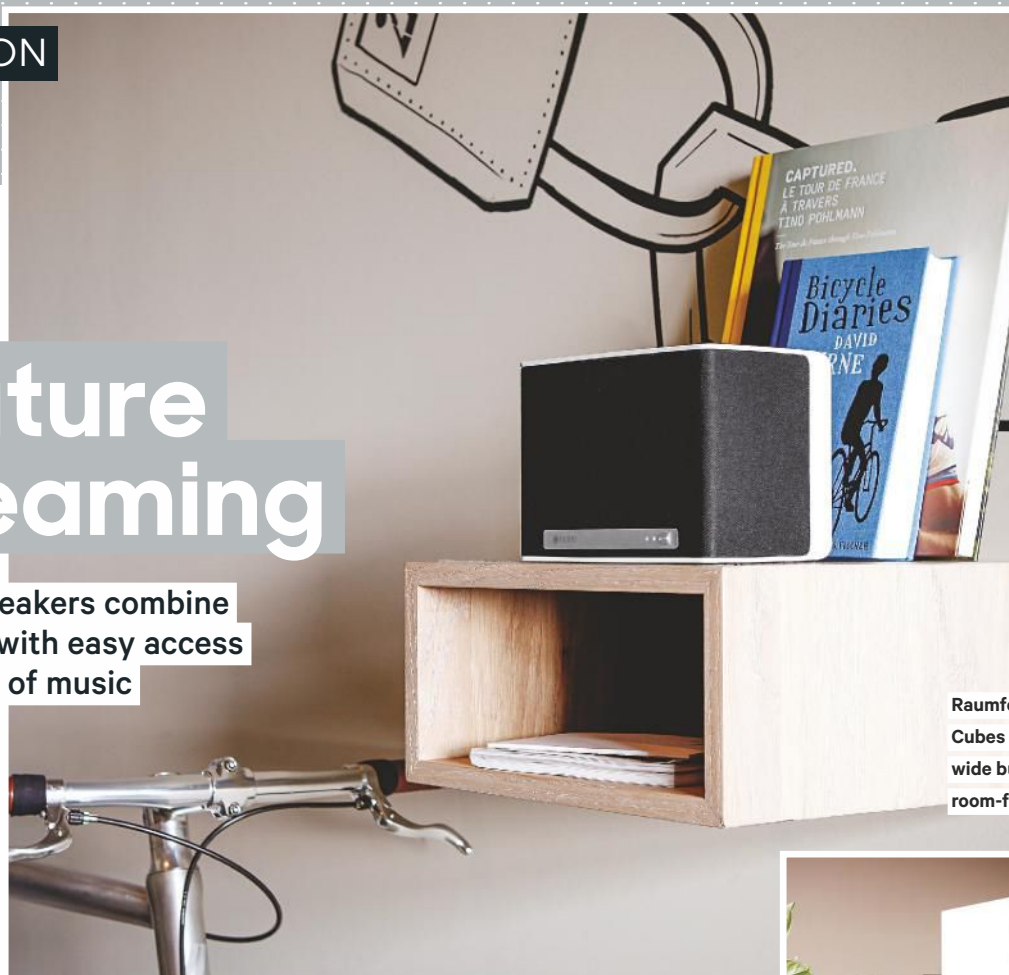
Don't be fooled by their size – the Stereo Cubes boast a double bass reflex system and a 160-watt amplifier, which basically means your next house party will be absolutely banging.

What makes it unique?

At just 20cm in width, each cube fits into the smallest space without compromising on sound. The elegant, Bauhaus-inspired design makes them stylish, too. As a stereo pair, you can experience true stereo panorama.

How much does it cost?

£399.99



Raumlfield's Stereo Cubes are just 20cm wide but provide room-filling sound



► Raumlfield Stereo M

How does it work?

Control this pair of bookshelf stereo speakers from your smartphone or tablet with Raumlfield's intuitive free app.

What does it sound like?

An integrated 320-watt amplifier guarantees distortion-free levels, so My Bloody Valentine's reverb will sound eardrum-batteringly glorious.

What makes it unique?

Its three-way speakers will flood the room with sound, while direct selection buttons allow you to pump your favourite tunes out in a second.

How much does it cost?

£699.99

► HOW TO BUY

Head to raumfeld.com to view full details of Raumlfield's high-fidelity Wi-Fi speaker range and buy from their online shop.



FILM

Mad Max: Fury Road

Tom Hardy stars in an explosive reboot of the post-apocalyptic trilogy

Director George Miller has described his first Mad Max film in 30 years as a “western on wheels”, but that’s seriously underselling this turbo-charged reboot. It’s set in the same post-apocalyptic wasteland as the Australian’s classic 1979–1985 trilogy – an influence on everything from the *Saw* horror movies to Mötley Crüe’s 1980s stage costumes – but tells a completely different story to its predecessors.

Miller doesn’t waste time trying to connect *Mad Max: Fury Road* to the earlier films, in which Mel Gibson’s Max sought to restore order in a lawless dystopian society. Instead, he dives straight into a minimal plot. Tom Hardy takes over from Gibson as former highway patrolman “Mad” Max Rockatansky, starring opposite Charlize Theron as new character Imperator Furiosa, a rig-driving renegade every bit Max’s equal.

