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LETTER OF THE WEEK

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IN THE COURT OF KING MATT

Thank the lord some of our rock stars have got their brains in gear. Matt Bellamy exposing the casual "kill decisions" that world leaders like Barack Obama make every day before breakfast in last week's *NME* gave me faith in musicians' ability to highlight important issues using the power of pop. I don't know if our governments really are hunkered in bunkers, plotting new ways to oppress the masses and control us all. I don't know if we really are on the brink of *Terminator 2*-style AI becoming a chilling and deathly reality. What I do know is: call him the rock David Icke all you like, but I'll take his wild but eye-opening conspiracy theories over another gormless say-nothing hipster pillock any day. Vote Bellamy!

Lisa Harris, via email

Al Horner: He'd get my vote, Lisa. Just imagine – Matt Bellamy bossing world politics. Firing falsetto heckles about how Vladimir Putin's a "lizard person" over UN meeting speeches, replacing the boring old national anthem with an intergalactic rock epic, slinging the Queen out of Buckingham Palace and onto



her rump. Seriously, though, whether or not you like Muse, you've got to appreciate a dude whose interviews are as overblown as his music. And there are dark truths within his rhetoric: drone warfare, the subject of new album 'Drones', is something to be ashamed of.

WINEHOUSE WHINE

Having seen the trailer for the Amy Winehouse documentary, I have to say I'm dreading it. Not because I'll probably end up blubbing in public but because it's yet another example of the media hyping the dead and encouraging artists to believe that the best way to gain respect beyond your talent is to take as many hard drugs as possible and die young. Oh, and that the fastest way to critical acclaim is to pore over every detail of the deaths in films or books that merely feed our ghoulish need for tragedy in the guise of unflinching storytelling.

Carol Jennings, via email

AH: I know what you mean, Carol. With Amy arriving hot on the heels of Cobain: *Montage Of Heck*, it does feel a bit like 27 Club overload at cinemas at

the minute. It's a wonder *Avengers: Age of Ultron* didn't have a Jim Morrison segment. But from everything I've seen and heard, Asif Kapadia's film sounds – as *Montage Of Heck* was – like an artful, caring and beautifully made portrait of a troubled talent gone too soon, and not something that glamourises living hard and dying young.



BB AND BONO

I started listening to BB King thanks to U2. The song 'When Love Comes To Town' (on which BB King duets) from 'Rattle And Hum' had a vibe I didn't understand at first but liked a lot and persevered with. So say what you will about Bono (don't be too mean or I'll hunt you down), but he introduced me to the real and original soul and blues legend. Rest in peace, BB.

Juan Lopez, via email

AH: Just goes to show, Juan, how far and wide BB King's influence spread. When it comes to laying the blueprint for modern music, he's one of the big dogs. And his influence transcended generations and genres, from Keith Richards ("he was one of the greats") to New York rapper Action Bronson (who sampled King's 'Sweet Thing' on his own

'Buddy Guy'). Did you know that between 1951 and 1985 he had 74 songs go into Billboard's R&B charts? Ridiculous.

LORDE AND ORDER

Why do so many artists ditch the people that made them as soon as they get a whiff of the big time? Reading that Lorde sacked her manager made me wonder whether she's fallen into the same diva trap that catches so many rising stars out – believing they're God's gift to music who were fated for success and forgetting all the sweat, cash and dedication their original support team had put into their talent from day one. There's nothing more grasping, and risky career-wise, than ditching those that believe in you the most. Remember what they say about being nice to people on the way up, Lorde...

Paul Cera, via email

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AH: Lorde can probably handle the risk, I reckon, Paul. Sure, long-term manager Scott MacLachlan signed her in 2008, five years before she blew up with 'Royals', and got her a deal with Universal, but we don't know what went on behind the scenes. As she answered to critics on Twitter: "don't underestimate [her] skill."

SIR NICK

Recently I had the good fortune to see Nick Cave at Gateshead Sage. After many years of gig going, I have never experienced such a force of nature as Nick and his band. The evening was the best I have ever spent at a gig. I also revisited Ben Hewitt's article on Cave entitled *Murder He Wrote* in the February 7 issue of *NME* – one of your best articles of the last few years.

Paul, via email

AH: There's no sight in music like Cave prowling onto a stage and generating a suspicion among the crowd that the King Of Hell himself has arrived to lay waste to humanity. The King Of Darkness. The Lord Of The Macabre.



LOOK WHO'S STALKING

Here's me with Cav from Swim Deep after their Birmingham show. What a legend!

Dylan Whatley, via email

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NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

**1. The Summer Moon
Happenin' (Blue Room Mix)**

Nikolai Fraiture hasn't been the most celebrated member of The Strokes over the years, but that could all change with the arrival of The Summer Moon – the bassist's new band with Tennessee Thomas and Lewis Lazar from The Like and Au Revoir Simone's Erika Spring. This song is understated and sci-fi-tinged, Fraiture nonchalantly singing over skittering, muted electronic patterns.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

**2. Nicolas Jaar
The Three Sides of Audrey**

Ambient mastermind Nicolas Jaar has been busy since 2011's debut 'Space Is Only Noise', running his Other People label as well as electrifying festival tents as half of electronic duo Darkside. But it's a pleasure to hear new stuff from the New Yorker himself, and 'The Three Sides of Audrey' doesn't disappoint, its dreamy sound collage gliding into the heavens before sinking like a submarine into the sleepy subconscious of 'Rounds'-era Four Tet.

Jazz Monroe, writer

**3. Jean Michel Jarre & M83
Glory**

Here's another momentous master/apprentice team-up in the Daft Punk/Moroder vein, M83's Anthony Gonzalez leaping at the chance to make loads of bombastic whooshy space noises with original French synth overlord Jean Michel Jarre. 'Glory', the first track from Jarre's new album 'Conquistador', is suitably colossal and ever so slightly sad, the sound of attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion and robots crying in the rain.

Sam Richards, writer

**4. Courtney Love
Miss Narcissist**

"Me, me, me. No apologies", howls Courtney Love, brimming over with her trademark bile-and-balls on this one-off seven-inch single released via Wavves frontman Nathan Williams' Ghost Ramp indie label. At 50 years old, Love is sounding more fired up than ever, pitching ragged guitars against gleefully confrontational lyrics. A new solo album has been in the pipeline for a while; if this is anything to go by, it'll be an absolute fireball.

Leonie Cooper, writer

**5. Kendrick Lamar
Money Over Love**

"Fuck your resistance, fuck them who tried to owe him", blasts Kendrick Lamar over scattershot jazz drums and noodling clarinets on this unreleased track, debuted in LA last week. Whether it's something the rapper pulled from the cutting-room floor after finishing 'To Pimp A Butterfly', or whether he's already powering ahead on new material, one thing's for sure: there's more to come from K-Dot, and it appears to be coming soon.

Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

**6. Sun Kil Moon
Garden Of Lavender**

It is impossible to adequately unpick the meaning-of-life gravitas that Mark Kozelek manages to feed into his music in 75 words. He's indefinable, unfathomable, untouchable. But rest assured: if last year's astounding 'Benji' made you question the very purpose of yours and everyone else's existence, the long and winding 'Garden Of Lavender' will too. Well worth at least 100 listens.

Tom Howard, Assistant Editor

**7. A\$AP Rocky
LSD**

A\$AP Rocky may claim that 'LSD' stands for 'Love, Sex, Dreams', but you don't have to be a hallucinogenic expert to realise what he's also alluding to. Just like its titular drug, 'LSD' is a strung-out and languid trip, with the rapper's mood flipping from impassioned euphoria to regret and paranoia. Rocky recently boasted of Doors influences on his new album, but here, there's more than a touch of Drake's 'Take Care' apparent.

Luke Morgan Britton, writer

**8. The Strypes
Eighty-Four**

At the beginning of the video for 'Eighty-Four', Strypes frontman Josh McClorey flicks his head sideward and then snarls into his mic. He looks incredibly cocky and full of attitude, and the track's modish clatter does its best to match him. Guitarist Conor Bates (now sporting stubble) leads the way, bashing out a jagged riff that shows the Cavan quartet are moving away from their bluesy beginnings and getting noisier with age.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

**9. The Maccabees
Lean On**

Where Major Lazer and MØ's original prioritised pulsing beats and Middle Eastern rhythms, The Maccabees' recent Radio 1 Live Lounge cover finds new dynamics in 'Lean On's club vibe. Less 'boat party in Ibiza' and more 'twilit emotional crisis', it starts off sparse and minimal, wondering whether a relationship will last, before crashing into a glorious tumult of guitars at the climax. Who knew Major Lazer could sound so deep?

Lisa Wright, writer

**10. Paul Smith & The Imitations
Coney Island (4th Of July)**

Maximo Park have announced a 10th-anniversary reissue of 'A Certain Trigger', but frontman Paul Smith isn't just looking back to his band's heyday. This song from new solo album 'Contradictions' takes inspiration from a Robert Frank photo of people asleep on the sand, following Independence Day celebrations. "Pour out some more of that whisky and water", croons Smith, getting into party mood over drifting guitars.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

ESSENTIAL NEW TRACKS

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11. Florence + The Machine Delilah

'Delilah' starts out sounding like the moment before a piano-house song explodes into life, as Florence sings in piercing falsetto: "*Too fast for freedom, sometimes it all falls down*". But just when you expect a beat to kick in, it transforms into a bluesy rock anthem. In typical Florence style, there's a lot to take in here, but her voice shines throughout, powerfully commanding the chaos surrounding her.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor

12. The Parrots To The People Who Showed Me Their Love While I Was Here

The Parrots were show-stealers at a recent all-dayer at London's Shacklewell Arms, but this proves that the Madrid garage trio are more than just an incendiary live act. Black Lips-indebted jangling guitars fall in line alongside funeral-march drums on this sozzled ballad, as Diego García cries out with yelping vocals. Forthcoming debut EP 'Weed For The Parrots' can't come soon enough.

James Bentley, writer

13. Spoon TV Set

The Austin band have contributed this cover of the song that opened The Cramps' classic debut album 'Songs The Lord Taught Us' to the new version of horror spectacular *Poltergeist*, and it's suitably creepy. Spoon frontman Britt Daniel ominously stutters "*Baby I see you on my TV set/I cut your head off and put it in my TV set*" through echoing effects and guitar lines that zip in and out of focus. A scary, fun thrill.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

14. Saint Pé Movin On Up

Former Black Lips guitarist Ian Saint Pé – the one with the gnarly grill – returns after quietly parting ways with the Atlanta garage-rock legends on good terms last year. 'Movin On Up' is a statement of intent, scratchy as hell and built around glam-rock drums (albeit ones that sound like they've been played on a mic'd up cereal box rather than an actual kit) and a fierce guitar solo that's as bluesy as you'll hear all year.

Matt Wilkinson, New Music Editor

15. Stormzy Shut Up

Stormzy sets the record straight on this, the 21-year-old's first new song since breakout hit 'Know Me From' earlier this year. Freestyling over grime producer DJ XTC's classic 'Functions On Da Low' instrumental, he addresses his recent rise ("*I'm the best, I'm so cocky, I've got a mob like A\$AP Rocky*") and his ambitions ("*I wanna make my mum so proud*"). By the time Stormzy is ordering deathbeds for rival MCs it's game over.

David Renshaw, Acting Deputy News Editor



16. Yung Blanket

Anyone who's caught Yung live this year will be familiar with the bone-shaking chorus of 'Blanket'. The Danish quartet sound marginally less insane here than they did on debut single 'Nobody Cares', concentrating on rumbling punk rhythms rather than screeching guitars. Frontman Mikkel Holm Silkjær appears calmer too, as he tells a simple story of a beach-based summer romance.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

17. Speedy Ortiz Basketball

Massachusetts quartet Speedy Ortiz have offered up a demo of this unreleased track for a 12-inch featuring acts from the Carpark stable to celebrate the US indie label's 16th birthday. A lo-fi affair featuring Sadie Dupuis' cracked vocal over acoustic guitars, it's less immediately biting than much of their superlative 2015 LP 'Foil Deer', but still rolls along with enough melodic idiosyncracies to elevate it from mere acoustic pleasantness.

Lisa Wright, writer

18. Frankie & The Heartstrings Think Yourself Lucky

In a somewhat surprising move, the Sunderland indie mainstays are introducing brass to their sound on third album 'Decency'. 'Think Yourself Lucky' zooms about with their usual buoyant energy, gilded by tooting trumpets. "*Seems like you've had your fun with everyone*", warns Frankie Francis as new member (and former Futurehead) Ross Millard backs him up on the chorus: "*Think yourself lucky, you're out of control*".

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

19. Flying Lotus Transmoleclularization

During a recent show on BBC Radio 1 as part of his FlyLo FM residency, Flying Lotus dropped this spectacularly named offcut from last year's well-received 'You're Dead!' album. Kamasi Washington (signed to FlyLo-affiliated Brainfeeder Records) dominates its two-and-a-half minutes with a zig-zagging saxophone part, but the overall effect is sedative. After working with Kendrick Lamar, this is FlyLo at his super-chilled best.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

20. Destroyer Dream Lover

You wait forever for Canada's Destroyer to release a follow-up to 2011's 'Kaputt' – their best record, and one of the best albums of the decade so far – then the band's leader, Dan Bejar, announces a double album, 'Poison Season', and an accompanying two-song 12-inch. Album track 'Dream Lover' is noisier than the material on 'Kaputt' – closer to 'Born To Run'-era Springsteen – but equally poignant, telling a difficult tale of lovers on the run.

Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

The Week

► EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN MUSIC ■ EDITED BY DAN STUBBS

From the Cannon

A new exhibition reveals exclusive, unseen outtakes from designer Brian Cannon's work with Oasis and The Verve

PHOTOS BY BRIAN CANNON



Brian Cannon, founder of design agency Microdot, was practically the sixth member of Oasis in their '90s heyday, creating all their artwork, partying with the band and even playing keyboards on the track 'Morning Glory'. "It was just a laugh," recalls the man who initially got the gig because Noel Gallagher liked his trainers. Brian enjoyed a similarly tight relationship with fellow Wiganers The Verve, and along with his eye-catching work for Suede, Ash and Super Furry Animals, he created a bold visual identity for Britpop.

Now he's collating all his design work from the past 25 years for an exhibition at The Old Courts in Wigan this week. As well as his memorable record sleeves, the exhibition will feature Brian's personal photos of his time with The Verve, plus outtakes from some classic Oasis shoots.

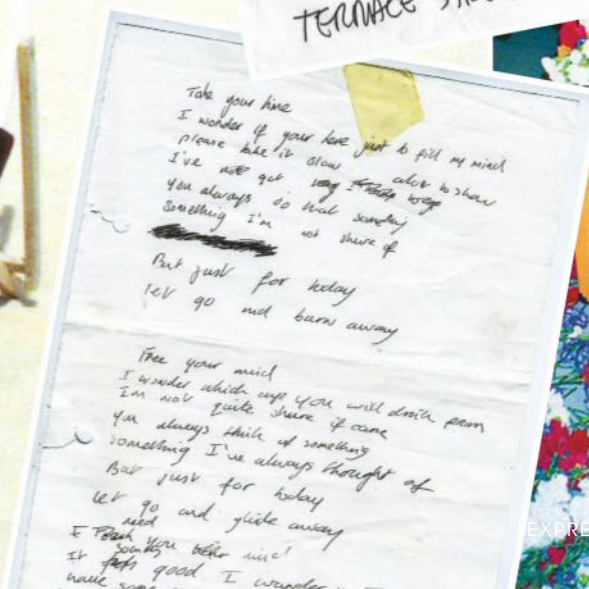
One of Brian's favourites is the 'Roll With It' sleeve, hastily convened in Weston-super-Mare because it was the nearest beach to Glastonbury, where Oasis were playing two days later. "It was a baking-hot day and they were all sat there in duffel coats! It looks like quite a serene scene, but what you can't see is their bodyguard fending off a crowd of about 200 people behind the camera. Liam was always animated – he's screaming at me [in that shot] – but it was all light-hearted banter, never aggressive."

Brian's increasingly extravagant Oasis cover shoots reached their apex on 1997's 'Be Here Now' sleeve, featuring a real Rolls-Royce lowered into a swimming pool. "It came to about £75,000. The bar bill alone was a couple of grand!"

Brian says seeing all his finest work together in one room is "mindblowing... it is generation-defining stuff. But we never got caught up in all that at the time. We were just down-to-earth guys, having a good time." ■ SAM RICHARDS

► Microdot: The 25th Anniversary Exhibition, The Old Courts, Wigan – until May 30

The Verve's Richard Ashcroft up the Empire State Building, October 1992 and (below) his sketch for the cover of 'This Is Music' and an early version of his 'Slide Away' lyrics. Bottom right: the set-up for the sleeve of Oasis' 'Don't Look Back In Anger' single sleeve





Lydon calling

The dependably crude John Lydon talks politics, passports, poo... and Public Image Ltd's new album

Forty years since he joined the Sex Pistols and became Johnny Rotten, John Lydon still has a unique ability to lower the tone. "Sorry I was a bit late, I was just having a Farage," he says, by way of greeting. "That's when it's all a bit dribbly."

Lydon is here to introduce Public Image Ltd's 10th album, due out on September 4. Preceded by the single 'Double Trouble', it's called 'What The World Needs Now...' "There's a dot dot dot at the end, because I am asking the question," explains Lydon. "You fill in the blank. It's a question, not an exclamation, which is so typical of me."

Lydon says the "pop-based" album is "a lurch in a different direction" from 2012's vibrant comeback, 'This Is PiL', their first studio album in 20 years. "I loved that last album, but this is the next level. It's timeless. I don't do that fashion-of-the-moment thing. I am ahead of the pack, I never fall behind. And I don't want to sound like anybody else. That's the key to my success."

Song titles include 'C'est La Vie', 'I'm Not Satisfied', 'Corporate' and 'Shoom', which Lydon promises takes "absolutely no prisoners, and is about the most direct you can be as a human being". There's also 'Double Trouble's' B-side to contend with, a savage, off-the-

cuff rant about fashion designer Vivienne Westwood called 'Turkey Tits'.

"I don't mean to be outspoken," he claims unconvincingly. "I just feel the need to comment when I see something that's wrong. Or even when it's right."

Naturally, the Los Angeles-based Lydon can't resist casting his scorn on current parlous state of the United Kingdom. "I read something hysterical this morning about the north of England declaring independence and joining Scotland," he cackles. "It's a joke, but it's a good joke." So is he in favour of Scottish independence? Apparently not. "When I hear of Scotland going independent I think it's going back to a 15th-century village ideology, feudalism. I don't want to see countries exist, I just want one nation called the world."

Suffice to say the recent general election didn't capture Lydon's imagination. "I tried to stay up [to watch the result] but it was boring. I'd much rather watch a real soap opera than that rubbish." Did this one-time anarchist even vote? "Oh yes, I voted. You have to. Although I'm getting a US passport, so next time I vote it'll be over here, where it really matters."

Don't worry, though – this noxious national treasure isn't giving up his British passport just yet. "Oh no, matey, I am not giving anything up. It'll just go with my stack of others, so I can use whichever passport is least likely get me prodded at the airport. There's always someone wanting to have a look up your crackhole. Well, good luck to them at my age, I say. There's many a rancid old-man fart waiting for them." ■ ANDY WELCH

"I am ahead of the pack, I never fall behind"
John Lydon

MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE

FIVE TOURING ESSENTIALS

Frank Carter



BOOK **Blood Meridian - Cormac McCarthy**



"It's incredibly violent and visceral, but really beautiful and poetic."

Every time I read it I find something new in there that inspires me. Every time I go on tour, I read it. It's like holding a fucking bomb."



FILM **Step Brothers**

"The only film we ever watch on tour is *Step Brothers* – it's completely the opposite of *Blood Meridian*. Everyone just says every word along with it – it's like karaoke for film."

GAME **Magic: The Gathering**

"I'm addicted to *Magic: The Gathering* – the nerdiest shit ever. On a Friday night you can find me in a card shop somewhere getting crushed by some 14-year-old wizard."

DVD BOXSET **David Attenborough: The Life Collection**



"We're all old men now – we watch a lot of nature documentaries, a lot of David Attenborough."

When you're on the road, it's nice to learn what you can."

HOME COMFORT **Laptop**

"FaceTime is very important – to be able to speak to my wife and see my daughter and my dog every day is important."



► Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes start their UK tour at Nottingham Bodega (June 2)

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William E Badgley's
new crowdfunded
film aims to give
punk pioneers
The Slits the credit
they deserve



Trailblazing:
The Slits
onstage in 1977

Director's cut

The punk heritage industry has left few stories untold, but The Slits' contribution to musical history still feels neglected. Not only did female musicians of the era have to do rather more system smashing than the men, but their innovation went much further than three chords and the truth. These four women were among the first to fuse punk, dub and reggae, singing with joyful confrontation about sex and shoplifting. Listen to 1979's classic 'Cut' and you'll find its energy and originality hasn't dimmed a watt, and its influence pounds through records by Sleater-Kinney, Sonic Youth, Gossip and many more.

Following on from the release of guitarist Viv Albertine's memoir *Clothes Clothes Clothes, Music Music Music, Boys Boys Boys* last year, The Slits' belated canonisation continues with a new documentary. *Here To Be Heard: The Story Of The Slits* is being funded through Kickstarter for release later this year. German-born singer Ari Up instigated proceedings during the band's 2006/2007 reunion tour, but the film remained incomplete when she

died from cancer in 2010. Her bandmates had no idea she was sick, says William E Badgley, the filmmaker who took over. "Ari was so wont to couch things in urgency that the band say that when they read her emails and think back on conversations, it's really chilling – her saying, 'We're running out of time, we must do this now!'"

Up's broad aims were to counteract what Badgley calls the band's "totally unacceptable erasure" – the fact that after their initial split in 1982, the precedent they set was all but forgotten. Badgley grew up in riot grrrl-era Portland, where female musicians were forced to rebreak the glass ceiling that The Slits had smashed more than a decade earlier because their legacy hadn't been passed down alongside the likes of 'Never Mind The Bollocks'.

That legacy is as an "inability to be contained", he says. "First by gender, then genre. There's this hunger and thirst that

any good artist should have: to keep pushing forward, to not take no for an answer." Their attitude is evident in his favourite bit of footage: as the band walk around London

before a gig, Ari decides to get changed on the street. "It's incredibly tame by today's standards, but in a matter of minutes there's a crowd of people that's probably 40-strong, gaping that this person would have the audacity to do that."

Considering The Slits' trailblazing feminist legacy, Badgley was initially worried about the political implications of a man directing this film. "But it fits into what they keep telling me," he says, "that it's not about what's between your legs, but who you are as a person, a heart, an intellect, a creative force. I always knew this project was going to be exciting for young women, but they've made it very clear that it's going to be exciting for young men, too. That's absolutely how it should be." ■ LAURA SNAPES

**"THEY COULDN'T
BE CONTAINED –
FIRST BY GENDER,
THEN GENRE"**

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► THE DETAILS

- WHEN July 16–19
- WHO'S PLAYING Alt-J, Portishead, Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, Manic Street Preachers, The Vaccines, Caribou, Portishead, Warpaint
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Mortal combat

Brothers Ruban and Kody Nielson, previously of Mint Chicks, used to be at war. Now in Unknown Mortal Orchestra and Silicon, they're gigging together

Ruban and Kody Nielson grew up in Auckland, New Zealand bonding over their dad's record collection before playing in bands together that burned out amid in-fighting and animosity. In a few hours, for the first time ever, the pair will share a stage under separate guises, Ruban fronting bedroom-psych breakout Unknown Mortal Orchestra while Silicon, Kody's spacey electro-pop project, supports. "I'm pretty relaxed," says Kody, crouched in a basement corridor with *NME*, but it's sort of hard to believe. Tonight's gig, at a sold-out Islington Assembly Hall in London, will only be Silicon's second.

Growing up, the brothers would share A2 sketchpads, drawing vast, intricate landscapes together. Although their dad is a celebrated saxophonist, music didn't come until later when Ruban, two years older, would lead Kody to the basement and rifle through vinyl crates looking for fusty fusion records. But once they picked up on their dad's hints – guitars and keyboards left conspicuously around the house – it became inevitable that they would start a band.

"He always 'gets' it," Ruban says of Kody, "so working together on recordings is always so fun. I suppose we come from what you'd call a broken home. It's hard to digest the past and make sense of it, so we do that through music – it's our religion and our therapy."

Their first collaboration was Cloth Monkey, helmed by a Syd Barrett obsessive who, Kody says, "thought you had to be a total druggie to be in a band. One day, he was tripping his ass off on mushrooms, trying to do his vocals. We ended up deciding, 'Well, maybe I could just do vocals.'"



Ruban and Kody Nielson, reunited in London, May 21, 2015

"SOMETHING WAS OFF. I HAD TO BAIL"
Ruban Nielsen

They soon reassembled as The Mint Chicks, the furious noise-pop upstarts scouted by cult New Zealand label Flying Nun. The band, still in their early twenties, survived the saga of uprooting to Portland, Oregon, leaving behind bassist Michael Logie. But hectic live shows, one of which saw Kody attack a corporate logo with a chainsaw, took their toll.

"We were drinking, taking drugs, and we just spent too much time together," Kody admits. "I ended up feeling like the scapegoat for a lot of stuff, because I was the frontman." At their last show, tensions boiled over, and Kody trashed the stage. "The band was always on the edge like that," Ruban says, "but there was a nastiness and lack of camaraderie that crept into it. Something was off. I had to bail." For Kody, the show was "the last straw"; he moved home to New Zealand, which prompted a chilly radio silence with Ruban.

A year later, Kody got wind of a buzzy psych curio called 'Thought Ballune', by an anonymous Bandcamp artist. The vocals sounded alien, but Kody, picking up on his brother's trademark ninth chords, played the song to his dad, who grinned, having been Ruban's only confidant about the secret project, which was to become Unknown Mortal Orchestra. The brothers reconnected, crushing hard on each other's new stuff, albeit with mixed emotions. "I was really happy that Kody loved the music," Ruban says, "but sad that I was doing things on my own now."

Tonight, the pair are just beginning a new chapter. They've plotted a split single remixing each other's tunes, along with an all-night afterparty in Dalston to cap tonight's show. The fun starts here. ■ JAZZ MONROE

THE MINI INTERVIEW



Dan Auerbach

The Black Keys

You're releasing your second solo album this summer, but it's under the name The Arcs, not Dan Auerbach – why?

"The musicians worked so well together that it just felt wrong to have it under my own name. It wasn't just me that made it special."

Has your Black Keys bandmate Patrick Carney heard the album?

"He's heard of some of it, but honestly, no-one's really heard it! It's pretty much under wraps."

Are you ready to restart The Black Keys' tour at Primavera in Barcelona this week following Patrick's shoulder injury?

"Yeah! He says he feels good. He's been doing his rehab this whole time. It's like a full-time job trying to recuperate from that."

How did you feel when you found out that a bunch of shows would have to be cancelled?

"I wasn't pissed off at all. I mean, I felt bad that we had to cancel for our fans, but at the same time having a break, for me personally, was great. It was really nice to spend a lot of time hanging out at home. It was really good!"

Are you going to be working on the new Lana Del Rey record?

"No. I think she went back and is working with her old producer."

■ LEONIE COOPER

Kody onstage in Islington, May 21



Babes In Toyland: part of "a blossoming of energy" with Nirvana (right)



the word – they were badassess. I remember watching them in Germany and [singer/guitarist] Kat Bjelland dropped to her knees, pulled out a butter knife and played slide guitar with it. The audience were stunned, but I just thought to myself, "This is as good as it gets." I was completely in love with that band and was really happy to have them on the road with Sonic Youth.

At the time, they were part of this American underground that we were a part of that was really coming alive – bands like Killdozer, and then Hole and certainly Nirvana, Mudhoney, and the other Seattle groups. In a way, it was like this blossoming of energy and action, of new rock'n'roll and... blissfulness.

In 1991, they had a 7-inch single out – 'Handsome And Gretel'/'Pearl'. One side pictured [drummer] Lori Barbero, the other side Kat. They were bleeding from either being punched in the nose or being in a car wreck, or something like that. And I heard it was really polarising for some people, because it was like, "Well, what does this say about women presenting themselves in music and entertainment?" It certainly was a bit of a wild statement – very independent, and I thought it was fascinating.

As a band, I think they were representing a true ideal of who they were as women, not only in the world, but in an industry that always had a history of having an imbalance in gender equality. That alone is important and I think them reforming only encourages that. I'm absolutely looking forward to seeing them at their gig in London on May 26. I have the night off before I have to go back on tour, so I'm going to do a backflip off stage.

I'd also love for them to do a new record. If they do, I hope it will have a lot of older-person energy; I think that's really important. We have plenty of youthful energy going on in rock'n'roll, but for me – somebody who's in their mid-50s – I'm looking for more older energy. I want to hear Yoko Ono and Neil Young. I want to hear The Pop Group and I want to hear Babes In Toyland. I want them come out with an album that is all about who they are now as older people. God, I badly want to hear that. ■

BABES IN TOYLAND: ONE OF THE GREATEST BANDS EVER

BY THURSTON MOORE

Ahead of the Minneapolis punk band's first UK shows in 18 years, the ex-Sonic Youth frontman explains why they're so vital



For me, for a certain period of time, Babes In Toyland were the greatest band on Earth, and there are very few bands I can say that about. I'll always remember when they first came to New York City and played at this little club called The Pyramid Club, which is a cool little place in the East Village that Sonic Youth used to play at a lot. Babes In Toyland were there because they were coming up just after us in the '80s and they were just phenomenal that night – they completely destroyed and tore the place up. We asked them immediately if they would play gigs with us, and they came over and did a whole European tour in 1990 – right when their first record, 'Spanking Machine', came out.

On that tour, nothing stood in their way. They were very tough; they were not a neat band in any sense of

LOST ALBUMS

#74

Skating Polly

Lost Wonderfols (2013)

Chosen by Kate Nash



"They're two sisters from Oklahoma and they're really young and so cool. My favourite track is 'Blue Obvious' – it's so catchy. The lyrics are really fucking deep. I was just really inspired by such young, fresh minds having this intensity. They have deep emotional stuff that's weird and about their brains and their minds and how they feel and their emotions, and then they sing about their friends and they have this lyric about carrots. When they first started they were 12 and 14. They've played with The Flaming Lips before, and because I love them I took them on tour. They're like fucking Nirvana or something onstage."



► THE DETAILS

- **RELEASE DATE** April 2013
- **LABEL** SQE Music
- **BEST TRACKS** 'Blue Obvious', 'Lost Wonderfols'
- **WHERE TO FIND IT** As an MP3 and on CD or vinyl
- **LISTEN ONLINE** On Spotify

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Leftfield

Sixteen years after their last album and one member down, the dance-music legends return to the fray at last



Neil Barnes in RPL Studios, west London, April 2015

These days we've come to expect long gaps between albums. Nonetheless, there are *NME* readers who won't have been born when Leftfield's last LP, 1999's 'Rhythm And Stealth', hit shelves. Neil Barnes, what have you been up to for the last 16 years? "I've been doing other things," laughs the Leftfield founder. "I built a studio. I spent a long time bringing my family up. I spent years doing demos in various styles, trying to get away from dance music, but nothing really came of any of it."

Now there is a new Leftfield album, 'Alternative Light Source' – and if you're wondering why you should care, first a history lesson. Electronic music as we know it today exists in Leftfield's image. Like a bit of dub weight to your dance music? When Leftfield played Brixton Academy in 1996, a year after debut LP 'Leftism', the bass assault showered ravers with dust and plaster from the roof. Thinking of dropping a big name on your dance track? Leftfield's idea too – see 1993 single 'Open Up', on which John Lydon spat bile at LA celebrity culture. "We were the first people to do a really big instrumental drop," says Barnes, warming to the theme. "We

"THE ALBUM CONCEPT IS ABOUT SEARCHING FOR LIGHT IN DARKNESS"
NEIL BARNES

changed the possibilities of what you could do on a dancefloor."

Following a rapturously received 2000 tour, Barnes and his original Leftfield partner, Paul Daley, went their separate ways. "I wanted to do Leftfield, he wanted to do different things," recalls Barnes. "Which is fair enough." Barnes revived Leftfield for some live shows in 2010, and started buying records again, reeling off a list of current favourites including George FitzGerald, Legowelt and Daniel Avery. He wondered what he might make that sounded relevant in 2015. "I couldn't genuinely call it a Leftfield record unless I felt like it sounded like now."

Happily, 'Alternative Light Source' fits the bill. Made with new collaborator Adam Wren, it's an artfully sequenced 10 tracks that veer between the epic jackhammer of 'Universal Everything' to more atmospheric moments like 'Dark Matters' and 'Storms End'. Also on board is an impressive guestlist that includes Channy Leaneagh of Poliça ('Biolocation'), Tunde

Adebimpe of TV On The Radio ('Bad Radio') and Jason Williamson of Sleaford Mods. 'Head And Shoulders' is a withering glare at cokehead culture that comes from a darker, weirder place than Williamson's recent,

cartoonish Prodigy collaboration. "I wanted him to develop it, like a story," says Barnes.

Barnes explains that the album title and sleeve – the latter by Turner-nominated artist Mark Wallinger – tie into a loose concept "about searching for light in darkness". He hasn't really discussed it before publicly, he says, but in the past he's experienced whole months lost to depression, in which he was unable to set foot in the studio. He's got it under control – meditation and mindfulness help. "But sometimes it just grabs you."

Perhaps, ventures *NME*, dark but uplifting music of the sort Leftfield make, can be heard as a sort of grapple with depression? "Yeah, I think so. When it hits you it takes you to a place where

it seems like there's no way out. That's what 'Bad Radio' is about. But out of all that, good things can happen. You go through it, then come out the other side." ■ LOUIS PATTISON

▶ THE DETAILS

▶ **TITLE** Alternative Light Source

▶ **RELEASE DATE** June 8

▶ **LABEL** Infectious

▶ **PRODUCERS** Neil Barnes, Adam Wren

▶ **TRACKLISTING** 1. Bad Radio 2. Universal Everything 3. Biolocation 4. Head And Shoulders 5. Dark Matters 6. Little Fish 7. Storms End 8. Alternative Light Source 9. Shaker Obsession 10. Levitate For You

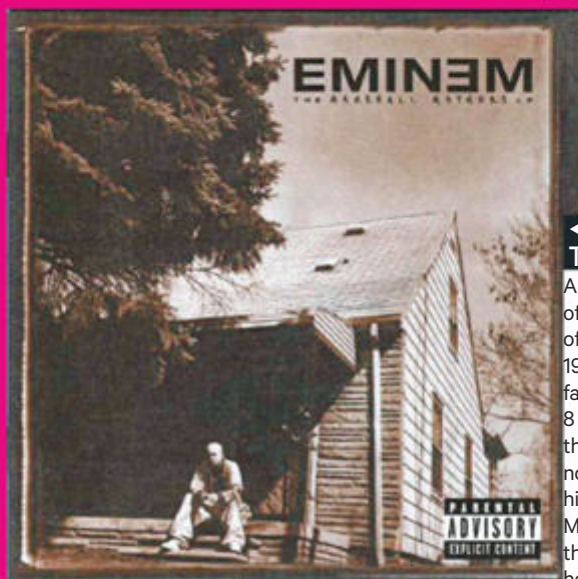
▶ NEIL BARNES SAYS

"Making a record is not always a pleasant experience. You have to push yourself, question yourself, go to places you don't necessarily want to go."

ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM



"IT'S PROBABLY MY FAVOURITE ALBUM"
EMINEM



STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

A black-and-white portrait of Eminem on the porch of his childhood home at 19946 Dresden Street, not far from Detroit's infamous 8 Mile. Eminem reprised this image in front of the now-abandoned house for his 2013 LP, 'The Marshall Mathers LP2'. Shortly after that album's release, the house was destroyed by fire.

THIS WEEK...

Eminem: The Marshall Mathers LP

The controversial album that turned the Detroit rapper into a superstar is 15 years old this month

THE BACKGROUND

For years, Eminem – real name Marshall Mathers – had been a jobbing Detroit MC, scrubbing dishes by day and honing his skills in rap battles at local hangout The Hip-Hop Shop by night. But Mathers found his voice when he adopted an unhinged alter ego, Slim Shady. Eminem's major-label debut, 'The Slim Shady LP', came on like a rap version of a *South Park* episode, pricking liberal consciences with rhymes about violence, murder and drug taking, peppered with swearing and casual misogyny but delivered with ferocious technical ability. It hit Number Two on the US Billboard Chart and scooped a Grammy, so expectations for the follow-up, recorded in a two-month "creative binge" with producers Dr Dre, Mel-Man and Detroit compadres the Bass Brothers, were high.

FIVE FACTS

- 1 After the first delivery of tracks, record label Interscope thought the album lacked singles, so Eminem returned to the studio and wrote 'The Way I Am' and 'The Real Slim Shady'.
- 2 One title considered for the album was 'Amsterdam', inspired by a trip Mathers and friends took to the famously liberal Dutch capital.
- 3 The clean version of 'The Marshall Mathers LP' excises the 16th song, 'Kim', entirely. Hardly surprising: it's a murder fantasy in which Eminem abducts and kills Kimberly Scott, his high school sweetheart and mother of his daughter, Hailie. The song was reportedly written while Kim was refusing Eminem access to Hailie, although by the time the record was released the pair had married.
- 4 Also censored is a line on 'I'm Back' that made reference to the Columbine High School massacre of April 20, 1999.
- 5 'Stan' revolves around a hook sampled from British singer-songwriter Dido's song 'Thank You'. Her LP 'No Angel' sold modestly on its 1999 release but shifted 22 million worldwide on its post-'Stan' re-release.

LYRICAL ANALYSIS

"Dear Slim, I wrote you but you still ain't calling/I left my cell, my pager and my home phone at the bottom" – 'Stan'

One of Eminem's finest storytelling moments, 'Stan' is told through the words of an obsessive fan who, ignored by his idol, kills himself and his girlfriend.

"Will Smith don't gotta cuss in his raps to sell records/Well I do, so fuck him and fuck you too" – 'The Real Slim Shady'

Smith had criticised gangsta rap at the 1998 Grammy Awards. Other celebrities in the crosshairs on 'The Real Slim Shady' include Pamela Anderson, Tommy Lee and Christina Aguilera.

"I'm a criminal/An animal caged who turned crazed/But how the fuck you supposed to grow up when you weren't raised?" – 'Criminal'

Eminem believes in nurture, not nature. If he's a monster, it's all mom's fault.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"The Marshall Mathers LP' may be the white noise of America's Most Unwanted, but it is also the product of a talent supremely untouchable" – 9/10, Steve Sutherland

WHAT WE SAY NOW

Darker and more introspective than its predecessor, 'The Marshall Mathers LP' mixes shock-horror and social critique, stark autobiography and twisted fantasy to make something toxic but undeniably thrilling. The reference points have aged, but the beats still feel fresh. A problematic masterpiece.

FAMOUS FAN

"I like the fact that Eminem is brash and angry and politically incorrect. He's stirring things up... That is what art is supposed to do."
Madonna

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"It's probably my favourite. I think some of them are my favourites for different reasons. Hate to even say that about my own record, but, I mean, the first three records, I think they may have captured a time period."
Eminem, Rolling Stone, 2013

AFTERMATH

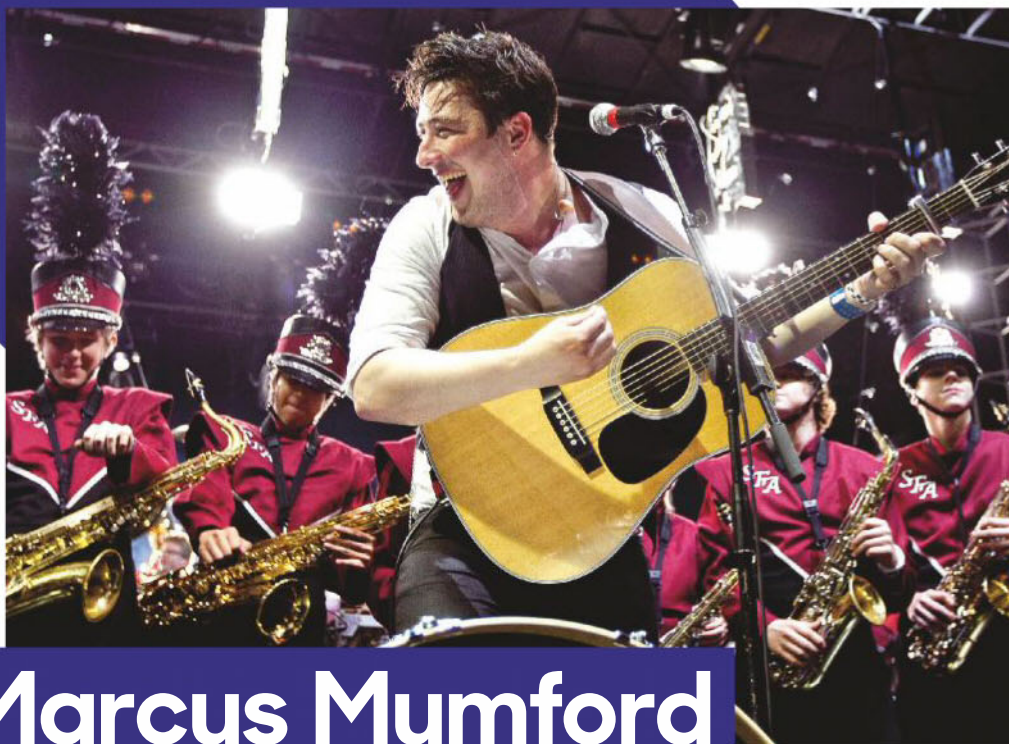
'The Marshall Mathers LP' was a critical and commercial success, becoming the fastest-selling studio album by a solo artist in American music history, despite being criticised for its homophobia and misogyny. It remains Eminem's best-selling album, and a 2013 sequel of sorts, 'The Marshall Mathers LP2', was hailed as a return to form.

THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** August 1999 – April 2000 ► **RELEASE DATE** May 22, 2000
► **LENGTH** 72:14 ► **PRODUCERS** The 45 King, Bass Brothers, Dr Dre, Eminem, Mel-Man ► **STUDIOS** The Mix House, Boise; Encore Studios, Larrabee Sound Studio, Record Plant, all LA; 54 Sound, Detroit
► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 ► **UK SALES** 2,400,000 ► **SINGLES** The Real Slim Shady, The Way I Am, Stan, I'm Back ► **TRACKLISTING**
► 1. Public Service Announcement 2000 ► 2. Kill You ► 3. Stan ► 4. Paul (Skit) ► 5. Who Knew ► 6. Steve Berman ► 7. The Way I Am ► 8. The Real Slim Shady ► 9. Remember Me? ► 10. I'm Back ► 11. Marshall Mathers ► 12. Ken Kaniff (Skit) ► 13. Drug Ballad ► 14. Amityville ► 15. B**** Please II ► 16. Kim ► 17. Under The Influence ► 18. Criminal

STAYING IN

THE BEST MUSIC ON TV, RADIO AND ONLINE THIS WEEK



Marcus Mumford

Lost Songs: The Basement Tapes Continued

►WATCH Sky Arts, 11am, May 28

Watch Marcus Mumford, Elvis Costello, My Morning Jacket's Jim James and more create new music using once-lost lyrics penned by Bob Dylan during his famous Basement Tapes sessions. Tune in to see how the results match up to the folk hero's own work.

Songhoy Blues Lauren Laverne

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 10am, May 28

Songhoy Blues' famous fans include Damon Albarn, who asked them to support him at the Albert Hall at the end of last year, and Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Nick Zinner, who produced their recent album 'Music In Exile'. Tune into Lauren's show to hear the

Malian Afro-rockers' debut session for 6 Music.

Holly Herndon Mary Anne Hobbs

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 7am, May 31

4AD signing Holly Herndon joins Mary Anne Hobbs to talk about the use of computers in music. As well as being a maker of avant-garde

pop, Herndon is a student at Stanford's Center for Computer Research In Music and Acoustics, so she certainly knows what she's talking about.

Fleetwood Mac Classic Albums

►WATCH Sky Arts, 11.30pm, May 29

The legendary soft-rockers touch down in the UK this

week for a mammoth series of shows, including a headline spot at the Isle of Wight festival. Take a look back at the drug-strewn, divorce-wracked making of their classic 'Rumours' album.

Young Fathers Lauren Laverne

►LISTEN BBC 6 Music, 10am, May 29

The 2014 Mercury Prize winners stop by 6 Music to recreate the highlights of their victorious album 'White Men Are Black Men Too' and talk to Lauren Laverne about their recent adventures in Africa.