Furiosa is an enigmatic heroine with a prosthetic left arm seeking unexplained “redemption”. Her mission is to drive a 78-foot vehicle called the “War Rig” across the desert to the utopian “green place” to secure safety for her cargo, the five wives of tyrant King Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne, who played a different villain, Toecutter, in 1979’s original). After escaping from Immortan Joe’s brainwashed army – a sickly-looking clan called the War Boys that includes former *Skins* star Nicholas Hoult in his most manic role yet – Max joins Furiosa and the fleeing harem. “My world is reduced to a single instinct: survive,” he growls at the start.

This simple premise drives an over-inflated, super-sized chase movie, as Immortan Joe’s bloodthirsty



men and their convoy of ludicrously pimped-up trucks, muscle cars and motorbikes pursue Furiosa’s War Rig. Dialogue is sporadic but noise is constant. Junkie XL, the Dutch producer behind 2001’s chart-topping remix of Elvis Presley’s ‘A Little Less Conversation’, supplies a suitably bombastic score, and for reasons never explained, one of the War Boys’ trucks houses a stack of amps and a masked guitarist blasting out massive metal riffs. *Mad Max: Fury Road* is simply that kind of film.

It’s also a film packed with epic action sequences,

including a screen-devouring sandstorm, shedloads of exploding automobiles and a craggy canyon collapsing onto a speeding 18-wheeler truck. This relentless onslaught of thrills, spills and burning grilles is made even memorable by the bleached-out backdrop from Oscar-winning cinematographer John Seale (*The English Patient*), who Miller tempted out of retirement to create the vibrant and sometimes freakish visuals. In one of the grizzlier scenes, Immortan Joe harvests breast milk from four massively overweight women in a sort of human dairy.

Everything about *Mad Max: Fury Road* is as ridiculous and thrilling as it sounds, but Miller’s film also has heart. The unspoken bond that gradually develops between Theron’s stoic Furiosa and Hardy’s buff, grunting Max is unexpectedly touching, and provides an emotionally satisfying conclusion to what is surely the most exhilarating film of 2015 so far. ■ NICK LEVINE



► **DIRECTOR**
George Miller
► **RELEASE DATE**
May 14

FILM

Return To Sender



Fans of *Gone Girl* have another

chance to see Rosamund Pike playing an icily cool American who suffers violent abuse and has secrets to hide. But, like its central character, *Return To Sender* may not be what it seems: it was shot two years ago, and it’s easy to see why it’s taken the acclaim for Pike following her Oscar nomination to get it released. Pike is excellent and veteran *Cape Fear* star Nick Nolte, as her father, offers formidable support. But their efforts are hobbled by a preposterous story that second-time director Fouad Mikati (*Operation: Endgame*) struggles to tell. “I know this doesn’t make a lot of sense,” says one character in the final scene. The other replies, “It doesn’t make any sense at all.” ■ ANGUS BATEY

5

CINEMA

Sword Of Vengeance



The severed hand that flies through the air in the opening scene of *Sword*

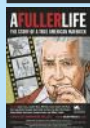
Of Vengeance ushers in an 86-minute bloodbath. Set sometime after the Battle Of Hastings in 1066, this is the first feature from British director Jim Weedon, who worked with Ridley Scott on visual FX on *Gladiator* in 2000. It tells the story of warrior Shadow Walker (French actor Stanley Weber) exacting revenge on his evil uncle (*The Bourne Supremacy*’s Karel Roden) for killing his father. Walker is joined on his quest by a band of rebel farmers led by *Peaky Blinders*’ Annabelle Wallis. Weedon’s ideas are simple, and he opts for gratuitous bloodshed over meaningful dialogue. But when two knives being plunged into the chest of a man covered in animal skin isn’t even the most gruesome scene, you feel he’s onto something.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7

CINEMA

A Fuller Life



Hollywood director Samuel Fuller – known for low-budget films like *The*

Big Red One and *Shock Corridor* – is remembered in his own words in this documentary. Fuller died in 1997 aged 85, and here friends and collaborators – including James Franco and *Exorcist* director William Friedkin – read extracts from his memoir

A Third Face, which was published in 2002. Directed by his daughter Samantha, the film charts Fuller’s early career as a crime journalist reporting on executions in 1920s New York. Fuller served as an infantryman in the second world war, and footage from the Falkenau concentration camp is compelling. Elsewhere, clips from his films will inspire you to dig deeper into the work of a renegade spirit full of surprises.

■ DAN BRIGHTMORE

7

CINEMA

Spring



Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead conjured a terrifying atmosphere in 2012 indie horror *Resolution*, and their latest project is no different. Evan (*Evil Dead*’s Lou Taylor Pucci) leaves California for the Mediterranean to escape personal problems. Travelling around Italy, he falls for local girl Louise (German actress Nadia

Hilker), and their initial interactions feel like a set up for a love story. But their relationship is threatened by Louise’s supernatural secret, and she turns out not to be the beautiful girl she seems. Before Louise reveals all, the couple’s interplay creates intimacy reflected in the picturesque setting of Polignano a Mare, but this gives way to a frightening conclusion that, as all good horrors should, delivers a real shock. ■ RHIAN DALY

8

Tame Impala

Levitation Festival

Austin, Texas

Friday, May 8

**Kevin Parker's crew blow
minds with new tunes at the
former Austin Psych Fest**

PHOTOS BY POONEH GHANA

After a week of biblical rainfall turned Carson Creek Ranch into a mudbath before the Levitation festival even opened, the sight of Tame Impala's neon-white lasers piercing the night sky feels miraculous. Lit up underneath them, frontman Kevin Parker raises a hand and asks a simple question, "How are you guys feeling?"

As introductions to opening night headline slots go, it's understated, but the wailing guitars and crashing drums of 'Intro Jam' make it feel epic. Now in its eighth year, the festival formerly known as Austin Psych Fest (the name changed for 2015 to honour the reformation of grizzly Texans The 13th Floor Elevators) is a mecca for mind-bending sounds. Tame Impala are this year's overlords. ➡➡

Tame Impala
psych out
onstage at
Levitation



47

TAME IMPALA SETLIST

- Intro Jam
- Let It Happen
- Mind Mischief
- Sestri Levante
- It Is Not Meant To Be
- Why Won't They Talk To Me?
- Elephant
- Be Above It
- Alter Ego
- Eventually
- Why Won't You Make Up Your Mind?
- Feels Like We Only Go Backwards
- Apocalypse Dreams

They follow the onslaught of 'Intro Jam' with disco-flecked new song 'Let It Happen', a fixture in their setlist since its debut at Coachella in April. Parker, barefoot and wearing jeans, T-shirt and a thin scarf draped around his neck, is initially rooted to the spot. His voice – as it is on all four songs so far released from 'Currents' – is pitched higher than on previous Tame records, and he appears locked in concentration, pushing his hair from his eyes to sing "*All this*

running around/Bearing down on my shoulders/I can hear an alarm/Must be a warning" in the chorus. Behind him, drummer Julien Barbagallo hammers his kit, beefing up Jay Watson's synth part. The extra muscle seems to help Parker relax, and as the crowd – who already know the words – clap along to the heavy outro, the frontman allows himself a headbang.

He's even looser during 'Mind Mischief', turning his back to the audience and thrusting his guitar skywards. 'Sestri Levante', which featured on last year's 'Live Versions' EP, leads into a relaxed two-song sequence of 'It's Not Meant To Be' and 'Why Won't They Talk To Me?' that's obliterated when Parker and Dominic Simper's guitars kick up a gear on 'Elephant'. Parker dedicates it to departing visuals engineer Zachary Boswell, and its overdriven chug is extended into an immense psych shred-out. The lighting guy seems determined to go out with a bang, matching the music with relentless strobing that threatens the retinas of the 10,000-strong crowd.

When the lights come up, Parker jokingly mocks Watson's all-khaki outfit ("He looks like Steve Irwin going to a business meeting") before the urgent drums of 'Be Above It' kick in.



BEST OF THE REST

DIIV

►Reverberation Stage, Friday, 9pm

Diiv recently announced details of their second album 'Is The Is Are', and bathed in flashing purple, the New York five-piece blast through a selection of its tracks, most of which are still untitled. The sludgy 'Waste Of Breath' – the only one they introduce by name – hints at a heavier new direction. The remainder of a pulsating show occupies more familiar territory, with frontman Zachary Cole Smith trading blurry guitar parts with Andrew Bailey during the intoxicating choruses of 'How Long Have You Known'.

SPIRITUALIZED

►Reverberation Stage, Friday, 10.30pm

Positioned on the right of the stage and all in white, Jason Pierce comes on like a debauched preacher. Lulling the crowd into a woozy haze before headliners Tame Impala, Pierce and his five-piece band drift from a druggy



Jason Pierce
of Spiritualized

sequence of 'Electricity', 'Shine A Light' and 'Electric Mainline' to a delicate version of closer 'Walkin' With Jesus', a song Pierce wrote for his old band Spacemen 3.

PRIMAL SCREAM

►Reverberation Stage, Saturday, 10.30pm

Bobby Gillespie spends most of Primal Scream's set cavorting on the edge of the stage, goading the crowd to copy his jerky dance moves. Opening with a bluesy 'Rocks', the Glasgow legends start by showing Austin their rockier side, before segueing into a brilliant, bleary second half featuring 'Loaded', 'Movin' On Up' and 'Higher Than The Sun'. By the end they've got everyone – from wrinkly old fans to kids at the back – grooving with them.

The singer clings to his mic stand between verses, reverb distorting his random squeals. His voice is clearer on 'Alter Ego', a cut from 2010's 'Innerspeaker' that's augmented by extra bombast. Now, the drop that comes after Parker sings "*The only one who's really judging you is yourself*" is cacophonous.

They top it easily with a live debut for 'Eventually', the night's second and final new track. Spread across seven waltzing minutes,

soaked in distortion and driven by a deadly bassline from Cam Avery, it's the set's clear highlight. It's also, arguably, the most psychedelic Tame Impala get all night. On the surface, it's a luscious ballad. The pace is slow and Parker's voice is pitched high and sweet, but as effected guitar and keys mix with that bassline, it feels precision-engineered for hypnosis, and the outro dopes the crowd into reverent near-silence.



Diiv's Zachary Cole Smith onstage at Levitation

BRAND-NEW SONG 'EVENTUALLY' FEELS PRECISION-ENGINEERED FOR HYPNOSIS

Closers 'Feels Like We Only Go Backwards' and 'Apocalypse Dreams' are expectedly monumental, but they don't come close to matching it. Tame Impala have unleashed an absolute monster at Levitation. On this evidence, 'Currents' will be seismic.

■ GREG ACKERMAN

9

▶ WANT TO GO TO AUSTIN?

Feel like you missed out? Want to go to the Live Music Capital Of The World for more festival fun? Well, you can. Austin City Limits is in October and features The Strokes, Florence and Drake. To get your tickets, head to aclfestival.com/tickets. For your direct flight (they're cheaper than you think) head to BA.com.