Young Fathers

GOING OUT

THE BEST LIVE EVENTS

THIS WEEK



Earl Sweatshirt

The Odd Future rapper brings recent album 'I Don't Like Shit, I Don't Go Outside' to the UK.

►DATES Birmingham Institute

(June 1), Bristol Trinity (2)

►TICKETS £18.50 from NME.

COM/tickets with £1.85 booking fee

East India Youth

William Doyle takes second album 'Culture Of Volume' around the country this week.

►DATES Manchester Deaf

Institute (May 27), Glasgow

King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (28),

Sheffield Plug (30), Bristol

Exchange (June 2)

►TICKETS £10 from NME.

COM/tickets with £1-£1.50

booking fee; Glasgow £10

from ticketmaster.co.uk with

£2 booking fee

5 TO SEE FOR FREE

The Vryll Society

Shacklewell Arms, London

►May 28, 8pm

Yoofs

Sixty Million Postcards,

Bournemouth

►May 29, 9pm

Birdskulls

Old Blue Last, London

►May 30, 8pm

Post War Glamour Girls

Green Door Store, Brighton

►May 30, 7.30pm

Slaves

Rough Trade East, London

►June 1, 7pm

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SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE



Joni
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Neil
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Colin Newman

Wire

THE FIRST SONG I REMEMBER HEARING 'Telstar' - The Tornados

"A person on the radio said it was the sound of the future, and that sounded good to me. I must have been five or six. It's a Joe Meek production, a very thin sounding proto-synth played over a surf-rock guitar backing. Up to that point I couldn't identify with music at all. I didn't like '50s rock'n'roll, what they called in the '60s 'mums and dads' music. So this was the first."

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH 'Blackberry Way' - The Move

"I'm not from the '60s, but ask anyone who was a teenager in the '60s and they'll tell you The Move were the most important band to see live. They were the first band to smash up their guitars, the first to be really heavy. But they were a pop band, and had hit after hit. I guess what

put it all in a bad light was Roy Wood went on to Wizzard. That Christmas song ['I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday'] - people look at that and go, 'How can he be any good?'"

"THE MOVE WERE THE FIRST BAND TO SMASH UP THEIR GUITARS"

THE FIRST ALBUM I BOUGHT 'Nice Enough To Eat' - Various artists

"The first album I had bought for me was 'Sgt Pepper's...', but the first I bought for myself was 'Nice Enough To Eat', an Island sampler. As kids, we could never afford albums, so everyone bought this, it was cheap - 99p. They were all quite hip groups - it had '21st Century Schizoid Man', my first exposure to King Crimson, and 'Time Has Told Me' by Nick Drake. At the time,

being a Nick Drake fan was a very lonely life, but I was always into him."

THE SONG THAT MADE ME WANT TO BE IN A BAND 'Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out' - The Rolling Stones

"There were always records I thought needed improvement - the drums shouldn't do this, they should do that. I had ideas above my station from a very young age (laughs). Me and my friend Desmond had a band around 1970 - we used to listen to 'Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out'. I was the lead singer and played kazoo."

THE SONG I CAN NO LONGER LISTEN TO 'Ex Lion Tamer' - Wire

"I'm saying this to be controversial, I guess, because a lot of people say this is the best Wire song ever. We don't play a lot of our old stuff these days - we only play the song 'Pink Flag' when we've got the full guitar orchestra. And we do it very, very differently. I find it hard

THE SONG I SING IN THE SHOWER 'Out On The Weekend' - Neil Young

"Oh, God. I do a pretty good Neil Young impersonation. (Sings) 'Think I'll pack it in and buy a pick-up...' Nice and simple, just two chords. But that's enough of that."

THE SONG THAT I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD 'Windowpane' - Mild High Club

"A total earworm. It's a guy called Alexander Brettin from Los Angeles. He has to his credit so far one single, two tracks. Wire are taking him on the West Coast leg of our American tour. It's an assemblage of harpsichord, flute, organ - it's got a bit of Todd Rundgren, a bit of '60s psychedelia, a bit of Sébastien Tellier."

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN 'All I Want' - Joni Mitchell

"At the moment she's in the news for all the wrong reasons [the 71-year-old Mitchell was recently hospitalised after being found unconscious at her LA home]. So I would like to get it on record that I'm a fan. The emotional content is great, but the sheer musicality of it all is amazing - it's written on a dulcimer, one drone string, which really appeals to me a lot."

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL 'The Hall Of Mirrors Palace At Versailles' - John Cale & Terry Riley

"I've been to too many funerals recently. Let's have a random choice - this is a beautiful instrumental from one of my favourite records, 'Church Of Anthrax'."

to work up enthusiasm for 'Pink Flag' - the more people go on about it the less I want to listen to it, which is classically perverse, I know."

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME WANT TO DANCE 'One & Only' - PFM

"It's a drum'n'bass thing, released on LTJ Bukem's label Good Looking. It's got a great bassline, and it's just very danceable - quite a noddy dance, not a 'flinging yourself around the dancefloor' dance."

INTERVIEW: LOUIS PATTISON PHOTOS: REX, GETTY



The Rolling
Stones



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JULIO BASHMORE • BREACH • BENJI B • ECLAIR FIFI

10 JULY

THE PRODIGY • MUMFORD & SONS

JAMES BLAKE • RÓISÍN MURPHY • FUTURE ISLANDS
KODALINE • SHEPPARD • THE TING TINGS
CAPICUA • BATIDA • MARMOZETS • COLD SPECKS • BEAR'S DEN
MOULLINEX • MAGAZINO • BLEACHERS • SKIP & DIE

11 JULY

DISCLOSURE LIVE • SAM SMITH

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NOS Alive Tree by Tamara Alves
Portuguese Street Artist.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"@NoelGallagher thank you so much for hanging out & the song dedication & being all around rad!"

Frances Bean Cobain meets her hero after a recent High Flying Birds gig in Los Angeles.

THE NUMBERS

\$20,000

Value of the equipment stolen from Fat White Family's van in San Francisco, on the last night of their US tour. The band are appealing for witnesses.

£308,000

Amount George Harrison's Maton Mastersound guitar was sold for at auction. Harrison played it at a bunch of Beatles gigs in 1963.

£3.20

Ticket price for the Rolling Stones gig at The Fonda in L.A. Prices to see them play 'Sticky Fingers' soared to £600 online.

35

Joy Division's back catalogue to be re-released on vinyl in June to commemorate 35 years of 'Love Will Tear Us Apart'.

WHO THE FUCK IS...



Cali Hetfield

This is Metallica frontman James Hetfield's daughter, who helped the rocker show his sensitive side during a recent live appearance when the pair covered Adele's 'Crazy For You' together.

That song is a long way from 'Enter Sandman'...

Exactly. Cali, 16, took care of the vocals on the song from Adele's debut, '19', while her dad provided backing on his acoustic guitar. The performance was to help raise funds for children's brain-tumour research at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital.

So it was all for a good cause...

Absolutely. Other artists involved in this year's Acoustic-4-A-Cure event included Joe Satriani and Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith.

+ GOOD WEEK +



Mick Jagger

The Stones frontman has been revealed as something of a political oracle after Tory political adviser Jim Messina said Jagger predicted the UK election results. "One of the savviest political observers I've come across," said Messina.

- BAD WEEK -



Slaves

The duo were forced to cancel a gig in Sheffield after singer and drummer Isaac Hollman injured himself in an accident involving a kitchen knife. "They stitched me up, but I can't play the drums for a little while," he tweeted.

IN BRIEF

Not 1997 forever

Labour's Andy Burnham, who has declared his intention to run in the party's leadership contest, quoted Courteeners lyrics on Twitter recently, describing his "love" for the band and their 2010 single 'Take Over The World'.

Hot fuzz

Brandon Flowers has said that he has been collecting his facial-hair shavings in a bag for seven years. "It's a lot of hair!" he says. "It doesn't smell. It's all black but about half way up you start to see some greys. I don't know what to do with it yet."

Batman vs Rihanna

DC Comics have taken steps to stop Rihanna from trademarking her birth name Robyn amid fears it will be detrimental to Batman's sidekick. The publisher says her reported interest in launching a magazine would confuse comic-book fans.

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

Official RECORD STORE Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS MAY 30, 2015



NEW 01 Paul Weller Saturns Pattern PARLOPHONE

The Modfather continues with the experimentation of 'Sonik Kicks', taking a more psychedelic direction. His 12th solo album goes straight in at Number One.

- NEW 2 Why Make Sense? **Hot Chip** DOMINO RECORDINGS
- NEW 3 Sol Invictus **Faith No More** RECLAMATION RECORDINGS
- NEW 4 Simple Songs **Jim O'Rourke** DRAG CITY
- 5 The Magic Whip **Blur** PARLOPHONE
- 6 Wilder Mind **Mumford & Sons** GENTLEMEN OF THE ROAD/ISLAND
- NEW 7 The Desired Effect **Brandon Flowers** EMI
- 8 Born Under Saturn **Django Django** BECAUSE MUSIC
- NEW 9 Happiness Is **Taking Back Sunday** HOPELESS
- NEW 10 The Purple Album **Whitesnake** FRONTIERS
- 11 Sound And Color **Alabama Shakes** ROUGH TRADE
- 12 Carrie & Lowell **Sufjan Stevens** ASTHMATIC KITTY
- NEW 13 Welcome Back To Milk **Du Blonde** MUTE
- 14 Sub-Lingual Tablet **The Fall** CHERRY RED
- NEW 15 Johnny Rocket Narcissist & Music Machine **Eccentric Research Council** WITHOUT CONSENT
- NEW 16 Platform **Holly Herndon** 4AD
- NEW 17 Sprinter **Torres** PARTISAN
- 18 Hairless Toys **Roisin Murphy** PLAY IT AGAIN SAM
- 19 The Ultimate Collection **Paul Simon** SONY MUSIC CG
- 20 Forever Man **Eric Clapton** RHINO
- 21 Dumb Flesh **Black Mass** SACRED BONES
- 22 Traveling Kind **Emmylou Harris/Rodney Crowell** NONESUCH
- NEW 23 Multi-Love **Unknown Mortal Orchestra** JAGJAGUWAR
- 24 In The Lonely Hour **Sam Smith** CAPITOL
- 25 The Race For Space **Public Service Broadcasting** TEST CARD RECORDINGS
- NEW 26 Loin Des Hommes OST **Nick Cave & Warren Ellis** GOLIATH ENTERTAINMENT
- 27 Hozier **Hozier** ISLAND
- 28 I Love You, Honeybear **Father John Misty** BELLA UNION
- 29 Mwing **Super Furry Animals** DOMINO RECORDINGS
- 30 Can't Forget - A Souvenir Of The Grand Tour **Leonard Cohen** COLUMBIA
- 31 Vulnicura **Bjork** ONE LITTLE INDIAN
- 32 Peanut Butter **Joanna Gruesome** FORTUNA POP
- 33 Tracker **Mark Knopfler** BRITISH GROVE
- 34 X **Ed Sheeran** ASYLUM
- NEW 35 Sour Soul **Badbadnotgood/Ghostface Killah** LEX
- NEW 36 The Day Is My Enemy **Prodigy** TAKEMETOTHEHOSPITAL
- 37 Sometimes I Sit And Think, And Sometimes I Just Sit **Courtney Barnett** HOUSE ANXIETY
- NEW 38 From Kinshasa **Mbongwana Star** WORLD CIRCUIT
- 39 Title **Meghan Trainor** EPIC
- 40 Edge Of The Sun **Calexico** CITY SLANG

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. Owing to the bank holiday, this week's chart runs from Sunday to Wednesday.

TOP OF THE SHOPS



THIS WEEK SWORDFISH RECORDS BIRMINGHAM

FOUNDED 1979

WHY IT'S GREAT Staff are happy to chat, even if you're not buying.

TOP SELLER LAST WEEK

Blur - 'The Magic Whip'

THEY SAY "Having been in business for 36 years, we offer a good all-round knowledge of music."

Rad ar

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NME
NEW
BAND
OF THE WEEK



Algiers

Politicised, genre-mashing trio with members in New York and London

People say bands aren't politicised any more. Then again, they say you shouldn't fuse punk with gospel, so what do they know? Just ask Algiers, a three-piece who combine these disparate genres to rally against consumerism and political conservatism.

Vocalist/guitarist Franklin James Fisher, bassist Ryan Mahan and guitarist Lee Tesche hail from Atlanta, a home city for which they share mutual disdain. "People act as if the South's history of exploitation and slavery happened so long ago that it's no longer relevant," Franklin says. "In fact, its violent history is quite recent. It's a conservative place and these things are still so near the surface."

Their discomfort with this conservatism caused them to leave Atlanta. After college, Ryan became a New Yorker, while Lee moved to London and Franklin to Douarnenez, France. They spent the next few years exchanging fragments of music online. "At first it was

a file-swapping project – a collective presence online," says Lee. "We never thought we would be able to play live shows or anything."

Worked up into righteous punk-soul – all chanted vocals and abrasive bursts of guitar – these fragments became songs strong enough to unite them as a functioning, fierce band. Algiers grew up in religious households and their self-titled debut album – out on Matador in June – simmers with the fire and brimstone of an orthodox church.

Lee believes their geographical disconnect created their unlikely, cross-pollinated style. "We were inspired by new bands, experiences, spaces and cities. Sharing these different ideas and identities helped us develop our sound." Franklin has since moved to New York and Ryan and Lee now live in London, so expect the overlap of influences to continue.

The arrangement is unusual, as is Algiers' refusal to ignore the issues that concern them. But Franklin believes that to tackle injustice – be it racial tensions or the ills of consumerism – you must be forthright. "If you only talk about how happy you are and how everything is great," he says, "you're just reinforcing the status quo." ■ JORDAN BASSETT

▼
ON
NME.COM/
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NOW

► Watch the video
for 'Black Eunuch'

► THE DETAILS

► **BASED** London, New York

► **FOR FANS OF** Nick Cave, Suicide, Roland S Howard

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/algierstheband

► **BUY IT NOW** The album 'Algiers' is out June 1 on Matador Records

► **SEE THEM LIVE** London Ace Hotel (June 2)

► **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** Franklin's mum grew up living next door to the Grand Wizard of the North Carolina arm of the Ku Klux Klan

MORE NEW MUSIC

NME BUZZ BAND OF THE WEEK

Elvis Depressedly

Starting out life as the bedroom project of South Carolina musician Mat Cothran, Elvis Depressedly has to date released six EPs of lo-fi melancholy in the vein of Alex G, but it's with newest offering 'New Alhambra' that he's starting to fully hone his sound. Recruiting fiancée Delaney Mills into the musical fold, the likes of 'Bruises (Amethyst)' are still intimate windows into his forlorn mind, but with a little more beef added to his sound.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/elvisdepressedly

► **HEAR THEM** elvisdepressedly.bandcamp.com

Dolores Haze

Stockholm quartet Dolores Haze are as feisty and uncompromising as the character they're named after – the fabled young siren in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Judging by early track 'I Got My Gun', the all-girl group trade in kitschy electronics and speak-sing vocals that hark back to the trashier end of nu rave, while their recent 'Accidental EP' is available to stream on Spotify in full.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/doloreshazeband

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

Avid Dancer

You wouldn't imagine that a former US marine and world snare-drumming champion could end up making woozy psych pop, but LA's Jacob Summers – Avid Dancer – makes a very convincing case with his debut album, '1st Bath'. Veering between the Tame Impala-like 'Stop Playing With My Heart' and the dancefloor sensibilities of 'I Want To See You Dance', it's an impressively varied opening statement without a five-minute drum solo in sight.



Elvis Depressedly

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/avidodancer

► **HEAR HIM** aviddancer.bandcamp.com

Allie X

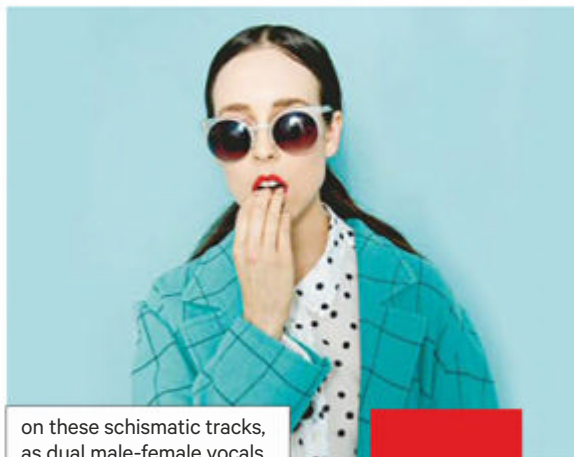
In 2013, Alexandra Ashley Hughes left Toronto for the sunshine of LA and spent her time crafting debut EP 'CollXtion', which shows off her theatrical pop vocals, as shrill as Kate Bush and as clinical as Alice Glass. She's also been masterminding the vision for her live show, which plays on an escapist aesthetic, allowing fans to enter the surreal universe of Allie X's anti-heroine who takes audiences on an intelligent pop adventure via the cold, gothic synths of 'Bitch', 'Prime' and 'Tumor'.

► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/alliexxxandra

► **HEAR HER** alliex.xxx

Dearly Beloved

This Canadian punk duo recently wrapped up a tour of the UK supporting Swervedriver, and as the frenetic sounds of 'Enduro' and 'Olympics Of No Regard' make plain, it was a match made in noise-rock heaven. Rollicking, distorted bass riffs supplant crashes of flailing drums



Allie X

on these schismatic tracks, as dual male-female vocals tenaciously fight it out on top. They sum it up perfectly in their own words: "Chaos, tempered by love and delivered with great fury."

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/thebeloveds

► **HEAR THEM** dearlybeloved.bandcamp.com

Drones Club

As Drones Club's bizarre introductory video will hypnotically, and ominously, inform you, the world around us is absurd and ephemeral – but "there is a new way" to help us reconnect. "We can help", they say, and with infectious, repetitive tracks like 'It Rolls On', 'Sphinx' and the Pet Shop Boys-like 'Cabin Pressure', it's hard to

resist their promise. Time to join the club.

► **SOCIAL** twitter.com/dronesclubmusic

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

Darius

Already renowned in his native France, Parisian DJ and producer Darius made his name remixing the likes of Flight Facilities and MØ. Now he's back with 'Helios', a brand-new EP that follows last year's 'Romance', and with a title track featuring input from Berlin singer Wayne Snow alongside some soulful-house production.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/iamdariusmusic

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

BAND CRUSH

Stuart Murdoch

Belle And Sebastian

Whyte Horses

"They're from Manchester, that's about all I know about them, I don't know who is in the band or anything, but their music – really dreamy psych-pop – is fantastic."



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Andy Shauf

Andy Shauf marries the melancholic and introspective atmospherics of Elliott Smith to the universal pop ambition of Tobias Jesso Jr. On tracks like 'Two Little Clouds' and 'You're Out Wasting' he displays a love for the melodic element of grunge while entwining it with Paul McCartney-like songwriting. It's minimal and brooding, but with all the medicinal self-empowerment that proper, big pop melodies can bring.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/andyschaufmusic
► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/andyschauf

Elephants & Castles

Forming, unsurprisingly, in south-east London, Elephants & Castles have picked up a fair deal of support since the release of their debut single, 'Fashanu', with a debut EP scheduled for release this autumn. Musically, their nostalgia is rooted in the kind of alt-Britpop choruses of The Lightning Seeds and pre-debut-album Stone Roses.

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

Beds In Parks

► **SEE THEM LIVE** St Albans The Horn (May 28), London Zigfrid von Underbelly (June 4)

Beds In Parks

Inspired by a shared love of alternative rock'n'roll, Beds In Parks is a creative partnership between Joanna Curwood from The History Of Apple Pie and Hatcham Social's Finnigan Kidd. Having recently released their debut single 'Mabel (When It Gets Dark)'/ 'Something To Do' through Crocodile Records, the pair's influences are worn on their sleeves: their lo-fi obsessions channels the likes of The Vaselines and Mazzy Star.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/bedsinparks
► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/beds-in-parks
► **SEE THEM LIVE** London The Lock Tavern (June 11)

Downies

Brooklyn's Downies have made a riotous entrance with 'Widow', the first track from their forthcoming debut EP. Comprising members from local acts like Porches and LVL UP,

The Weather Station

The Weather Station

Tamara Lindeman's latest blissful track recalls the languid, flowery sounds of fellow Canadian Joni Mitchell, as finger-plucked arpeggios, gentle pianos, gliding strings and vocals intertwine for three minutes of pure folk wonderment on 'Shy Women'. An artist full of emotional charge ("Luxury would be to not be so ashamed", she sings), Lindeman promises that her new record under the name The Weather Station, 'Loyalty', will be a "quietly radical statement". Without doubt, it's sure to be a powerful one.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/theweatherstn
► **HEAR HER** soundcloud.com/paradise-of-bachelors

Downies

Downies have been playing shows at tiny Brooklyn apartment-cum-venue David Blaine's Steakhouse recently – and 'Widow' is suitably ramshackle in sound, giving off rough-and-ready Ramones and Buzzcocks vibes.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/downiesband
► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/downies

Radar NEWS ROUND UP

WET'S UK RETURN

Brooklyn synth trio Wet return to the UK next month, where they'll play The Victoria in Dalston, London on June 17. The news comes in light of debut album 'Don't You' being announced for release this autumn. Before then, there's new single 'Deadwater', which is streaming now.

TENEMENT GET PREDATORY

Wisconsin punk trio Tenement will release double LP 'Predatory Headlights' on June 2. Recorded in a home studio that the band then symbolically demolished on the album's completion, it will be the follow-up to 2011 LP 'Napalm Dream'.

Wet



Vant



DO YOU KNOW VANT?

In February, London quartet Vant released 'Parasite', the first track from their double-A-side debut. Now they've unveiled the other song, 'Do You Know Me?'. Both are available to download and the band – recently signed to Columbia – will play The Victoria in London on June 12.

LUCY WORKS IT OUT

Lucy Rose has announced details of her second album, the follow-up to 'Like I Used To', which came out in 2012. 'Work It Out' will be released through Columbia on July 6 and marks the first time the singer has ventured away from home recordings. Single 'Like An Arrow' is also released that month.

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Loyle's family

Rising London hip-hop prodigy Loyle Carner lifts the lid on his new material – and hints at some big collaborations



Loyle Carner in his south London home

▶ You'd forgive a hotly tipped British hip-hop hopeful about to embark on a busy summer of huge festivals for being nervous about the months ahead. Loyle Carner, however, is more concerned about how his fast-filling-up schedule is going to impact the five-a-side football team he plays with on Tuesday nights a stone's throw from his south London home. "None of the shows are on Tuesday at the minute. So even though things are getting busier, it shouldn't stop me killing it on the pitch," he laughs.

It's typical of the 20-year-old, who despite accruing hype on both sides of the Atlantic since the whip-smart rhymes and melancholy of his debut EP, last year's 'A Little Late', remains committed to his home life, both on record and off. "My next single's called 'Tierney Terrace', which is the place my nan and grandad lived. It was my home away from home when my mum was working late, so it became one of those landmarks for me. They passed away a few years ago, so it was cool to pay homage." Due out on paradyse Records, the track's "the next stage in my story", he says. "It's a continuation of where I'm at. I didn't want to change up my sound just because there's a bit of attention around me now."

"A bit" is maybe understating it. Since the



"I didn't want to change up my sound because there's some attention"

release of 'A Little Late', a gritty, sad but never moping six-track rap confessional threaded with glimpses into a sometimes troubled adolescence – "Everybody says I'm fucking sad. Of course I'm fucking sad, I miss my fucking dad", he rasps on opener 'BFG' – he's opened for hip-hop mastermind MF Doom at his first ever show, earned a fan in New York star Joey Bada\$\$ and played a series of storming sets at The Great Escape in Brighton.

"They might have to wait a little while,"

Loyle grins to *NME* when asked about his debut album. "I don't want to rush it.

I want to get it right, you know?"

That doesn't mean new material beyond isn't coming, though.

As well as 'Tierney Terrace', he and Rebel Kleff, the collaborator responsible for the twilight boom-bap sound of breakout tracks 'Sea Shells' and 'BFG', have been working on new tracks both in his beatmaker friend's home and at a nearby fancy London studio, as part of Converse Rubber Tracks, giving rising young artists free studio time.

"The driving force in my life is family and friends. That's what has been spurring me on to write, so that will be what the next step for me is about too, I think," he says. Having worked previously with the likes of Kate Tempest, he hints at some major collaborations in the works. "I wouldn't want to give too much away just in case they turn out really shit," he laughs. "But one is a big hero of mine..."

Expect Carner to keep killing it, on the mic as well as on the football pitch. ■ AL HORNER

Carner's latest collaboration

Loyle is one of several rising artists to be given free studio time from Converse Rubber Tracks London

How did you find out about Converse Rubber Tracks London?

"My manager found it and emailed me. It was wicked – a great opportunity and a fantastic experience. Me and [collaborator] Rebel Kleff usually record and work on all of our stuff in his bedroom, so being in a professional environment was something new and kinda eye-opening."

How'd it go, then?

"Yeah, great, man! We had nothing planned – we just wanted to go in there and see what happened, experiment a little. We made a track I haven't given a name yet. It's quite short, not a fully fledged song."

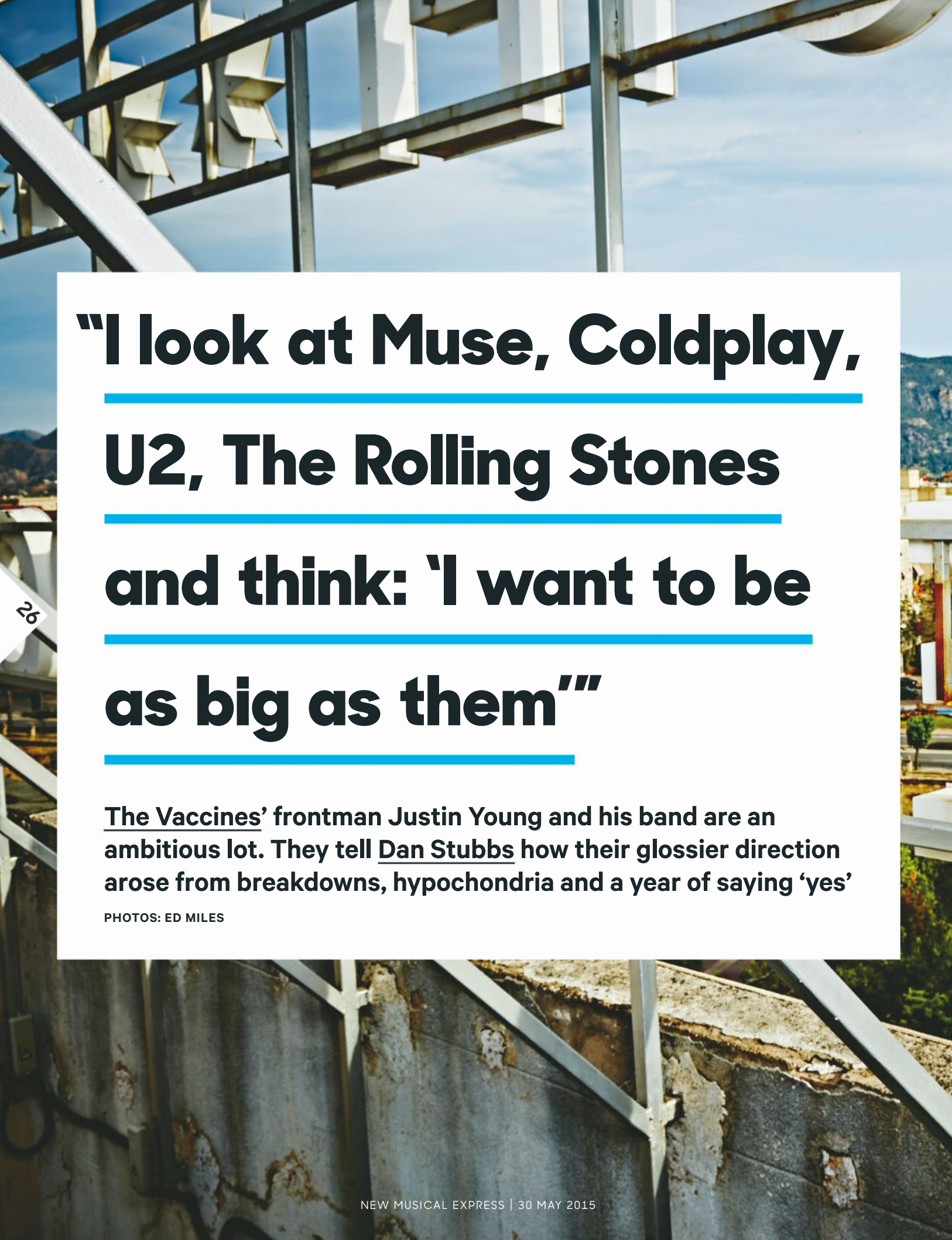
Did you learn anything from the experience, do you think?

"I learned a new approach. It was great to be able to play with keyboards and things not normally at our disposal... The track we made's a little more polished than normal, so I might bring a little of that back to the bedroom."

▶ Converse Rubber Tracks London is currently making free recording time available to the capital's musicians through a series of studio residencies. Sessions have taken place in the London boroughs of Haringey and Ealing so far and the series will be moving on to Tower Hamlets and Southwark next. For more info, see conversemusic.tumblr.com



▶ Go to NME.com to watch a video interview with Loyle



**"I look at Muse, Coldplay,
U2, The Rolling Stones
and think: 'I want to be
as big as them'"**

The Vaccines' frontman Justin Young and his band are an ambitious lot. They tell Dan Stubbs how their glossier direction arose from breakdowns, hypochondria and a year of saying 'yes'

PHOTOS: ED MILES



F

reddie Cowan is missing. Last spotted talking to Palma Violets bassist Chilli Jesson at Gatwick airport, the louche

Vaccines guitarist turned up at the wrong gate for his flight to Alicante, where The Vaccines are playing Festival SOS48 in nearby Murcia. His bandmates – frontman Justin Young, bassist Árni Arnason and drummer Pete Robertson – were blissfully unaware until, sitting in their separate seats on the flight (“We always sit separately,” says Árni), until Cowan’s name was called over the PA, with a warning that they’d be removing his bags unless he made himself known.

Freddie’s clerical error came as a surprise to precisely none of the other members. “I’m glad it’s happened,” says Justin, shortly after arriving in Murcia in southern Spain. “He always has to go at his own pace. If you try and make him speed up, he’ll go slower.” Soon, the band are having photos taken as a three-piece, falling quite happily into arrowhead formation in front of a wrought-iron church door in the city’s old town. “It’s like a glimpse into the future,” mutters Árni. Justin agrees: “Yeah, it’s just like a normal photoshoot except there’s no-one trying to stand just in front of me.”

It’s all in good humour, of course; at the stroke of midnight, Justin will turn 28, and in the morning, he and Freddie will hop over to Majorca to celebrate for the weekend, like a couple of old pals might. A year ago to the day, Justin made a vow. “On his 27th birthday he said to me, ‘I’m not going to say ‘no’ to anything for a year – my 27th will be my ‘yes’ year,’” explains Árni, over tapas in one of the city’s plazas. I ask what the most ludicrous thing he ended up saying yes to was, and Justin giggles. “This isn’t a Fat White Family interview,” he says. “I’ll tell you later.” He doesn’t.

There is evidence of Justin’s ‘yes year’ on record, however. The Vaccines’ new album, ‘English Graffiti’, finds the band exploring new territory, casting themselves as pop rockers from the future as imagined in 1987. It’s there in ‘Handsome’-s robotic take on the Ramones, or in ‘Dream Lover’-s interpretation of the kind of power ballad that might soundtrack a glitterball-sparkled prom scene in a John Hughes movie. It’s come, simply, as a result of Justin ceasing to say ‘no’ to anything beyond his original, narrow vision of what The Vaccines would and should be. “I don’t want to do ‘rama lama ding dong’ any more,” he says. “We had to unshackle ourselves from this clearly defined and self-imposed ethos we had.”



The Vaccines onstage at Festival SOS48 in Spain, May 1, 2015

Early in the band’s career, Justin had implemented a number of rules: no drum fills, no fussy basslines, no guitar solos. It’s a formula that put the songs and the energy firmly at the forefront, and one that proved so instantly successful that 2011’s fun, punky debut, ‘What Did You Expect From The Vaccines?’, was swiftly followed by more of the very same – 2012’s fun, punky ‘Come Of Age’. In cold calculation, it worked, but you get the sense that Justin no longer sees the group’s second LP as any kind of artistic triumph. “There were times when we were making that record that I thought, ‘This is great within the boundaries of what we’re doing, but it’s not great within the wider context of music and music history and what’s happening now,’” he says. “It brought me down. There were points where I almost admitted defeat and thought, ‘Well, this is what we are, so either put up or shut up, really.’ But coming into this record, there was this desire to have no limits, a freedom that I always stopped us from having.”

“I have had numerous breakdowns this year”

JUSTIN YOUNG

‘English Graffiti’ saw the band heading into the wilderness, physically and mentally. Recording in the remote Tarbox Road studios in upstate New York with producers Dave Fridmann (The Cribbs, Mercury Rev, Weezer), who owns the studio, and Cole MGN (Beck, Ariel Pink’s Haunted Graffiti), they generated heaps of material that might be far out even by the standards of Fridmann’s most regular collaborators, The Flaming Lips. Árni says some of it sounded like industrial misanthropists Suicide, and a track I’m played evokes ‘Poupée De Cire, Poupée De Son’, the track Serge Gainsbourg wrote for Luxembourg’s 1965 Eurovision Song Contest entry. ‘Rama lama ding dong’ it ain’t. “We thought we had the record in the bag last October, but I think that we were about to commit suicide – commercial and creative suicide,” says Justin. “I think we were kidding ourselves to an extent. I think we were being selfish, and I don’t think music is necessarily selfish. There’s one thing that ties us together, and that’s my emotive disposition and my very straightforward way of writing a pop song, and whatever we do around that, however we choose to colour it in or chop it up or reorganise it, that’s always going to be at the heart of what we’re doing.”

Justin’s emotive disposition has, however, shifted. The group’s first album, and to a lesser extent second, seemed powered by the gonads, whether lusting over a young Danish model in ‘Nørgaard’ or having one for the road in ‘Post Break-Up Sex’. This time, it’s less about getting your rocks off and more about romance; it’s love, not lust. “I was single →

Árni Árnason(bass) **on...****...Pop music**

"In rock music, nobody's looking outside of a very narrow framework. Modern pop music is insane – it's all over the place. There's so much experimentation and freedom in what people are doing in pop."

...Producing Hinds

"I get really excited about new bands and there just happened to be a new band from Spain coming through London, so I invited them down to my studio. It was as simple as that."

Justin Young(vocals, guitar) **on...****...Tidal's launch**

"That was the weirdest fucking thing I've ever seen."

...Working with ex-Ariel Pink man Cole MGN

"The new record is as much Cole's vision as it was ours. He really joined the band in a sense. I wrote songs with him."

...Mumford & Sons' new direction

"They could have put out another record of finger-picking four-on-the-floor and sold millions, but why would they if it's not what they want to be doing? You have to change to grow, and it can only be commended, really."

...Inspirations

"I think St Vincent is an amazing example of someone who's doing something very classic in one sense but sounding like this sort of goddess from the future in another."

...Catfish & The Bottlemen

"In 2011 we were supporting Arctic Monkeys at the Arena in Cardiff. Catfish were playing the pub across the road. They came and knocked on our tourbus and said, 'Come and watch us', and we did. It's poetic and amazing that they're now a fucking massive band."

Pete Robertson(drums) **on...****...Justin's lyrics**

"Justin's lyrics are like having an in-depth, late-night conversation with him. When Justin and Cole MGN were writing together, Justin said, 'Well, I don't really know what to write about.' Both of Cole's parents are psychoanalysts, so he and Cole basically just sat and talked about stuff for hours. It's how they got to the stuff at his very core."

...Freddie

"There is a caricature of him as this quite stiff, pompous, self-assured character, but he's one of the sweetest,

Freddie Cowan(guitar) **on...****...The Vaccines' Levi's adverts**

"I didn't realise it would be such a big deal. I keep seeing stadium-sized billboards. It's fucking nuts."

...Headlining festivals

"I really want to headline festivals and big tours. I want to do all those things, but I want it to be the right time. I think we could do it, but really you need five records behind you. I want to headline Reading the most. It's my dream, because I went there as a kid."

...Árni's cooking

"He did all the cooking when we were in the studio. He started off being resentful, then once he was into it he was like, 'Fine, I'll go to the shops, then, for fuck's sake.' Then he'd come back with all these amazing things."

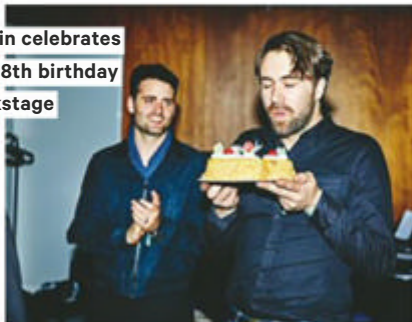
when I wrote it," says Justin when quizzed. So it's like an advert, then? "No! But it's people I've met, for sure, rather than people I want to meet. A song is always for someone." Do they know? "Never." Do you woo people with songs? "No," he says. "That's... awful."

He's perfectly clear on one thing: there's meaning – and feeling – behind everything he does. "I firmly believe that the more personal you are in your songwriting, the more universal you are," he says. "It's frustrating to me when I hear people being disingenuous and faking it. And it makes me incredibly frustrated when people can't see how honest I am and how good I am at writing songs or writing lyrics about very personal things."

You mightn't guess it from listening to the Skittles-bright, primary-coloured blast of 'English Graffiti', but the record followed dark times for the band, and took Justin to an even darker place. "I definitely have had numerous breakdowns this year. I guess the record really allowed me to say everything I wanted to say, and once we'd finished the record I really felt I'd lost a bit of purpose and direction and felt like a very vulnerable body floating in a big, scary ocean," he says. After completing the album, and on finishing the touring cycle for 'Come Of Age', Justin began suffering phantom symptoms, convinced there was something wrong with him. He suffers, he says, from clinical hypochondria. "Three or four times in my life I've ended up in hospital after finishing important projects, just through boredom and self-obsession," he says. "I'm an incredibly self-obsessed and anxious person. When I lose focus in life, which I do when I hand in a record, all my focus turns to myself and what might be wrong with me. With self-obsession comes this desire to control and preserve, and so for whatever reason over the last 10 years, this has manifested itself in hypochondria and psychosomatic pain and a weird list of things that scare me enough that I end up in hospital attached to various different machines trying to reassure myself that I'm not about to drop dead."

It wasn't just Justin who felt bruised by the band's rocket-fast rise and punishing touring schedule. After 'Come Of Age', Árni took himself off to a cabin in his native Iceland,

Justin celebrates his 28th birthday backstage



Justin and Freddie onstage in Murcia



switched off his phone and spent two weeks in splendid isolation. Pete, meanwhile, went home to Winchester to work out how to be a rock'n'roll dad. "I had a pretty set life to go back into, but I had to learn really fast what my role was," he says. "I had three weeks at home when my son was born and that was it – we were off again. I only had a few days at home here and there until he was about nine months old. Towards the tail-end of the campaign it was really difficult to try to keep everything together, trying to churn out really good performances while knowing you're not being able to be a really good husband and father."

They certainly aren't the first band to find that life's harder when you don't have a tour manager telling you what to do. "I think you're in a vulnerable place when you put yourself out there like musicians do, and actually, that structure institutionalises you," says Justin. "The day-to-day touring and having someone tell you what time to be in a hotel lobby or be onstage – or catch a flight – is comforting, because you're a family."

The singer, tellingly, hasn't really settled in recent years, and now describes himself as a "nomad". His last permanent address was in New York, where Freddie eventually relocated too, but that was, in itself, an exercise in upsetting the apple cart. "I felt so apathetic in London and I wanted to go somewhere I didn't know anyone or anything, the way that I'd arrived in London from Southampton eight years before," he says. "I wanted to feel hungry for the place I was living in, not say no to anything and be able to... I guess I just wanted subject matter, you know." For songs? "No, for life."

Like being 27, being in New York was about saying 'yes', then, but – typically – Justin gives a politician's answer about what that entailed. "I had a group of friends that I suppose facilitated a certain lifestyle, but I'd go to the cinema a lot on my own – that's the ultimate form of escapism," he says.

Outside of the band, Árni and Pete have dipped their toes into production – the bassist recorded an EP for Madrid indie

rockers Hinds, the drummer for local bands in Winchester. Árni, too, has fostered a sideline in cooking, and in May was guest chef at a restaurant in Madrid. Justin still hires himself out as a songwriter-for-hire. It's something else he's fairly cagey about, it having been a matter of some controversy when it emerged he'd done some sessions with members of One Direction in the past. He refuses to say who he's been working with lately, but he doesn't write under a pseudonym and he insists it's not a matter of shame. "I love writing songs," he says. "I'm not very good at much. I'm not a very good musician, some would say I'm not the most enigmatic frontman and I'm not particularly good at producing music, but I could write 100 songs a day, because melody just comes to me and it's very cathartic getting that out. I'm a songwriter. I wake up in the morning and want to write a song, and I'd love to write a Number One for someone." Puffed up, Justin reaches out with his fork and nicks half of Árni's melted-cheese dish. The shy frontman of old is no more.

Freddie Cowan bowls into the dressing room at SOS48 at 10pm, decked out head to toe in blue denim and looking like he's stepped straight out of the band's recent Levi's ad, currently doing the rounds on billboards Stateside. It's not selling out, says Freddie, "because we've been inadvertently advertising for them for years, so we might as well get paid for it". He's had quite an ordeal: he had to be escorted out of the airport, collect his luggage, arrange a new flight, cab it from Gatwick to Stanstead and make his own way from Alicante airport. It was, he says, a "dehumanising" experience.

Out in the festival – the kind of big, concrete-y, gig-in-a-car park event favoured in southern Europe – the band head off to check out Morrissey, today's de facto headliner. They don't seem particularly impressed, but neither do the locals when Moz relishes the line "There's no mercy in Murcia" in 'The Bullfighter Dies'. Árni heads off to check out The Parrots, a band from Madrid, as the rest

filter back to the dressing room. At 11.50, Pete's working his way through a bag of crisps, Freddie's strolling around strumming an acoustic guitar and Justin is idly scrolling through listings of motorbikes for sale on his laptop. This, he's decided, will be his birthday present to himself, a very premature midlife crisis or a very late quarter-life one.

We talk about how awkward it feels receiving birthday presents in front of people mere moments before the lights go off and there's a cake, candles and the 'Happy Birthday' song. Freddie presents his friend with a pair of homoerotically fierce-looking black leather biking boots. Time to buy the

"I think I'm too clever to say anything interesting"

JUSTIN YOUNG

bike, then. "I'm 28," Justin says, blankly, after the excitement, realising he's too late to join the 27 club. "I didn't die."

With Freddie finally present, it's out into the courtyard for a full-band photoshoot. There's an audience: fans gather on the balconies, take their own pictures and holler sweet nothings at Justin. It is, you suspect, not something the frontman finds easy to rationalise, even if he says he doesn't mind posing in front of an audience any more. All day, the band have been taking photos for Instagram, but very few have gone online. 'Handsome' tackles selfie culture and self-obsession head on: "Well, I got so down I held the world to ransom/Lonely, bored and bad, thank God I'm handsome/Arresting, prepossessing and disarming/Oh, what a stroke of luck that I am charming". It's tongue-in-cheek, but as ever with Justin, you wonder if there's a grain of truth there. He says, "Don't you think there's something quite poetic about someone who two years ago sang about not being a teenage icon but can now address God and thank him for making him such a fine specimen?"

Justin says he often composes a tweet or Instagram post, then changes his mind and deletes it. "Sometimes I think I'm too clever to say anything interesting," he says. "I don't

have that abandon, in the way that someone like Liam [Gallagher] doesn't worry about what he says." Oversharing and social media is a characteristic of his generation that the singer seems to struggle with. "I think the best thing about the internet is it's levelled the playing field and everyone has a voice," he says. "But that's also the worst thing about it. All these people writing comments under news stories on NME.COM are the kind of people who were writing in to *Points Of View* 20 years ago. It's a victimless crime – they can say what they want and there's no recourse. Most people probably shouldn't have a voice." I tell him that sounds a bit totalitarian. "Well, I'm happy with that," he says. "Bit of clickbait for you."