Austintexas.org

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MORE GIGS

Pretty Vicious

King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, Glasgow,

Saturday, May 9

There's a lot to like about Pretty Vicious. There's not a solitary "Here's our softer side" ballad in their 40-minute set; their distortion pedals are permanently activated, like a Christmas gift whose novelty hasn't worn off; and frontman Brad Griffiths sings in a larynx-threatening way that guarantees he'll be cancelling gigs within six months. You have to applaud the Merthyr Tydfil foursome's energy and enthusiasm. Yet, besides single 'Cave Song', only 'This World's Not Enough' – which sounds like 'Second Coming'-era Roses jamming on a Bo Diddley beat – really justifies the Next Big Thing tag that's been thrust upon them. There's promise here, but let's not put the cart before the horse.

■ BARRY NICOLSON

7

The Big Moon

The Lexington, London

Tuesday, May 12

The Big Moon may have only a handful of gigs under their belt so far, but they exude confidence tonight as they whip out blasts of Elastica-style indie. Opener 'Eureka Moment' is built on tumbling riffs, and midway through the set, the London quartet transform Madonna's 'Beautiful Stranger' into a grungy riot, frontwoman Juliette Jackson nonchalantly swinging her ponytail as she makes the Queen Of Pop's words her own. 'The Road' is a moody thrill but could benefit from more fire and fury. Closing song 'Sucker' is the killer ace in their pack, though; its chorus lingers in the memory long after The Big Moon have left the stage.

■ RHIAN DALY

8

Shamir



Belgrave Music Hall, Leeds

Monday, May 11

The 20-year-old from Las Vegas can start a party anywhere – even in Leeds on a school night

When he was in high school, Shamir Bailey's classmates voted him 'Most Likely To Appear On The Cover Of *Vogue*'. Tonight, on the opening date of his first full UK tour, he strikes flashbulb-ready poses as though he's playing Studio 54, rather than a modestly filled Leeds venue.

Opening with the languid funk of 'Vegas', an ode

to his hometown, he's here in support of his party-starting debut album 'Ratchet', which, while tipping its hat to LCD Soundsystem, is teeming with plastic-pop hooks Kylie would kill for. Tonight, 'In For The Kill' comes on like The Rapture's 'Get Myself Into It' as performed by Prince, and is followed by the cartoonish rap of early single 'On The Regular'. Preening through the house workout of 'Hot Mess', the 20-year-old drapes himself over his monitor like Grace Jones reclining on a chaise longue.

Shamir's vocal is disarmingly androgynous and, live, his female backing singer's voice is frequently effected to make her sound like Barry White, enhancing the gender-blurring impression. Shamir's voice takes on a gospel quality during a soulful rework of Philadelphia indie kid Alex G's 'Harvey',

which leads into 'Youth', a fierce Frankie Knuckles-style throwback to house music's '80s origins. By the time of closer 'Head In The Clouds', the room feels like a warehouse sweatbox, the bouncing crowd caught up in its squelching synths and rippling bass. At the end, Shamir leaps off the stage to hug everyone in attendance. As he departs, you're left feeling he could probably start a rave in a morgue. ■ GARY RYAN

SETLIST

- ▶ Vegas
- ▶ In For The Kill
- ▶ On The Regular
- ▶ I Know It's A Good Thing
- ▶ Hot Mess
- ▶ Make A Scene
- ▶ Harvey (Alex G cover)
- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Demon
- ▶ Call It Off
- ▶ Darker
- ▶ Head In The Clouds

The Strokes

Shaky Knees Festival, Atlanta, Georgia
Friday, May 8

Julian is iconic as The Strokes
run through the hits at their
first show of 2015

Striding out to greet a 30,000-strong crowd on a muggy night in Atlanta's Central Park, The Strokes look ready to tear hearts and eardrums apart. It's the band's first gig of 2015, and their first since Julian Casablancas suggested they were planning to hit the studio to record new material in an interview back in March. Tonight, they're kicking off a short run of dates – which takes in a huge outdoor gig at London's Hyde Park in June – at Shaky Knees Festival, which moved from outdoor shopping centre to this lush



city-centre park for this third instalment.

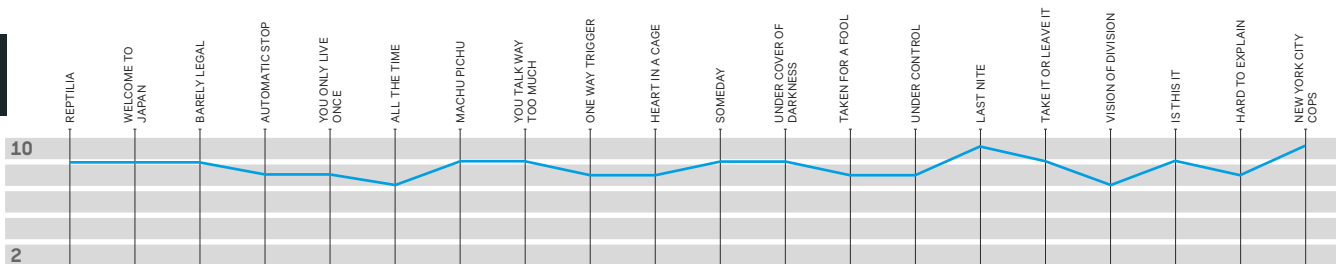
With the 36-year-old Casablancas standing centre-stage, stock-still and iconic, sporting ripped jeans and a dirty mullet, they launch into a blistering version of 'Reptilia'. It launches a blitzkrieg of big tunes. 'Welcome To Japan' and 'Barely Legal' complete a rapid and powerful three-song opening sequence. After a punchy run through 'Automatic Stop' from 2003's 'Room On Fire', the frontman drawls, "What does Shaky Knees mean anyway?" He lets the crowd drink in his first interaction for a moment, then, in a come-hither growl, adds, "Right, we're doing it. In the unofficial capital of the South."