An hour later, the band assemble behind the stage, each a bundle of nervous energy. They've drawn a bigger crowd than Morrissey, and their set is a pacy, fat-free romp through highlights of three albums. They've saved 'If You Wanna' for last, because it's been used on a heavily rotated commercial for well-loved Spanish beer Estrella Damm and has raised their profile in the country. The crowd goes bonkers for all three minutes of it.

"It feels like we're a one-hit wonder over here now," says Justin after the show. "But that's OK." Justin's ambition for The Vaccines could probably be best described as grandiose tempered with a dose of realism. Earlier he told me, matter-of-factly, "The Vaccines are not The Rolling Stones. We're not going to be popular for 50 years – that's just not going to happen. That doesn't scare me; I just want to make sure that we all put everything we can into it while we can, because I do still believe that the better you are, the bigger you become. Not just by fucking trying harder, but by being open to everything, open to each other, open when you're making music."

Some cynics have noted that 'Dream Lover' bears some tonal resemblance to Arctic Monkeys' 'Do I Wanna Know?' thanks to its prowling riff and lascivious feel, a comparison that the band brush off as "lazy". Says Justin: "Honest answer, we definitely had a conversation at one point where we said, 'Do you think anyone's going to make this lazy comparison, because this is a four/five-note riff over this slow-burning groove and we're both British rock bands. Both producers said no and we never spoke about it again.' But Justin does freely admit to coveting the success enjoyed by Alex Turner and co. "I look at a band like Arctic Monkeys and think, 'I want to be as big as them', but I also look at Muse and Coldplay and Mumford & Sons and U2 and The Rolling Stones and fucking Imagine Dragons and think, 'I want to be as big as them, too,'" he says.

It's big talk that 'English Graffiti' might deliver on. Even if it doesn't, there's a mental stumbling block that's been pulled away for this cautious young band, a straightjacket that's been removed. The Vaccines may have used the title 'Come Of Age' too early. ■

Young at art

Now and then, Justin Young moonlights as a songwriter for other acts. Here are the ones we know about...

One Direction

Though Justin's been careful not to name the track he wrote with 1D, he's claimed their sessions were a great success and that the band were "natural writers". "People who don't understand why I'd want to write with One Direction are small-minded and tribal," he spat back at critics of his move. "Someone asked

me if we were selling out and I thought, 'How have I gone back on my word?' At no point have we professed to be indie."

Caitlin Rose

Nashville country singer Caitlin Rose wrote twinkling smooch pop beauty 'Gemini Moon' with Justin in New York in 2013.

Katie Melua

Little is known of the track 'The Art Of Persistence', which Justin wrote with jazz/blues chanteuse Katie Melua (below) but is yet to see the light of day.



SPIKE ISLAND

MERSEY PA



In the 25 years since The Stone Roses' gathering-of-the-tribes gig at Spike Island, it has become the stuff of legend. Barry Nicolson speaks to organisers, artists and attendees – including DJ Paul Oakenfold, actress Maxine Peake, author Jon Ronson and promoter Phil Jones – to find out what really happened

RADISE

On a grey Thursday morning in January 1990, three men stood on a man-made island in the Mersey estuary and decided that this was as good a place as any to make history. For the last few months, they'd been scouting locations for a massive outdoor gig by The

Stone Roses, visiting quarries, speedway tracks and caravan parks around the UK, but none of them, until now, had seemed quite right for what they had in mind. "It was Gareth [Evans, Stone Roses manager] who came up with the idea of Spike Island," remembers concert promoter Phil Jones. "It was near where he lived and they'd had events on there in years gone by, so myself, Gareth and Roger Barratt, who ran a company called Star Hire and who'd already agreed to do the staging, went out there, took a look around and said, 'Yeah, we can do this here.' The council were there, we'd already worked out what the capacity would be and we all shook hands on it that afternoon."

For a band who once professed their desire to play a gig on the moon, a reclaimed toxic-waste dump seemed an unlikely staging post, but that was always part of Spike Island's appeal. The Stone Roses could have had their pick of venues – such as their popularity at the dawn of the '90s, even Knebworth, where Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones had played, wouldn't have been out of the question – but they had no interest in following in the footsteps of others. As Ian Brown told *NME* in 2010, "We wanted to do something outside the rock'n'roll norm and do it in a venue which had never been used for that sort of thing before. This was back in the days of raves, remember. We started out doing warehouse parties and we still had that mentality where we wanted to play different venues. We wanted to play places that weren't on the circuit."

Spike Island certainly wasn't that, but while Heaton Park, scene of 2012's Manchester reunion shows, was bigger and the band members would probably tell you Glasgow Green, where they played a month later, was better, Spike Island was to be the Roses' defining statement, a celebration of not only their own success, but of an entire youth culture. "It was a gathering of the clans," Mani later told *NME*. "We were always confident that if we just turned up, people would come. That was always the way it was with The Stone Roses. We knew what we'd started, we knew the reactions we were getting all around the country, and we just wanted to get everyone together."

At that time, The Stone Roses were a bridge between the past and the future, between '60s psychedelia and the burgeoning acid house scene. They had arrived at the fag end of Thatcherism, the vanguard of a new sound, a new style and, in ecstasy, a new drug. Ian Brown spoke of killing the Queen and becoming bigger than The Beatles, and for a brief moment both seemed within the realms of possibility. "History in the making was how it felt at the time," remembers Andy Fyfe, who reported from Spike Island for *NME*. "It had been hyped up for months before; endlessly emphasised that this was the defining moment of a generation – when rock meets rave, the point at which the music world was going to explode in one big group hug." ➔

WE BANG THE DRUM

How the event unfolded in the pages of *NME*

► January 20

The rumour mill cranks into gear as manager Gareth Evans places an ad in the *Widnes Weekly News* stating he's made an application for an entertainment licence for the site.

APPLICATION FOR ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE TO HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
Spike Island, Widnes, Cheshire.
Notice is hereby given that I, Gareth Ian Bromley Evans have applied on the 21st December 1989 to the Halton Borough Council for an Entertainment Licence in respect of the above-named premises, under

Roses eye Widnes

WIDNES looks to be the favourite bet to host the next big STONE ROSES gig, as exclusively revealed by *NME* in our Christmas issue.

Recent rumours appear to have been confirmed this week by Roses' manager Gareth Evans applying for an entertainment licence for a plot of ground near Cheshire town.

It is believed to

STONE ROSES CONFIRM SPIKE ISLAND RAVE AND NEW SINGLE

► March 3

The Roses officially announce the show alongside a new single 'One Love'. *Melody Maker* reports, "The gig has been off and on for the last eight weeks as the promoters and band argued with the local council and a strong anti-concert lobby from local residents."

► March 17

Amid controversy over the band's arrest for vandalising their former record label's office, tickets go on sale for the May 27 show at Spike Island. Priced £14, they're sold largely by mail order.

THE STONE ROSES
SPIKE ISLAND
SUNDAY 27th MAY
WIDNES CHESHIRE
£14.00
TICKETS ON SALE ON MAY 27

NME
STONE FREE?
charts and in the dock

MAN CITY! Roses bloom in June

THE STONE ROSES have reportedly pencilled in two shows at London's Brixton Academy in June. The shows, which have been provisionally booked, would be while, the band have confirmed ticket details for their Spike Island gig at Widnes, Cheshire on Bank Holiday Sunday 10th June, priced £13, plus 50p booking fee. Tickets on sale from 10th June, Cheshire SK12



Roses play (no bul

► May 12

Having turned down huge festival shows in France and Spain, the band pencil in a 10,000-capacity tent gig on Glasgow Green on June 9. Fans are starting to worry that their Spike Island tickets haven't arrived, but a spokesperson says, "They're not sending out any tickets until two weeks before the gig because they don't want anyone trying to forge them. It's not quite sold out, so anyone who has sent money in will get a ticket."

THE STONE ROSES, having turned down an appearance at a F... (see News last week), are now ready to play a 60... air show in Glasgow – and a date in Belfast. ... previously site of gigs by the likes of WET WET W... is usually home to scores of football pitches for ... day soccer leagues. ... Belfast gig will happen at Maysfield Leisure centre... person for the group confirmed: "They are planning... and are just waiting to finalise them."

and if he went through the paperwork, he'd see that Gareth complied with everything. There's no blame to be apportioned, and certainly not on Gareth – if anything, if it was Widnes Council. D'you think Mani went wandering around the site to find out how many toilets there were? He arrived in a vehicle, went backstage, did the gig and went home again. He had no idea about the number of toilets."

As May 27 drew nearer, anticipation reached fever pitch. The Roses hadn't played live for six months, and no-one could be sure when they would again, because a criminal damage case brought against the band by their former label boss (they'd daubed his office, cars and girlfriend in paint as retaliation for a 'Sally Cinnamon' video he'd commissioned against their wishes) meant the threat of prison was hanging over their heads. Much to their relief, they eventually escaped with a fine. Meanwhile, a short warm-up tour of Scandinavia hadn't gone according to plan, and the press conference held the day before the gig bordered on calamitous: BBC and ITV news crews declined to cover the event when Gareth Evans tried to charge them for access, and the surly and uncommunicative band were accused by one journalist of "treating these people like fucking shit".

When the band arrived onsite – not in a helicopter, as has been reported, but in a rented minivan – they were unimpressed by the heavy-handedness of the security and the apparent lack of facilities. "The organisation was shambolic," Ian Brown told *NME* in 2010. "The PA wasn't big enough for a start, and certain things were going on that we didn't know about. The management were taking people's sandwiches off them at the gate to force them to buy five-quid burgers when they got in. Some kid got impaled. He broke out of jail, tried to jump the railings and ended up leaving his bollocks on top of them. We were still finding out about this stuff two, three years later."

"Our management really fucked up," agreed Mani. "There were security guards taking booze off people, there was a lot of overcharging for food and drink, and there wasn't enough facilities onsite. There were a lot of aspects of Spike Island that were really badly thought out, but none of that is the band's job."

Phil Jones, however, disputes this version of events. "What you have to remember is that Mani doesn't like Gareth, and he also has a very limited idea of how these things work. We provided exactly what the council told us we had to,

Can I get to Widnes?

James Brown previews the Roses' Spike Island bash



SLIDE THROUGH the bustling town of Widnes on the side of the Mersey Estuary and the one-way system eventually point you towards the Runcorn Bridge. On the north side of the estuary, off the Waterloo Road, almost beneath the shadow of the huge iron bridge, is Spike Island. It is not, as might have been expected, a barren island where the only access is an old dirt track and a rusty ferryman. But a well-known local beauty spot, albeit in the middle of an industrial estate.

You sort of fear for Widnes and Spike Island. It's all so tranquil, can it be ready to receive hordes of teens in T-shirts and flares? Out Spike Island way, only the boat owners and anglers wear fishing hats.

By its two residents Phil Jones and Chris and

► May 26

NME's James Brown visits Spike Island ahead of the gig and finds "not, as might have been expected, a barren island where the only access is an old dirt track and a rusty ferryman, but a well-known local beauty spot, albeit in the middle of an industrial estate. It's all so tranquil, can it be ready to receive hordes of teens in T-shirts and flares?" Reporting that some locals object to the "pop concert", police are warning ticketless fans not to try to row over in a rubber dinghy, and a local councillor has tried to have the show banned.

neap tide on a full moon, which is the highest tide you can get. It never came close in the end, but that was the worst moment."

After a supporting bill that included DJs Dave Haslam, Paul Oakenfold and Frankie Bones, as well as sets from a Zimbabwean drum orchestra and reggae artist Gary Clail, the band took to the stage shortly after 9pm, with Brown urging the crowd to "do it now, do it now", and 'I Wanna Be Adored' rumbled into life. As 30,000 people suddenly rose in unison, a cloud of red dust formed in front of the stage, triggering asthma attacks among some members of the crowd. Others simply got caught up in the moment – *Shameless* actress and Eccentric Research Council member Maxine Peake, who was 15 at the time, remembers "being completely overwhelmed when they came on. I started to get hysterical, and I couldn't breathe. When the woman behind me asked if I was alright, I had to pretend to have asthma because I was so embarrassed. It was ridiculous."

A camera crew from Central Music TV were present, but at the last minute the band instructed them to stand down. The



► May 26

NME's Roger Morton attends a tense pre-gig press conference (right) at Manchester's Piccadilly Hotel, the day before the main event. "You'll never see us doing a full-scale tour," says Ian Brown, adding that his ambitions are to "change the world, end poverty, make everybody 'appy". When it's claimed they're being commercialised, Mani points at his plain T-shirt and says, "Yeah, mate, somebody made me wear this and I didn't want to... What the fuck are you on about?"



"We were always confident that if we just turned up, people would come. That was always the way it was with The Stone Roses"

MANI

only footage that exists of the gig was shot on a fan's camcorder, which is one of the reasons why no-one who was there seems able to agree on whether the performance was second rate or sublime. *NME*'s Andy Fyfe remembers them playing "abysmally. Colleagues who went to the soundcheck the day before said it was amazing, electrifying, they were on top form, but from what I recall, they had no funk to them at all. There was a certain weight of expectation that they didn't live up to." For author Jon Ronson, however, "Even though the sound was blowing all over the place, it was impossible not to be moved by it. When Brown came out brandishing an inflatable globe [during the show], it was everything it was supposed to be – the world in their hands. When you saw it, you absolutely felt like you were a part of something, at the centre of that place and time."

"Take it from me, people could hear the gig fine," insists Phil Jones. "There were 30,000 people there, and 29,990 of them had a whale of a time. Whenever I read about Spike Island, it's always negative. Show me firm evidence that the sound wasn't good. And the lights were the best fucking lights I'd ever seen. What we had on that stage was state of the art. We didn't scrimp on the PA, either, but the council wouldn't allow it to go above a certain decibel level."

Ninety minutes later, it was all over. "I touched base with the band in their dressing room afterwards – I think that everyone involved felt a sense of triumph that day," says Paul Oakenfold. "They were great musicians with a great sound who came along at the perfect time – and sometimes

I wanna be Adolfed!

THE STONE ROSES have scrapped the cover artwork for their new single 'One Love' after spotting the suggestion of a swastika in John Squire's sleeve.

June 2

The unveiling of the new artwork for 'One Love' formed part of an abstract painting by the band. It was revealed that a £100,000 deal to have Spike Island the band discovering to their televised fell through at the last minute when talks between Central Music TV officials and the Roses broke down.



Stone Roses' 'island of sanity'

June 9

A teenager who suffered a heart attack during a crowd crush at the show is reported to be "comfortable". In total, 27 people were hospitalised after the gig, including one who was impaled by the testicles while climbing the perimeter fence. Police report only four arrests, three of which were drug-related. "It could have been a madhouse," says a local councillor, "but in fact it was an island of sanity."



timing is the most important part of it. By the time they got to Spike Island, there was a whole movement they were at the forefront of: you had what was going on in the clubs in London, and what was going on up north with bands like the Roses and Happy Mondays. The whole country wanted a change, and the Roses captured that at Spike Island."

For Mani, however, "It all felt a bit anticlimactic. I wasn't overly happy with the way it had been thrown together, and there were a few incidents that pissed me off. We went back to our manager's nightclub in Manchester after the show, and the snide cunt tried to charge us for a can of lager. After we'd made him that much fucking money." The Stone Roses themselves made no money from the gig, but they made something more elusive: history. In the years since, outdoor shows on that scale have become commonplace – Oasis at Knebworth, Blur at Hyde Park, even the Roses themselves at Heaton Park – but none loom so large in the collective consciousness as Spike Island. It was a real moment in time; the beginning of a long hot summer that saw England nearly go all the way in the World Cup, the peak of a period when Manchester and the north-west felt like the centre of the universe.

"It really felt like an 'us versus the world' moment, because of the amateurism of the organisation as much as despite it," says Jon Ronson. "It didn't feel to me like the start of something as the end of it – the ideal place to bring down the curtain on what it had been. The record had been out for a year by then, and because the Roses didn't release another record for so many years afterwards, it framed perfectly the summit of what they'd become and what they meant to people." A quarter of a century on, it's a summit few bands have ever come close to scaling. ■

June 9

NME's review is published. Roger Morton speaks of "15,000 day trippers" being "spellbound and kinetically charged up. Further back, though, another 13,000 are having to make a gallant leap of the imagination to feel transported by the somewhat subdued volume level." In *Melody Maker*, reviewer Everett True declares the event "a failure. The sound was atrocious, the tuning off-key, the band and crowd strangely subdued."

THEIR SATANIC MAD-JESTERS



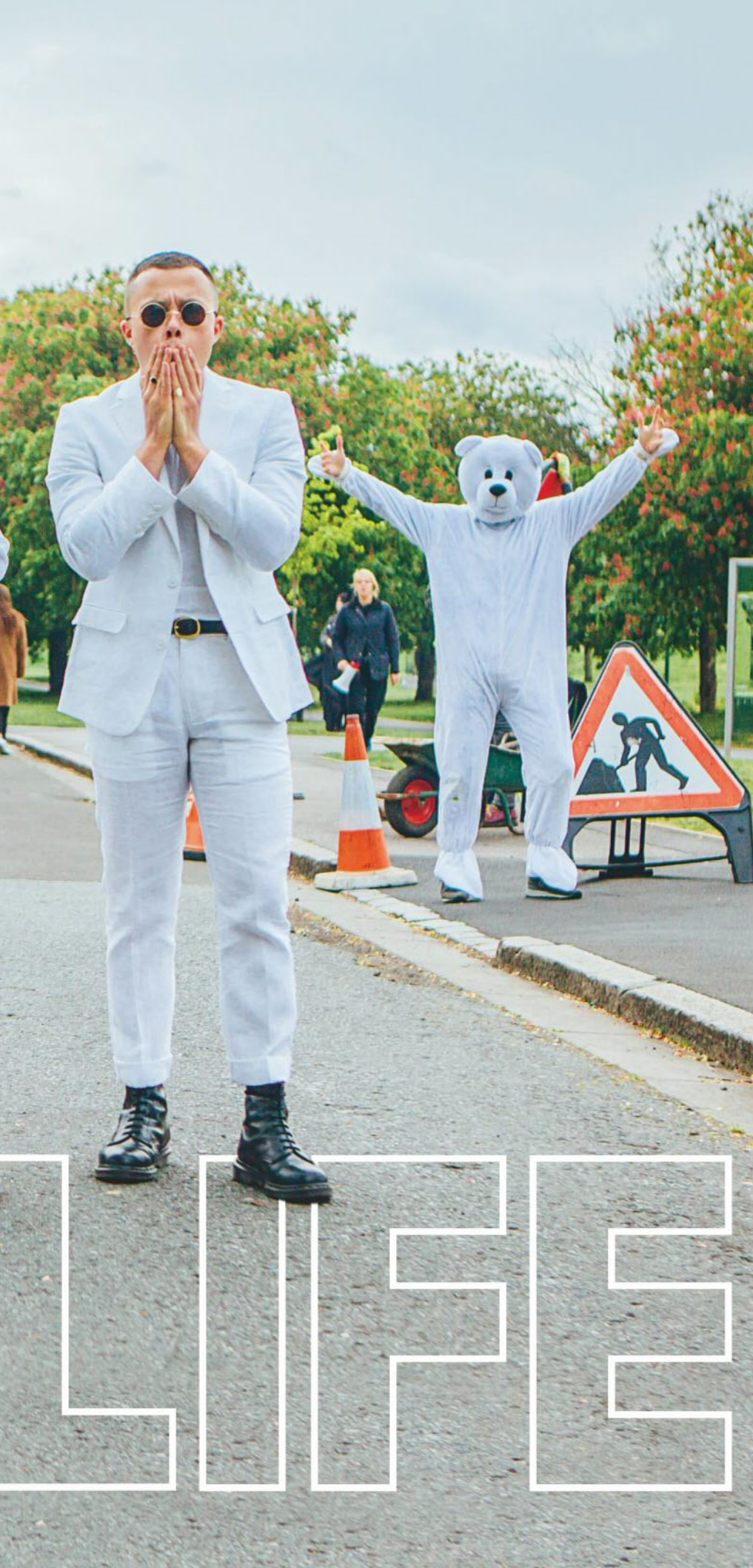
Laurie Vincent and
(right) Isaac Holman
shooting the 'Cheer Up
London' video in Burgess
Park, south London



Slaves' new video shoot involves polar bears, ice lollies and a genuine EastEnders unleashed in London's green spaces. It's just the next part of their mission to bring fun, inspiration and the unexpected to indieland, they tell Ben Homewood

PHOTOS: ANDY FORD

PARK



Slaves guitarist Laurie Vincent is standing over a man wearing a zip-up polar bear costume. “Get down, I wanna ride you!” he yells, pushing the man onto all fours. Next to him, with his arm round another polar bear, is the band’s singer and drummer, Isaac Holman, who’s dressed as a businessman in a suit and thick-rimmed glasses. Nearby, leaning on an ice cream van with a carrier bag of frozen lollies in his hand, is actor and comedian Shaun Williamson, who played Barry Evans in *EastEnders* and appeared in Ricky Gervais’ *Extras*.

We’re in south London’s Burgess Park, at the video shoot for Slaves’ latest single, ‘Cheer Up London’, and the rowdy Kent duo are in high spirits. The riotous humour in evidence in this bear-infested scene seems to infect everything they do. Two fluffy white dogs peer out from the neon-pink sleeve of ‘Are You Satisfied?’, which features up-for-it, motivational blasts of hardcore- and grime-inspired noise like ‘Do Something’ and ‘Feed The Mantaray’. Their gigs – where Isaac, topless and Popeye-like, screams and attacks his stand-up drumkit while Laurie, a heavily tattooed skinhead, pogos and hacks at his guitar – are packed with as much witty repartee as they are aggressive riffs and drumbeats. In interviews, they’re liable to fabricate stories about meeting *EastEnders* character Sonia Jackson at a service station. Then there’s the song itself, inspired by the times Isaac (who writes all Slaves’ lyrics) chose to walk to the east London studio where they spent last winter recording debut album ‘Are You Satisfied?’ rather than use public transport. “I just didn’t fancy it – there were a lot of sad faces,” he says.

And so, today, they’ve closed off a section of the park and filled it with balloons, ice cream and a busload of their mates. The video’s slapstick plot – Isaac and Laurie dash round London trying to cheer people up – mirrors the song’s lyrics, which aim to gee up those sourfaced commuters downtrodden by modern life (“*Put another 0 in your paycheck/Are you done digging your grave yet?/You’re dead already*”).

It’s a step up from their last promo, February’s lo-fi ‘Feed The Mantaray’, which saw them driving a red Mini through a cartoon seascape while being chased by the titular fish. Shaun Williamson is involved because they used to put pictures of Barry Evans on their merch and Isaac’s mum still drinks her tea from a mug emblazoned with his face. “Shaun’s from Maidstone,” Laurie explains. “We used to live 10 minutes from each other, so he’s in the video. Kent represent! He does have to leave at four o’clock, though – he’s in a musical in Dartford.” For Slaves, who formed in Tunbridge Wells and slogged between pub gigs in a Vauxhall Astra for two years before signing their deal in March 2014, this video – complete with star guest – is a big-budget endeavour.

“The Whole of ‘Are You Satisfied?’ is pretty much social documentation,” Isaac explains ➔

later over lunch. And tracks such as "The Hunter" deliver lines like "He was starving, his children were crying to be fed/And now they're falling and dying, but at least you are ahead", in the conversational style of a friendly bloke down the pub.

But rather than just offering kitchen-sink grimness, Slaves want to inspire others. "There's a real feeling that everyone is hard done by and suppressed," says Laurie, "but what we found when we started this band is that we'd made our dreams come true." The guitarist drums a ringed finger. "I wish there was more inspiration – so many people say 'I don't know what to do' or 'I can't do this', but somebody *has* to do it. In our generation there's lots of negativity towards people being creative. When I was growing up, no-one ever said 'You can do it'. Our band says you can."

After they formed the band when a 17-year-old Laurie approached Isaac after a gig by the drummer's old band Bareface, Laurie dropped out of his illustration degree and worked in a milkshake shop ("I figured if I wanna draw I'll do it anyway"), while Isaac worked in a care home, aiming to become a nurse if the music stuff didn't work out ("I still miss that work").

That hard work along their journey gives them their motivational spirit, while the aggression that fuels their songs stems from a desire to do things differently. From their varied sound – a mix of hardcore noise, pop-rock choruses, rudimentary rhythms and rapid-fire vocals from Isaac, who rapped in his old band – to their bovver-boy aesthetic, Slaves seek to offer an alternative to the "mainstream indie" they grew up with. "I don't wanna be in any band apart from Slaves. Changing the format of what being a musician is, that's what excites me," Laurie says. We're alone at the table – Isaac has momentarily gone in search of a new wooden fork after snapping his first one. "There is a format," Laurie continues. "If you get really deep, everyone eats three meals a day, gets up for school at this time, goes there until they're a certain age... These set ways extend to music, four people in a band and that. I feel like we're right at the end of being in that world."

For Laurie, being signed to Virgin – who landed the Sex Pistols in 1977 – is the seemingly unlikely but perfect vehicle to be the change they want to see. "Labels make dreams come true; doing it yourself is fucking sick, but we need the traditional support method. Our idea is to make new things and tie them in with tradition." He has a message for anyone who questions Slaves signing to a major, too. "People



Shaun 'Barry from EastEnders' Williamson joins the lads on set

say 'fuck majors'. Do they know why they're saying that? It can be a good thing. Virgin have other good singers and bands and they struggle 'cos they can't get the ideas out of them, but with us, we're telling them what we want and making it happen."

The Sex Pistols parallel is interesting. At the end of album closer 'Sugar Coated Bitter Truth', Isaac repeatedly bellows "Do you ever feel you're being cheated", echoing John Lydon's snarled goodbye at the end of the last Sex Pistols gig in San Francisco on January 14, 1978. But Laurie scoffs at the comparison. Slaves are tired of being called punks – they don't share the nihilistic approach of the Pistols or Oi! bands like The Business that followed in the 1980s – and label themselves "primal". "I wanna write my own blueprint. I wanna stick out like a sore thumb, so you can look back and say 'Slaves did it like this'. That's far more attractive than copying something that's already happened. You've got to set your mission, haven't you?"

Three days after we meet, Slaves post a 400-word statement of that mission on Facebook. It is in response to allegations that their name is racially insensitive, given its historical context and their own white backgrounds. Its tone is notably serious: "Our name and music is aimed at being a slave to day-to-day life and routine, it is a metaphorical use of the word."

Scrutiny of their name intensified as 2014 rolled into 2015, and their profile increased rapidly thanks to radio play for singles 'Hey' and 'The Hunter' plus opening slots on Jamie T's autumn tour and February's NME Awards Tour with Austin, Texas. In March, US magazine *The Fader* ran an article headlined "Why Would A Band Of White Dudes Name Themselves Slaves?", which – while making only fleeting mention of the Californian pop-metal band also called Slaves – tagged Isaac and Laurie as "arguably the most controversial" of "bands whose names provoke a reaction". It also included links to abusive tweets aimed at Slaves and quotes from Laurie, who said: "We just liked the word. We weren't trying to provoke."



Forty-eight hours after the statement went out, we're sitting backstage at London's Scala, where Slaves are about to play the first of two sold-out shows. Their girlfriends, a few bottles of champagne and Isaac's iron ("Course he's got one," says Laurie) are next door. Bar the occasional sound of a drum rattling through from the stage, it's quiet. We sit on a squeaky leather sofa and get straight to the controversy. "We're not defending it, we're explaining it. We spent ages wording [the statement] and I feel we've made people a lot more comfortable by doing it," Laurie begins.

Slaves don't do "swearing at or insulting anyone" and are frustrated their fans are disparaging others to defend them. Neither member can believe the names they're being called, but they'd still like to meet the naysayers. "They're hate-filled before they've even said anything, calling you a prick or a white middle-class dickhead. Wow, we haven't stepped into each other's lives. I would happily invite someone round to see what they say – let's get in a room together, forget the argument and just see if we get on as humans," Laurie says.

Does he think Slaves – who admit their music is aggressive – offering to "get in a room" with their detractors could lead people to think they might leave with a broken leg? Isaac laughs sarcastically but Laurie remains solemn-faced and answers, "No. I think they [the people commenting] are the more aggressive ones."

"PEOPLE SAY, 'I CAN'T DO THIS.' OUR BAND SAYS YOU CAN"

Laurie Vincent



Laurie hangs onto his bandmate during Live At Leeds this month

SLAVE 4 U

Isaac and Laurie on the cornerstones of their relationship...

MUSIC

Laurie: "When we met, Isaac's band had already had 30,000 plays on YouTube. I hadn't even recorded a song in a studio yet."

Isaac: "We didn't have any connection other than the Kent music scene."

Laurie: "I didn't encounter him 'til I was 17, but lots of

people think we're hardcore old friends."

BROTHERHOOD

Isaac: "We became friends when Slaves started. It went from strangers, to acquaintances, to business partners, to brothers, then brothers and business partners."

Laurie: "I think there was best mates before brothers, when you get so close you're not best mates any more 'cos you can hate each other for a day. Even if we

fell out in 20 years we'll still be mates. When we get in a room together, we just lock in. We read each other's minds."

DINNER AND RECORDS

Laurie: "There was a time when I was round yours all the time. Dave his dad was playing records and his mum Sandy was cooking dinner. Sandy said I became like her fourth son for a while."

Isaac: "We've got a similarly deep love for each other."

The band keenly point out that black culture is a heavy influence on them. "Skinheads came from black music and black people," says Laurie, who mixed with Kent's skinhead population during his teens and learned that many adopted the look to "cut the bullshit". "That's why I've got a lot of tattoos and a shaved head; when I didn't, people would shout stuff at me in the street. Now no-one says anything. I avoid aggro. My parents don't like it, but I'm proving there's more to people than looks," he continues.

Isaac acknowledges, though, that the word 'slaves' is a loaded one, as "everything has connotations", but maintains that Slaves' explanation should suffice. Laurie is unhappy with how it came across in *The Fader*. "The journalist was really nice, and agreed with me but then twisted it," he remembers, adding that this interview will be their last on the subject.

"It's been three years. We wouldn't have got this far if it was that wrong. What do you think?" he asks uncertainly, before saying he wants the press to "put their fucking balls in their hand and say, 'We're backing you.'"

One person who's pledged support is Jamie T. When they saw him at a recent rehearsal, the Wimbledon singer was "bouncing around with anger" about the backlash. "I asked if he'd come

out and talk about it if things got really bad," Laurie says. "He was like, 'Fuck yeah. You don't have to tell people anything.'"

For now, Slaves' former touring buddy thinks the band's statement suffices. "Laurie and Isaac have said all that needs to be said on the matter," he says over email. "They speak for themselves, as does their album, which only goes on to further state the relevance of their name in conjunction with their ideas and sound. I for one love this band and so should you."

But while they feel their positivity sets them apart from the indie template ("We're British, we should be like The Smiths and write miserable things"), they do almost seem to relish the fact it's *their* band that's shoving noses out of joint.

"We're showing everyone what 2015 is like and it's fucked up," Isaac says. "It feels like an important time to make a stir – is anyone else gonna do it?" asks Laurie excitedly. "It's almost like we were given this. I believe in another power sometimes. I'd almost like to have been a band without a controversial name like The Strokes and just keep making sick music and inspire people that way, but maybe we were meant to walk this path."

It seems that Slaves see being controversial and rattling cages as an extension of their desire

to be original. Still, it feels at odds with their believable good intentions.

Their music is inspiring people all the same. Isaac and Laurie talk animatedly about "50-year-olds who've said, 'Your band makes me wanna do art again'". "People have told us we've made them restart their bands and believe in themselves; that's why Slaves is important," Laurie says.

Slaves is also incredibly important to the two people in it. When they were working nine-to-five and their friendship was threatened by frustration at not breaking through, Slaves kept them motivated. Laurie strives even harder in tribute to his father, who "went from being a high-flying City bigshot to sitting on the sofa all day every day" after he had a stroke five years ago. "To watch your dad do that is crippling. There's more to us than we put out, and it's frustrating when you get abuse for it, so we're starting to tell people where we came from," he says. Isaac backs him up: "We've got no guard up now."

Their relationship was further damaged while recording their album. Halfway through 2014's festival season, when they were supposed to be writing, Slaves fired their manager. They'd flown to play a festival in Spain with no money, their equipment hadn't arrived and they were booked for another show in France the next day. "I said, 'Get us on a flight, we're not doing the fucking show,'" Laurie recalls. Isaac was anxious about rocking the boat soon after they'd signed their deal, so Laurie issued an ultimatum. "I said to Isaac it was the manager or me, it got so bad."

They went home and wrote the caustic 'Do Something' ("If you're not moving/DO something!"), before starting a recording process during which Laurie shared his girlfriend's single bed at her parents' house and Isaac was "poncing" at his girlfriend's house share. "We were both in pretty unstable positions. I used to sit in the studio and draw the same man every day – he had red lipstick and was bald on top," says Isaac, who became so anxious he lost patches of his hair and broke out in spots. "I was in a bad way, I didn't wanna get out of bed," he adds. Laurie, meanwhile, was at his throat, trying to coerce him into the studio. Producer Jolyon Thomas (SCUM, British Sea Power) arranged the timetable so they'd arrive and leave separately. "We stopped talking for a few weeks, but we got it done," Laurie says.

Onstage a few hours later, the introspection that choked their dressing room during our earlier conversation evaporates. Slaves dive repeatedly into their delirious pit of moshing fans. Isaac's eyes roll back in his head as he bawls "CHEERS!" and thwacks his cymbals at the end of an encore of early track 'Beauty Quest'. Out in front of him, in a white boiler suit with 'MAN OF KENT' scrawled on the back, an ecstatic Laurie walks on the upturned hands of the crowd. As the gig ends, he's screaming, his fists are clenched and the tattoo of an eagle that covers his chest glows red in the lights. They look, frankly, like maniacs, determined to stamp their inspirational racket on all before them. ■

Diva

40

Shamir's hip-hop-tinged soul-pop and extrovert persona have made him cool faster than you can lose a million in his hometown. But, he tells Eve Barlow, it's Las Vegas' suburbs that still shape him

PHOTOS: BRINSON + BANKS

Shamir on the outskirts of Las Vegas, April 21, 2015

Las Vegas

High. "The road ends with the mountains," he chirps. "The prisons are behind them." Shamir would stare at the picturesque scene from inside his classroom. "It's beautiful and it's a hellhole. Let's be real," he laughs.

Only two summers ago, Shamir was still messing about with a solo project on his drum machine, figuring out how to make music that resembled influences such as Zola Jesus and Robyn. "My plan was to release a tape, move to Arkansas, live on a farm and make music like Bon Iver." His rural dreams were thwarted by producer Nick Sylvester at Godmode. "One day, my job texted me: 'Are you coming in?' I said, 'Nope, tell the manager to suck my ass, I'm flying to New York.' Nick

for singles 'Call It Off' and 'On The Regular'. "I prefer to stay in if I have a choice," he says. "I lose energy being around people. I know that sounds horrible." Throughout his life, people have forced him to be a poster-child for *something*. He never went to prom or graduation, despite being nominated Prom King. "It was flattering but I didn't wanna be popular. I tried *really* hard to be an outsider. People liked me for some reason." His efforts to deflect friends backfired when he named his punk band Anorexia and wound up counselling people with eating disorders. "They thought

our Facebook was the official anorexia support group," he says. "They listened to the music, though. It was a win-win!"

His latest unwelcome crown is as a spokesman for androgyny. He's confused by the notion that he's had a difficult upbringing or a troubled school experience. "I'm naturally androgynous. I don't wear makeup or skirts." He looks down at his chipped black talons. "Yeah, my nails are *did* but they're fucked-up. When I look in the mirror I see a boy. People say I push boundaries. I'm not going out of my way to do that." Today he gets antsy having to act 'bubbly' to camera. "Anybody who tries to confine me won't be successful," he pouts. "Photographers always want Happy Shamir, but that's just one side of Shamir. Right now I'm Chill Shamir."

Even Chill Shamir, though, is still shocked he shares a roster with Adele and Vampire Weekend. He recently brought back an FKA Twigs vinyl from London for the 'bro pad', but Andrew and

River didn't get it. "I told them I'm labelmates with Jack White. They were like, 'We don't care unless you're on [Jack's label] Third Man.' That's beautiful. It makes me feel human." And though it was the limitations of Northtown that shaped 'Ratchet', now that he's begun his escape, Shamir is already plotting a return to his hometown.

"I want to establish my own DIY space here in Northtown," he says. "All ages and artistic, like the places in New York... I don't wanna become an untouchable demigod. I'm just, 'Hi, I'm Shamir. I'm gonna sing, hug you, then you can buy my album,'" he says. "Cos I am hungry." ■



"Anyone who tries to confine me will not be successful"

[Sylvester] listened to the demos and said, 'Oh, you must like a lot of house music?' I was like, 'What's that?' All I knew was the EDM from the Strip and I was *not* down." Within a year he was interning at and signed to label XL, meeting cultured people he could finally geek out with about music, *Girls* and philosophy.

The title 'Ratchet' is slang for 'diva'. Its release has been manic: last week he was in five countries. It's left him understandably irritable. At the shoot, he stares down the lens like Grace Jones, stating, "*This* is my resting bitch face."

Yet the real Shamir is the opposite of the extrovert he channels in cartoonish videos

The roots of Shamir

Some of the elements you might hear bobbing around in the rising star's mix

Robyn

The Swedish star's irresistible sparse electropop on tracks such as the Knife-produced 'Who's That Girl' are echoed in a more low-key way on 'Ratchet'.

ESG

In the nonchalant Double Dutch chants and spare bang of 'On The Regular', you can hear the Scroggins' sisters much-sampled New York street sound.

Robin S

The one-hit wonder of 'Show Me Love' fame is a classic example of the sort of vibrant '90s chart dance-pop channelled by Shamir (and also Azealia Banks).

LCD Soundsystem

There are cowbells all over Shamir's album, and the influence of James Murphy's witty disco pranksters is strong.

Welcome to the Las Vegas that God passed over," says Shamir. We're in Northtown, a suburb of Sin City that's a world away from the infamous gamblers' paradise of the Las Vegas Strip. It's a place so far on the edge that it's near Area 51, the restricted section of a US Air Force base where – if you believe the conspiracy theorists – the US government keeps its alien invaders. Pocket-sized soul-pop-hip-hop singer Shamir Bailey was born in Northtown, fittingly to a teenage hippy mother who believed she was an alien in a past life.

Touted as the blueprint for the super-modern star – the effortlessly androgynous end-point of 40 years of dance-pop – the 20-year-old's highly anticipated debut is a 10-track seedy-disco trip into his hometown's forgotten fringes called 'Ratchet', shaped by the musical and economic constraints Las Vegas places on its young. 'Make A Scene' is an anthem for bored, reckless teens like his roommates, "weird-ass rockers" River and Andrew. "It's about being underage in America," he enthuses. "We're adults, pay taxes, live alone, work, can join the army... but we can't have a drink?" The bass-y house of opener 'Vegas' plays off the Strip's clichés and glamorous lies. 'Call It Off' is about cutting all the negative influences out of life, be they dead-end jobs or bad lovers. Highlight track 'Demon' was written when he was bored working at budget clothes store Ross. "If I'm a demon, baby, you're the beast that made me", he sings, relieved there's salvation in music.

Today, Shamir is bringing the songs to life for us via a guided tour of his local haunts, including the 'bro pad' he shares with River and Andrew when he's not in New York working with indie label Godmode, who snapped him up for the 2014 'Northtown' EP after his bedroom drum-machine pop found its way to them. The house is a box opposite a pig farm surrounded by miles of identical buildings. Inside, it has fairy lights, Jack White posters, empty beer cans and an upturned bicycle that Andrew traded for 10 cigarettes. Then there's the creperie, where he goes to "act European" – chain smoke and drink espressos. It's also where he used to gig, because there was nowhere else to play. "The city government ensures all money goes to the Strip," he says. "We locals are left to our own devices."

After school, Shamir's friends would drive to what they called "the rave cave", up in the mountains. They invited Danish punks Iceage to play there once, but the band backed out because of lack of transport. We visit Shamir's school, down a long road.

"The government give nothing to education either." Shamir guides us along a never-ending road that stops at his former school, Legacy



Reviews

► THE DEFINITIVE VERDICT ■ EDITED BY BEN HOMEWOOD



Muse Drones

Matt Bellamy turns his beady eye to drone warfare on a concept album that takes in pop stomp, glam rock and Elgar



against another five years of Conservative government. But instead Matt Bellamy's eyes are to the skies, squinting at his next obsession: drone warfare.

The 36-year-old's new fascination with the backroom soldiers who "kill by remote control", might mark a frustrating shift away from immediate, tangible issues, but when you take into account Muse's own story arc, it's an unavoidable one. After 'The Resistance' and 2012's 'The 2nd Law' tackled globalised control and

Skimming through the rock stratosphere carrying a riff payload capable of levelling entire districts, Muse drift further off radar. Down on Earth, the stage is set for the uprising they foresaw back on 2009's 'The Resistance' – protest marches are already descending on Whitehall to rally

shrinking natural resources, Muse doing a full-on concept album was as inevitable as a Kanye Glasto backlash. 'Drones', the trio's seventh album, follows the story of a soldier trained to be a brainless killing machine, becoming disillusioned by the blind brutality of battle, rebelling and rising to power himself.

The two pre-release tasters, as usual, were red herrings. 'Dead Inside', considered by some to be an attack on Bellamy's ex Kate Hudson with its quivering cries of "Do you have no soul?/It's like it died years ago", threw back to 'The 2nd Law's' electro-pop bangers 'Madness' and 'Panic Station'. 'Psycho', in which our hero is trained to become "a super drone" by a bawling drill sergeant, apes every glam-rock stomper from Tame Impala's 'Elephant' to Pink Floyd's 'Money' to Muse's own 'Uprising'. But from there, 'Drones' swoops and dives like its navigation system has malfunctioned. 'Mercy' is infectious electro-rock about the "men in

DANNY CLINCH

cloaks" and "puppeteers" at the controls of the world, while 'Reapers' has Bellamy indulging his hair-metal bent alongside android backing vocals.

Once our protagonist has reached peak drone on 'The Handler' – "I have been programmed to obey... I will execute your demands", he parrots over 'Radio Ga Ga' powerchords – and starts fighting back, 'Drones' likewise reaches peak Muse. Wrapped in a sample of a JFK speech decrying shadowy Cold War tactics, 'Defector' is a brilliant slinky pop squealer, while 'Revolt' is among their most creative songs, a two-speed storm built on monumental riffs.

The lack of an indulgent multi-section symphony, like those on 'The Resistance' and 'The 2nd Law', makes 'Drones' the most focused Muse album since 2006's 'Black Holes And Revelations', but the weirdness (obviously) lingers. 'Aftermath' is an after-the-battle singalong in the vein of Rod Stewart's version of 'Sailing' or, oh yes, Dire Straits' 'Brothers In Arms'. 'The Globalist', in which our hero starts his own nuclear state and destroys the planet, is a 10-minute epic taking in chunks of 'Ennio Morricone funeral scene' metal and Elgar's 19th-century 'Enigma Variations: Nimrod'. The title track – do not adjust your NME – is a choral

Insiders

The book exposes several projects and operatives within the US military responsible for developing the technology, including an air force organisation called Big Safari and a Pentagon operator named Snake.

piece based on 16th-century hymnal 'Sanctus And Benedictus', featuring a choir of Matts intoning, "My mother, my father, my sister and my brother, my son and my daughter, killed by drones".

'Drones' trademark Muse themes of brainwashing, warmongering superpowers, suppression of The Truth and the urgent need to fight the hand that bleeds us still resonate in 2015, but obliquely. It's Bellamy's job to prise open deeper socio-political dimensions as much as it is to comment on the times, and Muse's music once more matches his adventurous intrigue. ■ MARK BEAUMONT

THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** June 8 ► **LABEL** Warners/Helium-3 ► **PRODUCERS** Muse, Robert John 'Mutt' Lange ► **LENGTH** 52:49 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Dead Inside ►2. [Drill Sergeant] ►3. Psycho ►4. Mercy ►5. Reapers ►6. The Handler ►7. [JFK] ►8. Defector ►9. Revolt ►10. Aftermath ►11. The Globalist ►12. Drones ► **BEST TRACK** Revolt

MORE ALBUMS

Sharon Van Etten I Don't Want To Let You Down EP Jagjaguwar



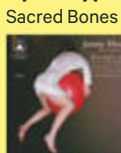
On last year's fourth album 'Are We There', Sharon

Van Etten documented the end of a decade-long relationship with devastating candour. A year on, this new EP shows her wounds are still healing. "It's not my fault, it's just my flaw, it's who I am", she sighs over strolling piano chords on centrepiece 'I Always Fall Apart'. There's more determination in the title track's downbeat Americana twangs, courtesy of The War On Drugs' Adam Granduciel on guitar, and the live rendition of 'Tell Me' is a spirited, though less gripping version of the 2012 demo version. But when icy guitar turns 'Pay My Debts' into one of Van Etten's darkest songs yet, her wounds feel incredibly raw.