THE STROKES LOOK AND SOUND AS TIGHT AS THEY EVER HAVE

The setlist reads like a Christmas wishlist for any hardcore Strokes fan. There's a stomping live debut for 'All The Time' from most recent album 'Comedown Machine', which is now over two years old. After a heavy 'Machu Pichu' prompts the crowd to surge towards the stage, 'You Talk Way Too Much' – which they haven't played since a 2004 show in Indianapolis – is also dusted off. There are no new songs, but

SETLIST

How good?



MORE GIGS

Lower Dens

Green Door Store, Brighton

Saturday, May 9

"I don't feel like saying anything, we're just gonna play," announces Jana Hunter at the start of a headline gig Lower Dens have squeezed into their run of Belle And Sebastian supports. After the gothic disco of opener 'Quo Vadis', the whoops of adoration from the crowd change the singer's mind, and a run of songs from dark-hued third album 'Escape From Evil' is punctuated by affectionate asides to hecklers ("I can't understand you, but I'm excited too!"). They lighten the Baltimore quartet's glowering electro, but the gliding 'Your Heart Still Beating', the operatic peaks of 'Company' and the hypnotic pulse of 'Brains' hold the room rapt all the same.

■ STUART HUGGETT

7

Bully

The Lexington, London

Thursday, May 7

There's something striking about Bully singer Alicia Bognanno, and it's not the Hendrix-esque red kimono she's draped in tonight. As a singer, the 25-year-old has the potential to be right up there with the best of them, veering effortlessly from the primeval howling Courtney Love managed to nail only fleetingly live, to a more sedate coo reminiscent of Evan Dando at his most tender. The Nashville foursome's songs totally match her vocal prowess: 'Trying' is a cautious tale of teenage kicks wrapped around a sickly-sweet, addictive riff and 'I Remember' is three-chord punk at its purest. This is Bully's first ever UK show – you won't want to miss their next one.

■ MATT WILKINSON

8

The Strokes back onstage in Atlanta, Georgia, May 8, 2015

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Courtney Fisher, 23
"I've loved them for ages. I've never got to see them live, so this is pretty much perfect."



Franklin Rabon, 32
"I've been a huge fan since they started. I actually saw them a week after their first record was released in South Carolina."



Kastle Molinar, 24
"'Last Nite' was epic. It's easy to see why I've been a fan forever."



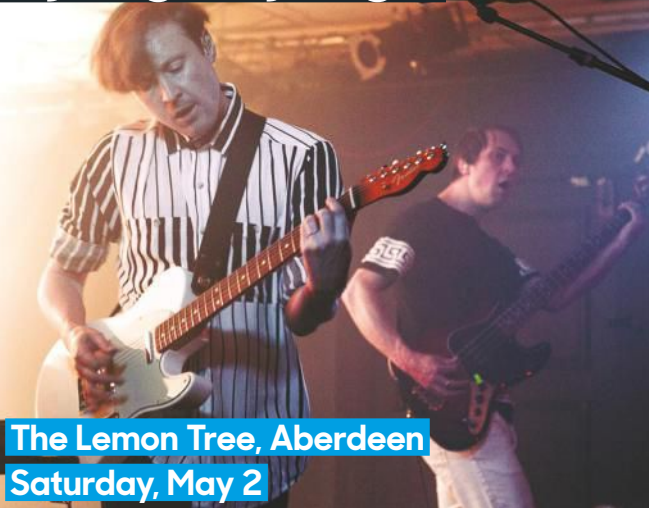
Marinao Villagrancia, 23
"I travelled all the way from California for this gig. There was no way I was missing it after such a long time away."

that's difficult to gripe about when you're being beaten in the chest with classics like 'Someday' and 'Under Control', which comes with the added bonus of a cameo from Mac DeMarco, who rushes around the stage hugging the band. The 25-year-old Canadian pops out from the wings again as the band buzz through an exhilarating 'Last Nite', but his appearance is a mere sideshow. Tonight is all about The Strokes. Guitarist Nick Valensi's signature riffs entwine tightly with Fabrizio Moretti's urgent drums on 'Under Cover Of Darkness' and the seismic 'Take It Or Leave It', before a closing barrage of 'Is This It', 'Hard To Explain' and 'New York City Cops' completes a brilliant comeback.

It may be approaching a year since their last live show (at Los Angeles festival FYF in August 2014), but The Strokes look and sound as tight as they ever have. After nearly two hours they depart, leaving a sense of excitement and occasion hanging in the air that suggests they might just be recapturing the old magic. Hyde Park, take note, The Strokes are coming. ■ KARI LLOYD

9

Django Django



The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen
Saturday, May 2

Full of clanging cowbell and skronking sax, the Djangos' new tunes are rowdy, rambunctious fun

"The last time we played Aberdeen it was to about 20 people, so this is pretty fucking good," Django Django's Vincent Neff remarks to the crowd tonight. Ah, but that was four years and a Mercury nomination (for 2012's self-titled debut) ago. Beneficiaries of the same sudden, inexplicable appetite for left-of-centre wonk-pop that propelled Alt-J into arenas, Django Django may not quite be at the same level yet, but as singer and guitarist Neff would no doubt attest, progress is progress, whichever way you cut it. The London-based foursome have made more of it with their second album, 'Born Under Saturn', in the sense that they've become even trickier to put your finger on. Yet while Django Django remain all things to all men – surf-rock futurists, electro-folk magpies, psych-skiffle weirdos, and a hundred other hyphenated pigeonholes besides – at their core they're something reassuringly simple: rowdy, rambunctious fun.

Five tracks from 'Born Under Saturn' make the cut this evening, and while they're all subject to inevitable opening-night roughness, it's not necessarily a bad thing. 'Reflections' sounds like Brian Wilson conjured up a euphoric house track and stuck some acid-jazz sax on it for shits and giggles. Tonight, James Mainwaring of Leeds jazz group Roller Trio plays its saxophone part and appears again, merrily skronking away at the back as '4000 Years' descends into a cowbell-clanging riot. On 'Pause Repeat', Neff cheerily offers the caveat that, "it's maybe the second time we've ever played that song". Hopefully they'll still be playing it with as much enthusiasm once they reach triple figures.

For a band whose records can sometimes sound like they were made in a laboratory, live, there's a surprising amount of spontaneity to their performance. 'Waveforms' is stretched out and remixed into something longer, dirtier and funkier, and the swaggering barroom-blues of 'Shake And Tremble' (another of the new songs) is amplified to far greater levels than the original. Django Django sound like a band in a state of continual flux, ever-shifting and impossible to define. Long may it continue. ■ BARRY NICOLSON

SETLIST

- Introduction
- Hail Bop
- Storm
- Shake And Tremble
- First Light
- Reflections
- Skies Over Cairo
- 4000 Years
- Default
- Life's A Beach
- Wor
- Pause Repeat
- Silver Rays

8

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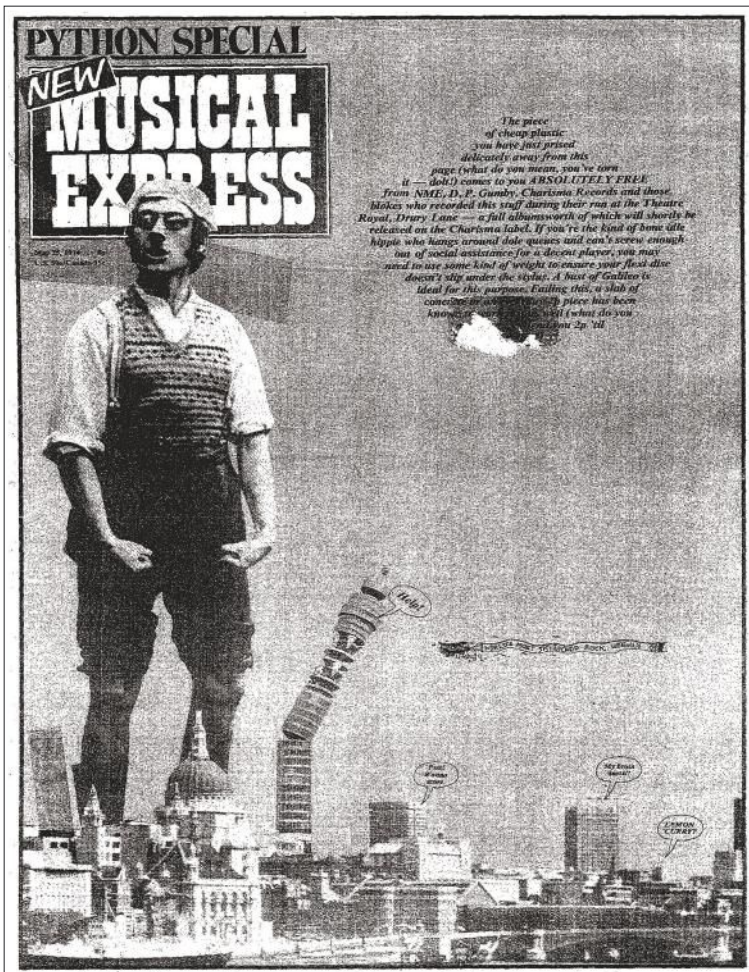
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THIS WEEK IN 1974



Grail travel

And now for something completely different... In a Monty Python-themed issue, NME joins the cash-strapped surrealists on location in Scotland

In an issue entirely dedicated to their madcap humour, NME's Andrew Tyler joins the Monty Python team as they film *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* in Scotland ("It'll be very nice when it's finished," says Eric Idle) on such a skimpy budget that the cast are working for free and Tyler is roped in as an extra. Watching the team film a scene wherein a killer hand-puppet rabbit bites the heads off of knights, Tyler learns that the filming has been plagued with problems. "The first shot of the film," says Graham Chapman, playing King Arthur, "we were going through a rather involved dialogue scene about three or four minutes long when the camera broke down after 15 seconds!"

"It's a disaster that frankly parallels the Boer War," adds John Cleese. "Although the machinery these days isn't quite so advanced."

The team also let on about their rock'n'roll antics on a recent Canadian tour. When someone offered to pay the bill if they wanted to trash a hotel room, they contented themselves with peeling small bits of wallpaper off the walls.

SPARKS CATCH ALIGHT

With their new single 'This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us' shooting up the charts and gangs of fans chasing them into dry-cleaners in Beckenham, Sparks are joined by Nick Kent in a Ladbroke Grove vegetarian cafe to discuss their past as child models in Pacific Palisades, LA and how Russell Mael stole the girlfriend of their first producer, Todd Rundgren.