■ ROBERT COOKE

8

Jenny Hval Apocalypse, Girl Sacred Bones



Spoken word, avant-garde noise, synthpop and

melodrama collide on this fifth album from Norwegian artist Jenny Hval. On 'Take Care Of Yourself' she confrontationally sings, "Shaving in all the right places/Holding onto your soft dick/Can I do that for you?" 'That Battle Is Over' may appear to be a gentle homage to '70s songwriters (think Joni Mitchell), but its softly droning organ masks grim analysis of a self-centered society, appropriating the optimism of Lennon's 'Happy Xmas (War Is Over)' and turning it on its head: "Feminism's over/Socialism's over/I can consume what I want now". 'Apocalypse, Girl', then: serene on the surface but disturbed deep down. ■ HAYLEY AVRON

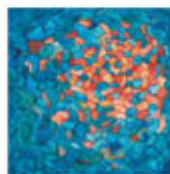
7



A Dream Outside

The north Londoners' debut is an oddly soothing blend of dark romance and gentle psychedelia

In March last year, Gengahr emerged from north London with breakthrough demo 'Fill My Gums With Blood', a vampiric love song on which singer Felix Bushe implored, "Let me in/So I can drink from you". The quartet's debut album sounds just as unsettling. "I've changed for the better now there's metal in my heart", sings Bushe in delicate falsetto on the iridescent 'Heroine', like some kind of lovelorn Iron Man. 'Lonely As A Shark', meanwhile, has him "lonely as a shark in a dark room, counting away" over rippling guitars, and the woozy 'She's A Witch' wonders "Maybe she'll sink, maybe she'll fly/I caught a witch that cries all the time". Throughout these 11 gently psychedelic tracks, John Victor weaves an aura of calm via unconventional



but pretty guitar patterns that counterbalance Bushe's romantic tribulations. The result is a record that cloaks Gengahr's inherent weirdness in peaceful melodies you'll want to wallow in for hours. ■ RHIAN DALY

8

THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** June 15 ► **LABEL** Transgressive ► **PRODUCER** Gengahr, James Bragg ► **LENGTH** 36:00 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Dizzy Ghosts ►2. She's A Witch ►3. Heroine ►4. Bathed In Light ►5. Where I Lie ►6. Dark Star ►7. Embers ►8. Powder ►9. Fill My Gums With Blood ►10. Lonely As A Shark ►11. Trampoline ► **BEST TRACK** Heroine

J Fernandez Many Levels Of Laughter Joyful Noise



Recorded above a stained-glass window workshop on salvaged gear, this debut album has the found-sound rawness you'd expect, but the overall feel is of lush psychedelia. J Fernandez's background – the son of Filipino immigrant parents, raised in Arkansas, now

based in Chicago – is reflected in songs that blend The Phantom Band, Television and David Holmes ('Between The Channels'), dive into improv jazz ('Filled With Joy') and echo with '60s baroque pop ('Holy Hesitation'). Fernandez is a warm presence, murmuring his stream-of-consciousness lyrics on mini-masterpieces that promise a sunny future.

■ MATTHEW HORTON

8

Reviews

No Joy More Faithful

Mexican Summer



The process of making the third No Joy album gives the

impression that it was a labour of love and intensity. The Montreal dreampop duo decamped to studios in Brooklyn and Costa Rica, switched off from the outside world and now talk of the "maturing process" and suchlike. It is a step up, complexity-wise, from its predecessor, 2013's 'Wait For Pleasure': swooning, multi-layered marriages of blissed-out bombast outnumber bursts of punky fuzz-indie, although 'Corpo Daemon' is a tasty example of the latter. For all the personal envelope-pushing taking place here though, 'More Faithful' still essentially sounds like a fair-to-middling early '90s shoegaze album.

■ NOEL GARDNER

6

Palace Chase The Light EP

Beatnik Creative/Fiction



Palace's emotive indie-soul sound, built on reverb-

laden guitars and jittery vocals, is similar to that of Manc band Wu Lyf. Sadly though, the wishy-washy choruses and limp compositions on this new five-song EP – the follow-up to last year's impressive 'Lost In The Night' EP – fail to provide enough reason to care about their pale and wounded outpourings. The London foursome break from the torpor on standout track 'Kiloran' as frontman Leo Wyndham sings, "Whatever lie, bleeding me dry" with a quivering vocal that approaches Jeff Buckley intensity. Elsewhere, guitarist Rupert Turner does his best to elevate 'Settle Down' with a classy solo, but it can't save an ultimately forgettable listen.

■ DAVID RENSHAW

5

Jamie xx In Colour

The xx man's euphoric solo debut showcases his extensive dance knowledge and impeccable taste

Jamie xx began a 2014 Boiler Room set with a track that shouted out many of the past gods of UK dance, and there's much about his work as a producer, remixer and DJ that's concerned with paying his dues, while also updating the music in a tasteful way. The 27-year-old's debut solo album begins with a fine track called 'Gosh' that samples drum'n'bass MCs from an unaired mid-'90s BBC Radio 1 *One In The Jungle* pilot, but you can also hear 18-year-old grime rapper/producer Novelist laughing at the end of 'I Know There's Gonna Be (Good Times)', putting 'In Colour' in a contemporary context.

As you'd imagine from a producer famed for being a member of minimalist indie pop band The xx, 'Gosh' is an almost brutally simple song that adds the sample and a siren-like, two-fingers-maximum keyboard line to a shuffling beat and ultra-basic bassline. Less has always been more with Jamie, and the



THE DETAILS

►RELEASE DATE June 1 ►LABEL Young Turks ►PRODUCER Jamie xx ►LENGTH 43:05 ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Gosh ►2. Sleep Sound ►3. SeeSaw (feat. Romy) ►4. Obvs ►5. Just Saying ►6. Stranger In A Room (feat. Oliver Sim) ►7. Hold Tight ►8. Loud Places (feat. Romy) ►9. I Know There's Gonna Be (Good Times) (feat. Young Thug & Popcaan) ►10. The Rest Is Noise ►11. Girl ►BEST TRACK Gosh



NME
ALBUM
OF THE WEEK

success of 'In Colour' lies in his gift for melding together very few elements to create songs that are original, surprising and highly effective. The melodic steel drums first heard on his 2011 single 'Far Nearer' make a return on 'Obvs', an even more straightforward piece of music that somehow – as with 'Sleep Sound', 'Hold Tight' and 'Girl' – manages to sound euphoric and far grander than seems immediately possible.

Bandmates Romy Madley Croft and Oliver Sim contribute vocals to three songs, suggesting a less gloomy, more electronic R&B direction for the next xx record, although you could equally guess at a housey feel. Atlanta rapper Young Thug and dancehall artist Popcaan – the only other guests – trade verses on 'I Know There's Gonna Be (Good Times)', a track that might have been included to give a distinctly London-

sounding record some US appeal.

Nonetheless, on an album defined by its creator making perfect choices, it fits, and you'd never know that Jamie cobbled 'In Colour' together on downtime over the last seven

years. ■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE

9

Sauna Youth Distractions

Upset The Rhythm



Approaching four decades old, punk rock is now a term so

broadly applied it doesn't really mean anything any more. Grouse about that all you want, but it does allow for the existence of bands like Sauna Youth. The London quartet's second long-player sounds designed to interrogate ideas of what punk should

or could mean. Noisy guitar scrawls such as 'New Fear' and 'Modern Living' charm on a visceral level, but elsewhere, 'Distractions' offers zipping tangents. 'Monotony' is an experiment in repetition that would make Mark E Smith envious; co-vocalist Jen Calleja considers the male gaze and street harassment on '(Taking A) Walk'; and 'Abstract Notions' poses philosophical statements through the medium of snotty garage stomp.

■ LOUIS PATTISON

8

Prinzhorn Dance School

Home Economics

DFA



Prinzhorn Dance School arrived fully formed with

the minimal post-punk of 2007's self-titled debut, and following 2012's more leisurely 'Clay Class', 'Home Economics' continues to finesse, rather than develop, the Brighton-based duo's bass-and-drums blueprint. At six tracks it's a slight but

solid return. Tobin Prinz and Suzi Horn's vocals carry an intimate calmness on 'Reign' ("Tears snaking down your skin/Do you feel lonely?") that matches the steady tempo of their sparse rhythms, a lone guitar line unravelling at the close. Prinz's rat-a-tat beat on 'Battlefield' and Horn's yelps on 'Education' are as animated as Prinzhorn get, the jagged edges of their past replaced by a soft warmth on 'Let Me Go' and 'Clean'.

■ STUART HUGGETT

7

Reviews

Pins

Wild Nights Bella Union



'Baby Bhangs' opens Pins' second LP with a riff

far dirtier than we're used to from the Manchester quartet. The band recorded 'Wild Nights' with Queens Of The Stone Age producer Dave Catching in the Joshua Tree desert, far from the tiny Liverpool

studio where they made 2013 debut 'Girls Like Us'. But while the guitars are grimmer and the drums hit harder, Pins haven't totally smothered their sound in engine oil. Tracks like 'Curse These Dreams' and 'Dazed By You' are brittle but pretty, built on toe-tapping guitars and sweet backing vocals. Even so, the latter's outro builds to a noisy clatter that, like the aggressive 'Oh Lord', shows Pins are committed to their new muscle.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7

Downtown Boys Full Communism

Don Giovanni



Downtown Boys' second album opens with a drum line not dissimilar to Bikini Kill's 'Rebel Girl', and the twin saxophones that streak through 'Full Communism' evoke The E Street band as much as X-Ray Spex. But it doesn't take long to realise the Providence sextet's activist punk sound is wholly their own. 'Full

Communism' – the follow-up to 2012's self-titled debut – is a joyous surge of drums, guitars, wild brass and potent Spanish-English vocals from powerhouse frontwoman Victoria Ruiz. This is protest music you can dance to – a beautiful, volatile chaos where hope, rage and social justice anthems collide, with a Bruce Springsteen cover ('Dancing In The Dark') thrown in for good measure.

■ CHARLOTTE RICHARDSON ANDREWS

9

Rainer

Water Kissability



The bleeps and bass that underpin 'Water', the

opener on Rainer's debut album, derive from a beat the south London duo originally wrote for Drake. The band (vocalist Rebekah Raa and producer Nic Nell) were asked to submit music for the Toronto rapper's second album 'Take Care', but the 10 tracks here bear little resemblance to his lavish hip-hop. Raa's lyrics are romantic – "babys" and "darlings" abound – and her intimate delivery and Nell's minimal accompaniment align Rainer more closely with The xx. Raa fills the record with heartache ("I love you to death, I do" she moans on the garagey 'Nocturne'), but 'Water' really captivates when shifting from isolated, clacking effects to the sweeping dance-pop heard on the likes of 'Leave' and 'Laws'.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7

45

Snoop Dogg Bush

Snoop hooks up with Pharrell, Kendrick and Stevie Wonder for a set of luscious funk that sizzles only occasionally



In 1993, when his debut album 'Doggystyle' came out and he was simultaneously caught up in a murder case, Snoop Dogg was about the most-feared rapper on Earth. No longer. Over time, he's gone through countless reinventions – pimp figure, porn baron, comedy actor, family man, sports fan, Rasta – before settling on what he is now: a kind of blunt-smoking uncle of America, who seems harmless enough and is extremely good at being very famous. If he did a gangsta rap album now, it wouldn't wash, and neither would another reggae record like his patchy 2013 effort as Snoop Lion, 'Reincarnated'.

Later in 2013, adopting the handle Snoopzilla and in collaboration with Californian multi-instrumentalist Dâm-Funk, Snoop released a low-key synth-funk mini-album, '7 Days Of Funk', that made a lot more sense than 'Reincarnated', and it's no surprise that 'Bush' – his 13th album proper – ploughs a similar furrow. This



time, though, the producer is Pharrell, making 'Bush' seem like the slicker, major-label version of '7 Days...', which came out on LA indie Stones Throw.

Snoop and Pharrell have previous, particularly 2004 single 'Drop It Like It's Hot' – a monster smash that Pharrell wouldn't top until co-writing Daft Punk's 'Get Lucky' and Robin Thicke's 'Blurred Lines'. You'd expect 'Bush' to have at least one huge track on it, but it doesn't. Instead, it's a groove of an album caught somewhere between Zapp & Roger, Rick James and Parliament/Funkadelic. Snoop takes a surprising back seat, singing low in the mix and seldom rapping. It's an odd decision but it works, and when 'Bush' is good it's an absolute joy, like lead single 'Peaches N Cream' and opener 'California Roll', a classic ode-to-California track featuring Stevie Wonder on backing vocals and playing his signature chromatic harmonica.

An ultra-pouty Gwen Stefani appears on 'Run Away', then Kendrick Lamar and Rick Ross deliver verses on closer 'I'm Ya Dogg' – both decent songs, but lacking edge. And therein lies the problem with 'Bush' – it's luscious on the ears, cleverly put together and terrifically good fun, but it feels off the pace, like Pharrell hasn't given Snoop his best tracks, or it's coming out too long after 'Get Lucky'. Still, having a barbecue this summer? Stick it on; everyone will bug out. ■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE

7

THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** Out now ► **LABEL** RCA ► **PRODUCER** Pharrell Williams ► **LENGTH** 41:13
► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. California Roll (feat. Stevie Wonder) ►2. This City ►3. R U A Freak
►4. Awake ►5. So Many Pros ►6. Peaches N Cream (feat. Charlie Wilson) ►7. Edibles (feat. TI) ►8. I Knew That ►9. Run Away (feat. Gwen Stefani) ►10. I'm Ya Dogg (feat. Kendrick Lamar & Rick Ross) ► **BEST TRACK** California Roll

Giorgio Moroder

Déjà Vu RCA



Seventy-five-year-old Italian producer Giorgio

Moroder is a hugely important figure in the history of electronic music. This is the man behind such dance landmarks as 'I Feel Love' by Donna Summer (1977), the theme from the film *Midnight Express* (1978) and 'Tryouts For The Human Race' by Sparks (1979). However, his first album for 30 years – whose guest singers include Charli XCX, Britney Spears and Kylie – doesn't just fall short of that legacy, it faceplants into the dancefloor. The likes of '4 U With Love' and 'Wildstar' are shockingly bad, a sorry collection of Euro trance and derivative dance-pop in the Tiësto/David Guetta/Avicii mould. None of the magic that made his '70s work so vibrant is left.

■ CHRIS COTTINGHAM

1

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FILM

A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night

A badass Iranian bloodsucker revitalises the vampire genre



Following the bloody exploits of a merciless female vampire, Iranian-American writer/director Ana Lily Amirpour's debut feature puts a slick spin on an ever-popular genre. Inspired by New Orleans author Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* books and based on Amirpour's 2011 short film of the same name, this warped feminist fairytale stars Sheila Vand as The Girl, a mean, skateboarding bloodsucker.

Filmed in Californian city Taft and rendered in menacing monochrome by cinematographer Lyle Vincent, this tale of sex, drugs and biting is set in a deserted Iranian town known only as Bad City. It boasts an air of hip 1980s Jim Jarmusch irreverence, thanks to the inclusion of a classic 1950s car in nearly every scene and German-Iranian male lead Arash Marandi's preference for James Dean-style white T-shirts and tousled screen-idol hair.

Vand plays The Girl with confident nonchalance and twists the notion that women should be worried about being on their own late at night on its head. As she prowls the Bad City streets, it's the men who have cause for concern. Around her, stock characters abound. There's a despondent prostitute (Mozhan Marnò, from 2007's *Charlie Wilson's War*), an evil pimp (*Captain America: The Winter Soldier*'s Dominic Rains), an ageing addict (Marshall Manesh, who appeared in *The Big Lebowski*) and a prescient tabby cat you'd find in a Coen brothers movie.

Vand is vengeful yet chilled, gliding down abandoned roads with her traditional chador scarf – which exposes only the face – billowing behind, cape-like, before silently pouncing on her prey when they mistakenly feel comfortable with her. Amirpour – who was born in Margate before moving to California aged eight – found inspiration for The Girl during a 2003 visit to Iran, where she was advised to wear a chador to cover her choppy haircut, nose-piercing and western clothes.

Amirpour has called *A Girl Walks...* an "Iranian vampire spaghetti western" and has said it's influenced by John Hughes' teen movies. References to other films are plentiful. An air of sinister *Taxi Driver* redemption hangs over the whole piece, and lingering sniffs of cocaine nod to *Scarface*. Yet within all this lurks a luscious, unconventional movie that's quite the director's own.

The dialogue – which is in the Farsi language – is sparse, but the twanging soundtrack, curated by Amirpour,

beautifully bolsters the eerie atmospherics and owes much to David Lynch collaborator Angelo Badalamenti. The majority of songs come from Iranian artists, including Kiosk and Radio Tehran, but Amirpour weaves in a spin of White Lies' 2008 single 'Death' during a scene of gothic romance. It's just one of many stylish touches that marks the emergence of a vibrant new talent. Proof there's life in the vampire flick yet. ■ LEONIE COOPER



► **DIRECTOR** Ana Lily Amirpour
► **RELEASE DATE** May 23

CINEMA

Mr Holmes



Ian McKellen's portrayal of Sherlock Holmes in this film directed by Bill

Condon (*Dreamgirls*) bears little resemblance to Benedict Cumberbatch's celebrated turn in BBC series *Sherlock*. Based on Mitch Cullins' 2005 novel *A Slight Trick Of The Mind*, *Mr Holmes* follows the iconic fictional detective, now 93 and living in Dorset with his grumpy housekeeper (*Mystic River*'s Laura Linney), as he tries to remember why he retired after solving his final case 30 years earlier. Though Condon deftly unfolds the mystery via flashbacks featuring a younger-looking McKellen, the story is less compelling than the star's poignant performance as the tormented ageing detective. An unlikely friendship Holmes forms with his housekeeper's young son (child actor Milo Parker) proves especially affecting.

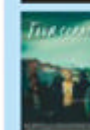
■ NICK LEVINE

7

47

CINEMA

Four Corners



Writer-director Ian Gabriel clearly prizes quality over quantity. His

first feature, *Forgiveness*, was judged best African film of 2004 in South Africa, and this second film was the same country's entry in the 2014 Oscars. The tightly interleaved storylines involve a 13-year-old chess prodigy (first-time actor Jezriel Skei) on the periphery of brutal gangs, a former gang member (Brendon Daniels, *Zulu*) going straight after release from prison, a London doctor (Lindiwe Matshikiza, *Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom*) in Cape Town for her father's funeral, and a detective (newcomer Abduragman Adams) on the trail of a serial killer. It's slickly executed, punchily provocative and richly rewarding.

■ ANGUS BATEY

8

CINEMA

Spy



Melissa McCarthy reunites with *Bridesmaids* director Paul Feig for this frothy action comedy set in the world of international espionage. She plays Susan Cooper, a meek, desk-bound CIA analyst given a one-off opportunity to head into the field wielding a gun when a former colleague (Jude Law) is killed, allegedly by

a European arms dealer (*Bridesmaids*' Rose Byrne). The deliberately ridiculous plot gives McCarthy the chance to show off her superb comic timing in a series of witty exchanges with a boastful rogue agent (a surprisingly subtle Jason Statham) and amusing set-pieces, including a ludicrous shoot-off in a private jet. It all bodes well for Feig and McCarthy's next collaboration, 2016's *Ghostbusters* reboot. ■ NICK LEVINE

7

CINEMA

Tomorrowland: A World Beyond



In this big-budget Disney sci-fi adventure, Tomorrowland is a futuristic utopia that seems to exist in an alternate reality. Teenage dreamer Casey (Britt Robertson) finds a pin badge that grants her temporary access and is instantly seduced by the technologically advanced metropolis. But on her

second visit, accompanied by an irritable inventor (George Clooney) and a mysterious little girl (Raffey Cassidy), Casey is told only she can save both Tomorrowland and the human race. Director Brad Bird (*Ratatouille*) shoots each spectacular scene with a sense of wide-eyed awe, but the initial charm wears off during a final stretch that will really test your suspension of disbelief.

■ NICK LEVINE

6

The Great Escape

Various venues, Brighton

Thursday, May 14 – Saturday, May 16

48

Eaddy from
Ho99o9
crowdsurfs
at Patterns,
Friday, May 15



The seaside bash packs in
crowdsurfing punks Ho99o9
as well as secret sets by
The Vaccines and Maccabees

PHOTO BY ANDY HUGHES

Walking around Brighton on Great Escape weekend, you encounter a procession of rainbow hairdos, industry natters and wandering oddballs, and music follows at every turn. Guitar feedback and harmonies seep into the streets, out along the promenade and into pub gardens where punters reminisce over the town's heyday as a locus for mods and rockers. If you're looking for a similar rivalry this weekend, check the diverse headliners: while The Maccabees, The Vaccines and Drenge play popular secret sets, top buzz goes to a sold-out grime night headed by Skepta & JME, proving there's more to TGE than Brighton rock. ➔

Thursday night sees **La Priest**, aka Sam Eastgate, headline The Haunt. Clad in baggy white pyjamas, he plays a mix of clubland beats, dub bass, deep house and arcade funk (recent single 'Oino' is a highlight) with the jumpy manner of a man who's spent the last seven years filling out cereal-box competitions in an attic, which may be exactly what he's been up to since his band Late Of The Pier vanished after 2008's 'Fantasy Black Channel'. Similarly unpindownable are **The Garden**, who burst onstage the following night at the same venue in a whirl of strobes, dark jungle beats and Prodigy intensity. Sometime drummer Fletcher Shears, white-haired and feral, clambers up speaker stacks and flails into the crowd while twin brother Wyatt jabs out surf licks and barks like a hooligan Mark E Smith.

Over at beachside venue Shooshh, Wirral upstarts **Hooton Tennis Club** play a goofball blend of late-'90s Blur and Pavement, adorned with lyrics that make family holidays and writing essays sound hilarious. Headlining the Dome are **Alabama Shakes**, with a set of bluesy ballads and redemptive Memphis soul. On a string of tracks from latest album 'Sound & Color' ('Miss You', 'The Greatest', 'Gimme All Your Love'), which reached Number One in the US, singer Brittany Howard has the makings of a soul icon, able to traverse the seven stages of grief in a single note while playing nimble guitar licks backed by an eight-piece band.

Later that night, Patterns hosts a hell-raising set from Philly rap-punks **Ho99o9**, in which rapper The OGM storms onstage in a wedding dress and blue balaclava before his

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Andy Clarke, 35, Brighton
"The Garden were utterly fantastic, in a strutting, trench-coat style. It's Duran Duran gone wrong, in a wonderful, wonderful way. And I was happy about that."



Eliana Cuhls, 22, Hamburg
"We've been here since Tuesday, so it's a bit of a holiday. The best thing today was Cape Cub. We've been sitting in the street for an hour waiting for The Maccabees, and we are very excited."



Colleen Kaminski, 21, Hanover
"The best thing we've seen so far was Jeremy Loops. He got us going from the first second. It felt like summer, a mixture of dance, folk and chill-out."

yelling counterpart Eaddy downs someone's pint and sprays it back in his face. **Dreng** make a noble effort to carry the vibe: despite sometimes wearing the placid expression of a man gutted to have received a B in his maths GCSE, Eoin Loveless has a knack for deadpan hooks, and by the time he's leading singalongs to 'Fuckabout' and unhinged closer 'Let's Pretend', the crowd is electrified.

Down the road at The Haunt, **The Vaccines** headline *NME Radar*'s night with old faves and a few tracks from third album 'English Graffiti'. Shuffling onstage at 1am, guitar mounted on his shoulder like a rifle, singer Justin Young tears into 'Come Of Age' single 'Teenage Icon' before raising the pace with 'Wrecking Bar (Ra Ra Ra)'. "We're going to spoil you," jokes Young, introducing new song 'Want You So Bad', and if the crowd aren't quite going nuts early on, 'Post Break-Up Sex' kickstarts a love-in that climaxes

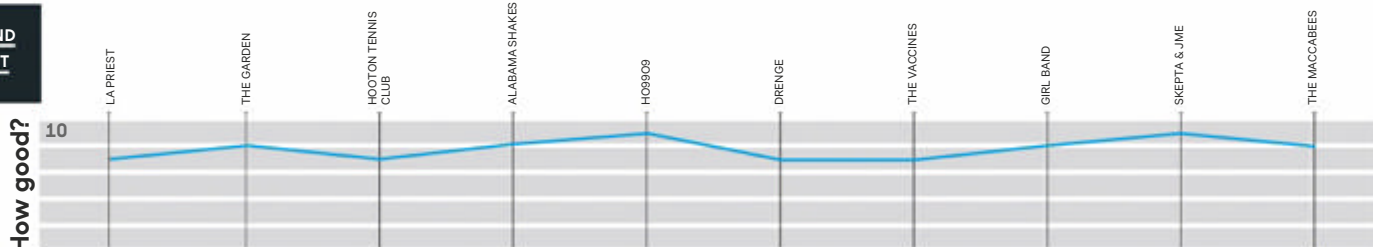


PUNTERS PRANCE INTO THE MACCABEES' SET ARM IN ARM, LIKE LUCKY LOTTERY WINNERS

during 'Nørgaard', when Freddie Cowan smashes his guitar to pieces.

Dublin's **Girl Band** prove the weekend's surprise success story, with songs like 'Lawman' employing terror tactics against a packed Corn Exchange on Saturday. Singer Dara Kiely oscillates between torment and insanity as the quartet attempt to rock the crowd's mental and existential foundations, with drummer Adam Faulkner's steady 4/4 thumps the only reminder you're alive. Later in the same venue, anticipation peaks for a not-so-secret set by **The Maccabees**: with a queue spanning the length of the street, lucky punters storm in like lottery winners, some prancing in arm-in-arm, others tangled leerily around one another's shoulders. The boozy goodwill spills into the quintet's show, with

BAND LIST





Skepta, The Maccabees (below) and The Garden (below left)



singer Orlando Weeks earnestly introducing old favourite 'Latchmere' as "a magical thing that exists on your doorstep but you overlook all the time". For all their nostalgic value, the old songs feel brittle next to their sturdier new stuff; best is the epic 'Marks To Prove It', a perfect example of how The Maccabees have learned to pull the trigger only and exactly when necessary.

As loved up as the Maccabees' show proves, **Skepta & JME** spark the weekend's most animated scenes. After riotous support from Stormzy, Skepta swaggers onstage to last year's crossover hit 'That's Not Me', its chorus shouted back as thousands pogo in a giant moshpit. JME soon joins him to swap bars, and the pair – brothers and co-founders of the Boy Better Know label with Wiley – launch into a set of solo hits and, on songs like Meridian Dan's 'German Whip', collaborations as featured artists. Diligently attempting to determine whether the mandem or single ladies can make more noise, they fire up BBK classic 'Too Many Man' before storming into Skepta's 'Shutdown' for a riotous finale. ■ JAZZ MONROE

8

MORE GIGS

Ghostface Killah & BadBadNotGood Electric Ballroom,

Friday, May 15

Tonight's vibe moves from louche speakeasy to massive party. Wu-Tang legend Ghostface Killah and Toronto trio BadBadNotGood spend half of the show – their first European date together – slinking through the elegant jazz-funk of their recent album 'Sour Soul', before launching into a couple of covers (the room swells with Jackson 5's 'I Want You Back'). Happily breaking the Ballroom's curfew, they blast out Wu-Tang tunes including 'CREAM' and the 45-year-old rapper drags two fans onstage to rap ODB and Method Man's bars on 'Protect Ya Neck'. This warm gesture echoes his earlier tribute to BadBadNotGood: "You ain't gotta be at the top for me to fuck wit you. It's one love."

■ JORDAN BASSETT

9

Steve Gunn The Lexington, London

Monday, May 18

It doesn't take long for Steve Gunn to break into the first mind-bending riff of the evening. On second song 'Water Wheel', the Pennsylvania songwriter feeds his guitar through pedals set to cosmic, lending its Americana a bleary psychedelic feel. Such trickery is no surprise; Gunn was once part of Kurt Vile's band and recently joined his friend on the books at Matador. Last year's 'Way Out Weather' was the smoky-voiced guitarist's 10th album, but as this sold-out first-night crowd shows, he no longer flies under the radar. With a bassist and drummer thickening out the melodies, he transfixes the audience one solo at a time.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

Foxygen



Electric Ballroom, London Tuesday, May 12

San Francisco oddballs mark the end of an era with messy psychedelia and topless pandemonium

In billowing blue flares and a flowery shirt, Sam France is conducting a wake. It's the last UK date of a run Foxygen announced as a "farewell tour" in March, and the frontman is bounding across the stage like a jack-in-the-box. If he doesn't look like a man whose band is breaking up, that's because they aren't – the San Francisco quartet were joking. In fact, tonight marks only the end of the Star Power incarnation they conceived for last year's album '...And Star Power'.

They begin with the title track from 2013's 'We Are The 21st Century Ambassadors Of Peace & Magic'. It's a sprawling mess of Stones rhythms and sun-baked psychedelia, and its lurching choruses incite onstage pandemonium that lasts the duration of their hour-long set.

Three go-go dancers goad the pirouetting, gurning France by thrashing and pogoing ceaselessly next to him. When they're not dancing, they scream harmonies, bolstering the singer's androgynous yelping. Behind a stack of keyboards, Jonathan Rado is stood still, but his ridiculous tasselled jacket is arresting enough on its own.

The visual spectacle is so outrageous that the songs almost feel secondary. A short-lived cover of The Beatles' 'Let It Be' – for which France removes his shirt – and a glorious 'No Destruction' stand out, but the night peaks with an encore of 'Everyone Needs Love'. His blond bob matted with sweat, France spends its extended wig-out shrieking, "We love you!" and blowing kisses at the crowd, thrusting his hips as he goes.

After one final bow, he leads his rabble off stage leaving one question hanging in the air: how on earth will they top this? ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

SETLIST

- We Are The 21st Century Ambassadors Of Peace & Magic
- On Blue Mountain
- Coulda Been My Love
- Can't Contextualize My Mind
- Brooklyn Police Station
- Hot Summer
- Let It Be
- Shuggie
- Teenage Alien Blues
- No Destruction
- Everyone Needs Love

8

NME
GIG
OF THE WEEK

The Prodigy

Rivermead Leisure Complex, Reading
Monday, May 11

A set heavy on noisy new songs shows the
rave survivors are as ridiculous as ever

Beneath five large dishes suspended in front of a massive photograph of an insouciant fox, Prodigy MC Maxim stalks around in a full-length fake-fur coat with the hood up, like a giant walking gerbil. Beside him, Keith Flint sports a Siouxsie Sioux-circa-1977 peaked cap, but the effect is less terror of the suburbs than post-punk bus conductor.

Let's face it: The Prodigy are ridiculous. But that's a compliment. A big part of what's turned this band from acid-house malcontents to three-decade veterans of British popular music is their absolute refusal to play the game of cool. They've cultivated an image that's defiantly disconnected from what everyone else is doing, saying and thinking. The risk is they can look out of touch – middle-aged men with a dated vision of the future – but it's a risk that's proved well worth taking. That fox on the backdrop, on the cover of the new 'The Day Is My Enemy' album and all over every bit of merchandise associated with it? That's what The Prodigy have very carefully made themselves into: the world's biggest underdog.

Those who like their music serious-minded and considered have always had a hard time

THE PRODIGY RETAIN THE COMMUNAL EUPHORIA OF THE RAVE SCENE

with this band. They call Keith a "plastic punk" and moan that Liam Howlett's pugnacious beats frame songs that rage inchoately against last year's targets. Yet the whole point of The Prodigy is that there always has to be a prick out there to kick against: there's nothing more punk rock than a band who actively goes out of its way to get people to hate them, and The Prodigy work hard to make sure they piss the right people off.

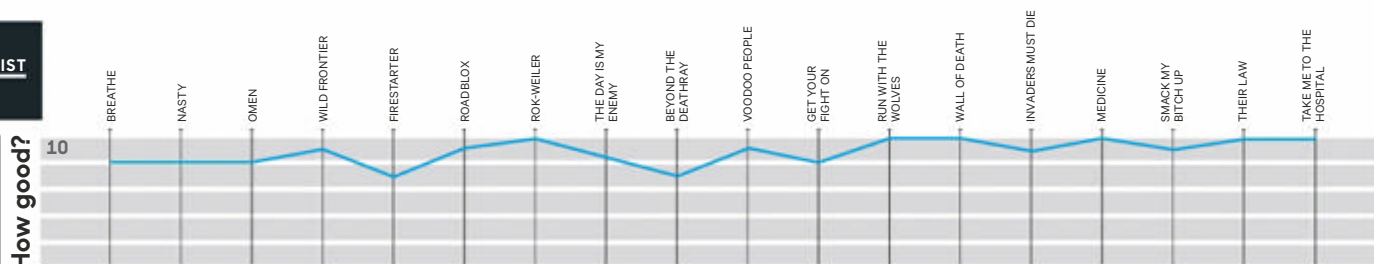
Not that there's anyone here tonight who's anything other than a devoted true believer.

The fascinating contradiction is that while their music needs to remain rebellious and nonconformist, the live Prodigy experience retains every ounce of communal euphoria that fuelled the rave scene they tumbled out of. Their combination of volume, aggression and a sound that's built on high-velocity collision brings about a shared release.

Part of this relies on familiarity, but it's delivered in a typically uncompromising, almost puritanical way. It would be the easiest thing in the world for The Prodigy to dash through a greatest hits set, yet half of tonight's gig features songs from the new album – and they get the biggest cheers.

A cynic could suggest that the Middle Eastern-flavoured 'Medicine' goes down so well is because at its heart lies a canny

SETLIST



MORE GIGS

Richard Dawson Polish Club, Bristol

Thursday, May 14

There's a cameraman in the wings, filming Richard Dawson for a tentative documentary. Out of the sight of most at this sold-out gig, he's referenced a few times by the Newcastle folk singer, amid the rambling, quasi-comedy routines that separate his songs. Whether defiantly a cappella or in trad-folk fashion (bloodthirsty murder ballad 'Poor Old Horse'), the detuned clang of his guitar keeps him in the realm of the avant garde. What sounds inaccessible on paper is warm and inviting in Dawson's hands, though, and when the closing half hour is taken up by two songs, 'Nothing Important' – the title track of last year's album – and regretful drinkers' anthem 'The Vile Stuff', everyone cheerfully submits.

■ NOEL GARDNER

8

DMA's Night & Day, Manchester

Tuesday, May 19

"We're DMA's," declares Tommy O'Dell. "We're from Sydney." You wouldn't know it from the frontman's singing voice, which apes Liam Gallagher's snarl, or the trio's Britpop-influenced tunes, which could be straight off a '90s 'Shine' compilation. At times the band sound so much like Oasis, you can imagine Noel preparing a cease-and-desist order. 'So We Know', from their recent debut EP, is a ballad in the vein of 'Half The World Away', and by heart-on-sleeve anthem 'Delete' ('Fosters Supernova'), pints are aloft. DMA's deliver each tune with festival-slaying swagger, and their first visit to Manchester is a riotous triumph.

■ GARY RYAN

8

Keith Flint
onstage in
Reading

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Louise Redmond,
22, Reading

"I've loved them for a long time but never seen them live before. I couldn't miss them playing in my hometown. They were bloody brilliant."



Jade Baker, 24,
Oxfordshire

"To see them in a small venue is a million times better than a festival. You can feel the music going through you – your whole body shakes."



Marcus Jeffrey,
26, Torbay

"I've loved them all my life, man. The last album was good, this one's better, but my favourite is 'Break And Enter' – and they never play it live!"

Tyler, The Creator



Academy, Manchester Wednesday, May 13

The Odd Future rapper swaps controversy for sincerity at an explosive northwest love-in

Tyler, The Creator is offering something different on his merch stand tonight. The Odd Future man is now flogging an eye-catching gay pride T-shirt, featuring a white power symbol in LGBT rainbow colours. For a rapper who sparked outrage over his use of the word 'faggot', it's like Morrissey selling barbecue utensils. But the most shocking thing about tonight is how Tyler shuts up and lets his beats do the talking.

Opening with the aggressive 'Bitch Suck Dick' and an ear-splitting 'Deathcamp', he tears through his set, easily stoking a party atmosphere aided by hype-man and OF member Jasper Dolphin. During the NERD-like 'Domo23' – one of five songs from new record 'Cherry Bomb' – they

divide the audience in two, with one half bellowing, "FUCK THAT!", while the other responds, "GOLF WANG!" During 'Run', he sprints across the stage faster than a member of Fat White Family hearing the words 'last orders'. Even rage-fuelled pair 'Tron Cat' and 'Bimmer' don't elicit a sense of menace, rather the young crowd chant along with the mischievous glee of children giggling at naughty words in a dictionary.

The woozy 'IFHY' mellows the breakneck pace as Tyler sings sentiments that sound like Eminem writing a Valentine's card and slow-jam morality tale 'Fucking Young/Perfect' proves too much for one audience member, who hurls his tie onstage – "You wore a suit to this gig of all gigs?" boggles Jasper. 'Yonkers' sees Tyler firing his fearsome flow over quaking bass, while he sits on the lip of the stage for the slinky 'She', which features Frank Ocean's crooned hook on tape. But the respite is short-lived, as the MIA-homage 'Tamale' explodes like a box of fireworks.

Tyler's controversial stance has always raised the question of whether he's a smart man playing at being stupid or a stupid man prone to flashes of genius. But as he exits by fawning, "I love you Manchester!", you're left in no doubt that, now more than ever, he's being sincere. ■ GARY RYAN

SETLIST

- Bitch Suck Dick
- Deathcamp
- Tron Cat
- Sam (Is Dead)
- Bimmer
- Run
- Jamba
- IFHY
- Domo23
- Fucking Young/Perfect
- Yonkers
- Smuckers
- The Brown Stains Of Darkeese Latifah
- Part 6-12
- 48
- Rella
- She
- Oldie
- Tamale

overhaul of the 11-year-old 'Spitfire', from 2004's 'Always Outnumbered, Never Outgunned'. You can argue that by opening the set with the slashing swordplay of 'Breathe' and following it with recent single 'Nasty', Howlett is encouraging you to hear the similarities between the scratchy, springy, guitar-like sounds that underpin both. But the truth is they make music so individual that the only thing any new song of theirs reminds you of is a previous Prodigy record. The new material – the first made with the current live incarnation already in place – works so well that 'Firestarter' feels a little flat after a seismic 'Wild Frontier'. 'Rok-Weiler's tempo-shifting bark and bite and the foul-mouthed shoutalong 'Wall Of Death' crackle and spit like a post-apocalyptic bonfire.

But sometimes the past meets the present in an unexpected way. 'Their Law', written to protest an anti-rave bill passed by the last Conservative government, is a song whose time has come again. Rolled out to a breathless, pummelled crowd as the first of two encores, its renewed relevance and tensely coiled rage proves that these perennial underdogs may be older, but they still have the sharpest of teeth. ■ ANGUS BATEY

9

8

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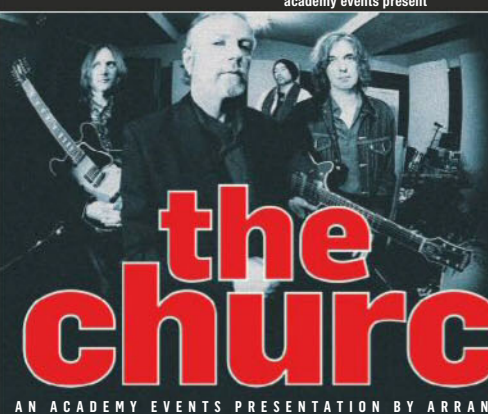
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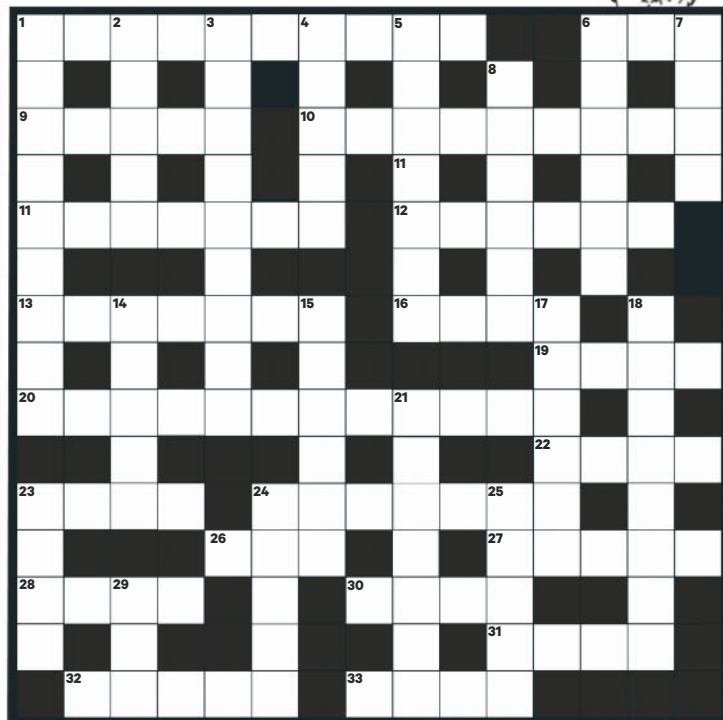
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CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Muse are performing, but not live nor in the open air (4-6)
6+31A For the present, here's The Jam (3-4)
9+10A Have Circa Waves bitten off more they can chew? They'll need to be more picky (5-2-2-5)
11+12A Put the needle on the record, it's Madonna (4-3-6)
13 This is not the work of Blur (7)
16 Barking types who were 'Tuned Into A Different Station' (4)
19+23A A long story that's hard to believe of being Pulled Apart By Horses (4-4)
20 Profits later, perhaps, from a Bob Dylan album (4-8)
22 A bit anxious to include a T Rex album (4)
23 (See 19 across)
24 (See 18 down)
26 A track from Wolf Alice's 'Blush' EP can be found in... the 'Blush' EP! (3)
27 Best man with The Wedding Present (5)
28 Kooks album named after The Kinks' recording studio

- where it was recorded (4)
30 Most of the DVD gets a negative response from Justice (4)
31 (See 6 across)
32 The last agent to have included a David Bowie live album (5)
33 American folk singer ____ Guthrie, son of Woody (4)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Tame Impala getting a disc out before piles tumble on their followers (9)
2+29D '80s indie band that featured ex-members of The Fall, Smiths and Blondie (5-3)
3 "Well, my head got a bump when I hit it on the radio", 2007 (4-5)
4 Look pleased at abandoned Beach Boys' album being resurrected 37 years later by Brian Wilson (5)
5 Albums by both Black Flag and Lambchop were not in good condition (7)
6 Recordings from Patti Smith and Forward Russia! by the dozen (6)
7 "The distant ____ of far away voices boarding far

- away trains", from The Jam's 'Down In The Tube Station At Midnight' (4)
8 A powerful performance from London Grammar (6)
14 Welsh band making an appearance in Carlisle train station (5)
15 They had a Number One hit in 1986 with 'The Final Countdown' (6)
17 Make yourself comfortable while listening to Disclosure (6)
18+24A At the very end of the day it's an exceptional country-blues song that's been covered by Lead Belly, Van Morrison and Creedence Clearwater Revival (8-7)
21 Chvrches, Dexters and The Automatic should all get better (7)
23 He escorted 'Grace Kelly' to number one (4)
24 Things were on the move to both Little Boots and Otis Redding (5)
25 Things were on the move to 'Global ____' by Joe Strummer And The Mescaleros (1-2-2)
29 (See 2 down)

MAY 16 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1 Wilder Mind, 6+29A Ship To Wreck, 10 Roads, 11 Immortals, 12 Use Somebody, 13+28D Cut Here, 14 Zero, 19 O-Town, 20 Naive, 21+31A Dream Lover, 22 Sky, 24 Edge, 35 Wonder Stuff, 36 Pin **DOWN** 1 Word Up, 2 Loaded, 3 East Of Eden, 4 Maine Road, 5 Nimrod, 7 Heavy Cross, 8 Pass It On, 9+25A Grey Britain, 15+18D Tom Petty, 16 Undertow, 17 King, 23 Kele, 26 Rakes, 27 Neo, 30 Win, 32 VIP 33 Run, 34+31D Wu Lyf

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NEXT WEEK

FLORENCE + THE MACHINE

"This creation, it came
with a lot of sacrifices"



ZACKERY MICHAEL

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