CULT CORNER

Jazz musicians Chick Corea and Mike Garson, pianist on the 'Ziggy Stardust...' album, meet NME's Charles Shaar Murray to discuss their joint interest in Scientology. "When I saw Mike with Bowie," says Corea, "I thought, 'He's really flexible, he's able to manifest a lot of different beingnesses.'" Garson claims his Scientology skills helped revive Bowie after he fainted onstage in New York. "We have a certain process to aid people who are unconscious... it was a good thing I was there."

REVIEWED THIS WEEK



Joan Baez - 'Gracias A La Vida (Here's To Life)'

"When you first hear it you'll probably think it's the sort of stuff you hear piped through any cheap Spanish restaurant along the Tottenham Court Road. Well listen again."

■ BOB WOFFINDEN

ALSO IN THE ISSUE THIS WEEK

► On the singles page, Tony Tyler says Elton John's 'Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me' is "about as cheerful as Neil Young reading the Bible during an Al Stewart dubbing 'session'"

► Catching them live in Leeds, Charles Shaar Murray states: "The Sensational Alex Harvey Band are in the process of becoming one of the best bands we've currently got."

► Queen have postponed their US tour supporting Mott The Hoople as guitarist Brian May has been flown home suffering from acute hepatitis.

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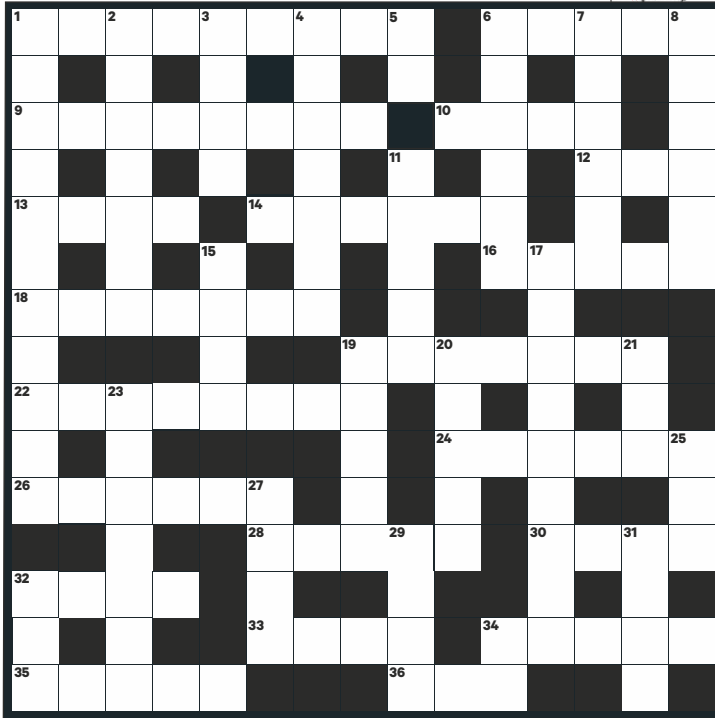


CROSSWORD

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1-19D** The Cribbs are playing, so I've changed my viewpoint (9-5)
6+32A Battles of the airwaves to feature album by Howling Bells (5-4)
9 Album that was a problem for Menswear (8)
10 Album that was a pain for You've Got Foetus On Your Breath (4)
12 The cost of seeing frontman with US band The Tubes (3)
13+19A Any rare soul remixes from Morrissey? (4-7)
14 Put your foot down regarding Happy Mondays (4-2)
16 Two guys who don't sound like guys with an album that is an 'Album' (5)
18+22A Bring into play a fantasy with Guns N' Roses' music (3-4-8)
19 (See 13 across)
22 (See 18 across)
24 Les Savy Fav didn't sound as though they'd be long with this album (6)
26 Ringed the wrong name of musician who was with

- Kraftwerk and Neu! (6)
28+17D For Black Rivers this is no time to plead guilty (3-2-9)
30 'Lapdance' act coming from a dinner dance (1-1-1-1)
32 (See 6 across)
33 "As it's only a northern ____ it doesn't really matter what clothes I wear", The Beatles (4)
34 A bit more volume for the Manic Street Preachers (5)
35 They took off in a 'Jet' (5)
36 'Sweet ____ My Sweet ____', from the green-fingered Paul Weller (3)

CLUES DOWN

- 1** Do it funny, do strange version of Jamie T number (4-3-4)
2 The Posies' debut album was clearly not a success (7)
3 A bit of elegance from member of Visage (4)
4 Someone to get you worked up about Depeche Mode (7)
5+7D Bohicas number that could have made them a killing (2-3-3)
6+27D Star caring about creatures associated with

- Editors (6-4)
7 (See 5 down)
8 They sang not of themselves but of 'Stan Bowles' and 'William' (6)
11+31D Not being low-life themselves, they dealt with 'Other People's Problems' (5-4)
15 Mull Historical Society didn't make any money from this album release (4)
17 (See 28 across)
19 (See 1 across)
20 Record label for Ian Dury, Elvis Costello and The Damned (5)
21 A bit of sleep for the girl in Evanescence (3)
23 "You can go the distance, we'll find out in the ____", Eagles (4-3)
25 The Twilight ____, Scottish post-punks (3)
27 (See 6 down)
29 Terrible pong getting over the doctor as Death Grips (2-2)
31 (See 11 down)
32 "Ooh, yeah, you're amazing, we think you're incredible", 1979 (3)
34 Todd Rundgren's Utopia album put in the trash bin (2)

MAY 9 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1 The Magic Whip, 10 Ropes, 11 Storytone, 12 Skye, 13 Nico, 14 Caleb, 16+28A Seventh Tree, 18+20D Isn't She Lovely, 19 As, 22 Psycho, 23 Deus, 24 The, 25 Maps, 27 Let's Go, 31 Lashes, 32 Lie, 33 Ride, 34 Siens, 35 Enemy **DOWN** 2+7D Happy People, 3 Muse, 4+15D Gaslight Anthem, 5 Crocodiles, 6 Hey Scenesters! 8 Crisis, 9 Webb, 17 Voyage, 21 Otis Blue, 22+30D Picture This, 26 Peace, 29 Eyes

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Tame Impala

Get ready for the Aussie psych band's new album 'Currents' (released on July 17) by brandishing this arty tote bag.

► **BUY** £5.75, frocksteady.com



BOOK

Popular Music In The Manchester Region Since 1950 by Dave Rusell

Post-war groups and subcultures are celebrated in this book about one of British music's prominent cities.

► **BUY** £14, amazon.co.uk

GUITAR

Epiphone Dobro Hound Dog M-14 Metalbody

The vintage looks hide modern touches such as a round mahogany neck.

► **BUY** £645, epiphone.com



JACKET

Patagonia Baggies Jacket

Outdoor brand Patagonia helps you look cool and stay dry with this old-school, mod-style light-blue jacket.

► **BUY** £85, not-addicted.co.uk



DOCUMENTARY

Quest For Cuba: Questlove Brings The Funk To Havana

The Roots' drummer recently headed to Cuba to bring goodwill and good music to the country's citizens. His visit is captured in this short documentary.

► **WATCH** youtube.com

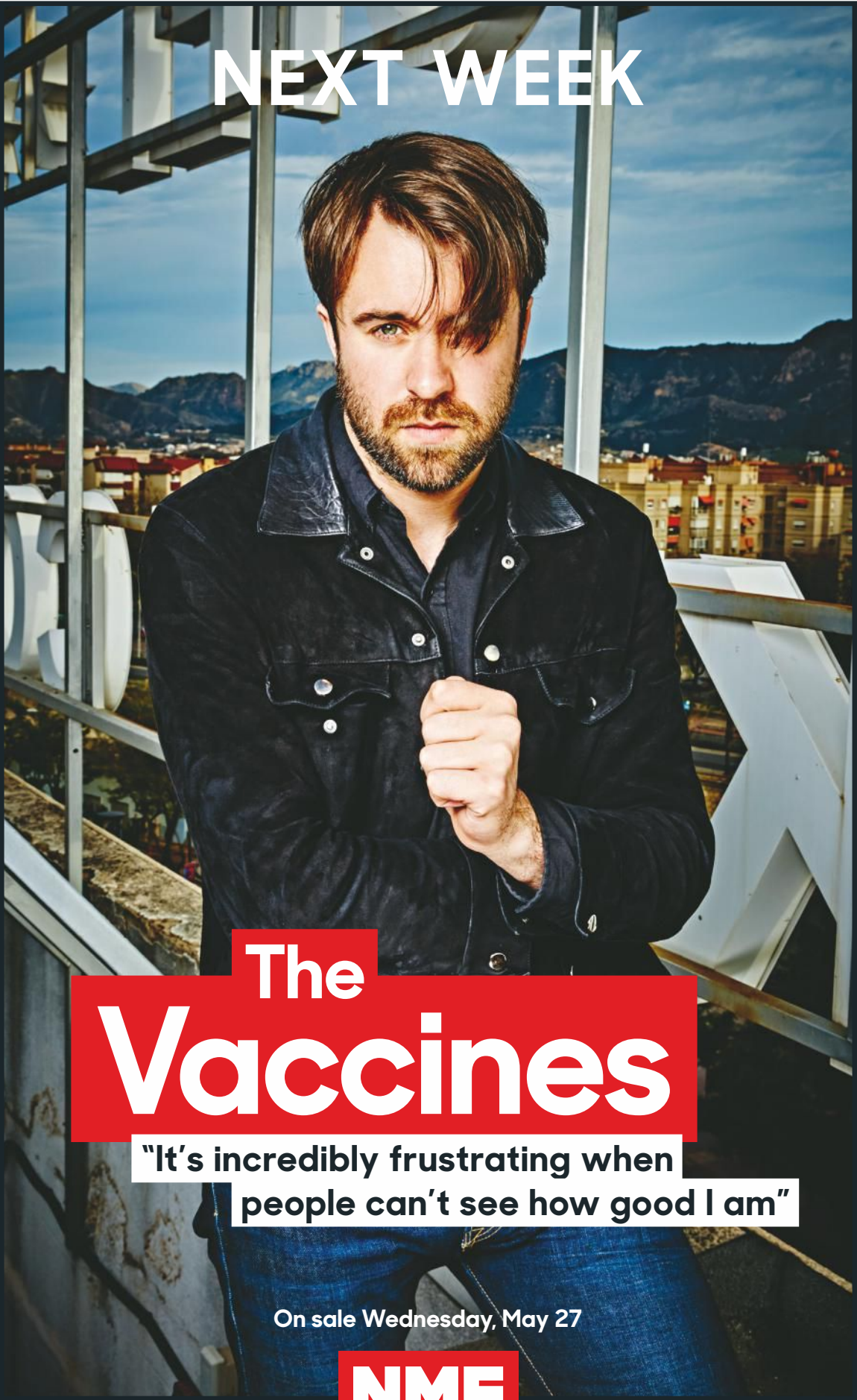


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► **THIS WEEK'S ARTIST** Sam Koisser, Peace

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